MON SEMBLABLE – MON FRÈRE: THE 'EVIL TWIN' MOTIF IN *TOGAIL BRUIDNE DA DERGA*

KSENIA KUDENKO

0. Introduction

Togail Bruidne Da Derga is the tale of the king Conaire downfall who, after his *gessi* were violated, falls in battle. It should, however, be noted that every broken *geis* is an omen of the forthcoming death rather than the reason for it.

Taboos or ritual injunctions (OIr *geis*, pl. *gessi*) are a characteristic feature of pre-Christian and early medieval Irish society fairly well described in literature (Sjoblom 2000; O'Connor 2013: 72-81). Scholars agree that the phenomenon existed in early Ireland, and one can argue there is extensive evidence for the survival of *gessi* on the basis of the early Irish narrative data.

One of the main sources for *gessi* is the tale *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* ('The Destruction of Da Derga's Hostel'), which relates the biography and taboos of Conaire Mór. It describes the journey of king Conaire to his death through his violation of his *gessi*. One of the most important features of the tale is the fact that Conaire does not notice how each of these *gessi* are broken. As T. Sjöblom (2003) has put it, "Conaire had no choice here […] he now acted more like a zombie".

Here is the list of Conaire's *gessi* (Knott 1936: 6.172-181):

1) *Ní thuidchis deaseal Temra ₇ túaithbiul mBreg*, 'Thou shalt not go righthandwise round Tara and lefthandwise round Brega';[1]
2) *Nír taifnichter lat claenmíla Cernai*, 'The evil-beasts of Cerna must not be hunted by thee';
3) *Nír echtra cach nómad n-aidche seach Theamair*, 'Thou shalt not go out every ninth night beyond Tara';
4) *Nír faei i tig as m-bi eggna suillsi tenead immach íar fuineadh n-gréne ₇ i m-bi ecnai dammuig*, 'Thou shalt not sleep in a house from which firelight is manifest outside, after sunset, and in which light is manifest from without';
5) *Ní tíassa*[*t*] *riut tri Deirg do thig Deirg*, 'Three Reds shall not go before thee to Red's house';
6) *Nír ragbaiter díberg id fhlaith*, 'No rapine shall be wrought in thy reign';

[1] The translation is taken from Whitley Stokes' 'The Destruction of Dá Derga's Hostel' (Stokes 1901) unless otherwise stated.

7) *Ní tae dám aenmná nó énfir i tech fort íar fuinead n-gréne*, 'After sunset a company of one woman or one man shall not enter the house in which thou art';
8) *Ní ahurrais augra do dá moghud*, 'Thou shalt not settle the quarrel of thy two thralls.'

The list of *gessi* is obviously divided into two parts: the first four *gessi* could be broken by the king but the violation of the last four cannot be controlled by Conaire and, on first sight, depends on other people's behaviour.

It could be supposed then that the ritual injunctions given to Conaire by Nemglan are not taboos but rather a description of some future events which Nemglan reveals in the form of a sequence of *gessi*; in other words, a *geis* is simply a prophecy. These *gessi* might be compared to the injunction placed upon Sleeping Beauty not to touch the spindle, as the very formulation of this '*geis*' issued from an initial knowledge of the girl's death. For this reason, the ban could be interpreted as a kind of prediction, and the utterance "Do not touch a spindle" is equal to "You will die because of the spindle prick". Should the situation described in a *geis* materialise (by chance or because of the actions of other human beings), the utterance shifts to another semantic level and becomes not a taboo but an omen of the forthcoming downfall.

In the narrative, the violation of the first *geis*, namely *Nír ragbaiter díberg id fhlaith* 'No rapine shall be wrought in thy reign', happened because "now his foster-brothers murmured at the taking from them of their father's and their grandsire's gifts, namely Theft and Robbery and Slaughter of men and Rapine" (*Fo-dordsat íarum a chomaltai-seom im gabáil dána a n-athar ₇ a seanathar díb .i. gat ₇ brat ₇ guin daíne ₇ díberg* (Knott 1936: 6.192)). The last phrase indicates that the foster-brothers' intention to harm Conaire was quite deliberate, and, for this reason, I will pay more attention not to *gessi* that incarnate the idea of fate but to the opponents of the king who act in this case as the executors of his fate. In other words, has the violation of the last *gessi* as little to do with Conaire as it seems on the first sight?

1. The three foster-brothers as the king's 'evil twins'

It is evident that taboos play a prominent part as initiators of action in this tale, in accordance with Propp's statement that a violation of a prohibition is a major catalyst in the development of many narratives:

> II. The protagonist is announced with an interdiction… III. The interdiction is violated. The forms of violation correspond to the forms of interdiction. The functions II and III form a paired element (Propp 1998: 24-5, my trans.).

Indeed, before the *geis* is violated, there is little action. The depiction of Ireland as a thriving country does nothing to move the plot along, though it serves to provide a striking contrast with the devastated land at the end of the story:

> *Ro bátar trá deólatchaire móra inna fhlaith .i. .uii. mbárca cach mís mithemon da gabáil oc Inbiur Colbtha cacha blíadna, ₇ mes co glúine cach fhogmair ₇ imbas for Búais ₇ Boind i medón in mís mithemon cacha blíadna ₇ imbet caínchomraic co nár rubi neach in n-aile in nÉrinn fria fhlaith, ₇ ba bindithir la cach n-aen guth aroile in nÉrinn fria fhlaith ₇ betis téta mennchrot. Ní lúaiscead gaeth caircech mbó ó medón earraich co meadón foghmair. Nír bo thoirneach ainbtineach a fhlaith* (Knott 1936: 6.182-91).
>
> Now there were in his reign great bounties, to wit, seven ships in every June in every year arriving at Inver Colptha, and oakmast up to the knees in every autumn, and plenty of fish in the rivers Bush and Boyne in the June of each year, and such abundance of good will that no one slew another in Erin during his reign. And to every one in Erin his fellow's voice seemed as sweet as the strings of lutes. From mid-spring to mid-autumn no wind disturbed a cow's tail. His reign was neither thunderous nor stormy.

