Fear and Trembling did Seize Him: The Concept of Mythology as Interpreted through *Tales of the Elders of Ireland*.

by

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"I sought a theme and sought for it in vain,
I sought it daily for six weeks or so.
Maybe at last being but a broken man
I must be satisfied with my heart, although
Winter and summer till old age began
My circus animals were all on show,
Those stilted boys, that burnished chariot,
Lion and woman and the Lord knows what"
-William Butler Yeats, "The Circus Animal's Desertion", *Last Poems*

Mythology, as a general concept means a different thing to anyone, and how a "mythologist" encounters mythology is even more complicated. To compile mythology, one must make a mythology, in order to retell or criticize stories, to enter them into discussion, they must be contextualized through retelling and re-establishing, thus making the process of mythology self-consuming. One might call this process fruitless if the stories in their rich variety didn't provoke discussion and thought over their possible use as devices for creativity and thought, all wrapt in how rigidly they resist and fail our attempts to properly interpret them. Many writers concerned with mythology act as if they are merely "translating" the myth into a modern lexicon, making the story available for a contemporary audience as well as republishing and reanalyzing stories in new contexts and different lights. This doesn't nearly come close to understanding what exactly "mythologizing" does, mythology instead is a constant rewriting, reimagining and rethinking of seemingly timeless stories that seem to overflow and brim with significations, themes and concepts that seem to morph generationally and appeal to ideas new

and old simultaneously. The "significance" in many ways is found within the text as frequently narratives are retold in order to suit contemporary events and understandings. Narratives are retold to understand contemporary events in context with events of old and they are retold in order to bridge gaps and understandings between traditions that seem incredibly alien and hostile to another.

This is where the subject of my study enters, the *Tales of the Elders of Ireland* is simultaneously a new original narrative about Fenian characters from classical Irish literature, a re-compilation of Fenian narratives within the context of a "placename" text and a complete re-imagining of the Fenian characters and of mythologic Ireland, with the figure of St. Patrick acting as judge, moral advisor and interested listener to all of these things. What we find in the *Tales* is a complicated attempt to "re-mythologyze" Ireland, re-writing much of the literature, lore and narratives in order to understand how a medieval Christian Ireland can retroactively (as of the 12th century) connect with its equally legendary and equally difficult to reconcile past. To do this, we will need to completely reconstruct our concept of "mythology" in order to investigate this.

Modes of Mythic Understanding

Ever since its inception as a literary form the myth was subject to investigation. In fact the study of myth, known as "mythology" is so often conflated with the stories themselves that any real study of mythology inadvertently is prone to telling myths themselves. In order to suggest a different way of understanding mythology I would implore employing the Middle French root of the word in *"mythologie"* or the "exposition of myths." This act of "exposing" the myth gives the word a double meaning: it allows a comprehensive discussion of the myth's

themes, metaphors and ideas, while still allowing for its alternate description, as a way of highlighting the myth, revealing it and bringing out the intentions and what its symbolism conveys. Using this definition mythological criticism becomes an attempt to expose mythology for what lies behind and within the story. This also allows theorists of mythology to highlight particular aspects of myths, such as narrative voice, themes, the historical circumstances and the cultural values that are behind them.

There is also a story to the philosophers and theorists being used, with Schelling's mythological theory beginning the romantic and idealist movement to seeing mythology as not just story, but as a psychological and cultural construct of interiority, which is further moved on and amended by Freud's psychoanalytic take on the study. We then move into Bakhtin who attempts to tell the story of the emergence of the novel by discussing the qualities of epic poetry and medieval writing, which allows for us to track where exactly the *Tales of the Elders of Ireland* falls as a style within a long-running literary tradition. Finally we end this discussion of theory with Roland Barthes who brings mythology into the contemporary day, discussing myth as contemporaneous process of creating national or cultural semiotic orders that reference eternally frozen images of that culture. Succinctly put Barthes drives the conversation home, speaking on myth's ability to speak eternally and with a multitude of interpretations, making myth a contemporary and relevant topic for academic discussion, especially in how these images factor into our discourse and literature.

Schelling and the Succession Myth

Schelling establishes mythology as an artistic process that negotiates and explains an already existing theological order. Schelling defines myth as an act of poetry, noting that the

myth itself exists as an artistic creation of the period, created primarily for entertainment. However, despite myth being defined as mostly poetic, it enters into existence alongside an "articulated history of the gods" or theogony (18). This means that for the poetic myth to exist, a theological order concerning its' gods and heroes must exist as well. This follows Louis Dupré's assertion that Schelling conceives mythology as a kind of "non-supernatural revelation" emerging out of the poet rather than from a transcendental place (3). Mythology to Schelling depicts real "processes that awaken the mind to self-consciousness" (Dupré, 3) in how poets' attempt to articulate a pre-existing theological order.

Myth in this sense, emerges outwards from the poet, revealing ancient gods "arising" (Schelling, 18) from an ancient past. This ancient past, while definitely rooted in the historical moment of the poet, it is still mythical, and is thus a cognitive function. Schelling further solidifies this remark by confining myth to its "historical condition" (Schelling, 16), as in how Homer's epics refer to pre-existing deities worshiped by his contemporaries, yet his epics emerge out of him as fiction, an act of consciousness rather than history. This conception of mythology is rooted in understanding the religious cosmology that is contemporary to it. In this the myth is historized and refers to something behind it, making the myth "new" (Schelling, 18) in the process. For example, the myth of Homer thus expands on earlier theological, historical and poetic practices, moving the myth into the future. This "new" myth details the actualized progression of the history of the gods in a time when they are believed to be real. The succession myth, typified by the castration of Kronos by his son Zeus, reflects how mythology is constantly emerging and re-emerging, replacing and rewriting older traditions as they come into articulation.

In Schelling's view the constant articulation and re-articulation of mythology, is intrinsically linked to its state as "invention" (37) as well as a "historical phenomenon" (43) and as such is a creation that "proceeded from the *people* itself" (45). Myth thus emerges from the poet, but is also a historized invention that emerges from a culture as a whole. Myth then becomes a mass cognitive process that constantly re-articulates itself as a culture moves through historical moments and periods. After claiming that both philosophy and poetry have their origins in the myth, Schelling begins to describe linguistic differences in order to illustrate the poetic quality of language itself. On this lingual basis, Schelling makes the claim that mythology acts as a kind of "individual popular consciousness" (Schelling, 49) establishing mythology in its symbols not only a cultural construct, but as a way that a culture communicates and thinks.

Schelling further establishes mythology as being placed within "consciousness" (Schelling, 89). Schelling then claims that the history of the gods is one of struggle. This struggle is a succession of god after god within the consciousness of mankind. Schelling says this theogony, the actual history of mythology, is lived and experienced throughout the consciousnesses of whole cultures. This idea of a struggle to become the icon of a cultural body makes the mythic, cultural and psychic, acting as embodied features of cognition and understanding. In this Schelling makes mythology psychic, historical and cultural as a function of society, rather than a far off and dead theological system.

Freud's Unconscious and Schelling's Mythology

Schelling's theory that mythology is a function of consciousness naturally sets the practice into the domain of psychology. While it's hard to imagine much in common between the idealist philosophy of Friedrich Schelling and the psychoanalysis of Sigmund Freud, Matt

Ffytche in his book *The Foundation of the Unconscious: Schelling, Freud and the Birth of the Modern Psyche* rightly sees the connection between theories of individuated consciousness within romantic German thinking, chaining Freudian psychoanalysis to romantic and idealist ideals of the individual and the individual's interiority. This connection between romantic idealism and psychoanalysis allows us to take Schelling's cognitive interpretation of mythology and the succession myth, and intertwine it with Freudian analysis of mythology.

The middle ground between Freud and Schelling being that they both acknowledge mythology as a cognitive process and that they both view interpretation of mythology as essential to understanding consciousness within a culture of its time. This is specifically seen within "The Return of Totemism in Childhood" in its fixation on the presence of the violent father, filial rebelliousness and its aftermath with a newfound remorse and reverence towards the father. This cognitive and filial explanation of totemic-religion does well to suit a understanding of Schelling's mythological theory of succession. (Freud, 147) One can see in Hesiod's description of the castration of Cronus an overcoming of a violently tyrannical father by a son, the taking of Hera by Zeus as competition with the father's potency, and finally lamenting the age of Cronus as a golden age of man, followed by remorse at the new age with new gods. With this assertion it provides a non-teleological understanding of the succession myth, not as an overcoming towards a kind of Absolute, but as a cultural movement seated psychically and historically. The presence of God as father, God as head of family and God as an agent within the family drama that pervades myth (Freud, 151), making myth more essentially understood as a symbolic representation of family structure than as the poetic theology that Schelling proposes it is.

Within Freud's discussion of totemic rituals, one can see the presence of totem meals as well as animal sacrifice as familial rituals. The totem meal serves as both religious arrangement of a group as one body, putting the group in communion through consuming a meal together, while animal sacrifice sets the animals as "father-surrogate" (Freud, 148) making the totem a stand in for a much hated father as it is sacrificed. This is further suggested by Freud's theory of reverse-euhemerization, wherein instead of godly figures being reinterpreted as people, a dead person of significance becomes a God through an attempt of atonement. The genealogy Freud follows contains reference to the death of a primeval father, something that happened far in the past that shatters' humankind's consciousness, as well as something that man regrets and must atone for. This follows the model of the succession myth, going from from revenge against the hated father to the killing of the primeval father to the eventual deification of said father, followed by nostalgia and atonement. This model is important for understanding that a mythical story reflects cultural and societal struggles, related to familial traditions, rather than an abstract archetypical generalized and metaphysical conflict.

