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## Equivocal Land Claims in *Guta saga* and *Tochmarc Étaíne*

### A Neglected Norse-Irish Analogue

Likely composed during the thirteenth century (Peel 1999: vii),<sup>1</sup> *Guta saga* offers a condensed historiographical account of the island of Gotland from its fabled discovery through its Christianization and eventual domination by the Swedish king at Uppsala. This legendary history of the Gotlanders was originally written in Gutnish, the native East Norse dialect of the island, and survives as such in the unique manuscript B64 Holmiensis in the Royal Library in Stockholm.<sup>2</sup> The account opens with

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<sup>1</sup> Peel surmises that the date of composition falls sometime between 1220 and 1330.

<sup>2</sup> *Guta saga* appears in B54 Holmiensis as an appendix to the collection of Gotlandish laws known as *Guta lag*. The Gutnish recension of *Guta lag* actually survives in two man-

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**Abstract:** The Old Norse *Guta saga* contains an interesting episode in which the Byzantine emperor is tricked by a group of Gotlanders into granting settlement rights. The unwitting emperor initially seeks to give the Gotlanders permission to stay in his realm for only a month, but is later informed that the phrase “for the waxing and waning” actually means “for ever and ever”. As a result, the emperor is left no legal recourse for the removal of the Gotlanders. In the most recent edition of *Guta saga* (1999), Christine Peel identifies many of the oral and written source traditions that inform the narrative, but when it comes to the duping of the emperor, the editor is forced to concede that, “No close parallels to this story have come to light”. Peel goes on to discuss numerous land claiming tricks that appear in Norse and Middle English narratives, but fails to consider the Irish material as a possible source for analogues. For those familiar with medieval Irish literature, the tricking of the emperor will doubtlessly call to mind similar deceptions involving equivocal language in *Tochmarc Étaíne* and other narratives. This paper explores the possible connections between *Guta saga* and its Irish analogues as well as reassesses some of the possible implications for research methodologies and the cultural exchange between Ireland and continental Scandinavia.

**Keywords:** Norse-Celtic, Old Norse Literature, Old Irish Literature, Middle Irish Literature, Scandinavian Folklore, Irish Mythology, Irish Folklore, Folklore Motifs, Equivocation, Land Claims, Cultural Exchange, Analogues, Historiography, Gotland, *Guta saga*, *Tochmarc Étaíne*, Cináed Úa h-Artacáin, *De Gabáil in t-Sída*, *Altrom Tige Dá Medar*, *Echtra Mac Echdach Mugmedóin*, *Scéla Conchobair Maic Nessa*, St. Moling, St. Patrick.

the Promethean figure Pieluar, who is heralded as the first to discover the island. Gotland is initially enchanted as it sinks by day and rises by night, but Pieluar manages to break the spell by introducing fire. The legendary history then relates how Pieluar's son, Hafpi, settles Gotland along with his wife, Huitastierna, and the island is populated by their offspring. Within a generation, however, the Gotlanders find that their island has grown overpopulated and cast lots to send every third person away. The exiled Gotlanders then migrate across the Baltic, into Estonia, down through Russia, and eventually end up in *Grikland*, i.e. the Byzantine Empire. Once in Byzantium, the Gotlanders seek an audience with the Byzantine emperor, asking his permission for them to stay in his territory for what would seem to be a month's time. What follows, however, is an interesting land claiming trick achieved through equivocal language that has long been overlooked by comparative literature scholars and folklorists:

So fierri foru þair, et þair quamu til Griklanz. Þar baddus þair byggias firir af grika kunungi um ny ok niþar. Kunungr þann lufaþi þaim ok hugþi, et ai maira þan ann manar vari. Siþan gangnum manabi, vildi hann þaim bort visa. En þair annsuarabu þa, et ny ok niþar vari e ok e, ok quabu, so sir vara lufat. Þissum þaira viþratta quam firir drytningina um siþir. Þa segþi han: 'Minn herra kunungr! Þu lufaþi þaim byggia um ny ok niþar. Þa ir þet e ok e, þa matt þu ai af þaim taka.' So bygþus þair þar firir ok enn byggia, ok enn hafa þair sumt af varu mali. (Peel 1999: 4)

They travelled for such a distance that they came to the Byzantine empire. There they asked permission of the Byzantine emperor to live 'for the waxing and waning'. The emperor granted them that, thinking that this meant no more than a month. After a month had passed, he wanted to send them on their way. But they answered then that 'the waxing and waning' meant 'for ever and ever' and said that was just what they had been promised. This dispute of theirs came at last to the notice of the empress. She then said, 'My lord emperor, you promised them that they could settle for the waxing and the waning of the moon. Now that continues for ever and ever, so you cannot take that promise away from them.' So there they settled and still live. And, moreover, they retain some of our language. (Peel 1999: 5)

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uscripts *A* (B54 Holmiensis) and *B* (AM 54 4to, held in the Arnamagnæan collection in Copenhagen), though *Guta saga* is lacking in *B*. Several translations of *Guta lag* and *Guta saga* have also been preserved, including a relatively complete German rendering (though several minor omissions and interpolations are present) from c. 1400, a partial Old Swedish adaptation, and two fragmentary Danish versions. For a lucid summary of the manuscripts and their relation to one another, cf. Peel 1999: x–xiv.

In briefly straying from its main focus on Gotland proper, *Guta saga* utilizes this digression as an opportunity to incorporate an amusing migratory legend.<sup>3</sup> Using this anecdote as a template, *Guta saga* reveals a fabulate<sup>4</sup> in which: 1) a dispossessed party or individual seeks ownership of some piece of land; 2) said party asks permission from the rightful lord to take possession of that land using equivocal language; 3) the equivocal phrasing hints that the land shall be held by the previously dispossessed party for a finite period of time; 4) the rightful lord rashly awards the land after erroneously interpreting the phrase; 5) the equivocation is later revealed as a euphemism or idiom meaning “forever and ever”; 6) a mediator steps in and sides with the party claiming the land in perpetuity; 7) the original lord is left no legal recourse for the removal of the squatters and is forced to concede defeat.

The most recent editor of *Guta saga*, Christine Peel, does an admirable job of identifying many of the oral and written source traditions that inform the narrative and even makes note of the possible poetic and oral folklore background of this particular passage, stating:

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<sup>3</sup> L. Bødker offers the following definition of ‘migratory legend’: “...a narrative of a certain length, usually shorter than a *fairy tale*, in prose, existing in a limited number of *variants*, some, if not all, of which may become localized in quite different places.” (Bødker 1965: 198) Bo Almqvist elaborates: “The term ‘migratory legend’ ... indicates that the narrative in question, though attached to various persons and localities, is found in more or less the same form over sizable geographic areas, usually in several countries.” (Almqvist 1991: 2, note 2).

<sup>4</sup> Bødker’s dictionary of folk literature terminology in the Germanic languages follows the usage of ‘fabulate’ as established by Carl W. von Sydow, stating: “F[abulate] is defined as a *sagn*, which, in contradistinction to *memorate*, has not directly resulted from experiences or observations, but from concepts having their origin in those *elements* which have, as it were, crystallized in f[abulates]. They cannot really have taken place in the form adopted in the f[abulate]; rather they are formed by the fabulating art of the people, who tried to arrange the subject-matter of the *sagn*, and to explain and give expression to the facts of the case....” (Bødker 1965: 94–5) On how this particular tale might represent a fabulous explanation by the Gotlanders to express their familiarity with a historic group of Black Sea Goths that spoke a similar language, cf. Peel 1999: xxxi. Bo Almqvist further expands on von Sydow’s definition of ‘fabulate,’ stating: “The term *fabulate* ... is based on the construction of the narrative in question, a short but well-composed and rounded story, often containing a snappy core-sentence, consisting e.g. of a rhymed or rhythmical formula, and often also a surprise effect of one kind or another.” (Almqvist 1991: 2, note 2) The phrase here, *ny ok niþar*, certainly represents a snappy and rhythmical core sentence that lends a surprise effect upon later interpretation. Following the example of Almqvist, the terms ‘fabulate’ and ‘migratory legend’ are used here as essentially interchangeable. Almqvist explains, “Since nearly all fabulates are migratory and have become migratory for the very reason that they are interesting and easy to learn, thanks to their construction, the terms ‘migratory legend’ and ‘fabulate’ may for practical purposes be used synonymously.” (Almqvist 1991: 2, note 2)

