

Walking in Legends

A Comparative Analysis:

**The Parallels between *The Lord of the Rings* and
Medieval Welsh and Irish Literature**

Luke Schouwenaars

3938565

14 april 2016

Bachelor thesis Comparative Literature

Supervisor: K. Lemmen-Friedrich MA

Second reader: dr. F.P.C. Brandsma

Contents

1. Introduction	2
2. The Word of Tolkien	3
3. The Kinds of Celtic	4
3.1. Medieval Celtic	4
3.1.1. Medieval Irish Literature	4
3.1.2. Medieval Welsh Literature	5
3.2. Romantic Celtic	6
3.3. Perceived Celticness	7
4. Celtic Influences	8
4.1. The Irish Influences	8
4.2. The Welsh Influences	10
4.2.1. Style and Structure	10
4.2.2. Characters: The Two Fellowships	11
4.2.3. Motifs: Magic and the Court	12
5. Conclusion	15
Works Cited	17

1. Introduction

The relation between J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* and medieval Celtic literature has been the subject of many a discussion, going back to 1937, almost twenty years before the first book, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, was originally published¹. Since then, many people have written on the subject, chiefly referring to medieval texts written in Ireland. At times, this has produced striking parallels, but more often than that, the relation has been treated as a given, requiring no further explanation. This might be considered a surprising fact, given that Tolkien himself has explicitly stated that there is nothing Celtic whatsoever to his Middle-earth. Surely, this is ground for a thorough investigation of both Tolkien's statement, and the relation between his work and Celtic literature.

If Tolkien was so adamant on the absence of Celtic elements in his books, why does the topic keep appearing? Was Tolkien wrong about his own work, or is there some other explanation? Equally important: are there Celtic elements in *The Lord of the Rings*, or not?

This last question will be the main focus of this thesis. I wish to bring to light interesting parallels between medieval Celtic texts and Tolkien's works, specifically *The Silmarillion*, which contains much of the mythology of Tolkien's Middle-earth, and the *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy. To do this, I will draw on the work of scholars who went before me, namely Dimitra Fimi, Jamie Williamson, and Annie Kinniburgh, but I will also introduce a great deal of original research.

When the word "Celtic" is used, one quickly runs the risk of falling into generalisation, which can easily void any discussion of meaning. Therefore, I will first specify just what exactly is to be understood as "Celtic" for the purpose of this thesis. A distinction will be made between medieval Irish-, medieval Welsh-, and the more modern Romantic Celtic literature. Here I will refer to experts on the field, respectively Máire ní Mhaonaigh, Sioned Davies, and Patrick Sims-Williams.

The last category, Romantic Celtic, stands out, because it is far more recent than the other two. As such, it will primarily be of importance in the discussion of why people today are so quick to assume that there is a Celtic side to Tolkien's work in the first place.

In brief, the structure of the thesis will be as follows: first, Tolkien's statements and its implications ought to be examined. Once that has been discussed, I will set out to differentiate between the three kinds of Celtic mentioned above. Only when the difference is clear can we set out on a comparative analysis, discussing the many parallels between *The Lord of the Rings* and certain key pieces of medieval Irish and Welsh literature. For this discussion, the most relevant Irish story is that of the Tuatha Dé Danann, a group of semi-divine beings who are said to have inhabited Ireland in bygone days. Much has been written about the similarities between that story and the tale of the Noldor, a group of rebellious elves that played a key part in the history of Middle-earth. For the relation between *The Lord of the Rings* and Welsh literature, I will make extensive use the tales collected in *The Mabinogion*, and especially the tale of Culhwch and Olwen.

There is a veritable host of parallels between Tolkien's writings and the literature of the medieval Celtic world. In the discussion of the Irish influences, I will make frequent references to Fimi and Kinniburgh. When we turn our attention to the Welsh tales, I will discuss much of my own research, focussing on parallels on the fields of style and structure, characters, and, most importantly, motifs.

¹ *The Fellowship of the Ring* first appeared in 1954. *Two Towers* came out that same year, and *Return of the King* was published in 1955.

2. The Word of Tolkien

Because we intend to look at both *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Silmarillion* in a Celtic light, it stands to reason that we first examine what Tolkien has written on the matter, and whether his dismissal of the potential for a Celtic side to his work allows for further debate, or closes the matter in its entirety. Near the end of the year 1937, an early version of *The Silmarillion* found its way to Edward Crankshaw, one of the readers employed by Tolkien's publisher. This man reported that the text had "something of that mad, bright-eyed beauty that perplexes all Anglo-Saxons in the face of Celtic art" (from Carpenter, 32).

When Tolkien heard of the comparison of his work to "Celtic art", he wrote a letter to his publishers. In this letter, dated 16 December 1937, he vehemently rejected the assumption that the names he had invented, nor his stories as a whole, were Celtic. He continued,

"I do know Celtic things (many in their original languages Irish and Welsh), and feel for them a certain distaste: largely for their fundamental unreason. They have bright colour, but are like a broken stained glass window reassembled without design. They are in fact 'mad' as your reader says – but I don't believe I am" (from Carpenter, 32).

Tolkien's statement seems to leave little room for debate. According to him, it is clear that his stories are not Celtic. Some might consider any further inquiry on the subject doomed to fruitlessness, but it is my opinion that there is more to Tolkien's condemnation than there seems to be.

The first thing I would like to point out is the letter's date: 1937. Nowadays, Celtic Studies has developed a relatively clear picture of the term "Celtic", and the difficulties concerned therewith². This was far less so in Tolkien's day. It bears remembering that he grew up in the time of William Butler Yeats and "Celtomania", the tendency of scholars (and laymen alike) to use the term "Celtic" with reckless abandon, resulting in many oversimplifications and misunderstanding. The Romantic movement complicated matters even further, by attributing modern values to the concept of "Celtic". It is highly unlikely that Tolkien did not feel the influence of his environment. Kinniburgh, to whom I will refer a number of times in later chapters, argues that Tolkien, "[l]ike most Englishmen, [...] believed in the popular image of the magical, maudlin, almost effeminate Celt" (Kinniburgh, p 14), which is exactly the version of the Celt associated with the Romantic movement. The "mad, bright-eyed beauty" Crankshaw writes of certainly seems to bear the marks of this confused concept of "Celtic" as well.

