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A Genre Analysis of Contemporary Celtic Music: The Revival of the Traditional Ballad

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Abstract

This is a genre study in linguistics of which the sole purpose is to identify and categorise common conventions within lyrics from the genre Celtic music. Previously, there have been no dedicated or conclusive studies on the lyrics of Celtic music. With no specific initiation point, this research chose to look at certain stylistic aspects of the lyrics - broadly, whether or not mimicking can be identified from an earlier or external genre. The traditional folk ballad has been used as a point of comparison for this study as many of its structural conventions can be found in the lyrics of Celtic music today. This research carries out an in-depth analysis of a small selection of lyrics by comparing and contrasting their identifying features with those found in selected historical ballads. The results point out some of the common conventions, and also connect these to pertinent local or contextual influences. Using previous studies in genre analysis to influence some aspects of the results, the conclusion proffers the theory that Celtic music has been adopted by mainly communities influenced by an Anglophonic presence. The genre, thus, appears to ignore the broader roots of origin associated with the word *Celtic*, as the people with the same name are known to have been living throughout other parts of Europe as the UK. If the lyricists of Celtic music are situated in a context rich in Anglophonic influences, then it is highly plausible that their conventions would take inspiration from existing stylistic frameworks as the classical Anglophonic ballad.

Keywords: Linguistics, Genre Studies, Celtic Music, Celtic Studies, Discourse Analysis, Lyrics, Ballad, Comparative Study, Stylistics.

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1. Introduction

“The fact that it is nearly impossible to determine historically what Celtic music sounded like makes it that much easier to reinvent the category; and possibly reclaim it as an indigenous category, rather than a more generically transnational one” (Thornton, 1998, p. 265 – 266). Celtic music has been introduced to the music market without anyone knowing what Celtic music actually is. It would be assumed from the name that the music belongs to some type of folk music from the ancient people who lived scattered throughout Europe with the same name. Instead, it seems, the genre has been reinvented to primarily cater to Anglophonic artists, especially with connections to the British Isles. The music has been attributed largely to the traditions of Ireland, England, Scotland, and Wales. This includes choice of instruments, musical formulas, and similar components. The Celtic lyrics, however, have been written in the modern age and it is unclear if they follow, or are supposed to follow, conventions from the folk music by the abovementioned nations. In previous studies, the whole genre has been targeted for research but a conclusive study on the lyrics specifically has yet to be done.

Several structural features of a number of lyrics can be recognised in the traditional (or folk) ballad. Thus, the aim of this research is to try and identify these in Celtic music academically. The ballad is a genre of musical and poetic expression with its fundamental roots in the British Isles, but it is widely known to have been used in other parts of the world. Ballads were popular during the medieval era and diminished largely during the 19th century. They are distinct for many reasons, amongst them the use of metre, rhyme, and formula in themes and the modes of narration (Kekäläinen, 1983; Würzbach, 1986).

This research aims to do the following: allocate a linguistic structural framework for the ballad conventions, try to identify these in a selection of Celtic lyrics and lastly compare and contrast these to traditional ballads from a historical selection. Before the actual analysis, the study will provide a fuller explanation of the intended purpose, review the relevant body of research, and delineate the theoretical framework and methodology which will be applied to the assessment of the data.

2. Purpose

This research aims to fill a gap in previous studies in Celtic music. It is not until recent decades that lyrics have gained popularity in the linguistic community (Motschenbacher, 2016). Since lyrics have been targeted in the linguistic community in a greater scale, studies on niched genres as Celtic music will hopefully add more dimensions to the field. Lyrics can

indeed be treated as a type of discourse used for communication (Opfer, 2017; Würzbach, 1986) as well as an indicator of overall language use and also politics or aspirations within a nation or culture (Motschenbacher, 2016). Lyricists who contribute to Celtic music make up a type of cultural community, in the sense that they have a common goal in their writing. Treating makers of Celtic music as a culture or community will thus be valuable when analysing the lyrics.

Furthermore, this research will additionally contribute to genre studies. Since an in-depth discourse analysis of the lyrics of Celtic music and also a comparative assessment is done in this study it has advantageous potential compared to broad-scope methods. Methods such as corpus linguistics or similarly natured tools allow for broader results and allow for the identification of patterns and an easily-accessed chronological overview. However, there is lesser space to individually analyse and parse specific sections and, as this study aims to do, compare and contrast selected data. The qualitative method chosen for this research comes with the consequence of lesser data, meaning a limited number of lyrics can be chosen. Nevertheless, with this approach to the lyrics of Celtic music the research will hopefully give some ground to not only future genre studies, but also the initiation for more studies in the Celtic genre and its lyrics.

3. Literature Review

3.1 Overview

This research is concerned with comparing and, by that means, identifying common features in a series of lyrics belonging to the genre *Celtic music*. This section aims to give some coverage of the field. Genre studies as a type of research can be done to several types of work such as poetics, literature or any other type of discourse that fits under a genre, and it is collectively called genre studies. The origin of a genre and, more specifically, its features can often be traced back to a cultural context, that is when, where, and by whom the genre was invented. The classification of a genre requires a series of unifying conventions, beside the common context, themes, functionalities, and ambitions (Adair, 2011; Würzbach, 1986). The previous research that this study will review showcases different methods for carrying out genre studies, with common features such as the usage of corpus tools being common. For the sake of coverage, relevance, and structure the different types of research will be explained in their own sections: beginning with ballad studies, genre studies, and then a review on the current situation of studies on Celtic music.

3.2 Genre Studies

Genre studies with a focus on identification and unifying features have been done in several types of genres. Poems are indeed common for analysis within genre studies and seeing how they bear a bold resemblance to the ballad, studies on poetics will be addressed in this research. Stephanie Opfer (2017), Niloufar Sultana (1990), Tiffany Beechy (2007), Anya Adair (2011), and Marina Tarlinskaja and Naira Oganeseva (1986) are some scholars who have done genre studies on sub-genres of poetry. Their studies were carried out differently in terms of method and the structural components they examined differed. Their common aim was to explore semantical, lexical and grammatical similarities and differences, pragmatic features, and other linguistic devices. This is either done in a comparative assessment or to manifest existing conventions in terms and devices.

