

ORPHEUS, ODIN, AND THE INDO-EUROPEAN UNDERWORLD:

A RESPONSE TO BRUCE LINCOLN'S ARTICLE

“WATERS OF MEMORY, WATERS OF FORGETFULNESS”

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Erick James Dodge

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Erick James Dodge

APPROVED:

Richard Armstrong, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Classical Studies
Honors College Faculty
Committee Chair

Francesca D'Alessandro Behr, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Classical and Italian Studies

Michael Barnes Ph.D.
Honors College Faculty

Antonio D. Tillis, Ph.D.
Dean, College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences
M.D. Anderson Professor in Hispanic Studies

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Dedication

*I dedicate this work to those ancient cowboys
whose language, culture, and descendants
cover the earth.*

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Abstract

In 1982, in an article titled “Waters of Memory, Waters of Forgetfulness”, the Indo-Europeanist Bruce Lincoln reconstructed the following Proto-Indo-European (henceforth PIE) narrative from Platonic (*Republic*, 614B - 621D), Orphic (Gold Tablets), Indic (*Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad* 1.4), Nordic (*Gylfaginning* 4, 15; *Grímnismál* 28; *Völuspá* 28); and Celtic (*Feis Tighe Chonáin*) written sources. See Table I in Lincoln’s article for a summary.

On the way to the otherworld, souls of the dead had to cross a river, the waters of which washed away all of their memories. These memories were not destroyed, however, but were carried by the river's water to a spring, where they bubbled up and were drunk by certain highly favored individuals, who became inspired and infused with supernatural wisdom as a result of the drink. (Lincoln, 1982: 30. <https://www.academia.edu/32367336/Waters_of_Memory>)

Lincoln briefly traced the development of this proto-narrative in the various Indo-European (henceforth IE) branches. See Table II “Transformations” in Lincoln’s article for a summary.

While Lincoln’s article was foundational, it was also only a preliminary sketch. In light of this, we will build on his work and refine his reconstruction by gathering additional Graeco-Roman, Indo-Iranian, Germanic, Celtic, and Hittite sources. Additionally, once we have established the PIE background, we will follow this narratives’ development in the myths and cults of two IE figures: the Germanic Odin and Greek *Orpheús*. Lastly, we will consider possible Finno-Ugric and Laurasian connections. The ultimately goal of this thesis is to arrive at a greater understanding of the development of IE culture, from its primordial roots to its various local manifestations.

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Abbreviations

PIE	<i>Proto-Indo-European</i>
IE	<i>Indo-European</i>
PII	<i>Proto-Indo-Iranian</i>
II	<i>Indo-Iranian</i>
PG	<i>Proto-Germanic</i>
PC	<i>Proto-Celtic</i>

Languages

Hittite	Hit.
Greek	Grk.
Latin	Lat.
Old Norse	ON.
Persian	Per.
Sanskrit	Skr.

Theonyms

When the spelling “Odin” is used, it refers to all of the descendants of the Proto-Germanic **Wōdanaz* and not just the specifically Old Norse *Óðinn*.

Part 1 - Introduction

In 1982, in an article titled “Waters of Memory, Waters of Forgetfulness”, the Indo-Europeanist Bruce Lincoln reconstructed the following Proto-Indo-European (henceforth PIE) narrative from Platonic (*Republic*, 614B - 621D), Orphic (Gold Tablets), Indic (*Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad* 1.4), Nordic (*Gylfaginning* 4, 15; *Grímnismál* 28; *Völuspá* 28); and Celtic (*Feis Tighe Chonáin*) written sources. See Table I in Lincoln’s article for a summary.

On the way to the otherworld, souls of the dead had to cross a river, the waters of which washed away all of their memories. These memories were not destroyed, however, but were carried by the river's water to a spring, where they bubbled up and were drunk by certain highly favored individuals, who became inspired and infused with supernatural wisdom as a result of the drink. (Lincoln, 1982: 30. <https://www.academia.edu/32367336/Waters_of_Memory>)

Additionally, Lincoln traced the development of this proto-narrative in the various Indo-European (henceforth IE) branches. See Table II “Transformations” in Lincoln’s article for a summary.

While Lincoln’s article was foundational, it was also only a preliminary sketch. First, there are many IE sources which express a descended form of the proto-narrative which we can add to Lincoln’s sources. Second, Lincoln only looked at a single Orphic text. Third, while Lincoln did touch on the historical development of this narrative in the various IE branches, he only did so briefly since his primary focus was PIE reconstruction. In light of these points, we will review Lincoln’s sources and add to them in Part 2 “Sources”. We will work branch by branch, which will allow us to focus on details which would otherwise bloat Part 3 “Comparison”. We will begin with the Orphic material, which Lincoln looked at uncritically. He only considered a single Orphic text, instead of reviewing the many versions we have. By doing so he missed the importance of two reoccurring motifs: the guardians of the well of memory and the cypress tree. Following Lincoln’s order, we will then move on to look at Indo-Iranian sources.

We will look at Indic texts, Steppe (i.e. Scythian, Sarmatian, and Ossetian) archaeology, and the Persian narrative of Alexander’s Journey in the *Šāhnāme*. Our discussion of the Indic World Tree and Proto-Indo-Iranian (henceforth PII) ritual drink **sáwHmas* (Skt. *sóma*; Avestan *haoma*) in this section will link up with our discussion of the Germanic World Tree and mead in the next section. In the Germanic section we will also consider the figure of Odin in detail. Next, we will look at Celtic myths about sacred heads and wells, as well as the English At-480 folktale “The Three Heads of the Well”. Lastly, we will look at a Hittite text concerning the soul’s Underworldly journey. This last text is important because the Hittites were one of the earliest branches to break away from the PIE homeland¹. Their cultural remains, therefore, are good indicators of the age of IE comparative ideas.

In Part 3 “Comparison” we will take a step back from the linguistic and cultural minutiae and point out patterns which we see. This stepping back is also a stepping back through time to the era of the PIEs. This is because reconstructive comparativism explains cultural similarities between historically related peoples first and foremost as products of descent. Diffusion and independent development, especially when similarities are found in historically unrelated peoples, are also possible explanations. If provided the space and time, the comparativist ought to “countercheck” their reconstructions by considering these alternative explanations (Witzel, 2012). Unfortunately due to the scope of Indo-European Studies—not only its linguistic and cultural scope but its cross-departmental approach—such counterchecking is difficult to find time and space for, but we will have the chance do a bit of it in Part 5 “Postscript: Laurasia”.

While reconstructing we need to keep in mind what, exactly, we are reconstructing. Some Indo-Europeanists reconstruct theonyms, others reconstruct formulas, still others ideology. This thesis will be concerned with the following units of reconstruction: motifs (both “figural”, like eyeballs, and *topographic*, like Underworldly rivers), narratives, and rituals. We will talk about the last later in Section 3.3 “The Traveler” where we will see that the myth’s protagonist is the ritually identified with the initiate. For now, we will address the problems that come with

¹ A useful interactive map from Leiden University shows just how complicated the history of the Indo-Europeans was: <http://homeland.ku.dk/>

working with the first two. A motif on its own, for example “a severed head”, means nothing and everything. Stith Thompson pointed out that such a motif can be found in folktales “from all parts of the earth” (1977: 50). Motifs are universal, rooted in biology, cognition, and language. This means that motifs are difficult to track and can lead the reconstructionist down never-ending pathways. See, for example, the mind-boggling *Figure 4* in D’Huy,(2019) <<https://folklore.ee/era/pub/files/jef-2019-0003.pdf>> which show just how much the constituent motifs of tale types can overlap with one another. It is just the nature of myth: intuitively jumping from idea to idea. Reconstructing individual motifs may be possible in linguistics, but in Historical and Comparative Religious Studies the units one reconstructs must be more complex, either more detailed (ex. “a prophesying severed head”) or linked with other motifs (ex. “a severed head next to a well”) to form a type (i.e. narrative). This thesis, therefore, will focus on complex motifs, rather than simple ones so as to avoid the never ending pathways. Part 3 will speak of, for instance, “the well of memory in the underworld” and the “sacrifice of the eye for wisdom” and not just wells and eyes on their own.

Apart from patterns in the sources, there are the patterns in previous scholarship which add another layer of ideas for the comparativist to work with. For example, MacDonald’s work was particularly difficult to integrate into this thesis. First, he wrote a dense two page article with the following bewildering title: “Water, Milk, Eviscerated Eyes and Severed Heads: An Iconographic Pattern in Indo-European and Near Eastern Mythology”. This work overlaps with many of our motifs and can be read here <https://pies.ucla.edu/IEConference/IEAbstracts/McDonald_J_2003.pdf>. Second, he (2006: 45) discovered the following pattern: “...both the Bóand myth and that of Óðinn at Mímisbrunnr: a bovine aspect (ga/la, Bóand, aurr), a spring (Mnemosyne’s, Nechtan’s, Mímir’s), an adjacent tree (the leukh\n kupa/risson, Crimall’s hazel tree, Yggdrasill) and inspiration (transmigration, the Boyne’s imbas, Mímisbrunnr’s wisdom).” While Macdonald was working on Serpent Slaying myths, and this pattern was a passing remark, we will see these motifs appear throughout this thesis. When you add all the other scholar’s work to the pile you find that their work overlaps with one another, both in their data and their conclusions. If one were to represent their work visually, by connecting the dots between them,

the resulting picture would look more like a long wandering island than a circle. I have tried to bring all of them into dialog with one another, while being careful to state clearly whose ideas were whose.

Once we have reconstructed proto-forms from the data we will find that the PIE reconstructions come together to form both a narrative and a cosmography in which the narrative takes place. We will not only refine Lincoln's proto-narrative but will reconstruct those aspects of PIE cosmography which provide context to the story. In other words, to present our refined story in Part 3 we will need to set the stage as well, its props (figural motifs) and background (topographic motifs).

In Section 3.3 "The Traveler" we will focus on the protagonist, the Otherworldly Traveler. We will look at the way in which his body, specifically his head and eyes, were related to PIE cosmography, narrative, and ritual. We will end this section by moving away from reconstruction towards historical development. Lincoln called this "transformation". Another comparative scholar, Michael Witzel (2012: 24. §7.2), called this "secondary elaboration", the "continuous reshaping and reinterpretation" of older myths. (Witzel 2012: 24. §7.2). The Indo-Europeanist Jaan Puhvel (1987: 138) said that deities are "hotbed[s] for the study of typology, of superimposition, juxtaposition, combination, fusion, and multiplication." We will focus on two traditions, the Germanic and Greek, and trace how our reconstructions developed in the myths and cults of Odin and *Orpheús*. Reception studies have been done on these figures before, for instance Friedman (1970: 1) said of Orpheus that "each age has fashioned Orpheus in its own image, giving him new attributes, emphasizing certain of his deeds at the expense of others, and even changing the course of the narrative to make the Orpheus myth conform to the values of the day." Never, however, have these two figures been compared as deeply as we will be. Both were Travelers in our reconstructed narrative. Both were intimately tied to their bodies and bodiliness, but one embraced it while the other rejected it. Both's cults developed an initiatory system steeped in eschatology and asceticism, but one took a militaristic path while the other a far more peaceful one. As well, both's cults dealt with the shift from orality and literacy by incorporating their mythic figures' voices into their magical practices, but they did so in very different ways.

In Part 4 “Conclusions” we will trace our steps and review our conclusions. As well, we will reformulate Lincoln’s original summary. We will have worked from many IE branches up to their meeting point (i.e. PIE proto-forms) and then slowly back down two IE branches. If we started with Odin and Orpheus, we might not have the same grasp of the IE background. As well, we might get sidetracked onto topics which are unrelated to Lincoln’s narrative, which is the link between Odin and Orpheus and the guide rail of this thesis.

At the end of the thesis, in Part 5 “Postscript: Laurasia”, we will take a peek at a Non-Indo-European parallel found in the Turkic tradition to countercheck our reconstruction and consider the possible Laurasian roots of certain shared themes.

Part 2 - Sources

Now that we have considered our disciplinary history and established a methodology, we can begin to look at the data. In this part we look at data gathered from the following branches of the IE world, proceeding according to Lincoln's original order: Graeco-Roman (2.1), Indo-Iranian (2.2), Germanic (2.3), Celtic (2.4), Hittite (2.5).

2.1 Graeco-Roman

The first IE branch we will look at, is the Classical. We will first review Lincoln's work (2.1.1), then look at the Greek view of the afterlife in general (2.1.2), then at the Orphic one in particular (2.1.4). We will also examine *Orpheús* and his cult in detail (2.1.3).

2.1.1 Lincoln's Data

Lincoln looked at two Classical passages, one from Plato's *Republic* (621) and one Orphic Tablet from Petelia, Italy. He did not, however, go into as much detail about the Orphic texts in his article as we will.

2.1.2 *Hāidēs*

The Grk. noun *Hāidēs* (Homeric *Aídēs*) is a contraction of *a-* and *eídon*, which descend from the PIE compound **h₂-* ("not") + **weyd-* ("see"). The masculine term referred to both the male deity and place. It was the "invisible (place/one)". The place contained/was, and the deity lived in, a *dómos* ("house, hall"), from PIE **dóm* ("a constructed house or home"). The place was filled with water (*Stúx*, *Titaressos*, *Kōkutós*, *Phlegéthōn*, and most importantly *Akhérōn* and *Léthē*). *Léthē* appeared in Lincoln's article and the Orphic texts. The word meant "oblivion", "forgetfulness", or "concealment"; and was related to *aletheia* ("that which is not concealed, the truth"). The dead drank of its waters in order to have their memories forgotten so as to be reincarnated (Virgil, *Aeneid*, 6.703-751).

2.1.3 *Orpheús*

An ancient person who knew Greek who heard the name *Orpheús* may have thought of the adjective *orphanós* (“orphaned, without a father or parents; destitute, bereft”). Both words descend from the masculine PIE noun **h₃órbʰos* (“orphan; servant, slave, worker”) which itself comes from the PIE root **h₃erbʰ-* (“to change allegiance/status/ownership”). Alternatively, they may have thought of the noun *órphnē* (“the darkness of the night or the underworld”) which oddly enough descends from a different PIE noun: **h₁régʷos* (“darkness”) (Beekes, 2010: 1114). The first etymology has been interpreted by Freiart as referring to his loss of *Eurudíkē*, the second etymology to his descent into the underworld. In support of the first, Burkert traced:

the Greek words goāō ‘to mourn’ and goēs ‘an enchanter’ back to an original sense of shaman. Orpheus the shamanistic conjurer of animals is fundamentally the mourner, whose nature it is to be orphaned, deprived of his wife, separated from love, and eventually separated from his own mantic head, which even in death goes on singing his love (Eurydike). Orpheus is the singer, not of kleos, but of penthos ‘grief’. As the one deprived of his love, Orpheus is the central figure in the primordial love-death antinomy. It is this that is the basic fact about him. The parallel between Orpheus’ cultic head on Lesbos and the Dionysian phallic head of Lesbos suggest Orpheus’ sexuality. If the head is the source of life, then the decapitation that orpheus suffered is a symbolic castration. [...] After Eurydike, he was unable to love women again (Freiart, 1991: 46).

Freiart also doubles down on the sexual connotation, saying:

Bodiless heads were cult objects among the Indo-Europeans. ...the head was seen as the seat of the psukhē and also as the source of life. The birth of Athena from the head of Zeus, rather than being a mere metaphor of mētis ‘intelligence’, may point to primitive notions that equate the cerebrospinal substance with semen.” (42-3).

At the end of the article he summarizes his view by asserting that Orpheus’ “*truncated head is an emblem of his self-separation (48)*”.

The decapitated head he was referring to was the one which Phanocles (*fr.* 1), Philostratus (*Her.* 28.8-11; *VA* 4.14), Euripides (*Alc.* 962-972), Ps. Eratoshenes (*Cat.* 24), Lucian (*Ind.* 11-12), Ovid (*Met.* 10-11), and Virgil (*Geo.* 4) all spoke of².

First, while I can see Orpheus being an “orphan” or “the bereft one” because of his loss of *Eurudikē*, the idea that this etymology extends to the loss of his head is not very intuitive; it does not address the head’s prophetic nature, and it derives it from an oversimple, even fetishistic, scholarly motif of the vague “severed head”. As we will see about the numerous severed heads in IE myth, they were more complex narrative motifs than simple cultic objects (the instances of such a cult being primarily concentrated in the Celtic branch).

Second, Friert’s interpretation does not take into account Orpheus’ followers, the “Orphics”, who were called *Orpheotelestai* (“Orphic-initiators”), and would have been colloquially seen as either “The Dark (Ones)” or “The Ones who are Orphaned or Bereft”. If we follow the first interpretation, they might have been seen as the ones who descend to the Underworld (i.e. world of darkness). If we follow the second interpretation: what would this have meant to Greek speakers at the time? As we will see in the next section, the Orphic initiates saw themselves as children “of mother Earth and starry father Heaven”, so their orphanage could not have referred to this Near-Eastern phrase. Instead, I argue, it would have been interpreted by the ancients as simply stereotypically describing the initiates’ lifestyle as wandering devotees, who like the contemporary young male members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and ISKON (i.e. Hare Krishna) live lives, at least for a time, away from their families knocking on doors and promising rewards in the afterlife and trying to save souls—in the orphic case—from the continuous rounds of reincarnation. The importance is not on the familial aspects of the words, but simply the broad and original PIE idea of a change in allegiance, status, or ownership. Their lifestyles are liminal, just as Orpheus is liminal in that he is between life and death. We will return to this topic later in our case study of Orpheus and Odin.

