

The hound/wolf and warrior in Irish literature

A narratological and semiotic analysis of the *Acallam na Senórach*

BA thesis Celtic Languages and Culture

Rein Schiphorst

3580156

Utrecht University

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supervisor: prof. dr. Peter Schrijver

second reader: dr. Aaron Griffith

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1. Introduction

In Indo-European cultures existed war-bands associated with hounds/wolves, most typically the initiatory **korios* or *Männerbund* of young men, in whose rituals hounds/wolves figured. This same association seems discernible from Insular Celtic sources.¹ There is, however, some disagreement on whether or not to believe Insular Celtic, and especially Irish, on which I shall here focus, to reflect Indo-European cultural elements. The remoteness in both time and place, and the sheer obscurity of the development of the Celtic cultures, have led to firm suspicions or refutals of identifying Insular Celtic cultures as Indo-European. Primarily so the theory that Insular Celts, especially Irish, more than other Indo-European populations,² descended from Neolithic inhabitants, without invading Indo-Europeans from a continental homeland taking over (and partially replacing them): Insular Celtic languages and culture deriving instead from their adoption as a result of trading contact with the prestigious continental communities, with Ireland, being the most culturally isolated location, receiving the least Celtic influence.³

Recently, Sims-Williams argued against the reconstruction of a Celtic culture shared by Continental and Insular Celtic civilizations, with a continuity of the Celtic customs that were described in Classical sources also to be found in Ireland and Wales, based on similarities that might be found to exist between them.⁴

¹ Mallory and Adams (1997): 31, 632.

² The traditional view is that Indo-Europeans invaded Europe and conquered indigenous Neolithic populations, in the same way as Germanic languages spread across Europe through invasions and migrations, cf. Prokosch (2009): 21-34. So too Greek is thought to have been introduced to Greece by immigrating people in a time of radical change, bringing about the destruction of the local Neolithic civilizations, cf. Anthony (2007): 368-9, Ramondt (1999): 9-10. The Tocharians and Indo-Iranians certainly migrated across the Eurasian steppes into the Tarim Basin in China, and into the area stretching from India to Iran, resp., Anthony (2007): 9-13, 264-7, 308-11, 427ff. The introduction and spread of western Indo-European languages – Italic, (Continental) Celtic and Germanic – into Europe has become thought of in a more nuanced way than the idea of warlike invaders destroying the peaceful world of local Neolithic populations, although the initial introduction into Europe of Indo-European from its steppe homeland did comprise 'a true "folk migration", a massive and sustained flow of outsiders into a previously settled landscape' during a time of crisis and collapse of Neolithic civilizations, yet these immigrants integrated with the local populations, establishing patron-client relations through which the Indo-European dialects of the elites spread, most likely, proposed by Anthony (2007): 10, 117-9, 225-262, 344-370 (quote on 344).

³ The 'network of cultural interrelationships [across] the entire [Atlantic] region in the period c.1300-600 [BC, bound to the Urnfield and early Hallstatt systems of west central Europe, causing] the Celtic language in its more archaic form to spread from its [homeland] to the Atlantic zone [as a *lingua franca*.]' while in the period from c.600 the networks were reoriented, the area roughly corresponding to modern-day Brittany, 'linked to mainstream European development', being the focus of a cultural zone spreading across the southwestern parts of Britain, Wales and Ireland 'with increasing regionalism and (...) isolation the further one ventured north', the rest of Britain similarly sharing the cultural zone of Northern France and the Low Countries, during which time the later form of Celtic spread from continental Celtic cultural areas to the British Isles, where it 'did not penetrate [Ireland] to a degree sufficient to alter the established forms' due to its cultural isolation. Cunliffe (1997): 145-167 (especially 154-6, 160 for the quotations). Cunliffe emphasizes regional variety of cultural zones within the broad Celtic-speaking world, each indigenous culture in the Atlantic zone responding in an individual way to developments of the Celtic cultural heartland, especially after the changes in the networks in the sixth century, while before then the cultural similarity on a broad level was remarkable. Brenneman (1989) states the Neolithic based Celtic, esp. Irish culture not to be identifiable as Indo-European.

⁴ Sims-Williams (2012): 1-45.

In this paper, I will analyze the late Middle Irish *Acallam na Senórach* (in short *Acallam*), the longest and most important literary text from early Ireland dealing with Fenian lore: stories about the famous Finn mac Cumhaill and *Fianna*, bands of hunter-warriors which have been likened to Indo-European war-bands.⁵ Examining the relation in which hound/wolf and warrior stand in this text, I will compare their associations to those in Indo-European culture in order to conclude whether the same cultural phenomenon was shared by these Insular Celts.

2. Academic context

Attempts have been made to reconstruct aspects of the culture of the linguistic ancestors of Indo-European speaking populations: Proto-Indo-European culture.⁶ It seems that Proto-Indo-European society was one of a pastoral nomadic, male-dominated, cattle-raising people, in which warriors organized in bands of aristocratic chieftainship held a position of prominence.⁷ Warfare and the accompanying mythology centered on the attainment of wealth, mainly in the form of cattle, through raiding.⁸ Warrior-bands were bound to their leader by mutually sworn oaths of loyalty, the war-leader ensuring his followers loot and glory.⁹ Young adolescent males (unmarried and possessionless) were initiated into adult warriorhood in a warrior-band called *Männerbund* or **korios*, separated from society, living off the country by hunting and raiding, and engaging in frenzied, berserk-like behavior, entering a state of furor (induced by drugs or an intense emotional situation or crisis) often described as wolf-like.¹⁰ The young men were also symbolized by the dog/wolf, being called dog/wolf and adopting the headdress, apparel and iconography of the dog/wolf, some groups wearing dog/wolf skins or teeth as pendants.¹¹ As an initiation ritual, these youths went on cattle raids, reenacting the paradigmatic **Trito-*myth in which the archetypal warrior-hero recovers cattle stolen by a monstrous serpent.¹² The warrior-champion, proving his prowess by breaking loose from the pack and battling the enemy on his own, is idolized, especially the ferocious animalistic warrior in frenzied rage (becoming wolf-like, or possessed, probably by the war-god), who appears throughout the Indo-European literatures.¹³

⁵ Cf. Dooley and Roe (1999): i, xi, Mallory and Adams (1997): 632, McCone (1987) and McCone (1990).

⁶ Cf. Mallory and Adams (1997), Anthony (2007): 14-15.

⁷ Mallory and Adams (1997): 31, 632-3, 647, Anthony (2007): 15, 34-5, 328, 364, Kershaw (2000), McCone (1987).

⁸ Mallory and Adams (1997): 138, 632-3, 647, Anthony (2007): 134-5, 364, Cunliffe (1997): 74.

⁹ Mallory and Adams (1997): 632-3, 647, Anthony (2007): 342, 364, Miller (2002): 41.

¹⁰ Mallory and Adams (1997): 7, 31, 632-3, 647, Anthony (2007): 134-5, 364, Kershaw (2000), McCone (1987).

¹¹ Mallory and Adams (1997): 31, 632-3, 647, Anthony (2007): 134-5, 364, Kershaw (2000), McCone (1987).

¹² Mallory and Adams (1997): 19, 31, 138, 632-3, 647, Anthony (2007): 134-5, 364, Kershaw (2000), McCone (1987).

¹³ Mallory and Adams (1997): 31, 632-3, 647-8, Anthony (2007): 134-5, 364, Kershaw (2000), McCone (1987).

Based on archaeological findings and the reconstruction of Indo-European languages and culture, David Anthony concludes the homeland of Proto-Indo-Europeans to have been the Pontic-Caspian steppe.¹⁴ He supposes that long-distance cattle raiding of the bands of wolfish youths of early Indo-European aristocrats developed into migration into southeastern Europe up the Danube valley, spawning the first Celts.¹⁵ The reconstructed set of associations of raids, hounds/wolves, and (drug-induced) frenzied rage connected to the **korios* is probably one of the few phenomena belonging to Proto-Indo-European culture reflected in archeology.¹⁶

Many Indo-European traditions refer to wolf-men as founders of city-states or empires.¹⁷ The Irish (and Welsh) claim as their ancestor *Bile (Beli)*, father of *Mil*, 'soldier', whose name is connected to henbane, a herb that had well-known medicinal and hallucinogenic effects, making one raging mad, insane, infuriated and destructively violent, perhaps in relation to the (in this case drug-induced) state of furor of warriors.¹⁸ Many aristocratic warriors bore names containing the words 'hound' or 'wolf' as was the case in other Indo-European societies.¹⁹

Irish tradition knows warrior-heroes like *Cú Chulainn*, 'Hound of Culann', with his frenzy and animalistic nature, who led *in maccrad* 'the youths', sons of kings, an initiatory **korios*.²⁰ Also known are the historic *Fianna*, bands of hunter-warriors comprising 'propertyless males of free birth who had left fosterage but had not yet inherited the property needed to settle down as full land-owning members of the *túath*' or 'tribe', connected to the **korios* by Kim McCone.²¹ They were organized with strong leader loyalty often with ritualized features and carried out raiding-group activities.²² Furthermore, a great many Irish tales survive of various mythic cattle raids that were identified as Celtic versions of the Indo-European cattle-raiding **Trito*-myth which functioned as a paradigm for the social class of warriors by Bruce Lincoln and Ruth Katz Arabagian.²³

Walter Brenneman opposes Lincoln and Arabagian in their analysis of the **Trito*-myth as seen in Celtic culture –especially Irish– saying that cereal grain cultures and pastoral nomadic

¹⁴ Anthony (2007): 343-4, 361-370.

