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Reflexes of Myth in Medieval Germanic Poetry and Lithuanian Folk Songs: Common Indo-European Heritage

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INTRODUCTION

Traditional oral poetry presents a unique source of the archaic lore implying common Indo-European intellectual and cultural heritage. The poet had at his disposition an invaluable tool: the word-hoard stored in his memory and transmitted from generation to generation. The poetic word conveyed a message from gods, bestowed immortality upon the hero or lamented the death of the king. Yet, it is the Mead of Poetry, a mythical beverage that "nourished" two very distinct poetic traditions – medieval Germanic poetry and Lithuanian folk songs, although the creation of the earth from the body of the giant Ymir, the love story between the god Freyr and the giantess Gerd, and the prophecy of *Vǫlva* may seem to have little in common with either the heroic world of *Beowulf*, with its mead-hall attacked by the ferocious monsters, or the pastoral life celebrated in folk songs, with lay people singing about their daily challenges and the agricultural and family festivals. In the course of time myths changed, and gods and supernatural heroes were transformed into the acting personae of folk songs, riddles, charms and laments.

The problem. Traditional oral poetry bears in itself symbolic references of mythic reality. The scholarly problem lies in an attempt at recognising the mythological content behind the poetic image and tracing it back to the mythical prototype (archetype); discriminating between the layers of poetic grammar – mythic formula and the formulaic expression (kenning or epithet); and establishing the link between mythic formula, motif, and poetic image. The root of the problem lies in the apprehension of research tools necessary for undertaking the comparative analysis of the Old Icelandic, Old English and Lithuanian poetic narratives. Traditional narrative serves as a paradigmatic model, encompassing the different genres of traditional oral poetry. It is important to note that the same motifs in different traditions may be represented in different forms; this fact poses a challenge when performing an analysis of the motifs themselves.

The current dissertation aims at unveiling the metamorphosis of myth into poetry and song as reflected in the poetic grammar of the selected Old Icelandic, Old English and Lithuanian poetic narratives. The following tasks were set out to fulfil the aim:

1. to reveal the connection between myth, ritual, traditional poetry and song;

2. to decipher mimesis from a mythopoetic perspective;

3. to exhibit the link between archetypes, motifs, and mythic formulas;

4. to highlight the elements of poetic grammar as embedded in mythic formulas;

5. to unveil the levels of symbolism in a poetic text in terms of hermeneutic interpretation.

The **empirical corpus** of the research comprises the Old Icelandic collection of poems *The Poetic Edda*; the Old English epic poem *Beowulf*, poems *The Dream of the Rood*, *The Wife's Lament*, *The Riddles of the Exeter Book*, and Lithuanian folk songs – calendar, wedding, military-historical, work songs, and laments.

The research carried out within the scope of this dissertation was guided by the following **claims**:

1. The transformation of myth into different modes and genres of traditional oral poetry may be confirmed by comparing mythic and mimetic narratives.

2. The connection between myth and traditional oral poetry is established by means of mimesis through the paradigm of common motifs and imagery.

3. Traditional oral narrative exhibits thematic motifs revealed through poetic formulas and perceived through poetic images and archetypes.

4. Mythic formulas observed in the poetic narrative refer to the underlying elements of poetic grammar – kennings and epithets in particular.

5. Hermeneutic interpretation discloses the general orientation of traditional oral poetry towards myth as the sacred narrative.

The **novelty of the dissertation** lies in the comparison of three distinct traditions: the Old Icelandic, the Anglo-Saxon and the Lithuanian. As a result of this comparative study, shared poetic characteristics and common elements of mythic worldview of each unique tradition may be identified. The dissertation offers an input into the studies of traditional oral narrative in Lithuania, as it provides an investigative tool for the analysis of the components of traditional oral narrative. A comparative analysis is focused on the deep structure of poetic narratives – motifs and archetypes as embedded in the *poetic/mythic formulas,* a pivotal element of the poetic grammar. The dissertation should be relevant for the studies of traditional oral narrative, comparative poetics and comparative mythology; it should also contribute to the comparative studies of the Germanic and the Lithuanian poetics.

The **theoretical approach** establishes a theoretical framework for the analysis of traditional oral narrative and its components. The attempt to examine traditional oral narrative is directed toward its connection to myth and ritual by means of *mimesis* wherein poetry (a mode of elevated speech) complements myth (a sacred story) and ritual (a sacred action). Structurally, poetic narrative is divided into motifs and archetypes which are reflected in poetic formulas. In traditional oral narrative, poetic formulas are part of poetic grammar – a fixed repertory of poetic expressions. Oral-formulaic

composition may be seen as the defining feature of Indo-European epic poetry (extended to traditional oral poetry in general). The founder of the study of oral tradition Milman Parry in his article *L'Épithète traditionnelle dans Homère: Essai sur un problème de style homérique* (1928) analysed traditional fixed epithets of Homeric verse and argued that they constitute the major building blocks in the system of versification. Parry presented a comparative analysis of rhythmic patterns and formulaic verse of Homeric poetry and Slavic traditional song in *Whole Formulaic Verses in Greek and Southslavic Heroic Song* (1933). The oral-formulaic theory was further developed by Albert B. Lord (*The Singer of Tales*, 1960) who described theme as a group of ideas regularly used in telling a tale in the formulaic style in a traditional song. In the second half of the 20th century the oral formulaic theory was further advanced by John Miles Foley who investigated the fixed poetic formulas in relation to performance and reception theories (*Word-Power, Performance, and Tradition* (1992), *The Singer of Tales in Performance* (1995), etc.).

Inasmuch as myth manifests a connection to ritual and the beliefs of an archaic society, the discussion of the sacrality of myth and mythic worldview is crucial for the present dissertation. Historian of religion Mircea Eliade discusses the concept of hierophany (a manifestation of the sacred) and the cyclic notion of time which is especially valuable in uncovering the connections between myth and ritual. In his study *The Myth of Eternal Return* (1954) Eliade introduces cyclical understanding of time in the archaic consciousness and the idea that in archaic societies people imitate the actions of gods or mythical heroes in order to establish a connection with the sphere of the sacred and enter the sacred time. In mythopoetic perspective, traditional oral narrative imitates myth and complements ritual inasmuch as it recites sacral events (cosmogony, hierogamy, death and rebirth of the gods).

The **methodology** applied in the thesis combines *archetypal literary criticism* (Northrop Frye), which offers a three-fold classification of narrative (mythic, high mimetic, and low mimetic) with a corresponding division of motifs and archetypes, and *comparative Indo-European poetics* (Calvert Watkins, Martin Litchfield West) which traces the manifestations of mythic worldview in traditional oral poetry. *Hermeneutic interpretation* is employed as a tool for unravelling the hidden meanings of traditional oral poetry: the elements of narrative are interpreted as symbols which direct the reader toward the hidden (mythic) layer of meaning (Hans Georg-Gadamer, Paul Ricoeur).

A combination of several theories has been applied to advance the empirical analysis of traditional oral narrative. The framework of archetypal

literary criticism by Frye (*Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (1957)) was followed to reveal the distinction between mythic and mimetic narrative. Mythic narrative comprises the stories about gods and their participation in the events of cosmic significance. Mythic narrative is imitated in the high mimetic (heroic) narrative, where heroes perform deeds similar to those of gods, but the scale of their actions pertains only to the warrior society. Mythic narrative is also imitated in the low mimetic (folk) narrative where profane people replicate the divine pattern in order to sanctify their works and festivals. The three types of narrative are viewed as the formal substructures of traditional oral poetry.

In the analysis of the components of traditional oral narrative, the scheme of poetic grammar introduced by Watkins has been exercised. Watkins distinguishes the level of sound (metrics, phonetic devices) and the level of meaning (grammatical figures, poetic diction, formulas, and themes) in the poetic grammar. The empirical research is also supported by the premise that formula is linked to motif and image/archetype. The insights by Alexander Veselovsky contribute to the definition of motif as a simple and indivisible unit of narrative (*Историческая поэтика* [1940] (1989)). The insights of Bronislava Kerbelytė (*Историческое развитие структур и семантики сказок (на материале литовских волшебных сказок* (1991), *Lietuvių tautosakos kūrinių prasmės* (2011)) contributed to the description of motifs as semantically significant units within numerous variations of a plot.

Comparative Indo-European poetics as a field of study was developed by Calvert Watkins (*How to Kill a Dragon: Aspects of Indo-European Poetics* (1995)). The scholar analyses the dragon slaying myth as the fundamental Indo-European myth which left an imprint on the poetic tradition. The research carried out within the scope of this thesis is supported by the premise of genetic intertextuality of traditional oral texts in the Indo-European tradition (Watkins 1995, vii). Similar poetic formulas may be found in the corpus of different Indo-European traditions; these formulas refer to universal motifs which are incorporated in a mythic narrative. In the poetic corpus, the basic formula is transformed into formulaic expressions – poetic phrases which contain lexical and/or syntactic replacements of the components of the original formula.

The Indo-European heritage in traditional oral poetry and myth of the European and Asian daughter traditions was examined by M. L. West in his study *Indo-European Poetry and Myth* (2007). West provides an overview of phrase, figure, metrics and other characteristics of Indo-European poetry as well as presents an elaborate description of Indo-European gods in relation to

their functions as reflected in myths and folklore sources; the study covers many different aspects concerning the culture of Indo-Europeans.

