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THE DUAL FACES OF FEMININITY IN IRISH MYTHOLOGY: A CORPUS ANALYSIS OF FEMALE MYTHOLOGEMES

Abstract. This study investigates the dualistic representations of femininity in Irish mythology through a corpus-based analysis of prominent female mythological figures. By categorizing female mythologemes according to positive and negative archetypes, the research examines their historical significance, linguistic evolution, and ongoing relevance within contemporary cultural discourse. Employing Google Ngram Viewer and Sketch Engine, the study quantitatively tracks the frequency and semantic shifts of negatively framed figures, such as the Banshee, Witch, Cailleach Beara, and Morrigan, in juxtaposition with their positively framed counterparts: Áine, the Sidhe, Étaín, and Airmid. The findings reveal a nuanced landscape wherein certain mythologemes have undergone reclamation and reinterpretation within feminist and neo-pagan contexts. In contrast, others remain culturally marginalized or relegated to niche spheres of influence. The study underscores the dynamic interplay between language, mythology, and gender identity, illuminating how mythological archetypes adapt to evolving cultural discourses and reflect shifting societal values.

Keywords: mythologemes; Irish mythology; Irish Folklore; femininity; corpus linguistics; female figures

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ИРЛАНДИЯ МИФОЛОГИЯСЫНДАҒЫ ӘЙЕЛ БЕЙНЕСІНІҢ ДУАЛЬДІ СИПАТЫ: ӘЙЕЛ МИФОЛОГЕМАЛАРЫНЫҢ КОРПУСТЫҚ ТАЛДАУЫ

Аңдатпа. Зерттеу жұмысы Ирландия мифологиясындағы әйел бейнелерінің екі жақтылығын эмпирикалық талдауға бағытталған. Зерттеу нысаны ретінде әйелдерге қатысты мифологемаларды позитивті және негативті архетиптерге жіктеу арқылы тарихи маңыздылық, лингвистикалық эволюция және қазіргі заманғы мәдени дискурстардағы өзектілік секілді аспектілерге баса назар аударылады. Google Ngram Viewer және Sketch Engine аналитикалық құралдары пайдаланылып, негативті атрибутталған Banshee, Witch, Cailleach Beara және Morrigan сияқты кейіпкерлердің жиілік және семантикалық өзгерістері позитивті прототиптерімен (Aine, The Sidhe, Étaín және Airmid) қатар сандық көрсеткіштер арқылы бақыланады. Алынған нәтижелер кейбір мифологемалардың феминистік және нео-паганистік контекстерде мелиорация және қайта интерпретациялауға ұшырағанын көрсетеді, ал кейбіреулері мәдени тұрғыдан маргиналданған немесе тар аядағы әсер ету саласына ығыстырылып қалады. Осылайша, мифологиялық архетиптердің дамып келе жатқан мәдени дискурстарға бейімделуі және әлеуметтік құндылықтар трансформациясын бейнелеуі арқылы тіл, мифология және гендерлік сәйкестік арасындағы динамикалық қарым-қатынас айқындалады.

Түйін сөздер: мифологемалар; ирланд мифологиясы; ирланд фольклоры; әйелдік; корпус лингвистикасы; әйел бейнелері

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ДВОЙСТВЕННОСТЬ ЖЕНСКИХ ОБРАЗОВ В ИРЛАНДСКОЙ МИФОЛОГИИ: КОРПУСНЫЙ АНАЛИЗ ЖЕНСКИХ МИФОЛОГЕМ

Аннотация. В данном исследовании изучаются дуалистические представления женственности в ирландской мифологии посредством корпусного анализа выдающихся женских мифологических фигур. Категоризируя женские мифологемы в соответствии с положительными и отрицательными архетипами, исследование изучает их историческое значение, лингвистическую эволюцию и постоянную актуальность в современном культурном дискурсе. Используя Google Ngram Viewer и Sketch Engine, исследование количественно отслеживает частоту и семантические сдвиги негативно оформленных фигур, таких как Банши, Ведьма, Кайлех Беара и Морриган, в сопоставлении с их позитивно оформленными аналогами: Айне, Сидхе, Этаин и Эйрмид. Результаты раскрывают нюансированный ландшафт, в котором определенные мифологемы подверглись восстановлению и переосмыслению в феминистских и неоязыческих контекстах. Напротив, другие остаются культурно маргинализированными или отнесенными к нишевым сферам влияния. Исследование подчеркивает динамическое взаимодействие между языком, мифологией и гендерной идентичностью, проливая свет на то, как мифологические архетипы адаптируются к меняющимся культурным дискурсам и отражают меняющиеся общественные ценности.
Ключевые слова: мифологемы; ирландская мифология; ирландский фольклор; женственность; корпусная лингвистика; женские образы

Introduction

Mythology provides a foundational framework for understanding the genesis and perpetuation of human beliefs, social structures, and cultural identities. As shared narratives, myths explain fundamental aspects of existence, reinforce societal values, and shape collective memory. These narratives are constructed from *mythologemes* – fundamental symbolic units that encode and transmit cultural meaning across generations (Rubert, 2012). These recurring motifs, archetypes, and conceptual structures constitute the building blocks of mythological storytelling and reflect deeper cognitive and linguistic patterns that influence human perception and cultural expression (Selivanova et al., 2023).

A particularly salient dimension of mythologemes is their gendered representation, especially concerning portrayals of femininity within mythological contexts. Gendered discourse encompasses language, communication practices, and symbolic representations that construct, reinforce, or challenge societal understandings and expectations of gender. It refers to the ways in which gender is performed, negotiated, and reproduced through verbal and nonverbal interactions, media representations, and institutional structures. This discourse shapes perceptions of masculinity and femininity, influencing power dynamics, social roles, and individual identities, ultimately contributing to the ongoing social construction of gender. Across diverse cultures, female mythological figures are frequently depicted through a dualistic lens, manifesting either as benevolent, nurturing entities associated with fertility, healing, and wisdom, or as malevolent, transgressive figures linked to chaos, destruction, and the supernatural (Cooke, 2016). This binary representation of femininity is prominently manifested in Irish

mythology, where figures such as the Banshee, Witch, Cailleach Beara, and Morrigan embody negative mythologemes, contrasting with figures like Étaín, Aine, The Sidhe, and Airmid, who represent more positive, life-affirming aspects of womanhood. These representations reflect historical cultural perceptions and continue influencing contemporary gender narratives in literature, media, and folklore studies.

