Tochmarc Moméra: A Critical Edition and Literary Analysis

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Acknowledgments

Abstract

Over the past decades, the discipline of Celtic Studies saw the emergence of literary-critical works which examine early Irish tales as literary compositions. These, however, with the exception of Ralph O'Connor's all-embracing study of *Togail Bruidne Da Derga*, tend to be narrowly focused on tracing particular motifs, without exploring a narrative as a consistent whole. This dissertation endeavours to fill up this lacuna in our field at least partly, by presenting a systematic critical analysis of the Middle Irish tale *Tochmarc Moméra,* 'The Wooing of Momera', an origin-legend of the Eóganacht of Munster.

A new semi-diplomatic edition and translation of the text from the Yellow Book of Lecan were produced in order to provide a reliable text for the literary-critical groundwork to proceed. The tripartite analysis of the native mythological, Biblical and (pseudo)-historical motifs used in the compilation has demonstrated that the tale uses various literary devices to sanction Eógan's acquisition of kingship in Leth Moga, and hence, to legitimise the dynasty named after him. This interpretation of *TM* is supported by its manuscript context. In YBL, the tale is grouped together with early Irish legal tracts postulating the pre-eminence of the Eóganachta among the other Munster polities.

As it is often the case in early Irish literature, the events of the past are presented to serve the aims of the present. I have tentatively dated the text to the late twelfth century, when the Eóganachta were no longer kings of Munster and the power has shifted to the Dál gCais. It might have been important, therefore, to remind that the Eóganachta were meant to be kings from legendary times. The scribes of the Book of Leinster, where *TM*, as I will argue, might have been once contained, were particularly interested in making this point. The tale, therefore, represents a propagandistic political scripture aimed at defending the ambitions of the Eóganachta as the only rulers in the south of Ireland.

Abbreviations

AFM – Annals of the Four Masters

CA – Cóir Anmann

CML – Cath Maighe Léna

DBIE – Do Bunad Imthechta Eóganachta

eDIL – Electronic Dictionary of Irish Language

LG – Lebor Gabála Érenn

LL – Book of Leinster

MF – Macgnímartha Finn

SR – Saltair na Rann

TBC – Táin Bó Cuailnge

TBDD – Togail Bruidne Da Derga

TM – Tochmarc Moméra

YBL – Yellow Book of Lecan

Introduction

Tale

The medieval Irish tale *Tochmarc Moméra* (*TM*), 'The Wooing of Moméra', belongs to the so-called Cycle of the Kings. Along with the Mythological Cycle concerning Túatha Dé Danann, the Fenian Cycle (*fiannaíocht*) devoted to the adventures of Finn mac Cumail and the Fianna, and the Ulster Cycle[1] focused on the Ulster warriors of Emain Macha, the Cycle of the Kings is one of the four core cycles of the early Irish literary tradition. The systematisation of Irish tales in four principal saga cycles is not a traditional classification but a modern conventional scholarly invention:[2]

> Although medieval scholars preferred to classify Irish narrative according to traditional tale types (*aided*, *cath*, *togail* and so forth), modern scholars have found it convenient to divide the extant literature into different categories based primarily on the characters that appear in the individual stories (Wiley 2008: 14).[3]

Based on this criterion, Wiley (ibid.) proposes a definition of a "king tale" as a "narrative in prose or prosimetrum that focuses on the exploits of one or more native rulers." In this regard, *TM* fits the framework definition proposed by Wiley and occupies its legitimate place in the Cycle of the Kings, as it describes the adventures of Eógan Taídlech, the legendary ancestor of Eóganachta who purportedly lived in the second century AD.

Manuscript

TM has only one extant manuscript witness — a short manuscript, penned by a Lecan scribe Murchadh Ó Cuindlis in the years 1398–9, which now forms part of the Yellow Book of Lecan (H.2.16, alias TCD MS1318, cols. 281–344). *TM* occupies two and a half columns (cols. 341–343.30; pages of facsimile 329a1–330a30) and 162 lines. The vellum folio which contains the tale is well preserved, although on recto some of the beginnings of the lines in column 341 have slightly faded due to the proximity to the place where the folio was bound. In general, the text is clear and easy to read. The opening majuscule, letter *F* of the word *fecht*, is decorated with a traditional knot design, with the head of an animal on the top and a paw at the bottom.

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[1] Recently, Thomas Charles-Edwards (2015: 88) proposed to look at the Ulster Cycle as an 'Ulster-Connaught Cycle', on the basis of its "significant Connaught component."

[2] The main stages of this relatively recent classification are addressed in Poppe 2008: 5–13.

[3] As Máire Herbert (1989: 76) puts it, "the modern categorization of the literary corpus as consisting of mythological, heroic, and king cycles defines stories solely in terms of the actors which they represent." The medieval classification as exemplified in the two Middle Irish tale lists is discussed in MacCana 1980.

Date

The Yellow Book of Lecan is a late medieval manuscript compiled at the end of the fourteenth and the beginning of the fifteenth centuries, the period characterised by the resurgence of interest in the Irish history and heritage; the manuscript where *TM* is found was penned in the years 1398–9. The language, however, seems to be late Middle Irish. Obviously, further linguistic analysis would be necessary to assign a date. Yet, on the basis of external evidence, one could tentatively propose a mid-twelfth century dating. *TM* is mentioned in the genealogical tract in the Book of Leinster (TCD MS 1339, 319b42–4), a codex compiled ca. 1160:

> Eogan Taidlech ai*nm* aile. am*ail* ro-sc*r*ibsam*ar* i Tochm*ar*c Momera i*ngin*e rig Espai*n*e.
> Eógan Taídlech is another name as we have written in the Wooing of Moméra, daughter of the king of Spain.

In reference to this mention, O'Rahilly (1946a: 187) argued that a version of the tale was once contained in the Book of Leinster. I will return to this theory later on; for a moment, it is sufficient to say that at least a version of our tale was already in existence in a written form by the middle of the twelfth century.

Title

The title of our tale is known from the conclusion of the text (TCD MS 1318, 330a28–9):

> *Conad tochmarc Moméra ingeine ríg Espane.*
> This is the wooing of Moméra, daughter of the king of Spain.

There are neither opening remarks when, for example, the title is introduced by the Latin formula *incipit*; nor is the princess called Moméra in the text.[4] The tale is not mentioned in any of the medieval tale lists which "purport to catalogue the repertoire of the *fili*" (Mac Cana 1980: 33).

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[4] In other sources, the name of Eógan's wife is Bera. Metrical *Banshenchas* does not mention her. It does, however, mention, Ailill Aulom as the husband of Sadb, daughter of Conn Cétchathach (Dobbs 1930: 300, 326). The prose version from the Book of Lecan mentions Bera, daughter of Emer, king of Spain, and mother of Ailill Ulam and two daughters, Caimille and Gothnem (*Caimilli ₇ Gothnemi*) (Dobbs 1931: 177). The prose version of the *Banshenchas* from the RIA MS D. 2.1, fol. 95a, also states that Beara was the daughter of Éber and mother of Ailill Eolum. Eógan does not appear in any of these entries. The first element in the princess's name, *mo-*, might be interpreted as a first singular possessive, same as in the hypocoristic names of saints, or in Ailill's sobriquet *Moshaulom* from *Scéla Moshauluim*. Ailill's nickname, particularly its first unusual element, was recently discussed by Clodagh Downey (2017: 45). See also Baumgarten 1973: 220.

Previous Edition

The first edition of the tale to have been accompanied by a parallel English translation is that prepared by Eugene O'Curry in the middle of the nineteenth century. He published it along with the early Modern Irish tale *Cath Maighe Léna* (*CML*), 'The Battle of Mag Léna' (O'Curry 1855). His edition of *CML* and *TM*, however, contains a great number of mistakes in transcription and incorrect expansions of manuscript contractions. The translation is generally outdated. The author of a critical edition of *CML*, Kenneth Jackson, gave a harsh but ultimately fair assessment of O'Curry's work: "it was not a critical edition, and O'Curry took considerable licence with his exemplar, altering spelling and phrasing and inserting or omitting without acknowledgement" (Jackson 1938: ix). The same can be said about the edition of *TM* which was published by O'Curry as an appendix to *CML*. Therefore, the poor quality of the first edition has long impeded the full appreciation of the text.

Sources

TM is an origin-legend of the Eóganachta of Munster which explains their lawful right to rule over the southern half of Ireland. Together with another aetiological legend, *Do Bunad Imthechta Eóganachta* (*DBIE*), and an early Modern Irish saga *Cath Maighe Léna* (*CML*), it forms part of the corpus of the Eóganachta family lore. Entries in *Cóir Anmann* (*CA*) which discuss nicknames of Eógan are essentially based on *TM* and probably on some other sources which were used in the fourteenth century for the compilation of *CML*. A detailed review of these sources, from the point of view of their contribution to the compilation of *CML*, is provided by Kenneth Jackson (1938: xxiv–xxxv) in the introduction to his critical edition of the tale. I find it appropriate to preface the edition of *TM* with a similar discussion of other records related to the dynasty. Not to repeat the argument which has already been presented by Professor Jackson, my analysis is focused on *TM* and on its role and place in the development of the Eóganachta cycle.

The oldest extant text which provides the reason for the Eóganachta's rule in the south of Ireland is *Do Bunad Imthechta Eóganachta,* 'Concerning the origin of the wandering of the Eóganachta.' The tale is found solely in MS Laud 610, which is kept in the Bodleian library in Oxford. Kenneth Jackson (1938: xxv) describes the text as an early eighth century tract; Donnchadh Ó Corráin (1985: 53) provides a later date, "very likely, from the late ninth century or very early tenth." The text was edited by Kuno

Meyer (1912a: 312–4), along with other genealogies and tribal histories from MS Laud 610. Byrne surmises (1973: 200–1) that the tale was probably compiled by Cormac mac Cuilennáin when the Eóganachta were making a final effort to challenge the Uí Néill high-kingship. In this account, Eógan is portrayed as a foreigner who comes to Ireland with a fleet of one hundred and fifty men. As the text begins,

> *Do bunad imthechta Eoganachta in so .i. doluid longes mór, do[5] fheraib hÉirenn a mbunad, edón meic Eogain Táidlig. Trí anmand bátar fair .i. Eogan Táidlech ₇ Mug Núadat ₇ Eogan Fitheccach. Gabsat a n-Inbiur Cholpthai, tri cóicit fer a llín, immusrala muir aimsera co táncatar Éirind* (Meyer 1912a: 312);

> On the origin of the wandering of the Eóganachta here. A big fleet came, of the men of Ireland their race, that is of the son of Eógan Taídlech. He had three names, Eógan Taídlech, Mug Nuadat, and Eógan Fitheccach. They arrived in Inbur Cholptha, three fifties men their number; the sea carried [them] about for a long time until they reached Ireland.[6]

The story apparently confuses Eógan and his son, stating that, upon arrival, Eógan Taídlech, son of the king, is taken into fosterage by the Irishmen and quickly becomes the favourite of Ireland (*gabthu mac a rríg do haltrom ar séotu .i. Eogan Túidlech, co mbo tretell hÉirenn*). Eógan receives three forts, each of them called Fithecc, and hence receives his nickname Fitheccach. Then, a great famine is revealed to Eógan by his seers.[7] Upon learning this, Eógan follows the advice of his prophets and starts accumulating stores of provision. When the famine begins, the Irishmen ask Eógan for food and he feeds them. When the plague is over, grateful people make the son of Eógan their king, and hence, the new dynasty is called Eóganachta. The account ends with two etymologies: the first one interprets Eóganacht as Greek *eu-* (i.e. Lat. *bona*) and *icht*, 'kindness, mercy', meaning: *icht maith dó fir hÉrenn do shaerad ar gorta* 'good kindness to him for saving the people of Ireland from the famine'; the second one derives the name from the words *eu-* and *generatio*, which gives 'good generation; good birth'. As Kenneth Jackson (1938: xxv) puts it, "this is a very early version of the Origin of the Eóghanacht; that they were a body of outsiders from Spain." It is hard to say why Jackson mentions Spain — the text does not specify where Eógan comes from, although we might surmise his Spanish provenance based on his links with Spain in *TM* and *CML*.

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[5] I take *do* as *de* 'of, from'.
[6] Translation of the passages from this tract is mine.
[7] This episode is modelled on the story of Joseph and his interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams (Genesis 41). I will return to its discussion in Chapter 2.2 concerning the Biblical motifs which probably influenced the compilation of *TM*. This episode and its Christian connections are also discussed in Ó Corráin 1985.

The second part of the text represents an antithesis: it tells about the coming of the Dál Cuinn (*bunad Dáil Chuind*) and sets their invasion in parallel terms with Eógan's arrival:

> *Is hí amser indatánic in Míl Espane tánaise ind-hÉirind, trí cóicit fer a llín* (Meyer 1912a: 313);
> At the same time the second Míl of Spain came to Ireland, three fifties men their number.

The tone of the narrative changes dramatically: after the depiction of the rule of Eógan, who gained disposition of the Irishmen by his wisdom and generosity and was peacefully elected the new king, the Dál Cuinn took the land by swords (*gabsit tír and ar chlaideb*). Notably, the comparison *in Míl Espane tánaise* 'the second Míl of Spain' as compiler's substitution for Conn, implies that some version of the Milesian legend was known to the author of *DBIE*, and that he probably disregarded it intentionally.[8] As Donnchadh Ó Corráin (1985: 53) puts it,

> the compiler of this piece was well aware of the *Lebor Gabála* version of Irish pre-history … and we cannot rule out the possibility that he was deliberately providing an alternative origin in which subtle parallels with the history of the Chosen People would be evident.

According to the doctrine of the Milesian invasion which later on became crystallised in *Lebor Gabála Érenn* (*LG*), the Eóganachta had long been settled in the south of Ireland, and were descendants of Éber son of Míl, who divided the island into two halves with his brother Éremón, ruler of the northern part of Ireland and ancestor of the Connachta. The compiler of *DBIE*, however, gives a different twist to the story. It seems tempting to describe this deviation by the influence of Genesis. If it served as a template for the famine episode in the tract, it might have been important to maintain the link between Eógan Taídlech and Joseph by the fact that both were foreigners fostered by people of another nation, by the Irishmen and the Egyptians respectively.

We might also surmise that the canon of synthetic history has not yet been shaped (the first versions of *LG* appear only in the eleventh century), and therefore alternative versions were still allowed. In *DBIE*, both Eógan and Conn are portrayed as strangers who come to Ireland with their men. As Byrne (1973: 11) argues, "the origin legends of many dynasties describe them as having conquered their territory after having invaded Ireland from abroad. The Laigin and the Eóganachta had such legends, which were

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[8] If we agree that the genealogical corpus in which *DBIE* is preserved was compiled ca. 900, then the author may have learned about Míl of Spain and the Milesian settlement from such sources as *Historia Brittonum* or *Scél Tuáin*. However, these two sources differ between themselves (there was no unified doctrine prior to the eleventh century), and there is no way of verifying that the compiler was familiar with any of them. I base my assumption that the author of *DBIE* knew about the Milesian invasion solely on his mention of Míl Espáine.

quite independent of the Milesian scheme." As he continues, "when the pseudo-historical fabric had been completed", these earlier accounts became anachronistic. Nevertheless, the link with a foreign land was "preserved in a modified form, representing these ancestral figures as exiled princes who recovered their patrimony with the aid of foreign troops." This new motif of a return to Ireland in a company of loyal foreigners is first expressed in *TM* and elaborated in greater detail in *CML*.

Thus, *DBIE* eventually came into conflict with the Milesian theory of the provenance of the Gaels. From the seventh century onwards the learned class was involved in inventing and composing the history of Ireland which resulted in the eleventh-century encyclopaedic *LG*.[9] O'Rahilly (1935: 363, 365) argues that by this time, the legend about the division of Ireland between Conn and Eógan, the two traditional ancestors of the Gaels, was already in existence. According to him, "this popular belief was challenged by the Irish pseudo-historians … who pushed back the Goidelic invasion into the second millennium B.C., and replaced Conn and Eógan in their capacity of leaders of the invasion by Éremón and Éber respectively" (ibid.: 365). The theory of the second-century division of Ireland between Eógan and Conn into two parts, Leth Cuinn and Leth Moga, mirrors the same division carried out in the more distant past by Éremón and Éber. It "was probably conceived in the seventh or eighth century to account for the political spheres of influence exercised by Tara and Cashel" (Byrne 1973: 168).

Once the Milesian theory became the canon, the origin-legend of the Eóganacht as expressed in *DBIE* was no longer acceptable. I would dare to suggest that *TM* was compiled as a response to this challenge. At least chronologically, this tale follows *DBIE* among the extant sources. In *TM*, Eógan is presented as an Irishman whose family has been settled in the south of Ireland since the times of their ancestor, Éber son of Míl. Notably, the action of the tale starts at Mag Femin, the plain in the vicinity of Cashel which, according to the tradition, will be founded by another ancestor of the dynasty, Conall Corc. Eógan's visit to Spain is triggered by the prophecy which reveals that he must marry the Spanish princess. His coming to Ireland from Spain is not his first visit, as in *DBIE*, but a return to his homeland. The relationship between the two texts has been outlined by Jackson (1938: xxvi–xxvii) and is worth quoting in full:

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[9] A brief analysis of the development of the official historical doctrine is given in Ó Corráin 1985: 63–8. I will discuss it later in Chapter 2.3 devoted to the textual relationship of *TM* and *LG*.

> This tale [*TM*] represents another attempt to reconcile the Eóghanacht legend with the Milesian. According to the Milesian story, Eóghan was the descendant of Éibher son of Míl of Spain, and a native Irishman, while in *Do Bunad Imthechta Eóganachta* he was a foreigner from Spain. *Tochmarc Moméra* unites the two by making the Irishman Eóghan sail to Spain, marry the daughter of the king (significantly called Éibher) and return to conquer Ireland.

Various traditions related to the origins of the dynasty were all brought together in the longest tale of the dynastic lore, *Cath Maighe Léna*, 'The Battle of Mag Léna'. As Kenneth Jackson (1938: xxxiv) summed up the reason for its compilation in the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century,

> this story, the Life and Death of the great hero and eponymous ancestor of the Eóghanacht, must have been put together in the Eóghanacht interest by one of their family sages, for the preservation of recitation of family lore was one of the offices of the *filidh*.

This tale was edited by Eugene O'Curry in 1855 together with *TM* which was published, in fact, as its appendix. The critical edition, already mentioned above, was prepared by Kenneth Jackson in 1938. *CML* is an Early Modern Irish tale compiled in the end of the thirteenth or in the beginning of the fourteenth century (Jackson 1938: xxiv). This tale represents the fullest account of Eógan's 'heroic biography' assembled of miscellaneous sources available to the author. According to Jackson (1938: xxiv),

> there was no connected life-story for the original composer to use. He had genuinely to compile, out of a loose body of legends of varying date belonging to the Eóghanacht families; and the result is a composition rather unskilfully put together.

For example, *CML* features the famine episode as in *DBIE*. In §3–5 of *CML*, Sída, Mug Néit's wife, sees a dream about seven fat cows and seven lean cows and the druid interpretats it: this episode is also derived from the story of Joseph and Pharaoh. But, if in *DBIE* a newcomer Eógan demands the kingship of Ireland for his son after saving the Irishmen from starvation, in *CML* it is his father, Mug Néit, who takes this role and respectively asks the sovereignty of Munster for his son Eógan. In what concerns the provenance of Eógan, *CML* follows *TM*. Eógan is a native Irish prince who goes to Spain and marries a Spanish princess, daughter of Éber. Later on, he returns to Ireland with an army of Spaniards and compels Conn Cétchathach, his rival, to divide Ireland between the two of them.

CML also attempts to reconcile "the tradition that Eógan led the Southern Goidels to Ireland with the official view that Eógan was of Irish birth" (O'Rahilly 1935: 366). O'Rahilly does not discuss *TM* as a chronologically intermediary tale between *DBIE* and *CML* and skips directly to *CML* in his discussion of the conflation of the two traditions. Kenneth Jackson (1938: xxvi), on the contrary, fully acknowledges the

influence of *TM* on the later *CML* and stresses that "another early Eóghanacht legend which went to the make-up of *CML* is the Old Irish tale *Tochmarc Momera*." Since two prophetic quatrains pronounced by the Spanish druid in *TM* were used in the composition of a longer prophecy in *CML* (ibid.: 20), there is no doubt that *TM* was one of the sources at hand of the compiler.

Another criterion which helps to underline the textual relationship between *DBIE*, *TM* and *CML* is the etymology of Eógan's sobriquet, i.e. Eógan Fithecach. *DBIE* explains that three forts were given to a newcomer Eógan, and the name of each was Fithecc (*tobretha trí dúne dó .i. Fithecc ainm cach æ* (Meyer 1912a: 312)). In each of the forts there was a seer (*bói fáith cacha fithicce díib* (ibid.)) who prophesied the famine. Hence, Eógan was nicknamed Fitheccach. *TM* mentions the three forts called Fidfeccai but provides yet another etymology. According to it, Eógan gets his name after he fixes spades (*fecca*) to the trunks of trees (*fid*) to facilitate the digging during the construction of his forts. *CML* does not discuss the nickname, although it is mentioned in one of the poems as Eógan Fithecdha (Jackson 1938: 21). The root of the word, *fithec*, *fidec*, means 'an earthern fort or rath' or 'underground tunnel or cave', in this case probably referring to the stores in which Eógan accumulated grain for the days of famine. This word is used in the poem in *CML* to designate the cellars constructed to preserve the food (*co fithechaib for-lána*) (ibid.: 6). Apparently, however, already by the time of *DBIE*, "the meaning of the name was evidently forgotten" and "it is surprising that the Irish sages did not think of this etymology" (ibid.: xxix). In his discussion of *DBIE*, Ó Corráin (1985: 53) also translates the name as "Eógan of the stores" even though this interpretation is not given in the tract itself.

The etymological tract *Cóir Anmann* (*CA*) is another source of information about Eógan. The short version, late twelfth-century *CA2* in Arbuthnot's *sigla* (2005: 1–2), features two entries: §29 which explains the origin of the name Eóganacht (interpreted as *Eógan-ict*, that is, 'people of Eógan') (Arbuthnot 2005: 85, 125), and §145 which derives the sobriquet Mug Nuadat, 'slave of Nuadu', from the name of Eógan's foster-father, Nuadu son of Dáire Barrach (ibid.: 111, 147). From the five copies of *CA2*, this entry is preserved only in the Book of Lecan. A larger section on the nicknames of Eógan is found in mid-thirteenth-century *CA3*, a longer recension of *CA* (Arbuthnot 2007: 9–12, 86–8).[10] This part starts with §36 where the quatrain about the four names

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[10] The manuscript tradition of the shorter and longer recensions and the stemma of *CA* are discussed in Arbuthnot 2001.

(Eógan Mór, Taídlech, Fidfecach, Mug Nuadat) is cited followed by the etymology of the name Eógan (Greek *eo* 'well' + *gein* 'birth'). §37 provides the etymology for the name of the dynasty, and the name Eógan Mór, the Great, is explained through the greatness of the kin named after him. The next entry §38 follows the same story as *TM*. It describes Eógan's voyage to Spain, his marriage to Bera and the birth of their children (three in this variant, Ailill and two daughters). As in *TM*, the name Taídlech derives from 'a brilliant bright sheen' of Eógan's cloak (*robo thaídhlech taithnemach in deallrad*) made of the wool of the salmon caught by the Spanish king Éber, not by the princess as in our tale. No motivation is given for Eógan's journey to Spain. §39 suggests three complementary etymologies of the name Fidfecach. First of all, the name refers to the three forts which were called Fidec. Then, Eógan 'placed and bent and intertwined the wood' (*ac cur ₇ ac feccadh ₇ ac figi ind fedha*), and hence was named Fidfecach (< *fid* 'wood' + *fecad* 'bending') or Figfec (< *fige* 'intertwining' + *fecad* 'bending').

The last entry of the section devoted to Eógan, §40, discusses the name Mug Nuadat and represents an attempt to create Eógan's *macgnímrada* — an obvious desideratum for a heroic biography. As the legend goes, young Eógan is in the fosterage by Dáire Barrach son of Catháir Már. The latter decides to build a fort, Dún nAillinne, and gives this task to an excellent rath-builder Nuadu Sálfota son of Óengus, a man of supernatural strength and size. When builders are digging the ditch, they come upon a large boulder, and Nuadu is not able to lift it. The young men of the fort, including Eógan, see him failing; Nuadu asks them for help. Everyone refuses, except Eógan alone. He lifts the boulder and puts it on the southern corner of the fort where it has been ever since. The druid, who witnesses that, says: "A freeman is your slave today, Nuadu" (*Is sáer do mhodh aniugh, a Núadha*). Hence, Eógan gets the nickname 'Nuadu's slave', Mug Nuadat.

Discussing textual sources for Eógan's sobriquets, Arbuthnot (2005: 65–6) focuses primarily on *CML* and *TM*. She summarises the ideas of Jackson that the part of *CML* which describes Eógan's marriage in Spain derives from *TM*, although the phrasing of the episode which concerns the wedding of Eógan and Bera, is closer to the first part of §38 in *CA3*. In the same entry, the salmon is caught by Éber, king of Spain, which contradicts *CML* and *TM*, where the salmon is caught by Eógan's wife; the compiler of *CA* apparently used a different version of the story. §40 in *CA3* derives from a certain version of the legend about Eógan's childhood, which was also employed in the

compilation of *CML*. The name of Eógan's foster-father in *CA3* is Dáire Barrach, and Eógan receives his nickname Mug Nuadat after a rath-builder Nuadu Sálfota. In *CA2*, Nuadu is Eógan's foster-father and the son of Dáire Barrach. *CML* follows *CA2* and portrays Nuadha Derg mac Dáirine as Eógan's foster-father (Jackson 1938: 1). Besides, in *CA3* Eógan is said to assist in building the fort of Dún nAillinne, while in *CML* the fort is said to be in Mag Femin in Munster, the place where the prince meets three messengers in *TM*. Having discussed this evidence, Arbuthnot (2005: 66) states that "Jackson's conclusion (that *CA3* and *CML* made use of different versions of the same material) was a safe minimal claim." She, however, estimates that "the architect of *Cath Maige Léna* consulted a copy of *CA3*", and there is no doubt that §38 in *CA3* "draws on a text of *Tochmarc Moméra*." According to Arbuthnot (ibid.), the relationship between the three sources (*TM*, *CML*, *CA3*) can be summarised as follows:

> *CA3* itself draws on a text of *Tochmarc Moméra* but prefaces the episode concerning the salmon with a scene-setting paragraph in which Éiber's daughter is called Bera. Presumably, this paragraph was necessitated by the extraction from the *Tochmarc* of the material specific to the explanation of Taídlech, and one would think that *CA3* provided the perfect occasion for such an enterprise. *Cath Maige Léna* also refers to Eógan's wife as Bera and is close in wording to the introductory passage found in *CA3* but absent from the text we have of *Tochmarc Moméra*. I am not sure what Jackson was referring to when he claimed that *CA* contains an anomalous account of the salmon-wool cloak. At any rate, that *Tochmarc Moméra* was the main source of this episode in *Cath Maige Léna* is not in dispute.

The influence between the sources serves as internal evidence for dating *TM*. Jackson has dated *CML* to the second half of the thirteenth century or early fourteenth century. Arbuthnot (2005: 72) argues that the non-linguistic evidence "would place *CA3* in the thirteenth century, perhaps the first half", and *CA2* is dated to the latter part of the twelfth century. According to Ó Corráin, *DBIE* is a tenth-century tract. Since the compiler of *CA3* has deployed *TM* as a written source of information for his compilation, this gives us the beginning of the thirteenth century as a *terminus ante quem* for our tale. The chronological axis, therefore, is as follows:

DBIE (tenth century)

↓

TM (based on mention in LL — not later than middle of the twelfth century)

↓

CA2 (late twelfth century)

↓

CA3 (first half of the thirteenth century/ mid-thirteenth century)

↓

CML (second half of the thirteenth century or the beginning of the fourteenth century)

Editorial Policy

My aim is to make available a new semi-diplomatic edition of *Tochmarc Moméra* in order to include this long neglected tale into modern scholarship. My main principle has been to respect the manuscript text and avoid undue interference. All expansions of *n*- and *m*-suspension strokes, contractions and lenited consonants are italicised. I hope that the resulting italics will not be thought excessive but will give a reader a proper impression of how contracted the manuscript is. I have also silently supplied missing length-marks using the *síneadh fada*. Capitalisation, punctuation, word-division and text layout are largely editorial. I have made no attempt to normalise the text, and the manuscript spellings have not been altered. Supplied letters have been enclosed in square brackets; round brackets indicate scribal errors like superfluous words and letters; superscript letters and words are enclosed in angle brackets. Transcription of the manuscript was performed by accessing the high resolution digital photos of the manuscript pages created by the ISOS project (Irish Script on Screen), based at the School of Celtic Studies of the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies and made available online at https://www.isos.dias.ie. I also wish to express my gratitude to the staff of the Manuscripts & Archives Research Library in Trinity College Dublin for their generous assistance in accessing the Yellow Book of Lecan. While translating the text, I tried to find a balance between staying faithful to the Irish original, on the one hand, and producing a readable translation, on the other. Added words are enclosed in square brackets.

Edition

From TCD MS 1318 (H 2.16), cols. 341–3.

1. {col. 341.1} Fecht n-óen d'Eógan Taídlech *for* faithche baile a ath*ar* fésin, Moga
Néit, hic Ráith Ai*rth*i*r* F*h*emin. Nirba cían dó *co n*-accai t*rí* m*a*ccóemu chuige and hi
cend na faigthe.

'Ron-bendachut do c*h*óengní*m*a a m*a*ccóeim,' a*r* síat.

5 'Rob saml*aid* dúib-se a m*a*cu,' a*r* ésium.

'Is óebi*n*d duit,' a*r* íat.

'Is óebi*n*d écin,' a*r* sé. 'Lib-se ba*r* cuid don oíbnes hí-sin,' ba*r* Eóg*an*.

'Nach fit*ir* cid túsa a m*ei*c,' a*r* íat-som, 'in t-óebni*us* fil a n[d]án duit?'

{341.10} 'Ní fil lium a fis cose,' a*r* sé.

10 'Fil a f*h*is acai*n*de duit,' a*r* na m*ei*c.

'Dá ainm bát*ar* fo*r*t cu*s*a ndíu. Biaid i*n* tres ain*m* fo*r*t anossa ⁊ amensat do s*h*íl a*r* Ér*inn*
.i. gébaid do s*h*íl a*r* Éir*inn* ⁊ ní genast*ar* duit-si co ngébut. Dáig ní faigbe-su céli *nó* cu
rois sruth Ébir i nEspáin ⁊ corub and fogéba-su céli ⁊ is ead í-side ingen ríg Espái*ne* ⁊ co
*m*béra-side duit-si cethrar clai*n*de ⁊ *co m*bia láech díb ⁊ mescuid a s*h*íl f*or* Éir*inn* feib ad-
15 rubr[a]*m*ar fe*cht* n-aill rias trá[t]h-<sa> ⁊ biaid láech díb ⁊ bid búaid (buaid) laích díb
im*morro* ⁊ beit dá c*h*óemrígain s*h*uaic*h*inte sai*n*emla díb-s*id*e ⁊ ba sead a n-an*m*anna i*n*
cethrair {341.20} sin .i. Ailill i*n* m*a*c bad sine díb ⁊ bid Cóemell i*n*gen Eóga*i*n b*us* nesa
dó ⁊ bid Lugaid b*us* nesa diseni ⁊ bid f*or*iumda lechta láech les*id*e ⁊ bud ead fochlucc
brui*n*de bias fa deoid an*d*, Sco[th]niam i*n*gen Eóg*ain* ⁊ ardai-siu f*or*a ce*n*d .i. da h-
20 ía*rr*aid a mucha laí ⁊ laithe amba*r*ach.'

'Canas tá*n*ic dúib-se <fis> fai*r* sin a m*a*cu?' a*r* Eógan.

'Ní *hannsa*. T*rí* m*ei*c An*n*tipate*r* i*n* druád sinde a hEspáin ⁊ am-sói-seic f*or*a r*ús* fis feib
do-chuaid fair. Ad-cuas don ríg .i. ro-in*n*is dó ⁊ is an*n*sin ad-b*er*t-som:

'Dó dam, [a Fh]a[t]haid, f*or* ésiu*m*, a*r* Éber, a*r* ríg Esp*á*i*n*e, ⁊ íarfaid da*m* don druíd can
25 cúan *nó* cen*él nó* ciniud *nó* cla*n*d don fir {341.30} do-b*ér*a an ing*h*en mbic ucut fil f*or*
m'fíad*nais*e .i. mo i*n*gen fén.'

1. Once upon a time Eógan Taídlech was on the green of the homestead of his father, Mug Néit, at the Fort of Eastern Femin. It was not long before he saw three young men coming in his direction onto the green.

'May your fine deeds bless us, O young man,' said they.

'The same to you, O young men,' said he.

'It is a pleasure for you,' said they.

'It is a pleasure indeed,' said he. 'You [also] share in this pleasure' said Eógan.

'Do not even you know, O young man,' said they, 'the pleasure which is in store for you?'

'I do not have the knowledge of it so far,' said he.

'We have the knowledge of this for you,' said the young men.

'You had two names up to this day. Now you will have a third name. And your descendants will attack[11] Ireland, that is, your descendants will rule over Ireland, and ...[12] For you will not find a wife until you reach the Ebro River in Spain, and there you will find her. She is a daughter of the king of Spain and she will bear you four children. One of them will be a warrior, and his descendants will attack Ireland, just as we have already said before this time. And there will be [another] warrior, and he will be a victorious warrior among them then. And there will be two beautiful queens, distinguished and excellent, among them. These would be the names of the four: Ailill will be the eldest son, and Cóemell, daughter of Eógan, will be next to him. Lugaid will be next to her, and many warriors will die by his hand. And the youngest[13] of the womb, which will be the last there, is Scothniam, daughter of Eógan. Go to her, that is, to ask her for her hand at daybreak tomorrow.'

'How did you know this, O young men?' asked Eógan.

'Not difficult. We are three sons of Antipater the Druid from Spain. He interprets through his great wisdom the knowledge just as it came upon him. This was related to the king, that is, he told him, and then he [the king] said: [Go] away for me, O Fáthe, said he, said Éber, said the king of Spain, and ask the druid for me of which family, or kin, or race, or clan is the man who will take that small girl yonder who is in front of my eyes, that is, my own daughter.'

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[11] The translation of the obscure form *amensat* is tentative. I will discuss this form in more detail in the linguistic analysis below.

[12] I left the phrase *ní genastar duit-si co ngébut* untranslated and will discuss my decision in the linguistic analysis.

[13] Lit. *fochloc*, *fili* of a lower grade. See Breatnach 1987: 111.

2. 'Is an*d* do-chuad*us*a ₇ as-b*ertus* f*r*isin druíd fátsi*n*e <do dénam> don ríg fo dála a inge*n*i ₇ am-sáe *in* druí i f*or*mna a fessa ₇ ro-faillsiged dó comad a h-inis Cesrach céle a ingi*ne* .i. a hÉr*inn*.'

'Cía fúath fir a hÉir*inn* dia tibri*n*d-sea m'i*n*gen?' a*r* Éb*er*.

5   'Con-ticfa fer amra,' a*r* in druí, 'a h-in*d*se m*ac* Mil*ed* dot s*h*aigid ₇ ro-gabsat .uii. sent*r*ícha dec a*r fich*it in i*n*dsi níam ad-buileat.'

'C*esc*[14] *con*-ti(ti)cfa?' a*r* Éb*er*.

'I*n* úai*r* rach*thair* uait a*r*a chea*n*d,' a*r* in druíd.

'Cuir-si te*ch*ta f*or*a chend,' a*r* Éb*er* f*r*isi*n* druíd, 'co h-ai*r*m hi fil i*n* m*ac*cóem gellai.'

10   3. {341.40} 'Ro-chuir i*n* druíd a t*r*í m*e*ic ₇ ba s*ead* a n-an*m*an*n*a s*id*e .i. Fáthe ₇ Fis ₇ Fírin*n*e. Is a*n*dsin ad-b*ert* i*n* druíd ri*n*de techt a*r* do chen*n*-sa ₇ tai*r* li*n*d a mucha láei amba*r*ach ₇ na clui*n*ed soch*aid*e uaid ₇ na clui*n*ed t*r*á side, i*n*gen Ech*aid*, do m*athai*r, daig nít-léicfea f*or* ton*n*aib ma*r*a dia clui*n*ed.'

'Ergid, a m*a*cu, feib t*h*éit cách isi*n* dúnad nderm*á*ir-sin anu*n*d co mucha láei imba*r*ach ₇
15   ricub-sa da ba*r* saigid f*r*i dumach*aib* d*er*id*h* láei.'

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[14] MS *cs̄*, s.v. eDIL *cesc*

2. 'Then I went and told to that druid to make a prophecy for the king about the lot of his daughter. And the druid reflected in the depth of his knowledge, and it was revealed to him that the husband of his [the king's] daughter will be from the Island of Cesair, that is, from Ireland.'

'How does the man, to whom I would give my daughter, look?' asked Éber.

'A wonderful man,' said the druid, 'will come to you from the island of the Sons of Mil, and they have conquered thirty-seven ancient cantreds on the splendid island where they are.'[15]

'When will he come?' said Éber.

'When you send for him,' said the druid.

'You send messengers for him,' said Éber to the druid, 'to the place, where the young man that you promised lives.'

3. The druid sent his three sons, and their names were Fáthe, Fis and Fírinne.[16]

'And then the druid told us to go to you. Come with us early tomorrow morning. And do not let many people hear about this from you, and, therefore, do not let her hear, the daughter of Echaid, your mother, for she will not let you go upon the waves of the sea if she were to hear it.'

'Go, O young men, as everyone does, into that great fort over there until tomorrow morning, and I will come to you in the twilight at the end of the day.'

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[15] O'Curry gives a detailed explanation of these thirty seven cantreds in a footnote on pp. 154–5. According to the poem which he cites on p. 106 of his edition, Munster had seventy cantreds; thus, according to *TM*, the race of Éber to which Eógan belonged possessed half of the territories in the province.

[16] 'Prophecy, Knowledge, and Truth'.

4. Do-chuat*ar* isin dúnad ₇ búi-siu*m* a*r*a clesaib clui*the*-muige co d*er*ed láei. Luid ía*r*sin co h-ai*r*m i mbat*ar* na m*a*ccóeim. Bat*ar* an*n* co mucha lái ₇ ro-gabsat na m*eic* láma fair {341.50} um dula leo. Téit i*n* m*ac* a*r* fert fódmaige ₇ tiagait na m*eic* ele na degaid .i. m*eic* in druád.

5 'Maith, a m*eic*,' a*r* síat, 'in tici i lleth ro-gellais?'

'Regat écin,' a*r* sé.

'Cía lín ticfa?' a*r* síat.

'Ní raga *acht* mise ₇ m<o> .u. comalta su*n*d: Ut ₇ Óena*r*a ₇ Fiacha Suigthi m*ac* Fedl*imid* Rechtada ₇ Aiglend m*ac* ríg Osraige comalta ele da*m* ₇ ía*r*si*n* Magur m*ac* ríg desc*er*t
10 Ér*enn* diatá Glend Mag*h*air i*n*diu ₇ Gaiscedach m*ac* ríg ía*r*m[u]*m*an co*m*alta ele da*m* ₇ Tigernach m*ac* ríg *Connacht* co*m*alta ele da*m* ₇ Mosad mo gilla diatá Mag Mosaid.'

5. {341.60} Am-sóset f*or sét* co h-ai*r*m a mbói long na m*a*ccóem ₇ is an*n* bói-s*id*e in Dún na mBár*c* a n-ia*r*th*ar* Ér*enn*. A*m*-sóset rompu a*r* munci*n*d ma*r*a a nónba*r* m*a*ccóem ₇ lot*ar* an oidche-sin co hI*n*dsi na Fai*r*csina. Is ai*r*e d*a*no ad-b*er*ar Inis na Fai*r*csina ría-
15 s*id*e úai*r* it-cith*er* esti Éir*inn* ₇ Espái*n*. *Con*-fóiset in aidche-sin isin oilén-sin.

6. Ad-b*ert* in ríg isi*n* maidin-si*n* risi*n* druíd:

'Finta dúi*n*d imth*ús* na m*a*ccóem do-chuat*ar* uai*n*d f*or* munci*n*d ma*r*a.'

'Ro-f*etar*-sa ón duit-se si*n*,' a*r* sé. 'Is anné {342.1} táncat*ar* a*r* fe*cht* ₇ *con*-febut ano*ch*t i *n*Espáin.'

20 'Is éat táncatar[17] a*r* fe*cht*.

Is caín ta*r*that a tuide*cht*.

Con-lethfa a síl a*r* Mag*h* F*h*ail,

Fir *con*-foí ano*ch*t i nEspáin.'

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[17] MS *ta˜ic*. I will discuss my emendation in the linguistic analysis below.

4. They went into the fort, and he was performing his feats at the playing-field until the end of the day. Then he went to the place where the young men were. They stayed there till the early morning, and the young men enjoined him to go with them. The young man went upon a burial mound built of sods, and the other young men, sons of the druid, followed him.

'Well, O young man,' said they, 'are you coming where you promised?'

'I will indeed,' said he.

'How many will come?' said they.

'Only myself and my five foster-brothers: Ut, Óenara and Fiacha Suighthi, son of Feidlimid Rechtaid; and Aiglend, son of the king of Ossory, my other foster-brother; then Magur, son of the king of the southern part of Ireland, from whom Glend Maghair [is called] nowadays; and Gaiscedach, son of the king of western Munster, my other foster-brother; and Tigernach, son of the king of Connacht, another foster-brother of mine; and Mosad, my servant, from whom Mag Mosaid [is called].'

5. They set out on the way to the place, where the ship of the young men was, and it was in Dún na mBárc[18] in the west of Ireland. The nine young men set forth upon the expanse of the sea, and they went that night to Inis na Faircsina.[19] The reason why it is called Inis na Faircsina is because Ireland and Spain are seen from it. They spent the night on that island.

6. In the morning, the king said to the druid:

'Find out for us the fate of the young men, who have gone from us upon the expanse of the sea.'

'I have sought that for you,' said he. 'Yesterday they started their journey, and tonight, they will spend the night in Spain.'

'It is them who have come on a journey.
Their arrival happened smoothly.
His descendants will spread over Magh Fhail [i.e. Ireland],
Of a man, who spends the night in Spain tonight.'

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[18] 'Fort of the Boats'
[19] 'Island of the View'

7. Do-chuata*r* na lu*ing* íarsin ₇ róiset co cal*ad* Esp*áin*e. Buí frestal ₇ f*r*itháil*em* f*or*ra ₇ ruc*ad* co dú*n*ad ríg Esp*áin*e .i. cu Tor mBreogai*n* i nEsp*áin.* Ro-f*er*ad fáilte mín muint*er*dhai f*r*iu. Ro-freslait ₇ ro-f*r*itháilit íat. T*u*cad núa bid dóib ₇ sean lenda. Batar i*n* oidche-sin an*n* ₇ nir-h-i*m*ráided riu i*n* chai*n*gen fo ndechata*r* ₇ d*an*o nir-imráidset ri nech.

5 'Maith a m*ei*c,' a*r* Fiac*h*a {342.10} Suigt*h*i a Eógain, 'dia n-aba*rth*a*r* f*r*it-sa tabai*r*t na mná tiaga*r* uait-se d'agall*aim* i*n* druád ₇ gellta*r* séoit dó ₇ maíne ₇ abrad na fil sén fessi co cend mbl*íadn*a an*n* co rabu*m* ic déscin na h-ingine co cend mbl*íadn*a co f*h*inda*m* bés i*n* tíre aneóil i tanc[a]*m*ar.'

10 'Fata liu*m*-sa si*n* a gilla,' a*r* Eóg*an*.

8. Inbaid bata*r*-s[o]*m* ui*m*e si*n co n*-acata*r* te*cht*a i*n* ríg chuca.

'Mait*h* a m*a*ccóema,' ba*r* na techta, 'cui*n* do-géntai-si i*n* ní risi ta*n*cuba*r*?'

'Ni h-acaind atá a fu*r*ech it*ir*,' a*r* Eóg*an*, '*acht* in úai*r* b*u*s accoba*r* lasi*n* ríg.'

Is an*n*sin do-chuaid a t*hecht*a co ai*r*m i rrobe i*n* rí ₇ ro-indis dó frecc[o]*r*a i*n* m*a*ccóei*m* 15 fai*r.* Is an*n*sin ro-ía*r*f*a*c*h*t {342.20} i*n* rí don drúid ro-buí i*n*a fa*rr*ad:

'Cui*n* bud maith sén fessi dóib?'

'Is sí mo chabuis na fuigéb dóib sén is ferr i*n* ano*ch*t. Tíagu*m* isi*n* tech i tátt na m*a*ccóeim.'

Do-chuaid i*n* rí ₇ mait[h]i Esp*áin*e ui*m*e isi*n* tech i rrabuta*r* na m*a*ccóei*m* ₇ ía*r*f*a*cht a 20 cen[é]l*a* uile díb ₇ ía*r*u*m* ro-in*n*iseta*r* dó ma*r* tá ro*maind* anúas.

7. Then they went into their ships and rowed to the shore of Spain. Warm welcome and attendance were [given] to them, and they were brought to the fort of the king of Spain, that is, to the Tower of Bregon in Spain. A courteous and friendly welcome was given to them. They were entertained and well-served. Fresh food and old ale were brought to them. They spent the night there, and the matter, because of which they came, was not mentioned to them; and neither did they mention [it] to anyone.

'Well, O young man,' said Fiacha Suighthi to Eógan, 'if you are told to marry this woman, send the messengers to talk to the druid. Let treasures and gifts be promised to him, and let him say that there is no luck for the marriage until the end of the year, so that we might observe the girl till the end of the year [and] learn the customs of the unknown country in which we came.'

'I think that long, O young man,' said Eógan.

8. While they were [talking] about it, they saw the messengers of the king approaching them.

'Well, O young men,' said the messengers, 'when will you do the thing, for which you have come?'

'We do not delay this at all,' said Eógan, 'but when the king wishes.'

Then his messengers went to the place where the king was, and told him what the young men replied to him. Then, the king asked the druid who was beside him:

'When will there be a good luck for their marriage?'

'I swear that I will not find any better luck for them than tonight. Let us go to the house where the young men are.'

The king, and the noblemen of Spain around him, went to the house where the young men were, and asked all of them about their families, and they then told him, just as it was previously [related] above.

9. Is andsin do-ró*n*ad a lám ₇ a lep*aid* ₇ níro chui*n*chit séoit *nó* ma*í*ne fai*r*.

'A m*a*ccóemu,' a*r* i*n* ríg, 'dá tiss*ed* b*ar* comlín-si chugam-sa do chui*n*chid *sét nó* maíne *nó* i*n*dmais do-b*é*rai*n*d-si dúib ₇ maithbet a tin*n*scc*r*a ₇ toch*r*a na h-i*n*gine út dúib.'

Is andsi*n* do-cuas isin slúaig-tech na soc*h*{342.30}aide ₇ ro-gab*ad* fled ól ₇ to*m*alt*us* léo a cor*n*aib ilbreca ecoir ₇ a h-escraib f*or*órdaib ₇ a cúach*aib* findruine úai*r* ba breth ca*ch* br*í*ath*ar* dóib. Ro-dérgit iu*m*dada saine*m*la dóib ₇ do-chuat*ar* i*n*a n-i*m*dadaib ₇ na lepthaib ₇ ro-chanaid a cíuil ₇ a n-ai*r*fitid dóib.

10. Bat*ar* an*n* i*n*a n-i*m*dad*h*aib cor lín g*r*ían tulcha ₇ túaithebra Esp*á*ine. Bat*ar* an*n* t*r*í lá ₇ t*r*í h-aidche. Áeibnes acu ca*ch* lá, ól ca*ch* n-aidche. Hi ci*n*d t*r*í laa *co n-*aidche ro-dáilit séoit ₇ ma*í*ne ₇ i*n*dm*us*a don i*n*gein. A n-i*m*th*ús* ó sen amach nocon ed do-b*erar* f*or* ai*r*d. *Acht* bat*ar* co cend mbl*í*a*dna* i nEsp*áin*.

11. Sruth f*or* lár Esp*á*ine. Sruth nÉbir a ainm ₇ ca*ch* *secht*mad <bl*í*a*dna*> tic in*n*ti-sene bradán(a) {342.40} o díamraib na ndúl ₇ ola*n*d t*r*it-s*i*de ₇ is andsi*n* ad-b*ert* i*n* dru[í]d *cét*na:

'I*n*diu atá i *n*dán a fagbáil i*n* ní dia *m*bia i*n* tres ain*m* a*r* th'fer ₇ a*r* do chéli ₇ eirg dochu*m* i*n* t[s]rotha i*n*diu .i. srotha Éb*ir* ₇ i*n*diu atá i *n*dán in bradán do thuide*cht* a*n*d ₇ .uii. mbl*í*a*dna* c*us*a i*n*diu tánic ₇ gab*a*r acu<t>-sa hé ₇ ben a ola*nn* de.'

Ó ra-búi Lígbratach i*n*gen ríg Esp*á*ine su*n*d ₇ .iiii. bl*í*a*dna* atu*r*ra si*n* ₇ t'at*h*air-se ₇ *dixit*:

'Erig don tsruth a ai*n*der,
Con-ciuchlast*ar* i*n* chai*n*gen,
Co tibre ass tl*acht* cen meth,
Bid de bias Eó*g*an Taíglech.'

9. Then the marriage was celebrated, and neither valuables, nor treasures were asked for from him.

'O young men,' said the king, 'if your company had come to me to ask for jewels, or gifts, or treasures, I would have given them to you. And I will excuse you [from paying] the dowry and the bride-price of the girl yonder.'

Then [the company] went to the troop-house of the host. They held a feast of drinking and eating from speckled adorned corns, and golden vessels, and goblets of white bronze; and each word of theirs was a command. Excellent beds were prepared for them, and they went to their beds and cubicles, and their songs and tunes were sung for them.

10. They stayed there in their beds until the sun filled the hills and the mounds of Spain. They were there three days and three nights, celebrating every day and drinking every night.[20] At the end of three days and nights, jewels, gifts and treasures were bestowed upon the girl. Their story from now on is not what should be brought forward; but they remained in Spain till the end of the year.

11. There is a river across the middle of Spain. Its name is the Ebro River, and every seventh year a salmon from the mysterious places of Creation comes into it, and wool [grows] on it. Then the same druid said:

'Today it is destined to obtain something, from which there will be the third name for your husband and your companion. Go to the river today, that is, to the Ebro River, and today it is destined that the salmon will come there, and [it has been] seven years before today [that] it came. And you should catch it and cut its wool from it.'

Since Lígbratach, daughter of the king of Spain, was there, and four years between her and your father,[21] and he said:

'Go to the river, O woman,
The claim will be heard
So that you would bring from it a garment without decay,
From it will be Eógan Taídlech.'[22]

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12. Am-sói docum in tsrotha ⁊ da-rónadh airceist accu arin mbradán gur gabad léo hé ⁊ ro-benad de in tlacht búi fair co nderna sí brat dia fir {342.50} don olaind bói arin mbratán ⁊ batar na h-uile dath ind isin bratán-sin.

In lathi con-gebed-s[o]m in brat uime in dath do-aidbistea don fir búi ina farrad, ni hé ro-taispénta don fhir bud nesa dó-sein. Is andsin fegais in rí fair ⁊ in inbaid ro-fheg toídliges uile hé itir, étach²³ ⁊ erred.

'Darm bréthir,' ol in rí, 'is com-thoídlech ria brat ule Eógan anossa.'

'Cían otá i toicthi ⁊ i tarrngaire,' ar in drúi, 'in t-ainm-sin do beith fair-sium ⁊ biaid fair nogo fhadba bás ⁊ aiged .i. Eógan Toídlech ⁊ bid ainm íartain dó Eógan Fid[fh]ecach.'

13. 'Mithid lem-sa,' ar in mac, 'dul dom crích ⁊ dom orba ⁊ dom [fh]erann.'²⁴

'Eirg a meic,' ar in drúid, 'for muncind mara. Caín térnais ⁊ atá {342.60} th'athair for do chind ina flathus ⁊ ber do bancéli ⁊ ni bethi acht .ix. n-aidche i nErinn in úair beras in gein fil fo bruinde ⁊ bid lán beóil fer nÉrenn de.'

Tucait séoit ⁊ maíne ⁊ indmusa dóib-sium. Batar ann co mucha láei ⁊ lathi íar n-abarach.

'Tánic nert don sheón ⁊ don tsolud,' ad-rubairt in drúid riu.

Ocus am-sóiset ina longaib ⁊ ro-línait .ui. longa léo ⁊ tánic in drúid chuca ic dula ina longaib ⁊ tuc a ucht arin luing i rroibe Eógan {343.1} ⁊ at-bert fris:

'Bid mór fích cáich riut isin crích hi tégi dáig ni lécfi-se Erinn do neoch ⁊ ni lécfea nech Éirinn duit ⁊ nos-roindfithi edruib hí.'

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²³ MS *ect*. I emend an obscure form *ect* to *étach* in order to preserve alliteration with *errad*. Another option might be to emend *ect* to *erc* 'salmon'. I will discuss this exemple in more detail below.
²⁴ MS spelling *erban~*, with *punctum delens* above and below *b*.

12. She went to the river, and a trap was made for the salmon, so that it was caught and the skin which was on it was cut from it. She made a cloak for her husband from the wool that was on the salmon, and all colours were in that salmon.

The day the cloak would be put on him, the colour, which would be displayed to the man who was beside him, was not the same that was shown to the man who was nearer to him. Then the king looked at him, and the moment he looked, he [Eógan] all became shining, [his] raiment and vestment.

'Upon my word,' said the king, 'Eógan is as shining now as his whole mantle.'

'For the long time it has been destined and prophesied,' said the druid, 'that he will have this name, and he will have it until he finds his death, that is Eógan Taídlech (The Shining), and afterwards his name will be Eógan Fidfhecach.'

13. 'I deem it time,' said the young man, 'to go to my country, my patrimony, and my land.'

'Go, O son,' said the druid, 'upon the expanse of the sea. You have got safely through, and your father is in his royal power before you. Take your wife, and you will be but nine nights in Ireland when she will give birth to an infant, which is in her womb. And the mouths of the men of Ireland will be full [of praise] of him.'

Jewels, gifts and treasures were given to them. They stayed there till the early morning of the next day.

'Omen and luck became strong,' said the druid to them.

And they went into their ships, and six ships were filled with them. The druid came to them when they were going into their ships; he approached the ship where Eógan was, and said to him:

'Great will be the enmity of everyone towards you in the country where you are going, for you will not leave Ireland to anyone, and the one will not leave Ireland to you, and she will be divided between you.'

14. Táncat*ar* fai*r*end .ui. long lais do neoch búi f*or*a c*h*ur fén 7 f*or*a thú*a*r*us*tal *con*id an*n* gabsat hic Dún C*h*orcan a n-í*a*rm[u]*m*ain. Am-sóset í*a*rsi*n* hi tír 7 ro-hi*n*dised fo Éir*inn* a tor*acht*ain 7 ba ríg Ér*enn* f*or*a chi*n*d-so*m* Cathai*r* Mór 7 í*a*rsin t*r*á ro-faíded te*cht*a uad d'acall*aim* ríg Ér*enn* 7 ro-cuinced c*r*ích uadib fai*r*.

5 'Do-bér-sa inad dúine dó i cóiced Cond*acht* 7 do-bér dá dún dó {343.10} a dá cóiged M[u]*m*an.'

*Con*id a*n*dsin t*u*cad Dubthelach dó hi cóiged C*on* Rí 7 t*u*cad Drui*m*m nA*r*d dó hi cóiced *Conacht* 7 t*u*cad Telach i*n* tSlóig dó hi nUib Liatháin.

15. Tánic Eóg*an* í*a*ru*m* dia fégad na n-inad t*u*cad dó 7 gabais doét a h-idan 7 lámanda in 10 i*n*gen 7 ruc m*ac* sainem*ail* 7 ad-rubai*r*t i*n* drúid:

'Bid oll ndáile do-béra a*r*na c*r*íchaib ui*m*me.'

Ocus ro-baisded a srothaib druíde*cht*a 7 t*u*cad Ailill fai*r* 7 biaid f*or*tórmach anma fair í*a*rtain. Et do-roacht a athai*r* fén 7 ro-gabad léo-so*m* in dúnad 7 i*n* deg-á*rus* do thochul 7 rucad i*n* m*ac* co dúnad a m*atha*r-s[o]*m* fén 7 a ath*ar* 7 ro-benad lesiu*m* i*n* 15 f*h*id{343.20}baid i co*m*fo*cus* dó gu ra-tochl*ad* leis i*n* tal*am* dí 7 ba bec leiseo*m* fu*r*med a llám na láech co *m*beth fu*r*med a cos mar aen ris. *Con*id é scrúdan aicenta fuai*r*-siu*m* fecca do thabai*r*t a*r*na fedaib búi i llámaib na láech.

16. 'Is hí a*r* cobais ce*n*a,' a*r* m*ac* i*n* drúad, 'is i*n*diu atait t'an*m*anda ule f*or*t do*n*a feccaib út t*u*cad a*r*na fedaib acut bad Eóg*an* Fidf*h*eca*ch* de 7 do-génta*r* let na t*r*í dúine 20 t*u*cad duit 7 Fidfeccai ai*n*m ce*ch* dúine díb 7 co ngéba leth Ér*enn* ule léo.'

17. As lir tuirem a scél ó sin amach. *Con*ad tochma*r*c Moméra ingeine ríg Espáne dia*r* fói re hEóg*an* Toídlech 7 genemai*n* {343.30} Ail*i*lla Oluim indsin *et reliqua*. Finit. Am*en*.

14. The company of six ships came with him, of those who were under his own protection and his pay. They landed at Dún Corcan in West Munster. Then they went to the land, and their arrival was told all over Ireland. Catháir Mór was the king of Ireland before him. Afterwards, therefore, messengers were sent from him to address the king of Ireland, and the territory was requested of him by them.

'I will give him the site of a fort in the province of Connacht, and I will give him two forts in the two provinces of Munster.'

And it was then that Dubthelach[25] was given to him in the province of Cú Roí, Druimm nArd[26] was given to him in the province of Connacht, and Telach in tSlóig[27] was given to him in Uí Liatháin.

15. Then Eógan went to look at the places which were given to him, and the pangs of child-birth and parturition seized the girl, and she gave birth to the finest boy. And the druid said:

'Great will be the septs, which he will bring to the regions around him.'

And he was baptised in druidic streams, and [the name of] Ailill was given to him; and he had a sobriquet after that.[28] And his own father came, and they started digging up the entrenchment and the noble residence. The boy was taken to the fort of his own mother and his father. And he cut down trees, which were near him, so that he dug up the earth with them. And the effort of the hands of the warriors seemed small to him, unless the effort of their feet was [used] along with it. So, he had a natural thought[29] to place spikes on the trees which were in the hands of the warriors.

16. 'We swear indeed,' said the son of the druid, 'that today you have all your names: from the spikes yonder, which you placed on the trees, you will be Eógan Fidfhecach. And you will build the three forts, which were given to you. Fidfeccai will be the name of each of them, and you will conquer the half of the whole of Ireland with them.'

17. More numerous than can be recounted are the accounts[30] of their stories from now on. This is the courtship of Moméra, daughter of the king of Spain, when she married Eógan Taídlech, and the birth of Ailill Olum *et reliqua. Finit. Amen.*

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[25] 'Black Mound'

[26] 'High Ridge'

[27] 'Mound of the Host'

[28] The audience of the tale, of course, knew that Ailill's nickname was Aulomm.

[29] *aicenta* 'natural' is a derivative of *aicned* 'nature; natural law'; I will discuss this notion below.

[30] *lir* (equative of *il* 'many') probably represents here the late usage of a petrified equative in comparative sense.

Chapter 1

Language and Date

Linguistic analysis of *TM* has recently been the subject of a master thesis by Anouk Nuijten (University of Utrecht). She has discussed general features of the language and has dated the text to the late Middle Irish period, without ascribing a more precise date (Nuijten 2016: 26–32). Her edition of the text is accompanied by textual notes where individual words and forms of interest are addressed in greater detail (ibid.: 37–87). Although Nuijten's master thesis contains some mistakes and, therefore, should be consulted carefully, her overall analysis of verbal forms is thorough and comprehensive. For this reason, not to repeat the work which has already been done, I will limit myself to a brief overview of the main linguistic features of the text. Referencing the examples in the text, I provide the paragraph and the line in that paragraph as given in my edition.

1.1. Orthography

The orthography of the text is mixed and inconsistent which is typical for Middle Irish manuscripts (and in general, for spelling systems in medieval manuscripts in other European languages as well). The most noticeable Middle Irish features[31] of the text are as follows:

- fluctuation of *g/d* (*taíglech* for *taídlech* (11.11), *aiged* for *aided* (12.9), *fhadba < fo-gaib* (12.9));
- *b/m* (*túaithebra* for *túaithemra* (10.1));
- *a/o* (*dam* for *dom* (1.23, 4.8, 4.9., 4.10), *da* for *do* (1.18, 3.6), *da-rónadh* (12.1), *rabum* (7.7), *rrabutar* (8.8), *cabuis* for *cobais* (8.7); *oilén* for *ailén* (5.4));
- preposition *oc* is spelled *(h)ic* throughout the text (1.1, 7.7, 13.7, 14.2);
- *co-* is occasionally spelled *gu-/ gur-* (12.1, 15.7), *go-* (*nogo* (12.8));
- in one instance, pres. pass. sg of the verb *ad-cí* is spelled *it-cither* (5.4);
- in constructions of the preposition *i* + possessive pronoun *a* (*ina*), *i* is occasionally dropped (*na degaid* (4.3); *na luing* (7.1); *na lepthaib* (9.6));
- preposition *i* is often spelled *a* (*a n-iarthar* (5.2); *a n-íarmumain* (14.2); *a srothaib* (15.4)).

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[31] Uáitéar Mac Gearailt discusses the twelfth-century Middle Irish orthographic features in Mac Gearailt 1992: 172–9.

1.2. Article

The Old Irish system of articles was considerably simplified at the end of the Middle Irish period with only three forms left: *in* (nom. sg. masc., nom. sg. fem., gen. sg. masc.), *in t-* in front of the vowels, and *na* (gen. sg. fem., nom. pl., gen. pl.). These three forms are used throughout the text; the Modern Irish form of the article *an* is attested once in *an inghen* (1.24). Neuter article is not featured in the text.

1.3. Noun

Neuter gender is not attested in our text. The former neuter nouns are treated as masculine and preceded by article *in* in nominative and genitive singular (e.g. *in tres ainm* (1.10) < *ainm* (n, n); *in tíre aneóil* (7.7) < *tír* (s, n)).

The only possible reflex of neuter gender is found in the toponym *Sruth nÉbir* (11.1) where the nasalisation of the second element might be caused by the fact that the noun *sruth* (u, m) was originally a neuter *u*-stem. It should be stressed, however, that nasalising *sruth* with proper names appears in later texts and may be seen as a stylistic convention rather than an indication of age. Cf. in *SR*: *o sruth nEofrait* (Stokes 1883: 39).

1.4. Pronoun

Independent pronouns are abundantly used in the text, the development which was settled ca. 1150; cf. for example, their usage as subjects in passive constructions (*ro-fritháilit íat* (7.3); *gabar hé* (11.6); *gabad léo hé* (12.1)).

- independent 3 sg. masc. pronoun is *sé* (1.6, 4.5, 6.3) or *ésium* (1.4, 1.23), with emphasising particle *-som*, which is a typical spelling in later manuscripts;
- independent 3 sg. fem. pronoun has a form *í/ sí* (1.12; 8.7, 12.2);
- independent 3 sg. neut. pronoun is spelled *ed/ ead* (1.12, 1.17) and also in its Middle Irish spelling *sead* (1.15, 3.1);
- independent 3 pl. pronoun is featured in its Middle Irish form *íat/ síat/ éat* (1.3; 1.5, 4.4; 6.5) derived from the Old Irish 3 pl. pronoun (*h*)*é* with the 3 pl. ending of finite verbs.

There are, however, three instances of infixed pronouns in our text. The first of them, 1 pl. in the form *ron-bendachut do chóengníma* (l. 3), literally 'may your fine deeds bless us', is technically used correctly, although the meaning of the phrase is likely to be

'may we bless your fine deeds'. The second pronoun is used correctly in the *f*-fut. 3 sg. form of the verb *léicid*, *nít-léicfea* (l. 3.3), 'she will not allow you'. The third case is mixed: in the 2 pl. *f*-fut. form of the verb *rannaid*, *nos-roindfithi hí* (13.10), 'you will divide her', the infixed pronoun -*s*- might be the 3 sg. fem. pronoun used correctly, in which case the addition of the independent object pronoun *hí* is a hypercorrection; most likely, however, -*s*- used alongside *hí* is an asemantic pleonastic pronoun characteristic of the Middle Irish period when the pronominal system was undergoing considerable changes. Cf. in the Book of Leinster: *dos ratais…íat* 'you have put them' (LL 35207), *nos beir…íat* 'she bears them' (LL 2549) (McCone 2005: 193).[32] Strachan (1904: 168–9) explains -*s*- in such constructions as proleptic, and connects the extended usage of -*s*- with the gradual replacement of the infixed pronoun by the independent one: "in late texts -*s*- itself is a literary survival, and is often inserted where it has no meaning" (ibid., 176).

1.5. Verb

The main innovative features of the verbal system of the text are as follows:

- Old Irish compound verbs are generally replaced by simplexes. These simple verbs are either derived from a verbal noun or from a prototonic form which later gains absolute verbal endings. The majority of verbs start being treated as weak verbs; thus, the *s*-preterite, *f*-future and *ā*-subjunctive expand and replace other types of formations such as, for example, reduplication, etc. Deponent verbs are treated as active verbs.

An interesting example is 1.22 where the form *ad-cuas*, OI pret. pass. sg. of the verb *ad-fét* 'tells' is glossed as *.i. ro-innis*, 3 sg. augmented preterite of the Middle Irish simplex *indisid*, derived from the verbal noun *indisin* of *ind-fét*, which replaces *ad-fét* in Middle and Modern Irish; cf. *ro-indis dó* (8.4). Probably, OI *ad-cuas* was already not clear for the scribe who supplied a more updated verbal form as a gloss. Among other examples are: *ro-chuir* (3.1) < *cuirid* < *do-cuirethar/ fo-ceird* 'puts, places'; *cluined* (3.3, 3.4), 3 sg. subj. of the deponent verb *ro-cluinethar* 'hears' which is treated in Middle Irish as an active verb and adapts the stem *cluin-* in subjunctive; *ro-fritháilit* (7.3) < *fritháilid* < *fris-áilethar* 'receives, entertains'; *nir-h-imráided*, *nir-imráidset* (7.4) < *imráidid* < *imm-rádi* 'thinks of, discusses'; *ro-íarfacht* (8.5), *íarfacht* (8.8) < *íarfaigid* < *íarmi-foich* 'seeks after'; *ro-chuinchit* (9.1), *ro-cuinced* (14.4) < *cuingid* < *con-dïeig* 'asks'; *ro-*

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[32] See also Mac Gearailt 1996: 182.

chanaid (9.6) < *canaid* 'sings' is treated as a simple verb with augmented preterite instead of original reduplicated preterite; *ro-taispénta* (12.5) < *taispénaid* < *do-aispéna* 'shows'; *ra-tochlad* (15.7) < *tochlaid* < *do-claid* 'digs'.

- Middle Irish 1 sg. fut. ending *-at/-et* is found in the form *regat* (4.5), 1 sg. fut. of the verb *téit*. This termination is derived from the Old Irish 1 sg. fut. absolute ending *-a* with a petrified suffixed neuter pronoun *-t* (Thurneysen 1933b; McCone 1985: 97; Breatnach 1977: 104–6).

- In the preterite, deponent endings spread to active verbs, as in *ro-innisetar* (8.9).

- The 1 sg. *s*-preterite ending *-us* spreads to verbs which originally did not have *s*-preterite, cf. *do-chuadusa* (2.1) and *as-bertus* (2.1) (note also that in the latter the original preverb *as-* is preserved as opposed to *at-bert* with a petrified infixed pronoun).

- Past tense is generally expressed by augmented preterite with prefix *ro-*, originally a perfective preverbal particle. There is, however, no instances of using the Modern Irish preverb *do-* in the preterite forms.

