

## 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.