



Olfactory Elements as Reflections of Celtic Mythical Worldview in Folktales and Early Medieval Literature

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Introduction

Myth is one of the most important constituent parts of culture. It helps to grasp the values and their inter-relation in a particular community. As David Leeming puts it, “myths reveal the nature of cultures” (Leeming 2003, xii). Studies on myth agreed long ago that myth is a complex and highly dynamic semantic unit that reacts to the changes of cultural environment thus introducing new values into its structure. In this way myth and its environment, i.e. culture, as if feed each other and are inter-dependent. On the other hand, since myth embraces various spheres of life, due to its complexity it becomes inert. Ivan Marazov claims that “mythological thinking is deeply conservative [hence] determines the traditional character of the images and motifs that appear in the art” (Marazov 2011, 135). To put it otherwise, the plane of expression of myth is stable and hardly susceptible to the influence of other cultural systems though interpretation of its figurative elements may vary. This leads to the assumption that the figurative level of myth expression contains constant constructions of elements which constitute the core of certain myths.

One of the first scholars to have noticed such a peculiarity of a mythical discourse was A. G. van Hamel who also introduced the term *mytheme* to refer to the crucial complex of images or characters which constitute the structural framework of a particular myth (cf. van Hamel 1934, 11). A similar deconstructive technique was later adopted by Claude Levi-Strauss who laid great emphasis not on the constituent elements but on their interrelation as for him a *mytheme* is a “bundle of relations” (Levi-Strauss 1955, 431). In other words, he derived the essence of myth from the combination of elements which reoccur in different variants of myth. It is logical to expect that a semantic homogeneity of a *mytheme* is determined by its cultural environment, i.e. it “attracts” only such elements whose interrelations are culturally acceptable. The constituents of a *mytheme* may

come from various conceptual categories: they may include characters, specific peculiarities of appearance, environment, etc. Undeniably, they may include such units as olfactory elements.

Every mythical system as a part of culture has such *mythemes* or, to put it otherwise, typical models of expression which do not cease existing even though they lose their religious topicality (cf. Olson 1980, 45). They rather change the environment of their functioning, for example, “migrate” from myth to literature and folklore. The relation between myth and folklore has been widely discussed in scholarly literature and raises little doubts (cf. Liszka 1989; Palménfelt 1996; Palménfelt 2008; Donald 2006; Mees 2009). Northrop Frye has rightly observed that the structural principles of literature actually reside in myth (cf. Frye 1957, 134f). Edgar M. Slotkin draws his suggestions on Archer Taylor’s ideas concerning the inter-dependence of literature and folklore and comes to the conclusion that in the Celtic tradition “oral and written literatures are bound up together and self-reinforcing” (Slotkin 1983, 213f). Following this line of thought, it seems reasonable to hypothesize that *mythemes* typical of the Celtic culture find their place in a later vernacular tradition. Hence, the study of Celtic folktales and fictional stories found in ancient manuscripts might reveal new perspectives of the Celtic mythical thought.

By all means it would be naïve to maintain that a *mytheme* registered in later times has remained absolutely unaltered – under the influence of ever changing cultural environment even such rigid constructs “crumble” and “accept” new units of significance. Nevertheless, the change of a *mytheme* is a long process which might be observed by examining the details and functions of a *mytheme* in various types of a literary tradition. To illustrate the mechanism of *mytheme* construction, migration and operation, the author of the present paper has set out the aim to characterize the role of olfactory elements as possible constituents of native Celtic *mythemes* in Celtic folktales, mythical narratives and medieval literature. For the aim to be achieved the following tasks have been set out:

- to determine the governing principles of the Celtic mythical worldview thus “distilling” essential Celtic *mythemes*;
- to designate the functioning of olfactory elements as *mytheme* constituents in Celtic folktales and mythical narratives;
- to discuss the significance of olfactory elements as inherited *mytheme* constituents in medieval fiction.

The analytical-comparative method has been applied in the research.

Fundamentals of Celtic Mythical Thought

Before starting analyzing the extrapolations of Celtic mythical models in a vernacular tradition it is important to briefly introduce the main issues regarding the Celtic mythical perspective. One of the fundamental differences between Celtic mythology and, for example, a well attested classical mythical tradition is absence

of a functionally organized pantheon of gods and goddesses. In Sjoestedt's way of thought, a single Roman deity may represent a number of local Celtic gods whose functions only partially coincide with those of the Roman 'label' god (cf. Sjoestedt 2000, 15). Green puts it even further when she discusses Celtic preoccupation of warfare. She thinks that Celts did not have a functional war god but what they had were really tribal protectors in a war aspect (cf. Green 2011, 101). To put it in another way, Celts had a holistic approach to their divinities – tribe protectors were to guarantee safety from enemies, diseases, famine, etc.

