

FAMINE COTTAGE

My daughter pumps in the back seat,
her hand rhythmically suctioning
one breast then the other, louder

than the spring tide on the beach.
I stand outside, watching waves
crested, crashing; white fury of the full moon

lulled at noon into wide swells.
Wind whistles near my right ear
melodic as last night's

lilting phrases escaping
the sash of a window in a Dingle pub
whose name I can't recall. What will be

forever familiar are the faces
of ragged, dirty mannequins—the skinny girl
beseeching me from the rafter of the cottage;

the bodies of five bronze statues struggling
to reach the docked museum ship--
the mother's bony hand splayed

on a blanketed bundle,
each finger fierce as her eyes.
I lowered my camera.

Her wilding welded
onto my cheek, my bones,
holding us fast

in a hunger so human.
As my daughter opens
the car door, pours

scant milk onto the gravel,
her babe thousands of miles away,
my heart lets down.