- The ending of preterite passive is generalised as *-ad/-ed* in singular and *-ait/-it* in plural. In the Middle Irish period, passive forms were assimilated to those of weak verbs and absolute endings were eliminated in favour of conjunct ones (cf. OI pass. pret. sg. *gabthae*, *-gabad*) (Nuner 1958–9: 269). Note that special plural passive forms are generally lost in Middle Irish and the universalised preterite passive forms with *-ad/-ed* termination are used in both singular and plural (Jackson 1990: 109, 111). However, although our text makes a distinction between singular and plural preterite passive forms, the plural preterite passive ending *-(a)it* is a Middle Irish innovation. Liam Breatnach (1994: 308) notes that there are no instances of this ending in *SR*, but cites some examples from *Togail Troí* which suggests that it may already have appeared by the eleventh century.

In singular: *ro-faillsiged* < *foillsigid* < *foilsigidir* 'reveals' (2.2); *ro-ferad* < *feraid* 'grants' (7.2); *nir-h-imráided* < *imráidid* 'thinks of, discusses, mentions' (7.4); *ro-benad* < *benaid* 'hits, beats' (12.2, 15.6) instead of older passive *-bíth*; *ro-hindised* < *indisid* 'tells' (14.2); *ro-faíded* < *foídid* 'sends' (older pret. pass. pl. form *foíte* (Mac Gearailt 1996: 154)) (14.3); *ro-baisded* < *baistid* 'baptises' (15.4); *ra-tochlad* < *tochlaid* 'digs' (15.7).

In plural: *ro-freslait*, *ro-fritháilit* < *frestlaid* 'attends to, entertains', *fritháilid* 'receives, entertains' (7.3); *ro-dérgit* < *dérgaid* 'spreads, makes a bed' (9.6); *ro-dáilit* < *dáilid* 'portions out' (10.2); *tucait* < *do-beir* 'brings' (13.5); *ro-línait* < *línaid* 'fills' (13.7).

- 2 pl. future of *do-gní*, *do-géntai-si* 'you will make' (8.2), is a Middle Irish form with future ending *-thai/-tai*, as opposed to Old Irish form *do-génaid*.
- In Middle Irish, prototonic forms of original compound verbs are used in independent positions instead of the deuterotonic forms, and get absolute endings. The preterite form of *beirid* is the perfective form *ruc* (15.2): in Middle Irish, *ruc-* has completely replaced preterite forms as a past tense. Cf. also preterite passive *do-rónad* (9.1) < *do-gní* which presents the deuterotonic form, but preterite passive *tucad* (7.3, 14.7, 14.8, 15.1, 15.4, 16.2) < *do-beir* shows the independent usage of the prototonic form.

1.6. Glosses

TM contains a few scribal glosses for earlier or corrupted forms which were evidently unclear for the scribe. These forms look like the most unequivocal evidence for the existence of an earlier version. Interestingly, all of them are incorporated in the very beginning of the text, and §1 in my edition contains most of the linguistic difficulties.

Amensat do shíl ar Érinn .i. gébaid do shíl ar Éirinn (1.11–2).

The verbal form *amensat* here represents a problem. It was clearly incomprehensible for the scribe who glossed it with a 3Sg future form of the verb *gaibid*. Another 'gloss' occurs a few lines below. The statement *mescuid a shíl for Éirinn feib ad-rubr[a]mar fecht n-aill rias trá[t]h-<sa>* 'his descendants will attack Ireland, just as we have already said before this time' (1.14-15) seems to refer to this clause implying that *amensat* is somehow equivalent to *mescuid*, as both phrases convey a similar idea. The verb *mescuid ar*, *for* means 'rushes, attacks', and *gaibid for* means 'attacks, assails, overtakes, rules over'. Both phrasal verbs are, therefore, synonyms, and *amensat* must have meant something similar.

Judging by the fact that the verb *imm-sói* is represented in our text as *am-sói*, we might surmise that *am-* in the beginning of *amensat* is also a variant of this prefix. Could it be something like *am-[m]esc(s)at*, provided that the cluster *-sc-* might have been

misspelled as *-n-*? In this case *-s-* preceding the ending *-at* also poses a problem, as the phrase evidently refers to future events and hence, *s*-preterite verbal form does not fit semantically. Cf., however, the examples from *eDIL* where the verb *mescaid* is used in similar contexts: *ticfait Genti ... mescfait for ferand hErind* (LL 309a55); *tancatar clanna Caim co rus-mesc[s]at fo oraib in talman* (BB 411a510).

If indeed *amensat* stands for something like *am-mescfait* 'they will attack', the plural form of the verb is also problematic. Why is there 3 Pl ending when the subject is in singular, *do shíl*, 'your race, your progeny'? It is obvious that the form as it stands is corrupted in many ways and was as unclear to the scribe as it is to us. I have tentatively translated the phrase as 'your descendants will attack Ireland, that is, your descendants will rule over Ireland' on the basis of the phrase *mescuid a shíl for Éirinn* which seems to be meant to clarify the preceding verbal form *amensat*.

Ní genastar duit-si co ngébut (1.12).

Another corrupted and obscure form appears a few lines below. After the three visitors predict that Eógan's children will attack and conquer Ireland, they say *ní genastar duit-si co ngébut*. *Ní genastar* also refers to *do shíl* and hence, here there is the same problem of a plural verbal form accompanying a subject in singular. Moreover, the ending *-star* indicates the preterite which makes little sense in the prophecy of the future.

We might try to amend the MS form *-genastar* to *-genatar* (3 pl. pres. subj. conj.); but while the rationale for this emendation is sound from the morphological point of view, the clause still makes no sense. If the verbal form is present subjunctive, we need to translate the clause 'and they may not be born to you so that they will take (rule)'. The conjunction *dáig* 'for' in the beginning of the next sentence implies that it should logically follow on from the previous one, but in fact this again does not seem to make any sense. Thus, I suppose that this clause is sufficiently corrupt. Since as it stands, it does not fit into the text, I decided that the best option would be to leave it untranslated.

Ardai-siu fora cend .i. da h-íarraid a mucha laí (1.19–20).

The next gloss in our text explains an obscure verbal form *ardai*. It might in fact be the same form as *artai* which we find in *Aided Énfhir Áifi*, 'The Death of Conla' from YBL,

edited by Kuno Meyer and ascribed by him to the ninth century: *artai o riad cnis focloc ...* (Meyer 1904a: 118). Meyer left the phrase untranslated, although *eDIL* (s.v. *artai*) suggests the translation 'turn away' based on the proto-form **ar-to-só-*. *eDIL* also notes the verb *ardaid* 'rises', derived from *ard* 'high', but its 2Sg imperative form would be *ard* and not *ardai*. Nuijten understands *ardaisiu* as *ardaig(h)isiu*, derived from *ord(d)aigid(ir)* 'to order, command', which would be a passive form with suffixed 2Sg emphasizing personal pronoun (Nuijten 2016: 42). Her explanation, however, seems to me too far-fetched.

I was considering a possibility to amend obscure *ardai* to *atraí*, 2Sg imperative form of the verb *at-reig*, 'rises, goes'; in this case, the form *ardai* could show a metathesis or simply a scribal error. However, *atraí* is an Old Irish form, and the 2Sg imperative of *at-reig* used elsewhere in our text is a later form *erig* 'rise, go' (11.8) or *eirg* (13.2). Hence, I decided to avoid any emendation and leave the verb as it stands in the MS, *ardai*. Since the following *ar chenn* 'towards, in the direction of, to meet' is usually used with the verbs of motion, I have translated *ardai* accordingly, simply as 'go'. Note, however, that my translation is only approximate.

In my defence I would say that *ardai* was not clear to our scribe either. He glossed this form with *íarraid*, verbal noun of *íarraid*, 'searches, demands, seeks', so that the resulting phrase means something like 'go towards her, that is, to search for her'. I have translated the phrase more specifically, however, as 'to ask her for her hand', because, although vn. *íarraid* might mean simply 'seeking; searching; asking', it seems to be used here in its more precise meaning as 'an act of seeking in marriage' (see e*DIL*, s.v. 1 *íarraid*).

Ad-cuas don ríg .i. ro-innis dó (1.23).

The last gloss in our text clarifies the Old Irish form with the help of a later Middle Irish one. *Ad-cuas* is a preterite passive singular of the verb *ad-fét* 'tells, relates' which was replaced in Middle and Modern Irish by the verb *indisid*. Here the verb *indisid* has the form of augmented preterite. I have translated accordingly: 'this was related to the king, that is he told him'.

1.7. Style

1.7.1. Alliterating Collocated Synonyms

In terms of style, *TM* is not the most ornamented text. It does not have elaborate descriptions, metaphors or *roscada* that we find in other early Irish tales. However, among the characteristic features of our text one can name the abundance (for a relatively short piece of literature) of collocated alliterating synonyms. In such cases, two alliterating nouns with similar or same meaning are paired together and express a common idea. Alliterating combinations are typical of Early Modern Irish prose; the style, however, was well established in the twelfth century (Mac Gearailt 1992: 168).The list of these pairs is as follows:

- *cúan nó cenél nó ciniud nó cland*, 'family, or kin, or race, or clan' (1.25).
- *Buí frestal ⁊ fritháilem forra*, 'Warm welcome and service were [given] to them' (7.1); *Ro-freslait ⁊ ro-fritháilit íat*, 'They were entertained and well-served' (7.3).

Verbal nouns *frestal* and *fritháilem*, as well as respective verbs *frestlaid* and *fris-áilethar* (probably, here in its simplified form *fritháilid*), are synonyms and express the same idea of 'welcoming; serving; ministering to; entertaining'. My translation is only approximate, but I translated them differently trying to show the nuances of meaning implied in these words.

- *Do-rónad a lám ⁊ a lepaid*, 'Then the marriage was celebrated' (9.1).

Lit. 'their hand and their bed were made', the first part of the sentence probably refers to joining hands in marriage. In this context, *lám* and *lepad* function as collocated alliterating synonyms denoting 'marriage'; since the literal translation makes no sense in English, I have chosen to translate the sentence paraphrastically, in accordance with the general idea of Eógan's marriage being decided and celebrated.

- *a tinnsccra ⁊ a tochra*, 'the dowry and the bride-price' (9.3).
- *cor lín grían tulcha ⁊ túaithebra*, 'the sun filled the hills and the mounds' (10.1).

- *Cían otá i toicthi ⁊ i tarrngaire*, 'For the long time it has been destined and prophesied' (12.8).

Toicthiu literally means 'fortune; fate' and *tairngire* means 'promise; prophecy'. Prepositional constructions *i toicthi* 'destined' and *i tairngire* 'prophesied' here represent another pair of alliterating synonyms.

- *Tánic nert don sheón ⁊ don tsolud*, 'Omen and luck became strong' (13.6).

Sén 'sign; omen; portent' is a borrowing from Lat. *signum*, and *solad* means 'omen; good fortune'. Here these synonyms are probably collocated in order to stress the favourable conditions for Eógan's departure.

- *in dúnad ⁊ in deg-árus*, 'the entrenchment and the noble residence' (15.5).

The word *dúnad* means 'fort, entrenchment', and the word *deg-árus* represents a composite of *deg-* and *arús* literally meaning 'good-building'. I suppose that the adjective *dag-/deg-* 'good' was prefixed to the word *árus* in order to bind these words by alliteration.

The last example represents my own emendation. After Eógan starts shining, we find that the glow spreads upon his *ect ⁊ erred* (12.6). The latter means 'apparel, dress, attire', while the first word is obscure. However, judging by other examples of alliterating pairs in our text, *ect* should be synonymous to *erred*.

O'Curry emends *ect* to *cucht*, 'form, apperance' (O'Curry 1855: 162). Although this word fits semantically, the problem with O'Curry's emendation is that we lose alliteration. Nuijten (2016: 75) thinks that *ect* could be interpreted as *erc*, which she, following Mícheál Ó Flaithearta, understands as having the semantic range "from 'shine' to 'sky' to '(bright) shape/form/appearance'". However, *DIL*, to which Nuijten does not refer in this instance, does not list the meaning 'form, apperance' among the meanings of various (homonymic?) *erc*'s. It does, nevertheless, list a few animals denoted by this word. Among them is a cow, a lizard, a bee and, interestingly, a salmon. The reason for this is probably the existence of an adjective *erc* meaning 'speckled', and we find a gloss *earc .i. bradán* in the example from O'Clery's glossary.[33] If *ect* might really be emended to *erc*, would this not be a better option? The word 'salmon' in this context could function metonymically referring to the salmon mantle as a whole. In *TM*, the words *erc* 'salmon (mantle)' and *erred* 'vestment' could be regarded as synonyms, very similar to word-pun expressed in the etymological association between the words *brat* 'cloak' and *bratán* 'salmon' which I will discuss in the following chapter.

In my edition, however, I have emended *ect* to *étach*, 'covering, raiment, clothing, a garment'. This word is semantically neutral and fitting in the context, and it is important that it does not require a lengthy explanation as does the emendation to *erc* above. My main rationale is that the noun *étach* is acknowledged in the Irish tradition as a synonym of *errad*: in fact, *errad* is often associated and juxtaposed with *étach*, see examples in *eDIL*, s.v. *errad*. Therefore, such emendation seems to be the most reasonable and safe.

1.7.2. Non-Alliterating Collocated Synonyms

There are instances in our text when two collocated synonyms are not bound by alliteration:

- *sét*, *maíne* and *indmais* 'treasures; gifts; valuable objects' (9.2–3, 10.3, 13.5). My translation of the passage as 'jewels, gifts and treasures' is approximate.
- *bás ₇ aiged*, 'death and violent death' (12.9);

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[33] *eDIL*, s.v. *3 erc*.

- *dul dom crích ⁊ dom orba ⁊ dom [fh]erann*, 'to go to my country, my patrimony, and my land' (13.1). Cf. in *TBC*: *is acainne fuarais crích ⁊ ferand ⁊ forbba* (Windisch 1905: 859).
- *gabais doét a h-idan ⁊ lámanda in ingen*, 'the pangs of child-birth and parturition seized the girl' (15.1–2).

1.7.3. Idioms

Our text contains two idiomatic expressions which were disregarded by previous editors. The first one appears in the episode when the young men are asking Eógan to go with them to Spain. As the text goes, *ro-gabsat na meic láma fair* (4.2). O'Curry translates this sentence as 'and the youths laid hands upon him' (O'Curry 1855: 157). Nuijten has 'and the young men put (their) hands on him to go with them' (Nuijten 2016: 51). The idiom *gabaid láim for*, lit. 'put a hand upon', however, has a meaning 'enjoins; entreats someone to do something'. For this reason, I think that the best way to translate this clause is 'and the young men enjoined him'.

The second phraseological unit in *TM* is an expression *tuc a ucht*, literally 'brought his breast' (13.8). This idiom describes the druid going to Eógan's ship. O'Curry translated it as 'put his breast to the ship' (O'Curry 1855: 163); Nuijten translates similarly as 'he put his breast on the ship' (Nuijten 2016: 77). However, *do-beir ucht ar*, lit. 'brings breast before', has the sense of 'approaches, faces, advances towards'. I translate accordingly: 'he approached the ship'.

An expression *co/ a mucha lái* occurs in our text five times (1.20, 3.2, 3.5, 4.2, 13.5). The noun *mocha*, *mucha*, 'earliness; an early time (hour, etc.)' is used here adverbially with preposition and means something like 'early in the day'. It is used in the text as a formula simply denoting 'in the morning'. Another formulaic expression is *ar muncind mara* (5.2, 6.2, 13.2) which means 'upon the surface on the sea' and refers to travelling by sea crossing the aquatic border between Ireland and Spain.

The last thing I would like to mention is the usage of the word *oíbnius* 'pleasure, enjoyment, enjoyment, festivity'. In the opening dialogue, the young men ask Eógan, '*Nach fitir cid túsa a meic in t-óebnius fil a n[d]án duit?*', 'Do not even you know, O young man, the pleasure which is destined for you?' (1.8). This 'pleasure' is subsequently revealed in the prophecy about the power and glory of Eógan and his progeny. In the second time, this word is curiously echoed in the description of the wedding feast: *Áeibnes acu cach lá, ól cach n-aidche*, lit. 'they had pleasure every day and drinking every night' (10.2). Thus, we can see that the prophecy is fulfilled and that the starting point for Eógan's prosperity and luck is his marriage.

1.8. Miscellania

- Preposition *fri* is replaced by *re* which is a Middle Irish innovation (*ad-bert rinde* (3.2), *ad-berar ría-side* (5.3); *risin* (6.1); *riu, ri nech* (7.4)).
- The peculiar feature of *TM* is the unusual application of the verb *am-sói* (OI *imm-sói*) 'turns, rotates', with the Middle Irish spelling of the preverb *imm-*. In our text, this verb either refers to mental activity of the druid in the sense of 'interprets', or denotes the movement, replacing verbs like *téit, ro-icc, do-icc* in the meaning 'goes, comes, arrives'. Cf. *am-sóset* (5.1, 5.2, 14.2), *am-sói* (12.1), *am-sóiset* (13.7) in the meaning 'comes, goes'. I would suggest that the usage of *am-sói* in these atypical context might be either stylistic — the compiler was trying to ornate his text using an unusual verb instead of neutral *téit* or *do-icc*, — or dialectal. We know very little of possible Middle Irish dialectal distinctions but they surely existed and, probably, in compiler's dialect *am-sói* might have been used as a verb of motion. When this verb refers to the mental activity of the druid (cf. *am-sói-seic fora rús fis feib do-chuaid fair*, 'he interprets through his great wisdom the knowledge just as it came upon him' (1.22–3); and *am-sáe in druí i formna a fessa* 'the druid reflected in the depth of his knowledge' (2.2)), it might be the same verb of motion as elsewhere but used in metaphorical sense. In fact, verbs of motion can sometimes describe the way the druids receive and interpret their knowledge. Cf. the following line from the tale 'The battle of Findchorad': **lottar** *iaramh na dróithe a … nghin a bhfis ₇ a n-éolus* 'then the druids went … their knowledge and their learning" (Dobbs 1923: 398-9).
- *Dó dam, [a Fh]á[t]haid* (1.24). I have amended an obscure phrase *do damahaid* found in the MS and translated it as '[Go] away for me, O Fáthe'. *Dó* in this

sentence is an adverbially used preposition *do* in its 3Sg. m/n form, 'thither'. This adverb causes ellipsis of verb, and is normally followed by *do* and personal pronoun to express motion onwards or away. *eDIL*, s.v. *2 dó*. Cf. a similar phrase in *TBC II*: *dó dam-sa go Fíngin fáthlíaig* (LL 3657), translated by O'Rahilly as 'go for me to Fíngin the seer-physician' (O'Rahilly 1967: 101, 236).

- *Is éat táncatar ar fecht* (6.5). The verbal form in the MS is *tanic*. I amend *tanic* to *táncatar* because the line as it is seems to be one syllable short, and the verb in singular does not agree with the subject in plural, *éat*. The form *táncatar* restores the seven-syllable structure of *deibide* and agrees with the preceding prose which states *Is anné táncatar*.

- The translation of the line *Is caín tarthat a tuidecht* (6.6) in the first of druid's poems as 'their arrival happened smoothly' is approximate. I surmise that the verbal form *tarthat* derives from *do-airret* 'reaches; arrives' (or from a later simplex *tár(r)thid*, *tair(r)thid*, *tarraid*), but I am not sure which form is used here. We might probably suspect **tarthad*, pret. pass. sg. form, but I doubt that the meaning 'it is beautiful that their arrival/coming is reached' makes sense. Alternatively, *tarthat* might represent the noun *tairthiud* 'story, account, description'; in this case, the whole meaning of the phrase becomes much clearer: 'Beautiful is the story of their arrival'.

- Another obscure verb in our text is *con-foí* used in the sense 'spends the night', cf. 3Pl. pret. *con-fóiset* (5.4), 3 pl. *b*-future *con-febut* (6.3), *con-foí* (6.8). *Con-* here is probably a relative particle. Cf. *Fir con-foí anocht i nEspáin*, 'Of a man, who spends the night in Spain tonight' (6.8).

- *Róiset co calad Espáine* (7.1). MS has *roiset* which might look like the form of the verb *ro-saig* with the subjunctive stem *rois-* (cf. *co roiset*, *SR* 4281). However, subjunctive does not fit into the clause semantically. What we probably have here is the later 3Pl. preterite of the verb *ráïd* 'rows', *ráiset*. I have silently supplied the vowel length and translated accordingly.

- *Is andsin do-cuas* (9.4), 'Then [the company] went'. *Do-cuas* is a perfect passive of *téit*, which literally gives 'it has been went'.

- *Batar na h-uile dath ind isin bratán-sin* (12.3). *Dath* here may preserve the old neuter plural, but the following *ind* 'into it' is obscure.

- In terms of the script, an interesting example in our text is the form *ricub-sa*, 'I will come', 1 sg. *b*-fut. of the verb *ro-icc* (Figure 4).
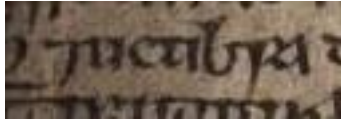
Figure 4, YBL, col. 341, line 46.

In his edition, O'Curry (1955: 156) has *acus tucubsa* 'and I shall come', which, I presume, represents his amendment of what he transcribes as *₇ ucubsa*. Nuijten (2016: 48), following O'Curry, reconstructs *₇ (t)ucubsa*, and states that "the verb here poses a problem" (ibid.: 49). What we have here in fact is a ligature of *7* 'ocus' and *r*, two letters sharing the vertical stroke. O'Curry mistakingly interpreted the upper stroke of *r* as the first minimum of *u*, which gave an obscure *ucubsa*. When we look closer at the manuscript, however, we can notice that this first 'minimum' is a little bit inclined to the left, something which Ó Cuindlis never does (cf. the straight first minimum of a real letter *u* after *c* in the same form). The correct transcription gives *ricub-sa*, a 1 sg. future form of *ro-icc*, attested, for example, as *ro-n-icub* in the Würzburg glosses (*eDIL*, s.v. *ro-icc*).

1.9. Conclusions

Although there are certain linguistic difficulties, which for the most part occur, as we have seen, in the opening paragraphs, the language of *TM* is not exceedingly difficult and is relatively unified, meaning that there are no drastic fluctuations between early and late forms.

Speaking of orthography, there is always the issue of distinguishing between spelling features which are authorial and were introduced by the scribe and those copied from the exemplar. The scribe of *TM*, Murchadh Ó Cuindlis,[34] seems to be on a conservative side. Judging by the spelling system of the texts which he copied in *Leabhar Breac*, and of the two eighth-century legal tracts immediately preceding *TM*, Murchadh preserves early spellings from his exemplars. In YBL, the difference in spelling between these

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[34] I discuss the scribe and the manuscript context of *TM* in a greater detail in Chapter 3.

Old Irish tracts and the following text of *TM* is indeed striking, which indicates that the late spelling features in *TM* were almost certainly in Murachadh's exemplar.

With regard to morphology, the reduced system of articles; simplified and unified verbal system; loss of neuter gender, etc. unambiguously point toward the Middle Irish period. More specifically, the widespread use of independent pronouns rules out the early Middle Irish date and gives the middle of the twelfth century as the *terminus post quem*. On the other hand, there is still a distinction between singular and plural forms of preterite passive. As John Carey argues (2003: 12–3), "although an example of the use of a sg. preterite passive verb with plural subject occurs in *Saltair na Rann*, the usage does not appear to be otherwise attested earlier than the first recension of *Acallam na Senórach*." This statement would suggest that *TM* is linguistically earlier that the *Acallam* composed ca. 1225, which provides us with the *terminus ante quem*.[35] This is supported by the evidence of *CA3*, compiled in the beginning or middle of the thirteenth century. As I have mentioned above discussing the sources of Eógan's legend, one of the entries in *CA* incorporates the material from *TM*, and it can only mean that our tale was already in existence by the time of the tract's compilation. On this basis, I would date the composition of *TM* to the last half of the Middle Irish period, ca. 1150–1200.

The extralinguistic evidence complies with linguistic dating: *TM* is mentioned in the genealogical tract in the Book of Leinster copied by Áed mac Crimthainn whose scribal activity is dated by Elizabeth Duncan to the years 1151/1163 (Duncan 2012a: 58).[36] In Chapter 3, I would argue that the copy of *TM* was most likely once contained in LL, and the late language of the tale indicates that it might have been compiled for this codex in particular.

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[35] Anne Dooley supported Nuner's dating in her discussion of the tale's historical context stating that the *Acallam* was compiled during the reign of Cathal Crobderg Ua Conchobair (ca. 1190–1200, 1202–24) and his son Áed mac Cathail (1224–8) (Dooley 2004: 103). More recently, Anne Connon elaborated Dooley's ideas concluding that 'it may be that the writing of the *Acallam* spanned the reigns of Cathal Crobderg and his son, or that the whole text was written after 1224' (Connon 2014: 54).

[36] The later stratum of the linguistic features of *TBC* Recension II from LL (Mac Gearailt 1992; Mac Gearailt 1997) bears similarities to the language of *TM* which, I suppose, could be dated to the same period. By this comparison, however, I do not mean that *TM* from LL (if it indeed was once copied there) was Murchadh's source: as I stated above, the folios which might have contained *TM* must have been lost before the fourteenth century. I believe that Ó Cuindlis copied the text from a later manuscript, or considerably edited it, as the verbal system of *TM* is suspiciously unified and exhibits very little archaic features. Áed mac Crimthainn, on the other hand, had a conservative attitude and, because of his age and status, was more inclined to retain archaic literary standards (Mac Gearailt 1992: 203–4).

Another option would be to surmise the existence of an earlier text which was reworked in the middle of the twelfth century and included in LL.[37] Although Middle Irish innovations prevail in our text, it also features earlier linguistic forms, like *ad-cuas* or *nít-léicfea* (Old Irish future *-ea* (*léicfea*) would give way in Middle Irish to *-at/ -et* (*léicfet*)), which might have been preserved from an earlier version.[38] However, the number of early forms is not sufficient to postulate with any level of certainty an earlier date of the original compilation. As Kevin Murray (2012: 41) explains,

> when a text displays a combination of earlier and later linguistic forms…[o]ne point of view would see the earliest surviving linguistic forms as indicative of the date of original composition of the core narrative. This viewpoint can be supported if sufficient early examples are attested in the text. A second point of view would see the latest dateable linguistic forms as reflecting the date at which the extant version of the text was reworked and given its final form.

A strong evidence for the existence of an earlier version, as I discussed above, is provided by inserted glosses for early verbal forms which were evidently unclear for the scribe. However, although the proportion of earlier and later forms in *TM* allows saying that there might have existed an Old Irish/ early Middle Irish prototype which eventually has been reworked in the twelfth century, no any further information can be induced. One would expect that if the Old Irish version indeed existed, the two *deibide* stanzas would have been preserved from the original, but the first poem features Middle Irish 3 pl. pronoun *éat*, and the second one starts with the 2 sg. ipv. *erig* 'rise, go' < *éirgid* < *at-reig* (cf. OI 2 sg. ipv. *atré*, *atraí*). Both poems are written in a language similar to that of the surrounding prosaic text and do not seem to have been composed earlier. In his short manuscript, Murchadh Ó Cuindlis has faithfully copied other texts which are securely dated to the late eleventh or twelfth century, for instance, *Fled Dúin na nGéd* and *Aided Muirchertaig meic Erca*. *TM* seems to belong to that period too.

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[37] The twelfth-century fervour toward reworking and elaborating early Irish tales is discussed in Murray 2014.

[38] I should stress that while *nít-léicfea* and *ad-cuas* are Old Irish forms, they are also well attested in later Middle Irish: cf. *nichat-léicfider* (*LL* 6873) and *feibh adcuas* 'as was foretold' in the twelfth-century *Cogadh Gaédhel re Gallaibh* (Todd 1867: 98). I find it significant, however, that in our version of *TM*, the form *ad-cuas* is glossed as *.i. ro-innis*, but this was probably added by the fourteenth-century scribe.

Chapter 2
Literary Analysis

In their foreword to 'Ulidia 2', Ruairí Ó hUiginn and Brian Ó Catháin (2009: vi) noted that one look at the bibliography of the volume is enough to realise how much we still rely on the editions produced by Windisch, Stokes, Thurneysen and Meyer over a century ago; ultimately, the editors stressed the paramount importance of textual editing. Editing is crucial for establishing a reliable text which can then become the subject of literary criticism. "A pressing need to analyse the extant texts as literary works in their own right" was voiced by Tomás Ó Cathasaigh (1984: 292). The necessity of the study of literary content, as well as the importance of editing and re-editing of texts, was also repeated in Ó Cathasaigh (1996: 55–7). Ralph O'Connor advocated this idea in the introduction to his all-embracing literary study of *Togail Bruidne Da Derga*. As O'Connor (2013a: 4) stresses, literary monographs focused almost exclusively on a text *per se* are "an extreme rarity" in the field of Celtic Studies, mainly because "Irish sagas' status as 'literary works' has been laid open to question" (ibid.: 5).[39] As he continues, sagas "have typically been seen as parables with clearly defined 'messages' for their target audience, ranging from political claims to moral or religious principles." However,

> in densely woven sagas … aesthetic and political concerns are inseparable … the richer and more complex the tale, the greater the need today for literary-critical groundwork to clarify its textual strategies … before the historian can confidently identify any ideological purposes or undercurrents the tale may have (ibid.: 6).

Clearly, *TM* is a shorter and less impressive text than the epic tragedy of the *Togail*. This does not mean, however, that our text is less complex. As I will try to demonstrate, despite its briefness, the tale houses many motifs which shed light on the notions of kingship and acquisition of power. For certain reasons which I will explain in due course, some of these motifs (e.g. journey to the Otherworld, or sacred marriage) were not expressed explicitly. There are reasons to believe, however, that the contemporary audience was nevertheless able to discern available context clues, which indicate certain motifs, and to interpret them correctly. Modern readers, however, will certainly need guidance to fully comprehend the tale.

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[39] The lack of literary criticism for Irish medieval literature is also referred to, for instance, by Hollo who writes about an extensive discussion of *Fingal Rónáin*, stressing that "the fistful of secondary sources" on this literary piece "is a welcome anomaly" (Hollo 2004: 141).

The content and the manuscript context of the tale suggest that it was compiled as a political scripture and represented a historical document. However, the political agenda of the compilers does not exclude the possibility to analyse the text as a literary compilation. I favour following this approach, employing the methodology of literary criticism. After all, the compiler skilfully arranged the well-known motifs inherent to the Irish tradition and enhanced them with allusions to other texts so that the resulting work lacks neither style nor dramatic tension; and his achievement is worth analysing in its own right. In the words of Morgan Tomas Davies (1996: 23), "early Irish literature cannot be properly understood as 'historical documentation' unless it is first understood as literature." Ralph O'Connor (2013a: 336–7) also warns against the purely functional analysis of the early Irish narratives:

> To approach these texts solely from the point of view of celebrating semiotic indeterminacy or the illusory nature of textual integrity would risk depriving these understudied and much-misunderstood narratives of any literary-critical legitimacy whatever, by unwittingly feeding the much more old-fashioned view that their aesthetic strategies are by definition irrelevant or non-existent. In this book, I have sought to show that these sagas are worth considering as 'literature', and to show that their narratives have been constructed with great technical skill and with specific designs on their audiences.

Since O'Connor's work is one of the rare purely literary monographs devoted to a particular tale, I will confine myself to his approach and produce a tripartite analysis of the text, first considering the place of the tale in native literary tradition, then discussing the possible Biblical allusions and finally proceeding to the analysis of contemporary historical and political contexts in which the tale might have functioned. I will also pursue the same goal of "arriving at a provisional understanding of what the author of a specific text was up to (consciously or unconsciously), without using the resulting interpretation to deny legitimacy to subsequent interpretations and reinterpretations of the text" (O'Connor 2013a: 337). The ability of medieval texts to be re-opened and re-interpreted, as well as to be analysed in multiple (and potentially unlimited) number of ways, was recently voiced by many scholars. This ability partly results from the medieval authors' intertextual approach to compilation. Allusions to other narratives provide texts with a high level of semantic density, which means that a tale can be interpreted from different perspectives and can reveal more and more hidden overtones and undercurrents.

The notion of intertextuality in medieval studies was defined by Neil Wright (1995: vii) as "the way in which early medieval writers' medium and message could be informed by and interact with other texts which they had read and which would, for the most part,

also have been familiar to their audience." This approach was used, for example, by Clodagh Downey in her analysis of intertextual references of the tale *Echtra mac nEchach Muigmedóin*. Downey examines "overt exchanges between literary texts", i.e. borrowings from other texts verbatim or allusions to similar situations in other literary works. As she explains,

> importing from other texts could in this case have the effect … of relocating a particular discourse and of influencing the text's pragmatical meaning, in the sense of its function and relationship with its audience. If we can assume consciousness of the sources on the part of the audience, then the foregrounding or highlighting of the borrowings (achieved by a kind of textual homophony), and not only the information that those borrowings carry, may be part of the message. Thus, a text may microcosmically assimilate the interests, purposes and perspectives of other texts into its own fabric in an economic and efficient synthesis (Downey 2004: 79–80).

In a recent article, Hugh Fogarty also analysed the tale *Aided Guill meic Carbada* ⁊ *Aided Gairb Glinne Rigi* from the point of view of its intertextual complexity, understood as "direct or mediated allusions to other texts" (Fogarty 2014: 189).[40] The author has also discussed a question of the manipulation of literary genre, noting that this particular tale stands out from other *aideda* and "contravenes generic principles, breaking the 'rules of the game'" (ibid.: 192).

As I will try to show, the original titles of the medieval generic classification can sometimes be misleading when it comes to interpreting a text; and *TM* is not an exception. In general, the borders of medieval genres are often blurred, "and the very question of genre, or, rather, the applicability of this category to the Irish saga narration, is … still unlikely to be solved with much certainty" (Mikhailova 2014: 230). One of the most notable examples of a deceptive title is, perhaps, the tale *Taín Bó Fraích*, which "for the greater part is rather a story of the "wooing" type (*tochmarc*)" (Meid 2015: 20). Many translators, therefore, ignored the original title and preferred to rename the tale in accordance with its main theme (e.g. Thurneysen's *Fraechs Werbung um Finnabair* (1901); Meid's *Die Romanze von Froech und Findabair* (1970); Dottin's *La courtise de Findabair* (1926)). Similarly, in one of the tales of the *tochmarca* genre, *Tochmarc Becfhola* (Bhreathnach 1984), the marriage of Becfhola to the king is mentioned in passing while the plot concerns the voyage of the main heroine to the Otherworld. This fact even prompted John Carey to nickname *Tochmarc Becfhola* a "female *echtra*" (Carey 2015a: 73). On the other hand, some difficulties may arise

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[40] Fogarty (2014: 186–90) also provides an overview of the development of the term 'intertextuality' since it was coined by Julia Kristeva.

during the attribution of tales to a particular cycle in modern nomenclature. As Kevin Murray (2008: 87) observes in relation to the tale *Baile Binnbérlach mac Buain*, it is artificially placed in the Cycle of the Kings only because Art mac Cuinn is mentioned at the end of the tale; the narrative, however, does not concern him at all. Thus, for a purpose of a literary study, it is necessary to focus on the narrative *per se* without either being distracted by its medieval generic classification or trying to fit it into a particular cycle of the existing modern taxonomy. Ultimately, it is only by examining the text through its various prisms that one can fully appreciate its literary sophistication.

The ability of a text to extend the boundaries of its genre or even to invert the 'law of the genre', as well as to communicate with other texts by incorporating allusions and cross-references, creates a text which can be interpreted in a potentially limitless number of ways. In an article devoted to the 'openness of the text', Kaarina Hollo considers the phenomenon of an 'open text' as an "argumentative space", which privileges multiple meanings, and where different interpretative values and opinions can co-exist:

> The notion of the openness of the text, any text, is by now a commonplace of contemporary literary theory. On the most basic level, openness can be seen as inherent 'in any text through its [the text's] nature as a system of signs interpreted subjectively by its audience'. Openness in these terms would have to be seen as present in any text from any period (Hollo 2004: 147).

Hollo (2004: 148) defends the applicability of the notion of the 'openness' to medieval texts and, on the example of *Fingal Rónáin*, argues that the compiler of the tale

> has rather constructed the text as a meditative or argumentative space that resists closed and finite interpretation. The nonresolution of major issues is constitutive of the work, and not the result of the reader's inability to find a preordained fixed meaning.

In fact, this understanding of a text is by no means post-modernist or revolutionary. We have evidence that Irish compilers themselves favoured the ability of a text to be read in many ways. If we agree that the Irish *literati*[41] were not only excellent writers but, first and foremost, excellent readers, this would come as no surprise. Attentive and reflective reading was an essential part in the curriculum of the learned elites in the medieval Christendom, the core of which was the culture of the written word and the Bible. The way to read this Book — above all, the fourfold exegesis — privileged multiple interpretations of the text: literal, allegorical, moral and anagogical expositions were to be provided for the same passage. The interpretative community of readers and writers

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[41] Donnchadh Ó Corráin (1986: 142) variously calls them as "highly trained, highly self-aware mandarin class", "caste of hereditary scholars", "custodians of the past", "makers of the past who re-shaped it to accord with the pretensions and ambitions of the contemporary holders of power."

shared the same indoctrination into literacy, and, therefore, the attitude to literary meaning was common for both reading and writing. If we believe that "the way one writes is determined largely by the ways one has learned to read," this would explain the approach valuing the plurality of interpretations (Davies 1996: 20). Medieval authors trained in exegesis and etymology, with its multiple and often contradictive etymons, with a bias towards encrypted messages, were likely to apply the strategies inherited from their reading practices to their own compositions: some scholars have already noted "the possibility of exegetical influence on Gaelic secular literature, arguing that it may have been intended for the kind of allegorical or moral reading normally reserved for Scriptures" (Ó Néill 2003: 12). As Ann Dooley (2007: 13) observes, Irish textual culture is distinguished by

> an intense focus in the tradition on the analysis of words as sense units in themselves. This attitude, born of their received traditions of verbal exegesis reflects the mind-set most commonly encountered among Irish literati in their reading and handling of texts and extends even to their non-religious writing as well.

In this case, such exegetical tools as allegory or typology are used not as interpretative strategies, but as compositional and rhetorical devices.

The environment in which texts were produced, labelled as a "culture of creative syncretism" (O'Connor 2013a: 285), warns us against searching for a singular meaning. Davies (1996: 8) also stresses "the hermeneutic spirit that animated the milieu in which early Irish texts were written down, copied, read, revised, and in many cases first composed." In his study, he examines the glosses to *Amra Coluim Cille*, which contain multiple paraphrases and lexical equivalents, along with various — sometimes contradictory — alternatives and options in apparent equality of semantic value, demonstrating "a real catholicity in the attitude to interpretation" (ibid.: 11). As a result, we can conclude that the Irish *literati* were "not only comfortable with but indeed insistent upon the potential plenitude of meaning in the language of a text" (ibid.: 17). For Davies, the openness of the text issues from the fact that the literary meaning is always "irredeemably contextual" (ibid.: 7) and relational and is never simply inherited from the author and his original intention.[42] For this reason, each text can be re-interpreted depending on the context in which we put it. Eventually,

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[42] We can remember, for example, the twelfth-century enthusiasm toward the reworking of earlier texts. See Murray 2014. Needless to say, in the twenty-first century, the re-opening and re-actualisation of classical texts is one of the most important and interesting tasks undertook by modern literary critics, writers and opera and theatre producers.

> the meaning of a text is a function not (or not only) of the intentions that governed its composition, but also of the place that texts occupies — within another, later text, within a living literary tradition, or within an interpretive tradition (ibid.: 7).

As I intend to demonstrate, the placing of *TM* within three different contexts — that of native secular literature, Biblical and historical — results in three different interpretations which cooperate together and complement each other, making the text polyphonic and helping us to better understand the message of the tale. I will focus on how the text is constructed and how the constitutive elements of the narrative function within the text. This will allow suggesting what the text was intended to mean and may have meant for its original compiler and its audiences. By this comprehensive literary analysis I also hope to demonstrate that *TM* can be used as a *comparandum* in various studies on early Irish literature and mythology and that it is worth being read and re-read today, debated on and fully included into the scholarship.

On the first sight, *TM* is not the most engaging of the Irish tales.[43] It is abbreviated to an almost mere outline; the style is limited to an unadorned linear paratactic narration with non-linear flash-backs in direct speech of characters and terse dialogues. The tale lacks any static descriptions or vivid *ekhphrases* which many other examples of the early Irish literature are praised for; nor does it have enigmatic verses known as *roscada*. Two laconic quatrains put in the mouth of a druid are versified prophecies about the arrival of Eógan and the catching of a salmon, which resume the druid's message that has just been narrated in prose. However, although the text contains what we would now call inconsistencies, I approach *TM* as an organic whole, making an "assumption that it was structured like this for its author's own reasons, rather than because of a lack of skill, since to assume incompetence would paralyse effective analysis from the start" (O'Connor 2013a: 15). Indeed, early Irish tales manifest their own style and logic, very different from what we expect from a literary composition nowadays. If we take this position without applying our modern literary tastes and Aristotelian conceptions of unity as a lens for appreciation of a medieval text and adhere to the principle of reading a text in its own terms, we can, I believe, admire this short tale's economy and fine artistry as well as its compressed elliptical style.

In my dissertation, I will examine the text as an internally consistent whole focusing on the design of the tale and scrutinising its constitutive episodes predominantly from the

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[43] This might be the general feature of the Munster tales which are "linguistically as old as the traditions of the other areas, but are less substantial in volume. The earliest Munster historical saga tends to be presented somewhat artlessly" (Carney 2005: 485).

point of view of their function and their place in the narrative. In this approach, I agree with Robert Alter (Alter and Kermode 1987: 26), the Biblical scholar who insisted on "a continuous *reading* of the text instead of a nervous hovering over its various small components."[44] Therefore, instead of producing a collection of short critical essays focused on single themes — a general practice in Celtic Studies, — I aspire to produce a systematic analysis of the text as a literary composition. My task will be, of course, simplified by the fact that we have only one manuscript witness of the tale and thus, I will be able to focus on a single text without explaining why I should privilege a certain recension. Eventually, I concur with Tomás Ó Cathasaigh (1977: x) who has stressed that "an advantage of dealing with a limited amount of material is that something of the richness of even the shorter Irish texts can be appreciated."

The compiler of *TM*, however, used rhetorical tropes and *topoi* from a common store of literary devices available in the tradition. Therefore, I will not address the tale in isolation, but will put it in parallel with a wide range of other Irish narratives. To pursue his goal of commemorating the life of a legendary hero in a remarkable manner, the author has generated new meanings by re-arranging old motifs, and his achievement and creative genius can be justly assessed only by comparing his work with other compilations. Unlike our literary tastes based on the interest towards unexpected twists of plot and unpredictable ending, the medieval audience "did not seek to discover the unique world-view of a particular author, but rather, sought recognition of familiar codes and conventions shared from one work to another" (Herbert 1989: 75). In other words, "the convention alerts you: you know what to expect and you get it" (Ó Corráin 1986: 144). The analysis of these conventions makes us closer to the position of medieval public which is the ultimate goal of a literary study, namely "the reconstruction of the 'horizon of expectation' of those for whom the text was originally composed" (Herbert 1989: 75).

Literature is a bilateral process which involves both an author and a reader. Since both compilers and their audiences belonged to the same learned culture, the latter were aware of the codes used by the authors, and there was no need to elucidate a particular motif every time it had been employed in the text.[45] The literary tradition, therefore, was not meant to be accessible for the outsiders. As Ó Corráin (1986: 142) stresses, "one

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[44] See McCone 1990: 6 for the discussion of tendencies in Biblical criticism.
[45] The process of compilation from "common (and limited) range of building blocks" is discussed in Ó Corráin 1986: 142–4.

finds tales and genealogies reduced to a bare outline and so savagely abbreviated as to be almost incomprehensible to all but the initiated." This probably explains the phenomenon of *TM* as a brief but concise text, which requires, on our part, a detailed analysis.

2.1. *TM* as an *Echtra*

From a literary point of view, *TM* might seem unornate and simple at the first sight, but is nevertheless an enigmatic and complex text. Probably, due to the lack of sophistication, *TM* was neglected by major scholars and did not receive any decent attention. Comparing *TM* to *CML* (O'Curry 1855; Jackson 1938), a longer account on how Eógan got power over the Southern half of Ireland with the help of his Spanish allies, O'Rahilly (1946a: 187) argues, not without a certain degree of disappointment, that "that part of the story which concerns Eógan marrying a Spanish wife has been worked up into a *tochmarc* or love-story, and at the same time stripped of its political context." The first editor of the tale, Eugene O'Curry, had a similar opinion. In the Introduction to his edition, he called *TM* "the short account of Eoghan Mór's romantic voyage into Spain", and stated that "the difference between this version of Eoghan's voyage to and from Spain, and that given in the Battle of Magh Lena may be well accounted for by the licence of romance and poetry" (O'Curry 1855: xxiii).

This position is difficult to agree with. First of all, unlike other well-known Irish love-stories (e.g. *Tochmarc Treblainne* (Meyer 1921; Jennings 1997), or *Scéla Cano meic Gartnáin* (Binchy 1963)), where the mutual sympathy of protagonists is explicitly expressed, *TM* does not feature any indication of love-related emotions from either side. The main heroine is not named and never exchanges a single word with her future spouse (in fact, Moméra does not speak at all in the tale). The marriage of Eógan and Moméra is a royal marital union arranged by the druid and the king of Spain on the basis of the beneficial prediction. Secondly, the tale focuses not on the marriage as such, but on the journey to Spain, on the change of Eógan's status there, and on his triumphal return back to Ireland. Therefore, in its basis, *TM* has an initiatory scenario.[46] After Eógan's magical transformation with the help of a cloak, he receives a new name and

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[46] According to Van Gennep's definition, rites of passage consist of three phases, namely, 'separation', 'transition' and 'reincorporation' which correspond to preliminal, liminal and postliminal stages of the ritual (Van Gennep 1960: 11). Interestingly, *CML* employs another scenario: in the tale, Eógan is banished from Ireland and is forced to go to Spain after he loses a battle with Conn. This allows saying that an 'expulsion-return' formula was chosen here as a life-pattern of a hero. In any way, "a standard part of the heroic biography is a story of expulsion and return, a trip abroad" (Sproule 1985: 17).

comes back to Ireland as its future king. For this reason, it is possible to suppose that *TM* is not a mere appendix to *CML*, which highlights the love-story of the prince and the princess. It is, on the contrary, an equally important account which describes the same fact as *CML* (Eógan's acquisition of royal power after his return from Spain) from another point of view: in other words, from a symbolic perspective.

TM has two layers of meaning: the first one is more obvious and lies on the surface; the second one is comprised of various mythologems and requires explanation. The tale, therefore, can be read in two complementary ways. On the surface, *TM* is a tale about the voyage to Spain and the wooing of a Spanish princess. This evokes the whole complex of native beliefs connected with the provenance of the Gaels from Spain. Indeed, allusions to *Lebor Gabála Érenn* are scattered throughout the narrative.[47] The future king and his company experience a symbolic return to their land of origins both in space and time. They travel to Spain, land of their forefathers, while the name of the Spanish king, Éber, reminds us of the legendary ancestor of the Gaels.

On the other hand, the journey to an unknown land (e.g. Fiacha calls Spain *tír aneóil* 'strange land' in his dialogue with Eógan) which lies behind the sea corresponds to the Irish genre of *echtra*, 'adventures (to the Otherworld)'[48] or 'overseas voyages.'[49] The king's voyage to the Otherworld and the items which he obtains there strengthen and sanction his royal status and power (cf. *Echtra Chormaic*, *Echtra Airt meic Cuind 7 tochmarc Delbchaíme ingine Morgáin*, *Baile in Scáil*). As Séamus Mac Mathúna (2010: 7–8) argues about the genre,

> there exists an unusually rich store of Irish stories concerning both freshwater and the sea in which the denizens of the *síd* play a central role. The theme of the voyage provides the framework for the attainment and legitimisation of kingship, for example, which is granted by the god and goddess of sovereignty who dwell in the world of the *síde*, and also for various kinds of speculation concerning the mysteries of the world and the secrets of knowledge.

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[47] I will discuss them in Chapter 2.3.

[48] The Otherworld is defined by John Carey (1986: 1) as follows: "minimal designation for any place inhabited by supernatural beings and itself exhibiting supernatural characteristics."

[49] The definition of the genre of *echtra* is formulated by Proinseas Mac Cana (1980: 75–6) and is worth quoting in detail:

> *Echtra(e)* "expedition, journey (to the Otherworld), adventure" (lit. "outing", from **ekster-* "outside"). The *echtrai* tell of the hero's incursion into the world of the supernatural, whether this is thought of as being beyond the sea,[49] under the earth or a lake, within the depths of a cave, or simply within the confines of a magic mist. He may set forth at the invitation of one of its inhabitants, or one of its factions, in which case the Otherworld realm is normally pictured as a land of wonder and beauty and joy, but when he is the aggressor in an act of heroic self-assertion, then the Otherworld inevitably stands in a different relationship to the world of mankind and is often conceived of as the home of hostile forces whose power and possessions are a challenge to the hero's prowess.

The structural and comparative analysis of the existing *echtrai* was recently carried out by Leonie Duignan who established the list of the main constituents, which form the taxonomic model of this particular genre (Duignan 2011: 65). According to Duignan, the typical *echtrai* contain the following common features: royal site located in proximity to the Otherworld entrance as a spatial location; the royal lineage of the main protagonist; 'the otherworldly nature of the invitation bearer'; 'sovereignty motivations for the expedition', which can imply quest for a woman; the journey to the Otherworld (which can involve a boat trip to an overseas realm); relationship with the otherworldly woman; tangible gifts obtained in the Otherworld; return home (ibid.: 66–7). As Mikhailova (2014: 236) concludes her review of Duignan's monograph, these tales are not "in fact as much about contacting the Otherworld as about legitimising the supremacy of the royal power."

Similarly, discussing the *echtra* story-pattern in the basis of *Immram Brain*, Mac Mathúna (1985: 256) distinguishes in it three main narrative elements: the initial situation, the visitation, and the description of the otherworld, stressing that "an otherworld visitor comes to the hero when he is at a hierophanic site." As we shall see, *TM* follows the pattern of a typical *echtra* closely and makes use of many motifs associated with this genre (e.g. overseas voyage, *insignia* obtained in another land). Significantly, Duignan incorporates such tales as *Tochmarc Emire*, *Baile in Scáil*, and *Serglige Con Culainn* in her analysis of the *echtrai*.[50] Although these tales are not called *echtrai*, their plots are based on journeys to the Otherworld. Thus, the attribution of these texts to the *echtra* genre might advance our analysis of these compositions. As Mac Mathúna (1985: 256–7) resumes,

> otherworld journeys occur in other genres of tales established by the native cataloguers and taxonomists. They appear in tales which, in their primary motivation, belong to such international types as rescue tales – the quest for the (lost) bride, for example … it is only through minute inspection of the table of contents of tales, with a sure eye for similitude and differentiation, that we shall be successful in establishing a proper order and classification.

Eógan's overseas voyage to a foreign land as a place of initiation (in which sense, as I will try to demonstrate, Spain occupies that place in the narrative chain which in the other *echtrai* is typically occupied by the Otherworld), and his marriage therein, provide a platform for his future acquisition of kingship, this process being mediated by the contact with a mysterious creature, a magic salmon. The active role his wife plays in this transformation (she makes a magical mantle and bestows it upon her spouse) echoes

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[50] Cf. Mac Mathúna's (1985: 249–50) discussion of *echtrae*, in which he includes such tales as *Serglige Con Culainn* and *Labraid Lúathláimh ar Chlaideb*.

the myth of the relationship between the king and the sovereignty goddess. In the rest of this chapter, I will try to highlight the range of native motifs used by the compiler to create this complex, concentrated and dense narrative.

2.1.1. Three Young Men and the Prophecy

The voyage of Eógan to Spain starts with the invitation on behalf of the three mysterious young men. They suddenly appear on the green of his father's residence in Mag Femin. The initial location of Eógan is not arbitrary. We might recall that at the beginning of *Echtrae Chonnlai*, Connlae is placed "at his regal father Conn's side on the summit of Uisnech, thus combining pivotal dynastic eminence of the heir apparent … with a location" (McCone 2000: 54). Notably, in *TM*, Eógan's father is mentioned for the second time at the end of the story, when Eógan is ready to leave Spain for Ireland. The druid stresses that Eógan's father is in his royal power before him (*caín térnais ⁊ atá th'athair for do chind ina flathus* (§13)). Therefore, already from the start, our tale conveys an unambiguous political message: Eógan is recognised as Mug Néit's lawful heir, who succeeds his father in his kingly office, and has a right to rule because he is a direct descendant of a royal bloodline. In general, our text stresses the utmost importance of lineage for a future king. For instance, the Spanish king asks the druid about the provenance of his daughter's future husband (*can cúan nó cenél nó ciniud nó cland don fir* 'which family or kin or line or clan is the man' (§1)). Then, upon arrival of the company in Spain, the king goes himself to ask about the families of the new-comers:

> *Do-chuaid in rí ⁊ mait[h]i Espáine uime isin tech i rrabutar na maccóeim ⁊ íar-facht a cen[é]la uile díb.*
> The king, in the company of the nobles of Spain, went to the house where the young men were, and asked all of them about their families.

The concern with the notion of *cenél*, together with the portrayal of Eógan as a legitimate son and heir of Mug Néit, king of Munster, serves as a testimony of the tale's focus on the Eóganachta's lawful right to rule in the south. As Damian Mc Manus (2009: 59) highlights, "among the qualities is the ever-important … *cenél* 'kinship/ family', which is essential to become a king." Apart from forging an association of young Eógan with the royal line of Munster kings, the mention of Mug Néit's fort might have another narrative function. As John Carey (1986: 5) stresses, "that the royal stronghold is one of the points of Otherworld access is also apparent on those occasions

when an Otherworld emissary appears suddenly within its boundaries." And indeed, the three men are introduced into the tale by the following phrase:

> *Nirba cían dó co n-accai trí maccóemu chuige.*
> It was not long before he saw three youths coming towards him.

The formula *co n-accai (ní) ... cucca* 'he saw (something) … towards him' is often used in Irish narratives to express the vision of a supernatural creature. This was first noted by James Carney (1955: 302–3, fn. 3) who, speaking of the formula *co n-acca ní*, stressed that "the indefinite pronoun *ní* is used to anticipate something strange, mystic, surprising, or startling" which might ultimately be "the apparition of an Otherworld being." In such formulae, "tension is achieved by the use of the neuter pronoun and the definite article."

For instance, in the beginning of *Echtra Chormaic*, Cormac encounters a visitor from the Otherworld in very similar circumstances:

> *Co-faccaidh aen-oclach furusta fínn-líath cugi ar faighthi in dúin.*
> On the green of the fort he saw (coming) towards him a grave handsome grey-haired warrior (Hull 1949: 875).

In *Aislinge Óenguso*, the same formula is used when Óengus first sees a swan-girl Caer Ibormeith:

> *Boí Óengus in n-aidchi n-aili inna chotlud. Co n-accae ní, in n-ingin cucci...* (Shaw 1934: 43);
> Another night Óengus was asleep. He saw something, a girl coming towards him…

In *Compert Con Culainn*, the encounter of Deichtine, mother of Cu Chulainn, and the god Lug, who visits her to conceive the hero of the Ulstermen, has the same verbal setting: *co n-accai ní, in fer cuice* 'she saw something, a man approaching her' (Van Hamel 1978: 5). Similarly, in *Echtrae Chonnlai*, the main hero also sees an otherworldly woman approaching him:

> *Co n-acca in mnaí i n-étuch anetargnaid na dochum* (McCone 2000: 121).
> He saw the woman in unfamiliar clothing (ibid.: 130).[51]

The choice of this introduction formula makes one think that the author deliberately wanted to give a hint about the supernatural character of Eógan's visitors. As Joseph Nagy (2015: 75) observes, early Irish literary descriptions of encounters with the denizens of the Otherworld do not lack theatricality: "conceptualising the confrontation with the otherworld as narrated in Irish story … allows us to talk about this kind of

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[51] Cf. that the 'otherworldliness' of woman's clothes is also stressed in *Immram Brain*: *Con-accatar in mnaí i n-étuch ingnad*, 'They saw a woman in unusual attire' (Mac Mathúna 1985: 33, 46).

narrative episode in terms of *performance*." Medieval authors, in a way, could be compared to modern playwrights who use special stylistic devices to create a memorable scene. In this episode, the author of *TM* employs an almost cinematographic "zooming" effect in order to stress the importance of the encounter: the king is alone on the green, and the three visitors are slowly approaching him from afar.

Another proof of a supernatural character of the three messengers comes from *CML*. In it, the three sons of the druid do not appear at all. Instead, Eógan has a fairy mistress, Edaín, who predicts to Eógan his future destiny and urges him to go to Spain. Remarkably, the word which Edaín uses to designate Eógan's journey is *echtra*: *rachaid tú echtra im-chian a h-Érinn co h-Espáin* (Jackson 1938: 18). It is possible, after all, to project this episode to our tale and conclude that supernatural harbingers (three brothers) were modified in *CML*, and the same narrative function was attributed to Edaín, a supernatural creature.

The dialogue with the three young men starts with a phrase of greeting:

> *'Ron-bendachut do chóengníma a maccóeim,' ar síat.*
> *'Rob samlaid dúib-se a macu,' ar ésium.*

> 'May your fine deeds bless us, O youth,' said they.
> 'The same to you, O youths,' said he.

I am not sure what the verbal form *ron-bendachut* means in this context. Is it a corrupted form, a formulaic greeting, or should we translate the 1 pl. infixed pronoun literally, in the sense that the future deeds of Eógan would have a beneficial impact on the guests from Spain?

At this stage, the audience is not less surprised than Eógan himself. We know nothing about the visitors, though the way in which they are introduced make us suspect their supernatural character. Indeed, after a few traditional greetings, the young men explain the reason for their visit and reveal to an astonished prince his future. The prophecy, which Eógan receives, serves as a signal that he is the chosen royal candidate of the Otherworld. In her analysis of the three tales concerning Niall Noígiallach (the eleventh-century poetic *Echtra Mac nEchdach Mugmedóin*; the twelfth-century prose *Echtra Mac nEchach Mugmedóin*; and the late twelfth-century poem *Tarrnig in Sealsa ag Síl Néill*), S. Elizabeth Passmore observes different approaches to the usage of prophecy in these texts. The prophecy is of paramount importance in the prose *Echtra*. "Prophecy, rather than action, indicates the king-candidate's inherent ability and

appears to be a major initiating force … behind Niall's attainment of the rule" (Passmore 2008: 150). Moreover, the counsel of a king's proxies has the same narrative function. It indicates its addressee as a chosen one, regardless of his own actions, which in this case are of secondary importance. As Passmore continues,

> the contrast between prophecy and counsel in the Irish tales demonstrates … the flexibility of these narratives to counterbalance the themes of counsel and prophecy as factors in obtaining kingship against the hero's demonstration of his natural abilities for rulership.

Therefore, the fact of receiving a prophetic message is enough to justify the status of a hero as a future king. Character's fitness for being a king is expressed not through his heroic actions or personal qualities but through prophecies concerning his future rule. In other words, the protagonist's inherent suitability for kingship is conveyed by the fact that he is the one who receives a prophecy. This might explain the seeming passivity of Eógan who merely fulfils the instructions of the three brothers based on Antipater's prediction.[52] However, his obedience to the druid's word, along with the acceptance of his destiny, indicates him as a future king. Any other expressions of his innate abilities to rule would be superfluous. Another significant moment is that the three young men foretell the future of not only Eógan but of his four children as well, and — implicitly — of their progeny too. Being transmitted by means of a narrative, the prophecy stretches into an unlimited future. It unveils the status of Eógan as a progenitor of a royal dynasty and is directed not only towards its immediate audience (Eógan) but also towards contemporary listeners and readers of the tale.[53]

Like in many other early Irish tales, the course of events in *TM* is pre-ordained by the foregoing prophecies. This feature of medieval Irish narratives, criticised above all by Thurneysen, was addressed by Thomas Charles-Edwards (1999: 38) on the example of the tale *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* (*TBDD*), the prophecies in which are so precise that "all the details are already known before the first blow is struck." Prophecies play a particularly prominent role in the tales of the Kings' Cycle, in which, "in terms of

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[52] This prediction, as we know, is the result of a query on behalf of the Spanish king who worries about the lot of his beloved daughter. Same practice is documented in *Tochmarc Ailbe*. As the tale explains, there was a druid in Tara, named Cithruad son of Fercaethod, and all Cormac's daughters used to go to him to find out what was in store for them (*baei drai a Temraig an n-inbad sin .i. Citruad mac Fercaethod. Do-ticdis cuigi uili ingena Cormaic dia fiafraidid de, dus cid no-biad doib*) (Thurneysen 1921: 254).

[53] Indeed, the nature of kingship implies an idea of inheritance. It is not enough to be a king *hic et nunc*; what matters is the possibility to pass the throne to one's legitimate children. This notion, for instance, shapes the dramatic conflict of Sheakspeare's *Macbeth*: the main hero cannot accept the fact that Banquo will be a forefather of a line of future kings. As Fomin (2010b: 221) stresses in relation to an Indian account on the career of Jina, "when the royal father invites the seers to interpret the dreams, they inform him of the future *cakravartin* status of a begotten child. Overall, the text attributes particular importance to the prediction of the benevolent future career to a royal off-spring."

narrative development, a king's destiny is often determined from near the story's outset" (Sayers 2008: 122). Such tales as *Longes mac nUislenn* and *Táin Bó Cuailnge* are also deterministic. In a similar vein, the main episodes in our tale are made known in advance, in preceding prophetic utterances. Even the salmon episode – an apparent climax of the story — is, in a way, an anti-climax, since the mantle has already been mentioned in the druid's poem addressed to the Spanish princess.

As Charles-Edwards (1999: 39) notes, "the Irish *scélaige* was not concerned to leave the outcome in suspense until the last moment"; nor was he "interested in the battle [in *TBDD*] itself except in its fore-life in the mouth of the prophet" (ibid.: 59). Indeed, the task of a compiler was exactly the opposite: to ensure the audience's prior knowledge of the future events of the narrative. One should be reminded that the medieval public was looking not for originality but for familiar conventions. As I have argued in the Introduction, "expectations were subverted and interest generated by the *ways* in which the expected events took place, and in the meanings given to those events, rather than by surprise of *what* took place" (O'Connor 2013a: 130). The principle of familiarity of the audience with the plot was clearly expressed by Aristotle in his *Poetics*. He stresses that tragedies should be based on well-known plots and regrets that nowadays "the familiar themes are familiar only to a few" [1451b25]. In general, storylines of Greek plays were known to the educated Athenians, and the function of prophecies, as those put in the mouth of Cassandra in *Agamemnon*, was to refresh these memories, making sure that the audience is aware of what is going to happen and can focus on a more poignant topic — a man struggling against his predetermined fate.[54] Although the outcome of *TM*, contrary to *TBDD* or the Greek tragedies, is positive, the narrative is governed by the same principle: the audience is informed about the outline of future events from the introductory dialogue with the three messengers.

Eógan readily accepts his fate but, nevertheless, asks his visitors to identify themselves. The young men tell that they are Fáthe, Fis and Fírinne, sons of Antipater the Druid. These names are worth being discussed. The Greek name Antipater means 'like a father',[55] and could be interpreted in the light of the voyage to Spain as a symbolic return to the ancient Fatherland in terms of space and to the immemorial past in terms of time. Moreover, Antipater really represents a paternal figure in our tale. The actions of

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[54] O'Connor (2013a: 129–31) observes the same stratagem as lying in the basis of prophecies in *TBDD*.

[55] I will discuss this name in more detail in Chapter 2.2. I base my translation of Antipater on one of the meanings of the Greek preposition ἀντί- which can function as a prefix in compounds and signifies 'equal to, like, as'. Among the examples listed in Liddell-Scott Greek Lexicon, we find ἀντίθεος 'godlike', and ἀντίπαις 'like a child'. See http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/, s.v. ἀντί- (last accessed on 7.02.2019).

other characters are sanctioned by his commands. Every step the Spanish king or Eógan are planning to undertake is consulted with the druid and is not possible without his blessing. The druid sends his own sons to find Eógan; he establishes the date for a marriage; he tells Eógan's wife to catch the salmon and to make a mantle for her husband; he foretells a lucky day for going back to Ireland and for the birth of Eógan's son, Ailill. The character of Antipater is shaped in terms traditional for the Irish literature, which portrays the druids as "professional interpreters and manipulators of omens", entitled to bestow instructions upon kings at the inauguration (Charles-Edwards 1999: 52). His position in the tale, however, is exceptional. In fact, he is the only active force in *TM*. The other almost speechless characters, seeking the druid's permission for their actions, look like puppets in his hands. As Sayers (2008: 122) stresses, a king's proxies, and most notably his druids, give counsel from within the system and "provide occasions for royal action or inaction and then participate in various ways in the outcomes, as subjects and witnesses." In Irish tales, druids often act as protectors of the interests of the country and of kingship in particular. For instance, in *Echtrae Chonnlai*, the druid attempts to prevent Connla from escaping to the Otherworld and, therefore, from renouncing his right to the throne. It is noteworthy, that, though the druid in our tale does not belong to the same royal court as Eógan and rather provides counsel from the outside, his actions are nevertheless aimed at supporting the Irish king and his kingship in Ireland.

Peculiar names of the druid's sons, Fáthe, Fis and Fírinne, 'Prophecy, Knowledge and Truth', also have an important role in the interpretation of the tale. These appellations function like a metatext used to describe the emanations of the druid. We could easily imagine them as "the three qualities required of a druid" among many other professional triads (Meyer 1906). Moreover, taken as qualities, prophecy, knowledge and truth are believed to have their source in the Otherworld. According to Carey (1986: 12), "inspiration and poetic ability likewise mediate between the worlds." Therefore, there is no wonder that the three young men, allegories of prophecy, knowledge and truth, function in *TM* as mediators between the Otherworld and Ireland. For the compiler, who belonged to the Irish tradition which was deeply influenced by Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae*,[56] the naming could not have been arbitrary. Names reflected nature and

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[56] Isidore's *Etymologiae*, known in Ireland as *culmen*, or 'the summit of knowledge' (Ó Máille 1921–3), had a big impact on the Irish learned tradition, and stimulated the compilation of native tracts such as *Sanas Cormaic*, or *Cóir Anmann* (Baumgarten 1983: 225); so that eventually, the Irish *literati* became "more Isidorian than Isidore himself" (ibid.: 228). On the Isidorian influence on native learning, see also Baumgarten 1984; Hillgarth 1984; O'Connor 2013a: 248.

were given *secundum naturam/ secundum qualitatem qua genita sunt*; hence, "etymology serves the knowledge of things through the comprehension of language" (Baumgarten 1983: 226). The figures of the young men actually represent the phenomena they are named after.

Interestingly, the name of one of them, Fis, 'knowledge' is many times used as a noun and creates a sophisticated word pun. First, the young men acknowledge that they know the destiny of Eógan (*fil a **fhis** acainde duit*). Then Eógan asks about the source of this knowledge (*canas tánic dúib-se **fis** fair sin*). Eventually, we learn that *fis* was first received and interpreted by the druid through his *rús*, 'great knowledge', another word of the same root which derives from *ro-fhís* (*am-sói-seic fora **rús fis** feib do-chuaid fair*). On the basis of this knowledge, the druid formulates a prophecy about the coming of Eógan. He then sends this information to Eógan himself *incarnated* in the figures of the three messengers, his sons, whose names are equal to their function and to their nature — they actually come to declare truth, knowledge and prophecy. That Irish *literati* used metatext to create the reality of the Otherworld was demonstrated by John Carey. He observes that

> medieval Irish authors deliberately exploited this parallelism between Otherworld and narrative world: that we can point to texts which coordinate shifts in locale with shifts in idiom, and which juxtapose the opposition *this world: Otherworld* with an opposition *real world: world-as-described* (Carey 1989: 32).

For instance, *Tochmarc Emire* provides an illustrative parallel to the episode discussed above. Among the dwellers of Emain Macha, the tale mentions Scél son of Bairdéne, the gatekeeper of Emain Macha. It adds that "it is from him that there is (the expression) 'a story of Scél' (*scél Scéoil*), for he was a great storyteller" (cit. after Carey 1989: 33). Appellations in *TM* reveal the same underlying metatextual structure: story (*scél*) is the "son" of *bairdéne*, diminutive form of 'bard'; likewise, prophecy, truth and knowledge are "sons" of the druid. Characters named Fáthe, Fis and Fírinne represent these notions accordingly. The personage, who is named Scél, 'story', is said to be an excellent storyteller. Commenting on this extract, Carey (ibid.) argues that

> this unique passage seems to have an allegorical significance: access to the warriors of the past, to the famous court of Emain, is obtained by means of narrative. It is "Story" who admits us into the presence of the ancient heroes: the implicit equation of Emain Macha with the Ulster Cycle itself is a striking instance of the parallelism of spatial location and narrative mode here under discussion.