The interpretation of traditional oral narrative has been conducted within the framework of hermeneutics. Poetic symbols of oral traditional narrative are interpreted as having a 'surplus of meaning' (Ricoeur 1976). Hermeneutic circle is employed to uncover the meaning of poetic symbols and to establish their connection to myth (Gadamer *Truth and Method* (1960), Ricoeur *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (1976)).

In order to carry out the research within the scope of this thesis, a combination of several **research methods** is applied. The theoretical framework was constructed by applying descriptive and analytical research methods. The empirical research was guided by analytical and comparative methods.

So far, the Lithuanian studies of traditional oral narrative have mainly been focused on the investigation of Lithuanian folklore in relation to traditional Lithuanian beliefs, customs, and rituals. In this context, investigations devoted solely to the connection of myth and traditional Lithuanian songs have been few (not to mention comparative studies of Lithuanian folk songs and foreign poetry). The scholar whose work most prominently deals with mythical aspects of Lithuanian folk songs is Nijolė Laurinkienė. Her book *Mito atšvaitai kalendorinėse dainose* 'Reflections of Myth in Calendar Songs' (1990) offers an overview of the Lithuanian calendar rituals and the archaic images and motifs of calendar songs. Laurinkienė also provides a comparative analysis of songs from related traditions (Latvian, Ukrainian, Belorussian, Russian, Germanic).

The prominent Lithuanian mythologist Norbertas Vėlius explored the mythic aspect of archaic Lithuanian wedding customs and wedding folklore (songs, orations, music, games) in his posthumously published study *Senieji vestuvinių dainų ir papročių semantikos klodai* ('The Ancient Layers of Semantics in Lithuanian Wedding Songs and Customs' (2014)). Vėlius presents specific characteristics of Lithuanian wedding songs and their connections to ritual and mythical worldview and compares them to Latvian folk songs. The analysis of the theme of death and afterlife in this dissertation benefited from the study *Dausos* 'Heaven' (1990) by Gintaras Beresnevičius who discusses the different perceptions of the afterlife as embedded in Lithuanian folklore and songs in particular.

The recent works on Lithuanian folklore and mythology by Dainius Razauskas were important for the analysis of the motif of the bride. The article *Iš baltų mitinio vaizdyno juodraščių: Aušrinė (ir Vakarinė)* 'From Rough Copies of the Baltic Mythic Imagery: the Morning Star' (2011) discusses the

traditional personified images of the morning star and the evening star, whereas *Medis – mergina, nuotaka: dendromitologinė apybraiža* 'The Girl-Tree: an Essay in Dendromythology' (2017) discusses the parallels between the image of a tree and the image of a young girl/bride in folklore. The studies of Lithuanian folk songs within the framework of oral-formulaic theory are still in the stages of early development. Birutė Jasiūnaitė has examined the formulaic nature of traditional Lithuanian curses (2001, 2007); Latvian scholar Laila Vacere presented a study of formulas pertaining to the motif of the apple tree in Latvian folk songs (Vacere 2006). Among other studies dedicated to the reflections of mythic worldview in Lithuanian folk songs there could be mentioned *Žemės įvaizdis kaip vertės matas: stabilumo ekspresija* 'Image of Earth as Standard of Value: Expression of Stability' (2003), *Advento-Kalėdų dainų turinio apimtys ir potekstės* 'The Scope and Subtext of Advent and Christmas Songs' (2007) by Jurgita Ūsaitytė, *Mitinis vandens įprasminimas lietuvių sakmėse, padavimuose ir tikėjimuose* 'Mythical Meanings of Water in Lithuanian Folk-Legends and Folk-Beliefs' (1999) by Lina Būgienė, *Vestuvinių ir iniciacinių apeigų sąsajos dainose* 'Connections between Wedding and Initiation Rites as Reflected in Folk Songs' (2004) by Bronė Stundžienė.

Structure of the dissertation. This thesis comprises four chapters: an introduction, a theoretical part, an empirical part, and conclusions. In the introductory chapter, the target and the aim of the research are presented and the tasks necessary to accomplish the intended research are delineated. The introductory chapter presents the theoretical approach and the methodology employed in the thesis, as well as reveals the novelty of the dissertation.

The theoretical part discusses the theoretical premises for the research and presents a model of analysis of traditional oral narrative. The theoretical approach focuses on the connections between poetry and myth and reveals the mythopoetic nature of traditional oral narrative. Characterisation of traditional oral narrative and the dynamic of its evolution in relation to the sacred/profane opposition is provided. The theoretical part presents a model of structural analysis of traditional oral narrative: the components of traditional oral narrative, i.e. motifs, images/archetypes, and formulas are defined and discussed in relation to poetic grammar.

The empirical part of the dissertation provides a historical overview of the Old Icelandic, the Anglo-Saxon and the Lithuanian source material and offers descriptive comments on each tradition and genre. In the empirical part, the theoretical model of analysis is applied for the study of selected poetic texts. The empirical research focuses on the recurrent motifs, images and poetic devices identified in the analysis of poetic narrative. The material is grouped

into subchapters which approach the following themes: cosmogony, hierogamy, the *Axis Mundi*, the battle of chaos and order, and death.

The conclusions present the main findings of the empirical analysis and the insights on the subject of the thesis gained in the process of conducting the research. The list of scholarly literature which supports the research follows the conclusions.

Approbation of the research. The research results were published in the following scholarly articles:

1. *The Dualism of the 'Sacred' and the 'Profane' in the Poetic Narrative of 'The Lay of Skirnir' and Lithuanian Wedding Songs.* (2016). Etnolingwistyka. Problemy języka i kultury, Vol. 28. (ISSN: 0860-8032).
2. *The Mythical Space of Death and Afterlife as Embedded in the Structure of the Poetic Narrative.* (2017). Current Issues in Literary and Cultural Research, Vol. 22 (ISSN 2500-9508).

The research results were presented at the following international conferences:

1. *Functions of Gods Perkūnas and Thor in the Baltic and the German Traditions*. International conference TELL ME'15. Kaunas, VU KHF, 21-22 April 2015.
2. *The Roles and Names of Thunder God as Reflected in the Poetic Narrative*. International conference *Šventieji ir nelabieji kultūroje*. Šiauliai, Šiauliai university, 14-15 May 2015.
3. *The Mythical Space of Death and Afterlife as Embedded in the Structure of the Poetic Narrative*. International conference *Current Issues in Literary and Cultural Research*. Liepaja, Latvia, 17-18 March 2016.
4. *Unveiling the Cosmogonic Myth in the Songs of the Poetic Edda and Lithuanian Calendar Songs*. International conference *Baltistų Agora*. Ryga, Latvia, 12-14 October 2017.
5. *Deterministic Worldview in the Poetic Edda and Beowulf: Poetic Manifestations of Fate.* International conference *Medieval Fantasy Symposium*. Koszalin, Poland, 16-19 September 2018.

GLOSSARY

<u>Archetype</u> – a recurrent image conveying key cultural concepts; in poetics – an archaic image serving as the prototype of poetic tropes

<u>Dianoia</u> – the meaning inherent in a poetic form

<u>Enigmatic mode</u> – the language employed by oracles, prophets, and archaic poets which conveys encoded divine messages; in terms of poetic narrative – the technique of imparting a symbolic layer of meaning on a poetic text

<u>Epic (heroic) narrative</u> – the narrative which recounts the deeds of heroes and which carries mimetic qualities in relation to the mythic narrative

<u>Ethos</u> – the cultural and moral characterisation of a society and acting personae of traditional oral narrative

<u>Folk narrative</u> – the narrative which focuses on lay people and which imitates mythic narrative by means of transformation

<u>Hermeneutic circle</u> – a method of interpreting a text which is based on the interrelationship of a part and the whole: each unit of a text must be deciphered to comprehend the whole text, and the meaning of the whole text determines the significance of each unit

<u>Image</u> – a representation of an object conveyed by means of poetic devices

<u>Mimesis</u> – an imitation of life and its phenomena in art and literature; a referential relationship between myth and traditional oral narrative

<u>Motif</u> – the smallest unit of narrative which forms an essential part of the theme

<u>Myth</u> – an ancient story about gods and their participation in the creation of the world and other events of cosmic significance which embodies the worldview of a particular society

<u>Mythic narrative</u> – the narrative which focuses on gods and which is closely linked to the sacral perception of the world

<u>Mythic formula</u> – a poetic formula which refers to mythic narrative and/or mythic worldview

<u>Mythopoetics</u> – the poetic mode of human thought which was operative in the creation of mythic narrative

<u>Sign</u> – a meaningful unit (figure, object, gesture) which refers to a phenomenon or an idea; in a poetic narrative – the verbal representation of such meaningful unit in the form of a poetic device

<u>Symbol</u> – a unit of signification with multiple layers of meaning connected to vital cultural concepts which may be disclosed in the process of interpretation

Theme – the basic organising idea in a narrative

Traditional oral poetry – orally transmitted poetry which is closely connected to myth and ritual and is characterised by a specific poetic language

1. TOWARD A FRAMEWORK OF MYTHOPOETICS

Traditional oral poetry is a unique source of ancient wisdom and archaic worldview conveyed by means of poetic vocabulary. Mythical structures prevail in the design of poetic diction, for it is the intersection of the sacral mythic world and the profane life that is reflected in the traditional oral narrative[1]. The defining feature of ancient poetic diction is the enigmatic mode which allows for the meaning of a poetic text to be unravelled in the process of close reading. As myth manifests the poetic mode of thought, it imprints mythic content on the poetic devices employed in traditional oral poetry. Therefore, traditional oral narrative has to be decoded to be properly understood: 'the entire system is implicit in any of its details, and a myth is equally present in a kenning or an allusive skaldic poem from the pagan period' (Lindow 2002, 44). The interpretation of traditional oral narrative attempts to unveil the underlying mythic meaning, wherein the units of poetic grammar are viewed as references to mythic narrative.