This serene picture is troubled in the following paragraph:

> *Fo-dordsat íarum a chomaltai-seom im gabáil dána a n-athar ₇ a seanathar díb .i. gat ₇ brat ₇ guin daíne ₇ díberg. Gatsat-side na teora gata ar in n-oenfher .i. mucc ₇ ag ₇ bó cacha blíadnae co n-accaitis ca h-indeochad do-bérad in rí forru ind ₇ cía domaín do-airgébad don ríg in gat ina flaith* (Knott 1936: 6.192-7).
>
> Now his foster-brothers murmured at the taking from them of their father's and their grandsire's gifts, namely Theft and Robbery and Slaughter of men and Rapine. They thieved the three thefts from the same man, to wit, a swine and an ox and a cow, every year that they might see what punishment therefore the king would inflict upon them, and what damage the theft in his reign would cause to the king.

It is clear that the first *geis* to be broken ('No rapine shall be wrought in thy reign') belongs to the second part of the list, that is, it does not depend on the king's will.

The first broken *geis* is the most crucial one because its violation implies the violation of all the others as well,[2] and a single broken taboo is quite enough to unleash the destructive forces of fate. Nevertheless, it should

[2] Cf. the words of St. James regarding the Decalogue: 'For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all' (James 2:10).

be pointed out that *gessi* are practically never violated singly, and the first broken commandment automatically entails the violation of others in a domino effect.

Díberg is the first step on the king's way to his death. Conaire is not the perpetrator of the crimes in question and may seem to be merely a powerless victim of forces beyond his control. As Ó Cathasaigh (1996: 203) stresses:

> One of the main questions which have arisen in regard to this tale is whether Conaire is to be seen as an innocent victim or as an architect of his own tragic end. The view which I have taken is that Conaire erred fatally in not checking the initial, tentative criminal activities of his foster-brothers, in that they then went on to perpetrate *díberg*, thereby infringing one of Conaire's *geisi*.

The opponents of the king who engage in plunder are his once beloved foster-brothers and, in the course of the tale, their relationship to Conaire changes dramatically. The three foster-brothers are first mentioned in the passage which recounts Conaire's childhood:

> *...ro alta in meic aile lesin .i. Fer Lé ₇ Fer Gar ₇ Fer Rogein, trí meic h-ui Duind Désa ind féndeada .i. fear sochraidhi do sochraidi a meic lesi. Ro bátar didiu teora búada for Conaire .i. búaid clúaisi ₇ búaid radairc ₇ búaid n-airdmesa, ₇ ro múin búaid cach comalta dia trí comaltaib díbsin ₇ nach sére do-gníthea dosom do-téigtis dí a cethror. Citis teora séire do-gníthi dosom no téigead cach fear díb dia sére. Inand éitiud ₇ gaiscead ₇ dath each doib a ceathrur* (Knott 1936: 4.111-21).
>
> And other boys were fostered with him, to wit, Fer Lé and Fer Gar and Fer Rogein, three great-grandsons of Donn Desa the champion, an army-man of the army from Mac Lesi. Now Conaire possessed three gifts, to wit, the gift of hearing and the gift of eyesight and the gift of judgment; and of those three gifts he taught one to each of his three foster-brothers. And whatever meal was prepared for him, the four of them would go to it. Even though three meals were prepared for him each of them would go to his meal. The same raiment and armour and colour of horses had the four.

It is safe to say that the three foster-brothers are described as Conaire's doubles or 'twins'. They resemble the king in appearance, countenance and behaviour. However, these doubles are not entirely full-fledged: each of them possesses only one gift, while the true king alone is perfect and gifted with superior hearing, eyesight and judgment. It is exactly the inferiority of the foster-brothers, and not only the outward resemblance, that highlights their

status as doubles. In the mythologem of 'twins' or doubles, the opposition of 'authenticity – falsity' is implied.[3]

The hero is true, real, and his 'twin' is but a copy or a counterfeit, seen as something artificial, secondary, and implicitly negative. What is essential is that a copy, because of the outward likeness, is always impinging upon the rights of its original. A double is often sinister, cruel, envious and aggressive. He realizes his unoriginality and strives for full personhood, but because his original tries to maintain his own status, this is only possible after the death of the latter. Likewise, the foster-brothers do harm Conaire with the conscious intention of discovering what damage the theft in his reign would cause to the king.

It should be pointed out that the three foster-brothers and Conaire were not always in conflict. At the beginning, they were united and acted together. They become separated at the day of *tarbfheis* 'bull-feast'. Firstly, they are literally separated in space, as this day was the first mentioned in the narrative when Conaire left his beloved foster-brothers:

> *Baei Conairi a ceithri cairpthig i lLifiu occa cluichiu, a thrí comaltai ₇ sé bad-deisin . Lotar didiu a aite chuice co tuidchised don tairbfheis. At-chonnairc fear na tairbfheisi in tan sin ina chotlud fer lomnocht i ndiaid na h-aidche íar sligi na Temrach ₇ a chloch ina thailm. 'Ragatsa dadaig', ol sé, 'infar n-degaid'. Fan-ácbat a chomaltai occa chluichiu ₇ ima-saí a charpat ₇ a arai co m-baí oc Áth Clíath* (Knott 1936: 5-6.127-35).
>
> Four men in chariots were on the Plain of Liffey at their game, Conaire himself and his three foster-brothers. Then his fosterers went to him that he might repair to the bull-feast. The bull-feaster, then in his sleep, at the end of the night beheld a man stark-naked, passing along the road of Tara, with a stone in his sling. "I will go in the morning after you", quoth he. He left his foster-brothers at their game, and turned his chariot and his charioteer until he was in Dublin.

At the same time they become separated figuratively, since it is understood that, after leaving them, Conaire gains a new status, the status of the king, which he is granted only after his *gessi* are made known to him, these being a kind of a privilege. As Nemglan says, *bid sí do airmitiu .i. do ges* (Knott 1936: 6.171), "there will be your caution, i.e. your *geis*".[4] Taking into account that, in the context, *airmitiu* is a synonym of *geis*, it should be mentioned that this

[3] Cf. Latin *imitatus* 'similar, alike' but also 'feigned, false, fake', and from the same root (*imitor*), the word *imago* 'picture, image' but also 'copy, double'.

