

# THE ANCIENT IRISH GODDESS OF WAR



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spears and weapons, so that one hundred warriors died of fear and trembling in the middle of the fort and encampment that night.”

Of the effects of this fear inspired by the *Badb* was *geltacht* or lunacy, which, according to the popular notion, affected the body no less than the mind, and, in fact, made its victims so light that they flew through the air like birds. A curious illustration of this idea is afforded by the history of Suibhne, son of Colman Cuar, king of Dal-Araidhe, who became panic-stricken at the battle of Magh-Rath, and performed extraordinary feats of agility. Another remarkable instance will be found in the Fenian Romance called *Cath-Fintragha* (Battle of Ventry Harbour), where Bolcan, a king of France, is stated to have been seized with *geltacht* at the sight of Oscur, son of Oisin, so that he jumped into the air, alighting in the beautiful valley called *Glenn-na-ngealt* (or “the Glen of the Lunatics”), twenty miles to the east of Ventry Harbour, whither, in the opinion of the past generation, all the lunatics of the country would go, if unrestrained, to feed on the cure-imparting water cresses that grow there over the well called *Tobar na ngealt*, or the “well of the lunatics”. In the same tale it is also said that those who heard the shouts of the invading armies on landing were surprised that they were not carried away by the wind and lunacy: “*ba hionghna le gach dá gcúaladna garrtha sin gan dol re gaoith agus re gealtachus doib.*” Persons are also represented as frightened to madness on observing the fight between *Cuchullain* and *Ferdia*, which forms the chief episode in the *Tain bo Cuailgne*.

Again, in the battle of *Almha* (or the Hill of Allen, near Kildare), fought in the year 722, between Murchadh, king of Laighen, and Fergal, monarch of Ireland, where “the red-mouthed, sharp-beaked *badb* croaked over the head of Fergal,” (“*ro lao badb belderg biorach iolach um cenn Fergaile*”), we are told that nine persons became thus affected. The Four Masters (A.D. 718) represent them as “fleeing in panic and lunacy,” (*do lotar hi faindeal ocus l ngealtacht*). Other annalists describe them in similar terms. Thus, Mageoghegan, in his translation of the “Annals of Clonmacnoise,” says they “flyed in the air as if they were winged fowle.” O’Donovan (in notes to the entries in his edition of the Four Masters, and Fragments of Annals) charges Mageoghegan with misrepresenting the popular idea; but Mageoghegan

represented it correctly, for in the *Chronicum Scotorum* the panic-stricken at this battle are called “volatiles,” or *gealta*. May we not therefore seek, in this vulgar notion, the origin of the word “flighty” as applied to persons of eccentric mind?

But although, as we have seen, the assistance given to Cuchullain by *Neman* was both frequent and important, the intervention of *Morrighu* in his behalf is more constant. Nay, he seems to have been the object of her special care. She is represented as meeting him sometimes in the form of a woman, but frequently in the shape of a bird—most probably a crow. Although, apparently, his tutelary goddess, the *Morrighu* seems to have been made the instrument, through the decree of a cruel fate, in his premature death. The way was thus:

In the territory of *Cuailgne*, near the Fewes Mountains, dwelt a famous bull, called the *Donn Cuailgne* (or Brown [Bull] of *Cuailgne*), a beast so huge that thrice fifty youths disported themselves on his back together. A certain fairy, living in the caves of *Cruachan*, in the county of *Roscommon*, had a cow, which she bestowed on her mortal husband, *Nera*, and which the *Morrighu* carried off to the great *Donn Cualgne*, and the calf that issued from this association was fated to be the cause of the *Tain Bo Cuailgne*. The event is told in the tale called *Tain Be Aingen*, one of the prefatory stories to the great epic, which thus speaks of the *Morrigan*. “*Berid in Morrigan iarum boin a mic sium cen bai seom ina cotlad, conderodart in Donn Cuailgne tair i Cuailgne. Do thaet cona boin doridise anair, Nostaertend Cuchullain i Mag Murthemne oc tuidecht tairis, ar ba do gesaib Conculaind ce teit ban as a thir manib udairc les. . . . . Da thairte Cuchullain in Morrigan, cona boid, ocus isbert ni berthar in nimirce, ol Cuchullain,*” i.e. “The *Morrigan* afterwards carried off his [*Nera*’s] son’s cow, so that the *Donn Cuailgne* consorted with her in the east in *Cuailgne*. She went westward again with the cow. Cuchullain met with her in *Magh-Muirthemhne* whilst crossing over it; for it was of Cuchullain’s prohibitions that even a woman should leave his territory unless he wished. . . . . Cuchullain overtook the *Morrigan*, and he said: the cow shall not be carried off.” But the *Morrigan* whom Cuchullain probably did not recognise in the form of a woman, succeeds in restoring the cow to her owner.

