

## Myth-Crafting the South West



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 victor,  
but heart 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'.  
From *Slieve Mish* a tapestry unfurls to the sea ...  
as does a coastline of stories,  
stretching eastwards  
to the the lands of the *Déise*.

Gaytholos *ar fán* seeks festival flames at *Dá Chích Anann*  
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.

A gnomon to shadow-cast the height of the sun

at the noon of a summer solstice...

a station of Pytheas, perhaps,

to Hipparchus of Nicaea,

Geminus of Rhodes star-gazing...

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.  
In Hibernia, a pleasant island found,  
some to spend their winters there

sheltering underground.

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*,

elsewhere hides draped across

the spine-lands of *Cnoic na Seithe*,

in Carthage once upon a time a story of Dido was told.

Baal Hammon of Carthage elevated,  
upon a scaffolding as throne,  
as the Puck, the Buck, the Ram...  
with a nod to Father Prout of Cork,  
to Father Joaquin Lorenzo Villanueva  
...and to the Phoenicians of O'Brien...  
scholarly quests, learned societies to popular ones,  
after a time of Napoleon among the pyramids...as antiquarianism  
blossoms into the 19th century...stirrings along the pavements of  
the city of Cork...as tourist trails open to the west.

*Beara* rises monumentally  
from the bottom lands of the sea,  
*Cnoc Daod*, Daoud's Goliath perhaps,  
from a beacon calling  
the call of *MacCárthaigh's* highland 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.

*Roinn Romhánach*,

a SATOR in a House Church

beneath a garrisoned banner of Romani

...a missive for a bishop bound...

Assembly of the faerie isle

at the rock of *Clíodhna*



by *Maighe Ealla*,

the land of the river plain of the swan...

a conference of the wise at a rookery.

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 *Cillín* 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 *Anú*, *Annan*, rests,  
the Dean dreaming...Carberiae Rupes...beyond  
by Iveragh embattled *Anú* 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.

*Anú* 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...  
stilled now, doors to the soul closed now,  
identity dissolved to non-entity,  
all now stepped across a threshold to forgotten-ness,  
enclosed now,  
entombed in silence...  
spirit breath speckled across starlight...  
shadow walker...  
amber-beaded, gold-crowned,  
breast-plated, cloaked,  
walking toward an afterlife awaited,  
into a paradigm forever unseen...  
bones to dust now

but the liquid of the gold still flows somewhere...

Knockane, a minor hill, a *Cnocán*

or a *Cnoc* of *Áine*,

a *Cnocán* of *Áine*, *Áine* of *Cnoc Áine*,

consort of the bent-backed, the *crompán*, *Crom Dubh*

the sheaves-carrier at the harvest time of *Lughaidh Lámhfhada*,

*Áine* who once sat, garlanded, on the brow of a ridge,

*Áine* of that ancient *aonach* of Knockaney...

she, once so ubiquitously named perhaps,

but also here in the lands of the *Uí Mhic Coille*...

lands where a menhir of *Lughaidh* once stood by *Lurrig*,

*Lughaidh ríoga*, by *Carraig an Crompán*

by where *Colmán* once leaped

from the *túr* of his *cluain*

to instate a new faith... where *Crom* once fed the multitudes and

souls were brought to heaven.

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 where Molaga’s charioteer rested,  
the healing apple of the heart retrieved from the *Abha Mór* of *Móire*  
beside a *farsid* along the way of the *Cliadh Dubh*...

*Flanaid* with her father, a *Fir Maighe* king,  
awaits at *Cluain Dá Lann* ...

beneath the land a hermit prays for the new religion  
at *Carraig na gCrochairí*, rock of the crosses,  
beneath the tail-land of the settlement  
at the promontory of the *Carn of Tierna*.

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 by the flame-light of a hearth-place an old man's remembering  
of another year of the 'Pirate Round'...

and a fireside tale of when Carthage subsumed Tangiers many  
centuries before...

and a ship-man's tale of when the Freedom of the City of Cork

was presented to the embassy of an Ottoman sultan...upon the  
midnight shore tongues of the waves speak of the legacies of times  
yore...*Eterscé!* upon the crest of a roaring wave forever more.