The messengers in our tale also have an allegorical interpretation: Eógan receives prophecy and knowledge literally from 'Prophecy' and 'Knowledge'. Another example of a similar naming model is found in the tale *Tréide cétna labratar iarna genemain*. One of the episodes relates the birth of a legendary poet and jurist of the Túatha Dé Danann Aí mac Olloman, "poetry son of archpoet" (Thurneysen 1936: 193). Here, the metatext is used to highlight the supernatural status of the divine child and, at the same time, to show that, as deity of poetic art, Aí mac Olloman serves as an allegory of Poetry. This wordplay is elaborated with another pun: the birth of Aí is heralded by *athach gaíthe*, 'blast of wind', which allows us to discern the concealed *gáeth* meaning 'wise'.[57] In this manner, the Otherworld might be represented by a shift in diction, and the Otherworld description requires a special verbal setting. The convention which is chosen in *TM* is a metatextual one as the inhabitants of Spain in *TM* represent certain ideas, e.g. fatherhood, prophecy, truth, etc., and create their own allegorical narrative within the main narrative. Thus, Carey's dichotomy of the *real world: world-as-described* is maintained.

These three qualities, prophecy, knowledge and truth, are also related to the notion of a righteous kingship. The name of the third young man, Fírinne, might allude in this context to the concept of *fír flathemon*, which characterises the reign of a worthy king. Interestingly, similar wording is found in the version of the tale *Airne Fingéin* in the Book of Lismore. Among the aspects of the divine all-embracing knowledge of the history of Ireland revealed within Fintan mac Bochra at the night of the birth of Conn Cétchathach, the recencion from the Book of Lismore lists: *fírinne Éirenn ₇ a coimhghne ₇ a fáitsine ₇ a senchus ₇ a dligeda*, 'the truth of Ireland, her history, her prophecy, her tradition, her just laws'. As Bondarenko (2012: 140) observes, "this addition [in the Book of Lismore] aims to confirm Conn's position as a *fírfhlaith* and develops the cosmogonic qualities of his birth up to the highest level — the truth is manifested only with the birth of an ideal 'true king'." Since the association of Conn with these *mirabilia* was forged in order to stress his exceptional status, we can surmise that a similar stratagem was used in our tale, when Eógan was brought into contact with the three men who represent prophecy, knowledge and truth. Those are the gifts for the true king from the the Otherworld that serves "as model of a perfect realm, whence the

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[57] A wordplay based on the homonymy of *gaéth* 'wind' and *gaéth* 'wise, clever' is not a rarity in the Irish literature. For instance, in *Tochmarc Ferbe*, the house where Maine and his warriors are staying suddenly starts shaking because of an incredibly strong wind (*do-dechaid sidi **gaithi** géri galbigi*). This is taken as a bad omen, and it is Maine's druid named Oll**gaéth**, 'great and wise', who interprets the sign (Windisch 1897: 468).

king acquired his right to rule along with the legitimating blessings of peace (*síd*) and truth (*fír*)" (Carey 1986: 13).

2.1.2 The *Fert* Episode

Without considering Eógan's voyage to Spain as an *echtra* to the Otherworld, and his whole adventure as legitimising his kingship, it is problematic to explain his ascent to *fert*, 'burial mound' or 'ancient grave'. It is a commonplace in early Irish narratives, that *tumuli* were access points to the Otherworld as "any sacred spot would *ipso facto* have been a supernatural gateway" (Carey 1986: 6), but "most notably ancient burial mounds" (ibid.: 13). For instance, Warner discusses the meaning of mounds related to royal sites of Tara, Navan (Emain) and Rathcroghan. He notes that "the Celts considered their political and religious centres such as Temair, Cruachu and Emain as replicas of the palaces of the gods of the other world," adding that "the conclusion that the Navan wooden structure represents the otherworld is inescapable" (Warner 2004: 31).[58] It is also significant that the word *fert* is used to designate a pagan burial mound as opposed to a non-pagan burial mound. Thus, Navan Fort represents an otherworld *bruiden*, residence of gods, while the stones of the *cairn* symbolise the dead Ulster warriors whose power, henceforth accumulated in the otherworld, might be invoked by the king for assistance in difficult times. Warner (ibid: 32) resumes that "the mound at Navan, by enclosing the 'house' of the god, and thereby the entrance to the otherworld, provided a platform on which a priest/ king could 'communicate' with that otherworld visibly before his people."

Therefore, the king standing on the top of the burial mound acted like an intermediary between the living people of his *tuáth* and the Otherworld. The Otherworld empowers the king, with the implication of the support on behalf of deceased members of the community. For this reason, the ritual ascent to a burial hill played an important role in inaugurations. Myles Dillon (1973: 3, 4) stresses that the consecration of Irish kings took place on earth-works or near standing stones, and the candidate was often placed

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[58] As Ó hÓgáin (1999: 246) notes, in modern folklore otherworld dwellings are also "situated within the ordinary landscape, such as fairy palaces within raths and *tumuli*." "Just as one can reach the otherworld through sea-water, so can one also within or under an inland lake, and indeed within an old *tumulus* or rath on solid ground" (ibid.: 259).

on a hill.[59] As Ó Cathasaigh (1978: 148) explains, the use of *tumuli* as inauguration sites "furnishes the physical or material correlation of the abstract connections," i.e. the Otherworld dimension of a righteous kingship. Warner (2004: 33) also emphasises that "one of the functions that required otherworld communication was undoubtedly the inauguration or rather confirmation of the king, which involved a *feis* — a symbolic 'mating' with the 'tribal' land personified by a goddess." In this vein, the episode with Eógan's ascent to the *fert* serves as a prefiguration of the events to come — his journey to the Otherworld, marriage and royal status, all these elements being implied in a symbol of the *fert*.

Welsh comparanda provides us with an image of the legendary Gorsedd Arberth (W. *gorsedd* is a cognate of Irish *forad* < **for-sed-*, meaning 'over-seat'),[60] featured, for instance, in the First Branch of Mabinogi. *Gorsedd* is a place of otherworldly visions *par excellence*. However, only princes and nobles are able to experience these magic encounters. Notably, Gorsedd Arberth is adjacent to Pwyll's royal residence, as is, apparently, the *fert* in Eógan's story, situated in the vicinity of the residence at Mag Femin. The Otherworld, represented by the mound, and the dwelling of a king are bound in one complex — not only symbolically but also visually and spatially. In Welsh tradition related to Gorsedd Arberth, this idea is made explicit by the fact that Pwyll is simultaneously the lord of Arberth and of Annwfn, the Otherworld. As Charles-Edwards (2004: 97) has wittily remarked, Welsh *gorsedd*, as well as Irish *síd*, was a place of assemblies but also — a gate to the Otherworld, and "this worldliness and other-worldliness were, in this instance, intertwined."

Thus, certain mounds were associated with particular ruling dynasties and could be effectively used while claiming legitimacy for certain dynastic groups. As Elizabeth FitzPatrick (2004b: 68) puts it,

> in the cause of upgrading a dynasty or endorsing a king's right to rule over a territory, genealogies could be fabricated and history made malleable. Monuments and antique landscapes, some spanning millennia, played their part too in the validation of royal succession in the

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[59] In her reconstruction of the medieval Irish inauguration ritual, Elizabeth FitzPatrick (2004a: 11) also notes that the royal candidate stood or sat on the summit of the 'ancestral' mound. See FitzPatrick 2004a: 43 on the use of sepulchral mounds for judicial and royal assembly practices in Gaelic Ireland, including inauguration, with examples from legal, historical, narrative and hagiographic sources. On pp. 70–3, the author discusses the identification of some inauguration mounds with *fertae* on the basis of the Middle Irish *Vita Tripartita*.

[60] Welsh *gorsedd* is etymologically connected with Irish *síd*: "the word *síd*… is used in the medieval literature for the otherworld, and for the mound through which it was reached. The word seems, however, to be cognate with Latin *sedum* 'seat'… the mound (or perhaps a chair upon it) was the *síd* — 'seat/place of sitting' — upon which the king communicated with the otherworld" (Warner 2004: 32).

kingdoms and lordships of Medieval Ireland. They were 'biographical landmarks' where the ceremony of king-making and the pedigree of a royal candidate could be visibly attached to an illustrious past.[61]

Therefore, the mention of Eógan's ascent to the *fert* unfolds in the whole complex of notions and symbols crucial for a king's tale. Before departing to the Otherworld, place of initiation and legitimisation of his royal status,[62] the future king goes to a burial hill. The mound simultaneously represents the entrance to the Otherworld and the place of inauguration. Remarkably, the three messengers, qualities, which constitute righteous kingship, follow him.

2.1.3. The Island

After the episode with the *fert*, Eógan and his company leave Ireland for Spain, and the *echtra* begins. The Island of the View is introduced as an intermediate point between the two countries. It is surprising, that both Ireland and Spain could be simultaneously seen from it. According to *LG*, Ireland was seen from the Tower of Bregon in Spain, and no in-between place of observation has ever been mentioned. Nevertheless, in the Irish tradition, the realm of the sea is generally associated with the Otherworld, abode of the god Manannán, where the Otherworld islands are scattered (cf. *Immram Brain*, *Echtrae Chonnlai*).[63] Heroes start their journey in the morning; they spend the night on the island and in the morning of the next day leave this last rampart of the real world. From now on, they are in the realm of another reality.[64]

2.1.4. Other Remote Lands as the Otherworld

TM seems to be based on an *echtra* story-pattern, but that place in the narrative which is normally reserved for the Otherworld is occupied in this case by Spain. I would like to stress that there are no indications in our tale that Spain *is* the Otherworld or is

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[61] For a discussion of the legal use of inanimate evidence ('the dead which overswear the living'), including such property markers as 'boundary or pillar' (*crích l coirthe*), see Carey 1992.

[62] The association of kingship with the Otherworld is sealed in many early Irish tales, where kingship is sanctioned by the emissaries of the Otherworld, e.g. *Echtra Chormaic*, *Togail Bruidne Da Derga*, *Baile in Scáil*, *Echtra Airt meic Cuind*. As O'Connor (2013a: 2) stresses, Conaire is "begotten and raised to the kingship of Tara by the shadowy powers of the Otherworld." *TBDD* and other stories about Conaire Mór epitomise the notions of the Otherworld paternity and guidance. In *De Síl Chonairi Móir*, Conaire becomes *rí bertatar siabrai*, "the king whom spectres raised up" (ibid.: 68), while in *TBDD*, the Otherworld plays an ambivalent role in first raising Conaire up and then casting him down.

[63] The review of folklore accounts concerning mystical islands is given in Ó hÓgáin 1999.

[64] Carey (1982) is uneasy with the overseas location of the Otherworld. In his opinion, the Irish imagined a subterranean Otherworld located in fairy mounds, while the reference to the Otherworld across the sea, like, for instance, the one in *Echtrae Chonnlai*, is a later amendment. This point of view is opposed by McCone (2000: 91–2, 93–4). McCone's position is shared by Séamus Mac Mathúna (2010: 6) who states that "the home of the otherworld people is sometimes located across the sea." See also Dumville 1976.

associated with the Otherworld. Speaking of Spain as the Otherworld throughout this chapter, I mean only that Spain in our tale corresponds to what would typically be the Otherworld in other *echtrae*. I believe that the protagonist's destination was shifted for certain purposes which I would discuss in Chapters 2.2.12 and 2.3 but most likely the main reasons for it are, firstly, the earlier association of Eógan with foreign lands as can be seen in *DBIE*, and secondly, the importance of Spain in the Milesian legend and in the myth of the establishment of human kingship in Ireland.

This being said, it should be pointed out that in many Irish tales remote lands often represent the Otherworld. As Donald Meek (1984b: 71) observes for the second part of *Táin Bó Fraích*, in which Fraéch travels to Lombardy to rescue his family, "it may thus be reasonable to suppose that, as is generally held to be the case with the Ulster tales and Fian ballads, the original expedition may have been to the Otherworld, and not to any recognisable country."[65] Given that the description of other countries in early Irish tales is by no means realistic or geographic[66] but, on the contrary, is endowed with fantastic characteristics, it is possible to postulate that foreign lands were basically associated with Otherworld realms. For instance, discussing the tale *Síaburcharpat Con Culainn*, Mac Cana (1962: 81) stresses that "in it we already have the characteristic merging of the real Lochlainn in the land of giants and other wonders." Lochlainn, or Scandinavia, shows the same connotations in another tale, *Aided Derbforgaill*: "Derbforgaill is described as the daughter of the king of Lochlainn, which, in the light of the narrative and what we know of her prototype Fann in the *Serglige*, really means daughter of the king of the Otherworld" (ibid.). Otherworldly features could be traced in the description of characters coming from Northern Germania (*Aided Guill meic Carbada*) (ibid.: 82), and Greece and the Orkneys (ibid.: 86–7). Mac Cana also observes that Irish heroes carrying war against their foreign enemies in the overseas lands is "a development which obviously derives from traditional accounts of expeditions and raids carried out against the Otherworld" (ibid.: 87).

Cú Chulainn's journey to Scáthach in *Tochmarc Emire* can be regarded as an *echtra* to the Otherworld where the Ulster hero completes his initiation. Although Cú Chulainn travels to Alba — Scotland — and therefore, to the place which really exists on the world map, the representation of Scáthach herself and the trials Cú Chulainn goes through in her realm, recall the fantastic Otherworld.

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[65] Cf. also Meek 1984a: 6–7; Meek 1984b: 66–7, 71, 72.
[66] As Rolf Baumgarten (1984: 189) argues, there was no interest in accurate European geography.

Interestingly, sometimes even Ireland herself can gain connotations of the Otherworld. As R. A. Breatnach (1959: 146) argues, 'Ireland', in which the 'Pursuit of Diarmuid and Gráinne' is imagined, is in fact the Otherworld. John Carey (1995c: 54) has noted an important feature in the description of Ireland in *LG*: "Ireland, before the Gaels can win it for themselves, is itself a kind of Otherworld." This means that a new, unknown, non-domesticated land by default represents the Otherworld. It is probably this literary convention that is employed in *TM*: when Fiacha calls Spain *tír aneoil*, 'unknown, strange land', he acknowledges its otherness, and the distance which lies between the new-comers from Ireland and this country.[67] Therefore, if in *LG* Ireland first appears as the Otherworld to the settlers from Spain, in *TM*, on the contrary, Spain *seems* to be the Otherworld for the Irish visitors, which does not imply, however, that it *is* indeed the Otherworld.

Interestingly, that Spain, as featured in early Irish texts, is a euhemerisation of the Otherworld or Land of the Dead was one of the ideas of Henri d'Arbois de Jubainville. Commenting on Nennius' *Historia Brittonum*, he argues that

> the word Spain in this text is a learned translation of the Irish words *mag mór*, 'great plain'; *trag mar*, 'great strand'; *mag meld*, 'pleasant plain', by which the Irish pagans designated the Land of the Dead, the place whence the living originally came, and their final abode. For these mythological expressions, which testify to the beliefs held in the most primitive ages, Christian euhemerism substituted the name of Spain (d'Arbois de Jubainville 1903: 48).

This idea is, of course, controversial. Nevertheless, it is remarkable that in the native historical tradition, Eochaid Mac Eirc, the last king of the Fir Bolg, marries Taltiu, the daughter of Magmor. According to *LG*, later on, Magmor becomes a king of Spain, and Taltiu, a Spanish princess, is brought to Ireland from Spain by Eochaid. This account resembles *TM* in many aspects. It is possible to say that Eógan re-enacts the scenario from the immemorial past as he does with his voyage to Spain and back in general. It is noteworthy, however, that the Spanish king, Magmor, bears the name which is used for the designation of the Otherworld. In *Tochmarc Etaíne*, Midir describes his Otherworld dwelling as *íar gnáis **maige máir*** 'according to the custom of *mag mór*' (Windisch 1880: 132). In the critical edition of the same tale, it is also said that *Cluiche**mag már** la Midir i mBrig Leith* 'Midir had a great playing-field in Brí Léith' (Bergin, Best 1938: 142–3). If we interpret this name as a metatextual commentary, according to Carey's opposition *this world: the Otherworld as a verbal world*, Tailtiu, the daughter of

[67] Cf. in *Immram Brain*, where it is stressed that Bran's otherworldly visitor comes from 'strange lands': *In ben a tírib ingnad*, 'The woman from the lands of wonders' (Mac Mathúna 1985: 33, 46).

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Magmor, appears to be the otherworldly woman, while the name of her father embodies the idea of the Otherworld, which, in this case, really overlaps with his kingdom.

2.1.5. The Marriage

The journey to the Otherworld as a means of legitimisation of kingship is underpinned in our tale by another motif with the same function, i.e. the myth of *hieros gamos*, "the mating between the surrogate female divinity of the natural world and the male who was representative of human society" (Herbert 1992: 264). The favourable attitude to a royal candidate on behalf of the Otherworld, his obedience to supernatural powers, and marriage to sovereignty goddess are important criteria in obtaining kingship, which enjoyed long-lasting stability in the tradition.[68] Of course, the Spanish princess is not a sovereignty goddess in a traditional sense: she is a legendary queen and ancestress of the Eóganachta of Munster. This veil of pseudo-historicity, however, does not impede us from tracing in Moméra the features of the sovereignty goddess. In general, *TM* seems to conflate the mythological framework with the historical: the whole journey of Eógan can be seen either as an otherworldly *echtra*, or as the return to the land of origins, and the recreation of the archetype — the arrival of the first Gaels to Ireland from Spain. The mythological and pseudo-historic interpretations do not contradict one another as, having passed the stage of *interpretatio Christiana*, the mythic figure of sovereignty goddess was eventually historicised. As Máire Herbert (1992: 266) stresses,

> in the redaction of Christian scribes, myths were transferred from sacred time into history, and transformed into narratives of the past. Yet since narrative had been the vehicle of transmission and preservation of myth in the first place, the transmission of oral myth into written story did not obliterate the themes constitutive of the myth.

Therefore, the marriage in *TM* might allude to the myth of the sacred marriage, and I will now try to show which strategies our compiler might have used to introduce this theme.

The phenomenon of king's marriage with sovereignty goddess is extensively analysed in Celtic scholarship (O Máille 1928; Thurneysen 1930; Thurneysen 1933a; O'Rahilly 1946b; Breatnach 1953; MacCana 1955–6; MacCana 1958–9; Bhreatnach 1982; Trindade 1986; McCone 1990: 110; Herbert 1992; Scowcroft 1995: 130–7; Eichhorn-

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[68] On the contrary, adulterous affairs and non-compliance with the instructions of gods lead to the destruction of the kingdom. Such is the unfortunate destiny of Eochu from the *dindshenchas* of Loch nEchach (Gwynn 1924: 62–9). In this account, the kingship of Eochu is not welcomed by the inhabitants of the Otherworld. Although he gets love of the sovereignty goddess Eblend, their relationship is based on the betrayal of Eblend's legal spouse, and hence, Eochu is doomed.

Mulligan 2006).[69] The typical scenario of 'sovereignty goddess' myths could be summarised as follows: she could be depicted as "(1) an ugly hag transformed into a beautiful woman by the embraces of the hero destined to be king; (2) a wild, wandering hag who is restored to sanity and beauty through union with the king and (3) a girl of royal birth brought up among cowherds and elevated again to her rightful dignity through marriage to the king" (Bhreathnach 1982: 244, referring to Mac Cana 1958–9: 63). Besides, the acquisition of royal status is reached through consummation and drinking of the liquor of sovereignty (O'Rahilly 1946b: 14). The most evident prototypes of this scenario are the stories of Niall Noígiallach and Lugaid Loígde (O'Rahilly 1946b: 17; Mac Cana 1955–6: 85).

However, the tales which constitute the core of the seminal research by Proinseas Mac Cana are *Mór Muman ⁊ Aided Cuanach meic Ailchine* (Mór Muman being a sovereignty goddess) (Mac Cana 1955–6: 78–84), *Esnada Tige Buchet* (Eithne) (ibid.: 87–8), the story of Mis and Dubh Ruis (Mis) (ibid.: 370–82), and *Scéla Cano meic Gartnáin* (Créd) (ibid.: 392). Neither of these female figures corresponds to the above-mentioned classical scheme. On the contrary, the mythic model of royal rule through *hieros gamos* is hidden among other twists of the plot and disguised as an adventure or a love-story. As Mac Cana (ibid.: 84) explains in relation to Mór Muman, this tale

> has no mention of the symbolic libation which O'Rahilly regards as one of the essential ingredients of the myth or legend of the territorial goddess. But even if that be so, there is of course no reason why all adaptations of the basic theme should preserve the same pattern down to points of detail. In the normal course of things they will differentiate themselves, one from another, by accentuating certain aspects of the general theme at the expense of others and by introducing extraneous or related material.

Same can be said about our tale. Although *TM* does not provide us with an ideal *tableau* of a sovereignty goddess serving a drink to a future king, the mention of a wedding feast, which featured an abundance of ale, might point toward a *feis* as a sacred marriage between the future king and the woman who incarnates his kingship. After the marriage is decided, the feast for three days and three nights is held (*batar ann trí lá ⁊ trí h-aidche. Áeibnes acu cach lá, ól cach n-aidche*). A three-day and three-night period is a *locus communis* in Middle Irish literature.[70] At the same time, it evokes the idea of symbolic drinking as part of certain rituals: the Gaulish *trinox*, attested on the Calendar of Coligny, means 'three night[s], three-night [festival]' (Koch 2006: 330). Moreover,

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[69] The review of major works devoted to this topic is given in Bhreatnach 1982: 243–4.
[70] For instance, Nera stays in the *síd* for three days and three nights in *Echtra Nerai* (Meyer 1889: 221); in *Mesca Ulad*, the Ulstermen spend three days and three nights drinking (*la trí laaib & aidchib ic ól*) (Carmichael Watson 1983: 6).

according to the *dindshenchas*, any drinking is beneficial for a king. Thus, in the *dindshenchas* of Cell Chorbbáin, the king gains superior strength after drinking at his feasts (*íar n-ól a fled ba forlond* (Gwynn 1924: 344, 345)); while in the *dindshenchas* of Ard Ruide, Fiachu, one of the chiefs of Ard Ruide, cannot stay long without drinking ale (*ná baí trath cen ól corma* (ibid.: 370, 371)). It is quite possible that such references are parts of the motif of symbolic libation which constitutes the paradigm of ideal and rightful kingship.

In terms of the 'sovereignty goddess' myth, it is significant that the actions of Moméra result in bestowing a new name upon Eógan. He is called Taídlech because *she* provides him with the shining cloak. The change of status is almost always accompanied by a new name. Since the sovereignty goddess incarnates the fate of the king, she might also declare his new names. For example, according to *Cóir Anmann*, the woman who identifies herself as Sovereignty (*Missi in flaithius*) also gives a set of new names to Lugaid (§70). Moméra, who gives a king his royal apparel and — implicitly — a new name derived from it, is typologically similar to a female figure of distributor of kingship, like, for example, the goddess in *Baile in Scáil*. Given the passion of the Irish authors for etymologies, there might be an important significance in the princess's nickname, Lígbratach, 'the beautifully mantled one', or 'the one having a beautiful mantle'.[71] Her name embodies both her function in the narrative — to bestow the mantle and hence, kingship on her spouse — and the future of her husband. After she presents him with the cloak, it is he who becomes *lígbratach*.

One may ask why, despite her importance for the story, the girl plays such a passive role. The princess is neither named, nor is she granted a right to speak. Her only role is her presence which is enough to promulgate the idea of the acquisition of kingship through marriage. She is not a real heroine, like, for instance, Emer, Cú Chulainn's wife, who has a strong personality and dares to openly challenge and reproach her glorious husband (e.g. in *Serglige Con Culainn*, or *Aided Óenfhir Aífe*). Nor does Moméra resemble Ferb, who incites revenge after the slaughter of her fiancé Maine (in *Tochmarc Ferbe*). Compared to them, the Spanish princess looks like a speechless shadow. But this feature can be explained by her status of a sovereignty goddess. She is

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[71] As I have mentioned, the princess is not named in the text, and the name Moméra appears only in the closing sentence referring to *tochmarc Moméra* as a definition of the tale. Interestingly, the female characters in *echtrae* are usually nameless. As Carey (2005: 119–20) stresses in relation to the *síd*-woman whom Crimthann went in *echtra* with, "the supernatural woman who lured him away from Ireland was probably originally nameless, like the fairy mistresses in *Echtrae Chondlai*, *Immram Brain*, and *Echtrae Nerai*."

an allegory herself. Her only function in the narrative is to become a wife and, therefore, to validate her spouse as a king.

Of course, very often, a female who represents the sovereignty goddess plays an active role in the narrative. She chooses her husband herself, and a successful candidate is found after a certain ordeal (cf. *puella senilis*). Moméra, on the contrary, is by no means an initiator of the relationship. As stated above, the druid of Spain acts like the agent of Fate, and other characters merely fulfil what has been told. Thus, the emphasis on a female role in the myth of sovereignty goddess has been removed. Interestingly, in the eleventh-century *Baile in Scáil*, Lug instructs his female companion who represents the Sovereignty. The goddess in this tale also functions not as an active force but as a mediator between the god and the mortal king, similar to Delphic Pythia: she asks to whom she should pour the drink and serves accordingly to the words of Lug. Discussing this episode, Herbert (1992: 269) notices that "the locus of power has shifted from female to male" and that "the female role is, in fact, relegated from that of subject to that of object" (ibid.: 270). This shift is related to the strengthening of the concept of kingship which eventually depreciated the importance of the female sovereignty figure. Herbert (1992: 272) concludes that "female sovereignty is privileged in the era of prehistoric *rois fainéants*, but in the androcentric culture of kingly power, her role as partner is diminished." Thus, Sovereignty is seen "as a passive female object upon which an active male subject inscribes his right to rule" (Eichhorn-Mulligan 2006: 1016).[72]

For the medieval Irish learned tradition, the king's wife represents the sovereignty goddess *par excellence*. Therefore, she often has two complimentary natures — a human one and a supernatural one. In *Echtra Chormaic*, the voyage of the king to the Otherworld is determined by his will to bring back his wife, Eithne, who was kidnapped by the Otherworld creatures. However, as it was very convincingly shown by Ó

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[72] Remarkably, in various folk traditions, the quest for the future wife equals to the hunt for a treasure. In his narrative theory, Vladimir Propp defines thirty-one functions of the tale. The last function 31 is called "wedding" (Propp 1998: 48–9). Though a folktale does not necessarily end up with the wedding, this generic term is used to designate both the wedding and the ascension to the throne. Sometimes the hero gets both, sometimes only the wife, or the kingship, or any other promotion. It is important, nevertheless, that from the point of view of the folktale narrative, the princess corresponds to the prize and, more precisely, to the acquisition of kingship. She is given as a reward after a successful completion of the ordeal. To marry her means to become a king. Thus, the only function of the princess in the narrative is simply to be there and to become the hero's wife at the end of the story. Eógan's marriage with Moméra corresponds to Proppian function 31: the young man becomes the king when he marries the princess which has been promised to him in the prophecy and which he was told to find. In this way, the passive role of the princess in the tale is determined by her narrative function — to be a prize for the prince and the symbol of his kingship.

Cathasaigh (1978: 141), "Cormac's wife, Eithne Thóebfota, is a version of the chthonic goddess of sovereignty, so that in taking her back from the Otherworld, Cormac is in effect validating his title to kingship." Interestingly, in another short account about Cormac and Eithne, 'Cormac's dream', Eithne is explicitly identified with a female incarnation of kingship. One night, Cormac is sleeping and sees an unusual dream:

> *Atchí dno a banc[h]éile féin .i. Eithni Thoebfoda du fheis la hEochu nGunnat ₇ a bith ón n-étrud co a chéile aigi ₇ a tuidecht chuci féin ar sin. …Atchí dano a cinn do thescadh do mnáib Ulad do C[h]ondachtaib, ₇ Lugaid mac Lugna do béin a ccind do mnaí Eochach Gunnat .i. Cacht ingen Fergusa* (Carney 1940: 192);

> He sees his own wife, that is Eithne Thoebfada sleeping with Eochu Gunnat, and lusting with him again and again, and her coming back to him after that. …He sees also the heads of the women of Ulster being cut off by the Connaughtmen, and Lugaid son of Lugna striking the head from the wife of Eochu Gunnat, that is, Cacht, daughter of Fergus (ibid.: 193).

Cormac wakes up in terror and his druids are called upon to explain the significance of this vision. The dream is interpreted as follows:

> *Do bhanchéile immorra do fheis leis ised dofóirne do ríghe faifes leis ₇ ní bia acht oen-bliadhain i flaithius Temra. A cinn immorra do béim da mnaí Echach Gunnat ised dofóirne .i. Ulaid cona ríg dafaetsat let-su ₇ le Connachtaib i lló chatha, ₇ is é Lugaid mac Lugna do C[h]onnachtaib díchendfas in ríg féin* (ibid.: 192);

> Moreover, thy wife sleeping with him, it is this that it signifies, that thy kingship will sleep with him, and he will be but one year in the kingship of Tara. Moreover the striking off of the head of Eochu Gunnat's wife it is this that it signifies, that the Ulstermen will fall by thee and by the Connaughtmen on the day of battle, and it is Lugaid, son of Lugna who will behead the king himself (ibid.: 193).

It is remarkable that not only Eithne symbolically represents Cormac's royal power, but female images in general replace male figures in his vision. Thus, Cormac sees heads of the women of Ulster being cut off. In reality, it means that the army of the Ulstermen will be defeated. In a similar manner, the beheading of Eochu's wife Cacht represents future beheading of Eochu himself. The vision shows the reality inversed in terms of gender. The female figures stand for the abstract ideas of kingship, martial prowess and luck.

Another example is found in *Talland Étair*, where Aithirne, threatening kings with deadly satire, demands to spend a night with the wives of kings Tigerna Tétbuillech and Mess Gegra. By doing so, he challenges the sovereignty of his victims (Scowcroft 1995: 147). Thus, if we look at this episode through the lens of the 'sovereignty goddess' theme, the actions of Aithirne, as well as the kings' response to them, acquire an additional semantic dimension. Likewise, in *Echtra Airt meic Cuind* (Best 1907), Conn's wife Bécuma is also a pseudo-historicised personification of sovereignty. Her

marriage with Conn is unsuccessful insofar as he is not the righteous king, and the throne is intended for his son Art. Therefore, Bécuma sends Art to the Otherworld realm where he should marry Delbcháem, Bécuma's *alter ego* and another embodiment of the sovereignty goddess (Ó Hehir 1983: 169–70).

Sometimes, female characters other than queens implicitly show the reflex of a sovereignty goddess. For example, the self-representation of Emer as *Temair ban*, Tara of women, in her dialogue with Cú Chulainn in *Tochmarc Emire*, made Wagner (1975: 20–1) think that Emer also positions herself as an incarnation of the goddess, the sacral hilltop of Tara being identified with the goddess of the earth. In *Tochmarc Étaíne*, serving of a drink is chosen as a trial in order to find real Étaín, and although "we cannot on this evidence alone dub her a sovereignty goddess, we can say that the literal and symbolic wives of the king are fused here in one personage" (Scowcroft 1995: 132). This function of Étaín was also observed by O'Rahilly who tentatively compared her to Gráinne, another variation of the sovereignty goddess dispersing a sleep-inducing drink at her marriage feast with Finn (O'Rahilly 1946b: 16). The view that Gráinne is a sovereignty goddess in her negative aspect was also expressed by Breatnach (1959: 146). John Carey also advocated an idea that the image of a disguised Étaín (represented, depending on translation of a word *gast*, as 'hag' or 'bitch') in the scene when Eochaid is to choose his wife among her fifty doubles may be interpreted in the light of the 'king and goddess' theme (Carey 2016: 32, 37). In his recent article, Carey (2018: 27) developed this idea even further, making a supposition that each of the fifty Étaíns dispensing a drink of sovereignty might personify "the reign of an individual ruler."[73]

This ubiquitous presence of sovereignty goddess's features in almost each single heroine of early Irish tales was explained by Scowcroft (1995: 132):

> The *banais rígi* sets forth a parallelism between marriage and kingship that can be approached from either side in the literature: if sovereignty is interpreted as a marriage, *a king's marriage inevitably suggests sovereignty* (emphasis is mine), and abstract narrative expresses the analogy in literal terms, queen and goddess playing virtually the same role.

Moreover, "married status appears to be a necessary concomitant of kingly status, in *Tochmarc Étaíne*, for example, the people of Ireland refused to pay tribute to the new king Echaid Airem because he did not have a queen" (Poppe 1996: 144). This attitude

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[73] For Guyonvarc'h, for instance, there was no doubt that Étaín is a sovereignty goddess. As he states, "Etain n'est ni légère ni 'amoureuse' au sens humain du terme, elle est la Souveraineté, divinité féminine unique, épouse polyandre des dieux souverains" (Guyonvarc'h 1980 : 43).

towards dynastic marriage is reflected in saga literature as well as in historical records. As W. Ann Trindade (1986: 152–3) puts it, "'seizing the Queen' in annalistic records can be construed as a symbolic description of an act which is itself symbolic (like 'taking the soup'…) The reality symbolised is nothing less than the acquisition of Sovereignty." She also mentions Brittonic parallels, stressing that "Gwenhwyfar in her various manifestations has the obvious attributes of a Sovereignty figure and the same has been said of Rhiannon in *Pwyll*" (ibid.: 153).

Apart from sacred marriage, among the vital components of the 'sovereignty goddess' *topos*, we can mention the conception and the birth of progeny. As Mac Cana (1955–6: 88) stresses in relation to Eithne Thoébfhota, "the underlying tradition envisages the goddess espoused to the rightful king, but it also regards her as the mother of such a king and the ancestress of a royal line." It is noteworthy, therefore, that the birth of Ailill Aulomm, future king of Ireland, is mentioned in our tale, and the role of Moméra as mother of Eógan's children is emphasised in the prophecy. From the point of view of the 'sovereignty goddess' myth, it is probably significant that the compiler concludes the tale with the following words:

> *Conad tochmarc Moméra ingeine ríg Espane **díarfói** re hEógan Toídlech.*
> This is the courtship of Moméra, daughter of the king of Spain, when she has married Eógan Taídlech.

The verb which is chosen, *foaid*, 'to spend the night', gives the verbal noun *feis*, meaning both 'feast' and 'spending the night, sleeping with'.[74] This verb includes both motifs of the 'sovereignty goddess' theme — physical intercourse and festive libation. "Special emphasis could be laid either on the festive or on physical aspect of the ceremony without in the least straining the meaning of the word" (Mac Cana 1955–6: 86). Therefore, as the archetype of kingship comprises contractual drink ((*f*)*laith*) and marriage (*banais rígi*), the variation of this pattern could be seen in the scene of a wedding feast in *TM*. As a parallel, one might remember an episode from the tale *Aided Diarmata*; in it, king Diarmait visits a *bruiden* in which he receives a shirt woven of a single flax-seed, a mantle from the wool of a single ship, and beer brewed from a single grain.

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[74] Cf. "The king … assumed full identity as such after the inaugural ceremony called *feis*; as many scholars have convincingly argued, this ritual represented his marriage with the goddess of the land. This sacral union between the *túath*'s representative and the supernatural embodiment of its territory is the most vivid expression of the bond between the worlds" (Carey 1986: 14).

> The one who bestows the clothes to him and serves him is Banbán's daughter with whom he also sleeps. The investment, the meal and the intercourse bear comparison with the *feis Temro* — 'the fest of Tara' — the 'sacred marriage' *hieros gamos* (Rekdal 2011: 258–9).

In *Aided Diarmata*, obviously, this scene has an effect of parody because the night in the *bruiden* ends for Diarmait with his death and, therefore, loss of kingship. Such examples, nevertheless, show that various tales can employ the motifs associated with *hieros gamos* very differently, rearranging, modifying and re-accentuating them, according to their own narrative logic and purposes. In *TM*, some elements of this archetype are omitted, altered or disguised but, nevertheless, recognisable. The 'king-and-goddess' theme

> was an integral element of the historical and political consciousness of the early Irish — or of the classes who interested themselves in such matters as history and politics, and, of course, literature. That being so, we might expect it to manifest itself in many other different, and less obvious, ways throughout the pages of the early literature and historical records (Mac Cana 1958–9: 61).

The stability of this theme in the tradition could be probably understood from the fact that the marital union between a mortal man and a supernatural woman is portrayed as the archetype of marriage in the *Acallam na Senórach*. In this text, the marriage of Aéd, king of Connacht, and a fairy woman Ailenn is documented as the first marriage in Ireland blessed and celebrated by Patrick. This furnishes the marriage of this type with a status of a precedent. John Carey argues (2015b: 60) that "nuptial union of human royalty with the immortal race, consecrated by the authority of Patrick himself, is obviously a scene of the greatest symbolic importance." As he explains elsewhere (Carey 2014: 87), "perhaps the saint is depicted as granting legitimacy to the idea-age-old, but destined to survive into the modern period — that a king's true spouse is the supernatural personification of the land."

2.1.6. The Ebro River

The first part of the story ends up with a happy marriage and the narrator gives his editorial remark that he has decided to leave his characters for a while. One year passes. The second part starts with the description of the Ebro River. The author finds it important to stress the geographical location of the river: it runs through the centre of Spain. Every seventh year, a magical salmon from the hidden corners of the Universe comes into its waters. This image evokes an immediate association: in the middle of Ireland there is the Hill of Uisnech, mythological and sacred centre of Ireland; the Well of Segais (estuary of the Boyne) also runs through the middle of the country and its

waters carry nuts of wisdom which are eaten by salmons of knowledge (Wagner 1975: 3). Binchy (1958: 114) argued that "in pre-Christian, perhaps in pre-Goidelic, days Uisnech, "the centre" of Ireland, appears to have been of religious significance, perhaps associated with a fire-cult." The hill of Uisnech is also related to the notion of kingship. For instance, it symbolises supremacy and sacred status of heir apparent, Connla, who is standing on the top of Uisnech in the beginning of *Echtrae Chonnlai*.

In the context of kingship, Uisnech is also featured in the poem *Tarrnig in seal-sa ag Síl Néill*. The plot of the poem is based on the famous story of how Niall Noígíallach got his power from the sovereignty goddess but is in fact intended to legitimise the status of Cathal Crobderg, king of Connacht (1189–1224). The latter was the younger brother of Ruaidrí Ua Conchobair, and the poem was aimed at promoting Cathal as the High King of Ireland. Though Cathal died King of Connacht in 1224, he was regarded as a High King of Ireland by the Irish élite. As Breatnach (1953: 329–30) points out, it was a "remarkably elaborate attempt to provide Cathal with an incontrovertible title, based on an alleged ancient tradition, to rule Ireland." This poem features an important association of Irish kings with a bind of salmon and, at the same time, contains the 'sovereignty goddess' motif. In this poem, Niall Noígiallach encounters a hag (Sovereignty) near a pool surrounded by yews, with a pillar-stone and a spring in its middle, and a run of salmon in its waters. As the hag explains, the pool represents Ireland, and five yews around it are its five provinces. The pillar stands for the hill of Uisnech; the spring symbolises the wedding-feast of Tara. The salmon sipping its waters are kings of Ireland. The poem was edited by Brian Ó Cuív (1983); the relevant sections are as follows:

> **32** *In flaithes meise, a Néill náir,*
> *a uí Chairbre chrechaig cháid;*
> *is í in tipra gainmech gel*
> *Inis Fótla na finntreb.*
>
> **33** *Is iat na hibair arda*
> *na cúic cúicidh comarda;*
> *is iat caera na n-eó n-ard*
> *étála na ríg ro-garg.*
>
> **34** *Is é in cairthe taidlech tenn*
> *Uisnech ardmedón Eirenn;*
> *is é in sruth caem can cruaide*
> *Feis na Temra taebuaine.*
>
> **35** *Is iat in ré maigred mór*
> *flaithe Eirenn ac in ól;*
> *íbait Feis Temra na treb*
> *mar ebait in sruth saergel*

(Ó Cuív 1983: 165).

> 32. I am the sovereignty, o noble Niall, o descendant of Cairbre, pure and plundering; the clear sandy well is the island of Ireland of the fair families.
> 33. The tall yews are the five equally-eminent provinces, the berries of the tall yews are the booties of the very vigorous kings.
> 34. The strong shining stone is Uisnech, the noble centre of Ireland; the fair and soft stream is the Feast of green-sided Tara.
> 35. The shoal of big salmon are the princes of Ireland at the drinking feast; they will drink the Feast of Tara of the tribes as the salmon drink the noble bright stream.
> (ibid.: 170).

As Breatnach (1953: 332) argues, the sovereignty goddess

> finds no perceptible difficulty in recognizing the O'Connor High-kings amongst the salmon in the magic well, or in singling out from amongst them a mighty one which was distinguished appropriately by having 'brownish red fins.'

If we apply the system of symbols used in the poem to *TM*, we can also interpret the Ebro River in the middle of Spain as an allusion to the well of Segais in the middle of Ireland. Salmon of knowledge in its waters is a symbol of Eógan himself as future king. It is also remarkable that when Eógan puts on the salmon mantle, he becomes identified with the animal and in this manner, illuminated (presumably, with a supernatural knowledge the salmon possesses). While the description of the salmon, which comes to the Ebro every seventh year from the mysterious places of Creation, points toward its interpretation as *bratán feasa*, another reason for employing this image in *TM* is the fact that the words denoting 'salmon', e.g. *eó*, *éigne*, or *maighre*, functioned as metaphors for a prince or a warrior. Art Hughes has demonstrated that such similes were used in bardic praise poetry and were included in bardic primers. As he concludes, it is

> erroneous to view all uses of, and references to salmon in bardic poetry as pertaining to this mythological inspiration [salmon of knowledge] as there are countless other instances where the use of the term salmon is clearly intended as an allusion to a strong, vigorous, warlike, dauntless chieftain (Hughes 1996: 18).

For example, Tadhg Dall Ó hUiginn in his panegyric for Cormac Ó hEaghra (O'Hara) compares him with *maighre séanta sleachta Céin*, 'fortunate salmon of the race of Cian', which stands for the celebrand's martial prowess and leadership (Knott 1922: 214; Knott 1926: 142). Similarly, in a poem called *A fir ná suidh arin síth* in the Book of Uí Mhaine, Cathal Crobderg and his brother, the last high-king of Ireland Ruaidrí Ua Conchobair, are praised as "noble salmon who have been attacked by monstrous *gairbhéisc* (rough fish) who are defined as the Welsh, the English, and the French" (Carney 1987: 689).

In the poem *Tarrnig in seal-sa ag Síl Néill*, we are presented with an iconic picture of the pool, which is a symbol of the whole of Ireland, with its provinces and its kings. The essence and the diversity of the whole country are concentrated in this image. In a similar manner, the Ebro, which runs in the middle of Spain, could also simultaneously refer to both geographical places, i.e. Spain and Ireland, mirroring each other in that instance. The fact that the geographical organisation of both worlds is essentially the same represents a nexus of structured relationship between the two realities. As Carey (1986: 5) stresses, "in a just king's reign his realm will mirror the conditions of the blessed Otherworld." Ó Cathasaigh (1978: 144) also admits that the Golden Age of Ireland which is possible only under the rule of a worthy king, is modelled upon the paradisal state of the Otherworld. Spain in *TM* reflects Ireland; two worlds have a common point, and "the locus of sacred kingship exists simultaneously on the divine and human planes" (Carey 1986: 5).

2.1.7. *TM* and *Macgnímartha Finn*

2.1.7.1. The Salmon and the Transformation

The image of the salmon in the Ebro River deserves to be considered in detail. First of all, the multi-coloured salmon covered in wool is an unusual image obviously aimed at evoking wonder in listeners. Salmon's appearance tells us that it is the creature of the Otherworld. Being not entirely a fish and not entirely a mammal, but a creature between different species, it could easily find its place in the imagination of the medieval public who was aware of many other fantastic beasts of medieval bestiaries. For us, however, it is more important that the salmon plays the role of a transforming agent in Eógan's initiation. For those familiar with the Irish tradition, this episode has an immediate association. Probably the most famous Irish tale, which features both the salmon and the change of the hero's status, is the medieval Irish text *Macgnímartha Finn* (*MF*).[75] In this account, young Demne, gilla of Finn the Poet, waits on the bank of the Boyne River for the salmon of knowledge, which he has to catch for his master. The magical creature is to bring the gift of poetic knowledge and prophecy to Finn. Eventually, the salmon is caught and Finn orders his apprentice to cook it. Because of the precious essence of poetry contained in the salmon, eating the fish is strictly forbidden to Demne. However, while cooking the fish, the boy accidentally burns his finger and puts it in his mouth to cool it down. As Joseph Nagy (1980: 125) resumes,

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[75] The text was edited in Meyer 1882; translation is given in Meyer 1904b.

the cook puts a part of himself that has been 'cooked' in his mouth almost as a parody of eating. In this way Demne acquires and consumes the poetic inspiration and knowledge meant for his teacher. The gilla actually assumes his master's identity: upon realizing what has happened, Finn the Poet gives the salmon and his own name to Demne.

In *MF*, the salmon's provenance is the Otherworld[76] (we remember that in *TM* the salmon also comes from 'the hidden places of Creation'). The fish contains the quintessence of poetic inspiration which the recipient obtains through consuming the fish. "Since the poetic essence comes from outside society,[77] it is raw and must be subjected to the process of cooking, which culturalises food and makes it usable in society" (Nagy 1980: 124). In this case, the procedure of cooking is an indispensible intermediary stage which transforms the Otherworld substance into the product consumable in this world. If we consider the process of cooking as a cultural technique which domesticates raw or alien substances and makes them usable for people, representatives of culture, it is typologically similar to making clothes, when animal skin is made part of material culture by turning it into fabric. The shift from 'nature' to 'culture' in the episode of making a cloak out of the salmon wool is as obvious as in the episode of cooking a raw fish.

In *MF*, "the salmon has not yet completed its passage from the extra-social source of poetry to the representative of society, the poet; before the latter can consume it and utilise the poetic essence within, the gilla must cook the fish" (ibid.: 127). We know, however, that eventually, by a fatal mistake, the *gilla*, Finn, tastes the salmon himself and in this way acquires wisdom contained within the salmon. Thus, the cooker — a person who performs the transformation of a poetic gift from raw to cooked — and the consumer — recipient of a poetic knowledge which is the product of this transformation — is the same person. The distribution of roles in *TM* is different. Eógan is a recipient of the gift of his wife who has skinned the salmon and woven the magic mantle. Moméra, therefore, is an agent who does not have an independent standing in the story and whose function is to transfer salmon's magical aspect on the future king. The woman serves as a mediator who performs the significant transformation: a creature as fantastic as a woollen salmon is transferred into the socially acceptable form of a king's mantle. After that, Eógan's own identity comes into being.

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[76] In general, the Irish tradition associates the salmon with the Otherworld. "The mythical *eó* serves as the intermediary par excellence between this world and the otherworld for poets and other seekers of otherworldly knowledge" (Nagy 1985–6: 127).

[77] The source of poetic inspiration is located in the Otherworld and is portrayed as the well of knowledge (*fiss*) with five streams running out of it. This vision appears in front of the eyes of Cormac in *Echtra Chormaic*. Interestingly enough, "the well of knowledge is within the divine enclosure, though not within the hall itself; inspiration and poetic ability likewise mediate between the worlds" (Carey 1986: 12).

Analysing the process of cooking in the story of Finn, Joseph Nagy (1980: 124; 1985: 15, 132) often refers to the seminal study by Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Mythologiques I: Le cru et le cuit* (1964), (published in English as 'The Raw and The Cooked').[78] In the opening sentence of the introduction to the volume, Lévi-Strauss explains that

> empirical categories — such as the categories of the raw and the cooked, the fresh and the decayed, the moistened and the burned, etc., which can only be accurately defined by ethnographic observation and, in each instance, by adopting the standpoint of a particular culture — can nonetheless be used as conceptual tools with which to elaborate abstract ideas and combine them in the form of propositions (Lévi-Strauss 1970: 1).

Through the observation of these dichotomies in various myths, Lévi-Strauss strives to unveil the epistemological principles which are timeless and ubiquitous, in other words, valid to any group of people, anywhere and anytime. Eventually, it becomes possible for him to categorise myths according to the ideas they channel with the help of these basic binary oppositions, and to acknowledge that universal laws must govern mythical thought. According to his striking statement, "peut-être, ainsi que nous avons suggéré, convient-il d'aller encore plus loin, en faisant abstraction de tout sujet pour considérer que, d'une certaine manière, les mythes se pensent *entre eux*" (Lévi-Strauss 1964: 20).[79] The reviewer of the book *Le cru et le cuit* was obviously attracted by this catchy formulation and gave his own more detailed explanation:

> Un mythe est la traduction d'un autre, dans la mesure où il en est la transformation selon des règles précises. Et ces transformations sont éclairantes dans la mesure où ells mettent en lumière des articulations essentielles, des invariants fondamentaux. En ce sens, on peut dire que "les myths se pensent entre eux." …Ainsi un ensemble de mythes forme in système lorsqu'ils fournissent les solutions d'une même combinatoire et sont, à ce titre, complémentaires entre eux (Isambert 1965: 393).[80]

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[78] Although the structuralist methodology cannot be called a mainstream in Celtic scholarship, a few scholars have used this approach in their works. For example, a structural analysis of *Echtra Nerai* following Lévi-Strauss' theory was undertaken by Alden Watson (1986). Leonie Duignan (2011) also bases her research of the *echtrae* genre on the methodology of Lévi-Strauss.

[79] It is not easy to translate into other languages such an elegant and concise phrase, primarily because the particle *se* can express both reflective ("myths think themselves") and reciprocal ("myths think each other") relations. The English translators have preferred to paraphrase the final part: "and, as I have already suggested, it would perhaps be better to go still further and, disregarding the thinking subject completely, proceed as if the thinking process were taking place in the myths, in their reflection upon themselves and their interrelation" (Lévi-Strauss 1970: 12). Markos Zafiropoulos (2010: 171) translates Lévi-Strauss' idea as "myths think themselves in relation to each other by the intermediary of men."

[80] "A myth is a translation of another insofar as it is its transformation according to precise rules. And these transformations are enlightening insofar as they shed light on the essential articulations, fundamental invariants. In this sense, we can say that "myths think each other among themselves." …Thus, the ensemble of myths constitute a system when they provide solutions for the same combination and are, as such, complementary to each other" (translation is mine).

The invariant nature of corresponding myths as well as their self-reflective and introspective character was also noted by René Girard in his article about Lévi-Strauss' critical theory:

> Lévi-Strauss also says that myths are able to think each other as myths. The formula has been most successful but its real meaning is not explained. It cannot mean only that many variations of the same myth are found. In nature, many varieties of the same species are found, many varieties of ants, for instance, but we would not say that these different ants think each other. In order for myths to think each other, it is necessary that each myth, up to a point, think itself as myth. And myths appear to think themselves because they provide the mirror in which they reflect their own process. Since the process is one of pure differentiation, the only appropriate mirror is the undifferentiated. … It is the presence in myths of the undifferentiated that allows Lévi-Strauss to say that they "think each other as myths" (Girard 1977: 113).

The structuralist analysis pioneered by Lévi-Strauss was applied to Gaelic tradition by Joseph Nagy in his book 'The Wisdom of the Outlaw', an illuminating study of the narrative tradition related to Finn. As Nagy explains in the introduction,

> briefly, the hypothesis behind this method is that within a narrative tradition, at any given point in its historical span or throughout that span, every story has something to say about every other story within the tradition. Every tale, accordingly, can be treated by the mythologist as a multiform of every other, just as every story, in both a thematic and a structural sense, "flows into" every other. The method derived from this structuralist hypothesis encourages the analyst to ascertain the meaning of a story, its fundamental, ahistorical "truth", on the basis of the other stories within the tradition. The structuralist interpretation of myth is in fact a process of translating one story into another (Nagy 1985: 15).

The "undifferentiated" of Girard or "fundamental, ahistorical 'truth'" of Nagy is yet another term for Isambert's "fundamental invariant" — a stable changeless element which lies at the basis of mythological tales. If we apply this methodology to the tales in question, the salmon episode in *TM* and the story of Finn seem to share this unvarying core. The comparison of the two tales allows them to interact effectively explaining both themselves and each other. The basis of both tales is modelled upon the following *invariant fondamentale*: the process of the culturalisation of a wild salmon from raw to ready (to wear)/cooked mediates the passage between nature and culture, between the Otherworld and this world and, ultimately, between adolescence and adulthood. Thus, the mythological mindset is holistic and building on a simple opposition from everyday life, it creates a bricolage of pairs of dialectic notions. Mythological narrative here serves as a vehicle for explanation.

That, from the mythological point of view, cooking and sewing semantically represent the same transitional process was well documented by Lévi-Strauss himself. Already at the end of his first volume, *Le cru et le cuit*, in the chapter called *Noces* ('Wedding'), he

mentions that the culinary opposition 'raw/cooked' is subsequently associated with the 'naked/ dressed' dichotomy. For example, he notes that in France the young people who wanted to get married were to eat salad made of raw vegetables while in England a single person was to dance without shoes; therefore, the comparison of these rituals equals the categories of 'raw' and 'naked'. Further on, he stresses that this equivalence is often reflected in idiomatic constructions. Lévi-Strauss quotes such idioms as English *to sleep in the raw* meaning 'to sleep naked' or French *danser à cru* meaning 'to dance barefoot' (Lévi-Strauss 1964: 340–1). The last and fourth volume of his *Mythologiques* entitled *L'homme nu*, 'The Naked Man', is entirely devoted to the elaboration of this idea (Lévi-Strauss 1971). Throughout this volume, Lévi-Strauss argues that culture as such is identified not only with cooking food but with making clothes as well. Hence, the dichotomy of 'raw' and 'cooked' implies the notions of 'naked' and 'dressed'. Among many other examples, he cites a tale about the Eagle and the Coyote. With the help of a cunning trick, the latter makes the Eagle dispose of his clothes and appropriates both his feathery dress and his identity (Lévi-Strauss 2007: 238). As Lévi-Strauss observes, by doing so, the Coyote forces the Eagle to degrade from culture to nature, and, metaphorically, from food cooked on a fire to a raw food diet (ibid.: 327).

Therefore, from the perspective of their mythological structure, the stories of Finn and Eógan share the same *invariant fondamentale*. Both tales are united by the main theme — the social maturation and transition of the hero with the help of the mystical essence contained within the Otherworld salmon. For both Finn and Eógan the interaction with the final product of the salmon's transformation manifests the accomplishment of their rites of passage. It is not surprising that both heroes receive new names straight after this: the gilla Demne becomes Finn the Poet; and the prince Eógan receives his predestined name Taídlech. The presence of an invariant, however disguised, within various tales of the same tradition makes the comparative analysis a favourable method of examination. Donnchadh Ó Corráin has argued that the scenarios involved in Irish narratives were limited and repetitive and were subject to a unified way of treatment rather than to an original interpretation on behalf of their compilers. "Once an appropriate formula had been devised, one had only to change the details to meet new situations" (Ó Corráin 1986: 143). Therefore, if we look beyond varying circumstances, we get an unchangeable and stable narrative pattern as a literary tool suitable for multiple applications. The thematic correspondences in various tales, however, do not imply their common origins. As Pádraig Ó Riain (1972: 181) puts it,

the repetitious nature of Irish literature in thematic terms is not necessarily indicative of a widespread literary course of derivation. Rather should it be taken as a reflection of the perennial Irish concern with a limited group of themes, and with the less limited, though by no means extensive, area of possible manoeuvre in the introduction of thematic variables.

Notably, Lévi-Strauss has ascribed a general character to this phenomenon. In his monograph *La pensée sauvage* ('The Savage Mind') he describes the 'bricoleur model' of common mythological thinking, which in many ways echoes Ó Riain's statement:

> The characteristic feature of mythical thought is that it expresses itself by means of a heterogeneous repertoire which, even if extensive, is nevertheless limited. It has to use this repertoire, however, whatever the task at hand because it has nothing else at its disposal. Mythical thought is therefore a kind of intellectual 'bricolage' – which explains the relation which can be perceived between the two (Lévi-Strauss 1966: 16–7).

For this reason, I will proceed with the discussion of other Irish and international tales which seem to contain a relevant dichotomy of 'raw' and 'cooked' with the implication of the relationship between Otherworld and the real world, immaturity and adulthood, wilderness and culture and so on. First of all, this opposition is evident in folklore accounts on how a mortal man is trying to seduce a supernatural woman by offering her different types of bread. The basic plot of these tales is as follows: a man sees a beautiful lady and invites her to come with him. He offers her baked bread but she rejects. The next day he brings her unbaked bread but the result is still unsatisfying. Eventually, on the third day, he brings lightly baked bread — as the Irish story phrases it, "just to put the bread on the griddle and lift it off". The supernatural woman accepts the food and becomes his wife. Obviously, no one would deny that the baked bread is a metaphor of our world and of human culture. On the other hand, the unbaked bread symbolises the Otherworld — the realm of immortals which is an inverse image of our earthly life. Therefore, the lightly grilled bread that is neither cooked nor uncooked represents the coincidence of mutually exclusive elements and provides a platform for a union between mortals and supernatural beings: "on the functional level, to win the fairy woman through the choice of the ambiguous bread is essentially the same as to capture her within the ambiguous space" (Mac Cana 1999: 153). Another variation of this tale, the Welsh story of Llyn y Fan, is discussed by the brothers Rees in 'The Celtic Heritage'. As they stress, "coincidence of opposites and of other irreconcilables gives a shock to the understanding and transport the spirit to the gateway of the Other World" (Rees & Rees 1961: 344).

The comparison of other tales also demonstrates the typological equality of cooking and making clothes as two transforming cultural techniques. For instance, in Irish and

Indian literature the acquisition of royal power can be described in terms of obtaining clothes or cooking/ eating. On the one hand, in both Ireland and India royal power has been generally associated with obtaining and spreading the king's mantle (Fomin 2010b: 211). On the other hand, the Indian king was represented as the eater of his kingdom (Skt. *annada*) and the king's treasury (Skt. *kośa*) was interpreted as his mouth (Skt. *mukham*). In a similar manner, in some Irish sources the king is also metaphorically described as consuming his kingdom. Cf. such examples as *rige dorumaltsa* 'I have exercised (lit. eaten or consumed) kingship'; *doromla Banba* 'he shall enjoy (lit. consume) Banba' (i.e. he shall rule Ireland) (Fomin 2010a: 266). McCone (1990: 174) also stresses that

> the king is not only initiated into his new supreme status by being made the object and/or recipient of cooking but also himself then becomes a cooking vessel channeling nature's bounty into and harmoniously combining the various ingredients of the whole society over which he rules.

This significant correlation of cooking and dressing is found, for example, in the story of Mis and Dubh Ruis (Ó Cuív 1954; Partridge 1980: 25–6; Carey & Koch 2003: 282–5) and *Mór Muman ₇ Aided Cuanach meic Ailchine* (O'Nolan 1912–3). In the first tale, Mis has gone mad after the death of her father and lives in the forest. She is restored to her senses due to eating the deer which she catches (the second restorative element is the coition with Dubh Ruis). Initially, the girl wants to eat the deer raw (the madness and wildness of Mis correspond to this basic category) but her lover Dubh Ruis insists that the deer should be cooked before consumption (clearly, Dubh Ruis is a representative of reason which corresponds to the 'cooked' element of the dichotomy).[81] Therefore, the shift from nature to culture and, implicitly, from madness to sanity is expressed in this tale in terms of cooking. However, the same conflict in the story about Mór Muman has another resolution. Like Mis, Mór goes astray, but her return from frenzy is manifested by her acceptance of the queen's cloak (Mac Cana 1955–6: 84). Thus, the relevant change from chaos to culture and from madness to reason, analogous to the shift from raw to cooked in one tale, is described in categories of nudity and clothing in another. Interestingly, Seán Ó Coileáin compares the story of Mór Muman to

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[81] In the light of the sovereignty goddess myth which the story of Mis and Dubh Ruis is based on, the mention of a deer might be also crucial. As Joseph Nagy (1997: 87–8) points out, "in the Celtic mythology of sovereignty, sometimes the hero wins the kingship through success in a deer hunt." In this manner, cooking the deer and spending the night with Mis represent equally important elements for Dubh Ruis's acquisition of kingship. For the symbolism of deer hunt in the Irish paradigm of kingship, see Fomin 2018: 76–7.

the confession of Caillech Bérri lamenting her poor clothes, and explains this motif in relation to the acquisition or loss of power and social status:

> There is a remarkable emphasis on clothing imagery in both this text [the story of Mór Muman] and the Caillech's poem. Mór wanders about Ireland in rags; on going to bed with Fíngin mac Áeda she discards them; her new position as queen is confirmed by placing a purple cloak about her. The Caillech describes the reverse process in such stanzas as:

> *Is mé Caillech Bérri, Buí;*
> *no meilinn léini mbithnuí;*
> *indiu táthum dom shéimi,*
> *ná melainn cid aithléini* (Ó Coileáin 1974: 114–5).[82]

A parallel to the stories of Mór Muman and Eógan, who undergo positive transformations after putting on a royal cloak, is found in *Togail Bruidne Da Derga*. Conaire is instructed by his supernatural patron, the king of birds Nemglan, that he should undress and go naked to Tara and thus he will become the king of Ireland. Meanwhile, the prophets of Tara learn in the *tarbfheis* ritual how and where the future king should appear. As the story follows,

> *Luidseom íarum in chruthsa ⁊ bádar trí ríg cacha sráite dina ceithri sráitib día tíagad do Themair oca urnaideseom, ⁊ étach acco dó, ar is lomnacht da-rairngiread a thaideachd. Con-accesom don rout for m-bátar a aite ⁊ do-bertatar étach ríg dó imbi…* (Knott 1936: 5);

> So in this wise Conaire fared forth; and on each of the four roads whereby men go to Tara there were three kings awaiting him, and they had raiment for him, since it had been foretold that he would come stark-naked. Then he was seen from the road on which his fosterers were, and they put royal raiment about him… (Stokes 1901: 25).

It is clear that by accepting the royal garment, Conaire simultaneously accepts the power, as the "laying of the royal raiment upon the would-be king" symbolises "his acquisition of a kingly status" (Fomin 2010b: 229). Thus, the shift from 'naked' to 'dressed' implies the rise to a higher social status, as well as a shift from adolescence to maturity. In contrast to Eógan and Conaire, who put on regal attire as a visual manifestation of their kingship, the protagonist of *Buile Shuibhne* loses his royal status and, echoing Mis and Mór Muman, his mind, after losing his cloak. When the enraged king Suibhne hastens to the newly founded church of St Ronán, he drops his cloak and comes to the site stark naked:

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[82] 'I am the Caillech Bérri beside Dursey / I used to wear an ever-new tunic / today I have for my thinness / that I may not wear out even a worn-out garment.' Translation is quoted after Ritari 2006: 67.

Tarraidh a bhainc[h]eile .i. Eorann ingen Chuinn Chiannachta eiti an bhrait chortharaigh chorcra robhúi ime dia fhosdudh, go rosging fón teach an sioball airgid aeinghil co míneagur óir robhaói san brat os a bruinne. Lasodhain fágbaidh a bhrat ag an riogain ⁊ dothaod roimhi lomnocht ina reim roiretha do dhíochar an chleirigh on chill co riacht áit ina raibhe Ronán (§3) (O'Keeffe 1913: 4);

His wife Eorann, daughter of Conn of Ciannacht, in order to hold him, seized the wing of the fringed, crimson cloak which was around him, so that the fibula of pure white silver, neatly inlaid with gold, which was on his cloak over his breast, sprang through the house. Therewith, leaving his cloak with the queen, he set out stark-naked in his swift career to expel the cleric from the church, until he reached the place where Ronan was (O'Keeffe 1913: 5).

Deprived of his royal mantle, Suibhne is already symbolically deprived of his status, his kingship and his senses, this being followed by St Rónán's curse which really turns him into a geilt and a madman. As Jan Erik Rekdal (2011: 245) interprets this episode,

when he [Suibhne] sets out to banish Rónán from his ground, he leaves his house without his cloak — his royal vestment — and enters naked the place where Rónán is building a church. It is the opposite of the normal movements of a king, who is given his cloak at his inauguration.

In this example, the descent from 'dressed' to 'naked' symbolises the decline from reason to madness, from royal status to asocial marginal existence, and from settled life within the confines of society to wandering in the wilderness. Another counter-example is the destiny of Diarmait in the tale *Aided Diarmata meic Cerbaill*. Among the series of phenomena accompanying the king's death, there is a mention of a tunic woven from a single grain of flax and of a cloak made of the wool of a single sheep. In this tale, the symbols of king's power, tunic and cloak, are put in the situation of the king's death. Being placed in this sinister context, the elements of *investitura* change their symbolic function. From now on, they serve not as signs of king's suitability for his position, but, on the contrary, as manifestations of his incongruity, and hence, his doom. "Thus, the king's failed rule and destiny are marked by motifs associated earlier in this cyclic narratives with selection and investiture" (Sayers 2008: 116).[83] Moreover, any reader or listener of the tale understands that it would be technically impossible to weave a tunic from a single linseed grain and to make a mantle from a single sheep's wool. These *impossibilia* function as "the paradoxical narrative sign for inevitability" (Sayers 2008: 116). Joan Radner (1983: 185) has also noted that this element of mystery, riddle, or paradox in *Aided Diarmata* imbues the event (when it comes) with a sense of divine judgment, of things beyond our ken. As often in folklore and literature, when something impossible is mentioned as a signal of a future event, and characters feel safe exactly

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[83] The similar inversion of the motif can be seen in the story of Conaire's doom. When the king is about to die, he starts suffering from a supernatural thirst and there is no water in the whole kingdom to quench it. This episode alludes to the motif of *(f)laith*, liquor of sovereignty. As it is clear from the context of the king's death, there's not a drop of this liquor for an unsuccessful king. Notably, ale brewed from a single grain is also listed among the circumstances of Diarmait's downfall.

because of its impossibility, the audience usually knows that this will inevitably happen and trigger the following (predicted) catastrophe.[84] The idea of the mantle made of the wool of a salmon is so extraordinary and unnatural that one is tempted to think that this might have been the point: Eógan prevails by gaining something the existence of which seems impossible.

Irish tradition also provides an interesting counter-example to the story of Finn and the salmon. In the vernacular Life of St Brendan, there is an account of a man called Dobarchú (lit. 'water-dog' or 'otter') (Plummer 1922a: 81–3; 1922b: 79–80). Like Finn, Dobarchú is cooking a trout he caught in a lake but, unfortunately for him, he ignores the social norms which prescribe a particular way of cooking on a fire. First of all, he makes a fire of bracken. Moreover, he eats the hot fish straight off the spit. After that, Dobarchú rushes to the river to quench his thirst but falls into the water and is turned into an actual otter. Similarly to the story of *Buile Shuibhne*, this metamorphosis is the result of the saint's curse. While Finn performs the significant transformation of the salmon from 'raw' to 'cooked' and makes a progress in his social position, Dobarchú violates the basic rules of cooking and experiences a decline from human to animal, in other words, the shift from 'culture' to 'nature'. In a poem, an otter Dobarchú warns his son that he must not, under any circumstances, make a fire of fern and eat a fish hot without waiting for it to cool down. Moreover, while in the story of Mis the properly cooked meat returns the mad woman to her senses, Dobarchú, on the contrary, loses his mind. He laments that he is now *gan chéill*, 'without sense', because the hot fish has burned him.[85]

The opposite transformation of an animal into human perceived through the cultural activities of cooking and sewing/ weaving is experienced by the main heroine of the Russian folk-tale 'The Frog Princess'. In it, the three royal brothers are engaged in shooting three arrows, and the girl who finds an arrow will become the wife of the prince who shot it. The arrows of the two elder brothers land in the yards of a nobleman and a rich merchant, while the arrow of the youngest brother lands in a bog and is found by a frog. The latter turns out to be a princess, who becomes a beautiful woman when she removes her frog skin. The old king, the father of the three brothers, sets special

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[84] Cf. Macbeth's prophecy that he will never be vanquished, until Great Birnam wood would come against him to the Dunsinane hill.

[85] Significantly, in an article devoted to the image of a madman in Irish literature, Ó Riain lists "the consumption of contaminated food or drink" as one of the reasons for madness (Ó Riain 1972: 183, 191); by contrast, "the consumption of 'blessed' food or drink" in Ó Riain's scheme restores to sanity (ibid.: 184, 202). Note that Suibhne also looses his mind as the result of his transformation.

ordeals for his daughters-in-law. The first task is to bake a loaf of bread; the second one is to sew a carpet. As Maxim Fomin (2010a: 261) observes, the supernatural frog

> behaved like a human, and was transformed into a human for the duration of the time taken to perform her tasks. The observed semiotic models embedded into such a narrative core can be explained by analysing the motivation behind the activity of the main character. According to Yury Lotman (2000: 334), "a human being, immersed into a cultural space, inevitably creates an organised spatial sphere around himself. This sphere, on the one hand, includes … semiotic models, and, on the other, the re-creative activity of a human." Thus, the Frog Princess, being brought from the bog and finding herself in the cultural space of a human society, is bound to act according to its norms and regulations. She is only brought into human shape when she engages in various forms of activity central to human existence.

