

Life and Opinions of a Harting Scholar: *the Airport*

I feel like I've been there at least a million times, and every single time...oh no wait, I've used that one before. Anyway, the airport. Forget the peaceful gardens of Merrion Square, the Georgian Quarter, Trinity College or even the quaint Ha'Penny Bridge. This is the part of Dublin that I've come to know best. Not that there is much to know, of course. With its one arrivals hall and just three or four luggage belts, it feels hardly big enough for the "average of 60,000 passengers per day, rising to 80,000 during the peak season, and more than 600 aircrafts movements every day"(1). Anyway, Dublin Airport for me has come to represent contradictory sentiments. It is the place where I impatiently await the arrival of loved ones, but also the place where I can't help but burst into tears every time said loved ones, for some reason or other, consider it necessary to go home again.

If you have ever watched, say, *All You Need Is Love* or *Memories* or whatever tearjerker (and don't try and deny it boys, I know you have!), you may have let out a mocking sneer at the sight of people, long separated by vast bodies of water or other impediments, throwing their arms around each other and sobbing like mad on the moment of their reunification. After all the field work I have done in these past few months, I can say with some certainty that it is not the presence of cameras that spurs people into acting like that, it happens in real life, too. I have watched mothers and children, grandparents and grandchildren, friends, lovers, and people whose connection to one another I couldn't possibly guess, sharing a pure moment of intimacy right before my eyes, and since I'm an emotional kind of gal, these sights never cease to touch a chord deep within me. Luckily, you can always count on a scantily clad (if clad at all) hen party, on return from their week-long shindig in Prague, Amsterdam or whatever sinful place they have chosen as the background for their last moments of freedom, to relieve some of the emotional tension with their alcohol-fuelled shouts, thus stopping me from making a fool of myself by blubbering at this moment of happiness of complete and utter strangers.

Yesterday I was there again, more relaxed than ever. I was picking up my cousin, who had decided to grace me with her presence for a couple of days, I had just handed in the last of the no less than eight essays I had to write this semester, the weather was nice, in other words, good times. But then it hit me: in a few weeks, I will be at Dublin Airport for the last time as a resi-

dent of this city, the show will be over, time to go home, slán Ireland. Again these mixed feelings. Of course the idea of being home again, and live at what is quite literally a stone's throw away from my other half (I would have said better half, but that would be quite a lot for him to live up to, wouldn't it), is something I can't but look forward to. But on the other hand, the thought that I might not come back for quite a while makes me particularly sad and depressed. It really feels like leaving behind another home; a home that, since a few weeks, has only done nothing but emphasize that I have nearly arrived at the end of my journey, and that I really shouldn't expect a pot of gold either.

Spring is in the air, which is quite something in Ireland. It hasn't rained for weeks on end, my rooms feels like an opium den and every single person is adorned with a combination of tiny tanktops, flip-flops and painful-looking sunburned skin, except, of course, for the international students. Classes are finished, exams are on the way and there is a constant tinge of excitement, anxiety and expectation in the air. Did you notice all three nouns I just used contain an x? Well, of course that is nothing but a random coincidence, but if you're into that kind of stuff (and you are, or you wouldn't be studying Lit) you might consider it symbolic for the crossroads at which many people, including yours truly, have arrived at this point. The happy few who've seen the Britney Spears cult classic must know exactly what I'm talking about. And here I am, a little older, a little more experienced, yet as clueless as ever when it comes to the road ahead of me (I usually have the same problem when I'm driving, which is very dangerous). However, my experiences here may have taught me a couple of things that will be of use in the near future. For instance, that good things come to those who wait. And wait. And wait a bit more. But although I'm afraid my newly-acquired patience will soon vanish, I hope that the habit of taking every day is it comes, will stick with me a bit longer. As for what comes next, "[i]t is all a darkness"(2), and I like it.

By Leonie van der Meer

(1) If you find this topic particularly interesting, which I doubt, check <http://www.dublinairport.com/about-us/>

(2) Ford Madox Ford. *The Good Soldier*. New York, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1990,