[4] Manuscript readings differ. Knott (1936: 6, fn. 1) provides readings from Y ("*do ghes* (with .i. erased before *do*), H (.i. *do ges*)" and D (*do gs*. with superstroke above *gs*, which she explains as "usual compendium for *grés*"). Knott prefers the reading of D in her edition, whereas I am more inclined to follow the reading of H.

lexeme is a verbal noun of the verb *ar-muinethar* 'honours' meaning respectively 'honour, respect, privileges', the second meaning being 'taboo; consideration, caution, reverence for a supposed supernatural sanction' (DIL 1990: 29). Hence, *geis* is a prohibition given by a supernatural being exclusively to nobles as a kind of privilege or a sign of honour.[5]

There is also a significant dichotomy between Conaire's gifts and those of his foster-brothers which becomes clear if we compare the following passages (my emphasis):

> Now Conaire possessed three **gifts**, to wit, the gift of hearing and the gift of eyesight and the gift of judgment; and of those three gifts he taught one to each of his three foster-brothers (Stokes 1901: 22)
>
> OIr *búaid* 'victory; benefit, virtue' (DIL 1990: 89): ***búaid*** *clúaisi ₇ búaid radairc ₇ búaid n-airdmesa* (Knott 1936: 4)
>
> Now his foster-brothers murmured at the taking from them of their father's and their grandsire's **gifts**, namely Theft and Robbery and Slaughter of men and Rapine (Stokes 1901: 28)
>
> OIr *dána* 'gift, present; profession' (DIL 1990: 180-181): ***dána*** *a n-athar ₇ a seanathar díb .i. gat ₇ brat ₇ guin daíne ₇ díberg* (Knott 1936: 6)

Borsje (2002a: 86-7) emphasises that "the separation becomes an opposition when each party takes up the profession (*dán*) of their respective ancestors: Conaire's kingship, his calling, is incompatible with the foster-brothers' marauding (*díberg*), for allowing the latter is among the *gessi* of Conaire's kingship". Since his foster-brothers betray Conaire and prefer the gifts of their fathers to the virtues he has taught them, they start acting in a reversed manner which supports the idea that the evil 'twin' is a physical copy of a protagonist with radically inverted morals.

2. Other 'twins': Ingcél Cáech, Fer Caille and the three red riders

In the separation of the four once united foster-brothers another pair of doubles plays a very significant role. At this point in the narrative, both the king and his foster-brothers meet a one-eyed man: Conaire encounters Fer Caille and the foster-brothers meet Ingcél Cáech. The text portrays Ingcél Cáech as follows:

[5] Apparently, satire functions in a similar way, as is clear from the following extract from *Bretha Nemed Toísech*: *Ní áera acht nemed* 'only a dignitary is to satirise' (CIH 2215.4; cf. Breatnach 2006: 63).

> *Méit mulaig for gut mella a droma. Sithir cuing n-úarmedóin cechtar a dá lurcain* (Knott 1936: 16.519-21)
>
> His buttocks are the size of a cheese on a withe. Each of his two shins is as long as an outer yoke.

At the same time, Fer Caille who has only one leg (*in fear maeldub co n-oenshúil ⁊ oenláim ⁊ oenchois* (Knott 1936: 11.345-6), 'the man of the black, cropped hair, with his one hand and one eye and one foot') is described by the same words through chiasmus:

> *Sithremir cuing n-imeachtair cechtar a dá lurgan. Mét mulaig for got cech meal do mellaib a dromai.*(Knott 1936: 11.350-2)
>
> Each of his two shins is as long as an outer yoke. His buttocks are the size of a cheese on a withe.

According to Borsje (2002a: 86):

> [...] it is reasonable to infer that the parallels between the descriptions of Ingcél and Fer Caille are deliberate. It should be also noted that the parallelism of the shins is all more remarkable in the light of Fer Caille having only one leg. Evoking the figure of (or a figure *like*) Ingcél seems to be more important for the author than maintaining consistency within Fer Caille's description: the man with one leg has two shins, like Ingcél. It is not the literal form of the image, seemingly, but its meaning that matters.

Although Conaire, on the one hand, tries to get rid of Fer Caille, while his foster-brothers, for their part, unite with Ingcél Cáech in an agreement to go marauding, these encounters with two one-eyed men, each of whom also has an evil eye, serve as sinister omens of disaster for both. Moreover, for Conaire, the encounter with Fer Caille is another broken *geis* and, consequently, clearly an evil omen: *Ní tae dám aenmná nó énfir i tech fort íar fuinead n-gréne* (Knott 1936: 6.179-80), 'After sunset a company of one woman or one man shall not enter the house in which thou art'. However, cooperation with Ingcél Cáech also represents a danger to the three foster-brothers, as Ingcél triggers the destruction to come and leads everyone in his party to death.

The separation of the four foster-brothers is marked, therefore, by the encounters with one-eyed Fer Caille and Ingcél Cáech, who are also described in terms that present them as twins and play a common function in the narrative as bad omens. After that, no further twins or parallels of Conaire appear in the text. He is unique because he is doomed. As a rule, the presence of doubles, such as doubles of a hero, occurs when the 'doubled' figure is in a liminal position. For instance, in the Russian folktale *Maria the Weaver*, a boy

named Ivanushka must identify his mother, who has been kidnapped and carried away to an undersea kingdom, from a row of look-alikes. In this context, the visual multiplication of a woman symbolizes her liminal state: if her son chooses incorrectly, she will remain in the Otherworld for the rest of her life; if not, she will be able to return to this world.[6] Therefore, when a protagonist is limited in his abilities, enchanted or endangered, the opportunity to multiply him exists, but as soon as his fate is already sealed, the character is no longer multiplied. So, in the case of Conaire, he becomes separated from his twin foster-brothers when being vested with royal status (see above). It is intriguing, however, that Conaire still depends on his doubles even after he has become a king, his fate being determined by the violation of the first *geis* committed by his foster-brothers.[7]

Interestingly, after the separation from Conaire, the foster-brothers continue to have 'twins'. The three foster-brothers who broke the first *geis* correspond to the three red riders, who are, in turn, supernatural agents representing the king's doubles (his foster-brothers) and whose apparition also breaks another *geis* (*ní tíassat riut tri Deirg do thig Deirg* (Knott 1936: 6), 'Three Reds shall not go before thee to Red's house'). The three red riders also perform a common function with the foster-brothers as omens of Conaire's near death and also have the same appearance as one another:

> *Rathaiges in triar marcach riam dochum in tigi ₇ teora léne derga impu ₇ trí bruit derga impu ₇ trí scéith derga foraib ₇ trí gaí derga ina lámaib ₇ trí h-eich derga foa suidib ₇ tri fuilt derga foraib. Derga uile cona fíaclaib ₇ foltaib iter each ₇ duine* (Knott 1936: 9.287-93).
>
> He perceived three horsemen riding towards the house. Three red frocks had they, and three red mantles: three red bucklers they bore, and three red spears

[6] Cf. the Russian epic narrative poem *Sadko* where Sadko shall recognize his bride from a range of her doubles and the folktale *The Untold Dream* ('Нерасказанный сон') where the main hero, Ivan, travels with 12 youths resembling him as to "height to height, voice to voice, hair to hair" ('рост в рост, голос в голос, волос в волос').The motif of a protagonist's multiplication is also widespread outside the Russian tradition. Cf. the legend of Nal and Draupadi in the *Mahābhārata* and the identification of Lugaid standing along with his doubles by the Scottish king in the Irish tale *Cath Maige Mucrama* (examples taken from Fomin 2010; see also Fomin 2009a). In *Tochmarc Étaíne* the same motif of multiplication of a protagonist forms the basis of the trial Eochaid must pass to bring his wife back from the elfmound: 'They saw fifty women all of like form and raiment as Étaín. Silence fell on the hosts. There was a grey slut before them. They say to Eochaid, 'Choose thy wife now, or bid one of the women to abide with thee. It is meet that we set out for home' (Bergin, Best 1938: 187). I am indebted to Dr. Maxim Fomin for drawing my attention to these important parallels.

[7] Cf. the episode in *Cath Maige Mucrama* when by eating a mouse (OIr *luch*) one of the doubles of Lugaid (whose name is based on *luch* 'mouse') violated his *geis* (which is similar to Cú Chulainn eating the flesh of the dog and loosing his strength and eventually being defeated) and was the cause of Lugaid's failure as a king. See Fomin 2010.

> were in their hands: three red steeds they bestrode, and three red heads of hair were on them. Red were they all, both body and hair and raiment, both steeds and men.

Moreover, the three riders are going from the house of Donn Tesscorach, who is said to be one of the elf-folk and whose name corresponds to that of the foster-brothers' grandfather, Donn Desa:

> *im-ríadam eocho Duind Desscoraig a sídaib* (Knott 1936: 10.329)
>
> We ride the steeds of Donn Tesscorach from the elf-mounds.

When Conaire enters the house, the three red riders and Fer Caille also take their places near him. Being *gessi* of Conaire, they correspond to the foster-brothers and Ingcél Cáech, who are discussing the situation in the hostel before the final battle. Moreover, it is mentioned that the three red riders were exiled from their *síd* for marauding, which also corresponds with the actions of the foster-brothers after they parted from Conaire. There are, therefore, several pairs of doubles and 'twins' in the tale, united by the same function.

Prior to their separation the four brothers acted as one person; "like many sets of foster-brothers in mediaeval Irish narrative, they are inseparable and function initially as a single unit" (O'Connor 2013: 95). After their split, the three foster-brothers are never mentioned again separately, and they always act together as if they were one character. The plot would not be affected, if they were replaced by one character, the antagonist of Conaire. This is probably why the textual tradition differs on their number – three, five or seven are mentioned (Knott 1936: 72-5). The two one-eyed men also have the same function; they are Conaire's evil omens. Three red riders now correspond to the three foster-brothers and perform the same function as them – they manifest the death of Conaire, as meeting them is a *geis* of his.

3. The three foster-brothers as the king's *alter ego*

Taking into account the similarities between Conaire and his foster-brothers, their confrontation could be described within the terms of a 'twin'-mythology paradigm. Conaire himself is a 'twin'-protagonist who possesses various virtues and thus guarantees prosperity to his country through/by maintaining *fír flathemon* ('ruler's truth'; see McCone 1990: 129; Fomin 2013: 43, 188, 206-11 for discussion). The three foster-brothers, being presented as a single unit, form the figure of the 'twin'-antagonist which takes the first step, *díberg*, on the way to *gáu flathemon*, 'ruler's falsehood'.

In the 'twin-brothers' myths which are a characteristic feature of dualistic mythologies, one of the brothers is usually connected with everything

good and helpful, and another one with everything evil or 'badly fabricated' (Ivanov 1980: 174). The 'twin'-myth is often associated with solar/lunar opposition or with a dualistic cosmology. Like the sun and the moon, light and darkness, white and black parts of the universe, the so-called 'evil twin' is more precisely a dual opposite to the 'good' counterpart. Twins are either opponents or stand in complementary distribution within a common category. For example, the twin consorts Tefnut (water) and Shu (air) in Ancient Egyptian religion correlate with each other as the right and the left eye (Shu represents the right eye – Sun, while Tefnut is the left eye – Moon) (Ivanov 2009: 39). Therefore, the idea of complementary distribution within a certain unit draws attention not only to the external but also to the internal rivalry, to the duplicity and the constant struggle between the two parts of human nature, in other words, between the hero and his dark side, his *alter ego*.

Three of Conaire's foster-brothers, each of them having one of the king's gifts, could actually be interpreted as different aspects of Conaire's personality. The representation of one character as a triad is not alien to ancient Irish tradition. Apart from the triple deities like Brigid,[8] Morrigan-Macha-Badb and so on, three characters are in many cases equal to one from the point of view of their function in the narrative.

A similar case of a functionally non-motivated presence of three characters occurs in *Cath Bóinde*. Three twin-brothers, Breas, Nár and Lotar, all sleep with their own sister Clothrú. Together they conceive a son, *Lugaid Ríab nDearg, mac na trí Find-eamna* 'Lugaid of Red Stripes, son of the three Findeamna',[9] and die in a battle against their father.[10] It is clear that the three fathers are only necessary for explaining the stripes on Lugaid's body. In other respects, they perform the function of a single character. Similarly, in *Aided Con Culainn*, Lugaid is called *Mac Trí Con*, 'son of three hounds'[11] which led Vendryes (1952: 237) to believe that, as Lugaid was the son of Cú Roí, the latter used to be a tripartite personality; the 'three hounds' in this case are regarded as a reference to one legendary character, namely Cú Roí.

[8] *Brigit .i. banfile* […] *cuius sorores erant Brigit bé legis ⁊ Brigi bé goibne*, 'Brigit the poetess whose sisters were Brigit the physician and Brigit the blacksmith' (*Sanas Cormaic*, Meyer 1912: 6 §150).