Recent advancements in corpus linguistics and digital humanities have furnished scholars with innovative tools for analyzing mythological texts with unprecedented depth and breadth. Computational methodologies, exemplified by platforms such as Google Ngram Viewer and Sketch Engine, facilitate tracking frequency, semantic shifts, and contemporary relevance of mythological figures within extensive textual corpora (Müller, 2023). These analytical tools enable researchers to quantitatively assess the persistence and evolution of both positive and negative female mythologemes, offering novel insights into the diachronic transformations of these cultural symbols. Furthermore, artificial intelligence's burgeoning role in storytelling introduces challenges and opportunities for adapting and reinterpreting mythologemes within modern digital narratives.

This study aims to investigate the dual representations of femininity in Irish mythology through a corpus-based analysis of mythologemes associated with female figures. Specifically, the research will:

1. Identify and classify female mythologemes in Irish folklore, categorizing them based on their prevalent positive or negative attributes.

2. Analyze these mythologemes' frequency, usage patterns, and semantic evolution using Google Ngram Viewer and Sketch Engine.

3. Examine the persistence and adaptation of these mythological figures in contemporary discourse, digital storytelling, and feminist reinterpretations.

By integrating linguistic, cognitive, and cultural methodologies, this research will contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how mythology constructs and reinforces gender roles, and how digital technologies reshape traditional mythological frameworks. The findings will provide deeper insights into the enduring significance of female mythologemes, illuminating their role as historical artifacts and dynamic elements within contemporary cultural discourse.

Literature review

Concept and Function of Mythologemes

The term "mythologeme" has been extensively explored across philology, folklore studies, and semiotics as a fundamental mythological and cultural discourse unit. While myths function as extended narratives deeply embedded within cultural memory, mythologemes represent condensed symbolic structures that transcend the boundaries of individual stories, recurring across multiple traditions and linguistic contexts (Rubert, 2012). Scholars contend that mythologemes encode archetypal meanings, often linked to underlying cognitive schemas that shape human perception and narrative structures (Selivanova et al., 2023).

Semiotic and structuralist traditions have influenced the definition of mythologemes as essential linguistic and conceptual building blocks of mythology. Lotman (1970) posited myth as a semiotic system wherein mythologemes serve as recurring units of meaning that sustain the internal coherence of mythological discourse. Similarly, Lévi-Strauss (1994) conceptualized mythologemes as structural models, emphasizing their capacity to link disparate cultural narratives through shared archetypal meanings. This perspective underscores the universality of specific mythologemes across diverse civilizations, as exemplified by recurring themes such as the hero's journey, the trickster archetype, and the wise elder figure.

From a linguistic standpoint, mythologemes function as *mythonyms* – words or phrases encapsulating concentrated mythological meaning. A mythologeme is defined as a fundamental, irreducible unit or component of a myth or narrative, recurring across different myths and cultures. It represents a basic element of plot, character, or symbol that, when combined with other mythologemes, forms the larger narrative structure. Mythologemes are considered the building blocks of mythical systems, representing core cultural values, beliefs, and anxieties expressed through narrative form. Analysis of mythologemes facilitates the identification of recurring narrative patterns and underlying symbolic meanings. For example, "Narcissus" is a proper noun and mythologeme symbolizing self-obsession and its tragic consequences (Rubert, 2012). Moreover, the recurrent presence of mythologemes

across varied texts facilitates comparative analyses of mythological transmission and adaptation. Contemporary corpus linguistics studies have employed computational tools to trace the diachronic evolution of mythologemes, identifying shifts in their semantic connotations over time (Müller, 2023). This methodological approach allows for a quantitative assessment of how mythologemes adapt and are reinterpreted across different historical periods and cultural contexts.
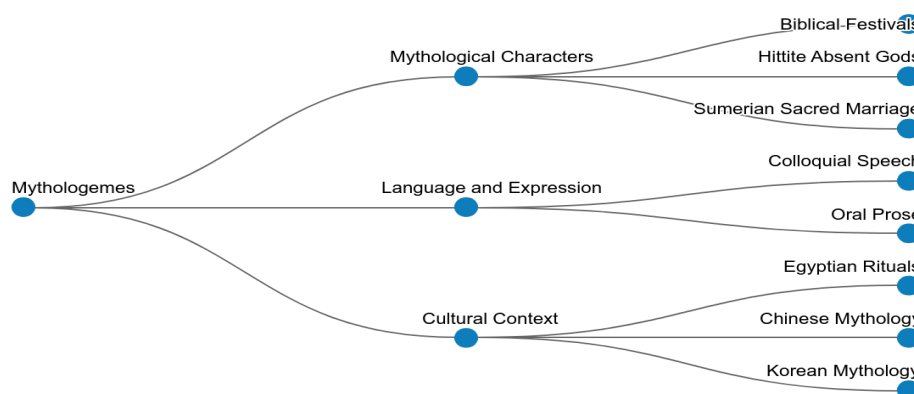

Figure 1 – Mythologemes in Cultural and Linguistic Contexts
Сурет 1 – Мәдени және лингвистикалық контекстегі мифологемалар
Рисунок 1 – Мифологемы в культурном и языковом контекстах

The conceptual map generated by Scopus AI (Figure 1) visually represents the interconnectedness of mythologemes and their diverse manifestations across three primary domains: mythological characters, language and expression, and cultural context. This structure highlights the inherently interdisciplinary nature of mythological studies, integrating historical, linguistic, and socio-cultural perspectives to provide a holistic understanding of mythologeme function and evolution.

