



Mitos y leyendas celtas (Noema)

T.W. Rolleston, J. A. Vitier (Translator)

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Fieros en la batalla y amantes de las historias; así eran los celtas, y así se reflejan en las leyendas que nos han legado. Transmitidas oralmente de padres a hijos durante siglos, aunque puestas por escrito mucho después, nos traen ecos de un pasado donde el valor, el honor, la belleza y la magia formaban parte de lo cotidiano.

Desde los conocidísimos caballeros de la corte del rey Arturo hasta los héroes más oscuros, estos personajes milenarios siguen siendo una fuente de inspiración constante para escritores y cineastas, y han entrado a formar parte del imaginario popular como algo a la vez exótico y cercano.

Este título es considerado desde su publicación la recopilación más completa sobre la cosmovisión de los pueblos celtas de la antigüedad. Escrito con gran rigor literario y belleza narrativa, es una referencia imprescindible tanto para el estudio en profundidad de esta cultura como para iniciarse en sus misterios.

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From Reader Review Mitos y leyendas celtas (Noema) for online ebook

Caroline Åsgård says

Spent ages on this thing! I read it on my phone, so it wasn't the best reading experience for such a big book. I am very interested in mythology and folklore, so I thought this would be an interesting read. It's full of stories from lots of characters in celtic mythology, and it was pretty cool and enlightening. I'd only recommend it for specially interested people though, as it's not a casual read.

Clara Mazzi says

Quando Picasso andò a vedere gli affreschi di Lascaux e Altamira, disse due cose che riutilizzo per la mia recensione:

1. "Non abbiamo inventato niente di nuovo."
2. "Da Altamira in poi, non è che decadenza."

Per quel poco che ho letto delle gesta celtiche/gaeliche dei vari cavalieri non posso che ripetere le parole di Picasso adattandole alla letteratura.

Non tenterò di usare parole mie per far capire quello che intendo. Basta che riporti qualche stralcio di questo breve racconto:

"(...) Quando i 4 si sedettero a desinare, il montone si alzò e salì sul tavolo. Uno dopo l'altro i guerrieri Fianna cercarono di tirarlo giù, ma quello se li scrollò di dosso buttandoli a terra. Goll, infine riuscì a tirarlo giù dal tavolo, ma poi il montone buttò a terra anche lui e salì sopra di loro. Il vecchio allora, pregò il gatto di condurre il montone al suo posto e di legarlo, e il gatto riuscì a farlo con facilità. I 4 campioni, sopraffatti dalla vergogna, avrebbero voluto andarsene da quella casa, ma il vecchio spiegò loro che non avevano subito nessun disonore: il montone contro cui avevano lottato era il mondo e il gatto era la potenza che avrebbe distrutto il mondo stesso, cioè la morte. Quella notte i 4 eroi si coricarono in una grande camera e nella stessa stanza andò a dormire anche la fanciulla. La sua bellezza richiarava le pareti come una candela e uno dopo l'altro i Fianna si avvicinarono al suo giaciglio, ma ella li respinse tutti. "Un tempo ti appartenni", disse a ciascuno, "ma non ti apparterrò mai più perché io sono la Giovinezza." (...)"

Sarah (Gutierrez) Myers says

Would have been better if the compiler's commentary and opinions about the "meaning" of the old stories had been placed in footnotes or left out altogether. I don't want to be reading a delightfully horrifying old story filled with curses and revenge and suddenly have the story interrupted to read, "And this is clearly symbolic of...." or "And this is an excellent example of the Ossian sensibility, untouched by the chivalric influences of continental Europe." Ruins the atmosphere, buddy.

Jesse says

I didn't finish, but I skimmed around. A decent overview of the different myths, but I found myself just

wanting to go read more complete versions.

Heather Kelly says

The overall subject of the book was very interesting and educational, however it seemed to have what I call "thought vomit" throughout the entire book. There was a lot of information to be had and needed to be introduced to the reader but a better, more concise way I think could have been found. I had taken an Irish literature class in college so I knew most of what the author was talking about, but if someone, not having the background of information that I had, to pick up this book and start reading it they would immediately get lost or put it back down because the flow of the information was as if someone said--"I have a lot of knowledge about this subject and I have to convey all of it in a short amount of period of time, then proceeded to 'vomit' their thoughts onto the pages." Again, I enjoyed the subject matter, but the flow I would say needs improvement.

Edu Elendil says

Interesante historia sobre los celtas con un contexto histórico y geográfico que ayuda a comprender de mejor manera su cultura. Los mitos se centran sobretodo en los Tuatha dé Danann, los hijos de la diosa Dana, y sus gestas llevadas a cabo con la ayuda de objetos mágicos.

