Traditional and Modernist View on Irish Mythology

(Master Thesis)

Irská mytologie z tradičního a modernistického pohledu

(Diplomová práce)

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Prohlášení:

Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto práci vypracovala samostatně a uvedla v ní předepsaným způsobem všechnu použitou literaturu.

V Olomouci dne   Podpis:

Poděkování

Děkuji vedoucímu práce za cenné rady, ochotu a trpělivost.

Contents

<u>Introduction</u>

There has always been a close connection between Irish tradition and Irish history. One cannot be discussed without the reference to the other. The arrival of Christianity had an impact on the oral tradition of the story-tellers. The Great Famine caused a massive decline in population and lowered the numbers of native speakers of the Irish language.[1] The Penal Laws in the 18th century brought along religious persecution and had a great effect on the tradition itself, almost driving it to its extinction. The Easter Rising was the result of a long time English oppression and the Irish Civil War had an impact on the formation of a present formation of Ireland finally winning independence for the Irish nation.

It is particularly in the first half of the 20th century when Irish tradition, especially the literary one, comes to a close fusion with politics. Various opinions were emerging in those times – some of them were opposing the connection, e.g. Connor Cruise O'Brien's description of "the ancient Irish collaboration between nationalism and art as 'an unhealthy intersection' " (Kiberd, 275). Some of them were more or less supporting the idea with a counter-opinion that "art is too potent a force to be left entirely in the hands of its creators, and politics too pervasive in its effects to be left in the sole control of politicians" (Kiberd, 275).

The revival of the Irish tradition was politically shaping itself within the Nationalist movement which took as its main interest the return to the Irish Celtic past – the old Irish myths as they were preserved in the last literary records . The goal of the "Gaelic enthusiasts" concentrated mainly on the revival of the Irish language and Irish antiquities with an opinion that "the imposition of the English rule had destroyed a free, orderly and highly cultured society" (Hughes, 3).[2]

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[1] Before the Famine, the number of speakers of Irish ranked among the first hundred out of the world's circa five thousand living languages. See Seán de Fréine, *The Great Silence* (Dublin: The Mercier Press Limited, 1978) 7.

[2] Michael Hughes, *Ireland Divided: The Roots of Modern Irish Problem* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1994) 3.

Ireland finally managed to present its resolution to separate itself from the political practices but the interrelation between both art and politics has always been understood as inseparable and dialectical.[3] Dialectical in a sense of what kind of spirit it aimed to represent. "The institution of literature was not just a storehouse of lore and wisdom over centuries for a dispossessed people; it was also a kind of dynamo, gathering energies into focus and releasing more" (Kiberd, 277). The true spirit of the National Revival lay in the hearts of the many young men who joined the rebellion of 1916 "re-enacting the sacrifice of Cuchulain" (Kiberd, 278). The tendency to recall the ancient heroes of the Irish history became the main focus also in literature. It drew on the tradition of glamorizing the hero, the hypermasculinity and violence of the Ulster Cycle. All these attributes became "a version of the connection between violence and poetry, a bloody crossroads indeed" (Foster, 288). But apart from the masculine and heroic approach of the revivalists there was also a tendency of the modern Ulster heroes to represent themselves as declining aristocracy. Many of the schoolmasters and clerks tried to create a new "self-image and a proud lineage of their own" (Kiberd, 287).

In the Irish history, some of the legendary heroes of the Irish past have always been symbols of extreme strength, powerful deeds and heroic mind. These features were later absorbed by national revivalists whose hero became Cú Chulainn, the symbol of extreme power, the hero who achieved great deeds by killing many of his enemies and therefore the most suitable representative for the modern nationalist movement. Cú Chúlainn was a great inspiration especially for the rebels of 1916. The same as he once defended Ulster against all comers, the Easter Rising rebels re-enacted this task in order to defend their country against the British. From all the characteristics of Cú Chulainn they adopted the physical power as the main weapon which contributed to the violent image of the rebels. It became the main feature of the national revival and soon began to interfere in literature, mainly in poetry.

The general dissatisfaction was based on the insufficiency of a Home Rule parliament. The change which was about to come was issued in the field of literature.

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[3] Declan Kiberd, *Irish Literature and Irish History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) 277.

"[t]he republication of many Gaelic texts which satirized parliamentary procedure […] seemed to validate those traditions which issued in physical-force nationalism" (Kiberd, 287). This new tendency was followed by a shift towards creating a new proud self-image based on aristocratic lineage of their predecessors. "Revivalists could see themselves as the lawful descendants of dispossessed noblemen" (Foster, 287). Unfortunately, the predominating concentration of the representatives of the Gaelic League and Sinn Féin on their aristocratic lineages overshadowed their true social interests.[4]

The inspiring literary source for the modern aristocrats was Standish O'Grady's *History of Ireland* who used Cú Chulainn adoption as a resurrecting element. "[t]he author's intention had been to employ the figure as a model to regenerate the declining pride and self-esteem of the aristocracy. That Cuchulain should have been appropriated by the lower-middle-class clerks and schoolmasters who wanted nothing more than to erase that aristocracy was just the first of many ironies" (Kiberd, 278).

Literature as well began adapting the Cú Chulainn image and the desire to connect itself with the violent tendencies. This was evident e.g. in J.M. Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World* where we can notice a contrast of views in "the relation between the ancient aristocratic tale and the debilitated rural Ireland" (Kiberd, 289). Synge represented an opposite mode in the view of the Irish past. For him awaking the national heroes was only "a confession of impotence than a spur to self-respect."[5] Anyway exploring the fusion between literature and violence plays an essential part in his play. This fusion is represented in the character of Christy Mahon who is a father-slayer and a poet in one body. For this kind of combination, Christy is admired by Pegeen Mike: "If you weren't destroyed travelling, you'd have as much talk as streeleen, I'm thinking, as Owen Roe O'Sullivan or the poets of the Dingle Bay, and I've heard all times it's the poets are your like, fine fiery fellows with great rages when their temper's roused" (Synge, 32). But she also emphasizes

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[4] see Kiberd 287.

[5] see Kiberd 289.

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that there is a gap between a "gallous story" and a "dirty deed." [6]

J. E. Caerwyn Williams and Patrick K. Ford in *The Irish Literary Tradition* claim that we can generally speak of two branches of the Irish literature. It is the Anglo-Irish literature which is coming from the Galltacht.[7] Then it is the Irish literature which originates in the Gaeltachts "in a primitive society (as the Gaeltacht was until fairly recently) and an impoverished one (as it still is to some extent today)" where literature is based on the genuine oral tradition (Williams and Ford, 265). What is so influential and typical of the Irish society and its literature – since we can speak of the literature of a nation as of the best tool of reflecting the image of the society – is mainly the tradition and folklore of its primitive population. And since we can speak about the primitive society in terms of the Irish nation as quite an actual problem until recently, we may assume that what makes Irish literature and culture so genuine is the folklore of the primitive society of the Gaeltachts, their story telling reflecting the ordinary life of people and their sense of tradition.

On the other hand there were numbers of arguments that Irish literature should become a part of a more general context. Foster in his *Irish Literature and Irish History* mentions Patrick Pearse's idea that if Irish literature is to develop, it has to get in touch not only with its own past but has to become a part of the European issue. In other words, it has to deal with the literatures of the contemporary Europe.[8]

The division of Ireland between the Gaelic and Anglo-Irish was felt by many writers. Among them was also W. B. Yeats whose main attempt was to unite these two tendencies. His idea was to "bring the Anglo-Irish tradition of Swift, Berkeley, and Burke into line with the Gaelic Ireland of Ó Rathaille and Brian Merriman"

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[6] see Kiberd 289.

[7] In relation to Irish language it is important to distinguish between the terms Gaeltacht and Galltacht for one relates to the entirely Irish-speaking areas and the other to the parts of Ireland where English has prevailed during the times as the main language of communication and Irish is used there only as a peripheral language. See Patricia Lysaght, "Traditional Beliefs and Narratives of a Contemporary Irish Tradition Bearer." 8 Nov. 2012 <http://www.folklore.ee/rl/pubte/ee/usund/ingl/lysaght.html>.

[8] Declan Kiberd, *Irish Literature and Irish History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) 294.

(Foster, 297). In his *Pages from a Diary in 1930* he expresses himself over the matter as such: "Preserve that which is living, and help the two Ireland, Gealic Ireland and Anglo-Ireland, so to unite that neither shall shed its pride" (Kiberd, 297).

For the revivalist writers Irish language has always represented an essential part of their work. Many of them were starting their literary careers in the Gaeltachts so typical of their richness of various accents. But there was a problem of the standardization of the form of the language because of the process of splitting dialects within a Gaeltacht. The language was not even fitting the area of the revivalist focus – the urban life of the Gaeltacht.[9] With the establishment of the Gaelic League the people living in the Gaeltachts – mostly being illiterate at those times – were suddenly facing a change. The League took as its aim to try to persuade the people to become literate in their own language which was a contradictory process to what there was before, to be "accustomed to think that the only way to climb out of their chronic poverty was to forget their own language and to embrace English" (Williams and Ford, 274). But the League was facing another problem and that was their inability to provide the people of the Gaeltachts and other parts of Ireland with contemporary Irish literature since they couldn't really draw on any sources of modern literature, [10] "[m]odern Irish literature did not then exist, and it could be argued that the Irish literary tradition, glorious as it had been in the past, had now been reduced to almost nothing" (Williams and Ford, 274). This was another turning point in the Irish literary history – the beginning of the Irish Literary Revival.

The works of the authors of the Irish Literary Revival were thus drawing heavily on the only and the last literary period which could be classified as native, the literature of the manuscripts of the 13th – 16th centuries. The fact that there was such a gap in the Irish literary history gave an impulse to the literary activities of the authors who were trying to compensate for the loss of the native literature using specific means to recreate the national literature and the national spirit which was

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[9, 10] J. E. Caerwyn Williams and P. K. Ford, *The Irish Literary Tradition* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1992) 274.

had strong roots in the oral tradition from the very beginning of the Irish history up to the present times. One of the most specific features was the use of mythology practised among others also by James Stephens and Flann O'Brien. Although each of them worked with the mythology in his own and specific way, they both achieved to give a new image to the mythological figures in their works.

Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds* can be classified as a work of literary modernism. In this way it is interesting to concentrate mainly on the structure of the plot as it plays an essential role for the use of his mythology. It consists of several layers in which we can follow the appearance of the legendary hero Finn Mac Cool, the animal spirit the Pooka, the Good Fairy (the Good Spirit) and Suibhne (Sweeny). Thus Finn Mac Cool appears in the first part of the plot to relate the old legend about himself as it is known to us in the old stories but at the same time he is a storyteller in the time outside the legendary layer, i.e. he functions as a transmitter of the legends when retelling them to the men of modern Ireland. The same as Finn, the Pooka and the Good Fairy take part in the affairs in the parts of the plot retold from the present point of view, especially those considering the matter of Trelis's punishment. Suibhne is first introduced to us by Finn in the legend *Buile Suibhne* before he appears as Sweeny in the modern age. O'Brien's mythological figures thus receive roles distinctive from the traditional ones, although drawing heavily on their traditional character. However O'Brien needs to reshape their traditional image in order to enable them to function in the multilayered plot and also in the world of present Ireland. By turning to the Irish mythology, O'Brien is building a bridge over the literary and historical gap but he doesn't let the present characters enter the world of the fairies and legendary heroes. He rather makes the heroes and fairies enter the world of modern Ireland. In this way it is interesting to concentrate on the changing character of the main mythological figures as they appear in different time perspectives of the plot of the book.

James Stephens introduces a similar usage of Irish mythology as O'Brien. In *The Crock of Gold* he mixes mythology with the present Ireland. He uses two main mythological figures to contrast the two worlds. The Leprechauns appear mostly in the forest where the plot seems to take place in a fairy-tale, the reader may feel from the children's perspective as if he were entering the world of the Sídh (fairies), but

later in the book they come out of this world to enter the "real" world of institutions to take revenge over the human beings and play a trick on the policemen. The other two worlds which are contrasted in the book are the Catholic and the Pagan both represented by gods of love – Aengus Óg as the Irish god and Pan as the Greek pagan god who comes to Ireland and tempts the young girl Caitilin Ni Murrachu to live with him in the caves. In this way we follow Aengus's struggle for the love of Caitilin whose role is symbolic not only in terms of her return to Aengus but also as a representative of the whole nation who is supposed to follow Caitilin and restore their belief in Irish gods in general. By the conflict between the native and the alien, Stephens tries to emphasize the importance of national history, tradition and culture. The awakening and the final march of Irish gods and fairies described at the end of the book symbolizes the awakening of the Irish nation.

The aim of the thesis will be to provide the readers with the use of Irish mythology in the works of the Irish Literary Revival. The thesis will concentrate on the modernist picture of the mythological figures with relations to the traditional one in order to provide certain comparison in the characterization and the incorporation of the mythological figures in the traditional and modernist literature. The first chapter will include the background of Irish mythology as seen from the traditional point of view. The thesis will also provide the characterization of the mythological figures in the traditional image which will be in later chapters compared with the modernist adaptations. The second part of the thesis will relate to the modernist view on Irish mythology where the political and cultural problems of the Irish nation will be slightly touched in order to provide a complex understanding in the relation between tradition and history. The literary works which will be discussed in the last chapters will concentrate on the particular literary works of the Irish Literary Revival, namely Flann O'Brien's At *Swim-Two-Birds* and James Stephen's *The Crock of Gold*. The goal of these chapters will be to provide the readers with an attempt to explain authors' reasons for the use of particular mythological figures as well as providing the readers with modernist characterizations of these figures. This thesis should serve as a comparative study of Irish mythology through the analysis of the mythological figures from the modernist view but relating also to the traditional characteristics in the process of understanding the Irish tradition in the whole image.

1. Traditional View on Irish Mythology

Irish mythology is a complex issue in terms of classification of mythological figures into historical periods and their division into types. It would be an extensive work enough only to try to capture it in its whole range. For the purpose of the thesis, which is going to relate only to some of the figures in the 20th century literary works, the following chapter will present those issues important for the latter chapters considering a brief chronology of the four cycles and the classification and the characterization of the figures of the Irish mythology important in the tradition and for the latter comparison in this theses.

1. 1. The Origin of the Sídh

As it was already mentioned it is almost impossible to track the very origins of Irish mythology as the documentation of it in the pre-Christian period was preserved only by the means of oral tradition. The tales of the pagan Ireland included in the Mythological Cycle as we know it today are mostly affected by monastic additions and are the only source of the documentation of the lives of pagan gods and fairies.

   Before Christianity and monastic culture was spreading in Ireland since AD 431, the mythological world was dominated by the sídh (or sí in modern spelling) known in the mythological terminology also as the 'fairy folk' (aos sí), 'fairy host' (slua sí) or good people (daoine maithe) – named so because of the "fear of offending them" (Welsh, 523). There are two versions of the origins of the sídh. According to the Christian version in the *Book of Armagh* the sídh were the pagan gods of earth who were defeated by Christianity, according to the Gaelic tradition the sídh were the fallen gods of the Tuatha Dé Dannan tribe who lost their battle against the sons of Míl[1] but because the sídh had magical powers the both tribes agreed to share the

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[1] According to *Leabhar Gabhála* reflecting the history of the waves of invasions to Ireland, the Milesians, or the Sons of Míl, were the last people in the history of invasions to settle in Ireland.

world. The Milesians became the gods of the upper world and the Tuatha Dé Dannan took power over the underworld. The access to otherworld was possible through mounds and raths which became known as the fairy rath (or fort). By moving the sídh to the underground they became related to as fallen angels, immortal figures, ever youthful.[2] But the two worlds didn't remain separated from each other. There were actually a few occasions at which the mortal and immortal worlds 'cooperated'. Kings of Ireland or the famous heroes of Irish mythology were granted supernatural powers by the sídh to help them in battles. Some of the legendary heroes' origin could be traced back in both aristocratic and divine lineage, e.g. Fionn Mac Cumhail and his acquiring of knowledge, Cú Chulainn and his extraordinary power on the battlefield. On the other hand the sídh were as well leading battles in their underground world and were helped by the warriors from the upper world. These were the most occasional cases of overcrossing between the two worlds. Another kind of overcrossing was related to the cycle of the year and festivals connected with them such as Samhain, Beltaine, Lúghnasadh. Those were the times when fairies became most active. The Sídh were said to be coming out of the underground through raths and at this time the mortals were most likely to encounter with them. These encounters with the otherworld creatures became a very important issue in the folk tradition and storytelling which was later reflected in literary works. Such occasions of encounters brought along various customs and attributes connected with the particular mythological figure. What was emphasized mostly in relation to these occasions was the way of behavior of the mortals towards the immortal creatures and their knowledge of the communication of the sídh with the upper world, e.g. banshee's cry as a prophecy of death in a family, etc.

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[2] Robert Welsh, *The Oxford Companion to Irish Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996) 523.

1. 2. Literary Recordings of the Irish Mythology in the Four Cycles and in the Tale Types

The chronological division of Irish mythology to the four cycles, Mythological, Ulster, Fionn and Historical, is rather a matter of modern approach and its tendency is to classify the old tales according to historical periods. All the mythology of Ireland was originally sorted into literary genres according to the main theme of the story or according to the first word in the title of the story in the Irish language.[3]

The original stories were gathered by the medieval poets, the filídh, who organized them into two lists, List A and List B, according to its main topic. Both lists comprise Battles (Catha), Feasts (Fessa), Adventures (Echtraí), Elopements (Aitheda), Slaughters (Airgni), Eruptions (Tomadmann), Visions (Físi), Loves (Serca), Expeditions (Slúagaid) and Migrations (Tochomlada). Above these are also Caves (Uatha), Voyages (Immrama), Violent Deaths (Oitte) and Sieges (Forbassa) included in List A. In the List B we can find Conceptions and Births (Coimperta) in addition to the content of genres common to both lists.[4]

Tomás Ó Cathasaigh proposes in his chapter *Secular literature in Irish: prose tales* two different possibilities of how these tales were preserved until present days. He says that some of the stories have come down to us through the works of monks and some have been collected by the medieval poets. Unfortunately, there is an uncertainty about the possible connection between the two groups: "We cannot now know what relationship there may have been between the tales that have come down to us in the manuscripts and those which would have been known by the filid" (Cathasaigh, 24).[5]

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[3] Robert Welsh, *The Oxford Companion to Irish Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996) 553.

[4] An accurate division of tale-types is provided in Welsh, p. 553.

[5] Tomás Ó Cathasaigh, "Secular literature in Irish: prose tales", *The Cambridge History of Irish Literature*, Vol. 1., eds. Margaret Kelleher, Philip O'Leary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 24.

Thanks to a quite difficult recoverability of the history and origin of most of the stories and thanks to the fact that most of the stories in the manuscripts were not written down earlier than 11th century, it is nowadays quite complicated to trace back some important facts such as the nature of the transmission of the tales, connections between them, authors of the tales, etc.[6] As Cathasaigh says: "[t]he manuscript transmission was a creative process comprising the expansion and contraction, reshaping and redaction of matter, much of which must have been received into the literature from indigenous oral tradition, but some of which is of learned ecclesiastical provenance. We can assume that a good deal of the material has perished; as for the rest of what was composed in our period, some of it has doubtless been modernized beyond recognition, while more of it survives as early strata in composite texts" (Cathasaigh, 24).