This tradition of the succession myth, explicitly within older theological being overturned by newer ones, featuring the death of an earlier father god and his subsequent replacement by a new theological order within a new "son-religion" is reflected within the *Tales of the Elders of Ireland*'s depiction of the transition between the pagan Finn McCool to the Christian Patrician Ireland. This can be generally found within his followers' conversion to Christianity, reinterpretation of Fenian religious, martial and cultural practices as well as a general overturning towards new forms of household and family arrangement. What we see within the *Tales* is total social reimagination, change as well as a psychic rearrangement of memory, time

and place. Within the myth earlier Irish traditions are reworked or eliminated in lieu of Christianity, which can be clearly seen in the poetic prophetic tradition that Finn McCool exemplified being reinterpreted within the lens of Abrahamic prophecy, using the middle ground of revelatory approaches to knowledge as a bridge between the Celtic and Abrahamic tradition. Finn's past, while euhemerized, is still given the place of nostalgia, the place of magic and the place of fiction.

The Geis as the Irish place of Taboo

The geis which may seem to have a straightforward relation to a kind of taboo or prohibition and it is, but the geise becomes even more complicated when one notes that it is intensely "particular" (Rolleston,137) to the individual it afflicts. Take for example Conaire, king of Tara, from *The Destruction of Da Derga's Hostel* who could not kill birds on the account that he was presumably sired by a bird and has a totemic connection to birds, making the geis entirely personal but also interrelated to familial structures, taboo law as well as his position as a chieftain, ruler and heroic personage. Conaire's geis in particular lines itself up well with the first of Freud's laws concerning the totem animal, "not to kill" (Freud, 32) it, but the matter of the geis is entirely more complex, ranging from an inability to refuse invitations to feasts to an inability to drink without the presence of severed heads, the geis is an intensely personalized and invariably mysterious part of Celtic mythology. The meaning, acquisition and position of the geis in relation to the afflicted also is variable and inexplicable, fitting itself well within the "unconscious" (Freud, 31) of that individual despite the outside supernatural punishment visited upon the character when it is violated.

The geis is further interrelated specifically to characters who are rulers, leaders or heroes and often the violation of a geis predicts the death of the afflicted, as well as being much like Freud's conception of the ruler's taboo, it exists not only to protect the ruler from physical harm in all practicality (such as: the ruler "may not encamp for nine days on a certain plain", all having to do with location and time as a means to practical protection informed by psycho-spiritual taboo) but also to allow the ruler to present themselves as godlike so that he can be so that their people can be properly dependent upon them. This fits much closer with depictions of Nuadu Necht as I will be discussing later, whereby a hero or king's physical form must be impeccable in order to satisfy the rigors for kingship. The geis while incredibly important in myths of the Ulster cycle and mythology before the movement into the 12th century is left out of many of the latter and mid-latter text, however throughout Irish writing in the middle ages its influence can be felt.

Bakhtin and the Epic as an Object of Tradition, History and Monoglossia

Mikael Bahktin's theory of mythology is focused on the style of the myth, much unlike Schelling's focus on the content. Bahktin's analysis of form describes three qualities that define the epic: the absolute past as setting, sacrosanct tradition, and epic distance that separates the text from reality (13).

Bahktin's conceives the epic as "walled off" (16), which sets it in an absolute past that is impossible to access from any subsequent moment. The epic is thus an impersonal work that displays a reverence and piety towards the subject matter, as well as the language used to describe the subject matter. The absolute past is one of monoglossia, a singularization of the narrative voice as well as the subject matter, so much so that they become one and the same. The

voice of the absolute past, according to Bahktin, is concerned with "the world of fathers, of beginnings and peak times" (15). The world of the epic is completed, inaccessible and reflects the ruling class of the time's valorization of a culture's origin. This origin is a fictionalized 'emerging' from a mythological past into the current civilization of the era, a great founding that puts all present and future events within its shadow. The epic in this conception is an object of tradition, a story composed of perfect content and perfect form so it can be preserved by the memory of the descendents of those who originally told it (18).

Bahktin's myth is a product of monoglossia, it refuses to speak any language except the one that it was originally told in. When he states that "epic language is not separable from its subject" (17) it clarifies that the language, context, characters and subject all blend into one whole. This whole is not characterized by a narrator, or several narrators, but as a speaker who orally delivers the entirety of the work in a singular voice. This sets Greek epics and intrinsically Greek, as Greek gods, demigods and heroes all speak Greek, even their Trojan antagonists when rendered by Homer speak Greek, thus setting the Greek epic as Greek. In this it becomes one voice that defines the entirety of the work as one that speaks a singular chosen language and rejects any kind of relativity or subjectivity.

The myth, as an object of tradition, becomes static and unchanging. The myth thus offers no futurity, but rather a valorization of a detached past (Bahktin, 19). The valorized past is, according to Bahktin, intrinsically "hierarchical" (15), lacking any form of relativity or discourse. This sets the myth as a genre that is primarily dictatorial, a product of monoglossia, wherein one language and one voice is selected beyond the others in order to both valorize and

complete the world of the epic. Bahktin constantly contrasts the epic with later forms, attempting to crystalize the epic's world as distinctly closed off, hierarchical and absolute.

Bakhtin's and the Medieval Text

Medieval writing to Bahktin is subjected to the three qualities of the epic to a "greater or lesser extent"(18). This sets the formal foundation of medieval writing to that of the epic, but notes on developing ideas and stylistic differences which causes the medieval epic to at points diverge. Medieval writing is intrinsically linked to the clerical, as most of the scribes of the period were priests or monks, they would of course be learned in Latin and sometimes Greek. Despite this much of medieval writing occurs in the popular language of the area, with the *Songs of Roland* being written in Old French, the *Mabinogion* being compiled in Middle Welsh, and the subject of this paper *The Tales of the Elders of Ireland* being composed in Middle Irish. Because of this medieval writing is immediately subject to polyglossia, with converging clerical and local traditions directly influencing the writing.

Medieval writing much like the epic mythologizes the text in the form of a valorized past, but in such a way that the past intermingles with the present. To use *The Tales of the Elders of Ireland* as an example, both the characters of the earlier Fenian Cycle, and characters present within medieval saints lives interact. And while this is still concerned with broadening the past, it does so in a way that brings the two into dialogue with another. In this we see Bahktin's vision of "polyglossia" emerge in a very interesting way, the poetic languages of the Fenians, the styles that predominated Ireland in the pre-Christian period come into contact with the language of the Roman church. While it is far from incorporating the full breadth of available language, we see within the *Tales of the Elders of Ireland* the incorporation of a multitude of literary traditions and

genres. The author's use of Patrician narratives, epic Fenian mythology and Irish place-name poetry in dialogue with each other. Bakhtin's assertions on medieval writing displays that despite its position as an inheritor of the epic's defining traits, there is an emerging flexibility within the style.

Openendedness and the Tales as 'Post-Epic'

The distance that the epic makes from contemporary lived experiences, according to Bahktin, is mostly caused by how its position as both an object of tradition and a device that creates an absolute past. This excludes any activity or change within it; even in the first line of Homer's *Iliad* we gain a pre-emptive vision of Achilles's rage and violence, something that cannot be stopped, changed or reconciled throughout the text. The *Iliad* as it exists can only speak of the rage and violence of Achilles, but it cannot engage in what Bahktin calls "openendedness" (11).

"Openendedness" is effectively in opposition to the project of the myth as it denies the epic's tendencies of slavish tradition (i.e., its walled off and close-minded cultural and linguistic formation) and it posits a future where the characters are not held to their positions and where characters have agency beyond warfare, dying, destiny and the machinations of the gods. This opens the work to future events, possibilities of agency as well as change and progression within the world of the text and the flux of history. "Openendedness" is so crucial because it functions as a way in which other forms of writing differentiates itself from the epic, gradually leading literature away from the genre's archaic problems. The crucial nature of "openendedness" is found within the trappings of the epic as genre, closing itself off by ending at a certain point wherein the narrative can only go in one direction and in once place. Medieval writing as a genre

that falls somewhere between the myth and the novel, thus can embody a certain degree of "openendedness" something that is perfectly established within the arc and narrative of the *Tales of the Elders of Ireland*, as a text that seeks to bring characters from a dead isolated tradition into a more contemporary setting, a text that tries to put voices from a pre-Christian past into conversation with Christian voices and as a text that has no general endpoint aside as an arena where entertainment can be had.

While the *Tales* certainly cannot be a narrative that is perfectly in line with Bakhtin's concept of the novel, in several ways it remarks towards medieval writing as a murky gray area. While the voice of hegemonic tradition remains existent in the text through the voice of St. Patrick, the text is closed to Christian Ireland and the theological realities it provides to the world of the text, the classical voices of tradition are constantly undermined through faulty memory and the quality of the tales specifically being told for "entertainment." (Dooley-Roe, 12) The theme of 'entertainment' not only carries with it Schelling's implications about myth as "posey" it also supports Bakhtin's major claim that the novel and the styles leading towards its "becoming" (Bakhtin, 5) and that is the novel's "inconclusive" nature, meaning that the stories of the *Tales* need not be incredibly weighty and can exist for the pleasure of reading the text. This sets the *Tales* at odds with other literature of its period that heavily focuses on recanting memory for the purpose of knowing history or extracting truth value from within, and while some of the stories contained within the *Tales* are told for the purpose of a didactic, many are not, existing to be recanted for pleasure and joy rather than the remembrance of a violation, battle or victory. In this we can see Bakhtin's theory of literature's "becoming", not in a harshly teleological sense,

but in a way that makes the *Tales* more intertextual and a part of a larger and more open literary movement than its contemporaries might seem to be.