All the while, *Morrigan* seems to watch over the interests of the Ultonians. Thus when, after the death of Lethan at the hands of Cuchullain, Medbh endeavoured, by a rapid and bold movement, to surround and take possession of the *Donn Cuailgne*, we find her acquainting the *Donn Cuailgne* with the danger of his position, and advising him to retire into the impenetrable fastness of the Fews.

“*Is he in la cetna tanic in Dond Cuailgne co crich margin, ocus coica samseisce immi do samascib. . . . is e in la cetna tanic in Morrighu, ingen Ernmais*

*a sibaib [in deilb euin] comboi for in chorthi i Temair Chualgne ic brith rabuid don Dund Chualgne ria ferdaib hErend, ocus rogab ac a acallaim; ocus maith, a thruaig, a duind Cuailnge ar in Morrighu, deni fatchius daig ardotreset fir hErenn, ocus not berat dochum longphoirt mani dena fatchius; ocus ro gab ic breith rabuid do samlaid, ocus dosbert na briathrasa ar aird.”*

“It was on that very day that the *Donn Cuailgne* came to Crich-Margin, and fifty heifers of the heifers about him. . . . It was the same day *Morrighu*, daughter of *Ernmas*, from the *Sidhe*, came [in the form of a bird—*Lebor na hUidhre*] and perched on the pillar stone in *Temair* of *Cuailnge*, giving notice to the *Donn Cuailnge* before the men of *Eruí*; and she proceeded to speak with him, and said, ‘Well thou poor thing, thou *Donn Cuailnge*; take care, for the men of *Eriu* will come to thee, and they will take thee to their fortress if you do not take care. ‘And she went on warning him in this wise, and uttered these words aloud.’ . . . . [Here follows a short and very obscure poem to the same effect], *Book of Leinster*, fol. 50, a1.

Immediately after the foregoing incident the narrative, as preserved in the *Lebor na hUidhre*, represents Cuchullain and *Morrighu* as playing at cross-purposes. I have suggested that Cuchullain did not appear to recognise the *Morrighu* when she met him in the form of a woman, in the scene quoted from the *Tain Be Aingen*. He seems similarly ignorant of her identity on other occasions, when she is said to have presented herself before him in female shape. Let us take, for example, the episode entitled “*Imacallaim na Morigna fri Coincullain*,”—“Dialogue of the *Morrigan* with Cuchullain, “which preceeds his fight with Loch, son of *Ernonis*.

*“Conacca Cu in nocben chuci conetuch cacn datha impe, ocus delb ro derscaigthe fuirri. Ce taisiu or Cu. Ingen Buain ind rig, or si; do deochaidh cuchutsa; rotcharus ar thairscelaib, ocus tucuc mo seotu lim, ocus mo indili. Ni maith, em, ind inbuid tonnanac, nach is olc ar mblath oinmgorti. Ni haurusa damsá dana comrac fri banscail cein nombeo isind nith so. Bid im chobairse daitsiu (.i. do gensa congnom latt) oc sudiu. Ni ar thoin mna dana gabussa inso. Bi ansu daitsiu, or si, in tan doragsa ar do chend oc comrac fris na firu; doragsa irricht escongan for chossaib issind ath co taithis. Dochu lim, on, oldas ingen rig; notgebsa, or se, im ladair commebsat t’asnai, ocus bia fond anim sin co ro secha brath bennachtan fort. Timorcsa in cethri forsind ath do dochumsa irricht soide glaisse. Leicfesa cloich daitsiu as in tailm co commart do suil it cind, ocus bia fond anim co ro secha brath bennachtan fort. To rach dait irricht samaisci maile derce riasind eit, comensat forsnaí lathu, ocus fors na hathu, ocus fors na liniu, ocus nimaircechasa ar do chend. Tolecubsa cloich deitsiu or se, commema do fergara fot, ocus bia fo ind anim sin co ro secha brath bennachtan fort. Lasodain teit uad.”*

“Cu saw the young woman dressed in garments of every hue, and of most distinguished form, approaching him. ‘Who art thou?’ asked Cu. ‘The daughter of Buan, the King,’ said she; ‘I have come to thee; I have loved thee for thy renown, and have brought with me my jewels and my cattle.’ ‘Not good is the time thou hast come,’ said he,’ said he. ‘It is not easy for me to associate with a woman whilst I may be engaged in this conflict.’ ‘I will be of assistance to thee therein,’ replied she. ‘Not by woman’s favour have I come here,’ responded Cuchullain. ‘Twill be hard for thee,’ said she, ‘when I go against thee whilst encountering men. I will go in the form of an eel under thy feet, in the ford, so that thou shalt fall.’ ‘More likely, indeed, than a king’s daughter; but I will grasp thee between my fingers,’ said he ‘so that thy ribs shall break, and thou shalt endure that blemish forever.’ ‘I will collect the cattle upon the ford towards thee, in the shape of a grey-hound,’ said she, ‘I shall hurl a stone at thee from the sling,’ said he, ‘which will break thine eye in the head; and thou shalt be under that blemish for ever.’ ‘I will go against thee in the form of a red hornless heifer before the herd, and they shall defile the pools, and fords, and linns, and thou shalt not find me there before thee’ ‘I will fling a stone at thee,’ said he ‘which will break thy

right leg under thee; and thou shalt be under that blemish for ever,' With that she departed from him."

