

12-1-2017

## laid out to dry // the invention of mental illness

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### Recommended Citation

Miller, Arianna (2017) "laid out to dry // the invention of mental illness," *Gandy Dancer Archives*: Vol. 6: Iss. 1, Article 16.

Available at: <https://knight scholar.geneseo.edu/gandy-dancer/vol6/iss1/16>

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ARIANNA MILLER

# 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  
home, 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.