This passage distinguishes the emigration episode as told in *Guta saga* from the more generalized accounts in the written sources ... and contains such a remarkable number of alliterative phrases (*so fierri foru þair, badus þair byggiar, ny ok niþar, maira þan ann manafþr, þissun þaira viþrattra* and so on) that it seems probable that some lost poetry lies behind the story. If so, it is likely to have been of the orally-transmitted variety. One would expect to find parallels to the episode of the word-play used to trick the Byzantine emperor in ballads or folktales.... (Peel 1999: xxix–xxx)

In an effort to verify anticipated parallels, Peel goes on to evaluate a number of deceptive land purchases involving the familiar ox or bull-hide measurement wherein the dispossessed may have as much land as can be covered by a single hide and proceed by cutting the hide into thin strips so as to cover an unexpectedly sizeable area.<sup>5</sup> During her attempt to establish genuine analogues, Peel points to this reoccurring motif in Saxo Grammaticus, *Ragnars saga loðbrókar*, and a legend regarding Birger Magnusson. (Peel 1999: xxix–xxx) That the turn of phrase regarding time and the equivocal hide-trick are closely related, however, seems highly unlikely. As many readers will recall, the hide-trick is alluded to in Book I of the *Aeneid*, where Dido uses a bull's hide to establish the boundaries of Carthage (ll. 367–8). Though oral permutations of the hide-trick cropped up as well, the *Aeneid*'s pervasive influence on medieval audiences lends a more direct, written source for the motif's dissemination.<sup>6</sup> In

<sup>5</sup> For numerous parallels involving this motif, cf. K185.1. in Thompson 1955–58.

<sup>6</sup> The transmission history of the hide-trick motif is difficult to determine with any precision. The *Aeneid*'s influence on medieval literature is indeed vast and may provide a textual source for the motif's dissemination. The hide-trick itself is expounded upon at length by Heinrich von Veldeke in his *Eneasroman*; cf. Kartschoke 1986: 24–25. There is no surviving Old Norse adaptation of the *Aeneid* in its entirety, though the text was doubtlessly known to the saga writers as portions of it were used to expand the longer recension of the *Trójumanna saga*; cf. Simek & Pálsson 1987: 381. Peel notes that the hide-trick motif can be found in Saxo Grammaticus. (Peel 1999: xxx) Given Saxo Grammaticus' dependence on the *Aeneid* as a model for his *Gesta Danorum*, it seems plausible that he could have lifted the motif from Virgil at the end of the twelfth century, thereby making it available to the sphere of Norse influence. The Irish may have also encountered the motif via their contact with the *Aeneid*. Indeed, Virgil's work was adapted into Irish in the form of the fourteenth-century *Imtheachta Aeniasa*. The *Imtheachta Aeniasa* frequently abbreviates its source material and omits to translate the passage referring specifically to the hide-trick. Only passing reference is made to Dido "building a city": *7 ata [ac] cumdach cathrach* (Calder 1907: 20). Whereas George Calder's edition remains the standard to date, his commentary and introductory remarks have since been superseded by those of Erich Poppe; cf. Poppe 1995. While the *Aeneid* supplies a convenient textual source for transmission of the hide-trick, the folk motif would doubtlessly have been disseminated via oral variants and written sources other than Virgil's work. For a brief discussion of variants on the hide-trick as found elsewhere in Irish Christian sources (i.e. legends regarding St. Brigit and St. Patrick) dating back to at least the ninth-century, cf. Ó hÓgáin 1992/1993: 65–66.

the end, Peel herself grants that the hide-trick is a rather flimsy parallel. Noting that no word-play approximating the Gotlanders' equivocal land claim appears elsewhere in the Norse tradition, Peel is forced to concede that, "No close parallels to this story have come to light." (Peel 1999: xxx) Peel, of course, fails to account for the Irish material.

Students and scholars of medieval Irish literature will be familiar with the equivocation of time as a means for claiming land and need only point to the folktale types K232.2\* ("one day and one night: object borrowed for a day and a night retained") and K232.2.1\* ("Fairy (god?) loses stronghold by consenting to lend it for 'a day and a night'") catalogued by Tom Peete Cross in his *Motif-Index of Early Irish Literature* to begin citing instances of this motif's appearance.<sup>7</sup> The most famous parallel occurs in *Tochmarc Étaíne*, where Óengus tricks Elcmar, the owner of the Brug na Bóinne, into turning over the famed *síd*.<sup>8</sup> According to a prose recension preserved in the Yellow Book of Lecan, the Dagda (also referred to as Eochaid Ollathair) contrived to sleep with Elcmar's wife, the result of which union was the boy Óengus.<sup>9</sup> As he grows up at Brí

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<sup>7</sup> For the significance of "night and day" as a microcosm for the whole of time in Celtic literature, cf. Rees & Rees 1961: 83–89.

<sup>8</sup> Throughout the body of this paper, the normalized medieval Irish spelling of Óengus is used to denote the mythical figure. The name may appear in numerous permutations such as modern Irish *Aengus* or Scots Gaelic *Aonghus*. The reader will notice that within cited passages, alternate spellings of the name are maintained in accordance with the usage of the individual editors and translators. Despite the orthographical variance, the character remains the same. Conceived and born within the span of a day as the offspring of the Dagda and the river deity Bóinn, Óengus was also known by the cognomen *Mac Óc* ("young son") or, alternately, by the ungrammatical *Mac ind Óc* ("the son of the youth"). For a brief discussion of this nickname, its origin and relation to the Welsh figure Mabon, cf. Ó hÓgain 1992/1993: 59–61; *idem* 2006: 20–21. Again, Óengus and Mac Óc refer to one and the same figure.

<sup>9</sup> Three narratives (cols. 129a–b, 129b–130b, and 130b–132a respectively) are preserved under the title *Tochmarc Étaíne* in the early twelfth-century *Lebor na hUidre* ("The Book of the Dun Cow"; Dublin, Royal Irish Academy MS 23. E. 25), though the first and third narratives survive there only fragmentarily; cf. Best & Bergin 1929: 323–32. The relevant section about Óengus' seizure of the Brug na Bóinne, comprising the first part of the first narrative, is missing from *Lebor na hUidre* due to a lacuna in the manuscript. Óengus' claiming of the *síd* is, however, preserved in a section of the early fifteenth-century Yellow Book of Lecan (National Library of Ireland MS G 4; formerly MS 8214 of the Phillipps collection at Thirlestaine House, Cheltenham) where *Tochmarc Étaíne* appears in cols. 985–990. This manuscript serves as the basis for Bergin and Best's 1938 edition and should not be confused with the main volume of the Yellow Book of Lecan (Trinity College, Dublin MS 1318, *olim* H 2.16), which also contains a recension of *Tochmarc Étaíne* (cols. 876–877) corresponding to the second narrative found in *Lebor na hUidre*. The three sections of *Tochmarc Étaíne* also appear together in the heavily interpolated recension of British Library, Egerton MS 1782. Lastly, the story of Óengus' equivocal land claim as related in

Léith under the fosterage of Midir, Óengus is unaware of his true parentage. When he is teased by Triath son of Febal of the Fir Bolg for his unknown lineage and lack of inheritance, Óengus goes to Midir in despair. Midir then informs Óengus of his true heritage and presents him for acknowledgment before the Dagda. The Dagda recognizes Óengus as his son and wishes that Óengus be granted the Brug na Bóinne as his domain. There is, of course, one catch—the Brug na Bóinne still belongs to Elcmar. The Dagda then lays out his plan for Óengus to claim the Brug:

