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Master's thesis

Games of power: A Study of Magic as an Instrument of Ideology, Strategy, and Power in Medieval Irish Narratives

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Summary

This thesis is aiming to be a qualitative, descriptive study conducted through close reading of two texts of the Irish tradition: *The Death of Muirchertach Mac Erca* and *The Second Battle of Mag Tuired*. The purpose of this is to observe how magic is used as an instrument to gain, wield, and manipulate power. Thus, how supernatural powers are strategically applied for the pursuit of their user‘s ideologic goals.

Foreword

I would like to thank my supervisor Kristen Mills for her support and for being a great inspiration and a lovely person.

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I. Introduction

The quote "Religion ist das Opium des Volkes", taken from Karl Marx' *Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie,* is famous to this day. Wars were fought over opium, and so are they over religion. Ever since it has been a powerful tool of influence on the individuals as much as on society. Marx is one of the founders of one of the highly influential ideologies of history. At the same time, ideologies are just ideas, they have histories and reasons why they came to be. The power that ideas hold is the essential point. Ideas can be the key to it. Just like with physical substances like opium, it is possible to influence people's minds.

The idea of magic has been a powerful one throughout history. In this thesis I am hoping to demonstrate the instrumentalization of the idea of magic in the quests for power in Medieval Irish narratives.

"And me seems that my power is in no wise a fraud." (Stokes, ed., 1902, 409) is what Sín says to Muichertach in *The Death of Muirchertach Mac Erca* as she is demonstrating her supernatural power by conjuring up two battalions of warriors. What Muichertach was asking her for was "to work [..] some of these great miracles" (Stokes, ed., 1902, 409): he is asking her to demonstrate her supernatural powers. Conjuring up two battalions of people, which Muichertach then confirms to see with his own eyes, clearly seems to be an act of magic. Muichertach using the word 'miracle' here instead of 'magic', 'witchcraft' or similar terms adds on to a question as old as the idea of magic, where is the line between magic and religion, and also science? This question has been subject to many attempts of answers, but the distinction has remained blurry and varying from source to source. One working definition of the critical term 'magic' is the following by Peter Maxwell-Stuart:

> " 'magic' refers to a constellation of what are officially regarded as deviant ritualistic or ritualized ways of dealing with an individual's immediate problems by achieving access to sacred power which demands or compels the assistance of non-human entities"(Maxwell-Stuart, 2017, 1).

Bernd-Christian Otto and Michael Stausberg, who edited an entire 260-pages book on how to define magic, emphasize, that magic, as a critical category in the study of religion, is frequently used to negatively determine the nature of 'religion' (Otto and Stausberg, eds., 2013,1). Hence,

the relationship between the two terms ‘religion’ and ‘magic’ is commonly a mutually exclusive one. Stausberg and Otto note, that

> “ ‘religion’ is purified from ‘magic’, and ‘magic’ is what does not qualify as ‘religion’. ‘Magic’ is therefore also a critical category in the sense of providing an implicit critique: ‘magic’ is illegitimate religion, unless it is given a positive twist and serves as the positive other to traditional religion [..]” (Otto and Stausberg, eds., 2013,1).

Magic as a category is critical because it differentiates certain practices and understandings from those regarded as religious, rational or scientific. These differentiations have been criticized by scholarship and laity alike. This can be seen in the fact, that there is no unanimously agreed on academic definition of magic and even the scholarly validity of the entire category is being criticised on a regular basis (Otto and Stausberg, eds., 2013,1).

To criticize the concept of a category of magic in religious studies, it needs to be taken into account, that throughout history and cultures, religious practices have shown great variations of themes and modes of expression not necessarily following the Christian understanding of what ‘religion’ means (Mitchell et al, 2010, 871). Variations in traditions reflect local realities, which can be useful for abstracting theories of these local realities. It becomes problematic when practices common among illiterate social groups are being seemingly depreciated to categories such as ‘folk belief’, magic and popular culture. Problems such as ignorance of differences between vernacular groups and overly simplifying the practice of religion in daily life separating it from the understanding of religion as a theoretical model of its local world in all aspects, can occur when those depreciated classes are being homogenised (Mitchell et al, 2010, 871). In the study of religion and magic, it can not be forgotten, that

> “it is the individual’s conceptions and expressions of a transcendental reality (i.e. independent of human experience, but within the range of human knowledge) which give rise to the different material we study. This is the basic material for the history of religions, the very empirical point of departure for our academic activities; but the concept of religion means that our target is not the expressions themselves but the worlds of conceptions they hide. The history of religions therefore always has a meta-theoretical character as it departs from a cluster of academic theories that in their turn deal with (or cover) other emic theories of reality.” (Mitchell et al, 2010, 871).

When there is a change of religion, such as was in Europe in times of Christianisation, when a culture shifts its religion from one belief to the other, there are two options for dealing with the

old beliefs. Either it is entirely abbandoned based on the apparent insight, that the old beliefs were wrong and their image turns more and more negative and is thus actively removed whenever noticed. Or the new belief system is perceived as superior, but elements of the old beliefs are integrated into it because they are seen as natural and not opposite to the new teachings. This is dependant on the individual's own decision of course, but also depending on the systematisation of the religion. If it is a religion that is very insistent on a very conform behaviour when it comes to spirituality and belief following this religion, it will most likely be unaccepting of previous, local belief figures (Mitchell et al., 2010, 876). If parts of previous beliefs find their way into people's spiritual behaviours and clash with the conformity set by the new structures, it can be seen as an opposition to the authority of the new religious system and thus as misconduct and heresy, a term which got strongly associated with anything witchy or magical over time. Although there probably were problems like this in transitional times, it is not to be taken for granted that individuals branded as heretics in the Middle Ages and Early Modern times actually remebered or consciously integrated prehistoric ritual or its meaning accurately into their own practices. Therefore, it seems that when divergent and alternative beliefs exist between the norms occaisionally, such as witchcraft, they tend to be "(a) regional, articulation loyalties to landscape, and (b) fantastical, because of not knowing or misremebering previous practice" (Mitchell et al., 2010, 876). Thus, it is not only modern paganism that is a construction of their times, but also Early Modern pagans of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries for example appear to have followed their contemporary constructions of practice and belief not necessarily having too detailed understanding of the local prehistories (Mitchell et al., 2010, 876).

In other words, in modern times there tends to be the understanding, that those accused of witchcraft were at variance with their local norms, while they actually rather seem to be a product of those cultural norms. As Diane Purkiss frases it: "Those accused of witchcraft—including those who genuinely believed themselves to be practicing magic, a minority of those accused—espoused beliefs that derived directly from medieval Christendom." (Purkiss, 2020, 155).

For example, it should be considered as well, that there was not only a perceived variance from the cultural norms between heathenism and Christianity, but with the coming of the reformation also between Catholic practices and Protestant concepts of belief. In the times of the witch trials, mostly in post-Reformation times, it was almost common practice in protestant-dominated areas to have "many of the complaints about the accused cite what are very evidently

Catholic rites, an uncomfortable mix of mystifying prayers in Latin, prayers to icons themselves declared witches such as the statue of the Virgin Mary at Ipswich—burned as a witch in Smithfield market" (Purkiss, 2020, 156).

In other words, people have used superstitions and undefined border regions of seemingly legitimised and societally normalised practices, in this case religious ones, to manipulate others and their cases throughout time. Especially in the case of magic, doubtlessly there were people who believed in in and people who did not, in all times. It does not seem to be necessary to be a real believer to use magic against or in service of someone else, neither to reach one's own goal nor to sell one's service to a believer. 'Magic' is such a liminal and critical concept that is hard to define and in most cases is defined by exclusion, meaning practices, behaviours or concepts that for various reasons can not be grouped with other categories are being grouped in this big, literally myth-entwined umbrella-term. Based on this it seems really easy for people to use the concept of magic in many ways to empower themselves and achieve their goals through it, either through actively using magical practice to achieve their goal through requested supernatural intervention or through passive use by manipulating other people through their beliefs and superstitions.

In this thesis I want to examine how magic is used as a strategic instrument. Hence, I want to ask questions like

- How is magic wielded by those who seek to empower themselves with it?
- In which ways is the blurry distinction between magical and religious practice strategically used by individuals for their purposes?
- In which ways are practices labelled as magic strategically used to influence others? Or strategically labelled as magic?
- In which ways are practitioners of magic depicted and possibly judged by the texts?
- What are the principles of magic that make it useful as a tool to influence others?
- What are the ideologies connected to the usage of magic?
- What importance does magic have to achieve power in society?

in my analysis of my chosen primary sources.

As this will be a literary criticism, it is important to take into consideration the individual text's religious allegiance and the represented understanding of tradition both in religious and cultural terms. Dealing with this complex problematic seems daunting due to the complexity of the topic, but as an example of the type of goals that literary analysis and cultural-historical research

tend to aim at, it can be rewarding in pursuing an analysis focused on both the continuities and incongruities in some chosen examples of the canon (Spyra, 2017, 195).

I aim at a qualitative, descriptive study conducted through close reading of two texts of the Irish tradition for this purpose: *The Death of Muirchertach Mac Erca* and *The Second Battle of Mag Tuired*. These two texts are good examples of their fields each. *The Death of Muirchertach Mac Erca* is a king's tale, strongly representing the power struggle between royal and clerical power. The tale is placed in the human world. *The Second Battle of Mag Tuired* is situated in a mythological setting and the Túatha Dé Danann are its main characters. Thus, I chose these texts as a representation because one of them is a more 'human' type of magic, while the other is more 'godly'. It will be interesting to see, if there are any differences in the presentation of the matter by the authors based on this.

II. Theory

The strive for power is a part of human nature, every person is trying to gain enough power to fight for their own survival, security and comfort. If born with (e.g. royal) privilege, it is important to be strong enough to hold onto it. If born without privilege, it is a daily struggle with the surrounding to balance gains and losses to be able to thrive. Most of the time, the nature-given resources, including those established by the gathering of human resource as understood from the dawn of humanity on and alternatively called society, are enough for the average problem, usually created by this surrounding nature, to be solved. In situations with a hopeless feel, when certain obstacles just can not be overcome, one tends to seek forces stronger than one self for assistance. Turning to beings more powerful than oneself for help is a quite common behaviour in such a case. This can be those who have gathered more power in the human world, or those who have access to power sources beyond the human world. This can be indirect, through persons who have channels to powers bigger than occurring in our natural surrounding on planet Earth, or direct, through making contact with a supernatural entity by oneself.

Clearly, I am speaking about magic as a solution for unsolvable problems. A phenomenon, which has gained much popularity throughout history, but in modern day is clearly regarded as non-existent. Are we thus speaking about the history's biggest hoax?

The description I gave above is insofar plurivalent, as it also can be pointing at supernatural entities, which are quite legitimized and accepted within society and whose followers have held great powers in society for very long times in history and still do today. This statement is still not clarifying, what else than magic I might be speaking about. This is a typical problem encountered when speaking about magic and religion.

Neither magic nor religion are dead, even though we live in times were man-made technology seems to be the supernaturally powerful. Even at the very time of writing this, wars are being fought not just with the aim of gaining influence in geopolitically strategical regions, but also about dominance of belief systematics. In both cases, and so many before and after them, it is the question: who has the right to the land? It is one of the continuities in history.

II.1 Power

Gaining control of strategical places and dominating beliefs are just two examples, but they basically represent essential concepts of a definition of power: control and social influence. A classical definition of the concept 'power' itself is the one by French and Raven from 1959 'the potential to influence others in psychologically meaningful ways'. This not unproblematic conception, which Guinote and Vescio refine to 'the ability to control completely outcomes that are valued by others', finally stands as 'power as a force of influence and control that shapes interactions between individuals, within groups and between groups' (Guinote and Vescio, 2010, 3).

When understanding the basic concept of power, it is basically a self-understanding, that its importance lies in "the fundamental nature and import of power [deriving] from power's ability to satisfy core self- and group-serving needs" (Guinote and Vescio, 2010, 3). Its function on the individual level as a starting point is about securing access to desired resources and thus the ability to satisfy essential self-needs, while combining resource-securing efforts by multiple individuals can control environments and increase the stability of access to desired resources (Guinote and Vescio, 2010, 3). How does an individual stay alive? By having the power to find edible food on a regular basis. How does one become a king? By having more supporters than everyone else. A quite straightforward concept which holds a lot of potential for creative ways to apply it.

Formation of social units requires coordination, leading to the necessity of roles of power aiming to organize and structure in order to facilitate an advancement of the group's interests. Thus, "power is also important, because it is the glue that coordinates social life and moves shared goals forward" (Guinote and Vescio, 2010, 3). This importance is the essential factor for the legitimisation of power. Power asymmetries are accepted in society because "the concept of power legitimacy implies that power is exercised within the influence of a larger social context and in general is not absolute" (Guinote and Vescio, 2010, 3). This means that positions of power established as coordination points can be resisted or opposed if it does not serve the purpose of resource securing for the individuals of the social unit anymore. This aspect makes power ambivalent, both desired and feared by those who do not have it (Guinote and Vescio, 2010, 4). Called 'nourishment' by Nietzsche and 'diseased appetite' by Adams, the ambivalence of its nature is a fascination to everyone, as it is a dimension of human relationship that touches on everyone. As Winter puts it,

> "power is often implicit or hidden from view. As a divine reflection shining through the charismatic leader, the magic of power is shielded from the view of ordinary mortals; as a violation of social ideals, values, and norms, it is exiled to those 'lower regions' where, we are told, dwells the devil." (Winter, 2010, 113).

First of all, how interesting, that he, as a scholar of psychology and not writing about magic in his essay, still uses a metaphor of magic and devil in this description. It is a great example of how this image of magic as the supreme form of power and the wielder of magic as the naturally strongest powerholder is so engrained in culture, that it serves as a classical metaphor even used in science, which is striving to be as rational as possible, and chosen among so many examples explaining power relationships. Second, he is talking about the abstraction of power following the simple logic explained before, a very human phenomenon. It is about the motivation to power, the strive for it, stemming from survival instincts but often going beyond this. But as power is originally an instrument to bundle resource security efforts as demonstrated before and hence in society rather seen as serving the public, it is morally frowned upon in society to use it for other purposes than this, which again is a natural logic of securing resources which otherwise might be taken by those who use their gained power for other purposes. Seeking power can thus be conceptualized as a motive. The motivation for seeking power is subject for a variety of research fields. Questions like, 'what does power do to the individual?' or 'how does power feel like?' can be utile to understand power striving (Winter, 2010, 114).

The core goal of the power motive can be described as "the observation that something moves because of [the power wielder's] will, not because of its own will" (Winter, 2010, 114). Moral constraints of this core goal can be modifiers for it to be a beneficent.

Power can be studied with a focus on the macrocontexts, such as examining the forms of power allotted in institutions and relationship concept patterns, how those systems work and which effects its procedure has on the system and context. This is the classical focus in fields such as sociology, political science and anthropology. Fields such as social psychology focus more on the microcontexts, hence the situational and individual preconditions and consequences of power behaviours in particular settings (Winter, 2010, 115).

Winter presents a row of concepts connected to the topic of power: status as the occupying of a position of power, dominance as a power behaviour in specific situations, skills as using of power, conscious goals as choices of power, power motivation as implicit desire for power, feeling powerful as perceived control and, values and beliefs about the use of power (Winter, 2010, 118). Throughout these concepts, the motive for power and the skill at getting power

must be distinguished. The motivation for power can be summarised to ‘a concern about impact, control, or influence on another person, group, or the world’, expressed in different ways:

- “By taking strong, forceful actions that inherently have impact on other people or the world at large
- By controlling or regulating others
- By attempting to influence, persuade, convince, make or prove a point, argue
- By giving unsolicited help or advice
- By impressing others or the world at large; prestige or reputation
- By eliciting a strong emotional reaction in someone else” (Winter, 2010, 120).

