

Moore Street, Dublin, June 2006

poetry by Jean Kim

It starts with a whimper—
makeshift play shops, hand painted
signs like kids selling lemonade

underscored by the brutal stench
of turnover, of unsold things—
the mishmash of ghetto ambassadors,

America crushed into an Irish kettle.
The colony unfurls like fiddleheads
new to the heady scent of fishmongers

and butchery; old world meat pies
dance alongside kielbasa and bok choy.
Storefronts flat like a Western rush town,

the only ghosts that of faded tongues
whipped into a common brogue,
“Would you like a Moroccan bazaar

Cast in the Lower East Side sans pickles?”
Overhead the sodden ruin of a parking garage
concrete and primary colors, early ‘80s ugly,

holds these ethnic dreams in check.
Taste is a 3rd generation thing after all
once you leave the mannerisms behind,

the plushness of bartering, the earnest labor,
the scrap metal pounded into euros.
It’s damp at dawn, and the market dames

shiver a bit under the red tarp
as they glare at your commerce.
Perhaps parsnip meets long bean

as they nervously chat about the Crash,
and the steaming soups ask the potatoes
how they handled all the attention before.

Will it be another Jamestown, a Roanoke even,
a doomed celebration for Miss Virginia Dare,
this cross-pollination between thieves

and lovers and capitalists and pioneers
brewed in stout, you peasant kings
who laughed when Rome and London fell,

who asked Celts to stand first, forever—
the harp, the reed, the call
for new names rising?