Tochmarc Moméra as *Echtra* to the Otherworld

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Tochmarc Moméra (*TM*), 'The Wooing of Moméra', is a tale found solely in the Yellow Book of Lecan (TCD MS1318, *alias* H.2.16; cols. 341–343).[1] The tale belongs to the Cycles of the Kings and explores the Spanish journey of Eógan Taídlech, the eponymous ancestor of the Eóganacht, whose *floruit* is allegedly placed in the second century AD. The tale forms part and parcel of the lore of the Eóganacht, along with the early Irish account *Do Bunad Imthechta Eóganachta*, 'Concerning the origin of the wandering of the Eóganacht' (late ninth or early tenth century, Ó Corráin 1985, 53) and the late saga *Cath Maighe Léna* (*CML*), 'The Battle of Magh Léna' (late thirteenth or early fourteenth century, Jackson 1938, xxiv).

According to *Do Bunad*, Eógan is an outsider who comes to Ireland with his fleet and saves the Irish from starvation, after which he or his son Eógan is granted kingship in the south of Ireland (Meyer 1912, 312–314). It has been suggested that *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 (Jackson 1938, xxvi–xxvii).

While preserving the crucial link with Spain, *TM* relies on the traditional pedigree of the Eóganacht (O'Brien 1976, 192, 250). Eógan is portrayed as the son of Mug Néit of Síl Ébir and a future progenitor of an illustrious royal dynasty. The tale ends with the birth of Eógan's son, Ailill Aulom, who, as known from genealogies, became the father of Eógan Mór, another eponymous founder of the dynasty (O'Brien 1976, 192, 193).[2]

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1   The first edition with a parallel English translation was that prepared by Eugene O'Curry. He transcribed and translated *TM* along with *Cath Maighe Léna* (*CML*), 'The Battle of Mag Léna' (O'Curry 1855). That edition, however, contains a number of mistakes and incorrect expansions. The translation is generally outdated. The editor of *CML*, Kenneth Jackson, made a harsh but ultimately fair assessment of O'Curry's work on the same text: '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' (1938, ix). The same can be said of the edition of *TM*, which was published by O'Curry as an appendix to *CML*. The most recent treatment of the subject is Anouk Nuijten's unpublished MA thesis *Tochmarc Moméra. An edition and translation, with introduction and textual notes* (2016).

2   There clearly exists some confusion between Eógan Mór/ Taídlech and his grandson Eógan Mór mac Aiello. O'Rahilly believed that 'the use of the name Eógan as a second appellation of Mug Nuadat is a later development', and the example of *TM*, where Mug

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The tradition credits Eógan with four names, Eógan Mór, Eógan Taídlech, Eógan Fidfecach, and Mug Nuadat. Thus, *TM* is partly an etymological narrative, which explains how Eógan got his sobriquets Taídlech and Fidfecach. The four names are respectively treated in §§36–40 of the longest version of *Cóir Anmann* (*CA*) dated to the first half of the thirteenth century (Arbuthnot 2007, 9–12, 86–88). Entries on the names Eóganacht and Eógan are also given in §29 (Arbuthnot 2005, 85, 125) and §145 (Arbuthnot 2005, 111, 147) of the shorter version compiled in the latter part of the twelfth century.[3]

Eógan is also mentioned in the genealogical tract from the Book of Leinster (TCD MS 1339, 319b42–44), a codex compiled ca. 1160. Since *TM* is given as the source of his nickname, Taídlech, this external evidence assuredly gives us a *terminus ante quem* for our text:[4]

> *Eogan Taidlech ainm aile. amal ro scribsamar i Tochmarc Momera ingine ríg Espaine. Ailill Ólom a mc* (O'Brien 1976, 190; 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.

Based on this reference, O'Rahilly argues that a version of *TM* was once contained in the Book of Leinster (1946a, 187). Regardless of the veracity of this claim, the tale was already in existence in written form by the middle of the twelfth century.

I give a plot outline as follows:

Nuadat is called Eógan, 'may have had an influence on later writers' (1946a, 184). This innovation was apparently meant to 'amalgamate Mug Nuadat and Eógan, as far as possible, into a single individual' (O'Rahilly 1946a, 184).

3   A detailed review of the sources related to the Eóganacht, from the point of view of their contribution to the compilation of *CML*, is given in Jackson 1938, xxiv–xxxv. The textual relationship between *TM*, *CML*, and §38 of CA drawn on the episode of *TM*, is summarised in Arbuthnot 2005, 66. See also Nuijten 2016, 14–15.

