

LECTURE # 8
DIVINATION: OGHAMS

Ogham is only one of several keys into the world of folklore and magic, albiet the most important one, but it is necessary to look briefly at a few of the other methods that the Druids used as a symbolic language in order to open the door on a parallel world of knjowledge, meanings and associations.

In order to tap into this reservoir of knowledge the symbolism is necessary so that the subconscious, the group mind, the accumulated experience of human existence with all that implies, will be understandable. It must become intuitive to the person using it.

Thus here is a brief description of other methods of reading reality.

TAGHHAIRM: The seer was wrapped in a bull's hide, fell into a trance and by various extreme methods, such as the impaling of cats, forced spirits to come to his aid.

IMBAS-FOROSNAI: This is the trance, created by eating the flesh of a white bull ritually slaughtered at the winter solstice. The ser would be chanted to while he slept.

OMENS FROM ANIMAL AND BIRD MOVEMENTS: With the mind in the correct state of trance, or hypnotic part-sleep, it was, and still is, common for omens to be seen in the flight of birds, expecially the wren, raven and crane. Eagles were commonly observed in Wales. The hare was often seen as a Celtic phoenix since it was the last to flee the burning stubble when the final sheaf was cut at harvest.

Its path was closely observed and predictions made. Boudicca held a hare close to her heart and then released it and observed its run for some hidden message that would assist here in her fight against the roman invaders.

SACRED FIRES: These were lit and observed for the vertical shape of the smoke and the formation of smoke clouds.

SCAPULIMANCY: This is the divination from shoulder blades. It involved the observation of the flat surface of the cleaned shoulder blade, with a system of dividing up the surface into separate zones, and of predicting egvenyts from the results.

COELBRENI: The omen sticks. the sticks were cut with ogham letters, cast on to the ground and predictions made from the way they fell.

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THE SWIMMING OF NAMES: The casting of names and letters written on paper or birch bark (the celtic equivalent of papyrus) upon a bowl of water. Those that sank were unlucky; those that floated lucky.

St Patrick in the fifth century, used this method in one of his infamous trials of strength against the druids in Eire--books were thrown into the sea and those that floated were supposed to be superior. The druids books sank and St. Patrick's floated, which goes to prove that the druid's were weightier.

TALISMANIC OBJECTS: This technique involved the use of stones and the Druid's egg. Lucky stones were cast into the water, which then developed healing powers, mainly for cattle, upon which wealth and success depended.

The Druid's egg was considered such a potent symbol of good luck that one roman knight was put to death for wearing one during the conduct of a law suit. It was thought that he was taking an unfair advantage over his opponent.

These divination methods and practices show that it was, and still is, common to regard the world around us as a magical place. Objects within it may be observed in special conditions and in a special state of mind and help the observer gain an insight into whatever problems are causing concern. The conditions have to be correct, and the situation always similar so that previous experience may apply.

It was also important to perform these rituals at the special times of the year, when divine forces were more readily accessible. These times included the four fire festivals, the solstices and equinoxes. These times marked highlights in the farmers year--ploughing, sowing, growing and harvesting--when the auguries would be particularly potent, since the well-being of the tribe depended on a good crop and the preservation of sufficient meat to carry all thru the hard winter months.

~~DIVINATION TREES~~

Bodhran Divination

Before getting into the main form of Divination that we know of, The Oghams, I want to mention the Bodhran drum which is used for magic, chant and divination. As with the native American peoples, the Celts used drumming to create moods and to use for dancing. We don't know all the musical instruments they had, but the Bodhran drum was one, along with the lyre or harp.

Using the drum for divination is interesting and involves a wooden frame covered with animal skin (in my case goat skin). The drum frame is painted and nine directional indicators were marked on the skin. When used for divination the drum is held flat on one hand and between nine and 21 seeds (thorn apple) were dropped onto the skin.

The skin is gently tapped with a prepared ritual hammer, causing the seeds to scatter on the surface. The answer to a question is determined by the relationship of the seeds to the directional indicators.

- It is preferable to use the drum out of doors in a spot where you won't be disturbed, under a tree is perfect. Once your question is clear in your mind, take the seeds in your right hand and drop them onto the drum (held in your left hand) from a height of about 6". If some fall off, don't worry.
- Take three deep breaths, ask your question out loud, and then tap the center of the drum firmly with your hammer or drumstick. the seeds will bounce in the air and resettle. Make sure you keep the drum as motionless as possible.

If at least three of the seeds land between the four main indicators, the outcome is deemed favorable. If at least two seeds finish between the top indicator and the middle one, the outcome is said to be excellent for a woman. Likewise, if two end between the middle indicator and the bottom one, the outcome is said to bode well for a man. However, if most of the seeds end up outside the main lines, the outcome is said to be unfavorable.

~~DIVINATION TREES~~

Bodhran Drum (cont.)

ST. PATRICK'S DRUM: St. Patrick is reputed to have used a drum to eliminate the snakes from Ireland. When he visited different parts of the country he would announce his presence by beating a drum. He told everyone that he would use this drum to get rid of all the snakes.

He climbed Croagh Patrick, a mountain later named after him, beating his drum as he went. Unfortunately, he beat the drum so hard that it burst. A black snake appeared and seemed to laugh as it slithered down the hillside. Many felt that Patrick had promised more than he could deliver.

However, an angel suddenly appeared and touched the drum, causing it to become whole again. St. Patrick started beating it again and all the snakes disappeared, never to return.

DRUID STICKS

Druid sticks are four oblong pieces of wood with a single mark on one side and two marks on the other. When they are cast, or gently thrown they create one of sixteen possible combinations depending on which side of each stick lands uppermost.

The sticks are then brought together to create a figure that can then be interpreted. They are read from the casters point of view, with the stick nearest being the bottom stick of the arrangement

The origin of Druid sticks is not known, but they are reasonably modern, but date back to medieval times when they were given latin names which they still use today. As well as being convenient to carry, they are a much simpler, more elegant way of casting the geomantic characters. These are much like the I Ching of China, tho there are only 16 possible combinations with them instead of 64.

Despite their name, it is dubious that the Druids used geomancy in this form. These are easily made, usually from wood tho not necessarily. They can be quite small and up to about 6 inches long.

CASTING: One holds the sticks in one and mixes them and then tosses them on a casting cloth, moving from the front of the cloth to the back. The tossing is virtually a spreading out of the sticks. once on the cloth, the hand then smooths them out. The tossing and spreading are almost a single movement.

It takes awhile to get the knack of allowing the individual sticks to fall away from the hand while also covering the sticks so they cannot be seen until combined to form a pattern.

* * * * *



Via—The Way



This combination is formed if all four sticks have one line on them, forming a road or path.² This indicates a journey, action, or forward movement. It can also indicate time spent by oneself. Via is related to the moon, water, and the sign of Cancer. The tarot cards most applicable to it are the Chariot and Strength.

As Via is Latin for "street or way," this figure indicates travel. It can also mean the opening of a doorway, such as being exposed to new ideas. Via is an indication that the person has found the right direction and knows where he or she is going. The influence of the moon and Water shows that considerable empathy and understanding is present, and the person has the necessary skill to tactfully get his or her own way. The obstacles that appear from time to time will all be overcome.



Caput Draconis—The Dragon's Head

The Dragon's Head is formed when the top stick shows two lines and the lower three sticks show one line each. This can be construed as the snout of the dragon's head. It traditionally means an entrance or beginning. It is a fortuitous formation because it also indicates shrewdness and alertness.

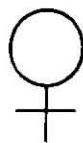


Caput Draconis relates to Jupiter, earth, the moon's north node, and the sign of Capricorn. The tarot cards are the Star and the Fool.

Caput Draconis is representative of the moon's north node. The nodes indicate the two positions where the moon's path crosses the ecliptic. The north node occurs when the moon ascends from the southern to the northern hemisphere. Caput Draconis is often referred to as the dragon's head, because whenever an eclipse occurs, the dragon moon appears to swallow the sun.

Caput Draconis is a positive figure indicating new starts, birth and innocence. It is an indication of helping others, but remaining aware of one's own needs at the same time. The person has complete faith in what he or she is doing and is "marching to the beat of a different drum."





Puella—The Girl

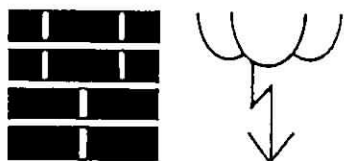


This formation of the sticks relates to wisdom, intuition, birth, and healing—all traditionally feminine qualities. The sticks show a circle with a line below it, representing the female.

Puella relates to Venus, air, and the sign of Libra. The tarot card is the High Priestess.

Puella means a young girl.

It generally relates to pleasant dealings with women and is a good indication of happy family relationships. For a man, it describes his relationship with his wife and daughters. For a woman, it relates to pleasant, harmonious dealings with the other women in her family: mother, mother-in-law, and daughters. It also relates to the traditional feminine qualities of nurturing, wisdom, and intuition. It is not always a positive figure. An attractive woman is not necessarily a good person.



Fortuna Major—Major Fortune

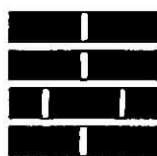
As you can imagine, Fortuna Major means success, friends, harmony, and celebration. It consists of two rows of two lines each, representing the heavens, above two rows of one line each, indicating success coming down from above.

Fortuna Major is related to the sun, fire, and Leo. It relates to the tarot card Justice.



Fortuna Major is a very positive figure indicating great fortune, success, and protection. It relates very much to karma—the good that has been done in the past allows the person to enjoy good luck, success, and peace of mind in the future. It can also relate to property and possessions. It is an indication that the person is liked and held in high esteem by others.





Puer—The Boy



This formation of the sticks depicts the traditional masculine attributes of physical activity, leadership, initiative, and responsibility. Nowadays, people may not like the idea of masculine and feminine activities being so rigidly defined, but it was a very natural way of deciding things thousands of years ago. The formation of

a circle below, with a line above it, represent the male.

Puer relates to Mars, fire, and the sign of Aries. The tarot card is the Magician.