Barthes' Myth as a Type of Speech

Myth as a "type of speech" is how Roland Barthes describes the practice in his essay *Mythology Today*. The myth is re-categorized as a living linguistic convention that is intimately connected to the historicity of the time as well as the culture attached to it. To Barthes, "everything can be myth, provided it is conveyed by a discourse" (217), a claim that gives innumerable possibilities to the subject of mythology, as long as it exists as a mythological form. Barthes identifies the mythological form as having a linguistic and semiotic root, particularly as what he describes as a "second-order semiological system" (223). The traditional system of semiotics involves a sign, which is split into the signified and signifier. The signified is the concept the sign represents, whereas the signifier is the form in which the sign takes. Mythology becomes a "second-order" semiological system refers to the signifier first, rather than the sign.

In referring to the signifier first, within what we shall now call the "mythical system" (Barthes, 226) we reduce the "material" of the speech involved, to a "pure signifying function" (Barthes, 223) in which language exists completely for itself and within itself. The myth in this regard is the meaning and the form at the same time, displaying both a richness of meanings and an incredible difference of reality. Mythology relies on unity of form and meaning displays the essential quality of the myth in how evokes innumerable referentiality, making both its' form and meaning arbitrary and not at all fixed. The form of myth is not a symbol to Barthes, it is a confused set of shapeless and yielding associations that serve strictly to be "appropriated" (229).

Myth functionally signifies contradictory and struggling themes, but also that this myth is functionally and effectively produced for use.

The function of myth and the reason for its' appropriation is primarily to "distort" (231) as mythology presents immense possibilities of associations that directly engage the subjectivity of the speaker. Take for example the image of Finn McCool, a character who appears with numerous associations throughout the canon of Irish literature and within *The Tales of the Elders of Ireland* as a prophetic warrior chieftain who foresees the arrival of Christianity. In Finn's wisdom, much like how Socrates is rendered in Plato's Dialogues, he can deduce the existence of an apparent monotheism that lies in relation to a Christianity contemporary to the text. This character who appears within that context is frozen "into an eternal reference"(235) allowing for a dense multitude of interpretations, rather than any direct significance or intention.

Finn McCool becomes a wise pagan who accepts the apparent reality of Christianity, a prophet and seer that references both the Irish tradition of poetic prophets and the Judeo-Christian tradition of prophecy that the author inherits. The image of Finn as a Christian prophet is entirely mythological, as the image is not only a distorted icon of an earlier theological and literary tradition, but is also in eternal reference towards the historical context of the Irish conversion from polytheism towards monotheism. This figure that vaguely gestures towards the history of the period while also over-pollution the image with a number of interpretations. One can see this image as Finn in a number of perspectives: the wise pagan, a symbol of Christian dominance over an earlier religion, or a mystic figure of heresy. All of these interpretations can exist within that image of the text, and while the work leads that interpretation towards a particular interpretation. The mythic, over-signified image points vaguely but is ornate and

over-complicated in its interpretation, the meaning is slim and direct, but how the meaning is displayed is in a form that distorts, freezes and appropriates towards its end.

Myth further obliterates reference to itself in its overcoming of an earlier order, renaming itself and shifting shape in signification. Myth as stolen speech remarks on myth's quality to both presuppose meaning before encountering form but also in its ability to remove language from context in order to use or carry the meaning into the realm of ultra-signification. Myth takes from whatever it employs in conveying meaning, take Barthes' example of the saluting black soldier (225/242), the image is appropriated not to create a symbol or statement, but rather to naturalize an image, taking it and introducing it into the mythology. The image is as earlier described, introduced into a mythological order not as the thing described but as a series of images that fits a predetermined meaning. Poetry in particular is a point of contention, with Barthes arguing that contemporary poetry in its attempt to depict the "thing in itself" and as a "murder of language" (245), so much that it rejects formal conventions of language and in essence exactly what made classical poetry mythic. Classical poetry remains mythic in that it valorizes its subject matter with its formal restrictions, creating a myth that predicates its meaning on a unity with form, creating something that achieves success through marrying meaning and form, with assumed meaning and assumed form both creating a mythic ultra-signification. Language is stolen and fastened to stagnant form that reflects the sacrosanct language of tradition, the mythological order aligns form and meaning in order to create perfectly coherent hypersignified poetry that aspires to arbitrary formal perfection. (245)

In one of his final segments of "Myth Today" Barthes addresses bourgeois mythology by relating it to a "joint-stock company" (249), a metaphor that reveals much about the nature of the

kind and type of mythology Barthes is examining. The metaphor of the bourgeoisie as a joint-stock company evokes very clearly that mythology is something that is all encompassing and something that anyone in a period can buy into, specifically by universalizing itself and maintaining control by striking itself from the society that it most prevalent within. This establishes myth as a pervasive, naturalizing and inviting process. Myth is something that like a joint-stock company one buys into and participates in, and like a joint stock company those that buy in have a vested interest in seeing its success. The universal language that a dominant culture creates provides norms that inflict all inhabitants of said culture becomes something to dream for. (253) Culturally while it is not always lived, it is something that is often aspired towards, a naturalized cultural ideal that people buy into in order to cash in on the benefits further down the line. Myth further depoliticized talks, by speaking about things rather than speaking things, the language is filled with jargon and made into a metalanguage, discussing institutions and ideas rather than materials as such. (256) In this Barthes speaks to the central question of mythology, in which it begs the reader to sympathize with its form and world, and in doing so 'buy into' what exactly is promised with the story. In speaking of "literary myths" Barthes speaks at length about the history of the novel, and that in order to interact with the medium certain ideas, rules, formal arrangements and contrivances must be accepted, and much in the same light epic poetry and medieval writing call for the same acceptance. Despite this the epic and medieval form (as spoken upon by Bakhtin) are archaic, requiring more of the reader and a different formal arrangement in order to be understood, making the task of reading mythology incredibly plural when other voices, contemporary and archaic are brought into the conversation.

But what of the plight of the reader of these many mythologies? One who spends time attempting to understand symbols and signs, who looks to find signification where there is too much for easy understanding? This question seems to plague the final segment of "Myth Today" invoking the position and character of a so-called "mythologist." This person seems to be a shadowy version of Barthes' writing the essay itself, as someone who finds false natures at every turn, one who speaks only in metalanguage and one who unveils mythology such to find something valuable and harmonious within how mythology might exist within the world. In this the mythologist turns away from others in criticism, "the language of the community" (272) strips the mythologist of any hope for a future where the lies of his period are reversed, instead turning to pessimism and fantasy. Alienated from reality such that knowledge and object become disjointed from each other, Barthes uses the example of "wine is objectively good" but "the goodness of wine"(273) being a myth as a way to understand the disjointed parallelism that mythology creates. The conclusion of this to Barthes is a reconciliation between ideology and poetry, between the magic, terror, blindness and fascination that both worlds provide, despite their staunch opposition. Barthes' solution might be found within modernist texts that both prioritize the mythic medium as well as poetic language that attempts to capture life (something the author might suggest could be found within Yeats' poetry.

Rolleston's View of Fenian Ireland

In his book *Celtic Myths and Legends* T.W. Rolleston discusses the Fenian narratives as in conversation with much of the earlier and contemporary of Ireland, adding contextual understanding to the myths but also recategorizing the myths within his own contemporary context, judging and retelling them in ways to elaborate a greater purpose. Rolleston first sets out

a chronology, establishing the Ulster cycle as having taken place at around the birth of Christ, while the Fenian stories take place around the 3rd century and are mostly preoccupied with fictive bands of warriors created to protect Ireland from foreign invaders. The Fian in this conception is somewhat of an equivalent to a warband or knightly order pledged to defend and protect the kingship of Ireland, set against a lavish fairyland with mystical and magical creatures to behold. Because of this, as well as their preoccupation with magic and nature as well as their romantic sentiment, Rolleston rates them as lacking the nobility of the Ulster cycle in their inability "to warm, to comfort and command." (Rolleston, 255). This characterization might be in fact in conversation with the partially incomplete translation of the *Tales of the Elders of Ireland* that Rolleston had access to, or due to personal preference, especially considering the tragedy of Cuchulain and his generation's obsession with the tragic as the instantly human, but interestingly enough Rolleston acknowledges the *Tales* as the "the most interesting and attractive" "relic of Ossianic literature" (Rolleston, 281) for its "love of wonder and mystery" (Rolleston, 286).