II.2 Ideology

"Ideologies are born of crisis and feed on conflict" (Ball et.al., 2020, 1). Ideologies as world-views are tightly associated with power struggles. They are a systems of decided norms shared in a group building a common world-view and thus a set of rules which serve the justification of any actions taken following these views to reach the group's goals. The establishing of the term of ideology as power-oriented world-views can be traced back to Marx and Engels. Originally, the term 'ideology' was intended to label the academic study of ideas, linking the study of psychology to the practice of revolution. It is a term formed in the aftermath of the French Revolution of 1789 by a group of young philosophers attempting to "reconstruct post-revolutionary society on the basis of rationally founded, psychological principles." (Billig, 1982, 7). The inventors of the study of ideology considered the term 'psychology', deriving from the Greek word 'psyche' for soul, too old-fashioned, since the connection to the soul made it seem to have a religious connection and thus psychological science based on the presumption of the existence of a soul. One of the original intentions of the ideologues was the struggle against traditional schemes of knowledge. Their philosophy was directed towards rationality and aimed to demystify old metaphysics, thus exposing old biases and creating a new ground for truth (Billig, 1982, 17). By searching for the origins of ideas, presenting new criteria for truth became possible and the methodology of psychological decomposition made way for a new process of composition.

Following modern understandings of 'ideology', it is "a more or less systematic set of ideas that performs fours functions for those who hold it: the explanatory, the evaluative, the orientative, and the programmatic." (Ball, et.al., 2020, 1). Hence, it helps to explain political phenomena such as wars or other conflicts between groups, whose explanations are dependent on the ideology of the one answering. Furthermore, ideologies offer guiding standards and criteria to their followers, helping them to decide what is wrong or right or morally adequate or not, such as the permissibility of certain restraints and their conditions. Answers to such a question will again be varying due to the respondent's ideology. Further, ideology also creates a sense of belonging to a group, offering its followers an identity based on their shared views within the group. Hence, it functions as a "a social and cultural compass with which to define and affirm their individual and collective identity." (Ball et.al., 2020, 1). In addition, through answering questions such as "what is to be done? [..] Who is to do it? With what means?",

questions posed by Lenin among others, ideology gives a structure for a basic political program to its followers (Ball, et.al., 2020, 1).

Ideologies are thus not true or false. According to Slavoj Žižek,

> "what really matters is not the asserted content as such but the way this content is related to the subjective position implied by its own process of enunciation. We are within ideological space proper the moment this content – 'true' or 'false'[..]- is functional with regard to some relation of social domination ('power', 'exploitation') in an inherently non-transparent way: the very logic of legitimizing the relation of domination must remain concealed if it is to be effective." (Žižek, 1994, 8)

In other words, ideologies are not true or false, only functional or not. Their success is dependant on their transparency in the reach for domination. At the same time, ideologies are not always static, they can be adapted.

Adapting course for an ideology means reinterpreting what ways should be used to achieve the set goals or adjusting the goals to the retained measures. A classic example is the shift of Western Marxism from critique of political economy to critique of instrumental reason (Žižek, 1994, 9). Hence, a reinterpretation of an ideology as an impartial, 'objective science' can be distorting as the "notion of the reason [is] no longer grounded in a concrete social reality but is, rather, conceived as a kind of anthropological, even quasi-transcendental, primordial constant that enables us to explain the social reality of domination and exploitation" (Žižek, 1994, 9). Žižek suggests a preferability of a synchronous approach, otherwise, the immanent cognitive value of the term 'ideology' will be overturned through historicist relativism and turn it into "a mere expression of social circumstances." (Žižek, 1994, 9). As Billig puts it: "Contemporary psychological phenomena should [not] be treated 'as if' they were historical, but because in a very real sense they are historical." (Billig, 1982, 2). Generally, ways of thought are products of history, what can also be seen in the historical development of each specific ideology. However, within psychological research specific contents of the particular ideologies are usually removed and psychological generalities set the terms of treating them (Billig, 1982, 2).

According to philosopher Habermas, ideology is a 'systematically distorted communication'. Hence, a text which separates its public utterances from its internal intentions under the influence of not publicised social interests. Thus, there is a tension between the explicitly stated content and its pragmatic presumptions (Žižek, 1994, 10). The tradition following Enlightenment denounces what Habermas perceives as the step out of ideology as ideology par

excellence by putting "various 'pathological' interests (fear of death and of natural forces, power interests etc)" as reason for a "blurred ('false') notion of reality" (Žižek, 1994, 10).

Marx himself set religion as ideology par excellence, while Hegel systematised three main points of reference into his explanation of ideology: doctrine, belief, and ritual.

> "one is thus tempted to dispose the multitude of notions associated with the term 'ideology' around these three axes: ideology as a complex of ideas (theories, convictions, beliefs, argumentative procedures); ideology in its externality, that is, the materiality of ideology, ideological state apparatuses; and finally the most elusive domain, the 'spontaneous' ideology at work at heart of social 'reality' itself (it is highly questionable if the term 'ideology' is at all appropriate to designate this domain – here it is exemplary that, apropos of commodity fetishism, Marx never used the term 'ideology')." (Žižek, 1994, 9)

Chomsky breaks this down into two main principles: the principle of ensuring a favourable environment for the own interests and the principle of ensuring that "the population remains passive, ignorant and apathetic and that none of these matters are understood among the educated, articulate and politically active classes" (Chomsky, 1987, 10). This pretty much aligns with what has been said before. Hence, to understand ideology theory "symbolic realities and their material mediation, as well as the practical production and consequences of knowledge and belief systems are at the very center of interest" (Beetz et al, 2021, 103). Knowledge and Power are united into belief systems used for goal-oriented influence. When contradicting ideologies meet it can lead to political antagonism, which limits sovereignty of authorities. If they are contrary, authority is eroded from both sides (Žižek, 1994, 2). Based on Foucault's work on discourse, power and subjectivation, modern research has analysed the politicisation of knowledge in forming identity of individuals. Ideology is seen as a "representation of an imaginary relationship and a material reality, or the conceptualization of the constitution of subjects through the semiotic practice of interpellation" (Beetz et al, 2021, 103).

In modern research on ideology, two approaches seem to be common. First, the descriptive and analytic approach researching the operating of ideologies as instruments of power in contexts of politics, economy, education, media and others. The description of the logic of argument within the ideology is here the main focus of description along with the analysis of the achieved effectivity in material ways in social realities following the logics of the discourses. It follows ideology more as a material practice and less as a symbolic cosmovision, making it necessary to analyse it as a productive social moment and not only a symbolic phenomenon, thus it following along in a row with power, influence and domination concepts (Beetz et al, 2021,

104). A second approach would be the critical approach, relating ideology to forms of "normative critique of falsity, injustice or inequality" (Beetz et al, 2021, 104). Aiming at criticising the very functioning of an ideology, they can be criticised as ideological themselves in controversies and are thus more concretely "related to an unsustainable social order and dominating power relations" than abstracted to belief sets (Beetz et al, 2021, 104).

II.3 Strategy

Focusing on power and world-views with domination goals to achieve power, ideologies, there need to be strategies to achieve those goals. If ideology functions as legislative, strategy is their executive. Just as above, we have to deal with a concept which can contain multiple interpretations. Originating from the Greek term 'στρατηγία' ('stratēgia') for 'art of troop-leading' or generalship' which clearly links it to the field of military, through time the term has widened its understanding a bit: focus can be on the broader topic of power or highlight the process quality in formulating a strategy. J.C. Wylie's definition of strategy is "a plan of action designed in order to achieve some end; a purpose together with a system of measures for its accomplishment" (Baylis and Wirtz, 2019, 4). W. Murray and M. Grimslay define it as "a process, a constant adaption to the shifting conditions and circumstances in a world where chance, uncertainty, and ambiguity dominate" (Baylis and Wirtz, 2019, 4). In other words, strategy is the planned application of power. The question it is seeking to answer is, 'will it work?' (Baylis and Wirtz, 2019, 5).

While strategies are tools, their application can be very debatable between the followers of the ideology who compiled the strategy to fit their goals and those who do not share this ideology. This is reference point to ethical and moral issues, even though in many cases strategist are perceived as unemotional, clinical and cool. After all it is just an instrument of certain ideas, thus those who write the plan to achieve those goals are not necessarily the same ones as the ones who set those goals. This is the basic to the claim of neutrality of strategists. Others see these calculations more critically as they can be things such as "tracts on mass murder, how to commit it, how to get away with it, how to justify it" (Baylis and Wirtz, 2019, 9). The essential point here is, that a strategist might put great powers in the hands of those who are seeking them, which in itself can be morally questionable. Clearly, it is a question of societal acceptability of a strategy which impacts its feasibility. After all, strategies are only theoretical plans, which can vary greatly from their feasibility based on obstacles in reality which were not considered or turned out to work in a different way than predicted. Strategizing is tightly connected with predictions and logic after all.

Throughout history, until this day, strategy has consisted of knowing the ones who are likely to oppose the strategy, those who do not share the own ideology or are competitors in the strive for gaining power about a certain aspect. Points of influence to any strategy are things such as

available resources, economic connections, geography, climate, human resources, known opponents, possible opponents, public mood, historical connections and many others.

These are aspects, which still are as valid today as they were in times in which military leaders needed to know if an elephant can cross a snowy mountain chain, even though it might not be obvious to the average person seeing a commercial in their social media feed in modern times. This last example encapsulates a key point throughout the history of the concept of strategy: "strategy existed without the existence of the concept" (Heuser, 2019, 33). Strategic thinking is inbuilt into human thinking as a part of evolution: those who managed their resources better, and had better strategies to get their hands on further resources had the better chances of survival from the early days on, even though nobody used the term 'strategy' yet. When the name was first imprinted by the Greeks, following their centuries of wars with pretty much all neighbouring states fighting for the dominance of the Mediterranean, it was mostly used for military purposes as mentioned before. It is not before the late eighteenth century that the term was abstracted and used in ways less directly connected to military campaigns. Hence, "historically, 'strategy' has been a reality, if not an articulated concept" (Heuser, 2019, 33).

Thus, the logic of strategy is universal. It is "valid in all times and places" (Mahnken, 2019, 56). Theorizing strategy can help to identify problems in an analysis of any kinds of power struggles. Understanding those problems of theory can offer ways to find questions for further study of the problematic. Nineteenth-century Prussian strategist Clausewitz put this together as "the purpose of theory is not to uncover fixed laws or principles, but rather to educate the mind" (Clausewitz, 1984, 141). Strategic thinking is thus a generally useful activity, according to him. Using war as prime example of strategic thinking training derives thus from it being a supremely practical endeavour, where the stakes are at its highest (Mahnken, 2019, 57). The applicability is what makes it an ideal object of practice for the theories to be reality-proof. The force that those theories can give rise to need to be usable for political purposes after all. Mahnken writes: "if tactics is about employing troops in battle and operational art is concerned with conducting campaigns, then strategy deals with using military means to fulfil the ends of policy." (Mahnken, 2019, 57-58).

II.4 Power, Ideology and Text

Following an overview over theoretical considerations, it must be wondered, where and how to detect those power relations and ideological utterings. Fairclough states that "conventions routinely drawn upon in discourse embody ideological assumptions which come to be taken as mere 'common sense', and which contribute to sustaining existing power relations." (Fairclough, 1989, 77). Hence, ideologies are so deeply embedded in cultures that they will often not be seen as such in everyday utterances as they are taken for granted in what is perceived in common sense. So to say, they are 'holy narratives' expressing a culture's truths both on an individual's basis and for society (Steinsland, 2013, 28). According to Fairclough, the 'intimate' relationship between power and ideology can be seen in powerful myths, like the one of free speech. Essential for this are constraints of social practice, specifically exclusivity of access to social institutions and their practices, and their leading positions in their practices (Fairclough, 1989, 63).

A classical example for this are ritualistic religions. Rituals such as a church service have constraints on access by requesting the one to officiate it to be an ordained priest. Thus, it is limited to those who fulfil this condition. It is though just one example among many, medical examinations can only be carried out by those who fulfil the constraint to be a medical professional and to achieve this status the individual needed to fulfil other constraints to even enter the preconditions to get access to the opportunity of entering this next level of constraint. Hence, basically, everybody is free to obtain these kinds of qualifications to fulfil constraints, but practically, individuals from the dominant bloc are more likely to actually obtain them. Less institutional assets such as cultural capital can be less equal in its distribution as well, an essential example for this is literacy, access to reading and writing abilities and through them to vast amounts of information constitute great capital (Fairclough, 1989, 63).

The vast power of language, here specifically in its written form is quite the opposite of insignificant. The power of media is infamous in these days as it has always been: careers can be ruined and public images need to be safeguarded. Nowadays with pictures and videos available on the internet within seconds, even faked ones. Previously, through village gossip, satire and oral poetry. The effects of media power work cumulative though. One text by itself can be disregarded as insignificant, only through repetition of information handled with the same causality and agency, media is able to influence the reader. Through positioning, the influence on the reader can gain ubiquity and power through reproduction. The very scale of

modern mass media enables this even more through exposing large parts of populations to relatively homogenous outputs with high levels of exposure. It should be noted though, that "people do negotiate their relationship to ideal subjects, and this can mean keeping them at arms length or even engaging in outright struggle against them" (Fairclough, 1989, 54).

Hence, one must wonder whether the power any kinds of media hold is manipulative. It is impossible to answer this question categorical. The same goes for the question of how hidden this power is. Are those who produce the media aware of the manipulative power and followed ideologies? Or are they unaware as large parts of the crowd are? And which consequences would this have? As Fairclough puts it: "ideology is the most effective when its workings are least visible." (Fairclough, 1989, 85).

It is "about the stories others have told about the stories of others still"[…] [and treating] "these narratives and metanarratives with considerable care and caution" (Lincoln, 1999, ix). Discourses about theses stories lead to assertions being made by those who have heard them and add their own opinions to it or mix them with other stories they have heard, highly consequential. The levels of validity and authority become relative and assertions leave neutrality to join either positively or negatively coloured perceptions. Being passed on they might eventually loose their validity and credibility, even among those who stand positive towards them. Thus, the stories might eventually enter in the world of 'myths'. This comprises powerful assertions being made about its authority as a truth.

The word 'myth' itself derives from the Ancient Greek μῦθος (mȳthos) eventually yielding to λόγος (lógos) in the meaning of 'speech, narrative'. In their early attestations, 'logos' had been used for influencing speech acts with morally judged contents, such as seduction, beguilement, and deception, "through which structural inferiors outwitted those who held power over them" (Lincoln, 1999, x). Contrasting to that, 'mythos' was used for speech acts of the preeminent such as kings or poets, thus being higher ranked in genre and authority. This also made for its powerful backing in claiming truth. This authority remained with the 'mythoi' until well into the fifth and even the fourth centuries BCE, longer than usually expected. This status was not a result of miracles or gradual progress of the human mind, rather the opposite: "fierce polemics bound up in issues simultaneously political, linguistic, and epistemological" (Lincoln, 1999, x). These were outcomes of struggles within Athenian democracy, a spreading of literacy and the overtaking of prose over poetry in the field of literature. The category of myth was loosing so much footing, that the word itself did not even survive the journey over the Mediterranean to the new centre of civilisation in Rome. The Romans invented the term 'fabulae' for what the

Greeks called ‘mythoi’, carrying the implication of unseriousness which they were regarded with, but not carrying further ambiguities.

The name "myth" was only used again with the Renaissance's resurgence of Greek texts and culture, which set the stage for the genre's eventual revival through a series of interconnected events. The main plot point here is the rise of nationalism, especially in light of romanticism, as well as the search for a language and a collection of narratives that may serve as the foundation for the new nation-state. In order to do this, the official, international languages of the church and court were replaced by vernaculars, and myths which were supposed to be constituted as the nation's true voice (Lincoln, 1999, x).

Poetry also possesses the power to evoke strong feelings. Lincoln uses Odysseus as an example to emphasize that it usually causes joy. He describes the gladness of singing at the conclusion of the feast, when food and drink, as well as the sense of abundance, conviviality, and celebration, provide delights for both the body and the soul. The story, however, places more emphasis on sadness than joy, and there aren't many more dramatic moments than when the most seasoned of heroes is moved to tears by Demodocus's poetry—as the others find pleasure in them. Odysseus’s tears are quite relevant because the Odyssey gives the idea that it has somehow resolved or conquered their differences in the lines that connect his sadness to the suffering of the Trojan women. Greek and barbarian, male and female, victorious and defeated, are all brought back together in these lines by the shared experience of suffering and loss (Lincoln, 1999, 22).

