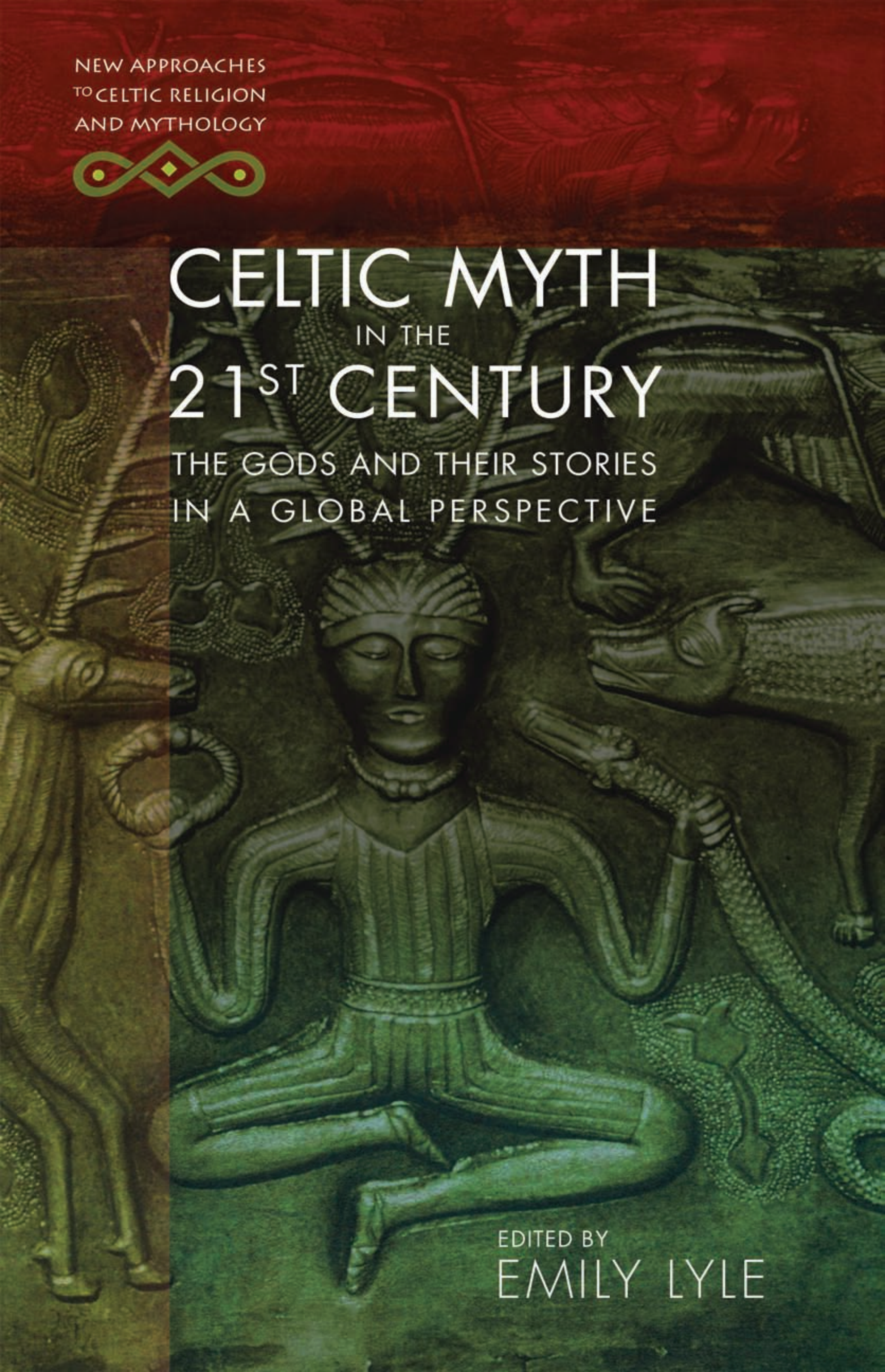
NEW APPROACHES
TO CELTIC RELIGION
AND MYTHOLOGY



CELTIC MYTH IN THE 21ST CENTURY

THE GODS AND THEIR STORIES IN A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

EDITED BY
EMILY LYLE

NEW APPROACHES
TO CELTIC RELIGION
AND MYTHOLOGY

CELTIC MYTH
IN THE
21ST CENTURY

NEW APPROACHES
TO CELTIC RELIGION AND MYTHOLOGY

Series Editor
Jonathan Wooding, *University of Sydney*

Editorial Board
Jacqueline Borsje, *University of Amsterdam*
John Carey, *University College Cork*
Joseph F. Nagy, *University of California, Los Angeles*
Thomas O' Loughlin, *University of Nottingham*
Katja Ritari, *University of Helsinki*

NEW APPROACHES
TO CELTIC RELIGION
AND MYTHOLOGY

CELTIC MYTH IN THE 21ST CENTURY

THE GODS AND THEIR STORIES IN A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

EDITED BY

EMILY LYLE

UNIVERSITY OF WALES PRESS
2018

© The Contributors, 2018

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any material form (including photocopying or storing it in any medium by electronic means and whether or not transiently or incidentally to some other use of this publication) without the written permission of the copyright owner. Applications for the copyright owner's written permission to reproduce any part of this publication should be addressed to the University of Wales Press, 10 Columbus Walk, Brigantine Place, Cardiff CF10 4UP.

www.uwp.co.uk

British Library CIP Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN: 978-1-78683-205-4
e-ISBN: 978-1-78683-206-1

The right of the Contributors to be identified as authors of this work has been asserted in accordance with sections 77 and 79 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

Typeset by Marie Doherty
Printed by CPI Antony Rowe, Melksham

FSC
www.fsc.org
MIX
Paper from
responsible sources
FSC® C013604

CONTENTS

Preface vii
List of Illustrations ix
List of Abbreviations xi
List of Contributors xiii

Introduction: Celtic Myth in the 21st Century
Jonathan M. Wooding, Series Editor 1

SECTION 1: MYTH AND THE MEDIEVAL

1 God and Gods in the Seventh Century: Tírechán on St Patrick and King Lóegaire's Daughters
Elizabeth Gray 11

2 Identity, Time and the Otherworld: An Observation on *The Wooing Of Étaín*
John Carey 23

3 The Celtic Dragon Myth Revisited
Joseph Falaky Nagy 31

4 Tory Island and Mount Errigal: Landscape Surrogates in Donegal for the Gods Balor and Lug
Brian Lacey 43

SECTION 2: COMPARATIVE MYTHOLOGY

5 Ireland as Mesocosm
Grigory Bondarenko 53

6 Hunting the Deer in Celtic and Indo-European Mythological Contexts
Maxim Fomin 73

7 Gods, Poets and Entheogens: Ingesting Wisdom in Early Irish Literary Sources
Sharon Paice MacLeod 89

8 The Armorican Voyage to the Afterlife and Celtic Myths
Fañch Bihan-Gallic 107

SECTION 3: THE NEW COSMOLOGICAL APPROACH

9 Towards Adopting a Double Perspective on Celtic Mythology and its Prehistoric Roots
Emily Lyle 121

10 Sisters' Sons in the Fourth Branch of the *Mabinogi*
Anna June Pagé 137

11 Fashioner Gods in Ireland and India: the Dagda and Tvaṣṭṛ
John Shaw 149

12 Psycho-Cosmology: Mental Mapping in *Táin Bó Cuailnge*
James Carney 163

Bibliography 179
Index 203

PREFACE

This publication stems from an initiative at the University of Edinburgh begun when Professor Rob Dunbar became head of the department of Celtic and Scottish Studies in 2013. At that time, he encouraged the holding of a colloquium on ‘Thinking about Celtic Mythology in the 21st Century’, with a board consisting of Professor Dunbar, Professor Wilson McLeod, Dr John Shaw and myself. The first colloquium was small but stimulating, and led to the holding of further colloquia on the same topic in 2014 and 2015. All the contributors to this volume, except Brian Lacey, attended one or more of these gatherings.

When a call for contributions to this proposed publication was circulated, an advisory board was established, consisting of John Carey, Rob Dunbar, Elizabeth Gray, Barbara Hillers, John Koch, Wilson McLeod, Daniel Melia, Joseph Nagy, John Shaw and Jonathan Wooding, and I am grateful to all these scholars for their careful work. I am especially indebted to Elizabeth Gray, who advised on all the contributions, and to Wilson McLeod, who kindly undertook the burden of final preparation.

Happily, the University of Edinburgh initiative coincided with the establishment of the University of Wales Press series entitled ‘New Approaches to Celtic Religion and Mythology’, under the editorship of Jonathan Wooding, and this book seemed to find its natural place in that development. I should like to thank the members of the Press for their friendly help in the process of bringing the book to publication.

Emily Lyle, Editor

this page has been left intentionally blank

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

FIGURE 4.1 *Cloch Cenn Fáelaid* – the stone of Cenn Fáelad, Falcarragh, Co. Donegal 45

FIGURE 6.1 Cernunnos, the antlered Celtic divinity, second century AD 78

FIGURE 6.2 Stag God, Grandfontaine, Donon, third century AD 79

FIGURE 9.1 The spatio-temporal structure of the Lyle 3-axis cosmological model 132

FIGURE 12.1 The spatio-temporal structure of the Genesis narrative 167

TABLE 12.1 The eight semantic locations in the *Táin* 169

this page has been left intentionally blank

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ATU	Aarne-Thompson-Uther
BB	Book of Ballymote
(e)DIL	*(Electronic) Dictionary of the Irish Language*
LL	Lebor Laignech
RIA	Royal Irish Academy
SDD	*Suidigud Tellaig Temra*
TBF	*Táin Bó Fraích*
TCD	Trinity College Dublin
TDG	*Tóruigheacht Dhiarmada agus Ghráinne*
YBL	Yellow Book of Lecan

this page has been left intentionally blank

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

Fañch Bihan-Gallic is a doctoral student in Gaelic Studies at the University of Aberdeen.

Grigory Bondarenko is a General Director of LRC Publishing House, Moscow, and is the author of *Studies in Irish Mythology*.

John Carey is Professor of Early and Medieval Irish at University College Cork.

James Carney is Senior Research Associate in Psychology at Lancaster University.

Maxim Fomin is Senior Lecturer in Celtic at Ulster University.

Elizabeth Gray is an Associate of the Department of Celtic Languages and Literatures at Harvard University, having previously held posts there as Assistant and Associate Professor.

Brian Lacey, a former lecturer at Ulster University, was Director of the Discovery Programme for advanced research in Irish archaeology from 1998 to 2012.

Emily Lyle is an Honorary Fellow in the Department of Celtic and Scottish Studies at the University of Edinburgh.

Joseph Falaky Nagy is the Henry L. Shattuck Professor of Irish Studies at Harvard University and Professor Emeritus of Celtic and Folklore at the University of California, Los Angeles.

Anna June Pagé is a Lecturer in the Institut für Sprachwissenschaft at the University of Vienna.

Sharon Paice MacLeod is the author of *Celtic Myth and Religion: A Study of Traditional Belief* and Director of the *Eólas ar Senchais* research project, funded by the Canada Council for the Arts.

John Shaw served as Senior Lecturer in Scottish Ethnology in the Department of Celtic and Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh, where he is currently an Honorary Fellow.

Jonathan M. Wooding is Professor of Celtic Studies at the University of Sydney.

INTRODUCTION: CELTIC MYTH IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Jonathan M. Wooding, Series Editor

Celtic Studies is a field long connected with the study of mythology. In the western European context the Celtic-speaking peoples have been amongst those most often held up as the inheritors of a rich body of 'tradition'. From early descriptions of the Gauls through to modern accounts of Scottish Highland culture we find a recurrent emphasis on oral culture and a concern with the supernatural in daily life. In modern scholarship Celtic languages developed a strong connection to the discipline of comparative Indo-European philology and, in turn, to theories of comparative mythology that are its by-products. Aside from these external perspectives, a primary stimulus of interest for mythologists is the very strong sense of the mythic present within Celtic literature itself; reference to deities, to heroes with supernatural qualities, and to events of the distant past. For these reasons, studies of Celtic religion, folklore and literature have very often been made subject to mythological models of interpretation.

In the twenty-first century we are more than ever mindful that conceptions and associations of the 'Celtic' may be socially and politically constructed, as well as historically situated.[1] Past claims for the particular relevance of mythology to Celtic Studies proceeded from assumptions concerning remoteness and conservatism of tradition that are now reasonably open to question.[2] We are presented with many contrasting perspectives. Though remote in European political geography, Celtic-speaking peoples were also innovative, being amongst the earliest to adopt literacy in the vernacular. In the early twentieth century one scholar could travel to the Great Blasket Island with the aim of stimulating a new genre of folk-literature; another would leave convinced that he had collected especially conservative oral traditions.[3] We have become ever more conscious of the role of the author in creating, as well as communicating a sense of the mythic. In the mid-twentieth century, medievalists were prepared to rewrite literary narratives to fit the underlying myths they detected in them. By the 1990s, when such approaches had come to be rejected as representing a distorting ‘nativism’, these texts were often read anew as Christian allegories rather than fragments of a decayed mythology.

In the twenty-first century, then, we look back on a range of often sharply contrasting positions with respect to mythology and tradition. How do we move forward from these in a productive fashion? We should be conscious that the last century was, in varying degree, a decolonising period in Celtic cultures, in which process ‘tradition’ became a politically charged concept – and, latterly, a contested one.[4] Whether for nationalist or academic reasons, Celtic Studies made a particularly strong investment in mythology in the mid-twentieth century through the work of scholars such as T. F. O’Rahilly, W. J. Gruffydd, R. S. Loomis and Lord Raglan. An influential study by Alwyn and Brinley Rees built on the new theorising of mythology by scholars such as Ananda Coomaraswamy, Georges Dumézil and Mircea Eliade.[5] These approaches generally promoted the view that the mythological interpretation of texts was a diachronic exercise, finding meaning in characters and structures that were identified as relics of much older strata in texts. Many scholars found inspiration in these approaches, not only in the search for a heritage of deep tradition, but also in productively theorising approaches to literary questions – in which scholars such as Tomás Ó Cathasaigh and Proinsias Mac Cana may be seen to have played a pioneering role.[6]

Outside the discipline of Celtic Studies, however, mythological approaches underwent substantial revision in the late twentieth century, sometimes as part of wider critiques of anthropology, religion and the colonial – especially orientalist – context in which these had been formed.[7] As Joseph Nagy observes, this also had the result that:

> many contemporary Celticists, hardly deaf to the unsettling din of countless theories and disciplinary goals crashing and burning over the last half-century in the fields of folklore and mythology, anthropology and comparative religion, are far less certain than they used to be as to what the term ‘myth’ means, and thus sceptical of its application.[8]

At the same time as the revisions occurring outside the discipline, within Celtic Studies there was a sustained assault (often termed ‘anti-nativist’) upon the conceptions of ‘text’ to which mythological models were characteristically applied. This critical turn, which began in the 1950s, but reached a crescendo around 1990, included sharp criticism of the assumptions that texts evolved (rather than were authored), and that a continuous oral tradition could be looked for immediately behind our extant early literature.[9] These reflections were important for medievalists who sought to revalue medieval texts to be seen less as evidence for prehistory than (in the words of Rachel Bromwich): ‘the mature literature and culture of the medieval Celtic nations’.[10] A further dimension of this revisionist critique questioned whether Christian medieval authors or redactors were motivated – or even able – to convey meaningful details of pre-Christian belief.

These new perspectives arguably did not reflect only academic concerns. They also reflected scholarly dissatisfaction with romantic conceptions of ‘Celtic’ as an identity, and the rejection of a local conservative politics that had invested heavily in orality and folk-life since the 1930s.[11] A nation credited with a long mythic tradition could find this both energising and enervating. In Ireland, in particular, a changing of the guard in scholarship saw the opportunity to shake off a constraining model of traditional culture to ask new questions about texts. Yet, inasmuch as the comparative mythology of the twentieth century sought (rightly or wrongly) to find its roots in a more distant common European and Indo-European heritage, it at least could not be accused of insularity. By contrast, with their focus often on interpreting the medieval text in its extant form, and in an immediate historic context, the anti-nativist approaches can appear rather narrow in theoretical terms. A failure to consider comparative models – and confusion as to even the premises for any comparative approaches – has been occasionally noted by its critics.[12] Mythological criticism at least offered wider comparisons and a dimension of theory, albeit, as Nagy observes, one that is itself subject to a strong revisionist critique.

How then do we continue to make a productive and critical approach to mythology in the twenty-first century? The studies in this collection point to a number of viable approaches. Theoretical models and collections of data from mythological studies can, as Ó Cathasaigh has cogently observed, be used productively even if one does not accept all the premises on which they are founded.[13] What Tom Sjöblom has termed the ‘weak version of the mythological approach’ may comprise an explicitly heuristic use of mythological criticism – a type of use of theory that is not uncommon in literary criticism.[14] A search for common sources, moreover, is not the only reason to make comparisons outside Celtic cultures – a point that may be lost in the continuing deconstruction of Celtic essentialism.[15]

One approach, then, is to redefine myth to operate largely independently of its claims to a prehistoric dimension, staying on the historic shore (or at least its ‘inter-tidal’ space). A number of studies of myth in this volume do this. Joseph Nagy in his contribution defines ‘myth’ first of all as a story concerning something important to the society in which it is written – echoing an approach to ‘myth’ found more generally in contemporary criticism.[16] What separates myths from other stories here, perhaps, is their character as mutable narratives which explain and sanction things that are important to community or nation. They may bestow a status of the sacred on their actors, but do not necessarily demand these to be decayed gods or demi-gods of a distant past in performing their functions. Nagy makes a reading of a monster motif in which he explicitly contrasts the nineteenth-century theorising that made the monsters ‘vestiges of an archaic past or redolent of an otherwise long-forgotten pantheon – that is, “mythic” in the old-fashioned sense’ – with a reading of the texts that has ‘as much to say about the rhetoric, the inherent contradictions, and the potential monstrosity of the texts in which we find them as they do about the bygone ideologies in which these stories may have been rooted’.[17] The monster, in Nagy’s critique, becomes a symbol that is important in a transitional context: symbolising the encounter of orality with literacy and old religious ideas with new ones. This is similar to Maxim Fomin’s approach to the motif of the deer-hunt in Irish and Indo-European myth, which he sees ‘not as embodiments of the pre-Christian mythological tradition’, but ‘codes “of good conduct in which the mythological tradition is packaged for a contemporary audience” of the Christian medieval era’ and ‘founding charters’ for society.[18] This is an approach that also appreciates the sense of the mythic that is unarguably created in the texts themselves. John Carey in his contribution concerns himself with ideas that (here quoting Thomas Charles-Edwards) he finds ‘hover on the margins’ of the narrative ‘ideas or practices taken for granted in the eighth and ninth centuries, but which can only be deduced by us because they appear to be required in order to make sense of the text’.[19] This leads him to resolve what other editors dismiss as chronological discrepancies created by copying as ideas explicable in a wider conception of the ‘otherworld’.

The reflection on myth here perhaps reminds us first of all to envisage a world outside the text and not to attempt to explain it according to too narrow a set of criteria.[20] The otherworld might still be a primal conception, but for the purposes of the critique its contemporary literary currency is also pertinent. Elizabeth Gray is, like Carey, interested in widening our perception beyond the text, where she uses a mythological reading of the encounter with Laoghaire’s daughters in the *Vitae* of Patrick by Tírechán and Muirchú to reconstruct ‘Tírechán’s imagined pre-Christian world of belief'.[21] To some extent Gray, like Carey, uses the elements of the mythological approach to provoke consciousness of the difference between the Christian and pre-Christian world-view:

> to know about the gods was necessarily to have heard stories about them: someone must have spoken about them, detailed their genealogies and family histories, identified them as supernatural patrons of particular peoples, and associated them with specific places in ways that mapped the world of the gods on to the Irish landscape.[22]

Her study may be seen as a departure from the very theological readings of Tírechán and Muirchú in recent criticism; it is important to say that these approaches need not be seen as exclusive of each other.[23] It also may be seen to offset the occasionally monolithic conception of the 'Christian writer' that has emerged out of the anti-nativist critique; Gray rightly notes John Gibson's warning against reading Old Testament texts in terms of our perceptions of what writers 'ought to be saying' in the context of their own religious doctrines.[24] In his study of *Cath Maige Tured*, Brian Lacey is more definite on the longer connections of his subject, the literary and landscape identity 'Lug'. His study ventures only a short way across the historic shore, however, in seeking to explain the functions and relations of sites associated with Lug and Balor in the north-west Irish landscape. These studies, we should note, with their emphasis on the processes by which the society and landscape were transformed by the encounter of religions, converge with a welcome recent renewal of interest in religious conversion in the early Celtic world.[25]

The authors of several other chapters venture into the wider waters of comparative mythology. Grigory Bondarenko, Maxim Fomin and Sharon Paice MacLeod, in making comparisons with Indian materials, take us more into the territory mapped out by Alwyn and Brinley Rees, Myles Dillon and other Indo-European mythologists who compared Celtic and Indian traditions. Fañch Bihan-Gallic's study of Breton otherworld narratives does not venture such a wide geographical reach, but takes an extended diachronic approach within the Celtic field, including investigation of evidence from Classical sources.

Some contributions, however, venture deeper into structuralist theorising of myth in the Indo-European context. If one could gain the impression that the revisionism of the late twentieth century universally rejected such diachronic studies of comparative mythology, it should be observed that this is not the case. A new theorising of this topic indeed develops the ideas of the most forceful of the anti-nativist critics, Kim McCone, whose re-interpretation of Dumézil's tripartite model has been further developed in Emily Lyle's re-approach to the Indo-European model.[26] John Shaw in his contribution describes this as 'a synthesis of prehistoric systems that can be reconstructed for Indo-European, comprising age grade, royal succession and spatio-temporality'.[27] This approach posits the idea that there is a sharp divide between the organisation of the cultural commodity of knowledge as it occurs in oral and in literate societies. It proposes that myth in the preliterate society formed part of a total cosmology and can usefully be explored by putting it conceptually in this framework. This approach argues for the necessity for structural bases for the thought-world of an oral society to rest on. Lyle and James Carney separately identify one of these structural bases as having three interlocked polarities. Carney applies this structure to the Irish saga *Táin Bó Cuailnge* in his contribution. Anna Pagé and John Shaw, while exploring respectively medieval Welsh and Irish materials, find Lyle's new cosmology model productive in reflection on themes of function and genealogy in these tales.

This collection, as a whole, models a series of approaches that offer new and imaginative uses of mythology as a method of criticism. They vary as to approach and differ upon the chronological remit of studies of mythology. All have in common the belief in a requirement for critical reflection on method and engagement in detail with sources, in an inclusive spirit, that is the aim of this series.[28]

Notes

[1] Patrick Sims-Williams, 'Celtomania and Celtoscepticism', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 36 (1998), 1–35; Malcolm Chapman, *The Celts: The Construction of a Myth* (Basingstoke and New York, 1992).

[2] See, especially, the reflections of Edwin Ardener, some of whose students made significant, if now somewhat neglected, contributions to Celtic Studies: Edwin Ardener, 'Remote areas: some theoretical considerations', in Anthony Jackson (ed.), *Anthropology at Home* (London, 1987), 38–54.

[3] See, for summary: Bo Almqvist, 'The mysterious Mícheál Ó Gaoithín, Boccaccio and the Blasket tradition', *Béaloideas*, 58 (1990), 75–140 (pp. 87–90).

[4] A new polity such as Ireland, claiming a strong Christian identity, also could not be neutral in response to claims that the pagan past was inherent in its living tradition – a problem that is thoughtfully satirised by Brian Friel in his 1990 play *Dancing at Lughnasa*.

[5] Also a strong investment in orality in the work of the Irish Folklore Commission under James Delargy.

[6] Tomás Ó Cathasaigh, *The Heroic Biography of Cormac Mac Airt* (Dublin, 1977); Tomás Ó Cathasaigh, *Coire Sois: The Cauldron of Knowledge. A Companion to Early*

Irish Saga, ed. Matthieu Boyd (South Bend, 2014); Proinsias Mac Cana, *The Cult of the Sacred Centre: Essays on Celtic Ideology* (Dublin, 2011).

[7] Bruce Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth: Narrative, Ideology, and Scholarship* (Chicago, 1999); Wouter Belier, *Decayed Gods: Origin and Development of Georges Dumézil's 'idéologie tripartite'* (Leiden, 1991).

[8] Joseph F. Nagy, 'Introduction', in *CSANA Yearbook 6: Myth in Celtic Literature* (Dublin, 2007), p. 7.

[9] Kim McCone, *Pagan Past and Christian Present in Early Irish Literature* (Maynooth, 1990); also see extensive reviews by Patrick Sims-Williams (*Éigse*, 29 (1996), 179–96) and David Dumville (*Peritia*, 10 (1996), 389–98); Jonathan M. Wooding, 'Reapproaching the pagan Celtic past: anti-nativism, asterisk reality and the Late-Antiquity paradigm', *Studia Celtica Fennica: Finnish Journal of Celtic Studies*, 6 (2009), 63–76; Mark Williams, *Ireland's Immortals: A History of the Gods of Irish Myth* (Princeton, 2016), esp. pp. 45–6.

[10] Minutes of Cambridge University Senate (14 March 1967), in Michael Lapidge (ed.), *H. M. Chadwick and the Study of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic in Cambridge* (Aberystwyth, 2015), p. 256.

[11] Dumville, Review of McCone, *Pagan Past*, p. 390; Philip O'Leary, *The Prose Literature of the Gaelic Revival* (University Park PA, 1994), pp. 14–52.

[12] J. P. Mackey, 'Christian past and primal present', *Études Celtiques*, 29 (1992), 285–97; Dumville, Review of McCone, *Pagan Past*, 393.

[13] Ó Cathasaigh, *Coire Sois*, p. 43.

[14] Though, as Sjöblom observes, such approaches may then only arguably remain 'mythological' and might simply be regarded as 'textual': Tom Sjöblom, ''Mind Stories: A Cognitive Approach to the Role of Narratives in Early Irish Tradition', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 47 (2004), 59–72 (pp. 63–4).

[15] See the thoughtful comments by Barry Lewis, 'Review of Patrick Sims-Williams, *Ireland in Medieval Welsh Literature*', *Celtica*, 27 (2013), 176–81 (p. 81).

[16] See Robert Segal, *Myth: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 4–6. Heather O'Donoghue, writing about Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian myth, suggests 'stories about the gods', but in the medieval Celtic tradition deities are not so directly identified: *English Poetry and Old Norse Myth: A History* (Oxford, 2014), p. 1; also see Williams, *Ireland's Immortals*, p. xv.

[17] See Chapter 3.

[18] See Chapter 6.

[19] See Chapter 2.

[20] See the comments of Dumville, Review of McCone, *Pagan Past*, p. 395.

[21] See Chapter 1.

[22] See Chapter 1.

[23] Thomas O'Loughlin, *Discovering St Patrick* (London, 2005); Aideen O'Leary, 'An Irish Apocryphal Apostle: Muirchú's Portrayal of Saint Patrick', *Harvard Theological Review*, 89 (1996), 287–30. Bernhard Maier, 'Dead Men don't Wear Plaid: Celtic Myth and Christian Creed in Medieval Irish Conceptions of the Afterlife', in Joseph F. Nagy (ed.), *Writing Down the Myths* (Turnhout, 2013), pp. 105–31 (pp. 112–13). Also see Williams, *Ireland's Immortals,* pp. 39–45.

[24] See Chapter 1.

[25] See Roy Flechner and Máire Ní Mhaonaigh (eds), *Converting the Isles I: The Introduction of Christianity into the Early Medieval Insular World* (Turnhout, 2016).

[26] McCone, *Pagan Past*, esp. 209–11. Emily Lyle, *Ten Gods: A New Approach to Defining the Mythological Structures of the Indo-Europeans* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 2012); Emily Lyle, 'The Cosmological Theory of Myth', in Wim M. J. van Binsbergen and Eric Venbrux (eds), *New Perspectives on Myth: Proceedings of the Second Annual Conference of the International Association for Comparative Mythology* (Haarlem, 2010), pp. 267–77.

[27] See Chapter 11.

[28] I would like to thank John Carey and Emily Lyle for their helpful comments and suggestions.

SECTION 1

MYTH AND THE MEDIEVAL

this page has been left intentionally blank

1

GOD AND GODS IN THE SEVENTH CENTURY: TÍRECHÁN ON ST PATRICK AND KING LÓEGAIRE'S DAUGHTERS

Elizabeth Gray

Stories about the gods of pagan Ireland lie barely below the surface of Tírechán's account of the meeting between Patrick and two daughters of King Lóegaire on the slopes of Cruachan.[1] Composed in the second half of the seventh century, Tírechán's description of St Patrick's missionary travels establishing churches that will form his patrimony reflects contemporary claims by Armagh and by leading branches of the Uí Néill that placed much of Ireland under the actual or aspirational control of an intertwined spiritual and secular aristocracy. The passages under consideration here include an extended anecdote describing the conversion of the sisters, fair-haired Ethne and red-haired Fedelm, and an earlier reference to efforts by the girls' druid foster fathers to keep Patrick away from their charges.[2]

To prevent Patrick from entering Mag Aí, lest he influence the girls to 'make the ways of the holy man their own', the girls' druid foster fathers had generated darkness and fog that took Patrick and his bishops three days of fasting and prayer to disperse.[3] Resuming his missionary journey, Patrick reaches the well of Clebach before sunrise, where he and his companions are met by the king's daughters, arriving there to wash. Ethne and Fedelm do not know 'whence they were or of what shape or from what people or from what region'.[4] The sisters' first thought, Tírechán tells us, is that Patrick and his companions are men of the *síd* (*viros side*), 'men of the otherworld', or alternatively, in Latin, 'of the earthly gods' (*aut deorum terrenorum*).[5] The girls also consider a third possibility, that what they see is an 'apparition' (*fantassiam*).[6]

Aware that the strangers may be deities, the girls address Patrick, their first words seeking literally to place him: 'Whence are you and whence have you come?'[7] To know who and what the strangers are, the sisters ask a double question that offers Patrick the opportunity to identify his country and people of origin as well as the starting point for his journey to Cruachan. Ethne and Fedelm are not simply curious. They need information to know how they should respond to the strangers, whatever they might be. Personal identity and legal standing in the early Irish context depended upon an individual's territorial origin and family affiliation.[8] Status influenced the style and quality of clothing as well as hairdressing and personal ornaments – Patrick and his bishops would be wearing the unfamiliar Christian tonsure, and perhaps unfamiliar garments.[9] To recognise a stranger's shape is both to see the physical person clearly and to understand the significance of what one sees. Identity in these terms, once established, determines appropriate interpersonal behaviour.

Patrick's failure to reply to the sisters' questions is significant for the tale's fundamental strategic contrast between pagan and Christian perspectives. As narrator, Tírechán indicates what his pagan characters – the two princesses and their druid foster fathers – are thinking, while Patrick is known solely through his words and deeds. While the girls wonder silently about Patrick's possible supernatural status, Patrick, directing attention away from whatever the girls may suppose, proclaims his 'true God' as the appropriate object of their devotion. In the parallel version of this encounter in the later *Vita Tripartita*, the girls ask Patrick directly whether he and his company are from the *síd*, from the gods.[10] He does not reply there either.

For these two princesses, fostered by druids, the realm of the gods is not unfamiliar territory. Ethne's rapid-fire questions to Patrick about his God document her fifth-century beliefs about the deities she knows – as imagined by Tírechán in the seventh century.[11]

> The first maiden said: 'Who is God and where is God and whose God is he and where is his dwelling-place? Has your God sons and daughters, gold and silver? Is he ever-living, is he beautiful, have many fostered his son, are his daughters dear and beautiful in the eyes of the men of the earth? Is he in the sky or in the earth or in the water, in rivers, in mountains, in valleys? Give us an account of him; how shall he be seen, how is he loved, how is he found, is he found in youth, in old age?'[12]

Irish society was still in the process of integrating elements of its cultural inheritance into a new Christian order. Druids, for example, retained legal status and were entitled to sick maintenance equal to that of a *bóaire*, the free landholder whom Fergus Kelly compares to the twentieth-century

Irish 'strong farmer', a person of wealth and standing in his community, although well below the rank imagined by Tírechán, whose fifth-century druids serve as advisers of kings and fosterers for royal children.[13]

What can we learn from Patrick's dialogue with Lóegaire's daughters about Tírechán's imagined pre-Christian world of belief? First, it is polytheistic and preliterate. For the sisters, there are many gods, not one, and Ethne's questions reflect characteristics of deities she knows from oral tradition. Before the arrival of Christian literacy, to know about the gods was necessarily to have heard stories about them: someone must have spoken about them, detailed their genealogies and family histories, identified them as supernatural patrons of particular peoples, and associated them with specific places in ways that mapped the world of the gods on to the Irish landscape.[14]

We know from the girls' initial reaction to Patrick and his companions that gods may appear in human form and turn up unexpectedly at dawn. One by one, Ethne's queries reveal further 'default assumptions' about the nature of the gods she knows.[15] When she asks Patrick where God is and how he shall be seen, she reflects her understanding that gods can be located and perceived through deliberate but unspecified human actions. In asking the location of God's dwelling-place, she indicates that specific sites can be identified as the abode of deities. That individuals or peoples claim certain gods as their own particular gods is implied by her question 'whose God is he?'[16]

Among themselves the gods' relationships are intimate and familial, and like mortal parents they are concerned about the upbringing of their sons and daughters. They foster their many children in other households, a practice that in early Irish society created networks of personal and familial ties and produced strong emotional and contractual bonds among the families in question.[17] The gods have great wealth in precious metals, both silver and gold. Young or old in appearance, they may be both beautiful and immortal.

Ethne expects a god's son to have many fosterers, although she does not indicate whether they might include human families.[18] That possibility appears in later literature: one version of the birth tale of Cú Chulainn, identified as a son of the god Lug, features competition among leading Ulster nobles to serve as Cú Chulainn's foster parents that results in a multitude of fosterers, a matter of boasting for him when he woos his wife Emer.[19] As Edel Bhreathnach points out, 'Royal dynasties depended on fosterage to build alliances, and in many cases multiple fosterages of royal families were effective in creating networks of alliances.'[20] Such advantages were evidently not lost on Ethne's gods, their practice of multiple fosterage underscoring their similarity to mortal Irish aristocrats.

Ethne wonders aloud whether the daughters of Patrick's God are dear and beautiful in the eyes of men, and a little later asks in what way Patrick's God is to be loved.[21] Her first question might imply the existence of seventh-century vernacular tales addressing relationships between mortal men and supernatural women.[22] In different ways both questions may foreshadow the girls' ready acceptance of Patrick's offer of marriage to the divine son of his 'true God'.

Within the framework of Tírechán's narrative, the phrasing of Ethne's questions both purports to reflect pagan belief and dovetails neatly with the dominant structure of the Christian message set forth in Patrick's responses.[23] The point-by-point juxtaposition of pagan and Christian perspectives provides a brief exposition of Christian belief that leads directly to the princesses' conversion. At the same time, the structure of Tírechán's narrative implicitly claims accuracy for the girls' knowledge of pre-Christian religious traditions as well as the importance of what they know.

Curious about where Patrick's God dwells, Ethne thinks primarily in terms of earthly terrain and terrestrial scale: her gods may be found in sky or earth or water, rivers, mountains and valleys. In presenting these surmises, Tírechán may have had in mind the numerous sites bearing *síd* place names, such as *Síd in Broga* (Newgrange) and Midir's *síd* of Brí Léith (Ardagh, Co. Longford).[24] Hogan's *Onomasticon* includes well over one hundred *síd* sites, and he adds 'many are the Sheeaun tls. [that is, *sídán* townlands]', illustrating the high frequency of these intensely localised supernatural places.[25] Irish rivers are also associated with deities, typically feminine. Tírechán knew – and crossed – the Shannon as *Bandea*, Irish for 'Goddess'.[26]

Patrick's responses to Ethne and Fedelm reveal how far the nature and actions of his God transcend those of the deities of pagan Ireland. God's dwelling reaches far beyond earth and sky to encompass the entire universe, which he not only inhabits but has created and continues to sustain. Patrick emphasises God's role in bringing into being all that exists. His God is present throughout the universe, including the reaches of interstellar space. He makes all things live.

Patrick goes on to describe his triune God in terms that constitute a basic Christian creed. He explains that the coeternal Son of his God is similar to his Father, neither being older or younger, with the Holy Spirit breathing in them, and the three not being separate. Patrick then proposes a royal marriage: ‘now I wish to join you to the heavenly king since you are daughters of an earthly king, if you are willing to believe’.[27] The Latin word *coniungere*, translated ‘join’, is the customary word for ‘marry’, and the girls ‘as with one voice and with one heart’ accept the offer.[28] As Ethne has already indicated, in whatever way a god is seen or found, love is the appropriate response.[29]

As young unmarried Irish women of high rank, Ethne and Fedelm would expect to be bestowed in marriage, not to select husbands themselves.[30] Their ready acceptance of Patrick’s proposal without consulting parents or fosterers is legally transgressive, but the offer might well seem to them one no father or family would refuse.[31] Given Patrick’s account of his ‘heavenly king’, it might well seem to Ethne and Fedelm that there could be no nobler husband for them both, no more fortunate marriage alliance for their people, and they embrace sisterly polygamy in light of the transcendent royal status of their divine spouse.

Patrick’s proposal is expressed plainly, without elaboration or nuance, and at this point in the narrative the sisters’ understanding and acceptance are literal, not figurative. They are not pursuing Christian virginity. Viewing the proposed marriage as marriage in the usual sense, Ethne and Fedelm ask ‘Teach us with all diligence how we can believe in the heavenly king, so that we may see him face to face. Tell us, and we will do as you say.’[32]

In the dialogue that follows, what the sisters learn of their new faith is left largely to the reader to infer. When Patrick, for example, begins the baptismal catechism by asking whether the girls believe that ‘through baptism you cast off the sin of your father and mother’, the text provides no frame of reference that would identify Adam and Eve or describe their original sin.[33]

In comparison with the Order of Baptism in the seventh- or early eighth-century Bobbio Missal, Tírechán’s treatment of Patrick’s catechism and the sisters’ responses is abbreviated.[34] Patrick’s account of his God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, for example, which functions as the credal statement supporting the girls’ baptismal commitment, makes no reference to Christ’s birth, passion, descent into hell, resurrection from the dead, and coming to judge both living and dead on the day of judgement.[35] Exorcism, as an element of the baptismal rite, occurs in the Bobbio version both as a general exorcism and as a specific requirement that the candidate renounce Satan and his works.[36] Tírechán’s baptismal catechism contains no exorcism, and does not mention Satan.

Patrick proceeds to ask Ethne and Fedelm, ‘Do you believe in penance after sin?’ ‘Do you believe in life after death?’ ‘Do you believe in the resurrection on the day of judgement?' concluding with 'Do you believe in the unity of the church?'[37] The Bobbio Missal brings these topics together in a single question, asking the baptismal candidate to affirm belief in the Holy Catholic Church (with no added emphasis on unity), as well as the communion of the saints, the remission of sins, the resurrection of the body and life after death.[38]

Once baptised, Ethne and Fedelm demand to see their bridegroom. Learning from Patrick that they must leave their present life to do so, they approach the transition in practical terms, explicitly choosing death after receiving the sacrament in order to meet their new spouse face to face.[39] The girls' voluntary death is the crux of the tale, challenging the reader to consider the meaning of death and the nature of continuing life. Throughout the tale, by juxtaposing the perspectives of pagan and Christian characters, Tírechán contrasts aspects of their respective belief systems, raising questions of meaning and value inherent in each system.

From a Christian perspective, the death of Lóegaire's daughters marks their entry into larger life, their journey to paradise. For their pagan friends and relatives, however, the girls are simply dead. They will never fulfil the promise of their lives as future queens and mothers of princes, the social roles laid out for them at birth. Patrick has not only usurped their father's right to select husbands for Ethne and Fedelm, but also figures paradoxically as supernatural abductor and psychopomp.[40] The sisters are lost to their kinfolk as surely as the heroines (or victims) of later otherworld abduction tales, in which young women are taken into *síd* dwellings, sometimes with the indication that their conscious spirit has been separated from the body, with a corpse (or simulacrum) left behind to be mourned.[41]

Their uncomprehending family and friends lament them according to pagan custom, building a grave mound (Irish *ferta*) to mark their burial site. Discussing continuity and change in relation to pre-Christian Irish burial customs, Bhreathnach describes the ongoing social role of the deceased:

> At another level, the dead are often active ancestors who have their own cults and who become important in a genealogical tradition. This tendency was very prevalent in medieval Ireland, where genealogies were powerful tools for legitimizing dynastic or ecclesiastical power, and for the ownership of land. Like genealogies, certain grave mounds, *fertae*, 'ancestral graves', were used as boundary and territorial makers.[42]

Making reference to Tírechán's account, Bhreathnach points out that such pagan burial sites, which were sometimes employed in the formal legal process of establishing a claim to land, were often appropriated as focal points for a cult of relics over which a church was built.[43] The king's daughters are interred inside the ancient royal ceremonial complex of Rathcroghan. Christian or pagan, Ethne and Fedelm remain as guardians of a supernatural place linked to legitimate authority over a land and its boundaries. Eventually their burial site does become the locus of a new Patrician church: 'And the *ferta* was made over to Patrick with the bones of the holy virgins, and to his heirs after him for ever, and he made an earthen church in that place.'[44]

The burial of the two princesses, however, is not the end of the story. When the girls' druid fosterers confront Patrick in grief and anger, his steadfast replies eventually persuade them to join him as Christian believers. Both men are tonsured, and bring to their new religious status full knowledge of Ireland's pagan past. Tírechán remains pointedly agnostic about the source of the power that enabled these two worried foster fathers to conjure darkness and fog to keep Patrick away from their charges, and respectful of the druids' devotion to their fosterlings.[45] Ultimately, the king's daughters' upbringing and belief system have prepared them for conversion, making them ready to hear and accept Patrick's message, as their foster fathers both feared and foresaw.

Regarding that belief system, the most noteworthy aspect of this tale may be what it does not say. Nowhere does Tírechán associate the girls' gods or the efforts of their druid foster fathers with the Late Antique powers of evil familiar to Irish scholars from Christian authors such as St Augustine and Isidore. Missing are references to evil demons, fallen angels, cruel idols, extortionate sacrifices, poetic fantasies, euhemeristic misinterpretation of allegory, and/or demonic deceit.[46] John Carey indicates that in addition to euhemerisation and demonisation, alternative explanations of Ireland's pre-Christian deities include descent from elder children of Adam who had not themselves been affected by their parents' fall from grace, and the possibility that the Irish gods were semi-fallen angels who had not supported Lucifer but had not actively opposed him.[47] Regarding the diversity of early Irish explanations of the nature and origins of their pre-Christian deities, Carey concludes that 'it is a testimony perhaps to the vitality of the immortals themselves that none of these rationalisations ever definitively triumphed'.[48]

Tírechán's account, by presenting two distinct perspectives on a series of events, invites readers to compare, contrast and parse its elements as seen through pagan and Christian eyes. In addition to the opposed yet complementary fifth-century pagan and Christian perspectives imagined by the text, Tírechán's hypothetical seventh-century (or subsequent) reader brings a third perspective. That reader is informed by what had happened since Patrick's day and benefits from a nuanced understanding of Christian teaching. Seen from this third perspective, Ethne and Fedelm are virgin saints, brides of Christ in a spiritual sense, whose burial mound has long been a Patrician church, and whose conversion at dawn opened Connacht to Christianity and to the authority of Patrick's mission, as understood by the ambitions of seventh-century Armagh. This hypothetical seventh-century reader is also aware that Ireland's pagan deities, whose lives and family concerns lie just beneath the tale's surface, were continuing to play significant cultural roles – providing paradigmatic authority on judgements related to medicine and certain craft professions, for example – within Ireland's imaginative and integrative creation of a new Christian order, an order within which narratives about the gods would continue to flourish.[49]

Notes

[1] Ludwig Bieler (ed. and trans.), *The Patrician Texts in the Book of Armagh* (Dublin, 1979). Bieler indicates (p. 36) that Tírechán's sources were both oral and written, including a book in the possession of Bishop Ultán of Ardbraccan in Meath (d. 657). In regard to the episode of Lóegaire's daughters, Bieler suggests (p. 223) that 'its elaboration is not, or not entirely, Tírechán's own' while indicating his view that the treatment of the druids' conversion reflects 'Tírechán's simple narrative style'. Bieler also discusses (p. 223) earlier scholars' views on the passage.

[2] Bieler, *Patrician Texts*, pp. 142–3 (Tírechán 26), and pp. 138–9 (Tírechán 19).

[3] Bieler, *Patrician Texts*, pp. 138–9 (Tírechán 19(2)).

[4] Bieler, *Patrician Texts*, pp. 142–3 (Tírechán 26(3)).

[5] Liminal pre-dawn settings feature in later vernacular tales of supernatural encounters, a classic example being the meeting of Midir and Eochaid Airem on the rampart of Tara before the court had been opened (see Osborn Bergin and R. I. Best (eds and trans.), '*Tochmarc Étaíne*', *Ériu*, 12 (1938), 137–96 (pp. 174–5)). The presence of water in the form of a spring or well is a motif with both secular and biblical parallels: Eochaid Feidlech meets the beautiful Étaín beside a spring, where she has come, like Lóegaire's daughters, to wash (see Eleanor Knott (ed.), *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* (Dublin, 1936), p. 1). Biblical meetings beside wells include that between Rebecca and the servant of Abraham (Genesis 24: 42–62), and that of Jesus with the Samaritan woman (John 4: 7–29). A detailed and insightful discussion of the meeting of Patrick and Lóegaire's daughters is provided by Jacqueline Borsje, 'Monotheistic to a Certain Extent. The "Good Neighbors" of God in Ireland', in

Anne-Marie Korte and Maaike de Haardt (eds), *The Boundaries of Monotheism: Interdisciplinary Explorations into the Foundations of Western Monotheism* (Leiden, 2009), pp. 53–82. Borsje explores (pp. 56–64) the range of terms for supernatural beings in Irish and cites parallels in other texts for the terms used by Tírechán. Joseph Nagy, 'Myth and *Legendum* in Medieval and Modern Ireland', in Gregory Schrempp and William Hansen (eds), *Myth: a New Symposium* (Bloomington, 2002), pp. 124–38, explores Tírechán's account of the conversion of King Lóegaire's daughters and their druid foster fathers, identifying possible underlying story patterns that include meetings between mortals and supernatural women and the role of twinning or doubling.

[6] On the semantic range of the third term used to describe the girls' surmises regarding Patrick and his companions, *fantassiam*, 'apparition', see Borsje, 'Monotheistic', pp. 60, 62–3.

[7] Bieler, *Patrician Texts*, pp. 142–3 (Tírechán 26(4)). In his commentary on the text, Bieler, p. 224, identifies a similar series of questions, addressed to Bishop Ibar by a pagan king in southern Britain, in the *Vita Abbani*, ch. 13, ed. Charles Plummer, *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae* (Oxford, 1910), vol. 1, pp. 10–12. Borsje, 'Monotheistic', p. 58, n. 22, discusses the *Vita Abbani* passage, indicating that the *Vita* is dated to the beginning of the thirteenth century. Borsje, 'Monotheistic', p. 60, n. 32, also cites a comparable passage from Jonah 1: 8–9. The sailors who have taken Jonah on to their ship ask whence he has come, where he is going, and about his region and people. Tírechán's Patrick, however, fails to give Jonah's reply: *Servus Domini ego sum* ('I am a servant of the Lord'). Borsje further notes that similar questions have been identified as traditional elements in accounts of meetings between mortals and supernatural beings, citing Proinsias Mac Cana, 'On the "Prehistory" of *Immram Brain*', *Ériu*, 26 (1975), 33–52 (pp. 38–40), and John Carey, 'The Baptism of the Gods', in *A Single Ray of the Sun: Religious Speculation in Early Ireland* (Andover and Aberystwyth, 1999), p. 14. See also the discussion of such interrogative passages, questioning the evidence for regarding them as an element of pre-Christian insular narrative, and providing additional biblical examples, in Kim McCone, *Echtrae Chonnlai and the Beginnings of Vernacular Narrative Writing in Ireland* (Naas, 2000), pp. 54–5.

[8] Fergus Kelly, *A Guide to Early Irish Law* (Dublin, 1988). See in particular the introduction and chapters on the law of persons, pp. 1–98.

[9] Fergus Kelly, *Early Irish Farming* (Dublin, 1997), pp. 263–4, describes the theoretical relationship of clothing colour to rank. See also Niamh Whitfield, 'Dress and accessories in the early Irish tale "The Wooing of Becfhola"', in Robert Netherton and Gale R. Owen-Crocker (eds), *Medieval Clothing and Textiles*, 2 (Woodbridge, 2006), pp. 1–34.

[10] Kathleen Mulchrone (ed.), *Bethu Phátraic: The Tripartite Life of Patrick* (Dublin, 1939), p. 61. Borsje, 'Monotheistic', p. 61, notes that 'or' is absent in the Irish text; the girls ask 'are you from the *síde*, are you from the gods'. Versions of the meeting of Patrick and the king's daughters in later lives of Patrick are compared in detail in Borsje, 'Monotheistic', pp. 59–64.

[11] For Old Testament references to God and gods that would have been familiar to seventh-century Irish ecclesiastical scholars, and no doubt provided as much of a challenge for interpretation then as for scholars of the Hebrew Bible today, see the summary provided by John C. L. Gibson, 'Language about God in the Old Testament', in Glenys Davies (ed.), *Polytheistic Systems* (Edinburgh, 1989), pp. 43–50. For the use of 'god' in relation to living human beings such as Moses, in Exodus 4: 16, 7: 1, or the king, in Psalms 45: 7, see Borsje, 'Monotheistic', p. 79, n. 109. For a discussion of the issues see also John Carey, 'From David to Labraid: Sacral Kingship and the Emergence of Monotheism in Israel and Ireland', in Katja Ritari and Alexandra Bergholm (eds), *Approaches to Religion and Mythology in Celtic Studies* (Newcastle, 2008), pp. 2–27.

[12] Bieler, *Patrician Texts*, pp. 142–3 (Tírechán 26 (5–7)).

[13] Liam Breatnach, *The Early Irish Law Text Senchas Már and the Question of the Date* (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 40–2, discusses the dating of the text. For the legal standing of druids, see Kelly, *A Guide to Early Irish Law*, pp. 10, 59–61. Kelly refers to *Bretha Crólige* for the level of a druid's sick-maintenance (p. 60); he also indicates that in *Uraicecht Becc* druids are classed as *dóernemed*, translated in the Index of Irish terms as 'dependent professional' (p. 318).

[14] Christianity both required and provided Latin literacy. Tírechán 13(1), for example, makes reference to Patrick writing an alphabet (for a certain Cerpanus) after founding two churches (see Bieler, *Patrician Texts*, pp. 132–3).

[15] Bieler, *Patrician Texts*, pp. 142–3 (Tírechán 26(5–7)).

[16] Bieler, *Patrician Texts*, pp. 142–3 (Tírechán 26(5)).

[17] Kelly, *A Guide to Early Irish Law*, pp. 86–90 (p. 89).

[18] Kelly, *A Guide to Early Irish Law*, pp. 86–90.

[19] A. G. Van Hamel (ed.), *Compert Con Culainn and Other Stories* (Dublin, 1968), pp. 1–8; for the dialogue with Emer see pp. 28–30.

[20] Edel Bhreathnach, *Ireland in the Medieval World, AD 400–1000: Landscape, Kingship and Religion* (Dublin, 2014), p. 91.

[21] Bieler, *Patrician Texts*, pp. 142–3 (Tírechán 26(7)). Love, however understood, is presented as the appropriate response to deity in the pagan context; there is no indication at any point that the girls find their gods fearsome.

[22] John Carey, 'On the Interrelationships of Some "*Cín Dromma Snechtai*" Texts', *Ériu,* 46 (1995), 71–92. *Cín Dromma Snechtai* (*CDS*) does not survive as a single document, but is cited in a number of texts as a source. Among the texts attributed to *CDS* are several that deal with *Tochmarc Étaíne* (*TÉ*) materials. For later reworking of the *TÉ* material recounting the struggle between the supernatural Midir and the mortal king Eochaid Airem for possession of Étaín, whom each claims as his legitimate wife, see Bergin and Best, '*Tochmarc Étaíne*'. On the dating of *Cín Dromma Snechtai*, see also McCone, *Echtrae Chonnlai*, especially pp. 29–47.

[23] Bieler, *Patrician Texts*, pp. 223–6, provides notes on Tírechán 26, pointing to Ps. 32: 6 as one possible source.

[24] These sites feature in the *Tochmarc Étaíne* material discussed by Carey, 'Interrelationships', pp. 71–2 and 89–92, in relation to the lost contents of *Cín*

Dromma Snechtai (*CDS*). Whatever the precise date of *CDS* and whatever its relationship to the extant *TÉ* material, the *síd* dwellings of Midir and the Mac Óc evidently figured prominently in *TÉ* material in *CDS*. On the date of *CDS*, see also Kim McCone, *Echtrae Chonnlai*, p. 41.

[25] Edmund Hogan, *Onomasticon Goedelicum: Locorum et Tribuum Hiberniae et Scotiae An Index, with Identifications, to the Gaelic Names of Places and Tribes* (Dublin, 1910), pp. 597–600 (*Síd* names) and p. 597 (for *sídhán*).

[26] Bieler, *Patrician Texts*, pp. 138–9 (Tírechán 19(5)).

[27] Bieler, *Patrician Texts*, pp. 142–5 (Tírechán 26(12)).

[28] Bieler, *Patrician Texts*, pp. 144–5 (Tírechán 26(13)).

[29] Bieler, *Patrician Texts*, pp. 142–3 (Tírechán 26(7)).

[30] Kelly, *A Guide to Early Irish Law*, pp. 70–3.

[31] We know from St Patrick himself that in reality fathers might strongly oppose the desire of young women to choose the Christian religious life over marriage. See Ludwig Bieler (ed.), *Libri epistolarum Sancti Patricii episcopi: Introduction, text and commentary* (Dublin, 1993), pp. 81–2. Family opposition to daughters choosing the religious life is a well-known motif in lives of female saints; see, for example, Donncha Ó hAodha (ed.), *Bethu Brigte* (Dublin, 1978), p. 23.

[32] Bieler, *Patrician Texts*, pp. 144–5 (Tírechán 26(13)).

[33] Bieler, *Patrician Texts*, pp. 144–5 (Tírechán 26(14)).

[34] See E. A. Lowe (ed.), 'Incipit Ordo Baptismi', *The Bobbio Missal: A Gallican Mass-book (MS. Paris. Lat. 13246) Text* (London, 1920), pp. 72–6. Tírechán's baptismal catechism would benefit from attention by a specialist in early liturgies.

[35] Bieler, *Patrician Texts*, pp. 142–3 (Tírechán 26(11)).

[36] Lowe, *Bobbio Missal, Text*, pp. 72–4.

[37] Bieler, *Patrician Texts*, pp. 144–5 (Tírechán 26(14)).

[38] Lowe, *Bobbio Missal, Text*, p. 75.

[39] Bieler, *Patrician Texts*, p. 225, note on section 26.16, addresses the motif of a virgin's death after baptism, indicating he has found no exact parallel that includes reference to the Eucharist, but citing Muirchú's account of the British princess Monesan who comes to Patrick for baptism. For Muirchú's text, see Bieler, *Patrician Texts*, pp. 98–101. See also Borsje, 'Monotheistic', p. 75.

[40] Angela Bourke, *The Burning of Bridget Cleary: A True Story* (London, 1999), provides extensive nineteenth-century references regarding fairy abduction tales and discusses the complex and deeply rooted cultural roles of such narratives. We do not know when or how such understandings of the supernatural developed, but story patterns presenting conflict between mortal and supernatural figures over women can be seen, for example, in *Tochmarc Étaíne* (see nn. 22 and 24 above).

[41] In addition to Bourke, *Burning*, also Seán Ó hEochaidh, *Fairy Legends from Donegal*, ed. Séamus Ó Catháin, trans. Máire Mac Néill (Dublin, 1977), esp. pp. 47–75.

[42] Bhreathnach, *Ireland in the Medieval World*, p. 143.

[43] Bhreathnach, *Ireland in the Medieval World*, pp. 143–6.

[44] Bieler, *Patrician Texts*, pp. 144–5 (Tírechán 26(20–1)).

[45] Bieler, *Patrician Texts*, pp. 138–9 (Tírechán 19(1–4)). For comments on Tírechán's reticence here, see John Carey, 'The Nature of Miracles in Early Irish Saints' Lives', in A. K. Siewers (ed.), *Re-imagining Nature: Environmental Humanities and Ecosemiotics* (Lewisburg, 2014), pp. 127–39 (pp. 131–3). Tírechán elsewhere describes druidic hostility to Patrick, ending with a chief druid's death through Patrick's curse (Bieler, *Patrician Texts*, pp. 156–7 (Tírechán 42)). For the error of druids in honouring what they consider a godlike well, see Bieler, *Patrician Texts*, pp. 152–5 (Tírechán 39). While Patrick is journeying toward Cruachan, he meets a pair of druid brothers, Ith and Hono; the latter welcomes him with hospitality, and offers him his house (Bieler, *Patrician Texts*, pp. 140–1 (Tírechán 21)). For broad discussion of the figure of the druid, including the applicability of biblical typology to the interpretation of druids' positive and negative social roles as depicted in law and literature, see Kim McCone, *Pagan Past and Christian Present in Early Irish Literature* (Maynooth, 1990), especially pp. 229–32.

[46] For Isidore's discussion of the pagan gods, and careful analysis of his sources, including St Augustine and other Christian writers as well as Classical sources, see Katherine Nell MacFarlane, 'Isidore of Seville on the Pagan Gods (*Origines* VIII.11)', *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, 70/3 (1980), 1–40.

[47] Carey, 'Baptism', pp. 14–32.

[48] Carey, 'Baptism', p. 14. See also Carey, 'From David to Labraid', pp. 2–27. In a passage addressing polytheistic issues in the Old Testament context, John Gibson, 'Language about God', pp. 44–5, cautions against textual interpretations that are 'too patently based on our judgement of what the Old Testament writers ought to be saying. What should intrigue us about these passages is not the inability, but the reluctance, of their formulators to dispense with comparison. They want to abase other gods but by no means to get rid of them; for that would not, in the polytheistic age in which they lived, serve their purpose. Their subtlety (as distinct from ours) consists in the way they manipulate polytheistic language; they cannot but allow other gods some kind of real existence, but in doing so they make sure they contrast them with Yahweh to their permanent disadvantage.'

[49] We may think of the seventh-century codification of law in the *Senchas Már*, where the Judgements of Dían Cécht on medicine are attributed to the divine physician of that name. Other lost legal texts associated with members of the Tuatha Dé (to be understood as 'Peoples of the Gods' or perhaps 'Peoples of the Goddess') who function as paradigmatic practitioners of professions and crafts, include *Bretha Goibnenn, regarding smithcraft, *Bretha Crédine, regarding coppersmithing, and the *Bretha Luchtaine, the judgements of a mythological wright. See Fergus Kelly, *A Guide to Early Irish Law*, pp. 269, 271. For dating see Breatnach, n. 13 above.

2

IDENTITY, TIME AND THE OTHERWORLD: AN OBSERVATION ON *THE WOOING OF ÉTAÍN*

John Carey

In a lucid and insightful study of the Old Irish tale *Tochmarc Étaíne* ('The Wooing of Étaín'), Thomas Charles-Edwards distinguishes between elements in the story that are 'relatively unambiguous' and those that 'hover on the margins'. The main subject of the present chapter may be assigned to the latter category, if only because it does not appear to have attracted the attention of scholars hitherto. Nevertheless, a case can also be made for its being integral to the narrative, and a reflection of fundamental concepts: an instance (to quote Charles-Edwards again) of 'ideas or practices taken for granted in the eighth and ninth centuries, but which can only be deduced by us because they appear to be required in order to make sense of the text'.[1]

In the third of the three narratives into which *Tochmarc Étaíne* is divided, in a part of the story preserved in its entirety only in the Yellow Book of Lecan, Étaín, wife of Eochaid Airem, king of Ireland, has been carried off into the otherworldly realm of the *síde* or hollow hills by the supernatural Midir, who had been her husband in a previous life. Midir's home is the *síd* of Brí Léith, now Ardagh Hill in Co. Longford; but after he has transformed himself and Étaín into two swans, the pair fly off toward Síd ar Ḟemun or Síd Ban Find, the mountain of Slievenamon in Co. Tipperary.[2]

Eochaid's subjects advise him to dig up every *síd* in Ireland until Étaín is recovered. They excavate Síd Ban Find, until 'someone' (*nech*) emerges to tell them that Étaín is not there: Midir, a 'king of the *síde* of Ireland' (*rí sidhe nErenn*), has taken her to his own stronghold of Brí Léith.[3] They then spend a year and three months vainly attempting the excavation of Brí Léith, but whatever they dig in the course of a day is restored during the night.[4] Thwarted, they return to Síd Ban Find and resume digging there. When 'someone' again appears to complain of this unjust harassment, for 'we have not taken your wife', Eochaid says that he will not leave them in peace unless they reveal to him how he can recover Étaín. The advice that he receives is to 'take blind puppies and blind cats (*dallchuilena* . . .

dallchato) with you, and leave them [there]. That is the work that you must do every day'.[5] Now the men of Ireland are more successful, and as they are digging Midir comes to negotiate with Eochaid. It is agreed that Étaín will be brought to Eochaid on the morrow.[6]

Next day there come fifty women, 'all with the same appearance and the same clothing as Étaín', accompanied by a 'grey *gast*'.[7] Eochaid is confident that he will be able to recognise the real Étaín by her manner of pouring drink, for 'my wife is the best at pouring drink in Ireland'.[8] All of the women are made to dispense drink from a vessel that has been placed in the middle of the house; the next to the last of the women is chosen, even though her pouring does not seem quite right. All are pleased at 'the rescue of the woman from the men of the *síde*'.

But Eochaid's triumph is illusory. Some time later Midir comes to him, and obtains the king's word that he has no further claim upon him. He then reveals that Eochaid had not chosen Étaín at all: 'Your wife was pregnant when she was taken from you . . . and bore a daughter; and she is the one in your company. Your wife, however, is with me, and it has happened to you that you have relinquished her again.' Eochaid is horrified to realise that he has unwittingly been living in incest, and even more horrified when this union produces a daughter. He gives orders for the baby to be exposed, but she survives and eventually becomes the mother of the celebrated king Conaire Már.[9]

Another version of these events is given in the *dindṡenchas* (place-name lore) of Ráth Ésa.[10] Here it is related that Eochaid and the men of Ireland spent nine years digging up the *síd* of Brí Léith, being continually hindered by Midir. At length the latter agreed to negotiate, and it was three times fifty women 'in the shape of Étaín' from among whom Eochaid had to choose. He chose his own daughter in error;[11] and their child was Mess Búachalla, the mother of Conaire.[12] In this telling, Eochaid is said to have returned to Brí Léith thereafter: this time he succeeded in recovering Étaín, and it was as recompense (*éraic*) for the abduction that Midir performed the great land-shaping tasks which figure considerably earlier in the narrative in *Tochmarc Étaíne*.

There are many intriguing aspects to these variant accounts of a physical and intellectual struggle between a mortal ruler and his supernatural antagonist. The point on which I wish to focus here is a simple one: how old was the woman whom Eochaid chose by mistake, and on whom he begot Mess Búachalla? Since Eochaid was evidently unaware that Étaín was pregnant when she was taken from him, she must at that point have conceived only recently; and so the better part of nine months of gestation are to be figured into the reckoning. If we follow the *dindṡenchas* story, according to which it was nine years before Eochaid and Midir entered into negotiations regarding Étaín's return, her daughter would accordingly have been a little over eight years old at that time. We are not given such a straightforward figure in *Tochmarc Étaíne*, but I think that we must assume that the interval envisaged is considerably less. As we have seen, after attempting to dig up Brí Léith for a year and three months Eochaid realised that he was getting nowhere, and went back to Síd Ban Find to try another tactic. Surely, therefore, his other stints of digging – the two at Síd Ban Find, and the final one at Brí Léith – did not last nearly so long: rather, the impression is of a fairly speedy result on each of these occasions. Even if, for purposes of argument, we allow the same length of time in all four cases, the total is still only five years; on this showing, allowing again for the duration of Étaín's pregnancy, their daughter would have been between four and five years old when Eochaid took her as his wife.

