

## Pilgrimage to Ireland

As I lay dreaming 'neath a Hawthorn tree  
The land of Ireland came back to me.  
I heard a harp, a magic sound  
And waking, found myself within a mound.

The harp had turned into a wail  
The mound was dark, the air was stale  
I heard a *bean sidhe* cry outside,  
And then she offered to be my guide.

The narrow stones gave way to me  
And crawling through, I was set free.  
I stood on a hill of broken stones,  
Beneath me were the whitening bones.

Some cairns were open to the sky  
An aerial bed for the great ones that die.  
The Bean Sidhe was waiting by a fairy tree  
A blackthorn laced with purple sloe berry.

She took my fingers in her bony hand  
And bid me travel throughout the land.  
She led to a mare of midnight black,  
and I clung thru the ride to her skeletal back.

We shot up to the starry sky  
And I saw how the land did lie,  
Like a vast green goddess in the sea.  
I found myself trembling in ecstasy.

I saw the paths where Druid's walked,  
with kings and their ministers as they talked  
And ancient yews were honored where  
the forest folk chanted their healing prayers.

I felt time slip and slide away,  
And today became yesterday.  
I gazed on the coming of the Mills  
As the ancient prophecy fulfills.

The earth opened up and swallowed  
The children of Danu, who hallowed  
The Underworld, the land of dead  
For whom all of Ireland has bled.

And every invader, followed the last  
The land shuddered with every blast  
But still the sacred land is whole  
Sanctified by every soul.

“I’ve keened for many an old family”  
Whispered my guide, the fearsome Bean Sidhe  
“And I’ll cry until the end of time  
When the bells of eternity cease to chime.”

Looking down at Sacred hill and hallowed mound  
Where Ogham trees can still be found,  
Rivers, Holy wells and clootie trees  
Sheilas carved into a church freize.

We stood among the Standing Stones  
Seven sisters who were healing crones  
Their ancient spirits blessed our hands  
With healing energy of the sacred lands.

We walked among the ogham folk  
Trees whose wisdom we could invoke  
By listening to the branches creak, and  
Wind whispering through leaves, to speak.

And then, we were Dublin bound  
And the remnants of the Vikings, I found  
I had a meal in their old Norseman’s pub,  
The Brazen Head Inn, with its pub-grub.

From Castle to Museum, I walked the street  
Until I could barely feel my feet.  
Every building had a story, some  
Like the Vampire Crypts were quite gory.

I sat in the pews under vaulted ceilings  
And registered the hushed and holy feelings  
I paid respect to ancient graveyards  
Especially those who honored the bards.

The shades of poets still stalk the streets  
Their shadows creep on silent feet.  
I saw Bran Stoker, wrestling still, with  
Dracula looking for his nightly kill.

I joined a coffin bus, a campy ghost tour

All my photos came out in a blur  
The rowan trees red berries shone  
Over the graves of the unwary bones.

I cried with joy and delight to see  
Brian Boru's precious harp at Trinity  
For Ireland's harp graces their flag,  
The only instrumental emblem, they brag.

In Kildare we visited Sister Mary, as  
Delicate a soul as a flower fairy  
We saw Brigid's shrine, the holy fire pit  
Where Her sacred fires were always lit.

Tara Hill, the Center of ancient Eire  
On a high hill, we breathed the scented air  
I played my harp beneath the lone hawthorn tree  
and I tied a green ribbon, a healing cloutie.

In every church I lit a candle, and  
Said a prayer for my mother's soul  
Along the Liffey, I felt her hand  
In mine, as in days of old.

At last the end of my journey was near  
And I saw in the eye of my guide, a tear.  
"Once you have traveled in Ireland at all  
You are forever under its irresistible thrall

Ireland will call to you, awake and in dream  
And the isle will return to you, it will seem.  
Your face will be turned to these soft green lands  
And your soul will forever wander the Fairy strands."

Dedicated to Mara Freeman, with whom I traveled to Ireland in 2005

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