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‘To the waters and the wild’: Patterns, themes and variations in tales of the birth and youth, of Ireland’s Cormac, Níall and Brigit, Rome’s founder(s), and other kings and heroes

Zusammenfassung: Trotz auffälliger Ähnlichkeiten mit der weltbekannten Legende der Gründung Roms hat *Genemuin Chormaic*, die inhaltlich wohl ursprünglichste vorhandene Fassung der Geschichte von der Geburt und Erziehung des legendären irischen Königs Cormac mac Airt, wenig Beachtung außerhalb der Keltologie gefunden. Der einleitende Teil der vorliegenden Studie bietet eine kurze Besprechung und die erste vollständige Übersetzung dieses aufschlussreichen Textes. Teil II befasst sich anhand einschlägiger Beispiele mit den Grundzügen aufeinanderfolgender moderner Darstellungen und Beurteilungen des Heldenlebens, die größtenteils allgemeinere theoretische und methodologische Entwicklungen im Bereich der Kulturanthropologie und der vergleichenden Mythologie widerspiegeln. Teil III behandelt die bahnbrechende strukturalistische Untersuchung, der Lévi-Strauss den Mythos des nordamerikanischen Helden Asdiwal unterzogen hat, und wendet gewisse Einsichten des Strukturalismus auf einige mittelalterliche irische und neuzeitliche englische Geschichten an, die das frühe Leben von Níall Noígíallach, Cormac, der heiligen Brigit, Mes Búachalla, Mowgli, Tarzan usw. erzählen. Trotz nicht unbeträchtlicher Abweichungen legen einige spezifische Übereinstimmungen zwischen den Legenden von Cormac, Kyros und Romulus die Vermutung nahe, dass alle drei einer gemeinsamen Quelle entstammen. Zum Schluss wird in Teil IV die Rekonstruktion eines dadurch implizierten urindogermanischen Kerns unternommen. Dabei wird Gewicht den Legenden von Cormac und Kyros beigemessen, zusätzlicher Stoff (vor allem der griechische Mythos der Geburt von Zeus und die altnordische Geschichte des Volsungs Sigmund) herangezogen und besondere Aufmerksamkeit der eigenartigen und z. T. hybriden Entwicklung gewidmet, die der außerordentlich gut bezeugten und (allerdings meistens eher oberflächlich) wohlbekannten römischen Legende zugrunde liegt.

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I Introduction and translation of *Genemuin Chormaic* 'Cormac's birth'

In the 1860s attention began to be paid to enclosure in a vessel set afloat on water, nurture by an animal in the wilds[1] and other motifs often found in culturally diverse accounts of the conception, birth and upbringing of kings and heroes. A major role was played from the start by the legend of Rome's foundation, in which the newborn Romulus and Remus were set adrift in a basket on the Tiber, washed ashore and adopted by a she-wolf. However, almost a century elapsed until an early Irish account of a legendary king of Tara's birth in the wilds and nurture by a she-wolf was mentioned in this connection by DE VRIES (1961: 285; cf. REES 1961: 219–20 and 245). Some years later, Ó CATHASAIGH (1977) made a full study of the 'heroic biography of Cormac mac Airt', including an edition and translation of *Scéla Éogain ⁊ Cormaic* (SEC) 'Tales of Éogan and Cormac' (1977: 107–33). The language of 'Version I' underlying the two extant manuscript witnesses of SEC 'belongs on the whole to the eighth century', whereas 'Version II' or *Genemuin Chormaic* (GC) 'Cormac's birth' 'represents a source which dates from the tenth century, if not earlier' (Ó CATHASAIGH 1977: 111–12). Serious discrepancies between them as well as basic agreements such as 'the abduction, suckling and rescue of the boy' made 'independent derivation from a common ancestor' more likely than the creation of II from I 'by a process of deletion, substitution and expansion' (Ó CATHASAIGH 1977: 113).

Ó CATHASAIGH's analysis (1977: 24–106) was informed but not limited by de Vries's scheme of the hero's life (Ó CATHASAIGH 1977: 6–7), and introduced structuralist principles into the study of medieval Irish literature. Part II below reviews various taxonomic proposals and other studies relating to heroic narrative patterns with the help of non-Irish examples. The focus shifts in Part III to structuralist analysis and medieval Irish examples, notably Níall of the Nine Hostages and Saint Brigit, before concluding with a couple of modern creations. Finally, Part IV turns to origins and the reconstruction of a Proto-Indo-European archetype underlying extant accounts of the birth and upbringing of notable kings such as Cormac, Cyrus, Zeus, Sigmund and Romulus. The famous legend of Rome's foundation is treated at length in IV.3 on account of its ample documentation and the tendency of its very familiarity in broad outline to overshadow deep-seated peculiarities and variations.

Two very similar texts of *Genemuin Chormaic*, the primary concern of Part I, survive in in the Book of Ballymote (a town in the barony of Corann, where Cormac's fosterage is located, in SE County Sligo) and the Yellow Book of Lecan. The former

1 'To the waters and the wild': the second line of the refrain of W. B. Yeats's poem 'The stolen child'.

has been published by Ó Grady (1892: I, 253–6) with a translation (II, 286–9) and the latter by Hull (1952) without one. My own translation of Hull's text is given below.

[1] Art son of Conn of the Hundred Battles went to give the battle of Mag Mucrama against Mac Con. He went with great hosts of the men of Ireland across the (river) Shannon westwards. He took hospitality that night before the battle in the house of Olc Ache the smith. He had evil omens and forebodings that night. Olc Ache was telling Art that it was not suitable or proper for him or Éogan son of Ailill Ólom to give battle to Mac Con and his offence against him was bad because Lugaid was entitled to retribution from him. 'How many offspring do you leave behind, Art?' said the smith. 'I only know [*ni·f* or*fedar acht*, *v.l. ni·ḟeadar acht*, ms BB: cf. Breatnach 2017) (of) one son indeed', said Art. 'That is too little', he said. 'Sleep with my daughter tonight, Art', said the smith, 'for it is prophesied to me that a great distinction will be born from me'. That was true. Great was the distinction, namely **Cormac son of Art son of Conn** of the Hundred Battles.

[2] Then the king sleeps with Etan daughter of Olc Ache that night. It is then that Cormac was conceived. Art told her that she would bear a son and that he would be **king of Ireland** (*ri Her*enn) and it is then he tells her (about) every hidden hoard for the advantage of the boy and he said to her that he would be killed on the morrow and bids her farewell thereafter and said to her: 'Take your boy for fostering to a friend from the Connachta, namely Lugne Man of Three (*Lugna F*ir *T*ri, ed. Hull) in Corann'. The king is then killed in the battle as he himself relates.

[3] Etan was, then, pregnant and it came into her mind to go off to the house of Lugne so that it might be there that she gave birth to the issue that was beneath her bosom. She then went into her chariot accompanied by a single woman to (make for) Corann to seek out Lugne. When she reached the land, the onrush of birth pangs overtakes her and she jumped down out of her chariot and brought forth a son. The handmaid went and cuts twigs (to place) under her so that it is thence there is Twigs in Corann. A great thunderclap came into the air at the birth of the boy. Lugne said on hearing the rumble:

[4] 'A rumble of thunder, the birth of a king, increase of corn, extinction of falsehood, a male son of splendour, exalted place of intellect, kindling of truth, a darkening of any utterance. Grain and dairy produce will come from the expedition of Art to Olc's house and from the birth of his great son. Heaven expresses joy and happiness, for the great chief and his son will be mannerly and affable. May heaven prevent the triumph (of those) whom the burst of noise has reached'. 'True', said Lugne. 'The son of the true ruler is Cormac son of Art who has been born now and let us go to look for him', he said, 'for his protection has been entrusted to me until he be capable of inheriting'.

[5] Etan, moreover, slept as a result of the childbirth and entrusted the protection of the boy to the handmaid until it should be time for them to go. Then the handmaid slept and a she-wolf (*sad me*i*ctiri*) comes to them and carries the son off to the place where her whelps were and to the rock cave which is in Cenn Craíbige in Conachail. That is the Cave of Cormac (*Uaim Cormaic*) today. The woman awoke thereafter and gave vent to her woe because she could not find the boy. Then Lugne reached her and asked them what they were about. The maiden told him everything, (namely) that it was to seek him himself that she had come, since it is to him the boy had been entrusted for fostering. Lugne then takes the woman with him to his house and said that he would grant his own request to whoever should find news or whereabouts of the boy.

[6] One day Grec son of Arae was going round the territory and came upon the cave and saw the whelps playing in the cave's entrance (*dorus*) and the young boy among them on his hands [i.e. 'on all fours']. 'Right', he said. He then went to the place where Lugne was and bound upon him the recompense if he should find the king's son for him. Lugne accepted that, so that it is thence that the land upon which the Grecraige live was given to him as a reward for Grec's finding of Cormac. Afterwards Lugne and Grec went to the cave and take the boy and the whelps (*in mac* 7 *na cuilenu*) with them out of it, so that it is then that Lugne sang the following as he prophesied:[2]

[7] 'Welcome, **Conn's heir** (*Cuind comarba*), victorious birth who shall supply righteousness in its propriety to proper gatherings. He shall be discerning of wisdom, he shall be of good judgment, he shall be content, he shall be a *fían*-warrior, he shall be generous, he shall be mannerly. Good (is the) man. (His) great deeds will not be rash. Good shall be the yoke that he adjudges to many hosts. Let them attain every benefit. He shall supply bright feats against all warriors, from which there shall be destruction of their most mighty kings/chiefs. Banishment shall send him jointly away, from which there shall be their absence for a period of nine months. He will supply chariots having coloured points. He assails foes.[3] He will slay hosts of Luaigni. He will promulgate fair law over the lands of Ireland. There will be a court over Ireland's plain. His great judgments are promulgated in this island till the end of the world. Ireland shall put (aside?) her zealous grief if the most chosen great king be capable of inheritance. **He shall be king of Tara three times** (*Bid ri Tem*rach *co bo t*ri). Phantoms (*síabra*) will perish after spending 40 (years) in kingship over the fort of Corann (*cathair Coraind*) so that Tara says to him: "Welcome, Conn's heir". Welcome, Conn'.

[8] Then the boy is fostered with Lugne and mention of his family name was not dared with a view to his father's enemies. The lad was, then, a grazing for the eyes of a multitude, i.e. in shape and attire and fitness and evenness and eloquence and sport and delight and comeliness and dignity and vigour and strength and vehemence. The name that was given him by Lugne, then, namely Corpmac, for that is what Art had bequeathed for bestowing upon him.

[9] Cormac and the sons of the Man of Three, i.e. Ochomon and Úathnach, were playing once. He struck one of them. 'Hey!', he said, 'the man whose family and race are not known, except for his being a fatherless bastard, has struck me'. Cormac then went in grief and sadness to where

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2 The following rhetoric is straightforward enough in some parts but more problematical in others. The translation offered does not aspire to be definitive, and other renderings may well be viable in places. Hull's YBL text is translated without reference to a few significant divergences in O'Grady's BB text. Notwithstanding these limitations, the passage's overall drift seems tolerably clear.

3 YBL *tau bodbdai*, BB simply *bodbada*. If the latter is intended as the gen. sg. of otherwise unattested *bodbaid* (*bodb* 'war goddess' plus agentive suffix), 'a warrior's chariots having coloured points' might be ventured as a translation. The YBL text of this and the immediately preceding and following segments (Hull 1952: 83, ll. 61-2, in essential agreement with BB) is *Firfaid cairpthiu co ndathrindi tau bodbdai. Ar-dibiba sluaga di Luaignib*, which bears some resemblance to the following passage in Tbc I: *Atchíu carpat condathrind táuthat slúagu is bodbdae ardibi firu i n-áthu* (O'Rahilly 1976: 39, ll. 1223–4), translated (1976: 159) as 'I see a chariot with bright points … he will slay men in fords'. The omitted part might perhaps be rendered 'he/it/which assails (*tautat*) hosts and foes' and indicates that *tautat* had been corrupted to *tau* in the archetype of GC underling the YBL and BB versions and was then omitted entirely in the latter as part of an attempt to "fix" the text. If so, 'he assails foes' is indicated as a translation of the original reading.

Lugne was and complained to him about being abused. 'That is not true', said Lugne. 'You are **the son of the true ruler** (*mac na fir-flatha*), **i.e. the son of Art son of Conn of the Hundred Battles**. It is prophesied for you that **you will steer your father's rudder**. For neither grain nor dairy produce nor nut-mast nor sea produce nor weather will be in order until you be **in Tara in lordship** (*hi Tem*raig *i tigern*us)'. 'Let us go, then', said Cormac, 'so that we may ask our way **(in)to the house of our father in(to) Tara** (*i tig ar n-athar i Tem*raig). 'Let us go, then', said Lugne.

[10] They then went, namely Cormac and Lugne with their wolves (*cona conaib*)[4] and the Men of Cúl (*Fir Chul*) with him as kerns. They were in Corann from the time of Echaid Airem until then. For it is they who had killed Echaid Airem, i.e. a heavy tribute was imposed upon them. Those are the Men of Cúl Breg (*Fir Chul Breg*) today, i.e. Cormac gave the land in the East to them and the administration of Tara. For it is they who went in company with him.

[11] They then go until they reached Tara, and Mac Con welcomes them and took Cormac after the manner of fosterage. There was a female hospitaller in Tara at that time, namely Bennaid. Her sheep went and ate the queen's woad. The matter was referred to Lugaid. He declared the sheep in payment for the woad to the queen. 'No', said Cormac. 'Shearing of the sheep is sufficient for the shearing of the woad, for they will both grow again'.

[12] 'That is the true judgement', said everyone. 'It is the son of the true ruler who has given the judgement'. The side of the house in which the false judgement had been given went under the other. It will remain thus until judgement so that it is the crooked mound of Tara.

[13] The reign of Mac Con was not good, moreover. The men of Ireland (*fir Er*enn) expelled him and grant the kingship to Cormac. The world was full of every good thing thereafter as long as Cormac was alive. His wolves (*a choin*), moreover, were with Cormac after a time and it is that that is responsible for the great regard Cormac had for wolves (*for conaib*), i.e through his fostering by wolves (*do chonaib*).

[14] **Tara was built anew by him as it had not been before** both houses and trenches and (other) buildings besides, both hero-houses, sun-houses and houses of earth. Good, then, was Ireland at the time of that king. It was not possible to drink the waters of a river through the slippery mass of its fish. It was not possible to traverse her woods easily through the abundance of their mast. It was not easy to traverse her plains through the abundance of their honey bestowed upon him by heaven through the righteousness of his rule. The abundance of wild honey would have relieved them for food and sustenance of its people even though there should be neither cultivating nor harvesting with them.

[15] **Cormac was in his kingship** (*ina rigi*) **thereafter in Tara (***a Tem*raig**) and it is by him there was built the noblest building that was ever made in Tara** and he was not separated from sovereignty, although the Ulstermen came against him until he died in the fort of Spelan the hospitaller in Cletech when a salmon bone which had been baked in wheat stuck in his throat. It was given to him so that it is thence (came) his death.

[16] What Cormac left to his men of rank and entrusted to his men of rank was not to bury him in the Bruig. For the god that he and the people buried in the Bruig adored was not the same. He told (them) to bury him in Ros na Ríg facing due east towards the rising of the sun, saying

4 See McCone 2021a: 206–7 on the use of *cú* in early Irish to refer to a wolf as well as a dog.

> 'The son of Art rejected the land of the Mac Óc. He asked for a piece of earth over him in Ros na Ríg. He was borne by the host of the Bruigs of Brega so that he rose at the breast of Boand Bríg'.

In SEC, Cormac's mother was called Achtán, the account of his conception is more elaborate than GC's and, when she had given birth,

> 'it was not long afterwards that she was asleep on the green (*isind [ḟ]aithchi*). A she-wolf came and took her son from her without her knowing and the she-wolf put him on her teat, and she did not know where he had gone. There was a trapper named Lugne Man of Three there in that region. He came trapping for game in the environs of the litter of wolves (*cūanlocht na mac tíre*) and found the lad there, and it is he who used to run together with her wolves (*laa cona*). Lugne Man of Three took him with him and he was fed by him for a year. His mother finds out about this. She went to Lugne Man of Three and took him from him and tells him how things were with the lad. "Off with you, then", said Lugne Man of Three to her. "Hide the lad. You will (all) be liable to death for it if Mac Con finds out". Achtán went straightaway by night with her son into the north of Ireland to seek out Fíachnae Cassán, the foster-father of Art son of Conn. When she went across the mountain there at midnight, the wolves (*coin*) of Ireland came to her to carry her son off from her by force. They surround her with lamentation. A wild herd that was on the mountain comes up to her, takes her side and grants her protection. Hence there is Mount Conachal[5] in the East of Luigne. She reached Art's foster-father in the north'. (Ó Cathasaigh 1977: 121, ll. 59–75)

Here too, then, there is a journey to the foster-father accompanied by lupine intervention, this time an unsuccessful attempt by the 'wolves of Ireland' to recover the child previously taken from a she-wolf. After being fostered for thirty years, Cormac set out alone for Tara and duly obtained the kingship after correcting Mac Con's judgment.

Cormac's company on his way from Corann to Tara in GC [10] provides a prestigious aetiology of the presence of population groups called Luigne and Fir Chúl Breg in the Tara area. The political implications of GC and SEC have been elucidated by Ó Corráin (1986: 147–51) in the light of their main characters' genealogical connections, including the protagonist Cormac's key role as a direct ancestor of the Uí Néill dynasties which controlled the Tara kingship in the historical period (e.g., McCone 2020: 82–4). The names of the future king of Tara's finder (Grec) and fosterer (Lugne Fer Trí)[6] in GC are evidently eponyms extrapolated from the Grecraige and

5 See McCone (1990: 46–7) on the narrative function of etymology, this example apparently being based upon analysis of (Mount) Conachal (OIr. *Slíab Conachlae*) as a compound of OIr. *con-* 'wolf, hound' (e.g., McCone 2021a: 206–7) and a variant *uchal* of *uchan* 'sigh, lament' (apparently derived from the expletive *uch/och/ach* 'woe!, alas!') extrapolated from *uchlán, achlán* 'groan, lament' (presumably a dissimilation of **uchnán*).

6 'His name is an example of a highly encoded dual eponym. Lugna is a learned extraction from the well-known tribal name Luigne … The second element makes him eponym also of Corcu Fer Trí

the Luigne plus their eastern neighbours the Corcu Fer Trí respectively, population groups living in and around Corann that were of little consequence by the 8th century AD. Lugne's 'central role as the fosterer of Cormac must indicate, at the least, that the lineages descended from him claimed a "most favoured nation" status in relation to Cormac's descendants, the Uí Néill' and 'it seems reasonable to assume that the tale [GC] goes back to a period anterior to the eighth century when the associations of the Uí Néill with the Luigne, Corco'r Trí, Greccraige and related peoples were of some more political moment' (Ó Corráin 1986: 149). In SEC, by contrast, Fíachnae Cassán is the fosterer and Lugne a mere trapper who finds and temporarily nurtures the child, thereby rendering Grec otiose. Ó Corráin (1986: 151) discerns 'a clear line of policy', since 'Fíachnae Cassán is none other than Fíachra Cassán, ancestor of ... the group of Airgialla dynastic families who controlled Armagh and the kingdom in which it lay' and his role 'points immediately to the interests of Airgialla and particularly those of Armagh' as the chief church of the Uí Néill at a time of some instability in the early ninth century. SEC, then, looks like a 9th-century Armagh product (Ó Corráin 1986: 151).

By contrast, the strong local colour of GC points to composition in or near south-east County Sligo, essentially the three neighbouring modern baronies of Leyney (< Luigne), Corann (Etan's goal when seeking Lugne in GC [3], and probably the territory of the Corcu Fer Trí) and Coolavin, where 'the Gregories' (< Grecrige) are located according to Byrne (1973: 67). The tale's location of Cormac's upbringing in this area, represented as ruled over by Lugne, includes the cave to which the she-wolf took the newborn Cormac to be reared with her own cubs, namely 'the rock cave which is in Cenn Craíbige in Conachail' and was called 'the Cave of Cormac (*Uaim Cormaic*) today' [5]. I am most grateful to Ireland's Chief Placenames Officer, Dr. Conchubhar Ó Crualaoich, for pointing out to me that Hogan's (1910: 287) identification of Conacha(i)l with the present-day townland of Cunghill in the barony of Leyney is formally untenable and that the final element of the townland Carrownacreevy just north of Ke(a)sh Corann could well be a reflex of *Craíbige*, particularly since there are two caves of note on a northeastern spur of the Hill of Ke(a)sh in the immediately adjacent townland of Carnaweeleen.[7] Although the western side

(or Corco'r Trí), an early tribal people who were near neighbours of the Luigne' (Ó Corráin 1986: 149).

7 See the searchable online Irish placenames database **logainm.ie** for maps and records (usually from the late 16th century onwards) of most of the places and their names in this paragraph. Cunghill's location in the barony of Leyney rather than Corann is not an insuperable objection but *Congall* or *Cungall* in the earliest records, which can hardly be the outcome of *Conachail* (e.g. Conaghil in Co. Leitrim), makes it likely that later *Cunghall* and *Cunghill* are due to English-influenced popular etymology. There are four townlands called Carrow-na-creevy (*Ceathrú na Craoibhe* or

of the hill is marked by the spectacular row of some sixteen Caves of Ke(a)sh, the largest and most southerly of which is at some remove from the rest and known nowadays as Cormac's Cave or the Hermit's Cave, the plausible connection between Carrow-na-creevy and GC's Cenn Craíbige makes it likely that one or the other of the present-day School (or Teacher's) Cave and Thief's Hole on the hill's northern side was identified as Cormac's Cave in the early medieval period.[8] The townland Drumcormick 'Cormac's ridge' just northeast of Carnaweeleen may be worth noting in this connection.

Notwithstanding significant differences between them, both GC and SEC present a geographical, social and political matrix revolving around a king supposed to have restored the royal line leading directly to Níall of the Nine Hostages, eponymous ancestor of the historically prominent Uí Néill kings of Tara. Even if the linguistic evidence indicates an 8th- or 9th-century Old Irish date for 'Version I' and a 9th- or 10th-century one for 'Version II' of Cormac's birth-tale, it does not necessarily follow that the content of SEC was closer than that of GC to an inferred "original" underlying both. On the contrary, 'II'/GC 'may … preserve a more original Connacht account' (Byrne 1973: 67) and Ó Corráin's scenario implies that 'I' was, at least in part, a politically motivated recasting of 'II' or an earlier version thereof. Since a quarrel plays a key role in revealing the true identity of the young hero(es) in the legends of Cyrus of Persia and the Roman twins (see IV.2), this feature's absence from SEC and presence in GC provide further support for the latter as a more faithful reflex of an inherited pattern than the former. While this does not invalidate Ó Cathasaigh's focus upon SEC in a typologically oriented study that includes GC, it does identify GC as the more promising base for the genetically oriented comparisons in part IV below.

Craoibhí) in Co. Sligo but only one of these is in Corann, with its end (*ce(a)nn*) perhaps hived off at some stage as Carnaweeleen. If the name *Conacha(i)l* in CG referred to a northern part of Ke(a)sh Corann and/or an adjacent area (cf. note 5 for SEC's '*Slíab Conachla* in the east of Luigne', although an Armagh composition may not be entirely reliable on Corann's geography), it had apparently fallen out of use by the modern period.

8 See, for instance, https://www.carrowkeel.com/sites/carrowkeel/kesh1.html [access: → 'carrowkeel.com' → **second** link 'Kesh Corran' (listed under 'Keash Corran')]: 'The Hill of Kesh rises from the Plain of Corann at the western extreme of the Bricklieve Mountains … The sixteen famous Caves of Kesh Corann open in the cliffs on the west side of the mountain … the largest of the series, Cormac's [*sic*] Mac Art's Cave, also known as the Hermit's Cave … At north-eastern end of Kesh Corann on a large spur by the monument at Cairnaweeleen is a small hole which opens to a large cavern called Pollagcaddy or The Thieves Hole … Nearby in the cliff face below is the Teacher's Cave, where a hedge school was conducted during the penal times'.

II The basic pattern: key examples, taxonomies, inventories and theories

II.1 From Tylor to von Hahn

In a discussion of scattered reports of children raised by beasts, the anthropologist E.B. Tylor (1863: 29) noted that 'stories of children being brought up by animals are found among the popular myths of several parts of the world. Of these, the tale of Romulus and Remus is the best-known example. Here the idea of children being suckled by a she-wolf is joined to another incident often found in the old wonder-tales, the setting adrift of children in an ark, after the manner of the infant Moses in the ark of bulrushes. The infant Cyrus is said to have been brought up by a bitch'. Tylor (1863: 32) concluded that such accounts 'may be safely given over to the student of Comparative Mythology'.

An ancient Mesopotamian text dating from the 7th century BC but probably based upon an older narrative opens with the birth and rearing of King Sargon of Akkad (†c. 2300 BC).

> I am Sargon, the mighty king, king of Akkad. My mother was a priestess. I did not know my father. My father's brother inhabits the highlands. My city is Azupiranu on the bank of the Euphrates. A priestess mother conceived me (and) bore me in concealment. She put me in a wicker basket (and) made my opening watertight with bitumen. She let me down into the river from which I could not ascend. The river carried me (and) brought me to Aqqi, the drawer of water. Aqqi, the drawer of water, on lowering his bucket lifted me up. Aqqi, the drawer of water, raised me as his adopted son. Aqqi, the drawer of water, set me to (do) his gardening. While (I was) at my gardening, Ishtar loved me and for [...] years I exercised kingship.
>
> (text Lewis 1980: 24–5; my translation)

Affinities with Moses and 'the birth of other great lawgivers or founders of nations', such as Romulus and Cyrus, suggested to its first publisher Talbot (1872: 272) 'that similar tales were current in antiquity concerning the infancy of many great sovereigns or legislators'.

The earliest extant mention of setting babies afloat has since come to light at the beginning of an incompletely preserved Old Hittite narrative datable to c. 1500 BC. In this, a queen of Kanis, appalled by the birth of thirty sons in the same year, 'filled vessels with excrement, put her children inside and released them onto the river. The river, however, brought them to the sea to the land of Zalpuwa. The gods then took the children up from the sea and brought them up'. Some years later, the queen bore thirty daughters and reared them herself. When her previously rejected sons eventually turned up, their mother did not recognise them and offered her

daughters to them in marriage. Only the youngest brother objected, realising that these were their own sisters (Otten 1973: 6–7). The clay tablet breaks off at this point, but a pattern of expulsion/exposure and return is obvious in what survives.

'The waters and the wild' of this study's title figure prominently in the biblical story referred to by Tylor and Talbot above. This tells how a pharaonic order to drown newborn Hebrew males led a Hebrew woman to enclose her son in a vessel of bulrushes made buoyant with pitch and leave it among riverside flags with her daughter watching from a distance (Exodus 1:22–2:4). A Pharaoh's daughter found the baby, entrusted the selection of a nurse to the boy's sister, who chose their mother, and adopted him as her son with the name Moses (2:5–10). After killing an Egyptian who was striking a Hebrew, Moses sought refuge among the shepherds of Midian, marrying a daughter of their priest Reuel/Jethro (2:11–22). When he took his father-in-law's flock to 'the backside of the desert' and Mount Horeb (3:1), he encountered a burning bush and was told by God to return to Egypt and confront Pharaoh along with his brother Aaron (3:2–4:23), who was sent 'into the wilderness to meet Moses' (4:27). After the struggle with Pharaoh, Moses brought the Hebrews out of Egypt through the Red Sea, in which their Egyptian pursuers were drowned (5–14). The rest of Exodus (15–40) narrates their wanderings in the desert wilderness, culminating in Moses' receipt of the Ten Commandments from God on Mount Sinai. Finally, having been denied passage over the River Jordan (Deuteronomy 31:2), Moses died in sight of the Promised Land (34:1–5).

According to Livy (i, 3,10–7,3), Romulus and Remus were fathered, allegedly by the god Mars, upon a deposed king's daughter whose usurping uncle had attempted to render her childless by making her a Vestal Virgin. She was imprisoned and her twin sons set adrift on the River Tiber but, when the vessel carrying them floated to dry land, they were found and suckled by a she-wolf until seen by the king's herdsman, who took them home to be raised by his wife. Here flotation on water is combined with nurture by a wild animal prior to discovery and adoption by humble foster-parents. Romulus and Remus grew up to become leaders of a brigand band in the wilds, Remus's capture led to his recognition by their grandfather, and they restored him to the throne of Alba after killing the usurper. The twins then set out with their followers to found a new city at the site of their exposure. After a quarrel between them had resulted in Remus's death, Romulus became sole founder of Rome and her first king.

Similar features occur in the account of Cyrus the Great's birth, upbringing and accession to the Persian throne recorded in Greek within a century of his death (c. 530 BC) by Herodotus (i,107–130). Warned against his daughter's child in a dream, the Medes' king Astyages married her off to a quiet Persian. When she bore a son, the king's confidant Harpagus was entrusted with disposing of the child but ordered a herdsman named Mitradates to take him to his mountain home and leave him there

in a remote spot. However, Mitradates was persuaded by his wife, whose name 'was Kyno in the Greek tongue but Spako in Medic –for the Medes call the hound (Greek *kyn-*) *spak-*' (i, 110,1), to expose their own recently still-born son and let her rear the royal child as their own. At the age of ten Cyrus was made king in a children's game and had the son of an aristocratic Mede flogged for disobedience. When the victim's father complained about this affront, Cyrus was brought before the real king. Astyages then discovered his grandson's true identity but, assured by his magi that the threat had been nullified by the pretended kingship, restored Cyrus to his natural parents. Cyrus subsequently rebelled, defeated and replaced his maternal grandfather.

In Herodotus's version, Cyrus's praise of his foster-mother Spako/Kyno to his parents gave rise to his rumoured rearing by an actual bitch but, as already apparent to Tylor (1863: 29), this looks like a later rationalisation similar to identification of the *lupa* 'she-wolf' as Romulus and Remus's human foster-mother through a secondary sense 'prostitute' in a variant of the Roman legend mentioned by Livy (i, 4,7). Conversely, his nurture by an actual bitch gave rise to the foster-mother's name according to the source used by Trogus Pompeius for his *Philippic histories*, since lost apart from Justin's summary. According to this (i 4, 6–14), Harpagus 'gave the boy to a herder of the king's livestock to be exposed. It happened that a son had been born to the herdsman himself at that time. Consequently, upon hearing of the infant king's exposure, his wife asked with extreme entreaty that the boy be brought and shown to her. The herdsman was plagued by her entreaties into returning to the wood, where he found beside the child a bitch offering her teats to the little one and defending him from wild animals and birds. He … brought the boy to the enclosures with the bitch in anxious attendance. When his wife had taken the boy into her hands, he played with her as if he knew her … so that she asked the herdsman of her own accord to allow her to nurture the boy … Subsequently the foster-mother was named Spaco, because that is what the Persians call a dog. Then the boy received the name Cyrus while among the herdsmen'.

