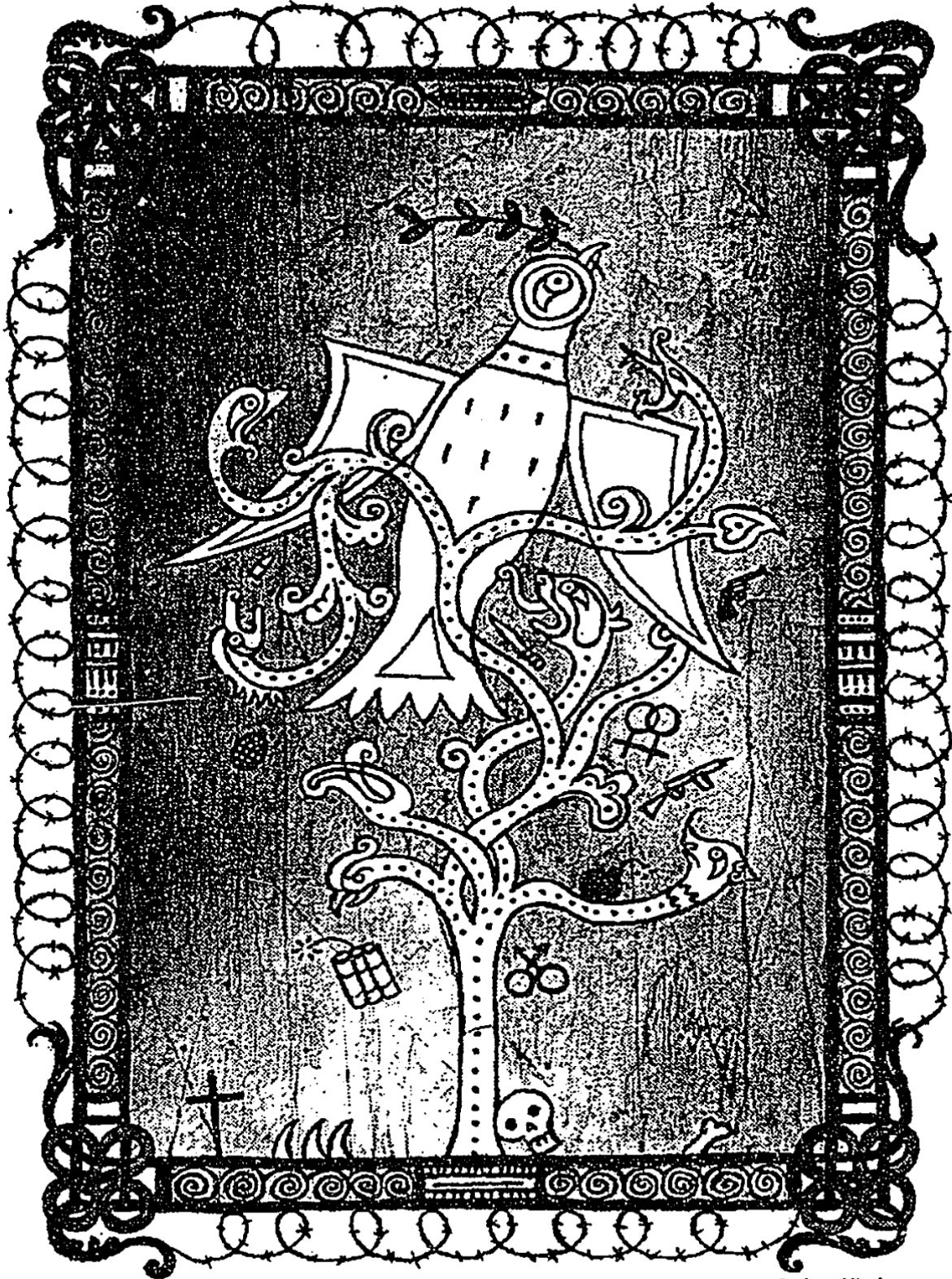


**Task 3:**

Look at the image below. What do you see? What story could be told here? What do you feel when you look at the image? Take notes and after five minutes discuss your ideas with your partner.



Stefano Vitale

# A Clear Signal

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By Paul Muldoon

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Now that the living outnumber the dead  
I turn from Ireland, from the tit-for-tat

murders (one of "theirs" for one of "ours")  
that characterize that most civil of wars

where large ambition's backed up by small arms.  
I turn from violent action that confirms

the suspicion, held on both sides of the pond,  
that we Irish are a little people bent

on the goal of self-extermination.  
I turn to our Irish-American cousins

in the hope that's fond, albeit faint,  
that on the feast-day of our patron saint

they'll send a signal, kindle a flame  
as Patrick did when he first came

among us, and lead us by a kindly light  
out of our present plight

as a nation which, in one recent diagnosis,  
is undergoing a "very deep crisis."

Lest there be some misapprehension  
as to which "crisis" Mary Robinson

meant, let me remind them  
of the case of the fourteen-year-old victim

of an alleged rape whom a court forbade  
to follow the thousands who've taken the boat

for an abortion clinic in England.  
This tended to substantiate the notion,

to which so many are inclined,  
that we are indeed a backward nation

with far to go and much to learn:  
and yet, not only did our Supreme Court overturn

the original High Court injunction  
but the Irish bishops, while not about to sanction

abortion, are said to have given "a clear  
signal" that the clause defending "as far

as practicable" the life of the unborn  
is open, as they say, to interpretation.

This flexibility, that's come only of late  
to us, is so long-fixed in the United States —

whose Supreme Court would never, surely, be swayed  
to upset the balance of *Roe versus Wade*? —

that I feel almost churlish in taking this occasion  
to appeal to our Irish-American cousins

never again to be seen to rain  
on their own parade, not to be heard to cry "Aryan

*Go Bragh.*" As for the "Hibs" standing in the way  
of Irish Lesbians and Gays,

would they have stopped Casement when he tried to land  
a boatload of guns on Banna Strand?

The ghost of Roger Casement would now call "enough"  
to the claymore and Kalashnikov

and, lest the green  
flag should come to stand chiefly for gangrene

or some corrosive bile,  
would join me in one last appeal

to our Irish-American cousins: let them show  
they heard what Gerry Adams said only weeks ago —

that "there's a need to end  
all acts of violence": let them send

a clear signal to the President of Sinn Fein  
that *his* clear signal wasn't sent in vain —

now that the living outnumber the dead  
we ought to quit while we're still ahead.

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*Paul Muldoon, a poet from Northern Ireland, is author  
of "Madoc." He teaches creative writing at Princeton.*



Poem by Paul Muldoon<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Muldoon, Paul. "A Clear Signal." *The New York Times* (17 March 1992): 25 (A).

Discussion questions:

- What did you feel when you read this poem?
- What is its main theme? What does the poem talk about?
- Can you say anything about the form of the poem? How does it influence the message it conveys?
- What is Roger Casement's role in this poem? Why is he an important character?

Now that you also read the poem, how does your opinion on the image change compared to your first impression of it?

- Does it change at all?
- Do you see something new that you have not noticed before?
- Do you feel different about the image?

Take notes and discuss with a partner.