Susie says

This book wasn't quite what I expected it to be. For one thing, it has to be realised that it is very dated, so the writing style isn't what it would be today. Then you have to realise that this is simply an overview of Celtic history and their later mythology.

The book starts with a brief overview of the history of the Celts, where they came from, a bit about their religion, where they went, and where they are today (most of which I've heard is quite outdated compared with modern thinking). This section was quite interesting, as I wasn't actually aware of the beginnings so far away, although I did know that there were Celtic peoples scattered about Europe who eventually were pushed out and migrated to the UK.

Then, however, we come to our largest, most tedious section – the myths themselves. Probably around sixty percent of the entire book revolves around Irish tales. Then, afterwards, there's a small section of Welsh tales. Also, despite what the back-cover blurb says, there is very little to be had on Arthurian tales, as the majority of these, according to the book (although something which I've been partially aware of through other books), are actually imported from France. I was already aware that we had Chrétien de Troyes (called Crestien de Troyes in this book) to blame for such characters as Lancelot, who didn't actually appear in the original tales (indeed, Mallory's work includes much of the French translations, which are said to be a mix of the tales imported from Welsh immigrants to Brittany and French tales), but I didn't realise how few characters that we've come to know through popular works actually do appear in the surviving Welsh tales. We have Owain and Peredur (Percival), even Gwenhwyvar (Guinevere) and Myrddin (Merlin), but all familiarity pretty much stops there. Of course, the Grail Quest was influenced by the spread of Christianity, even if some of the original mysticism survives in the tale, but the tale we know is also unfortunately another

de Troyes creation (it is said that the original tale, however, was possibly one involving a quest for a stone). And another surprise in there, for me, was that Arthur himself may be based upon a deity called Artaius? Yet some of the Welsh tales weren't actually told, for being near identical to the Irish tales. There were no Scottish tales to be had (Scots and Irish Gaelic were once the same language, therefore the tales are pretty much the same) and none from elsewhere within the British Isles. This last part, for me, was perhaps my biggest disappointment after the pages upon pages of commentary on the Irish tales. The Irish tales are interesting, and perhaps contain the strongest hints of the mythology during the pre-Christian days of the Isles (even with the changes made in them during the transition and post-Christian period – Saint Patrick even makes an appearance), but I was perhaps looking for something more that I could link into on a personal level, like the tales of Bran the Blessed, mythology that still survives in the ravens at the Tower of London. I want to be able to feel the history as I walk through the lands once walked by the ancients. Ireland is interesting in being still captured by that mythology, most particularly as perceived from outsiders, yet it is not my land.

But, however, the biggest trouble was how all these tales were written. They were dry, brief, perhaps direct translations, interspersed with various comments on how the tales relate to various things. We do not simply have a list of the tales here (although I guess there are other sources for the tales themselves in full); we have more a commentary on the tales and their meaning. It should be no surprise, then, that it took me six months to finish this book! I guess that, on a reference level, there is plenty of interesting information contained within, whether for serious study or just out of curiosity (like with myself). I have heard that it's not a bad book to be had on the shelf for either. Yet there are more modern books on the subject that could perhaps cover everything much better. Considering that I was gifted this book, more than ten years ago now, and had planned to keep it just for reference using the index rather than giving it a thorough read, a part of me thinks that maybe I should have done just that. Yet I have learnt a few things through the full read through, so perhaps I shouldn't regret the effort required to get through it after all.

Final rating: ★★★?? – Sort of liked/OK

GypsyBookworm says

This book, like most collections had some dry spots but others part were sheer magic. A lot of tales are covered in this book so it is a great overview and the stories are broken up and are not overly long. I really liked the version of Etain and Midir. The illustrations are also charming.

Dawn says

Going to put this aside for awhile.

The title is very deceiving. This is more or less a history book..and very dryly written.

It is interesting but not what I expected.

Will come back to it at another time.

Kathy says

I'm usually a fast reader, but this book was so boring it took me three months to finish. I literally did everything to avoid reading this. I can count all the things I would have rather done than read this dribble.

The title of this book is misleading because there are no fairy tales or mythology. Just skip the two chapters and start from Chapter 3. This book is a Dover reprint. Celtic Myths and Legends was first printed in 1817. I expected for this book to be condescending and full of narrow-minded remarks. In that sense this book did not disappoint.