The importance of "wonder and mystery" within the *Tales* falls often onto the prevalence of St.Patrick's constant exclamations of "Success and benediction attend thee!" (Rolleston, 283) a sound of genuine appreciation as well as a constant building of themes of fascination, wonder and a genuine appreciation for the material provided. This falls in line with what Rolleston believes the genre of the *Tales* to be, light hearted "satire" (Rolleston, 289)blending "poetry, pathos and humor" (Rolleston, 284) using humor to elaborate on the differences between church figures, the Fenians and the fairies they encounter, humorously playing with the differences between each. This sets contrast to other dialogues between Ossian and Patrick whereby it

becomes what Rolleston claims to“resembl[e] those of an English miracle-play” (Rolleston, 290) claiming that the rough contrast between Patrick and Ossian in some dialogues fails to reflect the attitude of the *Tales* as “Celtic product” (Rolleston, 290) focusing on irreconcilable differences between Christianity and pre-Christian religion of Ireland rather than the “pleasant” “harmonizing” (Rolleston, 290) that occurs within the *Tales*. In this we can see two narratives on Irish mythology revealed, and we can also see different historical compilings of Irish myth particularly in the difference between the *Tales* and the Scottish *Book of the Dean of Lismore* (containing the harsh Patrick and Ossian narratives) which in just three hundred years of difference represent entirely different mythological sensibility. The harmonizing and supplementing humor and pathos of the *Tales* shifts sharply towards the “rough humour and of crude theology” (Rolleston, 290) of the Ossian and Patrick dialogues, wherein Patrick tortures Ossian with starvation in order to convert the old warrior-poet to Christianity. The shift in attitudes of this mythology shifting from the late 1200s and early 1300s towards the late 1500s only makes logical sense as both the *Tales* and the *Book of the Dean of Lismore* came about in the beginning and end of the “Gaelic resurgence” respectively, with the *Book of the Dean of Lismore* being composed around the time when Ireland would be decimated by the Tudor conquest. This historical fact divides the two myths into two drastically different periods where Irish identity can be negotiated. One where a harmonious friendship between Cailte and Patrick could be imagined and another where a “sour and stupid fanatic” starves a “poor blind giant.” (Rolleston, 290)

Rolleston theorizes that the element that stripped Celtic literature of its nobility is Christianity, that the Finn legends, in their Christianization leaves secular literature only to

"wonder and romance" (Rolleston, 296) taking the seriousness away from the myth and trivializing them. Also of note is a lack of a serious death narrative within the Finn myths, something that is never fully pinned down (as is the case of Cuchulainn) with Rolleston stating that Finn fits the 'sleeping hero type' much like "Kaiser Barbarossa" (Rolleston, 308) or alternatively King Arthur or Bran the Blessed. This connection between the Christianization of the Fenian narratives as well as Finn's presence as a 'sleeping hero' seems to be no surprise, as these figures were popular figures in Christianized mythologies, one in which Finn seems to draw parallels to, giving Cucullain more shared history with Orion or Achilles than his seemingly more medieval counterpart.

Similarly enough T.W. Rolleston was writing on Irish mythology during a revival of Irish culture and art in a time of his own, translating and interpreting archaic Irish poetry much like his contemporary and rival W.B. Yeats did. Much like our understanding and reading of the different Ossian myths, our understanding and reading of Rolleston as well as the compiler and author of the *Tales* must be met with the same understanding, that Rolleston's readings, evaluations and theories surrounding the Ossianic cycle as well as Irish mythology at large is a function of a greater project connected to the Irish literary revival, signifying to us how historically circumstanced mythological readings and interpretations are, allowing for any number of readings, especially contradictory readings within and defined by their periods. Another point to note is of Yeats' powerful connection to the dialogues between Patrick and Ossian that Rolleston so resents, with both of their careers mythically opposed to each other in many different senses, despite the fact they were both invested in Irish literary revival as well as Irish nationalism, within their literary works we can see incredibly divergent views on myth as

well as deep conflicts on material that was equally and powerfully significant to both authors. In this we can see the act of mythologizing is an act of making the over-signified archaic story that lies out afar and placing one's views, values, impressions and interpretations within it by retelling and reinterpreting it.

The Three Qualities of a Poet

The pre-Christian Irish poet was figured as particularly different within Irish society having special skills and abilities that set them as separate and distinct from Irish society at large. These three skills are defined by John Carey as being "dichetal di chennaib*",* "imbas forosnai" and "teinm laedo" (41). Each of these skills provides Irish poets with a kind of "immunity" that Carey defines as both legal and sacred. These three abilities set the speech of the Irish poet as an aesthetic art that is held both in legal and religious regard, making the speech wholly mythic and powerful within the contemporary moment of Ireland. As this type of speech was owned by any important "fili" or "high poet" in Ireland it distinctly flavors Irish poetry. This is especially pertinent within the *Tales of the Elders of Ireland* which deals intimately with the truth value of verse and the mystical and often ritualistic qualities of Irish poetry.

This can be distinctly scene within "dichetal di chennaib" or a "extempore incantation", a type of spontaneous composition that usually had to do with prophecy, intimately related to supernatural practices that involve the prophetic poems of severed heads. (Carey, 46) This form of composition is reflected in older tales, particularly within the tradition of Finn McCool. This is not only featured within the many severed heads that deliver poetry in this manner towards Finn, but Finn himself delivers this type of spontaneous poetry, especially in his attempts to discern a hidden truth at the end of one of his adventures. This poetry is magical and prophetic in

nature, but does not require any rituals or . Finn as a member of this class of intellectuals and poets draws signification to this throughout his tales which reinforces the position of the "fili" as a mystic and priestly figure. Interestingly enough "dichetal di chennaib" is the only permitted form of prophecy (according to Cormac's glossary) as "no offering to demons is necessary at it" (Carey, 48) after Patricks' arrival into Ireland, setting this spontaneous prophecy with poesy and earlier Christian traditions of divination.

The second characteristic a "fili" requires is "imbas forosnoi" or "inspiration" (Carey, 48), a kind of otherworldly "joy" that tows the line between the realms of humans and the realms of the Christian God. This as mentioned by Cormac and Patrick sets it as a strictly pagan activity, prohibited as not within the realm of human creativity, or as within the realm of grace from God.

This distinction in speech can be seen in the mythic separation of language found within Irish culture at the time, the poetic concept of "teinm laedo",(Carey, 41) or "cracking a nut" the poetical ability to discern truth from verse. "Teinm laedo" being one of the three things required of a master poet, it displays the aesthetic and linguistic qualities of knowledge within Irish culture and in that it evokes what Bakhtin calls the "language of tradition" which attempts to dictate real truths. While it can be taken either way in other works it can be strongly seen that the unknown author of the *Tales of the Elders of Ireland* attempts to use the mythic speech associated with the language of tradition in order to awaken new associations and completely change former conceptions of the Irish mythic and cultural traditions. The fili's language as a "languages of tradition" a form of speaking that is elevated and given truth value, but is subjected to the literary languages, metaphors and mythologies of the period.

The Fictive Didactics of the *Tales*

An early example of this process is encountered very early on when St. Patrick asks Cailte about a fort located to the south of their position early in their departure. The place described at first as a "fort and fine dwelling" is first described by Cailte as "the proudest place I have ever been" (Dooley-Roe, 14). This immediately relates the place to an intimated memory and with the sin of pride. This location ceases to be merely a castle, once it enters the "oral state" it becomes immediately subject to an infinitude of meanings and suggestions, those being Christian morals, qualities of a legendary pagan past as well as the memory and character of Cailte which defines the place in a unique way as well. The story in particular indicates a few things, it describes a fictive high-king of Ireland who refuses to give his three sons (who were fostered elsewhere) an inheritance. This is because the king's holdings "came not from my father, but from my own good fortune and brilliance." (Dooley-Roe, 14) Undoubtedly his sons are not pleased by this, and naturally they set out to acquire an inheritance instead of following their father's model of acquiring land for themselves. To do this the three sons plot to acquire a gift of "territory and patrimony, of land and great treasure" (Dooley-Roe, 14) by fasting before the *Tuatha Dé Danann*, the magical tribe of godlike beings that ruled Ireland in times before. The three sons are then each given immense gifts from *Tuatha Dé ,*including, magical drinking horns, immense amounts of red gold, marriage pacts, swords and all number of inheritances delivered by supernatural means. Despite this generous offer it comes with the catch of after hundred and fifty years, "destruction visited them" (Dooley-Roe, 15) destroying their holdings and causing the three brothers to return to the world of the Tuatha.

While the material is portrayed rather innocently, as a story of supernaturally gained splendor after a rejection of inheritance as a practice. This displays the historical preoccupation

with inheritance that was prevalent to the author's contemporary moment, as well as the author's categorization of inheritance with "pride". This displays the author strictly categorizing older models of direct inheritance with sins of pride, as well as the rejection of newer models of kingship with the supernatural. This new concept of Irish high kingship eschewed inheritance, as it instead viewed fortune and brilliance as qualities of leadership as claims to land. This solidifies contemporary claims of Irish leadership, while setting the tradition of bestowing gifts upon children and relatives as older, 'heathen' and sinful. We see both voices represented, however the qualification of destruction at the end of their one hundred and fifty year reign as well as the area's association with pride definitely sets the author's tone towards traditional inheritance in the negative. n that endorses newer modes of inheritance over older family based hierarchies that the Tuatha embody. These beings while immortal and magical, also represent antiquated tradition. It should be no doubt that these characters make their slow leave from Ireland into their own magical realm that while beautiful and immortal, represents a stagnant past that features none of the 'higher' Christian glories the saintly and baptized characters enjoy.

The Problem of Home and Household in the *Tales*

Oisin and Cailte's presence as 'son-figures' so much as they are inheritors of Finn's house and heritage, both blood-son and prime poet of the Fenian era and most important lieutenant and much like Oisinn, are "nobles"(*Tales*, 3) of the "*Fian"* directly inheriting the order and organization after the death of Finn. The premise of being "nobles" while anachronistic for the period of the *Fian*, signifies that both characters are not only 'in charge' but are also inheritors of Finn's legacy. We can thus take Finn to not only be a literal father, as he is to Oisin, but also as a father to Cailte and all the older Fenian inheritors met throughout the text.