4   In the linguistic analysis, Nuijten shows that the language of the tale is late Middle Irish (2016, 26–32); but she does not ascribe a more precise date to the text. However, the usage of independent pronouns throughout the text points towards its composition about the middle of the twelfth century, by which time infixed pronouns have disappeared from the ordinary language and have been gradually replaced by independent objective pronouns (Nuner 1958–9, 235, 304). The two instances of infixed pronouns in the speech of the druid's sons (*ron-bendachut do chóengníma* 'may your fine deeds bless us' (?); *nit-leicfea* 'she will not allow you') may point towards an Old Irish archetype used for the compilation. The third instance, *nos-roindfithi edruib hí* 'she will be divided between you', represents a pleonastic usage of pronouns, with the independent one used alongside the older, in this case asemantic, infixed pronoun. Such constructions are also characteristic of the twelfth century when the pronominal system becomes blurred. 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).

The story begins with Eógan's encounter, on the green of his father's fort, with three visitors who prophesy his future destiny. They entreat him to go to Spain to marry the daughter of the Spanish king. In this marriage, four children will be born who will rule over Ireland. Eógan asks the messengers how they know this, and they reveal that they are the sons of the chief druid of Spain, Antipater, who has foretold that a man from Ireland should become the husband of the Spanish princess. In order to fulfil the prophecy, the druid has sent his three sons, Fáthe, Fis and Fírinne, to bring Eógan to Spain. The prince agrees and decides to depart the next morning. On the way to Dún na mBárc, where ships are ready for their departure, he climbs a burial mound, a *fert*, and the three young men follow him. Then, the whole company, including Eógan's five foster-brothers, start their overseas journey.

Meanwhile, in Spain, the druid prophesies that the Irish will reach Spain by the end of the day; so it happens. The company receives a warm welcome but no one speaks about the aim of their visit. One of Eógan's foster-brothers, Fiacha Suigthi, wants to stay in Spain till the end of the year in order to observe the bride as well as the customs of this 'strange land' (*tír aneóil*).

However, the king's messengers suddenly interrupt asking when Eógan will fulfil what has been prophesied. Eógan readily answers that he can marry the girl whenever the king says. The latter enquires of the druid to confirm the best time for the marriage; the druid declares that the wedding should be celebrated the same night. The feast is held for three days and three nights. The newly-married couple remains in Spain for a year.

The second part of the tale begins with an account of the Éber (Ebro) river. Every seventh year, a salmon covered in wool of many colours comes to its waters from the secret places of the Universe. One morning, the druid commands the princess to catch the fish and to make a cloak for her husband out of the salmon skin. At this point, the girl is named for the first time: her (nick)name is Lígbratach, 'possessing the beautiful mantle'. When Eógan puts his salmon cloak on, he starts shining. The druid declares that, from this radiance, Eógan will receive a new name—*taídlech* 'the illustrious'.

After that, Eógan states that he wants to go back to his country. The druid predicts that the princess will give birth to a son on the ninth day of their stay in Ireland, and the glory of this boy will spread all over Ireland.

Before the departure, the druid also foretells that Ireland will be divided into two halves between Eógan and another warrior. The company sails to Ireland and lands in Dún Corcan. Catháir Mór, the king of Ireland, is waiting for Eógan and provides the young hero with three pieces of land. As was predicted, Eógan's wife gives birth to a son. He is baptised in druidic streams and receives the name Ailill. After that, Eógan and his men start the construction of his forts on the land

received from Catháir Mór. They dig earth with the trunks of trees, which turns out to be very difficult. Eógan fixes horizontal spikes on the trunks, creating a spade, which facilitates the work. From this invention, Eógan receives his third name, Fidfeccach (from *fid*, 'tree', and *fec*, 'spade, spike'). The story ends with the prophecy by one of the druid's sons: he confirms that Eógan will build three forts and conquer half of Ireland.

Although in terms of medieval taxonomy *TM* belongs to *tochmarca*, 'wooings',[5] the plot of *TM* corresponds much more closely to an *echtra*. The definition of the genre of *echtra* is formulated by Mac Cana as follows:

> *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, 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 (1980, 75–76).

A detailed examination of the genre was undertaken by Leonie Duignan. The structural and comparative analysis of the existing *echtrai* allowed the author to establish 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 (2011, 66–67).