In some MSS. The foregoing dialogue forms the principal feature in a romantic tale called *Tain Bo Rgeamhna*, which, like the *Tain Be Aingen*, is one of the prefatory stories to the great Cattle Spoil. Like the *Tain Be Aingen*, also, it introduces the *Morrighu* in the character of a messenger of the fate that had decreed the death of Cuchullain when the issue of the *Donn Cuailnge* and the Connacht cow should have attained a certain age. But the *Tain Bo Regamhna* is further important, as connecting the *Morrighu* with Cuchullain, in the position of protector. The tale, which is too long to quote *in extenso*, represents Cuchullain as one morning meeting the *Morrighu* in the form of a red-haired woman, driving a cow through the plain of Murthemne, as related in *Tain Be Aingen*. Cuchullain, in his quality of guardian of the border district, tries to prevent her from proceeding; and after a great deal of argument during which Cuchullain seems

not to know his opponent, the woman and cow disappear, and Cuchullain perceives that she has become transformed into a bird, which perches on an adjacent tree. Cuchullain, as soon as he become aware that he had been contending with a supernatural being, confident in his own might, boasts that if he had known the character of his opponent, they would not have separated as they did; whereupon the following exchange of sentiments takes place:—

"*Cid andarignisiu, ol si, rodbia olc de. Ni cuma dam ol Cuchullain. Cumcim eicin ol in ben; is ac [do] diten do baissiu, atusa ocus biad, olsi. Do fucus in mboinsea a sith Cruachan, condarodart in Dub Cuailnge lim i Cuailnge .i. tarb Dairi mic Fiachna, Ised aired biasu imbeathaid corop dartaig in laegh fil imbroind na bo so, ocus ise consaithbe Tain Bo Cuailnge. Bid am ardercusia de din tain ishin, ol Cuchullain. Gegna a nanrada, brisfe a mor chatha, bid a tigba na tana.*"

"'What hast thou done?' asked she; 'evil will ensue to thee therefrom,' 'I care not,' said Cuchullain. 'But I do,' said the woman (i.e. the bird or *badb*); it is protecting thee I was, am, and will be,' said she. 'I brought this cow from Sidh-Cruachna, so that the *Dubh Cuailnge*, i.e. Daire Mac Fiachna's bull, met

her in Cuailnge. The length of time you have to live is until the calf that is in this cow's body will be a yearling; and it is it that shall lead thee to the Tain bo Cuailnge.' 'I will be illustrious on account of that Tain,' observed Cuchullain; 'I shall wound their warriors break their great battles, and I will be in pursuit of the Tain.' (*Lebor Buidhe Lecain* col.648). Then the *Morrighu* threatens to act to Cuchullain in the way detailed in the dialogue which I have just quoted; and, as the tale concludes, "the *Badb* afterwards goes away." ("luid ass in *Badb iarum*").

The *Morrighu* puts her threats into execution during Cuchullain's fight with Loch, son of Ernonis. The narrative in *Lebor na hUidhre* describes the encounter in the following manner:—

"O ro chomraicset iarom ind fir for sind áth, agus o rogabsat oc gliaid agus oc imesorcain and, agus o ro gab cach dib for truastad a chéli, focheird in escongón triol (.i. tri curu) im chossa Conculaind combói fáen fotarsnu isind áth ina ligu. Dauautat (.i. buailis) Loch cosin chlaidiub combu chroderg int ath dia fuilriud. . . . Lasodain atraig, agus benaid in nescongáin comebdatar a hasnai indi, agus comboing in cethri dars na slúaga sair ar ecin, combertatar a puple innan adarcaib lasa torandcless darigensat in dá lathgáile isind ath. Tanautat som ind sod mactire do imairg na bú fair siar. Léicid som cloich as a tailm co mebaid a suil ina cind. Téite irricht samaisce máile derge, muite rias na buaib forsna linni agus na háthu. Is and asbert som ni airciu ( .i. ni rochim) anáthu la linni. Leicidsom cloich dont samaisc máil déirg comemaid a ger gara foi." *Lebor na hUidre*, fol. 37, a1.