¹⁵ Ibid., especially 364-7.

¹⁶ Ibid.: 361-367, Mallory and Adams (1997): 226-7, 632-3.

¹⁷ Cf. Kershaw (2000).

¹⁸ Schrijver (1999). Perhaps healing, henbane or similar drugs, dogs/wolves, furor (even prophecy and poetry?) were all associated with each other, as they were with the god Apollo, and similarly with **Belenos* and *Odin*. Cannabis was first found in archaeological sites belonging to the Yamnaya immigrants in the Danube valley, who also had dog-tooth necklaces, and the smoking of cannabis was probably introduced to Europe by them, cf. Anthony (2007): 362. Henbane was found in sites dating from Roman times near Utrecht, the Netherlands, cf. Groot (2011): 33.

¹⁹ Like *Coinchenn* in the *Acallam*, cf. n. 11, Mallory and Adams (1997): 31, McCone (1987), Kershaw (2000).

²⁰ Mallory and Adams (1997): 632, Larsen (2003).

²¹ Mallory and Adams (1997): 632, McCone (1987), McCone (1990), Dooley and Roe (1999): xi.

²² Ibid.

²³ Mallory and Adams (1997): 138, 579-580, Anthony (2007): 134, Brenneman (1989), Lincoln (1975), Arabagian (1984).

cultures with their different ecologies and technologies have radically different religions, Irish Celts, having an earth-centered culture and mythology, placed at the opposite pole to the Indo-Europeans with their masculine oriented warrior ideology and cattle-raiding mythology. Celts, particularly Irish, should in his opinion not be identified as Indo-European, '[d]espite common linguistic roots within the Indo-European language group, the cultural heritage of the Celts from their earliest beginnings differ[ing] from that of the Indo-Europeans who invaded India, Greece, and Iran.'²⁴ He states the power source at the center of the Celtic culture was the earth, feminine divinity, making possible all 'masculine, pastoral nomadic structures' dependent on it such as male leadership, chieftainship and war, and that the symbolism of the cattle raid myth and its paradigmatic, legitimizing function, relating how males are to become proper warriors, must also be different in Celtic culture.²⁵

Dooley and Roe state it is 'certainly attractive to view aspects of the institution [of the *Fianna*] as part of a common Indo-European tradition [though] it is more realistic to study its historical development among the Celtic people themselves.'²⁶ They propose the continued existence of the war-band institution first in the La Tène culture and later in Ireland to depend on contact with the alluring civilized and wealthy empires of the Mediterranean south and the Roman world in particular, which acted as an incentive for the barbarian neighbors.²⁷ Cunliffe similarly suggests that – while warrior elites of Continental Celtic core territories maintained themselves by raiding, commanding 'seizable entourages', as acts of prowess – in the northern peripheral zone 'raiding may have developed as an economic necessity to provide (...) prestige goods', thus becoming 'embedded in the social system [as] one of the defining characteristics of early Celtic society'.²⁸ Both seek to explain the continued existence of the phenomenon of raiding war-bands by contemporary circumstances (external), instead of by cultural heritage (internal), these bands forming a traditional part of society into which new generations enter, perhaps even retaining the elements of ritual initiation and its association with hounds/wolves.

3. Research question and method of research

Insular Celtic raiding war-bands could have continued to exist as a part of the Indo-European cultural heritage, though Ireland especially suffered from great (cultural) separation from even the Continental Celtic core centers, let alone the original speakers of Indo-European. The war-band **korios* in Indo-European tradition, as seen above, comprised young men, following a

²⁴ Brenneman (1989): 342.

²⁵ Ibid.: 343, Mallory and Adams (1997): 138, Lincoln (1976), Miller (2002): 49-50, 53-64.

²⁶ Dooley and Roe (1999): xi.

²⁷ Ibid.: xi-xii.

²⁸ Cunliffe (1997): 74.

war-leader, who raided; the warriors were associated with the hound/wolf and frenzied rage; and their accompanying paradigmatic warrior myth was the cattle-raiding **Trito*-myth.

In this paper I shall try to ascertain whether in the *Acallam*, dealing with the lore of *Fían*-bands, supposedly connected to the **korios*, the same associations were attached to warriors. My main question will be *whether the hound/wolf in this text stands in any relation to the warrior; and if so, what kind of relation, hound/wolf, and warrior; specifically*. Secondly, I will examine whether these associated motifs are linked to frenzied rage and raiding in the text. In conclusion, I will assess if any connection exists between the associated hound/wolf and warrior in the *Acallam* and those in the **Trito*-myth; if its motifs, events and roles can be identified in passages connected to hounds/wolves; and in which way these differ. Thus, I will evaluate whether the association of the hound/wolf and warrior in the *Acallam* is connected to the war-band, and to raiding, frenzied rage, and the **Trito*-myth, respectively, the same as in Indo-European tradition, indicating continuance of the same cultural phenomenon in Insular Celtic Irish tradition.

The text of the *Acallam* probably dates from the first decade of the thirteenth century, and comprises about 80.000 words – 223 pages in Dooley and Roe's translation – dealing with Fenian lore, related in a frame narrative in which the newly arrived Saint Patrick encounters the last surviving *Fíanna* of Ireland, some two hundred years old, asking their chieftain Cailte to tell stories, mostly those behind many various place-names, as they travel together through the whole of late fifth-century Ireland, during which some new legendary events take place.²⁹ The text thus contains hundreds of stories within the literary structures of the *Dinnshenchas* and Patrician hagiography, the latter traditionally containing encounters with *Fían*-types.³⁰

The *Acallam na Senórach* appears in three manuscripts from the fifteenth century, MS Laud 610, The Book of Lismore, and MS Rawlinson B 487, and a Franciscan copy from the sixteenth century; The Book of Lismore containing the most complete text.³¹ The *Acallam* was edited by Standish Hayes O'Grady in 1892 and Whitley Stokes in 1900. The former translated the text in 1999, named 'The Colloquy with the Ancients'. Myles Dillon edited six stories in 1970. Maurice Harmon based his 2009 translation *The Dialogue of the Ancients of Ireland*, which he calls 'a free rendering', on the edition of Stokes.³² Ann Dooley and Harry Roe's 1999 translation *Tales of the Elders of Ireland*, which they call 'the first complete translation', is based on their own comparative readings of the main manuscripts of the *Acallam*.³³

²⁹ Dooley and Roe (1999): viii-ix, xx, xli, 224, and Harmon (2009): xi.

³⁰ *Dinnshenchas* is the 'lore about place-names'. Dooley and Roe (1999): ix-x, xv.

³¹ Dooley and Roe (1999): xxxi.

³² Harmon (2009): xix.

³³ Dooley and Roe (1999): i, xxxi-xxxiii.

I based my analysis on Dooley and Roe's translation, collecting every mention of hound and wolf (i.e. 'dog(s)', 'hound(s)', 'wolf/wolves', 'greyhound(s)', 'beagle(s)', 'bitch' and 'pack'), while comparing the readings to those in Stokes' and Harmon's, and using Stokes' and Dillon's editions of the corresponding Irish texts to determine the exact designations, referencing the *Dictionary of the Irish Language* to confirm the meaning of terms. The same procedure I used when encountering words like *furiosus*, *raging*, *frenzied*, *insane*, etc. in passages connected to the mention of hounds or wolves, due to the known association of the hound/wolf to warriors, war, and connected 'frenzied rage' in Indo-European traditions. The standardized use of either *óclach* or warrior and *gilla* or boy or servant in different translations of the text, caused me to use the same procedure when these designators, or 'youth(s)', appeared, and to decide to use in my paper the form *gilla* for 'boy' or 'servant' used by Dooley and Roe.

Of all the collected mentions of hounds/wolves I will analyze if they stand in any, and if so which, relation to warriors, trying to discover what (semiotic) *meaning* is attached to them and their relation to warriors: which words are used, in which context they appear, and in which events they take place, and which symbolisms, metaphors or associations are connected to them.³⁴ I will employ the functionalistic designation of *static* or *dynamic*, *free* or *bound* motifs to explicate mentions of the hound/wolf in the story, and identify mainly structuralistic roles of *hero* or *champion*, and *opponent* or *enemy*, as well as *special weapons* and the *givers* of these, which are the most prominent roles recurring in the discussed text.³⁵

4. Analysis of research material

Hounds appear throughout the narrative of the *Acallam*, with over a hundred mentions in the most complete translation of the text, *Tales of the Elders of Ireland*, occurring on about 50 of the 223 pages. The first time they make their appearance is at the very beginning of 'Chapter I' (p.5, sentence three) when Saint Patrick and his priests first see the *Fian*-warriors Caílte and his men approaching them, together with their dogs, and are struck with terror at the sight of the enormous size of these men and their hounds.³⁶ Patrick then asks Caílte to find him a well of pure water. Caílte, after doing so, recites some lines about the spring, ending: "After the slaughter of dogs and men, after the wounding of shining warriors, Garad's cry was heard at night beside the spring".³⁷ Being mentioned together from the start of this narrative, we get a sense here that hound and warrior (or dog and man, if we may substitute the designators) were

³⁴ Cf. Brillenburg Wurth and Rigney (2006): 276-281.

³⁵ Cf. Brillenburg Wurth and Rigney (2006): 170-172.