Captain Myagh *MacCárthaigh* a 'pyrate' of the Round,  
from Barbary returned, to *An Cruachán* 'booty laden',  
the yarn of a shanty sung upon the breeze...

sails slackening ...

and in the east a yarn of *Donal Spáinneach of Dubh Clann*

*MacCárthaigh* once told at a *bothán* fireside at *Carraig na bhFear*...

in ragged rain drifts a shadow play of dark silhouettes ...a culture in  
decline as homelands are abandoned...

...down a cliff-face of rock-cut steps by moonlight the lantern-  
holder goes as a storm wind blows,

and the black shadow of a sail-less sloop lies beyond the cove...

'*torann na dtonn*' forever reverberating...abandoning, seeking help

from beyond the sea... as when a fugitive sought help from a

warlord of Rome... as when *Diarmaid Mac Murchadha* slipped

away below the horizon of a moon-silvered sea...

where once a dragon ship of Oda once sheltered

by the leeward coastline of a *Poill Mór*...not far from

where Desmond's old countess...as Raleigh once said of her...  
slipped unto the ending of her days.

*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 *cluain* 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' (*Uíbh Ierne*) remarked a Carthaginian 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...

beside her *Bríd* washing the dirty fleece.

A chieftain prince kneeling

as a drizzle of soft rain moistens a mossy headland,

he receives a kingship as a crown of laurel leaves,

a nod to an ancient thalassocracy,

at *Corca Duibhne* the Cybele at *Ceann Sibéal*,

by the Three Sisters,

spoke of Hy Brazil and of *Tír na nÓg*,

as a coastal wind whistled to the haunting lilt of a faery dance

across the horse-waves,

in the drooped eye-lids and distant gaze of a fiddle player...

in a reverie, in a trance, in the gloaming self-realising...

a seaman's tale about a paradise beyond the Western Sea...

*An dríocht mar an Duende i gcroí an Spáinneach...*

*an scáth san ceo,*

*ceo an cnoc...*

*ceo mara* seared by the scream of a gannet's roar...

hovering, slipping down the wind shear, circling,

high above *Na Scealaga*.

The Argo coasting beside the Mizen,  
the Argonautica of Apollonius  
penned at Alexandria's Great Library.  
Emergent from a myth,  
white horse-waves rampant,  
hard-harnessed breast-straps strain,  
held fast as fist-clenched reins retain the furies,  
Poseidon's chariot assails  
many an aspiring migrant's ship  
eastward of *Inis Dairbre*...  
a calf island and a forest of oak,  
*Mog Ruith* at the oak of assembly  
beneath the speckled milk of  
*Bealach an Bó Finne*.  
As at a headland cove  
a tidal clustering of wreckage  
shunted to and fro,  
across the ebb and flow  
of a pebbled beach.

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.

Deep in the shadow-held *uaigneas* of the land,  
a lingering, those place-namings  
in the fluidity of their Gaelic sounds,  
token memories of gods  
and of a forgotten homeland they do abound,  
through times to come they will continue to resound,  
a lacework across the topography of a place,  
sometime newly colonised, sometime newly found.

Long silent in its dreaming,  
it may remain  
in some random thoughts as just a trace,  
until a scholar awakens  
a new understanding of what awaits

in the unsaid majesty of this haunting place.

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



1. **Mindful.** Carved stone slab beside Kilteskin ( *cill teach seiscinn* meaning cell of the marsh / house of the marsh, or meaning monastic house / hermitage / leprosarium (?) run by a community of six persons...*seisiúr ceann?*) at a time before Cork Harbour came to be in the 9th century AD or a creek was converted into a marshy lakeland in the 18th century. The stone is beside a Holy



Well in proximity to a ruined medieval church and laneway (Imokilly, East Cork).

2. For Myagh *MacCárthaigh* and other piratical *MacCárthaigh* stories see Carroll, Michael J. (2007) *Irish Pirates and Privateers.*

*'The Brethren of the Sea'* . (Michael J. Carroll, Bantry).

3. 'Freedom of the city of Cork to the embassy of an Ottoman sultan'...see Dr. Richard Caulfield (1876) *Council Book of the Corporation of the City of Cork from 1609 to 1643 and from 1690 to 1800.* J. Billings and Sons, Surrey.