

A tall man saw me studying Irish in the Starbucks on 9th street.  
He pulled himself into the chair next to me, to explain all of Ireland's ancient history.  
Starting in the center, calling on his ancestors,

*Bhí cúpla focal in a bhéil.  
An Chraobh Rua, agus Emain Mhaca,  
agus scéal draíochta,  
ó am na mBíobla Naofa,  
Scríobh sé stríocáilí ó thoir go thiar*

*[There were a couple words in his mouth.  
The Red Branch, and the Twins of Macha,  
And a magical story  
from the time of the Bible,  
He wrote lines from east to west]*

And his black eyes glistened like unspeaking stars.

Drawing places he's never seen but always seen...  
Friends asked me why I'd sit with a raving man like this, but I'd say,  
"You can't argue with a dream."

A frenzy of time straightened out in plain sight,  
In his scribbled maps to the center, I saw something familiar.  
He drew out my dreams in black and white, and old eyes colored them:

I've been walking alone at night through those cold and windswept fields.  
Dark green under the black skies, shadows on the hills.  
Wooden windows with flickering sills,  
A room full of candlelit kings  
Muddy roads to the center, sleeping, and I'm waking up with wings.

I can still hear their chat through the flat roof a thousand moonlit nights ago.  
I fall through the swirling portal to Emain,  
Which takes me off from the peninsula of a dream,  
Where I spend all night at the switchboard...  
Concrete canals and creek-side cottages,  
Electric light, and glowing ice to Ísafjörður  
and sunset rays to Waikiki...  
I lost my backpack in a hostel in India,  
Huddled all night under the garden sheet,  
Whispering to strangers, "Strange how the pathways followed me."

I left my backpack somewhere in the origins of the world.  
It would be difficult to retrieve it, and I needed to rest here in this cavern.  
It came to me as the rain came— with a knock on my dream door,  
About three weeks before...

The next day when I woke up a mouse had eaten through the oatmeal package and ran up and down my unfinished painting that I began a summer ago. I dreamed of my friendly ghosts and thought to paint over the unfinished lines, but the mouse ran like brushstrokes, footprints too light to mark the dusty road paved through my mind.

Besides the mouse and the landlord, I'd been living alone on the edge of an island, learning Irish in Manhattan.  
I could imagine myself flying out of the bed, the window, the sidewalks, riding the space between the skyscrapers, like skyways to Europe, where I'd take my body to my soul, to Armagh!