laid out to dry // the invention of mental illness

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laid out to dry

their irish accents lit a fire
in us shook our american
minds when they said they loved our fast talk,
the way we kissed & bit
their lips
& they told us we were brilliant

we let them take us
game, where they showed us cloudy views
from their flat, the insides
of their palms & made fun of us for wearing
flip flops; “a girl should never show an irishman her toes.”

we watered left behind lovers as we gaped at green
mountains sprinkled in little white puffs
only pausing to remember what it felt like to kiss in sligo
rain, our faces hidden beneath soaked sweaters & the glow
of yellow lamps.
the invention of mental illness

my mother always told me there was nothing wrong with me. the bees buzzing beneath my mattress were nothing more than grandfather’s snoring reverberating through the walls.

when i was six i crawled up the ladder to my mother’s loft made of pine and something sour. she said the smell was rain-soaked pillows digesting the water. i knew it was milk she kept in her closet; sometimes she mistook it for the fridge. on sundays she took me to the lake-drenched park. where the ducks & geese poked their heads into puddles that were no longer there. momma said i was better than birds

i had to stop making up things that weren’t there.