1. 2. 1. Characterization of the Heroic Tales

From the heroic tales which were preserved within the manuscripts the most important where those referring to the famous Age of the Táin. These tales offered a good amount of knowledge about the society of those times, about the ordinary lives of kings, queens and heroes and the historical places which became an important element of the Irish mythological tradition. This period of Irish history is gathered in tales under the shortened term the Táin and written down in the Ulster Cycle. The Táin is named so according to the famous cattle raid, the *Táin Bó Cúailnge* (*The Cattle Raid of Cooley*).[7] The Táin is without a doubt the most famous period in the

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[6] Tomás Ó Cathasaigh, "Secular literature in Irish: prose tales", *The Cambridge History of Irish Literature*, Vol. 1., eds. Margaret Kelleher, Philip O'Leary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 24.

[7] The legend tells about a dispute between queen Medb and her husband Ailill. Medb wants to rival her husband by making a raid against the Ulaid (Ulstermen) and get the Donn Cuailnge, a great bull from Cooley. She tries to accuaire the bull peacefully at first but she is refused by Dáire and the cattle raid begins. The *Táin Bó Cúailnge* is the saga where the famous hero Cú Chulainn is mentioned for the first time. See Welsh, p. 551.

history of Ireland. Again there is uncertainty about how long this period lasted but the general knowledge is that it persisted until the late 16th century. Another general idea is that the popularity of the Ulster people probably ceased down before their stories could be recorded in a written form. It is also possible that the stories first belonged to a specific people and had rather a regional character before they gained a nationwide importance.[8] As Williams and Ford say in *The Irish Literary Tradition*: "At one time the Ulaid (Ulstermen) must have been one of the most important and most prominent peoples of Ireland, but they had ceased to be so before they entered on the stage of historical records. When that happened, those who succeeded them in pre-eminence must have cultivated their stories – perhaps because they themselves had no similar sotires, or perhaps – and this is more likely – because their stories could not compete with those of the Ulstermen in interest or excitement" (Ford and Williams, 15). The greatness of the Ulster Cycle is present not only in its people but also in the literary quality and complexity. The history of the *Táin Bó Cúailnge* can be traced back in two 'prefatory tales' as they are generally termed, *Compert Conchobuir* and *Compert Con Culainn*. Among other texts preceding *Táin Bó Cúailnge* is also *Verba Scáthaige* (*The Words of Scáthach*) in which is described how Scáthach, the Amazonian warrior, instructed Cú Chulainn in the defense of Ulster and who foretells his adventures in the battles with the Connacht warriors. This text is said to have originated in the 8th century because of its form resembling the extant versions of the *Táin Bó Cúailnge*.[9]

The value of the Ulster tales lies mainly in the literary quality of using detailed and descriptive narration. The tales bring quite a large amount of information about the society of those times although their attention is paid more to the aristocracy than ordinary people - warriors, their womenfolk, their attendants and bondservants.

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[8] P. K. Ford and J. E. C. Williams, *The Irish Literary Tradition* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1992) 15.

[9] Tomás Ó Cathasaigh, "Secular Literature in Irish Literature", *The Cambridge History of Irish Literature*, Vol. 1., eds. Margaret Kelleher and Philip O'Leary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 25.

There are also some references to the fílidh and druids.[10] The tales include geographical references to some of the most important places in the mythological history. Most stories take place in the court of Conchobar, the king of the Ulstermen, or in the camp of Ailill and Medb. Quite a lot of action takes place in the battlefield or in Cú Chulainn's residence.[11]

There are uncertainties about the chronology of the events of the tales. All events are told in the past but we are almost never told how much time passed between the particular events. The question about the historical truth arises and it has been discussed by many critics. On one hand Williams and Ford claim: "[o]ne must always remember that many of the heroes of the tales had found a place in the genealogies of the chief families and that some of the audience were members of those same families" (Williams and Ford, 20). For some of the critics, as was e.g. O'Rahilly, the historical evidence of the cycle is not sufficient enough: "[t]here is not the least connection between the stories of the Ulster Cycle and anything that can be called history either, apart from the fact that the tradition about the war between the Ulstermen and the men of Connacth was introduced by accident into some of them and especially into the greatest and most famous of all, the Táin Bó Cúailnge" (Williams and Ford, 20).

The historical value of the Ulster tales, as well as the mythological aspects of them, adds to the many obscurities and ambiguities typical for Irish literary history. The characteristic feature of much of the tales is the intermingling of the upper and lower worlds. This type of tales is present in a particular genre, so called echtrae which includes an Otherworld journey or experience.[13] Such a theme is present in the *Echtrae Chonnlaí* (*The Expedition of Connlae*) where the main protagonist of the tale Connlae is chosen by 'the people of the sea' as their hero and who is taken by a

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[10, 11] J. E. C. Williams and P. K. Ford, *The Irish Literary Tradition*, (Cardiff: university of Wales Press, (1992) 19.

[12] Tomás Ó Cathasaigh, "Secular Literature in Irish Literature", *The Cambridge History of Irish literature*, Vol. 1., eds. Margaret Kelleher and Philip O'Leary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 26.

woman to the "land that is without grief, without woe, and where there is neither death nor sin" (Ó Cathasaigh, 26).

Many of the tales are the example of a combination between traditional or inherited features and external features which came to the literary works thanks to the activities of medieval monks. Although we cannot certainly say how much of the content in the tales bares historical truth, we can at least conclude that the amount of both features is different in different cycles. Thus e.g. the Mythological Cycle is based much more on the folk features representing the prehistoric world of mythological creatures of the Otherworld. We can then expect that most of the historical truth will be included in the Historical Cycle which tells us more about the lives of famous kings and queens.

Although the works of medieval monks brought the external features to most of the tales, we cannot deny them the greatest merit of preserving the old tales up to present. The 7th and 8th centuries were a historical period of high literary activities. As Ó Cathasaigh says: "It was during this period that patterns were set that were to endure in Irish literature of many centuries to come: in language, in metre, in narrative and in much else. We owe the vitality and exuberance of the earliest Irish literature to the churchmen, scholars and filid who brought it into being" (Ó Cathasaigh, 26).

The origination of the Fionn Cycle can be as well traced back into the 8th century but unlike the Ulster Cycle, the Fionn tales were not written down into any kind of corpus which would be comparable with the *Táin Bó Cúailnge*.[13] This attempt comes only in the 13th century when an anonymous genius attempts the task to gather the stories and he uses Christianity to make some of the heroes survive to meet St. Patrick to follow him on his journeys throughout Ireland. The heroes are the members of the Fianna, the warriors of the legendary Finon mac Chumhail. St. Patrick questions the survivals of Finn's army and through the answers the history of Ireland is unveiled to St. Patrick. The responses are brought to St. Patrick by Caoilte

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[13] J. E. C. Williams and P. K. Ford, *The Irish Literary Tradition* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1992) 126.

and Oisín.

The tales have come down to us in the so called *Acallamh na Senórach* (*Colloquy, Discourse of the Ancients*). The stories differ in the narration from the old tales as they had to be adjusted to the taste of the period in which they were attempted to be written down. Also the literary genre differed a bit from the genre of the Ulster tales. As dialogue was the most common means to express action now the poem gets more importance. The Fionn Cycle is written in two distinct styles: in prose tales with speech-poems which substitute the dialogue and poems or ballads which "frame" the dialogue between Patrick and Oisín.[14]

Similarly as the hero Cú Chulainn in the Ulster Cycle the Fionn tales have their own hero Fionn mac Cumhaill. We cannot deny the similarities between the two cycles although the originations of both and the differences in the mood in which they were written down distinguish from each other. E.g. the life of Fionn is documented in two tales not included within the Acallamh – the birth and death tale – the same as the deeds of Cú Chulainn were preceded by the two 'prefatory tales'.[15] Furthermore, Máire Ní Mhaonaigh says: "[t]he twelfth-century account of his youthful exploits is termed macgnímrada in its sole fifteenth-century manuscript copy, perhaps in deliberate imitation of Cú Chulainn's similarly titled boyhood deeds" (Ní Mhaonaigh, 57). There are other similarities between the two cycles such as the chronological pattern of the stories. Both the Fianna and the Ulaid tales were known to us already in the 8th century.[16] To be more precise the Fionn tales were certainly known by the 9th century but their literary record came later than that of the Ulaid tales which were already being recorded in the 8th century. Therefore when the Fianna tales started to be recorded in the 10th century, they were already relatively mature in its essence. This is reflected mainly in occurrences of the two main heroes

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[14]   J. E. C. Williams and P. K. Ford, *The Irish Literary Tradition* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1992) 128.

[15]   Máire Ní Mhaonaigh, "Fíanaigecht", *The Cambridge History of Irish Literature*, Vol. 1. eds. Margaret Kelleher and Philip O'Leary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 57.

[16]   There are discrepancies between different literary sources. Williams and Ford say the Fionn tales were known to us since the 8th century. Máire Ní Mhaonaigh says it was the 9th century.

in similar roles, e.g. in the 10th century wooing tale *Tochmarc Ailbe* (*The Wooing of Ailbe*).[17]

What is perhaps different if we compare the Ulaid and the Fionn tales, is the character of the Fionn tales when observed from the social point of view. The social institution of the *Fíanaigecht* has a fresh tendency to base itself more on the aristocratic institution and many of the young males are in search of their aristocratic inheritance. This aristocratic mode of the Fionn tales has been many times highlighted and ascribed to as negative in its characteristics. On the other hand the Fionn tales bring a wide picture of the life of its warriors, their character development within the Fionn troop and it highlights the positive characters of the Fianna warriors such as wisdom, generosity and humility.[18] As Máire Ní Mhaonaigh says: "In addition, the casting of Finn ad his fíana as aetiological artisans of the natural world ensured a crucial link with the favoured genres of place–name lore and nature poetry, a factor which added considerably to their attraction" (Ní Mhaonaigh, 58).

The aristocratic mode of the Fionn tales in 10th century was supported mainly by the clergy. The same tendency was in process again when the tales were being recorded by the medieval lay learned families in the post 12th century period.[19] It was the time when Irish language was starting to gain more predominance again and thus the Fionn tales were perceived to us in two languages, Latin being the other one. Moreover thanks to the fact that the Fionn tales were mostly developed in the 12th century and later, which means at the time of highly educated society which "accorded intellectual activity a central place, embracing learning in a multitude of forms", we can perceive a variety of aspects in the tales which the medieval writers tried to capture: "In their quest, they drew freely on all aspects of their rich and varied inheritance, native as well as foreign, old alongside new, producing complex literary constructs in the process directed at a significant body of the community" (Ní Mhaonaigh, 59).

[17, 18, 19] Máire Ní Mhaonaigh, "Fíanaigecht", *The Cambridge History of Irish Literature*, Vol. 1. Eds. Margaret Kelleher and Philip O'Leary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 58.

2.   Traditional Image of the Figures of Irish Mythology – Roles, Characteristics, Functions and Ambiguities

It is almost impossible to come up with an accurate characterization of the mythological figures in the overall Irish mythology. The medieval manuscripts are full of varieties including differences in names and embodiments. Among the most typical varieties is the usage of triads for Irish goddesses and differences in characteristics and the form in which they appear in various literary portrayals. Irish goddesses are defined in relation to fertility, protection and sovereignty. Thus we can find the usage of three names for the goddess of sovereignty – Medb, Macha and Deidre. Other trios are Ériu, Fódla and Banba and Morrígan, Bodb and Nemain. Each of the names brings slightly different characteristics considering the roles of the goddesses as well as the forms in which they appear in the old tales. Macha represents the battle goddess and fruitfulness while Deirdre embodies a more human character. Morrígan is also known as 'Phantom Queen' and Nemain as 'Scald-Crow'. Morrígan, Bodb and Nemain have pleasure in slaughter and conflict while Ériu, Fódla and Banba are connected with the kings' ritual of inauguration and mating with the goddess by accepting a drink from her. [1]

These variations had a considerable effect upon the editorial works of the medieval Christian monks which was also strengthened by intermingle with the British culture. In term of editing, there was a tendency to comply the Christian tradition which began in Irish history with the coming of the Tuatha Dé Danann, the native gods of Ireland. And since the Christian monks were the first who attempted to write down the origins of Irish mythology, it is logical that what was known in pre-Christian period and passed down only by oral tradition, could have been hard to reflect in its authentic and full image in the centuries later.

The other case was the intermingle with British literature which was much closer to the Celtic and Romano-Celtic traditions and which could not provide a complete

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[1] Robert Welsh, *The Oxford Companion to Irish Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996) 387.

image of the Irish mythology pictured only fragmentally in its literary sources.[2] Irish manuscripts were often added with this material and the result was the ambiguity in the roles and character of some of the mythological figures. Thus we have in many cases a British counterpart to the Irish gods and goddesses. E.g. the Irish patron saint Brigid has its counterpart in the British Brigantia, tutelary deity of the tribe of Brigantes and the Irish god Lugh has its counterpart in the Gaulish Lugdunum/Lyon who was the "invetor of all arts in Caesars' account" (Welsh, 387).

2. 1. Fairies

Throughout the history of Ireland certain attributes have been given to different sorts of fairies as well as there have been attempts to divide them into categories according to their roles in the world of the Sídh and the ways they used in communicating with the world of mortals. There are also different approaches to their origin depending on the type of the source relating to this issue. W. B. Yeats mentions in his *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry* different versions of the origins of the fairies: according to the peasantry they were either the fallen angels who were destined to wander around because "they were not good enough to be saved, nor bad enough to be lost", according to *The Book of Armagh* they were the gods of earth and for that reason they lived in the underground, according to the Christian tradition they were the gods of Pagan Ireland, the Túatha Dé Dannan, before they were defeated by the Milesians (Yeats, 1).[3]

The general notion of the fairies is that they are good people. This notion relates particularly to the first characterization mentioned by Yeats, i.e. being fallen angels. He further mentions that their goodness must be deserved as they are always fair-minded to the mortals. Their goodness is perceived in many of their atributes:

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[2] Robert Welsh, *The Oxford Companion to Irish Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996) 387.

[3] W. B. Yeats, *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry* (1888) 1. 14 Nov. 2010

< http://www.sacred- texts.com/neu/yeats/fip/>.

"[t]he nature of the creatures, their caprice, their way of being good to the good and evil to the evil […] Beings so quickly offended that you must not speak much about them at all, and never call them anything but the 'gentry', or else daoine maithe" (Yeats, 1).

This characterization includes not only the settled attributes of the sídh which have been passed down through centuries. It also includes the importance of mortals' aspect of behavior towards them as the character of the sídh is the reflection of the souls of human beings. Generally, it is always better to be in good terms with the fairies or you will always be somehow punished for your behavior but "they will do the best to keep misfortune away from you if you leave a little milk for them on the window-sill over-night" (Yeats, 1-2). This last notion of milk symbolizes the already mentioned aspect of the relations between fairies and human beings – the relation based on reciprocal communication such as evil for evil and good for good. Therefore it is always better to be helpful to the fairies then steal from them. Otherwise there is an equal punishment awaiting the mortals. The notion of milk has probably been established during centuries by the folk people and oral tradition in the form of stories and sayings.

The appearance of the fairies is never certain. Again it is very important what kind of person sees them. They are not always little. They are changeable because of their whimsical character so even their size can be changed according to their own taste. Most of the activities which the fairies love to practice have connection to their pagan origin, e.g. feasting, fighting, making love, playing music and dancing.[4]

They are most notably very good singers, musicians and dancers. The tradition of Irish music is closely related to them. If we wanted to speak about the origins of Irish traditional music, we would have to go back in time to the Túatha Dé Dannan. Music relates to the particular moods of the fairies. They usually practice this occupation when they are feeling gay or gloomy so their music is a way of

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[4] W. B. Yeats, *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry* (1888) 2. 14 Nov. 2012
< http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/yeats/fip/fip03.htm>.

expressing melancholic feelings but it is also connected with the cycle of the year when different moods take importance in celebration of the festivals, i.e. Lúghnasadh, Samhain, Beltaine and Imbolc. Celebrating these festivals is connected with other practices for which the fairies are known. e.g. stealing mortals, especially young maidens, to become their brides, makes them gayest at the Midsummer Eve. On the other hand they get most gloomy with the coming of winter in celebration of Samhain.[5]

There are different types of fairies and as has already been mentioned their revelation in the world of human beings depend on the human character. As in other mythologies, their appearance and occurrence in the upper world also has a connection with the nature or witchcraft. There is a close ambivalence between the Sídh and nature elements, e.g. the fighting of the fairies is seen by mortals as a mere blowing of the wind.[6] Some other fairies are connected with prophesizing future, e.g. banshee as a herald of death, at which she can be heard and sometimes seen.

Another way of possible typology is connected with the form in which they happen to be spotted in nature. Some of them have a form of animal or half-animal – the Pooka. Some of them have purely human resemblance – banshee.

W.B. Yeats sorts the fairies into two groups: the trooping fairies and the solitary fairies. The first type of fairies gathers in groups and the second one includes single fairies which can be spotted in the country separate or independent from any other kind of fairy groups. There are also local differences between the way how mortals interpret their appearance. The solitary fairies are those who are best known in Irish mythology, e.g. the Pooka, the Leprechaun, the Cluricaun.[7]

2. 1. 1. The Pooka

In Irish tradition the Pooka is one of the mystery animals, i.e. has the entire

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[5, 6, 7] W. B. Yeats, "The Trooping Fairies", *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry* (1888) 2. 14 Nov. 2012

< http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/yeats/fip/fip03.htm>.

appearance of an animal. This is also reflected in the name itself. The meaning comes from the Irish poc, a he-goat, billy-goat.[8] This Irish meaning is a representative of the whole character of the Pooka in the Irish mythology but again as almost everything considering the Irish mythology, some of the characteristic elements of the Pooka vary, too. As well as with other mythological figures, we can hardly talk about an exact image of the Pooka. W.B. Yeats says: "He has many shapes – is now a horse, now an ass, now a bull, now a goat, now an eagle. Like all spirits, he is only half in the world of form" (Yeats, 94). Nevertheless, from all of the possible shapes the Pooka may take, the he-goat seems to prevail.

There are certain traditions connected with the Pooka. In the past he played an important role on the November-day [9] when people used to come to him for advice to a hill in Leinster as he could be generally found living in hills and among old ruins. He used to talk to them in a human voice "to give intelligent and proper answers to such as consulted him concerning all that would befall them until the November of next year" (Yeats, 94). This tradition probably falls back to the pagan times of Ireland as Yeats mentions later that: "[p]eople used to leave gifts and presents at the hill until the coming of Patrick and the holy clergy" (Yeats, 94).

As we can see, the variability concerning the Pooka's character brings a possibility that he could once have human features but not in appearance, only by using human voice in order to fulfill his role in Irish mythology, i.e. being an adviser to the mortals.