Throughout human history, myth embodied the thought, cultural customs and social organisation as reflected in an intricate system of poetic images[2]. Myth is viewed as the source and the substance of poetry by German Romanticist philosopher F.W.J. Schelling: 'Mythology is nothing other than the universe in its higher manifestation, in its absolute form, the true universe in itself, image or symbol of life and of wondrous chaos in the divine imagination, itself already poesy and yet in and for itself the content and element of poesy' (Schelling 1985, 45). Up to the present times myths persist to pervade the human cognition and emerge in the form of readily produced and culturally recognised images which imply the levels of signification reaching far beyond the primary, or literal, meaning.

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[1] It is vital to note that traditional oral poetry developed on the foundation of myth: 'Sacred myth, a narrative form associated with religious ritual, is one kind of mythic narrative; but legend and folktale are also mythic in the sense of traditional, and so is the oral epic poem. One of the great developmental processes that is unmistakable in the history of written narrative has been the gradual movement away from narratives dominated by the mythic impulse to tell a story with a traditional plot' (Scholes, Phelan, and Kellogg 2006, 19).

[2] The imagery of myth endows the archaic man with an opportunity to unite his microcosmos with the macrocosmos: 'Man discovers in the myths, symbols and designs of poetry's exemplary texts the most luminous vision of his nature and its horizon, the principles which link his erratic and crushed individuality into a general cosmic destiny' (Garcia-Berrio 1992, 378).

The debate surrounding the explication of myth, its position and influence in human culture has been ongoing from the era of Ancient Greece[3]; contemporary analysis of myth manifests a pluralism of approaches which seem to agree only on the issue of the importance of myth. Several major characteristics are common for the myths of the world inasmuch as they:

> 1) are regarded as accounts of a remote past; 2) explain origins of life, the universe, and the natural world by means of logic and design; 3) evolve from the actions of supernatural or superhuman figures; 4) establish authority for social and cultural institutions, such as governing structures, racial divisions among people, and religious practices; 5) reflect basic behavioral structures related to values, morals, or attitudes, such as good vs. evil, light vs. dark, and rich vs. poor; and 6) evoke the contemplation of the sacred through mystery, ritual, or transcendent experience (Donovan 2014, 96).

In the scope of this thesis, perhaps the most relevant remarks on the modern interpretation of myth are proposed by Ricoeur:

> For us, moderns, a myth is only a myth because we can no longer connect that time with the time of history as we write it, employing the critical method, nor can we connect mythical places with our geographical space. <…> But in losing its explanatory pretensions the myth reveals its exploratory significance and its contribution to understanding, which we shall later call its symbolic function – that is to say, its power of discovering and revealing the bond between man and what he considers sacred. Paradoxical as it may seem, the myth, when it is thus demythologized through contact with scientific history and elevated to the dignity of a symbol, is a dimension of modern thought (Ricoeur 1969, 5).

It follows from this premise that for archaic people, a myth was the reflection of their beliefs about the order of the world and a prescriptive model of behaviour; for contemporary people, a myth is an intellectual paradigm and a category of investigation.

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[3] In the course of history, the definition of myth and the methods of its investigation underwent a series of changes, which were marked by considerably differing approaches towards the subject matter. The study of myth in the Ancient times mainly revolved around the argument initiated by Presocratics who maintained that myth constitutes an allegory for moral and spiritual concepts and natural phenomena. The approach offered by Euhemerus in the late 4th century BC focused on the proposition that myths echoed real historical events and presented historical figures transformed into gods. While in the Middle Ages myth was subject to allegorisation by Christian scholars as well, during the Renaissance the interest in myth was reignited, and the scholarly precursors to modern theories of myth emerged, generally focusing on the evolution of myth as a cultural phenomenon. The Romantic era saw continued interest in myth as an aesthetic phenomenon and as an expression of national character, and in the late 19th and 20th centuries theories on the complex archaic mentality reflected in myth were developed in relation to such disciplines as anthropology, sociology, and psychology.

In the present thesis, likewise, myth is viewed not as a complete and finite story, but rather as a pattern of thought which is embodied in traditional oral narrative. The narrative itself is not treated as a mere recounting of mythical events in chronological order and in full detail[4] but rather as a sequence of motifs that echo some of the universal mythic themes. Clunies Ross maintains that the fragmented nature of oral texts is rooted in the mythological knowledge of the audience: 'When we turn to the role of narrative in oral societies, and that of medieval Scandinavia in particular, we find that many oral texts reveal only the tips of narrative icebergs, as it were, and assume the audience's knowledge of the main part of the story below the surface' (Clunies Ross 1994, 25). Although separate mythic motifs may not constitute a narrative themselves, they may be placed in the wider pattern of the mythological system of a certain tradition.

When the viewpoint of any single doctrine is abandoned, one may notice that diachronically myth as a type of narrative is marked by transformations and syncretism[5]. The mythic perception may be seen as fluid and embracing various motifs – that is how traditional oral narrative may combine both Pagan and Christian elements (cf. Frog 2018, 30-31). According to Frog, such fluidity is facilitated by the symbolic matrix[6] which underlies myth. The symbolic matrix encompasses a variety of symbols which are employed in the traditional oral narrative and undergo transformations in the course of time. The symbolic matrix of myth is encoded in traditional oral narrative. Inasmuch

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[4] Frog warns against the dangers of referring to myth as a story: there are many motifs which should be seen not as parts of a coherent narrative but rather as stand-alone mythical units. Such units may exist as short descriptions which never develop into full and detailed narratives (Frog 2018, 12-14).

[5] Lévi-Strauss describes the thought process of a primitive man with the French word *bricolage* which is employed to designate the intellectual process that uses 'remains and debris of events', in other words, the only means available, to organise the world into a working system, or a 'structured set' (Lévi-Strauss 1966, 20-21). While creating the narrative of myth, the primitive man uses images of concrete objects to express his realities: 'he 'speaks' not only *with* things, as we have already seen, but also through the medium of things: giving an account of his personality and life by the choices he makes between the limited possibilities' (Ibid.). In a similar vein, Cassirer suggests that in contrast to empirical science which seeks the universal laws that define change, mythic consciousness accepts only metamorphosis, or a concrete change – 'the transformation of a single given *thing* into another' (Cassirer 1953, 47). Hence the poetic foundation of the mythic thought: when a concrete phenomenon is replaced with another one, a parallel between them is made and reflected in a metaphor.

[6] The author introduces the symbolic matrix as 'constitutive elements of a mythology or mythologies in a cultural environment and conventions for their combination' (Frog 2015, 33).

as this thesis aims at exploring the link between myth and poetry, between mythic consciousness and its verbal expression, it is essential to delve into the construction of traditional oral narrative with reference to myth.

1.1. Myth, Ritual, and Oral-Formulaic Poetry

Traditional oral poetry comes perhaps the closest to the mediation between myth and ritual, since it evolved in a society whose thought was essentially mythical. Veselovsky argues that the poetry of a ritual demonstrates the syncretism of different literary genres: a drama in action, the dialogue of a chorus, an epic story, as well as a lyrical song.[7] Oral poetry helped to consolidate mythology through the repeated recitation of sacred narratives, or 'production and reproduction of social memories and cosmologies through mnemonic practices' (Carver et al. 2010, 71). In the religious life of a society, oral poetry served as a supplement to a ritualistic action, hence 'we see in the performative use of poetry a combination between words and acts in which poetry underlines the action and action sustains the poetry' (Reyes 2006, 22). Therefore, neither ritual nor ceremonial verbal utterance can exist by itself: the power of the word is essential in evoking the efficiency of a sacral action.

The performance of traditional oral poetry includes the levels of sound and imagery: 'the special nature of rhythm in oral narrative traps the images from the real world, working them into a system which parallels and mixes them with images from the art tradition' (Scheub 1978, 72). The imagery employed in traditional oral poetry seems to be inseparable from the rhythmic performance as the latter gives it structure and artistic restraints. Moreover, traditional oral poetry employs signs and images in order to affect the audience and to transpose it to the sacral time and space: 'however the system of signs is constituted, its primary burden is to stimulate the audience to an experience of particular sort, based on the syntax of the event situated in a performance tradition' (Foley 1995, 49). Therefore, the performance of traditional oral poetry shares some basic characteristics with ritual on the levels of sound, rhythmics and imagery. According to Northrop Frye, ritual and narrative are also closely connected in the temporal domain, inasmuch as in the former 'we may find the origin of narrative, a ritual being a temporal sequence of acts in which the conscious meaning or significance is latent' (Frye 1963, 15).

