

THE SALMON AND THE CNÓ

When song is born, many other things are born too. The birth of song is a heavenly realisation. When song is born, nations are born. When song is born, peoples find their communal voice. When song is born, we achieve great things.

In our own pool of doubt, a miracle is wrought. Out of the slime, the smolt emerges. When the lava-light is brought to the surface, a billion possibilities manifest.

'None shall look to the bottom of the well.'

Why? Why is there nobody who will look to the bottom of the well? What is the prohibition that prevents us from doing so?

The reason that it is said no one shall look to the bottom of the well is because in doing so, in bringing our own doubt to Segais, we fear that we will see nothing but darkness in its deepest depths. And then it will erupt upon us, and break us, and wash us down, sweeping like a great river rushing to the sea, and we will drown in the waters of our own doubt.

Only those who have heard the song of Amergin should look to the bottom.

Only those who have seen the shimmering silver light at Inber Colpa should look to the bottom.

Only those who have stood at the sea shore awaiting Bóinn's remaking should look to the bottom.



Bring your doubt to Segais and have it wash over you.

Segais is not a pool of darkness. It is a pool of possibility.

What did the salmon imbibe there, as fry, as smolt, in the depths of Segais?

What was it digesting, when it ate the sacred hazel nuts?

They were the *cnó* of its doubts.

They were the *cnó* of its faults.

They were the *cnó* of its misgivings.

They were the *cnó* of its prejudices.

They were the *cnó* of its self-loathing.

They were the *cnó* of its pride.

They were the *cnó* of its fears.

They were the *cnó* of its fall.

They were the *cnó* of all the things it wanted to know.

The *cnó* of knowing. The *cnó* of no return.

Like the apple from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, to taste the *cnó* of the sacred trees that grew over Segais was to cross a salmon weir from which there could be no return.

The pool of introspection becomes a pool of excoriation. Once the sacred nut is cracked open, it loses its shell. And there is nothing then to prevent its inner core — its true nature — from being revealed. When the salmon ate the *cnó* in Segais, something of its own shell was parted, and something of its skin was



rent open, and something of its own core nature was revealed to itself.

By ingesting the nuts, and consuming their inner seed, the fish was imbibing its own rebirth. The seed was planted in the belly of a fish. The *cnó* of no return had been cracked open, like a fissure opening in the heart of the fish, allowing its past lives to seep out and become manifest.

This was no ordinary salmon. This was Bradán Feasa, the Salmon of Knowledge — the knowledge of good and evil, of present lives and past iterations, of glimpses into the core nature of all living things. A *sídhe* had opened in the heart of the fish, in its very fabric and nature, allowing other worlds to become visible in the pristine waters of the well of Segais.

Faced with such a terrible beauty, the salmon found itself confined by the constraints of the well. Even though the well was thought to have no bottom, the fish whose heart had been opened into the multiple cosmoses of its past, present and future lives, found itself trapped in the thoughts of its own eternal nature.

In a Segais open to the *sídhe*, the pitiful salmon smolt found its expansive, everlasting, potential nature trapped in the confines of a two-dimensional universe in which the only directions seemed to be 'up' or 'down'.

Once the *cnó* of no return had been cracked open and consumed, the salmon in its *sídhe* nature knew that



there was only one direction that really mattered —
'OUT'.

To stay in Segais would be to submit to the limitations of a two-dimensional cosmos, and in the uncharted waters of a *cnó*-revelation, a *cnó*-revolution, a two-dimensional universe in which the only directions were up or down would surely crush the creature under the weight of its own limitations.

The river beckoned. All rivers lead to the sea.

Segais, the pool of initiation, the well of introspection, where the neophyte must be challenged to peer deep into their own core nature, becomes a place of limitation once that core nature, *cnó*-like, has been cracked open. And when the call of the river has been heard, it must be heeded. No creature who has had its *cnó* nature uncovered can withstand the limitations of a pool of only two dimensions. The river, running free and wild, leads to the sea. And the sea opens out into an ocean of possibilities.

The *cnó* nature of the Salmon of Knowledge has been revealed to it. In the deep of Segais, doubt has become tinged with possibility. The *cnó* of no return has a stark revelation for the creature of the silvery light.

'Know thyself in the deep oceans, and if you do, you will come to know that you have never known anything of yourself at Segais.'