The character of the studies mentioned above introduced unique ways of carrying out genre studies. Tarlinskaja and Oganeseva preferred using a corpus-study and a semantic analysis of "... their[poems] lexicon ..." (Tarlinskaja & Oganeseva, 1986, p. 2); as one of their aims was to find patterns in poems using similar metre, theme and structure. Moreover, Adair found the best method for her results to be "via a detailed comparative study of the style and poetics of the lyrics" (Adair, 2011, p. 824). Sultana (1990) used the established *systemic functional linguistics model*, meaning that the language used in the poems were "divided into units in the *scale of rank*" (Sultana, 2011, p. 352). Her findings were then placed into a structure, finally to be used in the analysis. Systemic functional linguistics is also one of the chosen approaches for Opfer, who carried out a study to find "... similarity of the linguistic style in poems ..." (Opfer, 2017, p. *Abstract*) and to organise and explore themes. Beechy (2007) took to the approach of discourse analysis in her study of structure and modes of language used in Old English poetry.

Studies exploring lyrics, which are the primary focus of this research, fall under the broader umbrella of poetic genres. Heiko Motschenbacher (2016) and Valentin Werner (2012) have carried out research on pop-music. Their studies, both using corpus studies as a tool, looked for structural differences and similarities in pop-music from different nationalities. Thus, both discussed these results in relation to context and culture. In Werner's (2012) study, pop-music from Great Britain and the United States of America was compared for their lyrical conventions. His results indicated that the British lyricists were attempting to mimic the discourse of their American counterpart, whereas Motschenbacher's study compared American and European pop-music (Eurovision), which interestingly indicated some awareness on part of European lyricists to distance themselves from their American

counterparts.

The previous notion of situatedness of the lyricists and their relationship to the source genre are of interest when looking at what a genre is and what it consists of. This is the case, for instance, when it comes to Eurovision. Eurovision is to be regarded as a sub-genre to pop-music. Sub-genres are interesting targets in genre studies as they make it easier to follow the process of mimicking and the effect of deviation from the source genre. Motschenbacher (2016) notes that the specific style of lyrics in Eurovision is largely influenced by unifying measures within Europe, for instance: lyrics seldom reference to Europe in past tense, but instead in future tense. The author of the research accounts this to romanticising a utopian and futuristic Europe instead of a previous Europe divided by separate nations. This exemplifies how a deviation in theme can appear in a sub-genre, the different themes bringing new sets of registers as well (Motschenbacher, 2016).

The origin of a genre is thus found in common contexts and conventions. The sub-genre is, then, additionally found to be mimicking earlier conventions from a source, other genres, or communicative structures. Distinctive deviations must occur to verify the status of the genre as a sub-genre. In explaining unifying features in Old English Advent lyrics, Adair says “[t]hat is to say, any structural similarities between the lyrics are explicable as (merely) a fortuitous resemblance arising from the similar structures of the source texts” (Adair, 2011, p. 827). Adair points out that in small scale it is showcased how certain features are fortified using a source as framework. This argues that there is a certain practicality involved to sub-genres, where mimicking what is available diminishes the effort to create new conventions; that is if they were not chosen for other reasons, such as for being aesthetically pleasing or convenient in other regards. The source in this case are poems written prior to the latter poems, both sets sharing themes and contexts. Similarly, Tarlinskaja and Oganeseva (1986) found in their quantitative study of romantic lyrical poems that certain metrical and stylistic structures were commonly administered when processing certain themes. On the sonnet they say “... it has strong associations with a particular theme, ‘love’, treated in a stylistically particular way by invoking a conventional set of images and stylistic devices” (Tarlinskaja & Oganeseva, 1986, p. 1). Thus, it is inviting to think that certain stylistic sets are more or less attractive to different genres, which, as discussed, are bound to context and conventions.

3.3 Ballad Studies

Genre studies focusing on the ballad have been ongoing since the 19th century, with Francis Child (1904) being one of the catalysts for the study of the genre. After Child made the study

of these lyrics easier with his printed collections of historical ballads, literature scholars and linguists began exploring the genre. This was, largely, because conventions could now be recognised in several works simultaneously and conveniently. The structural format of the ballad is like that of poetry, because both use the same prosody (poetic metre). It additionally bears strong resemblance to western folklore and fairy tales by having similar conventions in modes of narration (Würzbach, 1986), which highlights evidence of the mimicking, or sharing, of stylistic traditions earlier in history.

Würzbach (1983) and Kekäläinen (1983) have both done exceptional work in the contemporary linguistic identification of the ballad, with Kekäläinen providing the most extensive research. Identification in this context means finding uniting conventions that allow the categorisation of lyrics belonging to the genre. Together, they have specified that a series of features, or conventions, can be distinguished within the genre. These conventions will be represented in some detail in the theoretical framework of this study. However, both studies point to the fact that these conventions cannot be recognised individually. Instead, they must be viewed in how they are integrated with other conventions. Thus, features such as stanza, repetition, and rhyme do not automatically classify as belonging to the ballad, but their cooperative organisation is distinctive.

Additional studies to map out uniting components of the ballad have been made by scholars such as Dick Leith (1988), who focused on the pragmatic functionality in the modes of narration instead of stylistics and structure. Because of this, one of the conclusions of Leith's study suggested that the ballad should be treated as a drama instead of a type of lyric or a narrative. This means his study concluded that the performance of the ballad had to be considered when interpreting the lyrics, as they were indeed meant to be performed, not read. Kekäläinen (1983) sets aside the performance element of the ballad in her stylistic assessment of it, since she looks at only its textual samples, as the study of structure in lyrics is bound to do in most cases.