Puer is a positive symbol rather than a negative one, even though it can sometimes indicate rash, impulsive behavior. Traditionally, it was regarded as being positive in war and love but negative in everything else. It usually is indicative of a young man, which could be a son, boyfriend, husband, or bachelor. This person has a great deal of ability, which needs to be harnessed and used correctly. It is an indication to think before acting. Used positively, it is an indication of leadership ability, initiative, and the ability to achieve anything that is desired. All things are possible.



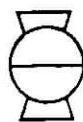
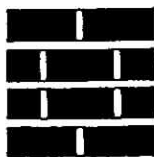
Acquisitio—Gain

This formation of the sticks can be looked at as being two full bowls. It represents prosperity, promotion, improvement, and worldly success.

Acquisitio is related to Jupiter, fire, and the sign of Sagittarius. The tarot card is the Sun.

Acquisitio means "acquiring," particularly in regard to money and possessions. Consequently, this figure relates to success, good fortune, and financial gain. It is a very positive figure. It shows that the trials and travails of the past are now behind the person. He or she has learned from experience and is now on a new cycle of experience. Ideally, this worldly success will give the person the necessary freedom to develop spiritually and intuitively. He or she will enjoy the material rewards and at the same time become aware of philosophy and some of the simple things in life.





Carcer—The Prison



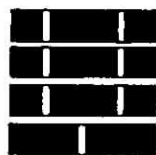
This formation shows the two bowls being held together, confining whatever is inside. It means obstacles, worry, and indecision.

Carcer relates to Saturn, the earth, and Capricorn. The tarot cards are the Devil and the Hanged Man.

Carcer is a negative figure. Because Carcer literally means

"a prison," this is a sign of confinement, limitations, and restrictions.

When Carcer appears, the person has to pay particular attention to emotions such as greed, anger, and jealousy. The person has to accept the situation as it is, accept the reversals, and try to remain positive despite periods of doubt and uncertainty.



Tristitia—The Sadness

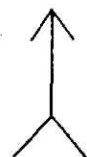
This time the rune sticks form an upside-down rainbow, indicating disappointment, sorrow, loneliness, and unhappiness.

Tristitia is related to Saturn, air, and the sign of Aquarius. The tarot card is the Tower.

Tristitia means "melancholy" in Latin. It is an indication of grief, sadness, and the possibility of a major loss.

These things are likely to happen unexpectedly, and the person will have to cope with the loss or destruction of something that has been carefully built up. The immediate reaction will be to hit out in all directions and blame everyone else. In time, the person will have to learn to be unselfish, charitable, and forgiving.





Cauda Draconis—The Dragon's Tail

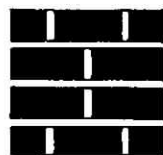


The druid sticks form the dragon's tail, meaning the end. It signifies a downward path, an exit, bad luck and ill fortune.

Cauda Draconis relates to the moon's south node, fire, and Scorpio. The tarot cards are Death and Judgment.

Cauda Draconis is a negative figure meaning death, endings, and terminations. Traditionally, it has always been regarded as evil and relates to the negative characteristics of Scorpio.

When Cauda Draconis appears in the chart, the person has to be prepared to walk away from the past and start anew. There will be a great deal of hurt and bitterness, but the person will have to gracefully let go without looking back. He or she will learn a great deal from the experience, and will have to accept that he or she is reaping the rewards of past actions. Cauda Draconis signifies endings, but also portends a new beginning.



Conjunctio—The Union

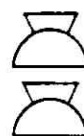
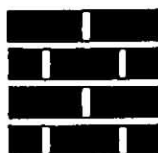
This formation can be interpreted as a cross, indicating two people joined together. It represents love, friendship, partnership, and sexual attraction.

Conjunctio is related to Mercury, earth, and the sign of Virgo. The tarot card is the Lovers.



Conjunctio is a fortunate figure indicating a combining, or joining together. Marriage is a good example of this, though it can also indicate relationships of all sorts. The person will have to think carefully about what he or she wants before making any important decisions. These decisions will have to be made using logic as well as the emotions. The person will have to be responsible and ensure that the union is beneficial for both parties.





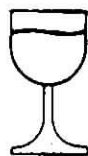
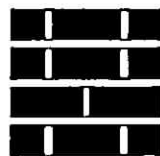
Amissio—The Loss



The druid sticks indicate two upside-down bowls, representing loss, illness, accidents, conflict, and financial difficulties.

Amissio relates to Venus, earth, and the sign of Taurus. The tarot card is the Moon.

Amissio means "loss" and, despite being related to Venus, is a negative figure. It relates to loss, usually of money, but sometimes of love. It indicates a negative outcome to whatever it is the person is involved in. The person will have to be aware of other people's motives and be extremely careful before making decisions. It is a warning to make sure that everything the person does is in everyone's best interest. If he or she tries to take advantage of others, it will assuredly end in failure.

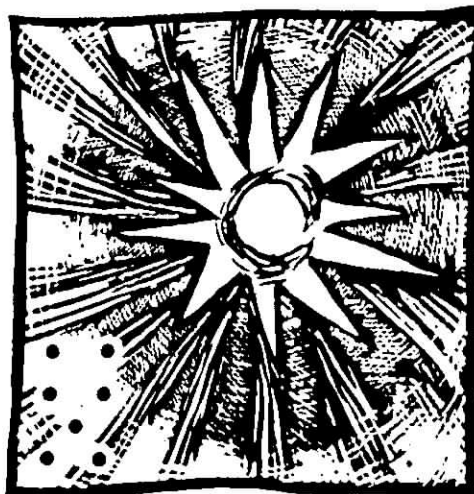


Albeo—The White

The druid sticks picture a full wine glass signifying wisdom, moderation, thoughtfulness, and patience.

Albeo is related to Mercury, air, and Gemini. The tarot cards are Temperance and the Hierophant.

Albeo means contemplation, wisdom, and moderation. It is a fortunate figure, though not as positive as Conjunctio, the other figure governed by Mercury. It can often indicate spiritual growth and the ability to balance all areas of life: physical, mental, and spiritual.





Fortuna Minor—The Minor Fortune

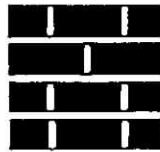


This can be represented as good luck coming from the earth. The figure is formed by two rows of two lines each below two rows of one line each, indicating success coming from the earth. It indicates success, power, possessions, and influence.

Fortuna Minor is, like Fortuna Major, related to the sun, fire, and Leo. However, Fortuna Major is related to the sun during the day, while Fortuna Minor is the sun at night, "placed in lesser dignities." The tarot card represented by it is the Wheel of Fortune.

Fortuna Minor is an indication of lesser success. It shows the person is protected from misfortune and will grow from each experience until success is attained. The person must be prepared to work hard when necessary, but also be willing to slow down, relax, and listen to the quiet voice within from time to time.

Bartholomew of Parma regarded Fortuna Minor as being a negative figure. This is probably because it is ruled by the sun at night, and the person could be inclined to adopt some of the negative qualities of Leo. These would include pride, boastfulness, love of luxury, and the need for constant adulation.



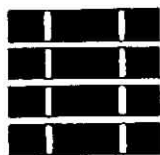
Rubeo—The Red

The druid sticks indicate an upside-down wine glass, representing emptiness. This formation indicates caution and retreat. Because it is red, it is also an indication of passion and temper.

Rubeo is ruled by Mars, water, and the sign of Scorpio. The tarot card is the Hermit.

Rubeo is a negative figure and can indicate passion, negativity, and upheaval. The person needs time for quiet contemplation, to think things through and decide where to go from here. It is a sign of retreat, almost a licking of the wounds, and a gradual awareness that the problems are probably of his or her own making. If the person is prepared to listen to his or her inner self, the correct path for the future will be found.





Populus—The People

The druid sticks indicate people standing beside each other. This figure represents family, friends, and group involvement.

Populus is also related to the moon, water, and the sign of Cancer. The tarot cards are the Emperor and the Empress.



Populus literally means "people" and represents a group or gathering of people. It is a neutral figure that, like a crowd, tends to reflect its surroundings. If love and good, positive thoughts are sent out, the results will be excellent. However, when negative thoughts and feelings are sent out the results will work against the person's best interests. The person has to learn from experience, and the future depends entirely on what use is made of this knowledge. Populus can also mean family, friends, and news or messages.





Laetitia—The Joy



The druid sticks show a rainbow, indicating joy, happiness, good fortune, and peace of mind. This is the most fortunate figure of all.

Laetitia is related to Jupiter, water, and the sign of Pisces. The tarot card is the World.

Laetitia represents joy, laughter, good health, and future happiness. It also relates to creative endeavors and enjoyment of the good things in life. It gives peace of mind, a positive approach to life, and an abundance of happiness and contentment. It usually means that the person has achieved his or her goals, has grown in wisdom, and can now help others. This person has balanced the spiritual and material sides of his or her nature and is living in harmony with the universe.

LECTURE # 8 DIVINATION: OGHAMS

Much of our present day knowledge of Ogham comes from the *Book of Ballimote* written in the 14th century and based on other manuscripts that were employed in the teaching of medieval schools of classical poetry, that had been compiled from other oral and written records.

This material was compiled at the university of Glasgow at the turn of the century and published as "the Handbook of the Learned." *The First writing was a system of tree writing known as bobileth.*

Tree writing used and alphabet of 34 letters each represented by a different tree. A message was constructed by stringing various leaves on a cord, with each leaf representing a different letter. The people of Peru used the same idea. We inherited the term "leaves" of a book from the ancient celtic boblith.

Many varying written letter forms of the alphabet are given, presumably devised for secrecy and obscurity or evolved by the different colleges. The alphabet was used as a teaching model or mnemonich for learning other facts, as well as being a spiritual guide.

THE SACRED CRANE:

Another source of the creation of Ogham is examined by Robert Graves in an essay THE CRANE BAG, a result of his long search for the White Goddess. The Greeks credited a poet of the Trojan War, Palamedes with having invented the letters that had not already been invented by the Triple goddess.