1. *Mythological Characters and Religious Influence*

One visualization branch focuses on mythological characters, explicitly linking them to key religious and mythic traditions, such as Biblical festivals, Hittite absent gods, and Sumerian sacred marriage rituals. These elements suggest an intertextual approach to mythology, wherein the presence or absence of deities and their roles in ritualistic and communal settings intricately shape the development and interpretation of cultural narratives (Eliade, 1959). The specific reference to Hittite absent gods may reflect the inherent linguistic and theological ambiguities encountered in recovered ancient texts, where deities could have been deliberately omitted, subtly transformed, or lost to textual lacunae over time (Beckman, 2005).

2. *Language and Expression in Mythologemes*

Another significant branch connects mythologemes to language and expression, emphasizing their pervasive influence on colloquial speech and the structure of oral prose. This connection aligns with established scholarship on oral traditions, demonstrating the profound influence of mythological themes on everyday language, metaphorical constructs, and broader storytelling paradigms (Ong, 1982). The demonstrable presence of mythologemes in colloquial speech suggests their deep entrenchment within common linguistic expressions, potentially shaping idioms, metaphors, and other figures of speech derived from fundamental mythic archetypes (Lakoff, Johnson, 1980).

3. *Cultural Context and Mythological Transmission*

The final branch explores diverse cultural contexts, linking mythologemes to traditions ranging from Egyptian rituals and Chinese mythology to Korean mythology. This inclusion underscores the global nature of myth-making processes, wherein diverse ritualistic practices and regionally specific mythological systems collaboratively contribute to forming universally recognized archetypes and symbolic structures (Jung, 1951). An archetype, in the context of this study, refers to a universal and recurring image, pattern, or motif representing fundamental human experiences and deeply ingrained psychological structures, often manifesting across diverse cultural narratives and symbolic systems. These archetypes are understood as pre-conscious predispositions shaping perception and behavior, thereby

influencing the formation and interpretation of social and cultural phenomena. They operate as symbolic representations of shared human conditions, emotions, and existential concerns, facilitating cross-cultural communication and understanding. Furthermore, the explicit differentiation between Chinese and Korean mythology highlights the localized adaptations of mythologemes, wherein similar thematic elements such as creation myths, pantheons of deities, and supernatural beings – manifest in culturally distinctive forms, reflecting unique historical trajectories and social frameworks (Yang, 2005; Kim, 2010). This localized adaptation reinforces the idea that mythologemes may have universal elements, but their specific manifestations are culturally contingent.

The conceptual structure provided by Scopus AI presents a systematic and multifaceted categorization of mythologemes, elucidating their trajectory from foundational religious narratives to pervasive linguistic expressions and culturally situated embodiments. This mapping is a robust foundation for further interdisciplinary research, particularly in comparative mythology, corpus linguistics, and cognitive linguistics. Future studies could quantitatively assess the frequency and distribution of specific mythologemes across expansive linguistic corpora or analyze their dynamic role in shaping contemporary media and literary narratives.

Gender Representation in Mythology: A Corpus-Based Analysis of Positive and Negative Female Mythologemes

The representation of women in mythology constitutes a significant area of inquiry within feminist literary criticism and gender studies. A persistent theme in analyzing these narratives is the tendency to assign dualistic roles to female figures, often portraying them as embodiments of contrasting archetypes (Cooke, 2016). This binary framework, which positions women as either nurturing and benevolent or dangerous and subversive, reflects broader societal constructs of femininity. Within this dichotomy, female figures are frequently depicted as either life-giving and maternal – exemplified by fertility goddesses – or as threatening and chaotic forces, such as witches and seductresses.

Feminist scholarship has consistently revisited classical and mythological texts to deconstruct how these mythologemes shape and reinforce gender norms. For instance, studies such as Radulescu's (2014) "Stereotyping the Feminine in Greek Mythology" analyze how female archetypes often perpetuate social hierarchies, restricting women to predetermined roles like daughter, lover, or mother. Conversely, contemporary feminist retellings of classical narratives, such as Margaret Atwood's The Penelopiad, actively challenge and subvert traditional mythologemes by reinterpreting female characters through an empowering lens (White, 2024). This process of reinterpretation highlights the dynamic nature of myth and its susceptibility to shifts in cultural context and ideology.

The prevalence of this dualistic portrayal of femininity is particularly evident in the context of Irish and Celtic mythology, where female figures embody both protective and destructive forces. Negative mythologemes, such as the Banshee, Witch, Cailleach Beara, and Morrigan, are frequently associated with death, magic, and otherworldly influence (Butler, 2008; Woodfield, 2011). In contrast, positive mythologemes, including figures like Áine, The Sidhe, Étaín, and Airmid, represent fertility, healing, and wisdom (Kelly, 2022). The continued resonance of these mythologemes in contemporary discourse underscores their enduring capacity to shape modern narratives surrounding femininity and gender.

Corpus-Based Studies of Mythological Narratives: Methodology and Findings

The advancement of digital humanities and computational linguistics has facilitated the emergence of corpus-based approaches as valuable tools for analyzing mythological texts. Corpus linguistics allows researchers to quantitatively assess the presence of specific mythologemes, track their semantic shifts over time, and analyze their usage across different historical periods. By employing tools like Google Ngram Viewer and Sketch Engine, researchers can observe how the prominence of particular mythological figures waxes and wanes, reflecting evolving cultural attitudes and values (Müller, 2023).

For example, corpus analysis reveals an increase in the frequency of the term "witch" in contemporary texts, which correlates with the resurgence of feminist and neo-pagan movements (Shufelt, 2007). Conversely, the declining usage of figures like Cailleach Beara in English-language texts suggests that certain mythologemes, despite their historical significance, have become increasingly culturally niche. This observation aligns with existing research highlighting the crucial role of popular media, literature, and digital culture in reshaping traditional mythologemes and their interpretations (Magoulick, 2022). Furthermore, corpus methods allow for systematic comparisons between positive and negative

representations of women in mythological contexts. Researchers can identify the common collocates associated with individual mythological female figures by analyzing concordance patterns within large-scale textual databases. For instance, negative mythologemes such as the Banshee and Morrigan frequently co-occur with lexical items relating to death, destruction, and fear. In contrast, positive mythologemes like Airmid and Étaín tend to be linked to themes of healing, beauty, and resilience (Kenna et al., 2023). This comparative analysis provides empirical evidence to support the enduring influence of these binary representations and their continued relevance in shaping our understanding of gender dynamics.