² Most of these sources (including greek text, notes, and a translation) are available at Watson, 2013: <https://livingpoets.dur.ac.uk/w/Orpheus:_A_Guide_to_Selected_Sources> Click the “Highlight Selected Sources” button on the top right of the page.

2.1.4 The Orphic Gold Tablets

While Lincoln included a translation of one passage from the tablets, he misrepresented the source as being singular by not mentioning that there are a variety of texts, many of which contradict each other. It would have been better to compare them, find the similarities and construct a proto-orphic text, and then reconstruct back to PIE times from there instead of randomly picking one. The following translations are my own. They follow the Greek found in Edmonds (2011), the intertextual reconstructions of Bernabé and Jiménez (2008), and they leave out irrelevant parts such as fragmentary passwords.

[A4, OF 487; L8 (Thurii, 4th century BCE)]

When your soul leaves the light of the sun/soul, carefully join with the thiasos on the right. Hail! You'll see things such as you've never seen before, and you, a man, will become a god, like a child who falls into milk. Hail! Hail! Make your way to the right, to the sacred meadows and groves of Persephone.

[B1, OF 476; L3 (Petelia, 4th century BCE)]

You will find to the left of the hall Hades a spring [krénē], and standing by it, a ? glowing? white cypress tree; Don't go near this spring! On the other side you'll find the lake of Mnemosyne, and from it refreshing water flowing forth. Close by will be guardians. Say: "Know that I am the son of Earth and starry Heaven; but my race is heavenly. I am parched with thirst and dying; quick, give me some of that water flowing fresh from the lake of Mnemosyne." They will give you some water to drink from the sacred/divine spring, and then you will reign-with-the-other-heroes/celebrate? [rites? with the other] heroes. This is the work of Mnemosyne: when a hero is about to die, let him get this engraved on gold, and remember it, lest the darkness/shadow cover him and lead him down in dread.

[B2, OF 477; L4 (Pharsalos, 4th century BCE)]

You will find in the mansion/halls of Hades a spring on the right, and standing by it a ? glowing? white cypress tree. Don't go near that spring! Further along you will find, from a lake of Mnemosyne, the refreshing water flowing forth. On its banks will be guardians who ask you why you have come. You should tell them the truth and say: "I am the child of Earth and starry Heaven; My name is Asterius ("Starry"). I am thirsty, so give me a drink from the spring."

[6 Texts: B3-8, OF478-483, L5a-f (all from Eleutherna, 2nd-1st century BCE)]³

"I'm dying and dry with thirst, so give me a drink from the ever-flowing spring on the right, (where/by) the cypress (is)."

"Who are you? Where do you come from?"

"I am the child of Earth and starry Heaven."

[B9, OF 484, L6 (Thessaly?, 4th century BCE)]

"I'm dying and dry with thirst, so give me a drink from the ever-flowing spring. On the right is a white cypress."

"Who are you? Where do you come from?"

"I am the son of Earth and starry Heaven. But my race is heavenly."

[B10, OF 474; L1 (Hipponion, 5th century BCE)]

This is the work of Mnemosyne. When you are about to die...you will go to the well-built abode/halls of Hades; on the right there is a spring, and standing by it a ?glowing? white cypress tree; there the descending souls of the dead refresh themselves. Don't go near this spring! Further along you will find, from the lake of Mnemosyne, ?refreshing? water freshly flowing forth. But guardians are nearby/on-the-banks(of-the-spring). They will ask you, with sharp minds [πνευκαλίμαισι; i.e. wisdom], why you are seeking in the

³ Since the six texts are nearly identical I show only one.

darkness/shadowy gloom of Hades. Say: "I am the son of Earth and starry Heaven; I am parched with thirst and I-perish/death. Give me quickly fresh/refreshing water to drink from the lake of Mnemosyne." And, assuredly, they will then speak to the subterranean/underworld queen/ruler, and then they will give you water to drink from the lake of Mnemosyne, and once you have drunk, you will go along the sacred road that the other mystai/famed-initiates and bacchics travel, glorious.

[B11, OF 475; L2 (Entella, West Sicily, 4th century BCE)]

This is the work of Mnemosyne: when you, hero, are about to die, engrave this on gold and remember it lest the darkness/shadow cover you and lead you down in dread. You will find in the halls of Hades a lake on the right, and standing by it, a glowing? white cypress tree; this is where all the descending soul refresh themselves. Do not go near this spring! Further along you will find, from the lake of Mnemosyne, refreshing? water flowing forth. On its banks/nearby are guardians. They will ask you, with sharp minds [πευκαλίμιασι; i.e. wisdom], what you seek in Hades' darkness/shadowy gloom. Say: "I am the son of Earth and starry Heaven, but my race is heavenly. I am parched with thirst and I am dying; give me refreshing water flowing forth from the lake of Memory." And then they will speak to the subterranean/underworld queen/ruler, and they will give you a drink from the lake of Mnemosyne.

[B12, OF 484a; L6a (Crete, 2nd-1st century BCE)]

He is dying and dry with thirst, "so give me a drink from the ever-flowing-spring, to the left of the cypress."

"Who are you? Where do you come from?"

"I am the son of mother Earth and starry father Heaven."

As you can see, the topography of the texts is vague and contradictory. There are patterns however. The following is an attempt at reconstructing the essential proto-narrative, at least, those parts of the narrative that are relevant to this thesis.

When you die, unlike most people who go to the water on the left, you should go past Hades' Hall and take a right, give the guardians (φύλακες) a password, and drink of the water of Memory by the tree.

Reconstructing this shows the importance of the tree and guardians. The fact that the tree shows up in all but one case, and the fact that the guardians show up often, shows their integralness to the instructions. There is a problem however, this reconstructed narrative is too simple to be a real text. So, another comparative act we can do is to add all the texts together and reconcile the differences. What we get is of course too *detailed* to be a proto-text, but it gives us a vibrant look at the Orphic view of the afterlife.

This is the work of Memory. When you, hero, are about to die engrave this on gold and remember it lest the darkness cover you and lead you down in dread: You will go to the well-built hall of Hades and find on the left that there is a water where all the descending souls of the dead refresh themselves. Don't go near this! Further along you will find, from the ever-flowing water of Memory, refreshing water flowing forth and a glowing white cypress tree beside it. But nearby, on the banks, are guardians. They will ask you, with sharp minds: "Who are you? Where do you come from? Why have you come? What are you seeking the dark gloom of Hades" Say to them the truth: "I am the son of mother Earth and starry father Heaven; but my race is heavenly, my name is Asterius ("Starry"). I'm dying and I'm parched with thirst. Give me quickly refreshing water to drink from the water of Memory." And, assuredly, they will then speak to the underworld queen and give you water to drink from the sacred water of Memory. Once you have

drunk, you will go along the sacred road that the other heroes, mystai, and bacchics travel. With them you will reign, be glorious, and celebrate.

Somewhere between these two reconstructions was the original conception. In both reconstructions I equated the lakes (*limnē*) and springs (*krēnē*) in the original texts, because, only four out of twelve total original texts specify that the lake of Memory is different from the spring. Additionally, both waters are said to be “refreshing”. It is my assertion that they were originally the same: the Nexus of Memory. I further argue that the separate lake for “normal” people was an Orphic invention which was originally just the Greek water of *Lēthē* (i.e. the forgetful waters). This layout fits the most with the other data as we will see. This argument is different from Janko’s (1984: 99-100) reconstruction which sees the waters as separate without considering possible changes over time.

There are a few detail which are important to note for our reconstruction. First, that tree found in the texts is described as *leukós* (Grk. adj. “bright, shining, gleaming; white”). The word descended from the PIE adj. **lewk-* (“bright; to shine; white”; Lat. *lūx*, Eng. *light*) which is itself the source of the English word *light*. Second, that the Spring of Memory is guarded by *phúlakes* (Grk. noun, “guards, sentries”). We will see parallels to these later.

Among the Orphics this text was not just reserved for death, it was ritualized during life. Pausanias (9.37-39) said “that those who entered the cave of Trophonius for prophecy first drank Lethe, to forget their former thoughts, and then the water of memory, to remember the prophecy, which was communicated in a dream during sleep.” (Knight, 1936: 49.)

As a final note to these texts, we will mention that Bernabé and Jiménez (2008) provided two parallels found in other Indo-European branches (Indian and Iranian). Their influence is certainly possible, but neither mentions waters or trees and as such at most constitute a line of influence separate from our narrative. A couple years later, López-Ruiz (2010: 56-73; 205-210) argued that the Orphic texts were influenced by both the Indo-European and Near Eastern traditions. First, she pointed out that the phrase “*I am the son of Earth and starry Heaven*” has Near Eastern correspondences. Second, she argued that the cypress tree of the Underworld was

derived from a common Indo-European and North-West-Semitic motif about a sacred tree, stone, and pillar. She maintained that this motif “transcends the traditional disciplinary division between Indo-European and Near Eastern (or rather Semitic) Studies”. On the Near Eastern side of things she connected it with the Canaanite-Israelite Tree of Asherah and with the five Coptic “trees in paradise”. On the Indo-European side she connected it to the birth of humankind from trees or rocks via the creative act of the PIE thunder god (**per(k^w)unos*). I argue, and the following chapters will show, that there is ample competing evidence that the Orphic tree derives primarily from an Indo-European motif about the World Tree and Otherworldly Liquid-Nexus rather than the Thunder God or the Near Eastern traditions of eternal trees.

2.2 Indo-Iranian

Now that we have looked at the Greco-Roman data we will move on to the Indo-Iranian data. We will first review Lincoln's work. Then we will provide an overview of the Proto-Indo-Iranian **sáwHmas* cult (2.2.1). Then we will look at two Iranic sources: the archaeology of the steppe peoples (Scythians, Sarmatians, and Ossetians; 2.2.3) as well as the story of Alexander's journey to the end of the world in the *Šáhnâme* (2.2.4). Lastly, we will switch to the Indic branch and look at various texts (2.2.5).

2.2.1 Lincoln's Data

Lincoln looked at the following passage from the *Kauṣītaki Upaniṣah* (1.4):

Five hundred celestial nymphs [apsarasās] go to him [the deceased] [...]. They decorate him with Brahma-decorations. Decorated with Brahma-decorations, knowing Brahma, he approaches Brahma. He comes to the pond Āra. He crosses it by mind [manasā]. Those who only know the obvious drown when they come to this [pond]. He comes to the moments Yeṣṭiha. They run away from him. He comes to the river 'Apart from Old Age' [Vijarā]. He crosses it by mind [manasā]. Then he shakes off his good deeds and bad deeds. Truly, his dear relatives receive his good deeds, and those who are not dear his bad deeds. Just as one who drives a chariot looks down on the two chariot wheels, so he looks down on night and day, good and bad deeds, and all dualities. Without good deeds, without bad deeds, knowing Brahma, he approaches Brahma.

He argued that the PIE notion of the “washing away of memory” (like with *Léthē*) is replaced with the Indian notions of reincarnation and *kárman*. “The only difference between the two in this regard is that the accumulated past is understood as memory in one case and as deeds in the other. In both cases the memories/deeds return to this world.

2.2.2 The Drink (PII *sáwHmas)

The original sacred drink of the PIEs was mead (*médʰu). This tradition was so ancient, widespread, and central to their culture, that descendants of the word are found in Late Old Chinese (*mit*) and Proto-Uralic (**mete*) via Tocharian. This tradition was continued in Germanic and Celtic branches (PG and PC **meduz*) as well as in Proto-Balto-Slavic (**medús*), but in the epic poetry of the Greeks the term shifted to meaning “wine” (epic: μέθυ *méthu*) and among the Indo-Iranians it was replaced with the cult of **sáwHmas* (Skt. *sóma*; Avestan *haoma*) (Witzel, 2006: 173; Watkins, 2011: 53). Nevertheless, the mythic associations remained. *Sóma* provided vitality and wisdom to those who drank it (*Rgveda* 9 and 8.79.2-6). It was guarded in the otherworld/heavens by the Iranian *Gandarewa* and Indic *Gandharváḥ* (“heavenly-bards”) (Macdonell, 1897: 8). It had hallucinogenic properties possibly as a result of using ephedra as an ingredient. This is not surprising, given that poppy and cannabis (PIE **kannabis*) were used by various steppe peoples, most famously the Scythians⁴. With the earlier mead it shared an association with honey. Schroeder demonstrated the equivalency of the Germanic mead with the Indic soma and sweet porridge (i.e. honey, milk, and oats)⁵. *Sóma* is further associated with milk, via the Vedic fire ritual. For example, in RV 8.9.7 (trans. Ginevra, 2018) we find the following:

á sómam mádhumattamaṃ “Here he’ll pour the most **honeyed soma** and
gharmám siñcād átharvaṇi the hot **milk** in the presence of the fire-priest.”

As such, the drink had many functional equivalents and connections. Soma was not the only sacred drink however, the original focus on mead survived to some extent as can be seen the name of one Scythian king: Madyes, which was related to Proto-Indo-Iranian, PII, **mádʰu* (“intoxicating/inspirational honey mead”)⁶.

⁴ Windfuhr, 2000: 19-20. Watkins, 2011: 38. Herodotus, 4.74-5. Fedorov, 2000: 65.

⁵ Schroeder, 1910. I do not agree with his overly simplistic solar and lunar interpretation, but he did phenomenal source comparison.

⁶ Fedorov, 2000: 65. Fedorov only connects it to the Indian *madhu*, but the broader PII relation is obvious and more direct.

2.2.3 Scythian, Sarmatians, and Ossetians

Unfortunately for us, and unlike most of the IE branches, those who remained on the steppes left no written record. All we have are their deposits and rock art. Nevertheless, many of the features of these remains can be connected to Indo-Iranian writings (Ossetian, Iranian, Indian, etc.) as well as to the broader Indo-European world. In this section we will primarily focus on Kurgans (burial mounds) with possible connections to notions of otherworldly travel and the PIE cult of **sáwHmas*.

First, zoomorphic deposits (horses, mounts, and/or golden deer) indicate the belief that the dead person utilized them on the way to, and/or in, the otherworld⁷. This idea is later expressed and expanded upon in an “Ossete legend [which] refers to sleeping heroes who borrow their neighbors’ mounts to travel to dreamland and bring back good things to their people... Thus some steppe people might have associated a hero’s or a chief’s death with benefits for the tribe...” (Farkas, 2000: 12). The journey is thus not only one-directional and for the benefit of the dead person, but two-directional and for the benefit of the community.

Second⁸, the kurgans often contain ritual vessels, which were used to contain water, broth, koumiss, and most importantly: **sáwHmas*. The cult of **sáwHmas* was immense, and we will speak about it below in the Indian section (2.2.5), but for now we will focus on a few elements of the vessels: animals, heads, warriors, and kingly-initiation.

These ritual vessels were covered in zoomorphic designs. When we consider Indo-Iranian texts, bird figures may have been illustrations of the myth of the abduction of Soma by an eagle and deer may have symbolized the drink itself, as in the Rig-Veda where the deer is the “beast inhabiting the wooden vessel”. Broader still, all male hoofed animals (Vedic *vrsan-* “bulls,

⁷ Barkova, 2000: 244. These peoples certainly had a notion of an underworld situated in a tripartite cosmos, with a possible World-Tree as can be seen by a 4th C. BCE Scythian bronze Cauldron from modern Ukraine which was decorated with three friezes: the top shows circles and bucrania; the middle shows palmettes; and the bottom shows zigzags. These designs have been interpreted to represent the heavens, the Iranian tree of life, and the underworld respectively (see Aruz, et al, 2000).

⁸ This section draws from Korolkova, 2000; Fedorov, 2000; Herodotus, The Persian Wars 4.75; Demkin and Ryskov 1995; Aruz et al, 2000.

stallions, rams, elk, stags”) may have symbolized the drink itself. The Vedic term literally means “he who emits the seed”, and hence it equates **sáwHmas* with semen.

Along with zoomorphic features, the vessels sometimes contain other “images and motifs—animal combat, fantastic monsters, and hunting scenes—[which] may be linked symbolically to the world of the dead and sacrificial offerings. Some scholars have suggested that the vessels on which these images appear were used during sacrificial ceremonies and, further, that the cups’ rounded shape was linked to the Scythian custom, described by Herodotus (4.65), of fashioning drinking cups from the skulls of enemies as a sign of valor. The remains of a cup found in Ukraine—a human skull decorated with gold zoomorphic plaques around the perimeter—have been cited as evidence for these conjectures (Korolkova, 2000: 63-4). Such a style matches with the description of soma vessels in the Rig-Veda as “round, wooden [but not in this case], and richly decorated with shining metal plaques” (Fedorov, 2000: 65). It also matches up with passages in the *ṛgveda* which describe: the Soma potsherds as skulls, the Soma cup as a head, and the drinking of Soma as “the restoration of the head” (Heesterman, 1985: 46. *Taittirīya Saṃhitā* 6.4.9.1. *Kāṭhaka Saṃhitā* 27.4 and 29.4).

