

Bridget & Ellen,

Scenes
Imagined



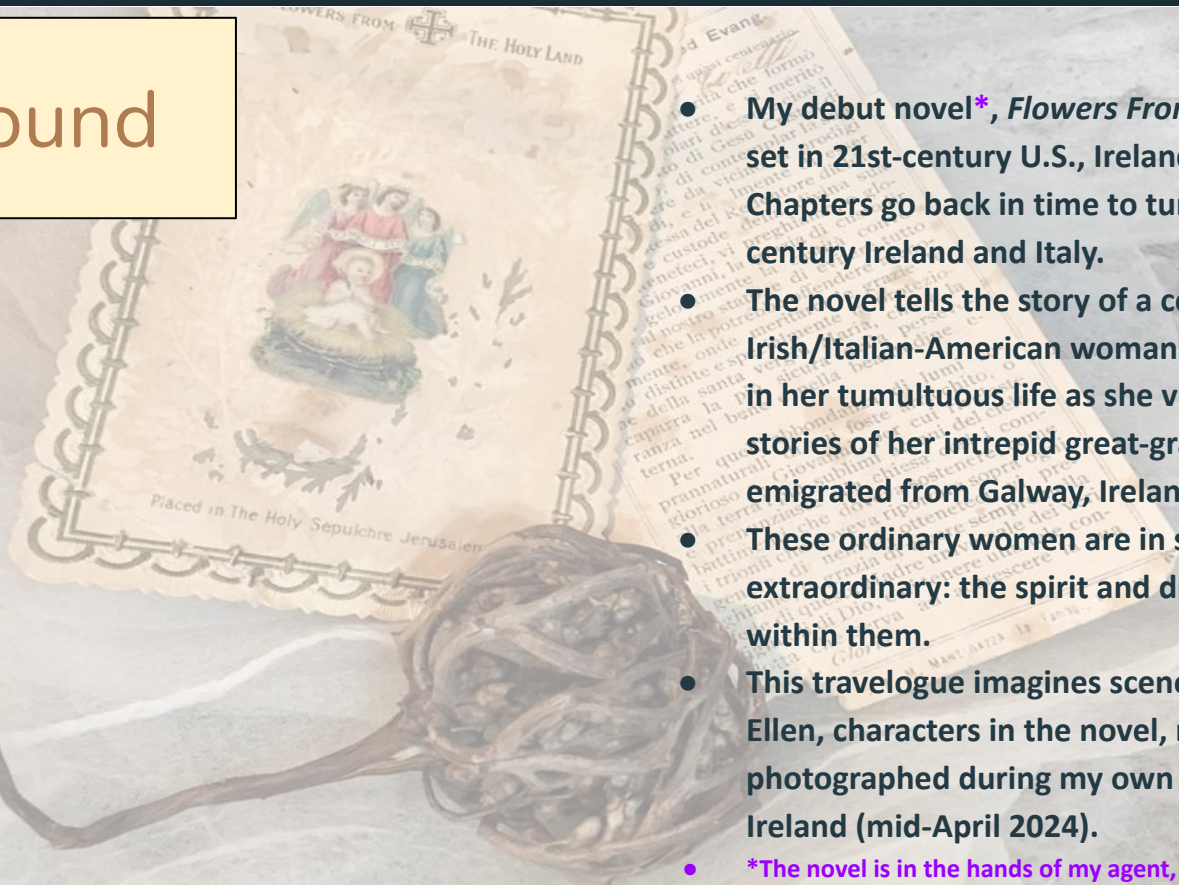
Travelogue, April 2024:

Flowers From the Holy Land

by Susan Pomerantz

Background

- My debut novel*, *Flowers From the Holy Land*, is set in 21st-century U.S., Ireland, and Italy. Chapters go back in time to turn-of-the-20th-century Ireland and Italy.
- The novel tells the story of a contemporary Irish/Italian-American woman in search of peace in her tumultuous life as she visits the lands and stories of her intrepid great-grandmothers who emigrated from Galway, Ireland, and Genoa, Italy.
- These ordinary women are in search of the extraordinary: the spirit and dreams that live within them.
- This travelogue imagines scenes that Bridget and Ellen, characters in the novel, might have lived, photographed during my own recent trip to Ireland (mid-April 2024).
- *The novel is in the hands of my agent, Mark Gottlieb, at Trident Media Group awaiting a publisher!!!