Therefore, the same Lévi-Strauss' pattern can be found in this tale. The frog takes the *shape* of a woman when deprived of her skin; nevertheless, she becomes fully human only after being involved in baking and carpet weaving — traditional female cultural activities. Significantly, baking and weaving in this tale are associated with kingship — the carpet the frog makes is ornamented with the image of the royal capital and the bread has the model of the city on its top. By doing this, the frog princess helps her husband to conquer the kingdom and manifests her own queenly character.

Probably the same motif of the inclusion of an otherworldly woman into this world through doing traditional household chores, can be found in the tale *Noínden Ulad*. In it, Macha chooses an Ulster commoner Crunnchu as her husband and comes to his house. As Joanne Findon (2017: 120) observes,

> Macha does not focus on self-display but immediately enters the home and identifies herself with Crunnchu's domestic space: she walks righthandwise around the kitchen (signifying good luck), then silently sets about performing household chores such as kneading dough and cooking a meal. At the end of the day she goes out and milks the cows, and when night falls she lies down beside Crunnchu and initiates a sexual relationship with him. Although there is no mention of her being paid her bride price, she clearly becomes his wife.

In a footnote, Findon expresses a surprise that "Macha performs domestic tasks that would not normally be associated with a woman of elite status (as Otherworld beings tend to be)", and stresses that in Irish sources, female physical work is viewed "as being beneath the dignity of noblewomen." This paradox could probably be explained in the light of Lévi-Strauss' theory. Like the magical frog in the Russian folk-tale, the supernatural woman Macha makes herself able to become a wife for a mortal man after she engages in traditional female tasks, like making dough and cooking food. Only after that she has intercourse with Crunnchu, an ultimate step which makes her part of the mortal world. Here the shift from 'raw' to 'cooked', as well as coition, mediates Macha's own shift from the Otherworld to this world.

I believe that the transformation of a sovereignty goddess from a loathly lady into a beautiful woman in the central kingship myth, the 'king-and-goddess' theme, can also be explored in terms of 'raw and cooked' opposition. For example, in *Echtra Mac nEchach Mugmedóin* we find the same transformation of an animal/ monster into a beautiful king's lover, as we do in 'The Frog Princess'. The relevant shift from wilderness and madness to culture and sanity is performed by means of sexual intercourse. As Amy C. Eichhorn-Mulligan (2006: 1025–6) argues,

> the text provides an arrestingly visual image of the hag's numerous long teeth that extend from her mouth to curve to the outside of her body; and by the grafting of animalesque tusks or horns onto her body, the lines between human and beast are blurred, and she constitutes a suitably wild opponent for the hero to overcome in his rise to Ireland's kingship. It is potentially of note that the term used, "benna buabaill" (horns of a buffalo), based on the typical employment of this natural material, also signifies "drinking horn." The primary goal of the hornlike teeth is most likely to repulse in their wild incongruity on a woman's body; however, since this second descriptive passage immediately precedes the approach of the rightful king-to-be, the horns may also subtly remind the audience of the drink of sovereignty that she proceeds to offer Niall from a "royal horn" ("dind chuirn," p. 106). Like a wild buffalo's horns in the hands of an able craftsman, *the ugly hag has the potential to be "tamed" and remade for productive social use* (emphasis is mine), and as Niall lays his lips on hers, she is transformed.

We might recall here that both Mis and Mór Muman are also fully restored to their senses after they spend a night with their lovers, Dubh Ruis and Fíngen mac Áeda. Notably, Ó Riain (1972: 196) lists the act of coition "as a possible restorative occasion in terms of both madness and the novice" (Ó Riain 1972: 196), and instances the stories of Mis and Mór Muman as classical examples of this case (ibid.: 202–3). The fact that, *pace* Mac Cana (1955–6: 370–82), both ladies represent avatars of the sovereignty goddess links them with the goddess in *Echtra mac nEchach Mugmedóin*. Therefore, all three accounts can be considered realisations of the same theme: a beast-like/mad woman, *alter ego* of the sovereignty goddess, is restored to her beauty and sanity after the coition with a rightful king.[86] Remarkably, according to Lévi-Strauss, the category of celibacy corresponds to the 'raw' element of the dichotomy (Lévi-Strauss 1964: 340), and in this vein, marriage is considered a transforming activity which performs the shift from immaturity to adulthood encoded in the basic opposition of 'raw' and 'cooked'.

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[86] Note that the Frog Princess, who is also associated with the acquisition of kingship, turns into a beautiful lady only after the marriage with the young prince. The crucial role of the intercourse for the possibility of the union between a supernatural woman and a mortal man was discussed above on the example of Macha and Crunnchu. In general, this *topos* is well attested in world folklore and literature. For example, in the famous *Undine* by Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué, Undine needs to sleep with a man in order to obtain a human soul and to leave the supernatural world of the Rhine. She indeed gains a Christian soul after the first night with her husband, the knight Huldbrand.

The tales I have discussed feature a liminal creature — be it a frog, a supernatural woman, or a salmon — which possesses the essence of kingship (or of poetry, in the case of Finn). Since the creature still belongs to the supernatural realm, the protagonist cannot yet access the magical substance contained within it and in order to obtain it, he needs to perform certain transforming actions which will make the otherworld substance usable in this reality. Finn cooks the salmon; the wife of Eógan makes a cloak out of the salmon's wool; Niall, Dubh Ruis and Fíngin spend a night with the threatening hag, Mis and Mór Muman respectively, after which the women recover their sanity and their own appearance. The methodology of Lévi-Strauss allows us to discern a common pattern in these tales: cooking and sewing, as well as the act of coition, function as civilising and socialising transformative processes which integrate wild and untamed creatures into the structures of human society and human relationships. Only when this is done, the essence that is contained in a magical creature is released, and the hero can finally benefit from it.

2.1.7.2 *Tarbfheis* and *Imbas Forosna*

Commenting on the story of Mis, who gets back to her sanity after eating a cooked deer, Nagy (1986–7: 178) observes that "the treatment of this bereaved woman resembles other recorded Irish rituals that mark and/ or effect transitions, including the mantic *tarbfheis*, 'bull-feast', and the bestial Tirconnell inauguration ceremony described by Gerald of Wales." Of course, putting on a skin of slain animal can be seen as an approximate analogue of Eógan's 'investiture'. The potential king fulfils his destiny as soon as the initiation rite is accomplished, and this accomplishment is transferred to a visual level by the change in his appearance. The participant of the ritual, going through a symbolic rebirth, is to dispose of the 'old body' and accept his new shape; or, as Malamoud (1989:60) puts it, "pour être en état de célébrer le sacrifice, le sacrificiant doit se dépouiller de sons corps profane et se donner un corps sacrificiel".[87]

It would be too bold, perhaps, to emphasise the reflex of *tarbfheis* in this episode of *TM*. What is really worth discussing is the nature of the salmon: being covered in wool, it is between fish and mammal; it comes from the hidden corners of the universe to the observable world; it is a creature between worlds and species. In this sense, it mirrors the status of Eógan who passes through his initiatory ordeals, and cannot yet be defined or occupy an appropriate niche in society. He is in the middle stage of the ritual and just

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[87] 'In order to be able to celebrate the sacrifice, the sacrificer should divest himself of his profane body and provide himself with a sacrificial body' (translation is mine).

about to be ready for kingship. Moreover, he resides in the country which is not his own land, the passage being made from this world (Ireland) to the Otherworld (Spain). Both the salmon and the prince share the quality of liminality, "the state of being in between separate categories of space, time, or identity. A boy who is on the verge of manhood is a liminal figure, as is someone who crosses from the world into another" (Nagy 1981–2: 135). Finn is also a young boy without a defined status and a liminal figure, like Eógan.[88] He burns his finger while cooking and is suddenly enlightened after automatically putting his burned thumb into his mouth. This gesture can be compared with the technique of *imbas forosna*[89] where a seer reached the necessary condition by chewing a piece of taboo meat. "The non-food is treated by the poet in search of knowledge as if it was edible; the morsel is a liminal object between the categories of edible and inedible" (Nagy 1981–2: 136). The same can be said about the salmon skin in our tale. Its wool is obviously not suitable for making clothes; however, it is treated in this manner. The liminal status of the object involved in the initiatory ritual corresponds to the liminal status of the participant of the rite.

It is also important that the participants of the ritual, who are in liminal position themselves, interact with liminal objects in liminal areas. In the *tarbfheis* ritual the seer falls asleep on the threshold during the twilight. Finn is cooking the salmon on the bank of the Boyne River. Likewise, the transformation of Eógan takes place near the Ebro. In early Irish tradition, rivers and lakes often serve as sources of truth, wisdom and poetic knowledge. According to the tale *Imacallam in dá thuarad*, inspiration came at the edge of water (Stokes 1905a: 8, 9; Wagner 1975: 1). To sum it up, "knowledge originates in a liminal source and comes to the poet in a liminal place. The seeker of knowledge must make himself a liminal figure in order to acquire *imbas*, and his liminality is reinforced after he receives it" (Nagy 1981–2: 139). Moreover, liminal anomalous objects obtained in liminal spaces are believed to be sources of supernatural powers. The poet gets extraordinary knowledge after chewing raw meat. Finn chews his burned thumb. Eógan starts shining as soon as he puts on the mantle. The salmon which comes to the Ebro

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[88] Nagy (1985: 124, 126) stresses that the "*gillacht* (the state of being a *gilla*) is important to us in the study of Finn's youth because it is as a *gilla* that Finn becomes not only a full-fledged *fénnid* but also a poet (*fili*). …The *gilla* of medieval Irish literature is a liminal figure still in the process of being initiated into the status of adulthood". In general, the warriors of Finn, the *fíanna* who live in the wilderness before settling within the confines of society, represent Lévi-Strauss' shift from nature to culture and from youth to maturity. Charles Doherty (2005: 5) describes the *fíanna* as "an institution that prepared young men as warriors and presumably allowed the natural leaders of the next generation to emerge. Operating on the margins of society in the forests and wilderness, they returned to the settled community on reaching adulthood and on coming into their inheritance". See also McCone 2012.

[89] Literally, 'the great knowledge that enlightens'. On *imbas* and other mantic procedures of *filid*, see Carey 1997. Cf. Eógan who begins to shine after putting on his cloak.

from the mysterious places of Creation embodies the whole wisdom of the Universe (that is, perhaps, what the multi-coloured tone of his wool alludes to). Wearing his skin, Eógan becomes symbolically identified with the slain animal and therefore, acquires its qualities. That wearing the skin of a slain animal transfers animal's qualities on its possessor is evident in folklore accounts about the Otter King (Ir. *Rí mhadra uisce*; Scott. *Rìgh nan dòbhran*). His skin makes the person who puts it on invulnerable. "The virtual indestructability of the *rìgh nan dòbhran* — his magical ability to survive — is actually transferred to the one who kills it and wears the pelt, a talisman which successfully contains and protects him" (Nagy 1985–6: 125). Which qualities could Eógan have gotten from the salmon? Though the salmon of *TM* is not explicitly called *bratán feasa*, 'salmon of knowledge', there are a few important signals which help the audience to reconstruct this association.

I have already argued that the central location of the Ebro with the salmon coming to its waters every seventh year evokes the image of the Boyne in the centre of Ireland. There is, however, an interesting tradition whih might help us to elucidate this correlation. The poem *Boand I* states that the Boyne has fifteen names and flows in different countries before reaching its delta (and simultaneously its mouth) in Paradise:

> *Cóic anmand déc, demne drend, / forsin tshruth-sin adrímem / otá Síd Nechtain asmaig / co roshaig pardus Adaim.*
> Fifteen names, certainty of disputes, / given to this stream we enumerate, / from Sid Nechtain away / till it reaches the paradise of Adam (Gwynn 1913: 26, 27).

The following quatrains enumerate the names of the Boyne in various parts of Ireland and Scotland, and after that, the Boyne becomes the Severn in the land of the Saxons, the Tiber among the Romans, the Jordan and the Euphrates in the east and then, known as the Tigris, flows straight into Paradise from which she starts her way back to the streams of Síd Nechtain. Géorges Dumézil (1968 : 29), discussing this "l'ambitieuse tradition", imagined that the river does not stop in its estuary: "coulant sous (ou sur) la mer et sous les continents, elle resurgit dans le monde, de source en source, portant divers noms, — et quels noms!" ("flowing under (or on) the sea and under the continents, she reappears in the world, from source to source, bearing various names — and which names!"). Therefore, the Boyne is envisaged in a learned tradition as the world river, all the other major rivers of the world being its manifestations. This might explain the similarity in the descriptions of the Boyne in Fenian cycle and the Ebro in *TM*, and might point toward the connection of our salmon with the indigenous *bratán feasa* and the *imbas*. Interestingly, in §38 of *CA*, which discusses how Eógan got his

nickname Taídlech, the salmon first comes from the River of Creation in Paradise to the River Tiber, and from the Tiber it goes to the Ebro. The journey of the salmon in *CA* version partly follows the flow of the Boyne as the world river.

Another signal which points towards interpreting the salmon in the Ebro as the salmon of knowledge is a temporal marker: first, we learn that the salmon comes to Spain every seventh year; then, the druid stresses that seven years have already passed since the salmon came to the waters of the Ebro last time. As we know from *MF*, Finnéces, master of Demne and future Finn, dwelt beside the Boyne and had been waiting seven years for the arrival of the salmon from Linn Féic. The seven years cycle is also mentioned in the 'Cauldron of Poesy' (§11) in relation to the source of Segais (located near the Boyne according to *Boand I* and *Boand II*):

> ...*fáilte fri tascor n-imbais do-fuaircet noí cuill cainmeso for Segais i sídaib, conda-thochrathar méit moltchnaí iar ndruimniu Bóinde frithroisc luaithiu euch aige i mmedón mís míthime dia secht mbliadnae beos* (Breatnach 1981: 66);
> …and joy at the arrival of *imbas* which the nine hazels of fine mast at Segais in the *síd*'s amass and which is sent upstream along the surface of the Boyne, as extensive as a wether's fleece,[90] swifter than a racehorse, in the middle of June every seventh year regularly (ibid.: 67).[91]

As is evident from the aforementioned account, *imbas* is interpreted as a mysterious essence contained within hazelnuts. Salmon eats the nuts as they fall into the well of Segais, and becomes the container and the transmitter of *imbas*. In the *dindshenchas* of the Shannon, *Sinann II*, Sinann is the daughter of Lodan Luchairglan. She goes to the well, called Connla's well which is located beneath the sea, in search of *imbas*. Over this well, there are nine hazels of wisdom; the nuts, flowers and foliage of the trees fall in the well where they are then eaten by the salmon. The juice of nuts forms the mystic bubbles of knowledge. Cf. in the account *Sinann II*:

> *In úair is abaig in cnúas/ tuitit 'sin tiprait anúas/ thís immarlethat ar lár/ co nosethat na bratáin* (Gwynn 1906: 292);
> When the cluster of nuts is ripe/ they fall down into the well:/ they scatter below the bottom/ and the salmon eat them (Gwynn 1906: 293).

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[90] As Breatnach comments (ibid.: 86), "here *cnaí* has nothing to do with *cnú* 'nut' but is rather the indeclinable noun meaning 'fleece'. […] I take it that 'extensive as a wether's fleece' refers to the surface area of the river covered." Thus, the editor interprets *molt-chnaí* as a compound, the first element of which corresponds to a noun molt meaning 'wether' or 'ram.' The mention of the fleece in the context of *imbas* travelling across the Boyne evokes the image of a wool-covered salmon in *TM*. Could it be that this peculiar image in our tale appeared due to some sort of a misinterpretation of this Old Irish poem on behalf of a tale's architect? Speaking of a 'woolen salmon', we might also remember that in *Immram Brain*, Manannán describes salmons in the waters as ' "calves" and "lovely-coloured lambs" (*it loíg, it úain co ndagdath*) (Mac Mathúna 1985: 39, 52).
[91] The nuts come to the Boyne every seventh year according to *Auraicept na nÉces*: *Téghedh immorro in cnómes úd* **cacha .uii.mad bliadna** *frithrosc na Bóinne…* (Breatnach 1981: 93).

In *Scél na Fír Flatha*, a magical well which Cormac sees in Tír Tairngire is also surrounded by nine hazel trees. Purple nuts (*na cuill corcarrda*) fall into the fountain, and the five salmon sever them and send their husks down the stream (Stokes 1891: 195).

This tale, however, is relatively late, and, except for the presence of salmon consuming *imbas*, does not have direct links with *TM*. There is, however, an extremely interesting Old Irish text which incorporates the same set of significant motifs as *TM*: namely, the salmon and the multi-colour garment; the notion of *imbas*, as we shall see, is also directly related to the events. The text is called *Comracc Con Chulaind re Senbecc ua nEibricc a Segais*, 'The Combat of Cuchulaind with Senbecc, grandson of Ebrecc, from Segais.' It was published and translated by Kuno Meyer among the other *anecdota* from the Stowe 992, a manuscript "written by very good scribes" (Meyer 1883–5: 173). The adventure of Cú Chulainn near Segais is a short account (ibid.: 182–4), and for this reason I will present the extracts relevant for my analysis in full:

> *Feacht n-aen dino do Choinculainn la taeb na Boine ina charput ⁊ Laeg mac Rianngabra 'na farrad ⁊ cles níadh nonbur uaso oc guin na n-iach il-Lind Feig. Confacatar in fer mbecc i n-edach corcra ⁊ luingin creduma foi fri troisc na Boinne gan imram itir. Dobert Cúchulainf for a bois cona luingin. 'Dotrala ind,' ar Cúchulaind. 'Is docha,' ar se. 'Dober logh n-anacail .i. mo brat ⁊ mo léine ⁊ atat buada leo .i. at coimsi do cech duine itir becc ⁊ mor. Ni baitir, ni loisctir cein beit imme. Ni raga urcra forro na ar inti imbá m-bía ⁊ cech dath is maith ré neach bid forro.*

> Once upon a time Cuchulaind was in his chariot on the bank of the Boyne, and Loeg, the son of Riangabar, with him. And he was performing the feat of the nine heroes over the river, killing the salmon of Lind Feic, when they saw a little man in a purple dress, and a small boat of bronze under him … on the Boyne, without rowing at all. Cúchulaind took him on his hand together with his boat. 'Thou art in it,' said Cúchulaind. 'The likelier then, said he, that I shall give a ransom, to wit, my cloak and my shirt, and they have their virtues, in that, they fit any man, be he small or great. He is not drowned nor burnt, as long as they are on him. No decay comes upon them, nor upon him on whom they are, and any colour you like will be on them.'

After that, Cú Chulainn takes Senbecc's clothes, as well as his shield and spear, and the little man plays him three tunes on his harp. This account, albeit focused on a different sibject, bears striking resemblance with the salmon episode in *TM*. Senbecc appears straight after Cú Chulainn kills the salmon, the provenance of which — Linn Féic — corresponds to the place from which the salmon of knowledge comes to Finn in *MF*. Moreover, the action takes place on the banks of the Boyne which serves as another hint for the interpretation of the whole episode in this light. Though Cú Chulainn is not portrayed as hunting after the *imbas*, we might presume that the granting of the protective mantle, with every colour on it, is in a way related to the fact of killing the salmon. At least chronologically, the encounter with the little man immediately follows

Cú Chulainn's feat with the salmon, and, therefore, the clothes and other gifts which Cú Chulainn obtains, might function as visual manifestations of the esoteric powers the Ulster hero releases after catching the *bratán feasa*. If we project the characteristics of Senbecc's clothes on Eógan's cloak, it becomes clear that both mantles exhibit certain similarities. The fact that no decay comes upon Senbecc's clothes and their owner is equivalent to the characteristics of Eógan's mantle. In the poem, the druid mentions that the girl would make "a cloak without decay" (*co tibre ass tlacht cen meth*).[92]

The answer to the question who is Senbecc and what he was doing on the Boyne when the salmon was caught, is found in the opening sentence of the version B of this story, preserved in the TCD MS 1317 (H 2.15b), fo. 143a, as part of the legal tract *Bretha nemed dédenach*. We learn that Senbecc was one of the *sí*-folk, and that he came to the source of Segais in search of *imbas* (*Senbheg ua Eibric a síodhaibh doluidh a muigh Seghaisi a ndeghaidh an iomhais go ccomhairnig Cú Chulainn fris for Boinn* (Gwynn 1942: 26–7)). However, as Gwynn (1942: 222) notes, "the tale about Cú Chulainn and the elf Senbecc edited by Meyer in *RC* vi 182 differs from ours in everything except the conclusion." Indeed, the plot is different but, nevertheless, it seems that it corroborates and complements the version A, representing the meeting of the two characters with a focus on a different matter — the search for *imbas*. Senbecc, one of the *sí*-people, comes to the Boyne seeking the hazelnuts (*ba i ndeghaidh thoraidh cnó cuill caoinmhesa doluidh*); these hazelnuts from the nine hazel trees contain *imbas* (*naoi ccuill chaoinmhesa ate a ccno dofuair an iomhus*). The fruit fall into the well and are carried by streams into the Boyne (*contuited isna tiobradoibh conadtoxla an sruth an iomhus isin mBóinn*). As we can see, this description corresponds to the accounts of hazel trees of knowledge in other sources. Interestingly, according to the 'Cauldron of Poesy', Segais is said to be located in *sí*-mounds, where there are also nine hazel trees with the essence of *imbas* (Breatnach 1981: 66).

Both versions of *Comracc Con Chulaind re Senbecc*, however, leave open a question of whether Cú Chulainn was looking for *imbus* on the banks of the Boyne. This answer is found in an anecdote from Harleian 5280, fo. 44b, which Kuno Meyer entitled *Die Ursache von Noinden Ulad*. The wording of the opening of this account is very similar to the version A of the *Comracc*:

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[92] The word used by Senbecc is *airchra*, 'act of perishing, hence decay, decline, deterioration'; the word *meth* used in the poem in *TM* signifies 'decay, blight, wasting, failure'. However, we should not line out the possibility that the epithet might be asemantic. According to e*DIL*, *cen meth*, 'without fail', is common in poetry and is often a mere expletive, e*DIL* s.v. *meth*.

> *Luid Cúculaind dorerim inbuis* (sic) *la Bóainn ₇ [a] ara .i. Laog mac Riencabair* (Meyer 1912b: 120).
> Cú Chulainn went to learn *imbas* from the Boyne, and his charioteer, i.e. Loeg, the son of Riangabar.

This passage names the same characters, Cú Chulainn and his charioteer Loég, at the same place — the Boyne — before killing the salmon. The only difference is that in this case, the aim of Cú Chulainn is explicitly mentioned — he came to the river in the search for *imbas*. Therefore, the details of the encounter of Cú Chulainn with Senbecc provide us with a clue to the salmon episode in *TM*. Similar combination of motifs, i.e. the river, the salmon, the magic coloured mantle, and the *imbas*, allows interpreting the salmon in our tale in a similar vein, as the *bratán feasa*. Therefore, we could probably surmise that the *topos* of *imbas forosna* was employed in *TM* to explain the shining of Eógan's mantle from which he got his famous sobriquet. As the text in *TM* goes, *cach sechtmad blíadain tic innti-sene bradán o díamraib na ndúl*, 'every seventh year a salmon comes from the mysterious places of Creation.' The provenance of the salmon *o díamraib na ndúl* is of central importance for our understanding of the episode. The adjective *díamair* has various meanings among which are 'hidden, secluded, remote, lonely; hence mysterious, curious, recondite; mystic;' the substantivated adjective, hence, means 'hidden thing, secret, mystery.' The noun *dúil*, meaning 'element, being, creature, thing' is used here in gen.pl. which points towards its usage in the sense of 'Creation, Universe.' A similar phrase is found in two sources. First of all, in the version B of the *Comracc* (Gwynn 1942: 26; Breatnach 1981: 60), Senbecc, who is the *file a Seghais*, declaims in his poem that *fesa rom dánsattar **dé díamra***, which Breatnach translates as "mysterious (hidden) gods have granted me knowledge" (see also notes in Gwynn's edition, Gwynn 1942: 222).[93] Secondly, in the 'Cauldron of Poesy', the relevant line is found in the beginning of the tract:

> *Moí Coire coir Goiriath / gor rond-n-ír Día dam **a dúile ndemrib**.*
> Mine is the proper Cauldron of *Goiriath*, / warmly God has given it to me out of the mysteries of the elements (Breatnach 1981: 62, 63).

This line of the poem is accompanied by a gloss:

> *.i. is maith do n-uc Dia damh **a diamraib na ndule** no omaicedh ro érnestar damh in sloinded sáerus sin **a diamraib na ndúl***

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[93] As Professor John Carey once told me, he has a different opinion regarding the translation of this line. He interprets *díamra* as n.pl., with gen.sg. *dé* in preposition, which gives 'secrets of god'. The line, thus, can be translated as 'secrets of god have given me knowledge.' I am also indebted to Professor Carey for drawing my attention to this valuable parallel in the 'Cauldron of Poesy'.

Well has God given it to me out of the mysteries of the elements, or 'that naming which ennobles' is a raw instrument which He has granted to me out of the mysteries of the elements (ibid.).

As Breatnach comments on this line, "I emend *duilib* of the MS to *dúile*, a preposed gpl. which is supported (twice) by gloss 3; it is difficult to see how an original *a duilib demrib* would have been so glossed" (ibid.: 75). The phrasing in *TM* (*o díamraib na ndúl*) is very similar to *a díamraib na ndúl(e)* mentioned twice in the gloss to the 'Cauldron of Poesy'. According to the abovementioned sources, we will see that the phenomena gained from these "mysteries of the elements" include *fios* 'knowledge' (in Senbecc's poem), the cauldron Goriath, and enigmatic *sloinded sáerus*, related to the stages of knowledge one can get from that particular cauldron. It is impossible to know for sure whether the architect of *TM* was quoting the 'Cauldron of Poesy', or whether he borrowed this motif from some other source. It is notable, however, that the formula *a díamraib na ndúl* exists in the tradition and is used specifically for designating the provenance of *imbas* and *fios*.

There is another similarity between the salmon of knowledge and the cauldron of knowledge. Central to the 'Cauldron of Poesy' "is the idea of the cauldron as the source of ability in poetry (and other skills). …Two aspects of the cauldron are relevant: (i) that of a cooking vessel … and more important, (ii) that of a container" (Breatnach 1981: 47). Three cauldrons are metaphorically represented as vessels containing knowledge: they originate inside of a person but may be upright, inclined or upside-down (in case of ignorant) (ibid.: 66–7). An important aspect of a salmon is that it is also a magical container of *imbas*:

> Otter, salmon, eel — each creature functions in the traditions … as a wondrously mobile waterborne 'container' … Each creature, therefore, holds or preserves in different ways, and each is distinguished by what it contains: the otter is a container of salmon (and sometimes of poison), the salmon of *imbas*, and the eel of hapless victims, poison, and madness. These contents are usually released and utilised — that is, the animal container is penetrated, opened, even turned inside out, and/or transformed …What was contained is released, what was implicit becomes explicit, what was ordered is reordered or deprived of order (Nagy 1985–6: 137).

Since the salmon is a 'container' of *imbas*, the person who uses its skin releases the power of *imbas* and becomes the owner of what was once contained within the salmon. From this point of view, it seems particularly important that Eógan starts shining, and the *imbas* previously concealed in the salmon, becomes visually manifested.

2.1.7.3. Conclusions

The two salmon episodes in *TM* and *MF*, therefore, can be presented through a common invariant that was elaborated into two different stories: the hero attains higher status after certain cultural activities transform the essence contained within the magical salmon. If we split the respective episodes into smaller segments, syntagmatic units, we will see that the underlying predicative structure of the stories of Finn and Eógan is almost identical. The stages of Finn's initiation can be categorised as follows:

1) Knowledge, the new status and the new name as the result of initiation are gained from the salmon, a liminal creature travelling between the worlds, which possesses wisdom contained within a hazel-nut (plant/ fish liminal state);

2) The result of the interaction with a final product of the salmon is the acquisition of *imbas*, illuminating knowledge;

3) Enlightenment happens on the bank of the river, a liminal area between land and water;

4) The mediatory process of transforming the essence of knowledge into a usable substance is cooking (transitional procedure which performs the change from the category 'raw/ nature/ Otherworld' to the category 'cooked/ culture/ this world');

5) Finn is a liminal figure himself, a youth on the verge of manhood, a *gilla* ready to become a poet.

The salmon episode in *TM* shares a similar structure:

1) The new royal status and the new name as the result of initiation are gained from the salmon, a liminal creature travelling between the worlds, which is covered in wool (fish/ beast liminal state);

2) The result of the interaction with a final product of the salmon is related to *imbas*, illuminating knowledge; this is probably one of the reasons why Eógan starts shining after putting on the cloak;

3) Transformation happens on the bank of the river, a liminal area between land and water;

4) The mediatory process of transforming the magical essence hidden within the salmon into a usable substance is sewing (transitional procedure which performs the shift from the category 'raw/ nature/ naked/ Otherworld' to the category ''cooked'/ culture/ dressed/ this world');

5) Eógan is a liminal figure, a youth on the verge of manhood, a prince ready to become a king.

Significantly, all the elements involved in this syntagmatic chain have a liminal status. They create a specific liminal atmosphere — the only one in which the ritual, as well as the final transformation, becomes possible. Therefore, the two episodes, to use the term of Lévi-Strauss, "se pensent entre eux". *MF* helps us to better understand the role of the salmon in our tale and the way our tale was constructed in general. Eventually, both tales constitute a certain system because they both derive from the same store of literary motifs available in the Irish tradition.

2.1.8. *La Gloire lumineuse*

Eógan's shining produced by the salmon cloak, however, might allude not only to the *imbas* which was brought from the "mysterious places of Creation" and discharged after the salmon was killed and transformed into the cloak. This wonderful radiance may be another example of Dumézil's *gloire lumineuse*, "luminous glory," a supernatural gift of power and wisdom represented in the image of fire or a glowing object hidden at the bottom of a pool and transmitted upon a worthy hero through water. In order to explore this notion, let us look at Dumézil's hypothesis first.

Dumézil starts his argument with Apām Napāt, the deity of fire which originates in waters ("le Feu dans l'Eau") in the hymns of *Rigveda*. In these hymns, the deity is celebrated in sacred waters within which Apām Napāt is shining (Dumézil 1968: 22–3). The paradoxical nature of Apām Napāt born simultaneously from the two opposite elements — fire and water — corresponds to the Iranian myth of $X^v ar \partial nah$, "cette 'Gloire' lumineuse qui … vient marquer sensiblement les princes iraniens élus de Dieu" ("the luminous glory which marks to some extent the Iranian princes chosen by God") (ibid.: 24). According to the Iranian legend, Apąm Napāt has drowned the essence of $X^v ar \partial nah$ at the bottom of the lake Vourukasa, making it inaccessible for unworthy candidates. According to Dumézil (ibid.: 26), Apąm Napāt, hiding "the luminous glory" in the waters from where it can be extracted only by the Aryans ("d'où elle ne se

laissera pas retirer que par des Arya"), corresponds to the Vedic Apām Napāt who represents fire in water himself.

Further on, Dumézil considers the Irish evidence and tentatively suggests the Indo-European roots of the concept. Dumézil draws the connection of the Iranian and Vedic myths with the *dindshenchas* of the Boyne. The fact that whoever would approach the secret well of Nechtan would have his eyes burst (OI *maidid*) is related, *pace* Dumézil, to some sort of "deadly radiance, light or heat" ("rayonnement meurtrier, lumière ou chaleur") emanated by the water (Dumézil 1968: 27).[94] Although, in the case of this legend, we can only speculate about the reason for the eye bursting, there is another *dindshenchas* account which relates the origins of a water source with fire. The relevant motif is found in the legend of Loch Lugborta in the neighbourhood of Uisnech:

> *Nó comadh o Lughaidh mac Táil frisa n-aparthaí Delb Aedh rohainmnighedh. Uair in tan taínic Delb Aedh mac Táil aness a Mumain cona chóig maccaibh, íarna fogra día inghin fesin dó a fherann d'fhagbáil disi ₇ día fir .i. do Thrad mac Tasaigh, is é port rogab-som in crích út, co n-derna-som tene druidhechta íar sin, cor' muighsed cóic sruama eisti.*

> Or else the lake was named after Lugaid mac Táil, who was called Delbaeth. For that territory was the place that Delbaeth mac Táil took possession of, when he came northwards out of Munster with his five sons, after being warned by his own daughter to give up his land to her and her husband, Trad mac Tassaig. Then Delbaeth **lit a magic fire, and five streams burst forth from it** (Gwynn 1924: 278, 279).

Another example similar to Avestan X^varənah — glowing substance associated with kingship and kept on the bottom of the lake — is found in *Echtra Nerai*. In the Otherworld where Nera finds himself, he sees a blind man and a lame man who guard the golden crown placed in a magic well in the *síd* (*minn n-ōir bīs for cind ind rīg*) (Meyer 1889–90). The crown of Briun was originally in the possession of Túatha Dé Danann and figured later among the marvellous objects whose discovery accompanied the birth of Conn Cétchathatch. "Its association with Conn, perhaps the greatest of the legendary kings, gives the crown enormous value as a symbol of sovereignty" (Watson 1986: 132–3).

The traces of the Indo-European myth, labelled by Dumézil as *gloire lumineuse*, could also be found in the Scandinavian legend of the Niflung treasure. "The Niflung hoard, the brilliant treasure from the water with which Loki fills the deceased Otr, no doubt

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[94] Séamus Mac Mathúna generally agrees with this parallel. Cf. "A very close correspondence with the legend of Topur Nechtain is found in the Avestan tradition where it is related how Apām Napāt seized the *xvarənah*, the luminous and fiery substance which is the hallmark of the duly elect king, and deposited it safely in the mythical Lake Vourukasa. …Although the seering brightness of the light issuing from Topur Nechtain is not directly equated with fire, it has properties associated with the concept of fire-in-water, and also dispenses the regal qualities of wisdom and poetic knowledge" (Mac Mathúna 2010: 23).

represents more than just material wealth" (Nagy 1985–6: 139). It is noteworthy that gold — symbol of power in the Niflung story — initially belongs to Andvari, a dwarf who dwells in water in the shape of a fish (*hann var fiskr í vatni*). When Loki takes his gold, Andvari puts a curse upon it. The hoard is given to Hreiðmarr in the skin of another water creature, an otter, and causes his death because of the jealousy of his sons. Ominous powers contained in the treasure destruct its owners, demonstrating the negative paradigm of the myth of the "luminous glory".

The negative consequences of treating the *gloire lumineuse* in an inappropriate way are also exhibited in *Echtra Nerai*. In the beginning of the tale, the Otherworld has an advantage compared to the realm of the mortals: they own the golden crown of kingship. Their king, however, is a poor monarch, responsible for inadequate judgment and faulty decisions.[95] "When the king of the *síd* appointed the lame man and the blind man to guard his crown, he also entrusted them, to some extent, with the guardianship of his sovereignty of which the crown is a symbol" (Watson 1986: 135). Both guardians are, however, handicapped, which might serve as a visual representation of the poor condition of kingship in the *síd*. Eventually, the king's lack of wisdom in treating Nera leads to the demolition of his kingdom by the Connachtmen. "The *de facto* supremacy of human sovereignty is established by the destruction of the *Síd* of Cruachan and the capture of the crown of Briun by Connacht" (ibid.: 134–5). This episode echoes the Avestan myth: like $X^v ar\partial nah$, the crown of sovereignty was extracted from waters by worthy heroes (*Echtra Nerai* is obviously a pro-Connacht tale).

The world depository of myths, therefore, reveals an interesting concept which associates a glowing object kept in water with eternal glory and kingship. We can possibly relate it to the salmon episode in *TM*, in which Eógan becomes the recipient of a shining mantle made from the skin of a water creature. Interestingly, the *imbas*-bringing salmon in *Macgnímartha Finn* has already been related to Dumézil's 'gloire lumineuse' by Patrick K. Ford. Ford agrees with the view of Dumézil in relation to the well of Nechtan (Ford 1974: 67):

> In the Indo-Iranian and Irish traditions the concept [of 'fire in water'] is realized as a potent essence, preserved in a body of water, accessible only to a chosen few, and endowing those elect with extraordinary powers.

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[95] E.g. he does not know how to treat Nera properly; instead of taking him as a captive, or making use of the hero's martial prowess, he makes him carry wood. Later, he gives Nera a wife but expresses his dissatisfaction with the fact that the woman has slept with Nera.

But he also associates the "brigtly burning essence" with *imbas forosna* and poetic inspiration, and sees the salmon of knowledge in *MF* as an Irish realization of the Indo-Europen myth of 'fire in water' (ibid.: 68, 71).

Eógan also obtains his mantle through water, and this glowing garment mediates his transformation from a young boy, *maccóem*, to a king. A supernatural light which surrounds his face and garment indicates him as a worthy ruler and is also connected to the notion of kingship. Physical beauty, often expressed in terms of shining and glowing, was a prerequisite for a king and a standard poetic cliché. Discussing the depiction of regal male beauty, which is an essential ingredient for the acquisition of kingship, Damian McManus (2009: 63) observes that "the emphasis is on dazzling colours, but in particular on dazzling brightness: not of the king's regal bejewelled attire, but of his body itself". Eógan looks like an epitome of this notion: his many-coloured mantle has both dazzling colours and shining, which subsequently spread all over his figure. This glow identifies him as the chosen hero and qualifies him for kingship.

2.1.9. The Cloak

In the section concerning the methodology of Claude Lévi-Strauss and the basic dichotomy 'raw' and 'cooked' perceived as 'naked' and 'dressed', I have already mentioned the utmost importance of the cloak as a necessary attribute of a king. Although apparently we do not have any strong historical evidence that mantles were included among royal regalia during the inauguration ceremonies of the Irish kings,[96] this motif was nevertheless very stable as a literary convention. In the eighth-century tale of the inauguration of Conaire Mór, *De shíl Chonairi Móir*, a cloak, *casal*, figures as one of the supernatural objects aimed at recognising a worthy king:

> *Bai casal rig isin carbad; inti nad aurimeth flaith Temrach ba romor do in chasal* (Gwynn 1912a: 134);
> And there was a king's mantle in the chariot; whoso might not receive Tara's sovereignty the mantle was ever too big for him (ibid.: 139).

This example shows that a righteous king was to receive a fitting mantle, and the same motif is employed to mark the change of Eógan's status in *TM*. Besides, the gifts which the Otherworld female bestows upon a mortal hero are a frequent element of the

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[96] Reconstructing the royal inauguration ritual as it might have been practised in medieval Ireland, Elizabeth FitzPatrick (2004a: 1–2, 11) mentions among the regalia *slat na righe*, 'rod of kingship', a shrine, simple robes, a drinking cup or horn, and a shoe which was thrown over the head of a royal candidate.

echtrae. For example, according to the *dindshenchas* of Dún Crimthainn, Crimthainn went on *echtra* with a woman from the *síd* (*is é docuaid i n-echtra … la Nair tuaidhigh in bansidhe*). "And to him she gave many treasures including the gilt chariot and the draughtboard of gold, and Crimthann's *cétach*, a beautiful mantle (*lend sainemail*)" (Stokes 1894: 332). The cloak obtained in the Otherworld from the inhabitants of the Otherworld echoes other significant items which can be obtained in the parallel realm. Commenting on Cormac receiving a cup of truth in *Echtra Chormaic*, Ó Cathasaigh (1978: 141) argues that "he acquires his functional attribute as a worthy and righteous king." In this manner, the obligatory quality of a king — truth — is materialised and visualised in the image of a cup which becomes part of the king's *paraphernalia*. The same motif is deployed in *Baile in Scáil*. Conn Cétcathach and his followers receive special gifts from Lug, these being interpreted as "the attributes of the sovereignty which was transferred over to Conn from Lug himself" (Fomin 2010b: 231). Among these items, there are cups and vessels, from which the sovereignty goddess dispensed the red ale of kingship, and staves:

> *Lotar íar sein hi foscad an scáil ⁊ ní arrdraigestair a ndún nach a tech. Fo-rácbad immurgu la Conn in dabach ⁊ int escra ⁊ ind airdech ⁊na flesca* (Murray 2004: 35);
> They went then into the shadow of the phantom and the fort and the house were no longer visible. However, the vat and the vessel and the cup and the staves were left with Conn (Murray 2004: 58).

Conn brings these gifts to Tara as material witnesses of his journey to the Otherworld and supernatural attributes consolidating his power in this world. I would suggest that a similar motif, albeit slightly modified, is used in the description of the ordeal which the three sons of Eochaid should go through in the tale *Echtra mac nEchach Muigmedóin*. Sithchenn, a druid and a smith, settles the test for the three brothers in order to find out who of them is destined to become the future king of Ireland. Eochaid's sons are locked in Sithchenn's burning forge; "the objects that they take with them as they escape the fire operate in the text to signify each son's merit as well as the characteristics his descendants will exhibit" (Eichhorn-Mulligan 2006: 1032). Niall takes the smith's anvil and its block, the objects which constitute the core of the forge and of the profession of a blacksmith. The two other brothers escape with less significant objects. The anvil which Niall rescues represents both Niall's own qualities (his future mastery) and his kingship. By saving the heaviest and the most important object of the druid's forge, Niall shows himself as fitting for leadership. Therefore, similar to Conn and Cormac who bring back from the Otherworld supernatural gifts legitimising their kingship, Niall escapes from the forge with symbolic objects of power.

In a similar manner, the salmon cloak which Eógan receives from his wife embodies the prestige of his new royal status as well as the outstanding wisdom transmitted upon the king from the salmon. After all, it is significant that at the end of the tale Eógan comes up with a *scrúdan aicenta*, 'the natural thought', on how to facilitate the construction of his forts. The mantle, therefore, is functionally identical with Cormac's cup, Conn's vessels, or Niall's anvil. All these items are symbols of kingship, and it is not arbitrary that they are made of precious and durable materials like gold, silver or iron. The material points towards the permanence of royal power and the endless rule of a particular dynasty. In a poem addressed to a princess, the druid calls the mantle *tlacht cen meth* 'a garment without decay'.[97] It is possible to suppose that the cloak symbolises the kingship of the Eóganachta which will never perish, in a similar manner that the radiance of Conn's golden vessel represents the glory of the Uí Néill.

Therefore, gaining, losing and regaining kingship has a symbolic material manifestation, and the minor objects of everyday routine can get regal connotations after being put in a political discourse. For this reason, the otherworldly items are always brought back to the real world and, subsequently, figure prominently in the regal context as manifestations of the king's legitimacy. Very often, the female character mediates the bestowal of those precious items, and the comparison of the aforementioned stories proves my idea that the Spanish princess in *TM* plays the role which is otherwise attributed to the sovereignty goddess. One could argue that the creation of a mantle from the salmon skin and its transferring upon Eógan is similar to giving a potion of sovereignty by a sovereignty goddess in *Baile in Scáil*, or the investiture of Cormac with magical objects in *Echtra Chormaic*. In both tales, the goddess of sovereignty serves Lug, who proclaims the nature of interaction as the granting of kingship. In *Baile in Scáil*, Lug instructs the speechless lady, in which manner she should dispense the liquor of sovereignty; in *TM*, Antipater, similarly to Lug, commands the girl to catch a salmon and to make a cloak for her husband, and then prophesises Eógan's future kingship.

Many colours of Eógan's cloak might symbolise his all-encompassing wisdom and power, but, apart from symbolic significance, this image can in fact be historically trustworthy and mirror particular social practices. As Fergus Kelly (1997: 263) explains, strict regulations governed the colours which may be worn by various ranks:

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[97] See, however, fn. 99, p. 81.

the sons of commoners may only wear clothing which is dun-coloured (*lachtnae*), yellow (*buide*), black (*dub*) or white (*find*). The sons of lords may wear clothing which is red (*derg*), grey (*glas*) or brown (*donn*), and the sons of kings may wear purple (*corcra*) or blue (*gorm*). …They [such regulations] must reflect a general truth that the higher ranks wore more colourful clothing than those of lower rank.

There is no wonder, therefore, that the cloak which had all the colours would enjoy exceptional regal connotations. For example, in *Tochmarc Ailbe*, Cormac goes to the chamber where his daughters are sewing and embroidering[98] clothes of many colours:

> *...occ fidi corrthar ₇ snait cruitne óír ₇ airgit (₇) ar (no for)* **edgadh cach data** (Thurneysen 1921: 268);
> …weaving fringes and [putting] needlework of gold and silver upon **garments of every colour**.

In the passage from a famous *roscad* of Ailbe, in which she expresses her readiness to marry and her desire to become Finn's companion, the girl stresses "her ability to take up the responsibility of a married wife (line 13 *Bangníma menma fri tuind trebairi*)" (Corthals 2004: 2). Among the qualities of a good wife she mentions the making of multi-coloured cloaks:

> *Bangníma menma fri tuind trebairi,*
> *fri bíathad, fri brugus, fri sílad særc[h]ineda,*
> *fri níamlen do* **tlacht gec[h] dat[h]a**… (ibid.: 3);
>
> The mind of woman's deed (i.e. the mindful deed of a woman) (is directed) to soil and farming (i.e. farming of the soil),
> to providing food, hospitality and breeding noble offspring,
> to a **beautiful cloak (consisting) of a colourful covering** (ibid.: 4).

So, this would be the starting point of our interpretation of the colour of the cloak: not only was the cloak generally seen as a king's attribute — royal figures were also entitled to wear more colourful clothes than common people. However, as Nagy (1985: 10) puts it, "traditional stories in their capacity as myth reflect on cultural realities and also "play" with them. The mythopoeic process presents and preserves realities in forms that transcend and sometimes even defy historical fact." Therefore, the next step of our interpretation would require the placing of a historical reality into the mythological context. In this context, multi-coloured fabrics are often associated with the Otherworld and its emissaries. In *Immram Brain*, the woman describes the marvels of the Otherworld as *dússi cach datha*, 'treasures of every colour' (Mac Mathúna 1985: 35, 48). Here it might also have connotations of prestige and richness as the Otherworld is portrayed as a place of supernatural abundance. In *Echtra Chormaic*, the queen of the

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[98] In this tale, sewing is represented as a female cultural activity *par excellence*, a highly praised gift of culture. Thus, Cormac, full of fatherly affection, marvels at skilful work of his daughters (*feabus a lam*, 'excellence of their hands') (Thurneysen 1921: 262).

Otherworld says that she clothes the inhabitants of the Land of Promise with clothing of every colour (*eidíghím-si… Tir Tairngaire dó etach cacha datha* (Hull 1949: 876)). This parallel supports the idea of sewing as a typical female task and implies that multi-coloured clothes have certain associations with the Otherworld. Significantly, the link of the sovereignty goddess with, on the one hand, a river, and, on the other hand, a multi-coloured mantle is found in one of the versions of the *dindshenchas* of Loch Garman. The story tells us about the vision, in which king Cathaír sees a beautiful woman wearing clothes of every colour. She bears a male child whom she has been carrying for eight hundred years, and while she reigns with her son, all the fruits of the earth come in abundance from a golden tree (*bile*). Cathaír's druid reveals to the king that this woman is in fact the river Sláine in his own kingdom (*is í ind ingen adbal ard / Atchonarc-sa a ri rogarg / Ind aband fail it tír the / Dianid ainm sír-búan Sláne* (Gwynn 1913: 168–83).

In *TM*, the importance of the transformation of the salmon (and of the magical powers contained within) into a cloak is emphasised with a sophisticated word pun. As it is said it the tale,

> *Co nderna sí brat dia fir don olaind bói arin mbratán 7 batar na h-uile dath ind isin bratán-sin.*
> She made a cloak for her husband from the wool that was on the salmon, and all the colours in this salmon were in it.

As we can see, by weaving the two words together in a sentence about the making of the cloak, the author establishes an etymological connection between the words *bratán* 'salmon' and *brat* 'cloak'. In this context, the term *brat* is understood as a derivative of the noun *bratán/ bradán*; this etymology fails phonetically as the final consonant of *brat(t)* is voiceless, but plays well visually, when the two words are placed near each other in a written sentence. The linking of *brat* and *bratán* is an etymology in purely Isidorian sense: words are connected on the basis of their phonetic similarity and semantic correlation supported by the common context, and etymological complexes of the words serve for a better philosophical understanding of the nature of things these words denote. As I already mentioned, according to Isidore, naming happened *secundum naturam/ secundum qualitatem qua genita sunt* (Baumgarten 1983: 226). In this manner, the association of *brat* with *bratán* sheds light on the nature of the mantle: *secundum naturam*, it is made of the wool of the salmon, *bratán*; hence, it is called *brat*.

This word pun, uniting the concepts of 'cloak and 'salmon' in one semantic and etymological complex within a particular context, can be categorised as one of the most favourite stylistic devices of the Irish scribes. Ó Cathasaigh (1978: 138) stresses that

"there is the general point that the Irish *literati* were much given to word-play"; while Dooley (2007: 24) specifies that "they gloried in linguistic variety and played linguistic games with the languages of sacred Scripture and their own vernacular." In their permanent strive for contextual and philosophical etymologisation, "building on Isidore they achieved greater sophistication than he possessed" (Hillgarth 1984: 16). One might say that the whole episode with the salmon cloak was made up solely in order to highlight — by means of a narrative — the etymological connection between the two words. This approach towards etymologies was noted by Scowcroft (1995: 125) who stresses, in relation to the *dindshechas* tradition, that "words and names inspire *narrative* ideas in Ireland where Isidore and his followers would prefer analysis and exposition." Kim McCone (1990: 46) also observes that "etymological explanations… often function as major constituents in or even the creative mainspring of a tale or episode." Similarly to our tale, the use of etymology and word-pun as a narrative device was noted by Joseph Nagy (1985: 179) in the episode in which Finn gains power over the Otherworld after obtaining a brooch, *eó*, of a fairy woman:

> Perhaps the word for "brooch," *eó*, is a pun in our text on the word for salmon, the homonym *eó*. …It is possible that in the present episode the mysterious *eó* is a reference to the adventure with the fish of knowledge. Such an allusion in our text would in fact be more than pure whimsy. The situation in which Finn finds himself at the end of the text of the *Boyhood Deeds* is similar to the other previously discussed contexts in which Finn wins imbas and attains his identity as a poet-seer. According to the poem quoted above that alludes to the Síd Slánga episode, Finn receives a *long* ("vessel") full of precious metals in exchange for the woman's brooch. But the word *long*, meaning "container," usually refers to a container of liquids. Since imbas frequently comes in a liquid form (as in, for instance, the Cúldub tale), perhaps the gift of a vessel, like the brooch taken from the supernatural female, is yet another symbol of the knowledge of poets that Finn comes to possess.

The mythological narrative, therefore, is self-explanatory and self-reflective. In its constant introspection and reconsideration of its own elements, it provides us with the answers to the questions it poses itself. The etymological narrative built upon the derivation of the word *brat* from *bratán*, might have even deeper undertones. Although the salmon in our tale is not called *eó*, this element is nevertheless present in the name of Eógan. Besides, the lexeme *eó* means not only 'salmon', but also 'yew', the tree which was seen as a symbol of the Eóganachta (note, for example, the yew-bush which appears in the legend of Conall Corc) (Byrne 1973: 181–2, 186; Sproule 1985: 25).

To sum it up, one could trace in early Irish tales a certain complex of criteria necessary to become a king. This complex normally contains three elements: the winning of a wife; the acquisition of royal regalia and royal attire from the Otherworld; and, finally,

the gaining of kingdom itself. In the paradigm of ideal kingship, these three elements are counter-balanced and interdependent. The loss of one of them causes the subsequent loss of the others, while, respectively, the gaining of one of them brings along the rest. The connection of the three elements is also expressed in one of the scenes from Mahabharata when the assembly of the Pandavas at the warrior's meeting place (Skt. *sabhā*) was followed by their game of dice with the Kauravas, in the course of which Yudhishthira, the leader of the Pandavas, looses first his kingdom, then his wife Draupadi, and finally, his royal guise (Fomin 2010a: 264–5).

2.1.10. The Ordeal

Normally, the initiation structured around a journey to the Otherworld contains an ordeal for a future king which he should complete during his stay in the Otherworld (Ó Cathasaigh 1978: 152). In *TM*, this element is not expressed explicitly. However, we can suppose that the behaviour of Eógan was tested and, apparently, he met all the expectations successfully. When Eógan and his people are ready to depart to Ireland, the druid starts his farewell speech with the following words:

> *Caín térnais ₇ atá th'athair for do chind ina flathus.*
> You have got safely through and your father is in his royal power before you.

The verb *do-érni* (later treated as a simple verb with stem *terná-* or *ternó-*, mod. *téarnuigh-*) has as its primary meaning 'escapes, gets away', so our phrase could be roughly translated as 'you got away smoothly'. According to the examples quoted in *eDIL*, the usage of the verb implies escaping from death, or from some dangerous situation. The verb can be also applied to the situations describing the recovery from illness. The example from *TM* is given in *eDIL* with the translation 'thou hast got safely through'. Besides, *eDIL* documents the meaning of the verb designating 'passing out of one state into another'. It seems that the latter meaning can be applied to the position of Eógan. He accomplishes his initiation and is ready to go back in his new status. The words of the druid can be interpreted as praise and congratulations on passing the ritual. In this light, the mention of Eógan's father in his power is not arbitrary, as if the druid says: "your father is already a king and you are the next one because you have passed safely through [the ordeal]."

On the other hand, I need to acknowledge that the interpretation of *cáin térnais* as 'you have got safely through', more literally, 'well have you escaped', remains a puzzling statement in the context of our tale as Eógan did not experience any obvious difficulties

in Spain. We should probably emend the verbal form to *dérnais* which would give us 'you have done well'. This might refer to the druid's positive assessment of Eógan's behaviour: as I stated above, the future king should have paid attention to the counsel of his proxies, and notably his druids. Here, probably, what the druid means is that Eógan has done well by listening to his commands and predictions, and hence, his destiny took the right path and the hero is ready to go back and become a king in Ireland.

Be that as it may, the psychic transformation of Eógan in our tale is not only visual; after his initiation is accomplished, we can notice a psychological development of his character as well. Eógan whom we meet in the first part of the tale is relatively passive. His action is determined by the counsel and prophetic insight into the future of the druid and the three young men. This situation changes, however, after his return to Ireland. The 'new' Eógan is portrayed as a cultural hero, charismatic leader of his people, who claims land for his people and provides the builders of his fort with a smart inventory to facilitate their work. This activity also adds up to the image of Eógan as a worthy king. As Scowcroft (1988: 41) puts it,

> the building of forts and clearing of plains seem likewise the achievements of sovereign peoples, combined with cosmogonic motifs (the appearance of rivers and lakes) into a formula expressing the basic correlation between earthly and supernatural sovereignty.

It is also worth noting that obtaining of property manifests the end of the rite of passage for a young male. As *Tecosca Cormaic* laconically formulates it: *fénnid cach co trebad*, 'everyone is a *fían*-member until he becomes a property owner" (McCone 2012: 16). By building his three forts in the south, Eógan settles down within the established confines of society, and claims his right to the kingship in Leth Moga. The ritualistic scenario of kingship generally comprises three elements, "designation by gods, recognition by the wise men and acceptance by the people" (Ó Cathasaigh 1978: 143). This pattern is evident in the story of Eógan.[99] First, he is appointed and called upon by the Otherworld visitors, the three young men. Then, Eógan receives his royal apparel, followed by Eógan's recognition by the king of Spain and the druid. Although *TM* lacks proper *tecosca,* Eógan gets detailed prophecies from the druid who predicts the day of Ailill's birth and the division of Ireland between Eógan and Conn. Eventually, he goes back to Ireland and is acknowledged by local people (*ro-hindised fo Éirinn a torachtain* 'their arrival was told all over Ireland') and by the king of Ireland, Catháir Mór. Therefore,

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[99] O'Connor also acknowledges the presence of this pattern in the legendary biographies of Conaire Mór and the Old Testament king Saul who might have served as a prototype for Conaire. The threefold conferral of kingship of Conaire and Saul comprises the divine designation (Nemglan, God); recognition by wise men (druids of Tara, Samuel), and acceptance by people (O'Connor 2013a: 253).

TM turns out to be a politically powerful narrative constructed with great care for individual details which are combined to produce an image of a righteous and decent king.

2.1.11. Comparison with *Echtra Láegaire meic Crimthainn*

In the previous parts of this chapter I was trying to show that *TM* was compiled in accordance with the main conventions of the *echtra* genre. I also touched upon the theme of the structuralist approach and tried to demonstrate how the dichotomy of 'raw' and 'cooked' expressed by Claude Lévi-Strauss in his seminal study can enhance our interpretation of the relationship between the tales in the corpus of early Irish literature. In general, however, the structuralist analysis is not a new, although not a mainstream, methodology in the area of Celtic Studies. Scowcroft (1995: 121) stresses "usefulness of structural anthropology for the interpretation of early Celtic literatures." Likewise, O'Connor (2013a: 4) deems it necessary to show the "complexity and sophistication of mediaeval Irish literature by applying feminist, structuralist, and post-structuralist approaches to the corpus as a whole." Alden Watson (1986) offered a structural analysis of *Echtra Nerai* based on Claude Lévi-Strauss' work 'Structural Antropology'. As he explains his choice,

> the meaning of myth is found in the narrative structure of the story which it tells. A narrative can be broken down into a series of basic structural relations. The structural relations can be arranged in groups which pertain to the same topic or type of narrative action. […] Once isolated from the order imposed on them by the sequence of the narrative, these structural relations or 'mythemes' may be read together to give meaning, much as words are strung together in different combinations on the sentence level of speech (Watson 1986: 130).

I hope to have shown that one of the ways to analyse *TM* is to approach it as an *echtra*, even if the medieval taxonomy ascribed the tale to the genre of 'wooing'. However, to support my argument I feel it necessary to offer a structural comparative analysis of *TM* with another tale, which is not named *echtra* in the manuscript but which is ascribed to the *echtra* genre, i.e. *Echtra Láegaire meic Crimthainn* (*EL*). I will break both narratives down into smaller syntagmatic units and align the corresponding episodes with each other in order to demonstrate the parallelism in the structure of these tales.

EL is an Old Irish tale which relates the journey of Láegaire, son of Crimthann Cass (king of Connacht), to the Otherworld (Mag Mell). The text has two manuscript witnesses: the Book of Leinster (TCD MS 1339 (H 2.18), pp. 275b22–276b24) and the Book of Lismore (ff. 167ra24–167va32). The tale was edited by Kenneth Jackson and dated to the second half of the ninth century (Jackson 1942: 377). In the beginning, the

tale shows the men of Connacht at the assembly at Énloch on Mag Aí. In the morning after the assembly they see a man approaching them through the mist. Láegaire bids welcome to a stranger. He asks about the purpose of his visit and the land from which he came. The stranger answers that he has come to ask for troops and that he is from the fairy people and his name is Fiachna son of Réda. He confesses that his wife has been abducted from him and that later she has gone to Goll son of Dolb, the king of Mag Mell. This day is the day of the battle between Fiachna and Goll, so the former has come to the men of Connacht to ask for their assistance. Láegaire decides to help the man and follows him with his fifty warriors. The company goes under the lake and sees an encampment in front of them and one army facing another. Láegaire and his men join Fiachna's army; Láegaire defeats Goll and his fifty warriors. After that, Láegaire is told that Fiachna's wife is in the fort of Mag Mell. Láegaire goes there only to find out that the capture of the fort is already in progress. Since Goll and his men are killed and the resistance bears no fruit, the woman comes out of the fort and, lamenting Goll, agrees to return to Fiachna. As a reward, Láegaire receives Dér Gréine, daughter of Fiachna, and his fifty warriors also get wives in the Otherworld. They stay with them till the end of the year. After that, Láegaire decides to go back to Ireland to find out news of his country. They go back to the assembly place where the men of Connacht have been bewailing them for the whole year. Láegaire declares that they have come to say farewell. His father Crimthann entreats him not to leave and stay in Connacht. Láegaire, however, declines his request. In a poem, he describes the pleasures of the Otherworld, concluding that he would not exchange one night of the fairy nights for the kingdom on the earth. After that, he returns to his fairy mound where he reigns as the king of Mag Mell together with Fiachna, and Dér Gréine remains his wife and his queen.

As we shall see, in its general outline as well as in many details, *EL* is very similar to *TM*. Now let us have a closer look at these correspondences starting from the beginning. As part of the structural comparative analysis, I will list and enumerate the episodes in both tales which are similar in setting and verbal expression, before offering my conclusion.

1) Both tales start with an opening formula *fecht ann* "once upon a time" and highlight the character(s) (*persona(e)*) and place (*locus*) of the tale.

- *EL*: ***Bātar Connachta fecht and*** *i ndáil oc Énloch for Maig Aí* — 'Once upon a time the men of Connaught were assembled at Énloch on Magh Aí' (Jackson 1942: 380, 381).

- *TM*: **Fecht n-óen d'Eógan Taídlech** *for faithche baile a athar fésin…* — 'Once upon a time Eógan Taídlech was on the green of the homestead of his father…'

2) After the protagonists are presented, the next episode features the appearance of a mysterious visitor. His appearance is expressed by the formula *co n-accai X co Y* which, as I have previously discussed, is often used to introduce into the tale an otherworldly visitor.

- *EL*: **co n-accatar in fer chucu** *triasin ciaig* — 'they saw a man coming towards them through the mist' (Jackson 1942: 380-1).
- *TM*: **co n-accai trí maccóemu chuige** *and hi cend na faigthe* — 'he saw three young men coming towards him onto the green.'

The otherworldly character of Fiachna in *EL* is also expressed through the reference to the mist which is a common "form of introduction to the Otherworld" used as a marker of supernatural in *Baile in Scáil* (Murray 2004: 20), as well as in other Irish tales.

3) The dialogue between Láegaire and Fiachna, on the one hand, and Eógan and the three messengers, on the other hand, share the same structure: greetings, questions about personality of the visitor(s), and the reason for the invitation.

- *EL*:

'Fochen don laech nad athgēnamar,' ol Laegaire.
'Is bude lim,' ol sē.
'Cid immo-t-racht?' ol Laegaire.
'Do chungid s(h)ochraide,' ol sē.
'Can duit?' ol Laegaire.
'Do fheraib sīde dam; Fiachna mac Rētach m'ainm-se.'

'Welcome to the warrior whom we do not know,' said Laeghaire.
'I am glad of it,' said he.
'What has sent you?' said Laeghaire.
'To ask for troops,' said he.
'Where are you from?' said Laeghaire. 'I am of the fairy people; Fiachna son of Réda is my name.' (Jackson 1942: 380, 381).

- *TM*:

'Ron-bendachut do chóengníma a maccóeim,' ar síat.
'Rob samlaid dúib-se a macu,' ar ésium.
'Is óebind duit,' ar íat.
'Is óebind écin,' ar sé. 'Lib-se bar cuid don oíbnes hí-sin,' bar Eógan.
'Nach fitir cid túsa a meic,' ar íat-som, 'in t-óebnius fil a n[d]án duit?'
'Ní fil lium a fis cose,' ar sé.
'Fil a fhis acainde duit,' ar na meic.

…

'Canas tánic dúib-se fis fair sin a macu?' ar Eógan.

'Ní hannsa. Trí meic Anntipater in druád sinde a hEspáin…

'May your fine deeds bless us, O young man,' said they.

'The same to you, O young men,' said he.

'It is well for you,' said they.

'It is indeed,' said he. 'You also share in this pleasure,' said Eógan.

'Do not even you know, O young man,' said they, 'the pleasure which is in store for you?'

'I do not so far,' said he.

'We have that knowledge for you,' said the young men.

…

'How did you know this, O young men?' asked Eógan.

'Not difficult. We are three sons of Antipater the Druid from Spain.

After the introductory dialogue and self-presentation, the visitors reveal the aim of their visit. Fiachna tells that his wife has been kidnapped and asks for Láegaire's help in gaining her back. The three sons of the druid explain the latter's prophecy and urge Eógan to go to Spain in order to marry the princess. It is probably significant that Láegaire stresses that the visitor is unknown to him and his people (*laech nad athgēnamar*). In *TM* this motif of unknownness is introduced later, when Eógan's foster-brother Fiacha calls Spain "a strange, unknown land" (*tír aneóil*). These expressions recall *Baile in Scáil*, when Conn finds himself surrounded by the mist and senses that he and his druid have moved into unknown lands (*hi tíri anetargnaide*) (Murray 2004: 21, 34); or *Echtrae Chonnlai*, where the outfit of the mystical lady is described as "unfamiliar clothing" (*i n-étuch anetargnad*) (Mac Cone 2000: 130). These adjectives serve as markers of the supernatural and subtly point towards something that belongs to another reality, and is therefore unknown to the people of this world.

4) The visitors invite Eógan and Láegaire to follow them in order to fulfil respective requests. Láegaire and his five warriors follow Fiachna under the lake (*fon loch*); Eógan and his foster-brothers go to Spain "upon the expanse of the sea" (*for muncind mara*). In both cases the heroes should cross an aquatic border. Interestingly, comparing the now lost tale speculatively called *Echtrae Brain* with the famous *Immram Brain*, James Carney (2000: 83) highlights the shift in the Otherworld locale from the bottom of a

well to a transmarine land, stressing that "the 'Otherworld beyond the sea' is a development and rationalisation of the 'Otherworld beneath the water'."[100]

5) Coming to the Otherworld, Láegaire and Eógan proceed to perform what they have been asked to. Láegaire wins the battle with the impostor Goll and gives Fiachna's wife back to him. Eógan meets the king of Spain and the marriage is arranged. Eógan's wedding, as I was trying to show in this chapter, is a final stage of his initiation which means for the prince the acquisition of kingship. In terms of mythological narrative, any royal marriage is a variation of *hieros gamos* between the king and his land/ sovereignty, and very often the taking of a wife symbolically equates to the getting of a kingdom (Scowcroft 1995: 132, Trindade 1986: 152–3). In *Echtra Láegaire*, the marriage with Dér Gréine, Fiachna's daughter and a fairy woman, also brings Láegaire kingship in the fairy mound: as we know from the very end of the tale, Láegaire reigns in the *síd* together with his father-in-law.

6) After their respective tasks are fulfilled, the heroes stay in the Otherworld together with their wives till the end of the year.

- *EL*: *Anait leo co cend mbliadna*. — 'They stay with them till the end of a year' (Jackson 1942: 384, 385).
- *TM*: *Acht batar co cend mblíadna i nEspáin*. — 'But they remained in Spain till the end of the year.'

7) After the year is over, the protagonists express their will to return to Ireland.

- *EL*: *'Tiagam do fhis scél ar tíri,' or Laegaire.* — 'Let us go to find out news of our country,' said Laeghaire' (Jackson 1942: 384, 385).
- *TM*: *'Mithid lem-sa,' ar in mac, 'dul dom crích ₇ dom orba ₇ dom [fh]erann.'* — 'I deem it time,' said the youth, 'to go to my country, my patrimony and my land.'

The two tales have different outcomes: Eógan returns to Ireland to become the future king of Leth Moga, while Láegaire (similarly, for instance, to Connla) chooses to rule in the Otherworld saying that one night in the *síd* is better than all the kingdoms in this world. However, the idea of kingship received as the final reward once the tasks of the Otherworld visitors are over is present in both tales. The only difference is that Eógan returns to become a king in the real world, while Láegaire prefers to remain a king in Mag Mell, the Otherworld.[101]

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[100] For the discussion of Carney's idea, see Carey 1995b: 80.
[101] A similar situation occurs in *Echtra Nerai* where the protagonist also decides to remain in the Otherworld with his fairy wife.

2.1.12. Conclusions

...the page and the meaning of the text metamorphose into an elegant eternal whisper. I return to your paintings again and again to hear that whisper, and each time, I realize with a smile that the meaning has changed, and how shall I put it, I begin to read the painting anew. When these layers of meaning are taken together, a depth emerges...

Orhan Pamuk. *My Name is Red.*[102]

In one of his articles, James Carney touched upon the matter of correspondence between an established story-pattern and historical reality which lies behind a tale concerning historical figures. As an example, he addressed the tale *Scéla Cano meic Gartnáin* in which the biography of presumably historical characters (Cano, Créd, Marccán) was subject to a change imposed by the Tristan story-pattern. As he concluded, when a certain story-pattern is applied to historical background, the conflict between the two stratagems is inevitable, and the story-pattern must be reformed to accord with the historical background (Carney 1970: 235). This position was challenged by Seán Ó Coileáin who insisted that, since the facts of history are diachronic, more chaotic and obviously less patterned than existing literary conventions, they are "gradually reshaped and replaced by the synchronic and more regular moulds of the particular narrative form by which they are conveyed" (Ó Coileáin 1981: 115). He admits, however, that the competing elements of story and history have mutual influence on each other:

> The historical content which we allow a tale will in turn have significant implications for our understanding of what Carney calls "the story-pattern": both elements, those of story and history, occupy, as it were, the same creative space in differing proportions and as one element expands the other must correspondingly contract (ibid.: 123).

