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Mythology in Cultural Practice: A Methodological Framework for Historical Analysis

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Abstract: This paper presents a methodological framework for addressing variation and change in mythology within a cultural environment. Mythology is approached in terms of a 'symbolic matrix', which provides a semiotic context for mythic discourse. Different formal 'integers' of mythology are distinguished. 'Dialects' and 'registers' of mythology are introduced along with an approach to 'positioning' within the symbolic matrix.

In recent decades, research on mythology has struggled increasingly with the problem of living variation in historical cultures and how this should be addressed. The present article sets out an approach to mythology that can be applied to any cultural arena and calibrated in both temporal and cultural-geographic scope according to the research questions asked and the material available. This is a usage-based approach to mythology as a special type of semiotic phenomenon. It is designed to take into consideration both synchronic and diachronic local and regional variations in mythology. The same social processes and practices that enable continuities also necessarily produce variation as an historical outcome. The equation of continuity and variation is affected by different social and historical factors including contacts and conversions. It is necessary to bear in mind that these are processes that take place in communities and networks of embodied individuals, even where the specific processes are ambiguously remote in time and the individuals have been rendered anonymous. A specific aim in the development of this approach was to provide a methodological framework equipped to address these processes and the active uses of mythology by agents operating in them. The approach is therefore equipped to address social variation at the level of practices and group identities that may exist within a single community,

even where that variation is at the level of different religions. Equipping the approach to be a functional tool in synchronic and diachronic investigations of either situation-specific uses of mythology or broad social developments has required theorizing mythology in a way that can move beyond many of the limitations of earlier approaches.

This approach addresses mythology in terms of what I call a *symbolic matrix*, a term which refers to the constitutive elements of a mythology or mythologies in a cultural environment and conventions for their combination (see also Frog 2014a; 2014d). Rather than seeking to attend to 'a mythology' as a single, static thing, this approach attends to the symbolic resources through which mythology is manifested and functions. As a usage-based approach, it attends especially to interfaces between mythology and social practices or sets of practices. It acknowledges the potential for mythology to vary between different practices – types of variation that are customarily eclipsed by images of 'a mythology' as uniform, homogeneous and atemporal. The scope of the symbolic matrix under consideration can be calibrated to a 'cultural mythology' or a 'religion', but attending to the matrix of resources helps avoid the presumption that 'a mythology' is exclusive of 'other mythologies'. This is essential for considering diverse variations related to contacts, such as those discussed

below. A focus here is on is the problem of how to take into account different perspectives that coexist within a community on the same elements of mythology.

The present discussion briefly outlines what is meant here by 'mythology' and what is referred to as a symbolic matrix. A review then follows of some formal differences between certain types of 'integers' in that matrix (i.e. unitary signifying elements such as images, motifs, etc.). Distinguishing these elements make it easier to observe and analyze what is happening in specific cases under discussion. Examples will be provided of variation between perspectives on symbols of mythology. Different perspectives will be considered, both under conditions of encounters between religions and also between different social practices. *Registers of mythology* is then introduced as a tool to account for both of these types of variation as different forms of the same phenomenon. In accord with interests of the readership of *RMN Newsletter*, emphasis is on pre-modern environments rather than modern cultural arenas.[1] Examples are centrally drawn from Old Norse and Finnic cultures.

The Problem
Before turning to the problem of synchronic variation, it is useful to highlight mythology's capacity for long-term continuities, which is a necessary counterpoint for considering variation. This historical endurance parallels that of language, which is why it becomes reasonable to talk about 'Indo-European mythology' or 'Uralic mythology': just as the words and grammar of language have a continuity spanning thousands of years, so too do symbols and structures of mythology.[2] Language and mythology have somehow been paired through the history of different cultures until they were documented in the forms in which they have become known. This does not mean that Hungarian and Finno-Karelian mythologies are the same any more than the respective Uralic languages. It also does not mean that Finno-Karelian mythology is any more homogeneous than the dialects of Finnish and Karelian languages. Building on the analogy of mythology to language, Anna-Leena Siikala (2012: 15) has proposed that we

should discuss 'dialects' of mythology as a means of talking about this sort of variation in much the same way we talk about dialects of language. This type of analogy for considering mythology provides a valuable tool for thinking about variation.

Languages and dialects of language do not evolve in isolation: they are affected by loans and other interference from contacts with different languages and dialects. Mythologies are correspondingly affected by contacts with other mythologies and the practices with which those mythologies are interfaced. Viewing a mythology as a coherent, homogeneous and exclusive system leads one to imagine that Christianity encountered a more or less coherent mythology – and thus religion – when it arrived in Finland or Scandinavia. The various consequences of such an encounter that produce new combinations of mythological material have been described with terms like 'syncretism', 'religious pluralism' and 'acculturation'. Such outcomes have been conceived of as something like a creolization of two idealized religions with their associated mythologies. The researcher then seeks to untangle which elements derive from which religion or how they work together. However, this sort of approach easily marginalizes and devalues the hybrids of this contact (or collision): they appear as aberrations between two ideal images. A particular concern that I want to address here is the social perception of different mythologies – the perception that leads to the assimilation or manipulation of symbols associated with one perspective on a mythology by people viewing the same symbols from a different perspective. This perception may be from the perspective of an entirely different religion, as in an encounter between Christians and non-Christians, but it can also occur where different groups or specialists have different perspectives on (what we assume to be) the same mythology.

A distinction between 'mythology' and 'religion' is also warranted here. These tend to get blurred in comparisons of 'Christianity' to the 'mythology' of a culture or community in the North. Mythology and religion should better be viewed as distinct but complementary categories. If we follow the

analogy of mythology to language, the elements like images, motifs and stories along with the structures and conventions for their use and combination can be viewed as a parallel to the lexicon and grammar of a language. In other words, mythology is like another system for communication, representation, labelling and interpretation; it is a system that functions symbolically rather than linguistically.[3] In contrast, *religion* can be broadly considered as a type of register of practice (cf. Agha 2007) that has developed through inter-generational transmission, is characterized by mythology, and entails an ideology and worldview. This approach to religion views it as a metasemiotic entity – a system of practices and behaviors (extending to social groups with hierarchies and multiple roles) associated with mythology and that is socially recognizable as a particular religion. Thus, individuals exhibiting certain behaviors, practices and associated symbols are viewed as associated with a particular religion, and that identification associates the practitioner with the broader range of practices and behaviours, and the worldview of that religion, as well as associating them with other practitioners of that religion as a register of practice. 'Christianity' is not simply a mythology, but a religion that entails a socially recognizable religious identity. The link established between a religion and a mythology allows the metasemiotic entity of religion to be recognized through characteristic elements of that mythology, and individuals identified with a religion become associated with its emblematic symbols of practice and mythology. Although religion and religious identity are topics of discussion beyond the scope of the present paper, it is important to emphasize that, according to the present approach, mythology remains a signification system, whereas religion is the constellation of practices and behaviors interfaced with mythology that provide a fundamental frame of reference for religious identity.[4] In this respect, the conflation of mythology with religion is comparable to conflating language with ethnicity.

Distinguishing mythology and religion may not seem especially significant at first glance, but it must be stressed that

continuities of mythology may be maintained through a radical change in religion (see e.g. Frog 2013c), while a change in religion may be accomplished on the platform of an established mythology (e.g. the Reformation).

Mythic Discourse and a Symbolic Matrix
The terms 'myth' and 'mythology' have been defined in many ways. Generally speaking, approaches tend to fall into three broad categories, or some mixture between them. These broad groupings are considered according to how they define or construe 'myth' and 'mythology' as formal categories rather than according to categories of analytical and interpretive approaches (psychoanalysis, Myth-and-Ritual, literary criticism, etc.; see Doty 2000), within which implicit or explicit definitions of 'myth' and 'mythology' may vary. A brief look at these three categories is warranted as a frame of reference for the theoretical approach to mythology outlined below.

A classic approach is to define myth as a type of story. This approach has a foundation in the origin of the modern term 'myth', which was borrowed from Classical Greek *mythos* during the era of Romanticism as a word for talking about stories associated with non-Christian religions.[5] Specific definitions of 'myth' as a type of story nevertheless remain quite diverse.[6] William G. Doty has suggested that the continued emphasis on narrative is at its root "a way to stress the humanistic values of imaginative storytelling, in contrast to bloodless scientific abstraction and arithmeticizing." (Doty 2000: 41.) Defining myth as a type of story normally leads to constructing a model of mythology as something like a coherent narrative world in which gods and their adversaries have adventures according to narrative logic. This sort of approach has difficulty with, for example, gods addressed in rituals but not narrated, such as Äkräs, the Karelian god of turnips and other root vegetables (e.g. Harva 1948: 209–220): although he would seem to be a god linked to the orchestration of growth and sustenance, he remains beyond the scope of this type of mythology if there are not stories about him. The same is true of other mythic images and motifs familiar only from

ritual discourse, such as the staircase to the otherworld described in Karelian lament (Stepanova 2012: 262) or *Kipuvuori* ['Pain Mountain'], ruled by a maiden who receives and tortures aches and illnesses in Karelian incantations (Siikala 2002: 192).

