

Reader

In Memory of John Springhall (1943-2015)

Poem by Niamh McNally (2026)

My first time, piled on either side
of archived Penny Dreadfuls:
Dick Turpin, Diamond Jack, Nick Carter in
Canadian Wilds, black hooded bandits
burying a man up to the neck, holding a shovel,
True Liberty Blue ‘Against Britannia’s Foes’,
swashbuckling rogues on thin front covers,
soldiers, Cavaliers with golden cloaks,
‘For boys and old boys’ magazines, 25p,
adolescent battalions, The Boys’ Brigade,
‘parading with dummy rifles’...

I like your ‘others’, John.

P.T. Barnum the moral panics gangster films,
‘degenerates’ ‘freaks’ ‘juvenile delinquencies’
deconstructed colonies
the constrained failing
then alleviated
as New Orleans jazz melts on humid porches
coated with West African and Haitian voodoo
there are looser shoulders
far from Station Road.

Pinned *arpilleras* decipher your chapters as we track
mysterious stitches along a tacked Castlerock rail.
Discussing you, we meet through reading lists, papers, and articles,
now notched in needle felt, printed onto an infinite chess game,
and I am left wondering what your next move might have been.