There is obviously a difficulty here. According to early Irish law, a girl could not be betrothed – let alone married – before her fourteenth year.[13] But what is at issue in the present case is a matter not merely of legality but of physiological feasibility: thus, the seventh-century Irish theologian Augustinus Hibernicus gives the interval between twelve and forty-nine years as the 'age at which women customarily give birth' (*aetate qua solent feminae parere*).[14] That such limitations were taken seriously in Irish legend can be seen from the tale of the expulsion of the Déisi: when her people are anxious that Eithne Úathach should marry as soon as possible, they are obliged to accelerate her development by the gruesome expedient of feeding her the flesh of small boys.[15]

So far as I am aware, modern scholarship has not discussed this chronological discrepancy. This may be because it has been regarded merely as a piece of carelessness on the part of the storyteller, rather than as a significant detail; but I think that various considerations tell against such a dismissal of the problem. For one thing, it seems implausible that the same sort of negligence (differently expressed, however, and involving different periods of time) should figure in two versions of the story which are in so many respects so distinct from one another as are *Tochmarc Étaíne* and the *dindṡenchas* of Ráth Ésa.

More generally, authorial incompetence should only be posited when all other possibilities of explanation have been exhausted: otherwise, we deny our sources the opportunity to show us what we do not expect to find. In previous publications, I have noted the shortcomings of such a belittling approach as applied to the tales *Echtra Nerai* and *Tochmarc Becḟola*:

here, geographical and chronological 'inconsistencies' have been regarded by modern commentators as the results of confusion and conflation, even though a major theme in both stories is the distortion of the mortal categories of time and space that is entailed in experience of the otherworld. Surely, therefore, it is preferable to see such anomalies as further instances of the same concern.[16]

I believe that similar considerations apply in the case of *Tochmarc Étaíne*. The text begins with the magical manipulation of time being applied to the conception and birth of a child: through the power of the Dagda, the passage of nine months seems like that of a single day; and the boy whose antenatal existence has occupied this interval is called 'the Young Son' (*an Mac Ócc*), for 'young is the son who was begotten at the beginning of a day and born between then and evening' (*is óc an mac doronad i tosach lai ⁊ ro geinir eitir ⁊ fescur*).[17] This marvel seems clearly akin to the puzzle under consideration here, the principal difference being that a supernatural explanation is made explicit in the case of the Mac Óc. Both episodes can be compared with the events in *Echtra Nerai* and *Tochmarc Becḟola*, where a day or more spent in an otherworldly location (the *síd* of Crúachan, a magical island) occupies no time at all in the mortal world.

The parallel between the gestation of the Mac Óc and that of Eochaid's daughter links the beginning of *Tochmarc Étaíne* with its end, confirming the structural integrity of the tale despite its division into three parts.[18] A parallel involving contrast may also be present. The original Étaín goes through a preternaturally protracted sequence of transformations and wanderings, so that 1,002 years elapse between her first and second births: this is the opposite extreme to the unnatural compression of the time between the conception and maturity of the second Étaín's daughter.

That the temporal anomaly implicit in Eochaid's union with his daughter can be classed with other such anomalies in tales of the *síde* does not seem to me to admit of reasonable doubt. The further possibility which I would like to put forward now is more speculative, but also I think deserving of consideration.

In the scene of the choosing between the fifty identical women, the decisive criterion is their manner of pouring (*dál*): Eochaid asserts that 'My wife is the best at pouring drink in Ireland. I will recognize her by her pouring'; and earlier we have been told that 'pouring drink was a special skill (*sain-dán*) of hers'.[19] This has been widely, and I believe correctly, seen as a reflection of the association in Irish tradition between the gaining of kingship, and the offering of drink by a female figure identified with the land or the sovereignty.[20] One striking instance of the theme is afforded by the prophetic text *Baile in Scáil*, which appears first to have been composed in the ninth century. Here the mortal king Conn finds himself in the hall of the supernatural ruler Lug, where a beautiful woman whose name is 'Sovereignty' (*Flaith*) serves ale not only to Conn but also to his fifty-three successors in the kingship: these have been gathered from the whole of subsequent history into the timeless simultaneity of the otherworld.[21]

I suggest that the scene in *Tochmarc Étaíne* is the direct converse of this. Instead of the mortal Conn visiting the immortal Lug, it is the immortal Midir who comes into the hall of the mortal Eochaid at Tara; and instead of a single woman pouring drink for fifty-four kings, there are fifty women pouring drink for a single king. But if the two situations really are variations on a shared symbolic pattern, what do these fifty 'Étaíns' signify? Might it not be the case that each personifies the reign of an individual ruler? In these terms they could indeed be, as they are portrayed, both 'the same' (rulership passes from each king to his successor) and multiple (each king enjoys his own reign).[22] Eochaid's task is to find the one who belongs to him: and when he fails in this, picking rather the 'Étaín' of the next generation, it means that his time is over.

To return to this brief contribution's main argument: I have undertaken to call attention to an aspect of *Tochmarc Étaíne* which appears hitherto to have escaped discussion. This element in the plot relates to, and finds its basis in, ideas about the relationship between the realm of mortal humans and the magical realm of the folk of the *síde*: ideas which appear to have been of fundamental importance to the mental world of the medieval Irish, and which lie at the heart of this perennially fascinating story.

Notes

[1] '*Tochmarc Étaíne*: A Literal Interpretation', in Michael Richter and Jean-Michel Picard (eds), *Ogma: Essays in Celtic Studies in Honour of Próinséas Ní Chatháin* (Dublin, 2002), pp. 165–81 (p. 166).

[2] Osborn Bergin and R. I. Best, 'Tochmarc Étaíne', *Ériu*, 12 (1934–8), 137–96 (pp. 184–5, § 15). The opening words of this part of the story are also preserved in R. I. Best and Osborn Bergin, *Lebor na hUidre: Book of the Dun Cow* (Dublin, 1929), p. 332. I have used my own translation, in John T. Koch and John Carey, *The Celtic Heroic Age: Literary Sources for Ancient Celtic Europe and Early Ireland and Wales*, 4th edn (Aberystwyth, 2003), pp. 161–3 (somewhat modified).

[3] Bergin and Best, 'Tochmarc Étaíne', § 16.

[4] The tale enigmatically adds that 'two white ravens went to them from the *síd*, and there came two hounds: Scleth and Samaír' (Bergin and Best, 'Tochmarc Étaíne', § 16).

[5] Bergin and Best, 'Tochmarc Étaíne', § 16.

[6] Bergin and Best, 'Tochmarc Étaíne', § 17.

[7] Bergin and Best, 'Tochmarc Étaíne', § 17. On the sense of *gast*, see my article 'The Final Transformation of Étaín', *Ériu*, 66 (2016), 31–8.

[8] Bergin and Best, 'Tochmarc Étaíne', § 18.

[9] Bergin and Best, 'Tochmarc Étaíne', § 18.

[10] The synopsis which follows is based directly on the poem *Sund dessid domunemar*, in E. J. Gwynn (ed.), *The Metrical Dindshenchas*, 5 vols (Dublin, 1903–35), vol. 2, pp. 2–9; see Whitley Stokes, 'The Prose Tales in the Rennes Dindṡenchas', *Revue Celtique*, 15 (1894), 272–336, 418–84 (pp. 290–1).

[11] Here I differ from Gwynn: I would translate *Ba gó aní ro maíde-som: / conid sí dál fors-ndessid* as 'False was what he asserted, so that it is that dispensing that took precedence', with reference to Eochaid's incorrect assessment of the ways in which the women poured drink.

[12] Further accounts of Mess Búachalla's descent from Étaín, with many differences of detail, are given in the tales *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* (ed. Eleanor Knott (Dublin, 1936), pp. 2–3) and *De Ṡíl Chonairi Móir* (ed. Lucius Gwynn, *Ériu*, 6 (1912), 130–43 (p. 133)). In the latter, it is Eterscél by whom 'the *síd* was dug up' (*clasa a sith*). The feature in which I am interested here does not figure in these versions, however.

[13] Fergus Kelly, *A Guide to Early Irish Law* (Dublin, 1988), pp. 81–2, 88, citing glosses to *Cáin Íarraith*: D. A. Binchy, *Corpus Iuris Hibernici* (Dublin, 1978), pp. 901–2.

[14] Jacques-Paul Migne, *Patrologiae cursus completus... in qua prodeunt patres, doctores, scriptoresque ecclesiæ latinæ...*, 221 vols (Paris, 1844–64), vol. 35, col. 2162.

[15] Kuno Meyer, 'The Expulsion of the Dessi', *Y Cymmrodor*, 14 (1901), 101–35 (pp. 108–9); see Kuno Meyer, 'The Expulsion of the Déssi', *Ériu*, 3 (1907), 135–42 (p. 138).

[16] 'Sequence and Causation in *Echtra Nerai*', *Ériu*, 39 (1988), 67–74 (pp. 69–70); 'Time, Space, and the Otherworld', *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, 7 (1987), 1–27 (pp. 3–4); '*Yonec* and *Tochmarc Becḟola*: Two Female *Echtrai*', in John Carey, Kevin Murray and Caitríona Ó Dochartaigh (eds), *Sacred Histories: A Festschrift for Máire Herbert* (Dublin, 2015), pp. 73–85 (p. 83). See also Patrick Sims-Williams, '*Tochmarc Becfhola*: A "Peculiar Confused Tale"?', in Joseph Eska (ed.), *Narrative in Celtic Tradition: Essays in Honor of Edgar M. Slotkin*, CSANA Yearbook 8/9 (Hamilton, 2011), pp. 228–34 (pp. 228–9).

[17] Bergin and Best, 'Tochmarc Étaíne', p. 142; Koch and Carey, *The Celtic Heroic Age*, p. 146.

[18] The 'question of coherence' is raised by Charles-Edwards, '*Tochmarc Étaíne*', pp. 165–6; later on in the essay, he notes ways in which verbal echoes tie the subtales together (pp. 176–7, 179–80).

[19] Bergin and Best, 'Tochmarc Étaíne', pp. 182, 186; Koch and Carey, *The Celtic Heroic Age*, pp. 161–2.

[20] Thus T. F. O'Rahilly, 'On the Origin of the Names *Éraınn* and *Ériu*', *Ériu*, 14 (1943), 7–28 (p. 16); Charles-Edwards, '*Tochmarc Étaíne*', p. 173; John Carey, 'Tara and the Supernatural', in Edel Bhreathnach (ed.), *The Kingship and Landscape of Tara* (Dublin, 2005), pp. 32–48 (p. 45); Tomás Ó Cathasaigh, '*Tochmarc*

Étaíne II: A Tale of Three Wooings', in Pamela O'Neill (ed.), *The Land Beneath the Sea: Essays in Honour of Anders Ahlqvist's Contribution to Celtic Studies in Australia* (Sydney, 2013), pp. 129–42 (p. 133).

[21] Kevin Murray, *Baile in Scáil: 'The Phantom's Frenzy'* (London, 2004), pp. 34–5, 51–2, 103–4, 113–14.

[22] A distant but apt analogy is afforded by Uṣas, the Brahmanic goddess of the dawn: within the same hymn she can be described both as a single deity who appears every morning throughout all of time, and as an innumerable series of identical sisters: *na vi jñāyante sadṛśīr ajuryāḥ*, 'they are not known from one another, looking the same, unaging' (*Ṛgveda* 4.51.6). See further A. A. Macdonnell, *Vedic Mythology* (Strasbourg, 1898), pp. 47–8.

this page has been left intentionally blank

3

THE CELTIC DRAGON MYTH REVISITED[1]

Joseph Falaky Nagy

In 1911, the year before his death, George Henderson, Lecturer of Celtic at the University of Glasgow, published *The Celtic Dragon Myth*, which included a lengthy introduction by him concerning traditional stories about dragons and dragon-slayers from around the world; a translation of the medieval Irish text *Táin Bó Froích* 'Cattle-Raid of Froech', a saga that features not just one but two arguably dragon-like creatures; balladic material from the sixteenth-century Book of the Dean of Lismore about Froech's encounter with the first monster; and a curious fusion of several folktales – a novella of sorts, assembled and massaged by John Francis Campbell of Islay (who had died in 1885) from various Scottish and Irish sources. Even though this melange, almost one hundred pages long in printed form, is what is given the title 'The Celtic Dragon Myth' in the book, the designation, at least for Campbell, clearly also referred to a widely found subtext or underlying story pattern, one not limited to Celtic storytelling lore. The dragon-story recipe (which, as Henderson details in his Introduction, is followed in many international analogues) consists of many ingredients, according to Campbell: 'It treats of water, egg, mermaid, sea-dragon, tree, beasts, birds, fish, metals, weapons, and men mysteriously produced from sea-gifts. All versions agree in these respects; they are all water myths, and relate to the slaying of water monsters.'[2] The understanding and use of the term 'myth' implicit in Campbell's thinking (and also in Henderson's) becomes clear elsewhere in the Introduction, where Campbell is once again quoted in regard to the 'Myth': 'Theoretically. . . this looks like serpent worship, and the defeat of serpent worship by some mythical personage.'[3] 'Myth' is understood here to be archaic, concerned with religious beliefs, and typically features a struggle between a divine or semi-divine hero and an equally otherworldly monster-opponent.

Before proceeding, I would offer a different description of myth, reflecting more than a century of thinking about and insight into this human phenomenon, particularly in the fields of anthropology and folkloristics, since the publication of *The Celtic Dragon Myth*. The following model is what I teach my students in courses on mythology (Celtic or comparative), and I would propose applying it to the narratives we are shortly to consider.

> Myth is a story or story pattern that is pervasive and persistent among a group of people related by a shared sense of collective identity – a sense often crystallised in and communicated by the myth(s) themselves. Myths:
>
> - whether they were originally composed to do so or not, serve to reflect (like a mirror) AND refract (like a distorting mirror) the basic traits and values of the society whose myths these are;
> - are told, performed and transmitted in a special and stylised way;
> - feature a shared repertoire of themes, motifs, characters and narrative procedures.
> - In sum, myths are the stories that a society unmistakably marks as important for its members to know.

Unlike nineteenth-century definitions of myth (such as those lying behind *The Celtic Dragon Myth*), this one does not demand that gods or semi-divine heroes or villains inhabit the cast of mythological characters. Moreover, while religion oftentimes employs myth, the latter, according to the above, is not necessarily religious in its content or function.

And although this too is not a necessary ingredient, each of the three stories or 'myths' considered in this study does in fact feature the monstrous – specifically, what Campbell and Henderson considered a 'dragon', or what my UCLA colleague Stephanie Jamison dubbed for comparative purposes a 'serpent plus'.[4] These monsters, however, are not just vestiges of an archaic past or redolent of an otherwise long-forgotten pantheon – that is, 'mythic' in the old-fashioned sense used in *The Celtic Dragon Myth*. Viewed from the contemporary lens of 'monster theory', these creatures have as much to say about the rhetoric, the inherent contradictions, and the potential monstrosity of the texts in which we find them as they do about the bygone ideologies in which these stories may have been rooted.[5]

The monsters we are about to meet are both literal and metaphorical. As we shall see, they are 'real' antagonists in the contexts our stories provide. Viewed as metaphors, the monsters, I argue, refer to the texts themselves, which are transitional between oral and literary, and in which we are likely to find traces of pre-Christian Celtic story, or in which we find old narrative patterns and characters recycled, rehabilitated and refitted to suit the rhetorical needs of a new (Christian) era and a new medium (vernacular writing). The dragon, a creature to be found in both Eastern and Western tradition, in ancient literature as well as medieval (not to mention modern belief and ritual), traditionally sports features that make it a monster well suited to represent this kind of text.[6]

First and foremost, a dragon, like many other monstrous species, is a hybrid – part serpent, sometimes part fish or bird or terrestrial animal, and part *sui generis*. So too, the transitional text as understood in the study of oral tradition is a hybridised creation, employing oral-traditional elements in its composition and/or delivery and yet is also a written document – whether it is a 'case study' inserted into an Old Irish law tract, an early Middle Irish heroic saga, or an Early Modern Irish 'romance': in other words, the texts on which we will be focusing in this chapter, or, more generally, the array of texts Albert Bates Lord discussed in his chapter on 'The Transitional Text' in his final work, *The Singer Resumes the Tale*.[7] Moreover, the author of a transitional text is just that: an author, but also a storyteller and, quite possibly, a performer.

To push the analogy further, dragons not only are hybrids but are generated by and highly susceptible to transformation. Old Norse literature, for example, famously bears witness to a dragon that originally was a human (and brother to another human who, perhaps just as remarkably, could change himself into an otter), in the story of the dragon-slayer Sigurd.[8] In one of the Irish texts (the third in chronological order) we will be examining, the romance *Tóruigheacht Dhiarmada agus Ghráinne*, 'The Pursuit of Diarmaid and Gráinne' (*TDG*), we find a monstrous serpentine beast, a dragon, who starts out in life as a tiny larva or worm on a cluster of sloes swallowed by a pregnant woman suffering from pica.[9] Similarly, our texts, or the stories they tell, proceeded in the history of the medieval Irish literary tradition to 'morph' into other forms pertaining to other genres, while arguably our texts themselves most likely emerged as the products of 'breakthrough' metamorphoses in the development of medieval literary forms. The chronologically first of our texts, what its editor called 'an account of a "leading case"' concerning *athgabáil* (distraint, a form of legal recourse), centres on the ultimately fatal adventures of a legendary king of the province of Ulster named Fergus mac Léti. This was succeeded several centuries later by a saga about Fergus's adventures and death, far removed from the earlier text grounded in archaic Irish law.[10]

The text that lies chronologically in the middle of our ensemble, the *Táin Bó Fraích* 'Cattle-Raid of Fraech' (*TBF*), nominally a *táin* 'cattle-raid tale', is succeeded in the later Middle Irish period by a *tochmarc*, 'wooing tale', featuring the same hero but with a different cast of characters, albeit in a plot comparable to what we find in *TBF*.[11] Even more strikingly emblematic of the protean nature of transitional texts is the existence of a late Middle Irish poetic version of the *TBF*, which Donald Meek speculates may be an implicit praise poem composed for a Connacht dynasty eager to be associated with the political cachet that the place whose name enshrines this traditional hero's name had come to possess (Carn Fraich).[12] But the most significant indicator of the resilience of the Fraech material and its various textual manifestations is the survival (into the repertoire of Scottish tradition-bearers as late as the second half of the twentieth century!) of a 'lay' (*laoidh*) of Fraech (or Fraoch, as it is spelled in Scottish Gaelic), a ballad independent of the previously mentioned versification and a reshaping (or restoration?) of the story of Fraech as it is told in *TBF* that results in a tragic, instead of a happy, ending. The lay is already to be found in the famous Scottish manuscript known as the Book of the Dean of Lismore, from the first half of the sixteenth century.[13]

Our third text, *TDG*, a product of the period on the cusp between late medieval and early modern Irish literature, belongs to a similarly complex textual lineage that weaves in and out of oral and literary tradition, in both Ireland and Scotland. This prose romance climaxes in a fully developed scene, taking place in a rowan tree, that also exists as a poetic 'lay', already attested in a seventeenth-century Irish collection of lays put together by Irish men of letters in exile, in a manuscript produced not long after the earliest Irish MS witness to *TDG*.[14] While only elliptically alluded to in early Irish literature, as if this were a story judged to be best left in its sub-literary lair, the tale *TDG* tells – or rather the various distinct episodes it narrates – has/have enjoyed a healthy shelf-life in oral tradition, as the evidence of place names and the cache of stories about Diarmaid and Gráinne folklorists of recent centuries have collected attest.

Given the interface between oral and written transmission that our texts reflect (particularly *TBF* and *TDG*), it would be foolhardy to claim, as some have, that what seem to be transformations or multiforms of any one text or the material it contains can be explained simply in terms of literary filiation and the vagaries entailed in scribal enterprise or plain error. This, for example, was the underlying thesis of James Carney's still very influential treatment of *TBF* and related texts, published in the last century.[15] Let me emphasise the conclusion reached by scholars who have approached medieval Irish texts without a preset bias against what they would call a 'nativist' approach to understanding them: namely, that most vernacular texts that have survived from medieval and early modern Ireland, such as those under discussion, bear the imprint of frequent and productive exchange between oral and written tradition on the level of transmission as well as composition, and that variation and seeming innovation cannot automatically be attributed to a literary agenda or aesthetic sensibility insulated from oral tradition.

In addition to hybridity and transformability, here are a third and a fourth characteristic of dragons that I propose are ‘good to think with’ vis-à-vis our texts. Dragons are famous guardians, standing fiercely between items of value and us humans, and ready to attack our stand-ins in the narrative who are bold enough to try to take away these items, whether out of necessity or ambition. Because they block the pathway to what we and/or heroes want to possess, but also because dragons, as will become clear, have a special connection with the sense of sight, dragons are conspicuous – fascinating, even. It is in this ability to ‘entrance’ that lies much of the dragon’s advantage over would-be opponents, more so in many instances than in its fierceness, fieriness or other destructive powers.

While it would be going too far to call them our own ‘monsters’, the three transitional texts on view in this paper have certainly cast a spell of fascination over generations of scholars of medieval Irish literature, having served as the hardly docile objects of extensive critical attention for well over a century. Not surprisingly, for these are ‘guardian’ as well as transitional texts, the scholarship centred on them has tended to pose big questions, more so than work on most other survivors from the medieval Irish scriptorium – big questions having to do with:

- The mechanics of composition in the literary tradition of Ireland in the Middle Ages;
- the extent of ‘artistic licence’ the tradition allowed the author-storyteller in reshaping or even refusing traditional material, substituting in its place invented or imported motifs and patterns;
- the survival (or extinction) of Indo-European mythology in medieval Irish texts.

Each of our texts features a dragon or dragon-like creature, each hard to miss or avoid as it watches over its designated ‘treasure’. In the Fergus text, the latter takes the form of the waters of a special inlet or lake (Loch Rudraige); in *TBF*, which features a dragon in each of its two parts, the first monster guards a rowan tree replete with delectable berries, and then (in the second part) another dragon is said to protect an alpine fort of marauders recently returned with a fresh haul of booty, including the hero's wife and children; and in *TDG*, almost like an external soul, the dragon guards the life of the man who had served as the dragon's host when it was still a parasitic worm accidentally dwelling inside his head.

How appropriate, then, that the modus vivendi, kinship and nomenclature of these creatures have played no small role in bringing scholarly attention to the texts in which they guard their diverse treasures, as well as to questions we have yet to answer satisfactorily about the nature of medieval Irish texts. The designation of Fergus's aquatic nemesis, for example, *muirdris*, a *hapax legomenon*, caught the late Calvert Watkins's eye, which detected in the *-dris* an Irish cognate to Greek *drakōn*, and a derivation in both cases from IE **derk-* 'eye, sight'.[16] Hence the dragon is a creature that sees maleficently, or the seeing of which has dire consequences for the see-r. (The Classical Greek figure of the Gorgon and the perennially popular basilisk do and should come to mind.) That the name of Fergus's monstrous nemesis might etymologically correspond to *dragon* would be fitting, given what the *muirdris* actually does in the story. When Fergus, the king of Ulster, abuses his supernaturally granted ability to swim underwater like a fish, by entering the one body of water into which his supernatural benefactors had forbidden him to plunge, he encounters this monster, so horrific in appearance that Fergus's face, in reaction to the sight, becomes horrifically distorted as well. He leaves the water, with the monster untouched, and returns to his men, unaware of what has happened to his appearance. The disfigurement, however, is so extensive and so permanent that it imperils Fergus's continued functioning as king, but his advisers, satisfied with his kingship and wishing to keep him on the throne, agree never to tell Fergus about his misfortune, nor to allow him ever to wash his own face, lest he see it reflected in the water. All is well until one day Fergus acts rudely toward the bond-woman assigned the task of washing him (in the later saga-text already mentioned, it is Fergus's own wife whom he insults and who then takes her revenge),[17] and he is told about the appearance of his face and the lie that his continued kingship has become. No longer kept from seeing the monstrous horror into which he has been transformed, Fergus returns to the loch and bravely goes mano-a-mano with the monster and slays it, though apparently at the cost of his own life (more on this later). As action-packed as this scene is, the story as told in our text does not really pivot on it but on the (earlier) scene of visual contact as made between Fergus the submariner and the *dris* of the deep, the sight of whom etches doom on the king's visage or exposes a weakness in the heroic profile of this royal taboo-breaker.

Unlike the self-adulating turn inward the experience of seeing his face mirrored in the water induces in the Narcissus of Classical mythology, Fergus's coming eye-to-eye with himself impels him back to his secret sharer, the dragon, and incites him to engage in prolonged underwater combat that in the end produces for those gathered anxiously on the shore the spectacle of a body of water the surface of which stays red with blood for a whole month afterwards.

In *TBF*, the vocabulary of monsterhood, not as etymologically suggestive as in the Fergus text, settles for the Latin borrowing *béist* (from *bestia*), the vague native word *míl* 'animal, beast', and *nathir* 'serpent', cognate with English *(n)adder*.[18] Nevertheless, in the case of the monster that Fraech encounters while swimming across a pond, the narrative build-up to their life-and-death confrontation provides *TBF*'s most striking visual 'special effect', in a text that even apart from this scene abounds in highly descriptive passages. Having been asked by his murderously minded prospective father-in-law to fetch rowan berries from the tree on the other side of the pond in which Fraech was already swimming, our hero, without being told that a monster lurks nearby, at first succeeds in eluding the beast's attention and returning with a particularly tasty batch. His both aesthetically thrilling and sensually arousing appearance as he swims back across the pond is a veritable epiphany for the girl he loves, and who loves him, and for those to whom she will henceforth pass along the story (in Henderson's elegant translation):

> And the remark of Findabair [the daughter of Ailill, whom Fraech had come to woo] was: 'Is that not beautiful that ye see?' Beautiful she thought it was to see Fraoch over the black linn [water]: the body of great whiteness, the hair of great loveliness, the face so well formed; the eye of deep grey, and he a tender youth without fault, without blemish; with his face small below and broad above; his build straight and flawless; the branch with the red berries between the throat and the white face. Findabair was wont to say that she had not seen aught that would come up to him half or third for beauty.[19]

Surely this scene, and the girl's reaction to whom she sees (the opposite of the monstrous, although Fraech is soon to catch the eye of a monster), we can legitimately place alongside the more famous scene in the Middle Irish account of the tragedy of Derdriu, the most beautiful girl in Ireland, who, seeing a flayed calf lying on the snow with a raven perched on it, declares that she will accept no mate whose colours do not match those before her.[20] Given the impact the sight of the waterborne Fraech with the berries has upon the girl and maybe even her father, Ailill's request for an encore performance – that the hero swim across again and bring more berries – would be understandable, even if his intention were not to make sure that the monster finally notices the invasion of his lair and the plundering of his fruity treasure. (The outcome of the deferred but inevitable encounter as narrated in *TBF* leaves the monster dead and the hero gravely wounded, and in need of the special healing only his supernatural kinfolk can provide – he does, however, survive. In the lay mentioned above, he does not.)

In the 'dragon' episode from *TDG*, we find a creature that, unlike the others we have encountered, experiences various stages of grotesque development. At each stage, however, it is referred to as a *cruimh* or *cnuimh*, an Irish word cognate with Welsh *pryf* 'insect, small creature' and Persian *kerm* 'worm', and derived from an Indo-European variant of the word that gives us Latin *vermis*, English *worm* and Old English *orm*, the last two frequently used specifically in reference to monstrous worms or dragons.[21] The violent releasing of the *cruimh* from Cian's head certainly makes a visual splash and a spectacular sequel to its gestation as a conspicuous bump on Cian's head. But once it is 'outed', there's no hiding this worm, which instead of escaping wraps itself around the head of a spear, rendering it a peculiar caduceus or Asclepian staff. The worm's subsequent growth into a creature big enough to fill a house, and a freakish exhibit worth visiting (in particular, by Cian's foster brother), makes it downright lethal – the sudden, 'straw that breaks the camel's back' mutilation the worm inflicts upon that foster brother, whose leg the monster savagely removes, appears to be its response to the insult of being the object of his victim's voyeuristic gaze. After this lashing-out, even Cian's mother agrees that the worm has to be killed, no matter what the consequences for her son and his life. An attempt to burn the worm alive fails because it proves to be a spectacular leaper – a characteristic, I note in passing, it shares with both of the dragons featured in *TBF*. Soaring above Ireland, the *cruimh* of *TDG* finds refuge in a cave, where it successfully hides from a world too scared to pursue it into its lair. Even Finn and his band of heroes, who constitute the majority of the cast of characters in *TDG* and generally enjoy the reputation of being the ones to call on when all kinds of monstrous creatures have to be stopped or slain, are said to avoid the vicinity of the worm's cave.

The story of the worm, as originally told by Oisín, ends with the monster still alive. In the present of the narrative, when the story as told by

Oisín is now retold by Diarmaid, the latter hero-storyteller does provide an ending. We learn that he to whom Oisín told the story, the young hero Conán, eager to pass this test in order to be accepted into Finn's band, succeeded in slaying the worm in the cave. But, in a variant of the *TDG* text discussed by Caoimhín Breatnach, Diarmaid adds the detail, with more than a little pride, that Conán was able to accomplish the deed only by borrowing Diarmaid's spear, which never misses its mark.[22] The contributions (both the spear and the narrative coda) Diarmaid makes to the sequence of events he relays from another narrator and then brings to a conclusion with his own knowledge from hindsight of what happened, complicate the 'authorship' of the story, as they do the question of who after all should receive credit for having slain the worm.

The narratological complexity that winds around the episode of the *cruimh* in *TDG* brings us to the last point I am going to make about the iconic function of dragons in our chosen texts. The fact that the worm tale is couched within a double narrative nest and left unresolved in regard to both who or what engendered the worm and who terminated it, presents a parallel to what happens in the story of Fergus mac Léti as told in the Old Irish text. Let us recall that the outcome of his initial encounter with the *muirdris*, the ugly punchline to the story up to that point (Fergus's disfigurement), is an embarrassment that needs to be suppressed or replaced among the Ulstermen, who want to keep Fergus as their king. The party line of 'nothing happened' breaks down with the rupture of hierarchical relations (between slave and master, or between husband and wife), and only then can the story proceed toward the ending it 'should have', that is, a rematch between Fergus and the dragon.

Even the at-long-last realisable ending, however, leaves us with a hint of ambiguity. The hero's final words are that 'he is the survivor' of the fight with the dragon, and yet he sinks back into the water 'dead' (*marb*). Presumably, he dies from the wounds inflicted upon him, but the questions still arise, is he not able to live underwater anymore, and has he not overcome the monstrous obstacle to his living unharmed beneath the surface of Loch Rudraige?

This denouement takes us back to a similar ambiguity in *TBF*, where the pointedly difficult recovery of a half-dead Fraech after his fight with the water monster, and the oddity of his being returned from his convalescence by a troop of supernatural females who are said to be mourning, not rejoicing, give the impression of a text or storyteller aware of a different, grimmer ending – one that is in fact attested in another text, as we have seen. I would argue that the presence of dragons in this text and the others we have examined leads to a heightened awareness of the potential complexities of narrative, especially in the fluid milieu of oral tradition, where multiformity and the coexistence of alternative tracks do not just 'happen' but provide the means of a story's survival and adaptation. 'How to kill a dragon' goes hand in hand with another challenging task, 'how to account for the killing of a dragon', especially in transitional texts, which by definition are attempting to negotiate between sometimes incompatible modes of narration. But in oral tradition as well, the challenge this accountability poses is inferable from the way that the venerable folktale-type ATU 300, 'The Dragon-Slayer', usually unfolds. The hero rarely has the opportunity to enjoy his triumph right away – typically in instances of ATU 300, he is beaten to the punch by an anti-hero who tells a 'false' story of what happened and presents himself as the dragon-slayer.[23] Even in the relatively predictable world of the international folktale, where heroes including dragon-slayers ultimately do live happily ever after, the confrontation with the monstrous brings to centre stage the plasticity of story and its dependence on factors such as perspective and need, and the importance of rhetoric for the art of the storyteller, of the stakes involved in making the story as you tell it 'convincing' and fulfilling for the audience. How much more so these issues impinge on the artistry of the author of a transitional text, and how intimately the dragon is implicated in these issues, I hope has become clear in our journey through these three 'mythological' Irish tales about dragons and the heroes who fight with them.

Notes

[1] I thank members of the audiences who commented on earlier versions of this piece as presented at the University of Edinburgh and Stanford University in Fall 2014, and also the reviewers of my contribution to this volume for their helpful suggestions.

[2] John Francis Campbell, trans. with introduction by George Henderson, *The Celtic Dragon Myth, with the Geste of Fraoch and the Dragon* (Edinburgh, 1911), Introduction, n.p.

[3] Campbell, *Celtic Dragon Myth*, Introduction, n.p. John Shaw has kindly pointed out to me that Campbell's epistolary travelogue, *My Circular Letters*, 2 vols (London, 1876), contains several observations concerning East and South Asian stories and traditions about dragons and serpents. Campbell even refers to the Gaelic narrative materials that he consolidated and included in *The Celtic Dragon Myth* (*My Circular Letters*, vol. 1, pp. 326–33).

[4] In her contribution to the forthcoming proceedings of a conference on dragons, held under the auspices of the UCLA Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies in Spring 2015. These proceedings are being edited by the author of this chapter.

[5] The term ‘monster theory’ was coined by Jeffrey J. Cohen, who edited the collection *Monster Theory: Reading Culture* (Minneapolis, 1996). Three of the ‘theses’ listed in Cohen’s contribution to this volume (‘Monster culture: seven theses’, pp. 3–25) are especially relevant here: ‘The Monster’s Body is a Cultural Body . . . The Monster is the Harbinger of Cultural Crisis . . . The Monster Dwells at the Gates of Difference’.

[6] Notable recent contributions to the study of the dragon are Daniel Ogden, *Drakōn: Myth and Serpent Cult in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Oxford, 2013), and ‘Dragon’, in Lihui Yang and Deming An, with Jessica Anderson Turner, *Handbook of Chinese Mythology* (Oxford and New York, 2008), pp. 100–10. Ogden and Yang have both contributed to the proceedings mentioned in note 3.

[7] Albert B. Lord, *The Singer Resumes the Tale*, ed. Mary Louise Lord (Ithaca, 1995), pp. 212–37.

[8] *Reginsmál*, in Jónas Kristjansson and Vésteinn Ólason (eds), *Eddukvæđi II: Hetjukvæđi* (Reykjavík, 2014), pp. 296–302.

[9] Nessa Ní Shéaghdha (ed. and trans.), Tóruigheacht Dhiarmada agus Ghráinne*: The Pursuit of Diarmaid and Gráinne* (Dublin, 1967), pp. 48–67 (pp. 56–9).

[10] Daniel A. Binchy (ed. and trans.), ‘The saga of Fergus Mac Léti’, *Ériu*, 16 (1962), 33–48 (pp. 33, 36–9). On this text and its subtexts, see now Neil McLeod, ‘Fergus mac Léti and the law’, *Ériu*, 61 (2011), 1–28. The later retelling of the ‘saga’ was edited and translated by Standish H. O’Grady in *Silva Gadelica: A Collection of Tales in Irish*, 2 vols (London, 1892), vol. 1, pp. 238–52.

[11] Wolfgang Meid (ed. and trans.), *The Romance of Froech and Findabair or The Driving of Froech’s Cattle* (Táin Bó Froích), English-language version prepared with Albert Bock, Benjamin Bruch and Aaron Griffith (Innsbruck, 2015). The *tochmarc* text was edited by Kuno Meyer, ‘Mitteilungen aus irischen Handschriften: Tochmarc Treblainne’, *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, 13 (1921), 166–75. On the complementarity of the *táin* and *tochmarc* genres, see Vincent A. Dunn, *Cattle-Raids and Courtships: Medieval Narrative Genres in a Traditional Context* (New York, 1989).

[12] James Carney (ed. and trans.), ‘Carn Fraoich’, *Celtica*, 2 (1950), 154–94; Donald E. Meek, ‘*Táin Bó Fraích* and other “Fráech” texts: a study in thematic relationships’, *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies*, 7 (1984), 1–37; 8 (1984), 65–85 (p. 16)

[13] Neil Ross (ed. and trans.), *Heroic Poetry from the Book of the Dean of Lismore* (Edinburgh, 1939), pp. 198–207. Versions of the *Laoidh Fhraoich* recorded from 1954 to 1963 are available on the website *Tobar an Dualchais/Kist o Riches*. Available at *http://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/en/*, accessed 23 June 2016.

[14] Gerald Murphy (ed. and trans.), *Duanaire Finn, The Book of the Lays of Fionn*, vol. 2 (London, 1933), pp. 402–9.

[15] ‘Composition and Structure of TBF’, in James Carney, *Studies in Irish Literature and History* (Dublin, 1955), pp. 1–65. See now also Dewi W. Evans, ‘The learned borrowings claimed for *Táin bó Fraích*’, in Michael Richter and Jean-Michel Picard (eds), *Ogma: Essays in Celtic Studies in Honour of Próinséas Ní Chatháin* (Dublin, 2002), pp. 182–94.

[16] Calvert Watkins, *How to Kill a Dragon: Aspects of Indo-European Poetics* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 441–7.

[17] O'Grady, *Silva Gadelica*, vol. 1, p. 250.

[18] Meid, *Romance of Froech*, ll. 189 (*béist*), 196, 200 (*míl*), 337, 346, 348, 350 (*nathir*). The word *míl* is used once elsewhere in the text in reference to prey (l. 40), and *nathir* in reference to serpentine decoration (l. 79).

[19] Campbell, *Celtic Dragon Myth*, p. 11.

[20] Vernam Hull (ed. and trans.), *Longes mac n-Uislenn, The Exile of the Sons of Uisliu* (New York, 1949), p. 45. On the theme of the lover's colours, see now Jessica Hemming, '"I could love a man with those three colours": gazing and the tricoloured beloved', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 68 (2014), 51–67.

[21] Watkins, *How to Kill a Dragon*, pp. 521–2. On Norse and Iranian parallels to the Irish story, similarly featuring monstrous growth of a serpent or worm, see the author's 'The "Conqueror Worm" in Irish and Persian literature', in Houchang Chehabi and Grace Neville (eds), *Erin and Iran: Cultural Encounters between the Irish and the Iranians* (Boston, 2015), pp. 3–13.

[22] Caoimhín Breatnach, 'The transmission and text of TDG: a reappraisal', in Sharon Arbuthnot and Geraldine Parsons (eds), *The Gaelic Finn Tradition* (Dublin, 2012), pp. 139–50 (pp. 140–1).

[23] Henderson notes the presence of this story pattern in the medieval Tristan narrative (*Celtic Dragon Myth*, n.p.). See Hans-Jörg Uther, *The Types of International Folktales: A Classification and Bibliography, Based on the System of Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson*, 3 vols (Helsinki, 2004), under ATU 300, and (on the Tristan connection) Kurt Ranke, *Die zwei Brüder. Eine Studie zur vergleichenden Märchenforschung* (Helsinki, 1934), p. 193.

4

TORY ISLAND AND MOUNT ERRIGAL: LANDSCAPE SURROGATES IN DONEGAL FOR THE GODS BALOR AND LUG

Brian Lacey

The early medieval text *The Second Battle of Mag Tuired* has been characterised as 'the most important Irish mythological tale'.[1] It describes the conflict for the possession of Ireland between two mythical prehistoric peoples, the Tuatha Dé Danann and the Fomorians.[2] The story involves a host of Celtic gods and heroes but at its heart is the particular conflict between what we might call the bad god Balor and his grandson, the good god Lug – the most important of them all. Balor belonged to the Fomorians, while Lug was associated with the Tuatha Dé Danann.

As well as the medieval and later written versions of the story of *The Second Battle of Mag Tuired*, and allusions to it in other literary texts which have survived from Ireland, there are also various localised oral or folk versions,[3] one particular example of which from Donegal is the focus of this chapter.

This local rendering of a myth is still reflected in the features of the surrounding landscape, in the names assigned to those features, and in the folk-etymologies that purport to explain those names. The two most dominant features of that landscape – Errigal mountain and Tory Island at its southern and northern extremes – carry various associations with the two principal characters in the myth and, almost certainly, were also once understood as surrogates for each of them respectively.

The Donegal version seems to have been recorded for the first time by John O'Donovan in a then-unpublished letter written from Falcarragh on 15 September 1835.[4] He said that his source was Shane O'Dugan from Tory Island. O'Donovan gives the tale in English but almost certainly O'Dugan would have recounted it in Irish. In 1856 O'Donovan published a slightly polished-up version of the tale in his edition of the Annals of the Four Masters.[5]

> This Balor, the general of the Fomorians, is still vividly remembered by tradition throughout Ireland, as *Balor Béimeann*, and in some places they frighten children by his name; but he is more vividly remembered on Tory Island, – where he is believed to have chiefly resided, – and on the opposite coast of Donegal, than anywhere else, except, perhaps, at Cong, in Mayo. The tradition connected with Balor, on Tory Island, was written by the Editor[6] in 1835, from the dictation of Shane O'Dugan, whose ancestor is said to have been living on Tory Island in St. Columbkille's time.[7]

The story in the earliest form which has survived to us is influenced heavily by its transmission through early Irish Christian culture.[8] Later versions reflect other contemporary historical events, such as the Tudor conquest of Ireland and the subsequent spread of colonial landlordism.[9] The story and the separate episodes in it are located variously in different parts of Ireland but the version discussed here situates some of the main events in the Cloghaneely area of north-west Donegal, and Tory, an adjacent offshore island in the Atlantic Ocean. Both Cloghaneely and Tory are part of the modern Gaeltacht, that is, the area where the Irish language is still the dominant vernacular. Contemporary culture in both places also still preserves extensive *béaloideas* ('oral lore' or 'folklore'), including folk etymological explanations for local place names which narrate different parts of the Balor/Lug story. That localised folk version seems to have descended from an origin legend of an ancient small kingdom located in that area.[10]

From the earliest records available – dating from the sixth and seventh centuries – we can say that a tiny kingdom known to us as Síl Lugdach (the 'seed' or 'people' of [the god] Lug) lived in a part of this area.[11] By around 725 the little kingdom had expanded somewhat to the east, almost certainly under a leader (a king?) called Cenn Fáelad whose genealogy has survived.[12] That leader's name would become attached to a local monument, *Cloch* ('stone of') *Cenn Fáelaid* – anglicised in modern times as Cloghaneely (Figure 4.1).[13] The *cloch* or stone is a block – roughly three feet in each dimension – of white quartz with darker ('reddish') veins running through it. These latter are interpreted in local folklore as the fossilised remains of the blood of the person whose name it carries because he was, allegedly, beheaded on it by Balor. Since the mid-eighteenth century the stone has been mounted on a modern column.

Eventually the name *Cloch Cenn Fáelaid* would be extended to cover the whole area, that is the original Síl Lugdach land and the new territory acquired to its east about 725. However, as we have seen, the local

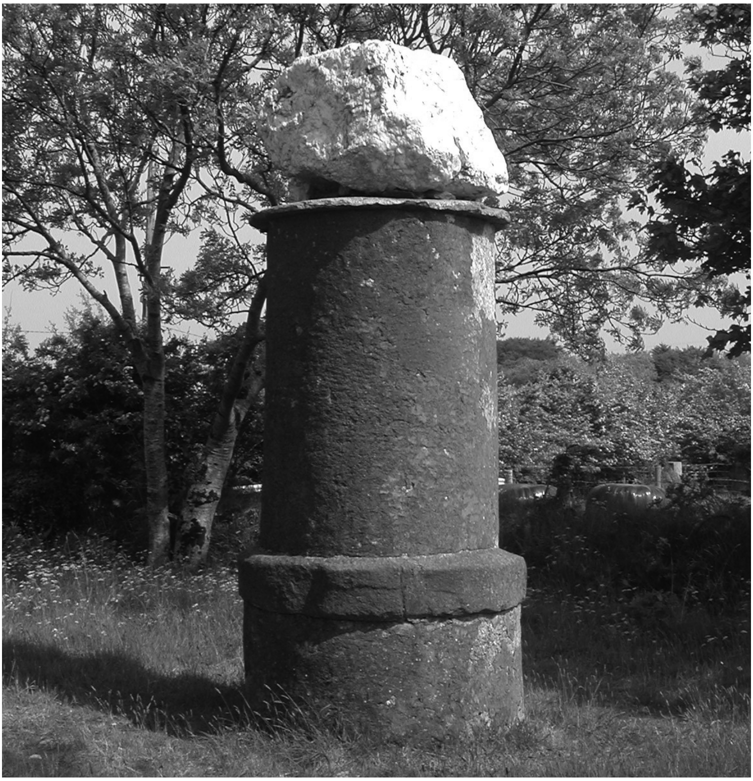


FIGURE 4.1 *Cloch Cenn Fáelaid* – the stone of Cenn Fáelad, Falcarragh, Co. Donegal (photo: the author).

oral version of the Balor/Lug tale provides an alternative non-historical, mythical explanation for the name.[14]

The little kingdom originally covered an area of approximately one hundred square miles and was located between (indeed, was somewhat isolated by) a high mountain range to the south and east, and the open ocean to the north and west.[15] Its southern boundary (in effect, its 'south pole') was the imposing quartzite cone known now as Mount Errigal, at 2,466 feet the highest mountain in Donegal. Nine miles off the coast to the north is Tory Island, its name deriving from the Irish word *torach*, meaning 'towery', referring to the high craggy natural features at its east end. Whether or not Tory originally belonged to the Síl Lugdach, it certainly belonged to their visual and mythical landscape and, in effect, formed the 'north pole' of the little kingdom – beyond lay nothing but the rolling ocean. Both features – the mountain and the island – are still very distinctive and dramatically dominant elements of the local landscape.

In the version of the story from this area, Balor lives on Tory. The interrelated set of promontory forts at the high, east (*torach* or 'towery') end of the island have been known since time immemorial as *Dún Baloir*, 'the fort of Balor'.[16] Tory, which can often look dark and forbidding from the mainland, was Balor's realm. A prophecy claimed that Balor would be killed by his grandson, so he locked away his only daughter on the island to prevent any man making her pregnant. But, inevitably, Balor's own depredations on the adjacent mainland brought one of his victims, Ceannfhaolaidh (modern form of Cenn Fáelad), in revenge to the island and, while there, he fathered Balor's grandson.[17] It is this fictional Ceannfhaolaidh (as distinct from the eighth-century historical character) who gives us the folk-etymology of the name Cloghaneely, as mentioned above. In the story, the baby grandson escaped to the Donegal mainland where he grew into a young man. The grand finale of this local version sees the grandfather Balor killed by his then grown-up grandson.

Mount Errigal is located at the extreme southern end of what used to be the Síl Lugdach territory. Mountains, like islands, are of course natural things, created by geological forces aeons before our species even existed. But they are also cultural objects in the sense that we humans give them names and attribute stories and meaning to them. We even honour some mountains as holy, especially if they are cone-shaped, like Mount Fuji or Kilimanjaro, or peaked, like Mount Everest. Such mountains were thought to point to or even touch the sky, the realm of the gods. Errigal is both cone-shaped and (from some perspectives) peaked, so that, despite the absence of surviving lore, it is likely that it was considered to have been a holy mountain in ancient times. Errigal (anglicised from the Irish word *aireagal* – Old Irish *airecal*) is a Christian name, derived from the ecclesiastical Latin word *oraculum* meaning 'oratory'.[18] It occurs also as a name in several other places in Ireland, particularly in Ulster. The original pre-Christian meaning of *oraculum*, however, was a place where prophecies were sought from the gods.

What sort of things might have been believed about Errigal before it got that name in early Christian times?[19] The off-white colour of this attractively shaped mountain means that it can be said to almost glow in the sunlight. Clearly it has always been a notable feature in the landscape that was likely to have attracted myths. While such myths do not survive, there are various hints that from around the time of Christ the mountain was probably a focus of devotion, almost certainly to the god

Lug – just as its Co. Mayo counterpart, Croagh Patrick, was, before it too was Christianised in early medieval times. Croagh Patrick, Mount Brandon (Co. Kerry), Sliabh Donard (Co. Down) and many other imposing mountains and hilltops in Ireland were known to have been the foci of devotion to Lug.[20] The god was associated with the harvest and was honoured by the festival of Lughnasa at the beginning of our month of August, a festival which continued down to modern times. As Máire MacNeill says:

> The essence of the festival was that it celebrated the beginning of the harvest of the main subsistence crops: corn, in earlier times, and, in later times, potatoes. Its most distinctive manifestation was an assembly at a traditional site, always a remarkable natural feature, either a height (often the top of a mountain) or a water-side: a lake, river, or well. In many instances the sites have both features, e.g., a spring on a height, a lake near a mountain-top . . . Local memory has preserved in abundance stories of the origin of the festival and many anecdotes of the assembly-sites. As the festival can be shown, beyond all doubt, to be the survival of ancient Lughnasa, the combination of popular custom, traditional sites of celebration, and body of legend provides new information on the pagan festival and on Celtic religion.[21]

But apart from the place name *Dún Lúiche* – 'fort of Lug', now referring to an area and a lake at the base of the mountain – there are no surviving beliefs about Errigal. It is worth noting that *Dún Lúiche*, 'fort of Lug', means exactly the same thing as *Lugudunon*, the ancient name of what is now Lyon in France, an important centre of the god's cult.[22] *Dún Lúiche is* clearly the mainland counterpart of *Dún Baloir* on Tory Island.

The relatively flat landscape between Errigal and the coast looking out to Tory Island was understood as the location of an epic struggle between Lug (although usually not named because of a taboo) and Balor, as is still reflected in modern place names and folklore.[23] Just as Tory Island was connected with Balor so it can be speculated that Errigal (before it got that name) was connected with Lug – each, among other things, representing various sets of cosmic opposites such as south and north, high and low, land and sea, perhaps even life and death.

The arrival of Christianity in this district (probably in the sixth or early seventh century) heralded many changes but not the total eclipse of the pagan cult of Lug. The primary Christian ecclesiastical site in the area continued to be known as *Tulach Logha* ('the mound of Lug') down to the early thirteenth century.[24] It seems to have been originally an important ritual site – perhaps the royal inauguration mound – for the Síl Lugdach kingdom.[25] Even when that name was discarded, its replacement – *Tulach Bheigile*, anglicised as Tullaghabegley – is only thinly disguised. Although local folklore (but not any historical source) claims that the replaced element of the place name refers to a clerical founder, ambiguously known as Saint Beigile or Beaglaoch, the name is clearly a reference to the *beag laoch*, or 'little warrior', which is another of Lug's local aliases.[26]

Mount Errigal, the southern boundary of the Síl Lugdach kingdom, is very unusual in that no folklore or myths seem to be attached to it. This is extraordinary; almost certainly such a prominent natural feature would have attracted *dindshenchas* ('place-lore stories') in ancient times. The absence of such stories suggests that if they once existed (which almost certainly they did) then they must have been deliberately censored and suppressed – most probably by early Christian clerics who may have been worried about whatever pagan beliefs were associated with the mountain. The giving to it of a new, 'Christian' name may also have been an attempt to exorcise it of such heathen associations. All the circumstantial evidence suggests that before this happened the mountain was associated with Lug and was probably understood as a local manifestation of that god in his conflict with Balor, who was similarly manifested in the form of Tory Island.

A question that remains is: was this local rendering appropriated in some way from the wider classic version reflected in the main written account, or was the latter elaborated from a local telling, such as that discussed here?

Notes

[1] James Carney, 'Language and Literature to 1169', in Dáibhí Ó Cróinín (ed.), *A New History of Ireland I: Prehistoric and Early Ireland* (Oxford, 2005), p. 464.

[2] Elizabeth Gray (ed.), *Cath Muige Tuired: The Second Battle of Mag Tuired* (London, 1982).

[3] See, for example, Henry Morris, 'Where was *Tor Inis*, the island fortress of the Fomorians?', *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, 57 (1927), 47–58.

[4] Michael Herity (ed.), *Ordnance Survey Letters, Donegal* (Dublin, 2000), pp. 39–44.

[5] John O'Donovan (ed. and trans.), *Annála Ríoghachta Éireann: Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland by the Four Masters from the Earliest Period to the year 1616*, 7 vols (Dublin, 1851–6), vol. 1, pp. 18–21.

[6] That is, by John O'Donovan.

[7] O'Donovan, *Annála*, p. 18.

[8] Kim McCone, 'A tale of two ditties: poet and satirist in Cath Maige Tuired', in Donnchadh Ó Corráin, Liam Breathnach and Kim McCone (eds), *Sages, Saints*

and Storytellers: Celtic Studies in Honour of Professor James Carney (Maynooth, 1989), pp. 122–43 (pp. 138–9); Elizabeth A. Gray, 'Cath Maige Tuired: Myth and Structure', *Éigse*, 19 (1982), 1–35 (p. 17).

[9] Joan Radner, 'The Combat of Lug and Balor: Discourses of Power in Irish Myth and Folktale', *Oral Tradition*, 7/1 (1992), 143–9.

[10] Brian Lacey, *Lug's Forgotten Donegal Kingdom: The Archaeology, History and Folklore of the Síl Lugdach of Cloghaneely* (Dublin, 2012), pp. 70–6.

[11] Their earliest appearance in contemporary documentation is probably the record in the Annals of Ulster under the year 614, where they appear to be the people referred to by the older, cognate 'tribal' name Luigni. Síl Lugdach seems to be a later dynastic development of the latter name, essentially meaning the same thing. See Lacey, *Lug's Forgotten Donegal Kingdom*, p. 10.

[12] Lacey, *Lug's Forgotten Donegal Kingdom*, p. 35.

[13] Lacey, *Lug's Forgotten Donegal Kingdom*, pp. 39–41.

[14] Lacey, *Lug's Forgotten Donegal Kingdom*, pp. 74–5; and see below.

[15] Lacey, *Lug's Forgotten Donegal Kingdom*.

[16] Brian Lac[e]y et al., *Archaeological Survey of County Donegal* (Lifford, 1983), p. 271: 1572.

[17] In the oral versions the grandson is not named – except perhaps as the *beag laoch*, 'the little warrior' (or some such variant) – but he plays the role assigned to Lug in *The Second Battle of Mag Tuired*. There seems to have been a taboo about actually using Lug's name, which was close to the Common Celtic word for an oath: **Lugiom* (see John T. Koch, 'Further to *Tongu do dia toinges mo thuath* etc.', *Études Celtiques*, 29 (1992), 249–61 (pp. 252–4)). Koch ('Further', p. 253) explains the origins of this as follows: 'If the swearer reveals to enemies the name of the god being invoked against them, he risks having a counter-invocation to the same god thrown back at him.'

[18] *Dictionary of the Irish Language, Based Mainly on Old Irish and Middle Irish Materials, Compact Edition* (Dublin, 1998), p. 25.

[19] The arrival of Christianity in this area also brought about the commencement of writing and the recording of 'history', thus the end of 'prehistory'.

[20] Máire MacNeill, *The Festival of Lughnasa: A Study of the Survival of the Celtic Festival of the Beginning of Harvest* (Oxford, 1962) (see especially chs 6–9).

[21] MacNeill, *The Festival of Lughnasa*, p. ix.

[22] Art Ó Maolfabhail, *Ó Lyon go Dún Lúiche: Logainm san Oidhreacht Cheilteach* (Cork and Dublin, 2005).

[23] MacNeill, *The Festival of Lughnasa*, pp. 140–2; Lacey, *Lug's Forgotten Donegal Kingdom*, pp. 71–5.

[24] Dónall Mac Giolla Easpaig, 'Places and early settlement in County Donegal', in William Nolan, Liam Ronayne and Mairéad Dunlevy (eds), *Donegal: History and Society* (Dublin, 1995), p. 155.

[25] Lacey, *Lug's Forgotten Donegal Kingdom*, pp. 108–10.

[26] Lacey, *Lug's Forgotten Donegal Kingdom*, pp. 86–94.

this page has been left intentionally blank

SECTION 2

COMPARATIVE MYTHOLOGY

this page has been left intentionally blank

5

IRELAND AS MESOCOSM

Grigory Bondarenko

In attempting to understand the major principles of early Irish cosmology one has to define how the island of Ireland was perceived in the early world-view (*imago mundi*).[1] The most important source of information on this world-view is to be found in a number of medieval Irish texts on the 'domestication' of Ireland where features of landscape are manifested or cyclically re-established. A medieval Irish eleventh-century pseudo-historical compendium, *Lebor Gabála Érenn* (literally 'The Book of the Taking of Ireland'[2]), as well as the eleventh to twelfth centuries' prose and metrical *Dindshenchas Érenn* ('Place-lore of Ireland')[3] and other origin legends reflect a specific insular world-view. Ireland is seen through the eyes of medieval literati as a self-sufficient cosmos surrounded by the primordial ocean full of potential settlers and dangerous demonic Fomoire. Both the geography of Ireland and her long existence outside the Graeco-Roman world influenced this unique insular cosmology. Of course, one has to be aware of trade contacts and Latin learning as major factors in shaping early medieval Ireland. Nevertheless, the fact that early Irish literature, apart from translations and adaptations from Classical literature, is centred on Ireland and deals almost exclusively with Irish matters testifies to a special and central place of the land of Ireland in this world-view.

This traditional perception often causes early Irish world-view and cosmology, as limited to Ireland itself, to be implicitly determined by a unique insular space. All takings, explorations, clearings, floods and manifestations in Ireland can also be understood on the universal cosmological level. This is not to say that Scotland and the whole of Britain (*Albu*) and generally the Western world or Europe lay outside the geography of the medieval Irish literati, but that Ireland in its entirety is of primary importance. As late as the seventeenth century, Geoffrey Keating wrote that 'Ireland was a separate kingdom on her own, like a little world' (*do bhí Éire 'na ríoghacht ar leith léi fein, amhail domhan mbeag*).[4] A similar worldview is to be found in medieval Welsh literature, where the world is centred on the Island of Britain (*Ynys Prydein*), whereas at the time of the composition of these tales the major part of the island was in English hands and belonged to a different civilisation. The 'Island' as an entity transcended all political barriers. This phenomenon reflects an ancient isomorphic, hermetic principle: 'One is all, and by it all, and for it all, and if one does not contain all, all is nothing.'[5]

Mythopoeic models of the world often presuppose similarity (or, at least, special ties and interdependence) between macrocosm and microcosm, and that similarity in the early Irish tradition is reflected in a mesocosm of the insular landscape.[6] That is why the cosmos of Ireland, in its turn, is often modelled anthropomorphically: the whole island is taken as a divine body or, even more specifically, the body of a female deity. As Proinsias Mac Cana remarked, 'the concept of Ireland personified as a woman whether known as Ériu or by another name appears to be older than the written literature and to have had analogues in other lands of Celtic language and culture'.[7] Nevertheless, to our knowledge all other literary female personifications in other Celtic regions, such as Britannia or Scotland, are rather late and might have been influenced by the Irish tradition.

Ireland's omphalos traditions

Medieval Irish literature contains a number of passages where features of insular space are described as parts of a human or divine body.[8] Some remarkable examples are found in the Middle Irish tale 'The settling of the possessions of Tara' (*Suidigud Tellaig Temra*, later *STT*),[9] where Fintan mac Bóchra 'domesticates' the island of Ireland. *STT* shows Fintan's intimate relations with the land of Ireland. When he arrives at Tara, he calls Ireland his 'foster mother' (*buime*; note that the nobles called Fintan their *aiti* 'foster father') and the hill of Tara 'the familiar knee' (*glún gnáthach*).[10] This terminology is quite natural given that according to the early Irish pseudohistory Fintan was not born in Ireland: he came from the Near East together with Cessair (sometimes called Banba or even Ériu) and her almost entirely female crew and in Ireland he found a refuge during the Flood and afterwards.[11] It is also important to trace witnesses to the perception of Ireland as a divine entity, as a nurturing goddess, whose qualities are most evident for the primordial man of the island. The 'famous/familiar knee' naturally can be explained as a knee on which the child (Fintan) is fed by the foster mother, although we do not have any alternative sources suggesting Fintan's original connection with Tara. In Middle Irish poetry, another Gaelic island, Rathlin, is described as a 'foster mother': *ig muime gach ratha ráin*.[12] The perception of certain elements of horizontal space as parts of the divine body is widespread in early Irish mythological tales. The descriptions of such 'domesticated' space of Ireland by Fintan mac Bóchra in the text constitute an archaic image of the world.

In another passage in the same tale Tara is described in a different way. When Fintan comes to Uisnech, the geographical and sacred centre of Ireland, the narrator describes two centres of Ireland, Tara and Uisnech, 'as its two kidneys (which) are in a beast' (lit. 'beast of the herd') (*amail bit a di áraind a mmíl indile*).[13] As noticed by two Russian scholars, E. Golovin and V. Ivanov, any traditional society or inhabited space evolves elliptically around two centres with two symbolical functions.[14] In Ireland these are Tara with its Lía Fáil and Uisnech with its Rock of Divisions (*Ail na Mírenn*). Yet the stone of Uisnech is also known as the 'navel of Ireland'. In *STT* Fintan relates in a poem how he survived the Deluge 'over the navel of Uisnech' (*ós imlind Usnig*),[15] namely over the stone (or rock) of Uisnech. This very stone on the hill of Uisnech is once again described as the navel of Ireland by Gerald of Wales in his late twelfth-century *Topographia Hibernica*, when he speaks of the stone of Uisnech 'called the navel of Ireland, situated almost in the middle of the land' (*umbilicus Hiberniae dicitur, quasi in medio et meditullio terrae positus*).[16] The rock, or rather a fragmented glacial erratic, popularly known in English as the 'Cat Stone', is surrounded by an earthen enclosure. The enclosure was constructed from material scarped outwards from around the stone. This monument, broadly dated from the Neolithic period to the first millennium AD, emphasises the rock's significance and status in the sacred landscape of Uisnech.[17] A local tradition, recorded in the Ordnance Survey Letters, describes a certain 'aged thornbush' in the townland of Loughanstown, Co. Westmeath (not far from Uisnech), which marked the 'navel of Ireland'.[18] Note also that in Ireland we know only of the 'navel of Ireland' and never 'the navel of the earth'; thus, Ireland is taken as a cosmos of its own.

It is less known that Munster as a southern fifth of Ireland had its own omphalos, its own 'navels'. In a seventeenth-century poem 'Address to David O'Keeffe', some quatrains tell us how an arch-druid of Munster, Mog Ruith, came back from the siege of Druim Damgaire and settled in the area of Fermoy and became an ancestor figure for Fir Muighi Féine. He took the land 'of the soft navel of Munster' (*a n-imlind mhín na Muman*).[19] This is a hill on which the northern part of modern-day town of Fermoy is situated.

Another navel of Munster was supposedly in the old royal centre of the province in Bruree (Bruig Ríg), alternatively called Dún Eochair Máige. A Classical Modern Irish poem describes this place as 'a soft and fine navel of Munster' (*do Dhún ard Eochair Máighe / d'imlinn Mumhan míonáille*).[20] Even though we witness the literary imagery in the late bardic poetry, Munster here is still perceived as a world on its own with a hierarchy of its own,[21] a mesocosm, where certain features of Ireland are projected onto its provincial level.