³⁶ This 'disparity of size is...a sign of belonging to a former age or to another world', cf. Dooley and Roe (1999): 226. Repeated on p.88, Caílte and his men are recognized by clergymen, seeing great men with great hounds.

³⁷ Ibid.: 6.

somewhat of a fixed pair in the age of the *Fianna* to which we are introduced. Moreover, we find in the lines recited by Cailte prior to the ones just mentioned, the words *cath confaite*,³⁸ translated by Ann Dooley and Harry Roe as “the battle of *Confaite*” (as it is again later on page 119),³⁹ yet by Maurice Harmon as “the furious fight”.⁴⁰ The word *confaite* in this phrase is derived from *confa(i)d*, meaning 'rabid, raging, furious' or 'warlike': the rabid state of a dog, figuratively the furious state of a warrior; a composite word containing *cú*, 'dog, hound' or 'wolf', which also figuratively means 'warrior'.⁴¹ This “furious fight” *cath confaite* pertaining to warriors, and dogs semantically, stands right next to “the slaughter of dogs and men” *ar marbad con 7 fer*,⁴² which seems to strengthen the connection of the pair in battle together.

Cailte tells Patrick about the *Fianna* and his late lord, Finn mac Cumail, to whose retinue he belonged. When asked if they had horses, he tells the story of how the *Fían* Artúir, son of Benne king of the Britons, stole three of Finn's hounds, Bran, Sceolaing, and Adnúall, during a hunt on the Hill of Étar and with his men carried them off to their own land and hunted on a mountain.⁴³ After the *Fianna* ended their hunt and, as usual, counted their hounds (we learn here that Finn's household comprised a hundred and fifty chiefs of *Fían*-bands, two hundred fosterlings and three hundred *gillas*, owning three hundred hounds and two hundred young dogs), they found the three hounds missing, which Finn later discovered stolen by Artúir. Finn then sent a group of nine heroic *Fianna* after Artúir, who killed his men, and brought back to Finn Artúir as a hostage, the heads of his men, Finn's hounds, and a stallion and a mare of the Britons, from which two all the horses of the *Fianna* came – one for each chief.⁴⁴

In this frame narrative, hounds are presented as the valued possession of, as well as a part of the *Fían*-band of Finn. The “hounds of Finn's household” are called “Finn's hounds”, while we are told the many *Fianna* in Finn's house owned them.⁴⁵ We see here for the first time how the *Fianna* and their hounds hunt together. This organization of the hunt becomes a dynamic

³⁸ Dillon (1970): 4.

³⁹ Dooley and Roe (1999): 6, 119.

⁴⁰ Harmon (2009): 3.

⁴¹ Quin (2007), hereafter abbreviated as DIL: 146 [436-437], 162-163 [565-566]. Ludwig Christian Stern has identified this word with its strange spellings *confaite*, *conphatte* as a derivative of the compound from *cú* and *fad*, comparing it to Welsh *cynddar* 'raging, mad, furious; rabid'. Cf. Stern (1900): 11 n. 18, and Meurig Evans and Thomas (2009): 145. Cf. also Zanten (2007): 50.

⁴² Dillon (1970): 4 and Dooley and Roe (1999): 6. Also named is *Choinchenn*, the epithet of a 'dogheaded' *fían*.

⁴³ Cf. Dooley and Roe (1999): 8-10.

⁴⁴ First it is said that from the one mare and stallion were born 150 colts, as many as the chiefs in Finn's house. Later it is said the mare had 64 foals, given to the nobles and warriors of the *Fianna*, and then twenty horses of famous noble *Fianna* are listed, after which it is said that Finn's cavalry comprised 1280 men. This last number could be that of the final number of horses supposedly descended from this first stallion and mare. It seems the *Fianna* originally did not own horses, while the gaining of British horses here probably reflects 'the increased role of cavalry in twelfth-century Irish warfare' after importation of a new type of horse, and of horses in the Irish feudal system, becoming a 'standard element in the *túarastal* or stipend given by provincial kings to the petty kings under them in return for military co-operation.' Cf. *ibid.*: xxiv, 10-11, 226-227.

⁴⁵ Dooley and Roe (1999): 8-9.

motif in the story, as it gives the opportunity for the theft of three of the hounds. These hounds are initially also called “three of Finn's hounds”, yet Finn tells his *Fianna* “Artúir...took your hounds from you” and Cailte thereafter too refers to them as “our three hounds”.⁴⁶ We do read later, though, that these three hounds were the best, and among the few most valued things that Finn had ever obtained.⁴⁷ The enumeration of the *Fianna* and hounds in Finn's household implies a top to bottom line of ownership. To Finn belong 150 chiefs, to them collectively 300 *gillas* with 300 hounds and 200 fosterlings with 200 young dogs. Warrior and hound are thus equated: the youths boys given to the *Fianna* to be brought up as men are like the pups they own, which have to be raised and trained. The relationship that is implied between hound and warrior, as well as between both hound and warrior and their chief, is at the same time a bond of personal ownership and loyal following. Yet the chiefs personal hounds are also the shared belongings of his subjects, in a system of 'what's mine is yours'.⁴⁸ The warriors and hounds are then like a pack, all living together and taking care of each other. Thus, Finn's hounds are here emphatically presented as the (good) hounds of the collective *Fianna* that were stolen, which was a great loss to them, their theft being the main dynamic motif in this narrative, making the hounds the object of a *Fian*-quest which turns out to be the cause of the *Fianna*'s acquisition of horses – a great extra gain.

Next Patrick asked what the best hunt was which the *Fianna* ever took part in and Cailte tells him it was the annual hunt on Arran, a lush island that “fed hosts”, where, among berries, nuts, fish, swine and deer, he says in his verse, were greyhounds and beagles, yet it is unclear whether he refers to these belonging to the *Fianna* or to be encountered there.⁴⁹ However, they are part of the idyllic scene of effortless picking from the lushness of nature, a form of which the hunting here is presented as. The Irish compound translated as 'greyhound' is *mil-chú*, *mil* meaning 'animal, used in wide sense of all lower creatures', or 'hare', rendering *mil-chú* a hunting-hound for (small) game, and this hound is either equated or contrasted with the (less valued?) *gadar* 'hunting-dog' or 'beagle'.⁵⁰ They could be mentioned together in this effortless hunt, requiring less skill, as hunting dogs of lower status, perhaps regarded as less ferocious than the undifferentiated 'hounds' fighting in battle together with the warriors.

Later on, Cailte recites a verse starting: “Three waves came from Ruide's high fortress,

⁴⁶ Ibid.: 9-10.

⁴⁷ Ibid.: 23, 103, 227. Bran and Sceolaing (Finn's cousins) are mentioned as a pair and Adnúall separately later.

⁴⁸ The chief who gives valuable things to his followers is praised, most notably in Finn's eulogy: “Were the dark leaves gold, that the trees discard, [a]nd the white wave silver, Finn would give away all.” Ibid.: 6.

⁴⁹ Ibid. :12-13.

⁵⁰ Stokes (1996): 11, DIL: 352 [9-10], 463 [135-136]. The *milchú* is also equated to the *molossus*, signifying either a guard or war hound or a hunting hound of either large and heavy or lightweight physic. Perhaps the *mil-chú* could also be interpreted as a war-hound or 'soldier-dog' containing *mil*, 'soldier'.

[w]aves of youths and horses and greyhounds of Lugaid's sons."⁵¹ Here the 'greyhounds' are definitely not a less ferocious type of hunting-dog of lower status: they are one of three waves of powerful, virile, swift, rather noble creatures of war/hunt, which warrior, horse and hound are here grouped as.

The next mention of hounds is when Cailte tells Patrick about the hunting ground Grove of Cressán, where the *Fianna* could still hunt when in all the rest of Ireland and Scotland there was shortage of game, and he recites: "Often with hunting-dogs, we chased the proud, young deer, Our warriors and our hounds, hunted the pleasant grove."⁵² Here again we see the praise of a lush hunting ground of plenty where the *Fían*-warriors and hounds hunt deer, presented as sublime. Hounds are in these cases static free motifs connected to the activity of hunting.

Another frame narrative, the heroic biography of Mac Lugach, also contains hounds and hunting, which are now dynamic motifs. Mac Lugach, who was Finn's grandson and raised by Finn's wife, at age twelve, given arms, went to Finn who was at the Rock of Dog-Droppings and entered into his service. With him being among the *Fianna*, they could hardly kill a single boar or deer because Mac Lugach was mistreating their hounds and *gillas*. Therefore, after a year of great distress, the three battalions of the *Fianna* told Finn to choose either themselves or Mac Lugach. Finn then told Mac Lugach how to behave properly if he wished to remain in vassalage, which included not to "beat your hound without cause".⁵³ This narrative relates the customs of *Fían*-vassalage, from entering to internal organization and codes of conduct, each part of which is here connected to hounds: they appear in the name of the location at which the youth enters into service and figure strongly in both the make-up and activity of the *Fían*-band, to which they are presented as integral and valued, and as the subjects of the youth's misconduct keeping the *Fianna* from their prime activity, for which he could be dismissed from the *Fían*-band. We can infer that the core elements of the well-functioning *Fían*-band are organized vassalage, hunting, and hounds. The location's name also forebodes the upcoming events: in "the Rock of Dog-Droppings, on top of the Mount of Smol, son of Edleacar", Dog-Droppings (Irish *conluan*, equated to *cac na chon*, 'dung of a dog') refers to abuse or dishonor, as does *smól*, in the sense of 'blemish' or 'insult'.⁵⁴ The dung may also refer to the role of Finn as protector of his subjects and settler of the conflict between Mac Lugach and the *Fianna*.⁵⁵

When Cailte and Patrick are at Fair Hill,⁵⁶ Bran, son of the king of Munster, with his men

⁵¹ Dooley and Roe (1999): 16.