Mythologemes in Contemporary Media and AI-Generated Narratives: Reinventing Tradition in the Digital Age

Extending beyond historical and corpus-based analyses, contemporary research has begun to explore the implications of artificial intelligence (AI) and digital storytelling technologies on the evolution of mythological discourse. AI-generated narratives, for example, frequently incorporate traditional mythologemes, demonstrating their persistence and adaptability within algorithmic narrative structures (Müller, 2023). This raises critical questions about the reinterpretation and potential commodification of myth in digital spaces. The increasing reliance on pre-existing mythological frameworks to generate new content via AI-driven processes necessitates a closer examination of how these inherited symbolic structures are being mediated and re-contextualized. In contemporary popular culture, female mythologemes are potent cultural symbols. Figures like the witch, for instance, have undergone a process of reclamation within feminist discourse, emerging as potent symbols of resistance against patriarchal oppression (White, 2024). Similarly, neo-pagan spiritual practices frequently reference goddesses such as Áine and The Sidhe. These evolving interpretations underscore the inherent fluidity of mythologemes, demonstrating their capacity to adapt and resonate within evolving socio-political contexts. This adaptability suggests that mythologemes are not static, but are constantly being re-shaped and reinterpreted to address current cultural needs and ideological struggles.

In sum, the study of mythologemes provides valuable insights into the linguistic, cognitive, and cultural mechanisms that underpin the construction and transmission of mythological narratives. While foundational semiotic and structuralist approaches have established mythologemes as elemental symbolic units, recent research in corpus linguistics and digital humanities expands our understanding of how these fundamental units evolve over time, particularly in response to technological and societal shifts. This expanded understanding includes how technology shapes myth and how mythology, in turn, shapes how technology is used.

Materials and methods

Corpus Selection and Data Collection

This study employs a corpus-based methodology to investigate the representation of femininity in Irish mythology. The primary analytical framework centers on data extracted from digitized texts sourced from Google Ngram Viewer and Sketch Engine, two widely recognized computational linguistic tools designed for quantitatively assessing word frequency and semantic evolution over time. The corpus was constructed to ensure a comprehensive overview of mythologeme development and encompassed a variety of data sources, including historical literary texts, folklore compilations, and contemporary references. This multifaceted approach aimed to capture the diachronic changes and varying interpretations of female figures within the mythological canon.

Text selection adhered to specific inclusion criteria to ensure methodological rigor and the validity of comparative analyses. The corpus comprised texts spanning the 19th to the 21st centuries, incorporating both classical mythological sources and modern literary reinterpretations. Specifically, the following criteria were applied:

- The text must contain explicit references to key female mythological figures, including those representing both positive (e.g., Áine, Étaín, Airmid) and negative (e.g., Banshee, Morrigan, Witch, Cailleach Beara) mythologemes.

- The text must be available within publicly accessible digital corpora or academic databases, ensuring accessibility and replicability.

- The text must be written in English or Irish, allowing cross-linguistic comparisons and a broader understanding of cultural variations.

Corpus Linguistics Tools and Analytical Framework

Analyzing linguistic patterns and cultural shifts in the mythologemes utilized two core computational tools: Google Ngram Viewer and Sketch Engine. Each tool provided unique analytical capabilities that contributed to a more nuanced understanding.

Google Ngram Viewer was employed to track the historical frequency of key mythological terms in English literature from 1800 to 2022. The analysis focused on identifying temporal trends in the popularity and decline of these figures, with particular attention paid to their relationship with significant historical events, feminist movements, and influences from popular culture. This approach enabled the identification of turning points and shifts in the reception and usage of these characters.

Data Analysis and Categorization

The collected corpus data underwent a dual quantitative and qualitative analysis, structured as follows:

1. Frequency Analysis: The relative occurrence of each selected mythological term was quantified to identify usage patterns over time. These frequency data were visualized using graphs and tables to illustrate temporal trends and changes in prominence.

2. Collocational Analysis: Commonly associated words and phrases (collocates) were extracted to delineate the semantic networks surrounding each figure. This analysis revealed the dominant themes and attitudes associated with each mythologeme.

3. Thematic Categorization: Building upon established frameworks in feminist literary studies, the identified mythologemes were categorized into two primary representational archetypes:

- Positive Representations: Figures predominantly associated with fertility, wisdom, protection, and healing (e.g., Áine, Étaín, Airmid).

- Negative Representations: Figures primarily linked to chaos, destruction, supernatural forces, and fear (e.g., Banshee, Morrigan, Witch, Cailleach Beara).

Results derived from these analyses were visualized using a combination of tables and graphs, highlighting historical shifts in word frequency and contextual usage. This visual representation provided a clear and accessible overview of the data, aiding in interpreting trends and patterns.

Limitations and Ethical Considerations

The present study acknowledges several limitations inherent in the methodological approach:

- The Google Ngram Viewer data is inherently limited to published literature, thereby excluding oral traditions and non-digitized folklore, potentially introducing a bias toward certain forms of expression.

- The Sketch Engine corpus may contain biases dependent on the specific sources included. Variations in source selection, particularly in terms of regional origin and genre-specific representation, could influence the generalizability of the findings.

- While the study focuses primarily on Irish mythology, the influence of cross-cultural interactions and the diffusion of mythological motifs was not extensively examined. This area presents a promising avenue for future research.

- This study involved no direct interaction with human participants, and all data sources were obtained from publicly accessible digital corpora, ensuring adherence to established ethical research standards and the protection of privacy. Using these public resources eliminates the need for informed consent and complies with institutional review board (IRB) guidelines.

