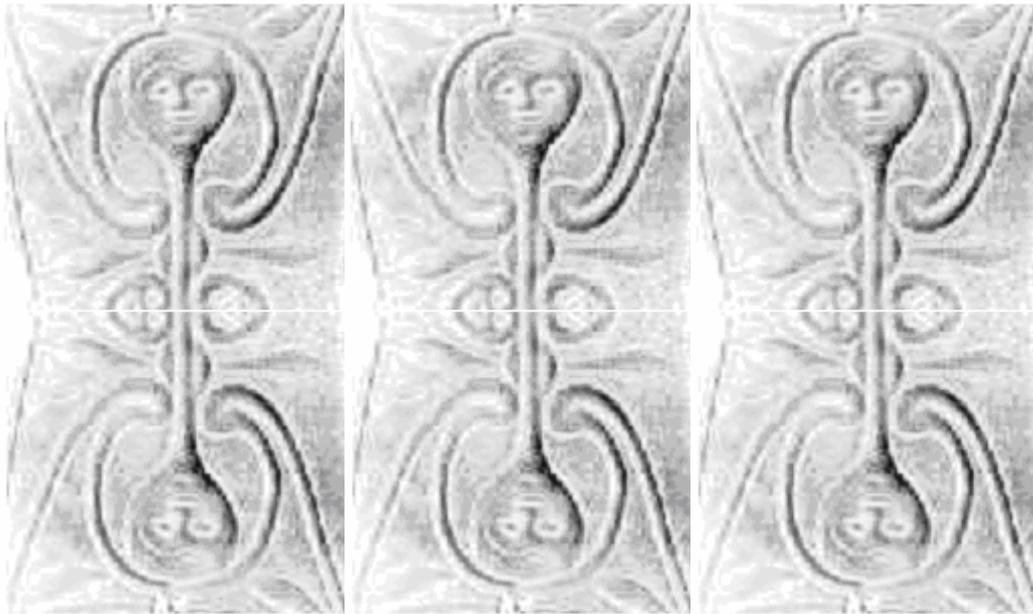


Clas Myrddin

Theses on Celtic Religion



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Contact the author:

celt@gruenverlag.de

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Overview:

The difficulties resulting from any attempt to reconstruct Celtic religion and mythology are not based exclusively and not even mainly on the state of the sources.

What really prevent us from understanding Celtic mythology are our prejudicial denotations by which we approach its remnants.

In Celtic religion of the pre-roman era and the era before Anglo-Saxon or Scandinavian invasions there are to be kept apart a stratum kin to animism and a stratum of belief in personal divinities.

Fairy tales and legends as legitimate sources

Shamanism and druidism

The stratum of divinities

Now this old stratum of shamanism has been contaminated by the stratum of divinities which in itself is by no means homogeneous.

It was not before contact with Greeks and Romans, particularly not before the political domination by the latter that the Celts obtained their ensemble of gods, their Olympus.

On the other hand, they all knew of universal divinities, the Indo-European deities

Druidic religion does not consist in a doctrine about gods. It comprises however a series of themes, which turn up several times in different Celtic sources and can be followed up to the fairy tales, legends, customs, lore and superstitions of the Irish, Scottish, Welsh, Cornish, Bretons, French and English.

The Themes

Polarity Death / Mothers / Change in material existence / Maben vab Genoveva / Interface of Death and Mothers / Isolated themes

The realities of the world

The difficulties resulting from any attempt to reconstruct Celtic religion and mythology are not based exclusively and not even mainly on the state of the sources.

It is true, documents are fragmentary without any apparent or reliable connections among them and they are in no case original or genuine, in every case distorted by roman or Christian impact.

Hardly anything has been handed down to us directly from British druids, or from their songs and tales – this is not explained simply by the early destruction of the druids' centre at Mona (Anglesey). More important is the fact that druidical tradition had been worked upon to attain a state where it is not possibly recognized. Reading however attentively the **Mabinogion** or the *Welsh Triads* (R. Bromwich, 1978) reveals the existence of druidic texts underneath the tales of chivalry and of gods. Some of the knights e.g. in **King Arthur's Round Table** stories display marvellous abilities or appear as wise counsellors; in this they remind of the druids. The changes undergone by *Gwydion*, *Arianrod* and others are to be equalled to similar ones recorded for Irish druids. The names of *Arthur* and *Math* are indicative of a bear cult, etc. And yet, the greater problem is not constituted by those mediated traditions, underneath which we have to look for the Celtic mythology.

What really prevent us from understanding Celtic mythology are our prejudicial denotations by which we approach its remnants.