However, one should not get caught up in the text too much. It must be stressed that this moment, in which the strongest oppositions are overcome, is not just fiction but also a fiction inside a fiction in order to avoid. Hence, the epic poet tells us a tale about the consequences of a second tale that was told to a man who appears in both tales by a character in the first tale—who is also a (fictive) poet. In reality, poetry is quite limited in its capability of bringing about this kind of healing, but its power may lay in convincing listeners that despite all the evidence to the contrary, this kind of recovery is achievable. Thus, poetry carries a lot of potential in knowledge, truth, emotional, therapeutic, and reconciliatory power.

The term ‘mythos’ carries a set of ideas and images “that might otherwise be blown apart by their own contradictions, achieving such stability by designating the Muses’ otherwise paradoxical act of speech as something one can accept as absolutely true in spite of its

ambiguities and internal contradictions" (Lincoln, 1999, 23). Thus, usage of a term like this can be stabilizing.

Poets gain knowledge of the past from the air the Muses breathe into them and form their words with. But Apollo is the one to gift them knowledge of the future, patron of oracles, sibyls, and seers. Those who speak poetry are also connected to him through attributes such as the laurel of the sceptre and also the lyre. Thus, poets presenting their epics alongside melodies from the lyre, they do not only fuse the powers of music and words, but also implicitly reference their gifts, the knowledge of things past and those yet to come, as much as the sources of these gifts, Apollo and the Muses. Narrative details such as these "reflect and ideologically embellish the institutions and practices of an oral culture whose chief technology for preserving and transmitting traditional knowledge was a poetic speech, the meters, melodies, and formulaic conventions" (Lincoln, 1999, 25). Such conventions serve as memory aids and decoration in the performance. Poetry served as a the main carrier of archived knowledge, being at the same time the prime instrument for the reproduction of this knowledge over time and carrier of options for authoritative discourse.

The rise of the written word eventually brings vast changes along. Those changes are not of immediate and linear fashion, more a slow and struggling development (Lincoln, 1999, 25). The previously mentioned authority on discourse that lies in the nature of poetry was subject to changes in this development as well. The words by themselves, out of their human context, get reduced by their extralinguistic factors such as rhythm, melody accompaniment, and the atmosphere of a joyful occasion such as a feast with friends. They are exposed to re-examination and study by readers independent and unfamiliar of the author and the situation they were written in. Thus, they are subjected to criticism from perspectives that are foreseen by the writer and leave no opportunity to adapt the presentation to the audience or respond to criticism. Nonetheless, poetry retains big parts of the esteem and importance in culture, but "attacks on them begin to appear in the writings of pre-Socratic philosophers in the sixth century." (Lincoln, 1999, 26).

From Plato's times until the Renaissance, the category of myth was not held in particularly high regards. A few endeavours were made to restore the genre by treating myths either as metaphorical recodings of philosophical understandings or as records of old history distorted to the point of being indistinguishable. Yet, for most part, the mythic stories of classical times lost their authoritative status, becoming folktales, local legends and tales while likewise providing a stock collection of themes that could be utilized for entertainment and embroidery. The later

Greeks and Romans did not bother much to engage with these kinds of stories, but when they did, they tended to not take mythoi and fabulae serious and rather see them as entertainment only. Christians on the other hand set them "in stark opposition to the one story they judged authoritative, but emphatically nonmythic: that of the Bible and, above all, Christ's passion"(Lincoln, 1999, 47).

Encoding systematisations in mythic forms, it gives the option to packages it into the narrative in "a specific, contingent system of discrimination in a particularly attractive and memorable form" (Lincoln, 1999, 147). It also gives space to naturalise and legitimise it. Hence, this would make the specific myth an ideology in the shape of a narrative and not just a systematisation anymore. This fits the usual treatment of myths as anonymous and collective products, in which the authorship is usually given little attention. One of those treating myth as a logically structure basically grown by itself and regarding variations in the versions as products of impersonal processes following the variants that it contains until all of them have been tried, was French structuralist Lévi-Strauss. This view might be shared by those who are looking for the original versions and writers of the mythical texts, since it "drains agency from the act of narration" (Lincoln, 1999, 149), but Lincoln regards as unacceptably high price to be paid for it. In any case, assuming that we are to regard myth as a ideological and not just an systematising discussion, a more logic, political hypothesis of portrayal will be required. Specifically one that perceives the limit of storytellers to alter subtleties of the narratives that pass through them, presenting changes in the classificatory request as they do as such. This is most frequently done in manners that mirror their subject position and advance their interests.

According to Lincoln, "myths are not snapshot representations of stable taxonomies and hierarchies, as functionalists would have it. "(Lincoln, 1999, 150). The relation between societal order and those tales is much less personal and tied than this, and hence much more dynamic, creating possibilities for variations by other editors. This opens up options for changes in the established order of earlier versions, which can have far-reaching consequences when the audience takes these innovations as the original. Hence, there is a big margin for storytellers for changes. Most often they would make changes in the representation of socio-taxonomic order to introduce new categories, change the old ones and recalibrate these categories along with the organisation of hierarchic order. Hence, why Lincoln goes for a "characterization of myth as a ideology in narrative form"(Lincoln, 1999, 207).

Besides this very flexible, at times shape-changing outer form of the myth, it can neither be isolated by the category of its object or material. Any material can be endowed with meaning

through speech act. Cognitive perception is key here, speech acts directed towards different senses have the power to create different associations. They can touch upon different kinds of consciousnesses and offer different kinds of readings, depending on it being a written text, picture or orally presented text. Here we are leaving the field of theory as we are dealing with very particular significations, which are connected to very particular images. In case of mythical materials, it is pre-worked speech which has been modified to be fit for communication. Thus, "it is because all the materials of myth (whether pictorial or written) presuppose a signifying consciousness, that one can reason about them while discounting their substance" (Barthes, 1993, 110). Barthes gives the example of a wrestler:

> "When the hero or the villain of the drama, the man who was seen a few minutes earlier possessed by moral rage, magnified into a sort of metaphysical sign, leaves the wrestling hall, impassive, anonymous, carrying a small suitcase and arm-in-arm with his wife, no one can doubt that wrestling holds that power of transmutation which is common to the spectacle and to religious worship." (Barthes, 1993, 25)

This transmutation is very visual:

> "In the ring, and even in the depths of their voluntary ignominy, wrestlers remain gods because they are, for a few moments, the key which opens nature, the pure gesture which separates good from evil, and unveils the form of a justice which is at last intelligible." (Barthes, 1993, 25)

Even though the audience is very aware of the role the persons in the ring play, they are being so pulled into the spectacle, that they endorse the new rules which are being enforced for a brief moment of time in this closed universe inside the ring. It does not matter that societal rules which are usually a part of culture are pushed aside for a moment. It is a moment of living myth in front of the audience's eyes. When this moment is over, societal rules and culture return.

Does not this make one wonder, whether culture and society are ideologies themselves? Usually culture is depicted as "a noble, universal thing, placed outside social choices: culture has no weight [while] ideologies, on the other hand, are partisan inventions" (Barthes, 1993, 81). They stand in opposition to each other and ideology has the worse image. Through this it serves to make the other look better and create a term to bear the weight of being judged (Barthes, 1993, 81-82). This is connected to the signification system to be found in myth: it is a tri-dimensional pattern consisting of the signifier, the significant and the sign. Myth is peculiar though, because it has a second-order semiological system, meaning that "it is constructed from a semiological chain which existed before it" (Barthes, 1993, 114). Here, the associative total of a concept and an image is the sign in the first system. In the second system they turn into the signifier. It is

typical for mythical material to become reduced to signifying function when they enter the stage of ‘myth’. “Myth sees in them only the same raw material; their unity is that they all come down to the status of a mere language” (Barthes, 1993, 114). Independently of the form of the text, pictorial or written, their sum of signs, a global sign, is the final term in a first semiological chain in myth. Here as a final term, it also builds the first one of a greater system, standing over language as a metalanguage, because it is the second language one speaks about the first one in. Since both of them are signs, “both reach the threshold of myth endowed with the same signifying function, that they constitute, one just as much as the other, a language-object” (Barthes, 1993, 115).

II.5 The Power of Words: Poetry and Magic

Creating art with words sounds very much like the main principle of magic, but usually poets are associated with focusing on artistic beauty and aesthetics of their word art pieces and less on their functionality. Here it needs to be considered though that poems can have clear messages as well and do not necessarily only function as decorative pieces. In many cases, especially among the medieval poets of Europe, hidden meanings are gracefully interwoven into word plays of attention-leading rhyme patterns and can be only unlocked by an informed audience. This seems to certainly resemble magical incantations quite closely if taken as a general definition like this. It can be said, that reading a poem is a process, that creates new mental images through reasoning through metaphors and forming of new contents in the mind. Poems contain the power to create, they can make things be reasoned into existence that did not exist before (Selove, 2020, 43). They can create new world with their own inner logics. Alexander Key suggests that "within the triad of language, mind, and reality, poetry is concerned only with language and mind" (Key, 2018, 197). Poetry works thus as an interaction and influence on reality, quite alike a magician, through connecting the microcosmos and analogies to artistic speech (Selove, 2020, 44). Analogies and similarities are a topic that is common between the two categories and provides a powerful option for manipulation.

Some accounts of poets who were able to predict their rivals' words before they were written down are testimonial of their mastery of language and their perception of the underlying, hidden connections and order between macrocosm and its reflections in the microcosm of man. Through this connection, poets can in some sense manipulate the one through the other by addressing elements of nature and their reflections between micro- and macrocosm (Selove, 2020, 45).

As Raïssa Maritain puts it, logical sense, hence rationality, "is not to be required in poetry for its own sake [….] and yet [..] to some degree, it always accompanies the poetic work" (Maritain and Maritain, 1955, 1). This logical sense can appear either explicitly or implicitly cooperating with intelligence. In opposite to that, the poetic sense can not be left out,

> "it is one with poetry itself […] [and] causes the poem to be, by being the form (in Aristotelian language) or the idea (in the language of Spinoza) of this body, by giving it a substantial signification, an ontological sense." (Maritain and Maritain, 1955, 1).

In the Middle Ages, many poems are the makings of court poets for example, which in many cases were commissioned by the local authorities, frequently kings and lords, and thus had quite

clear messages, such as praise for the particular lord or heroizing a particular event such as a battle or similar. Hence, they had a clear purpose. This can quite straight forward be considered as a strategy of power establishment through marketing, to use modern terms. Just like an eye-catching advertisement video nowadays, a king would advertise his supreme status and power through poetry. This was obviously not the only channel though, considering for example the classic images of jousting or other kinds of amusement fights or similar through out the centuries, or other kinds of materiality, such as expensive clothes, houses, castles, armour and other fitments. There are a lot of ways to show off one's wealth and power, but in times with no internet to reach millions of people within seconds, one had to invest in other ways to spread this image and let people further away from the place, where the person of power was on display, know about their legendary deeds. Poetry was one of the ways to do this, since a poem, spread and retold everywhere, retelling those deeds and maybe packaging them into a fancy story, will spread the person in question's power by manifesting it in people's minds. Hence, the only way to not have to fight for your kingly rights on every corner of the street in each meeting with a person who could equally as much claim kingship, for example. "Poetry in all its form seeks, as we said above, to liberate a substantial experience" (Maritain, 1955, 21).

According to Maritain, poetry and mysticism differentiate by nature and type of knowledge. They differ by being affective knowledge, which is connected to new creations, in opposite to speculative knowledge, which unifies objects with reality. Magical powers have always been a temptation to poets though. It is the proper function of art, to create something for its self worth. Poetry involves a self-consciousness as poetry and its function as proper art, the creation of an object. Actually, it is less of a physical object than more a "self-sufficient universe, without the need of signifying anything but itself and in which the soul must allow itself to be enclosed blindfolded[…]the effluvia of night that penetrate to the heart without one's knowing how" (Martian, 1955, 45). In its consciousness as poetry, it is also of importance that poetry is "immersed in an infinity of infra-conscious, supre-conscious mystery to be discovered and come to know" (Martain, 1955, 45) as part of its essential poetic state. Through this, the poet can choose the dimension they wish to create.

It is the psychological dimension of power, that is induced by legend and story. People will make way for a king of whose great name and deeds they have heard of, even though they have never seen his face nor his skills with the sword or word. That poetry is a reliable way to spread this image is a well-known fact, basing itself on the comparatively greater ease for the brain of

remembering fast structures and rhyming words. Hence, making it easier to spread information in schematic form. As Johan Bürgel beautifully puts it:

> "The licit magic of poetry […] had many aspects . . . it extended from word juggling and rhetorical artistry to the skilful and meaningful establishment of harmonies comparable to the procedures of the sorcerer. It wielded the power of praise and imprecation, of changing a man's moods, emotions, and situations. It allowed itself a fanciful play with the universe, based upon the analogies between macrocosm and microcosm, and attained the highest form of "licit magic" […]: the transmutation of the visible world into a mirror of the invisible." (Bürgel, 2006, 84)

This would set poetry as 'licit magic' in opposite to spells as 'illicit magic'. Bürgel, who is writing about Medieval Islamic poetry, explains that the ability of man as microcosm to embody the cosmos allows him to reflect the creative powers of God in his creative imagination (Bürgel, 2006, 17f). Poetry functions thus as a information carrier with the option to touch upon great powers and channelling them into more or less societally legitimized forces of influence. Hence, it is an instrument holding great powers. To add to his argument, Bürgel adds a translation of a poem by the 14th century Persian scholar Al-Jurjānī

> Rhymes exercise a subtle sorcery,
>
> poetry is like smokeless fire.
>
> Though worthy of the highest praise,
>
> musk becomes carcass through satire.
>
> Some syllables and letters slight
>
> have overthrown many a sire
>
> (Bürgel, 2006, 65)

Though he is mainly referring to the hazardous consequences a teasing satire poem can have to a person's status talking about societal ruin and social death, clearly it can contain other kinds of bad intentions as well. Putting a person on a public scaffold, metaphorically speaking, is still an indirect way to harm them, since it is not one's own hands being drenched in their blood. Cursing them to meet some kind of harm leading to their demise or death in private is a direct action against the other person. Thus, maybe the distinction between smoking and smokeless fire here.

Originally, satirists were often seen to have preternatural skills, which comes quite close to magical ones. The distinction between the two categories was at times quite blurry. "Some satirists achieve their malefic ends merely by uttering their incentives (or mockery or riddling

verses – whatever form their satire takes) the power seems to reside in the words themselves, often in a special concatenation of words, rhymes, and rhythms" (Elliott, 1960, 50). It was not uncommon either to call upon gods or involve certain magical practices in the performance of satire. Blending different sources of power and combining different methods of using it lead to a combination of powers. At the same time, satirists keeping away from the position of magicians, were bypassing the possibly dangerous position of being object to the ambivalent emotional attitudes towards magicians (Elliott, 1960, 258-259). Sticking to the 'inferior' genre of becoming a 'mere' poet, as usually self-titled, might seem like the safer option. But early law codes are often meticulously regulated satirist's activities by rewarding 'good' satire, the one seen to serve society, and heavily sanctioning 'bad' satire, which was seen as danger to society. This showcases the ambiguous attitude towards poets.

The distinct case of Irish literature, which we shall return to later on, gets described as "the great and fertile source of material on the early relation of satire to magic" (Elliott, 1960, 18). As Elliott puts it: "history, myth, saga, folktale- these intertwined in such a way that no separation of categories is possible" (Elliott, 1960, 19). Besides the rigorous blending of genres, all of them are united by the power the poets hold by satirizing, shaming and praising.