‘Tatham dó,’ ol Eochaid. ‘Tiad dia Samna isin mBruig, 7 tuicead gaisgead fair. La side 7 caincomraic sin la firu Erenn, 7 ni bi neach a fuath a cheili and, 7 bied Ealcmar a Cnuc Síde an Broga cen gaisced fair acht gablan findchuill ina laim, 7 a brat diabal *imi*, 7 dealg n-oir ina brutt, 7 tri .l. isin cluichimuigh ara belaib oca cluichi, 7 teis Aengus chuici, 7 domaithi do dia marbad, 7 is tacar do nin rubai <.i. nir gona> acht coro ingealla a réir dó, 7 bá[d] sí riar Aengusa rigi láí co n-aidchi isin Bruigh, 7 ní leicisiu a ferand do Ealcmar co targha mo reirsea, 7 bad ed tacra Aengusa iar tiachtain is i mbithdisli dorochair do a ferand ar anacal Ealcmar arnach ro marbad, 7 is rigi láí co n-aidchi conatechoir, 7’ asbeirsom ‘is laib 7 aidchib dochaitear an doman.’ (Bergin & Best 1938: 144–46)

‘I have this for him,’ said Eochaid. ‘On the day of Samain let him go into the Brug, and let him go armed. That is a day of peace and amity among the men of Ireland, on which none is at enmity with his fellow. And Elcmar will be in Cnoc Síde in Broga unarmed save for a fork of white hazel in his hand, his cloak folded about him, and a gold brooch in his cloak, and three fifties playing before him in the playing-field; and let Aengus go to him and threaten to kill him. But it is meet that he slay him not, provided he promise him his will. And let this be the will of Aengus, that he be king a day and a night in the Brug; and see that thou yield not the land to Elcmar till he submit himself (?) to my decision; and when he comes let Aengus’ plea be that the land has fallen to him in fee simple for sparing Elcmar and not slaying him, and that what he had asked for is kingship of day and night, and’ said he, ‘it is in days and nights that the world is spent.’ (Bergin & Best 1938:145–47)

As the story progresses, all goes as planned and Óengus successfully wins the Brug. The parallels with *Guta saga* are indeed close and the migratory legend as related in *Tochmarc Étaíne* matches all of the same

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*Tochmarc Étaíne* may be found in a passage extracted from that work into Trinity College Dublin MS 1337 (*olím* H. 3. 18) for lexical purposes; cf. Stern 1905: 523–24. T. M. Charles-Edwards has most recently summarized the various narratives and recensions referred to under the umbrella title *Tochmarc Étaíne* and their relation to one another; cf. Charles-Edwards 2002: 165–66.

criteria for the fabulate: 1) Óengus represents a dispossessed individual whose main goal is to obtain land appropriate to his station; 2) Óengus asks permission from the owner, Elcmar, to take possession of the Brug na Bóinne using equivocal language; 3) the equivocal phrasing hints that Óengus shall rule over the Brug for the finite period of a day and a night; 4) in an effort to save his own life, Elcmar rashly hands over the Brug after mistakenly interpreting the phrase *laí co n-aidchi*; 5) the equivocation is later interpreted as an indefinite amount of time, for “it is days and nights that the world is spent”; 6) the Dagda serves as a mediator, albeit a partial one, and awards the Brug to Óengus; 7) Elcmar is left with no legal claim to the Brug, but the Dagda later compensates him with land of equal value.<sup>10</sup>

While *Guta saga*'s version of the equivocal trick represents the motif's sole known attestation in the Scandinavian milieu, the story of how Óengus won the Brug na Bóinne is not a single occurrence within the Irish tradition. In his *Die irische Helden- und Königsage bis zum siebzehnten Jahrhundert*, Rudolf Thurneysen identifies several surviving versions of how Óengus took possession of the Brug and takes special care to catalogue all known stories that relate either directly or indirectly to the events of the narrative. (Thurneysen 1921: 598–618) One such rendering of the tale is found in a verse adaptation of *Tochmarc Étaíne*'s first section, preserved toward the end of the metrical *dindsheanchas* in *Lebor Laignech* (or the “Book of Leinster”; Trinity College, Dublin MS 1339, *olim* H. 2. 18). The poem's purported author is named in the final stanza as “Cinaed” and a colophon identifies him with Cináed ua h-Artacáin († 975). Thurneysen notes that the language alone is far too late for a poet of the tenth century and surmises that the verse rendition was likely composed in the middle of the twelfth century. (Thurneysen 1921: 608–9) The poem strays somewhat from the details of the aforementioned prose recension. The major difference is that Midir plays the central role in executing the land claim, for Óengus instructs him to ask for the Brug as repayment for an ale-feast they have provided for the Dagda. Furthermore, Óengus and Midir do not deal with Elcmar when vying for the Brug. Instead, the Brug is presented as the Dagda's own fortress and the two tricksters must confront him about taking ownership over the *síd*. There is also no mediating voice in this version and it falls to Midir to

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<sup>10</sup> *Tairtais do ferann ar th'anacal, ar ba caime lat do ainim oldas do thír, 7 rot biasu tír limsa chena ná bó hingoiri duit oldas an Brug* (“Thou gavest thy land for mercy shown thee, for thy life was dearer to you than thy land, yet thou shalt have land from me that will be no less profitable to thee than the Brug”). Bergin & Best 1938: 146–47.

explain that “night and day” actually implies “for ever and ever”. As a result of these divergences, a couple of the fabulate’s characteristics do not correspond as neatly with this variant. Not only is there the absence of a mediator, but compensation and embarrassment rather than a sense of entitlement to land holdings and the accompanying respect seem to constitute the chief motivating factors. Nevertheless, the equivocation of “day and night”, the supposed finite duration of the “loan”, and the ultimate revelation that the *síd* has been granted in perpetuity all remain at the center of the episode:

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| 58. “Tráth bas irlam lind na láich—<br>ni chel, a rí find na fáth—<br>noco beo oc cungid do chruid,<br>gebat úait do Bruig co bráth.” | 58. ‘When the ale-feast of the warriors is made ready,’ answered Midir, ‘I conceal not, O fairhaired King of poets, that I shall not claim thy cattle, but I will accept thy Brug in perpetuity.’ |
| 59. “Na cuinnig mo Bruig tria bæis,<br>ní maith lem a chur fo chíis,<br>noco tibrind duit, a fir,<br>ar a fil fo nim a-nís!”          | 59. ‘Seek not heedlessly for my Brug: I will not have it laid under tribute: nay, man, I shall not grant it to thee for all that is beneath the sky.’   |
| 60. “Can co tardda ní bas mó,<br>ar isat rí for cach ré,<br>iasacht lá 7 aidche cen ail<br>[dúinn a láich] di’n taig i-tá.            | 60. ‘Then, though thou grant no more, for thou art sovereign across every highway; a day and night’s loan without fail of the house wherein thou stayest.’  |
| 61. Tabair rum ratha, a rí Ríach,<br>a fir imres gnathga ngnath!<br>tabiar rum esca 7 grián<br>mar do-beir cach fial iar fáth!”       | 61. ‘Give me thy bonds, O prince of Rí, thou who wieldest an accustomed spear, swear to me by moon and sun, as all true men must swear according to cause.’                                       |
| 62. Falmaigis Dagda a dún,<br>ra pa rún can tarba di ɛn,<br>Oengus 7 Midir mín<br>rucsat ar in rí in ræn.                             | 62. The Dagda vacated his mansion: ’twas a compromise without value: Óengus and pleasant Midir had overreached the king.  |
| 63. Ria-siu tisad in tres tráth,<br>tic cuccu in bress nar’ bu bæth,<br>suail na-tised toir na tu<br>dlomaid riu co brath in lech.    | 63. Ere the third day was come, the chieftain returned to them, and even before help could come unto them (?), the hero ordered them forth forever.   |
| 64. “A láich,” ar Midir co mbáig,<br>“ma daime dáil ndligid dún,<br>adaig ocus la co lí<br>noco derna, [a] rí na rún.”                | 64. ‘Sire,’ quoth Midir proudly, ‘if thou wouldst permit our rightful compact; King of just purposes, night and day are not yet ended.’   |