By applying the words God, Divinities, Priest, etc we always apply our own ideas and concepts to the remnants of Celtic antiquity, and we construct similarities. We find those similarities conformed for Celtic peoples under roman influence. But in face of the pre-roman era or of any lack of congruency and in face of any contradiction, we are left unanswered. Some gods lend themselves to be equalled to roman or Indo-European deities; but what about the other ones, what about the hundreds of local divinities – are there any gods recognized by "all" Celtic peoples?

Contradictions and incongruities are however more easily explained, if we recognize Celtic religion as being heterogeneous in itself.

In Celtic religion of pre-Roman times and the era before Anglo-Saxon or Scandinavian invasions, there are to be kept apart a stratum kin to animism and a stratum of belief in personal divinities.

The **animistic component** is a kind of shamanism and will be called so here. Certain typical concepts are to be attributed to it: The idea of an **Otherworld** to and from which there are entrances, transitions and exits; the ideas of **transformation, shapeshifting, metempsychosis**, comprising also several – though not arbitrarily chosen – animals; the system of **divinations, predictions and conjectures**, including messengers of bad luck and evil, which again often appear in animals' bodies or as natural forces. Furthermore we have to subsume here certain symbols as there are: the **severed head**, the **boar**, the **horse**, the **raven**, symbols for otherworldly beings and phenomena. It is here, where we have to place **druids**.

Druids are not the priests (flamen) or the philosophers, they sometimes appear to be – they are this too, to be sure, but these functions comprise just parts of a large druidical complex. Druids are endowed with connections and relations to any kind of supernatural, mysterious, incomprehensible and inaccessible phenomena and forces and therefore they are historically late expressions of shamanism. (It must be said here aside that Clemence of Alexandria mentioned among the philosophers-magicians of the antiquity the druids as well as certain Samanians from Bactria – are those the shamans of inner Asia?)

The thesis of druidism and Celtic religion being rooted in shamanism presupposes a continuity with other shamanistic cultures. Several Eurasian and Siberian nations had conserved shamanism up to our days (being themselves possibly in touch with Mongolian or Turkish

nations of Central Asia). From Neolithic times on there might have been connections between Eurasian, Indo-European and other central European cultures.

Shamanism of those Eurasian and Siberian nations will have been subject to changes and several influences since the days of the Neolithic period. Therefore, any congruencies between La-Tène-druidism and 20th century shamanism should not be expected to be great. The more valuable are those similarities actually found.

They are even more conspicuous when fairy tales, legends and popular traditions are admitted as being sources for revealing traces of druidism. This may not be asked too much considering that for shamanism a tradition in form of fairy tales is quite typical. Oral tradition as proper to all shamanistic and animistic cultures is also known for the pre-roman, pre-Christian Celts and consisted in the numerous tales druids and bards were obliged to know and to recite. By the time and by design the old traditions were shaped into a system of more or less artful tales which kept alive and preserved in a canonized form the ancient beliefs and individual experiences (e.g. of journeys to the Otherworld, of shapeshifting or of ancestors). Some of those tales remained alive until they found their way into medieval manuscripts, the authors of which however did no longer understand their meaning and interpreted them on the grounds of Christian concepts. Parallel to it is the fate of those tales which were communicated orally to become popular tales and legends. The magic of the druids turned to be the witchcraft in fairy tales.

We are therefore justified in scrutinizing those tales for elements of ancient religious beliefs of the shamanistic stratum.

Several of the similarities between druidism and shamanism which usually are not mentioned shall be pointed out here (druidism as based upon LEROUX/ GUYONVARCH, THURNEYSEN, D'ARBOIS DE JUBAINVILLE a.o., shamanism as based on FINDEISEN for 20th century Siberia)

- a. Shamanism encompasses complex activities, and so does druidism in Celtic society: magician, diviner, healer, poet, teacher, philosopher, administrator – all this may be covered by the word: medium. The function of a medium is as well applied to shamans. They are magicians (wizards, conjecturers), priests, psychopompi, healer, artists, seer and they are all this because of a special psychic disposition, which makes them media.
- b. Shamans are mentally particularly active, creating even religious invocations and hymns. Up to the end of his life the shaman is expected to survey the whole of the cultural matters of his ethnic group. In consequence he knows all tales and legends of the tradition. Quite similar must have been the status of the druid.
- c. The shaman derives his existence from a holy tree or from a nest hanging in its branches. Or else he receives there his education and formation to being a shaman. In his tree he finds his refuge.