This is a phenomenon which goes back to oral histories before writing. In case of the Irish heroic sagas for example, many of them survive in text from around the 8th century, but are based on much earlier traditions of oral nature. This is the case for most early narrative writings in other cultures as well. The representation of historical fact, or at least the presence of historically factual substrates, was for a long time taken for granted in scholarship dealing with early texts as sources. Many of the famous heroic persons were taken as actual historical persons "around whom, it was conceded, a good deal of legend had accumulated." (Elliott, 1960, 19). This view has been abandoned in the recent years. Here it is essential to consider that many heroes of the sagas are presented as gods and not humans. They are mythic persons. It seems quite clear that there was a process of euhemerism, the interpretation of mythologic accounts following the presumption of them originating in real events or persons, probably early on in the Christian era (Elliott, 1960, 20). Hence, the exaggerations and accumulations of material onto historical accounts making them into myths in the first place, but giving insights into cultural mores at the same time. This theorizing of mythology based on historicality "disfigures the features of the gods familiar to us from (classical) literature and mythology – their supernatural powers […]- that it sounds peculiar and marginal, though perhaps too dull and prosaic to count as an exotic curiosity" (Pugh, 2021, 1). The idea itself is neither marginal nor

new, it was already widespread, though controversial in Antiquity, Middle Ages and so on. As Pugh puts it: “At many points throughout this long history, euhemerism’s radical revisionary powers were harnessed in the service of polemic for various religious and political causes: even when mainstream, it was still capable of being weaponized” (Pugh, 2021,1)

The term ‘Euhemerism’ itself originates in Euhemerus, a person, who about 300 BCE described the ancient gods and goddesses as ordinary people who lived ordinary lives, died and were buried in known places (Cooke, 1927, 397). He was the first to write this phenomenon down, but the concept lived on: Medieval people continued the viewpoint regarding those called as gosds as not only mere shapes of imagination, but as real people who had existed and had had real powers. Most commonly this was regarded as respect of their descendants who carried their legacy on and thus carried them into the realm of myths, becoming god-like figures with time. This explains the origin of the gods in a quite human way. How these mortal men could turn into gods was usually following a set of explanations: firstly, the fabrication of myths by poets which were deifying them and adding more and more potency to the stories with time. Secondly, especially in the later Middle Ages, it would have been assumed that these so-called gods had received support to achieve god-like powers, such as through help from the devil or demons, or through “alignment of the pagan gods with the planets of the same name which [..]were thought to possess actual power” (Cooke, 1927, 396). These explanations would appear independently of each other. “Quite different is the attitude taken toward euhemerism by the early fathers” (Cooke, 1927, 397). Here, the attitude was hostile towards the ‘pagans’ and thus eager to use an euhermeristic viewpoint to weaken the image of their antagonists, because why would anybody worship gods who are only men.

In the early twentieth century, the viewpoint shifted to the so called ‘disenchantment’. Max Weber argued that the rationalisation of capitalism had entailed the decline of all forms of supernaturalism and thus led to a disenchantment of modernity (Bever and Styers, 2017, 1). Theoretical frameworks related to secularization and rationalization suggested that religion, should it endure, would primarily serve as a limited source of moral direction and personal inspiration within the contemporary societal structure. However, these ideas made the assumption that magic and other alternative supernaturalisms would eventually go away due to their unredeemable ignorance and crude irrationalism. However, it turned out that the assumption of magic's impending extinction were highly exaggerated (Bever and Styers, 2017, 1).

As Lévi-Strauss states: “it was thought that science could only exist by turning its back upon the world of the senses” (Lévi-Strauss, 1978, 5). Older generations of mythical thought considered the world of sensory impressions a delusive one. The real world was the one directed by mathematical principles “which could only be grasped by the intellect and which was entirely at odds with the false testimony of the senses” (Lévi-Strauss, 1978, 5). In opposite to that mythical stories seem to be ‘meaningless and absurd’, even though they are spread to every corner of the world. Lévi-Strauss argues that as “a fanciful creation of the mind in one place would be unique—you would not find the same creation in a completely different place” (Lévi-Strauss, 1978, 7). Yet, they are repeatedly appearing, thus there must be an order behind the “apparent disorder” (Lévi-Strauss, 1978, 7). Thus, it is possible to have meaning without order. Semantics is the discipline which researches the meaning of words. Lévi-Strauss comments on this: “What does ‘to mean’ mean? It seems to me that the only answer we can give is that ‘to mean’ means the ability of any kind of data to be translated in a different language. [...]Now, what would a translation be without rules?” (Lévi-Strauss, 1978, 8). Without rules on meaning, it would be impossible to understand. Otherwise, any words would mean anything. Thus, there needs to be a system putting rules in place to have people speak of the same thing with the same words to enable communication. Hence, a basic rule of humanity, “the common denominator is always to introduce some kind of order” (Lévi-Strauss, 1978, 8).

In Modern days any kinds of superstitions or religions are believed to stand in stark contrast to science. Science is predicated based on the precise recognition of definite and constant quantitative relations between causes and effects. Superstition is counted as a subclass of magic, however the most primitive kind of magic, since it is predicated based on the idea of repetition of supernatural events, rather than any belief in actual supernatural power. The effect is thought to follow upon the cause without the mediation of a force passing from the magician. The category of superstition is sometimes considered to be “too cognitively archaic to lead to science and too impersonal to lead to religion” (Styers, 2017, 28) and thus clearly different from science. This is relevant because literature tends to not differentiate between superstition and magic, the terms are often interchangeably in use and are considered as each others subsets. According to Styers, this is connected to the irrationality which is often cited to be a response and desire in the human perception and is a product of “repetition of behaviour based on erroneously or irrationally formed causal linkages [hence, making] almost all habitual human behaviour become suspect, since habitual behaviour often fails to demonstrate its instrumental basis” (Styers, 2017, 28). This makes the ideal of rationality quite limited.

II.6 Psychology and Cognition of Magic

Magic is quite a rich resource for information to psychology on variety of fields such as cognition, behavioural science, development and transcultural components. The robust set of the magician has yet more potential to be explored by science. Psychologists Raz, Olsen and Kuhn write about the possibility of "incorporating these effects into existing experimental, or even clinical, paradigms paves the road to innovative trajectories in the study of human behaviour" (Raz, Olsen, Kuhn, 2016, 2). Examples for this could be study of behaviour of persons in situations were they believe to make choices that they did not make. It also offers itself for easier approaches in the original environment in opposite of created situations in the laboratory.

Thinking back of the environment of magic in the younger history, for example the Early Modern witch trials, also opens for research on interpersonal aggression, adult bullying and power misuse. It offers great resources for everyday aggression research and people's coping with it in official and unofficial situations in past times. In modern times, for example school bullying is a 'significant public health concern world-wide', but also spousal and child abuse at home and many other situations (Bever, 2016, 196). Research about these distressing features bases itself on intragroup aggression, which makes for an entire field of research itself. Comparing bullying and the experience of witchcraft shows that there are "obvious similarities between human and non-human forms [intragroup aggressions] and when individuals fail to use culturally appropriate methods of anger management, cultures have specific labels to describe them" (Bever, 2016, 196). Since Enlightenment, allegations of witchcraft tend to be perceived as conspiracy and diabolical, but rejected based on disbelief in their effects or even existing practice. It can not be rejected though, that human aggression based on witchcraft beliefs did occur and had severe consequences for their victims and society at large (Bever, 2016, 196).

It should be reviewed though, how beliefs in magic happening came to be. For this, it is a precondition to understand, that under certain conditions, humans "are prepared to suspend initially strong beliefs in the permanence of perceived objects and start believing in mind-over-matter" (Subbotsky, 2010, 82). It asks for belief suspension in permanence of objects and its possibility for them to be imagined instead of being a perceived object. This means mind over matter- magic would be replaced by mind-over-mind magic, hence changing imagined objects that change people's minds to physical objects outside of the mind being altered. It is quite

common, that objects being part of magical practices are imagined and not perceived. Examples of this can be healing spells, prophecies or astrology. The role that magical thinking plays in assessing the success of these manipulative techniques needs to be based on knowledge of the fundamental functions of manipulation through magic.

Imagining future or destiny scenarios by an individual about themselves needs a special kind of imagining because they can be interrupted by unforeseen circumstances. Subbotsky calls them "personally significant imagined" objects (Subbotsky, 2010, 91). They included thoughts on future about oneself, close ones, personally significant environments, risky activities, health and activities they find meaning in. These kinds of events are of emotional significance and personal value in opposite to other imagined objects that will chancge in the future, such as the weather or similar. The emotional significance makes for higher vulnerability to magical manipulations. This can make even otherwise usually rational individuals become prone to superstitions, because it affects their own future lives. It is because of this, that "practices and persuasion techniques used in magic, religion, psychotherapy, politics, and commercial advertising target these personally significant imagined objects" (Subbotsky, 2010, 92). This leads to endorsement of mind-over-mind magic in regard to personally significant imagined objects and reasoning for the persistence of religious and magical practices. These kinds of objects offer reality, as they are possibilities that can come true. The possible reality of these objects, the own future destiny, make them highly vulnerable and thus accessible by other people who offer ways to influence them. These people can have altruistic intuitions as much as more pragmatic ones, but their methods of dealing with other people's personally significant imagined objects will be quite similar and tend to be based on psychological mechanism participation (Subbotsky, 2010, 95).

The performance of acts which use magic as a catalyser for the outcome to happen inherently is characterised as defying the laws of nature. The question is though, does nature have laws? Or are those rules set by the human mind who's most relevant advance in evolution away from our fellow animals is its ability to categorize everything perceived? To approach this question, it is necessary to examine cognitive principles governing humans' perception and their link to comprehension (Ekroll et.al., 2017, 91). That is categorisation of new experiences in comparison with previous or learned experiences, hence experience-based categorisation, versus discovery of new information which does not fit any of the established categories. Thereby, how humans' experience of acts with for them unintelligible mechanisms and their reason about them play a central role in any act of magic.

Previously it was said, that magic can inform psychology, with particular benefits for the cognitive, social, developmental, and transcultural components of behavioural science. Raz, Olsen and Kuhn name the psychology of deception as a relatively understudied field, which explores the intentional creation of false beliefs and how people often go wrong. Understanding how to methodically exploit the tenuous twilight zone of human vulnerabilities – perceptual, logical, emotional, and temporal – becomes all the more revealing when top-down influences, including expectation, symbolic thinking, and framing, join the fray (Raz et.al., 2016, 3).

Most of the modern studies about the psychology and cognition of magic, just as the Raz, Olsen, Kuhn study and the Ekroll, Sayim, Wagemans study which are cited above, take their starting point in modern magical trickery performed by professional 'magicians' as part of a stage show. Hence, they are talking about performance tricks which are designed not to be understood by an untrained audience and are intended to seem impossible to go through with and thus totally unexplainable when they nevertheless work out on stage. Stage magic is based on different sets of misdirection tricks, requiring the magician to have considerable understanding on the tricks individual parts to make them seem flawlessly flowing, even though many of the elements to this trick sets are essentially self-working, because they are speaking to automatised processes of cognition and perception. Failure of visual metacognition is an essential part of any magical experience, it consists of "a major gap between what humans actually perceive and what they intuitively believe they are able to perceive" (Ekroll et.al. 2017, 92). This is due to the limited processing capacity of the brain. Rather than processing every intake of perceptual information, the attentional system is working with priorities for information depending on their importance. Thus, less relevant information is cut out. In magic performance, there is a row of things happening at the same time and distraction of attention can prevent the audience from perceiving all the crucial details. This offers great insights into the limitations of human cognition, which has attracted the attention of scientists to studying magic in the recent years. Here, the focus lies on the misdirection and research is being done on the key principles of misdirection in magical endeavours. This kind of research gives us a chance to gain a more systematised approach towards misdirection and help to move beyond anecdotal descriptions (Kuhn et al, 2022, 17).

Misdirection has several types of cognitive mechanisms: firstly, there are procedures manipulating perceptual mechanisms, which potentially prevent people from noticing an event. All types of attentional misdirection principals are in this category, since attention plays a key role in understanding which aspects of the world are perceived at all. There are lots of

techniques to influence people's attentional focus, for example by salient features such as lighting or sound. These can be used to shift the attention towards or away from a spot. This is proven to be very effective at preventing people's notice of an event happening right in front of them (Kuhn et al., 2022, 18). Secondly, narrative are used to orchestrate the audience's attention and manipulate their internal motivation to attend to what is happening.

Amodal absence is another factor in perception. It means that our brains automatically complete patterns, even though parts of it might be invisible because they are covered. The term indicates a feeling of curiosity of hidden parts actually being there and having a definite shape, even though their existence has obviously not being proven by the person perceiving it. It is a kind of amodal completion of spaces that are technically empty (Ekroll, 2017, 98). If the magician is coordinating the movement with he hidden object well enough, it can evoke impressive illusions based on the amodal absence based on increased level of accidentalness. Tricks based on this amodal perception are particularly robust. Visual organisation in the brain automatically fills the gaps of hidden parts of any object in the perception of it and it is hard to reverse this process as they are mere parts of more comprehensive figural units (Ekroll, 2017, 101). Hence, it is difficult for the audience to find out what is actually going on and consciously ignoring the information they receive from their brains, which makes the tricking process quite sturdy and even more reliable than attentional misdirection based tricks. In combination, the visual fixedness makes it almost impossible to consciously overcome the cognitively impenetrable illusion of amodality (Ekroll, 2017, 102). Failures of visual metacognition like these are the basis for the creation of strong magical experiences, especially as it makes it almost impossible for the audience to even suspect that they are not noticing something. Combining the two types of visual metacognition failures, attention and amodal perception, makes for a counterintuitive misdirection and it not being recognized as a misdirection at the same time. Even if the magicians themselves are not aware of these processes, they know from experience how to perform to fullfill the criteria for these processes to work. Throughout history there has been a vibrant exchange of knowledge of practitioners of magic and those trying to gain advantages over others, hence lots of exchange of knowledge without necessarily understanding all the processes behind them (Kuhn et al, 2022, 14).

Considering this spread of practices, it must be a question of how this kind of knowledge did not become public and even further, how did beliefs and actions like this persist, even if more people knew that they are tricks? Well, "the adaptive human tendency to understand, control, and make meaning out of occurrences in the world probably lies at the heart of magic and

religion" (Rozin and Nemeroff., 1999, 503). Humans tend to seek personalised and humanised accounts of impersonal forces and random events to satisfy the human mind. Magical beliefs offer a particular pervasiveness here based on: firstly, the naturality and intuitiveness of this kind of thinking to the human mind, second, moderately accurate predictions made by magical thinking, and thirdly, the performative function of magical acts and rituals.

Magical beliefs tend to take the particular forms they have because of natural guidance of intuition about the nature of the world humans live in. Furthermore, they possess the ability to give accounts which can be satisfying, anxiety-reducing and accurate. Thinkers like Freud and Piaget theorized that "these intuitions may derive from primary process thought (Freud), failure to distinguish the self from the world (Piaget), preprogrammed or readily acquired cognitive heuristics, or the very nature of symbolic thinking." (Rozin and Nemeroff, 1999, 503). Some of this received support through certain beliefs turning out 'true', such as for example the cholera being contagious.

Some widespread principles are the laws of sympathetic magic originally described by by Tylor (1879), Frazer (1890) and Mauss(1902). They are described as basic features of the human mind, which are projected onto the world and form belief of associated or symbolically related things actually belonging together and being causually linked (Rozin and Nemeroff, 1999, 503). This can be summarised to principles such as 'like produces like' or 'the image equals the object', forming a law of similarity. It elevates likeness of objects or forms to a causal principle. It can connect likeness with identity, hence equalling appearance to reality.

This is a quite straight-forward concept to the mind, but can become problematic due to humans' nature of making artefacts imitating the world around them. Through this, it is easy to influence things that are depicted in these artefacts through the law of similarity. An example of its implementation could be the harming of the effigy of a person to cause harm to the real person. The term 'nominal realism', embossed by Piaget, titled the difficulty in understanding an arbitrary relation between a term and its referent. Similar to this is the difficulty of adults of disregarding given information they know is wrong. An example for this is putting a label saying 'poison' on a bottle of juice (Rozin and Nemeroff, 1999, 503).

Related to the law of similarity is the law of contagion: when two objects come into physical contact, as brief as it may be, properties are being transmitted between them and linger permanently. A valenced source is usually connected to a target, which can be a person, through a vehicle. An example of this would be celebrity token hunting. In opposite to similarity,

contagion comprises things not being what they seem to be as they are bearers of the traces of their history, even though they are invisible. Among adults, magical contagion usually gets attributed to health risk aversions, but this account is insufficient "when their aversion remains after the contaminant has been rendered harmless (e.g. sterilized)" (Rozin and Nemeroff, 1999, 504). These kind of head vs heart conflicts are often exposed by magical thinking. Typical properties of contagion are: firstly, the necessity of physical contact, secondly, the permanence of the effect, thirdly, dose and route insensitivity, meaning the sufficiency of even very brief contact with any part of the source producing the full effect. Further properties are the negativity dominance, meaning that negative contagion usually is more powerful and widespread, and the options of properties to be physical or mental, hence luck or intention, and lastly, the option for contagion to work in reverse direction, when effects flow back from the recipient or vehicle to the source (Rozin and Nemeroff, 1999, 504).