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[7] 'Оказывается, что в поэзии обряда, древнейшем показателе поэтического развития вообще, соединены в наивном синкретизме все роды поэзии, насколько они определяются внешними признаками формы: и драма в действии, и диалог хоровода, и эпический сказ, и лирическая песня' (Веселовский 1989, 53).

Traditional oral poetry depicts a particular order of events that have a symbolic meaning, which is also characteristic for a ritual.

Rituals and ceremonies embody the sacral aspect of myth[8]. Whereas myth incorporates gods as the acting personae, their actions are imitated by lay people in rituals in order to partake in the divine existence:

> The dancer who appears in the mask of the god or demon does not merely imitate the god or demon but assumes his nature; he is transformed into him and fuses with him. Here there is never a mere image, an empty representation; nothing is thought, represented, 'supposed' that is not at the same time real and effective (Cassirer 1955, 238).

Ritual reflects the mythic thought which blurs the limits between the object and its representation, the part and the whole. Accordingly, the profane actions of lay people and the profane objects of the natural world gain their value only when a connection with the sacred sphere of gods is attained. The divine order may be imitated by the repetition of ritualistic actions and by recitation of mythic narratives. Ritual embodies the divine order in the form of a physical action (song/dance), traditional oral narrative embodies the divine order in the form of a verbal utterance (song/story).

1.1.1. From the *Sacred* to the *Profane*

In the analysis of traditional oral narrative and its mythological substructures, a distinct dimension in the spectrum of meaning should be mentioned: the sacral aspect of myth. The category of the sacred as the category opposite to that of the profane was studied by the prominent scholar Mircea Eliade who maintained that 'sacred and profane are two modes of being in the world, two existential situations assumed by man in the course of his history' (Eliade 1959, 14). With reference to the opposition of the sacred and the profane, myth usually manifests symbolic representations of the divine realm embodied in the objects of the natural world; to put it in Eliade's words, 'all nature is capable of revealing itself as cosmic sacrality' (Ibid. 12). The objects of the physical world are regarded as symbols of the divine entities, and 'poetry is therefore simultaneous with mythology and they both put an end to the primitive dark ages of silent and obscure religious consciousness' (Kun 2015,

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[8] The ritualistic school adopts a position that myth originates from various rituals related to seasonal cycles and fertility cults. Frazer viewed myth as secondary in relation to ritual and treated it as a commentary or 'script' of myth. Although the curriculum of the Frazerian school has been subject to a diverse criticism, the symbolic incorporation of human life into the cycle of dying and resurrecting nature remains an important aspect in the study of myths.

64). Hence, mythical thought reveals itself not only as poetic but also as deeply religious in the broad sense of the term[9].

The nature of knowledge encoded in the oral poetic language is closely related to the cyclical notion of time[10]. Mythic thought is characterised by a cyclical and repetitive perception of time as opposed to historical and linear existence[11]. As Eliade posits, 'religious man lives in two kinds of time, of which the more important, sacred time, appears under the paradoxical aspect of a circular time, reversible and recoverable, a sort of eternal mythical present that is periodically reintegrated by means of rites' (Eliade 1959, 70). The sacred time is accessed by means of performing a ritual or reciting a myth – a practice which transfers the audience to the mythical time (Dardel 1996, 90), or *illo tempore* in Eliade's terms (Eliade 1959, 85). In this way, the audience experiences unity with the recited myth as 'the mythic actualises everything it touches: it makes the narrator an actor in his 'story', the listener a witness, the world a present without past or future' (Dardel 1996, 90). Subsequently, such experience of the sacred is moulded into the shape of a poetic utterance in the traditional oral narrative.

The cyclical perception of time has a crucial role in the calendar festivals which are closely associated with the yearly changes of seasons. The festivals derive their sacrality from divine acts, which, when repeated, imply the sacral meaning of the periodical changes of nature. In relation to the mythic motif of

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[9] According to Ricoeur, myth is employed to project sacrality onto the world as the archaic man is already a man divided: 'it is only in intention that myth restores some wholeness; it is because he himself has lost that wholeness that man re-enacts and imitates it in myth and rite' (Ricoeur 1969, 167). Thus, although the archaic man could not recognise the loss of unity with the natural world which started with the beginning of civilisation, he expresses his attitude towards the world by reconciling his profane surroundings with majestic natural phenomena and by envisaging their sacral bonds.

[10] Cf. cyclical notion of time in relation to events depicted in a mythic narrative: 'Time is only perceptible (and acceptable) thanks to its discontinuity brought about by events that presuppose in turn a linear temporal continuum. Reversible time, on the contrary, would be typified by the undifferentiated recurrence of "events", that is, by the identity of features before and after, thus cancelling change, defined as the main seme of "event." <…> This question is vital for the interpretation of myth and mythic reference' (Coste 1989, 45).

[11] French philosopher Henri Bergson sees primeval religion as 'a defensive reaction of nature against the dissolvent power of intelligence' as well as against the inevitability of death (Bergson 1935, 101). This view is also echoed in Eliade's insights about archaic man's attempts to abolish history: he chooses 'reidentification with the modes of nature' over historical existence (Eliade 1959, 155). The conclusion may be drawn that the poetic stage of thought (the archaic period) is essentially cyclical and in a sense timeless, while the rational stage of thought (the modern period) is essentially linear and historical.

the dying and resurrecting god, as established by Frazer, 'the god's death typified the coming of winter to the world, and all lamented him; then he emerged again from the darkness of death to give new life and bring rejoicing in the spring' (Ellis Davidson 1990, 108). The stages of human life were also viewed as part of the cycle of nature; their sacral meaning revealed itself through their connection with the sacrality of the seasonal cycles.

As far as the progress of human life is concerned, communal rituals are necessary to 'translate the individual's life-crises and life-deeds into classic, impersonal forms' (Campbell, 2004, 354). The changes of human life, as perceived by archaic societies, have been associated with the rites of passage by a prominent folklorist Arnold van Gennep. The scholar focused on the rituals that accompany the transition of a human being from one social position to another, including birth, puberty, marriage, fatherhood and motherhood, and death. In Van Gennep's theory, the connection of the sacred and the profane is subject to constant variation: 'sacredness as an attribute is not absolute; it is brought into play by the nature of particular situations' (van Gennep 2004, 12). Sacred aspects of the profane human life are treated not as inherent but as obtainable through ritual. Therefore, for the archaic mindset, sacredness is a quality 'that readily shifts in different situations and at different ritual stages' (Bell 2009, 37). Meanwhile, an important aspect of ritual as distinguished by van Genep is its liminality, i.e. ritual always accompanies a certain period of transition in human life. Hence, van Gennep identifies three types of rituals: preliminal rites (rites of separation), liminal rites (rites of transition) and post-liminal rites (rites of incorporation) (van Gennep 2004, 11). Such liminal stages of human life may be symbolically represented in the mythic and mimetic narratives[12], for instance, crossing of water may serve as a symbol of the individual's passage to the afterlife.

On balance, sacrality permeates the foundations of the archaic man's life. With reference to time, a human being shares the main events of his life with those of gods; with reference to space, he is surrounded by nature as a sacral manifestation of divine creation. There is a constant dynamic between the human reality and the majestic divine existence: people measure their life's worth based on the degree of sacrality they are able to attain.

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[12] Cf. 'Symbols could appear prominently with regard to a specific life transition, or could link together different 'passages' and thereby spin a web of symbols that had dominant significance within a society. Other sorts of rituals were distributed over the years; in each performance certain aspects of a dominant symbolic theme might be highlighted. By attending to a series of contexts, however, the range of symbolic associations becomes both clarified and "naturalized". Members of a society come to feel that the meanings are part of themselves' (Salamon and Goldberg 2012, 130).

1.1.2. *Mimesis*: Poetry Born of Mythical Worldview

Analysis of traditional oral narrative with reference to myth is closely connected to the fundamental principles of literary theory laid out in Aristotle's *Poetics*. Aristotle sees *mimesis*, or imitation, as the propulsive creative force characterising the human mind, the main aim of which is learning and understanding the world[13]. The limitedness of sensory experience gives rise to the significance of the imitative art which allows for the phenomena to be pondered over from a distance: 'objects which in themselves we view with pain, we delight to contemplate when reproduced with minute fidelity' (Aristotle 1902, 1448b 10-12). Aristotle employs the word *mythos* to denote the story, or plot, of an artistic creation: plot (*mythos*) is seen as 'an imitation of an action', which must structurally correspond to the whole, 'the structural union of the parts being such that, if any of them is displaced or removed, the whole will be disjointed and disturbed' (Ibid. 1451a 30-34). Respectively, mythic imagination renders human experience in the form of a traditional oral narrative by means of imitation of the actions and objects of the real life.

The sequence of actions, determined by myth, is transposed onto poetic narrative where myth is employed as a pattern. The mythical basis may be seen as pervasive yet inevitable in the sense that 'a characteristic of myth is its ability to insure order, organization, arrangement, and system in the domain of action' (Brisson 2008, 30). Mimesis may also be discussed as a 'mediating function' in the process where action is transformed into plot (Ricoeur 1984, 65). As in Aristotle's theory, the imitation of an event of real life is treated as an inclusive unit of the story; the events gain their true significance only when they are imitated in the narrative and arranged as its integral parts: 'by mediating between the two poles of event and story, emplotment brings to the paradox a solution that is the poetic act itself' (Ibid. 66). Traditional oral poetry thus offers the conversion of human life into a narrative which displays the intersection of divine and human worlds.