Finn is in this sense the principle father figure of the mythos, and his two sons are figuratively Cailte and Oisin, who are the principle inheritors of Finn's story and mythology, and are both eventually baptised by Saint Patrick, moving to his "house" which in the metaphors of the medieval world was effectively a kind of fosterage, effectively changing fathers.

The *Acallam* spends much of its time within the text designating "household" almost blending the characters with the spaces they occupy in ways that almost ascertain their characteristic state. Much throughout the text we are greeted with patrilineal titles that intend to assert or reveal something characteristic about the character mentioned. For example the character Bodb Derg is often referred as the "Son of the Dagda" whenever he appears, revealing to us his relation to the supernatural character called "the Dagda" but also associating Bodb Derg with his father. The Dagda being one of the high gods of pre-Christian Ireland, this creates innumerable associations between Bodb Derg and Ireland's mythological past that signify much without directly telling the reader anything. This establishes the "household" to be alike the dwelling of a a family, as well as an intrinsically ideological space. Something that Gaston Bachelard writes within the *Poetics of Space* as revealing of the "intimate values of inside space" (Bachelard, 25) by the "household" that they are aligned with. Traditionally that household is completely hereditary, and much into the medieval era hereditary households would remain important within Europe. This sets the individual's values as one and with the values of the family. These values reflect where the character 'belongs', where they ideologically and cognitively are set, as well as how the character positions themselves within the world of the text. The space of the "household" and the family much reflects mythological qualities of a character and how they exist within the space of the world of the text. Of side interest is also

Bodb Derg's position as Oisin's grandfather, being the father of his mother, the sidhe woman Sadhbh remarking further on the ideological position of fatherhood rather than it being a construct of a blood relation.

The traditional position of households being mostly familial is riposted when encountered with the author of the *Acallam*'s recharacterization of Cailte's relations as now being "one of the household of Patrick" (Dooley-Roe, 88). This is a radical departure from the patrilineal familial relations of medieval Irish society, that sets "household" as more of an ideological or cultural function rather than a genealogical one. Cailte as the last of Finn's retinue is adopted from the household of Finn into the household of Patrick. This takes Cailte from the position as a hunter-cum-poet-cum-brigand into the body of the Church becoming transformed into a Christian figure in the process. The house as a the "binding" of "thoughts, memories, and the dreams of mankind" (Bachelard, 28) reflects its central position in memory and thought processes. The house in this sense is a thing that one constantly comes back to in one's dreams and daydreams. Now to consider that upon his baptism Cailte suffers a second birth, entered into the household of St. Patrick, his whole cognition must be altered, his memory and ways of thinking too are undeniably changed by the shifting of homes. Cailte's positions himself not only as successors to Finn but also as figures who enter into a generational shift from the "father-religion" (the Celtic religion practiced before Christianity) into the "son-religion" (Patrician Christianity) through his conversion to Christianity, being claimed by a different newer tradition and being changed in the process.

Lore of Place Names

One of the historically-influential genres that the *Tales of the Elders of Ireland* is derived from is the "*Dinnschenchas*" or "the lore of place-names" (Dooley/Roe, *ix*) a set of poems related to a place that tell a brief story and explain how it comes to name. This model of storytelling is incredibly prominent within Irish writing of the time, providing much of the structure to the epic poem of Cuchulain as well as making up the bulk of the Middle Irish manuscripts, the *Book of Lenister* or the *Book of Ballymote*. (Dooley-Roe, ix). Place-name literature is thus a major genre of literature, at the time when the *Tales* were composed. This practice is usually associated with legends of wandering bards, as they would craft mnemonic poems in order to navigate a mostly rural Ireland. The importance of the place-name in Irish literature, as interpreted by T.W. Rolleston is as the "hidden-treasures of heroic romance" (214), the place wherein the Ulster and Fenian cycles diverge from their larger stories in order to bring quaint tales of love, war and classical heroism. However the true purposes of these divergiances is found within Rolleston's reference to that vitally important mechanism of storytelling in oral culture, and that is "memory" (215), with Rolleston also mentioning the darkness of "forgetting" (215) something that causes the stories of these place-names to only be remembered in the communities particular to their story.

While this tradition might have a quaint association with wandering bards, it gains serious weight when considering the political climate of the period. This Ireland faced Norman invasion, the death of the High King Muirchertach Mac Lochlainn as well as the segmentation of Ireland into several distinct kingdoms and factions. Place-names take a different turn when one considers the ideological implications of retroactively determining the legend and lore of a place. This involves poets and monks in the employ of kings rewriting history from the purview of the

present as to attach numerous associations, passing the object from "silent existence to an oral state" (Barthes, 218). These place-name poems evoke Barthes' conception that any object entered into speech becomes mythical and therefore on some level ideological, as the story and language associated with the poem reflects the concerns of the poet, and his employer.

This however enters confusion when a bulk of the place names of the *Tales* do not actually exist but rather function as fabrications of literary fiction (Dooley-Roe, xxii) setting many of the definite place-names as formations entirely of "mythical speech" which despite its place as a creation of imagination still yet exists as a product of its "historical foundation" (Barthes, 218) taking the nature of interpreting and noting place names and setting it firmly in the world of semiotic linguistics, indicating something beyond itself with its evocation of place and the meanings behind it. These places are fictionalized, fake, held as products of "faulty" (Dooley-Roe, 12) memory and yet Patrick still inquires on the meaning of a place's name, the space is real in that the characters encounter it but puzzlingly enough it treads the line between fiction and reality as being a product of the Fenian's faulty memory, but also of a space within the text that is realized through the vision of Patrick.

The vision of Patrick, the vision of a "relaxed spirit" (Bachelard, 208) resembles the spectacular vision Bachelard describes the *Poetics of Space* as being the realm where vast space can illuminate "external spectacle" that "helps intimate grandeur unfold." (Bachelard, 209) Vastness to Bachelard is the uniting of vast world and vast thought, allowing for visions of the exterior world to be unified with deep internal compilation, allowing for space and thought to be united in thinking. Poetics in particular function in unifying contraries (Bachelard, 209) setting a "complex of images that deepen one another as they grow on a vast being." (Bachelard, 211)

This as being deeply involved with a discussion of Baudelaire's conception of nations as "vast collective creatures" (Bachelard, 209) allows for the poetics of vast thought as able to unite contradictory ideas and awaken "vast perspectives" and "new clarities" from the "moral world" (Bachelard, 210) which gives poetry the power to correspond between different types of grandeur, using spectacle in order to bridge between different ideals of inner life, merging separate and disparate worlds in this vast imaginative space.

The notion of memory in relation to place-names awakens the subject of memory's conversation with spatiality, the purpose of place and memory and the embodiment of characters or artifacts in relation to space and events in order to awaken critical motions of remembering. One such occurrence appears within the tales when Cailte, seperated from St. Patrick, travels on his own to "search out the hills and mounds and the heights where my companions and foster-brothers...once were with me, for I am tired of being in one place" (Dooley-Roe, 46). After Cailte announces this to his band, Patrick anoints him saying that he shall "have heaven from me, wherever be the place, indoors or out, where God puts his hand on you" (Dooley-Roe, 46) which creates an interesting tension between an older culture that highly identifies space with the death and spirits of individuals with a God that it not restricted by space. The spatiality of the text further becomes present as when Cailte approaches an area known as the "Bed of Diarmait" which is located within another area known as the "Tomb of the Sow on the Peak of Gulban" and is overwhelmed with feeling, so much that he lays by the grave of his comrade and "wept tears of flowing sorrow until both his shirt and chest were wet." (Dooley-Roe, 47) This encounter displays how deeply connected space and memory are within the world of Fenian Ireland, with Cailte remembering and re-encountering the death of Diarmait and his children by entering a

location associated with them, such that he is overwhelmed with feeling and must then recite a poem that not only gives substance to the area and the territories surrounding it, but also a story that explains the death of Diarmait and his sons. This shows a process of traveling, stopping at an area of significance, and then re-applying the significance to the area, entering it into myth by speaking of it. When Cailte speaks of an area it is not only related through his memory, the area itself becomes a spot of memory and a spot of mythology, with Cailte's recollection giving significance to said area through poetry that gives space meaning.

The importance of the "casket" of the container that holds the body, something a burial mound aptly appears as an "infinite dimension" as well as a "dwelling place" (Bachelard, 107) an immensely unknowable, yet incredibly intimate zone, one that assures to hold Diarmat, but also holds the infinite unknowable possibility of the lack of Diarmat's soul and essence. Diarmat's presence may be there, or it may not, which sets Cailte into his weeping for loss and the uncertainty of his comrade. The casket, the container bears much similarity to the importance of the "shell" or rather the "resurrection shell" (Bachelard, 135), the shell that abounds with an "interior, hidden form of life" (Bachelard, 133) reminds one of the important liveliness that is present within containers. This analysis of the shell as an embodied home or an embodied fits as it is an ancient "symbol for the human body" (Bachelard, 135) also abounds with energy, things leap and hide within their shells, metaphorically evoking lines such as "my spirit left" or "my spirit shrank" all too common to spiritual discourse, the human body as shell becomes a powerful object within spiritual discourse. When Patrick applies his hand to Cailte, blessing him with eternal life from him and the Christian God the unknowable nature and possibility of the container instead becomes capable of resurrection. This moves the locus of afterlife from the

sacred burial mound to the body of the believer, setting promise of heaven as individuated rather than being moved into the Otherworld between reincarnations, making Diarmat's death more sorrowful (his change of reincarnation shattered when Patrick enters the scene) and Cailte's need for divine protection more important (he will not spend time feasting in a remedial transitory afterlife between incarnations) which makes the importance of the burial mound as a remembrance space all the more pertinent, with the changing importance of Christianity forming and reforming places of memory even within the minds of characters that we assume to be pre-Christian in their temperment.