A more subtle problematic site in narrative-based approaches is an inclination to (historically) reconstruct and fill out the image of a mythology into a coherent whole. This inclination easily leads to the inference that in the Old Norse eddic poem *Hárbarðsljóð*, for example, each mention of an act or adventure of Þórr and Óðinn in their competitive dialogue either *a)* refers to a narrative that was known and circulated independently as part of the broader mythology, or *b)* is an invention of the author of the poem without relevance to the mythology. This can only be tested in cases where the story is independently attested or referenced elsewhere, which tends to be the exception because extant sources are so limited. The difficulty here is that a presumption of integration is not necessarily valid. Looking at the much richer data of kalevalaic poetry, the mythic smith Ilmarinen is attributed with forging of the vault of heaven in epic contexts as an exemplar of his skill, and the motif is used in incantations as a symbol of mythic power. However, the event is never narrated and it is never presented in poems of the creation of the world – even where *The Origin of the World* is performed as part of an epic cycle in which this act is attributed to Ilmarinen.[7] In redactions of *The Singing Competition*, the demiurge Väinämöinen similarly proclaims certain motifs in the act of creating the world that are not found in performances of *The Origin of the World* by the same singers.[8] However the history of these variations is interpreted, certain elements of the mythology clearly exhibit context-specific functions even within the 'textual universe' (Tarkka 1993) of a single genre. This raises questions about how to view motifs and themes that are referenced or narrated in ritual discourse but which otherwise seem at a remove from the broader mythology.

This sort of autonomy is common for charm historiolae, such as accounts of how Jesus meets Peter (sitting on a stone) and

heals him of an ailment in so-called *Super petram* ['On a Stone'] charms (e.g. Roper 2005: 122–125), or how the River Jordan is stopped so that Jesus and John can cross it in some so-called *Flum Jordan* ['River Jordan'] charms (e.g. Roper 2005: 104–109).[9] When developing a coherent image of a mythology, narrative-based approaches have often included such historiolae. The case of the Second Merseburg Charm is famously controversial, because its first attestation is the most important Old High German source for vernacular mythology, whereas the numerous later examples are normally found with Christian actors like Jesus, Peter and Mary (e.g. Christiansen 1914; see also Beck 2003 and works there cited). For the present discussion, it makes no difference whether a Christian narrative was translated into vernacular Germanic mythology or vice versa: in either case, a function-specific narrative appears to be transposed into a different 'mythology' without clear integration into its broader narrative world. In fact, the agents in such charms seem to be easily transposable (Versnel 2002: 118) – i.e. such narrative elements can easily be transferred from the mythology of one culture or religion to another – and it is not necessary for them to interface at all with the broader mythology for users to see them as magically effective (Frankfurter 1995: 475). These are just a few examples of sites where narrative-based approaches to mythology frequently appear ill-equipped to consider what might otherwise seem to belong to 'mythology'.

Another major type of approach begins with an idea of mythology as a sort of modelling system for understanding the social, empirical and unseen worlds, how they work and why they are the way that they are. This type of approach has developed from attention to the relationship of mythology to the way people think about reality (e.g. Cassirer 1925), which led up to Branisław Malinowski's proposal that myth "is not merely a story told but a reality lived" (1926: 100). In its background is Émile Durkheim's view of religion as "a system of ideas with which the individuals represent to themselves the society of which they are members and the obscure but intimate relations which they

have with it" (1912: 225). It has been influenced by structuralism, which considered structures and their systems through which culture and cultural expressions are organized and which exhibit a *longue durée* (cf. Lévi-Strauss 1967 [1958]: 202–228; Greimas 1987 [1962]). Semiotics has been most fundamental in developing the modern approaches, among which Roland Barthes (1972 [1957]) is at the forefront. Although its implications extend to such a fundamental level that it can be challenging to unravel (esp. Lotman & Uspenskij 1976), this type of approach proves very useful for addressing myths in modern cultures owing to its emphasis on symbolic patterns and the indicators that make them recognizable in diverse forms, such as the 'myths' that good will triumph over evil or that soap bubbles help make things clean. Basically, myths become viewed in terms of symbolic models that provide frames of reference or that are more abstractly just recognized and understood as meaningful or significant (i.e. functioning paradigmatically rather than syntagmatically). Similar ideas are implicitly behind descriptions of mythology as constituted of things that are *bonnes à penser* (Lévi-Strauss 1962: 128) ['good(s) to think with'] or mythology as "a form of *knowing*" (Doty 2000: 55–56, original emphasis). On the other hand, the semiotic approach is not equipped to differentiate these types of patterns from a 'myth' of Þórr's battle with the world serpent or a 'myth' that the world was created from an egg. In other words, it slides towards structuralism's pitfall of identifying a meaning-bearing paradigm, and then using that abstraction as a lens through which to view all of the paradigm's instantations. Even when the abstraction is not artificially applied across contexts and cultures[10] and the indexical semantics of the paradigm have been accurately assessed, using that paradigm as a lens customarily levels differences between those instantiations and marginalizes their potential for distinctive meanings. The utility of this type of approach is compromised especially where the 'mythology' of narrative-based approaches is brought into focus if no differentiation is made between the 'myth' of an abstract paradigm, like the monster-slayer's victory over the monster,

Figure 1. The so-called Gosforth Fishing Stone, 10th (?) century, Cumbria, England. Þórr is on the left with his hammer, deeply carved eyes and a fishing line with an ox-head for bait; his companion on the adventure, the giant Hymir, is on the right with an axe to cut the fishing line when the World Serpent is caught and raised to the surface; the face (?) of the World Serpent is in the lower right, with its tail in lower left (the knotwork pattern above the boat might speculatively be interpreted as the serpent's body, which encircles the world). (Illustration by the author.)

and 'myths' that are distinct instantiations of that paradigm, like Þórr's battle with the World Serpent (cf. Figure 1).[11]

Since around 1990, a third major approach has developed that has been less concerned with defining 'myth' or 'mythology' and focuses instead on *mythic discourse*, or people's use and manipulation of images, motifs and stories that have a mythic quality in order to mediate conceptual models, values, understandings and so forth. The term and concept of mythic discourse emerged when 'discourse' became both a catchword and a new frame for looking at different phenomena.[12] The term 'mythic discourse' is most often used without seeking to define it, but it was quickly adapted into studies of mythology and religion (e.g. Siikala 1992) and has been more

generally explored as a tool for addressing how people interact with emotionally invested symbols (e.g. Goodman 1993). The rise of mythic discourse as an approach to mythology is linked to increased attention to meanings, performance and viewing mythology in terms of systems of symbols,[13] which will here be considered the 'integers' of mythology. An *integer of mythology* is considered a meaningful, unitary element that can be distinguished from other elements. However simple or complex, insofar as anything linked to mythology is presented, understood and referred to as a single unit and can carry meanings or associations as a unit, it can be considered a symbol: it is a type of sign that can be recognized as signifying something. This may be the image of a god, a narrative motif or even a complex story. Different types of these symbolic integers will be introduced in the following section. For the moment, it is simply important to stress that mythology is here considered to be more than just stories; it is made up of all sorts of symbolic integers and the conventions for their combination.[14] All of these together form a symbolic matrix.

When approaching the symbolic matrix of a particular environment, three factors should be stressed. First, discussing mythology and its symbols should be distinguished from 'belief'. 'Belief' is a subjective phenomenon which happens at the level of individuals. Owing to how this term is used with Christianity, 'belief' is normally imagined as a conscious subscription of faith. Mythology enables imaginal understandings of the world and experience. It extends beyond the empirical world to mental models that are related to the world through imagination (see Tarkka, this volume). Mythology is distinguished from, for example, poetic metaphor by the emotional investment of these models (Doty 2000: 55–58). Thus mythology can be viewed in terms of *emotionally invested thinking models*. When talking about mythology, its integers can be described as emotionally invested symbols because they are socially recognized as being meaningful to people in powerful ways, whether they are so deeply established that they function as unconscious assumptions or they are actively contested within or across communities.[15] On the one

hand, the engagement with these models is not dependent on a conscious understanding: just because one does not 'believe' in ghosts does not mean that s/he will not get nervous or frightened by strange noises in the middle of the night in a house that is supposed to be haunted (cf. Kamppinen 1989: 18–19). On the other hand, the recognition of this emotionally invested quality is not dependent on personal alignment with the symbol: an atheist can easily respond to symbolism of martyrdom in literature. It is precisely the recognition that certain symbols are emotionally invested that leads them to be used and manipulated. In addition, mythic symbols are generally characterized by ambiguity: they can be interpreted flexibly and in varying ways (cf. Bell 1992: 182–187).[16]

In some contexts, it may be relevant to discuss the symbolic matrix of 'a mythology' in the sense of a system of symbols along with the constructions and conventions for their combination that are seen as belonging together and associated with a particular language, culture or religion. When this is done, the symbolic matrix aligns with 'a mythology' in an abstract sense comparable to a description of 'a language'. This type of approach nevertheless differs from many narrative-based approaches by extending to include all elements in a mythology on the one hand, while allowing that not all elements will be employed equally or function in the same way in all discourses on the other – much as certain archaisms and loan words are established in some varieties of language practice but not in others. However, a particular utility of the symbolic matrix is that it can be calibrated to a cultural environment where more than one such mythology is active and where, capitalizing on the ambiguity of mythic symbols, the elements of a mythology may be manipulated and contested. When calibrated in this way, a symbolic matrix is constituted of the all of the relevant symbolic resources available, as will be illustrated below.