The analysis of the influence of myth on literature laid ground for the development of archetypal literary criticism in later centuries. Frye discusses the interrelationship between myth and different literary modes:

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[13] Cf. 'Poetry in general seems to have sprung from two causes, each of them lying deep in our nature. First, the instinct of imitation is implanted in man from childhood, one difference between him and other animals being that he is the most imitative of living creatures; and through imitation he learns his earliest lessons; and no less universal is the pleasure felt in things imitated' (Aristotle 1902, 1448b 4-9).

We have, then, three organizations of myths and archetypal symbols in literature. First, there is undisplaced myth, generally concerned with gods or demons, and which takes the form of two contrasting worlds of total metaphorical identification, one desirable and the other undesirable. These worlds are often identified with the existential heavens and hells of the religions contemporary with such literature. These two forms of metaphorical organization we call the apocalyptic and the demonic respectively. Second, we have the general tendency we have called romantic, the tendency to suggest implicit mythical patterns in a world more closely associated with human experience. Third, we have the tendency of 'realism' (my distaste for this inept term is reflected in the quotation marks) to throw the emphasis on content and representation rather than on the shape of the story. (Frye 1973, 139-140).

It may be observed that mythical patterns are connected with both traditional and modern literature. Yet the traditional literature (especially oral poetry) manifests a more direct connection with myth as the source of poetic inspiration.

Mimesis, or imitation, ensures the maintenance of the sacral order established by gods; this order is reflected in the social organisation of archaic society. Based on this assumption, French comparativist Georges Dumezil introduced the theory of the tripartite division of the Indo-European society. The scholar maintained that the Indo-European social hierarchy system had a metaphorical equivalent in the hierarchy of gods: 'we can still recognize, in various formulas, in divine groupings, in the general division of the mythology, that great triple division of cosmic and social functions: magical sovereignty (and heavenly administration of the universe), warrior power (and administration of the lower atmosphere), peaceful fecundity (and administration of the earth, the underworld and the sea)' (Dumezil 1988, 121). In Germanic mythology, this division pertains to gods Odin (magical sovereignty), Thor (warrior power), and Freyr (peaceful fecundity). Here the principle of mimesis is manifest, inasmuch as gods and their functions embody the existing order of the society.

1.1.3. Mythic Narrative and Mimetic Narrative

The evolution of traditional oral narrative significantly correlated with the stage of development of a specific culture. Giambattista Vico proposed a distinction between divine, heroic, and human stages of civilisation. In his seminal study *The New Science* (1725) Vico introduced his theory on the course of development of human civilisation and divided it into three ages that occur cyclically in the lives of all nations; this development is marked by a gradual progress from the sacred towards the profane. The age of gods, the

heroic age, and the age of men, as per Vico's classification, are inevitable stages of civilisation marked by different stages of linguistic expression (Vico 1948, 301-308). Hence, the stages of development of the human thought are reflected in the following forms of utterance: the language of myth proper, characteristic of the ancient times, the language of heroic poetry (with heroes as the successors of gods), characteristic of the heroic age, and the unsophisticated, non-metaphorical, 'vulgar' language, characteristic of the human age. A narrative exhibits a link to an age in the cycle of history – a mythic age, a heroic age, and an age of people; it expresses itself through language – the poetic, the heroic, and the vulgar, in Vico (Vico 1948, 306-307); and the hieroglyphic, the hieratic, and the demotic[14], in Frye (Frye 2006, 23).

In regard of these divisions, several types of narrative may be distinguished. When the hero is 'superior in kind both to other men and to the environment of other men' (Frye 1973, 33), the narrative concerns gods and thus constitutes a myth proper. Meanwhile the narrative that imitates myth and the actions of mythic characters establishes mimetic literary modes: the *high mimetic mode* portrays a hero who is 'superior in degree to other men and to his environment'; and the *low mimetic mode* depicts a hero who is 'superior neither to other men nor to his environment' (Ibid. 33-34)[15]. Frye's typology encompasses the traditional oral poetry examined in this dissertation, where the mythic narrative is analysed in relation to the high mimetic (or heroic) and low mimetic (or folk) narratives.

Frye introduces three criteria which help to determine the context of a narrative:

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[14] 1) The hieroglyphic phase is the poetic stage of language where words are identified with the objects they represent, so that the symbol in this phase is expressed in the form of archetype; 2) the hieratic phase is the allegorical stage of language where words metonymically stand for ideas and refer to a hidden spiritual meaning. It is important to note that in this phase a word is not identified with the object it represents, as in the mythic phase, but constitutes a reference. In this phase, a symbol is conveyed in an image which serves as a visual representation of an idea. The narrative of this phase is either high mimetic or low mimetic; 3) the demotic phase is marked by the descriptive language which characterises Vico's human age. This type of language is stripped of broader metonymic and metaphorical implications; symbol in this phase constitutes a sign that directly refers to an object. In terms of poetic grammar, this is the level of literal meaning (Frye 2006, 23-33).

[15] Cf. Aristotle's division of characters: 'Since the objects of imitation are men in action, and these men must be either of a higher or a lower type (for moral character mainly answers to these divisions, goodness and badness being the distinguishing marks of moral differences), it follows that we must represent men either as better than in real life, or as worse, or as they are' (Aristotle 1902, 1448a 1-5).

meaning or *dianoia* was one of three elements, the other two being *mythos* or narrative and *ethos* or characterization. It is better to think, therefore, not simply of a sequence of meanings, but of a sequence of contexts or relationships in which the whole work of literary art can be placed, each context having its characteristic *mythos* and *ethos* as well as its *dianoia* or meaning (Frye 1973, 73).

The criteria of *mythos*, *ethos* and *dianoia* serve as tools for both determining the context of the narrative and distinguishing between mythic, high mimetic, and low mimetic narrative. *Mythos* pertains to the plot, or the sequence of motifs, *ethos* – to the acting personae and *dianoia* – to the theme. For instance, in myth proper, *mythos* would include the deeds of god (possibly the acts of creation), *ethos* would include the pantheon of gods, and *dianoia* – a theme such as cosmogony, hierogamy, the end of the world, etc.

In addition, the opposition of the sacred and the profane proposed by Eliade may be adopted in the investigation of the variations of narrative. Myth deals with the divine world and exhibits the highest degree of sacrality, whereas the high mimetic narrative explores heroic endeavours and contains a lesser degree of sacrality. The transition from the sacred to the profane is even more noticeable in the low mimetic narrative which focuses on the profane acting personae and their relationship with the sacred[16]. In the process of transformation, the projected degree of sacrality changes i.e. 'what was a direct address to heroes or gods becomes a narration about them' (Reyes 2006, 18). Therefore, Eddic poetry introduces the mythic mode (acting personae include various Norse gods), the Old English epic poem *Beowulf* – the high mimetic mode (the protagonist is an outstanding hero), and Lithuanian folk songs – the low mimetic mode (the worldview of peasants)[17]. Different mimetic modes focus on different perceptions of the world: in the high mimetic mode, the hero's struggle 'is waged not for narrow, petty goals, not for personal interests, not for the well-being of the individual hero but for the

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[16] Theodor H. Gaster distinguishes the following evolutionary stages of mythological story: the primitive, the dramatic, the liturgical, and the literary with the gradual reduction of its functional importance (cf. Gaster 1954, 200-203). Gaster stresses that, although in the literary stage mythological story no longer has its ritualistic significance, 'the ancient content is very largely preserved' (Ibid.)

[17] In his analysis of the historical records of Lithuanian mythology and folklore, Greimas observes the following evolution of acting personae: a text from the beginning of the 16th century introduces a god, texts from the 16th and the 17th centuries mention a pagan priest who performs sacrifices, and in a text from the 19th century the pagan priest is substituted by a housewife (Greimas 2005, 665). A housewife performed various rituals dedicated to household deities, e.g. she made an agreement with *kaukas*, a household deity responsible for the prosperity of the household he lived in (Ibid. 59).

people's highest ideals' (Propp 1984, 149). Meanwhile in the low mimetic mode, 'the subject of the lyric is a real man, his life, and his emotions' (Ibid. 34). Accordingly, the gradual reduction of sacrality in a narrative coincides with the impact on the world/society that is achieved by the acting personae: in the mythic narrative, gods exert absolute power, in the epic narrative the hero is still close to gods in his communal effort, in the folk narrative the profane people are concerned with their individual life events within a certain community.

1.2. Traditional Oral Narrative: a Model of Analysis

In this thesis, the analysis of traditional oral narrative focuses on its constituent parts: themes, motifs, images and archetypes, formulas, and poetic grammar. These components are treated as layers of traditional oral narrative. The interpreter performs a certain vertical dissection of these layers in order to grasp the meaning of the text and its mythic subtext. It is important to note the versatility inherent in traditional oral poetry: 'the poetic tradition properly understood is not at all limiting but rather a connotatively explosive medium, a touchstone or nexus of indication and reference' (Foley 1993, 2). The repertory of the oral poet consisted of a set of poetic phrases which were frequently enigmatic and presented key cultural concepts by means of kennings, epithets, metaphors, and other instruments of the poetic grammar. These poetic devices evolved over time and some of them underwent transformations. Thus, the analysis of traditional oral narrative includes the identification of its main elements which might have been subjected to transformations.

