

## Transformations of Epic Time and Space: Creating the World's Creation in Kalevala-metric Poetry

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To illustrate the “ancient and authentic disposition” of the Karelians still persisting in 1829, the vicar of Utsjoki parish, Jacob Fellman, described the “classical country of the Finnish Muse” in the following words (1906:496-98):

Enchanted by the charm of their abode, the people do not give a thought to the good of this world, but live in the remembrance of singing praises to the deeds of their gods, heroes, and fathers . . . in the echo of the harp left on the gates of the North by their forefather Väinämöinen . . . . When I asked an older man in Vuokkiniemi what he believed to be the world's creation, he answered: “Well, my holy brother, we have the same belief as you. An eagle flew from the north, placed an egg on Väinämöinen's knee and created the world out of it. See, our beliefs are kindred.”

Fossilization of the people into the memory of its own heroic past was a substantial part in the wider project of framing the Finns' Golden Era within the Karelian ethnographic present. The two cultures confronted one another on many levels—the ethnic, political, religious, linguistic, and aesthetic. The Orthodox old believer from Vuokkiniemi presented for Fellman his syncretic cosmogony as one shared with a Lutheran, Swedish-speaking clergyman, and condensed a local variant of the cosmogonic epic poem *The Creation* into a brief statement. This credo encapsulates an oral mythology, and alludes to a rich epic universe. In Elias Lönnrot's *Kalevala*, these representations of the “authentic dispositions,” epic poems in Kalevala-meter, were transformed into a literary epic.

Both a supposedly sublime style and superior length make the epic the story of stories: a “superstory” that not only represents the models of

heroic action but even works as a model for other texts (Honko 1990a:14; 1993a:195; 1993b:617-18; Zumthor 1990:80-89). It reflects upon the culture's other texts and ways of narrating. In this metatextual aspect it is a grand narrative central in the cultural construction of textuality, narrativity, and temporality. The symbolic status of the epic emphasizes its textual autonomy and identity. According to classical, literary-derived, and canonical criteria, the epic text is easily identified with its written manifestation: it is a bound work, a literary artifact, often a national monument.

How does this monumental epicality emerge from a tradition of oral narratives? How does inscription and editing transfigure the oral epic from an open symbolic system into a symbol? As a national literary epic compiled of oral epic poetry, the *Kalevala* provides an ideal case for analyzing these processes of transformation. Creating and manipulating texts and authorizing them has been discussed as a set of con-, en-, de-, and retextualizing strategies by Richard Bauman and Charles Briggs (1990:72-76)—from this perspective, most stress is laid on contextualization within the epic universe, as further elaborated by Bauman (1992).<sup>1</sup> Here, the story of the world's creation in the *Kalevala*'s first canto is compared to the cosmogonical oral epics that served as Lönnrot's sources: the *Sampo*-cycles collected from 1820 to 1920 in Vuokkiniemi parish, Archangel Karelia. In the Vuokkiniemi corpus, *The Creation* appears independently and in many narrative chains, of which the *Sampo*-cycle is the most common.<sup>2</sup>

As a cosmogonic beginning for both epics, *The Creation* illuminates the respective mythological structures at work in its oral and literate renderings. In the present paper these transformations are going to be assessed by analyzing generic intertextuality, reported speech, and spatial description in Kalevala-metric epics. These factors seem to suspend narrative progression by describing, motivating, and expanding on themes, and they are often trivialized in narratological models and hierarchies of textual organization. Variable and subordinate to the narrative mainstream as they may be, however, they never remain epiphenomenal. They show that the epic, despite its textual, mythopoetic, and historical authority, is

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<sup>1</sup> On con- and entextualization as textual strategies in ritual discourse, see Kuipers 1990:4-7, 62-79.

<sup>2</sup> On oral epic cycles and the *Kalevala*, see Kuusi 1990; Honko 1993b:622-23. On the *Sampo*-cycle, see Kuusi et al. 1977:110-34, 525-29; Honko et al. 1993:655-63, 768; Honko 1993b:630.

profoundly contextualized discourse emerging from a definite “now,” “here,” and ego.

### **The Epic Universe: The Oral Corpus as an Intertextual Space**

The epic universe, the whole of a local culture’s narrative texts, is a fictive world bound to and motivated by its temporal, spatial, and social context. Its thematical and structural coherence is not one of strict narrative logic and chronological order but is created by redundancy, with analogies stretching from one traditional scene and landscape to another. Its stories can be made long or short and linked to others with explicit ties or by way of allusion. Instead of any one “superstory,” various stories spin around the same thematic core, weaving different and even conflicting versions of elementary events, trivial pursuits, and dead ends. Even in the case of *The Creation*, the fragmented and allusive texts give rise to many contradictions in common sense and narrative logic. At the time of Creation, the world was already complete and filled with intrigues and plots—in other words, stories.

As tradition and as an intertextual universe, the epic is always “already told” (Barthes 1982:160): known, ready-made, and yet emergent. Shared knowledge of the epic universe makes explicitness and narrative synthesis unnecessary: narrating was not explanation aiming at closure, but meditation on themes central to the singers (Kuusi 1990:148-49; T. DuBois 1993:261, 265). The oral epic is an “art of allusion” working through metonymic association, in which the tradition works as an “enabling referent” for the understanding of partially formulated messages (Foley 1991:10-13, 46-48, 245; 1992a). The inter- and intraculturally variable length of epic texts is often used as a criterion in defining epics (e.g., Honko 1990a:19), but only the depth or the density of tradition’s intertextual network, the enabling referent, makes the epic meaningful.

Both Foley and Paul Zumthor see the grounding of traditional oral semiosis in formulaic techniques of composition. For Zumthor (1990:89-90) the formulaic style is “a discursive and intertextual strategy” which “integrates into the unfolding discourse . . . fragments borrowed from other preexisting messages that in principle belong to the same genre, sending the listener back to a familiar semantic universe.” Here, the semantic universe extends beyond the epic genre to other genres using the same poetic style and meter (cf. Foley 1991:15, 55-56, 192), the Kalevala-meter. Use of a common poetic language in epic and lyrical poetry, as well as incantations, ritual songs, epigrams, and proverbs makes the intertextual network of the

oral corpus dense and the boundaries of genres permeable. Instead of distinct genres, the analysis thus focuses on the interplay of aspects of formalized speech-acts used in defining genres: voices and modes of discourse, and the functions of language as defined by Jakobson (1987:69-70).<sup>3</sup> Epic poetry provides the synthetic level of this particular system of genres: its multivocal textual universe is saturated by interventions of voices and rhetorical structures dominant in other genres. The interplay of epics and incantations is both culturally significant and the most common instance of generic intertextuality, even if lyrical songs, epigrams, and proverbs occur throughout the epic corpus. The dialogical nature of narrative discourse links even the genres in verse form to prose narratives: several folktales, some of them closely linked to the epic poems, include sung passages in Kalevala-meter.

Regional and cultural differences in the function of Kalevala-metric poetry seem to determine the dominant type of generic intertextuality. In Archangel Karelia, the epic was closely related to the institution of sages: the ritual specialists' activities as healers and seers, as well as those of social and supranormal troubleshooters.<sup>4</sup> The grand narrative of Vuokkiniemi epics is to be found in metafolkloric texts that elaborate on the related themes of singing songs, ritual incantation, and the power of the word. The position of these themes and the intergeneric strategies connected to their elaboration, for instance in the etiological cycle starting with *The Creation*, point at the cultural significance and the mythological meaning of Kalevala-metric epics even without explicit testimony about "belief" or ritual use.

### **From the Epic Universe to a Linear Epic**

Lönnrot knew the depths of the epic universe and used its potentials as a basis for his extended style in the *Kalevala*. Generic intertextuality was cultivated by including lyrical poems, ritual songs, and, most of all, incantations in the epic.<sup>5</sup> In Magoun's translation (Lönnrot 1963:410), the

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<sup>3</sup> On generic voices and genres as "leaking" and dialogical, see Bauman 1992; Tarkka 1993, 1994; Wadley 1991.

<sup>4</sup> On regional differences in the cultural function of Kalevala-metric poetry, see Siikala 1990; on the Finnish-Karelian sage, *tietäjä*, and the tradition of incantations, see Siikala 1992:68-86.