2.2.4 Alexander’s Journey in the *Šāhnâme*

At the end of the “heroic” and beginning of the “historical” half of the *Šāhnâme* of *Ferdowsī*, we find the following passage (Hanaway, 1978: 79).

[While traveling in the far east, Alexander the Great⁹] reached a mount where he beheld not a man or beast... thereupon a palace built of topazes, with lustres of crystal everywhere, and in the middle [there was] a fount of brackish water. A ruby served for lamp and... light fell on the water, and the jewel illumined the palace like the sun. [...] A cry came from that briny fount: ‘...’Tis time to drawn thy rein because thy life is ending, and thy throne of sovereignty is going all astray.’ [Sikandar gets scared and flees through

⁹ Per. *Sikandar* (اسکندر) or *Iskandar* (اسکندر)

the desert and comes to a city where he is told there is] "a wonder here, whose match none in the world of small and great e'er hath beheld--a tree with double trunk--a marvel manifest. One trunk is female, the other male; they speak, have boughs, and flourish. At night the female yieldeth speech and perfume, the male doth speak by day.' [...] The Sháh asked: 'When we pass the tree...what marvel meet we then?' 'Of going further, the interpreter replied, there is no question. There is no place beyond it, and guides call it 'The World's End'. [When he arrives at the tree it speaks to him saying] 'Thou hast not long to live'... He heard and left the tree, heart-stricken by the scimitar of fortune. (Warner, 1912: 6.31.166-169)

Many of the details of this passage can be found in an older Greek version (the *Alexander Romance*) but the feature of the tree being located at the edge of the world (*karān-i jahān*) is unique to the Persian text (Manteghi, 2018: 69). In illustrations of this passage the tree is covered with the heads of animals and humans¹⁰. The tree shows up in other texts under the name “The Tree of the Sun and Moon” (Cordier, 1903: 129-31).

2.2.5 Indic Texts

In the Indic epics and *Purāṇas* the dead must travel over *Vaitaraṇī*, “the moat (*parikhā*) [or river (*nadī*) in *Manusmṛti* 4.89] of hell”. One early Jain text, describes how sinful travelers lose their memories when crossing *Vaitaraṇī* (albeit in a boat):

Have you heard of the horrible (river) Vaitaranī, whose cutting waves are like sharp razors? They cross the horrible Vaitaranī, being urged on by arrows, and wounded with

¹⁰ See <<http://medievalromance.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/domains/shelleysghost.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/local/cache/77-1-MS.%20Ouseley%20Add.176.%20fol.311v.jpg2000x2819.jpg>>

Also see the *Great Mongol/Ilkhanid/Demotte Manuscript* <https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/a3/Iskandar_%28Alexander_the_Great%29_at_the_Talking_Tree.jpg>

*spears. The punishers pierce them with darts; they go in the boat, losing their memory; others pierce them with long pikes and tridents, and throw them on the ground.*¹¹

A less obvious continuation of this theme can be seen in the *Mahābhārata* where we find:

...a number of similes...which speak of the possibility of saving/carrying across (*tāraya-*) one's ancestors by means of rites, pious deeds, or virtuous conduct. A good son or male descendant is likened to a boat that carries the forebears across the sea to safety; more unfortunate ancestors "sink," boatless, into hell or "darkness." [...] the verb *tārayate/tārayati* used in these passages, while often meaning "to save," may at least in some places have to be taken in its literal sense as "to carry across." [...] the imagery of the son or descendant who carries his forebears across like a boat has Vedic antecedents. The images of darkness, water, and hell, which seem to merge in the epic similes, are already closely associated in Vedic texts, where mention is made of a vast, watery gloom at the ends of the world, bordering the realm of the dead. (Norelius, 2020)

What is the descendent saving the ancestors from exactly? The dark water of the text may be a poetic way of illustrating forgetfulness. Inglorious people and ancestors with poor descendants would sink into the dark waters of the otherworld and be forgotten. There was no bright Elysium awaiting them. One had to be "saved/carried over" by their descendants. The Sanskrit word used is *tāraya-*, which comes from the PIE **terh₂-* which meant both a mundane "crossing over" as in the Lat. *trāns*, but as Watkins pointed out (2011: 94) it also meant "overcome" as in the Grk. *néktar* ("death-overcoming") and the Hittite Storm God *Tarḫunnaš* ("the overcomer (of the dragon who comes each year)"). I interpret this passage to be a form of

¹¹ *Sūyagaḍaṃga-Sutta* (1.5.1.8-9; trans. Jacobi, 1895; Norelius, 2015.)

the older IE idea that to be remembered¹² one must be famous and/or well regarded by family.

This idea extended to initiates as well:

And finally, what people normally call 'the embarking to the wilderness' (aranyāyana) is, in reality, the life of a celibate student. Now, Ara and Nya are the two seas in the world of brahman, that is, in the third heaven from here. In that world are also the lake Airamādīya [see footnote¹³], the banyan tree Somasavana ["Soma-pressing-place"], the fort Aparājita, and brahman's golden hall Prabhu ["mighty, great, rich"; cognate with Latin probus]. So, only those who, by the life of a celibate student, find these two seas, Ara and Nya, in the world of brahman come to possess that world, and they obtain complete freedom of movement in all the worlds.¹⁴

A good descendant, by carrying his ancestors over the waters of forgetfulness, *remembers* them, and saves them from flowing down the river. This original notion of remembering was replaced in India by more specific action-oriented ethical ordinances ("rites, pious deeds, [and] virtuous conduct"). This historical transformation of the myth may have easily occurred by first associating remembrance with the remembering of the ancestors' *advice*, and then simply focusing on the advice (i.e. ordinances) the original explicit notion ironically being forgotten.

The last aspect of Indic myth that I would like to draw attention to is the following. We will see this unique arrangement of motifs again later. According to the Indic story about the

¹² Now, obviously the notion of *remembrance/salvation via crossing over the river and not sinking* and our broader reconstructed myth of *remembrance via sinking into the river and being carried away to the well of memory* contradict one another. This may simply be the result of time and intuition, myth does not stay static and often plays off itself in contradictory ways. Functional equivalents (like the liquids we will encounter throughout this thesis) mix things up. What we can say for certain, is that the same themes are present, just in a new, remixed way.

¹³ The range of this word, like many Sanskrit terms, is startling. Thieme, 1949: 68-9. interprets it as follows: "Nahrung (irā) und Rauschtrank (mada)...Milch und Soma enthaltend...". For the interpretation of *irā* as milk, see <sanskritdictionary.com>. It at the very least means "Intoxicating drink" but has further connotations of *sōma*, dairy (milk, koumis), and even semen [<<https://www.wisdomlib.org/definition/mada>>].

¹⁴ *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad* 8.5.3 Lincoln (1982) references this text in a footnote but didn't use it for reconstruction. Visigalli, 2019: 165; trans. Norelius: 2015: 24.

Churning of the Cosmic Ocean (*samudra manthana*), hidden in the Ocean of Milk (*Kṣīra Sāgara*) was the Elixir of Immortality (*amṛta*). Amid this ocean's waves was the World Tree (*Kalpavriksha*)¹⁵.

2.3 Germanic

Now that we have looked at the Greco-Roman and Indo-Iranian data we will move on to the Germanic. We will first review Lincoln's work (2.3.1). Then we will provide an overview of the Germanic Underworld (2.3.2). We will take an in-depth look at figure of Odin, focusing on his head (2.3.3). We will examine the Germanic World-Tree and its ties to various kinds of liquids (2.3.4). Lastly, we will mention a folklore type (2.3.5) which will tie in with our discussion of Celtic myth and folklore.

2.3.1 Lincoln's Data

Lincoln provided an overview of the Norse sources related to Odin and *Mimir*.

2.3.2 *Hel*

The Old Norse *Hel* (and its Proto-Germanic form **haljō*) come from the PG verb **helanq* ("to hide, conceal, cover") which itself comes from the PIE root **kel-* ("cover"). It is the "covered or hidden (place)". It was located underground and in/to the north (*Völuspá* 38; Boberg, 1966: 99). It contained many rivers (*Grímnismál* 28). It was and/or contained a hall (*holl*, from PG **hallō* "covered place, hall", from PIE **kol-*). Both words, *hel* and *holl*, were etymologically linked. It was located "Beneath the tree Yggdrasil" (*Grímnismál* 31; Crawford, 2015), "below the tree roots" (*Skírnismál* 35; Crawford, 2015). Gylfaginning 15 states that "A hall stands there, fair, under the ash by the well" (*Þar stendr salr einn fagr undir askinum við brunninn*). One text, *Völuspá*, is particularly revealing. Its two primary manuscripts, the Codex Regius and Hauksbok, render stanza 20 differently¹⁶. The former states that there is a *sal* ("hall") under the World Tree,

¹⁵ *Mahābhāratam* 1.18, *Rāmāyaṇam* 1.45, and the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 1.9.

¹⁶ See <<https://etext.OLD.NO/bugge/voluspa/>> for the ON manuscript transcriptions.

while the later says there is a *sæ* (“sea”) under it. While this may simply have been a copying error, as we will see in Part 3 “Comparison” both notions fit with the PIE conception of the World Tree.

2.3.3 The Odinic Head

Mimir was not the only figure in the Germanic texts that was head-focused. Let us look at the history behind Odin’s name (Polomé, 1969: 268-9). The Old Norse *Óðinn* is related to the Old Norse noun and adjective *óðr*: The noun *óðr* means “cerebral activity; mind, soul, spirit; ecstasy” but also “song, poetry, and inspiration”. The adjective *óðr* means “mad, raging, frantic; furious, vehement; eager, impatient; violent; and inspired...[all] meanings which point either to strong emotional stress or to lack of control of the power of reasoning.” Going back further in time, *Óðinn* comes from the Proto-Germanic theonym **Wōdanaz*, and *óðr* comes from PG noun **wōdaz* (and adjective **wōduz*), which had the same meanings as the ON versions. Ultimately they all came from PIE **weh₂t-¹* (“excite(d), inspire(d), spiritually arouse(d), possessed; raging”) (Watkins, 2011: 104; De Vaan, 2008). This same root produced the Latin noun *vātēs* (“seer, soothsayer, prophet; poet; oracle”) and the Old Irish noun *fáith* (“seer, soothsayer; prophet”). This clear but multifaceted linguistic background is why *Óðinn* is connected to so many things and people, including: religious figures (priests, seers, etc), poets/bards, and ecstatic Männerbund-based *berserkr*/Warriors.

If we look closer we find even more connections. First, Odin (*Óðinn*/**Wōdanaz*) was directly tied to mead (ON *mjǫðr*/PG **meduz*) because the stimulating effect of drinking it was called *óðrærir* (“rousing to the point of ecstasy”). This matches with *Óðinn*’s theft of the mead of poetry in the myths¹⁷. Second, the PIE term that *Óðinn* derives from (**wet-*) also meant “blow” and was closely tied to another root meaning “to blow” (**wē-*; originally **h₂weh₁-*, and later contracted as **h₂wē-*) (Watkins, 2011: 98). This root eventually produced Sanskrit *Vāyú* (i.e. the wind god). This matches with *Óðinn*’s giving of ON *ǫnd* to humans (“breath of life; soul”; it has a

¹⁷ The theft of the gods food (in the Germanic case, Mead; in the Indic case, Soma), especially by a bird, is its own PIE, even international, motif. See Sterken (2018) and Horrell (2003: ch. 3).

different PIE root from the ones we have been looking at, **h₂enh₁*, but with a close meaning nevertheless “to breathe”) (De Vaan, 2008). It also matches with some of his other names: *Váfuðr* (“Wind”), *Viðrir* (“Weather-Causer”), and *Ýrungr* (“Wild, Stormy”) (see below). Mythologically both Odin and Vayu are howling wind warrior host leaders and descend *in part* from the PIE Männerbund (PIE **koryos*) god¹⁸.

Odin had many other names besides *Óðinn*¹⁹. A full list is available in Grundy (2014b: 66-83). Looking at the ones which are related to the body in some way, we find: Ten of his names emphasize his Eyes, especially as being blind(ing): *Báleygr* (“Fire Eye”), *Bileygr* (“Weak-Eye”), *Blindr* (“Blind”), *Gestumblindi* (“The Blind Guest”), *Gunnblindi* (“He Who Causes Blindness In Battle”), *Helblindi* (“Hel-Blind”), *Herblindi* (“Host-Blind”), *Hōarr* and *Hárr* (“The One-Eyed”), and *Tvíblindi* (“Double-Blind”). Ten of his names emphasize his mouth in battle: *Gapþrosnir* (possibly “The One Who Rushes Forward Frenzied with Open Mouth”), *Göllnir*, *Gøllor*, and *Gøllngr* (“The Screaming One”), *Hengikeptr* (“Hang-Jaw”), *Hrjótr* (“The Roarer”), *Hveðrungr* (“Roarer”), *Ómi* (“The Resonant-Voiced”), *Við(h)rimnir* (“One who Screams in Opposition”), and *þundr* (possibly “The Rumbler”). Six of his names emphasize his facial hair, and thus his wisdom: *Hárbarðr* (“Hoar-Beard”), *Hrosshárs-Grani* (“Horse-Hair Mustached”), *Langbarðr* (“Long-Beard”), *Rauðgrani* (“Red-Mustachioed”), *Síðgrani* (“Long Hanging Mustache”), and *Siðskeggr* (“Long Hanging Beard”). Two emphasize his mysteriousness: *Grímnir* and *Grímr* (“The Masked One”), and *Siðhøttr* (“Low-Hanging Hat”). Four of his names emphasize his association with hanging by the throat: *Hangaguð* and *Hangatýr* (“God of the Hanged, or, Hanged God”), *Hangi* (“The Hanged One”), and *Vøfuðr* (“Hanger/Dangler”). Two of his names emphasize his head in general. *Arnhøðði* (“Eagle-Head”), and *Ennibrattr* (“(The One) with a Straight Forehead”). That totals to Thirty Two names explicitly emphasizing the head. Only eleven of his other names are indirectly bodily, and in some cases its quite the stretch:

¹⁸ I said “in part” because Odin also descended from the PIE Night Sky God as we will see in Part 3 “Comparison”.

¹⁹ A table of them, and their sources, is available at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_names_of_Odin>

Biflindi (“God with the Painted Shield”, his hand), *Göndlir* (“magic staff/wand; male member”), *Hram(m)i* (“The Tearer”, his hands), *Jalfaðr* and *Jölfuðr* (“Yellow-brown Rear”, his buttock? skin? fur?), *Loðungr* (“Shaggy Cloak-Wearer”, his body in general), *Sviðurr* (“Spear-God”, his hand), *Svipall* (“Swift”, his legs), *Vegtamr* (“Accustomed to the Road”, his legs), *Víngnir* (“The Swinger/Striker/Turner”, his arms), and *þunnr* and *þuðr* (“thin, pale, clear”, his skin).

This is all to argue that Odin’s identity, via his etymological spiderweb, is intimately tied to the head. His Eye and Mouth are his most essential aspects, the former connection to blindness and perception (i.e. knowledge) and the later connected to drinking mead and breathing spirit or rage in battle. This connection to the head is further emphasized by his actions at Mimir’s Well and the bottom of the World-Tree. At Mimir’s Well he removes his eyeball and decapitates *Mimir* (for more on his eye see Grundy, 2014b: 35-39 and Kershaw, 1997: 6-7). At the bottom of the World-Tree when he sacrifices himself to himself to gain knowledge of the written runes he screams and looks down (*nidr*) into the void below the world tree. There were many kinds of runes, and we will return to them in Part 3 “Comparison” (Section 3.3.4.3 “Orality and Writing”), but for now we can say that there were: victory-, wave-, speech-, beer-, life-, limb-, and mind-runes. Odin is above all associated with the mind-runes. The *Saga of the Volsungs* states the following:

<i>Hugrúnar skaltu nema,</i>	You should learn mind-runes
<i>ef þú vill hverjum vera</i>	if you want to be wiser
<i>geðhorskari guma.</i>	than any other man,
<i>þær of réð</i>	Óðin read them,
<i>þær of reist,</i>	Óðin carved them,
<i>þær of hugði Hroptr.</i>	Óðin thought them up.
(Finch, 1965: 37)	(Crawford, 2017: 38)

This fixation on his head, both in the etymological spiderweb and in the myths, is not found in the other Norse gods. For instance, Thor is associated with his arms²⁰ and Freyr's outstanding personality trait is his gigantic penis²¹.