The components of traditional oral narrative should be analysed as interrelated parts of a whole: 'the units of oral traditional narrative must be addressed not as objective entities complete in themselves but as necessarily incomplete cues to be contextualized by an audience's subjective participation in the tale-telling process' (Foley 1986, 216). Therefore, one component of the traditional oral narrative suggests another, and each component bears the referential value of the whole system; the sequence of motifs guides the audience towards the theme and the meaning of a narrative.

1.2.1. Motifs: the Elementary Units of Narrative

When the analysis of traditional oral narrative, irrespective of its mythic, heroic or folk mode, is performed, the researcher deals with the crucial task of identifying the main structural components of the narrative, namely, the

motifs. The recognition of traditional motifs is influenced by 'received paradigms' (Ricoeur 1984, 76), or sets of cultural notions which are consistent with the worldview of the society. Traditional oral narrative consists of a sequence of motifs which are united by the theme. For example, one may find the theme of temptation in Homer's *Odyssey* embodied in such motifs as his encounters with Circe, the Sirens, and the cattle of the Sun God Helios. As long as the narrative is specified as traditional[18], recurrent motifs are inevitably present: they serve as universally recognised constructs that speak to the audience on a symbolic level. While a motif may be defined as the smallest unit of narrative, the term 'traditional motif' implies more elaborate characteristics, such as recurrence and recognisability. The exploration of the segments of traditional oral narrative poses the question of the identification of traditional motifs.

The significance of a motif may be determined based on its relationship with the main characters and/or their actions. In her study of Lithuanian folk tales, Kerbelytė distinguishes 'elementary plots' (*elementarieji siužetai*) which vary a lot: acting personae, objects, surroundings, and other details are subject to changes (Кербелите 1991, 46). Usually, similar motifs in elementary plots may be recognised based on predicates, which invariably render the actions performed by the protagonists, meanwhile the protagonists themselves and their goals may differ (Ibid.). Thus, it is the 'hero's action' (*herojaus akcija*) that drives the elementary plot (Kerbelytė 2011, 34). Although this classification is intended for folk tales, the elementary plots are viewed as universal patterns of all folklore narratives (Ibid. 31). This approach leads to a premise that the actions of the acting personae are closely linked to motifs which function as the main components of traditional narrative[19].

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[18] The term 'traditional' herewith is used in relation to the oral-formulaic theory by Parry and Lord, where the traditional oral epic, as well as traditional song are distinguished by formulaic diction and repetition of specific formulaic phrases. Lord described tradition in relation to its performative qualities as follows: 'A tradition, as I understand it – that is to say, all the performances of all the songs and all the singers in any given culture since the beginning of the genre in question – includes a variety of songs of differing quality and also singers of great diversity. There are good singers, mediocre singers, unskilled singers, and singers of real genius. Tradition is not a mediocre mean; it does not consist merely of what is common to all songs or singers over all or even over some discrete part of the period during which the practice exists. It embraces all types of singers and all types of performances. It includes the 'hapax legomena,' the coinages of the moment, as well as the much-used and often much varied formulas and themes' (Lord 1987, 62).

[19] In Aristotle's literary theory, the focus lies on the actions of the acting personae rather than on the acting personae themselves. Aristotle pointed out that the

Meanwhile Veselovsky linked his description of a motif to the mythical thought of a primitive society and defined it as 'the simplest narrative unit[s], corresponding imagistically to the diverse needs of a primitive mind and to the needs of ordinary perception'[20] (Веселовский, in Bremond 1995, 22). Veselovsky notes that the main aspect of a motif is its schematism as a single segment of narrative; such indivisible units are found in myth and folktale, e.g. kidnapping of the sun (solar eclipse), a bird which carries lightning/fire from the sky, etc. (Веселовский 1989, 301)[21]. Motifs may be arranged in various sequences to form complex structures, namely, plots (*сюжеты*) (Ibid.). This insight may be employed to grasp the relationship between a motif and a theme in traditional oral narrative. The meanings of different motifs complement each other and form a theme – the broadest semantic entity which unites all other constituents of traditional oral narrative. Veselovsky also asserts that a traditional plot and motifs are marked by commonness and repetitiveness – the qualities transferred from myth to epos, folktale, saga, and novel, where typical schemes and situations are employed to render a theme[22]. These features of traditional narrative were discussed by Eco as 'prefabricated fabulas', or fixed plots (Eco 1985, paragraph 4.6.6.), i.e. the narratives which include standard schemes and typical functions of characters[23]. Thus, the

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arrangement of 'incidents', or imitated actions, is more important for a literary work than the moral character of its acting personae (cf. Aristotle 1902, 1450a 5-10).

[20] Cf. 'Под *мотивом* я разумею простейшую повествовательную единицу, образно ответившую на разные запросы первобытного ума или бытового наблюдения' (Веселовский 1989, 305).

[21] 'Признак мотива – его образный одночленный схематизм; таковы неразлагаемые далее элементы низшей мифологии и сказки: солнце кто-то похищает (затмение), молнию-огонь сносит с неба птица; у лосося хвост с перехватом: его ущемили и т.п.' (Веселовский 1989, 301).

[22] 'Те же точки зрения могут быть приложены и к рассмотрению поэтических *сюжетов* и *мотивов*; они представляют те же признаки *общности* и *повторяемости* от мифа к эпосу, сказке, местной саге и роману; и здесь позволено говорить о словаре типических схем и положений, к которым фантазия привыкла обращаться для выражения того или другого содержания' (Веселовский 1989, 305).

[23] 'En premier lieu, on pourrait définir des scénarios maximaux ou *fabulae préfabriquées:* tels seraient les schémas standard du roman policier de série, ou des groupes de fables où se répètent toujours les mêmes fonctions (au sens de Propp) dans la même succession; ces scénarios seraient au fond des règles de genre, comme celles qui prévoient la 'correcte' organisation d'un spectacle de variétés à la télévision, où doivent entrer certains ingrédients dans une succession définie (le présentateur introduit la chanteuse, il a avec elle une conversation brève et spirituelle, elle fait de la publicité pour son dernier trente-trois tours puis commence l'exécution de sa chanson, etc.)' (Eco 1985, paragraph 4.6.6.)

motifs of traditional narrative may be seen as recurrent units with fixed meanings, the interplay of which contributes to the theme.

When the motifs of traditional oral narrative are investigated, the notion of type-scene, or typical scene (introduced in 1933 by Walter Arend in his study of Homeric poetry *Die typischen Scenen bei Homer*) should be discussed. In terms of composition, Kirk maintains that a typical scene occupies a position between a motif and a theme (Kirk 1990, 15). Typical scenes are defined as scenes 'in which recurrent actions of everyday or heroic life are described again and again in standard language that can be abbreviated or elaborated where necessary: for example, scenes of arrival or departure by land or sea, of meeting, of preparing a meal or a sacrifice' (Ibid.). In contrast to motif, typical scene is not crucial to the dynamics of actions depicted in the narrative – it rather communicates relevant details of the traditional discourse (Edwards 1992, 285). Typical scene is connected to motif inasmuch as it elaborates on the actions of acting personae by employing a fixed poetic vocabulary.

A special focus must be placed on the interrelation of motifs in the narratives of different traditions. In comparative analysis, one of the criteria for identifying a common motif of traditional narrative is the existence of a similar motif in a different tradition. When such motifs are compared, their significance in respective narratives from different traditions is established. Eco states that the intertextual nature of narratives may be recognised based on the analysis of classical literary tropes and of motifs as distinguished by Veselovsky[24]. In this case, intertextuality operates as a comparative and analytical tool inasmuch as it enables the identification of similar motifs in different traditions.

To conclude, the motifs of traditional oral narrative are identified based on several criteria. Motifs exhibit a significant correlation with the functions of acting personae, the actions of whom govern the dynamic of a narrative. Motifs also serve as the building blocks of traditional oral narrative and may be recognised based on their correlation with the theme and their recurrence in a specific poetic tradition as well as in the context of cognate poetic traditions.

1.2.2. Symbol as an Image and as an Archetype

Each fragment of the mythic universe is symbolic in that it is not a separate phenomenon but rather a reference, an integrated element which bears in itself the full connotative weight of mythic reality – 'in each particular we must

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[24] 'En réalité, on pourrait rapprocher les scénarios intertextuels des topoi de la rhétorique classique et des motifs dont on a parlé de Veselovskij à nos jours' (Ibid.)

think the form of the whole' (Cassirer 1955, 32). The symbols which occur in traditional oral narrative may be interpreted with reference to the mythic universe[25]: a symbol directs the audience not only towards the object it represents, but towards the perception of that object as part of the mythological system. Hence symbols in traditional oral narrative retain their cultural recognisability and also gain, to use Ricoeur's term, the 'surplus of meaning' (Ricoeur 1976, 55). The symbolic meaning may be unravelled only by decoding the literal meaning inasmuch as 'primary signification is the sole means of access to the surplus of meaning' (Ibid.). The investigation of symbols in traditional oral texts concentrates on their different layers of meaning which contribute to the overall meaning of the narrative.