The navel of the earth or a navel of a particular land or island, sometimes a stone, sometimes a mountain, is a phenomenon common to many world cultures. In other Celtic lands we find a late sixth-century Iudael, a youthful king of Domnonia in Brittany, seeing in his prophetic vision 'a most lofty mountain standing in the middle of his region of Brittany, at its very navel' (*in medio sue regionis Britannie, id est in umbilico*).[22] The best-known example in Europe is Delphi, where Zeus geographically determined the navel of his 'Grandmother Earth' (Gaia), and Delphi as a whole or a particular stone in Delphi was called ὀμφαλός γῆς 'the navel of the earth'. Note also that the purported etymology of Delphi (δελφύς 'womb') may point to an earlier veneration of Gaia 'Earth' on the site. Another Greek example, somewhat closer to our Irish phenomenon, is a town of Enna in the centre of Sicily, which was regarded as a navel of this island (ὀμφαλός Σικελίας): this is where a major temple of Demeter was built and the cave with the entrance to the Netherworld was located.[23] A traditional navel of the earth on the Indian sub-continent is located in the town of Ujjain in the geographical centre of India and is associated with a stone *jyotirlinga* of Shiva or Mahākāla.[24] Note also that most of these sacred 'navels' are physically attested as rounded-shaped stones, hills or mountains: this is more than just place names being metaphorically used to mean 'middle'.

A navel of the earth or of a certain region/island transfers human and bodily dimensions on to the terrestrial and cosmic level. A navel is not only a symbol of the cosmic centre, it is also a symbol of the beginning, birth and a locus where a foetus used to be connected with its mother. These complex ideas are likely to have been associated with the image of omphalos in Gaelic as well as in the other traditional societies.

The breasts of Ireland: *Dá Chích Anann*

One can also find another example in the early Irish literature where certain features of the Irish landscape are associated with divine body parts: these are the famous Paps of Anu (*Dá Chích Anann* 'Two Breasts of Anu') in Co. Kerry, not far from the border with Co. Cork, in the area of Slíab Lúachra and close to another focal point in Munster, Temair Lúachra. These two breast-shaped mountains are respectively 2,277 and 2,264 feet high. On the top of each of the Paps there is a cairn, possibly a Neolithic burial mound. The two tops are connected with a series of protruding rocks set on edge and called in Modern Irish *Na Fiacla* 'The Teeth'.[25] A detailed mythological microtext (macaronic in Latin and Irish) describing the Paps is found in Cormac's Glossary as well as in *Dúil Dromma Cetta*. I cite the copy of Cormac's Glossary found in the Yellow Book of Lecan, with some minor amendments based on other manuscripts:

> Ana .i. mater deorum hibernensium. Robo maith di*diu* ro bīathad-si deos; de cuius nomine ana dicitur .i. imed, et de cuius nomine Dā Chīc[h] nAnand īar Lūachair nominant[ur], ut fabula fertur .i. am*ail* aderait na sgēlaige.[26] *Uel* ana anyon graece, quod interpretatur dapes .i. biad.[27]
>
> Anu, i.e. mother of the Irish gods. It was well she nourished the gods: from whose name '*ana*' is called i.e. 'wealth, food', and from whose name the Two Paps of Anu in West Lúachair are called as the tale tells, i.e. as the storytellers say. Or '*ana*' 'anyon' (ἀνάγαιον/ἀνώγεον?) 'dining room' in Greek,[28] which is interpreted as 'sacrificial foods, foods', i.e. 'food'.

Ana is a variant form of earlier *Anu*, which reflects the falling together of the pronunciation of the unstressed final vowel. *Anu*, gen. *Anann*, is found in the corresponding entry from the version of *Dúil Dromma Cetta* (tentatively dated to the late ninth century or even later)[29] (TCD MS 1337, p. 63c). In both glossaries there seems to be a purposeful association with OIr. *anae* 'wealth, riches, prosperity' (see *eDIL* s.v.) intended to build up a learned etymology for *Anu*, a local theonym. John Carey supports C.-J. Guyonvarc'h's derivation of the name from Pokorny's **an-* 'male or female ancestor'; compare Armenian *han*, OHG *ana* 'grandmother'; Latin *anus* 'old woman'; Hittite *an-na-aš* 'mother'.[30] Anu is also mentioned in Cormac's Glossary as 'the mother of gods'; when another female mythological character, Búanand, is called 'foster mother of the Fianna' (*mumi na fian . . . quasi mater . . . na fian*) she is compared to Anu (Anand) *.i. mater deorum*.[31] In another early Irish glossary, *Dúil Dromma Cetta*, Anu is also mentioned twice and once she is specifically associated with the land of Ireland: *Īath* *nAnann .i. Ēiriu .i. Anu mater deorum, ut geintileis fingunt* ('The Land of Anu i.e. Ériu i.e. Anu, the mother of the gods, as the gentiles imagine') (TCD MS 1337, p. 635c). Anu thus is taken as an equivalent of the eponymous Ériu and is embodied in the land of Ireland.

According to a personal communication with Breandán Ó Cíobháin and according to his card catalogue,[32] as recently as the late twentieth century local farmers (non-speakers of Irish) preserved the Modern Irish name for the Paps in the form *Cíonna Banban* (or *Cíocha na banbhán* 'Breasts of the piglets (?)', a corrupt form of *Banbha?*) 'The Breasts of Banbha', where Banba is one of the names of Ireland and its eponymous goddess.[33] Despite the fact that Banba originally had associations with north Leinster (see *eDIL*, s.v.), according to the Lebor Gabála the Sons of Míl encountered her at Slíab Mis in Munster; according to the *Cín Dromma Snechta* version it was Ériu whom they met at Slíab Mis; and according to the *LL* version they had a colloquy with Ériu at Uisnech.[34] There seems to be an early connection of Banba with the south, and the name of the eponymous goddess in its local forms could have changed through time and space. Both Anu and Banba may have started out as the names of local land-goddesses, but both came to be used as designations for Ireland as a whole.

It is not surprising that *mater deorum*, a term derived from Classical mythology, is found in Cormac's Glossary. Early Irish literati were often influenced by Graeco-Roman religion and it is natural that local old deities were fitted into a structure inspired by classical polytheistic religion.[35] The question is whether and to what extent the term reflects genuine early Irish cosmological beliefs.

The learned author of Cormac's glossary seems to have been interested in Classical parallels when discussing peculiar Irish terms. Almost immediately following *Anu* there is an entry on *áed* 'fire' suggesting that *áed* 'fire' is *dea* 'divinity' backwards and referring to Vesta, the Roman goddess of the hearth: *bandea tened, et quia Uestam illam deam esse ignis fabula fertur* 'goddess of fire, and because the tale tells that Vesta is a goddess of fire'.[36] Thus Latin *fabula fertur* refers in Cormac to both Classical and vernacular Irish realities. The Latin phrase in *Dúil Dromma Cetta ut geintileis fingunt* corresponds to *ut fabula fertur* 'as the tale tells' of Cormac's Glossary. Both phrases in the present tense seem to rely on a contemporary living tradition, and the author of *Dúil Dromma Cetta* dissociates himself from such overtly pagan beliefs of the 'gentiles'. As the gloss (*.i. amail aderait na sgēlaige*), with its oral connotations, especially when the 'story-tellers' (*na sgēlaige*) are mentioned, is likely to be a later insertion and interpretation, not found in other versions of the Glossary, the genuine information supplied by the authors of the glossaries is limited to Latin phrases (*fabula fertur* and *geintileis fingunt*).

In order to derive *Anu* from *anae* ‘wealth, prosperity’ the author of the Glossary makes it clear that Anu as the mother of the gods nourished them (*ro bīathad-si deos*), presumably with her breasts, that is with the Paps, familiar and prominent features of the Irish landscape. Latin and Irish are indiscriminately used in the surviving versions of the glossaries. Further associations with food and the use of Greek ἀνάγαιον/ἀνώγεον (?) ‘dining room’ and Latin *dapes* ‘(sacrificial) foods’ also refer to Anu in her capacity of a feeding mother of gods. If Anu is the land of Ireland, and gods are born from the land and are fed by the land, one can most probably suggest that they are the chthonic gods, the gods of the *síde*, the fairy mounds and hills (Tírechán’s *dei terreni*). Note also that *Anu* as *mater deorum* has a male counterpart among the Irish deities, namely, *in Dagda* in his capacity of *Eochaid Oll-athair* (‘Great Father’).

A passage from a longer version of *Cóir Anmann* (‘Fitness of Names’) on the etymology of the name of the province, *Mumu*, also refers to the same folk etymology connecting Anu with *anae* ‘wealth’, and is possibly based on *SC* § 31:[37] *ar is innti no adhradh bandía int ṡonusa .i. Ana a hainm sein ⁊ is úaithisidhe isberar Dā Chīgh Anann ós Lūachair Degaid* ‘For in (Munster) the goddess of prosperity was worshipped, whose name was Ana, and from her are named the Two Paps of Ana above Lúachair Dedad’.[38] Apparently landscape features at Bruig na Boinne are called in the *Dindshenchas* on the same matching principle *Da Chích na Morrígna* ‘Two Paps of the Morrígan’, involving another goddess of the Irish pantheon (Yellow Book of Lecan (YBL, TCD MS 1318) 407, Book of Ballymote (BB, RIA MS 23 P 12) 190b).[39] According to the *Metrical Dindshenchas*, the Paps at the Bruig were west of the ‘fairy’ enclosure: *Dá Cích rígnai ind ríg* (‘The Two Paps of the king’s queen’).[40] John Carey doubts the authenticity of the association with the Morrígan in the prose and links the place name with Bóand.[41] Whatever goddess is meant, the pattern of naming is the same as in the Paps of Anu in the south.

The mother of the gods as known in some Indo-European and Near Eastern religions is often located at or associated with the mountains. A Latin term *mater deorum* used in Cormac’s Glossary most likely refers to Cybele or Rhea, a Graeco-Phrygian ‘mother of the gods’ (θεῶν μήτηρ) imported into the Graeco-Roman pantheon.[42] Servius persistently calls Cybele ‘the mother of the gods’, *mater deorum*.[43] A Phrygian name of the goddess *Matar Kubileya* is usually translated as ‘Mother of Cybele’ (Cybele being the name of the mountain),[44] and later Cybele was worshipped on

Mount Ida, and accordingly called in Latin *Idaea Mater*. She is associated with the mountain, just as Rhea, the Mother of the Gods, was worshipped in Asia Minor as *Meter oreia* 'Mountain-mother'.[45] A phenomenon typologically similar to the Irish 'mountain/mother of the gods' pair is found in the Greek and Phrygian sacred geography: two summits of Mount Dindymus in Phrygia associated with Dindymene, a local representation of Cybele, are 'etymologically' explained as *didumoi mastoi* 'twin breasts' by the Hellenistic writer Philostephanus.[46] Another senior goddess of purely Greek origin is Gaia, the Earth, who arose next after Chaos – 'The broad-breasted Gaia, the firm and everlasting abode of all divinities, those that dwell high above, on Mount Olympus, and those that dwell within her, in the earth'.[47]

It would be highly unlikely that the author of Cormac's Glossary was familiar with these particular Greek religious and geographical phenomena. Nevertheless the entries from *Dúil Dromma Cetta* and Cormac's Glossary resemble the description of the pagan gods in Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae*, in a section entitled *De diis gentium* ('On the pagan gods').[48] Isidore takes care to articulate the etymological significance of each god's or goddess's name.[49] He discusses the earth-goddess Ceres, known to him also as Tellus (Earth) and Magna Mater (Great Mother) (*Eandem et Tellurem et Matrem magnam fingunt*). Isidore does not specifically call her 'the mother of gods', nor does he attribute breast-feeding to her. He says of her nurturing function that she is 'the bountiful' (*alma*) because she nourishes all animals with her produce (*almam, quia universa animalia fructibus suis alit*). It was Isidore who associated Vesta with fire in his list of gods, and this must be the source of the *áed* passage in Cormac, whereas the *Anu* passage seems more complex and is based both on Isidore's *De diis gentium*, other Classical sources and local Irish primeval beliefs.[50]

Codal and Ériu: feeding the land of Ireland

If Anu/Ériu feeds the gods of Ireland with her breasts, she is in turn reared and fed by a supernatural male character *in illo tempore* when both the goddess and the land of Ireland were still in their infancy. The tale is found in both the prose and metrical Middle Irish *Dindshenchas* of an unidentified hill, Benn Codail.[51] To our knowledge no scholars after Stokes and Gwynn attempted any linguistic, historical or anthropological analysis of the tale in question apart from Nina Zhivlova, whose 2015 article raises a number of problems related to the nature and origins of the place name as well as the background of beliefs and rituals reflected in the tale.[52] Our purpose here is to set the microtext from the *Dindshenchas* in the context of the early Irish syncretistic literary world-view. We are going to look at some linguistic features of this Middle Irish tale and more generally to establish its purposes in the light of a comparative mythological approach. We make use of the Rennes prose version (f. 121a1)[53] with some variant readings from the Book of Ballymote (BB, RIA MS 23 P 12), the Book of Lecan (Lec, RIA MS 23 P 2) and the Edinburgh MS (Ed, National Library of Scotland, Adv. MS 72.1.16) and offer our translation:

> Bend Codhoil, canas ro*ainmniged*? Ni *ansa*. Codhal Corrcīchech is é rob aite hĒrend dia tā Inis Ēr*end*, 7 is and airb*er*edh bith a dalta, f*or*sin mbeind ucat, 7 n*ach* tairbert dob*er*edh fuirri *cono*cb*ad* in talmoin foib, 7 meine ep*re*d Oiriu fria haiti: 'Atomannar (BB atomandar Ed atumadar Lec isium romorthogbaigther) sūas (Lec ūair do gair grīan 7) co tiaghat na goith gaithi t*r*ianar clūasa,' 7 mine apradh sí sin noasfad co[m]bad lēir (BB, Ed rēil) Ēr*iu* de, 7 al-laithi domelad (BB, Ed domela) comorba Ēr*enn* tūara Codail f*or*b*eir* a gail 7 a slaine. Un*de* Benn Cod*ail*.
>
> Benn Codail, whence was it named? Not hard (to say). Codal the Prominent-breasted, it is he who was fosterer of Ériu after whom *Inis Érenn* 'Ériu's Island', is named. And on yonder peak his fosterling used to eat. And every portion which he gave her used to raise the earth under them. Unless Ériu had said to her fosterer: 'I am burnt (?) up [Lec because the sun burns (?)] so that the spears of wind are coming through our ears' — unless she said *that*, it would have grown until Ireland was manifest/visible from there [*or* from that, *i.e.* on that account ?]. And the day that Ériu's successor would eat Codal's food (or food of hide?) it increased [*lit.* increases] his valour and his health. Whence *Benn Codail* 'Codal's Peak'.

The name of the protagonist is likely to be the same as *codal* 'hide, skin' (ā-stem, fem. noun). It is possible that *codal* was later declined as an o-stem masculine noun. *Codal* is usually taken as a derivative from Lat. **cutilia* from *cutis* 'skin, hide' via British Latin.[54] This etymology has been suggested in O'Mulconry's Glossary: *Codal a cutilia .i. a pelle, quia cutis cutilia cuticula sit*.[55] The problem here is that Lat. **cutilia* or adjective **cutilis* are not attested in Latin sources apart from a place name in Italy. This makes it all the more striking that *cutilia* is attested in O'Mulconry. More plausible is an etymology advanced by Kroonen, who derives MIr. *codal* from PIE **kuH-* + suffix *d*^{h}*léh*^{2}-.[56] Thus, the word is not necessarily a borrowing from Latin. This etymology, if correct, at least indicates that the word should have been native to the earliest Irish. Both Codal as the feeding fosterer and the hill associated with feeding seem to have a suitable name when a distribution of substantial food is involved.

Codal Corrchíchech, an eponymous hero, is one of the main characters elsewhere in the prose and metrical *Dindshenchas* of Codal (RIA MS D ii 2): he is one of the Tuatha Dé Danann, a warrior of Áed, the son of the Dagda. As terms of a peace agreement among the Tuatha Dé Danann Codal is granted a hill named after him. This is an unidentified hill on a plain in Ireland.[57] Codal's epithet can be compared to a Gaulish divine epithet attested as CICOLLOS 'breast, or muscle (?) + great'.[58] Especially relevant here is the name of CICOLLOS's consort or associated female divine character LITAUIS 'la Terre, la Vaste, l'Étendue', cognate with OIr. *Letha*, Welsh *Llydaw*, Sanskrit *pṛthivī*.[59]

Judging from his epithet in the *Dindshenchas*, Codal seems to feed Ériu with his own breasts, a phenomenon not unknown in early Irish secular literature and hagiography, where a male hero (Lugaid Cíchech) or a saint (Colmán Ela, Finnchua) could feed a person with his own breast.[60] The shape of Codal's breasts and the term *cích*, which normally stands for woman's breast, may suggest an androgynous nature of Codal. The only other instances of the adjective *corrchíchech* 'of pointed breasts' known to me are applied to young seductive girls and women: in the *Dindshenchas* this is an epithet of the supernatural woman personifying 'the Kingship of Albu and Ériu' (*flathius Alban is Hérend*).[61] Codal's young age becomes explicit as one can find another Codal in the *Dindshenchas*, who is described as *Crínchíchech* or *Crínchosach* ('of withered breast', 'of withered feet').[62] This 'old' Codal is a knowledgeable character, possibly an adviser to king Eochu Airem in Étain's story.

A fosterer feeding a child with his own breasts also reminds us of an Irish custom of attesting loyalty, or allegiance, by sucking the breasts or nipples of the recipient (see Latin *sugere mammellas* in St Patrick's *Confessio*, or a dwarf sucking a king's breast in 'The Saga of Fergus mac Léti').[63] Bernhard Maier also points out some Hamitic and Ethiopian analogues to this Irish custom, for example in southern Ethiopia a fosterling symbolically sucks the breasts of his fosterer.[64] However, the *Dindshenchas* of Benn Codail might have meant feeding the child with the fosterer's own breast in a literal sense, since children in Ireland could have been given to a fosterer at a very early age (see *comalta óenc[h]léib* 'foster child of the same cradle'; *comalta* gl. *collactaneus*).[65]

Important here is Ériu's feminine fertility and primeval quality in the Irish insular context. One can only agree with Gwynn that *Inis Érenn* here is simply Ireland,[66] while Ériu is the eponymous goddess and the personification of the island. Alongside the above-mentioned story of Codal and Áed this is a good reason why Benn Codail should not be identified with Ireland’s Eye, a little island east of Ireland’s coast, as initially suggested by Stokes.

One of the difficult places in the prose *Dindshenchas* of Benn Codail is the first phrase uttered by young Ériu, with which she ultimately stops the growth of the hill: *Atomannar* (BB *atomandar*, Ed. *atumadar*) *sūas*. I tentatively take *atomannar* (*atomandar*) as a preverb *at* + inf. pron. 1 s. + pass. sg. of *ad-annai* ‘kindles, burns’, meaning ‘I am burnt up (?)’ (that is, exposed to the sunlight high above the ground) rather than Stokes’s ‘I am heaved (?) up on high’. The Book of Lecan variant of the same phrase – *Isium romorthogbaigther sūas ūair do gair grīan* ‘It has grown up a lot because the sun burns (?)’ – is likely to explain a difficult verbal form from the prose version of the original manuscript used by the scribe. The passage from the Book of Lecan is not included in Stokes’s edition although he gives his translation of this phrase in brackets (‘the sun scorches me and’). The *Metrical Dindshenchas* version has Ériu’s words as *rongoir grían grin* ‘the cheering sun hath scorched us’,[67] whereas *atumadar* in the Ed. version seems to be a preverb *at* + inf. pron. 1 s. + pass. sg. of *ad-aig* ‘I am raised up’. Alternatively, looking at the variants in palaeographical terms suggests that *atumadar* could be regarded as derived from *atumandar* with loss of a suspension stroke. In the poetic version Ériu says that ‘the mountain rises above Ériu (Ireland?)’ (*atraig in slíab ós Érinn*).[68] The very clarity may make the poem suspect as a *versio facilior* as compared to the prose.

Benn Codail cannot be accurately located but it is likely to be identical with Síd Codail in Co. Kildare, mentioned in a later thirteenth-century tale where a giant is killed in this fairy hill and is mourned by his beautiful giant mistress.[69] It is not clear whether the giant is Codal himself or another character from the *síd*. In both stories one can see the same pair of supernatural characters, a male and a female, in their intimate relations associated with the hill of Codal. According to the *Metrical Dindshenchas*, Codal is buried in the same hill (*hi tul-chnuc gurm* ‘in the swelling blue/black hill’) that bears his name afterwards.[70]

After the whole story of the growing hill has been unfolded, a final and particular role is ascribed to Ériu’s *comarba* ‘successor, coarb’. A *comarba* is entitled to eat certain food in order to increase his health and valour: *al-laithi domelad* (v.l. *do-méla*) *comorba Ēr*enn *tūara Codail f*orbeir *a gail* 7 *a slaine*, ‘the day that Ériu’s successor eats Codal’s food it increases his valour and his health’;[71] while the Edinburgh *Dindshenchas* provides a more detailed description: *an la domela comarba Ērenn no rí Temrach tuara Codhail* nó *ní d'enlaith* nó *d'fíaduch* (MS *dīaguch*) nó *di iasc, forbraid a ghal 7 a slainte*, 'And the day that Ériu's *coarb* (successor) or Tara's king would (or 'will') partake of Codal's food, or aught of birds or venison or fish, his valour and his health increase'.[72] Ériu's *comarbae* is presumably the king of Tara and the food is associated with a place described in the *Dindshenchas*. Alternatively one can take *comorba Ērenn* as standing for any Irishman and *tūara Codail* as referring to any substantial food from the air, earth and water (*ní d'enlaith* nó *d'fíaduch* nó *di iasc*),[73] especially since *túara codail* can be translated literally as 'food of (the) skin, hide'. Another possibility is that *túara codail*, a food of animal origin, was initially a type of sacrificial food with which Ériu was fed.

Comarbae is very often used as an ecclesiastical term for a saint's successor or an abbot, but it is originally a secular term applied to any legal inheritor.[74] Elsewhere in the *Dindshenchas* of Irarus a *comarba* of a local druid is entitled to a certain type of food. In order to solve difficult problems the *comarba* of Bicne, the druid, is entitled to eat the fruit of Irarus (a supernatural tree), which in the Rennes version includes corn, milk, mast and fish.[75] After Mide son of Brath, the chief druid of Ireland, had lit the first fire in Ireland on the hill of Uisnech, 'his successor was entitled to a sack (of corn) and a pig from every house in Ireland' (con*id de dliges a comorba miach la muic ca*ch *oen cleithe i nĒir*inn).[76]

It might be argued that Codal as a character from the *áes síde* could have been fabricated in order to fit into the etymological and etiological story of a particular place name associated with *codal* 'skin, hide'. However, the mythologem involving a male supernatural character feeding the eponymous goddess of Ireland deserves a better look. Stokes remarks that no parallels 'to the concurrent growth of a peak and a child reared upon it' are found in folklore or mythology of other countries.[77]

Deeper and much more primitive in the *Dindshenchas* is the notion of how this very particular hill was raised when the baby earth-goddess was fed by her fosterer. The hill of Codal then is a mesocosm where Ériu's growth is magically reflected on a landscape level. It is a manifestation of Ériu. This interrelation between Ireland/Ériu and the hill is best stressed in the following phrase: 'it would have grown until Ireland was manifest/visible from there' (*noasfad co[m]bad rēil Ēriu de*). Significant here is that we deal with the hills or mountains in a number of Irish mythologems related to feeding and fosterage on the insular level: the hill of Tara where Fintan is fostered by Ériu, the Paps of Anu (*Dá Chích Anann*) where gods are fed by the land of Ireland, and the hill of Codal Corrchíchech where

Ériu in her turn is fed by her fosterer. The phenomenon of Benn Codail in the growth of the child (Ériu) and the simultaneous growth of the hill is an Irish version of the 'primordial hill' on the surface of the waters in its first stage of *instabilis terra* before being fixed. This imagery is comparable to the corresponding Indian myths from the *Brāhmaṇas* of the *Yajur-Veda*, where the original small hill began to grow in the beginning of the Earth.[78]

Another 'archaic' feature in this *Dindshenchas* is the 'child-earth' motif, where the earth (or the cosmos of Ireland) grows from a primordial child: variants of this motif are attested both in Asian and American cosmogonic myths but do not seem to be found elsewhere in Europe.[79] This 'child-earth' could have been either a boy or a girl: in the Philippines it is the boy made of stone who tries to conquer the heavens; he is killed by the lightning and the earth is formed from his fallen body; among Costa Rican Indians it is the 'girl-earth' whose body forms the fertile land.

Preliminary conclusions

Ireland as described in the medieval secular literature is seen as an insular cosmos on its own, an intermediary or a homologue of the divine body. In the invocation of Ériu by Amairgen found in *Lebor Gabála* Ireland is seen and praised as a 'vast woman' (*Bé n-adbul Ériu*), when the land and the woman seem to be consubstantial.[80] This insular space is often modelled or explained as a manifestation of the divine female body where important and sacred features of landscape, such as Uisnech, Tara or the Paps of Anu, represent parts of this body. The perception of Anu/Ériu as 'the mother of the gods' found in the glossaries could have been influenced by the Classical literature known to the compiler(s). Yet Anu's association with a concrete feature of the Irish landscape, namely the Paps of Anu, which is supported by later folklore and comparative evidence from other mythologies, seems to reflect a genuine early Irish view of the South Munster landscape.

The mother-goddess feeds the gods and she herself had to be nurtured in the beginning of time. Thus, however indirectly, we probably witness traces of cosmogonic myth where a child-goddess is fed with the sacrificial food (made from the contents of *codal* 'skin, hide') and when grown up feeds the gods, while the whole land of Ireland is manifested as her own body. These Irish medieval texts all go back to local variants (Midlands or Munster) later forged into literary narratives, yet they seem to be consistent in their attitude towards the land of Ireland, her unity, her divinity and the interdependence of her elements. Similar interrelations of goddess, food and mountain are to be found at the opposite end of the Indo-European world, in India, where one of the names of Shiva's spouse, Durgā, was Annapūrṇā 'filled with or possessed of food', and the same name is also applied to one of the highest mountains in the Himalayas.[81] In the holy city of Vārānasī locals say that Annapūrṇā provides food (*anna*) in the widest sense, that is, all that nourishes and sustains life.[82] Thus, however marginal and late, the traces of early Irish mythology discussed above refer to motifs and deities known and respected since the most ancient times both in Indo-European societies and even more widely.

Notes

[1] I am grateful to Emily Lyle, Elizabeth Gray, John Carey, Wilson McLeod, Gregory Toner, Nina Zhivlova and Màiri Òg Koroleva for all their suggestions and corrections, whereas I am solely responsible for all possible remaining errors and misinterpretations.

[2] R. Mark Scowcroft, 'Leabhar Gabhála, Part II: The Growth of the Tradition', *Ériu*, 39 (1988), 1–66; R. Mark Scowcroft, 'Abstract Narrative in Ireland', *Ériu*, 46 (1995), 121–58; John Carey, '*Lebor Gabála* and the legendary history of Ireland', in Helen Fulton (ed.), *Medieval Celtic Literature and Society* (Dublin, 2005), pp. 32–48. For an overview, see James Mallory, *The Origins of the Irish* (London, 2013), pp. 201, 205–8.

[3] See Petra S. Hellmuth, 'The *Dindshenchas* and Irish literary tradition', in John Carey, Máire Herbert and Kevin Murray (eds), *Cín Chille Cúile: Texts, Saints and Places: Essays in Honour of Pádraig Ó Riain* (Aberystwyth, 2004), pp. 116–17.

[4] Geoffrey Keating, *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn, Vol. 1*, ed. David Comyn (London, 1902), pp. 38–9.

[5] Georg Luck, *Arcana Mundi: Magic and the Occult in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Baltimore, 2006), p. 441.

[6] 'Mesocosm' as a term was first employed referring to early Irish spatial phenomena in William Sayers, 'Mesocosms and the Organization of Interior Space in Early Ireland', *Traditio*, 70 (2015), 75–110. The difference between phenomena described by Sayers and our material is that we deal with insular space as an intermediary between a 'microcosm' of the divine body and the macrocosm.

[7] Proinsias Mac Cana, *The Cult of the Sacred Centre* (Dublin, 2011), p. 294.

[8] A similar attitude is to be found in Gaelic Scotland, where a number of landscape features are perceived as human body parts. The word for almost every human feature could describe a natural feature: *ceann* (head, end), *gualann* (shoulder, mountain ridge), *bràigh* (upper chest, uplands), *cìoch* (breast, pointed hills), *druim* (back, hill or mountain ridge), *tòn* (buttocks, eminence), *bod* (penis, stone pillar). Thus the landscape is seen as a living entity (Michael Newton, *A Handbook of the Scottish Gaelic World* (Dublin, 2000),

p. 216). Of course, much of this terminology can also be found in Ireland. However, there seems to be no personification of Scotland (or Britain) in this Scottish Gaelic attitude.

[9] R. I. Best, 'The Settling of the Manor of Tara', *Ériu*, 4 (1910), 121–72.

[10] Best, 'The Settling of the Manor of Tara', p. 128.

[11] John O'Donovan (ed.), *Annála Ríoghachta Éireann: Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland by the Four Masters from the Earliest Period to the Year 1616*, 7 vols (Dublin, 1848), AM 2242.1.

[12] Kuno Meyer, 'Mitteilungen aus irischen Handschriften', *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, 10 (1915), 37–54 (p. 53.17).

[13] Best, 'The Settling of the Manor of Tara', p. 152.

[14] E. V. Golovin [Е. В. Головин], 'Друиды. Дороги. Деревья. Рецензия на Г. Бондаренко "Мифология пространства Древней Ирландии"' ['Druidy. Dorogi. Derevya. Retsenziya na Grigory Bondarenko 'Mifologiya prostranstva Drevney Irlandii' – 'Druids. Roads. Trees. Review of Grigory Bondarenko, 'Mythology of Space in Early Ireland'], *Волшебная гора* [*Volshebnaya gora*], 9 (2004), 226; Vyacheslav V. Ivanov [Вячеслав В. Иванов], *Избранные труды по семиотике и истории культуры. Т. 1* [*Izbrannye trudy po semiotike i istorii kultury. T. 1 – Selected Writings on Semiotics and Cultural History. Vol. 1*] (Moscow, 1998), pp. 520–5. Ivanov mentions Egypt divided into Upper and Lower kingdoms, medieval Rus with its two centres in Kiev and Novgorod, and other societies.

[15] Best, 'The Settling of the Manor of Tara', p. 150.

[16] J. F. Dimock (ed.), *Giraldi Cambrensis Opera*, vol. 5 (London, 1867), p. 144. Alternatively, Clonmacnoise as an ecclesiastical centre in the Midlands was once called 'the navel of Ireland' in *Quinta vita sancti Columbae*: *Hiberniae umbilicum mire irradiatum prope incendebat* (of St Ciarán) (John Colgan (ed.), *Triadis Thaumaturgæ, seu divorum Patricii, Columbæ, et Brigidæ, trium veteris et majoris Scotiæ, seu Hiberniæ, Sanctorum insulæ, communium patronorum acta, a variis, iisque pervetustis ac Sanctis, authoribus Scripta* (Louvain, 1647), p. 392, col. 2). On the imagery of the navel of the earth (omphalos) among the Celts see also Joseph Loth, 'L'omphalos chez les Celtes', *Revue des études anciennes*, 17 (1915), 193–206.

[17] Roseanne Schot, 'From cult centre to royal centre: monuments, myths and other revelations at Uisneach', in Roseanne Schot, Conor Newman and Edel Bhreathnach (eds), *Landscapes of Cult and Kingship* (Dublin, 2011), pp. 96, 101–2.

[18] Ordnance Survey Letters, Co. Westmeath, vol. 2, p. 193 (RIA MS 14 G 14). Available online at *http://www.askaboutireland.ie/aai-files/assets/ebooks/OSI-Letters/WEST%20MEATH%20VOL%202_14%20G%2014.pdf*, accessed 24 August 2017. See A. T. Lucas, 'The Sacred Trees of Ireland', *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society*, 68 (1963), 16–54 (p. 48).

[19] Eleanor Knott, 'Address to David O'Keeffe', *Ériu*, 4 (1910), 209–32 (p. 226, § 54).

[20] Láimhbheartach Mac Cionnaith (ed.), *Dioghluim Dána* (Dublin, 1938), p. 74, § 52.

[21] Alwyn and Brinley Rees, *Celtic Heritage* (London, 1961), pp. 133–4.

[22] Robert Fawtier, 'Ingomar, historien breton', in *Mélanges d'histoire du moyen âge offerts à M. Ferdinand Lot* (Paris, 1925), pp. 188–9. See also Mac Cana, *The Cult of the Sacred Centre*, p. 163.

[23] Vladimir N. Toporov [Владимир Н. Топоров], *Мифология. Статьи для мифологических энциклопедий. Т. 2* [*Mifologiya. Stat'i dlya mifologicheskih entsiklopediy. T. 2 – Mythology. Articles from the Mythological Encyclopaedias. Vol. 2*, ed. Grigory Bondarenko] (Moscow, 2014), p. 180.

[24] Diana L. Eck, *India: A Sacred Geography* (New York, 2012), pp. 236–40.

[25] Frank Coyne, *Islands in the Clouds: An Upland Archaeological Study on Mount Brandon and The Paps, County Kerry* (Tralee, 2006), pp. 21, 24.

[26] The gloss (*.i. amail aderait na sgēlaige*) seems to be a later insertion, not found in the shorter versions of the Glossary.

[27] Kuno Meyer (ed.), '*Sanas Cormaic*: An Old-Irish glossary compiled by Cormac úa Cuilennáin, king-bishop of Cashel in the tenth century', in Osborn Bergin et al. (eds), *Anecdota from Irish Manuscripts*, vol. 4 (Halle and Dublin, 1912), 1–128 (p. 3, § 31). Meyer's corrigenda based on the YBL version are inserted and variant readings from other MSS are taken into account.

[28] Pádraic Moran, '"A Living Speech"? The Pronunciation of Greek in Early Medieval Ireland', *Ériu*, 61 (2011), 29–57 (p. 42). In the *Dúil Dromma Cetta* version we read *aninos*.

[29] Paul Russell, '*Dúil Dromma Cetta* and Cormac's Glossary', *Études Celtiques*, 32 (1996), 147–74 (p. 165).

[30] John Carey, 'Notes on the Irish war-goddess', *Éigse*, 19 (1983), 263–75 (p. 271, n. 41); Christian-J. Guyonvarc'h, 'Les Noms celtiques de l'âme et de l'esprit', *Ogam*, 19 (1967), 475–90 (p. 489); Julius Pokorny, *Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch. Band 1.* (Bern and Munich, 1959), pp. 36–7.

[31] Meyer, '*Sanas Cormaic*', § 104.

[32] Dr Breandán Ó Cíobháin is a leading place-names scholar and medievalist from Ceann Trá, Co. Kerry (see Breandán Ó Cíobháin, *Toponomia Hiberniae*, vols 1–4 (Dublin, 1978–84)).

[33] See also Sc. Gaelic *banbh* 'land unploughed for a year' (Edward Dwelly, *The Illustrated Gaelic to English Dictionary* (Glasgow, 1994), p. 65).

[34] Robert A. S. Macalister (ed.), *Lebor Gabála Érenn*, vol. 5 (Dublin, 1956), pp. 34–7.

[35] Ronald Hutton, *The Pagan Religions of the Ancient British Isles* (Oxford, 1991), p. 296; Jody Joy, 'The Iron Age', in Timothy Insoll (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Archaeology of Ritual and Religion* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 405–20 (pp. 406–7).

[36] Meyer (ed.), '*Sanas Cormaic*', § 33.

[37] Sharon Arbuthnot (ed.), *Cóir Anmann, Part 2* (London, 2007), p. 152; Carey, 'Notes on the Irish war-goddess', p. 270, n. 36.

[38] Arbuthnot, *Cóir Anmann*, p. 2, § 1.

[39] Whitley Stokes (ed.), 'The Prose Tales in the Rennes *Dindshenchas*', *Revue Celtique*, 15 (1894), 272–336, 418–84 (p. 283).

[40] Edward Gwynn (ed.), *The Metrical Dindshenchas*, Part 2 (Dublin, 1906), p. 18.13.

[41] Carey, 'Notes on the Irish war-goddess', p. 274, n. 56.

[42] Sergey N. Trubetskoy [Сергей Н. Трубецкой], *Метафизика в Древней Греции* [*Metafizika v Drevney Gretsii – Metaphysics in Ancient Greece*] (Moscow, 2003), p. 121.

[43] Georgius Thilo and Hermannus Hagen (eds), *Servii Grammatici qui feruntur in Vergilii Carmina Commentarii* (Leipzig, 1884), vol. 2, p. 419, 136; vol. 3, p. 325.

[44] Philippe Borgeaud, *La Mère des dieux: De Cybèle à la Vierge Marie* (Paris, 1996), pp. 24–5.

[45] Carl Kerényi, *The Gods of the Greeks* (Harmondsworth, 1958), p. 72.

[46] Carolus Wendel (ed.), *Argonautica Scholia in Apollonium Rhodium* (Berlin, 1935), vol. 1, p. 985.

[47] Glenn W. Most (ed. and trans.), *Hesiod*, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA, and London, 2006–7), vol. 1, pp. 12–13 (*Theogony*, ll. 117–19).

[48] Stephen A. Barney et al., *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 187 (VIII, XI, pp. 61, 67).

[49] Jane Chance, *Medieval Mythography: From Roman North Africa to the School of Chartres, A.D. 433–1177* (Gainesville, 1994), pp. 142–3.

[50] Both Michael Clarke and Mark Williams have recently suggested that the lore in the Irish glossaries may have been shaped in emulation of Isidore's treatment of Classical mythology (Michael Clarke, 'Linguistic Education and Literary Creativity in Medieval Ireland', *Cahiers de l'Institut de Linguistique et des Sciences des Langues*, 38 (2013), 39–71; Mark Williams, *Ireland's Immortals: A History of the Gods of Irish Myth* (Princeton and Oxford, 2016), p. 190). This may be true as regards lexical borrowings and the structure offered by Isidore. Nevertheless this sounds debatable when Williams writes that 'nowhere else <in Irish tradition> is a natural feature described as part of a divinity's body'. In this study we offer a number of such descriptions.

[51] Whitley Stokes (ed.), 'The Prose Tales from the Rennes *Dindshenchas*', *Revue Celtique*, 16 (1895), 31–83, 135–167, 269–312 (pp. 60–1, § 109); Whitley Stokes (ed.), 'The Edinburgh *Dinnshenchas*', *Folk-Lore*, 4 (1893), 471–97; Edward Gwynn (ed.), *Metrical Dindshenchas*, Part 4 (Dublin, 1924), pp. 184–7. The following part of my chapter (excluding my conclusions) has been written partially with the collaboration of Dr Nina Y. Zhivlova (Moscow).

[52] Nina Zhivlova, 'Ériu and Codal: raising up a goddess and an island', in N. Kazansky (ed.), *Indo-European linguistics and classical philology – XIX. Proceedings of the 19th Conference in Memory of Professor Joseph M. Tronsky* (St Petersburg, 2015), pp. 249–57.

[53] Rennes, Bibliothèque de Rennes Métropole, MS 598. A digital photograph of the MS is available online at *www.tablettes-rennaises.fr/app/photopro.sk/rennes/detail?docid=48917*, accessed 24 August 2017. See also edition by Stokes, *Revue Celtique*, 16 (1895), 60–1 (§ 109).

[54] Michiel de Vaan, *Etymological Dictionary of Latin and the other Italic Languages*, ed. A. Lubotsky (Leiden and Boston, 2008), p. 160. LÉIA s.v. codal supports borrowing from Latin.

[55] Early Irish Glossaries Database, available at *http://www.asnc.cam.ac.uk/irish-glossaries/*, accessed 24 August 2017.

[56] Guus Kroonen, *Etymological Dictionary of Proto-Germanic*, ed. A. Lubotsky (Leiden Indo-European Etymological Dictionary Series; Leiden, Boston, 2013), pp. 251–2.

[57] Gwynn, *Metrical Dindshenchas*, Part 4, p. 268.

[58] Bernhard Maier, '*Sugere mammellas*: a pagan Irish custom and its affinities', in Ronald Black, William Gillies and Roibeard Ó Maolalaigh (eds), *Celtic Connections: Proceedings of the Tenth International Congress of Celtic Studies: Volume One, Language, Literature, History, Culture* (East Linton, 1999), pp. 152–61 (pp. 154–5); Wolfgang Spickermann, 'Les noms des divinités celtes en Germanie et leur interprétation dans le cadre de l'histoire des religions', in Andreas Hofeneder and Patrizia de Bernardo Stempel (eds), *Théonymie celtique, cultes, interpretatio – Keltische Theonymie, Kulte, interpretation. X. Workshop F.E.R.C.AN., Paris 24.–26. Mai 2010* (Vienna, 2013), pp. 131–44 (p. 133). CICOLLOS may be compared to Irish Cichol Gricenchos, the earliest-mentioned leader of the Fomoire (Robert A. S. Macalister (ed.), *Lebor Gabála Érenn*, vol. 3 (Dublin, 1940), pp. 2–15, 72–5, 85).

[59] Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum, Vol. XIII, 5599, 5601, 5602 (Otto Hirschfield and Carolus Zangemeister (eds), *Inscriptiones Trium Galliarum et Germaniarum Latinae: Inscriptiones Germaniae Superioris*, Partis Secundae, Fasciculus I (Berlin, 1900), pp. 99–100); Xavier Delamarre, *Dictionaire de la langue gauloise* (Paris, 2003), pp. 204–5.

[60] James George O'Keeffe (ed.), '*Duan Chatháin*. The Genealogies of the Uí Eachach of Munster', in John Fraser, Paul Grosjean, S. J. and James George O'Keeffe (eds), *Irish Texts. Fasc. IV* (London, 1934), pp. 47–67 (pp. 51, 65f.); Charles Plummer (ed.), *Bethada Náem nÉrenn: Lives of Irish Saints*, vol. 1 (Oxford, 1922), p. 174 (*Betha Colmáin Ela*). See also Whitley Stokes (ed.), *Lives of Saints from the Book of Lismore* (Oxford, 1890), p. 90. The phenomenon of human male breastfeeding has been observed in other cultures throughout the world; see, e.g., Nikhil Swaminathan, 'Strange but True: Males Can Lactate', *Scientific American* (9 September 2007).

[61] Whitley Stokes (ed.), *Félire Óengusso Céli Dé* (London, 1905), p. 40; Gwynn, *Metrical Dindshenchas*, Part 4, p. 140.

[62] Whitley Stokes (ed.), 'The Prose Tales in the Rennes *Dindshenchas*', *Revue Celtique*, 15 (1894), 290.

[63] D. A. Binchy, 'The Saga of Fergus mac Léti', *Ériu*, 16 (1952), 33–48 (p. 38). Some archaeological data support the symbolic significance of men's breasts and nipples in Ireland. Bog bodies of Old Croghan and Clonycavan men (dated approximately between the fourth and second centuries BC) bear traces of their nipples having been pinched and cut. This torture would have made these individuals incapable of kingship and/or manly dignity and status before being sacrificed (Jarrett A. Lobell and Samir S. Patel, 'Clonycavan and Old Croghan Men', *Archaeology*, 63, no. 3 (2010)).

[64] M. A. O'Brien, 'Miscellanea Hibernica 13: On the Expression 'sugere mammellas' in the Confessio Patricii', *Études Celtiques*, 3 (1938), 372–3; Maier, '*Sugere mammellas*'.

[65] Rudolf Thurneysen, *Irisches Recht: I. Dire, ein altirischer Rechtstext. II. Zu den unteren Ständen in Irland* (Berlin, 1931), p. 20 § 21; Whitley Stokes, *Irish Glosses: a mediaeval tract on Latin declension* (Dublin, 1860), l. 486. See Fergus Kelly, *A Guide to Early Irish Law* (Dublin, 1988), p. 86.

[66] Gwynn, *Metrical Dindshenchas*, Part 4, p. 425.

[67] Gwynn, *Metrical Dindshenchas*, Part 4, p. 184.15.

[68] Gwynn, *Metrical Dindshenchas*, Part 4, p. 184.16.

[69] Kuno Meyer, 'Mitteilungen aus irischen Handschriften: Elfenbegräbnis. Aus dem Liber Flavus Fergusiorum, fo. 92b 1', *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, 8 (1912), 559–65 (pp. 559–60); Lucius Gwynn, 'An Old Gaelic Giant Tale', *The Irish Monthly*, 42 (1914), 640–5 (p. 643). Hogan and Edward Gwynn also locate Benn Codail in Co. Kildare. *Benn* usually refers to 'peak, high mountain' rather than 'hill', but there are no mountains in Co. Kildare.

[70] Gwynn, *Metrical Dindshenchas*, Part 4, p. 186.

[71] Stokes, 'The Prose Tales from the Rennes *Dindshenchas*', *Revue Celtique*, 16 (1895), 60; Gwynn, *Metrical Dindshenchas*, Part 4, p. 425. I have made use of both Stokes's and Gwynn's translations.

[72] Stokes, 'The Edinburgh *Dinnshenchas*', § 72.

[73] See Sergey V. Shkunaev [Сергей В. Шкунаев] (ed.), *Предания и мифы средневековой Ирландии* [*Predaniya i mify srednevekovoy Irlandii – Tales and Myths of Medieval Ireland*] (Moscow, 1991), p. 233.

[74] Kelly, *A Guide to Early Irish Law*, pp. 102, 307.

[75] Grigory Bondarenko, *Studies in Irish Mythology* (Berlin, 2014), pp. 81–2.

[76] Stokes, 'The Prose Tales from the Rennes *Dindshenchas*', *Revue Celtique*, 15 (1894), 297.

[77] Stokes, 'The Prose Tales from the Rennes *Dindshenchas*', *Revue Celtique*, 16 (1894), 61.

[78] F. B. J. Kuiper, 'Cosmogony and Conception: A Query', *History of Religions*, 10/2 (1970), 91–138 (pp. 102, 109).

[79] Yuriy E. Berezkin [Юрий Е. Березкин], *Мифы Старого и Нового Света* [*Mify Starogo i Novogo Sveta – Myths of the Old and New Worlds*] (Moscow, 2009), pp. 162–3.

[80] John Carey, 'Native Elements in Irish Pseudohistory', in Doris Edel (ed.), *Cultural Identity and Cultural Integration: Ireland and Europe in the early Middle Ages* (Blackrock, 1995), pp. 45–60 (p. 59). Compare this image with the already mentioned Gaulish goddess LITAUIS 'vast, extended'.

[81] Charles Malamoud, *Cuire le monde. Rite et pensée dans l'Inde ancienne* (Paris, 1989), ch. 3, p. 72; Sir Monier Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit–English Dictionary* (New Delhi, 2002), p. 45.

[82] Eck, *India: A Sacred Geography*, p. 277.

this page has been left intentionally blank

6

HUNTING THE DEER IN CELTIC AND INDO-EUROPEAN MYTHOLOGICAL CONTEXTS

Maxim Fomin

Introduction

This chapter explores various mythological concepts concerning the domestication of space and the taming of wild nature, the hunt of the deer as the epitome of the process, including its subject ('the hunter') and the object ('the prey'), the interrelationship between the two and their interdependence on each other for their subsequent survival and success.[1] The data provided by the Irish written sources, as well as by the iconographic depictions of the deer hunt in Continental Celtic and medieval Irish monuments, together with data of a comparative mythological nature, confirms that the domestication of space by a hero of a semi-divine status by way of hunting is a central feature of various Indo-European traditions, in which various religious figures embodying the veneration of wild nature are found.

The deer as primary beast of prey

The earliest attestation of the OIr. word *seth* 'deer' is contained in the saga 'Scél Tuain meic Cairill',[2] in which the protagonist speaks about his shape-shifting experiences, one of them being 'in the form of deer' (*i rricht sétha*).[3] This rare word is also attested in RIA MS G 2: *tredon seth* .i. *damh* '[the lifetime of] a deer, i.e. a stag, is three times [that of] a human being'.[4] In a similar list in NLI MS G 1, f. 38 v 4, *seth* is glossed as *seabhac* 'hawk', whereas in TCD MS H. 3.18, p. 35, *seth* is spelled as *seg*. Ó Cianáin glosses *seth* as *damh* 'stag'.[5]

In his study on the 'Celtic '"deer"'', Václav Blažek scrutinised the insular Celtic designations of such zoonyms as 'deer', 'stag', 'wild animal', etc., as well as their cognates.[6] Seeking the ultimate meaning of the OIr. *seg* 'deer', Blažek follows the hypothesis postulated earlier by Joseph Vendryes, who 'etymologised the zoonym on the basis of Old Irish *segais*

f. ‘forest’, seeing the semantic motivation in ‘wild’ = “forest animal”’.[7] Vendryes ‘collected several convincing parallels: OIr. *fíadmíla* ‘wild animals’, where *fíad* means ‘venison, game’; Mod. Ir. *fiadh* ‘deer, stag’, OIr. *fid* ‘forest’, Welsh *gŵydd* ‘wild’: Welsh *gŵydd* ‘forest, trees’, Latin *silvāticus* ‘wild’: *silva* ‘forest’.[8] To this Blažek added examples from Old Indic *sahya* m. ‘name of the seven principal ranges of mountains of India’, *sahra-* and *sahira* m. ‘a mountain’.[9] OIr. *segais* ‘forest’ and Old Indic designations of mountains determine the semantic field ‘wilderness’.

Another study of the collocations in relation to the semantic field ‘wilderness’ in OIr. was carried out by Kim McCone. He proposed that the OIr. word *fian*(*n*) ‘the band of roving warriors’ (earlier equated by Meyer ‘with an erstwhile Lat. **vena* underlying *venari* “to hunt”’[10]) ultimately derives from

> < **wēd-nā* with the same element as seen in OIr. *fíad* ‘wild, game’, MW *guyd*, OBret. *guoid* ‘wild’ < **wēd(w)-o-* (< **ṷeḭd*^{h}-; compare OEng. *wāð* ‘hunt’ < *ṷoḭHd*^{h}-), evidently related to OIr. *fid* ‘wood’, OW/Bret. *guid* ‘trees’ < **wid-u-* . . . *Fian(n)*, then, was derived, in all likelihood, from *wēd-* ‘wild’ by means of a collective suffix **-na*.[11]

The semantic range with which the OIr. word denoting the deer is connected is that of ‘hunting’. Thus, *segánach* ‘wild-deer hunter’, *ségduine* ‘deer slayer’. Examples are also provided in Gaulish (**segus*[*t*]*ios* ‘hound, hunting or tracing dog’).[12] Blažek also points out that the designations of ‘hound’ motivated by the word ‘deer, stag’ appear for example in Welsh *hydd-gi*, lit. ‘stag-dog’.[13] This semantic chain is confirmed by examples in Sanskrit: *mrgá* m. ‘stag, deer, fawn, forest animal or beast, game of any kind’, *mrgayā* f. ‘hunting, chase’, *mrgayú* ‘hunstman’, *mrgayākukkura* ‘hunting dog’.[14]

All in all, the common semantic denominator for ‘deer’ is ‘hunting’. The wild animal, ‘deer’, is hunted by the ‘hunting-dogs’ in the ‘forests’ (out in the ‘wilds’), etymologically interpreted as the ‘hunting grounds’. That the ‘deer’ is the key to research the ‘taming of the wild’ cluster of motifs will become evident in the following discussion.

The separate spheres of wild and tame

I now move on to the mythological context of ‘the taming of the wild’ cluster of stories in the early Irish sources. I propose to look at such stories not as embodiments of the pre-Christian mythological tradition, rather seeing in them codes ‘of good conduct in which the mythological tradition is packaged for a contemporary audience'[15] of the Christian medieval era.

The origins of things described in such narratives do not necessarily imply their sacred character; the interactions between the first inhabitants, and the establishment of the first social institutions 'represent "founding charters" for society'.[16] The passage below describes the circumstances in which the first hunt in Ireland and the first judgment that followed it had been carried out:

> What was the first judgment that was passed in Ireland? And who was the one who passed? And who passed it about whom? Not difficult. Eber, son of Miled and Eremon landed at the river-mouth of Feale and it was not related there was any human in Ireland. Then Eber with his men went to the mountain to hunt and they killed twelve deer. Eremon was still with his people making dwellings and preparing food. The people of Eber said to the people of Eremon that there was not any food for them from the prey that they killed since it was not their work. The judgment of Amargen son of Miled which he had testified [followed].[17]

MS Rawl. B 512 contains another version of the story. It mentions that the dispute originated between the Tuatha Dé Danann, the former inhabitants and masters of Ireland, and the newly arrived settlers, the Sons of Míl, over the division of the cattle or the deer (*in breth eter cheithre ⁊ oisa* 'the judgment concerning cattle and deer').[18] Although the interpretation of the latter version is difficult, it is clear that the two contending parties in both versions of the legend of the first hunt present two opposing sides of the medieval Irish cosmology: we have the settled society represented by the people of Eremon building houses and cooking food in the first version, and by the Sons of Míl taking over the domesticated cattle in the second version, as opposed to the wild environment epitomised by the hunters of Emer and the Tuatha Dé Danann, who were satisfied with the wild stags. In both versions, the myth of the first hunt drew a sharp distinction between the settled society and the wild one, between the status of the fertile land (and the settled society that cultivates it) and that of the wilderness (and the hunters who keep their abode in the latter).

The rite of passage which allowed a young male to cross from one status/community into another is expressed in the apt and laconic statement of *Tecosca Cormaic*: *fénnid cach co trebad*. It is normally translated as 'everyone is a *fían*-member until he becomes a property owner'.[19] I am inclined to propose a more literal understanding of the passage, taking *trebad* as a verbal noun of *trebaid* 'ploughs', and translate 'everyone is a *fian* until [his] ploughing'. In this regard, let us recall the significance of ploughing as a ritual practice associated with starting a new agricultural cycle and symbolising the cosmogonic domestication of the landscape. The importance of ploughing as a marker distinguishing a settled society from an unsettled community is upheld by the legend of the foundation of Rome, when at the point of the city's foundation Romulus marked its sacred boundary with a plough drawn by a white bull and a white cow.[20]

The pursuit of the deer as symbol of sovereignty

The connection of the ideal royal hero with a beautiful maiden and the successful hunt that ultimately leads the hero to her has been explored by Celtic scholarship since the study by Risteard A. Breatnach, 'The Lady and the King: A Theme of Irish Literature': the hero obtains his sovereignty through 'a hunt, in which the hero is victorious over a wild animal, a search for water (in a royal cup), the encounter with the *puella senilis*, the coition, and finally, the metamorphosis of Sovereignty'.[21] Rachel Bromwich, examining the Celtic mythology of kingship, extended her research into the Old French and Arthurian literature.[22] In literary compilations considered by these scholars, the chase of the White Stag symbolising the sovereignty obtains magical character and is characterised by transformation and metamorphosis of the animal being hunted into the sovereignty figure thus metaphorically described.

Such understanding of the rightful kingship connected via the royal lineage with various zoomorphic characters is put forward in the genealogies of the medieval compilation entitled *Cóir Anmann*, 'Fitness of Names', which contains abundant data relating to the Early Irish prosopography. It is worth noting that the image of the 'fawn' is explicitly employed as representing the idea of kingship:

> The five sons of Dáire Doimthech, i.e. the five Lugdaig . . . Dáire asked his druid: 'Which one of my sons will take kingship after me?' The druid said: 'A fawn with a golden sheen on it will come into the assembly and the son who captures the fawn will take the kingship after you'. Afterwards a fawn came into the assembly . . . Dáire's sons followed the fawn . . . And Lugaid Laígde caught the fawn.[23]

Moving from the Old Irish tradition, I would like to connect the image of the 'little fawn' found in the popular etymologies of the *Cóir Anmann*, with the figure of Oisín (whose name means 'little deer'), son of Finn. Although necessarily a later story, the legend of the finding of Oisín (similarly to that of Óengus Osairge of *Cóir Anmann*) among the deer is found in a modern Irish tale collected by Douglas Hyde from John Dempsey (Culleens, Kilglass, Co. Sligo) in June 1901: 'They set the dogs on Oisín, but when Bran came at the place – she was the hound of the king – she recognised the blood of the king . . . They brought him home, shaved and cleaned him, made a *fian* of him.'[24]

The hunt scenes of the Irish High Crosses and the continental Celtic iconography of the deities of the wild

The iconographic evidence depicting the *fiana* hunters becomes widespread in insular art in the Old Irish period (especially in the eighth- to ninth-century AD Pictish sculpture and the Irish High crosses[25]). That a distinctive motif of Insular art depicting the hunters with their hunting dogs chasing the wild animals[26] pre-dates the Old Irish period and goes deeper into Celtic antiquity can be proved by looking at the Continental data, the celebrated example of the iconographic evidence being three inner panels of the first century BC Gundestrup Cauldron:[27]

> The panel of interest is the well-known 'Cernunnos' panel . . . He has horns on his head . . . a deer flanks him on the left and a wolf on the right . . . The implication is that he partakes of the attributes of both animals, which we have seen juxtaposed with young warriors of the *fían* roaming the mountains.[28]

The Gundestrup cauldron is explicit in presenting a supernatural figure, probably, a deity connected with hunting, surrounded with animals and humans – Cernunnos – (lit. 'Horn God') symbolising the wild.[29] Proinsias Mac Cana, referring to the 'characteristic 'Buddhic' posture' of Cernunnos (see Figure 6.1 below for illustration), points to the numerous Eastern analogues of the motif, and hints at 'a common source of dissemination in the Near East'.[30]

That such a common source of the depiction of the Stag God could have originated in ancient Anatolia is registered in the Lycian[31] and Hittite linguistic data,[32] as well as in the late eighth-century BC Hieroglyphic Luwian inscriptions found in south-east Anatolia. These inscriptions present the

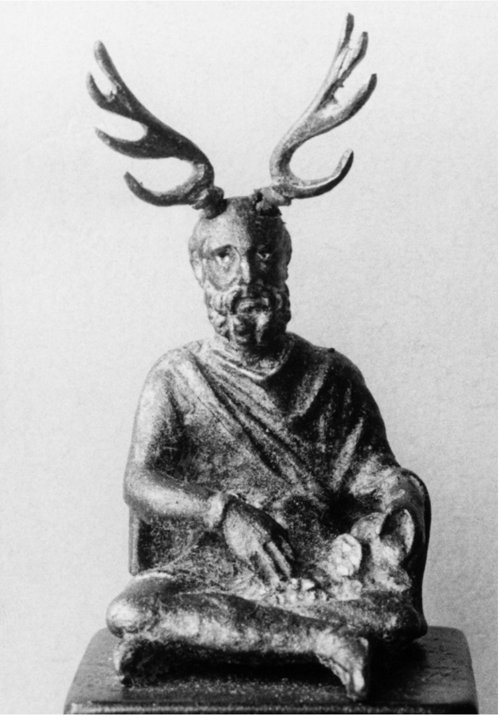


FIGURE 6.1 Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum/Romano-German Central Museum, Mainz Roman: Cernunnos, bronze, the antlered Celtic divinity, second century AD, locality unknown, from a private collection.

figure of the Anatolian pantheon, analogous to Celtic Cernunnos, 'the iconographically familiar Stag God'.[33] According to Calvert Watkins, 'the figure on the Schimmel rhyton standing on a stag and labelled in gold with the hieroglyph for "antler" CERVUS$_2$ . . . This god is known in Hieroglyphic Luvian logographically as (DEUS) CERVUS, (DEUS) CERVUS$_2$'.[34] Such inscriptions were connected with the belief that the Stag God as the lord of the wild animals provided the royal hunter with prey and guaranteed his authority.[35]

Besides the cross-legged seated Cernunnos, one finds other depictions of the Stag God venerated by the early Celts. My example is the figure of the forest deity depicted on the stela from the mixed Roman–Celtic third-century AD sanctuary of Donon in the upper Bruche valley in Alsace, containing an additional image of the stag standing behind (Figure 6.2).[36]

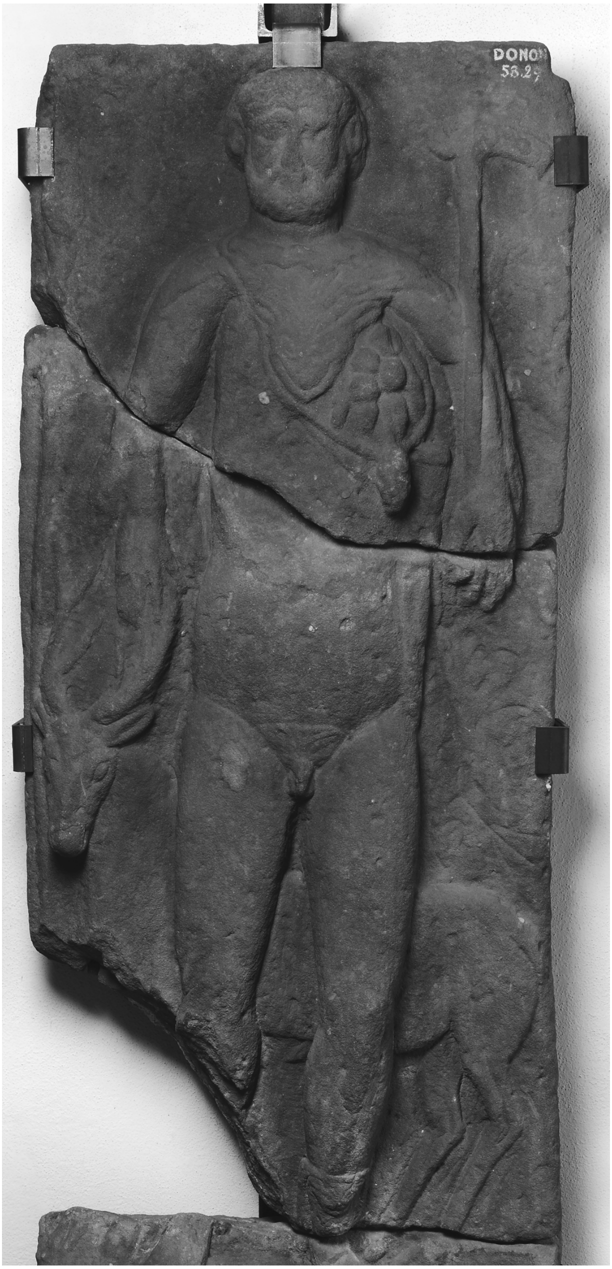


FIGURE 6.2 Strasbourg Archaeological Museum: Stag God. Grandfontaine, Donon, third century AD.

Yet, one cannot be sure that no Roman influence could be detected in the depiction of the Forest God of the Donon sanctuary, when taking into account the images of the Roman goddess Diana, accompanied by the fawn, and of the Forest God Silvanus, depicted together.[37]

The transformation of St Patrick and his followers into a herd of deer

In the Irish narrative tradition, hunting was also associated with the bands of roving warriors, the *fiana*. Despite the negative attitude of the clerical compilers to the members of the warrior associations expressed in the injunction of the *Aipgitir Chrábaid – cetharda fo-[f]era fiannas do duiniu .i. . . . etar-díben sāegul; ar-cuirethar píana*, 'the four things that the participation in the *fiana* causes to mankind: . . . it cuts off life; [and] it lengthens torments'[38] – the association between the *fiana* and St Patrick's mission does not present a problem for the Patrician hagiographers, and may well go back to St Patrick's writings themselves.[39] I am inclined to connect the theme of the *fiana* and that of hunting with the following episode from the *Life of St Patrick* by Muirchú, in which the saint and his followers are transformed into a herd of deer, followed by a fawn.

> Patrick . . . blessed his companions, eight men with a boy, . . . and the king counted them as they went along; and suddenly they disappeared from the king's eyes; instead, the pagans merely saw eight deer, with a fawn, going, as it were, into the wilds.[40]

This episode received further attention from Jacqueline Borsje[41] and John Carey. Following McCone's study, who 'observed that Muirchú's writing "has many of the dramatic and suggestive qualities of native Irish saga"',[42] Carey proposed to take the theme of transformation by Patrick and his followers to be derived from 'the repertoire of vernacular narrative in the seventh century'.[43]

Borsje highlighted the fact that the description of the herd of deer escaping the wrath of King Lóegaire contains not just the mature stags as members of the herd, but also a little fawn.[44] Although one finds a clear reference to Benignus, who becomes the successor of the saint after his death, I am also inclined to explain the reference to a fawn not only as a retrospective device characterising the interplay of the hagiographic source with the vernacular Irish narrative tradition (hero's chase of the fawn symbolises the chase for kingship), but also as a prospective device to be used by the later compilers of the Patrician texts connecting legends of Patrick with those of Oisín, possibly drawing on the meaning of the name Oisín as 'little deer' or simply a 'fawn'.