Distinguishing Formal Types of Integer in Mythic Discourse

When approaching mythic discourse and a symbolic matrix of mythology, it is helpful to distinguish between the formal types of

symbolic integers. The terms 'image' and 'motif' are often used rather loosely and to some degree interchangeably. I distinguish an *image* as a static integer corresponding to the grammatical category of a noun.[17] In contrast, a *motif* incorporates a verb and involves change or situates two or more images in a relationship.[18] This distinction provides a framework for approaching different types of variation in mythic discourse. For example, a motif common in the Baltic Sea region is THUNDER STRIKES DEVIL[19] (cf. Uther 1997–1999: 763). (SMALL CAPITALS are used here to indicate symbols as semantic units; this is done especially at the level of images and motifs and the symbolic equations formed by them.) Within this motif, THUNDER describes a role for the local god like Þórr, Finno-Karelian Ukko, or Lithuanian Perkūnas, and is filled by the corresponding symbolic image (i.e. ÞÓRR, UKKO, PERKŪNAS). The slot of DEVIL may be filled by the image of the relevant adversary and does not require a unique identity.[20] This motif functions as a core of many legends and is also linked to taboos and related traditions, such as what to do in order to avoid being struck by lightning. In the latter contexts, THUNDER STRIKES DEVIL can be viewed as an *immanent motif* – i.e. the motif could manifest as reality or experience any time it thunders. This motif is also interfaced with a number of other motifs, such as DEVIL FLEES FROM THUNDER, which is in turn associated with motifs like DEVIL ENTERS HOUSE TO HIDE. This last motif is in its turn associated with preventative measures of shutting windows and doors when it thunders in order to avoid the house being struck by lightning. Such actions reflect an immanent motif THUNDER STRIKES HOUSE WITH OPEN WINDOW/DOOR (← DEVIL ENTERS HOUSE TO HIDE), which is connected to the system of motifs surrounding THUNDER STRIKES DEVIL.

The whole system surrounding the THUNDER STRIKES DEVIL motif has developed on a principle that the images in the slots THUNDER and DEVIL have agency. Individual motifs linked to this system and the narratives built out of them could pass between cultures in the Baltic Sea region with relative ease because the different cultures shared the general framework related to conceptions about thunder (cf. Uther 1997–1999: 763). Vernacular images of THUNDER and DEVIL could simply be transposed into the appropriate slots and the motif would 'make sense' within the symbolic matrix of the local mythology (Frog 2013b: 110). Modernization carried alternative images of many phenomena based on scientific learning. These included redefining thunder as caused, for example, by movements or collisions of air. These alternative images divested THUNDER of agency, which thus dissolved the central motif THUNDER STRIKES DEVIL. Although dissolving this central motif would seem to break down the whole system surrounding it, this was not precisely the case, as recently illustrated by Ülo Valk (2012) in his discussion of Estonian traditions. Viewed in terms of the model outlined above, motifs such as THUNDER STRIKES HOUSE WITH OPEN WINDOW/DOOR remained emotionally invested and vital: just because the understanding of thunder changed did not mean one stopped taking precautions against being struck by lightning! Rather than necessarily changing motifs that structured behavior, the motif could also be reinterpreted. The image of thunder was linked to new motifs as basic principles for how thunder works, such as THUNDER IS ATTRACTED BY MOVEMENT OF AIR, through which an associated logic emerges for the motif THUNDER STRIKES HOUSE WITH OPEN WINDOW/DOOR (← OPEN WINDOW/DOOR MOVES AIR IN HOUSE) (cf. Valk 2012: 43, 53, 61, and also 56, 59). This same process can be observed for other immanent motifs (e.g. Frog 2014d: 67). These examples illustrate mythic discourse in the negotiation of the relationship between individual behavior and understanding how the world works. At the same time, this example is illustrative of the utility of distinguishing different types of minimal integers in a mythology and their relationships when approaching variation.

Motifs are here addressed as minimal units in narration, activity or experience. In research, the term 'motif' has sometimes also been used for more complex integers of narration that circulate socially, but it is often useful to differentiate these from motifs as well. More complex integers made up of conventionally associated images, motifs and/or equivalent

sets of these can be distinguished as *themes*.[21] In the Finno-Karelian kalevalaic epic *The Song of Lemminkäinen*, for example, the hero encounters and overcomes a series of dangers on his journey,[22] each of which can be approached as a theme made up of a set of motifs that comprise the encounter, resolution and continuation of the journey (cf. Frog 2013b: 106–108). The series of themes are normally structurally similar, varying only in equivalent images for the danger encountered (e.g. FIERY EAGLE, BLACK WORM, WOLVES IN IRON BRIDLES), each of which is linked to a relevant motif for overcoming that danger (cf. Frog 2014e: 196–198). Nevertheless, the image of the danger or motif of overcoming it may vary without disrupting the theme as a whole.

Whole themes can also be manipulated in mythic discourse. For example, *The Song of Lemminkäinen* includes a theme of a duel of magic in which the hero and his adversary 'sing' an alternating series of helping-spirits and the hero triumphs. In one exceptional case, a singer reversed the roles of Lemminkäinen and his adversary so that the hero is defeated (*SKVR* VIII₁ 839). This can potentially be seen as asserting an alternative perspective on the image of the hero. Like images and motifs, whole themes can also be transposed. This theme of a magical duel is found in a localized variation of the epic *The Singing Competition*, where it has displaced the theme of the demiurge Väinämöinen's dialogic competition of knowledge with Joukahainen (*SKVR* II 33, 34a–b, 36). The case is interesting because these contests are never otherwise interchangeable. Keeping them separate appears historically rooted in a contrast between identifying the socially disruptive Lemminkäinen with magic of a *noita* or shaman while Väinämöinen, *tietäjä iän ikuinen* ['*tietäjä* of age eternal'], is identified with the type of power and magic relied on by the ritual specialist who commands the power of incantations and associated rite techniques, a *tietäjä* ['knower, one who knows'] (Frog 2010: 191–196; see also Frog 2013c). This local variation may not, however, reflect contesting conceptions of mythology *per se*; it may instead be symptomatic of changes in the local significance of differentiating these types of magical knowledge, or it could be more generally symptomatic of the epics losing their mythic status and the differentiation breaking down.

A *narrative pattern* is a constellation of elements (images, motifs, themes and/or equivalence sets of these), their organisation and interrelations, forming a coherent sequence, although not necessarily constituting a plot forming a narrative whole; a conventional *plot* or *plot type* is a narrative pattern that characterises a complete narrative from complication to resolution.[23] For example, the tradition of the Theft of the Thunder-Instrument, identified as tale-type ATU 1148b (Uther 2004 II: 48–50), is a complex plot type characterized by two interconnected narrative patterns. The opening narrative pattern accounts for the theft and concealment of the object with which the thunder-god produces thunder (an image of THUNDER); the second narrative pattern accounts for the god's adventure(s) whereby he recovers the stolen THUNDER and defeats his adversary with it (THUNDER STRIKES DEVIL).[24] In the period when this plot type was recorded, the image of THUNDER as a musical object was inconsistent with current aetiologies of thunder in most of the cultures concerned (Frog 2011: 80; cf. Frog 2014b: 125–134). The plot was also generally falling out of use or being adapted into something more currently relevant (Frog 2011: 81–91). One example from Estonia presents the opening narrative sequence in which the devil steals the god's 'instrument' (*pill*), but then concludes abruptly as an origin of the devil's association with bagpipes (*torupill*) without connection to THUNDER (Loorits 1932: 63–64). This adaptation may have been intended humorously, but it can in any case be viewed as contesting the ATU 1148b tradition and the image of thunder from an instrument (*pill*). It illustrates the difference between adapting the narrative pattern of an episode as opposed to a whole plot type, as well as the potential for variation between integers of different types (here adapting a narrative pattern into a complete plot; in other specific cases a motif may vary with a theme or even with a whole narrative pattern). When considering variation in mythic discourse, it can be quite important to distinguish integers of different scope and complexity in order to assess the dynamics

Gods as Central Symbols

Images of gods are symbols that are often seen as emblematic of a religion and the mythology with which it is interfaced. This is unsurprising insofar as gods regularly appear as agentive symbols of authority and power that function like proper nouns and are interfaced with networks of motifs, themes and other integers of mythology. These other elements appear dependent on the agency of the image in the role of the god. This provides the god as a symbol with the impression of especial *centrality* in the sense that if the symbol of the god is changed, all of these other elements of the mythology must change as well (Converse 1964: 208). In other words, changing a god can have wide-ranging ramifications affecting stories, relationships to other gods and possibly social order, ritual practices and so forth. In contrast, changing a motif that has an identity like a proper noun, such as ÞÓRR FISHES FOR WORLD SERPENT, has ramifications of much more limited scope. A motif such as THUNDER STRIKES DEVIL, on the other hand, may be manipulated in a specific context to affect the image of a god but, it is much more difficult even to perceive as targetable for manipulation as a symbol itself. It may have centrality within the symbolic matrix, but it functions more like a common noun and its very pervasiveness leads the symbol simply to be taken for granted. Gods thus manifest as central emblems of religions, whether engaged by subscribers to a religion as a register of practice or perceived from outside as linked to a social identity for which the religion is inferred (and potentially fictionalized, e.g. from a Christian perspective). Accordingly, gods become prime targets of engagement in mythic discourse.

When addressing the images of gods, it is relevant to distinguish the mythic image from the name of the god. Basically, the Old Norse name *Þórr* (as well as Modern English *Thor*) is a word, a lexical integer designating the image ÞÓRR. This distinction becomes more pronounced in the case of the one-eyed god Óðinn: a remarkable variety of names that are used to designate him in the various disguises he assumed and in poetic discourse – 204 in the list compiled by Neil Price (2002: 100–107; cf. Falk 1924; Lassen 2011: esp. 183–193, 230–233). All of these names present alternative ways of referring to the image ÓÐINN. Óðinn's penchant for disguises has equally led the image ÓÐINN to be recognizable through the image of MYSTERIOUS STRANGER, especially when predicated with only one eye. Equating name and image becomes more complex in *interpretatio Romana*. In various parts of the Germanic-speaking world, the local image equivalent to ÞÓRR seems to have been commonly designated *Hercules* and equivalents to ÓÐINN as *Mercurius*, although such 'translations' were not entirely consistent (e.g. de Vries 1956–1957 II: 27–32, 107–111). The name or label for the image was translated into a word from another language. This other word might carry particular connotations for the image in a local environment but could also simply affect a full translation of the image (ÞÓRR → HERCULES) among, for example, the local elite in Rome. At the same time, Old Norse texts present *interpretationes Norroenae* whereby Old Norse names for vernacular gods were used to translate names (and thereby images) of Roman gods (e.g. Lassen 2011: 95–109). It is easy to conflate personal name and image, but there is in fact a great deal of potential for slippage and (re)interpretation between the word as a signifier and the symbolic image that it signifies.