Results and discussions

Therefore, we decided to take negative and positive myth images from Irish English. Table 1 below illustrates the depictions of women in a negative connotation within Irish mythology. Four distinct female appellations, Banshee, Witch, Cailleach Beara, and Morrigan, and their respective definitions are presented.

Table 1 – Mythological Images of Women in Irish Folklore: Negative Representations
Кесте 1 – Ирландия фольклорындағы әйелдердің мифологиялық бейнелері: жағымсыз көріністер
Таблица 1 – Мифологические образы женщин в ирландском фольклоре: негативные репрезентации

Figure	Definition	Analysis
Banshee	A female spirit in Irish folklore, known for her wailing, traditionally believed to foretell the death of a family member (Butler, 2008)	The banshee occupies a significant position within Irish folklore as a herald of death. Lysaght (1996) notes the tradition's intricate evolution through literary and folklore sources, with Scottish Gaelic material providing additional context. The banshee also provided a wonderful foundation for the Irish National Theatre and motivation to many of its founding members, including Alan Murphy (Alan, 2011)
Witch	A woman believed to have magical powers, often portrayed negatively in folklore, but can also represent healing and wisdom (Elsley, 2012)	Witches are frequently depicted as elderly women capable of casting curses through ritualistic means (Nuttall, 1998). However, these figures are not uniformly portrayed; Lysaght (1996) observes that poets often depict witches as youthful and potentially vulnerable figures. Elsley (2012) suggests that qualities associated with witches could apply to both aristocratic women of the Irish Sidhe and village wise-women offering healing and love charms
Cailleach Beara	A goddess in Irish mythology, associated with the land and winter, often depicted as a powerful old woman (Šefčíková, 2021)	The Cailleach Beara is a supernatural female entity typically recognized for her vast size, advanced age, and association with both topographical (mountains) and environmental (harsh winters) features (Ellis, 1994; Malone, 2024). Kravets et al. (2020) characterizes her as unafraid of chastising her children and reminding others of mortality, ready to express anger at injustices, and refusing to be obedient
Morrigan	A goddess of war and fate in Irish mythology, often associated with sovereignty and the battlefield, sometimes depicted as a crow (Kadeřávková, 2022; Woodfield, 2011)	While some 19th-century scholars have interpreted Morrigan as a goddess of death (Loomis, 1945), Woodfield (2011) argues that she is better understood as a goddess of sovereignty and a patroness of those who hold power. Her association with war and fate and frequent depiction as a crow contribute to her complex and often intimidating representation

Table 1 demonstrates key aspects of four female figures from Irish mythology and folklore – the Banshee, Witch, Cailleach Beara, and Morrigan. Each figure is defined by her core attributes and then further analyzed through scholarly interpretations. The analysis reveals that these figures, while often associated with negative traits (death, curses, harshness, war), are not monolithic representations. They exhibit complex and evolving roles, with some interpretations highlighting their power, sovereignty, connection to the land, or potential for healing and wisdom. The table showcases the multifaceted nature of these mythological characters and the diverse scholarly perspectives surrounding their significance within Irish culture.
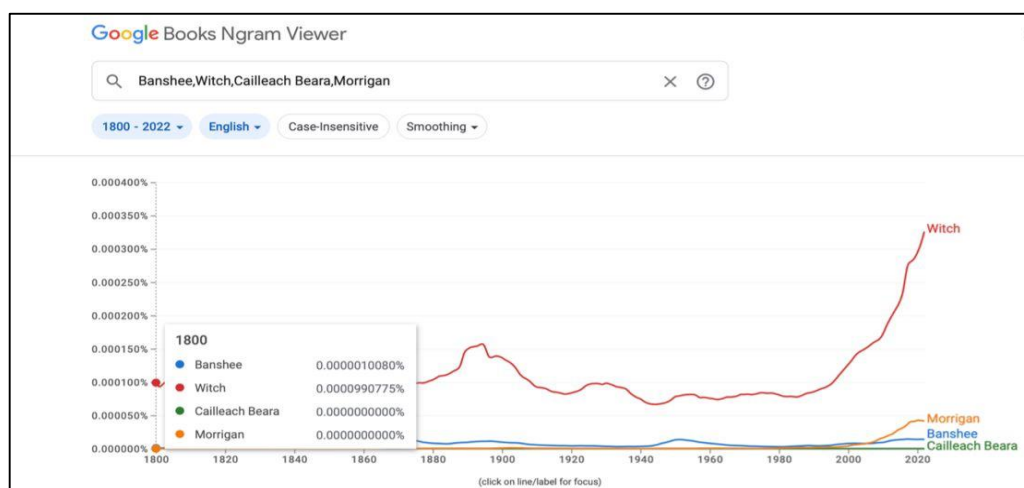

Figure 2 – Analysis of the Tendency of Negative Images of Four Irish Mythological Female Figures through the Google Ngram Viewer Since the 1800s
Сурет 2 – 1800 жылдардан бастап Google Ngram Viewer арқылы төрт ирландиялық мифологиялық әйел фигураларының жағымсыз бейнелерінің үрдісін талдау
Рисунок 2 – Анализ тенденции негативного изображения четырех женских персонажей ирландской мифологии с помощью Google Ngram Viewer начиная с 1800-х годов

The Ngram Viewer chart (Figure 2) illustrates the relative frequency of the terms "Banshee," "Witch," "Cailleach Beara," and "Morrigan" in English-language books from 1800 to 2022. A striking trend is the notable increase in the usage of the term "Witch," particularly in recent decades, culminating in a significant peak around 2020. This surge may indicate a growing societal interest in witchcraft and related themes, potentially influenced by popular culture, literature, and media representations. The temporal data suggest that while all terms possess historical significance, "Witch" is currently the most prevalent and recognized term in literary contexts, reflecting contemporary societal preoccupations and cultural trends. In contrast, "Banshee," "Cailleach Beara," and "Morrigan" exhibit comparatively lower frequencies and appear to occupy more niche positions within the literary landscape.