Some of the popularizing tendencies tend to use the comic when recording the encounters with the mythological figures in literature. In case of the Pooka it has been said that from time to time he can give a lift to a mortal on his back and it

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[8] W. B. Yeats, "The Pooka", *Fairy and Folk tales of the Irish Peasantry* (1888) 94. 16 Nov. 2012
 < http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/yeats/fip/fip27.htm>.

[9]   Samhain, one of the traditional Gaelic festivals celebrating the end of summer and the beginning of
   the new Celtic year on the 1st November. It is a time of harvesting and according to the tradition
   Irish families were supposed to leave a bit of hay for the Pooka to keep in good terms with him. This
   was called the Pooka's share. See "The Irish Pooka", 16 Nov. 2012
   <http://www.yourirish.com/folklore/pookas/>.

usually happens to be "the wildest trip the rider will ever know for the Pooka loves to terrify the rider with its great prowess jumping over hedges and rocks and making death defying leaps."[10] This usually happens when a rider had been drinking previously and needs a quick lift home so that he wouldn't be wandering around and straying from a path.

2. 1. 2. The Banshee

The name of the Banshee comes from the Irish ban (woman) and shee – sidhe (fairy). Her form remains more or less the same – she would mostly appear as an old woman. Her role is to prophesize death in families. According to Yeats, Banshees are classified among the solitary fairies because they appear as single fairies but sometimes two or more of them may gather in occasions such as the death of a holy person, a hero or a king.[11]

In the long past the Banshee was known as badhb, i.e. a crow-like figure into which the goddess of sovereignty would transform in her "martial aspect" (Welsh, 31). Later in the 17th century, she began to be connected with elegies written by Gaelic poets and also with the so called caoineadh (keen). She would usually appear at a tribal funeral and lament for the hero after the burial.[12]

During the centuries her role has slightly changed. Instead of after she began to appear before the funeral and thus was given another characteristic feature – the herald of death. She became to be connected with the dark aspect of life and she was rather heard than seen.

In some later stories she was described as: "a small, wizened old woman who sits in a secluded spot near the family home combing long hair as she makes her cry." The modern representation of the Banshee resembles sort of a horror-like

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[10] see "The Irish Pooka", 17 Nov. 2012 < http://www.yourirish.com/folklore/pookas/>.

[11] W. B. Yeats, "The Banshee", *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry* (1888) 108. 17 Nov. 2012 <http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/yeats/fip/fip31.htm>.

[12] This notion was again a matter of local tradition. The form of banshee taken by a goddess was registered mainly in Leinster. See Robert Welsh, *The oxford Companion to Irish Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996) 31.

image. In popular stories and descriptions she is seen as "an old woman with dirty gray hair, long fingernails and sharp rotten pointed teeth. Her eyes are blood red and filled with so much hatred and sorrow that to look into them will cause instant death." [13] She is even described in Hollywood films as such: "Banshees that relish in taking a life and will stalk their victim wailing and screaming at them to the point that the victim goes insane and die", and another sources mention: "It has been told that the Banshee has ripped many a brave man to death with her bare hands." [14]

Although her connection to death might have evoked a scary picture and horror-like character in the modern minds, her exact role in the Irish mythology was definitely of a more gentle character. She was a symbol of security for those who were soon about to start their way to the other world. Her task was not only to simply foretell the death to a family but also to prepare the family to the death of their member which was achieved by the keen. And after the death she was supposed to take the person with her on the passage to the other side. Thus her function was based on gentle relationship with the families where she took care of their members.

In the tales of the Irish peasants she is often accompanied by a "[c]oach-a-bower (cóiste-bodhar) – an immense black coach, mounted by a coffin, and drawn by headless horses", and it is said that it "[w]ill go rumbling to your door, and if you open it, […] a basin of blood will be thrown in your face" (Yeats, 108).

From all the characteristics mentioned above we can sum up that there have been various functions of the Banshees gathered throughout the centuries from which we can assume a number of possible appearances:

"a) an old woman dressed in black with long grey hair and covering her face with a veil.

b) an old woman with long white hair, red eyes and dressed in a green dress.

[13, 14] see "The Irish Pooka", 17 Nov. 2012 < http://www.yourirish.com/folklore/pookas/>.

c) a deathly pale woman with long red hair dressed in a white dress, sometimes a shroud.

d) a beautiful woman wearing a shroud.

e) a beautiful woman with silver-white hair wearing a long shimmering silver dress.

f) a headless woman naked from the waist up and carrying a bowl of blood." [15]

All these possibilities may comprise variations in terms of local differences or they may differ in terms of historical approach where the appearance of the Banshee kept changing during different periods in Irish history. There is also a possibility that the Banshee is never seen, only heard. That is why their keen is so important in connection with their character and appearance because there are as well variations in keening mainly in terms of the experience of the local peasantry which differs from county to county.

2. 1. 3. Leprechaun

The origin of the Leprechaun can be traced back in the Old Irish compound Luchorpán (*lú* = small, having its origin in the Indo-European roots + corp = body, from Latin *corpus*). The development of the word can be traced through alternations from the Middle Irish *Luchrupán* up to the Irish Gaelic *Luprachán* and the present form *Leipreachán*.[16]

Some sources suggest that the meaning of the second compound of the present-day form of the word, *préachán*, actually assigns a particular character to the Leprechaun, i.e. "*Préachán* when used to describe a person signified an idle chatterer up to no good." [17] According to the dictionary version of the meaning

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[15] About the classifications and other characterization of the Banshee see "The Banshee In Ireland", 17 Nov. 2012 <www.yourirish.com/folklore/banshees/>.

[16, 17] see the Leprechaun definition by *Free Online Dictionary*, 18 Nov. 2012 <www.thefreedictionary.com/leprechaun>.

of the word, it is possible to interpret the character of the Leprechaun as a chatterer but perhaps in a different sense. The meaning of *préachán* suggest on the first place a crow or rook then a person with black hair on the second place but also a person with raucous voice which is the closest description to the chatterer character.[18]

W.B. Yeats's interpretation of the name Leprechaun connects this mythological figure with his primary occupation, i.e. shoemaking. He suggests that Leprechaun comes from the Irish *leith brog* meaning the One-shoemaker because he is usually seen at working on a single shoe.[19] His occupation is to make shoes which he does continually and thus he has become rich during history and known to general people as one of the richest fairies ever. In modern mythology he is often mentioned in relation to a pot of gold which he has managed to gather through his constant working and which he keeps safe in the ground from the sight of the mortals. He has also grown famous for his musical abilities. He is a good musician and a dancer and in Irish mythology he is connected with many feasts and sessions (feiseanna) taking place throughout the whole country. In relation to the feasts he has also become known as a good alcohol maker and drinker. At least in modern mythology they are connected with being heavy drinkers but some sources say that this activity should be rather ascribed to another solitary fairy named Cluricaun. *The Encyclopedia Mythica* says that it was during the feasts they became known as Cluricauns. Yeats says that Cluricauns were different creatures from Leprechauns although belonging to the same group of Solitary fairies. But even he doubts the exact differentiation between Leprechaun and Cluricaun: "The Cluricaun […] makes himself drunk in gentlemen's cellars. Some suppose he is merely the Leprecaun on a spree" (Yeats, 80).

His appearance has also undergone many changes and has been influenced by the modern popularizing tendencies. What we can be sure about is the fact that he is

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[18] Dictionary versions of the word préachán were searched in the electronic form of *WinGléacht Irish Dictionary*.

[19] W. B. Yeats, "Leprecaun, Cluricaun, Far Darrig", *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry* (1888) 80. 18 Nov. 2012 <http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/yeats/fip/fip23.htm>.

a man of a small height which is even proved by the linguistic explanations of the Old and Middle Irish forms of his name. Another question is the colour of his dress. Generally we can see him dressed in green trousers, a jacket and a red cap. But it is possible that the colour of the whole Leprechaun's dress was actually red before his appearance was influenced by modern approaches and tendencies to connect everything Irish with green. In the tradition red colour is symbolizing magic. Therefore it would be likely to use it in connection with the description of the mythological figures. The modern tendencies for green colour have been into a large extant influenced by the celebration of St. Patrick. The popularization of the green colour might have affected the Leprechaun's dress as the Leprechaun has become one of the main symbols of this event.

Leprechauns are often connected with bringing luck to the ordinary people. The general notion is that peasants should rather avoid Leprechauns as they like to play tricks on them. Some sources say that Leprechauns would always pay back the hospitality of peasants if they offered help to Leprechauns. "Sometimes they ask humans for supplies and furniture, for which in return they give objects which bring luck and fortune." [20]

2. 2. The Legendary Heroes
2. 2. 1. Cú Chulainn

The life and deeds of one of the most famous hero of the Irish heroic tales have been preserved in manuscripts up to the 19th century and in the Irish folklore up to the 20th century. He has been a figure of interest for many Anglo-Irish writers and has been mentioned in many other works of the 20th century Irish writers, e.g. Lady Gregory's *Cuchulain of Muirthemne*.[21]

There are variations considering the origin of Cú Chuainn. He is not simply a

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[20] see Micha F. Lindemans, "Leprechaun", 18 Nov. 2012

<http://www.pantheon.org/articles/l/leprechaun.html>.

[21] Robert Welsh, *The Oxford Companion to Irish Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996) 125.

hero but his life and deeds incorporate a certain amount of the supernatural. Therefore there arises a question about his origin – aristocratic or divine. Most of the heroic deeds of Cú Chulainn are described in the *Táin Bó Cúailnge* where his life is reflected through the supernatural elements. Cú Chulainn was gifted the supernatural powers through his divine lineage. The legend is well described in *Compert Chon Culainn* (*Birth of Cú Chulainn*) where it is said that his father was the god Lúg and his mother Deichtine who was probably the sister or daughter to the Ulaid king Conchobor. The legend says that his original name was Sétanta and that he received his heroic name according to the house of a smith named Culann where Cú Chulainn was attacked by his dog. In the fight with Culann's dog Sétanta showed an extraordinary power thanks to which he was able to kill the dog and after which he received the name Cú Chulainn, the hound of Culann.

In Thomas Kinsella's *The Táin*, Deichtine is the sister of Conchobar. The wife of Conchobar gives birth to a boy and Deichtine looks after him but he soon dies of an illness. Later he is reborn through Deichtine after she drinks a cup of water in which a small creature is hiding. At that night she has a dream in which a man comes to her telling her that "[s]he would bear a child by him… that the boy she had reared was his, that he was again planted in her womb and was to be called Sétanta, that he himself was Lug mac Ethnenn" (Kinsella, 23).

But the very origin of Cú Chulainn still remains a little bit hidden to us. What *The Táin* says later is that Deichtine was given for a wife to Sualdam mac Roich and that "[s]he was ashamed to go pregnant to bed with her husband, and got sick when reached the bedstead. The living thing spilled away in the sickness, and so she was made virgin and whole and went to her husband. She grew pregnant again and bore a son, and called him Sétanta" (Kinsella, 23). These variations in legendary tales relating to Cú Chulainn's origin approve of the duality between the heroic and the supernatural powers Cú Chulainn was endowed with. And it is a general matter that we come across with this double lineage as another element which contributes to the many ambiguities of the Irish mythology. Therefore Cú Chulainn is both a hero, the son of Deichtine and Sualtan and the son of Lúg, the god of light, from the divine side.

His appearance as well varies according to various sources. In the popular descriptions he has been described as "[a] handsome lad" who had "[t]hree colours of hair […] next to his skin the hair was brown, in the middle it was red; on the outside it was like a diadem of gold; comparable to yellow gold was each glittering long curling splendid beautiful thread of hair, falling freely down between his shoulders." [22] He is generally connected with red colour because of the heat which was glowing from his body and he is said to have had "tiny links of red gold flashing" around his neck. [23] Different colours could be found on more parts of his body, e.g. he had several moles on his cheek each of different colour – a yellow, a green, a blue and a red. He used to wear a headgear which was "adorned with hundred different jewels", he had seven pupils in each eye which were "sparkling like seven gems" and he is said to have had seven toes on each foot and seven fingers on each hand. He used to carry a golden sword and a shield "coloured dark crimson with a pure white silver rim all around its circumference." [24]

Out of the literary sources depicting the life of the hero the most important ones are mentioned e.g in Kinsella's *The Táin* where we have the titles as follows: "How Cuchulainn was Begotten" depicting the birth of Cú Chulainn and trying to search for both aristocratic and divine origin of the hero, then "Cuchulainn's Courtship of Emer, and his Training in Arms" where he goes to the Gardens of Lúg "to woo a girl he knew there" (Kinsella, 26), "Cuchulainn's Boyhood Deeds" which includes the naming of Cú Chulainn and the famous fight with the dog of Culann, and it is perhaps worth mentioning Cú Chulainn's encounters with other god-like figures, e.g. the encounter with Morrígan in "The Bull is Found, Fruther Single Combats.

[22, 23] see "CúChulainn", 20 Nov. 2012 <http://www.she-eeire.com/Magic&Mythology/Warriors&Heroes/Warriors/Males/Cuchulainn/Page1.htm>.

[24] The author of the article from which this description was taken was inspired by a translation in *The Cuchullin Saga* which was edited by Eleanor Hull (1898). 20 Nov. 2012 <www.shee-eire.com/Magic&Mythology/Warriors&Heroes/warriors/Males/Cuchulainn/Page1.htm>.

Cuchulainn and the Morrigan". In the encounter with Morrígan Cú Chulainn was unable to recognize the goddess. It is said that Morrígan appeared to the hero quite a few times but every time he failed to recognize her sovereignty. Morrígan declared love to him but was rejected. However she remained faithful to him, accompanied him in battles and after his death in the battle of Muirthemne she was seen to be sitting on the shoulder of his dead body.[25]

2. 2. 2. Fionn mac Cumhaill

Fionn mac Cumhaill is the other most popular hero of the Irish mythology. His life and heroic deeds are described in the Fionn Cycle (also known as *Ossianic*). He is the leader of the warrior troop Fianna under the High King Cormac mac Airt. In the old tales and their modern versions he is described as an: "[u]nknown fair-haired youth who with one cast of his spear could kill a bird on the wing […] and single-handed could win a game of hurling against twelve opponents" (O'Faoláin, 128). We know from the stories that Fionn was an outlaw although he worked for the king. In Welsh it is mentioned that the Fianna were "one of many such bands of nomadic hunters and warriors living on the margins of society as outlaws in early Ireland, but having strong connections with the tribal hierarchy, which often called upon their martial skills" (Welsh, 194).

The core of Fionn's story is based on his father's murder which he attempts to revenge. Fionn's father is Cumhal, the leader of Tara under the service of High King Conn Cétchathach. His mother is Muirne, daughter of the druid named Tadg which again offers a possibility of combined origin suggesting warrior-like and visionary elements of the character of the hero, the same as Cú Chulainn's. According to *Acallam na Senórach* Tadg is said to have been of the Túatha Dé

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[25] Thomas Kinsella and Louis Le Brocquy, *The Táin: from the Irish epic Táin Bó Cuailnge*. (1970; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

Dannan tribe.[26] The legend says: "Cumhall abducts Muirne without Tadg's consent, incurs his enmity, and is killed by his soldiers at the battle of Cnucha, being succeeded by his rival and Fionn's arch-enemy Goll mac Mórna" (Welsh, 194). After the death of his father Fionn is sent by his mother to two of her druid colleagues named Bodbal and Fiachel to be trained under their fosterage in the way which would follow his father's method.

The same as Cú Chulainn, Fionn is endowed with physical power. We know that he was gifted an extraordinary power which helped him in battles. In the tradition this is explained in the legends about Fionn's acquiring of the knowledge one of which speaks about his famous biting of a finger. This biting has two explanations in literary sources. The first explanation is that: "[h]e sustained an injury when a fairy-woman caught his finger in the door of the fairy-fort at Femun […] while he was pursuing Cúldub, an otherworld thief who stole the Fianna food" (Welsh, 194).

Since then he is able to acquire knowledge every time he puts his finger into his mouth. The other version has its origin in the folklore and says that: "[t]he injury is caused by Fionn's burning his thumb on the Salmon of Knowledge from the Boyne which he is cooking for his druid teacher. By chewing his thumb to the marrow […] or by putting it under his dead feasa (tooth of knowledge) […] he can attain the state of wisdom" (Welsh, 194).[27] This power brings him the gift of poetry and it is said that most of the poems in the Fionn Cycle which describe the beauty of nature in the cycle were written by him.[28]

The appearance of Fionn is well described in Kuno Mayer's transaltion of *Fianaigecht*. In the beginning of *The Chase of Sid na mBan Finn*, which is held by Finn across Sid na mBan, we are given a picture of him right before his final battle and death. Fionn is accompanied by a large troop of warriors. It is said that "[t]he chiefs of the Fianna and their noble tribes went with the royal leader of the fianna to

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[26] see Robert Welsh, *The Oxford Companion to Irish Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996) 194.

[27] Versions of this legend will be further discussed in later chapters.

[28] Robert Welsh, *The Oxford Companion to Irish Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996) 194.

hold that chase, even the children of Baiscne and the children of Moma […] and the children of Nemnann and the children of Ronan […] and all the other ordinary fian." [29] Mayer's translation provides us with a picture of how Fionn has dressed himself up into the final battle: he "[p]ut on his battle-dress of combat and contest, […] a thin, silken shirt, […] and outside over that he put his twenty- four waxed, stout shirts of cotton, […] on top of those he put his beautiful, plaited, three-meshed coat of mail of cold refined iron, […] and about his waist he put a stout corslet with a decorated, firm belt with gruesome images of dragons, […] he put his gold hafted sword in readiness on his left, […] and upon his arched expanse of his he placed his emerald-tinted shield with flowery designs and with variegated beautiful bosses of pale gold, and with delightful studs of gold, and with twisted stout chains of old silver; and to protect the hero's head in battle he seized his crested, plated, four – edged helmet" (Meyer, 86-87).

Out of the stories which describe the life of Fionn, the most popular is *Tóraigheacht Dhiarmada agus Ghráinne (The Pursuit of Diarmuid and Gráinne)*. The theme of the story can be compared to the tragedy of Deidre who was destined to be the most beautiful woman of Ireland but was raised by the King Conchobar who became a foster-father to her in order to make her his wife. Her elopement with Naoise, the son of Uisliu, is similar to that of Gráinne's elopement with Diarmuid who betrays his king Fionn and runs away under the urging of Gráinne. Fionn starts the pursuit and Diarmuid is killed but "not directly at the hands of Fionn but indirectly through his refusal to use his healing power" (Williams and Ford, 131).