This book should really be called: Why I think the Irish and Welsh are Inferior: A study by some racist jerk. Rolleston claims that the Celts contributed so much to society yet he belittles their culture and their stories. How's that for respect?

Other than the fact that Rolleston believes that Celtic is too broad of term because there were several Celtic tribes across Europe. Or the fact that he includes the Mabinogion (Welsh epic). I do not see a single positive thing about this book. If the reader can get through even one chapter without falling asleep than one might actually learn something. In addition, the illustrations included are gorgeous probably to keep the reader from destroying the book.

Other things I learned: CuChulain is a manchild, literally. In order for CuChulain to fight with men he had to smear blackberry juice on his chin to trick them into thinking he has a beard. Grown men would not fight a boy. He killed his liege's dog and didn't even apologise for it. Although this is meant to represent the sacrifice of killing and becoming your spirit animal. CuChulain kills his only son and doesn't care. He cheats on his wife, Emer who has done nothing, but put up with him. Lastly he denies the Morrighan. No one taught CuChulain that if he wants to be king one never deny sovereignty or a war/sex goddess. Honestly I have no pity for him. This is not a hero. This is an irresponsible person who reaped what he sowed.

What I have taken from this book is that the women of Ireland and Wales are tenacious, kind, patient, and full of more love than I will ever be able to understand. Most of these "events" could have been easily avoided if it wasn't for the arrogance of these "kings" and "heroes".

Miriam Joy says

My review from Amazon (written April 2012):

I have a copy of the 1912 printing that I bought for a tenner in Camden market, because why buy things new when you can get them a hundred years old.

I'm a writer and the novels I write are generally inspired by Celtic mythology, so I'm always looking for new versions of legends I've heard hundreds of times or a new take on a certain element. My main resource has until now been Daragh Smyth's "Guide to Irish mythology", but that's more of a dictionary than anything else, organised alphabetically with an entry for each character or place.

By contrast, Rolleston's book takes us through the stories 'in order', as it were. They're broken up by headings that make it clear what the main point of that section is, much like in a Bible where there are subheadings

within chapters. There's also a helpful index at the back, and if it's a particular character you're looking for, you'll be able to find the page numbers for every story they're in.

It starts with a pretty lengthy introduction, and towards the beginning there is a lot about the general society and religious arrangements of the Celtic races, which is good for giving some sort of context to the stories. As well as quoting various other interpretations, Rolleston gives his own view on what he believes to be the explanation for things, allowing a reader to make up their own mind - though his arguments are convincing enough that they often won't be inclined to disagree.

The stories come from all of the Celtic races, from the Tuatha de Danaan in Ireland to the warrior women of Skatha, now believed to be the island of Skye, to the flower woman Blodeuwedd from Wales, to beliefs of the Gauls... There are also Arthurian legends, although I'll confess I haven't quite got that far in the book yet! It isn't one you would read from beginning to end, but rather one you would dip into and look for things you find interesting.

Something else I liked was which characters were given careful attention. In many books, such as Daragh Smyth's excellent Guide to Irish Mythology, there will be huge amounts on people like the Dagda, on Cuchullain... the more 'famous' characters of legend, for example. However, the female warriors I discovered in the pages of Rolleston's book I'd never come across before, because they have only fleeting mentions in other people's legends. For example, I liked the way he talked about Aifa, a woman warrior, as a character in her own right, rather than focusing only on her relationship with Cuchullain as her defining feature.

Mariah says

Wow, this book is really old! Both when it was published (early 1900s) and the particular copy I have. The introduction, history and religion chapters are outdated- there is a bit of a Noble Savage framing of the Celts and he takes seriously the fabricated "Barddas" of Iolo Morganwg that was claimed to be ancient Welsh Bardic wisdom. However the re-tellings of the myths seem like they are good. There are even a few myths that I haven't seen before, like the story of Tuan Mac Carell. The edition I have also has nice Art Noveau illustrations. Actually this is the most extensive collection of Celtic myth and legend I have seen in one book- that is the best reason to buy, borrow and read this book.

G. Lawrence says

A good read and beautifully illustrated, although it should more accurately be titled "Irish myths and legends, with a bit of Welsh at the end". This didn't ruin the book for me, but it wasn't quite what I had expected. Recommended for all who love fairies, myths and legends!

Bill says

This book was OK for 1911, but is now horribly out of date. It is of use only for those wanting to understand how Celtic studies has progressed over the last century.

Rebecca McNutt says

This book is one that every reader in the world should have. Enough said. With its stunning illustrations, imaginative tales and classic style, it's really an amazing addition to literature. :)