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| <p>65. Ro breacad Dagda do'n tslícht<br/>         'mo an tir talmga do thecht,<br/>         dia finnad nech rún in rí,<br/>         do-rat sain i snim foa secht.<br/>         (Gwynn 1914: 227–28)</p> | <p>65. In this wise was the Dagda cozened<br/>         of the fruitful (?) lands of his right: it cast<br/>         him into sevenfold grief, lest any should<br/>         divine his secret.<br/>         (Gwynn 1914: 234–35)</p> |
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Along with the verse adaptation of *Tochmarc Étaíne*, the Book of Leinster contains yet another version of Óengus' seizure of the Brug, appropriately referred to by the title *De Gabáil in t-Śida* (or "On the taking possession of the *śid*").<sup>11</sup> Thurneysen remarks that the language of this short prose narrative is quite old and proposes that the text's composition dates, at the very latest, to the ninth century (Thurneysen 1921: 604). While Thurneysen's dating of the narrative is admittedly intuitive and lacks any detailed defense, subsequent scholars such as the text's editor, Vernam Hull, have supported his assertion (Hull 1933: 54). If such a claim to antiquity may be accepted, *De Gabáil in t-Śida* represents the oldest extant version of the tale. Even at this early date, the equivocation of time plays a central part in the narrative. Óengus confronts the Dagda alone in this version and, after being refused outright possession of the *śid*, receives a "loan" of the Brug for "a day and a night". Before Óengus approaches the Dagda, *De Gabáil in t-Śida* goes into more detail about the allocation of the various *śide* among the Tuatha Dé Danann. The result is a heightened sense of urgency and injustice on behalf of Óengus, having been left out of the original apportionment. Once again, Óengus outwits his father, insisting "that night and day are (the length of) the whole world":

Ba mór, di'diu, a chumachta-som in tan ba rí i tóssuch 7 ba hé fo'dail inna śide do feraib Dea .i. Lug Mac Ethnend i Śśid Rodrubán; Ogma i Śśid Airceltraí. Don Dagdu fessin, immurgu, Śith Leithet Lachtmaige, Oí Asíd, Cnoc Báinne, Brú Ruair. Śid in Broga, da'no, ba laiss i tossuch, amal as'berat.

Do'lluid, di'diu, in Mac Oac cosin Dagda do chungid feraind o fo'rodail do chách. Ba dalta saide, di'diu, do Midir Breg Léith 7 do Nindid fáith.

Now when he was king at first, his might was vast, and it was he who apportioned out the fairy mounds to the men of the Túatha Dé, namely Lug Mach Ethnend in Śid Rodrubán, (and) Ogma in Śid Airceltraí, but for the Dagda himself Śid Leithet Lachtmaige, Oí Asíd, Cnoc Báine, (and) Brú Ruair. As, however, they say, he had Śid In Brogra from the beginning.

Then Mac O[o]c came to the Dagda in order to petition for land after it had been distributed to each one. He was, moreover, a fosterling to Midir of Brí Léith and to Nindid, the seer.

<sup>11</sup> A later recension of the narrative may also be found in Dublin, Royal Irish Academy MS D. 4. 2 (formerly Stowe MS 992); cf. Meyer 1885: xii–xiii; Hull 1933: 53–56.

“Ní-m’thá duit,” ol in Dagda,  
“Tarnaic fodail lemm”.

“Ētar dam, di’diu”, ol in Mac  
Ooc, “cid laa co n-aidchi it trib  
féin”. Do-breth do-som ōn, iarum.

“Collá dot dáim, trā”, ol in  
Dagda, “ūaire do·romailt do ré”.

“Is menand”, olse, “is laa 7 adaig  
in bith uile, 7 iss ed ōn do·ratad  
dam-sa”. Luid, do·no, Dagān ass,  
iarum, 7 anaid in Macc Óoc ina  
Síd. (Hull 1933: 55–56)<sup>12</sup>

“I have none for thee”, said the Dagda.  
“I have completed the division”.

“Therefore let be granted to me,” said  
the Mac Ooc, “even a day and a night in  
thy own dwelling”. That was given to him.

“Go now to thy following”, said the  
Dagda, “since thou hast consumed thy  
(allotted) time”.

“It is clear”, said he, “that night and day  
are (the length of) the whole world, and it  
is that which has been given to me”.

Thereupon the Dagda went out, and the  
Mac Ooc remained in his Síd. (Hull 1933:  
57–58)

One final iteration on Óengus’ taking of the *síd* ought to be addressed, though it diverges most significantly from the story as recounted in *Tochmarc Étaíne*. In *Altrom Tige Dá Medar* (“The Fostering of the House of the Two Vessels”), found in the Book of Fermoy (Dublin, Royal Irish Academy MS 23. E. 29; compiled mainly during the fifteenth century), Óengus similarly displaces Elcmar from the Brug, but the circumstances and cast of characters are quite different. While Óengus is still referred to as the Dagda’s son, his father plays no role in the events of the narrative. Midir’s part is also greatly diminished and only passing reference is made to him as the recipient of a beautifully-sloped *síd* when Ireland’s barrows are apportioned. Here, the mythical Manannán mac Lir is presented as leader of the Tuatha Dé Danann and it is he who functions as the main instigator in urging Óengus to claim Elcmar’s home. Manannán’s primary motivation for pressing the seizure is unrestrained jealousy. After a lengthy description of the wealth and splendor of Elcmar’s residence, Manannán is moved to tell Óengus: *da madh me fein tu, a Aengus, is agam fein do beith an teaghdais so 7 d’fuaigeorainn d’Ealcmara a fagbail* (“If I were you, Aengus, this house would be mine and I would summon Ealcmara to exit it”). (Dobbs 1930: 196–97)<sup>13</sup> He further instructs Óengus on how to ward off Elcmar’s return, advising:

<sup>12</sup> The Book of Leinster text has been edited more recently in a semi-diplomatic edition: Best et al. 1954–83 vol. 5: 1120. While the semi-diplomatic text more accurately reflects the manuscript readings, Hull’s edition has the added advantage of providing in parallel the variant recension found in Dublin, Royal Irish Academy MS D. iv. 2 (formerly Stowe MS 992).

<sup>13</sup> Another edition of the text was prepared by Lilian Duncan at the same time as that of Dobbs, but first appeared in print two years later. Duncan also supplies a modern English translation which is imminently more readable, but plays far more loosely with the source text; cf. Duncan 1932.

Fuagair do na tigeadh don tigh o teid no gu cumusgti ogham 7 achu re cheile 7 no cu cumusgi neam 7 talman ar a ceile 7 no cu cumusgi grian 7 esca ar a cheile. (Dobbs 1930: 198)	Warn him that he may not come to the house he leaves till ogham and pillar be blent together, till heaven and earth [be blent together], till sun and moon be blent together. (Dobbs 1930: 199)
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Initially hesitant to act, but persuaded that Elcmar is not the lawful owner of the Brug, Óengus follows Manannán's instructions and casts him out. Unlike the other variants, Óengus later feels compunction for ousting Elcmar and, in a show of penitence, tries unsuccessfully to delay him from leaving. In this version of the tale, there is no equivocation of time to trick the Brug's owner out of possession, and the fabulate, therefore, no longer remains in tact. However, the permanence of Elcmar's exile as expressed in more poetic terms—i.e. until the distinctions between ogam and pillar, heaven and earth, and sun and moon have all collapsed—resonates vaguely with those traditions in which the concept of “forever and ever” must be phrased in an abstract manner. The expressions here are much more transparent than the intentionally obscure wording of “(a) day and (a) night” found elsewhere, yet they convey the same idea of “in perpetuity”.

The temporary possession of authority and land which results in a more permanent ownership is not limited to the legends surrounding Óengus. Niall Noígiallach is reported to have gained the kingship of Ireland after obtaining as a boon from his four half-brothers the right to speak before them *lá is aidchi* (“day and night”) at an assembly of the men of Ireland (Joynt 1910: 106–9; Best et al. 1954–83 vol. 1: 152–53). When their father, Eochaid Mugmedón, hears what has transpired, he informs them that they have unwittingly granted the kingship of Ireland outright to his favorite son, Niall. In another instance, Conchobar ascends to the kingship of Ulster after first gaining control for what was intended to be a finite period of time. The previous king of Ulster, Fergus mac Róich, wished to sleep with Conchobar's mother Ness. Before agreeing to Fergus' desire, Ness demands that her son be allowed to rule Ulster for a year in order that Conchobar's offspring should be known as the sons of a king. Fergus grants the rash boon and Conchobar, heeding the advice of his shrewd mother, proves a more generous king than Fergus. After a year, the time comes for Fergus to reclaim his kingdom, but the Ulstermen, preferring the reign of Conchobar, insist that their new lord remain in power. Although equivocal language does not factor prominently in the story, the tale clearly demonstrates an even more widespread and varied tradition in the Irish material about a king who,

on the advice of a wise helper, uses his temporary authority to extend his kingship indefinitely:<sup>14</sup>

Bói dano Fergus mac Rossa i rriġu Ulad. Adcobrastar-side in mnái .i. Ness, do mnái dó. Nathó, ol sisi, co ndomrab a log .i. ríge ríbiadne dom mac, conid tairle co n-erbarthar mac ríġ frim mac. Tabair, ol cach, 7 bid lat a rriġe cia choġgarthar [dó] ainm ríge. Foid tra iar suidiu in ben la Fergus, ocus coġgairther ríge n-Ulad do Chonchobur.