<sup>5</sup> See the index of 57 named incantations inserted in the *Kalevala*.

generic inserts are demarcated from the narrative text by headlines, an editing style that portrays intertextuality as consisting of closed quotations, not open-ended allusions. This “epic of charms” was criticized for the mix of genres but the questioning of *Kalevala*’s epic unity is more informed by normative literary aesthetics than sensitive to the source’s semiotic system (Kaukonen 1990:172-74; cf. T. DuBois 1993:265). Even chronological and causal flaws in the *Kalevala* could be explained by the “religion of disconnectedness,” the “magical” mentality (Kaukonen 1956:437). Blurring of genres was deplored not only for its aesthetic defects, but for ideological reasons. Incantations introduced a “magic” element into the epic, which stood both for archaic authenticity and condemnable paganism.

As in the case of parallelistic embellishment, Lönnrot exaggerated and mechanized manifestations of generic intertextuality. The paradigmatic depth of the epic universe was molded into a linear text, and elusive shifting voices and generic allusions were displayed explicitly. Even genres that, because of their strictly ritual context of use, were relatively isolated from the epic were added in as descriptions of the rituals in question. Lönnrot (1963:375-76) specified that many ritual “passages . . . in the *Kalevala* are sung separately” but referred to explicitly by the singers as they commented on their epic performances. The synthetic epic universe was re-created as a description of its singers’ and the ancient Finns’ lives.<sup>6</sup>

Lönnrot’s handling of generic intertextuality well exemplifies his way of working toward a unified epic plot: he assembled texts alluded to and “filled them out with the general help of all songs of this kind, regardless of whether they were sung in one sequence . . . or separately” (1963:376). Profound changes in linear sequencing made the narrative elements lose their roots in the epic universe.<sup>7</sup> An ethnopoetical analysis of these changes as reflected in texts by a Vuokkiniemi singer and *Kalevala*’s fiftieth canto is presented by Thomas DuBois (1993). Confinement to the variants of one poem by one singer misrepresents Lönnrot’s sensitivity to *Kalevala*-metric tradition’s intertextuality: some of the associations questioned by DuBois (1993:259-66) are motivated within the wider epic universe. Presentation of the oral tradition was conditioned by a narrative “in the eye of the beholder” (see Goody 1991:91; Honko 1993a). A linear logic of explicitness was the literate scribe’s way of compensating for the

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<sup>6</sup> See Lönnrot 1963:372-73; Kaukonen 1990:174; Honko 1990c:566-67; 1990b:212.

<sup>7</sup> See Honko 1993a:199-200; 1990b:209-23; Kuusi *et al.* 1977:69-72.

enabling referent that within an oral tradition caused the allusions to resonate with meaning.<sup>8</sup>

Using poetry from various cultural areas “to fill in the gaps” in local epic corpora or unsatisfactory storylines has been said to produce *Kalevala*’s “epic breadth and detail” (Kuusi 1990:144), but simultaneously the epic’s deep cultural resonance was sacrificed. Lönnrot did not stay within the pool of tradition of one community or even one cultural area, but created a “visionary fantasy” all his own (Kaukonen 1990:157; Honko 1990b:196). As opposed to the numerous local epic universes, the fabricated epic was not grounded in communication between and among the singers. The pooling of all Finnish-Karelian poetry was supposed to echo a national, unified poetic voice and culture projected into history. Lönnrot’s narrative was radical both as an ideological and textual reinterpretation of the epic universe.

The new narrative order forced a unitary plot out of a universe of alternative stories and a multitude of plots. Rearrangement and combination of the sources’ plots meant not only breaking their internal narrative time. Decontextualization of the narrative elements and the narrative tradition as a whole also disintegrated the epic universe as narration taking place *in* cultural time (see Goody 1991:91).

### **Times of Epic Performance—Voices in Epic Discourse**

Etymologically, the Greek word *epos* is a metaphorical designation for oral poetry: “words conveyed by voice” or “oral utterances.”<sup>9</sup> Etymologies stressing the epic’s oral delivery lead to a specific phenomenology of the oral epic rooted in the classical, Homeric tradition. The epic universe’s temporality actualizes as discourse, as “language put into action,” not only as a plot unfolding in narrative time. Following Benveniste (e.g. 1971:223), the concept of discourse refers to the level of linguistic action in which the act of narrating leaves a trace in the text itself (see Tarkka 1993:180-83).<sup>10</sup> When alluded to or metonymically evoked in

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<sup>8</sup> See Foley 1991:11-12, 54-57, 245; 1992b:86-88.

<sup>9</sup> Zumthor 1990:81; Bynum 1969:248, 250; see also Findlay 1984:169.

<sup>10</sup> See also Foley 1992a:292-93 on keys to oral performance, and Bauman and Briggs 1990:73 on incorporation of contextual elements in the text that comes to “carry elements of its history of use within it.”

any performance of an epic poem, the epic universe reaches toward and merges with the present universe of the singers: performance is, in Foley's words, the "enabling event" for any interpretation of oral tradition (1992a).

Fusion of the two temporal orders, the time of the epic universe and the present of performance, is in sharp contrast with Bakhtin's characterization of temporality as a past tense "locked into itself and walled off from all subsequent times," especially the "eternal present" of performance (1981:17). Bakhtin's notion of an absolute epic distance is rooted in the idea of the heroic age as the referential background of epic poetry. The epic's cultural and ideological functions are trivialized, even if these very functions define the epic as an untouchable literary monument. He notes (1981:38) that the roots of the novel, epic's dialogical counterpoint, were to be found in genres with an oral origin; discussion on the epic was, however, limited to the literary canon of epics. The notion of an absolute epic distance denies the coevalness of the epic universe and the world of those who produced it, "the incessant fluidness of lived experience" grounding the epic's historicity (see Zumthor 1990:84). Continuity with the temporal orders of the past, with the past within the time of the narrative and the past performances of the traditional narrative, is, however, one of the main aims of the epic performance.

Bakhtin goes on to argue that "tradition isolates the world of the epic from personal experience . . . , understanding and interpreting" (1981:17). The argument of the epic as monological and authoritative is paired with a notion of the anti-subjective nature of epics traceable to classical poetics (see, e.g., Aristotle:96-97). Even when the epic is defined as an "autobiography" of its audience, and the heroic as a "community superego," the epic is still "impersonal," isolated from individual lives and histories (Zumthor 1990:84-85, 88; see Connelly 1986:147-66). The only individual subject is the hero, and his actions and emotions model and reflect the "communal" and the "ideal," not the "personal" and the "real."

Even the notion of epic anti-subjectivity evaporates in the context of performance. Plato's distinction between two poetic modes (*Republic*:90-94; see Havelock 1963:20-31), *mimesis* (imitation or enacting) and *diegesis* (narration or recounting), was built on the Homeric performance in which the bard and the audience identified themselves with the characters of the epic. *Mimesis*, or the singer's imitation of and identification with his characters, extended in concentric circles to the listeners, producing a collective and yet intimate experience of group identification.<sup>11</sup> This

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<sup>11</sup> Havelock 1963:145-64, 197-214; Foley 1984:441; cf. Okpewho 1979:18-19, 238.

dramatic and ritual nature of the epic performance subordinates the narrative function to the mimetic one. Familiarity with and redundancy in the stories diminished their propositional force based on the stories' contents. In this context, the significance of oral epics rests largely on performative or illocutionary force: the actuality of meaning saturating the texts when enacted, the meaning of utterances as deeds.<sup>12</sup> In such performances, symbolic reality is created not by describing reality or presenting arguments but socially, by "constructing a situation in which the participants experience symbolic meanings as part of the process of what they are already doing" (Schieffelin 1985:709; see also Kapferer 1986:192-93).

Distance between the subject and the textual universe varies in different cultures, traditions, and genres, even if the oral mode worked toward its minimization (see Ong 1977; Foley 1984:441-48; Okpewho 1979:227-39). Contextualizing reduces the distance, but entextualization heightens awareness of the performance as distinct from everyday discourse and action (Bauman and Briggs 1990:73-74) and thus helps in creating distance for "performance reality" via a set of expectations, dispositions, and motivations distinct from the flux of unmarked communication. The idea of identification between the singer and the characters portrayed by him need not remain speculation over the psychodynamics of performance. The multitude of voices and identifications is portrayed within the limits of and made possible by the conventions of the poetic language, and the processes of performance are realized on the level of the text. Here we enter the sphere of discourse where the act and scene of narrating leave their imprint on the text. But whose are the voices?

A. T. Hatto has pointed out the multitude of narrating voices in the world's oral epics: third-person narration is intermingled with first-person narration in all possible tenses: in first-person present narration "the Hero . . . speaks through the bard's mouth," and identification reaches the intensity of possession (1989:153-57).<sup>13</sup> Identity of the actual singer, the narrator intrinsic to the text, and the hero—"the happy fusion of persons" (Okpewho 1979:238)—stands opposed to literary theories' categorical differentiation between narrator and author, or diegetic universe and reality.