Some examples of Celtic literary tradition:

Someone climbs up into the tree-top and returns after having had a meeting with an eagle or another kind of bird. This motif as found in the tale of *Lleu Law Gyffes* of British tradition is met with also in Siberian shamans' tales. The heads of the dead lovers *Baile* and *Ailinn* appear in a tree; in a tree appear or are hanging the heads of the gods *Erriapus* and *Esus*. Otherworldly individuals sit in the tree, e.g. *Suibhne*, the "Irish Merlin". Here *Finn* meets the *Red One Son of the Flashing One*, who springs and guards a blackbird on the shoulder, carries a cauldron with a salmon and is accompanied by a stag. He eats nuts and apples, and from every fruit half is given to the blackbird and to the stag. Salmon and nuts are the symbol of knowledge, the cauldron, the blackbird, the apple and the stag are symbols of the Otherworld.

- d. Before stepping to an ill person's bed, the shaman receives the visit by his "spiritual girl". If she is kind and amiable towards him, he recognizes in her visit a hopeful prospect for a good prognostic and a successful healing. This reminds of the Celtic tale where the personified Death takes place either at the head or the foot of the ill person's bed thus permitting to the doctor a prognostic on the patient's dying or living.
- e. Shamanism knows the concept of Animal Mothers - maybe this is equivalent to the Oldest Animals Brythonic traditions speak of. Moreover, Celtic tradition knows mothers in a bird's shape.
- f. Cults of bear or stag are clearly connected to hunting magic, and in this respect traditions of present Siberian peoples are close to those of long gone druidism. While the bear lived on only in certain personal names (the goddesses *Dea Artio* and *Andarta*; *Artgenos* = son of the bear, which equals the Irish *Mac Mathgamhna*; *Art*; *Arthur* = *matus*; *Math* son of *Mathonwy*), the stag has a clear cut role in respect to Otherworld: Stags make hunters follow them and attract them to a place which by and by changes into a part of the Otherworld. *Salbhuide*, the son of the king of Munster in Ireland was lost by this way as well as the Christian *Saint Hubertus*. Sometimes the stag drags a chariot which leads to the Otherworld and is known to us as the sleigh of Father Christmas drawn by stags or deer.

In the course of a séance horns or antlers grow on the shaman's head and then perish. Numerous are the horned divinities of the Celts known by the name of Cernunnos (or Cervunnos? cf. Latin cervus- the stag - Celtic languages are akin to italic languages). The horned god is often represented in a seated position like the shaman in a séance. He is accompanied by a stag or a bull or a snake. For a long period after the Neolithic up to Christian images this picture had been applied. Generally the horned god is a god of animals. *Saint Kornély* (note the name) is a Christian guardian of the animals. *Furbaide Ferbend the Horned* disposes of three horns. In the **Tain Ferdach Fechnach the Horned** represents military power. *Conall Cernach*, the warrior par excellence, one of the ancestors of Ireland, is also associated to a snake. In Brittany, *Cornik* is the name of the (horned) devil, and those people who attempted to stone Saint Yves have been marked by a horn on the forehead. *Cornu* is the name of the demon haunting St. Patrick. In Brittany the magician *Coethalec* makes antlers grow on the head of his enemy, another magician.

Prehistoric remnants indicate a transformation between stag and *Cernunnos* (Cervunnos). The horns or antlers as well as the squatting position are suggested here as signs of an exceptional (mental or psychic) condition and not an intensification, as GREEN preferred to say.

- g. Dismembering the shaman's body may be a prerequisite for an initiation. The severed head is put onto the end of a long staff to permit him seeing anything that is done to the body. Celts knew the cult of the head, which was separated from the body after death to permit continued life of the head; it was then often fixed to a staff. The head of *Bran* and that of *Conaire Mor* laughed and spoke long time after the death of the body etc.
All the shaman's bones are put to their place before his returning into life. The bones of a hunted animal may call the animal back to life, provided that the shaman joints them completely. To this Siberian tradition compare the fairy tale motive where just one lacking bone prevents calling back the brother or lover from death or spell. Shapeshifting as well as an otherworldly journey belong to shamanism as well as to druidism.
- h. Shamans often are represented to be clothed in bird's feathers or a stag's skin. Similarly this is reported for British druids (e.g. for *MagRuith*).

- i. The staff or stick of the shaman finds its direct successor in the druidical wand and indirectly in the magician's wand up to our days.
There is a description of a Siberian shaman meeting a Spirit of Possession. Two items of this description evoke the contortion of *Cuchullain's* face (warp spasm) as depicted in the **Tain**: In the moment of being possessed his hair erect and he has the feeling of being lifted up or of extending.
- j. During their journeys shamans meet with mediating spirits. These may be identified with certain beings of the druidic tradition. They are called here mediating spirits because neither in shamanism nor in druidism they are gods or divinities, yet are superior to human beings. They are remotely akin to the heroes of antique mythologies or to the angels of judeo-Christian provenance. Among them we find for example: *Arawn, Keridwen, Koll mac Kollvrewy, Ferdia, Gwydion, Gwynn/Finn, Kei, Math, Midir, Myrddin, Oengus* and some of the legendary druids of ancient Ireland.