Ro gab tra in ben for tinchosc a maicc 7 a aite 7 a muntire .i. lomrad indala fir 7 a thidnacul diaraile, 7 a hór-si 7 a hargat do

Fergus son of Ross was then in the kingship of Ulster. He desired the woman, even Ness, for his wife. “Not so,” quoth she, “till I get a guerdon therefore, to wit, a year’s kingship for my son, so that it may come to pass that his son may be called the son of a king.” “Grant it,” says every one, “and the kingship will be thine, though the nominal kingship will be his.” So after this the woman sleeps with Fergus, and the kingship of Ulster is nominally Conchobar’s.

Then the woman began to instruct her son and his fosterers and his household—namely, to strip every second man, and to give (his wealth) to another; and her good

<sup>14</sup> So far as I am aware, the medieval Welsh tradition offers no close analogues to the fabulate as featured in the *Tochmarc Étaíne*. For the sake of comprehensiveness, however, attention should briefly be drawn to the Middle Welsh tale *Pwyll Pendefic Dyuet*, which offers an imperfect parallel to the hero whose authority is made permanent after a finite period of time. This first branch of the famed *Mabinogi* relates how Pwyll switches place with Arawn, the king of the otherworld (here called Annwn), in order to rule and protect Annwn for a year and a day. Following this finite period of time, Pwyll and Arawn switch back to their respective positions. Despite the fact that Pwyll returns to his kingdom in Dyfed, he becomes known thenceforth as *Penn Annwŷyn* (“Head of Annwn”), an honorific title if not one of active authority. Since Pwyll does not go on to rule the otherworld “forever and ever”, the parallel remains imperfect. Nevertheless, because his title as *Penn Annwŷyn* is said to have extended *o hynny allan* (“from that time forth”), Pwyll’s nominal authority over the otherworld is granted a certain permanence beyond the year and a day of his princely interlude. (Thomson 1957: 7; for a modern English translation, cf. Jones & Jones 1993: 8.) The period of a year and a day is a common motif throughout Celtic literature and may, in this instance, parallel the intended duration of Fergus’ loan of the Ulster kingship to Conchobar before the latter became the permanent ruler. The similarity is too vague to represent any kind of direct literary borrowing from the Irish sources mentioned here. Patrick Sims-Williams has recently surveyed the extent of Irish influence on medieval Welsh literature and found that, while certain borrowings did take place, Irish vernacular texts never exercised any kind of literary hegemony over the Welsh tradition (Sims-Williams 2011: 334–39). If any connection is to be drawn between Pwyll’s more permanent designation as “Head of Annwn” and the extended authority of legendary Irish figures like Conchobar and Niall Noígíallach, then such parallels are likely due to a common Celtic (or even Indo-European) inheritance that had given rise to an international popular tale not unlike those explored by Kenneth Hurlstone Jackson (Jackson 1961). Nora K. Chadwick has pointed to some rather compelling Scandinavian analogues to the Pwyll tradition in *Egils saga einhenda ok Ásundar berserkjabana* and Saxo Grammaticus (Chadwick 1953–57: 173–76).

thidnacul do a[n]radaib Ulad and silver were given to the champions of Ulster because of the result to her son.

Tanic *idu* cend na re hísín dia Now [a year from that day] the end of that time arrived. Thereupon Fergus claimed his pledges. “A colloquy about it!” say the Ulstermen. They took counsel in a single assembly. They deemed it a great dishonour that Fergus had given them (to Ness) as a bride-price. But they were thankful to Conchobar for his goodly gift to them. This then was their suffrage: “What Fergus sold, let it part from him: what Conchobar bought let it stay with him.”

Is andsin tra ro scar Fergus fri So ’tis then that Fergus parted from the kingship of Ulster, and ’tis then that Conchobar was called the overking of a fifth of Ireland. (Stokes 1910: 23–25)

Just as the motif of the temporary king made permanent may appear in medieval Irish literature without deceptive equivocal phrasing, so too can the purposeful double meaning of temporal language appear in tales that involve neither kingship nor land claims. There are several Irish tales that demonstrate another equivocal deception in which a phrase denoting a finite period of time to the listener actually turns out to mean “in perpetuity”. Rather than draw on the notion of day and night lasting for all time, this group of tales plays on the dual meaning of the word *Luan*, which can refer to both “Monday” or “Judgment Day”. The most elaborate use of this motif can be found in a narrative recounting the various attempts by the high kings of Ireland to levy a tribute known as the *bórama* on the province of Leinster (Best et al. 1954–83 vol. 5: 1307–11).<sup>16</sup> According to this legend, St. Moling is enlisted by King Finnachta to resurrect his dead son, Donnigilla. As compensation for the miracle, Moling requests that payment of the *bórama* be forgiven until *Luan*. Thinking that Moling simply means until the following Monday, Finnachta rashly agrees to the saint’s terms. St. Adomnán later hears from Moling about the tribute’s remission and is left to inform Finnachta that he has actually given up the *bórama* until the day of judgment—i.e. until the end of time.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. also the semi-diplomatic edition: Best et al. 1954–83 vol. 2: 401.

<sup>16</sup> Cited here is the semi-diplomatic text of the Book of Leinster edited by Best and O’Brien. For the Irish text with facing modern English translation, cf. Stokes 1892: 104–13. Cf. also O’Grady 1892 vol. 1: 384–387, with modern English translation in vol. 2: 420–23.

Since the story of St. Moling and the *bórama* is preserved in the Book of Leinster, the tale can be dated to at least the twelfth century and may represent an older tradition.

Variants on this *Luan*-deception continued to be adapted and disseminated within Irish folk narratives down through the nineteenth century. In one tradition, St. Patrick fends off a water-monster when it acquiesces to having a cauldron placed over its head until *Luan*. To the best of my knowledge, this variant is first attested in Lady Wilde's collection of Irish folklore and popular superstitions (Wilde 1887 vol. 1: 216).<sup>17</sup> Unfortunately, the age of this particular variant cannot be determined with any certainty. As seen above, deceptions based on the equivocation of *Luan* can be traced back to at least the twelfth century. In his survey of water-monsters in Irish folk traditions, Dáithí Ó hÓgáin has shown where legends about Patrick battling lake-serpents are attested as far back as the tenth century (Ó hÓgáin 1983: 90–99, 121–23). Ó hÓgáin also discusses folktale variants in which Patrick banishes a watermonster into a lake until *Luan*, though all of the cited examples were first recorded in the late nineteenth or early twentieth centuries. Thus, it remains unclear when the motif first became attached to Patrick's exploits. Additionally, W. G. Wood-Martin has drawn attention to a related folk narrative which relates how a goddess lends an entire lake, Lough Foyle, to her sister by pouring it into a large cow hide (Wood-Martin 1902 vol. 1: 345–46). The sister promises to return the lake by *Luan*, but when she fails to return on Monday, the ruse is revealed and the province of Connaught is left with a barren hollow where the lake once stood. Again, the relative antiquity of the legend cannot be ascertained and may represent a much later, even nineteenth century variant. Despite their recent date, however, both of these variants bear witness to an oft reworked folk motif based upon the equivocation of the word *Luan* and related, albeit distantly, to the trick used by St. Moling to free Leinster from the burden of the *bórama*.