Bridget Foley Mahoney

Inis Mór and Galway, ca. 1900



Recreation of a successful farmer's house, Bunratty Castle and Folk Village

Photograph by S. Pomerantz, April 20, 2024

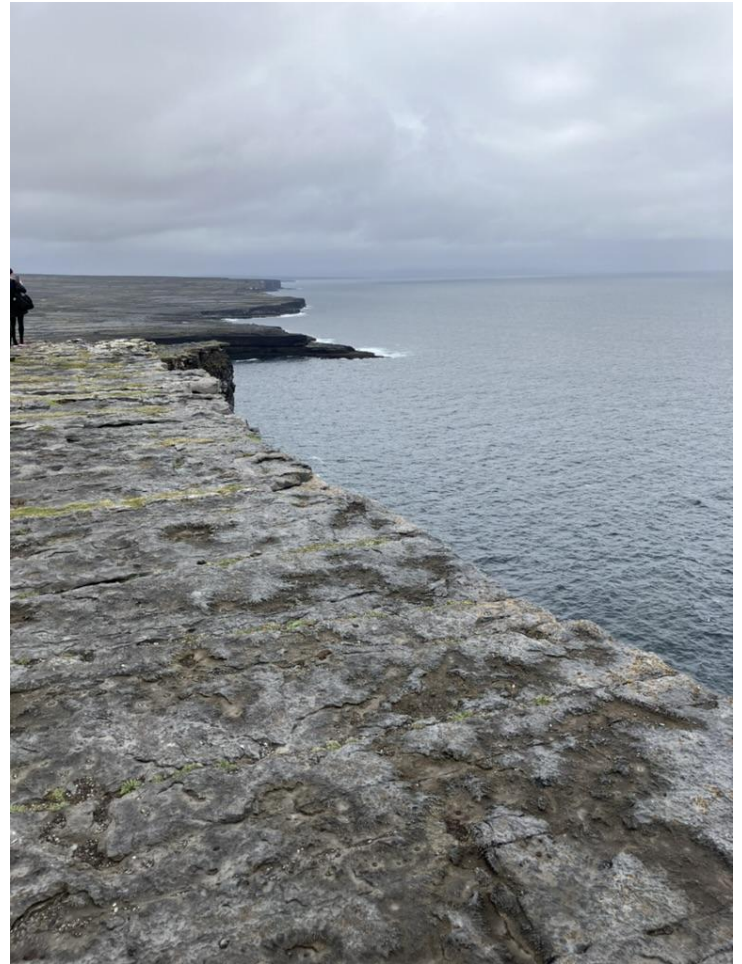
From the loft Dadai built into their tiny island cottage, prompting all kinds of wagging Islander tongues about the Foleys thinking they were too good for good enough, Bridget heard the muffled voices of her parents below. (Chapter 6)

But if she stayed, this would be it for her—the life of knitting and sewing and hauling seaweed up to fertilize the fields....Padraig, a few years older than Marty, was swept off the cliffs leaning over to catch gulls...*No! I canna' stay!* ...She'd rather sail away of her own accord than be stolen by the indifferent, tyrannical sea. Life-giver. Life-taker.

(Chapter 6)

Cliffs of Inis Mór, View from Dún Aonghasa

Photograph by S. Pomerantz, April 18, 2024



The boats and nets *would* be repaired, and Martin would carry neither a grudge nor a debt. A family had to eat, and he knew these families. His father had stood shoulder to shoulder with the fathers of these families, sharing tea around a turf hearth. (Chapter 6)

Turf Fire, Farmhouse, Bunratty Castle and Village

Photograph by S. Pomerantz, April 20, 2024



Then, there was nothing but sea and more sea off the rail. For all she knew, Bridget sailed from this salt-soaked dock on the shores of Kilronan for the last time.

(Chapter 6)



View From a Departing Aran Islands Ferry

Photograph by S. Pomerantz, April 18, 2024

Bridget moves in with Cousin Mary in Galway and meets James Mahoney in her explorations of the countryside:

James would often finish at the farm, and finish at his job at the docks getting the fish ready for market, and go find Bridget at Gilby's to help her mend nets.

(Chapter 7)

Galway Bay Docks, Galway City

Photograph by S. Pomerantz, April 18, 2024



Ellen Greene

Summer 2001



Aer Lingus jostled Ellen awake as it made its descent and released her into the din of Shannon International. ... The fifty miles of greens and browns, lovely towns, and low-hanging clouds along the M18 settled her.”(Chapter 2)



Scenes en route From Shannon Airport
Photograph by S. Pomerantz, April 20, 2024

On the short taxi ride from the bus station to Eavan and James O’Flaherty’s home, buildings and streets looked so ordinary. Ellen had been expecting what? Leprechauns and castles in downtown Galway?