2. 2. 3. Oisín

Oisín's father is Fionn mac Cumhaill and his mother Sadb. His name bears the title of James Macpherson's *Ossian*. He is the poet hero of the *Fionn Cycle*. According to mythology his mother Sadb "[w]as transformed into deer form by a

[29] see Mary Jones, "The Fionn Cycle" (2004), 20 Nov. 2012
<http://www.maryjones.us/jce/fionncycle.html>.

magician of the sídh for refusing him", she "[l]eaves Oisín for Fionn to find on Beann Ghulban (Ben Bulben, Co. Sligo) during a hunt" (Welsh, 441). He becomes Fionn's partner on the exploits and notes down the deeds and travels of the Fianna in his poems. Later he is lured to Tír na nÓg by Niamh where he spends many hundred years and returns in the times when St. Patrick comes to Ireland. His return symbolizes the beginning of Christianity in Ireland. The most part of the Fionn Cycle consists of the exchanges between St. Patrick and Oisín, the pagan survivor who "recalls the valour and generosity of the old way of life" (Welsh, 441).

Oisín's adventures in Tír na nÓg and his encounters with St. Patrick represent the most important part of the Fionn Cycle. But there is one more story which tells us about the dispute between Oisín and his father Fionn, of which the title is *The Quarrel between Finn and Oisín*.[30] It is worth mentioning particularly because it was completely missed out of the Macpherson's *Ossian*. It is also important to say that a similar story is known as a fight between Cú Chulainn and his son Conla which proves another similarity between *Fionn* and *Ulster Cycles* and their main heroes Fionn and Cú Chulainn. According to Meyer this similarity can be traced back in a Persian story about a conflict between Rustem and Sohrab. Meyer says: "It had found its way westward. It must have reached the Goths in their migrations, from whom it passed into the literature of several other Germanic tribes. For the Old-High-German poem of the combat between Hildebrand and Hadubrand has a Low-German Origin" (Meyer, 22). A story of a similar theme can be later found in Anglo-Saxon literature through which it probably came to Ireland. Cú Chúlainn's wandering in foreign lands where he left the son is therefore most probably inspired by the legend of Hildebras and Hadubrand.[31]

2. 3. Irish Gods
2. 3. 1. Aengus Óg

In Irish mythology Aengus Óg, Aengus the young, is the god of love and patron

[30, 31] Kuno Mayer, *Fianaigecht* (London: William and Norgate, 1910). 20 Nov. 2012
  < http://www.unz.org/Pub/MeyerKuno-1910 >.

of all young people in Ireland. It is said that he inspires them with love. He himself is a young handsome man who always appears with four birds flying around his head as symbols of kisses.[32]

According to mythology he was the son of Dagda and Boann, the goddess of fertility and the river Boyne. The legend says about his troubled dreams of a young beautiful maiden with whom he falls in love and becomes love sick. He tells his mother Boann about it and after both Boann and Dagda attempt to search for the maiden without success, they ask Bov the Red, king of the Dannans in Munster, to try and find her. He succeeds and Aengus is taken to find her himself among 150 other maidens. When he finds her he gets to know her name. She is Caer, the daughter of Ethal and Anubal, the prince of the Dannanns of Connacht. On 1st of November she transforms into a swan altogether with the other maidens. He is said that if he recognizes Caer among the other swans, he may take her for his wife. He finds her and turns into a swan with her to join her in flying off.[33]

Brugh na Boinne is said to have been his palace situated on the river Boyne. It is connected with the spring equinox and thus known as a famous solar temple. There are certain divine functions which he represents through his deity origin in Dagda and Boann connected mainly with spring, fertility and rebirth. In modern Irish literature the legend comprising Aengus Óg's story is known as *The Dream of Aengus Óg*.

2. 4. Irish Kings

2. 4. 1. *Buile Suibhne*

J. G. O'Keefe suggests that the *Buile Suibhne* text may have been composed between the years 1200-1500. From the historical point of view it belongs to the King's Cycle.

There are three manuscript versions of the story of *Buile Suibhne*. One was

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[32, 33] see Deedra Jackson, "Aengus", *Encyclopedia Mythica*, 20 Nov 2012

<http://www.pantheon.org/areas/mythology/europe/celtic/articles.html>.

written in 1629 by Michael O'Clery and is now held in the Royal Library in Brussels. The second one was written by Daniel/David O'Duigenan between the years 1671-1674 and is held in the Royal Irish Academy in Dubling. The last one is as well part of the Royal Irish Academy and was written between 1721-1722 by Tomaltach Mac Muirghiosa.[34]

Out of the modern versions of the story we can mention O'Keef's *The Buile Suibhne (The Frenzy of Sweeney) being The Adventures of Suibhne-Geilt a Middle-Irish Romance.* He bases his work primarily on the manuscript version composed between 1200 - 1500 and considers it the most valuable.

Buile Suibhne relates the events of the life of Suibhne after the battle of Mag Rath. But the events before the battle are not comprised in *Buile Suibhne*. Suibhne Menn was a king of Tara but after his death there was a dispute between the two followers to the throne Congal and Domnall. Congal was defeated at a feast and had to flee to Scotland but he returned to Ireland after nine years with a great army to meet his enemies on the plain of Mag Rath. He lost the battle and died. In *Buile Suibhne* we read about Suibhne as the king of Dal Araidhe. He gets angry after he heard that a church would be built on his lands as an order of the cleric St. Ronan. As he rushes away to stop the building of the church, his wife Eorann catches him by his clothes and tears them off so Suibhne runs naked to challenge St. Ronan. During their fight Suibhne throws away Ronan's psalter and a messenger comes to him to ask him for help to Cognal in the battle of Mag Rath. After Ronan gets his psalter back from an otter, he courses Suibhne to wander about the country naked and mad and prophesizes that he be killed by a spear. During his journey through Ireland he comes to visit a lot of places, e.g. Glen Bolcain, a place where all madmen from Ireland are said to gather. Then it is the Church of Snámh-dá-én on the river Shannon where he sets off after the visit of Glen Bolcain. He is hiding from everyone except his wife, although she got married for Suibhne's successor of Dal Araidhe since Suibhne wanders throughout Ireland. He meets his relative

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[34] Eva Wäppling proposes that the scribe's name should be David, O'Keefe mentions Daniel. See Eva Wäppling, *Four Irish Legendary Figures in At Swim-Two-Birds* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1984) 53.

Longseachan in Glen Bolcain who tells him that all his relatives are dead which scares Suibhne and he regains his sanity back but this is just a trick to get him home and when he realizes that his relatives are actually alive, he tries to escape but is taken prisoner.

All the time Suibhne loses and regains his sanity. He loses it again when he escapes from the prison but regains it while he is in Scotland with another madman called Ealadhan but when he returns to Ireland and approaches Dal Araidhe he is again turned back by Ronan's course. Finally he comes to a place called Tech Moling where it is prophesized that he dies and after some time he is killed by Mongan, the present husband of Suibhne's ex-wife. He kills him by a spear as was prophesized by Ronan because he thinks that his wife prefers Suibhne to him. Before Suibhne's death Moling promises him that he will be in heaven as long as he himself will be and after Suibhne dies, Moling together with other clerics each place a stone on his tomb.[35]

We can notice the Christian influence in the tradition of the Suibhne. The three critics who dealt with this tradition all agreed on an important argument which claims that the fusion between Suibhne and Moling is of a later origin than the one of the madness of Suibhne. They also agreed that the influence of the Christian tradition has changed the original reason for Suibhne's madness. Eva Wäppling mentions: "The Ronan episode is not mentioned in the story of Suibhne, as it appears in *Anecdota from Irish Manuscripts* in a collection of verses dealing only with Moling and his life, and the episode belongs most probably to the latest Suibhne tradition, i.e. *Buile Suibhne* and also the late version of *Cath Muige Rath* (*The Battle of Bag Rath*)" (Wäppling, 54-55).

Another discrepancy concerns the event of the Battle of Mag Rath and the date when it actually happened. In the earliest tale composed between 1200 – 1500, the battle takes place after the death of Suibhne for the reason of the dispute between his two followers Congal and Domnall. In *Buile Suibhne*, Suibhne is supposed

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[35] see Eva Wäppling, *Four Irish Legendary Figures in At Swim-Two-Birds* (Uppsala: Almqvist & viksell International, 1984) 54.

to take part in the battle to support Congal. We might also suppose that the Battle of Mag Rath was the reason of Suibhne's madness which was another discussable point for the critics. According to O'Keefe, the earliest reference to the battle where Suibhne became insane was in *Adhamhnan's Life of Colum Cille*, and he claims that the battle took place in AD 63. Wäppling further mentions: "In Adamhnan's description of the battle there is no reference to Suibhne /.../ but in a later tale dealing with the battle Suibhne plays a part and that story is closely related to Buile Suibhne" (Wäppling 55). O'Keefe suggests that the two stories, *Adhamnan's Life of Colum Cille* and *Buile Suibhne*, were written dependently on each other.[36]

2. 5. Conclusion

Most of the mythological figures mentioned above were chosen for the purpose of the further use in the following chapters to compare their traditional image with the one used in the early 20th century Irish novel. They will be further discussed in the following chapters.

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[36] see Eva Wäppling, *Four Irish Legendary Figures in At Swim-Two-Birds* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1984) 55.

3.   The Origins of Fiction in the Period of Irish Literary Revival

It is no doubt that a big amount of gratitude should be paid to the authors of the fiction who largely contributed with their works to the process of revolutionizing the Irish thinking and thanks to whom the Irish literary culture could develop its own distinctive character even though it had suffered many oppressions in the past leading to the loss of cultural identity. Wilson Foster describes the main attributes and aims of the Literary Revival in his *Fictions of the Irish Literary Revival*: "They were associated through their cultural nationalism, their preoccupation with heroism, their interest in folklore and the occult, their attention in the peasantry, their promotion of an ancient Gaelic polity and worldview, and by their repudiation of realism, democracy, individualism, modernization, the bourgeoisie, and cultural union with England" (Foster, xi). The last notion especially, including the question of the union with England, has been a frequently discussed matter in the history of Ireland as well as during the years of the Irish Literary Revival. For some of the critiques or other literary personages the Revival has always been only "the reawakening of interest in a subject-matter whose discovery by the English poets in the eighteen century was one of the chief agents bringing about what we know as the Romantic movement in Georgian England," in other words "not a revival at all" (Weygandt, 422).

It is also necessary to emphasize one important fact, i.e the situation of fiction at the beginning of the Irish Literary Revival. Fiction became the essential part of the revival but the conditions for its usage were a bit hardened comparing to poetry or drama. While poetry and drama have been studied wildly, fiction remained rather unexplored or even neglected to the Irish literary scope. This situation could be related to the fact that Irish fiction has always played a somehow distinctive role from the other genres being an "uncooperative body of work" (Foster xi). Foster suggests that this was because: "[t]he revival encouraged other literary forms at its expense" and so "the novel as a recognizable and autonomous form received a setback at the hands of the revival and its aims and aspirations" (Foster, xi).

There is a logical conclusion for the arguments mentioned above. If we want to talk about the question of the Anglo-Irish literature or about the importance of fiction in the Irish literary tradition we must not forget that the Irish literary culture is from most of its part based on the poetic tradition of the bards. Thus poetry has got a long literary history in Ireland unlike fiction.

3. 1. The Problem of Anglo-Irish Unity in Irish Literature

The term Neo-Celtic Renaissance has been used by critics to relate not only to the literary activity in Ireland but also in other Celtic countries, i.e. Scotland, Wales, Brittany, Cornwall and the Isle of Man. Formally it equals to what is in Ireland known as the Irish Literary Revival.[1] Thus we could say that there are two branches of the revival which take into regard the geographical aspects. But this brings along also the ideological differences between both branches. Cornelius Weygandt mentions in his study some of the Yeats's statements considering the aims of the Irish Literary Revival: "He claimed that the movement was strong in that it was based on the national feeling […]; he believed that the movement had strength in that it was founded, to a certain degree, on folk song and folk story; and he hoped that it would continue to have, as he believed it had now, something of the simplicity of earnestness of medieval art" (Weygandt, 420-421). On one hand we have an opinion based on Yeats's argument that the Irish Literary Revival is a matter exclusively Irish since it draws the inspirations on its tradition but on the other we have an opinion of Weygandt who claims that Irish literary works should be considered as part of the English literature since they were written primarily in English.[2]

We can speak of the Irish Literary Revival as either of a new literary tendency

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[1, 2] see Cornelius Weygandt, *The Irish Literary Revival*, The Sewanee Review, JSTOR (The John Hopkins University Press) 420. 25 Nov 2012 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/27530648>.

which is a part of the English literary history or as of a new beginning of the Irish literary culture (mainly fiction) which is its great contributor. But there is one more important issue to be mentioned. Foster relates in his Fictions of the Irish Literary Revival to Anglo-Irish novel and argues that the Irish fiction, once it started to spread, was establishing itself independently from the Irish Literary Revival: "The popular Irish novel (Irish in a way that permitted popularity in Britain) continued in blithe disregard of the revival" (Foster, xii). Here he refers rather to the popular fiction in Ireland and mentions that most of the authors of this popular fiction were Protestant women of the middle-class or upper middle-class background. According to Foster there were two types of the popular novel: "A self-consciously Irish form written mainly but not exclusively by southern Protestants but for English readers", and "the novel of broad appeal that happens to be set, unselfconsciously, in Ireland" (Foster, xiii).[3]

It is important to realize some crucial facts relating to the problems such as was the dependence of Irish literature on the English one, or the degree of autonomy of the Irish Literary Revival. Weygandt mentioned the problem of language and he was right to claim that the Irish literature was written in a language which was not its own. He was also right to claim that Irish literature should be taken as part of the English literary culture since it was using the English language. But what is important to emphasize is the popular fiction and the revivalist fiction which since it started to take shape within the literary revival, changed the "mental circumstances in Ireland" (Foster, xiv). Foster argues that: "The Anglo-Irish novel could not, it seems, adapt to rapidly changing mental circumstances in Ireland; brittle in genre, inclined to humor and romance, it seemed ill-equipped to register the political gloom and cultural euphoria of post-Parnelitte Ireland" (Foster, xiv).

Thus we could speak of a process of "shunting the Anglo-Irish novel into its

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[3] see J. W. Foster, *The Fictions of Irish Literary Revival* (1987) xiii. 25 Nov. 2012 <http://books.google.cz/books?hl=hu&lr=&id=nkpwQf2Lu9QC&oi=fnd&pg=PR11&dq=irish+literary+revival&ots=xHgqGlSfYz&sig=eJVaIbdLFd10uG8qjKiosJJ3ZC0&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=irish%20literary%20revival&f=false>.

middlebrow and popular sidings" as Foster mentions.[4] Those writers who came out of this process as the "survivors" were the ones who became the heart of the Irish Literary Revival and who represented its crucial aims. "They survived by adapting in rather startling ways, one of which was to abandon the Anglo-Irish novel as a vehicle of their survival. In this way the space was given to the imaginative prose drawing on folktales, ancient sagas and romances. "During the revival, writers were in pursuit of native prose tradition that would be a mingling of the old and the experimental. This pursuit did not succeed in concealing the need for a vigorous realist fiction in Ireland, a fiction which a handful of Catholic (or lapsed Catholic) writers tried to provide while the revival was under way […] But it did result in a variegated body of prose that demands our attention if we would fully understand the Irish Literary Revival" (Foster, xiv).

3. 2.   The Irish Peasant as an Essential Part of the Irish National Character

Most of all the characteristics of the spirit of the Irish Literary Revival, nationalism seems to be standing out as the specific feature in all the revivalist spheres. It was so specific that it even became the main distinguishing feature between English and Irish literature. The new establishing nationalist activities were the result of the long-time oppression from the English side and therefore became one of the means of achieving freedom from the English influence. In terms of literature it is the attempt of the Irish writers to search for the national identity, distinctiveness, authenticity and re-awaking the traditional aspects of the ordinary people – the Irish peasants. This tendency puts folklore to the main place of attention of

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[4]   see Foster xiv.

the writers of the modern Irish literature.[5]

But at the end of the 19th century it was actually a bit more difficult to define who the Irish peasants were. What the society had chance to meet with was a mythologized image achieved by the first wave of authors of the literary revival. "From James Joyce and Flann O'Brien onward, few major Irish writers have not felt compelled to demythologize the peasant figure that was first imagined by the Revivalists" (Hirsch, 1116). The true image of the Irish peasant was shrouded in stereotypes mainly on the English part producing the image of "Paddy", "a comic, quaint, drunken Irish buffoon" (Hirsch, 1119). While creating the image of the Irish peasant it was also important to take into account the events between the years 1860 and 1890 when the Irish rural class was affected by a massive reordering resulting in growth of small-farmer owners as well as decrease in population caused by the Famine.[6] "That peasants no longer existed as such by the time they were being fiercely "discovered" and portrayed by Irish antiquarians and imaginative writers should point up that what mattered to those writers and their urban audiences was not so much what peasants were but what they represented" (Hirsch, 1118).

As was already mentioned above, most of the writers of the Irish Literary Revival like e.g. Synge, Gregory, Yeats, Hyde were Anglo-Irish Protestants. The class they were writing about – the country people – were all Catholics. For this reason the Protestant writers not only took the Catholic rural class as an essential part of the Irish identity but there was a feeling on their side that the Catholic peasant was taken as something "Other".[7] The Irish peasant became "a romantic emblem of a deep, cultural, pastoral, and significantly anticommercial Irish life" (Hirsch, 1122). The general revivalist notion was that the rural life was typical of its

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[5] see Edward Hirsch, "The Imaginary Irish Peasant" (Modern Language Association, 1991) 1116. 26 Nov 2012
<http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.2307/462684?uid=3737856&uid=2134&uid=2129&uid=2&uid=70&uid=4&sid=21101436138363>.

[6] see Hirsch 1117.

[7, 8] see Hirsch 1122.

free condition from modernity and commercialism while the city (including also the English city) was the representative of it. There was also a difference in the notion of the inhabitants of the city and the country. It was believed that the city inhabitants were individuals while the rural countryside was inhabited by the folk.[9] Moreover there was a certain kind of discomfort from the part of the middle-class Catholics who took the peasants and the rural life as too Irish. On the other hand it was the idealization of this life that initiated organizations such as was the Gaelic Athletic Association.[10]

What the folk people were most representing was their own land and its immediate connection with nature. The most common of literary forms of the countryside people still remained the oral tradition which later developed into short story being the main genre of the folk people. Kiberd mentions in his *Irish Literature and Irish history* that the short story "[w]as itself a ruralist form, which sprang up wherever folk anecdotes were challenged by the onset of print technology and a written literary tradition" and that "It was ideally suited to capturing what Frank O'Connor would later call 'the lonely voice', the speech of those outsiders and individuals of an unmade society, the 'O's' and the 'Macs' of the emergent rural bourgeoisie" (Kiberd, 322-323). It was the Irish peasant who stood closest to the Irish nature and to the supernatural which inhabited the nature. What was typical of the literature of the revival was the description of the ordinary lives of the country people which was often mingled with the supernatural events being a part of this ordinary peasant life. This was in a way connected with what Lady Gregory called the "ancient idealism" which served as an argument against buffoonery and easy sentiment often used in connection with Irish peasantry.[11] "By idealizing peasants - and by defining them as the essence of an ancient, dignified Irish culture - The Revivalists were specifically countering the English stereotype" (Hirsch, 1120). And one of the tools how to manage such countering was to use the "imaginative wealth" and the "supernatural folk" as a contrary affect (Hirsch,

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[9] see Hirsch 1112

[10] see Hirsch 1124.