The increasing prominence of "witch" can be attributed to various cultural phenomena, including the resurgence of interest in witchcraft and neo-pagan spirituality and the influence of feminist movements in reclaiming and reinterpreting the witch's figure. Popular culture representations in books, movies, and television shows (e.g., "Charmed," "The Craft") have likely contributed significantly to this trend, shaping public perceptions and increasing familiarity with the term. In contrast, the term "Banshee" is more closely rooted in specifically Irish mythology and may possess a less universal appeal than the broader "witch" category, thus limiting its usage in broader contexts. Figures such as "Cailleach Beara" and "Morrigan" are primarily relevant within specific mythological traditions (Irish and Celtic mythology), and their relatively low frequency may indicate that the general public less widely recognizes them.

Contextual Analysis of Mythologemes Through Sketch Engine

The following examples from Sketch Engine provide a glimpse into the contexts in which these mythologemes appear and the associated terms used in conjunction with them:

1. "Folklore tells us 'Banshee' might be a wailing red-eyed ghost present at the death of loved ones, but only the aggression and wickedness of the…"

2. "Discover why witches' friends are felines and how the wand became an established magical power object. This illustrated lecture…"

3. "The Cailleach Beara is one of the oldest mythological antiquities in Ireland."

4. "Indeed, I pretty much take it as confirmed that the Morrigan was just an earlier alias of the Banshee."

While limited in scope, these examples illustrate the diverse contexts and connotations associated with each mythologeme. The Banshee is connected to themes of death and aggression, while the Witch is linked to instruments of magic and supernatural power. The Cailleach Beara is positioned as an ancient figure within Irish mythology, and the Morrigan is explored in relation to other mythological entities.

Exploring characters such as the Banshee, Enchantress, Cailleach Beara, and Morrigan reveals a delightful tapestry of folklore and mythology highlighting cultural beliefs surrounding passing, magic, and the extraordinary. The Banshee, often portrayed as a messenger of death, is a heartfelt reminder of the emotional load associated with loss in Irish culture. Meanwhile, the Cailleach Beara represents the ancient ties to the earth and the cyclical nature of life and passing. The connection of enchantresses with magical tools like brooms and wands reflects societal views of femininity and strength. At the same time, Morrigan's possible link to the Banshee emphasizes the fluidity of mythological identities. As these tales intertwine, they offer valuable insights into the historical and cultural contexts they emerge, inviting further exploration into their importance and evolution over time.

The Enduring Relevance of Negative Female Mythologemes in Contemporary Discourse

The sustained presence of mythological figures in modern storytelling underscores their enduring cultural significance, particularly within contemporary discussions of female strength, identity construction, and empowerment narratives. The terms "Banshee," "Witch," "Cailleach Beara," and "Morrigan" exhibit a marked prevalence in contemporary discourse, particularly within the contexts of modern spiritual practices and popular cultural representations. The Banshee, rooted in Irish folklore, is frequently depicted in films and literature as a spirit of mourning, symbolizing loss and the supernatural, thereby resonating with contemporary audiences (Kodumal, Aiken, 2005). Similarly, the witch archetype has been reclaimed within feminist discourse, representing empowerment and resistance against patriarchal norms, thus becoming a salient topic in gender studies (Radulescu, 2014). The modern witchcraft movement, often called Wicca, emphasizes a connection to nature and community, reflecting

a broader societal shift towards embracing these figures as symbols of strength, agency, and spirituality (Shufelt, 2007). The Cailleach Beara and Morrigan, derived from Celtic mythology, are increasingly integrated into contemporary rituals and spiritual practices, highlighting a growing interest in ancestral wisdom, earth-based spirituality, and pre-Christian traditions. Social media platforms further facilitate the sharing of practices associated with these figures, enabling community building and knowledge dissemination among modern practitioners. Therefore, these terms are not merely relevant but actively shape contemporary cultural and spiritual landscapes, providing frameworks for identity formation and alternative belief systems.

The resurgence of these mythological figures within contemporary society signifies a broader movement towards amplifying mythological representations in prevalent media forms. These archetypes are increasingly employed to explore complex themes of empowerment, identity negotiation, and societal critique, which resonate profoundly with contemporary audiences. This phenomenon can be understood through several key dimensions:

Mythological Representation in Media

Modern media often reinterprets traditional myths, allowing figures like the "Banshee" and "Morrigan" to take on complex narratives that challenge and deconstruct established societal norms (Reid, 2007). These contemporary portrayals serve multiple purposes: they educate audiences about cultural traditions and histories, while simultaneously critiquing existing social frameworks. Through their retellings, these myths offer alternative perspectives on critical issues such as values, power dynamics, and gender roles. For instance, the Banshee, traditionally viewed as an omen of death, can be reimagined as a symbol of female empowerment, highlighting the strength and agency of women in confronting inevitable transitions. Similarly, the Morrigan, often associated with war and fate, can depict the multifaceted nature of femininity and the complexities of female power in a patriarchal society. By recontextualizing these figures within contemporary narratives, media fosters a deeper dialogue about the role of women in both historical and modern contexts, prompting audiences to reflect on how these age-old stories continue to resonate with and challenge current societal structures.

The Appeal of Witchcraft

The term "Witch" has undergone a significant semantic evolution, with contemporary interpretations frequently associating it with empowerment, self-determination, and emancipation, particularly within feminist and neo-pagan movements (White, 2024). Today, witchcraft is perceived as a conduit for reconnecting with ancient traditions and engaging in self-discovery, thereby providing a sense of agency and control in an increasingly complex and turbulent world.

Cultural Significance of Goddesses

Archetypes such as "Cailleach Beara" and "Morrigan" are frequently portrayed as formidable and powerful female figures in literature and popular culture. This reflects an escalating interest in matriarchal narratives and re-evaluations of traditional power dynamics (Magoulick, 2022). These portrayals challenge patriarchal conventions and underscore the significance of female agency and resilience in contemporary society.