2.3.4 The World Tree and Structurally Equivalent Liquids

While Lincoln notes that Mimir's well was filled with Mead and that it was located under the cosmic world tree he dismisses the first as a result of a stereotypical Germanic "Valuation of intoxicants" (Lincoln, 1982. Table II). In addition, he doesn't note the tree's fundamental connection to the well. We will review the nature of Structurally Equivalent PIE Liquids as well as the Orphic parallel of the bright cypress later in Part 3 "Comparison". For now we will look at the Germanic tree on its own.

In one late text there is a tree called *Mímameiðr* ("Mimir's tree") (*Fjölsvinnsmál*, 20 and 24). Most scholars (Bellows, Simek, Lindow, etc.) equate it with *Yggdrasill*. This name shows the importance of the tree as being more than simply a topographic detail, it is literally "Memory's Tree" intimately tied to the Well.

This world-tree was predictably linked to water. Streams flow from it and its roots; wells are located at its base (Boberg, 1966: 32). But on closer look things are not so predictable.

1. The waters of the cosmos and World-Tree are produced from a hart named *Eikþyrnir* ("oak-thorny") who bites the tree and uses his horns somehow (the texts are vague, perhaps he stabs the bark with them). This seems to equate water with tree sap.

²⁰ and beard, but this has more to do with his strength and manliness than his wisdom.

²¹ a) See the Rällinge statuette:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/R%C3%A4llinge_statuette#/media/File:Frejstatyett_fr%C3%A5n_R%C3%A4llinge_SHM_14232-1.jpg>

b) For an artifact that may be a PG depiction of Freyr, see the Broddenbjerg idol:

<https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/c3/Nationalmuseet_-_Cophenaghne_-_Male_figure.JPG>

2. The dew which drips from the tree²² is not water, but honey²³.

3. The tree was “ladled/poured/sprinkled with white mud/clay” (*ausinn hvíta auri*) (*Völuspa* 19). Snorri Sturluson explains that this is done by the *nornir* (“fates”) and he explains that the substance was a mixture of water taken directly from *Urðarbrunnr* (the Well of Destiny; also as the base of the world tree) and clay gathered from around the well. This mixture was “so holy that all things which come there into the well become as white [*hvítir*] as the film which lies within egg-shells” (*Gylfaginning* 16). Not only that, the water kept the limbs of the tree from rotting, allowed it to “stand ever green”.

This ON word *hvítur* (“white”) which appears twice to describe this substance, derives from P.I.E. **kweytós* (“bright, shining; white”) which is itself the source of the English word *white*. It may be playing off of an idea of milk akin to the cosmic river-producing teats of the Primordial Cow (*Auðumbla*). A possible ritual representation of this has been found in Helgö, Sweden:

Around the post, ritual deposits from the period 550-800 have been found, including several layers of clay. Torun Zachrisson (2004a, 2004b) had interpreted these layers of clay as counterparts to the ‘shining loam’ that the Norns poured over Yggdrasill according to [the texts]²⁴.

What we have then, when it comes to the World Tree’s liquids, are the following equations:

water (of the well) = mead

water (of the cosmos) = tree sap

²² *Völuspa* 19:

þaðan koma duggvar “from there come dews”
þær’s í dala falla “those which fall into valleys”

²³ a) A2813 in Boberg, 1966: 37; *Gylfaginning* 16:

Sú dökk, er þaðan af fellr á jörðina, þat kalla menn hunangfall, ok þar af fæðast býflugur.
“The dew which falls on the earth from this tree men call honey-fall, and it is the food of bees.”

²⁴ Andrén, 2014: 42-3. While the deposit is a post and not a tree, Andrén stresses that World Trees and World Pillars are “functional alternatives”, both are Axis Mundi, and play the same role in the archaeological landscapes.

water (as dew) = honey

water (for the roots) = white clay

Beyond the World Tree, the war-dead (*einherjar*) drink clear mead (*skíra mjaða*) from the teats of a goat named *Heiðrún* as if it were milk²⁵. We will see this liminality of liquid in other branches.

2.3.5 Later Germanic Folklore

In Scandinavian balladry there appears from 1673 forward narratives of women who are beheaded, and from where their heads fall, springs well forth²⁶. We will see this head-and-well motif complex show up again in the Celtic section.

²⁵ *Grímnismál* 25; *Gylfaginning* 39; Boberg, 1966: 29 (A661.1.0.2).

²⁶ See Wimberly (1928: 82-83) for the Faroese version; and Afzelius (1816: 197) for the earliest recording.

2.4 Celtic

Now that we have looked at the Greco-Roman, Indo-Iranian, and Germanic data we will move on to the Celtic. We will first review Lincoln's data (2.4.1). Then we will provide an overview of the Celtic Underworld (2.4.2). Next we will examine the myths and folktales associated with the Celtic head-well cult (2.4.3 and 2.4.4).

2.4.1 Lincoln's Data

Lincoln (1982: 27) compared the Norse *Mimir* ("Memory") to the Celtic *Rosmerta* (from PIE **(s)mer-* "to think, recall, reflect, worry over"). He, along with Ford (1974), also analyzed the Celtic *Feis Tighe Chonáin* ("Feast at Conán's House"). Lincoln looked at it in relation to our narrative, and Ford looked at it (along with the *Dindshenchas*) in relation to the close and overlapping PIE notion of the "La Gloire Lumineuse" otherwise known as "The Fire in Water". We will not repeat either argument here, but we will use their work for support later in Part 3 "Comparison" when we talk about the Otherworldly Nexus.

2.4.2 Tech Duinn

One of the Celtic Otherworlds was called *Tech Duinn*. The first word means "house". The second word means "brown, hazel, dark" and comes from Proto-Celtic **Dhuosnos* "dark, brown" (cognate with Latin *fuscus*). Ultimately it derives from PIE **d^hewh₂-* ("smoke, mist, haze"). It was also called *Bruiden Dá Derga* ("The Destruction of Da Derga's Hall"). The Celtic Underworld is thus the "Hall of The Dark One". This "Dark One", *Donn*, was the king of the fairies (*aos sí/sídhe*). Souls went to his hall to "assemble" and await reincarnation either in our world or in a second, happier Otherworld (Freitag, 2013: 105).

2.4.3 Head and Well Cult

The Celts had a "cult of the head". A part of that cult was the belief that the head housed the soul. It was the "centre of the emotions as well as of life itself, a symbol of divinity and of the powers

of the other-world” (Jacobsthal, 1944). The reverence they held for it manifested itself: in the military and political practice of headhunting; in the cult of the ancestors (with severed heads taking center stage in shrines); and in their relationship with water. To the Celts, heads were the perceptive point of contact between our world and the Otherworld (Clark, 1998: 463). Ross’ extensive iconographic work shows the “fundamental [Celtic] association of the cult of the head with water” (Ross, 1967: 140-149). This is especially the case with wells which were mythologically linked in the Irish *Dindshenchas* texts with wisdom and inspiration (Irish *imbas*) (Simpson, 1962-65a). This was symbolized by the Salmon of Wisdom which swam in it and by the hazel tree (Old Irish *coll*). A variety of these wisdom wells appear in the texts: the Secret Well (*topur diamair*), the Well of *Segais*, the Well of *Connla*, the Well of *Coelrind*, the Well of *Nechtán*, and in the story *Cath Cumair* there is the Well of Heads (*Tiobruid na cCeann*). All of these wells play a similar cosmic role and share associations with heads and wisdom (Ross, 1967: 169). In other words, they are structurally equivalent and are simply different manifestations of a single concept of the cosmic well.

This Well was the ever flowing source of the worlds rivers (the Shannon, Boyne, Suir, Barrow, Slaney, etc) and as such it was the World-Navel. The unworthy were not permitted to look in it, lest their eyes explode:

<i>Nechtain mac Labrada laind,</i>	Nechtain son of bold Labraid
<i>diarbo ben Bóand, bágaimm,</i>	whose wife was Boand, I aver;
<i>topur diamair bói 'na dún,</i>	a secret well there was in his stead,
<i>assa maided cech mí-rún.</i>	from which spewed all kinds of mysterious evil.

<i>Ní fhail nodécced dia lár</i>	There was none that would look to its bottom
<i>nach maided a dá rosc rán:</i>	but his two bright eyes would burst:
<i>dia ngluased do chlí nó deis,</i>	if he should move to left or right,
<i>ní thargad úad cen athis.</i>	he would not come from it without blemish.

(Boand I.11-12. Gwynn, 1903-35)

These narratives and motifs were ritually acted out all throughout Celtic lands. For instance, in Ashill people filled a well with hazel nuts, which were symbols of wisdom (Ross, 1967: 54, 64.). Sometimes these practices mixed with other IE cultures, for instance in the cult of the Romano-Celtic Goddess *Coventina*. One of the sources of physical evidence for her cult comes from a well along Hadrian's Wall. In the well was found a human skull and various head-related artifacts. Linguistically, her name derives from *cov-* "memory" (as in *cofen* "memorial") (Clayton et al, 1878: 21)²⁷.

2.4.4 The English AT-480 Folktale "The Three Heads of the Well"

In 1595, the Elizabethan playwright George Peele published a play entitled *The Old Wive's Tale*. The title and folkloric motifs of the plot hint that it was drawn from folklore and not simply the creativity of Peele himself (Clapp, 1926; Adams, 1963: 15-8). In the story, Erestus tells Lampriscus to send his daughters, Zantippa and Celanta, *to the well for the water of life*²⁸; *there shall they find their fortunes unlooked for* (2.151-2). Lampriscus in turn tells his daughters if they *give fair words and rule [their] tongue[s]* they'll receive husbands. In Scene 9, the bad tempered sister, Zantippa, arrives at the well. *Here she offers to dip her pitcher in, and a Head rises in the well* (9.48-49). It sings to her: "*Gently dip, but not too deep, for fear you make the golden beard to weep. Fair maiden, white and red, stroke me smooth, and comb my head, and thou shalt shave some cockell-bread [love-charm-bread] (9.51-5).*" Zantippa ignores the advise and *breaks her pitcher upon the Head: [and] it thunders and lightens* (9.64-65). Later, in Scene 12, her good-tempered sister, Celanta, arrives at the well and dips her pitcher in. *A Head comes up with ears of corn, and she combs [i.e. sweeps] them into her lap* (12.12-13). Like before with Zantippa, it

²⁷ Alternatively, Cranbourne sees her name as deriving from *Gover* "(head of a) rivulet". However, this is more of a jump (gover -> coventina vs cofen/cov -> coventina).

²⁸ The exact phrasing was probably influenced by the *Bishop's Bible* of 1568 since all of the direct biblical quotes in the play comes from that edition. Revelations 21:6 ("*I wyll geue to hym that is a thirst of the well of the water of lyfe freely*"). It is based on the Tyndale's earlier translation (1535) ("*well of the water of lyfe*") which was slightly different from Wycliffe's even earlier translation (1382) ("*welle of quic watir*"). The Greek is τῆς πηγῆς ὕδατος τῆς ζωῆς and the Latin *fonte aquæ vitæ*.

sings: “*Gently dip, but not too deep, for fear you make the golden beard to weep. Fair maiden, white and red, stroke me smooth, and comb my head, and thou shalt shave some cockell-bread [love-charm-bread] (12.25-9).*” But then, unlike with Zantippa, a *Second Head comes up full of gold, which she [Celanta] combs into her lap (12.21-2)*. It sings: “*Gently dip, but not too deep, for fear you make the golden beard to weep. Fair maiden, white and red, comb me smooth, and stroke my head, and every hair a sheaf shall be, and every sheaf a golden tree (12.24-9).*” Finally, Celanta leaves, happy with her lot.

In 1823, this story reappeared in a chapbook entitled *The Princess of Colchester* (Chapbook, 1823). However, a few things are different. The girls now voluntarily “*seek [their] fortune(s)*”. They are said to pass “*through groves, woods, and valleys*”, where such was unspecified before. Importantly, on their journey the girls comes across an old man “*sitting on a stone at the mouth of a cave*”. The kind girl shares her provisions with him and in return he gives her guidance: “*There is a thick thorny hedge before you, which will appear impassable, but take this wand in your hand, strike three times, and say, 'Pray, hedge, let me come through,' and it will open immediately; then, a little further, you will find a well; sit down on the brink of it, and there will come up three golden heads, which will speak; and whatever they require, that do.*” Promising she would, she took her leave of him. Coming to the hedge, and pursuing the old man's directions, it divided, and gave her a passage.” When the kind girl arrives at the well, there are three heads inside it, instead of two like in Peele’s version, and they provide the her with “*beauty*”, “*perfume*”, and “*fortune/queendom*” in exchange for combing them. Later, the ill-tempered girl predictably doesn’t share her provisions with the old man and thus journeys without guidance, getting stuck in the sharp hedge and receiving from the heads leprosy, bad-breath, and a poor husband.

In 1890, these same details reappear in a folktale collected by Joseph Jacobs entitled *The Three Heads of the Well* (Jacobs, 1890: 258-265). Later the tale also appeared under the titles: *The Three Gold Heads* and *The King of Colchester's Daughters*. In one Scandinavian version the good girl receives wisdom (Simpson, 1962-65b). All derive from a common folkloric tradition: the Aarne–Thompson motif 480 *The Kind and Unkind Girls* (Tearle, 2019). Roberts did a

comparative study on this type as it is found all over the world (Roberts, 1958: 119-121, 143, 164). Among the many versions, the number of heads and the type of water varies, but Roberts argues for an original three heads and well (in Scandinavia it sometimes changed into a river or lake). He found that the motif of the three severed heads in the well is unique to the Northern European tradition (Scandinavia, England, Ireland, and immigrants to America) and probably originated in England given that the earliest record comes from there (i.e. Peele's play). In addition to the case studies we showed above, there are 37 versions in total with the following common proto-narrative reconstructed by Roberts: "...a girl is sent to a well for water. In the well she finds heads which ask to be washed or combed. She is given some kind of physical reward. The bad girl is likewise given physical punishments....Most of the versions agree that the rewards are that the girl will be lovely, that gold or gems will fall from her hair, and that gold or gems will fall from her mouth." Based off of Roberts' work, Adams (1963: 17) argued for the following proto-story: "Two sisters, one kind and one unkind, go forth from home. The kind sister is the first to go. She is sent to a well for water, pursues objects, has encounters enroute, and arrives at someone's abode, usually in the lower world, at the end of her journey. She is given tasks, one of which involves dealing gently with heads in a well and as a reward gold falls from their hair. When, upon the first sister's return home, the second sister learns of her success, she attempts to have the same adventures but is unkind and is punished."

2.5 Hittite

Now that we have looked at the Greco-Roman, Indo-Iranian, Germanic, and Celtic data will will move on to the Hittite. We will first review Lincoln's work (2.5.1). Then we will look at a Hittite text concerning the soul's journey to the Underworld (2.5.2).

2.5.1 Lincoln's Data

Lincoln did not provide any Hittite sources in his article. This is unfortunate because, as we pointed out in the introduction, Hittite sources provide the reconstructionist a good indication of the age of the theme due to the earliness of the Hittites in comparison to the other IE branches.

2.5.2 The *Tenawas*

Among the fragments of the Hittites we find the following text:

The soul is great. The soul is great. Whose soul is great? The mortal soul is great. And what road does it travel? It travels the Great Road. It travels the Invisible Road. The Guide has himself prepared it for this road. A holy thing is the soul of the Sun Goddess [taknaš, she had a Chthonic aspect], the soul of the Mother. Why must I, a mortal, go into the pit? I would rather go into the... I would rather fall into the river. I would rather fall into the pond. I would rather go into the tenawas. ...the tenawas is evil...let not... go...to the meadow...to the god...

The evil tenawas holds him so that he does not recognize them. One doesn't recognize the other. Sisters having the same mother do not recognize each other. Brothers having the same father do not recognize each other. A mother does not recognize her own child. A child does not recognize its own mother. [...] From a fine table they do not eat. From a fine stool they do not eat. From a fine cup they do not drink. They do not eat good food. They do not drink my good drink. They eat bits of mud. They drink waste waters.
(Hoffner, 1998: 34, 85. Edited for flow.)

In the paragraph before this text, the world “is described as in a dreaming state” (Bernabé and Jiménez, 2008: 209).

The *tenawas* is “a kind of prelude to the existence of the soul in the afterlife” and an “evil force, sometimes portrayed topographically, which seizes souls in the afterlife, causing forgetfulness. It may be compared to Lethe, the mythological Greek River of Forgetfulness.” (Hoffner, 1998: 39, 113).

Once the soul is in the otherworld, “there are two alternatives. There is a good path (into which one “falls”), which leads to a meadow, a river and a pool, and a bad path (to which one “goes”), [*tenawas*; n18: This phraseology recalls the use of “to fall” in the Orphic tablets, cf. Watkins (1995: 289). The fact that one “falls” into the good path and one “goes” to the bad one may be due to the fact that in the first case the divinity intervenes in order to “place him there”, whereas if it does not intervene, the traveler will be lost and will “go” to the bad path.]...”. A paragraph after the text explains how “the divinity...decides which souls must end up in the *tenawas*, drink swampy water and eat clay, and which souls can enjoy good food and good drink...”. “Watkins (1995: 289) considers that good food is proper to the fortunate soul, which may have been instructed or “initiated”.” (Bernabé and Jiménez, 2008: 212-213n21.)