TM follows this pattern closely. The voyage of Eógan to Spain starts with the invitation by the three young men who suddenly appear in front of the fort of Mug Néit, Eógan's father.[6] As John Carey notes: 'that the royal stronghold is

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5 The *tochmarca*, according to Mac Cana, are related to *aitheda*, 'elopements'; the main difference being that elopements are initiated by women while in the *tochmarca* 'the man is the active suitor and generally he carries off the woman without the consent of her kinsmen, though with her own collusion' (1980, 74).

6 This suggests that Eógan is recognized as Mug Néit's heir, succeeding his father in his kingly office. Cf. the beginning of *Echtrae Chonnlai* where 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,

one of the points of Otherworld access is also apparent on those occasions when an Otherworld emissary appears suddenly within its boundaries' (1986, 5). The appearance of the three men is described in the following terms:

> *Nirba cían dó co n-accai trí maccóemu chuige.*
> It was not long before he saw three youths coming towards him.[7]

The formula *co n-accai (ní) … cucca* 'he saw (something) … towards him' is often used to highlight the first encounter with a supernatural visitor. For example, a similar scene takes place at the beginning of *Echtra Láegaire meic Crimthainn* (*co n-accatar in fer chucu triasin ciaig* 'they saw a man coming towards them through the mist', Jackson 1942, 380–381) and *Echtra Chormaic maic Airt* (*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).

Then, after the greetings, the three messengers prophesy his future to the astonished prince. In the context of the tale, which focuses on Eógan's initiation and acquisition of power, the prophecy serves as an indication of the protagonist's potential for kingship. As Passmore stresses in the case of the twelfth-century prose tale *Echtra Mac nEchach Mugmedóin*, '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' (2008, 150). This might explain the seeming passivity of Eógan, who merely fulfils the instructions of the three brothers based on Antipater's prediction. However, his obedience to the druid, along with his acceptance of his fate, reveals him as a future king. Significantly, the three young men predict the future not only for Eógan but for his children as well, and—implicitly—for their descendants. Thus, the prophecy stretches into an unlimited future and is directed not only towards its immediate audience (Eógan) but also towards contemporary listeners of the tale.[8]

Eógan readily accepts his destiny but, nevertheless, asks his visitors to identify themselves. The young men tell that they are the three sons of Antipater the

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Eógan's father is mentioned for the second time by the druid when Eógan is ready to leave Spain for Ireland. The druid stresses that Eógan's father is in his royal power before him (*atá th'athair for do chind ina flathus*).

7   The quotations of *TM* used in this essay are from my own transcription and tentative translation of the tale.

8   The nature of kingship implies a notion of inheritance; what matters is the ability to pass the throne to one's descendants. This idea, for instance, shapes the dramatic conflict of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. As Fomin 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' (2010, 221).

Druid. These characters, whose names are Fáthe, Fis and Fírinne, 'Prophecy, Knowledge and Truth', personify the emanations of the druid, and we could easily imagine them as 'the three qualities required of a druid' among many other professional triads. Moreover, taken as qualities, prophecy, knowledge and truth are believed to have their source in the Otherworld. Thus, it is no surprise that the three young men, who *are* prophecy, knowledge and truth, function in *TM* as mediators between the Otherworld and Ireland. The name of the one of them, *Fis*, 'knowledge', is multiplied in the text to create a sophisticated 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 elucidated by the druid (*am-sói-seic fora rús **fis** feib do-chuaid fair* 'he interprets through his great wisdom the knowledge just as he got it'). On the basis of this knowledge (*fis*), the druid formulates a prophecy (*fáthe*) about Eógan's future. He sends this information to Ireland *incarnated* in the figures of his sons, whose names are equal to their function—they actually come to declare truth, knowledge and prophecy. The name of the third man, Fírinne, might allude in this context to the concept of *fír flathemon*, which characterizes the reign of a worthy king.

That Irish *literati* used metatext to create the reality of the Otherworld has been demonstrated by John Carey who observes that

> certain 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* (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). Used as a comparandum, *TM* reveals a similar underlying structure of the two episodes: story (*scél*) is the 'son' of *bairdéne*, 'bard'; likewise, prophecy, truth and knowledge are 'sons' of the druid who represent these categories accordingly.