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<sup>12</sup> On the illocutionary force of genres as the source of their authority, see the discussion initiated by J. L. Austin's 1975 formulation of speech-act theory—e.g., Bauman and Briggs 1990:62-66; Kuipers 1990; Wadley 1991:211-18.

<sup>13</sup> On applying the idea of possession to an analysis of rhetorical identification within the Kalevala-metric epic performance, see Tarkka 1993:183, 187; 1994.



A literary text is transmitted from the real-world storyteller (author) through an “implied narrator” and an “implied reader” to the real reader.<sup>14</sup> The protagonists are separated by a span of time and situated in different places and “realities.” In between the real-world storyteller and the audience emerges the diegetic universe: the realm of the story. Crossculturally however, the differentiation may well prove to be misleading—one “established by generations of scholars nourished by the scribal culture” (Okpewho 1979:239; see also Havelock 1963:22). As Ward Parks (1987:518-21) has pointed out, oral performance differs crucially from the literary act of communication.

In oral performance, these conceptual divides are bridged. The temporal and spatial distance collapses into a shared presence: both the singer and the listeners “are absorbed in the tale” (Parks 1987:520). This phenomenological collapse leads to a mimetic identification by the singer and the audience into the diegetic, epic universe, as discussion on Platonic mimesis already showed (see Okpewho 1979:234-39; Hult 1984:255-56). At the same time, the border between the diegetic and the real cracks: a mimetic relationship in its broader sense is established (see Foley 1984:448). The mimetic nature of the oral epic is thus not a matter of stylistic realism or verisimilitude (Okpewho 1979:14-27; Zumthor 1990:88), but is grounded in the communicative structure of performance.

Dramatic moderation in the performance of Karelian epics does not undermine the rhetorical play of voices and identities at the level of discourse. The poems were ideally sung by two singers, the other repeating the lines sung by the foresinger (see Kuusi et al. 1977:72-73). The tendency to favor dialogue in Kalevala-metric epics offers the structural slots, and formulaic expressions highlight the shifts of voice within the text. In their reported speech, the heroes constantly use genres dominated by direct discourse, and the multigeneric nature of oral epics is rooted in this very resource (see Tarkka 1994). Reported speech is Bakhtin’s prototype for dialogic speech-acts, and it is a prime example of both generic intertextuality and metalinguistic elements in folklore.<sup>15</sup> The framed reported speeches

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<sup>14</sup> Author is here replaced by singer or storyteller, since the idea of authorship in oral tradition can be seen as the process of authorization of the discourse by references to the chain of performances constituting that tradition (see Bauman 1992:135-37) or by referring to the supranormal powers behind that tradition (see Kuipers 1990:7, 71, 79, 163-64).

<sup>15</sup> Bakhtin 1986:92-93; Bauman 1992:132-33, 138; Bauman and Briggs 1990:63-64, 69-70.

with clear incantatory or lyrical functions create a new level in the textual hierarchy as well as open the textual universe to extratextual reality.

Inserts and allusions may be embedded in the narrative in many ways. In Archangel Karelia, there are relatively fixed combinations of epic historiana and incantation, idiosyncratic combinations that blend epics and incantations through thematic association, shorter or longer incantations placed in the mouths of epic heroes, as well as epic descriptions of names, epithets, magical substances, and ritual practices rooted in the world of incantations (Tarkka 1994:272-74). Furthermore, recognizable allusions to epic poems or short epic songs transformed into first-person form can be used as incantations (*SKVR* I:1, 173, 368). Apart from actual combinations, foregrounding the theme of incantatory singing and the sage's heroic role encourages the mutual embeddedness of incantations and the epic.

Reported speech within the epic typically opens with a mediating formula that draws attention to a performance taking place within the epic text. Impulse for a new mode of narration may rise from the incidents narrated: in the case of incantatory lines, orientation toward the mythical epic universe is dramatized, and the referential or descriptive modes give way to direct involvement, moving from "telling about" to "telling to." Bauman (1992:133-35) notes that quoted speech is not merely recounting or referring to the speech-act, but representing or re-enacting it. Thus reported speech maintains a trace of the illocutionary power of incantations (Tarkka 1994:273). The use of other genres known to the singer, and linked to his ritual roles, may lead to identification: shift of voice activates the frames of mind at work while performing an incantation, a process that, at its most extreme, leads to embodiment of the mythical hero.

As spoken imitation of speaking, reported speech epitomized mimesis for Plato (Hult 1984:255-56). The mimetic relationship between the epic universe and the present reality of performance is clearest when the roles within the narrative universe coincide with those of the situation of narrating. When epic heroes are presented as tradition-bearers similar to the performer and audience, and the traditional song is about tradition and singing, the narrative event merges with the narrating event (Bauman 1992:133; Lönnroth 1979:95; Tarkka 1993:180-83). In Vuokkiniemi, the singer of the epic was most usually a sage, a colleague of the main epic hero, Väinämöinen. Inserting incantations in his mouth served both as a metalinguistic statement of the singer's own cultural competence and as legitimation for the tradition of incantations. Within the epic universe, tradition was constantly defining and evaluating itself—the "precise truths," knowledge, and "holy words" of "bearded heroes," "custom, knowledge,

might and memory” of the singers themselves (*SKVR* I:1, 185, 64). All this was accomplished by portraying the origins of traditional acts of communication and by testifying about the successful action of the heroes.

In the *Sampo*-cycle Väinämöinen resorts to the magical power of words repeatedly. He utters the words of the world’s creation and of sowing, raises the wind and a hail storm with a spell, and sings his enemies to sleep. A *Sampo*-cycle from the village of Aajuolahti provides an example of the singer’s rhetorical identification with the hero and a shift to the incantatory mode. As Väinämöinen drifts towards the otherworld, he raises a storm to throw him ashore by a spell usually used as an invocation for rain, for extinguishing fire, or for preventing the firing of arms (*SKVR* I:1, 78):

“Oi Ukko ylijumala,  
yli toatto taivahani,  
taivahallini jumala.  
Luo sie pilvi luotehelta,  
toini on lännestä lähätä,  
kolmas on koko terältä.  
Lomatusta loukahuta,  
kassa polkalla porohkat.”  
Sekä nousi, jotta joutu,  
kasto polkalta porohkat . . . .  
Tuop’ on vanha Väinämöini  
itsepä noin sanoiksi virkko:  
“Nossa tuulta tutkutointa,  
seän mänövä meäritöintä.”  
Sekä nousi, jotta joutu . . . .

“You Ukko, the supreme god,  
the highest father in the heaven,  
the heavenly god.  
Create a cloud from the northwest,  
send another from the west,  
a third one from all over.  
Bang them against each other,  
water the flintlock’s powder.”  
And it rose, and it fell,  
watered the flintlock’s powder . . . .  
It is the old Väinämöini  
who himself put it into words:  
“Raise a wind of no measure,  
the ill-weatherers untold.”  
And it rose, and it fell . . . .

The positive outcome of Väinämöinen’s incantation is underlined by a typical parallelistic pattern: the plea of the incantation is repeated as a narrative statement. Bauman’s (1992) analysis of Icelandic legends (and tentatively of a passage from the *Kalevala*) points out that generic dialogue not only effects the plot’s temporal flow by articulating it and opening it towards the time of the performance. Serving as a testimony of the power of words, the embedded incantations are more than mimetic representations of speech-acts: they call attention to and validate cultural patterns of action, and articulate notions of cause and effect.

The incantation can make its presence obvious even without the shift of narrating voice. Generic intertextuality can be triggered by descriptive passages woven into the narrative, for instance by crystallized descriptions belonging to ritual discourse. In a *Sampo*-cycle from the village of Lonkka, the heroes obstruct the enemy’s sail by creating an islet (*SKVR* I:1,

649):

Siit' on vanha Väinämöini  
 sanovi sanalla tuolla,  
 virkko tuolla vintiellä:  
 "Annas piitä pikkaraini,  
 taki takloa muruni!"  
 Siit on seppo Ilmorine  
 anto piitä pikkaraisen,  
 taki takloa murusen.  
 Siit on seppo Ilmorine  
 Iski tulta Ilmorine,  
 välkähytti Väinämöini  
 kolmella kokon sulalla,  
 vii'ellä Viron kivellä,  
 seittsemellä sieran peällä,  
 kaheksalla kannikalla,  
 tulitaulan loi merellä  
 kautta kainalon vasemen,  
 yli olkasa merehe.