The scholars mentioned above have used different approaches and methods to achieve their results. Kekäläinen (1983) predominantly used a type of discourse analysis to find uniting factors in the texts. The study states its goal is to produce "... regional catalogues of ballad style ..." (Kekäläinen, 1983, p. *Preface*) Likewise, Würzbach (1983) used a qualitative approach to look at the ballad, but instead this research "... attempted to sketch out a description of the ballad as a genre in terms of typology and history ..." (Würzbach, 1983, p. 62). Furthermore, in her study an attempt to establish the relationship between genre and social context was explored by listing linking communication systems, such as politics,

economy and culture (Würzbach, 1983). Finally, Leith (1988) carried out another type of discourse analysis and instead looked at the performative functionalities, with focus on devices such as speech acts, direct speech and patterns of words; the function of the different narrative devices and the effect they had.

3.4 Celtic Music

Genre identification within modern Celtic music has not been done in any large scale in terms of lyrics. Primarily, this genre has broadly been treated by social and cultural studies, as well as in ethnomusicology, focusing little on linguistic features. Shannon L. Thornton (1998), Alistair Mutch (2007), Malcom Chapman (1994) and Duck Baker (2012) are some of the researchers who have discussed the genre-phenomenon that is Celtic music. The focus of these studies, as mentioned, has not been the lyrics but the phenomena behind the popularity and birth of the genre: which again highlights the significance of this study.

On the emergence of Celtic music in the contemporary musical scene, there are several theories. A common conception is that Celtic music is often attributed to either Breton in France or, more commonly, the British Isles (Chapman, 1994). Baker (2012) makes claim that a lot of Celtic music can be attributed to the romanticising of the past by Anglophonic countries. Thornton (1998) builds on this and argues that economic powers from the music industry commercialise the sentimentality and fascination with Anglophonic, often Irish and often ancestral (to the listener), roots. Thornton argues that “[t]here is an awareness on the part of marketers and composers that label music “Celtic” has the effect of conveying and perhaps instilling a particular quality – poetic, aesthetic, imaginal – that “Irish” or even “Gaelic” cannot” (Thornton, 1998, p. 265). This is discussed by Mutch (2007), who believes that the label *Celtic* is often used collectively to talk about folk music from all the British Isles, instead of individual nations. Hence, there is agreement among scholars that some sense of nationality and nostalgia has played a part in the formation of the genre. With the help from the music industry, *Celtic Music* has then been introduced to the market, giving initiation to fortify conventions within the genre. Evidentially, there is no official collection of conventions belonging to the genre, at this point.

Thus, some connection can be drawn to Motschenbacher’s (2016) study, regarding the connection between context and genre. Whereas the sub-genre to pop that was developed in Europe was altered from the source by its surroundings, the same could be applied to Celtic music. If Celtic music is indeed a product from British or Anglophonic elements primarily, then the integrating of the ballad structure, which is very much a part of British folk music,

would be plausible. Indeed, it would follow Adair's (2011) theory of mimicking source material, in this case the ballad, and applying new content to it. It would additionally mirror the effect in Tarlinskaja's and Oganeseva's (1986) attribution to using a format that invites certain themes and topics. How, and if, these imitations appear will be explored in the result section of this study.

In conclusion, there is still a gap in that the lyrics of Celtic music have not been studied. There lies the significance of this study: it will initiate the studying of a genre so far unexplored lyrically, try out existing methods and theories for genre studies, and hopefully result in a research that will be useful for future studies.

4. Research Aims and Research Questions

There is still much room to expand within the study of Celtic music and its lyrics. This research has chosen to start with a sub-type of the lyrics within the genre. The sub-type is lyrics that could be recognised according to a more general perception of the ballad. They would be resembling the traditional ballad while adhering to those conventions belonging to the Celtic genre which are, then, outside the framework of the traditional ballad. This means that not every lyric found under the label *Celtic* will be targeted by the claims of this study. Definition, comparison and discussion are thus core components for this research and have led to the following aims and questions:

- Can structural patterns, stylistic devices and lexical features from the traditional folk (Anglophonic) ballad be recognised in a selection of contemporary lyrics in Celtic music?
- If so, will the results reflect the context and surroundings of the genre, as well as a presence of national influences?

5. Methodology

5.1 Overview

The approach of this study will carry out a qualitative, empirical, and comparative study led by discourse analysis: proceeding with an investigation of selected lyrics and comparing them with traditional ballads. Hopefully this will provide enough room for a well-organised discussion. Previous bodies of research on the folk ballad will additionally be incorporated for a better understanding of the material used for comparison.

5.2 Data

The data presented in the study derives from several sources. These include the authors of the Celtic lyrics and the collection of traditional ballads. Lyrics were chosen by those who were deemed appropriate within the genre. The criteria for appropriate in this study is how distinct the artists were to the genre, if they were recognised as representative of the genre and popularity based on sales records as well as status on streaming-services such as Google Play Music and Spotify. Three lyrics were collected from the artists Loreena McKennitt, Enya and Celtic Woman. The lyrics were all collected from the official booklets belonging to the albums to ensure that the textual version was as intended by the artists. As for the traditional ballads, this research is using the collections of historical ballads by Francis J. Child, which are verified sources based on the status within the research community surrounding ballads. Child's collections of ballads were used as the foundation for the definitions drawn up by Kekäläinen (1986), whom the analysis will use as a primary reference. All lyrics posed for the research can be found in the appendix.

5.3 Theoretical Framework

The devices that this section treats represent the points of comparison that will be applied in the result section. They derive primarily from Kekäläinen (1983), who lists in her comprehensive study of traditional ballads that these are integral in the genre.

5.3.1 Stanza

The use of stanzas is the very foundation of the ballad which it shares with other types of writing that uses metre and verse. The analysis will be concerned with the realisation of stanzas within the lyrics and their cooperative organisation with the other devices, such as repetition, rhyme, formula, etc. The most commonly associated stanza of the folk ballad is the quatrain stanza, that is, a stanza consisting of four lines. Stanzas exist within the ballad to adhere with the rhythm and the melody and to create structure. Within the ballad stanza, the lines would normally either show common measure, where the lines alternate between short and long, or long measure where the lines are equally long.

