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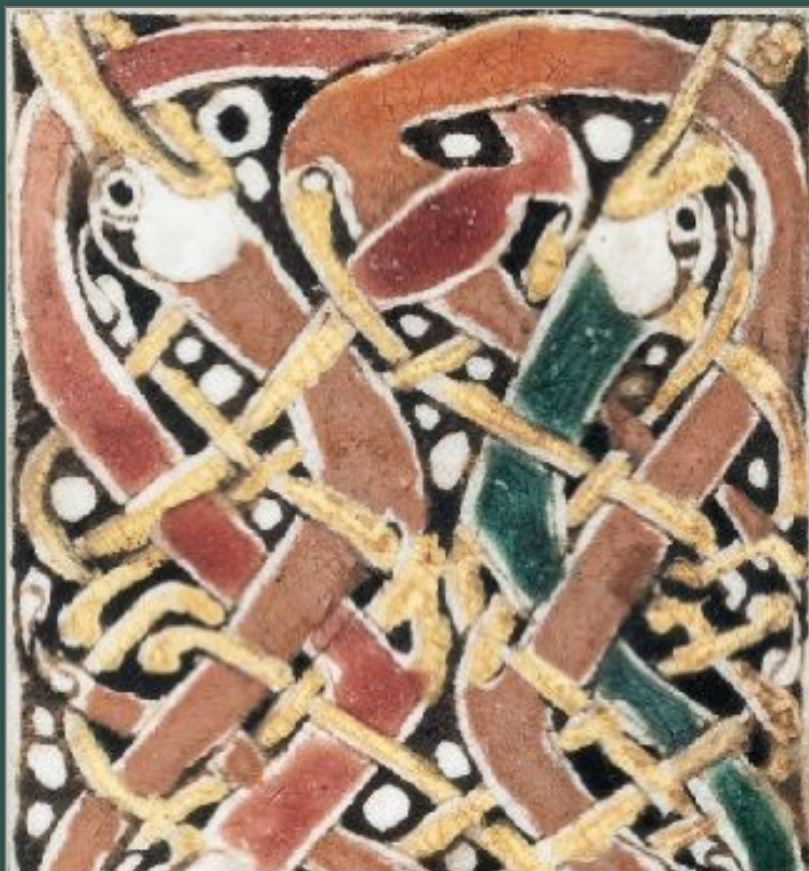
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EARLY IRISH MYTHS AND SAGAS

Translated by Jeffrey Gantz

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PENGUIN CLASSICS

Early Irish Myths and Sagas

Early Irish Myths and Sagas

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A GUIDE TO SEARCHING THESE NOTES

Tags are used throughout this file to indicate the topic(s) that each quote or poem entail. These tags are written in brackets with an asterisk so that the tags remain unique within the overall text (making searching much more precise): {___*}. When searching, simply type a keyword that is being used as a tag in this file followed by an asterisk. See the list below for the tags used in this file (listed in alphabetical order and *without* the asterisk):

{ <i>advice</i> }	{ <i>linguistic</i> }
{ <i>behavior</i> }	{ <i>love</i> }
{ <i>beauty</i> }	{ <i>masculinity</i> }
{ <i>color</i> }	{ <i>music</i> }
{ <i>custom</i> }	{ <i>myth</i> }
{ <i>Cú</i> }	{ <i>shame</i> }
{ <i>deep</i> }	{ <i>sickness</i> }
{ <i>emotion</i> }	{ <i>Síde</i> }
{ <i>fosterage</i> }	{ <i>symbolism</i> }
{ <i>gifts</i> }	{ <i>time</i> }
{ <i>heroes</i> }	{ <i>women</i> }
{ <i>honor</i> }	{ <i>women-feud</i> }
{ <i>insult</i> }	

Also, **bolded terms** often refer to people or other figures (when they are first introduced), whereas an underlined word often refers to a place (but also only for the first mentioning).

The Wooing of Étaín

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INTRODUCTION

Preserved in *Lebor na huidre*. Beginning of first and ending of third were missing. Only completed recently (1937). Three sections, each virtually independent. Poetic sense of law.

SUMMARIES

{I}

Famous king from the Túatha Dé Danand — **Echu Ollathir**, or the **Dagdae**. He performed miracles and saw to weather and harvest. He is called the Good God. The Dagdae wished to sleep with **Bóand**, wife of **Elcmar**, whom she feared. The Dagdae sent him off, casting spells to lengthen his journey. Elcmar's journey took nine months, though it felt like a day for him. Bóand bore the Dagdae a son, named **Óengus**. He was fostered in the house of **Mider**. He was also called the Macc Óc.

Óengus 'feuds' with Tríath, son of Febal (or Gobor) — Fir Bolg. Their argument is based on parents. Mider tells him who his parents are. Óengus seeks acknowledgement from his father. They go to Echu, asking him to give Óengus land, but it is occupied by Elcmar. Echu gives them advice.⁽⁴¹⁾ The leave on the following Samuin to Elcmar's land (to follow the plan laid out by Echu). The plan goes well, and Elcmar promises Óengus "a kingship of day and night in his land."⁽⁴¹⁾ Judgement goes before the Dagdae. Elcmar was given a new land, Cletech.

Mider comes to visit Óengus at Bruig a year later, again on Samuin. A quarrel breaks out, and, as Mider attempts to settle the matter, he gets injured. Óengus sets out to seek Dían Cécht have Mider healed. Mider was shamed by this injury. He was successfully cured. Mider will not stay unless he has reward. He asks for a chariot and a "the fairest woman in Ériu."⁽⁴³⁾ The woman he seeks is of the Ulaid, daughter of Ailill. Her name is **Étaín Echrade** (nothing causes men more ache women, apparently).

Ailill will not give her away, but he is fine if Óengus buys her. He asks that twelve lands of his are cleared and made usable. The Dagdae cleared these lands in a single night. Óengus goes to claim Étaín, but demands twelve more lands have their rivers diverted to the sea, draining the land. Again, the Dagdae did this in a single night. Ailill still refuses, wanting now to receive her weight in gold and silver. This finally concluded their dealings.

Mider had a wife, **Fúamnach**, who was skilled in the ways of the Túatha Dé Danand. Óengus warns Mider to watch out for Étaín. She seems kind and welcoming at first, but turns Étaín into water! Then, the conditions of the house turned her into a worm, and then into a scarlet fly. A very, very prestigious fly, mind you. She accompanied Mider as such. Mider knew it was Étaín. He never took another wife so long as she was with him, "for the sight of it nourished him."⁽⁴⁵⁾

Eventually, Fúamnach came back, with protection from three Túatha Dé Danand (Lug, Dagdae, Ogmæ). She has no regrets for her action. She vows to "bring nothing but evil to Étaín, wherever and in whatever shape the latter might be."⁽⁴⁶⁾ Fúamnach casts a powerful spell to banish Étaín from Mider's land — she ends up in Óengus' land. Óengus took her into his house and bower, "lifting the fly's spirit until its color and cheer returned."⁽⁴⁷⁾ Fúamnach heard of this and managed to banish her from Óengus' land as well. Étaín ended up in Ériu (where she originally came from). She landed in a golden vessel, from which the wife of Étar drank. She was swallowed and born again from the woman's womb — "one thousand and twelve years from her first begetting by Ailill until her last by Étar."⁽⁴⁷⁾

She was raised well, along with "fifty chieftains' daughters."⁽⁴⁷⁾ One day, a man came (described with tremendous detail). He stopped to look at Étaín, and all the women fell in love with him. He spoke verse. Once Óengus finds out about Étaín's disappearance, he seeks out Fúamnach and "there he attacked her and struck off her head..."⁽⁴⁹⁾

{II}

Echu Airem becomes king of Ériu, with all five provinces submitting to him. He holds a feis, which is a feast but specifically in the sense of marriage and not related linguistically to the latin festa or english feast.(footnote 6) He then sought out the fairest woman of the land for this, because he needed a queen for the feis. Of course, this woman was Étaín.

Ailill Angubae (a son of Find and the queen's, thus a brother of Airem's) fell in love with Étaín after she had slept with Echu Airem. He could not resist, for "his desire was stronger than his will."(50) He fell ill, from both love and jealousy, of which he was ashamed for. Étaín (of course) was left with him to perform the funeral rites. He began to get well again, because "every day, she went to the house where he lay sick to talk to him."(50)

They arrange a day for them to sleep together, so that Ailill could be officially cured. Ailill is unable to meet her, and instead she meets with a man similar to Ailill each time. It turns out that the man similar to Ailill was Mider. It was he who made Ailill fall in love with her. He asks if she will return with him if Airem will allow it, she agrees.

{III}

Airem sees a strange young man on a beautiful summer day. This man is revealed to be Mider. He challenges Airem to play fidchell (a popular game). Airem says there must be a stake. They make a wager and Mider loses the first game. Mider comes the next day with the reward he promised and they play again. They wager once more. Airem's foster-father advises him to put Mider through great labors. Mider accepts, but on the condition that "neither man nor woman under [Airem's] rule walk outside before sunrise tomorrow."(54) Airem sent a steward to spy on him though, discovering that Mider had many men helping him develop the causeway. Mider returns very angry, but this is because of the difficulty of the tasks imposed upon him.

The play fidchell once again, this time the stake is whatever the other names (after the game is played). This time, the third time, Mider wins and, of course, he requests Étaín. Airem is silent, but finally agrees saying that he can have her in a month. The year before, Mider attempted to woo Étaín, then he addressed her by the name of Bé Find, meaning fair woman.

Once that month had passed, Airem prepared for battle. Mider was impressive. Airem won't give up Étaín freely, and so Mider is challenged and takes her. They fly away as two swans. Airem pursues them into Síð. They decided to dig up every Síð until they find her. They cannot dig up Mider's mound, and seek help from someone from another Síð. They must use "blind dogs and cats, and leave them."(57)

Once they dig up Mider's mound, he agrees to return Étaín, but not until the third hour of the following day. At that time, they were met with fifty women who all looked like Étaín. They determined which one was real based on their skill at serving drinks. Mider confesses that the 'Étaín' he chose was actually her daughter, whom she was pregnant with when Mider 'took' her. Yet, because of their pledge, Airem could not act again.

He was greatly distressed that he slept with his own daughter. His daughter then became pregnant and bore another daughter. This daughter was "thrown...into a pit with wild beasts." (59) She was saved, however, by a herdsman and his wife, who found her among their house's kennel. She was great at embroidery. She was taken, though, one day by Eterscélae, who he made as his wife. She would be the mother of Conare, son of Eterscélae.