⁵² Ibid.: 17.

⁵³ Ibid.: 19.

⁵⁴ Stokes (1996): 16, DIL: 92 [2], 163 [567], 550 [286].

⁵⁵ The phrase *cac fora/ar enech* is 'interpreted by glossators as the act of surrendering a refugee after receiving him in legal protection', cf. *ibid.*: 92 [2].

⁵⁶ Here Cailte tells Patrick about the Battle of the Fair Shore and the story of how the *Fían* Cáel the Brave and

comes to learn Fíanry from Cailte and the *dórd fiansa*, “chanting of the *Fían*”.⁵⁷ Bran then describes their method of hunting: surround a hill with their hounds, *gillas* and warriors, and “spend the whole day chasing the game”.⁵⁸ At this Cailte wept. He then organized a hunt to demonstrate how the *Fíanna* hunt using the *dórd fiansa*. He placed men all around the Lake of Cows, then 'loudly raised his cries of hunting and game and slaughter, and three war-cries of anger came from him' at which all the game in that area came 'dashing in a great frenzy' and jumped in the lake to cool down from their exertions; then '[t]he host encircled the lake and not one of the hunted animals escaped alive, totall[ing] eight hundred.’⁵⁹ This spectacular way of hunting seems not to require hounds. They are not mentioned. Cailte also tells the story of a treacherous stag that dwelt on a hill north of the lake, that for twenty-seven years had “eluded the *Fían*, both the men and their hounds, until a warrior of the *Fían* killed him. I”.⁶⁰ Here we do see again the explication of “the *Fían*” as “both the men and their hounds”, indicating that, at least during a hunt, when *Fíanna* are mentioned, accompaniment of their hounds is a given; yet in the end it is Cailte alone killing the stag, opposed to the men and hounds of the *Fíanna*, as a feat of prowess.⁶¹ Hounds only are mentioned chasing a “very fierce wild stag” as Finn is busy with a giantess, him saying, “*Fían*[na], leave this stag alone, for I shall not put our trust in the hunting of our hounds tonight, but in a certain warrior of the *Fían*[na]”, Finn mac Cúán, who has eight score milch-herds, all acquired through Finn.⁶² This account indicates that the *Fíanna* had command over their hounds, while these were the ones hunting here, that Finn as chief commanded the hunt with which he ensured food for his *Fíanna*, and that, alternately, he could call upon the hospitality of another aristocrat, property- and cattle-owning, as is told, to cater to him and his followers, in a system of taking care of each other.⁶³

“Sálbuide (...) son of Feidlechar, King of Munster, died here, together with thirty hounds, thirty [*gillas*], and thirty warriors, while pursuing a deer of the *síd*,”⁶⁴ explicates the company

Quick-Wounding wooed his fairy wife Créde, and outdid all the *Fiana*, yet tragically died on the last day of the battle, chasing his opponent into the sea and drowning. At this, “other poor wild creatures of the same age as Cael died grieving for him.” Créde then laments, reciting a poem about how all of nature grieves for him, calling him “the youth from Two Hound Lake”, and then also dies of grief. Cael seems closely connected to nature and hunting here, including deer and hounds, as if he were an Adonis-figure. Cf. Ibid.: 24-28.

⁵⁷ Ibid.: 29, Stokes (1996): 25, DIL: 244 [357].

⁵⁸ Dooley and Roe (1999): 29. Here the hounds again appear again static motifs connected to the hunt.

⁵⁹ Ibid.: 29-30.

⁶⁰ Ibid.: 29. On p.89 Cailte tells almost the same story of a red stag that “escaped from the men and the hounds of the *Fían* three times a year.” One year, they chased it to a lake and he and three other good *Fíanna* caught up with it and “each threw our spears at him at the same time and killed him.”

⁶¹ Elsewhere Cailte thinks he sees a *Fían*-band, but “no hound or boy or warrior” is there. Later, he and Patrick hear shouts of hunting and Cailte says, “Faint is the sound of men and hounds”, a hunt without the *Fíanna*, and with Blathmac he hears the sound of three packs of the king of Leyny, identifying the animals in the hunt by their cries. The prominence of the hunt and of hounds in the *Fían*-life is clear. Cf. Ibid.: 102, 119, 206.

⁶² Ibid.: 167-8.

⁶³ Finn son of Cúán, 'doggy', could be the great mythical Finn's duplicate. Cf. DIL: 163 [574].

⁶⁴ Ibid.: 35.

of a nobleman during his hunt, here due to the fact that they all died on that same location. So, too, with “I shall tell you (...) how the *Fían[na]* of Ireland nearly perished, man and hound,”⁶⁵ the explication emphasizes that here nearly each and every *Fían*-member died, comprising the men and hounds. Both in battle and hunt, the fates of the warrior and his hound are tied. The enumeration of the hounds, *gillas* and warriors shows their personal bond. They fight together and for each other, following each other to death.

On page 48 we find the description of a warrior standing on a *síd*. In accordance with the narrative tradition, the attractiveness of appearance of the person including his belongings are mentioned: rich clothings, jewels, weapons, and hounds. “With one hand he held two hunting-hounds on twisted chains of old silver; in the other (...) strong and heavy blue weapons.” This warrior is half-fairy, half-human, and accordingly his hounds' leashes are old silver chains.⁶⁶ He, Derg Díanscothach, is the foster-brother of Caílte, now living with his fairy family in the *síd*, where there is no lack of anything, yet he prefers the life of the *Fianna* – even the worst – whom he misses. Now he is hunting alone. Derg brings Caílte and his men into the *síd* of Áed Minbrecc and Ilbrecc of Assaroe, at war with Lir of another *síd*. Every evening for that whole year Lir's supernatural bird shook their *síd* and their weapons rained down on them, and 'every missile thrown at it would fall on the head of one of their boys or women or foster-children,' about which Ilbrecc said to Caílte: “Not good for us this raging fury and insane destruction.”⁶⁷ The Irish words describing the attack are '*colg dremni dibad dasachtach*' of which *dremni* and *dasachtach* are equated adjectives denoting a state of being 'insane, raging, furious, possessed, frenzied, wild', or 'rabid', especially referring to dogs and bulls, or 'excited' or 'panicked'.⁶⁸ Normally these words are used to describe warriors or animals overcome by this furor during battle or hunt, yet here it describes the attack itself or, by extension, the supernatural bird.

Caílte is able to kill the bird and is given the spear with which Finn killed the fairy Aillén, to keep in case Lir come to avenge his bird. The next morning Lir and his great host approach the *síd* and Áed fears Lir and his host will kill them and seize their *síd*. To this Caílte replies: “Do you not know, Áed, (...) that the strong, wild boar escapes from hounds and packs, and when the bellowing stag leaps he likewise comes away unscathed from the hounds” and then recites the lines: “The boar of the hill charges the pack with his murderous blade. The raging one attacks and scatters the red-footed hounds.”⁶⁹ Here the attack by Lir is compared to that of hounds hunting boars and stags, who leap or attack and thus escape. In Irish, “the bellowing

⁶⁵ Ibid.: 41.

⁶⁶ Ibid.: 48-49, 234. Fairies' appearances were praised so loftily, it got parodied in Welsh, Davies (2007): 248.

⁶⁷ Dooley and Roe (1999): 51.

⁶⁸ Cf. Stokes (1996): 46, DIL: 186 [112-3], 249 [394].

⁶⁹ Dooley and Roe (1999): 55.

stag leaps” and “the raging one attacks” are nearly duplicates: *bedg in búiridan daimh allaid* and *buirech a bedg*,⁷⁰ the words used having multiple meanings. The animals, who 'leap, rush, dash, attack' (*bedg*), are described as 'bellowing, roaring, raging, furious', which also carries the extended meaning of 'attacking' (*búiridan, buirech*).⁷¹ The comparison then is that fearful Áed – or Derg rather, who has command of his army – when meeting the great host of Lir in battle, will be like the wild animal facing the pack of hounds out to kill him: outnumbered and cornered, discarding fright, roaring the raging one charges his opponents and murderously and unscathed scatters them. This state of furor of the animals symbolizing the warriors of the *síd* battling Lir during this second attack parallels the furor of the first attack, though the two differ semantically and contextually: in this second the furor is more closely connected to the image of roaring of animals, denoting ferality, while the first is connected more to (demonic) possession and otherworldliness.⁷² Both connected to places of death and the wild outside of cultured society, they are presented analogously as ferocious rage of battle, the same as the canine ferocity *confaite* of the battle mentioned earlier which caused Bláí, the daughter of Derg, to lament. The warriors who do in fact enter into the battle with Lir and his men are not themselves portrayed as enraged but rather as courageous: Cailte and Derg ask who the best men, the most troublesome warriors of their opponents are, and volunteer to fight these. In doing so, they take on the roles of heroic champion, and their condition can be compared to that of Oscar, facing a massive army, described in Finn's poem:

“Rise up, Oscar, and show them who you are,
Though heroes stand before you, a hundred keep at bay.

“Charge back and forth, till their necks be headless.
(...)

