

Toast in Costa Rica

By Eileen P. Kennedy

It's not the cocoa-colored stray
looking for scraps outside my casita
that brings me back to my childhood house
with its ever-hungry dog

It's a piece of toast I made
after frying an egg

I don't have a toaster so I'm making it
in the pan as my father taught me

he grew up in Westmeath
with the great appliance abyss of Irish rural life

the best bite came from my mother's brown bread
here in Costa Rica it's cornmeal

I cut it thin place it flat in the fat
still warm from the previous cooking
the surface scorched and fibrous from the butter

I open my mouth
I bite down

the crush of the hardened dough
the crunch against the teeth
the horse's bit-in-the-mouth feel of it

I close my eyes
I am back in the house I grew up in

my famished dog waiting
my brother and I ready with our plates
my mother sleeping in
my father humming softly over the stove