Eógan is about to start his journey, but, before getting into a ship, he climbs a burial mound—*fert*. This episode can also be explicated in terms of his Otherworld quest for royal power. In early Irish tradition, *tumuli* were access points to the Otherworld as 'any sacred spot would *ipso facto* have been a supernatural gateway', but 'most notably ancient burial mounds' (Carey 1986, 6, 13). Such sites also functioned as places of consecration of Irish kings, during which the

candidate was often placed on a hill (Dillon 1973, 3, 4).[9] 'Many of these *tumuli* or hills will doubtless have been *síde* so that their use as inauguration sites furnishes the physical or material correlation of the abstract connections,' those being the Otherworld dimension of a righteous kingship (Ó Cathasaigh 1978, 148).[10] Thus, before departing to the Otherworld—the place which sanctions his royal status—the hero goes to a burial mound. This locus simultaneously represents the entrance to the Otherworld and the place of inauguration. Remarkably, the three messengers, allegories of the qualities, which validate and constitute a righteous kingship, follow Eógan. After the episode with the *fert*, Eógan and his company leave Ireland for Spain and the *echtra* begins.

Obviously, *TM* is not the only tale where a remote land is given attributes of the Otherworld. As Donald Meek observes about the second part of *Táin Bó Fraích*, in which Fróech travels to Lombardy to rescue his family, 'the original expedition may have been to the Otherworld, and not to any recognizable country' (1984b, 71; cf. also Meek 1984a, 6–7; Meek 1984b, 66–67, 71, 72). In discussing the tale *Síaburcharpat Con Culaind*, Mac Cana also stresses that 'in it we already have the characteristic merging of the real Lochlainn in the land of giants and other wonders' (1962, 81). Lochlainn (Scandinavia) shows the same connotations in *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' (Mac Cana 1962, 81).

That Spain, as featured in early Irish texts, is a historicisation of the Otherworld was an idea of Henri d'Arbois de Jubainville.[11] Commenting on Nennius' *Historia Brittonum*, he argues that

> the word Spain in this text is a learned translation of the Irish words *mag mor*, '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).

9   See FitzPatrick 2004 on the use of sepulchral mounds for judicial and royal assembly practices in Gaelic Ireland, including inauguration.

10   For instance, Warner stresses 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' (2004, 32). Welsh sources provide us with an image of the legendary Gorsedd Arberth featured, for instance, in the First Branch of Mabinogi. As Charles-Edwards 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' (2004, 97).

11   I am indebted to Professor John Carey for drawing my attention to this important parallel.

However controversial this idea might be, it is remarkable that in *Lebor Gabála Érenn* (*LG*), 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). This account bears a striking resemblance to *TM*. It is possible to say that Eógan re-enacts this scenario from the immemorial past, as he does with his voyage to Spain and back, imitating, therefore, the Milesian kings. It is also noteworthy that the Spanish king, Mag Mór, bears the name, which is used for the designation of the Otherworld. In the version of *Tochmarc Etaíne*, edited by Windisch, Midir describes his Otherworld dwelling as *íar gnáis maige máir* 'according to the custom of *mag mór*' (Windisch 1880, 132). If we interpret this episode as a word pun created in accordance with the dichotomy *this world: the Otherworld as a verbal world*, the Spanish king Mag Mór represents the idea of the Otherworld, which, in this case, actually overlaps with his kingdom.

As our tale evolves, Eógan arrives in Spain and there are no obstacles to impede his marriage. Since the narrative concerns Eógan's acquisition of kingship, I suggest regarding the wedding of the protagonists as a variation of the widespread 'king-and-goddess' theme. The phenomenon of a king's marriage with a sovereignty goddess is well described in Celtic scholarship (Ó Máille 1928; Thurneysen 1930; Thurneysen 1933; O'Rahilly 1946b; Breatnach 1953; MacCana 1955–6; MacCana 1958–9; Bhreatnach 1982; McCone 1990, 110; Herbert 1992; Eichhorn-Mulligan 2006). The typical scenario involves 'an ugly hag transformed into a beautiful woman by the embraces of the hero destined to be king' (Mac Cana 1958–9, 63; Bhreatnach 1982, 244). Besides, the acquisition of royal status is reached through the consummation of liquor of sovereignty (O'Rahilly 1946b, 14). The most evident prototypes of this myth 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 Mac Cana, are *Mór Muman Aided Cuanach meic Ailchine* (Mór Muman being a sovereignty goddess) (1955–6, 78–84), *Esnada Tige Buchet* (Eithne) (87–88), the story of Mis and Dubh Ruis (Mis) (370–382), and *Scéla Cano meic Gartnáin* (Créd) (392). None of these tales corresponds to the aforementioned scheme. On the contrary, the mythic model of royal rule through *hieros gamos* is hidden among the other twists of the plot and disguised as an adventure or a love-story. As Mac Cana 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 (1955–6, 84).