[9] Cf. the *dindshenchas* of Druim Criach: *Lugaid Riab ndearg mac na tri Find-eamna* (Stokes 1895b: 148).

[10] Note that in *Serglige Con Culainn*, Lugaid Ríab nDerg receives a *tegosc*-instruction (teaching concerning the proper way of ruling) from Cú Chulainn, which is similar to the taboos placed by Nemglan on Conaire. In both cases, the protagonists are the addressees of royal injunctions which protect the integrity of their rule. Cf. *Bríatharthecosc Con Culainn* (Dillon 1975: 9; Fomin 2009b).

[11] Cf. also the passage from 'The Annals of Tigernach': *Mors Conchulaind fortissimo herois Scottorum la* ***Lugaid mac trí con*** (Stokes 1895a: 407).

According to Propp's functional analysis of a fairy tale (1998: 20-51), there are 31 functions; each character type (hero, villain, donor etc.) has its own range of functions (ibid.: 60-1). That is why it could be argued that the character is equal to the functions he fulfills in a story. The converse is also correct: one function, from the point of view of a narrative structure, requires one character type. For example, function VIII ('Villain harms family', abbreviated as *A*) can be performed only by a character of Type 1, 'the villain'. From a position of functionality the presence of three twin-brothers in *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* and *Cath Bóinde* seems redundant. This tripartite identity is implicitly mentioned in a paragraph of *Cath Bóinde*:

> *Ceathrar mac lais .i. na tri findeamna (.i. Eamain* ***ræd nach dealaigther****,) ⁊ d'ænt*airbirt rucad *.i. Breas ⁊ Nár ⁊ Lothar a n-anmand, ⁊ is iad dorigni Lugaid tri riab n-derg rena siair bodein in agaig reim chath Dromacriadid do thobairt da n-athair* (O'Neill 1905: 174)
>
> He had four sons, namely, the three Findeamna (*eamain* i.e. **a thing which is not divided**),[12] and they were born of one birth, Breas, Nár, and Lothar their names; it is they who conceived Lugaid-of-the-three-red-stripes with their own sister on the night before giving the Battle of Druimcriad to their father.

The gloss obviously implies the idea that, although there are three brothers, they represent, at the same time, something undivided, being a kind of unity in a trinity. So Fer Lé, Fer Gar and Fer Rogein could be functionally regarded as one character, which might be called a 'hyper-character' or 'super-character', similar to Bres, Nár and Lothar. Each of these 'hyper-characters' follows his own dualistic twin-mythology pattern (Ivanov 1980: 174):

> 1) The confrontation 'Conaire versus his evil twin/*alter ego* (= Fer Lé + Fer Gar + Fer Rogein)' embodies the model 'two rival brothers';
>
> 2) The alliance 'Clothrú + her brother (= Bres + Nár + Lothar)' embodies a model of 'an incest of brother and sister' (cf. Tefnut and Shu, Yama and his twin-sister Yami).

Apart from the arguments above, the following extract also gives reasons to interpret the foster-brothers as Conaire's *alter ego*:

[12] My emphasis. OIr. *emon* 'pair' (DIL, s.v.) is related to Sanskrit *yama* 'a twin, double'. In Hinduism, Yama and Yami are, in turn, twin consorts, deities of Sun (Day) and Moon (Night).

> *Ónní íarum ros-gab míad ₇ imtholtu íad, gabsat díberg co maccaib flaithi fer n-Érenn impu. Trí .lll. fear doib in tan bádar **oc faelad** i Crích Connacht occa múnud* (Knott 1936: 7.204-7).

This passage is translated by Stokes as follows:

> Since, then, pride and willfulness possessed them, they took to marauding, surrounded by the sons of the lords of the men of Erin. Thrice fifty men had they as pupils when they (the pupils) were **were-wolfing** in the province of Connaught (Stokes 1901: 29-30).

Cross and Slover (1936) translate the last clause as "**in the form of were-wolves** were destroying in the province of Connaught."

I wish to draw attention to *oc faelad* (lit. 'wolfing', from *fáel* 'wolf') which could be translated simply as 'marauding, plundering', indicating that the act of *díberg* alludes to the wolves' behaviour. On the other hand, cases of this sort cannot be regarded simply as metaphors, because in the reality of the narrative these elements mean exactly what they denote and moreover, the epic narrative in its constant introspective development strives for the pseudo-etymological or popular etymological treatment of its components' meaning. For this reason, the portrayal of the brothers as were-wolves or people in the shape of wolves is absolutely correct in both translations. Cf. the extract from *Cóir Anmann*:

> 218. *Laighnech Faeladh .i. fer eissidhe no theghedh fri faeladh .i. i conrachtaibh .i. a rachtaibh na mac tire, téghedh in tan ba háil dó. Ocus teighdís a shil ina dheóidh. Ocus do mharbhdaís na hindile fó bés na mac tire. Conadh aire sin isberthí Laighnech Fáelad frissium. Ar is é cétna dochóidh i conrecht díbh* (Arbuthnot 2007: 58).

> Laignech Fáelad [< *fáel* 'wolf'], i.e. he was a man who used to engage in 'wolfing', i.e. he used to change into wolf-forms, i.e. into the forms of wolves whenever he wanted. And so did his descendants after him. And they used to kill cattle in the manner of wolves. For that reason he used to be called Laignech Fáelad. For he was the first of them who went into the form of a wolf (Arbuthnot 2007: 131).

The implicit fact that foster-brothers may turn into wolves / go into a wolf-shape in a certain way also supports the idea that they represent the king's *alter ego*, the dark part of his personality. In his book *The Epic Hero*, Miller points out that, in an epic tale, a wolf usually incarnates the "wolfish side of the hero, the hero's initial movement out of culture and into ferality, into wild animal morphisms", in contrast to a dog, who is hunter's friend and companion (Miller 2002: 78):

> A symbolic caninism, in the good sense, is attached to the hero-warrior who is supportive of kin, protective to society, and obedient, while the wolf is allied to the outlaw, the dangerous stranger, the expelled one. A human individual may also pass from the image of dog to that of wolf – from domesticated culture to feral nature – or the reverse (ibid.).