Soon after Tylor's and Talbot's comments, the Austrian diplomat and amateur folklorist J.G. von Hahn (1876: pull-out table between pp. 340 and 341) independently posited an 'Aryan [aka Indo-European] expulsion/exposure and return formula' (*Arische Aussetzungs- und Rückkehr-Formel*) consisting of 16 items. These were essentially an aggregate of features extrapolated from 15 heroic careers: seven (Perseus, Heracles, Oedipus, Theseus, and three sets of twins) drawn from Greek mythology, one (Romulus and Remus) from Rome's foundation legend, three (Wittich, Saxon Siegfried, and Wolfdietrich) from Germanic saga, and a further two each from Iranian (Cyrus of Persia and Chev Chosrew) and Indian (Karna and Krishna) tradition. Von Hahn's taxonomy was divided into four main parts: *birth* (1. out of wedlock, 2. to a local royal mother and 3. divine or outsider father);

youth (4. warning signs of future rise, 5. resultant expulsion/exposure, 6. suckling by animals, 7. upbringing by a childless herdsman and his wife, 8. extraordinary courage, 9. servitude abroad); *return* (10. victorious homecoming and return to foreign parts, 11. fall of persecutor, succession as ruler, liberation of mother, 12. foundation of cities, 13. extraordinary manner of death); *subordinate features* (14. slandering for incest, and early death, 15. revenge of the offended servant, 16. murder of the younger brother). His table juxtaposed the heroic careers selected, noting the various items occurring in each: e.g., Oedipus 4–5, 7, 11, 13–14; Romulus (and Remus) 1–7, 9, 11–13,15–16; Cyrus 2–9, 11, 13, 15–16. *Genemuin Chormaic* (I above) presents reasonable approximations to 1–4, 6 and 11–13 as well as somewhat divergent realisations of 5 and 7. The circumstances of his conception and birth meant that Cormac had no obvious home and so "returned" (10) to the seat of his deceased father's kingship.

Von Hahn was an adherent of "solar" mythology, a theory seeking to relate Indo-European myths to various natural phenomena.[9] Although largely ignored otherwise, his scheme was applied by Nutt (1881), with limited success, to some Irish folkloric and older literary material concerning Fi(o)nn and Cú Chulainn. Taylor (1964: 115–16) and Bremmer (1987: 26–7) reproduce von Hahn's taxonomical list in English translation, as does Ó Cathasaigh (1977: 3–4) along with Nutt's few "Celtic" additions in italics.

Habis's childhood exposure to all manner of wild and domestic animals as well as water contrasts markedly with his later foundation of cities and introduction of laws and arable farming to the Tartessians in the SW Iberian Peninsula.

> The woodlands of the Tartessians … were inhabited by the Cynetes, whose oldest king Gargoris first discovered the practice of collecting honey. When his daughter's misbehaviour had produced him a grandson, shame at the disgraceful deed made him determined to have the little one destroyed in various ways … When he [Gargoris] had first of all ordered him to be exposed and after some days had sent (people) to look for the body of the exposed child, the latter was found nourished by the milk of various wild animals. When he had been brought home again, the utterly cruel man … ordered him to be thrown out onto a narrow pathway along which herds were wont to pass to and fro. When he was unharmed and not short of food there as well, he first cast him to starving dogs tormented by days without food and soon after to pigs. Then, when he was not only not harmed but even nourished at the teats of some of these, he ordered him to be cast off upon the ocean. Then … he was cast ashore by a gentle sea and a deer soon turned up to offer her teats to the little one. Thereafter the boy acquired extraordinary nimbleness in the end through association with his nurturer and, scarcely inferior to them in speed, wandered the mountains and woods amidst herds of deer. Finally, having been caught by a snare, he was given to the king as a gift. Then the grandson was recognised by similarity

9 E.g. von Hahn 1876: 100: 'There is no genuine legend (*Sage*) … which would not originally have been the embodiment of a natural state (*Naturstand*) or natural process (*Naturverlauf*). We call this embodiment the natural kernel (*Naturkern*) of the legend'.

> of features and by the marks burned into him when little. Then, on account of admiration for so many hazards and perils, he was designated heir to the kingdom by him [Gargoris]. He was given the name Habis and, when he assumed kingship, … he bound a barbarian people by laws and first taught cattle to submit to the plough and seek grain by the furrow and, out of loathing for what he himself had suffered, he forced men to eat mellower things instead of wild food. His fortunes would seem incredible if the founders of Rome and Cyrus the king of the Persians had not also been reported to have been nurtured by a she-wolf and a bitch respectively. He also forbade the people to engage in servile labour and the populace was divided up into seven cities. (Justin xliv, 4)

This comparison of Habis' nurture with those of the Roman twins and Cyrus effectively anticipated modern scholarship by nearly two millennia. In most of the above narratives, water is instrumental in an early transition from the biological parents/mother to other nurturers for the rest of the pre-adult phase: a river in the stories of Sargon, Moses and the Roman twins but the sea in Habis's case, and both in the Hittite tale. Not only were rivers and seas natural boundaries but water's use for bathing and cleansing also made it an obvious symbol of purification or death (by drowning) as a prelude to renewal or rebirth: for instance, in the Christian ritual of baptism linked to the Gospels' account (e.g. Matthew 3:13–17) of Christ's immersion by John the Baptist in the River Jordan, accompanied by the Holy Spirit's descent upon him in the form of a dove and followed by a period of temptation in the wilderness before he left home to begin his mission after this exposure "to the waters and the wild". Water brought Moses from a humble to an exalted home but Romulus and Remus in the reverse direction from high birth to the wilds, where they were reared by an animal and then lowly people. Sargon, Cyrus and Habis display the latter sequence with one different omission each: suckling animal, water, and humble fosterers respectively. Moses had no animal helpers but did eventually flee to the wilderness and dwell among Midianite shepherds. After returning to Egypt, he led the Israelites through the parted waters of the Red Sea and the wilderness, dying before they crossed the River Jordan into the Promised Land.

Illegitimate birth characterises Habis, Romulus and Remus, and Sargon as well as Cormac. Fathers play no role beyond impregnating the mothers, but there may be fraught relations with a maternal grandfather or uncle (Cyrus, Habis; Romulus and Remus).

II.2 Oedipus, Freud and Rank

The Odyssey (xi, 271–80) tells how Epicasta, having unwittingly married her own son after he had killed his father, hanged herself when the truth came out, leaving Oedipus to rule Thebes in torment. Flesh is put on this vignette's bare bones by the

5th-century BC Athenian tragedians Sophocles and Euripides as well as the much later *Library* of Greek mythology ascribed to Apollodorus (iii, 5, 7–9).

In the prologue to Euripides's *Phoenissae*, Iocasta (her usual post-Homeric name) tells of her childless marriage to King Laius of Thebes and his request for male offspring to Apollo, who warned him that any child of his would kill him and ruin his house. Laius nevertheless impregnated his wife in his cups and tried to forestall the god's prediction by piercing the resultant child's heels with iron pins (whence his name Oedi-pus 'Swollen-foot') and arranging for cowherds to take him to Mount Cithaeron and expose him there. However, the minders of the Corinthian king Polybus's horses rescued him and handed him to their mistress, who persuaded her husband to adopt him. Upon reaching manhood, Oedipus set off on foot for 'Apollo's House' (Delphi) to learn his natural parents' identity. Encountered by Laius in a chariot making for the same destination to learn the fate of his exposed child, he slew him in a dispute over the right of way. As the Sphinx was oppressing Thebes and Iocasta was now a widow, her brother Creon promised her in marriage to the solver of the Sphinx's riddle. Oedipus solved it and became king by unwittingly marrying his likewise unaware mother. When apprised of the truth, Oedipus blinded himself by sticking pins in his eyes (cf. the fate of his feet). Once his sons were of age, they kept him locked up and were cursed by him.

Euripides shifts Iocasta's suicide from its position straight after the revelation of incest in the Odyssey and Sophocles's play to the aftermath of her sons' death. Oedipus's blinding and eventual departure from Thebes occur in Sophocles as well as Euripides but are not mentioned in the Odyssey, where he remained as Thebes' ruler – until his death, to judge from a reference to his burial in Thebes in the Iliad (xxiii, 679–80). Such variations do not affect the following sequence of classic features exhibited by the Oedipus myth, albeit with some unusual twists: prophecy of a threat posed by the royal child, his exposure in the wilderness (but no suckling by a beast), involvement with herdsmen, fosterage away from home (with the king of Corinth and his wife, not humble herdsmen),[10] (unwitting) revenge upon his persecutor (his biological father), triumphant homecoming (unaware that it was home), elevation to the kingship (of Thebes) and, finally, revelation of his true identity. The hero's identification, usually a positive precursor of his elevation (e.g. Habis) and/or homecoming (e.g. Romulus and Cyrus), is postponed here and has disastrous consequences.

In his work *Traumdeutung* on the interpretation of dreams published in 1900, Freud made his first reference in print to his view of the Oedipus myth in Sophocles's

10 Cf. Cormac's finding by a mere trapper and fosterage with the dynast Fíachrae Cassán in SEC.

version as a reflex of impulses triggered by a male child's longing for his mother and resentment of his father, which he eventually termed the "Oedipus Complex". Whatever about the validity of Freud's interpretation, which has been challenged as anachronistic by VERNANT (1990), it stimulated a broader study of heroic births and early careers by his student Otto RANK (German original 1909, English translation 1914 reprinted in SEGAL 1990: 1–86). Rank's Freudian approach dictated a focus upon the formative phase up to the hero's typically hostile encounter with his father or an equivalent male authority figure. Although he also appended references to others such as the already discussed Habis (RANK 1914: 56, n, 1; SEGAL 1990: 54, n, 55), Rank's main examples were the Cyrus legend and parallels to it identified by scholars from BAUER (1882) to LESSMANN (1906), who included 'a saga of the Celts' relating to Lug and Balor (1906: 13–18).

In addition to the "Indo-European" Karna (India), Oedipus, Paris, Telephus, Perseus, Heracles (Greece), Cyrus (Persia), Romulus (Rome), Tristan (British-Germanic) and Siegfried (Germanic), Rank also considered the ancient Mesopotamian Sargon and Gilgamesh as well as the biblical Moses and Jesus with a view to extrapolating 'the standard saga itself … according to the following outline' (with asterisks added to denote items with reasonable approximates in *Genemuin Chormaic*, in which prophecies of Cormac's future greatness figure prominently but not as threats and, instead of taking revenge upon his father, Cormac avenges him by replacing the king responsible for Art's death): 'The hero is the child of most distinguished parents, usually the son of a king [*]. His origin is preceded by difficulties, such as continence, or prolonged barrenness, or secret intercourse of the parents due to external prohibition or obstacles. During or before the pregnancy, there is a prophecy [*], in the form of a dream or oracle, cautioning against his birth, and usually threatening danger to the father (or his representative). As a rule, he is surrendered to the water, in a box. He is then saved by animals, or by lowly people (shepherds), and is suckled by a female animal [*] or by an humble woman. After he has grown up, he finds his distinguished parents, in a highly versatile fashion. He takes his revenge upon his father, on the one hand, and is acknowledged [*], on the other. Finally he achieves ranks and honors [*]' (RANK 1914: 66; SEGAL 1990: 57). 'The exposure in the water signifies no more and no less than the symbolic expression of birth' and 'the basket, box, or receptacle simply means … the womb' (RANK 1914: 73; SEGAL 1990: 63 to which is appended a note [SEGAL 1990: 79, n, 8] that 'the "box" in certain myths is represented by the cave [*]').[11] 'The hero himself, as shown by his detachment from his parents, begins his career in opposition to the

11 Dundes's objections (SEGAL 1990: 195–6) to this interpretation of Rank's in the contribution referred to in the following note seem unduly literal-minded.

older generation; he is at once a rebel, a renovator, and a revolutionary' (Rank 1914: 95; Segal 1990: 77).

Rank (1914: 50–4; Segal 1990: 39–43)[12] included the accounts of Christ's nativity in the opening chapters of the Gospels according to Matthew and Luke in his inventory of heroic birth-tales.

Matthew tells how David's descendant Joseph was dissuaded from abandoning his pregnant fiancée, Mary, by an angel in a dream urging him to marry her as she had conceived from the Holy Spirit a son destined to be called Jesus and save his people from sin (1: 18–23). Mary gave birth as Joseph's virgin wife in Bethlehem during Herod's reign over Judea (1:24–2:1). Magi then appeared in Jerusalem seeking one 'born king of the Jews' after seeing a star. Informed of a prophecy that the Christ would be born in Bethlehem, Herod summoned the magi and sent them to Bethlehem with instructions to locate the child and then inform him so that he too could pay homage (2:1–8). The star led them to the house and Mary with the baby, to whom they offered gifts (2:9–11). Visions prompted them to avoided Herod on their way home and Joseph to flee to Egypt with Mary and the child (2:12–15). Herod then had all of the boys under two years old in and around Bethlehem killed (2:16–18). After the king's death, Joseph returned from Egypt with his family and settled in the Galilean city of Nazareth as advised in dreams.

Luke interweaves the conception and birth of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ. An angel informed the aged priest Zechariah that his barren wife Elizabeth would bear a spiritually potent son to be called John (1:5–25). Then (1:26–38) the angel Gabriel visited Nazareth to tell a virgin called Mary, who was betrothed to a descendant of King David called Joseph, not only that she would conceive by the Holy Spirit and bear a 'Son of God' but also that her kinswoman Elizabeth was six months pregnant. When Mary visited Elizabeth (1:39–56), the child leapt in the latter's womb and she blessed Mary and her offspring. John's birth, naming and early life in the wilderness (1:57–80) precede an account of Joseph's obligation to go for a census to Bethlehem, where Mary gave birth to a son, wrapped him and laid him in a manger because there was no room in the inn (2:1–7). Shepherds guarding their flock in the fields at night received angelic notification of the birth (2:8–14), found the family and then told others (2:15–20). The child was named Jesus and circumcised after eight days (2:21). After being presented at the temple in Jerusalem (2:22–38), Jesus returned home to Nazareth with his parents and grew in strength, wisdom and God's grace (2:39–40).

12 See further Dundes 'The hero pattern and the life of Jesus' (Segal 1990: 179–223), which includes a three-column table juxtaposing comparable items in the schemes of von Hahn, Rank and Raglan. The discussion of them by Taylor (1964: 114–19) successively presents all three taxonomies in full.

These look like parallel adaptations of suitable "heroic" motifs to the birth and upbringing of the son of God and a human mother. Both locate Christ's birth in Bethlehem and his formative years in Nazareth. In Matthew's version, Joseph's house in Bethlehem is visited by the magi and the family only settles in Nazareth after returning from Egypt, whereas Luke makes Nazareth Joseph's home and a temporary trip to Bethlehem the occasion of Jesus's birth and the shepherds' visit. Portents of the infant's future greatness abound in both, but only Matthew has the hostility of a ruler threatened by a prophecy leading to the child's exile and return (to and from Egypt like Jacob and his descendants in Genesis and Exodus). The trip from Nazareth to Bethlehem and back as well as Christ's birth outside the inn, his laying in a manger usually used by animals, and the shepherds' visit in Luke's Gospel look like attenuations[13] of a classic exile/exposure and nurture by animals and herdsmen.

II.3 Ritualism, Raglan, 'rites of passage', and the Rees brothers

Neither Rank nor von Hahn figured in a study by Lord Raglan (1936), among other things an amateur folklorist influenced by Sir James Frazer's *Golden bough* and the "Cambridge ritualists" (Ackerman 2002) Jane Harrison, F.M. Cornford and A.B. Cook plus Oxford's Gilbert Murray. The latter accepted Frazer's idea of a priest-king linked to fertility and the vegetational cycle through sexual union or "sacred marriage" with a female spirit and, when his powers waned, liable to be killed or deposed in order to transfer his fecundating function to a fitter successor.[14] Well after the pre-1914 heyday of mytho-ritualism (Ackerman 2002: 46, 74 and 163–7), Raglan aspired 'to show … that all traditional narratives originate in ritual' (1936/1949: 41).

The biblical and semitic scholar Robertson Smith was an important influence not only upon Frazer but also upon the French sociologist Émile Durkheim and thence the Cambridge Ritualists (Ackerman 2002: 41–3). Adopting 'fundamentally a sociological approach' and a basic tenet that 'religious practices [rites] precede the doctrines [myths] that grow up to explain them', Smith sought 'the origins of ancient religion in the *structure* of the worshipping community', for which it 'provided what we should call supernatural sanctions that legitimized the existing order of things' (Ackerman 2002: 41–2).

13 A similar suggestion regarding the shepherds is made by Dundes (Segal 1990: 192) in the article mentioned in the previous note.

14 Murray (1927: 228), for instance, relates the Greek myth of King Agamemnon's murder by his successor Aegisthus and their wife Clytaemnestra, who were in turn killed by Agamemnon and Clytaemnestra's son Orestes and daughter Electra, to 'the world-wide ritual story of what we may call the Golden-Bough Kings'.

> And here is the key sentence [of Smith's]: 'So far as myths consist of explanations of ritual, their value is altogether secondary, and it may be affirmed with confidence that in almost every case the myth was derived from the ritual, and not the ritual from the myth; for the ritual was fixed and the myth was variable …' … Basically, he asserts, myths have grown up as elaborations upon rituals, and only when the original sense of these rituals has been misunderstood or forgotten. It follows, then, that the only useful way to understand a myth is to examine the ritual it attempts to explain, or, if the ritual no longer exists, then to read backwards through the myth and attempt to reconstruct the ritual. This, of course, is exactly what the [Cambridge] ritualists and their followers were to adopt as their method. (Ackerman 2002: 43–4)

Although social context was hardly a concern of Frazer's (Ackerman 2002: 63), he similarly claimed that 'while many cases can be shown in which a myth has been invented to explain a rite, it would be hard to point to a single case in which a myth has given rise to a rite' (Frazer 1894: 223). Harrison declared in 1890 that 'that in many … cases, *ritual practice misunderstood* explains the elaboration of myth' (cited by Ackerman 2002: 81). In a study known to have influenced Harrison (Ackerman 2002: 103, n, 23), Durkheim (1898/9: 22) appended the following footnote to a statement that '*the phenomena called religious consist of obligatory beliefs connected with specific practices relating to things given in these beliefs*':

> This definition maintains an equal distance from the two contrary theories which currently divide the science of religions. According to some, it is the myth that would be the essential religious phenomenon; according to others, it would be the rite. But it is clear that there cannot be a rite without a myth, since a rite presupposes that things are represented as sacred and this representation can only be mythic. But, on the other hand, it must be recognised that, in less evolved religions, the rites are [well] developed and determined whereas the myths are still rudimentary. Besides, it also seems rather improbable that there should be myths which are not linked to any rites.

Whether or not they insisted, like the "hyper-ritualist" Raglan, that the relationship always held in the final analysis, mytho-ritualists emphasised the dependence of myths upon rites or, at least, close correlations between them. As Kirk (1970: 8–31) shows, claims that myths always derive from rituals are empirically untenable, unless myth (as opposed to, say, legend or folktale) is defined with evident circularity as a narrative linked to a ritual.[15]

Raglan (1936: 179–80; 1949: 178–9) extrapolated a 22-point ('but it would be easy to take more', 1936/1949: 190) 'pattern' from the 'careers' of a dozen classical gods and heroes (11 Greek, plus Romulus) and then incorporated the relevant points into twelve 'potted biographies', supplemented by those of three biblical, one Javanese, one Nilotic and four medieval European characters. The basic pattern focused upon:

15 Cf. Raglan's (1936: 179; 1949: 178) reference to 'genuine mythology, that is, mythology connected with ritual, and the imitation mythology'.

parentage (1. a royal virgin and 2. a king, often 3. closely related to her), *conception* (4. unusual and 5. reputed siring by a god), *birth* (and 6. attempted murder, usually by his father or maternal grandfather), *childhood* away from home (7. removal to and 8. fosterage in a far country but 9. otherwise uneventful); *attainment of manhood* (and 10. return home or journey to his future kingdom, 11. victory over a king, giant, dragon or wild beast), *marriage* (12. to a princess, often his predecessor's daughter), 13. *attainment of kingship* (14. uneventful reign and 15. lawgiving, 16. loss of favour with gods and/or subjects, and 17. expulsion); *death* (18. mysterious, 19. often on a hill's summit, 20. not succeeded by his children, 21. unburied but 22. with one or more holy sepulchres). The 21 heroes were awarded points (bracketed after their names in the following list) corresponding to the number of the pattern's 22 features found by Raglan in their 'potted biographies' (1936: 179–89; 1949: 178–89): Oedipus (21), Theseus (20), Romulus (18), Heracles (17), Perseus (18), Jason (15), Bellerophon (16), Pelops (13), Asclepius (12), Dionysus (19), Apollo (11), Zeus (15); Joseph (12), Moses (20), Elijah (9); Watu Gunung (18), Nyikang (14); Sigurd/Siegfried (11), Llew Llawgyffes (17), Arthur (19), Robin Hood (13). Raglan (1936: 92–100 and 189; 1949: 93–101 and 188) also considered the Irish hero Cú Chulainn without including him in his list. Cormac may be awarded 10 points: 2, 4, 7, 8, 10, 11 and 13 occur more or less straightforwardly in *Genemuin Chormaic*, his correction of Mac Con's judgment can be ascribed to 15, and 12 and 17 supplied from other texts featuring Cormac (II.6). Frazer's moribund sacral king is apparent in specification of the hero's wife as 'the daughter, or widow, of his predecessor' in line with 'a *hieros gamos* or sacred marriage' by Raglan (1936: 195–6; 1949: 196), who also emphasises the hero's death and its aftermath.

The Belgian anthropologist Arnold van Gennep's seminal work *Les rites de passage* (1909; English translation 1960) on initiations and other rituals of transition attracted the attention of Cambridge Ritualists: e.g., '"initiation," "going in," that is, entering the tribe. The ceremonies vary, but the gist is always substantially the same. The boy is to put away childish things, and become a grown and competent tribesman … To the Greeks and to many primitive peoples the rites of birth, marriage and death were for the most part family rites needing little or no social emphasis. But *the* rite which concerned the whole tribe, the essence of which was entrance into the tribe, was the rite of initiation at puberty' (Harrison 1913: 41 and 43). For Raglan (1936/1949: 190) 'the incidents fall definitely into three groups—those connected with the hero's birth, those connected with his accession to the throne, and those connected with his death. They thus correspond to the three principal *rites de passage*, that is to say, the rites at birth, at initiation, and at death'. Hence (1936: 192; 1949: 193) 'point number nine, that we are told nothing of the hero's childhood … since as a general rule children take no part in ritual between the rites at birth and those at initiation'.

Raglan's barely used taxonomy did influence Alwyn and Brinley Rees, who prefaced their treatment of 'births' and other medieval Irish narrative genres with the claim (1961: 213) that 'whereas the pattern of the hero's life has little in common with what is historically significant in the lives of men, it does, as Lord Raglan has shown, correspond with the ritual life-cycle', especially 'birth and baptism, initiation and marriage, death and burial'. They draw 'a comparison between the exposure of the hero, particularly by immersion or by setting him adrift, and the sacrificial ritual of baptism … [as] a death and rebirth ceremony' (Rees 1961: 242). They present (Rees 1961: 223–4) an avowedly impressionistic 9-point taxonomy of medieval Irish birth-tales as 'the common stuff of birth myths the world over': 1. Foretelling of the hero's advent and future greatness; 2. Danger posed by him to an authority, his grandfather, uncle or mother; 3. Difficulties (e.g. virtual imprisonment) confronting his mother-to-be; 4. A mystery about his begetting (e.g. the identity of his biological father or the possibility of incest); 5. An auspicious time of birth, heralded by natural signs; 6. Early nurturing by animals; 7. Loss at birth or an attempt to kill him; 8. Early revelation of extraordinary qualities; 9. Difficulty or peculiar circumstances of his naming.

van Gennep (1960: 20–1) ascribed a key role to the threshold (Latin *limen*):

> The door is the boundary between the foreign and domestic worlds in the case of an ordinary dwelling, between the profane and sacred worlds in the case of a temple. Therefore to cross the threshold is to unite oneself with a new world … The rites carried out on the threshold itself are transition rites. "Purifications" (washing, cleansing, etc.) constitute rites of separation from previous surroundings; there follow rites of incorporation (presentation of salt, a shared meal, etc.). The rites of the threshold are therefore … rites of preparation for union, themselves preceded by rites of preparation for the transitional stage. Consequently, I propose to call the rites of separation from a previous world, *preliminal rites*, those executed during the transitional stage *liminal* (or *threshold*) *rites*, and the ceremonies of incorporation into the new world *postliminal rites*.

II.4 Malinowski's "functionalism", Jungian archetypes and Campbell's 'monomyth'

'Immediately after the First World War … philosophical evolutionism began to be replaced by the more pragmatic, functional, and professional approach associated with the names of Malinowski, Radcliffe-Brown and Boas' and 'social function and social structure replaced mental states as the central concerns of the student of primitive culture' (Ackerman 2002: 45 and 46). Fieldwork was deemed crucial and a long sojourn on the Trobriand Islands convinced Malinowski 'that an intimate connection exists between the word, the mythos, the sacred tales of a tribe, on the one

hand, and their ritual acts, their moral deeds, their social organization, and even their practical activities, on the other' (1926: 11). Myth could still function as an adjunct of ritual, but subsuming both into a broader social and ideological network deprived the connection of its privileged status. Malinowski differentiated myth from other types of narrative, which he termed *folk-tale* and *legend*, by maintaining that 'the *myth* comes into play when rite, ceremony, or a social or moral rule demands justification, warrant of antiquity, reality, and sanctity' (1926: 36). These parameters went well beyond the ritual sphere and were given a functional dimension insofar as 'myth is not only looked upon as a commentary ... but it is a warrant, a charter, and often even a practical guide to the activities with which it is connected. On the other hand the rituals, ceremonies, customs, and social organization ... are regarded as the results of mythical event ... the real cause which has brought about the moral rule, the social grouping, the rite, or the custom' (1926: 37–8).

Binder (1964: 1–129) adopts a functionalist approach to 'the exposure/expulsion of the royal child' with special reference to Cyrus and Romulus, emphasising the social and ritual correlations of the myths or legends in question with sodalities, sovereignty, the Lupercalia festival etc. and entitling a concluding chapter *Mythos und Kult – Sage und Brauch* 'myth and cult – saga and custom'. For instance, 'the submerging of those baptised (initiands) signified their symbolic death ... For water simultaneously has destructive, cleansing and creative power. Such initiation rites were part of the life of a sodality (*Männerbund*)' (Binder 1964: 37; cf. McCone 2022b: 216–21).

For Malinowski and his followers, the function of myths was to provide aetiologies and archetypes for a whole range of phenomena, experiences and activities. Meanwhile, Jung was developing psychological theories which ascribed a key role to archetypes of a more subliminal nature (see Walker 2002: 3–89), conceived by him in 1912 as 'forms or images of a collective nature which occur practically all over the earth as constituents of myths and at the same time as autochthonous individual products of unconscious origin' (cited in Campbell 2008: 342, n, 17). Jung was not only personally interested in myth and its relation to dreams but also influenced students of mythology and literature (Walker 2002: 91–122), including the Cambridge Ritualists (Walker 2002: 95 and Ackerman 2002: 63 and 150–2).

Joseph Campbell (1949; posthumous third edition 2008) made the hero's progress dependent upon 'rites of passage' and the need to withdraw and 'break through to the undistorted, direct experience and assimilation of what C. G. Jung has called "the archetypal images"' (2008: 6 and 12): 'the archetypes to be discovered and assimilated are precisely those that have inspired ... the basic images of ritual, mythology, and vision ... Myth and dream are symbolic in the same general way of the dynamics of the psyche. But in the dream the forms are quirked by the peculiar troubles of the dreamer, whereas in myth the problems and solutions shown

are directly valid for all mankind' (Campbell 2008: 14). Hardly a strict Jungian,[16] Campbell also acknowledged a ritual dimension to his work.

> The standard path of the mythological adventure of the hero is a magnification of the formula represented in the rites of passage: *separation – initiation – return:* which might be named the nuclear unit of the monomyth. [According to this] a hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder (*x*): fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory won (*y*): the hero comes back from his mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons upon his fellow man (*z*). (Campbell 2008: 23)

In comparison with those of von Hahn, Rank and Raglan, Campbell's basic scheme is patently reductionist[17] even if 'the changes rung on the simple scale of the monomyth defy description' (2008: 212). The rites of passage most applicable to it are those of initiation into brotherhoods, manhood and so on typically involving separation, seclusion and reintegration according to van Gennep (1960: 65–115). Nevertheless, 'where for Freud and Rank heroism is limited to the first half of life, for Carl Jung it involves the second half even more. For Freud and Rank, heroism involves relations with parents and instincts. For Jung, heroism in even the first part involves, in addition, relations with the unconscious … Jung himself allows for heroism in both halves of life, but Campbell does not … Where Rank's scheme ends, Campbell's begins … Campbell does acknowledge heroism in the first half of life and even cites Rank's monograph, but he demotes this youthful heroism to mere preparation for adult heroism' (Segal 1990: xvi–xvii).

The lack of a clear biographical framework differentiates Campbell's tripartite monomyth from the taxonomies of von Hahn (under three main headings of birth, youth, and return up to death), Rank (partial – from conception to revenge upon the father and attainment of honours) and Raglan (three phases connected with birth, accession to kingship, and death). Nevertheless, he did resemble two of them in subdividing his three main sections (Campbell 2008: 28–9): I *separation/departure*, (1) call to adventure, (2) refusal of call, (3) supernatural aid, (4) crossing first threshold, (5) (womb-like) belly of the whale; II *initiation* (1) road of trials, (2) meeting the goddess, (3) woman as the temptress, (4) atonement with father, (5) apotheosis, (6) ultimate boon; III *return* (1) refusal of return, (2) magic flight, (3) rescue from outside, (4) crossing return threshold, (5) master of two worlds, (6) freedom to live. After a 'prologue' (Campbell 2008: 1–37), each of these was dealt with in separate chapters

16 See Walker (2002: 139) and his attached endnote (161, n, 27): 'In a late interview Campbell stated "I'm not a Jungian". But then he added: "As far as interpreting myths, Jung gives me the best clues I've got"'.

17 See Segal (1990: ix–xli) for a discussion and comparison of the treatments of Rank, Campbell and Raglan.

(I 'Departure' 41–79, II 'Initiation' 81–165, III 'Return' 167–215) with five or six subsections corresponding to the aforementioned subdivisions.

Campbell included a few Irish examples from medieval sources and later folklore in material drawn from a wide range of literatures and cultures. As far as his II(2) is concerned, 'the ultimate adventure, when all the barriers and ogres have been overcome, is commonly represented as a mystical marriage (ἱερὸς γάμος) of the triumphant hero-soul with the Queen Goddess of the World', one example adduced being the sequential encounters of King Eochaid Feidlech's five sons on a hunting expedition with a hag whose bedding by the youngest transformed her into a beauty and destined him to succeed his father (Campbell 2008: 91 and 97–9; see III.2 below). Campbell's (2008: 274–87) treatment of the 'childhood of the human hero' as a foreshadowing of future greatness, concludes (284–7) by illustrating the claim that 'the cosmic energies burning within the vivid Irish warrior Cuchulainn … would suddenly burst like an eruption' in his first and last 'boyhood deeds' through 'paroxysm or distortion' (see McCone 2021a: 218–19, and 2022a: 183–6).

II.5 The motif-index, Binder's inventory, and the "formalist" Propp

Two major studies of the heroic pattern considered so far were essentially folkloristic (von Hahn with a "solar" and Raglan with a "ritualist" orientation) and the other two (Rank and Campbell) basically psychological (Freudian and Jungian respectively). In effect, von Hahn's scheme was a motif-index of a particular narrative genre, as were those of Raglan and even Rank. Indeed, von Hahn had already made 'the first attempt at a logical ordering of folktales' in his extensive collection of Greek and Albanian material published in 1864 (Thompson 1946: 414). With the help of various collections (see Thompson 1946: 467–79), a *Motif-index of folk-literature* intended to be comprehensive but expandable appeared in six volumes between 1932 and 1936.[18] According to Thompson (1946: 415–16), 'a *motif* is the smallest element in a tale having a power to persist in tradition … First are the actors … Second come certain items – magic objects, unusual customs, strange beliefs, and the like. In the third place there are single incidents – and these comprise the great majority of motifs. It is this last class that can have an independent existence and may therefore serve as true tale-types'.

18 See Thompson 1946: 413–27 on 'Classifying folk narrative' and 488–500 for a list of the *Motiv-index*'s main categories [A-Z], various subcategories and a selection of individual motifs such as A1700 or B211.3 illustrating the basic *modus operandi*. Propp (1968: 8–11) discusses the pros and cons of Arne's preliminary work in this direction, on which see Thompson 1946: 416–23.