Sjoestedt introduced the idea that Celtic goddess bear local character, whereas gods – tribal responsibilities (cf. Sjoestedt 2000, 24). In other words, goddesses were related with land and nature, while gods stood for the social order of a particular community. It is possible to arrive at the conclusion then that goddesses were functionally isomorphic even though they were cherished by different Celtic tribes and bore different names. Green notices that Celts were especially concerned about fertility and the divine figure which represents this aspect of life is the Mother Goddess (or the Great Goddess) (cf. Green 2011, 69f). In the Celtic tradition, abundance and protection functions were undertaken by the Sovereignty Goddess who implemented them through monitoring the kingship succession. Whenever the land became bare and unfruitful it was the sign that the goddess is dissatisfied with the king, hence he must be changed. The most typical model of dealing with the Sovereignty Goddess is transformation from an ugly hag to a beautiful maiden which is usually incited by a kiss or sexual intercourse¹.

The Celtic goddess figure is inseparable from the discussion of the life and death cycle. She is the deity that is to take the deceased to the afterlife realm (cf. Lincoln 1991, 78; MacLeod 2012, 47). The goddess governs the birth-rebirth cycle and may appear as a destructive hag (cf. Stewart, Williamson 1996, 42). But this anthropomorphic shape is not the only one acquired by the goddess – she could appear as an equine creature, e.g. Epona (cf. Stewart 1990, 24). Another common zoomorphic representation of the goddess is the bird or some other flying creature, e.g. an insect. Green suggests that birds “were regarded prophetic, as having links with the otherworld, and as representatives of spirit when freed from the body” (Green 2011, 178). In general, the Celtic goddess rules the life and death spheres as she has to do with the transfer of the human spiritual essence to the otherworldly realm after the death of the body. When the goddess manages earthly affairs, she acquires an anthropomorphic shape; when she deals with the otherworldly reality she is then inseparable either from a bird or horse figure.

The Functions of Olfactory Elements in Celtic Mythical Narratives and Folktales

Without any doubts, Celtic mythemes might be well attested by comparing vernacular and archaeological data as there is hardly any source of direct information

¹ The model of Sovereignty Goddess transformation is provided in an ancient legend “Echtra Mac nEchach” (CHA 203-208). It is commonly found in folktales.

about the Celtic perception of the world. However, such a collaboration of different scholarly fields is sometimes impossible, as in the case of examining olfactory elements whose importance in structuring the worldview cannot be established or denied on the grounds of archeological findings. Nevertheless, whenever smell is mentioned in a vernacular tradition it can hardly be isolated from the mythological conception of the world.²

One of the first instances where smell appears as a narrative figure with a clear mythical signification is the tale “Wooing of Étaín” (8-9 c.), an early text that belongs to the Irish mythological cycle. It tells about a mortal woman Étaín who is a lover of an otherworldly lord Mider. Étaín offends Mider’s wife Fuamnach thus she turns the girl into a scarlet fly that has strong supernatural implications:

This fly was the size of the head of the handsomest an in the land, and the sound of its voice and the beating of its wings were sweeter than pipes and harps and horns. Its eyes shone like precious stones in the dark, and its colour and fragrance could sate hunger and quench thirst in any man; moreover, a sprinkling of the drops it shed from its wings could cure every sickness and affliction and disease. <...> while [the fly] was with [Mider] he did not take another wife, for the sight of it nourished him. He would fall asleep to its buzzing, and it would awaken him when anyone approached who did not love him. (*EIMS* 45).

It should be brought into focus that Étaín-fly performs several functions: brings abundance and overall satisfaction, heals, causes sleep and protects. On the mythological plane, all the activities are carried out by the goddess in the Celtic perspective. Hence, there is little doubt that Étaín represents a native Celtic goddess in her benevolent aspect both figuratively and functionally. Nevertheless, normally particular intentions of the goddess, e.g., providing of abundance, are represented by some concrete object such as cornucopia. Yet Étaín has no such thing – her fragrance serves as a vehicle to deliver abundance without any interruption.