Then the old Väinämöinen  
 said with these words,  
 uttered by this twist of tongue:  
 "Give me a piece of flint,  
 or a crumb of tinder!"  
 Then the smith Ilmorine  
 gave a piece of flint,  
 or a crumb of tinder.  
 Then the smith Ilmorine,  
 he stoked the fire, Ilmorine,  
 he flashed the light, Väinämöini,  
 with three feathers of an eagle,  
 with three stones of Estonia,  
 over seven whetstones,  
 with the help of eight crusts,  
 he created a flint on the seas,  
 from under his left arm,  
 over his shoulder to the sea.

The epic heroes took a role even in the myths on the origin of fire, and the association of flint with striking a fire gives birth to a passage from the incantation describing the origin of fire. Flint and steel were among the sage's most important magical tools, and striking a fire one of the most widely applicable magical acts. In Vuokkiniemi, the same mythical image of Ilmarinen's stoking was referred to whenever striking a fire, or when a thunderclap was heard. Description of ritually central acts and paraphernalia in conjunction with one of the plot's climaxes motivated the emerging incantation in manifold ways. The epic universe opened to the temporal praxis of observing the natural and manipulating the supernatural.

Identification of the narrator and the actual epic singer is clearest when the text takes on idiosyncratic twists or emphasis motivated by autobiographical information. In the *Sampo*-cycle by Jeremie Malinen, a famous and self-conscious smith and boatbuilder from the village of Vuonninen, the singer's commitment to the epic universe shows already in the choice of the main hero. Väinämöinen's leading role is taken by the smith Ilmarinen. He builds and equips boats for a journey to the otherworld, forges the fantastic harp, and through his music creates a handyman, his real-life double. On Ilmarinen's arrival in the otherworld, the following dialogue takes place (*SKVR* I:4, 2134):

Pohjan akka harvahammas

The gap-toothed hag of the North

jopa vastahan tulovi. "Tiäsiäkö, tuntiako, näkiäkö, kuuliako sitä seppä Ilmarista?" Sano seppä Ilmarini: "Sekä olen nähny, jotta kuullun, Kun olen itsekin seppä. Katso itä, katso länsi, katso pitkin pohjan ranta, katso taivaskin peäs peältä. Onko oikein otava, Tähet taivon taitavasti? Mie olen taivoni takon, Ilman koaret kalkutellun . . . . Soatan mie sammon takuo, kirjokannen kalkutella yhestä oztranjyvästä, vielä puolesta sitäkin."	now comes to meet him: "Do you know, do you recognize, have you seen, have you heard the smith named Ilmarinen?" Said the smith Ilmarinen: "I have seen and I have heard, since I am a smith myself. Look eastward, look westward, look along the northern shore, look to the sky upon your head. Is the Plough in the right way, stars on the sky laid with skill? It was I who forged the sky, I did hammer the firmament . . . . I can forge the sampo, hammer the bright-colored lid of one grain of barley, and even the half of it."
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The hero acts and utters his boasts at the text's deictic focal point.<sup>16</sup> The demiurge Ilmarinen merges with the singer-smith Jeremie whose autobiographical interview testifies the same: "I will hammer just anything," "I am a smith myself," "It was I." Deictic expressions in the epic provide an opportunity for a breakthrough from the time of the tale to the time of the telling. In this very case, the breakthrough reached all the way to mythical times, making the deictic gesture into a ritual utterance. The ego and the singer constitute one of the world's creators, a possessor of the know-how and knowledge of the origins of time and universe.

The singing ego's voice is loudest in the singer's opening words, which are rhetorically akin to the formulae opening heroic speech-acts within the narrative universe. They signal the start of a song "as a particular kind of speech-act" and invoke "the fictional world of mythic enterprise" by activating the traditional universe of reference (Foley 1991:69-70). In a typical invocation by Arhippa Perttunen, the singer paraphrases his singing as an itinerary into the epic universe (*SKVR* I:2, 1105):

"Siitä sinne tie menee,

"From here goes the way there,

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<sup>16</sup> Deictic expressions "single out objects of reference or address in terms of their relation to the current interactive context in which the utterance occurs" (Hanks 1992:47). On deictics and referentiality in Kalevala-metric poetry, see Tarkka 1993:180-83.

rata uusi urkenee	the new track clears itself
paremmille laulajille,	for better singers,
tietävimmille runoille.	for more knowledgeable poets.
Laulun tieän, ehken laulan,	I know a song, I might sing,
tietä karsin, ehken tieä	I clear the way, I might know
paremille laulajoille,	for better singers,
tietävimmille runoille.	for more knowledgeable poets.
Noin kuulin laulettavaksi,	This I heard being sung,
tiesin tehtävän runoja . . . .”	knew the poems being made . . . .”

The singer's words contextualize the epic by pointing out its embeddedness in the interactive setting and its role in the series of previous and future performances. They depict the origin of songs and of the singer's competence, the concrete act and the sensory whirl of singing, as well as address the co-singer and audience. The singer's words are even entextualizing devices (Bauman and Briggs 1990:72-78), in that they highlight the relative autonomy of the poetic text by signaling its particularity, beginning, and end. In local festivals and singing contest, the singer's words were used to present the singers and raise their spirits, and thus pave the way toward the epic universe.

Contextualization similar to that provided by the singer's opening words often takes place within metafolkloric epic poems that highlight the hero's role as an unrivaled singer, or tell about singing contests. The tale of Lemminkäinen's quest associated with the feast at the otherworldly Päivölä usually starts with a myth recounting the first brewing of beer, and an invitation for a singer to perform at the feast. The stage for a performance such as the ongoing one is being prepared within the text. After attempts by some lesser singers, the hero takes over, "instantly accepts some beer, and thus starts his singing" (*SKVR* I:1, 362). A text whose context of performance is identical to the setting of the poem is particularly mimetic, or characterized by a "double-scene": it is "performed by people engaged in the very activity that they are singing about" (Lönnroth 1979:95, 97). This logic, particularly characteristic of songs sung at festivals, such as drinking songs, indirectly motivates even the bond between incantatory themes and intergeneric links between incantations and epics. In the *Lemminkäinen* poem, a singing contest is initiated by a dialogue of conventional singer's opening words (*SKVR* I:2, 811):

Sano Päivölän isäntä:	Said the master of Päivölä:
“Ruvekkama laulamahe,	“Let's start singing,
soakama sanelomah on.	let's get on with uttering.
Kump' on laululta parempi,	Which one is better in singing,

runoloilta rohkijempi?”  
 Sano lieto Lemminkäinen:  
 “En ole laulajan lajia,  
 enkä soittajan sukuvo.”

braver in the poetry?”  
 Said the unsteady Lemminkäinen:  
 “I am not of the singing kind,  
 nor from a *kantele*-player’s family.”

Within the epic, the singer’s quest for inspiration may extend beyond the pint of beer. On the third day of singing, the “sleigh of songs” of even “the best of singers, most knowing of poets” may crack, and help must be sought from the land of the dead. In Arhippa Perttunen’s poem, the singing hero finds the lost words but concludes the epic by uttering an epigram warning posterity of visits to the otherworld and ultimately, as a dedication to his art, includes conventional singer’s concluding words addressing posterity (*SKVR* I:1, 362). In Arhippa’s case, singing about singing contests merges into autobiography. The famous bard told Lönnrot “that the people of his village often persuaded him to take part in contests and he could not remember ever being beaten” (Kuusi et al. 1977:74). In his epic and lyrical songs Arhippa told the same story in various forms, enriched with descriptions of the know-how, joy, and magical potency of singing.

Lönnrot used the thematic weight of the singer’s words as a way to frame the *Kalevala*. The intention was not a hidden one, as Lönnrot quoted the singer’s opening words to explain his editor’s license: “I cast myself to incantations, and threw myself to singing,” and “I regarded myself as a singer, as their equal” (Lönnrot 1993:403; see Honko 1990b:222-23). *Proto-Kalevala*’s preface starts Lönnrot’s self-authorization (1963:365, 374) by thematizing aspects of handing down tradition in a manner similar to the singer’s words. The writer-singer explains “how these songs were got,” and urges them to reach the audience and posterity: “Go forth now . . . poems of Kaleva’s District . . . after spending time in my hands . . . .” Paradoxically, the dialogical essence and contextualizing devices of oral tradition worked in the *Kalevala* for monological authority (Sawin 1988:194-95; cf. Okpewho 1979:233-36). The singer’s extended opening words start the epic by presenting Lönnrot-as-singer (1:1-104), and then move on to narration by alluding to the appearance on stage of the “eternal bard,” Väinämöinen. The closing words of the singer (50:513-620) are likewise linked to the epic proper by an account of Väinämöinen’s exit and a mention of the songs he left as his heritage (50:501-12). Via these subtle mediations, Lönnrot authorized himself as a singer of tales and framed the epic as one belonging to an authentic tradition.