QUOTES

1. "...the Dagdae cast great spells upon him, so that he would not return quickly, so that he would not perceive the darkness of night, so that he would feel neither hunger nor thirst." (39)
 - a) *{myth*}*
2. "Mider had a playing field at Brí Léith, and three fifties of the young boys of Ériu were there together with three fifties of the young girls. And Óengus was their leader, because of Mider's love for him and because of his handsomeness and the nobility of his people." (39-40)
 - a) *{fosterage*}*
3. "Young the son who is conceived at dawn and born before dusk." (40)
 - a) *{time*}*
4. "...he requested the kingship of day and night and that it is in days and nights that the world passes." (41)
 - a) *{time*}*
5. "He hewed you menacingly on a day of peace and friendship, and since your life was dearer to you than your land, you surrendered the land in return for being spared." (42)
6. "...a sprig of holly was hurled at him, and it put out one of his eyes." (42)
 - a) *{myth*}*: I can't help but recall the story of Baldr's death, and how he was killed by his blind brother Hod and a mistletoe. Likely no real connection, but interesting nonetheless.
7. "...I have been shamed: with this blemish, I can neither see the land I have come to nor return to the land I have left." (42)
 - a) *{shame*}*
8. "The nobility of your family and the extent of your power and your father's is so great that, if you were to shame my daughter, I would have no recourse." (43)
 - a) *{honor*};{women*}*: It is true that he would not be able to honor his daughter if she were shamed, assuming that is what he refers to.
9. "You will not have her until you buy her...for after you take her away I will have no further good of her, only what you give me now. ...Everything that you have done now has profited only her family and her people." (44)
10. "[Fúamnach] was wise and clever, and she was versed in the knowledge and power of the Túatha Dé Danand, for the druid Bresal had reared her before her engagement to Mider." (44-45)
 - a) *{women*}*

11. “‘The seat of a good woman have you occupied’ With that, Étaín sat in the chair in the centre of the house, whereupon Fúamnach struck her with a wand of scarlet rowan and turned her into a pool of water. Fúamnach went to her foster-father, then, and Mider left the house to the water that had been made of Étaín. After that, Mider was without a woman.” (45)
 a) {*women-feud**}
12. “This fly was the size of the head of the handsomest man in the land, an the sound of its voice and the beating of its wings were sweeter than pipes and harps and horns. Its eyes shone like precious stones in the dark, and its color and fragrance could sate hunger and quench thirst in any man; moreover, a sprinkling of the drops it shed from its wings could cure every sickness and affliction and disease.” (45)
 a) {*symbolic**}?
13. “He wore a green tunic of the Síde...” (47)
14. “Echu ordered the men of Ériu to hold the feis of Temuirm so that their taxes and assessments for the next year might be reckoned.” (49)
 a) {*custom**}?
15. “He fell ill, then, for he would not dishonor himself by speaking with Étaín. When he sensed he was dying, he had Echu’s doctor Fatchna brought to him, and Fatchna said ‘You have one of two deadly pangs that no doctor can cure: the pang of love and the pang of jealousy.’ Ailill said nothing, for he was ashamed.” (50)
 a) {*honor**}; {*women**}; {*sickness**}
16. “...funeral rites: digging his grave, weeping over his body, slaying his cattle.” (50)
 a) {*custom**}?
17. “Echu imposed these famous great labors: clearing Mide of stones, laying rushes over Tethbae, laying a causeway over Móin Lámrighe, foresting Bréifne.” (53)
18. “My arms around Étaín and a kiss from her.” (55)
 a) {*women**}: As mentioned in the introduction, this is an interesting way to refer to his ‘possession’ of Étaín.
19. “That night, Étaín was serving the chieftains, for serving drink was a special talent of hers.” (56)
20. “...they saw Mider coming towards them in the center of the house; he had always been beautiful, but that night he was more beautiful still. The hosts who saw him were astonished, and they fell silent...” (56)
 a) {*beauty**}

21. “Étaín herself promised me she would leave you.’ said Mider, and at that, Étaín blushed. ‘Do not blush, Étaín,’ said Mider, ‘for you have done no wrong. I have spent a year wooing you with the most beautiful gifts and treasures in Ériu, and I have not taken you without Echu’s permission. If I have won you, I have done no evil.” (56-7)
 a) {women*}; {behavior*}
22. “Echu did not dare unearth Mider’s Síid again, for he had pledged himself content.” (59)
23. “She was the best of women at embroidery: her eyes saw nothing that her hands could not embroider.” (59)
 a) {women*}

VERSE

V1 — THE MYSTERIOUS YOUNG WARRIOR (48)

*Étaín is here today
 at Síid Ban Find west of Ailbe;
 among little boys she is,
 on the border of Indber Cíchmane.*

*It is she who healed the king’s eye
 from the well of Loch Dá Licc;
 it is she who was swallowed into the drink
 in the vessel of the wife of Étar.*

*Because of her the kind will chase
 the birds of Tethbae;
 because of her he will drown his two horses
 in the waters of Loch Dá Airbrech.*

*Over here there will be much fighting
 against Echu of Mide;
 Síid mounds will be destroyed,
 and many thousands will do battle.*

*It is she who will be celebrated everywhere;
 it is she the king is seeking.
 Once she was called Bé Find.
 Now she is our Étaín.
 {women*}*

V2 — MIDER'S WOOING OF ÉTAÍN (55-6)

*Bé Find, will you come with me
to a wondrous land where there is music?
Hair is like the blooming primrose there;
smooth bodies are the color of snow.*

*There, there is neither mine nor yours;
bright are teeth, dark are brows.
A delight to the eye the number of our hosts,
the color of foxglove every cheek.*

*The color of the plain-pink every neck,
a delight to the eye blackbirds' eggs;
A delight to the eye Mag Fáil,
it is a desert next to Mad Már.*

*Intoxicating the ale of Inis Fáil;
more intoxicating by far that of Tír Már.
A wonderful land that I describe:
youth does not precede age.*

*Warm, sweet streams throughout the land,
your choice of mead and wine.
A distinguished people, without blemish,
conceived without sin or crime.*

*We see everyone everywhere,
and no one sees us:
the darkness of Adam's sin
prevents our being discerned. (like Icelandic folklore)*

*Woman, if you come to me bright people,
you will have a crown of gold on your head;
honey, wine, fresh milk to drink
you will have with me there, Bé Find.*

{myth}; {women*}; {beauty*}; {color*}*

THEMES

{*fosterage**}
The number 50
{*women-feud**}, 46
{*advice**}

CURIOSITIES

- ❖ I noticed, after reading how Ailill keeps himself awake (page 51), that fire and water have been referred to together twice already. Before, it was when Étaín was turned into a fly, and not it appears again. I wonder if there is meaning to this? Perhaps not, but something to keep aware of.
- ❖ A high king! Though, not historically so. Interesting that there was indeed such a concept, despite the fact that no one was able to obtain it through ‘traditional’ means. What exactly was kingship to them? Or, was high kingship a thing specific to a mythological past? Things to ponder, I suppose.
- ❖ The ending of this story, when the herdsman and his wife take care of the daughter, reminds me of a moment in the Mabinogi, although I cannot quite remember the exact time or situation. Though, I believe there was definitely something like this, so I will have to look once time allows me to do so.
- ❖ Involving Étaín — there is the woman they love and fight for, and there is the woman they fight *against* (*fúamnach*). This is not much different from female representations in Icelandic literature (at least from my readings up until now).

The Destruction of Da Derga's Hostel

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INTRODUCTION

Part impacted myth, part heroic saga, and part literary. Deals with the slaying of a king in a house of death at samhain. Iron houses—'The Destruction of Dind Rig' and 'The Intoxication of the Ulaid'. The hostel can never actually be destroyed, and that is the point. Expands part II of Étaín. Conception of Conare Már is duple—divine and ordinary. Conare appears doomed throughout (gessa—taboos, being an offspring of incest). Irish sagas often unbalanced. Descriptive catalogs valued.

SUMMARY

The king: **Echu Feidlech**. He ran into a very beautiful girl at a well (lengthy description, 62-3). The king detained her, wanting to sleep with her. She identifies herself as **Étaín** (I thought this was the daughter?). She confesses her apparent love for him. The king dies after giving her a bridal gift of “seven cumals”(63).

Cormac, king of the Ulaid “and a man of three gifts”(63), abandoned Echu’s daughter (because she was “barren save for [a] daughter,” 63). He takes back Étaín and vows to kill the other woman. She laughed and smiled, which changed their hearts. Instead of throwing her into a pit, they fostered her into becoming an amazing embroiderer. She was a king’s daughter (Airem). Prophecy that she will grant the king a son (Not Cormac, but **Eterscélae**). She had the son, named **Cormare**, and requested he be given three fosterages.

He was reared with three other boys: Fer Lé, Fer Gar, and Fer Rogain, who were all sons of **Donn Désa**. Conare also possessed three gifts: hearing, seeing, and judgement. He taught a gift to each of his foster-brothers. Eterscélae dies. Bull feast. A dream and an “incantation of the truth”(65). Conare goes to Áth Cláth, where he chased interesting birds. One bird was called Nemglan and he helped Conare. Conare goes to Temuir, and he is to be the man of the dreams told of earlier, thus becoming king.

Upon his arrival, people are not very impressed. Still he convinced them otherwise and was crowned a king. A man tells him of gessa to beware of: not to go rightwise around Temuir and leftwise around Brega, not to hunt the beasts of Cernae, not to venture out of Temuir every ninth night, not to pass the night in a house where a firelight can be seen, not to let three Deirgs precede him when entering the house of Deirg, not to taken plunder during his reign, no one man nor one woman ought to enter his house after sunset, and not to interfere in the quarrels between his two servants.

His reign began wonderfully, with great prosperity. Conare’s foster-brothers, however, caused tremendous trouble. They went to plunder abroad. Conare send them away to plunder elsewhere. There was a geiss against Conare leaving to settle a dispute. Conare begins to violate his gessa. Conare seeks a house to stay for the night. **Macc Cáech** and the fire. Three Deigs enter the house, all red. He tries to enter the house before them, but cannot gain on them. He tries to incite them with gifts. Now all the gessa were broken.

Strange man appears, named **Fer Calliu**. He brought a pig, and with him was a woman named Cichuil (with a terrible description, by the way—71). He violates another of Conare’s gessa. The seven Manes of Ailill and Medb (72). The plunderers cast away team up with a man named Ingcél. Their party lands in Ériu and they begin to raid, but send out a recon tesm first (note that they need to have the three gifts that Conare has—73). They report their findings. The sound of their boats shook the land. Conare doesn’t fret, having faith his foster brothers would not do harm.

Ingcél Cáech, a great champion and grandson of Conmac, with the plunderers (75). **Da Derga**. A seeress appears, very ugly, and her name was **Cailb**. She foretells death. She also has many names, including samuin (76). There is a geiss against letting her in, but he is force (seemingly by honor) to let her in. The hostel is always open. Conare out making a big fire. Raiders see it. A telling of good things occurring under his reign (77-8). Ingcél decides to plunder

the hostel. He sees a man there named **Cormac Cond Longes**, son of Conchubur and a great warrior. Ingcél is a kin slayer, btw. Here are those who he sees:

1. A great trio of warriors (82).
2. Nine pipers of the Síde (82).
3. **Taidle Ulad**, steward and Conare's household and a man of judgement (83).
4. Macc described in more detail, as a landscape (84-5). They retreated a bit in fear of him.
5. The three callow youths (85-6).
6. Thee **Fomóri**, three headed men (86).
7. Three royal heroes (87).
8. **Conall Cernach** son of Amorgen, a great warrior similar to Conare (88).
9. Conare Már himself, with a lengthy description (89-91).
10. The twelve guards of Temuir (92).
11. **Lé Fer Flaith**, the infant son (7 yrs) of Conare (93). Multi-colored hair (3 colors).
12. The six servers of Temuir of the Síde. (94)
13. **Tulchaíne**, the royal fool and trickster of Temuir, a man of great power (95).
14. Nine men of Míde (96).
15. Two servers of Conare (96).
16. Three chief warriors (97).
17. The "three churls whom Cú Chulaind spared" (98).
18. Da Derga, builder of the hostel, and his two foster-sons (99).
19. The three nephews of the Síde (100). Conare is the last of three Temuir kings to kill them as punishment from the King of Síde himself.
20. The three doorkeepers of Temuir (100).
21. Fer Calliu and his wife Cichuil (100).
22. The three sons of Baithse of Britain, plunderers (101).
23. The three fools of the king of Ériu (101).
24. The three cupbearers of Temuir (102).
25. **Nár Thúathcáech**, swineherd of Bodb, from Síde ar Femuin (102).

At last the plunderers rose and made their way towards the hostel, and so the fated battle begins. Conare performs the feat of arms. Conare seeks a drink from his cupbearers while Macc protects him. No more liquid, for it was used to distinguish the flames. He seeks a drink three times. Now Macc must go fetch for a drink. He went to many rivers and could still not fill the cup. Úarán Garaid did not fail him. He returned before morning. By the time he returned, two men were cutting off Conare's head, and one escaped with the head, but Macc stopped him by breaking his back with a stone. He poured the drink into Conare's throat, and, head detached, he spoke a poem.