The details of this version of "Celtic" will be discussed at length in the next chapter. For now, what is important is that the criticism Tolkien received seems to come from a perspective coloured by Romanticism. It stands to reason that Tolkien reacted to the idea that his work also bore these markings. In the same letter, Tolkien wrote that he was familiar with Celtic things, but it is important to note that he specifically mentions the languages Irish and Welsh – modern languages, both. In this thesis, we are concerned with medieval Celtic texts, which are written in the ancestor-languages of today's Irish and Welsh.

Can it be said, then, with any certainty, that the "Celtic" Tolkien reacted so strongly to is the same as the medieval Irish and Welsh Celtic this thesis deals with? Based on the cultural context in which Tolkien wrote, this is questionable at best. It seems far more reasonable that Tolkien attempted to distance his writings from what was (and in part still is) considered by the public to be "Celtic": druids dressed in white, dreaming of nature, weaving spells, leading tribes of noble savages. This is the "mad

² Patrick Sims-Williams played no small part in this achievement. Much concerning this will be discussed in the following chapter.

beauty” Tolkien and Crankshaw both refer to, but not the “Celtic” that lies at the heart of this discussion. Tolkien’s claim could be interpreted as saying that his tales are not Romantic-Celtic, but that does not exclude parallels with medieval Irish and Welsh literature. Indeed, these parallels are many, as it is my hope to convey.

Before that can be attempted, however, it would be prudent to expand a little more on the three types of “Celtic” I have referred to so far, to avoid the pitfall of misunderstanding that has plagued Celtic Studies for so long. What is the difference between medieval Irish- and medieval Welsh literature, and what sets both of these types apart from their modern, somewhat confused reflection found in Romanticism? These questions and more will be discussed in the next chapter.

3. The Kinds of Celtic

“Celtic” is a problematic term. For many years the word has been used in a broad sense, as “a shortcut from one discipline to another, or from one region to another, or from one millennium to the next” (Sims-Williams, 33). This uncritical use of the term saw insular and continental societies from various periods thrown on one big, metaphorical heap, as if their cultures were identical. Clearly, this is not the case, and building any kind of argument on this implied assumption guarantees that it will miss the mark.

To avoid this pitfall, I will detail exactly what types of Celtic literature we are here concerned with. In doing this, I hope to establish that there was never any one, unified “Celtic” culture. Rather, there was a plethora of diverse cultures that interacted and exchanged with one another, but were never identical. This step is necessary, in order to draw any meaningful parallels between *The Lord of the Rings* and texts from the cultures in question.

Three kinds of Celtic are relevant to our discussion. Chief amongst these are medieval Irish and medieval Welsh Celtic, two traditions grounded in the medieval past. The third is Romantic Celtic. It is more modern, but it has greatly influenced the public mind, and is thus paramount to the discussion of why people assume there is a Celtic side to Tolkien’s works, with which I will close this chapter.

3.1. Medieval Celtic

With the introduction of writing to Britain and Ireland, stories that until that time had existed only in oral form were committed to manuscripts. This led to tales being preserved and spread, but also altered, edited, or “corrected”. In Ireland especially, much has been preserved. A great number of Welsh manuscripts have been lost or destroyed, or perhaps there never were as many as in Ireland. Still, enough remains to be of use in our discussion. The Irish and Welsh corpora will be our focus. Both traditions will be discussed in brief, and several works that are relevant to our discussion will be introduced in the following pages.

3.1.1. Medieval Irish Literature

Irish literature stemming from the medieval ages is, in the words of Máire Ní Mhaonaigh, “remarkable both for its size and for the sheer variety of its terrain”. There was heroic literature, of course, but also saints’ lives, poetry, law texts, historical texts such as genealogies, scholarly works, texts on medicine and magic, and even translations of classical literature³. The arrival of groups of outsiders is a common theme (Ní Mhaonaigh, 32). In her article “The literature of medieval Ireland, 800-1200: from the Vikings to the Normans”, Ní Mhaonaigh provides an overview of several key works from this era,

³ Take for example the Irish *Merugud Uilix maicc Leirtis*, or ‘The Wanderings of Ulixes son of Laertes’.

including one especially relevant to our discussion: the *Lebor Gabála Éirenn*, or the 'Book of the Takings of Ireland'. In this book we find the tales of the Tuatha Dé Danann, already mentioned in the introduction. This text will be discussed in great detail in the next chapter, concerning Tolkien's Irish influences. Ní Mhaonaigh argues that it "exemplifies many of the themes that characterise medieval Irish literature [...]. In particular, it's preoccupation with genealogical synthesis, combined with its emphasis on kingship" (p 45). Furthermore, it has a very distinct style, which she classifies as a "bombastic celebration of the written word", full of "ornamental repetition, rhythmical runs of alliterating adjectives and nouns, [...] pleonastic pairing, elaborate ornamentation and a general diffuseness" (p 41).

In the prose works, verse appears with some frequency, in various amounts. It is often used to mark important passages (p 43). Many texts are concerned with the Otherworld, a land of myth and magic. This is often related to the previously mentioned preoccupation with kingship (p 50).

In short, Irish medieval literature tends to use a style of writing that is highly ornamental. The texts are oftentimes prosimetrical, meaning they incorporate verse in a prose text. Important themes are genealogy, kingship, and journeys into the Otherworld⁴. Of course, this is a very rough summary, and it is by no means meant to cover the entirety of medieval Irish literature. It gives an idea, however, of some elements that could be considered as typical. Ní Mhaonaigh's full article should be consulted for a more detailed picture.

3.1.2. Medieval Welsh literature

The Welsh left less manuscripts than the Irish. Perhaps much was lost, or maybe there never was as much to begin with. However, much can be said about those few texts that have been preserved. The most well-known examples are the tales that make up *The Mabinogion*. These eleven tales can be dated back as far as the mid-fourteenth century, and are likely older still⁵. One of the most recent academic translations of *The Mabinogion* was composed by author Sioned Davies, who is also responsible for the article "Writing in Welsh to 1150: (re)creating the past, shaping the future". This article is a counterpart to the one by Ní Mhaonaigh discussed above. Again we find a detailed discussion of elements that are typical for Welsh literature, applied to several key texts, such as the tale "How Culhwch won Olwen", from Davies' own *Mabinogion* translation. One of the main themes the Welsh used, she argues, is the invasion of Britain by Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman forces (Davies, Writing in Wales, p 675). Here we find a parallel between the Welsh tradition and that of the Irish, which, as Ní Mhaonaigh pointed out, also frequently dealt with the subject of invaders. From that point, however, the two styles begin to diverge. Kingship in general is not as important to the Welsh. Instead, one king stands out: Arthur, "the model of an over-king, physically strong, decisive, focused, and leader of a band of ferocious warriors" (p 678). In these times of conquest, Wales saw a lot of "mythmaking, with the creation of a national and ethnic identity". One of the more interesting characteristics of the tales of mythmaking was their use of the theme of the Otherworld, which we

⁴ It should be noted that the *Táin Bó Cuailnge*, another very important text of significant length, does not fit this description very well. It uses a far more prosaic style. Because of its important position in the field of medieval Irish literature, it cannot go unmentioned. However, because the *Lebor Gabála* provides far more interesting parallels with Tolkien's work, I have decided to focus on that text instead, and leave the *Táin* for a later discussion.