The *Motif-index* was an ambitious attempt to compile an extensive thematically organised worldwide inventory of the motifs to be found in folktales. Naturally, collections of motifs or tale-types with a narrower geographical and/or thematic focus were also possible. One such was Binder's (1964; cf. II.4 above) numbered inventory of 121 examples of the expulsion/exposure of a royal child.[19] This chronologically and, albeit within the bounds of Eurasia, geographically diverse material was arranged under the following headings: Greece (items 1–37), Rome and Italy (38–43), Near East (44–51), Israel (52–8), Persia (59–69), India (70–86), Turks and Mongols (87–94), Germania (95–105), elsewhere (106–21). Like von Hahn and Rank, Binder makes no mention of Irish examples of the basic pattern.

In 1928 the Russian folklorist Vladimir Propp produced a study of a corpus of folktales prone to feature departures, quests and returns. However, this had little effect outside Russia until it appeared in English translation in 1958 (revised 2nd edition 1968). The 31 'functions of dramatis personae' and their 'designations' (e.g. β for function 1, ↑ for function 11 *departure*, ↓ for function 20 *return*; plus more detailed sub-categories such as β^1, β^2, β^3) are catalogued by Propp (1968: 25–65), concluding with an item shared with Raglan (II.3 above): 'XXXI. The hero is married and ascends the throne. (Definition: *wedding*. Designation W.' (1968: 63). The functions are also listed, albeit succinctly without sub-types,[20] by Taylor (1964: 124–6) in his summary and critique of von Hahn (114–17), Rank (117), Raglan (118–19), Campbell (119–21) and Propp (121–7). As Hollo (2005: 16–17) puts it:

> Propp, working with stories 50 through 151 from the Afanasiev collection of 400 Russian folktales, developed a sequence of thirty-one *functions* which he considered sufficient to describe all fairytales. A function is described as 'an act of a character, defined from the point of view of its significance for the course of the action.' (Propp 1968, 21) … These functions serve as stable, constant elements in the folktales independent of how and by whom they are fulfilled … Not all functions will appear in any given tale, but those that do will appear in the order which Propp describes. These functions are organised into *moves*. A move is created when an act of villainy or a lack (as defined by Propp) enters the story [and ended by a 'terminal' function such as marriage, a reward or gain, liquidation of misfortune, escape etc.; Propp 1968: 91]. A folktale may be composed of one move alone or of several … Propp also established a set of seven *actants* defined through their spheres of action …: the hero, the villain, the donor, the helper, the princess/her father (counted as one actant), the dispatcher, the false hero.

19 See Lewis (1980: 152–95) for an overlapping list (in English) of 72 versions.

20 Instead, after Propp's *initial situation* (*a*), he divides the functions into larger groups: 'preparatory section' (I–VII or Beta–Theta), 'inauguration of the plot' (VIII–XI or A–Upward arrow), 'the hero experiences a number of different adventures which lead to the moment when he eventually receives a magic agent' (XII–XV or D–G), 'struggle with villain or villainy' (XVI–XXIV or H–L, including XX Arrow downward), 'task and solution' (XXV–XXXI or M–W).

In the final analysis, notwithstanding its greater elaboration and formal sophistication, Propp's list of 'functions' (or alternatively 'motifemes', on which see Melia 1977/8: 41) was a limited motif-index[21] like the schemes of von Hahn, Rank and Raglan. Moreover, his characterisation (e.g. Propp 1968: 96–9 and 128–34) of individual (or groups of) tales in terms of the particular selection of functions employed in it (or them) was not significantly different from the use made by von Hahn (II.1 above) and Raglan (II.3) of their respective numbered lists of 16 and 22 typical but often optional items.

The labelling of a tale as a particular linear set and sequence of Propp's 'functions' (including any repetitions; e.g. Propp 1968: 74 and 92) was complemented by the 'move' as a larger unit of formal structural analysis (see Propp 1968: 92–4 for typical schemes). *Loinges mac nDuíl Dermait*, a medieval Irish text featuring Cú Chulainn's departure, adventures and return, has been explicitly analysed by Hollo (2005: 19–22) in terms of the functions posited by Propp and moves as defined by him. Since his 'functions' were based upon certain Russian folktales and hardly indispensable to 'moves' as such, a limited amount of medieval Irish material has been subjected to "quasi-Proppian" analyses in terms of either moves alone or *ad hoc* functions other than Propp's (see Hollo 2005: 18).[22]

A central feature of Propp's methodology is his distinction between 'constants and variables … The names of the dramatis personae change (as well as the attributes of each), but neither their actions nor their functions change … one may say that the number of functions is extremely small, whereas the number of personages is extremely large. This explains the two-fold quality of a tale: its amazing multiformity, picturesqueness, and color, and on the other hand, its no less striking uniformity, its repetition … *Functions of characters serve as stable, constant elements in a tale, independent of how and by whom they are fulfilled. They constitute the fundamental components of a tale*' (1968: 20–1). Dundes (in Propp 1968: xi–xii) notes 'two distinct types of structural analysis in folklore':

> One is the type of which Propp's *Morphology* is the exemplar par excellence. In this type, the structure or formal organization of a folkloristic text is described following the chronological order of the linear sequence of elements … Following Lévi-Strauss (1964:312), this linear sequential structure we might term "syntagmatic" structural analysis … [In t]he other type … the elements are taken out of the "given" order and are regrouped in one or more analytic schema. Patterns or organization in this second type of structural analysis might be termed "paradigmatic" (cf. Sebag 1963: 75) …

21 His 'functions' and 'actants' may be compared with Thompson's aforementioned 'incidents' and 'actors'.

22 A number of Ulster death tales (Melia 1977/8; moves and *ad hoc* functions), *Scéla muicce meic Da Thó* (McCone 1990: 60; moves without reference to functions), and Conaire's accession to the Tara kingship in *Togail bruidne Da Derga* and *De ṡíl Chonairi Móir* (McCone 1990: 60–1; *ad hoc* functions).

Propp's concentration upon the "syntagmatic" level naturally impeded or even excluded systematic consideration of its "paradigmatic" counterpart comprising constituents deemed 'variables' (notably specific characters, as opposed to their generic narrative functions listed by Hollo above; Propp 1968: 79–80). Propp (1968: 87–8) does acknowledge 'the problem of tale characters in general. Previously, we sharply separated the question of *who* acts in the tale from the question of the actions themselves. The nomenclature and attributes of characters are variable quantities of the tale. By attributes we mean the totality of all the external qualities of the character: their age, sex, status, external appearance … and so forth. These attributes provide the tale with its brilliance, charm, and beauty … The constancy of functions endures, permitting us to also introduce into our system those elements which become grouped around the functions'. Variable attributes are thus viewed primarily as aesthetic embellishments. The vague possibility of a more essential role is then floated, only to be dismissed as beyond the scope of Propp's current investigation: 'The study of attributes makes possible a scientific *interpretation* of the tale. From the historical point of view, this signifies that the fairy tale in its morphological bases represents a *myth* … However, we are stating all of this in the form of a supposition. Morphological investigations in this sphere should be linked with a historical study, which at present cannot enter into our task' (Propp 1968: 90). Dundes (in Propp 1968: xii–xiii) puts the nub of the matter thus:

> Propp's syntagmatic approach has unfortunately dealt with the structure of the text alone … [but] pure formalistic structural analysis is probably every bit as sterile as motif-hunting … Propp made no attempt to relate his extraordinary morphology to Russian (or Indo-European) culture as a whole. Clearly structural analysis is not an end in itself! … It is a powerful technique of descriptive ethnography inasmuch as it lays bare the essential form of the folkloristic text. But the form must ultimately be related to the culture or cultures in which it is found.

II.6 De Vries and Ó Cathasaigh

de Vries presented his own taxonomy (1961: 282–9)[23] in a chapter entitled *Das Modell eines Heldenlebens* 'the pattern of a hero's life', which acknowledged previous studies by 'the brilliant and often insufficiently recognised' von Hahn and by Lord Raglan in his 'dilettantish' book (281–2). It was divided into ten main sections with various subdivisions: 1. *Conception* (a. virgin mother, often out of wedlock; b. divine

23 De Vries's *Heldenlied und Heldensage* (1961) was his own translation into German of a book originally written by him in Dutch and published two years previously, and so is preferred here for reference (and, where necessary, my own translation) over the English translation by Timmer published in 1963.

father, c. sometimes disguised as an animal; d. incestuous); 2. *Birth* (a. unnatural; b. by Caesarean section); 3. *Threat when young* (a. exposure either by the father through a dream of the risk posed by the child or by the mother to hide her shame; b. animal wetnurse such as a hind, she-wolf, goat or bitch; c. subsequent finding and sometimes taking by herdsmen, fishermen or the like; d. upbringing by a mythical character); 4. *Childhood* (a. early revelation of strength or other attributes; b. slow early development); 5. *Acquisition of invulnerability*; 6. *Fight with a dragon* or other monster; 7. *Acquisition of a maiden*, usually after overcoming great dangers; 8. *Journey to the underworld*; 9. *Return* and defeat of opponent, sometimes followed by abandonment of the kingdom acquired; 10. *Death*, often early. The examples given in each (sub)section include the following Irish ones: 1a. Cú Chulainn's mother Dechtire, 1b. 'Cú Chulainn as son of the god Lug and Dechtire' (see McCone 2023: 138 and 144), 1d. 'Cú Chulainn as son of Conchobor and his daughter Dechtire' (see McCone 2023: 142), 'Lugaid Riab n-Derg is the son of three brothers Bres, Nár, Lothar with their sister' (see McCone 2020: 107), 3b. (she-wolf) Cormac mac Airt, 3c. (fishermen) Fíachu fer mara, 5. Fer Diad and Conganchnes (see McCone 1984a: 17–18), 10. 'the Irish heroes Finn and Mongan do not die'. There follow (de Vries 1961: 289–90) sketches of heroic careers displaying a relatively full version of the basic pattern: Heracles (compared with Samson; 291–2), Oedipus, Theseus, Cyrus, Karna and Siegfried.

'We must, then, attempt to explain how it is possible that in so many parts of the world the hero's life is always constructed according to the same pattern', bearing in mind 'that not only heroes but also proper gods fit into the scheme' (de Vries 1961: 292–3). As a starting point[24] de Vries (1961: 294–5) takes 'what Arnold van Gennep has called "rites de passage"', particularly the initiatory rituals customarily associated with puberty: 'The content of such rites is the symbolising not so much of a transition as of a "new birth". The child dies, yet the adult man now first starts his life … Consequently, initiation is a passage through death to a new life … It [also] signifies, above all, the maturing of the individual male … Finally, from the moment of puberty onwards the boy enters society as a fully entitled member'. The hero's departure to and return from 'the waters and the wild' is a mythical reflex of this process.

De Vries (1961: 296) sees 'the creation of the world as the significant prototype of the initiation ritual'. Moreover, 'it cannot be denied that the myth can never be separated from the rite … The rite presents what happened in primeval times; the myth

24 de Vries's (1961: 245–6) one reference to Jung in his book seems to make the hero of myth and saga the source rather than the expression of an archetype: 'He still lives on in the depths of the modern psyche but, to use Jung's terminology, as an indestructible archetype'.

narrates it … As Eliade puts it, what once occurred *in illo tempore* must repeatedly take place *hic et nunc* here and now' and 'the essential point' is 'that myth and rite run parallel and do not stand in a linear or genealogical relationship to each other' (DE VRIES 1961: 303–4). The ritualist slant is unmistakable but informed by Eliade's theories, which in turn echo Malinowski's, rather than those of the "Cambridge" group (II.3). In effect, De Vries shares Raglan's belief (II.3) in a close link between myth and ritual, especially initiatory 'rites of passage', but rejects rigid derivation of myths from rituals or *vice versa* and treats both as on a par.

Although not even mentioned in discussions of the main taxonomies by TAYLOR (1964) and SEGAL (1990: vii–xli),[25] De Vries's model was used by Ó CATHASAIGH (1977) in a study based chiefly upon *Scéla Éogain ⁊ Cormaic* and *Genemuin Chormaic* (SEC and CG; I above) but augmented at two points by *Esnada Tige Buchet* (ETB) and *Echtrae Cormaic* (EC):[26] 'de Vries avoids the rigid formulations of von Hahn, Rank and Raglan on the one hand, and the over-generalized "monomyth" of Campbell on the other … I shall adopt de Vries's pattern as a framework for the study of Cormac's biography' (Ó CATHASAIGH 1977: 6–7). Ó CATHASAIGH organises the bulk of his treatment (1977: 26–92) under de Vries's ten section headings, two of the three (6–8) found to be missing from both SEC and GC being supplied from ETB (7) and EC (8) (1977: 73–80 and 80–5 respectively) and analysed in terms of a small selection of Proppian categories (1977: 73; see HOLLO 2005: 17–18) such as lack, lack liquidated, villainy, departure and return. Correspondences to the subsections 1a., 3a./b.[27] and (GC only) 4a. are also identified (1977: 30, 51 and 58 respectively).

Overall, 'it seems true that the heroic biography is concerned essentially with life-crises and … that the episodes in the heroic biography are the mythic correlatives of the rites of passage (border experiences) identified by van Gennep' (Ó CATHASAIGH 1977: 22; cf. II.3 above). For instance, Etan's journey from home to Lugne in GC constitutes an 'example of the territorial passage or separation which characterizes the myths and rites of life-crises, and the birth of the boy at the border of his foster-father's territory can be interpreted as a territorial correlative

25 The former probably because the English translation of de Vries's work had not yet appeared (so Ó CATHASAIGH 1977: 2, n, 7). The obvious justification for Segal, namely concentration upon Rank and Raglan in his introduction to a book containing their studies of the hero, is somewhat undermined by his inclusion of Campbell as a major third component of his treatment.

26 According to Ó CATHASAIGH (1977: 85): 'Of all the tales in the Cormac cycle, EC corresponds most closely to Campbell's monomyth' (see II.4 above) and 'the monomyth might serve as a summary of EC'.

27 'Of these, only the first is found … in GC' (Ó CATHASAIGH 1977: 51). Although it is strictly true that suckling is only explicitly mentioned in SEC, reference in GC to Cormac being found playing with the she-wolf's whelps some time after his abduction surely implies that, like them, he was being suckled/fed by her.

of the "border" experience of birth' (1977: 42). Similarly, 'Cormac's sojourn in the wolves' cave and his return to human society can be interpreted as a ritual death and rebirth of the kind found in initiation scenarios' (1977: 55; cf. Rank in II.2).

Leach (Leach & Aycock 1983: 99) refers van Gennep's term *liminal* (end of II.3 above) to 'a marginal state in which, temporarily, the initiate is outside society in a "tabooed" condition'. As far as 'the ambiguities of betwixt and between' are concerned, 'uncertainty generates anxiety … The individual is either a man or a beast; either a child or an adult; either married or unmarried; either alive or dead. In relation to any building I am either inside or outside. But to move from one such clear cut state to an opposite entails passing through an ambiguous "threshold", a state of uncertainty where roles are confused and even reversed' (Leach in Leach & Aycock 1983: 15–16). In structuralist terms, 'the hero belongs to this "middle ground", for there can be no doubt about the anomalous character, the otherness of the heroic life-pattern' and 'one of the features of myth is the repeated "mediation" of certain basic oppositions' (Ó Cathasaigh 1977: 46 and 93).

De Vries (1961: 300–1) notes that a basic heroic pattern is liable to underlie accounts of the birth and youth of gods and kings, the latter essentially on account of their sacrality. Ó Cathasaigh rightly emphasises the major role of *fír flaithemon* 'ruler's truth' and its opposite *gáu flaithemon* 'ruler's lie/falsehood' in accounts of Cormac's attainment and Mac Con's loss of kingship (1977: 63–6; cf. McCone 2020: 127–30). This leads him 'to draw a distinction between king-heroes like Cormac and martial heroes like Cú Chulainn' in terms of a strict divide between rulers and warriors in Indo-European ideology posited by Dumézil (Ó Cathasaigh 1977: 65–8 and 105). Repeated emphasis upon the Irish king's role as a leader in battle prompts the suggestion 'that those texts which credit Cormac with victory in a number of battles are closer to the political and social conditions of early Irish society than the ideal conditions figured forth in the Birth-tale' (68).

Dumézil's IE model of three discrete "functions" labelled sovereignty, warfare, fecundity on the level of ideology but not necessarily social organisation jars with functionalist recognition of the intimate connection between myth, ritual and social norms (McCone 2020: 117). It is also contradicted by evidence from a range of IE cultures pointing to an ideological and social system based upon three functionally overlapping post-pubescent age-grades presided over by a functionally comprehensive sacral king expected to excel as a warrior as well as a ruler (McCone 2020: 104–26) and to guarantee social harmony, natural abundance etc. by virtue of a 'sacred marriage' to a goddess (McCone 2020: 127–37 and 150–7). This model militates against a strict distinction between kingly and martial heroes.

There is no lack of king-heroes such as Sargon (Mesopotamia), Habis (Iberia), Cyrus (Persia), Theseus, Oedipus (Greece) and Romulus (Rome) in the inventories reviewed above. To add a divine example, Zeus became king of a new Greek

pantheon after overthrowing the Titans led by his offspring-devouring sire Cronus, thereby taking violent 'revenge upon his father' in conformity with Rank's scheme (II.2) and Freudian doctrine (see Rank 1914: 93; Segal 1990: 77 and 86, n, 45) like Oedipus. Cyrus and Romulus deposed a grandfather and a maternal uncle respectively by violent means.[28] King-heroes, then, are quite capable of using force to become rulers, even if they may sometimes achieve this by specifically kingly means such as the love of a goddess for Sargon (II.1) reflecting Mesopotamian "sacred marriage" (Frankfort 1948: 295–9) or Cormac's delivery of a judgment embodying 'ruler's truth'. Overall, the evidence does not support a clear distinction between kingly and martial heroic paradigms.

Although only von Hahn includes the foundation of cities (as item 12) in his taxonomy, Binder (1964: 63) observes that 'many myths of exposure/expulsion end with the rescued hero founding a city, a holy site or an empire'. Examples include such king-heroes as Sargon (Akkad), Cyrus (the Persian empire), Habis (seven cities), Romulus (Rome), Caeculus (Praeneste; see McCone 2022a: 186) as well as Zeus as founder of an Olympian pantheon. Ó Cathasaigh (1977: 98) is inclined to 'postulate an earlier form of Cormac's heroic life … making no reference to Art's having been king of Tara … which was subsequently modified to fit in with the pattern being imposed on Irish legendary history'. According to various passages in boldface in the translation of GC in I above, Cormac will be 'king of Ireland' and Tara, is 'the son of the true ruler' Art, proposes going to 'our father's house in Tara', and is the heir of (Art's father) Conn. Clearly the text recognises Cormac as king of Tara and Ireland, while his destiny to steer his father's rudder and status as Conn's heir imply that Art and Conn had likewise enjoyed this dual mandate (as had Mac Con on the evidence of his expulsion from Tara by 'the men of Ireland'). Nevertheless, Cormac effectively re-founds Tara in GC by means of an extensive building programme. SEC clearly designates Art 'king of Ireland' based in Tara and states that his and Achtán's offspring (i.e. Cormac and his descendants) will be 'kings of Ireland forever' (Ó Cathasaigh 1977: 119, l. 22 and 120, ll. 31–2 and ll. 42–3; cf. CMM §15, l. 94, 'for the king of Ireland, i.e. Art son of Conn').

An early and/or Laginian tradition associating Art and Conn with Kells not Tara may be deduced from the claim in a genealogical tract and the opening of *Fotha Catha Cnucha* that Catháer Mór of the Laigin was king of Ireland in Tara for fifty years (the combined length of Conn's and his son Art's reigns according to a list of kings of Ireland) while his contemporary Conn was based in Kells (McCone 2020: 83–4). This obviously contrasts with the developed pro-Uí Néill doctrine (seen in

28 Raglan's taxonomy (II.3) included 'a victory over the king and/or a giant, dragon or wild beast' (item 11), while de Vries (II.6) reduces this to 'the fight with a dragon or another monster' (item 6).

GC, SEC and CMM, for example) that the eponymous ancestor of Síl Cuinn and his son had been kings of Tara and Ireland before Cormac. ETB takes an intermediate position whereby Art (and presumably Conn before him) had been king of Tara, Catháer ruled Ireland from Leinster and Cormac's accession was a two-stage affair, firstly as his father's successor in Tara[29] and then as Catháer's over Ireland (McCone 2020: 85–90). It seems that, as suggested by Ó Cathasaigh, Cormac mac Airt was once regarded as the founder of Síl Cuinn (and hence Uí Néill) hegemony over both Tara and Ireland.

Propp's dichotomy between constant functions and variable components such as characters (II.5) is restated in terms of a *syntagm* 'actualized as a [finite] linear sequence of events in time and space' and a *paradigm* that comprises characters or other elements 'in a potential relation of *substitution* … [and] can be extended almost indefinitely' (Ó Cathasaigh 1977: 14–15; cf. Dundes in II.5 and McCone 1990: 59). The account of Cormac mac Airt's conception, birth and fosterage stands alone in GC but is juxtaposed in CMM and SEC[30] with a parallel account of the conception and birth of Fíachu Muillethan 'Broad-crown' son of Éogan the Great of Munster, Art's ally and fellow casualty in the battle against Mac Con. The constants common to CMM (§§39–43 and 44–7) and SEC (§§1–3 and 4–15; Ó Cathasaigh 1977: 119–22, ll. 1–16 and 17–80) may be reduced to the following *syntagm* (with key *paradigmatic* variables in brackets): The day before his death in battle against Mac Con, a king (Éogan/Art) receives lodging and hospitality (from Tríath[SEC] or the druid Díl[CMM] maccu Chreccai/from the druid[SEC] or smith[GC, CMM] Olc Ache), whose daughter (Moncha/Achtán[SEC] or Etan[GC][31]) is impregnated by the doomed royal guest (Éogan/Art), bears a son (Fíachu/Cormac) in a "liminal" location (the middle of a ford/the *faithche* 'green, infield'[32]) and loses him (through her death/his

29 'As early as the seventh-century *Baile Chuind*, Cormac is preceded in the kingship by Lugaid mac Con, and he in turn by Cormac's father, Art. So far as I know, this is not explicitly contradicted in any of our texts, with the exception of the *dinnṡenchas* of Odra' (Ó Cathasaigh 1977: 93). However, this part of *Esnada Tige Buchet* (Greene 1955: 31, ll. 555–80; McCone 2020: 75–6 and 80) begins by stating that Medb Lethderg, having been 'at Art's side' (*i fail Airt*)' (l. 557), would not let Cormac into Tara after his father's death. The implication is surely that Art was her consort and hence king of Tara. The issue between Odrán, a mere *bachlach* 'churl' (l. 560), and Cormac was not the kingship, which the latter had by then assumed (l. 569), but Cormac's building activity on Odrán's land.

30 *Cath Maige Mucrama* (ed. O Daly 1975: 38–63), and SEC (ed. O Daly 1975: 64–73, and Ó Cathasaigh 1977: 119–33).

31 Unnamed in CMM except for the evidently later addition of a marginal gloss *.i. Achtan a ainm* in §45.

32 An area used for cultivation, grazing, sport etc. (Kelly 1997: 369–70) between a homestead's enclosed *les* 'farmyard' surrounded by a 'roughly circular earthen bank', of which 'tens of thousands have been identified'; Kelly 1997: 364), and the outside/wilds.

abduction by a she-wolf). There the account of Fíachu ends but Cormac is discovered among the wolf's cubs by a finder (Grec GC/Lugne SEC/not in CMM/), reunited with his mother (not in CMM) and given to his fosterer (Lugne GC/ Fíachnae SEC/Mac Con CMM §59). Propp (1968: 88–9) observes 'that an element which is usually encountered under one heading might suddenly be met under a totally different one; here we have a transposition of forms'. In similar vein, Ó Cathasaigh (1977: 16) notes that 'in *Cath Maige Mucrama* (CMM) … Lugaid Mac Con is the hero, Art the Villain … In such cases, it is necessary to speak of the transformation of the hero'.

II.7 Some salient points.

A significant problem confronting "motif-index" approaches to traditional accounts of a hero's birth and early career is the subjective nature of the selection and specification of relevant items.[33] Although Propp's somewhat differently oriented scheme is hardly immune, this factor is particularly evident from appreciable discrepancies between the taxonomies of von Hahn, Rank, Campbell (see II.4 on his 17-point taxonomy) and de Vries. 'Each of these scholars has brought his own assumptions and insights to bear on the origin and nature of the pattern' (Ó Cathasaigh 1977: 4), not least because this subjectivity allowed scope for the approaches reviewed above, whether "solar", psychological or ritualist.

As intimated by Dundes (end of II.5), formal structural analysis in terms of motifs, Proppian (or, for that matter, quite different Dumézilian) 'functions' or the like can hardly determine meaning without reference to the pertinent cultural context. Universal correlates have been sought in Freudian[34] or Jungian[35] psychology, in transitions punctuating a person's life that are typically associated with rites of passage and initiation (Raglan, de Vries and Ó Cathasaigh), or in a combination of the two (Campbell).[36] In the end, however, such correlations displace the issue of meaning without resolving it. A narrower focus would follow from the functionalist (II.4)

33 The establishment of implicational relations between some of these (McCone 2016) promises no more than marginal amelioration.

34 E.g. Rank 1914: 93: 'The hero myths are equivalent in many essential features to the delusional ideas of certain psychotic individuals who suffer from delusions of persecution and grandeur – the so-called paranoiacs'.

35 E.g. Jung 1952: 679: 'Modern psychology has the distinct advantage of being practically acquainted with an area of psychic phenomena which undoubtedly presents the foundation of all mythology, namely *dreams, visions, phantasies* and *delusions*. Here it not only finds frequent correspondences to mythical motifs but also has the inestimable opportunity of live observation and analysis of how such components arise and function'.

36 E.g. Campbell 2008: 7–8: 'Apparently, there is something in these initiatory images so necessary

tenet that rituals as well as myths belong in a broader cultural milieu (cf. the end of II.5), and Ó Cathasaigh calls for 'study of the biographies of particular heroes within the context of the traditions in which they occur' (1977: 7).

An obvious way of reducing subjectivity would be to establish viable formal criteria for identifying basic categories with maximally simple labels. A start was made by Propp's distinction between two intersecting aspects of narrative, namely a "horizontal" axis (termed *syntagm(atic)* by Dundes and Ó Cathasaigh) comprising a fixed linear sequence of 'functions' organised into 'moves' and a "vertical" axis (termed *paradigm(atic)* by Dundes and Ó Cathasaigh) of 'variables' capable of being substituted for each other as realisations of a given function (e.g. a range of interchangeable and sometimes transposable individuals able to perform the functions *hero, villain* etc.). If syntagmatic functions are a constant, paradigmatic variation must have more bearing on shifts of meaning than Propp generally allows despite the following concession: 'The meaning which a given function has in the course of action must be considered. For instance, if Iván marries a tsar's daughter, this is something entirely different than the marriage of a father to a widow with two daughters' (Propp 1968: 21).

Given wide acceptance of a correlation between ritual and myth, it was only a matter of time for van Gennep's concept of "liminality" referring to intermediate locations or states in a ritual context to be adapted to the interpretation of mythical and other narratives, not least those concerning heroes, by invoking pairs of opposites (e.g. inside/outside, unmarried/married) mediated by a "liminal" third term (e.g. threshold, marriage). The establishment of binary oppositions and their mediations constituted a more (but not fully) objective means of identifying categories and patterns as an aid to interpretation. Ó Cathasaigh, then, anticipated "structuralist" methods by employing syntagm versus paradigm and binary oppositions plus mediations within what basically remained a "motif-index" framework of the hero's career.

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to the psyche that if they are not supplied from without, through myth and ritual, they will have to be announced again, through dream, from within'.

III Lévi-Strauss on Asdiwal, and structuralist perspectives on some early Irish heroes and modern creations.

III.1 Asdiwal

Lévi-Strauss's seminal 'La geste d'Asdiwal' (1958; later translated into English, e.g. Lévi-Strauss 1978: 146–97) dealt with four versions of a myth recorded and published by Franz Boas in the late 19th and early 20th century from different parts of Tshimshian territory extending from the northern coastal region of British Columbia and northeastwards up the mighty Nass and Skeena rivers (Lévi-Strauss 1978: 147). After sketching relevant geographical, social and economic background, Lévi-Strauss (1978: 149–52) presents a summary of the Port Simpson variant that has been further condensed below.

> After a winter famine has claimed the lives of their husbands, a mother and a daughter travel along the frozen Skeena from their respective downstream and upstream settlements towards the other's abode. Meeting midway and starving, they pitch camp beneath a tree. The supernatural bird Hatsenas visits the daughter by night, enables the women to find food, and takes her to wife. She bears him a son, Asdiwal, whose growth he accelerates. After giving Asdiwal magical weapons and other objects, Hatsenas disappears. After her mother's death, Asdiwal's mother takes him to her childhood home downstream. A white she-bear hunted by Asdiwal leads him up to a prairie-like heaven and the home of her father, the sun, before revealing herself as a beautiful girl called Evening Star. The sun seeks to thwart his daughter's marriage to Asdiwal by setting him difficult tasks, which he performs with the help of his father and his gifts. Pining for his mother, Asdiwal is allowed to return to earth with his wife and four inexhaustible baskets of food, which earn them a warm welcome from villagers suffering the usual winter shortage. Later, Asdiwal's liaison with a local woman provokes Evening Star into returning to heaven. The repentant Asdiwal follows but, halfway up, is struck dead by a look from her. He is restored to life by his father-in-law and conjugal relations are resumed but, eventually, Asdiwal again feels homesick and returns to earth with Evening Star, who then bids him a final farewell. Learning of his mother's death, Asdiwal travels further downstream to another village, marries the chief's daughter, lives happily and hunts wild goats successfully with his four brothers-in-law. During the family's spring move to the River Nass, a dispute about mountain- versus sea-hunters triggers a competition in which Asdiwal kills four bears but his brothers-in-law return from the sea empty-handed. Humiliated, they abandon him and take their sister with them. Asdiwal joins another group of four brothers and a sister on their way to the Nass to fish and trade. He marries her and, after a successful season, accompanies them back to their coastal settlement. One day, he claims to be better than his brothers-in-law at hunting sealions. His success and their failure leads them to abandon Asdiwal on a low sea-reef as a storm brews but, changed into a bird by his avian father, he keeps above the waves. After the storm, a lady-mouse leads the exhausted Asdiwal to the sealions' subterranean home. Their king lends him his stomach as a means of transport back to land, where his wife's ritual knowledge helps Asdi-

wal to bring about her brothers' death. Later he leaves her for a settlement in the Skeena valley of his childhood, where he is joined by his son. Finally, he goes on a winter hunt in the mountains. This is successful but, having forgotten his magic snowshoes, Asdiwal gets lost and stuck, being turned into a stone landmark still visible on a mountain peak.

This narrative and its mobile but ultimately immobilised protagonist display typical features of "heroic biography": half-human and half-supernatural parentage, upbringing in the wilds, precocious development, marriage after passing dangerous tests, recurrent departures and returns, and an untimely death. Lévi-Strauss (1978: 146) states his two basic aims at the outset: 'First, to isolate and compare the *various levels* on which the myth evolves: geographic, economic, sociological, and cosmological—each one of these levels … being seen as a transformation of an underlying logical structure common to all of them. And, second, to compare the *different versions* of the myth and to look for the meaning of the discrepancies between them'. His analysis distinguishes 'sequences … the chronological order in which things happen' like a 'melodic line, which is horizontal', from 'contrapuntal schemata, which are vertical' (Lévi-Strauss 1978: 161).'The first two [schemata] are exact transcriptions of reality, the fourth has nothing to do with it, and in the third real and imaginary institutions are interwoven' (158).