By the third day Macc was wounded. He saw a woman go by. He asks her to come to him and she tells him that an "ant of the ancient earth" (105) is upon his wound (he asked her about this, by the way). After that, he died. Conall escaped, though injured as well. He goes to his father and relays the news of Conare's death. Young warriors against old.

QUOTES

1. “She was the fairest and most perfect and most beautiful of all the women in the world; men thought she was of the Síde, and they said of her: ‘Lovely anyone until Étaín. Beautiful anyone until Étaín.’” (63)
 - a) {*women**}; {*beauty**}
2. “After that, she was taken to the king. Her fosterers went with her, and she was betrothed to the king; he gave seven cumals to her and seven to her fosterers.” (64)
 - a) {*custom**}?
3. “Conare possessed three gifts—the gift of hearing and the gift of seeing and the gift of judgement—and he taught a gift to each of his foster brothers.” (65)
 - a) {*gifts**}; {*fosterage**}
4. “It seems to us that our bull feast and our incantation of truth have been spoilt, for it is a young, beardless lad who has been brought to us.” (66)
 - a) {*masculinity**} I have begun to notice a trend of ‘beardless’ being used to demasculinize characters.
5. “Let each man slay his son, but let my foster-brothers be spared.” (67)
 - a) {*fosterage**}
6. “...unless the earth has turned over; or the Leviathan that encircles the world has overturned it with his tail.” (75)
7. “Conare went into the hostel, then, and everyone took his seat, geiss or no geiss.” (76)
8. “And she recited these in one breath, and standing on one foot, at the entrance to the house.” (76).
9. “Ingcél then went to spy upon the hostel with one of the three pupils in his eye...” (79)
10. “If my advice were taken, the destruction would not be attempted.” (82)
 - a) {*advice**}
11. “...he took the trio [of Formóri] to Conare’s house as a guarantee that the Formóri would not spoil milk or grain in Ériu beyond their lawful allowance, and that so long as Conare reigned.” (86)
12. “Indeed, it is not a moon without a king.” (91)
13. “A shameful haircut he had...” (94)
 - a) {*shame**}

14. “I swear by the gods my people swear by, the Lúin of Celtchair will serve drinks of death to a multitude tonight.” (97)
15. “They are the instruments by which you may lawfully destroy Conare tonight.” (100-1)
 a) (Fer Calliu and his wife) Interesting. Is this because of the broken geiss? It mentions that shortly after the quote, so I imagine so.
16. “...sword that could split hair floating on water.” (101)
 a) This has been used multiple time now, and, even if not very ‘important’ I really like it.
17. “The hostel was fired three times and extinguished three times, and it was conceded that the destruction would not be carried out until Conare had performed the feat of arms.”
 a) As all good Irish heroes must! Also, it is interesting how much a role house-burning seems to play in medieval tales.
18. “I swear by the god my people swear by...”
 a) Another common phrase throughout this saga.

VERSE

VI — POEMS OF ENTICEMENT

Behold, lad, great tidings!
Tidings from the hostel.
A road for ships.
A gleam of javelined men,
fian-valorous in their wounding exploits.
A great catastrophe.
A fair woman upon whom
the red embroidery of slaughter has settled.
Behold!

Behold, lad, great tidings!
The great ardour of a generous king
warms you, heats you.
Through ancient enchantments
a company of nine yields.
Behold!

Behold, lad, great tidings!
Weary the horse we ride.
We ride the horses of

*Dond Tétscorach of the Síde.
Although we are alive,
we are dead. Great omens!
Cutting off of lives,
satisfaction of crows,
sustenance of ravens,
din of slaughter,
whetting of blades,
shields with broken bosses after sunset.
Behold!*

V2 — CONARE'S DREAM (90-1)

*The cry of Ossar. Ossar the hound.
A shout of youths going up
from the marsh of Tule Gossi.
A cold wind across a dangerous blade.
A night for destroying a king.*

*It is heard again,
the cry of Ossar, Ossar the hound.
Battle is declared. The end of a people.
The destruction of a hostel. Saddened fianas.
Wounded men. A fearful wind.
The carrying off of spears.
Pain against unfair odds.
The fall of a house.
Temuir desolate. Unknown heirs.
Weeping over Conare. Destruction of corn.
A shout. A cry.
The destruction of the king of Ériu.
Chariots whirling about.
Hardship for the king of Temuir.*

*The cry of Ossar. Ossar the hound.
A combat of heroes. Youths in slaughter.
Slaughter will be done. Men will bend.
Warriors will be despoiled.
A bellowing encounter.*

Shouts raised. Concern shown.
An abundance of spectres.
A prostrate host.
The overthrowing of enemies.
A combat of men on the Dothra.
Hardship for the king of Temuir.
Men cut down in youth.

V3 — CONARE'S DEAD-HEAD POEM (105)

A good man Macc Cécht!
Wéclome, Macc Cécht!
He brings drink to a king.
He does well.

THEMES

- {*fosterage**}
- Lineage
- Prophecy/ Fate
- Geiss
- {*heroes**}
- {*color**}
- **Apples, pigs, and eyes.**

CURIOSITIES

- ❖ This saga is full of wonderful descriptions. Ever since the beginning many characters have been described with such amazing detail and I find that to be both an interesting and beautiful style.
- ❖ It seems as though the lines between the real world and the supernatural world are extremely loose, because many men are of the Síde while many are also of mortal origins. There are even Formóiri!
- ❖ It just occurred to me, but **Fer Rogain** reminds me of Fergus in the Táin. He speaks so well of the opposing forces, despite going against them. Though, Rogain does not seem to have the connections that Fergus had.
- ❖ Great legendary king and prosperity.

The Dream of Óengus

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INTRODUCTION

A continuation of the opening of Étaín. Only survives in a 1782 manuscript, but mentioned in the Book of Leinster. Not especially old. Familiar themes: love before sight, otherworld woman, wasting away mortal lover, unwilling father, transformation into swans. The role of samhain and time. Romantic yet restrained tone. Puzzling aspect: does not reveal cause of illness. Transferred theme inappropriately? Source for a Yeats poem.

SUMMARY

A woman, most beautiful, comes to **Óengus** while he is asleep. She vanished before he can draw her to his bed, though. He was troubled and “the form he had seen by not spoken to was making him ill.”(108) He did not eat. She played a timpán for him until he slept. This girl continued to visit him for a year. He fell in love with her, but told no one. **Fergne**, Cond’s physician, came and knew what it was by the look on his face. Fergne sends for Óengus’ mother, **Bóand**, to come speak with him.

She is to search Ériu for the form her son saw. They searched for a year, but to no avail. Fergne comes again, and he says to summon the **Dagdae** so that he may advise his son. They now tap into the Síde network to find this girl (**Bodb**, king of the Síde of Mumu). He also searches for a year and the girl is found.

Óengus goes to Bodb and they feast three days and three nights. They went, and Óengus was warned that Bodb did not have the power to grant him the woman, only to bring him to her. Once there, there were many women, but *the* girl wore a silver necklace. He cannot take her now, but now knows who she is by name: **Cáer Ibormeith**, daughter of **Ethal Anbúail** from Síde Úamuin in the province of Connachta.

Óengus is now advised to go to **Ailill and Medb**, since the girl is in their lands. they go, but they do not have the power to give her. Ailill and Medb summon Ethal, but he refuses. Ailill says a threat, and they indeed acted upon it (attacked Ethal). Ailill now demands that Ethal give Cáer to Óengus, but he replies with “I cannot...for he power is greater than mine.”(111) She can

be in both human and bird form in alternating years. Ethal says he cannot reveal which year she is in which form. Ailill threatens him, and so he tells. Next samhain is when she will be a bird.

Peace was then made between them. Óengus goes that samhain and calls for her. she makes him promise that she can return to the water, though. they then slept in the forms of swans until they had circled the lake three times, thus fulfilling his promise. They then left as birds. They went back and sung to the people until they slept for three days and three nights. this is the story of how the friendship between Ailill and Medb and the Macc Óc began, and why Óengus brought three hundred to the cattle raid of Cúailnge.

THEMES

- {*women**}
- {*sickness**}
- Aetiology (of sorts)
- Samhain

CURIOSITIES

- ❖ In this story, it seems as though a woman can be given only by the most powerful, at least based off of what Ethal says. I imagine in reality it was always the closest male relative, whether it be the father or brother, depending on who lived. It is interesting, then, to see that Cáer gives herself to Óengus, rather than being given to him by another. I am not sure if this has any significant meaning, but it is a curiosity, if nothing else.
- ❖ I have noticed that the role of love sickness is a very prominent one, and not just in this tale. Furthermore, women seem to drive a substantial amount of the action. In all of these stories so far, women have been at central roles, although more so as objects of men's desire. I suppose the tale of Da Derga's hostel did not have this role, being much more fixated on the heroic qualities of great men. Still, that in itself is an interesting point of contrast to consider.

The Cattle Raid of Fróech

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INTRODUCTION

Peculiar title. More of a recovery of cattle (and a wife) from Alps than raiding cattle. A better name may be 'The Wooing of Findabair.' Myth pressed with Ulster cycle. Begins in Síde. White animals and red ears is always otherworld. Story takes a sudden shift into a heroic world. This hero must win his love, because there is an unwilling father of course, who is in Étaín and Óengus. Degraded regeneration motif. Mythic/folkloric — uncharacteristic villainy of Ailill and Medb. Also, Ailill is dominant, which is backwards. This story is more literary and psychological, focusing particularly on motivation. Subtle dialogue. Lie left unchallenged (about a ring), is this irony or forgotten?

SUMMARY

Fróech, son of **Idath** of the Connachta, son of **Bé Find** of the Síde, who was the sister of **Bóand**. Very peculiar household. Definite hero. **Findabair**, daughter of **Ailill and Medb**, falls in love with him. He learned of this and was advised to get gifts from his mother's sister, **Bóand**, to give to **Findabair**. He gets many, many gifts. Great feat! Such a glamorous arrival that people suffocated in the massive crowds. They go hunting. Description of **Ailill's** household (116). Lots of copper and metals in general.

Ailill and **Fróech** play *fidchell*. The board set is described in detail (117). **Medb** and **Fróech** play *fidchell*. Harpers (music!) (117). These are also described in detail. the harpers were fair, for they were “the fair ones of **Úaithne**”(117). They were named after the music that **Úaithne**, **Dagdae's** harper, played. **Fergus** is there. **Luther** carves out the food. **Medb** and **Fróech** play *fidchell* for three days! Three days and three nights. She now worries because she never gave the youths food. Food was then distributed, and they ate for three days and three nights.

Fróech was summoned “to the house of council” and was asked why he had come. He said just to visit. He had not seen **Findabair** yet. He goes bathing and she happens to be there as well with her maid. He asks her to come with him, but she says he must have her father accept. She gives him her thumb ring (119). **Ailill** was already worried about this, though, and him and **Medb** agreed to allow it, so long as he paid the bride price. **Fróech** found the price too high, though (119). **Ailill** wants to plot to kill **Fróech** now, for great peril awaits them if **Fróech** succeeds in taking **Findabair**.

They all go to bathe in a river, apparently, and it is then that **Ailill** discovers the ring and throws it into the river. A salmon ate it, but **Fróech** caught the fish and hid it. **Ailill** says he cannot leave the water until getting a branch from “a yonder rowan” (120). **Findabair** saw him in the river with the branch and thought it to be the most beautiful thing ever. **Ailill** made him get more, but this time he was attacked by a monster in the process. **Findabair** brings him a sword and **Ailill** throws a spear, but **Fróech** caught it. The monster is defeated. **Ailill** and **Medb** regret going against him. For her treachery, though, **Ailill** says **Findabair** must die.