When I first came across this text, I believed I was the first to notice its connection to the other texts we will look at. I later discovered that Bernabé and Jiménez (2008) had noticed its similarities to the Orphic texts. Nevertheless they did not consider its greater Indo-European background as we will in Part 3 “Comparison”.

Part 3 - Comparison

Now that we have reviewed, and added to, Lincoln's data we can return to his original reconstructed narrative:

On the way to the otherworld, souls of the dead had to cross a river, the waters of which washed away all of their memories. These memories were not destroyed, however, but were carried by the river's water to a spring, where they bubbled up and were drunk by certain highly favored individuals, who became inspired and infused with supernatural wisdom as a result of the drink. (Lincoln, 1982: 30)

Given that this narrative takes place in the PIE Underworld, we will provide an overview of it (3.1) and its relation to the rest of the PIE cosmos (3.2). We will follow our narrative's Traveler to the Underworld (via the Watery Way; 3.1.1) and to its central Nexus (3.1.2). Along the way we will refine the PIE cosmography and the biography of the narrative's protagonist (3.1-3.3.3). Lastly, we will perform an in depth case study of two descendants of this narrative: the Germanic Odin and Classical *Orphéus* (3.3.4). We will see how the proto-cosmography and proto-narrative changed in the myths and cults of each.

3.1 The Underworld

Scholars²⁹ have reconstructed the following about the PIE Underworld. The night sky was personified as the "Broad One" (PIE **Wélunos*; Grk. *eurús*). Over time he descended to become Velinas, Varuna, and notably, Odin (although not etymologically and only partially). We will return to him later in Section 3.3 "The Traveler". The Underworld was seen during the night to the north in the dark sky. As such, the time, sky, and Otherworld were linked. Furthermore, the Night (**nókʷts*), starry sky, and Underworld (**régʷos-*; Grk. *Érebus*) were all called "The

²⁹ Calin, 2017: 163-7, 248; Winn, 1995: 167-173; Puhvel, 1987: 41, 138; Hansen, 1987: 63-4.

Darkness” (**témhos*; Lat. *tenebrae*). These two things resulted in many overlapping poetic formulas:

Both the Darkness and Night were Long (**d̥l̥hgʰó-*) and Misty (**migʰ-*).

Both the Darkness and Underworld were Dark (**témhos*) and Sunless (**ṛsáhw̥nto-*).

Both the Darkness and Underworld were Below (**ṛdʰerom/nérterom* or *(*s*)*up-*).

Given these formulas, we can say that the Underworld was Below, Dark, Sunless, and Black (**mél̥n-*). It was described as Misty and poetically Long (i.e. when seen as the Underworld and not the literal night it was “long” because it was eternal). Beyond this, we know it was watery, located in the North (or sometimes to the West), and associated with Burial Mounds (i.e. it was under the earth).

3.1.1 The Watery Way

How did one travel to the Underworld? Lincoln showed that one had to cross some kind of water. It appears in IE texts as an “ocean, bay, or most often a river which is crossed variously by ferry, bridge, or act of wading”. Because of this variety I prefer the term “Watery Way”, although I do still recognizing its primary form as a river. This water was liminal and, like the World Tree we will meet in Section 3.2, it flowed through all three of the cosmological world-levels. Lincoln pointed out that it negatively effects the “bodies” (vitality) and spirits (memory; Indo-Iranian karma) of the dead who cross it. This is how the IEs would explain the fact that we do not remember most of our ancestors: their memory (i.e. our memory of them) got washed away. The opposite is the case for the famous dead who, as far as the sources show, do not cross this river, and instead go to the Upperworld (see Section 3.2 for more on it).

I support Lincoln’s reconstruction with the following observations. The Indic Otherworldly river caused the souls of the sinful to lose their memories when they cross it (2.2.5). The Indic *Mahābhārata* speaks of descendants saving their ancestors from the waters of the underworld through right conduct (2.2.5). I interpreted this as being a reflection of the PIE notion

of the waters of forgetfulness. The Hitiite text spoke of a river in relation to the Underworld (2.5.2). Lastly, the same text spoke of the *tenawas* (“a kind of prelude to the...afterlife”) which caused the loss of memory.

3.1.2 The Nexus

Lincoln argued that if the traveller went far enough down the Watery Way (s)he would come to the “Spring of Memory”. Apart from Lincoln much scholarship has been done on the importance of wells and springs as holders of memory and power in IE myth. In this section, I aim to support Lincoln’s concept and bring in these other scholars’ work to bear upon his narrative. At the end of this section we will have reconstructed a topographic motif-complex consisting of a potent Well, bright white World Tree, a Guardian, and the Hall of the Underworldly Ruler.

First I support Lincoln’s reconstruction with the following observations. The Iranian story of Alexander contained a fount of brackish water located in the far far east (2.2.4). The Indic texts included an otherworldly lake of intoxicating milk (*Airamādīya*) next to a soma-tree (*Somasavana*) (2.2.5). Hindu myth contained the idea that the World Tree and Elixir of Immortality were located in an Ocean of Milk (2.2.5). The Celtic texts were filled with sacred wells which were associated with wisdom and inspiration and located next to the sacred Hazel tree (2.4.3). We saw in the same section that the goddess Coventina presided over a sacred well along Hadrian’s Wall. Her Celtic name meant “memory”. The English At-480 folktale contained a well full of the “water of life” which was associated with the lower world (2.4.4). The Hittite Otherworld contained “the pond” (2.5.2).

Second, based on the variety of forms in the sources, I argue that it would be better to call the “Spring of Memory” the Nexus. This allows it to refer to both the texts where it is the end of the Watery Way, and the texts where it is the sources of the world’s waters/rivers. It was the Navel of the Cosmos, and as such can be seen either way. This is based on the following observations which go against Lincoln’s original reconstruction (of the waters all flowing to the well). The Germanic World Tree was the source of all world’s liquids (2.3.4). The sacred Celtic wells were the source of the world’s rivers (2.4.3). This new name allows it indiscriminately to refer to both

its capacity as a memory-holder and a power/vitality-holder. We will see these two effects below in Section 3.1.2.5 “Drinking”.

Third, Nagy (1990: 42-3) noted “the sea-trop [as] a long-lived Indo-European mythological element, apparent, for example, in the Greek traditions concerning Nereus, the Old Man of the Sea, who, because he remembers all, is a "master of truth”. He went on to say that “oral transmission preserves a vast, venerable "sea" of knowledge (to use Muirchú's metaphor), which flows from and through "those who spread the word from the start”.

Third, Calin (2017: 229-230) reconstructed the following formulas: “Unfading Spring” and “Unfading Water” (PIE **(h)aw(o)ntó-/wódr̥ ḡd^hg^{wh}ito-*) While these reconstructions were based on texts are are unrelated to those in this thesis, the PIEs may have referred to the Nexus with similar language.

Fourth, there is another important PIE body of water we need to consider: “La Gloire Lumineuse”. Puhvel (1987: 279) summarizes this PIE mythologem in his chapter “Fire in Water” as follows:

*A deity [known in scholarship as the “Offspring of the Waters” (PIE **həpōm népōts*; Calin, 2017: 170)] hoards a fiery and effulgent power immersed in a body of water. His trust is challenged by one who is inherently unqualified to possess this treasure and may in addition have had truck with falsehood (in either a religious or a veridical sense). Three rounds of approach by the usurper result in three countermeasures, either retreats or attacks; in either instance, whether fleeing or pursuing, the advancing waters with their inherent fiery power create a watercourse or courses that after a worldwide circulation revert to their mythical source.*

This proto-mythologem descended to become a part of the Celtic *imbas forosna*; Indo-Iranian *Apam Napat*, and Iranian *x^varənah*. Dumezil (1963), Ford (1974), Lincoln (1982) and Nagy (1990) showed that this water often took the form of a well, and was connected to wisdom, immortality, heads, and eyeballs. This is a striking. Both our Water of Memory and this *La Gloire*

Lumineuse utilize overlapping motifs, but are narratively distinct. This fascinating connection has never been made before. I assert that they were originally the same body of water and that two different narratives (Lincoln's and Puhvel's) developed from it.

Fifth, Calin (2017: 21) reconstructed two formulas which seem to be similar to this *Gloire Lumineuse*. First, the formula: Ambrosial/Immortal Water(s) (PIE **ǵm̥rtom wód̥r / ǵm̥rtōs hḁ́pes*). Second, the formula: Ambrosia In The Waters (PIE **ǵm̥rtom hḁ́psu*).

Sixth, and lastly, Calin (2017: 27) included a list of IE texts that speak of specifically *three* wellsprings. A Hittite text says “*the goddess Hannahanna [“grandmother”] made three springs*”. A Latvian text says “*in the third spring the three Fates bathed*”. The Norse *Gylfaginning* says there three cosmic wells, one at each of the three roots of the World Tree. The list goes on. I am unsure of how these three wellsprings relate to the Nexus. Perhaps there were originally three spring at the roots of the World Tree where fate was determined; or perhaps each of the cosmic levels had a navel-well. As well, it may be an idea exclusive to the European branches of the IE world.

3.1.2.1 The Prophetic Guardian Head

Simpson (1962-65a) pointed out that severed heads were often found together with water in European myths. This includes the prophetic severed head of Mimir, Orpheus's prophetic severed head, and the AT-480 English folktale we looked at (albeit in more detail than she did). Simpson went so far as to assert that it “may be a survival of ancient beliefs of the Indo-Europeans”. She did not connect it to the PIE Otherworldly topography as we are. As well, at the time Lincoln had not written his article. We will nevertheless go over our own work since we looked at many more sources in far more detail.

The Orphic Gold Tablets state that the Spring of Memory was guarded by *phúlakes* (“guards, sentries”) (2.1.4). The PIE **sáwHmas* was guarded (by Indic *Gandharvāḥ* and Iranian *Gandarewa*) (2.2.2). In the Iranian *Šāhnāme* a fount spoke and prophesied to Alexander of his downfall (2.2.4). In illustrations of the story, the tree which Alexander visited afterwards is covered in severed heads. In Germanic folklore women's decapitated heads produced springs

when they fell on the ground (2.3.5). The Celtic cosmic well was associated with heads, and that real sacred wells, like Coventina's, contained head-related deposits (2.4.3). The English Folktale AT-480 contained an old man at the mouth of a cave and, later, three speaking golden heads in a well (2.4.4). These characters rewarded or punished the traveling girl based on her moral behavior.

Based off my own and these scholars' overlapping work, I argue that the Nexus was protected by a prophetic guardian, a severed head. It was prophetic because the water of the Nexus was made of memories. This concept manifested itself in a different way when the Nexus was imagine as "La Gloire Lumineuse". Dumézil (1963), Ford (1974), and Nagy (1990) have argued that "La Gloire Lumineuse" defended itself from those not worthy of its power by violently rising up. It is possible that this is the form of the guardian for those unworthy, and the prophetic head is the form the guardian takes for the worthy. I take this double-view in Part 4 "Conclusions".

3.1.2.2 The Bright White World Tree

I argue that the Nexus was situated at the roots of (i.e. under) the World-Tree whose roots "drank" the water. Furthermore I argue that this World Tree was bright white. Neither of these ideas were argued by Lincoln, although the first argument was made decades later by Šmitek (1999: 188) who came to the same conclusion based off of the Norse texts (we will look at them in more detail however) and the Iranian "tree of immortality, the white *Haoma*, situated at the source of Ardwisura and having healing and rejuvenating characteristics". Šmitek also argued that is was from this spot that all the words rivers flowed. He, however, was primarily concerned with Slovene folklore and so his article was not focused on arguing this point, he was just making passing remarks about similarities. Nor did he look at the Norse data in detail or the nature of the whiteness of the Nexus/Tree. He did assert a parallel to the orphic text, but it is so different it seems more a product of folklore than IE cosmology. Separately, Norelius (2016) looked at the Indo-Iranian evidence and argued that the Indo-Iranian world-tree was associated with a "spring or receptacle of soma in heaven, which, following Witzel, is identified as the Seven Seers, the

constellation Ursa Maior”. He showed that the birds in this Indo-Iranian World Tree were the Sun and Moon (i.e. light emitting bodies).

Now, as for our own data. The Orphic tree was called *leukós* (Grk. “bright, shining; white”; from PIE **lewk-* (“bright; to shine; white”) (2.1.4). The tree in the Alexander story in the *Šāhnāme* was called, in many different texts as far as Europe, “The Tree of the Sun and Moon” (i.e. of celestial light; like the PIE World Tree) (2.2.4). Indo-Iranian steppe peoples had the notion of the World Tree (2.2.3). The Indic texts speak of a sacred soma tree (*Somasavana*) and a World Tree (*Kalpavriksha*) (2.2.5). The Germanic World Tree’s roots were covered in white liquid (2.3.4). The Celtic cosmic well had a hazel tree over it (2.4.3).

I further assert that the brightness of the World Tree is linked to the light of “La Gloire Lumineuse”. Both narratives utilize the common characteristic of the Nexus and World Tree: brightness.

3.1.2.3 The Hall

I assert that the Underworld contained a hall and that this hall was situated next to the Nexus based off the following observations. The Greek Underworld contained a “house” (*dómos*; 2.1.2). The Orphic texts specify that this “house” was next to the water of Mnemosyne, its guardians, and the bright cypress tree. The Indic soma-tree and milk-lake were located next to the “hall *prabhu*” (2.2.5). The Germanic underworld contained a “hall” (*hǫll*) which was located at the bottom roots of the World Tree next to the well (*brunnr*) (2.3.2). Finally, the Celtic Underworld contained a “house” (*tech*) and a “hall” (*bruiden*; 2.4.2).

This typography of the Well and Tree eventually became ritualized. Sundqvist (2017) pointed out that various European peoples (Norse, Slavs, and perhaps the Balts) drew on mythic notions of “the cosmic tree, well, and temple” to support their political claim by constructing halls or temples near tree-well shrines. He did not see the deeper PIE roots of this conception since he was only looking at Northern European data³⁰.

³⁰ He asserted that they were modeling their claim off of the heavenly *Valhǫll*, but the hall of *hel* is more likely since *Urðr* is located under the World Tree anyway, and because of our comparative data.

3.1.2.4 Liquids

What was in the Nexus? This section goes beyond answering that simple question however, it gets at the poetically liminal nature of Liquids in IE myth in general. In the data we came across many different liquids: wine, water, milk, semen, dew, honey, mead, and **sáwHmas* (Skt. *sóma*; Avestan *haoma*). In IE texts and rituals liquids are often used interchangeably and act as structurally equivalents. They are linked together by mythic intuition and even have etymological links (Olsen, 2011; she goes through said connections between Grk. and Skt. terms for milk, honey, and soma, as well as PIE words for mead). Because of this linkage, things can get a little confusing. However, we have a guide, an aspect that ties everything together: The World Tree at the Nexus. Whenever seen together, the Nexus is elevated above a mere memory or power retainer, it becomes the World-Navel, the source and end of all life-supporting liquids. The liquids themselves, when seen in this context, become more than their constituent parts. Soma is no longer just the inspirer of the poet-priest, but the inspirer of life in the cosmos.

Originally the Ritual Drink of the PIEs was mead (**médʰu*). Later, among the Indo-Iranians, Soma took on its mythic associations (Witzel, 2006: 173). Their equivalence has been noted by other scholars (Horrell, 2003; Schroeder, 80-81.). The same is true for wine among the Greeks. Among the Indo-Iranians **sáwHmas* was linked to honey, mead, milk, and kumis (i.e. intoxicating milk). Norelius (2016) showed that the Indo-Iranian World Tree's figs were honey and soma/amṛ ta-. He also pointed out that the Indic World Tree was associated with "the spring or receptacle of soma in heaven". The Indic *Somasavana* ("soma pressing") tree was located near lake *Airaṃmadīya* ("intoxicating milk/soma/semen") (2.2.5). In the same section we saw that the Indic World Tree and Elixir of Immortality was located in the Ocean of Milk. The Iranian fount (found right before visiting the prophetic tree) at World's End was filled with "briny...bracish water" (2.2.4). We argued that the Germanic sources represent the water of the World Tree as being capable of having various hypo-states (mead, honey, tree sap, figs, and milky white clay) (2.3.4).

Let us now focus on the many instances where milk appears. The Indo-Europeans were milk-drinkers, actually and stereotypically. We noted that Soma was linked to and even equated

with milk (2.2.2). Garnier, et al (2017) noted that soma and the elixir of immortality was connected with milk. First, there is the Indo-Iranian the phrase “to extract soma” which also means “to milk a cow”. Second, there was an old Indo-Iranian formula **sáumas iás gáuā* which meant “soma-juice mixed with (cow’s) milk” (Late Av. **haomō.yō gauua*). This mixture was prescribed to adults. Third, one Sanskrit text (*Ka.Ka. 7.90*) states: “*Milk is beneficial for healthy individuals; by drinking milk one does not get diseases; hence there is no better aphrodisiac than milk; there is no better life-prolonger (jīvanīyam) than milk.*” Fourth, another Sanskrit text states: “*Milk is said to be a life-elixir per excellence.*”³¹. The authors went so far as to assert that “Like horseback riding, teenage and adult milk consumption may also have amplified the military might of Indo-European raider groups by conferring higher bodily stature to Indo-European individuals with the lactase persistence phenotype” (Garnier, et al, 2017: 308).