⁵ The oldest manuscript in which these tales are found is the White Book of Rhydderch, which was written around the middle of the fourteenth century. Knowing this, we can say that the tales must be at least as old, possible even older; the general consensus is that the tales reached their current form in the eleventh century, even though there are no extant versions of the text from that period.

already encountered with the Irish (p 684). At the core of this newly forged national identity, Davies argues, lie three main themes: “Loss, betrayal, [and] self-destruction” (p 686).

It seems there certainly are similarities regarding the subject matter of these two Celtic traditions. Both the Welsh and the Irish Celts encountered their fair share of invaders, which left its mark on their literature. Kings and kingship feature as important themes in both traditions, though it is more explicit in Irish tales. There, we also notice a greater emphasis on genealogy. Both corpora include tales dealing with the Otherworld, and this is done in comparable fashion.

When we turn to the styles of writing, we start to notice more differences. Davies makes no mention of the “bombastic” way of writing we saw the Irish employ, nor do we see any evidence for it when we turn to *The Mabinogion*, except in some rare few passages. The language is far more direct, reporting one event and then moving on to the next. Verse does appear in Welsh prose, but nowhere near as frequently as in Irish texts.

All of this shows us that these two cultures, while they shared much, were not identical. Welsh Celtic and Irish Celtic are two distinct branches: alike, but not the same.

3.2. Romantic Celtic

Romantic Celtic is a subtype of Celtic that stands out. Whereas the different kinds of Celtic discussed so far are all grounded in history and based on linguistic, philological, and archaeologic evidence, Romantic Celtic does things the other way around. It is a modern concept, based primarily on the imagination of certain key figures like Ernest Renan (1823-1892), Matthew Arnold (1822-1888), and later W.B. Yeats (1865-1936), but not on any factual evidence. For academics, this is problematic, because it muddies the field. The images conjured by the authors mentioned, and many others, are, however, so potent, that they have taken root in the mind of the people. For this reason, the Romantic perception of Celtic cannot go unmentioned, even though it might have little to do with the genuine Celtic cultures that Celtic Studies today is concerned with.

Patrick Sims-Williams has written a very comprehensive article about the uncritical, “woolly” way of using the word “Celtic”. He states that “generalization about Celtic literature began with the 1854 essay *La Poésie des races Celtique* by Ernest Renan”. One of the examples he gives is the image of the “Celts as poetic visionaries, more in touch with the Otherworld and with the world of nature than the unimaginative Germanic ‘race’”. He then continues to argue that it is one of the tasks of Celtic Studies to remove itself from those Romantic beliefs (Sims-Williams, p 8).

Writing about both historical Celtic cultures and Romantic “Celtic” afterimages in the same discussion, without clearly delineating the (vast) differences between the traditions of the medieval and modernity, serves no purpose other than to create confusion. However, banishing the Romantic branch of the Celtic tradition might be too extreme a reaction. As long as clarity about its place in history remains a crucial part of the discussion, the Romantic view of “Celtic” deserves at least some attention, primarily because it is entrenched in the public mind. Ignoring it would, therefore, be a mistake. Later on in this thesis, we will discuss the matter of Tolkien’s writings’ perceived Celticness. In that discussion, it shall be demonstrated, the Romantic view of “Celtic” is critical.

In “The Celtic Twilight”, Francis Shaw describes Romantic Celtic literature as “shadowy and dreamy”. He is swift to add that these features have no ties with the historic Celts of Ireland and Britain (Shaw, p 260). While he primarily discusses the early poetry of W.B. Yeats, his comments can be applied to the modern image of the Celt as a whole. He argues that Romantic Celtic literature promotes a “return to a blissful, joyous world free from moral responsibilities and cares, it is inviting us to enter a “dream-world” which exists in the imagination of Mr. Yeats, but which finds no “external validation”” (p 264). For quite some time now, this “dream-world” has overshadowed the genuine Celtic cultures and their

literature. The Romantic movement is responsible for the dreamy druids that feature so heavily in the modern conception of “Celtic”, whereas in reality very little is known about them, except that they were definitely *not* dreamy: they underwent years of rigorous, formal training before reaching their position. This almost academic background puts them firmly in touch with reality, rather than Yeats’ “dream-world” (p 272). The following words conclude Shaw’s article: “The real beauty of the woodland scene and noon-day sun [symbolising what historical evidence shows us, “clear as day”] is forgotten, and there is substituted for it the unconvincing fancy of the poet painter’s twilight mind. The story is applicable to the poetry of the Celtic Twilight [and Romantic Celtic literature as a whole] generally” (p 278).

The Romantic idea of “Celtic” is an entirely original concept. The few historical sources it uses are limited, for the most part, to names. The picture it shows us is completely new, hardly related to the medieval Celts at all. Yet it is this picture which has been imprinted on the retina of so many. And with that in mind, we can try to answer a different question, already mentioned above: why is it that people are so quick to assume that *The Lord of the Rings* has a Celtic side to it?

3.3. Perceived Celticness

C.W. Sullivan wrote a most interesting article concerning the relation between the Celtic world and fantasy literature. In this article, he claimed that J.R.R. Tolkien is one of the authors for whom he considers the influence of the Celtic world “both obvious and integral” (Sullivan, p 13-14). The question at this point is not whether he was right or not, but rather why he, and many others with him (like Crankshaw, the first to note the “Celtic madness” in Tolkien’s work), make this assumption without providing any evidence, as if the relation between Celtic literature and Tolkien were a matter of general knowledge. In the next chapter, I will show that there are many parallels for those who look close enough, but none of them are so obvious to warrant a comment like that of Sullivan.

Perhaps the answer to this question can be found in the very article in which Sullivan expressed his assumption. Tolkien is part of a tradition – fantasy literature – which in its early stages made frequent use of Celtic material. Sullivan refers to the works of Kenneth Morris and Evangeline Walton, for example. Both authors wrote novels that can safely be seen as adaptations of tales from *The Mabinogion* (p 14). This is not the case with Tolkien, but his tales do share much with texts that rely more heavily on Celtic sources. This might explain why Sullivan, and others like him who are familiar with the origins of fantasy literature, consider Tolkien’s Celticness so self-evident.