Therefore, the balance between the historical reality and the story-pattern which was chosen as a vehicle for a particular narrative depends, to a large extent, on the aims of the author, and on the message he wanted to convey. This kind of interdependence between story and history is crucial to our understanding of *TM*. First of all, it is impossible to deny that the tale the author was compiling definitely belonged, in his opinion, to the realm of history. He was dealing with historical, although pre-Christian, figures – Eógan Taídlech, founder of a historical royal dynasty, and his wife who, under the name of Bera, is mentioned a few times in *Banshenchas* as mother of Ailill Aulomm, one of the kings of Ireland. By the time of the compilation of *TM*, certain facts of Eógan's 'biography' were already established: it was known that he had political connections with Spain; that he ruled over the southern half of Ireland, called

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[102] Pamuk 2001: 204.

Leth Moga after him (or after his father Mug Néit); and that he was eventually slain by Conn Cétchathach.

At the same time, the aim of the compilation was to show that the Eóganachta were the only lawful rulers in the south and to boost their political prestige. The well-developed tradition of kings' tales had a ready answer on how to achieve this goal. The true king must be a *favori* of the denizens of the Otherworld whose benevolence towards the royal candidate, as well as the gifts of the Otherworld bestowed upon him, sanction his status and power. In the repertoire of applicable motifs which were at the hand of our compiler, there was also a prominent myth of the king's wife who embodies his sovereignty, and of the royal marital union as a symbol of the acquisition of kingship. Numerous tales of the voyages to the Otherworld, *echtrae*, which result in gaining (e.g. *Baile in Scáil*, *Echtra mac nEchdach Mugmedóin*, *Echtra Láegaire*) or confirming (e.g. *Echtra Chormaic*) one's power (very often, not without the help of a female figure or protagonist's wife) were in circulation and, most definitely, not unknown to the architect of *TM*. Now the question was how to combine the elements of historical tradition with a narrative pattern of the journey to the Otherworld. The task of amalgamating story and history, reality and fantasy within one tale was not an exceptional task for a medieval compiler. As Ralph O'Connor (2013a: 40) has remarked

> sagas in mediaeval Ireland (as in Iceland) were presented and used as a form of historiography, in the broad sense of textualized memory. …But this valorization of historically true stories as the only appropriate content for prose did not imply a downgrading of creativity or imagination.[103]

I would suggest that the author took the framework of the *echtra* genre, traditionally associated with the notion of kingship, and adapted its main constitutive elements for his purposes. Visitor from the foreign lands; invitation; journey; tasks to be completed there; gifts or attributes of kingship obtained; marriage; returning back to Ireland — these are more or less the constituents of a typical *echtra*, and obviously in a particular tale some of them could be omitted while the others are expanded or multiplied.

However, our author filled this chosen narrative structure (Carney's 'story-pattern') with specific contents which suited best to represent the material he was working with. The material at his disposal was essentially historical, and here I mean history as

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[103] O'Connor (2013a: 40–1) provides a detailed discussion of the relationship between 'history' and 'literature' in medieval culture with an extensive bibliography given in the footnote. He stresses, however, that a tale should not be taken as a blend of history and literature because in Middle Ages these two concepts were inseparable: "writing good history and telling a good story were not polar opposites, but often served as the twin motors of vernacular narrative practice" (ibid.: 228).

understood by a medieval scholar; he also needed to weave in the motif of Eógan's political affiliations with Spain. I believe it is for this reason that he stripped his *echtra* of any explicitly fantastic characteristics, replaced the final otherworldly destination with Spain, and shaped his tale as a verisimilar account of Eógan's voyage to Spain and his marriage to a local king's daughter. The compiler left for us, however, certain clues which help us to discern the story-pattern of an *echtra* in the basis of his tale. One of such clues is the mantle made of the skin of the salmon of knowledge — an overwhelmingly fantastic element in the otherwise verisimilar tale lacking any specifically magical traits. Further on, comparisons with other *echtrae*, most notably with *Echtra Láegaire* the narrative structure of which bears striking resemblance to *TM*, allow us to focus not only on the contents of the tale but also on the underlying *fabula*, on the deeper structure which *TM* shares with the other *echtrae*.

The notion of balance between the elements of story and history, as expressed by Ó Coileáin, helps us to better understand our tale in which a predominantly fantastic story-pattern was filled with characters, events and places considered as historical. To bring in a linguistic metaphor, just as morphemes which belong to the same class but show great semantic diversity occupy a morphologically identical position within a word, or lexemes of various semantic fields can equally occur in the same place within a certain syntactic construction, so different realisations of existing motifs can be found in identical positions within the narrative structure without much altering the nature of an original story-pattern.

As Ó Coileáin (1981: 124–5) concludes, when story and history merge together, "in order to understand the tale we must disentangle several narrative threads that go to make it up." In the case of *TM*, one thread — the historical one — is represented by the journey to Spain echoing the Milesian invasion in *LG* which our tales explicitly alludes to; another one — the 'story' *per se* — is moulded upon the conventions of the *echtra* genre, which our author as well as his audience were familiar with. This approach to presenting the past was not alien to medieval Irish literary tradition, as "*historia* was designed not only to record past events, but also to persuade audiences of moral, political, or religious truths by revealing the past in rhetorically effective, memorable, and entertaining literary forms" (O'Connor 2013a: 41).

In the afterword to his multi-faceted study of *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* (*TBDD*), Ralph O'Connor compares the account of Conaire's fate to *Ulysses* of James Joyce. He

stresses that inconsistencies and techniques of non-linear narrative which many scholars have reproached the *Togail* with, "are held up for critical adulation in *Ulysses*", and alerts the researchers of medieval literatures not to be blinded by assumptions based on our modern understanding of the narrative logic. As O'Connor (2013a: 335–6) sums up, "Joyce experimented in this way as a deliberate challenge to the conventions of the realist novel, but the *Togail* was composed centuries before those conventions took root, and they should not be held against it." What unites the early Irish tale with a modernist novel, separated by centuries and multiple literary movements in between, is the fact that "a single man becomes the archetype of a whole class of men, and the landscape of one small part of Ireland at one historical moment becomes the stage on which a timeless drama of cosmic dimensions plays itself out" (ibid.: 336).

To resume my discussion on the elements of story and history in the tale, I would dare to say that *TM* suits the comparison with Joyce's masterpiece even more. Like our tale, *Ulysses* also makes use of the classical and timeless story-pattern filled with current historical events. On the historical level, the novel features a contemporary character, Leopold Bloom, who walks in a historical city of Dublin in a precisely located moment of time (16th of June, 1904). He stops in various places which could be easily found on the real map of the early twentieth-century Dublin (and many of them could still be found on the Dublin map of our days). The narrative pattern, however, explicitly mentioned in the title of the novel, concerns a non-temporal archetype of a cultural hero, who is wandering in the Otherworld, full of marvels and irrational wonders. By means of his journey and, therefore, his discovery of these unknown lands, he is stitching its scattered parts together, creating in this manner 'cosmos' out of 'chaos'. In *Ulysses*, the Homeric archetypical story-pattern is also filled with contemporary historical events and modern-day personages, but these do not overshadow the deeper symbolic level. Like in *TM*, the fantastic story-pattern and its inherent symbols are not evident in the novel. However, the narrative is permeated with certain stimuli which are able to evoke in a careful and knowledgeable reader the intended associations that effectively harmonise the two levels of meaning. For instance, on the one hand, the chapter 'Sirens' represents an everyday *tableau* from an Irish pub where two barmaids are serving drinks to customers. On the other hand, the beguiling atmosphere of libation as well as various songs and sounds that accompany the action and occupy Bloom's mind remind us of the episode in Homer's epic when Ulysses is listening to the songs of sirens tied to the mast in order not to succumb to the charms of their singing. In a similar manner, what we

have in *TM* is a verisimilar historical account of Eógan's journey to Spain, his marriage there and his return back home. Nevertheless, various signals (e.g. three visitors, overseas voyage, and a magical gift in a transmarine country) recall the well-known story-pattern of a journey to the Otherworld.

The fact that a story-pattern was not a once and forever established form but a flexible archetype which the authors manipulated with "extraordinary freedom" was advocated by R. Mark Scowcroft. He mentions Carney's 'story-patterns' and Mac Cana's 'thematic cores' as various terms for the same phenomenon which he defines as "narrative conventions in a living tradition rather than the rubble of a misunderstood canon" (Scowcroft 1995: 121). To illustrate his idea, he gives an example of the international pattern of heroic biography which can be adapted to diverse literary contexts as was shown by Ó Cathasaigh. Therefore, a specific story-pattern is not a religious dogma but an archetype which is able to generate innumerable variations.

For example, as we can see, the motif of the contract with the Otherworld as a prerequisite for gaining kingship can be elaborated differently in various tales. Eógan enters into a contract with the three young men by accepting their request to go to Spain and by showing hospitality — he invites them to his *dúnad*, — a quality indispensable for a future king. Láegaire is also attentive to the request of his visitor. He agrees to help Fiachna and follows him to the Otherworld in order to fight against Goll, Fiachna's enemy. For Conaire in *TBDD*, however, the contract with the Otherworld is manifested in the list of his *gessi*. By accepting them, he accepts the guidance and control of the Otherworld. Thus, in these three tales, the identical position in the narrative structure is filled with differing contents which, nevertheless, do not change the essence and the significance of the motif as such.

Likewise, I tried to demonstrate that Moméra, however ordinary she is portrayed, plays in our tale the role which is otherwise performed by a sovereignty goddess. This nuance in her character can still be spotted even through the veil of historicity created by the compiler. If we take advantage of the comparison with *TBDD*, beautiful Eithne in the opening lines of the tale obviously epitomises the sovereignty goddess, while Moméra, on the contrary, lacks any explicit description. We should not, however, take the Spanish princess as a defective example of this mythological motif and blame the author for his incompetence. As a stable *topos*, the 'king and goddess' myth was universal and versatile, able to be modified in numerous ways in accordance with the logic of the text

and its goals. As John Carey (1989–90: 56) stresses, "the 'king and goddess' theme's antiquity should not blind us to the broad range of constantly shifting political situations to which it was adapted; it may indeed be arguable that the theme cannot be detached from its topical applications." Even the Otherworld, as fluctuant as it is in the Irish tradition, is also "constructed anew in every individual text, and therefore cannot be understood without reference to each text's particular formal strategies" (O'Connor 2013a: 60).

Paying homage to the structuralist methodology, Scowcroft refers to Northrop Frye who has adapted the approach of Claude Lévi-Strauss to the literary theory. Thus, Frye "defines myth and realism as opposite poles on an axis of narrative design and compares them with abstract and representational art" (Scowcroft 1995: 122). Needless to say, in Frye's dichotomy myth corresponds with abstract art while realistic literature stands for representational art. It was this metaphor which prompted me to use a quotation from the novel 'My Name is Red' by the Turkish Nobel Prize winner Orhan Pamuk as an epigraph to this section. The main narrative thread of the novel concerns the conflict between the realistic representational Venetian art and the abstractionism of the Ottoman miniature. While the Western portraitists draw faces in the way which allows distinguishing a person from the painting in a crowd of other people — the skill which sparks envy in some Turkish miniaturists, — the beauty of the Ottoman miniatures is in their symbolism and, therefore, in their openness to various associations and interpretations. As the Tree depicted in the Turkish style admits, thanking the Lord that it was not drawn in the European manner, "I don't want to be a tree, I want to be its meaning" (Pamuk 2001: 61). Indeed, a tree drawn in an abstract manner is not a particular tree in the forest as it would be in the case of a realistic drawing. It represents an idea of a tree and embodies all the trees in the world; hence, when we look at an abstract painting, we can interpret it in various ways.

In the epigraph to this section, I am quoting the miniaturist who is examining the Turkish illuminated manuscript acknowledging that its pictures can be read differently each time one looks at it. And that is where the "eternal whisper" of a single miniature becomes evident and, due to the conflation of different meanings inherent to an abstract picture, "the depth emerges." I find this metaphor particularly appropriate for the early Irish tales, the ambiguity and multivalence of which seem to have formed part of their compositional strategy. As in the abstract art, the notion of a single correct meaning is alien to this literature from the very start. Therefore, our attempts to interpret medieval

Irish tales should not be limited to the authority of one dogmatic version of interpretation but must acknowledge their semiotic openness.

Scowcroft takes the notions of abstract and realistic artworks further and establishes the opposition of abstract and mimetic modality in which authors create mythological or realistic literary works respectively. The way Scowcroft characterises his notion of abstract modality agrees with my definition of *TM* as a tale based on an essentially fantastic *echtra* story-pattern but almost entirely lacking explicit fantastic details or markers of the Otherworld. As Scowcroft (1995: 123) puts it, "Irish literature is notoriously relaxed about distinguishing the natural from the supernatural." In his view, abstract modality in which the mythological narrative is composed

> does not amount simply to the presence or absence of the fantastic but to the attention given to internal versus external rules of design. Abstract narrative focuses on elements of the medium itself — story-patterns, motifs, principles, themes, metaphors and other verbal associations (ibid.).

Thus, the abstraction of these story-patterns, conventions and archetypes allowed them to endure in the tradition and ensured their versatility in serving "as vehicles for various themes in a wide range of literary genres, contexts, addressed to many different audiences, and as flexible as they are effective" (ibid.: 154–5). As Scowcroft (1988: 29) writes elsewhere in relation to the compilatory and intertextual nature of *LG*,

> story-patterns [are] abstracted from their original setting and content, and adaptable like so many of the *scéla* to a variety of personages, places and things. The cyclic repetition of these patterns, following the statement of their prototypes in the biblical introduction to *LG*, resembles a theme with variations in music.

Therefore, an abstract story-pattern is open to be developed in multiple number of ways, and there is no single fixed version credited to be the correct one. In this afterword, I tried to show that *TM* is not a defective or corrupted example of an ideal original *echtra*. The tale's structure does follow the conventions of a particular genre, which becomes especially clear when we compare *TM* to *Echtra Láegaire*, but there are no grounds on which this saga could be judged against an exemplary model of *echtra* which, in fact, does not even exist. When a compiler has chosen a particular story-pattern, what he was interested in was its creative development and not an unchallengeable transmission of particular dogmatic principles. The author did what he did and, I believe, in the best possible way; so the primary responsibility of an investigator is to look at the text *per se* and, without forcing our modern aesthetic feelings on the text, to bring our world view into alignment with the view of the architect of the tale and his intended audience.

2.2. Christian Influence

However extensive and significant the mythological component of many early Irish tales might be, it should not lead us away from the fact that these texts were compiled in a Christian society by people whose education was primarily ecclesiastical. The curriculum of the Irish *literati* ranged from learning "scriptural exegesis, canon law and computistics to inherited native law, legend and genealogy", so that already by the sixth century, "Christian Latin learning and native learning had coalesced" (Ó Corráin 1985: 52). As Ralph O'Connor (2013a: 244) observes,

> the various branches of literary training (reading, writing, grammar, rhetoric) reached their highest goal in the correct understanding and dissemination of biblical texts, especially Psalms, Gospels, and Pauline epistles. The precise Latin texts used for each book varied, but by the Middle Irish period St Jerome's text, the Vulgate, was dominant. The Bible was the source and centre of Irish literacy…

Irish authors preferred conservative spiritual exegesis, influenced by the Patristic authorities, and favoured allegory and typology as main exegetical devices. Among the Latin Fathers, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, Gregory, Isidore and Bede were the most revered; works of Eucherius, Cassiodorus, Hilary of Poitiers, Cassion, Sulpicius Severus, Orosius and Caesarius of Arles were also in esteem. Greek Fathers — Eusebius, Origen, Theodore of Mopsuestia, John Chrysostom — were read in Latin translation (Kelly 1982: 562; Kelly 1987: 121–2). Among the most important sources of medieval learned culture one can name *De Civitate Dei* of St Augustine (413–26 AD), the *Historiae adversum paganos* of Orosius (417 AD), Jerome's Latin translation of the *Chronicle* of Eusebius (379 AD) and, of course, an encyclopaedic *Etymologiae* of Isidore of Seville. "The Irish synchronists based their accounts not only on the Bible but also on works of Jewish and Christian historians such as Flavius Josephus and Eusebius of Caesarea. Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*, and his *Chronicon* or *Chronicle* were important sources" (Mac Mathúna 2013: 6). These books were enormously influential in Western Christendom, and their impact upon early medieval Ireland is hard to overestimate. The accepted classical historiographical paradigm as envisaged by these Christian authors was augmented with native Irish legends and myths, which were respectively incorporated into the general chronological scheme. As John Carey (2013: 139) argues,

> the new faith, together with the Mediterranean tradition which was its backdrop and the Latin literacy which was its vehicle, confronted an indigenous society with its own kings and wise men... And so the Irish embraced the Christian religion, and the classical learning which came

with it, while retaining a keen sense of the continuing value of many of their own traditions. This double outlook had a myriad consequences…

The impact of Sacred Scripture and Christian literature on early Irish texts is well attested. These comprise genealogies (Ó Corráin 1985: 53), native legal materials (which were attributed to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in pre-Christian times) (Ó Corráin 1987; Carey 1990a), and native secular tales.[104] According to Scowcroft (1995: 122), even the Lists of medieval Irish tales known as List A and List B and the generic classification of tales therein reflect "a structuralist disposition among the early literati, which accords well with the legacy of patristic exegesis and with medieval formalism in general." Irish clerics sought "to create a hybrid, composite culture which would be both wholly Irish and wholly Christian" (Carey 1999a: 11). The hybrid nature of the Irish writing is manifested by the fact that "the saga-authors (re)composed their stories in forms which reflected a *fusion* between native lore and Latin learning, and between literacy and orality" (O'Connor 2013a: 229). For this reason, possible impact of Christian sources on native secular tales was the subject of many a scholarly research.

For instance, Anne Dooley has demonstrated how hagiographical sources influenced *Acallam na Senórach*. As Dooley (2012: 100) argues in the case of the *Acallam,* "what one actually finds is a much more complex set of textual echoes and references which serves a contemporary historical configuration." In a recent article, Gregory Toner (2016: 139–40) supposed that the assault by the fairy women, which Cú Chulainn experiences in his dream in *Serglige Con Culainn*, might have been informed by the warning of the Fathers against interpretation of dreams and by the Christian literature depicting demonic posessions occurring during sleep. Likewise, writing about aetiological myths which shaped the basis of *LG*, John Carey (1993: 2) stresses that "whatever the native origin legends may have been, they did not survive the advent of Christianity intact." The whole encyclopaedic *LG* is deeply entrenched in the tradition of the Book of Genesis, and its events are synchronised with the Creation, the Flood and the postdeluvian times. Wanderings of the Gaels are fashioned upon the story of the Israelites, and Ireland itself is the longed-for "Promised Land." The last sections of the *LG* which feature stories of the kings of Ireland are fashioned upon the Books 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings which present a panoramic history of the kingship in Israel and Judah. As Séamus Mac Mathúna (2010: 4) has aptly resumed,

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[104] For a more extensive treatment of the subject, see Ó Néill 2003.

the translation of oral narratives into writing brought with them a dilution of the mythological material associated with earlier rituals and beliefs, and such material was frequently adapted and re-interpreted in the interests of the Church and ruling elites by the early literati and synthetic historians in order to form a new paradigm synchronised with the traditions of biblical and classical antiquity.

Many tales represent a creative fusion between the tradition which the Irish inherited from their forefathers and the classical and Christian learning. One of the most famous examples is, probably, *Echtrae Chonnlai*, the tale based on a well-known native story-pattern but conveying, in fact, a strong Christian message. While, on the first sight, the narrative is structured upon native pre-Christian literary conventions and myths (e.g. young prince who is brought into contact with the Otherworld; woman who invites the protagonist to go with her to the Otherworld; fruit of the Otherworld she gives to the prince, etc.), it averts our expectations and does not follow the "rules of the game" established by a particular genre. Thus, the "sovereignty goddess", suspected to have an intercourse with a young royal candidate, rather behaves as an angel promising to Connla eternal life in chastity; the Otherworld is described in terms of the Garden of Eden before the Fall; and Connla himself, a young prince ready to become a king, chooses to abandon this world for transcendental Paradise leaving behind his kingdom and the vanity of earthly glory.[105]

The question whether the woman represents an allegory of the Church or is merely the prefiguration of the advent of Christianity, resulted in polemics between Kim McCone and John Carey. Criticising McCone's opinion that the woman "symbolizes the Church in accordance with an allegoristic principle" (McCone 1990: 81–2), John Carey (1995a: 64–5) is "uneasy with the premise that early medieval exegetes would apply the same hermeneutical methods to pagan imagery as to the Scriptures." In McCone's view (2000: 103–4), however, it is more plausible that exegetical methodology would be applied to pre-Christian literary conventions rather than that 'pagan' imagery would be employed to create an essentially Christian parable. Moreover, from the perspective of medieval exegesis, McCone sees no point to argue whether the otherworldly woman is an allegory of the Church, or, as Carey interprets it, a prefiguration of Christianity: after all, typology and allegory are complimentary exegetical devices (ibid.: 104). Morgan Thomas Davies (1996: 7), however, touching upon this subject, cautions that one must distinguish between "allegory as a compositional mode and allegory as an interpretive strategy." Be that as it may, the Irish were not the first to interpret the elements of native

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[105] For the discussion, see Carey 1999a: 27–9.

lore in the light of the new religion. Since one of the main concepts of Christianity concerns Providence and sees the whole history of humankind as a preparation for the advent of Christ, the divine pre-ordained plan is revealed in a pattern of promise and fulfilment. This means that glimpses of the new order could be found in pre-Christian writings as well. The most famous example is, probably, the Fourth Eclogue of Virgil which Constantine the Great and, later on, Augustine in *De Civitate Dei* interpreted as a prophecy about the birth of Christ, approaching the poem of a pagan poet from the point of view of Christian exegesis. The value of this approach is expressed by Augustine in *Epistolae ad Romanos inchoata expositio* (I.3): "For there were also pagan prophets in whom some things are found, which they sang about Christ" (Bourne 1916: 393).

Many Irish tales of the local kings were also compiled with possible Biblical precedents in mind. Since the history of the Hebrew nation has considerably influenced the way in which the Irish historians perceived their own history and culture, many Irish kings were aligned with the Old Testament figures. For instance, the legendary king Cormac mac Airt is regularly compared with king Solomon because of his outstanding wisdom (McCone 1990: 142). The ninth-century *Tecosca Cormaic* is our first extant source which features this important parallel: *ba … rí ar dligiud rígda ₇ uair as lais boí cóir rechta ríg do rígaib an domuin uile cenmothá Solam mac Dauid* 'he was … a king by royal right, for it is he who had the right way of authority for a king [beyond] the kings of the whole world, apart from Solomon, son of David' (Fomin 2013: 148, 149). This comparison is repeated in the twelfth-century Cormac's testament, *Tesmolta Cormaic*: *ní rabi iarum isin domon rí ro bo samalta fri Cormac acht Solum mac Dáuid ar áine a ecna is ar saibris a fhlatha* 'saving David's son Solomon there never was in the world a king for lustre of his intellect, for opulence of his reign might be likened to Cormac' (O'Grady 1892a: 89; 1892b: 96). In the meantime, the tragic destiny of Conaire Mór might have been modelled upon the story of the ill-starred king Saul (O'Connor 2013a: 250).

In her article on Niall's encounter with the sovereignty goddess, Amy C. Eichhorn-Mulligan (2006: 1015) has shown that the goddess, which might be seen as a purely pre-Christian concept, is portrayed in accordance with Christian literary conventions. As she comments, "while routinely drawing from an ancient Irish past, the Irish *literati* recast the kingship stories for a thoroughly Christian present, and Sovereignty's significance is most clearly understood when she is read in that context." Another famous example of Biblical influence is the Testament of Cathaír Mór, *Timna Cathaír*

Máir, based on Jacob's blessing in Genesis 49. In this case, like in other examples, one can find an amalgamation of native and borrowed elements. The scribe "took Jacob's blessing as his model … freely adopted what suited his purposes, and, with a good deal of artistry, produced a text which owes much to Genesis and more to the Irish learned poetic tradition" (Ó Corráin 1985: 54). Moreover, in the area of native law, Irish *literati* often referred to the figure of Moses because they found certain similarities between their native law and Mosaic Law. The Hebrew legal tradition was not considered as something foreign and exotic: they believed that their own law is an inherent part of a wider Mosaic tradition (Jaski 1998: 330; MacCone 1990: 104; Ó Néill 2003: 6).

This being said, on the other hand, religious writings were often modelled on Irish secular tales or interpreted in the tradition of the native learning. One of the most striking examples is, perhaps, the corpus of Blathmac's poems in which he describes the crucifixion in terms of *fingal*, 'kin-slaying', presents the apostles as a band of warriors, and envisages Lord's hospitality in legal phraseology (Byrne 1973: 29). Traditional Christian genres, such as hagiography, did not escape the influence of secular native legends either. The list of pre-Christian motifs in Irish hagiography was provided long ago by the editor of both Latin and vernacular Lives of Irish saints Charles Plummer (1910a: cxxix–clxxxviii).[106] This phenomenon, of course, can be traced throughout Latin and Greek Christendom and "pagan reminiscences in the *vitae sanctorum* are not a peculiarity of Irish hagiography" (Ó Briain 1947: 33). Continental hagiographical accounts are permeated with anecdotes and miracles borrowed from folklore and secular legends. Since the Irish hagiographers frequently used famous *vitae* as models for their own works (Selpicius Severus' *Vita Martini* imbued with fantastic details being one of the most popular templates (Herbert 2002)), they willingly fashioned miracles of local saints upon the Latin Lives. Obviously, the character of thaumaturgy as described in these *vitae* was often far from being purely Christian. In Ireland, this tendency was to some extent hyperbolised by employing Irish secular literary motifs in hagiographical compilations. As McCone (1984: 29) puts it, "like Christianity itself and monasticism, hagiographic composition was an import to Ireland from the Continent in the first instance but very soon began to feel and show various influences from native tradition."

For instance, as Jean-Michel Picard (1989: 368) has demonstrated on the example of the death of Gúaire in *Vita Columbae*, Adomnán was attempting "to present as natural and

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[106] Plummer's analysis of the pagan motifs in Saints' Lives is reviewed in Bruce 2004: 42−8.

logical the story he heard about Gúaire when in fact it was probably a legend which originally belonged to the world of mythology." Picard compares the unfortunate lot of Gúaire with similar personages from Kalevala and the Irish and Welsh literature (e.g. Celthair mac Uithechair in *Scéla mucce meic Dathó*; or Ysbaddaden in *Culhwch ac Olwen*). He postulates that the way Gúaire finds his death certainly has mythological roots. "Found in a seventh century saint's Life it provides a good example of the process of weaving pagan tradition into Christian literature" (ibid.: 371). However, being put in the context of a *vita*, this significant episode is stripped of its ritual and symbolic meaning and obtains a new function: to emphasise the ability of a saint to work miracles (in this case, to highlight a prophetic gift of Columba who predicts Gúaire's death). Thus, weaving together several traditions (e.g. the Bible and the Apocrypha, secular Irish sagas, and continental Lives), by means of "intertextual echoes, the Irish hagiographer was able to alter a literary motif in order to suit his aim, in this instance, the glorification of his patron saint" (Picard 1996: 262).

Genres of secular literature and common tale-types could also have been modified to provide a narrative structure for an hagiographical account. Thus, the Life of St Scothíne features elements of the "world wide *ville engloutie* tradition" (Herbert 2000– 1: 27) while the overseas voyage of St Ailbe is modelled upon the native genre of *echtrae*, though accommodated to Christian ideology and redefined in terms of spiritual transportation of a saint to Heaven or Hell (e.g. *Visio Sancti Pauli* based on 2 Cor 12:3– 4). As Herbert (1999: 186) argues in connection to the Life of Ailbe, "Christian context of the narrative is adding a new set of meanings to the system of signification" inherited from a particular genre of native tales. The phenomenon of this fusion and of the mutual influence of secular and religious writings can be explained by the fact that certain Biblical episodes in many ways echoed native narratives. This provided a ground for their unison and hence, a possibility of juxtaposition:

> If some traditional Irish stories did significantly resemble well-known biblical stories, this convergence probably would have been noticed by the monastic authors who drew on these stories to write sagas about them. Indeed, it could have prompted such authors to make use of those stories rather than others, perhaps reshaping them to reflect the biblical pattern more closely; and it could have affected the saga's reception (O'Connor 2013a: 245).

Eventually, as Donnchadh Ó Corráin (1986: 142) argued, there is no clear borderline between inherited Irish or Latin (Biblical and classical) influence, since "the worlds of native and ecclesiastical learning had merged long before the bulk of the surviving texts were redacted." For this reason, "it is rather pointless to try to figure out to which of the

two the Irish literati were referring and unravel native and Christian elements in their views" (Jaski 1998: 330). For example, the Irish Christian tract *De duodecim abusivis saeculi*, 'On the Twelve Abuses of the World', introduces the motif of a sin or a personal fault as responsible for devastating consequences on a cosmic scale. Among those people whose immoral behaviour might cause global catastrophes, the tract lists *rex iniquus*, 'unjust king'. This concept obviously finds its parallels in Biblical stories of David and Solomon,[107] but even more — in the tradition of *fír flathemon* expressed in *Audacht Morainn* and *tecosca*-literature (Meens 1998; Fomin 2013: 27–55; O'Connor 2013a: 269–70). The influence of the native and Biblical traditions is, therefore, mutual in this case: for Christian readers, the native concept was enhanced by parallels in the Scripture, while the Biblical motif was more comprehensible because it resonated with a native one. Here again, context is of utmost importance. Even if the concept of *fír flathemon* ultimately derives from a pre-Christian ideology of kingship, "to biblically trained readers within the Christian culture of early medieval Ireland they would almost certainly have drawn much of their force from the numerous scriptural parallels in Old Testament books like Proverbs, Psalms, and Kings" (Davies 1996: 7).

It is clear, therefore, that the partition line between what is considered as native pre-Christian secular tradition and imported ecclesiastical literary production is blurred, and the relationship between the two is impossible to define with much certainty. "That there are common themes in the two genres is established; the question of the major vector of influence remains in debate" (Bruce 2004: 42). In order to carry out a literary analysis of either a secular tale or a religious account, one must remember that

> the sagas are not reliable or comprehensive guides to pre-Christian religion in Ireland, though they may serve to evince some of its features. Similarly, pagan features of the Lives which may have been derived from the sagas, may themselves turn out to be features gained from the Christian interpretation of Irish pagan religion in this Greek and/ or biblical/ ecclesiastical conformation (ibid.)

At the same time, keeping in mind that due attention must be paid to possible influence of Christian sources and interpretative strategies on the Irish secular compilations, one must avoid the risk of seeing all Irish tales as a sort of Biblical fan fiction. The misleading nature of this approach was voiced by Joseph Nagy (1994–5: 188). Discussing the *Táin*, he stresses the danger of focusing only on Latin impact while

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[107] The second part of the tract "provides an illustrative digression on the topic of David's righteousness (*iustititam David regis*) and Solomon's sin (*piaculum enim Salomonis*)" (Fomin 2013: 65). This text represents another example of the "creative fusion" as the Irish compiler weaves together both the Biblical concepts of sin and justice and the native Irish concepts of retribution and the power of the elements.

overlooking the possible influence of the oral tradition with its "coeval multiforms", "as if we chose to read only the colophon in Latin and to disregard the one in Irish." In a similar vein, Patrick Sims-Williams (1996: 189) cautiously remarks that

> it does not follow from the fact that literacy reached Ireland through Christian-Latin channels that the entire vernacular literature that resulted was bound, whatever the genre, to be permeated by biblical and classical influences. *Only* examination of the texts themselves with the methods of comparative literature can prove such influence.[108]

This methodological concern is understandable since the main difficulty with the evaluation of the extent of Biblical influence on a secular tale is that there are no methods of proving or verifying the assumed influence. Another stumbling block in the analysis of Biblical influence is the "range of attitudes to the pagan past across the many centuries of Ireland's Christian present. Generalization and homogenization of the sources are therefore dangerous" (ibid.: 196). However, if the impact of Scripture cannot be easily assumed, nor can it be easily dismissed. The Bible's prestige does not mean that its authority informed every tale's composition, but it "does mean that biblical analogues … demand serious consideration at the level of textual reception, transmission, and recreation" (O'Connor 2013a: 246). Recognition of Biblical allusions, introduced in vernacular tales not like "slavish imitation" but rather like "deliberate verbal echoes", is also crucial for our appreciation of the significance of those narratives (McCone 1990: 33). Therefore, such speculations about Biblical prototypes of the Irish tales should be taken into account at least as possibilities.[109]

Another important aspect, which calls for scholarly analysis of both secular and Biblical motifs, is that the Irish learned men themselves perceived the two traditions as an organic whole. "The blending of pagan and Christian lore which confronts us in Ireland's legendary history bears witness to a commitment to both traditions" (Carey 1995c: 48).[110] From the way the tales are compiled, it is obvious that Irish authors felt comfortable interlacing *topoi* borrowed from different sources partly because they

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[108] O'Connor (2013a: 244) expresses a similar concern: "The possibility of biblical influence on secular sagas cannot be assumed merely from the cultural prestige of the Bible. It needs to be properly demonstrated in each individual case, on the basis of more than just one or two striking parallels."

[109] Cf. the words of Kim McCone (1990: 34) in defence of his Biblical interpretation of an episode in *Tochmarc Étaíne*: "Proof can hardly be supplied in such a case, but a creative interplay of native and biblical models does look like a distinct possibility."

[110] This does not mean, however, that pagan and Christian traditions always co-existed peacefully. As John Carey stresses, "it is important not to oversimplify: the spirit of rapprochement … represents only one strand in a complex culture, full of controversy and contradictions" (Carey 1999a: 10–1). Note, for instance, the conflict of native ideals and Christian argument in 'The Lament of the Old Woman of Beare' (Carey 1999b: 35).

"regarded Christian culture as complementary to their own (Celtic) culture, not as its opposite" (Jaski 1998: 329). As John Carey (1989–90: 53) stresses elsewhere,

> I am not calling into question the survival in medieval Irish narrative of mythic patterns and pagan concepts; rather, I would invoke the truism that such survivals belong to a tradition which functioned as a living organic whole. Inherited materials were combined, recombined, adapted and transmuted: archaism and innovation must constantly be weighed against one another in appreciating an Irish text.

The monastic cultural milieu, in which literary works were produced, was inclusive and represented "a merging of ecclesiastical and secular, Latin and vernacular" (Herbert 1999: 189). One of the main strategies used by Irish compilers would be what we now call intertextuality, i.e. shaping of a text by means of other texts, whether it is achieved by allusion, direct quotation, borrowing, translation or calque. In other words, "what we actually have is a constant stitching together of earlier texts drawn from divergent literary and sometimes oral traditions" (Murray 2014: 293). This connection with other authoritative texts gave necessary value to the work and added depth and layers of meaning. In this manner, we should admit that the compilers of tales were equally proud of their own lore and of the Christian tradition which they regarded as interrelated.

The main question, therefore, is that of a balance between classical and Biblical learning and inherited native tradition. It seems reasonable to tackle early Irish texts from a syncretic point of view in order to find out which strategies Irish *literati* used to provide room for the elements of both traditions and how they harmonised them within a particular text. These two vectors of influence are equally contributing towards the interpretation of a text as a creative fusion without diminishing or eliminating the significance of each other. For this reason, interpretation of the intertextual references intentionally used by Irish authors in their works is vital for our understanding of the contexts and purposes of the texts. In the first part of the literary analysis, I have already discussed the mythological motifs which form part and parcel of *TM*. In the rest of this chapter, I will focus on a few intriguing passages the understanding of which might be enhanced by comparison with possible Biblical precedents. Having examined these possible influences, we will be in a better position to explore the meaning of the tale for its contemporary audiences as well as its relation to then-current political situation.

2.2.1. Old Testament Motifs

2.2.1.1. The Visitation of Abraham

In the previous chapter, my analysis of the intertextual parallels started with the discussion of the three emissaries who often make contact with a future king in the opening lines in many kings' tales. At the same time, I would suggest that this passage might be partly informed by a Biblical model. The number of visitors — three men — and the content of their message — the birth of children who will rule the world — might allude to the divine visitation of Abraham in Genesis 18:1–19. I will quote here the verses which are relevant for the present discussion:

> *1 Apparuit autem ei Dominus in convalle Mambre sedenti in ostio tabernaculi sui in ipso fervore diei; 2 cumque elevasset oculos apparuerunt ei tres viri stantes propter eum quos cum vidisset cucurrit in occursum eorum de ostio tabernaculi et adoravit in terra…*

> *10 cui dixit revertens veniam ad te tempore isto vita comite et habebit filium Sarra uxor tua quo audito Sarra risit post ostium tabernaculi…*

> *17 dixitque Dominus num celare potero Abraham quae gesturus sum; 18 cum futurus sit in gentem magnam ac robustissimam et benedicendae sint in illo omnes nationes terrae. 19 Scio enim quod praecepturus sit filiis suis et domui suae post se ut custodiant viam Domini et faciant iustitiam et iudicium ut adducat Dominus propter Abraham omnia quae locutus est ad eum.*

> 1 And the Lord appeared to him in the vale of Mambre as he was sitting at the door of his tent, in the very heat of the day. 2 And when he had lifted up his eyes, there appeared to him three men standing near to him: and as soon as he saw them, he ran to meet them from the door of his tent, and adored down to the ground.

> 10 And he said to him: I will return and come to thee at this time, life accompanying, and Sara, thy wife, shall have a son. Which when Sara heard, she laughed behind the door of the tent.

> 17 And the Lord said: Can I hide from Abraham what I am about to do: 18 Seeing he shall become a great and mighty nation, and in him all the nations of the earth shall be blessed? 19 For I know that he will command his children, and his household after him, to keep the way of the Lord, and do judgment and justice: that for Abraham's sake, the Lord may bring to effect all the things he hath spoken unto him.[111]

The outline of the story can be summarised as follows: Abraham is sitting outside of his tent (Gen. 18:1). He sees the three visitors (Gen. 18:2), who bring him news about the future pregnancy of his wife and the son that they will have (Gen. 18:10). The Lord also promises that from Abraham a mighty people will descent, and that their rule will spread across the earth (Gen. 18:17–19). In the Old Testament, this visitation and the

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[111] Bible is quoted after the Vulgate with Douai-Rheims translation from the website http://www.latinvulgate.com (last accessed 7.02.2019). The Vulgate was the text used throughout the Middle Ages, and "the King James Bible, literary monument though it is for later periods, differs from the Vulgate in several important respects, and must never, under any circumstances, be used for any studies concerning the Middle Ages" (Kaske, Groos, Twomey 1988: 4).

prophecy of the birth of Isaac represents the fulfilment of Abraham's covenant with God, during which he also receives a new name:

> *Nec ultra vocabitur nomen tuum Abram sed appellaberis Abraham quia patrem multarum gentium constitui te*, 'Neither shall thy name be called any more Abram: but thou shalt be called Abraham: because I have made thee a father of many nations.' (Gen 17:5).

It seems to me that the structure of this episode closely resembles the opening of *TM*. As Abraham, Eógan is outside, on the green in front of his father's residence. He notices the three messengers approaching him. They prophesy that Eógan will receive a new name, and that his children will rule over Ireland, which is similar to God's promise that Abraham's descendants will bless all the nations of the earth.[112] In order to compare the two accounts and to show that the story of Abraham might have informed some aspects of the opening of *TM*, I suggest using one of the favourite exegetical devices of the Irish themselves,[113] and explore *locus*, *tempus*, *persona* of the following passages.

Speaking about *locus*, the initial position of both protagonists is outside their houses. The specific location of Abraham — outside his tent — has a symbolic interpretation. In the Judaeo-Christian tradition, "the figurative use of the tent is fairly common for the home, the person, the life" (Mc Kenzie 1968: 879). For example, the image of the tent symbolises human life in the following passage from the Book of Prophet Jeremiah (10:20):

> *Tabernaculum meum vastatum est omnes funiculi mei disrupti sunt filii mei exierunt a me et non subsistunt non est qui extendat ultra tentorium meum et erigat pelles meas*, 'My tabernacle is laid waste, all my cords are broken: my children are gone out from me, and they are not: there is none to stretch forth my tent any more, and to set up my curtains.'

Very often, however, the tent or tabernacle stands for the human mortal body, the image which is, for instance, very important in the rhetoric of St Paul (e.g. 2 Cor 5:1–4).[114]

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[112] Our tale starts with the dialogue between Eógan and the three young men, which represents an exchange of short questions and answers about Eógan's destiny; while the answer to the question about who the three young men are, is unnecessarily preceded by *ni ansae*. Interestingly, this verbal exchange stylistically echoes the dialogue as a didactic genre, meant to open discussion of particular passages in scholastic tradition. "It is typical of the schoolroom tradition to set a question and begin the answer to it with the phrase 'That is not difficult' (Latin *non difficile*, Irish *ni anse*). The answers themselves tend to bear this out. This leads to the conclusion that this kind of material derives from the study of the Bible in schools" (Richter 1988: 74). For this specifically Irish treatment of questions, see Bischoff 1976: 85.

[113] As Bischoff (1976: 84) observes, "the questions regarding the *locus*, *tempus* and *persona* of an author or work were not discovered by the Irish but were taken over enthusiastically."

[114] Another significant comparison in the Pauline theology is that of the body and the temple, another architectural construction. Cf. 1 Cor 3:16–17; 1 Cor 6:19.

The heaviness of the mortal body as a tabernacle is also clear from the following verses of the Book of Wisdom (9:15):

> *Corpus enim quod corrumpitur adgravat animam et deprimit terrena inhabitatio sensum multa cogitantem*, 'For the corruptible body is a load upon the soul, and the earthly habitation presseth down the mind that museth upon many things.'

If we project this meaning of a tent on Abraham's divine visitation, it becomes clear that, by placing the patriarch outside of his tent, the author stresses his liminal position not only spatially but also spiritually. Abraham is portrayed as being symbolically outside his mortal body. This may allude to his mental and spiritual readiness and perceptivity, the only condition in which the encounter with God becomes possible. "A clue to Abraham's vitality is in his position," writes Brodie (2001: 246), quoting Dreifuss and Riemer (1995: 57) who stress that "the tent door symbolises Abraham's psychic receptiveness."[115] In the Irish or Welsh mythological traditions, the encounter with the supernatural also takes place in various liminal areas — outside of the fort, on the top of a hill or *gorsedd*, or on the bank of a sea or a river. Since we know, that poetic inspiration, for example, was believed to come to poets on the brink of a wave,[116] we might presume that these liminal areas also symbolised certain mental change. Moreover, as I mentioned in the first chapter, the royal castle was recognised as a gateway to the Otherworld. Thus, the location of both Abraham and Eógan plays a significant role in explaining the following meetings and the nature of the three visitors. For the audiences that belonged to respective traditions, the mention of such *loci* was enough to trigger certain expectations which facilitated the understanding of the episode to come.

In terms of *tempus*, in both cases the visitation happens before the protagonists travel to another place in order to fulfil what was promised by the three guests. Following their invitation, Eógan sails to Spain where his first-born Ailill is conceived; Abraham goes into the region of the Negev and lives between Kadesh and Shur (Genesis 20: 1) where Sarah gives birth to Isaac (Genesis 21:2). In the case of *persona*, the *tertium comparationis* for Abraham and Eógan might be the fact that both are patriarchs,

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[115] Notably, Sarah also first perceives God at the entrance of the tent (Gen 18:10). As Brodie (2001: 248) explains, "hearing is the heart of the process of accepting God, as witnessed in the Shema ('Hear, O Israel…', Deut 6:4–6). …The placing of this act at the entrance of the tent confirms the idea that the entrance is significant — evocative apparently of some form of opening or openness." In the Book of Exodus, God also appears to Moses at the door of his tabernacle. Significantly, people who witness the theophany stand at the entrances of their tents as well (Ex 33:8–10). Cf. Nm 11:24–25; 12:4–5.

[116] In *Imacallam in dá thuarad*, Néde goes to the brink of the sea, "for the poets deemed that on the brink of water it was always a place of revelation of science" (Stokes 1905a: 9).

forefathers of glorious dynasties, first of their lines. Even the etymological entries for their names stress this fact. The main medieval authority for *onomastica sacra* was Jerome's *Liber Interpretationis Hebraicorum Nominum*, a source well-known in Ireland, on the basis of which the Irish scholar Ailerán, has composed in the seventh century an exegetic tract *Interpretatio Mystica et Moralis Progenitorum Domini Iesv Christi*. Jerome's etymologies for the names of Abraham are as follows:

> Abram – *pater excelsus* 'father on high';
> Abraham – *pater videns populum* 'father of many peoples' (Breen 1995: 165).

"Jerome's pattern was followed in almost all later Latin sources", but Ailerán also notes Greek etymology: *pater 'ethnon* (*pater gentium*) (ibid.: 84). Further on, Ailerán uses Jerome's etymology in his moral exposition of the reflections on the name:

> *in sancto igitur Abraham… studeamus ut patres sanctarum gentium…efficiamur* (ibid.: 23).
> let us strive in holy Abraham to become fathers of holy nations (ibid.: 49).

Same etymologies are given in *Pauca Problesmata*, otherwise known as *Das Bibelwerk*, Irish exegetical tract compiled ca. 750–800 AD: *Abram enim prius 'interpretatur Pater excelsus, postea 'Abraham', "Pater multarum gentium"'* (MacGinty 2000: 129).

As Abraham is known as the patriarch of the Jewish people through Isaac, Eógan is portrayed in *Cóir Anmann* (*CA*) as a patriarch of his own people. In §36 of the long version of *CA*, his own name is explained as *eó-gein .i. gein maith… bona geniratio*, 'good birth', stressing his own good parentage, and, potentially, his ability to father many children: in the previous sentence the compiler says, *genesis: uero genirati[o]*, which Arbuthnot translates as "*genesis* 'birth': that is to say, *generatio* 'begetting'". The following etymology in §37 states explicitly that Eógan is the forefather of a mighty dynasty:

> *Is dé sin tra rob ainm dó Eogan Mór .i. mór é ós chách ₇ a chlann ₇ a chinél ina dhiaidh.*
> That is why, then, that Eógan Mór was a name for him, i.e. he and his descendants and kin after him surpassed all others in greatness (Arbuthnot 2007: 10, 86).

The name of the dynasty, Eóganacht, is, *inter alia*, interpreted in the same paragraph as 'Eogan's offspring':

> *Eoganacht .i. … Eogan-necht .i. necht Eogain .i. necht clann .i. clann Eogain an uii. nEóghanacht[a].*
> Eoganacht i.e. … Eogan's offspring, i.e. the offspring of Eoghan, i.e. *necht* means descendants, i.e. the seven Eoganachta were the descendants of Eogan (Arbuthnot 2007: 10, 86).

Another reason for comparing the two narratives and suggesting a possible Biblical influence is the nature and the number of visitors. In other *echtrae*, the protagonist is typically approached by one guest, e.g. Cormac encounters a grey-haired warrior, Connla sees a beautiful woman, and Láegaire starts a conversation with Fiachna. On the other hand, the Irish tales abound in the triplets of characters, but those seem to be rare in the context of the otherworldly visitations. Our compiler, however, has introduced the three sons of the druid. Moreover, as I have previously discussed, the names of the three young men — prophecy, knowledge and truth — suggest considering them as allegories or manifestations of druidic art. I believe that the story of Abraham might help us to elucidate this episode. First of all, I suggest looking at the patristic exegesis of the figures of Abraham's guests. Following the Book of Genesis, this episode is understood as an angelic visitation. Cf. the words of Augustine in *De Civitate Dei*, 16.29: [117]

> *Item Deus apparuit Abrahae ad quercum Mambre in tribus uiris, quos dubitandum non est angelos fuisse; quamuis quidam existiment unum in eis fuisse Dominum Christum…*

> God appeared again to Abraham at the oak of Mamre in three men, **who it is not to be doubted were angels**, although some think that one of them was Christ…

Later on, however, the opinion emerged that the three angels represent the first epiphany of the Trinity. It is tentatively expressed by Augustine in his tract *De Trinitate*, II.10.19:

> *Sub ilice autem Mambre tres uiros uidit quibus et inuitatis hospitioque susceptis et epulantibus ministrauit. Sic tamen scriptura illam rem gestam narrare coepit ut non dicat: 'Visi sunt ei tres uiri,' sed: Visus est ei dominus. Atque inde consequenter exponens quomodo ei sit uisus dominus attexit narrationem de tribus uiris quos Abraham per pluralem numerum inuitat ut hospitio suscipiat; et postea singulariter sicut unum alloquitur… Inuitat ergo et pedes lauat et deducit abeuntes tamquam homines; loquitur autem tamquam cum domino deo siue cum ei promittitur filius siue cum ei Sodomae imminens interitus indicatur.*

> But under the oak at Mamre he saw three men, whom he invited, and hospitably received, and ministered to them as they feasted. Yet Scripture at the beginning of that narrative does not say, three men appeared to him, but, The Lord appeared to him. And then, setting forth in due order after what manner the Lord appeared to him, it has added the account of the three men, whom Abraham invites to his hospitality in the plural number, and afterwards speaks to them in the singular number as one… He invites them then, and washes their feet, and leads them forth at their departure, as though they were men; but he speaks as with the Lord God, whether when a son is promised to him, or when the destruction is shown to him that was impending over Sodom.

The fact that Abraham addresses the three visitors in singular, and that the Scripture introduces this encounter by highlighting that "Lord appeared to him", prompted

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theologians to interpret the three guests as the first epiphany of the Trinity. Irish *literati* were aware of this interpretation, as *Pauca Problesmata* quotes the words of Augustine, stressing that God himself appeared to Abraham in the guise of three angels:

> *Agustinus: 'apparuit deus Abrahe ad Quercum Mambre in tribus uiris' ... Ideo sine dubio tres 'angelus fuisse', quamuis alii decant tertium 'Christum fuisse, quia', si tres fuerunt, ad unum tantum, dominum, Abraham locutus est ... inde 'in tribus' angelis et 'in duobus uenit' ad Abraham et ad Loth dominus, sed in formis uirorum* (MacGinty 2000: 134).[118]

Similarly to the three visitors in the Biblical story, who represent three hypostases of the One God, the three emissaries in *TM* represent the three "sons" of one person, while their names, Prophecy, Knowledge and Truth denote the functions of the druid. His name, Antipater, also seems suggestive. Not only does it mean 'like a father',[119] with very specific Christian connotations of the word *Pater*, but also, it is the only foreign word in the whole tale. Here we might remember the code-switching in *Echtrae Chonnlai*, where Latin is used only in relation to the female visitor, whom McCone (1990: 81–2; 2000: 103–4) understands as an allegorical symbol of the Church. Only her direct speech in the tale is introduced by Latin markers and, therefore, is expressed in the language of the Church, e.g. *mulier respondit*, or *dixit mulier*. The diction which she uses is also "unmistakably ecclesiastical in tone" (Carey 1999a: 29). In the tale *Immram Curaig Ua Corra*, the main characters are the three siblings named Lóchán, Enna and Silvester. As Máire Ní Mhaonaigh (2006a: 156) argues, the employment of the non-Irish appellation, Silvester, is probably "a deliberate echo of the religious disputation of Pope Silvester and the twelve Jews which acquired considerable popularity in the crusading fervour of the twelfth century and beyond." Thus, non-Irish names and references in the Irish texts do not seem arbitrary, and probably, we should interpret the name Antipater from this perspective.

First of all, for a medieval Irish scholar the name Antipater would be known from the Biblical history as the name of the founder of the Herodian dynasty. For instance, Antipater is mentioned twice in *Passions and Homilies* (*PH*) in the genealogy of Herod, who was the king of Judaea at the times of Christ:

> *Hiruath Agripa mac Aristobuil meic Hiruaith meic Antipater meic Hiruaith Ascolonta; a tírib hIndía do* (Atkinson 1887: 64);
> Herod Agrippa, son of Aristobulus, son of Herod, son of Antipater, son of Herod of Asculon. This Herod was from the lands of India (ibid.: 304).

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[118] Cf. also in *Pauca Problesmata (Textus Breuior)*: *Non apparuit dominus quia inuisibilis est, sed angeli. Ideo dicit Agustinus tres 'angelos fuisse'; quamuis alii dicunt tertium dominum fuisse, et sic dicunt quod ad unum locutus est Abraham et adorauit* (ibid.: 260).
[119] See fn. 55 above.

This genealogical description is found in the 'Passion of John the Baptist' in *Leabhar Breac*. Interestingly, a copy of this Passion evidently made from the same exemplar also exists in YBL, and there the king is called Iruath mac Anntepater (YBL, col. 849.9).

The second time the name occurs in *PH* in the homily 'On Penitence':

> *Hiruath Tetrarchai mac Herotis meic Antipater meic Herotis Asculontai* (Atkinson 1887: 220); Herod the Tetrarch, son of Herod, son of Antipater, son of Herod of Ascalon (ibid.: 458).

It could, of course, be the case that Murchadh, the scribe of *TM* who was the student of Giolla Íosa Mac Fir Bhisigh, principal scribe of YBL, knew about the 'Passion of John the Baptist' from his master and remembered the name Antipater which he later incorporated in his text as an exotism. As we can see, it was believed for some reason that Antipater's father was from India; the name, therefore, was associated with faraway lands and it might have been applied to the Spanish druid to lend to the description the overtones of 'alien' or 'foreign'.

If the druid was really named after Antipater of the Herodian dynasty, I do not notice in our text any negative connotations, which this name probably might have had. In terms of his narrative role, as I discussed in Chapter 2.1, Antipater is a benevolent character who orchestrates the whole action, performing a function of *theos ex machina*. He is indeed a paternal figure who might also be interpreted in a religious sense, with *Pater* referring to God the Father. Another valid point to consider is that Latin *pater* is also used as a habitual address to a priest. In this vein, one might be reminded of a "paradigmatic interchangeability of cleric and druid." Notably, some tales, e.g. *Scél na Fír Flatha*, equate "the two as the pre- and post-Patrician occupants respectively of the *sacerdos* slot in biblical typology" (McCone 1990: 230–1).

As the three angels in Abraham's story were interpreted in patristic literature as the three hypostases of the Trinity and of the One God, the three sons of the druid might be similarly seen as three emanations of the druid. In both accounts, three guests foretell the birth of children and their future glory. This becomes an impetus for the protagonist's journey abroad where the promises of the prophecy are fulfilled. I believe that the architect of *TM* might have employed this typological strategy in order to harmonise his account from the pre-Christian past with the new Christian order essentially because there apparently was no established motivation of why Eógan went to Spain. In *CA* §38, we are simply told that Eógan happened to be in Spain on a visit. In *CML*, Eógan is urged to go to Spain by his fairy mistress Édaín, and the name of the

Spanish druid is Dá Drona. Although the etymological twist on the name of Eógan in *CA* §37 right before his voyage to Spain in §38 hints that he was wont to leave good progeny behind, no explicit prediction of children is featured in either *CA* or *CML*. Since there was no common version, our author had a certain freedom in fashioning his narrative and could have shaped the opening episode of *TM* to reflect the Biblical pattern more closely. The selected elements from the story of Abraham might have helped him to structure the image of Eógan and to enhance it with deeper undertones but also to affect the subsequent reception of his text and of its main hero.

One might ask whether the clerically trained author of our text might have felt uneasy projecting the divine visitation of Abraham on the image of the three young sons of the pagan druid. However, I would like to refer here to another example of divine visitation from the tale *Do Shuidiugud Tellaich Temra*. During the assembly, Irish noblemen are visited by a guest, who is described in clearly fantastic terms:

> *Láa n-and dúin isin dáil sin iarum co n-acamar in scálfher mór cáin cumachtach chucaind aníar la fuinead nhgréne. Donbert ingantas mór méd a delba. Comard fri fid máel a dá gúaland, ecnach nem ⁊ grían fo gabal ara fhot ⁊ ara cháime. Fíal étrocht glainidi imme amal étach línda lígda. Dá máelasa imma chosaib ⁊ ní feas cía luib dia rabadar. Monhg legta órbuidi fochas fair co clár a dá leas. Taibli lecda inna láim cli, cróeb co trí toirthib ina láim deis, itté trí toraid robádar fuirre, cnóe ⁊ ubla ⁊ dercain i cétemun sin* (Best 1910: 138).

> On a day then in that assembly we beheld a great hero, fair and mighty, approaching us from the west at sunset. We wondered greatly at the magnitude of his form. As high as a wood was the top of his shoulders, the sky and the sun visible between his legs, by reason of his size and his comeliness. A shining crystal veil about him like unto raiment of precious linen. Sandals upon his feet, and it is not known of what material they were. Golden-yellow hair upon him falling in curls to the level of his thighs. Stone tablets in his left hand, a branch with three fruits in his right hand, and these are the three fruits which were on it, nuts and apples and acorns in May-time (ibid.: 139, 141).

On the first sight, this guest reminds us of the Otherworld visitors and heroes of the Golden Age. His enormous size is reminiscent, for example, of Caoilte in *Acallam na Senórach*, a great warrior of the past whose height is gigantic compared to St Patrick and his clerics. The visitor comes from the west, where the otherworldly islands are located. He also brings the branch with the fruit of the Irish Otherworld, apples, nuts and acorns, in May-time, reminding us of Nera who brought the fruit of summer from the *síd* during the night of Samhain, or of the visitor in the opening lines of *Echtra Chormaic*, who was carrying a branch from Tír Tairngire. In *Do Suidiugud Tellaich Temra*, however, our original expectations are not met. This guest says that his name is Trefuilngid Tre-eochair, 'Three-sufferer Three-key', which McCone (1990: 75) labelled as a "trinitarian name." According to a later revelation by Fintán mac Bochra, "he was

an angel of God, or he was God Himself" (*ba haingel Dé héside, nó fa Día féisin*) (Best 1910: 152, 153). Thus, we can be sure that the assembly of the Irishman has been visited by God/ Angel, and his description is far from being canonical. Same can be said about the visitation of Cormac: neither Cormac's guest — 'a handsome grey-haired warrior' — nor the Land of Promise from which he hails resemble the description of angels or Paradise as found in the Bible. However, although the portraits of these guests bear a distinctive local flavour, it is important that the Irish *literati* themselves have reassessed the otherworldly visitors as angels. As the colophon from *Scél na Fír Flatha* states,

> *Acht adberaid na hecnaidi cach uair notaisbenta taibsi ingnad dona righflathaibh anall — amal adfaid in Scal do Chund, 7 amal tarfas Tír Thairngiri do Cormac —, conidh timtirecht diada ticedh fan samla sin, 7 conach timthirecht deamnach. Aingil immorro dos-ficed da chobair, ar is firindi aignidh dia lentais, air is timna Rechta rofoghnamh doibh* (Stokes 1891: 202).

> The wise declare that whenever any strange apparition was revealed of old to the royal lords, — as the ghost appeared to Conn, and as the Land of Promise was shewn to Cormac, — it was a divine ministration that used to come in that wise, and not a demoniacal ministration. Angels, moreover, would come and help them, for they followed Natural Truth, and they served the commandment of the Law (ibid.: 220–1).

If the learned men themselves understood such episodes in other *echtrae* — namely, in *Baile in Scáil* and *Echtra Chormaic* — as angelic visitations, we have another reason to suppose that the author of *TM* might have used a well-known Biblical prototype of angelic visitation to structure his own narrative.[120] Moreover, this subtle allusion to the visitation of Abraham might have helped to boost the image of Eógan by paralleling him to an Old Testament patriarch, as was a general medieval practice.

2.2.1.2. The Book of Tobit

As we have seen, visitors who invited and guided kings on their journeys in early Irish tales were sometimes interpreted in the native learned tradition as angels. In the Bible, angels often act as messengers (in fact, Greek *angelos* means 'a messenger'), and for instance, archangel Raphael accompanies young Tobias in one of the episodes from the Book of Tobit. This episode bears a striking resemblance to the plot of *TM*, and might

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[120] John Carey discusses various attempts of the Irish learned circles to reconcile their pagan gods with Christian religion. Unlike many other Christian cultures that condemned and demonised the old gods, the Irish sought "to find not just any niche, but an exalted one, for the deities of their forefathers" (Carey 1999a: 26). Sometimes gods were seen as half-fallen angels (ibid.: 23); or as a human race, free from original sin, who live in a permanent state of blessedness (ibid.: 28–36). The colophon from *Scél na Fír Flatha* is somehow unique, because it is the only instance in Irish literature when the deities of the old religion "are guardian angels, the messengers of God" (ibid.: 38).

serve perhaps as another indication that we may interpret the journey of Eógan in the light of the theology of angelic apparitions.

In chapter 5 of the Book, Tobias the Father asks young Tobias to go to the country of the Medes in order to ask his debtor to return the sum of money which Tobias lent him back in the day. On his way, young Tobias, who does not know the road to the foreign lands, meets Raphael. The angel offers to become his guide and to bring him back to his father thereafter. Having received the blessing of the old man, the two set off on a journey.

Chapter 6 starts with a curious incident. The two travellers lodge near the Tigris River. Suddenly, when Tobias is washing his feet in the river, a monstrous fish attacks him, and Raphael tells him to catch the fish. Its heart, gall, and liver have medicinal and magical properties. The angel instructs Tobias about what to do with the fish's entrails: when heated to smoke, the piece of heart liberates a man or woman from the attack by a demon (6:8); and the gall can be used for healing blindness (6:9). Then the angel tells the young men that they approach the house of Raguel, and that Tobias must marry his daughter, Sara. So it happens (7:9–20). Finally, the young couple accompanied by the angel returns back to the old father.

As we can see, the outline of the adventures of young Tobias resembles Eógan's journey: he travels with an angel to a foreign land; on their way they catch a magical wish; Tobias takes a wife in a foreign country; and returns back home to his elderly father. Moreover, the text pays particular attention to the children of Tobias and Sara (6:22; 8:9; 14:15) and to the glory of Jerusalem *in perpetua* (13:11–22). Obviously, we cannot be sure that the author of *TM* was inspired specifically by the Book of Tobias while moulding his own tale. The resemblance between the two texts might be explained by a coincidence: after all, magical fish existed in Irish native tradition as well. However, we might at least surmise that the author knew about the adventures of young Tobias and that they might have partly informed his own narrative. That the Book of Tobias was known in Medieval Ireland is well attested. For instance, it is mentioned in *Félire Óenguso*, ll. 511–2: *amail soersai Tóbe / de thróge na daille*¸ 'Thou savedst Tobit / From the misery of blindness' (Stokes 1905b: 286), referring to 11:7-17.

In *Pauca Problesmata*, there are also a few references to the Book of Tobias (MacGinty 2000: 310). Interestingly, one of them immediately follows the discussion of Abraham's

visitation. The author mentions Raphael, Thobias's guide, in the paragraph which concerns angelic apparitions:

> *Item Agustinus dicit: 'cum qualibus corporibus angeli apparuerunt hominibus, ut non solum cernentur, sed tangentur ?' … Tamen Rafahel angelus dixit as Thobiam…*

We can see that Abraham's meeting with three guests and Tobias's journey with Raphael are featured in one context and interpreted in the same light. Those Old Testament texts, therefore, were associated by the exegetes themselves as both represented the examples of angelic and divine guidance. If at some point the opinion emerged that otherworldy apparitions in native *echtrae* were angelic visitations, there is at least a possibility that the author of *TM* might have been aware of it and, accordingly, furnished his own text with the allusions to Abraham's and Tobias's encounters with the angels.

2.2.1.3. The Story of Joseph

Another significant motif which links the story of Eógan with the Book of Genesis is the multi-coloured mantle which he receives from his wife. I have previously mentioned that, according to the legal tradition, the king was the only member of the society who was allowed to wear multi-coloured clothes. This is the first semantic level, the level of culture and everyday life, which is reflected in our tale. However, being adapted for the narrative purposes, the cultural reality is further on transmitted on the next semantic level. The cloak gains abstract connotations as a symbol of royal power and substitute of kingship. These connotations have also been already discussed in the Chapter 2.1.9. There is, however, the third level of Biblical typology, visible only for those familiar with the respective methodology and the Sacred Scripture. As Bart Jaski (1998: 342) argues, Irish *literati* were

> a mandarin caste of scholars who received their training in a clerical environment, and we may expect that they were familiar with inspiring examples of kingship offered by the Old Testament. They cannot but have noticed certain similarities between native Irish customs and those found in Scripture, and it was these similarities which they integrated in their writings.

From this point of view, these similarities reconciled the native tradition with the Hebrew tradition, and the Old Testament in particular "functioned as a bridge between native Irish culture and Christianity" (ibid.: 244). In this vein, we might imagine that the episode from the Book of Genesis, when, as a symbol of his superiority among his brothers, Joseph is granted a "coat of many colours" by his father, Jacob (Gen 37:3), resonated with the local tradition of a multi-coloured cloak as a sign of supremacy.

Therefore, this allusion might have been accordingly incorporated by the architect of our tale. Let us first recall the passage from the Genesis:

> *Israhel autem diligebat Ioseph super omnes filios suos eo quod in senectute genuisset eum fecitque ei tunicam polymitam*, 'Now Israel loved Joseph above all his sons, because he had him in his old age: and he made him a coat of divers colours'.

Although modern theologians now generally agree that the Hebrew *kethoneth passim*[121] (translated here as 'coat of many colours') means, in fact, a 'tunic with long sleeves' (Mc Kenzie 1968: 144), for medieval theologians, whose primary source was Latin Vulgate, this epithet stood for some colourful raiment. The word which is used in Jerome's translation is *polymitus*, borrowing from the Greek πολύμιτος which signified 'wrought with many treads', hence — 'of diverse colours.'[122]

In the exegetical tract *Pauca Problesmata*, *tonica polimita* is glossed as *uaria uestis* (MacGinty 2000: 152). Latin adjective *varius* can have multiple meanings, including 'diverse, different, manifold, changing, varying'; however, the entry in the Latin-English Dictionary of Lewis & Short[123] specifies that one of the primary meanings is 'of color, etc., variegated, party-colored, mottled', and gives among the examples a line from Terence's comedy *Eunuchus*: *variā veste exornatus fuit* (Eun. 4, 4, 16). Thus, we can safely suppose that Irish exegetes understood Joseph's attire as a sort of colourful garment.

Joseph's tunic "doubtless represents festive attire" (Mc Kenzie 1968: 144). Festive garments are frequently mentioned in both the Old and New Testament, and "these were made of more costly materials and were probably more brilliantly coloured" (ibid.: 145). That the acquisition of tunic emphasised Joseph's superiority is evident from the New Testament when Jesus forbids his disciples to have two coats as it is a sign of wealth (Mt 10:10; Mk 6:9; Lk 9:3). Joseph's coat might also allude to the mantles worn by the prophets, for instance, Elijah. As Thomas L. Brodie (2001: 353) notes, "the coat itself is enigmatic but may well be a variation on the general idea of a prophetic mantle (1 Kings 19:19; 2 Kings 2:8)" (cf. ibid.: 358–9). This seems plausible, especially since Joseph is famous for having prophetic dreams (Gen 37:5–10) and prophesies the famine in Egypt after having heard the Pharaoh's dream (Gen 41). Martin Kessler and Karel Deurloo are of a different opinion. They argue that an overarching theme of this part of

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[121] Hebrew *kuttōnet* was borrowed into Greek as *chitōn*, 'chiton', and meant a garment, made of wool or linen, which reached almost to the ankles and could be with or without sleeves (Mc Kenzie 1968: 143–4).
[122] As Brodie (2001:353) writes, "many-coloured" of the Latin Vulgate is based on the Greek translation of the Old Testament, not on Hebrew original.
[123] The entry is quoted after the online dictionary http://www.perseus.tufts.edu.

the Old Testament (Gen 37:1–50:26) is kingship (Kessler, Deurloo 2004: 184). In this manner, the famous multi-coloured coat of Joseph, whether having or lacking explicit regal connotations, is, nevertheless, a manifestation of his distinction. This gift of a loving father foretells the future position of Joseph, now shepherd and dreamer, as a political leader of the Egyptian nation. It is also crucial that in the story of Joseph, the coat appears at the transitional point and triggers the following action. It causes envy of the brothers which results in selling Joseph to Egypt where, eventually, the prophecy of his leadership is fulfilled. The motif of wandering is of primary importance here. It links Joseph with the figure of Abraham, as God makes both go to a new land which He would make them see (Brodie 2001: 353, 355).

2.2.1.4. Joseph in Other Eóganachta Legends

Do Bunad Imthechta Eoganachta (*DBIE*) is the first source which established a parallel between Eógan and Joseph. Obviously, "this whole tale is consciously modelled on the biblical story of Pharaoh's dream and Joseph's interpretation" (Ó Corráin 1985: 53). Joseph prophesies a disastrous famine which will come to the land of Egypt and elaborates the plan of how to store enough food in order to overcome the hungry years. In return, Pharaoh sets him over Egypt as a ruler. Joseph accumulates provision, and when the famine comes, he sells corn to the Egyptians and to the people who come from other countries affected by the famine. Eógan Mór, a foreigner who becomes the king of Ireland, echoes Joseph, a Hebrew shepherd who rises to power in Egypt due to his wisdom and prophetic gift. Joseph served as a perfect *exemplum* for Eógan, and the parallel between the two assisted in portraying the ancestor of the Eóganachta as an ideal ruler which suited the aims of the propagandists of the dynasty's prestige:

> in the world of early medieval Irish historiography, an origin is the demand the present makes upon the past, not knowledge of the past for its own sake — a much more historical pretence. To treat these texts literally as raw data reporting simple historical descent is to blinker oneself and, worse, to patronise as primitives the makers of the historical discourse (Ó Corráin 1998: 185).