Separately from Garnier, McDonald (2006: 39) argued, and we saw on our own in sections 2.3.4 and 2.1.4, that both the Germanic well and the Orphic springs (“*like a child who falls into milk*”) were connected to milk. McDonald (2006: 46) argued that milk and honey (together) constituted a symbol of sacred inspiration in Greek religion. He also argued that milk was tied to “memory”. McDonald (2003) argued that “the gloire lumineuse often has a lacteal epiphany. In Greek the Bacchants, while in a frenzied state, drew forth honey (i.e. ambrosia) as well as milk from rivers, a collocation much like that of Mimir’s and Urðr’s well, the one containing white waters and the other the mellifluous mead. The *imbis forosnai* is associated especially with the river Boyne, which is named for the cow goddess Bóand”³². The milk which features in the Irish and Norse myths is thus an epiphany of the wisdom which the hero attains.” Earlier he stated: “Urðr’s well, the waters of which run white, implying perhaps, that they are of a lactiferous constitution” (1). Now, MacDonald was speaking about the gloire lumineuse, but as we spoke about above it overlaps quite a lot with Lincoln’s Well of Memory.

³¹ *Cāraka Saṃhitā Sūtrasthāna 27.218*

³² For more on cows see McDonald, 2015

Across Vedic, Celtic, Slavic, and Greek texts milk (and its producer: the cow) and honey (and its producer: the bee) are etymologically and structurally/mythically connected³³. There is also a curious association of these liquids with the figs of the World Tree.

This is all to show that the Nexus' liquids—especially water, mead (/soma), and milk—were structurally equivalent. All served in IE texts as variant forms of the original PIE Nexus-liquid. In other words, the poets of the various IE branches took the original liquid, and defined it variously as milk/mead/seed/etc so as to focus on its different aspects (explained in the next section). For example, the brackishness of it in the Iranian texts emphasizes its liminality while the intoxicating-ness of it as the Germanic mead and Indo-Iranian soma emphasize its power of inspiration.

3.1.2.5 Drinking

Whatever hypo-state the liquid of the Watery Nexus' took back in PIE times, I argue that the Traveller would have probably drunk from it using a vessel (as opposed to directly or with his hands) based upon the following observations. Lincoln mentioned that Mimir drank from the pool using the *Gjallarhorn*. We saw the importance of head-related vessels in the cult of **sáwHmas* (skull-cups, drinking soma was called “restoring the head”, etc) (2.2.3). Soma itself was apart of the liquid complex we looked at above.

Lincoln pointed out how drinking the liquid provided the drinker with physical and spiritual benefits. If the former: vitality/strength/life; if the later: (poetic) inspiration and memory (and hence wisdom and knowledge). I support Lincoln's reconstruction with the following observations. The Indo-Iranian **sáwHmas*, both in ritual and in the myths, provided the drinker with vitality and inspiration (2.2). The Germanic mead provided the same benefits (2.3). Celtic poets drank of the inspiring *imbis* of the wells (2.4).

³³ Oguibéine, 2017. In his abstract, the nature of the connection is vague, and unfortunately I cannot get ahold of his presentation.

3.2 The Upperworld, Middleworld, and Axis Mundi

Scholars³⁴ have reconstructed the following about the PIE Cosmos.

Above the Underworld, was what I will call the “Middleworld”. One of its names was **dʰéǵʰōm* (Hit. *tēkan*; Grk. *khthōn*; Lat. *humus*). It was the land of the humans (via Latin we got the English word “human”), who were called the Earthlings (**(dh)ghm-on-*) and the “Mortal” (**morto-*). It was formulaically said to have a central **nóbʰ(i)s/ómbʰ-* (Grk. *omphalós*; Lat. *umbilicus*; Eng. *navel*).

Above the Middleworld was the Upperworld. As the Underworld was seen during the night to the north in the dark sky, so this Upperworld was seen during the day to the south in the bright blue sky. It was an evergreen, bright, warm, and positive place. It was the resting place for famous dead warriors³⁵. The blue daytime sky was personified as Heavenly Father (**Dyḗus ph₂tér*; Hit. *sius*; Grk. *Zeús*; Lat. *Iūpiter*).

All three of these levels (the Under-, Middle-, and Upperworld) were connected by an *axis mundi*, a World Tree. The World Tree’s branches were located in the day-time sky, the summit hooked to the Pole Star, around it all the celestial bodies moved. Its trunk probably ran through the Navel of the Middleworld (my opinion), its roots were located in the night-time sky. As such it would have been upside down at night. The Night Sky God, who we met above in Section 3.1 and who descended to become one of the influences for the Germanic Odin, was seen as formulaically hanging on to, or from, its roots. One question remains unanswered by scholars: what were its roots hooked to? We will answer this question in Section 3.3.2.2 “The Moon as Eye and Nexus”.

³⁴ Lincoln (1979, 1980b, 1981), Hansen (1987: 9, 63-4), Winn (1995: 159-173), Calin (2017: 74-6, 92, 129, 153, 156-7, 162, 167, 205, 268-274, 279), Puhvel (1987: 139), Velasco López (2001), Bernabé and Jiménez (2008: 213), Šmitek (1999), Watkins (2011: 20), and Oreshko (2019).

³⁵ This matches up with Beckwith’s (2015: 108) afterlife/proto-myth of the comitatus within the Central Eurasian Culture Complex. I am unsure if anyone has noticed the connection with Beckwith’s work.

3.3 The Traveler

Now that we have set the stage we can join our protagonist as (s)he travels through the Underworld. We will define the different kinds of Travellers (3.3.1). Next, we will examine how their bodies (eyes and heads) relate to PIE cosmography and ritual (3.3.2-3.3.3). Lastly, we will perform a case study of two IE descendants of the PIE traveler: the Germanic Odin and Classical *Orphéus*. We will focus on the relationship between our narrative and the following themes: bodiliness (3.3.4.1); as well as, eschatology, initiation, asceticism, sexuality (3.3.4.2); and lastly, orality and writing (3.3.4.3).

3.3.1 Types of Travellers

According to Lincoln's original reconstruction, there were two kinds of travelers to the Otherworld, the dead and the living. The first would have had their memories washed away by the river (what we call the "Watery Way") to the well of memory (what we call the "Nexus"); the second he called "special" and they would simply pass over the river (or travel down it) unaffected. I agree with his reconstruction but further assert that the Living Traveller had a variety of subtypes which could overlap in the data.

I support Lincoln's reconstruction of the Dead Travellers with the following observations. Indo-Iranian steppe peoples "may have associated a hero's or a chief's death with benefits for the tribe" because the dead man would journey to and return from the Otherworld with something of value (2.2.3). Indic texts state that the dead had to cross the river *Vaitaraṇī*, and that ancestors had to be carried across the waters of the Otherworld by their descendants (2.2.5). The Hittite Otherworld was reached by the "mortal soul" (2.5.2). Other scholars have of course pointed out that the Celtic and Germanic otherworlds were reached via boat (indicated by burial rituals).

I argue that these dead souls, after having their memories sucked out of them by the river would have gone on to be reincarnated, and hence not remember their past lives. This is based on

the fact that late Vedic Hindus believed (Uzzell, 2010) and the Slavs (folklore), Pre-Socratics³⁶ (*metempsychōsis*), Virgil (*Aen.* 6.725-751), and the Celts³⁷, all believed in some form of reincarnation. The exact form this took, and the extent of the belief back in PIE times would require its own study. It may have been that the meadow was eternal, and the underworld was temporary.

I argue that another subtype of the Living Traveller was what I will call The Dreamer. Their spirit would have temporarily separated from their body. This is based on the following observations. The Orphics performed a ritual in which—according to Pausanias (9.37-39)—“those who entered the cave of Trophonius for prophecy first drank Lethe, to forget their former thoughts, and then the water of memory, to remember the prophecy, which was communicated in a dream during sleep” (Knight, 1936: 49) (2.1.4). The Ossetes had legends about Sleeping Heroes who would “borrow their neighbors’ mounts to travel to dreamland and bring back good things to their people” (2.2.3). The Hittite text the world was “described as in a dreaming state” before the protagonist journeyed to the Otherworld (2.5.2).

I argue that one of the subtypes of the Living Traveller was what I will call the Journeyer. Their whole body would have gone with them to the Otherworld. This is based on the following observations. The Germanic texts are filled with occasions on which Odin would physically travel to the Underworld (2.3.2, and below in 3.4.4.2). In the Celtic text, the *Feis Tighe Chonáin*, which Lincoln connected to his narrative, Finn physically journeyed to a *sid* (“burial mound”). The little girls of the English folktale physically travelled to the well (2.4.4).

3.3.2 Eyes

There are two kinds of eyes that appear in the data, the Journeyer’s sacrificial eye, and the Nexus’ mythic nature as an eye.

³⁶ Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, i. 16

³⁷ Rees and Rees, 1961: 425; Julius Caesar, *De Bello Gallico* 6

3.3.2.1 The Journeyer's Sacrificial Eye

I argue that the Journeyer would have had to give an eye (voluntarily or involuntarily) to look into and gain access to the well³⁸. Furthermore, this was ritualized in the PIE Männerbünde system (**koryos*; Grk. *koíranos* “leader”; ON *herr* “army”).

Dumezil and Ford pointed out about “La Gloire Lumineuse”, and we saw in Section 2.4.3, that the visitor of the Well of Nechtan would “suffer the shattering of his two eyes” (Ford 1974: 69). McDonald (2003) laid out an iconographic pattern in IE myth in which the eye “figures as an index of wisdom and power” often “eviscerated” and connected with “an aqueous milieu, a damaged head...and a white liquid which, arguably, might suggest milk”. This milk provides the “retrieval of eyesight”. As for our own data, we observed the following. Lincoln pointed out that Odin gave his eye to Mímir in exchange for a drink from the water of memory. We argued that Odin’s identity is based on his head (2.3.3). A part of that identity shows itself in his names which have to do with his eye(s): Fire Eye, Weak-Eye, Blind, The Blind Guest, He Who Causes Blindness In Battle, Hel-Blind, Host-Blind, The One-Eyed, and Double-Blind. Those who were unworthy and drank of the Celtic well of wisdom lost their eyes (2.4.3). Kershaw (1997: 448), in her exhaustive study of the IE Männerbünde, that “Odin’s missing eye can be found in a ritual of the Vrātya brotherhoods of early India.” Furthermore, she argued that the PIE warrior cult “was a part of the Ancestor cult; that it played an essential role in the formation of those males who were going to be the bearers of culture and tradition; that, because of this, the intuition was at the center of national life and was by its very nature conservative [...]”

Why an eye? Why all this talk of darkness and bright liquids/trees? Because, intuitively, memory is a different kind of “sight”. One has to give up present-sight for past-sight. One could imagine the initiation leader telling the initiates “through blindness, you may see”, like in the Eleusinian Mysteries were the *hierophántēs* (“one who shows sacred things”) directed the initiate

³⁸ There is also the possibility that they would have to provide a password. I mention it here because there are only two sources for this idea, both in Europe, and one of them very late. First, the Orphic texts speak of the initiate as been required to provide a password to the guardians (2.1.3). Second, the English folktale say the little girls have to perform a magic spell at the hedge (beyond which is the well) (2.4.4).

who was called an *epóptēs* (“beholder”). “The highest stage of initiation [was]...that of the *epopteia* “beholding”...” (Meyer, 1999: 5). This idea can be found everywhere, from contemporary Freemasonry where the seeker is “brought from darkness to light”, to Pali-based Buddhism in which one can develop “Divine Eye” (*dibba-cakkhu*) through initiatory training which allows one to view other people’s karmic rebirths.

3.3.2.2 The Moon as Eye and Nexus³⁹

I argue that the Journeyer’s Eye is a narrative reflection of a deeper cosmological identification of the Nexus with the Moon, the Left Eye of the Sky God. As we noted earlier the PIE World Tree’s roots were located in the Underworld, in the dark and watery night sky (3.1.3). We also argued that the PIE Nexus was located at the bottom of the World Tree (3.3.2). It logically follows that the Nexus was in the night sky. This idea fits with the PIEs’ preference for celestial things. The question is: where exactly was it in the night sky?

The PIEs considered the sky to be the head of the Sky God (Lyle, 1990: 7). Furthermore The PIEs formulaically called the Stars, Sun, and Moon “eyes” (Calin, 2017: 85-6). In Sanskrit texts for example, the Sun and Moon were the Eyes of Dyaus. The moon in particular was emphasized as being an eye. The moon’s primary name was **méh₁nōt* (“moon, month”) from **meh₁-* “to measure”). It was also called the Glittering One (**(s)kand-* from **h₂eh_x-s-* “burn”; Hit. *hasterza*, Lat. *stēlla*, *candeo*; Grk. *astér*). Lastly, it was called the Shining Body (NW-PIE **louk^hsnā-* or **louksneh_q-* from **leuk-* “light, glow, be white”) . This PIE root, **leuk-*, descended to become the adjective for the Orphic tree (Grk. *leukós*). The Moon and Stars were called The Eyes of the Night (PIE **nék^wts ók^w- / *nók^wts...ék^wb^his*).

Let us look closer at the Sanskrit texts. The Sanskrit texts equate the Moon with Soma, called *Candrá*. The PIE root of this word, **(s)kand-*, is one of the PIE names for the moon. It was seen as a vessel which was filled with soma by the sun. The texts state that it was a soma-spring

³⁹ This section pulls from: Gamkrelidze and Ivanov, 1995: 590-1. Mallory and Adams, 1006: 128-9, 328, 497, 510, 545. West, 2007: 172, 349, 382.

from which ancestors and deities drank (Gonda 1985). But it goes beyond “moon = soma”. The *Mahābhārata* states that “in the north [i.e. in the PIE night-time Underworld] is *Śvetadvīpam*, the White Island; those go there who are devoted to Vishnu and die in battle at his hands. Its inhabitants shine white like the moon, and require no food.” We have seen the connection between soma and the white Nexus/tree repeatedly. One Sanskrit text (AV 15.18.2) states: “his [Dyaus] left eye is the Moon” (*yád asya savyám áksy asaú sá candrámāḥ*).

Now let us look at the Norse texts. We pointed out earlier that *Hel*’s hall was located at the bottom of the World Tree, among its roots, next to the sacred well (2.3.2). The text *Helgakviða Hundingsbana* (I.3) states that one night (*nótt*) the Norns (*nornir*) determine a man’s fate “under the moon’s hall in the middle” (*und mánasal miðjan*). This could refer to the man’s house, but why is it called the *moon’s* hall? Additionally, in the next stanza the Norns spread his fate-strings across the world, so they obviously moved around the cosmos. I take this to mean that the Norns were actually at their hall: located as we saw in Sections 3.1.2.3 and 3.2 in the Underworld, at the bottom of the World Tree next to the milky mead filled wells.

The Night Sky god we spoke of earlier eventually descended to become the one-eyed Lithuanian *Velinas*, the Indic *Váruṇa*, and the Germanic Odin (Calin, 2017: 163-7, 248) (3.1.1.2). *Óðinn* put his eye in Mimir’s well. Which one we do not know, but if it I had to bet, I would go along with the Sanskrit idea and say it was the left because of the following Iranian parallel: “the same way the sun is brighter than the moon, so men too see better with one of the eyes” (Calin, 2017: 86. *Greater Iranian Bundahišn* 28.4). The harmed eye would intuitively be the less bright light in the sky (i.e. the moon).

3.3.3 The Journeyer’s Decapitated Head

IE scholars have only ever spoken about one PIE severed head, yet the IE data clearly shows two distinct forms.

First, there was the stationary severed head of the guardian of the Nexus. We went through the sources earlier (3.3.1). They included: the heads on Alexander’s tree, Mimir, the heads in Coventina’s Well, and the Golden Heads of the English AT-480 folktale.

Second, there is the head of the mobile protagonist (i.e. Traveler). Orpheus is obvious, and as we saw with the etymology behind Odin's name, he was essentially *defined* as his head. But there are more. Kazanas (2013) looked at the Indic *Brhaddevatā* text in which a horse-headed man (*Dadhyañc*), who had lost his human head at the beginning of the story, "magically acquired wisdom, [and] fell into a lake on the mountain *Saryanavat*" (33). He did not note, however, that *Saryanavat* was connected to *Soma* (Parmeshwaranand, 2000: 599). Kazanas and Graves (1955: 114) also pointed out the Celtic Bran who "instructed his warriors to cut off his head and carry it back to Britain". It was preserved, remained alive, sang, spoke, gave advice, and acted as a talisman. It is this head, the head of the mobile protagonist, which Kazanas and Wright (2003) reconstructed as "the [PIE] severed head that continues to sing and speak/utter wisdom/advise/counsel or prophecy [and, according to Wright travels across water] long after it has been cut off".

