

Leannán-áit, teanga-áit (love-strange, strange-tongue)

Claire Dineen

I sat with dictionaries, combing through
for what it was that I am to you.
The novice forgot to sharpen his quill here.
Even where we have

iarmhaireacht,
sclimpíní,
camhanaich,

The loneliness at cock-crow
Supernatural dancing lights in your eyes
Half light of dawn, dusk

There is still no word for the soul stitched to yours, unpicked.

Leannán-áisteach. A lover strange.

M'anam-fuaite, still.

My soul-sewn

Ach

D'anam á thointeáil, now.

Your soul torn

(Agus bíonn anam dlúth le ainm.)

(And soul is close to name)

Bíonn cruth mo bhéil, ag feannadh duit,
dlúth leis na dathanna de do chroí.

the shape of my mouth, keening you
close to the colours of your heart

This is why I come back here.

But it has been so long since I carved my lungs around this tongue.
A child running back to its mother, sobbing without sound.
How is it that I must stop and consult and check
to find the words you sent across me?

In another life, your name would've lain on my tongue

cosúil le faireog mheala.

Like a nectary, honey-gland

Sin go bhfuil tú dom.

Go raibh tú dom?

Is that even correct?

How can a woman write in a language her foremothers couldn't ache in?

How is it that you have shaken the heart out of me,

sent it flying out and running home

to a mother that will no longer hold it?

Logh dom, mo ghrá-sa, logh dom,

mar thit mé i ngrá leat

gan aimsiú na focail chun tú a chailleadh,

gan aimsiú na teanga chun filleadh air

le iníon caillte.

Forgive me, my love, forgive me

for I fell in love with you

without finding the words to lose you

without finding the language to return to

the lost daughter