In general, from the cognitive perspective, the most important points of magical ritual are usually explained by direct or indirect manipulation of a person's nervous system. This can refer to the practitioner's or the target person's or both of them. An example for this is one of the most frequent causes for witchcraft treatments: illness, as "healing is frequent focus of charms and magico-religious rituals in general, and psychologically supportive therapeutic activities can have similarly potent effect on the course and outcome of a wide variety of ailments" (Bever, 2017, 37). Magical ritual often includes states of altered consciousness necessary for the performance of the ritual, such as prophecy. They often make use of ideomotor activities to access conscious awareness of unconscious knowledge. For incantations forms of neuro-linguistic self-programming can "consciously cultivate the kind of hostile displays of emotion that occur spontaneously in witchcraft" (Bever, 2017, 37). To achieve altered states of consciousness rituals can involve demanding, protracted exercises leading to ecstatic trance conditions, which are meant to enable the practitioner to interact with non-human autonomous intelligences or reach unusual powers.

As "magical beliefs can be seen to be rational-verbal representations of associational-imagic processes and their products" to counteract magic in a variety of forms based on explicit renunciations of these beliefs "serves the purpose of excluding them from the conscious network of linguistic representations of the world and preludes their employment in the conscious formulation of deliberate actions" (Bever, 2017, 37). At the same time, there are suggestions, that there might be alternative, resistant neural circuitries at work, which have the task to process unwanted advice. These internal regulations can be transformations of external

imperatives, which follow a range of forms of repression present, such as judicial punishment, religious sanctions, communal pressure. Concepts of repression also point at the function of mediating structures. It is the right frontal lobe of the brain which is particularly involved with this. It is here where the associational-imagic cognition and autonomic body processes are processed and output is created. The left frontal lobe on the other hand is more employed on rational-linguistic cognition and relations with the external world. This prevents the brain of bringing the significant part of the body of understanding into the awareness of the consciousness (Bever, 2017, 38). The left frontal lobe is able to recognize information as undesirable and block it from being transferred to the right hemisphere at all. At the same time, the right frontal lobe can detect information recognized through emotion as forbidden and prevent it from spreading over to the left hemisphere. This works as a prevention of including this information understood as inadmissible to enter into the information processing in the left hemisphere.

To understand what consequences these kind of neural connections of the human brain have, it must be considered, how experiments are conducted. Especially in a Medieval context, the modern reader will find a lot of these experiments reported as the practical methods of the foremost in their days as seemingly unreal and curious at best. As Benedek Láng puts it: "the puzzle is the following: medieval texts on natural magic, talismans, divination, and angel magic report practical methods " (Láng, 2017, 49), these kinds of texts were widespread in the Middle Ages and some of the most educated people of the time, such as learned monks, court intellectuals and university masters, certainly capable of reflections, copied and collected them. Thus, the question, what did they think about these kinds of practices? Certainly it is impossible to exclude the possibility that there was some scepticism among them, concerning both methods and sources. At the same time, there is "no reason to doubt that most of these texts were copied with a fairly strong conviction that the procedures outlined in them were valid" (Láng, 2017, 50). Certainly, the genres of texts were varying and perceived in various ways, but often enough, they were practical scientific text, which were meant for actual use, following along with marginal notes and various background information. Following this, the question is:

> "why didn't the scribes and collectors see that it was impossible to become invisible with the help of herbs etc? How did these persons fail to recognize that the methods they were copying were nonsense? Did they not see that the mechanism of magic is obviously false, and that its falsity can be easily shown in practice with the help of simple experiment?" (Láng, 2017, 50).

Concerning questions like this, it must be wondered whether they are legitimate questions in themselves or just naïve and anachronistic. Metalevel considerations like this depend obviously on the person answering. Scholars of traditional, positivist background might regard questions like this as legitimate but uninteresting, based on the view that the kinds of experiments in question can be seen as clearly falsified by simple counterevidence or only pseudoscientific through the avoidance of empirical falsification through ad hoc hypotheses (Láng, 2017, 50). Views like this were later reviewed and given a bit more leniency as it was argued that many scientific theories are immediately falsified after their birth, which does not necessarily lead to their immediate abandonment. Rather, "a constructive reaction to the falsificatory attempts can allow theories to develop in ways that enable them to conform to the empiria better" (Láng, 2017, 51). In more recent times the impact of contextualism has led to views of leaving evidence of historical subjects as it is and not attempt to judge them on being real or not (Láng, 2017, 53). There can obviously be no single explanations for phenomena like this. Why theories of magic were not falsified by negative experiments is a question with a myriad of interconnected answers, impossible to summarise in one answer.

On an other note, it must be considered that in many cases magical practices probably worked and delivered outcomes which seemed satisfying to those seeking them. Thus, many methods must have been regarded as very valid and reliable. To try to understand why negative outcomes did not destroy such confidences, it must be considered that there are various types of magical practices. Different kinds of proof are regarded as necessary for the belief in supernatural entities as are for mechanical processes of science. It might seem "fairly absurd to construct scientific experiments in order to test the efficacy of prayers and to count the percentage of those prayers that prove successful" (Láng, 2017, 55). The basic discrepancy between Medieval and contemporary attitudes towards scientific experiments should also be considered. In a Medieval setting, the "notion of experiment was not understood to be something involving a number of controlled experimental situations, but rather as commonly shared knowledge described by traditional practitioners and authorities" (Láng, 2017, 56). Authority of ancient knowledge was held in high regards. Thus, claims of ancient books were held superior over repeated experiments and counterexamples. But because a lot of knowledge came from cultures and languages that were not familiar to those dealing with the texts, it can be assumed that problems with understandings of meanings, metaphors and texts and even just problems with translation and correcting copying did occur. Specifically in the field of magical knowledge and scientific knowledge in general, large parts of instructions came from Arabic and Jewish

cultures and preceded the European Middle Ages by several hundred years. While this last one is a very plausible one, it needs to be remembered, that all of these arguments are hypothetical ones as it is almost impossible to find records showing how practitioners interpreted failed magical experiments surviving to this day (Láng , 2017, 58).

II.7 Magic and Socioeconomics

As terms like ‘magic’ and ‘witchcraft’ are in Modern days often brushed off as insignificant fantasy or only associated with the ‘dark, medieval times’, it must not be forgotten that belief in magic has a long history not without reasons and its serious impact on people’s daily lives throughout this history. As many scholars have demonstrated in their works, it can not be portrayed as mass delusion or credulity what was leading to Europe’s witch trials, the probably most known part of witchcraft history. As Owen Davies puts it: “ The greatest minds of the era believed in the reality of witchcraft and magic. […] [This] belief was not some evolutionary stage that society passed through on the way to general enlightenment and scientific progress.” (Davies, 2017, v). Actually, it is quite the opposite, through the topic of witchcraft and magic, it is possible to get rare insights into the human psyche and analyse the multilayered structures of relationships both between individuals and in the bigger picture of societal development and changes in the past (Davies, 2017, vi). Societal changes in history may as well be studied through other phenomena such as wars, but studying people’s beliefs gives a deeper insight into people’s minds, their moral conceptions and their motivations to act. As religions differ, it is useful to study magic as it is a phenomenon which both overarches differences and shows of divisions between ideologies. It seems almost like a concept elevated above religion in its possible use to analyse ideologies because of its status of being othered and outside of the standard. In other words, because the category of magic is often perceived as forbidden or secret and magical practices outside of societal norms, it gives insight in people stepping over these moral and societal boundaries and thereby what these norms were and what reasons they had to abandon these norms.

Previously, it was hinted at several times, that magic is an integral part of religion and culture, which is usually accepted as the explanation of events that otherwise have no societally accepted explanation. Based on this, it needs to be taken into account, that it was for the longest times absolutely normal to accept magic, together with witchcraft and prophecy, as a part of nature and society as these are phenomena which have closed logical systems and provide a rational system of causation (Jolly et al, 1999). In Modern times, awareness might not be as high about this fact, but scholars of witchcraft and specifically the witch trials for example should not be underestimated in their role as educators about the psychological realities of witchcraft beliefs and the dangers of panic and persecution for society (Hutton, 2007, 121).

Large parts of these beliefs are associated with fear and social constructions, very real and powerful instruments.

According to Gershman's research, numerous ethnographic case studies show that witchcraft beliefs can have a direct adverse effect on interpersonal relations and cooperation (Gershman, 2016, 183). The two main channels for this are the fostering of fear of bewitchment and the spreading of fear of witchcraft accusations. The impending consequences vary from severe sanctions, destruction of property, ostracism to ritual killing (Gershman, 2016, 183).

Research in preindustrial small-scale societies suggests that present witchcraft beliefs can have associations of specific personality traits in children, which include aggressiveness and mistrust, resulting from inculcation. Gershman's research even suggests that "lower trust among second-generation immigrants in Europe can be traced back to higher prevalence of witchcraft beliefs in their countries of ancestry" (Gershman, 2016, 183). Usually, witchcraft is considered a cause of illness in those preindustrial societies. Hence, parents cultivate toughness in their children instead of sociability through emphasis on aggressiveness and competitiveness. It seems that witchcraft beliefs even interfere with development aid projects in some places as it is not uncommon to use them as instruments of intimidation following political and ideological purposes. Thus, there are possible social costs following the spread beliefs in witchcraft, such as diminished trust and willingness for cooperation. Even though there is no reason to assume, that witchcraft beliefs do not have benefits as well. Actually, anthropology has long traditions to argue for the pervasiveness in regard to efficiency and adaptability that witchcraft beliefs relate to.

Gershman's study mentions that there is "recent anecdotal evidence from Liberia, [where] witchcraft and sorcery-based killings have effectively paralyzed civil society [. . .] creating an environment of such pervasive interpersonal suspicion and competition that not even the most basic forms of social cooperation can get off the ground" (Gershman, 2016, 197). As tragic as this sounds, it supports the theory of three relevant traits of sociability: trust, honesty and generosity. Trust is here referring to the confidence in social relationships, particularly outside of the own family. Toughness, on the other hand, refers to aggressiveness, fortitude, and competitiveness. In its influence on the econometric framework there are two groups of regressors in this setting of interest: "geographic controls and proxies for economic development that could be confounding the relationship between superstitious beliefs and socialization of children to certain values and traits" (Gershman, 2016, 197).

At the same time are witchcraft accusations a threat for everyone: they can be directed towards the poor as much as the rich. While the poor might be accused to be driven by envy towards the members in community that have more wealth, the rich might have to deal with accusations of resorting to witchcraft to promote their own fortunes to the better. These kinds of fears have a stiffening influence on society, they prevent social mobility and obstruct deviation from the established order (Gershman, 2016, 198). This aggravates the desperation for the poor even more, leading to higher rates of violence, as it is well known that people bearing desperation and 'nothing to loose' tend to be more willing to commit crimes (Miguel, 2005, 1153). This is a well-known phenomenon in anthropology where acute environmental stress induced by poverty has been observed to direct itself towards weaker members of the community which then get seen as burdens. This can explain economic motivations for witch killings. Particularly older women tend to be targeted here. This is mostly the case because local leaders tend to be men, specifically elderly men, who "provide households with valuable access to political power" (Miguel, 2005, 1158). When patrilocal exogamy is practiced, the relocation of the wife in the husband's home town and family upon marriage, it leads to a weakening in social standing for women as they are no longer supported by a surrounding of close relatives and childhood friends, particularly in old age. This makes them more vulnerable for attacks. The other obvious target are children, being of little economic value in young age and maybe limited in their skill to explain certain happenings, they are particularly susceptible to mistreatment.

II.8 Principles of Magic

Previously, I have tried to give an overview on the psychological and cognitive dealings with magical imagery on the micro-level of an individual. To understand the macro-level of groups and society on this topic, it is necessary to have a look at the principles of magic as an understanding with social impact.

Firstly, the word 'magic' itself comes from the Persian word 'maguŝ', meaning 'priest', which was adopted into Greek in form of 'μαγεία' 'mageía' and later into Latin 'magīa'. Deriving from the Persian name for their Zoroastrian priests, at first it did carry suspect and dangerous connotations in Greek texts. Later it developed into a more generally used term for all kinds of supernatural abilities. Followers of monotheistic religions such as Christians and Jews "tried to dissociate themselves from magic by calling their own rituals 'theurgy'(from Greek), 'divine work', and from this emerged the discussion of white versus black magic" (Varberg, 2023, 268).

Behind this term lies a rational thought-system. Magic or the restoration of order, the well-chosen title of Monika Schulz's book basically says it all. But what does the restoration of order comprise?

Firstly, the modalities of magic: in most cases they are based on congruence with situations and not with a objective reality. They are not based on an independent reality but on a constructed reality based on the situation. Humans understand natural phenomena not based on one-time occurrence but on what turns them into manifestations of common laws. A common law, on the other hand, can not do justice to the individual character of a single event. Magic is based on a supernatural cause, especially when it occurs suddenly and constructs a reality, a theory of causes, which is able to answer the crucial questions on why that specific person is affected. Magic functions only as a correcting intervention, because it is the only one having its starting point in a person, while nothing can be done against natural disasters. Within a system of deterrence and banishment, magic creates the option to advance against causative demons and with that, potential for action (Schulz, 2000, 24). Magic also functions with an aspect of proportionality: out of natural causality it is mostly assumed when a certain size of harm is reached since demons and witches will not intervene with insignificant disruptions.

Magic can have a causa proxima or a causa remota. Hence, an immediate, self-evident or an indirect, hidden, access-deprived cause (Schulz, 2000, 27). This goes mostly for illnesses, which are supposed to be cured with magic. Most illness incantations are based on causa

remota, but sometimes a causa proxima is additionally added. Problems caused by a causa remota are usually not left to be treated by medicine as they are thought to be caused by humans with evil intentions.

Addressing the question regarding the relationship between evocator and deity, it is usually recognized as damage-causative and curative. This evokes a question of legitimisation, which equals a phenomenon of utilisation of divine power. An example for this is using bible verses as phrases of power in incantations. Here, it is clearly not the person speaking who is actually speaking but Jesus himself and this pattern has been used since pre-Christian times. The purpose of this is firstly the potentiation of incantation power, secondly the legitimisation of the incantation priest as an envoy of God/the gods and thereby as working white magic and thirdly, an excuse of the incantation priest in front of demons as they are only acting on higher order. This acts as a phylactery for the priest, so that the anger of the demons is directed towards the deity instead (Schulz, 2000, 31). This principle can also be found in Greek magic papyri, the so called 'divinsation temporaire', which refers to a person speaking the invocation referring to themselves by the names of different deities. This is based on the assumption of a temporary union of the evocator and the deity to make use of the higher power. This practice does not appear in Christian invocations as Christians would never identify themselves with God, they would only act 'in his name' or the name of the trinity (Schulz, 2000, 34). Interestingly, here the interconnectedness of religion and magic is quite obvious, since these kinds of incantations basically are exorcisms.

Regarding this, one question automatically comes up: what is it that legitimizes the evocator as God's envoy? For this, it is necessary to have the following prerequisite: the norm-setting consensus of a community which names specialists for exorcism and banishment of evil (Schulz, 2000, 35). As a rational answer to an archaic theory of cause, it seems easy but is based on a complex system of reciprocal legitimizing references: first, a violation of a taboo leads to demonic attacks, which is followed by a stipulated mode of reconciliation of the divine anger, followed by exorcism and re-integration into community (Schulz, 2000, 37) This is a causal and thereby rational concept of a learned effort of a total representation of the world and of good and bad with a correcting intention.

Already in the Mesopotamian medical science attested in the standard literature of the first millennium BCE, a distinction between 'āšipu' (exorcist or magician) and 'asû' (physician or herbalist) can be found. It is essential, that only the āšipu engaged in aetiology, the search for causes in medicine, while the asû engaged in curing damage by symptom (Schulz, 2000, 38).