Frye introduces the following stages of symbol[26]: 1) symbol as a sign/motif (the literal phase) – the phase where symbol constitutes an element of a verbal structure and displays a centripetal orientation towards text, not towards the meanings outside of the text; 2) symbol as an image (the formal phase) – the phase where the mimetic characteristics of symbol come into prominence; 3) symbol as an archetype (the mythical phase) – the phase of archetypal meaning, when symbol constitutes a recurrent and conventional image, called an archetype; 4) symbol as a monad (the anagogic phase) – the phase where literature is the 'total form' containing in itself universal symbols that embrace all main aspects of human existence (Frye 1973, 73-119)[27]. Within the framework of this dissertation, two stages of symbol are of vital importance: symbol as an image and symbol as an archetype.

As specified above, Frye identifies a poetic image as the formal 'phase' of a symbol. The scholar emphasises that in this phase, 'on the one hand, form implies what we have called the literal meaning, or unity of structure; on the other, it implies such complementary terms as content and matter, expressive

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[25] Ricoeur speaks of symbols in myths as vital for the perception of the sacral totality of the universe which is projected rather than experienced. The narrative then serves as a means to re-establish, recreate and confirm this projected sacrality in a symbolic form (Ricoeur 1969, 168-170).

[26] In his theoretical framework, Frye employs the term 'symbol' to denote any meaningful unit of a poetic text: 'a word, a phrase, or an image used with some kind of special reference (which is what a symbol is usually taken to mean) are all symbols when they are distinguishable elements in critical analysis' (Frye 1973, 71).

[27] Frye's stages of symbolism may be compared to those of Hegel's. In his theory of aesthetics, Hegel describes three stages of development of symbolic expression: unconscious symbolism where no distinction is made between the image and the meaning; the symbolism of the sublime, where symbols become progressively detached from their meanings; and the stage of symbolic art, where symbols become references, consciously designed to direct the viewer/reader towards a hidden meaning (Hegel 1975, 318-320).

of what it shares with external nature' (Ibid. 82). The content of a poetic image is its essential part as it ties the meaning of the poetic image to the narrative[28]. A poetic device as a verbal vessel of a poetic image determines its meaning and imposes certain semantic constraints. It is important to note that a poetic device does not merely signify the poetic image – it also reveals a variety of meanings related with that image.

Barthes examines polysemy of meanings as one of the key characteristics of a poetic image (Barthes 1977, 40). The poetic text provides hints and references that are instrumental in recovering the meaning of a poetic image. Barthes argues that the meanings of a poetic image are encoded in the text and 'the text *directs* the reader through the signifieds of the image, causing him to avoid some and receive others; by means of an often subtle *dispatching,* it remote-controls him towards a meaning chosen in advance' (Ibid.) In this way, the interpretation of poetic images turns into the process of uncovering the meaning that has already been present implicitly.

Traditional poetic images tend to bear references to mythic entities and their intrinsic symbolism is frequently rooted in myth. Meletinsky posits that 'the process of mythification is such that the fragment of reality that is reproduced mythically is incomparably richer than its real prototype' (Meletinsky 2000, 212). Therefore, when an image which represents an object of the real world[29] is incorporated in a mythic narrative, it gains a deeper symbolic value. Cassirer elaborates on the link between poetic images and their mythical prototypes:

> And at the same time one can see how such lingual 'metaphors' react in their turn on mythic metaphor and prove to be an ever-fertile source for the latter. Every characteristic property which once gave a point of departure to qualifying conceptions and qualifying appellations may now serve to merge and identify the objects denoted by these names. If the visible image of lightning, as it is fixed by language, is concentrated upon the impression of 'serpentine', this causes the lightning to *become a snake*; if the sun is called 'the heavenly flier', it appears henceforth as an arrow or a bird – the sun-god of the Egyptian pantheon, for instance, who is represented with a falcon's head. For in this realm of thought there are no abstract denotations; every

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[28] A poetic image may also be analysed as an 'aesthetic universal' observed in traditional poetry (Garcia-Berrio 1992, 379). Traditional oral narrative employs basic mythic patterns: 'in the poetic text's structure, we can identify a series of concrete symbolic entities which govern very well-defined spaces of the textual scheme' (Ibid.) Myth provides traditional oral narrative with the matrix of archetypal images and sequential patterns of motifs.

[29] Meletinsky introduces the term *hypostasis* as an essential characteristic of mythical thought which constitutes 'a hierarchy of mythological forces and beings that possesses its own semantic and axiological significance' (Meletinsky 2000, 155). Hypostases may be expressed in either verbal or non-verbal signs.

word is immediately transformed into a concrete mythical figure, a god or a daemon (Cassirer 1953, 96-97).

In the mythic stage of symbolism, a symbol becomes an archetype (see p. 20), or a recurrent traditional image which has deep cultural implications. The concept of archetype (the 'archaic remnant', or 'primordial image' as introduced by Jung (Jung 1968, 57)) was appropriated from the field of psychoanalysis into literary criticism by Maud Bodkin who defined archetypes in poetry as 'themes having a particular form or pattern which persists amid variation from age to age, and which corresponds to a pattern or configuration of emotional tendencies in the minds of those who are stirred by the theme' (Bodkin 1951, 4). Frye emphasises that the main quality of an archetype is the stability of its characteristics that stands out in a seemingly inexhaustible multitude of meanings:

> Archetypes are associative clusters, and differ from signs in being complex variables. Within the complex is often a large number of specific learned associations which are communicable because a large number of people in a given culture happen to be familiar with them (Frye 1973, 102).

Thus, it is the prevalence and recognisability of a certain symbol in a culture that allows for it to be identified as an archetype. Archetypes are related to traditional motifs, inasmuch as motifs of a traditional narrative usually pertain to archetypal figures and situations.

When the mythic narrative evolves into heroic or folk narrative, archetypes are correspondingly transformed into archetypal images which retain the basic features of the original archetype. As Frye suggests, the development of literature progresses from the mythic mode, which is 'the most abstract and conventionalized of all literary modes' (Frye 1973, 134) towards the realistic literature with the imagery as close to reality as possible. During this process a certain 'displacement' of mythological content takes place, for mythic structures are transformed into literary devices: 'what can be metaphorically identified in a myth can only be linked in romance[30] by some form of simile: analogy, significant association, incidental accompanying imagery, and the like' (Ibid. 137). In this way, the supernatural characteristics of gods in mythic narratives are reduced to qualities which indirectly reflect such characteristics in high mimetic or low mimetic narratives, e.g. the sun-god from the mythic narrative may be transformed in an acting person who is associated with light, brightness, etc. (Ibid.). The challenging task of the researcher is to trace such

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[30] It should be clarified that in Frye's framework, the notion of romance embraces a wide variety of literature, where the hero is a human being as opposed to the divine hero in myth (Frye 1973, 188); romance corresponds to the high mimetic mode in Frye's theory of literary modes.

poetic parallels back to their archetypal predecessors and to uncover mythical figures and themes in the traditional oral narrative.

Archetypal images, as well as archetypes, are fixed, recurrent and culturally recognisable inasmuch as 'the audience in an oral society is prepared for the repeated image sets; it is conditioned through much experience to accept the initial construction as the model and the subsequent repetitions as insuring its proper reception' (Scheub 1978, 78). A poetic image identified in the process of interpretation may be deemed as an archetypal one when it is analysed in the context of a poetic tradition. When a poetic image is recurrent and culturally significant, it may be assumed that it displays a correlation with an archetype.

1.2.3. Mythic Formulas: Encoding the Motif

The analysis of traditional oral narrative is inseparable from the investigation of unique poetic devices – mythic formulas. The concept of mythic formula developed in this thesis is based on the oral-formulaic theory by Parry, Lord, and Foley, and comparative Indo-European poetics by Watkins. Oral-formulaic composition is one of the essential features of traditional oral poetry; it manifests in the usage of a poetic formula – 'a group of words which is regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea' (Parry, cited in Lord 2000, 18). Lord posited that the most stable formulas expressed the most common ideas, and that the single set of common formulas might serve as a template to countless further variations (Ibid. 34-36). In relation to the formula, Lord described themes as 'groups of ideas regularly used in telling a tale in the formulaic style of traditional song' (Ibid. 69). The hypothesis of traditional formulaic diction proposed by Parry and Lord relies on the repetitiveness of formulas and their significance in the corpus of oral tradition.

Since the introduction of oral-formulaic theory by Parry and Lord, the idea of oral-formulaic composition was subjected to many discussions and scrutiny. Haymes stresses that the oral formulaic theory can present a serious challenge for a scholar in that it is a rather difficult task to apprehend which repeated phrases can be classified as formulas and which as mere repetitions: 'If one wishes to define a formula as a repeated phrase, then nothing is lost by this equation, but if one follows Parry and Lord and defines the formula in terms of the oral tradition, then calling every repetition a formula is an impossible oversimplification' (Haymes 1980, 400). Herein the question of not only the poetic form, but, importantly, the content comes into focus: a

formula is not only a recurrent poetic phrase but a phrase with a significant semantic value.

Formulas may also be distinguished in relation to rhythm (in oral poetry, 'whole verse lines are repeated nearly verbatim in order to facilitate oral composition and delivery' (Fludernik 2009, 68)). Nonetheless, Gregory Nagy argues that formal characteristics of oral poetry, such as rhythm and meter, do not dictate the subject of the poem but vice versa: 'diachronically, the content – let us call it *theme* – determines the form, even if the form affects the content synchronically' (Nagy 1996, 23). It may be stated that the theme, or contents, of traditional oral poetry remains relatively stable and unchanged within the course of time. The scope of this thesis is concerned with the thematic rather than rhythmic function of formulas.