A bunch of weeping women appear, after **Fróech** went in for a bath. They were apparently his people, and so he went with them to the síde of **Crúachu**. Once they came back, they were all perfect and matching (122). Peace was made. A feast begins. **Fróech** demands the salmon be found and cooked and given to **Findabair**, because he expects that “it may be demanded of her tonight”(122). Everyone became intoxicated.

Ailill demands all his treasure to be presented, including **Findabair's** ring. It cannot be found and **Ailill** threatens death. The salmon is brought and the truth is revealed (well, and alternate truth). All turns out well and **Findabair** is finally given to **Fróech**. turn out that while he was gone his cattle were stolen. Yet, also his three sons and wife (when did this happen?). So begins a quest to the Alps to retrieve them.

Great trouble is all that is foretold about this journey. A woman describes the Alps as “a grim, frightful country with truculent warriors” (125). His wife is with the king there, it seems. He has lost trust in his wife. They are led to another woman who shares kinship with them. **Conall Cernach** has been with him, and he is the connection needed for all these **Ulaid** to help him. It

was foretold that Conall would come (126). Conall let the serpent in his belt and they immediately destroyed the fort and later let the serpent go. All was well. The end.

QUOTES

1. “Fróech was the handsomest warrior in Ériu and Albu, but he did not live long.” (114)
 - a) The most common side-effect of being a handsome warrior lad.
2. “One warrior performs a feat the like of which I have never seen: he casts his javelin on ahead of him, and before it can strike the ground, seven hounds with their silver chains have caught it.” (116)
 - a) {*heroes**}
3. “...there was such a crowd that the people suffocated, and sixteen men died looking.” (116)
4. “‘Have food prepared for the youths,’ said Ailill. ‘I have no wish,’ answered Medb, ‘but to go and play fidchell with Fróech.’ ‘Do that, then; it is fine with me,’ said Ailill.” (117)
 - a) There is something that is interesting about this, although it is quite subtle.
5. “The harpers played, then, and twelve men died of weeping and sorrow.” (117)
 - a) {*music**} Forget *Game of Thrones*, this guy kills people off in heaps, and purely out of their own level of excitement and joy!
6. “...I am the daughter of a king and queen. You are not so poor that you cannot get me from my people, and it will by my choice to go with you, for it is you I have loved.”(119)
7. “The girl, however, will die tomorrow night, and not for the crime of taking the sword to him.” (121)
 - a) I wonder what crime he is punishing her for, then. The ring, perhaps? It seems, after reading more, that this is indeed the case.
8. “Fróech’s horn-players preceded him into the court, then, and such was their playing that thirty of Ailill’s dearest ones dies of yearning.” (121)
 - a) {*music**} Fróech is dangerous to have around! Not because he is a powerful warrior, but simply because he is just so amazing that people can do nothing but die of pleasure.
9. “I swear by the god my people swear by, you will die unless you restore this.” (123)
 - a) I still find this to be an interesting phrase.
10. “I swore on my honor and my soul...” (124)
 - a) {*honor**}
11. “‘My mother was of the people of Ériu.’ ‘Then help me out of kingship,’ said Fróech.” (125)
 - a) {*kinship**}

12. “I will not go to my wife,’ said Fróech, ‘for I do not trust her. I trust you. We know that you will not betray us since you are of the Ulaid.” (126)
- a) {*women**} A lot going on here in such a short bit of text.

THEMES

- The hero and his lover
- Unwilling father
- Heroic feats
- Three days and three nights
- ‘Global’ (125)

CURIOSITIES

- ❖ Not really a curiosity, but I want more of this magnificent Fróech, sicne he is apparently so well known across Ériu and Albu. What a guy.
- ❖ You know, you can probably learn a lot about real valuable items and crafts in these societies by reading their descriptions in the ‘wooing-gifts’ passages (115).
- ❖ Hounds are mentioned quite often.
- ❖ I have heard of this game fidchell multiple times now, and I must say that my curiosity of it is growing! Is it anything like the Viking game Hnefataff?
- ❖ Also, a lot of these writers have really enjoyed descriptions, whether of people, objects, or households.
- ❖ These stories kind of remind me of chivalric tales. Not necessarily for concepts of knightly behavior, but rather of crazy adventures to get the girl.

The Labor Pains of the Uliad & The Twins of Macha

SECTION CONTENTS

SUMMARY

22

INTRODUCTION

Foundation of myth, but a historical claim. Macha is a horse goddess, like Rhiannon. Macha appears out of what seems like nowhere. She selects a mortal husband and brings him to prosperity. She is associated with equine speed. All of this is just like Rhiannon. Macha herself runs faster than any horse, which is unlike Rhiannon. Aetiology: How did *Emuin Machae* get its name? *Emuin* means either ‘twins’ or ‘brooch.’ (depends on version). Also explains why Cú Chulaind is alone in the Táin. An oddity: Crunnic does not appear elsewhere.

SUMMARY

Crunnic, son of Agnomán of the Uliad, was a hospitaller with many lands. He lived in the wilderness with his sons (his wife had died). A woman came and brought him great prosperity. The Uliad held a fair and Crunnic went. The woman warns him not to say anything foolish (he does anyway). He sees fast horses and claims that his wife is faster. Now she is forced to run even though she is with child. Her labor pains troubled her. She pled for help, hoping they would wait until she gave birth for the challenge. They were not moved, and so she curses them (129). She names herself now: **Macha**, daughter of Sainrith, son of Imbath.

She gave birth while racing to a son and daughter. Her curse: any man who heard her give birth would experience her pains “for five days and four nights” (129). This lasted for nine generations. Three classes of people did not suffer, though: The women and children of **Cú Chulaind**. This was the curse that affected them from Crunnic until **Furcc**, son of Dallán, son of Manech, son of Lugaid.

The Birth of Cú Chulaind

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INTRODUCTION

Two fairly different versions, but the earlier one is presented here. Cú Chulaind has two fathers, like Conare, but the story of his birth is clearly corrupt. Lug is the mythical father of Cú Chulaind. He was one of the most important Irish deities. Although an obvious connection to make with the greatest hero, the connection doesn't seem to be that old. The last section of this story attempts to make him the son of Súaltain instead. His birth is aligned with horses, and he receives one as a gift (like Pryderi). Other portents: flock of birds from otherworld and a great snowfall. Location is Bruid na Bóinde (New Grange), a site associated with mythological tales rather than the Ulaid (perhaps for divine origin). The son of Conschubur's sister (matrilineal descent in Ireland). His name is not the name given to him at birth, similar to Pryderi. The original name was Sétantae (one who has knowledge of roads and ways).

SUMMARY

One time, a flock of birds kept eating everything at Emuin Machae while **Conchubur** and the chieftains of the Ulaid were there. They were distressed because the land was devastated. They went to chase them away with chariots. Conchubur was with his daughter, **Deichtine**. Other champions, too: **Conall**, **Lóegure**, **Bricriu**, and more. The birds flew off and they were all enchanted by their flight and singing. Three birds broke away from the rest and went to Bruid na Bóinde.

Night came upon the Ulaid and a great snow fell. Everyone sought shelter. They found a house and in it was a couple, but that it was not worth going to because it did not have enough food nor clothing. Still, they went. They grew merry with drink. The man's wife was in labor, and so Deichtine went to assist her. A son was born, and at the same time so were two foals outside. Those foals were given to the boy as gifts by the Ulaid.

The next morning, everything was gone except the boy and the horses. They returned to Emuin Machae, and there the boy was nursed. Yet, later on, he fell ill and died. Deichtine was sad for the death of her foster-son. She cried a lot and grew thirsty, and so she requested a drink from a copper vessel. Each time she drank from this a tiny creature would jump into her mouth. The night she had a dream: a man spoke to her and told her that she was pregnant and that a son would be born. The man's name was **Lug**, son of Eithliu. The boy's name was to be **Sétantae**, and it was from him that the colts were to be reared.

After that, she indeed became pregnant. This troubled the Uliad since they did not know the father. They surmised that the father was Conchubur from a time when he was drunk. Conchubur then married her off to a man named **Súaltaim**, son of Roech. Deichtine was embarrassed to have to go into bed with this man while pregnant. So embarrassed, in fact, that she crushed the child within her. She then became pregnant by him instead and bore a son.

QUOTES

1. “When morning came, the Ulaid found themselves east of Bruig — no house, no birds, only their horses and the boy with his colts.” (132)
 - a) This reminds me of when Hrolf and his men made Hrani (aka Óðinn) angry.

CURIOSITIES

- ❖ I must say that there is something interesting about this ending (133). It feels forced and awkward, and I am left wondering what would have motivated the author to do this. Perhaps the work was commissioned by a family member who was related to Súaltaim. If that is true, it would make sense that the author would attempt to change the story to please his patron.

The Boyhood Deeds of Cú Chulaind

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{ <i>Second Extract</i> }	
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INTRODUCTION

Not an independent tale, but rather a series of extracts from the Táin, but present here in the earlier a less refined version. Fergus and numerous other Ulaid have changed allegiance to Connachta due to Conchubur's killing of the sons of Uisliu. Here the exiles tell Ailill and Medb of Cú Chulaind's feats. Four extracts. First: recalls Welsh tale of Peredur. No father, unwilling mother, goes to true companions. Feats with boy troop; superhuman yet playful. Second: explains how Cú Chulaind once saved Conchubur in battle (deteriorated role). Third: how he got his name. Preference for original, but wise elder prevails. Fourth: seized by battle fury and must cool in water. Shy in front of bare-chested woman.

SUMMARIES

{FIRST EXTRACT}

In exile because of him, but still the best warrior. **Cú Chulaind** wishes to go, but must get “one of the champions of the Ulaid” to accompany him (136). He goes anyway. He went to the boys without securing protection, but defeated all their attempts against him (136). His *riastartha*e came upon him and he defeated many of the boys before being stopped by **Conchubur**. He is accepted into the troop. Cú Chulaind asks that the boys be put under his protection.

{SECOND EXTRACT}

Falling out between Ulaid and Éogan, son of Durthacht. The Ulaid went to battle while Cú Chulaind slept, but they were defeated. Many survived, but their wailing woke Cú. He made for the battlefield to look for Conchubur. He fights with a man who wanted Cú to help with his wounded brother (138). Badb is there. He finds Conchubur in a ditch and lifts him out. They go to a house and light a fire. Conchubur says he needs a roasted pig to live (138). Cú steals another man’s pig dinner. then they went home, but came upon Cúscaid, Conchubur’s son, along the way. The three of them returned together.

{THIRD EXTRACT}

Culand the smith offers Conchubur hospitality, but a large host ought not to come, for there would not be enough. Conchubur went with the 50 most impressive heroes. Stopped at the playing field on his was for the boys’ blessings (139). Cú was being a boss as always. Cú is invited to come, but wants to play more first. When Conchubur arrived, he had forgotten that Cú was coming and said he was not expecting anyone else. Culand has a watchdog. When Cú came, the dog attacked him. Yet, Cú kept playing and was not distracted by the dog. The rest were amazed that Cú was still alive. Cú completely destroyed the dog. The Ulaid rose to help him, and they were alarmed from the dangerousness of the situation. Culand says that, without the hound, he is a doomed man. Cú says he will rear a new pup for him, but until the pup is grown, he would be the hound. He is given his nickname.

{FOURTH EXTRACT}

A druid named **Cathub** was teaching a hundred men the druidic ways. A pupil asked what that day would be good for and he said that the “warrior who took up arms that day would be famous among the men of Ériu and that stories of him would be told forever” (141). Cú heard that and went to Conchubur to ask who taught him, and it was Cathub. Conchubur gives Cú a spear and shield, but all break expect Conchubur’s. Turns out that Cú will be famous, but live a short life. Cú is fine with that, saying that fame is worth it. Next is was the next to step into a chariot would be know forever, and so Cú did this. Cú broke all except Conchubur’s. Cú rides to Emuin for the boys’ blessing.

