

## *Oran Mór: The Primordial Celtic Myth*

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*Quiet—*

*Eternal Quiet.*

*Not even the sound of the restless, stirring, dark waters could be heard.*

*Then, a great spiraling strain of Melody moved across the endless waters.*

*Subdued at first,*

*then quickly gathering momentum until it reached a great crescendo.*

*And, then, there was Life!*

*But the Melody did not stop.*

*It continued its song,*

*filling all of Creation with its divine harmony.*

*And so it continues today,*

*for all those who listen.*

The primordial myth of Creation, common to all people, tells of a mighty melody - the very breath of the primordial god - that sang Creation into existence. To the Celts it was known as the *Oran Mór*<sup>1</sup>, "The Great Melody" a melody that did not cease with the initial creation, but goes on and on and on, inspiring Creation along its holy pilgrimage of giving and receiving blessing.

It is this primordial myth that, like a Celtic knot, weaves throughout the entire corpus of the Celtic mythos, knitting an interwoven, cohesive mythology. The *Oran Mór*, as the primordial "sea melody,"<sup>2</sup> flows through the myths and legends of submerged lands, mystical springs, life-giving cauldrons, and holy grails. As Wisdom it "fills the head," and gives meaning to the severed heads that so disturbed Caesar. It is the "creative melody," always creating, both in the hearer and in the one singing. It is the myth of Uaithne and Boand who bear the three strains of music: innocence, sorrow, and joy<sup>3</sup>. It is The Song of the Three Cauldrons giving and receiving creative blessing in its song. The words of the song are as diverse as there are people to hear it; always taking their meaning from their divinely breathed sound, never from that design which we impose. The *Oran Mór*'s divine sound gives meaning to - no, creates - the Celtic languages. These are languages that provide us melodious words such as *Cruithear*, *yr wyddor*, and *grammeria* to role on our tongues and savor; words that have no import apart from the divine melody<sup>4</sup>.

Ultimately, the divine song, as with Percival, gives form to, and rises up within us the basic question of Celtic myth— "Why do you suffer?" It is this question, this song, which interprets not only Celtic myth, but also Life!

The Oran Mór, as Celtic myth attests, is nothing more or less than the creative energy of the primordial god. Call the song "Grace." Here is the divine energy whose various numinous aspects are revealed not only in the Continental and the Insular gods of the Celts, but in Creation herself. The Oran Mór as the numinous music - energy - sings Creation into existence, and becomes the holy, mystical song of Life sang in the seasonal festivals and rituals of sovereignty of the Celtic peoples. It is this holy song of Creation that fills humankind and gives meaning to history, making mythical history objective. It is this song that drives us to pilgrimage and simultaneously brings about the *hiraeth*, that indescribable yearning for home. It is *gorfoleddu*<sup>5</sup> in the midst of oppression.

The Oran Mór is still being sung today, but, alas, we live in an age that no longer hears, or even listens for, that primordial divine Melody of Creation. This is an age that serves up soul-less science and life-less religion, each noisily clamoring to be heard over the other. It is an age runctiously marked by fragmented, in your face, individualism, an individualism so tumultuous that it robs the Self of its very ease. No longer, in the discordant noise of this age, can the Great Melody be heard. If it is heard, ever so slightly, it is seldom recognized for what it is. All we hear is the contentious noise of conflicting "realities". And, thus, we wander restlessly with a sorely dis-eased soul, through a clashing wilderness of antagonistic half-truths, each demanding to be heard as the Melody of Life.

In this fragmentation, we have lost our way, our holy nature, and have profaned the holiness of both Creation and the Creator. We have failed to live up to our potential as co-creators, with the divine, and in so doing have compounded the profanity and brokenness of a holy Creation. However, all is not lost. Deep within each of us lies a yearning for our lost (w)holiness. Thus, we discover our co-creative role within divinity, and with it, the holiness of Creation. We learn to ask the right question, which is simply, "Why do you suffer?"

There is however, one problem. We are incapable in our fragmented state to accomplish the quest on our own. We need a hero. It is when we find our hero - in truth, our divine nature with which we have been created that is within - and allow it to be our Advocate in a jointly fought struggle with suffering (and profanity) that we find holiness and with it our wholeness. Not merely a wholeness within This-World, but the original wholeness both within and between This-World and the Other-World. In other words, we re-enter into the One-World of Celtic Paradise.

To live sustainably, in the fullest sense of the word, we need to learn to live once again within the One-World of Celtic Paradise. To live sustainably demands the full participation of our senses. It is the Oran Mór, in Celtic myth, which gives vitality to the senses. For the Celt, as it is for us all, there are five senses: sights, touch, sound, taste and intuition. All are God-given, all are to be celebrated. It is, however, intuition, or The Sight (as the Celts know it), that rises from the "deeper nature" of the Oran Mór. For the Song has the uncanny ability to recognize herself as she is sung throughout Creation. It is in the recognition of herself that she (Oran Mór) stirs up within our being "The Sight." In hearing the Song being sung beyond us, the Song within wells up seeks herself. We might say that She seeks her original wholeness. And in the seeking the Song within makes our head/heart to hear the other, and in so doing, gives us "The Sight", or understanding, of that which is to come, that which has been, and that which is.

To live according to "The Sight" is not to live with one foot in This-world and the one foot in the Other-World, but to live as Celtic myth demonstrates with both feet simultaneously in both worlds. The Oran Mór assures us that which we need to do so is already within waiting to be heard and applied creatively. To do so is to begin to re-enter the One-World of Celtic Paradise.

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1 "Oran" = Song, "Mór" = Great

2 "Mór" = "Már" = Sea

3 "Uaithne" = Harmony (mortal), "Boand" = Melody (supernatural). Their three children were, in order: "Goltriaghe" (sorrow), "Giantriaghe" (joy), and "Suantriaghe" (peace). From prenatal innocence comes sorrow, then joy, then mystical peace, or the renewal of innocence.

4 "Cruithear" = Creator (God), Scotch Gaelic; "yr wyddor" = alphabet, Welsh; "grammeria" = grammar (Welsh). Each have either song/music or water as their primitive root.

5 An ecstatic rejoicing that flows from, and in the midst, of sorrow.