The motif of smell as the source of satisfaction and plenty is reiterated in the folktale “The Apprentice Thief”. Consider:

It was a lee long time ago when ould Ireland was happy and contented <...> and the farmers had fields of wheat that it was a day’s journey to walk over, and the smell of them was a’most enough to satisfy a hungry man, if the like could be found in the kingdom <...>, barrin’ on a fast day, when <...> they used to schame it by goin’ out and sniftherm’ up the smell of the wheat, and fillin’ themselves <...> that way, till their fren’s would a’most have to tie some of them <...> with ropes, for feared they’d burst (*ICC* 207f).

² The data for the present research has been collected from several collections of Irish tales (*ICC*, *WIFR*, *MFI*, *IFFT*) as well as rich collections of ancient Irish stories found in manuscripts (*CHA*, *CRCT*, *TEI*, *EIMS*). It must be admitted that olfactory elements are rarely brought into consideration: all the instances found are discussed in the present paper.

The smell in the given episode is manifestation of an incredible fertility of land. Not only it stands for the fruit of earth but is also carried to the consumer without any labour, moreover, without even wishing it. The smell replaces the magical object bringing abundance, it is manna itself. Structurally the episode coincides with the scheme given in the “Wooing of Étaín” as well as the established mode of abundance expression in the Celtic tradition:

Source	Vehicle	Receiver
Goddess	cornucopia	people
Étaín	smell	Mider
Land	smell	people

Figurative, i.e. representative, elements vary, nonetheless, the fundamental layout of values is preserved. It is worth noting that in the folktale, smell serves as a defining element of a temporal axis. It denotes the far past time, the so-called golden age, which is qualitatively different from all subsequent ages, each of which reflects human degradation. Here, this difference is expressed in olfactory terms. Thus smell, besides manifesting the goddess-provider’s function, is also a temporal determinant.

The story about Étaín-fly is not the only instance which takes a creature as the source of smell bearing supernatural qualities. In one of his tales, Caílte tells about the bitch of the three sons of the King or Irúaith. The beast acts as a provider when she vomits precious metals and various drinks as well as a protector when she manages to guard the entire kingdom of Fian. When she is left with Finn, men notice she spreads pleasant smell:

The men closes to [Finn] thought that the fragrance coming from her was like that of a vat of mead that had been strained. To others it seemed that the odour that was emanating from her, when she went into Finn’s house, was that of a fragrant orchard (*TEI* 174).

However, when Finn gets into an argument with the sons of Úar from Ireland, the bitch reveals her destructive side: after her owner Dub chants against the invaders, the bitch “raised her tail and put a foul wind underneath them, and they flew off onto the fruitful, green-edged sea <...> so that they were thus slain and entered into Hell” (*Ibid.*, 175).

The olfactory elements employed in the episodes expose a dual nature of the animal: when the bitch is benevolent her smell is pleasant, whereas foul smell indicates her hostility and aggression. In this way, smell as an expressive device that contributes to the picture of the bitch’s character. Actually, it serves as the index of her intentions and foretells possible consequences of her activity. Here, smell does not act as the direct vehicle of impact but is a token. In other words, it is a complementary figure which helps to reinforce the theme of the supernatural power of the beast.

Foul smell as an indicator of dangerous situations is popular in the folk tradition. For example, the tale “The Spirit Horse” tells about Murtagh’s unfortunate pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Gobnait. Murtagh gets lost and meets a hag who forces him on the supernatural horse Pooka³ which brings him to destruction. The hag, besides being ugly and black in appearance and gazing with red flaming eyes has a peculiar olfactory specification – sulphurous steam rises from her mouth when she speaks (*BIL* 111). The stench that comes from the hag is indicative of Murtagh’s forthcoming death. It suggests that the pilgrim has no hope of escape.

The parallel between a hostile female character and sulphurous steam is further developed in the tale “King Mananaun”. The hero Kaytuch after having defeated Slaughter and the Hag of Slaughter is involved in a fatal combat with the Hag of the Church. She is more powerful than her companions and cannot be easily killed. She asks Kaytuch to put her into brimstone, i.e. sulphur acid, after which she raises as fresh as ever (*WIFR* 71). It proves that sulphur and sulphurous smell is a natural characteristic of the hag that represents destructive powers or, better to say, the Goddess in her destructive aspect when she stands in adverse relations with humans, especially males.