Having established the similarities between the equivocal land-tricks in both *Tochmarc Étaíne* and *Guta saga*, as well as many of the reminiscent variants to be found in Irish literature and folklore, it is, perhaps, useful to outline some of the previous scholarship that has attempted to identify parallels between *Tochmarc Étaíne* and Old Norse texts on the one hand, and *Guta saga* and the Irish tradition on the other. For well over a century now, scholars have explored analogous material in the Old Norse and medieval Irish literary traditions.<sup>18</sup> Noting a wealth of parallel

<sup>17</sup> Cf. also Wood-Martin 1902 vol. 1: 377.

<sup>18</sup> Both Bo Almqvist and Michael Chesnutt have provided lucid summaries of the so-called "Norse-Irish" question and the scholarship weighing in on it. cf. Almqvist (1996):

motifs and narrative structures, the Norwegian philologist Sophus Bugge became one of the earliest proponents to argue in favor of Irish influence upon Old Norse literature (S. Bugge 1896 & 1901–1908). With his influential *Helge-Digtene i den Ældre Edda, deres Hjem og Forbindelser*,<sup>19</sup> Bugge outlined, in particular, numerous similarities between the Helgi lays of the *Poetic Edda* and a variety of medieval Irish texts. Among the parallels originally noted by Bugge was how the Helgi-Sigrún relationship, in which the heroine, having never seen the hero, falls in love with the protagonist based largely on his reputation, mirrors the love Findchoem felt for Cú Chulainn in a variant tradition about Bricriu's Feast. (S. Bugge 1896: 178; Stokes & Windisch 1884: 175, 188–89.) Though Bugge never made specific mention of *Tochmarc Étaíne*, his work inspired a number of subsequent scholars to continue looking for analogues between the Helgi poems and the Irish tradition. Building upon Bugge's work, A. Heiermeier pointed out how Étaín, in the heavily interpolated British Library, Egerton MS 1782 recension of *Tochmarc Étaíne*, expresses her love for Eochaid Airem based solely upon prior knowledge of his exploits (Heiermeier 1941: 64–66; Windisch 1880: 120). Considering Étaín's blind affection to be cognate with the Helgi-Sigrún relationship, Heiermeier became one of the first scholars to explicitly draw a link between the Old Norse tradition and *Tochmarc Étaíne*. Nora K. Chadwick further refined the parallels between *Tochmarc Étaíne* and the Helgi lays by noting the analogous use of barrows and the common theme of rebirth (Chadwick 1953–57: 178–83). Furthermore, Chadwick drew attention to a parallel in the relationship between Helgi and Lára (alt. Kára) in *Hrómundar saga Gripssonar* (a possible variant on the Helgi-Sigrún pairing), where, similar to Étaín's transformation into a swan, Lára appears in the likeness of a whooper swan before being killed. In his extensive study *Gaelic Influence in Iceland*, Gísli Sigurðsson offered support for Chadwick's views, further emphasizing how, in the

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140–142 & Chesnutt 2001: 153–70. For Norse-Celtic bibliography leading up to 1970, Michael Chesnutt began a “Norse-Celtic Bibliographical Survey”, of which two segments (covering Iceland, Norway, and the Faroe Islands) of an originally planned ten sections appeared in the journal *Medieval Scandinavia*; cf. Chesnutt 1970: 109–37 and 1971: 119–59. This incomplete bibliography can be supplemented up through the mid 1980's by the references found in Gísli Sigurðsson 1988: 120–155. For bibliography up through the 1990's, the aforementioned articles by Almqvist and Chesnutt are quite helpful.

<sup>19</sup> Sophus Bugge's *Helge-Digtene i den Ældre Edda, deres Hjem og Forbindelser* represents the second volume in Bugge's *Studier over de nordiske Gude- og Heltesagns Oprindelse* and was later translated by William Henry Schofield as *The Home of the Eddic Poems with Especial Reference to the Helgi-Lays*; cf. S. Bugge 1896 & 1899.

Eddic *Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar*, Héðinn, the brother of Helgi, falls in love with Helgi's wife Svava, thereby offering a possible parallel to how Eochaid Airem's brother, Ailill Ánguba, suffers a waisting-sickness for love of Étaín (Gísli Sigurðsson 1988: 54–56).<sup>20</sup> Most recently, Michael Chesnutt has demonstrated the ubiquitousness of the “fatherless hero in the playground” story as far afield as the Old French *Vie de sainte Grégoir*, Heinrich von Aue's Middle High German *Gregorius*, the Cymro-Latin *Historia Britonum*, Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae*, *Tochmarc Étaíne*, *Immram Cúraig Maíle Dúin*, *Orgain Denn Ríg*, *Hrafns þátr Guðrúnarsonar*, *Heiðreks saga*, as well as several Faeroese and Danish ballads (Chesnutt 2000). According to Chesnutt, this tale-type centers around a hero who is born of an illegitimate union, fostered off to be raised, kept in the dark about his true parentage, and attains surpassing strength at an early age. When the youth is teased about his unknown lineage on the playground, he defeats his peers in a fight and returns to his foster-parent to have his actual heritage revealed.<sup>21</sup> While previous scholars have sought out parallels between other sections of *Tochmarc Étaíne* and Old Norse literature, Chesnutt's study is among the first to deal specifically with the first part of the narrative in which Óengus is born of the illegitimate union between the Dagda and the river-goddess Bóinn, fostered into Midir's care, teased by Triath son of Febal, and ultimately seeks recognition and an inheritance from his true father.

Of the various Norse “analogues” to *Tochmarc Étaíne* mentioned here, Chesnutt's proposal seems the most compelling in that multiple, successive details of the “fatherless hero in the playground” tale-type are preserved in tact within the narrative framework of several Irish and Norse variants. That said, the widespread attestation of the tale-type throughout Europe makes it difficult to attribute the presence of such an analogue specifically to the Norse-Celtic exchange of narrative lore. The parallels between the Helgi lays and *Tochmarc Étaíne* espoused by other

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<sup>20</sup> Gísli Sigurðsson appears to overlook another possible parallel between *Tochmarc Étaíne* and Old Norse literature. Drawing upon the work of A. B. Rooth, he mentions how a tradition in which Fergus mac Róich is wounded by a spear of “hardened holly” offers a parallel to Baldr's death by mistletoe in *Snorra-Edda's Gylfaginning* (Gísli Sigurðsson 1988: 77–78). Gísli Sigurðsson neglects, however, to note a similar occurrence in *Tochmarc Étaíne*. Here, Midir has one of his eyes knocked out by a spit of holly (*bir cuilind*) while trying to break up a quarrel between the youths of Ireland. Midir's wound does not prove fatal and his eye is healed by the Tuatha Dé Danann's leech, Dian Cécht; cf. Bergin & Best 1938: 146–49.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. also de Vries 1959.



scholars seem rather less convincing in that they represent little more than floating folk motifs. After all, instances of blind love based on reputation, reincarnation, enchanted burial sites, shape-shifting, and a man's love for his brother's wife seem common enough occurrences elsewhere in folklore. Taken in conjunction, these motifs may appear to reveal cognate traditions. None of the Helgi lays nor *Hrómundar saga Gripssonar*, however, combine all the motifs on their own, and it is possible that the motifs were incorporated independently into the cycle of Helgi lore rather than descending from a single, unified tradition. Furthermore, the individual motifs are found in the different sections of *Tochmarc Étaíne*, which the earliest manuscript witness, *Lebor na hUidre*, treats as discreet narratives. For instance, the love-triangle of Étaín, Eochaid and Ailill appears in the second section, whereas Étaín's transformation into a swan comes in the third. Only in later manuscripts such as the Yellow Book of Lecan do the sections come to be treated as a single, cohesive narrative.<sup>22</sup> Even then, not all of the motifs are present. Étaín's initial love for Eochaid Airem based on reputation appears in neither the *Lebor na hUidre* nor the Yellow Book of Lecan recensions, instead showing up somewhat later as an interpolation in Egerton 1782.<sup>23</sup> Thus, *Tochmarc Étaíne* itself acquired some of the motifs only piecemeal over time. Even Chadwick, who argued for a "close relationship in origin", confesses that the motifs "appear rather to be common themes, developing independently in the two countries, Ireland and Scandinavia or Iceland" (Chadwick 1953–57: 177). By no means do I wish to negate the possibility that some of the motifs as represented in the Helgi lays might derive ultimately from Celtic stock. Rather, I simply mean to show that no close connection between *Tochmarc Étaíne* and the Helgi lays can be established based upon the evidence of these particular motifs. While the motifs may betray a common Indo-European or even Celtic inheritance, they appear too inconsistently among the various texts and their recensions to demonstrate a genetic relationship between *Tochmarc Étaíne* and the Helgi lore.