Moving further, to disentangle this description as to what was really meant by this passage, the saga 'Finn and the man in the tree' contains an intriguing comparandum. In the saga, the main character Derg Corra flees from Finn on account of the latter's wrath, due to a young girl's affection to him in preference to Finn. Finn gives him three days and three nights to escape, and 'Derg Corra went into exile and took up his abode in a wood and used to go about on shanks of deer *si uerum est* for his lightness'.[45] When finally Finn finds him in the wood, the *fiana* do not recognise him: 'for they did not recognise him on account of the hood of disguise which he wore'. The key word to the understanding of the passage is *celtair* 'cover', translated in the previous sentence as 'hood'. The H.3.18 Old Irish glossary interprets *cealtair* .i. *etach núa .i. ni maith con-tui[tet] co tucar a lóth ass* 'c., i.e. a new clothing, i.e. it is not good when they fall down so that his plumage is taken from him'.[46] Kaarina Hollo notes that *celtair* is not a standard word for a hood; it is something which conceals, often magically or miraculously.[47] She invokes an example from *Bethu Phátraic* in which Patrick and his companions are saved from King Lóegaire by a *dícheltair*[48] that causes them to appear as deer.[49] The word can be explained via the OIr. *díchleth* 'concealment', in which case one can interpret the phrase *celtair díclithe* as some sort of cover to conceal Derg Corra from the eyes of Finn.

Taking this a bit further, I am inclined to argue that in the passage under discussion from the *Life of St Patrick* by Muirchú, we are not dealing with the transformation of Patrick and his followers, but rather with the putting on of some form of a camouflage so that the followers of the saint can go into hiding in the woods.[50] This camouflage, if we are correct in interpreting this metaphor through a theme of 'covering' rather than that of 'transforming', helps Patrick with his followers to take the form of the wild creatures, probably putting on deer skins (in the shape of Derg Corra) to look like these animals. That such skins were the necessary attribute of the Stag God of the Celtic mythology is visible on the iconographical depiction of a forest deity from the Donon sanctuary which I referred to above (Fig. 2). The deity is depicted as clearly wearing an animal skin as an item of clothing, as his 'cover'. Could it be that Muirchú drew on the common pool of iconographic representation of the supernatural figure of the wild, the Stag God?[51] It is hardly probable, yet taking into account the connection of St Patrick with the *fiana* which I proposed earlier, it is more likely that Muirchú was hinting at the liminal status of the saint and his followers – they did not belong to the society depicted in the *Vita* as yet; escaping into the wild, the saint and his followers were simultaneously taming it, having thus elevated their status to that of proper contenders for power, and having overcome Patrick's counter-protagonist, Lóegaire, who failed to chase his magical fawn of kingship.

Conclusion

In conclusion, suffice it to say that the hunt as the pivotal happening in the career of the hero attracted a rich store of semiotic codes of a mythological character. These codes include the liminality and the unconquered character of the wild environment; its antithesis to the arable land filled with connotations of fertility and profit; the representation of the figure of the king as the hero hunting for his sovereignty, symbolised in the image of the magical fawn, representing an ideal adversary to be tamed; and the figure of the Stag God – the patron of the hunt and the facilitator of royal foundations and prosperity. All these and many more details have been woven into the tapestry of stories and themes connected with the taming of the wild across centuries, continents and cultures.

Notes

[1] I would like to thank Emily Lyle for her interest in my contribution, and also for the opportunity to speak at the 'Thinking about Celtic Mythology in the 21st Century' conference at the University of Edinburgh, 20 November 2015; I am also indebted to Prof. Victoria Vertogradova of the Institute for Oriental Studies (Moscow) for her invitation to present the talk at the annual Roerikh readings, 2 December 2015, and to Prof. Erich Poppe for his invitation to present the talk at the Celtic Studies research seminar at The Philipp University of Marburg, 19 May 2016, and to Dr Ilya Yakubovich for drawing attention to Luwian and Lydian parallels. I would also like to thank Alexander von Humboldt Foundation for facilitating this research through an award of the Fellowship for Experienced Researchers.

[2] See John Carey, 'Suibne Geilt and Tuán mac Cairill', *Éigse*, 20 (1984), 93–105; John Carey, 'Scél Tuáin meic Chairill', *Ériu*, 35 (1984), 93–111.

[3] Osborn Bergin and R. I. Best (eds), *Lebor na hUidre* (Dublin, 1929), p. 1247.

[4] The text presents a catalogue of different lengths of life of various elements and creatures, contained in 'the earliest compilation of traditional material after the Book of Leinster' ascribed to Ádhamh Ó Cianáin (d. 1374). Its editor remarks that it is 'a very archaic piece of lore, and was doubtless committed to writing . . . in the Old Irish period'. See James Carney, 'The Ó Cianáin Miscellany', *Ériu*, 21 (1969), 122–47 (p. 129).

[5] Carney, 'The Ó Cianáin Miscellany', p. 130, is unsure of the meaning of the word *seth* (*tredon seth* 'a hawk (?) three times a human being'), besides 'it seems impossible to choose between that of *seth* or *seg*(*h*)'.

[6] Václav Blažek, 'Celtic "deer"', *Études Celtiques*, 41 (2015), 121–8.

[7] Blažek, 'Celtic "deer"', p. 121.

[8] Blažek, 'Celtic "deer"', p. 121, citing Joseph Vendryes, 'Étymologies (I. Irlandais *seg* (*sed*) 'cerf', *sefas* 'forêt')', *Revue Celtique*, 35 (1914), 85–91 (p. 86).

[9] Monier Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit–English Dictionary* (Delhi, 1995 [1899]), p. 1193.

[10] Kuno Meyer, *Fianaigecht: Being a Collection of Hitherto Inedited Irish poems and Tales Relating to Finn and his Fiana* (Dublin, 1910), pp. v–vi.

[11] Kim McCone, 'The Celtic and Indo-European Origins of the *fían*', in Sharon Arbuthnot and Geraldine Parsons (eds), *The Gaelic Finn Tradition* (Dublin, 2012), pp. 14–30 (p. 21).

[12] Blažek, 'Celtic "deer"', p. 122, citing Arrian, *Cynegeticus* 4.2.

[13] Blažek, 'Celtic "deer"', p. 122, citing Stefan Zimmer, *Studies in Welsh Word-formation* (Dublin, 2000), p. 113.

[14] Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit–English Dictionary*, pp. 828–9, 373.

[15] S. Sioned Davies, '"Venerable Relics"? Re-Visiting the *Mabinogi*', in Joseph F. Nagy, (ed.), *Writing Down the Myths* (Turnhout, 2013), pp. 157–79 (p. 173). See also the sophisticated tackling of the problem of the presentation of pre-Christian beliefs in the context of the amalgamation of the native Irish tradition with Latin learning and the Christian religion in Bernhard Maier, 'Dead Men Don't Wear Plaid: Celtic Myth and Christian Creed in Medieval Irish Concepts of the Afterlife', in Nagy, *Writing Down the Myths*, pp. 107–36.

[16] Davies, 'Venerable Relics', p. 166.

[17] My translation of D. A. Binchy (ed.), *Corpus Iuris Hibernici* (Dublin, 1978), p. 2127.6–11: *Cíasa cetbreath ruccud i neirind? Ocus cia .c.na ruc? ocus cia dus rucc? .nī. eber mac miled ocus eirimon gabsat indber feile ⁊ ni é[c]datar in rabe duine a neirinn. Luid di[diu] eber cona muintir issin sléib do seilg ⁊ marbaid dí oss déc. Boí eremon hi fos cona muintir ic denum aitreibe ⁊ irgnama bid. ISberait muinter ebir fri muintir érimoin nis bíad ní don fíadach romarbsat, uair nīrbo soethar dóib. For[r]uigellsad breith amairgein meic miled.* See Fergus Kelly, *Early Irish Farming* (Dublin, 1998), p. 275.

[18] Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Rawl. B 512, f. 97^{b}1, lines 30–5 (cited from an online image available at *image.ox.ac.uk/show?collection=bodleian&manuscript=msrawlb512*).

[19] McCone, 'Celtic Origins', p. 16; Kuno Meyer (ed.), *Tecosca Cormaic: The Instructions of King Cormaic Mac Airt* (Dublin, 1909), p. 10, § 31, translates 'every one is a roving warrior till he takes up husbandry'.

[20] Ovid, in the fourth book of the *Fasti*, lines 819–26, reports that Romulus marked the boundary (Lat. *pomerium*) of Rome with oxen and plough. See James George Frazer (trans.), *Ovid's Fasti* (London and New York, 1931), pp. 248–51.

[21] Risteard A. Breatnach, 'The Lady and the King: A Theme of Irish Literature', *Studies*, 42 (1953), 321–36.

[22] Rachel Bromwich, 'Celtic Dynastic Themes and Breton Lays', *Études Celtiques*, 9 (1961), 439–74 (p. 443, n. 4). In referring to the 'Celtic' mythology of kingship, I do not necessarily aim at reconstructing pre-Christian beliefs surrounding kingship in pre-Christian Ireland. Rather, the word 'Celtic' here is appropriate to designate the commonality of the insular and continental medieval literary traditions of Britain, Ireland and Brittany.

[23] Sharon Arbuthnot (ed.), *Cóir Anmann: A Late Middle Irish Treatise on Personal Names* (London, 2007), pp. 96–7, § 72. The royal dynasty of Osairge, according to the compilation, also claimed their ancestry from the deer – the founder of the dynasty, Óengus Osairge, was originally found among the herd of deer and then introduced to human society (see Arbuthnot, *Cóir Anmann*, p. 82, § 26).

[24] Douglas Hyde, 'Scéalta ar Oisín', *Béaloideas*, 2 (1930), 253–60 (pp. 253, 258). Hyde refers to the story on the Isle of Skye, where the same legend was still current.

[25] Nancy Edwards, 'The Irish Connection', in Sally M. Foster (ed.), *The St Andrews Sarcophagus: A Pictish Masterpiece and its International Connections* (Dublin, 1998), pp. 227–39 (pp. 236–7).

[26] The native origin of these scenes is not disputed (see Isabel Henderson, '*Primus inter pares*: The St Andrews Sarcophagus and Pictish Sculpture', in Foster, *The St Andrews Sarcophagus*, pp. 97–167 (p. 134)); they are, however, connected to the so-called David Cycle, and also occur on the sculpture in Dál Riata, Iona. John Soderberg paid attention to the image of the deer on Irish crosses that functions both as a symbol of Christ and as an emblem of immunity, concluding that 'monasteries and deer were closely associated with each other in a manner that identifies monasteries with a realm beyond royal or secular control'. John Soderberg, 'Wild Cattle: Red Deer in the Religious Texts, Iconography and Archaeology of Early Medieval Ireland', *International Journal of Historical Archaeology*, 8 (2004), 167–83, (p. 181). That the picture is more complicated is confirmed by 'a letter written by Aldhelm of Sherbourne (d. 709) that mentions shrines which had been converted to Christian uses, where previously *ermuli cervulique* had been worshipped, perhaps referring to an image of a stag or hybrid stag-deity' (Aleks Pluskowski, 'Animal Magic', in Martin Carver, Alex Sanmark and Sarah Semple (eds), *Signals of Belief in Early England* (Oxford and Oakville, 2010), pp. 103–27 (p. 116), citing Bernadette Filotas, *Pagan Survivals, Superstitions and Popular Culture in Early Medieval Pastoral Literature* (Toronto, 2005), p. 144). Although this instance refers to the establishment of the Christian institutions in England, it can be shown that one could speak with caution of similar practice in Irish society, as well as 'in other parts of Northern Europe . . . In all of these regions, the centrality of zoomorphic ornament, the incorporation of totemic functions such as their use in personal names, all point to a paradigm where boundary between human and animal was mutable' (Pluskowski, 'Animal Magic', p. 116). See, for instance, the episode of the church foundation at Armagh by St Patrick, who 'found there a doe with its little fawn lying in the place where there is now the altar of the northern church at Armagh' (Ludwig Bieler (ed.), *The*

Patrician Texts in the Book of Armagh. Scriptores Latini Hiberniae X (Dublin, 1979), p. 113) which could be interpreted along similar lines.

[27] The Thracian origin or at least influence has been reported in relation to the Gundestrup Cauldron (e.g. A. K. Bergquist and T. T. Taylor, 'The Origin of the Gundestrup Cauldron', *Antiquity*, 61/231 (1987), 10–24; most recently, Flemming Kaul, 'Gundestrup Cauldron: Thracian Art, Celtic Motifs', *Études Celtiques*, 37 (2011), 81–110).

[28] McCone, 'Celtic Origins', p. 28.

[29] 'The image of the Celtic forest deity has been also observed 'on a Paris relief [at Musée de Cluny, Paris] found near that of Esus . . . it alone preserves the name of the god in question, [*C*]*ernunnos*, "The Horned (or Peaked) One"', see Proinsias Mac Cana, *Celtic Mythology* (London, 1996 [1970]), p. 39. See Calvert Watkins, 'A Celtic Miscellany', in Karlene Jones-Bley (ed.), *Proceedings of the Tenth Annual UCLA Indo-European Conference* (Washington, DC, 1998), pp. 2–35 (p. 19), on the etymology of the words **kornu-*/**kerno-* 'horn' in Italo-Celtic.

[30] Mac Cana, *Celtic Mythology*, p. 39. On p. 41 he writes about the analogy 'between *Cernunnos* "lord of the animals"' on the Gundestrup cauldron and the Indian god who appears on the seal from Mohenjodaro: 'Like Cernunnos he is horned, sits cross-legged, and is flanked by various animals. It has been suggested that he is a prototype of the god Shiva in his aspect as *Pashupati*, "Lord of Beasts".' This figure provides another parallel to Celtic *Cernunnos* and the Luwian *K*(*u*)*runtiya* (see notes 31 and 32 below), and attests to a widespread diffusion of this belief, not necessarily of Indo-European provenance.

[31] See Günter Neumann., *Glossar des Lykischen* (Wiesbaden, 2007), p. 165, s.v. *kerut*[*i*], subst. 'appellation of an animal' < Luwian *karawanti* 'a horned animal, deer or ram', related to Germ. **heruta* > NHG *Hirsch* 'deer'. Equally important is the Luwian *Kruntiya* < **kru-nt* 'horned' as a possible Hittite reading of the Sumerogram dLAMMA (John David Hawkins, 'Commentaries on the Readings', in Suzanne Herbordt, *Die Prinzen- und Beamtensiegel der hethitischen Grossreichszeit* (Mainz, 2005), 248–313 (p. 290).

[32] According to Hawkins, 'the Hier. Stag-God *Runzas* is known as the late form of Hitt. Empire ^{D}KAL (= *Kurunta*), who was already at this date identified with Rešeph, especially in the latter's Hurrianized form, Iršappa, in the Ugarit god-lists. One would suppose that the epithet *ṣprm* attached here to Rešeph was intended to define the god more closely to bring him into line with the established character of the Stag-God as the god of wild beasts' (John David Hawkins, *Corpus of Hieroglyphic Luwian Inscriptions* (Berlin and New York, 2000), vol. I, part 1, § XL, 212, p. 63).

[33] Watkins, 'Celtic Miscellany', p. 15.

[34] Watkins, 'A Celtic Miscellany', p. 15; see pp. 16–17 for further iconographic representations of the deity on the seal of Kurunta and the stag god (in human form) at the Yazilikaya.

[35] 'A royal hunt was thus a religiously sanctioned attribute of kingship . . . In later centuries the hunting of deer by the king was a ritual act of great significance, involving sacrifices to earth, mountains, and rivers . . . found in

Sasanid Iran etc.'. See Thomas T. Allsen, *The Royal Hunt in Eurasian History* (Philadelphia, 2006), p. 161.

[36] Strasbourg Archaeological Museum, Inventory no. Donon 58.29. I am inclined to explain the iconography of the Donon stele as primarily Celtic with signs of Roman influence. Dr Dagmar Bronner kindly drew my attention to the deer figure from Stuttgart Württemberglandes Museum ('Hirschfigur aus dem Brunnen der Viereckschanze von Fellbach-Schmiden', inv. no. V 86.8) which, together with the two other carved oak goats, was once a part of a larger late Celtic religious image. 'The figures masterfully combine Celtic and naturalistic Hellenistic style elements . . . It is possible that we are dealing here with the representation of the deer of the god Cernunnos of the Gallo-Roman period' (my trans., original in Heike Schröder (ed), *Kunst im Alten Schloß* (Stuttgart, 1998), p. 36). See also Bernhard Maier, *Die Religion der Kelten: Götter – Mythen – Weltbild* (Munich, 2001), p. 78. One can also refer to the visual representations of horned figures in Ireland, such as the Tandragee idol, the Boa Island figure and the figure on the Carndonagh pillar, as well as the uppermost panel on the east side of the Market Cross at Kells, although any interpretation of their divine or supernatural status should be treated with caution.

[37] See, for example, a votive relief to Diana and Silvanus from Freisenheim dated to A20D 100 kept at the Archäologisches Museum Colombischlössle, Freiburg. Compare also altars on the Roman road leading from Strasbourg to Rottweil devoted to Silvanus found at Eigeltingen (AD 160; Badisches Landesmuseum Karlsruhe) and Diana Abnoba found near Mühlenbach in Kinzigtal (AD 193, Freiburg Archaeological Museum) and near Badenweiler.

[38] Vernon Hull, '*Aipgitir Chrábaid*: The Alphabet of Piety', *Celtica*, 8 (1968), 44–89 (pp. 72–3).

[39] In his *Confession*, St Patrick speaks about his travels around Ireland when preaching the Gospels, and refers to the payments he made to the kings and their sons: 'Sometimes I gave presents to kings – over and above the wages I gave their sons who travelled with me – yet they took me and my companions captive. On that day they avidly sought to kill me, but the time had not yet come. Still they looted us, took everything of value, and bound me in iron' (Thomas O'Loughlin, *St Patrick: The Man and His Works* (London, 1999, p. 83). James Carney (*The Problem of St Patrick* (Dublin, 1973), p. 67), expresses a view that Patrick had an earlier association with members of a *fian* ('bound together in mutual loyalty under a leader, and admission to whose company involved the Irish pagan rite of breast-sucking') who brought him back to his fatherland from captivity.

[40] *Patricius . . . benedictis in nomine Iesu Christi sociis suis octo uiris cum puero uenit ad regem ac numerauit eos rex uenientes statimque nusquam conparuerunt ab oculis regis, sed uiderunt gentiles octo tantum ceruos cum hynulo euntes quasi ad disserum*. In Bieler, *Patrician Texts*, pp. 90–1.

[41] Jacqueline Borsje, 'Druids, Deer and "Words of Power": Coming to Terms with Evil in Medieval Ireland', in Katja Ritari and Alexandra Bergholm

(eds), *Approaches to Religion and Mythology in Celtic Studies* (Newcastle, 2008), pp. 122–49, p. 126, argued that the image of the herd of deer into which the saint and his followers are transformed may be interpreted as 'often the transformed supernatural beings . . . the *áes síde*, "the people of the hollow hills", sometimes called fairies or elves'. Borsje recently presented a more nuanced and balanced solution in 'Celtic Spells and Counterspells', in Katja Ritari and Alexandra Bergholm (eds), *Understanding Celtic Religion: Revisiting the Pagan Past* (Cardiff, 2015), pp. 9–50 (pp. 24–5).

[42] John Carey, 'Muirchú and the Ulster Cycle', in Gregory Toner and Séamus Mac Mathúna (eds), *Ulidia 3: Proceedings of the Third International Conference on the Ulster Cycle of Tales* (Berlin, 2013), pp. 121–6 (p. 121), citing Kim McCone, 'An Introduction to Early Irish Saints' Lives', *The Maynooth Review*, 11 (1984), 26–59 (p. 33). This passage was also discussed by Joseph F. Nagy, *Conversing with Angels and Ancients: Literary Myths of Medieval Ireland* (Ithaca, 1997), pp. 87–8.

[43] Carey, 'Muirchú', p. 214.

[44] Borsje, 'Druids', p. 142: 'The motif of the fawn strengthens the idea of transformation: it would refer to Patrick's young pupil Benignus. His name in Irish, *Benén*, moreover, hints at *bennán*, the Irish word for "fawn, calf".'

[45] Kuno Meyer, 'Finn and the Man in the Tree', *Revue Celtique*, 25 (1904), 344–9 (pp. 348–9): *Luid didiu Derc Corra for loinges ⁊ arfoét caill ⁊ imtighed for luirgnib oss n-allta (si uerum est) ar a étrumai*.

[46] Binchy, *Corpus Iuris Hibernici*, p. 1071.3a (compare H 3.18, 633.23: *lóth* gl. *clúmh* 'plumage').

[47] Kaarina Hollo, '"Finn and the Man in the Tree" as Verbal Icon', in Sharon Arbuthnot and Geraldine Parsons (eds), *The Gaelic Finn Tradition* (Dublin, 2012), pp. 50–61 (p. 51).

[48] Borsje, 'Deer', p. 142, interprets the word *dícheltair* as 'a covering, concealment, disguise, invisibility, an invisibility spell'.

[49] Kathleen Mulchrone (ed.), *Bethu Phátraic* (Dublin, 1939), p. 31.

[50] Note that the protection of the saint's followers was reinforced by the composition of the *lorica* by the saint on the occasion, which is literally translated as 'a breast-plate'. See Borsje, 'Deer'.

[51] Suffice it to say that a number of the Pictish cross-slabs contain images of semi-naked deer-hunters wearing some covering on their backs which can be taken to represent short cloaks or possibly animal hides. See Iain Fraser, *The Pictish Symbol Stones of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 2008), pp. 52–3 (fig. 58, Eassie cross-slab, NO34NE 4, a naked warrior with a small shield and a hide/cloak on his back on the face of the slab), pp. 56–7 (fig. 65.2, a cross-slab from Kirriemuir, NO35SE 20, depicting a man wearing a fur-trimmed cloak on his back on the left and the hounds hunting deer on the right), pp. 92–3 (fig. 128, Shandwick sandstone slab, NH86SE 4 depicting the deer hunt on the reverse with warriors partly naked, partly clad in short cloaks/hides).

this page has been left intentionally blank

7

GODS, POETS AND ENTHEOGENS: INGESTING WISDOM IN EARLY IRISH LITERARY SOURCES

Sharon Paice MacLeod

This chapter will explore early Irish literary sources that feature stories pertaining to early Irish deities and supernatural figures, and contain symbolism associated with the ingestion of foods or other substances believed to provide access to the wisdom of the otherworld. These themes are examined in relation to practices ascribed to medieval poets, as well as episodes from Finn tales, with special focus on the motif of the 'thumb of wisdom'. Comparable examples from Indo-European cultures, linguistic considerations, and ethnobotany will all play a role in illuminating the meaning behind these intriguing but obscure stories.[1]

The premise is that symbolism and coded language exist in Irish literary contexts which refer to the ingestion of entheogenic substances, specifically the *Amanita muscaria* mushroom. Topics to be discussed include: the otherworld well of wisdom; salmon and the motif of 'cracking open' hazelnuts; wisdom and bodies of water; the ingestion of raw and cooked animal flesh; the 'thumb of wisdom'; and the acquisition of knowledge. This is followed by exploration of terminology pertaining to mushrooms; information about the use and effects of *A. muscaria*; and a short discussion comparing Celtic motifs with possible analogues from the Rig Veda.

Amanita muscaria is known to have grown in Ireland and other parts of northern Europe, and possesses chemical properties that might have been known to (and utilised by) the Irish in the past. The absence of overt references to the mushroom may be explained by the employment of taboo words, perhaps to restrict the knowledge and use of the mushroom to the learned classes. Additionally, over time the practice may have been forgotten, resulting in confusion in terminology. In either case, the use of phrases such as *bolg fis* or *immais* ('bubble of wisdom' or 'mushroom of knowledge'?) may have encoded (or obscured) the identity of the plant. While the evidence, as it stands, may fall short of that required for absolute proof, it may be possible to build up an impression of mushroom use through studying the texts obliquely. It may thus be fruitful to explore the possibilities (including an Indo-European dimension in relation to *soma*).

The otherworld well of wisdom

The first story under examination pertains to the divine figure *Boand*, the subject of two poems in the *Metrical Dindshenchas*. Boand is described as the wife of Nechtan, in whose stead was a hidden or mysterious well from which gushed forth 'every type of inauspicious secret or knowledge' (*cech mí-rún*).[2] The eyes of those who looked into the bottom of the well would burst, and for this reason none dared approach it except Nechtan and his three cupbearers. Boand approached the well to make trial of its power and walked around it heedlessly three times. Three waves burst from the well, disfiguring her eye, hand and foot. She rushed to the sea to escape her blemish and thus became the eponymous spirit of the river Boyne.[3]

The *Dindshenchas* also contains two poems pertaining to the divine woman *Sinann*, which exhibit similarities with the story of Boand. The first recounts the existence of a well or spring which was located under the sea by the edge of a river, from which flowed seven streams.[4] Over the well stood a 'hazel of poetry, of many songs' (*coll n-écsi n-ilcheólach*).[5] Its leaves, flowers and fruit burst forth at once and fell upon the well. The second poem states that when the nuts were ripe, they fell into the well and scattered on the bottom, where they were eaten by salmon.[6] Under the spring was the 'wisdom of Segais' (*immas na Segsa*), and from the seven streams arose a whisper of poetic music (*cocur ceól-éicse*)'.[7] It notes that Sinann was said to lack no gift or treasure except *immas sóis* ('knowledge of great learning').[8]

It adds that from the juice of the nuts (*súg na cnó*) mystic bubbles were formed. *Súg* may refer to the 'juice' or 'sap' of plants, as well as 'energy, strength' or 'essence, inner nature' of something.[9] The reference to 'bubbles' (*na bolca immais*) is intriguing, as *bolg* / *bolc* / *balg* has a variety of meanings: 'bag, sack; belly, stomach; (smith's) bellows; bubble; blister; berry, bud; boss, ball'.[10] After forming from the juice or essence of the nuts, the 'bubbles of wisdom' flow down the stream. Seeking *imbas*, Sinann comes to the river and sees the beautiful bubbles of wisdom (*na bolca áilli immaiss*). She goes after them into the river and is drowned.[11]

The story of Sinann also appears in the prose *Dindshenchas*, where she goes to Connla's well beneath the sea to seek *imbas*. Here we encounter the salmon of wisdom, which chew the hazelnuts from the trees at the well:

> a well at which are the hazels and the *imbais na heicsi*, the hazels of the science of poetry, and in the same hour their fruit, and their blossoms, and their foliage break forth, and these fall on the well in the same shower, which raises on the water a royal surge of purple. Then the salmon chew the fruit, and the juice of the nuts is apparent on their bellies. And seven streams of wisdom spring forth[.][12]

Both Boand and Sinann approach a powerful but potentially dangerous source of knowledge and are destroyed. As a result, they undergo a change of state and become the goddess of an important river (the Boyne and the Shannon respectively). Boand approaches the well to make trial of its power (*cumacht*), while Sinann explicitly seeks the power of *imbas*.

The hazelnut motif

A similar well is described in *Echtrae Chormaic i Tír Tairngire.* At daybreak on the first of May, Cormac is approached by a figure who carries in his hand a silver branch bearing three golden apples. The sound of the branch puts Cormac to sleep. Upon awakening, he asks the mysterious figure from whence he had come. The man describes to Cormac the wonders of his realm. Cormac suggests that they become allies, and the man agrees. Later, Cormac is taken to the otherworld, where he is shown a remarkable sight:

> He saw in the enclosure a shining fountain, with five streams flowing from it, and the hosts in turn drinking its water. Nine hazels . . . grew over the well. The purple hazels dropped their nuts into the fountain, and the five salmon which were in the fountain severed them and sent their husks floating down the streams. Now the sound of the falling of those streams was more melodious than any music that men sing.[13]

At the end of the tale, the otherworld figure reveals his identity as the god Manannán mac Lir and reveals the significance of the well:

> The fountain which you saw, with the five streams out of it, is the Fountain of Knowledge, and the streams are the five senses through which knowledge is obtained. No one will have knowledge who drinks not a draught out of the fountain itself and out of the streams. The folk of many arts are those who drink of them both.[14]

In Cormac's tale, the hazel trees are said to be purple in colour (*corrcarda*). In the story of Sinann the 'mystic bubbles' are also described as *corcor* / *corcair*, a word that refers to a range of colours from crimson to purple.[15] Blood-red hazelnuts (*cnói cró-derga na caille*) are mentioned in the *Dindshenchas* poem on *Cnogba*.[16] In 'The Settling of the Manor of Tara', the ancient character Fintan is approached by a supernatural figure named Trefuilngid Tre-Eochair, who is garbed in a shining crystal veil. He carries a branch with three fruits on it, reminiscent of Mannanán's branch and its three golden apples.[17] From the branch grew five sacred trees, one of which bore three crops every year: apples, acorns and 'round, blood-red nuts'.[18]

To the modern eye, hazelnuts appear brown or reddish-brown in colour, and hazel leaves are typically green. However, there is a species of European hazel tree that has dark purple foliage, whose hazelnuts ripen into a reddish-brown colour.[19] Nonetheless, it seems clear we are not in the presence of normal vegetation, and the colour *corcor* appears to be significant.

Hazelnuts also feature in 'Finn and the Man in the Tree', where they are once again cracked open (but not explicitly said to confer wisdom):

> Finn . . . saw a man in the top of a tree, a blackbird on his right shoulder, and in his left hand a vessel of white bronze filled with water in which was a skittish trout, and a stag at the foot of the tree. And this was the practice of the man, cracking nuts; and he would give one half of the kernel of the nut to the blackbird . . . while he himself would eat the other half; and he would take the apple out of the bronze vessel and divide it in two, throw one half to the stag and eat the other half himself. And he would drink a sip of the bronze vessel so that he and the trout and the stag and the blackbird drank together.[20]

Wisdom and water

The consumption of liquid with special properties appears in a number of narratives. In *Feis Tighe Chonáin*, Finn and two companions find the door of a *síd*-mound open and enter the mound. The three daughters of *Bec mac Buain*, the owner of a wisdom-giving well inside, try to close the door against them. One of the daughters holds a vessel filled with water from the well. In her struggle, some of the water spills into the mouths of the three men, whereby they acquire knowledge (*fis*).[21]

A similar scenario is found in *Imtheacht an Dá Nónbhar*. The men encounter three women who each hold in their hands a cup filled with the 'liquor of inspiration' (*lionn iomhais*). When the women shut the door against the intruders, Finn's thumb is squeezed between the door and the doorpost. He places the thumb in his mouth and begins to chant, and is enlightened by the power of *imbas*. Liquid from one of the cups splashes on the faces of his companions, and thus all three acquire knowledge.[22]

The idea that there was a potent essence held in a body of water that was accessible only to a chosen few, which had the power to endow those so chosen with a special kind of knowledge and power, is seen in a number of Indo-European contexts. This power was often characterised as a brightly burning essence sought by poets and others who knew its source was in the water. This essence had the ability to bestow wisdom or skill, or maim or destroy one.[23] In Indo-Iranian tradition, the guardian spirit of the well was *Apam Napat*. In the Rig Veda, he was said to dwell in the waters, where he emanated a kind of brilliance. He was both the brilliant essence of the waters and its guardian, illuminating those who honoured him.[24]

This essence that illuminates – the 'fire in water' – appears to be exemplified in the concept of *imbas*. An early Irish tract refers to the nuts that fell from the hazels which stood on the banks of the Well of Segais, and the drinking of *imbas* directly from the water:

> Segais is the name of the body of water or spring . . . into this spring fell these nuts . . . into the Boyne River, so that they – filled with *imus* – came to certain persons. These drank the *imus* out of them, so that they then became master poets.[25]

A number of possibly related motifs appear in an Irish text known as 'The Caldron of Poesy'. Preserved in a sixteenth-century manuscript but believed to date to the eighth century, the text discusses the attainment or development of wisdom, and speaks of three cauldrons which were said to exist in every person: *Coire Goriath* ('The Cauldron of Warming'), *Coire Érma* ('The Cauldron of Motion') and *Coire Sois* ('The Cauldron of Knowledge'). The position of the cauldrons indicated the level of skill or knowledge possessed by the person.[26]

The Cauldron of Motion is described in a gloss as a 'good vessel in which was the fire of knowledge'. This cauldron could be converted into the Cauldron of Knowledge through an experience of extreme joy or sorrow. Two types of joy that could effect this transformation were: 'joy at the prerogatives of poetry after studying it well' and 'joy at the arrival of *imbas* which the nine hazels of fine mast at Segais in the *síd*'s amass and which is sent upstream along the surface of the Boyne'.[27] In one passage, the Cauldron of Motion is described as containing a 'noble brew in which is brewed the basis of all knowledge'.[28] This theme is also mentioned in connection with the Cauldron of Warming: 'the womb in which the basis of all good knowledge is boiled, i.e., poetic inspiration of the Boyne which is distributed according to the rule thereafter'.[29] The boiling of knowledge is likewise referred to in *Bretha Nemed*, where the Cauldron of Judgement is described as 'a womb that boils up knowledge'.[30]

The brewing of knowledge also features in the Welsh tale of *Gwion Bach*. In the story, a young boy tends a fire under a cauldron in which herbs have been set to brew by Ceridwen, a woman learned in the three arts of magic, enchantment and divination. When the elixir is ready, three drops will be produced which have the power to bestow skill in various arts, making one 'full of the spirit of prophecy'. The drops are intended for Ceridwen's son. However, she is asleep when the brew is ready, and the drops fall upon the young lad tending the fire, who thereby obtains the gifts of wisdom, prophecy and shape-shifting.[31]

Poets and animal flesh

In addition to the consumption of hazelnuts, water and herbal brews, there are also references to the ingestion of the flesh of animals and fish.[32] One of the earliest appears in *Sanas Chormaic*, in a description of a ritual associated with the technique known as *imbas forosnai* ('great knowledge that illuminates'). During the ritual, the diviner was said to chew a piece of raw flesh (pig, dog or cat), after which he placed the flesh on a flagstone behind the door. He then chanted an incantation over it, offering it to 'the idol gods'. The poet then called the gods to him and 'left them not on the next day'. Afterwards he chanted and went into a ritual sleep. Others sat and watched him so he did not turn over and so that no one disturbed him. When he awoke from his sleep, the revelation of the desired information took place.[33]

Like the substances mentioned above, the flesh of pigs, cats or dogs would not produce a visionary state. However, what we may be seeing is a reference to eating flesh that is taboo. The consumption of raw pork is known to be dangerous, and eating domestic animals like cats and dogs may not have been socially acceptable. The 'flesh' eaten by the poet in this text has a forbidden or dangerous property. In addition to domestic animal flesh, the acquisition of knowledge was also associated with the consumption of a wild creature: the salmon.

In the Middle Irish narrative *Macgnímartha Find*, the young Finn mac

Cumhaill is studying with the poet Finn Éices. The poet had been waiting for seven years beside the river Boyne, hoping to catch a particular salmon. It was prophesied that once he ate the salmon, there would be nothing that he did not know (a motif also mentioned in relation to Sinann). He catches the fish and assigns his student the task of cooking it for him, cautioning him not to eat any of it. Finn burns his thumb on the fish and puts it in his mouth, after which he receives the knowledge. Thereafter, whenever he wished to know something, Finn would put his thumb in his mouth and chant by means of *teinm laída*, and whatever he did not know would be revealed to him.[34]

The acquisition of knowledge

The text goes on to state that as a result of obtaining knowledge, Finn learned the three things which qualified a *fili*: *teinm laedo*, *imbas forosnai* and *díchetal di chennaib*.[35] John Carey has shown that while their earliest attestation as a triad does not occur before the end of the ninth century, *imbas forosnai* is a prophetic faculty associated with the practice of *filidecht* in at least three Old Irish sources, including *Bretha Nemed*, the introduction to the *Senchas Már* and 'The Caldron of Poesy'.[36] *Teinm* is the verbal noun of *teinnid* 'gnawing, cracking open', an action also performed by the salmon at the well of wisdom. The word *laid* means 'song', as well as 'pith or marrow'.[37] *Díchetal* is the verbal noun of *do-cain*, and refers to an incantation or spell. It was considered one of the fourteen *srotha éicsi* ('streams of knowledge'). The phrase *di chennaib* means 'from or of the heads', much as we might say 'off the top of one's head'. The name of the technique occasionally appeared in a longer form – *díchetal do chollaib chenn* or *díchetal do cholla cennaib*. The first may mean 'incantation from the heads of bodies', while the second may refer to 'incantation from the ends/tips of the hazel' (*coll*).[38]

In many of these tales, the substance consumed by the poet must be first manipulated in some way – chewed, cracked open or cooked – in order to access its power. The hazelnuts at the Well of Segais were cracked open by salmon in order to release their power, while the salmon in the prose *Dindshenchas* story of Sinann chew (*cocnaid*) the hazelnuts of wisdom. In *Sanas Chormaic*, the poet chews red flesh to obtain *imbas*. Finn eats the cooked flesh of a salmon from the Boyne. Later, he either puts his thumb into his mouth, or chews his thumb. As chewing requires the use of the teeth, the idea seems to have arisen that Finn possessed a special 'tooth of wisdom' and put his thumb 'under his tooth' (*tuc a ordain fo a dét fis*). To put something under one's tooth is to chew it, as to put something under one's nose is to smell it.[39]

This idea of 'chewing the flesh' seems to have developed further in the corpus of Finn tales. In a nineteenth-century Irish folktale, in order to obtain wisdom Finn had to chew his thumb 'from the flesh to the bone, from the bone to the marrow, from the marrow to the inmost core, from the marrow to the juice, and then he knew'.[40] This brings to mind the interpretation of *teinm laedo* as 'cracking open the pith or marrow', as well as the cracking open of hazelnuts by the salmon, and the cracking of nuts (*teinm cnó*) in 'Finn and the Man in the Tree'.

The thumb of wisdom

The concept of chewing or ingesting flesh in order to obtain divine wisdom is found in other Indo-European traditions. The Germanic hero Sigurd burns his finger while cooking the heart of a dragon and puts it in his mouth, thereby obtaining knowledge that was desired by another (as in the stories of Finn and Ceridwen). The mythic episode of Sigurd roasting the dragon's heart and putting his thumb into his mouth was represented on a number of late tenth- and early eleventh-century memorial stones from northern England and the Isle of Man, as well as a medieval rock carving from Sweden, and twelfth- and thirteenth-century woodcarvings on the doorposts of Norwegian churches.[41]

This motif apparently had a long pedigree. A figure with an upraised hand about to put his thumb in his mouth appears on fifth- and sixth-century Scandinavian bracteates. A similar image was represented on a carved stone slab from Drumhallagh in Donegal dated to the seventh to ninth centuries. Below the arms of the stone cross are an ecclesiastic and a cloaked man with a sword or staff. Above them are two seated or squatting figures with their thumbs in their mouths.[42]

As we have seen, in addition to the consumption of red nuts, the acquisition of wisdom was associated with the consumption of the red flesh of fish or animals. A reference to a poet possessing (or embodying) the flesh of 'meat or fish' comes from a poem attributed to the legendary figure of Taliesin (italics mine):

> I got poetic inspiration from the cauldron of Ceridwen . . .
> And no one knows what my flesh is – *whether meat or fish*.
> And I was nearly nine months in the womb of the witch Ceridwen;
> I was formerly Gwion Bach, but now I am Taliesin.[43]

It is unclear whether this refers to the poet's own flesh, or to flesh that he possesses. However, if we look at the word used to refer to Finn's thumb – *ordu* – we find that it has two meanings: 'a thumb or great toe', as well as 'a piece, morsel or portion, especially of meat or fish'.[44]

Flesh of knowledge

What if the object Finn originally chewed or ingested in order to activate his power was not his thumb, but a 'piece, morsel or portion' of something – specifically, a piece or morsel of red flesh? Nora Chadwick observed that in *Sanas Chormaic* the *fili* chews a *mír* (a piece of red flesh: *mír do charnna dherg*),[45] while in the sagas Finn chews a *mer* / *mér* and in later versions, *ordain* ('thumb').[46] *Mér* means 'digit or finger', with a secondary meaning (as a variant of *smér*) 'the name of a berry'. Here we might remember that 'berry' is one meaning of *bolg*.[47] This might account for variants in which Finn puts his finger or thumb in his mouth, as well as stories in which magical berries are consumed (although these are not said to confer wisdom).[48]

In an episode from 'Finn and the Man in the Tree', Finn squeezes his finger (*mer*) in the door of the *síd*, after which he puts it in his mouth and begins to chant (*díchetal*). Later in the tale, he puts his thumb in his mouth and his *imbas* illumines him.[49] Perhaps originally the poet chewed on a piece of red flesh (*mír*) and recited incantations in order to activate the power of *imbas*. The exact identity of that flesh was (or became) unclear, and the object chewed upon became *mér* / *smér* 'a berry' (which is also red flesh) or *mér* 'a finger or digit'. From this point, the progression is relatively straightforward from *mér* to *ordu*.

Mushroom terminology

While this may shed some light on the development of these ideas in Irish contexts, we are still left to account for the association of wisdom or skill with various foods or substances which do not biologically possess such power (unless they are made into an alcoholic beverage, or prepared with other ingredients that contain psychotropic properties). Some of these images – especially in otherworld settings – could be symbolic of supernatural states or entities, rather than physically possessing vision-inducing properties. Or, they could simply be 'magical'. It is also possible that these images are symbolic and at the same time actually represent something that does possess specialised psychotropic properties.

Here we should re-examine the story of Sinann and her quest for the 'red bubbles of wisdom' (*na bolca immais*). As we saw above, Old Irish *bolg* / *bolc* / *balg* has a variety of meanings: 'bag, belly, bubble, berry, bud, ball'. We could interpret the phrase as a poetic way of referring to red, round 'hazelnuts of wisdom'.[50] However, the word *bolg* appears in connection with another group of plants, some of which possess psychotropic properties – the family of fungi and mushrooms. The Old Irish word *bolg* or *bolgán* referred to fungi, such as the *bolg bélce* or 'puffball' mushroom.[51] In modern Irish, *bolgán-béice* refers to the puffball, while in Scottish Gaelic it denotes the fuzzball or sponge mushroom. Other Scottish Gaelic examples include *balgan-losgainn* ('truffle'), *balg-dubh* ('large fuzzball'), *balg-péitach*, *balg-séididh* and *balg-smùid* ('puffball'), and *balg-bhuachair* (*Agaricus campestris*).[52]

In *Immacalam in Dá Thuarad*, the poet Néde is studying *éicse* with his tutor, who recognizes his ability and sends him forth. Néde and his two brothers set out, but a *bolg bélce* chances to meet them on the path. One of the brothers wonders why the plant is called by that name, and as they do not know, the brothers return to their tutor for a month. They set forth again, encountering the rush (*simind*) and the sanicle (*sanais*) with similar results. After learning the origin of the names of these plants, the brothers are able to undertake their journey. It is interesting to note the association of plants, including a mushroom, with poetic training.[53]

'The Caldron of Poesy' also contains the word *bolc* in a discussion of the two divisions of joy (divine joy and human joy) through which the 'Cauldron of Motion' is converted into the 'Cauldron of Knowledge'. Human joy is subdivided into four types, the fourth being 'joy at the arrival of *imbas* which the nine hazels of fine mast at Segais in the *síd*'s amass and which is sent upstream along the surface of the Boyne'. The gloss on this line is as follows: 'at the coming of *imbas* along the Boyne or the Graney, i.e. a bubble which the sun causes on the plants, and whoever consumes them will have an art' (*.i. fri tascair n-imhais iar mBóind no Greithine .i. bolcc imba-fuilgne grian forna luibhidh bé cathes iat bid don aea*).[54]

We have seen repeated descriptions of 'red flesh' connected with the acquisition of specialised knowledge. These references may be *noa* terms – terms of avoidance – which hid the identity of the substance in question from those for whom that knowledge was not intended.[55] In the story of Sinann and the Cauldron of Poesy we encounter a 'bubble' associated with wisdom or skill. Could this be a 'mushroom of wisdom' (*bolg fis*)? I suggest that these terms were meant to obscure the identity of the flesh of a red mushroom that has been widely documented as producing a visionary state: the *Amanita muscaria* mushroom.

Amanita muscaria

Commonly known as the fly agaric, this mushroom is a psychoactive fungus native to conifer and deciduous woods throughout the temperate and boreal regions of the northern hemisphere (including Ireland, Britain and Scandinavia).[56] Widely noted for hallucinogenic properties, it has been used as an intoxicant and entheogen by the peoples of Siberia, North America, northern Europe and elsewhere.[57] Some cultural groups still use the mushroom, and it often has a religious significance in these cultures. Others preserve oral traditions of having consumed the fly agaric in the past, although they no longer do so.[58]

Amanita muscaria is a large, conspicuous scarlet-red mushroom, with a 3- to 8-inch globoid cap. The remnants of a veil or membrane that covered the mushroom during its immature form appear as white speckles on its cap. It is ectomycorrhizal and forms symbiotic relationships with certain trees, including birch, pine, spruce, fir and cedar. For this reason, it cannot be cultivated. *Amanita muscaria* contains several biologically active agents.[59] Its effects include drowsiness, sweating, auditory and visual distortions, and euphoria.[60] In the initial stages, the effects are soporific, often leading to a state of sleep lasting about two hours. One cannot be roused from this sleep, but may be aware of sounds. In this state of half-sleep, there may be colourful visions. After awakening, subjects experience a feeling of elation that lasts for three to four hours.[61]

These mushrooms can only exist in a symbiotic relationship with certain types of trees, and trees figure prominently in descriptions of the well of wisdom. Here we might note that the name of the 'Man in the Tree' is *Derc Corra mac Ua Daigre*, perhaps 'Red Peaked / Swelling One, son of Descendant of Flame', an apt epithet for *Amanita muscaria.*[62] The supernatural character Trefuilngid Tre-Eochair subsisted on the magical essence of a branch and wore a 'crystal veil', reminiscent of the characteristic white veil of the *Amanita muscaria*.

Depending upon local custom, the mushroom can be eaten raw or cooked, fresh or dried, or in liquid form (as an infusion in water, or in a decoction of the juice mixed with berries). It was frequently dried before being consumed. Drying has been shown to decrease those psychoactive agents which produce undesirable side effects, and converts them into more stable and potent agents. Drying the mushrooms also provides a storable resource for use year-round, not just during seasonal conditions when the fungi are available fresh.[63]

The methods of preparing *Amanita muscaria* directly parallel the methods of ingestion seen in Celtic sources: eating or chewing raw or dried flesh (hazelnuts, thumb, fish or animal flesh); cooking and eating flesh (salmon); squeezing or pressing (Finn's thumb); decoction (Ceridwen's brew, the boiling of knowledge); and infusion (drinking *imbas* from nuts, water from the *síd*). The effects of *A. muscaria* appear to be comparable with those in the texts.

Celtic symbolism and the Rig Veda: Irish soma?

Amanita muscaria has been tentatively identified by R. Gordon Wasson as the unidentified plant known as *soma* in Vedic tradition.[64] In the hymns of the Rig Veda, it is consistently referred to as red, chestnut, golden or yellow (the latter are variant colours of *A. muscaria*). Most frequently its red colour and brilliant, resplendent or flaming characteristics are emphasised.[65] The appearance of soma is frequently likened to garments or clothing, described as being 'wrapped all around with the rays of the sun'. Soma is also described as 'abandoning his envelope' and clothing himself 'in a spread-cloth like a cloud', possible references to the mushroom's emergence from its membrane and the appearance of its white fluffy veil.[66]

Soma is often said to have a single eye.[67] There are numerous one-eyed figures in Celtic sources, and blind or one-eyed poets figure quite prominently.[68] In Scottish Gaelic, the puffball mushroom was sometimes known as *caochag*, a word also used to refer to the whole family of larger fungi. It comes from OIr *cáech* 'blind, one-eyed' or 'hollow, empty', used to refer to an empty shell, 'a nut without a kernel', bringing to mind salmon cracking open hazelnuts and sending their empty husks downstream.[69]

A metaphor frequently applied to soma was that of a bull.[70] Bull flesh and hides were used in several Celtic divination rites. These include descriptions in early Irish literature of the *tarb feis* (in which a seer wraps himself in a bull's hide to dream of the identity of the future king), and the much later-attested Scottish practice of the *taghairm* (in which a seer is wrapped in a bull's hide and left in a secluded place to obtain information for the community).[71] In a literary context, an early Irish poem contains a reference to *bolg fis na tarbha* ('bubbles of wisdom of bulls').[72] The term *balg fhis* also appears in connection with setting up a king after attaining prophetic inspiration (*gur thoghadar é i mbalg fhis*).[73] In one verse of the Rig Veda, soma is described as having the hide of a bull and the dress of sheep. This is believed to refer to its red skin and white, fluffy covering.[74] A gloss from 'The Caldron of Poesy' describes *imbas* as being 'extensive as a wether's fleece'.[75]

Vedic texts describe how the stalks of the plant were pressed as a liturgical act. The dried plants were first freshened with water so that they would 'swell up again' (bringing to mind the meanings of the word *bolg*). They were then macerated with stone pestles and a tawny-yellow juice came coursing through the conduits of the press.[76] Wasson's research showed that when the fly agaric is crushed and the juice milked out, the liquor that comes forth is tawny-yellow.[77] In the tenth-century tale *Airec Menman Uraird Maic Coisse*, we encounter a reference to the pressing of 'liquor of inspiration':

> Good is *teinm laedo* of full speech,
> a complete pressing (?) which elucidates
> the flowing liquor of supreme inspiration:
> most victorious for him is *díchetal do chollaib cenn*.[78]

In Vedic tradition, Soma was ingested in two forms: the pressed juice of the plant, or mixed with water, milk or curds.[79] The swollen stalks of soma were milked like 'cows with full udders'.[80] Soma is described as a source of eloquence: 'Tongue of the Way' and 'Seer's Milk'.[81] In *Bretha Nemed*, the Cauldron of Judgement 'milked in truth, but precluded falsehood'.[82] Here we might note Boand's name: 'Bright, White or Blessed Cow'.[83] At the sacrifice of soma, verses are recited from the hymn of Apam Napat. As we have seen, Boand approaches the Well of Segais, guarded by Nechtan and his cupbearers.[84] Associations with poetry and prophecy are also found in connection with soma: 'the sharp seer . . . is magnified in the woolen filter, Soma the wise, possessed of good intelligence'. Soma is described as 'triumphing over the prophets . . . father of poems, Master Poet never yet equaled'.[85]

In the Vedic hymns, soma is described, but never directly named or identified. Over the centuries, the authentic soma fell into disuse and people resorted to a variety of substitutes. Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty points out that there has been a consistent association of the colour red with the preferred substitutes for soma.[86] While these were recognised as being inauthentic, the substitutes served in the same religious role as the original.[87] In fact, hymns to soma were sung and revered for two millennia after the absence of the actual soma.[88]

As *Amanita muscaria* grows plentifully in Ireland, physical substitution would not have been necessary. However, words of substitution may have been used by the poets to safeguard their access to specialised knowledge, obscuring and protecting the identity of a powerful entheogenic substance whose use was restricted to the learned classes. Taking into consideration the extensive range of parallel imagery between the texts and the ethnography, as well as the longevity of certain Indo-European traditions (especially those associated with poetry and prophecy), it is worth considering the possibility that *Amanita muscaria* may have once played a role in the memories, if not the practices, of Celtic poets and seers.[89]

Notes

[1] This chapter is an extension of research originally presented at Harvard University as an honorarium lecture entitled 'The Hazel of Immortality' for the GSAS / Ford Foundation Lecture Series in 2001.

[2] Edward Gwynn, *The Metrical Dindshenchas*, Part 3 (Dublin, 1991 [1913]), pp. 28–9.

[3] Gwynn, *Metrical Dindshenchas*, Part 3, pp. 30–1.

[4] On the motif of wells or rivers flowing beneath the ocean in Indo-European contexts, see Heinrich Wagner, 'Studies in the Origins of Early Celtic Traditions', *Ériu*, 26 (1975), 1–26; Kay Muhr, 'Water Imagery in Early Irish', *Celtica*, 23 (1999), 193–210; and Sharon Paice MacLeod, 'A Confluence of Wisdom: The Symbolism of Wells, Whirlpools, Waterfalls and Rivers in Early Celtic Sources', *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, 26–7 (2010), 337–55.

[5] Unless otherwise noted, Old Irish definitions are from E. G. Quin et al., *Dictionary of the Irish Language* (Dublin, 1976).

[6] Gwynn, *Metrical Dindshenchas*, Part 3, pp. 292–3.

[7] Gwynn, *Metrical Dindshenchas*, Part 3, pp. 286–8.

[8] *DIL*: *imbas/imbus* 'great knowledge, poetic talent or inspiration, foreknowledge, magic lore; especially to fore/knowledge obtained by magic or occult means'; *sous* / *soas* / *sós* 'knowledge, science, learning, poetic lore'.

[9] *DIL*, *súg*.

[10] *DIL*, *bolc/bolg*.

[11] Gwynn, *Metrical Dindshenchas*, Part 3, pp. 294–5.

[12] Whitley Stokes, 'The Prose Tales in the Rennes *Dindshenchas*', *Revue Celtique*, 15 (1894), 272–336, 418–84 (p. 457).

[13] Tom P. Cross and Clark H. Slover, *Ancient Irish Tales* (New York, 1996 [1936]), pp. 504–5.

[14] Cross and Slover, *Ancient Irish Tales*, p. 507.

[15] DIL, *corcair*; *derg*; *rúad*; *flann*.

[16] Gwynn, *Metrical Dindshenchas*, Part 3, pp. 42–3.

[17] R. I. Best, 'The Settling of the Manor of Tara', *Ériu*, 4 (1910), 121–72 (pp. 140–1).

[18] Gwynn, *Metrical Dindshenchas*, Part 3, pp. 144–9; Stokes, 'Prose Tales in the Rennes *Dindshenchas*', p. 277.

[19] This variety is known as *fusco-rubra* or *atropurpurea*. Norman Taylor, *The Guide to Garden Shrubs and Trees* (New York, 1965), p. 112; John Lust, *The Herb Book* (Toronto, 1987), pp. 502–4.

[20] Kuno Meyer, 'Finn and the Man in the Tree', *Revue Celtique*, 25 (1904), pp. 344–9.

[21] Maud Joynt (ed.), *Feis Tighe Chonáin* (Dublin, 1936), ll. 1331–76.

[22] Vernam Hull, 'Two Tales about Find', *Speculum*, 16 (1941), 322–33 (pp. 329–30).

[23] Patrick K. Ford, 'The Well of Nechtan and La Gloire Lumineuse', in Gerald J. Larson (ed.), *Myth in Indo-European Antiquity* (Los Angeles, 1974), pp. 67–74 (pp. 67–8).

[24] Ford, 'The Well of Nechtan'.

[25] Rudolf Thurneysen (ed.), 'Zu Verslehre II', *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, 17 (1927), 263–76 (p. 258).

[26] See Liam Breatnach, 'The Caldron of Poesy', *Ériu*, 32 (1981), 45–93. Note that in the *Dindshenchas* poems regarding Sinann, one of the terms used to denote the mystic art she sought was *immas sóis*.

[27] Breatnach, 'The Caldron of Poesy', p. 67.

[28] Breatnach, 'The Caldron of Poesy', pp. 69–71.

[29] Breatnach, 'The Caldron of Poesy', pp. 69–71.

[30] Fergus Kelly, 'Cauldron imagery in a legal passage on judges', *Celtica*, 26 (2010), 31–43.

[31] Patrick K. Ford, *The Mabinogi and other Medieval Welsh Tales* (Berkeley, 1977), pp. 162–4.

[32] Eoin Ó Donnchadha, '*Filid i Sanas Chormaic*: A Picture of Pragmatic Professionals' (unpublished MA thesis, University College Dublin, 2010), pp. 44–52.

[33] Whitley Stokes (ed.), *Sanas Chormaic* (Calcutta, 1868), p. 94.

[34] Kuno Meyer, '*Macgnímartha Find*', *Revue Celtique*, 5 (1882), 195–204, 508; Kuno Meyer, 'The Boyish Exploits of Finn', *Ériu*, 1 (1904), 180–90.

[35] An excellent discussion of these terms may be found in John Carey, 'The Three Things Required of a Poet', *Ériu*, 48 (1997), 41–58. See also Joseph Falaky Nagy, 'Liminality and Knowledge in Irish Tradition', *Studia Celtica*, 16–17 (1981–2), 135–43.

[36] Carey, 'The Three Things Required of a Poet', 57.

[37] Ford, 'The Well of Nechtan', p. 74.

[38] Carey, 'The Three Things Required of a Poet'.

[39] T. F. O'Rahilly, *Early Irish History and Mythology* (Dublin, 1984 [1946]), pp. 335–6.

[40] Joseph Falaky Nagy, *Wisdom of the Outlaw*: *The Boyhood Deeds of Finn in Gaelic Narrative Tradition* (Berkeley, 1985), pp. 136–8; O'Rahilly, *Early Irish History and Mythology*, pp. 336–40.

[41] Hilda E. R. Davidson, *Myths and Symbols in Pagan Europe: Early Scandinavian and Celtic Religions* (Syracuse, 1988), pp. 85–7; Gale Owen, *Rites and Religions of the Anglo-Saxons* (New York, 1981), pp. 172–3; John Lindow, *Norse Mythology* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 85, 211.

[42] Françoise Henry, *Irish Art in the Early Christian Period* (London, 1940) pp. 109–10.

[43] Ford, *The Mabinogi*, p. 173.

[44] DIL, *ordu*.

[45] Stokes, *Sanas Chormaic: imbas*; Nora K. Chadwick, 'Imbas Forosnai', *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, 4 (1935), 97–135 (pp. 99–100).

[46] Chadwick, 'Imbas Forosnai', pp. 114–15; O'Rahilly, *Early Irish History and Mythology*, pp. 334–6.

[47] DIL, *mer*, *mér*.

[48] In *Immram Curaig Maile Dúin*, Mael Dúin and his crew travel to a number of otherworld islands, on one of which are trees 'like willow or hazel' which bore marvellous fruits with the power to intoxicate and induce sleep. In *Tóruigheacht Dhiarmada agus Ghráinne*, the Tuatha Dé Danann possess tree-produce from the otherworld: crimson nuts, fragrant berries and arbutus berries. One of the 'fragrant berries' falls to the ground, and a rowan tree grows from it. This tree and its berries were said to prevent illness and induce a sense of youthfulness. Stokes, 'The prose tales in the Rennes *Dindshenchas*', 457, and Nessa Ní Shéaghdha (ed.), *Tóruigheacht Dhiarmada agus Ghráinne* (Dublin, 1967), p. 53.

[49] Meyer, 'Finn and the Man in the Tree', pp. 344, 348.

[50] Joseph Falaky Nagy, 'Otter, Salmon and Eel in Traditional Gaelic Narrative', *Studia Celtica*, 20–1 (1985–6), 135–43 (pp. 130–4).

[51] DIL, *belche*.

[52] Niall Ó Donaill (ed.), *Foclóir Gaeilge-Béarla* (Dublin, 1992): *bolg*; Edward Dwelly, *The Illustrated Gaelic–English Dictionary* (Glasgow, 1994 [1911]): *balg*.

[53] Whitley Stokes, 'The Colloquy of the Two Sages', *RC*, 26 (1905), 4–64 (pp. 8–18).

[54] Breatnach, 'The Caldron of Poesy', pp. 66–7.

[55] See Tom Sjöblom, *Early Irish Taboos: A Study in Cognitive History* (Helsinki, 2000).

[56] J. Geml et al., 'Beringian origins and cryptic speciation events in the fly agaric (*Amanita muscaria*)', *Molecular Ecology*, 15 (2006), 225–39.

[57] H. Nyberg, 'Religious use of hallucinogenic fungi: A comparison between Siberian and Mesoamerican cultures', *Karstenia*, 32, 71–80. Its primary psychoactive constituent is the compound muscimol.

[58] R. Gordon Wasson, *Soma: Divine Mushroom of Immortality* (New York, 1968), p. 10.

[59] W. Theobald et al., 'Pharmacological and experimental psychological studies with 2 components of fly agaric (*amanita muscaria*)', *Arzneimittelforschung*, 18, 311–15.

[60] D. R. Benjamin, 'Mushroom poisoning in infants and children: the *Amanita pantherina / muscaria* group', *Journal of Toxicology: Clinical Toxicology*, 30/1 (1992), 13–22; D. R. Benjamin, *Mushrooms – Poisons and Panaceas. A Handbook for Naturalists, Mycologists and Physicians* (New York, 1995), pp. 303–4; Theobald et al., 'Pharmacological and experimental psychological studies'.

[61] Peter D. Furst, *Hallucinogens and Culture* (Novato, 1976), pp. 92–3. Here we should also note the twelfth-century account by Gerald of Wales (bk I, ch. 16) in which seers in medieval Wales known as *awenyddion* had to be violently shaken in order to awaken and restore them. See the discussion in Patrick K. Ford, *The Celtic Poets* (Belmont, 1999), pp. xxvi–xxvii. In this account, as well as that in *Sanas Chormaic* associated with *imbas*, seers were watched over by others.

[62] John Carey puts forth the suggestion that Derg Corra's name may not contain the word *derg* 'red', in 'Two Notes on Names', *Éigse*, 35 (2005), 116–24.

[63] Furst, *Hallucinogens and Culture*, pp. 91–3; Michael Ripinsky-Nixon, *The Nature of Shamanism: Substance and Function of a Religious Metaphor* (Albany, 1993), p. 147; Margaret Saar, 'Ethnomycological data from Siberia and North-East Asia on the effect of Amanita muscaria', *Journal of Ethnopharmacology*, 31 (1991), 157–73 (p. 168): the Khanty believed that berries strengthened the brew.

[64] See Wasson, *Soma*.

[65] Wasson, *Soma*, pp. 18–21.

[66] Wasson, *Soma*, pp. 36–7, 40–1.

[67] Wasson, *Soma*, pp. 46–7. Perhaps this is a reference to the round, light-coloured portion of the hazelnut, the 'eye' of the nut.

[68] *Áed Minbrecc* ('Fiery One of the Fine Spots') was likewise associated with this waterfall. While *áed* generally means 'fire', it could also be used to refer to the eye.

[69] Dwelly, *Illustrated Gaelic–English Dictionary*: *caochag*; DIL: *cáech*.

[70] Wasson, *Soma*, pp. 21–2.

[71] Discussion may be found in Andrew E. M. Wiseman, 'Caterwauling and Demon Raising: The Ancient Rite of the *Taghairm*', *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, 35 (2010), 174–208, and Nagy, 'Liminality and Knowledge in Irish Tradition'.

[72] Laimhbheartach Mac Cionnaith (ed.), *Dioghluim Dána* (Dublin, 1938), 83.11.

[73] Lambert McKenna (ed.), *Aithdioghluim Dána* (Dublin, 1939), 4.2.

[74] Wasson, *Soma*, p. 41.

[75] Breatnach, 'The Caldron of Poesy', pp. 66–7.

[76] Wasson, *Soma*, pp. 4–5.

[77] Wasson, *Soma*, p. 36. Before the liturgy was finished, the juice was drunk; three such sacramental offerings could be made in one day. This instantaneous preparation argues against the drink being fermented.

[78] M. E. Byrne, 'Airec Menman Uraird Maic Coisse', in Osborn Bergin, R. I. Best and J. G. O'Keefe (eds), *Anecdota from Irish Manuscripts*, 2 (Halle and Dublin, 1908), 42–76 (p. 75); Carey, 'Three Things Required of a Poet', 51. Note that the form of *díchetal* noted here contains the word *coll* 'hazel'.