Similar processes of authorization permeate the *Kalevala*. Väinämöinen’s singing activities are displayed lavishly, but in a logic

different from the oral sources. The singing contest described above is echoed in a preparatory celebration of a wedding, where Väinämöinen and other singers exchange conventional singer's words (21:255-438). Väinämöinen is presented as the foresinger at bear cult festivals (46:159-644) and weddings (25:405-672). Lönnrot's vision of the epic's performative context and the wider ethnographic setting was projected onto the epic universe. This vision was partly motivated by the epic universe's themes of singing and courtship, as well as its contextualizing processes, but most of all by Lönnrot's conviction that the poems reflected an ancient way of life. This way of life, including the enabling referent of tradition and the enabling events of performances (Foley 1992a), were narrated into one ethnographic account or mythohistorical still life.

### **The Epic Universe and the Beginning of the World**

The singing ego's presence in the "here and now" of performance and his mastery over the epic's "there and then" makes the epic discourse into a narration taking place in and manipulating cultural time. The epic is not, however, confined to the unfolding present, but rather extends to the past marked as historical or mythical. The very process of creating continuity between the past and the present is one of the main functions of epic tradition, part of the culture's formulations of its historicity (cf. Hale 1990:60-67, 163). The performative formulation of historicity would nevertheless remain hollow without a thematic foundation in the texts being performed. On this level, an epic such as the *Sampo*-cycle is a narrative of cultural time—on the origins of time and constitutive acts of creation. The cycle starts with the world's creation, dwells upon the creation and loss of the symbol of "all the good(s) in the world" (*SKVR* I:1, 83a), the *sampo*, and ends with a description of a battle fought with words. The hero and the matron of the otherworld curse each other's fields with hail and frost. Abundance and riches are lost to the sea, and the fertile soil is rendered vulnerable to climatic hazards.

The mythical nature of the cycle's time has been pointed out by Lauri Honko, who describes its cohesion as "a balance between all the cosmological elements permeating the story: the cycle ends . . . as it began, with magnificent acts of creation" (1993b:630). The time of origins is projected onto subsequent times by building multiple temporal orders within the text. The story starts from the the source of power and authority: the creation of the universe and the beginning of time. Already at this point, the word of traditional utterance was in force; the world was



created with words. The incident ending the poem explains the impoverished *status quo* and offers a solution based on the magical power of the word. The third order puts the word into action: the events recounted are acted out in a ritual performance. The *Sampo*-cycle was chanted in sowing and plowing rituals, together with incantations, and the ending was said to describe how “Väinämöinen removed the frost that had been sent by the mistress of the North” (*SKVR* I:1, 88b). Explicit statements of ritual use support the contents and the temporal and rhetorical strategies of the poem. Aggression between competitive neighbors was, in everyday life, articulated by the notion of envy and the practice of cursing the neighbor’s lot. The myth tells how misery was born out of similar conflicts.

In the *Sampo*-cycle, aggression takes the shape of a dialogue of blessings and curses (*SKVR* I:1, 79a):

Sano vanha Väinämöinen:  
 “Ohoh Pohjolan emäntä,  
 läkkäämäs jaolle samon,  
 kirjokannen katsantaan  
 nenääh utusen niemen!”  
 Sano Pohjolan emäntä:  
 “En lähe jaolle sammon,  
 kirjokannen katsantaan.”  
 Siitä vanha Väinämöinen . . .  
 itse nuin sanoiksi virkko:  
 “Tänne kyntö, tänne kylvö  
 tänne vilja kaikenlainen  
 poloiselle Pohjan maalle,  
 Suomen suurille tiloille;  
 Tänne kuut, täne päivät!”  
 Sano Pohjolan emäntä:  
 “Vielä mä tuohon mutkan muistan,  
 keksin kummoa vähäisen  
 sinun kynnön, kylvön pääle;  
 soan rautasen rakehen,  
 teräksisen tellittelen  
 halmettasi hakkaamahan.  
 pieksämään peltojasi!”  
 Sano vanha Väinämöinen:  
 “Satoos rautaista rietta,  
 teräksistä tellitellös  
 Pohjolan kujan perille,  
 saviharjan hartioille!”

Said the old Väinämöinen:  
 “You mistress of the North,  
 let us go and share the sampo,  
 to survey the bright-colored lid  
 at the tongue of a misty land!”  
 Said the mistress of the North:  
 “I shall neither share the sampo,  
 nor survey the bright-colored lid.”  
 Then the old Väinämöinen . . .  
 himself put it into words:  
 “Here the plowing, here the sowing,  
 here the crops of all kinds  
 to the poor lands of the North,  
 to the great farms of Finland;  
 Here the moons, here the suns!”  
 Said the mistress of the North:  
 “I remember one more trick,  
 I will find one more puzzle  
 over your plowing, over the sowing;  
 I shall send the hails of iron,  
 and throw the steely ones  
 to beat your land sown with grain,  
 to batter your fields!”  
 Said the old Väinämöinen:  
 “Let the hails of iron rain,  
 the steely ones fall  
 upon the ends of the Northern lane,  
 on the shoulders of the clay-hill!”

Väinämöinen's first utterance, "here the plowing, here the sowing," corresponds to the farmer's charms performed in sowing rituals. The particular words used in the epic are not known to be employed as incantations or curses in the ritual proper, but the contents of the epic reverberate in notions of the North's mistress as frost's and the north wind's personification, or in short charms associated with harvesting.

*The Creation's* embeddedness within the *Sampo*-cycle sets the mythical matrix for the whole cycle. Because the *sampo* is the embodiment of all that is valuable, it may absorb into itself the whole cosmos: the *sampo* can be equated to the sky; it may contain the moon and the sun, and even the "birds in the sky" (*SKVR* I:1, 97, 79, 647). The *sampo* that falls to the sea is distributed by Ilmarinen (*SKVR* I:1, 83a):

Ite nuin sanoikse virkki . . . :  
 "Meillä kyntö, meillä kylvö,  
 meilä kuu on, meilä päivä,  
 meilä armas aurinkoinen,  
 meilä tähet taivahalla!"

He himself put it into words . . . :  
 "Ours the plowing, ours the sowing,  
 ours the moon, ours the daylights,  
 ours the dear sun,  
 ours the stars in the sky!"

As a symbol containing the central cosmographic elements as well as potential for growth and wealth, the *sampo* finds a parallel in the bird's egg containing the substance of the cosmos. In *The Creation* that opens the cycle quoted above, Väinämöinen distributes the world out of the egg fallen to the water (*SKVR* I:1, 83a):

Ite nuin sanoikse virkki:  
 "Mi munassa ruskieta,  
 se päiväkse paistamaha.  
 Mi munassa valkijeta,  
 se kuukse kumottamaha.  
 Murskaha muna muruikse.  
 taivosella tähtysikse."

He himself put it into words:  
 "All that is brown in the egg  
 shall shine as the sun.  
 All that is white in the egg  
 shall glow as the moon.  
 Crush the egg into crumbs  
 to shine as stars in the sky."

In this poem, the world's and time's beginning is made analogical to the beginnings of different means of subsistence. The loss of *sampo* to the waves even explained the relative riches found in the sea: the sea had "all the best goodness" and "more goods," both salt and "all the things alive in the sea" (*SKVR* I:1, 83a, 84, 73). Maritime wealth was grounded in the beginning of the *Sampo*-cycle, in which Väinämöinen formed the seabed and the fishing grounds: "It was the beginning of the world, when they got started with plowing and sowing" (*SKVR* I:1, 91). Synchronicity of the season's beginning, the mythical origin of the source of livelihood, and the

creation of the cosmos could thus be verbalized explicitly or by building an analogy between a cosmic symbol and the *sampo*. The first was distributed in the beginning, and the latter in the end, at the point where the epic opens up to the ritual present.

