

Navigator

Gareth Alun Roberts

Call me thud-fisted:
a night-handly spoiler
blading great globs of ache
from my shoulder to the sky. I

am an engineer of the straight lines,
precedent of busy streams,
my unravelled sinew
connecting perfidy to itself.

O! my sweet turlough:
I stole your cool waters
for a beat and a wing
to where the sun doesn't set.

For a chance and a scrape
at something more than your scraggy karst
I cast the earl of myself
into these channels:

channels of dirt.
In my hands it is dirt,
at my back the shove and alien budge,
alien tongues tonguing words I know too well.

I share my cups with the puddle men,
making ourselves a construct of form
and language, the blood-strained vein
singing the distant voices:

they have earned their cups
as tall as the sky
and the brassy knuckle
like a tug at your eye when the moon is alright.

My cups are more sluice than river,
more weir than the bright babble
that falls from Benbulbin.
Will I bide again your green shoulders?

Can I unlearn the knot
of my once-beaten heart,
the whorled lines
cut into stone? There

was the brood of skies,
the hooded riders skirting towers
emptied of all their thaumaturgy
except one candle and the all of the stars.

The nights I spent there
on its crippled step
until the heron-morn dripped its beak
and the vast silence.

If you could think me a swan
I would thank you for it:
a better creature of the whistling reed
beneath Irish Hill –

here now a nest, a net if you like
to catch up my heart and thew
'til even the stars
all bleary with mine eyes.

Un-navigate me
to the last living tree at the stop of the barren;
cut my small mark through its bark
and into the sap-wood.