"When the men met afterwards in the ford, and when they commenced fighting, and assaulting, and when each man began to strike the other, the escongón (eel) made a triple twist round Cuchullain's legs, so that he was lying down prostrate across in the ford. Loch struck him with his sword, and the ford was gory-red from his blood. . . . Thereupon he arose and struck the eel, so that her ribs broke in her. And the cattle rushed violently past the army, eastwards, carrying the tents on their horns, at the sound made by the two warriors in the ford. He (Cuchullain) drove to the west the wolf-hound that collected the cows against him; and cast a stone out of his sling at it, which broke its eye in its head. Then she (*Morrighu*) went in the shape of a short hornless red heifer before the cows, and advanced into the linns and

fords; when he said—‘I see not the fords with the pools.’ He cast a stone at the red hornless heifer, and broke her leg.” it is added that “it was then truly that Cuchullain did to the *Morrighu* the three things which he had promised to accomplish, in the *Tain Bo Regamna*;” (*is andsin tra do géni Cuchullainn frisín Morrighain a tréde do rairngert di hi tain bó Regamna*;” ib).

With respect to the instances of transformation already referred to it may be pertinent to quote the following, which is given in an account of the battle alleged to have been fought at Tailte between the Milesian forces and Eire, queen of Mac Greine, king of the Tuath-de-Danann, who acted in the capacity of a war goddess. The Milesian chiefs are represented as having advanced as far north as the hill of Uisnech, when it is added “*go facadar in en mnai minderg moir malach dhuibh in deil bdesi . . . . da ninsaigidh. Ingantaigsed na sluaigh re sirdechsain ahinnell ocus a habaise. In darna huair ann ba rigan roisclethan ro alainn; ocus in uair aill . . . . na baidb biraigh banghlais. . . . . Suidhis ar inchaib Eremoin; snaidmis a heinech ar Emir. Ca crich as ar cemnigis ocus ca cele ca clechtaidh do comluigi, ocus ca hainm is raiti rit a ingín, ar Eremon. O tuathaib digraisi de Denann do dechladhus am, bar, isi, 7 mac gréni gaiscedhach mfher cele, 7 Eriu mainmse, bar in ingen.*” “They saw the one woman, smooth-red, large, black-browed, in the shape of two . . . . . approaching them. The hosts wondered with constant observation of her behaviour and changefulness. At one moment she was a broad-eyed, most beautiful queen, and another time . . . . a beaked, white-grey *badb*. . . . She sits down in the presence of Eremon; she enjoins her protection on Emir. ‘What country hast thou come from, and what companion dost thou associate with, and what name is to be addressed to thee, o woman, asked Eremon. ‘From the ardent Tuatha de Danann I have come truly,’ said she, ‘and Mac Greni, warrior, is my husband, and Eriu is my name, ‘said the woman.” Ms. H. 4. 22. p. 120.

And Aimhirgin asks, immediately after the preceding dialogue, “*ca ni chuingi etir, a ingin ilrechtach*;” what do you request, o woman of many shapes,” the latter epithet being used in allusion to the frequent transformations referred to before. The account further represents her as fighting a battle with the chiefs in question, in the form of a *badb*.

The next meeting between Cuchullain and the Morrigan is very curious. It is thus related in the *Book of Leinster* fol. 54,a2.

“Andsin tanic in Mórrigu ingen Ernmais a sidaib irricht sentainne, corraib ic blegu bó trí sine na fiadnaisse. Is immi tainic si sin ar bith a forithen do Choinchullaind; daid ni gonad Cuchullain nech ara térnád combeth cuit dó fein na legus. Conattech Cuchullain blegon fuirri iar na dehrad dittaid. Do brethasi blegon sini dó . Rop slán a neim damsa so. Ba slána lethrosc na rigna. Conaittecht som in tres ndig, agus dobrethasi blegon sine dó. Bendacht dée agus ándee fort a ingen (batar é a ndee int aes cumachta, agus andee int aes trebaire); agus ba slan ind rigan.”

“then the Morrigan, daughter of Ernmas, came from the Sidhe, in the form of an old woman, and was milking a three-teated cow in his presence. The reason she came was, in order to be helped by Cuchullainn; for no one whom Cuchullainn wounded could recover unless he himself had some hand in the cure. Cuchullain asked her for milk, after having been troubled with thirst. She gave him the milk of one teat. “May I be safe from poison therefor.” The queen’s eye was cured. He asked her again for the milk of a teat. She gave it to him. “May the giver be safe from poison.” He asked for the third drink, and she gave him the milk of a teat. “The blessings of gods and men be on thee, woman (the people of power were their gods, and the wise people were their *andée* “non divine:); and the queen was cured.”