“Woe to the man to whom he bears his sharpened sword.
When angrily his arm strikes in fierce attack.”⁷³

This description of the heroic champion charging the great hosts of opponents echoes that of the raging boar charging the pack. The warriors' courage then seems to parallel furor.

When the war is won and Cailte six weeks later leaves Áed's *síd*, Ilbrecc gives him “nine bright garments with handsome mantles, nine shields and nine spears, nine inlaid, golden swords, and nine good hunting-hounds.”⁷⁴ Here, again, we see a warrior's standard belongings

⁷⁰ Stokes (1996): 51.

⁷¹ DIL: 67 [51], 91 [238].

⁷² DIL: 186 [112-3]. The fiery bird being a demon laying seize to the fairies' home. Furor was thought of as the possession by a spirit.

⁷³ Dooley and Roe (1999): 33-34.

⁷⁴ Ibid.: 57.

comprising weapons and hounds, and the fairy origin of these items reflected by their quality and beauty. Likewise, Caílte next meets a beautiful couple who tell them about a monstrous giant who plundered all their lands. This giant, Maelán, lived on an impregnable rock over a bay with his daughter, “a lump of a woman, bald and dark, like a rocky crag from a distance,” and “with a stout iron spear in her hand,” and his dog, “a coarse-haired, greyish-brown bitch with a rough iron chain around her neck.”⁷⁵ Here the negative description of the attractiveness and quality of the giant's belongings – his daughter with spear and dog with chain – as ugly, dark and iron, reflect his monstrous nature. The giant himself was the match of four hundred men, his hound and daughter each of three hundred: the owner and his hound are again presented as an equal pair, as in “I left Maelán and his dog, fearful monsters on the shore. I killed Maelán and his dog and his daughter of ill repute” recited by Caílte after killing all three in a row. The duel with the dog is here furthermore equated to that with persons, Caílte being more terrified of her than ever before in combat, and his duels with dog, daughter and giant are parallels.

Noble Donn, son of chief Áed, is again like Derg described as wearing rich clothings and having “two fine hunting hounds in his hand and a pack of [hunting-dogs in his presence].”⁷⁶

Finn, *Fíán*-chieftain par excellence, likewise had a hound par excellence “named Conbec that he loved well. Any deer she was loosed against would find no shelter in Ireland, until he was driven towards the hounds and boys of the *Fíana* of Ireland. She was the only bitch that ever slept with him.”⁷⁷ She was drowned by Finn's enemy and lamented in this elegy:

“Sad for me the death of Conbec, she of the great jaws.
Never saw I a more skilful paw at chasing a boar or deer.

“Sad for me the death of Conbec, she of the rough voice.
Never saw I a more skilful paw at the killing of a hill deer.

“Sad with me the killing of Conbec, above the high green waves.
Her killing a cause of grief, her death a cause of sadness.”

We can see here that this hound of Finn enjoyed a status equal to his and his dearest men. She was lamented and praised as the best, a hunting champion, the same way Finn and other warrior-champions were, and she was the only hound to sleep with Finn in his bed – a mark of

⁷⁵ Ibid.: 58-59.

⁷⁶ Ibid.: 60, Stokes (1996): 56: *dá choin caeim-sheagle 'sna láim & cuanart gadar 'na fhiadhnaise* may contrast more highly valued hand-held *cú* (*sealga*) with lesser *gadar*, or use these as synonyms reflecting multiplicity. They are mentioned in a very parallel way. Dooley and Roe translate this as “two fine hunting hounds in his hand and a pack of hounds was nearby”, but I do not think this does justice to the enough original phrasing: two fine hunting hounds in his hand, a pack of hunting hounds in his presence, reflecting his ownership more.

⁷⁷ Ibid.: 68. *Conbec* means 'doggy', parallel to the later mentioned magical bitch *Fer Mac*, 'young man', an odd name for a bitch, perhaps originating from the warrior = hound equation.

favoritism as was also granted his wife Sadb's four foster-brothers, the sons of kings.⁷⁸

That hunting and warfare are equatable as battles in which the status of champion can be obtained, is seen explicated during the hunt of the wild sow *In Muc Slánda*e, an enormous sow with nine tusks, which “neither dogs nor men [could ever harm.]”⁷⁹ Caílte, Donn and the *Fíanna* tracked her down and the sow 'screamed at the sight of the hounds and the giant men and they were seized by fear and horror at the sight of her. Donn said, “I shall deal with the sow, and it is the same to me whether I live or die.” “The choice of a champion,” said Caílte and Donn turned toward the sow.⁸⁰

Here we see that championship is based on singular engagement in battle – with animals or persons, during hunt or warfare – which tests prowess, with courage equaling fear. Worthy opponents are frightening to each other, like the sow and *Fíanna*, both huge and powerful. So, too, frightened Caílte finds in the monstrous hound of Maelán an opponent fitting a champion.

When we compare this section of Caílte and Donn hunting *In Muc Slánda*e with that of the battle of Caílte and Derg with Lir and his men, including its metaphor of boars during the hunt, we are presented with the coalesced image of the warrior as champion equated to a wild animal in a state of furor – roaring, raging, frightened or courageous – battling men or animals in a hunt that is a warfare or a warfare that is a hunt. Furor is not only linked to the hound but also the wild boar: it is the ferality that is key. Warriors/animals in a battle/hunt get ferocious.

Besides this metaphoric equation of man and animal, actual shape-shifting appears in the *Acallam*. Caílte says Finn had a fairy lover, whom he rejected “because she was constantly changing herself into the shapes of different animals.”⁸¹ This is mentioned in an unclear way as the reason that Finn and his *Fíanna* and hounds were hunting and chasing their escaping quarry into a lake, where a hundred of their men and a hundred of their hounds were killed by a great beast, a monster that lived there in the water.⁸² Perhaps this reflects the corruption of an earlier version of the tale, with the rejected shape-shifter killing the hunters and their hounds. Parallel to this is the story concerning the Barrow of the Hounds. Here too the fairy druidess or witch Ben Mebla, 'Woman of Deceit', was in love with Finn, but he rejected her for being a witch. As revenge, she killed a hundred and fifty hounds that Finn had loosed hunting, turning her breath on them and putting them in a mound.⁸³ Comparable to both these fairy witches is

⁷⁸ Of Adnúall is told she roamed Ireland thrice and then died at a ford, naming the location. *Ibid.*: 85, 103, 238.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*: 68. The magical swine is a symbol of sovereignty and fertility and similar to the wolf-fairies and wild stag discussed later one came from the cave of *Crúachu* destroying crops, cf. Boekhoorn (2008): 50-53, 270-278, MacKillop (2004): 45-6, MacCulloch (1991): 210-211. This hunt might well be one of noble initiation.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*: 74.

⁸² *Ibid.*: 74.

⁸³ *Ibid.*: 208.

Bé Mannair, 'Woman of Destruction', who would transform herself into every kind of shape of animal or person to learn all secrets, and challenged the *Fianna* to a foot race in the shape of the fairy Étaín Fholtfhinn, lover of Finn's grandson Oscar. This race is called dangerous and won by Caílte – perhaps the same as the race run against an ugly hag, with the condition that the one left behind have his head taken, ending in winning Caílte decapitating the hag.⁸⁴ Such races were challenges of prowess, the games reflecting battle or hunting. These shape-shifting witches here then all seem connected to lethal pursuit in the form of a race or hunting.

Another mention of a shape-shifting fairy is also connected to hunting. Finn and his men with their hounds are led to a *síd* in pursuit of a fairy girl in the shape of a wild fawn. Both the warriors and hounds are mentioned by name, reflecting their importance: Finn holding his hounds Bran and Sceolaing, Oisín holding Adnúall and Fer Úaine; Oscar holding Iarratacha and Forstad, Díarmait holding Báeth and Buide; Caílte holding Brecc, Lúath and Lánbinn and Mac Lugach holding Conúall and Conrith. They pursue the fairy deer from Tory Island to the Mount of Women, which contained a hidden *síd*-palace.⁸⁵ After entering the *síd*, they learn that the sons of Midir reside here and staged the pursuit of the fawn-shaped fairy because they needed the help of Finn and his men in defending them from enemy fairy troops of the *Túatha Dé Danann* under Bodb Derg, who attacked them thrice a year. Curiously, this assembly of fairies also includes Lir and Áed and Ilbrecc, whom we saw earlier as enemies in the battle Derg and Caílte helped in. We are here probably dealing with different accounts collected in the single frame narrative of the *Acallam* of battles between fairy hosts in which the help of the mortal *Fíán*-warriors was needed to defeat the enemy.⁸⁶ This is a well-know motif –as is the pursuit of a supernatural animal leading mortal hunters to an otherworldly location.⁸⁷

The sons of Midir tell Finn how thirty years ago Bodb Derg had been given the kingship of the *Túatha Dé Danann* and demanded Midir's sons to give themselves as hostages, which they refused, as no hostages were given them, and fled to this *síd*. The thousand warriors they each had, had been killed in the triannual battles with Bodb Derg. Hearing the great number of the enemy hosts, Finn and his men bravely take it upon themselves to fight the ensuing war. Finn tells Oscar, Díarmait and Mac Lugach to protect the sons of Midir, and “[I]eave the rest of the battle” to him, Caílte and Oisín, being the eldest.⁸⁸ They battle three times that year,

⁸⁴ Ibid.: 158-9, Hayes O'Grady (1999): 108.

⁸⁵ Dooley and Roe (1999): 139-149.