A connection between religion and magic is quite clear here, as well as the categorisation of the āšipu are clerics. At the same time, the āšipu and asû probably worked complementary. It should be taken into consideration, that the interconnectedness of medicine, religion and magic in archaic societies is an expression of a often complicated societal system with sacral structuring. Hence, it is a closed system in which it was possible to take peoples' fears and certain illnesses serious, therefore it was effective in a sense. It created the possibility to reintegrate those who where isolated through ritual. Illness had the power to be a stigma transposing a person into the realm of social death and as part of human nature and more human interdependence in earlier times a person was only happy as a respected member of society. Even Jesus follows these principles: he is a medicus-magicus, healing illnesses and exorcising demons, acting on behalf of God. Priests are his proxies on Earth, hence being responsible for these tasks (Schulz, 2000, 41).

Another interesting question regarding magical practices is usually the one for the people involved: Who were these evocators? There are usually very rarely hints in invocations on identities, thus one might wonder if this information is unimportant. That is, until Thomas von Aquin lead to a turning point for systematisation of the heterogenous elements that made up the term 'witch' and development towards the inquisition-relevant term of 'heresy' (Schulz, 2000, 51). The cumulated offence of witchery was composed of 5 main points: firstly, the pact with the devil, secondly, the Devil's amour, thirdly, the witch's flight (in the air), fourthly, the Witch's sabbath (with devil worship) and lastly, malicious sorcery. The term 'charm' began to be used for the entire field of pre-Christian rituals which are in any way connected to supernatural powers. The distinction between white magic, magic used by the official priests of the dominating religion, and demonic, black magic was getting more and more pronounced. To distinguish themselves from this, the term 'miracle' for Catholic priests acting against demons through exorcism following clerical instructions was used. From the sixteenth century on, any kind of magic, also white magic, seen as demonic in all forms.

There are a row of symbols and symbolic figures or personifications connected to magic. For example in Sumerian incantations, the term 'udug' was used for a group of 7 demons or spirits of death. Among them was a sub-group of 3 air or wind demons called 'ardat lilil' and described as men-seducing virgin (Schulz, 2000, 60). These types of personifications were not uncommon, for example another illness demon lady's name is probably close to the word for 'touching' and is the source of deadly illnesses with fever and ague. These demons are also described as drinking human blood and gnawing human bones and alike, which is also

described in the CSB (Corpus der deutschen Segen und Beschwörungsformeln), the collection of Medieval and Early Modern evocations and blessings, which is the working ground for Monika Schulz's groundbreaking book. Demons can also cause illnesses in various ways, such as moving into the body in form of a worm for example (Schulz, 2000, 65). Other typically associated things are for example numbers or colours, typically for witchcraft impact would be green substances or making things yellow or red for example. This is not surprising considering for example that inflammations usually have characteristic colour changes to red, blue and black shades. With time, illnesses were generally moved from the magical to the moral plane and demons who were originally thought of as the reasons of illness moved to be the executioners. This is connected to the concept of causal relation of personal misbehaviour and transgression of norms, while illness and misfortune was obviously productive.

Bearing traces of the law of similarity that has been mentioned above, it needs to be mentioned that it was common, that those possessed by demons were beaten because it was believed that the demon would feel the pain alongside the shared body (Schulz, 2000, 97). On the same note, it was also tried to soothe the demon through offerings. In general, there was a lack of distinction between mental and physical levels. Magic tends therefore to be viewed as based on a system of 'actio' – 'reactio' (action - reaction). It creates an image of a 'crises'. Actually, still today it is talked about 'critical days' in the course of illness curing. There are power struggles happening between the harming and the defending, healing magicians on behalf of the patient or victim. In the course of this, the healer takes the place of the victim and returns the harming magic like a projectile: the shooting, stabbing, blowing or breathing on is therefore nothing else than an imitation of the previous demonic attack (Schulz, 2000, 130). Considering this, it is not surprising, that the relation between white and black magic is not a diverging pattern of action.

Briefly returning to the example of Mesopotamian magic: although witch and āšipu are opponents, they are basically mirror-images of each other and use many of the same techniques. Early texts insist on them being only reactive to a previous, evil-intended damage, but both parties see their magic actions as justified and as a measure against harm, which was induced to them or their client. Therefore, it is not weird that there are no instructions specifically for black magic to be found, in the Mesopotamian texts. In conclusion, only the assessment of the situation in which magic is used is important for its classification, e.g. if it is public or forbidden and secretly (Schulz, 2000, 131).

Later on, it was the presence or absence of the church's authority which determined the propriety of any action. It was less differentiation in the action and more in the social position

and authority of those who involved, on which their respective claims rested. In folk belief, there was mostly a perceived difference between white and black magic based on perspective, while scholarly opinions were more based on inquisition into relevant witches and demons. White magic was accepted within the group, while black magic was seen as antisocial and serving egoistic purposes, like harming charms which should get rid of obstacles or gaining advantages through the harming of others. Related to this is the discussion on 'magic ex opere operato', meaning without the assistance of a deity, or whether it ever existed. The point is that the principles of effect are not bound to a development of a pantheon. Magic seems to be based on a postulated order of things following Foucault's theory, for example a macro-micro cosmic concordance, meaning that everything is connected to everything (Schulz, 2000, 137). We have met this phenomenon already above: the human body as microcosmos reflecting the macro cosmos of the world. This is a thought concept based on the world being created of a body or a body of parts of the world. These concepts of a micro-macro concordance are part of a constructivist world view. This stimulates the idea of a possibility of magic influence, which means, if there is a basic expectation of a universal order of a system with reduplicated similarities, it is possible to diagnose types of disarray. In this case magic is the art to adjust the disarray (Schulz, 2000, 139). Hence, the restoration of order.

An example for this is the science of signs, e.g. the observation of planets. Here the omen indicators which are falling out of line, either in nature or by violating the rules of society, are the ones which indicate upcoming calamity. But not in all cases is a correction directly at the affected object itself possible. Here the law of comparability comes into play. Likeness becomes regarded as expression of an extensive system of balance principles. The law of comparability tries a classification and thereby basically a totalisation of the world, e.g. through influencing of gods or demons through sympathetic or antipathic objects such as animals, plants or stones (Schulz, 2000, 140). This is regarded to be possible because of its connection to the demiurge act, world creation. It is regarded as the thought moment of the overcoming of chaos. Hence, this is the macrocosmic analogue to this is the reintegration of the object, which came out of order through an invocation in human micro-cosmic level. And again, the category of similarity of things, similitude, which can be found in the structure of things itself or artificially created and resembles the central tool of magic manipulation. In many cases the problem itself can not be fixed through ritual, for example illnesses, so a substitute, chosen based on its similarity, is manipulated in the place of the thing itself (Schulz, 2000, 145).

Until the sixteenth century, the knowledge of the age and magic were seen as a unit, since both of them basically were trying to decode the ‘as ordo naturalis’ hidden in nature. From the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries on, a partition of science through institutionalisation and professionalisation was started. Assessment of similarity as fundamental instrument of insight changed to a medium of error and began to be replaced by scientific analysis based on identity and difference. This corresponded with the decline of magic (Schulz, 2000, 147). Here this means the loss of a ‘officially’ recognised position as instrument of enlightenment and a decline of the generally valid assessment of magic as a proven instrument. Magic in other means continued to bloom, like in subcultures of the big cities.

III. Analysis

III.1. The Death of Muirchertach Mac Erca

Aided Muirchertaig Meic Erca, translated to *The Death of Muichertach Mac Erca*, is a tale of death and vengeance. In a spectacle of a killing a young lady takes the role of the retaliator of her slain family. Bearing the spirit of vengeance, she appears to Muichertach Mac Erca, a king and the slayer of her kin.

Within the four major cycles of early Irish literature, this tale is part of the *Cycle of the Kings*, also know as the *Historical Cycle*. This Cycle focuses on the mythical and historical kings of Ireland between the third and seventh centuries and is said to be "less magical than the Mythological, less heroic than the Ulster, and less romantic than the Fenian." (MacKillop, 2004c).

The king, who is being put to death for his sins in this tale, is listed as Muichertach, Son of Muiredach, Son of Eogan, Son of Niall of the Nine Hostages. Hence, he is part of the Uí Néill dynasties. In the tale he is titled as king of Ireland and is staying in the "House of Cletech over the brink of Boyne of the Brugh" (Stokes, ed., 1902, 397). Hence, close to Bruig na Bóinne, the archaeological ensemble, which includes Newgrange, in the bend of the river Boyne. Bruig na Bóinne is a seat of the Gods in the Mythological Cycle of Early Irish literature (Guyonvarch, 1983, 987). The House of Cletech is attributed to Elcmar, one of the Tuatha Dé Danann and either the foster father or the unknowing stepfather, depending on the version of the story, of Angus Óg, the son of the Dagda and Boand. He gets the location in exchange for Bruig na Bóinne from Angus Óg (MacKillop, 2004a). Hence, there is obviously a síd at Cletech, but probably also a house of the mortal king, but the distinction is blurry and the close proximity speaks for itself (MacKillop, 2004b).

Muichertach gets introduced as being married to Duaibsech, daughter of a king of Connacht. His byname Mac Erca is a matronym and comes from his mother Erc or Erca, who seems to be a legendary figure. To bear a matronym instead of a patronym is not uncommon among the early Irish kings (Cross and Slover, eds., 1936, 518). Muirchertach's death gets mentioned in several chronicles, among others the *Annals of Tigernach* and the *Chronicum Scotorum* dating it to AD 531, the *Annals of Ulster* dating it to AD 533 and the *Annals of the Four Masters* dating it to AD 526 (Stokes, ed., 1902, 395). All of these annals were not compilated before about a

thousand years after these assumed years of his death and overarch large spans of time, from creation to the Christianisation of Ireland and further on, basing themselves in many cases on the Bible, Latin sources and the Irish synthetic history *Lebor Gabála Érenn* (Welch, 2000). Among them, the *Annals of the Four Masters* is the youngest one, compiled in the 1630s (McCarthy, 2008, 355). The *Annals of Ulster*, traditionally seen as the most reliable source for the medieval period among the Irish Annals, is confirmed to be part of a row of annalistic texts that base themselves on a common previous source which seems to be extending to about 685 CE as demonstrated by Daniel McCarthy (McCarthy, 2008, 357). Even though they seem not to be reliable sources for Muirchertach's actual historical existence, they are a piece of evidence for the popularity of his tale, or at least the tale of his death. Or, to be precise, it must have been seen as important enough and morally acceptable enough for the compilators, who often were of monastic background, to pass this information on. The same goes for the *Aided Muirchertaig Meic Erca.*

Aided Muirchertaig Meic Erca survived in two vellum manuscripts, Trinity College Dublin MS 1318 (H.2.16), the so called "Yellow Book of Lecan", dated to about the end of the fourteenth century, and the Trinity College Dublin, MS 1298 (H.2.7), dated to the fifteenth century (CELT 2004/2011). The Yellow Book of Lecan has a lacuna in cols. 317-318. Whitley Stokes, whose 1902 edition and translation of the text is the most classical one, approved for its quality of translation, used H.2.7 to fill in the lacuna of H.2.16. Although, his edition is criticised for omitting large parts of the verse present in H.2.16 (Guyonvarch, 1983, 986). H.2.7 is lacking large parts of the verse as well and, as Stokes puts it, the verse parts are "merely repeating what has already been told in clearer language"(Stokes, 1902, 395) in the prose parts. This lets the attentive reader wonder, whether the verse might be older and was willingly re-written in prose to achieve certain underlining for parts of the tale considered more important or fitted around otherwise intended messages built into the story by later copyists. Another edition was made by Lil Nic Dhonnchadha in 1964, but this edition does not include a translation, although there was made a French translation based on this edition by Christian-J. Guyonvarch in 1983. There is another edition and translation published by Tom Cross and Clark Slover in 1936, which is quite in line with Stokes' version.

The tale itself seems to be, like in so many cases, older than its surviving manuscripts. Guyonvarch remarks, that the structure of blending prose and verse is a sign of high age of a text, typically expressing that a text is older than its transcription (Guyonvarch, 1983, 986). Some of the verses seem to be unclear in interpretation, but this is not unnormal for texts being

transmitted for such a long time. Held in late Middle Irish , the linguistic context gives a quite homogenous impression, leading to the assumption, that it is a one piece composition. The linguistic profile makes for the dating to the twelfth century (Herbert, 1997, 28).

The tale is another example of Irish tales about kings and examples of rulership, a quite frequently appearing theme. A lot of these types of narratives depict rulership through positive or negative examples. Usually, these kinds of stories serve as model for present and future, basing themselves on inherited stories from the past. In *Aided Muirchertaig Meic Erca,* as in many others, a Christian influence in the redaction and the presentation of the story is visible. This is particularly relevant to *Aided Muirchertaig Meic Erca*, because the Christian perspective brought the idea of a focus on the after-life with it and, as the name already says, the *Aided* is a tale with the death of a ruler as its core point. Further Christian influence comes from the gradual blurring of the boundaries of church and state in Ireland from the tenth century onwards. Following this, the distinction between literary genres such as king's tales and hagiographies began to disappear as well (Herbert, 1997, 28). From the twelfth century on it becomes obvious that Christian authorities take the roles as arbiters of the royal personnel in the king's tales.

The *Aided Muirchertaig Meic Erca,* contains an encounter between a king and a supernatural woman as its mythic core, thus a fairy lover motive, and also the threefold death of a king motive is prominent.

The tale opens with Muirchertach, being left alone by his hunting companions, on his hunting-mound outside of the House of Cletech and being approached by "a solitary damsel beautifully formed, fair-headed, bright-skinned, with a green mantle about her" (Stokes, ed., 1902, 397). Her beauty leaves Muirchertach in awe and he immediately falls in love with her. Her outstanding beauty and its effect, as much as her sudden, unexpected appearance already lead to the assumption that she probably is a supernatural person. That it is a tale about a demonstration of a king's quality as a ruler becomes clear immediately after, when the reader gets told, that "for gazing at her it seemed to him that he would give the whole of Ireland for one night's loan of her, so utterly did he love her at sight" (Stokes, ed., 1902, 399). This statement disqualifies him immediately as a good ruler and makes it clear, that his demise is about the come over him. The lady is just the representation of temptation. It is unacceptable for a king to give away his kingdom for any temptation like this, since he has the responsibility for his kingdom and its residents. He would pay with Ireland's and its inhabitants' destiny for his own pleasures. Clearly, this sheds a bad light on him from the beginning on.

The lady adds oil to the fire by introducing herself as “the darling of Muirchertach” (Stokes, ed., 1902, 399). At his surprise for her introducing her as knowing him and naming herself in this position, she reveals to him without further ado that she is “skilled[..]in places more secret than this” (Stokes, ed., 1902, 399). She does not hide, that she has magical knowledge and power. She agrees to follow Muirchertach “provided [her] guardon is good”, to which Muirchertach promises to “give thee power over me” (Stokes, ed., 1902, 399). Hence, she does not come voluntarily out of love for him, but has intentions to receive something for her presence. As Muirchertach goes on to promise her a lot more material things such as gold-rings, cattle and feasts, she rejects, making other, less material demands instead: “my name must never be uttered by thee, and Duaibsech, the mother of thy children, must not be in my sight, and the clerics must never enter the house that I am in” (Stokes, ed., 1902, 399). The prohibition of name utterance follows the law of similarity in magic. It goes by the power of words. By touching upon somebody’s or something’s name, one might conjure the named. Names also give power of knowledge over the named. Her prohibition of clerics getting under the same roof as her also speaks for her being a person of opposite position to a cleric, hence connected to the demonic side of things. Lastly, banning the wife, who is bound in sacred matrimony to Muirchertach, also speaks for her anti-sacral position. Hence, already by letting her name these kinds of preconditions she gets depicted as not just supernatural, but positioned on the demonic side and not neutral to the Church, but opposing it.

Through Muirchertach’s promise to fulfil these conditions, he seals his fate, binding himself to her. Although, he does it, knowing that it is not an easy promise to give, as he says: “ I pledge thee my word; but it were easier for me to give thee half of Ireland” (Stokes, ed. 1902, 399). Again, he shows levity with his royal responsibilities.

When Muirchertach inquires her name, she lists “Sigh, Sough, Storm, Rough wind, Winter-night, Cry, Wail, Groan” (Stokes, ed. 1902, 401). After this, she goes on to be called ‘Sín’ for the rest of the story, meaning ‘storm’ (Williams, 2011, 1).