[11] see Hirsch 1120.

1120).

Mythology is used by the revivalist authors as a way to break the stereotype used in connection to the ordinary people of Ireland. And there are different ways of how this is being achieved according to different authors who devoted their works to prove Irish tradition something what is above the sentiment or stereotype. Yeats radicalizes the image of the country people by creating his own system of the occult and thus spiritualizing the country people "in search of a truer faith than Christianity" which would result in "his unique syncretism of romantic and occult ideas conjoined with a culture's interest in national folklore" (Hirsch, 1126). O'Brien uses his skills in language to break the stereotype of the former picture of the peasant life. He uses parody and wit as the main tools in achieving his goals.

We can say that the Irish peasant became the central point of the revivalists' interest. It was from the simple reason of having brought many other aspects of the Irish life when being discussed. The Irish peasant meant not only a county man but brought along many other political, social, cultural issues of the Irish life which the peasant was holding within himself. In other words, while used as a literary figure writers couldn't avoid relating to cultural and national problems. Thus we can say that "[t]o define an idea of the Irish peasant was to define an idea of Ireland itself" (Hirsch, 1130).

4.   The Use of Mythology in Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds*

Hirsch claims: "If O'Brien lacks an international reputation, the reason may be that his work concentrates on dismantling the literature of Ireland rather than on creating a revisionary "European" oeuvre equal to the poems of Yeats, the plays of Synge, or the fiction of Joyce" (Hirsch, 1128). Compared to the other well-known Irish writers, Flann O'Brien's work relates much more to the question of Irish national literature. In addition to that, his literary methods are of a different character from those promoting the political sense of the revival. His novels are typical of the usage of historical references relating to the previous literary tradition. He is preoccupied with rewriting Irish mythology and at the same time uses his linguistic skills "to parody and unmask previous portraits of peasant life" (Hirsch, 1128).[1]

In his *At Swim-Two-Birds* modern elements are blending with those reflecting the Irish tradition, literature, mythology, etc. The characters, both the peasants of the modern age and the figures of Irish mythology, share the same time and place, although timelessness is the most typical feature of the novel. It is through timelessness which the possibility of the fusion of both the modern plot and the Celtic myth is allowed.[2] O'Brien's relation to the Celtic myth is innate. He is a native speaker of Irish and at the same time he continues the art of storytelling of the previous literary tradition which strengthens his capacity to combine mythology with the literary modernism. His chronology of the plot is very unusual as there are number of plots developing within one narrative. The three main plots develop around the character of a student who is writing about writing a book so we have a

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[1] see Edward Hirsch, "The Imaginary Irish Peasant", JSTOR (Modern Language Association, 1991) 1128. 26 Nov. 2012

<http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.2307/462684?uid=3737856&uid=2134&uid=2129&uid=2&uid=70&uid=4&sid=21101436138363>.

[2] Marguerite Quintelli-Neary *Folklore and the Fantastic in Twelve Modern Irish Novels* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1997), 83. 26 Nov. 2012 < http://www.questia.com/library/1376960/folklore-and-the-fantastic-in-twelve-modern-irish>.

branched scheme of the narrative where other characters and plots are developing on both real and imaginative levels – Dermot Trellis, Finn mac Cumhaill Sweeny/Suibhne, etc. Thus we have three levels in the book: the student-author's life and his book which is further divided into the world of reality and the world of imagination where Finn serves as a link between the two worlds. On the second level we have Dermot Trellis and his book and Finn entering the real world through the story of Suibhne. On the third level we have Orlick Trellis's writings about his father Dermot and the reworked story of Suibhne concentrating on his punishment.[3] Jay Giebus summarizes it in one sentence: "Supported by a fantastic plot of characters who rebel against their author, incongruous literary tradition meet in the imagination of a precocious undergraduate" (Giebus, 65).

O'Brien's multiple chronology relates to the use of numbers which has again source in the mythology. The number three seems to be penetrating throughout the whole book. The narrative has three openings, three different times and places. "Sublimating or obscuring the role of chronology, O'Brien plunges the reader into an atemporal domain, suggesting that a novel may have many different beginnings, all of which may occur at different times, and, in the same vein, that there may be overlaps between beginnings, as traditional folktales often contain overlapping events from different historical periods" (Quintelli-Neary, 86).

This method enables both modern characters and the characters of the mythology to meet and lead conversations regardless of the time. "The Pooka and the Good Fairy may travel through a forest inhabited by fictional creatures, and the poet, Jem Casey, may meet the legendary King Sweeney" (Quintell-Neary, 86). O'Brien's use of the temporal and spatial overlapping refers to the same overlapping which is typical for the medieval Irish literature and the oldest stories of the Irish mythology. What inspired O'Brien to use this method was probably his desire to remain within his field of study – Irish language and literature, his familiarization with the tales of the Sídh, sea voyage adventures, imram or

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[3] Eva Wäppling, *Four Irish Legendary Figures in At Swim-Two-Birds* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1984) 100-101.

bruidhean tales.[4] O'Brien's use of blending between the old and the new world could be apprehended as a process of the modern mind to come closer to one's own history and origins, to come to its very core and essence. It stands hand in hand with the process of nationalism using the Irish myth as one of the methods of national awareness. Unfortunately, this process meets with a tendency to falsifications of the Irish cultural life. As Hirsch mentions, O'Brien: "[w]itheringly parodied the various sentimentalizations of the peasant in Irish cultural discourse, including a popular spate of autobiographies by country people" (Hirsch, 1128).

4. 1.   Fionn mac Cumhaill – The Link Between Real and Imaginary Worlds

Some facts about the origination of the Fionn tales have been discussed above. But there are prevailing differences around this issue pointing to various opinions of critics such as T. F. O'Rahilly, Myles Dillon or Gerard Murphy. According to Murphy, the Fionn tales were known to the learned men since the 8th century but the literary sources which would give evidence about him were very rare. De Blacam states that first popular compilation of the Fionn tales was the *Ossianic lay* which is actually the equivalent to the English ballad.[5]

   After the publication of *At Swim-Two-Birds* the center of research moved from the origination and chronological placement of the existence of the tales to the origination and character of Finn himself. The focus of discussion was moved to the historical validity of the Fionn tales in relation to his figure, i.e. whether the Finn tales had any kind of historical background or whether Finn and his warriors were only legendary figures. Eva Wäppling mentions: "One thing that critics seem

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[4] Marguerite Quintelli-Neary, *Folklore and the Fantastic in Twelve Modern Irish Novels* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1997) 87.

[5] Eva Wäppling, *Four Irish Legendary Figures in At Swim-Two-Birds* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1984) 9-30.

to have agreed about was that there were two Finn traditions, different not so much in content but in form and spirit. The oral tradition pictured Finn as a comic, sometimes rather burlesque, old man. The learned, or manuscript, tradition was more closely constructed in poetic or rhetorical language and was characterized more by the heroic and prophetic Finn" (Wäpplinng, 32).

The question of the character of Finn was raised and started to be discussed by those critics who had been already concentrating their area of research around the Finn tradition. O'Rahilly was of an opinion that Finn and his warriors had no historical background: "Our storytellers may be forgiven for the fluctuating chronology they assign to Finn and his fian, for none of their alleged achievements has the remotest connexion with history. Finn and his fellows (Goll, Diarmait, Oisín, etc.) never existed. Finn is ultimately the divine Hero, Lug or Lugaid, just like Chúchulainn" (O'Rahilly, 277). On the other hand we have arguments of other critics who stand in opposition to the legendary origin of Finn. E.g. Mac Neil was of an opinion that Finn is deliberately "a hero, a brave and ruthless war-lord" (Wäppling, 34).

The same question could be discussed in connection with *At Swim-Two-Birds* as it offers the same topic, i.e. what types of Finn's character O'Brien chose for his book and why it is Finn who retells the legendary story of *Buile Suibhne*, of Finn's acquisition of wisdom and the Fianna warriors.

We get the first image of Finn at the beginning of the book. When he is retelling the stories of the legendary past, his role is to perform in a representative and serious manner. This is the image we usually find in the oldest stories about the *Fenian lay* but in *At Swim-Two-Birds* he meets with ignorance of the audience. We can see this contrast while Finn is trying to retell the story of Suibhne and after he finishes reciting a poem he is interrupted by Shanahan: "That thing you were saying reminds me of something bloody good. I beg your pardon for interrupting, Mr. Storybook" (O'Brien, 72). Here we might perceive a slightly ironic tone which makes the effect of praising the legendary history to bring a contrary result. Finn is called a Storybook which is perceived in relation to his importance of name as rather comic touching also his function of a storyteller of the oral tradition.

After the book opens, we are provided by a description of Finn. This is a description which is possible to find both in oral and manuscript sources. O'Brien writes of Finn as of "[a] man of superb physique and development" (O'Brien, 9). He emphasizes his physical robustness: "Each of his thighs was as thick as a horse's belly, narrowing to a calf as thick as the belly of a foal. Three fifties of fosterlings could engage with handball against the wideness of his backside, which was large enough to halt the march of men through a mountain-pass" (O'Brien, 9).

This concept of Finn has also relation to other characters of the mythology. It actually extends across the whole range of tales ascribing the same physical dispositions to the opponents of Finn in the manner of exaggerated style typical of the Irish tales.[6]

The ignored Finn in *At Swim-Two-Birds* may seem to have a comic character which is probably the result of the excessive seriousness of Finn trying to catch attention of the ordinary people who are not willing to listen to him. On the other hand this notion might be understood from a different angle. In relation to the audience who is supposed to listen to the retellings of Finn, we may understand the reason of Finn's re-appearance in the modern age as part of the nationalizing process recalling the importance of tradition and myth but meeting with ignorance which might actually point to the "sentimentalizations of the peasant in Irish cultural discourse," in order to attempt "literary refigurations of the peasant" in Hirsch's words.[7] It is then understandable that the best image of Finn to use in this connection is the manuscript version of Finn drawing on the heroic and therefore a more serious image.

O'Brien's studies of the old literary tradition enabled him to draw sources from the oldest manuscripts. The crucial source was the *Acallam na Senórach* which he used in connection with Finn's retelling of Buile Suibhne.[8] The main question was why O'Brien chose Finn to retell the story of *Buile Suibhne* but Wäppling points

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[6] Eva Wäppling, *Four Irish Legendary Figures of At Swim-Two-Birds* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1984) 38.

[7] see Hirsch 1128.

[8] see Eva Wäppling 36.

out another important fact: "[t]he early connection between Finn and Suibhne found in the *Acallam* has been overlooked" (Wäppling, 36). As we know from the previous chapters, *Buile Suibhne* belongs to the King's Cycle which in the literary history follows the Fionn Cycle. This means that in the traditional literature it would be impossible for Finn to tell the story of *Buile Suibhne*. But from the literary tradition we know of the prophecy addressed by Caoilte to Finn where he foresees the great battle of Magh Rath and Suibhne's escape from this battle.[9] There is another fact important in relation to Caoilte. It is the place of Swim-Two-Birds itself. Wäppling mentions: "In the *Acallam* Snámh-dá-én is the place where Finn, according to Caoilte began to believe in the coming of Christianity" (Wäppling, 37). Suibhne comes to the same place after his escape from Magh Rath. Here in a church he becomes "a changed man" (Wäppling, 54).

The possibility that Finn and Caoilte were able to meet is as O'Rahilly mentions because of the lifespan of both Finn and Caoilte: "While Finn's lifetime is made to extend over a period of four generations, from Conn Cétchathach to Cairbre Lifechar, his son Oisín and his nephew Caílte were, by a later convention, supposed to have lived sufficiently long to have held converse with St. Patrick" (O'Rahilly, 274-275). This was undoubtedly one of the many interventions of Christian monks to the old tales thanks to which we can now find links between two legendary figures of different cycles over the spans of centuries.

As has been mentioned we have an ambiguous image of Finn. On one hand there is the comic Storybook Finn on the other we have the tragic hero. Wäppling explains that O'Brien's intention was to find a compromise between both images: "O'Brien used the sources he wanted, not to introduce a comic giant telling absurd stories to uninterested companions, but to achieve balance in the novel between tragic and comic elements, by invoking the tragic, abused hero, Finn Mac Cool. He sometimes used Finn […] to create a comic or absurd effect, but to tell the tale of *The Madness of Suibhne*, he did not use the traditionally comic Finn, i.e. the giant

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[9] Thomas O'Rahilly, *Early Irish History and Mythology* (Dublin: Cahill and Co., Ltd., 1946) 27.

of later oral tradition, but Finn the prophet" (Wäppling, 38).

In his retellings Finn goes back to the story of how he acquired wisdom. Thanks to many interventions of the manuscript writers this story has at least three variations. Modern sources provide two possibilities which have already been mentioned in previous chapters. Generally the Otherworld remained closed to mortals apart from the filidh who were allowed to communicate with the Otherworld. Among the filidh there was a belief that gaining of knowledge was achieved by chewing a piece of an animal. Another concept was the possibility of drinking water from the Otherworld well surrounded by: "hazel-trees, the fruit of which dropped into the well and caused bubbles of mystic inspiration to form on the streams which issued from the well" (O'Rahilly, 326-327).

Both of these concepts survived in relation to Finn but O'Rahilly adds: "Finn's wisdom was that it resided in his thumb" (O'Rahilly 327).[10] One of the versions how the wisdom was transferred into Finn's thumb is that Finn's thumb was squeezed between the door in a struggle and water was spilt on it from a cup held by a daughter of Bec mac Buain who was the owner of the wisdom well.[11] Later there were re-workings of this version so nowadays we might read of the same version with slight changes. The other version relates to the Salmon of Knowledge which could be apprehended as a derivation of the first concept of chewing a piece of meat from an animal. According to this version Finn was given a task to cook a salmon but was forbidden to eat from it. He burned his finger on the salmon and put his thumb into his mouth to cool it down. From that moment he gained wisdom. It is evident that the concept of chewing meat was changed by relating the gaining of wisdom to Finn. The concept of chewing a thumb was introduced and enabled Finn to foresee danger and use knowledge every time he put the finger into his mouth.

In *At Swim-Two-Birds* this legend appears in connection with a prophetic character of Finn and his ability to foresee the coming of Christianity. But in the mythology we read not only about his thumb of knowledge but also about his tooth

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[10, 11] Thomas O'Rahilly, *Early Irish History and Mythology* (Dublin: Cahill and Co., Ltd., 1946) 326.

of knowledge. This tooth is important in relation to Finn's ability to foresee the coming of an enemy and to his talent for reciting poetry. Finn in his retellings also speaks of other men who are somehow dangerous of their physical appearance or have a special gift. In *At Swim-Two-Birds* he speaks of men who can defeat a host by viewing through his fingers.[12] According to O'Rahilly there are a few versions of who these men were. One of them speaks of such a man as of "the owner of the salmon as a one-eyed giant, whom Finn blinds by thrusting a red-hot spit or iron bar through his eye" (O'Rahilly, 330). In *At Swim-Two-Birds* we get parallel characters to the one-eyed giants of the Irish mythology.

Finn is also asked by the Fianna to tell the famous stories of the Irish tradition: *The Feast of Bricriu* (*Fled Bricrend*), *The Cattle Raid of Cuailnge* (*Táin Bó Cuailnge*) from the *Ulster Cycle*; *The Pursuit of the Gilla Decair* (*Tóruighecht an Ghilla Dhecair*), *Cormac's Adventures in the Land of Promise* (*Echtra Chormaic i Tír Tairngiri*), *The Little Brawl a Almain* (*Bruiden Beg na hAlman*) and *The Adventures of the Churl in the Drab Coat* (*Eachtra Bhodaig an Chóta lachtna*) from the *Fenian Cycle*.[13] Anyway he seems to be unable or unwilling to retell these stories which are otherwise crucial part of the Irish tradition and therefore relevant to O'Brien's plot of *At Swim-Two-Birds*.

To summarize O'Brien's use of Finn, he represents a changing character in the plot. We may perceive his role in the book as ambiguous in the traditional perspective: a comic giant of the oral tradition and a hero/warrior/prophet of the manuscript tradition. Anyway there is a tragic feature in his character as it is shown by his inability to retell stories or even remembering them. Here O'Brien uses Finn as "[a]n old man bent with misery and age, a man ridiculed and not taken seriously, a man who is unwilling to tell the great tales of Irish literature but remembers only the one tale in which he has been dishonoured (*The Churl in the Puce Great-Coat*)" (Wäppling, 50).

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[12] Eva Wäppling, *Four Irish Legendary Figures in At Swim-Two-Birds* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1984) 45.

[13] see Wäppling 46-47.

Finn also figures as an important element for the three plots of the narrative. He is the parallel of the author who lives in both real and imaginary worlds which are present in all three levels of the book. Therefore Finn's function is to be a connecting element between the imaginary and real world but also between the three levels of the narrative, e.g. Finn comes to the real world to tell the story of Suibhne on the second level when he is interrupted by the pub talk. "This juxtaposition crates an absurd effect, but it also makes Finn's story serve as a bridge between the old times of Irish legend and the real world as it appears in the room at the Red Swan" (Wäppling, 73).

Finn's role in the plot is together with Suibhne the most important because of the connection between the modern and imaginary worlds. The presence of Finn in the modern world makes a comic and ridiculed character of him. A hero whose heroic fame is no longer important whose voice is overshadowed by the pub talk of the men, but is at the same time being highlighted together with the beauty of the old tales as a warning of man's inability to listen to their own myth, to the stories of their own past.

4. 2.   The Representation of Good and the Evil in the Character of the Pooka

If Finn's task was to retell the story of *Buile Suibhne*, then the Pooka's task was to tell the story of Diarmuid and Gráinne, one of the most famous stories of the Fenian Cycle. Moreover the same as Finn, the Pooka appears in all the three levels of the book which is possible through his role of the storyteller. Therefore retelling the stories of both Finn and the Pooka has importance not only of reminding the stories to the characters in the Red Swan and the reader but also to challenge again the possibilities of blending the past and the present. The Pooka is in Red Swan playing cards with other men when he suddenly mentions: "Did I ever tell you the old story about Dermot and Granya?" (O'Brien, 140). It is not Finn who is chosen to tell the story of his own times because Finn actually refuses to tell any story about himself.

In *The Pursuit of Diarmuid and Gráinne*, he is betrayed by his wife that points to Finn's tragic role in the legendary history, a role which he wants to avoid in the modern world. Thus Finn gives a chance to the Pooka to appear in the real world. He also puts himself into an important role within the story. In the traditional literature there would not be a mention about him in the story but here he appears in the part of the story when Diarmuid and Gráinne already eloped and came to a cave where the Pooka dwells: "One dark night the woman and Dermot strayed into my cave in their wandering, looking if you please for a night's lodging. I was working at that time, you understand, in the west of Ireland. My cave was by the seaside" (O'Brien, 141). All the time the Pooka is disturbed by the card game talk of the other men and even he himself disturbs it when he wants to comment on his play. We get a feeling that the story is intentionally given no special importance, as if told in the background as a part of the rest of the pub talk. Again the importance of the knowledge of the modern men is emphasized. Finn asks all the men if they ever heard about the story to which the Good Fairy replies: "No, […] I never heard that particular story. If it is dirty, of course, etiquette preludes me from listening to it at all" (O'Brien, 140). With the statement of the Good Fairy, we get an important notion considering the relation between the Pooka and the Good Fairy. A special contrast is offering itself to be paid attention to. The Pooka seems to have a constant desire to tell the story although nobody else is curious to ask any further questions about it even after his talk is interrupted by the card game talk. The Good Fairy wants to avoid it if it is dirty.