There is a place called *Sliab Fúait* where great warriors take turns to protect Emuin. Conall is there, but Cú comes and tells him to leave and takes his place. Cú educates himself on

various forts and places in that area. Cú goes looking for trouble. Cú break the geiss of a set of brothers who were enemies of the Ulaid. Cú goes to sleep and tells Ibor, the charioteer, not to wake him unless the crowd is bigger. Ibor is scared. Cú fights them. Del Chliss, a spear thrusting feat (144). Their mother wailed, but Cú would not leave behind his triumph, taking their heads and weapons. They went back with great speed (145). Cú is challenged to bring back deer to the Ulaid alive (145). He tamed the deer immediately. Next were swans, of which he also needed alive. He brought them down with stones. Ibor collects the bird while Cú holds the reins.

Cú went to Emuin. A watchmen said that he will shed the blood of all unless naked women meet him. Cú turned the left side of his chariot to the fort, which was a geiss to the fort. Cú seeks to fight another man. Conchubur sends out naked women. Cú hid his face from the women, and the warriors of the Ulaid seized him and thrust him into cold water (because of *riastarthaë*). The water boiled instantly. It took three vats to cool him. He sat at Conchubur's knee with a blue mantle, silver brooch, and a hooded tunic, which became his bed ever after.

QUOTES

-
1. “He went forth, then, with his toy javelin and his toy shield and his hurly and his ball. He would throw his javelin on ahead and then catch it before it could strike the ground.” (136)
 2. “When he reached Emuin, he went to the boys without first securing their protection...” (136)
 - a) *{custom*}*? This seems like an important social practice, but if it was, why is Cú Chulaind unaware of it?
 3. “Then his *riastarthaë* came upon him.” (136)
 - a) This reminds me of going berserk. Is this a common motif for great warriors?
 4. “I wish that their protection be given over to me.” (137)
 - a) An interesting development.
 5. “...it was custom when leaving or returning to seek the boys’ blessing.” (139)
 - a) *{custom*}*
 6. “He asked if the boy’s deeds would be similarly distinguished when he became a man, and everyone said that they would be.” (139)
 - a) *{masculinity*}*
 7. “He would also throw his javelin on ahead and catch it before it could strike the ground.” (140)
 - a) A common way to refer to a heroic character
 8. “It was the man of the family.” (140)
 - a) Interesting that the watchdog being the man of Culand’s house. Reminds me of the way Gunnar’s dog, Samr, was regarded as a foster-son.

CURIOSITIES

- ❖ I remember them from the Táin, but I would like to know more about these boy troops that are mentioned so often. What is the social role of this? I assume it is something like fosterage, except with a king of sorts. Something to explore.
- ❖ I understand that a hero is all the more heroic as a young boy, but doesn't this make the grown men look pathetic in comparison? Not just in literature, but in society as well? It seems odd to read comments like "six Ulaid champions could not have raised him more bravely" (138). It makes Cú all the more impressive, but it makes the rest of the warriors seem weak and dependent. Perhaps that is not the intention, though.
- ❖ Also, Cú can be a bit of a jerk sometimes. He steals pig dinners and beats up people. I highly doubt that is intentional, and perhaps it is for humor. Still, like with the boy troop, he almost seems out of touch with society.
- ❖ Cú is a beast, and I do mean that in a literal way as well.
- ❖ There is a stark contrast between the reaction of Cú and the Ulaid during the attack involving the watchdog. Cú is very calm whereas the great Ulaid warriors are worried and upset.
- ❖ This is the second time that Cú has offered himself up as sole protector.
- ❖ I find it interesting that Cú is destined to be famous, but must live a short life as well. It is, of course, the most common destiny for a great hero, but Cú is a bit special. He is extremely heroic *because* of his youth. I find that aspect to be inseparable from him. Yet, what does this mean for Cú as a role model? As a symbolic, legendary hero in literature for society?
- ❖ Cú constantly undermines the other great heroes.
- ❖ Why is it that bare-chested women were the only thing that could stop Cú's fury? It couldn't possibly be for humor alone, could it? Why is this a weakness of his?

The Death of Aífe's Only Son

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INTRODUCTION

More international in feeling than Irish. Probably not very old. Title may suggest an older matrilineal system. Home in north Britain. Cú's son. Cú usually a boy. Conclae, his son, is a mini version of Cú: arrogant and impressive. Many phrases do not sound very old.

* * *

SUMMARY

Cú went to study weaponry with **Scáthach nÚanaind**, daughter of **Airdgeme**. While there **Aífe**, daughter of **Airdgem**, came to him and left pregnant. He gives her a thumb ring and tells her to hold onto it until his son can wear it, and to seek him out at that time (148). Seven years later, the boy sought Cú. He performs feats (148). **Conchubur** sees this and worries, and so they send someone to meet him. **Condere** goes to meet him. The boy will not identify himself, as he was instructed. Condere says he cannot continue, but the boy persists. Condere speaks highly of the Ulaid to tempt the boy to come with him (149). The boy responds with a challenge.

Next Conall came, but he was defeated by a single blow from the boy's slingshot (150). Someone else was to go, now. The host smiled because Cú was going out to meet him. Cú approached while playing and with the arm of Emer around his neck. Emer was pleading for him to not go, since she knew it was his son. He goes anyway, denouncing the advice of a woman.

Cú goes out to meet **Conclae**. Cú says that he will die unless he identifies himself. Conclae actually does rather well against Cú. Cú then rose out of the water and "deceived the boy with *gáe bolga*" (151). This killed Conclae, and it was his downfall because it was the only thing the Cú knew and Conclae did not. Cú took the boy in his arms and took him to shore, now realizing it was indeed his son. Conclae wishes to see the great men of the Ulaid before passing (151). Much grief thereafter.

QUOTES

1. “Far enough that, little boy, until you tell us where you come from and who your family is.” (149)
2. “I vowed that I would meet this boy, though he has neither beard nor manly hair, provided he is not disobedient to the Ulaid.” (149)
 - a) {*masculinity**}
3. “The Ulaid will not be shamed while I am alive.” —Conall (150)
 - a) {*shame**}; {*honor**}
4. “...the rest of the host only smiled.” (150)
 - a) This reminds me of Skarphedin in Njal’s saga, who was always smiling when trouble was coming. An interesting detail to see, though.
5. “Cú Chulaind, however, was approaching the boy, playing, with the arm of Emer daughter of Forgall round his neck.” (150)
 - a) A peculiar image.
6. “Silence, woman! It is not a woman’s advice I seek regarding deeds of bright splendor. Such deeds are not performed with a woman’s assistance.” (150)
 - a) {*women**}, This feels like a different Cú.

CURIOSITIES

- ❖ Again Conall is shamed by a mere boy, although he is famed as a great warrior. All of these great men are always put to same by those in the likeness of Cú. On the note of Conall, I am curious about him.
- ❖ I must say that this story in particular has sounded the most like an Icelandic saga, though I avoid making such comparisons too often (best to avoid confining Irish literature to Icelandic norms and tendencies). Still, the way of writing and the attitude towards women (being somewhere between positive and negative) has led me to think about this.
- ❖ The ending of this tale is quite interesting, and I wonder what significance it all may hold. There definitely seems to be more behind it.

The Wasting Sickness of Cú Chulaind & The Only Jealousy of Emer

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INTRODUCTION

One of the more remarkable tales (myth, history, soap opera). Conflation of two different versions, which are not well integrated. Opens historically, with how the Ulaid celebrate Samhain (the annual end-of-the-year ceremony). Otherworld birds and two women arrive, who beat Cú with horsewhips. Rulers of otherworld have no need for mortal strength. Otherworldly beauty. Much of the tale is verse. Near end, tone becomes psychological, which is unusual. Fand and Emer fight over Cú. Writing is emotion but not sentimental.

SUMMARY

Annual Samhain assembly (see quote 1). Here, they would give each warrior an opportunity to boast and show-off his feats (155). Put tongues of their past foes in their pockets. Swords between thighs that would turn “against anyone who swore falsely”(155). **Conall** and **Fergus** were the only ones who still had yet to go. More *fidchell*, poetry, and acrobatics. While this happened, a flock of birds came, which were very beautiful. The women began to argue who should have them. Conchubur’s wife (**Eithne A.**) wanted a bird for each shoulder. Cú’s wife (**Eithne I.**), too, wanted this. Everyone did. To seek a solution, they went to **Cú**. Cú gets sassy (156). The women on the Ulaid suffered three blemishes (see quote 3). Cú’s crazy eye skills (156).

Cú did his thing, with chariot and sword, so that the birds could be distributed among the women. Each had a pair except his wife. She is not angry. Cú vows that if more birds come, she will have the most beautiful pair. More did come, but this time with a red-gold chain. Cú readies himself, but Eithne I. warns him. He cannot capture the birds (157)! He was angry because of this, but fell asleep. While asleep, two women came to him and each smiled at him and then beat him with a horsewhip (157). The Ulaid notice and try to wake him, but Fergus knows what it is and says to wait. Cú became sick and remained so for a year.

After a year, it was again Samuin, and a man came to see Cú, reciting a verse (see v1). The man reveals himself as **Óengus son of Áed Abrat**, and then he left. They did not know where he went. Cú finally speaks, and he goes to revisit that stone. There was a woman in a green cloak there (from the dream). She is **Lí Ban**. she brings a message from her husband, who says he will give him Fand in exchange for service.(159) Cú sends **Lóeg** with her. Once there, she changes mood and says he needs a woman to protect him (see quote 5). Next they saw a bronze boat coming to them and a man appeared.

Next they entered a house with three fifties of women inside (160). They all greeted Lóeg; they are in “a chamber apart” (160). They go to speak with Fand. Her name is explained (see quote 6). Labraid was approaching now. Lí says that he is angry, and so they go to speak with him (see v3). The poems do not help, but news of Cú does. Lóeg returns and tells of his adventure. Cú’s spirits are strengthened.

* * *

(A break in the story from an omitted section)

Cú tells Lóeg to go to **Emer** to tell her that women of the Síde has destroyed him and that he is mending and that she should come to him (162). Lóeg recites a poem for him (see v4). Lóeg goes to Emer. She shames the Ulaid for not doing more for Cú (163). She recites a poem (see v5). Next she goes to see Cú, speaking a poem to him as well (see v6). Cú awakens and goes to Lí, asking where Labraid is. She answers with a poem (see v7). Cú said he would not go on the invitation of a woman, so he sent Lóeg with her instead (we already read this, but obviously there is a little overlap here). Lóeg is told by Fand that the battle will be that day, and that Cú must come now. He recites a poem (see v8).

After that, Cú finally went to Labraid and his island. Fand gave him a special welcome (170). They went to meet the host. Ravens announced Cú’s arrival. The enemies hunted down the birds. Cú is fighting intensely, and needs vats of water to stop him (171). Fand recites a poem upon seeing Cú (see v9). Lí greets him with a poem as well (see v10). He replied (see v11). Then

he slept with Fand and stayed with her for one month (173). They prepared to meet somewhere, but Emer was aware and plotted to kill Fand, along with fifty other women. Cú and Lóeg played fidchell and did not notice the women coming. They notice, but Cú says to have no fear, and he is not worried at all. Instead he confronts Emer in conversation. They argue. Emer finally gets through to him a bit. Fand is moved into sorrow. She recites a poem (see v12). Her husband returns and she leaves with him. Cú does not take this well (178). Emer gets help from conchubur, who sends artisans and druids. Cú is tamed. Magic songs and magical drinks cause them all to forget this pain (178).