The different measures of the stanza are often associated with stress. In folk ballads there is an internal structure of the lines that dictate the patterns of metrical stress, which may vary in ballads compared to stress patterns in ordinary speech. This is important to recognise as the process of scansion might give faulty results otherwise. Scansion is the name of the method to calculate the rhythm, stress pattern and prosody of a line. Furthermore, the common (also known as the ballad metre) and long measure would synchronise with the number of stresses, giving a result of certain amount of stresses per line. This shows another example of how

these conventions must be viewed in their cooperative organisation, rather than individually. The verses consist of stanzas covering four lines, which in turn are divided into feet or metre. Commonly, there would be 3 and 4 stresses for a common measure and 4 stresses per line for the long measure stanza. However, this was not always the case as additional stresses were known to appear either as a pause, sounds that were not written in lyrics (“*O*”, for example) or other musical devices. Such stresses could also be imbedded in rhythm or instrumental appearances and are called *metrical fillers*.

Iambic metre is the dominant form in the traditional ballad, that is where an unstressed syllable is followed by a stressed syllable. However, the iambic metre was not exclusive, as stressed syllables could indeed initiate lines. For instance (The first stress is underlined): Hound's bluid was neer sae red (Child, 1904, p. 24). The deviation of the initial stress makes the metre trochaic instead. However, deviations are known to occur, especially where unstressed syllables occur in clusters before or after the stressed syllables, rendering the verse to, for instance, become dactylic instead (Kekäläinen, 1983).

To finalise, along with the features previously mentioned, the ballad's claim on the stanza is distinct in how it narrates. The lines, in pairs, are generally obligated to present a fundamental idea, except if they are a part of an internal refrain. Furthermore, it is most often essential that the sequence of information is finished in the stanza and not continued in the latter (Kekäläinen, 1983).

5.3.2 Repetition and Refrain

Both repetition and refrain show a significant role in the overall structure of the ballad.

Stanzas and repetitions are some of the conventions that are obvious to the ballad and their realisation is thus important when comparing them to modern lyrics. Refrains, however, are known to not always appear in historical ballads. A refrain in the context of the ballad is either imbedded in the stanzas(internal), whereas certain lines are repeated in every stanza; alternatively, the refrains are external. If they are external, then, instead, whole stanzas are repeated according to a returning pattern. The refrains and repetitions can then come either in whole stanzas, individual words, whole sentences or clauses. The purpose of repetitions and refrains has been presumed to give the listener a rest and present a section without adding new information (Kekäläinen, 1983). Alternatively, its usage could relate to creating emotional effect or to serve as indication of the ballad having a specific purpose, incantation, for example. Incantation, or chanting, would be plausible contexts as many ballads indeed had religious or supernatural themes. Both Würzbach (1983) and Kekäläinen (1983) keep

reminding that repetition served originally another purpose when the ballad was primarily oral: namely, easing memorisation of the lyrics. Memorisation is indeed believed to be a common origin for many of the conventions used in the ballad (Kekäläinen, 1983).

Repetitions would often overlap in function and device compartment, as they can be either refrain or a part of a reoccurring formula – as well as an ornamental component tailored to fit the tune, lyrics or metrical fillers. Being a feature that can be both ornamental and practical, the usage can add both to the structural pattern of either individual stanzas or whole lyrics. To summarise this section on repetition, it is of value to recognise that repetitions do not have to be verbatim but are instead flexible in how they appear. Including refrains in some cases. (Kekäläinen, 1983) A sub-category to repetition and refrain, with a more outlined design is the formula, which will be introduced in the next section.

5.3.3 Formula

Formula, sometimes called prefabricated linguistic unit, are within genre studies important as they recognise repetition and events that are not verbatim. Identifying these formulas is vital in the process of identifying similarities between the two genres. Formulas can be divided into several categories. They can be either *structural formulas*, *sentence-type formulas*, *part-of-speech formulas*, or *thematic formulas* (Kekäläinen, 1983) with other sub-types included. Each of these types of formulas entails the use of different elements, such as spatial reference, reporting functions and introduction sequences. Several of these sub-types of formula will be exemplified in the result section. The sub-types allow the categorising of sequences according to how they appear and their function. Kekäläinen on the formula: “The essential characteristics of formulas are their frequency, meaning and rhythm. Their further characteristics, such as length, depend on the type of verse and prose in which they serve as metrical units” (Kekäläinen, 1983, p. 4). Würzbach (1983) adds that formulas are not only lexical, structural or common phrases but also characteristics in characters. However, lexical and structural formulas are more preferred in genre analyses as these are easier to recognise.

5.3.4 Rhyme

The ballad is distinct for using the rhyme pattern ABCB, ABAB and AABB. Applied to the quatrain stanza, it is common for the 1st and 3rd line to rhyme, as well as the 2nd and 4th line. The rhyme patterns recognised as traditional can be further identified when looked at in their cooperative organisation with other conventions. The masculine rhyme is, in traditional settings, the dominant form: which is when the rhyming occurs on the last syllable of the word. In the tradition of folk ballads, the end-rhymes were the most frequent: that is, where

the rhyme would end in the object or last lexical item. It is worth noting that there was no exact science to the rhyme patterns of the ballad and thus the quality of the rhymes is known to differ. Invalid rhymes in traditional ballads can also be miscategorised due to performance elements, where pronunciation or melody dictates the sound otherwise (Kekäläinen, 1983).

5.3.5 Vocabulary and Word-order

The register and grammatical conventions of the historical ballads were known to differ in some areas to that of contemporary English at respective times. Kekäläinen (1983) discusses the presence of archaic language in her study and dwells on its usage in her analysis. Archaic in the context of folk ballads means that the language used when the lyrics were written could already during the writing be considered archaic. The overall language in the Celtic lyrics is contemporary English. Archaisms in the context of modern lyrics would mainly consist of selected words from early middle English, often related to the language of Shakespeare. Archaism beyond this era is not deemed probable. The analysis will not be concerned with identifying individual words that could either be a form of archaic language but indeed some ballad-distinct phrases and clauses in general.