In *TM* there is no explicit mention of symbolic libation either. However, after the marriage is decided, the feast is held for three days and three nights (*batar ann trí lá ⁊ trí h-aidche. Áeibnes acu cach lá, ól cach n-aidche*).[12] Another possible reference is that, when the company arrives in Spain, they are offered *núa bid ⁊ sean lenda*, 'fresh food and old ale'. This phrase is also found verbatim in the passage from *CA* (§72) in which Lugaid Loígde is given 'fresh food and old ale' by the sovereignty goddess:

> *Luidh Lugaid co[a] bhraithribh, ⁊ dobeir gusin tech lais íat. Ocus fogabait **núa bídh ⁊ sen leanna** inn*
> Lugaid returned to his brothers and brought them with him to the house. And they received the best food and drink there (Arbuthnot 2007, 22, 98).

The Spanish princess who provides the future king with his royal apparel and—implicitly—with a new name, is typologically similar to, for example, the goddess in *Baile in Scáil* who serves the drink of kingship (Murray 2004, 34, 51), or the sovereignty goddess who gives new names to Lugaid Loígde in *CA* (§72) (Arbuthnot 2007, 20-23; 96-99). Given the passion of the Irish authors for etymologies, there is an important meaning in the princess's nickname, Lígbratach, 'the beautifully mantled one' or 'possessing the beautiful mantle'. In a way, this sobriquet symbolises Eógan's destiny as, in fact, it is *he* who will possess the beautiful mantle, which his wife bestows upon him.

One may ask why the princess, if she is a sovereignty figure, is neither named (the name Moméra appears only in the title of the tale at the end of the text) nor granted the right to speak. However, this can be explained by the fact that her only function in the narrative is to become a wife and thereby validate her spouse as a ruler. Though normally a sovereignty female has an active role, in *Baile in Scáil* she also functions as a passive mediator between Lug and the mortal king, similar to the Delphic Pythia. Máire Herbert explains the mechanical role of the sovereignty goddess in this tale by the fact that 'the locus of power has shifted from female to male' (1992, 270). Herbert 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' (1992, 272). Thus, sovereignty is seen 'as a passive female object upon which an active male subject inscribes his right to rule' (Eichhorn-Mulligan 2006, 1016).

Ultimately, the king's wife mirrors the goddess of sovereignty *par excellence*. In *Echtra Chormaic*, the voyage of the king to the Otherworld is determined by

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12 A three-day and three-night period is a commonplace in Irish literature. For instance, Nera stays in the *síd* for three days and three nights (Meyer 1889, 221); in *Mesca Ulad*, the Ulstermen spend three days and three nights drinking (*la trí laaib & aidchib ic ól*) (Carmichael 1941, 6).

his will to bring back his wife, Eithne, who has been kidnapped by Otherworld creatures. However, as was convincingly shown by Ó Cathasaigh, 'Cormac's wife, Eithne Thóebfhota, 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' (1978, 141). Another example is Conn's wife Bécuma in *Echtra Airt meic Cuinn*, who is also a personification of sovereignty. Her marriage with Conn is unsuccessful insofar as he is not the righteous king, and the throne is intended for Art. Therefore, Bécuma sends Art to the Otherworld realm where he should marry Delbcháem, Bécuma's *alter ego* and yet another incarnation of the sovereignty goddess (O Hehir 1983, 169–170). Apart from the sacred marriage, among the vital components of the sovereignty *topos*, we find birth of progeny. As Mac Cana 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' (1955–6, 88). It is significant, therefore, that the birth of Ailill Aulom is given a prominent place in our tale, and Eógan's spouse is portrayed as *mater genetrix* of the Eóganacht.