However, it is crucial to acknowledge that while these mythological figures are often lauded, they may simultaneously perpetuate stereotypical representations or reductive narratives concerning femininity and power, which may not adequately encapsulate the complexities and nuances of the original myths (Xianglin, 2010). This underscores the importance of critically examining how these figures are reinterpreted and deployed in contemporary contexts, paying particular attention to potential distortions and oversimplifications.

Positive Representations of Women in Irish Mythology

Irish mythology frequently portrays women in positive roles, embodying powerful and nurturing qualities that underscore their integral position within the cultural landscape. Table 3 overviews four prominent female figures – Áine, The Sidhe, Étaín, and Airmid – each representing distinct facets of positive femininity.

Table 2 – Female Figures with Positive Interpretations in Irish Folklore
Кесте 2 – Ирландия фольклорындағы позитивті интерпретацияланған әйел тұлғалары
Таблица 2 – Женские фигуры с положительной интерпретацией в ирландском фольклоре

Mythological Figure	Description	Interpretation
Áine	Áine is a goddess of summer, wealth, and love, often associated with fertility and abundance (Kelly, 2022). Áine is a goddess of summer, wealth, and love, often associated with fertility and abundance (Kelly, 2022).	She embodies the positive aspects of femininity, including joy, abundance, and the nurturing of life. Áine also reminds us of the interdependent relationship between humans and the environment, illustrating how cultural myths shape our understanding of environmental care and sustainability (Kelly, 2022).
The Sidhe	The Sidhe (also known as the *Aos Sí*) are often depicted as beautiful and powerful female figures representing the mystical and enchanting aspects of femininity in Irish culture (Ocampo-Gooding, 2012).	The Sidhe, as beings of great beauty and power, embody a rich tapestry of folklore that intertwines with the natural world. They represent Irish mythology's mystical aspects and illustrate the complex relationship between humanity and nature. Encounters with the Sidhe frequently highlight the consequences of disrupting this delicate balance; those who venture too close to their enchanted realms may find themselves ensnared in a timeless existence (Almeida & Obeng, 2020).
Étaín	Étaín is a central figure in Irish mythology, whose narrative involves themes of love, transformation, and resilience (Davey, 2010).	Étaín's story showcases the complexities of female identity within the broader context of Irish mythology, where female characters frequently embody power and vulnerability. The nuanced portrayal of Étaín can be compared to other figures, such as Sinann, whose historical marginalization and subsequent recovery in modern discourse highlights the evolving representation of women (Kenna et al., 2023).
Airmid	Airmid is a goddess of healing and herbalism, representing femininity's nurturing and restorative aspects in Irish mythology (Beck, 2009).	Airmid's role as a healer highlights how women often embody both sides of creation and destruction, reflecting the broader theme of female autonomy within Irish mythology. This dualism is echoed in other figures, such as the Cailleach, who symbolizes both the harshness of winter and the promise of rebirth in spring (O'Donoghue, 2016).

The figures in Table 2 represent a spectrum of positive attributes associated with femininity. The interpretations highlight their specific roles and how they serve as cultural symbols that reflect complex understandings of human relationships, environmental stewardship, and the inherent duality of the feminine experience.
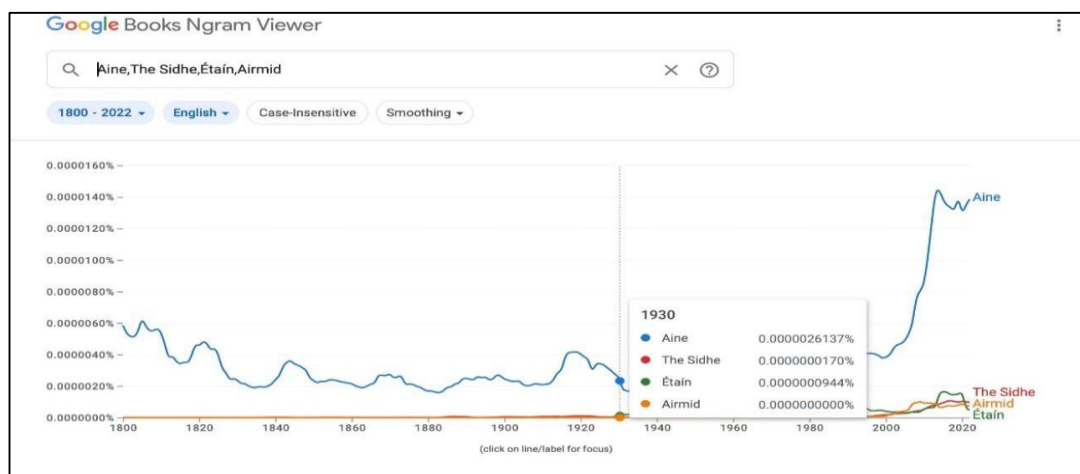

Figure 3 – Diachronic Trends in the Representation of Positive Female Figures
in Irish Mythology (1930s)
Сурет 3 – Ирландия мифологиясындағы позитивті әйел фигураларындағы
диахрондық тенденциялар (1930 ж.)
Рисунок 3 – Диахронические тенденции в изображении положительных женских образов
в ирландской мифологии (1930 г.)

Figure 3 presents the analysis of the relative frequency of four female figures from Irish mythology with positive interpretations – Áine, Sidhe, Étaín, and Airmid – as reflected in the Google Ngram Viewer data from the 1930s. The data reveal a distinct dominance of the term "Áine" throughout the period under examination. At the same time "Sidhe," "Étaín," and "Airmid" appear with significantly lower frequencies, suggesting a differential prominence in the cultural consciousness and literary landscape of the time.

The prevalence of "Áine" likely reflects a heightened cultural focus on themes associated with the positive aspects of femininity she embodies, including joy, abundance, and the nurturing of life. The relatively lower frequency of the other terms may indicate that they relate to more specialized or niche cultural references, appealing to a narrower audience or being confined to specific folkloric traditions. It is important to note that during this period, the dominant themes explored often focused on the more general ideas Áine embodies, resulting in higher literary mentions of "Aine".

