

Slieve Mish and Myth-Crafting the South West : A Poem

A Greek trireme out of a Tartessian port,
charting a periplus.

Mercenary Gaytholos to Egypt out of a *Danánn tuatha*-land of
Black Sea goldsmiths, Dananites.

Scythian Kurku seeking new promontories in the western sea
and the magic of new weaponry,

as gold bangled Persian in fine raiments

whispers a temple hymn to the Mindful One,

as the vengeance of *Mog Ruith* seeks Simon the Magus,

as the temple flame, eternal, flickers its reply to each breath's veil.

Gaytholos as vanquished warrior of Slieve Mish,

his princess of the Nile from white steed fallen

by a mountain stream in a purple glen.

Battle becomes legend to a 'book of invasions'.

Gaytholos *ar fán* seeks festival flames at *Dá Chioch Anú*

before ridge-crested southwards to the panorama of *Cnoc Osta*

as majestically it meets the mariner within an autumnal sunset,

as rough-lands are softened by an evening breeze caressing a
forest floor,
and a tomb-top is chosen as an altar.

Eye-line of peaked land-spear pierced into breast of the sea,
crepuscular rays of sunshine beneath clouds opening,
corridor of the imagining,
vista becomes envisioned.

Staff upright in a cup-mark of rings,
the shadow dial of Time's gearing reverses...

Philip prepares an army which Alexander will command.

Staff of a hooded wanderer in cup-mark within concentric circles,
a radial shadow calibrated,
thought or seen as day becomes night,
as season turns to season,
as celestial entities predictably align,
circle of cycle,
cycle of circle at this place of spectacle,
this place of ships, of picks and stones,
of braziers and a chorus of anvils ringing

as surveyor surveys, as readings are collected,
Ptolemy's Almagest, Ptolemy's Geographia,
from Eratosthenes four centuries before
to the wonder-door of nautical charts,
Marinus the mariner of Tyre,
Ptolemy of the Greek Library of Greek Alexandria;
co-ordinates from a navigator,
co-ordinates from a prospector and explorer,
co-ordinates for a cartographer projecting a globe,
co-ordinates for merchant seamen venturing to the isles of the
West,
Atlantic port of Greek Iberians a safe harbour,
Iverni waiting fair weather at Ivernis *aonach*
by *Inbhear Scéine* beyond *Cnoc Osta*
among the Insulae Oestymnides,
Hibernia upon the 'map' of Ptolemy.
Surya-Siddhanta
and Alexander winters in the Hindu-Kush
in the late fourth century BC...
gold staters once lost in the lands of the Iverni
and memories of Philip

as a Spring-time gale takes lift across
a West Cork sand-dune.

Platform a tablet of symbols and instruments,
low dry-stone wall, ancient,
mossy escutcheons the embalmers of ages forgotten,
fades into furze-land.

Marcálaim 'to mark out' ,

dá chloch ag marcáil na h-áite , two stones mark out this place...

gallauns, perhaps,

land - divisioning upon a plains-land, a *maighe*,

sweeping from highland defiles and ravines

to a coastal sweep of coves and a hundred isles,

muintir Cnoc Osta in a land of tombs and circles,

myth-crafting the slow end of an age of bronze.

Antikythera, Euclidian, Pythagorean, Archimedean

predicting the cosmic calendar to measuring Gaia.

Metonic, Sidereal, Axial Precessional...capturing the motions

making them hand-held...

Ismail Al-Jazari and the Book of Knowledge of Ingenious Mechanical Devices

clock hinging of gear wheels as an automaton comes to life.

A Golden Age preserves the legacy of Greece,

a Greek sunset as an Arab dhow

is silhouetted against the rising dawn of a new day.

Scroll halls where scholars theorise,

the geometry of charts and the quest for the west...

A language of the Egyptian mathematician,

Hermes as Tri-Magus seeking to predict

the unencoded, the new, the yet-to-be-seen,

distance gazing, geometry of the pyramids to geometry of the sails,

geometry of sea coasts to geometry of lands

wrestled from beneath Nature's embracing canopy.

Footfall among the scroll halls,

librarian as knowledge custodian,

as keeper of the knowledge store,

as curator of intellectual heritage,

as scholar voice among the discourses of scholars,

as gate-keeper of memory.

'Little oak wood of the stones'...

but why emphasise the 'stones'...

happenstance or something other?

Permanency of stone markings,

time fixed positions,

time fixed referencing,

time fixed accuracy,

but the axis of rising slowly changes,

almost imperceptibly as horizons no longer align,

as knowing becomes lost,

as deviations are no longer understood,

as time embedded awareness becomes lost,

as faces change with the generations,

as only ghosts come returning

again and again to measure

and interpret the cycles,

to predict and philosophise.

Tombs as perennial chorus of ancestral voice-ings,
one by one *cloch-le-carn*,
a community processional in its motions,
commemorates its warrior dead on hill top, on ridge-crest
...sky-blue merges into sea blue as seasons become ages slipping
away,
becoming days of remembrances long past.
Old stones awaiting a knowing, a time to speak again,
once more tales awaiting to be re-told by a speaker from a Roman
eyrie...
Said the mariner, as the echo shock of a bow wave receded in the
wake of a surge of the sea,
'how many leagues northward might it be,
from a beacon *túr* of the *sacrum promunturium*,
upon the lands of the Oestriminis,
to a Mizen coast beacon at Cnoc Osta,
once known to those of Greece,
the *Insulae Oestymnides?*','
a once-upon-a-time legacy of sailing
each to each.

[*Dá chloch ag marcáil na h-áite*see Marcálim in Rev. Fr.

Dinneen's dictionary of the Irish language].