The narrative of *TM* is focused on the voyage as part of the *rite de passage*, followed by a return back home with a new status,[13] and is, therefore, similar to other *echtrai* known in the Irish tradition. The protagonist travels to the Otherworld in order to find a wife who represents his sovereignty (cf. *Echtra Airt meic Cuinn*). In the parallel realm, he receives special gifts, attributes of kingship and manifestations of the king's legitimacy to the throne. In *Echtra Chormaic*, Cormac receives a cup of truth; in *Baile in Scáil*, Conn gets staves, cup and vessel. That the cloak of the king represents his power is evident from, for example, *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* where Conaire goes to Tara stark-naked and, first of all, gets a cloak as a symbol of his new kingly status.[14]

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). These elements, in fact, constitute the narrative structure of *TM*. First, Eógan is called upon by the Otherworld visitors. Then, he is recognised by the druid and the king of Spain. Eventually, he comes back to Ireland to be acknowledged by his contemporaries (*ro-hindised fo Éirinn a torachtain ⁊ ba ríg*

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13   Van Gennep divided the rite of passage into three stages: separation, transition and incorporation (1960, 81). These elements can be clearly seen in *TM*: first, Eógan is separated from his environment; during his transitional period in the Otherworld he is subjected to bodily mutation; finally, he is incorporated back into society and acts as a cultural hero and a wise ruler facilitating the work of his people. As Scowcroft 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' (1988, 41).

14   See Fomin 2010 for the discussion of the royal mantle in Irish and Indian traditions.

Érenn fora chind-som Cathaír Mór 'their arrival was told all over Ireland and the king of Ireland, *Cathaír Mór*, was awaiting him').[15]

Comparing *TM* to *CML*, a longer account of how Eógan gained power with the help of his Spanish allies, O'Rahilly argues, not without 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' (1946a, 187). It is, perhaps, O'Rahilly's failure to see a deeper layer of meaning in the tale, which has resulted in the text's neglect in modern scholarship. However, as the analysis above has demonstrated, *TM* is by no means inferior to *CML*. It is an equally important account imbued with a political agenda which describes the same fact (Eógan's acquisition of kingship after his return from Spain) from another point of view—from a symbolic, ritual and mythological perspective. The *echtra* story-pattern, which is generally associated with sovereignty motifs, served as a perfect vehicle for conveying an elaborate political message, i.e. the future rulership of Eógan and his descendants over the southern part of Ireland, and the division of the country between Eógan and Conn Cétchathach.

This message is already present in *Do Bunad*, where the arrival of the founder of the Dál Cuinn is set in parallel terms with Eógan's one:

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

O'Rahilly notes that this name, *in Míl Espane tánaise*, 'the second Míl from Spain,' represents 'a redactor's substitution for Conn' (1935, 365). The text further contrasts the two parallel settlements, the ascendancy of Eógan being gentle and peaceful in comparison with the Dál Cuinn, who rule Ireland by the sword. The motif of this division becomes especially emphasised at the end of *TM*, logically enough, after Eógan has received his mantle and is preparing to return to Ireland. When Eógan has already boarded the ship, the druid gives him another 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 no one will leave Ireland to you, and it will be divided between you.

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15 O'Connor 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 comprises the divine designation (Nemglan, God); recognition by wise men (druids of Tara, Samuel), and acceptance by people (2013, 253).

The same prophecy is repeated in the final passage of the tale and concludes the whole story:

> *Ocus do-géntar let na trí dúine tucad duit ⁊ Fidfeccai ainm cech dúine díb ⁊ co ngéba leth Érenn ule léo.*

> And the three forts will be built by you, which were given to you; the name of each of them will be Fidfeccai, and you will conquer the half of all of Ireland with them.

Thus, the shadow of Eógan's rival, Conn, who is never explicitly mentioned, is present in the text nevertheless. The motif of the division 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 notion is underpinned by the figure of Fiacha Suigthi, the youngest son of Fedlimid Rechtmar and the brother of Conn. In *TM*, he is one of Eógan's foster-brothers, which implies a 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 truce between Eógan and Conn is further alluded to in the prophecy directed toward new-born Ailill. As the druid says, 'great will be the judgement (?) which he will bring upon the lands around him' (*bid oll ndáile do-béra arna críchaib uimme*). This prophecy focuses on the future reign of Ailill, while the mention of lands under his influence might refer to the descendants of Ailill who will rule over different parts of the country: Eógan Mór, another ancestor of the Eóganacht; Cormac Cas, ancestor of the Dál Cais; and Cían, after whom the Cíanachta are named. The listeners to the tale obviously were aware of the fact that the wife of Ailill and mother of Eógan Mór is Sadb, daughter of Conn Cétchathach, whose marital union cements the alliance between the two competing dynasties (O'Brien 1976, 192-193).[16]