It is worth pointing out that images of gods could also be communicated, for example, non-verbally through iconography. An example of this is the representation on the so-called Gosforth Fishing Stone (Figure 1, above). In this case, the image ÞÓRR becomes recognizable through a configuration of image elements. These elements become interpretable in relation to one another as a distinct motif ÞÓRR FISHES FOR WORLD SERPENT, the motif at the center of a theme of confronting the World Serpent at sea, which is in turn the center of a broader narrative pattern of Þórr's fishing adventure (images associated with both being present in the representation). The preservation of this stone in St. Mary's Church in Gosforth suggests a Christian relevance. The incorporation of the Gosforth Fishing Stone into the visual arena of a

church might be rooted in initially rendering vernacularly meaningful equivalents in the place of unfamiliar Christian mythic symbols – in this case the corresponding Christian motif JESUS FISHES FOR LEVIATHAN and the broader theme and narrative pattern of which it is iconic. This would be a type of mythic discourse as translation – an *interpretatio Norroena* – at the level of motifs and narrative sequences. Such translation has also been suggested for the representation of the vernacular dragon-slayer Sigurðr in Christian contexts where the Christian St. George or Archangel Michael would be expected (Rowe 2006: 169). The history of the Gosforth Fishing Stone is unclear, and its incorporation into the church may otherwise have involved mythic discourse at the level of reinterpreting the ambiguity of image elements as signifiers, allowing them to be seen as directly signifying the Christian motif JESUS FISHES FOR LEVIATHAN (a transition which presumably occurred eventually among the local congregation).

It is worth pointing out that the symbols in a mythology index one another as an outcome of their patterns of use – i.e. they form links of association that develop potentially quite complex networks. On the Gosforth Fishing Stone, for example, ÞÓRR becomes recognizable through the configuration of image elements which we might say cumulatively attain a sort of critical mass that activates recognition of the symbol ÞÓRR FISHES FOR WORLD SERPENT. This motif is iconic of a broader mythological narrative as a symbol, a symbol that is of broader scope than the motif that indexes it. However, it is precisely the indexical network of elements comprising ÞÓRR FISHES FOR WORLD SERPENT that allows it to be recognizable, and once recognizable, specific image elements on the stone are interpreted in relation to the motif and the narrative sequence to which it belongs. This process also holds for the image of ÞÓRR: once recognized, the pronouncedly carved eyes become interpretable through Þórr's fiery gaze as a characteristic predicate.[25] In other contexts, an attribute may prove emblematic of the god, which has led one-eyed figures to be interpreted as signifying ÓÐINN. This appears in the context of two

Figure 2. Section of the Skog Church Tapestry presenting three figures customarily interpreted as the gods Óðinn (left, characterized by the emblem of missing an eye), Þórr (center, characterized by the emblem of his hammer), and Freyr (right). (Reproduced from Wikimedia Commons, "Three kings or three gods.jpg".[26])

other gods on the Skog Church Tapestry, where each representation supports the interpretation of the other two gods as forming the characteristic grouping of three, venerated gods (Figure 2). The lack of an eye has equally led to the interpretation of the Lindby figurine as a representation of ÓÐINN owing to this emblematic feature (Figure 3).

Like any mutilation characterizing a god's identity, this emblem is connected to a motif: EYE SACRIFICED FOR MYTHIC KNOWLEDGE/ POWER. The index of this motif to ÓÐINN leads a variety of artefacts to be interpreted as construing an identity with the motif ÓÐINN SACRIFICES EYE FOR (MYTHIC KNOWLEDGE/ POWER?) where the artefact exhibits contrastive differentiation of light and dark eyes or the post-production mutilation of one eye, as well as cases of the deposition of a removed eye or associated part of a helmet representing the eye(brow) (see Price & Mortimer 2014). Some of these ritualized behaviors are likely intended to produce a signifier for ÓÐINN, but this cannot be assumed for all cases. Leszek Gardeła identified a one-eyed female head uncovered in the Viking emporium of Truso, Poland, with this pattern (Gardeła 2014: 81–83). If this head is related

Figure 3. Bronze figurine from Lindby, Svenstorp, Skåne, Sweden SHM 13701 (7th century), generally accepted to be a representation of the god Óðinn, as the figurine only has one eye. (Photo © SHM (Swedish History Museum), reproduced with permission.)

to the pattern of one-eyed symbolism, it is clearly not a signifier of ÓÐINN *per se* (Figure 4).

Like so many symbolic elements of mythology, the motif EYE SACRIFICED FOR MYTHIC KNOWLEDGE/POWER seems to have circulated cross-culturally in the Baltic Sea region (Frog 2014a: 375–376). A common basis can be inferred for both Óðinn's sacrifice of his eye at the spring of the giant Mímir and its parallel in a tradition in Lithuania of sacrificing an eye for mythic knowledge at a spring, where the practice is connected with the chthonic god Velnias (Gimbutas 1974: 89). Here VELNIAS equates to ÓÐINN just as Lithuanian PERKŪNAS will translate ÞÓRR (and vice versa) in relevant plot-types built on the motif THUNDER STRIKES DEVIL. Even if the narrative describing the sacrifice of Óðinn's eye varied by dialect of mythology in time and space, the integer ÓÐINN SACRIFICES EYE FOR (MYTHIC KNOWLEDGE/POWER?) seems to have maintained continuity.[27] The motif EYE SACRIFICED FOR (MYTHIC KNOWLEDGE/ POWER?) also seems to have been mobilized across languages and associated mythologies in the dynamics of mythic discourse. This fact highlights social perceptions of the motif's significance and reinforces its validity as a frame for interpretation.

Depositions of material eye-symbols suggest ritualized enactments of precisely this motif, with the implication that the significance of performance is informed by ÓÐINN SACRIFICES EYE enacted as personal experience (noting that the latter motif might have been altered or exchanged when the ritual was adapted cross-culturally). Some of the identified images may signify the EYE SACRIFICED FOR (MYTHIC KNOWLEDGE/ POWER?) motif performed by someone other than Óðinn. The significance of this motif can be inferred to derive from the motif ÓÐINN SACRIFICES EYE. That motif operates as a metonym for the power acquired by Óðinn's act, which would in turn be identified with the power conferred on the individual filling the role of sacrificer. This highlights that the uses of ÓÐINN SACRIFICES EYE could be diverse. Identifying this motif as a symbolic referent must therefore be distinguished from the potential network of associations through which it is engaged in any one case. If the

Figure 4. One-eyed female head from Truso (Janów Pomorski). The right eye exhibits a clear eye with pupil, while only a hollow area appears where the left eye should be. (Photo by Leszek Gardeła, reproduced with permission.)

one-eye modification to the so-called weapon-dancer on one of the Torslunda matrices is not an ÓÐINN image (Price & Mortimer 2014: 524), inferring the motif ÓÐINN SACRIFICES EYE does not reveal its significance, nor does it reveal the significance of a woman represented this way in the Truso head (Frog 2014a: esp. 396–398).[28]

Figure 5. Þórr's hammer ring. (Illustration by Amppi Darmark, © Ålands Museum, reproduced with permission.)

Similarly, the so-called 'Þórr's hammer' amulets (cf. Figure 5) may potentially also have activated the image ÞÓRR metonymically through the symbol of his power as the one who wields it. This would link the possessor of the amulet (or its use) to that power and thereby to ÞÓRR. Here again the amulets as signifiers passed cross-culturally in a part of the world where the hammer or axe was the characteristic instrument of the thunder god. The ambiguous amulet-signifier may thus have metonymically activated different gods in different cultural contexts, much as the Gosforth Fishing Stone could be interpreted as a signifier of JESUS FISHES FOR LEVIATHAN. These systems of indices are important because the connections between symbols reciprocally construct those symbols, their significance and valuation. The motif THUNDER STRIKES DEVIL and its patterns of use reciprocally construct the image ÞÓRR as a protector of social order from agents of chaos. Disrupting that index or altering the patterns of use of the motif would necessarily redefine the image ÞÓRR, which is constructed exclusively through discourse (unlike e.g. images of other immediate ethnic groups, where discourse is in dialectic relation to empirical experiences of contacts with those groups).

Alternative and Changing Perspectives
Contexts of radical cultural change provide vital sites to observe mythic discourse. Modernization is extremely interesting in this respect, but it does not work well for illustrating a symbolic matrix and how such a

matrix works. Today, we are accustomed to viewing mythology as distinct from science, and this makes it difficult to recognize ELECTRICITY and other mythic images, motifs and more complex integers associated with them in terms of mythology (see Frog 2014d). In this respect, historically and culturally remote contexts are much more easily viewed with greater objectivity. The historical remoteness of mythic discourse associated with medieval Christianization proves much more practical to illustrate effects of cultural change on a symbolic matrix.