It is worth mentioning that sulphurous smell is typical not only of female characters but supernatural horses as well. To illustrate, the Pooka in the tale “Taming the Pooka” is said to be ‘breathin’ flames av blue wid a shmell o’ sulfur” (*IW* 18). This the Pooka is one of the most dangerous supernatural creatures in the region. It kills many people; the Pooka is difficult to manage until the king tames him and makes forswear his bad habits. Since then the Pooka satisfies himself with destroying drunkards only. Sulphurous smell indicates malevolent intentions of the supernatural horse as well as highlights his supernatural powers. In other words, smell helps to reflect upon the creature’s nature and character⁴.

³ The Pooka is a notorious supernatural horse of Irish folklore. The spirit usually haunts wild places and lures weary people to mount its back – when someone does so, the Pooka rises to the air and dashes people into pieces (cf. *B r i g g s* 1971, 217).

⁴ Both qualitative and functional differentiation of the types of smell marches with the distinction set in the biblical tradition. In *The Bible*, pleasant smells – scents, fragrances – are associated with rightfulness and true faith: a canonical phrase “a sweet smell to the Lord” is used in episodes describing sincere and devoted sacrifice to the Lord (Eph 5:2, Phil 4:18; Ex 29: 18, 25, 41; Lev; Ezek 20:28). Devotion and obeisance to the laws of the Lord please Him and only then he accepts offerings of people. If sinful and unrepentant mortals make sacrifices their efforts to please the Lord are fruitless and have a bad smell (Ezek 24:12). In other words, olfactory elements help to expose the nature of the Lord: he does not judge people on the grounds of their offerings, but rather judge offerings with regard to people’s behaviour. Sweet scents are also associated with the Lord Himself (Ge 8:22, 27:27; Ps 45:8); love (Song 1:3, 4:11, 7:8, 33), life (Job 14:9). Stench is inseparable from Hell (Rev 9:17-18), dead bodies (Jn11:39; Isa 19:6, 34:3) and destruction (Ex 7:18, 21; 8:14, 16:20; Ec 10:1; Isa 19:6, 50:2; Joel 2:20, Am 4:10). Interestingly, destructiveness of a horse is vividly described in *The Book of Job*: it is stated that whenever the horse smells the battle he cannot help rushing to it in great rage (Job 39:19-25). It comes out that the biblical tradition tends to associate pleasant smells with abundance and fertile relations with the divine

The Role of Olfactory Elements in Medieval Fiction

The literary tradition of the Middle Ages was a rich terrain for the growth of philosophical thought as well as figurative expression. Nourished by local mythologies fused with Christian theology and thus creating vivid stories whose aim was not only to entertain but even more to guide the readers morally, fiction inevitably acquired an allegorical character and so every narrative detail came to represent some contemplative aspect of human nature. Olfactory elements make no exception.

Medieval fictional literature keeps to the biblical approach and relates human spirituality with different types of smell. But it should be noted that rarely the scenes where smell is involved can do without some female character expressed either directly as a concrete participant of the action or as an abstract entity. To illustrate, Chrétien de Troyes in his romance “William of England” contemplates upon human nature and employs olfactory elements to better express his ideas. Consider:

[Nature] always carries sauces wit her, but one is sweet, the other bitter; one murky, the other clear; one is old, the other fresh. In one are cloves, cinnamon, cardamom, and nutmeg blended with pomegranate juice and pure balsam. The other is dreadful blend, without sugar or honey, but with scammony, bile, venom, and poison; no remedy can cure or save the person whom Nature obliges to consume it. Such nature as is in a man, such is a man <...> Nature, then, has such a great influence that she makes a person good or evil (*CRCT* 467).

The images of spices and poisonous, bitter substances help the author to determine the character of a human being. In the given extract, different types of smell reflect medieval philosophy, that is to say, they are employed on purely theoretical grounds and have no direct relation with the participants of the action – two princes raised by churls. The author uses the images of fragrant spices to maintain that as spices do not change their odour under different circumstances, so poor living conditions and churlish environment could not erase the inborn nobility of the boys. Chrétien concludes that “Nurture [was not] able to combat Nature” (*Ibid.*). Though the boys found no good example in their surroundings, their nature allowed improving themselves: they needed no interference in growing an inborn perfection just as spices do not need any measures to be taken so that they could spread their pleasant smell.

