



DMC (Dunmurry May-Day Conspiracy)

Aoibheann Greenan, TBG&S, 17 April - 20 June 2015

I am standing beneath a tree in the heart of Temple Bar. Stranger still, on the ground below its branches, there's a scrap-wood DeLorean sports car, complete with gull-wing doors and faux-sheepskin upholstery. It's been fitted together around the trunk, carefully, cautiously, because the tree's a hawthorn/whitethorn/quickthorn, a tree of many names, a tree for which manmade infrastructures all over Ireland have been circumvented, a fairy tree.

Tasseled crests hang from the ceiling, stirring music wisps through the air, and a figure stands guard, frocked in a glistening head-dress and an Irish dancing costume. Remnants of the costume bedeck the tree; they are fluorescent orange and yellow, sequined silver and gold. Nearby, an amputated tyre proffers the rags, inviting me to become a part of this strange scene, to collude.

This is a ceremonial site, and my understanding of the hawthorn's ritual is that I'm supposed to tie a rag around a twig, and plead an intention, which will only be granted once the fabric has rotted away. But these rags won't disintegrate; this tree will never leaf or flower or fruit. The branches I'm standing beneath are enclosed by the ceiling of a different sort of sacred space, by a white cube.

In 1978, when construction began on the DeLorean car manufacturing plant in Dunmurry, Co. Antrim, a group of local people mounted a protest against the bulldozing of a hawthorn on the plant's site; they formed the Druids of Dunmurry, a pagan-style society whose aim was to solicit folkloric spirits to vanquish the car factory.

Something dissuades me from my intention; a trace of menace, of artifice, discloses itself. Hazard tape saws across the scene; animal skulls blazon hollow grins, the bodyguard becomes a shop dummy and skulking in the tree's crowning thorns, there's, not a fairy, but a plastic cobra.

The site is flanked by a towering tableau: drawn, painted, printed, glued; its detail so sweeping and so scrupulous, so exquisite, that it's hard not to believe in the Druids; I want to believe. But I only know for certain that the car plant existed; Greenan is not the first artist to explore its convoluted history. As for whether or not there was a protest, or even a hawthorn tree, I can't say for sure, but ill-luck arose from somewhere. In 1982, John DeLorean was arrested for possession of millions of dollars' worth of cocaine, and though the charges were later dropped, it ruined his motor company.

The rag tree ritual calls for purification, and whether this fabricated enactment is meant to parody or in tribute, how apt that it should be located inside the ramparts of Temple Bar.

Within the white cube, dainty bulbs flicker, their reflections catching in the window panes of souvenir shops across the street, and in the laminated L-plates tourists wear around their necks as they troupe across the cobblestones. Within the white cube, even though no one appears to have disturbed them, the pale thorns of the fairy tree are delicately twitching.

Sara Baume