According to the present approach, the arrival of Christianity in the North was not a process of one exclusive religion displacing another. Instead, the new religion richly increased the available symbols in the matrix. Christians and non-Christians were not unaware of each other's mythologies and they could actively utilize each other's symbols in mythic discourse as resources for the negotiation of their relationship (cf. McKinnell 2008). This sort of engagement has produced quite exceptional narratives that may seem to fall between the respective mythologies. For example, an Old Norse saga describes such a confrontation between a missionary and a pagan priestess in which the priestess tells that the thunder-god Þórr once challenged Jesus to a duel, and Jesus was too cowardly to fight (*Njáls saga* 102). This can be viewed as the emergence of a new plot (or at least the kernel of a plot) through the combination of different images (ÞÓRR, JESUS), and as a variation on the motif of confrontation which normally leads to THUNDER STRIKES DEVIL in other mythological narratives about Þórr. Whereas the example of the Gosforth Fishing Stone could be viewed in terms of translation across mythologies, in this case the manipulation of the images ÞÓRR and JESUS situates gods of two mythologies in a contrastive relation to one another. The new plot asserts a relationship between them, and thus between the ideologies and ways of life (which can be compared to the vernacular concept commonly identified with 'religion')[29] of which those gods were emblematic.

There is no evidence for the historical endurance of a story about Þórr challenging Jesus, but it has long been thought that the

kalevalaic epic *The Judgement of Väinämöinen*, in which Väinämöinen is banished by a Christ-like baby, emerged and became established out of precisely this type of process (e.g. Kuusi 1963: 320).[30] Examples like this are important because they highlight that individuals can draw on all of the resources available to them and that the particular symbols are regarded from the perspectives of those individuals. Such perspectives can be approached in terms of *positioning* in the matrix. Religions, viewed as registers of practice, may correspondingly be viewed as characterized by socially established positioning and stance-taking – i.e. as generally character-ized by alignments, interpretations and valuations of the different sets, constellations, or systems of symbols in the matrix. It should also be noted that individuals will not have an even competence in all of the symbols available in the matrix. Such competence varies not only in relation to the positioning of different religions, but also between specialist and non-specialists associated with the same religion formation. This uneven distribution of competence also participates in the relative ambiguity of the symbols.

Other strategies in mythic discourse may target interpretations of specific symbols. Óðinn seems to have been rather popular in this regard, at least in certain genres and discourses (Lassen 2011). He was characterized by disguises and motifs of organizing and orchestrating the fates (and deaths) of heroes in the vernacular mythology. Although the medieval oral culture of Scandinavia can only be guessed at, Christian authors took up these established motifs in certain saga genres and steered their interpretations to foreground deceit and manipulation as primary character-istics of Óðinn as a pagan god (e.g. Lassen 2011: 152–177). In other cases, they could emphasize Óðinn's 'otherness' by linking him to motifs of Sámi shamanism (Tolley 2009 I: 507–513). They could also employ a motif familiar to Christian discourse, such as DEVIL TEMPTS CHRISTIAN, situating the image ÓÐINN in the role of DEVIL, which reciprocally informs the valuation and inter-pretation of ÓÐINN; the relationship between Óðinn and the Christian Devil could also be made explicit by stating that the Devil took the form of Óðinn, whereby the image ÓÐINN itself becomes a signifier of the image DEVIL (see e.g. Kaplan 2011). Affecting the inter-pretation of motifs linked to Óðinn's disguises and manipulations of fate established new conventions as a process, and that process redefined the image ÓÐINN accordingly. Of course, such mythic discourse did not involve non-Christian agents only. In much the same way that mythic discourse constructed the image ÓÐINN in relation to, or to become a signifier of, the image DEVIL, the images ST. OLAF and ST. ELIJAH were evolved in the cultures of Northern Europe in relation to vernacular images of the thunder god (Kaplan 2008; Harvilahti 2013). These strategies are dependent on the expansion of the symbolic matrix: this expansion made symbols of the vernacular religion available to the Christians for manipulation. Developments in patterns of the use of mythic symbols, their inter-pretations and relative valorization are outcomes of mythic discourse. Just as the symbolic matrix is expanded by the intro-duction of a new religion into the cultural environment, it inevitably contracts again as mythic discourse advances the social environ-ment toward increasing degrees of hegemony in the distribution of relationships of identities, practices and mythic symbols. These develop-ments are important to understand as a social process, but they also have implications for research and the significance of extant research materials. Research builds under-standings of mythic symbols through the identification of the patterns in preserved, documented discourse, but the discourse that has been preserved may only enable a view from one perspective in the community, society or cultural environment.

Symbols of the relevant vernacular religion were not always available to medieval Christians. In the *Russian Primary Chronicle*, for example, descriptions are also offered of encounters with non-Christian sorcerers or priests. The Scandinavian accounts mentioned above are historically removed from events, yet the authors are generally concerned with the history of their own communities and events in (more or less) familiar locations. The *Russian Primary Chronicle* recounts historically remote events in geographically distant

locations such as Lake Beloye, where the non-Christians are presumably Uralic and therefore also culturally remote from the authors. Some of these pagan specialists are made to state explicitly in dialogue that their god is named 'Antichrist' and even to describe their gods through Christian images as demons in Hell.[31] It is therefore good to consider whether such an example of mythic discourse manipulates symbols of the culture addressed (as in the case with ÓÐINN above), symbols only of the culture in which the source was produced (as seems probable in the account surrounding 'Antichrist' as a pagan god), or even of an unrelated third culture with which some association has been made.[32] In addition, cultures construct images of other groups, their mythologies and religions, and these constructed images not only produce conventional interpretations but also feed into the resources of the symbolic matrix – e.g. developing a mythic image SÁMI as not just an ethnic other but also as a supernatural other (Lindow 1995).[33]

In some cases, a whole plot type of a mythological narrative may be manipulated in mythic discourse. This seems to have occurred in medieval Iceland with the Theft of the Thunder-Instrument (ATU 1148b) mentioned above. This narrative tradition is found in Baltic, Finnic, Germanic and Sámi cultures. It is generally interfaced especially with the motif THUNDER STRIKES DEVIL and also with conceptions of a relationship between thunder and fertility and/or life on earth that are manifested through various motifs in the different cultures. The 13th century eddic poem *Þrymskviða* presents a version of this narrative that differs from the tradition elsewhere in certain key respects. Most notably, *a*) Þórr is passive rather than orchestrating the action; *b*) the motif GOD ASSUMES A DISGUISE associated with the recovery of the stolen THUNDER here takes a unique variation, in which the god is pressed into dressing up as goddess in a wedding gown, that is explicitly identified with humiliating the god through gender transgression; and *c*) the story appears completely divorced from belief traditions – the god's chariot still produces thunder and lightning as he travels (disguised as a bride)

and the adversary exhibits no fear either of this thunder or of the stolen object (Þórr's hammer), which he is willing to return in exchange for marrying the goddess Freyja (hence the disguise).[34] *Þrymskviða* appears to be a product of mythic discourse in which a mythological plot was adapted into a new narrative that makes fun of the god Þórr (for discussion, see further Frog 2014a). This example is also interesting because the adaptation made the narrative sustainable in the new environment of a Christian milieu: it eventually spread throughout Scandinavia and was preserved as the only purportedly mythological narrative recorded from the Scandinavian ballad tradition (Liestøl 1970: 18).

In the context of periods of religious change, the negotiation of perspectives and positions of groups through mythic discourse gives rise to diverse and fascinating products, such as how Þórr challenged Jesus to a duel. Very few of these become established and historically maintained as tradition beyond that transition period, if at all (see Frog 2013b: 109–110). The transience of such products can be associated with the transience of the period of transition itself: as Christianity became dominant, the interest and relevance of contesting the images of vernacular gods receded. They belong to the process whereby the expansion of the symbolic matrix was followed by its contraction. The introduction of an alternative modelling system for the world (mythology) linked to the new religion was followed by the negotiation of mythic symbols. Such diversity in the symbolic matrix was inevitably resolved on local and regional levels as people and their identities became united under the rubric of shared social practices to which only certain ranges of mythic symbols were relevant. Cases like *Þrymskviða* – attested relatively little changed across a period ca. 650 years – are exceptional. In this case, the plot's long-term sustainability seems connected to the fact that the story of a burly, bearded man being disguised as a sexy bride in order to recover his phallic hammer and beat up the thief continued to be entertaining even when contesting the authority of Þórr was no longer topical. Reviewing these products of mythic discourse highlights that

integers of the symbolic matrix are not uniformly engaged: they are engaged from different perspectives with different degrees of competence as shared symbols through which identities and understandings may be contested and negotiated. It also foregrounds that the relevance of integers in the symbolic matrix vary in relation to social and historical contexts, which in at least some cases seem to exhibit alternating periods of pronounced change and stability.

Generic Interfaces with the Symbolic Matrix
In general, the systems of symbols in the matrix tend to center around particular social practices. Consequently, the symbols and perspectives on those symbols become interfaced with genres. Such interfaces become particularly apparent when mythology is compared across genres. Modern ideas about Finno-Karelian mythology have been primarily developed surrounding narratives in Kalevala-meter epic and incantations. These genres are intimately connected. The most central agent narrated in this poetry is Väinämöinen, who is a demiurge and a founder of culture, who plays a significant role in establishing the present world order, and who is the *tietäjä iän ikuinen* ['*tietäjä* of age eternal'], providing an identity-model (cf. Honko 1998: 20–29) for the ritual specialist known as a *tietäjä*. Narratives about him both offer origins of the incantations used by the *tietäjä* as well as exemplar models of magical events described in incantations themselves. However, Väinämöinen is not narrated in prose, he is rarely directly summoned for support in incantations, and he is not 'worshipped'. (Frog 2013c: 75–83.) On the other hand, the thunder-god Ukko ['Old Man'] (blurring into the Christian God) is summoned by the *tietäjä* as the primary source of his power, and Ukko is 'worshipped', associated with rituals, taboos and so forth. However, Ukko plays no role in the creation of the world nor in the establishment of the world order and he is not narrated as an agent active in Kalevala-meter epic, even if he has a strong presence in narrative prose. (Frog 2013c: 72–75.) Ukko is no less important for the *tietäjä* specialist than Väinämöinen – albeit in different ways – yet he does not play an active role with

Väinämöinen and Väinämöinen's companions in narratives. These gods appear quite differently across different genres although they are associated with the same type of specialist and even linked to the same ritual practices, such as healing (cf. also Honko 1981: 26).