The *geographical schema* traces Asdiwal's progress East → West → East, punctuated by a journey South → North → South corresponding 'to the seasonal migrations of the Tshimshian (in which the hero takes part) to the River Nass for the candlefish season in the spring, then to the Sheena for the salmon fishing in the summer' (162). The *economic schema* 'begins by evoking a winter famine; it ends with a successful hunt. In between, the story follows the economic cycle and the seasonal migration of the native fishermen' (164). The *cosmological schema* centres upon Asdiwal's birth, first and third marriages, and death. It features 'three supernatural visits' which 'establish a relationship between terms thought of as "below" and "above"' (162): Asdiwal is fathered upon an earthly woman by a denizen of the air (between earth and heaven); he pursues a white bear/Evening star from earth to her heavenly home and marries her; a female mouse brings him down to the sealions' subterranean abode; he dies and is turned to stone after getting stuck on a mountain peak (between earth and heaven). The celestial journey initiated by a huge she-bear in the mountainous eastern interior is diametrically opposed to the subterranean one initiated by a tiny female mouse on a low-lying reef in the sea off the west coast (160). Despite their sequential position before and after these episodes, the hero's birth and death stand schematically as opposites between these two extremes: Asdiwal's conception is preceded by a mother and her daughter's hunger-driven convergence through movement in opposite directions along a river/valley, whereas the prelude to his death is separation from his son and solitary immobilisation on a mountain after catching food (Lévi-Strauss 1978: 173–4).

That leaves the *sociological schema*: 'To start with, the patrilocal residence prevails. It gives way progressively to the matrilocal residence (Hatsenas's marriage), which becomes deadly (Asdiwal's marriage in heaven), then merely hostile [his second marriage] … before weakening and finally reversing [his third marriage] … to allow a return to patrilocal residence … At the beginning, it involves a mother and her daughter; in the middle, a husband, a wife, and his brothers-in-law; and, at the end, a father and his son' (163–4). The Tshimshian recognised three types of social affiliation: there were three hereditary castes and transmission of *status was bilateral* through both a father and a mother of the requisite rank; *kinship was matrilineal* with a man's inheritance passing to his sister's son; and *residence was patrilocal* with the husband's kin, preferably after "cross-cousin" marriage to the mother's brother's daughter (149 and 167–70; cf. McCone 2020: 100–1, n, 51).

It is obvious that Asdiwal's career repeatedly contravenes Tshimshian marital norms. He was not only born and brought up in his mother's instead of his father's home but also entered into three successive matrilocal marriages, each with an outsider of his own choice as opposed to a cross-cousin chosen for him. These were not only all terminated prematurely, the first two by his wife and the third by Asdiwal himself, but were also marked by increasingly serious conflicts with in-laws. Finally, Asdiwal established an all-male patrilocal ménage with his son, the opposite of the exclusively female matrilocal one initially constituted by his mother and maternal grandmother 'at the halfway point' between the two settlements of their respective husbands and in-laws 'correspond[ing] to a neutralization of patrilocal residence' (Lévi-Strauss 1978: 158).[37]

A central message is conveyed by the failure of each of Asdiwal's matrilocal marriages despite their alignment with matrilineal kinship. 'In real life, the children grew up in the patrilocal home. Then they went to finish their education at their maternal uncle's home. After marriage, they returned to live with their parents, bringing their wives with them, and they settled in their uncle's village only when they were called upon to succeed him. The comings and goings were some of the outward signs of *tensions* between lineages connected by marriage. Mythical speculations about types of residence … do not seek to depict what is real, but to justify the shortcomings of reality, since the extreme positions are only *imagined* in order to show that they are *untenable* (Lévi-Strauss 1978: 173).

Asdiwal experienced literal "death and rebirth" halfway up to heaven: a look from his alienated first wife struck him dead but he was resurrected by his father-in-law and recovered her, albeit temporarily. This pattern of murderous wife, helpful

37 Cf. Leach's reference (cited in II. 6 above) to 'an ambiguous "threshold", a state of uncertainty where roles are confused and even reversed', in this case from patrilocality to matrilocality.

in-law and reconciliation was inverted in the third marriage: his wife helped Asdiwal to dispose of his murderous brothers-in-law but was later abandoned by him and their son for good. There was no split between Asdiwal's wife and in-laws in the intervening second marriage: she simply joined his alienated brothers-in-law in leaving him permanently. Notwithstanding these variations, all three aberrant liaisons share a cautionary theme of 'matrilocal marriage, accompanied by antagonism between the husband and his in-laws' (Lévi-Strauss 1978: 156). The last of them 'brings about a reversal … for it separates his third wife from her brothers, the hero himself from his wife, and their son from his mother, and leaves only one relationship in existence: that between the father and his son' (158). 'Thus, having begun with … the *reunion of a mother and her daughter*, freed from their affines or *paternal kin*, the myth ends with … the *reunion of a father and his son*, freed from their affines or *maternal kin*' (157).

Lévi-Strauss's "functionalist" concern with the myth's cultural and geographical background is obvious, as is his "structuralist" application of binary oppositions and their mediations. Asdiwal's career can be viewed in terms of what Lévi-Strauss (1978: 163) dubs 'oscillations' of different 'amplitude' between oppositions of varying magnitude, which he proves unable to mediate until his mobility finally comes to a permanent end on a mountain, effectively between heaven and earth. One might add failure to mediate the nature/culture opposition (e.g. McCone 2020: 95 and 101, n, 53) at the heart of the expulsion of infant heroes from home to the wilderness and their eventual return (II above), insofar as Asdiwal hunted successfully in the wilds but could not sustain the social bonds forged by his three failed marriages.

Lévi-Strauss (1978: 165–8) summarises and discusses a variant which 'brings a new character into play: Waux, the son of Asdiwal's second marriage, who seems to be a double of his father, although his adventures take place after those of Asdiwal … But these *later* sequences are organized in schemata which are at the same time *homologous* to those which have been described before and more *explicit*' (165). Waux, who was close to his father and had regularly hunted with him, was dismayed when his maternal uncles took him and his mother away from Asdiwal. Waux became a great hunter like his father and married a cousin at his mother's behest. After his mother's death, Waux continued to use his father's hunting grounds, sometimes accompanied by his wife and eventually their twin sons. The latter were killed in an accident on an expedition to a new region, to which Waux returned the following year. Caught in an earthquake, he shouted to his wife to appease the supernatural powers by sacrificing fat but she misheard him and proceeded to eat a surfeit of fat. When she lay down, her body burst as veined flints that now cover the place. Unable to escape, Waux was turned to stone and is still there today (165–6). This narrative, then, opened with 'two women who were *single*, *unfed* and *on the move*, whereas its conclusion involved 'a *couple* composed of a husband and his wife, one a *bringer of food*

(who is not understood) and the other *overfed* (because she does not understand), and both *paralyzed* in spite of this opposition … The most important transformation is that represented by the marriage of Waux … Asdiwal contracted a series of marriages, all equally unsuccessful … Waux, on the other hand, marries only once, but this marriage proves fatal to him [or rather, perhaps, fails to save him]. Here, however, it is a case of a marriage *arranged* by Waux's mother (unlike Asdiwal's *adventurous* marriages) and a marriage with a *cousin* (whereas Asdiwal marries complete *strangers*)' (167). Unlike Asdiwal's three efforts, Waux's lasting single marriage with patrilocal residence conforms to Tshimshian social norms. On the other hand, the inheritance of his father's hunting grounds contravenes the Tshimshian norm of matrilineal inheritance from the mother's brother.

As Dundes puts it (in Propp 1968: xii), 'the task of the structuralist analyst, according to Lévi-Strauss, is to see past or through the superficial linear structure to the "correct" or true underlying paradigmatic pattern of organization'. This method assigns a subordinate role to the "syntagmatic" sequence articulated by the linear "surface" structure of primary concern to Propp or various schemes of "heroic biography" (II above). A major shift of perspective results from making this component a mere platform supporting less immediately obvious "deep" structures generated by homologies, transformations, binary oppositions and mediations as the primary carriers of meaning.

Leach (Leach & Aycock 1983: 1) rejects Lévi-Strauss's restriction of 'his method … to data from what he calls "cold" societies (i.e. "primitive" pre-literate societies) and not data from "hot" societies (i.e. literate, historically fluid social systems)', which would put medieval Irish literary sources out of bounds. Indeed, Lévi-Strauss himself applied his method to the ancient Greek myth of Oedipus, although this 'has only reached us under late forms and through literary transmutation', ostensibly just 'to illustrate … a certain technique, whose use is probably not legitimate in this particular instance' (Lévi-Strauss 1963: 209). Nonetheless, this possibility undermines the cold/hot dichotomy as a methodological straitjacket. Moreover, notwithstanding the advent of Christianity, early medieval Irish monastic sources reflect what might best be described as a "warm" rather than an unambiguously "hot" or "cold" ideology (cf. McCone 1990: 104–6).

III.2 Cormac mac Airt, Fíachu Muillethan and Níall Noígíallach

Although certain features such as a river, a doorway or daybreak are "natural" boundaries particularly prone to mark transitions, liminality is not an inherent property but the derivative of a given pair of opposites (e.g. the territories on either side of a river, the inside and the outside of a dwelling, night and day). The wil-

derness, for instance, may be liminal in some contexts but one term of a binary opposition in others. Leach (Leach & Aycock 1983: 16) notes 'that, in the Bible, inspired sacred persons … almost always experience their inspiration in a "betwixt and between" locality, described as "in the wilderness", which is neither fully of This World nor in The Other'. Between their escape from captivity in Egypt and arrival in the Promised Land, the Israelites made a crucial transition by receiving the ten commandments (revealed on Mount Sinai, effectively between earth and heaven) during a prolonged liminal period wandering in the desert. However, that same arid wilderness also contrasted with two lands of riverine fertility, and each of these binary oppositions was mediated by crossing a body of water. Hence, with italicised mediations, not only Egypt → *wilderness* → Promised Land but also Egypt → *Red Sea* → wilderness, wilderness → *River Jordan* → Promised Land. Asdiwal (III.1) was born at the mid-point between two settlements but Romulus and Remus (II.1) were expelled from an urban human environment and suckled by a she-wolf in the wilds, binary opposites mediated by an upbringing on the margins among rustic animal-minders. The baby Cyrus was similarly taken from home, left in a wild wood and then fostered by a herdsman and his wife in the interval leading up to his return home.

The night separating his father Art's receipt of hospitality from his death in battle on the morrow was the liminal time of Cormac mac Airt's conception at his mother's home in GC. However, his birth and, during the interval of his mother's sleep thereafter, abduction by a she-wolf took place in a liminal wild location on the edge of Lugne's territory (cf. II.6) between her home and that of Lugne, by whom Cormac was eventually recovered after being found by Grec at the entrance (*dorus*) dividing the she-wolf's cave from the world outside. *Cath Maige Mucrama* (CMM §§44–7; O Daly 1975: 52) omits the she-wolf from what looks like an abbreviated version of GC or its source (cf. Ó Cathasaigh 1977: 112).

SEC (Ó Cathasaigh 1977: 119–23) describes Art's arrival with an advance company of 150 men on the way to the battle, the druid Olc Ache's dairying arrangements, his surpassingly beautiful daughter Achtán's supplying of milk to Art and his followers but refusal to give the drink to the king herself[38] (ll. 21–35). A grand feast was given by her and her fifty maidens for the king on the morrow at the behest of her father, who foresaw that a line of kings of Ireland would result from a union between her and Art (ll. 36–48). They duly sleep together 'that day' (*in lá sin*, l. 49), she tells him of her father's prediction, and Art presents her with his sword,

38 An act presumably presaging the end of Art's reign by virtue of reversing the motif of a woman's presentation of a drink to her choice of mate and the next king (see below and McCone 2020: 131–2, 138–41, 143–4, and 160–1).

ring and festival garment, whereupon they sorrowfully bid each other farewell and she is left pregnant (ll. 48–52). Nine months later she gave birth to a son called Cormac because 'a dutiful son will arrive, consequently *gormac*'[39] (*tairicfea mac gor eim, gormac īarum*, l. 55), and Olc Aiche's 'druid-smith' (*druígoba[e] hUilc Aiche*) put five belts around him as a protection against wolves (*ar chona(ib)*) and other evils (ll. 56–8). As in GC, her child was abducted by a she-wolf while she was asleep (ll. 59–61), but in this case the liminal location was the *faithche* 'green, infield' (see note 32 above) between the enclosed homestead (*les*), where Cormac had presumably been born, and the wilds to which he was taken by the wolf to be reared. No explanation of the she-wolf's atypically benign behaviour is offered in GC, but SEC makes a magical protective belt provided by a druid-smith responsible. The finder of Cormac among the litter (*cūanlocht*) of wolves, among whom he used to run, was Lugne (performing the role assigned to Grec in GC; see the penultimate paragraph of I), who took the boy and nurtured him for a year (ll. 61–5). When his mother found out, she went to Lugne and took her child by night to the north of Ireland, making for Art's foster-father Fíachnae Cassán (see I), who received Cormac gladly and fostered him until he was thirty (ll. 65–81). 'When she traversed a mountain there at midnight' (*In tan luide tar slīab n-and medōn aidche*, ll. 70–1) on the way from Lugne to Fíachnae, she was confronted on this spatial and temporal threshold by the 'wolves of Ireland' (*coin hĒir*enn, l. 71) seeking to recover the boy by force and howling but was rescued by their principal prey, a 'deer-herd' (*fíadgraig*) (ll. 72–3).

Setting out alone for Tara on completion of his upbringing with Fíachnae, Cormac encountered Mac Con's steward (*rechtaire*) 'in the entrance of Tara' (*i ndor*us *Temrach*, l. 85) consoling a woman who was weeping because Mac Con had judged her sheep forfeit for stripping the queen's woad-garden (*glaisen-gort*) (ll. 81–93). This, like the grazing animals, was probably located on the *faithche*.[40] Cormac corrected this judgment on the spot and, when informed, Mac Con recognised that his reign in Tara was at an end, welcomed Cormac and prepared to leave with his followers (ll. 93–106). Cormac not only gave the revised judgment initiating his transition to the kingship on a literal threshold (*dorus*, which actually glosses Latin *limen* at Ml. 132d2) but also proceeded to ask Mac Con for a judgment concerning another typically liminal place associated with his own abduction as a child by the she-wolf: 'How have you (pl.) left the green on which I was?' (*cinnas … for-ācbaid in*

39 Whatever about its formal inadequacy, this etymology of Cormac's name is suggestive insofar as he may be regarded as a *mac gor* by virtue of doing his duty by avenging his father but also a *gormac* on account of his extramarital birth and effective lack of a father (see McCone 2023: 153–61).
40 See note 32 above and Ó Cathasaigh 1977: 133, note on l. 107.

faithchi forsa raba?, l. 107). Mac Con, however, urged him to inaugurate his reign by giving it himself and Cormac agreed, pronouncing 'Give' (*Tabair*). The text breaks off at this point.[41]

In SEC and CMM, the account of Cormac's conception is directly preceded by a parallel birth-tale of the Munster dynast Fíachu Muillethan 'Broadcrown'. At the beginning of SEC (Ó Cathasaigh 1977: 119, ll. 1–16), his mother Monchae slept with Éogan Mór the night before his death in battle, became pregnant but, when her time came, delayed the birth until the following morning by sitting *forsind licc oc Raphaind i n-imīc[h]tur Siúire* 'on the stone at Raphae in the lower reaches of the Suir' (1977: 119, ll. 10–11, and 124). This was in response to her druid father Tríath's prophecy of a regal future for her son and his descendants if he were born on the morrow (1977: 119, ll. 8–9, and 124). The child's head broadened (as a result of pushing) on the stone. Here the liminal element is the period before the next morning spent sitting on the stone near but not necessarily in or beside the river.[42]

The explanation of Fíachu Muillethan's name in the onomastic compilation *Cóir Anmann* (Arbuthnot 2007: 14) has more in common with CMM than with SEC but sometimes differs from both: 'the night before giving birth to her offspring she went into the Suir and sat on a stone on the river's bank, for her father had told her that she would bear a son and that, if she gave birth that night, he would be a worthy druid (*druí*) and, if she gave birth on the morrow, he would be a king, and his descendants and kindred would be kings over the two provinces of Munster after him … She was seated on the stone during the night to the following morning. The girl then gave birth to a son in the early morning' (§43). Here the threshold is specified temporally as daybreak (between night and day) and physically as a stone on a boundary (between land and water). Fíachu's alternative sobriquet *Fer-da-líach* 'Man of two sorrows' is ascribed to his father's death in the battle of Mag Mucrama and his mother's death giving birth to him (§44). In *Cath Maige Mucrama*'s broadly similar account (CMM §§39–43; O Daly 1975: 50), Monchae goes into the Suir at Áth Nemthend, deposits herself around 'a stone which is in the middle of the ford' (*i mmedón ind átha*, §43, l. 211), and dies straight after giving birth: 'The piling up of liminal symbols in this passage is truly remarkable. Fíachu's mother waits for the crucial passage from one day to the next [more accurately, night to morning] immobilized on a stone dividing the middle of the river dividing the land, a boundary

41 Since this applies to both extant manuscript versions, the archetype underlying them must likewise have lacked an original conclusion of indeterminate and quite possibly considerable extent.

42 In the likely event that *i n-immíchtur* refers to the 'lower' (or 'upper' in English terms) reaches of the river where Raphae was situated. A less probable meaning 'in/on the very bottom' of the Siur referring to the position of the stone itself would presumably imply that it was rooted in the riverbed and so surrounded by water as in CMM.

within a boundary, and passes over from life to death just as her son is making the reverse transition from non-existence to life' (McCone 1990: 190).

The saga *Echtrae mac nEchdach Muigmedóin* (EmEM; ed. and trans. Stokes 1903) 'The expedition of Eochaid Muigmedón's sons' is, like *Genemuin Chormaic*, extant in the Yellow Book of Lecan and the Book of Ballymote. It begins by enumerating the five sons of Eochaid, the king of Tara and Ireland: four (Brian, Ailill, Fíachrae and Fergus) fathered upon his queen Mongfínd and a fifth (Níall) upon the enslaved daughter of a Saxon king, Cairenn Chasdub, who was set to draw Tara's water owing to Mongfínd's enmity. Although pregnant, she was forced to keep working so that the child would die in her womb (§1). Nevertheless, she gave birth to the boy on the *faithche* of Tara beside the water-pail (*drolmach*) but abandoned him there through fear. No one dared touch him until the poet (*éices*) Tornae crossed the *faithche*, saw the child being attacked by birds and picked him up, foretelling his greatness and 27-year rule over Ireland (§§2–3). Tornae took the boy off and fostered him until he was ready to be king. The pair then went to Tara and met Cairenn as she was carrying water. Despite her fear of the queen, Níall freed his mother from servitude, took her with him and clothed her in purple (§4). The angry Mongfínd demanded that Eochaid decide which son would be his heir, but he left the decision to the druid-smith Sithchenn (§5).

Here, then, a classic illegitimate heroic birth straddling the social extremes of king and foreign slave (albeit once a princess) takes place on a liminal *faithche* between an enclosed inner area and the outside world (see note 32 above). There the abandoned child was exposed to the attacks of wild birds but removed from Tara and its *faithche* by a rescuer/fosterer. On his return, Níall encountered and liberated his mother on the very *faithche* where she had had to abandon him, and then took her into Tara with him. In SEC, the sleep that befell his mother on the *faithche* similarly exposed Cormac, Níall's alleged ancestor, to abduction by a she-wolf, which then uncharacteristically nurtured him until he was found by one man and fostered by another. According to Justin (II.1), Cyrus was attacked by wild animals and birds, defended by a domestic bitch, and then rescued and fostered by a herdsman. Níall's rescue from hostile birds by his future fosterer is obviously similar, but dispenses with an animal helper. Cormac was born in his mother's home, inadvertently exposed on a liminal *faithche*, removed thence first into animal and then into human custody, and eventually came to his late father's erstwhile royal residence to succeed him. Níall, however, was born to and exposed by his once royal but now degraded mother on the *faithche* just outside Tara, was rescued from attacking birds by an outsider, returned in due course from fosterage in his rescuer's home to raise his mother from servile to royal status just outside Tara, and finally entered his father's home with her as a prelude to his own elevation as his royal father's heir apparent. The water-pail marking Cairenn's subjection was temporar-

ily set down by her on the *faithche* for her royal son's birth. On their next encounter there, Cairenn's clothing in purple raiment (*édach corcorda*) marked her permanent recovery of her lost son and royalty.

Mongḟind's reaction to Níall's return long after his post-natal exposure and expulsion led to his second departure, this time on a hunting expedition with his four legitimate half-brothers. Sithchenn made his judgment by setting his smithy on fire with the five boys inside and predicting their futures on the strength of what each of them emerged with, Níall's prevalence being foretold on the basis of the anvil which he brought out (§§6–7). After Tornae's thwarting of an attempt by Mongḟind to get her four sons to stage a quarrel and then kill Níall when he intervened (§8), her refusal to accept Sithchenn's original judgment led to their being sent to him for arms. He duly obliged, giving the finest set to Níall, and instructed them to go on a hunt to try them out. This they did, but went astray (§9), lit a fire, roasted some of their prey and ate their fill. They then felt very thirsty and, having volunteered to look for water, Fergus set out and happened upon a well in the custody an old woman (§10), whose hideous features are described at some length (§11). Rejecting her offer of water in return for a kiss on the cheek, he declared that he would rather die of thirst (§12). After Fergus had returned saying that he had found no water, Ailill fared likewise and did not admit to finding the well. The oldest of the sons (*sinser na mac*), Brian, then went and was denied water for refusing to kiss the hag. However, Fíachrae at least offered to kiss her and was granted a visit (*tadall*) to Tara (since two of his descendants would become kings of Tara, whereas his other three full-brothers would draw a blank) but no water (§13). Finally, Níall went and offered to sleep with the woman as well as kissing her. When he fell upon and kissed her, he saw that she had become a radiant beauty clad in 'an expensive fully purple mantle (*brat logmarda lancorcra*)' and, when he asked who she was, she declared 'I am the Sovereignty (*Misi in Flaithi*us)' (§§14–15). She told him to go back to his brothers with water and the kingship (*in rigi*) would belong to him and his descendants till doomsday (*co brath*), apart from Fíachrae's two descendants and Brían Bóruma. She advised him not to give his brothers the water until they had granted 'their seniority' (*a sindsirrdacht*) to him and he had raised his set of arms a hand's breadth above theirs (§16). Níall did as instructed (§17) and, when they returned to Tara, raised his weaponry above theirs, sat in the middle between them, and replied to their father's request for news. When Mongḟind asked why the oldest (*in sindsear*, Brian) was not their speaker, they said that they had granted seniority and kingship to Níall in return for water. Sithchenn then predicted that this arrangement would be permanent (§18), a final section (§19) confirming the truth of this from Níall to Máelśechlainn (†1022) with the help of a poem giving the number of kings of Ireland from various later branches of the Uí Néill in the long interval between their reigns.

This part of the narrative is obviously comparable with *Cóir Anmann*'s account (Arbuthnot 2007: 20–3, §72) of the hunting, killing and eating of a golden-skinned fawn by five brothers named Lugaid, who then go in turn to seek a bed for the night. Each encounters a fine house occupied by an ugly old woman, but only one of them is prepared to kiss her in return for lodging. When he goes so far as to sleep with her, she becomes a radiant beauty, promises him succession to his father's kingship, and gives all five Lugaids a feast. She then bestowed distinctive sobriquets upon each of them in accordance with their various roles in the fawn's killing, cooking and consumption, whereas in EmEM the five brothers' destinies were distinguished by Sithchenn before the hunt on the basis of the different implements that they salvaged from his burning smithy. On the strength of comparison with episodes in early Indian and Greek epic, key features of these two tales concerning five Lugaids and Eochaid Muigmedón's five sons have been traced back to a Proto-Indo-European prototype with the following basic outline (McCone 2020: 143–9, and 2021b): five royal brothers (cf. often five-strong bands of young 'wolves' typically joined by kings' sons) hunt a golden-skinned deer (wolves' classic prey, exhibiting a classic regal hue) and then encounter a goddess of sovereignty in ugly guise, who reveals her true beauty and identity to the deer's killer and her paramour as the one destined to become king.

In EmEM, the hunt is treated quite perfunctorily and, rather than looking for shelter, the five brothers seek a drink, presentation of which by a woman to the mate of her choice is the centrepiece of another reconstructed PIE myth concerning the transmission of kingship (McCone 2020: 137–43). The basic idea is seen clearly in two early Irish texts in which kings of Tara and Ireland are foretold: Art (§1), Cormac (§4) and others are said to 'drink' the sovereignty in *Baile Chuinn* 'Conn's vision' (Bhreathnach & Murray 2005), while a seated woman called *flaith hÉrenn* (l. 44) 'the sovereignty of Ireland' pours red ale into a cup and her enthroned companion names the king destined to receive each draught in *Baile in Scáil* 'The phantom's vision' (Murray 2004).

In Proppian terms, EmEM consists of two syntagmatic "moves", each marked by the hero's departure and return. From a basically Lévi-Straussian standpoint, these are broadly homologous and linked by a protagonist's role as a procurer of water, while also employing various transformations and inversions on the paradigmatic plane to articulate and develop a contrast between Níall's exclusion from Tara as a helpless baby (move 1) and his inclusion as a determined grown man on the way to ultimate recognition as heir to the throne (move 2). To begin with, Níall's mother lays aside her vessel of water in order to give birth and then has to abandon her baby to an insecure future outside Tara without giving him a drink (of her milk), whereas the woman at the well grants her new paramour Níall drinking water as a means of securing a future for him as king of Tara and Ireland. Both female pro-

viders of water undergo dramatic improvements on encountering Níall: his mother Cairenn is raised socially from a menial to the royal purple and his mate 'Sovereignty' exchanges ugliness for purple-clad beauty. Cairenn and Níall both procure water, but under different circumstances and to quite different effect. The mother is forced by her rival (Mongḟind) to go and bring water for Tara on a regular basis and to leave her and the king's newborn son on the *faithche* outside, whence he is taken still further afield by Tornae for a period of fosterage. Her son, by contrast, goes willingly to seek water just once but, having obtained it, withholds it from his rivals (Mongḟind's four sons), thereby forcing them to admit him into the fold as their royal father's heir apparent – despite his initial disadvantages and with lasting dynastic results. Finally, Níall elevates a water-bearing woman (his own mother) encountered on his first return to Tara by clothing her in purple but subsequently is himself elevated, on returning to Tara after a second outing, as a result of an encounter with a water-guarding woman ('Sovereignty') turned into a beauty clothed in purple.

What may be termed a "schema" of sovereignty is superimposed upon the linear narrative by explicit references at several points such as the woman revealing herself as *in flaithius* 'the sovereignty' as well as certain of her and Sithchenn's prophecies, by the decisive role of the quest for a drink (a traditional component of a king's inauguration), and by basing the story's second major episode upon an inherited mythical pattern featuring a stag-hunt that culminates in the bestowal of kingship upon the only one of five brothers to prove fit to mate with a goddess of sovereignty. A political schema is based upon the roles of Níall, Brian (or rather Bríon), Fíachrae and Ailill as eponymous ancestors of historically significant dynasties in the Old and Middle Irish period: the Uí Néill who controlled much of the Northwest and Midlands as well as the kingship of Tara and (in theory, at least) Ireland, and the Uí Briúin, Uí Ḟíachrach and Uí Ailello in Connacht (Byrne 1973: 84–5). In EmEM, a basic pecking order from Níall's pre-eminent line down through those of the other three to the dynastically insignificant Fergus is established by the different objects brought out from the burning smithy. A similar legend concerning the first Scyth's three sons, the supposed ancestors of that great nomadic people's three main subdivisions, is recorded by Herodotus (iv, 5–6): a bright golden plough, yoke, sword and vessel that had fallen from heaven became hot when the two older brothers tried in succession to grasp them and only became cool for the youngest to hold them, with the result that he and his descendants were acknowledged as kings over the whole nation. Both accounts involve heat, a variety of objects, several brothers and the succession of the youngest to over-kingship on the basis of grasping them. However, in the Scythian tale it was a matter of all or nothing, whereas in the Irish one the prospects of each brother depended upon the particular object(s) taken by him from the flames. While both legends may be somewhat divergent outcomes of

a single PIE prototype, a degree of typological coincidence and biblical influence[43] cannot be ruled out. At all events, the implement grasped by Níall in the burning smithy secured him the best weapons from Sithchenn and a guarantee of his and his line's pre-eminence from the woman at the well.

As it stands, *Echtrae mac nEchthach Muigmedóin* can be no older than the early 11th century on account of the references in it to Brian Bóruma (†1014) and Máelsechlainn mac Domnaill (†1022). Since, however, the mention of the former and the final section referring to the latter can easily be removed without seriously affecting the narrative and its political message, it seems quite possible that these were 11th-century additions to a rather older composition. With or without them, the text justifies Uí Néill monopoly of the Tara kingship by endowing their eponym with a traditional heroic pattern of exposure/expulsion at birth and eventual return home along with a similarly time-honoured myth of a shape-changing supernatural woman's bestowal of sovereignty upon the only one of five brothers prepared to sleep with her despite her initially hideous appearance. The permanence of the claim to the Tara kingship established by Níall is asserted for his Uí Néill descendants by prophecies ascribed to Tornae, the woman at the well and Sithchenn at various points in the text.

At a higher genealogical node, *Genemuin Chormaic* justifies the restoration of the Tara kingship to Síl Cuinn, to which Eochaid Muigmedón and all of his sons were supposed to belong, by asserting the superiority of Cormac's claim over that of the interloper Mac Con: unlike the latter, Cormac is repeatedly called the 'son of the true ruler', despite his "heroic" illegitimate birth, and represented as an unerring deliverer of true judgments. GC's political focus upon minor population groups in North Connacht was apparently deemed too parochial by the author of SEC, who proceeded to replace Grec with Lugne and demote the latter in favour of the more relevant Fíachrae Cassán (see I). GC's primary aim was clearly the depiction of Cormac as an or even the ideal king. To that end, a classic syntagm of the hero's exposure/expulsion, nurture by a beast, recognition and "return" to recover his birthright was used as the suitably evocative narrative frame for an exposition of the foundations and benefits of 'true' sovereignty, some of which were also contrasted with 'false' counterparts exemplified by Mac Con. Rather than the close encounters with fire, a supernatural woman or the like that brought Níall to the fore in EmEM, the bulk of GC is taken up with prophecies, descriptions and actions betokening Cormac's supreme fitness to be king of Tara and Ireland like his father and his great

43 Well-known biblical instances of a youngest son surpassing his older (half-)brother(s) are Jacob (Gen, 27), Joseph (Gen, 37–50) and David (1 Sam. 16:1–13), a kingly paragon of particular relevance to Cormac (McCone 1990: 159–60). The pattern is also found in some German folktales collected by the brothers Grimm (e.g. nos. 57 and 64).

success in that role. These repeatedly invoke classic aspects of the early Irish ideology of kingship (McCone 1990: 108, 121–3, and 2020: 127–8) such as a fair appearance, military prowess, the promotion of truth and resultant natural abundance.