In regard to word-order, the ballad displayed a phraseology that were distinct to the genre in many ways. They are believed to have been shaped to complement the rhythm and have similar functions as those of repetition and formula: ornamental with some usefulness to the narrative. Word-order conventions are speculated to have been inherited by tradition and with the continuance of the folk ballad as a genre. Some that stand out more in frequency is the post-nominal placement of the adjective and rearranging the position of the subject and verb, as well as fronting. (Kekäläinen, 1983)

5.4 Procedure

The procedure of the analysis will be carried out in the following steps: identification of features in the lyrics, comparison with framework (traditional ballad) and discussion of the results. The research aims to give approximately corresponding number of examples from each group of lyrics: the folk ballads and the Celtic lyrics.

5.5 Limitations

This research is only concerned with a small number of lyrics and expanding the scope of lyrics, using a corpus-tool in its analysis, would make the results more comprehensive. Furthermore, the conventions looked at are macro-conventions - a study on the micro-conventions would allow for more precise results. Micro-conventions could include speech-patterns, lexical items, character portrayal, pragmatic functionalities and similar features.

Outside the field of this study, however, there is more that could be examined within this specific topic. Celtic lyrics remains largely unexplored and excluding the folk ballad and including linguistic dimensions, such as, the usage and heritage from the Celtic languages would be valuable. Additionally, the stylistics of the whole genre and not sub-types (as the conventions looked for in this research does not cover all Celtic lyrics) could be targeted for analysis. This could be done in either qualitative or quantitative ways.

6. Results

As stated in procedure, the treatment of the results will follow the same order as shown in theoretical framework, namely: stanza, formula, rhyme, repetition and refrain, and vocabulary and word-order. After a brief summary examples, from both sets of lyrics, will be provided along with a discussion of the data. The results aim to begin with showing similarities and finishing each feature with contrasts. Furthermore, samples will be numbered for a clear referential system which means each sample will be given a number as will each line within the sample. Some samples will be referenced several times in the text and will thus at some instances be underlined for future purposes.

6.1 Stanza

The stanza-format seems to be dominant in the selected lyrics written by Celtic musicians, especially the quatrain stanza. Below, in example 1, Loreena McKennitt adheres to the classic quatrain stanza in her song *The Mummies' Dance*. It is posed to demonstrate the presence and reality of the stanza structure in the exemplified lyrics.

1. 1. A garland gay we bring you here
2. And at your door we stand
3. It is a sprout well budded out
4. The work of our Lord's hand (McKennitt, 1997)

Example 2 is included to show similarity in structure with example 1, but from a traditional ballad.

2. 1. Ye cast off yer clouty coat.
2. An ye pitt one my Scarlett cloke.
3. An I will follou you just att the back,
4. Becass ye are a bonny laddie (Child, 1904, p. 606)

Both stanzas showcase one of the most standard forms of the quatrain stanza, both in terms of number of lines and length of the lines. Furthermore, the traditional *The Beggar-Laddie* and

The Mummers' Dance by McKennitt (1997) follow similar conventions concerning the numbers of stanzas in the lyrics. In McKennitt's *The Mummer's Dance* there are 10 stanzas altogether (including the 4 external refrain stanzas). In *The Beggar-Laddie* there are 15 stanzas, but no external refrains. There are variations in all three contemporary Celtic lyrics where the length spans from six to ten stanzas. The length of the folk ballad was known to vary greatly, either being very short or very extensive. Thus, it would be safe to claim that all three lyrics fit within the frame of acceptable lengths within the realm of the ballad.

Deviations from the quatrain stanza, outside that of the external refrain, could be seen in some of the lyrics. One instance is the last stanza of Enya's (2015) *Pale Blue Grass* in example 3.

3. 1. And so I stand and gaze and so I watch
2. the maze of blues depart the day
3. Sun is high above and winds are still
4. enough and one by one they fly away
5. Sun is high above and winds are still
6. enough and one by one they fly away (Enya, 2015)

Here, the lyric deviate from its normal usage of the stanza, in that each stanza normally contains four lines. It is most likely that the repetition of the internal refrain-lines with alterations in favour of the story is used to synchronise with the melody, which indicates an advance towards the finale of the song. However, this is seen in some of the traditional ballads as well, for instance in example 4, from the song *Child Waters*:

4. 1. To-morrow, Ellen, I must forth ryde
2. Soe ffarr into the north countrye;
3. The ffairest lady that I can ffind,
4. Ellen, must goe with mee.
5. And eiiier I pray you. Child Watters,
6. Your ffootpage let me bee! (Child, 1904, p. 122)

All previous stanzas in *Child Water* consisted of four lines, whereas the last stanza was added two lines to finish the story and song: meaning, adding a final section to the lyrics for narration and closure.

6.1.1 Measure and Meter

Continuing from the stanza, verse, metre and measure will be assessed. First, I will discuss the measure. In this section they will be exclusively structurally defined, which means metre is not yet going to be treated. Examples 1, 2, 14, and 5 illustrate the classical common measure model. These samples show instances where the lines alternate between short and long, showing fidelity to the common measure.

5. 1. Who will go down to those shady groves
2. And summon the shadows there
3. And tie a ribbon on those sheltering arms
4. In the springtime of the year (McKennitt, 1997)

In example 3 and 6 the usage of the long measure is exemplified.

6. 1. A wonder stranger ne'r was known
2. Then what I now shall treat upon.
3. In Suffolk there did lately dwell
4. A farmer rich and known full well (Child, 1904, p. 593)

Hence, both measures can be identified in the Celtic lyrics. However, although two of the lyrics, namely *Pale Grass Blue* (Long measure) and *A Mummers' Dance* (Common measure) follow the measures of the traditional ballad, *Tír na nÓg* does not. Instead, Celtic Woman's (2016) song demonstrates the usage of a structure that can be recognised as a 'sapphic stanza' - which is not within the realm of the ballad and shows another measure.