This old stratum of shamanism has been contaminated by the stratum of divinities which in itself is by no means homogeneous.

Gods of the Celts are known to us from Gaul or Britain, or from Central Europe, all these parts having been under Roman rule or influence. From periods before the Romans were present in Central and West Europe as well as from areas out of Roman influence (Ireland) we do not know of Celtic gods, neither by prehistoric remains nor by any literary tradition. Did they not know gods before the Romans told them? Had they no gods of their own? The great number of local deities however (several hundreds are known by name) as well as the fact that Dumézil's three functions can be ascribed also to Celtic gods and heroes, argue in favour of there having been Celtic gods even before Roman times. Individuals acting in medieval texts usually are interpreted as 'gods'. It is however by no means clear that they are gods of that antique Mediterranean type we are acquainted with, or whether they are originally heroes and ancestors belonging to a shamanistic stratum, having been interpreted as gods not by the Celts but by the authors of the medieval texts. At least some of those divine individuals were close to animistic beings, which the Celts may have thought of having the shape of animals or the sun or shifting shapes. DIODORUS reports on the Celtic leader Brennus who when coming to Delphoi in the 4th century B.C. was astonished of the Greeks imagining their deities in human shape and even carving them as such in stone and wood.

Regionally and locally, the Celts venerated ancestors, the sun and other celestial bodies and natural phenomena. Influenced by the Romans, they began calling them gods, maybe before Cesar's invasion into what he called Gallia. Any identification of the local gods of Gaul and other regions with the Roman deities is not admissible.

Therefore, my thesis is:

It was not before contact with Greeks and Romans, particularly not before the political domination by the latter that the Celts obtained their ensemble of gods, their Olympus.

On the other hand, they all knew of universal divinities, the Indo-European deities, which have been described for the Celtic world by RHYS, DE VRIES, LEROUX, GYON-VARC'H and others.

This thesis explains the parallel existence of so many deities as well as the wide range of a few single gods. Furthermore, by this thesis the aspects of enigma, marvel and superstition, which already struck ancient authors, are explained as a consequence of the animistic, shamanistic origins. Druids were not priests appointed to the service of a particular god; it was only in the centuries of co-existence of shamanism and Indo-European theism that they systematically developed into a priestly, dominating caste.

No doubt, there have been processes of influence, exchange, assimilation and merging between animistic and Indo-European beliefs. The more as there was no obligatory canon and no dogmas, and as Celtic people have to be regarded as being highly imaginative.

An end was put to druidism in Britain by the Romans (destruction of the druidic centre in Mona/Anglesey) in 60 A.D. After this date, there is no trace of druids in the British Island, but there are innumerable Celtic gods! This is another hint of druidism and a belief in gods being two different institutions. The foundation of Christian monasteries brought about the end of these gods as they brought the end of druidism in Ireland and Gaul. Anyway, the old beliefs, now called heathendom (because it used to be practised on the heath, cf. Heidentum/Heide, paganism/pagus) did not vanish immediately and totally. Numerous are proves for a co-existence of both religions, found in the tales and legends about the saints, in Christian customs as well as in documents of Christian mission and other documents. In Gaul, they co-existed at least up to the 6th century, when the Franks arrived, in Ireland, up to the 10th century, when the Scandinavians came.

Druidic religion does not consist in a doctrine about gods. It comprises however a series of themes, which turn up several times in different Celtic sources and can be followed up to the fairy tales, legends, customs, lore and superstitions of the Irish, Scottish, Welsh, Cornish, Bretons, French and English.

These themes are listed here consequently instead of gods and their functions, because these themes are the last remnants of what once was the druidical doctrine and what never had been fixed in written form, be it total or in parts. Archaeological evidence of the Romano-Celtic period will be neglected here (for that, see ROSS, GREEN a. o.), because here an attempt is made to reveal the pre-roman druidical religion, but also because the archaeological approach inclines to classify everything into already accepted categories. This is done by virtue of a lack of interpretational frames, but the consequence is the lack of comprehension of unique, specific traits.

Several of these themes are not at all restricted to Celtic culture, but may be found in different contexts of European and extra-European cultures, including also Turkish cultures, which in its pre-Islamic times derived from central Asian (shamanistic) regions. This however demonstrates that Celtic culture was based on multiple origins and knew a cultural exchange along its geographic as well as temporal borders.