When the time approached in which Cuchullainn should succumb to the decree of fate, as previously announced to him by Morrigan, the impending loss of her favourite hero appears to have affected her with sorrow. The night before the fatal day when his head and spoils were borne off in triumph by Erc Mac Cairpre, Morrigan, we are told, disarranged his chariot, do delay his departure for the fated meeting.

Thus we read in the “*Aided Conchullainn*,” or “Tragedy of Cuchullainn,” contained in the *Book of Leinster* (fol. 77, a1) that when he approached his horse, the *Liath Macha*, in the last morning of his existence, this faithful companion of his many victories “thrice turned his left side” towards his master, as an augury of his doom so soon to await him; and he found that “the Morrigan had broken the chariot the night previous, for she liked not

that Cuchullainn should go to the battle, as she knew that he would not again reach Emain Macha.”

“*Teite Cuchullainn adochum [in Leith Macha], ocus ro impa int ech a chle friss fothri, ocus roscail in Morigu in carpat issind aidchi remi, ar nir bo ail le a dul Conculainn dochum in chatha, ar rofitir noco ricfad Emain Macha afrithis,*”

Then follows a curious scene between Cuchullainn and *Liath Macha* or “grey horse of Macha,” the hero reminding his steed of the time when the *Badb* accompanied them in their martial feats at Emain Macha, or Emania (*rodonbai badb in Emain Macha*), and the *Liath*, becoming so affected at the impending fate of his master, “*co tarlaic a bolgdera móra fola for a dib traighthib,*” “that he dropped his big tears of blood on his (Cuchullainn’s) two feet.”

The grief of the *Liath Macha*, and the arts of the *Morigu*, were of no avail, Cuchullainn would go to the field of battle, impelled by the unseen power which ruled his destiny. But before he approaches the foe, he meets with three female idiots, blind of the left eye, cooking a charmed dog on spits made of the rowan tree; creatures of hateful aspect and wicked purpose.

Cuchullainn’s strength must be annihilated, or the fates will have decreed in vain; and this can only be done through his partaking of the horrid dish, which he resolves to do rather than tarnish his chivalrous reputation by refusing the request of the witches, although aware of the tragic results about to ensue, The strength of the hero is paralyzed by the contact with the unclean food handed to him from the witch’s left hand; and Cuchullainn rushes headlong to his doom. But still the *Morrigan* does not abandon him, although apparently quite powerless to assist him; for as he comes near to the enemy, “a bird of valour” is seen flying about over the chief in his chariot (*en blaith*, i.e. *lon gaile, etarluamnach uasa erra oen charpait*). And after he has received his death-wound she perches beside him awhile, before winging her flight to the fairy palace beside the Suir, from which she came. The following is the description of Cuchullainn’s proceedings after receiving his mortal wound, extracted from the *Book of Leinster* (fol. 78, a2).

“*Do dechuid iarum crich mór ond loch (Loch Lamraith in Magh Muirthemne) slar, ocus rucad a rosc airi, ocus téit dochum coirthi cloiche file*

*isin maig cotarat a choimchriss immi, narablad na suidiu, nach ina ligu, conbad ina sessam atbalad. Is iarsin do echatar na fir immacuairt, ocus ni rolamsatar dul a dochum. Andarleo ropo beo. Is mebol duib, ol Erc Mac Cairpre, cen cend ind fhir do thabhairt lib in digail chind m'atarsa rucad leis co ro adnacht fri airsce Ehdach Niafer. Rucad a chend assaide co fil i síd Nenta iar nusciu. . . . Iarsin tra do dechaid in Liath Macha co Coinculaind dia imchoimét in céin robói a anim and, ocus ro mair in lon laith ass a étan. Is iarum bert in Liath Macha na tri derg ruathar immi ma cuairt, co torchair l. leis cona fiaclaib, ocus xxx cach crui do issed romarb dont sluag. Conid de ata nitathe buadremmend ind leith Macha iar marbad Conculainn. Conid iarsin dolliud ind ennach for a gualaind. Nir bo gnáth in corthe ut fo enaib ar Erc mac Carpre.”*

“He (Cuchullainn ) then went westwards, a good distance from the lake (lock Lamraith in Magh Muirthemne), and looked back at it. And he went to a pillar stone which is in the plain, and placed his side against it, that he might not die sitting or lying, but that he might die standing. After this the men went all about him, but dared not approach him, for they thought he was alive. ‘It is a shame for you,’ said Erc Mac Cairpre, ‘not to bring that man’s head in retaliation for my father’s head, which was borne off by him, and buried against Airsce Ehdach Niafer. His head was taken from thence, so that it is in Sidh-Nenta. . . . Afterwards, moreover, the *Liath Macha* went to Cuchullain, to guard him whilst his spirit lived in him, and whilst the *lon laith*(bird of valour?) continued out of his forehead. Then the *Liath Macha* executed the three red routs about him, when fifty men fell by his teeth, and thirty by each shoe, all of the enemy’s host; and hence the proverb—‘Not more furious was the victorious rout of the *Liath Macha*, after the killing of Cuchullain,’—Thereupon the bird went and perched near his shoulder. “That pillar stone was not usually the resort of birds,” said Erc Mac Cairbre, who supposed the *Morrigan* to be a mere carrion crow awaiting the feast prepared by his hand. Then they advance and cut off Cuchullain’s head, and the *Morrigan* disappears from the scene.