From the outset (references in round and square brackets are to lines in Hull 1952 and to sections of the translation in part I above respectively), it is anticipated that the progeny of Olc's daughter and Art will be 'a great distinction (*ordan mor*)' (11–14)[1]. When she gave birth on the way to Lugne, the fosterer indicated by Art before going to his death, the event was accompanied a great thunderclap (*torann-bresim mor*) or rumble of thunder (*delm toraind*) (28–30)[3/4], which Lugne recognised as heaven's welcome for the birth of a king who would, as 'son of the true ruler (*mac na fir-ḟlatha*)' (35)[4] secure such agricultural and other benefits as 'increase of corn' (*tormach n-etha*), 'extinction of falsehood' (*dibad ngua*), 'kindling of truth' (*adnad fir*) and 'grain and dairy produce' (*ith sceo blicht*) (30–2)[4]. The royal infant's initial upbringing in and around a womb-like cave as one of a she-wolf's litter before being effectively "reborn" as a human and taken into fosterage (39–55)[5–6] constitutes a fitting start in life for a king expected, among other things, to mediate between nature and culture. Indeed, like Kipling's Mowgli (III.4), Cormac subsequently maintained a vital connection with his wild natural nurture in the shape of the lupine "foster-brothers" taken from the cave with him.[44] Lugne welcomed Cormac with a prophecy of future greatness (56–67)[7] emphasising his righteousness, discernment, generosity, military prowess and dispensing of judgments, while also referring to future interruptions of his reign (cf. Ó Cathasaigh 1977: 75–8). This is almost immediately followed by a brief catalogue of Cormac's admirable personal appearance and qualities grouped in alliterating dyads and triads (69–71)[8]. A quarrel between Cormac and Lugne's two sons induced his foster-father to reveal his true pedigree as 'the son of the true ruler (*mac na fir-ḟlatha*), i.e. the son of Art son of Conn of the hundred battles' destined to steer his father's rudder since there would be no grain (*ith*), dairy produce (*blicht*), nut-mast (*mes*), sea produce (*m*uir-*tor*a*d*) or good weather (*sin*) until he assumed the kingship (73-82)[9].

Lugne and Cormac then set off for Tara, and CG's central concern with the qualifications for, and disqualifications from, kingship is duly reflected by the climax of the narrative, namely Cormac's decisive correction of Mac Con's faulty judgment in the matter of the female hospitaller's sheep and the queen's woad (83–96)[11]. It was immediately and generally recognised as 'the true judgment' (*in ḟir-breth*) given by

44 The she-wolf's 'whelps' taken by Grec and Lugne along with Cormac (54)[6] were surely meant to be identified with the 'wolves' that later accompanied Cormac and Lugne to Tara (86)[10] and remained with him there after he became king, whence his fondness for wolves (102–4)[13]. Since the possibility of Kipling's acquaintance with GC can be discounted, the striking parallel with Mowgli must be coincidental.

'the son of the true ruler' (*mac na fir-ḟlatha*), whereas the exposure of Mac Con's 'false judgment' (*gu-breth*) led to the collapse of the side of the house in which it had been given into the permanent feature known as the 'crooked mound of Tara' (*in clæn-ḟearta Temr*ach) (97–9)[12]. Since 'Mac Con's reign was **not good**' (***ni**-bo **maith** … righi M*eic *Con*), he was expelled, Cormac was made king and 'the world was full of every **good** thing' (*ba lan in bith do cach **maith***) as long as he lived (100–2)[13]. Mac Con had caused the *destruction* of part of Tara but Cormac saw to the *construction* of many new buildings there (105–7), and this social provision was matched by nature's wild bounty: rivers teeming with fish, woods full of mast, and plains abounding in honey 'bestowed upon him by heaven through the righteousness of his rule' (*iarna tidnocol do nim do tria ḟirindi a flaithi*usa)' (107–11)[14]. The linear narrative is rounded off by brief accounts of Cormac's death (114–16)[15] and burial (117–24)[16].

Its pervasiveness leaves little doubt that the principal theme of *Genemuin Chormaic* was ideal rule and its supposed embodiment by Cormac mac Airt as a key figure in the establishment of Síl Cuinn monopoly of the Tara kingship. The main function of Cormac's "heroic biography" in GC seems to have been as a suitable syntagmatic means to that paradigmatic end, although it also facilitated a contrast between difficult beginnings and subsequent success dramatically mediated by a quite literal "moment of truth".

III.3 Brigit, Mes Búachalla, Conaire and others

The porous nature of the boundary between secular and saintly "heroic" narrative has been not only long recognised (McCone 1990: 179) but also motivated in structuralist terms: 'Ambivalence and liminality are the hero's essential attributes, and mediation between what threaten and may ultimately prove to be irreconcilable opposites is his or, more rarely, her essential function … As mediators between man and God in life as well as the afterlife by virtue of being mortals with an exceptional endowment of divine grace and power, saints function very much as the heroes of Christian ideology' (McCone 1990: 188). Although this influence was a two-way process also incorporating biblical and other external ecclesiastical influences (McCone 1990: 179–81 and 195–202), one generally acknowledged aspect of it is of primary concern here, namely 'the absorption, sometimes with very little modification, of secular themes into Irish saints' Lives' (McCone 1984b: 36; cf. 1990: 182–4 and 189–92). This point may be illustrated by the obvious resonances with the birth-tales of Cormac mac Airt and Fíachu Muillethan (I and III.2 above) observable in the accounts of the births of Saints Ailbe of Emly and Áed of Killare in the "Salamanca" collection of Irish saints' lives in Latin edited by Heist (1965).

> However, the father of St. Ailbe was called Olcnais and lived with king Crónán in the region of Artrige. There he secretly knew the king's own bondmaid, Sant ['Lust'] by name, and slept with her. Knowing, however, that the bondmaid had conceived through him, Olcnais, fearing death at the king's hands, became a fugitive, and the bondmaid bore her son. However, when king Crónán saw his bondmaid's son, he said: 'that ignoble boy, born of a servant and a bondmaid, will under no circumstances live in my house and be brought up with my sons'. Then the king's servants put the boy down under a certain rock and left him there, where his name is venerated down to the present. However, a wild she-wolf lived beneath that rock, and she, loving the boy greatly, like a kind mother gently reared him among her own whelps. One day, while that wild beast had wandered in the woods to seek food, … Lochán son of Lugar, … seeing the boy among the whelps under the rock, took him and brought him with him to his own home … Lochán son of Lugar, however, gave him as a reward to certain Britons who were in servitude in the east of Clíu, and they brought the boy up and called him Ailbe because he was found alive under a rock. (Heist 1965: 118; translated McCone 1990: 191)

> The holy bishop Áed who is called son of Brecc was descended from the Uí Néill but the mother of Saint Áed traced her origin from the race of Munstermen, from the race of Múscrige Thíre. When she was pregnant and close to giving birth, a certain prophet came past her house and said to his companions: 'there is in this house a woman giving birth. If the infant to whom she is giving birth should be born tomorrow morning he will be great before God and men in this whole island of Ireland'. Hearing this, a certain girl related all this to the woman about to give birth. She said in reply: 'unless he come through my sides, he shall not emerge until tomorrow from my womb'. Rising up then, she went outside and sat on a rock. And the Lord performed this miracle. For the head of the infant stood on the rock and made a concavity in it after the likeness of an infant's head, and down to the present day it remains and water that appears in that concavity heals every disease for every believer'. (Heist 1965: 167–8; translated McCone 1990: 190)

As a namesake of Mac Da Thó's hound and 'son of Ol-chú, "Great Hound"' (Kenney 1929: 314), Ailbe may have pre-Christian canine roots conducive to an association with wolves,[45] while the ascription of his name to being found alive under a rock was presumably due to etymologising it as OIr. *ail* 'rock' plus *béo* 'alive' (McCone 1990: 191). His discovery as a child playing with the she-wolf's whelps in their lair (beneath the subsequently venerated rock) and handing over by his human finder to others to be brought up bears an obvious resemblance to Cormac's finding and fosterage in *Genemuin Chormaic*. Whereas the pressure of a rock near to or in the

45 'Mythical hounds like Mac Da Thó's Ailbe were, like Cerberus pre-eminently in Greek myth, guardians of the Otherworld hospitaller god's possessions and functioned as supreme symbols of the martial virtues embodied socially by a warrior caste of *díberga* ("reavers") organised in *fían*-bands in early Ireland, and it is probably in this light that we should view Ailbe's pupil Mac Creche "son of plunder", a most inappropriate name for a saint by normal standards. Moreover, in Mac Creche's Middle Irish Life he appears, in Kenney's words (*Sources* [Kenney 1929] p. 314, n, 84), "as the son of an Ailbe (elsewhere confused with our saint) who is called «the war-god of Slíab-Crot»". Accordingly, Kenney's acute suspicions (*loc. cit.*) can be fleshed out into a strong case for regarding Ailbe of Emly as a Christianized version of a pagan hound guardian of the Otherworld' (McCone 1984b: 50; see McCone 1984a: 6–14 and 22–6).

middle of water upon the emerging Fíachu's head earned him the sobriquet *Muillethan* 'Broad-crown', the converse characterised the birth of Áed, the pressure of whose head produced a water-collecting depression in the middle of a rock. Etymology and aetiology (particularly of holy sites or objects in hagiographical texts) play obvious roles here and elsewhere as triggers of narrative patterns, including inversions and other transformations.

Brigit's so-called *Vita prima* (VP) or 'First Life' seems to be a mid-8th-century conflation of three mid-7th-century Lives (McCone 1982: 107–36). Use is made below of the English translation by Connolly (1989) of an unpublished critical edition of the text in his M.A. thesis. The opening part of concern here (§§1–43) corresponds to the so-called 'Old-Irish Life' or *Bethu Brigte* (BB), 'written about three quarters in Irish, about one quarter in Latin' and 'ascribed to the ninth rather than to the eighth century' by Ó hAodha (1978: xxv–xxvi) in his edition (plus translation). 'It is certain that our Life could not derive from the V.Pr. Not only are there a few incidents peculiar to each, but also it is obvious that the compiler of the V.Pr. was much less interested in details of names, both of people and places … The most likely supposition would seem to be that both texts used the same source(s), which our Life has followed more faithfully' (Ó hAodha 1978: xvii and xix; cf. McCone 1982: 118–23). Since loss of a leaf from its sole manuscript witness has deprived BB of its beginning, VP alone is available until §7.2 (= BB §1).

The opening of Brigit's life (VP §§1–20/BB §§1–19) displays affinities with the above account of Níall Noígíallach's early career (III.2): 'both saga and saint's Life feature a hero or heroine conceived by an illegitimate liaison with a female slave, [born to her as she was carrying a vessel full of liquid across a liminal place,] banished from home through the jealousy of the father's legal wife, made the object of prophecies of future greatness and brought up by a druid or poet before returning home in honour and securing the freedom of the slave mother'. (McCone 1984b: 36–7; cf. 1990: 182–3).

When a noble Leinsterman called Dubthach made his recently purchased bondmaid Broicsech pregnant, his wife demanded that he expel and sell her but he refused (VP §1). A druid's prophecy that she would bear 'an illustrious daughter who will shine in the world like the sun in the vault of heaven' increased Dubthach's love for her and pressure from his wife and brothers-in-law to let her go (VP §2). A visiting bishop's prediction that Broicsech's child would outshine but also benefit their legitimate offspring (VP §3) failed to diminish his wife's hostility, and so Dubthach sold his bondmaid, but not the child she was carrying, to a visiting poet of the Uí Néill and he took her home, where a ball of fire appeared as she slept (VP §4). The poet then sold Broicsech to a visiting druid from the north (VP §5).

Brigit's birth to an aristocratic father remaining at home and a servile mother sent far away not only straddled the high/low or free/unfree social and home/away

spatial divide but also occurred 'astride[/upon] the threshold (*super limen*)[46] … neither in the house nor outside the house (*nec in domo nec extra domum*)' (VP §6). Its liminality, then, was not only quite literal but also defined in quasi-structuralist terms as the neutralisation of a binary opposition (inside/outside). There was a prophecy of the progeny's greatness if the birth took place on the morrow, as with Fíachu and Áed, but no attempt to delay it artificially. Instead, a socially and sexually antithetical queen's son and bondmaid's daughter experienced an inversion of normal expectations when the former's birth did not but the latter's did fulfil the prophecy by passing the temporal threshold of daybreak. The newborn baby girl was, in effect, baptised on the threshold with new milk, the whiteness of which presumably symbolised purification as a typical component of rites of passage (end of II.3).

> One day the druid (*magus*) invited his king and queen to supper but the queen was near childbirth. Then the king's friends and servants began to ask a certain prophet at what hour the queen was due to give birth to the baby. The druid said: 'Were it born tomorrow at daybreak, it would have no equal on earth.' But the queen gave birth to a son ahead of time. When morning came and the sun had risen, the druid's bondmaid (*ancilla magi*) came to the house carrying a vessel full of milk which had just been milked, and when she had put one foot across the threshold of the house (*trans limen domus*) and the other foot outside (*foris*), she fell astride the threshold (*super limen*) and gave birth to a daughter. That is how the prophet said this bondmaid would give birth, neither in the house nor outside the house, and the infant's body was washed with the warm milk which she was carrying. (VP §6; cf. McCone 1990: 186)

The druid, whose mother and father were from Connacht and Munster respectively, migrated with the bondmaid to 'the region of the Connachta' (VP §7.1), where fire was seen in the house where her daughter was sleeping (BB §1/VP §7.2) and subsequently near her head (VP §8) but proved illusory on both occasions. The druid then dreamed that three/two clerics were baptising the girl and told him to call her Brigit (BB §2/VP §9). One night the druid was stargazing, saw a fiery column rising from the house where baby Brigit and her mother was sleeping and summoned his mother's 'pious' (*cráibdech*) brother/a certain man to witness it too (BB §3/VP §10). Accosted by the druid's maternal uncle/a man while she was praying, Brigit declared 'this will be mine; this will be mine (*meum erit hoc, meum erit hoc*)', which was referred to her future possession of the area by the druid to the consternation of the uncle/inhabitants (BB §4/VP §11.1–4, including the clarification that 'today saint Brigit has a large *paruchia* in those regions' in §11.3). When she regularly vomited her food, the druid realised that this was because he was impure (*immundus*) and

46 Occasional Latin words and phrases in *Vita prima* cited here and below are taken from the text recently published by Freeman (2024: 125–82).

set aside a white cow (presumably symbolising purity), the milk of which she tolerated (BB §5/VP §11.6–7, noting that a pious Christian virgin did the milking as her foster-mother in §11.7). The druid and his followers duly left for his home territory in Munster (BB §6, adding that she was fostered there/VP §11.5). Brigit was taken thence by her father to his home in Leinster (BB §6/VP §12, adding that her Christian foster-mother accompanied her) and given to another virgin to be fostered (BB §7, cf. VP §11.7). As her cook, she always supplied her foster-mother's guests, whatever their number, with enough bread (BB §7)/She served in the house and any food that she touched or saw multiplied (VP §11.8).

Here a "heroic" pattern of exile (as a child in the womb) from and return (when old enough for fosterage) to her father's Leinster home includes a circuit of Ireland from (probably midland) Uí Néill territory through the north[47] (where her birth took place), Connacht in the west and Munster in the southwest presumably intended to bolster Brigit's pan-Irish credentials and claims to ecclesiastical jurisdiction or *paruchia* (VP §11.3).

Tension inherent in the opposition between Brigit's extreme Christian piety and the paganism of her guardian, the druid (*nida Christadi* 'I am not a Christian', BB l. 19), is encoded in alimentary terms as her inability to hold down food supplied by him. In *Bethu Brigte* (§5), this problem arose in Connacht as soon as she was weaned, and was solved by assigning her nourishment to 'a white red-eared cow' (*bó find audercc*, l. 39; see the note in Ó hAodha 1978: 39). This was followed by the move to Munster (§6), where she was placed in fosterage (*nutritur*, l. 41), and her separation from the pagan druid's sphere was completed when, on foot of a request to her foster-father (*nutritori*, l. 41; see Ó hAodha 1978: 40), she was retrieved by her father and (§7) taken 'to a certain virgin to be fostered by her' (*ad aliam virginem nutrire eam*, l. 47; see Ó hAodha 1978: 40). In *Bethu Brigte*, then, Brigit's transfer from the druid's to her father's custody was preceded by distancing from her pagan guardian in two stages: firstly, a shift from an impure (the druid) to a pure (the white cow) source of her food and, secondly, the transfer of her upbringing to a foster-father. Further transition to a pure upbringing ensued when her father entrusted her to a new fosterer, this time a suitably virgin (and so, by implication, Christian) foster-mother instead of the foster-father provided by the druid. These developments may be summarised as: impure → pure food-source [Connacht], pagan environment/foster-father [Munster] → Christian environment/virgin foster-mother [Leinster]. In *Vita prima* (§11.5–8), by contrast, the digestive problem arises

47 Topographical vagueness at this point may be put down the lost beginning of the Old Irish Life (BB), which often provides more precise topographical and onomastic details than VP (McCone 1982: 111–13 and 118).

in Munster (5–6) and is resolved by simultaneously providing Brigit with a white cow and 'a certain Christian woman, a very God-fearing virgin', who milked (*mulgebat*) it and fostered (*nutriebat*) her (7). Afterwards, learning of her desire to return home, the druid sent for her father to take her back and 'her Christian foster-mother (*nutrix sua Christiana*)' simply went with her (§12). Here, then, her exile with a pagan guardian and return to her father are mediated by a stage in which she remains under the druid's ultimate control but her nourishment and upbringing are consigned to an all-female Christian environment prefiguring her future as a nun and duly continued by her father. This part of the underlying source has probably been best preserved by BB and "tidied up" in VP by simplifying and combining Brigit's feeding and fosterage into a single coherent process.

The next three/two miracles feature the conversion of water from a well into beer to cure her ill foster-mother (*mume/nutrix*) (BB §8/VP §13), and the restitution of stolen boars (BB §9) and missing portions of bacon (BB §10/VP §14). At an ecclesiastical gathering (in Kildare/Mag Life), bishop Ibor/a holy man related a dream in which he had seen Mary and been told by a senior cleric/man beside her that this was the Mary who would dwell/had dwelled among them; when Brigit turned up with an old nun/God-fearing widow, he recognised her as the Mary of his vision (BB §11/VP §15). Brigit went to visit her mother among cows and, despite giving the butter produced to the poor, was able to fill the vessels/large vessel brought by the druid and his wife with the result that he not only granted Brigit her mother's freedom, the butter and the cows but also accepted baptism (BB §12/VP §§16–17). Her mother's liberation from bondage and her former guardian's conversion bring two major items of unfinished business to a satisfactory conclusion for Brigit.

The first phase of her life concludes with three moves to send her away from home, two thwarted and one implemented. Brigit's success in freeing her mother from slavery with the druid is directly followed by the reverse, namely her father's unsuccessful effort to sell his daughter into slavery with the king because she was constantly giving things away, including a sword which the king replaced with another (BB §13/VP §18). Shortly afterwards, Brigit's hand was sought in marriage but she resisted pressure from her brothers to wed by disfiguring herself with loss of an eye, and her father finally allowed her to take the veil (BB §§14–16/VP §19). She then sought out Bishop Mel and, while she was consecrated (inadvertently as a bishop according to BB)/he beheld her, a fiery column rose from her head, and the wooden base of the altar touched by her subsequently proved indestructible (BB §17–19/VP §20). Here quasi-marital veiling as a nun replaced the conventional marriage that typically served to bring the opening phase of a heroic career to a conclusion but had been explicitly rejected by her.

While the appearance of fire in a number of episodes above may be due to Brigit's likely antecedents as a pagan goddess of fire and the arts (McCone 1990: 162–3),

fire and cyclopism are also well attested as attributes of warriors and heroes such as Cú Chulainn (McCone 2022a). In particular, Brigit's loss of an eye and the fiery column rising from her head in the run-up to her consecration resonate with two major symptoms of the pre-eminent martial hero Cú Chulainn's battle frenzy (*ríastrad*), namely the disappearance of one of his eyes and ascent of the *lúan láith* 'warrior's radiance' from his crown (McCone 2021a: 218–19). At all events, their applicability *mutatis mutandis* to hagiography testifies to the adaptability of heroic motifs and narrative patterns.

Jesus Christ's birth in Bethlehem took place away from his earthly parents' normal home in Nazareth according to Luke, whereas Matthew located it in their Bethlehem home prior to their joint exile to Egypt and return thence to live in Nazareth (II.2). A "classic" pattern of birth at home followed by expulsion from it and exposure in the wilds is exhibited by a number of non-Irish examples given above (II.1–2). By contrast, in most of the Irish examples considered so far (III.2–3) the mother actually gives birth away from or at least outside the parental home. However, in SEC the baby Cormac was born at home but lost on the green just outside it shortly afterwards and the "classic" pattern has been exemplified above by Ailbe of Emly, who was deliberately expelled and exposed as a baby before being nurtured by a she-wolf, found by Lochán and eventually handed over for upbringing to human outsiders, a group of implicitly Christian Britons in keeping with Ailbe's status as a pre-Patrician saint (McCone 1984b: 49–54) rather than canonical herdsmen.

Togail Bruidne Da Derga 'The destruction of Da Derga's hostel' provides a rare Irish example of the "classic" pattern of expulsion/exposure and upbringing by herdsmen as, in effect, an aetiology of the name of King Conaire's mother Mes Búachalla 'Cowherd's (nut-)mast/decision', regardless of whether it inspired or was inspired by the story:[48]

> After a time Cormac, the man of the three gifts, leaves Eochaid's daughter because she was childless apart from a daughter whom she bore to Cormac after making the broth that her mother gave her, i.e. the woman from the *síd*-mounds. It is then that she said to her mother: 'What you have given me is wrong. It is a daughter that I shall bear'. 'That will not matter', said her mother. 'There shall be a king's suit (*taigid*, l. 70)[49] upon her'.

48 According to an alternative explanation of her name in another old text, *De ṡíl Chonairi Móir* 'On the seed/offspring of Conaire the Great', Mes Búachalla was King Eterscéle's ugly daughter and was engaged in tending his herds (*i mbochailius*) on Slíab Gerg and Slíab Fúait (Gwynn 1912: 133, ll. 9–12). The contrast between Mes Búachalla's ugliness here and her beauty in TBDD below may be put down to her role as a female transmitter of sovereignty (cf. EmEM in III.2 above, and McCone 2021b).

49 Due to the influence of the verbal noun *saigid* of the simple verb *saigid* 'seeks' upon *toichid*, the verbal noun of compound *do:saig*.

> Cormac then takes the woman again, i.e. Étaín, and it was her will that the daughter of the woman who had been left before her be killed. Cormac did not leave her to her mother for rearing. Then his two serfs take her to a pit. She smiles a happy smile at them while being brought into the pit. Their taste (for the deed) left them then. They carry her to the calf-pen of the cowherds (*búachaille*) of Eterscéle descendant of Iar, the king of Tara, and these reared her until she was a good seamstress and there was not in Ireland a king's daughter fairer than her.
>
> A wattle and daub house was made by them for her with no door at all in it but only a window and skylight. Eterscéle's followers then notice that house and thought it was food that was (being kept) in it by the cowherds. One of them went and looked from above the skylight and saw the exceedingly fair and beautiful girl in the house. That is related to the king. His followers immediately go from him to get her without asking and to breach the house, for the king was childless and it had been foretold to him that a woman whose ancestry was not known would bear him a son. The king then said: 'She is that woman who was promised to me'.
>
> When, then, she was there at night, she saw the bird over the skylight (coming) towards her and it leaves its bird-headdress on the floor of the house and goes to her and takes hold of her, saying: 'They are coming for you from the king to destroy your house and take you to him by force, and you shall be pregnant from me and bear a son from it, and that son shall not kill birds and his name shall be Conaire (for her name was Mes Búachalla, moreover).
>
> And she was taken to the king afterwards and her foster-fathers went with her and she was betrothed to the king and he gave seven *cumal*s ['female slave, bond-woman' and also 'the highest unit of value used in ordinary reckoning'; Binchy 1941: 81–2] to her and seven more *cumal*s to her foster-fathers and they were ennobled after that so that they were both stewards (*reachtaidi*) so that is the origin of the two Feidlimid Reachtaidi. And she then bore the king a son, i.e. Conaire son of Mes Búachalla. (Knott 1936: 2–4, §§4–8, ll. 64–104)

Brigit and Mes Búachalla exemplify the relatively uncommon application of a heroic pattern of birth and upbringing to a woman of distinction. Regardless of who precisely is referred to in the somewhat garbled opening (see Knott 1936: 71–2, note on l. 63), the child is conceived with the help of a magic potion and her future greatness as a king's wife is foretold but, as in the case of Snow White in the Grimms' fairytale (no. 53), a stepmother's desire for her death results in her being taken away and exposed by underlings, whose pity for her leads to her survival: having been left in a calf-pen instead of a pit, the infant Mes Búachalla is found and reared by the king's herdsmen (*búachailli*). Having no lower entrance but only a window and an opening to the sky, the building in which she is shut away from prying eyes may be compared with the quasi-uterine cave or enclosing vessel set on water that are prone to mediate a baby hero's "(re)birth" from the threat of death to a new future (cf. Rank in II.2 above). Like Asdiwal's mother (III.1), Mes Búachalla is impregnated by a supernatural birdman. However, having then been taken and betrothed to the king, she bore him what was generally regarded as his son. Thus, not only was there a discrepancy between Conaire's acknowledged and actual parentage but his biological parentage straddled the boundaries between human and supernatural, human and animal (or, more precisely, bird), earth and sky. Her marriage and production of a

royal heir constitute the fulfilment of Mes Búachalla's basic destiny, whereas that of her son was realised by accession to kingship in accordance with an already documented heroic pattern appearing, for example, as points 11 and 13 in the schemes of von Hahn (II.1) and Raglan (II.3) respectively. Help vouchsafed to Conaire as the son of a supernatural birdman (cf. Asdiwal in III.1) proved crucial in securing his succession to his human "father" as king of Tara (Knott 1936: 5, §§13–15, ll. 136–66). Thereafter the bulk of this long saga is concerned with the events leading up to his tragic death.

III.4 Umslopogaas, Mowgli, Tarzan, and the element of disguise

Modern interest in wild upbringings with wolves etc. also inspired several creative writers. Oscillation between nature and culture combined with classical models to produce fictional "wild men" characterised by mobility, ambiguity and other traits of traditional heroes found in a wide range of cultures.

After *King Solomon's mines* (1885), H. Rider Haggard (1856–1925) gave its protagonist a second outing in *Allan Quatermain* (1887), where he was joined by a feisty old Zulu warrior called Umslopogaas. A "heroic biography" was then supplied by the entirely Zulu-centric *Nada the lily* (1892) narrated by Umslopagaas's aged supposed father Mopo and set in the reigns of his real father, the mighty Shaka/Chaka (†1828), and his successor. Chaka's practice of eliminating possible rivals by having the children born to his many wives killed was circumvented when Umslopagaas's mother induced her brother Mopo to substitute him for his own still-born twin son (cf. Cyrus and Zeus) and raise him as brother of the surviving twin daughter Nada (ch. 6). When Chaka's suspicions were eventually aroused, Mopo arranged an escape for his wife and the "twins", during which Umslopogaas was carried off by a lioness (ch. 9). After a mauling, he was rescued by a wolfskin-clad youth named Galazi and, having recovered in a cave, became his "brother" as co-leader of a pack of ghostly werewolves (chs. 12–14). Some years later, he acquired a wife, a great axe and a chiefdom by killing a local chieftain and, with Galazi's help, defeating his ten sons in combat. Thereafter, Galazi mostly continued his wild way of life but Umslopagaas tended to stay with his wife and the children she bore him (ch. 17). Reunited with his beloved Nada at last (ch. 26), he resolved to wed her when Mopo told him that Chaka was his real father in the hearing of Umslopagaas's first wife (ch. 29), who betrayed the secret to Chaka's successor with the result that warriors were sent to kill the potential rival (ch. 32). As the sole survivor of the ensuing carnage, Umslopagaas made his way to the cave in which Nada had taken refuge, but his exertions and wounds had made him too weak to roll back the entrance stone and eventually she

died (ch. 34). After Mopo had nursed his near-dead foster-son back to health, they took revenge upon the Zulu king and replaced him with his half-brother (ch. 35).

This story's many borderline events include Umslopogaas's three narrow escapes from death: as a baby, a young man about to become a "wolf", and a just widowed adult. He was taken from his real father's people by Mopo and from his adoptive family by a lioness. A young "wolf" and his wolfpack took him to a womb-like mountain cave to be healed and "reborn" as a "wolf" and the joint pack-leader. Unlike his "brother" Galazi, who had also become a "wolf" there after fleeing in the wake of his royal father's murder, Umslopagaas later returned to a human settlement, became its ruler, married and had children. Under rather different circumstances (IV.3), Remus similarly failed to make the transition from wilderness to kingship and marriage reserved for his twin Romulus. Finally, Nada became trapped and died in the cave where Umslopagaas had been revived to become a "wolf" but from which he was now excluded in a near-dead state from which he was again brought back to life.

Although doubtless familiar with the Roman twins, Rudyard Kipling (1865–1936) acknowledged a debt to *Nada the lily* for the basic idea of Mowgli in a letter to Rider Haggard dated October 20, 1895, and may also have been aware of alleged cases of Indian children nurtured by wolves (Hearn in Kipling 2016: 6–7) discussed by Tylor (1863: 24–7; see II.1). Mowgli first appears as a mysterious young man wearing only a loincloth and a floral headdress in 'In the rukh', one of the short stories in Kipling's *Many inventions* (1863). He introduces himself to the warden of the forest or *rukh* as 'a man without caste, and for matter of that without a father', a classic "heroic" motif, and proceeds to help him in often baffling ways between sudden emergences from and disappearances back into the wild *rukh*. After the butler's daughter has absconded with Mowgli into the forest, the warden and her incensed father find them in the *rukh* with four wolves, Mowgli's 'brothers', who had accompanied him (cf. Cormac and his wolves in note 44 above) on his wanderings after his expulsion firstly from the jungle as a human and secondly from a village after being seen cavorting with the wolves at night. "Heroic" nurture by wild animals and expulsions betoken Mowgli's ambivalence in relation to nature versus culture. He maintains this liminal status by finally marrying his girl and becoming a forest ranger while continuing to live in the wild *rukh* with his wife, baby and wolf 'brothers'. Mowgli's earlier life was fleshed out in further short stories included by Kipling in *The jungle book* (1894) and *The second jungle book* (1895). Among other things, the former describes the head wolf Akela in Frazerian terms (see II.3) and gives more details of Mowgli's expulsion from the village.[50]

50 'Akela said nothing. He was thinking of the time that comes to every leader of every pack when

Edgar Rice Burroughs (1875–1950) introduced a highly mobile and ambivalent hero raised by and among wild animals more attuned to Darwinian ideas[51] in *Tarzan of the apes* (1912). On a voyage from England to a posting in West Africa, a peer and his pregnant wife were marooned by mutineers on a jungle-fringed shore along with their belongings etc. (chs. 1–2), a classic case of 'to the waters and the wild'. Lord Greystoke built and furnished a cabin, in which their son was born and a year later his wife died (ch. 3). Greystoke was then killed by apes and the baby substituted by a female for her own dead child, so that 'the son of an English lord and an English lady nursed at the breast of Kala, the great ape' (ch. 4). Like Asdiwal or Cormac, Tarzan was born in the wilds on an interrupted journey between human settlements and, again like Cormac, exchanged noble birth for bestial nurture.

The analysis below will focus upon antitheses and mediations of the type identified in subsequent studies of heroic myths and legends[52] rather than the convoluted plot of this action-packed "pulp" fantasy and its sequel up to Tarzan's marriage. *Tarzan of the apes* (TA) traces his gradual progress from the wild simian upbringing in Africa responsible for his superhuman strength and agility (ch. 5; cf. the deer-nurtured Habis's 'extraordinary nimbleness' in II.1) to civilisation in France

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his strength goes from him and he gets feebler and feebler, till at last he is killed by the wolves and a new leader comes up — to be killed in his turn' (Kipling 2016: 24). Since the first edition of Frazer's *Golden bough* had appeared in 1890 and attracted considerable attention, its influence seems quite possible. 'Tiger! Tiger!', the third and final Mowgli story in *The jungle book*, displays an obvious pattern of exposure/exile and return followed by a further exile and a reference to his future marriage: after being expelled from the wolf pack, Mowgli came to a human village, was given to a couple in the belief that he might be the child that they had once lost to a tiger, eventually killed and skinned his old tiger enemy, Shere Khan, but was expelled from the village after being accused of demonic sorcery. The tale ends with an oblique reference to 'In the rukh': '"Man-Pack and Wolf-Pack have cast me out," said Mowgli. "Now I will hunt alone in the Jungle." "And we will hunt with thee," said the four cubs. So Mowgli went away and hunted with the four cubs in the Jungle from that day on. But he was not always alone, because years afterwards he became a man and married'.