[79] Wasson, *Soma*, pp. 26–7.

[80] Wasson, *Soma*, pp. 42, 44.

[81] Wasson, *Soma*, pp. 21, 58.

[82] Breatnach, 'Caldron of Poesy', p. 175.

[83] Wasson, *Soma*, pp. 21, 58.

[84] See Ford, 'The Well of Nechtan', regarding correlations between Vedic traditions and the story of Boand and possible etymological parallels between Apam Napat and Nechtan.

[85] Wasson, *Soma*, pp. 51–2.

[86] See Wasson, *Soma*, pp. 13, 95 (and particularly Wendy O'Doniger Flaherty's contribution, 'The Post-Vedic History of the Soma Plant', pp. 95–147).

[87] Wasson, *Soma*, p. 5; Flaherty, 'Post-Vedic History of the Soma Plant', pp. 95–147. See also Rajesh Kochkar, 'The Rgvedic Soma Plant', *Medicine and Life Sciences in India* (New Delhi, 2001), pp. 1–16.

[88] Wasson, *Soma*, p. 7.

[89] The theory that coded references to *A. muscaria* exist in Celtic contexts has been explored in several popular works, but not previously in an academic setting. In 1995, I was approached by a student of ethnobotany concerning mushroom symbolism in Celtic literary and folklore sources. He provided me with a description of *A. muscaria* and ethnographic descriptions of its use. This fuelled my research, which focused on the word *bolg* / *balg*, seen in the *Dindshenchas* poem concerning Sinann's quest for the red 'bubbles of wisdom'. Some years later it was brought to my attention that an enthusiast article exploring a cluster of related motifs, entitled 'Speckled Snake, Brother of Birch: *Amanita Muscaria* Motifs in Celtic Legends' (by Erynn Rowan Laurie and Timothy White), appeared in *Shaman's Drum*, 44 (1997), 52–65. The article was wide-ranging, and discussed the ingestion of berries and apples, the association of *A. muscaria* with birch trees, and one-eyed and one-legged figures. A few of these motifs were later discussed in *Ploughing the Clouds: The Search for Irish Soma* by Peter Lamborn Wilson (San Francisco, 2001). Despite the title, most of the work discusses the Rig Veda, with only a few examples from Celtic contexts.

8

THE ARMORICAN VOYAGE TO THE AFTERLIFE AND CELTIC MYTHS

Fañch Bihan-Gallic

In August 1923, Félix Tual, mayor of Molenez,[1] was on his deathbed. After bidding farewell to his family, he turned his head to the window and, seeing his boat anchored outside, asked those who were by his side in his agony what the weather was like. They answered him that the weather was fine and sunny. Then he asked what the wind was like, and was answered that an eastern breeze was blowing. He thought for a while and asked whether it was ebb-tide, to which they answered that it was. He then closed his eyes and remained silent, before dying.

This anecdote reported by Joseph Cuillandre was told to him by the woman minding the old mayor. To those who know little about Breton traditional beliefs, this might seem a touching yet random story. To others, it appears as a perfect illustration of the strength of an ancient Breton belief up to the twentieth century. Like any other man from Molenez, Félix Tual was firmly convinced of the navigation of the souls to the afterlife, and was thus preparing himself in his last moments.

It is no wonder that the otherworld is seen as an island location, and that the fairy mounds of the Celtic tradition, only accessible on certain occasions, appear as islands of magic in the sea of our everyday lives. Brittany is a Catholic country, and has been since before the early medieval period. As is the case in many other places, local beliefs have been mixed with new ones brought by the Christian religion. This point is important to underline before going further, as the idea of crossing water to the afterlife is not the sole representation of our last journey among Armoricans. Indeed, the world of *an Anaon* (the realm of the dead souls) is a complex one and takes many forms.[2] That being said, the motif of travel by water to the otherworld is an important feature of Breton beliefs. We will here attempt to trace its antiquity and its potential connection to ancient cosmological and mythological representations.

In order to fathom the existence of this concept, we will first explore the ancient sources that might tell us about such a journey, before looking at various aspects and stories related to Armorican beliefs. We will dwell in particular on accounts from the Molenez archipelago (off the north-western coast of Brittany). Myths – that is, stories and representations that transcend mere tales in order to give an explanation of the state or organisation of the world – are difficult to reconstruct, and stories which once were of great importance in such respects often became simple narratives with the passing of time. It is, however, a myth that we will discuss here, and connecting the various elements at our disposal will give us a clearer picture of this specific representation of the organisation of the world in Breton traditions.

The ancient sources

The oldest unambiguous mention of a water-crossing to the afterlife in a Celtic context is given to us by the Byzantine author and historian Procopius of Caesarea (*c.* AD 500–60). When writing about Gaul in his *History of Wars*, he gives us an intriguing testimony about an island he calls ‘Brittia’. Even though he himself claims this isle to be distinct from Britannia, we clearly know from the information he gives us that he is indeed talking about Britain, as he mentions the name of known British people of the era (Άγγίλοι *Angili*, Φρίσσοηες *Frissones* and Βρίττωηες *Brittones*), as well as the Breton migrations to Gaul that were happening at the time.[3] The clear geographical confusion in the author’s mind is seen elsewhere, but it does not make his anecdote less interesting to us. According to Procopius, the fishermen on the coast of Gaul facing Brittia have the task of carrying the souls of the dead to that island, as their resting place lies there. He then tells us that those sailors make a special crossing at night with apparently empty boats that are, in fact, filled with souls.[4] What makes this anecdote interesting to Procopius is the echo it has of the Greek mythology he must himself have been familiar with.[5] What makes this anecdote interesting for us is its location. Indeed, even though his geography is not easy to follow at first, we quickly see that the part of Gaul he is talking about includes Armorica and perhaps modern-day Normandy. What can be made of this strange story? It appears obvious that Procopius himself never set foot in that part of the world, and he himself says that he heard and read those stories from others.[6] However, both his explanation about the origin of these stories and his direct association of them with the Celtic population of the shores of the Channel are curious. Even though the whole anecdote can be seen as exaggerated and mystified by the distance separating the author from the source, we can strip it down to a core belief: the people of Armorica believed that souls had to travel to an island after death. It would merely be a strange story if it were not for the later evidence we are about to study.

Indeed, the idea of crossing water toward the afterlife is found quite famously in the Matter of Britain, which finds its origin both in Welsh and Breton legends.[7] It appears in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* when Arthur, mortally wounded, is taken to the Isle of Avalon:

> *Sed et inclitus ille rex Arturus letaliter uulneratus est; qui illinc ad sananda uulnera sua in insulam Auallonis euectus Constantino cognato suo et filio Cadoris ducis Cornubiae diadema Britanniae concessit anno ab incarnatione Domini .dxlii.*
>
> The illustrious king Arthur too was wounded; he was taken away to the island of Avallon to have his wounds tended and, in the year of Our Lord 542, handed over Britain's crown to his relative Constantinus, son of Cador duke of Cornwall.[8]

Though it is here a question of attending to the king's wounds, rather than his death, sovereignty falls to another, and there is no mention of Arthur's return in the *Historia*. We are here being presented with the last journey of the king. The supernatural nature of the island is confirmed in the *Vita Merlini*. Although the name 'Avalon' is not stated there, Geoffrey is making reference to the same place (*insula pomorum*). It is there that Arthur is taken after his last battle, even though this time it is said that the king will not succumb to his wounds ('*Inspexit que diu. tandem que redire salutem Posse sibi dixit – si secum tempore Longo Esset et ipsius uellet medicamine fungi*').[9] That being said, no source ever noted Arthur's return from Avalon, which makes it de facto his otherworldly resting place. The *Brut y Brenhinedd* even unambiguously states that Arthur is buried on Avalon, which is an original statement from this Welsh translation of Geoffrey's *Historia* and does not appear in the *Historia* itself.[10]

This island nature of the afterlife is also found in some descriptions of the Welsh legendary otherworld, *Annwn*.[11] The 'Preiddeu Annwfn', an Arthurian poem from the *Book of Taliesin* (*Llyfr Taliesin*), tells us about the geographical nature of the place. Line 23 states: '*yg kaer pedryfan*, *ynys pybyrdor*' ('in the four quarters of the fort, stout defence of the island'). Caer Pedryvan is one of the numerous names that the poem gives to *Annwn*, and it is stated at line 27 that Arthur and his companions had to travel by sea to reach the realm.[12]

It seems that this belief was not only Brythonic, as it is also found in Gaelic sources. *Lebor Gabála Érenn* mentions *Teach Duinn*, an island in which Donn, one of the first inhabitants of Ireland, welcomes the dead: '*Cucum dom thig tíssaid uili íar bar n-écaib*' ('To my house you will all come after your death'; my translation).[13] This passage suggests that the island nature of the afterlife existed in Gaelic tradition as well, a Gaelic tradition that will reappear later in this discussion.

Those are merely a few examples, but they illustrate that the medieval Bretons – who shared the Matter of Britain with the Welsh and from whom part of it was taken – had kept in their heritage this idea of a water-crossing to the afterlife that was already found in Procopius. This belief, it seems, was known to the Irish as well, which may point at a pan-Celtic tradition.

An Anaon and water-crossing

As we saw, the association of islands with the afterlife was already present at the end of Antiquity, and was further seen in medieval legends and representations. This specificity is also present in modern Breton folklore, while radically differing from Christian teachings. The Bible covers the matter extensively: the dead rest in the ground (Daniel 12: 2; Psalms 146: 4) and Hell is described as a big furnace (Matthew 13: 50), a lake of fire (Revelations 19: 20) or a set of dungeons (Peter 2: 4). Revelations (20: 13) even makes a clear distinction between the seas and Hades/Hell, which is elsewhere said to be underground (Romans 10: 6–7; Ephesians 4: 7–9). Such orthodox Christian representations exist of course in Brittany, but they mix with others, especially the insular one.

One of the many expressions still used in Breton to mention someone's death is '*roeñvet en deus war Gornôg*' ('he rowed west'), which has cognates in Irish and Scottish Gaelic '*ag dul siar*' ('going west'). West of those lands is of course the sea. It is beyond the waves that is found the Irish *Tír na nÓg*, also called *Tír fo Thuinn* ('land below the waves'), bearing great resemblance to the Brythonic *Annwn*.[14] This idea of crossing water also appears in another expression for dying collected by Daniel Giraudon in Bro-Dreger (Brittany), '*mont en tu all d'ar saon*' ('go to the other side of the valley/stream').[15]

Apart from those expressions, which testify in themselves to a specific set of representations, we find some interesting stories. One of them is related by Anatole Le Braz in his famous *Légende de la Mort*. He mentions the belief in western Brittany, especially among communities living on the coast, that a boat transports souls to the afterlife. This boat is named the *bag-noz* ('night boat') due to its appearance after sunset.[16] Another reference, more anecdotal but still significant for us, appears in the ballad *Ar Plac'h dimezet gant Satan* ('The Girl Wedded to Satan'), collected by Hersart de la Villemarqué in his *Barzaz Breiz*. During a wedding, the bride is not present and the pipers ask the groom about her whereabouts. The latter answers to them that he will bring them to her (stanza 32). The following stanzas (33–5) are the most important ones:

Oa ked ho c'homz peurlavaret,	'They were merely done talking,
Pa oant gant ***ann aod*** *digouezet;*	that they had reached **the coast**;
Ha gand eul ***lestr*** *digemeret,*	And were welcomed on a **ship**,
Hag ar ***mor braz a oa treuz et****,*	and the **great sea was crossed**,
Lenn *ann Anken hag ann Eskern,*	The **Lake** of Despair and of Bones,
Ha pa oant e toull ann ifern.[17]	And they were in the pit of Hell.'

The crossing of water is here unambiguous. Interestingly, La Villemarqué also made the comparison between this voyage and Procopius' anecdote. In another ballad, known as *Ar Baradoz* ('The Paradise'),[18] the soul is compared to a lost boat sent away by the body after death (stanza 12) and Death is said to be a ferryman taking the soul when '[its] ship is broken against the rocks' (stanza 13).

To those elements can be added further examples from traditional tales and stories. In a legend collected by Fañch an Uhel, 'The Crystal Palace',[19] a boy named Yvon goes to find his sister, married to a prince, in the eponymous castle. In order to reach it, the hero must cross a lake in which he is fully immersed before coming back on the other side. This crossing becomes interesting for us when, at the end of the story, we realise that the Crystal Palace is the afterlife. This fact is stated by the prince, who tells the boy when he leaves that he will see him sooner than he thinks: indeed, upon arriving back home, Yvon realises many centuries have passed and his entire family is dead. And the storyteller finishes by saying that death seizes the hero, who joins his sister in her palace. As in *Ar Plac'h dimezet*, we see that the crossing of water is necessary to reach the world of the dead. In a tale mentioned by Hélias,[20] *Trêzenn ar Re Varo* ('The Beach of the Dead'), a ferryman-sorcerer takes careless travellers beyond the horizon to this beach where only the dead live. One can also think about the life of Santez Anna, patron saint of Brittany, whose body was not found after her death on the Armorican shores. Instead, a fishing boat came from the sea transporting a statue of her[21] – this otherworldly boat brings a relic from the deceased saint. We can also think about the tale collected by Paul Sébillot, *Le Navire des Fées* ('The Fairies' Boat'),[22] in which the parents of the hero, seeing him cross the water with a fairy, believe him to be dead.

Finally, we can mention the presence in western Breton geography of several burial islands, be they mythical or real. The myth of Avalon is found, though superficially and with some doubts, in the parish of Pleuveur-Bodoù, where the small islet of Enez Aval is believed to be Arthur's last resting place.[23] Similarly, I heard that the Enez Tristan, next to Douarnenez, is believed to be the tomb of the famous knight – I have unfortunately not been able to find the origin or the antiquity of this story. More concretely, several parishes in Brittany are faced with Neolithic and Mesolithic burial-islands: the Enez Karn, in the parish of Ploudalmeze (Finistère), the Gavriniz in the parish of Larmor-Baden (Morbihan), some of the islands of the Molenez archipelago (Finistère), and no fewer than four islands (Roc'h Avel, Enez Guennoc, Enez Tarieg, Enez Garv) in the parish of Landeda (Finistère). Even though those were not in use any more by the time the Bretons settled in Armorica, their presence must have been a striking feature of the landscape and have nourished the myths of the island-like otherworld.[24]

The various stories and beliefs mentioned above are a clear echo of the oldest medieval sources and display a great resemblance to the belief system and cosmological representation among the Bretons. This resemblance appears even more strikingly when looking at the afterlife as it was conceived by Armorican seafarers well into the twentieth century.

The otherworld of Breton sailors

Joseph Cuillandre, who reported the anecdote that opened this chapter, was from Molenez himself, and in his article about the voyage to the afterlife[25] he includes interesting details concerning the beliefs of the island. It is both a secondary source by its academic nature and a primary source by the personal approach and recollection of the author. The anecdote of the death of Félix Tual takes on an even greater significance in light of the elements to be discussed below.

The belief among the people of Molenez was that sailors had to navigate to the otherworld upon dying.[26] The representation of this travel appears to have been quite complex and clear in the mind of the people. It was said that the best day to make this voyage was when the wind was blowing from the east (*avel reter*),[27] which of course recalls the saying 'going west'. The ebb is also favoured for departure, and Le Braz tells us, as does Cuillandre, that sailors would die with the turn of the tide.[28] The voyage is long and perilous for inexperienced sailors. The soul will approach a land always surrounded by fog and around which the currents are treacherous and strong. If he lands there, the sailor will find only a dead world where nothing grows or lives, and in which the constant obscurity is only broken by a pale, weak light. Lost souls wander there aimlessly until they can finally go back upon the sea.[29] The good sailor will, however, go past this place without any problem and reach the harbour of a fortunate land ('*un pays fortuné*') which is the otherworld. Even though the Breton name is not given for the latter expression, Cuillandre says that another term in use to talk about it is '*bro ar re yaouank*' ('the country of the youth').[30] It is never clearly stated, but Cuillandre always himself represented this country as an island, especially as it was compared with Molenez by the storytellers. In it everything is light, and beautiful music and songs are heard. The fields are always covered in flowers and the land is fertile; golden fruits grow on trees. On the hills stand castles made of jewels and gems. Those are the homes of the fairies that rule over the otherworld and protect the sailors.[31] The ancestors welcome the newly arrived soul, and life is spent resting, navigating for leisure and celebrating festivals.[32] One last thing on which Cuillandre puts an emphasis is that those stories are not only stories one tells one's children. In the mind of the people of Molenez they are concrete realities.[33]

This belief has also been reported by Hélias[34] as the *Baradoz ar Huz-Heol* ('The Paradise of the Setting Sun'), and he states that the same story was found elsewhere along the coast of Brittany. It also joins with the belief of the *Bae an Anaon* ('Bay of the Anaon'): the souls of the ones who were drowned are waiting in this bay near Plogoñv to embark for the otherworld. The boat of the dead (*bag ar re varv*) comes sometimes at night, and calls the name of the sailors that are to travel to the afterlife, beyond the horizon. Not everybody is called, however, and those who have badly sinned are bound to remain in this world.[35] Cuillandre reported in another article a similar boat which was a ferry that the souls would take, rather than a boat that the souls would navigate on their own.[36]

The picture is rich and clear, and many parallels can be drawn. First of all, in relation to the names of the otherworld. We lack the original form for the *pays fortuné*, but if the French expression is faithful to the Breton we find an echo to Geoffrey of Monmouth ('*insula pomorum que fortunata uocatur*'), and indeed the description of the fertile, fruitful country is quite close to the definition of Avalon. However, this is to be expected from a paradise-like afterlife. The other name, this time given in its original form, is far more striking: '*bro ar re yaouank*' translates literally in Irish as *tír na n-óg*. Once again, it could be expected from a dreamed afterlife that one remains eternally young, but it is not a constant across cultures – we can think for instance of Greek mythology, in which none of those features are found. What makes those elements resonate strongly is the last point: the land is ruled by fairies. There is no mention of Christian images such as saints, or even God. The welcoming fairies in their marvellous castles are a very specific element. It of course fits well with Avalon – ruled by nine fairies – and with *Tír na nÓg*, land of otherworldly creatures and the Tuatha Dé Danann.[37] It also echoes interestingly the Old Irish text *Echtrae Chonnlai*, in which a woman comes on a crystal boat (*loing glano*) to seek the eponymous hero. In it she appears to have come from the otherworld, situated beyond the waves and in which only women and maidens are said to live (*ní fil cenél and nammá acht mná ocus ingena*).[38] Even though this early reference has to be taken with care considering its strong Christian themes,[39] the correspondence in the representation of the otherworld is quite striking, and ties in with the tradition of the *Teach Duinn* we previously mentioned, showing once again that we may be looking at a Celtic tradition. The fact that the palaces made of precious stones inhabited by fairies are at the centre of this otherworldly realm also corresponds to the previously mentioned tale of the 'Crystal Palace', even though the latter is only a remnant of what Molenez presents in such detail.[40] And it is no wonder that the archipelago should have kept an ancient story in such vivid ways: fishing was at the heart of life on the island until quite recently, and it appears clearly why a myth corresponding to what we know as Avalon might have survived there. Moreover it is worth noting that Molenez has a past when it comes to such matters, as Neolithic burial mounds have been found on some of its islets. Some of those seem to have been dedicated solely to the dead and display engravings of boats, pointing at a connection between sailing and travelling to the afterlife.[41] Whether or not those cairns supported those beliefs among the latter inhabitants of Molenez is impossible to know, but the parallel here is interesting.

The Armorican voyage to the otherworld and Celtic myths

The elements presented above are striking in many ways. Not only are they out of keeping with traditional Christian representations, but they are sometimes oblivious of them, as is the case on Molenez. However, can we really talk about Celtic myths here? Could we not be dealing with a development specific to Armorica? It seems unlikely, as the evidence is pointing at something wider. The correspondences between the Breton expression '*roeñvet war Gornôg*' and the Gaelic (both Irish and Scottish) '*ag* *dul siar*' has been mentioned. So has the striking resemblance between '*bro ar re yaouank*' of the people of Molenez and the Irish '*Tír na nÓg*', as well as with the Irish traditions surrounding the *Teach Duinn*. We also find a specific and interesting tradition in the Scottish Highlands – and, interestingly, in Montrose (Angus) – of island burial. Indeed, no fewer than ten parishes in Scotland use or used small uninhabited islands as cemeteries, and seem to have been doing so since the medieval period at least. I have argued elsewhere[42] that the evidence pointed in Scotland at a tradition strongly linked to Christianisation, but the lack of sources for the early period is to be blamed here, and it would not come as a surprise if further enquiries and discoveries pointed to a practice of far greater antiquity. Digressing for a moment into the wider mythic sources, one could mention once again the famous Greek myth of Charon, the ferryman of Hades, which could also support the antiquity of such a belief and place it back into very ancient cosmological views.

To come back to a Breton context, the lack of continuous sources on the subject from Antiquity to our times is obviously to be regretted, as many more elements could have been brought in. Such sources would also help in knowing to what extent we may be dealing with direct continuity. However, from Procopius to Cuillandre we can unravel patterns and similarities that point at a belief with ancient roots. The original myth can hardly be reconstructed, but some elements can be perceived: a land of bliss on the other side of the sea ruled by gods and goddesses who gradually became fairies. For the seafarers that the western and insular Celts were, such an image must have been powerful indeed. Those ideas belong to the realm of cosmological representations and would have been so deeply engraved in the mind that it seems natural for them to have left their mark, especially as the sea kept its great value in Brittany's everyday life. The coming of Christianity is not without influence of course, and probably brought its own elements when we think about the wicked souls not being granted passage by the boat of the dead, but the isolation of the western Breton seaboard, as well as the uninterrupted fishing lifestyle throughout the centuries, would have made the original myth hard to replace. The inclusion of non-Christian myths into the Armorican belief system has not always been coherent, and it led to an adaptation of the new faith rather than a disappearance of the older folklore. It is of course in this way that we can allow ourselves to talk about myths, as these stories are meant to explain the world and are seen as conveying cosmological truth. Moreover, seeking the origin of such a world outside of Christian beliefs is more than reasonable: even though the details might be adapted, it is not conceivable for that religion to beget an afterlife that would not include God, as he is the underlying foundation of everything and reigns in Heaven. His absence from *bro ar re yaouank* and Avalon is an indicator that the myth in question here takes its roots elsewhere.

Though the idea of belonging to a 'Celtic' family was probably foreign to him, we can wonder whether Félix Tual reached in his last voyage the same land as the Gaels who would bid farewell to their families by telling them: '*tha mi feitheamh ris an aiseag*', 'I am waiting for the ferry'.[43]

Notes

[1] *Moal-Enez*, 'The Bald Island' (French *Molène*), though other etymologies have been defended (Joseph Loth, 'Origine du nom de l'île Molène', *Revue Celtique*, 44 (1927), 76–7). It lies west of Brittany, between the mainland and Ushant Island (*Enez Eusa*). The following anecdote is reported by Joseph Cuillandre in 'La broella d'Ouessant et la Navigation des Molénais dans l'autre monde', *Annales de Bretagne*, 36 (1924), 299–320.

[2] These are not discussed here. They are well covered by Anatole Le Braz, in his *La Légende de la Mort chez les Bretons Armoricains*, 2 vols (Paris, 1902), and Daniel Giraudon, in his *Sur les chemins de l'Ankoù – Croyances et légendes de la mort en Bretagne et pays celtiques* (Fouesnant, 2012).

[3] Procopius Caesarensis, *Procopius in Seven Volumes: History of the Wars, Books VII and VIII*, trans. H. B. Dewing (London, 1928), pp. 254–5. See also E. A. Thompson, 'Procopius on Brittia and Britannia', *The Classical Quarterly*, 30 (1980), 498–507, for more on the geographical aspects of Procopius' passage.

[4] Procopius, *History*, pp. 268–71.

[5] Procopius, *History*, p. 266.

[6] Procopius, *History*, pp. 266.

[7] See J. E. Caerwyn Williams, 'Brittany and the Arthurian Legend', in Rachel Bromwich, A. O. H. Jarman and Brynley F. Roberts (eds), *The Arthur of the Welsh* (Cardiff, 1995), pp. 249–72.

[8] Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, ed. Michael D. Reeve and trans. Neil Wright (Woodbridge, 2007), pp. 252–3.

[9] 'At length she said he could be cured if only he stayed with her a long while and accepted her treatment', Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The Life of Merlin*, trans. Basil Clarke (Cardiff, 1973), p. 103.

[10] Jon B. Coe and Simon Young, *The Celtic Sources for the Arthurian Legend* (Felinfach, 1995), pp. 54–5.

[11] John T. Koch, 'Annwn/Annwfn', in John T. Koch (ed.), *Celtic Culture: A Historical Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara, 2006), p. 75.

[12] Marged Haycock (ed. and trans.), 'Preideu Annwfyn', in *Legendary Poems from the Book of Taliesin* (Aberystwyth, 2007), pp. 433–51 (p. 436).

[13] For the growth and development of *Lebor Gabála Érenn* during the Irish Middle Ages, see R. Mark Scowcroft, '*Leabhar Gabhála* Part I: The Growth of the Text',

Ériu, 38 (1987), 79–140. Scowcroft identifies the summary version in the *Historia Brittonum* (*c.*830) attributed to Nennius as 'our first testimony to the existence of LG (as a text)' (p. 83). See also John Carey, 'Native Elements in Irish Pseudohistory', in Doris Edel (ed.), *Cultural Identity and Cultural Integration: Ireland and Europe in the Early Middle Ages* (Dublin, 1995), pp. 45–60. The *Lebor Gabála Érenn* passage is quoted as rendered by Kuno Meyer in 'Der irische Totengott und die Toteninsel', *Sitzungsberichte der Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* (1919), 537–46 (p. 538). The tradition of the *Teach Duinn* is attached to a real islet off the southwestern coast of Ireland. See Meyer, 'Der irische Totengott', and Dáithí Ó hÓgáin, 'The Mystical Island in Irish Folklore', in Patricia Lysaght, Séamas Ó Catháin and Dáithí Ó hÓgáin (eds), *Islanders and Water-Dwellers* (Dublin, 1999), pp. 247–60. For further discussion, see Patrick Sims-Williams, 'Kaer Sidi and Other Celtic Otherworld Terms', in *Irish Influence on Medieval Welsh Literature* (Oxford, 2010), ch. 3, and Jonathan Wooding (ed.), *The Otherworld Voyage in Early Irish Literature: An Anthology of Criticism* (Dublin, 2014).

[14] Patrick Sims-Williams, 'Tír na nÓg [1] Irish background', in Koch, *Celtic Culture*, p. 1671. Although the concept of an island where inhabitants do not age is much earlier, the specific use of the term *Tír na nÓg*, 'Land of the Young', seems first attested in an eighteenth-century poem attributed to Michael Comyn in which Niamh, daughter of the sea-deity Manannán, carries away Oisín, son of Finn mac Cumaill, over the sea on horseback to Tír na nÓg (Bryan O'Looney (ed. and trans.), 'The Land of Youth', *Transactions of the Ossianic Society for the Year 1856*, 4 (1859), 227–79). Charles Plummer, in his introductory section (p. clxxxii, n. 19) to *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae*, vol. 1 (Oxford, 1910), points out that 'the idea, though not the name, occurs in the Maelduin story: "ni toeth áes foraib", i.e. age shall not fall upon you', citing Whitley Stokes, 'The Voyage of Mael Duin (Suite)', *Revue Celtique*, 10 (1889), 50–95 (p. 64).

[15] This information comes from an email exchange in January 2016 between the author and Daniel Giraudon about traditions in Bro-Dreger (Trégor).

[16] Anatole Le Braz, *La Légende de la Mort chez les Bretons Armoricains*, 2 vols (Paris, 1902), 2, pp. 26–8. A similar boat is found in Irish folklore, the *bád sí*, a ghostly boat. The Irish boat, however, is not dedicated to the crossing of the dead. See Críostóir Mac Cárthaigh, '*An Bád Sí*: Phantom Boat Legends in Irish Folk Tradition', in Lysaght, Ó Catháin and Ó hÓgáin, *Islanders and Water-Dwellers*, pp. 165–76.

[17] Théodore Hersart de la Villemarqué, *Barzaz Breiz* (Paris, 1846), p. 266. Translation by the author.

[18] Théodore Hersart de la Villemarqué, *Le Barzhaz Breizh* (Spéze, 1997), p. 219. An Baradoz ('Paradise') is found on pp. 498–500 of the same edition.

[19] Fañch an Uhel, *Contes populaires de Basse-Bretagne* (Paris, 1887), pp. 40–65.

[20] Pêr-Jakez Hélias, *Mojennoù Breiz ar Mor I* (Brest, 2001). Trans. Anthony Vitt and Myriah Williams, available at *www.csub.edu/~cmacquarrie/csana/documents/alltales.rtf*. Accessed 24 August 2017.

[21] Pêr-Jakez Hélias, *Mojennoù Breiz ar Mor II* (Brest, 1959), p. 12.

[22] Henri Gaidoz and Paul Sébillot, *Contes des Provinces de France* (Paris, 1884), pp. 105–11.

[23] H. Corbes, 'Alfred Tennyson en Bretagne à la recherche des légendes arthuriennes', *Annales de Bretagne*, 72 (1965), 529–36 (p. 535).

[24] When one looks at the shores of Landeda and Ploudalmeze, there can be little doubt that the medieval settlers were conscious of those cairns, which are impressive through both their size and their prominent place in the landscape. The *Enez Karn* is even said to be the dwelling of Marc'h, the king with horse's ears.

[25] Joseph Cuillandre,'La broella d'Ouessant et la Navigation des Molénais dans l'autre monde', *Annales de Bretagne*, 36 (1924), 299–320.

[26] Cuillandre, 'La broella d'Ouessant', pp. 309–10.

[27] Cuillandre, 'La broella d'Ouessant', p. 311.

[28] Anatole Le Braz, *La Légende de la Mort chez les Bretons Armoricains*, 2 vols (Paris, 1902), 1, pp. 76–9.

[29] Cuillandre, 'La broella d'Ouessant', p. 312.

[30] Cuillandre, 'La broella d'Ouessant', p. 314.

[31] Cuillandre, 'La broella d'Ouessant', p. 313.

[32] Cuillandre, 'La broella d'Ouessant', pp. 314–15.

[33] Cuillandre, 'La broella d'Ouessant', p. 317.

[34] Hélias, *Mojennoù Breiz I*.

[35] Hélias, *Mojennoù Breiz II*, p. 10.

[36] Joseph Cuillandre, 'À propos de la "Légende de la Mort"', *Annales de Bretagne*, 35 (1921), 627–50.

[37] Sims-Williams, 'Tír na nÓg'.

[38] Kim McCone (ed.), *Echtrae Chonnlai and the Beginnings of Vernacular Narrative Writing in Ireland* (Maynooth, 2000), p. 123.

[39] McCone (ed.), *Echtrae Chonnlai*, p. 105. In regard to the date of the text, McCone concludes (p. 104): 'All of the extant manuscript versions of *Echtrae Chonnlai* derive from an archetype, possibly contained in the famous *Cín Dromma Snechtai*, that can be dated with some confidence to the eighth century on the strength of the firmly Old Irish language of the text deduced from a comparison of its surviving descendants.'

[40] This specific image of castles made out of crystal may be a Christian importation, as it appears in Revelation 21: 11, concerning the Holy Jerusalem: 'her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal'. Of course, associating precious stones and crystal with otherworldly qualities is not exclusively Christian, but this connection could be made.

[41] Yvan Pailler et al., 'Évolution des paysages et occupation humaine en mer d'Iroise (Finistere, Bretagne) du Neolithique a l'Age du Bronze', *Norois*, 220 (2011), pp. 13–14.

[42] Fañch Bihan-Gallic, 'Eileanan-Cladh ann an Alba – Burial-islands in Scotland' (unpublished MSc thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2015).

[43] Allan Turner, 'Beliefs and practices in health and disease from the Maclagan Manuscripts' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2014), p. 88.

SECTION 3

THE NEW COSMOLOGICAL APPROACH

this page has been left intentionally blank

9

TOWARDS ADOPTING A DOUBLE PERSPECTIVE ON CELTIC MYTHOLOGY AND ITS PREHISTORIC ROOTS

Emily Lyle

Viewing Celtic mythology through the lens of a fully oral culture

The premise of this chapter is that the gods we know in stories were first imagined in prehistory and that we can only understand some aspects of Celtic mythology by reflecting on it in this context. Myth in oral culture rests on 'the assumption of a world of gods conceived on analogy to a human world' and also on 'the "ontological continuum" that fuses everything into a single all-encompassing totality'.[1] This is quite different from the thought-world of literate cultures and it has to be met on its own terms. In order to allow the two strands of the enquiry – the actual stories found in the medieval manuscripts and the prehistoric matrix where it all began – to be brought together, we have to adopt the appropriate methodology for an understanding of the oral world. It can be taken for granted that the literate world is already familiar in the scholarship and does not require special attention.

Hopefully, this discussion can encourage enquiry into the oral roots of myth by pointing to solutions that have already been reached as well as to possibilities that have still to be explored. The Celtic domain, through cultural conservation, may perhaps have retained more from the fully oral past than any other Indo-European area, and scholars working in this field are in a position to illuminate, not just the Indo-European cosmology of the pre-Axial Age, but the entire complex in the remote past when that cosmology impinged on other cosmologies.[2]

An approach through myth, rather than working with the semantics of isolated words, relies on a network of interrelationships that extends beyond the verbal to concern place and time and the kinship patterns operative in the foundation society. It is axiomatic that a society in prehistory must have had a certain schema in place, but it is also well known that a wide variety of schemas could be developed by the human imagination.[3] What we have in the Indo-European case is a substantial body of evidence in a range of related cultures that allows the postulation of a specific source schema, as laid out in my book *Ten Gods*.[4] It is envisaged that the materials originally belonged in a realm of order which became fragmented through the wear and tear of the passage of time so that it is no surprise to find a situation of chaos, where remnants survive without being tied neatly together.[5] The value of the double perspective advocated here is that it suggests placing the postulated ordered universe of the cosmological whole side by side with the historical texts, so allowing illumination without any forcing into a mould.

Celtic myth had been travelling for a long time before we find the evidence of the written texts of the Christian period, and it is argued that we cannot sensibly regard Celtic myth in isolation from the Indo-European complex of which it formed a part. As in the case of linguistic studies, we are concerned with both the synchronic system and with the diachronic changes. As regards the synchronic system, an interesting difference from language is that myth, which consists of stories and is verbal in itself, is nevertheless integrated into a cosmological system which is concerned with components of social organisation and is embedded in a spatio-temporal setting. It can be argued that going back through the stories takes us more deeply into the past than linguistic studies, which are particularly informative for the period immediately before the linguistic evidence is available in written form and throw less light on the more distant past, when it can be postulated that the mythic world took shape.[6] It is possible to envisage a total integrated Indo-European system on the basis of detailed study of relevant components within the various Indo-European traditions and to use this as a model against which to set for comparison the elements that turn up in the later written record. The Celtic area has especially strong potential and I shall start by drawing attention to a crucial contribution made by Irish scholarship.

Ireland points the way to the deep past

The importance of the breakthrough made by Kim McCone when he took up the triad defined by Dumézil and placed it in a new context has not hitherto been fully appreciated. Dumézil had spoken of the triad of priests, warriors and cultivators[7] and these social divisions within a society are not found at the earliest stages of culture. Margaret Clunies Ross, in the Old Norse context, dismissed the whole Dumézilian approach to the triad on these grounds, but, following McCone's work, it is no longer possible to disregard Dumézil's work in this way.[8] McCone's discovery of the age-class basis of the triad gives it solidity and the necessary time depth. He urged that the concepts (Dumézil's 'functions') of the sacred, physical force, and fertility and prosperity were tied to the three life-stages of old men, young men, and mature men, and these were potentially distinguished in early societies.[9]

It is possible to study age-class societies in the modern period, particularly among the pastoral peoples in East Africa, and to gain an understanding of how they operate.[10] One can see that the triad can emerge as a system where a grade of young men is present, awaiting entry into the grade of mature men, and where there is a grade of old men following on from the mature men. In the system that is especially illuminating for the Indo-European case, there are four classes, one forming a grade of young men, two forming a grade of mature men, and one forming a grade of old men. This suggested foundation goes far to explain how it is that we can find sets of three and four which are not contradictory but are simply expressions of different aspects of the whole.

An age-grade system, besides being one of the modes of organising society, sets up categories which can be applied outside the immediate age-grade context. The qualities of the life-stages of youth, maturity and old age could be abstracted and so these qualities could be applied in different contexts, such as alternations or generations. Usefully, they could also be categorised by colour and, in the Indo-European case, as Dumézil appreciated, the triad is that of white for old men/the sacred (the Dumézilian first function), red for young men/physical force (second function), and black for mature men/fertility and prosperity (third function).[11] The triad was also expressible in terms of the human body, and the Irish Lugaid of the Red Stripes has a head like one father, Nar, an upper body like a second father, Bres, and a lower body like a third father, Lothar.[12] To have an image like this available is one indication of just how rich the surviving Celtic material is in cosmological content. In terms of the full set of the pantheon discussed below, the Dumézilian triad occurs twice, once at the level of the old gods, which would apply to Nar, Bres and Lothar, and again at the level of the young gods in the next generation.

The four-generation capsule and Celtic expressions of the theogony

Since the gods are imagined on the basis of the human world, the pantheon will be organised in accordance with human networks. The primary one in any human society is kinship but, in the Indo-European case, this is supplemented by royal succession. It is a striking feature of the Indo-European cosmological system that it is centred on sovereignty, and a focus on kingship is very evident in the Irish material.[13] It is argued here that sovereignty stemmed from a female source and that one of the diachronic changes to be taken into account is a shift to a patrilineal focus which, however, failed to efface traces of the older matrilineal system in the case of a number of Celtic stories, such as, for example, those alluded to by Carey in chapter 2.

It is noteworthy that the whole schema centred on sovereignty falls within the four-generation block of the Common Celtic true kindred, which has equivalents in Greece and India,[14] and so can readily be posited as having an Indo-European extent. This kinship group has not been given the attention it deserves, but growing awareness of the relationship of a four-generation block of time to the extent of communicative memory, through the work of Jan Assmann and others, is likely to make its relevance in a prehistoric oral society more apparent.[15] The block covers the current adult generation and three before it, and extends out to second cousins. In the historical material, the group is patrilineal, but an earlier matrilineal form has to be posited to account for the traces of succession through females.

Speaking of the vast extent of time in human prehistory, Robin Fox notes the recurrent use of a pattern of either two or four generations, which holds the culture constant over long periods.[16] The Proto-Indo-European structure evidently had the wider of the two schemas extending to four generations.

When exploring how kingship managed to legitimise itself in oral societies, Mary Helms pointed out the need to call in a supernatural source to buttress human authority and considered the two possibilities, which are either a source ‘out there’ in space, or a source ‘back in time’ through a line of ancestors.[17] The society being studied evidently mapped its royal descent structure on to the time-depth of four generations, and this in turn formed the human basis on which the pantheon was constructed.

Myths rest on a solid, earth-bound reality. As Russell T. McCutcheon observes:

> Myths . . . are utterly mundane and assigning them an 'extraordinary' status as a precondition for studying them rightly is to begin our study with a mistake that deflects us from a more interesting and productive scholarly aim: undertaking the difficult study of the mechanisms whereby societies create the extraordinary from the everyday.[18]

In terms of the extraordinary, supernatural level found in the stories, the gods came into being over four generations, and birth and succession are both taken into account in the Celtic narratives. The corresponding humans in the biological set were centred on a young male ego, the king. The relevant people proposed in the model were his great-grandmother, his father's father, his father, his maternal uncle, his two brothers, his wife and her two brothers. It is argued that this tenfold set of humans corresponds to the pantheon.[19] The key figure of the king in the Celtic pantheon can be identified in the Irish context as Lug and in the Welsh context as Lleu.

Although much of the evidence for myth is medieval, Patrick Sims-Williams indicates the earlier underground presence of the materials in the centuries when there is very little direct information, so providing a channel of continuity. He comments:

> [I]t is unimaginable that the Celtic language existed *in vacuo*, with no cultural content (such as literature and religion). The facility of communication afforded by a common language would tend to aid the spread and/or maintenance of common cultural features, as is implied by the widespread cult of gods such as Lugus or the phenomenon of druidism.[20]

It was apparently the phenomenon of druidism which was responsible for the exceptionally strong retention into the period of literacy of materials which had had a natural place in an oral culture. The well represented young-king Lugus figure is clearly and centrally present in both Irish and Welsh tradition. As Lugaid of the Red Stripes he succeeds his grandfather Eochaid Feidleach after the rebellion of his three fathers;[21] as Lug he becomes the third king following positively from the first king, Núada, and antagonistically from the second king, Bres;[22] and as Lleu he is a king in the third generation of males in the Fourth Branch of the *Mabinogi*.[23]

The statement above concerns the three generations of males which, according to the model, are preceded by a female, and it is worth pausing and considering the adaptation required to the presentation of the primal goddess when the stories are told in human terms. There is no clear case where the members of the pantheon descend from a single goddess, but Anu is called the mother of the gods.[24] That statement occurs in isolation and the births from her are not detailed. According to the model, the primal goddess is first alone and gives birth to a male, the 'first king', who becomes her consort. The goddess gives birth again at this point to the two sons of the first king (this is the generation of Nar, Bres and Lothar, of whom Nar is understood here as a doublet of Eochaid Feidleach, the first king). At the final stage she gives birth to the young king and five others in this generation. The birth of Lugaid of the Red Stripes is presented alone, but the Fourth Branch of the *Mabinogi* has a full set of six, including, as it does, the births of the twins, Lleu and Dylan, and of the male triad, consisting of Hyddwn, Hychdwn and Bleiddwn, as well as the creation of a woman, Blodeuwedd, as wife and queen for Lleu.

The capacity of the primal goddess to give birth repeatedly over several generations cannot be mirrored in stories about humans, and so the stories will treat the human reality and include a goddess name in the generation just before that of the young gods, as in naming Clothru as the mother of Lugaid of the Red Stripes. The fact that the stories are told in human terms may be seen to account for the loss of a direct connection with Anu.

To sum up: before an expanded awareness of historical time was made possible through writing, people lived largely within a time-world that attended to a relatively short period, which was often no more than four generations. The four-generation block can be accessed through communicative memory, which obviously had the power to reinforce it. The injection of sovereignty into the mix, and the felt need to legitimise royal authority by supernatural backing, led to the understanding that the temporal depth included royal ancestors, who transmitted supernatural authority to the king. It is not inappropriate to make a connection with the best known of all theogonies, the *Theogony* of Hesiod, and see the four generations as those of (1) Ge (earth and female); (2) her son Uranus (heaven); (3) their son Cronus; and (4) Cronus's son, Zeus.[25] Clearly, Zeus is understood as a culminating figure, and, as has been indicated, this can also be said of Lugus. Although the complete pattern is not available in any one Celtic story, we can propose as the line of birth and succession: (1) Anu (female); (2) Eochaid Feidleach/Nar/Núada (head, heaven, first king); (3) Bres (upper body, sky, second king); (4) Lugaid of the Red Stripes/Lug (triple totality, third king). An important element present in both the Greek and Celtic materials is the opposition between Cronus/Bres and his predecessor and successor.

Sovereignty through two goddesses and their human equivalents

The 'sovereignty goddess' has been much studied and has often been seen as a single figure, but an article by R. A. Breatnach made a distinction between the queen and the transforming hag,[26] and an interpretation of sovereignty as manifesting itself in a pair of goddesses has been looked at in detail in my recent study on 'The Law of Succession Established by Eochaid Fedlech and its Implications for the Theme of the Irish Sovereignty Goddess'.[27] When son cannot follow father as king (as in the strong form of this law of succession), the next king is not the son of the queen and he has to be conceived outside the immediate royal line. This appears to be the basis of the story of the sexual encounter with the hag (who, as primal goddess, can be both old and fruitful).

The underplaying of the importance of the Indo-European goddesses in past scholarship has led indirectly to the idea that, wherever there are strong goddess figures in Celtic and other Indo-European myths, they must have come from the 'Old European' goddess-centred substratum posited by Marija Gimbutas.[28] This view has to be reconsidered when the central roles of the Indo-European goddesses are properly appreciated. The centrality does not imply dominance, but simply means that the goddesses and their human equivalents have their places in a system characterised by a number of balances, including that between the genders and that between kings representing opposing values in alternate generations.

The discussion of royal succession in this and the preceding section shows narrative as forming part of a cosmology where the stories correspond to the actions taken by the community. The next section does not relate to the organisation of society in prehistory, but keeps within the story-world while it works out the implications of the presence of a set of old gods preceding the ordering activities of the young king.

Meeting the threats posed by the old gods of the vertical levels of the cosmos

This recent development within the field has been induced by consideration of some points made in *The Origins of the World's Mythologies* (2012). Its author, Michael Witzel, who was particularly strongly aware of the Vedic material, interpreted a series of events as the cosmicising work of the hero.[29] I suggest that part of this sequence is best understood in terms of the storyline that the old cosmic gods were in existence before the young gods came along and had to be tamed by the hero. The levels of the vertical universe simply are the old gods. This is particularly explicit in Hesiod's *Theogony* when Ge (Earth) gives birth to Uranus (Heaven). A realm between earth and heaven is clearly present in the Indian material, and there is also a fourth level of the water below the earth. In a development from Witzel's ideas, I expressed the relationships as follows:

> The four old gods are necessary since they form the foundation of the cosmos but the mythic stories indicate that they also posed four threats which can be understood as extremes. Heaven was once 'too close' and people felt smothered or crushed so that it had to be pushed away. The sea also could come 'too close' and people were in danger of drowning so that it had to be contained. The sky was once 'too hot' and people were being burnt up so that the heat had to be reduced. The earth was once 'too dry' and the land was barren and the people parched so that fresh water had to be made to flow . . . A basic idea is that things in the beginning were markedly different from the current state and had to be changed in order to make human life possible.[30]

It becomes feasible to understand some of the major stories in a new way when the old gods are seen as the set of four cosmic levels like this. In *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, Conchobar speaks of his kingship being secure while the sky with its stars does not fall on the earth, while the earth does not burst open in an earthquake, and while the sea does not submerge the land.[31] Blathmac, in his devotional poetry, similarly has the expressions 'That the sky did not fall on them, that great fire did not burn them, that the great ocean did not drown them! . . . that the heavy earth did not swallow them'.[32] These passages have been the subject of discussion by Liam Mac Mathúna which demonstrates that they are concerned with a pagan multi-level universe.[33] However, the implications can be taken further for, in cosmological terms, the levels of the universe are not simply physical entities but are gods, and Conchobar and other kings only rule securely because, in the beginning, the cosmic hero (the young king of the gods) controlled the threats posed by the earlier gods, who are expressed biologically as monsters and giants, three of them being male and one (earth) being female.[34] The four old gods have to be brought, by force or trickery, to make a habitable place for humankind. The dragon fought underwater, of which we have an instance in chapter 3 by Nagy,[35] is illuminated by Fontenrose's point in *Python* that, when Poseidon is said to flood the land or to send his creature to do it, it amounts to the same thing; the god of the cosmic level of the sea can take the shape of a monster.[36] Heaven (the upper or night sky) is held up by a pillar put in place by the cosmic hero.[37] The bright lower or day sky has to be prevented from burning up the land. That the response to the destructive power of the gaze from Balor's eye, treated in Lacey's study in chapter 5, can be understood to effect the control of intolerable heat is suggested in two folktale versions published by Jeremiah Curtin which give the following accounts of Balor's eye:

> He had an eye in the middle of his forehead which he kept covered always with nine shields of thick leather, so that he might not open his eye and turn it on anything, for no matter what Balor looked at with the naked eye he burned it to ashes.
>
> Besides his two eyes Balor had a third one, an evil eye, in the middle of his forehead, with the power to burn everything in the world that it looked upon. Over this eye he kept seven steel shields, and a lock on each one of them . . . [The druid said to Cian] 'In five days from this Balor will be here to burn up Erin. He will stand on Muin Dur at daybreak. He will raise all the shields from his eye; and unless a spear made by Gaivnin Gow is hurled into his eye by his grandson that instant, he will have all Erin in flames.' . . . On the fifth morning, at daylight, Balor was on the top of Muin Dur; and the instant the last shield reached his upper eyelid Lui Lavada struck him with the spear, and Balor fell dead.[38]

It is worth pausing on versions of the story because it seems possible to discern a latent trickster element here. The young god is insignificant in size as contrasted with the old god, identified with the bright sky, but the hero uses his wits and sends back the force that is directed against him. When a physical projectile is used by Ysbaddaden Chief Giant in 'The Wooing of Culhwch and Olwen', the projectile is thrown back by Culhwch.[39] Since the spear is thrown at the same time as the eyelid is lifted from the giant's destructive eye, a clear parallel is established between the thrown weapon and the gaze. If the destructive power of the eye alone is in question, the obvious way to return it is to reflect it back, as in the motif of the killing of the basilisk by showing it its own image in a mirror.[40] It can be suggested that this motif may be recalled in a much modified form in the mirroring of Fraoich's face (see chapter 3). The context is quite different but the mirror is present. It can be noted as a parallel to countering the destructive heat of Balor that the Indian sun-god, Vivasvat, is found to be intolerably hot and bright, and kindly allows himself to be pared down until he is reduced to the level of a sixteenth of his original force.[41]

The threat from the female element of the earth is presented as earthquake in the Celtic series mentioned above, but the story appropriate to it can probably be discerned in the case of Boand outlined in chapter 7. In the Rig Veda, the hero, Indra, forces a dragon to release the waters, and the primitive idea is probably the releasing of the life-giving waters of the world river from the body of the earth creature through her vagina.[42] In a different way, Boand's action causes the water from a single source, a well, to flow as the river Boyne. As Paice MacLeod notes, Boand 'rushed to the sea' and similarly the newly released waters are described in the Rig Veda as going 'straight down to the sea'.[43]

Witzel shows that cosmic events like the propping up of the sky were commemorated in the ritual year,[44] and it seems possible that the four quarter days in the Celtic calendar relate to the conflicts with the old gods, while the four cross-quarter days relate to the young gods.[45] This is an area that is ripe for further exploration in the light of the cosmological model.

The value of modelling in the study of myth

Texts have an actual existence that cannot be questioned, but anything stemming from prehistory must be hypothetical, although tentative hypotheses can become more solid when they are given the benefit of critical examination. Nagy, who argues for a very restricted definition of myth in his chapter in this book, explained the background to his thinking about mythology in 2007:

> In the last several decades of the twentieth century, it went out of fashion for scholars of medieval Celtic Languages and Literatures to speak of 'mythology'. Many of our late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century predecessors, on the other hand, had spent a great deal of time speaking, thinking and publishing about it. Unfortunately, this change in attitude was not a case of these intellectual forebears having established a foundation of discovery upon which one could still depend in the study of Celtic myth, with the result that there was little left to say.[46]

Clearly, this quandary could be solved by the establishment of a new foundation that can be relied on, and the model worked out in terms of a prehistoric cosmology, and the various forces that brought the multi-levelled system into existence, seems to fit the requirement. Surely it cannot fail to be an asset to work within a wider knowledge of the field? One difficulty faced by earlier scholars who attempted to relate the Celtic strand to Indo-European mythology as a whole was the lack of criteria to distinguish the remnants of the cosmological 'religion' from the later developments in free-flowing fantasy. There is now a theory of the structure of the base cosmological religion in place which, whether it eventually proves to be right or wrong, can serve in the meantime as a firm basis for debate.

At the present stage, we are dealing with a hypothesis, but we do not need to establish its absolute truth before making use of it. It is held to be valid but its validity is not an essential for scholarly progress, since a hypothetical model can function heuristically while it is still being assessed and explored.[47]

The study of Indo-European mythology need not be dependent, as often in the past, on linguistic and archaeological findings, but can operate as its own centre with other disciplines playing ancillary roles. It is argued that, on the basis of considering all branches of Indo-European culture, we can model the mythology of a more remote past than has been reached through linguistic methods, and that the apparently scattered remnants of Celtic mythology have a greater coherence than has been recognised.

Since, as Nagy's remarks demonstrate, the field was largely abandoned as unfruitful, we are in the position of starting afresh with a new set of concepts about myth, and there are various ways in which we can work with the cosmological totality. The king is in the key position when the pantheon is explored in terms of the four-generation capsule, as demonstrated above, but the two complex deities in the system – the king and his brother, who is king of the dead – are excluded when the schema is looked at in terms of an eightfold system of 'simple' gods, who can be defined in terms of three polarities and presented spatially.[48] Each of these eight gods has a set of three attributes. A god belongs to the above or to the below, is warlike/dry or peaceful/wet, and relates to the current generation of the living or to the former generations of the ancestors. Formerly, my proposed three-axis system existed in isolation in the mythological context, but now it is joined by the identically constructed system underpinned by psychological and mathematical considerations that is presented by Carney in chapter 12. I have not previously named domains but, in order to match Carney's scheme, I have included the domains of hierarchy, politics and state here.

The model as it applies to the Lyle theory is shown in Figure 9.1, which makes a direct connection with the concepts of the above and the below by showing the above towards the top of the page, while placing the warlike and the peaceful, and the alive and the dead on the remaining axes.

Celtic myth is a particularly rich and fascinating body of material, ultimately deriving from the indigenous religion of much of Europe and parts of Asia. In order for the Indo-European contribution to human development to be fully understood, the descendant cultures, such as that of the speakers of Celtic languages, have to be put into a relationship with the rest of the world through informed study of the heritage of myth. It is suggested that, by employing appropriate methodology, an understanding of the prehistoric conditions in which the Indo-European mythology arose can be reached, and that this opens the way to beginning on the absorbing task of studying the divergences that took place diachronically to yield the different patterns found in historically known societies, including those of the speakers of Celtic languages.

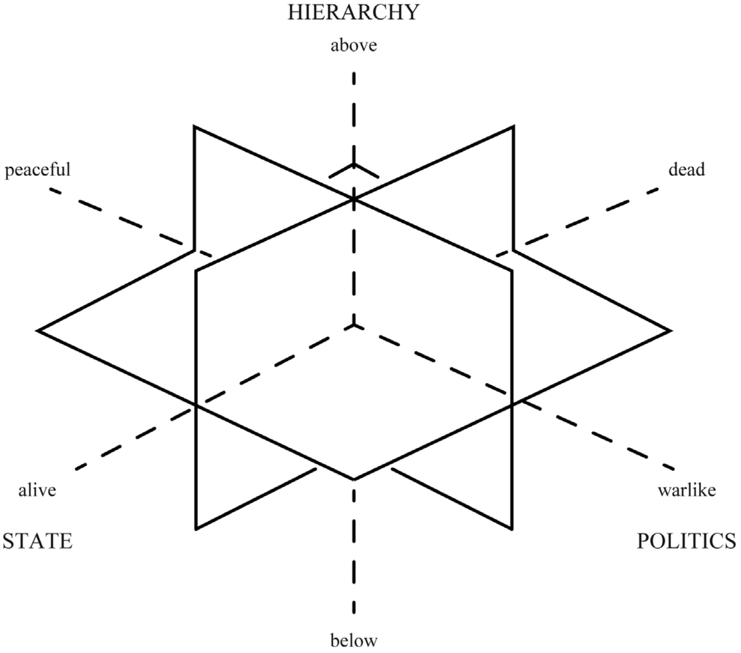


FIGURE 9.1 The spatio-temporal structure of the Lyle three-axis cosmological model. Each octant corresponds to or houses one of the simple gods in the pantheon.

The discipline of Celtic Studies, like that of the studies in the other Indo-European languages, has withdrawn into itself over the last few decades, and has concentrated on refining its treatment of the texts that are the verbal and direct sources of our information. We can see the field as gradually finding its way to a new and rewarding methodology through a careful process of testing earlier theories and rejecting the too sweeping and insecurely based claims that had been made. There were assumptions in earlier scholarship that had to be rejected before forward movement was possible, but the point has now been reached where we can see the myths with a double vision: just as they are in the medieval texts that happen to have survived, and as they would have been in a prehistoric, orally based society.

Notes

[1] Heiner Roetz, 'The Axial Age Theory: A Challenge to Historism or an Explanatory Device of Civilization Analysis? With a Look at the Normative Discourse in Axial Age China', in Robert N. Bellah and Hans Joas (eds), *The Axial Age and Its Consequences* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 2012), pp. 248–74 (pp. 255–6).

[2] E. J. Michael Witzel, *The Origins of the World's Mythologies* (New York, 2012), and Emily Lyle, 'Defining the Religion that Lay behind the Self-Colonization of Europe', in James L. Cox (ed.), *Critical Reflections on Indigenous Religions* (Farnham and Burlington, VT, 2013), pp. 93–101.

[3] Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Harmondsworth, 1967).

[4] Emily Lyle, *Ten Gods: A New Approach to Defining the Mythological Structures of the Indo-Europeans* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 2012); see also Emily Lyle, 'The Cosmological Theory of Myth', in Wim M. J. van Binsbergen and Eric Venbrux (eds), *New Perspectives on Myth: Proceedings of the Second Annual Conference of the International Association for Comparative Mythology, Ravenstein, the Netherlands, 19–21 August, 2008* (Haarlem, 2010), pp. 267–77.

[5] Emily Lyle, 'The "Order, Chaos, Order" Theoretical Approach to Reconstructing the Mythology of a Remote Past', *Cosmos*, 30 (2013), 37–48.

[6] Emily Lyle, 'The Importance of the Prehistory of Indo-European Structures for Indo-European Studies', *Journal of Indo-European Studies*, 34 (2006), 99–110.

[7] For an overview of Dumézil's work, see C. S. Littleton, *The New Comparative Mythology: An Anthropological Assessment of the Work of Georges Dumézil* (3rd edn, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1982), and for comment on it see Emily Lyle, 'Which Triad? A Critique and Development of Dumézil''s Trifunctional Theory', *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, 221 (2004), 5–21.

[8] Margaret Clunies Ross, *Prolonged Echoes: Old Norse Myths in Medieval Northern Society*, 2 vols (Odense, 1994), and Emily Lyle, 'Entering the Chimeraland of Indo-European Reconstruction', *Retrospective Methods Network Newsletter*, 5

(2012), 6–10. Available at *http://www.helsinki.fi/folkloristiikka/English/RMN/RMNNewsletter_5_Dec_2012.pdf*, accessed 24 August 2017.

[9] Kim McCone, 'Werewolves, Cyclopes, Dibergs and Fianna: Juvenile Delinquency in Early Ireland', *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies*, 12 (1986), 1–22; 'Hund, Wolf und Krieger bei den Indogermanen', in Wolfgang Meid (ed.), *Studien zum indogermanischen Wortschatz* (Innsbruck, 1987), pp. 101–54; and *Pagan Past and Christian Present in Early Irish Literature* (Maynooth, 1990), esp. pp. 117 and 210. See also Lyle, *Ten Gods*, pp. 21–8.

[10] Emily Lyle, 'Age Grades, Age Classes and Alternate Succession: A Restatement of the Basis at the Societal Level of Indo-European Symbolic Partition', *Emania*, 16 (1997), 63–71. For general background on age grading, see Bernardo Bernardi, *Age Class Systems: Social Institutions and Polities Based on Age* (Cambridge, 1985).

[11] Georges Dumézil, 'La Préhistoire indo-iranienne des castes', *Journal asiatique*, 216 (1930), 109–30.

[12] Bruce Lincoln, *Myth, Cosmos and Society: Indo-European Themes of Creation and Destruction* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 1986), pp. 160–1.

[13] Bart Jaski, *Early Irish Kingship and Succession* (Dublin, 2000).

[14] T. M. Charles-Edwards, *Early Irish and Welsh Kingship* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 55, 187, 213–14, 471–2; D. A. Binchy, 'The Linguistic and Historical Value of the Irish Law Tracts', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 29 (1943), 195–227 (repr. in Dafydd Jenkins (ed.), *Celtic Law Papers Introductory to Welsh Medieval Law and Government* (Brussels, 1973)).

[15] Astrid Erll, *Memory in Culture*, trans. S. B. Young (Basingstoke, 2011), p. 29.

[16] Robin Fox, *The Tribal Imagination: Civilization and the Savage Mind* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 2011), p. 23; see also Emily Lyle, 'Stepping Stones through Time', *Oral Tradition* 27, 1 (2012), 161–70. Available at *http://www.journal.oral-tradition.org/issues/27i/lyle*, accessed 24 August 2017.

[17] Mary W. Helms, *Access to Origins: Affines, Ancestors and Aristocrats* (Austin, 1998), pp. 7, 37–9, 75–6.

[18] Russell T. McCutcheon, 'Myth', in Willi Braun and Russell T. McCutcheon (eds), *Guide to the Study of Religion* (London and New York, 2000), pp. 190–208 (p. 200).

[19] Lyle, *Ten Gods*, pp. 81, 117.

[20] Patrick Sims-Williams, 'Post-Celtoscepticism: a personal view', in Dónall Ó Baoill, Donncha Ó hAodha and Nollaig Ó Muraíle (eds), *Saltair Saíochta, Sanasaíochta agus Seanchais: A Festschrift for Gearóid Mac Eoin* (Dublin, 2013), pp. 422–8 (p. 428).

[21] Lyle, *Ten Gods*, pp. 72–3.

[22] Elizabeth A. Gray (ed.), *Cath Muige Tuired: The Second Battle of Mag Tuired* (London, 1982), esp. notes at pp. 126, 130–1 and 133–4 on Lug, Núada and Bres.

[23] Sioned Davies (ed. and trans.), *The Mabinogion* (Oxford, 2007). See also Pagé in ch. 10 below.

[24] Latin: '*mater deorum*'; Kuno Meyer (ed.), '*Sanas Cormaic*: An Old-Irish glossary compiled by Cormac úa Cuilennáin, king-bishop of Cashel in the tenth

century', in Osborn Bergin et al. (eds), *Anecdota from Irish Manuscripts*, vol. 4 (Halle and Dublin, 1912), pp. 1–128 (p. 3).

[25] Glenn W. Most (ed. and trans.), *Hesiod*, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA, and London, 2006–7), 1: 12–17, 38–43, *Theogony*, ll. 116–82, 453–506.

[26] R. A. Breatnach, 'The Lady and the King: A Theme in Irish Literature', *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, 42 (1953), 321–36.

[27] Emily Lyle, 'The Law of Succession Established by Eochaid Fedlech and its Implications for the Theme of the Irish Sovereignty Goddess', *Études Celtiques*, 42 (2016), 135–42. For discussion of Greek and Hittite matrilineal succession, see Margalit Finkelberg, *Greeks and Pre-Greeks: Perspectives on Aegean Prehistory* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 65–89, 177–82.

[28] Marija Gimbutas, *The Civilization of the Goddess: The World of Old Europe* (San Francisco, 1991), pp. 34–9, 352, 396, 401.

[29] Witzel, *Origins*, pp. 64, 78.

[30] Emily Lyle, 'The Cosmic Connections of the Eight Key Points in the Indo-European Ritual Year', *The Ritual Year*, 10 (2015), 19–27.

[31] Liam Mac Mathúna, 'The Christianization of the Early Irish Cosmos?: *muir mas, nem nglas, talam cé* (Blathm. 258)', *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, 49–50 (1997), 532–47 (pp. 532–3), quoting Cecille O'Rahilly (ed.), Táin Bó Cúalnge *from the Book of Leinster* (Dublin, 1967), pp. 112, 247, lines 4041–7.

[32] Mac Mathúna, 'Christianization', 540, quoting James Carney (ed.), *The Poems of Blathmac Son of Cú Brettan* (Dublin, 1964), pp. 24–5, ll. 269–73. See also William Sayers, 'Mani Maidi an Nem . . . ["Unless the Sky Falls . . ."]: Ringing Changes on a Cosmic Motif', *Ériu*, 37 (1986), 99–117.

[33] Mac Mathúna, 'Christianization', esp. 545–6.