The exact meaning of the expressions *en blaith*, and *lon gaile* (called also *lón* or *lúan-laith*) which occur in the preceding sentences have not been well defined. Some writers have understood *en blaith* as a veritable “bird of valour,” whilst others deem the words as a title for a particular kind of

frenzy. I have not met with any statement identifying the bird of valour with the scare-crow, or, indeed, with any bird in particular, although the principal heroes in the Irish battle pieces, from Cuchullain to Murchadh, son of Brian, have each his “Bird of valour” flying over him in the thick of the fight. In the account of the battle of Magh-Rath, we are told that Congal Claen, excited to fury and madness by the exhortations of one of his servants, in the banqueting hall at Dun-na-ngedh, “stood up, assumed his bravery, his heroic fury rose, and his ‘bird of valour’ fluttered over him, and he distinguished not friend from foe at the time [<sup>8</sup>]”. So when Murchadh, son of Brian after the repulse of the Dal-Cais by the Danes, at the battle of Clontarf, prepares to assail the enemy, it is said that” he was seized with a boiling terrible anger, an excessive elevation and greatness of spirit and mind, A bird of valour and championship rose in him, and fluttered over his head and on his breath..” But this *lon laith, en gaile*, or bird of valour (?) which hovered about Cuchullain, not only excited him into fury, as is represented, but also produced a strange bodily transformation, from which he obtained the sobriquet of the *Riastartha*, or transformed. Thus, in a passage in the tale form which I have so often quoted already, where King Ailill deems it advisable to beg Cuchullain’s permission for the Connacht army to retire from a position of danger, the following account of the effects of this paroxysm of fury is given:

“*Denaid comarli for Ailill, Gudid Conculainn im for leclud asind inudsa ar ni ragaid ar ecin tairis uair rodlebaing a long laith, ar ba ges dosom intan no linged a lon laith ind imreditis a traigthi iarma ocus a escada remi, odus muil a orcan for a lurnib, ocus in dala suil inachend, ocus araili fria chend anechtair; do coised fer chend for a beolu. Nach findae bid fair ba hathithir delca sciach, ocus banna fola for cach finnu. Ni aithgnead coemu na cairdiu. Cumma no slaided riam ocus iarma. Is desin dober fir nolnecmacht in riastarthu do animm do Coinculainn. (Lebor na hUidhre, fol. 34, b1.)*

“‘Take counsel together,’ said Ailil; ‘entreat Cuchullain that he may permit you to leave this place, since you cannot pass by him forcibly, because his *lon laith* has sprung,’—For it was usually the case with him when his *lon laith* started in him, that his feet turned backwards and his arms forward,

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<sup>8</sup> Battle of Magh-Rath, p. 33.

and the calves of his legs were transferred to his shins, and one of his eyes sank deep into his head, whilst the other was protruded, and a man's head would fit in his mouth. Every hair on his head was sharper than the thorns of whitethorn, and a drop of blood stood on each hair. He would not know friends or relations, and he slew equally backwards and forwards. Hence it was that the men of Connacht applied the name of 'Riastartha' to Cuchullainn."

It has been already observed that the name of the goddess, of fury, whose identity we have been endeavouring to connect with *Cathu-bodua*, is written *badb* and *bodb*, just as the adjectives derived therefrom are written *badba* and *bodba*, and the deriv. subst. *badbdacht* and *bodbacht*.

The term *bodba* (terrible) is applied to the *Morrigan* in an old tract in the *book of Leinster*, where Conor Mac Nessa is represented as directing Findchad to summon auxiliaries to assist Cuchullainn: "*ardotrai cosin nathaig mbodba, cosin Mórrigain co dún Sobairche*;" "go to the terrible fury, to the *Morrigan*, to Dun-Sobairche (Dunseverick, co. Antrim)."

The name *Morrigan* is also varied, as we have seen, to *Morrigu*; but as the genitive form is *Morrigna*, the proper nom. would seem to be *Morrigan*.