The presentation will end by sketching a short reconstruction of a pre-historic Celtic individual's ideas on the world.

The themes shall not be treated here in any detail (you will find these in the German edition), and only a simple list will be given:

A ubiquitous dominant theme is **Otherworld**.

The polarity of Thisworld and Otherworld is expressed also by those complexes into which most of Celtic concepts will fit: Death (=forthcoming and Mother (=origin).

Pole of Death:

Death

Triple Death

Severed Head

Heads in Chains

Head and Water

Water

Tree and Death

Special theme:

REVIVIFICATION / REANIMATION

Revivification/Reanimation differs from original animation (by way of birth) in that not everyone enjoys it. Special circumstances are required, be it that dead warriors are needed in a battle, be it that a manslaughter or murder must not be accepted and has to be revised. Reanimation is the result of wishful thinking. Reanimation is furthermore characterized by the incomplete result: the warriors remain mute, or only the head is revived, or the individual lives on as tree or flower.

On the other hand is reanimation profoundly different from returning of dead souls who retain the state of being dead and are not typical living human beings.

Reanimation is different from rebirth.

Changes in material existence (general survey)					
I. Coming back after death				II. Change (shift) without preceding death	
I.1	I.2. Coming back as a living person			II.1.	II.2
I.1 Coming back as a dead one. The <i>revenant</i> remains dead and returns for restricted time and purpose.	I.2.1.	I.2.2	I.2.3.	II.1. Shape-shifting. The soul enters another body. This is mostly performed in a regular manner with period and shapes restricted	II.2 Metempsychosis. An end is put to the present existence and a new one begins without intermittent death, sometimes though by way of another birth. Soul definitively enters a new body.
	Revivification, the deceased person resumes his/her former existence, dying thus being reversed	Rebirth. The dead one is re-born into his or her former existence.	Re-incarnation. The dead one is borne again, but into a new existence and another body than before. This requires the separation of soul and body. The immortal soul attains another body		
Note: Coming back as a dead one (I.1.) and coming back as a living person (I.2.1) are quite usual in the context of Celtic traditions (and are the basis of connecting any kind of ghostly appearance to the British Isles.)					
Note: For rebirth and reincarnation no Celtic example is known					
Note: Those cases of shapeshifting understood in items II.1 and II.2, have to be separated totally from those in item I, because death is not a condition. Sometimes however, birth is a condition or in any case new life or a new way of living. Therefore items II are part of the complex Mothers (see below).					

The themes up to this point group around a pole which is best characterized as the Death. It is contrasted by the pole of Mothers, though this theme does not appear explicitly anywhere. It is however deduced from the second array of themes as follows:

Pole of Mothers

Ancestors

Oldest Beings

Origin of the Country

Fertility

Chastity/Virginity

Motherhood

Nourishing Woman

Sovereignty

Shiftings which lead

to a new embodiment (see above, I.2, II.2).

Magic Forces

Special theme:

MABON VAB GENOVEVA

1. Several elements which appear dispersed within the fragments of Celtic tradition and lore, are indicative of a thematic complex where a child is been taken away from a mother and reared in isolation. Hands of unknown origin abduct *Rhiannon's* newborn son; *Mabon* is taken away from *Modron*; *Gwydion* abducts *Arianrod's* son *Lleu Law Gyffes* and fosters him; *Aoife* has the *children of Lyr* vanished and grown up in loneliness. We find *Children of the White Dog*, and *Cormac* is told to have been stolen by a wolf. Moreover are pertaining here those wide-spread tales about *changelings*: the child is stolen from the mother and changed for an ugly child of the fairies.

Might all this be interpreted to be a late reflection of the custom of foster-fathers (which in itself is a reflection of a matriarchal society where children belonged to the house of the mother's brother), we have on the other hand further examples of a child being raised in isolation: *Deirdre* is damned to grow up separated from all mankind; *Lyr's children* live alone (in the external appearance of swans); *Mabon* is prisoner from his third day of life on and was set free only as an adult man; similar to him, *Balor's* daughter is kept in a tower. *Rapunzel* of the German fairy-tale may serve as an example for a non-Celtic tradition of this theme.

Thus, we find here a connection to elements of imprisonment. *Geir* son of *Rigantona* was prisoner in Oeth and Anoeth. He provides the passage to *Pryderi*, son of *Rhiannon* (=Rigantona) and to adult prisoners: *Bran*, *Caratacus* and *Manawyddan* - each of them has passed some years in imprisonment.