QUOTES

1. “Each year the Ulaid held an assembly: the three days before Samuin and the three days after Samuin and Samuin itself. They would gather at Mag Muirthemni, and during these seven days there would be nothing but meetings and games and amusements and entertainments and eating and feasting. That is why the thirds of Samuin are as they are today.” (155)
 - a) {*custom**}
2. “...for Conall was his foster-brother and Fergus his foster-father.” (155)
 - a) {*fosterage**}
3. “The women of the Ulaid suffered three blemishes: every woman who loved Conall had a crooked neck; every woman who loved Cúscraid Mend Machae son of Conchubur stammered; and every woman who loved Cú Chulaind blinded one eye in his likeness.” (156)
 - a) {*women**}
4. “...for it is by me that the birds were distributed.” (156)
 - a) {*women**}: Interesting, because it is as though the wife shares in the actions of her husband; his honor is her honor.
5. “When they arrived, Lí Ban seized Lóeg by the shoulder and said ‘Do not leave this place today, Lóeg, save under a woman’s protection.’ ‘Being protected by a woman has not exactly been my custom,’ replied Lóeg.” (159)
 - a) {*women**}
6. “Fand was the daughter of Áed Abrat, that is, fire of eyelash, for the pupil is the fire of the eye. Fand is the tear that covers the eye, and so she was named for her purity and beauty, since there was not her like anywhere in the world.” (160)
 - a) {*women**}
 - b) {*symbolism**}
 - c) {*linguistic**}
7. “...for the sake of the woman with whom you have come and for the sake of everyone from whom you have come.” (162)
 - a) Second appearance.

8. “I will not go upon the invitation of a woman.” (166)
 - a) {*women**}: I have to wonder, is this reflecting society as a whole? Or is it reflecting the additional anxiety of monks and the luring of women?
9. “Two druidic ravens announced Cú Chulaind’s presence; the host perceived this and said ‘No doubt the ravens are announcing the frenzied one of Ériu.’” (170)
 - a) {*myth**}
 - b) {*Cú**}
10. “Listening to you is a troop of clever, capable women, glittering sharp knives in their right hands and gold on their breasts. When warriors go to their battle chariots, a fair from will be seen: Emer daughter of Forgall in a new guise.” (174)
 - a) {*women**}: An interesting change of role and description.
11. “...for the strength of a woman is insufficient to demand my full power.” (174)
 - a) {*women**}
12. “‘Why, then, Cú Chulaind, have you dishonored me before the women of the province and the women of Ériu and all people of rank?’ asked Emer. ‘It is under your protection I have come, under the great power of your guarantee.’” (174)
 - a) {*women**}
 - b) {*honor**}
13. “...what’s red is beautiful, what’s new is bright, what’s tall is fair, what’s familiar is stale. The unknown is honored, the known is neglected — until all is known.” (175)
 - a) {*deep**}
14. “Cú Chulaind grew melancholy at this, and he said ‘By my word, you do please me, and you will as long as you live.’” (175)
 - a) {*Cú**}
 - b) {*emotion**}
15. “...[Fand] began to cry and grieve, for being abandoned was shameful to her; she went to her house, and the great love she bore Cú Chulaind troubled her...” (175)
 - a) {*shame**}
 - b) {*love**}

VERSE

V1 — MYSTERIOUS MAN TO CÚ (158)

*Cú Chulaind, sick as you are,
 waiting will be no help.
 If they were yours, they would heal you,
 the daughters of Áed Abrat.*

*Standing to the right of Labraid Lúathlám,
in Mag Crúaich, Lí Ban said
‘Fand has expressed her desire
to lie down with Cú Chulaind.*

*‘A joyous day it would be
were Cú Chulaind to come to my land.
He would have gold and silver
and plenty of wine to drink.*

*‘“Were he my friend now,
Cú Chulaind son of Súaltaim,
perhaps he could relate what he saw
in his sleep, apart from the host.*

*‘“There at Mag Muirthemni in the south
no misfortune will befall you this Samuín.
I will send Lí Ban to you,
Cú Chulaind, sick as you are.”’*

V2 — LÍ BAN’S CONVERSATION (159-60)

Lí Ban:

*Where is Labraid Lúathlám ar Cladeb,
head of the troops of victory,
victory above a steady chariot,
he who reddens spear points with blood?*

A man:

*Labraid is fierce and vigorous;
he will not be slow, he will have many followers.
An army is being mustered; if Mag Fidgai is crowded,
there will be great slaughter.*

V3 — LÍ BAN AND LABRAID SPEAK (160-1)

Lí Ban:

*Welcome, Labraid Lúathlám ar Cladeb!
Heir of troops,*

*of swift spearmen,
he smites shields,
scatters spears,
wounds bodies,
slays free men,
see slaughter.
More beautiful than women,
he destroys hosts
and scatters treasures.
Assailant of a warrior band, welcome!*

(He remains silent, and so she continues:)

Welcome, Labraid Lúathlám ar Cladeb Augra!

*Prompt to grant requests,
generous to all,
eager for combat.*

*Battle-scattered his side,
dependable his word,
forceful his justice,
amiable his rule,
skillful his hand,
vengeful his deeds—
he cuts down warriors,
Welcome, Labraid!*

(He again remains silent, and so she continues:)

Welcome, Labraid Lúathlám ar Cladeb!

*More warlike than youths,
prouder than chieftains,
he destroys valiant adversaries,
fights battalions,
sieves young warriors,
raises up the weak,
lays low the strong,
Welcome Labraid!*

***'What you say is not good, woman,' replied Labraid,
and then he recited this poem:***

*I am neither proud nor arrogant, woman,
 nor is my bearing over-haughty.
 We go to a battle with fierce spears everywhere,
 plying in our right hands red swords
 against the ardent multitudes of Echu Íuil.
 There is no pride in me.
 I am neither proud nor arrogant, woman.*

This poem has quite a bit of interesting aspects to it. I will definitely have to tag this one, for it relates to a few interesting topics: {heroes}; {women*}; {behavior*}.*

V4 — LÓEG TO CÚ (162)

*Great folly for a warrior
 to lie under the spell of a wasting sickness;
 it shows that spirits,
 the folk of Tenmag Trogagi,
 have bound you,
 and tortured you,
 and destroyed you,
 through the power of a wanton woman.
 Awake! then the woman's mockery will shatter
 and your glorious valor will shine
 among champions and warriors;
 you will recover fully,
 and take action
 and perform glorious deeds.
 When the call of Labraid sounds,
 O warlike man, rise that you might be great.*

{heroes}; {women*}; {masculinity*}; {sickness*}.*

V5 — EMER'S SHAMING OF THE ULAIÐ (163-4)

*Alas, son of Ríangabur,
 that you visited the Síde
 and returned with no cure
 for the son of Deichtine's spectre.*

Shame on the Ulaid, with their generosity

*among foster-fathers and foster-brothers,
not to be searching that dark world
to help their friend Cú Chulaind.*

*If Fergus had sunk into sleep,
and a single druid's art could heal,
the son of Deichtine would not rest
until that druid had made his examination.*

*Or if it were Conall
who was beset by wounds and injuries,
the Hound would search the wide world
until he found a doctor to heal him.*

*If Lógure Búadach were faced
with an overwhelming danger,
Cú would search the meadows of Ériu
to cure the son of Connad son of Iliu.*

*If it were Caltchair of the deceits
to whom sleep and long wasting had come,
Sétantae would be journeying
night and day through Síde.*

*If it were Furbude of the fian
who was laid low for a long time,
Cú would search the hard earth
until he found a cure.*

*Dead the hosts of Sid Truim,
dispersed their great deeds;
since the sleep of the Síde seized him,
their Hound outstrips hounds no more.*

*Alas! Your sickness touches me,
Hound of the smith of Conchubur;
my heart and mind are troubled —
I wonder if I might heal him.*

*Alas! Blood my heart,
wasting for the horseman of the plain
unless he should come here
from the assembly of Mag Muirthemni.*

*He comes not from Emuin —
a spectre has parted us.
My voice is weak and mute
because he is in an evil state.*

*A month and a season and a year
without sleeping together,
without hearing a man
of pleasing speech, son of Ríangabur.*

{heroes}; {women*}; {honor*}; {fosterage*}; {sickness*}.*

V6 — EMER'S POEM TO CÚ (164)

*Rise, warrior of Ulaid!
Awake healthy and happy from sleep!
See the king of Emuin early in the morning —
do not indulge in excessive sleep.*

*See his shoulder with full crystal,
see his splendid drinking horns,
see his chariots traversing the valley,
see his tanks of fídhchell pieces.*

*See his vigorous champions,
see his tall and gentle women,
see his kings — a course of danger —
see his very great queens.*

*See the onset of brilliant winter,
see each wonder in turn;
see then that which you serve,
its coldness and distance and dimness.*

*Heavy sleep wastes, is not good;
weariness follows oppression.
Long sleep is a draught added to satiety;
weakness is next to death.*

*Throw off sleep, the peace that follows drink,
throw it off with great energy.
Many gentle words have loved you.
Rise, warrior of Ulaid!*

{heroes*}; {sickness*}.

V7 — LÍ BAN TO CÚ CHULAIND (165-6)

*Labraid dwells on a clear lake
frequented by troops of women.
If you decide to meet him,
you will not regret your visit.*

*His bold right hand cuts down hundreds —
she who tells you knows.
Like the beautiful color
of a violent his cheek.*

*Conchend keen for battle trembles
before the slender red sword of Labraid;
Labraid crushes the spears of foolish hosts
and breaks the shields of armored warriors.*

*In combat his skin is as bright as his eyes.
More honorable than the men of the Síde,
he does not betray friends in great need.
He has cut down many thousands.*

*Greater his fame than that of young warriors:
he has invaded the land of Echu Íuil.
Like threads of gold his hair,
and his breath reeks of wine.*

*Most wonderful of men, he initiates battles;
fierce he is at distant borders.
Boats and horses race
past the island where Labraid dwells.*

*A man of many deeds across the sea:
Labraid Lúathlám ar Cladeb.
No fighting in his domain —
the sleep of a multitude prevails.*

*Bridles of red gold for his horses,
and nothing but this:
pillars of silver and crystal.
That is the house where he dwells.*

{heroes*}

V8 — LÓEG TO CÚ (167-70)

Due to the length of this poem, it is more wise to see it in the text instead. Important stanzas, however, will be included here, along with helpful tags.

(169)

*I went very slowly,
fearing for my honor.*

(169)

*I saw a bright and noble land
where neither lie nor falsehood is spoken.*

(170)

*I could enumerate, as I know them,
the descendants of sinless Adam,
and still the beauty of Fand
would find no equal.*

{Side*}; {honor*}; {heroes*}; {women*}.

V9 — FAND'S POEM ABOUT CÚ (171-2)

*Stately the chariot-warrior who travels the road,
though he be young and beardless;
fair the driver who crosses the plain,
at evening, to Óenach Fídgai.*

*The song he sings is not the music of the Síde:
it is the stain of blood that is on him;
the wheels of his chariot echo
the bass song that he sings.*

*May the horses under his smooth chariot
stay for me a little, that I may look at them;
as a team their like is not to be found —
they are as swift as a wind of spring*

*Fifty gold apples play overhead,
performing tricks on his breath;
as a king his like is not to be found,
not among the gentle, not among the fierce.*

*In each of his cheeks
a spot red as blood,
a green spot, a blue spot,
and a spot of pale purple.*

*Seven lights in his eye —
he is not one to be left sightless.
It has the ornament of a noble eye:
a dark, blue-black eyelash.*

*A man known throughout Ériu
is already good; and this one has
hair of three different colors,
the young beardless lad.*

*A red sword that blood reddens
right up to its hilt of silver;*

*a shield with a boss of yellow gold
and a rim of white metal.*

*He steps over men in every battle;
valorous he enters the place of danger.
None of your fierce warriors
can match Cú Chulaind.*

*The warrior from Muirthemne,
Cú Chulaind, came here:
the daughters of Áed Abrat
they who brought him.*

*A long red drop of blood,
a fury rising to the treetops,
a proud high shout of victory,
a wailing that scatter spectres.*

{heroes*}; {Cú*}; {masculinity*}; {color*}; {music*}.

