

# Ireland

—For Peter

*Brent Pace*

When did I find the music  
of another open-window autumn?  
I've left more vodka empties near  
the warehouse dumpster.  
I've touched girls' faces  
in somnambulistic lives  
and dried my face and hands  
on brown institution paper towels.

I breathe near your  
hand-knit sweater.  
I've smelled the world  
but am sure to forget the  
odor of some wools.  
I've slept a summer and dreamed  
an anuretic folktale. I've held  
my breath to bend and kiss  
my mother the day her mother died.

I've boxed up weeping foundation  
rocks from Bergerac when I heard you  
were dying of the virus on your island,  
let more books be ruined in another of  
my father's basement floods.

I found my soul crouched  
in a scrub oak grove and  
weighed it in the market of  
Notre Dame de Grace.

I've spoken to the shadows of  
my closet and let them bless and  
break the bread of another  
midnight stereo mass. I've  
almost let them bleed me  
on an altar of cotton. I've waded  
the currents of an empty  
canyon stream at noon  
in gym shoes and shorts.

Dry grass, dry grass, dry grass.  
I touch my ribs through sweatshirt  
pockets. I remember my writing  
of blue-womb safety that ended  
when I crossed the Dordogne, myself  
walking closest to the water. Ahead,  
dead palm fronds scratched against  
each other in the wind along the bank.