We infer from all this a single theme: A child is separated from his mother shortly after birth or in the first year, and is kept in isolation and imprisonment. *Rhiannon-Pryderi*, *Rigantona-Geir*, *Aoife-Children of Lyr*, *Arianrod-Lleu Law Gyffes*, the *changelings* - they all may be generalized into *Mabon vab Modron*. Exception must be made for *Balor's* daughter, *Deirdre* and *Cormac*.

2. There is a body of legends about *Genoveva*, spread far over Europe, mainly however in countries of roman languages. The German variants typically run as follows: The hypocritical *Golo* persecutes the virtuous *Genoveva* while her husband, *Golo's* lord, is in war. *Genoveva* rejects him and *Golo's* love turns into hate. Being his lord's representative, he uses his power to inflict a bad reputation to her and orders her being killed for that. A faithful servant however leaves her alive and she hides in the wilderness. Either she takes her newborn son with her, or else he is born out there. He shares loneliness with her and grows up isolated from all mankind but looked after by a hind. All the animals of the forest come with pleasure to stay with *Genoveva's* son.

The name of Genoveva which sounds very much to be of Celtic origin - as does Golo's too - is only found in later versions of the legend. In a Breton legend assumed to be an early version the mother is called Azenor, her son Golo. The latter name is only later transferred to the negative male character. The name of Genoveva is said to derive from the Sainte Geneviève of Paris, but apart from being virtuous, there is no further similarity between these two women. We assume Genoveva to be the old Celtic (Gaulish) name of the mother.

The motive of the hind has no function whatsoever in the Genoveva legend. It is however of great importance in Celtic tradition (horned animal) and should be regarded as the remnant of an old theme which later was no longer understood. Interpreting Mabon as the lord of the animals, we gain a further element of Celtic significance.

In the German variants, Genoveva calls her son *Schmerzensreich* = rich in pain or grief. This appears to be a direct translation of *Pryderi*, if the cymric "pryder" is the grief. *Pryderi* might also be another form of *Peredur*, otherwise called *Perceval*. In Wolfram von Eschenbach's version of the *Perceval/Peredur* tale the mother is called *Herzeloyde* = *Herzeleid* = grief of heart.

The sundry elements of the Genoveva legend and the elements of the Celtic Mabon-vab-Modron material may thus result to be mere variants of an old Celtic or proto-Celtic theme telling of an abducted son and his suffering mother following him into wilderness or imprisonment or other kind of isolation.

3. Why was this story of interest to ancient bards or story-tellers?

A singular behaviour of the lyra antelope *Damaliscus* might serve as an analogy: Male individuals use to chase and abduct nursing calves thus separating them from their mother and drive them to their own territory. Doing this, they compel the mothers to follow thus entering the territory of the kidnapper and becoming his own.

Though the present author rejects all attempts to adopt animal behaviour in order to understand human actions, he recognizes the analogy. In early periods of European mankind a similar custom might have led to a tale about abducted children reared with or without their mothers in a foreign, strange country. That custom having been lost, the original meaning of the tale was no longer understood and it was interpreted in different, Celtic, Christian or other ways.

4. For all those who judge this to be a too speculative or not admissible way of thinking, another example of an analogy between mythical account and ethological observation may be cited.

Apollonius Rhodius tells us: Before Klytemnestra married Agamemnon she was married to a son of Thyestes, called Tantalos, after his grandfather. Agamemnon however, desiring to possess Klytemnestra killed his cousin Tantalos, tore off Tantalos' child from the mother's bosom, smashed it to the ground and abducted the young woman.

To this outrage, at least twenty parallels are reported from among apes, monkeys, lions and birds: Male individuals who have killed their rivals in order to adopt their female, immediately kill all the offsprings of the former rivals.

There are some themes to be located at the interface of Death and Mothers, origin and aim, past and future. Among these are the two types of re-animation (see above, I.1,2). Further, the association of female persons and tumuli are of importance.

Tumuli had been erected for *Taltiu*, *Macha* and *Branwen*. *Boand* and Brug na Boyne is a further example as are *Etain*, *Cruachan* and Brig Leith (and the box, *Etain* lives in under *Oengus*' protection). The roches-aux-fées, those megalithic housings for fairies or witches have conserved this idea until close to our times.

The interfacial region connecting Death and Mothers is also the right place for mermaids. These strange characters are not mothers or women, but originally are messenger of the Otherworld. Their maternal aspect is warranted not only by a woman's body. *Llyn y fan fach* and *Mari Morgane* incontestably perform a mother's role in the legends (the latter one even

having a daughter, *Dahut*), and nonetheless they are true otherworldly persons. In the Irish tradition, even the typical primordial mother, *Ana*, may appear as a woman of the lake.

Significant suggestions associate Motherhood and Death: The killing of own offsprings or the fright to be killed by them.