After leaving Diarmat's tomb Cailte encounters Derg, an old companion of his that now dwells among the *Tuatha de* with his supernatural mother, and the two enter into a odd conversation of questions and answers. Both Cailte and Derg speak events that both of whom were present for (events related to the area they currently are in) by asking each other questions pertaining to what the other would be more knowledgeable on. When Cailte asks Derg "against whom" (Dooley-Roe, 49) did he ride against in a difficult race, he is not only asking for clarification, but is giving Derg agency in telling his own story, as well as affirming the communal nature of "place-name" lore and this aspect of mythmaking. The placename gains significance through a mythological consensus held towards an area, not just the personal memories and feelings that characters hold towards space, but the significance is gained through a shared story that explains the features and nature of the space. This was all to elaborate on the mystical hill both Cailte and Derg are sitting on, a doorway to the otherworld that also was the burial ground of a powerful Fenian warrior known as "Cuinnscleo" who was king of "the Britons, the English and the French" an odd story that can only be found within the *Tales* that

would have more contemporary relevance than within the 5th century, several hundred years before Ireland could have been in contact with either the English or the French.

Following this odd exchange Derg tells the master of the hill they are sitting on, Ilbrecc of Assaroe, of the conversation the two of them just had, on which Ilbrecc invites Cailte into the mound. Cailte is then informed that Ilbrecc's otherworldly mound (sidhe) is at war with the síd of Finnachad, and in this war Ilbrecc's sidhe was being harassed for a year by a "bird with a beak of iron" (Dooley-Roe, 51) that shakes his dwelling, causing weapons and armor to fall onto its denizens. Furthermore if Ilbrecc's soldiers hurl spears at the bird, the spears will fall out of the air as a danger to the denizens of the sidhe. Ilbrecc describes this situation as a time of "raging fury and insane destruction" (Dooley-Roe, 51) which Cailte takes as a plea for help and very quickly kills the bird by throwing a "copper wand" at it. This while humorously short and anti-climatic bears a decent amount of similarity to a narrative that pertains to Finn, something that is alluded to when Ilbrecc hands Cailte a "sharp, blue-angled spear" (Dooley-Roe, 51) asking him of it and asking him which Fenian owned it. The spear in question happens to be the famous poisoned spear that Finn employed in driving Aileen, a member of the *Tuatha De* whose magical dulcimer could put mortals to sleep, from setting Tara on fire once a year. This story, from the slaying of Aileen onwards, forms a greater story that elaborates how Finn became chief of the Fenians in Ireland, completing this feat and gaining his position from Goll of Morna, his rival from early childhood, who had to pledge his loyalty to Finn or face exile. The story comes to Cailte as soon as the spear is placed in his hand, localizing the memory within direct contact with this famous mythological object. The spear and the story become intertwined, and while there are numerous and contradictory interpretations of Finn's acquisition of this spear (some say

it comes from Finn's crane skin bag, our tale links it to Fiacha an ally of Finn), the spear becomes instrumental in Finn's killing of Aileen and his rise to power, becoming an essential tool in the telling of the story. The spear is thus an entrypoint into the tale, with the purpose of the spear being catered for the odd abilities Aileen bears and necessary in order to understand Finn's rise to power, making all memories of slaying creatures with spear or 'wand' in a Fenian myth evokes the quintessential act of Finn slaying Aileen as he is retreating into the sidhe, losing his spear only to have it returned to his disciple far in the future.

The importance in how place and embodiment influence the world of the *Tales* and how it unfurls is intricately related to the Christian (and somewhat medieval) notion of they body as "shell" but also of a pre-Christian concept of the "tomb" as the home of the deceased soul. This tension describes how the *Tales* separates itself from the pre-Christian practice of place-names that ascribes meaning towards a place of death, a battle or of a historical oddity, instead placing the characters in a promised house belonging to God and His saints. The materially focused instances of the "inner immensity" the 'daydream' of the past becomes realized in the present, with the material object being essential as an artifact in drawing parallels between periods. Cailte, as a former Fenian and a current Christian, recognizes and owns his past through the spear he recognizes and claims, yet the difference remains in the re-enactment of the act, adding and editing the story once told. The spectacle becomes the space, which influences the body as an enactment and recognizable place in and of itself.

The Tales as a Myth of Succession

The move from the old religion of the Celts to the religion of Patrick appears in many ways throughout the text, from Patrick's title of "salmon of Heaven" (Dooley-Roe,5) overturning

and fitting itself into earlier traditions of Finn McCool achieving his prophetic and poetic powers from a mythical 'salmon of knowledge' deeply connected to earlier druidic traditions. Themes of religious overturning continue with Patrick's investigation into Finn McCool's knowledge of monotheism, with Cailte explaining that Finn learned of the "King of Heaven and Earth" through an event that happened on the "Hill of the Slaughter" (Dooley-Roe, 46) a site where the sons of the kings of Ireland spent time feasting and resting. This event was the discovery of the dead corpses of these sons by "Binne, the Chief Steward of Tara" (Dooley-Roe, 45) which provided the undeniable evidence of the God of Patrick by the Irish people during the time of Finn. Interestingly enough the mysterious event being read as a sign falls in line with much of what Barthes describes as mythological, a over-signified event with meaning (the Christian God is real) presupposed as the outcome.

This mythic cloud appears to haunt the text as its purpose as ordained by Saint Patrick's two guardian angels is primarily for "entertainment for the lords and commons of later times" as well as reminding Patrick that the Fenians' "memories are faulty" so that only a "third of their stories" can be told. Furthermore Patrick is instructed to inscribe them "on poet's tablets in refined language." (Dooley-Roe, 12) This call to elevate the stories of the Fenians to "refined language" and thrust them into the realm of "poets" charges Patrick's mission as an attempt to "mythologize" the tales into a new era and a new tongue much in the manner of Barthes' conception of "mythic speech." The claim to entertainment as well sets itself forth to dispel claims to truth and repurposes this earlier cultural and religious order of signification into a new order of myths in order to "save" and in order to inherit this cultural tradition. This is further supplanted by Cailte's first action after his baptism within the text, which is to use his knowledge

of lore and place in order to find Patrick a "well of pure water" so that he may "baptize the peoples of *Brega*, Meath and Usnagh" setting the action towards introducing Patrick into the land, lore and peoples of Ireland so that Christianization might occur. While the stories Cailte tells are relegated to entertainment, the action of the book is incredibly vital as the landscape that Patrick is encountering comes to life through story. The succession of the text comes in stories relegated to Patrick in how the land of Ireland is recodified and reinvented through largely fictive stories related to an Ireland that is fixed in a realm of nostalgia.

The whole texture of Irish literature is reinvented as in Cailte's stories of place, land and the traditions of Ireland is reinterpreted by his present character through his baptism. When ruminating on his old wounds and his inability to watch and join hunts after the age of Finn, Cailte tells a story of how "Seiscenn [Old Irish word for Marsh], son of Fer Dub cast" a spear at him leaving the enormous spearhead in his side, only living because of the intervention of "the King of Heaven and Earth" (Dooley-Roe, 119). Patrick then performs a miracle pulling the spearhead out of Cailte with energy from the palm of his hand, causing much pain to Cailte but removing the impediment to his prohibition from watching the hunts after his wound. What Patrick does is twofold, invoking the powers of the lord to remove a wound made non-fatal from a retroactively applied Christian god, but also invoking his power in order to remove what appears to be a kind of "geis" (Rolleston, 137) against Cailte inflicted by a wound upon him. While it is easy to say that Seiscenn's blow against Cailte prohibited him from attending hunts because it crippled and wounded him, we have seen Cailte achieve feats of strength, agility and mobility up to this mention, so it appears to be a kind of geis inflicted on him due to this conflict.

Cailte's geis bears much similarity to the geis inflicted upon the Irish king Nuada Necht or Nuada of the Silver Arm, who lost his arm after battling the Firbolgs at the Plane of Morturya, a wound that prevented his continued kingship under the traditions of the Tuatha de Danann. Nuada only was able to overcome this taboo by his acquisition of an enchanted silver arm that appeared exactly as his own arm did previously. What Patrick provides is a way in which the need of placating geis by engaging in implausible magical acts and circumventing cumbersome taboos a way out of a geis. This story from the *Tales* which appears only within the text despite calling on an older tradition heavily set in past events overturns conventional Celtic superstitions with an equally implausible but metaphysically available solution, supplanting the need for enchanted items or vigorous knowledge of taboo with religious rite and ritual, effectively taking the concept of geis and moving it into a different context ruled by Christianity rather than earlier traditions. Patrick's gesture of removing the spearhead plaguing Cailte through touch resembles how touch often can cure taboo, take Freud's example of the king mitigating a death taboo by the "remedial power of touch" (Freud, 42) through Patrick's possession of what Freud describes as "*mana*"(Freud, 19) which gives him power of Cailte's wounds and geise. "*Mana*" as a concept according to Freud is intricately associated with kingship, and in commenting on the Irish *Book of Rights*, taboo was incredibly and intimately connected to "strange restrictions" (Freud, 46) placed on the king. In Patrick's use of the kingly magic of 'contact healing' he overturns an older metaphysical tradition strongly related with kingly and heroic taboo by healing them through his saintly powers and authority. In this a distant but personal Christian God, mediated through Patrick, becomes the source and healer of taboo in the Irish world.