And thus we come to two explicit revelations about the folklore of Segais. One relates to the number of



spots or speckles on the salmon's back. Every *cnó* that he eats gives him a new spot. The Salmon of Knowledge, the speckled salmon with the countless spots, was being suffocated under the weight of its own *cnó*-wisdom. Segais could not contain this suffocating and burgeoning beauty. Segais, with all its power of transformation, had to yield its fruit. The shell of the watery womb must open, and the amniotic fluid must gush forth so that the newborn creature can be delivered to the river on its new journey into self and selflessness.

And here is the second revelation of the sacred lore of Segais — the well of the nine hazel trees, the one where the salmon first swims, erupts and its waters create the beginnings of the Boyne river. When the river calls, it must be heeded.

There is nothing now that can deter or prevent the salmon from beginning its journey to the ocean. The *cnó* has been cracked open. The waters have broken. A birth must occur. The river must be born, and the smolt must swim free.

The ocean calls.

I will wait and watch for you, Bradán Feasa, on your journey to the ocean.

I will watch for you in the streams that flow down from Sídh Nechtain above Carbury.

I shall watch for your coming in the Little Boyne and where the Yellow River meets the Boyne.

I will await your ingestion at Bolg-Bóinne, the Belly of the Boyne, hoping of course that your passage through the belly of the serpentine river will be a transformative one.

I will wade out into the water at Áth Troim, the Ford of the Liver, where the great Brown Bull of Cooley dropped the liver of white Finnbennach into the Boyne. There, I hope, the silver flash of your passing will resuscitate the bulls of old, so that the Finnbennach may stand proudly at Cruachan Aí, and the Donn Cuailnge may once again graze the uplands in the mountains of Cooley above Dundalk Bay.

I will watch for you at the weir at Bective and in the ford at Bellinter.

Eagerly, I will observe your passage northwards from St. Brigid's Well at Ardsallagh.

On the height of Athlumney, in Navan, I will watch for you. There was once a ford there — Áth Luimnigh, the ford of Limnaigh, a bare spot of land. High up on the motte at Athlumney, on that ancient bare spot of land, I will watch a thousand of your passings, or maybe ten thousand, and there I might get a glimpse into an ancient world, a green earth untainted by the concrete intrusions of man. Standing at Navan, one wonders what great geological forces conspired here in far-off times to turn the river Boyne dramatically northeastwards.

From here, the final rush towards the sea begins in earnest.



I will see the silver flash in the water at Swynnerton Lodge, and from the top of the round tower at Donaghmore. From there, your run turns eastwards, and I will stand excitedly on the ruins of Dunmoe Castle, the Fort of the Cow — a very ancient name — to witness your rush towards the homelands of my own soul.

At lofty Ardmulchan, I will watch for you.

At Broadboyne Bridge, I will watch for you.

I will be the angler without a rod, watching for your safe passing at the floodgate in Slane. No otter will confound you there. No memory of your confinement in Segais will hook you at Slane. No, from there you must be free to swim to Linn Féic at Rosnaree.

Bradán Feasa, you must come to Rosnaree, for it is written in the stars. At night, if you follow the stars of the Milky Way, the heavenly river Boyne, the Way of the White Cow, you will come eventually to the white pool beneath the wood of the king. There, in dreams, I have seen your coming. There, in dreams, I have seen my own arrival into a hidden world beneath the water. Down there, in secrecy, beneath the great mounds of Cnogba and Síid in Broga and Cleitech, I have dreamt of otherworlds. There are many worlds hidden in the twilight of Linn Féic at Rosnaree. If the Bradán Feasa should come to me in the starlight at Fiacc's Pool, I should be like the serf at the arrival of the king. When the salmon comes to Rosnaree, the world will fall silent,



and the heavenly bodies will come to a halt. Even the river itself will be still when the salmon comes to Rosnaree.

The water of a million rain showers has washed down here. The rain in Ireland does something to you. It washes the patience out of you until you hate it. And only when you have hated it can you really come to love it. It dampens your spirits until you have become like a bog, drenched in ancient oak. In the bog, the oak recalls its former nature, when it was rooted to the earth yet reaching for the sky. How great a pity it is that the glorious oak tree can be reduced to a putrid and uncouth mass, a grim and slimy gunk in a dank, swampy form.

Thus have we been reduced, from lofty beings whose thoughts and hopes soar into the summer sky towards a willing sun, to shadowy beings who fester in the darkness of our own sludge.

But the misty rain that falls in sheets over the hushed banks of the Boyne at Rosnaree is a rain that washes into our very soul. When we deny our own tree nature, that which roots us to the earth but calls us to reach out towards heaven, we rot in the darkness of the swamp of our own dark nature — that which we deny we can become, even as our stumps are withering and rotting and the vitality of our leaf-bearing nature wanes in the evening of our own self-contempt.