His inspiration came from observing a flock of cranes "which make letters as they fly." "Crane knowledge" is thus the secret and hidden knowledge of the tree alphabet. St. Columba was known as a "crane cleric" due to his great wisdom. He had been trained in a Druid college and had learned all the letters from the chief druid by eating a special cake each day, each successive cake marked with another ogham--a pleasant and direct way to absorb knowledge.

Graves goes on to speak of a legend concerning Manannan, the sea god, who possessed a bag formed from the skin of a sacred crane. This Crane bag contained a number of objects which refers to the secrets of the Tree alphabet, of which the first 20 letters could be easily formed by the fingers and used as a secret sign language. The last five ~~letters~~ ^{sounds}, the ~~letters~~ ^{Diorthenas}, were derived from the Greek and supplied additional sounds that it had lacked. These were also adapted for hand signing. *Last 5 found after medieval period.*

OGHAMS were composed of single strokes cut across a line or on the corner of a stone or wooden object. Each Ogham is a mnemonic that relates first to a tree, and then to a variety of plants, animals and other objects. Ogham is pronounced OHM, a name used to signify God around the world.

Most of these engraved stones are found in Southern Ireland, with the rest scattered around the British Isles. The Ogham letters appear to have been used originally to record inscriptions on stone or wood. However, the wood has long since rotted. We do know that the Yew tree was most often used, though not exclusively.

The Ogham alphabet is named for OGMA and was devised by him. He was the son of King Elathan around 600 BC. However, the oldest date back to the 4th century BC. The Letters were ^{symbolic} ~~sybolic~~, with each letter indicating a wide variety of ideas relating to Celtic philosophy. In effect it was a secret code, kept from the common man but widely used by the learned. ~~It was a secret code, kept from the common man but widely used by the learned.~~

~~THE ALPHABET; The original alphabet was made up of 20 letters and 5 more were added much later to represent the diphthongs. The last five letters have never been found on any pre-medieval inscriptions.~~

The letters are most often grouped in sets of five. Each one being one rung on a ladder and related to specific lessons the student was working on. This is why it often took 20 years of schooling to become a druid.

The Ogham letters provided a complete system for classifying the entire universe the Celts lived in, a complete cosmological system. The Ogham alphabet, with each letter full of information, evolved naturally into a system of divination. The druids took divination seriously and used many methods to determine the future.

They used divination techniques to learn the hidden secrets about things, so they could be just as interested in divining someone's secret past as in determining the future. They understood that by knowing someone's past, the future can be predicted with a great deal of precision.

SECRET POLICE

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THE CASTING CLOTH:

There are several systems of using the oghams for divination. I happen to prefer treating the last 5 additions as part of the cloth upon which one casts the other 20 oghams. The casting cloth is divided into four equal parts surrounding a center square. It is a world unto itself—a living system from which we can ask for guidance and receive answers to questions.

These are the "fifths" which are the original essence of the Celtic cross and were of paramount importance to the Celts. the Fifths represented the five directions North, south, east and west and the center.

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THE THREE CIRCLES OF ANNWN (refer to felt cloth) can use cards of fews.

In Celtic cosmology, all of life can be represented by three circles of being. At the beginning of time there was nothing but God and the spirit world, known as Annwn. The world came into being when God spoke his name.

The name of God was so sacred that druids were not allowed to say the name out loud to anyone other than another druid. the letters representing the name --O, I, U,--could be shown to others but not spoken. These three letters were also represented by three lines, known as the three columns of truth.

The world can be represented as three circles. The inner circle, known as Abred, is the realm of Matter. This is where all life comes from and where it returns after death.

Surrounding this circle is the circle of Gwynedd, the white place. Here good triumphs over evil and joy abounds.

the outermost circle is CEUGANT or infinity, God alone can be found here.

The three circles can be envisaged as being a spiral with life beginning from Annwn in the center, progressing thru Gwynned to Ceugant, and ultimately returning to the center to start again.

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The fifths also represented the five subtle bodies of God-self, Spiritual self, Intellect, Emotions and physical body. Thus the fifths were a map of the conscioursness, watching the flow of energy from Spirit to the individual.

KOAD=the sacred grove=self: The grove was the most sacred place as far as we know, for the druids because it was the place where the two worlds of the Divine and Matter blended. This is why the druids used Oak groves for their teaching. It is placed in the center of the castiang cloth. This space in the Celtic cross is called Mide, and symbolizes the sovereign self or higher self. This is our essence.

This position in a reading of the Ogham speaks of our highest aspirations and guidances - the words whispered to us directly from Spirit. this enables us to stay in touch with our true essence, enabling us to stand in our personal power and manifest our purpose.

OIR=spindle=harmony: The second Fid on the cloth represents the spindle tree. It has a very hard wood used to make pegs for wood joining and spindles for thread. The spindle tree represents the unsung, invisible part that is essential to hold all the peices together.

In this way it is the perfect analogy to the spiritual nature - the invisible, yet all pervasive presence that gives structure and support to our lives. Oir's place on the cloth is the bottom or southern fifth, called Seis on the celtic cross. This represents the spiritual body.

In a reading, this position relates to our spiritual nature with regards to the issue in question. This position can often show us opportunities for our spiritual growth.

PHAGOS=beech=learning: The third fid represents the beech tree. writing tablets were often made of beech, and thus symbolizes learning. - the intelligence gathered from our own experiences, as well as guidance given by teachers. It also represents the carrying on of traditions and the wisdom of "tried and true" actions.

DIVINATION: TREES

The position of phagos on the cloth is the left, or western, fifth. This position called Fis, relates to learning and the intellectual body. In a reading, this position tells how the issue affects us on an intellectual level, and can bring awareness to limiting thoughts or old patterns. With this awareness we can begin to evolve ourselves in positive ways. This area can also point to new areas of study and growth.

UINLIEAN=honeysuckle=challenge: The fourth Fid represents the honeysuckle. This sweet smelling plant was said to give young girls dreams filled with love and desire. This fid is associated with the feeling nature, and the instinctive wisdom we gain by listening to our hearts.

this gives one the courage to face the challenges of the emotions. Unliean resides in the top, or northern, fifth of the casting cloth. In the Celtic cross this area is called Cath, and relates to the emotional body.

In a reading this position brings one into the depths of the emotions, revealing our true feelings about the issue in question. It is also associated with challenge, and shows us the obstacles to our emotional maturity. This area can also give guidance in working with those obstacles.

PEINE= scots pine=manifestation: The fifth fid, representing the scots pine, has associations with heroes of celtic myth, such as Cu chulainn, finn mac Cumhail, and Maeve.

The cones of the scots pine were said to be imbued with wisdom and illumination. Again, this represents the mystical worlds of the natural and supernatural in harmonious union with the physical world.

Thus peine represents the physical body and resides in Blath- the right, or eastern Fifth, and that of manifestation. Peine shows how we can manifest our dreams and visions, as well as our nightmares, and can point out inner blocks to the manifestation process.

* * * * *

8

Meanings of the Ogham Staves



Beth / Birch

Birch is one of the first trees to grow on bare soil and thus it births the entire forest. Children's cradles were made of Birch. The tree bark is white, the inner bark provides a pain reliever and the leaves are used to treat arthritis. Criminals were at one time birched to drive out evil influences on them, to renew them for the new year. Axe handles were also made from Birch. The Amanita Muscaria grows well under the Birch. Birch indicates new beginnings.

Physical: You must rid yourself of negativity, unhelpful influences and bad thoughts for a new, fresh start.

Mental: Concentrate on your desire, the image of the result wanted must be held firmly in mind.

Spiritual: For a new beginning focus on the white of the birch, it stands out clearly from distractions and obstructions.

Luis / Rowan

The Rowan tree is long known for aid and protection against enchantment. Sticks of the Rowan were used to carve Runes on. It was also used in the art of metal divining. Rowan spays and crosses were placed over cattle in pens and over homes for protection. Its lovely red berries feed the birds in winter. The berries have a tiny pentagram on them. The pentagram is the ancient symbol of protection. The Rowan tree indicates protection and control of the senses from enchantment and beguiling.

Physical: You will keep your senses about you to distinguish good from bad, and harm from help.

Mental: You will not be swayed, tricked or beguiled. Keep your wits about you.

Spiritual: Your strength will turn away anything that threatens your purpose and your serenity. Be not afraid.

Fearn / Alder

This tree is a water lover. The oily water resistant wood has been used extensively for underwater foundations and pilings in Venice and elsewhere. It is used in dairy vessels and the branches in making whistles. It is associated with Bran, as He used His body as a bridge to span dangerous waters. It is used in the construction of bridges. Bran's Head was oracular. Alder indicates protection and oracular powers.

Physical: Be aware of uniqueness in self and others. Keep your eyes open to see the unusual and acknowledge what is seen in another if at all possible.

Mental: You will utilize something you previously overlooked. Oracular skills are not easy to acknowledge. The mind is unwilling at times to deal with the intuitive part.

Spiritual: You offer spiritual aid and protection in a dispute. Let your intuition guide you.

Saille / Willow

The Willow is another water loving tree. Willow bark contains Salicin which is used in the treatment of the rheumatic fever and various damp diseases. Her catkins, which appear in early spring before her leaves, attract trees to start the cycle of pollination. She indicates cycles, rhythms and the ebb and flux.

Physical: A comfortable relationship to the material world is full of lessons and cycles of changing values. Change is necessary for growth, and values are no exception to the rule.

Mental: To gain understanding of a particular concept, a steady accumulation of facts is the foundation that brings understanding. All cannot be learned in one lesson. Repetition is the key.

Spiritual: This is a period of taking it easy rather than full speed ahead. Learn to play with the cyclical nature of things.

IIII Nuin / Ash

The Ash tree has the toughest, most elastic wood. It is used in weaver's beams. Women would weave cloth and intermingling threads together in a tight pattern as the microcosm and the macrocosm are united. The Ash tree indicates the linking of the inner and outer worlds.

Physical: Your actions echo in the cosmos as a stone thrown in a pond casts ripples. Know you and the world are interconnected. Be aware of the effect of your actions.

Mental: Your problems or questions are not yours alone; others have the same ponderings. Look at the question in the wider context and ask opinions.