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. above, note 9. For a discussion of the narrative structure and potential cohesiveness of *Tochmarc Étaíne*, cf. Charles-Edwards 2002. The compiler of *Lebor na hUidre* certainly saw the narratives as complimentary and may have worked to highlight their interconnectedness, though the fragmentary remains of the manuscript cannot support any definitive answer on the topic. To what extent the narratives represented a single, unified tradition prior to *Lebor na hUidre* and the subsequent reworkings in the Yellow Book of Lecan and Egerton 1782 is unclear.

<sup>23</sup> Compare Bergin & Best 1938: 162–65 and Stokes & Windisch 1884: 175, 188–89.

Far less work has been done on establishing possible links between *Guta saga* and Irish traditions. In fact, I am aware of no research that has proposed specific analogues between the legendary history of the Gotlanders and medieval Irish texts. Following in the footsteps of his father, the Norwegian historian Alexander Bugge brought forth several studies about Western (including Irish) influence on the Scandinavian way of life (A. Bugge 1904 & 1916). In his *Vesterlandes Indflydelse paa Nordboernes og særlig Nordmændenes ydre kultur, levesæt og samfundsforhold i Vikingetiden*, the younger Bugge proposed that, for a time, Gotland stood paramount among the Scandinavian lands in terms of art and material culture, noting the strong impact exerted upon the island by the Irish, Anglo-Saxons and Franks. In the same breath, he even touched briefly upon *Guta saga* as an example of Gotland's cultural and artistic vitality during the Middle Ages (A. Bugge 1904: 402). Bugge, however, stopped short of claiming that *Guta saga* may actually betray some vestiges of foreign or even Irish influence. Thus, any potential connection between *Guta saga* and Ireland was left to be drawn by later scholars.

That the analogous land-trick in both *Tochmarc Étaíne* and *Guta saga* has gone unnoticed for so long should come as little surprise. There have been, of course, too few scholars over the past century and a half who have worked in both medieval Irish and Old Norse literature. This shortage of qualified experts has meant that precious few have been in a position to note such parallels. We should be extremely grateful, therefore, for what little work has been produced on the subject of Norse-Celtic analogues thus far. Nevertheless, the previous neglect of this particular analogue raises methodological concerns within the field that must briefly be addressed. For far too long, most of the scholarly debate surrounding Irish influence on Scandinavian literature (and vice versa) has focused around the vast repositories of Icelandic, i.e. West Norse, written traditions. Gísli Sigurðsson's admirable survey on the topic focused on Gaelic influence in Iceland, and *Guta saga*, composed in Gotland, would necessarily have fallen outside its purview. Consequently, Gísli Sigurðsson's work makes no mention of *Guta saga*. For scholars and students looking for folk motifs in Old Norse literature, one of the go-to sources has long been Inger Boberg's *Motif-Index of Early Icelandic Literature*. Again, the focus is on Icelandic traditions, and *Guta saga* is accordingly absent from Boberg's bibliography of source materials (Boberg 1966: 9–18). Boberg's work was later integrated into Stith Thompson's monumental *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature* alongside Tom Peete Cross' parallel con-

tribution on early Irish literature.<sup>24</sup> Thanks to the latter's incorporation, Cross' entries for "one day and one night: object borrowed for a day and a night retained" and "Fairy (god?) loses stronghold by consenting to lend it for 'a day and a night'" now appear in this oft consulted reference work with the variant traditions about Óengus duly noted. The parallel passage in *Guta saga*, however, remains absent. The study of Old Norse literature, of course, extends well beyond Old Icelandic sources, and scholars looking for Norse-Celtic analogues must broaden their scope to encompass the literary inheritance of continental Scandinavia (including East Norse traditions) as well. While catalogues for modern Scandinavian folklore have appeared during the twentieth century, some sort of Old Norse motif-index that more systematically incorporates medieval sources from the continent is still to be desired.<sup>25</sup> To some extent, scholars have already acknowledged the need to break away from a West-Norse-centric mode of thought and look more thoroughly at Eastern Scandinavia. One striking confirmation of this trend was the theme of the Fourteenth International Saga Conference, "Á austrvega: Saga and East Scandinavia" (Ney et al. 2009). Among the papers presented at the conference was an interesting essay by Robert Avis comparing Icelandic foundation-myths with *Guta saga*. As regards the *Grikland*-episode, Avis plausibly argues how the migration myth attests to an independent and self-defined Gotlandish identity in the thirteenth century such that "the concept of a 'Gotlander abroad' was meaningful" (Avis 2009: 54). It is interesting to posit how Avis' arguments about Gotlandish identity might be nuanced if the Gotlander's equivocal land-claim in Byzantium were recognized to be dependent on a migratory legend of foreign and possibly Irish origin.

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<sup>24</sup> Thompson's *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature* as referenced above represents his continued work following his translation and expansion of Antti Aarne's *Verzeichnis der Märchentypen* (1910). Thompson's original work based on Aarne's book can best be assessed by consulting the first publication of his translation which appeared under the title *The Types of the Folk-Tale: A Classification and Bibliography* (1928). This translation was then later published in a revised and enlarged edition in 1961. The more comprehensive *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature* as published in six volumes by Indiana University Press from 1955 to 1958 represents Thompson's expanded work supplemented by further motif-indexes produced by other scholars such as Tom Peete Cross and Inger M. Boberg who possessed a more specialized knowledge of the literatures in their respective fields of research. The motif-index can most easily be utilized now via a more recent electronic version (Thompson 1993).

<sup>25</sup> A useful catalogue of modern Scandinavian folk-tales is Kvikeland & Sehmsdorf 1988. The editors' introduction also includes a helpful summary of Scandinavian folklore editions, collections and research.

The important question remains as to how these correspondences between Óengus' claiming of the Brug na Bóinne and the Gotlanders' seizure of Byzantine territory might have come about. The characters, location, and precise wording of the episodes are different enough in the two narratives to caution against any genetic relationship based on written traditions. There is the distinct possibility that any similarities may stem from reflexes of a common Indo-European tradition that evolved independently in both Scandinavia and Ireland. While the equivocal land-trick appears here in two very different contexts, i.e. the fabled migration story of a people and the coming-of-age tale of mythic hero, the details of the fabulate as outlined above remain remarkably in tact for variants diverging at such an early date. It is, of course, the nature of a good legend to maintain its basic form across time and space. That said, no variants incorporating both a land-claiming trick and an equivocal phrase implying a fixed period of time, but meaning "forever and ever", have as yet come to my attention outside the Irish material and this one instance in the medieval Scandinavian tradition. Stith Thompson includes a section for "deception by equivocation" (K2310) in his *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature*, but no equivocal formulas such as "a day and a night", "a year and a day", or "the waxing and waning" appear there outside of the examples cited by Cross from Irish sources. While the possibility of an Indo-European origin cannot be ruled out, until further examples of this kind of equivocation come to light in other folklore traditions, the closeness of the parallels seems to speak for a more recent point of common origin.