Another solution points to the Romantic movement as the cause of these conceptions. In *The Evolution of Modern Fantasy*, Jamie Williamson argues that Tolkien was concerned with writing “an imaginary version of the lost, pre-Christian myths and legends of England” (Williamson, p 158). In this longing, we find a striking parallel to Yeats’ dream-world: both authors went back to an era before their industrialised present, an era that never was. Could it be that Tolkien’s fascination with this rustic, Romantic view of England, expressed between the lines of his epic, is what causes people to label *The Lord of the Rings* as Celtic? This might be another manifestation of the same problem that caused Tolkien to deny his works’ Celticness in the first place: people see a story about a group of adventures, led by a sage old man dressed in white, travelling through green lands rife with magic, filled with monsters and dwarves and elves, and perhaps all or some of that touches upon what the Romantic movement has told them that “Celtic” is.

4. Celtic Influences

Now that the concept “Celtic” has been thoroughly defined, the board is set to begin our comparative analysis at last. We have established that Irish Celtic literature and Welsh Celtic literature are two different things, and it only makes sense to apply this division here as well. First, Tolkien’s Irish influences will be discussed in brief. The focus of this section will be the similarities between the tale of the Tuatha Dé Danann and Tolkien’s Noldor. The Welsh influences will be the topic of the section after that. I have chosen to dedicate more time to this latter subject because, of the two traditions, this one has had the least attention in relation to Tolkien. The parallels are less obvious, but, as I hope to convey, not less interesting.

4.1. The Irish Influences

When it comes to Tolkien’s Celtic influences, there is one tale that always leads the charge. The parallels between the Irish myths concerning the Tuatha Dé Danann and Tolkien’s Noldor are unmistakable. As such, it is an excellent starting point for our discussion. Dimitra Fimi and Annie Kinniburgh have both written compelling articles on this matter. Fimi begins her article mentioning the “striking similarity between the Noldor [...] and the Tuatha Dé Danann” (Fimi, p 161). Kinniburgh writes of “unavoidable echoes” and “significant thematic and direct parallels” (Kinniburgh, p 4). In order to present the matter clearly, I will combine their findings here.

First, several introductions are in order. Who are the Noldor and the Tuatha Dé? The former appear in Tolkien’s *Silmarillion*. They are a group of rebellious elves who forsake Valinor, the land of their gods, to return to their ancient homeland of Middle-earth. In Valinor, the hidden island far to the west, the Noldor had learned much from their gods, and that knowledge contributed to their position of power back home. The Tuatha Dé were “semi-divine creatures of Irish mythology” (Fimi, p 161), who ruled Ireland before the ancestors of the historical Irishmen first came there.

Kinniburgh has classified the similarities between the two peoples in three categories: their natures, their social structures, and their histories (Kinniburgh, p 13). I would like to discuss especially the parallels concerning nature and history, because those seem to me the strongest. We will begin with a discussion of the nature of the two peoples.

Both races are semi-divine. They are “children of the gods--the Children of Iluvatar and the Sons of Danu” (Kinniburgh, p 6). Iluvatar is the creator-god of the world Tolkien constructed. The elves, of whom the Noldor are a subtype, were amongst Iluvatar’s first creations. The phrase “Tuatha Dé Danann” is frequently translated as “people of the goddess Danu”, which explains the second part of Kinniburgh’s statement. Fimi argues much the same, claiming that the nature of the Tuatha Dé and the Noldor are highly comparable. She describes both races as “inferior to [...] the “gods,” but superior to men” (Fimi, p 162).

Aside from their origin, there is another element of their nature that connects the races: their skill in arts and craft, learned on islands far away (the Noldor in Valinor, the Tuatha Dé in “the northern islands of the world” (Fimi, p 162-163)). The emphasis on craftsmanship is essential especially for the Noldor. Most famous amongst their kings is Fëanor, who captured the first light of the world, from the fruits of two celestial trees in Valinor, in a collection of gemstones. These gems of treelight are called the Silmarils, from which the name of Tolkien’s book of myth is taken.

I will only briefly mention Kinniburgh’s argument regarding the social structure of the two races. She highlights the role of the oath in both societies “as a means of assessing and ensuring [...] loyalty” (Kinniburgh, p 8). This is not necessarily a parallel between the Noldor and the Tuatha Dé. Rather, it establishes that the Noldor are a pre-literate society: there is no writing, so of course the spoken word is important. Many oral societies relied on the sacred nature of the oath. Calling it Celtic is too grand

a statement. For the sake of brevity, let us instead turn to the historical parallels between the Noldor and the Tuatha Dé, which are more concrete.

Both races arrive in what will one day become the land of man by fleet, having left a mysterious, sacred island behind. In a sense, they are both returning home. The Noldor lived in Middle-earth when they were first created, long before mankind awakened. Other, darker things dwelt there too, and so the Valar – the gods – took the elves to live in a safer place: with them, in Valinor. After the Noldor rebellion, ages later, the Noldor returned. This is paralleled in an early version of the *Lebor Gabála*. The Tuatha Dé had strong ties with Ireland, because their ancestors lived there long ago. As Fimi puts it: “[they] were justified in invading Ireland because it was theirs by right of heredity” (Fimi, 162).

Kinniburgh sums up the history of the two peoples in one sentence: “both races enter the established world of legend triumphant, live in it with an elevated status, and leave it diminished” (Kinniburgh, p 5). The triumphant entry refers to the battles fought when the races land, which are very alike. First, they burn their ships. The Noldor do this to prevent pursuit, the Tuatha Dé do it to show they intend to stay. Their reasons may differ, but the motif is the same. Both races then fight a great battle in extraordinary darkness. The Noldor fight an army of orcs, the Battle-under-Stars, before the sun and moon had been created. The Tuatha Dé Danann clash with the Fir Bolg, Ireland’s previous inhabitants, under a solar eclipse. Their king, Nuada, loses his hand during this fight. The first son of Fëanor, called Fingon, an elven prince, also loses a hand, albeit under different circumstances (Fimi, p 163).

The similarities are multitude: a return to an old homeland, the burning of ships, a battle in darkness, and the loss of a hand. The parallels are so strong that Fimi claims these histories “can be claimed to be equivalent” (Fimi, p 163). This certainly seems the case.