This myth of the decapitation of the Traveler, just like that of the Sacrifice of the Eye, became incorporated in PIE initiatory rituals. Kazanas ends his article by arguing that this myth of the severed speaking head (and its manifestation in these texts and the myths of the Greek Orpheus, the Germanic Elves, and the Vedic *Rbhu*) originated from the ancient practice of head-hunting. We will see more on this connection with elves and ancestral spirits below.

Knight argued that the universal archetype of the ritual pattern of initiation began as a burial rite and developed into cult, myth, and belief (1936: 1-4). I argue the opposite, myth manifests ritual. He went on to point out that the Orphic Gold Tablets had parallels in real Greek initiation centers which had pools inside them (Grk. *limnē*; Latin *impluvium*) (1936: 48-9). The same set up may have been at the famous shrine in Lesbos that supposedly held Orpheus' prophetic head (Harrison, 1903). It was probably as much Orpheus' head as Medieval relics were actually Christ, but that itself is not an issue, they believed it was, and so they may have performed rituals that mimicked it. Nagy, J., (1990) looked at Indo-European severed heads and covered some of the same ground we have (Orpheus, Mimir) but his method was more comparative than reconstructive. Nevertheless he saw in the mythic IE severed heads a mythical unification of Dumézil's sociological model (i.e. the tripartite functions).

I argue that once the Traveller returned to the Middleworld from his Underworldly journey, imbued with the knowledge and vitality of the Nexus, he was decapitated by his tribe so that his head might be preserved as a mobile prophetic source. Through his sacrificial death-preservation the memory of his ancestors could live on. This was certainly the case mythically, and perhaps ritually. This could have developed out of shamanic practices and later been what spawned the whole Celtic Head Cult. At the very least this section demonstrates just how easily the line between myth and reality can become fuzzy where tribal memory is concerned.

3.3.4 Case Study: The Myths and Cuts of Odin and *Orphéus*

We will now look at how our narrative developed within the myths and cults of the Greek *Orphéus* and Germanic Odin.

3.3.4.1 The Bodies Living Dead Travelers

All of the types of Travellers are close with one another, because the living ones are ironically wandering through the world of the dead. However, this closeness is deeper than that and I argue we can see a fusion of these two types—the “Living Dead”—in Odin and Orpheus.

A surprising amount of Indo-European work has been done on Orpheus⁴⁰. The cumulative result of their work is as follows: the Greek *Orpheús*, the Vedic *R̥bhus*, the Germanic Elves (*álfr*; *ælflylf*), and the Celtic Fairies (*aos sí*) shared a PIE linguistic and mythological background related to the dead. The last three were originally the deified dead of the burial mounds (barrows, *síd*, kurgans, etc). The last two were literally the spirits of the dead, and the *R̥bhus* were once mortals but through crafting items for the gods they became immortal. Orpheus, a mortal, interacted with the dead, by giving instructions to his followers and by trying to save a dead woman (Eurydice). He also existed in a liminal state in between life and death once he was decapitated because his head continued to sing.

⁴⁰ Estell (1999), Kazanas (2001a, 2001b, 2007, 2013, 2015), Jackson (2002, 2014), McDonald (2003, 2014), López-Ruiz (2011), Luján (2011), Adluri and Bagchee (2012), Cohen (2017), and Massetti (2017)

Odin, like Orpheus, interacted with the dead. He too tried to revive a dead woman (a prophetic witch in *Hel*). He was also close to hanged men and dead warriors, since they would help him when Ragnarok comes (Patton, 2009: 233). He even brutally mutilated himself, indeed died temporarily, in a sacrifice at the bottom of the world tree. But unlike Orpheus, Odin was a god and he was successful in his reviving of the dead woman. The divine⁴¹ Odin was either more determined, more potently-magical, and/or wiser which allowed him to succeed where the mortal Orpheus failed: conquering death (at least, for a period of time, we will talk about his fatalism below).

This liminality of life and death shows through in cult. The rituals of blinding and decapitation we spoke of above show as much. The flesh of the body becomes transformed into wisdom and power. Odin at the beginning of the current cosmic cycle, dismembered the primordial giant *Ymir* and constructed our whole universe out of his body parts:

<i>Ór Ymis holdi</i>	The earth was made
<i>var jörð of sköpuð,</i>	from Ymir's flesh ;
<i>en ór beinum björg</i>	the rocks were made from his bones .
<i>himinn ór hausí</i>	The sky was made from his skull
<i>ins hrímkalda jötuns,</i>	of that ice-cold giant,
<i>en ór sveita sær.</i>	the sea was made from his blood .

(*Vafþrúðnismál* 21; Crawford 2015)

Later, when he gives life to humans, he does so by blowing the breath of life (*Qnd*) into two tree trunks. They were named *Ask* (“Ash (tree)”) and *Embla* (“vine; perhaps elm”). This is to say that the Norse conception of the body in relation to the soul was positive. The body provided a place for the soul to dwell. It was given cosmological importance by our bodies being named after the World Tree (“ash”) and mimicking the cosmic body of *Ymir*. For the Orphics, it

⁴¹ Although, we ought to keep in mind that the Germanic Gods die. We will talk more about this fatalism below.

couldn't be more different. They saw the σῶμα, "mortal body; corpse" as a place of imprisonment which we need to be saved from (σῶζω) and they saw our Middleworldly existence and nature as being a punishment, an original sin (Edmunds, 2011: 58, 80). "...the Olympiodoran myth of anthropogony from the remains of the Titans furnishes mankind with a Titanic element, mixed in with the pure divinity of the soul. 'This Titanic element is the original guilt for which the human soul is excluded from the community of the other gods and from her blessed abode, and is condemned to a succession of births and deaths.'" (Edmunds, 2011: 5). It is this negativity in the Orphic conception of the body, and this positivity (or at least, potency) in the Norse, which plays into their forms of eschatology, asceticism, and sexuality, which we will speak of next. For now we can say that in both traditions, the body becomes the part of the Traveler most affected. Odin rips his eyeball out from its socket, decapitates Mimir, mutilates himself, howls at the bottom of the world tree and in battle, all to gain power over death. Orpheus, meanwhile, is *subjected to* dismemberment and decapitation on earth. He conquered death (Eurydikē) but didn't have the will power to carry it out, that is, he didn't deliver the final blow to death, and ended up losing the object of his love and all power over his body because of it. At the meeting place between life and death the body becomes distorted, losing its health and harmony, becoming severed, fractured, and broken. If the Upperworld was positive and filled with the harmony of the sphere circulating around the axial pole star, the Underworld at the bottom of the world tree was a gruesome confusion of bloody limbs.

It was only in his music, through his mouth, that Orpheus was able to have true power in life. He shows up in book 4 of the Georgics for a reason, it has to do with bees, that is, honey. His sweet voice is his defining characteristic, just as Odin, the god of poetry, is defined by his head and drinks mead and sings *galdr* ("spell songs") (Grundy, 2014a: 58). One moved rocks, trees, and animals, while the other moves men in battle. This positive voice (harmonious song, and magical spells) of Odin and Orpheus also has a darker side to it. For Odin this is his battle scream, for Orpheus it is his lament. But while the former can make enemies flee in battle, the later can do nothing but attract the hands of the *maïnádes*. The positive voice of both is powerful,

but only Odin knew how to use the dark side of speech. Odin's habit of learning "the dark side" will show up below in the discussion of his sexuality.

3.3.4.2 Eschatology, Initiation, Asceticism, and Sexuality

Odin is trying to prepare for nothing less than the fated *Ragnarøk* ("The Final Destiny of the Gods"), for *ragnarøk* (the "twilight of the gods"), for "the fate of the gods" (*tíva røk*), for "when the gods die" (*þá er regin deyja*), for "when the gods will be destroyed" (*unz um rjúfask regin*), for the "end of the gods" (*regin þrjóta*). This time was also called "the end of the world" (*aldar røk*) and the "destruction of the world" (*aldar rof*) because of the gods' death and because it was the time "when the sons of Muspell move into battle" (*þá er Muspellz-synir herja*). During this time the *Miðgarðr* will be plunge into ice (*Fimbulwinter*), fire (*Surtr*), water (the ocean rises), and darkness (Fenrir's wolf devours the sun). Even the World-Tree itself shakes. That is how close to total destruction, total reset to the primordial chaos of *Ginnungagap*, that the cosmos the gods built will come. Odin knows his desperate attempt to learn the secrets of the cosmos is a partially doomed enterprise. He knows, because of the *völva* (the seeress he raised from the dead), that most of the beings in the cosmos will die, but he also know there will be a rebirth, a new world. For him, it does not matter whether his knowledge actually helps or not during that transition period, what matters is the act of gaining knowledge for knowledge's sake. That is his role, his personality, his mythic biography. The *völva* repeatedly asks him "Have you learned enough yet, Allfather?" The answer is of course not (Crawford, 2015: 8. *Völuspá*: 27.8). The fatedness of the Odin and the Norse cosmos parallels the mindset of the Germanic warrior who knows, in fact yearns, to die in battle so as to attain the cathartic, climatic, bliss of death. The afterlife for them in *Valhöll* is just a temporary training ground for *Ragnarøk* when (I argue) their individuality will be absorbed into an apocalyptic battle scream mimicking that of the first being: the primordial giant *Ymir*. This is because, first, at *Ragnarøk Heimdallr* will blow the *Gjallarhorn* ("yelling horn" from *goll* "scream, loud noise") (Orchard, 1997: 57). The first part of the word, *goll*, is in three of Odin's names: *Göllnir*, *Göllor*, and *Göllngr* ("The Screaming One"). These three are apart of the ten names we listed earlier in Section 2.3.3 which emphasize Odin's mouth in battle.

Second, while Ýmir's name certainly derives from the PIE root meaning twin, and hence is one of the data points for the PIE lord of death **Yemo*, his name would have also been connected by the Norse audience to ON *yǫmr*⁴² “scream, groan” and one of his other names was in fact *Aurgelmir* (“gravel-yeller” from *gella/galmr* “scream”) (see Kure, 2014 “In the beginning was the Scream” for more on Ymir).

To prepare for this apocalypse Odin needs two things: knowledge and warriors. First, he goes on a “relentless quest for esoteric knowledge” (Patton, 2009: 214.). He goes on four journeys⁴³: First, to Mimir to gain knowledge of the future via mutilation (removing his eyeball); Second, to the base of the World Tree to gain knowledge of the runes via mutilation and asceticism; Third to *Hel* to revive a prophetic dead witch because his son, Baldr, is having bad dreams about *Ragnarok*; and Fourth to *Hel* again to revive a prophetic dead witch to learn about the origins and fate of the cosmos. His repeated mutilation is voluntary. In *Voluspa* the witch kept asking him “have you learned enough yet?” and he kept saying no. Patton (2009: 217, 234) points out that the agony of Odin's ordeal strongly resembles an initiation, “something like a shamanistic test [he] took upon himself in order to learn esoteric magic. [It consisted of] a symbolic death followed by a rebirth...”. Second, Odin—along side his wolves *Geri* and *Freki*—scours the world for hanged men and sends his *valkyrjur* out to collect the war dead. These dead men band together in a heavenly counterpart to the real Odinic wandering warrior bands. These real bands descend from the ancient IE *Männerbünde* system where by young males would join together in wolf raiding parties (called PIE **koryos*) (Kershaw, 1997).

But what does Orpheus have to do with all this? Nagy, J, (1990) states that: “...the peaceable figure of Orpheus—poet and mystic, the putative author of so-called Orphic writings—embodies qualities that make him in crucial respects the opposite of the warrior-hunter of myth (Robbins 1982, 18-19). Especially in his role as the perhaps too-loving husband of Eurydice,

⁴² Kvilhaug (2016: 6) sees this screaming aspect of Ýmir as parallel to the Indian *aum*. While I find that proposal tantalizing, I think this notion of cosmic screaming is a uniquely historical product of the Germanic sound similarity between Ýmir and *yǫmr*; their fatalistic battle-ethos (*ragnarok*) and their practice of screaming in battle.

⁴³ *Baldrs Draumar eða Vegtamskvida*; Boberg, 1966: Q413, A451, J163.3, J162

Orpheus places himself at the opposite end of the mythological spectrum from devotees of a *männerbund* ethos...”. Let us start with his followers. The Orphic initiates, “The Ones of Changing Allegiance; the Bereft or Orphaned Ones”, were just as desiring to leave this life as the *berserkers* were, but they wished to do so peacefully with Orpheus’ words of direction around their neck (the gold tablet-necklaces). Because of the asceticism and knowledge, their heads were cool from the hope, indeed *surety*, that they were going to a better place. The Orphics saw secret knowledge as an actual means of salvation, while for Odin it was just a means of duration. The Well of Memory for Odin was a cyclicly self turning pool which is its own end, but for the Orphics it is a chance to escape the rounds of reincarnation (metempsychosis) in this world through remembering their past lives (as opposed to the kind of temporary song-based memory (PIE **(s)mer-*) that warriors want: -Fame (PIE **kléwos*; Grk. *kléos*) (Watkins, 2011: 44; Calin, 2017: 179-80). This non-kleos based alternative would have “appeal[ed] to those, such as women and non-aristocratic men, who [were] unlikely to be immortalized by epic” (Edmunds 2004: 52-3). Adluri and Bagchee (2012: 239-241) when talking about the connection between Orpheus and Ruru, assert their common myth distinguished between “a poetic transcendence that grants a limited immortality, and, two, the unconditioned immortality of salvation [*sōtēria* or *mokṣa*].” The Germanic peoples, and the Odinic initiates, did not have a notion of reincarnation. Somewhere along the way from PIE to Germanic reincarnation got replaced by the grander idea of a cosmic-reset and the warrior death cult.

An aspect of asceticism which was common to both the cults of Odin and Orpheus was sexuality. Sexuality always played its role in IE religion and initiation, in the Indic branch this took the form of *tapa* (“sexual control; discipline; asceticism”). Orpheus spurned women, and his followers valued chastity as one of their main virtues (the other being asceticism, see Bernabé and Jiménez, 2008:117). Odin did the opposite of Orpheus. He did not just know magic, he knew *seiðr*, a form of sex magic associated with *ergi* (“effeminate (men)” and *kona* (women) (Price, 2019: ch. 3). He gets mocked for this by Loki in front of the other gods in *Lokasenna* (Crawford, 2015: 105. Stanza 24).

<i>En þik síða kóðu</i>	But people say that you
<i>Sámseyu í,</i>	practiced womanly magic
<i>ok draptu á vétt sem vödur;</i>	on Samsey, dressed as a woman.
<i>vitka líki</i>	You lived as a witch
<i>fórtu verþjóð yfir,</i>	among the humans—
<i>ok hugða ek þat args aðal.</i>	and I call that a pervert's way of living.

He was not content only knowing masculine traditions, he wanted to know everything. He wasn't afraid to use sexuality as a means to an end either. Traditionally, the Hieros gamos myth consists of the male Sky God and female Earth Goddess mating to produce benefits for society, but when Odin does so in the texts it is for selfish ends: in one case to produce an avenger for the death of his son Baldr, and in the other case to steal the mead behind the female's back (Steinsland, 1986). Additionally, the knowledge of the runes which Odin learned was not just intellectual, it was sexual:

<i>þá nam ek frævaz⁴⁴,</i>	Then I began to become fertile [Gothic <i>fraiw</i> “seed, semen”]
<i>ok fróðr vera,</i>	and to be fertile/wise [*the word means both]
<i>ok vaxa ok vel hafaz,</i>	and grow and thrive
<i>orð mér af orði</i>	“Each word led me on to another word,
<i>orðs leitaði,</i>	Each deed to another deed.” (Bellows, 1936.)
<i>verk mér af verki</i>	
<i>verks leitaði. hafask. (Hávamál 141)</i>	

⁴⁴Talley (1974: 165) and Kuhn (1968: 63).

This idea that fertility comes from the roots of the World Tree fits with the structurally equivalent liquid of the Nexus at the bottom of the PIE World Tree, where the liquid sometimes appears as white (semen⁴⁵, milk, clay).

All three traditions incorporated sexuality into their ascetic practices, but while Orphic and mainstream Indic traditions essentially moved away from the body towards spiritual sublimation, Odin reveled in it. The direction he took is similar to tantric traditions in India, which utilized sexuality in the same way.

Another aspect of this section which can be seen in other IE branches, is initiation. A part after the Hittite text we looked at in Section 2.5.2 explains how “the divinity...decides which souls must end up in the tenawas, drink swampy water and eat clay, and which souls can enjoy good food and good drink...” (Bernabé and Jiménez, 2008: 212). “Watkins (1995) 289 considers that good food is proper to the fortunate soul, which may have been instructed or “initiated”.” (Bernabé and Jiménez, 2008: 213n21.) This is not to say that initiation systems or ritual sex practices are particularly Indo-European, they’re found everywhere. Although, Witzel does demonstrate the formers special manifestation in Laurasian cultures as “secretly transmitted magical poetry” (Witzel, 2012: 5). What this is to say however, is that once the Indo-Europeans established an otherworldly topography, and a set of inter-related mythemes (severed heads, wells, etc), some people could start to claim special knowledge about how to navigate and interact with those things. Behavioral controls could be put in place, power could be allocated to a few, and energy could be directed towards a single goal, whether that be evangelism, social disruption, or war. Myth and ritual serve ideology.