The *Tales* as an Exaltation of Lyric

Poetry in the early Irish world is frequently described as lyrical, being associated with oral culture and oral storytelling that while primarily prose, used short lyrical ballads interspersed throughout the narrative to immortalize characters and areas as well as express periods of high emotion. The faked "Ossianic verses" by James Macpherson further solidify the impression that the Fenian literature associated with Ossian was intended to be sung. One of the many poems of the *Tales of the Elders of Ireland* reflects this sensibility with Cailte meditating on the harsh cold night of Samhain as well as the images he recently beheld in a poem:

> 'Cold winter, a sharp wind, a fierce red stag rises.
> No warmth this night on the mountain. The stag is swift to bell.
>
> 'The stag of Slieve Aughty takes no rest,
> Listening to the music of wolves.
> 'Dark Diarmat and I, and Oscar, keen and light,
> Heard their music on a freezing night
>
> 'Well sleeps the stag in his lair,
> Shielded against the cold night.
>
> 'Today I am old, I know but few
> On icy mornings I shook my spear.
>
> 'I thank the King of Heaven above,
> That I held a host, thought tonight I'm cold.'(Dooley-Roe, 107)

This poem specifically relates to Cailte and Patrick's welcoming of Eogan the High Hospilater of the King of Ireland into their retinue, followed by the band's progress being stopped by a "great and heavy snow" as well as a "grievous cold" (Dooley-Roe, 107) that caused nature to wither and the animals to retreat. Reflecting classical Irish lyric the focus on nature as well as the importance of the speaker's voice as the old and lonesome Cailte, it not only immortalizes the moment of the verse, but mythically "freezes" the image, making this scene of a freezing night inalienable from the voice of Cailte, and particularly inalienable from the Christian Cailte that is

now speaking it, thanking the Christian God for being able to offer Eogan hospitality, despite the cold. In the moment of that poem Cailte becomes the voice of mythology relating this immense cold, one that brings to mind "lyrical synthesis" (Bachelard, 209) making Cailte into a unifier between the naturalistic poetry of pre-Christian Ireland as well as the newly found Christian disposition of contemporary Ireland. The combination of naturalistic and mythic references with the final line thanking a Christian god for one's virtues blends the themes of medieval poetry with earlier more traditional styles. It is within the imagined subjectivity of Cailte that the grand majesty of nature can simultaneously can be the object of the moral contemplation of a newly formed Christian spirituality, lending Cailte's lyrics close to the intimate thoughts and feelings of the author.

This is mirrored within the narrative *Tales of the Elders of Ireland* as many of the verses interspersed throughout have a certain performative musicality to them, as well as one of the major conversations within the work concerning the place of music within Irish culture. This conversation around music is centered on the night of Samhain, when the barriers between the mortal realm and the Otherworld were thin and the barrier between the two could be easily crossed. The occurrence of this dialogue on Samhain not only notes of the association of music with the magical and supernatural within Irish culture at the period, but it also mirrors the classic Fenian narrative of Samhain, the slaying of the faerie musician by Finn which ends the bewitching sleep-spell that Aileen placed on the people of Tara, causing its ruin each year. In this a new character that represents Irish music is encountered, a mirror to Aileen who acts in a very similar, yet entirely subversive way. This form of "otherworldly" music is in fact also employed by Cas Corach when Cailte is enlisted to kill three werewolves terrorizing the lands of a *Tuatha*

De Danann named Bairnech further on, where Corach's bardish appearance and bewitching music causes the wolves to shift out of their animal forms, into their vulnerable human forms where Cailte can kill them with his spear throw. (Dooley-Roe, 213) Cailte then remarks that he "did no more than the minstrel" (Dooley-Roe, 214) after slaying the three werewolves, crediting Cas Corach's music with their deaths. In this the bard figure is transformed form a bewitching sneak to a warrior just as Cailte, and Cailte's poetic rendering of the event further draws similarities between himself and the artistic Cas Corach, blurring the lines between bard and warrior.

This newly encountered character is that of Cas Corach represents the musical and magical within the group of major characters as he is not only a member of the *Tuatha De Danann* but is also a musician of considerable skill and fame. The music of Cas Corach puts those that listen to it into a state of "drowsiness" (Dooley-Roe, 105), similar to the music of Aileen in the traditional Fenian tales, however the music of Cas Corach is described as entirely beneficial by Patrick. This praise comes with a single stipulation, that the "magical melody of the sidhe" (Dooley-Roe, 106) not be in it, otherwise, it belongs to heaven. This stipulation changes the nature of Cas Corach's music from supernatural to the normal, that while it resembles the music of Aileen and bears the powers of it, it is not only natural, but according to Patrick is "closer to the music of the King of Heaven and Earth" (Dooley-Roe, 106) displaying an attempt to legislate music within arts appreciated by the church of the period, but also of a turning and reclaiming of a legendary music into the era of post-Christian Ireland, by heaping laurels of praise and promises of heaven towards lyric poets and musicians from Patrick which would be applicable in the contemporary moment of the *Tales'* author.

The dialogue on music is brought to great intensity when one encounters a short series of comments between Patrick and his scribe Broccán. In this short exchange Broccán muses on the music of heaven as being replicated on earth, and that it is "not proper to banish music" (Dooley-Roe, 106) because of this congruence. To this Patrick responds "I did not say that at all" referring to a prior comment on the infernal music of the sidhe and that one should "not put too much stock in it." (Dooley-Roe, 106) In this circumstance "It" can be perceived to be the mystic or infernal superstitions surrounding music, while Patrick's statement that he did not "say that at all" clarifies his positive opinion on music. This following his many blessings towards musicians that they may be the "bedfellows of kings through eternity" as well as giving them "Heaven through their poetry and art" (Dooley-Roe, 106) placing musicians and poets at an incredibly high position and even casting away doubt of artists as servants of mystical powers goes to defend the position of the poet as an augur of heaven more than anything else. Indeed, if music and poetry can give one Heaven or mimic the divine sounds that Heaven provides then one does not need to hesitate too much to realize the implications of privileging poets to this degree. As most of the cast of the *Tales* are poets, regaling stories in verse or reciting poems to elucidate feelings or impressions of a moment, the most important warrior-poet cum mystic in Irish mythology still lies unmentioned. Finn, despite being given Heaven directly in the work by Patrick, is further given Heaven and honor by his praise of Cas Corach as musician and poet. Indeed Finn's poetry as it appears throughout the *Tales* seems to frequently invoke the divine, and poetry as a whole is transformed in the process.

Patrick's praise of music and lyric poetry, while appealing to one who is interesting in the culture of pre-Christian and medieval Ireland, especially in a period where orthodox Church

dogma still opposed art rooted in the pagan, figures such as St. Bonaventure in his *Reduction of the Arts to Theology* encourage the greater adoption of art for entertainment, instruction, comfort and enjoyment into a Christian body, something Bonaventure describes in his first light short into the work. This is by no means an invitation to discuss Bonaventure's comprehensive philosophy, but is rather an indication of a greater movement within the Church body to adopt art as a constructive force rather than a wasteful one. In this Patrick speaks "myth" in a very Barthesian sense, elaborating a contentious opinion of theology within a saintly voice. The argument of Bonaventure is suspended, and as a rough contemporary to the *Tales,* affixed within the same general tradition the argument is re-elaborated without the reasoning or reality of the text, but is instead conveyed through the voice and character of Patrick, eternally associating it with the gentle but still orthodox saint. Thus even when the *Tales* praises poetry, figuring earlier characters in, we must be aware of the ideological project and the work being done upon it, moving and changing theology through the collected meta-fiction of the *Tales*.

Poetry in the *Tales* is not just an important subject for theologians and Church law, but also in how deeply poetics figure into the character of Finn McCool, and his powers of prophecy. As mentioned earlier poets maintained a privileged space within pre-Christian Irish society with the most fine examples of Irish poetry not only capturing life, but revealing some truth or future truth about it, with these poetics, except for the exception of *dichetal di chennaib* which one can assume most of the poetry within the *Tales* is, except for the poetry of Finn. Finn's power was that of the highest rank of poets, the previously mentioned *imbas forosnai*, being the archetypical bearer of this kind of prophetic poetry, however within the *Tales* these prophetic moments are rendered through the stories Cailte tells of Finn, immediately subjecting them to a kind of

inaccuracy and revision. When Finn speaks he invokes the voice of tradition speaking mythically on events in an obscure way that seeks to elucidate some kind of truth, however when Cailte speaks of Finn the relationship becomes even more complex, as a mythic speech rendering mythic speech into another series of references.

Such is the difficulty when analyzing Finn's poetry, for example the poem Finn relates after a battle with his lifelong enemies in the sons of Morna; "A peaceful church above a lake, afterwards a royal place. At times end a sanctuary in the Meadow of Shame." (Dooley-Roe, 186) This poem is undeniably cryptic, but Cailte interprets it as prophecy that the "holy and righteous ones" (Dooley-Roe, 186) would come there, predicting the very moment Patrick and Cailte are currently in, as well as divine prophecy that Patrick would even come to Ireland enters Finn into the *Tales* as not only a revelator, but as a character in conversation with the future. Finn in this moment, and throughout the text, embraces his role as the father to be overcome, the voice of tradition that defines the future and as the functional voice of a whole mythology, defining the future of itself from the past. That is how Finn is used in the narrative for sure, as the usher of Patrick's legacy into Ireland in order to proclaim a kind of unity between a pagan past and a Christian present, effectively rewriting the whole tradition. Finn becomes the absolute object of mythology in this moment, becoming an object of use that transforms an earlier mythological tradition into another through a murky reinterpretation of his prophetic poetry and his ability to know the future.