51 Tarzan's nurturer was 'an ape, a huge, fierce, terrible beast of a species closely allied to the gorilla, yet more intelligent; which, with the strength of their cousin, made her kind the most fearsome of those awe-inspiring progenitors of man' (ch. 3). As yet, no live gorilla had been exhibited in the West and information about them derived chiefly from the specimens and sensational descriptions supplied by the American explorer Paul du Chaillu (1831–1903), whose first published account mentions 'that monstrous and ferocious ape, the gorilla' in the third sentence of its preface (1862: v).

52 Any influence from the various taxonomies and other studies of heroic narrative patterns reviewed in II above can be excluded on straightforward chronological or linguistic grounds. Legendary and fictional figures such as Romulus and Remus, Mowgli and/or Umslopagaas may have provided Rice Burroughs with inspiration but, if so, this amounted to little more than a spark for his florid imagination.

and the USA through contact first with human artefacts and then with actual humans. It ends (ch. 28) with his loss of Jane and suppression of proof that he was the Greystoke heir. *The return of Tarzan* (1913; RT) charts a regression from civilisation and its shortcomings to liberating African wildness until the finale of his marriage to Jane, revelation of his aristocratic birthright and departure for England with her.

Ignorant of his own birth in that tiny human outpost in the wilderness, the ten-year-old Tarzan managed to gain access to his dead parents' locked cabin and its contents, including a sharp knife and 'a child's illustrated alphabet' (TA, ch. 6). The former enabled him to overcome stronger animals (e.g. ch. 6) and become king of the apes (ch. 11). The latter opened the door to literacy (ch. 7) and, thanks to the cabin's many books, by the age of eighteen he 'could speak no English, and yet … could read and write his native language. Never had he seen a human being other than himself', although that soon changed with the arrival of fugitive cannibalistic 'savages'[53] (ch. 9), with whom he mostly had clandestine contact from a distance. In due course, having left the apes to pursue 'the finding of other white men like himself' (ch. 12), he witnessed the marooning of Professor Porter, his beautiful daughter Jane, two male companions and her Afro-American servant but remained hidden, leaving a proprietary note signed 'Tarzan of the Apes' in the cabin (ch. 13).

The structuralist view of clothing as a mediator between nature and culture (e.g. McCone 2020: 95) was foreshadowed by young Tarzan's 'desire to cover his nakedness with clothes' because 'he had learned from his picture books that all men were so covered, while monkeys and apes and every other living thing went naked' (ch. 8). The donning of a native victim's ornaments and loincloth marked Tarzan's transition from naked "ape" to half-clothed "savage" on the verge of his first contact with white men. Conversely, after being pushed overboard from a passenger ship on its way from Algiers to Cape Town (RT, ch. 12,), Tarzan 'divested himself of his remaining garments' to facilitate his passage through water to the wilds, which turned out to be his old jungle haunts. There he found 'the true happiness of perfect freedom' and could 'slough the skin of his artificial civilization, and sink happy and contented into the deep sleep of the wild beast' (ch. 14).

When Jane's admirer Clayton was saved from a lion in TA by a 'young man, naked except for a loin cloth', whose speech 'resembled the chattering of monkeys mingled with the growling of some wild beast' (ch. 14), there was an understandable failure to identify him with the note's writer (ch. 15). Tarzan then acquired an

53 As Rice Burroughs often calls them in accordance with typical attitudes of his day, albeit with at least some awareness that such natives were not the only savages: 'To add to the fiendishness of their cruel savagery was the poignant memory of still crueler barbarities practiced upon them and theirs by the white officers of that arch hypocrite Leopold II of Belgium, because of whose atrocities they had fled the Congo Free State' (ch. 21).

idiosyncratic pairing of written English with spoken French,[54] which he learned while nursing D'Arnot (ch. 23), a French lieutenant rescued by him after being captured and maltreated by the cannibals (ch. 21). D'Arnot's ship had already sailed with Porter's party on board when the pair got back to the coast and so they made a journey, during which 'D'Arnot taught him many of the refinements of civilisation' (ch. 25), to a coastal settlement and thence to France. After sailing to the USA and meeting Jane, Tarzan (who had by then learned some spoken English) identified himself to her as 'Tarzan of the Apes … who wrote what I could not speak' (ch. 27).

In RT a sojourn in Algeria (chs 7–11) effectively constituted a halfway house between Tarzan's time in France (chs 3–6) and return to his sub-Saharan home (ch. 14). When he visited the desert home of an old sheikh befriended in Sidi Aissa (ch. 8), the latter 'wished to adopt him into the tribe' but 'a half-formed resolution in the ape-man's mind to accept and remain forever with these wild people' was resisted (ch. 11). Foreshadowed here as a temptation only, a life among wild men was actually adopted later by Tarzan in his African home, where his solitary ape-like existence came to an end when he befriended a native warrior after saving him from a lion (ch. 14) and was welcomed by his people into their settlement. There 'Tarzan lived with his savage friends', who were the fugitive remnant of a once great northern nation devastated by slave-raiders and led a 'wild, primitive tribal life' but 'were not cannibals', and soon he was 'to all intent and purpose a savage among savages … far more closely allied to these people [the Waziri] and their life than to the Parisian friends whose ways, apelike, he had successfully mimicked for a few short months' (ch. 15, entitled 'From ape to savage'). Unlike the despicable cannibals outwitted by Tarzan and destroyed in a punitive expedition by the French sailors in TA, the 'savages' befriended by him in TR were patently of the "noble" variety. When an Arab raid responsible for their king's death (ch. 16) had been thwarted by Tarzan's tactics, they made him their new king (ch. 17).

In TA Tarzan longed for the white man's world and kept his distance from cannibal 'savages', but in TR he became disillusioned with the former[55] and entered into an intimate relationship with admirable 'savages'. An expedition with fifty of these 'in search of the ruined city of gold' led to Tarzan's capture by its violent in-

54 Tarzan's late father, by contrast, had been an English nobleman who kept his diary in French, with the result that Tarzan could not understand it until it was read aloud to him by D'Arnot (ch. 25).
55 Two examples will suffice. On the ship from America to France 'he sat speculating on the numerous instances of human cruelty, selfishness, and spite that had fallen to his lot to witness since that day in the jungle four years since that his eyes had first fallen upon a human being other than himself' (ch. 2). Once back in his earlier haunts, he asks himself 'who would go back to the stifling, wicked cities of civilized man when the mighty reaches of the great jungle offered peace and liberty?' (ch. 14).

habitants, 'short, stocky men, with great beards … hairy breasts … [and] white skins' (ch. 19). 'Their females were more symmetrically proportioned' and the young high priestess, who was charged with sacrificing Tarzan but instead took him to a hiding place from which he succeeded in finding his own way out of the city, explained to him that her people were the 'last remnant' of an 'ancient civilisation' whose mighty centre 'had sunk into the sea'.[56] Since then they, especially the men, had 'dwindled in power, in civilisation, in intellect … In fact, the apes live with us … we speak their language quite as much as we do our own [hence her ability to communicate with Tarzan] … in time we will no longer banish those of our people who mate with apes, and so in time we shall descend to the very beasts from which ages ago our progenitors may have sprung' (ch. 20). Tarzan's individual short-term regression from man to "ape" is thus matched by a whole people's long-term degeneration in the same direction,[57] currently to the level of despicable white "savages" contrasting with the admirable, if wild, black 'savages' led by Tarzan. In Rice Burroughs's scheme of things, both are effectively intermediate between the wild apes and civilised white men.

Key sequences and features in TA are inverted in RT, and both stories display the oppositions and mediations, homologies and inversions identified by Lévi-Strauss (see III.1) as essential attributes of heroic and other mythical narratives. Rice Burroughs's instinct for these devices testifies to the enduring creative potential of heroic ambivalence by generating a modern heroic "myth" concerned with breeding versus upbringing[58] and nature versus culture from a broadly post-Darwinian evolutionary standpoint with a racialist slant.[59]

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56 Presumably a nod to the populist Minnesotan politician Ignatius Donnelly's pseudohistorical work *Atlantis: the antediluvian world* (1882).

57 The *Time machine* (1895) by H.G. Wells envisaged a distant future in which the earth was peopled by the feckless, physically and intellectually diminished Eloi and the subterranean Morlocks, who fed and ate them, as a result of the evolutionary degeneration of an upper elite and a lower working class respectively.

58 Poles apart in the case of Tarzan and other similarly well-born heroes nurtured by wild animals. Upbringing generally prevails and even in Paris Tarzan asserts 'my civilization is not even skin deep – it does not go deeper than my clothes' (TR, ch. 6), but sometimes breeding will out. When Tarzan killed the first man he encountered, a native who had slain his ape mother, and was about to eat him in accordance with 'jungle ethics', 'a strange doubt stayed his hand' and 'hereditary instinct … saved him from transgressing a worldwide law of whose very existence he was ignorant' (TA, ch. 9). Later a gesture of his towards Jane is rather oleaginously described as 'the hall-mark of his aristocratic birth, the natural outcropping of fine breeding, an hereditary instinct of graciousness which a lifetime of uncouth and savage training and environment could not eradicate' (TA, ch. 20).

59 Rice Burroughs rather obviously recognised an ascending hierarchy of *apes-savages-white men* (a binary opposition with intervening mediation in structuralist terms), but at least depicted both

As the examples of Romulus, Cormac, Cyrus, Zeus and others show, a king-to-be's true identity was liable to be concealed in heroic narratives featuring a reason such as usurpation or a prophecy for a current ruler to fear replacement by him. King-heroes such as Odysseus and Nala were physically disguised when attempting to recover their thrones after a long absence in early Geek and Indian epic (McCone 2020: 137–45). Not only did the young Russian hero Volx (Jakobson 1966: 301–68) have a mortal mother and supernatural snake-father (ll. 1–11) but his half-bestial nature was also reflected in an ability to change into a falcon, wolf or aurochs (43–51). In the Middle High German *Nibelungenlied*, Sîvrit (Siegfried) had a *tarn-kappe* (or *-hût*), a hooded garment which made its wearer stronger and invisible (quatrains 336–8; Brackert 1970: 76–9) and was donned by him in decisive support of Gunther's wooing of Prünhilt (Brünhild) (431–73; Brackert 1970: 96–107). Nevertheless, such disguise is hardly an essential heroic attribute: the royal child's identity is typically revealed by a quarrel or the like, Odysseus and Nala cast off their disguises on regaining their queens, and the transformations of Volx and Sîvrit were also temporary for specific purposes.

For many a modern fictional hero or "superhero", disguise is an indispensable means of switching between an "everyday" identity and a heroic or even superhuman "alter ego". The strong and valiant Umslopagaas' true origin was a secret known only to a very select few in his lifetime, but it was Baroness Orczy who really set the ball rolling with *The scarlet pimpernel* (1905). This was the first of a series of novels featuring a daring and resourceful master of disguise who rescued aristocrats from the clutches of the French Revolution but was known to the world at large only as the foppish socialite Sir Percy Blakeney. *The curse of Capistrano* (1919) by Johnston McCulley presented a bookish aristocrat, Don Diego Vega, who became the supreme swordsman known as Zorro 'Fox', a courageous and cunning equestrian avenger of wrongdoing and defender of the poor, after donning a black "uniform" complete with cape and disguising mask. Thereafter, a distinctive costume prone to include a cape and/or mask became the increasingly clichéd hallmark of the masked Phantom (1936–), the caped Superman *alias* Clarke Kent (1938–), the masked and caped Batman *alias* Bruce Wayne (1939–), and numerous other so-called "superheroes" with dual identities who have since proliferated in comics, films and television series.

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good and evil representatives of each of the three main racial stereotypes in TA and RT: *native African, Arab, white man*, again an ascending scale but this time with Arabs mediating a binary human opposition.

IV Cormac mac Airt, Cyrus, Romulus (and Remus), Sigmund and Zeus

IV.1 The question of origins

The historical linguistic orientation of "solar" mythology meant applying it to a particular language family, and its principal proponent, the Sanskrit scholar Max Müller (1823–1900), naturally chose Indo-European. As an adherent, von Hahn posited an 'Aryan [IE] expulsion/exposure and return formula' on the strength of examples drawn solely from sources in Indo-European languages (II.1). He explicitly adopted the *genetic* approach 'that the great cycles of the heroic legend (*Heldensage*) of all ancient Aryan [IE] peoples are just as related as their languages and that their derivation from a common original source (*eine gemeinsame Urquelle*) is just as inescapable' (von Hahn 1876: 110).

A *diffusionist* alternative transcending individual linguistic families was implicit in the compilation of a general "motif-index" of folktales (II.5). This envisaged the spread of myths or folktales and motifs over potentially large and culturally/linguistically diverse areas by borrowing with varying degrees of adaptation across linguistic and other boundaries. Combined with a functionalist approach and structuralist methodology, diffusionist assumptions underpin geographically oriented mythological studies by Lévi-Strauss ranging from the relatively localised (e.g. 1978: 238–68) to the broadly south-to-north progress of his four-volume *Mythologiques* (1964–71) through a range of myths culled from many native cultures over the vast area of the Americas. The distribution of "Frazerian" royal ritual and its alleged "heroic" mythical outgrowth was fancifully ascribed by Lord Raglan (1936) to diffusion from the great early river civilisations: 'This age-long evolution probably began … in the valleys of the Nile, the Euphrates, or the Indus … and we have good reason to believe that from very early times they were ruled … by kings whose principal duty it was to ensure by means of ritual that the floods should be punctual and adequate (1936: 149–50; 1949: 148–9) … Myths are concerned almost entirely with gods and heroes, or goddesses and heroines, because they are accounts of royal ritual (1936: 151; 1949: 150) … The original ritual, so far as can be judged from the general pattern, was based upon the existence of a king who was killed and replaced annually' (1936: 152; 1949: 151).

Universalist hypotheses were a response to the shortcomings of genetic or diffusionist explanations in the face of the worldwide occurrence of typical features of the "heroic" pattern (e.g. Asdiwal in III.1 on Canada's Pacific coast). For instance, Cornell (1995: 61–2) categorises the story of Romulus and Remus as 'an old and indigenous legend' containing 'elements which are echoed in myths and legends from

many societies throughout the world' concerning 'the birth and upbringing of persons who grow up to become kings, founders, religious leaders, heroes or conquerors' and bases the following conclusion on a brief review of some relevant cases: 'the recurrence of the same motifs in so many different contexts cannot be explained by literary or oral diffusion, or by common inheritance within a particular ethnic or linguistic family. The stories … must be seen as popular expressions of some universal human need or experience, occurring in times and places that are worlds apart'. Hence the label 'international heroic biography' (Ó Cathasaigh 1977: 2).

Explanations invoking alleged psychological universals depend not only upon the questionable hypothesis of an intimate connection between myths and dreams/complexes but also upon a discipline, or rather a particular far from generally accepted theory (e.g., Freudian or Jungian), that is not primarily concerned with mythical narrative. "Mytho-ritualist" (II.3) insistence that myths are regularly or at least mostly derived from rituals tends merely to displace the overall problem. Nevertheless, the 'rites of passage' identified by van Gennep (end of II.3) do seem to have near-universal status as markers of basic biological-cum-social transitions such as birth, puberty, mating and death. De Vries and Ó Cathasaigh view the myth and ritual or, more specifically, a hero's progress and rites of passage as correlating responses to 'life-crises' (II.6).

Kings and other heroes are, to borrow the term coined by van Gennep with reference to initiatory and other transitional rituals (II.3), 'liminal' figures by virtue of their characteristic role as (not invariably successful) mediators between opposites such as culture/nature or human/divine (cf. Leach in II.6). As such, they manifest what structuralists identify as a general human tendency to organise phenomena and experiences into binary oppositions and then attempt to resolve these by means of an intermediary third term. That being so, it would be only natural for accounts of their careers (whether in whole or part) to attract likewise liminal events and situations resonating with initiation rituals, especially those associated with the transition from childhood through puberty to manhood. Liminality, often manifested in a restless tendency to straddle or cross and recross all manner of boundaries, may thus be identified as the structural universal chiefly responsible for generating similar basic narrative patterns for heroes the world over. Whereas alleged psychological universals offer a view of myths in the light of an extraneous theory, structuralist analysis in terms of binary oppositions and their (actual or attempted) mediation or neutralisation is, above all, a heuristic formal procedure aimed at revealing the meanings or messages of narratives in the relevant social and environmental context. As such, it can be judged in any given instance by its results, effectively the extent to which it yields convincing interpretations of the material in question.

A universalist approach to general similarities between heroic myths the world over does not exclude the possibility that genetic affinity and/or diffusion may ac-

count more satisfactorily for subsets sharing features of more limited distribution. These three types of explanation are not necessarily incompatible with each other in individual cases, and there is no reason *a priori* why a given myth should not combine "universal" components with circumstantial correspondences indicative of transmission by diffusion and/or inheritance. That being so, *Genemuin Chormaic* 'Cormac's birth' will now be set in a broader Indo-European context with a view to reconstructing a Proto-IE archetype from which it and comparable Persian, Roman, Greek and Norse narratives may be plausibly derived.

IV.2 Cyrus and Cormac

The account of Cyrus the Great's (†529 BC) birth and youth underlying Herodotus' and Justin's extant versions was recognised from the start as a good example of a pattern liable to be imposed upon the early careers of notable legendary or historical kings/heroes (II.1–2). Cyrus's royal Median mother and unassuming Persian father straddled an ethnic divide prefiguring their son's conversion of the Medes' empire into a Persian one. His exposure by a herdsman in a mountain wilderness on his maternal grandsire's orders in response to a dream is a typical configuration paralleled by the legendary Greek king Oedipus (II.2: legitimate birth, warning prophecy to royal father, and baby son's resultant entrusting to herdsmen for exposure on a mountain). His fostering by a humble herdsman and his wife as well as the revelation of his true identity in the wake of a quarrel also have obvious equivalents, e.g. in the legend of Romulus and Remus (IV.3).

The animal helper is rationalised in Herodotus' version as a woman called Spako/Kyno 'Bitch' (II.1), who substituted her own stillborn baby for the royal one (cf. Zeus in IV.4 and Umslopagaas in III.4). Later, Cyrus was encouraged to rise up against his grandfather by Harpagus, who was secretly bent upon avenging his son's death. As BURKERT (1983: 109) puts it, 'the wolf-boy was helped in carrying out his appointed tasks by Harpagos, "the rapacious", i.e. the wolf, as his name must have been understood by the Greeks'. Thus, instead of being reared successively by a she-wolf and human foster-parents like the Roman twins and Cormac, the Persian king-to-be was helped at two crucial stages by people who had lost their own sons: a humble herdsman's wife with a canine name who adopted the baby Cyrus, and a nobleman with a lupine name who helped him to "seize"[60] the kingship after reaching manhood. A tame canine bitch and a woman named 'Bitch' look

60 Gk. ἁρπάζειν (*harpázein*). It is unclear whether the connection was a Greek innovation or Ἅρπαγος (*Hárpagos*) was a Greek rendering of an Iranian original with a similar meaning.

like successive rationalisations of a normally savage she-wolf, the nurturer in GC and Rome's foundation legend.

Similarities between the legends of Cormac and Romulus are not sufficiently circumstantial to make dependence of the former upon the latter plausible. As Ó Cathasaigh (1977: 54–5) puts it, 'the suckling of the hero by an animal is an integral part of the international heroic pattern' but 'it is only in the form of a "twin saga" that the Romulus story could have been known in Ireland, and there is nothing in Cormac's biography to suggest that it has borrowed from such a source'. *Genemuin Chormaic* seems to be the thematically oldest account of Cormac's career from conception to acquisition of the kingship and thence, albeit in bare and partly obscure (I[7]) outline, as far as his death and burial. It clearly evinces the basic pattern of partially royal but illegitimate birth (like the Roman twins), nurture by a she-wolf in the wilderness (with associated cave, as in the case of Romulus and Remus), finding and upbringing by persons of inferior status (albeit lesser dynasts rather than mere herdsmen), revelation of the child's true descent as a result of a quarrel (with other children at play, as in Cyrus' case), deposition of the current king (like the Roman twins and Cyrus) and accession to the kingship (in his stead like Cyrus).

GC differs most obviously from the Roman and Persian legends in two respects. Firstly, it introduces a wide range of attributes and accomplishments required of a 'true' ruler by means of prophecies and descriptions as well as a dramatic account of Cormac's attainment of sovereignty through a righteous judgment (III.2) rather than the force employed by those other 'king-heroes' Romulus and Cyrus (II.6). Secondly, its genealogical-cum-political concerns (I) demanded, notwithstanding the she-wolf's intervention, the implementation of his doomed royal father Art's instructions that Cormac be fostered by King Lugne in accordance with normal social practice[61] rather than leaving the selection of his foster-parents to chance as in the case of Romulus and Remus or Cyrus. In the latter two instances, a humble finder/rescuer also became the foster-father, whereas in GC the child's finder Grec, after exacting the promise of a fitting reward, took Cormac's designated foster-father Lugne to the she-wolf's cave. Ó Corráin (1986: 148–9) puts matters thus in his discussion of GC (and SEC): 'the relationship between fosterer and fostered is modelled on the ordinary mutual obligations and ties brought about by such connections. Individuals of the highest status (and Cormac was one of these) were fostered by those of lower status … and the relationship entailed ties of *pietas*, loyalty and mutual support … In the convention of the origin tales, this is the model for the relationship which should exist between the descendants of ancestors bound

61 See Kelly 1988: 87–90, and McCone 2023: 131–6 and 147–9.

by the tie of fosterage. And the relationship with the descendants of those whose ancestors helped the hero at birth or in his youth are analogous'.

A two-pronged political approach may be discerned. Firstly, on what might be termed a "macro" level, the claims of Cormac's alleged descendants (notably the Uí Néill, singled out specifically in EmEM; III.2) to the Tara kingship were validated by his depiction as an ideal ruler comprehensively endowed with the accomplishments envisaged by early Irish regnal ideology. Secondly, there was an attempt on a more "micro" level to bolster the status of a number of local dynasties in what is now southeastern County Sligo by giving them significant roles in Cormac's early life and progress to the Tara kingship. Given their contemporary relevance at the time of composition (arguably as early as the 7th century AD), these concerns may have triggered modifications to a still older inherited narrative pattern.

IV.3 Rome's foundation myth

IV.3.1 The principal sources and different versions

A broadly "orthodox" version of Rome's foundation is given by Livy, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Plutarch, Justin (summarily) and Cicero (*De re publica* ii, 1–10, idealising Romulus and virtually excluding Remus). Its basic features were already established in the first recorded history of Rome, written by Quintus Fabius Pictor towards the end of the third century BC (Beck & Walter 2005: 55–61) but no longer extant. Plutarch sandwiches his account of events down to Amulius's death (*Romulus* 3,1–8,9) between claims that it largely agreed with Fabius.[62] Dionysius's similar narrative (*Roman antiquities* i, 76,1–83,4) notes basic agreement among 'most of the authors' up to the twins' birth (79,1) but disagreement about their mother Ilia's fate, and then prefaces the rest of the story as follows (79,4): 'An account of Ilia's offspring has been written by the Quintus Fabius called Pictor, whom Lucius Cincius and Porcius Cato and Calpurnius Piso and most of the other authors have followed'. Dionysius (i, 79,8) mentions an old bronze statue of a she-wolf suckling two babes near a cave on the side of the Palatine, while Livy (x, 23,12) notes 'likenesses of the infant founders of the city beneath the she-wolf's teats at the Ficus Ruminalis' financed by the Ogulnius brothers when curule aediles in 296 BC.[63] After recording Alba Longa's foundation by Aeneas' son Ascanius, Justin continues (xliii, 2–3):

62 Tantalisingly, Plutarch claims that the first written account of this was by the otherwise unknown Greek author 'Diocles of Preparethus', whom Fabius mostly followed.

63 This monument was probably reproduced as the image of a she-wolf looking back at suckling infants on silver didrachms issued during the consulate of Quintus Ogulnius and Gaius Fabius Pictor in 269 BC. If so, it cannot have been the famous surviving "Capitoline" bronze of a solitary lactating

> Then, after many kings of this city, Numitor and Amulius finally took possession of the kingship. However, when Amulius had overthrown the older Numitor by force, he consigned his daughter Rea to perpetual virginity so that no male claimant of the kingship might arise from Numitor's family … Shut up in a grove sacred to Mars, then, she bore two boys, whether conceived in dishonour or from Mars … Amulius … ordered the boys to be exposed and weighed the mother down with chains, the injustice of which brought about her death. Nevertheless, Fortune … gave the boys to be nurtured to a she-wolf … after the loss of her cubs … The herdsman Faustulus noticed them, took them away from the wild animal and brought them up in a rustic way of life among herds of cattle. It was believed … that the boys belonged to Mars … One of the boys was named Remus, the other Romulus … When they assiduously and frequently kept robbers from plundering cattle, Remus was captured by those same robbers and … was brought before the king. He was accused of being wont to attack Numitor's herds. Then he was handed over by the king to Numitor for punishment … Faustulus suddenly turned up with Romulus and made the boys' origin known … and the youths and Numitor took up arms to avenge their mother's death and to recover the stolen kingship respectively. Amulius having been killed, the kingship was restored to Numitor and the city of Rome was founded by the youths … Then, when neighbours spurned marriage with herdsmen, the Sabine maidens were seized.

Livy (i, 3–8) gives further details. For instance, Amulius killed his deposed elder brother Numitor's sons in addition to making a Vestal Virgin of his daughter, Rea Silvia, who nevertheless bore twins allegedly fathered by Mars. Amulius then had her imprisoned and her offspring set adrift on the Tiber, but their vessel floated to dry land, where they were suckled by a she-wolf (*lupa*). Faustulus, the king's herdsman, found her licking the twins, whom he brought home and presented to his wife Larentia. 'Thus born and brought up, when they had first reached maturity, … they traversed the woods hunting … [After a time,] they attacked robbers laden with booty, [and] divided the takings among the herdsmen … as the band of youths (*iuvenes*) grew daily' (i, 4,8–9; cf. Plut. *Rom*. 6, 3). In an ambush by their robber victims at the Lupercalia, when 'naked youths (*nudi iuvenes*) run in sportive frolic in honour of Wolfish Pan (*Lycaeus Pan*), whom the Romans then called Inuus' (i, 5,2), Remus was captured and ultimately handed over to Numitor as the chief victim of the twins' depredations after assembling a band of youths (*collecta iuvenum manu*, i, 5,4). Faustulus now told Romulus of his suspicions that the twins were the ones exposed on the king's orders, while Numitor guessed Remus' true identity after discovering that he was a twin. After a plot leading to Amulius's death, Numitor was restored to the throne of Alba and his twin grandsons led an emigration to the place of their exposure and upbringing. However, after disagreeing about which of them would give his name to the new settlement, Romulus occupied the Palatine and Remus the Aventine to await the gods' verdict. Remus saw six vultures first but Romu-

she-wolf looking straight ahead, usually dated to the fifth century BC (e.g. Aigner-Foresti 2003: 59; Cornell 1995: 61 and 413, n, 37) but arguably an early medieval artifact (Carruba 2006).

lus then saw twice as many, an ambiguous outcome provoking a conflict in which Remus was killed – by his own brother after insultingly leaping over Rome's nascent walls according to some. Having thus become the sole founder and ruler of the new city, Romulus proceeded to issue laws and assume the trappings of authority, as the new city became a place of refuge for all and sundry. Livy's account continues (i, 9–16) with rebuffed efforts to forge marriage alliances with surrounding peoples, whom Romulus then invited to solemn games. While their attention was upon the spectacle, the Roman youth (*iuventus Romana*) set about seizing the maidens (*virgines*, i, 9,10). Resultant hostilites were brought to an end by a ceasefire mediated by the Romans' new Sabine wives and then a merger of both peoples in Rome under their two kings, Romulus and Titus Tatius. After the latter's murder at Lavinium, Romulus ruled alone until he disappeared in a cloud. Hailed as a god born of a god, he appeared soon afterwards to Proculus Iulius with a prophecy of Rome's future greatness and invincibility.

Dionysius' fuller account (*Roman antiquities* i, 76 – ii, 56) agrees with Livy's in essentials, and his version of the foundation itself will suffice here. The twins disagreed about the location, since Romulus favoured old haunts on the Palatine but Romus ('Ρῶμος aka Remus) wished 'to settle the place now called Remoria after him' (i, 85,6), namely a hill near the Tiber some thirty stades from Rome. Their grandfather in Alba suggested letting a divine omen decide. After Romulus had sent messengers from the Palatine to Romus on the Aventine with a false report, six vultures appeared to Romus, who went to the Palatine. There the discomfited Romulus now saw twelve vultures and claimed victory. Romus, Faustulus and many others fell in an ensuing fight. Romulus settled the survivors, 3,000 infantry (the original strength of a legion) and 300 cavalry (the number of the *celeres*),[64] on the Palatine on Larentia's advice. Dionysius mentions one view that Celer slew Romus with his spade as he leaped over Rome's nascent wall (i, 86–7; cf. *De viris illustribus* 1). According to Plutarch's *Romulus*, 'Romulus founded the quarter … called Rome and wished to build a city there but Remus (preferred) a certain stronghold on the Aventine which was named Remonium after him and is now called Rignarium' (9, 4). As for the birds of omen, 'some say that Remus truly saw his but that Romulus lied and that the twelve appeared to Romulus after Remus had come to him' (9, 5). The angry Remus mocked the digging of the trench to mark Rome's walls 'and finally, as he was leaping over it, fell there, some say struck down by Romulus, others by one of his companions (τῶν ἑταίρων) Celer. Faustulus also fell in the battle … Anyway, Celer migrated to Etruria and the Romans call the swift and quick *celeres* after him' (10, 1–2).

64 Dion. Hal. ii, 2. A legion of this size was originally drawn from the three tribes of Titienses, Ramnes and Luceres according to Varro, *Ling. Lat*. v, 89.

Dionysius (i, 72–3), Plutarch (*Rom.* 1–2) and Festus (326–9 L) record divergent accounts of Rome's foundation given by often obscure Greek authors. Collected in translation by Wiseman (1995: 162–6), these typically involve someone called 'Rome' ('Ρώμη *R(h)ōmē*, if female; 'Ρῶμος *R(h)ōmos*, if male) and connected with the Trojan Aeneas or, more rarely, a Greek opponent such as Odysseus. They look like relatively early efforts by Greeks drawing upon their own linguistic (e.g., Gk. ῥώμη *r(h)ōmē* 'strength')[65] and literary resources (Mommsen 1906: 3). When Romulus does appear in Greek, he is usually twinned with a Romus.

Plutarch's selection ends (*Rom.* 2, 4–8) with a 'fantastic' account by the otherwise unknown 'Promathion, author of a history of Italy'. A divine apparition in the form of a penis rose up from the hearth of Tarchetius, the king of Alba, and stayed there for days. An oracle of Tethys in Etruria advised that a maiden mating with it would then bear a famous son of outstanding virtue, fortune and strength (ῥώμη). Tarchetius delegated his own daughter but she sent a servant girl instead. The furious monarch condemned the two girls to death but was dissuaded in a dream by the hearth-goddess Hestia [Vesta]. They were chained to a loom and promised marriage on completing their task, but their daily weaving was unpicked at night. When the menial bore twins, Tarchetius gave them to Teratius with orders to kill them, but he left them on the river bank. There they were suckled by a she-wolf and fed by birds until spotted and taken in by a cowherd. Subsequently they attacked and defeated Tarchetius.