Chrétien draws a double parallel between olfactory elements and human nature. Firstly, the author uses them symbolically and claims that sweet fragrances relate to

agent, whereas stench stands for destructiveness and decay, both physical and spiritual. In the light of the biblical evidence, the usage of olfactory elements on the folk tradition does not seem to be original regarding the link between the fundamental values and figurative elements, namely, abundance-fragrance, destruction-stench. Nonetheless, the above discussed instances of smell in the Celtic vernacular tradition show close connection between smell and female characters which is absent in *The Bible*.

nobility whereas unpleasant smells signify churlishness and arrogance. Secondly, though it is not set out straightforwardly, the text still implies there is an analogous model between the behaviour of the boys and the natural characteristics of spices. In other words, the author maps together different realities. As a result, the image of spices starts functioning as a part of the scheme reflecting the freedom of natural qualities from circumstances.

The same position is adopted in the romance “Erec and Enide” when king Arthur is introduced to Enide’s parents. He notices the beauty of the girl’s mother and concludes that “what comes from a good source has a sweet fragrance” (Ibid., 82). Pleasant odours are identified with a pleasant personality as well as independence of both, smell and nature, from circumstances is highlighted as the beauty and nobility of the mother is hidden neither by age nor poverty. To come back to the Celtic mythical models and their relation with olfactory elements, it is worth noting that in Chrétien’s, i.e. a Christian author’s text, an anthropomorphic expression of creative power is erased. Instead the author offers an abstract agent – Nature – thus appealing to a creative element as such and avoiding an anthropomorphic agent so typical of the pagan tradition. Nature determines a certain character of a person as well as a certain peculiar smell of some spice: the two come from the same source thus are organized following the same principles and reflect each other.

Somewhat different narrative schemes related with olfactory elements are depicted in another Chrétien’s romance, namely, “Cliges”. The story speaks about two lovers – Cliges and Fenice – who cannot be together because Fenice is married to an old emperor, Cliges’ uncle. The girl despises the idea of adultery and asks her nurse Thessala to help her. The nurse prepares a magic potion which lulls the emperor to such a dream that he is convinced his marriage with Fenice has been consummated while actually he sleeps soundly. Thus the bride remains untouched and preserves herself to her only love – Cliges. Smell appears to be of crucial importance regarding the effect of a potion. Consider its preparation process:

Thessala mixed her potion. She added profusion of spices to sweeten and temper it, bating and blending them well, and filtering the preparation until it was entirely clear. Because of the sweet fragrance of the spices, the taste was not bitter or sharp (Ibid., 126).

The image of a potion bears a multimodal significance on the both, symbolic and mythic, planes of the story. First of all, it takes the central role in the deceit scheme. To say it other way, at the narrative level it is the agent that plays a trick on the emperor’s mind. On the grounds of metonymic relations, symbolically a potion stands for deceit itself hence its inherent bitter taste – lying and deception – is an unacceptable moral behaviour which is represented by unpleasant gustatory and olfactory senses. Sweet fragrance is used to mask distastefulness and thus hide the true nature of a potion. At first sight it seems that sweet fragrances bear negative implications suggesting their deceitful nature. Nevertheless, it is worth reminding here that the whole scheming is undertaken to protect the true love and preserve

Fenice's good name. Thus, spices and sweet fragrances come to represent security and faithfulness which overcome other moral factors. Moreover, the emperor, though a lawful husband to the girl, appears as an intruder and violator of sacred love relations because his determination to marry Fenice deprives the lovers from joy of being together.

Similar observations might be made regarding the mythological perspective, namely, the mytheme of the Sovereignty Goddess that judges upon kingship matters. When Thessala wants to give drink to the emperor she notices Cliges serving his uncle and thinks he "wastes his service by being a servant to his own disinheritance" (Ibid.). The emperor has actually usurped the throne which rightfully belongs to Cliges and Thessala, who clearly represents the Sovereignty Goddess⁵, is unsatisfied. She sets the affair so that finally Cliges receives what lawfully belongs to him: his beloved the right to whom he gets on the grounds of the laws of true love and the throne which he had to ascend according to the contemporary civil law. Syntagmatic reading of the episode suggests that sweet fragrance is used to deceive the emperor, yet paradigmatic examination reveals that it actually restores the values to their proper places under the supervision of the Sovereignty Goddess-like character.