Although Ukko and Väinämöinen seem to have different distributions in different genres, there do not necessarily appear to be gross inconsistencies in mythology across these genres. The contrast increases if we compare these with Karelian lament traditions, which were performed by different specialists in different contexts.[35] Both Väinämöinen and Ukko are completely absent from laments – as is the Virgin Mary (Stepanova 2012: 276; 2014: 215), who was prominent both in other women's traditions and incantations (e.g. Timonen 1994; Siikala 2002: 195–203). Laments are instead directed at specific deceased individuals, the remote community of ancestral dead, and a mysterious category of divine powers (*syndyzet*) which may blur into a Christian 'Savior' (*spuassuzet = spuassu*.DIM.PL; *Spuassu* < Ru. *Spas, Spasitel'* ['Savior']). The topography of the otherworld also differs from that of genres mentioned above. (See further Stepanova 2012; 2014: 191–223.) Although certain features are found across genres, such as the dog guarding the path to the otherworld, laments lack a river separating the worlds of the living and the dead which is otherwise fundamental to Kalevala-meter epic and incantation (Stepanova 2012: 262; 2014: 198–199). Laments also refer to a copper staircase, which indicates vertical movement between worlds rather than the horizontal movement characteristic of epic (Stepanova 2012: 262; 2014: 196). In spite of the fact that these genres had been evolving in the same communities for centuries, they appear to engage quite different parts of the symbolic matrix with only a rather limited number of shared symbols.[36] Observing that lament, on the one hand, and epic and incantations on the other, have assimilated a variety of Christian symbols, they might be described as exhibiting mythologies that are as different from or similar to one another as each is different from or similar to the mythology of Christianity.

The complementary distribution of Ukko and Väinämöinen across different genres underscores the fact that the image of 'a mythology' that will emerge in a study may vary considerably depending on the types of material subject to analysis. The complementary significance of these mythic agents to the same institution of ritual specialist equally emphasizes the need for caution in the emphasis given to different categories of data when considering the relative significance of different gods in a cultural environment. The fact that Väinämöinen was not venerated in worship does not make him less socially significant than Ukko any more than the absence of Ukko from the world-creation and narration of mythological epics would make Ukko less socially significant than Väinämöinen. What is interesting to keep in mind is that the presence and absence of both appears to have been relatively stable on a genre by genre basis, and their complementary significance to the *tietäjä* seems never to have produced narratives about Väinämöinen and Ukko as co-adventurers any more than it did about Väinämöinen and the Virgin Mary. This type of social and historical interfacing of mythology distributed across genres can be considered no less present in the relative significance of the Virgin Mary in traditions associated with women (cf. Timonen 1994) and Mary's absence from lament, which was a characteristically women's practice (Stepanova 2014: esp. 283). Still more striking is the fact that genres associated with different categories of ritual specialists seem to have intersected and overlapped rather than to have aligned in a coherent and uniform mythology. Although mythology as engaged within a genre exhibits social stability, it becomes relevant to ask *whose mythology* and how that relates to, reflects and reinforces the uses to which it is put by the people practicing the particular genre.

Registers of Mythology

The variation of mythology by genre can be approached in terms of 'registers'. This approach can then be applied back to variation in mythology according to positioning by religion, as in mythic discourse related to Christianization. Whereas language has commonly been conceived as an abstract and uniform whole, *register* developed in social linguistics as a term for variation in language according to situation or context and the relationships of participants (esp. Halliday 1978; see further Agha 2001; 2007). The image of language as an ideal, uniform and homogeneous system was thereby replaced by a much more nuanced picture. The thing we call a language appears as a set of potential resources of vocabulary along with frameworks for grammar and pronunciation that form various constellations as registers. However, no single register includes all of the potential vocabulary of the language. The meanings of words may also not be the same or have the same connotations in different registers. Speech communication is not limited to language only, and the term register has been progressively expanded from language to paralinguistic features and the broader semiotics of expression. Register-based approaches have become common especially in Finnish folklore research to refer to the linguistic and para-linguistic resources for expression associated with a particular genre (see e.g. Koski 2011: 322–324). A complementary term *mode* was early on employed to describe the mediating system through which the signifiers of a register are communicated, whether these are signals, such as the sounds of a voice singing, or another system of signs, like alphabetical characters in a written text.[37] In the same way that speech registers are mediated through a mode of expression, the symbols of mythology are mediated through a speech register. In this way, a speech register can be regarded as a mode of expression for a register of symbols of mythology.

Viewed in this way, variation in mythology by genre or cultural practice becomes expected in parallel to variation in the linguistic register's lexicon and its semantics, grammar and pronunciation. In other words, certain symbols like the turnip-god Äkräs have quite narrow and specialized contexts of use, whereas other symbols like Ukko or the Virgin Mary are used much more widely. At the same time, this does not mean that Ukko and the Virgin Mary are uniformly integrated into every register of mythology. This returns us to the long-term persistence of mythology.

In this context, the long-term persistence of mythology is linked to the corresponding persistence of particular genres and cultural practices. The relationship of such practices to registers of mythology have been historically constructed and socially negotiated – they function in the present as outcomes of the past. We tend to take it for granted that Mary and Jesus do not go on adventures with Väinämöinen and Ilmarinen because we see them as belonging to Christian and vernacular traditions, respectively. However, kalevalaic poems about both were sung by the same singers for centuries, and Väinämöinen, Mary and Ukko can all have relevant places in a single incantation. (Frog 2013c: 74.) How and where these symbols appear, and how they are or are not combined, are not a function of a contrast between 'Christian' and 'non-Christian' in the present of the singers, but rather an outcome of the long-term persistence of conventions for their use in different registers of mythology.

On the same basis, the different registers of mythology can be assumed to evolve in relation to practice by individuals in conjunction with their interests and aims (which may be based on or respond to needs in the community: cf. Rychkova, this volume). This process means that the registers develop with varying degrees of interconnection with and independence from one another (cf. also Honko 1985 on 'tradition ecology'). When this is acknowledged, it underscores the caution needed when developing perspectives on mythology in contexts where sources are limited. For example, the sort of evaluative stance-taking in representations of Óðinn in certain written genres of Old Norse saga literature addressed above seems to have evolved a genre-based image ÓÐINN aligned with the perspective of the sagas' Christian authors. At the same time, the role of Óðinn as an active and present agent in the lives and deaths of heroes in the mytho-heroic past seems to be rooted in the vernacular mytho-heroic traditions: the Christian construction of ÓÐINN seems to have developed through the manipulation of traditional motifs and themes that already indexed ÓÐINN. However, this register of mythology is linked to particular written genres of saga literature and is not necessarily representative of oral genres handling mytho-heroic traditions with which written sagas necessarily co-existed for some considerable period of time, even though little about those oral genres is known (cf. Lassen 2011: 308–383).

Shifting attention away from ideal and uniform mythologies to a register-based model also provides an approach to registers of mythology linked to different religions. In the same way that we discuss Finnish and English as separate languages, we can discuss Christian versus non-Christian or 'scientific' versus vernacular mythologies. When Finnish and English are introduced into a single environment, they increase the linguistic resources available and the different languages can function as alternative registers: switching between them may be contextually prescribed or a strategic choice.[38] Particular resources can been seen as centrally interfaced with the genres and cultural practices through which they are asserted, communicated and socially negotiated, whether those resources are linguistic or symbolic. It is in the interactions of such environments that symbols of the matrix are adapted from one register to another just as words are borrowed from one language to another, potentially changing in meaning or use. With mythology, this process may involve reinterpretations or the conflation of symbols linked to different registers, such as the image ÓÐINN in Christian discourse sometimes merging with DEVIL, the image ST. OLAF merging with ÞÓRR, or reference to *Spuassu* ['Savior, Christ'] in Karelian lament merging with the supernatural powers that the register was historically oriented to address. This same process led the Old Norse term *þurs* to be preserved in mythological eddic poetry referring to cosmological giants in mythic time, in incantations referring to agents of illness in the present world, and in sagas used as a simple synonym for 'monster' (Frog 2013a). These are all engagements with the symbols of the matrix from the perspectives of users and uses of the particular registers. That positioning constructs the interface between the genre or cultural practice and mythology. At the same time, conventions of a genre and its use condition the conservatism and social innovation of that

interface – i.e. how much it is inclined to change or stay the same and in what ways – which affect the long-term maintenance of mythology within the particular register.

In the long-term, each register of mythology may develop a different internal historical stratification of both language and symbols. This stratification is an outcome of the history of uses, contacts with other genres and relationships to them. In addition, different registers of mythology may also remain rooted in their formation in a particular era with a particular perspective. This may be when a particular genre, set of cultural practices or religion was introduced into a cultural environment, or when historical changes led to the (re)formation of a practices into their distinct form on the basis of earlier traditions. The register of Old Norse skaldic poetry, for example, evolved its system of poetic circumlocutions interfaced pervasively with the referents and patterns of association of the pre-Christian cultural milieu and especially the mythology and mytho-heroic traditions of that milieu. The adaptation of the skaldic register to the Christian milieu evolved within that framework rather than displacing the pre-Christian elements and associations with a set of Christian alternatives. (Clunies Ross 2005: 114–115, 134–138.) A corresponding phenomenon can be observed in the evolution of Finno-Karelian kalevalaic mythology, incantations and the *tietäjä*-institution, which emerged especially under Germanic influence during the Iron Age (Frog 2013c; cf. Siikala 2002; 2012). The formal continuities of mythic images, motifs, themes and narrative sequences in mytho-heroic sagas reconventionalized from a Christian evaluative stance may also warrant consideration in this light. For example, Old Norse saga literature emerged in a Christian environment in conjunction with the Christian technology of writing. It drew on the resources of vernacular oral traditions for the inception of new, written genres that can be assumed to have developed distinctive registers of both language and mythology within that special Christian milieu.