Spiritual: Endeavour to become aware that all things are connected. Balance your need with the Earth's.

I Huatha / Hawthorn

The wood from the Hawthorn provides the hottest fire known. Its leaves and blossoms are used to create a tea to aid with anxiety, appetite loss and poor circulation. This small tree can create dense thickets and have thorns that are an excellent defence. The Hawthorn signifies cleansing, protection and chastity.

Physical: You need to work upon the physical condition of yourself. To better yourself you need to alter diet, smoking or eating properly. Healthy body can be attained by diet and exercise. A healthy body means a healthy mind.

Mental: You must open your mind to the self-imposed thickets of ignorance and false facts. Free your thoughts and cleanse your mind.

Spiritual: However hot the problem, the forge heat of overcoming it, in your spirit creates new and unexpected strengths.

II Duir / Oak

The grand Oak, King of the Forest, grows slowly. Its dome shape and clean, straight trunk make it known on the horizon. Its wood is hard and tough and it burns slowly. Acorns when processed feed humans. Druids taught lessons under the Oak. Duir means doorway. This tree indicates protection - a doorway to mysteries and strengths.

Physical: A hands-on approach will nurture the skills you wish to have. Step through the door, one learns by doing.

Mental: You have accumulated acorns of wisdom, the time for dropping and sharing your wisdom is here.

Spiritual: You as a teacher or student must be tough and resilient despite life's unpredictability as an Oak is to the bolt of lightning. Strong and wise.

III Tinne / Holly

The Holly is an evergreen bush with bright red berries. It is one of the three timbers used in the construction of

chariot wheel shafts. It was used in spear shafts also. The qualities of a spear shaft are balance and directness, as the spear must be hefted to be thrown the holly indicates directed balance and vigour to fight if the cause is just.

Physical: Challenges will be overcome with unity and concerted effort. Ensure the cause is just.

Mental: As warriors train and retrain until what they do with spears is instinctive, so you too must train and learn daily.

Spiritual: Cultivate dynamic and instinctive intuition to respond to fast moving situations and accept the reality of here and now. Ensure the ability of slipping in and out of a great variety of behaviour styles, to be able to respond to the environment at hand.

III Coll / Hazel

The Sacred Salmon is associated with the Hazel tree in legend. The Salmon swimming under the overhanging Hazel trees ate the 9 nuts of poetic wisdom. The number of spot on the Salmon's side denoted the number of nuts eaten. The Hazel tree provided shade, protection and baskets. Hazel twigs were used for divining because of their pliancy and affinity with water. Hazel indicates intuition to lead to the source, poetry, divination and meditation.

Physical: Your skill in poetry, divination and meditation allows you to inspire others to increase their capacity in these arts. Example is the best teacher.

Mental: Allow the promptings of your intuition to bring ideas to the surface. Become a catalyst with those ideas.

Spiritual: Follow your intuition to the source, you will be rewarded with wisdom and your soul will ring with poetry.

III Quert / Apple

The Apple is the earliest cultivated tree. It is associated with choice. At Somerset, an auction was held for single acre plots on two pieces of common land. Plots were marked and matching marks made on the fruit. The apples were then placed in a bag and commoners were allocated land by the distribution of the fruit. All the acres of land were similar, as many times today choices must be made between similar and equally attractive things. Regardless, the choice must be made. Apple indicates choice.

Physical: Choice, while not easy, is necessary. Stop procrastinating, you will end up with nothing or an unsatisfying taste from each choice.

Mental: Many paths of learning are open to you choose one! Better master of one than expert of none.

Spiritual: In your journey choose one of the Eight Paths to complete the others will follow.

+ Muin / Vine

The Vine has been known and grown in the British Isles for a long time. Its distinctive fruit and foliage appear on Bronze Age artifacts. The grapes of the Vine are the supply of wine. The effects of wine are well known. Wine loosens inhibitions and allows one to speak more truthfully than normal. The Vine indicates the release of prophetic powers, as will be seen in the story of the blind men and an elephant.

Physical: Unwind, if you then sense at a deep level that you must act in a certain way at this moment in order to deal with an issue; let intuition be your guide and do it.

Mental: Allow your senses to open to speed inner development as you learn to place trust in them when they are acting strongly. Instead of using reason constantly.

Spiritual: Open your inner self so it may harvest and gather all signs and omens that it is capable of.

understanding. Allow yourself this boon.

Gort / Ivy

Ivy is capable of growing and spreading in any land climate conditions. It is strong and difficult to destroy. Growing in a helix pattern it represents the spiral of the self and the search for the self. Ivy symbolizes the soul's wandering inward and outward seeking nourishment and experience from both the inside and out to achieve enlightenment. Ivy indicates the search for the self.

Physical: Link with others turn out this is not the time to be alone.

Mental: Recognize group unconscious has an influence on you, absorb, go inward to learn more about the self.

Spiritual: Enter group mind with joy, assist others in their spiritual journey as they assist in yours. We all are intertwined as the Ivy, their success is yours and vice versa.

Ngetal / Reed

Reed grows in clumps at the river's edge. Reed resembles an arrow by its thinness. It was at one time used to make arrows. It is symbolic of music, bagpipes and flutes. In the winter the villagers rethatched their roofs with reed for security in the cold ahead. Weavers used reed to separate threads and to beat the fibres before spinning. Reed indicates direct action, and finding direction and meanings to the purpose of your journey.

Physical: You are able to find order where others find and create only chaos. Put this valuable skill to work. Take charge.

Mental: Your results are as sure as the intentions with which you began. Keep your target in sight. Do not be distracted.

Spiritual: Your journey has begun, surprise encounters and upsets are only to be expected. The skills you overcome these troubles with are as valuable as the trip itself.

Straif / Blackthorn

Blackthorn is a winter tree. The sloe, its fruits ripen and sweeten only after the nip of the frost. White flowers are seen even before the leaves in the spring. It is black barked with vicious thorns and grows in dense thickets. The wood is used in the cudgel shillelagh and Blasting Stick. Its thorns are used to pierce waxen images. Blackthorn indicates strong action of fate or outside influences that must be obeyed.

Physical: Unexpected change, plans altered or ruined. No choice however unpleasant. Events take over forcing you down the unavoidable path. Take courage, issues must be faced, decisions are unavoidable.

Mental: Your negative view, clinging to old ways and facing challenges with anger and stubbornness will only make it worse and hurt you more. Accept the changes and move on.

Spiritual: Realize you and your life have changed radically, enter reborn.

Ruis / Elder

Elder regrows damaged branches with ease and can root rapidly from any part. A tea for purifying the blood can be made from the flowers and wine from the fruit. Sticks of Elder were used as magical horses by Witches. Elder indicates the end in the beginning and the beginning in the end. Life in Death and Death in Life.

Physical: Though one aspect of your life is over, another begins anew.

Mental: Changes from the old will bring creativity; to usher in new ideas and thoughts.

Spiritual: Links are continually formed as new phases of life and experience repeat in different forms that lead to renewal.

+ Ailim / Silver Fir

Fir is a very tall slender tree that grows in mountainous regions on the upper slopes. Fir cones respond to rain by closing and the sun by opening. Fir can see over great distance to the far horizon beyond and below. Fir indicates high views and long sights with clear vision of what is beyond and yet to come.

Physical: In this issue you can see what is beyond and what is coming. You have the perception to see and to understand from the point where you stand. Take long view point and foresee the future.

Mental: Receive from the past and present strength and healing from which to draw insight and knowledge for your future.

Spiritual: Be aware of your progress on your spiritual voyage.

+ Ohn / Furze

Furze is a yellow flowering shrub that grows on the moorland and common land. It blooms throughout the year. The flowers are plentiful in pollen and nectar and give off a strong sweet aroma of honey. The flowers are frequented by the first bees of the year. The bruised shoots provide food for the horses. In the spring Furze is set on fire to burn away the old growth to make room for the new. Furze indicates a gathering together, a skill at collecting elements needed for a goal.

Physical: Your search is over. What you seek shall be found. Continue on towards your goal.

Mental: Share the knowledge you have gathered, as the bee shares pollen and nectar gathered from the Furze.

Spiritual: There is an abundance of blessings in your spiritual voyage, do not stockpile and hoard. Share with others, you will be rewarded.

+++ Ur / Heather

Heather grows on top of peat moss, which provides fuel after it is cut and dried. Heather blossoms are used in the brewing of tea. The blossoms also attract bees and are valuable as a source of honey unsurpassed in flavour and delicacy. The bee travels from the heather back to the hive in relation to the position and angle of the sun. It is regarded as a messenger from and to the Spirit world by the Celts. Heather indicates closer contact with the Spirit world and healing.

Physical: Listen to your body's message. The time for healing is now.

Mental: Do not permit yourself further stress. Go inward for healing and respite. This issue can wait.

Spiritual: Integrate inner with self to heal and be whole, to build the foundation for what will follow.

+++ Eadha / White Poplar

The White Poplar flourishes beside rivers, in marshes and in other watery areas. The pith is star shaped. The upper leaves are green, the underside is silver. The wood was used in the making of shields. Leaves move with every puff of wind. It is commonly referred to as the talking, whispering and quivering tree. The Poplar's ability to resist and to shield, its association with speech, language and the Winds indicates an ability to endure and conquer.

Physical: Whatever challenge you now face, you will endure and conquer with determination. You can bend

and not break.

Mental: Shield your thoughts from the fears and doubts about the odds you must overcome. A positive attitude will prevail.

Spiritual: Do not give in to worldly pressures, great assistance is yours on your journey to rebirth.

|||| Ioho / Yew

The Yew is an evergreen tree with the leaves attached spirally to the twigs. As the outer tree decays a new tree grows within. The branches grow down to form new stems. Yew timber is dark and very strong. Yew berries were used to poison weapons. Wine barrels were constructed of Yew to symbolize the death of the Vine. Yew was also used in the manufacture of bows. Yew indicates rebirth.

Physical: Something held for many years must be passed on, let go. It serves you no longer.

Mental: The knowledge that nothing lasts forever will bring ease at this time.