Finally, olfactory elements appear in relation to death, especially burial rites as reflected in the medieval literature. When Fenice feigns her death in order to escape the emperor and be together with Cliges, a craftsman John prepares a tomb for her:

He placed a feather bed inside on account of the hard stone, and even more on account of the cold. And that it might be fragrant for her, he spread flowers and leaves beneath. A more important reason for this, however, was to prevent anyone from seeing the mattress he had placed in the tomb (Ibid., 161).

The preparation of the tomb is structurally isomorphic to the potion making scheme. The function of fragrance is to cover deceit but occasions are entirely different: drink was offered during the wedding feast, flowers are spread for the supposed funeral. From the mythological point of view, the both wedding and death moments are perceived of as marginal points of human existence marking the change of one's state. Likewise, in Chrétien's story, the two occasions are associated with deceit to save Fenice, firstly, from love and marital obligations to the emperor, secondly, from his presence in general. In both cases, smell appears as the agent that eliminates the ability of the right judgment of the situation. It should be highlighted, however, that a sweet nature of smell is never deprived of positive signification.

⁵ Thessala who prepares the potion shows expertise in the magic; as she uses various spices cleverly, she proves to know the secrets of nature and land as well. Even her role as the inventor and implementer of the deceitful scheme reveal her 'divine' character because she has strong intellectual powers and is able to arrange the affair the way she wishes, in other words, her decisions are irrevocable.

Another instance where sweet fragrance and spices appear in relation to funeral rites comes from “The Quest of the Holy Grail”. After Perceval’s sister sacrifices her life to cure a heavily sick lady, her companions embalm her body with costly spices and put it into a richly adorned boat so that the hand of God would take it to the holy city of Sarras (*QHG* 251). The maiden is the epitome of virtue and virginity – she has never faltered either in thought or in deed, therefore even after her death she spreads pleasant fragrance. Here, smell functions not only as the reflection of her personality but also as its extension: the maiden brought joy when alive, so the fragrance that comes from her incites pleasant senses after her death. Smell operates as the life force of Perceval’s sister; it neither ceases acting nor loses its peculiarities even after an earthly death occurs.

Conclusions

To generalize, the examination of the functions of olfactory elements in Celtic folktales, mythical narratives and literature has revealed that olfactory elements emerge in such situations which fit different representative models of the Great Goddess as depicted in the Celtic tradition. In other words, olfactory elements function as the constituents of the Sovereignty Goddess, an abundance guarantor, a divine protector and psychopomp *mythemes*. Qualitative opposition of pleasant fragrances and stench is clearly established but their significance in folktales, mythical narratives and medieval fiction differs.

In folktales and mythical narratives, pleasant smell is normally associated with natural objects thus adding to the picture of the benevolent goddess-like female characters that bring abundance and satisfaction. Sulphurous smell, in its turn, is a forced invitation to experience the supernatural destructive power of some female creature. It is interesting to note that pleasant fragrance often functions as a vehicle to bring abundance to the world, i.e. fragrance is the immediate instrument of divine activity, whereas stench rarely acquires such a meaning – it rather comes out as a token of forthcoming danger and signifies fatal consequences of the encounter with the supernatural.

The examination of the role of olfactory elements in medieval literature has revealed that a literary tradition took a turn from an immediate representation towards the allegorical philosophy of morals: fragrances are related to positive values and characteristics, whereas stench represents the opposing principals. The employment of the image of a certain type of smell varies from a purely theoretical contemplation of human nature in terms of fragrances to actual employment of smell as a means of a deceit cover. Yet, whatever the nature and function of smell is, it never “leaves” the sphere of Celtic Goddess activity.

It is difficult to say whether a qualitative distinction of the types of smell is actually Celtic or influenced by the Christian perspective derived from *The Bible*. Nevertheless, the examined cases show that smell as a figurative element perfectly inscribes into the *mythemes* related to the pagan Celtic goddess. Even if it does not directly prove the Celtic heritage, it points to the vitality of mythical consciousness

which adopts the values of different cultural-semantic systems thus creating new significances.