Plutarch's "orthodox" version adds a nurturing woodpecker to the she-wolf since 'these animals are considered sacred to Ares [Mars]' (*Rom.* 4, 2). There were, then, not only appreciable differences of detail between the main surviving accounts but also more seriously aberrant versions (see Wiseman 1995: 162–8, and Cornell 1995: 57 and 412, n, 26).

IV.3.2 Rome's foundation myth: the problem of Remus, some proposed solutions, and cultic perspectives

As already noted, Romulus and Remus have routinely figured in taxonomies and other studies of the patterns and themes typifying the birth and rearing of heroes. Four of von Hahn's 15 examples were twins (II.1), but Binder added a mere five Greek pairs (nos. 29–33 out of a total of 37) to the Roman one (no. 38) in his larger inventory (II.5). Although uncommon, twin heroes were hardly problematical as such, but

65 Initial *r* was regularly aspirated in Greek but this has been generally ignored in transcriptions hereafter, except where *rh* occurs in secondary sources cited.

Remus remained perplexing: 'First, why a twin in the first place? Second, why call him Remus? Third, once you have him, why kill him off?' (Wiseman 1995: 17). After all:

> Twin stories, by their nature, are symmetrical. Jacob and Esau, Castor and Pollux … –whether the twins are hostile or devoted, of similar character or different, they presuppose each other and their myths belong to both. I know of no twin story anywhere else in mythology where one of the twins is violently removed and the other goes on to a heroic career of his own. Moreover, twins in a foundation story ought to signify some symmetry, duplication or twofold characteristic in the resulting community. Why were there two kings and two royal families at Sparta? Because Aristodemus, who led the 'Dorian invaders' to Lacedaemon, had twin sons. Why did two cities share the fertile plain of Argos? Because the twin sons of Abas, who quarrelled even in the womb, could not live together. There were such dualities in Rome, and the story could have explained them. Instead, we have a murder. (Wiseman 1995: 16–17)

The answer has usually been sought in a desire to reflect Roman ritual and/or constitutional pairs by grafting a twin onto the canonical pattern of a single exposed child of destiny successively nurtured by an animal and herdsmen before returning home. Mommsen (1906: 20 and 27), for instance, saw Remus as a 'creation of Republican Rome' intended 'to justify and canonise the double kingship [= consulate] by representing it not as a revolutionary modification … but as a restoration of the original arrangement of the Roman state'.

A survey of the evidence by Classen (1963) indicates that: (1) Rōmē in the earliest Greek versions is alien to the Roman tradition; (2) from about the middle of the fourth century BC Rōmylos and Rōmos begin to be mentioned by Sicilian historians drawing on Latin traditions; (3) the twins are already found on early Roman monuments; (4) Rōmos on his own is not definitely attested before 300 BC; (5) the name Remos is found in Greek alongside Rōmylos on a third-century BC Chian inscription.[66] Classen (1963: 453) envisages the following sequence: '1. The Greeks originally regarded Rhome as having given her name to the city'; '2. In the case of the saga of the brothers Romulus and Remus, its core at least is based upon an old local tradition developed in Rome or Latium'; '3. Only under the influence of this version did the Greeks tend to replace the eponymous Rhome with a male founder, whose name (Ῥῶμος) was directly derived from Ῥώμη and who was consequently sometimes preferred as the founder when appearing with Rhomylos; later Romulus was also recognised as the founder by the Greeks, first of all by Eratosthenes [3rd cent. BC] as far as we know, and Rhomos or Rhemos took the place of Remus'. However, Greek invention of a male founder of Praeneste named

66 Cited and dated to 'the late third or (more probably) early second century BC' by Wiseman 1995: 161.

Praenestes (Classen 1963: 453, n, 33a) rather than the native Caeculus makes it quite possible that Rōmos was an independent Greek invention subsequently twinned with Rōmylos from the fourth century BC onwards, as Rome's native origin legend began to attract Greek attention.

For Classen (1963: 456–7), Remus was 'not the troublesome survivor … who needs to be speedily removed because the pair of brothers is incompatible with monarchy' but a prerequisite 'for the appearance of two equals at the city's foundation', which 'represented the first "king" as having abandoned this inherent potential for collegiality and established one-man rule': consequently, 'the legend of Romulus and Remus … arose in republican Rome, in the fourth century at latest in view of evidence for its first impact upon Sicilian historiography in the second half of that century'. According to yet another variant on Mommsen, 'the establishment of explicit power-sharing between patricians and plebeians in the fourth century BC provides the necessary condition for the creation of the story of the twins', possibly 'out of the pre-existing myth of Lara and the Lares' (Wiseman 1995: 107 and 71): 'between 342 and 266 BC, a period coterminous with the Roman conquest of Italy and the last stage of the "struggle of the orders", a series of political events seems to have generated legendary analogues in the Remus and Romulus story, from the origin of the twins to the death of Remus and Romulus' rule as sole king … Fabius Pictor at the end of the third century gave it an authority that put all rival versions in the shade' (Wiseman 1995: 128).

Viewed thus, Rome's foundation myth was created *ab initio* or radically recast as a tale of twins in the early Republic, at least two centuries after significant urbanisation of the site (Cornell 1995: 92–7). Such sudden and sweeping change to an origin legend seems unlikely, especially since the Romans' recognition of an initial period of monarchy rendered far-reaching accommodations to republican dyarchy far from imperative, and this is not the only objection to making Remus a late insertion.

Both twins' otherwise obscure names have Etruscan connections. 'According to the legend, *Romulus*, to judge from his name the eponym of the gens *Romulia* …, founded the city *Roma*, i.e. on grammatical grounds the settlement of the Etruscan *ruma* … [If so,] the *Romilii* (*rumlna*), whom we find still attested at the beginnings of Roman history, are identical with the *ruma* … [Since] *Remona* … is the settlement of the *remne Remnii* attested several times in Etruria … *Rĕmus* too appears to be the eponym of an Etruscan family' (Schulze 1904: 581). Klingenschmitt (1992: 90) elaborates: 'the Etruscan family named *rumelna* < **rumele-na* (derivative of a personal name **rumele*) demonstrates the origin of *Rōmulus* as **rōmelo-* … a diminutive formation from a personal name **rōmo-*'; pairs such as *Sextilius* : *Sextus* 'show that originally one and the same person could bear an *o*-stem personal name or the associated diminutive in **-e-lo-*'; '*Rōma* is thus in origin a collective formation based

upon the personal name **rōmo-* and once meant "(settlement of) the family **Rōmā*" … or more likely "**rōmo-*s and his (family)"'. Unlike Greek *Sikelos* (Lat. *Siculus*) 'Sicel, Sicilian', *Rōmylos* (instead of **Rōmelos*) must have been borrowed into Greek after 5th-century BC (MEISER 1998: 66–7) weakening of unstressed vowels in Latin.

Even without the clear testimony of ancient sources, there would be little doubt about the foundation myth's connection with the archaic looking (cf. Cicero *pro Caelio* 26) ritual of the Lupercalia, which Plutarch (*Rom*. 21,4–5) describes as follows: 'For, indeed, we see the Luperci beginning the circuit from where they say that Romulus was exposed … For they kill goats, [and] then, two youths [chosen] by birth having been brought to them, some touch their forehead with a bloody sword and others immediately wipe this clean using wool soaked in milk. The lads must laugh after this cleansing. After this, having cut the goats' skins [into strips], they run about naked wearing [only] belts, striking anyone in the way with the leather strips … the Luperci also sacrifice a dog', a suitable tribute to the she-wolf. Plutarch explains, on the authority of Butas and Acilius respectively, that the Luperci run 'smiting those in their way, as once Romulus and Remus ran with swords from Alba' (21,6), and were naked because, before the foundation of Rome, Romulus' followers lost their animals and, after praying to Faunus, ran off in search of them without clothes to avoid sweating (21,7).

Ovid (*Fasti* ii, 267–474) links 'naked Luperci' with rites of 'two-horned' Faunus (267–8), to whom a goat was sacrificed (361–2). After mooting (271–302) an Arcadian origin for their nudity (283–4), he bids his muse 'add Latin causes to foreign ones' (359) and gives a fuller version (361–80) of the account ascribed by Plutarch to Acilius, including the extra detail (369–78) that Remus' Fabii beat Romulus' Quintilii to the recovery of the stolen cattle in prefiguration of the two colleges of Luperci and their names (FRAZER 1931: 84, and see the next paragraph). Ovid's account (382–424) of the twins' birth, exposure and nurture by the she-wolf basically agrees with Livy's. Justin (xliii, 1,6–7) mentions 'a temple to Lycaeus, whom the Greeks call Pan and the Romans Lupercus. The actual image of the god is naked (and) clad in a goatskin, the outfit in which people now run in Rome at the Lupercalia'. According to Valerius Maximus (ii, 2,9), 'the custom of the Lupercalia was initiated by Romulus and Remus when, exulting joyfully because their grandfather Numitor … had allowed them to found a city … and having followed Faustulus's advice to perform a sacrifice and slay goats beneath the Palatine Mount consecrated by the Arcadian Evander, under the influence of the merriment and rather abundant wine of the feast they divided the band of shepherds into two and, girt in the skins of the sacrificed victims, playfully made for those in their way. The memory of this merriment is repeated in the annual round of festivals'. This evident aetiology indicates that the Lupercalia included a bibulous feast between the goat sacrifice and the run.

Notwithstanding typical antiquarian speculation about Greek origins (e.g. Dion. Hal. i, 80,1; Livy i, 5,1–2), the Lupercalia was surely an old native ritual. It has been derived from a PIE rite involving a canine sacrifice, two youthful bands, a mock battle and a feast (McCone 2021a: 208–11) and also conforms to an early Roman cultic pattern: 'The clearest example is the division of the Salii, the dancing warrior-priests, into two corporations … The *luperci* … were also divided into two groups, the Luperci Quinctiales and the Luperci Fabiani … Again, the Lares Praestites, the guardian gods of the state, were represented as twins — *di gemelli*' (Cornell 1995: 75). A Roman foundation myth featuring twins and hence Remus follows from its correlation with the Lupercalia, which was not only obvious to classical authors but also accords with modern functionalist theory (II.4).

IV.3.3 Rome's foundation myth: Romulus and Remus, other jointly led emigrations, the twin Lares Praestites and Acca Larentia

Functionalism also correlates myths with social usages, and Alföldi (1974: 132–3) observes that 'the account of the young herdsmen, fugitives and criminals who flocked to Romulus and Remus and built up a flourishing city in a very short time is the mythical dressing up of the same form of organisation that brought about the sudden rise of the Brettii in 356 BC on the basis of toughening and possession as werewolves'. The Bruttii (*Brettioi* in Greek) 'had expelled many cities of Greek origin from Italy. They had also defeated the Lucanians, from whom they originated, in war and had made peace with them on equal terms … For the Lucanians had been wont to bring up their children by the same laws as the Spartans. That is to say, from the onset of puberty they were kept in woods among herdsmen … without clothing to dress in or lay down upon … Their food was the prey of the hunt … Thus, they were hardened for warlike endeavours. When fifty of their number,[67] having first become accustomed to plundering neighbours' lands, had become more numerous as many gathered to them under the inducement of booty … they established a state as herdsmen flocked to them in expectation of a new city' (Justin xxiii, 1,4–12).

The Sabine Mamertini or 'followers of Mamers [Mars]' also show that the practice of sending bands of youths forth to fend for themselves was still alive among Sabellic peoples of central and southern Italy in the later 4th century BC.[68] Polybius (i, 7, 2–4) describes them as Campanian mercenaries who approached the Sicilian

67 A typical number of members for a sodality (McCone 2020: 145–6).

68 As Cornell (1995: 144; cf. 428, n, 74; cf. Bremmer 1987: 41–2) points out, 'one of the most important features of the society of central Italy in the archaic period is the presence of … aristocratic warlords whose power rested on the support of armed personal dependants, who are variously

Greek city of Messana as friends and later expelled or slew its male citizens, taking over their wives and children along with the city in 289 BC in a brutally real counterpart of the Romans' legendary seizure of Sabine women. Festus (150 L) associates the Mamertines with a *ver sacrum* 'sacred spring', an ancient Italian practice of sending out consecrated youths born in the same year to settle elsewhere (McCone 1987: 128–30, and 2023: 152). The Picentes 'originated from the Sabines through the vow of a sacred spring (*voto vere sacro*)' (Pliny, *Nat. hist.* iii, 110) and 'set out from Samnium with a woodpecker leading the way for their leaders – hence the name, for they call this bird *picus* and consider it sacred to Ares [Mars]' (Strabo v, 4,2).[69] Moreover, 'the Hirpini too are Sabines and took their name from the wolf that led the emigration, for the Samnites call the wolf *hirpos*' (Strabo v, 4, 12). The legend of Romulus and Remus, coevals and (according to some) sons of Mars aided by a wolf and (optionally) a woodpecker, fits neatly into an early Italic social, ritual and mythological matrix of youthful emigration and settlement with evident Indo-European roots.

Sodalities and emigrating bands led by two or more brothers are well attested among IE peoples. Latium itself furnishes examples: 'Catillus and swift Coras, Argive youths' (*Argiva iuventus*, i.e. emigrants from Greece), the twin (*gemini fratres*) leaders of Tibur (*Aeneid* vii, 670–3), and three brothers who led an emigration from Alba that resulted in the foundation of Fidenae, Crustumerium and Numentum (Dion. Hal. ii, 53). Höfler (1934: 159) linked 'dual leadership among many peoples, not least the Germanic', with the creation of rival groups within a sodality for the purpose of athletic contests, mock battles etc. Two such are seen in annual rituals inviting comparison with the Lupercalia (McCone 2021a: 207–9), namely a fierce fight at Platanistas between two bands of Spartan ephebes after the sacrifice of two pups (Pausanias iii, 14, 8–10) and a canine sacrifice followed by the division of the younger element of the Macedonian army into two parts, each under one of the king's sons, for the purposes of a battle with sticks (Livy xl, 6–7). The fight between the followers of the wolf-nurtured Romulus and Remus can be seen as the mythical counterpart of a ritual fight before this had evolved into a still aggressive run by two bands of Luperci.

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styled "clients" (*clientes*) or "companions" (*sodales*) … [e.g.] Cn. Marcius Coriolanus, noted for his "large following of companions, and many clients banded together for warlike gain" …[and] the story of the Fabii, the patrician clan who in 479 BC fought a private war against Veii with the support of their own clients and companions … The so-called Lapis Satricanus, which can be dated with some confidence to around 500 BC, records a dedication to Mars by the companions (*sodales*) of a certain Poplios Valesios (i.e. Publius Valerius)'.

69 Cf. 'woodpeckers (*pici*) are distinguished by the surname of Mars and are great in divination' (Pliny, *Nat. hist.* x, 40 [XX]) and the role of a woodpecker in an ancient oracle of Ares/Mars in Italy (Dion. Hal. i, 14,5).

Caesar mentions the militarily motivated hiring of 'certain youths (*adulescentes*), whose leader was Litaviccus plus his brothers, young men (*adulescentes*) born of a most splendid family' (*De bello Gallico* vii, 37) in first-century BC Gaul. In the Irish saga *Togail bruidne Da Derga* (ed. KNOTT 1936), a *fían*-band of three hundred 'sons of the noblemen of Ireland' led 'a-wolfing' (*oc faelad*) in Connacht by the three sons of Dond Désa (ll. 200, 204–6) was exiled and joined up with Ingél Cáech 'the One-eyed', the king of Britain's son (ll. 217–23). Elsewhere in this compilatory narrative, a large force of Irish brigands including five hundred led by Dond Désa's sons (374) was expelled from Ireland and encountered a large British band led by Ingcél Cáech and his brother Éiccel (ll. 399–409).

Livy (v, 34, 1–4), himself from Cisalpine Gaul, gives 'this account of the passage of the Gauls into Italy …. [The Gaulish king] Ambigatus … revealed that he was going to send his sister's sons Bellovesus and Segovesus, both active young men (*iuvenes*), into the abodes that the gods should grant in auguries. They were to call up as large a number of youths as they wished … Then the Hercynian forests were given to Segovesus by lot and the gods gave to Bellovesus the considerably more welcome route to Italy'. Justin's summary of Trogus, who was of Gaulish descent, states that 'the Gauls in their abundant multitude … sent three hundred thousand men like a sacred spring (*ver sacrum*) to seek new abodes. A part of these settled in Italy … and a part, led by birds … settled in Pannonia' (xxiv, 4, 1–3).

A similar move by Germanic *Winnili* or *Langobardi* (Lombards) is described by Paul the Deacon (*Historia Langobardorum* i, 2–14): 'A journey to seek out land that they might inhabit was, therefore, undertaken by that part to which it had been granted by lot to leave their land of birth and seek foreign fields with two leaders appointed over them, namely Ibor and Aio, who were brothers (*germani*) in the prime of youth (*iuvenili aetate floridi*) and superior to the rest. The mother of these leaders was Gambara, whose prudence in matters of doubt inspired considerable confidence (3) … Therefore, having set out from Scandinavia … the Winnili were then, indeed, all in the prime of youth (*universi iuvenili aetate florentes*) but very few in number by virtue of only having been the third part of a single not particularly large island (7) … After the death meanwhile of the leaders Ibor and Aio, … the Lombards, no longer wishing to be under leaders (*sub ducibus*), established a king for themselves (*regem sibi … statuerunt*) like other nations', the start of a sequence of kings down to Alboin (i, 14–27), the conqueror of their eventual home in Northern Italy (ii, 7–9 and 25–8).

Like Rome's foundation myth, these two origin legends centre upon bands of emigrating youths under dual leadership: twins born to a king's daughter in the "orthodox" Roman version, the sons of a king's sister in the Cisalpine Gaulish account, and brothers assisted by their mother, whose intervention led to the *Winnili* being renamed *Langobardi* (i, 8–9), in the Lombard one. Fathers do not figure, and emig-

ration would be an obvious outlet for matrilateral relatives and illegitimate sons unable to inherit through the male line at home. Lacking elements such as twins or rivalry, the Lombard and Gaulish legends were hardly based upon the Roman one. All three seem to be independent reflexes of a PIE prototype featuring a youthful emigration led by two brothers.

Paul's narrative makes this a transitional arrangement superseded by the appointment of a single king. An agreed transfer of power between royal brothers takes place in another medieval Germanic narrative, namely Saxo Grammaticus's account (*Gesta Danorum* vii, 1–2) of a kingdom divided between Frotho and his more successful younger brother Harald. The jealous Frotho became sole king by killing Harald (cf. Amulius and Numitor), whose sons Harald and Haldan escaped with their mother Signy's help. Wolf's claws were tied to their feet to imitate wolf tracks, and two children of lowly birth were slain to make it look as if the royal pair had fallen victim to wolves. Then 'they, enclosed in a hollow oak by their tutors, were nurtured after the form of dogs [cf. nurture in a cave by a she-wolf] lest any sign of their being alive become known' but were eventually discovered by Frotho and sent away. Returning as men and pretending to be mad like berserks, they slew their uncle (cf. Romulus, Remus and Amulius). Haldan became king but abdicated after three years in his brother's favour in order to pursue a Viking career. In Justin's account (xliii, 3, 8–11) of the foundation of Massilia, the fleet carrying the 'youth (*iuventus*) of the Phocaeans' away from their home in Asia Minor was led by Simos and Protis but only the latter was granted the land to found Massilia after being chosen as her husband by the local Gaulish king's daughter (McCone 2020: 139–40). In the case of the Gaulish pair and Latin trio above, the brothers simply occupied different territories or founded different cities.

Among traces of a tradition that Romulus and Remus founded and at least briefly ruled Rome together (cf. Justin in IV.3.1), 'the anonymous author of *De viris illustribus* attributes to both twins the foundation of the *civitas* before the building of the fatal walls' (Wiseman 1995: 5). Since it contradicts his main narrative, Livy's reference to the 'likenesses of the infant founders of the city' on the Ogulnian sculpture of 296 BC (IV.3.1) may have come from an inscription on it, while Diodorus includes (xxxvii, 11) 'the demigods [ἡμίθεοι] who were the founders [κτίσται] of Rome' in a probably old military oath (Wiseman 1995: 74).

'Since Lares were probably deified ancestors, a *lar familiaris* being the founder of a family, it would seem to follow that there is some connection between the Lares Praestites and the twin founders of the city' (Cornell 1995: 75). If Romulus and Remus were Rome's co-founders in the original legend, it would be natural enough to deify them as the city's guardian Lares Praestites (cf. the end of IV.3.2), particularly in view of a dedication *Lare Aenea* on a boundary stone (Coarelli 2003: 53). According to Ovid's *Fasti* (ii, 569–83), the festival of *Feralia* placating the shades of

the dead (*manes*) on February 21st included rites in honour of *Tacita* or *dea muta* 'the silent/dumb goddess'. A nymph of the Tiber named Lara, seeking to protect another nymph from Jupiter's amorous intentions, warned both her and Juno. Enraged, Jupiter ripped out her tongue and bade Mercury escort her to the *manes* as a 'nymph of the infernal marsh (*infernae nympha paludis*)'. Ravished by Mercury in a grove on the way, 'she became pregnant and bore twins, the Lares who guard the crossroads and always keep watch in our city' (608–16). The *Fasti* also mention (v, 129–38) images of the Lares Praestites with a dog on a worn old altar erected by Curius, and a late republican denarius coin issued by L. Caesius in 112–11 BC depicts them with a dog, spears and only their loins covered Luperci-style.[70]

Wiseman (1995: 65–71) recognises the birth of the Lares on a bronze mirror found near Bolsena in Etruria but probably produced at Praeneste in Latium in the later fourth century BC. This depicts a she-wolf suckling two boys. Above the wolf, an owl and another bird perch upon a tree stump with reclining figures on either side, a male wearing only a short cloak and a hat beside a woman in a hooded robe. To the wolf's left, a male with dishevelled hair and a slight beard is armed with a stick and naked apart from shoes and a goatskin on his back. His counterpart on the right has neat hair, a long beard, shoes, a tunic and a spear. The reclining male's cloak and would fit Mercury/Hermes, and the woman has been variously identified as Rea Silvia, Acca Larentia or Lara. The male on the left has been taken as Pan/Faunus/Lupercus, and the spear-bearer on the right as Faustulus, the Tiber or Quirinus (Wiseman 1995: 69). Wiseman (1995: 70–1) regards the top pair as Mercury and Tacita, parents of the twin Lares Praestites being suckled below, and the two flanking males as Pan and Quirinus, who sports long hair and a beard on late republican coins (Simon 1990: 137–8) and bore a spear according to Plutarch (*Rom.* 29, 1–2).

Wiseman (1995: 71) argues that 'if the twins suckled by the she-wolf could be recognised about 340 BC as the Lares Praestites, then it is hard to imagine that the Remus and Romulus story yet existed'. Coarelli (2003: 52) goes further: 'We must infer that from a particular moment (fixed by Wiseman around 300 BC) the founder twins took the place of the *Lares Praestites* … [as] the original founders of the city'. This is incompatible with an early twinning of Romulus and Remus but, if the Lares Praestites were believed to be their deified outcomes, the mirror could represent the suckling of twin founders as yet undifferentiated from the Lares by divergent birth-tales retaining different elements from a shared original.

If both sets of twins were ultimately identical and Coarelli (2003: 51) is right that 'the sons of Acca Larentia are the Lares, for Acca Larentia means precisely *Ma-*

70 See http://numismatics.org/crro/id/rrc-298.1.

ter Larum "Mother of the Lares"', it would follow that she was once also the mother of Romulus and Remus. Plutarch refers (*Rom.* 4, 3) to the festival of Larentalia held in April in honour of their foster-mother, noting that Faustulus's wife was a prostitute named Acca Larentia. He adds (*Rom.* 5) that the Romans also 'revere another Larentia', who 'disappeared at the place where the aforementioned Larentia also lies buried', the Velabrum, after endowing the Romans richly: having been hired by the warden of Heracles's temple and shut in overnight for the god's pleasure, this Larentia went at Heracles's behest to the forum at dawn and befriended the first man she met – Tarrutius, an elderly bachelor who bequeathed his wealth to her.

Both Larentias were connected with the Velabrum, where the Tiber had deposited the baby twins, and were said to have married a Tarrutius (the "first" Larentia after Faustulus' death; Tabeling 1932: 45–6). Sending a hired girl into a room to mate with a deified hero parallels sending a slave girl into a room to mate with a supernatural phallus (IV.3.1), and there may be a ritual trace of the slave girl's identity with Acca Larentia: 'Larentinae, the day called by some Larentalia in writing, is named after Acca Larentia, to whom our priests publicly offer parental rites (*parentant*) on the sixth day [of the Saturnalia], which from her is called the day of the parental rites of Acca Larentia (*dies parentalium Accas Larentinas*[71]). This sacrifice takes place in the Velabrum … at the tomb of Acca, as what the priests perform near there to the sacred spirits of slaves (*diis Manibus servilibus*)' (Varro, *Ling. Lat.* vi, 23–4).

After discussing Larenti(n)a's lax morals, Lactantius (*Div. inst.* i, 20, 6) states that 'Flora, after acquiring great wealth through the courtesan's art, designated the people her heir and left a fixed sum of money, from the interest upon which her birthday is celebrated by the issuing of games called the Floralia' (see Tabeling 1932: 47–8 and 55). Anthō, a derivative of Greek ἄνθος 'flower' presumably rendering Latin *Flora* derived from *flos* 'flower', is the name given by Plutarch (*Rom.* 3,2) to the daughter of King Amulius who interceded on behalf of the twins' mother, whom 'some call Ilia, others Rea and others Silvia'. Ilia obviously derives from Ilium, a name for Troy, while Rea was the name of a goddess worshipped in Asia Minor (Wiseman 1995: 56). Both were doubtless relatively late creations linked to Aeneas, who 'was well known in Etruria in the sixth century' (Cornell 1995: 64–8) and whose legend 'the fourth century already saw … beginning its inexorable progress as the favoured … account of the origins of Rome' (Wiseman 1995: 54). Rea Silvia (e.g. Livy in IV.3.1) arose by appending the family name of Alba's royal line, and Silvia was then sometimes used alone (e.g. Ovid, *Fasti* iii, 11 and 45).

Bremmer (1987: 32) posits transfer of the name (Acca) Larentia from Heracles' harlot to the twins' foster-mother along with the tag *lupa* 'she-wolf, prostitute'.

71 With an archaic genitive singular as in the old legal term *pater familias* (Meiser 1998: 130).

However, preference for an aristocratic mother of aristocratically governed Rome's founder(s) would be only natural, and Larentia's resultant displacement to foster-mother would be comparable with that of Lugne from fosterer to finder of the baby Cormac (I above). It looks as if the lowly Acca Larentia was replaced as the twins' mother by a noblewoman around the third century BC and then underwent a split into two palpably interrelated figures.

IV.3.4 Rome's foundation myth: Promathion's version

Afterlife as Lares Praestites would be a good match for conception from a phallus on a household's hearth typically associated with its Lar Familiaris (cf. BREMMER & HORSFALL 1987: 50–1) or Lares Familiares, Pliny (*Nat. hist.* xxvii, 267) referring to *focus Larum, quo familia conveniet* 'the Lares' hearth, whither the family shall assemble'. That leads back to Promathion's version at the end of IV.3.1. MOMMSEN (1906: 5, n.1) dismissed it as 'a late Greek story written with the help of Roman annals' by combining the twins' legend with Servius Tullius' birth-tale and the nightly unpicking of her day's weaving by Penelope in the *Odyssey* (ii, 89–109). Classen's failure to mention it suggests that he agreed, and BREMMER & HORSFALL (1987: 50) viewed it as a late patchwork of Etruscan origin. DUMÉZIL (1966: 68–9) was non-committal, but its value has been convincingly asserted by others, notably ALFÖLDI (1974: 182–3) and WISEMAN (1995: 61), who calls it 'a wonderful archaic fossil'. A weaving motif taken from the Odyssey is hardly a counterargument in view of 'the effect of the refined Ionian civilisation on the cities of Tyrrhenian Italy … in the second half of the sixth century' (Pallottino translated by WISEMAN 1995: 58–9). The Greek Promathion 'evidently reported a native Roman story. The phantom phallus is a totally un-Greek concept … [also] present in the parallel myth of Servius Tullius, ruler of Rome at some time in the mid-sixth century' (WISEMAN 1995: 60). Even if Promathion wrote after the sixth-century BC date envisaged by WISEMAN (1995: 59–60), his native source was perforce older and a Servius-inspired mishmash could hardly postdate the "orthodox" version's dissemination in the Greek world in the wake of Roman dominion.

The 'clearly Etruscan' (WISEMAN 1995: 57) name Tarchetius[72] indicates an origin in or near Etruria or Latium for Promathion's tale. The twins' conception by a handmaid on a hearth sacred to Hestia/Vesta recalls their Vestal virgin mother's impregnation in the "orthodox" version. The king's commuting of the death sentence

72 See STEINBAUER (1999: 474) on the Etruscan name *Tarχie-* plus derivatives such as *Tarc/χnte-* etc., and PALLOTINO (1978: 333) or RIX (1991: I, 173) for further attestations on inscriptions.

upon his daughter and the slave girl from death to imprisonment at Vesta's bidding resonates with a version (Plutarch, *Romulus* 3, 3) in which King Amulius' daughter persuades him to imprison his pregnant Vestal niece instead of having her killed. The familiar motifs of the mother's prevention from marrying, the twins' exposure by the river, their nurture by a she-wolf and fosterage by a herdsman are all present. So too is their revenge upon the king responsible for their exposure, although their mother's lowliness (a well-attested feature of heroes' birth-tales) rules out a royal grandfather to be placed on the throne of Alba. Plutarch leaves Promathion at this point, but the oracle's prediction of greatness for a single son presupposes a narrative in which only one twin founded Rome or, in the event of a joint foundation, ruled it for any length of time.[73] Dionysius (*Roman antiquities* iv, 2,1–3) gives the following account of Servius Tullius' conception:

> They say that a man's member arose above the fire from the palace hearth … Ocrisia was the first to see this … and she went and told the monarchs … Tarquin was astonished but Tanaquil … told him that it was ordained that superhuman offspring would issue from the royal hearth (*hestia*) and the woman who copulated with the apparition. When the other augurs made the same revelation, Tarquin decided that Ocrisia, to whom the portent had first appeared, should have intercourse with it. Subsequently the woman was dressed as is customary for brides and shut up alone into the room in which the portent had been seen. After one of the gods or spirits (θεῶν ἢ δαιμόνων), either Hephaestus [Vulcan] as some think or the household's hero [Lar Familiaris] (τοῦ κατ' οἰκίαν ἥρως), had mated with her and after the mating disappeared, she became pregnant and gave birth to Tullius.

The prudish Livy was silent, but not so Ovid: 'For Tullius' father was Vulcan, his mother … Ocresia of Corniculum. She was ordered by Tanaquil, after duly performing rites with her, to pour wine on the adorned hearth (*focus*). There among the ashes there was … the shape of a male member. The captive sat on the hearth as ordered. Conceived by her, Servius has the seeds of birth from heaven' (*Fasti* vi, 627–34). Pliny (*Nat. hist.* xxxvi, 204 [LXX]) claims 'that, when Tarquinius Priscus was king, a genital organ of the male sex suddenly appeared from the ash and she who had sat down there, Queen Tanaquil's slave Ocresia, arose pregnant', further noting that Servius was 'believed to have been the son of the *lar familiaris* and for that reason to have first established the *Compitalia* games for the Lares'.