The ritual aspect of the epic need not be grounded in a strictly ritual use of the epic. Performative strategies of creating authority are common to ritual and art (Kapferer 1986:191), and epic poetry, such as the Kalevala-metric tradition, never is “pure entertainment” or art for art’s sake. Rather the epic performance is a “ritual enactment of the moral and social dilemma central to both the collective text and the collectivity” (Connelly 1986:147). The *Sampo*-cycle dealt not only with the uneven distribution of value and goods in nature, but even the ways of acting upon scarce natural resources: ethics of ownership and sharing, evaluations of craftsmanship, sentiments such as envy and aggression. In short, the *Sampo*-cycle was an elaboration—or meditation (see T. DuBois 1993:265-66)—on cultural values. The morality was not expressed in explicit statements, nor in epigrams framed as like Väinämöinen’s speech so common in other epic poems; it was acted out in the plot, recounted, and enacted in performance.

The *Kalevala* severed the story of the *sampo*’s creation from its cosmogonic context and postponed it until the era of heroic action and wooing intrigues. According to both Lönnrot and his sources, the diverse and enigmatic epithets of the *sampo* presented different aspects of luck and prosperity that were lost to and regained from the otherworld. The *sampo*, “all the good in the world” and “a wealthy being” (*SKVR* I:1, 83a, 649), encapsulated the paradigm of prosperity ranging from cosmic elements and “all kinds of goods” to spouses, harvest, and game. These existed within the *sampo* without contradiction. Problems arose only when the quantitatively limited goodness was to be distributed between two neighbors. In the literary context, however, the *sampo* was forged anew to fit into notions of unambiguous symbolization. This time Lönnrot’s interpretation aimed at a narrative establishing the historical emergence of the symbol. For Lönnrot, the different aspects of wealth and *sampo*’s epithets represented successive stages in the evolution of civilization.<sup>17</sup> The *Sampo*-cycle was thus an allegory of the pursuit of higher standards of living, both economic and moral. The new *sampo* had come a long way from the mixed economy of Vuokkiniemi. Instead of “all the good in the world,” the new *sampo* was to contain “all the time of civilization” oriented towards a goal, and claimed as “ours.”

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<sup>17</sup> See, e.g., Kaukonen 1956:466-67; Honko 1990c:563.

### The Birth of Man the Hero

In the epic universe, the analogy between diverse beginnings of time even reached myths of the birth of man. The mythology of childbirth was closely connected to a legend poem in which the Virgin Mary gives birth to her baby, Jesus. *The Messiah* graphically describes Mary's impregnation, birth pangs, and delivery, and Mary correspondingly acted as the main supranormal helper in incantations and rituals of childbirth. The start of a new life connoted not only the presence of the divine in every human but even the start of the universe, coinciding with the birth of the Messiah and each man (*SKVR* I:2, 1098):<sup>18</sup>

Niin siellä siitä syntyy poika  
kainalosta oikiesta.  
Siitä synty kuuhut, synty päivyt,  
Synty tähet taivahalla.

So a boy was born from there  
from under the right arm.  
Thence was born the moon and sun,  
Born were the stars in the sky.

Despite *The Messiah's* mythological focus on childbirth as one of the constitutive acts of creation (Tarkka 1994:286-87), Lönnrot located it at the end of the *Kalevala* (fiftieth canto); the birth of Christ was to illustrate the progression from the pagan past to the Christian present of the Finns (Kaukonen 1956:467; Honko 1990c:559). Religious syncretism in Karelia was parallel to the epic universe's multivocality, but it had to be explained as originating in monotheism and ending in Christian piety. The beginning of such linear time simultaneously dissociated the epic tradition from its ritual roots.

The prolonged and modeling pregnancies and births of the "heroes" in oral tradition and ritual were transferred by Lönnrot to the context of *The Creation*, which was already separated from the *Sampo*-cycle. An account of "Väinämöinen's birth" (1:341) absorbed into itself incantations associated with childbirth. In their original context, these represent birth as an otherworld journey strongly reminiscent of that of the epic heroes and the inside of the female body in panoramic scope as a carnal, otherworldly universe "wide as the sky, the size of the world" (*SKVR* I:4, 960; see Tarkka 1994:277-87). Lönnrot projected this panoramic representation of the prenatal state onto the maritime landscape of the world's creation through a female water goddess, the Water Mother (Lönnrot 1990:560; 1993:403-4). Being the personification of water—at once element,

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<sup>18</sup> Timonen 1987; see Tarkka 1994:279-80.

landscape, and actor—the Water Mother drifted in the sea (*Kalevala* 1:251-54):

noilla vienoilla vesillä,  
utuisilla lainehilla  
eessänsä vesi vetelä,  
takanansa taivas selvä.

on those mild waters,  
on the misty waves,  
before her the slack water,  
and behind her the clear sky.

Simultaneously, she embodied another sea, and Väinämöinen (*Kalevala* 1:290-300)

kulki äitinsä kohussa  
kolmekymmentä keseä,  
yhen verran talviaki,  
noilla vienoilla vesillä,  
utuisilla lainehilla . . .  
pimeässä piilossansa,  
asunnossa ahtahassa,  
kuss' ei konsa kuuta nähnyt  
eikä päiveä havainnut.

went round in his mother's womb  
for thirty summers  
and as many winters too  
on those mild waters,  
on the misty waves . . .  
in his dark hideout,  
in his narrow dwelling where  
he has never seen the moon  
nor beheld the sun.

The Water Mother replaced Väinämöinen as the creator of the universe and as the sculptor of the seabed and the landscape. From the start, Väinämöinen is presented as “the eternal bard” (1:288), as one born of a woman, neither a God to be believed in nor a “wooden idol” (Lönnrot 1963:371-72). As a sage cunning enough to utter the incantation of his own birth, he quotes lengthy passages of incantations of childbirth.<sup>19</sup> As in the original incantations, the aim is to deliver the hero by transferring him from the “dark,” “narrow,” and sunless state to the open under “the clear sky” (*Kalevala* 1:301-14):

Sanovi sanalla tuolla,  
lausui tuolla lausehella:  
“Kuu, keritä, päiväyt, päästä,  
otava, yhä opeta  
miestä ouvoilta ovilta,  
veräjiltä vierahilta,  
näiltä pieniltä pesiltä,  
asunnoilta ahtahilta!  
Saata maalle matkamiestä,  
ilmoillen inehmon lasta,  
kuuta taivon katsomahan,

He says with this word,  
he spoke with this speech:  
“Moon, unloosen, and sun, set free,  
and Great Bear, still guide  
a man out from the strange doors  
from the foreign gates,  
from these little nests  
and narrow dwellings!  
Bring the traveler to land,  
man's child into the open,  
to look at the moon in heaven,

<sup>19</sup> See also 1:169-76, 319-24.

päiveä ihoamahan,  
otavaista oppimahan,  
tähtiä tähyämähän!”

to admire the sun,  
observe the Great Bear,  
and study the stars!”

As the first incantation is of no help, Väinämöinen performs the first of his heroic deeds: he opens the gates obstructing his way, dives into the sea, and, ultimately, rises “on a headland with no name, on a mainland with no trees” (1:333-34).

The allusions in the original poems partly motivate Lönnrot’s combination: the landscapes in *The Creation* and in the incantations of childbirth were parallel. Both described birth as a coming ashore of an embryonic hero, as “letting the traveling man rise on land” (*SKVR* I:4, 960; see Tarkka 1994:278). Lönnrot’s literal interpretation stretched the allusions into a linear action-drama of the epic hero’s miraculous birth. Complementarity and openness in the epic universe narrowed into a more confined epic ethos, where already the amorphous and feminine substance of the proto-sea, the Water Mother, contained the epic hero etymologically as well as physically.<sup>20</sup> Lönnrot derived the name “Väinämöinen” from “Vein emoinen,” literally a diminutive for “water’s mother.”<sup>21</sup> Paradoxically, the literalizing interpretation joined an abstract tendency unknown to the oral sources. The physical and ritual anchoring of the incantations was hidden behind a veil of allegory and decency, where the “mother” no more connoted a carnal mother and a womb but an abstract “power or essence” (Lönnrot 1990:560).

*The Creation*’s transformations were influenced by Lönnrot’s own epical and mythological models, a Christian world view and the Genesis (Kaukonen 1956:458-59). The chaotic nothingness, “a formless void, mixture of elements” as described by Lönnrot (1990:557), was alluded to in *Kalevala*’s seventeenth canto. The proto-sage Vipunen boasted over Väinämöinen of his mythical knowledge, “spells about the Beginning” (*Kalevala* 17:541-52):

Lauloi synnyt syitä myöten,  
luottehet lomia myöten,  
kuinka Luojansa luvalla,  
kaikkivallan vaatimalla  
itsestensä ilma syntyi,  
ilmasta vesi erosi . . . .

He sang the Origins in depth  
and spells in order,  
how by their Creator’s leave  
at the Almighty’s command  
of itself the sky was born  
from the sky water parted . . . .