The author of the tale appropriately chooses the genre of an overseas voyage in order to communicate this political message and to validate the right of the Eóganacht to rule in the south, and the full literary sophistication of the tale emerges only after being addressed through this lens. Significantly, Duignan incorporates such tales as *Tochmarc Emire*, *Baile in Scáil*, and *Serglige Con Culainn* in her analysis of the *echtrai*. Although these tales are not labelled as *echtrai*, their plots describe the adventures in the Otherworld and may be fruitfully explored in these terms. These examples show that the borders of medieval genres are sometimes

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16   For instance, the reference to Ailill's marriage to Sadb and to the three dynasties founded by their sons opens the ninth-century tale *Cath Maige Mucrama* (O'Daly 1975, 38, 39).

blurred when it comes to giving titles, '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).[17] Although, structurally and stylistically, *TM* corresponds with other *echtrai*, the title *tochmarc* should not be regarded as arbitrary either.[18] In fact, these two genres sometimes overlap, since the voyage to the Otherworld is often motivated by a quest for a wife who embodies kingship for a male protagonist. The title of the tale *Echtra Airt meic Cuinn* *Tochmarc Delbchaime ingine Morgain* (Best 1907) would be a good example of the connection between the two genres, while O Hehir insisted that the first part of the tale, which describes Conn's marriage, could be more accurately referred to as *Eachtra Cuind Cetchathaig acus Tochmarc Bécuma ingine Eogain Indbir* (1983, 160).

I would suggest that in general, *tochmarca* imply the notion of sacred marriage, with the main heroine personifying the sovereignty goddess.[19] For example, the self-representation of Emer as *Temair ban*, 'Tara of women', in her dialogue with Cú Chulainn in *Tochmarc Emire* prompted Wagner to observe that Emer epitomises the sovereignty goddess (1975, 20–21). Likewise, in *Echtra Airt*, both Bécuma and Delbcháem represent sovereignty figures (O Hehir 1983, 169–170). In *Tochmarc Étaíne*, the serving of drink is chosen as a trial to find out the 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, in a footnote, compared her to Gráinne dispersing a sleep-inducing

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17 Cf. *Táin Bó Fraích* which 'for the greater part is rather a story of the "wooing" type (*tochmarc*)' (Meid 2015, 20). In *Tochmarc Becfhola*, the marriage of Becfhola to the king is mentioned in passing and the story concerns the voyage of the main heroine to the Otherworld, which prompted John Carey to call Tochmarc Becfhola a 'female echtra' (2015, 73).

18 It is hard to agree with Nuijten's statement that *TM* 'is not a traditional *tochmarc*', that the 'elements of courtship have been removed or lost in transmission', and that the title *Tochmarc Moméra* is a later scribal addition extrapolated from the passage in the Book of Leinster *ad hoc* (Nuijten 2016, 13). 'Proper *tochmarc*', according to Nuijten, contains the element of *grád ecmaise*, love of protagonists before they meet (2016, 12, 23). However, such tales as *Tochmarc Becfhola* or *Tochmarc Ferbe* do not concern wooing or love either. *Táin Bó Fraích* mentions *grád ecmaise* but is not called a *tochmarc* (although the plot corresponds to this genre, see the previous footnote). In general, although all *tochmarca* focus on the events related, directly or obliquely, to the marriage, from the point of view of their structure and composition they cannot be reduced to any common scheme, and thus, it is hardly possible to talk about a 'proper *tochmarc*'.

19 Cf. the genre of *togla*, 'destructions', which do not describe any destruction, but only 'the destruction of a *bruiden* as the result of the king's breaking of certain royal taboos called *geasa*' (Myrick 1993, 75). Likewise, as Duignan's analysis of *echtrai* has shown, the plot of these tales 'is not in fact as much about contacting the Otherworld as about legitimizing the supremacy of the royal power' (Mikhailova 2014, 236).

drink at her marriage feast with Finn (1946b, 16). The view that Gráinne is a sovereignty goddess in her negative aspect was also expressed by Breatnach (1959, 146).[20] In a recent article, John Carey postulated that disguised Étaín 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 (2016, 32, 37). In *Tochmarc Becfhola* (Bhreathnach 1984), Becfhola is obviously portrayed as a sovereignty goddess who comes to Ireland in search of a husband.