On metre: the iambic metre is dominant in the historical ballad, and in a scansion of the Celtic lyrics it is indeed frequent as well. However, there are some deviations. Example 7 displays a verse from Enya's *Pale Blue Grass*. Each stress has been written in bold.

7. 1. For **seven days** they **make** the **sky** look
2. **down upon** them **as** they **go** their **way**
3. **Sun** is **high** above and **winds** are **still**
4. **enough** and **all I want to do** is **stay** (Enya, 2015)

The lyrics in *Pale Grass Blue* follows, again, the long measure, thus the stresses are equal (Kekäläinen, 1983), namely 5 per line, with an exception in the first line. There is deviation from the traditional long measure as there are 5 stresses, instead of the average 4 per line. (Kekäläinen, 1983) The deviation in the first line is possibly a metrical filler. In the segment the iambic metre is noticeable partly, but since the order of stresses are assessed as stressed

and unstressed, the verse shows trochaic features.

In *A Mummings' Dance* in the example below, the stresses vary in every other line, as it instead follows the common measure – alternating between 4 and 3 stresses per line. The stresses are written in bold.

8. 1. A **garland gay** we **bring** you **here**
2. **And at your door** we **stand**
3. **It is a sprout** well **budded out**
4. The **work** of **our** Lord's **hand** (McKennitt, 1997)

McKennitt displays a textbook example of the traditional, ballad metre (iambic). In *Tír na nÓg*, the trochaic metre is mixed with the dactylic metre and it bears some resemblance to the long measure, having four stresses per line until the last line that carries only three stresses. All the scansion examples can be found in the appendix, along with an example from *Tír na nÓg*.

6.2 Repetition

This section will focus on two types of common repetitions within the lyrics, namely the *refrain* and *repetition patterns*. Formula, also being a type of repetition, will be assessed in its own section.

6.2.1 Refrain

All three lyrics showcased the use of a refrain. Enya (2015), for instance, uses the refrain by ending every stanza with the same two lines, as showcased in example 9.3, 9.4, 9.7, and 9.8.

9. 1. For seven days they make the sky look
2. down upon them as they go their way
3. **Sun is high above and winds are still**
4. **enough and all I want to do is stay**

5. For seven nights they wait the moment
6. for the morning light to come again
7. **Sun is high above and winds are still**
8. **enough and all I want to do is stay** (Enya, 2015)

Similarly, this pattern can be found in the traditional ballad *The Cruel Brother* as showcased in example 10.2, 10.4, 10.6, and 10.8.

10. 1. A Gentleman cam oure the sea,
2. Fine flowers in the valley
3. And he has courted ladies three.
4. With the light green and the yellow

5. One o them was clad in red:
6. Fine flowers in the valley
7. He asked if she wad be his bride.
8. With the light green and the yellow (Child, 1904, p. 21)

These examples display models of refrains that would go under the *internal* refrain, as the repetition of the refrain-elements are imbedded in each stanza instead of being separate entities. In modern day, an external refrain is more commonly used, and was used, albeit infrequently, in traditional ballads as well. Two out of the three lyrics use an external refrain, which is highlighted in example 11, 12, and, 13, the latter being a corresponding example from Child (1898).

11. 1. We've been rambling all the night
2. And some time of this day
3. Now returning back again
4. We bring a garland gay (McKennitt, 1997)

12. 1. Sha ta co ti oh scum ne rivna
2. Sha ta co ti oh nugga tir na nog
3. Sha ta co ti oh scum ne rivna
4. Nug a tir na nog
5. Tir na nog, oh, come beyond the ancient fog,
6. Tir na nog, oh, come with me to tir na nog (Celtic Woman, 2016)

13. 1. My plaid awa, my plaid awa,
2. And ore the hill and far awa,
3. And far awa to Norrowa,
4. My plaid shall not be blown awa (Child, 1904, p. 3)

The presence of an external refrain is, again, rare in the traditional ballads, but it does exist. An interesting note is Celtic Woman's usage of a fantasy(fictional) language for their refrain, as it indeed could be interpreted to have a certain effect on the theme and character of the song. While McKennitt and Enya adheres to stylistic features of the folk ballad refrain, Celtic Woman deviates, and their refrain would be identified as outside the framework of the traditional ballad.

6.2.2 Repetition Patterns

The ballad is known for a consistent usage of several types of repetition, some of which will be treated in this section. Kekäläinen (1983) states that recognising these different types is dependent on the categorising of them. This can be done by acknowledging their position in the stanzas (still discussing the quatrain stanzas). In the example 14.4 and 14.6, a typical occurrence of repetition, that is not a refrain, in the popular ballad can be seen in *Bewick and Graham*. In example 15.1 and 5.4 a corresponding example from McKennitt (1997) is provided.

14. 1. When he came home, there did he espy,
2. A loving sight to spy or see,
3. There did he espy his own three sons,
4. **Young Christy Grahame, the foremost was he**

5. There did he espy his own three sons,
6. **Young Christy Grahame, the foremost was he:**
7. 'Where have you been all day, father,
8. That no counsel you would take by me?' (Child, 1904, p. 499)

15. 1. **When** in the springtime of the year
2. **When** the trees are crowned with leaves
3. **When** the ash and oak and the birch and yew
4. Are dressed in ribbons fair (McKennitt, 1997)

These would be examples of the usage of repetition that occurs outside the same stanza, as repetition can also occur in the same line(s) or stanza. The repetitions are highlighted in all of the examples (except in 5.4).

6.3 Formula

Since repetition in its pure form is easily identified, the focus will instead shift to a type of repetition that is highly functional in the lyrics, namely the formula. In the investigation of the texts, there are several functional devices under the category formula to be identified. These are shown according to which type they occur as when compared to the traditional ballad. As mentioned, the formulas carry different distinctions and they appear differently because of this. Below is a series of examples from *Tír na nÓg* by Celtic Woman that demonstrates one type of formula.