Miller also expresses the idea that a zoomorphic double in a wolf-shape represents the hero's dark *alter ego* and notes that, "in a psychological significance, the animal-monstrous 'double' may be created so as to contain and display characteristics felt to be unfitted or repellent to the true-heroic image" (ibid.: 81).

The conflict between Conaire and his sinister foster-brothers could also correspond to the Jungian archetypes of 'persona' and 'shadow', the former signifying the social role of the individual and appropriate behavior with other people, while the latter signifies the opposite of 'persona', namely, a dark suppressed negative and *bestial* part of human personality, in the light of which the comparison of the foster-brothers with wild animals seems particularly interesting. According to Jung, the shadow often overwhelms a person's actions, for example, when the conscious mind is shocked, confused, or paralysed by indecision, something which eventually did happen to Conaire: "A man who is possessed by his shadow is always standing in his own light and *falling into his own traps* ... living below his own level" (Jung 1996: 123).

The image of the four foster-brothers, therefore, could be interpreted as the figure of a single hero torn by internal strife and contradictions. Following this interpretation, it becomes evident that it was Conaire himself who violated the first *geis* under pressure from his *alter ego* to see what damage the rapine in his reign would cause. Although a violation of a *geis* is highly dangerous for the protagonist, it is the person on whom a prohibition is placed who is the most curious about its consequences, and it was Conaire who would have desired to see what would have happened if his *gessi* were broken.

4. Twin brothers: a common 'field of fate'

Nevertheless, there remains an unresolved paradox. The 'evil twin' embodies the idea of external aggression, while the *alter ego* is a sort of auto-aggression. However, this contradiction is resolved in the epic tradition, where the border between the external and the internal is rather blurred. Where does a person begin and where does he or she end? In epic tales, the limits of human personality and human destiny were not yet specified and they extended far wider than the concrete individual. 'Personality' is not just a human being: it comprises the individual himself, his relationships, the objects he uses, his pets etc. (see Mikhailova 2005: 39).

An interesting parallel is found in the *glám dícenn* rite (Hyde 1899: 242-243; Joyce 1903: 453), in which the earth was supposed to swallow not only the unjust king cursed by the satire but also his dogs, horses, servants and family, and the king's household seems to share responsibility for his wrong-doing.[13]

This belief is obviously related to the so-called 'external soul', which can be contained in inanimate things, plants or animals.[14] For example, in the saga *Cath Maige Mucrama*, it is the garment of a king that is directly involved in the field of his destiny. King Lugaid Mac Con is considered to be *lommthrú* 'doomed' (DIL 1990: 439)[15] before the battle against his enemy. He exchanges

[13] The idea of the equivalent character of the body of the landlord and the place which his house occupied is found in the Indian treatise *Vastu-purusha-mandala* that describes the erection of a human dwelling. "The place that was allocated for a human dwelling was called *vastu*. So that the land where the building was erected is set in order and is correlated with the macrocosm… the regulation of the constructed dwelling is likened with the regulated state of the Universe or the cosmic primeval man (the *Purusha*) who is symbolically equivalent to the lord of the house" (Vertogradova 1975: 300, 302). I am immensely grateful to Dr. Maxim Fomin for this important parallel from the Indian tradition and for the translation of the above-mentioned citation for this footnote.

[14] Cf. Frazer 1907-1915: XI, 95ff.

[15] The word itself is obviously a composite of *lomm* 'bare, naked, smooth' (functions also as an intensifier, cf. *lomm-sherc* 'great love') (DIL 1990: 439), and *trú* 'a doomed person, one who is fey' (DIL 1990: 609). The literal translation of *lomm-thrú* in that case is 'naked-doomed' or 'utterly doomed'. Gwynn (1910: 152–154) points out that the lexeme *trú* is a valid descriptive word for 'someone who is under the sentence of fate', and the idea of someone being *trú* is to be classified as an expression of the passive notion of fate (as for passive / active forms of fate, see Gwynn 1910; Borsje 2002b). Mikhailova (2005: 44) translates *lomm-thrú* literally as 'naked-dry' stating that *trú*, apparently, goes back to PIE **ter-s*/ **tre-s* 'dry' and thus, *trú* might be interpreted as 'dry, wizened', implying that a doomed person actually lacks 'water of life' (in mythology, fate is often described as liquor: cf. Rus. *zhivaya voda / myortvaya voda* 'water of life / water of death'; OIr *deoga tondaig* (Knott 1936: 46) 'drinks of death' (Stokes 1901: 329), lit. 'drinks of waves' referring to 'death'). Obviously, such interpretation of the concept of *lommthrú* is also applicable to the situation of Conaire, as he starts suffering from a terrible thirst just before he was slain and there was no water to quench his thirst: "Short will his time be," say the wizards along with the reavers. This was the quelling they brought, a scantness of drink that seized him. Thereafter Conaire entered the house, and asked for a drink. "A drink to me, O master Mac Cecht!" says Conaire. […] Touching Mac Cecht, however, he went his way till he reached the Well of Casair, which was near him in Crich Cualann; but of water he found not therein the full of his cup, that is, Conaire's golden cup which he had brought in his hand. Before morning he had gone round the chief rivers of Erin, to wit Bush, Boyne, Bann, Barrow, Neim, Luae, Láigdae, Shannon, Suir, Sligo, Sámair, Find, Ruirthech, Slaney, and in them he found not the full of his cup of water' (Stokes 1901: 315-321). In addition, the word *lommthrú* may also refer to the 'drink of sovereignty' concept (see, for example, the passage from *Baile in Scáil* where the woman who is the Sovereignty of Ireland (*Flaith Érenn*) dispenses the ale and asks to whom each drink should be given (Meyer 1901: 460)), implying that a doomed king lacks the drink of sovereignty when he is approaching his death. The discussion of this topic in detail is found in Nikolayeva 2001.

his clothes with his fool, however, and thus survives. The most striking moment in this story is that the jester is actually a double of the king:

> Mac Con took counsel with his jester. Do Déra was his name. He was of the Dáirine. The jester was exactly like Mac Con in form and appearance.
> 'Well', said Lugaid, 'Éogan will now challenge me to single combat and his ardent spirit – [he being] son and heir of the king and grandson of another – will overthrow me'.
> '[Such words] come ill on your lips', said the jester, 'you are utterly doomed [OIr *lomthrú*]. I will go against him', said the jester, 'with your diadem on my head and wearing your battle-dress so that all will say that it is you that will fall there. If it happen then that I fall, take yourself off at once for all will say that it is you who have fallen there and the battle will be won. Éogan however will be looking for you throughout the battle. Then if he sees the calves of your legs you will be wounded'.
> That is done. The jester is killed. (O Daly 1975: 41-3)