Spiritual: Changes are coming to you, you have a tendency to try and hang on, let go and experience the change as an ally not an enemy.

-X- Koad / Grove

Certain groups or groves of trees have always been revered. Their branches are never pruned or lopped. It is assumed these are the remnants of Druidic Groves. These groves contained various types of trees, among them the Oak, and were by a stream. It is here all meetings by the Druids were held in the face of the Sun and in the eye of Light. Here grievances were heard and judgements rendered that would settle issues. Grove indicates all knowledge, past, present and future, where all are linked in unity, and the resolution of conflict.

Physical: You may be participating in a resolution of conflict.

Mental: Misunderstandings can be ironed out if all parties will meet, work towards this.

Spiritual: You must try to hold the energy of judgement, of life aligned to the values that are above reproach. By example do we teach others.

◇ Oir / Spindle

The hard wood of the Spindle was used in the making of pegs, bobbins and spindles. It is a small and delicate tree with smooth grey bark and tiny white flowers. Deeply lobed brought crimson fruits appear in Autumn. Spindle indicates honour of tribe, community and the sweetness and delight of a sudden revelation.

Physical: Fulfil your obligations, not for reward but because you must, honour demands it and the greatest happiness will be yours.

Mental: Sudden realization gives you the right and obligation to question authority.

Spiritual: Develop your consciousness of the right relationship with others in the community and tribe.

-X- Uilleand / Honeysuckle

Honeysuckle is also known as Woodbine. It twists and coils as the Ivy does. Beautiful yellow flowers entwine with the leaves. Its scent is very cloying and sweet. the Honeysuckle shows the way in which to achieve the search for the self. Honeysuckle indicates hidden desires, secrets and the path to the search for the self.

Physical: Pursue your desires; allow yourself to experience pleasure - you are not a monk. By joy do we learn, not by abstinence of what we enjoy.

Mental: The hidden secrets you pursue are not as impenetrable as you suspect. They are simply muted by

background noises, home in on the secrets, put aside the distractions.

Spiritual: Remain true to your beliefs and principles in your journey to the self. Follow the Honeysuckle in safety and joy.

Pion / Pine

The Pine tree is an evergreen, its old title was "the sweetest of woods". Its needles are a valuable source of vitamin C and can loosen a tight chest. The scent of Pine is useful in the alleviation of guilt. The Bach's flower remedies lists it for dealing with feelings of guilt. Pine indicates issues of guilt within you.

Physical: Use the guilt you have to clear the slate with those you have hurt and renew the relationships.

Mental: Creativity can be released as you release the guilt. Let it go and transform the energy from guilt to positive action.

Spiritual: Use the discomfort of your guilt to pursue essential changes within yourself. Transform the guilt and yourself.

Phagos / Beech

Beech wood is closely grained, very easy to work giving a smooth even surface. At one time Beech tablets were used as writing surfaces because of the above mentioned qualities. Beech and book have the same word origins. Beech is concerned with ancient knowledge as revealed in old objects, places and writings. Beech indicates guidance from the past to gain insight which protects and provides a solid base upon which all relies.

Physical: Reviving memories will bring understanding that is needed. Do not neglect the past it is rich in experience.

Mental: Heed the echoes within your mind, they will give wisdom to make the changes necessary.

Spiritual: Do not discount the past as old fashioned, words written, buildings erected and experiences gained have come with a price. Remember and respect and listen to the inner voices and you will not go wrong.

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Created: October 22, 1996, 11:30:43 AM

Last Updated: October 22, 1996, 11:30:43 AM

Both Tibet and Egypt have their books of the dead. ie, accounts of the states to be encountered after death. these were intended to be read by a person while still alive to prepare for the journey to come.

Thus the knowledge imparted by each of these books enables a smooth transition between states of living and dying. Unfortunately the west has treated death as the enemy but our ancestors had a healthier approach: they saw death as the other side of life, with its own customs and existence.

Dante - gave the Christian world its own book of the dead in the 14th century in the *Divine Comedy*. This three part book takes the reader thru hell, purgatory and heaven, the three possible destinations in Christian thought after death.

Some argue that Dante's ideas came from Celtic tales of the voyage to the Otherworld, more likely he had read Enoch, a non-canonical book of the first century which takes one on a trip similar to Dante.

The important thing is that these stories were important to the Celtic church which was responsible for converting a large area of Europe to Christianity.

Today, people are taking more of an interest in the old spiritual traditions of the Earth that preserve a healthy sense of an alternative reality. From the Celtic tradition, lying dormant for generations, is the *Celtic Book of the Dead*.

The Celts, as discussed, didn't have books per se, but an oral tradition preserved by the Bards, poets and Druids. The tradition of the immrama is one such spiritual story form. Immrama simply means "Mystical Voyage".

At least four complete sets of these stories remain, the most famous being the Voyage of St. Brendan, which probably had its roots in fact, ~~as discussed earlier.~~

This story enjoyed great popularity in Europe, possibly stimulating the Renaissance urge to discover new lands by means of voyages of exploration.

It is significant that interest in the spiritual voyage to the Otherworld gradually became replaced by the actual voyage to find the New World. European colonization has marked the erosion of many mystical traditions with which the Old world has to find ways of coming to terms.

The Celtic Otherworld was believed to have a reality contiguous to and sometimes overlapping ordinary reality. The Celts had no heaven or Hell. Everyone could reach the Otherworld. As discussed, the lands to the West were where the Otherworld existed.

BOOKS OF THE DEAD clearly depict states of awareness, specific functions and duties. They show the guardians and entities who sit at the boundaries between life and death and help people conclude unfinished business of life.

Unlike the Egyptian Book of the dead, the Celts have no final judgement in the Immran. Instead, each soul contains its own judgement. The Celtic otherworld is a mirror of this one, so our individual experience of the realm beyond death is influenced by our actions in this life.

One of the immran islands, the Island of Black and White --where black items turn white and white items turn black--gives a perception of this. The terrors that travellers meet there are the life lessons from which they have failed to learn or to assimilate.

As in the Tibetan Book of the Dead and the Egyptian, the immrama stories present some terrifying beings and challengeing scenarios. They are not demons or devils, and no more evil than the wrathful deities of Tibet. Their nature is to guard, guide and challenge.

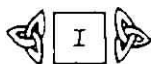
THE VOYAGE OF MAELDUIN is the story upon which one immran is based and it can be used, thanks to Caitlin Matthews work, to navigate the realm of the living. The cards illustrate 42 different experiences encountered by a soul, whether living or dead.

THE BASIC STORY OF MAELDUIN:

Maelduin was the son of a warrior, Ailill Ochair Agha, and an abbess of Kildare, whom he raped on one of his youthful raiding adventures. The Abbess called him Maelduin which means "bald one". She fostered him out to the queen of Eoghanacht of Ninuss who raised him as her own son. When taunted by one of his peers, he was teased for his lack of parentage. He went to the queen and demanded to know the truth.

The Queen brought him to the abbess, who told him who his father was and that he was long since dead. Maelduin returned to his father's kin and was welcomed among them. When he found out his father was murdered, he wanted vengeance. Nuca, a druid, told him fine but sail with only 17 hand picked men.(total is 18 or 2 times 9, a sacred number). He sailed on an auspicious day under druidic charms but, unfortunately, his brothers swam out to join them. He told them NO but they ended up having to take them on board or they would have drowned.

Because of this, the voyage went awry. When they found the murderers boasting, the brothers began rejoicing to soon causing the boat to drift aimlessly. Maelduin bade the crew rest their oars and trust to God but blamed his foster brothers for what had happened.

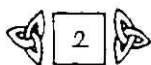


ISLAND OF GIANT ANTS

They sailed for three days and nights until they heard the crash of waves upon land. Turning to the north-east, they found an island whereon dwelled swarms of giant ants, the size of foals. These tried to devour the crew and their boat. The men fled.

The onset of the voyage provides a period of reflection when the men are alone with the elements. Their fears are represented by the giant ants, the first of many such encounters with enlarged animals and beings. This facility of telescoping size is a common feature in shamanic travel to the Otherworld. Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* is a prime example of this tendency. The initial experience of the inner traveller is often one of

fearful anticipation. Travelling in the Otherworld often brings up underlying anxieties and self-doubts, especially when confronted by the unknown. All spiritual voyaging is undertaken alone at the beginning. Greater experience lends confidence, but loneliness is the initial stumbling block, bringing up the question, 'Who am I in actuality?'

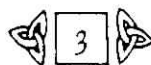


ISLAND OF MANY BIRDS

They came next to an island with many terraces, on which numerous birds perched. Maelduin himself went on to the island and brought back many birds to eat.

The men begin their quest for food, which sometimes becomes an overwhelming urgency. The Otherworld provides an abundance of good things, though there are often conditions which have to be observed if the men are not to transgress the bounds of hospitality. Birds are animals of otherworldly speech, often

appearing as messengers. Here they provide Maelduin with the means of staying alive in this strange environment. It is important to take appropriate nourishment so that we may better attune to and receive the gifts of the Otherworld.



ISLAND OF THE HOUND-FOOTED HORSE

The next island they found had upon it a horse with hound's legs. With the eagerness of a dog, it leaped at them in order to eat them. When it saw them flee, the strange animal dug up earth and stones to throw at them.

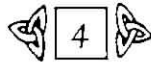
This is the first of three islands – the others being 4 and 8 – where horse-like creatures behave in a bizarre

way. The horse was a prime animal of reverence in Celtic tradition. Such a combination of the eagerness of

THE VOYAGE OF MAELDUIN

a dog, the speed of a horse and the dexterity of a human being is nightmarish. This is one of many encounters in which the men themselves are a potential part of the food-chain: a salutary experience for those who are used to being the aggressors. Our first

explorations on the inner journey are often confused, rather like the jumbled dreams which succeed a busy day. With time we learn how the Otherworld fits together.

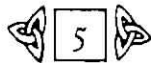


ISLAND OF INVISIBLE RIDERS

German drew the lot to explore the next island, but Diurán accompanied him. They found enormous hoof-prints, each one the size of a sail, in the sand, and the debris of great feasting. Made fearful by the size of what they saw, both men returned speedily to the ship from which they were able to view a horse-race and hear the sound of riders encouraging their steeds, but no riders could they see.