After Sín moved in with Muichertach, a further figure appears in the text, contacted for help by Duaibsech: the bishop Cairnech. When he follows Duaibsech to the house to support her claim, he finds Sín blocking them from entering, which angers him greatly. This leads the holy bishop to “curse the steading and [make] a grave for the king and [says]: He whose grave this is hath finished and truly it is an end to his realm and his princedom!” (Stokes, ed. 1902, 403). Hence, he effectively places a curse of death on Muirchertach. He then goes on to mount the grave and speak: “A curse upon this hill, [..] may neither its corn nor its milk be good, may it be full of

hatred and evil plight!" (Stokes, ed. 1902, 403). This very explicit curse spoken by the bishop can hardly be overseen as powerful, malicious witchcraft. He curses not only Muirchertach, but the entire household and the surrounding lands, involving a lot of innocent people who live on this land and are reigned by Muirchertach. Interestingly, he does not direct his curse against Sín, who from his perspective could be seen as the apparent demonic figure who brought evil into the house. He also does not try to exorcise Muirchertach. He does not even try to save Muirchertach from the 'wicked claws' of the witch.

Hence, the bishop's interest is neither in saving Muirchertach's soul, nor in saving Muirchertach's subjects, nor in defeating the witch. He only acts to remove Muirchertach from his royal position, as he has fallen from approval by breaking his holy sacrament of marriage, abandoned his children and his duties as a king, and has thus become unfit to be a ruler. Clearly, the question of who should hold royal power is the only object of interest to the church father here. His acting shows clearly, that in his ideology, the king needs the approval of the bishop. Thus, he establishes himself as superior in power.

Interestingly, he himself acts very much like a witch. Not just by cursing in general, but by the objects of his curse. He directs his curse against milk for example, one of the oldest motives in witchcraft accusations: stealing or spoiling of milk. The same goes for the corn, which in this context probably refers to any types of grain and not real corn, which was not introduced to Europe before the fifteenth century. Grain is a staple food and served as the basic food resource to everyone ever since the beginning of cultivation. Hence, by spoiling staple foods through curse for the entire area, he is making a very strong point in his seriousness.

He also goes through the ritual of making a grave for the king, who is still alive. Another very witchy, black magical behaviour. Apparently, he is so confident in his power and sovereignty as a church supported leader figure, that he does not hold back from using extreme measures like this to enforce his strategy of subduing the king to the ideological agenda of the Church. Bishop Cairnech's curse of spreading hatred and evil between the people also makes it sound very much like as if he would relay on other kinds of supernatural entities as power sources than the Christian God and Jesus. His motive for power seems clear, but one needs to wonder about his strategy, maybe it is a try to spread chaos and desperation between the local people to make them rise up against their unfit king, blaming him, unknowingly why these hardships came over them? Also, if his curse makes impact, one must wonder what his plan is: there will be food shortages and chaos and following that riots against the king, if it goes according to Cairnech's plan. But even when the king gets removed from his position and killed following

that, Cairnech will maybe have been able to prove his superior power, and thus the claim of the church. On the other hand, he will inherit a chaos and lands of starving people to take care of with no stabile rulership. On top of that, his strategy does not involve any measures to remove the trigger for these dramatic events, Sín.

To continue with the story: Cairnech goes on to curse the fortress, after that, the Clans of Níall ask him to bless them "for we are not guilty as regards thee" (Stokes, ed., 1902, 405). Muirchertach's relatives claiming their innocence towards Cairnech is also an interesting point. Once again, their request for absolution goes towards the bishop and not the king, meaning their loyalty is understood to be primarily towards the bishop and not the king. Cairnech goes on to grant them a blessing and some hereditary claims to power in the provinces if they were to loose their claim to the kingship of Ireland.

Later, as Cairnech meets 'the race of Tadg' who bring him with them to make a treaty with Muirchertach (Stokes, ed., 1902, 407). He is brought along for the purpose of officiating a peace treaty as an arbiter between the race of Tadg, Son of Cian, and the race of Eogan, Muirchertach's father. To officiate the treaty, Cairnech performs a ritual to form a blood covenant between them by "mingel[ing] the blood of both of them in one vessel" (Stokes, ed., 1902, 407). Again, his power is superior to the royal power, as they seek the sealing of their alliance to be performed by him. His legitimisation as a ritual specialist is essential here. Through his ritual knowledge and appointment as church leader and thus representative of God on earth, he holds a special power to seal these kinds of contracts, which would not be as powerful and binding otherwise. Through this strategy of legitimisation, both the power of the church as superior decision maker and the power of the alliance, strengthened through the parties' trust in the function of the church as a secondary, is supported.

Returning to the story, it is time for Sín to step up and show her powers: as she is sitting on the right side of the throne next to Muirchertach, he again is awestruck by her perfect beauty, but he also starts to ask questions "for it seemed to him that she was a goddess of great power" (Stokes, ed. 1902, 407). Her beauty is doubtlessly not unusual for a supernatural woman in an Early Irish text, but one needs to wonder whether it is indeed a part of her strategy to portray her power or just to ease her quest for seduction to gain power over the king. As a supernatural person of great power, she should be able to change her appearance according to her wishes.

Muirchertach asks her whether "believest thou in the God of the clerics? Or from whom hast thou sprung in this world?" (Stokes, ed. 1902, 407). An interesting way to ask which gods are

responsible for Sín's creation. At the same time, it is an interesting way to question Muirchertach's loyalty to the Christian God by letting him call him 'the God of the clerics' and not just 'God', as a believer would. Probably another problem in Muirchertach's ability to be fit as king. Also very interesting is Sín, the seemingly witchy temptress, answer to this question: "I believe in the same true God" (Stokes, ed., 1902, 409). It seems to be an unexpected answer for a figure, which is supposedly associated with witchcraft, to be a Christian believer. Just as Cairnech, her characterisation does not include an opposition between religion and witchcraft. One must be reminded that the distinction between white and black magic was not yet common before towards the end of the Middle Ages.

Sín goes on to say:

> "ye cannot work in this world a miracle of which I could not work its like. I am the daughter of a man and a woman of the race of Eve and Adam […] I could create a sun and a moon and radiant stars; I could create men fiercely fighting in conflict. I could make wine -no falsehood – of the Boyne, as I can obtain it and sheep of stones. I could make silver and gold […] I could make famous men[…]"(Stokes, ed., 1902, 409).

Thus, she is claiming to be able to work miracles as powerful as a god, but at the same time saying she is of human decent. Claiming she is able to create a universe and conjure warriors are qualities of power of creation. Claiming to be able to turn water, the river, into wine, reminds a lot of Jesus' power to do the same. Making silver and gold again reminds a lot of the high goals of alchemy. To be precise, alchemy tends to only try to transmute base metals into noble metals, not create silver and gold out of nowhere. At the same time, it also needs to be noted what she does not say: nowhere does she say that she is a witch, a goddess or a person from the Otherworld, hence a fairy.

To help his curiosity as much as the reader's, Muirchertach goes on to ask her for a demonstration of "some of these great miracles" (Stokes, ed., 1902, 409). Sín's answer to this is making two battalions appear and letting them fight each other to death. She also insists that her "power is in no wise a fraud" (Stokes, ed., 1902, 409). Muirchertach also confirms to be able to see the battalions. Furthermore, water of the river Boyne is brought to them and, as she claimed before, Sín "casts a spell into them and it seemed to the king and his household that never came on earth wine of better taste or strength" (Stokes, ed., 1902, 409). She also turns fern into pigs and feeds the entire feast with the wine and pigs she conjured. On the morning after this magical feast, Muirchertach gets up and feels "as if he was in decline, and so was everyone else who had partaken of the wine and the fictitious magical flesh which Sín had

arranged for that feast" (Stokes, ed., 1902, 411). He feels like all his strength is gone and he is close to death, but again he asks her to show some of her arts and willingly she does: she turns stones into blue men and into goat-headed figures. These figures again start to have a battle in battalions to their entertainment. Muirchertach starts to fight among them, using up all his strength as the conjured men keep reviving after being killed. Thus, he is fighting the entire day until nighttime until he is so exhausted that he returns to the castle , where Sín again feeds him the same magical food as the day before. Again, on the next morning, he and his men have no strength whatsoever after eating the magical dinner. As Muirchertach wants to charge into battle once again, when he is challenged by the conjured warriors, he falls to the floor with no strength left. His battles with the conjured warriors continue for a while. Eventually, Cairnech sends some clerics to him "so that he might have God's assistance, for the high saint knew of the oppression which he suffered at that time Thereafter the clerics meet him in the Brugh, while he is hacking the stones and the sods and the stalks" (Stokes, ed., 1902, 413). When they ask him why he is fighting stones, he answers: " the cleric who attacked me I came into conflict with him: I know not furthermore that the stones are not alive" (Stokes, ed., 1902, 415). As the clerics tell him to make the sign of the cross over his eyes and he does, his senses return and he can see that there are only stones and grass where he was fighting.

Here we have a little change in the attitude towards Muirchertach: he turned into a figure of pitifulness that the merciful church father sent for to be saved from bewitchments. Again, the dynamics are strategically presented to make the king look weak and delusional, while the bishop is wise and clear-sighted. Even though Cairnech previously cursed Muirchertach to death and dug his grave, he sends him God's help now to regain consciousness through the sign of the cross, which breaks his delusional bewitchment right away. Christian magic is presented as stronger than Sín's.

What follows is basically a power demonstration of the church winning over the fallen figure of Muirchertach, the king, which Sín had basically turned into her puppet: "the clerics marked out a church there in the Brugh, and told him to dig its trench in honour of the great Lord of the Elements" (Stokes, ed., 1902, 415). As Muirchertach, the king, begins to dig in the soil, he goes on to express his thankfulness to Jesus for helping him overcome his delusion. Further, he goes on to make confessions and another major reason why he is disqualified as a king comes to light: he killed his grandsire. He also confesses to have brought his army into troubles.

In this position, Muirchertach as a person is downgraded to do slave-like work. Cairnech is though interested to keep the position of a king and thus royal power, which Muirchertach still

officially carries, under his control. He even allows him to participate in absolution ritual to keep him under his influence, even though he himself had cursed him to death before. This is a strategical move, which at the same time serves the reputation of the Church as merciful, forgiving and generous. It also teaches the text's audience about the importance of confession and option of return to God of the sinner.

But the power struggle over influence on the king is not over yet: when Muirchertach returns home and tells Sín about the curing of his delusion, she, the self-proclaimed Christian believer, says: "Never believe the clerics for they chant nothing save unreason; follow not their unmelodious stave, for they do not reverence righteousness. Cleave not to the clerics of churches, if thou desire life without treachery […]" (Stokes, ed., 1902, 417). Clearly, she is set as opponent figure in this tale. Following this, the reader is told, that she again beguiles Muirchertach's mind and gives him magical wine.

After seven nights on wednesday night after All-Saint's Day she causes a great snowstorm, referring to properties of other names of hers, Rough Wind and Winter-night. In this night, after the usual magical feast weakening all the men, Muirchertach awakes from a prophetic dream and tells Sín about it. He foresaw that the house of Cletech will burn and the descendants of Niall will suffer in the flames caused by spells of witches (Stokes, ed., 1902, 419). He also mentions later, that to him it was "foretold that my death and the death of Loarn my grandsire would be alike; for nowise in battle did he fall, but no doubt he was burnt alive" (Stokes, ed., 1902, 421). As Muirchertach fears his fate, he can not sleep and asks for some wine, so Sín gives him some wine on which she cast a sleep charm before. Again, he has a prophetic dream foretelling him death through fire, this time as he is carried of his ship by a griffin into his nest and the nest catches fire with him and the griffin in it (Stokes, ed., 1902, 423). This time, Muirchertach seeks the help of a druid in order to understand his dream. The druid's interpretation has the ship as his princedom, which he is steering on the sea of life. He says "the taloned griffin that has carried thee into her nest, the woman that is in thy company" (Stokes, ed., 1902, 423). Thus, it follows that the nest in the prophecy is his house, which will burn, and the griffin, hence Sín, will die in connection to this as well.

When Muirchertach is back to sleep by sleep charm, Sín goes to prepare for the prophecy to come true:

> "Sín rose up and arranged spears and javelins of the hosts in readiness in the doors […] she forms by magic many crowds and multitudes around the fortress. She herself goes in and scatters fire in every direction throughout the house" (Stokes, ed., 1902, 423).

As Muirchertach awakes from his dream, again a prophetic one showing him the burning house, it is exactly this he finds. At first fighting the conjured hosts, eventually the fire takes over and Muirchertach can not escape it anymore. He jumps into a cask of wine to avoid the fire, where he drowns while the fire surrounds him and eventually burns his head and five feet length of him (Stokes, ed., 1902, 425).

Muirchertach's body is eventually retrieved by Cairnech and the clerics. They carry the corpse to the river and wash it there. Afterwards it is buried with absolution in holy soil, given the honours of a king. His wife, who dies of grief at the glance of the body, is buried alongside him.

When Sín appears to the burial and the clerics ask her who she is, she gives the reason why she killed the king: "Muichertach Mac Erca killed my father, my mother and my sister in the battle of Cerb on Boyne, and also destroyed in that battle all the Old tribes of Tara and my fatherland" (Stokes, ed., 1902, 429). It is thus revealed, that Sín acted to seek revenge. In the end, she confesses to Cairnech and to God, pledges her obedience to them and dies on the spot out of grief for the king (Stokes, ed., 1902, 429).

Lastly, the reader is told that Muirchertach's soul went to hell. To free him from there, Cairnech makes a prayer and repeats it until the soul is released from hell, upon which an angel appears to Cairnech, to confirm the release and praise his prayer (Stokes, ed., 1902, 431).

The appearance of the motive of the threefold death, hence through wounding, drowning and burning, is an typically Christian device of narrative in the Celtic tradition. In the Irish material it tends to appear in literary contexts involving the Uí Néill ancestors, prophetic madmen or connected to the deaths of historical figures (Sayers, 1992, 65). Hence, Muirchertach is predestined here. According to Sayers, the threefold death concept goes back to representatives of cosmic dynamics: originally, it was likely a triad of sky, earth, and sea or underearth, which is represented in the wounding, drowning and burning process (Sayers, 1992, 66). There tends to be a connection to ideologies of legitimacy of rule and following along with this, endorsement and denial of rule. In Muirchertach's case, the drowning and burning are quite clear, but the wounding moment is a bit less visible: Sín installed spears in the doorways of the house, which he passes as he runs in frenzy. This carries furthermore the symbolism of doorposts in their verticality resembling axis mundi, thus linking heaven and earth, at the same time as doors generally have a function of being critical liminal points (Sayers, 1992, 68). They connect the outside with the inside, making them a terminal marker of the house and thus a liminal point between the cultural order established in human society and the free, unorderly

nature outside. Hence, he the first part of his death happens in this liminal space. Sayers also relates Sín's claim to be able to create sun, moon and stars, and Muichertach's prophetic dream with the griffin to representations of the sky-related facet in the omens of his fate (Sayers, 1992, 68). Also, Sín's names and the snowstorm that she conjures are related to the aerial dimension.

While we have seen a lot of Christian ideology spread quite obviously throughout the text, there are also associations to earlier belief systems. The connection between legitimate sovereignty and territory is one of them. In its Christian from, the motive of territoriality tends to have the form of a king opposing a cleric's efforts of building a church on the land (Sayers, 1992, 73). In Muichertach's tale, this motive appears towards the end. Although, there is no direct mention of any opposition of the king to the building of a church and a already existing monastery, in which Cairnech lives, is mentioned, when Muichertach is doing his absolution work by digging the trench for the foundation of a church building, that "that it was then for the first time that the green of the Brugh was injured" (Stokes, ed., 1902, 415).