In the traditional mythology, the Pooka's role is of a devilish character but not entirely bad. W.B. Yeats classifies him among the fairies and points out that he might be very helpful to the humans if they behave in a nice way to him. His character is therefore ambiguous. If he is a fairy then according to the traditional mythology he must also be one of the fallen angels who were: "not good enough to be saved, nor bad enough to be lost" (Yeats, 1). In *At Swim-Two-Birds*, the Pooka character seems to be split in two: the Pooka himself is of the more devilish characters and the Good Fairy is of the good one. We might then conclude that the traditional mythological figure of the Pooka was split in two characters in *At-Swim-Two-Birds* in order to contrast good and evil in the book. This might be seen, e.g.,

in a different approach towards the story of Diarmuid and Gráinne. At the same time splitting the Pooka in two characters resulted in correspondence between them both. We could say that the Pooka and the Good Fairy are actually one mythological figure in *At-Swim-Two-Birds.*

The difference between the good and the evil characters of the Pooka and the Good Fairy plays an important role in the book but at the same time shows that nothing is entirely good and entirely evil.[14] The good and evil contrast appears in all the three levels. First it is present in the fight between the student narrator and his uncle. The second contrast of good and evil is present in Trelis's writing a book about sin where he puts his characters in a constant fight with the evil, e.g. John Furriskey rapes Peggy but finally marries her. On the third level we read about the punishment of Dermot Trellis for his evil sins. Here the Pooka wins and teaches Orlick how to torture his father.[15] At the card game in the Red Swan the Pooka discovers that the Good Fairy has no more money to bet and he doesn't want the Pooka to say it loud in front of others. The Pooka therefore takes as his duty to inform the other players about it: "The others allowed you to play in my recommendation and you have callously dishonoured me. I cannot be expected to stand by and see them exploited further" (O'Brien, 143). On which the Good Fairy replies: "For God's sake don't do that, don't do that under any circumstances, I would never get over it, it would kill my mother" (O'Brien, 143). The bad side of the Good Fairy lies within his inability to confess his debts to his mother and lying to her.

Both the Pooka and the Good Fairy came to the Red Swan to decide who will take care of the baby, Orlick Trellis, who is about to be born. Therefore the Pooka offers that he will forgive him the debt if he takes responsibility on his side and will take him under his care. In the tradition the presence of the devil and the angel at the birth of a baby was followed by a fight over the soul of the newborn. In *At-*

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[14] Eva Wäppling, *Four Irish Legendary Figures in At Swim-Two-Birds* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 184) 85.

[15] see Wäppling 82-83.

Swim-Two-Birds, the relation to the tradition is evident with choosing the Pooka and the Good Fairy as figures representing the traditional image of the fight between good and evil.[16] The validity of good and evil within both The Pooka and the Good Fairy is therefore discussable. But it makes the plot even more interesting and complex.

Anyway good and evil find their further application in relation to O'Brien's use of numbers, number three in particular. The whole book is about triads: the three plots, the three mythological figures Finn, Suibhne and the Pooka (if we consider the Pooka and the Good Fairy as good and evil variation of the same character), the card game is all about numbers and even Finn claims it a definite number when he relates to the three special abilities of the Fianna warriors: "I will relate three things and nothing Above three, […] Myself I can get wisdom from the sucking of my thumb, another […] can bring to defeat a host by viewing it through his fingers, and another can cure a sick warrior by judging the smoke of the house in which he is" (O'Brien, 18). The Pooka and the Good Fairy highlight the importance of the number three by pointing out that three is an odd number and that there is the whole truth in the odd numbers: "[I] find myself in agreement with your conception of the God and the Bad Numerals. It is for that reason that I consider the wearing of two shirts by you a deplorable lapse since it must result as you say in three tails in all and truth is an odd number" (O'Brien, 107).

The Pooka's importance in the book reflects also some sort of a shift from the serious narrative of Finn's to a more lightweight, witty and comic intercourse between the Pooka and the Good Fairy. In terms of the struggle between good and evil, we notice a change as well, particularly in the behavior of the Good Fairy. Since they approach the Red Swan, the Good Fairy becomes a more passive character than the Pooka: "[t]he good Fairy is getting more and more short-tempered, and he expresses himself in a coarser and coarser language, whereas the Pooka becomes more and more refined in his talk and in his behavoiur" (Wäppling, 95). This approves of the round characters of both the Pooka and the Good Fairy and also of the symbolical representation of the world which is not always black

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[16] see Wäppling 85.

and white but shows in times both bad and good elements in every person. In relation to mythology, it might represent a contrast between the traditional approach of the fight between good and evil and the modern world where the boundary between both is not always clear. In short, the point is to contrast the clearness of traditional world where the evil always shows itself clearly as well as the good and the disorientation in recognizing both in the modern world.

4. 3. The Story of Suibhne

Suibhne (Sweeny) enters the book throughout the narrative of Finn and the same as Finn is allowed to take part in all the three levels of the narrative. We can say that the Irish variation of the name is used when Suibhne's story is related to the legendary *Buile Suibhne* while the English variation, Sweeny, is used for his representation in the modern world. There are actually three stories of Suibhne used in *At Swim-Two-Birds*. The first one is told by Finn as *Buile Suibhne*. The second one is relating to Sweeny's appearance in Red Swan and meeting the characters in Trelis's novel. The third one is relating to Orlick Trelis's narration of the story of Sweeny.[17]

First he appears in the legend where Finn narrates how Sweeny was cursed by the cleric Ronan. This story is incorporated to relate to the Sweeny on the second level. Ronan was going around sprinkling the warriors with the holy water as a protection against hurt in the battle of Mag Rath. Ronan sprinkled the head of Sweeny after which Sweeny got furious and broke Ronan's bell.[18] After the incident he runs away from the battle filled with range: "[h]e was beleaguered by an anger and a darkness, and fury and fits and frenzy and fright-fraught fear, and he was filled with a restless tottering unquiet and with a disgust for the places that he knew and with a desire to be where he never was" (O'Brien, 66). Ronan expresses

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[17] see Wäppling 52.

[18] Flann O'Brien, *At Swim-Two-Birds* (London: Penguin Books, 2001) 65.

himself over the broken bell and sends Sweeny to live in the branches of trees: "The holy bell that thou hast outraged / will banish thee to branches / …. Just as it went prestissimo / the spear shaft skyward / you too, Sweeny, go madly mad- gone / skyward" (O'Brien, 65). Once Sweeny goes up the trees he cannot touch the ground and has to jump from one branch to another.

The second appearing of Suibhne in At *Swim-Two-Birds* is when the characters of Trelis's novel have found Sweeny in the woods and take him to the Red Swan so that he may become a connector between the legendary and modern world. Anyway, this part of the book seems to be the most tragic because Finn's voice narrating the story about Suibhne seems to be disappearing in the humming pub jargon of the ordinary men. Finn is interrupted and his story of Suibhne is juxtaposed with the recitation of the poems of the famous Jam Casey. On the other hand, Finn doesn't seem to be too much concerned about his audience: "He does not primarily tell his story to the men in the room; he is, above all, talking to the long-dead members of the Fianna" (Wäppling, 73). Every time Finn is interrupted in his talk, he waits patiently unless his turn comes again and he may continue his story. This is undoubtedly one of the ways O'Brien uses in achieving the tragi-comic effect of Finn.[19]

The third level relates to Orlick Trelis's incorporation of Sweeny and the motif of punishment which is aimed against Trelis's father Dermot. Orlick Trelis uses Sweeny to revenge on his father for the abuse of him and other characters. By using Sweeny who is the bearer of his long-life punishment enables Orlick to put the same punishment on his father. We can even find some parallels in the text relating to Orlick's suffering and being almost parallel with the descriptions of sufferings of Sweeny. Even though the third level might not evoke any sense of connection between the legendary past and the modern present, we have again Finn and

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[20] see Wäppling 73-74.

Suibhne present in the plot, this time as Finn the judge and Sweeny as the observer on the bench. The presence of Finn and Sweeny is evoking Trelis's suffering as well as it is connecting the modern world with the past.[21]

In connection to the Sweeny story, the word geilt is often mentioned. Most critics agree that "the word means "filled with madness" and that this madness is connected with levitation" (Wäppling, 55). For O'Brien levitation is a crucial issue because of his special favor to discover the effects of it upon the characters, mainly on Sweeny. We know at least of one more case in Irish mythology when levitation is used as a characteristic feature of a mythological figure. Jumping was one of the favorite activities of Cú Chulainn who, as we know from the old stories, was able to make great leaps which he learned from Scáthach, the trainer.[22] There might be a certain parallel between Cú Chulainn's leaps and the levitation of Suibhne who makes leaps among the branches of trees. But this only points to the parallels which are one of the characteristic features of Irish mythology, e. g. the existing parallels between the lives of Finn and Cú Chulainn. Anyway the ability to leap has a different character. For Cú Chulainn it is a natural ability which is part of his heroic and divine power. For Sweeny it is a punishment, an ability which is given to him through the curse and which has in *At Swim-Two-Birds* a completely different purpose.

In *Buile Suibhne*, Snámh-dá-én (At Swim-Two-Birds) is a place where Sweeny met Patrick and changed his faith. But O'Brien doesn't mention anything about this important event in his book. The only thing he relates to in connection to Snámh-dá-én is the arrival of Sweeny and an image of the church and clerics as he sees it in one particular moment: "After another time he set forth in the air again till he reached the church at Snámh-dá-én (or Swim-Two-Birds) by the side of the Shannon, arriving there on a Friday, to speak precisely; here the clerics were engaged at the observation of their nones, flax was being beaten and here and there

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[20] see Wäppling 79.

[21] The story of Cú Chulainn's training is included in *The Training of Cú Chulainn*. It tells how Cú Chulainn learned to do the great leap on the Bridge of Leap which led to the stronghold of Scáthach, Cú Chulainn's teacher.

a woman was giving birth to a child; and Sweeny did not stop until he had recited the full length of a further lay" (O'Brien, 68). It is curious why O'Brien didn't mention anything about Sweeny's change of faith once he decided to use the title for his book bearing the name of the place of his conversion. Anyway we know that O'Brien had alternative titles for his book and he also made many corrections and shortenings in the book including the parts of Finn narrative.[22]

The narrative therefore doesn't include Sweeny's conversion to Christianity but depicts only the consequences of the sin. In this matter we find another parallel: the sin of Sweeny in *Buile Suibhne* as retold by Finn, where Suibhne finally dies after Mongan kills him because of Eorann,[23] and the trial of Dermot Trellis who raped Sheila Lamont. O'Brien makes a parallel between the fall and the physical and psychical pain caused by the consequences of their sins. In relation to this, levitation is part of Sweeny's suffering and its effects are the way of expressing the consequences of sin. The book closes with a sad look on Sweeny pictured sitting in the branches of a tree looking to a distant horizon with the coming of night, an image which reminds us of the infiniteness of his destiny: "Sweeny in the trees hears the sad baying as he sits listening on the branch, a huddle between the earth and heaven; […] Bark answers bark till the call spreads like fire through all Erin. […] The eyes of the mad king upon the branch are upturned, whiter eyeballs in a white face, upturned in fear and supplication. His mind is but a shell" (O'Brien, 216 – 217).

O'Brien's usage of Finn and Suibhne brings a rich variety in narration. It offers a certain level of experimentation and possibilities of how to view the legendary history and its heroes. And it also allows the reader to become close to the myth of the past regardless of time.

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[22] Wäppling mentions among the alternative titles was "Sweeny in the Trees" as O'Brien didn't think of "At Swim-Two-Birds" as a suitable and serious title. "Sweeny in the Trees" was probably foregrounding the Sweeny story much more and therefore after O'Brien changed the title he probably omitted some parts of Finn¨s narrative relating to Sweeny. See Wäppling, p. 10.

[23] Suibhne's wife marries Mongan after Suibhne is struck by madness and leaves to wander around the world.

4. 5. Reference to Oisín

Although Oisín is not directly mentioned in any of the plots of *At-Swim*, one of the scenes with Finn relates to the manuscript version where Oisín took the main part. In *At-Swim-Two-Birds* Finn is repeatedly asked to tell the famous stories of the Irish past which he refuses to do until finally he is asked to retell the *Churl in the Puce Great-coat* which he refuses to tell as well. He says: "Evil story for telling, that, […] and though itself I can make it, it is surely true that I will not recount it. It is a crooked and dishonorable story that tells how Finn spoke honey-words and peace-words to a stranger who came seeking the high-rule and the high-rent of this kingdom and saying that he would play the sorrow of death and small-life on the lot of us in one single day if his wish was not given", and then he adds: "Who has heard honey-talk from Finn before strangers, Finn that is wind quick, Finn that is a better man than God?" (O'Brien, 18-19). In the old tales including the talk between Oisín and Patrick, it is Oisín who expresses mistrust to Patrick. It is him who stresses the greatness of Finn and indicates that there is no better man than Finn: "A delight to Fionn of the heroes / Was the cry of his hounds afar on the mountain; / The wolves starting from their dens, / The exultation of his hosts, that was his delight. / Many a desire Fionn had, / Which are disregarded after him, / Fionn or his houdns live not, / Nor shalt thou live, generous Oisin. / A greater loss is Fionn than we." [24]

In *At-Swim-Two-Birds* Oisín is substituted by Finn. It is Finn who speaks of himself in high terms choosing a poem to emphasize his ultimacy: "I am an Ulsterman, a Conachtman, a Greek, said Finn, / I am Cuchulainn, I am Patrick. / I am Carbery-Cathead, I am Goll. / I am my own father and my son. / I am every hero from the crack of time" (O'Brien, 19). Finn's mistrust in the old tales is expressed as mistrust in the storytellers, the book-poets who caused dishonor to

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[24] John O'Daly, ed, *Transaction of the Ossianic Society* (Dublin: Godwin, Sox and Nbthercott, 1859)11. 30 Nov 2012

<http://archive.org/stream/transactionsofos04ossiuoft/transactionsofos04ossiuoft_djvu.txt>.

to Finn and the Fianna as Finn further asks: "Who could have the saint Ceallach carried off by his four acolytes and he feeble and thin from his lent-fast, laid in the timbers of an old boat, […] Who could think to turn the children of a king into white swans with the loss of their own bodies, to be swimming the two seas of Erin in snow and ice-cold rain […]. Who could put a terrible madness on the head of Sweeney for the slaughter of a single lent-gaunt cleric" (O'Brien, 19-20). Here O'Brien relates to the parts of the old stories where we can nowadays distinguish impacts of the Christian adaptations. Finn's attack of this storytelling nonsense and his putting himself higher than the Christian tradition by emphasizing the true tradition of which he is the representative, gives him a reason why he should do so. Anyway O'Brien's idea to use Finn as an honorable speaker results in the tragic-comic effect. He should be praised as the most famous hero but in the modern world his deeds are losing the grandiose importance.

5.   James Stephens and the Leprechauns

James Stephen's work is a great combination of blending the Irish tradition, the comic and the intellectual in one book. The same as O'Brien in *At Swim-Two-Birds* Stephens in *The Crock of Gold* tries to reproduce the Irish myth in order to make connections between the reality and the past. His mythology plays crucial role for the plot development because all the mythological figures are living in the real world. In this way the use of Stephens's mythology is different from O'Brien's: "[t]hey serve to a purpose that is pragmatic to the plot. Leprechauns, fearies, warrior heroes, and nature gods, immediately recognized as peculiar to Irish legendary source works, are integral to the plot development and are not handled by the writer as fading figures from some distant, glorious past" (Quintelli-Neary, 137).

We cannot deny that *The Crock of Gold* shows the features of a fairy-tale. It is evident with the use of the story of two children who are kidnapped by the Leprechauns. Also the surroundings of the forest and the descriptions of nature are the elements which we would normally find in a fairy-tale. But James Stephen's book actually comprises a combination of genres within itself. It is a fairy-tale as well as a philosophical work. It reflects the world of the Irish institutions, as well as it is an old traditional tale. The book is full of combinations in terms of the real world and phantasy. "Stephens tempers intellectual and didactic features with the amusing interactions of humans with beasts, feary folk, heroes and gods, so that the reader is ensnared by the phantasy and succumbs to the powers of the Irish world of feary" (Quintelli-Neary, 138).

5. 1. The Leprechauns

Among all the sidh appearing in *The Crock of Gold*, the Leprechauns are the main developers of the plot. They steal the children, Bridgid and Seumas, because the

Philosopher sent Meehawl MacMurrachu to a place where the Leprechauns had their crock of gold and he stole it. The Leprechauns revenge and take the children to the forest. Moreover Meehawl MacMurrachu's cat killed the Leprechauns's robin which is a forbidden act to do so the Leprechauns steal his washboard in revenge. Therefore Meehawl MacMurrachu is punished for the death of the robin and the Philosopher is punished for sending Meehawl to the place with the crock of gold.

Symbolism is an important issue in *The Crock of Gold*. Stephens uses both Christian and pagan symbols. When Meehawl MacMurrachu comes to the Philosopher to ask for advice why his washboard was stolen, the Philosopher is able to conclude that it must have been the Leprechauns because the night before they took milk from a pan Meehawl put outside the door. The Philosopher says that in their neighborhood there are living six clans of fairies and he then asks a few questions which are all of them leading to the recognition of the right clan of the sídh. He asks if Meehawl takes off his hat when he meets a dust twirl or if he left a pan of milk outside. He also asks if he killed a robin. Through his reply on the question about milk the Philosopher recognizes that it was the Leprechauns and through the fact that Meehawl's cat killed the robin he is able to recognize that they were the Leprechauns of Gort na Cloca Mora.[1] The symbol of robin reflects the Christian tradition, therefore Stephens "synthetizes Irish faery lore with Christian mythology, for the robin is often viewed as a symbol of the bleeding Christ" (Quintelli-Neary, 139).