<sup>20</sup> See Tarkka 1994:277-87, 292-95.

<sup>21</sup> 1990:560; 1993:403-4; cf. Haavio 1991:12-14, 226-29.

Lauloi kuun kuvoannasta,  
 auringon asetannasta,  
 ilman pielten pistännästä,  
 taivosen tähytännästä.

He sang the moon's shaping,  
 the sun's placing, the fixing  
 of the sky's pillars,  
 heaven being filled with stars.

A creator *ex nihilo* entered where the oral sources conceptualized neither a single creator nor nothingness. Ironically, similar flashbacks to the “deep origins” appeared in the oral sources as ritual boast in first-person narration. Sages and smiths—such as Jeremie Malinen—or lyrical subjects raised their spirits (*SKVR* I:3, 1291; see Tarkka 1994:287-91):

Olin miessä kuuventena,  
 urona yheksäntenä  
 ilman kaarta kantamassa,  
 taivoa tähyttämässä.  
 Oikein on otavat tehty,  
 tähet taivon taitavasti,  
 omat on kuopat kuokkimani.

I was the sixth among the men,  
 the ninth among the heroes  
 when the firmament was carried,  
 when the sky was starred.  
 The Plough is correctly made,  
 the stars on sky with skill,  
 the furrows are hoed by me myself.

In the oral poem, *The Spell*, Väinämöinen is forced by the cunning Vipunen to pass the knowledge to himself and posterity, thus contextualizing their common symbolic capital as tradition. Christian authorities joined Väinämöinen in the chain of empowering the sage's words, but never replaced the sage: “what flows from my mouth, flows from the mouth of the sweet God; what I drop from the tip of my tongue, drops from the tongue of Jesus” (*SKVR* I:4, 476). In the *Kalevala*, authority provided by a share in the acts of creation was distanced from the singers and the epic heroes within their rhetorical reach. Vipunen conquered Väinämöinen, and ultimate wisdom and power was credited to the Christian God. Temporality of discourse was again replaced by temporality of linear narrative and reduced to a credo of Christian mythology. Lönnrot's version of the boast and reference to the acts of creation takes the ritual pattern of the oral sources nearer to the Biblical Genesis (1:6-7), in which God with his word “separated the water under the vault from the water above it,” and the Book of Job (38:31), in which God boasts by asking whether Job is able to “bind the cluster of the Pleiades or loose Orion's belt.” In the Finnish Bible, the constellations referred to are the Plough (as mentioned both in the *Kalevala* and the oral sources) and Orion, the “Sword of Kaleva,” translated even as “Väinämöinen's scythe” (see Haavio 1991:220-29).

### The Epic Universe as Symbolic Landscape

Even if narrativity dominates in definitions of the epic, conventions of epic description, such as epic geography, ecphrasis, and ornamental extended style, are often mentioned as epic characteristics.<sup>22</sup> Both limited descriptions and larger configurations display description's ambivalence in relation to narrative.<sup>23</sup> An ecphrasis, description of a visual object within the text, can incorporate both narratives and metahistorical statements (T. DuBois 1993:29-31, 49-50). Epic geography, the spatial structure of the epic universe, is connected to the epic's metahistorical and "genealogical" functions (see Zumthor 1990:84-85): it is about "our" history and "our" land. Likewise, spatial organization of the epic universe into two opposing regions motivates the typical plot of journey, and punctuates it by signaling movement from one episode to another. Epic plots portray dense alteration between home and the otherworld, both as scenes and proverbial or lyrical evaluations of the places uttered by the heroes. Descriptions of the otherworld are the most significant and elaborated paradigmatic set of spatial descriptions in the Vuokkiniemi corpus.<sup>24</sup>

The epic universe's fictional landscape is mapped out with a set of interchangeable images. Topoi and epithets belong to the common stock of motifs and formulae that are easily transferable from one context to another and activated for intertextual purposes. Places such as the "tongue of a misty land" or "a headland with no name" are the stages for diverse myths of origin in the incantations, and crucial points of reference in the epic landscape, for example, the battleground in the fight over the *sampo* (*SKVR* I:4, 2134).

Conventional and stable nuclei of description bring the epic closer to other, basically non-narrative genres. The songs of homesickness sung by Väinämöinen as he drifts in the sea in the *Sampo*-cycle provide an example of spatial description as a framed unit of reported speech and, simultaneously, a lyrical poem. Fusion of lyrical songs and epics or the lyrical and epic subjects is common, even if it has not reached the degree of

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<sup>22</sup> See Seidel 1976:12-15, 32-33, 64; Hatto 1989:215-22; Kurman 1974; P. Dubois 1982; Findlay 1984.

<sup>23</sup> On the statuses of narration and description in defining genres such as epics, see, e.g., Mitchell 1989:91-92; on the complex relation between description and narrative, see, e.g., Beaujour 1981:33, 47-48; Viikari 1993.

<sup>24</sup> On the paradigm of the otherworld and its symbolic function in the epic universe, see Tarkka 1994:291-96.



fixity found in the southern areas of Kalevala-metric tradition. (*SKVR* I:1, 83b).<sup>25</sup>

Jopa vanhan Väinämöisen  
 Itku silmähän tulovi:  
 “Mie jouvuin, poloni poika,  
 jouvuim moalla vierahalla,  
 moalla ristimättömällä,  
 paikkoihe papittomihin,  
 pimiehen Pohjolah,  
 paksuh Palehtolah,  
 miesten syöpäh kyläh.  
 Kuin oisin omilla mailla,  
 vielä kerran kellot soisi,  
 vaskipankat vankahuisi.  
 Teälä syöpi korppi kouhkot,  
 muun vereni musta lintu.”

Now the old Väinämöinen  
 feels the tears well in his eyes:  
 “I ended up, the poor boy,  
 ended up on foreign land,  
 on unchristened land,  
 in priestless places,  
 in the dark North,  
 in the thick Palehtola,  
 in the village that eats men.  
 If I were in my own land,  
 once more I’d hear the bells ringing,  
 the bells of brass banging.  
 Here my lungs are eaten by crows,  
 all my blood by the black bird.”

In this passage, spatial description is mediated by the hero’s sentiment towards the place as well as the values and symbolic frameworks attached to it: nostalgia, recognition, or aversion. Despite the otherworld’s negativity, it is not an abstract void but pictured with familiar and realistic details: the Other is, after all, your closest neighbor (see Tarkka 1994:292-95).

The wide connotations of the epic landscape and the hero’s movement within its coordinates show that heroic action not only moves the linear narrative forward but also elaborates symbolic boundaries and social values. The spatial organization highlights different aspects of identity, a cultural self, an “Us,” and a “Home.” Alterity located in the otherworld is not only a negative opposite of this world, but an essential point of reference in the construction of this-worldly identity and a source of wisdom, power, and wealth. Consequently, in the *Sampo*-cycle the symbol of all goodness is transferred from the otherworld back to its lawful proprietors, “Us.” After having forged the *sampo*, Ilmarinen locates the problem (*SKVR* I:1, 79):

Kuin on sampo Pohjosessa . . . .  
 Siin’ ois kyntö, siinä kylvö,  
 Siinä vilja kaikenlainen.

The sampo is in the North . . . .  
 There would be the plowing, there the  
 sowing,  
 There all kinds of harvest.

<sup>25</sup> For examples of co-texts of the following lyrical song, see Tarkka 1994:268-71.

Läkkä sammon nouantah . . .  
Pimiestä Pohjosesta.

Let's go and get the sampo . . .  
From the dark Northern land.

The ensuing fight over the *sampo* culminates in Väinämöinen's claim: plowing, sowing, and "all kinds of wealth" are to be *here*; hail and frost is to be "over *your* plowing and sowing," "over *there* . . . upon the ends of the North's lane" (*SKVR* I:1, 79). The relational structure of the epic geography is clearest in deictic elements that serve as mediators between epic landscape and the living space of the singers (see also Beaujour 1981:52-53). Significantly, the home's "here" was seldom named or described in detail: it was immanent, assumed familiar, and described either as the otherworld's opposite or in terms of nostalgia. It was the exceptional designation by Ontrei Malinen, "here, on the poor northern land, on Finland's wide space" (*SKVR* I:1, 79a) that influenced Lönnrot.<sup>26</sup>

The most obvious mimetic aspect of the epic lies in the epic description's verisimilitude, which can hardly be grasped without at least a tentative knowledge of the "reality" evoked or referenced.<sup>27</sup> This is not only the "reality" as such but a reality already culturally constituted, filled with and mapped out by the "store of cultural images": conventional "mental images" (Beaujour 1981:31, 33, 52-53), conceptual yet visually "seen" "mythical images" (Siikala 1990:87-106). Ultimately, even in the most realistic and immediate reference to the extratextual reality, the reality we are dealing with here is conditioned by the "broader picture" or "story behind" it: other texts (Tarkka 1993:178-79), the "word-hoard of tradition" (Foley 1992a).

