

Aberystwyth University

Department of Welsh

**Narrative Techniques of the Early Medieval Welsh and
Irish Prose Tales: a Comparative Investigation of the
Four Branches of the Mabinogi and a Selection of Tales
from the Ulster Cycle**

PhD Thesis

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ABSTRACT

This doctoral thesis seeks to examine some of the narrative techniques of the medieval Welsh and Irish prose narratives and compare and contrast them in an attempt to provide an insight into the mind and the methods used by the final redactor of the *Four Branches*. The sample of narratives selected for this research consists of the *Four Branches of the Mabinogi*, *Compert Con Culainn*, *Aided Óenfir Aife*, *Tochmarc Emire*, *Mesca Ulad*, *Echtra Nerai*, *Táin Bó Fraích*, *Scéla Mucce Meic Dathó*, and *Longes Mac n-Uislenn*.

The thesis consists of seven chapters. The first chapter explains the main purpose of the research and the reasons behind selecting the primary sources. The second chapter presents a short survey of the existing scholarly views on the material, the editions of the texts used for the purpose of the present thesis, the manuscript sources, and a discussion of the oral tradition. The third chapter explains the theoretical and methodological background on which the research is based. The fourth chapter concentrates on the narrative structure of the texts examined, and offers a graphic representation of the structure of each text. The fifth chapter examines certain narrative devices such as triads, lists, onomastic tales, embedded tales, *cynneddfau* and *geasa*, the watchman device, and poetry and *roscada*; this chapter also offers a discussion on how the use and placement of these devices in the narrative affects the flow of the narrative. The sixth chapter moves away from the level of the narrative structure and explores the variations in the *inquit formulae* used in the texts. The seventh chapter concludes the research by presenting an attempt at outlining a possible profile of the editor of the *Four Branches*.

Appendix A offers a graphic representation of the narrative structure of *Culhwch ac Olwen*. Appendix B is a brief note on the censorship of the *Four Branches*.

DECLARATION

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed (candidate)

Date

STATEMENT 1

This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Where ***correction services** have been used, the extent and nature of the correction is clearly marked in a footnote(s).

Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

Signed (candidate)

Date

[*this refers to the extent to which the text has been corrected by others]

STATEMENT 2

I hereby give consent for my thesis, if accepted, to be available for photocopying and for inter-library loan, and for the title and summary to be made available to outside organisations.

Signed (candidate)

Date

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