This ubiquitous presence of the sovereignty goddess's reflexes in almost each single heroine of the *tochmarca* was explained by Scowcroft:

> 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, and abstract narrative expresses the analogy in literal terms, queen and goddess playing virtually the same role (1995, 132).

Therefore, although the structure of *TM* follows the pattern of an *echtra*, its attribution to the *tochmarca* encapsulates the crux of the tale: Eógan's kingship is endorsed by means of a popular 'king-and-goddess' theme. Unlike Niall, who unites with the sovereignty of Ireland, or Art, who marries an Otherworldly goddess, Eógan gets married to a Spanish princess. Her provenance was carefully chosen to maintain the link of Eógan with Spain (as in *Do Bunad* where Eógan is a foreigner) while complying with the historical doctrine of *LG*. According to it, 'the Eóghanacht had long been settled in Ireland by Eóghan's time, for their ancestor Éibher son of Míl had come there hundreds of years before with his brother Éiremhón' (Jackson 1938, xxv).[21] The same is true in relation to the Connachta, whose ancestor Conn Cétchathach is a descendant of Éremón, the ruler of the northern half of Ireland.

The partition of Ireland into southern and northern halves between Conn and Eógan echoes the division by Éremón and Éber in *LG* (Macalister 1956, 95). The author of *TM* reinforces the connection between Éber son of Míl and his descendant Eógan by naming the Spanish king Éber and making the Tower of Bregon, from which Íth first saw Ireland (Macalister 1956, 10, 11), his royal residence. Thus, by travelling to Ireland from Spain, Eógan symbolically re-enacts the invasion by the Milesian kings who first established human kingship in Ireland.[22] These

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20 Notably, in the same article Breatnach also argues that 'Ireland', in which the 'Pursuit of Diarmuid and Gráinne' is imagined, is in fact the Otherworld (1959, 146).

21 See the genealogies of Clann Ébir and Síl Ébir to which the Eóganacht belonged (Macalister 1956, 92–93; O'Brien 1976, 191, 192–193).

22 It is also significant that Eógan starts his journey to Spain from Dún na mBárc, point of landing for the first invasion of Ireland, led by Cesair (Carey 1987, 37). Another reference to this character is found in the druid's prophecy: he reveals that the Spanish

overtones of the Milesian legend contribute to the image of Eógan as a rightful ruler and explain why Spain was chosen as a force behind the validation of Eógan's sovereignty.

Ultimately, *TM* not only appeals to the contemporary Eóganacht 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,[23] 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 archetypal precedent of the partition of Ireland between Éber and Éremón, the ancestors of Eógan and Conn.[24] Their equality is manifested by multiple bonds between Conn and Eógan as exemplified by the figures of Fiacha Suigthi and Ailill. It is also significant that Eógan's authority is acknowledged by Cathaír Mór, who willingly gives him land 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 clearly evokes the antithesis of the Eóganacht's peaceful rule and the Connachta's rule by sword in *Do Bunad*.

Essentially, *TM* is a political allegory seeking to promote the control of the Eóganacht over the southern provinces of Ireland. As so often happens, the history of the immemorial past has been forged in a way to fulfil the hopes of the present. For instance, discussing the composition of *Baile in Scáil*, Máire Herbert notes that 'the myth is co-opted to serve the purpose of projecting the dynasty's claim to the sovereignty of Ireland back to primordial time' (1992, 270). Functionally, *TM* is to the Eóganacht of Munster 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 Eóganacht started 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

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princess's husband will be from the Island of Cesair (*a h-inis Cesrach*). By means of these remarks, the author of *TM* establishes a dialogue with *LG*, the authority of which supports the veracity and the value of his own compilation.

23 Interestingly, O'Rahilly argues that 'the slaying of Eógan by Conn is analogous to, if not suggested by, the slaying of Éber by Éremón as told in *LG*' (1935, 366). See Macalister 1956, 155–157.

24 The historical perspectives of this division are discussed in Sproule 1984, 31ff. Particularly interesting is his idea that the division was purely fictitious. The southern dynasties promulgated the myth of the southern-northern parallelism to create a southern equivalent to the Connachta and to prove that the Eóganacht enjoyed the same power in the south, as the Connachta in the north, which was far from truth (Sproule 1984, 36). *TM* may have been part of this propagandistic political mythology.

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 author of *TM* undertook the task of creating such a legend with remarkable literary sensibility, creative imagination and intellectual energy, and in the confines of a short text, managed to marry a potent political message to a fascinating Otherworldly adventure.

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