Some of the details of the account of the famine in *DBIE*, however, correspond rather to the description of the Egyptian famine in *Saltair na Rann* (*SR*) and not in the Book of Genesis. This was noted by Byrne (1973: 201) who stressed that Eógan's adventures "are modelled on those of Joseph in Egypt: the parallel becomes even clearer when one reads the account of Joseph in the Middle Irish versification of the bible story, *Saltair na rann*, which exhibits striking verbal similarities." Unfortunately, Byrne did not develop this idea. Chronologically, *DBIE* might be a bit earlier than *SR* or compiled

roughly at the same time. I do not intend to suggest any sort of mutual influence or postulate a common source which might have influenced both texts. Such thoughts would be merely speculations on my part for the lack of expertise in medieval sources concerning Joseph.[124] It seems interesting, however, that there are elements shared by both *SR* and *DBIE* and not found in the Bible, and these parallels are worth being compared. I will start my textual analysis with the story of Joseph as given in the Bible and in *SR* and then will focus on the portrayal of Eógan Mór in *DBIE*. Let us first have a look at the famine prophesy in Genesis 41:

> *1 Post duos annos vidit Pharao somnium putabat se stare super fluvium. 2 de quo ascendebant septem boves pulchrae et crassae nimis et pascebantur in locis palustribus. 3 aliae quoque septem emergebant de flumine foedae confectaeque macie et pascebantur in ipsa amnis ripa in locis virentibus. 4 devoraveruntque eas quarum mira species et habitudo corporum erat expergefactus Pharao.*

> 1 After two years Pharao had a dream. He thought he stood by the river, 2 Out of which came up seven kine, very beautiful and fat: and they fed in marshy places. 3 Other seven also came up out of the river, ill-favoured, and lean fleshed: and they fed on the very bank of the river, in green places: 4 And they devoured them, whose bodies were very beautiful and well conditioned. So Pharao awoke.

Joseph is brought to the court in order to give his interpretation of a dream. A young man explains that seven good cows are seven plentiful years; and seven thin and ill cows are seven years of famine. "And all the plenty shall be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine shall consume the land" (Gen. 41:30). After that, Joseph suggests how to survive the famine:

> *34 qui constituat praepositos per singulas regiones et quintam partem fructuum per septem annos fertilitatis. 35 qui iam nunc futuri sunt congreget in horrea et omne frumentum sub Pharaonis potestate condatur serveturque in urbibus. 36 et paretur futurae septem annorum fami quae pressura est Aegyptum et non consumetur terra inopia.*

> 34 That he may appoint overseers over all the countries: and gather into barns the fifth part of the fruits, during the seven fruitful years, 35 That shall now presently ensue: and let all the corn be laid up, under Pharao's hands, and be reserved in the cities. 36 And let it be in readiness, against the famine of seven years to come, which shall oppress Egypt, and the land shall not be consumed with scarcity.

Hearing that, Pharaoh appoints Joseph as a ruler over Egypt, and a young Hebrew man starts his campaign:

> *47 venitque fertilitas septem annorum et in manipulos redactae segetes congregatae sunt in horrea Aegypti. 48 omnis etiam frugum abundantia in singulis urbibus condita est.*

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[124] The overview of major theological studies of Joseph narrative is given in Murdoch 1995: 106. The author also furnishes his commentary on *SR* stanzas with thematic parallels from other European Biblical chronicles and interpretations.

55 qua esuriente clamavit populus ad Pharaonem alimenta petens quibus ille respondit ite ad Ioseph et quicquid vobis dixerit facite. 56 crescebat autem cotidie fames in omni terra aperuitque Ioseph universa horrea et vendebat Aegyptiis nam et illos oppresserat fames. 57 omnesque provinciae veniebant in Aegyptum ut emerent escas et malum inopiae temperarent.

47 And the fruitfulness of the seven years came: and the corn being bound up into sheaves, was gathered together into the barns of Egypt. 48 And all the abundance of grain was laid up in every city.

55 And when there also they began to be famished, the people cried to Pharao, for food. And he said to them: Go to Joseph: and do all that he shall say to you. 56 And the famine increased daily in all the land: and Joseph opened all the barns, and sold to the Egyptians: for the famine had oppressed them also. 57 And all provinces came into Egypt, to buy food, and to seek some relief of their want.

Thus, the plan of Joseph runs as follows: first of all, he appoints officers to help him with the collection of corn in various provinces. During the seven abundant years, they collect the excesses of corn and grain and keep them in barns in the cities all over the country under Pharaoh's power. When the famine comes, Joseph can sell the accumulated grain to the Egyptians as well as to foreigners who come to Egypt looking for food.

The version related in *SR*, Canto XXIX, differs in both the details of the plot and the emphasis laid on certain events. Pharaoh tells his dream to Joseph and asks him to give a proper judgment of it:

3325] *Secht mbaí méithi tárfas dam,*
secht mbae caíla, clú n-ingnad,
na secht mbae caela, clú glé,
duatar na secht mbae remrae.

Seven fat cows appeared to me,
seven thin cows, wonderful fame;
the seven thin cows, a bright fame,
ate up the seven fat cows.[125]

After that, we are simply told that Joseph effectively explained the dream, but the details of his interpretation are not revealed. The events to come (seven plentiful years and seven years of famine) are mentioned *ad hoc* in the next Canto XXX, 3381–4 (see below).

This canto, treating Joseph's dream interpretations and rise to power, is interesting in that while the outline of the biblical narrative is followed there are substantial additions; on the other hand, important features, such as the explicit interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams, are left out (Murdoch 1995: 110).

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[125] Text and translation quoted here follow the provisional text and translation prepared by Professor David Greene and published online by the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies: https://www.dias.ie/celt/celt-publications-2/celt-saltair-na-rann/ (last accessed on 20.09.2018).

In what follows, *SR* focuses on Joseph's appointment as a ruler, and praises his ascent to power, and not his prophetic skills. "At all events, the emphasis has shifted away from a mystical view of Joseph as interpreter of dreams to a bargainer who now becomes viceroy" (ibid.: 111). Indeed, preparing for the years of hunger, Joseph acts as a truly good manager. In this episode, the author of *SR* took considerable license in elaborating Joseph's food-keeping policy. Joseph is not simply collecting corn and grain, as in the Bible: he introduces a new tax system making the citizens to pay all tributes and taxes in food:

> 3381] *Secht mblíadna lána mo-le,*
> *somma, slána, sonaide,*
> *ó gab Ioséph glóir garta*
> *co aimsir na mórgorta.*
>
> 3385] *Fot-roirgell, ba gním cíalla,*
> *Ioséph co cenn secht mblíadna,*
> *ná gébad, cid mór in smacht,*
> *étach, na hór, na hargat.*
>
> 3389] *Ní gebed Ioséph nach fíach*
> *ó na túathaib acht mad bíad,*
> *caingnib, cáinib, ciniud cert,*
> *dia dligiud do ríg Égept.*
>
> There were seven full years together,
> rich, safe and prosperous
> from the time that Joseph assumed hospitable glory
> to the time of the great famine.
>
> Joseph ordained for seven years, a wise deed,
> that he would not accept, though it was a great oppression,
> clothing, or gold, or silver.
>
> Joseph did not accept from the peoples,
> a proper race, any debt which was due to the king of Egypt
> by bargains, by taxes, except (as) food.

Everything Joseph gets from the Egyptians, he stores into his "strong safe forts, into his huge islands" (*'na dúinib trénaib daingnib; inna indsib éradblib*) (3395–6). When the famine starts, people come to Joseph and give him their gold and silver in exchange for food (3401–4), and Joseph feeds the people in Egypt, without telling the Pharaoh (3413–6). Therefore, *SR* gives a completely new motivation for Joseph's actions and furnishes the story with a new plan for the accumulation of the grain. Unlike Biblical Joseph, who enjoys the full power over Egypt but, nevertheless, recognises the supremacy of the Pharaoh, Joseph in *SR* acts independently, as if he is the only ruler of

the country (the text states it explicitly telling us that "the King through his grace chose long ago … that Joseph ruled over great high noble Egypt, with all its host" (3377–80)). We learn that the Pharaoh gives him full freedom in his decisions, and that Joseph does not even share his plan with the Pharaoh (*cen rád fri Foraind* (3414)). While in the Book of Genesis Joseph and his helpers collect the leftovers of the grain (which is possible due to abundant harvests) in the cities in different regions of the country, in *SR* Joseph introduces a new tax system — tax payments should be made in food, not in gold or silver — and accumulates the provision in his own forts. Accordingly, if in the Bible the Pharaoh commands his people to go to Joseph and buy food from him, in *SR* Joseph feeds them himself. People bring Joseph gold and silver in exchange for food, and even give themselves to him as slaves, "to the king," as *SR* significantly stresses (*dond ríg* (3405)). The description of people whom Joseph feeds bears a distinctive local flavour: the text mentions chief poets, druids, harp-players and jugglers (3417–20).

The last account to consider is the famine episode in *DBIE*. Eógan Taídlech receives three forts, and the name of each is Fithecc. There is a seer in each of these forts (*bói fáith cacha fithicce díib*). The text informs us that from these forts Eógan received his fourth name Fithicech, and tells us about the four names of Eógan in a praising quatrain. The episode of interest starts after the poem:

> *Fecht and fiarfaidus Eogan fáith díb: 'Cid aruntá?' Attubairt in fáith: 'Tic gorta mór for firu hÉirenn'. 'Cía tairicc?' 'Tairic hi cind teora mblíadna, ₇ ren ór ₇ argat ar biad isin blíadain seo ₇ bíid cethrur for biud triir occut'. Ocus íar sin imcomaircid na fáithe ele cechtarde a blíadna ₇ asbertatar cadissin: 'Ticfa innd úne béus ₇ ren t'uma ₇ t'íarand ar biad ₇ bíid triar ar biuth deissi ocut', ar in fáith medónach. Adubart in tress fáith: 'Ren t'étach ar biad ₇ bídh dias ar biud óenfhir ocut'. Dogéni huili Eogan aní sain* (Meyer 1912a: 312).

> Once Eógan asked one of the prophets: 'What is going to happen to us?' The prophet said: "A great famine is coming on the men of Ireland.' 'When will it come?' 'It will come after three years; and sell gold and silver for food this year and you will be able to support four men on the food of three.' And after that he asked each prophet in turn each year and they said: 'The famine is still coming: and sell your bronze and your iron for food, and you will be able to support three men on the food of two', said the second prophet. The third prophet said: 'Sell your clothes for food, and you will be able to support two men on the food for one (Byrne 1973: 199–200).

This episode, although arranged differently, in some ways echoes the story of Joseph in *SR*. The prophetic gift of Joseph was already rather irrelevant for the architect of *SR*, and is blurred even more in *DBIE* where the prophecy is put into the mouth not of the prince himself but of one of Eógan's seers. Since the aim of the author of *SR* was to portray Joseph as a worthy ruler capable of handling a dangerous situation, the fact of his clairvoyance was mentioned *en passant* and almost disregarded. This motif became

even less important in *DBIE*. As a young candidate worthy of kingship, Eógan should have shown his kingly qualities: forethought, generosity, good judgment and, last but not least, obedience to his proxies' counsel. In the world of Irish tales, the prophecy is a prerogative of the Otherworld inhabitants, druids, and "those in the story whose position in society is liminal" (Watson 1986: 138). "Everything from the observation and interpretation of surrounding reality and of royal rule to counsel for action and prophetic insight into the future came from within the ranks of the king's retinue" (Sayers 2008: 122). The task of a king is to make an adequate judgment according to what was prophesied, and this is crucial for the plot of *DBIE*. Eógan pays attention to the words of his seers and carefully follows their advice. When the famine comes, he is the only person who is able to feed the population of Ireland and to save them from deadly catastrophe. Eógan embodies a positive paradigm of king's rule. The king, who possesses the *fír flathemon*, provides prosperity to his country, including the abundance of harvest and fertility of land and animals. Even in the years of famine, a worthy leader is capable of supporting his nation because of his rightful judgment and his attention to the counsel of his druids. As *Audacht Morainn* formulates: "It is through the ruler's truth that great plagues (are?) constantly warded off from the people" ([*Is tria f.f.*] *at(a) mor[t]laithi móra di dóenib ding(a)ba[ta]r*) (Fomin 2013: 379, 371). In accordance with this statement, Eógan prevents harmful consequences of a natural catastrophe. Following the recommendations of his seers, Eógan bargains for food, first, gold and silver, then, his bronze and iron, and finally, his clothes. The same elements appear in the famine narrative in *SR*: Joseph does not accept silver, gold or clothes as taxes, but food only (*ná gébad ... étach, na hór, na hargat*). We do not find any mention of this triad in Genesis. Similarly, while Joseph stores corn in the cities which are under Pharaoh's control, Joseph in *SR* accumulates the grain in his own forts; Eógan, of course, stores food in his three forts as well. In this vein, neither *SR* nor *DBIE* precisely follow the Biblical text. At the same time, they share some common motifs in their description of the famine. Another common point of the two texts is that, unlike Genesis with its focus on the role of God in Joseph's destiny, both Irish texts primarily concern the characteristics of respective protagonists as wise and powerful rulers who can effectively handle difficulties. In the Irish context, this is an essential element pointing towards the *fír flathemon* which Eógan, from the perspective of the tale's compiler, certainly possesses.

In general, the corpus of the extant texts concerning Eógan preserves the connection with Joseph, different tales choosing different elements of Joseph's story. Thus, Eógan in *DBIE* is a foreigner who saves the people of Ireland from the famine and, having therefore proven himself as a worthy ruler, is elected their king. The motif of a cloak is not featured yet; interestingly, the coat of many colours does not appear in *SR* either. *TM*, on the other hand, represents a bricolage of native mythological conventions, underpinned by Biblical allusions, and since our tale describes Eógan's adventures in Spain, the story of the famine, which happens later, during his reign in Ireland, is not mentioned. The link with Joseph in that case is probably provided by the many-coloured cloak which Eógan, similar to Joseph, receives as a sign of distinction. Finally, *CML*, a later compilation which presents Eógan's full heroic biography, features both the story of the famine and the mantle, the last episode being borrowed from *TM*. The motif of the famine in the context of the history of the Eóganachta will reappear in almost three hundred years after the compilation of *CML*. A poem written by Tadhg Dall Ó hUiginn (1550–91) in honour of Cormac Ó hEaghra includes a large description of the dream, prophecy about the famine, and a resolution of the problem following the wise decision of Mug Néit.

The celebrand of this poem, Cormac, belonged to Ó hEaghra (O'Hara), the family who derived their name and descent from Eaghra, lord of Luighne (ob. 926),[126] and were for many centuries lords of Luighne (Leyney) in Co. Sligo. Tadhg Dall hailed from the barony of Leyney, and was fostered in Tirconnel (Knott 1922: xxiv). Cormac Ó hEaghra, chief of Leyney, was one of Tadhg's patrons and guarantor, chosen by the bard "for that nobleman's goodness and generosity" (ibid.: xxx). The eulogy to Cormac follows "a theme beloved of panegyrists of all ages and climes; the transitory nature of material wealth contrasted with the permanence of panegyric" (Knott 1926: 273). Tadhg Dall praises the forethought of his patron who invests his gold in ever-lasting praising poems: "since poetry is cheap to-day, Cormac … will have an unreckonable store of the eulogies of all." Moreover, by doing so, Cormac "will leave provision for all, gathered when easiest to obtain, of the polished offerings of the poets" (Knott 1926: 147). This statement is further justified by an expanded simile: Tadhg compares Cormac to Mug Néit who, in his time, "made just such a provision." I will cite the English translation of

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[126] "Eaghra, son of Poprigh, lord of Luighne, in Connaught; and Ceat, son of Flaithbheartach, lord of Corca-Modh-ruadh, died", *AFM*, s.a. 926.11.

the relevant part of the apologue,[127] before contextualising this panegyric within the corpus of the lore related to Eógan Mór:

> 20] Famous Mugh Néid, Cormac's gallant, princely ancestor, king of Codhal's strong-aled Plain, made a similar provision.
> 21] The queen of keen Mugh Néid beheld long ago a vision; there was import in the telling of it, she related it to the high-king.
> 22] Seven goodly, thriving cows appeared to that wife of Mugh, she sees the bright, sleek, fair herd around the isle of Ireland.
> 23] And then, moreover, it appeared to her that from the bright, wondrous herd each fair, rosy, white-hazelled plain was flowing with new milk.
> 24] After that herd there appeared to her seven hideous cows, sickening to speak of were the aged, spectral kine.
> 25] With harsh, bitter cries, with ironlike horns; furious as a ...(?) flock; with sunken, burning eyes.
> 26] Not a trace of the young and marvellous herd was left by the frenzied, pugnacious, repulsive, venomous, serpentlike drove.
> 27] Dearg Damhsa, the king's druid, gave the reading of the dream, this is the truth thereof; he hearkened to the learned judgment, its great profit came to pass.
> 28] Thus said the druid, beginning: 'The first seven cows are seven years of abundant milk, perfect in rule and sovranty.'
> 29] 'The other cows, moreover, are seven miserable years of hardship, for Ireland, land of sweetly-murmuring waters, it will be a portent of devastation.'
> 30] 'The woman shall devour the son she carries on her back, the heir shall deny the father, throughout Ireland, smooth, beautiful land of blue streams, from hunger.'
> 31] 'Therefore,' said Dearg Damhsa, 'let provision be made by you ere the first years come to a close, thou bright-limbed king of the Gaels.'
> 32] 'In thy tax or thy tribute from proud Leath Mogha accept not throughout the spreading land of fair, fertile, dewy hills one penny of gold or of silver.'
> 33] 'Do not accept from any in thy royal tribute,' said the king's sage, 'aught else save food as the universal payment.'
> 34] To each thing the druid said to him the king of Áine's brightly-spreading land willingly agreed, he was of one mind with the sage.
> 35] Upon their own summons the Munstermen unanimously attend the son of the high-king, in an ordered multitude around Glandore, in return for aiding their distress.
> 36] Conaire Mór and Maicnia did homage to Eóghan Mór, after the assembling of the territories, most willing (?) were the host to submit to him.
> 37] Mugh Néid was over Munster as a lofty stem among saplings, by reason of his perpetual purchasing of food for the comely assembly of Munstermen.
> 38] The better are his seed ever since that he waited not for the time of high prices, he – bright form before which the sea ebbs – purchased the cheap bargains of the rest.
> 39] The high-king Cormac O'Hara imitates Mugh Néid – two rightful owners of Fál's Cornfield are they – in getting a profitable bargain from us (Knott 1926: 147–9).

As Knott (1926: 273) rightly observes, "this apologue is taken from the story called *Cath Maighe Léana*". In *CML*, Eógan's mother Sída, wife of Mug Néit, has a vision (*aisling*) of seven fair cows and seven black cows, which Derg Damsa, Mug Néit's druid, interprets as seven prosperous and seven disastrous years respectively (Jackson

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[127] For the original text, see Knott 1922: 223–5.

1938: 2–4). In Tadhg Dall's panegyric, the vision (*fís*) of Mug Néit's[128] wife represents the Pharaoh's dream, elaborated in a pompous bardic manner. If the Pharaoh's dream in *SR* 3325–8 (see above), following the Biblical canon, is concise and brief, the cows being simply designated as 'thin' (*caíla*) and 'fat' (*méithi*), the stanzas devoted to the queen's *fís* are full of alliterating epithets, describing the wonderful seven cows and a hideous herd (lines 22–6). The presence of a thriving herd on the pastures of Ireland equals in her dream to the fertility of nature, as the plains are fair and purple, full of white hazel trees (*fionn, collbhán, corcra* (line 23)). These epithets and colours allude, on the one hand, to the mythological concepts of the Otherworld and supernatural abundance of Ireland of the Golden age, and, on the other hand, to the righteous kingship. Cf. the verse from *Audacht Morainn*: "It is through the ruler's truth that [there is] an abundance of every high corn" (Fomin 2013: 380). The druid's interpretation of the dream echoes this passage: "seven years of abundant milk, perfect in rule and sovranty" (*comhlán riaghla is ríoghachta* (line 28)). The devastation that comes after in the image of seven miserable cows is not explicitly called the famine in the text. Instead, the poet chooses to express this idea with the help of Scriptural analogues. As the druid explains, in the course of these seven years of hardship, "the woman shall devour the son she carries on her back."

This macabre scene is used throughout the Bible as a metaphor of extreme hunger. It is listed, for example, among the innumerable consequences of disobedience to God in Leviticus 26: *ita ut comedatis carnes filiorum et filiarum vestrarum*, 'So that you shall eat the flesh of your sons and of your daughters' (Lev 26:29). Same curse for disobedience is also mentioned in Deuteronomy 28:53–7, explained as a result of the siege of cities and the following lack of provision, in Jeremiah 19:9, and in Ezekiel 5:10. This prediction was actually fulfilled at the siege of Samaria by the Syrians (2 Kings 6:28–9), and at the siege of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans before the Babylonian captivity, which Jeremiah is keening in Lamentations 4:10. According to the Scripture, this is the uttermost calamity, with clear Apocalyptic undertones, that could come upon people. Tadhg Dall fittingly exploits this image to show the scale of the destruction which will happen in Ireland during the famine. Thus, the poet uses the Pharaoh's dream as a framework but elaborates the image of the seven years famine with the help of other Biblical motifs describing the ultimate hunger. The detailed portrayal of the

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[128] According to the genealogy of the prehistoric Éoganachta, Mug Néit was the father of Eógan Mór whose nickname was Mug Núadat. Tadhg Dall has apparently confused the names of the father and the son, but he is telling us the story of Eógan Mór: the protagonist is called by this name in quatrain 36.

good and ill herds (*tána*), however, might also echo native concerns, such as the preoccupation of the Irish with the valuable cattle and the well-known destructive consequences of the cattle-raids. I believe that the importance of cows in the native legal system, and their association with wealth and power, might have inspired the borrowing of the Pharaoh's dream from the Biblical narrative.

The advice that the druid gives to Mug Néit follows the one in *SR*: instead of collecting taxes in silver or gold, payments should be made in food (32–3). The king readily accepts this plan, proving his wisdom, or, as Tadhg puts it, "he was of one mind with the sage" (*sé d'aontoil an ollumhan* (34)). Needless to say, this wise deed brings him perpetual glory as well as admiration and submission on behalf of other ruling clans (line 36). As Tadhg resumes his panegyric, Cormac imitates Mug Néit by "getting a profitable bargain" from the poets (line 39). The association of contemporary rulers with their legendary ancestors is not rare in the lexicon of Tadhg Dall. "Each family provides in its geographical situation and its genealogical tree opportunity for many allusive epithets" (Knott 1922: lix). Although the Ó hEaghra were lords of Leyney, they were believed to be the descendants of Ailill Aulomm, son of Eógan (genealogy of the family is given in Knott 1926: 274–5). Since professional bards "had an accurate knowledge of their native language, of the official history of Ireland and of her literature" (Knott 1922: xxxiv), Tadhg Dall co-opted a story from the past which seemed suitable for the purpose of his eulogy. He coined an elegant simile, having compared the prudence of Cormac to the provisions made by his ancestor who saved the Irish from a tragedy described in terms of the disturbing scene from the Old Testament.

Biblical motifs were not a rarity in bardic lexicon. The tropes used by bards in their poetry were clichéd, conventional and stereotyped. Some of them, e.g. 'numberless as the stars of the sky, the sands of the sea', are borrowed Biblical expressions, and "apologues of Scriptural origin are not wanting." At the same time, examples from native history and mythology are also frequent as illustrative material, and glorious figures of the past are often evoked to praise contemporary patrons and overlords (Knott 1922: lxi). In our poem, for instance, it seems noteworthy that Cormac is described in the first stanza as a ruler "for whom the yew-branch bends" (Knott 1926: 146), which is paralleled by the epithet of Eógan who "was over Munster as a lofty stem among saplings" (stanza 37) (ibid.: 149). I would dare to suggest that this imagery echoes the dream of Joseph in Genesis 37 which prefigures his supremacy over his brothers:

7 putabam ligare nos manipulos in agro et quasi consurgere manipulum meum et stare vestrosque manipulos circumstantes adorare manipulum meum, 'I thought we were binding sheaves in the field: and my sheaf arose as it were, and stood, and your sheaves standing about bowed down before my sheaf.'

Notably, Knott mentions possible Scriptural influence in Ó hUiginn's usage of metaphors related to plant-terms (Knott 1922: liv). The image of the trees of the forest bending down to a king in reverence, however, is also a common place in the Irish tradition, and it is found in a depository of the bardic "stereotyped phrases" describing "the beneficial influence of a rightful ruler" (ibid.: lxii). Therefore, it is difficult to postulate whether the metaphor was originally a native one or borrowed from the Scripture. As Knott mentions, the chief's superiority is also illustrated by comparing him to "the full moon with the stars about her" (ibid.: lxi) which can be compared, for example, to the second Joseph's vision (Gen 37:9).

To sum it up, we can see that Joseph's story took deep roots in the family lore of the Eóganachta. First as a ruler in a foreign land and a saviour from the famine, Joseph served as a parallel and an *exemplum* for Eógan. This connection between the two kings built yet another bridge between their own lore of origins and the history of the Hebrews. As John Carey (2013: 140) explains this trend in Irish historiography,

> the Gaels themselves were portrayed as another Chosen People, escaping from Egypt to endure years of homelessness, but eventually taking possession of their own Promised Land. The various settlements which successively occupied Ireland were placed more or less in parallel with the sequence of 'world kingships' which had been developed by Eusebius; and the spatial setting for the whole extended story was supplied by the ancient geographers, as mediated by the Christian historian Orosius.

Thus, by the time *TM* was compiled, the tradition of associating Eógan with Joseph was already in existence. Probably, legendary biographies of Eógan and Joseph initially shared certain similarities, and those prompted the borrowing of the elements of Joseph's story into the tradition related to Eógan Taídlech. Both Eógan and Joseph are young boys[129] who are about to start their *rite de passage* which will lead them to glory and supremacy. The granting of the mantle symbolises the start of Joseph's initiation; for Eógan, on the contrary, receiving of his mantle marks the end and the successful accomplishment of the ritual. The mantle itself is a sign of distinction in both accounts. The heroes of the respective tales travel to foreign countries where they mature and take

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[129] As I have discussed in the previous chapter, Eógan is a young boy on the verge of a manhood, *maccóem*. The word which describes Joseph in Hebrew is *naᵉar*, 'boy', meaning both a youth and an apprentice shepherd (Brodie 2001: 358).

wives. The image of Joseph and his coat gives an additional value to the story of Eógan, and serves as a prototype of the events in the Irish legendary history.[130] Obviously, Biblical exegesis is based on a system of precedents and doublets when various episodes complement and help to interpret each other as two panels of a diptych. Thus, the compiler juxtaposes the stories of Joseph and Eógan and starts a dialogue between his own work and the most authoritative book of the Middle Ages. The overall purpose of this intertextual communication is to substantiate the events of the native history. As Brodie (2001: xi) puts it, "Genesis is indeed a form of history; it serves as prologue to the Primary History and includes the literary form of antiquarian historiography."

It was a general practice that the compilers of Irish tales used to attract various sources to support the veracity of their texts. One of the main authorities was, of course, the Bible, an all-encompassing collection of precedents for all possible life situations. For example, Herbert (1997: 324) stresses the same strategy in *Caithréim Cellaig* (*CC*). As she argues, "the writer of *CC* clearly adopts a series of literary stereotypes to give substance to the shadowy figures of distant history." This approach represents, in fact, the early medieval historiographical tradition. Since the past cannot be observed directly, but history is nevertheless worth writing down, testimonies of secondary sources become indispensable. "Therefore, the study of history was, of necessity, the study of historical memories and documents rather than the direct examination of the past itself and the historian accepted the truth of what was probable" (Toner 2005: 72). The juxtaposition of various sources functions as a method of evaluating historical knowledge and the task of the medieval compiler was not to give an objective and clear picture of the past but to be able to work with various documents in order to create a plausible account. As Ó Corráin (1985: 61) argues, "early Irish *literati* were perfectly capable of imaginative historical reconstruction for they neither forgot nor despised the pagan past. Rather, they fitted it into their Christian time-seal." Besides, permeating of a text with Biblical borrowings served as a powerful tool of propaganda, since recasting native lore into Biblical terms allowed legitimising the subject and adding weight to the argument through the authority of the Bible. To sum it up,

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[130] If Eógan's Biblical type is Joseph, a foreigner who saves a foreign land from famine, then, in terms of exegetical typology, Ireland should represent Egypt. Interestingly enough, we find this comparison in Muirchú's Life of St. Patrick. Cf. Muirchú describing the first Easter:

> *Adpropinquauit autem pasca in diebus illis, quod pasca primum Deo **in nostra Aegipto huius insolae** uelut quondam in genesseon celebratum est* (I.13.1);
> In those days Easter was approaching, the first Easter to be offered to God **in the Egypt of this our island** as it once was (offered), as we read in Genesis, in Gessen.

> the Irish seem to have looked at the Old Testament as a treasure-trove of legal guidelines and genealogical and political information but they read it through their own eyes and used it in a creative way, without trying to force its unfamiliar elements in their own culture (Jaski 1998: 344).

First, as I tried to show, the Irish author might have employed material from Abraham's story to show that Eógan is an ancestor of the Eóganachta in the same manner as Abraham is the father of the Hebrew people. Secondly, I believe that he might have used an allusion to Joseph in the salmon episode. Here again, the link with a Hebrew leader is used to substantiate the version of the events presented. It should also be pointed out that, although the Irish favouritism for the Old Testament is not called into question, comparisons from respective books were applied exclusively to the legendary rulers of the past. The reality did not provide the Irish learned men with suitable candidates for Biblical parallels. Petty kings of local kingdoms did not have enough authority to be compared with Solomon or David. For this reason, the depiction of Irish kings in the Old Testament style was restricted to the greatest kings of the past who belonged to the realm of legend (Jaski 1998: 340; O'Connor 2013a: 317). As a legendary ancestral figure, Eógan was a suitable candidate for this simile, and such comparison might have been used as a device to promote his eponymous dynasty.

2.2.1.5. Old Testament in Medieval West

As the discussion above has demonstrated, *TM* and other tales found in the dynasty lore of the Eóganachta are stylistically more oriented towards the Old Testament. This can be said about the early stratum of Irish literature in general:

> Among the sources of Christian provenance which were known and used in Ireland from about the seventh until the ninth century, the Old Testament evoked the greatest enthusiasm among the Irish *literati*. The Irish laws, gnomic texts, saga-literature, hagiography, annals, genealogies and regnal lists all contain stylistic features, narrative structures, concepts or provisions which appear to have been based on the Old Testament (Jaski 1998: 329).

We should bear in mind, however, that the orientation towards the Old Testament is characteristic not only of Ireland but of early medieval Christianity in general. Thus, the books of the Old Testament were of particular importance for political concepts, literary production and theology throughout Latin Christendom at the dawn of Middle Ages. Various aspects of medieval cultures which absorbed and adapted the Old Testament's motifs and symbols were scrutinised by generations of medievalists. The main works on the subject were summarised by Professor Mayke de Jong (1998) in the special issue of the *Early Medieval Europe* journal. Responding to the fact of the paramount importance of the Old Testament for the medieval world, this volume is entirely devoted to a single

theme and is based on a panel 'The Bible and Politics in the Early Medieval West" which was convened by Professor de Jong at the Leeds International Medieval Congress in the year 1996. As de Jong (1998: 262–3) explains in her opening article, "we were dealing with the question of how texts helped to shape political identities, with the books of the Old Testament taking pride of place as the most authoritative text of all." Indeed, the contributors have demonstrated that "when it came to finding images and law to be integrated into contemporary concerns, early medieval ideologues had to rely on the normative world of the Old Testament" (de Jong 1998: 263). For instance, Yitzhak Hen (1998) addresses its influence on the literature of Merovingian Gaul. He stresses (1998: 277) that the Old Testament provided "a fertile supply of similes" and that "contemporary political events are interpreted in the light of their biblical antecedents." Biblical models of prophets and kings — David and Solomon being the most popular of them — were exploited to portray kings and bishops of the époque and to provide them with decent examples for *imitatio*. This rhetoric was truly encompassing and had its impact both on the official liturgical sources aimed for a lay audience and private admonitory and on advisory materials for kings. In this manner, Biblical *exempla* served for the promotion of contemporary Frankish rulers. Close analogies between the latter and their Old Testament predecessors are also found in personal letters addressed to kings by clerics, as shown by the letters to Tassilo and Charlemagne. In these documents, their respective authors, Cathuulf and Clemens Peregrinus, describe king's duties based on the Old Testament precedents (Garrison 1998).

The Old Testament, with its all-embracing nature and attention to all possible circumstances of a human life, served as an ideal theoretical framework for any native ideas to be supported and developed. The motifs found in its Books were actively used or, on the contrary, ignored, depending on the aims of a particular author and a tradition they were to be applied to. This resulted in "elective and unpredictable affinities of new political communities with an authoritative biblical past" (de Jong 1998: 275). Nevertheless, however significant the role of the Old Testament used to be in the Medieval West, we still should pay a tribute to the Irish *literati*, because even among other medieval philosophers, the Irish are allegedly considered as "the most Old Testament-minded of all early medieval peoples" (de Jong 1998: 274). The Irish pioneered the devotion of the Old Testament saints and actively used the Old Testament imagery in hagiography (Kelly 1982: 557). They showed "more than ordinary interest in

the Old Testament as a source for ecclesiastical law and practice", with *Collectio Canonum Hibernensis* containing 500 citations from the Bible, two thirds of which are Old Testament references (McNamara 1987a: 34). The influence of the Old Testament may be traced in such fundamental works of the medieval Irish intellectual thought as *Altus Prosator*, Irish Penitentials, poems of Blathmac, *Saltair na Rann*, *Liber Himnorum*, *Lebor Gabála Érenn*, *De duodecim abusivus saeculi* and *De mirabilibus sacrae scripturae*. This fervour toward the Old Testament can easily be explained by the fact that Ireland lies on the periphery of oecumene and therefore, was not always following new Christian concepts and tendencies which were emerging on the continent. Unlike the rest of Europe where theological thought was largely affected by church councils, synods, patristic literature etc., in Ireland "Christianity was very directly influenced by the text of the Bible, and of the Old Testament in particular" (Meens 1998: 357).

2.2.2. New Testament Motifs

The salmon cloak episode in *TM* might have another important Biblical parallel. In this case, as I will argue, the association might have been taken from the New Testament. In general, as I have shown in the first part of my literary analysis, this scene employs various secular mythological motifs. The central location of the Ebro, with the salmon coming in its waters every seventh year, immediately evokes the image of the river Boyne in the centre of Ireland, where Finn was waiting for the salmon of Lind Féic for seven years. The glowing of Eógan, therefore, could be a visual manifestation of *imbas forosna*, which is ultimately understood as 'the knowledge which illuminates'. However, I am unaware of the examples when the recipient of the *imbas* would actually start shining. There is, however, an important reference-point which tells us that there might be another hermeneutic key to this scene. The author specifically highlights that Eógan's clothes start shining. And this focus — in my opinion — is almost a direct quotation from the Transfiguration scene as found in Matthew 17:2, Matthew being the favourite Gospel of the Irish:[131]

> καὶ μετεμορφώθη ἔμπροσθεν αὐτῶν, καὶ ἔλαμψεν τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ ὡς ὁ ἥλιος, τὰ δὲ ἱμάτια αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο λευκὰ ὡς τὸ φῶς.
> ...et transfiguratus est ante eos et resplenduit facies eius sicut sol vestimenta autem eius facta sunt alba sicut nix.

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[131] In general, two thirds of the Irish New Testament exegesis is devoted to the Gospels (of which Matthew was the most popular), while the rest is devoted to the Pauline epistles (Kelly 1982: 558).

> …and was transfigured before them: and his face shone as the sun, and his raiment was white as snow (light).

As Tom Sjöblom (1994: 163) writes about the borrowing of motifs from classical sources, "in terms of mythic thinking and world view, the important thing is that it [the motif] was borrowed and how it was used."[132] Thus, it is possible to pose the following question: why was it crucial for a medieval author to borrow this Biblical quotation and establish the parallel between Eógan's transformation and the transfiguration of Christ?

Transfiguration has important christological (the vision of Christ's radiance as a manifestation of his two natures); soteriological (the vision of the human being deified); and eschatological (glory of Christ after resurrection) significance (Bucur 2013: 252–3). Only Matthew specifies the transfigured face of Christ: the other three Gospels only report that his clothing became extremely white. The mention of both radiant face and white garment serves Matthew in the evangelist's understanding of the story as an apocalyptic vision, and is essentially informed by Jewish apocalyptic writings.[133] The Transfiguration on the Mount Tabor happens towards the middle of the narrative about Christ's mission. This pivotal episode reveals the true identity of Jesus as the Son of God. The voice of God Father says out of the cloud (symbol of the Holy Spirit): *hic est Filius meus dilectus in quo mihi bene conplacuit ipsum audite* (Matthew 17:5). The Transfiguration almost immediately follows an important discussion about the names of Jesus (Matthew 16:13–7). Disciples tell about the rumours expressed by people, who consider Jesus to be John the Baptist, or Elias, or Jeremias, or one of the prophets. Eventually, Peter confesses that Jesus is Christ, i.e. Messiah (Matthew 16:16), revealing the real name of Jesus. The revelation of Christ's glory during the Transfiguration

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[132] Cf. the statement by Donnchadh Ó Corráin (1986: 144) from his article devoted to the Irish narratives: "what is important is not that particular motifs are there nor how old they are but how they are used and what they are used to convey."

[133] Cf. Dan 10:4–6: 'as I was standing on the bank of the great river, the Tigris, I looked up and there before me was a man dressed in linen, with a belt of fine gold from Uphaz around his waist. His body was like topaz, his face like lightning'; Dan 7:9: 'I beheld till thrones were placed, and the Ancient of days sat: his garment was white as snow'; 4 Ezra 7:97 'The sixth order, when it is shown to them how their face is to shine like the sun, and how they are to be made like the light of the stars, being incorruptible from then on'; 1 Enoch 14:20–1: 'And the Great Glory sat thereon, and His raiment shone more brightly than the sun and was whiter than any snow. None of the angels could enter and could behold His face by reason of the magnificence and glory and no flesh could behold Him'; 1 Enoch 62:15: 'Afterwards, their countenances shall be filled with darkness and confusion before the Son of man; from whose presence they shall be expelled'; 2 Enoch 1:6: 'And there appeared to me two men, exceeding big, so that I never saw such on earth; their faces were shining like the sun'; 2 Enoch 19:1: 'And thence those men took me and bore me up on to the sixth heaven, and there I saw seven bands of angels, very bright and very glorious, and their faces shining more than the sun's shining'; Rev 1:16: 'In his right hand he held seven stars, and coming out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance'; Rev 10:1: 'Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven. He was robed in a cloud, with a rainbow above his head; his face was like the sun, and his legs were like fiery pillars.'

serves to the disciples as a clear confirmation of the truth of Peter's words and of Christ's divine nature. This event also marks a major turning point in the Gospel. After it, the second part of Christ's mission begins, followed by his way to Jerusalem, his passions and his death.

How can this passage and its exegesis be applied to the story of Eógan? Young Eógan, prince but not yet king, also goes through a 'transfiguration' after his royal apparel is given to him. After his countenance and cloak start shining, it becomes clear to everyone in his surroundings that he is a future king. Thus, his real royal status is revealed, while granting of the mantle represents, in fact, his investiture. This transformation is sealed in a new name. As Peter confesses his faith and calls Jesus 'Christ', Messiah, the king of Spain stresses the change in Eógan's appearance, and the druid gives him a new name, Taídlech. Under this name, according to the druid, Eógan will be known until his death. It is probably not accidental that the motif of Eógan's death is introduced at this point. Of course, the listeners of the story were well aware that Eógan will be slain by his rival, Conn Cétchathach, in the battle at Mag Léna. At the same time, the mention of the future death just after the transformation might have helped to maintain the Christological parallel. According to the tradition of the Gospels, Transfiguration "gives the prediction of passion a necessary clarification" as "the change described in the appearance of Jesus suggests the change which is implied in the resurrection narratives" (Mc Kenzie 1968: 898). Thus, Transfiguration is closely related to the future death of Christ.

That an ideal ruler should be a Christ-like figure was a major point in Augustinian theology. The tradition of king's Christomimesis is well known in the Medieval West and extensive scholarly literature is devoted to the discussion of this question (e.g. Kantorowicz 1957; Boitsov 2009). Irish tradition also saw some attempts to parallel certain characters with Christ. For instance, the Christological model might have influenced the circumstances of the life and death of Cú Chulainn when the mighty hero is put on a standing stone and pierced with a spear (Kelleher 1971: 122). In the tale *Síaburcharpat Con Chulainn*, on the other hand, Cú Chulainn is envisaged as a Christ-like figure on the basis of the fact that he dies young and then appears to a group of women after his death (Nagy 1997: 263). Likewise, Kelleher (1971: 122) argues that the choice of 33AD for the death of Conchobar "was clearly to associate these heroes with Christ." Outside of the Ulster Cycle, the birth of Mongán in *Immram Brain* is prophesied by Manannán in terms of the Incarnation; while the voyage of Manannán

himself is probably influenced by the letter of Columbanus to Pope Boniface IV in which Christ is portrayed as travelling to Ireland over the sea in his chariot (McCone 2000: 112). Besides, as David Sproule (1985: 26) argues, the story of the founding of Cashel employs some elements of the Nativity narrative (e.g. herdsmen seeing celestial omens which point toward the new king), while Conall Corc has the same role as Christ: he is the promised king elected by God. John Carey has also shown that Christ-like imagery might have been employed in the Genealogical Leinster poem about Labraid Loingsech. Labraid has conquered the world of men as the one true God has exceled over other deities, which means that Labraid is on earth what God is in heaven (Carey 2008: 7). The comparison of a local king and Christ as King of Kings is a sign of Labraid's unquestionable superiority (ibid.: 9). Like Eógan, Labraid lived before Christianity and, therefore, could not have been depicted as a Christian king (his life is put in 300BC). However, in the text of a poem Labraid is an 'oak-seed' from which many branches sprout.[134] He is an ancestor of the current royal dynasty, and thus, the genealogical poem functions as a dynastic propaganda imbued with Christian polemic.

Returning to the Transfiguration scene, its soteriological significance might have also been implied by the architect of our tale. The Transfiguration prefigures the resurrection of the faithful whose human nature will be changed in the glory of God in Heaven. The notion of salvation is prominent in this scene not least because of its connection to the Baptism of Christ. The formula of the utterance of the Father used in Matt 17:5 — *hic est Filius meus dilectus in quo mihi bene conplacuit ipsum audite* — is derived from the preceding scene of the Baptism (Matt 3:17: *hic est Filius meus dilectus in quo mihi conplacui*). The main elements of the transformation episode in *TM* — bank of the river, new clothes, new name, as well as supernatural shining — might also allude to the sacrament of baptism. Images of water and light are also suggestive of the Easter night when the baptism of catechumens normally takes place,[135] and light triumphs over darkness.

As Gertrud Schiller (1972: 133) observes, "the Tree of Life and the Water (River, Fountain, or Well) of Life … are not merely *topoi* for the Paradise of creation and the future Paradise, but were related … to the sacrifice and redemptive Death of Christ."

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[134] This is a beautiful image of a forefather being a root from which many branches spring. Curiously, this comparison might also be read in Christological terms. In the Scripture, Christ is an olive tree and the faithful are its branches (Rom 11:17). Alternatively, Christ is the vine and his people — its branches (John 15:1–8).

[135] As Tertullian stresses in *De Baptismo* 19.1.: *Diem baptismo sollemniorem pascha praestat*, 'The Passover affords a more than usually solemn day for baptism'.

Thus, the symbol for the sacrament of baptism originates in the image of water which flowed out from the pierced side of Jesus (John 19:34). From this point of view, the Ebro substitutes the Jordan, and the light surrounding Eógan alludes to the purification through baptism (cf. Eph 5:26). The connection of light, Easter and baptism is shown at its best in the Easter hymn *Exsultet* (the earliest extant version found in Bobbio Missal, seventh century) sung by a priest in front of the paschal candle during the Easter Vigil. The light of the candle stands for the light of God which illuminates the earth and the Church (*æterni Regis splendore illustrata*; *luminis adornata fulgoribus*), and the night becomes as bright as day (*et nox sicut dies illuminabitur*). In the Irish sources, the connection of light and fire with the Easter night is documented in Muirchú's Life of St Patrick. St Patrick lights the Paschal Fire in direct opposition to the druids who are preparing to light the fire on the pagan Hill of Tara: "Holy Patrick, then, celebrating Holy Easter, kindled the divine fire with its bright light and blessed it, and it shone in the night and was seen by almost all the people who lived in the plain" (§I.15.4).[136] This passage, interestingly, almost echoes the verse from *Exsultet* cited above.

In the context of baptism, the salmon might also change its meaning and make a semantic shift from *bratán feasa* to *ichthus*, fish as a symbol of Christ. As Augustine explains this concept in *De Civitate Dei* (XVIII.23), *erit ἰχθὺς, id est piscis, in quo nomine mystice intellegitur Christus, eo quod in huius mortalitatis abysso velut in aquarum profunditate vivus, hoc est sine peccato, esse potuerit*, 'the word ἰχθὺς, that is, *fish*, in which word Christ is mystically understood, because He was able to live, that is, to exist, without sin in the abyss of this mortality as in the depth of waters'. Medieval Irish learned circles were well-aware of this important Christian symbol. For examples, Bernard Meehan (2012: 147) discusses the significance of a fish as *ichthus* in the decoration of the Book of Kells. He notes that "the fish tends to be large and to resemble a salmon, for example on folio 188v [113], where it helps to form the initial letter *F*." As he resumes, "the fish is often employed in direct association with the face or name of Jesus." Interestingly, in the design of the Book of Kells, the *ichthus* is often pictured as a salmon. The Irish textual counterpart to the usage of a fish as a symbol of Christ in the Book of Kells is a passage in *Sanas Cormaic* glossing the word *iasc*, 'fish':

> *.i. ind-escc .i. uisce .i. noch is don uisciu forcumaic .i. a bethamnae, ₇ is and dano bis. Nó dono íasc quasi esc .i. ab esca. Es didiu .i. biad, unde eser. Ca óndi is caput, cend. **Ceand didiu ₇ cléithe cach mbíd in t-íesc, ar dotamail Isu é*** (Meyer 1912c: 62).

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that is, in 'escc', that is, water; for it is water from which it is constituted, that is, its sustaining, and it is in it that it is found. Or else 'fish' as if 'esc', that is, from [Latin] 'esca'. 'Es-' then, that is food; hence 'eser' (?). 'Ca-' is from 'caput', head; **a head then and the roof-tree of all is the fish, because he is in the likeness of Jesus**.

In the early Irish literature, the image of a fish as a religious symbol is probably employed in the account entitled 'Finn and the Man in the Tree'. In her inspiring interpretation of the tale as a Christian meditation, Kaarina Hollo has shown that the image of a "skittish trout" (*brecc bedcach*) in a vessel of bronze filled with water, which Derg Corra holds in his hand, has evident Eucharistic overtones. As she argues, "the encounter of Finn and Derg Corra was designed by its author, no doubt incorporating pre-existing material from his native Irish tradition, to be read as a meditation upon the crucifixion and the Eucharist" (Hollo 2012: 54). According to Hollo, the image of Derg Corra sitting on the tree, holding in his hands a vessel with a trout inside, and sharing apples, nuts and water with a blackbird on his shoulder and a stag at the foot of the tree, functions as a "verbal icon." Not only does this vivid *ekphrasis* feature relevant Irish motifs related to the concepts of the Otherworld and esoteric knowledge (e.g. trout and nuts as transmitters of the *imbas*; or apples as the fruit of the Otherworld), but it also has strong iconographic and theological associations with the Tree of the Cross and the sacrament of Communion. As Hollo (2012: 55–6) puts it,

> this shared consumption is obviously reminiscent of the fraction, distribution and consumption of the body of Christ (the host, here the apple and nuts). The apparent slip, in saying that all drink together when clearly only the man has done so, is readily explicable in a eucharistic context.

In the description of Derg Corra who is sharing meal with the three animals, the mystic Eucharistic bread is substituted by apples and nuts — otherworldly fruit of Irish tradition, while the Eucharistic wine in the chalice is represented by a trout swimming in a bronze vessel. The interpretation of Hollo seems even more plausible if we consider the episode with the feeding of the multitude mentioned in all four canonical Gospels. The miracle of Jesus when he fed five thousand people with five loaves and two fish (Matt 14:13–21; Mk 6:31–44; Lk 9:10–17; John 6:5–15) is a foreshadowing of the abundance of the Eucharist. Bread and fish in this episode prefigure bread and wine of the Communion. A similar substitution of Eucharistic elements is found in 'Finn and the Man in the Tree' where we have fruit and fish in a vessel. Hollo does not discuss the symbolism of the trout in a vessel as such, although it seems to me that the parallelism between Derg Corra's vessel and the chalice with the blood of Christ becomes even more prominent if we consider that fish is an iconographical symbol of Christ

himself.[137] Another interesting detail about Derg Corra is that he is capable of shape-shifting.[138] As the story tells us, "he used to go about on shanks of deer." This ability places Derg Corra among other liminal figures and shape-shifters known in Irish tradition, like Túan mac Cairill, who reincarnated in stag and salmon, or Fintan mac Bóchra. However, "another common medieval trope was that of the deer as an allegory of Christ" (Hollo 2012: 57). The Christological value of a stag makes Derg Corra a Christ-like figure, while the tree, on top of which he is sitting, alludes to the Cross, and the whole episode, therefore, could be read, as a theophany.

The comprehensive iconographical analysis of the episode with Derg Corra helps us to better understand the possible theological aspect of the salmon in *TM*. Since the River is suggestive of the sacrament of baptism, the salmon in its waters might represent *ichthus*, Christ (as the trout does in the Eucharistic interpretation of the 'Finn and the Man in the Tree'). The intimate association of baptism through water with the image of Christ *Ichthus* is sealed in the famous aphorism by Tertullian known from his treatise *De Baptismo* (1.3.): *sed nos pisciculi secundum ἰχθυν nostrum Iesum Christum in aqua nascimur, nec aliter quam in aqua permanendo salvi sumus*, "but we, being little fishes, as Jesus Christ is our great Fish, begin our life in the water, and only while we abide in the water are we safe and sound." The catching of the fish and putting on of its glowing skin might be associated with the light of God descending upon the faithful and the purification which comes along with the baptism. Interestingly, this passage from *TM* can well represent the literalisation of the words of Paul in his Epistle to the Galatians: *quicumque enim in Christo baptizati estis Christum induistis*, 'for as many of you as have been baptised into Christ have put on Christ' (Gal 3:27); the Latin verb *induo* meaning 'to put on dress or ornament; to clothe or cover'. Interestingly, the metaphor of God's grace as a shining mantle is used by Keating in 'Three Shafts of Death': *an croidhe ionnraic bios ar n-a óirneadh **do thlacht taidhleach** grádha Dé*, 'the honest heart that is ordained for the shining garment of God's love' (Atkinson 1890: 41). Keating, therefore, also uses the metaphor of divine favour as a shining gown which

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[137] The image of a trout in a vessel might remind us of the hermit's statement to Perceval in *Le Conte del Graal* that the Grail does not contain "pike or lamprey or salmon." This characteristic of the Grail resulted in controversial scholarly polemics, as certain apologists of the Eucharistic interpretation of the Grail's origins (e.g. Bruce, Frappier) pointed in this context to the symbolism of Christ as *ichthus* stressing that the Grail might be interpreted as a vessel for fish in this vein (Carey 2007: 265–6). John Carey, however, disagrees with this exegesis on the basis that it is specifically emphasised that the Grail *does not* contain any sort of fish. Therefore, *pace* Carey, the Grail might have originally been a platter for serving fish which Chrétien de Troyes spiritualised by replacing the fish with the host (ibid.: 267).

[138] Fomin (2018: 81), however, argues that the word *celtair* 'cover, hood' used in the description of Derg Corra might designate not as much his physical transformation in terms of shape-shifting, but rather a sort of camouflage which conceals him from the eyes of Finn.

covers a righteous person. We can speculate that probably a simile of that kind was also in the mind of our compiler. Dressing himself in salmon skin, Eógan, on the one hand, in the words of St Paul, "puts on Christ", but on the other hand, he metaphorically "shape-shifts", almost like Derg Corra who used to become a deer, and, therefore, becomes Christ-like himself. This again returns us to the statement that both Eógan's face and garment started shining — this passage alluding to the Transfiguration of Christ. For Christ, his transformation serves as a revelatory theophany, while for Eógan, the shining reveals his kingly nature.

Therefore, like in the story of Derg Corra, the salmon episode in *TM* represents, on the one hand, a depository of native *topoi* associated with *imbas*, but, on the other hand, is rich in Christological imagery and bears an important theological significance. Eógan Taídlech, whose *floruit* is dated to pagan times, is justified by the medieval architect of the tale through the prefiguration of baptism. This episode includes the ruler from a pagan past in an ecclesiastical system of values and makes him more worthy for the Christian present. This attempt on behalf of the author to "baptise" the character of his tale serves as a metatextual parallel for literary accounts concerning the baptism of pagan heroes by St Patrick, as known, for example, from *Acallam na Senórach*. Not only does this narrative depict the baptism of Caoilte and his companions, necessary for their interaction with the saint, but it also portrays Finn as a "proto-Christian" of pagan times before the advent of Christianity in Ireland:

> This fixed point, which is the second way in which the text is presented as the central text of the Finn Cycle, is the encounter of the *fían* with the Christian faith. *AS* is the first large-scale 'writing-up' of this theme; the text developed a topos found in some twelfth-century poetry and established a pattern that is replicated (Parsons 2012: 83).

This focus on the baptism in the *Acallam* is symptomatic of the twelfth-century ecclesiastical reform[139] one of the main trends of which was an acute attention to sacraments, especially to Baptism and Eucharist (Flanagan 2010: 208–9). The theme of baptism is, in fact, pivotal to the *Acallam* in general (Ní Mhaonaigh 2006a: 152). The authorial concern with baptism is also expressed at the end of *TM*, when Ailill Aulomm,

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[139] Irish ecclesiastical reform was a part of a bigger movement, of intellectual and spiritual renewal accompanied by institutional reform which was taking place at that time throughout the whole Catholic Church (Constable 1996). These developments include the papal reforms of Gregory VII, which radically revolutionised the church's organisation, establishing the hierarchical structure headed by the pope. The movement also focused on the ideals of clerical incorruptibility and the importance of the sacraments, in particular, baptism and communion. One of the main trends concerning the diminution of lay interference was the first step towards the later separation of church from the secular state. For the Irish dimension of the reform, see Bracken and Ó Riain-Raedel 2006.

Eógan's son, is baptised in "druidic streams", after which the name is conferred upon him (*ocus ro-baisded a srothaib druídechta 7 tucad Ailill fair*). Although the rivers are called 'druidic', presumably, to maintain the tale's heathen *mise-en-scene* of the second century AD, the use of the verb *baistid*, a Latin ecclesiastical borrowing, along with the fact that the name is conferred on Ailill, as during a proper Christian baptism, looks like an intended anachronism on behalf of the author. If, on the basis of the external evidence, we ascribe the composition of *TM* to the middle of the twelfth century, these allusions towards baptism might be explained by the influence of the Church reform, with its optimism towards the salvation of many through this sacrament. Because of the plot time, the author obviously could not introduce into the tale a cleric, who would baptise Eógan as St Patrick baptised the Fenian warriors. So, I believe, the author enthusiastically decided to baptise his protagonist himself.

This approach would be in line with the *Zeitgeist*, when, as Ó Corráin (1987: 287) stresses, "scholars of the eleventh and twelfth centuries were concerned with saving the pagan ancestors of some of the leading dynasties." Examining the tales *Aided Diarmata* and *Aided Muirchertaig meic Erca*, Jan Erik Rekdal (2011: 217) also mentions "a desperate wish" to save the king in the eleventh- and twelfth-century kings' tales, and suggests that their violent three-fold deaths are meant to purge and rehabilitate the rulers portraying them "to a certain extent, resembling royal martyrs" (ibid.: 219). As he points out in one place, unfortunately, without expanding this thought, "I will suggest that the reason why this death could turn into some form of purgation resulted from its connotations with the death of Christ, the piercing and the drink (thirst) on the cross" (ibid.: 229).

Conchobar was rehabilitated at the time of his death in a similar way. The short account relating the circumstances of Conchobar's death is preserved in RIA MS 23 N 10. After losing Mess Gegra's brain through his rage, the king of Ulster dies and goes straight to Heaven (*hi flait[h] nimea*) as the first pagan, "because the blood which he had shed was a baptism for him and because he had believed in Christ" (*fobit[h] robad bat[h]ais dó ind fuil donescmacht 7 rocreit é do Christ*) (Corthals 1989: 42). As Johan Corthals (1989: 52–3) explains this episode,

> this is an interesting case of *lavacrum sanguinis* 'baptism by blood' as it was accepted in early Christianity at least since Tertullian's treatise on baptism (*De baptismo* 16). It functioned not only as a second baptism for those martyrs who had forfeited the first by sinning, but also as a substitute for the not-yet-accepted baptism for martyred catechumens.

Perhaps, the wish to save the pagan king posthumously also inspired our compiler, when he decided to use the subtle allusion to the Transfiguration/ Baptism scene, a powerful image of the future salvation, while shaping the salmon episode in *TM*. When Eógan starts shining, he is transformed into Christ, echoing the words of Paul: *nam quos praescivit et praedestinavit conformes fieri imaginis Filii eius ut sit ipse primogenitus in multis fratribus*, 'For whom he foreknew, he also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of his Son: that he might be the Firstborn amongst many brethren' (Rom 8:29).

Twelfth century was the époque which re-considered and emphasised the images of Conchobar, wise judge Morann, Art mac Cuind and Cormac mac Airt as righteous heathens and proto-Christians, and it seems to me that the image of Eógan in *TM* might have been partly informed by this agenda too. An important theoretical framework for this twelfth-century re-evaluation of the Irish pagan rulers was provided by the statement of St Paul in Rom 2:14: *cum enim gentes quae legem non habent naturaliter quae legis sunt faciunt eiusmodi legem non habentes ipsi sibi sunt lex*, 'For when the Gentiles, who have not the law, do by nature those things that are of the law; these, having not the law, are a law to themselves'. The Irish took the Pauline notion of the natural law, *recht aicnid*, enthusiastically. This concept gave them the full right to portray their pre-Christian kings as Biblical patriarchs. The former also lived before the advent of Christianity but were guided to righteousness by the virtue of following the natural law, "that knowledge of the good which is available to humanity through innate grace (the *bonum naturale*)" (Carey 1990a: 9).

The idea of the Christian law in pre-Christian Ireland is explicitly expressed in the colophon appended to *Scél na Fír Flatha* which I have already mentioned above: *Aingil immorro dos-ficed da chobair, ar is **firindi aignidh** dia lentais, air is timna Rechta rofoghnamh doibh* (Stokes 1891: 202). Donnchadh Ó Corráin (1987: 293) translates this passage as follows: 'Moreover, angels would come to help them because they followed **the truth of nature** and it is the rule of the [Mosaic] law that served them [as law].' In this context, it seems to me particularly significant that Eógan's invention of a spade is called in our text *scrúdan aicenta*, 'natural thought', adj. *aicenta/ aicnetae* 'natural' deriving from *aicned*, 'nature, natural law'. It is probably also noteworthy that the inferior margin of the folio which contains *TM* (cols. 341–2) features a quatrain about Fíthal mac Fachtna who was particularly good at judgments on the basis of his special gift of *recht aicnid*. This marginal poem subtly resonates with the main body of the text

and was probably copied in this place because of the connection made in *TM* between the king and the natural law.[140] The mention of Eógan's *scrúdan aicenta* might be another attempt to portray him as a virtuous gentile in accordance with the words of Paul, and therefore, give him hope for salvation. Interestingly, if we accept the hypothesis that the portrayal of Eógan in the beginning of *TM* echoes the story of Abraham, one might also remember that in the eighth-century Irish *Bibelwerk*, Abraham figures (along with Enoch and Noah) as one of the three recipients of divinely inspired natural law (McNamara 1987b: 94).

2.2.3. Hagiographic Motifs

I hope to have shown that *TM* represents a skilful mingling of pre-Christian motifs and Christian ideals which harmoniously interflow, albeit with tonal shifts. In order to finish this chapter devoted to the possible influence of Christian learning on the compilation, I suggest looking at the tale through the lens of hagiography. An interesting comparative analysis of this kind was carried out by Amy C. Eichhorn-Mulligan, when she addressed the figure of Niall Noígillach from the point of view of his possible hagiographical predecessors. She discovered that the traits of Niall in *Echtra Mac nEchach Mugmedóin* in many ways echo those of Christian saints and of Christ himself. The main premise for Eichhorn-Mulligan's conclusion is the depiction of a hideous hag in which explicit physical symptoms of leprosy could have been easily recognised by the medieval audience (Eichhorn-Mulligan 2006: 1035–7). In this context, the transformation of a grotesque body affected by the disease into a perfect shape of a beautiful woman reminds us of the miracles performed by Christ in his ability to heal leprosy (e.g. Luke 17: 11–4; Matt 8: 1–3):

> Given the prominence of a leper's transformation in other contexts, most notably the hagiographical, Sovereignty's transformation in *Echtra mac nEchach* upon the king-to-be's touch evokes healing holy figures and saints and raises the stakes by featuring an ancient, revered, heroic king whose experience links him to Ireland's own miracle-enacting saints (Eichhorn-Mulligan 2006: 1019).

On the other hand, the image of a saint who is brave enough to approach the lepers and take care of them as a way of *imitatio Christi* is well-documented in Saints' Lives. Eichhorn-Mulligan provides Irish examples of St Mochutu (ibid.: 1042–3), St Brigid (ibid.: 1047–8) and other saints who healed the lepers in Ireland and sometimes were tested by Christ himself in disguise of a leper (ibid.: 1048–51). She also instances a legend about Emperor Constantine whose leprosy was healed by the blessed waters of

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[140] I discuss this stanza and provide its edition in Chapter 3.3.

baptism and by his acceptance of the Christian faith (notably, in the episodes from the Gospels mentioned above, Christ commands the cleansed lepers to go to the priest: the renewal of a physical body is inseparable from moral righteousness and new spiritual life). As Eichhorn-Mulligan comments on the Constantine legend (ibid.: 1046),

> this illuminating account situates the healing of the pagan, leprous body as an origin point for a divinely ordained, specifically Christian rule. The Irish account similarly associates the founding of a new dynasty with the miraculous cure of a leprous body.

Thus, *Echtra mac nEchach Mugmedóin* functions as a kind of secular hagiography and shows Niall, the eponymous ancestor of the Uí Néill as a miracle-worker comparable to the greatest saints. The theoretical framework used by Eichhorn-Mulligan demonstrates how by situating a tale in an appropriate Christian context, we can enhance our understanding of the material and put ourselves closer to the position of contemporary readers and listeners of the tale.

Let us now return to the salmon episode and see if there is any *comparanda* in hagiographical accounts. While I am unaware of any other secular tale in which the protagonist would suddenly start shining, Lives of Saints abound in accounts of divine light surrounding the saint. As Plummer (1910a: cxxxvii–cxxxviii)) has noted, many of the Irish saints are largely associated with sun, sunshine and solar miracles. He mentions this motif amidst the others pre-Christian mythological patterns abundantly featured in Irish *vitae*. It seems to me, however, that this particular motif does not need to be attributed to pre-Christian mythology. As McCone (1990: 174) has pointed out, "the inventory of religions prone to fire imagery certainly includes Judaism and Christianity, the sacred scriptures of which abound in highly charged references to fire and its effects." Although sun worship was strictly forbidden in ancient Israel (cf. Deut 4:19; 17:3), the imagery associated with the sun is instructive for the life of Judaic and Christian faith. Biblical examples in this case are innumerable. The Psalmist declares, *quia sol et scutum Dominus Deus* (Ps 83:12);[141] and Jesus says *ego sum lux mundi* (John

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[141] The solar imagery is prominently featured particularly in Isaiah. Cf. Isaiah 2:5; 9:2; 49:6; 60:19; 60:20. The image of the God Father appearing as a ray of sun is also present in iconography. Cf., for instance, 'The Annunciation' (1425–6) by Fra Angelico (now in the Prado, Madrid) on which there is a ray of the sun coming from the sky into Mary's room.

8:12).[142] Hence, Christ is the light that eternally shines in darkness (John 1:5) illuminating the faithful (e.g. *et inluminabit tibi Christus* (Eph 5:14)).

In the Irish Saints' Lives, we often find images of divine light which suddenly appears in the darkness of a saint's cell. In the Latin Life of St Comgall, the rays of the sun break forth through the closed doors and the light fills the whole dwelling: …*radii solis foras erumpebant*, §15 (Plummer 1910b: 8); *vidit…claram lucem totum habitaculum implentem*, §19 (Plummer 1910b: 9–10). In the Life of Fintán, light is shining around the figure of a saint as an omen of his sanctity: *circa illum immensam lucem*, §16 (Plummer 1910b: 102). A saint's student who witnesses this miracle, however, is blinded by the divine light since his own soul is not yet purified of all sins, and the hagiographer relies here on the precedent of St Paul as related in Acts 9:9 ("for three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything"): *Vide quod Paulus apostolus nondum purgatus a viciis, cum vidisset lumen celeste, oculi eius cecati sunt* (ibid.). St Moling also experiences this supernatural shining after he spends three days and three nights fasting in solitude: *in predicta cellula sua tribus diebus et tribus noctibus ieiunavit … et erat … separatus solus in sua domuncula*, §3 (Plummer 1910b: 191). Thus, again, the presence of Christ as a divine ubiquitous light can be seen only by a saint whose soul is freed from any sin and rests in contemplation.

In the Third Book of the Life of St Colum Cille composed by Adomnán, there are a few episodes devoted to the miraculous shining surrounding the saint. The first apparition of the divine light happened when Columba was still a boy, as described in chapter II, *De radio luminoso super dormientis ipsius pueri faciem viso* 'Of the Ray of Light which was seen upon the boy's face as he lay asleep' (Fowler 1894: 130–1). Then, chapters XIX, XX and XXI are entirely devoted to the examples when great brilliancy was accompanying the saint. In chapter XIX, a brethren named Virgnous sees Columba in a church where golden light is descending upon the saint (*aurea lux, de summa caeli altitudine descendens, totum illud ecclesiae spatium replens*), with such a pureness of heaven (*caelestis claritas luminis*) that the brethren gets terrified because of this shining (*splendor*). Later on, Columba comforts a young may stressing, nevertheless, that be his eyes not fixed on the ground, he would be blinded by the 'priceless light' (*illa*

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[142] The theology of John the Evangelist is almost entirely based on the notion of light which Christ brings to the earth. Cf. John 1:3–9; 12:35–6; 12:46; 3:19–20. The same motif can be traced throughout his Book of Revelation: Rev 21:23; 22:5, etc. In iconography, Christ can also be represented as the sun with the rays of light surrounding His head. One of the most famous examples is, perhaps, a third-century mosaic in Mausoleum M discovered under Saint Peter's Basilica in Vatican which portrays Christ as *Sol Invictus*.

inaestimabili obcaecarentur tui luce visa oculi; cf. to the Life of Fintán above) (ibid.: 149–50). In chapter XX, the church is again filled with heavenly light when Columba is praying inside, as witnessed by brother Colgius (*vidit ecclesiam coelesti luce repleri*) (ibid.: 150). In the next chapter XXI, Columba's house is full of divine light because of the presence of a holy man (*beati viri illud hospitiolum coelestis splendore claritudinis erat repletum*) (ibid.: 151).[143]

According to James Bruce (2004: 142–3), there is a definite "connection between these outpourings of heavenly light, and the abundant presence of the grace of the eschatological Spirit in Columba's life." Indeed, while bathed in light, Columba experiences prophetic revelations, and learns secrets of the world and the Bible, which corresponds to the words of the Psalmist (119:130): "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple." That light shining around a righteous person is a sign of God's special favour was promised in Psalm 36:6: *et educet sicut lumen iustitiam tuam et iudicium tuum sicut meridiem*, "And he will bring forth thy justice as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday." We can say that, in general, light in the Old Testament is an element of the theophany (Mc Kenzie 1968: 898). Thus, Columba's life is accredited "by the glorious light of the presence of the Spirit of God" (Bruce 2004: 145). Therefore, we might surmise that the shining of Eógan could be interpreted as a divine light which descends upon the elect of God, this motif being particularly important in claiming power for the dynasty. This interpretation is especially worth considering if we remember that panegyric biographies of royal and heroic figures were often composed like secular hagiography.