Conmor, King *March*, and others are afraid of being killed by the own descendant (*Tristan* as nephew or son-in-law), and K in fact finds his death by the hand of his grandson *Lugh*. *Yspaddaden* is killed by the young man who has come to marry his daughter.

Unwanted, illegal children are killed, mostly using the watery way of death:

Dana's son *Gerold*, whose father is human, is changed into a goose and vanishes in Loch Gur, the British parallel is *Arianrod* and her son *Dylan*. The son of *Conair Mor* who was hidden under *DianCecht's* arm glides into the water. *Ruadh* begets a son under water, who dies there (always water and death are close together = water is close to the otherworld).

One is right in seeing here the reflex of infanticide customs as a means to regulate population growth. Anyway, it is remarkable that this theme left its impact to Celtic wise men and they decided to incorporate it into mythic tales. They used it as an allegory to show the victory of Death over Motherhood and Youth. Some strange stories of young prisoners taken from their mothers or being imprisoned together with them also find their place here.

If one assumes the needles found in *Coventina's* fountain not to be instruments of obstetrics but of forced abortion, then we have to put this Mother-Goddess also at the interface of Death and Mother.

Those relations between Death and Mothers are not just accidental or incidental. Like day and night, dark and light, winter and summer, also Death and Mothers, future and origin are not independent from another but the other side of the same coin, are joint by transition and are phenomena that penetrate each other, the more as also the Mother is a symbol for the future (future of the living will be death – but by the same token, future is what will be borne).

Within this polarized relation the art of healing has a central position. Illness is the grip of the Otherworld for the living being, the first step towards death. The intervention to prevent dying is done by the maternal pole. Therefore it is the mermaid who in the Welsh legend offers the art of healing to mankind, and *Coventina* is the Mother-Goddess of a healing well.

Healing function is one of the three central functions in the Indo-European context, and is not a specifically Celtic theme: nonetheless we have to see its eminent importance.

DianCecht, *Miach*, *Brigit* were prominent healers whose names have come down to us. Another incidence of medical knowledge offers the healing well of *Gobniu* or the barrel (cauldron) where *Fraech* is cured. This event is depicted on the Gundestrup cauldron which itself might have been a vessel used in the art of healing.

Certain themes cannot be classified among either Death or Mothers and to our eyes appear quite isolated. Some of them suggest being part of Indo-European mythologies, others are shamanistic. Some may not be of mythological importance at all. Those themes are:

GOD OF THE ANIMALS

Several characteristics suggest the horned god (*Cernunnos* or *Cervunnos*) to be a god of animals. He is adorned by horns or antlers, is surrounded by various animals, among them stag, bull and ram-headed snake. St. Kornély, his Christian namesake, is patron saint of the animals, and in legends of Brittany, a hermit is master of all animals in the forest. In the tale of the "Countess of the Fountain", Kynon meets a "Lord of all animals".

This tradition opens the way to perceive here a shamanist hunting magic and the conjuring of sacred hunting game. Was a god or a lord of the animals still at Celtic eras involved into hunting magic?

BAD EYE

This is a theme of Indo-European connections. In Celtic tradition it seems to lack any importance, maybe even the ancient Celts did no longer understand its significance.

Balor's as well as *Yspaddaden's* eye is ill, opens only during a battle and must be kept open by artificial means in order to prevent war. King *Cormack macArt* lost an eye during an attack of *Oengus*, whose name makes the bridge over to *Midir*, who loses an eye by a hazel twig. *Nuada's* porter only has one eye (porter = druid, see below). The *Badb* is squint-eyed, a hint of being a druid or a mediating spirit.

Maybe the bad or lacking eye is an allegory for magic power and by this an allegory for druidism.

BAD ARM

A bad arm is a sign of lacking power.

Apart from a certain Berthe in legend, it is mentioned only for *Nuada*, a notoriously powerless king. His silver arm is not a symbol of richness but of an artificial limb. The hand of the Irish hero *Conall Cernach* is devoured already in his mother's womb by a worm (snake?).

PORTER

Arriving at Tara, *Lug*, even *Lug*, has to pass a verbal examination by the porter, in order to be admitted. Very similar are the procedures at *Arthur's* castle in the tale of "Culhwch and Olwen" and in a fairy tale about a certain *Oengus*.

A rite of entrance can be deduced from those examples, or a conjuration if we assume the porter to be a late, medieval code for druids.

SWINEHERDS

The character of a swineherd is frequently met with.