Conversely, the obsolescence of a register may lead to whole areas of the symbolic matrix falling out of use. Integers of the mythology, such as the turnip-god Äkräs, that operate in quite narrow fields are of course particularly vulnerable in this regard. However, the breakdown of a register that is socially central to a broad area of the symbolic matrix could have wide-ranging consequences. Here, it is again important to emphasize that registers of practice are registers of those who practice them.[39] As social phenomena, such registers are linked to social roles, relations and/or recurrent situations. Where mythology is concerned, practices associated with authoritative roles and institutions can take on a key role in historically shaping and structuring the positioning of social perspectives within the matrix, becoming *conduits of authority* for mythology (cf. Frog 2013c: 111). In terms of social semiotics, their registers become centers in the historical maintenance of mythology. Rather than a simple binary equation that registers either are or are not linked to these conduits of authority, the networks of diverse registers and their relations can be regarded in center–periphery relations to different conduits of authority (potentially several at any given time in history). Thus, the richness of kalevalaic mythology is associated with ritual and magical uses by *tietäjä*s with a continuity extending back to the Iron Age, but as those uses became obsolete in the wake of modernization, the whole imaginal world began to be forgotten. It first began shifting away from the center of the public life of the community, gradually displaced by public Christian practices and associated authorities. As the institutionalized specialization of the *tietäjä* became marginalized, different individuals began taking up the role to meet the needs of the community: a tradition that seems to have been dominated by men was finally kept up almost exclusively by women as the mythology collapsed and rapidly began to disappear (cf. Rychkova, this volume).

Theory and Utility in Practice

The aim of the present discussion has been to introduce an approach to mythology through a 'symbolic matrix' that is capable of addressing variation and diversity in mythology within a culture or cultural environment, and

that can be calibrated according to the scope of investigation. This methodological model is based on an approach to mythology through systems of symbols that are used and even contested in mythic discourse. Viewing mytho-logy in a social environment in terms of a matrix of symbolic resources allows it to be addressed simultaneously as a whole – even if that whole is not internally systematized *per se* – while acknowledging the diversity of per-spectives and uses that can be distinguished and situated in relation to one another.

Developing this approach with attention to mythic discourse has had the result that it is particularly suited to addressing mythology in situated practice. This has motivated the development of a more formalized and systematic distinction of integers in the matrix (images, motifs, themes, narrative sequences, plots) in order to have more sophisticated tools for addressing variation at a structural level. The emphasis on mythology in situated social activity has also highlighted the historical construction of the integers in the matrix and perspectives on them in relation to historically structured social practices or genres. It may also be noted that the basic framework for distinguishing types of formal integers and their use and variation in discourse is not dependent on symbols having the quality of signification linked to emotional investment making them 'mythic': the basic framework can be readily employed to address the variation and historical stratification of symbolic integers in any discourse.

Following the analogy with linguistics, this model complements the approach to local and regional variation of mythology according to 'dialects' with an approach to variation according to 'registers'. Although the discussion and analysis of registers necessarily abstracts these as semiotic resources from the people who use them, it is extremely important to recognize them as registers of practices that are in many cases socially constructed around roles or even social institutions. These roles and the individuals who fill them have been described in terms of 'positioning' in the matrix. This positioning, anchored in a social role or institution, then participates in the historical construction of genres and in the stratification of mythic symbols with which they are interfaced. The present model develops this as a framework within which it is possible to address alignments and tensions between individual choices or innovations and the social conventions of genres. At a broader social level, the alignments and tensions may be between those choices or innovations and the competing valorizations of different symbols and positioning within the matrix. Within such considerations, emphasis has been placed on the historical durability of the flexible yet compelling symbols and structures or resources in the symbolic matrix. Continuity and variation of these symbols and structures highlight that the outcomes of mythic discourse in any particular present moment in history participate in linking the past of the tradition to the future, or in disrupting that link.

The model outlined here is not intended to be the ideal tool for all research questions concerned with mythology. It is centrally intended for studies concerned with mythology in cultural practice, especially where variation in mythology is a focus, issue or concern. When looking at specific examples and historical situations, this approach has the advantage of acknowledging the synchronic meanings of the integers of the tradition. These may differ considerably from those of the cultural contexts from which they ultimately derive (cf. Siikala 2002; Frog 2013b). The usage-based approach underlines functions and meanings of mythology in application, on which both continuity and variation are dependent. This gives the frame-work a utility for addressing the dynamics between continuity and innovation or change. It is equally applicable to unique, situation-specific adaptations of mythology that may never become socially established, and to the investigation of an established tradition as the social outcome of such an innovation or change. Such applications simply require the calibration of the temporal and cultural or geographical scope and sensitivity of the symbolic matrix that forms the frame of reference. Although such a matrix is inevitably both hypothetical and abstract, it can be much more sensitive and specific if the scope is narrowly defined in time and cultural space where thick data is available – for example, a

single parish in Karelia during a single century (cf. Tarkka 2013). Sensitivity decreases and the matrix becomes increasingly abstract as its scope is extended across multiple dialects of mythology and a greater range of historical contexts. For example, it is possible to calibrate the framework to consider Scandinavian–Christian contacts during the Late Iron Age, but the range and specificity of symbols and structures considered would likely have to remain at quite a general and abstract level that would be unavoidably removed from locally distinct contact events. This would not invalidate such a model once it was developed, but it would affect its utility for addressing certain research questions. As a tool, however, this methodological framework nevertheless remains of central utility where variation is a relevant factor.

Approaching mythology in terms of a symbolic matrix places emphasis on signifiers, their patterns of use and variations in those uses. Where an investigation or method moves away from the symbolic integers of the mythology and their relations, so does the usefulness of this approach. For example, it would have little relevance to research focusing on a mythology or religion as a metasemiotic entity without exploring its unitary integers as such. In other words, both medieval Christians and players of modern video games may recognize Þórr as meto-nymically indexing vernacular Scandinavian mythology and religion. However, there is no need to introduce a symbolic matrix or even to discuss Þórr as a symbol if focus is on the meanings and associations of Scandinavian mythology and religion as an entity for medieval Christians or modern players of video games. Similarly, discussing a symbolic matrix is focused on social phenomena and social conventions that may only be of interest as a frame of reference if focus is on mythology as used at the level of a specific individual or in a specific text. An investi-gation may also concentrate on conceptual models mediated through symbols of mythology, much as symbols of mythology may be mediated through language. Conceptual models may be approached through symbolic integers, but such an investigation may simply target and survey those integers, as may a

study of the semantics of specific elements of a mythology. Any of these investigations might benefit from the present approach especially when looking at specific examples and cases, but they do not need it *per se*. On the other hand, investigations into the meanings and understandings mediated by mythic symbols should take into consideration registral variation, and thus that these meanings and even conceptual models may vary by register of mythology. The methodological framework presented here does have a wide range of applications, but it should be treated as a tool among other tools, and like any tool, it is better for addressing some problems than others.

Research on mythologies has been customarily done with mythologies associated with different language groups – Finno-Karelian mythology, Scandinavian mythology, Uralic mythology, Indo-European mythology and so forth. Here, variation has been foregrounded, which problematizes viewing mythology as a more or less uniform whole. The distinction of registers of mythology provides a new tool for approaching variation between cultural practices, the historical development of that variation in relation to uses and users, and also for looking at the linkages and continuities of mythology across diverse practices. However, attending to variation does not mean that broad categories of mythology by culture or religion are invalid any more than addressing linguistic registers invalidates addressing languages as categories of broad, inter-generationally trans-mitted systems. Rather than being mutually exclusive models, these are alternative and complementary ways of looking at material. They both become tools in the hands of a researcher for answering specific research questions. For example, comparative studies in Indo-European mythology and religion have a strong philological basis that seeks to identify and relate integers of mythology, interfaces between mythology and ritual language, connections to social roles and social structures, and other paradigmatic structures operating as organizing principles with a *longue durée*. The methodology outlined here is no more necessary to studies on these topics than linguistic register theory is to etymology and reconstructions of historical

phonology, grammar or metrics. However, it becomes relevant when attention turns from the question of *whether* certain motifs were associated with the central Indo-European god *Dyéus* ['Sky'] to *why* some of these seem to have been transferred to Óðinn (cf. West 2007: 173), *why* Indo-European structures do not seem to be filled by etymologically cognate gods in Old Norse mythology (cf. Lyle 2012: 75–86), or *why* the thunder-god's battle with his serpent-adversary is, in the Scandinavian tradition, situated on a fishing trip and in a collective battle at the end of the world (cf. Watkins 1995: 414–428). The methodological framework presented here can thus complement certain aspects of these sorts of investigations. Most important in this regard remains the perspectives that it enables, which extend beyond applying the framework directly. The variation that becomes evident through this approach should be taken into consideration in any attempt to develop a broad image of a mythology at a cultural level: such broad cultural mythologies are unlikely to be as uniform and systematic as it has long been popular to assume.