The motif of the cloak and its transforming abilities might also be better understood in hagiographical context. The first example I would like to consider is an episode from the vernacular life of St Berach, *Betha Beraigh* (Plummer 1922a: 23–43). A large part of the Life is dedicated to the dispute over land between Berach and Diarmait, head poet and chief master of druidism (*primh-eicces ₇ ard-maigistir druidechta*). Eventually, the saint and the poet decide to arrange an assembly involving the kings of Bréifne and Tethba, Áedh Dubh son of Fergna and Áedh son of Brénnán, who are to decide between the two opponents (§61). Berach performs a series of miracles which both terrify and

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[143] I give here, of course, only a few randomly chosen instances of the divine radiance in Saints' Lives. Many examples from both the Bible and vernacular sources are addressed by Kim McCone (1990: 174–8). Other interesting Biblical and hagiographical parallels are mentioned by Kay Muhr in her discussion of the place-name *Gluaire*, 'purity, brightness', designating the notions of light and presence of God (Muhr 2011: 73–5).

impress the assembly. One of his miracles, interestingly, involves the mantle which changes the appearance of Áedh Dubh, and this episode is worth quoting in full detail:

Iarsin tainic álghus codalta d'Aedh Dubh mac Fergna, do rí Breifne. 'A Shamhtann, mo chenn it ucht, a chaillech, go n-dernar codludh'. Do raidh Samthann fri h-Aedh n-Dubh mac Ferccna: 'Eirigh go Berach, ⁊ cuinnigh fair do dhath do chlaochlódh'. Do-luidh dano Aedh go Berach, ⁊ ro raídh fris go n-dingnedh a oighréir, dia cáemhcloidhedh a dath. 'As tualaing Dia', ar Berach. 'Tarr, ⁊ tucc do chenn fam chocaill, ⁊ codail'. Do-ratt Aedh a chenn fo cochall Beraigh, ⁊ ro chodail; ⁊ ro fer cioth flechuid focettóir. Ocus tuargaibh Aodh a chenn on cochall amach, ⁊ is e laoch ro ba finne do laochaibh domain é. Is annsin ro raidh aoin-fer da muinntir fein fris: 'Dar lim as Aodh Fionn anosa antí rop Aodh Dubh o chíanaibh'. Ro raidh Berach: 'Bidh Aodh Finn a ainm, ⁊ ainm a shíl ⁊ a shemen ó so amach go t-tí an brath'. Conadh de-sin ainmnigter sliocht Aodha Finn o t-tad riogradh Oirthir Connacht (Plummer 1922a: 36–7).

Hereupon an intense drowsiness came over Aedh Dubh son of Fergna, the king of Breifne. 'O Samthann,' (said he, 'let me put) my head in thy bosom, O nun, that I may sleep.' Samthann said to Aedh: 'Go to Berach, and ask him to change thy complexion.' Aedh went then to Berach, and said to him that he would perform all his desire, if he would change his complexion. 'God is able (to do that),' said Berach, 'come and put thy head under my cowl, and sleep.' Aedh put his head under Berach's cowl, and slept; and a shower of rain fell forthwith; and Aedh drew his head forth from the cowl, and he was the fairest of the warriors of the world. Then said one of his household: 'Meseems he is Aedh Finn (the Fair) now, who was Aedh Dubh (the Black) a while ago.' Berach said: 'This shall be his name and the name of his seed till doom.' So it is from this is named the Slicht Aeda Finn (progeny of Aedh Finn), of whom are the royal family of East Connaught (Plummer 1922b: 35–6).

As we can see, in this episode, Áedh Dubh, the Black, goes under the protection of the saint, and his presumably disfigured or unattractive countenance is changed into the fairest one in the world. This change is especially significant for a king since one of the most frequently mentioned prerequisites for a royal candidate is absolute physical perfection (McManus 2009: 58). The king puts his face under the cloak of the saint (OI *cochall* meaning 'hooded cloak' or simply 'mantle', here doubtless referring to Berach's monastic habit)[144] and falls asleep. The mention of the rain which immediately starts is of paramount importance here as it might allude in the context of the king's transformation to the healing waters of baptism. It is possible to compare this passage with the legend of the Emperor Constantine discussed above. The emperor's leprosy is healed after he accepts the sacrament of baptism, thus also experiencing the shift from "black" to "white" and "fair", not only physically but also spiritually. Moreover, this fateful change of Áedh's complexion is forever sealed in his new name — Finn, which, on the one hand, alludes to the sacrament of baptism during which a catechumen gets a new name in faith, but on the other hand, embodies the essence of the metamorphosis of the king, same as the name Taídlech for Eógan. There are other similarities between

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[144] Magical and protective properties of a saint's *cochall* are also prominently featured in the Life of Mac Creiche who kills the monster by wrapping his *cochall* around him (Fomin 2010b: 201–2). In the legends of the conversion of the Aran islands and the island of Tory, the *cochall* of Colum Cille is spread over the land to subjugate the territory (ibid.: 205–6, 208).

Berach's miracle and the salmon episode. A cloak functions as an agent of magical transformation, causing a notable change in appearance; both metamorphoses are related to the concept of light and, probably, baptism; and the new name encapsulates the pivotal conversion: Áedh becomes Finn, the Fair, while Eógan becomes Taídlech, the Shining. This attention to names might also be symptomatic of the specific insular tradition of exegesis: in the Irish exegetical tradition, the interpretation of names was a recurrent theme, and in their fascination with names and genealogies, Irish theologians even tried to supply names for nameless characters in the Bible (Kelly 1976: 14; Kelly 1982: 561, 564).

In the hagiographical context, the safeguarding and transforming nature of Berach's cloak has parallels in Adomnán's *Vita Columbae*. The function of Colum Cille's cloak is scrutinised in the recent article by David Woods which is entirely devoted to the symbolism of clothing in the "protective role played by Columba over those who turn to him" (Woods 2015: 341). The author shows that the tradition of a saint's cloak with magical properties is in fact deeply embedded in both continental and insular hagiography (see footnotes 1 and 2 in his article for extensive bibliography). For instance, in his *Dialogi* (2.7.3.), Gregory the Great gives an account of a monk Placidus who was rescued from drowning in a lake. While being dragged from water, he declared that at that moment he saw his abbot's cloak being spread over his head (*super caput meum abbatis melotem videbam*). The episodes from *Vita Columbae* which Woods analyses concern, firstly, the mantle which the saint's mother saw in her prophetic dream when she was pregnant and, secondly, the spreading of Columba's shining cloak upon the troops of Oswald (*VC*, i.i.). The angelic vision experienced by the saint's mother is related at the beginning of the Third Book:

> *ANGELUS Domini in somnis genitrici venerabilis viri quadam nocte inter conceptum ejus et partum apparuit, eique quasi quoddam mirae pulchritudinis peplum adsistens detulit; in quo veluti universorum decorosi colores florum depicti videbantur; quodque post aliquod breve intervallum ejus de manibus reposcens abstulit; elevansque et expandens in aere dimisit vacuo. Illa vero de illo tristificata sublato, sic ad illum venerandi habitus virum, 'Cur a me,' ait, 'hoc laetificum tam cito abstrahis pallium?' Ille consequenter, 'Idcirco,' inquit, 'quia hoc sagum alicujus est tam magnifici honoris, apud te diutius retinere non poteris.' His dictis, supra memoratum peplum mulier paulatim a se elongari volando videbat, camporumque latitudinem in majus crescendo excedere, montesque et saltus majore sui mensura superare; vocemque hujuscemodi subsecutam audierat, 'Mulier noles tristificari, viro enim cui matrimoniali es juncta foedere talem filium editura es floridum, qui quasi unus prophetarum Dei inter ipsos connumerabitur, innumerabiliumque animarum dux ad coelestem a Deo patriam est praedestinatus.' In hac audita voce mulier expergiscitur* (Fowler 1894: 129–30).

An angel of the Lord appeared to the mother of the venerable man in a dream, one night between his conception and his birth; and standing there, gave her, as it seemed, a robe of marvellous beauty, in which there appeared embroidered splendid colours, as it were of all kinds of flowers. And after some little space, asking it back, he took it from her hands. And raising it, and spreading it out, he let it go in the empty air. Grieved by losing it, she spoke thus to that man of reverend aspect: 'Why do you so quickly take from me this joyous mantle?' Then he said: 'For the reason that this cloak is of very glorious honour, you will not be able to keep it longer with you.' After these words, the woman saw that robe gradually recede from her in flight, grow greater, and surpass the breadth of the plains, and excel in its greater measure the mountains and woods. And she heard the voice that followed, speaking thus: 'Woman, do not grieve, for you will bear to the man to whom you are joined by [the bond] of marriage a son, of such grace that he, as though one of the prophets of God, shall be counted in their number; and he has been predestined by God to be a leader of innumerable souls to the heavenly country.' While she heard this voice, the woman awoke (Anderson & Anderson 1961: 465–7).

This episode is interpreted differently in scholarly literature. As Michael Enright (2013: 39) argues, "this *peplum*, *sagum*, *pallium*, all terms used to describe it, is clearly a miraculous garment signifying authority as it spreads and grows greater." Enright advocates the idea that Colum Cille is represented as an Old Testament prophet, hence his garment symbolises the "splendid robe of God's prophet." He also notes, nevertheless, that "this prophet's mantle could also become symbolic of royal authority" (ibid.: 40). A slightly different view is proposed by James Bruce. In his opinion, "peplum is a term used generally to denote a wide upper garment, but is specifically used to refer to the splendid robe of state of the gods of human dignitaries; emperors or kings, and with this would denote majesty, dominion or rule" (Bruce 2004: 133).

The fact that Columba's vestment "may be seen to represent kingly rule" alludes first and foremost not to the mundane glory of earthly kings but to the Kingdom of God, while the spreading of the cloak signifies the active role of Colum Cille in spreading Christianity. Woods generally objects to both interpretations. He sees no reason why to project regal or prophetic symbolism to the cloak which is simply a part of a monk's habit. Thus, he considers this mantle, which obviously represents the saint himself, to symbolise his future monastic vocation: as the miraculous robe, he will be taken from his mother to take a religious vow. Nevertheless, Woods does not deny the regal connotations inherent to the imagery of a cloak in general. As he states, "the possession or transfer of clothing could also be used to symbolise the possession or transfer of authority following the examples of the prophets Elijah and Elisha" (cf. 1 Kings 19:19–20; 2 Kings 2:8–14) (Woods 2015: 341). Maxim Fomin, however, adheres to the interpretation of the cloak as a royal garment and sees the monastic cloak as a symbol of power in direct continuation with the mantles received by the Irish kings during their inauguration:

> The multi-coloured cloak symbolises here not only the *persona* of Columcille himself, but also embodies the territorial extent of his teaching. In the view of the author of the twelfth century Irish Life, the sway of Columcille's authority extended over Ireland and Scotland, and his authority obtained a divine status and divine sanction. Metonymically the cloak can be taken as the vestige of power enjoined by the saint (Fomin 2010b: 230).

I would suggest that, being a symbol of remarkable versatility, the cloak which Columba's mother sees in her dream is able to embrace all these meanings. As a descendant of Niall Noígillach, Columba was of royal descent, and later on, enjoyed power as an abbot of Iona, a dominant religious and political institution in the region for centuries. On the other hand, Adomnán pays much attention to Columba's prophecies and, therefore, the image of the Irish saint could have been partly informed by the *exempla* of the Old Testament prophets. The spreading of his cloak, therefore, might be seen as both spreading of the Christianity in purely spiritual sense and of Columba's *paruchia* in a more world-oriented interpretation.

The association of Columba's cloak with Joseph's coat of many colours is unanimously accepted by all scholars. As Woods (2015: 345) argues,

> as for the highly colourful nature of this cloak, this perhaps symbolized the favour that God was showing Columba's mother in bestowing such a son upon her the same way that Jacob gave a garment of many colours to his favourite son Joseph.

Enright (2013: 39) also notes that the cloak "reminds us of Joseph's famous cloak of many colours." The same angelic vision is mentioned in the twelfth-century vernacular Life of Colum Cille. The mother of the saint dreams that a great colourful cloak is given to her, which reaches from Innsi Mod to Caer na mBrocc, and there is not a single colour that is not on that cloak (*andar lea bratt mor do thabairt di co rocht o Indsib Mod co Caer na mBrocc ⁊ ni boí do dhathaib dath na boí and* (§18) (Herbert 1988: 225)). In the sixteenth-century *Betha Colaim Chille* by Manus O'Donnell, the mother of Columba receives a multi-coloured mantle in a dream as a symbolic prefigurement of her son:

> 45. .. *docondairc a mathair fein a n-aisling .i. dar lé fen **brat mor do tabairt di, ⁊ do bi d'fhad ⁊ do leithne 'sa m-brat go rainec ó iarthar Ereann co hoirther Alban, ⁊ nach raibe do dathaib an domain dath nach raibe and.** ET dar lé tainic oclach a n-edach taitnemhach da indsoigid ⁊ ruc an brat vaithe, ⁊ bá dubach issi de sin. Tainec an t-oclach cedna cuige arís ⁊ adubairt an comrad-sa ria: 'A ben maith,' ar se, 'ni rige a les bron na dubachas do beith ort, act as cora duid failte ⁊ subachas do denam, vair is é is fidhair ⁊ is esimlair don brat ut docondcais, go m-bera tusa mac ⁊ go mba lan Eri ⁊ Alpa dá clu ⁊ da scelaib.'* (O'Kelleher, Schoepperle 1918: 30, 32).

> 45. And his mother herself saw it in a dream. Here **seemed a great cloak was given her, and the length and the breadth of that cloak reached from the west of Erin to the east of Alba;**

and of the colours of the world was not one colour that was not thereon. And her seemed there came to her a youth in shining raiment, and took the cloak from her, and she was sorrowful threat. Then came the same youth to her again and said to her these words: 'Good woman,' saith he, 'thee behooveth not sorrow and grief, but rather beseemeth thee to be joyous and to make merry; for the cloak thou didst see is a prefigurement and sign that thou shalt bear a son, and that Erin and Alba shall be full of his fame and renown (ibid.: 31, 33).

In this late vernacular Life, the rainbow-coloured mantle symbolises Colum Cille and prefigures his authority. There is a certain semantic shift in the symbolism of spreading of the cloak: it does not allude to the future expansion of Christianity or to the apostolic mission of Columba but explicitly stands for the power and glory the saint is destined to enjoy. Eventually, the question is whether this colourful mantle owes much to the secular saga tradition with such literary precedents as royal mantles of Conaire and Suibhne, or to the Biblical and hagiographical tradition, also featuring various miraculous cloaks? As it was mentioned above, while tackling a particular motif, it is impossible to be sure whether it was inherited from a secular or an ecclesiastical tradition, or whether, due to significant correspondences, there are interdependent influences of both:

> A more subtle question still regards the line which the investigator draws between what may be described as acceptably "Christian" and what, in contradistinction, must be regarded as essentially pagan. The lines are often difficult to draw, and may change with time and locality, and especially with the view of the observer (Bruce 2004: 49).

Therefore, without attempting to discover the origins of this motif, it is possible to postulate that the episode with Eógan's mantle and his supernatural shining has parallels in both secular and ecclesiastical traditions. The latter perspective enriches the analysis of Eógan's transformation with important notions of sanctity and healing, baptism and new life, presence of the Holy Spirit and of God's special favour. Connotations of authority and power related to the cloak in the Bible and hagiographical literature remain constant.

2.2.4. Conclusions

We might conclude that the author combined a solidly pre-Christian setting of his tale with scattered reference-points towards Christian interpretation of that setting (the name *Antipater*, baptism of Ailill, allusion to Transfiguration). These subtle hints might suggest that the audience was probably expected to observe the story through the Christian lens, and to assess the events of the pagan past featured in the tale as part of a providential plan moving the world triumphantly towards the Christian present and future. As Ralph O'Connor (2013a: 277) stresses, one of the strategies underpinning the

compilation of chronologically pre-Christian tales and treatises was "the reconstruction of the heathen past as historical memory from a perspective informed by Christian salvation history." This definition could be applied to our tale as well. The compiler employs recognisable conventions of native secular literature and internalises Biblical allusions. The native literary *topoi* and Christian motifs are assiduously blended together so that the relevant elements of both traditions interact for the benefit of the composition the meaning of which operates on several levels. An important aspect which unites these semantic levels is the concept of authority. Allusions to the two greatest medieval authorities – ancient native learned tradition and the Bible – are to support the veracity of the related events. This approach was especially valuable for historical tales which were compiled as "propaganda medium whereby the political situation at any given time was legitimized by the provision of appropriate, historical precedents" (Moisl 1987: 269). This results in the high complexity of possible interpretations because of a broad spectrum of potential readings. In the case of *TM*, these clusters of signification comprise native saga motifs, Biblical textual models and hagiographic conventions in various proportions. The compiler skilfully employed selected elements to help him structure and deepen his portrayal of Eógan. The narrative elements borrowed from various sources cooperate to serve the same aim – to boost the prestige of a great king. In this regard, a legendary ruler is portrayed as wise as a *fili*, as worthy as an Old Testament patriarch, as glorious as Christ, as blessed as a saint.

2.3. Influence of the Irish Historical Doctrine

In the two previous parts of the literary analysis of *TM*, I tried to show that our tale, despite its brevity and relative aesthetic paucity, is built upon a wide range of motifs belonging to the native tradition, which are skilfully interlaced with Biblical allusions. Both native and Christian motifs pursue the same goal: they portray Eógan Taídlech as a legitimate ruler of the southern half of Ireland, named Leth Moga after him, and strengthen the position of the dynasty which bears his name. There is, however, a third important stratum of motifs and intertextual references, which seems to be employed for the same reason. A careful reader might have noticed that for a relatively short account *TM* contains a high percentage of explicit references to the Irish native origin-legend, the doctrine of which became crystallised in the eleventh-century treatise *Lebor Gabála Érenn* (*LG*). In this chapter I will examine the respective references, and will try to offer my explanation of why the author sought to use these motifs in a tale primarily concerned with the acquisition of kingship. The examination of the tale from this third perspective will complete the literary analysis of the compilation which, it seems, is based on three equally important learned traditions — native mythological tradition, Judaeo-Christian tradition, and Irish historical tradition epitomised in *LG*. Before we consider the influence of *LG* on our tale, a brief overview of Irish aetiological legends seems to be useful.

As part of Latin Christendom, the Irish felt the urge to include their national history into the global history of salvation and provide foundations for the history of their country on the example of Israel and Rome. As John Carey (1995c: 47–8) argues, "the full range of Biblical and classical learning available to scholars of the day is drawn upon to create a niche, and a significance, for Ireland in the wider world." Whatever native pre-Christian beliefs and origin-legends they had before, these were "to be harmonised with the model supplied by the Book of Genesis, as interpreted and embellished by the emerging discipline of Christian historiography" (Carey 1994: 3). This ambitious project was meant to accumulate as fully as possible the lore about the invasions and colonisations of Ireland and to locate these stories within a wider framework of Biblical and global history. Attempts were also made to connect the pedigree of the Irish families to the sons of Noah, progenitors of all nations, as envisaged in a world scheme by a first-century Romano-Jewish scholar Josephus Flavius. This doctrine was subsequently introduced into Latin-speaking circles by Jerome and disseminated by Isidore, who postulated that all European peoples are descendants of Iapheth son of

Noah (Scowcroft 1988: 13–4; Carey 1990b: 107; Jaski 2003: 6). Theoretical framework, within which the invention and hybridisation of the Irish origin-legend was carried on, was supplied by major Patristic works: Jerome's translation of the *Chronicon* of Eusebius, Orosius' *Historia adversum paganos*, and the medieval best-seller, particularly popular among the Irish scholars, Isidore's *Etymologiae*. Eventually, the history of Ireland was synthetised, with its central event — the invasion of Míl Espáine with his sons, from whom all the Irish claimed their descent.

If we try to trace back the development of the Milesian legend, we should start with Leinster genealogical poems, composed in the seventh century or earlier, which feature Míl of Spain as a mythological ancestor of the Irish (Ó Corráin 1985: 57, 63; Carey 1994: 9–10). The doctrine of the Milesian invasion from Spain, ultimately derived from the writings of Orosius and Isidore, was already known to the author of these poems. According to Donnchadh Ó Corráin, the starting point for the emergence of the Milesian legend might be after the year 650 AD when the 'Etymologies' of Isidore became widely known and popular in ecclesiastical schools. At the time when the doctrine of the origins of the Gaels was developing, "there was no single text or authoritative teaching but rather … there were many different and indeed dissident opinions amongst the schoolmen" (Ó Corráin 1985: 67).

The seventh century was a time of dynamic creative and intellectual activity in Ireland, when the native and imported concepts and ideas were synthetised prompting the evolution of the Irish learned culture. At this stage, connections with Spain seem to have been solid and important: not only the works of Isidore, but other writings as well were brought to Ireland from Spain and played a key role in shaping the world-view of the monastic *hommes de lettres* (Hillgarth 1984). The doctrine that the Gaels invaded Ireland from Spain apparently emerged in the same century, as a result of extensive cultural contacts between the two countries (Carey 2006: 149).

In the eighth century, the origins of the Gaels were linked with the legend of the creation of the Gaelic language, which is expressed in the grammatical tract *Auraicept na nÉces*. The eponymous ancestor of the Irish, Gaedel, is portrayed as a son of a Scythian scholar who went to Egypt from the Tower of Babel. Other versions of the origin-legend, which were later used in the compilation of *LG*, might have been contained in the now lost eighth-century manuscript *Cín Dromma Snechtai* (Carey 1994: 11). According to the version once contained in this manuscript, a fleet of the race

of Iafeth left Greece, then reached Egypt during the reign of Pharaoh, and after that sailed to Ireland. One of their leaders, Éber, married Scota, the daughter of Pharaoh, and brought her to Ireland (Jaski 2003: 35).

The oldest extant source of the Irish origin-legend is the ninth-century *Historia Brittonum* purportedly compiled by Nennius in the years 829–30. The tract features two versions of the Gaelic settlement in Ireland. In the first of them, Gaels came to Ireland from Spain, following the previous invasions by Partholomus and Nimeth. The second account portrays a nobleman from Scythia, residing in Egypt at the time of Exodus when the Israelites were crossing the Red Sea. Expelled from Egypt, the Scythian nobleman wandered with his people for forty-two years, before sailing to Spain and thence to Ireland. Ireland, in this case, clearly corresponds to *Terra Repromissionis* (Carey 1994: 6–7); while the legend seeks to parallel the ancestors of the Irish with the Hebrews and represents "double Exodus of the Israelites and the Gaedil" (Scowcroft 1987: 81). The ninth-century vernacular texts focused on the provenance of the Gaels are *Scél Tuáin meic Chairill*, which enlists the main invasions (Carey 1984), and the poem by Mael Muru *Can a mbunadus na nGoidel?* 'Whence is the Origin of the Gaels?' This poem employs the already mentioned motifs: Scythian origins, sojourn in Egypt, travelling to Spain, and finally, arrival to Ireland (Carey 1993: 4, Carey 1994: 14).

The end of the tenth and the beginning of the eleventh century saw the works of four major poets, who undertook an important task of synthetising the Irish aetiological legend: Eochaid ua Flainn (ob. 1004), Flann Mainistrech (ob. 1056), Tanaide Eólach (ob. ca 1075), and Gilla Coemáin, the author of the poem *Gáedel Glas ó tát Gáedil* 'Gaedel Glas, from whom are the Gaels' (fl. 1072) (Carey 1994: 18; Jaski 2003: 18; Carey 2006: 156; Smith 2013). The writings of these poets accumulate a large corpus of diverse materials on the origins of the Gaels, and lay foundation for the future *LG*. In the middle of the eleventh century (probably shortly after the year 1050), an unknown compiler brought together a collection of poems by these poets, and fit the verse into a prose framework — this is how *LG* was created (Carey 1993: 1, 5; Carey 1994: 22). For the first time, a single work covered the full range of the previously scattered versions of the imagined past. The first recension (A), compiled after the year 1072, is the closest one to the original; the original text was also substantially revisited, and its modified version resulted in the second recension (B), which considerably varies from the first one. Another version of the text is the *Míniugud* (M), 'Explanation', which survived in

the manuscripts as an appendix to recension B. The third recension (C) represents the fusion of the first and the second recensions, after both of them were expanded with additional material (Carey 1994: 22–3).[145] The core of the four main recensions took shape ca. 975–1075 (Jaski 2003: 2).

Therefore, the creation of *LG* — official historical doctrine universally accepted in the eleventh and twelfth centuries — took three or four centuries. Immediately after *LG* was compiled, it gained extreme popularity, was copied and revised. The immense influence of *LG* on other varieties of Irish *senchas* is difficult to overrate: "its doctrines served as foundation and backdrop for legend, historiography, poetry, and political thought" (Carey 1994: 2). The accounts of the origins of the Gaels were complex and sometimes contradicting; but this provided the overall scheme with the necessary versatility which allowed adopting it for various purposes by inserting "countless allusions to its doctrines in sagas, poems, chronicles, pedigrees, and place-name lore" (ibid.: 23).

Once the legendary ancestors of the Irish were successfully included in the world history of salvation, there appeared an important task to link them with the real Irish families and ruling dynasties. The treatise became the point of departure for "the whole genealogical record and the anchor in time and space of a vast web of kinship" (Ó Corráin 1985: 68). The descent from the legendary settlers served as a means of legitimisation for the ruling dynasties; no wonder that mentions of Míl and his sons are regularly featured in genealogical tracts and genealogical sections in secular tales and hagiography. Spain, Greece and Egypt are three places most frequently associated with the ancestors of the Gaels. In the recension B of *LG*, Míl goes from Scythia to Egypt and afterwards to Spain. Annalistic evidence, as well as *Chronicon Scotorum*, make Egypt the place of birth of Éber, son of Míl, and the poem *Ocht meic Golaim na ngáire* in recensions B and C similarly state that Éber and his brother Amairgen were born in Egypt (Jaski 2009: 65–6). The Egyptian location was aimed at linking the Gaels with the Israelites with whom they were brought into contact and from whom they subsequently received the Mosaic law even before settling in Ireland (Ó Corráin 1987: 288; Carey 2006: 149). The fourth version, as discussed above, portrays the forefather

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[145] See Jaski 2003: 1–6. In the introduction to his article, he discusses the main sources and manuscript witnesses for the Irish origin legend, its development, and the differences between its versions. Research bibliography is briefly summarised on p. 1, fn. 1, 2. Four recensions of *LG* appear in sixteen manuscripts used by Macalister for his edition (Scowcroft 1987: 84). All manuscript witnesses are also listed and discussed by Scowcroft (ibid.: 85–7).

of the Gaels as a Scythian, no doubt because of the association of Scythians with the Gaels through etymology — *Scythae/ Scotti* (Carey 1990b: 107; Carey 2006: 149).

The edition of *LG* was undertaken by R.A.S. Macalister, and, despite the ambitions that heralded this project, the text represented in the resulting volumes is misleading and difficult to work with. As John Carey (1993: 15) summarises,

> it cannot be denied that the book is a disappointment, particularly when viewed against the background of Macalister's own high expectations and sometimes overbearing self-confidence. Errors in transcription, expansion, and translation are sufficiently numerous that the text cannot be relied upon as the basis for any close analysis or argumentation; and Macalister's attempt to accommodate all of the branching divergences of the medieval versions within the framework of one edition resulted in a text remote in form and appearance from any single manuscript, whose presentation of the material can sometimes be deciphered only at the cost of prolonged effort and concentration.[146]

However, in the absence of a more reliable edition, I will refer to Macalister's work when it proves necessary to address the original source.[147] In order to assess the impact of the native origin-legend on our tale, which is itself an origin-legend of the Eóganachta, I will list all the references to the Irish historical doctrine in the order that they appear in the text, and will provide them with a short discussion.

2.3.1. Éber

The whole action of *TM* is set into motion because of the prophecy requested by king Éber from the druid. This prophecy urges Eógan to travel to Spain and specifies that the place he should find in Spain is *Sruth Ébir*, the Ebro River, lit. 'the river of Éber'. The prominence of the name Éber in *TM*, which I will discuss below, was particularly significant for the Eóganachta tale: as we know, the Eóganachta claimed descent from Éber Find mac Míled who came to Ireland with the other settlers from Spain and acquired kingship in the south.[148]

In all versions of the Irish origin-legend, regardless of what was the invaders' original place of provenance, they all ultimately come to Ireland from Spain. This is most likely explained by the influence of Isidore, who called Spain "the mother of peoples", *gentium mater Hispania*, in his *Historia de regibus Gothorum*. The theory of the

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[146] A detailed review of Macalister's edition is also given in Scowcroft 1987: 82–3.

[147] Cf. "Until a more serviceable edition appears, however, students of the tradition must still consult this one" (Scowcroft 1987: 83).

[148] See the genealogies of Clann Ébir and Síl Ébir, starting with Mug Nuadat, i.e. Eógan, and his sons Ailill Aulomm and Lugaid Lága, to which the Eóganachta belonged (Macalister 1956: 92–3; O'Brien 1976: 191, 192–3).

Spanish origins of the Gaels is found not only in *LG* and other vernacular writings. In the 1180s, English historian Ralph de Diceto wrote two extensive historical tracts, the *Ymagines historiarum* and the *Abbreviationes chronicorum*. For the *Ymagines*, Ralph drew on the treatise called *Historia Anglorum* of Henry of Huntingdon (ca. 1130), who, in his turn, based his discussion of the origins of the Irish on the Vatican recension of *Historia Brittonum* and on Bede's works. Both repeat that the Irish came from Spain (Jaski 2009: 55). Following Henry's account sometimes almost verbatim, Ralph de Diceto in his *Ymagines* adds the following passage:

> The Ebro (*Hyberus*) is a river in Spain (*Hyspania*) from which Ireland (*Hybernia*) is named, and the Irish (Jaski 2009: 56).

This, of course, was not his original theory. Both Jerome in *Commentarii in Isaiam* (XVIII.66.18–9) and Isidore in *Etymologiae* relate the word *Hibernia*, Latin name for Ireland, to *(H)iberia*, Latin name for the peninsula containing Spain and Portugal. In support of this etymology, Isidore repeats Orosius's words about the nearness of Ireland to Spain. The name of Spain is derived from the name of the river, Lat. *Iberus*, OI *Éber*. Understandably, Irish historians might have concluded that the name of their own country is also connected with the name of the Spanish river. In Isidore's words:

> IX.ii.109 *Hispani ab Ibero amne primum Iberi.*[149]

> IX.ii.109 The Spanish were first named Iberians, after the river Iberus (i.e. the Ebro) (Barney, Lewis, Beach and Berghof 2006: 198).

> XIII.xxi.31 *Iberus amnis, qui quondam totius Hispaniae nomen dedit.*

> XIII.xxi.31 The Iberus (i.e. the Ebro) is a river that once gave its name to all of Spain (ibid.: 282).

> XIV.vi.6 *Scotia idem et Hibernia proxima Brittaniae insula, spatio terrarum angustior, sed situ fecundior. Haec ab Africo in Boream porrigitur. Cuius partes priores Hiberiam et Cantabricum Oceanum intendunt, unde et Hibernia dicta…*

> XIV.vi.6 Ireland (Scotia), also known as Hibernia, is an island next to Britannia, narrower in its expanse of land but more fertile in its site. It extends from southwest to north. Its near parts stretch towards Iberia (Hiberia) and the Cantabrian Ocean (i.e. the Bay of Biscay), whence it is called Hibernia… (ibid.: 294).

The source for Isidore's statement about the geographical position of Ireland is Orosius who gives the following information about Ireland in his *Historiae adversum paganos* I.2.80–1:

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[149] For Latin quotations, I use the edition of Lindsay 1911. Since numbers of pages are omitted in this edition, I refer simply to the number of the Book, section and verse of Isidore's tract.

Hibernia insula inter Britanniam et Hispaniam sita longiore ab Africo in boream spatio porrigitur. huius partes priores intentae Cantabrico oceano Brigantiam Gallaeciae ciuitatem ab Africo sibi in circium occurrentem spatioso interuallo procul spectant, ab eo praecipue promunturio, ubi Scenae fluminis ostium est et Velabri Lucenique consistunt. haec propior Britanniae, spatio terrarum angustior, sed caeli solique temperie magis utilis, a Scottorum gentibus colitur.

Ireland, an island situated between Britain and Spain, is of greater length from south to north. Its nearer coasts, which border on the Cantabrian Ocean, look out over the broad expanse in a southwesterly direction toward far-off Brigantia, a city of Gallaecia, which lies opposite to it and which faces to the northwest. This city is most clearly visible from that promontory where the mouth of the Scena River is found and where the Velabri and the Luceni are settled. Ireland is quite close to Britain and is smaller in area. It is, however, richer on account of the favourable character of its climate and soil. It is inhabited by tribes of the Scotti.

Isidore etymologised Orosius' information: he is the first to derive the name *Hibernia* from *Hiberia* "on the basis of the geographical orientation of the former towards the latter" (Baumgarten 1984: 192–3).

Irish scholars took this etymology most vigorously. No wonder that a legendary ancestor was named nothing else than Éber. This Éber united in his figure all Isidorian etymologies and provided the lacking starting point from which the whole etymological chain could be derived. According to the legend, this forefather gave his name to *both* countries *and* the river. Because Éber so perfectly suited the native origin-legend almost entirely based on Isidorean etymology, his figure was multiplied. In various sources we meet Éber son of Ceithim, Éber son of Nél, Éber father of Nóenual, Éber Echrúad, Éber son of Glas, and Éber son of Míl.[150] As Jaski (2003: 17) resumes, "Éber's position is curious and problematic." Recension A of *LG* also mentions Éber Scot, who took kingship in Scythia: in this case we can see how the Irish and the Latin appellations for the Irish are fused together in one name.

This impressive etymological complex was stable and enduring, and over the course of time, it attracted new elements. In a later account, the fourteenth-century *Chronica gentis Scotorum* of John of Fordun, not only the countries and the Ebro were named after Éber, but also the Irish sea. In Fordun's account, Scots live in Spain under their kings Gaythelos (*Goídel Glas*), his son Hiber (*Éber*), and the latter's son Nonael (Nóenual). As John of Fordun writes, "they called the land Hibernia after that same king Hiber or rather after the Hiberic sea." As he explains, the sea between Ireland and Spain was named after Hiber in the first place ("because Hiber sailed so frequently after that to the island…the sea was called Hiberic"); and the Ebro "took its name from that very

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[150] See Jaski 2003: 18, 20–1, 37–9 for the discussion of these various characters.

king" and "gave the name Hiberia to the whole Spain" (Skene 1871: 16). Geoffrey Keating also supports this derivation, stating in his *Foras Feasa* that *Hibernia* comes from the Ebro or from Éber. As Jaski (2009: 59) notes,

> the connection between Iberia, Iberus/Ebro, Éber and Hibernia is quite early, judging from the eighth-century core of O'Mulconry's Glossary, where it is written *Eriu quasi Hebriu ab Hiberia, hoc est ab Hispania* ('Eriu (Ireland) similar to Hebriu from Iberia, that is from Spain'), in which *Hebriu* may be related to Éber, also the Irish rendering of the name Hebrew.[151]

Curiously, as an illustrative parallel to this etymology, Jaski quotes a passage from *Cóir Anmann*, in which "we read the story of Eógan Mór of Munster, who goes to Spain, which is ruled by Éber Mór son of Midna. Eógan marries his daughter and catches a magical salmon in the river Ebro" (ibid.). Jaski does not mention *TM*, although it is obvious that the account in *CA* is derived from our tale. In this manner, our legend could be seen as an illustration of the etymology which derives the names of Ireland and Spain from king Éber and the Ebro River.

Considering the bulk of information about a prototypical Spanish ancestor named Éber, the king of Spain in *TM* continues the line of different Ébers, forefathers of the Gaelic nation. This time, however, he is linked not with the rising of the whole nation but with the establishment of a particular dynasty. We must acknowledge that introducing the character named Éber in this particular context was a smart move on behalf of the promoters of the Eóganachta. This name, applied to both the forefather and the river, was closely associated with the roots of the Gaelic civilisation. By travelling to Spain, Eógan re-enacts the journey made by the Milesians in pre-historic times. He goes back to the place of birth of the Irish nation, and returns to Ireland following the same transmarine way as the Milesian kings, founders of human kingship on the island. He meets the king named Éber who represents the symbolic figure of the forefather and gets his "baptism" in the Ebro, the river which, on the one hand, flows from Paradise, but, on the other hand, which literally is a "source" of the Gaelic people, and which gave its name to both the Spanish and the Irish people. The name of king Éber represents a combination of aetiology and eponymy: not only do Irish people descend from Éber, but they are also named after him.

The main etymological components of the Irish origin-legend are present in our tale: there is a reference to Spain (known as *Hiberia*), its king Éber and the river of the same name. The juxtaposition of these names reminds us of the name for Hibernia, and

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[151] See also Scowcroft 1988: 19–21. Scowcroft is sure that the name Éber has been affected by the Biblical Heber and that Éber Scott, the first Scythian king, could be seen as "the Heber of the Irish."

allows us to mentally reconstruct the whole etymological chain. These appellations share a common root, and more precisely, derive from the name of a Spanish king. For the dynasty's prestige, it must have been important to stress that Eógan's rule is supported by king Éber, namesake of the forefather of the Irish nation. It seems there could be no better way to legitimise a dynasty than through the link with this 'reincarnation' of the first Éber, who invites Eógan to Spain, whence the root of the Irish nation and of the human kingship comes from. As Séamus Mac Mathúna (2013: 37) explains, the elements of *LG* were often used in the claims of kingship: "these myths and legends as presented underpin the legal rights and powers of the various dynasties of the Gael to their patrimony." The very word *gabál* which denotes the 'takings' of Ireland signifies the exercise of sovereignty and the performance of kingship. In the list of kings found in the final section of *LG*, as well as in genealogies elsewhere, Éber son of Míl and brother of Éremón, is purported to be the ancestor of the Eóganachta who respectively belong to Síl Ébir. In fact, we might see the primary function of *LG* as a depository of genealogies, with issuing claims of legitimacy for ruling dynasties:

> The most important aspect of the whole scheme [i.e. *LG*] must always have been the genealogical system which it enshrined, an elaborate framework which derived all the dynasties of Ireland from the first Gaelic invaders, and in the process projected the political agenda of the seventh or eighth or ninth century back into the exemplary past (Carey 1994: 10).

As we know, the southern dynasties were descendants of Éber son of Míl, while the northerners were believed to belong to Síl Éremóin. The idea of kingship alternating between the descendants of Éber and Éremón appeared roughly in the eighth century when this concept was introduced into a political agenda after the Uí Néill and the Eóganachta became rivals following the rule of Cathal mac Finguine (*ob*. 742) (Carey 1989–90: 64, fn. 51). The partition of Ireland into southern and northern halves between Conn and Eógan, which is prophesied in *TM*, echoes the division by Éremón and Éber in *LG* which in a chronological scheme happened before the reign of the two adversaries (Macalister 1956: 95).[152] Thus, Eógan appears as "new Éber", and Conn as "new Éremón", this analogy fitting comfortably in the logic of exegesis based on prefigurations and prototypes. In this light, the official opinion that the name Éber was

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[152] According to another branch of tradition, based on the threefold ancestry modelled upon the three sons of Noah, there were three lords of Ireland, Conn, Eógan and Araide who gave their names to Leth Cuinn (descendants of Éremón), Eógahanchta of Leth Moga (descendants of Éber), and Dál nAraidi (descendants of Ír, the third son of Míl) (Scowcroft 1988: 23).

the eponym of Hibernia "may be a vestige of Munster claims to overall hegemony" (McCone 1990: 241).

2.3.2. Cesair and Dún na mBarc

When king Éber asks about the provenance of his daughter's future husband, the druid replies that he will be a nobleman from the island of Cesair, *inis Cesrach*. Later on, this reference is paired with another allusion to Cesair's invasion: Eógan departs to Spain from Dún na mBarc, the place where, according to *LG*, the company of Cesair landed. Cesair was the granddaughter of Noah, and the leader of the first antediluvian invasion of Ireland. She came in Ireland with fifty maidens and three men and their ships landed in Dún na mBarc, in Corcu Duibne in Munster. In the poems by Eochaid ua Flainn, which ultimately laid foundation for *LG*, this figure is already named Cesair, and her pedigree conforms to the Biblical model (Carey 1993: 5; Carey 1994: 21).

In regard to the name of this heroine, the tradition fluctuates. First of all, the prototype of Cesair legend might go back to the eighth-century *Cín Dromma Snechtai*. In it, a woman named Banba came to Ireland with her companions before the Flood; it is from her that Ireland received its name Banba (Carey 1987: 39; Carey 1994: 11). There is also evidence that the original name of the leader of the settlement was Berba. Similarly, she came with one hundred fifty women and three men, and the company was divided between the three female leaders in a place called Commar na Trí nUisce ('Meeting of the Three Waters'). Based on the name Berba, which corresponds to the Barrow river, John Carey observes that "the three groups into which these women are divided correspond to — and perhaps in fact personify — three rivers" (Carey 2004: 14).[153] Interestingly, *Chronicon Scottorum* mentions the three names of the first female invader as interchangeable: *Heriu no Berba no Cesair* (Carey 1987: 39). Thus, in earlier versions which lacked any Biblical context, the girl was named Berba, or Banba, or Ériu, the last two names being well-known appellations for Ireland.

The tale of Cesair may originally have been just a local legend, about the woman who personifies the land or one of its rivers. Later on, however, it was reconsidered as part of a broader Christian schema. Cesair received a Biblical pedigree, and her legend was included in the invasion-sequence as an artificial and secondary development (Carey 1987: 43–4, 46). The name Cesair was probably invented *ad hoc* as, according to the

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[153] Indeed, the Barrow (Irish: An Bhearú) is one of the so-called Three Sisters; the other two being the River Suir and the River Nore.

official canon of *LG*, the names Banba and Ériu were already assigned to the queens of the Túatha Dé Danann. If the tradition that Cesair overtook was originally associated with a figure of a local goddess, this would explain why the text of the third recension in the Book of Lecan regularly glosses Cesair *.i. Ériu* (Carey 1987: 40). The paraphrase 'island of Cesair' in our text is also paralleled with another paraphrastic name for Ireland which immediately follows *inis Cesrach — inis mac Miled*, 'the island of the sons of Mil'. Both appellations for Ireland in our text unambiguously refer to *LG*: the first one alluding to the first invasion, and the second one — to the last one, respectively.

Dún na mBarc is another reference to Cesair in our text. Dún na mBarc, port of Cesair's arrival, is a point of Eogan's departure. Thus, the circle of history was completed and started again, showing that Eogan's journey is a re-enactment of the immemorial past. On the other hand, the tale mentions various places in the southern half of Ireland, where Eógan is destined to rule (another vehicle for this claim will be the mention of Eógan's foster-brothers and of his three forts as I will discuss later). By doing so, the narrative connects certain areas with the protagonist, spreading his authority over a particular territory. We might surmise that this was an effective stratagem in a culture traditionally preoccupied with place-names. Such schemes were actively employed, for instance, in hagiography, where the cult of the saint was to be linked with certain areas. Speaking about the places visited by St Patrick, Doherty (1991: 55–6) argues that "such an approach was particularly attractive since there already existed a native oral and later vernacular written literature about places." Indeed, the place-name material seems to be generally focused on setting the background for Eógan's actions. This tendency will be somehow hyperbolised in *CML*, numerous episodes of which represent accounts fashioned in the manner of *dinnshenchas*.

2.3.3. Three Sons of the Druid

I have previously mentioned that the three sons of the druid, Fáthe, Fis and Fírinne conform to the idea that the Otherworld is the source for knowledge and prophecy, and that these three qualities, taken as allegories, could represent the emanations of the druid. At the same time, they constitute absolute essentials for the acquisition of kingship which also must be sanctioned by the blessing of the Otherworld. Interestingly, if we consider these qualities in the Biblical context, one might remember the first

Epistle of St Paul to Corinthians (1Cor: 12) in which the apostle discusses the gifts of the Holy Spirit:

> *8 alii quidem per Spiritum datur sermo sapientiae alii autem sermo scientiae secundum eundem Spiritum…10 alii operatio virtutum alii prophetatio.*
>
> To one indeed, by the Spirit, is given the word of wisdom: and to another, the word of knowledge, according to the same Spirit: … To another the working of miracles: to another, prophecy.

Thus, *prophetatio* and *scientia*, Irish *fáthe* and *fis*, are spiritual gifts given to the faithful. However, we also have a triplet of druids in *LG*, and their names surprisingly echo the names of the young men in *TM*. Among the retinue of king Partholón, we see

> *Trī druid Parthalōin na port, Fiss is Eolas is Fochmarc*;
> The three druids of Partholón of the harbours, Fiss, Eolas, Fochmarc (Macalister 1937: 56–7).

The names of these druids, Knowledge, Information, Inquiry, resonate with the names of the three messengers in *TM*, and, like in our tale, these appellations might be taken as allegories or as a metatextual commentary on the respective functions of Partholón's druids. This parallel shows that the names of the young men are modelled in the native fashion, another example of which is found in the names of Partholón's companions.

2.3.4. Eight Foster-Brothers

When Eógan is ready to depart to Spain, the three visitors ask him who will go on a journey with him.

> 'How many will come?' said they.
>
> 'Only myself and my five foster-brothers: Ut, Óenara and Fiacha Suighthi, son of Feidlimid Rechtaid; and Aiglend, son of the king of Ossory, my other foster-brother; then Magur, son of the king of the southern part of Ireland, from whom Glend Maghair [is called] nowadays; and Gaiscedach, son of the king of western Munster, my other foster-brother; and Tigernach, son of the king of Connacht, another foster-brother of mine; and Mosad, my servant, from whom Mag Mosaid [is called].'

The function of this episode is unambiguous: in saga narratives, "it was common to enhance the status of great kings in legendary history by representing them as surrounded by a circle of renowned champions" (O'Connor 2013a: 193). This passage, however, poses a certain dilemma regarding the number of the participants of the expedition. First, Eógan states that he wants to invite his five foster-brothers, this being followed by a list of eight companions. These are: Ut, Óenara, Fiacha Suigthi, Aiglend, Magur, Gaiscedach, Tigernach, and Mosad. This numerical contradiction is by no means unique to *TM*. As O'Connor (2013a: 45) puts it,

For example, in one of the episodes of *Togail Bruidne Da Derga*, the narrator mentions seven Maine, sons of Medb and Ailill, but then lists eight names. Then, the number of survivors in the battle is said to be a group of five, but only three names are mentioned thereafter (ibid.: 46). Elsewhere, O'Connor classifies these narrative inconsistencies in *TBDD* as "trivial errors and oversights." Among other numerical discrepancies, he lists the number of pupils in Ingcél's eye, the number of doors into the Hostel, the number of Ingcél's brothers, and the number of survivors of the final battle (O'Connor 2013b: 8–13). As he concludes, "all these errors are trivial, concerning matters of detail which do not affect the consistency of the saga's plot and structure" (O'Connor 2013b: 13).

In Eógan's case, however, it seems to me that there can be a reason behind such counting. For the lack of any evidence, the following discussion is speculative but is worth being considered nevertheless. Eógan mentions eight persons, which makes with himself a group of nine. However, we can notice that the last person mentioned, Mosad, is not Eógan's foster-brother but his *gilla*, servant. Thus, if we exclude Mosad, we will have seven foster brothers and Eógan who form an octad of foster-brothers. From the seven brothers named, five are presented in detail, their patronym or the place of provenance being expressed (Fiacha Suigthi, Aiglend, Magur, Gaiscedach, Tigernach) while the first two names are just mentioned without any information (Ut and Óenara). Could it be that the compiler added these two names *ad hoc*, simply to increase the number of Eógan's companions to eight? The reason for his confusion might be the phrase which almost immediately follows the list of foster-brothers. When the crew departs from Dún na mBarc, the text says that 'nine young men', *a nónbar maccóem* (§5.2 in my edition), were in the ship.[154] I presume that the version with five foster-brothers was the original one, as Eógan, five foster-brothers and three sons of the druid would give us exactly nine young men. Probably, at some point, the reference to nine young men was taken as meaning Eógan and his retinue, without counting the three messengers, and, therefore, other names were added to the list of foster-brothers in order to make a number of eight.

In the context of *LG*, an octad is an important archetype of a group of people setting out on an overseas journey to unknown lands. This notion ultimately goes back to the

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[154] Interestingly, when the company sets off on a journey in *Immram Brain*, "each one of the fosterbrothers was placed in charge of a group of nine" (Mac Mathúna 1985: 51).

eighth-century commentary on Matthew preserved in Würzburg, where the number eight signifies people in the Ark. The Noachic octad rapidly spread in the Irish learned tradition and received special treatment in the *Sex Aetates Mundi*, *Saltair na Rann*, and the copy of *Togail Troí* preserved in RIA MS Stowe D.iv.2. *LG* itself "goes on to describe the three lineages founded by the octad, their division of the world into three parts, and (in μ) the nations descended from them" (Scowcroft 1988: 22). As Scowcroft expands this idea, "the Milesian octad can thus be analysed along Noachic lines, e.g. as Míl and his seven sons or eight sons with Míl having stayed in Spain" (ibid.: 24). In one of the versions of *LG*, Tuátha Dé Danann also followed Bethach mac Iarbonéoil and seven subsidiary leaders; in other versions, the tribe had eight chief artificers, *prímelathnaig*. The archetype is therefore composed of either a chieftain and seven subordinates or simply eight chieftains (ibid.: 24). We can notice the same pattern in Eógan's expedition if we take him as the main chieftain accompanied by his seven foster-brothers. As Scowcroft (1988: 24–5) resumes,

> the notion of the octad that takes ship to populate an empty land had become separate in the authors' minds from its source in the Noah story and was susceptible, therefore, to various interpretations which could even contradict each other.

This motif, like many others, was borrowed into *LG* from the Bible and then disconnected from its source and modified according to the aims of compilers. Like the wanderings of the Gaels based on the Exodus of the Israelites, or the invasions of Ireland based on post-diluvian population of the earth in medieval Christian historiography, the "octad on a ship" ultimately represents a Biblical story-pattern with variations.

The provenance of foster-brothers can be another key to interpretation of this episode. I was not able to find any genealogical information about Ut and Óenara, but other foster-brothers and the places they are associated with are transparent. Fiacha Suigthi, son of Fedlimid Rechtaid, was an ancestor of Déisi Muman (Co. Waterford) (LL fol. 348b). Osraige, the realm of Aiglend, was a medieval Irish kingdom comprising most of present-day Co. Kilkenny and western Co. Laois. Gleann Maghair, named after Magur, is Glenmire in Co. Cork. In the words of Eógan himself, Gaiscedach was a ruler of Iarmuman, West Munster, the territory which in historical reality was under the control of the Eóganachta Locha Léin, with the center in Killarney, Co. Kerry. Tigernach is said to be a prince in Connacht. Mag Mosaid, named after Eógan's *gilla*, is situated between Eile and Cashel in Co. Tipperary. Eógan's foster-brothers hail from different parts of the south of Ireland which cover modern counties Cork, Tipperary, Kerry, Kilkenny,

Laois and Waterford. This episode shows that Eógan's familial relationships already encompass the territories which he will claim for himself as the king of Leth Moga. This claim will be explicitly repeated at the end of the tale, when we learn about the location of Eógan's forts: Dubthelach was situated in the province of Cú Roí, Druimm nArd in the province of Connacht, and Telach on the territory of Uí Liatháin.[155] In other words, "the province of Cú Roí" is a paraphrase for Munster; Druimm nArd could be probably identified with An Droim Ard (Drumard) in Co. Mayo; and the Uí Liatháin were an early kingdom of Munster related to the Eóganachta and featured, *inter alia*, in the tale 'The Expulsion of the Déisi'.[156] What was only implied by Eógan's milk kinship in the beginning of the text, got its full accomplishment at the end: Eógan receives the lands in Leth Moga he is entitled to by his birth right.

2.3.5. Tower of Bregon

Eógan reaches Spain and comes to the residence of king Éber, which is significantly called *Tor mBreogain*, the Tower of Bregon. This famous Tower of the Irish legends is in fact a Roman lighthouse which is still standing in a Galician port city of Coruña. The first evidence for its existence is not earlier than the third century. According to *LG*, another ancestor named Bregon founded a lofty tower of Brigantia, from which his son Íth saw Ireland and decided to sail to this unknown land. Eógan resides in the Tower of Bregon during his stay in Spain, and therefore, it also becomes his port of departure to Ireland. In this manner, Eógan's return to his homeland closely follows the general scheme of the Milesian invasion. The notion of a tower in northern Spain facing the sea and, hence, Ireland has its source in Orosius:

> Only in Orosius do we find the lighthouse in Brigantia from which Britain could be seen, and the mention of the visibility of Brigantia from a promontory at the Shannon estuary. Hence, this seems to be a reason behind the creation of Bregon who built the tower of Brigantia from which his son Ith first saw Ireland (Baumgarten 1984: 193).

An interesting echo of this concept in our tale is not the Tower of Bregon as such — after all, where else a Spanish king named Éber could have lived in the imagination of a

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[155] O'Curry tries to identify these places but without any particular success (O'Curry 1855: 164–5). It is notable that in a Munster tale, Tigernach, one of the foster-brothers, is said to be the son of the king of Connacht; and subsequently Eógan obtains a fort in the province of Connacht. Tigernach is not featured in any annals or genealogies, and the precise location of Druimm nArd is impossible to establish. If the text was indeed compiled in the middle of the twelfth-century, at that time Eóganachta were not even an active political force and could not claim any territories in Connacht by means of a narrative. Therefore, although references to Connacht are obviously outstanding and important, their role in *TM* is hard to determine with any certainty.

[156] Uí Liatháin, although not descended from Conall Corc, claimed to be of the Eóganachta and were sometimes called Eóganacht Ua Liatháin (Sproule 1984: 32). Cf. …*teora nEoganachta Muman .i. rí Raithlind ₇ rí Lochrae ₇ rí Hua Fidgenti co nHuib Liathan* (Meyer 1907: 138).

medieval Irish scribe — but the introduction of an intermediary point, Inis na Faircsina, the mystical Island of the View, where Eógan and his crew spend the night before continuing their journey to Spain. *Pace* Orosius, Ireland was perfectly seen from the Tower of Bregon, and simultaneously, the Tower was seen from the estuary of the river Shannon in the south-west of Ireland (in modern terms, the estuary has Limerick City at its head and its seaward limits are marked by Loop Head to the north and Kerry Head to the south). According to our tale, however, Ireland and Spain could be also seen at the same time from Inis na Faircsina where Eógan went after his departure from Dún na mBarc. I did not find the mention of this island in any other sources so it is hard to say whether Inis na Faircsina refers to some real island in Munster or whether it is a literary creation.

2.3.6. Conclusions

In this brief discussion, I tried to demonstrate that the origin-legend of the Eóganachta of Munster is skillfully permeated with important allusions and references to the origin-legend of the Gaels. By going back to the banks of the Ebro, the river of cosmic significance from which both Spain and Ireland got their names, Eógan symbolically goes back to the beginning of times, to the root from which the whole Irish nation has sprung. He goes back not only in space, but also, symbolically, in time, returning to the legendary timelessness full of signs related to the events and characters of the beginning of beginnings — the king named Éber, the Tower of Bregon, the Ebro. By getting his wonderful glow from the magic salmon, which comes from the hidden places of Creation, Eógan partakes of the pristine essence of the Universe. Last but not least, the whole plot of *TM* echoes one of the episodes in *LG* in which Eochu mac Eirc, the last king of Fir Bolg, marries Tailltiu, the daughter of Mag Mór, king of Spain, and brings her from Spain to Ireland (Macalister 1941: 115, 117, 149, 177, 179). It is possible to say that Eógan re-enacts this scenario from the history of Fir Bolg, as he does with his voyage to Spain and back, thus imitating the Milesian kings. Mark Scowcroft (1988: 33) regards such an approach to history as a general tendency in medieval thinking:

> the mythical mode of thinking interprets the 'accidents' of experience or tradition by recognizing in them elements of a normative pattern, and recasting them to fit it: argument and evidence are indistinguishable in the retelling that constitutes interpretation. The logic is metaphorical rather than abstract, analogical and deductive rather than empirical and analytic, and an innate faculty rather than a learned discipline...

"The Middle Ages saw temporality as an unbroken continuity from past to present" (Patterson 1990: 93). In this manner, the events of the present could have been

portrayed anachronically, on the example of the past. In Lévi-Strauss' words, medieval historiography demonstrated "an obstinate fidelity to the past conceived as a timeless model, rather than a stage in the historical process" (Lévi-strauss 1966: 236). As Erich Poppe (1996: 149-50) resumes,

> in the exemplary myth the past provides a model for the present □ in other words, the past is not only the historical past but also a metaphor. This interpretive approach was not unknown to medieval Irish literati, at least as an exegetical method applied to biblical texts. This is borne out by the notions of *stoir* 'historical sense' and *morolus* 'moral sense' used, for example, in the so-called 'Old-Irish treatise on the Psalter' … A similar model of the past as *exemplum*, as exemplary myth or exemplary history, could also have been applied to secular texts…

TM represents the past through particular narrative conventions, and for this reason, interpretation of the intertextual references intentionally used by the compiler is vital to the reader in order to understand the contexts and purpose of the work. Whenever we look at politically significant literary compositions, like Lives of saints or kings' tales, there will inevitably arise the dichotomy of past and present, the former being the mirror, *speculum*, for the latter one. Placing the characters of the tales and their *gesta* in pre-historic, mythic, sacred times, the compilers were trying to validate the political aspirations of contemporary leaders whose legendary ancestors were acting in these tales of the past. This idea is essentially expressed by Mircea Eliade in his book 'Sacred and Profane'. Thus, sacred time "is a primordial mythical time made present. Every religious festival, any liturgical time, represents the reactualization of a sacred event that took place in a mythical past, 'in the beginning'" (Eliade 1959: 68–9).

In *TM*, the sacred past is re-enacted twice — textually and then, metatextually. First, inside the narrative, Eógan himself is re-creating the sacred mythical time through the reconstruction of the events of *LG* and his symbolic return to Ireland from Spain and the Tower of Bregon, which imitates the Milesian settlement and, therefore, the beginning of the human kingship in Ireland. At the same time, the events of the tale belong to the legendary past themselves, and the deeds of Eógan represent the sacred time of *principium principiorum* for the tale's medieval audiences. By doing this, the tale substantiates and authorises the aspirations of the present for which it serves as a model. From this point of view, the adventures of Eógan take place in the mythological time of the past which is re-created for current political goals — promotion of the dynasty's prestige in the south.

Chapter 3

Manuscript Context and Possible Transmission

3.1. The Manuscript and the Scribe

Times of terror and deepest misery may be in the offing. But if any happiness at all is to be extracted from that misery, it can be only a spiritual happiness, looking backward toward the conservation of the culture of earlier times, looking forward toward serene and stalwart defense of the things of the spirit in an age which otherwise might succumb wholly to material things.

Herman Hesse. *The Glass Bead Game*[157]

TM has only one extant manuscript witness — the late fourteenth-century Yellow Book of Lecan (YBL, TCD MS 1318, alias H.2.16), cols. 341–343.30. The codex as we know it represents sixteen manuscripts, all written at the end of the fourteenth and the beginning of the fifteenth century. These manuscripts were bound together by Edward Lhuyd in the eighteenth century, which prompted Carney's observation that the unity of the YBL "is one imposed by the binders" (Carney 1987: 691).The name of the codex is also misleading: it rightly pertains to only six folios, cols. 370–400, copied by Cithruadh mac Taidhg Ruaidh, the great-great-grandson of Giolla Íosa Mór Mac Fir Bhisigh, a poet and a historian of Ó Dubhda of Tír Fhiachrach (Co. Sligo), who wrote cols. 573–958 (Ó Concheanainn 1974: 157; Oskamp 1975: 102). The section in which we find *TM* was compiled by a famous scribe of a Lecan school Murchadh Ó Cuindlis, student of Giolla Íosa Mac Fir Bhisigh,[158] who previously assisted his master in writing the Great Book of Lecan (Ó Concheanainn 1974: 157), and single-handedly wrote the *Leabhar Breac* (dated to 1408–11) (Downey 2015: 127). Murchadh was also the scribe of at least one lost manuscript, *An Leabhar Ruadh Muimhneach*, portions of which survive in transcripts by Míchéal Ó Cléirigh (Ó Concheanainn 1973: 67).

The "short but important" manuscript, which now forms part of the YBL (cols. 281–344), was penned by Murchadh for himself in east Ormond (Co. Tipperary) in the years 1398–99 (ibid.). It is not often that we know the names of the scribes, let alone the details of their lives. Luckily for us, this is not in Murchadh's case. Due to rich

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[157] Hesse 2000: 343.

[158] The production of such splendid manuscripts as the Book of Lecan, the Yellow Book of Lecan and the *Leabhar Breac* is a result of a revival period that reached its peak in the early years of the fifteenth century. The centres of this 'renaissance' activity were secular schools in Connacht and Munster, where literary production previously based at monasteries had shifted to in the post-Norman period (Mac Cana 1974; Henry & Marsh-Micheli 1987: 781, 790). These schools belonged to "a number of literary families who dominated the profession of *filidheacht* and the related branches of *seanchas* 'history' and law throughout Ireland and who by precept and example maintained from one generation to another a stringent code of literary and linguistic practice" (Mac Cana 1974: 127), under the patronage of local kings, chiefs and lords.

marginalia he left in the three manuscripts he has been working with,[159] we know his name, places and time of writing, and can induce what interested and fascinated him. I will return to the scribe's marginal notes and their role a bit later. For the time being, I will restrain myself to the two main glosses, in which Murchadh identifies himself and presents himself to the reader. The first Murchadh's "signature" appears in a colophon appended to the tale *Aided Muirchertaig meic Erca* (col. 320.10–13):

> Mu*rch*ad O Cui*n*dlis do-sc*r*ib *in* leba*r*-sa do fen in bl*iadain* tanaisti *th*anic rig Saxa*n* a nE[rinn ₇ d]ul aisti fa essid ₇ uile imda do denum isi*n* bl*iadain*-si it*er* Gall*aib* ₇ Gaedelaib ₇ plaig *ch*oitc*hen*n *for* dainib ₇ cea*th*raib Er*enn* isi*n* bl*iadain* c[het]na ₇ c̄.

> Murchadh Ó Cuindlis wrote this book for himself in the second year that the King of England came to Ireland and upon leaving there was strife and a great deal [else] happening between the English, and the Irish and the common plague upon the people and the animals of Ireland in that same year.

Since Murchadh mentions that he was at work during the year of the second expedition of Richard II to Ireland, this provides us with 1399 as the date of composition. What strikes me here is that Murhadh does not simply indicate the date of his compilation, but places his own work and his own life within the context of this turbulent time. Richard II made his second expedition to Ireland after the first expedition in 1394–5 resulted in a revolt following his departure. These two expeditions represented "the attempts to reduce Ireland to obedience to the English crown" (Cosgrove 1987: 525), but have in fact demonstrated the failure of England's policy in Ireland. Interestingly, as Lydon (1963: 136) observes,

> *the fierce Gaelic revival* (emphasis is mine) and the inflated power and pretensions of the middle race (or the 'Irish rebels', to use Richard's own terminology) seriously threatened the very existence of the English colony in Ireland. The only answer to that threat was the presence of the king himself at the head of the largest army he could bring together.

We might say that in a certain way actions of people like Murchadh, who were part of the Gaelic renaissance, provoked the king to lead his expeditions. Did our scribe realise his role in this process? We cannot be sure; but in the context of Irish colonisation, Murchadh's intention to accumulate the resources of native learning is clear. In the *époque* when the very basis of the whole society was shaking, Irish learned men turned their gaze inwards, upon their own history, and thus found their mental stronghold — the attitude which echoes for me the words of Herman Hesse quoted in the epigraph to this chapter.

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[159] The Book of Lecan, the short manuscript which is now part of YBL, and the *Leabhar Breac*.

Murchadh confirms his authorship the second time in the inferior marginal note under cols. 331a–332b:

> Adaig S*h*amna ano*cht* ₇ naeim Er*enn* ata ar*in* aidc*h*e ano*cht* do c*r*ichnugad na comairli ata a n-indti*n*d Mu*rch*aid Í Chuindlis do-sc*r*ib seo. Am*en* P*ate*r N*oste*r.

> The night of Samhain tonight. Saints of Ireland, who are on this night tonight to put into action what is in the mind of Murchadh Ó Cuindlis who has written it. Amen Pater Noster.

Murchadh hailed from a learned family who occupied the territory known as Baile Locha Deacair (Ballaghdacker) in Co. Galway, close to the border with Co. Roscommon (Ó Concheanainn 1973: 65–6). He was interested in the contemporary affairs of Connacht, as is evident from marginal notes related to the politics of the region (Abbott and Gwynn 1921: 345; Ó Concheanainn 1973: 66, fn. 17); the contents of his manuscript, however, demonstrate geographical variety. The major part of Murchadh's manuscript is devoted to religious works and historical documents. This interest might be the result of the fact that Murchadh may have been clerically trained (Herbert 2009: 35). Murchadh decorated his manuscript using red colour for titles and beginnings of new lines, and ornated some texts with elaborate initials (e.g. *Cath Maige Rath*, *Aided Muirchertaig meic Erca*, *Fled Dúin na nGédh*). He stops using the paint, which he probably ran out of, starting from Mael Ísa's metrical prayer on col. 336, and the rest of the manuscript has no colour and no particular decorations, with the exception of the elaborate animal-shaped *F* opening *TM*, which is the biggest and the most exquisite initial in the whole manuscript. This initial corresponds to the "wire-initial" type, "drawn in thick black lines ending in animal heads and paws" (Henry & Marsh-Micheli 1987: 783).

3.2. Manuscript Context

Murchadh's manuscript exhibits a relatively consistent thematic structure: it starts with a cluster devoted to Ulster politics; continues with a block of devotional literature, interjected by the list of Fennian warriors (cols. 333–4); before turning to Munster affairs (see Figure 1). The collections of clusters are sometimes permeated by individual pieces.

- *Cath Maige Rath* (cols. 281–310.32)

- *Aided Muirchertaig meic Erca* (310.33–320.10)

- *M'oenuran dam isin sliabh* (poem of Colum Cille) (320.14–320.60)

- *Fled Dúin na nGédh agus cath Muige Ráth inso* (321–332.44)

    Ulster

- The first rann composed by Mac Liag, bard of Brian Boru (332.45–8)

- Tract about the colour of hair of Christ and the apostles (332a.49–60, 332b.48–52)

- Genealogy of Nin son of Bel (332b.53–60)

- *Fianruth Fiand* (333–334)

- Account of St Cumán Fota (335–336.6)

- Metrical prayer by St Mael Ísa Ó Brolchain (336.7–15)

- Litany attributed to Colcu úa Duinechda (336.16–338.3)

- *Deus Pater omnipotens* (338a.4–68)

- List of Archbishops of Armagh (338b.4–50)

    religious writings

- *Se cathracha co cruch coem* (poem on the Jewish cities of refuge) (338b.52–63)

- Short note on the tribe of Dan (338b.64–9)

- Pedigree of Milid Espaine (338b.73–6)

- Note on Clann Bresail and Colla Fochrith (338b.77–89)

- *Dál Caladbhuig la Múscraige rolatar* (339.1–23)

- *Frithfolaith Caisil for túatha Muman* (339.24–79)

- *Baile Moling* (340)

- *Tochmarc Moméra* (341–343.30)

    Munster

- Account of the peace made by Finn Mac Cumhaill between Glangressach, chief ollam of the Meic Miled, and Sodelb daughter of Cormac (343.32–50)

- Story of Fergus mac Roich when he left for Connacht after the murder of the sons of Uisliu (343.52–63)

- Note on the nickname Fen Dar Crinach (343.67–9)

- The coming to Britain of Silvius, grandson of Ascanius (344.1–30)

- An account of celebrated trees of Ireland prostrated by a storm in the year 665 (344.32–54).

- An account of St Béc Mac Dé (col. 344.56–68)

Figure 1

The cluster I am going to look at is devoted to Munster; the texts which precede *TM* are *Dál Caladbhuig la Múscraige rolatar*; *Frithfholaith Caisil for túatha Muman*; and *Baile Moling*. Dál Caladbuig of Múscraige mBreogain was a Munster polity which vanished around the middle of the eighth century; their history and status are quite obscure. The text in YBL states that they were vassals of the Cenél Fergusa Scandail, who were a sept of the Eóganacht (Daurlais) Airthir Chliach, and resided in Dún Eóchaille, modern Co. Tipperary (Ó Corráin 1971: 14). The tract seals a social contract between the Dál Caladbuig and their Eóganacht overlords, and outlines the obligations of Dál Caladbuig which included the provision of a wright and food (Charles-Edwards 2000: 533). As Charles-Edwards (ibid.: 533) resumes, "both the obligations and the language in which they are expressed are those of ordinary base clientship, the clientship of an *aithech*; the dues therefore were those owed by an *aithechthúath*."[160] There is a clause, however, which specifies that Dál Caladbuig were to eat and drink in the royal residence of their Eóganacht lords. Hence, by the symbolic gesture of a shared meal, the *aithechthúath* of Dál Caladbuig was "attached to the rulers of a whole province" (ibid.: 534).