⁸⁶ In this battle too, Lir, “who is the eldest of the *Túatha Dé Danann*”, is given a position of leadership, advising how to command the men during the battle. Lir may traditionally have been known as the commander of the enemy fairy hosts, or even as the main adversary. Ibid.: 144.

⁸⁷ A second example is the hunt of Caílte, leading to the shore as the animals take to the water, where a fairy in the sea meets them and kills the animals for them. Ibid.: 97-8. Cf. Davies (2007): 4 and 229, 39 and 238.

⁸⁸ Dooley and Roe (1999): 144.

leaving Mac Lugach, Oscar and Diarmait badly wounded and killing a great many of the fairy hosts, until finally hostages were given by the *Túatha Dé Danann* to Donn, son of Midir.

Caílte fights a third battle in which the *Fíán* helps fairies defeat an attacking enemy troop. This time it is said the *Túatha Dé Danann* with Áed and Ilbrecc were attacked thrice a year by Garb, the King of *Lochlann*, his brother Éolan, and the warrior woman Bé Dreccain, 'Dragon Woman', who was learned in druidry, thus knowing all the secrets of the *síd*, enabling the host of *Lochlann* to raid them. These three were killed by Caílte and the young half-brothers Cas Corach and Fer Maise with special weapons, the spear *Ben Bodbda* 'Fatal Woman', the sword *Cró Coscair* 'Shaft of Victory', and the javelin *Deoch Báis* 'Drink of Death', respectively, in three parallel duels of prowess, scaring away the rest of the immense foreign host – with these Lochlanders here taking the place of fairies, being from another land across the sea.⁸⁹

Similar to the accounts in which the help of *Fíán*-warriors is asked to defeat undefeatable enemies, we find in the *Acallam* several accounts of their help being asked to kill wild animals who raid and destroy the properties of land- and cattle-owners. While Cas Corach is absent, Caílte meets the similarly named king Cosrach, Hospitaller of the household of the King of Leinster, who asks Caílte to ward off a stag: “I have twenty-nine ploughlands,' said Cosrach, 'and whenever it is time to reap the crop a very fierce and wild stag comes, and destroys and devastates everything so that I have no benefit from it.”⁹⁰ Caílte caught it in his net and killed it with his spear *In Coscarach*, named almost the same as the sword *Cró Coscair* used by Cas Corach to kill the warrior woman Bé Dreccain.⁹¹ Caílte and Cas Corach later meet Bairnech, Steward to the King of Ireland, who has great problems with his territory: “I have numerous herds here,” said Bairnech, “but a woman from the *Síd* of *Crúachu* raids us each year at the Eve of Samain, and takes with her the nine best cows of each herd and brings them without hindrance into the *síd*.”⁹² This fairy is the daughter of Caissirne the Druid, avenging her father and grandfather in this way. Cas Corach awaited her at the *síd* and killed her with his spear.⁹³ Caílte then says: “Cas Corach with his spear killed the frenzied maid.” Here she is called *mir*, meaning 'mad, frenzied, infatuated, possessed by ungovernable or reckless passion, often of a

⁸⁹ Ibid.: 192-197. In fact, *Lochlann* probably originally signified 'land beneath the lakes or the waves of the sea', the abode of hostile supernatural beings, MacCulloch (1991): 147. This makes this battle yet another one of fairy hosts attacking each other. It parallels the previous ones also with regards to the manner of killing and use of special weapons, as in the battle with Lir, and the asking of hostages, as in the battle with Bodb Derg.

⁹⁰ Ibid.: 124.

⁹¹ This killing again parallels that of the Lochlanners with the special weapons, all bearing similar names. It can also be no coincidence that *Cos Corach*, *Cró Coscair*, *In Coscarach* and likely *Cosrach* too are all uncannily similar variants of 'victorious', suggesting these accounts to derive from a shared original tale. Ibid.: 125, 193.

⁹² Ibid.: 211.

⁹³ Again, this killing is similar to the previous ones.

temporary state due to excitement or anger, or of martial fury' – i.e. the same as *dasachtach*.⁹⁴ Then Bairnech says, “do you know the other persecution that I suffer in this land? (...) Three wolf-bitches come from the Cave of *Crúachu* each year and destroy whatever rams and sheep we have. Before we can do anything they retreat back into the Cave of *Crúachu*.”⁹⁵ The three turn out to be women in the shapes of wolves, wearing dark, long cloaks. When Cas Corach plays his music, they take these off; then Caílte kills all three with a single cast of his spear.⁹⁶

The wolf-shaped women from the Cairn of *Crúachu* yearly taking away rams and sheep clearly equates to the frenzied fairy woman from the *Síd* of *Crúachu* yearly taking away cows at the eve of *Samain*. Both thus also parallel the “very fierce and wild stag” yearly destroying crops at harvest-time.⁹⁷ The wild beast is an agent of destruction opposing cultivation. Taking on a wolf-shape and being frenzied give these fairy women the same feral nature, and here the metaphoric and actual shape-shifting are presented as different forms of the same principle: being in a state of furor is being like a wild animal.⁹⁸ Their ferality is also destructive and in opposition to culture in the form of raiding and despoiling the livestock keeper. The wolf is also associated with wildness of nature and death, as the killer/hunter, together with the fierce stag in Caílte's poem about winter:

“Cold winter, a sharp wind, a fierce red stag rises.
No warmth this night on the mountain. The stag is swift to bell.

“The stag of Slieve Aughty takes no rest,
Listening to the music of wolves.

“Dark Díarmait and I, and Oscar, keen and light,
Hear their music on a freezing night.”⁹⁹

Of Finn and his relatives is said that the 'frenzy' *mire* and the 'boar-likeness' *torcdacht* that was in their blood came from the Ulstermen, who are the most associated with heroic frenzy, primarily seen in the Ulster hero Cú Chulainn, 'Hound of Culann', who took on the role of a hound and in battle not only fought like an animal, but contorted and physically changed, getting animal features, as he got enraged.¹⁰⁰ Here the state of furor, also *mire*, 'frenzy' or 'martial fury', instead of being equated with 'hound-/wolf-like', is called 'boar-like', *torcdacht*,

⁹⁴ DIL: 465 [147].

⁹⁵ Dooley and Roe (1999): 212.

⁹⁶ Ibid.: 213.

⁹⁷ *Samain* was the time of harvest, including the slaughter of animals, cf. MacCulloch (1991): 256ff.

⁹⁸ As seen here, the concept of shape-shifting reflects 'primitive conceptions of life, [the body being similar to removable clothes]' (ON *hamr* 'skin, form'); 'there is no distinction between an animal and human being; their external form is only a casual accident.' cf. Baudiš (1916): 33.

⁹⁹ Dooley and Roe (1999): 107.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Dooley and Roe (1999): 161, 241, Larsen (2003), and Stokes (1996): 158, DIL: 601 [259-260].

just as the boar in the hunt was earlier described as 'raging', while *torc* literally means 'boar' and figuratively 'chieftain, hero', exactly like *cú* denotes both 'hound/wolf' and 'warrior'.¹⁰¹ A (frenzied or courageous) warrior in battle then clearly is thought of as becoming feral like an animal, whether boar or hound/wolf, as powerful, dangerous, killers of the wild.

A person in romantic pursuit is also compared to a hunting hound tracking its reward. The image is that of passionate lusting, animalistic and rapacious. Again it is the intense emotional state, passion, *wild* desire, which can also be described by furor, that makes one hound-like.¹⁰²

The killing of raiding animals/fairies is equatable to the accounts of the battles fought with fairies/foreigners, as well as the duels with Maelán and *In Muc Slánda*. Each case, whether it be fairies, foreigners, giants or animals, concerns entities from another place – the otherworld, overseas or wilderness – threatening the lives and properties of residents, and the *Fianna*, being great warriors of prowess also from the wilderness, are their match and the only ones able to defeat them.¹⁰³ In this, the otherworld, overseas and wilderness are equatable, as are the agents of the threat: so too, then, are the *Fianna* to these, equaling them in wildness, ferociousness and strength, like boars, wolves, or the hounds that they are paired with.¹⁰⁴

Equally, the *Fian*-band of the Sons of Morna, enemies of Finn and his *Fianna*, engaged in plundering and raiding his territory. Finn went in pursuit of them, but before he had reached them, they encountered his wife Sadb's two foster-brothers Conaing and Cathal, sons of the king of Munster, who were dear to Finn, escorting her, with “[f]our hundred warriors and four hundred [*gillas*] with their hounds” and killed them all, referred to later as “each of Finn's men” and “those four hundred men of Finn's retinue” while in Cailte's recitation he said: “Sad is the death of the two sons of Dub, [w]ith a hundred boys and a hundred hounds.”¹⁰⁵ There is some confusion, but the point is that the retinue was large, 'hundreds', comprising an amount of hounds equal to that of men, and that all of the retinue died, hounds included, this being the standard formula to convey this, as seen earlier. It becomes unclear whether the sons of Dub's warriors were adult men, *óclachs* with for each a *gilla* with hound, or that the warriors were young men, *gillas* with hounds. Perhaps this confused account reflects the original *Fian*-bands consisting of young warriors, *gilla* being synonymous to *óclach* – which is in fact a formation from *óc* 'young' – while in later times the standard composition of war-bands comprised adult warriors accompanied by young boys, attendants/pages, for which the terms *óclach* and *gilla*,

¹⁰¹ DIL: 601 [259-260].

¹⁰² Dooley and Roe (1999): 180, DIL: 186 [111].