Although "Sidhe" is less prominent than "Áine," its presence, nonetheless, underscores the enduring appeal of the Sidhe as a symbol within Irish mythology. The Sidhe, often associated with beauty, the Otherworld, and the sea, embody the magical and captivating elements of femininity, showcasing the charm and power of women within the rich tapestry of Irish culture. Any slight increase in the usage of "Sidhe" during the later part of the examined period could indicate a renewed interest in these elements, and a reflection of an ongoing appreciation for Irish mythology.

The limited usage of "Étaín" in the dataset, compared to "Aine" and "Sidhe", suggests that while Étaín remains a significant character within Irish mythology, her narrative may not have penetrated mainstream literature or popular culture as extensively as those of other figures. This limited representation could indicate that the themes embodied by Étaín, such as love and transformation, were perhaps less prioritized in the examined publications than themes of nature exemplified by "Áine".

The disparate settings in which the mythological figures examined in this study appear, as illustrated in Figures 1 and 2, underscore their enduring cultural significance and the diverse interpretations that have flourished within folklore. This variability likely reflects the influence of localized beliefs, historical exigencies, and the inherently dynamic nature of storytelling, all of which continue to shape our contemporary understanding of these compelling figures.

Therefore, a deeper exploration of these narratives has the potential to yield profound insights into societal values and shared cultural memories, revealing how mythologies adapt to address contemporary challenges while preserving their core thematic elements. This ongoing process enhances our appreciation for cultural heritage. It highlights the importance of preserving and transmitting these narratives to future generations, ensuring that their inherent lessons and moral frameworks remain relevant in an increasingly complex and rapidly evolving world.

Moreover, engaging with these stories through diverse media, such as literature, film, and artistic expression, can amplify their appeal and accessibility, opening avenues for new audiences to connect with timeless wisdom in innovative and engaging ways. Such multifaceted engagement fosters intercultural dialogue, promoting shared humanity while celebrating the rich diversity inherent in global storytelling traditions. By embracing these varied expressions, we pay homage to the past, stimulate creativity, foster critical thinking, and cultivate a more inclusive and enriching narrative landscape for the future. This can provide a new platform for interpreting and exploring these figures.

Enduring Significance: Positive Female Mythological Figures in Contemporary Contexts

The figures of Áine, Sidhe, Étaín, and Airmid from Irish mythology are frequently invoked in contemporary culture, reflecting their enduring influence and continued symbolic power. These figures persist as cultural memory components and undergo reinterpretation and adaptation processes that reflect evolving societal values and aesthetic sensibilities.

Áine, for instance, has transcended her mythological origins to become a popular given name in Ireland, underscoring the cultural resonance and contemporary adaptation of this figure. In Irish lore, Áine is traditionally associated with summer, fertility, and abundance. In modern literature, art, and popular culture, she frequently symbolizes feminine power and the vitality of nature. Examining her mythological roots provides valuable insight into how ancient symbols are reimagined and repurposed within contemporary contexts.

The Sidhe (also known as the Aos Sí), or "the fairy folk," represent a central and enduring aspect of Irish folklore and Celtic heritage. They are frequently referenced in contemporary discussions pertaining to folklore, fantasy literature, and cultural identity, demonstrating the timeless fascination with mythical beings and the supernatural realm. In modern storytelling, the Sidhe serve as potent symbols of the mysterious and otherworldly, influencing narratives centered on themes of heritage, nature, and the uncanny.

Étaín, another prominent figure in Irish mythology, is celebrated for her beauty and her narrative of love, loss, and ultimate transformation. In contemporary interpretations, Étaín is often viewed through a feminist lens, symbolizing resilience, personal growth, and the complexities of female agency. Her narrative provides a rich source for exploring themes of love, loss, and identity, resonating with modern audiences who seek narratives of empowerment and self-discovery.

Airmid, the goddess of healing and herbalism, embodies the knowledge of traditional herbal medicine and the inherent restorative power of the natural world. She is frequently associated with wisdom, nurturing, and the healing arts, symbolizing the enduring value of holistic health practices. Today, Airmid's legacy is reflected in contemporary discussions surrounding wellness, sustainable living, and the revival of natural healing modalities.

However, while these figures are widely celebrated and adapted in modern interpretations of Celtic mythology, some scholars caution that contemporary adaptations may, at times, oversimplify or romanticize their complexities, potentially diluting the depth and nuances of their original narratives (Lai, 2011). This critical perspective suggests that while these mythological figures retain their symbolic power, their modern reinterpretations should be approached with a critical awareness of the potential for preservation and distortion.

Conclusion

This study has explored the dualistic representations of femininity in Irish mythology through corpus-based analysis, examining the construction, perpetuation, and reinterpretation of female mythologemes across time. By categorizing mythological figures into positive and negative archetypes, this research elucidates how cultural narratives shape and reflect prevailing societal perceptions of gender roles, thereby revealing the complex interplay between mythology and social constructs.

These findings contribute substantively to the broader academic discussion surrounding mythology's function as a cultural lens through which gender identities are constructed, negotiated, and contested. As demonstrated by the linguistic trends analyzed in this study, mythology should not be regarded as a static repository of historical beliefs but rather as a dynamic and evolving framework that reflects ongoing cultural transformations and societal renegotiations of meaning.

Future research could extend this analysis through a cross-cultural comparison of female mythologemes, exploring the extent to which similar dualistic representations manifest across diverse mythological traditions. Furthermore, examining the role of digital media platforms in the revival, reinterpretation, or even the commodification of these figures would provide valuable insights into the contemporary significance and evolving dynamics of mythological archetypes. The integration of computational linguistics methodologies with feminist literary analysis offers a particularly promising avenue for further exploring the complex intersections of language, culture, and mythology.

In conclusion, this study underscores the enduring impact of female mythologemes in shaping cultural narratives, influencing gender ideologies, and informing contemporary cultural discourse. By bridging corpus linguistics and mythological studies, this research highlights the multifaceted ways language preserves and reinvents mythological archetypes, thereby ensuring their continued relevance and adaptability within the ever-evolving landscape of contemporary society.

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