The jester puts on the king's clothes and dies in Mac Con's place. This example shows that fate is, in fact, not inescapable; one can get rid of it like a material thing. Fate, certainly, cannot be just thrown away: one may exchange it, not with anybody but only with one's double, as twins do share a common fate. This explains why twin-brothers can exchange their lots as, for example, when Esau and Jacob exchange their birthright. In the same manner, in *Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar* ('Lay of Helgi Hjörvarðsson'), a poem which forms part of the Poetic *Edda*, Helgi's *fylgja* (< ON *fylgja* 'follow, accompany'[16], lit. 'one who accompanies, a companion', a supernatural being that accompanies a person and embodies his or her fate or fortune) followed his brother Heðinn and made him (Heðinn) take upon himself Helgi's fate, that is, to marry Sváva, bride of Helgi, as Helgi had already been doomed:

> *Heðinn fór einn saman heim ór skógi jólaaptan ok fann trollkonu. Sú reið vargi ok hafði orma at taumum ok bauð fylgð sína Heðni. "Nei," sagði hann. Hon sagði: "Þess skaltu gjalda at bragarfulli." Um kveldit óru heitstrengingar. Var fram leiddr sonargöltr. Lögðu menn þar á hendr sínar ok strengðu menn þá heit at bragarfulli. Heðinn strengði heit til Sváfu Eylima dóttur, unnustu Helga bróður sins* (Jónsson 1905: 253).

> Hethin was coming home alone from the forest one Yule-eve, and found a troll-woman; she rode on a wolf, and had snakes in place of a bridle. She asked Hethin to follow him. "Nay", said he. She said, "Thou shalt pay for this at the king's toast." That evening the great vows were taken; the sacred boar was

[16] Cf. OE *folgian, fylgan* 'follow, accompany; follow after, pursue', also 'obey, apply oneself to a practice or calling', Dutch *volgen* 'idem', German *folgen* 'idem'.

> brought in, the men laid their hands thereon, and took their vows at the king's toast. Hethin vowed that he would have Sváva, Eylimi's daughter, the beloved of his brother Helgi (Bellows 1936: 284-5).

It may safely be said that Conaire and his foster-brothers also possess a common 'field of fate', as the brothers violate the *gessi* placed upon Conaire. The aggression of a 'twin'-antagonist (implicitly, of a fake) is dictated by his desire to take the whole 'field of fate' and to reign over it entirely. That is why such a 'twin' is extremely dangerous and tries to slay the 'original'. It can be plausibly argued that this idea explains the origin of the taboos on making images of people (e.g. in Ancient Judea among the Hebrews), pediophobia (fear of dolls), and the popular belief that a part of one's soul is lost when one is photographed.

The last point to mention is the Old Irish incantation for a long life which begins with the words *Rohorthar mo richt / Rosoerthar mo recht / Romórthar mo nert*, 'May my double be slain / May my right be maintained / May my strength be increased' (Elton 1914: 230). Apparently, these lines also imply the idea that the death of a double strengthens the person's vitality, providing him with an entire 'field of fate'. Oliver Elton also gives a commentary to the first line:

> This is a difficult line to understand: *rohorthar mo richt* would mean literally 'may my shape be slain'. But *richt* also means 'guise, likeness' and 'a double'. Cf., e.g., *co tarat fuasma tria Odran hi richt Patraic*, 'so that he gave a spear-thrust through Odran mistaking him for Patrick,' Trip., p. 218, 6. So I have ventured to translate as above, and the meaning would be: 'if I am to be slain, may my double be slain instead of me' (Elton 1914: 231).

It is worth noting that the translation of this line by Elton also corresponds to the situation of Mac Con and his twin-jester in *Cath Maige Mucrama*.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be stated that, according to their common narrative function, the three foster-brothers in *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* are combined into one triple 'hyper-character', Proppian Type 1 ('Villain'), the antagonist of the king. This antagonist embodies the motif of the 'evil twin', as the brothers are depicted as having the same appearance as Conaire. Moreover, as each of the three foster-brothers possesses one of Conaire's virtues which they betray for their fathers' vices, together they feature an inverted image of the king himself, that is, his *alter ego*, and the separation of four foster-brothers in the narrative may represent a shift on another level, from an ideal heroic behavior to internal struggle and feral side of a human nature.

Viewed in this manner, the three foster-brothers, parallel to the three Otherworld riders, are sinister doppelgängers typically representing misfortune and death and resemble such figures as the Norwegian *vardøger* (a ghostly double who precedes a living person and is seen performing his actions in advance), the Icelandic *fylgja* (see above), the Ancient Egyptian *ka* (a spirit double having the same memories and feelings as the original person) and other 'evil twins' and represent the common idea of the incarnation of the negative part of one's personality (that is, *alter ego*, the second self) in a distinct copy. Being an epic hero, Conaire is a personification of virtue, and for this reason the sinister part of his mind is embodied on a narrative level in the figure of his antagonists (cf. Miller 2002: 81 cited above).

Therefore, it could be supposed that the very first, the most crucial *geis* was violated not by Conaire but by his 'evil twin'; Conaire is not entirely blameless as he is inextricably intertwined with his 'evil twin'/*alter ego*, represented in this case by his three foster-brothers. The idea of the enemy incarnated in the image of one's own double is deeply rooted in mythological consciousness and psychology and was subsequently widely employed in the literature of the early twentieth century. This is appropriately expressed in the last line of Baudelaire's poem *Au Lecteur* ('To the Reader'): *Hypocrite lecteur, — mon semblable, — mon frère* (Baudelaire 1917: 7), 'You — hypocrite Reader — my double — my brother!'[17]

St. Petersburg State University

Abbreviations

OE Old English
OIr Old Irish
ON Old Norse
Rus Russian
DIL *Dictionary of the Irish Language* (Quin 1990)

References

Arbuthnot, S., 2007, *Cóir Anmann: A Late Middle Irish Treatise on Personal Names. Part 2. Irish Texts Society Main Series*, 60. London.
Baudelaire, Ch., 1917, *Les fleurs du mal*, Paris.
Baudelaire, Ch., 1963, *The Flowers of Evil*, Marthiel & Jackson Matthews, eds., New York.