¹⁰³ The *Fianna* here take on the role of archetypal hero **Trito(s)* of the cattle-raiding myth. Mallory and Adams (1997): 19-20, 138 579-580, Anthony (2007): 134-5, Lincoln (1976), Miller (2002).

¹⁰⁴ Otherworldly locations were maritime or chthonic, cf. Davies (2007): 228, MacCulloch (1991): 147, 171ff.

¹⁰⁵ Dooley and Roe (1999): 85-87, Stokes (1996): 79.

respectively, are then used contrastingly, even though *óclach* is similarly used to denote a young servant or attendant, comparable to *iuvenis*.¹⁰⁶ The use of *gilla* in Caílte's recitation – presumed more original than the prose text of the *Acallam* – could support this theory.¹⁰⁷

Using almost the same formula, Cellach and Moling were (i) “two warriors beloved by Finn”, few *Fianna* being better than them, who (ii) “[e]ach had two hundred warriors, two hundred boys, and two hundred hounds,”¹⁰⁸ and lived in a fortress in the Forest of Badgers until (iii) the Sons of Morna came raiding on Finn. They attacked the fort for three days without result, then burned it down and plundered it – (iv) no one, man or woman, escaping the fire and slaughter. Rather than 'man and hound', the totality of the killed is here explicated as 'man and woman', probably because it refers to the residents of the fort and not the company in battle, while the retinue of Cellach and Moling is standardly said to comprise warriors, boys, and hounds in equal numbers.¹⁰⁹ As with the attack of Conaing and Cathal, (v) Finn here again arrives too late to help fight the Sons of Morna. It is in these cases the *Fianna* who have to protect their own – from other *Fianna*.

A third pair of warriors (i) dear to Finn are Art and Eógán, sons of the King of Connaught – two of the best *Fianna* in hunt or battle, killing “a boar or an opponent” again equated.¹¹⁰ They (ii) “with their people, [four hundred warriors and four hundred boys,] customarily kept watch for the *Fían* every evening.”¹¹¹ When Finn and his *Fianna* come to the Shore of Rudraige for “the great hunt of Ireland” Art and Eógán with their band are assigned to guard the shore, and then (iii) Conus and Conmael, two sons of the King of *Lochlann*, come to avenge their father on Finn – two great battalions come ashore and attack Art and Eógán, who stand against their enemy with valour and prowess, better than any *Fían* ever, even though the odds are overwhelming: nine hundred warriors to each of their men. With their spears *In Órlasrach* 'the Gold-Flaming' and *In Muinderg* 'the Red-Necked', which Finn had given them, they kill the Lochlanders. (iv-v) Finn again arrives too late to help them, and finds all of their

¹⁰⁶ Cf. DIL: 361 [82], 417 [18], 438 [181], 484 [93]. The term *óclach*, used both as 'young man' and 'servant', is compared to *iuvenis* in *The Latin Lives of Saints*, referenced in the DIL. Myles Dillon translates the Old Irish word also as 'youth', cf. Dillon (1970): x. Thus *óclach* and *gilla* are semantically comparable to 'other youth's terms applied to a military context' denoting a (young) warrior, page, follower or member of the *Männerbund* like IE **méríos* 'youth' and English knight. Cf. Mallory and Adams (1997): 630-1.

¹⁰⁷ The poetry in the *Acallam* was less subject to re-editing, due to its metrically compelled form and word-use, while the prose text comprised 'cavalier treatment of the 'canonical' materials of learned tradition', making it more up-to-date, to be relatable to late twelfth and early thirteenth century aristocratic society and its *iuvenes*. Cf. Dooley and Roe (1999): xxi, xxv, xxxi-xxxiii.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.: 80-1.

¹⁰⁹ Caílte's recitation in Dooley and Roe, p.82, starts “*Ros Brocc* a place of wolves between two cliffs”, or “*Ros broc* is to-day a path for wolves, and a rushing sea betwixt two cliffs” in Hayes O'Grady. The Irish line reads *Ros m-Brocc aníu is conair chuan romur ruad itir da all*, Stokes (1996): 75, in which *cúan* clearly should be interpreted as 'expanse or stretch of water, sea, river, waters' instead of '(pack of) wolves'. Cf. DIL: 163 [573].

¹¹⁰ Dooley and Roe (1999): 95.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

Fían there dead, and the badly wounded Art and Eógan dying. Finn recites: “Bravely they fought, the young, beardless boys. The King of Connaught's sons, many their hounds,”¹¹² in which these *Fían*-warriors are called beardless, young *gillas*, who are here put in the position of leaders of a war-band, having many hounds in their retinue.¹¹³ They take on the role of heroic champions in battle, using special weapons, again with Lochlanders as unconquerable otherworldly enemies. Paralleling all the previously mentioned battles, the champions are here most explicitly called young, *young boys*, while in the other instances their youth is inferred, being called 'the sons of' or handsome lads.¹¹⁴ These young champions seem to exemplify the *Fían*-warrior, emphasized by Caílte's many remarks that his fighting spirit has left him in his old age and moreover that “[it used to be my lot] to do slaughter, if the men of Ireland and of Scotland and of the *Túatha Dé Danann* wished it, but I have not done that since my youth.”¹¹⁵

Next we meet three powerful warriors from a place similar to *Lochlann*, who want to join the *Fíanna* and in exchange take it upon themselves to defend them from attacks.¹¹⁶ They were the three sons of *Irúaiith*, young men with a bitch, and all four of them were equally magical: the youths are the best warriors in the world, can ward off any danger facing the *Fíanna*, heal them, and provide everything that is requested of them; similarly the bitch wards off any wild animal every other night – a youth taking over on the alternate nights; she can hunt and kill any animal when the *Fíanna* cannot manage; can protect the *Fíanna* from battle too, as she does Finn; can vomit alcohol, silver and gold; raise a magical wind with her tail causing warriors' weapons to fly out of their hands and strike each other, and send warriors flying off; and make dust out of men with her breath.¹¹⁷ Furthermore, the three youths and their dog spend the night inside a wall of fire, hidden from sight, and every third night one of the youths is dead and the others watch over him, and the bitch, a very large hound, greater in size than any other hound, and with all the colors of the world, by night is no bigger than a ferret.¹¹⁸ Their specialness is emphasized when Caílte recites: “Finn found a wonder on this

¹¹² Ibid.: 96. Cf. Stokes (1996): 90.

¹¹³ In the prose they are said to have “been in the *Fían* for seventeen years” yet their emphasized description in the poetry as young boys challenges this statement. Cf. Dooley and Roe (1999): 95-6.

¹¹⁴ Irish *mac*, 'son (of)' also has the meaning 'boy (of)', which in this tale that places much importance on youths predispositions the reader to regard the warrior-champions as youthful. Cf. Ibid.: xiii, xxv, 48-9, 85-87, 101, 144, 192, DIL: 447 [5]. In the battle against Bodb Derg, Oscar, Mac Lugach and Díarmait are the young ones who defend the sons of Midir and are badly wounded, paralleling Art and Eógan in battle and the other young defenders accompanying the other Caílte, while Finn, Caílte, Ossían, the eldest, take on the rest of the battle.

¹¹⁵ Dooley and Roe (1999): 193. Also the Lochlander's name *Conmael* probably means 'young hound', perfectly encapsulating the nature of the warrior. Cf. DIL: 449 [18].

¹¹⁶ Conán, again with five hundred hounds, *gillas* and warriors, had done “great harm to Finn, killing a hound, a [*gilla*] and a warrior of the *Fían* from one *Samain* to the next, as well as killing [some of the best men].” This got him banished from the *Fíanna*, left to raid on Finn, until he forced reconciliation. To gain Finn's alliance again, he similarly promised to defend the *Fíanna* from every battle, injury and great wrong. Cf. Ibid.: 108-9.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.: 152-157, 171-176.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

hill, [t]hree gifted men and a monstrous hound.”¹¹⁹ The bitch is like a shape-shifting fairy, who can change her form (here seize) and has a magical breath. In this case the supernatural entity is not a threat to the *Fíanna*, but on the contrary becomes a special member.¹²⁰

In the case of these supernatural beings from *Irúaiith*, we find the same principle to apply: the warriors and their hound have similar qualities, not just ferocious, but also protective and sustaining ones in this case. The bitch's qualities equally apply to hunting and to warfare. She has the function of guard-dog protecting against wild animals *and* enemies, together with her owner as a human counterpart. The hound and youths take on the same protective role as the young sons of kings with their pairs of men and hounds discussed above. The hound is again an extension of its owners, but not only that, for she plays as big a part in the account as the warriors. It does seem, however, that the degree to which a hound has a dynamic function in the story equals that of its owners: her actions are paralleled by the youths' and it seems that it is only together and equally that they fulfill a certain function, as seen most clearly below.

The youths from *Irúaiith* and their hound have to defend the *Fíanna* from three differently yet equally supernatural warriors: the three sons of *Úar*, of the *Túatha Dé Danann*, described as “red-haired young men [holding] three red hounds and three spears [with poison on their weapons, clothes, hands and feet,]”¹²¹ who come to seek compensation from Finn for the death of their father, killed by *Cáilte* in their battle with the *Túatha Dé Danann* defending the sons of *Midir*. After he refuses, they announce to carry out raiding on him, killing or maiming his *Fíanna* daily – hounds, boys and warriors alike – so that no man would be alive by the end of that year.¹²² The youths from *Irúaiith* however healed the *Fíanna* again while the hound kept Finn from harm, until finally one of the youths cursed the sons of *Úar* and the bitch cast the magical wind with her tail, sending them off onto the sea slaying each other.