The following tract *Frithfholaith Caisil for túatha Muman,* 'Counter-obligations of the king of Cashel towards the peoples of Munster', may be dated to the first half of the eighth century and "depicts a formal royal court made up of officials drawn from subordinate kingdoms" (Johnston 2013: 74). The two texts are essentially concerned with the same problem:

> Dál Caladbuig was a minor *aithechthúath* subject to a local overlord. The political roles of several grander peoples of Munster are displayed in the text that immediately follows the account of Dál Caladbuig in the Yellow Book of Lecan: *Frithfholad Muman* (Charles-Edwards 2000: 534).

The *Frithfholaith* discusses the alternation of the kingship of Munster between the three branches of the Eóganachta — the Eóganacht Chaisil of Co. Tipperary, the Eóganacht Ghlendamnach of north Cork, and the Eóganacht Áine of east Limerick — and outlines the relationship of these three branches with their client-peoples, which were represented by those Éoganachta who did not belong to the inner circle of the kin (Byrne 1973: 177, 197). The rest of the tract deals with other Munster peoples who were the subjects of the king of Cashel by ministerial clientship. Two population groups of note mentioned in the text are the Osraige and the Corcu Loígde, supposedly the rulers

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[160] This tract is also shortly discussed by Elva Johnston. She agrees that Dál Caladbuig was an *aithechtuath*, 'rent-paying' *tuath*, which was "in a tributary relationship to the more powerful rulers of the free *tuath* or *sóerthuath*" (Johnston 2013: 76).

of Munster before the rise of the Eóganachta. Due to their share in the kingship of Munster in the past, both were free from paying tributes, but the general message of *Frithfholaith* is clear: both the Osraige and the Corcu Loígde are merely "the respectable has-beens of Munster politics" (Charles-Edwards 2000: 541). The rest of the tract deals with other Munster peoples who were subject to the king of Cashel by ministerial clientship. This part mostly focuses on the status of Múscraige, but also discusses other groups.

The Eóganachta was a dominant Munster dynasty, since their rise to power in the fifth century until their decline in the tenth century. Cashel, the stronghold of the Eóganachta contrasted to Tara, was founded by their ancestor Conal Corc and considered as the capital of the dynasty. Hence, only the descendants of Conal Corc were seen as the true Eóganachta. In the eighth century, when both tracts were supposedly created, branches of the Eóganachta ruled over various territories in Munster located among older tribes, e.g. Múscraige, Ciarraige, Corcu Baiscind, Corcu Duibne, and Fir Maige Féne, which were disposed by the Eóganachta and played the role of their vassals (Ó Cróinín 2005: 221–3). The two tracts were allegedly compiled to promote this superior position.

The following text is a prophetic poem called *Baile Moling* which foretells the lot of the kings of Leinster and, therefore, interrupts the Eóganachta section of Murchadh's manuscript. The only Munster link in the text is the reference to the death of Cormac mac Cuilennáin, king of Eóganacht Chaisil, in the battle of Mag Ailbe (line seven of the poem). Yet, to connect the whole poem with the Munster cluster solely on the basis of this reference seems too far-fetched. Another probable bridge between *TM* and *Baile Moling* is the prophetic character of both texts. The poem and the narrative feature prophecies concerning the fate of kings: *Baile Moling* foreshows the destiny of Leinster kings, while *TM* is permeated with prophecies concerning the rule of Eógan's descendants in the south. However, Murchadh's inclusion of *Baile Moling* amongst the Munster cluster may be due to a more practical reason: as suggested by the elaborate initial which opens our tale (col. 341), the scribe clearly wanted to start *TM* from the first column of the recto, and thus was left with one empty column space on the previous folio. *Baile Moling* occupies exactly one column and, therefore, Murchadh's inclusion of it here might be explained by not wanting to waste empty space on expensive vellum.

As an origin-legend of the Eóganachta, *TM* fits comfortably into the section with *Dál Caladbhuig* and *Frithfholaith*. The first of these texts marks a resumed political stratum of the manuscript, after purely religious matters — litanies and prayers. The three texts highlight the superior position of the dynasty and are part of the southern political myth which envisaged the power of the Eóganachta in Leth Moga as equal to that of the Uí Néill in Leth Cuinn. *TM* largely focuses on the division of Ireland between Eógan and Conn, representing an explicit illustration of their supposed equal standing. *Dál Caladbuig* and *Frithfholaith* pursue the same goal: they portray the formalised Munster kingship and defend the ambitions of the Eóganachta to be seen as the over-kings of the south. The reality, however, was different. Although both the Uí Néill and the Eóganachta rose to power in the fifth century, the latter never enjoyed the same authority as the northern dynasty. By the eighth century, the Eóganachta were totally unable "to stem the rising tide of Uí Néill ambitions" (Ó Cróinín 2005: 227). In other words, "the alliance of the western tributary peoples with the Eóganacht Chaisil", so carefully promoted in *DC* and *FC*, "proved an insufficient basis, however, on which to build a provincial kingship to rival the power of the Uí Néill" (ibid.: 225).

Going back to the manuscript context in general, the reciprocal influence of narratives and legal or historical doctrines is not a rare case.[161] Although we are used to distinguishing between history and fiction, and between such different genres as saga, genealogy, or annalistic records, for the Irish learned men these sources were part of a common corpus of *senchas*, and therefore, their understanding of generic boundaries and textual classification differ considerably from the modern ones.[162] Speaking about a deceptive tendency to assess early Irish tales from an aesthetic point of view, Donnchadh Ó Corráin (1986: 141) stresses that

> these tales are *historical scripture* (emphasis is mine), part of a dossier of dynastic claims put together in the twelfth century and apparently further elaborated later. …much of Irish literature, including *Táin Bó Cuailnge*, must be understood within the context of the highly developed historical culture of the mandarin classes who produced it.

In a similar vein, Gearóid Mac Niocaill (1986: 59) defines the overarching theme of the Book of Leinster as "historical, with the proviso that it is history as understood by the

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[161] See Qiu 2017: 9 for the discussion and bibliography on the subject of the mutual influence of law texts and narrative literature.
[162] Erich Poppe gives a useful overview of an earlier stage of Celtic scholarship which misleadingly draw a line between the so-called "pure literature" and other genres, like genealogy, hagiography , history and topography (Poppe 2008: 2–3). By the end of his paper, Poppe resumes that "a modern concern with a demarcation between fact and fiction" is "potentially misleading for the historian of medieval Irish textual culture" (ibid.: 47).

men of the twelfth century."[163] Irish historiography equally expressed itself in legal tracts and dynastic legends, all these texts representing ideological statements and aspirations conveyed by the members of the society who made respective records. For example, some tales might have been compiled as illustrations for legal principles,[164] while episodes from narrative literature are often embedded in legal commentaries where they play role of explanatory precedents (Qiu 2017). Legal texts may also "be situated within a manuscript in close proximity to the very narrative texts from which they draw their *exempla*" (Boyle and Hayden 2014: xli).

Similarly, speaking of genealogical material, James Carney (2005: 479) noted that

> in oral tradition the genealogies, even in the pagan period, must have been heightened by stories and traditions of the more important characters. When this type of material came to be written it was sometimes known as *scélshenchas*, which may be translated 'ancient tradition in narrative [prose] form.' Such material may be regarded as dramatised or fictionalised history.

Byrne (1973: 67) also stresses that the origin-legends were not intended as a piece of literature and had a "politically didactic purpose." It is also known that characters of sagas were assigned dates of lives within the chronological framework of Irish history, and were included into genealogies, and hence perceived as historical figures (Kelleher 1971: 110ff; Toner 2000).

For medieval historiography, one of the most important connections is the one between memory and history. For example, Hinton addresses the correspondences between the Old French *memoire* and *estoire*, which represent oral and written transmission of the information respectively, and defines codices as repositories of cultural memory (Hinton 2012: 71). Similarly, literary production of Irish historians represents "a massive project of learned, collective *memoria* intended to preserve the country's past as narrated history, within the textual genre of *historia*" (Poppe 2008: 48). As Poppe explains further on,

> they perceived as *historia* (most of) the texts belonging to the various cycles discussed earlier and traditionally classified as medieval Irish 'literature' …Their narratives formed part of a collaborative project of a narrative *memoria* for Ireland, by the creation of chronologically and intertextually related accounts of their country's past, which transcend modern generic boundaries of (fictional) literature and (true) history (Poppe 2008: 56).

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[163] Schlüter (2010: 17) also stresses that *historia*, Irish *senchas*, "is the main unifying motive of the different textual genres in the Book of Leinster."

[164] Thomas Charles-Edwards, for example, has convincingly shown that *Fingal Ronáin* could have served as a specific example of the destructive consequences of kin-slaying. He also stresses that such texts as *Fingal*, or Welsh *Pwyll*, are not merely stories: "they demonstrate again for Old Irish and Middle Welsh the indivisibility of history and literature," while "the force of the stories is obscure to anyone who does not appreciate how early Irish and Welsh society worked" (Charles-Edwards 1978: 140).

The clustering of texts of different genres in manuscripts can facilitate our understanding of an authorial intention and perception of these records, and serve as a metatextual commentary on the connections between the texts inherent to a particular culture. "The manuscript context of a work engages important issues around literary creation and reception. These issues acquire an extra layer of complexity in a cyclical corpus, where the process of *mise en cycle* is fundamentally a function of manuscript transmission" (Hinton 2012: 71). As Máire Ní Mhaonaigh (2006b: 35) notes, "placing of particular narratives adjacent to one another on the manuscript page was an act of textual interpretation, designed to ensure that certain groups of narratives were read and assessed collectively." Therefore, the meaning of a text is not to be considered in isolation but only together with its manuscript surroundings. In fact, many medieval cycles "developed by exploiting the potential for narratives to be re-opened through the addition of new material" (Hinton 2012: 4). Therefore, related texts in the manuscripts could often be transmitted in series, united by a common character (in which case we might speak about a cycle), or a common theme and chronology (like the Irish translations of classical texts grouped together in the Book of Ballymote).

In the case of the manuscript transmission of a group of associated texts, we should distinguish between "cycles-by-transmission", the "main unifying criterion" for which is their "physical sequence in at least one manuscript" (Poppe 2008: 15), and "thematic clusters" (ibid.: 23). The texts which form a cycle-by-transmission do not necessarily share the same protagonists, but should have a common "overriding concept" and general "thematic unity" (Poppe 2008: 21). The thematic cluster represents a looser sequential arrangement, in which texts have the same focus of reference but do not exchange the overt "cyclic signals" in the form of verbal links, which Skårup saw as an essential criterion for his concept of a cycle (Skårup 1994: 75–6). Schlüter (2010: 75) sees thematic clusters as one of the main principles in the arrangement of Irish manuscripts and as an example of "thematical associations" ("Assoziationskette") inherent to a particular tradition.

In Irish manuscripts, texts which are united in a thematic cluster, often share the same geographical concern. For example, a section of MS Rawlison B 502 contains "a cluster of prose works relating to Leinster matters under the title *Scélshenchas Lagen*"

(Buttimer 1982: 70).[165] Similarly, two Fenian stories set on the river Siur, i.e. *Bruiden Átha Í* and *Tucait fagbála in fessa do Finn ocus marbad Cuil Duib*, are copied as a cluster in two different manuscripts, the Stowe MS 992 (fo. 88r (66)) (Meyer 1893: 241) and YBL (cols. 951–2) (Meyer 1910: xix). Alternatively, texts in a cluster might be associated by a common topic. For instance, the Old and New Testament narratives are conjoined in the Gospel History in the *Leabhar Breac*; and adaptations of classical texts in the Book of Ballymote are also grouped together. Similarly, a cluster of wisdom-literature composed of *Tecosca Cormaic*, *Senbriathra Fithail*, and *Audacht Morainn* is found in the Book of Leinster (pp. 343–6), while in TCD MS 1298 (H.2.7.), recension of *Audacht Morainn* is followed by a fragment of *Tecosca Cormaic*, both texts having been written down by the same hand. As Maxim Fomin (2010c: 169) observes, "having continued the flow of compilation of the manuscript by switching from *Audacht Morainn* to *Tecosca Cormaic*, the scribe outlined the equal importance of both." As he resumes, "such equal standing serves only to prove that both wisdom-texts were equally embedded into the single mental matrix of the compiler and constituted important component of the paradigm of ideal ruling in early Ireland."

In this vein, *Dál Caladbuig*, *Frithfholaith* and *TM* form a historiographical and Munster-oriented cluster within Murchadh's manuscript. Similarly, in the beginning of the manuscript, there is a thematic cluster concerned with the seventh- and eighth-century politics of Ulster: *Fled Dún na nGéd*, and *Cath Maige Rath* represent a cycle of tales dealing with the historic period, for which the battle of Mag Rath was a central event. No wonder that Murchadh collated these texts with the tale *Aided Muirchertaig meic Erca*, Muirchertach being the "main Uí Néill protagonist of the early annalistic record" (Ó Cróinín 2005: 206).[166] We might surmise that, since the legal tracts preceding our tale postulate the pre-eminence of the Eóganachta over other Munster tribes, *TM* might have been appended as a legitimising explanation of the dynasty's supremacy, which, according to the tale, was many times foretold to their legendary ancestor Eógan Taídlech.

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[165] Rawlinson B 502 features a large section of Leinster genealogical material, followed by a few Leinster sagas, namely *Orguin Denna Rig*, *Tairired na nDessi*, *Esnada Tige Buchet*, *Comram na Cloenfherta*, and *Orgguin Tri Mac nDiarmata meic Cerbaill*.
[166] A similar thematic cluster focused on the Battle of Magh Rath is found in Stowe MS B iv I; it contains *Fled Dúin na nGéd*, *Cath Muighe Rath* and *Buile Shuibhne* (Lehmann 1964: xi–xii).

3.3. On the Margins of *TM*

As I briefly mentioned in the beginning of the chapter, Murchadh used the vellum which was at his disposition very efficiently: almost each page contains some marginal notes which include the commentaries on his life and on the contemporary events. These marginalia also feature poetry (Abbott and Gwynn 1921: 344–6).[167] For instance, the scribe placed the nine stanzas of the poem *Sen dollotar Ulaid hi cath Droma Criaig* on the lower margins of the five pages (cols. 305–14). The text was edited by Gwynn (1926–8: 93–4) and represents a eulogy which praises the valour of the Ulster warriors and their success in battles. Ruth Lehmann (1964: xi), the editor of *Fled Dúin na nGéd* from YBL, also comments on a *deibide* stanza, which is contained on the margins of the tale in the manuscript. The poem on the lower margin of cols. 341–2, occupied by the text of *TM*, is the quatrain No. 25 of a poem entitled *Aimirgein Glúngel tuir tend*, composed by Gilla in Choimded úa Cormaic of Tulach Leis (Co. Cork) and dated on linguistic grounds to the second half of the eleventh or the middle of the twelfth century (Smith 1994: 120, 124). As Peter Smith, the editor of the poem, argues, *AG* represents "a résumé of some of the *senchas* which medieval Irish scholars held to be fundamental to an appreciation of the historical development of Irish law and language." The editor also suggests that the poem might have been a "set-text in the curriculum of the medieval schools" (Smith 1994: 123). The poetical text is composed in *deibide* metre, and enumerates the most glorious judges and scholars of Ireland starting from Aimirgein Glúngel, the legendary *fili* of the Milesians.

The stanza which is copied on the margin of *TM* is as follows:

> Fithil m*ac* F*acht*na ba fl*aith*,
> fir n-aice*n*ta leis ba la*n*maith,
> co*mbe*r*e*d breith ba be*cht*a
> las*in* n-intle*cht* n-aicenta.

'Fithil mac Fachtna was a prince; the truth of natural law he had was fully good, so that he used to give judgment, which was accurate, with the understanding of natural law.'

Cf. to the text edited by Smith on the basis of the text found in the Book of Uí Maine:

> *Fíthal mac Fachtna ba flaith;*
> *fír n-aicnid leis ba lánmaith,*
> *coná bered breith mberta*
> *résin n-intlecht n-aicenta*
> (Smith 1994: 128).

'Fíthal son of Fachtna was a lord; he had the truth of the Natural Law, fully good, so that he used not pass judgment on a deed before attaining a natural understanding' (ibid.: 136).

Murchadh uses another genitive form of the word *aicned* 'natural law, knowledge', as in the last line of both versions (gen. sg. *aicnid/ aicenta*), and also has the two last lines slightly modified. Instead of *breith berta* 'judgment on a deed', we find *breith ba bechta* 'a judgment which was certain' (adj. *becht/ bechta* 'exact, precise, accurate; sure, certain'), and *intlecht n-aicenta*, 'understanding of a natural law', appears to be a reason for this accurate judgment, rather than a temporal condition for it. It is hard to say whether Murchadh used another version of this poem, or whether he modified the verse himself (probably, writing it down from memory). Be that as it may, Murchadh is known for his taste for poetry and his creative approach towards reworking the compositions in sometimes quite a radical manner (Downey 2015: 127, 134). In her analysis of Murchadh's version of the tale *Aided Muirchertaig meic Erca*, Clodagh Downey stresses the importance of poetry for Murchadh, who included thirty-one verse sections in his copy of *AMME* compared to three verses in the second extant version of this tale in TCD MS 1298 (H.2.7), pp. 248–54.

Obviously, the position of marginal verses "indicates their extraneous or incidental nature: they do not belong to the texts that occupy the pages on which they are found, although they sometimes have a connection to them" (Downey 2015: 128). This can be illustrated, for instance, by the quatrain on the beheading of John the Baptist on p. 188 of the *Leabhar Breac*, where the Passion of John the Baptist occupies the main body of the text, or by the verse on Crucifixion on the margin of the page which features the Passion of Christ. It is perhaps not accidental that the eulogy for the Ulstermen mentioned above is written on the margins of the tales about the Battle of Magh Rath and the violent death of Muirchertach mac Erca. The first saga concerns the battles and the death of Congal, king of Ulster, while Muirchertach, the High King of Ireland, belonged to the Uí Néill royal dynasty. Although we cannot be sure that the couplet from *Aimirgein Glúngel tuir tend* is in any way related to *TM*, we can speculate that the

verse about a good ruler and his right judgment is fitting to accompany the tale which focuses on the acquisition of power and the qualities necessary to become a king. I would tentatively suggest that the mention of Eógan's invention — a spade — which our text calls his *scrudán aicenta*, 'natural thought', might have been suggestive of a king's gift of right judgment, which was the result of him following the natural law. In this manner, the stanza about Fíthal might have come to Murchadh's mind as a logical association.

3.4. Marginalia as Murchadh's Personal Diary

With the amount of marginal notes it would not be an exaggeration to say that Murchadh used the marginal space as a sort of intimate diary, which, luckily for us, reveals a textual self-portrait of a scribe. Both the manuscript, which now forms part of YBL, and the *Leabhar Breac* contain personal comments on his own situation and life of his friends, conditions of his work, political events in the region, weather and time of the year, and invocations to God and Mary.[168] It is noteworthy that Murchadh puts his own name twice in the short manuscript he wrote for himself (see the colophon and the note above), but his name does not appear in the *Leabhar Breac*, the largest Irish vellum manuscript by one scribe, which Murchadh was writing in the years 1408–11 (Ó Concheanainn 1973: 64). Was it by chance, or probably the difference is to be induced from the status of the manuscripts? The manuscript which is now part of YBL was penned by the scribe for himself (*do-scrib do fen*), and probably, as a personal document intended for a personal use, it deserved to feature the name of its author. *Leabhar Breac*, however, was compiled for a patron, in which case the identity of a scribe was probably not so relevant. It is significant though that on the inferior margin of p. 258 in the *Leabhar Breac* our scribe copied a memorandum describing the extent and boundaries of the lands held by the Ó Cuindlis family in Baile Locha Deacair, which again can be taken as a personal note and a key to his identity. At the end, even without the scribe's name,

> his personality is to some extent revealed in it [in the *Leabhar Breac*] — in marginal observations on various matters, from his own and his friends' circumstances to the stirring events of his time ... other jottings record places of writing, the time of year and even the weather (Ó Concheanainn 1973: 64).

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[168] Some examples of these marginal notes from the *Leabhar Breac* are listed in Ó Concheannain 1973: 71–5.

On the basis of these marginal notes we might even reconstruct the outline of the scribe's biography. We know that young Murchadh received his training at the school of Giolla Íosa Mac Fir Bhisigh and was working with his master at Lecan in the autumn of 1397, assisting in the compilation of the Book of Lecan (*Leabhar Mór Leacain*). Only Giolla Íosa and Ó Cuindlis were working together on this manuscript during the reign of Ruaidrí Ó Dubda, king of Tír Fhiachrach (ob. 1417) (Ó Concheanainn 1973: 78). Working under the supervision of his master, the young scribe left three signatures as colophons on pp. 107rc, 162vb, 182rb. The first two say explicitly that Murchadh is doing his job for his teacher, *aite*, Giolla Íosa Mac Fir Bhisigh.

In late 1397 or early 1398, Murchadh moved to East Ormond to compile his own short manuscript, to which he devoted the years 1398–9, and which, by the twist of fate, later on became part of the Yellow Book of Lecan. The first date is known to us from his marginal note (col. 305) in which he documents the death of Uaitér mac Dáibhidh a Burc, who was killed in 1398 by the English (Gaill) of Munster.[169] The second date, as discussed above, is understood from the reference to Richard's expedition to Ireland in the year 1399. The peak of his career was in the years 1408–11, when Murchadh already became a mature and knowledgeable scribe and compiled the finest *Leabhar Breac*, less commonly known as *Leabhar Mór Dúna Doighre*, The Great Book of Dun Doighre.

Ó Cuindlis belonged to the circle of Mac Aodhagáin's, hereditary brehons attached to various families in Connacht and Munster (Carney 1987: 692; Henry & Marsh-Micheli 1987: 796). Judging by the exclusively religious content of the *Leabhar Breac*, we can surmise that the manuscript was compiled for a cleric or a religious community. During this time, Murchadh was working in Múscraige Thíre in North Munster (Upper and Lower Ormond, present Co. Tipperary), as he often mentions Mag Ua Forga and Cluain Leathan which were Mac Aodhagáin's territory (Ó Concheanainn 1973: 65). Their lands were a centre of scribal activity. The chief seat of southern Mac Aodhagáin's was in Ormond and later in Dún Doighre, while the western branch maintained close links with the Lecan school in Co. Sligo, under the direction of the Mac Fir Bhisigh. It is "to the contacts between the Mac Egan's and the Mac Fir Bhisigh family, to the close relations between the various groups of Mac Egan's, and to their influence" that the greatest manuscripts of the fourteenth- and fifteenth- century Gaelic Revival are due — the

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[169] Annals of Connacht, 1398.15.

Great Book of Lecan, the Yellow Book of Lecan, the *Leabhar Breac*, and the Book of Ballymote (Henry & Marsh-Micheli 1987: 796).

3.5. Connection to the Book of Leinster

Although *TM* has only one extant manuscript witness, the text was probably once contained in the Book of Leinster (LL). In order to defend this hypothesis, I suggest paying attention to the referencing of our tale in the genealogical tract *Senchas Síl Ébir*, where *TM* is given as the source of Eógan's sobriquet Taídlech (TCD MS 1339, 319b42–44):

> *Eogan Taidlech ainm aile. amal ro scribsamar i Tochmarc Momera ingine ríg Espaine. Ailill Ólom a mc* (O'Sullivan 1983: 1374).
> Eógan Taídlech is another name as we have written in the Wooing of Moméra, daughter of the king of Spain. Ailill Ólom is his son.

The tale referred to in this line could be the same text as in YBL: the central episodes of *TM* are focused on how Eógan got his nickname and on the birth of Ailill Aulomm. From this reference, we can probably surmise that the title of the tale is not *Tochmarc Moméra* but *Tochmarc Moméra ingine ríg Espaine*. Both this tract and the closure of the tale in YBL (*conad tochmarc Moméra ingeine ríg Espáne*) feature this version of the title.

The person who copied this genealogy was Áed mac Crimthainn, coarb of Terryglass and one of the principal scribes of the Book of Leinster (O'Sullivan 1966: 1, 6). The formula which Áed used, "as we have written", is not a rarity in large codices, and can be equally expressed both in Irish and in Latin. Such a phrase could refer to a preceding separate text in the manuscript, connected thematically with this one (in which case we can talk about "formal signals of intracyclical cohesion" (Poppe 2008: 27)); or, to a preceding paragraph in the same text, showing the editorial awareness of a scribe who was striving to create a coherent narrative with interconnected parts. An example of the first type is found in the *Lebor Gabála Érenn* section in the Book of Ballymote. The account of the division of Ireland in twelve parts between the sons of Míl is commented upon with a remark *ut supra diximus* 'as we have said above' (RIA MS 23 P 12, f. 43 r°a). This remark refers to the version of *LG* recension C, which precedes this account in the manuscript (Jaski 2003: 37). Poppe studied the intra-cyclical connectors in the *Leabhar Breac*'s Gospel History and defined these cross-references as "decisive formal signals of cyclification" (Poppe 2008: 25). For instance, when the narrator claims that the miracles which took place at the birth of Christ have already been mentioned (*na*

huli mírbuli at-rubramar remainn), this could refer either to the immediately preceding paragraph, or to the wonders related earlier in the second part of the Gospel History (ibid.: 26). It seems, however, that such cross-references always point to some preceding text within the same codex, and never allude to another manuscript. If this is the case, the mentioning of *TM* in *Senchas Síl Ébir* serves as a testimony that the tale was once contained in LL. Another interesting point is that, according to Schlüter (2010: 225), the majority of protagonists in the *scélsenchas* tales were also found in the genealogical material of the Book of Leinster; it could be surmised, therefore, that the mention of Eógan in the genealogical tract makes him a valid candidate for being the main character in one of the tales contained in the codex. If *TM* was copied in the Book of Leinster, where could we place it in the manuscript which for the most part deals with the lore of the Leinstermen?

In the present arrangement of the manuscript, p. 286 contains an incomplete (due to the loss of the following folio(s)) story of the birth of Cummine Fota, son of Fiachna. As is reported in *Félire Óenguso*, Cummine Fota belonged to the Eóganachta Locha Léin and was a king of West Munster and a sage (*ba rí Iarmuman 7 ba súi*) (Stokes 1905b: 242). In LL, however, he is said to be of the Eóganacht Chaisil.[170] The following p. 287 starts with an acephalous tale called *Longes Chonaill Chuirc*, 'The Exile of Conall Corc'. The text was edited by Vernam Hull who lamented the loss of the beginning of this tale, the surviving portion of which "commences abruptly in the middle of a sentence with his [Corc's] departure by sea from Dublin" (Hull 1941: 937). As an editor, Hull tried to guess what might have been written on the lost folios preceding the tale. His conclusion is, however, surprising. He suggests that "the contents of the lost part may, however, be surmised from the materials contained in several other documents in which Conall Corc is mentioned." Therefore, Hull gives a list of other sources featuring Corc, among which are the entries in *Cóir Anmann* and *Lebor na Cert* and poems and anecdotes about the Munster hero. His conclusion, apparently, is that the lost folios contained some writings from the provided list, but the reason for this judgment is obscure. The

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[170] For the discussion of the place of Cummine Fota in Munster tradition, see Ó Coileáin 1974: 93–6. The pedigrees, according to which Cummine was a descendant of Corc son of Lugaid, are quoted on p. 95. According to another (secondary?) tradition, Cummine belonged to Eóganacht Caisil (p. 96). That is what Stokes (1905: 243) puts in his own translation of *Félire Óenguso*, despite the fact that the Irish text features *d'Euganacht Locha Léin dó*. Another interesting connection is that the Eóganachta kingship is associated with Mag Femin, the place where Eógan's adventure starts, while the *dindshenchas* of Mag Femin is ascribed to Mac Dá Cherda and Cummine Fota (Ó Coileáin 1974: 111–2).

next tale is *De maccaib Conaire*, the origin legend of the Múscraige.[171] The action is placed around the time of the reign of Ailill Aulomm and features Dergtheine, "he from whom are Eoganacht (*sic*) and Dál Caiss" (Gwynn 1912b: 149, 152). Therefore, the present sequence of tales does indicate that this part of the manuscript, together with the lost folio(s) between what are now p. 286 and p. 287, might be seen as a thematic cluster devoted to Munster in general and to the Eóganachta in particular. Discussing the contents of LL, Schlüter (2010: 224–5) notes that "the arrangement in thematic clusters seems to be the main organising principle of the Book of Leinster", and labels the present group of texts as the "Eóganachta-Múscraige cluster" (ibid.: 74).

If indeed *TM* was once part of LL, I could not find any better place for it than on the lost folio preceding the tale about Corc's adventures. First of all, this section is the only thematic block devoted to Munster, and therefore, in terms of thematic unity and consistency, *TM* fits there perfectly. Secondly, the stories of Eógan's journey to Spain and of Corc's exile to Scotland are interrelated in the tradition: they follow the same narrative pattern and serve as vehicles for the same political message. Both texts feature young protagonists, ancestors of the Eóganachta, who are forced by different circumstances to travel across the sea to a country abroad. In these countries, they marry daughters of local kings and return to Ireland to rule over the southern half of the country. Eógan starts building his forts, and Corc founds Cashel. Both tales are origin-legends of the Eóganachta, and their protagonists represent different realisations of the same archetype used by the promulgators of the dynasty. An important feature of this archetypical Eóganachta ruler is his juxtaposition with a leader of the Uí Néill, and, as a result, the ever-present dichotomy of peaceful rule in the south, and the rule by sword in the north. In the earliest origin-legend of the dynasty, the tenth-century *Do bunad imthechta Eóganachta*, Eógan's acquisition of power by his generosity to Irish people is contrasted with the aggressive behaviour of Conn Cétchathach and the Connachta in the north (Meyer 1912a: 312–4). The subtle threat is also felt in *TM*, where Eógan is pursued by the phantom of Conn in the prophecies concerning the division of Ireland and the future rivalry between himself and Conn. In a similar vein, "Corc was the equivalent of Niall Noígiallach and of his father Eochu Mugmedón"; and in general, this strategy attempted to represent the Eóganachta "as a mirror image of the Connachta and Uí Néill" (Sproule 1985: 11).

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[171] Cf. "the transmission of this tale in close vicinity to the origin legend of the Eóganachta is thus another example of the intricate planning of the manuscript and shows how the compilers strove for thematical coherence" (Schlüter 2010: 81).

Interestingly, Schlüter highlights the utmost importance of the *Longes* for the compilers of LL. Although by the twelfth century, the legend of Corc was already anachronistic because the Eóganachta had lost their kingship to the Dál gCais, "the tradition that they [Eóganachta] were the rightful kings had not died out in scholarly circles" (Schlüter 2010: 75). The inclusion of this origin-legend, therefore, can be seen as an expression of the scribes' opinion on the present political situation which did not favour the rule of the Dál gCais and strived to enhance the Eóganachta's prestige:

> By selecting a claim that is no longer valid, a contemporary audience of the twelfth century is shown that the kingship of Munster is not held by the family who had the ancient right to do so. The genealogies of the Book of Leinster give broad room to various pedigrees of the Eóganachta whereas the pedigrees of the Dál Cais only occupy a few pages (ibid.: 77–8).

The Munster cluster indicates that the scribes were interested in Munster affairs and particularly in the history of the Eóganachta. Therefore, theoretically, the sequence of the two origin-legends legitimising the rule of the dynasty, namely *TM* and the *Longes*, would have enhanced the thematic coherence and convey a clear political message on behalf of the manuscript's compilers.

If this is the case, who might have been the scribe of *TM* and who was Áed referring to when he says "as we have written"? First of all, let us look at the scribes and the make-up of LL. In the chart at the rear of his article, O'Sullivan provided a table showing the correspondence of modern pagination of LL, its fourteenth-century foliation and details of the various hands.[172] According to this chart, the Eóganachta-Múscraige cluster would look as follows:

- Account of the birth of Cummine Fota (lacks ending), p. 286 (fo. CCV),[173] Hand F;
- *Longes Chonaill Chuirc* (acephalous), p. 287–8 (fo. CCVI), Hand F;
- *Cath Maige Mucrima*, started by Hand F on p. 288a17 (fo. CCVIv) and completed by Hand S on p. 289–90 (CCVII) and p. 291–2 (fo. CCVIII);
- *De maccaib Conaire*, p. 292 (fo. CCVIII), Hand S;
- *Audacht Morainn*, p. 293 (fo. CCIX), Hand S.[174]

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[172] Schlüter (2010: 226–43) supplies a similar table and includes the titles of the texts which particular scribes were responsible for; Duncan (2012b: 150–9) provides a table primarily based on the correlation between the texts and the scribes who copied them.
[173] Arabic numerals represent modern pagination; Roman numerals stand for the fourteenth-century foliation.

Scribe S also penned the following Leinster text, *Boráma*, on p. 294–308 (fo. CCIX–CCXVI). After this, there is a lacuna of four folios (fo. CCXVII–CCXX), before the fragment of *Cogad Gaedel re Gallaib*, copied by Hand T[175] on p. 309–10 (fo. CCXXI). According to the modern pagination of the codex, the *Cogad* is followed by the genealogies of Irish ruling families (p. 311–338). The tract *Senchas Síl Ébir*, which contains our important reference, occupies p. 319–20. However, according to medieval binding, this genealogical section was placed much earlier (fo. XXXI–XXXVIII), and p. 319–20 correspond to fo. XXXV (Schlüter 2010: 228; Duncan 2012b: 151).

Nevertheless, we do not need to look for the lost *TM* on the first thirty folios which preceded the tract copied by Áed on fo. XXXV. In general, the question of the original make-up of LL and the initial sequence of texts is problematic as the medieval binding dates to the fourteenth century. As Duncan argues,

> scanty evidence of quire signatures does not provide further information on structure and provides no guide to original quire structuring… Other issues surrounding *LnN* [*Lebar na Núachongbála* i.e. LL] pose the question of whether the medieval foliation provides the 'original' structure of the book (Duncan 2012b: 168).[176]

In a similar vein, Schlüter (2010: 24) notes that the manuscript was foliated and rebound in the fourteenth century "after having been bound for one scribe, T, in the twelfth century and that this very foliator-binder is the cause for insecurity as regards the original arrangement of the manuscript". These inconsistencies are pointed out by Mac Eoin who tries to give an explanation of T's statement *ra-scribsamar…inar ndiaid* 'we have written below' (LL 5403–4), which logically refers to the text on preceding pages (LL 4175–4425):

> It is not clear why T should have said that the list was 'here below' when it occurred before that place in the manuscript, unless he was unaware of the position occupied by *Cuiced Lagen na lecht ríg* in the manuscript or because the order of the pages in the manuscript was changed after he had written the sentence (Mac Eoin 2009–10: 83).

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[174] Although *Audacht Morainn* does not belong thematically to the Eóganachta cluster, this *speculum principis* seems to wind up this section of tales, essentially focused on the examples of good and bad kingship, quite fittingly. LL has two versions of *AM* and, notably, the recension at the end of the Eóganachta cluster contains a prefatory story about the coming of the righteous ruler — Feradach Finn Fechthnach — from across the sea. According to this short tale, Feradach's mother brought him in her womb to Scotland, from where he returned to Ireland with hosts. This supports the idea expressed, for instance, in the *Longes*, that the righteous ruler is the one travelling to Ireland from abroad to regain his kingship. If *TM* was once contained in LL, it would fit into this section as the third precedent of a king returning from a foreign land to establish his rulership in Ireland. The introductory story to *AM* was edited by Maxim Fomin (2013: 423).

[175] Duncan's Hand T2 (Duncan 2012b: 156).

[176] See also on p. 176 where Duncan expresses "some concerns about the evidence for the original structure" and surmises that "the medieval structure, which the fourteenth-century foliation reveals, may have been the end result of earlier layers of compilation".

Duncan (2012b: 170) also calls this reference "puzzling" and comes with three possible scenarios for T's (Duncan's T2) *inar ndiaid*, which she translates as 'after that'. The first possibility is that

> the medieval foliation does not present the order in which the folios were placed when T2 wrote and that T2's contribution to the king-lists on XX–XXI (pp. 39–42) were once placed elsewhere. It is also possible that such a list of Leinster kings once existed elsewhere but is now lost. Last, it is possible that T2 could have been referring to his lists of Leinster kings (starting with *Ríg Lagen* and followed by *Ríg Húa Cendselaig*, and *Ríg Húa Falge*) which directly follows this note and that T2 was specifying that these were written *inar ndiaid* (afterwards: purely in the sense of time, not location) which would correlate well with the rest of the evidence for T2 (Duncan 2012b: 171).

A similar problem with the sequence of folios can be observed in the *Leabhar Breac*, the margins of which often contain information about the time of the year when a particular folio was written. As Ó Concheanainn (1973: 64) notes, "the arrangement of the manuscript does not correspond to the chronological order of the ascertainable dates of writing." Therefore, the layout of the manuscript folios in a bound version does not necessarily correlate with the intended sequence of texts as envisioned by the scribes. For this reason, in spite of the fact that Áed's reference to *TM* is found on fo. XXXV, we can still tentatively place our tale in the Eóganachta thematic cluster, on the lost folio between fo. CCV (p. 286) and fo. CCVI (p. 287–8). Both extant folios CCV and CCVI were the work of Hand F, so he may have also written on the lost folio, which I have argued may have contained a copy of *TM*.

Another piece of evidence to consider is the role of these two folios in the compilation of LL. As we know, p. 288 (fo. CCVIv) contains a peculiar marginal note — a personal letter from Bishop Find to Áed, written on the inferior margin either by Find (O'Sullivan 1966: 7); or by scribe T1 (Duncan 2012a: 41, 46). The letter represents the request of Bishop Find to Áed to finish the story which he has begun copying.[177] This reference apparently concerns *Cath Maige Mucrima*, the tale started by F and completed by S, which made O'Sullivan (1966: 7) think that the scribe S was employed by Áed to copy fo. CCVII–CCXVI following the request expressed in the letter. The unusual position of a letter on a margin prompted Duncan (2012a: 48) to consider a scenario in which this folio was sent away, as a real letter, to a separate scriptorium.[178] As Duncan continues,

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[177] The transcription and translation of this document are given in Mac Eoin 2009–10: 81.

[178] Schlüter (2010: 27) also favours this scenario: "the manuscript, or probably only parts of it or a copy of *Cath Maige Mucrima*, travelled to another monastery in order to be completed".

if we are to trust the contents of this letter then it is certainly worth considering whether Hand S could be that of Áed. Certainly, Hand S displays a neat and elegant hand in comparison with Hands A, T1, and T2, which one would expect of such an alleged man of learning. It is possible that this section of *Lebor na Nuachongbála* was sent to another institution at which Áed resided (ibid.).[179]

This supposition becomes more substantial if we consider the fact that the folios CCV and CCVI are both singletons, with neither folio having belonged to a larger quire; the lost folio in-between, therefore, was probably a singleton too. The premise that these folios were singletons, probably sent away to a separate institution, can explain the loss of the folio(s): singletons could have easily been lost at any moment. The missing folio must have contained the ending of the story of Cummine Fota, and the beginning of *Longes Chonaill Chuirc*. Given that each folio in this section of LL has four columns (two on recto and two on verso), and that the version of *TM* in YBL occupies two and a half columns, this leaves us with one and a half columns — sufficient space for the ending of a short anecdote on Cummine Fota and the beginning of Corc's adventure. We may even surmise that Áed, coarb of Terryglass in Múscraige Tíre (Co. Tipperary), might have been particularly interested in this cluster of stories about Munster.[180] Áed's patron, the Leinster king Diarmait Mac Murchada, is called in Find's letter "the high king of Mug's Half":

> this latter is the same title which scribe T gave to Diarmait Mac Murchada in LL 5501: *ba rí Lethi Moga uili eside ⁊ Midi eside* 'He was King of the South of Ireland and of Meath', so that we can be sure that Diarmait was the king intended by Bishop Find in the letter (Mac Eoin 2009–10: 94).

Probably, this title of Diarmait as *rí Lethi Moga* prompted the inclusion of the Munster cluster which discusses the division of Ireland into Leth Moga and Leth Cuinn and the foundation of Cashel in the otherwise Leinster-oriented manuscript.

Returning to the question regarding the cross-reference *amail ro-scribsamar*, the 1Pl which Áed employs could be an editorial "we" if Áed was the copyist of *TM*, but it could also refer to Hand F. In this case "we" denotes the collective of cooperating

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[179] There is no unanimous opinion on the location of the scribes. Alfred P. Smyth (1982: 102–3) believes that several writers were working in various monasteries in the midlands, until their respective manuscripts were compiled into one codex in the monastery of Cluain Eidnech (Clonenagh). Mac Eoin (2009–10: 82) is sure "from the way in which the writers cooperate with one another that they were working as a team and therefore that they must have been in one place." He later identifies this scriptorium as Kildare (ibid.: 94). Uáitéar Mac Gearailt (1992: 167) states that the codex "was compiled in Núachongbáil, near Stradbally, Co. Laois." Duncan (2012a: 60), nevertheless, is more careful: "the shared style of writing between all the principal scribes certainly denotes a shared context for their writing; however, whether this means that this took place at one scriptorium or more remains to be debated."

[180] For the position of Terryglass as a Munster monastery in Múscraige Tíre, see Mac Eoin 2009–10: 91.

scribes. In fact, as Mac Eoin has demonstrated, the usage of "we" in the latter sense occurs in LL quite often, and illustrates the scribes' sense of collaboration. To demonstrate this point, I will quote Mac Eoin in detail:

> Having listed the kings said to be of Clann Míled, T remarks: *Is lór scribmait i fus de rígaib Herend. Uair ra scribsammar remaind isna Gabalaib íat* (LL 5400–1), 'What we write here about the Kings of Ireland is sufficient, for we have written about them already in the [Book of] Invasions'. That is indeed so. Aed had written a list of the Kings of Ireland from the time of Eiremón mac Míled to the time of Ruaidrí Ua Conchobair (who reigned from 1166 to 1186) in LL 1803–3201, apart from the lines already discussed which were written by T (2109–2342, 2561–2623, 2723–75). Immediately after the above statement T says: *Ra scribsammar dano rig Muman etir genelaigib Muman* (LL 5402), 'We have written the kings of Munster among the genealogies of Munster.' Again this is so. Aed had written the list of the kings of Munster among the genealogies (LL 41189–249). T continues with another sentence about the Kings of Leinster: *Ra scribsammar dano ríg Lagen eter chomramaib Lagen inar ˙ndiaid* (LL 5403–4), 'We have written below the [names of the] Kings of Leinster among the battles of the Leinstermen'. The title 'Battles of the Leinstermen' refers to the poems ascribed to Orthanach ua Caelláma, Broccán Cráibdech, Dubthach ua Lugair, and Dallán mac Móre, written by Aed directly after the lists of the provincial kings and the Bishops of Armagh (LL 6068–7099), poems describing the feats of the Leinstermen against other provinces (cf. 6154) (Mac Eoin 2009–10: 83).

From Mac Eoin's examples, it is clear that T uses *ro-scribsamar* referring to the texts which were copied not by himself, but by Áed. "This was no editorial plural, because it was not he who had written the passages he was referring to but Aed. It is a clear indication that Aed and T were collaborating in the compilation of the book" (ibid.: 84).[181] Therefore, Áed's *amail ro-scribsamar i Tochmarc Moméra* might refer to Hand F, author of the lost folio, with whom Áed collaborated, for example, on pp. 273–4 of the manuscript. Since the fourteenth-century medieval foliation does not register the loss of folio (pp. 285–6 and 287–8 being numbered sequentially as fo. CCV and CCVI), the folio(s) in-between were apparently lost before the fourteenth century, and, therefore, LL could not have been Murchadh's source. Nevertheless, I hope I have demonstrated that the evidence suggests that *TM* was once contained in the Book of Leinster, and this might considerably affect our understanding and appreciation of this otherwise largely neglected tale.

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[181]Similarly, Schlüter (2010: 18) has described the use of the 1Pl pronoun *ra scribsammar* in LL as "surely significant, in suggesting that the compilation of the manuscript followed a fixed plan observed by several scribes".

Conclusions

'Lour co sin,' ol Colum Cille. At-raig Colum Cille,
oca ndécsin a muintire, leis for leith dia acaldaim
₇ dia iarfaigid na rún nemdae ₇ talmandae.

'That is enough,' said Columba.
Looking toward his followers, Columba arises
and went aside with him, to speak with him and to ask
him about the heavenly and earthly mysteries.[182]

I started my dissertation by stressing the plurality of textual meanings and interpretations which could be discovered when a text is placed in different contexts. At this point of my study, when our journey with Eógan Taídlech comes to its end, I hope to have shown that "literary meaning is always contextual and relational, never simply inherent or independent of context" (Davies 1996: 6); and that early Irish tales deserve to be seen through multiple lenses. As Ralph O'Connor (2013a: 287) puts it,

> the meaning of any saga operates on several levels, from the cognitive patterns encoded within the myths and tropes on which the story is built to the upper layers of local (often political) significance attaching themselves to the saga in its extant Middle Irish recension, and various layers between.

Building on those two statements, i.e. that the meaning of a text varies depending on the context in which we interpret it, and that medieval Irish tales operate on multiple semantic levels, I have carried out a three-fold literary analysis. Below, I will try to summarise my findings in relation to the compilatory character of the text from three different perspectives (i.e. mythological, Biblical, and aetiological), and to delineate the purpose of its composition as a politically charged compilation.

I.

In the first part of the literary analysis, Chapter 2.1, I have addressed the story-pattern which *TM* is based on and have contextualised our tale within a larger corpus of the early Irish secular tales. I tried to demonstrate that the basic narrative structure of *TM* closely follows the *echtra* story-pattern as envisaged, for instance, by Leonie Duignan (2011: 37–68). Thus, an *echtra* represents a journey to the Otherworld prompted by an invitation on behalf of the otherworldly messenger. Typical *echtrai* "show a preference for a significant royal site as the location of the invitation" (ibid.: 39); the person invited is often a king's son (ibid.: 43); otherworldly male visitors normally issue an invitation (ibid.: 45); a quest for an 'Otherworld' woman/wife is a wide-spread purpose of the invitation (ibid.: 47); the Otherworld location is often separated by water (ibid.: 49); in

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[182] Carey 2002: 60.

the Otherworld, the hero has sexual relationship with a woman and acquires a tangible talisman (ibid.: 62); finally, "the aftermath of each *echtrae* has profound and lasting effects not only upon the hero but also upon the kingship in the human world and/or the otherworld" (ibid.: 63).

If we compare our tale to this model, it becomes obvious that *TM* is in fact an *echtra*: the Otherworld journey symbolises Eógan's initiation (following Van Gennep's formula of 'separation-liminality-incorporation'), after which the protagonist returns to Ireland to inherit kingship. *TM* shows particularly striking similarities in terms of its narrative structure and its plot with the tale *Echtra Láegaire meic Crimthainn*. Comparison of main episodes of *TM* with various constitutive elements of other *echtrai*, e.g. *Echtra Chormaic*, *Echtrae Chonnlai*, *Baile in Scáil*, and *Echtra Airt meic Cuinn*, have also helped to elucidate the tale and to attribute it to the *echtra* genre despite its medieval classification. The original title and genre, however, is not compiler's caprice either. It encapsulates the crux of the tale: Eógan's impetus for going to Spain is marriage; and the children born in his marital union with Moméra will be future rulers of Ireland. Marriage to the Spanish princess ensures Eógan's kingly status in Leth Moga, and therefore, as I tried to demonstrate in Chapter 2.1.5., the protagonist's acquisition of kingship is endorsed by means of ever-popular 'king-and-goddess' theme. Although the Spanish princess is not explicitly portrayed as the sovereignty goddess, in the Irish literary tradition, king's wedding in general is a substitute of mystical *banais rígi*, while king's wife is associated with sovereignty and the Otherworld *par excellence*, even if her figure is historicised. Therefore, *TM* was compiled as an *echtra*, the main focus of which is Eógan's marriage, and this is reflected in the tale's title.

Furthermore, the tale co-opts two other motifs of paramount importance for the notions of kingship and initiation — the images of the royal mantle and of the salmon of knowledge. The motif of obtaining/ losing of a mantle is present in many kings' tales where it symbolically stands for investiture or disinvestiture of a king (e.g. *Togail Bruidne Da Derga*, *Buile Shuibhne*, *Aided Muirchertaig meic Erca*). In *TM*, the significance of royal apparel which Eógan receives from his wife and which provides him with a new name, Taídlech (this sobriquet encapsulating his new status), is enhanced by the motif of the salmon of knowledge. Using the structural analysis pioneered by Claude Lévi-Strauss, I have compared the salmon mantle, which heralds Eógan's accomplishment of his rite of passage, with the salmon in *Macgnímartha Finn*, where the magical fish also serves as a transforming agent for young *gilla* Demne. The

comparison with Finn's story helped to better understand the application of this motif in *TM*: it allowed interpreting the salmon in our tale as *bratán feasa*, the transformation of which from 'raw' to 'cooked' (in broad terms) mediates the protagonist's rise from a young man, *maccóem*, to a mature hero capable of kingly service.

<div align="center">II.</div>

In the second part of my literary analysis in Chapter 2.2, I have placed *TM* in a second possible context of interpretation, the context of Biblical influences. Of course, Biblical influence on secular narratives is almost impossible to prove with any degree of certainty. However, taking into account an immense prestige of the Bible in the Irish intellectual culture and the fact that the tales were compiled by clerically trained scribes, the impact of Biblical writings is worth considering. As O'Connor (2013a: 249) has aptly remarked, "regardless of whether or not influence took place, the biblical text provides a vital context for our understanding of the cultural significance" of those tales. In this vein, I have tentatively suggested that the opening of our tale with three visitors prophesying to Eógan the birth of his children might have been informed by the angelic visitation of Abraham in Genesis 18. This supposition becomes more substantial if we recur to a colophon in *Scél na Fír Flatha*. It states that invitations to the Otherworld in other *echtrai*, for instance, in *Baile in Scáil* and *Echtra Chormaic*, were angelic apparitions. These were possible because the legendary kings of pre-Christian Ireland followed the 'natural law', the concept of which was expressed by Apostle Paul in Romans 2:14. In this regard, the encounter of Eógan with the three sons of the Spanish druid might also be seen as a divine apparition structured on the example of Abraham visited by the three angels. This subtle parallel would deepen the portrayal of Eógan as an Irish patriarch, the forefather of the Eóganachta, blessed by God since time immemorial. Another crucial Biblical prototype of Eógan is Joseph. His figure is visible in other tales of the Eóganachta dynasty lore (e.g. *DBIE*, *CML*), where the episode with Eógan saving the Irish nation from a dreadful famine is clearly affected by Joseph's interpretation of Pharaoh's dream in Genesis 41. The motif of a famine is absent from *TM*; but the allusion to Joseph could nevertheless be seen in the motif of a multi-coloured mantle which Eógan, similarly to Joseph in Genesis 37, receives as a sign of distinction and supremacy.

Based on the reference that both Eógan's face and garment start glowing after he puts on a salmon cloak, I have connected the motif of shining with the miracle of Christ's

Transfiguration. This New Testament parallel would comply with the pan-European tradition of Christomimesis of a rightful king and boost the image of a local ruler by comparison with Christ as the King of Kings. Significantly, in Christological context the Transfiguration manifests the divine nature of Christ to his disciples. Similarly, the shining of Eógan bespeaks his kingly character to his retinue. In the Biblical context, new clothes and a new name which Eógan receives near the Ebro River are also suggestive of the ritual of baptism. The incorporation of this allusion is very symptomatic of the twelfth-century tales, which often channel the optimism of salvation and employ various narrative devices in order to redeem and purge the heathen kings who died before the advent of Christianity.

Finally, I have devoted the last part of the chapter to hagiographical context, in which Eógan's multi-coloured mantle appear to have parallels in *vitae* of Colum Cille, where a similar mantle symbolises power of the saint over the lands belonging to his *paruchia*. Healing and transforming capacities of saints' mantles might have also informed some of the aspects of picturing the salmon cloak in *TM*. Notably, in the vernacular Life of Berach, the saint's monastic cloak put over the face of a disfigured king makes the latter fair and good-looking, echoing the change of Eógan's countenance in our tale.

<div align="center">III.</div>

The last part of my threefold analysis, Chapter 2.3, dealt with the references to the Irish doctrine of the origins of the Gaels crystallised in *Lebor Gabála Érenn*. For a relatively short text, *TM* houses an impressive number of allusions to the Irish origin-legend, e.g. the 'island of Cesair' and the 'island of the sons of Mil' serving as paraphrastic appellations for Ireland; Spanish king Éber residing in the Tower of Bregon; transmarine voyage from Spain to Ireland imitating the Milesian invasion. In this chapter I have argued that compiling an origin-legend of a particular dynasty, the author cleverly assimilated the motifs of a national origin-legend. By imitating and evoking the places and characters of *LG*, his text gained verisimilitude and authority. Since sons of Mil established human kingship in Ireland, the re-enactment of their journey from the Tower of Bregon to Ireland added necessary overtones to legitimisation of Eógan's kingship. Another means of endorsing Eógan's rulership is the support the protagonist receives from the Spanish king Éber, namesake of Éber son of Mil, the first Milesian king of Ireland and Eógan's ancestor.

IV.

The fourth context crucial for the interpretation of any medieval text is addressed in Chapter 3 dedicated to the tale's manuscript context. *TM* has only one manuscript witness, Yellow Book of Lecan, TCD MS 1318, cols. 341–3. This part of YBL was penned by a scribe of the Lecan School, Murchadh Ó Cuindlis, and has a clear consistent structure, with a few thematic clusters following each other. As I have argued, *TM* and the two preceding legal tracts, *Dál Caladbhuig la Múscraige rolatar* and *Frithfholaith Caisil for túatha Muman*, form a historiographical Munster-oriented cluster within Murchadh's manuscript. These three texts promote the supremacy of the Eóganachta and their right to rule over the southern half of Ireland. The physical juxtaposition of legal materials with saga literature in one thematic cluster serves as a testimony that the narratives which we would label today as fictional literature were perceived by their authors and their audiences as historical and political writings, part of their *senchas*, historical lore of the country. I have also issued a question of possible manuscript transmission of *TM* and speculated that our tale was once contained in the Book of Leinster. My hypothesis is built on the fact that *TM* is mentioned in one of the genealogical tracts of the codex, *Senchas Síl Ébir,* as the source of Eógan's sobriquet Taídlech. The examples of other manuscripts show that such cross-references always point toward a text copied in the same codex and never refer to a separate manuscript. As I tried to demonstrate, *TM* might be placed in the Book of Leinster on the lost folios in the beginning of the so-called Eóganachta-Múscraige cluster, where it would comfortably fit with other origin-legends of the Eóganachta and the Múscraige.

V.

All in all, the overarching idea of my dissertation is as follows: if we want to understand the tale ourselves and to reconstruct, at least partly, its contemporary meaning for its audience, we should analyse various contexts in which this text could have operated. In the case of *TM*, the first context would be the native secular tradition and the corpus of Irish *echtrai* in particular. In this context, the text can be read as a mythological tale which describes the acquisition of kingship using essential symbols and metaphors found in the treasure trove of the Irish tradition. The second semantic layer of *TM* emerges if we put our tale in the context of Christian writings and presume that important Biblical episodes related to the acquisition of power might have served as

narrative models for structuring the local past.[183] Biblical precedents would help the compiler to enhance the image of his protagonist, and to add the necessary value and depth to his compilation. Eventually, the third context in which we may analyse *TM* is the Irish aetiological legend and the Milesian invasion in particular. As an origin-legend of the Eóganachta, *TM* is deliberately constructed as an 'antitype' which fulfils and imitates the Irish historical legend, this scheme being possibly determined by Christian typology used here as a compositional mode. It is important to realise that these three contexts and three respective ways of interpretation are equally valuable for our understanding of the tale, with none of them prevailing over the others. I also need to admit that, favouring the idea of the 'openness' of any text, I acknowledge that my interpretations are by no means exhaustive; and future researchers might find many more hidden gems in the tale. Once these three literary contexts have been tackled, the fourth context in which any medieval Irish text should be addressed is its manuscript surroundings. The legal tracts grouped together with *TM* in YBL form a thematic cluster which postulates the paramount position of power of the Eóganachta among other political players in Munster. The four contexts, four complimentary ways of reading *TM*, channel the same idea, that *TM* was compiled as a historical and political tale in order to promote and defend the claim of the Eóganachta to rule in the south.

<div align="center">VI.</div>

As it is often the case in early Irish literature, the events of the past are presented and written down to serve the aims of the current situation. For example, in the ninth-century *Baile in Scáil*, the 'sovereignty goddess' myth is assimilated to legitimise the Uí Néill dynasty by portraying their second-century forefather, Conn Cétchathach, receiving the blessing of the Otherworld, which is an absolute essential for a rightful ruler. "Uí Néill's right to kingship is reasserted, in this instance, by demonstrating its acquisition by the dynasty's eponymous ancestor in an era of antiquity reaching back before Christianity" (Herbert 1992: 272). Similarly, written some six centuries after the death of the fifth-century ancestor Niall Noígiallach, *Echtra mac nEchach Mugmedóin* "played a prominent role as propaganda circulated to vault the descendants of the famed king to political authority and to increase a sense of social coherence through group

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[183] Cf. "in the exemplary myth the past provides a model for the present — in other words, the past is not only the historical past but also a metaphor. This interpretive approach was not unknown to medieval Irish literati, at least as an exegetical method applied to biblical texts. This is borne out by the notions of stoir 'historical sense' and morolus 'moral sense' used, for example, in the so-called 'Old-Irish treatise on the Psalter'" (Poppe 1996: 149).

reverence of their shared lineage" (Eichhorn-Mulligan 2006: 1017). These are only two examples; but clearly, the stratagem of presenting current political aspirations in terms of achievements that have already been fulfilled in the past remained productive not only for secular kings' tales but also, for instance, for hagiographical compilations.[184] The texts also co-opted legendary past to comment on or to mock the politics of their authors' times.[185] *TM* with its impressive array of potent motifs associated with kingship definitely belongs to this type of political scripture. However, it is both outside of the scope of my research and, probably, even beyond our capacities, to ascertain which stimuli have originally prompted the compilation of the tale. The Eóganachta were the main force at Munster political arena from the late sixth century up to their decline in the tenth century, when the Dál gCais took the leading position as a ruling Munster dynasty. The language of the tale is late Middle Irish, which, taken together with my hypothesis that *TM* was once contained in the twelfth-century Book of Leinster, might point towards the twelfth century as the date of its composition. In the early twelfth century, the Eóganachta Chaisil experienced a major revival under Cormac Mac Carthaig (1123–1138), whose family managed to retain control of South Munster (Desmumu) into the seventeenth century (Wiley 2008: 31). This might have been one of the reasons for the revival of interest toward the dynasty as such. Another point to consider, as I have already mentioned discussing the connections of our tale with the Book of Leinster, is the opinion spread in the circles of the Irish *literati* that the Eóganachta were the only lawful rulers of Munster, while the Dál gCais were regarded as impostors. The compilation of *TM* in the twelfth century would therefore serve as a reminder on behalf of the intellectual élite that the Eóganachta were destined to rule in the south from primordial times, the statement which would make a bitter counterpoint to the real political situation.

On the other hand, Old Irish verbal forms (e.g. the correctly used infixed pronoun in *nít-léicfea*) might indicate an earlier date for the compilation of some original prototype which might have been later reworked and modified. I would speculate that if this hypothetical *Urtext* has been compiled, for instance, in the late Old Irish or early Middle Irish period (for example, around the tenth century) when the infixed pronouns were still used, the story might be a restatement of the Eóganachta's right to the kingship

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[184] In this regard, particularly famous are the efforts of Armagh to establish an official legend of St Patrick as the first and the only Apostle of the Irish in order to get supremacy for their church as his see. See Doherty 1991.
[185] See, for example, Herbert 1997 for the analysis of *Aided Muirchertaig meic Erca* in the context of twelfth-century politics.

dating from the period when their monopoly had been broken. Alternatively, it might have been intended to support the right of the Eóganachta in face of the growing claim of the Dál gCais, who finally secured the kingship for themselves in the course of the tenth century. In this case, "the mythic past provided a defensive strategy in a threatening present" (Herbert 1992: 272).

In general, the dynastic lore of the Eóganachta has two main features which unite the tales belonging to this corpus. First of all, the adventures of prehistoric ancestors of the dynasty focus "in large part on the efforts of these rulers to assert and reassert their control of Leth Moga or the southern half of Ireland" (Wiley 2008: 33). The stories of Eógan Taídlech, Ailill Aulomm and his son Eógan Mór (e.g. *Scéla Moṡauluim*, *Cath Maige Mucrama*), and the adventures of Conall Corc illustrate this idea. Secondly, the main protagonists of those tales were meticulously paralleled with the Uí Néill: the Eóganachta were a mirror image of the Connachta, Cashel was their stronghold opposed to Tara, and their rule in the south was as powerful as their rivals' rule in the north.

> The development of the elaborate parallelism between the mythologies of the north and south must have been a large project: it would have involved the rewriting of considerable portions of the political mythology of the country and cannot have occurred by accident but through the conscious decisions of rulers and the hard work of historians and genealogists. This can only have started when the Eóganachta were powerful enough to be taken into consideration by the Uí Néill and the Connachta (Sproule 1984: 32).

The doctrine of two equal kingdoms of Leth Cuinn and Leth Moga was probably conceived by the Munstermen in the eighth century when the Uí Néill gained an unchallenged control of the northern half (Byrne 1973: 168). The second-century legendary forefathers Conn and Eógan, who allegedly divided Ireland into two parts along the ridge of the Esker Riada which runs from Clonard to Clonmacnoise, mirrored their respective Milesian ancestors, Éremón and Éber who equally divided the country into two parts. The rival dynasties got fused when Ailill Aulomm, son of Eógan Taídlech, married Sadb, daughter of Conn Cétchathach. In the next generation, Eógan Mór, son of Ailill, and Art mac Cuinn were both slain by Lugaid mac Con of the Érainn at the battle of Mag Mucrama. Finally, the fifth-century founder of Cashel, Conall Corc, was paralleled with Niall Noígiallach (Sproule 1984: 36; Sproule 1985: 15). The equilibrium promoted by the southern political myth did not become a reality. The Eóganachta never reached the same level of power and prestige as the Uí Néill and "did not succeed in evolving an 'accepted lie' which could give their cause the morale it

needed in the eyes of the learned public" (Byrne 1973: 203). As Sproule (1984: 31) stresses,

> corresponding to the Connachta of the northern half, there were Eóganachta in the south, but the correspondence was inexact and ultimately unconvincing. Though we see the Eóganachta growing in power in Munster in the historical period, they never dominated the south as the Uí Néill and Connachta dominated the north.

One can say that in this regard *TM* is a 'typical' pro-Eóganachta tale promoting the southern myth of equality between the two ruling dynasties. The narrative features multiple references to Conn and his family, and strives to put Eógan on an equal footing with Conn. When Eógan has already boarded the ship to go back to Ireland from Spain, the druid gives him a prediction:

> *Bid mór fích cáich riut isin crích hi tégi dáig ni lécfi-se Erinn do neoch ⁊ ni lécfea nech Éirinn duit ⁊ nos-roindfithi edruib hí.*
> Great will be the enmity of everyone towards you in the country where you are going, for you will not leave Ireland to anyone, and the one will not leave Ireland to you, and she will be divided between you.

The same prophecy is emphasised in the final passage of the tale and, significantly, concludes the whole story:

> *Ocus do-géntar let na trí dúine tucad duit ⁊ Fidfeccai ainm cech dúine díb 7 co ngéba leth Érenn ule léo.*
> And you will build the three forts, which were given to you. Fidfeccai will be the name of each of them, and you will conquer the half of the whole of Ireland with them.

The omnipresent figure of Eógan's opponent, Conn, who is never explicitly named in the text, is nevertheless felt as overshadowing Eógan's return back home and his future career. The motif of the division, repeated twice in the prophecies, is aimed at highlighting that Eógan and his descendants do not intend to usurp the power in its entirety and that there is a truce between the two dynasties. This truce is underpinned by the figure of Fiacha Suigthi, the youngest son of Feidlimid Rechtmar and the brother of Conn. In *TM*, he is one of Eógan's foster-brothers, which implies an already existing political union with the Connachta. His figure is ambiguous, however, as during the conversation with Eógan he falsely advises him to remain in Spain for one year before marrying the princess while the best time for the marriage turns out to be the same day.

The connection between the Eóganachta and the Connachta is further alluded to in the prophecy directed toward new-born Ailill. As the druid says, 'great will be the septs, which he will bring to the regions around him' (*bid oll ndáile do-béra arna críchaib*

uimme). This prophecy refers to the descendants of Ailill: Eógan Mór, another ancestor of the Eóganachta; Cormac Cas, ancestor of the Dál gCais; and Cían, after whom the Cíanachta are named. The audience of the tale were obviously well capable of mentally reconstructing the missing link: the mother of Ailill's children was Conn's daughter Sadb, and their marital union has cemented the alliance between the two competing dynasties (O'Brien 1976: 192–3).

Ultimately, *TM* not only appeals to the contemporary Eóganachta but also sends a message to the descendants of Conn. Although the alliance between the two dynasties is violated by Conn, who kills Eógan in the Battle of Mag Léna, the division into Leth Moga (named after Mug Nuadat, i.e. Eógan) and Leth Cuinn (named after Conn) is legitimised through the prophecies, which permeate the text of *TM*, and also, through the archetypical precedent of the partition of Ireland between Éber and Éremón, ancestors of Eógan and Conn. Their equality is manifested by multiple bonds between Conn and Eógan as exemplified by the figures of Fiacha Suigthi and Ailill whose marriage to Sadb conjoins the two genealogical lines. It is also significant that in our tale, Eógan's authority is acknowledged by Cathaír Mór, who willingly gives him lands in the south. This may be contrasted with the account from *LG* where Cathaír Mór is slain by Luaigne, led by Conn who becomes his successor (Macalister 1956: 331, 525). This implicit parallel evokes the antithesis of the Eóganachta's peaceful rule in the south and the Connachta's rule by sword in the north as described in *DBIE*.[186] Therefore, the fifth important context in which we can interpret *TM* is the historical background discernible in our tale. This context unambiguously highlights the text's propagandistic and political significance. In this respect, *TM* might be seen as part of the enduring tradition of a southern political myth aimed at establishing the two equal hegemonies of Leth Cuinn and Leth Moga.

VII.

The literary analysis of the tale has demonstrated that *TM* is a political allegory seeking to promote the control of the Eóganachta over the southern provinces of Ireland. As so often happens, the history of the immemorial past has been moulded in a way to fulfil the hopes of the present. The *echtra* story-pattern, which is generally associated with sovereignty motifs, served as a perfect vehicle for conveying an elaborate political

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[186] Note that the same scenario structures the image of Corc as the 'southern Niall'. Corc is portrayed as a peace-maker, famed for freeing prisoners and captives, in contrast to Niall who is, of course, famous for taking hostages. Like Eógan and Conn, both preceded by Cathaír Mór, Corc and Niall are preceded in their kingship by Crimthan mac Fidaig, and both are fostered by Torna Éices. See Sproule 1984: 36.

message, i.e. the future rulership of Eógan and his descendants. Unlike Niall, who unites with the sovereignty of Ireland, or Art mac Cuinn, who marries an otherworldly goddess Delbchóem in *Echtra Airt meic Cuinn*, Eógan gets married to a Spanish princess. Her provenance was carefully chosen to maintain the link of Eógan with Spain (as in *DBIE* where Eógan is a foreigner) while complying with the historical doctrine of *LG*, according to which the Eóganachta had been descendants of Éber and, therefore, had been settled in the south of Ireland for centuries prior to Eógan's lifetime. Functionally, for the Eóganachta of Munster, *TM* is what *Báile in Scáil* is to the Uí Néill: a tale, legitimising the dynasty through the symbolism of their forefather's journey to the Otherworld. Although the rise of the Eóganachta started in the fifth century, and their leading position in Munster politics is dated from about the late sixth century, the dynasty

> promoted the claim that they had dominated the province of Munster for centuries prior to the dawn of the Christian period. This claim forms part and parcel of the legends of their prehistoric ancestors, which became an integral part of the myth of the high-kingship of Ireland (Wiley 2008: 31).

As I hope to have shown, the compiler of *TM* undertook the task of creating such a legend with literary sensibility, creative imagination and vigorous intellectual energy, and in the confines of a relatively short text, managed to convey a potent political message by means of a fascinating adventure to the Otherworld.

At the end, I can only repeat the words of Colum Cill cited in the epigraph: *Lour co sin*, 'That is enough'. I hope to have presented sufficient evidence demonstrating that a medieval text can express different meanings depending on the context in which we interpret it. And since there are much more contexts, in which our tale can be explored, I believe that there are still many 'heavenly and earthly mysteries' that this text can reveal to us.

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