[17] Translation by Robert Lowell (Baudelaire 1963), quoted after http://fleursdumal.org/poem/099.

Bellows, H.A., 1936, *The Poetic Edda: translated by Henry Adams Bellows*, New York.
Bergin. O., **Best**, R. I., 1938, 'Tochmarc Étaíne', *Ériu* 12, 137-96.
Borsje, J., 2002a, 'Approaching Danger: *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* and the Motif of Being One-Eyed', in: Nagy, J. F., ed., *Identifying the Celtic,* Dublin, 75-99.
Borsje, J., 2002b, 'Fate in Early Irish Texts', *Peritia* 16, 214-31.
Breatnach, L., 2006, 'Satire, Praise and the Early Irish Poet', *Ériu* 56, 63-84.
Cross, T. P., **Slover** C.H., 1936, *Ancient Irish Tales*, New York.
Dillon, M., 1975, *Serglige Con Culainn*, Dublin.
Elton, O., 1914, *A Miscellany Presented to John Macdonald Mackay, July, 1914*, Liverpool.
Fomin, M., 2009a, 'Формулы идентифицирования персонажей в ирландской нарративной традиции и в русской волшебной сказке' [Protagonists' Identification Formulae in the Irish Narrative Tradition and in the Russian Magic Fairy-tale], in: Mikhailova, T., et al., eds., *Магия формулы* [Magic of the formula], Moscow, 58-60.
Fomin, M., 2009b, '*Bríatharthecosc Con Culainn* in the Context of Early Irish Wisdom-Literature', in: R. Ó hUiginn & B. Ó Catháin, eds., *Ulidia 2: Proceedings of the Second International Conference on the Ulster Cycle of Tales*, Maynooth, 140-72.
Fomin, M., 2010, 'Character Identification Formula in Early Irish Narrative and Russian Folklore Traditions', *Abstracts*. *The 5th International colloquium of Societas Celto-Slavica*, Příbram, Czech Republic.
Fomin, M., 2013, *Instructions for Kings. Secular and Clerical Images of Kingship in Early Ireland and Ancient India*. Heidelberg.
Frazer, J. G., 1907-1915, *The Golden Bough*, Third Edition, Moscow.
Gwynn, E. J., 1910, 'On the Idea of Fate in Irish Literature', *Journal of the Ivernian Society* 2, 152-65.
Hyde, D., 1899, *A Literary History of Ireland*, London.
Ivanov, V. V., 1980, 'Близнечные мифы' [Twin-myths], in: Tokarev, S., ed., *Мифы народов мира:Энциклопедия* [Myths of Nations of the World: Encyclopedia], Vol. 1, Moscow, 174-6.
Ivanov, V.V., 2009, *Избранные труды по семиотике и истории культуры*. *Том 5: Мифология и фольклор* [Selected works on Semiotics and the History of Culture. Vol. 5. Mythology and Folklore], Moscow.
Jónsson, F., 1905, *Sæmundar-Edda: Eddukvæði*, Reykjavík.
Joyce, P. W., 1903, *A Social History of Ancient Ireland*, London.
Jung, C. G., 1996, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, London.
Knott, E., 1936, *Togail Bruidne Da Derga*, Dublin.
McCone, K., 1990, *Pagan Past and Christian Present in Early Irish Literature*, Maynooth.

Meyer, K., 1901, 'Baile in Scáil', *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* 3, 457-66.
Meyer, K., 1912, 'Sanas Cormaic', in: *Anecdota from Irish Manuscripts*, Vol. 4, Dublin, i-xix, 1-128.
Mikhailova, T., 2005, 'Осмысление и обозначение судьбы в древнеирландской мифопоэтической традиции' [Interpretation and Designation of Destiny in the Old Irish Mythopoetic Tradition], in: Mikhailova, T., ed., *Мифологема женщины-судьбы у древних кельтов и германцев* [The Mythologem of the Woman and Fate among the Ancient Celts and Germans], Moscow, 24-49.
Miller, D. A., 2002, *The Epic Hero*, Baltimore and London.
Nikolayeva, N., 2001, 'The Drink of Death', *Studia Celtica* 35, 299-306.
Ó Cathasaigh, T., 1996, '*Gat* and *Díberg* in *Togail Bruidne Da Derga*', in: Ahlqvist, A., et al., eds., *Celtica Helsingiensia. Proceedings from a Symposium on Celtic Studies*, Helsinki, 203-13.
O'Connor, R., 2013, *The Destruction of Da Derga's Hostel. Kingship and Narrative Artistry in a Mediaeval Irish Saga*, Oxford.
O'Daly, M., 1975, *Cath Maige Mucrama. The Battle of Mag Mucrama*, Dublin: Irish Texts Society.
O'Neill, J., 1905, 'Cath Boinde', *Ériu* 2, 173-85.
Propp, V., 1998, *Морфология волшебной сказки* [The Morphology of the Fairy-Tale], Moscow.
Quin, E. G., 1990, *Dictionary of the Irish Language*, Compact Edition, Dublin.
Sjöblom, T., 2000, *Early Irish Taboos*, Helsinki.
Sjöblom, T., 2003, 'Early Irish Taboos as Traditional Communication: A Cognitive Approach', *Celtic Cultural Studies. An Interdisciplinary Online Journal*, http://www.celtic-cultural-studies.com/papers/03/sjoblom-01.html (accessed 16.05.2014).
Stokes, W., 1895a, 'The Annals of Tigernach', *Revue Celtique* 16, 374-419.
Stokes, W., 1895b, 'The Prose Tales in the Rennes *Dindshenchas'*, *Revue Celtique* 16, 135-67.
Stokes, W., 1901, 'The Destruction of Da Derga's Hostel', *Revue Celtique* 22, 9-61, 165-215, 282-329, 390-437.
Vendryes, J., 1952, 'L'unité en trois personnes chez les celtes', in: id., *Choix d'études linguistiques et celtiques*, Paris.
Vertogradova, V., 1975, 'Архитектура' [Architecture], in: Gerasimov, A. V., *Культура древней Индии* [The culture of Ancient India], Moscow: Nauka, 293-314.