In the Irish mythological tracts a well-marked distinction is observable between the attributes of the scald-crow and those of the raven; the scald-crow, or cornix, being represented in the written as in the spoken traditions of the country, not alone as a bird of ill omen, but as an agent in the fulfilment of what is "in dono" *in dan*, or decreed for a person, whilst the raven is simply regarded as a bird of prey, that follows the warrior merely for the sake of enjoying its gory feast. Just as the German myths describe Odin and Zio as accompanied by ravens and wolves, which follow them to the battle field, and prey upon the slain, so the Irish poets, in their laudations of particular heroes, boast of the number of ravens and wolves fed by their spears. Odin, especially, had two ravens, wise and cunning, which sat upon his shoulders and whispered into his ears, like Mahomet's pigeon, all that they had heard and seen<sup>9</sup>. In this latter respect the raven of German mythology stands in the same relation to Odin that the raven of

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<sup>9</sup> Grimm, *Deutsche Mythologie*<sup>2</sup>, p. 134.

Greek mythology does to Apollo. The Scandinavians, like their German relatives, considered the raven in a sacred light.

The *Anglo-Saxon chronicle* (at the year 878) records the capture from the Norse of a banner called the Raven, of which a more particular account is in *Asser's Life of Alfred*, at the same year. After describing the defeat of the Pagan Norse before Kynwith castle. On Devonshire, the writer adds, "and there they (the West Saxons) gained very large booty, and amongst other things the banner called the Raven; for they say that the three sisters of Hingwar and Hubba, daughters of Lodbrok, wove the flag and got it ready in one day, They say, moreover that in every battle, wherever that flag went before them, if they were to gain the victory, a live crow would appear flying on the middle of the flag; but if they were doomed to be defeated it would hang down motionless; and this was often proved to be so." Earl Sigurd also is said to have had a raven banner at the battle of Clontarf, which his mother had woven for him with magical skill [<sup>10</sup>].

This idea of the raven banner is probably connected with the tradition given in the *Völsunga-Saga*, which represents Odin as sending the Valkyria Oskemey, in the form of a crow, on a mission to Friga, to entreat that the wife of King Reris might become fruitful [<sup>11</sup>]; and the prayer being heard, a son (Sigmund) was born, whose son Sigurd married Brunhilt, a Valkyria, who was called Kraka, or the crow, and who was the wife of Radnar Lodbrok, and mother of Ivar Beinlaus.

The *Morrigan* has some dim connection to the pagan festival of *Samhain*, or *Allhallowtide*. *Macha Mongruadh*, the fabled foundress of Ard-Macha (Armagh) whose sword (*chaidhem Macha Moingruadh*) is described as a very powerful weapon, is sometimes *Morrigan*; as is also Mongfind, a great queen of the 3<sup>rd</sup> cent., in whose honour the festival of *Samhain* was anciently called "*Feil-Moing*," "when the vulgar and women asked requests of her." (*Book of Ballymote*.)

The name of the *Morrigan* is found connected with many of the *fulachts*, or Kitchen Middens, particularly with the larger ones, which are called

<sup>10</sup> Todd's "*Danish wars*," introd. p. clxxxiiij, note 1.

<sup>11</sup> *Fornaldar Sægur*, Copenhagen, 1825, pp. 117-118.

“*Fulacht na Morrigna*,” the “Morrigan’s hearth,” whilst the smaller ones are named “*Fulacht Fian*. One of these great *Fulachts* at Tara would cook three kinds of food at the same time. Some account of it will be found in Petrie’s “*Antiquities of Tara*,” pp. 213-14 (where, however, Petrie should have considered it rather a cauldron than a spit). In the tract call the *dthe Agallamh beg*, or “Little Dialogue,” contained in the “*Book of Lismore*” mention is made (fol. 196 a2) of another *Fulacht-na-Morrigna* which existed near the fairy mound of *Sidh-Airfemhin*, in the present county of Tipperary.

“*Ba hiat fein do rinde both doibh ind oidchi sin, ocus do rinded indeonadh leo, ocuss teit Cailte ocus Findchadh do indlad a lámha cum int srotha. Inad fulachta so ar Findchad, ocus is cian o do rinded. Is fir ar Cailte, ocus fulacht na Morrighna so, ocus ni denta gan uisce.*” “It was they who made a hut for themselves that night; and *indeonad*(cooking places were made by them And Cailte and Findchadh went to the stream to wash their hands. ‘Here is the site of a fulacht, ‘said Finchadh and it is a long time since it was made.’ ‘True,’ said Cailte; ‘and this is a *fulacht-na-Morrighna* which is not to be made without water” (i. e. there should be a supply of water near at hand).