In this simple story, a slave woman sees the phallus and reports it to the king, who decides that she should mate with it on a "first come, first served" basis, thereby

73 'In the story as we have it, twins are born, thus rendering the oracle false. That inconsistency cannot be original. The last part of the story looks like the result of "contamination" by an intermediate source, assimilating an unfamiliar version to the familiar one' (Wiseman 1995: 59). This is tendentious, since twins would not falsify the oracle if only one of them had a great future, more or less as in the "orthodox" version.

conceiving and bearing a future ruler. Promathion's more elaborate account contains features found neither in Servius's birth-tale nor in other extant versions of the foundation legend. The king's angry resolve to have the twin boys killed is well motivated by his daughter's thwarting of his desire for an illustrious grandson by substituting a slave girl as the phallus' mate. Vesta's role as protectress of the hearth fully justifies her intervention to save the twins' mother and resonates with her status as a Vestal virgin in the standard version. There is no obvious reason for replacing Amulius with an otherwise unknown Tarchetius or for the latter's recourse to an oracle of Tethys (see Wiseman 1995: 58) rather than to his own wife and soothsayers as in Servius's case. Finally, the twins' feeding by various birds[74] might have been generalised from a woodpecker, but specification of the latter more likely reflects a later notion that Mars was the twins' sire. After all, one of the two birds present at the twins' suckling by a she-wolf on the Bolsena mirror (III.4.3) was an owl and the other does not look like a woodpecker.

Whether of Etruscan or Latin origin, a supernatural fireside penis clearly reflects the importance of the hearth (*focus*) in Roman religion with its prominent cult of Vesta and domestic veneration of Lares and Penates. The union of a slave girl with an unidentified deity produces a classic illegitimate heroic birth straddling the boundary between low and high status, the human and the divine. A paradoxical combination of semi-divine origins with the social disadvantages of illegitimacy, an absent father and a servile mother would be an apt trigger of emigration by two brothers to seek their fortune away from home.

The hearth is also central to the birth-tale of the legendary founder of the Latin city Praeneste. Vergil (*Aeneid* vii, 678–81) records that he was a son of Vulcan found on a hearth and Servius' commentary elaborates: 'When their sister was sitting near the hearth, a spark jumped off and struck her womb, which, as they tell, made her pregnant. Later she gave birth to a boy near the temple of Jupiter and abandoned him. Maidens who were fetching water found him near a fire which was not far from the well and lifted him up … He is called Caeculus [see McCone 2022a: 186] … He later collected a band around him, lived as a robber for a long time and finally founded the city of Praeneste in the mountains' (trans. Bremmer & Horsfall 1987: 49). The impregnation of Caeculus's mother by a spark reflects his supposed descent from Vulcan. Despite patent similarities, Caeculus' birth-tale and Promathion's account are not sufficiently alike for direct dependence of one upon the other to be probable. Rather, they are independent reflexes of an early Latin focal pattern of heroic conception.

Aspects of Promathion's account may be hard to square with direct depend-

74 Cf. the nurture of the baby Semiramis of Babylon by doves (Diodorus ii, 4).

ence upon Servius Tullius' birth-tale, but positing the reverse (cf. Alföldi 1974: 182–3) calls for no more than appropriate cast changes and the omission of irrelevant elements. According to the scholarly emperor Claudius,[75] the author of a since lost history of the Etruscans (Suetonius, *Claudius* 42, 2), Etruscan sources equated Servius with a follower of Caeles Vibenna named Mastarna, who moved to Rome with the remnants of Caeles' army and became king. The Vibenna brothers were 'widely celebrated in Etruscan tradition' and appear with their names at either end of an Etruscan frieze from a tomb at Vulci 'generally agreed to date from the second half of the fourth century BC' (Cornell 1995: 135): the bound Caele Vipinas being freed by Macstrna and Avle Vipinas killing a certain Venthical. The details cannot be entered into here[76] but, as a probable interloper of relatively humble origins, Ma(c)st(a)rna aka Servius may have sought to bolster his authority by means of a birth-tale echoing that of Romulus and Remus and a fortuitous or (in whichever direction) deliberate resonance between his freeing of Caeles and Romulus' rescue of a likewise bound Remus.[77]

In conclusion, "Promathion" would be a viable platform for developments culminating in Fabius Pictor's version by virtue of already featuring a divine sire and illegitimacy, twins only one of whom was destined for greatness, a hostile king of Alba, riverside exposure, suckling by a she-wolf, adoption by a cowherd, and the persecuting Alban king's undoing. Although much of its content may well be older, an early republican date (c. 5th cent. BC) may be ventured for Promathion's basic source on the assumption that the twins' defeat of a king of Alba with the Etruscan name Tarchetius[78] was meant to prefigure expulsion of the last Etruscan king, Tarquin, from Rome.

75 In a speech to the senate in 48 AD recorded on a bronze inscription (*Corpus inscriptionum Latinarum* xiii, 1668) and translated by Cornell (1995: 133–4).

76 See, for instance, Cristofani 2006: 66–7 for a plan of the tomb and reproductions of the frieze, Coarelli 1983 for the most convincing interpretation to date, and Cornell 1995: 130–41 for a discussion of the frieze (based upon Alföldi's questionable interpretation), Ma(c)st(a)rna and the Vibenna brothers.

77 *Origo gentis Romanae* 22, 2–4 (ed. Sehlmeyer 2004) on the authority of the 'book of Pontificales'.

78 Schulze (1904: 96) notes a number of instances of Tarquitius on Latin inscriptions from Etruria and derives it by a different suffix from the forename *Tarχi* underlying Tarquinius, the usual Latin form of the Etruscan gentile name *Tarχna*.

IV.3.5 Rome's foundation myth: adaptations and additions in the third century BC

With regard to the dating of Rome's foundation over four centuries after the alleged fall of Troy, Alföldi (1963: 126) asserts that 'the poets Naevius and Ennius, though later than Pictor, still connected the origins of Rome directly with Aeneas and his family … To bridge this hiatus and to connect nevertheless the foundation of Rome with the Trojan hero, Pictor invented the dynasty of the Aeneads ruling in Alba Longa, the last "colony" of which would be Rome. Cato the Elder and others concocted more names and more dates for this list', Livy's (i, 3, 3–10) version of which comprised eleven kings of Alba in regular succession from its founder Silvius, the son of Aeneas' son Ascanius, down to the rival brothers Numitor and Amulius. Their fatal fraternal strife anticipates that between Romulus and Remus. Amulius was hardly the creation of Pictor himself, to judge from a fragment 'Viba, the king of Veii, kindly greets Amulius, the wise old king of Alba'[79] from a play *Lupus* 'The (She-)Wolf' by his rough contemporary Naevius. To judge from Servius's commentary on *Aeneid* i, 273, that 'Naevius and Ennius report that the founder of the city, Romulus, was Aeneas' grandson via his daughter', the play represented Amulius as either no relation of the twins (like Tarchetius) or else their father. Dionysius records a view that the disguised Amulius impregnated Numitor's daughter Ilia (i, 77,1) after making her a Vestal Virgin (i, 76,3–4).

It seems that there was still considerable fluidity regarding the foundation's date and the twins' ancestry in the early 2nd century BC, while Fabius Pictor's account was establishing its authority. As noted in the penultimate paragraph of III.4, usurpation of kingship (not infrequently by a brother, as in Saxo's story in IV.3.3) is an alternative to a prophecy in the 'expulsion/exposure and return' formula, provided its hero is a son (like Cormac) or grandson of the deposed ruler. The Greek myth of Jason is one well-known example: Pelias deprived his brother Aeson of the kingship and sought the death of the latter's son, Jason, who was rescued by a ruse, brought up in the wilderness for twenty years by a man-cum-horse (the centaur Chiron), returned home and was sent on a quest for the golden fleece, but finally managed a second homecoming followed by the gruesome murder of Pelias.[80] In theory, a fraternal usurpation could have been introduced at virtually any stage between "Promathion" and the extension of Alba's royal line but, in practice, Servius' comment makes this unlikely much before Q. Fabius Pictor wrote. Even if Pictor did

79 Warmington (1936: 136–9): *rex Veiens regem salutat Viba Albanum Amulium / comiter senem sapientem*.

80 See Pindar, *Pythian* iv, 101–19, and *Nemean* iii, 53–4, and Apollodorus i, 9,16 and 9,27.

create Numitor, Amulius seems to have replaced Tarchetius somewhat earlier.

Cicero (*De rep*. ii, 10) states that 'Proculus Iulius … is reputed to have said in the assembly that Romulus had been seen by him on the hill now called the Quirinal and had commanded him to ask the people to make him a shrine on that hill, (saying) that he was a god and was called Quirinus'. Romulus' posthumous appearance to Proculus figures in four other major witnesses.[81] Three of these (Dion. Hal. ii, 63;[82] Ovid, *Fasti* ii, 499–512; Plut., *Rom*. 28, 1–3) also specify his deification as Quirinus, only Livy (i, 16,5–8) failing to do so. There can, then, be little doubt that Romulus' deification as Quirinus formed part of the account given by Fabius Pictor in the late 3rd century BC. The war-god Quirinus was, like Romulus and Remus, associated with youthful sodalities (McCone 2020: 104–5 and 109–12) and probably appears beside them on the Bolsena mirror dating from about the middle of the 4th century BC, when the Lares Praestites were still viewed as the deified counterparts of Romulus and Remus (IV.3.3). Recognition of Romulus as Rome's sole founder was bound to undermine linkage with the twin Lares, while Quirinus's original role doubtless became blurred as sodalities declined in the course of the 4th century BC. If so, the time will have been ripe for a realignment by the 3rd century, mythical justification for which was provided by Romulus's encounter with Proculus Iulius and adopted by Fabius Pictor.

Polybius (vi, 53–5) refers to the display of the images and recitation of the deeds of ancestors at the spectacular funerals of notable Romans. As Cornell (1995: 9) puts it, 'Roman nobles sought to justify the domination of their class and to boost their individual claims in competition with their peers, by celebrating the achievements of their ancestors. In these circumstances it is inevitable that the great families preserved a record of their past achievements, and had ways of passing the information on to subsequent generations. That the early historians, who themselves belonged to the nobility, obtained information from this source seems likely'. Possible family biases in relation to the origin legend should, then, be born in mind: the patrician Iulii seem a likely source of the Proculus episode, but the great patrician *gens* of the Fabii is of particular interest in view of the influence of Q. Fabius Pictor's version and the existence of a Fabian college of Luperci associated with Remus.

There is evidence for at least two attempts to insert female eponyms of great Patrician *gentes* into the twins' pedigree: Their mother was Aeneas's daughter Aemilia according to a version recorded by Plutarch (*Rom*. 2, 3), and the Servilia named as the mother released from her chains by the twins on a scene from a 2nd-century BC

81 Absence of the Proculus episode from Justin's summary of Trogus's lost history means little, not even ruling out its presence in Trogus's work.

82 In connection with the creation of a cult of Romulus/Quirinus ascribed to his successor Numa rather than in the account of Romulus' death (ii, 56).

temple at Cyzicus[83] may have been suggested to the Servilii not only by her servile (*servilis*) status in the "Promathion" tradition but also by the identical twins (*gemini*) claimed in their ancestry according to Cicero (*Academica* ii, 56).[84] These and the ultimately prevalent genealogically neutral "Trojan" names Ilia and Rea (Silvia) connected with Alba's royal line look like attempts to provide the twins with a respectable aristocrat instead of a mere slave as a mother (end of IV.3.3). There was a corresponding move away from a hearthside phallus to an exalted "Olympian" sire: apparently Mercury on the Bolsena mirror but, once Romulus and Remus had been dissociated from the Lares Praestites, Mars as their helper from the start through his sacred creature(s), the wolf (and woodpecker) (end of IV.3.1, and IV.3.3).[85]

That leaves the 'story of anxiety and guilt' (Wiseman 1995: 16) involving ambiguous auspices and Romulus's questionable conduct. His duplicity may have been too much for Livy or Cicero, but its explicit mention by Dionysius and Plutarch indicates that their main source, Quintus Fabius Pictor, had made Romulus the sole founder and first ruler of Rome under highly contentious circumstances. Abnormal recourse to auspices (Mommsen 1906: 12; Classen 1963: 455) provoked Romulus to chicanery and introduced scavenging vultures as a fitting portent of carnage. Given the association of the Luperci Fabiani and Luperci Quinctiales with Remus and Romulus respectively by Ovid (*Fasti* ii, 369–78; see IV.3.2) and *Origo gentis Romanae*,[86] the Fabii may have had an interest in justifying Remus's disaffection by developing a version of events in which the auspices were less than clear-cut and Romulus' behaviour less than honourable. The twins' location on different hills may well have been suggested by events during the protracted struggle of the orders, a crucial stage of which centring upon plebeian eligibility for the consulship occupied the years on either side of the middle of the 4th century BC. Moreover, Romulus' emergence as sole founder seems to be bound up with his and Remus' choice of different sites for a city to be named Rome or Remoria/Remonium respectively. Decisive auguries were awaited by Romulus on the Palatine and by Remus on the Aventine in the "orthodox" version, but a fragment of Ennius' *Annales* (Warmington 1935: 28–31, ll. 80–100) places Romulus on the Aventine (as does Servius *ad Aen.* iii, 46) and Re-

83 Described in the 9th- or 10th-century AD *Anthologia Palatina* iii 19 (preface) and cited in translation by Wiseman 1995: 168.

84 See Cornell (1995: 447, n, 47) on C. Servilius Geminus in the late third century BC.

85 Cf. 'the victorious wolf of Mars' (*victor Martius lupus*) reminiscent 'of Mars' offspring (*gentis … Martiae*) and of our founder' (Livy x, 27, 9).

86 22, 1–2: After Romulus, Remus and their followers had run playfully apart clad in the victims' skins after a sacrifice at the Lupercal, beating those whom they encountered, the twins ordained that this should be a holy sacrifice henceforth and 'called their men separately, Remus the Fabii and Romulus the Quintilii, the name of each of whom endures in the ritual even now'.

mus on some other hill, the identity of which is obscured by metrically detectable corruption.[87] This tradition is clearly older than the one stationing Remus on the Aventine and Romulus on the Palatine. Since the latter was equally associated with both twins' early years as the site of the she-wolf's cave and Lupercalia, Romulus' relocation there can be plausibly linked to his recognition as Romes' sole founder. This was clearly enunciated in the early 2nd century BC by Ennius' claim that the dispute was about 'whether they would call the city Rome or Remora (*urbem Romam Remoramve vocarent*)', the latter perhaps to be identified with as the *Mons Sacer* or Sacred Mount some half dozen kilometres northwest of Rome (Wiseman 1995: 7 and 115–16). Since the Aventine and the Sacred Mount figure in accounts of the two secessions of the plebs supposed to have taken place in 494 and 449 BC (Wiseman 1995: 114 and 204, nn, 64–9), a political dispute between Romulus on the former and Remus on the latter or another hill could have arisen in pro-plebeian circles in the wake of the struggle over the consulship around the middle of the 4th century BC.

Once the admission of plebeians to the consulship had been established, its supporters could have recast the twins' legend somewhat as a questionable conversion of the prospect for a joint foundation and dyarchy into a sole foundation and monarchy. The staunchly "Tory" bent of the patrician Quinctii associated with Romulus's (Luperci) Quinctiales is reflected in the story of a young gang leader Kaeso Quinctius exiled for summarily beating up members of the plebs (Livy iii, 11, 6–14, 5; Cornell 1995, 249–50). By contrast, at least some of the equally patrician Fabii connected to Remus's (Luperci) Fabiani seem to have had "Whig" propensities towards the admission of plebeians to the consulship (e.g. Livy vi, 34; Cornell 1995: 342–3). If so, orientation of the foundation story towards justification for Remus's secessionist behaviour and the thwarting of equally shared supreme power might be expected to have appealed to at least some of the Fabii. If they did engineer this in the later 4th century BC, evidence that the twins could still be represented as joint founders of Rome in and after the 3rd century BC indicates that the partisan origins of this disturbing Fabian slant militated against its widespread acceptance until it was injected into the mainstream as part of what became an authoritative account of the city's foundation in a pioneering history of Rome written by a prominent member of the family, Quintus Fabius Pictor.

87 Perhaps to be identified on the strength of a plausible and metrically apt emendation as the neighbouring Mount Murcus somewhat further back from the Tiber (Wiseman 1995: 6–7 and 171, n, 33).

IV.3.6 Rome's foundation myth: conclusions

There seems to be a consensus that an original single child subjected to expulsion/exposure and return was later augmented by a twin in alignment with dual Roman institutions, notably the republican consulate, and that his sidelining so soon after being deliberately invented is a problem. This, however, disappears if Rome's earliest foundation legend was simply based upon an inherited pattern of youthful migration under two brothers, which is not only found elsewhere in and around Italy but also typically incorporates a shift from dyarchy to monarchy (IV.3.3). The antiquity of this core is corroborated by its "functionalist" correlation with: (a) early Italic social usage (IV.3.3); (b) a ritual starring two colleges of young Luperci, which can be derived from a PIE rite for the purification and reconstitution of sodalities by a bifurcated canine sacrifice, division of a band into two for a mock battle and its reunification for a feast (McCone 2021a: 207–10). A wolf or a woodpecker sacred to Mars was liable to be associated with such expeditions in Italy (IV.3.3), and women were almost bound to be needed after a successful conclusion.

The twins' legend was endowed, quite possibly from the outset, with heroic features such as supernatural conception, exposure, nurture by a she-wolf, and fosterage by a herdsman. It may once have displayed the scheme attested with Praeneste's founder Caeculus (IV.3.4): impersonal fireside impregnation of the mother,[88] her abandoning of the child, its finding (by a she-wolf/maidens), fostering by herdsmen,[89] assembling of a vagabond band, and founding of a city. Apparently, Rome's demigod founders were posthumously deified at an early stage as Lares Praestites guarding the city.

Incorporation of the return seen in Promathion's version will have called for properly motivated initial persecution and an eventual homecoming to take revenge upon the former persecutor before leaving again to found the new settlement. Promathion's source ascribed the king's hostility to anger that the great offspring prophesied was born to a slave instead of his own daughter (cf. Brigit in III.3) rather than a more conventional fear of future dethronement by the twins (cf. Rank in II.2). The bare mention of the twins' eventual return to attack and defeat Tarchetius in Plutarch's summary ignores what happened next. An ideologically congenial transition to single rule soon after a joint foundation had been introduced at some point in Rome's monarchical phase, to judge from the great destiny foretold for just one son in this probable "snapshot" of the native legend not long after the regal period

88 Perhaps originally the king's daughter (Flora?).

89 The Verona commentary on *Aeneid* vii, 681, states that Caeculus 'was brought up by the Depidii shepherds' (Baschera 1999: 116).

(end of IV.3.4). Although other scenarios are possible, the earliest version of Remus's untimely death may already have involved a fight between his and Romulus's men correlating with a mock battle between two bands of youths in a forerunner of the Lupercalia (inferred above and IV.3.3). A pro-monarchical account of Remus's demise will hardly have cast aspersions on Romulus.

Two originally independent legendary patterns, namely a youthful migration led by two brothers and a heroic 'expulsion/exposure and return', were thus integrated by locating the new foundation (Rome) at the site of the twins' exposure and making the return to their place of birth (Alba) transitional. As a result, their final return was to the place of their upbringing in exile, and their expedition thither from Alba resembled a Greek-style act of colonisation (cf. Simos and Protis in IV.3.3). *Pace* Classen (IV.3.2), Remus probably was 'the troublesome survivor of a … heterogeneous tradition' and duly sidelined. As to the *dramatis personae* (in their attested later forms for convenience), Plutarch's summary of Promathion specifies only Tarchetius as king of Alba and Teratius as the man charged with disposing of the twins. Assuming that the others were named by Promathion and/or his source, the following guesses may be hazarded in addition to Romulus and Remus themselves: their slave mother (Acca) Larentia, their herdsman fosterer Faustulus, and Tarchetius' daughter Flora.

A number of modifications seem to have been gradually introduced during the couple of centuries between "Promathion" and Pictor. Once Romulus had been recognised as effectively Rome's first king, it would be natural enough to make him the city's sole founder too. His equation with the god Quirinus by the later 3rd century BC presupposes his status as Rome's only founder, as does the view that Remus had intended to found a Remona or the like on a different site nearby. On the other hand, if the twins were still undifferentiated from the Lares Praestites around 340 BC (Bolsena mirror, IV.3.3) and were referred to as 'founders of the city' on the Ogulnian monument of 296 BC (IV.3.1/3), they could be viewed as co-founders until at least the early 3rd century BC. Piecemeal changes to the foundation legend are unlikely to have been generally accepted right away, and rival variants could have coexisted for some time. That being so, the shift from co-founders equated with twin Lares Praestites to a single founder equated with Quirinus seems to have been on its way into the mainstream by the later 3rd century BC along with a Fabian slant that Romulus had prevailed under dubious circumstances. A more exalted pedigree followed from ascription of the foundation of Alba and its royal line to Aeneas' grandson Silvius, probably in the wake of impetus given to the Aeneas legend at Rome by the subjugation of Aeneas's alleged foundation Lavinium in 338 BC (Wiseman 1995: 54). The twins' protector Mars became their suspected father, and a new mother from Alba's royal house displaced the slave-girl (Acca) Larentia to a role as the twins' foster-mother. The new motive for exposure/expulsion needed as a result

was provided by introducing rival royal brothers, the usurping Amulius (cf. Lugaid) and the dethroned Numitor (cf. Art), whose daughter bore his twin grandsons (cf. Art's son Cormac).

Notwithstanding longstanding recognition of the legend of Romulus and Remus as a classic example of the so-called 'heroic biography', it exhibits some major idiosyncrasies owing to its hybrid origins and subsequent factors such as tension between monarchy and republican dyarchy, a protracted struggle for plebeian rights, the evolving legend of Aeneas and different aristocratic familial (notably Fabian) biases.

IV.4 The ancient Greek gods' king Zeus, and the Norse king Sigmund

The only ancient Greek heroes recorded as protected by wolves and nurtured successively by a she-wolf and herdsman are the eponymous founder of Miletus and the Arcadian twins Lycastus and Parrhasius (Binder 1964: nos. 14 and 31). Whether these are genuine native examples or merely due to 'the impact of Romulus and Remus upon … the lesser Greek mythographers of the Imperial period' (Bremmer 1987: 31), a somewhat transformed but undoubtedly independent witness is provided by Apollodorus' account (i, 5–7) of the birth and early career of the king of the Greek gods: Cronus swallowed each baby born to his wife Rea in order to thwart his foretold deposition by his own child, but she gave him a stone instead of the sixth and Zeus was born in the Cretan cave of Dicte, nourished by a goat's milk and hidden from his father by weapon-clashing Curetes; the adult Zeus rescued his siblings, led them in a successful war against Cronus and the other Titans, and took over the kingship of the gods. Goats are animals typically tended by herdsmen and, as Jeanmaire (1939) has demonstrated, C/curetes or *K/koúrētes* (K/κούρητες) were closely connected with *koûroi* (κοῦροι) 'youths, young warriors'. They were, for instance, interchangeable in the Homeric expression κοῦροι/ κούρητες Ἀχαιῶν 'youths/young warriors of the Achaeans' (e.g. *Iliad* ii, 562/xix, 248). The evidence, including divine groups of Curetes such as the famous nine charged with the baby Zeus's protection, points to 'a Proto-Greek sodality … of **korwoi* or **korwētes*' (McCone 1987: 126), and sodalities were connected with wolves by a range of Indo-European peoples, including the Celts and Greeks (McCone 1986: 15–21; 1987: 103–6 and 118–22; 2024: 376–81). As Lincoln (1981: 126) puts it, albeit without reference to Celtic data, 'the ideology of man as wolf, the fiercest and most cunning of predators, is well attested in Baltic, Slavic, Germanic, Greek, Roman, and Anatolian sources, and thus must ascend to the Proto-Indo-European period'. Goats, then, were connected with herdsmen, and sodalities such as Curetes were liable to be likened to wolves. Whereas royal infants

were successively nurtured by a she-wolf (or a bitch in Cyrus's case) and herdsmen (minor dynasts in Cormac's case) in the Roman, Persian and Irish legends central to this study, Zeus was jointly tended by a she-goat and a sodality (cf. Jason's upbringing by a simultaneously half-human and half-animal centaur in IV.3.5). This difference can be accounted for by a straightforward inversion of animal and human functions in the Greek myth (McCone 1996: 106). It is to be noted that raiding activities directed particularly at livestock, above all cattle (McCone 2022b: 222), will have brought sodalities into frequent contact with herdsmen. In addition to attacking the herds and herdsmen of other communities, they may well have been called upon at times to defend herds belonging to their own people from attack by other sodalities.

In the Norse *Vǫlsungasaga* (trans. Byock 1999), King Volsung was murdered by his daughter Signy's husband, and his ten sons captured, bound to a beam and exposed in the wild wood, where all succumbed to a she-wolf's nightly attacks except Sigmund, who killed it with Signy's help (ch. 5). He was then tended in an underground lair by Signy, who bore him a son called Sinfjǫtli (6–7). After donning wolfskins taken from two sleeping kings' sons, Sigmund and Sinfjǫtli roved as wolves for a time. Sigmund killed his father's murderer with his son's help, returned home and became king (8). Whereas the Roman twins and Cormac survived owing to the lifesaving intervention of an abnormal beneficent she-wolf, Sigmund was the only one of ten brothers to survive the fatal interventions of a normal maleficent she-wolf (cf. the role of simulated destruction by wolves in preserving Harald and Haldan in IV.3.3). Despite this difference, a she-wolf wolf made a decisive contribution to a child's progress to kingship in all three cases (by removing possible rivals in Sigmund's).

IV.5 An underlying Proto-Indo-European prototype

Romulus, Cyrus and Cormac were successively suckled by a she-wolf or bitch and protected by herdsmen or minor dynasts. The animal and human roles are inverted in Zeus' birth-tale, the upshot being concurrent suckling by a domestic she-goat and protection by a wolf-like warrior band. In all four instances (plus Jason), a king's son is reared in the wild by a combination of beast and man or men before returning and deposing his persecutor. Although the above Roman, Iranian, Celtic, Germanic and Greek myths concerning the birth and upbringing of a great king-to-be conform broadly to a "universal" pattern, a closer connection between them may be indicated by more circumstantial features shared by some of them at least: suckling by a she-wolf (or domestic/human equivalent), subsequent discovery and fostering by a herdsman (or animal equivalent), and eventual recognition in the wake of a dispute.

Chronological considerations alone rule out borrowing of the Iranian Cyrus legend from its Roman counterpart, and the Greek example is too divergent from both to be feasible as a conduit from East to West. Since all five peoples involved spoke languages belonging to different branches of the Indo-European family, an alternative would be a genetic explanation in terms of descent from a Proto-IE original.

Notwithstanding some variation, this seems to consist of the following basic elements: **(a) a ruler's son** (Cormac, Sigmund, Zeus; also Jason and Harald/Haldan) **or his daughter's son** (Romulus/Remus, Cyrus) **is taken into the wilderness and (i) exposed** (Romulus/Remus, Cyrus, Sigmund on purpose; Cormac by accident) **or (ii) concealed there** (Zeus; also Jason, Harald/Haldan; with the help of a lifeless substitute in the case of Zeus, Cyrus and Harald/Haldan) **in order to thwart a threat** posed either to a longstanding ruler by a prophecy (Zeus, Cyrus) or to and/or by a new ruler on account of his insecurity as a usurper (Romulus/Remus, Sigmund, Cormac; also Jason, Harald/Haldan); **(b) the babe is taken and suckled by a she-wolf** (Romulus/Remus, Cormac; Cyrus is defended by a bitch and Harald/Haldan disguised as pups, while the older Sigmund as sole survivor of a she-wolf's attacks) **in a cave** (Romulus/Remus, Cormac, Zeus; cf. Harald/Haldan's hollow tree); **(c) the child is then discovered and taken by a herdsman** (Romulus/Remus, Cyrus; by a trapper and a minor dynast in Cormac's case) to be reared by his wife; **(d) the boy's true identity is revealed as the result of a dispute** (Romulus/Remus, Cyrus, Cormac); **and (e) he goes on to replace the king responsible for his exposure/exile** (Romulus/Remus, Cyrus, Cormac, Zeus, Sigmund; also Jason, Harald/Haldan), usually **by violent means** (but by a judgment in Cormac's case).

Some divergences look like well-motivated transformations. For instance, the behaviour of the protective bitch in the Cyrus tale or the devouring she-wolf in the *Vǫlsungasaga* is in character, unlike that of the suckling she-wolf. There were political reasons for replacing herdsmen by minor dynasts in the Cormac tales, while his own sister's care for Sigmund sets up a typically "heroic" incestuous birth (de Vries 1.d in II.6; McCone 1990: 192–3) for Sinfjǫtli. Joint rather than successive animal and human nurture applies to Jason and the baby Zeus (cf. Harald/Haldan reared like dogs by humans), who was cared for by young warriors with a wolf-like nature and a domestic animal typically tended by herdsmen. In short, the attested variants can be derived most efficiently from a prototype in which a royal baby was nurtured in a cave in the wild first by a she-wolf and then by a lowly pastoral pair.

Overall, the available evidence points to a PIE myth in which a king's infant son or grandson is exposed or concealed (optionally with the help of a substitution) in the wilds in the hope of forestalling a threat, whether to the current ruler or the child himself, but is found and nurtured first by a she-wolf in a cave and then by a humble herdsman couple until revelation of his true origins in the wake of a quarrel leads to a return home and the overthrow of his and/or his father's persecutor. Here

as in a number of other instances (cf. McCone 2020: 163–4), medieval Irish material (primarily *Genemuin Chormaic* in this case) makes a significant contribution to the reconstruction of the underlying prototype.

From a functionalist perspective (II.4), the PIE myth posited ought to be coordinated with actual social usage. In early medieval Ireland, a young man's first twenty-one years or so before reaching manhood (*fertu*) were divided into three more or less equal thirds of childhood (*maice*, in the parental home), fosterage (*altrum*, originally with his mother's kin as a rule) and membership of a wolfish sodality (*fían*) (see IV.4 and McCone 1990: 203–5, 2023: 131–6 and 147–53, and 2024: 407–9, 380–1). In view of good comparative evidence for essentially the same PIE system (e.g. Bremmer 1976; 2024: 408–12) including basic social stratification (McCone 2020: 115–26), the practice of sending boys away from the parental to another home for fosterage and then away from normal human society to wander in the wilds as a "wolf" in a sodality provides obvious social counterparts for mythical upbringing by a wolf and fosterage with herdsmen.

That said, taking the myth as a straightforward representation of real life would entail the absurdity of admitting unweaned babies to the "wolf" phase and the anomaly of fostering royal progeny with lowly herdsmen. Rather, we have here a case of the "dialectic" relationship between myth and reality recognised by Lévi-Strauss and other structuralists as a necessary qualification of functionalism (McCone 2020: 100–1). The myth's basic pattern is amenable to structuralist analysis in terms of binary opposites (+/−) such as culture/nature or inside/outside and a mediating or neutralising "liminal"[90] third term that is neither (Ø) and/or both (±) (cf. Leach 1982: 8–9). The real-life sequence was typically chronological, e.g. infancy in the paternal home (+), fosterage in a maternal kinsman's home (Ø±), life as a "wolf" in a sodality in the wilds (−), return home as an adult (+). However, myth or narrative could create a logical sequence by placing the mediating term after the two opposites that defined it (McCone 2020: 106 and 112): high birth at home (+), expulsion to the wilds and nurture by a wild animal (−), fosterage by lowly uncultured humans tending domestic animals on the boundary between society and the wilds (Ø±), return to home and high status (+). Once such factors have been taken into account, a reconstructed PIE myth featuring a baby king-to-be's suckling by a she-wolf may be plausibly linked, to mutually corroborative effect, with a reconstructed PIE social system featuring kingship and basic stratification, fosterage, and sodalities whose members were likened to wolves.

90 Cf. McCone 1990: 188: 'As a superhuman but usually non- or only half-divine frequenter of the margin between men and god(s), society and outsiders, culture and nature, life and death etc., the hero can move freely between these worlds without belonging properly to any of them. Ambivalence and liminality are the hero's essential attributes'.

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