V10 — LÍ GREETES CÚ (172-3)

*Welcome, Cú Chulaind,
advancing boar,
great chieftain of Mag Muirthemni,
Great his spirit,
honor of battle-victorious champions,
heart of heroes,
strong stone of wisdom,
red in anger,
ready for the fair play of enemies,
one of the valorous warriors of Ulaid.
Beautiful his brilliance,
bright to the eye of women.
Welcome, Cú Chulaind.*

{women*}; {heroes*}.

V11 — CÚ'S ANSWER (173)

*I have cast my spear
into the camp of Éogan Indber;
I do not know, famous its path,
wether my shot hit or missed.*

*Whether better or worse for my strength,
I have never yet in fair play
cast ignorantly at a man in the mist —
perhaps not a soul is left alive.*

*A fair shining host with splendid horses
pursued me from every direction:
the people of Manandán son of Ler
whom Éogan Indber summoned.*

*Whichever way I turned
when my full fury came upon me,
it was one many against three thousand,
and I sent them towards death.*

*I heard Echu Íuil groan,
a sound that came from the heart;
if that truly was one man, and not an army,
then my cast was well aimed.*

{Cú*}; {heroes*}.

V12 — FAND'S LOVESICK POEM(S) (175-8)

Again, due to the length of this poem (since I merged two together), it is more wise to see it in the text instead. Important stanzas, of course, will be included here, along with helpful tags.

(176)

*Wretched she who gives her love
if he takes no notice of her;
better to put such thoughts aside
unless she is loved as she loves.*

(176)

*But I have three fifties of women,
beautiful and unmarried, at home
with me in my fort —
they would not desert me.*

(176)

*Then, I would have wept,
but my proud spirit does not love now —
love is a vain thing
that goes about heedlessly and foolishly.*

(177)

*When fair Manandán married me,
I was a proper wife:
he never won from me
the odd game of fidchell.*

*When fair Manandán married me,
I was a proper wife:
a bracelet of gold he gave me,
the price of making me blush.*

(177)

*That keen sight would be useful to me,
for the sense of women are foolish:
the one whom I loved to completely
has put me in danger here.*

*Farewell to you, dear Cú!
I leave you with head held high.
I wish that I were not going —
every rule is good until broken.*

{women*}; {love*}; {advice*}

THEMES

otherworldly birds

{*sickness**}

{*women**}

{*masculinity**}

{*women-feud**}

CURIOSITIES

- ❖ Birds seem to appear quite often, especially in heroic feats.
- ❖ Óengus son of Áed Abrat reminds me of Óðinn.
- ❖ The treatment of masculinity feels different in this story, and even the symbolic role that Cú seems to play. For example, in his boyhood deeds, Cú seems to make the other men of the Ulaid seem pathetic and incapable. Yet, things are different here because Cú becomes the victim of feminine influence. This is not exactly new, though, given that Cú was calmed down because of his shyness of women's bare breasts, but this seems to be treated differently. I cannot quite put my finger on it quite yet, but this is something that I should definitely continue to think about.
- ❖ Even as I state what I did above, Emer insults the other men of the Ulaid for their inaction. (163) Does this emphasize the effects that Cú had on them in other tales? Is this related in some way? Perhaps I am reading too far into the text here.
- ❖ The verses of this tale repeat the prose, giving me the impression that this saga was heavily based on various poems, perhaps collected and gathered by this author so that it may be brought together into its prose form. This may explain why the various versions of this story do not seem to add up well.
- ❖ You know, there is enough references to color throughout these stories that one could write on that subject alone.
- ❖ At times reading this, I have felt as though there is an interesting but subtle contrast between Cú and Labraid.

The Tale of Macc Da Tho's Pig

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INTRODUCTION

Antiquity open to doubt. No Cú. Perhaps predating Cú? Other puzzling elements. Mythical pig (or satirical). In the Táin, war over a fine bull. In this tale, war over a dog. Dog promised to both Ulaid and Connachta. Bragging contest for right to carve pig. The Ulaid warriors are shamed and made out to be ridiculous. Comical elements. A parody of the Táin?

SUMMARY

Famous king of Lagen named **Macc Da Thó** who possessed a hound named Ailbe, who protected all of Lagen, thus becoming quite famous. Both Connachta and Ulaid wanted the hound and sent envoys at the same time. Macc Da Thó's hostel one in five currently in Ériu (180). Food in cauldrons, but only one change to get it (180). Connachta makes their offer (mostly material goods), and so does the Ulaid (promises of friendship along with goods). Macc Da Thó so confounded, he took three days to reply without food and drink. His wife recites a poem (see v1). After that, Macc Da Thó was renewed and tells each set of messengers that they will have the hound. Both hosts from each province showed up on the same day, of course. They were welcomed, but the faces were not friendly. Macc Da Thó's pig was slaughter for the feast; it was absolutely massive (182). Each side begins to argue with the other over how the food should be divided. Boasts and insults galore (183).

A man named **Cet** rises up and challenges the Ulaid in feats. The Ulaid sit silent. **Lóegure** spoke out, but Cet shut him down by bringing up the past (183). Next was **Óengus** son of Lám Gabuid, but Cet once again brings up a past event about Óengus' father, which brings shame to Óengus, and so he sits down (184). **Éogan** is next, and Cet reminds him of a past event in which he blinded one of Éogan's eyes (184). He is shamed and thus he sits. **Muinremur son of Gerrgend** is next, but he is shamed by Cet like the rest (184). **Mend son of Salchad** is next, but he, too, is insulted, shamed, and sat (184). **Celtchair** is next, and the same result arises (185). **Cúscraid Men Machae** is next, but he too is shamed, even though the Ulaid described his as having "the look of a king" (185).

Now it is **Conall** who comes, making a very grand entrance (185). It seems as though that Cet recognizes him as his match. Conall wins the contest! (See more detail on the middle of page 186). Conall carved the pig, but the Connachta found their portion small. A fight begins. Macc Da Thó unleashed Ailbe and let the hound choose for itself. It chose the Ulaid, for the Connachta were being routed. Yet, the hound was killed: the reason for the naming of Mag nAilbi. The dogs head remained on a pole, which was then paraded about for a bit until falling off at Áth Chind Chon in Bile. **Fer Loga**, Ailill's charioteer, hid himself. He ambushes Conchubur and forces him into a strange agreement: have the "nubile daughters" of the Ulaid sing for him in chorus every evening (187). He left a year later with two horses and bridles for both.

QUOTES

1. "At length one man triumphed over all Ériu: Cet son of Mágu from Connachta. He hung his weapons over those of everyone else; then he took knife in hand and sat down to the pig, saying 'Find among the men of Ériu one to match me in feats — otherwise I will carve the pig.' Inasmuch as his equal had not been found, the Ulaid fell silent." (183)
 - a) *{heroes*}*: The Ulaid need Cú; without him they are weak.
 - b) *{shame*}*
2. "I am the priest who baptized you father with that name, for I struck his heel with my sword so that he took but one foot away. What could bring the son of a one-footed man to challenge me?" (184)
 - a) *{insult*}*

3. “‘You will have that!’ said a large, grey, very ugly Ulaid warrior.” (184)
4. “Fergus pulled up a great oak by the roots.” (187)
- a) Simply amazing.

VERSE

V1 — MACC DA THÓ’S WIFE (181-2)

<i>‘Sleeplessness has come He has need of advice</i>	<i>to Macc Da Thó’s house. but he speaks to no one.</i>
<i>‘He turns away to the wall, His clever wife observes</i>	<i>a warrior in fierce combat. that her husband cannot sleep.’</i>
<i>‘Crumthand Níad Náir says A woman’s secret is not kept;</i>	<i>“Tell no secret to a woman. jewels are not given to slaves.”</i>
<i>‘You may speak to a woman my mind may comprehend</i>	<i>if no disaster ensues — what yours does not.’</i>
<i>‘Evil the day they came for Many a good man will die;</i>	<i>the hound of Macc Da Thó. the battle will be indescribable.</i>
<i>‘If Conchubur is refused, his hosts will not leave</i>	<i>there will be trouble for certain: any land or cattle with me.</i>
<i>‘If Ailill is disappointed, Cet will carry us off;</i>	<i>Ériu will be devastated. we will be reduced to ashes.’</i>
<i>‘I have advice for you, give the dog to both sides —</i>	<i>and the result will not be bad; let them fight over it.’</i>
<i>‘The Advice you offer God sent Ailbe;</i>	<i>renews my spirit. the dog’s origin is unknown.’</i>

{women*}; {advice*}.

THEMES

{*insult**}
{*shame**}
{*honor**}

CURIOSITIES

- ❖ Although named differently, and in a different setting, this hound (Ailbe) reminds me of Cú, at least in the sense of its fame and role. After all, this dog seems a bit divine: “God sent Ailbe; the dog’s origin is unknown.” I do wonder what that truly means. Yet, since the hound dies, I cannot be as confident in saying this hound is like Cú, at least not entirely. Still, though, it is after the hound’s death that the Ulaid face shame once again. Something to ponder, I suppose.
- ❖ This may sound crazy, but if this story is indeed satirical, and if the hound does represent Cú, I am not at all very surprised that the Ulaid warriors are criticized, mostly because Cú has often made them look rather incapable many times in other tales. This may not be the case, though, because there would need to be a reason for such a depiction. Something to ponder, I suppose. Yet, I do find it interesting that Conall is presented with much more capability in this tale.
- ❖ It feels as though Cet is here to emphasize the shame of all the Ulaid warriors. The question, then, is determining if this was for criticism, humor, or both?
- ❖ This text gives a fine idea of concepts of masculinity, and how to damage one’s honor by insulting that sense of masculinity.

The Intoxication of the Ulaid

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INTRODUCTION

Wild and comical. Mythic and historical subtext. Incomplete text. Two versions that don't match up well. Samuin, new versus old, regeneration. Historical context mixed into story and myth. Heroic to drunken stagger; humor and comedy.

SUMMARY

Sons of Mil arrive. **Amorgen** divided the land into two: under the ground to the **Túatha Dé Danand** and the rest to the sons of Mil. The Túatha went into the hills (Síde), but they left behind five of their people in each province of Ériu. List of the five in Ulaid (190). These men aroused discontent in Ulaid while it was at its high under **Conchubur**, who shared Ulaid (which was in three parts) with **Cú** and **Findtan** (both foster-sons of his). The shares are described (190-1). It remained this was for a year, until Conchubur held the *feis* of *Samuin* at Emuin Machae.

Lebarcham is sent to Cú, while **Findchad** is sent to Findtan. Leb tells Cú to go speak with Con, but he wants to stay with his people. **Emer** says he should go. He decides to go, but **Lóeg** warns him to not delay. He took the shortest ways to Emuin (191). **Senchae** greets him with rosy words (he seeks a gift). They engage in an interesting discussion about gifts and guarantors (191-2). Next Findchad arrives to Findtan, and the druid **Cathub** greets him. The same process is repeated that is seen in quote 2.

Conchubur is then king of all Ulaid. The guarantees began to fight. Senchae stops them. Cú and Findtan go along with things, provided there will be no interference after the year is up. That time comes and there is tremendous prosperity (see quote 5). Cú and Emer talk of how Conchubur is not High King, and that a feast ought to be prepared (193). Yet, this was also Findtan's plan, and everything was to happen at the same time. Cú arrived before Findtan, but not by much. Conflict is near.