The crew receive their first intimation that they are not the only intelligent species in this realm. At this point, none of them has the sensitivity to see the otherworldly beings who live-here, though they hear voices. This

corresponds to the manner in which inner voyagers begin to comprehend the extent and organization of the Otherworld, a chastening experience.



ISLAND OF PLENTEOUS SALMON

A whole week of near starvation brought them to an island where a house stood on the sea-shore. One door faced the sea; it had a stone valve that opened when the plenteous salmon carried by the water struck it, allowing the fish to tumble into the middle of the house. The house was unoccupied but there was a bed set ready for Maelduin and a single bed for every three of the crew, not to mention food and drink of the richest sort. They fell upon the food and praised God.

This island and number 24 show the totemic power of the salmon, one of the most important otherworldly animals in Celtic tradition, associated with great memory, inspiration and abundance. The otherworldly hostel set ready for the crew is a reflection of the hospitality that was offered to travellers in ancient

Ireland, where inns and hostels were governed by special laws. Hospitality is still a sacred duty among many indigenous peoples today. Here the men experience the abundance and open-handedness of the Otherworld, which is rich in nourishment to those seared by the hard commercialism of our own world.



ISLAND OF TREES

They came to an island of trees. Maelduin took a branch from one of them as they passed it; after three days, three apples began to grow on it which sustained them for forty days.

In Celtic tradition, the apple is a fruit of eternal life, in contradistinction to the fruit of the paradisaal tree in Eden. To their diet of birds and fish is added fruit. The wondrous apple bough is a scion of the otherworldly tree of tradition that nourishes the spirit. (The Edenic fruit of the Tree of Good and Evil is not called an apple, though it is conventionally symbolized in this

way.) The island, they discover, is like the paradisaal realm of the British Otherworld, Avalon, the Island of Apples, where King Arthur is said to have been restored to health. On this island the travellers learn to let their gifts and perceptions mature, an important aspect of shamanic journeying.

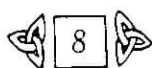


ISLAND OF THE REVOLVING BEAST

The next island had a great beast upon it which moved swifter than thought. It turned itself round and round and inside out, never at rest. It no sooner achieved one form when it shapeshifted into another. It threw stones at the ship when it saw the crew escaping, one piercing Maelduin's shield and lodging in the boat's keel.

One of the main features of shamanic journeying is the manner in which the shaman can shapeshift from human to animal form. In order to become a shaman at all, the candidate must suffer a wound or illness that

makes this ability possible, so it is significant that Maelduin's shield and the ship are pierced at this island. This is an important part of the voyage, for it enables changes to begin.



ISLAND OF CANNIBAL HORSES

They then discovered an island of great horses, the sight of which delighted the eye of any lover of horseflesh. However, each horse attacked the other, tearing and eating each other until blood poured out everywhere.

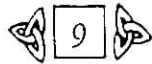
The sight of horses attacking and eating each other is probably one of the more horrific sights to any

Irishman, used to the universal Celtic reverence for the horse. Even today, in Britain and Ireland, horseflesh is

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not eaten by human beings. The horse is therefore one of the prime totemic animals, whose flesh is taboo. The senseless slaughter of beautiful animals on this otherworldly island reflects the way in which humans

prey on each other in the world. Only by such a shocking vision are we shown the futility of warring on each other.

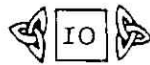


ISLAND OF FIERY PIGS

They sailed away swiftly, in low spirits, not knowing where they would find land or help. They arrived at the next island in sad shape, hungry, thirsty and depressed. When Maelduin and his men landed, they found the ground hot, heated by the fiery pigs who slept in caverns underground. There were trees with golden apples upon them. Red pigs struck at the apple trees so that the fruit fell and so they could eat from dawn till sunset. During the hours of darkness, they slept. From dawn till twilight, many birds swam around the island, landing at twilight to eat the apples. The men gathered apples to sustain them and were glad of the small respite from hunger and exposure to the sea.

At their lowest ebb, the voyagers see a wondrous sight of both otherworldly birds and underworld pigs eating the apples here. The men share this food, though they cannot live in such a fiery environment. In shamanic and folk tradition, humans are often helped by animals when they are in great need. Pigs are the animals of the

underworld, the place of ancestral wisdom in Celtic tradition. In British lore, Merlin learns from the pigs during his madness in the Caledonian forest. Here the voyagers learn that beings of all species and worlds can live together in harmony.



ISLAND OF THE CAT

Nearly dead from hunger and thirst, and sickened of the sea, they came to an island with a lime-whitened fortress upon it. Inside the wall of lime was one of chalk, and the tower almost touched the clouds. They entered the largest house within the enclosure and found a cat leaping from pillar to pillar. A splendid feast was laid ready and around the room were great treasures, stacked in rows. Maelduin asked the cat if the food had been left for them. He felt that it had been, so they set to. One of Maelduin's foster-brothers coveted a necklace and asked if he could take it. Maelduin forbade him, but the foster-brother disobeyed, concealing it about his person. As he reached the middle of the enclosure, the

cat leaped through him like a fiery arrow and burned him to ashes. Maelduin returned the necklace, cleansed the ashes from the floor and scattered them over the sea.

The seemingly cosy guardian of the treasures on this island turns out to be quite the reverse, and the first of the extra men is lost here. This island teaches the travellers that the laws of their own world also apply here, although much is strange to them. Inner

journeying may tempt us to relinquish our common sense, but it is a good passport to travel under nevertheless. Respect and good manners are just as important in the inner realms.

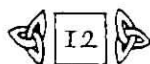


ISLAND OF BLACK AND WHITE

They came to an island divided by a brass fence. On one side of the fence was a black flock of sheep; a white flock was on the other. When the shepherd, who guarded them threw a black sheep into the other half it turned white; when he threw over a white sheep, it turned black. Maelduin determined to test this effect by throwing a peeled white wand into the black portion so that it turned black. They returned to the boat, still weary and hungry from this adventure.

This island represents a deeper level of experience for the voyager. It features many times in Celtic tradition and marks one of the primary borders of this world with the Otherworld. The reversal of black for white and vice versa is at first confusing, but it shows the Otherworld's ability to reveal the opposite of any

situation, feeling or action. The one who governs this experience is the shepherd, a threshold guardian who often challenges those who enter the Otherworld. He shows the traveller that confidence hides a kernel of fear and that fear hides a kernel of courage.



ISLAND OF GIANT CATTLE

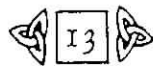
The third day following, they found an island of pigs, captured one and ate it. German and Diurán went to explore further. They found a wide, shallow river but when German dipped his spear into it, it burst into flames as though the water had been fire. They could see giant cattle protected by a herdsman on the other side of the river. German beat the remains of his spear-shaft upon his shield to frighten the cattle. 'Why are you frightening the calves?' cried the herdsman. 'Where are the mothers of these calves?' asked German, amazed that cattle larger than those before him could exist. 'They bide over the mountain,'

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replied the herdsman. German and Diurán returned to the ship and, on Maelduin's advice, the crew rowed wearily away.

Another herdsman appears on this island, showing the voyagers that there are certain boundaries it is wise not to cross. Over-confidence and bravado are worthless in

the Otherworld; only exact skills and ruthless self-knowledge will serve here.



ISLAND OF THE MILL

The next island had a mill and a surly old miller. The crew inquired about the mill and were told that it was called the mill of Innbir the Senant. Apparently, half the corn from Ireland was ground there; it came from those people who begrudged each other or acted in an ungenerous way. They saw the countless loads and the burdened people arriving and hurrying away, signing themselves against the mill.

Although the Celtic Otherworld is not a place of judgement, the deeds committed in life carry their own reward. The mill or turning tower is a common feature of Celtic stories, symbolizing a place of torment or burden where our natural dispositions are refined. Anciently, all grain was ground by the local miller, an unpopular figure who often took more than his own

share. A period of service within the mill is often required, depending on the individual concerned. A heart burdened or obscured by grudges cannot range throughout the freedom of the Otherworld and must be cleansed at this point. The experience of this island resonates well with number 32. (See C. Matthews, *Arthur and the Sovereignty of Britain*.)



ISLAND OF SORROW

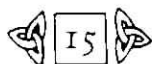
They came to an island of black-clad and lamenting people. One of Maelduin's foster-brothers drew the lot to go there; he too became a mourner as soon as he landed. Maelduin sent two men to rescue him, but they also fell to wailing. Then four men were sent to rescue these two; Maelduin bade them neither to look at the ground or the air, nor to breathe save through their cloaks. These four men were successful, delivering the two that had gone before them from the island. The foster-brother, however, was left behind. On their return, when asked why they wept, the two men said 'We did as we saw others do.'

This island represents the state into which inner travellers fall when they refuse the challenge of island

13: they fall into lamentation of the past, its unfairness, and the restrictions it places upon present actions.

While a period of mourning or moaning is healthy, this is not a place at which to stay forever. All living beings must suffer loss and feel the pain of grief, but there are

other islands to explore. The second foster-brother, however, remains on the Island of Sorrow.

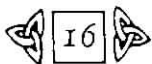


ISLAND OF THE FOUR FENCES

The next island had four fences dividing it into four enclosures: a golden one with kings inside; a silver one with queens inside; a brass one with warriors inside; and a crystal one with maidens inside. A maiden brought hospitality, serving them from a little vessel. They lay drunken for three days, and woke on the third day within the body of their own boat.

Here, the crew are greeted for the first time by an otherworldly maiden. Subsequent encounters, on islands 16, 23 and 27, reinforce the importance of women in the inner world. The Otherworld is the natural domain of women, in which they act as guardians and initiators. The everyday world is the

natural province of men, in which they are active and dominant. Like islands 11 and 12, this one challenges the travellers to find their correct place or vocation. The otherworldly food offered by the maiden is too strong for their present capabilities.