If the analogue does not represent an international popular tale of Indo-European origin, then it may constitute a verifiable migratory legend that travelled from Ireland to Scandinavia (or the other way around) during the medieval period. In this case, the analogue would adhere nicely to Almqvist's definition of a migratory legend as a short narrative "found in more or less the same form over sizable geographic areas, usually in several countries" (Alvqvist 1991: 2, note 2). Again, the deception is localized in different places and demonstrates verbal dissimilarities, but the fabulate's structure remains "more or less the same". Dáithí Ó hÓgáin has discussed Óengus' equivocal land-trick in *Tochmarc Étaíne* as an example of a widespread migratory legend, at least within Ireland (Ó hÓgáin 1992/1993: 59–61). The main purpose of Ó hÓgáin's article is to establish the difficulties of dating Irish legends about the otherworld by noting the pervasiveness and variability of such stories in both written and oral traditions. Accordingly, Ó hÓgáin addresses

Óengus' seizure of the *síd*, St. Moling's *Luan*-deception, and some modern Irish folklore variants, but makes no attempt to identify parallels in Scandinavia or elsewhere in the world. Whereas Ó hÓgáin has demonstrated the broad dissemination of the migratory legend in Ireland, the fabulate does not seem to have enjoyed the same widespread treatment in Scandinavia. This is not to say that deceptive land-claiming practices have no place in Scandinavian lore. There is, of course, the aforementioned ox-hide ruse identified in Boberg's motif-index and later cited by Peel as a possible parallel (Boberg 1966: K185.1; Peel 1999: xxix–xxx). Reimund Kvideland and Henning K. Sehmsdorf have documented another trick of equivocation used to claim land. According to this tradition, a farmer, seeking to resolve a boundary dispute in Västergötland, took some soil from a graveyard in his home parish and put it in his shoes. He then walked over the disputed territory and swore under oath that he was “standing on the soil of his own parish” (Kvideland & Sehmsdorf 1988: 333). Neither of these duplicities, however, parallel the *Grikland*-episode of *Guta saga* nearly as closely as Óengus' taking of the Brug na Bóinne or even the *Luan*-deception. If the land-trick based on equivocation of time was apt to grow metaphorical feet and migrate from one geographical area to another as Ó hÓgáin's study of the Irish variants would suggest, then we might ask in which direction it travelled. Given the relative antiquity of some of the Irish variants (possibly as early as the ninth century) compared to the thirteenth-century *Guta saga*, combined with the fabulate's wide dissemination throughout the medieval Irish written tradition and relative absence in Scandinavian folklore, it most likely originated in Ireland and then migrated to Scandinavia via the cultural exchange of neighboring peoples.

When precisely this exchange would have taken place is difficult to say. Scholars such as Gísli Sigurðsson, focusing on a bilingual Gaelic substratum in Norse communities brought about through intermarriage and slaving, have argued that the Viking era, with its Norse settlements in Scotland and Ireland, provided the ideal opportunity for the exchange of ideas and folk motifs (Gísli Sigurðsson 1988: 25–30). By contrast, Michael Chesnutt has contended that the period after the Battle of Clontarf in 1014, with its “collapse of Norse imperialism in the West and the beginning of a period of more peaceful coexistence”, offered a more conducive environment for Norse-Celtic cultural exchange (Chesnutt 1999: 158–60). According to Chesnutt, it was at this time that the earldom of Orkney occupied a “pivotal position” in the exchange of narrative lore between Norsemen and Gaels. Both of these scenarios offer plausible avenues for

Irish material to find its way into Norse tradition and eventually to Gotland. It is also possible that the migratory legend journeyed across the sea at a somewhat later date via the northern Atlantic trade routes of the twelfth or thirteenth centuries.

That the attestation of this particular land-trick in *Guta saga* seems to be a unique occurrence among recorded Scandinavian traditions may prove quite significant. Iceland has oft been pointed to as the intermediary through which Celtic motifs or traditions found their way to continental Scandinavia. In this instance, however, there is no evidence of the fabulate appearing in Old Icelandic texts. It remains possible that the migratory legend took a detour through Iceland, and that any subsequent West Norse variants have simply been lost to time. In the absence of further proof, however, this lone Norse witness to the fabulate opens up the possibility for direct exchange of narrative lore between Insular cultures and continental Scandinavia during the Middle Ages.<sup>26</sup> If this be the case, then scholars would be forced to reevaluate their current understanding of cultural relations between the Insular Gaels and continental Scandinavia, including more easterly territories such as Gotland. This should in no way impinge upon Icelandic preeminence in introducing Celtic motifs and narrative traditions to the Scandinavian world. The Norse migrations to Iceland via Ireland, Scotland and the Isle of Man, as well as later Icelandic contacts with the earldom of Orkney, were undoubtedly of primary importance to the encroachment of such traditions upon medieval Scandinavian literature; a fact born out by the vast preponderance of evidence found in Old Icelandic writings. Nevertheless, this analogue may demonstrate another plausible, if less frequent means by which a legend could have migrated from Ireland to areas like Gotland. In the end, it is impossible to trace with any certainty the exact route by which this analogue travelled from Ireland to its unique Scandinavian occurrence in *Guta saga*. For now, it remains a striking, yet tantalizing indefinable parallel that cannot prove on its own direct exchange between Ireland and Eastern Scandinavia. At the same time, it at least warrants further data-gathering by scholars better versed in the methodologies of folklore studies than myself. Hopefully, further research will uncover additional variants, particularly ones involving land claims and the equivocation of time, in Scandinavian folklore and beyond that will shed further light on a truly intriguing migratory legend.

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<sup>26</sup> For at least one other instance of a continental Scandinavian borrowing from Irish tradition, see the *Speculum Regale* (or *Konungs skuggsjá*), a Norwegian instructional book on kingship that incorporates several Irish *mirabilia*; cf. Meyer 1894; Young 1938; Hallseth 1967; and Sayers 1985.

In conclusion, a comparison between the land claims based on equivocal language found in *Guta saga* and *Tochmarc Étaíne* (as well as the other Irish variants) yields a clear and compelling analogue that has hitherto been overlooked by scholars. The fabulate likely circulated in Ireland first, where it was attached to the mythical origin story of Óengus (alt. Mac Óc) at a relatively early date such that it appears recognizably in *Tochmarc Étaíne*, *De Gabáil in t-Sída* and Cináed Úa h-Artacáin's poem on the Brug na Bóinne. Even the more distantly related *Altrom Tige Dá Medar*, with its poetic descriptions of Elcmar's permanent exile from the *síd*, may demonstrate vestiges of the deception. Similar equivocations on time were incorporated into traditions about St. Moling and the *bórama* tribute, later to survive in various nineteenth-century Irish folk tales involving the *Luan*-deception. Some time between the Viking Age and the thirteenth century, the fabulate found its way to Gotland, where it was eventually integrated into *Guta saga*. What precise form this variant took is impossible to say. The *Grikland*-episode most closely resembles the version recounted in *Tochmarc Étaíne*, though the differences in context and detail are great enough that we cannot assume a direct relationship between the two. Overemphasizing the importance of such a singular folkloric parallel remains a real danger, but recognition of this analogue raises certain key issues. First of all, in the absence of any clear parallels in medieval West Norse literature, this analogue may offer a sliver of evidence for direct cultural exchange between Insular Gaelic communities and Eastern Scandinavia. If this is indeed found to be the case, East Norse analogues such as this complicate our view of transmission history and force us as scholars to acknowledge that trade and travel between the Insular Gaels and Eastern Scandinavia via the sea routes of the northern Atlantic provided a viable means of cultural dissemination which did not necessitate the intermediation of Icelandic poets and scholars. Furthermore, the lengthy neglect of the analogue highlights certain methodological shortcomings within the field of comparative Norse-Celtic studies. The previous emphasis on the relationship between Ireland and Iceland, while fruitful, has lent a certain degree of myopia to earlier scholarship, which has failed to account fully for those traditions preserved in Eastern Scandinavia. In the future, scholars of folklore and early medieval literature wishing to gain a comprehensive understanding of Norse-Celtic relations must broaden their scope of interest to include East Norse traditions; that is, they must also look to Old Swedish and Gutnish writings for additional evidence. As touched upon in this paper, the tools currently available for Norse-Celtic comparison are woefully

inadequate to aid in competent research of this sort. Consequently, the task falls to future scholars of Celtic and Norse literatures to identify and catalogue more fully the literary analogues that exist in the early written traditions of the two cultures, paying special attention to expand the search for Scandinavian parallels beyond Icelandic and West Norse sources. The similarity between the Gotlanders' experience in Byzantium and Óengus' seizure of the Brug na Bóinne may, in the end, prove a mere one-off analogue, as unique as it is compelling. Only time and diligent research shall tell if the parallel is an anomalous peculiarity or symptomatic of some larger cultural exchange. Let us hope that it will not take "a day and a night" or the "waxing and waning of the moon" to discover the analogue's true significance.

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