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QUOTES

1. “The province was thus divided into thirds for a year, or until Conchubur held the feis of Samuin at Emuin Machae.” (191)
 - a) *{custom*}*?
2. ‘Name the present,’ said Cú Chulaind.
‘I will provided that I have a proper guarantee,’ answered Senchae.
‘Then name your guarantors, in return for a counter-present for me,’ said Cú Chulaind.
‘The two Conalls and Lóegure,’ said Senchae, ‘that is, Conall Ánglonnach son of Íriel Glúnmár and Conall Cernach son of Amorgen and Lóegure Londbúadach.’
These guarantors sufficed to secure the present, in return for a counter-present for Cú Chulaind.
‘What guarantors do you ask for your counter present?’ Senchae then asked.
‘Three young, noble, valorous lads,’ said Cú Chulaind. ‘Cormac Cond Longes son of Conchubur, Mess Ded son of Amorgen and Echu Cendgard son of Celtchair.’
‘This is my request, then,’ said Senchae, ‘that you give the third of Ulaid that is in your possession to Conchubur for a year.’
‘If the province were the better for being in his possession,’ said Cú Chulaind, ‘that would not be difficult, for his is a well-spring of authority; there is no refuting or contradicting him, and he descends from the kings of Ériu and Albu. But if the province is not better, then we will have a skirmish of little boys, and he will be returned to his own third.’ (192)
 - a) *{custom*}*; *{gifts*}*; *{honor*}*, due to the ranking of the guarantors.
3. “...Senchae son of Ailill rose and shook his peacemaking branch, and the Ulaid fell silent.” (193)
 - a) *{custom*}*?
4. “Cú Chulaind held him to that promise.” (193)
5. “Anyone who arrived at the end of the following year would have found Conchubur’s province a well-spring of justice and abundance, without a single dwelling, empty or desolate, from Rind Semni and Latharnai to Cnoc Úachtair Forcha to Dub and Drobaís, and without a single son usurping the place of his father and grandfather — everyone served his proper lord.”
 - a) *{ideals*}*, much can be said from ideals, because to have such ideals generally means that the opposite was likely present in reality.

CURIOSITIES

- ❖ The beginning of this story tells of the mythological events from the early days of Ériu. A good thing to keep in mind for various reasons.
- ❖ The exchange process in this tale is fascinating.

- ❖ Cú is interestingly passive in the beginning of this tale. He is not arrogant nor over-encumbering, but instead he wants what is best for the land and the people, rather than what may be best for his own fame or position; he is noble and just. Very admirable.

Bricriu's Feast

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INTRODUCTION

THIS STORY has a little bit of everything: mythic subtext, a heroic competition, otherworld, humor, parody, and a rambling and patchwork structure. Beheading sequence, ritual killing, samuin and earth-goddess figure. Grey and green not easily distinguishable in Irish. Contest over the champion's portion and seating. Bricriu is an Irish Loki, but no serious damage.

SUMMARY

BRICRIU NEMTHENGA prepared a great feast for Conchubur and the Ulaid. His house was built "in the likeness of Cráebrúad at Emuin Machae," but it surpassed it in quality. (221) He decorated his home extensively. He built himself a wonderful bower. When all was ready, Bricriu went to the Ulaid. They were holding a fair that day. He asks them to come. Conchubur is fine, but the Ulaid warriors are hesitant, because they know he will pin them against one another. Bricriu begins to threaten them. They finally agree and come up with a plan.

Bricriu does not sit still, though, and begins to plot ways in which to incite the Ulaid against one another. He goes to **Lóegure Búadach** and tells him that he deserves the champion's portion. Bricriu describes this portion (223). Bricriu does the same to **Conall**. Again, he does the same to **Cú**. They all arrive and the men gather around Conchubur, while the women gather around Conchubur's wife, **Mugain**, daughter of Echu Feidlech. Bricriu was ordered to leave the house, because of the hostages he had given (he knew this would happen).

Lóegure, Conall, and Cú rise to fight over the champion's portion. The first was very intense, and it was two against one! (Lóegure and Conall against Cú). No one dared to split them until Senchae, an "earthly god among the Ulaid," told Conchubur to do so. (226) An agreement was made for a judgement to occur the next day, but that, until then, the portion be divided among the host.

Bricriu saw how things were going, and so he began to contemplate ways in which he could incite the women as he had incited them men. He incites the wives of the three men from earlier: **Fedelm Noíchríde**, **Lendabair**, and **Emer**. They raced to be the first to enter the house. Their race was so tumultuous that the men thought that an enemy's army was coming! Emer made it to the door first, but the men had closed it. There began fighting over who's wife the door would be opened for. But Senchae said to have a war of words, not weapons.

And so began the war of words amongst the women of the Ulaid. The wives praised their husbands and their husbands did feats to allow them in. Cú's was the greatest, because he lifted a portion of the house! When he put it down, it knocked the bower down, which threw Bricriu and his wife into a pit of garbage. He immediately begins panicking because his house is so precious to him, and he mentions a geiss that is against the Ulaid about feasting and leaving the house in any form other than that which it was when they came. Cú was not able to straighten the house! But his ríastarthaе overcame him and he was able to do it!

AFTER THAT, the feast returned to normal for a bit once again. Yet, it is not long before the women begin to squabble once more over their men and themselves. The heroes even begin to fight once more because of this, despite Senchae stopping to scold the women. Cú is challenged by Conall, but Cú expresses his exhaustion and says that if he had his fill of food and sleep, he'd be able to beat any man in feats.

And with that, the fight over the champion's portion also resumed. They begin a chariot race to find someone who would settle their dispute. Lógure goes first and runs into a giant (after a fog/mist set in). The giant hits the charioteer for trespassing in his meadow. Lógure challenges him, they fight, but he is forced to flee back to Emuin, leaving weapons and chariot behind. Conall, next, took the same route. The same happens to him. Next Cú made the journey. Yet, Cú was able to win and took everything as his prize!

Upon the return, Bricriu declares Cú to have won the portion, but then Lógure and Conall say that the giant was Cú's friend and that it was all a setup. It was then decided that they should go to Crúachu. While on the way, Cú entertained the women with his feats. Cú is scolded by his charioteer because they must catch up now. He travelled so quickly that he reach Crúachu before Lógure and Conall. **Ailill and Medb** recognize each of the warriors as they come (with lengthy and heroic descriptions). The warriors were welcomed well and even given women to enjoy for their stay, but Cú got Findabair.

AILILL is told to make a decision, but needs time to think the matter over. The rest of the Ulaid leave, and the three heroes stay to be judged. Ailill begins to test them. One night he gives them food and sends monsters after them. Lógure and Conall run off and Cú remains. More excuses as to why this was not a fair test. Ailill thinks hard and Medb gives him a hard time, but then some advice. Medb thought over her advice and then begins something. She gives Lógure a bronze cup with a white gold bird at the bottom, promising the portion to him. Conall is promised the same and given a white gold cup with a gold bird at the bottom.

Cú suspects Medb of lying to him. She puts her arms around him and tries to sway him. Cú is given a red gold cup with a bird of precious stone at the bottom. He is also given two dragon's eyes. Medb takes over in testing them for their last night. The next morning they did the wheel feat. Lógure threw it halfway up the wall of the house. People laughed, but he assumed it to be cheering. Conall to the ridge pole — laughter and mockery, but he thought it was cheering. Cú was impressive as always, people cheered, but he thought it was mockery. He performs an additional feat.

Next they go to the house of Samera to be judged. Samera's daughter, **Búan**, falls in love with Cú. They must face spectres. Lógure and Conall run, of course. Cú stands strong, but is failing, until Lógure eggs him on. The ríastarthaе overcomes him and he is triumphant! Samera deems Cú the winner of the portion. Next they went to the house of Ercol. Duels? Lógure is defeated and runs. Same happens for Conall. Cú is victorious. They all return to the Ulaid. Upon

wondering about the portion, they present their cups. Lógure and Conall refuse to accept this, again. Senchae speaks and they are sent once again to a place for judgement.

THEY WENT to the house of Bude. A man named **Úath son of Imoman** is to judge them. He was a rather magical lad and lived by a lake. They pledged to accept this judgement. He sets a bargain: use an axe to cut off his head, and the next day he will cut off theirs. Lógure and Conall refuse, but Cú accepts. They pledge to accept the results if Cú is victorious, and so it happens. Yet, they did not accept. Now they must go elsewhere, again, and this time to **Cú Ruí**.

He was an incredible man. They are told by his wife that they must guard the stronghold until Ruí returns. Lógure is first. He faces a giant, who nearly kills him. Conall was next, and the same exact thing happens to him. Cú is last. Many evil things happen (that were prophesied to occur). He killed many men who tried to invade before night even fell. During the night, he faced a Lake monster. At dawn the giant came. He performed the hero's Salmon leap to avoid being grabbed. Cú makes demands before sparing the giant, who accepts and disappears. He leaps successfully over the wall. Ruí returns, now, and awarded Cú the portion. They return and yet still deny that Cú had been awarded the portion.

A churl comes to the Ulaid. He says that someone must come to him and cut off his head, and that the next day he must let him. A man named **Muinremur** steps up to his, for the heroes are not around. He bailed out the next day, though. Lógure was there that night, but he also failed to appear the second night. Conall was the same. Cú rose to the challenge, especially now that the entire reputation of the Ulaid was on the line. Cú's neck is too short and the churl complains. Cú stretched himself. The churl spared him. He awards Cú the portion, for it was Ruí in disguise.

QUOTES

-
1. "...sweetheart of the women and the young girls." (224)
 - a) This makes me wonder, because women have been Cú's weakness in the past, have they not?
 2. "'Let my will prevail,' said Senchae. 'We agree,' said the men. 'It is my will,' said Senchae, 'that the champion's portion be divided among the host tonight and that tomorrow the dispute be submitted to Ailill son of Mágu, since it is bad luck for the Ulaid to settle an argument without a judgement from Crúachu.'" (226)
 3. "Wait! Not a war of weapons this, but a war of words." (228)
 4. "...there is a geiss against your eating or sleeping until you leave [the house] just as you found it when you arrived." (229)
 5. "...Lógure and Conall are as different as bronze and white gold, and Conall and Cú Chulaind are as different as white gold and red gold." (239)
 6. "By my shield and sword, I will not go until I have fulfilled my pledge to the churl — since I am to die, I will die with honor." (254)
 - a) {*honor**}

CURIOSITIES

- ❖ **PAGE 222:** When Bricriu begins to threaten the Ulaid so that they might come to his feast, there must be some significance to the way that played out. War did not incite them, father against son did not incite them, but women did. This definitely comes across as humorous (and so I would assume it has such a role), but I do have to wonder if there could also be more behind it.
- ❖ **PAGE 225:** I am a little bit confused about why Bricriu must leave the house during the feast. I know that it is said that it was a “consequence of the hostages he had given,” but I am still left wondering about this. Bricriu knew it was going to happen, though, so it seems to be a sort of social custom among this class of men.
- ❖ **PAGE 227:** I suppose one could construct masculine and feminine ideals from Bricriu’s flattery? This, of course, being from a masculine perspective.
 - Strength, battle, victory, kingship, bravery, feats, heroic nature.
 - Lineage, male kin, form, intelligence, beauty, attention, fame.
- ❖ **PAGE 228:** The ways for each group of three to obtain honor is worth noting: The men fight for the portion while the women fight over who enters first. This was something mentioned before in Da Derga’s story.
- ❖ **PAGE 229:** The fact that the women praise the men to be able to enter is interesting.
- ❖ **PAGE 230:** The fact that Cú needed his ríastarthaé to straighten the house is quite humorous. Talk about over-kill.
- ❖ **PAGE 234:** Cú entertaining the women with his feats is interesting.
- ❖ **PAGE 327:** Women play an interesting role throughout this tale, but it is in such a way that they almost solely compliment the events following the three masculine warriors.
- ❖ **PAGE 243:** Very sudden bits of place naming.
- ❖ **PAGE 245-6:** A note about different versions. Is this actually in the manuscript being translated from? That would be great.