

Comparing the Births of Conchobar, Indra, and Herakles

Anna Pagé, UCLA
annajune.page@gmail.com

This paper presents a comparison of the birth narratives of the Irish king Conchobar mac Nessa, the Vedic god Indra, and the Greek hero Herakles. The specific focus of my discussion is on the strikingly similar ways in which their conceptions and births are manipulated, particularly with respect to time, in order to produce a specific outcome. Themes of prophecy and temporal distortion play a particularly important role here, as does the prolongation of gestation as a form of containment and control. I pay particular attention to the motif of miraculous birth through the mother's side, and consider further comparanda from Ireland and India, as well as from Armenian, Egyptian, and Algonquin narratives. These comparanda suggest a particular framework of meaning in which to situate the motif and provide a starting point for reflecting on the place of the motif in Indo-European narrative traditions.