Stephens uses the traditional knowledge of the experience with the communication between the world of the sídh and the world of the human beings. For all the characters it is important that they knew how to deal with the creatures of the Otherworld. Stephen's book uses both evil and good to stabilize some sort of

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[1] Yeats mentions in his *Fairy Folk of the Irish Peasantry* the presence of the Banshee which was in the tradition recognized by the whirling wind over the tops of roofs. Stephen's reference to the whirling dust may be a parallel to the way how the Banshees were recognized through the nature elements. Taking one's hat off was a way of expressing respect to these creatures because it was always better to be in good terms with them. See Yeats, p. 108.

an order between the world of the sídh and the humans. O'Brien's application of good and evil upon his characters always takes place on a certain level of the narrative – in the legendary tales, in the modern world. But Stephens uses good and evil to establish relationships between both worlds – legendary and modern – at the same time because the world of the sídh is simply a part of the modern world, or better said, the two of them share the same time and place. Meehawl is punished for the act of stealing and the Philosopher for being his "fellow participant." So the evil is adequately punished. On the other hand after the Leprechauns steal the children, they cause no harm to them. Instead they use them as hostage without the intention to cause them further harm. This fact gives a place for the rectification of Meehawl and the Philosopher. The Philosopher has to make a good act in order to be forgiven. The moral is present in the whole book and at the end we witness many happy endings. In this way *The Crock of Gold* draws on the traditional view of the intercourse between humans and the sídh. As it has been already mentioned, the behavior of the sídh towards the human beings is mirrored by the human soul. The children are innocent not only because they are simply children but also because they didn't do any harm to the Leprechauns and therefore there will be no other harm done to them. The children experience a world of the forest which we are able to see from their point of view as in a fairy-tale, a view which is the closest to the eye of a child. They experience fun with the Leprechauns, although to play with them is a tricky way how to entice the children to their hole. This episode is also pointing out to the role of imagination which is a very important tool in the book. Also the act of kidnapping is a must for the Leprechauns since their crock of gold is the only way how to free themselves in case of being captured by the humans. The crock serves as some sort of ransom and is their only weapon against the human evil.

The same as at the beginning, the Leprechauns set the plot in progress: "When the Leprechauns of Gort na Cloca Mora found they were unable to regain their crock of gold by any means they laid anonymous information at the nearest Police station showing that two dead bodies would be found under the hearthstone in the hut of Coille Doraca, and the inference to be drawn from their crafty missive was that these bodies had been murdered by the Philosopher for reasons very

discreditable to him" (Stephens, 123). This time they do injustice to a human being because the Philosopher is innocent. After being acknowledged with the fact that their crock of gold cannot be regained and since they knew that the Philosopher was the initiator of the stealing, they accuse the Philosopher of killing the other Philosopher and his wife, the Grey Woman. Here it is important to emphasize the way of absorbing the act of the Leprechauns by both the Philosopher and the Thin Woman. What Stephens puts above revenge, anger or feeling of harm are "the desires of human nature as hunger, love, happiness and a need for security" (Quintelli-Neary, 141). In this way it is more important for the Thin Woman to set on a journey and find her husband because of her desire to give him love and security. Stephens also emphasizes the importance of the role of the Leprechauns in the society instead of giving preference to a punishment for their act, i.e. for a false accusation. Stephens prays them above the Prime Minister because they are generally merry according to their very nature: "A Leprecaun is of more value to the Earth than is a Prime Minister or a stockbroker, because a Leprecaun dances and makes merry, while a Prime Minister knows nothing of these natural virtues" (Stephens, 122). What is actually being praised in the book is the nature itself, the human beings' turn to the nature and to the base of their existence which is comprising the states of love, hungriness, security, communication with the animals and sympathy with them, improving the relationships between the human beings and opening up to one's higher self and to one's own history which is forgotten by the evil mind of the modern times.

5. 2. Two Gods of Love

The role of Pan in *The Crock of Gold* has an interruptive character. He is introduced in the plot in order to "steal away" the daughter of Meehawl MacMurachu. Pan's coming to Ireland has no missionary character, his pagan origin reflects in his perception of the world through instinct and natural needs. He meets Caitilín and she lets herself be taken by him. With introducing Pan into the plot, another element becomes more visible and that is the forgotten Irish god of love Aengus

Óg. Aengus is complaining that people have forgotten him long time ago. Anyway the plot sets in progress when the Philosopher decides to visit Aengus in order to tell him about Pan's taking of Caitilín. He decides to meet Pan and ask him why he came to Ireland, on which Pan doesn't give him any serious answer. Therefore the role of Pan in the book is aimed to set contrasts between the two gods and point out to the danger of forgetting the traditional and the original in order to prefer the alien. Anyway Caitilín is not happy with Pan. "Pan had told her that he was the giver of happiness, but he had given her only unrest and fever and a longing which could not be satisfied" (Stephens, 107-108).

Caitilín's task is to find the knowledge. Pan promises her the world of happiness and life full of joy where instinct prevails. She first does't know what she wants best. But later she starts to see her own thoughts. "She had found the Tree of Knowledge, but about on every side a great wall soared blackly enclosing her in from the Tree of Life – a wall which her thought was unable to surmount even while instinct urged that it must topple before her advance; and this wall will not be conquered until Thought and Instinct are wed" (Stephens, 108).[2] She is finally put in a situation to decide between the two gods, in other words, to choose between the instinct and knowledge. Since the instincts is no longer bringing her any happiness, she decides for Aengus which in the end is a liberating act since she is no longer "graced with the intuitive abilities" (Quitelli-Neary, 140).

For Aengus Caitilín's decision is very important and causes the return of the Irish god as well as his regained importance in the minds of the country people. His role becomes important since the Philosopher decides to go and visit him to tell him about the coming of Pan. Since that moment we are almost sure that Aengus will rise from the obscurity and shade to which he has fallen. Caitilín's decision to go with Aengus symbolizes the return of the Irish god of love and the return to the tradition in a more vast sense. She is the symbol of the whole Ireland, the land which was in the past taken away from the native people but to which they now turn back.

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[2] The reference to the Tree of Knowledge relates to one of the versions of Finn's gaining of wisdom in *Early Irish History and Mythology*. See Thomas F. O'Rahilly, 326-336.

James Stephen's *The Crock of Gold* is contrasting good and evil especially in the use of the world of the sídh and the modern world of institutions. Human beings are generally represented as those who commit crimes and need to be punished. Another contrast is between the two deities which is actually pointing to the religious issues. The pagan god Pan is settling in the country of Aengus Óg who is symbolizing a pure love in contrast to the pagan intuition and promises of sexual wealth. Aengus as the symbol of the Irish past is forgotten by the people who seem to live in an institutionalized world full of regulations. These people lost the sense of life in its natural form, the life which would embrace love but which is actually missing it. The return of Aengus brings along many other moral retributions. The Philosopher's journey actually becomes the journey of recognition in his life the same as the journey of the Thin Woman who finds back her love to her husband both physical and spiritual. The final march is symbolizing the awakening of the people and recognizing their own past.

Conclusion

There isn't probably any such country where the connection between tradition and literature or history and politics would be so intertwined than it is in Ireland. It is a typical feature for a country to always retire to its own heritage, customs, tradition, national songs if it finds itself under repression, in a war, in the process of suppressing of the native language or emigration. Ireland was definitely one of the most suppressed countries in the entire history and tradition was always the only native thing which was left to them in the times of the British dominion.

In the whole history of Ireland there were two important milestones which influenced the image of the Irish tradition. First was the coming of Christianity which brought along many changes into the oral tradition of the country people and to a certain extant changed the character of the mythology to its own image. Then it was the Irish Literary Revival which used the tradition to take part in the national revival and thus made it a political tool in some cases. Even though both of them influenced the essence which was native about the Irish tradition, they were necessary for its preservation up to the present times. History, of which both Christianity and the period of the National Revival is an essential part, reflected itself in the ways how the Irish tradition is apprehended today, i.e. apprehended as an image including implicitly the whole history of changes and influences, even the popularizing tendencies of the modern times. No other celebration is as popular around the whole world as the St. Patrick's Day and no other mythology has undergone such a popularization as we can see in case of Leprechaun.

Literary works of the 19th and 20th centuries often include in the plot an everyday encounter of the ordinary Irish peasant with the sídh. This allows a wide range of symbolical possibilities which have been part of the tradition since the old times, e.g. a pot of milk symbolizing the visit of the Leprechaun, whirling wind signaling the presence of the Banshee. The works of O'Brien and Stephens aim towards one important notion – that mythology has always been an essential part of literature because literature has often been a tool against oppression. When Aengus

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Óg speaks to Caitilín of the final journey in the "Happy March", he actually refers to the awakening of the nation and the reacceptance of him by the nation: "We will go down to the world of men – from our quiet dwelling among the hills to the noisy city and the multitude of people. This will be our first journey, but on a time not distant we will go to them again, and we will not return from that journey, for we will live among our people and be at peace" (Stephens, 222).

O'Brien's reference to the mythology is possible through the use of Finn as a story teller. Although the contrast between Finn's talk and the pub talk might in some parts appear to the reader as comic, it actually brings the reader to the complex knowledge of tales which are not all told in the book – because of Finn's refusal – but at least mentioned. In the end it shows the beauty of the old tales of Suibhne, Diarmuid and Gráinne or the life of the Fianna who through the use of the multiple plots intermingle with the reality which enables some of the mythological figures to even take part in the plot in the real life and make it progress, e.g. the Pooka as the judge during the trial of Dermot Trellis.

If we speak about the Irish tradition it is important to make a slight division between two branches of the society where it was reflected. The first one was the folklore of the Irish peasants whose perceiving of mythology was based on the customs and practices connected with the cycle of the year and old sayings originating from the experience with the encounters with the sídh, etc. These reflections of mythology are still evident in the general knowledge of the country life and are as well reflected in the literature, although they have many alternations, e.g. in the multiple possibilities of the appearance of the mythological figures for different regions or counties. The second field where mythology is reflected is the literature where the authors of the modern works refer partly to the peasant image of the mythology, nevertheless a more important field of study for the authors represent the manuscript versions of the tales as it is evident with O'Brien and his study of *Acallam na Senórach*. "Timeless figures of the prehistoric tribes of the goddess Danaan, of the Ulster Cycle of Conchobar and Cuchulainn, situated at the time of Christ, and of the Fenian legends of Fion MacCumhaill, Oisín and Oscar, which dominated folklore by the sixteenth century, are refashioned to the suit of the literary needs of the modern Irish novelist" (Quintelli-Neary, 2).

Another part of the mythological reflections represents the political approach to the mythology in terms of national revival. But it stands very close to the literary representations since literature, and mainly poetry, are closely intertwined with the national movement and politics. In the most extreme cases, and there are such in case of Irish national movement, one cannot survive without the other.

Why are the mythology and the whole tradition of Ireland so popular nowadays that it is absorbed even by the nations abroad? Why are parts of their culture being accepted by other cultures and being practised, as it is, e.g. with the Irish dance? The answers to these questions are found in the history which should perhaps be renamed as the "history of oppression." They are found within the minds of people who cling to their tradition because in the history it was being taken away from them. But nobody can steal tradition from anyone. What was being taken away by the oppressive forces became in the times of the national revival one of the strongest tools on the way to achieving independence.

Shrnutí

Co se týče Irské tradice a mytologie, vždy se o ní mluvívá v souvislostech s historií či politickými událostmi. V tomto smyslu můžeme hovořit například o příchodu křesťanství, které do velké míry ovlivnilo dnešní podobu irské tradice a mytologie, můžeme zmínit období velkého hladomoru, který měl za následek jednu z největších emigrací v historii národů, dále pak Velikonoční povstání roku 1916, které probíhalo v duchu irského národního obrození, kde tradice a mytologie sehrály jednu z nejdůležitějších rolí v boji o nezávislost irského národa.

V této práci bude poukázáno na dvě historická období nebo spíše přístupy zpracování mytologie, které se staly nedílnou součástí národního charakteru Irska: tradiční přístup, který je do značné míry ovlivněn příchodem křesťanství, ale který nabízí díky dochovanému rukopisnému materiálu rozsáhlé dokumentace nejstarších podob prastarých příběhů a legend o slavných hrdinech a božstvech, a modernistickou tendenci, která zaznamenává mytologii v trochu jiném světle proto, že ji používá k rozdílnému účelu, avšak tradice je nezbytnou součástí při čerpání z původního materiálu pro účely národního uvědomění.

Jak už bylo zmíněno, v začátcích se jednalo pouze o tradici dochovanou v ústní podobě v nižších vrstvách, ale s příchodem křesťanství se tradice začala rozšiřovat i ve vyšších kruzích. Obměny v charakterizaci mytologických postav nebo dějů starých příběhů o legendárních hrdinech Irska sloužilo především účelům samotného křesťanství. Dnes už se můžeme jen domnívat, zda některé bytosti skutečně existovali nebo zda se jednalo o mytologickou bytost, které se připisovalo pouze jediné jméno, zda pro tuto bytost byla typická určitá a neměnná charakterizace. Za spolehlivou legendu můžeme považovat fakt, že původní prastaré mytologické bytosti byly jedním z kmenů, které se do Irska dostaly jako nájezdní kmeny. Jedním z takových byli tzv. Túatha Dé Danann, kteří po určitou dobu v Irsku vládli, avšak jiný kmen, tzv. Milesianský, který je následoval, svedl s Túatha Dé Danann bitvu, kterou vyhráli, a tak od nich nadvládu převzali. Tak vznikly mytologické bytosti, které známe dnes v podobě víl, leprikónů apod. Tuathá Dé Danann totiž vynikali nadpřirozenými schopnostmi, a tak se s Milesiany

usnesli, že každý převezme vládu nad svým světem. Milesiani se stali vládci světa zevního a Túatha Dé Danann převzali vládu nad podzemním světem. Komunikaci se světem vnějším však udržovali nadále a je známo, že mnohdy pomáhali obyčejným smrtelníkům nebo propůjčili své magické schopnosti některému ze známých legendárních hrdinů, jako např. Fionnovi mac Cumhaillovi. Komunikace s vnějším světem byla možná skrze tzv. tvrze a jiná opevnění, kde se mytologické bytosti setkávali i např. při oslavě keltských svátků. Křesťanské zpracování původu těchto bytostí vypráví o tom, že tyto mytologické bytosti byly ve skutečnosti pohanskými bytostmi, božstvy, které křesťanství se svým příchodem porazilo a převzalo od nich nadvládu nad Irskem.

Od dávných dob bylo setkávání s nadpřirozenými bytostmi nedílnou součástí všedního života obyčejných smrtelníků. Při těchto setkáních bývalo důležité umět se chovat. To co se mělo odehrát mezi smrtelníkem a vílou, většinou záleželo na obrazu duše či charakteru smrtelníka. Chování takové bytosti bylo obrazem duše smrtelníka, se kterým se bytost setkala. V důsledku různých zkušeností s těmito bytostmi vznikly v irské tradici různé symboly a atributy návodů na to, jak se k těmto bytostem chovat, jak rozpoznat jejich blízkost či jak se raději vyvarovat setkání s nimi. Zde už máme blízko k charakterizaci jednotlivých bytostí, které jsou v práci zmíněny v souvislosti s účelem porovnat tradiční vnímání těchto bytostí s charakteristickými rysy, které nabyly později v období literárního obrození.

Při charakterizaci mytologických postav je nutno rozlišovat mezi vílami (fairies), božstvy (gods), legendárními hrdiny (heroes) a králi (kings). Toto rozlišení nám dává skoro shodný náhled rozdělení celé irské mytologie do tzv. cyklů – mytologický, ulsterský, fenianský a cyklus králů. Do mytologického pak náleží především vyprávění o Túatha Dé Danann (vílách), fenianský a ulsterký cycklus vypráví o osudech legendárních hrdinů a bohů a cyklus o králech vypráví o životě nejznámějších králů, tzv. High Kings (Ard-rí). Toto rozdělení je však spíše moderní tendencí dát celé mytologii přehled a chronologicky ji uspořádat. Původně totiž staré povídky takto rozděleny nebyly a dělily se spíše podle rozdílných kategorií, které nesly i ve svých názvech, např. únosy, vábení, honby, atd. Záleželo tedy na tématu povídky.

Co se týče charakterizace jednotlivých mytologických bytostí, je dnes velice obtížné dopátrat se nějakých určitých faktů nebo alespoň ustálených a jednotných atributů. Právě díky křesťanství byla spousta původního materiálu přetvořena, a tak se dnes můžeme setkat nejen s obměňujícími se rolemi a funkcemi, které v rámci celé mytologie určitá postava představovala, ale také s obměnami ve jménech, které jsou dnes známé jako tzv. triády. Tak můžeme ve trojicích vidět např. Medb, Macha a Deidre nebo Ériu, Fódla a Banba. Navíc některá božstva mají své ekvivalenty v britských božstvech – irská Brigid má svůj ekvivalent v britské Brigantia.

Víly neboli sídh (fairies) lze do jisté míry klasifikovat do kategorií. Současná charakterizace víl je dobře podána ve sbírce příběhů W. B. Yeatse *Fairy and Folk Tales of Irish Peasantry*, kde se formou svědectví venkovanů dozvídáme o zkušenostech ze setkání s mytologickými bytostmi. Yeats navíc doplňuje tyto příběhy o vlastní charakterizaci jednotlivých víl, podává výklad a význam jmen z irského jazyka a charakterizuje typické vlastnosti a podobu víl, v jaké se venkovanům obvykle zjevovaly.

Co se týče víl, pro účely této práce byl k popisu vybrát Leprechaun, Banshee a Pooka. Leprechaun patří do kategorie víl, které se nezjevují ve skupinách ale jako solitéři. Jsou typičtí malým vzrůstem, jsou pilnými pracovníky – jejich povolání je šití bot, kterým si vydělávají na živobytí a všechny mince ukládají do svého hrnce zlata, který střeží před smrtelníky. Jeho dnešní podoba je výsledkem značně popularizačních vlivů, a to zejména vlivem oslav svátků svatého Patrika, jehož symbolem se stal. Leprichaun se tak pojí se zelenou barvou, zelenými trojlístky a pitím zeleného piva. Původně však jeho oděv neměl se zelenou barvou až tolik společného. Je celkem možné, že se na jeho oděvu vyskytovala barva červená, která se symbolicky pojila s magií.

Banshee je stějně jako Leprechaun vílou patřící mezi solitéry. Její podoba je více méně stejná. Zjevuje se jako žena rodinám v souvislosti s příchodem smrti. V irské tradici má za úkol předvídat smrt v rodině. Pokud se zjeví některému členovi nebo ji některý z nich uslyší kvílet (plakat), věští to jistý příchod smrti některého člena. Některé tradice byly však obměněny, a tak je možné, že v jedné době se mohla zjevovat spíše po smrti nebožtíka než před ní. Také se říkalo, že ve skutečnosti byla

spíše jen slyšet pro svůj charakteristický pláč, který byl v minulosti převzat jako součást pohřebního ceremoniálu. V dnešní době vlivem popularizačních tendencí získává Banshee až téměř hororové atributy. Někdy se její role natolik oddaluje té původní, že může vyznít až téměř komicky, např. v hollywoodských filmových zpracováních.