ISLAND OF THE CRYSTAL KEEP

They came to an island where a crystal keep and bridge were found. The bridge could not be crossed and would throw men backwards. A woman emerged from the keep with a pail in her hands and lifted a crystal slab to draw up water. German demanded a welcome for Maelduin but was rebuffed. Before the door of the keep was a brass net with musical blades which, when shaken, made the men sleep. On each of the following three days, the maiden came out again and rebuffed them. Lastly, she welcomed each by name and gave hospitality. Her great beauty impressed them. Her prophetic foreknowledge had told her of their coming. She took them into her house and served each man with food and drink. The crew tried to persuade her to sleep with Maelduin but she said she was unsure and would give her answer on the morrow. The next day, they found themselves in their ship once more.

The perilous or narrow bridge is a feature of the Otherworld. Only the truly dedicated can cross it. The boorishness of the crew in insisting that the hospitable

woman sleep with Maelduin shows their unreadiness to enter the Otherworld proper. Their attempted abuse of hospitality is punished when they are sent back

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summarily to their boat. The tests of islands 10, 11, 12, 15 and 16 are those of recognizing boundaries and understanding the nature of otherworldly and earthly

exchange. On this, the voyagers' second proper encounter with a being of power, they fail in courtesy and preparedness.

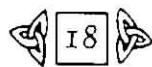


ISLAND OF SINGING BIRDS

Towards the north-east they heard the harmony of great chanting as though a choir were singing the Psalms. As they neared the mountainous island they saw that the song was that of birds.

Druidic tradition speaks of the 'perpetual choirs of song', the choirs of bards whose retelling of the ancient, traditional songs and stories wove together the mundane and inner worlds. This tradition was partially transmitted to the Celtic Church whose monks, like those in the rest of the Christian world, chanted the Psalter (the 150 Psalms of King David) every day. The

ancient Celtic and pre-Celtic lore, however, was and continues to be maintained in the Otherworld. The harmony of this perpetual song is heard by the travellers to this island, which marks the mid-way point of their *immram*. Birds are often the bearers of otherworldly tidings. This island denotes the place where we listen to the voice of the Otherworld.



ISLAND OF THE ANCESTORS

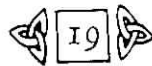
They found a small island with many trees upon it. Here a hermit lived, clothed only in his hair. He had left Ireland on pilgrimage and had been shipwrecked. He saved himself by placing a sod of Irish turf under him from which the island was formed, which continued to grow for ever more. Each year another foot and another tree was added to it. The birds in the trees were the souls of the hermit's ancestors awaiting judgement, and they were fed by angels. A half-loaf of bread and a piece of fish was the ration of every being on that island, with water from the well to sustain them. The hermit prophesied that all but one of Maelduin's crew should reach home.

This is the first of four islands (the others being 19, 29 and 32) on which the voyagers meet a hermit. The Irish missionary Church recognized three forms of martyrdom: red martyrdom was death at the hands of an opponent of Christianity; green martyrdom meant severe penance; and white martyrdom was exile in a

foreign land. The monks of the Celtic Church often achieved white martyrdom as they were responsible for the conversion and civilization of much of north-west Europe. Some, more adventurous than others, chose to live as hermits on islands off the western seaboard of Ireland. One such notable location was Skellig Rock, an

inhospitable and barren island off the coast of west Cork. The Island of the Ancestors brings knowledge of the ancestral realms. It is formed by the faith of the hermit who trusts in his native earth, and so it becomes a place where pilgrims learn about the

element of earth itself. This is the first of four islands which teach the gifts and challenges of the elements, the others being 20, 21 and 22. Here Maelduin and his crew are given reassurance of their return, all save the last foster-brother who, at this point, is still with them.

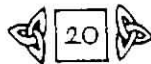


ISLAND OF THE HERMIT

On the third day following, they found an island surrounded by a golden wall. A hermit lived here sustained by a well of nourishment that yielded water and whey on Fridays and Wednesdays, milk on Sundays and feast-days, and ale and wine on other feast-days. They each drank their fill and slept from afternoon to morning. After three days, the hermit asked them to leave and so they set out.

The food well which generously gives forth on this island is equatable with the well of plenty belonging to the Goddess of Sovereignty in Celtic tradition. In many stories concerning the making of kings, we read of an encounter with the Goddess wherein she offers different beverages – milk, wine, ale, whey etc. – depending on the virtue and status of the individual who meets her. Each liquid conveys a distinct gift as well as nourishment. According to the Celtic Church, each day of the Christian calendar was accorded a different status: solemn feast-days of Our Lord or Our Lady – such as Christmas or Candlemas – merited

special foods; while the feast-days of saints, apostles and martyrs merited somewhat better food than the ferial or ordinary days. This island teaches the travellers about appropriate forms of nourishment and challenges our views on abundance and scarcity. The Otherworld usually provides an abundance of whatever is scarce within the mundane realm; this is one reason why so many people travel in the inner worlds. There is also a reciprocal exchange, for the mundane world has an abundance of whatever the Otherworld lacks. There is an important ecological balance to be maintained between the worlds.



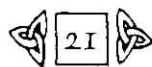
ISLAND OF THE FORGE

Ahead they saw an island from where they heard the hammering of smiths. The following conversation came on the breeze: 'Are they near?' 'Who's coming?' 'Those little boys floating in their trough.' Maelduin ordered the men not to turn the boat but to start rowing backwards. With the stern foremost, they began their retreat. The voice came again, 'Have they landed yet?' 'They are neither coming nor going.' 'So what are they doing now?' 'They are further away than before.' Then the giant smith came from the forge and lobbed a lump of red-hot iron at them which made the sea boil.

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Smiths were held in awe in Celtic society, for they had the alchemical secret of crafting metals, regarded to be a magical activity. The ancient skill of smelting ores from the earth into implements is now paralleled by the chemical processing of uranium – a natural deposit in the earth – into nuclear power. The uses and abuses of such power, which may be used for peaceful as well

as aggressive purposes, point to the importance of impeccable responsibility and dedication to the skills of smithcraft. This island represents the discovery that the human achievements of any one generation are puny compared with the eternal and archetypal works of the Otherworld. It also teaches the gifts and challenges of the element of fire.

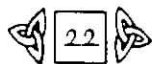


SEA OF GLASS

At last, the sea turned clear as crystal, so that the sea-bottom could be seen clearly. They spent a day sailing across its magnificent surface.

This next encounter marks a transitional stage in the voyage. Between this sea and the Pillar of the Silver Net (number 25), Maelduin and company are prepared for the last stage of the journey. The clear sea is like the clarification of the soul that is accomplished after

considerable hard work and spiritual effort. In the *Voyage of St. Brendan*, St. Brendan's crew are terrified of this sea because it reveals to them all the possibilities they had never thought of. The Sea of Glass represents the gifts and challenges of the element of water.

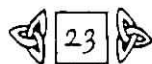


SEA OF MIST

The sea changed and became cloudy, giving the crew the sense that it would not support the ship. Beneath the waters they saw forts and countryside. A monster in a tree attempted to eat the herd of cattle a warrior was guarding. It seized an ox and devoured it while the warrior ran away. Maelduin and his crew grew terrified, for they felt that their fragile boat would pass through the waters as through mist.

The next sea becomes like mist and seems, to the travellers' perception, to be unable to support them. This sea symbolizes the difficult stage of trusting the

process of the inner journey when there is no prior experience with which to equate it. The Sea of Mist represents the gifts and challenges of the element of air.



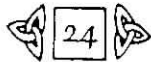
ISLAND OF RECOGNITION

They came to an island surrounded by cliffs. When the people of that place saw them coming they screamed, 'It is they,' in great panic. A large woman came forward and pelted

them with hazel-nuts, which they collected. The people seemed relieved when the crew returned to the ship, for it was apparent that there may have been a prophecy concerning travellers that might come and conquer the island.

This island is strategically placed at the very gates of the deepest Otherworld enclosure. The inhabitants represent those who have undergone a certain amount of experience or who have made a partial *immram*. They feel threatened by those who aim to complete the

journey. The islanders, perhaps unwittingly, gift Maelduin's company with hazel-nuts, the Celtic fruit of knowledge, thus equipping them for the next stage of the journey.

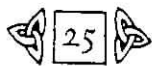


ISLAND OF THE RAINBOW STREAM

The next island had a rainbow stream which went up over the island, flowing onto the opposite strand. Within this stream swam salmon which the voyagers could catch as they fell upon the island in vast heaps. The air was thick with their odour and it was impossible to gather them all up. From vespers on Saturday to prime on Monday the stream was motionless. The crew gathered up plenteous quantities of fish and continued searching the seas.

This island presents one of the most beautiful visions of the whole *immram*. Like island 5, abundant salmon can be found here; but the rainbow stream denotes an even greater wonder, for it represents the gifts of the Otherworld which flow unendingly and are always

available. The juxtaposition of the salmon of this island and the hazel-nuts of the preceding one is significant, for the travellers have all the otherworldly sustenance they will need for the last stage of the voyage.



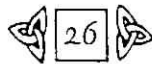
PILLAR OF THE SILVER NET

They rowed till they found a four-sided pillar of great height in the middle of the sea, with not a sod of earth around it. From its summit hung a silver net through which the boat passed. Diurán struck it with his spear. 'Do not destroy the net,' cried Maelduin, 'It is the wondrous work of great ones.' 'I take some in God's name,' said Diurán, 'that our story may be believed in Ireland. I shall offer it to the altar of Armagh if ever we return home.' Two-and-a-half ounces of that net remain in Armagh. From the height of the pillar they heard a great voice uttering, but they did not speak its language.

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The Pillar represents a significant gateway on the *immram*, for it shows the way into the deepest realms of the Otherworld. The travellers have seen many wondrous things, but they have never been exposed to such a mighty creation as the pillar. On the shamanic journey, passing beyond the net or veil signifies a deepening of experience, a greater confidence and trust,

although it does not mean that there are not still tests in store. We note that from this point onwards the terrors that surround the inmost circle of the Otherworld cease. The voice that they hear is almost certainly that of Manannan mac Lír, God of the Otherworld.



