

5-16-05

Dear Oisin,

Last night I slept pretty well, probably because I was so tired, but tonight I'm having some trouble falling asleep. It's partly because of the time difference, but I also have trouble sleeping whenever I'm away from home, probably because I think about you so much.

I bought an adaptor today that allows me to plug my computer into British outlets, so I'm writing on the computer. There's something nice about handwriting, it is true, but I thought it would be easier for you to make out the words by yourself if I typed.

My room in the flat has a clean wooden desk that I'm typing on. It faces a small window, but it's completely dark outside, so I don't see anything through it. Next to a few mathematical things, I have a book on the desk that I brought from home called 'The Rise of the West.' It has a subtitle 'A history of the human community.' That is, I think, a very attractive notion. Haraboji first gave me this book when I was a teenager and I read it, but I don't think I understood it so well at the time. You see, at that point, I hadn't traveled much and couldn't appreciate what it meant to study the history of the human community. Actually, even people who are older and have seen the world sometimes miss that very important point. That is, the point that there is a history of America, of Korea, Japan, Greece, India, ... but that meanwhile it's very important to understand a history of ALL people wrapping up all the separate histories into one long scroll.



*World Map, 1550*

I think about this a lot when I travel, so that's why I carry this book with me. Maybe I can understand better now what kind of things happened that influenced everybody.

In fact, it's a funny thing that even when people are fighting, they are somehow creating this common history that might give to their children and their children's children many years later something to wonder about, common memories of even quite different people. People often speak about how many died because Alexander the Great spread war over so many different lands, but that those wars still brought together much of the future histories of Asia and Europe. If you look by your desk, there is that poster from the exhibition in Japan that we never got to see. In that exhibition, they were

interested in showing how Greek sculpture was carried over to northwest India with Alexander's conquests, and then, together with Buddhism, how those ideas and methods eventually went as far as China, Korea, and Japan. So if you look at some of the temple guardians that we saw in Japan (I think there is even one on that poster), they are often very muscular in the manner of Hercules or Laocoon.



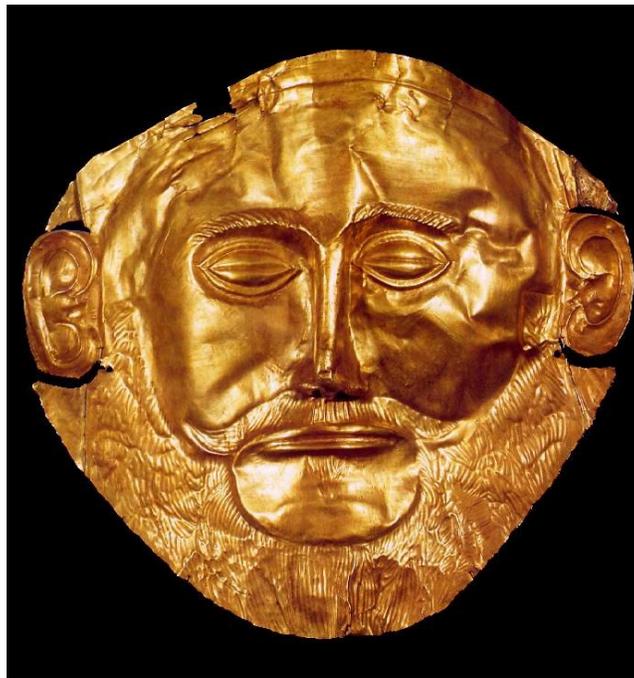
*Laocöon in the Vatican*



*Temple guardian in Nara, Japan*



history). Now certain historians think that some of the sea people were actually Greeks from the Mycenaean civilization, whose homes were taken over by Dorian slaves while the masters were away on long campaigns like the Trojan war. The idea is that the Mycenaeans then had to leave their homes and spend years sailing the seas, living as migrant warriors. There is apparently evidence that some of them landed around the area of present day Israel, and were referred to as the Philistines. These Philistines are the same people that the Israelites fought against, and whose mighty champion was Goliath.



*“Mask of Agamemnon”*



*David and Goliath, imagined in 13th century France*

Of course, the fighting must have been terrible, and it's probably not good to get too attached to sagas of war. But it's still a wonderful thought that the story of David somewhere meets the story of Agamemnon and Odysseus and your friend Achilles. (How is he these days, by the way?)

I told you about the hole that appeared in my heart when I left Korea long ago. Maybe that hole also never went away. It's also possible that I'm filling the hole with stories and pictures of all the beautiful things from the realms of gold, trying hard to understand that I never left home. Because, after all, the whole world *is* my home, and yours. This doesn't mean it's always easy to think of any old street as home. People are different in different places. They speak in different languages and wear different clothes, and still worship many different gods. Because of this, they sometimes

fight. For example, you might occasionally hear that even now in the land of Goliath, the people of Saladin and the people of David still fight, forgetting that they are actually all children of Abraham.

But in the long stream of history, maybe all the fighting isn't so bad. Someday, we will all understand that there is no longer much to fight about. In Agamemnon's times, people still struggled with difficult farming and didn't always have enough to eat. These days, everyone could be quite comfortable if we decided to share reasonably. So someday, even very rich people will see that it's not so important to have too many things, or to have more to eat than they can finish. In the meanwhile, all the people in the world are still writing on the long scroll together, so their great-great-great-grand-children can someday see how it all connects up into the one single greatest story of all that will then have to be written over and over again.

As I was writing I remembered how I fell asleep last night: I lay down, closed my eyes, and sang myself some songs, including the Napoleon song by Schumann that's been your lullaby for a while now. But there is one other song that always makes me feel quite peaceful called 'The Linden Tree'. It's also in German, but I'll translate it for you.

By the well before the castle gate  
There stands a linden tree.  
It's there I dreamed within its shade  
Sweet dreams eternally.

I carved into its solid bough  
Some loving words with care.  
In joyful and in tearful times  
The tree would pull me there.

Today's the day that I must go,  
To vanish like the light,  
Here in the darkness close my eyes,  
Away into the night!

But still the branches rustle loud  
Those words (how well I know)  
'Come here to me my dearest friend,  
And rest before you go.'

Against my frozen face the wind  
So harsh and cold does blow.  
My hat, flying off my frozen hair,  
Gets buried in the snow.

Now have I traveled far and wide  
So many years from home,  
But still I hear the rustling words  
'To rest now, you must come!'

Before I knew it, I was asleep.

Mr. D.



Postcard by Paul Baluschek (1870-1935)

**Mässig** *Leaves rustle* *Listen!* *Rustling continues*

*3 3* *pp* *cresc.* *fp* *ppp*

*Message unclear* *Becoming clear . . .* *Come to me!* *(Come to me!)*