Pooka je naopak bytostí velmi proměnlivého vzezření. Je doloženo z povídek venkovanů, že jeho podoba může připomínat hned několik variant. Ta nejčastější se váže i na samotný význam jeho jména, a to kozel. Je ale doloženo, že byl spatřen i jako osel, býk nebo dokonce orel. Pooka se váže ke svátku Samhain, kdy se slavil příchod zimy a který je také svátkem všech zesnulých. Je to svátek ze všech nejsmutnější a i samotné víly propadají smutku. V souvislosti s Pooka byla praktikována jedna tradice, která měla lidem zajistit do jisté míry blahobyt. Lidé z hrabství Leinster se scházeli pod vrcholkem hory, kde Pooka sídlil, aby jim poskytl radu ohledně hospodaření. Z tohoto důvodu měl Pooka odedávna jednu lidskou vlastnost, kterou se lišil od ostatních víl, a to lidský hlas. Křesťanská tradice později tento zvyk trochu pozměnila, lidé se nescházeli pro radu, ale nechávali u úpatí vrcholku pro Pooku dary, a tak si zajistili zpětnou pomoc.

Mezi další bytosti patří ty, které lze zahrnout pod legendární hrdiny irské tradice. V tého oblasti se už od dávných dob hovoří o spekulacích ohledně původu hrdinů. Nelze totiž spolehlivě určit, zda jejich původ je založen na čisté historii nebo zda se v jejich původu neodrážejí spíše božské kořeny. Víme, že hrdina Cú Chulainn je obdařen neskutečnou silou, která mu mnohokrát zajistí vítězství v bitvách proti Connachtu. Fíonn Mac Cumhaill je naopak obdařen chytrostí a schopností předvídat blížícího se nepřítele. Z příběhu o Cú Chulainnovi ten nejznámější vypráví o tom, jak Cú Chulainn získal své jméno. Jeho původní jméno bylo Sétanta, ale jednou při návštěvě pevnosti kováře Culana musel usmrtit jeho hrozivého psa, aby se dostal do domu. Svou nezměrnou silou psa přepral a tak mu bylo dáno jméno Cú Chulainn (the hound of Culann). Stejně jako s většinou irských hrdinů, i u Cú Chualainna lze hledat původ jak v aristokratických, tak i božských kořenech. Byl synem boha světla Lúga a sestry či dcery (není díky nejasnostem dodnes přesněji určeno) krále Conchobara, Deichtine. Osudy tohoto hrdiny tvoří

hlavní dějovou linii Ulsterského cyklu, který zahrnuje jedno velké období pod názvem Táin. Odtud i nejznámější povídka *The Cattle Raid of Cooley*.

Fionn mac Cumhaill je dalším nejznámějším hrdinou vystupujícím v tzv. Fionském cyklu, kde tvoří hlavní dějovou linii. Mezi Cú Chulainnem a jím lze hledat určité paralely, např. jejich nadpřirozené schopnosti, dvojí původ – aristokratický a božský. Paralely lze hledat i např. v literárních zpracováních jejich života. Oba cykly vypráví ve dvou povídkách o jejich zrození, apod. Fionn je synem Cumhala a Muirne, která byla pravděpodobně dcerou druida Tagda. Odtud jeho božský původ. Hlavním příběhem Fionského cycklu je odplata Gollovi za vraždu Finova otce. Cyklus také podává popis ze života Finovy armády, tzv. Fianna a jedním z příběhů je i zrada jeho manželky a útěk s hlavním vůdcem Fianny, Diarmuidem, Finnovým dobrým přítelem (*The Pursuit of Diarmuid and Gráine*).

Fionnský cyklus někdy bývá označován jako Ossianský (podle Macphersona). Součástí tohoto cyklu je i příběh o synovi Finna, Ossianovi, který se dostává do země věčného mládí – Tír na nÓg – aby tam přečkal dlouhá léta a mohl se dožít křesťanství a setkat se se svatým Patrikem. Takto může Ossian vyprávět o velkých činech fiannské armády, které křesťanství později zaznamenává do svých rukopisů právě díky vyprávění Ossiana.

Mezi čistě božské mytologické bytosti můžeme zařadit Aeguse Óga, boha lásky, který je zároveň symbolem všech mladých lidí. Legenda o něm praví, že trpěl sny o krásné mladé dívce, kterou se vydal hledat. Když přišel na místo k jezeru, zjistil, že se dívka mění v labuť. Dostal za úkol poznat ji mezi 150 dalšími dívkami, což se mu podařilo. Aby s ní mohl být, nechal se společně s ní také změnit v labuť, aby mohli společně odletět. Aengus se vztahuje k místu Brugh na Boinne, což je kultovní místo, sluneční chrám, pojící se s jarní rovnodenností. Jeho rodiče stejně jako jeho postava v irské mytologii, představují symboly plodnosti, krásy a úrodnosti.

Z irských králů byl vybrán tragický osud Suibhne (Sweenyho), který se vzbouřil proti kněžímu Ronanovi a rozbil jeho zvon na protest nesouhlasu s výstavbou kostela. Ronan, který se rozlítí, proklíná Sweenyho a odsuzuje ho k doživotnímu šílenství a vyhoštění z rodného místa. Sweeny se proto musí vydat na cestu po Irsku, jednu dobu se nalézá i ve Skotsku. Jeho příběh je bohatý hlavně díky tomu,

že poskytuje popisy důležitých míst v Irsku, jako např. Snámh-Dá-Én (At Swim-Two-Birds), což je kostel, kde podle tradice promlouval Patrik k Oisínovi.

Touto charakteristikou se uzavírá první část práce, která se soustřeďuje na tradiční pojímání irské mytologie, aby se nyní mohla zaměřit na její užití v dílech autorů přelomu konce 19. a počátku 20. století, které se souhrnně nazývá obdobím literárního obrození v Irsku. Víme, že irská mytologie byla hlavním předmětem prózy, ale na začátku obrození ještě nebylo z čeho čerpat, protože literatura se jakoby zastavila tam, kde jsme ji opustili v prvních kapitolách práce. Z celé literární tvorby byla k dispozici pouze poezie a rukopisné prameny. Próza jako taková se díky neustálým vlnám opresí a válkám či hladomoru a emigraci, nemohla vyvinout, jakoby tomu bylo, kdyby se národ vyvíjel za normálních podmínek.

Nicméně postupem času i próza našla své uplatnění a začala čerpat ze dvou zdrojů, které byly v literatuře k dispozici. Z rukopisných pramenů, které byly nejčastějším zdrojem pro spisovatele soustřeďující se ve svých dílech na irskou mytologii, a mezi venkovským obyvatelstvem, kde se tradice šířila i nadále v původním duchu ústního podání.

Takto vznikají mnohá prozaická díla, která různým způsobem podávají irskou mytologii dle záměrů autorových. Flann O'Brien spojuje svět reality se světem legendárních hrdinů pomocí překračování časových a místních hranic. V jeho knize *At Swim-Two-Birds* se mytologické bytosti ocitají v reálném světě venkovanů, účastní se karetních her či soudu, kde se sami podílejí na vývoji děje. Důležitá je postava legendárního hrdiny Fina, který zde vystupuje jako vypravěč – story-teller – který má za úkol podat venkovanům současného světa historii své hrdinské doby, ale také dává možnost jiným mytologickým postavám vstoupit do děje, což se týká např. Sweenyho (Suibhne). Finn zde vystupuje v dvojím podání. Jako vypravěč (story-teller) má poněkud komický charakter. Avšak komično se střídá s tragičnem zejména v částech, kdy Finn odmítá vyprávět ty příběhy, ve kterých sám sebe vidí jako ztroskotance. Zároveň je však poukázáno na jeho velikost a serióznost zejména při vyprávění příběhu o Sweenym. Dále se v souvislosti s Finnem autor zaměřuje na legendu o tom, jak Finn získal moudrost, což souvisí i s jeho schopností předvídat příchod nepřítele, což se projevuje nejen v rovině legendární, ale i v rovině moderního světa. V knize se tak střídá komický Finn s vážným Finnem,

z čehož nám vzniká tragikomické pojetí této postavy. Finnova recitace básně jako vlastní chvalozpěv a jeho vyprávění legendárních příběhů, které se ztrácejí v proudu řeči postav moderní doby, symbolizuje jakési zapomnění dávné hrdinské doby, avšak neustálá přítomnost Finna a dalších mytologických postav ve všech rovinách vyprávění nám tuto dobu připomínají jako nedílnou součást historie. V postavě Finna se do díla promítá neodmyslitelná charakteristika irské tradice – lidové vyprávění, kdy Finn zaujímá roli vypravěče dávných příběhů, jako tomu bylo od samých počátků historie a zároveň poukazuje na dávné příběhy tak, jak je známe v rukopisných zpracováních. Flann O'Brien sám čerpal většinu mytologie z tzv. *Acallam na Senórach.*

Další mytologickou bytostí, které se O'Brien věnuje je Pooka. Tato bytost se v knize rozděluje do dvou dalších bytostí, respektive mezi Pooka a Good Fairy (dobrou vílu). Účel takovéhoto rozlišení spočívá v užití kontrastu mezi oběma postavami čili poukázat na dobro a zlo jakožto tendenci, která byla odjakživa nedílnou součástí mytologie. V O'Brienově knize se ukazuje, že ani Pooka, ani Good Fairy nejsou vyhraněně pouze dobří anebo pouze špatní, ale že jde vlastně o komplexnější pojetí obou postav. Nicméně kontrast dobra a zla se odráží i v číselné symbolice, kde je nejdůležitějším číslem trojka. Princip triád se prolíná celou knihou a i všemi rovinami vyprávění. V souvislosti s Pooka se dá čerpat z jeho charakterizací v tradiční mytologii. Ani tam nebyl nikdy výhradně zlý, a proto lze vyvodit závěr, že ani v knize tomu tak nebude, pokud se autor snažil autenticky čerpat z tradice. Motiv dobra a zla je tedy představován těmito dvěma bytostmi. Avšak dobro a zlo se projevuje v různých formách a na všech třech úrovních vyprávění. Na té první je to kontrast mezi vypravěčem a jeho strýcem či doslova boj se strýcem, na druhé úrovni je to Trellisova novela o hříchu, kde jsou popisovány hříchy hlavních postav, např. znásilnění Peggy Johnem Furriskey. Na třetí úrovni je to pak paralela mezi trestem Sweenyho a trestem Dermota Trellise, který je na něj uvalen jeho synem Orlickem. Takto se dobro a zlo promítá ve třech úrovních děje a zároveň se stává proměnlivým. Dobré se mění v horší a špatné má snahu stát se lepším. Celkově lze říci, že v moderní rovině nejsou dány určité hranice mezi dobrem a zlem jak je to patrnější v tradičních pojetích světa, kde se

dobro vždy ukáže a zlo je vždy potrestáno. Pojetí dobra a zla tedy poukazuje na kontrast mezi úrovní tradice a moderním světem v díle Flanna O'Briena.

Poslední mytologickou bytostí v tomto díle je Sweeny. Sweeny se do děje dostává pomocí Finnova vyprávění, kde se dozvídáme o jeho zakletí knězem Ronanem. Později však se dostává i do dalších rovin vyprávění, kde je jeho hřích přirovnáván k hříchu Dermota Trellise. Pomocí Sweenyho autor popisuje následky činu, který Sweeny spáchal, a to ve formě doživotního odsouzení k levitaci čili přežívání v korunách stromů bez dovolení znovu sestoupit na zem. Účinky této levitace se odrážejí v psychickém i fyzickém mučení obou hříšníků.

Mezi další autory zpracovávající mytologii, je řazen James Stephens se svým *The Crock of Gold*. Stejně jako O'Brien Stephens sjednocuje svět reálný s mytologickým, avšak trochu odlišně. Postavy z mytologie jsou zde součástí pouze reálného světa, kde se účastní děje a rozvíjí ho. Dalo by se říct, že jsou vlastně i takovými hlavními iniciátory děje, což se týká především Leprechaunů. V díle je ukázáno, jak je důležité chovat se k Leprechaunům uvážlivě. Postavy z reálného světa jsou totiž adekvátně potrestány hned, jakmile se Leprachaunům přihodí újma ze strany smrtelníků, a to unesením dětí či ukradením pračky. Stephens tak naráží na dávné tradiční pojetí komunikace mezi světem víl a světem obyčejných smrtelníků. Na to, že je třeba vždy volit formu komunikace s těmito bytostmi, což v sobě zahrnuje i jisté pojetí dobra a zla. Stejně jako O'Brien autor do díla promítá toto pojetí světa, avšak zde se dobro a zlo promítá v jediné úrovni vyprávění a utváří tak kontrast mezi světem smrtelníků a světem mytologických bytostí. Ukáže se však, že svět smrtelníků chce směřovat k jisté nápravě, a to už jak v rovině osobní (sblížení Filozofa a jeho ženy), tak i obratem k všeobecným hodnotám jako je láska, příroda, komunikace se zvířaty, pomoc bližnímu, až nakonec dochází k celonárodnímu probuzení a obratu k vlastním tradicím. Celou tuto dějovou linii doprovází filozofická zamyšlení, která podporují hloubku úvah o světě a hodnotách lidstva neboli konkrétního národa.

V celém díle se tak promítá kontrast mezi tradicí a cizím vlivem. Tradice je tu zastoupena ve formě irského boha lásky Aenguse Óga, který zapomenut žije v ústraní v osamělé jeskyni. Na scénu tak přichází řecký bůh Pan, který nabízí mladé Caitilín život plný rozkoší a prožitků. Caitilín se nechá zlákat a odchází s

Panem. Aengus je však přivolán, aby zachránil nejen Caitilín, ale i celou zemi od cizích vlivů. Návrat Aenguse tak představuje návrat k vlastní tradici. Caitilín zde symbolizuje zemi, která se ocitla v zajetí cizích vlivů. Stephens zde užívá dalšího motivu, který se ustálil v průběhu historie, kdy Irská země začala být představována v podobě ženy, jako např. Yeatsova *Cathleen ni Houlihan*. Caitilín je tak určitým symbolem země, která se ocitá v zajetí cizího národa, což vyvolává probuzení národa a tendence zachránit vlastní zemi od pohanského vlivu.

Je důležité chápat irskou národní tradici v souvislostech, a to především historických. Dvě důležitá období, která tvoří celkový obraz mytologie, tak jak ji známe v dnešní době, odrážejí celkový obraz společnosti. Z velké části je tato společnost zastoupena venkovským obyvatelstvem, které nám podává mytologii z pohledu blízkému orální tradici. Z druhé strany tu máme literární památky, bez kterých bychom dnes asi těžko mohli nahlížet do jakýchkoliv souvislostí v komplexním obrazu celé mytologie. Celkový charakter národa, jako národ v minulosti nejutlačovanější, se promítá do tendencí silně přilnout ke svým vlastním tradicím. Toto se projevuje již po celá staletí, a proto je irská tradice tak specifická a šiřitelná i za hranicemi Irska. Jen málokterá země má tak silné kořeny tradice, že je schopná přebít i moderních způsoby života. Irská hudba, literatura a tanec se nadále praktikují způsoby, jaké byly typické před mnoha lety. Celkově tradice podléhá určitým moderním vlivům, avšak je praktikována velkým množstvím lidí a velice aktivně. Oslava svatého Patrika je dnes jedním z nejpopulárnějších svátků, a to po celém světě.

Lze tedy spolehlivě říci, že díky opresím v minulosti národa dnes můžeme toto vše zaznamenávat. Můžeme číst literaturu, kde se moderní svět pojí se světem mytologických postav. Díky popularizaci svátků se můžeme oblékat do zeleného a tančit na irské melodie. V neposlední řadě je třeba zmínit, že díky těmto útlakům, které znemožňovaly irskému národu vyvinout své literární úsilí, se o to víc posílila touha přilnout k tradici, která se nakonec stala tou nejspolehlivější zbraní národa na cestě k získání národní samostatnosti.

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Anotace:

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Rok obhajoby diplomové práce:	2013
Počet znaků:	179 028 (včetně mezer)
Počet příloh:	0
Počet titulů použité literatury:	30
Název práce v češtině:	Irská mytologie z tradičního a modernistického Pohledu

Klíčová slova v češtině: mytologie, tradice, Leprechaun, Irské literární obrození, James Stephens, Flann O'Brien, Fionn mac Cumhail, Cú Chulainn, Pooka, Suibhne, Aengus Óg, Irský venkovan.

Anotace: Cílem této práce bude zkoumat reflexe irské mytologie v dílech autorů období Irského literárního obrození (Irish Literary Revival). Práce se bude soustředit na charakteristiku mytologických postav tak, jak je představují autoři modernistické literatury, ale zároveň se bude opírat o jejich tradiční zpodobení, čímž docílí jistého srovnání obou období. První kapitola se bude soustředit na charakteristiku irské mytologie z hlediska tradičního. Bude zahrnovat charakteristiku jednotlivých postav v původním formátu, která bude v pozdějších kapitolách usouvztažněna s charakteristikami literárního modernismu. Druhá část práce se bude soustředit na období literárního modernismu a okrajově se bude zaobírat i politickými a kulturními tématy Irska, aby bylo docíleno celkového pochopení vztahu mezi tradicí a historií Irska. Literární díla, kterými se bude práce zaobírat v posledních kapitolách, budou At Swim-Two-Birds autora Flanna O'Briena a The Crock of Gold Jamese Stephense. Cílem těchto kapitol bude pokusit se čtenáři objasnit, proč a jakým způsobem tito autoři používají ve svých dílech konkrétní mytologické postavy a zároveň pokusit se analyzovat podobu a funkci mytologických postav v modernistickém duchu. Tato práce by měla sloužit jako srovnávací studie, která se pokusí analyzovat příklady užití irské mytologie v období literárního modernismu, ale zároveň se bude opírat o tradiční pojmy a zobrazení s cílem docílit celkového pochopení obrazu irské mytologie.

Anotace v angličtině:

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Total number of characters: 179 028 (včetně mezer)
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Number of works cited: 30
Title of thesis: Traditional and Modernist View on Irish
                                         Mythology

Klíčová slova v angličtině: mythology, tradition, Leprechaun, Irish Literary Revival, James Stephens, Flann O'Brien, Fionn mac Cumhail, Cú Chulainn, the Pooka, Suibhne, Aengus Óg, Irish peasant

Anotace v angličtině: The aim of the thesis will be to provide the readers with the use of Irish mythology in the works of the Irish Literary Revival. The thesis will concentrate on the modernist picture of the mythological figures with relations to the traditional one in order to provide certain comparison in the characterization and the depiction of the mythological figures in the traditional and modernist literature. The first chapter will include Irish mythology as seen from the traditional point of view. The thesis will also provide the characterization of the mythological figures in the traditional image which will be in later chapters compared with the modernist adaptations. The second part of the thesis will relate to the modernist view on Irish mythology where the political and cultural problems of the Irish nation will be slightly touched in order to provide a complex understanding in the relation between tradition and history. In the last chapters the thesis will concentrate on the particular literary works of the Irish Literary Revival, namely Flann O'Brien's At Swim-Two-Birds and James Stephen's The Crock of Gold. The goal of these chapters will be to provide the readers with an attempt to explain authors' reasons for the use of particular mythological figures as well as providing the readers with modernist characterizations of these figures. This thesis should serve as a comparative study of Irish mythology through the analysis of the mythological figures from the modernist view but relating also to the traditional point of view in the process of understanding the Irish tradition in the whole image.