[34] Lyle, *Ten Gods*, pp. 106–11, 117.

[35] See also Séamus Mac Mathúna, section on 'The Monster in the Lake: Slaying the Serpent/Dragon' (pp. 64–7) in his chapter 'The Relationship of the Chthonic World in Early Ireland to Chaos and Cosmos', in Jacqueline Borsje, Ann Dooley, Séamus Mac Mathúna and Gregory Toner (eds), *Celtic Cosmology: Perspectives from Ireland and Scotland* (Toronto, 2014), pp. 53–67.

[36] Joseph Fontenrose, *Python: A Study of Delphic Myth and Its Origins* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1959), p. 291.

[37] Witzel, *Origins*, pp. 64, 131; Jan de Vries, *Keltische Religion* (Stuttgart, 1961), p. 260, and *La Religion des Celtes* (Paris, 1963), p. 268.

[38] Jeremiah Curtin, *Hero-Tales of Ireland* (London, 1890), pp. 283–95 ('Balor on Tory Island') and pp. 296–311 ('Balor of the Evil Eye and Lui Lavada his Grandson'); the quotations are from pp. 293 and 311.

[39] Davies, *The Mabinogion*, p. 194.

[40] Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature: A Classification of Narrative Elements in Folk-Tales, Ballads, Etc.*, 6 vols (Copenhagen, 1955–8), 1, p. 355, B12.3 Basilisk killed by seeing own image.

[41] Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, *Hindu Myths* (Harmondsworth, 1975), pp. 68–9; the source is the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa 103.1, 3–40; 105.1–20.

[42] Emily Lyle, 'The Hero Who Releases the Waters and Defeats the Flood Dragon', *Comparative Mythology*, 1 (2015), 1–12. Available at *www.compmyth.org/journal/index.php/cm/article/view/5*, accessed 24 August 2017. See also Lyle, *Ten Gods*, pp. 106–11.

[43] Stephanie W. Jamison and Joel P. Brereton (eds), *The Rigveda: The Earliest Religious Poetry of India*, 3 vols (New York, 2014), 1, p. 135; *Rigveda* 1.32.2.

[44] Witzel, *Origins*, p. 35.

[45] For the calendrical system as a whole, see Lyle, 'Cosmic Connections'; for specific studies of the Celtic calendar, see Emily Lyle, 'The Celtic Seasonal Festivals in the Light of Recent Approaches to the Indo-European Ritual Year', *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, 23 (2003), 184–97, and Emily Lyle, 'The Celtic Year and Gender', joint issue of *Cosmos*, 25, and *The Ritual Year*, 4, *The Ritual Year and Gender* (2009), 180–9.

[46] Joseph Falaky Nagy (ed.), *CSANA Yearbook 6: Myth in Celtic Literature* (Dublin, 2007), p. 7.

[47] Modelling is discussed in general, and with specific reference to the Old Norse context, in Emily Lyle, 'Baldr and Iraj: Murdered and Avenged', in Pernille Herman, Stephen A. Mitchell and Jens Peter Schjødt (eds), *Old Norse Religion in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge, MA, 2017), pp. 341–61.

[48] For an early statement, see Lyle, 'Distinctive Features in Cosmic Structure', in *Archaic Cosmos* (Edinburgh, 1990), ch. 7, pp. 68–74, which gives the sequence of polarities as: A high/low; B dry/wet; and C light/dark.

10

SISTERS' SONS IN THE FOURTH BRANCH OF THE *MABINOGI*

Anna June Pagé

The central relationships in *Math uab Mathonwy*, the Fourth Branch of the *Mabinogi*, are those between uncles and nephews. Although other connections – between siblings, between mother and son, and between husband and wife – are also present in the text, these are presented as subordinate to the more prominent uncle–nephew relationships. The narrative follows the members of a single family, presenting three generations of a very narrow kin-group. The first generation consists of the titular Math uab Mathonwy, described by the text as *arglwyd ar Wyned* 'lord over Gwynedd', and his sister Dôn, who has no part in the narrative except through the presence of her children.[1] The children of Dôn represent the second generation: Gwydion, Gilfaethwy and their sister Aranrhod. Elsewhere in medieval Welsh literature, we find reference to two additional brothers: Gofannon, who is mentioned in the Fourth Branch, but plays no role in the main narrative, and Amaethon.[2] The third and final generation is represented by the children of Aranrhod: the twins Dylan Eil Ton and Lleu Llaw Gyffes, and the three sons of Gwydion and Gilfaethwy: Bleiddwn, Hyddwn and Hychdwn Hir. Within this family we find multiple uncle–nephew bonds, all of which are between a maternal uncle and nephew, that is, between a man and his sister's son, or his mother's brother. Of particular importance are the relationship between Math and the two sons of his sister Dôn, Gwydion and Gilfaethwy, and the relationship between Gwydion and the son of his sister Aranrhod, Lleu Llaw Gyffes.

The specific relationship between mother's brother and sister's son is recognised as an important one, cross-culturally. This type of relationship is known as *avunculate* and has been most extensively studied in the contexts of African tribal societies.[3] Avunculate is also known throughout the Indo-European world, and the word itself is based on the Latin *avunculus* 'uncle', which in turn is derived from the Latin *avus* 'grandfather'. This relationship between words for 'uncle' and 'grandfather' is attested in a number of Indo-European languages, and Jan Bremmer argues that Indo-European-speaking peoples 'knew an affectionate relationship of ego-mother's brother and mother's father in contrast with a more formal relationship of ego-father and father's family'.[4] The extent of avunculate in Indo-European societies is demonstrated in Bremmer's study of both the linguistic and textual evidence for this type of relationship, which concludes that 'There was certainly nearly everywhere a special relationship between MoBr [mother's brother] and SiSo [sister's son] and the maternal grandfather was not a quantité négligeable'.[5] Bremmer notes his surprise that the role of the mother's father has not been more thoroughly investigated, citing A. R. Radcliffe-Brown's assertion that the role of the mother's brother and the role of the mother's father 'are the objects of very similar behaviour patterns, of which the outstanding feature is the indulgence on the one side and the liberty permitted on the other'.[6]

The relationship between mother's brother and sister's son was not merely one of affection and indulgence, however. The relationship is commonly accompanied by what Robin Fox describes as a 'custom of privilege between a man and his mother's brother', and in certain cultures 'a man is allowed to joke freely with his M B [mother's brother], to steal his goods, to insult him, and even to sleep with his wife. The M B in turn often has special duties and responsibilities towards his maternal nephew.'[7] Bremmer notes that studies of avunculate in African cultures have shown that it has an 'ambivalent aspect which finds its expression in a joking relationship and ritual stealing', though he also notes that this side of the relationship appears to be absent in the Indo-European contexts.[8] In many Indo-European cultures, we find that the mother's brother has specific responsibilities with respect to his sister's sons, including providing fosterage and avenging their deaths.

The emphasis on the importance of maternal kindred does not imply that a society was at any stage matrilineal or matriarchal. Radcliffe-Brown has argued that the special relationship between mother's brother and sister's son is very common in patrilineal societies, and is paralleled by the relationship with the father's sister in matrilineal societies.[9] Fox summarises the reasons for the nature of these relationships as follows:

> In a patrilineal system, authority over a man was in his father's lineage, so he looked for indulgence to his mother's and to the men of his mother's lineage: in a matrilineal system the authority over ego was in his mother's lineage, so he looked to the women of his father's lineage for indulgence.[10]

This assessment points to a balance between paternal and maternal kin that simply does not exist in the Fourth Branch, which presents us with a kin-group almost entirely devoid of paternal kin, and in which those few fathers present in the text are also members of the maternal line. It is significant that, against the usual Welsh naming convention of using patronymics, the characters in this text are all named using matronymics or descriptive epithets. Gwydion and Gilfaethwy are designated as *uab Dono* 'son of Dôn' and Aranrhod as *uerch Don* 'daughter of Dôn', while Math is designated as *uab Mathonwy* 'son of Mathonwy'. Rachel Bromwich discusses the possibilities regarding the interpretation of *uab Mathonwy* as a matronymic, a patronymic, or even a doublet of Math's own name. She argues that a matronymic is possible, though by no means certain, since 'the dynasty to which Math belonged was regarded as matrilinear', and we do find other matronymics in the text, but that a doublet or 'ghost' name is also quite likely.[11]

In the Celtic context, the most extensive evidence for the avunculate relationship comes from medieval Ireland. Old Irish attests words for both the 'sister's son' (*nia*, known also in the genitive singular form NIOTTA in Ogam) and the 'mother's brother' (*amnair*). T. M. Charles-Edwards comments that the presence of these terms is striking and indicative of the significance of the relationship that they designate.

> The language is quite capable of defining collateral kinship, but it does so by phrases, not by single terms. To this rule there is a single exception of the correlative pair, *amnair : nia*, 'mother's brother' : 'sister's son'. It is, however, a common feature of agnatic kinship that the mother's brother occupies a special place in the affections of his sister's son.[12]

Fergus Kelly discusses the obligations of the *máithre* 'maternal kin' in Irish law with respect to offspring.[13] If a child is killed illegally, the maternal kin should receive a payment, and, if this payment is not received, the male members of the maternal kin are required to participate in a blood-feud against the killer. The maternal kin must also ensure proper fosterage for a child, and 'it is probable that it is the maternal uncle who is expected to take a particular interest in the rearing of his nephews'.[14] In cases involving a legally recognised marriage, the children will belong to the paternal kin. However, the maternal kin take precedence in certain specific situations, including cases involving a father who is an outsider or otherwise absent.[15]

In Welsh, the cognate terms to *nia* and *amnair* – *nai* and *ewythyr* – are less restricted in their use. In discussing the use of these words in the Welsh laws, Charles-Edwards writes that

> The *nai* is the son of a collateral of the same generation as ego. He might be *nai fab cefnderw*, 'a *nai*, son of a first cousin', or he might be *nai fab chwaer*, 'a *nai*, son of a sister'. The term *nai* thus underlines the importance of collaterals of the same generation as ego. The importance of ego-centred kinship is also illustrated by the use of *ewythr* for the brother of any ascendant: he may be the father's brother or the grandmother's brother.[16]

In the Fourth Branch, Gwydion and Gilfaethwy are described in relation to Math as *nyeint ueibon y chwaer* 'nephews, sons of his sister'.[17] As in Irish law, Welsh law assigns children to the care of the maternal kin in certain situations. According to the law of Hywel Dda, if a woman marries a foreigner, their children 'will be entitled to patrimony by mother-right', and their cattle will be paid for by the mother's kin.[18] If a father denies his son, that son will belong to the maternal kindred, and they will pay two-thirds of his *galanas* (the compensation for homicide) if he kills a man, or receive two-thirds of his *galanas* if he is killed.[19] In the Fourth Branch there is an almost complete absence of fathers, and so it is unsurprising to find strong ties between members of the maternal kin, and between uncles and nephews especially, in place of paternal kinship ties and father–son relationships.

There are strong parallels between the place of avunculate in medieval Welsh and Irish law, and the evidence of Irish literature has bearing on our understanding of avunculate in Welsh literature as well. Avunculate in Irish language and literature is most thoroughly explored in Tomás Ó Cathasaigh's article 'The sister's son in early Irish literature'.[20] Ó Cathasaigh examines the portrayal of avunculate relationships in a number of texts and discusses the proper status of the sister's son in relation to his mother's brother and her kin. With reference especially to Cú Chulainn in *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, Ó Cathasaigh suggests that

> it may be that the proper role of a sister's son . . . was that of the professional champion: he should not aspire to succession, but he could assume the prestigious office of the professional warrior who defended the domain of his maternal uncle.[21]

Ó Cathasaigh concludes that

> the relationship between the sister's son and maternal kindred is an important theme in the literature; the relationship can be amicable or hostile, and can accordingly be greatly beneficial to society, or greatly destructive to social order; the sister's son must be integrated into society be means of a solemn contract; and the social good will be served only if the obligations imposed by that contract are duly discharged on both sides.[22]

Ó Cathasaigh's study of the Irish material may serve to illuminate some of the events of the Fourth Branch, particularly with respect to Gwydion and Gilfaethwy's failed attempts to usurp their uncle's power, and Gwydion's role as Lleu's foster father and protector.

The narrative of the Fourth Branch can be divided into three major episodes. The first centres on the relationship between Math and his nephews, Gwydion and Gilfaethwy, while the second and third concern the relationship between Gwydion and his nephew Lleu Llaw Gyffes. At the outset of the narrative we are told that Math is king, but that 'ny bydei uyw, namyn tra uei y deudroet y[m] mlyc croth morwyn, onyt kynwryf ryuel a'y llesteirei'[23] 'he was not able to live, except when his two feet were in the lap of a virgin, unless the turmoil of war prevented it'. With Math unable to fulfil his responsibilities as king, his nephews Gwydion and Gilfaethwy travel throughout Gwynedd in his place while Math remains at his main court with Goewin, his virgin foot-holder. When Gwydion discovers that Gilfaethwy desires Goewin, he contrives a war that will separate her from Math. Gwydion achieves this through magic and deceit: he steals a herd of otherworld pigs from Pryderi, a king in the south. When Pryderi comes north to reclaim his pigs, Math rides to war and Gilfaethwy is able to rape Goewin.

According to Catherine McKenna, Gwydion and Gilfaethwy's position in Math's household appears to be that of the *penteulu*.[24] In the medieval Welsh court, the *penteulu* was essentially the head of the king's household or militia, responsible for maintaining the king's security and authority, and able to act on the king's behalf in his absence. The position of *penteulu* was one often held by the king's nephew.[25] In the Fourth Branch we find that the king never leaves his court and instead Gwydion and Gilfaethwy act in his place throughout his kingdom and away from his direct influence. McKenna comments on the dangers of this situation, particularly with respect to their habitually taking Math's militia away from him, and notes that 'their autonomy fosters the growth of envy'[26] and leads to their attack on Goewin, who is a symbol – or even the living embodiment – of

Math's sovereignty. This is a betrayal of Gwydion and Gilfaethwy's relationship with Math both as his nephews and as his *penteuluoedd*.

The first episode of the Fourth Branch concludes with the punishment of Gwydion and Gilfaethwy by their uncle, who transforms them into pairs of mating animals. They spend three years in exile as various animals, one male and one female; first a pair of mating deer, then a pair of mating wild boar, and finally a pair of mating wolves. Each year they produce a son and at the end of the year they return to Math's court where their son is made human, baptised, and named by Math. The three sons produced by this union are in a complex genealogical position because their father is also their mother's brother. The paternal kinship tie overlaps with and is overwritten by that of the mother's brother, at one generation removed in the person of Math, which reaffirms the absence of any external paternal kin in this text. The three sons are referred to by Math as *Tri meib Giluaethwy enwir* 'three sons of deceitful Gilfaethwy',[27] who is biologically mother to two of them and father to the third. All three sons, as well as Gilfaethwy himself, disappear entirely from the narrative at this point. Although the birth of the three sons has the potential to expand the kin-group and provide Math with additional potential heirs, which should be particularly important following the betrayal of Gwydion and Gilfaethwy, instead they simply vanish and contribute nothing to the continuation of the family.

In spite of this, the advent of new sister's sons – since Hyddwn and Bleiddwn are sister's sons to Gwydion, and Hychdwn Hir is sister's son to Gilfaethwy – who are properly integrated into society and the family by being claimed and baptised by Math, does appear to repair the damage done to the sister's son relationship between Math and his nephews. Gwydion and Gilfaethwy are integrated into their proper social roles when they return to their own human forms and are reintegrated into their family and into society, now as a positive force rather than a destructive one.

The second episode begins with the restoration of Gwydion to his role as adviser to Math. Math asks for Gwydion's advice in finding a replacement for Goewin, and Gwydion recommends his own sister, Math's niece, Aranrhod. When Math tests Aranrhod's virginity by having her step over his wand, she gives birth to a son and flees, leaving behind what the text describes as *y ryw bethan* 'some little thing'.[28] Her son is baptised and named Dylan by Math, and he then escapes to the sea where he takes the form of a sea creature. Dylan plays no further role in the narrative, but his death is noted as taking place at the hands of his mother's brother Gofannon: 'A'r ergyt y doeth y angheu ohonaw, a uyrywys Gouannon y ewythyr'[29] 'and the blow from which his death came, Gofannon his uncle struck it'. Meanwhile, Gwydion seizes the little thing that Aranrhod left behind and hides it in a chest. In time, the thing transforms into a child. Gwydion takes responsibility for his sister's son, ensuring that he is fostered and cared for, and eventually taking him to meet his mother. Aranrhod rejects her son, and swears that he will never receive a name unless she gives him one, but Gwydion, again using magic and deceit, tricks Aranrhod into naming her son. She then swears that unless she gives them to him, Lleu will never take arms. Gwydion again intervenes and Aranrhod is tricked into arming her son. Aranrhod's final curse is that Lleu will never get a wife 'o'r genedyl yssysd ar y dayar honn yr awr honn'[30] 'from any race that is on this earth at this time'. Gwydion, this time with the assistance of Math, again intervenes and they create for Lleu a wife made out of flowers, Blodeuwedd.

In this episode we find Aranrhod, as Lleu's mother, denying him the three things most essential for his proper integration into adult life, but simultaneously asserting her right to be the one who provides him with these things. This problem is resolved through the intervention of other members of the maternal kin-group – specifically the mother's brother and the mother's father. As previously discussed, it is entirely appropriate for the maternal uncle to take charge of a child with no paternal kin and to ensure that he is provided for, as Math has already done for the children of Gwydion and Gilfaethwy, and, at least in part, for Dylan. Math's assistance is also in keeping with the typologically common parallelism between the role of the mother's brother and the mother's father.

In the Fourth Branch, we find that it is Gwydion who has the power to incorporate his sister's son Lleu into society, and at an even more fundamental level into humanity itself. When Lleu is born, he does not even have human form. It is through Gwydion's actions that he is placed into a secondary 'womb' – the chest – and is able to gestate longer until he develops into a boy.[31] Initially there is no curse denying him a name, and yet Gwydion does not give him one. It is possible that Gwydion is here already acknowledging Aranrhod's right to be the one to name her son, and she certainly claims that right forcefully once she encounters him for the first time since his birth. It should be noted in this context that Gwydion is sometimes read as Lleu's father, and not merely his uncle. Patrick Ford discusses some of the arguments for and against Gwydion's paternity, concluding that it is unlikely that Gwydion is Lleu's father since both Aranrhod's apparently genuine belief in her own virginity and Gwydion's desire to avoid further reprisals from Math both argue against it.[32] I follow Ford in taking Gwydion to be Lleu's uncle and not his biological father, which maintains the pattern of avuncular relationships between the men in this text.

The third episode shows Gwydion's continued concern for Lleu's well-being and position in society. After Lleu has been brought to near death by the machinations of Lleu's wife Blodeuwedd and her lover Gronw, it is Gwydion who again intervenes and restores him to his family and position. Since Blodeuwedd and Gronw's attack on Lleu left him exiled and in the form of a disintegrating eagle, Gwydion is again required to assist Lleu in achieving human form, just as he had done after Lleu's birth. Lleu's marriage to Blodeuwedd, intended to fulfil the final requirement of his entry into adulthood, has failed, since it produces no offspring, and ends in her attempt on his life and his temporary loss of self and status. Further, if marriage should create and strengthen bonds between families or within the family, then Lleu's marriage to Blodeuwedd is indeed merely a symbol, since she is entirely without kin or connection to the world.

I turn now to the question of how these positive, negative, and ambiguous relationships between the members of the family of Dôn, and especially between sister's sons and mother's brothers, can inform our reading of the mythological contexts and themes of the text. The family consists of only twelve members:

First generation:	Math, Dôn
Second generation:	Gwydion, Gilfaethwy, Aranrhod, Gofannon, Amaethon
Third generation:	Bleiddwn, Hyddwn, Hychdwn, Dylan, Lleu

The second generation represents the offspring of a single member of the first generation, while the third generation results from the pairing of two members of the second generation and a mysterious conception by a third. No fourth generation is produced, and we have no knowledge of a generation before the first, except in the name *uab Mathonwy*, which, as previously noted, may well be a doublet of Math's own name.

Emily Lyle has argued that the Fourth Branch reflects a cosmogonic myth about the succession of three generations of kings. She emphasises that this is not a creation myth presented from its very beginning, because the narrative opens with a world and two generations of the family already in place. Instead, we find 'the mythic pattern of the conception and birth of the younger gods'.[33] John Carey also places the Fourth Branch in the general mythological context of creation myths, arguing that in it we find 'the reflex of a myth which combined two themes: that of the life cycle as a heroic progress past supernatural dilemmas, and that of the culture hero who wins for mankind benefits hoarded by the gods'.[34] He draws parallels between the stages of this narrative and the Ages of Man known from Greek mythology, as represented in Hesiod's *Works and Days*.

Carey equates Math's reign with the stage represented by Hesiod's Golden Age, which takes place during the reign of Kronos and is described by Hesiod as a time when the first race of men was created and lived among the gods without age or suffering. The rule of Kronos represents the second generation of gods, however. If Math and Dôn represent the first generation of gods, then it would be more fitting to view Math as a parallel for Ouranos, father of Kronos and the other Titans, and Dôn might then be equated with Gaia, the personification of the earth and the mother of the Titans. This equation is in keeping with the etymology of the name Dôn proposed by John Koch, who argues that the name is in fact a form of the word 'earth', and that therefore the *Plant Dôn* 'children of Dôn' are quite literally the 'Children of the Earth'.[35] Gaia is not only the mother of the Titans, however; she is also the mother of Ouranos himself. Gaia thus represents a generation even before the first generation of gods, and if we again draw a parallel between Gaia and Dôn, we may see in Dôn alone a fourth generation that precedes the family structure presented in the 'Fourth Branch'.[36]

In Greek myth, the conflict between the first and second generations of gods, represented especially by the father–son pair of Ouranos and Kronos, is followed by a conflict between the second and third generations of gods, with the Titans represented by Kronos and the Olympians by his son Zeus. In the Fourth Branch, the intergenerational conflict between Math and his nephews is followed by a conflict between Aranrhod and her son Lleu. Gwydion, one of the aggressors in the first conflict, now takes on the role of helper to his nephew as he guides Lleu to a partial victory against his mother. I say partial because, in spite of the magical intervention of both Gwydion and Math, Aranrhod does succeed in denying her son descendants, effectively castrating him. Her final curse that Lleu will never find a wife from any race on the earth forces Gwydion and Math to create a woman for him, but Blodeuwedd betrays Lleu. As a result he temporarily loses his place in human society and, although he is eventually restored to his human form and his position, and in time he succeeds Math as lord of Gwynedd, he is left without a wife and therefore without the possibility of descendants. With Blodeuwedd's betrayal, the family of Dôn appears to have reached its end.

In the conflict between generations of gods in Greek myth, as well as between the Tuatha Dé Danann and the Fomoire in *Cath Maige Tuired*, 'The

Second Battle of Mag Tuired', it is the relationships between fathers and sons that are most frequently tested as the younger generation struggles to supplant the elder. Conflicts with grandfathers are also typical of these types of stories, and it can be noted that in *Cath Maige Tuired* Lug kills his maternal grandfather Balor. Intergenerational conflict is a hallmark of the struggle for succession, whether in mythological contexts or on a more human scale. Carey suggested the heroic life cycle as one of the main themes of the Fourth Branch, and central to that cycle is the threat that the younger generation, represented by the hero, poses to the older, generally represented by his father or his mother's father.

In contrast to the Greek intergenerational conflicts and struggles for succession, in the Fourth Branch these conflicts are shifted from between father and son to between uncle and nephew. If we read the Fourth Branch as a creation story and in the light of Lyle's arguments about the interrelationships of the Proto-Indo-European gods, we find in it a story about the establishment of the four generations of the pantheon. However, on the human level we find that the male members of the family of Dôn, including her brother Math, are plagued by an infertility that manifests itself not only in their inability to produce offspring, but also in Math's immobility and initially sexless relationship with Goewin, as well as in Lleu's inability to enter into a fertile marriage, resulting in a total absence of normal father–son pairs. The ambiguous and potentially destructive nature of the avunculate relationship provides a vehicle for the theme of intergenerational conflict and succession, with the emphasis on avunculate rather than father–son pairs as symptomatic of the persistent problems of male fertility and the rule of a sterile king.

Notes

[1] The Welsh text is quoted from the edition of Ian Hughes (ed.), *Math uab Mathonwy: The Fourth Branch of the Mabinogi* (Dublin, 2013). All translations are my own.

[2] For discussion of the various members of the family of Dôn as referred to in this text and elsewhere, see Hughes, *Math*, pp. xli–xci, as well as Patrick K. Ford (ed.), *Math uab Mathonwy* (Belmont, 1999), pp. xiii–xiv.

[3] See A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, *Structure and Function in Primitive Society: Essays and Addresses* (Glencoe, IL, 1952) and Robin Fox, *Kinship and Marriage* (Harmondsworth, 1967).

[4] Jan Bremmer, 'Avunculate and Fosterage', *Journal of Indo-European Studies*, 4/1 (1976), 65–78 (p. 65).

[5] Bremmer, 'Avunculate', p. 71.

[6] Radcliffe-Brown, *Structure and Function*, p. 24.

[7] Fox, *Kinship*, pp. 230–1.

[8] Bremmer, 'Avunculate', p. 71.

[9] Radcliffe-Brown, 'The Mother's Brother in South Africa', in *Structure and Function*, pp. 15–31.

[10] Fox, *Kinship*, p. 231.

[11] Rachel Bromwich (ed.), *Trioedd Ynys Prydein: The Welsh Triads* (Cardiff, 1961), p. 448. Ford, *Math*, p. xv, also notes that aspects of inheritance in the 'Fourth Branch' are in keeping with a matrilineal society. See further C. W. Sullivan III, 'Inheritance and Lordship in *Math*', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* (1990), 45–63. John Koch, 'Some Suggestions and Etymologies Reflecting on the Mythology of the Four Branches', *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, 9 (1989), 1–10 (pp. 2–4), suggests that Math's name is a doublet of Amaethon, and that at some point in the development of Welsh myth the two originally distinct figures merged into one.

[12] T. M. Charles-Edwards, *Early Irish and Welsh Kinship* (Oxford, 1993), p. 36. Kim McCone, 'OIr. *aub* "river" and *amnair* "maternal uncle"', *Münchener Studien zur Sprachwissenschaft*, 53 (1992), 101–11 (pp. 103–5), demonstrates that *amnair*, previously without an etymology, can be derived from the Proto-Indo-European *h$_2$éwh$_2$-o-s 'grandfather', the root found also in Latin *avus* 'grandfather' and *avunculus* 'maternal uncle'. See also discussion by Robert S. P. Beekes, 'Uncle and Nephew', *Journal of Indo-European Studies*, 4/1 (1976), 43–63.

[13] Fergus Kelly, *A Guide to Early Irish Law* (Dublin, 1988), pp. 14–15.

[14] Kelly, *Early Irish Law*, p. 15.

[15] Kelly, *Early Irish Law*, p. 15.

[16] Charles-Edwards, *Kinship*, p. 172.

[17] Hughes, *Math*, l. 11.

[18] Dafydd Jenkins (trans.), *The Law of Hywel Dda: Law Texts from Medieval Wales* (Llandysul, 1986), p. 58.

[19] Jenkins, *Law of Hywel Dda*, p. 133.

[20] Tomás Ó Cathasaigh, 'The sister's son in early Irish literature', *Peritia*, 5 (1986), 128–60.

[21] Ó Cathasaigh, 'Sister's son', 141.

[22] Ó Cathasaigh, 'Sister's son', 160.

[23] Hughes, *Math*, ll. 5–6.

[24] Catherine McKenna, 'Revising Math: Kingship in the Fourth Branch of the Mabinogi', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 46 (2003), 95–117 (p. 111).

[25] For a discussion of the privileges and responsibilities of the *penteulu*, see A. D. Carr, '*Teulu* and *Penteulu*', in T. M. Charles-Edwards, Morfydd E. Owen, and Paul Russell (eds), *The Welsh King and His Court* (Cardiff, 2000), pp. 63–81.

[26] McKenna, 'Revising Math', 111.

[27] Hughes, *Math*, l. 223.

[28] Hughes, *Math*, ll. 242–3.

[29] Hughes, *Math*, ll. 251–2. It is worth noting that this is the only use of the word *ewythyr* 'uncle' in the text. All other uncle–nephew relationships, where

labelled at all, are designated using forms of *nei* 'nephew'. This is true also of sister's son–mother's brother pairs in the 'Second Branch', which makes use only of *nei*, and never of *ewythyr*.

[30] Hughes, *Math*, l. 376.

[31] For a discussion of stories involving this sort of secondary gestation and rebirth, particularly with reference to the birth of Lleu, see Anna June Pagé, 'The Theme of "Failed Birth and Rebirth": A Case Study in the Reconstruction of an Indo-European Myth', (forthcoming in *Cosmos*), with references.

[32] Ford, *Math*, p. xix.

[33] Emily Lyle, 'Old Myth and New Morality: A Theogonic Interpretation of the Fourth Branch of the *Mabinogi*', *Cosmos*, 5 (1989), 142–50 (pp. 143–4).

[34] John Carey, 'A British Myth of Origins?', *History of Religions*, 31/1 (1991), 24–38 (p. 30).

[35] Koch, 'Suggestions and Etymologies', 4–5.

[36] See further Emily Lyle, *Ten Gods: A New Approach to Defining the Mythological Structures of the Indo-Europeans* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 2012), who proposes a Proto-Indo-European pantheon consisting of four generations of gods, with the first represented by the primal goddess.

11

FASHIONER GODS IN IRELAND AND INDIA: THE DAGDA AND TVAṢṬṚ

John Shaw

Introduction

In the list of gods from the pre-Christian Celtic world, there is little doubt concerning the importance of the Dagda, who makes his first appearance in the mythological stories of medieval Ireland. He is regarded as having been at some time a principal deity, 'the most prominent of the older chthonic gods'.[1] Yet for all the perceived standing accorded him in the Celtic equivalent of the pantheon, his appearances in the academic literature have been infrequent and brief. Studies that go beyond passing references are chiefly in the form of short surveys,[2] with a few more detailed and speculative works by Gustav Lehmacher and William Sayers.[3] On the basis of the medieval Irish sources, most studies have effectively confined themselves to listing his characteristics and interactions with the other gods. Given the nature of the materials that have survived in the manuscript traditions,[4] this is not surprising; the picture that emerges for those attempting to establish a comparative context is an aggregate of mixed attributes as inconsistent as it is varied. His legacy is best regarded as a prime example of the 'chaotic' state of a long-existing oral mythology transmitted from the advent of writing.[5] With the exceptions of references by de Vries and Sayers to parallels mostly within Norse mythology, none of the studies mentioned has looked beyond Celtic traditions to explain his character or origins. However, these comparisons, incomplete as they may be, raise the question as to whether more complete correspondences can be identified. The aim of the present chapter is to draw on a parallel deity within the mythologies of the Indo-European world – the Indian artificer, Tvaṣṭṛ – to better understand the place of this enigmatic and multivalent mythological personage and his Indo-European counterparts.

The Dagda

The most detailed and revealing source concerning the Dagda is a medieval text central to Celtic mythology, the Second Battle of Moytura (henceforth *2MT*), with additional materials from the First Battle of Moytura (*1MT*).[6] The conflicts among the pre-Christian gods of Ireland recounted here, echoed in mythologies across the Indo-European world and so often examined by comparative mythologists, concern the Tuatha Dé Danann 'The People of the Goddess Danu' who, upon arriving in Ireland, come into conflict with the Fir Bolg (*1MT*), and subsequently with the Fomoire (*2MT*), a monstrous group of beings representing the antithesis of cosmic order. As a leading god of the Tuatha Dé Danann, the Dagda is featured in a surprising variety of roles in *2MT*. Before the battle he first appears as a builder and artificer, constructing the fortress for Eochu Bres, the new sovereign of Ireland; as the warriors of Ireland are increasingly oppressed by Bres's despotic rule, the Dagda constructs a rampart around the fortress. When his work is completed, he demands only a single heifer in payment, which the king regards as a foolishly small reward. In his capacity as builder, another source also credits him with the construction of a central location in the Irish Mythological Cycle, *Brugh na Bóinne* (Newgrange), with which he is closely associated and where for a time he had his residence.[7]

Fégaid in síd ar bhar súil,
is fodeirc dúib, is treb ríg,
rogníth lasin Dagda ndúr,
ba dín, ba dún, amra bríg

Behold the fairy mound before your eyes
It is plain for you to see, it is a king's dwelling,
It was built by the harsh Dagda
It was a shelter, it was a keep renowned for strength.

Earlier in the account he appears as the owner of a cauldron from which no one departs unsatisfied, expressing associations of abundance and wealth, presumably emanating from the Otherworld. We are then introduced to his exploits as an incorrigible womaniser, in episodes associated with rivers:

> The Dagda had a house in Glen Edin in the north, and he had arranged to meet a woman in Glen Edin a year from that day, near the All

> Hallows of the battle. The Unshin of Connacht roars to the south of it. He saw the woman at the Unshin in Corann, washing, with one of her feet at Allod Echae (that is, Aghanagh) south of the water and the other at Lisconny north of the water. There were nine loosened tresses on her head. The Dagda spoke with her, and they united. 'The Bed of the Couple' was the name of that place from that time on. (The woman mentioned here is the Morrígan).[8]

The Morrígan (Morrígu) 'queen of spectres' is featured in the role of the goddess of war and destruction, and her union with the Dagda, apparently the only one by her recorded (some sources list him as her husband), is an important one.

In Cormac's Glossary the mother of the gods is identified as Ana.[9]

Ana .i. mater deorum Hiberensium
Robo maith didiu robiathais si deos

Ana .i. the mother of the Irish gods.
Well did she feed the gods.

The *Ban-shenchas* 'Lore of Women' links her with the Dagda, while at the same time complicating the issue by suggesting that she is identical with the goddess Morrígu.[10]

Anand .i. in Mor-rígan diata Dá Chich Anand for Luachair
Deadad, bean eile do'n Dagda.

Anand, that is Morrígu, from whom the two Paps of Ana
on Luachair Deadad. Another wife of the Dagda.

Whatever form the name (or the appellative) of the goddess took, we can see her in a cosmogonic role in association with the Dagda.[11]

In a separate mythological tale from the *Dindshenchas* 'Lore of Place-names'[12] the Dagda succeeds in initiating a tryst with Boand, eponymous goddess of the river Boyne, by the device of sending her husband Elcmar, who ruled over *Brugh na Bóinne*, away on a needless errand. From their union is born the god Oengus (Mac Óc), whose inheritance was the Brugh.

In both of the mythological battles the Dagda's role as a warrior with the Tuatha Dé Danann is of considerable importance. Before *2MT* the god Lug asks the warriors in turn what they can provide to oppose the Fomoire, and the Dagda answers that he will 'fight for the men of Ireland with mutual smiting and destruction and wizardry. Their bones under my club will soon be as many as hailstones under the feet of herds of horses, where the double enemy meets on the battlefield of Mag Tuired'.[13] He serves in this capacity as well in *1MT*, in the conflict between the Tuatha Dé Danann and the Fir Bolg, where his main function is that of a warrior on the battlefield; when the arm of Nuadu, the leader of the Tuatha Dé Danann, is severed the Dagda stands over him until he is carried off the field to be attended by physicians.

The Dagda's powers of wizardry in connection with his battlefield exploits appear elsewhere in both mythological battles. In the lead-up to *1MT*, he is introduced as *Eochaid Ollathair*, a god of wizardry with the Tuatha Dé Danann and an excellent god altogether.[14] This and a passage from *2MT* provide an explanation for his name. The Tuatha Dé Danann call a conference of the druids of Ireland together with their retainers to inventory the magical powers that they command to deal with the invading Fomoire. At the end of this awesome enumeration of resources the Dagda grandly declares in front of the others: '"The power which you boast, I will wield it all myself". "You are the Dagda *the Good God*!" said everyone; and "Dagda" stuck to him from that time on.' '*"An cumang arbágaid-si, dogén-sou ule am áon [ur]". "Is tusai an Dagdae!" or cach; gonad de rot-lil "Dagdae" ó sin e.*'[15] The meaning underlying the statement seems to be that all the powers controlled by the Tuatha Dé Danann are in some sense vested in the Dagda, a fact recognised by the rest of the gods.

An often-noted feature of the Dagda is his club, or alternatively, an axe. In the *2MT* we are told that 'He trailed behind him a wheeled fork which was the work of eight men to move, and its track was enough for the boundary ditch of a province. It is called "The Track of the Dagda's Club" for that reason'.[16] He encounters a girl who prevails on him to carry her on his back, and during the course of their exchange a series of his other names is given, twenty-two in all. Following a burlesque portrayal of his appearance and actions, they too unite. The girl attempts to restrain him from joining the battle against the Fomoire, saying that he will not go past her until she summons

> the sons of Tethra from the síd-mounds, because 'I will be a giant oak in every ford and in every pass you will cross.' 'I will indeed go past,' said the Dagda, 'and the mark of my axe will remain in every oak forever.' (And people have remarked upon the mark of the Dagda's axe).

Finally she agrees to deploy her magical powers in support of the Tuatha Dé Danann in the upcoming battle. In a separate text edited by Osborn Bergin[17] we are informed of the magical properties attached to his staff or club. In the story of how it came into his possession, the club is said to have the property of dealing death from the rough end and bringing back to life from the smooth end.[18] Introducing the story is a short and widely noted passage where the Dagda declares that he has three names: 'the Good God of wizardry of the Tuatha Dé Danann, and the Rúad Rofhessa, and Eochaid Ollathair are my three names' '*dagdia druidechta Tuath De Danann ⁊ in Ruad Rofhessa Eochaid Ollathair mo tri hanmanna*', listing the attributes of magical powers, omniscience and progenitor of all.

A curious characteristic of the Dagda, possibly reflecting his associations with wealth and plenty, is his prodigious appetite for food. While the Tuatha Dé Danann are under the oppressive rule of Bres in *2MT*, we are given an initial, relatively moderate, description of his gluttony. While the Dagda is labouring unhappily building the ramparts, a blind satirist, Cridenbél, grotesque in appearance with his mouth situated in his chest, demands three portions of the Dagda's food, greatly reducing the latter's intake. The Dagda's son by the goddess Boand, Mac Óc, on noting his appearance, gives him three coins with the advice to slip them into the satirist's food as the three best portions demanded, so that they will lodge in his belly and result in his death. When the satirist dies the Dagda is accused of bringing this about by means of a poisonous herb. The Dagda, again following his son's advice, addresses the sovereign Bres, invoking the central principle of *fír flathu* 'prince's truth'; the satirist's belly is opened and the three coins are found, the explanation provided, and the Dagda is exonerated. He not only survives the sovereign's ensuing judgment, but, as noted above, chooses a heifer in payment from the Fomoire for his work. In a later episode in *2MT* concerning his fondness for food, the burlesque and irreverent portrayal of the god comes to the fore. On the eve of the battle between the Tuatha Dé Danann and the Fomoire, Lug sends the Dagda to spy on the enemy and delay them until the men of Ireland are assembled. The Fomoire force him to consume a large cauldron full of porridge, so that he might not deploy what we presume is another one of his talents, that of a satirist. The description of the Dagda, by now bloated with his meal, is far from flattering.

Such pointedly burlesque descriptions do not seem compatible with the actions of a primary god. It has been suggested that such portrayals may be connected with representations of copiousness[19] or may have been a later development driven by Christian doctrine.[20] Yet such coarse behaviour is hardly unknown in the traditions that have come down to us from pre-Christian northern Europe; we need only recall the plot of the *Þrymskviða* from the Old Norse Elder Edda, where the god Thor dresses as a bride and indulges his enormous appetite at the table, or the later half-humorous, post Ulster Cycle folk accounts of Cú Chulainn recorded in Scotland.[21]

Close to the end of *2MT* is an episode that describes the Dagda's musicality. He and two other gods go in search of his harp, which is in the banqueting hall of the Fomoire:

> There was the harp on the wall. That is the harp in which the Dagda had bound the melodies so that they did not make a sound until he summoned them . . .Then the harp came away from the wall, and it killed nine men and came to the Dagda; and he played for them the three things by which a harper is known: sleep music (*súantraigi*), joyful music (*genntraigi*), and sorrowful music (*goltraigi*). He played sorrowful music for them so that their tearful women wept. He played joyful music for them so that their women and boys laughed. He played sleep music for them so that the hosts slept. So the three of them escaped from them unharmed – although they wanted to kill them.[22]

They depart with the harp and cattle taken by the Fomoire as tribute, which come to them upon hearing the lowing of the original heifer with which the Dagda was paid for his work on the ramparts.

The Dagda's family associations demonstrate that his artistic talents extend further. He is the son of Elatha, whose name is connected to the arts, and his abilities extend to poetry as well. Toward the end of *1MT* he composes a long battle poem.[23] The attribute of poetry is further confirmed by the fact that he is the father of the goddess *Brigit banfile*, one of whose functions is the protection of poets.

Appellatives applied to the Dagda reveal more regarding his origins and functions. It has been suspected that his name, 'The Good God', is secondary and a pseudonym,[24] as the passage above from *2MT* all but makes clear. The epithet *Eochu Ollathair* is of particular interest. The personal name *Eochu* is derived from IE **ekwo-* 'horse' and may be reconstructed as IE **ekwo-poti-* 'horse lord',[25] drawing on an old and widely extended heritage of Indo-European belief and institutions. *Ollathair* finds its equivalent in Old Norse *Ǫllfoður* 'all-father, progenitor of all' which is applied to Oðin in pre-Christian Scandinavian mythology. *Ruad Rofhessa* is rendered by Bruford[26] 'The red-haired (/mighty) one of great knowledge', where *Rofhessa* signals omniscience. What is arguably the most intriguing appellative of all is found in the list of twenty-two from *2MT*: *Athgen mBethae* 'regeneration of the world', which has given rise to little comment, but in the context of the Dagda's position and attributes may well refer to a central cosmological function.

For researchers looking beyond Ireland, the Gaulish god Sucellos is most frequently mentioned as bearing affinities to the Dagda. His name consists of the prefix *su-* 'good' together with a form meaning 'to strike' < IE **kel-* , reminiscent of the formation of the Dagda's name (*dag-* 'good'), and thus may be another appellation overlaying an earlier theonym.[27] De Vries, who discusses Sucellos at some length,[28] is not convinced that the Continental god and the Dagda were descended from an earlier Celtic deity; he mentions the difficulty of describing the Continental god's nature concisely, but notes that he often appears with a hammer and a jar or a purse (perhaps to symbolise wealth or plenty). Sucellos is frequently in the company of a goddess, Nantosuelta, who is associated with rivers and is often depicted holding a cornucopia. Regarding wider associations for the Dagda extending beyond the Celtic areas, Sayers and de Vries, along with others, draw attention to the parallels between the club of the Dagda, that of Thor in Norse mythology, and the *vajra* wielded by the god Indra in the Rig Veda.

Such is the state of research at present: the Dagda presents a variegated, often bewildering range of attributes and activities that appear difficult to reconcile with a mythological model such as the tripartite one advanced by Dumézil. We have seen that the Dagda could belong to any one of the three functions in his roles of wizard, warrior and owner of a bottomless cauldron.

However, the particular context of battle calls upon the first two roles for effective action, and these roles may perhaps be best understood as operating in this context. The connection with the cauldron seems to be more fundamental and Bruford has proposed that the Dagda 'who is most often represented as a rather uncouth fertility-figure, seems to represent the third [function]'.[29]

This view is supported in Emily Lyle's recent work, based on the placing of items compared within their respective systems, or within a single proposed reconstructed system.[30] Lyle has developed a four-generation model for Indo-European mythology that assigns distinct places to a set of ten gods. The model is founded on what I would term a synthesis of prehistoric systems that can be reconstructed for Indo-European, comprising age grade, royal succession and spatio-temporality. The 'slots' are filled by ten gods in a system that can accommodate Dumézil's tripartite scheme. Within the framework of relative positions Lyle observes of the Dagda: 'The cauldron seems to relate this god to the third function'.[31] The third-function positioning of the cauldron is clearly expressed in the account of the four treasures brought by the Tuatha Dé Danann to Ireland. The *Lia Fáil*, the stone of sovereignty, is followed by the sword of Nuadu and the spear of Lug, and the Dagda's cauldron then occupies a unique final position.[32]

The Dagda is one of the cosmic gods who belongs to the old god category, which, in the Indian context is categorised as that of the Asuras, as opposed to the category of the young gods known as the Devas. Tvaṣṭṛ, the proposed counterpart of the Dagda, is one of the Asuras.

Tvaṣṭṛ

Tvaṣṭṛ is identified as one of the old gods in a family in a story told briefly in the Rig Veda and found in fuller form in later texts.

> RV 10.17.1
> 'Tvaṣṭṛ is arranging a wedding for his daughter': (on hearing) thus, all this world comes together.
> The mother of Yama, the wife of great Vivasvant while being conveyed around (on her wedding journey), went missing.[33]

The wedding is attended by all, with the verse showing three generations of the gods; Tvaṣṭṛ's daughter, who is being married to the sun-god Vivasvant, is identified as Saraṇyū in the following verse. All three of the central participants are old gods,[34] while the offspring belong to the young god generation.

It can be observed that, in much the same way as we have seen for the Dagda among the gods of pre-Christian Ireland, Tvaṣṭṛ does not sit well in the tripartite system of Mitra-Varuna, Indra, Aśvins that Dumézil developed for the Vedic pantheon. Considering Dumézil's scheme in terms of old and young gods, Mitra and Varuna are Asuras while Indra and the Aśvins are Devas. Mitra is associated with the day sky and can be seen as filling the same slot as Vivasvant, the sun god, while Varuna is associated with the night sky.[35] The three old gods can then be identified as Varuna and Mitra/Vivasvant, associated with sky and the above, and Tvaṣṭṛ who has no such sky association. Tvaṣṭṛ has thus a unique place in the system which corresponds to that identified earlier for the Dagda. In the set of three gods, each of these gods is contrasted with a noble or upper pair (Nuada and Lug with weapons; Varuna and Mitra/Vivasvant related to the sky) and is in a lone inferior position. That position, however, is still that of a major god who has the special role of craftsman.

In the Rig Veda, Tvaṣṭṛ is called the creator of all forms of life (RV 10.10.5 ‘the impeller who provides all forms’), and of heaven and earth (RV 1.160.4).

> This one here, the best artisan of the artisans of the gods, who begat the two world-halves beneficial to all, who measured out the two airy realms with a display of his good resolve, with unaging props – he has been universally praised.[36]

He then brought heaven and earth together to form a house (*sadanam*), and they became the parents of the gods. The Rig Veda credits Tvaṣṭṛ as being called *agrajā* ‘one born at the beginning’, and *puroyāvan* ‘journeying in advance’ (RV 9.5.9). As a *deus faber* his attribute is an axe, and in keeping with his role of creating and fitting together the two parts of the cosmos (later to be separated by Indra). It is as if in creating and fitting together heaven and earth, Tvaṣṭṛ has constructed the backdrops for the cosmic drama that was to follow.

The likely etymology of Tvaṣṭṛ’s name affirms his primary role as a cosmic artisan; it is the only known example in Indic of an Indo-Iranian root _*tvarś-_ > Ir. *θβrᵊś* ‘to fashion’, Older and Younger Avestan *θβarəs* ‘to form, create, cut’.[37] In addition to being a builder, he is a skilled artificer of objects of cosmic significance: a soma bowl for the gods; the *vajra*, as Indra’s weapon against the monstrous serpent-like Vṛtra in the cosmic conflict; and an axe for Bṛhaspati.

A number of his other attributes strongly recall those attached to the Dagda. He is omniscient, knowing the two cosmic regions of heaven and earth and everything dwelling therein (RV 4.42.3). He is associated with women and rivers: in RV 5.42.12 Tvaṣṭṛ conceals himself among his female consorts, who are in fact also rivers, and he is frequently accompanied by divine females who are the wives of other gods; he is connected with increase and wealth (RV 1.142.10; 7.34.22d *tváṣṭā sudátro* ‘generously giving’) and performs good deeds: (*sukṛt* RV 3.54.12 ‘let God Tvaṣṭṛ establish these things for us for help’). Like artisans elsewhere in the Indo-European world, he possesses secret, sometimes magic, knowledge.[38]

Tvaṣṭṛ does not directly join in warlike exploits, but his participation in the Vedic cosmological drama is instructive. The larger context is a war among the gods between the Ādityas ('Unconfined') representing the forces of light, cosmic order (*ṛta*) and lack of confinement, and the Dānavas ('Confined'), agents of darkness and chaos, one of whom, the serpent-like 'arch demon' Vṛtra ('Resistance'), accompanied by his mother Dānu, detains the Waters, thereby confining all of life and its potential. The details of Tvaṣṭṛ's role in the conflict are not always explicit or consistent, but in his actions he is clearly on the side of the Ādityas. Vṛtra's paternity is not stated; however Viśvarupa, one of Vṛtra's counterparts in the Rig Veda, is said to be one of Tvaṣṭṛ's progeny (RV 10.8.8,9; 2.11.19), and later sources identify Tvaṣṭṛ as his father.[39] Vṛtra is eventually overcome and slain by the warlike god Indra, who while in Tvaṣṭṛ's house obtains the magical substance soma, and upon drinking it becomes so mighty that Tvaṣṭṛ himself becomes afraid (RV 1.80.14). In the meantime Tvaṣṭṛ fashions him a weapon in the form of the *vajra*, a sort of club that has been often likened to Thor's hammer, which Indra uses to slay Vṛtra in their epic confrontation (RV 1.32.2):

> He smashed the serpent resting on the mountain – for him Tvaṣṭṛ fashioned the resounding [/sunlike] mace.
> Like bellowing milk-cows, streaming out, the waters went straight down to the sea.[40]

The Waters with their life force (elsewhere likened to cows: RV 10.49.10 where Tvaṣṭṛ likewise appears) are released, and order is restored to the cosmos. Indra's parentage is nowhere explicitly stated in the Rig Veda; some writers attribute his origins to Heaven and Earth,[41] while others regard him as one of Tvaṣṭṛ's offspring.[42]

Comparison

As noted above, according to the Rig Veda, Tvaṣṭṛ 'the most skilful of the gods' created heaven and earth and gave them form (RV 1.160 .2, 4; 10. 110. 9, 53. 9). He then constructed the cosmos from the two halves (RV 1.159.4), which became the gods' abode.[43]

We have seen that Tvaṣṭṛ in fashioning the cosmos by putting heaven and earth together created a house, *sadanam* (RV 3.54.6), and that the Dagda constructed not only the ramparts for his sovereign Bres, but also the more mythologically central dwelling of *Brugh na Bóinne* (Newgrange). In the passage quoted above from the *Dindshenchas* recounting this, the *brugh* is referred to as *síd*, a term whose history and usage is discussed at length by Tomás Ó Cathasaigh.[44] OIr. *síd/síth* 'an Otherworld hill or mound' is derived from a lengthened form of the widely attested IE root **sed-* 'sit'. Ó Cathasaigh traces the semantic prehistory of the Old Irish word as 'one of progressive specialization of meaning, narrowing from abode in general to abode of the gods in particular, and then from abode of the gods in general to hollow hill in particular',[45] and it is precisely in this divine/otherworld capacity that we find the same root, this time in the form of a neuter noun (*sadanam*[46]) applied to the house of the cosmos constructed by Tvaṣṭṛ. As Ó Cathasaigh is aware,[47] that such a usage extends back to Indo-European times is further supported by the religious connotations attached to Gk. '*ἔδος*', Lat. *sēdes*.[48] In John Carey's view,[49] the legends – or at least ideas – surrounding the complex at Newgrange are of considerable antiquity, extending back to the Late Neolithic. Furthermore, other researchers have suggested that the site, like many religious ones elsewhere, was laid out (or developed) as a model of the cosmos.[50]

Regarding the Dagda's epithet Eochu Ollathair, where the first element can be derived from IE **ekwo-poti-* 'horse lord', it is worth noting that the Vedic progenitor of all is centrally featured in the *aśvamedha*, the horse-sacrifice ceremony, as described in RV 1.162.3,19, where he lends his encouragement to the ritual, and where the sacrificed animal is described as 'the horse of Tvaṣṭṛ'.[51]

Thus far our comparisons have revealed a number of essential attributes shared by the two artisan gods at opposite ends of the Indo-European world. They are builders on a cosmic scale, credited either with fashioning the cosmos, or its monumental realisation as a lasting/former abode of the gods. They are progenitors of all living beings, omniscient ('great in knowledge') or all-seeing, and wield magic knowledge or powers. They are sources of abundance and wealth. They consort with goddesses, sometimes the wives of other gods, who in both traditions are closely associated with rivers. As artisans their tool is an axe, and in their support of cosmic order and their struggle with forces of chaos they fashion or wield a heavy club. Through epithets or ceremonial roles, they are associated with horses, or with traces that remain of an Indo-European ritual of horse sacrifice. Objections may be raised that nearly all of the attributes listed for both gods can be shown to apply in numerous instances elsewhere in each mythological system. Certainly it is no rarity in comparative religion for a number of gods to 'do good things' for their worshippers, be associated with abundance, have sexual appetites and wield clubs or hammers; and horses appear pervasively not only in Celtic and Indic mythology, but in cultures from prehistory on across Eurasia. However in the parallels examined here, the corresponding attributes occurring within each culture can be shown to belong to larger systems – be they a mythological conflict between order and chaos, or divine genealogies – that are inherited from a common source of language and culture; on each side they serve as parts of related systems, rather than as random collections of isolated artefacts. Within the ten-part system as applied to the Irish and Indic gods, the Dagda and Tvaṣṭṛ, both old gods, occupy equivalent places.[52]

What we have arrived at is by no means a neat picture of reconstruction for mythological prehistory, and perhaps some of the apparent inconsistencies evident from our comparisons can be best understood in terms of events during the Proto-Indo-European (PIE) era, and in the two millennia subsequent to it.

Notes

[1] Myles Dillon and Nora Chadwick, *The Celtic Realms* (New York, 1967), p. 144.

[2] Jan de Vries, *La Religion des Celtes* (Paris, 1963), pp. 45–8; Elizabeth A. Gray (ed.), *Cath Maige Tuired: The Second Battle of Mag Tuired* (Dublin, 1982), p. 121; Dáithi Ó hÓgáin, *The Lore of Ireland: An Encyclopaedia of Myth, Legend and Romance* (Woodbridge, 2006), pp. 145–7.

[3] Gustav Lehmacher, 'Der Dagde, das Haupt der irischen Götter', *Anthropos*, 5 (1953), 817–36; William Sayers, 'Cerrce, an Archaic Epithet of the Dagda, Cernunnos and Conall Cernach', *Journal of Indo-European Studies*, 16 (1988), 341–64.

[4] Unlike the personages from the Ulster and the Finn Cycles, the Dagda is barely mentioned in the post-medieval lore of Ireland, and does not appear in the modern oral traditions of Scotland.

[5] Emily Lyle, 'The "Order, Chaos, Order," Theoretical Approach to Reconstructing the Mythology of a Promote Past', *Cosmos*, 30 (2014), 37–48 (pp. 37–9).

[6] John Fraser, 'The First Battle of Moytura', *Ériu*, 8 (1916), 1–63.

[7] Edward Gwynn (ed.), *The Metrical Dindshenchas, Part 2* (Dublin, 1906), pp. 18–21.

[8] Gray, *Cath Maige Tuired*, pp. 44–5.

[9] Kuno Meyer (ed.), *Sanas Cormaic: An Old-Irish Glossary* (Felinfach, 1994 [1913]), s.v. Ana; Martin West, *Indo-European Poetry and Myth* (Oxford, 2007), p. 177.

[10] Margaret Dobbs, 'The Ban-Shenchus', *Revue Celtique*, 47 (1930), 283–339; 48 (1931), 162– 234, 49 (1932), 437–89, s.v. Ana(nd).

[11] Reflexes of IE *$d^{h}eg^{h}om$-/ $d^{h}g^{h}m$- 'earth' appear widely in this connection in later cultures for the 'mother of the gods'. The name of the goddess *Danu has long been a puzzle; John Koch has suggested that the similar name of the Welsh goddess Dôn (*Plant Dôn*), can be derived from **ghdhonos*, a genitive form from the same root that is also attested in Old Irish *don* (gen.) 'place, ground, earth'. See John T. Koch, 'Some Suggestions and Etymologies Reflecting upon the Mythology of the Four Branches', *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, 9 (1989), 1–10 (pp. 4–5); compare also Emily Lyle, 'Narrative Form

and the Structure of Myth', *Folklore*, 33 (2006), 59–70 (pp. 64, 66). Available at *www.folklore.ee/folklore/vol33/lyle.pdf*, accessed 24 August 2017.

[12] Gwynn, *Metrical Dindshenchas, Part 2*, pp. 36–7; Gray, *Cath Maige Tuired*, p. 127.

[13] Gray, *Cath Maige Tuired*, pp. 54–5.

[14] Fraser, 'The First Battle of Moytura', pp. 16–17.

[15] Gray, *Cath Maige Tuired*, pp. 43–4.

[16] Gray, *Cath Maige Tuired*, pp. 44–5.

[17] Osborn Bergin, 'How the Dagda Got His Magic Staff', *Medieval Studies in Memory of Gertrude Schoepperle Loomis* (New York, 1927), pp. 399–406.

[18] Also in the Ulster Cycle tale *Mesca Ulad*, ed. James Carmichael Watson (Dublin, 1941), p. 28.

[19] Ó hÓgáin, *The Lore of Ireland*, p. 146.

[20] de Vries, *La Religion des Celtes*, p. 48.

[21] John Francis Campbell, *Popular Tales of the West Highlands*, vol. 3 (Paisley, 1892), pp. 194–8.

[22] Gray, *Cath Maige Tuired*, pp. 70–1.

[23] Fraser, 'The First Battle of Moytura', pp. 51–7.

[24] Ó hÓgáin, *The Lore of Ireland*, p. 146.

[25] Myles Dillon, *Celts and Aryans* (Simla, 1975), p. 138.

[26] Alan Bruford, 'The Twins of Macha', *Cosmos*, 5 (1989), 125–41 (p. 132).

[27] Sayers, 'Cerrce', p. 342.

[28] de Vries, *La Religion des Celtes*, pp. 99–104.

[29] Bruford, 'The Twins of Macha', p. 136.

[30] Emily Lyle, *Ten Gods: A New Approach to Defining the Mythological Structures of the Indo-Europeans* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 2012).

[31] Lyle, *Ten Gods*, p. 71.

[32] R. A. S. MacAlister (ed.), *Lebor Gabála Érenn*, Part 4 (Dublin, 1941), pp. 106–7, 144–5, 169, 250–1. The four talismans of the Tuatha Dé Danann, like those bearing them, appear to be of divine, or even heavenly origin; their appearance in the founding stories of Ireland, and the functions they represent, are closely paralleled in the 'Scythian origin myth' as described by Herodotus in his *Histories* (Bk 4: 5–6) and famously discussed by Georges Dumézil ('La préhistoire indo-iranienne des castes', *Journal Asiatique*, 216 (1930), 109–30). In Herodotus' account four gold implements descend from the sky – a plough; a yoke; a battle-axe; and a drinking cup – representing Dumézil's hierarchy of functions in ascending order, perhaps determined by the 'youngest son' motif framing the story. The talismans arriving in Ireland with the gods are listed in descending order.

[33] Stephanie W. Jamison and Joel P. Brereton, *The Rig Veda: The Earliest Religious Poetry of India*, 3 vols (New York, 2014), p. 1398.

[34] Lyle, *Ten Gods*, p. 97.

[35] Lyle, *Ten Gods*, pp. 96–9.

[36] Jamison and Brereton, *The Rig Veda*, p. 339.

[37] Manfred Mayrhofer, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindischen* 1 (Heidelberg, 1992), p. 685. I am grateful to Michael Witzel for bringing this to my attention.

[38] The above attributes, with wider comparisons, are given in Thomas Oberlies, *Die Religion des Ṛg Veda*, 2 vols (Vienna, 1998), pp. 255–8.

[39] W. Norman Brown, 'The Creation Myth of the Rig Veda', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 62/2 (1942), 85–98 (p. 90).

[40] Jamison and Brereton, *The Rig Veda*, pp. 134–5.

[41] Brown, 'The Creation Myth', p. 92.

[42] Abel Bergaigne, *La religion védique d'après les hymnes du R̥ig-Véda*, 4 vols (Paris, 1878–97), vol. 2, p. 58, citing RV 2.17.6; and later commentators. See also Wendy Doniger, *The Rig Veda: An Anthology* (London and New York, 1981), p. 145.

[43] Brown, 'The Creation Myth', p. 86.

[44] Tomás Ó Cathasaigh, 'The Semantics of "Síd"', *Éigse*, 17 (1977–8), 137–55.

[45] Ó Cathasaigh, 'The Semantics of "Síd"', 150.

[46] See also Mayrhofer 2, p. 692.

[47] Ó Cathasaigh, 'The Semantics of "Síd"', 149.

[48] For a further Irish-Indic parallel incorporating the root **sed-*, this time involving the royal site at Navan, see Charles Doherty, 'Kingship in Early Ireland', in Edel Bhreathnach, *The Kingship and Landscape of Tara* (Dublin, 2005), pp. 3–31 (p. 16).

[49] John Carey, 'Memory, and the Boyne Necropolis', *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, 10 (1990), 24–36 (p. 29).

[50] David Lewis-Williams and David Pierce, *Inside the Neolithic Mind* (London, 2005), ch. 8.

[51] Calvert Watkins, *How to Kill a Dragon: Aspects of Indo-European Poetics* (Oxford, 1995), ch. 8. Stephanie W. Jamison, in *Sacrificed Wife/Sacrificer's Wife: Women, Ritual and Hospitality in Ancient India* (New York and Oxford, 1996), describes a ritual consisting of four oblations: 'one to Soma, one to Tvaṣṭṛ, one to the wives of the gods (*devānām patnīḥ*), and a final one to Agni Gṛhapati 'Agni Lord of the Household' . . . the purpose of these oblations is procreation . . . Soma deposits the semen . . . while Tvaṣṭṛ shapes this poured-out seed. The wives of course are the receptacles of the seed' (p. 30).

[52] Lyle, *Ten Gods*, pp. 71, 97.

12

PSYCHO-COSMOLOGY: MENTAL MAPPING IN *TÁIN BÓ CUAILNGE*

James Carney

Introduction

The last fifty years have not been kind to systematising cultural models. The post-*soixante-huit* emphasis on the anarchic, the ludic and the fragmentary has come, more or less explicitly, at the expense of approaches that nominate structure, organisation and totality as guiding heuristics. These latter concepts, variously nominated as 'conservative',[1] 'totalitarian'[2] or having a purely 'negative validity'[3] are taken to be complicit in an authoritarian attempt to close down the plural significations of literary and cultural texts. The result has been an institutionalisation of revolt, where the default position in literary and cultural studies involves a phobic rejection of the idea that any formal model might be adequate to a given text.

However, even default positions admit contraries, and it is notable that recent research has seen the pendulum begin to swing in the other direction. On the one hand, the taxonomic impulse of early work in formalism and structuralism never really went away, and for several decades now, the discipline of stylistics (or literary linguistics) has been consolidating itself as an undertaking of real intellectual force.[4] On the other, the emergence of the cognitive paradigm in the study of culture has allowed for critical analysis to take up insights from empirical disciplines like psychology, cognitive anthropology and evolutionary biology. Given this revival of interest in systematic theorising on the part of the interpretative disciplines, one can perhaps approach the enterprise of model building with a renewed sense of confidence.