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Notes

1. On applications of this approach to mythologies in modern culture, see Frog 2014d.
2. Addressing mythologies in this way groups them according to linguistic heritage and will then highlight the relatedness of those groups, which does not necessarily entail seeking to reconstruct an earlier form of the mythology. Any long-term continuity is of course linked to the history of the mythology and what that mythology was in earlier periods. Consequently, what can be said about the mythology of speakers of Proto-Indo-European (e.g. West 2007; Lyle 2012) and that of speakers of Proto-Uralic (e.g. Napolskikh 1992; Hoppál 2010: 28–37) are quite different. Perspectives have more recently been offered on elements and cycles of mythology that may have significantly earlier roots in the Stone Age (e.g. Meletinskij 1997; Napolskikh 2012; Witzel 2012; Berezkin, this volume). Alternately, attention may also be given to 'macro-regional complexes' of mythology, which are areal patterns and systems that develop in parts of the world where multiple cultures with different heritages of mythology have a long history of on-going interactions (Witzel 2012: 65–68; cf. Frog 2011; 2014a; also Berezkin in this volume).
3. Cf. Algirdas Julien Greimas' (1987 [1962]) description of mythology as a "metalanguage".
4. It is possible to distinguish here between two broad types of religious identity. One is an 'official', ideally prescribed religious doctrine linked to scripture and an institutionalized social or bureaucratic aparatus, such as the Catholic Church. The other is socially constructed through discourse and interaction at a local level. However, it should be noted that the ideal model of religious practice and identity is centrally a frame of reference constructed by and for those participating in a religious identity. Constructing images of the religious identities of 'other' groups is built on social perceptions especially constructed through discourse, whether this is a Norse or Finno-Karelian perception of Sámi religious identity, or the Church's construction of images of 'pagans', 'Muslims' and 'Jews'.
5. E.g. Eliade 1968 [1963]: 1–2; Doty 2000: 4–30; see also the discussion in Csapo 2004.
6. E.g. Eliade 1968 [1963]: 5–6; Lévi-Strauss 1967 [1958]: 202–228; Barner-Barry & Hody 1994; see also discussions in Rowland 1990 and Briggs & Bauman 1992.
7. This occurs in the Sampo-Cycle, in which Väinämöinen is the only anthropomorphic agent in the world-creation, following which forging the vault of heaven may be attributed to Ilmarinen as an indicator that he has the skill to create the mysterious object called a *sampo* (see further Frog 2012; 2013c: 69–73).
8. For example 'heaping together mountains' (e.g. *SKVR* I$_1$ 185.23, 30), whereas *The Song of Creation* attributes him only with the creation of the celestial bodies from a world-egg, which may include forming heaven and earth from its upper and lower parts (notably distinct from the fabrication of the vault of heaven from iron), and shaping the contours of the seabed but not of the land (for a variant from the same singer, Ontrei Malinen, see *SKVR* I$_1$ 79.19–26, 50–61).
9. Discussing the coherence of a mythology must be kept distinct from arguments about the 'origin' of a particular narrative element or historiola. For example, linking the *Flum Jordan* motif to an account of the baptism of Jesus found in the 7th-century *Chronicon Paschale* (Davies 1996: 21)

does not mean that users of the motif in charms also included it in local accounts of Jesus's baptism.

10. Particularly controversial in structuralist approaches was the attempt to advance structural patterns and paradigms to universals (e.g. Lévi-Strauss 1967 [1958]) or to otherwise presume a pattern whereby it became an artificial lens through which evidence was interpreted, and then to treat the interpretation as demonstrating the validity of the pattern (e.g. Germanic mythology and religion in Dumézil 1988 [1948]).

11. In order to resolve this issue, I have elsewhere outlined a differentiation between *centralized symbols* and *decentralized symbols* (Frog 2014a; 2014d), and between a *surface mythology* and *deep mythology* (Frog 2014c).

12. It was used, for example, to describe how references to apocalyptic visions were handled and manipulated in political speeches and the media (e.g. O'Leary 1989).

13. This is found even among scholars who defined myths in terms of stories (e.g. Witzel 2012: 17; cf. also Doty 2000: 49).

14. Certain abstract structural patterns can also be viewed as types of signs in that they have diagrammatic iconicity: recognizing the pattern equates to the recognition of its meaningfulness. even if the images and motifs with which it is completed may be open to considerable variation.

15. This type of variation has been discussed by Doty in terms of the degree of the *vitality* of a myth (2000: 137–140).

16. Cf. also Claude Lévi-Strauss' argument that "symbols are more real than what they symbolise; the signifier precedes the signified" (1987: 37).

17. On mental images and image schemata, see e.g. Lakoff 1987: *passim*.; on mythic images, see Siikala 1992: 42–50.

18. I have developed this definition of 'motif' as a practical tool for analysis. The term 'motif' was originally intuitively defined and its use has been extremely inconsistent. Stith Thompson's *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature* (1955–1958) did not serve to clarify this, owing to his own approach: "Certain items in narrative keep on being used by story-tellers; they are the stuff out of which tales are made. *It makes no difference exactly what they are like; if they are actually useful in the construction of tales, they are considered to be motifs*." (Thompson 1955: 7, my emphasis; cf. Berezkin, this volume.)

19. Thompson's motif type A62.2 "Thunder and Lightning Slay Devils".

20. I.e. the image filling the slot DEVIL may be a *decentralized symbol* – a symbol that functions as a common noun ('devil') as opposed to a proper noun ('Satan') (on decentralized symbols, see further Frog 2014a; 2014d).

21. Like the term 'motif', the term 'theme' has been used in a variety of ways and most often without clear formal criteria to distinguish it from other structural units (cf. Propp 1968 [1928]: 12–13;

Arend 1933; Lord 1960: 68–98; Frye 1968; Foley 1990: esp. 240–245, 279–284, 329–335).

22. For a review, see Frog 2010: 377–395; for examples of this epic in English, see *FFPE* 34–38.

23. This distinction is not clearly made in the Aarne–Thompson–Uther (ATU) tale-type index of international folktales (Uther 2004 or its earlier editions), which is ostensibly concerned with plots, even if these might be combined. However, certain types listed seem normally to have appeared only as episodes within complex narratives without a distinctive complication and/or resolution to form a complete plot according to the definition here (e.g. ATU 1087). On this topic, see also Berezkin, this volume.

24. For a survey of the sources for this tradition and its variations, see Frog 2011; for a more detailed review of the problematic Scandinavian evidence, see Frog 2014b.

25. If I am not mistaken, I was introduced to the potential significance of this feature in a presentation given by Merrill Kaplan at the University of Uppsala in 2006.

26. Available at: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Three_kings_or_three_gods.jpg.

27. On the one hand, this means that the accuracy of Snorri Sturluson's account of this event in his *Edda* is not relevant to this discussion except insofar as the loss of the eye is correlated with sacrifice and the acquisition of supernatural power. On the other hand, this means that caution is needed when employing Snorri's account as a frame of reference because the same details that make it accessible to us as narrative may deviate from the local tradition of ÓÐINN SACRIFICES EYE in relation to which a particular artefact was made or ritual performed.

28. For example, the one-eye modification could have been only symbolic, emblematic of a role, just as modifications to helmets were emblematic to their wearers rather than a literal blinding *per se* (cf. Price & Mortimer 2014: 519–525). It might be appealing to infer that the one-eyed Truso head represents some type of sorceress, but this would only be speculation. For all we know, the modification of an image making it one-eyed like the Truso head or the one-eyed buckle tongue from Elsfleth near Bremen (Price & Mortimer 2014: 525) may have been part of a ritual act for the creation of a supernatural helping agent that could act on behalf of the user (in later Scandinavian folklore this is most familiar in the form of a milk-stealer created by witches). The question seems irresolvable.

29. The vernacular language was not equipped with equivalents to the modern terminology for discussing religion, religious conflict and religious change. Instead, it used expressions like *inn forni siðr* ['the old way of life'] as opposed to *inn nýi siðr* ['the new way of life'] or *Kristinn siðr* ['Christian way of life (religion)'] (Cleasby & Vigfússon 1896: 526; on the interplay of vernacular and Christian religion in the conversion context, see further e.g. Aðalsteinsson 1978; Miller 1991; Sanmark 2004; Gunnell 2009).

30. This interpretation was a structuring principle of Elias Lönnrot's *Kalevala*, where *The Judgement of Väinämöinen* is represented at the end of the epic to mark the end of the pagan past and beginning of the Christian era.

31. This is found in the entry under year 6579 (AD 1071); a Christian's assertion that a pagan god is in fact the Antichrist is also found under the entry for 6582 (AD 1074).

32. This last case seems likely, for example, in the case of Old Norse sagas mentioning *Jómali* (from Finnic *jumala*) as a god of the *Bjarmar* ['Bjarmians'] on the White Sea: it is highly improbable that the theonym of such a remote and infrequently contacted foreign group was maintained in oral discourse for perhaps two centuries when other personal names were not (see Frog 2014c: 466–467).

33. Cf. motifs in legends related to Sámi shamanism (Christiansen 1958: 54–56, type 3080; Jauhainen 1998: 167–168, types D1031–1040; af Klintberg 2010: 264–265, types M151–160). Such motifs construct the image SÁMI through discourse.

34. For a full discussion, see Frog 2014b: 142–154.

35. On Karelian lament, see further Stepanova 2014; for works in English, see Stepanova 2011; 2012, and also Stepanova & Frog, this volume.

36. These differences extend to quite a fundamental level, as discussed regarding raptor symbolism in Ahola et al. 2016.

37. Although 'mode' was introduced with a prominent position by M.K.A. Halliday (1978), it was not as concisely defined as his other terms and was not devoid of ambiguity (see Shore 2015). On the use of 'mode' here, see Frog 2014e: 198–202.

38. This phenomenon has been referred to as 'languaging'; see e.g. Jørgensen et al. 2011.

39. This has recently been highlighted by Eila Stepanova, who has characterized the lament register as a register of lamenters rather than as a register of a genre of folklore *an sich* (2014).

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