The name of the *Morrigan* enters not a little into the composition of Irish topographical names. In the present county of Louth there is a district anciently known by the name of *Gort-na-Morrigna*, of the “*Morrigan’s feild*,” which her husband, the Dagda, had given to her (“*Book of Fermoy*,” fol. 125, a2). The “*Book of Lismore*” (fol. 196, b1) mentions a *Crich-na-Morrigna*, as somewhere in the present county of Wicklow. Among the remarkable monuments of the Brugh on the Boyne were *Mur=na-Morrigna* (the mound of the *Morrigan*); two hills called the *Cirr* and *Cuirrel* (or comb and brush) of the Dagda’s wife, which Dr. Petrie has inadvertently transformed into two proper names; and *Da cich na Morrigna*, or the “*Morrigan’s two paps*.” The name of the *Morrigan* is also probably contained in that of *Tirreeworrigan*, in the county of Armagh.

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P. S.—Mr. Hennessy's preceding paper is a valuable contribution to the comparative mythology of the Germans (chiefly Scandinavians) and Celts. More than one element of the Badhbh-story is common to both races. I mention briefly the chief coincidences.

I. To the ancient Irish goddesses of war correspond to the Norwegian (and, in general, Germanic) Valkyrias.

II. These Irish goddesses appear either by themselves, or (when more than one) three in number. In a similar way the Norns appear three together, and the youngest of them, Skuld, is at the same time a Valkyria. Very often too, three Valkyrias fly together (*Vælundarquidha*, 1, 2).

III. One of these goddesses is often the special companion of *one* hero, assists and warns him and, when his hour has come, leaves him with a cry. Instances of love-stories of a supernatural character are numerous in Germanic mythology. « Sigurd and Brynhild » furnish one. But the finest of the stories in the Older Edda, in the songs of Helgi. I do not find however that in Germanic tales the approaching death is announced by the divine bride leaving her husband with sorrow. Perhaps there may have been something of that kind in Sigurd's murder committed at the instigation of Brynhild. The dying Helgi too says to his Valkyrian bride: « Do you not sorrow, you have been destruction. » Herein seems to lurk a conception more stern than the Irish, namely that the Valkyrian herself is, when time arrives, the instrument of her lover's death. The simply divine Valkyrias that live with Odhinn and are not attached to any particular man, are sent by him for the special purpose of calling the heroes « home ». Hence in fact the name *VAlkyria*, « the chooser of the slain » (Norse *val-r*, strages; *kiosa*, eligere).

IV. The Irish goddesses appear in the form of a bird, which is more especially considered as the « bird of valour » of the hero. It is not always easy to find out what exact form they assume, but it is generally that of a scaldcrow. The Germanic Valkyrias generally appear as swans. Yet the *Völsunga Saga* tells of love between one of Sigurd's ancestors and a Valkyria, who assumed the figure of a crow, and Aslaug, daughter of Sigurd, who accompanies Ragnar Lodbrok after the fashion of the Valkyrias, calls herself also « crow » (*kraka*).

V. The names of the Irish goddesses, as far as can be ascertained, are Badb, ( or Badb-catha ) Fea, Ana, Morrighu (or Morrigan) Macha, Neman. Perhaps we might be justified in comparing the name of Macha with gr. μάχη. As far as the first of these names is concerned it is certainly identical with M. Pictet's [C]*athubodua* and it has its conter-part in Germany. Tacitus tells us (*Ann. IV, 73*) that, in the eventful campaign of the Romans against the Frisians, nine hundred Romans were slain « apud lucum quem *Baduhennæ* vocant. » This must be understood « Near the wood which is consecrated to *Baduhennæ*. » Now *Badu* is a Germanic word for « strife » (Anglo-Saxon *beado*, Old-Norse *boedhr*). Indeed it does not appear as the name of a Valkyria; but when one thinks that by the side of *nemas* in—*hild* decidedly derived from the Valkyrias such as *Mahthild*, *Gundhild*, *Svanhild*, there appears an Old-High German woman-name *Baduhild* which indirectly confirms the statement of Tacitus, it becomes most probably that there was an ancient Germanic goddess of war, named *Badu*.

Such similarities between German and Celtic traditions cannot be accidental. Not even the historical connection of the Scandinavians and the Irish can explain them. It seems that we must go much further back, to those times when along the Rhine Celts and Germans mixed together, sometimes as friends, sometimes as foes, when the king of the Marcomans, *Maroboduus*, a German by birth, assumed a Celtic name, in the same way as in later times *Cormac*, *Nial*, went over to the Scandinavians from Celtic lips. The old Gaulish names *Caturix*, *Toutiorix*, *Segomarus*, *Albiorix*, have their Germanic

corresponding words (some of which are still in use) in the names *Hedrich*, *Dietrich*, *Sigmar*, *Alberich*.

All these instances of resemblance indicate a long intercourse, and songs and traditions, as well as names and words, may have been interchanged from one side of the Rhine to the other and have strengthened the old bonds which united Celts and Germans in the time of the Indogermanic unity.

C. Lottner.

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