In the present chapter, my goal is to do this by way of an analysis of the Irish epic, *Táin Bó Cuailnge*. Specifically, I shall show that the *Táin* (including its *rémscela* or pre-narratives) exhibits a very precise formal structure, and that this structure is centrally concerned with the maintenance (and violation) of social solidarity. Thematically, the analysis will depart from considerations developed in previous pieces I have written on the *Táin*;[5] methodologically, the starting point will be the eightfold model of mythic discourse independently developed by the present author[6] and Emily Lyle.[7] Though the motivations offered for the model by its proponents are quite distinct, both identify mythic cognition as a combinatorial exercise that rigorously traces out the possibility space of how different qualities or traits can be co-posited. In this, the eightfold model reflects other combinatorial accounts of myth – most notably, that developed in Claude Lévi-Strauss's seminal 'The Story of Asdiwal'.[8] However, the proponents of the eightfold model emphasise its spatio-temporal derivation, to the extent that they volunteer it as a mnemonic or a map that discretises human experience into geometrically structured regions of value. (The adjective 'eightfold' derives from the partitioning of three-dimensional space into eight regions by three coordinate axes.) Thus, myth is conceived of as a cognitive device that makes experience intelligible by enabling a mapping to be performed between the continuous structure of real-world space and the discrete structure of a value space. To this extent, the eightfold model accounts for how the abstract world of meaning is accommodated with the practical world of action.

To be sure, models are only as useful as the results they generate, and I certainly do not wish to reduce the *Táin* to the status of a test case or exemplary material. I shall avoid this by using the model to extract a hitherto unrecognised mythic dimension to the *Táin*, wherein the aforementioned concern with social solidarity is aligned with distinctions of identity and ontology to generate a coherent cosmology. One outcome of this will be to challenge the standard interpretation of the *Táin* as 'a textual vehicle for the display of an exemplary master-hero'.[9] Though the narrative is unequivocally centred on Cú Chulainn, my analysis will show that the heroic emphasis is but one of the eight semantic 'locations' informing the narrative – a location, moreover, that cannot be understood without reference to the other seven. By approaching the thematic infrastructure of the text in this way, I shall thus excavate the cosmological and social presuppositions that inform its heroic foreground. The result, ideally, will be to showcase how the judicious use of structural and formal models can disclose hitherto unseen aspects to texts.

Throughout, my analysis will refer to Thomas Kinsella's edited translation of the *Táin*.[10] Though this is not ideal from a philological perspective, the disadvantages are outweighed by the gains in accessibility. Equally, given that the analysis will be conducted at the level of gross thematic structure, these disadvantages are fewer than they might otherwise be.

The eightfold model

Before engaging with the *Táin*, it is important to outline the nature of the model that will be used to guide the analysis. In this regard, the eightfold model is a cognitively 'thin' model of mythological narrative, in that it assumes only two intellectual operations: the ability to distinguish between contraries and the capacity to combine predicates. As these form part of the universal mental repertoire of human beings,[11] there are no a priori psychological reasons why it should not have a cross-cultural validity. (This is not, of course, to peremptorily claim that it does). In this scenario, distinguishing between contraries will involve partitioning experience by way of binary oppositions, while combining predicates will take the mutually compossible terms of a series of binary oppositions and integrate them into a global predicate. This scenario – familiar from propositional logic – means that a series of *n* oppositions will generate 2^n global predicates.

What does this process look like in practice? A familiar example should make things clearer. Chapters 1–5 of the King James version of the Book of Genesis evince a number of preoccupations that can be expressed readily enough as a series of oppositions. The first of these centres on ontology, and distinguishes between material beings and spiritual beings;[12] the second focuses on normativity, and deals with adherence to, and transgression against, lawful authority;[13] and the third concerns generation, and the respective positions of begetter and begotten.[14] More succinctly:

Ontology: = (matter vs spirit)
Normativity: = (good vs evil)
Generation: = (begetter vs begotten)

However, values do not exist in isolation; with the exception of the contrary terms of the same opposition, they can be mutually assigned to the same object or agent. (One can, of course, be simultaneously both begetter and begotten, but never in relation to the same agent). Applying this operation to the oppositions informing Genesis yields eight (i.e. 2^3) possible outcomes; each of these corresponds to an agent, class of beings or sphere of action, as outlined in the schema below.

1. Matter × Good × Begetter ≈ Human Paternity (Adam)
2. Matter × Good × Begotten ≈ Filial Duty (Abel)
3. Matter × Evil × Begetter ≈ Instinctual Transgression (Eve)

4. Matter × Evil × Begotten ≈ Filial Transgression (Cain)
5. Spirit × Good × Begetter ≈ Divine Paternity (God)
6. Spirit × Good × Begotten ≈ Divine Progeny (Angels)
7. Spirit × Evil × Begetter ≈ Intellectual Transgression (Serpent)
8. Spirit × Evil × Begotten ≈ Progeny of Sin (Demons)

1. And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived (4. 1)
2. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering (4. 4)
3. She took of the fruit thereof, and did eat (3. 6)
4. Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him (4. 8)
5. And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground . . . and man became a living soul (2. 7)
6. He placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims (3. 24)
7. Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field (3. 1)
8. Sin is a demon crouching at the door (4. 7)

In this way, the Genesis narrative can be represented as a string of transformations that iterates across the eight values that are defined by the co-positing of the terms of the three foundational oppositions. In fact, it can be further shown that joining these transformations to each other forms an algebraic structure known as a 'group', though as this level of abstraction is not relevant to the present exposition, I shall not pursue it further (see instead expositions by the present author and Robert Polzin).[15]

What is of relevance here is the spatio-temporal character of the eightfold system. Though I have derived it using a combinatorial method, treating each binary opposition as a coordinate axis generates a discretely structured space with 2^n individuated locations (Figure 12.1). Thus, much as a standard map uses the qualifiers 'North', 'South', 'East' and 'West' to partition two-dimensional space into four discrete regions, the eightfold model shows how a mythic narrative might succeed in subordinating real-world three-dimensional experience to an eightfold axiological schema. Most obviously, this can occur by way of a simple one–one correspondence between actual places in the physical world and regions of value in the narrative – a practice that is quite visible in those mythological narratives with a strongly cosmological import. However, Lyle[16] makes useful reference to the literature on mental mappings and cognitive models in support of a more sophisticated understanding of how myths establish normative precedents. On this view, the values encoded by the myth provide grounds for analogical correlations

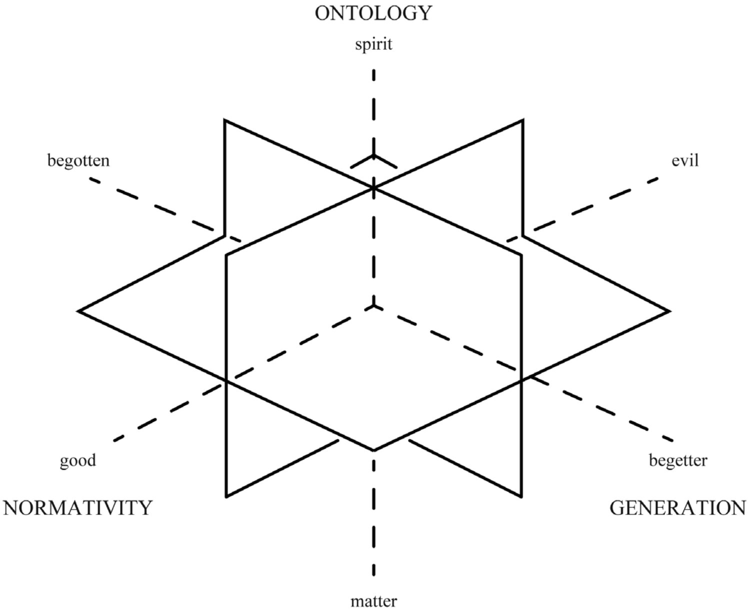


FIGURE 12.1 The spatio-temporal structure of the Genesis narrative.

that make sense of problematic areas of experience. For instance, the Genesis narrative accounts for the unhappy narrative of human history by mapping it into a specific folk ontology, where an inherited difference in substantial nature disposes human beings to break the moral law. In this way, the 'myth becomes exemplary, and consequently repeatable, for it serves as a model, and by the same token as a justification, for all human actions'.[17]

However, for all that the eightfold model may account for the normative function of myth, the question remains as to whether it provides an accurate account of how myths are actually structured. This is a difficult problem that raises issues of falsifiability and verification with respect to theorising in the humanities. Moreover, the different proponents of the model way well have different opinions in this regard. My view is that only large-scale experimental testing in controlled conditions is likely to produce convincing evidence of whether or not the model picks out human intuitions about narrative. In the meantime, the best that can be done is to trial the model with actual narrative materials – something that I shall now do with respect to *Táin Bó Cuailnge*.

The *Táin* in the context of the eightfold model

A key problem in modelling discourse structure is that of reliably abstracting high-level concepts and themes from low-level lexical and sentential features, and the eightfold model is no different in this regard. Ideally, the structuring binary oppositions would be identified by way of an automated process like latent semantic analysis that mitigates the effects of confirmation bias.[18] However, though this is likely to be possible quite soon, the present state of the art does not allow it to be easily performed for the high-level predicates under investigation here. Given this, I have manually analysed the text with a view to extracting oppositions in the standard literary-critical manner.

The outcome of this process is the identification of three structuring oppositions in the *Táin*: cohesiveness (social cohesion vs social antagonism), social orientation (intra-social vs inter-social) and nature (marked beings vs unmarked beings). The first two of these are self-explanatory and already attested in the secondary literature. Alwyn and Brinley Rees and Jarich Oosten, for instance, identify the *Táin* as a document that charts intra-social tensions and class struggle;[19] equally, the heroic character of the narrative means that the relationships between polities complement the relationships within polities.[20] Against this, the categories of 'marked' vs 'unmarked' beings may be less familiar. The essential distinction being adverted to here is that between the core protagonists of the *Táin* (aristocratic males) and all the other social actors (women, uninitiated males, supernatural agents and zoomorphic beings) who are active in the narrative. The 'marked' vs 'unmarked' terminology comes from linguistics, where the unmarked member of a linguistic pair is one that is morphologically dominant relative to an inflected or suffixed subordinate term that is semantically related ('lion' vs 'lioness', 'honest' vs 'dishonest').[21] The value of the terminology is that it neatly captures the distinction between the default agency position in the *Táin* and the multivalent, hierarchically structured ways in which alternatives to this agency are posited. As Bruce Lincoln notes, the *Táin* engages in a 'homologization of unrelated categories' in which 'men outrank women, just as Ulster outranks Connacht and the Donn Cúalgne outranks Finbennach Ai' – an outcome that reflects the fact 'that those responsible for . . . the *Táin* were males connected with the province of Ulster'.[22] Thus, the third opposition complements the exploration of conflict and sociality with considerations of gender, race and social rank.

As showcased above for the Genesis narrative, these three oppositions yield eight possible combinations. A preview of these combinations can be found in Table 12.1 below; the details of how they relate to the text of the *Táin* follow.

1	Antagonism	×	Intra-social	×	unmarked	≈	Conchobor's Kingship
2	Antagonism	×	Intra-social	×	marked	≈	Macha's Curse
3	Antagonism	×	Inter-social	×	unmarked	≈	Connacht
4	Antagonism	×	Inter-social	×	marked	≈	Pig-Keepers and Morrígan
5	Solidarity	×	Intra-social	×	unmarked	≈	Naming of Cú Chulainn
6	Solidarity	×	Intra-social	×	marked	≈	Boys of Ulster
7	Solidarity	×	Inter-social	×	unmarked	≈	Exiles, Ferdia
8	Solidarity	×	Inter-social	×	marked	≈	Lug

TABLE 12.1 The eight semantic locations in the *Táin*

Space 1 – Conchobor's Kingship

Conchobor, king of the Ulaid, has been described as 'one of the most Machiavellian characters in Irish literature'.[23] As such, he evinces intra-social antagonism by way of male aristocratic privilege. This is most visible in two *rémscela*, notably 'How Conchobor was begotten, and how he took the kinship of Ulster' and 'The exile of the sons of Uisliu'. Signals of his acquisitiveness can be found in his overlong sojourn in his mother's womb (three years and three months), his sexual coveting of the wives of the Ulstermen (as well as Deirdre) and the opulent splendour of his three households, Craebruad (the Red Branch), Téte Brec (the Twinkling Hoard) and Craebderg (the Ruddy Branch). Though each of these actions and attributes carries other significations – for instance, his wealth might advert to the abundance of a proper king, or his sleeping with the wives of his subjects might be a symbolic renewal of sovereignty – their aggregate effect points to the singular status of the king as the apex consumer. Conchobor's specifically intra-social antagonism can be seen in his propensity for provoking divisions among his people. On the advice of his no less acquisitive mother, Nes, he has his household 'steal everything from one half of the people and give it away to the other half'.[24] Again, other factors are at work here, with the scheming mother motif being widespread across the mythological record. However, the unequivocal registration of Conchobor's betrayal of his people for personal gain can be seen in his underhanded and duplicitous treatment of the sons of Uisliu in service of his desire for Deirdre, which ultimately leads to a body of the most accomplished Ulster warriors going into exile with Medb and Ailill in Connacht. For these reasons, Conchobor is expressive of the corrosive effects of aristocratic avarice on social solidarity.

Space 2 – Macha's Curse

As previously explored by the present author,[25] the curse of Macha can be interpreted as a symbolic representation of social inequality. On this view, Macha's forced race against the king's horses evokes the subordination of agrarian producers by the martial and juridical classes. That Macha is associated with material bounty is seen in how 'there was never a lack of food or clothes or anything else under her care',[26] as well as through her traditional nomination as a fertility goddess.[27] Paralleling this, her curse can be read as expressing the standing animosity that can subsequently be expected from the subjugated population. Elsewhere, I naturalise this connection by way of recent work in cognitive science that shows how moral violations lead to expectations of supernatural animation.[28] Specifically, experimental and ethnographic evidence shows that individuals primed to believe in the presence of an invisible supernatural observer are less inclined to break moral rules.[29] That Macha does indeed belong to the 'marked' category of agents is clear from her nature as a female supernatural being. Her material abundance is provided in semi-magical fashion once she first appears, and her injunction to her husband, Crunniuc, never to speak of her is a standard motif associated with the supernatural helper. Moreover, as Proinsias Mac Cana notes, the Macha of the *Táin* is just one incarnation of a goddess figure: 'Of the three Machas, one is a visionary, another a warrior, while the third is the telluric *materfamilias* who brings with her increase and fruitfulness.'[30] To this extent, Macha is a member of the *síd*; thus she is a plausible vehicle for intuitions about morality and the supernatural. As such, she is the absolute negation of Conchobor, insofar as her curse expresses the intuition that social institutions should be regulated to prevent the emergence of excessive inequality.

Space 3 – Connacht

As the lynchpin of the alliance against Ulster, Connacht is expressive of inter-social antagonism between rival polities. To begin with, there is the traditional inter-provincial rivalry, which sees the Exiles go to Connacht

– 'not that this was a home for Ulstermen'.[31] As such, Connacht represents the prototypical heterotopia for Ulster – and thus is a stand-in for the idea of enmity more generally. With respect to the action of the narrative, the province provides the motive for the *Táin* proper, insofar as Medb's rivalry with Ailill leads to the unprovoked invasion of Ulster. Necessarily, this brings with it the whole choreography of alliances, conflicts and intrigues that attend competitions between aristocratic, martial societies. Nevertheless, a seemingly problematic issue arises in the figure of Medb, who is both female and a powerful agent in her own right – thus querying the identification of Connacht as 'unmarked'. The resolution to this comes with recognising that Medb, though daughter of Eochaid Feidlech, a High King of Ireland, and a sovereignty-conferring figure in her own right, is propelled into action by a deficiency in wealth relative to her husband, Ailill. Thus, though Medb is a more imposing character than Ailill, the symbolic patterning of the narrative identifies the latter as socially dominant and preserves the structure.

Space 4 – Pig-Keepers and the Morrígan

Just as Macha evokes intra-social antagonism though the agency of a supernatural (i.e. marked) being, the pig-keepers and the Morrígan evoke inter-social antagonism through the agency of marked, supernatural beings. The former's rivalry is expressed in 'The quarrel of the two pig-keepers, and how the bulls were begotten' *rémscel*, which details how 'There was bad blood between Ochall Ochne, the king of the síd in Connacht, and Bodb, king of the Munster síd'.[32] The pig-keepers of both kings, starting with friendly rivalry, ultimately end up locked into a vicious conflict that portends 'only war-wailing and a fullness of friends' corpses'[33] in the mortal sphere. Moreover, this is precisely what eventuates when they take the form of the two bulls, the Donn Cúalgne and the Finbennach Ai, who occasion the invasion of Ulster. With respect to the Morrígan, she is, throughout the *Táin*, a hostile figure associated with carnage against the Ulstermen. For instance, she actively impedes Cú Chulainn in his single combats by appearing as an eel, a wolf and a heifer – only for Cú Chulainn to wound her in each form. However, it is also worth noting the Morrígan's role reflects that of the Fates in Greek mythology, and thus that she may be expressive of conflict without being responsible for it. In Máire Herbert's words, 'the goddess in all [. . .] instances is the harbinger of doom rather than its instigator'.[34] The general point, however, is that both the pig-keepers and the Morrígan offer a supernatural analogue to the mortal conflicts that pitch Ulster against Connacht and the rest of Ireland.

Space 5 – The Naming of Cú Chulainn

In previous work,[35] I argued that 'The naming of Cú Chulainn' and 'The curse of Macha' *rémscela* are inverses of each other, to the extent that the latter restores the break in intra-social solidarity that the former documents. That is, I suggest that Cú Chulainn's agreement to defend the home of the blacksmith Culann after he kills his hound expresses reciprocity between classes, where the racing of Macha expresses inter-class exploitation. A key item of evidence for this claim is the fact that Cú Chulainn is exempt from Macha's punitive curse. Anticipations of this role are also visible in 'How Cú Chulainn was begotten'. For instance, his conception is occasioned by the appearance of 'nine scores of birds with a silver chain between each couple',[36] a plausible representation of reciprocity as the chain forces each bird to coordinate its movements with the other; equally, Cú Chulainn has a triple birth and is raised as a foster son by the whole of Ulster. These latter facts evince a formation by the entire social collective – a scenario that could not contrast more with the self-serving Conchobor. The most poignant demonstration of Cú Chulainn's commitment to intra-social solidarity comes in 'The Death of Aife's One Son' *rémscel*. Specifically, just as Abraham demonstrates his commitment to the Hebrew Covenant with God by agreeing to kill Isaac in Genesis 22, so too does Cú Chulainn demonstrate his fidelity to the welfare of Ulster by slaying his own son in battle. In his words to Emer, 'No matter who he is, wife [. . .] I must kill him for the honour of Ulster'.[37] More generally, Cú Chulainn's lone stand against Connacht and the rest of Ireland takes up this role and amplifies it, and thus it comes to occupy the foreground of the *Táin*.

Space 6 – The Boys of Ulster

Relative to the terms 'man' or 'woman', the terms 'boy' or 'girl' are typically taken to be marked.[38] Thus, it is unsurprising that the co-positing of solidarity in the intra-social sphere with the trait of markedness should emerge in the form of the boys of Ulster. The boy troop, it will be remembered, substitute for Cú Chulainn while he sleeps for three nights after defending Ulster sleepless for the entire winter. Though they play a relatively marginal role in the narrative, it is notable how their marked status complements that of Lug (encountered in Space 8).

Space 7 – Exiles, Ferdia

A thematically foregrounded topic in the *Táin* is the collocation of inter-social solidarity with unmarked agents. In the first instance, Fergus evinces social solidarity through his pledge of safety to the sons of

Uisliu after Conchobor betrays them. Moreover, the way in which this pledge is overcome is quite significant: ‘But Fergus was stopped through Conchobor’s cunning. He was invited to a number of ale feasts, and, by an old oath, couldn’t refuse’.[39] To the extent that the exchange of food is a core action of social reciprocity,[40] it thus follows that Fergus is especially marked as agent of reciprocity. The inter-social dimension of this reciprocity comes from the fact that, during the events of the *Táin*, Fergus and the other exiles are nominally allied with Connacht, even while secretly aiding Cú Chulainn. (Fergus, for instance, deliberately impedes the progress of the armies with bad guidance and refuses to fight Cú Chulainn.) In this sense, they inhabit the role of external allies that further the interests of Ulster from without. A second instance of inter-social solidarity with an unmarked agent is the most arresting episode of the *Táin*, and can be found in Cú Chulainn’s fight with his foster-brother, Ferdia. Though this ultimately collapses into the inter-social conflict (i.e. Space 3), the reciprocity between Cú Chulainn and Ferdia is quite pronounced. Note, for instance, how after their first encounter, ‘As many wholesome, healing plants and herbs as were put on Cú Chulainn’s stabs and cuts and gashes and countless wounds, he sent the same over to Ferdia’, just as Ferdia in return sends over ‘all the food and the health-giving, stimulating, delicious drinks that the men of Ireland gave him’.[41] Moreover, when Ferdia is killed, Cú Chulainn laments him with the remembrance that ‘A like learning we both had / The same rights, the same belongings / The same good foster-mother / – her whose name is most honoured’.[42] Thus, even though Cú Chulainn overcomes Ferdia, the dominant register does not attach to martial triumph, but to the emotional bonds of alliance that transcend blood kinship.

Space 8 – **Lug**

The conjoining of inter-social solidarity with a marked agent can be found in the figure of Lug, Cú Chulainn’s father from the *síd*. This is most obvious when he aids Cú Chulainn by defending Ulster while he sleeps for three days: ‘“Sleep a while, then, Cú Chulainn”, [Lug] said, “a heavy sleep of three says and three nights by the gravemound at Lerga. I’ll stand against the armies for that time.”’[43] In this, Lug is clearly the inter-social analogue to the boys of Ulster, who manifest intra-social solidarity with Cú Chulainn. In fact, the question might well be asked as to whether there is, thematically, any difference between Lug’s and the boys’ actions. The answer is ‘yes’ for two reasons. In the first instance, Lug actively heals his son, when the boy troop merely compensate for him. The second is given by Lug’s exceptional status as a representative of the Tuatha Dé Dannan. As recorded in *Lebor Gabála Érenn* (*The Book of Invasions*), the Tuatha Dé Dannan are the relict population of the former inhabitants of Ireland who agree with the Milesians (i.e. the Celts) to share Ireland, with the former taking below ground and the latter above.[44] (It should be noted, however, that other early Irish materials identify the Tuatha Dé Dannan as the deities of pre-Christian Ireland). Whatever his exact provenance, it remains clear that Lug's aiding of Cú Chulainn is evocative of an alliance between polities, rather than comity within a polity. However, Lug's divine character means that, unlike the 'horizontal' alliance with the exiles, the alliance with Lug involves a 'vertical' sanctioning of Cú Chulainn's role by the cosmological order.

Conclusion

If successful, the preceding analysis will have convinced that the *Táin* decomposes relatively naturally into the divisions predicted by the eightfold model. Each semantic location has a well-defined representation in the narrative, and, though the correspondence is not exact, there is a reasonable (and unexpected) congruence with structural divisions in the text. The question is whether the model allows us to discover anything new about the *Táin*.

In this regard, a key finding is that the *Táin* is a highly structured exploration of the nature of social solidarity. With justification, it can be thought of as a type of algorithm, where every possible variation on the establishment (and breaking) of solidarity is represented and evaluated. In some cases, these variations are practical and likely to be encountered in actual social life; in others, they are fantastical and primarily of axiological or symbolic importance. Thus the medieval scribe's famous claim that 'some things in [this fable] are the deceptions of demons, other poetic figments; some are probable, others improbable; while still others are intended for the delectation of foolish men'.[45] Collectively, they evince the concerns of a society that is confident about its overall coherence as cultural entity, but dismayed at the factional tendencies that characterise it. As such, the *Táin* is broadly congruent with other Indo-European epics – though the mythopoeic elements in the *Táin* are certainly more visible than is typically the case.

These points raise further issues when it comes to the form of the text. Though I do not wish to speculate on palaeographical matters that are best left to specialists, the eightfold model does point to a principle of selection that may have guided the composition of the various recensions. The problem, as Frank O'Connor candidly notes, is that the *Táin* 'is simply [an] appalling text' and is difficult to 'read much less interpret'.[46] Moreover, even allowing this, some elements of the narrative present further difficulties with respect to continuity. For instance, Jeffrey Gantz notes that the Curse of Macha *rémscel* 'has not been well integrated'[47] with the broader Ulster Cycle. Given these assessments, it may be tempting to conclude that there is no overarching design to the *Táin*, and that its component parts are as much brought together by historical accident as they are by conscious design. The eightfold model challenges this view. Specifically, it points to an active selection of materials, where the cognitive model that informs the *Táin* gave prior criteria for the acceptance or rejection of the fragments, allusions and incidents that are visible in the text. On this reading, the Curse of Macha (for instance) is not a fossil whose presence needs to be explained; instead, it is actively selected for by the need for cognitive closure. For sure, this process leaves considerable room for stylistic variation (variation that is abundantly visible in the *Lebor na hUidre* and *Book of Leinster* recensions); nevertheless, it still accounts for the basic unity of the *Táin* as an ideological document – and even this claim needs to be expanded in the context of the other *rémscela*.

More generally, the considerations raised in the preceding pages point to two further lines of development for the eightfold model. The first of these is psychological, and has already been hinted at – namely, the experimental assessment of responses to manipulated narratives from large populations. There is no reason, in principle, why this cannot be done, though it presents the usual issues of funding and implementation that attach to experimentation with human subjects. The second line of development involves extending the analysis to other texts in the insular Celtic tradition. Traditionally, such an extension would be a major undertaking, but there are grounds for optimism that advances in machine learning and natural language processing may make the task considerably easier relatively soon.[48] Be that as it may, my hope for now is that the speculations offered here will have given some grounds for thinking that the eightfold model is worth pursuing as a tool for the analysis of mythological and legendary materials.

Notes

[1] Mark Currie, *Postmodern Narrative Theory* (Basingstoke, 2010), p. 82.

[2] Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (London, 2005), p. 69.

[3] Paul De Man, 'Roland Barthes and the Imits of Structuralism', *Yale French Studies* (1990), 177–90.

[4] Willie van Peer, *Stylistics and Psychology: Investigations of Foregrounding* (London, 1986); Peter Stockwell and Marina Lambrou (eds), *Contemporary Stylistics* (London, 2010).

[5] James Carney, 'The Pangs of the Ulstermen: An Exchangist Perspective', *Journal of Indo-European Studies*, 36 (2008), 52–66; James Carney, 'The Return of the Oppressed: Intra-Social Inequality and Supernatural Agency in the Táin and Crofton Croker's "Teigue of the Lee"', *Cosmos*, 32 (forthcoming).

[6] James Carney, 'Narrative and Ontology in Hesiod's Homeric Hymn to Demeter: A Catastrophist Approach', *Semiotica*, 167 (2007), 337–68.

[7] Emily Lyle, 'Dumézil's Three Functions and Indo-European Cosmic Structure', *History of Religions*, 22 (2007), 25–44; Emily Lyle, 'Narrative Form and the Structure Of Myth', *Folklore*, 33 (2008), 59–70; Emily Lyle, *Ten Gods: A New Approach to Defining the Mythological Structures of the Indo-Europeans* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 2012).

[8] Claude Lévi-Strauss, 'The Story of Asdiwal', in Edmund Leach (ed.), *The Structural Study of Myth and Totemism* (London, 1967), pp. 1–48.

[9] Ann Dooley, *Playing the Hero: Reading the Irish Saga Táin Bó Cúailnge* (Toronto, 2006), p. 6.

[10] Thomas Kinsella, *The Táin: From the Irish Epic Táin Bó Cuailnge* (Oxford, 2002).

[11] Donald Brown, *Human Universals* (New York, 1991).

[12] Saint Augustine, *Genesi Ad Litteram, Books 1–6*, ed. Johannes Quasten, Walter J. Burghardt and Thomas Comerford Lawlor (Mahwah, NJ, 1983).

[13] Charles E. Curran, *The Catholic Moral Tradition Today: A Synthesis* (Washington DC, 1999).

[14] Edmund Leach, 'The Legitimacy of Solomon: Some Structural Aspects of Old Testament History', *European Journal of Sociology*, 42 (2001), 131–74.

[15] Carney, 'Narrative and Ontology'; Robert Polzin, *Biblical Structuralism: Method and Subjectivity in the Study of Ancient Texts* (Philadelphia, 1977).

[16] Lyle, *Ten Gods*, pp. 55–74.

[17] Mircea Eliade, *Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries*, trans. Philip Mairet (London, 1960), p. 23.

[18] Thomas Landauer, Peter Foltz and Darrell Laham, 'An Introduction to Latent Semantic Analysis', *Discourse Processes*, 25 (1998), 259–84; Thomas Landauer and Susan Dumais, 'A Solution to Plato's Problem: The Latent Semantic Analysis Theory of Acquisition, Induction, and Representation of Knowledge', *Psychological Review*, 104 (1997), 211–40.

[19] Jarich G. Oosten, *The War of the Gods (RLE Myth): The Social Code in Indo-European Mythology* (London, 2015); Alwyn Rees and Brinley Rees, *Celtic Heritage: Ancient Tradition in Ireland and Wales* (London, 1961).

[20] Joseph Falaky Nagy, 'Heroic Destinies in the Macgnímrada of Finn and Cú Chulainn', *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie*, 40 (2009), 23–39; Marie-Louise Sjoestedt, *Dieux et Héros des Celtes* (Paris, 2009 [1940]).

[21] Chris Golston, 'Direct Optimality Theory: Representation as Pure Markedness', *Language*, 72 (1996), 713–48; Linda R. Waugh, *Roman Jakobson's Science of Language* (Amsterdam, 1976).

[22] Bruce Lincoln, *Theorizing Myth: Narrative, Ideology, and Scholarship* (Chicago, 1999), p. 149.

[23] Caoimhín Mac Giolla Léith (ed. and trans.), *Oidheadh Chloinne hUisneach* (Dublin, 1993), p. 15.

[24] Kinsella, *The Táin*, p. 4.

[25] Carney, 'The Pangs of the Ulstermen'; Carney, 'The Return of the Oppressed'.

[26] Kinsella, *The Táin*, p. 6.

[27] Miranda Green, *The Gods of the Celts* (Stroud, 2011).

[28] Carney, 'The Return of the Oppressed'; James Carney et al., 'Social Psychology and the Comic-Book Superhero: A Darwinian Approach', *Philosophy and Literature*, 38 (2014), 195–21.

[29] Jared Piazza, Jesse Bering and Gordon Ingram, '"Princess Alice Is Watching You": Children's Belief in an Invisible Person Inhibits Cheating', *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 109 (2011), 311–20; Pierrick Bourrat, Quentin D. Atkinson and Robin I. M. Dunbar, 'Supernatural Punishment and Individual Social Compliance across Cultures', *Religion, Brain & Behavior*, 1 (2011), 119–34; Jesse Bering and Dominic Johnson, '"O Lord . . . You Perceive My Thoughts from Afar": Recursiveness and the Evolution of Supernatural Agency', *Journal of Cognition and Culture*, 5 (2005), 118–42.

[30] Proinsias Mac Cana, *Celtic Mythology* (Feltham,1970), p. 88.

[31] Kinsella, *The Táin*, p. 15.

[32] Kinsella, *The Táin*, p. 46.

[33] Kinsella, *The Táin*, p. 48.

[34] Máire Herbert, 'Transmutations of an Irish Goddess', in Sandra Billington and Miranda Green, *The Concept of the Goddess* (London, 1999), pp. 141–51 (p. 147).

[35] Carney, 'The Pangs of the Ulstermen'.

[36] Kinsella, *The Táin*, p. 22.

[37] Kinsella, *The Táin*, p. 44.

[38] Byron W. Bender, 'Markedness and Iconicity: Some Questions', in Anna Siewierska and Jae Jung Song (eds), *Case, Typology and Grammar: In Honor of Barry J. Blake* (Amsterdam, 1998), pp. 57–70.

[39] Kinsella, *The Táin*, p. 14.

[40] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, trans. James Harle Bell, Richard von Sturmer and Rodney Needham (Boston, 1969); Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. W. D. Halls (London, 1990).

[41] Kinsella, *The Táin*, p. 188.

[42] Kinsella, *The Táin*, p. 204.

[43] Kinsella, *The Táin*, p. 142.

[44] R. A. Stewart Macalister (ed. and trans.), *Lebor Gabála Erenn: The Book of the Taking of Ireland, Part V* (Dublin, 1956).

[45] Proinsias Mac Cana, 'Early Irish Ideology and the Concept of Unity', in Richard Kearney (ed.), *The Irish Mind: Exploring Intellectual Traditions* (Dublin, 1984), pp. 56–78 (p. 56).

[46] Frank O'Connor, *The Backward Look: A Survey of Irish Literature* (London, 1967), p. 30.

[47] Jeffrey Gantz, *Early Irish Myths and Sagas* (London, 1981), p. 128.

[48] Julia Hirschberg and Christopher D. Manning, 'Advances in Natural Language Processing', *Science*, 349 (2015), 261–6.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Almqvist, Bo, 'The mysterious Mícheál Ó Gaoithín, Boccaccio and the Blasket tradition', *Béaloideas*, 58 (1990), 75–140.

Arbuthnot, Sharon (ed.), *Cóir Anmann: A Late Middle Irish Treatise on Personal Names* (London, 2007).

Arbuthnot, Sharon, and Parsons, Geraldine (eds), *The Gaelic Finn Tradition* (Dublin, 2012)

Ardener, Edwin, 'Remote areas: some theoretical considerations', in Anthony Jackson (ed.), *Anthropology at Home* (London, 1987), 38–54.

Augustine, Saint, Quasten, Johannes, Burghardt, Walter J., and Lawlor, Thomas Comerford (eds), *Genesi Ad Litteram, Books 1-6* (Mahwah, NJ, 1983).

Barney, Stephen A., et al. (eds), *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville* (Cambridge, 2006).

Beekes, Robert S., 'Uncle and Nephew', *Journal of Indo-European Studies*, 4/1 (1976), 43–63.

Belier, Wouter, *Decayed Gods: Origin and Development of Georges Dumézil's 'idéologie tripartite'* (Leiden, 1991).

Bender, Byron W., 'Markedness and Iconicity: Some Questions', in Anna Siewierska and Jae Jung Song (eds), *Case, Typology and Grammar: In Honor of Barry J. Blake* (Amsterdam, 1998), pp. 57–70.

Benjamin, D. R., *Mushrooms – Poisons and Panaceas. A Handbook for Naturalists, Mycologists and Physicians* (New York, 1995).

Benjamin, D. R., 'Mushroom poisoning in infants and children: the *Amanita pantherina / muscaria* group', *Journal of Toxicology: Clinical Toxicology*, 30/1 (1992), 13–22.

Berezkin, Yuriy E. [Березкин, Юрий Е.], *Мифы Старого и Нового Света* [*Mify Starogo i Novogo Sveta – Myths of the Old and New Worlds*] (Moscow, 2009).

Bergaigne, Abel, *La religion védique d'après les hymnes du Ṛ̥ig-Véda*, 4 vols (Paris, 1878–97).

Berger, Peter L., and Luckmann, Thomas, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Harmondsworth, 1967).

Bergin, Osborn, and Best, R. I. (eds), '*Tochmarc Étaíne*', *Ériu*, 12 (1938), 137–96.

Bergin, Osborn, 'How the Dagda Got His Magic Staff', *Medieval Studies in Memory of Gertrude Schoepperle Loomis* (New York, 1927), pp. 399–406.

Bergquist, A. K., and Taylor, T. T., 'The Origin of the Gundestrup Cauldron', *Antiquity*, 61/231 (1987), 10–24.

Bering, Jesse, and Johnson, Dominic, '"O Lord . . . You Perceive My Thoughts from Afar": Recursiveness and the Evolution of Supernatural Agency', *Journal of Cognition and Culture*, 5 (2005), 118–42.

Bernardi, Bernardo, *Age Class Systems: Social Institutions and Polities Based on Age* (Cambridge, 1985).

Best, R. I., 'The Settling of the Manor of Tara', *Ériu*, 4 (1910), 121–72.

Best, R. I., and Bergin, Osborn (eds), *Lebor na hUidre: Book of the Dun Cow* (Dublin, 1929).

Bhreathnach, Edel, *Ireland in the Medieval World AD 400–1000: Landscape, Kingship and Religion* (Dublin, 2014).

Bieler, Ludwig (ed.), *The Patrician Texts in the Book of Armagh* (Dublin, 1979).

Bieler, Ludwig (ed.), *Libri epistolarum Sancti Patricii episcopi: Introduction, Text and Commentary* (Dublin, 1993).

Bihan-Gallic, Fañch, 'Eileanan-Cladh ann an Alba – Burial-islands in Scotland' (unpublished MSc dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 2015).

Binchy, D. A., 'The Linguistic and Historical Value of the Irish Law Tracts', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 29 (1943), 195–227; repr. in Dafydd Jenkins (ed.), *Celtic Law Papers Introductory to Welsh Medieval Law and Government* (Brussels, 1973).

Binchy, D. A., 'The Saga of Fergus mac Léti', *Ériu*, 16 (1952), 33–48.

Binchy, D. A. (ed.), *Corpus Iuris Hibernici*, 6 vols (Dublin, 1978).

Blažek, Václav, 'Celtic "deer"', *Études Celtiques*, 41 (2015), 121–8.

Bondarenko, Grigory, *Studies in Irish Mythology* (Berlin, 2014).

Borgeaud, Philippe, *La Mère des dieux: De Cybèle à la Vierge Marie* (Paris, 1996).

Borsje, Jacqueline, 'Druids, Deer and "Words of Power": Coming to Terms with Evil in Medieval Ireland', in Ritari and Bergholm, *Approaches to Religion and Mythology*, pp. 122–49.

Borsje, Jacqueline, 'Monotheistic to a Certain Extent. The "Good Neighbors" of God in Ireland', in Anne-Marie Korte and Maaike de Haardt (eds), *The Boundaries of Monotheism: Interdisciplinary Explorations into the Foundations of Western Monotheism* (Leiden, 2009), pp. 53–82.

Borsje, Jacqueline, 'Celtic Spells and Counterspells', in Karin Ritari and Alexandra Bergholm (eds), *Understanding Celtic Religion: Revisiting the Pagan Past* (Cardiff, 2015), pp. 9–50.

Bourke, Angela, *The Burning of Bridget Cleary: A True Story* (London, 1999).

Bourrat, Pierrick, Atkinson, Quentin D., and Dunbar, Robin I. M., 'Supernatural Punishment and Individual Social Compliance across Cultures', *Religion, Brain & Behavior*, 1 (2011), 119–34.

Braz, Anatole le, *La Légende la Mort chez les Bretons Armoricains*, 2 vols (Paris, 1902).

Breatnach, Caoimhín, 'The transmission and text of TDG: a reappraisal', in Arbuthnot and Parsons, *The Gaelic Finn Tradition*, pp. 139–50.

Breatnach, Liam, 'The Caldron of Poesy', *Ériu*, 32 (1981), 45–93.

Breatnach, Liam, *The Early Irish Law Text Senchas Már and the Question of the Date* (Cambridge, 2011).

Breatnach, Risteard A., 'The Lady and the King: A Theme of Irish Literature', *Studies*, 42 (1953), 321–36.

Bremmer, Jan, 'Avunculate and Fosterage', *Journal of Indo-European Studies*, 4/1 (1976), 65–78.

Bromwich, Rachel, 'Celtic Dynastic Themes and Breton Lays', *Études Celtiques*, 9 (1961), 439–74.

Bromwich, Rachel (ed.), *Trioedd Ynys Prydein. The Welsh Triads* (Cardiff, 1961).

Brown, Donald, *Human Universals* (New York, 1991).

Brown, W. Norman, 'The Creation Myth of the Rig Veda', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 62/2 (1942), 85–98.

Bruford, Alan, 'The Twins of Macha', *Cosmos*, 5 (1989), 125–41.

Byrne, M. E., 'Airec Menman Uraird Maic Coisse', in Osborn Bergin, R. I. Best and J. G. O'Keefe (eds), *Anecdota from Irish Manuscripts*, Part 2 (Halle and Dublin, 1908), pp. 42–76.

Caesarensis, Procopius, *Procopius in Seven Volumes: History of the Wars, Books VII and VIII*, trans. by H. B. Dewing (London, 1928).

Campbell, John Francis, *My Circular Letters*, 2 vols (London, 1876).

Campbell, John Francis, *Popular Tales of the West Highlands*, 4 vols (Paisley, 1892).

Campbell, John Francis, *The Celtic Dragon Myth: With the Geste of Fraoch and the Dragon*, trans. by George Henderson (Edinburgh, 1911).

Carey, John, 'Notes on the Irish war-goddess', *Éigse*, 19 (1983), 263–75.

Carey, John, 'Scél Tuáin meic Chairill', *Ériu*, 35 (1984), 93–111.

Carey, John, 'Suibne Geilt and Tuán mac Cairill', *Éigse*, 20 (1984), 93–105.

Carey, John, 'Time, Space, and the Otherworld', *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, 7 (1987), 1–27.

Carey, John, 'Sequence and Causation in *Echtra Nerai*', *Ériu*, 39 (1988), 67–74.

Carey, John, 'Memory, and the Boyne Necropolis', *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, 10 (1990), 24–36.

Carey, John, 'A British Myth of Origins?' *History of Religions*, 31/1 (1991), 24–38.

Carey, John, 'Native Elements in Irish Pseudohistory', in Doris Edel (ed.), *Cultural Identity and Cultural Integration: Ireland and Europe in the Early Middle Ages* (Dublin, 1995), pp. 45–60.

Carey, John, 'On the Interrelationships of Some "*Cín Dromma Snechtai*" Texts', *Ériu,* 46 (1995), 71–92.

Carey, John, 'The Three Things Required of a Poet', *Ériu*, 48 (1997), 41–58.

Carey, John, 'The Baptism of the Gods', in *A Single Ray of the Sun: Religious Speculation in Early Ireland* (Andover and Aberystwyth, 1999), pp. 1–38.

Carey, John, '*Lebor Gabála* and the legendary', in Helen Fulton (ed.), *Medieval Celtic Literature and Society* (Dublin, 2005), pp. 32–48.

Carey, John, 'Tara and the Supernatural', in Edel Bhreathnach (ed.), *The Kingship and Landscape of Tara* (Dublin, 2005), pp. 32–48.

Carey, John, 'Two Notes on Names', *Éigse*, 35 (2005), 116–24.

Carey, John, *Ireland and the Grail* (Aberystwyth, 2007)

Carey, John, 'From David to Labraid: Sacral Kingship and the Emergence of Monotheism in Israel and Ireland', in Ritari and Bergholm, *Approaches to Religion and Mythology*, pp. 2–27.

Carey, John, 'Muirchú and the Ulster Cycle', in Gregory Toner and Séamus Mac Mathúna (eds), *Ulidia 3: Proceedings of the Third International Conference on the Ulster Cycle of Tales* (Berlin, 2013), pp. 121–6.

Carey, John, 'The Nature of Miracles in Early Irish Saints' Lives', in A. K. Siewers (ed.), *Re-imagining Nature: Environmental Humanities and Ecosemiotics* (Lewisburg, 2014), pp. 127–39.

Carey, John, '*Yonec* and *Tochmarc Becfola*: Two Female *Echtrai*', in John Carey, Kevin Murray and Caitríona Ó Dochartaigh (eds), *Sacred Histories: A Festschrift for Máire Herbert* (Dublin, 2015), pp. 73–85.

Carey, John. 'The Final Transformation of Étaín', *Ériu*, 66 (2016), 31–8.

Carney, James, 'Carn Fraoich', *Celtica*, 2 (1950), 154–94.

Carney, James, *Studies in Irish Literature and History* (Dublin, 1955).

Carney, James, *The Problem of St Patrick* (Dublin, 1961).

Carney, James (ed.), *The Poems of Blathmac Son of Cú Brettan* (Dublin, 1964).

Carney, James, 'The Ó Cianáin Miscellany', *Ériu*, 21 (1969), 122–47.

Carney, James, 'Language and Literature to 1169', in Dáibhí Ó Cróinín (ed.), *A New History of Ireland I: Prehistoric and Early Ireland* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 451–510.

Carney, James, 'Narrative and Ontology in Hesiod's Homeric Hymn to Demeter: A Catastrophist Approach', *Semiotica*, 167 (2007), 337–68.

Carney, James, 'The Pangs of the Ulstermen: An Exchangist Perspective', *Journal of Indo-European Studies*, 36 (2008), 52–66.

Carney, James, 'The Return of the Oppressed: Intra-Social Inequality and Supernatural Agency in the *Táin* and Crofton Croker's "Teigue of the Lee"', *Cosmos*, 32 (forthcoming).

Carney, James, et al., 'Social Psychology and the Comic-Book Superhero: A Darwinian Approach', *Philosophy and Literature*, 38 (2014), 195–215.

Carr, A. D., '*Teulu* and *Penteulu*', in T. M. Charles-Edwards, Morfydd E. Owen and Paul Russell (eds), *The Welsh King and His Court* (Cardiff, 2000), pp. 63–81.

Chadwick, Nora K., 'Imbas Forosnai', *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, 4 (1935), pp. 97–135.

Chance, Jane, *Medieval Mythography: From Roman North Africa to the School of Chartres, A.D. 433–1177* (Gainesville, 1994).

Chapman, Malcolm, *The Celts: The Construction of a Myth* (Basingstoke and New York, 1992).

Charles-Edwards, T. M., '*Tochmarc Étaíne*: A Literal Interpretation', in Richter and Picard (eds), *Ogma*, pp. 165–81.

Charles-Edwards, T. M., *Early Irish and Welsh Kingship* (Oxford, 1993).

Clarke, Michael, 'Linguistic Education and Literary Creativity in Medieval Ireland', *Cahiers de l'Institut de Linguistique et des Sciences des Langues*, 38 (2013), 39–71.

Coe, Jon B., and Young, Simon, *The Celtic Sources for the Arthurian Legend* (Felinfach, 1995).

Cohen, Jeffrey J. (ed.), *Monster Theory: Reading Culture* (Minneapolis, 1996).

Colgan, John (ed.), *Triadis Thaumaturgæ, seu divorum Patricii, Columbæ, et Brigidæ, trium veteris et majoris Scotiæ, seu Hiberniæ, Sanctorum insulæ, communium patronorum acta, a variis, iisque pervetustis ac Sanctis, authoribus Scripta* (Louvain, 1647).

Corbes, H., 'Alfred Tennyson en Bretagne à la recherche des légendes arthuriennes', *Annales de Bretagne*, 72 (1965), 529–36.

Coyne, Frank, *Islands in the Clouds: An Upland Archaeological Study on Mount Brandon and The Paps, County Kerry* (Tralee, 2006).

Cross, Tom P., and Slover, Clark H., *Ancient Irish Tales* (New York, 1996 [1936]).

Cuillandre, Joseph, 'À propos de la "Légende de la Mort"', *Annales de Bretagne*, 35 (1921), 627–50.

Cuillandre, Joseph, ‘La broella d’Ouessant et la navigation des Molénais dans l’autre monde’, *Annales de Bretagne*, 36 (1924), 299–320.

Curran, Charles E., *The Catholic Moral Tradition Today: A Synthesis* (Washington, DC, 1999).

Currie, Mark, *Postmodern Narrative Theory* (Basingstoke, 2010).

Curtin, Jeremiah, *The Hero-Tales of Ireland* (London, 1890).

Davidson, Hilda E. R., *Myths and Symbols in Pagan Europe: Early Scandinavian and Celtic Religions* (Syracuse, 1988).

Davies, Sioned (ed. and trans.), *The Mabinogion* (Oxford, 2007).

Davies, Sioned, ‘“Venerable Relics”? Re-Visiting the *Mabinogi*’, in Joseph F. Nagy (ed.), *Writing Down the Myths* (Turnhout, 2013), pp. 157–79.

Derrida, Jacques, *Writing and Difference*, trans. by Alan Bass (London, 2005).

Dillon, Myles, *Celts and Aryans* (Simla, 1975).

Dillon, Myles, and Chadwick, Nora, *The Celtic Realms* (New York, 1967).

Dimock, J. F. (ed.), *Giraldi Cambrensis Opera*, vol. 5 (London, 1867).

Dobbs, Margaret, ‘The Ban-Shenchus’, *Revue Celtique*, 47 (1930), 283–339; 48 (1931), 162–234; 49 (1932), 437–89.

Doherty, Charles, ‘Kingship in Early Ireland’, in Edel Bhreathnach (ed.), *The Kingship and Landscape of Tara* (Dublin, 2005), 3–31.

Doniger, Wendy, *The Rig Veda: An Anthology* (London and New York, 1981).

Dooley, Ann, *Playing the Hero: Reading the Irish Saga Táin Bó Cúailnge* (Toronto, 2006).

Dumézil, Georges, ‘La préhistoire indo-iranienne des castes’, *Journal Asiatique*, 216 (1930), 109–30.

Dumézil, Georges, ‘Le Puits de Nechtan’, *Celtica*, 6 (1963), 50–61.

Dumville, David, ‘Review of McCone, *Pagan Past and Christian Present*’, *Peritia*, 10 (1996), 389–98.

Dunn, Vincent A., *Cattle-Raids and Courtships: Medieval Narrative Genres in a Traditional Context* (New York, 1989).

Dwelly, Edward, *The Illustrated Gaelic–English Dictionary* (Glasgow, 1994 [1911]).

Eck, Diana L., *India: A Sacred Geography* (New York, 2012).

Edwards, Nancy, ‘The Irish Connection’, in Foster (ed.), *The St Andrews Sarcophagus*, pp. 227–39.

Eliade, Mircea, *Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries*, trans. by Philip Mairet (London, 1960).

Erll, Astrid, *Memory in Culture*, trans. by Sarah B. Young (Basingstoke, 2011).

Evans, Dewi W., 'The learned borrowings claimed for *Táin bó Fraích*', in Richter and Picard, *Ogma*, pp. 182–94.

Fawtier, Robert, 'Ingomar, historien breton', in *Mélanges d'histoire du moyen âge offerts à M. Ferdinand Lot* (Paris, 1925), pp. 181–204.

Filotas, Bernadette, *Pagan Survivals, Superstitions and Popular Culture in Early Medieval Pastoral Literature* (Toronto, 2005).

Finkelberg, Margalit, *Greeks and Pre-Greeks: Perspectives on Aegean Prehistory* (Cambridge, 2005).

Flechner, Roy, and Ní Mhaonaigh, Máire (eds), *Converting the Isles I: The Introduction of Christianity into the Early Medieval Insular World* (Turnhout, 2016).

Fontenrose, Joseph, *Python: A Study of Delphic Myth and Its Origins* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1959).

Ford, Patrick K., 'The Well of Nechtan and "La Gloire Lumineuse"', in Gerald J. Larson, C. Scott Littleton and Jaan Puhvel (eds), *Myth in Indo-European Antiquity* (Los Angeles, 1974), pp. 67–74.

Ford, Patrick K., *The Mabinogi and Other Medieval Welsh Tales* (Berkeley, 1977).

Ford, Patrick K., *The Celtic Poets* (Belmont, MA, 1999).

Ford, Patrick K. (ed.), *Math uab Mathonwy* (Belmont, MA, 1999).

Foster, Sally M. (ed.), *The St Andrews Sarcophagus: A Pictish Masterpiece and its International Connections* (Dublin, 1998).

Fox, Robin, *Kinship and Marriage* (Harmondsworth, 1967).

Fox, Robin, *The Tribal Imagination: Civilization and the Savage Mind* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 2011).

Fraser, John, 'The First Battle of Moytura', *Ériu*, 8 (1916), 1–63.

Frazer, James George (trans.), *Ovid's Fasti* (London and New York, 1931).

Furst, Peter D., *Hallucinogens and Culture* (Novato, CA, 1976).

Gaidoz, Henri, and Sébillot, Paul, *Contes des Provinces de France* (Paris, 1884).

Gantz, Jeffrey, *Early Irish Myths and Sagas* (London, 1981).

Geml, J., Laursen, G. A., O'Neill, I., Nusbaum, H. C., and Taylor, D. L. 'Beringian origins and cryptic speciation events in the fly agaric (*Amanita muscaria*)', *Molecular Ecology*, 15/1 (2006), 225–39.

Gibson, John C. L., 'Language about God in the Old Testament', in Glenys Davies (ed.), *Polytheistic Systems* (Edinburgh, 1989), pp. 43–50.

Gimbutas, Marija, *The Civilization of the Goddess: The World of Old Europe* (San Francisco, 1991).

Giraudon, Daniel, *Sur les chemins de l'Ankoù – Croyances et légendes de la mort en Bretagne et pays celtiques* (Fouesnant, 2012).

Golovin, E. V. [Головин, Е. В.], ‘Друиды. Дороги. Деревья. Рецензия на Г. Бондаренко “Мифология пространства Древней Ирландии” [‘Druidy. Dorogi. Derevya. Retsenziya na Grigory Bondarenko “Mifologiya prostranstva Drevney Irlandii” – ‘Druids. Roads. Trees. Review of Grigory Bondarenko “Mythology of space in Early Ireland”’], *Волшебная гора* [*Volshebnaya gora*], 9 (2004), 221–6.

Golston, Chris, ‘Direct Optimality Theory: Representation as Pure Markedness’, *Language*, 72 (1996), 713–48.

Gray, Elizabeth A., ‘Cath Maige Tuired: Myth and Structure’, *Éigse* 19 (1982), 1–35.

Gray, Elizabeth A. (ed.), *Cath Maige Tuired: The Second Battle of Mag Tuired* (London, 1982).

Green, Miranda, *The Gods of the Celts* (Stroud, 2011).

Guyonvarc’h, Christian-J., ‘Les noms celtiques de l’âme et de l’esprit’, *Ogam*, 19 (1967), 475–90.

Gwynn, E. J. (ed.), *The Metrical Dindshenchas*, 5 vols (Dublin, 1903–35).

Gwynn, Lucius, ‘De Ṡíl Chonairi Móir’, *Ériu*, 6 (1912), 130–43.

Gwynn, Lucius, ‘An Old Gaelic Giant Tale’, *The Irish Monthly*, 42 (1914), 640–5.

Hawkins, John David, ‘Commentaries on the Readings’, in Suzanne Herbordt (ed.), *Die Prinzen- und Beamtensiegel der hethitischen Grossreichszeit auf Tonbullen aus dem Nişantepe-Archiv in Hattusa* (Mainz, 2005), pp. 248–313.

Hawkins, John David, *Corpus of Hieroglyphic Luwian Inscriptions. Volume 1: Inscriptions of the Iron Age*, Parts 1–2 (Berlin and New York, 2000).

Haycock, Marged (ed. and trans.), ‘Preideu Annwfyn’, in *Legendary Poems from the Book of Taliesin* (Aberystwyth, 2007), pp. 433–51.

Hélias, Pêr-Jakez, *Mojennoù Breiz ar Mor I*, trans. by Anthony Vitt and Myriah Williams (Brest, 2001) (available at *www.csub.edu/~cmacquarrie/csana/documents/alltales.rtf*).

Hélias, Pêr-Jakez, *Mojennoù Breiz ar Mor II* (Brest, 1959).

Hellmuth, Petra S., ‘The *Dindshenchas* and Irish literary tradition’, in John Carey, Máire Herbert and Kevin Murray (eds), *Cín Chille Cúile: Texts, Saints and Places – Essays in Honour of Pádraig Ó Riain* (Aberystwyth, 2004), pp. 116–26.

Helms, Mary W., *Access to Origins: Affines, Ancestors and Aristocrats* (Austin, 1998).

Hemming, Jessica, ‘“I could love a man with those three colours”: gazing and the tricoloured beloved’, *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 68 (2014), 51–67.

Henderson, Isabel, '*Primus inter pares*: The St Andrews Sarcophagus and Pictish Sculpture', in Foster (ed.), *The St Andrews Sarcophagus*, pp. 97–167.

Henry, Françoise, *Irish Art in the Early Christian Period* (London, 1940).

Herbert, Máire, 'Transmutations of an Irish Goddess', in Sandra Billington and Miranda Green (eds), *The Concept of the Goddess* (London, 1999), pp. 141–51.

Herity, Michael (ed.), *Ordnance Survey Letters, Donegal* (Dublin, 2000).

Hirschberg, Julia, and Christopher D. Manning, 'Advances in Natural Language Processing', *Science*, 349 (2015), 261–6.

Hirschfield, Otto, and Zangemeister, Carolus (eds), *Inscriptiones Trium Galliarum et Germaniarum Latinae: Inscriptiones Germaniae Superioris*, Partis Secundae, Fasciculus I (Berlin, 1900).

Hogan, Edmund, *Onomasticon Goedelicum: Locorum et Tribuum Hiberniae et Scotiae An Index, with Identifications, to the Gaelic Names of Places and Tribes* (Dublin, 1910).

Hollo, Kaarina, '"Finn and the Man in the Tree" as Verbal Icon', in Arbuthnot and Parsons, *The Gaelic Finn Tradition*, pp. 50–61.

Hughes, Ian (ed.), *Math uab Mathonwy: The Fourth Branch of the Mabinogi* (Dublin, 2013).

Hull, Vernam, 'Two Tales about Find', *Speculum*, 16 (1941), 322–33.

Hull, Vernam, '*Aipgitir Chrábaid:* The Alphabet of Piety', *Celtica*, 8 (1968), 44–89.

Hull, Vernam (ed. and trans.), *Longes mac n-Uislenn: The Exile of the Sons of Uisliu* (New York, 1949).

Hutton, Ronald, *The Pagan Religions of the Ancient British Isles* (Oxford, 1991).

Hyde, Douglas, 'Scéalta ar Oisín', *Béaloideas*, 2 (1930), 253–60.

Ivanov, Vyacheslav V. [Иванов, Вячеслав В.], *Избранные труды по семиотике и истории культуры. Т. 1* [*Izbrannye trudy po semiotike i istorii kultury. T. 1 – Selected Writings on Semiotics and Cultural History. Vol. 1*] (Moscow, 1998).

Jamison, Stephanie W., *Sacrificed Wife/Sacrificer's Wife: Women, Ritual and Hospitality in Ancient India* (New York and Oxford, 1996).

Jamison, Stephanie W., and Brereton, Joel P., *The Rigveda: The Earliest Religious Poetry of India*, 3 vols (New York, 2014).

Jaski, Bart, *Early Irish Kingship and Succession* (Dublin, 2000).

Jenkins, Dafydd (trans.), *The Law of Hywel Dda: Law Texts from Medieval Wales* (Llandysul, 1986).

Joy, Jody, 'The Iron Age', in Timothy Insoll (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Archaeology of Ritual and Religion* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 405–21.

Joynt, Maude (ed.), *Feis Tighe Chonáin* (Dublin, 1936).

Jung, Carl Gustav, and Kerényi, Carl, *Science of Mythology: Essays on the Divine Child and the Mysteries of Eleusis* (London and New York, 2002).

Kaul, Flemming, 'Gundestrup Cauldron: Thracian Art, Celtic Motifs', *Études Celtiques*, 37 (2011), 81–110.

Keating, Geoffrey, *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn. Vol. 1*, ed. by David Comyn (London, 1902).

Kelly, Fergus, *A Guide to Early Irish Law* (Dublin, 1988).

Kelly, Fergus, *Early Irish Farming: A Study Based Mainly on the Law-texts of the 7th and 8th Centuries AD* (Dublin, 1997).

Kelly, Fergus, 'Cauldron imagery in a legal passage on judges', *Celtica*, 26 (2010), 31–43.

Kerényi, Carl, *The Gods of the Greeks* (Harmondsworth, 1958).

Kinsella, Thomas, *The Táin: From the Irish Epic Táin Bó Cuailnge* (Oxford, 2002).

Knott, Eleanor, 'Address to David O'Keeffe', *Ériu*, 4 (1910), 209–32.

Knott, Eleanor (ed.), *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* (Dublin, 1936).

Koch, John T., 'Some Suggestions and Etymologies Reflecting upon the Mythology of the Four Branches', *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, 9 (1989), 1–10.

Koch, John T., 'Annwn/Annwfn', in Koch, *Celtic Culture*, p. 75.

Koch, John T. (ed.), *Celtic Culture: A Historical Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara, 2006).

Koch, John T., 'Further to *Tongu do dia toinges mo thuath* etc.', *Études Celtiques*, 29 (1992), 249–61.

Koch, John T., and Carey, John, *The Celtic Heroic Age: Literary Sources for Ancient Celtic Europe and Early Ireland and Wales* (4th edn, Aberystwyth, 2003).

Kochkar, Rajesh, 'The Rgvedic Soma Plant', in *Medicine and Life Sciences in India* (New Delhi, 2001), pp. 1–16.

Kristjansson, Jónas, and Ólason, Vésteinn (eds), *Eddukvæđi II: Hetjukvæđi* (Reykjavík, 2014).

Kroonen, Guus (ed.), *Etymological Dictionary of Proto-Germanic*, ed. by A. Lubotsky (Leiden Indo-European Etymological Dictionary Series; Leiden, Boston, 2013).

Kuiper, F. B. J., 'Cosmogony and Conception: A Query', *History of Religions*, 10/2 (1970), 91–138.

Lac[e]y, Brian, et al., *Archaeological Survey of County Donegal* (Lifford, 1983).

Lacey, Brian, *Lug's Forgotten Donegal Kingdom: The Archaeology, History and Folklore of the Síl Lugdach of Cloghaneely* (Dublin, 2012).

Landauer, Thomas, and Dumais, Susan, ‘A Solution to Plato’s Problem: The Latent Semantic Analysis Theory of Acquisition, Induction, and Representation of Knowledge’, *Psychological Review*, 104 (1997), 211–40.

Landauer, Thomas, Foltz, Peter, and Laham, Darrell, ‘An Introduction to Latent Semantic Analysis’, *Discourse Processes*, 25 (1998), 259–84.

Lapidge, Michael (ed.), *H. M. Chadwick and the Study of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic in Cambridge* (Aberystwyth, 2015).

Leach, Edmund, ‘The Legitimacy of Solomon: Some Structural Aspects of Old Testament History’, *European Journal of Sociology*, 42 (2001), 131–74.

Lehmacher, Gustav, ‘Der Dagde, das Haupt der irischen Götter’, *Anthropos*, 5 (1953), 817–36.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, trans. by James Harle Bell, Richard von Sturmer and Rodney Needham (Boston, 1969).

Lévi-Strauss, Claude, ‘The Story of Asdiwal’, in Edmund Leach (ed.), *The Structural Study of Myth and Totemism* (London, 1967), pp. 1–48.

Lewis, Barry, ‘Review of Sims-Williams, *Ireland in Medieval Welsh Literature*’, *Celtica*, 27 (2013), 176–81.

Lewis-Williams, David, and Pierce, David, *Inside the Neolithic Mind* (London, 2005).

Lincoln, Bruce, *Myth, Cosmos and Society: Indo-European Themes of Creation and Destruction* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 1986).

Lincoln, Bruce, *Theorizing Myth: Narrative, Ideology, and Scholarship* (Chicago, 1999).

Lindow, John, *Norse Mythology* (Oxford, 2001).

Littleton, C. Scott, *The New Comparative Mythology: An Anthropological Assessment of the Work of Georges Dumézil* (3rd edn, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1982).

Lobell, Jarrett A., and Patel, Samir S., ‘Clonycavan and Old Croghan Men’, *Archaeology*, 63/3 (2010).

Lord, Albert B., *The Singer Resumes the Tale*, ed. by Mary Louise Lord (Ithaca, 1995).

Loth, Joseph, ‘L’omphalos chez les Celtes’, *Revue des études anciennes*, 17 (1915), 193–206.

Loth, Joseph, ‘Origine du nom de l’île Molène’, *Revue Celtique*, 44 (1927), 76–7.

Lowe, E. A. (ed.), *The Bobbio Missal: A Gallican Mass-book (MS. Paris. Lat. 13246) Text* (London, 1920).

Lucas, A. T., ‘The Sacred Trees of Ireland’, *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society*, 68 (1963), 16–54.

Luck, Georg, *Arcana Mundi: Magic and the Occult in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Baltimore, 2006).

Lyle, Emily, ‘Old Myth and New Morality: A Theogonic Interpretation of the Fourth Branch of the *Mabinogi*’, *Cosmos*, 5 (1989), 142–50.

