

The Cauldron of Poesy

trans - Erynn Rowan Laurie 1995/1998

My perfect cauldron of warming
has been taken by the Gods from the mysterious abyss of the elements;
a perfect truth that ennobles from the center of being,
that pours forth a terrifying stream of speech.

I am Amirgen White-knee,
with pale substance and grey hair,
accomplishing my poetic incubation in proper forms,
in diverse colors.

The Gods do not give the same wisdom to everyone,
tipped, inverted, right-side-up;
no knowledge, half-knowledge, full knowledge --
for Eber Donn, the making of fearful poetry,
of vast, mighty draughts death-spells, of great chanting;
in active voice, in passive silence, in the neutral balance between,
in rhythm and form and rhyme,
in this way is spoken the path and function of my cauldrons.

Where is the root of poetry in a person; in the body or in the soul? Some say it is in the soul,
for the body does nothing without the soul. Some say it is in the body where the arts are
learned, passed through the bodies of our ancestors. It is said that this is the truth remaining
over the root of poetry, and the wisdom in every person's ancestry does not come from the
northern sky into everyone, but into every other person.

What then is the root of poetry and every other wisdom? Not hard; three cauldrons are born in

every person -- the cauldron of warming, the cauldron of motion and the cauldron of wisdom.

The **cauldron of warming** is born upright in people from the beginning. It distributes wisdom to people in their youth.

The **cauldron of motion**, however, increases after turning; that is to say it is born tipped on its side, growing within.

The **cauldron of wisdom** is born on its lips and distributes wisdom in poetry and every other art.

The cauldron of motion then, in all artless people is on its lips. It is side-slanting in people of bardcraft and small poetic talent. It is upright in the greatest of poets, who are great streams of wisdom. Not every poet has it on its back, for the cauldron of motion must be turned by sorrow or joy.

Question: How many **divisions of sorrow** turn the cauldrons of sages? Not hard; four: ***longing and grief, the sorrows of jealousy, and the discipline of pilgrimage to holy places***. These four are endured internally, turning the cauldrons, although the cause is from outside.

There are two **divisions of joy** that turn the cauldron of wisdom; ***divine joy and human joy***.

There are four divisions of human joy among the wise -- sexual intimacy, the joy of health and prosperity after the difficult years of studying poetry, the joy of wisdom after the harmonious creation of poems, and the joy of ecstasy from eating the fair nuts of the nine hazels of the Well of Segais in the Sidhe realm. They cast themselves in multitudes, like a ram's fleece upon the ridges of the Boyne, moving upstream swifter than racehorses driven on midsummer's day every seven years.

The Gods touch people through divine and human joys so that they are able to speak prophetic poems and dispense wisdom and perform miracles, giving wise judgment with precedents, and blessings in answer to every wish. The source of these joys is outside the person and added to their cauldrons to cause them to turn, although the cause of the joy is internal.

I sing of the **cauldron of wisdom**

which bestows the nature of every art,
through which treasure increases,
which magnifies every artisan,
which builds up a person through their gift.

I sing of the **cauldron of motion**

understanding grace,
accumulating wisdom
streaming ecstasy as milk from the breast,
it is the tide-water of knowledge
union of sages
stream of splendor
glory of the lowly
mastery of speech
swift intelligence
reddening satire
craftsman of histories
cherishing pupils
looking after binding principles
distinguishing meanings
moving toward music
propagation of wisdom
enriching nobility

ennobling the commonplace
refreshing souls
relating praises
through the working of law
comparing of ranks
pure weighing of nobility
with fair words of the wise
with streams of sages,
the noble brew in which is boiled
the true root of all knowledge
which bestows according to harmonious principle
which is climbed after diligence
which ecstasy sets in motion
which joy turns
which is revealed through sorrow;
it is enduring fire
undiminishing protection.
I sing of the cauldron of motion.

The **cauldron of motion**

bestows, is bestowed
extends, is extended
nourishes, is nourished
magnifies, is magnified
invokes, is invoked
sings, is sung
keeps, is kept,
arranges, is arranged,
supports, is supported.

Good is the well of poetry,
good is the dwelling of speech,
good is the union of power and mastery
which establishes strength.

It is greater than every domain,
it is better than every inheritance,
it bears one to knowledge,
adventuring away from ignorance.