

**thirst**  
Grace Manning

there's a place  
in the gorse-choked Kerry mountains

where my uncle said  
you could drink the water

that it was better than anything  
anywhere

else

we were wild there  
scaled rocks slick with moss

fell into guinness lakes  
frothed with foam

caramel colored  
we sat

in high backed reed patches  
to rest

to watch the rain batter  
the field in front of us

but never get close enough

towhead hair left spiderweb  
strands on tree branches

clumped with fleece  
we crouched

on bristled banks and drank  
clung onto boulders

hung over waterfalls  
until our mouths hurt

novocaine numbness  
made our cheeks swell

sometimes we ate wild garlic  
or slurped

the sticky sweet  
from honeysuckle

we wouldn't see another person  
in all that big empty

under all that sky  
and those wind shorn mountains

hollows left by the ones  
who made walls

and crumbling houses seeping into land  
felt lonely

in the way that makes your lungs  
swell in your chest

a kind of loneliness  
you can spend your whole life

searching for.