

## 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...the hammered tempo of the  
*Gobán Saor*...

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.

*Marcálim* '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*,

elsewhere hides draped across

the spine-lands of *Cnoic na Seithe*,

in Carthage once upon a time

a story of Dido was told.

Beara rises monumentally  
from the bottom lands of the sea,  
*Cnoc Daod* a beacon calling  
the call of *Cártach*'s stag,  
heard by navigators tacking their sails,  
past many a perilous jagged crag.  
Land-strips perceived,  
cloud-shadows in floating motion cast,  
the harvest awaits beneath an evening sunset  
of orange amber glow,  
it silhouettes a peninsula like a rising ship's mast.  
Knit-workings of old stone rows,  
the twilight motions of calloused hands  
forever re-enacting what the gods  
nocturnally unfold,  
as sundown comes  
slowly swept across highland defiles and ravines,  
as upon a coastal sweep of coves,  
cabin lights arise,  
like the speckling of starlight  
upon a one hundred isles.

*Muintir Cnoc Osta* in a land of tombs and circles,  
myth-crafting the slow end of an age of bronze.

Antikythera, Euclidean, 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.

Romani traders out of Britannia wharf-sided for taxing,  
sheltering from the grasp of a storm-front breaking at *Dún*  
*Cearmna*...ship wrecked by *Cúirt Mhic Shéafraidh* a warning...a  
dense distribution of ogham inscribed memorials in a wide sweep  
of hinterland...the flourish of a stylus across a wax tablet, a  
counting cypher becomes a script ...merchandise and cargo cults

infused into the territory, *Roinn Romhánach*, ...and a king  
becomes a Christian.

Green deserts remember sand deserts  
and scroll halls where scholars theorise  
beneath floral capitals in a forest of pillars...  
the geometry of charts and the quest for the west...  
A language of the Egyptian mathematician,  
Hermes as Trismegistus, tri-magus, tri-magi, seeking to predict  
the unencoded, the new, the yet-to-be-seen,  
distance gazing, sky geometry,  
geometry of the pyramids to geometry of the sails,  
geometry of sea coasts to geometry of lands  
wrestled from beneath Nature's embracing canopy.

Poet as architect of meanings,  
ponders the ambient rather than the whiskey of a word  
amidst a 'foaming billows roar',  
the ending of an ancient wisdom of the divine,  
images forming and dissolving in the transience of

puff-balled clouds

where Tibet finds residence in a 'dysart' a *díseart*,

tears of knowing and life passaging,

remembrance in the cupped hands of an animist...

reawakens the spirit,

Aum recited by slate rock faces,

breath motion stillness performed in the rhythm of its flow...

and rags at a *Cilleen* tree and stone circle as cell of transition...

to delve once more upon the cycles of the spirals...

blending...

awaiting becoming once more.

Gullible Gulliver in a land of travailles and sorrows

near where Anu rests,

the Dean dreaming...Carberiae Rupes...beyond

by Iveragh embattled Anu fallen

upon the bedding sands of the

sea...

'making the land' said the old man

by the stone circle half-fallen,

by Brow Head,

by a sacred promontory...

upon the Mizen.

Anu by Iveragh,

Iveragh by the sea

and a Maori fisherman far away told a tale

about once upon a time and the making of the land...

and yet the she of he or he of she,

still procreates that which still proclaims...

people of her gentility,

of motherhood and life upon the land...

people-mind of the *currach* men...

and those of elder times long before.

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.

Master of his own genius...polymath...

Kallimachos by the sepia light of a midnight lantern...  
but then the ruin of the groves of academe  
while at *Doire na Sagart*  
a druid remained  
as last man standing...  
and a blanched-handed *sagart* performed  
a bead-led penance  
in a rock-cut cell at Kilcrohane  
to the knell of a shepherd's bell.

***'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.

Personhood as self-hood buried in a ‘cave’ at Knockane  
in the lands of the *Uí Mhic Coille*,  
person-hood as identity among peers abroad,  
person-hood as costume of the artefacts of memories,  
as curios of a life lived.

Person-hood as memory,  
mind as the synaptic repository of memory,  
its imagery, its enactment of understanding.  
Mind as the recurring enactment of memory,  
as un-folder of being.

Person-hood as mind-shaped by a life lived,  
person-hood as a life created,

enacted mentefact to artefact,

stories told, retold, untold,

retrospective narratives

of how histories should or should not have been,

lost knowing unearthed from within a stratigraphy of eras...

The search for a historiography of silenced knowings.

The 'once known' silenced, sword-bladed across the arris of an

ogham stone, overlooking a wind swept rock strewn cove in

Iveragh...

sea erosion the erosion of social landscape,

the erosion of collective memories...

last man standing

beside the door of a *bothán faoi talaimh*,

hooded, droplets upon a rain drizzled face beneath the cowl,

gazing into the sea at Galley Head,

'Woodland place of the Pilgrim'...

coins of King Aethelstan forgotten underground,

and the sand-beach of the long-ships beyond the monastery,

captives once taken from there it might be,

as storm clouds darken,

as time passes...

*Anú* beside him hooded beneath a Munster cloak.

*Clíodhna* subsumed beneath the flourish of an author's pen,

a faerie queene,

landscape becomes seascape,

promontory becomes island

as memory becomes legend.

In the end only the echoes whistling in the voices of the wild wind

continue to remember,

speaking to those who wish to hear,

in a language of the heart to the inner chambers of the ear,

*An Gaeilge* in the wail of a chanter's lament

the slow breathing of an *uilleann* piper's tears...

until once again a candle light flickers on the Fastnet...

as the ghostly pirate sloops of the Gael of Baltimore 'come rolling

home'...

and a smuggler's tale at Leamcon from a cave to a ship's hull...

and the strangeness of moonlight upon a night spent on the

Skellig...

tales of heritage seekers on Beara...

and the remembering of another year of the 'Pirate Round' ...

and of when Carthage subsumed Tangiers many centuries before...

and of when the Freedom of the City of Cork  
was presented to the embassy of an Ottoman sultan...tongues of  
the waves speak of the legacies of times yore...  
*Eterscéil* upon the crest of a roaring wave forever more.

*An Gaeilge* enmeshed in a Northman's brain,  
Rerir on campaign,  
perhaps a Volsungs saga within,  
Rerir's Rinn contracted to Rerrin, perhaps...  
Rerrin across the ridge, Lonehort's kin,  
East from the *cluian* of the lands of the *cill*,  
Where *Suileabháin* remembers the one-eyed Odin.  
Dragon boats by Beara, in *Ciarraige Luachra*  
slaves wrenched from underground,  
for a colony of Icelanders bound,  
to a splash of oars at Dursey Sound.

'Iverni' remarked a Phoenician sailor out of Alexandria bound,  
speaking of the peoples of the *Corcú Laoidhe*,  
when Beara's Hag, on a sunny day,  
stood sentinel for an outland

beyond Biscay Bay.

A silence settles,  
stillness descends,  
sea mist to bog mist  
meshed at a moist cliff-face,  
entropy dissipated,  
age becomes distilled to agelessness,  
mist becomes myth.

[ *Dá chloch ag marcáil na h-áite* ....see *Marcálim* in Rev. Fr.  
Dinneen's dictionary of the Irish language].



Mindful. Carved slab beside Kilteskin (cell of the marsh / house of  
the marsh, or hermitage / leprosarium run by a community of six

persons...seisiur ceann?) a Holy Well in proximity to a ruined medieval church (Imokilly, East Cork).