Generally, it is a common theme of the Irish medieval king tales to be treating the question of quality of rulership. Many of them are very explicitly critical towards the rulers presented in the story as it can be clearly seen in the example of the *Aided Muirchertaig meic Erca*. At the same time as the king is exhibited as a negative example in all his traits, and thus hardly able to safe his rule, there is usually a pronounced aim to save the king's soul from hell (Rekdal, 2011, 212). One must wonder, why there are so many critical stories and little praise. Adding to the amount of stories was probably the lay nobility depending on the learned nobility for good governance, specialists such as judges, learned poets (filid) and clerics. Kings always had to have a good group of advisors around them to ensure expertise in relevant fields for any kinds of decisions. Furthermore, there "may have been a wish of the learned nobility to put into words a Christian ideology of rulership not only for the ruler's benefit but also for that of society at large" (Rekdal, 2011, 213). Scholarship at large tends to view the Middle Ages as "a period whose outlook was intellectually focused on order and hierarchy" (Freedman, 2019, 39). That applies mainly to the two categories of stabilisation of a political ideology of society and standardisation of a theory of cosmological articulation. Hence, everything should have its place and know where it belongs, so to say a static outlook. Cosmic model theory served the legitimisation of hierarchy. Hence, God's creation had established chains of virtues and those were sought to be upheld. Thus," the Church was the main source of an ideology of order and the grand political theories of social cohesion in the Middle Ages were produced by clerics" (Freedman, 2019, 39). It is essential here, that the Church supported this claim by being the

supreme spiritual power, not physical, worldly power. The ideology of 'fír flathemon', the 'truth of the king', appearing to be "an Irish glossing of the Christian term 'rex iustus' but is held to be pre-Christian" (Rekdal, 2011, 215) follows concepts of a just king who is representing God on Earth as an incarnation of law, order and justice. Thus, it is a concept of a peace and prosperity bringing reign by a king mastering the truth initiated to him.

As we have paid a lot of attention to the king and bishop, I want to take another glance at the figure of Sín: even though her motive for action gets portrayed quite straightforward in the tale, her actual character has been object to discussion among scholar ever since. Often she is seen as an example of the Sovereignty Goddess, which is a figure appearing quite frequently in Early Irish literature.

First of all, it needs to be taken into account, that figures like Sín tend to be wanted to be seen as 'pagan' representations or mythic core representations in later Christianised tales of 'older origins'. These are modern constructions, because the modern reader tends to be more interested in supposedly pre-Christian material. This can have backgrounds in exoticism. But obviously this does not mean, that these kinds of figures can not actually be traces of motives that originate outside of Christian ideologic systems. As Mark Williams puts it: " there has been a tendency to see the tale as an subversive ecclesiastical rewriting of a traditional 'mythic' narrative , whether written or oral, […]this seems to me a wholly unnecessary conclusion" (Williams, 2011, 3). I tend to agree with Williams: the concerns in the text seem like they are fitting to the twelfth century and the text seems homogenously written. Actually, the portrayal of magic in the tale is a good indicator for this: in this tale, while there is a lot of power struggle between royal power and church power, magic appears as an instrument that is shared by both sides and equated. There is no particular separation between licit and illicit magic. Both the bishop and the 'supernatural witch lady' use it. Both clerics and druids help Muichertach with the interpretation of his prophecies and actually agree to a fairly high degree in their foretelling of his destiny.

Sín's powers are portrayed as quasi-divine., but she is one of these figures which follow the category of "ontological instability of pre-Christian supernatural beings in medieval literature […] [with] a sheer number of avenues available for explaining (away) their role and powers within a Christian cosmos" (Williams, 2011, 3). Like many other figures, such as the Tuatha Dé Danann for example, who are usually regarded as gods, they are unclear in origin and might be pagan gods or maybe euhemerized humans or just humans with magical powers. Williams also mentions, that the ontological instability is already visible from the variety in terminology,

there is seldomly only one name for these kinds of figures. Furthermore, it seems to be a feature which specifically in female figures appear even more frequently as they slide between categories and physical shapes more often (Williams, 2011, 3). In the *Aided Muichertaig meic Erca*, it seems that the author

> "has taken a considered an evaluative look at the ways in which mythological figures are represented in earlier texts, and has decided to exploit that variety for his own literary purposes […] [and] therefore represents [..] not mythic thinking, but active and intelligent thinking about myth" (Williams, 2011, 4).

This might as well be the reason why in the *Aided* magic is a power mainly held by the specifically educated and used in elite context. Magic is key instrument here, which depicts the ideological power struggle more than the physical one. While they hardly ever fight each other with swords in the whole story, there are a lot of mental domination struggles to be found. Cairnech only wields power through the word and Sín creates visual worlds to influence the mind.

III.2 The Second Battle of Mag Tuired

Cath Maige Tuired starts with the learning of magic right away: the Túatha Dé Danann themselves, whose story of coming to Ireland this is, are "studying occult lore and sorcery, druidic arts and witchcraft and magical skill, until they surpassed the sages of the pagan arts" (Gray, ed., 1982, 25). Already in the first sentence, not only are they learning it, and are not just naturally fluent in these arts, but also that we have a clear distinction between several disciplines of magical practice, all these disciplines being judgingly named as pagan arts and than having sages who are fluent in these arts and are teaching them to people who are often seen as gods. The latter is a special case though since *The Second Battle of Mag Tuired* has the Túatha Dé Danann as their main characters, but does not name them as gods at any point. Previously it was mentioned that they might as well be part of a group of figures of ontological instable supernatural beings appearing frequently in Early Irish narratives.

To take a closer look at the introduction, it is necessary to remember, that the introductory sequence of about the first seven paragraphs is most probably an addition made by the redactor, most likely taken directly from the *Lebór Gabála Érenn*, *The Book of the Taking of Ireland*, a Middle Irish protohistorical treatise (Carey, 1989, 53). It is somewhat visible in the text as well, since the introductory seven paragraphs are talking about the education in magical arts of the Túatha Dé Danann in the "northern islands of the world" (Gray, ed., 1982, 25). Although this text doesn't specify where they originally come from, it seems to be clear that they are set to be neither native to these northern islands they went to study in, nor to Ireland, where they go to in the text following the added introduction. It is noteworthy that the place they learn magical arts in is both 1. In the North and 2. On islands. It shows a particular perception of the 'North' of the world as a rather obscure place where practitioners of 'pagan arts' hold on to their arts and where those arts flourish with the finest masters of these arts to be found residing there. This gives a clear image of those 'Northern islands'. Also, apparently the inlands are less prone to be places of magical learning, or just less densely settled, what again though would speak to the later image of the practitioners of obscure arts living in remote places, like the classic old lady in the forest cabin brewing herb potions-witch image. This text clearly does not follow this image, which is a much younger invention.

So, what subjects are there to be studied in Hogwarts' predecessors? "Occult lore, sorcery, druidic arts, witchcraft and magical skill […] secret knowledge and diabolic arts" (Gray, ed.,

1982, 25) are on the Túatha Dé Danann's timetable. Their teachers are titled as "sages of the pagan arts" and "poets" (Gray, ed., 1982, 25).

Besides information about their teachers, we also get specific place names listed. The cities they study those skills in are Falias, Gorias, Murias and Findias. Each of these cities has one main wizard residing apparently, as we get the information, that "Morfesa was in Falias, Esras was in Gorias, Uiscias was in Findias, Semias was in Murias" (Gray, ed., 1982, 25). From each of these cities they bring a relic as well: the Stone of Fál from Falias, a crying stone placed under every king to take Ireland in Tara; a spear from Gorias, which Lug had and makes his bearer invincible; a sword from Findias, which Núadu had and did not let any enemies escape alive; and a cauldron from Murias, which the Dagda had and could feed an entire company (Gray, ed., 1982, 25).

In the name-giving battle of Mag Tuired itself, fought between the Túatha Dé Danann and the Fir Bolg over the domination of Ireland, Núadu's hand is cut of. The healer of the Túatha Dé Danann, Dían Cécht, replaces his hand by putting a silver hand on him, that moves just like a real hand. It is not further described, how Dían Cécht produces this silver hand for Núadu, but obviously he uses magic to make it 'come alive' and become a part of Núadu's body. Apparently, the healer possesses strong magical powers thus. Interestingly, Núadu does not, or can not, heal himself in this way, even though he is supposedly a god himself as a Túatha Dé Danann. Due to the loss of his hand, he is regarded as not fit for kingship anymore as he lost his bodily perfection.

As Núadu gets replaced as king by Bres, the *Cath Maige Tuired* turns to a tale discussing bad rulership once again. Bres gets shown off as an unfit king throughout the following story. His destiny seems to be already sealed from birth as he is the son of Elatha, the king of the Fomoire, while his mother is a Túatha Dé Danann. As it is the paternal linage that makes for his destiny as a king, Bres was basically cursed from the beginning because of the Fomoire-bloodline on his father's side. Interestingly, there is a crossover in destiny between him and Lug in the story. Lug is the son of a Túatha Dé Danann - father, Cían, Son of Dían Cécht, to be precise, and a Fomoire-mother, Ethne, Balor's daughter. Lug is titled as the 'glorious child' and goes on to follow Bres on the throne as king, where he is very much more praised than Bres is (Gray, ed., 1982, 25). Lug's paternal bloodline is Túatha Dé Danann, thus, the opposite to Bres'. Thus, destiny is here literally blood-bound.

After Bres takes up kingship, the Fomorian kings impose tributes to Ireland, quite to the displeasure of the people. Even the Dagda, one of the Túatha Dé Danann, has to work as a rampart-builder constructing earthwork around the fort (Gray, ed., 1982, 29). As he is working there, he gets approached by "an idle blind man named Crìdenbél, whose mouth grew out of his chest" (Gray, ed., 1982, 29). The reader does not receive any more regarding his physique to understand any further what is meant with his mouth being placed on his chest, but we learn that he is a satirist. Maybe the misplacement of the mouth is thus intended to be a metaphor. However, he goes on to demonstrate the power a satirist holds right away as he asks the Dagda "for the sake of your honor let the three best bits of your serving be given to me!" (Gray, ed., 1982, 29). Effectively, he blackmails the Dagda into giving him large parts of his rations with only this one sentence, targeting what a satirist does best: his honour. It turns out that he is successful with that, the powerful Dagda gives in right away and goes on to give him his requested portion every night, three bits with each of them being the "size of a good pig" and "those three bits were a third of the Dagda's serving"(Gray, ed., 1982, 29). It is so serious that we get told, that "the Dagda's appearance was for the worse for that" (Gray, ed., 1982, 29). The power of satire is very clear here, it is enough for Crìdenbél to only hint at his instrument of power, the words, cutting deep targeting reputation and social status. The Dagda is known to be skilled in sorcery himself and still gives in, because the threat of harm to his honour and thus social position can hardly be fixed by a spell, as it is in the thought-world of the people surrounding him. Thus, to escape this situation, the Dagda gets advice from his son Mac Óc. He advises him to put three gold coins into the three bits Crìdenbél will receive, as they will be 'the best' on his plate. As he recommends, this gold will kill Crìdenbél by sticking in his belly and he can escape judgment for killing the satirist by insisting on the fact that it was actually, the best, most precious bits on his plate (Gray, ed., 1982, 31). They follow this plan and it actually works the way Mac Óc had said it.

After this incident, the story returns to the magical healing of Núadu's hand again and picks up on the details. The reader learns that Dían Cécht, the healer, has a son, Miach, who is also a talented healer. Miach is not satisfied with his father's work on the silver hand and goes on to retouch the healing solution by taking the hand and saying "joint to joint of it, and sinew to sinew" (Gray, ed., 1982, 33) and within nine days and nights it heals. He is using an evocation following a pattern, which can be found in many spell books or similar outside of literature as well. The reader gets further informed about the healing process: "the first three days he carried it against his side, and it became covered with skin. The second three days he carried it against

his chest. The third three days he would cast white wisps of black bulrushes after they had been blackened in a fire." (Gray, ed., 1982, 33). The positioning of his hand while healing is highlighted here, first on the side until it looks like a real hand due to the grown skin and following that placed closer to the heart on the chest.

As his healing turns out very well, Dían Cécht gets jealous of his son's doing. It does not get stated clearly if he "did not like the cure" (Gray, ed., 1982, 33) based on some of the techniques that his son used. Thus, usually it is assumed that he is jealous of his son's advanced skills, which let him look worse in comparison. Again, the social status and reputation at stake here. This exposure and jealousy affect him so deeply, that he takes a sword and chops it into his son's head. Miach is able to heal himself, but his anger has apparently not passed yet, so he chops at his head again. Again, Miach is able to heal himself and again he strikes him with the sword. They do this three times until he strikes him so deeply that he cuts out the brain in his fourth strike and Miach, who is not longer able to heal himself, dies. Each blow gets described as going one layer deeper into the tissue, first only the skin and the flesh, then bone, then the brain membrane. The author seems to be well informed about anatomy.

He then goes on to bury his son and "three hundred and sixty-five herbs grew through the grave, corresponding to the number of joints and sinews" (Gray, ed., 1982, 33). Again, the author seems to be well informed on medical knowledge. Next, we also learn, that "Airmed spread her cloak and uprooted those herbs according to their properties" (Gray, ed., 1982, 33). Dían Cécht can not let this happen and goes on to mix the herbs so "that no one know their proper healing qualities unless the Holy Spirit taught them afterwards" (Gray, ed., 1982, 33). John Carey comments on this scene:

> "the virtue in the herbs, then, comes from the corpse of a pagan god; but access to those virtues is only possible through the grace of the Christian Deity. Christianity does not deny or condemn the power of the native supernatural; but the Church's authority becomes indispensable to the mediation of that power" (Carey, 2019, 14).

Following this visualisation of the connection between healing and magic, it is interesting to mention another analogy between macrocosm and microcosm: the world of gods mirroring the human world. Elizabeth Gray, editor of the *Cath Maige Tuired*, mentions in her commentary on the tale, that the Irish tradition is being particularly clear on this and gives parallels for every major role of human society in the world of the gods (Gray, 1980, 185). *Cath Maige Tuired* is a good example for this, since the contrast between the just rule of the Túatha Dé Danann and

the chaos of the Formorian rule is depicting the functions of various social roles to maintain order in society quite clearly (Gray, 1980, 185). The Túatha Dé Danann re-establish social and cosmic order by defeating the Fomorians and thus ridding Ireland of their oppression (Gray, 1980, 184). The entire text has "the role of warfare as a social institution and the relationship between social order and cosmic order" (Gray, 1980, 185) as its primary themes.

It is quite striking, that the underlying explanations of 'why things are as they are' instead of 'what actually happened' seem to be the focus of the narrative.

IV. Conclusion

In this thesis I have tried to demonstrate how magical powers are used to gain power to the end of achieving one's ideological goals. In the texts I have presented above, we have seen, that magic is used both by clerics, humans and supernatural being alike. The term magic has a quite different ringing in modern ears, as it appears to have been perceived in the Middle Ages. The texts make it quite obvious, that it was much more of an instrument of daily life than a spectacular ritual for exceptional occasions. In *Aided Muichertaig meic Erca* we have seen the bishop Cairnech and the supernatural human Sín each using magic to manipulate others. Sín creates powerful illusions for Muichertach, gives him magical foods, which leaves him and his entire court weakened, induces prophetic dreams and casts spells for a row of purposes. Cairnech is using magic to keep the king in check. The entire text is heavily influenced of Cairnech using his magical powers, in his case always under the blessings of God, to meet his ideological goals of establishing and holding the power position of the Church over the king. While Sín is seeking to punish Muichertach and get revenge by creating illusions that confuse and slowly kill him, Cairnech is trying to protect the royal power by marking Muichertach as unfit to be king. He is trying to remove him from his post and thus to eliminate the source of influence of Sín's onto the royal seat. At the same time, as a part of Christian ideology, he can not leave the king's soul behind and still goes on to save his soul from hell after he is no longer a threat to societal stability anymore.

In *Cath Maige Tuired*, it is mostly the Túatha Dé Danann wielding magical power. There is a quite explicit description on how the learned magic included: they learned it from powerful sorcerer-poets in the North, which gives a hint at the relationship between words, poetry and magic. Another demonstration for this is the episode between the Dagda and the satirist. Here it becomes quite clear, that the Dagda, usually a powerful magic-wielder, still has to give in to the powers of the satirist to harm his social status through injuring his reputation. This gives insight to an interesting connection of development, which can be observed in other culture and texts as well, where the development of poetry and magic is almost fused, as both of them use words to touch upon their significants. The law of likeness strikes here and magic only becomes a tool of directing in the bigger system of the world, which tends to be depicted in the description of the micro- and macro-cosmos theories.

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