Tristan, one of the three mighty swineherds of Britain, tended the pigs of *March*, son of Meirchion. *Pryderi* son of Pwyll herded the pigs of *Pendaran Dyfed* at Emlyn. *Koll*, son of Kollvrewy, the third of the three mighty swineherds tended Henwen, the sow of Dallwaran Dalben. The bulls *Donn of Cuailnge* and *Findbennach* are the final station in a series of transformations which had begun as swineherds. "De chophur in da muccida" is an Irish tale where two swineherds are subject to a similar series of transformations.

Due to the lack of any indication it may be questioned whether the swineherds are mythic characters and not just a position in Celtic society. The mention of transformations however is clearly mythic.

SHOEMAKER

There are several indications of a mythic significance of the shoemaker which however is entirely lost and inaccessible.

A pair of gods, called *Lugoves* (plural of *Lug*?) is called as well "collegium sutorum". Another pair are *Gwydion* and *Lleu Law Gyffes* (*Lug*?), who visit *Arianrod* disguised as shoemakers. In the *Welsh Triads* *Lleu* is one of the Three Golden Shoemakers. These seem to be three indications of *Lug* as a shoemaker, perhaps in association to the idea of anonymity. Anonymity is also an aspect of *Cassivellaunos'* going to Rome clad in a shoemaker's dress. *Manawyddan* is another one of the Three Golden Shoemakers. In the **Mabinogion** he is named a craftsman. *Manawyda* is the Welsh (British?) word for the awl. There are tales of Brittany where the awl is used to win in a lawsuit. Thus the shoemaker attains the aspect of a judge's function. The awl however is also used to conjure death upon someone and that suggests the judge's function to be that of a capital sentence.

The Irish *Leprecaun* assumes a shoemaker's appearance and watches over treasures. In a Breton fairy tale a princess has a shoemaker of her own.

Thus the frequent topos of shoemaker associates on one hand with incognito (magic? journey? mysterious activities? messenger from the Otherworld?) but as well with judge and treasures.

The realities of the world

Everyday life is predominantly determined by the sequence of the seasons and by pertinent processes, changes and repetitions met with in forests, fields and in gardens and those human activities dependent of them. Day and night, dark and light season, growth, ripening, harvest and fallow, the cycles of the celestial bodies and the times of feasts at the turning points in these cycles set the frame, set the conditions for human activities.

Into this world and mediated by it, numerous forces and powers exert their effects. They have their origin in another world, an otherworld, one that surrounds and penetrates this here world, one that comprises everything of unknown and mysterious character, but also everything that is dominant and decisive. There and from there superior beings exert their influence, some of them represented here as the Country where mankind lives in, and the Ground they live on. They may as well be the Ancestors of the clan, of the people or the entire mankind. Other ones are visible as for example the Sun, or the Water in all its appearances, or Trees or Animals. The most varying shapes can be assumed by them, strange and monstrous ones. But they can as well hide behind the outer appearance of familiar animals or even human beings, magically gifted men or women. They bring blessing or disaster, govern war and welfare.

The otherworldly regularities though incomprehensible to the average man, are reliable, even so that superior human beings can learn those regularities or some of their effects. Those men, wise men or druids, offer an interpreting help to other people. Certain signs emanate from the Otherworld which can and should be read and obeyed. There are good days and bad days and a wealth of rules about how to act and behave. Predetermined places are used by the inhabitants of the Otherworld to enter and leave this terrestrial world. At certain dates, at the turning points between dark and light season this is performed with greater ease. Numerous incredible and incredibly numerous tales are told – mostly by druids - which reveal a little bit of what happened in the Otherworld and under its impact in This World.

For human beings from this here world there is an entrance into the Otherworld: death. He or she who enters the Otherworld by ways of soil, water, fire or air can expect to continue life yonder there.

Since Otherworld beings can change more easily into this terrestrial world, one can never be sure of a dead person not to return. This happens rather frequently, be it that the dead one comes to conclude an affair, be it that he comes to fetch the next one to die, be it for other reasons. Reanimation can be prevented by separating the head from the deceased body and providing that they cannot come together. If however the head is separated from the body before death, it must be expected that the head remains alive. This is not a usual event and always worth to be notified. Life is housed in the head, more exactly in its blood.

The saying goes about some people taking up another body or shape even before death and beginning a new life. Some even do so several times. Of course this is no less than usual, and it may well be doubted that they are human beings and not rather of otherworldly origin.

Death leads into the Otherworld, new life emerges from there. Anything that is involved in production and reproduction, in growth, ripening and wealth, the rising waters of rivers and lakes and the prodigious sun – all this is in the might of Otherworld beings. They are conceivable or are met with as women, mothers, old women, and ruling female persons. Many among those who led the people to their country or founded a ruling clan were otherworldly mothers. They display a special predilection for human beings.