16. Come my love our worlds would part ...
17. Clear the way, I will take you home ...
18. Run with me, have a look around ...
19. Stay with me and be mine my love ... (Celtic Woman, 2016)

Celtic Woman demonstrates a formula that in a ballad-context would be classified as a sentence-type formula (Kekäläinen, 1983). The phrases exemplified occur at least once in every stanza, sometimes more. They are requests that signal movement in the narrative. They properly manifest the reality of the formula in ballad lyrics. The reoccurrence allows pillars for memorising the lyrics, they link the stanzas, create emotional effect and brings the chain of events forward. Corresponding examples are found in the traditional ballad *Erlinton*:

20. O feare me not, thou prettie mayde ...
21. Where dost thou dwell, my prettie maide?
22. And whither goest thou, pretty maide?
23. Stand backe, stand backe, my pretty maide (Child, 1965, p. 110)

Erlinton and *Tír na nÓg* utilise their formulas similarly, where the sentence-type is the preferred model and the functionality is similar in that both samples demonstrates requests. Note that the formulas are underlined in both sets of samples. Furthermore, the placement within the lyrics show fidelity to the metrical conditions (Even though Celtic Woman follows a non-ballad metre) of the melody, which is entailed within the usage of formulas.

In addition to the previous example, all three lyrics possessed some type formula that could be recognised in folk ballads, in *Pale Grass Blue* the part-of-speech formula is demonstrated below:

24. For seven days they make the sky look ...
25. For seven nights they wait the moment (Enya, 2015)

Samples of comparison are presented from the traditional ballad *Thomas Rymer*:

26. For forty days and forty nights ...

27. And till seven years were past and gone (Child, 1904, p. 64)

In these excerpts, the sentence-formula is similarly used for marking the passing of time. The formulas are, again, underlined.

One final demonstration of the formula will be taken from the lyrics of *The Mummies' Dance*. Below are examples of thematic formulas found in the lyrics:

28. The shadows of the trees appear

29. Who will go down to those shady groves

30. And summon the shadows there

31. When all the shades are gone (McKennitt, 1997)

A similar comparison can be made in the traditional ballad *Faire Anne*:

32. Whan I ha born you seven sons ...

33. O seven fu fair sons I have born ... (Child, 1904, p. 121)

Here, both lyrics deal with formulas connected to events belonging to a theme – all instances being underlined.

6.4 Rhyme

Next in the analysis is rhyme. In the three lyrics examined in the research, different rhyme patterns were followed. In the *The Mummer's Dance*, the rhyme pattern followed ABCB end rhymes, with masculine rhymes. *Pale Grass Blue*, instead, follows an AABB internal rhyme pattern, mixing feminine and masculine rhymes. Lastly, *Tír na nÓg*, follows a strict end rhyme pattern of AABA with predominantly masculine rhymes. The deviations that exists in the rhyme patterns are not enough to exclude the conventional membership of the ballad. As typical rhyme-patterns for the ballad has already been stated, no comparison will be exemplified.

6.5 Vocabulary and Word-order

The final section of the results is dedicated to the word-order of the lyrics. McKennitt displays below two instances where she used the post-nominal placement of the adjective.

34. We bring a garland gay

35. Are dressed in ribbons fair (McKennitt, 2017)

A similar excerpt from example from a traditional ballad:

36. Ye dinna seem a lady gay (Child, 1965, p. 430)

Along with demonstrating the usage of the post-nominal adjective, McKennitt also chose to mimic her register to some degree to that of the ballad, which naturally uses a more archaic language. The examples are underlined.

Moreover, Kekäläinen (1983) notes that the occurrence of the absolute fronting of the verb, often the auxiliary or be-verb, was frequent in popular ballads. This was done primarily to bring the narration forward and complement the rhyme. Samples 16 – 19 introduces examples of verbal-fronting. In the traditional lyrics, examples from the traditional ballads follows below. Note that the verb is underlined in all of the samples.

37. Count, maid, and there be 9 (Child, 1904, p. 40)

38. 'Come, tell to me noe, James,' she said ... (Child, 1904, p. 244)

39. 'Hold up, hold, James Hatley,' he cry'd ... (Child, 1904, p. 245)

40. Were playing at the chess (Child, 1904, p. 68)

41. Shall get the bairn's name (Child, 1904, p. 68)

These samples from both lyrics showcases the presence of the fronting of certain verbs.

In addition to verbal fronting, the fronting of adverbials and the conjunction *and* are, for the same reasons as absolute fronting of the verb, common. They are in fact more common in frequency than that of absolute verbal fronting. Previous examples have already dealt with *and*-phrases, in examples 1.2, 2.2, 3.1, and 5.2 (To name a few)– including both contemporary and traditional examples. The instances are underlined. As for the adverbial-phrases, these can be identified in McKennitt's (1997) lyrics, where several lines start with *when* and *in* (15.1., 15.2, 15.3, 4.1, e.g.) Corresponding examples can be found in:

42. When the king he was from home, (Child, 1904, p. 244)

43. There's neer a laird about your ha (Child, 1904, p. 68)

All instances are underlined. Granted that these occurrences are possible and common outside the ballad prose (In the English language in general), they stand as important pieces in the comparison and in the cooperative organisation with other conventions.

7. Conclusion

This research has carried out a comparative analysis on Celtic lyrics where the research aims were to see if these lyrics carried any stylistic and structural similarities with the traditional

folk ballad. The study used a set of conventions picked from the ballad genre and assessed the similarities and differences with the collection of lyrics chosen for this study.

Several similarities could be underlined in the analysis. The very foundation of the ballad, the use of stanzas, is also found in the Celtic lyrics. Even to the degree of using the quatrain stanza with fidelity. Moreover, metre and measure bore striking resemblance with that of the ballad; scansion showed similarities in both stress-count and length of lines. The use of rhyme, word-order, and repetition gave strong evidence on influence from the ballad, as several patterns could be recognised and exemplified in the results section.