The End of the *Tales* and the Work of Mythology and Storytelling

The end of the *Tales of the Elders of Ireland* is two words in Latin, "*caetera desunt"* (Dooley-Roe, 223) meaning "the rest are missing" an end signifying the incompleteness that

many manuscripts of the period suffer from as it was a time of strife, a time of change and followed a time where these stories weren't always able to be told. These stories left incomplete by faulty memory, political strife, loss of proper signification or those who can understand its signification, ends with this terse Latin phrase interrupting the narrative rather than as the competing great myth of Ireland, the *Táin Bó Cúailnge* ends with a odd and puzzling didactic that accuses the narrative of being the work of "jugglery of demons", "sundry poetic fragments" and crafted for the "delectation of fools." This attitude towards the mythic work was common during the medieval Christian era, in order to get a pass from clerical hierarchy that detested the stories and what the represented, holding them as a waste of time as paltry entertainment that distracts the enlightened from the promises of Heaven, an attitude that is never once exhibited in the *Tales of the Elders of Ireland.* To my delighting ear and delighting eye never once is the myth trampled as such, the *Tales* ends much as it is for a bulk of the work with a story, a story of the "Stone of Fal" or Lia Fáil relegated to Diarmait Mac Cerbaill by the son of Finn, Ossian the great poet of the Irish mythic tradition. This moment takes place in Tara as Cailte and Ossian tell their stories to the people of Ireland, reminding them of their history, and telling their tales so they may know their land and keep its history alive, as Patrick has instructed them to do. The Stone of Fal is known to Ossian to turn accused men who were innocent white and red while it puts a black mark on men accused, signifying their guilt. The Stone when approached by the King of Ireland, it "shrieked under him" (Dooley-Roe, 223) summoning the chief waves of Ireland, the Wave of Clinda, the Wave of Tuaide and the Wave of Rudraige, crashing them into the coast to signify the true High King while the stone would roar under any false king pretending to be coronated. The would also bleed black blood when approached by a barren

woman, and bleed many-colored moisture when approached by a fertile one signifying its connection to futurity, natality and any number of stipulations that can be placed upon it. The text ends saying that a "warrior of great spirit took over the kingdom…" cryptically opening the *Tales* to even an even greater narrative, as one of the legendary figures associated with interacting with the rock is Cuchulain himself, further interest could be opened by the many fenians that lived past the time of Finn and the time of Patrick, fighting with great spirit to inherit a king.

Myth as a juncture between the dreams and` life is epitomized here, as Lia Fáil is a very real place that for a long time was deeply respected by the political aspirants for kingship in Ireland, with Conn of the Hundred Battles meeting the god Lugh there in around the 1st century CE and achieving sovereignty of Ireland through a communal meal with a 'loathy lady' showing its significance within the real history of Ireland, as well as the myths surrounding it, creating a narrative that justifies the high kingship of an island of many families and many lords under one king who bested the rest. Brian Boru the last high king of Ireland, uniting many of the free provinces during a period of Norman and Viking invasion and conquest allegedly had the Stone shake as he was coronated, signifying his true kingship and destiny as ruler, leading his country into many battles that were bloody and tragic. As of 2014 Lia Fáil has been vandalized with paint colored green and red and eleven strikes with a hammer, making its placehood and significance real enough for some damage to occur and be recorded, permanently etched onto the stone spire as long as it stands. Lia Fáil has not shaken since.

> "and the clear song of a skilled poet
> telling with mastery man's beginnings,
> how the almighty made the earth
> a gleaming plain girdled with waters;

in His splendor He set the sun and moon
to be the earth's lamplight, lanterns for men,
and filled the broad lap of the world
with branches and leaves; and quickened life
in every other thing that moved. " -*Beowulf*, Seamus Heaney

Works Cited

Dooley, Ann, and Harry Roe. *Tales of the Elders of Ireland:Acallam Na Senâorach*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. Print. Ann Dooley and Harry Roe provide the most comprehensive translation of the Middle Irish text, the *Tales of the Elders of Ireland*. Within this translation both Roe and Dooley provide needed context and background to the historical era that the text is placed in, as well as context relating to the period that the text was composed within. The text deals with the Christianization of Ireland and the conversion of Irish mythological figures, making it distinctly important in cultural and historic value. The text follows St. Patrick, accompanied by the mythical character Cailte, as he preaches throughout this early stage of medieval Ireland. The text uses this story in order to comment on contemporary theological and political issues while reinventing and recreating Irish mythology in a new and deliberate way.

Barthes, Roland. *Mythologies: The Complete Edition, in a New Translation*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2012. Print. A collection of essays by the French linguist, philosopher and literary theorist Roland Barthes, in which he discusses the semiotic nature of modern mythologies as well as how reference can create mythology and influence culture. Barthes' discussion of mythology within the essay "Myth Today" will be used to discuss mythology's relationship towards power as well as how mythology is "over-signified" language that leads to the naturalization of cultural norms. Barthes' particular notice of how myths structure norms and narratives will be brought up in examining how the *Tales of the Elders of Ireland* reaffirms and recreates normative values.

Carey, John. "The Three Things Required of a Poet." *Ériu*, vol. 48, 1997, pp. 41–58. *JSTOR*, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/30007956. Essay focused on the culture and values surrounding Irish poetry and especially the legal rights and immunities that poets enjoyed within the medieval

period. Carey also notes the three particular positions that poets employ in order to enjoy their positions of prestige, and how that cultural phenomenon applies to the greater tradition of Irish medieval literature. This discussion of poetry covers religious rituals of the pre-Christian period, commentary on traditional Irish meter as well as an explication on the religious and ritualistic qualities of this type of Irish poetry.

Bachelard, Gaston, and M Jolas. *The Poetics of Space*. , 2014. Print. Book of philosophy and literary theory by well known philosopher of science, psychoanalysis and literary theorist Gaston Bachelard that investigates the presence of space in poetry and prose as well as the poetic value that depictions of space convey. As the *Acallam* is a mobile text that pays great detail to space and distance, Bachelard's theories will prove important in discussing how the text fleshes out its world. Bachelard will primarily be used in order to discuss space in its relation to homes, houses and movement throughout the text.

Bakhtin, Mikhail M, and Michael Holquist. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011. Print. Bakhtin's theories surrounding the epic, novel and medieval writing as an intermediary between the two. Bakhtin's theories based around epic poetry will be employed in order to explain the stylistic and narrative differences that mythological texts employ in order to explain history and tradition in a way that later styles either employ or eschew. Finally Bakhtin provides a way to understand medieval writing as a stylistic midpoint between epic and novel and explore how the *Acallam* negotiates between the two.

Dupré, Louis. "The Role of Mythology in Schelling's Late Philosophy." *The Journal of Religion*, vol. 87, no. 1, 2007, pp. 1–20. *JSTOR*, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/508384.

An analysis of Schelling's mythological philosophy, especially within its position as non-supernatural revelation, displaying the greater aesthetic and theological importances of mythology as "secular revelation" as well as a function of an internal cognitive struggle rather than a greater metaphysical struggle. Dupré sets up Schelling's theory of mythology to be a kind of general theological emergence, however he uses Schelling to discuss myth and revelation in philosophical forms rather than as purely cultural or social constructions, allowing the myths to be taken more fully as philosophical and religious structures during their historical moments.

Schelling, Friedrich William Joseph. *Historical-Critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*. Translated by Mason Richey and Markus Zisselsberger, SUNY Press, 2007. The whole of Schelling's philosophy of mythology touching on its' philosophical, poetic and religious connotations. As Schelling's major contribution to the modern study of mythology, especially in analyzing mythology as a cultural object as well as a mental facility. In this series of lectures Schelling provides an invaluable groundwork to looking at mythology as psychological, literary and as a cultural artifact that a language-group employed in order to interact with the culture of their historical moment. While Schelling's philosophy direction remains within the dated tradition of German idealism and a Christian teleology of religion, in setting mythology as poetic and cognitive, Schelling allows for future criticism within more secular models.

Freud, Sigmund, James Strachey, and Anna Freud. "Totem and Taboo", *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. London: Vintage, 2001. Print. This seminal work of psychology investigating cultures outside of the European purview in the typical mode of anthropology of its time finds itself lacking, however in a study of mythology from a

cognitive basis, it follows in Schelling's tradition of taking mythology from a wholly theological and historical realm. This attempt demystifies the myth, despite any conclusions Freud draws, allowing one to use his model in order to note the psychological and cultural importance of mentions of parentage and heritage, especially within Freud's theories that coincide with Schelling's assertions of mythological progression or succession.

Rolleston, Thomas Williams. *Myths and Legends of the Celtic Race* Urbana, Illinois: Project Gutenberg. Retrieved February 29, 2019 from www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/34081 Significant collection of Irish literature with post-Freudian theory and musings. Includes a sizeable look at the Fenian narratives, especially the *Tales* within the context of greater Irish mythology and storytelling. Used mainly to explain the world and mechanics of Irish mythology and how well the *Tales* fits within that world

Yeats, William B, and James Pethica. *Yeats's Poetry, Drama, and Prose: Authoritative Texts, Contexts, Criticism.* New York: W.W. Norton, 2000. Print. Provides the epigraph

Heaney, Seamus. *Beowulf: A New Verse Translation*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 2001. Print.
Provides the epilog