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Olfakciniai elementai kaip keltų mitinio pasaulėvaizdžio atspindžiai pasakose ir ankstyvojoje viduramžių literatūroje

S a n t r a u k a

Pagrindinės sąvokos: *mitema, keltų deivė, gausa, destrukcija, olfakciniai elementai, viduramžių literatūra.*

Straipsnyje aptariami olfakciniai elementai kaip mitinio keltų pasaulėvaizdžio indikatoriai folklorinėse airių pasakose ir ankstyvojoje viduramžių literatūroje. Laikomasi nuomonės, kad mitas kaip lankstus semantinis universumas atskleidžia esmines tam tikros kultūros vertes ir jų tarpusavio sandarą. Pakitus kultūrinei aplinkai, mitas kaip dinamiška prasmės struktūra transformuojasi į naujus žanrus, todėl mitinių elementų gausu folklore bei ankstyvojoje literatūroje. Tai ypač būdinga keltų tradicijai.

Keltų mitinio modelio pagrindinę ašį sudaro Deivės Motinos figūra, kuriai būdingas integralumas: jos veikla apima visas žmogaus egzistencijai užtikrinti būtinas funkcijas: gausos teikimą, apsaugą nuo priešų, ligų bei kitokių negandų. Deivė taip pat valdo su mirties ir gyvenimo ciklu susijusius veiksmus. Kaip gausos teikėja, ji siejama su žeme, kaip sielų lydėtoja anapilin pasirodo drauge su paukščiu ar arkliu. Nors keltų žodinėje

tradicijoje su kvapu susiję elementai naudojami retai, tačiau jų pasirodymo situacijos turi aiškių mitinių užuominų.

Išskirtini du kvapo tipai: malonūs aromatai ir smarvė. Folklore bei senosiose legendose malonus kvapas siejamas su gausos ir gerovės sąvokomis, kvapas gali pakeisti gėrybes arba apie jas pranešti. Nemalonūs kvapai siejami su destruktinėmis jėgomis. Reikia pabrėžti, kad blogas kvapas retai tampa mirties priežastimi, jis traktuotinas kaip ženklas, suponuojantis neišvengiamybę. Ankstyvojoje viduramžių literatūroje olfaktiniams elementams suteikiamas ryškus moralinis aspektas: malonūs prieskonių aromatai tapatinami su kilniomis asmens savybėmis, reprezentuoja pozityvias vertybes, pvz., meilę, teisėtumą, dievobaimingumą ir skaistumą. Sunku pasakyti, ar straipsnyje aptartos olfaktinių elementų funkcijos paveldėtos iš keltų tradicijos, tikėtina, kad jos galėjo ateiti iš krikščioniškosios verčių sistemos. Vis dėlto naujose prasmės struktūrose tokie elementai iliustruoja skirtingų kultūrų sąveiką ir atveria naujas keltiškų motyvų interpretavimo galimybes.

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Olfactory Elements as Reflections of Celtic Mythical Worldview in Folktales and Early Medieval Literature

S u m m a r y

Keywords: *mytheme, goddess, abundance, destruction, olfactory elements, Celtic tradition.*

The paper discusses olfactory elements as indicators of the Celtic mythical worldview in Irish folktales and early medieval literature. Myth as a flexible semantic universe reveals essential values and their inter-relation within a particular culture. When the cultural environment changes, myth as a dynamic structure of significance transforms into new genres. Therefore, mythical elements can be found in folklore and early medieval literature which is very typical of Celtic tradition.

The Goddess Mother figure stands for the core of the Celtic mythical model which features a highly integral nature: the goddess's activity embraces all the spheres necessary to guarantee the human existence: abundance, overall protection, etc. The goddess also governs the life-death cycle. As a provider she is associated with the land; as an accompanier of spirits to the afterlife realm she often appears together with a bird or a horse. Despite that olfactory elements are rarely used in vernacular Celtic tradition, the situations that they operate in have clear mythical implications.

Two types of smell are distinguished: pleasant aroma and stench. In folklore and ancient stories, pleasant smell is associated with abundance and well being; smell can substitute the goods or signify them. Unpleasant smells are related with destructiveness. It must be emphasized that stench is rarely a cause of death; it must rather be treated as a sign supposing the inevitable. In early medieval literature, olfactory elements are endowed with a clear moral aspect: fragrances of spices are identified with noble characteristics; they represent positive values, e.g. love, righteousness, faith, virginity or vice versa. It

is difficult to say whether the functions of olfactory elements discussed in the paper are inherited from native Celtic tradition. They are likely to have come from the Christian system of values. Nevertheless, when inscribed in new structures of significance, such elements illustrate correlation of different cultures and open new interpretative possibilities of Celtic motifs.

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