This is only the first battle. In later conflicts, we find further parallels. Kinniburgh writes:

“Nuada, the first High King of the Tuatha De Danaan, perishes in the Battle of Moytura North at the hands of the Fomorian king Balor (who, in a sequence of unavoidably suspicious similarities, is also called the Evil Eye, and who resides in the Tower of Glass). Feanor [*sic*], who of all the Noldor is deemed “mightiest in word and deed,” is killed in the Second Battle of the Wars of Beleriand by Gothmog, Lord of the Balrogs and servant of Sauron. These are no removed alfar [*sic*]; they are warlords who willingly trade immortality for a glorious death in battle” (Kinniburgh, p 7).

The “suspicious similarities” refer to Sauron, chief antagonist of *The Lord of the Rings*. His own “Evil Eye”, fiery, all-seeing, mounted on a tall, black tower, is in image most people today will be familiar with. The typographic similarity between “Balor” and “Balrog” is likely coincidental, but interesting to note nonetheless.

The last historical parallel I want to discuss is concerned with the end of the two races’ dominion. “After a certain number of years (at least 4, 000 for the Noldor, approximately 150 for the Tuatha De Danaan⁶), their time as the most prominent/powerful/important race on earth (or Middle-earth) is ended” (Kinniburgh, p 9-10). In both tales, mankind becomes the next dominant power. The process is swift in Irish mythology: one invading force replaces the next. In Tolkien’s works, the change is more gradual, but the result is the same. Elvenkind “must depart into the West, or dwindle to a rustic folk of dell and cave, slowly to forget and to be forgotten” (Tolkien, *Fellowship*, p 479). The same happens to the Tuatha Dé: they go into exile, to “dwell underground, in ancient barrows and cairns” or on islands to the west (Fimi, p 163). The parallel is exact in this case, making it perhaps the strongest one yet. Elf and Tuatha Dé make place for mankind, and depart for a realm of magic. To call upon Kinniburgh one final time: “Each race leaves the dominion of their land to mortal men and sails into

⁶ Kinniburgh uses an alternate spelling of the word: “Tuatha De Danaan” rather than “Tuatha Dé Danann”.

the West, bound for a destination not even legend describes in full. What glimpses there are show a land of transcendent beauty and peace" (Kinniburgh, p 13). Valinor is as much an Otherworld as anything Irish mythology has ever produced.

Taking all the above into consideration, it becomes nigh impossible to deny a Celtic influence in Tolkien's work. The Noldor are key to *The Silmarillion*⁷, and as such this Irish-Celtic element is a significant one. The parallels are many and strong, as I hope to have demonstrated. The Tuatha Dé Danann might well have been the inspiration that drove Tolkien to invent the Noldor. The claim that there is nothing Celtic in Middle-earth lies in ruins. It becomes all the more likely that the hypothesis I proposed earlier, that Tolkien did not mean "Celtic" in the sense of "medieval Irish and Welsh" but was rather referring to the Romantic reflection of the concept, might have some truth to it.

The way is now open for further investigation. There certainly are parallels to be drawn between the lore of Middle-earth and that of Ireland. What more could we find, were we to shift out attention to Wales?

4.2. The Welsh Influences

Say "medieval Welsh literature", and the first thing most scholars will think of is "*Mabinogion*". As such, in this chapter we will compare elements from *The Lord of the Rings* with several of the eleven tales that make up *The Mabinogion*. Of these eleven, "How Culhwch won Olwen" is considered the oldest. Because of that, and because it has proven useful for comparison with Tolkien's material, I have chosen to pay specific attention to that story. In my own research, I have found many similarities between Welsh Celtic literature and *The Lord of the Rings*. The most striking parallels can be divided in three categories, to wit style, characters, and motifs.

4.2.1. Style and Structure

Before we dive into the texts in quest for parallels, we should consider for a moment what we can see "from the outside". That is, without truly reading the texts, but simply looking at them. In chapter three, we established that many medieval Irish texts incorporated verse. Welsh literature shows traces of this as well, but in smaller doses. *The Mabinogion*, for example, has a small number of *englynion*⁸, short songs with a strict metre. One only has to leaf through any of *The Lord of the Rings* novels to see that verse plays an important role there as well. We find the first song as early as page 47 of *The Fellowship*. Many more examples follow throughout the books⁹.

This first parallel appears even before we turn to the content of the novel. It links Tolkien's works not to a specific text, but to the whole tradition. Of course, it cannot be claimed that the use of verse is specifically Celtic, but it is an important feature of medieval Irish (and, to a lesser extent, Welsh) texts. We now know that Tolkien used that material to base parts of his own work on, so it is not out of the question that this might be more than a mere parallel. However, because that would be impossible to

⁷ The Noldor are a critical faction in the history of Middle-earth. Of the twenty-four chapters that make up *The Silmarillion*, ten are directly concerned with the history of the Noldor, and mention of them appears in several other chapters. Furthermore, the Silmarils, the precious gems that give the book its name, were crafted by the most renowned king of the Noldor, as I have stated earlier.

⁸ In "How Culhwch won Olwen", Arthur signs an *englyn* about Cai (Davies, *Mabinogion*, p 206-207). There are also several examples in the Four Branches (p 31, 62 and 63, for example).

⁹ A rather small selection: *Fellowship*, p 119; 209-211; 445-446; *Two Towers*, p 453; 497; 712; *Return*, 764; 820; 933; 965.

prove without more information, let us note this as an interesting parallel, and leave it at that for now.¹⁰

Another structural parallel appears in the preface of *The Fellowship*. Tolkien references an old, fictional source, called the “Red Book of Westmarch” (Tolkien, *Fellowship*, p 1). Based on this account, he has reconstructed a tale from a long forgotten past, concerning the events surrounding the War of the Ring. This fictional source might well be a reference to the Red Book of Hergest, a real, historical manuscript, in which *The Mabinogion*-tales were found, as well as several other important pieces of medieval Welsh literature.¹¹

Tolkien has thus given *The Lord of the Rings* not only a Celtic appearance, by making it prosimetrical, he has also furnished it with a (fictional) context that is very reminiscent of the context of *The Mabinogion*. With this in mind, we have even more reason to expect evidence of a Celtic influence in the novels. Williamson has noted that the similarities go “beyond simply the style and structure of individual tales” (Williamson, p 158). We have established these similarities, and are now more than ready to discuss the parallels found in the text itself.

4.2.2. Characters: The Two Fellowships

There are many characters in Tolkien’s works, and more in Welsh mythology and the corresponding body of literature. Some interesting parallels appear when some of those characters are compared. I will limit myself to two fellowships: the members of the Fellowship of the Ring, and the characters that accompany Culhwch.