Whereas a majority of the comparisons came out positive in favor of a resemblance between the genres, some foreign features to the ballad were found. The highest count of contrasts were found in Celtic Woman's *Tír na nÓg*, whose stanzas and metre differed and whose refrain was asymmetrical (meaning it didn't adhere to the quatrain stanza). The usage of an external refrain in a majority of the lyrics is not a strong contrast, as it did occur in the folk ballad, but since it was the least favoured type of refrain in the ballad it still underlines a difference in conventions. Finally the analysis found that the metre and stress-count deviated slightly in all of the lyrics from what is generally accepted as the standard. However, whether this is to be considered a contrast or a dynamic use of the ballad's framework, as this is seen in the folk ballads frequently, is not given.

In conclusion, this study has been able to prove that a bold influence from that of the ballad can be found in a selection of Celtic lyrics. Celtic music is, as earlier stated, primarily associated with Anglophonic roots. The ballad, being a staple in the folk music traditions belonging to the Anglophonic communities are thus likely to be an influence on the lyricists. The features that deviated from the ballad would be attributed as necessary for making the genre unique and were to be expected from the beginning of the research.

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Appendices

Appendix A – The Celtic Lyrics

All the lyrics used in this research are available in this section.

A.1 Enya

Pale Grass Blue (Enya, 2015)

A silver hue on wings of blue as all
around me shadows dance in light
Sun is high above and winds are still
enough and all I want to do is stay

And everywhere the blues are moving
in the air I see them in their flight
Sun is high above and winds are still'
enough and all I want to do is stay

For seven days they make the sky look
down upon them as they go their way
Sun is high above and winds are still
enough and all I want to do is stay

For seven nights they wait the moment
for the morning light to come again
Sun is high above and winds are still
enough and all I want to do is stay

And one by one they wander one by
one meander never go astray
Sun is high above and winds are still
enough and all I want to do is stay

And so I stand and gaze and so I watch
the maze of blues depart the day

Sun is high above and winds are still
enough and one by one they fly away
Sun is high above and winds are still
enough and one by one they fly away

A.2 Celtic Woman

Tír na nÓg (Celtic Woman, 2016)

Sha ta co ti oh scum ne rivna
Sha ta co ti oh nugga tir na nog
Sha ta co ti oh scum ne rivna
Nug a tir na nog.

Come my love our worlds would part,
The gods will guide us across the dark.
Come with me and be mine my love,
Stay and break my heart.

From the shores through the ancient mist,
You bear the mark of my elven kiss.
Clear the way, I will take you home
To eternal bliss.

Sha ta co ti oh scum ne rivna
Sha ta co ti oh nugga tir na nog
Sha ta co ti oh scum ne rivna
Nug a tir na nog
Sha ta co ti oh scum ne rivna
Sha ta co ti oh nugga tir na nog
Sha ta co ti oh scum ne rivna
Nug a tir na nog

Tir na nog, oh, come beyond the ancient fog,
Tir na nog, oh, come with me to tir na nog.

Far away from the land you knew,
The dawn of day reaches out to you.
Though it feels like a fairy tale,
All of this is true.

Run with me, have a look around.
We build our life of a sacred ground.
Come my love, our world's may part,
We'll be safe and sound.

Sha ta co ti oh scum ne rivna
Sha ta co ti oh nugga tir na nog
Sha ta co ti oh scum ne rivna
Nug a tir na nog.
Tir na nog, oh, come beyond the ancient fog,
Tir na nog, oh, come with me to tir na nog.

Time won't follow the path we came.
The world you left, it forgot your name.
Stay with me and be mine my love,
Spare my heart the pain.

Sha ta co ti oh scum ne rivna
Sha ta co ti oh nugga tir na nog
Sha ta co ti oh scum ne rivna
Nug a tir na nog
Sha ta co ti oh scum ne rivna
Sha ta co ti oh nugga tir na nog
Sha ta co ti oh scum ne rivna
Nug a tir na nog
Tir na nog, oh, come beyond the ancient fog,
Tir na nog, oh, come with me to tir na nog.
Come with me to tir na nog.

A.3 Loreena McKennitt

The Mummers' Dance (McKennitt, 1997)

When in the springtime of the year
When the trees are crowned with leaves
When the ash and oak and the birch and yew
Are dressed in ribbons fair

When owls call the breathless moon
In the blue veil of the night
The shadows of the trees appear
Amidst the lantern light

We've been rambling all the night
And some time of this day
Now returning back again
We bring a garland gay

Who will go down to those shady groves
And summon the shadows there
And tie a ribbon on those sheltering arms
In the springtime of the year

The songs of birds seem to fill the wood
That when the fiddler plays
All their voices can be heard
Long past their woodland days

We've been rambling all the night
And some time of this day
Now returning back again
We bring a garland gay

And so they linked their hands and danced
Round in circles and in rows
And so the journey of the night descends
When all the shades are gone

A garland gay we bring you here
And at your door we stand
It is a sprout well budded out
The work of our Lord's hand

We've been rambling all the night
And some time of this day
Now returning back again
We bring a garland gay

We've been rambling all the night
And some time of this day
Now returning back again
We bring a garland gay

Appendix B – Scansion Results

In this section the results of the scansion are presented. One stanza from each lyric have been analysed below. The order of the stanzas are *Pale Grass Blue*, *Tír na nÓg* and *The Mummings' Dance*. Stressed syllables are written in bold text.

1. For **seven** **days** they **make** the **sky** look
2. **down** **upon** them **as** they **go** their **way**
3. **Sun** is **high** above and **winds** are **still**
4. **enough** and **all** I **want** to **do** is **stay** (Enya, 2015)

2. **Time** won't **follow** the **path** we **came**.
The **world** you **left**, it forgot your **name**.
Stay with **me** and be **mine** my **love**
Spare my **heart** the **pain** (Celtic Woman, 2016)

3. A **garland gay** we **bring** you **here**
2. **And at your door** we **stand**
3. It is a **sprout** well **budded out**
4. The **work** of **our** Lord's **hand** (McKennitt, 1997)