Lyle, Emily, *Archaic Cosmos: Polarity, Space and Time* (Edinburgh, 1990).

Lyle, Emily, ‘Modeling Feature and Mark in Old-World Cosmology’, *Semiotica*, 106 (1995), 171–85.

Lyle, Emily, ‘Age Grades, Age Classes and Alternate Succession: A Restatement of the Basis at the Societal Level of Indo-European Symbolic Partition’, *Emania*, 16 (1997), 63–71.

Lyle, Emily, ‘The Celtic Seasonal Festivals in the Light of Recent Approaches to the Indo-European Ritual Year’, *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, 23 (2003), 184–97.

Lyle, Emily, ‘Which Triad? A Critique and Development of Dumézil’s Trifunctional Theory’, *Revue de l’histoire des religions*, 221 (2004), 5–21.

Lyle, Emily, ‘The Importance of the Prehistory of Indo-European Structures for Indo-European Studies’, *Journal of Indo-European Studies*, 34 (2006), 99–110.

Lyle, Emily, ‘Dumézil’s Three Functions and Indo-European Cosmic Structure’, *History of Religions*, 22 (2007), 25–44.

Lyle, Emily, ‘Narrative Form and the Structure of Myth’, *Folklore*, 33 (2007), 59–70. Available at *www.folklore.ee/folklore/vol33/lyle.pdf*, accessed 24 August 2017.

Lyle, Emily, ‘The Celtic Year and Gender’, joint issue of *Cosmos*, 25, and *The Ritual Year*, 4, *The Ritual Year and Gender* (2009), 180–9.

Lyle, Emily, ‘The Cosmological Theory of Myth’, in Wim M. J. van Binsbergen and Eric Venbrux (eds), *New Perspectives on Myth: Proceedings of the Second Annual Conference of the International Association for Comparative Mythology, Ravenstein, the Netherlands, 19–21 August, 2008* (Haarlem, 2010), pp. 267–77.

Lyle, Emily, ‘Entering the Chimeraland of Indo-European Reconstruction’, *Retrospective Methods Network Newsletter*, 5 (2012), 6–10. Available at *http://www.helsinki.fi/folkloristiikka/English/RMN/RMNNewsletter_5_Dec_2012.pdf*, accessed 24 August 2017.

Lyle, Emily, ‘Stepping Stones through Time’, *Oral Tradition*, 27/1 (2012), 161–70. Available at *journal.oraltradition.org/issues/27i/lyle*, accessed 24 August 2017.

Lyle, Emily, *Ten Gods: A New Approach to Defining the Mythological Structures of the Indo-Europeans* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 2012).

Lyle, Emily, 'Defining the Religion that Lay behind the Self-Colonization of Europe', in James L. Cox (ed.), *Critical Reflections on Indigenous Religions* (Farnham and Burlington, VT, 2013), pp. 93–101.

Lyle, Emily, 'The "Order, Chaos, Order," Theoretical Approach to Reconstructing the Mythology of a Remote Past', *Cosmos*, 30 (2014), 37–48.

Lyle, Emily, 'The Cosmic Connections of the Eight Key Points in the Indo-European Ritual Year', *The Ritual Year*, 10 (2015), 19–27.

Lyle, Emily, 'The Hero Who Releases the Waters and Defeats the Flood Dragon', *Comparative Mythology*, 1 (2015), 1–12. Available at *www.compmyth.org/journal/index.php/cm/article/view/5*, accessed 24 August 2017.

Lyle, Emily, 'The Law of Succession Established by Eochaid Fedlech and its Implications for the Theme of the Irish Sovereignty Goddess', *Études Celtiques*, 42 (2016).

Lyle, Emily, 'Baldr and Iraj: Murdered and Avenged', in Pernille Herman, Stephen A. Mitchell and Jens Peter Schjødt (eds), *Old Norse Religion in Comparative Perspectives* (Cambridge, MA, 2017), pp. 341–61.

Lysaght, Patricia, Ó Catháin, Séamas and Ó hÓgáin, Dáithí (eds), *Islanders and Water-Dwellers* (Dublin, 1999).

Macalister, R. A. Stewart (ed.), *Lebor Gabála Erenn: The Book of the Taking of Ireland*, Part IV (Dublin, 1941) and Part V (Dublin, 1956).

Mac Cana, Proinsias, 'Aspects of the Theme of King and Goddess in Irish Literature', *Études Celtiques*, 7 (1955–6), 76–13, 357–413; 8 (1958–9), 59–65.

Mac Cana, Proinsias, *Celtic Mythology* (Feltham, 1970).

Mac Cana, Proinsias, 'On the "Prehistory" of *Immram Brain*', *Ériu*, 26 (1975), 33–52.

Mac Cana, Proinsias, 'Early Irish Ideology and the Concept of Unity', in Richard Kearney (ed.), *The Irish Mind: Exploring Intellectual Traditions* (Dublin, 1984), pp. 56–78.

Mac Cana, Proinsias, *The Cult of the Sacred Centre* (Dublin, 2011).

Mac Cárthaigh, Críostóir, '*An Bád Sí*: Phantom Boat Legends in Irish Folk Tradition', in Lysaght, Ó Catháin and Ó hÓgáin, *Islanders and Water-Dwellers*, pp. 165–76.

Mac Cionnaith, Laimhbheartach (ed.), *Dioghluim Dána* (Dublin, 1938).

McCone, Kim, 'An Introduction to Early Irish Saints' Lives', *The Maynooth Review*, 11 (1984), 26–59.

McCone, Kim, ‘Werewolves, Cyclopes, Dibergs and Fianna: Juvenile Delinquency in Early Ireland’, *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies*, 12 (1986), 1–22.

McCone, Kim, ‘Hund, Wolf und Krieger bei den Indogermanen’, in Wolfgang Meid (ed.), *Studien zum indogermanischen Wortschatz* (Innsbruck, 1987), 101–54.

McCone, Kim, *Pagan Past and Christian Present in Early Irish Literature* (Maynooth, 1990).

McCone, Kim, ‘OIr. *aub* “river” and *amnair* “maternal uncle”’, *Münchener Studien zur Sprachwissenschaft*, 53 (1992), 101–11.

McCone, Kim, ‘A tale of two ditties: poet and satirist in Cath Maige Tuired’, in Donnchadh Ó Corráin, Liam Breathnach and Kim McCone (eds), *Sages, Saints and Storytellers: Celtic Studies in Honour of Professor James Carney* (Maynooth, 1989), pp. 122–43.

McCone, Kim, *Echtrae Chonnlai and the Beginnings of Vernacular Narrative Writing in Ireland* (Maynooth, 2000).

McCone, Kim, ‘The Celtic and Indo-European Origins of the *fían*’, in Arbuthnot and Parsons, *The Gaelic Finn Tradition*, pp. 14–30.

McCutcheon, Russell T., ‘Myth’, in Willi Braun and Russell T. McCutcheon (eds), *Guide to the Study of Religion* (London and New York, 2000), pp. 190–208.

Macdonnell, A. A., *Vedic Mythology* (Strasbourg, 1898).

MacFarlane, Katherine Nell, ‘Isidore of Seville on the Pagan Gods (*Origines* VIII.11)’, *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, 70/3 (1980), 1–40.

Mac Giolla Easpaig, Dónall, ‘Places and early settlement in County Donegal’, in William Nolan, Liam Ronayne and Mairéad Dunlevy (eds), *Donegal: History and Society* (Dublin, 1995), pp 149–82.

Mac Giolla Léith, Caoimhín (ed.), *Oidheadh Chloinne hUisneach* (Dublin, 1993).

Mackey, J. P., ‘Christian past and primal present’, *Études Celtiques*, 29 (1992), 285–97.

McKenna, Catherine, ‘Revising Math: Kingship in the Fourth Branch of the Mabinogi’, *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 46 (2003), 95–117.

McKenna, Lambert (ed.), *Aithdioghluim Dána* (Dublin, 1939).

McLeod, Neil, ‘Fergus mac Léti and the law’, *Ériu*, 61 (2011), 1–28.

MacLeod, Sharon Paice, ‘A Confluence of Wisdom: The Symbolism of Wells, Whirlpools, Waterfalls and Rivers in Early Celtic Sources’, *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, 26–7 (2010), 337–55.

Mac Mathúna, Liam, 'The Christianization of the Early Irish Cosmos?: *muir mas, nem nglas, talam cé* (Blathm. 258)', *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, 49–50 (1997), 532–47.

Mac Mathúna, Séamus, 'The Relationship of the Chthonic World in Early Ireland to Chaos and Cosmos', in Jacqueline Borsje et al. (eds), *Celtic Cosmology: Perspectives from Ireland and Scotland* (Toronto, 2014), pp. 53–67.

MacNeill, Máire, *The Festival of Lughnasa* (Oxford, 1962).

Maier, Bernhard, *Die Religion der Kelten: Götter – Mythen – Weltbild* (Munich, 2001).

Maier, Bernhard, 'Dead Men Don't Wear Plaid: Celtic Myth and Christian Creed in Medieval Irish Concepts of the Afterlife', in Joseph F. Nagy (ed.), *Writing Down the Myths* (Turnhout, 2013), pp. 107–36.

Maier, Bernhard, '*Sugere mammellas*: a pagan Irish custom and its affinities', in Ronald Black, William Gillies and Roibeard Ó Maolalaigh (eds), *Celtic Connections: Proceedings of the Tenth International Congress of Celtic Studies: Volume One, Language, Literature, History, Culture* (East Linton, 1999), pp. 152–61.

Malamoud, Charles, *Cuire le monde: Rite et pensée dans l'Inde ancienne* (Paris, 1989).

Mallory, James, *The Origins of the Irish* (London, 2013).

Man, Paul de, 'Roland Barthes and the Limits of Structuralism', *Yale French Studies*, 77 (1990), 177–90.

Mauss, Marcel, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. by W. D. Halls (London, 1990).

Mayrhofer, Manfred, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindischen*, 2 vols (Heidelberg, 1992).

Meek, Donald E., '*Táin Bó Fraích* and other "Fráech" texts: a study in thematic relationships', *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies*, 7 (1984), 1–37; 8 (1984), 65–85.

Meid, Wolfgang (ed. and trans.), *The Romance of Froech and Findabair or The Driving of Froech's Cattle* (Táin Bó Froích), English-language version prepared with Albert Bock, Benjamin Bruch and Aaron Griffith (Innsbruck, 2015).

Meyer, Kuno, '*Macgnímartha Find*', *Revue Celtique*, 5 (1882), 195–204.

Meyer, Kuno, 'Brinna Ferchertne', *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, 3 (1901), 40–6.

Meyer, Kuno, 'The Expulsion of the Dessi', *Y Cymmrodor*, 14 (1901), 101–35.

Meyer, Kuno, 'The Boyish Exploits of Finn', *Ériu*, 1 (1904), 180–90.

Meyer, Kuno, 'Finn and the Man in the Tree', *Revue Celtique*, 25 (1904), 344–9.

Meyer, Kuno, 'The Expulsion of the Déssi', *Ériu*, 3 (1907), 135–42.

Meyer, Kuno, *Fianaigecht: Being a Collection of Hitherto Inedited Irish Poems and Tales Relating to Finn and his Fiana* (Dublin, 1910).

Meyer, Kuno, 'Mitteilungen aus irischen Handschriften: Elfenbegräbnis. Aus dem Liber Flavus Fergusiorum, fo. 92b 1', *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, 8 (1912), 559–60.

Meyer, Kuno (ed.), '*Sanas Cormaic*: An Old-Irish glossary compiled by Cormac úa Cuilennáin, king-bishop of Cashel in the tenth century', in Osborn Bergin et al. (eds), *Anecdota from Irish Manuscripts*, vol. 4 (Halle and Dublin, 1912), pp. i–xix (introduction), 1–128 (text).

Meyer, Kuno, 'Mitteilungen aus irischen Handschriften', *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, 10 (1915), 37–54.

Meyer, Kuno, 'Der irische Totengott und die Toteninsel', *Sitzungsberichte der Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* (1919), 537–46.

Meyer, Kuno (ed.), 'Mitteilungen aus irischen Handschriften: Tochmarc Treblainne', *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, 13 (1921), 166–75.

Migne, Jacques-Paul, *Patrologiae cursus completus... in qua prodeunt patres, doctores, scriptoresque ecclesiæ latinæ...*, 221 vols (Paris, 1844–64).

Monier-Williams, Sir Monier, *A Sanskrit–English Dictionary* (New Delhi, 2002 [1899]).

Monmouth, Geoffrey of, *The Life of Merlin*, trans. by Basil Clarke (Cardiff, 1973).

Monmouth, Geoffrey of, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, ed. by Michael D. Reeve and trans. by Neil Wright (Woodbridge, 2007).

Moran, Pádraic, '"A Living Speech"? The Pronunciation of Greek in Early Medieval Ireland', *Ériu*, 61 (2011), 29–57.

Morris, Henry, 'Where was *Tor Inis*, the island fortress of the Fomorians?', *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, 57 (1927), 47–58.

Most, Glenn W. (ed. and trans.), *Hesiod*, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA, and London, 2006–7).

Muhr, Kay, 'Water Imagery in Early Irish', *Celtica*, 23 (1999), 193–210.

Mulchrone, Kathleen (ed. and trans.), *Bethu Phátraic: The Tripartite Life of Patrick* (Dublin, 1939).

Murphy, Gerard (ed. and trans.), *Duanaire Finn: The Book of the Lays of Fionn*, vol. 2 (London, 1933).

Murray, Kevin (ed. and trans.), *Baile in Scáil: 'The Phantom's Frenzy'* (London, 2004).

Nagy, Joseph F., 'Liminality and Knowledge in Irish Tradition', *Studia Celtica*, 16–17 (1981–2), 135–43.

Nagy, Joseph F., 'Heroic Destinies in the Macgnímrada of Finn and Cú Chulainn', *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, 40 (1984), 23–39.

Nagy, Joseph F., *The Wisdom of the Outlaw: The Boyhood Deeds of Finn in Gaelic Narrative Tradition* (Berkeley, 1985).

Nagy, Joseph F., 'Otter, Salmon and Eel in Traditional Gaelic Narrative', *Studia Celtica*, 20–1 (1985–6), 123–44.

Nagy, Joseph F., *Conversing with Angels and Ancients: Literary Myths of Medieval Ireland* (Ithaca, 1997).

Nagy, Joseph F., 'Myth and *Legendum* in Medieval and Modern Ireland', in Gregory Schrempp and William Hansen (eds), *Myth: A New Symposium* (Bloomington, 2002), pp. 124–38.

Nagy, Joseph F. (ed.), *CSANA Yearbook 6: Myth in Celtic Literature* (Dublin, 2007).

Nagy, Joseph F., 'The "Conqueror Worm" in Irish and Persian literature', in Houchang Chehabi and Grace Neville (eds), *Erin and Iran: Cultural Encounters Between the Irish and the Iranians* (Boston, 2015), pp. 3–13.

Neumann, Günter, *Glossar des Lykischen* (Wiesbaden, 2007).

Newton, Michael, *A Handbook of the Scottish Gaelic World* (Dublin, 2000).

Ní Shéaghdha, Nessa (ed. and trans.), *Tóruigheacht Dhiarmada agus Ghráinne: The Pursuit of Diarmaid and Gráinne* (Dublin, 1967).

Nyberg, H. 'Religious use of hallucinogenic fungi: A comparison between Siberian and Mesoamerican Cultures', *Karstenia*, 32 (1992), 71–80.

Oberlies, Thomas, *Die Religion des Ṛgveda*, 2 vols (Vienna, 1998).

O'Brien, M. A., 'On the Expression "sugere mammellas" in the Confessio Patricii', Miscellanea Hibernica 13, *Études Celtiques*, 3 (1938), 372–3.

Ó Cathasaigh, Tomás, *The Heroic Biography of Cormac Mac Airt* (Dublin, 1977).

Ó Cathasaigh, Tomás, 'The Semantics of "Síd"', *Éigse*, 17 (1977–8), 137–55.

Ó Cathasaigh, Tomás, 'The sister's son in early Irish literature', *Peritia*, 5 (1986), 128–60.

Ó Cathasaigh, Tomás, '*Tochmarc Étaíne* II: A Tale of Three Wooings', in Patricia O'Neill (ed.), *The Land Beneath the Sea: Essays in Honour of Anders Ahlqvist's Contribution to Celtic Studies in Australia* (Sydney, 2013), pp. 129–42.

Ó Cathasaigh, Tomás, *Coire Sois: The Cauldron of Knowledge. A Companion to Early Irish Saga*, ed. by Matthieu Boyd (South Bend, 2014).

Ó Cíobháin, Breandán, *Toponomia Hiberniae*, 4 vols (Dublin, 1978–84).

O'Connor, Frank, *The Backward Look: A Survey of Irish Literature* (London, 1967).

Ó Donaill, Niall (ed.), *Foclóir Gaeilge-Béarla* (Dublin, 1992).

Ó Donnchadha, Eoin, '*Filidi Sanas Chormaic:* A Picture of Pragmatic Professionals' (unpublished MA thesis, University College Dublin, 2010).

O'Donoghue, Heather, *English Poetry and Old Norse Myth: A History* (Oxford, 2014).

O'Donovan, John (ed. and trans.), *Annála Ríoghachta Éireann: Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland by the Four Masters From the Earliest Period to the Year 1616*, 7 vols (Dublin: 1851–6).

O'Flaherty, Wendy Doniger, contributions to 'Part II: The Post-Vedic History of the Soma Plant', in Wasson, *Soma*, pp. 95–147.

O'Flaherty, Wendy Doniger, *Hindu Myths* (Harmondsworth, 1975).

O'Grady, Standish H. (ed. and trans.), *Silva Gadelica: A Collection of Tales in Irish*, 2 vols (London, 1892).

Ó hAodha, Donncha (ed.), *Bethu Brigte* (Dublin, 1978).

Ó hEochaidh, Seán, *Fairy Legends from Donegal*, ed. by Séamus Ó Catháin, trans. by Máire Mac Neill (Dublin, 1977).

Ó hÓgáin, Dáithi, *The Lore of Ireland: An Encyclopaedia of Myth, Legend and Romance* (Woodbridge, 2006).

O'Keeffe, James George (ed.), '*Duan Chatháin*. The Genealogies of the Uí Eachach of Munster', in John Fraser, Paul Grosjean, S. J. and James George O'Keeffe (eds), *Irish Texts. Fasc. IV* (London, 1934), pp. 47–67.

O'Leary, Aideen, 'An Irish Apocryphal Apostle: Muirchú's Portrayal of Saint Patrick', *Harvard Theological Review*, 89 (1996), 287–30.

O'Leary, Philip, *The Prose Literature of the Gaelic Revival* (University Park, PA, 1994).

O'Looney, Bryan (ed. and trans.), 'The Land of Youth', *Transactions of the Ossianic Society for the Year 1856*, 4 (1859), 227–79.

O'Loughlin, Thomas, *Saint Patrick: The Man and His Works* (London, 1999).

O'Loughlin, Thomas, *Discovering Saint Patrick* (London, 2005).

Ó Maolfabhail, Art, *Ó Lyon go Dún Lúiche: Logainm san Oidhreacht Cheilteach* (Cork and Dublin, 2005).

O'Rahilly, Cecile (ed.), Táin Bó Cúalnge *from the Book of Leinster* (Dublin, 1967).

O'Rahilly, T. F., *Early Irish History and Mythology* (Dublin, 1984 [1946]).

O'Rahilly, T. F., 'On the Origin of the Names *Érainn* and *Ériu*', *Ériu*, 14 (1943), 7–28.

Ogden, Daniel, *Drakōn: Myth and Serpent Cult in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Oxford, 2013).

Oosten, Jarich G., *The War of the Gods (RLE Myth): The Social Code in Indo-European Mythology* (London, 2015).

Owen, Gale, *Rites and Religions of the Anglo-Saxons* (New York, 1981).

Pagé, Anna June, 'The Theme of "Failed Birth and Rebirth": A Case Study in the Reconstruction of an Indo-European Myth', *Cosmos*, 32 (forthcoming, 2017).

Pailler, Yvan, et al., 'Évolution des paysages et occupation humaine en mer d'Iroise (Finistère, Bretagne) du Neolithique a l'Age du Bronze', *Norois*, 220 (2011).

Piazza, Jared, Bering, Jesse, and Ingram, Gordon, '"Princess Alice Is Watching You": Children's Belief in an Invisible Person Inhibits Cheating', *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 109 (2011), 311–20.

Plummer, Charles (ed.), *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae*, vol. 1 (Oxford, 1910).

Plummer, Charles (ed.), *Bethada Náem nÉrenn: Lives of Irish Saints*, vol. 1 (Oxford, 1922).

Pluskowski, Aleks, 'Animal Magic', in Martin Carver, Alex Sanmark and Sarah Semple (eds), *Signals of Belief in Early England: Anglo-Saxon Paganism Revisited* (Oxford and Oakville, 2010), pp. 103–27.

Pokorny, Julius, *Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch, Band 1* (Bern and Munich, 1959).

Polzin, Robert, *Biblical Structuralism: Method and Subjectivity in the Study of Ancient Texts* (Philadelphia, 1977).

Quin, E. G., et al. (eds), *Dictionary of the Irish Language, Based Mainly on Old Irish and Middle Irish Materials* (Dublin, 1976).

Radcliffe-Brown, A. R., *Structure and Function in Primitive Society: Essays and Addresses* (Glencoe, IL, 1952).

Radner, Joan, 'The Combat of Lug and Balor: Discourses of Power in Irish Myth and Folktale', *Oral Tradition*, 7 (1992), 143–9.

Ranke, Kurt, *Die zwei Brüder. Eine Studie zur Vergleichenden Märchenforschung* (Helsinki, 1934).

Rees, Alwyn, and Rees, Brinley, *Celtic Heritage: Ancient Tradition in Ireland and Wales* (London, 1961).

Richter, Michael, and Picard, Jean-Michel (eds), *Ogma: Essays in Celtic Studies in Honour of Próinséas Ní Chatháin* (Dublin, 2002).

Ripinsky-Nixon, Michael, *The Nature of Shamanism: Substance and Function of Religious Metaphor* (Albany, 1993).

Ritari, Katja, and Bergholm, Alexandra (eds), *Approaches to Religion and Mythology in Celtic Studies* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 2008).

Roetz, Heiner, ‘The Axial Age Theory’, in Robert N. Bellah and Hans Joas (eds), *The Axial Age and Its Consequences* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 2012), pp. 248–73.

Ross, Margaret Clunies, *Prolonged Echoes: Old Norse Myths in Medieval Northern Society*, 2 vols (Odense, 1994).

Ross, Neil (ed. and trans.), *Heroic Poetry from the Book of the Dean of Lismore* (Edinburgh, 1939).

Russell, Paul, ‘*Dúil Dromma Cetta* and Cormac’s Glossary’, *Études Celtiques*, 32 (1996), 147–74.

Saar, Margaret, ‘Ethnomycological data from Siberia and North-East Asia on the effect of Amanita muscaria’, *Journal of Ethnopharmacology*, 31 (1991), 157–73.

Sayers, William, ‘Mani Maidi an Nem . . . [“Unless the Sky Falls . . .”]: Ringing Changes on a Cosmic Motif’, *Ériu*, 37 (1986), 99–117.

Sayers, William, ‘Cerrce, an Archaic Epithet of the Dagda, Cernunnos and Conall Cernach’, *Journal of Indo-European Studies*, 16 (1988), 341–64.

Sayers, William, ‘Mesocosms and the Organization of Interior Space in Early Ireland’, *Traditio*, 70 (2015), 75–110.

Schot, Roseanne, ‘From cult centre to royal centre: monuments, myths and other revelations at Uisneach’, in Roseanne Schot, Conor Newman and Edel Bhreathnach (eds), *Landscapes of Cult and Kingship* (Dublin, 2011), pp. 87–113.

Schrijver, Peter, ‘On Henbane and Early European Narcotics’, *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie*, 51 (1999), 17–45.

Schröder, Heike (ed.), *Kunst im Alten Schloß* (Stuttgart, 1998).

Scowcroft, R. Mark, ‘*Leabhar Gabhála* Part I: The Growth of the Text’, *Ériu*, 38 (1987), 79–140.

Scowcroft, R. Mark, ‘*Leabhar Gabhála* Part II: The Growth of the Tradition’, *Ériu*, 39 (1988), 1–66.

Scowcroft, R. Mark, ‘Abstract Narrative in Ireland’, *Ériu*, 46 (1995), 121–58.

Segal, Robert, *Myth: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2004).

Shkunaev, Sergey V. [Шкунаев, Сергей В.] (ed.), *Предания и мифы средневековой Ирландии* [*Predaniya i mify srednevekovoy Irlandii – Tales and Myths of Medieval Ireland*] (Москва [Moscow], 1991).

Sims-Williams, Patrick, ‘Review of McCone, *Pagan Past and Christian Present*’, *Éigse*, 29 (1996), 179–96.

Sims-Williams, Patrick, ‘Celtomania and Celtoscepticism’, *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 36 (1998), 1–35.

Sims-Williams, Patrick, 'Tír na nÓg [1] Irish background', in Koch, *Celtic Culture* (2006), p. 1671.

Sims-Williams, Patrick, *Irish Influence on Medieval Welsh Literature* (Oxford, 2010).

Sims-Williams, Patrick, '*Tochmarc Becfhola*: A "Peculiar Confused Tale"?', in Joseph Eska (ed.), *Narrative in Celtic Tradition: Essays in Honor of Edgar M. Slotkin*, CSANA Yearbook 8/9 (Hamilton, NY, 2011), pp. 228–34.

Sims-Williams, Patrick, 'Post-Celtoscepticism: a personal view', in Dónall Ó Baoill, Donncha Ó hAodha and Nollaig Ó Muraíle (eds), *Saltair Saíochta, Sanasaíochta agus Seanchais: A Festschrift for Gearóid Mac Eoin* (Dublin, 2013), pp. 422–8.

Sjöblom, Tom, *Early Irish Taboos: A Study in Cognitive History* (Helsinki, 2000).

Sjöblom, Tom, ''Mind Stories: A Cognitive Approach to the Role of Narratives in Early Irish Tradition', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 47 (2004), 59–72.

Sjoestedt, Marie-Louise, *Dieux et Héros des Celtes* (Paris, 2009 [1940]).

Soderberg, John, 'Wild Cattle: Red Deer in the Religious Texts, Iconography and Archaeology of Early Medieval Ireland', *International Journal of Historical Archaeology*, 8 (2004), 167–83.

Stockwell, Peter, and Lambrou, Marina (eds), *Contemporary Stylistics* (London, 2010).

Stokes, Whitley, *Irish Glosses: A Mediaeval Tract on Latin Declension* (Dublin, 1860).

Stokes, Whitley (ed.), *Sanas Chormaic* (Calcutta, 1868).

Stokes, Whitley (ed.), 'The Voyage of Máel Dúin', *Revue Celtique*, 9 (1888), 447–95.

Stokes, Whitley, 'The Voyage of Mael Duin (Suite)', *Revue Celtique*, 10 (1889), 50–95.

Stokes, Whitley (ed.), *Lives of Saints from the Book of Lismore* (Oxford, 1890).

Stokes, Whitley (ed.), 'The Edinburgh *Dinnshenchas*', *Folk-Lore*, 4 (1893), 471–96.

Stokes, Whitley (ed.), 'The Prose Tales in the Rennes *Dindshenchas*', *Revue Celtique*, 15 (1894), 272–336, 418–84.

Stokes, Whitley (ed.), 'The Prose Tales from the Rennes *Dindshenchas*', *Revue Celtique*, 16 (1895), 31–83, 284–312; 135–67 (1st supplement), 269–83 (2nd supplement).

Stokes, Whitley (ed.), 'The Colloquy of the Two Sages', *Revue Celtique*, 26 (1905), 4–64.

Stokes, Whitley (ed.), *Félire Óengusso Céli Dé* (London, 1905).

Sullivan, C. W. III, 'Inheritance and Lordship in *Math*', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* (1990), 45–63.

Swaminathan, Nikhil, 'Strange but True: Males Can Lactate', *Scientific American* (9 September 2007).

Taylor, Norman, *The Guide to Garden Shrubs and Trees* (New York, 1965).

Theobald, W., et al., 'Pharmacological and experimental psychological studies with 2 components of fly agaric (*amanita muscaria*)', *Arzneimittelforschung*, 18 (1968), 311–15.

Thilo, Georgius, and Hagen, Hermannus (eds), *Servii Grammatici qui feruntur in Vergilii Carmina Commentarii* (Leipzig, 1884).

Thompson, E. A., 'Procopius on Brittia and Britannia', *The Classical Quarterly*, 30 (1980), 498–507.

Thompson, Stith, *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature: A Classification of Narrative Elements in Folk-Tales, Ballads, Etc*., 6 vols (Copenhagen, 1955–8).

Thurneysen, Rudolf (ed.), 'Zu Verslehre II', *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*, 17 (1927), 263–76.

Thurneysen, Rudolf, *Irisches Recht: I. Dire, ein altirischer Rechtstext. II. Zu den unteren Ständen in Irland* (Berlin, 1931).

Toporov, Vladimir N. [Топоров, Владимир Н.], *Мифология. Статьи для мифологических энциклопедий. Т. 2* [*Mifologiya. Stat'i dlya mifologicheskih entsiklopediy. T. 2 – Mythology. Articles from the Mythological Encyclopaedias. Vol. 2*], ed. by G. Bondarenko (Moscow, 2014).

Trubetskoy, Sergey N. [Трубецкой, Сергей Н.], *Метафизика в Древней Греции* [*Metafizika v Drevney Gretsii – Metaphysics in Ancient Greece*] (Moscow, 2003).

Turner, Allan, 'Beliefs and practices in health and disease from the Maclagan Manuscripts' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2014).

Uhel, Fañch an, *Contes populaires de Basse-Bretagne* (Paris, 1887).

Uther, Hans-Jörg, *The Types of International Folktales: A Classification and Bibliography, Based on the System of Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson*, 3 vols (Helsinki, 2004).

Vaan, Michiel de, *Etymological Dictionary of Latin and the Other Italic Languages*, ed. by A. Lubotsky (Leiden and Boston, 2008).

Van Hamel, A. G. (ed.), *Compert Con Culainn and Other Stories* (Dublin, 1968).

Van Peer, Willie, *Stylistics and Psychology: Investigations of Foregrounding* (London, 1986).

Vendryes, Jean, ‘Étymologies (I. Irlandais *seg* (*sed*) “cerf”, *sefas* “forêt”)’, *Revue Celtique*, 35 (1914), 85–91.

Villemarqué, Théodore Hersart de la, *Barzaz Breiz* (Paris, 1846).

Villemarqué, Théodore Hersart de la, *Barzhaz Breizh* (Rennes, 1988).

Vries, Jan de, *Keltische Religion* (Stuttgart, 1961).

Vries, Jan de, *La Religion des Celtes* (Paris, 1963).

Wagner, Heinrich, ‘Studies in the Origins of Early Celtic Traditions’, *Ériu*, 26 (1975), 1–26.

Wasson, R. Gordon, *Soma: Divine Mushroom of Immortality* (New York, 1968).

Watkins, Calvert, *How to Kill a Dragon: Aspects of Indo-European Poetics* (Oxford, 1995).

Watkins, Calvert, *Dictionary of Indo-European Roots* (Boston, 2000).

Watkins, Calvert, ‘A Celtic Miscellany’, in Karlene Jones-Bley (ed.), *Proceedings of the Tenth Annual UCLA Indo-European Conference, Los Angeles, May 21–23, 1998* (Washington, DC, 1998), pp. 2–35.

Watson, James Carmichael (ed.), *Mesca Ulad* (Dublin, 1941).

Waugh, Linda R., *Roman Jakobson’s Science of Language* (Amsterdam, 1976).

Wendel, Carolus (ed.), *Argonautica Scholia in Apollonium Rhodium* (Berlin, 1935).

West, Martin (trans.), *Hesiod. Theogony, Works and Days* (Oxford and New York, 1988).

West, Martin, *Indo-European Poetry and Myth* (Oxford, 2007).

Whitfield, Niamh, ‘Dress and accessories in the early Irish tale “The Wooing of Becfhola”’, in Robert Netherton and Gale R. Owen-Crocker (eds), *Medieval Clothing and Textiles*, vol. 2 (Woodbridge, 2006), pp. 1–34.

Williams, J. E. Caerwyn, ‘Brittany and the Arthurian Legend’, in Rachel Bromwich, A. O. H. Jarman and Brynley F. Roberts (eds), *The Arthur of the Welsh* (Cardiff, 1995), pp. 249–72.

Williams, Mark, *Ireland’s Immortals: A History of the Gods of Irish Myth* (Princeton and Oxford, 2016).

Wiseman, Andrew E. M., ‘Caterwauling and Demon Raising: The Ancient Rite of the *Taghairm*’, *Scottish Studies*, 35 (2007–10), 174–209.

Witzel, E. J. Michael, *The Origins of the World’s Mythologies* (New York, 2012).

Wooding, Jonathan M., ‘Reapproaching the pagan Celtic past: anti-nativism, asterisk reality and the Late-Antiquity paradigm’, *Studia Celtica Fennica: Finnish Journal of Celtic Studies*, 6 (2009), 63–76.

Wooding, Jonathan (ed.), *The Otherworld Voyage in Early Irish Literature: An Anthology of Criticism* (Dublin, 2014).

Yang, Lihui, and An, Deming, with Turner, Jessica Anderson, *Handbook of Chinese Mythology* (Oxford and New York, 2008).

Zhivlova, Nina, 'Ériu and Codal: raising up a goddess and an island', in N. Kazansky (ed.), *Indo-European Linguistics and Classical Philology XIX. Proceedings of the 19th Conference in Memory of Professor Joseph M. Tronsky* (St Petersburg, 2015), pp. 249–57.

Zimmer, Stefan, *Studies in Welsh Word-formation* (Dublin, 2000).

INDEX

Illustration page numbers in bold

abductions, 16, 23–7
Abraham, 172
'Address to David O'Keeffe', 55
Ādityas, 158
Áed, 62, 63
afterlife, 107–16; *see also* otherworld
age grades, 6, 123, 156
Ages of Man, 123, 145
agriculture, 75–6, 82, 170
Ail na Mírenn (Rock of Divisions), Uisnech, 55
Ailill, 37–8, 170, 171
Aipgitir Chrábaid, 80
Airec Menman Uraird Maic Coisse, 101
allegory, 2, 17
alliances, 13–14, 170–1, 173, 174
Amaethon, 137, 144
Amairgen, 65
Amanita muscaria, 89–90, 99–102
Anaon, an, 107, 110–12, 113
Ana *see* Anu
Anatolia, 77–8
ancestors, 16, 124–6, 131
animal flesh, 89, 94–7, 98, 100
Anna, St, 111–12
Annals of the Four Masters, 43
Annapūrṇā, 66
Annwn, 109, 110
anti-nativism, 2–3, 6
Anu, 57–9, 65, 126, 151
Apam Napat, 93, 101
Aranrhod, 137, 139, 142–3, 144, 145
Ardagh, Co. Longford, 14, 23–5
Armagh, 11, 18
Armenian, 57
Arthur, 109, 112
Arthurian literature, 76, 109
Assman, Jan, 124
aśvamedha, 159
Aśvins, 156
Athgen mBethae, 155; *see also* Dagda
Augustine, St, 17
Augustinus Hibernicus, 25
authorship, 2–3, 33, 39
Avalon, 109, 112, 113, 114, 116
Avestan language, 157
avunculate relationships, 137–46
axes, 152, 157, 159

Baile in Scáil, 27
ballads, 31, 34, 111
Balor, 5, 43–8, 129, 146
Banba, 54, 58
Ban-shenchas, 151
baptism, 15–16
Baradoz, Ar, 111
Baradoz ar Huz-Heol, 113
Barzaz Breiz (la Villemarqué), 111
basilisks, 36, 129
Bec mac Buain, 92
Benignus, St, 80
Benn Codail, 60–5
Bergin, Osborn, 153
Bethu Phátraic see *Vita Tripartita*
Bhreathnach, Edel, 13, 16–17
Bible, 5, 110, 165–7, 172
Bicne, 64
Bihan-Gallic, Fañch, 5, 107–16
Blathmac, 128
Blažek, Václav, 73–4
Bleiddwn, 126, 137, 142, 144
Blodeuwedd, 126, 143, 144, 145
blood-feuds, 138, 139
Boand, 59, 90, 91, 101, 130, 151, 153
Bobbio Missal, 15–16
boiling, 94, 100
Bondarenko, Grigory, 5, 53–66
Book of Ballymote, 61, 63
Book of Leinster, 175
Book of Taliesin, 109
Book of the Dean of Lismore, 31, 34
Borsje, Jacqueline, 80
Boyne, River, 90, 91, 93–4, 95, 98, 130, 151
Brāhmaṇas of the *Yajur-Veda*, 65
Bran, 77

Brandon, Mount, Co. Kerry, 47
breasts, 56–62
Breatnach, Caoimhín, 39
Breatnach, Risteard A., 76, 127
Bremmer, Jan, 138
Bres, 123, 125, 126, 150, 153, 158
Bretha Nemed, 93, 95, 101
Breton language, 110, 114–15
Breton mythology, 5, 56, 107–16
Bṛhaspati, 157
Brigit banfile, 154
bro ar re yaouank, 113–14, 115, 116
Bromwich, Rachel, 3, 76, 139
Bruford, Alan, 155
Brugh na Bóinne, Co. Meath, 59, 150, 151, 158–9
Bruree, Co. Limerick, 56
Brut y Brenhinedd, 109
Búanand, 57
bubbles of wisdom, 89, 90, 98, 100
bulls, 100
burial customs, 16–17, 114–15
burial islands, 112, 114–15

Caer Pedryvan, 109
'Caldron of Poesy, The', 93–4, 95, 98, 100
Cambell, John Frances, 31
Carey, John, 4, 17, 23–7, 57, 59, 80, 95, 124, 144–5, 146, 159
Carney, James, 6, 34, 131, 163–75
Cat Stone *see* Rock of Divisions, Uisnech
Cath Maige Tured, 5, 43–8, 145–6, 150–2
cauldron of Dagda, 150, 155–6
Cauldron of Judgement, 94, 101
Cauldron of Knowledge, 93, 98
Cauldron of Motion, 93–4, 98
Cauldron of Warming, 93, 94
Ceannfhaolaidh, 46
Celtic Dragon Myth, The (Henderson), 31–2
Celtic identity, 3
Cenn Fáelad, 44, 46
Ceres, 60
Ceridwen, 94, 96, 100
Cernunnos, 77–8, **78**
Cessair, 54
Chadwick, Nora, 97
Chaos, 60
Charles-Edwards, Thomas, 4, 23, 139–40
Charon, 115
child-earth motif, 65
Christianity, 2, 4, 5, 11–18, 44, 46–8, 107, 110, 115
Cian, 38, 129
Cín Dromma Snechta, 58
Cíonna Banban, 58
Classical mythology, 5, 36, 37, 56, 58–60, 76, 80, 108, 114, 115, 124, 126, 128–9, 145, 171
Cloch Cenn Fáelaid, Co. Donegal, 44–5, **45**
Cloghaneely, Co. Donegal, 44–6
clothing, 12, 81, 100
Clothru, 126
club of Dagda, 152–3, 155, 159
Codal, 61–5
Cóir Anmann, 59, 76–7
colonialism, 2, 44
colour symbolism, 92, 123
comparative mythology, 1, 3, 5–6, 53–116
Conaire Már, 34
Conán, 39
Conchobar, 128, 169–7, 173
Confessio (St Patrick), 62
Cong, Co. Mayo, 44
Conn, 27
Connacht, 168, 170–1, 173
Connla's well, 90–1
conservatism, 1, 3, 163
Coomaraswamy, Ananda, 2
Cormac, 91–2
Cormac's Glossary, 57, 58, 59–60, 151
cosmology, 6, 53–66, 75–6, 107–16, 121–33, 155, 157–60, 163–75
Costa Rican mythology, 65
creation myths, 144–5, 157, 158
Cridenbél, 153
Croagh Patrick, Co. Mayo, 47
Cronus *see* Kronos
Crunniuc, 170
'Crystal Palace, The', 111, 114
Cú Chulainn, 13, 140–1, 154, 164, 171, 172, 17–4
Cuillandre, Joseph, 107, 112–13, 115
Curse of Macha, 170, 172, 175
Curtin, Jeremiah, 129
Cybele, 59–60

Dá Chích Anann (Paps of Anu), Co. Kerry, 56–60, 64, 65, 151
Da Chích na Morrígna (Paps of the Morrígan), Co. Meath, 59
Dagda, 26, 59, 62, 149–56, 158–60
Dáire Doimthech, 76
Dānavas, 158
Dānu, 158

de Vries, Jan, 149, 155
death, 16–17, 107–16
decolonisation, 2
deer-hunt motifs, 4, 73–82
Deirdre, 169, 170
Déisi, 25
Delphi, 56
Demeter, 56
Dempsey, John, 77
Derdriu, 37
Derg Corra, 81, 99
Diana, 80
Diarmaid, 33, 34, 39
díchetal di chennaib, 95, 97, 101
Dillon, Myles, 5
dindsenchas (place-name lore), 24–5, 48, 53, 59, 60–5, 89–90, 92, 151, 158–9; *see also* place names
Dindymene, 60
Dindymus, Mount, 60
disfigurement, 36–7, 39
divine body, Ireland as, 54–66
dogs, 74, 77, 172
domestication, 53, 54–5, 73, 74–6, 82
Domnonia, 56
Dôn, 137, 139, 144–5, 146
Donegal, County, 43–8, 96
Donn, 110
Donn Cúalgne, 171
Donon sanctuary Stag God figure, 78–9, **79**, 81
dragons, 31–40, 96, 128, 130
druids, 11, 12–13, 64, 76, 125, 152
Druim Damgaire, siege of, 55
Drumhallagh, Co. Donegal, 96
Dúil Dromma Cetta, 57–9, 60
Dumézil, Georges, 2, 6, 122–3, 155–7
Dún Baloir, Tory Island, 46
Dún Eochaire Máige, 56
Dún Lúiche, Co. Donegal, 47
Durgā, 66
Dylan Eil Ton, 126, 137, 142–3, 144

earth, 126, 128, 130, 145, 157, 158
Eber, 75
Echtae Chonnlai, 114
Echtrae Chormaic i Tír Tairngire, 91–2
Echtra Nerai, 25–6
Edinburgh *Dindshenchas*, 61, 63–4
eightfold model, 131–2, **132**, 164, 165–75, **167**
Eithne Úathach, 25
Elatha, 154
Elcmar, 151
Elder Edda, 154
Eliade, Mircea, 2
Emer, 13, 172
Enez Aval, 112
Enez Garv, 112
Enez Guennoc, 112
Enez Karn, 112
Enez Tarieg, 112
Enez Tristan, 112
English language, 37, 38; *see also* Old English
Enna, 56
entheogenic substances, 89–90, 97–102
Eochaid Airem, 23–7, 62
Eochaid Feidleach, 125–6, 127, 171
Eochaid Ollathair, 152, 153, 154, 159; *see also* Dagda
Eremon, 75
Ériu, 54, 58, 60–6
Errigal, Mount, Co. Donegal, 43, 45–8
Étaín, 23–7, 62
Ethiopian mythology, 62
Ethne, 11–18
Etymologiae (Isidore), 60
evil, 17, 165–6
exorcism, 15

fairies, 112, 113, 114; *see also síd*
fairy mounds, 59, 63, 107, 150, 159; *see also síd*
Falcarragh, Co. Donegal, 43
fascination, 35
fashioner gods, 149–60
Fates, 171
fawns, 76–7, 80–2
Fedelm, 11–18
feeding, 60–6
Feis Tighe Chonáin, 92
female divine body, Ireland as, 54–66
Ferdia, 173
Fergus mac Léti, 33, 35, 36–7, 39, 62, 172–3
Fermoy, Co. Cork, 55
fertility, 62–3, 82, 123, 155, 170
Fiacla, Na ('The Teeth'), Co. Kerry, 57
Fianna, 57, 74, 75–6, 77, 80, 81
Finbennach Ai, 171
Findabair, 37–8
'Finn and the Man in the Tree', 81, 92, 96, 97, 99

Finn Éices, 95
Finn mac Cumhaill, 38–9, 77, 81, 89, 92–3, 94–6, 97, 100
Fintan mac Bóchra, 54–5, 64, 92
Fir Bolg, 150, 152
Fir Muighi Féine, 55
First Battle of Moytura (*1MT*), 150, 152, 154
fly agaric *see Amanita muscaria*
folklore, 40, 43–8, 77, 110–14, 129
Fomin, Maxim, 4, 5, 73–82
Fomoire, 43, 53, 145–6, 150, 152–3
Fontenrose, Joseph, 128–9
Ford, Patrick, 143–4
fosterage, 12–14, 54–5, 57, 61–2, 64–5, 138, 139, 141, 143, 172
fountain of knowledge, 91
four-generation model, 123, 124–6, 131, 146, 155–6
Fox, Robin, 124, 138
Fraech, 33–4, 37–8, 39, 129
functions, 6, 123, 155–6

Gaelic *see* Middle Irish; Modern Irish; Old Irish; Scottish Gaelic
Gaia, 56, 60, 126, 128, 145
Gantz, Jeffrey, 175
Gaulish language, 62, 74
Gaulish mythology, 155
Gavriniz, 112
Ge *see* Gaia
genealogies, 6, 13, 16, 44, 76
Genesis, 165–7, 172
Geoffrey of Monmouth, 109, 113
Gerald of Wales, 55
giants, 63, 128, 129
Gibson, John, 5
Gilfaethwy, 137, 139, 140, 141–3, 144
Gimbutas, Marija, 127
Giraudon, Daniel, 110
gluttony, 153–4
Goewin, 141–2, 146
Gofannon, 137, 142–3, 144
Golden Age, 145
Golovin, E., 55
Gorgons, 36
Gráinne, 33, 34
Gray, Elizabeth, 4–5, 11–18
Greek language, 36, 56, 59, 159
Greek mythology, 36, 56, 59–60, 108, 114, 115, 124, 126, 128–9, 145, 171
Gronw, 144
Gruffydd, W. J., 2
guardianship, 35–6
Gundestrup Cauldron, 77
Guyonvarc’h, C.-J., 57
Gwion Bach, 94, 96
Gwydion, 137, 139, 140, 141–4, 145
Gwynn, Edward, 60, 62–3

hags, 127
Hamitic mythology, 62
hammer of Thor, 155, 158
hazelnuts, 89, 90–2, 93, 95, 96, 98, 100
heaven, 126, 128–9, 156–7, 158
Hélias, Pêr-Jakez, 111, 113
Helms, Mary, 124
Henderson, George, 31, 37
Herbert, Máire, 171
Hesiod, 126, 128, 145
hieroglyphs, 77–8
high crosses, 77
Himalayas, 66
Historia Regum Britanniae (Geoffrey of Monmouth), 109
History of Wars (Procopius), 108–9, 111, 115
Hittite language, 77
Hogan, Edmund, 14
Hollo, Kaarina, 81
horses, 154, 159, 170
hounds, 74, 77, 172
hunting, 4, 73–82
hybridity, 33
Hychdwn Hir, 126, 137, 142, 144
Hyddwn, 126, 137, 142, 144
Hyde, Douglas, 77
Hywel Dda, 140

iconography, 77–80, 81, 96
Ida, Mount, 60
identity, 3, 12, 164
imbas, 90–1, 93, 94–5, 97, 98, 100
imbas forosnai, 94–5
Immacalam in Dá Thuarad, 98
Imtheacht an Dá Nónbhar, 92–3
Indian mythology, 5, 56, 65, 66, 89, 93, 100–2, 124, 127–8, 129–30, 149, 155, 156–60
Indo-Iranian languages, 157
Indo-Iranian mythology, 93
Indra, 130, 155, 156, 157, 158
infertility, 146
ingestion, 89–102
inter-generational conflict, 145–6
Irarus, 64

Ireland's Eye, 63
Irish high crosses, 77
Irish language *see* Middle Irish; Modern Irish; Old Irish
Irish law, 25, 33, 139, 140
Irish mythology, 4–5, 6, 11–18, 23–7, 31–8, 43–8, 53–66, 73–82, 89–102, 110, 111, 113–14, 115, 123, 125–6, 128–9, 140–1, 145–6, 149–56, 158–60, 163–75
Irish scholarship, 3, 122–3
Isaac, 172
Isidore of Seville, St, 17, 60
Island of Britain (*Ynys Prydein*), 54
islands of the afterlife, 107–16
Isle of Man, 96
Iudael, 56
Ivanov, V., 55

Jamison, Stephanie, 32
jyotirlinga, 56

Keating, Geoffrey, 53
Kelly, Fergus, 12–13, 139
kingship, 26–7, 76–7, 82, 124–7, 131
Kinsella, Thomas, 164
kinship, 124, 137–46
knowledge, 6, 89–102, 155, 157, 159
Koch, John, 145
Kronos, 126, 145
Kroonen, Guus, 61

la Villemarqué, Hersart de, 111
Lacey, Brian, 5, 43–8, 129
land ownership, 16–17
landlordism, 44
landscape, 5, 13, 14, 43–8, 53–66
Laoidh Fhraoich, 34, 38
Latin, 11, 15, 37, 38, 46, 57, 59, 61, 74, 138, 159
Latin literacy, 53
lays, 34, 38
Le Braz, Anatole, 110, 112
Lebor Gabála Érenn, 53, 58, 65, 110, 174
Lebor na hUidre, 175
legal status, 12–13
Légende de la Mort (Le Braz), 110
Lehmacher, Gustav, 149
Leinster, 58
Lévi-Strauss, Claude, 164
Lía Fáil, Tara, 55, 156
liminality, 82
Lincoln, Bruce, 168
literacy, 1, 6, 13, 53
Lleu Llaw Gyffes, 125–6, 137, 141, 143–4, 145, 146
Lóegaire, 80–2
    daughters of, 4–5, 11–18
Loomis, R. S., 2
Lord, Albert Bates, 33
Lothar, 123, 126
Loughanstown, Co. Westmeath, 55
Lug, 5, 13, 27, 43–8, 125, 126, 129, 146, 152, 153, 156, 157, 172, 173–4
Lugaid Laígde, 76
Lugaid of the Red Stripes, 123, 125–6
Lughnasa, 47
Luwain language, 77–8
Lycian language, 77
Lyle, Emily, 6, 121–33, 144, 146, 155–6, 164, 166
Lyon, 47

Mabinogi, Fourth Branch of, 125–6, 137–46
Mac Cana, Proinsias, 2, 54, 77, 170
McCone, Kim, 6, 74, 80, 123–4
McCutcheon, Russell, T., 125
Macgnímartha Find, 94–5
Macha, 170, 172, 175
McKenna, Catherine, 141
MacLeod, Sharon Paice, 5, 89–102, 130
Mac Mathúna, Liam, 128
MacNeill, Máire, 47
Mac Óc, 26, 151, 153
Mahākāla, 56
Maier, Bernhard, 62
Manannán mac Lir, 91
marriage, 14–16, 25, 144, 146
Math uab Mathonwy, 125–6, 137–46
Math uab Mathonwy, 137, 139, 140, 141–3, 144–5, 146
matrilineal systems, 124, 138–9
matronymics, 139
Matter of Britain, 109–10
maturity, 123
Medb, 170, 171
Meek, Donald, 34
mental mapping, 166–7
mesocosms, 54, 56, 64
Mess Búachalla, 24
metamorphosis *see* shape-shifting; transformation
Metrical Dindshenchas, 59, 63, 90; *see also dindsenchas*

Middle Irish (MIr.), 61
Mide son of Brath, 64
Midir, 14, 23–7
Míl, Sons of, 58, 75, 174
mirrors, 37, 129
Mitra, 156–7
Modern Irish (Mod. Ir.), 14, 36, 37, 38, 43, 44, 45, 46, 58, 74, 98, 110, 114–15
Mog Ruith, 55
Molenez, 107–8, 112–14
monsters, 4, 31–40, 128–9, 157, 158
Morrígan, 59, 151, 171
mountains, 46, 59–60, 64–6
Muirchú, 4–5, 80–2
Munster, 55–60, 65, 171
mushrooms, 89–90, 97–102
music, 154
myth, defining, 4, 31–2, 124–5, 130
mythological modelling, 6, 54, 121–33, 163–75

Nagy, Joseph, 2, 3, 4, 31–40, 128, 130, 131
Nantosuelta, 155
Nar, 123, 126
Narcissus, 37
narrative complexity, 39–40
nativism, 2, 34–5
Navire des Fées, Le, 112
Nechtan, 90, 101
Néde, 98
nephews *see* uncle–nephew relationships
Nes, 169–70
Netherworld, 56
Newgrange, Co. Meath, 14, 150, 158–9
Norse mythology *see* Old Norse mythology
Norway, 96
Núada, 125, 126, 151, 156, 157

Ó Cathasaigh, Tomás, 2, 3, 140–1, 158
Ó Cianáin, Ádhamh, 82
Ó Cíobháin, Breandán, 58
O'Connor, Frank, 175
O'Donovan, John, 43–4
O'Dugan, Shane, 43–4
Oðin, 154
Oengus *see* Mac Óc
O'Flaherty, Wendy Doniger, 101
Ogam, 139
Oisín, 38–9, 77, 81
old age, 123
Old English (OEng.), 38
Old French literature, 76
old gods, 127–30, 156, 160
Old High German (OHG), 57
Old Indic, 74
Old Irish (OIr.), 46, 57, 62, 73–4, 81, 98, 100, 139, 159
Old Norse language, 154
Old Norse mythology, 33, 123, 149, 153, 154, 155
Old Testament, 5, 165–7, 172
Ǫllfoður, 154
omphaloi, 55–6
O'Mulconry's Glossary, 61
one-eyed figures, 100
Onomasticon (Hogan), 14
Oosten, Jarich, 168
O'Rahilly, T. F., 2
oral tradition, 1, 3, 4, 6, 13, 33–5, 39, 43–8, 99, 121–6, 133, 149
Ordnance Survey Letters, 55
orientalism, 2
Origins of the World's Mythologies (Witzel), 127–8, 130
otherworld, 4, 5, 11, 16, 23, 26, 89, 90–1, 107–16, 150, 159
Ouranos, 126, 128, 145

Pagé, Anna, 6, 137–46
Paps of Anu, Co. Kerry, 56–60, 64, 65, 151
Paps of the Morrígan, Co. Meath, 59
Patrick, St
    Confessio, 62
    encounter with Lóegaire's daughters, 4–5, 11–18
    Muirchú's life of, 4–5, 80–2
    Tírechán's life of, 4–5, 11–18
    transformation into a deer, 80–2
    Vita Tripartita, 12, 81–2
patrilineal systems, 124, 138–9
patronymics, 139
pays fortuné, 113
penteuluoedd, 141–2
Persian language, 38
Philippine mythology, 65
Philostephanus, 60
Phrygian mythology, 59–60
physical force, 123
Pictish sculpture, 77
place names, 14, 24, 34, 44–8, 56–65; *see also dindsenchas*
Plac'h dimezet gant Satan, Ar, 111
ploughing, 75–6

poets, 89, 94–5, 96–7, 98, 100, 101–2, 154
Pokorny, Julius, 57
Polzin, Robert, 166
Poseidon, 128–9
prehistory, 3, 6, 121–33, 155–6, 159–60
'Preiddeu Annwfn', 109
primordial hills, 65
Procopius of Caesarea, 108–9, 111, 115
prosperity *see* wealth
proto-Indo-European (PIE), 61
Pryderi, 141

Radcliffe-Brown, A. R., 138
Raglan, Fitzroy Somerset, Lord, 2
Ráth Ésa, 24–5
Rathcroghan, 17
Rathlin Island, 55
Rawl. B 512, MS, 75
reciprocity, 172, 173
Rees, Alwyn, 2, 5, 168
Rees, Brinley, 2, 5, 168
relics, 17, 111–12
religious conversion, 5, 11–18
Rennes *Dindshenchas*, 61, 64
revisionism, 2–3, 5
Rhea, 59–60
Rig Veda, 89, 93, 100–2, 130, 155, 156–60
ritual calendar, 130
ritual sites, 47–8
rivers, 14, 90, 91, 93–4, 95, 98, 130, 150, 155, 157, 159
Roc-h Avel, 112
Rock of Divisions, Uisnech, 55
Roman mythology, 58, 76, 80
romances, 33, 34
Rome, 76
Romulus, 76
Ross, Margaret Clunies, 123
Rúad Rofhessa, 153, 154–5; *see also* Dagda

sacred, the, 123
sailors, 112–14, 115
salmon, 89, 90–1, 94–5, 96, 100
salmon of wisdom, 90–1
Sanas Chormaic, 94, 95, 97
Sanskrit, 62, 74
Saraṇyū, 156
Sayers, William, 149, 155
'Scél Tuain meic Cairill', 73
Schimmel rhyton, 78
Scottish Gaelic, 34, 98, 100, 110, 114–15
Scottish mythology, 31, 34, 100
sea, 128–9
Sébillot, Paul, 111
Second Battle of Mag Tuired, 5, 43–8, 145–6, 150–5
Second Battle of Moytura (*2MT*) see *Second Battle of Mag Tuired*
Senchas Már, 95
Servius, 59
'Settling of the Manor at Tara', 54–5, 92
Shannon, River, 14, 91
shape-shifting, 73, 94, 171; *see also* transformation
Shaw, John, 6, 149–60
Shiva, 56, 66
Sicily, 56
síd, 11, 12, 14, 16, 23–7, 59, 63, 92, 100, 158–9, 170, 17, 173
Síd Ban Find (Slievenamon), 23, 25
Síd Codail, Co. Kildare, 63
Síd in Broga (Newgrange), 14; *see also* Newgrange
síd of Brí Léith (Ardagh), 14, 23–5
sight, 35, 36, 129
Sigurd, 33, 96
Síl Lugdach, 44–8
Silvanus, 80
Sims-Williams, Patrick, 125
Sinann, 90–1, 92, 95, 98
Sjöblom, Tom, 3
sky, 126, 128–30, 156–7
Slíab Lúachra, 57
Slíab Mis, 58
Sliabh Donard, Co. Down, 47
Slievenamon, Co. Tipperary, 23, 25
social antagonism, 168–71
social solidarity, 163–4, 168–70, 172–4
soma, 100–2, 158
sovereignty, 26–7, 76–7, 82, 124–7, 171
sovereignty goddess, 127
spatio-temporality, 6, 122, 156, 164, 166
spear of Lug, 129, 156
Stag God, 77–80, **78**, **79**, 81, 82
stags, 4, 73–82
status, 12–13
Stokes, Whitley, 60, 63, 64
'Story of Asdiwal, The' (Lévi-Strauss), 164
structuralism, 5–6, 163–4
stylistics, 163
succession, 6, 27, 63–4, 80, 124–7, 146, 156
Sucellos, 155

Suidigud Tellaig Temra (*STT*), 54–5, 92
Sweden, 96
sword of Nuadu, 156
symbolism, 4, 27, 55–6, 62, 76–82, 89, 97, 123

Táin Bó Cuailnge, 6, 128, 140–1, 163–75
Táin Bó Froích (*TBF*), 31, 33–4, 35–6, 37–8, 39
Taliesin, 96–7
tameness, 73, 74–6, 82; *see also* domestication
Tara, 27, 54–5, 64, 65, 92
Teach Duinn, 110, 114, 115
teinm laedo, 95, 96, 101
Temair Lúachra, 57
temporal anomalies, 24–6
ten gods model, 122, 125–6, 155–6, 160
Theogony (Hesiod), 126, 128
theological readings, 5
Thor, 154, 155, 158
thumb of wisdom, 89, 93, 95–7, 100
Tír na nÓg, 110, 113–14, 115
Tírechán, 4–5, 11–18, 59
Titans, 145
Tochmarc Becfola, 25–6
Tochmarc Étaine (‘The Wooing of Étaín), 23–7
tooth of wisdom, 95–6
Topographia Hibernica (Gerald of Wales), 55
Tóruigheacht Dhiarmada agus Ghráinne (*TDG*), 33, 34, 36, 38–9
Tory Island, 43–6, 47, 48
transformation, 23, 26, 33–4, 36, 76, 80–2, 91, 142, 143, 144; *see also* shape-shifting
transitional texts, 4, 32–40
Trefuilngid Tre-Eochair, 92, 99
Trêzenn ar Re Varo, 111–12
trickster figures, 129
tripartite model, 6, 122–3, 155–7
Tual, Félix, 107, 112, 116
Tuatha Dé Danann, 43, 62, 75, 114, 145–6, 150–6, 174
Tudor conquest of Ireland, 44
Tulach Bheigile (Tullaghabegley), Co. Donegal, 47–8
Tulach Logha, Co. Donegal, 47–8
Tvaṣṭṛ, 149, 156–60

Uhel, Fañch an, 111
Uí Néill, the, 11
Uisliu, sons of, 169, 170, 172–3
Uisnech, 55, 58, 64, 65
Ujjain, 56
Ulster Cycle, 154, 175
uncle–nephew relationships, 137–46
Uranus *see* Ouranos

vajra of Indra, 155, 157, 158
Vārānasī, 66
Varuna, 156–7
Vendryes, Joseph, 73–4
vernacular literacy, 1
Vesta, 58, 60
Viśvarupa, 158
Vita Merlini (Geoffrey of Monmouth), 109
Vita Tripartita, 12, 81–2
Vivasvat, 129–30, 156–7
voyage to the afterlife, 107–16
Vṛtra, 157, 158

Wasson, R. Gordon, 100, 101
water, 31, 35, 36–8, 89, 90–1, 92–4, 100, 128, 130, 158
Watkins, Calvert, 36, 78
wealth, 13, 123, 153, 155, 157, 159, 169
Well of Segais, 90, 93, 95, 98, 101
well of wisdom, 90–1, 92–3, 99, 101
Welsh language, 38, 62, 74, 140
Welsh law, 140
Welsh mythology, 6, 54, 94, 109, 125–6, 137–46
wildness, 73, 74–6, 82
wisdom, 89–102; *see also* knowledge
Witzel, Michael, 127–8, 130
wizardry, 152–3, 155
‘Wooing of Culhwch and Olwen, The’, 129
‘Wooing of Étaín’ *see Tochmarc Étaine*
Works and Days (Hesiod), 145
written tradition, 4, 32–5, 121

Yajur-Veda, 65
Yellow Book of Lecan, 23, 57, 61, 63
Ynys Prydein (Island of Britain), 54
youth, 123
Ysbaddaden, 129

Zeus, 56, 126, 145
Zhivlova, Nina, 60

þrymskviða, 154

'Celtic mythology, for long sidelined by mainstream scholarship, is making a comeback – but, like the material that it examines, it is returning in a shifted shape. In this volume, we find a wide range of methodological and theoretical approaches to the body of myth in Celtic languages. Structuralist approaches are reinvestigated and revived. Stories and beliefs are set within their contemporary literary and historical contexts, and wider international analogues are considered. This enterprising collection of essays resets the agenda for work on mythology in Celtic Studies.'

Professor Gregory Toner,
Queen's University Belfast

This wide-ranging book contains twelve chapters by scholars who explore aspects of the fascinating field of Celtic mythology – from myth and the medieval to comparative mythology, and the new cosmological approach. Examples of the innovative research represented here lead the reader into an exploration of the possible use of hallucinogenic mushrooms in Celtic Ireland, to mental mapping in the interpretation of the Irish legend *Táin Bó Cuailgne*, and to the integration of established perspectives with broader findings now emerging at the Indo-European level and its potential to open up the whole field of mythology in a new way.

Emily Lyle is an Honorary Fellow in the Department of Celtic and Scottish Studies at the University of Edinburgh.

Cover image:
Cernunnos, the Celtic horned god. Detail from the Gundestrup Cauldron, *c.*100 BCE (Heritage Image Partnership Ltd/Alamy).

Cover design:
Olwen Fowler

Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru
University of Wales Press

www.uwp.co.uk

ISBN 978-1-78683-205-4

9 781786 832054