The central characters of the two fellowships themselves, Frodo and Culhwch, don’t have too much in common. They are both set on impossible quests, but show incredible perseverance, and eventually succeed. This, however, does not necessarily point to a Celtic influence. Rather, it can be explained by the role of the two characters: they are the central heroes. Determination in the face of impossible odds is a hallmark feature of that role, it is what makes them who they are.

We find more convincing parallels when we turn to other characters. A prime example is the case of Aragorn, son of Arathorn. He originally joins the party in the position of guide (Tolkien, *Fellowship*, p 227). He knows much of the land, and of survival in the wild, because he is a Ranger. As all Rangers, he is very much in touch with nature. In general it is said that Rangers have the ability to “understand the languages of beasts and birds” (Tolkien, *Fellowship*, p 197).

There are two men of Culhwch’s company that seem to bear some similarities with Aragorn. These are Cynddylig and Gwrhŷr. Cynddylig, like Aragorn, joined his party as their guide (Davies, *Mabinogion*, p 190). Gwrhŷr, the second character, has more in common with Aragorn. When Arthur assembles the party that is to help Culhwch, he picks Gwrhŷr because he “can speak the same language as some of the birds and the beasts” (Davies, *Mabinogion*, p 203). In the discussion of parallel motifs, this power will feature again, but for now we are primarily interested in the wording. We see that Tolkien’s Rangers’ ability to commune with animals is described in a simple reversal of the terms used to describe Gwrhŷr’s power: “the birds and the beasts” becomes “beasts and birds”. The use (and combination) of these specific terms makes the assumption that Gwrhŷr served as a minor inspiration to Tolkien a likely one.

There is one more similarity concerning Gwrhŷr that deserves a mention, which only reinforces the assumption above. One of the creatures he speaks with, on his quests with Culhwch, is an eagle (Davies, *Mabinogion*, p 191). *The Lord of the Rings* features eagles as well, the most prominent of

¹⁰ It should also be noted that prosimetrical texts appear in other traditions as well. It is a common feature of epics. The possibility that Tolkien was inspired by *these* specific epics, however, remains.

¹¹ Jesus College 11, c. 1382-1408.

which can speak. His name, Gwaihir, is so close to “Gwrhryr” that the odds of it being a coincidence are small. It seems that Gwrhryr, with reflections in both Aragorn and Gwaihir, did most certainly influence Tolkien.

Lastly, some words about Tolkien’s Gimli and Legolas. In this case, it is not the characters, but their relation that finds a counterpart in Welsh mythology. They are highly competitive, and frequently measure themselves against each other¹². This behaviour recurs throughout the novels, and we see it paralleled, to some extent, in the relationship of two of Culhwch’s companions: Cai, one of the bravest heroes of the court, and Bedwyr, “who never feared the quest upon which Cai went” (Davies, *Mabinogion*, p 189).

Except for the case of Aragorn and Gwrhryr, these parallels alone don’t mean much. It is, however, their combined weight that draws the attention. Maybe it is just a result of both tales following the rules of “a good story”, maybe it is accidental, but the makeup of the two fellowships is similar: a central hero who braves impossibilities (Frodo and Culhwch), a guide (Aragorn and Cynddylig), someone who communes with nature (Aragorn and Gwrhryr), and two rival heroes (Gimli and Legolas, and Cai and Bedwyr). Furthermore, Tolkien’s Fellowship seems to echo the well-established “Six Go Through the World” motif, found in many Celtic texts¹³. Readers of Tolkien will know that the Fellowship consists of nine members. This is true: Frodo, Sam, Merry and Pippin of the Shire; Boromir of the men of Gondor; Gimli of the dwarves of Erebor; Legolas of the Mirkwood elves; Aragorn of the men of old Númenor; and Gandalf of the Wizard council. Nine heroes, indeed, but representing six forces.

The ties between most of the characters are faint, but together, they form two very similar companies. Tolkien’s Fellowship definitely finds resonance in Celtic literature. The case of Gwrhryr is especially striking, and as far as characters go, this has all the markings a direct Celtic influence.

4.2.3. Motifs: Magic and the Court

There are distinct parallels between Tolkien’s trilogy and the material from *The Mabinogion*, on the fields of style and character, as we have seen. It is my belief that the most concrete evidence for a Celtic influence can be found in this last category: motifs. There will lie the focus of this final part of our analysis. The most striking parallels I have found come in two categories: magic, and the court.

Magic plays a (surprisingly) small role in Celtic mythology. It is there, but mostly in the form of subtle enchantments or magical properties. It is not as flashy as modern ideas of magic, influenced by video games and fantasy literature, but it is still unmistakable. In part, this is because magic is always, in a sense “marked”. It is common to find mention of a bank of mist suddenly surrounding the characters, after which the effects of a spell are revealed¹⁴. I have called this the Mist and Magic motif. It appears even more frequently in medieval Irish literature, often to mark the passing from one world into the next. This specific motif thus ties *The Lord of the Rings* to both Irish- and Welsh-Celtic literature.

Tolkien’s magic resembles the Celtic kind. Places and objects have magical properties, and several characters use subtle magic to influence others. Interestingly enough, all three novels use the Mist and Magic motif: when Frodo wears the Ring, he is shown “a world of mist in which there are only shadows” (Tolkien, *Fellowship*, p 526). The One Ring is beyond a doubt magical, and the world it shows

¹² The clearest example of this is during the siege of Helm’s Deep, where they count their kills and continuously boast of their scores and keep trying to one-up the other (Tolkien, *Two Towers*, p 522-523). This has been further developed in the Peter Jackson films, leading to Gimli’s famous quote: “That still only counts as one!”

¹³ This motif is rather self-explanatory: six heroes set out on a quest. It is found, for example, in Culhwch’s story.

¹⁴ For example, in the Third Branch (Davies, *Mabinogion*, p 36, and again on p 40).

Frodo through its magic is literally filled with mist. Much later, Gandalf and the Rohirrim¹⁵ make camp, when at night

“[a] mist gathered about them. Above them a few stars still glimmered faintly; but on either side there arose walls of impenetrable gloom; they were in a narrow lane between moving towers of shadow. Voices they heard, whisperings and groanings and an endless rustling sigh; the earth shook under them” (Tolkien, *Two Towers*, p 539).