The bitch and youth here fulfill the exact same dynamic function, while the three hounds of the sons of *Úar* do not have any role in the story and are only mentioned once as part of the standard description of their owners approaching, in which their red color, matching the color of the young warriors' hair, emphasizes their otherworldliness in the most obvious instance of hounds equaling owners in the entire *Acallam*.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.: 152. Otherworldly *Fer Mac* and *Iruaiith*'s sons are equally life-giving and destructive, like henbane, the hound/wolf and Apollo, cf. Mallory and Adams (1997): 647.

¹²⁰ The bitch and youths seem affected by night, diminishing their power, becoming nearly non-existent, and the protective wall of fire accordingly seems to imply that they are sustained by light/fire, and their powers solar, while they also seem markedly more supernatural during the night, perhaps it is the quality of being unseen, related to night, that allows their healing/sustaining powers, the bitch then vomiting precious metals/alcohol.

¹²¹ Ibid.: 172.

¹²² The *Fíanna* would daily lose a hound or boy or warrior of the *Fíanna*; and a band or a company or a leg or an arm or an eye; and between two and four *Fian*-warriors' limbs would seize up. Ibid.: 173.

5. Summary

In the *Acallam*, the *Fianna* are portrayed as bands of young hunter-warriors, consisting of the sons of kings or chieftains, in a symbiotic relationship with their hounds, who represent them. The *Fian*-bands comprised chieftains with their followers, *óclachs*, *gillas*, and fosterlings too, mentioned as part of Finn's household. The members of the war-band, both the chieftains and followers, seem to have constituted mainly (young) aristocrats: when they are mentioned, they are almost invariably said to be the sons of kings, and the terms used to denote the warrior and attendant are *óclach*, 'youth', and *gilla*, 'boy'. Each *Fianna* owns a hound, which is his lifelong follower, just as the warrior and hound follow their leader to death, with their bonds of loyalty extending from providing for each other and protecting each other with their own lives.

The members of the *Fianna* seem to enter the war-band from an early age. The paralleled *gillas* and hounds, fosterlings and young dogs in the enumeration of Finn's household implies the role of traineeship of the vassalage, learning how to hunt and fight. The young men ought to prove themselves, based on skill and courage (together prowess) and thus gain status.

Throughout the *Acallam*, the hound is mentioned together with the warrior, both in battle and the hunt and personal descriptions, indisputably connecting them to warriors. The two are an inseparable and codependent pair, the warriors living with them in their war-band, called a pack of hounds (*cúan*). Hounds reflect their owners: their status, appearance, otherworldliness and qualities like prowess in the hunt and battle. Both hounds and warriors are associated with furor, as are wild animals like the wolf and boar. The association is that of battle rage with the wildness of ferocious animals, primarily. The warrior can become like a feral dog or a wolf, or boar alike, as can fairies. The hound and warrior are paired as creatures of hunt/battle, killers, and as protectors of their war-band, guarding against dangers. Otherworldly dogs are recognizable by their chains of precious metal or the wondrous color of their coat, like their owners; the monstrous hound of a nasty giant similarly by his iron chain and shabby, grey coat.

The *Fianna*, mostly the young followers, endlessly take on the role of archetypal heroic warrior-champion defending society by slaying a monster or enemy that raids the land, taking away livestock. The raiding entity is in the different cases an otherworldly/foreign host, often led by three champions; a monstrous giant, giantess and their hound; a trinity of wolf-shaped women/one frenzied fairy woman raiding livestock, taking it back into a *síd/cave*, or even an enemy troop of *Fianna*. The *Fianna* are their match and the only ones able to defeat them, being great warriors of prowess from the wilderness equatable to their opponents, equaling them in wildness, ferociousness and strength. Moreover, they do not only defend society, but are themselves a band of feral warriors who raid and plunder, as their enemy band does them.

6. Conclusion and discussion: comparison to secondary literature

The *Fianna* seem a good candidate for the continued war-band institution of the **korios*. They seem to have been an initiatory band for young aristocrats. The *Acallam* shows them hunting and raiding outside of society. Hounds are an inherent part of the *Fian*-bands and play a vital role in their existence, being paired with warriors in both the hunt and battle. Hounds always appear together with warriors in the *Acallam*, closely associated, whether these are members of *Fian*-bands, settled aristocratic retinues, foreign or otherworldly entities.

Hound and wolf and warrior, as well as the boar, wild stag, etc., are connected to furor, in the sense of ferociousness, with the wilderness opposing society. This is the same association reconstructed as pertaining to ferocious wolf-men in Indo-European tradition.¹²³

Furthermore, the cattle-raiding myth is reflected in the *Acallam*, the *Fianna* taking on the role of **Trito(s)* defending society by slaying a serpentine monster that raids the land, taking cattle to its cave.¹²⁴ The monster in this myth is three-headed, a more numerous foe, associated with an enemy community. The warrior-champion of the myth is himself also 'imaged as close to a monster [potentially] being as damaging to society as he might, in his correct mode, be its defender.'¹²⁵ The raiding entity in the *Acallam* is also almost exclusively part of an enemy community and often three-headed (three champions as leaders, a monstrous giant, giantess and bitch, three wolf-shaped women, three red-haired youths with three red-haired hounds). The closest parallels to the reconstructed **Trito*-myth in the *Acallam* are the druidic warrior woman Dragon Woman, the king *Lochlann* and his brother raiding the *síds* of the *Tuatha Dé Danann*, taking the treasure back to their homeland; the giant with his daughter and bitch raiding a hospitaller, taking cattle back to their rock; and the three wolf-shaped fairy women / frenzied fairy woman raiding a steward, taking sheep / cattle back to their cave / *síd*. These raiding entities are all associated with the otherworld/wild (*Lochlann* too, cf. note 89) and all seem to have the same monstrous nature: a druidic dragon woman in one, monstrous giants and bitch, and frenzied / wolf-shaped fairy women, showing the association of wilderness and otherworld with the ferociousness of the monster or warrior, in one case perhaps serpentine, in two cases canine and lupine. The *Fianna* who defeat them are as ferocious as the monsters, as capable of damaging society, by raiding, like **Trito(s)*.

The combination of the various elements of warrior, hound, wolf, furor, and **Trito*-myth which can all be seen connected in the *Acallam* in the same way as in the reconstructed Indo-European culture, seems to imply the continuance of this cultural phenomenon, its institution,

¹²³ Cf. Mallory and Adams (1997): 19-20, 138, 579-580, 31, 632-3, McCone (1987), Kershaw (2000).

¹²⁴ Cf. Mallory and Adams (1997): 19-20, 138, 579-580, Anthony (2007): 134-5, Lincoln (1976), Miller (2002).

¹²⁵ Mallory and Adams (1997): 580.

symbolism, associations and mythology in the Insular Celtic society of Ireland, as inherited from the Indo-Europeans.

The association of hound and warrior in the *Acallam*, however, does mainly pertain to the use of hounds in the hunt, and in battle, as well as a guard-dog. The state of furor is not solely or markedly associated in the *Acallam* with the hound/wolf – more often the boar and stag are named. The wolf-bitches as raiders of sheep could be said to refer to regular events, that need not unnecessarily be connected to warriors or their myth, while the wolf and ferociousness of wolf and other wild animals could be connected to the wilderness and hunting activity with no connection to warfare. It is also hunting (in which hounds feature) that is connected as a motif to battles (in which hounds feature) which might reflect the **Trito*-myth, yet hounds are not themselves significant motifs connected to these battles and they are not said to have had any role in the course of events. They are merely mentioned as the inseparable companions of the warriors. One could conclude, then, that the association of hound and warrior could derive solely from the employment of hounds by the Irish hunter-warriors, instead of being inherited. Nevertheless, furor is seen in the *Acallam*, connected to the hunt and battle, including those likely reflecting the **Trito*-myth, and as *confaite* also appears in which the hound is connected to the furious battle, the association of feral warrior with the hound and of the feral warrior with the **Trito*-myth does seem to infer the inheritance of Indo-European cultural material.

If we can identify the *Fianna* as an (initiatory) **korios* associated with the hound/wolf, furor, raiding and the **Trito*-myth, how might this affect our view on Celtic culture?

According to Brenneman, in Ireland the obtaining of kingship was envisioned as wedding an earth goddess of sovereignty, the survival of the Irish *túatha* depending on agriculture, not cattle-raiding and hunting, through which the Indo-Europeans received sovereignty from the sky god. The *Fianna*, however, do survive on these activities and it would be the sons of kings who, reenacting the **Trito*-myth raiding like hounds, are initiated into adult warriorhood and obtain the means through this legalized ritual to become legitimate aristocrats or chieftains.

As Brenneman proscribed, the chthonic serpent of the **Trito*-myth can indeed be seen in the *Acallam* represented by females entities like 'Dragon Woman' and the three wolf-shaped women, yet these are not, as he states, life-giving sovereignty figures equatable to the cattle, but destructive forces equatable to the masculine, hound/wolf-like, royal warrior-champions, while the supernatural bitch *Fer Mac*, giving drinks, fighting and hunting, could be viewed as a sovereignty goddess both life-giving and destructive connected to daylight and fire.¹²⁶

¹²⁶ Perhaps solar in nature, cf. n. 120. Cf. Brenneman (1989): 341, 346.

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