Even the most concrete and realistic description always points in two directions: the mimetic or realistic and the pictorial or symbolic.<sup>28</sup> Use of metaphorical expression or images has its roots in the visual frameworks of reality, but it simultaneously foregrounds the fictive nature of representation and indicates "representation of the unreal, or . . . a non-representational, non-mimetic type of discourse" (Riffaterre 1981:107). In the epic universe, activation of the symbolic realm leads to the

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<sup>26</sup> See *Kalevala* 43:303-4; Kaukonen 1956:340.

<sup>27</sup> On spatial description, referentiality, and *mimesis* in literary theory, see Mitchell 1989:91-93; on the oral epic as mimetic and realistic see, e.g., Zumthor 1990:88; Okpewho 1979:14-27; on the naive interpretations of a mimetic relationship between the *Kalevala*-metric epic universe and the world as "photographic realism," see, e.g., Honko 1990c:567.

<sup>28</sup> On this "Janus-like" nature of description, see e.g. Beaujour 1981:37; Lyytikäinen 1992:124-34, 141-45, 156-57; Riffaterre 1981:107-8; Viikari 1993:68.

paradigmatic depth of tradition. “Realistic” descriptions of the otherworld are a case in point. In the Vuokkiniemi corpus, the North is represented both in a mimetic, realistic way as a neighboring village, and as a projection of the wide field of something “wholly other.” Picturing the otherworldly afterlife and prenatal existence alongside intimate images of the familiar and concrete surroundings is not only a staple of any particular system of beliefs but a condition of human language and literature (see also Okpewho 1979:226-32). Like any description, the otherworld points in two directions: the visible and visualized, perceived and concrete reality, which, when entering the processes of symbolization, changes and stretches to the multiple frames of reference provided by tradition. Simultaneously, the otherworld’s homely opposite, the “here” and “now,” also changes.

In textual praxis, activation of the symbolic in description of the otherworld is based on parallelism and intertextuality. The shifting conceptual frameworks of the otherworld’s epithets bring about movement towards symbolic, metaphorical meanings. For example, Arhippa Perttunen caught the essence of the otherworld in images and epithets that, by links established in parallelistic chains or by etymology, build an extensive field of associations ranging from the land of the dead and the graveyard to the celestial otherworld and the sun, from Jerusalem to the mythical mountain where pains and diseases originate, and, among others, from the neighboring village to the forest.

Opening the linear narrative towards the reality of performance made the epic mimetic in the sense of being enacted: rather than being itself a representation of reality, this aspect of *mimesis* created of that reality in performance. In description, reality was captured by its verisimilitude but simultaneously postponed by the symbolic, allegorical, or metaphorical levels hinted at in the elaborate descriptions of the otherworld. These descriptions break the linear narrative from another angle by introducing new frames of reference.<sup>29</sup> The paradigmatic or metaphorical widening of the epic horizon does not, however, fragment the unity of the epic universe, but only enriches and fills out the fictive universe, producing an impression of coherence—an epic quality *par excellence* (Lyytikäinen 1992:145). In the *Kalevala*, a matching coherence was sought by opposing means, by syntagmatic expansion and patchwork.

In its elusive, symbolic, and contextualized embeddedness in cultural reality and praxis, the epic universe makes a solid statement: it is a “perpetually re-created song of truth,” “our story,” and “a saga of identity

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<sup>29</sup> Beaujour 1981:36, 41-42; Lyytikäinen 1992:128-29, 134.

and, as such a saga of alterity.”<sup>30</sup> It clears a foothold in the world and places communities and egos in a spatial, temporal, and social matrix. In this sense all epic and all art—even that considered “mere entertainment”—are mythological: a gesture of locating human life and action in the cosmic order, and relating the present realities to other worlds and other times. The relations are not simply displayed; they are depicted as images and related as stories, spurred into movement, transformation, and action as performances. Because of this dynamic aspect, *poiesis*, *mythos* (or emplotment), and *mimesis* extend history’s and time’s manmade quality.<sup>31</sup> Ritual enactment connects the manmade nature of the temporal universe to the makings of the Gods.

### Enclosing the Epic Space

At the surface, the spatial structure of Lönnrot’s *Kalevala* was faithful to the epic universe: it was based on the opposition between the North and the home of the heroes. Topographical ambiguity was nevertheless against the current aesthetic norms,<sup>32</sup> and so Lönnrot simplified the epic landscape’s relational nature by naming the home of the heroes, the “Us” of the epic. “Here” became “Kalevala,” “Kaleva’s village.” The act of naming the “here” severed the epic from its mythological role as a “saga of identity” for its singers, and created a completely new saga with a new role.

Lönnrot explained his choice of name through a migratory legend of his own making. Kaleva was supposed to be the forefather of the Finns who led his folk to their present abode (Lönnrot 1963:367-70, 378-79). The idea was further elaborated by Lönnrot in his poem composed in Kalevala-meter, *The Birth of Finland*. To create a nation (Lönnrot 1990:7), Kaleva

Sanan virkko, noin nimesi:  
“Ollet suotu onnekseni,  
arvattu asuakseni,  
niin sun Suomeksi nimitän,

Uttered a word, named thus:  
“You are promised to be my fortune,  
allotted to be my abode,  
thence I will name you Finland,

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<sup>30</sup> Zumthor 1990:84; Wadley 1991:221; Connelly 1986:225; see also Okpewho 1979:75-76.

<sup>31</sup> Okpewho 1979:50-53; Ricoeur 1984:31, 33, 48.

<sup>32</sup> T. DuBois 1993:262; see Lönnrot 1963:374-75, 378-79.

Suomen maaksi mainittelen.”

mention you as the Finn country.”

Via a leap of etymological imagination, the name-giving was authorized by the myth of promised land: Lönnrot (1990:8-9) derived *Suomi* “Finland” from the verbs “to promise” or “to let” (*suoda*). “Here” was the land *promised* for “us.” While creating an imagined community in time and space, Lönnrot also created a genealogical link between the epic heroes and the Finns, the audience of the literary epic (Sawin 1988:195).

The decontextualized epic universe was linked to a new identity, and given a mythopoetic or historical significance. As a consequence of filling the deictic slots for a “here,” an “ego,” and any “present” with stable contents, a self-contained epic in Bakhtin’s sense was born. The sacrosanct authority of Lönnrot’s epic topography and act of naming raised few counterstatements. One of them was C. A. Gottlund’s epic compilation *Runola*, “Runeland.” Lampons against this counter-*Kalevala* praised Lönnrot as “the eternal singer,” “the first of heroes” who had, like his colleague Väinämöinen, “straightened the Plough” and shown the right path for the generations to come.<sup>33</sup> The audience and posterity thus gave Lönnrot the aura of the epic hero and demiurge, a status that was already grounded in the editor-singer’s ways of framing the epic. Moreover, Lönnrot, who presented himself as the singer *primus inter pares*, in fact acted as the politicized hero Kaleva in his own poem.

The need for a definite plot, morality, and message was dictated by the literary and ideological expectations set for the romantic, national epic. Ambiguity and openness had to be forged into closure, thus constituting a heroic history and national ethos. The *Kalevala* was cut off from living tradition by a radical cultural translation that flattened and stretched the endemic epic depth into a non-allusive linear story. Yet both the oral sources—the epic universe—and the *Kalevala* were sagas of identity. Possession of the epic tradition was an ethnic boundary marker and possession of the *Kalevala* became a national one; both articulated these boundaries within their textual universes. Both were cultural constructions of time relating pasts to presents and futures. In the oral sources, the relation was both transient and continuous: it was actualized in ritual discourse and was passed on as tradition, knowledge interpreted as ancient, communal, and valuable. The literate compilation promoted identity on a different level, and established a different relation to the past. By attaching the mythical times and places to supposed (historical) referents, Lönnrot

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<sup>33</sup> The Plough referred to was even the name for Gottlund’s other work which was, according to the lampoon, put in its proper place by the real textual demiurge Lönnrot.

created his myth of the creation of a Finnish world. This geography of Kalevala—and the *Kalevala*—was a hybrid, misplaced landscape, yet no more a “headland with no name.”

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