(Chapter 2)



Author Posing as Ellen in Front of Eavan and James’ Home

Photograph by S. Pomerantz, April 19, 2024



Oscar Wilde/Eduard Vilde Statue, William Street, Galway

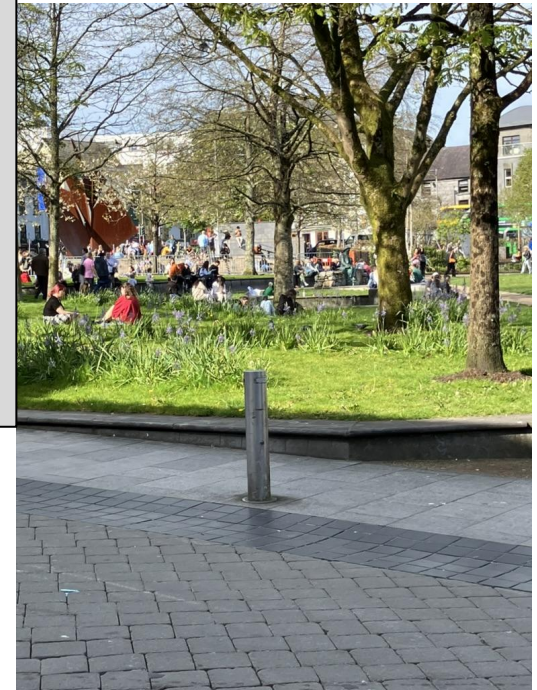
Photograph by S. Pomerantz, April 16, 2024

Famished, she stumbled upon a Café Express on her way to Eyre Square and ordered a BLT to go. She thought, too, to pick up a bag of *pain au chocolate* to bring back for Eavie and James, noticing that all she could find was French pastry...*Is there any such thing as an Irish pastry? Have they as a people denied themselves sweets out of deference to ancestors who starved to death on this soil?* (Chapter 3)

To calm a racing mind and heart, she read and re-read the plaque at the feet of the bronzed Oscar Wilde, and Simon stood back a bit, taking advantage of the chance to study her unobserved. (Chapter 3)

Eyre Square, Galway

Photograph by S. Pomerantz, April 21, 2024





Still struck by the magnificence of the Galway Cathedral, the longing for the long-gone solace of the Catholicism of her youth, she entered the pedestrian-looking Historical Society, standing low among the residential houses, and tried to reconcile the great divide between the holiness of her mission [genealogy] and the plainness of the street and community center. (Chapter 7)



Left, Galway Cathedral

Right, Galway Family History Society West, St. Joseph's Community Center

Photographs by S. Pomerantz,
April 19, 2024





They [Ellen & Eavan] peered out at the quaint village of Kilronan, spotting in large lettering on the colorful, postcard buildings, *The Bar* and *Aran Sweater Market*.

“Ah! That’s where I’ll go to get James his sweater. It was joking he thought he was, but my fantasy is to seduce a man wearing an Aran jumper, and it may as well be my husband! Less complicated that way!”

(Chapter 5)



Aran Island Ferry and Scene From Kilronan, Inis Mór

Photograph by S. Pomerantz, April 18, 2024



Ellen and Eavan inquire about a minibus tour of the island:

The server, flipping back her lovely auburn hair, nearly the color of Ellen's, and straightening her shoulders, said in practiced English, "I might be able to help. My brother runs a grand tour—he knows every inch of the island. Name is Michael Kilmartin. Here's his telephone number," she said while writing it on the back of a restaurant check. (Chapter 5)

A most awesome experience on their tour: the hike up to Dún Aonghasa, a prehistoric stone fort

Path to Dún Aonghasa

Photograph by S. Pomerantz, April 18, 2024



Ubiquitous Dry Stone Walls, Killeanny, Inis Mór

Photograph by S. Pomerantz, April 18, 2024

What Ellen & Eavan saw on their walk to meeting distant family for the first time. Mr. Burke, their B&B host, says:

“We are here at *na Mara*...Mrs. Burke made sure to tell me to show you the way to the Kilmartin place. I see you have the mark there on the map—twenty minute walk at the most.”

...

It turned out that Agnes Kilmartin must have been feeling some of the same tumult because she opened the front door, painted a brilliant and welcoming cobalt blue, before the two turned up her driveway. Ellen...burbled as she strode onto the porch, “I am Ellen Greene, and this is Eavan O’Flaherty. My great-grandmother, Bridget Foley, was your husband Liam’s great-great-aunt.”

All three women burst into laughter at this unusual calling card and threw themselves into an embrace for no reason whatsoever and for every reason in the world. (Chapter 5)



Leaving on Aran Island Ferries, Kilronan, Inis Mór

Photograph by S. Pomerantz, April 18, 2024

The Kilmartins stood softly next to one another as they watched the ferry pull away. They knew and accepted with some sadness that this would not be the last of their family to sail away. The two women waved until their arms ached and smiled until their faces quit. Eavan would be back, often, with James. And Aiden. And Bridget. Ellen vowed that she would see this sight, the image of Inis Mór receding, again, wondering if Bridget Foley at the age of seventeen made the same promise one hundred years earlier. (Chapter 5)