This mist hides the passing of a group of trees, made semi-sentient through magic¹⁶. In the third novel, we again find the Mist and Magic motif: when Aragorn proclaims the oath of the Host of the Dead¹⁷ fulfilled, they vanish “like a mist that is driven back by a sudden wind” (Tolkien, *Return*, p 859). When the mist is gone, so too are the ghosts.

In all three instances, we see mist linked to the magical world. The frequency of these occurrences rule out the possibility of the connection being a coincidence. The Mist and Magic motif appears well-established in medieval Welsh literature, and to Tolkien the association must have appeared a potent one, for him to preserve it in his own work.

Let us take a closer look at the example of Frodo, given above. In brief, what happens is this: Frodo, wearing the One Ring, flees up the Hill of the Eye. At the summit, he finds a mighty throne, and, sitting upon it, his vision is greatly enhanced. He lets his gaze pass over much of the known world. He sees great rivers, faraway towns, immense cities, and everywhere the signs of war. At last, he looks upon Mordor, and immediately feels that Sauron, the Enemy, is aware of his gaze. Their wills clash, and only at the last possible moment can Frodo break the link and avoid discovery (Tolkien, *Fellowship*, p 525-526).

This scene immediately brings to mind one found in the First Branch of the Mabinogion. Pwyll is brought to a hill, where he is told that

“the strange thing about the mound is that whatever nobleman sits on it will not leave without one of two things happening: either he will be wounded or injured, or else he will see something wonderful” (Davies, *Mabinogion*, p 8).

While such a description is nowhere given in Tolkien’s work, this seems to be exactly what happens to Frodo. When he sits on his hill, he sees many wonderful things. However, he barely escapes detection by Sauron, which would assuredly lead to something far worse than mere injury. This motif seems to be a close parallel between *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Mabinogion*.

Let us return to the semi-sentient trees. They are the Huorn, trees that can move and communicate. Some of them are more animated, more sentient. These are called the Ents, and it is with them that we find another parallel.

Ents, much like trees, have a very long lifespan, and are wise in the ways of lore. They employ lists (in verse!) to memorise facts, in order to pass their knowledge along through the ages. Partly because of this, Treebeard, the Ent who is the most central to the tale, is able to teach Merry and Pippin (by then two lost members of Frodo’s Fellowship) a great deal about the world. We see here, in short, lore being preserved and passed on by ancient trees.

¹⁵ The mounted warriors of Rohan.

¹⁶ Treebeard, fully sentient and one of the shepherds of the semi-sentient trees, reveals that long ago, his kind was “woken up” and taught to speak by the Elves (Tolkien, *Two Towers*, p 457).

¹⁷ The Host of the Dead are a group of restless spirits. In a previous war, they broke their oaths to do their part in the war effort, and their punishment was for their spirits to linger until a chance appeared to make up for their failings (Tolkien, *Return*, p 772).

In our discussion of parallels concerning characters, we mentioned Gwrhŷr's ability to communicate with animals. He uses this power to talk to a series of creatures, each older than the last, in search of one who is wise enough to know the location of someone Culhwch needs to find (Davies, *Mabinogion*, p 203-205). This motif, of passing on lore through ancient animals, appears again in other Celtic sources¹⁸. Tolkien employed a very similar method of preserving lore in his fictional world, supplanting sentient animals with sentient trees. Both tie knowledge to nature, and stress that nature is older, and thus wiser, than man (or hobbit). Whether it was intentional or not, the parallel is, once again, very close.

Lore is passed on through other means as well. In the kingdoms of man, both those in Wales and Middle-earth, preserving knowledge is the task of the bard or minstrel. Here I would leave the realm of magic, and turn to the courts, and the role that the bards played there.

Bards and stories are an important part of Tolkien's Middle-earth. Nowhere is this more clearly expressed than in some of the final conversations between Sam and Frodo. When the Ring is destroyed, and the two hobbits are worn out beyond hope, surrounding by fire and ash and lava and rock, Sam finds a moment to say,

"What a tale we have been in, Mr. Frodo, haven't we? [...] I wish I could hear it told! Do you think they'll say: *Now comes the story of Nine-fingered Frodo and the Ring of Doom?*" (Tolkien, *Return*, p 929)

The first court we find in *The Lord of the Rings* is in Rivendell, one of the great elven cities. This is the court of Elrond Halfelven, who forms the Fellowship of the Ring, and assigns them their task. Frodo is given a royal welcome, complete with a seat at the high table during the feast. After the meal is done, the party moves to the Hall of Fire, a place of "many songs and tales" (Tolkien, *Fellowship*, p 301), the domain of the bard. Those who sing and tell stories are regarded with high esteem.

Near the end of Tolkien's epic, there is another court. In many ways, it is the counterpart of the one in Rivendell. The quest has been completed, the party is reunited, and this time, it is Aragorn who holds court. Once more, there is a feast, but before that, a minstrel performs for the Fellowship and the host they have gathered,

"until their hearts, wounded with sweet words, overflowed, and their joy was like swords, and they passed in thought out to regions where pain and delight flow together and tears are the very wine of blessedness" (Tolkien, *Return*, p 933).

Again we see that the minstrel is given great significance. The whole host hangs from his lips as he tells the story of Frodo of the Nine Fingers and the Ring of Doom.

In medieval Wales, bards were important as well, as is attested in the literature¹⁹. We find a clear example of this in the Fourth Branch, where Gwydion finds his way into an enemy's court in the guise of a poet (Davies, *Mabinogion*, p 48-49). The fact that Gwydion can think of no better way to guarantee a conversation with Pryderi shows that poets must have been accorded some importance, and that they were welcome guests at court. Another tale from *The Mabinogion*, which Davies has given the title "The Lady of the Well", begins with a character telling a story, which acts as a catalyst for the

¹⁸ The other sources are mostly Irish. They often feature men shapeshifting into various animals to witness history, and pass on their knowledge to later generations. A well-known example is the *Scél Tuáin Meic Chairill*.

¹⁹ C  il  n Owens provides a brief but very good historical discussion of the position of the bard in Irish society in *Language and Tradition in Ireland: continuities and displacement* by M. Tymoczko (2003).

main events of the tale (Davies, *Mabinogion*, p 116-121)²⁰. As such, we can safely say that this is another parallel between *The Lord of the Rings* and Welsh Celtic literature.