⁴⁵ This links up with the ancient and widespread ascetic method of seminal retention for spiritual development, which was present in Orphic thought and practice (McEvelley, 2002: 95).

3.3.4.3 Orality and Writing

In the myths and cults of Odin and Orpheus we find a unique mixture of the oral and written⁴⁶.

We will begin the the Germanic side of things. Germanic words for writing like PG **stað-*, **wriān*, and **rēðan* were relatively straight forward terms referring to letters. The runes (ON *rúnar*) that Odin learned, however, were very different. Most people when they hear the word “rune” think of carved letters, but the “runes were not used for purposes of every-day communication as was the alphabetic script by the Romans, for they were employed in magic and divination, and were therefore tied up with the Germanic religion, they were largely confined to short, terse inscriptions and knowledge of them was restricted to a small, closed circle of runemasters” (Green, 1998: 254). This can be seen the *Hávamál* 144 where Odin asks the initiate if he knows how to paint, test, ask, bless, send, and offer them. Green, in his massive work on Germanic historical linguistics, summarizes the word’s semantic history by saying that in their maturity (i.e. in medieval christianized Iceland) they were “mysterious sign[s], character[s] used in magic practice”, prior to that during the pagan period they had connotations of being “secret[s], secret knowledge, magic”, and originally they were “low-voiced, secretive speech” (Green, 1998: 255). Grundy notes that “magical chants pre-dated the dissemination of the runes among the Germanic peoples” (Grundy, 2014a: 155). The original notion was borrowed into Finnish with the word *runo* (“poem, poetry”). The PG term was **rūnō* “secret, mystery” and the Proto-Celtic was **rūnā* “secret, mystery”. Both terms descended from late PIE **rū-no-* “secret, mystery” which came from the root **reuh_x-* “to intone, mumble, whisper” (Watkins 2011: 75). A similar idea can be seen the in ON *blót* (“sacrifice, offering”) as well as the Latin *flāmen* and Sanskrit *bráhmaṇ* (PIE **bhlagh-men-* “priest, wizard”). They all descend from a close net web of root including: **bhel⁻⁴* (“bellow”), **bhlād* (“to worship”) and **bhlē⁻¹* (“howl”), and **bhlē⁻²* (“blow”).⁴⁷ Given this heavily mouth-focused etymology we can see why Odin, who as we saw in Section 2.3.3 was defined by his head, would be connected with the runes. The

⁴⁶ For the Celtic side of things see Nagy, J, 1990.

⁴⁷ Watkins 2011: 10-13. Mallory and Adams, 1997. Lehmann, 1986: 76. UT Linguistics Center <<https://lrc.la.utexas.edu/lex/master/0258>>

“mysteriousness” of Odin too can be seen in the runes. The Germanic *Rune Poems*⁴⁸ clearly show that each individual rune was a secret, full of etymological and sacred meaning, which needed to be taught and transmitted via kenning filled riddles. For example here is the Old Icelandic Rune Poem for Óss † “god” (PG **Ansuz* † “god”)

† Óss er algingautr *[Which] god is old Gautr*

ok ásgarðs jöfurr, and prince of Ásgarð

ok valhallar vísi. and lord of Valhǫll?

I will give you a hint: we have been talking about him quite a bit⁴⁹.

Now let us look at the Greek side of things. “[The Orphics] come to the doors of the rich and persuade people that they have the power, granted by the gods through sacrifices and incantations...[they also]...present a babel of books of Musaeus and Orpheus, the sons of the Moon or the Muses, they say, according to which they perform sacrifices...”⁵⁰. Nagy (Jospeh, 1990: 226-8) wrote about how orality and literacy mixed in the Orphic tradition. He notes that Orpheus did not just supposedly write these books, but invented writing in general. He also notes there was a popular scene in classical art, of a man transcribing the spoken words of Orpheus’ severed head. Detienne (1989: 135) noted a similar example of an Apulian vase which depicted “In his left hand the inhabitant of the underworld, an initiate and probably a disciple of Orpheus, clasps a scroll, a portable book, like the one found at Derveni in a tomb dating from the first half of the fourth century BCE. An incantation from a book has the same power as singing; it triumphs over the harmful forces of oblivion: anyone who has mastered writing and becomes a reader of Orpheus does not die as others do.” Along these same lines Nagy concludes, after looking at other

⁴⁸ See https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Rune_poems for all the poems, and Silva (2006) for Óss.

⁴⁹ It is this kind of mystery and fascinatingly dense etymology that has (in part) sustained modern Germanic Polytheism throughout the last couple centuries. For a peek into this world check out Arith Håger’s (an archaeologist in his day to day life) fascinating explanation of the Óss rune: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NsRYCAXBPoQ>

⁵⁰ Plato, Republic 364b-365a. in Burkert, 2004: 79.

IE data as well, that “reactionary impulses...generated the image of the singing head performing for the scribe, an icon that preserves the preeminence of the spoken while recognizing the seemingly final victory of the written” (229).

I argue, that it was not the writing *itself* that was important about these scrolls, it was their capacity to retain spoken “Mnemosyne”. Orpheus’ head sang because it held sacred information which needed to be written down (i.e. made permanent). Orphic followers likely believed Orpheus had gone to the lake/spring of Mnemosyne because he had been to the underworld before (when he went to rescue Eurydikē; and because he was from the North of Greece, an area associated with the Underworld) and was literally guiding the initiate *via memory* on the gold tablets they wore around their necks when they died. That is why the tablets began “This is the work of Memory.” That is why his severed head was able to be used as a prophet at Lesbos just like Mimir’s head and all the others⁵¹, *because he was speaking from memory*. This is also to say that while the story of Orpheus visiting Hades to get Eurydice and the instructions on the Gold Tablets are technically different documents (separated by time, place, and sometimes language) the devotees would not have seen it like that. For them it was all one big pool of memory concerning the katabasis (Adluri and Bagchee, 2012: 243).

Both the Odinic and Orphic traditions were affected by the use of writing. They each grew out of traditions of orality and secret initiatory knowledge. Both traditions saw writing as a means of transmitting that knowledge. Yet, the Odinic was far more magical. For them, each letter, each carving was itself magical. Very few inscriptions were actually made, it was not a alphabet to use lightly. The Greeks on the other hand had writing from an early stage, so individual letters lost their significance long ago. The text was valuable only as a whole, only as a transmitter of passwords and instructions. For the Orphics, the scrolls were mediums for information. For the Odinics, the very act of carving a rune was a cosmic copy of Odin’s initiation at the bottom of the World Tree.

⁵¹ Of course, it does not explain everything about him, for instance, his ability to move stones and trees vis his songs (*Apollod.* 1.3.2) might have been connected more to notions of harmony and nature than the magical power of his head and voice.

Part 4 - Conclusions

We began, in Part 1 “Introduction”, by providing an overview of Lincoln’s work. As a reminder, this was Lincoln’s original narrative:

On the way to the otherworld, souls of the dead had to cross a river, the waters of which washed away all of their memories. These memories were not destroyed, however, but were carried by the river's water to a spring, where they bubbled up and were drunk by certain highly favored individuals, who became inspired and infused with supernatural wisdom as a result of the drink. (Lincoln, 1982: 30)

In Part 1 we also laid out a methodology and plan for our own work. We started, in Part 2 “Sources”, by gathering additional sources. In the Greek Section 2.1.3 “*Orpheús*”, we critiqued Freiert’s and Burkert’s interpretation of Orpheus’ severed head. In the same section we argued for an interpretation of Orphic devotees as wandering “bereft ones”. In the Greek Section 2.1.4 “The Orphic Gold Tablets”, we critiqued Lincoln’s method by reconstructing a proto-Orphic text. In the Germanic Section 2.3.3 “The Odinic Head”, we argued that Odin’s identity was intimately tied to his head. We included a Hittite section, 2.5, since the themes found in Hittite sources are good IE age-indicators.

In Part 3 “Comparison”, we took a step back from the cultural and linguistic minutiae and looked for patterns in the sources. These patterns were both motifs (figural and topographical), narratives, and rituals. We started by providing an overview of the PIE Underworld. We then supported Lincoln’s notion of a Watery Way to the Underworld, which caused negative effects on the dead (3.1.1). Then we traveled down the Watery Way to its Nexus (3.1.2). We supported and critiqued Lincoln’s reconstruction of a “Spring of Memory”, as well as identified it with the work of other scholars, including the sea-of-knowledge metaphor, the “unfading spring”, “La Gloire Lumineuse”, the “Ambrosial Waters”, and the Three Wells. We then explored around the Nexus and concluded that there was a prophetic guardian head and welling-waters which guarded it (3.1.2.1). The former appeared when the Traveler was worthy, and the later appeared when (s)he

was not. We concluded that the Nexus was located at the roots of the bright white World Tree whose roots “drank” the water (3.1.2.2). We interpreted its brightness as a common characteristic of our narrative and the “La Gloire Lumineuse” since both draw on the same cosmography. We concluded that there was a Hall (of the Underworldly ruler) next to the Nexus (3.1.2.3). In the end we had reconstructed the Nexus as a topographic motif-complex consisting of a potent Well, bright white World Tree, a Guardian, and the Hall of the Underworldly Ruler. We connected this motif-complex to Sundqvist’s (2017) work and pointed out that, at least in Europe, this PIE motif-complex was later incorporated into political ritual. We then took a dive into the Well and found more than just water. We found that the liquid could take various structurally equivalent forms, among them: water, intoxicating honey drink (mead/soma), and white liquids (milk and semen). We ended our discussion of the Nexus by asserting that the Traveler drank from it using a vessel (perhaps a horn) and gained physical (vitality, strength, fertility) and spiritual (inspiration, wisdom, perception) benefits thereby. We then left the Underworld and toured the PIE cosmos so as to demonstrate the wholisticness and binary structure of it, as well as to introduce certain key aspects that showed up later (the World Tree, the celestial focus of the PIEs, and the Sky Gods). Finally, we argued that the PIE topography of the Nexus and Tree was later incorporated into ritual. In Section 3.1.2.4 “Liquids” we demonstrated the variable nature of the Nexus’ liquid. In Section 3.1.2.5 “Drinking” we argued that the Traveller would drink from the Nexus using a vessel, perhaps a drinking horn. We also supported this idea that drinking from the well provides physical (vitality) and spiritual (inspiration and memory) benefits.

Starting in Section 3.3 we switched gears from setting the stage (cosmography) to the narrative by beginning to following Lincoln’s protagonist, the Traveler. We critiqued Lincoln’s original reconstruction by defining the subtypes of the Living Traveler, the Journeyer and the Dreamer (3.3.1). The former’s body would have gone with them, while the later’s body would have stayed in the Middleworld while their spirit was away. We also specified that the souls of the dead, after crossing the Watery Way, would have gone on to be reincarnated back up in the Middleworld. We argued that if the Journeyer was worthy, (s)he would have to sacrifice an eye to drink from the Nexus (i.e. to ironically gain perception). We asserted that this myth was

ritualized in the IE initiatory systems (including the Männerbünde and later Mystery systems) (3.3.2.1). We also argued that the Journeyer's Eye-sacrifice was a narrative reflection of a deeper cosmological identification of the Nexus with the Moon, the Left Eye of the Sky God (3.3.2.2). We moved on to talk about the Journeyer's head itself. We made a distinction between the severed head of the Guardian and the decapitated head of the Journeyer (3.3.3). We asserted that the Journeyer would be decapitated once he returned to the Middleworld, and that his head would have been preserved as a prophet. We further argued that this practice, like the eye, was incorporated into IE invitatory ritual.

In Section 3.3.4, we focused on two descendants of the PIE Otherworldly Traveler: the Germanic Odin and Greek *Orphéus*. We compared their myths and cults, and observed a variety of fascinating similarities and differences. We saw how they were paradoxical figures which united life and death in their mutilated bodies (3.3.4.1). We saw how their heads played a central role in their identities and magical abilities. We saw how their world views, while both drawing on the PIE narrative, developed in two radically different directions (3.3.4.2). One developed a this-worldly reveling in the body (in battle and in sex), while the other sought to escape this world, its seductions, and its rounds of bodily reincarnation. One saw the Nexus as a means to prolonging life, while the other saw it as a means of going beyond Middleworldly life to something eternal, even more eternal than what the Warriors could hope for in song. We ended by examining how their voices (i.e. orality) became fused with writing (3.3.4.3).

Most of our work is supported by a wide variety of Indo-European evidence, however, certain details have more “-European” than “Indo-“ support. These include the following.

- The speculation that there were three wells (one in each level of the cosmos) is primarily derived from European sources (Germanic and Latvian) as well as one Hittite source.
- The idea that the Hall-Well-Tree cosmographic complex was ritualized is exclusive to the European branch (Norse, Slavic, and Baltic).
- The reconstruction that the Traveller drank from the Nexus using a vessel is primarily based on European sources (Celtic and Norse) and secondarily on an Indo-Iranian source.

- The idea of that the sacrifice of the eye in relation to Lincoln's narrative was ritualized is based on European sources (Germanic and Celtic).
- The reconstruction of the Traveler's Decapitated head is primarily based on European sources (Germanic and Greek) and secondarily on an Indic source.
- The speculation that the Traveler provided a password is based on European sources (Greek and Celtic).

Recognizing the strength of most of our work, as well as the weakness of these particular details, I would like to end by roughly reformulating Lincoln's narrative to include our refinements and expansions. Of course, we will not be able to represent in this summary the many nuances and transformations of this narrative in its various IE forms, Odinic, Orphic, or otherwise.

*On the way to the **Underworld**, souls of the dead had to cross **The Watery Way**, the waters of which washed away all of their memories. **These souls would pass on to the other side where they would go on to be reincarnated in the Middleworld.** Meanwhile, their memories were not destroyed, but carried by water to **The Bottom of the Bright White World Tree, to The Nexus (i.e. the Eye of the Sky God, the Moon).** There, beside the Hall and guarded by a prophetic severed head, they would bubble up. **Certain unworthy individuals would try to drink of it and be beaten back by its waters.** Other, **worthy, and highly favored individuals (Travellers: Journeyers and Dreamers)** would travel to it **and sacrifice one of their eyes to drink of its liquid using a vessel.** As a result, they would become infused with wisdom (i.e. inspiration, perception) **and vitality (strength and fertility).** **Some of these individuals, after they returned to the Middleworld, were decapitated and their heads were preserved as prophets.***

Part 5 - Postscript: Laurasia

Non-Indo-European cultures are often sidelined, or blatantly ignored, by IE scholars. This is in part because studying all the various Indo-European branches is time consuming, but it is also because scholars worry that by counterchecking their reconstructions against Non-IE cultures they open themselves to the possibility of finding similar themes and thus diluting their argument. While similarities *can* indicate such, they can also be indicative of an *older* and *shared* mythology along the lines of Michael Witzel's Laurasian, Gondwana, and Pan Gean reconstructions (2012; for "counterchecking" see Chapter 5). Scholars ought to be excited at the possibility of primordial cultural commonalities, instead of despondent that their reconstruction is no longer "pure". We will point out a possible Laurasian (i.e. Eurasia + Americas) connection.

5.1 Turkic

To start, here is a Yakut/Sakha text recorded in the 1840s:

When the [first] man steps out of the easterly facing entrance of the front of the house to look around, he has a king of trees, which grows in the midst of his meadow; over it blows a blue breeze, and it is countless centuries old. The roots of this tree have grown down to the underworld, the tops parts have thrust through all nine heavens, each leaf measures seven fathoms, each cone nine fathoms. Under its roots everlasting water spring forth. When his aged, hungered, black and white cattle, their strength gone, and flying and running game taste and lick the sap and the resin that flow from the twigs and cones of this tree and gather into a rushing stream, it takes care of restoring their former state of youthfulness and satiety. Then spoke an aged goddess [Tolley identified her as Kübäi-xotun, the goddess of Fate] with snow-white hair, and a belly as piebald as a partridge and with breasts as large as two bags, from the root of the king of trees, which with steady creaking grew smaller and smaller, until it reached up only to the belt: "I am acquainted with everything... (Tolley, 2009: v1: 307-8; v2: 29.)

This is a jaw dropping parallel to Odin's encounter with *Mimir* at *Mimisbrunnr*, and the female *Nornir* under the wet roots of the world tree *Yggdrasil*. While this may be the result of Indo-European influence⁵², and Tolley does cite some speculation that the origin is southern, it may actually be more indicative of a pan-Eurasian tradition more than a specifically or originally Indo-European or Finno-Ugric motif.

⁵² The Mongols and Turks were in constant contact with Scythio-Iraninans, and certainly the former's equestrian focus was derived from the later, so they may have taken certain myths (Golden, 2006: 139).

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