ISLAND OF THE SHUTTERED DOOR

The next island stood high above them on a pedestal. Although they rowed about it, no approach could be found, only a locked door at its foot. Above they could see a plough, but saw no-one to speak with.

Just as island 23 represented incomplete knowledge of the Otherworld, so this island represents the potentiality of knowledge accessible within it. The

travellers are unable to penetrate this first island of the inmost circle which seems to act very much as a guardian of the Otherworldly gates.



ISLAND OF WOMEN

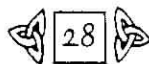
They came to a large island with a massive interior plain covered with grass. A great fortress stood near the sea, a beautifully appointed house with soft beds. Seventeen nubile maidens were preparing a bath. As the crew landed and made their way to the fort's entrance, Maelduin remarked, 'That bath is being prepared for us.' They saw a richly dressed horsewoman coming towards them, who entered the fort. One of the maidens came and said, 'The Queen welcomes you, enter here.' Maelduin sat with the Queen and his men with each of the maidens while they feasted. The Queen bade each man take the maiden next to him and retire to the canopied cubicles where the beds waited, while Maelduin slept with the Queen. They slept till dawn. The Queen said, 'Remain with us and you will not grow older. You shall have immortality and enjoy what you enjoyed last night. Be no longer wanderers of the wave.' When Maelduin asked how she came there, she replied, 'I was married to the King of this island to whom I bore these seventeen girls. He died and left no successor, so I ruled in his place and everyday I go out to judge the

community and guide its affairs.' 'Why do you need to leave us today?' Maelduin asked. 'Because, unless I judge the people, you will not enjoy the delights you had last night.'

They stayed for the three winter months and it seemed more like three years. The crew grew restless and wanted to return home. 'We shall never find the like of this at home,' said Maelduin. 'Stay here and enjoy your woman, then, but we are going home,' they said. Maelduin reluctantly accompanied them but, as they left, the Queen threw a sticky clew of thread at Maelduin and drew him back. They stayed thrice three months and resolved once more to leave. 'If the thread strikes Maelduin, we will be brought back to this place,' they said. 'Then let some other catch it,' said Maelduin. Again they embarked and the Queen threw her sticky thread. One of the crew caught the ball and his hand was severed by Diurán, so that they might escape. At that, the Queen began to wail and cry, and that was how they escaped.

This is one of the most famous islands of all the *immrama* stories. The tradition of an island whereon a group of women or priestesses guard the earthly paradise is told in Celtic stories and medieval legends alike. One such place is Avalon, where Morgen and her eight sisters reign. It is significant that Maelduin's arrival at the Island of Women is his twenty-seventh disembarkation: twenty-seven is a multiple of the sacred number nine; his crew should have been eighteen, another multiple of nine. Maelduin is unable or unwilling to leave here due to the fact that he has had his sexual initiation, becoming the consort of the

Queen of the Island of Women. She is an aspect of the great Goddess of the Otherworld whose reflection we can still discern in the Faery Queen of folk tradition. Maelduin's union with her brings him a deeper fulfilment than he has known before. This island brings immediate fulfilment of desire and refreshment of spirit; it also teaches lessons about life's purpose. Here time does not run and the seasons are constant. This cessation of cyclic time can only be borne by those who are immortal, however; the absence of the turning seasons becomes disorientating for mortalkind and they are compelled to travel onward.



ISLAND OF BERRIES

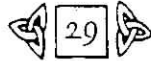
They were driven by the waves to an island where many-fruited trees grew. Berries of great size grew upon them; and the task of tasting them fell upon Maelduin. He squeezed some juice into a cup and, after drinking from it, fell into a sleep for twenty-four hours, totally senseless, so that it was unclear whether he was alive or dead. When he awoke, Maelduin bade the men gather more berries, for they were good. The crew mixed them with water to lessen their effect and rowed away.

This island provides a cleansing forgetfulness that heals Maelduin of his desire to return to the last island.

Many travellers make the otherworldly journey to seek healing of one kind or another; the Island of Berries

and the remaining islands provide different forms of healing or cleansing that help the traveller realign his or her energies physically, mentally, psychically and

spiritually. This island brings restoration to the essential inner self and is experienced, to some degree, each night in dreams which connect us to the inner realities.



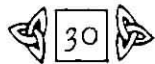
ISLAND OF THE EAGLE

They landed on a large island with a lake. There was a small church where a grey hermit lived, clothed in nothing but his own hair. He said that he was one of Brendan of Birr's company who had gone on pilgrimage. All had died save he. He showed them Brendan's stone, which they had brought with them, and the men bowed before it in reverence. The hermit bade them eat sparingly of the sheep, and so there they stayed for a season.

One day, while exploring the island, they saw a great, ancient eagle which alighted near the lake. It carried the branch of a tree from which red berries like grapes depended. The men hid and watched and, under Maelduin's direction, took some of the berries for themselves. In the afternoon they saw two younger eagles, who tended the old bird and stripped its feathers of lice. They crushed the berries and threw some into the lake to make it red and the ancient eagle bathed therein. The young birds continued to groom the eagle until, on the third day, it rose restored to strength and with fresh plumage. Diurán also bathed and drank of the waters, so that thereafter he remained forever youthful, losing neither hair nor tooth to age. They bade farewell to the hermit, provisioned the boat with sheep and set off once more.

This island brings the experience of complete renewal. The ancient eagle is restored to full vigour and is able to fly away as strong as any young bird. Diurán shares in the healing bounty of the berry-reddened lake and proclaims his experience to all people he meets thereafter by the amazing youthfulness of his form. It is

often remarked that those who engage in spiritual pursuits remain miraculously youthful in appearance. This is part of the otherworldly exchange: those who uphold the harmony of the inner realms are themselves upheld by otherworldly powers in the mundane realm.



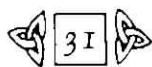
ISLAND OF JOY

Many people filled with laughter dwelled upon the next island. The lot to explore fell on the third foster-brother who immediately joined the inhabitants in laughing and playing, as though he had known them all his life. The crew left him there.

THE CELTIC BOOK OF THE DEAD

This is the reverse of island 14 and is, in some respects, the ante-chamber to island 31. The foster-brother who is left here enters into the most joyful state he is able to attain, and the crew is once more back at the appointed druidic number of eighteen. Like the other voyagers, he does not enter island 31 which

is reserved for those who have committed their mortality into the keeping of the Otherworld. This island brings the fulfilment of island 27 but without remembrance of the mundane world. It is a place of festival and of glad rejoicing because it connects us with the healing grace of shared companionship.

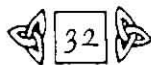


ISLAND OF CIRCLED FIRE

They came to a small island, circled with a fiery, revolving wall. When the doorway to the fortress faced them, they saw beautiful people feasting and enjoying themselves. They heard the music and delighted at the marvellous sight, but were unable to enter.

This is the innermost island of the *immram*, wherein the fullness of the Otherworld is found. It is guarded by a ring of fire and revolves so that no-one can enter it unaware. That fire is the white fire of the *sidhe*, the faery place of peace, which burns away mortality. The most archetypal ideas, forms and patterns are within this island, and all those who are within rejoice in their creation and preservation. They are guarded well in this the inmost centre, but we must not imagine them as only remaining here: concepts and archetypes ripple

out from this island to be filtered down into our own world. Some share of them is found in the other islands of the *immram*, but their full richness is experienced here. As Maelduin and his men retain their human condition, they are unable to attain the full experience of this island. The happy Otherworld this island represents is portrayed in many Celtic stories, and is properly the abode of the Lordly Ones, the Faery Folk or otherworldly beings.



ISLAND OF OTTERS

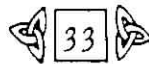
Not long after, they found a white island shaped like a bird, on which there was a man clad in his own hair making prostrations on a rock. They asked his blessing and demanded to know who he was. He had been the cook of a monastery on Tory Island. He was an ex-thief who used to steal from the church and garner away all his ill-gotten spoils. One day, when he attempted to dig the grave of a sinful man over a holy one, he was frightened by the holy man's ghostly voice. It promised him hell if he persisted in his enterprise, but heaven if he stopped. The cook demanded to know how this could be proved in advance. His answer came when the grave began to fill by itself.

After that, the cook went to sea with his treasures. Strong winds took his boat and he

became aware of a ghostly holy man beside him. The ghost instructed him to cast away his ill-gotten goods into the sea, and the cook obeyed. Eventually, he landed on a barren rock and was miraculously fed by otters who brought him salmon. By their providence, he wanted for nothing. The otters brought similar provisions for Maelduin's men. Before they left, the cook prophesied that Maelduin would reach his destination and find his father's killer, but that he should forgive him.

The cook's voyage, rather like that of Maelduin, is initiated by selfish intentions. From acquisitiveness and greed, the cook is brought to a place of scarcity where he learns to appreciate the simple things once again. We are shown that the most unregenerate person can

make an *immram* and discover the inmost self, but only by throwing overboard the luggage that encumbers his or her journeying. This island brings freedom of spirit to the inner traveller and marks the way back home.



ISLAND OF THE FALCON

They came to an island whereon much livestock grazed. Suddenly, they saw an Irish falcon which guided them south-eastwards towards Ireland. They found a small island very like the raiders' island, upon which they had been about to land when they were blown off course. The crew listened at the door of the fortress there and heard those within discuss what they should do if Maelduin came. Maelduin accordingly knocked on the door and was given welcome. They went within and were welcomed, and they related all their adventures.

All journey's ends are marked by a symbol or landmark that brings connection with our home; for the travellers, an Irish falcon appears, giving them new hope. After the many fantastic beasts of the Otherworld it is great relief to see a familiar bird. This island represents the return to everyday reality, a place where the traveller can become earthed in the mundane world. This is a crucial feature of inner journeying that is frequently overlooked. Unless we are grounded and

re-established in our own time and place, we are likely to become fey, accident-prone and adrift from our life's purpose. It is therefore important to mark the journey's end by humanizing actions, as Maelduin does, by eating, meeting other human beings and reporting his *immram* to them. Maelduin forgives his enemies and relates his adventures to them, so that the gifts of the inner journey are immediately shared.