5. Conclusion

By now I have presented many parallels – between *The Silmarillion* and the *Lebor Gabála*, and between *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Mabinogion*, on the fields of style and structure, characters, and motifs. There is, however, a great deal that did not fit into this thesis. Much more could be said about the relation between the Otherworld and Valinor, but also with Lothlorien, another elven stronghold. The motif of the hostile gatekeeper, the role of the sister's son, the enigmatic character Tom Bombadil, and many other elements had to be left out. Because this is a discussion, not an encyclopaedia of parallels, I have confined myself to a more limited selection. I have tried to pick only those parallels that are the most evocative, and those that are connected to one another, in hopes of creating a narrative, rather than a list. Nowhere in this thesis have I mentioned the linguistic Celtic elements (though there is much to say on that matter)²¹, in an attempt to remain concise, and because others are far more knowledgeable on that field. I have briefly discussed the role of modern, Romantic Celtic ideas and the perceived Celticness of Tolkien's work, but I am sure that that alone could be the subject of incredibly interesting research as well. I have made these decisions in an effort to stick to my own strengths, and to produce as interesting a narrative as I am able to.

Let us return to the questions we set out to answer: are there Celtic elements in *The Lord of the Rings*? And what about Tolkien's vehement rejection of "things Celtic"?

The later question I feel I have answered sufficiently in the early chapters of this thesis. Tolkien's "Celtic" and our own, modern interpretation of the word are two different things, set apart by several decennia of research and refinement. Tolkien saw the "madness" of Yeats' "dream-world", the Romantic Celts, and wanted to distance his own work from that bright but broken image, knowing it to be flawed in its representation of true history. The "Celtic" he denied is the generalised, Romantic "Celtic", not the "Celtic" we use to refer to medieval Wales and Ireland. Tolkien wasn't wrong; he was simply using a word that, through the years, has evolved. Parts of the old, "woolly" meaning remain, as I have discussed in chapter 3.3: the general public still sees the Celtic world through the Romantic filter. The pastoral, magical beauty of Middle-earth, as well as the other elements discussed, could potentially give those more familiar with the Romantic conception of "Celtic" than with its distant, historical roots the impression that Tolkien's world does line up with the tradition of Romanticism.

To the first question, I can only say, "yes". There are a great many parallels between Tolkien's work and medieval Celtic literature, both Irish and Welsh. Some are faint, whilst others, like those involving the Tuatha Dé and Gwrhŷr, are incredibly potent. I have, however, an addendum.

When Éomer, a captain of the Rohirrim, first hears Aragorn's tale of his adventures thus far, somewhere in the middle of the epic, he is overwhelmed by the strangeness of the story, and asks, "Do we walk in legends or on the green earth in daylight?" Aragorn replies, "A man may do both" (Tolkien, *Two Towers*, p 424). Frodo becomes living proof of this. He is the central character in the

²⁰ Were this the only example of the importance of storytelling, trouble would arise. "The Lady of the Well" is one of the Three Romances. These three Welsh tales each have a counterpart in medieval French literature, and it is uncertain which version came first. As such, it might be argued that the role of the bard could be a French element that was copied into the Welsh version. However, because we see storytelling and the importance of bards feature prominently in other tales, such as the Fourth Branch, we can safely say that this is a genuine Welsh Celtic element, and as such relevant to our discussion.

²¹ Tolkien created several languages, in part inspired by Welsh and Irish. This is reflected in many place- and person names. The word "Silmarillion" in itself is already an interesting example, *-ion* being a Welsh plural form, also seen in, of course, "Mabinogion".

tale, or the legend, of “Frodo of the Nine Fingers and the Ring of Doom”, but every aspect of that tale “happened”, at least in the world of *The Lord of the Rings*: it happened on the very green earth Éomer holds so dear, and it shows that the boundaries between those two worlds are not so clear after all. It is my belief that something similar could be said about Tolkien, and the creation of Middle-earth and *The Lord of the Rings*. It is assuredly an original tale. One, indeed, that might be credited with defining a genre. It is original, “real”, crafted by Tolkien on his own green earth. But, at the same time, Tolkien drew from other sources – and not only Celtic ones at that. He was, at the same time, walking in legends and in reality, his own world, and combined the two to create something new. Did Tolkien mean to give a Celtic air to his epic – “Celtic”, that is, as we use the term today? Perhaps, some of the parallels certainly seem to point that way. Others might well be coincidental, but that does not mean they are not there. It is because they are there, and in such great volume, as I hope to have shown, that I believe that medieval Irish and Welsh tradition played an important role in the conception of Middle-earth. In fact, I believe it is because they are there, these elements from Celtic legends, intermingled with original ideas and material from other traditions, that *The Lord of the Rings* became such a phenomenal piece of literature.

Works Cited

- Primary Sources

- Davies, Sioned. *The Mabinogion*. Oxford University Press, 2007. Print.
- Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Silmarillion*. London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 1999. Print.
- Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Fellowship of the Ring*. Film tie-in edition. London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2001. Print.
- Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Two Towers*. Modern Classics Edition. London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2001. Print.
- Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Return of the King*. Modern Classics Edition. London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2001. Print.

- Secondary Sources

- Carpenter, Humphrey. *The letters of JRR Tolkien*. Vol. 140. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981. PDF.
- Davies, Sioned. "Writing in Welsh to 1150: (re)creating the past, shaping the future". *The Cambridge History of Early Medieval English Literature*. Ed. Clare A. Lees. Cambridge University Press, 2012. PDF.
- Fimi, Dimitra. "'Mad' Elves and 'Elusive Beauty': Some Celtic Strands of Tolkien's Mythology [1] RESEARCH ARTICLE." *Folklore* 117.2 (2006): 156-170.
- Kinniburgh, Annie. "The Noldor and the Tuatha De Danaan: J.R.R. Tolkien's Irish Influences." *Mythlore* 28.1-2 (2009): 27+. *Questia*. Web. 8 Apr. 2016. *Mythlore* 28.1-2 (2009): 27-45.
- Ní Mhaonaigh, Máire. "The literature of medieval Ireland, 800–1200: from the Vikings to the Normans". *The Cambridge History of Irish Literature*. Ed. Margaret Kelleher, Philip O'Leary. Cambridge University Press, 2006. PDF.
- Shaw, Francis. "The Celtic Twilight." *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* (1934): 260-278. PDF.
- Sims-Williams, Patrick. "Celtomania and Celtoscepticism (Archaeology, history, question of definition, Celtic history)." *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* 36 (1998): 1-35.
- Sullivan III, C. W. "Celtic Studies and Modern Fantasy Literature1." *Welsh Mythology and Folklore in Popular Culture: Essays on Adaptations in Literature, Film, Television and Digital Media* 33 (2011): 9. PDF.
- Williamson, Jamie. *The Evolution of Modern Fantasy*. Palgrave Macmillan US, 2015. PDF.