The correlation between the formula and the theme in the traditional diction was explored by Calvert Watkins in his prominent study *How to Kill a Dragon: A Study of Indo-European Poetics.* In a broad sense, Watkins' definition of formulas may seem relatively close to that of Parry and Lord's, when he introduces formulas as 'the vehicles, the carriers of themes; they are collectively the verbal expression of the traditional culture of the Indo-Europeans themselves' (Watkins 1995, 152). The key difference lies in the author's premise that the 'basic formula' is reflected in countless poetic inventions of a given oral tradition (Ibid. 301). Watkins proposes that a common Indo-European theme of slaying the dragon is rendered in the basic formula 'HERO SLAYS SERPENT'[31] (Ibid.) Watkins further elaborates on the structure of the basic formula:

> The basic formula may optionally include the presence of a marginal element (in the instrumental case or its equivalent), the specification of either a weapon or a companion (normally not both). The formula sentence frequently exhibits marked word order (Verb-Object), and typically lacks an overt hero subject (Ibid.).

Formula reflects the theme yet is remarkable for its exceptional relationship with myth: 'the story-pattern provides a map for construing the narrative as a whole, the theme forecasts further developments both immediate and long-range, and the noun-epithet formula reaches far beyond its metrical slot to the mythic identity of its phraseological designate' (Foley 1986, 217). The 'hero subject' (god/hero/a profane acting person) is usually described in laconic epithets which constitute stable formulas. Such formulas convey the

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[31] The framework introduced by Watkins is based on the linguistic reconstruction of basic formulas and their variations in different Indo-European traditions. Meanwhile this dissertation does not focus on the linguistic reconstruction of formulas but rather interprets the poetic grammar in an attempt to reveal the mythic content of formulas.

essential characteristics of the god/hero/profane acting person in a poetic narrative:

> Rather we can recognize that a phrase like 'swift-footed Achilles' calls to narrative prominence not just one feature of the hero but his entire heroic personality. By synecdoche, by reference to tradition, the effect of this kind of recurrent phrase is to epitomize the mythic identity of Achilles in, as it were, a shorthand or code, and a code pregnant with extratextual meaning (Ibid. 216).

In the Homeric example provided by Foley, the formula is rendered in a recurrent poetic device – an epithet. It indicates both the hero (Achilles) and his typical characteristics (agility). The epithet refers to the theme of the Trojan War developed in Greek mythology. When a formula describes the characteristics of a god/hero (as reflected in archetypes or archetypal images) or his actions (as reflected in motifs) it may be considered mythic, for it implicitly directs the audience towards a mythic narrative. Formula frequently serves as a reference to myth:

> At the same time the function of the basic formula is indexical and memorative. It makes reference to the myth and calls it to the mind of the listener and at the same time makes reference to and reminds the listener of all other instances of the basic formula' (Watkins 1995, 303).

The definition of mythic formula thus is based on both oral-formulaic theory and comparative Indo-European poetics. The oral-formulaic theory is employed to identify formulas based on their recurrence and stable poetic characteristics[32]. The comparative Indo-European poetics (as determined by Watkins) is instrumental in comparing the poetic formulas of different traditions which may refer to myth. Thus, the concept of mythic formula adopted in this dissertation denotes a unit of poetic diction which occupies a special place in traditional oral poetry in terms of composition and has a symbolic layer of meaning which may be linked to the implicit mythic content.

Mythic formulas may be encountered in different genres of traditional oral poetry: heroic poetry and folk songs, as well as in other types of folklore – charms, incantations, inscriptions, etc. The formulas in a traditional poetic text are deciphered by unravelling a metaphorical code, i.e. reading the poetic expressions as encoded messages that refer to a common system of perception. It is important to note the variability and transformations of mythic formulas – they do not constitute strictly defined combinations of particular words but rather convey the theme, hence 'we can have the preservation of formulaic

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[32] In this dissertation, the formulaic significance of a poetic phrase is established when its content is interpreted in the context of a tradition (instead of placing the focus solely on the recurrence of the poetic phrase in the corpus).

status under partial or even total lexical replacement'[33] (Watkins 1995, 154). Such replacement takes place when the mythic narrative is employed as a matrix for a mimetic narrative: gods/heroes, their companions and weapons are transformed into different acting personae and objects depending on the type of narrative. Various transformations, lexical and syntactical replacements may modify a formula into a poetic expression which contains little of the original mythic content. The formula may be subject to paradigmatic (an epithet, synonym instead of a name or object) and syntagmatic (changes in tense, voice) changes (Ibid. 301-302). The abundance of transformations in the realm of mythic formulas instils a challenge in the task of interpretation: an element of poetic grammar has to be unravelled, or traced back, to the basic formula and then connected to an archetype or a motif.

1.2.4. Mythic Formula as a Constituent of the Poetic Grammar

Mythic formulas are embodied in the poetic grammar of traditional oral narrative which, being a 'diachronic document of great age and depth' (Foley 1993, 3), contains the remnants of the mythic worldview characteristic to the era before the beginning of written literature. Poetic grammar may be analysed as a multitude of poetic references, or signs, which are woven into the fabric of poetic narrative by the archaic poet[34]. In the archaic society, the objects of the world are perceived as non-verbal signs of the divine order, or as Manetti claims, 'the world, therefore, is a huge writing tablet, made up of objects which serve as material support for the omens from which oracles are drawn' (Manetti 1993, 5). The mode of mythic thought is transposed onto traditional oral narrative inasmuch as concrete signs of reality evolve into literary signs

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[33] Albert Lord gives examples of formulas from the Serbo-Croatian poetry that may contain only one word – 'the most frequent actions in the story, the verbs, are often complete formulas in themselves, filling either the first or the second half of the line' (Lord 2000, 34).

[34] Formulaic nature of traditional oral poetry may be viewed as its key feature. However, poetic grammar is seen as the ultimate exposition of traditional poetry: 'On the level of line formation, then, the basic entities of an oral poetic tradition will not be the fixed formulas (on the basis of which, however, we can positively identify the poetry as orally composed). They will be instead the abstract patterns in accordance with which singers can produce new phrases. On this level the tradition is seen to consist rather of a "grammar" than of a set of fixed elements. It is a grammar superimposed on the normal grammar of the spoken language; but like that grammar it is learned below the level of consciousness and carries with it profound restrictions on both the apprehension and the conceptualization of the external world' (Scholes et al. 2006, 27).

in a poetic text. Consequently, by means of imitation, the poet presents the existing order of the world by introducing verbal signs which refer to the mythic entities; it might be further intimated that the poet is the one who interprets the non-verbal signs and converts them into verbal signs (cf. Frye 1973, 55-57; Lord 2000, 66-67). As per Foley's suggestion, 'the artistry resides largely in the way in which the poet alternately harnesses the word-power of traditional referentiality (giving us familiar signs to read) and introduces situation-specific departures (causing us to read between the signs)' (Foley 1996, 25). These signs aid in recognising the genre of the traditional oral narrative, establishing the sequence of motifs and in identifying the main acting personae (or their possible transformations).

The archaic poet integrated the knowledge about the sacred and the profane by creating a poetic narrative[35]. The Indo-European poet was closely associated with divination and prophetic functions (cf. Finnegan 1980, 207-210), or, as West states, 'knowledge of the poetic language and technical command of the verbal arts were the province of specialists. These specialists were of more than one kind, for they performed a variety of functions, as priests, seers, eulogists, and so forth' (West 2007, 27). In this view, the poet comes close to the interpreter of the divine truth, which, when encoded in a poetic text, included 'the hidden presence of a second meaning and the idea that the first, obvious meaning had to be discounted'[36] (Manetti 1993, 170). Therefore, poetic devices have a wide range of functions: they provide an aesthetic pleasure, stylistic and rhythmic harmony, and contain an implicit symbolical meaning.

The language employed in traditional oral poetry implies a sacral context: 'the more ceremonial genres of oral narrative consist of "marked" language that differs noticeably from everyday speech' (Niles 1999, 121). Such marked language includes metric and rhythmic patterns, formulaic diction and specific

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[35] It was the poet who recounted myth in the words of poetry – 'before the rise of philosophy myth belonged to a special realm of undemonstrable truth that was the province of poets, sages, kings, and seers' (Morgan 2000, 22).

[36] This elaboration on the essence of the enigmatic mode is given by Manetti in reference to the interpretation of oracular prophecies in ancient Greece, cf. 'Once again we come up against the opposition of 'human language' vs. 'divine language'. The human individual interprets the prophecy according to the human code and fails even to attempt to understand the words of the revelation as being encoded in another language, the language of the god. <...> The basic idea presented by literary oracle episodes is that the prophecy always has a secondary meaning and, although this is hidden, it forms the only true meaning of the sign. It is the discovery of this second meaning and the rejection of the first, literal interpretation that we may call interpretation according to the enigmatic mode' (Manetti 1993, 24-25).

poetic devices. The archaic poet employed a distinct vocabulary and techniques in his craft:

> Archaic vocabulary, disturbed word order, and, above all, metaphors and periphrases that reveal the identity of a thing only with the application of some intellectual effort, present a challenge to the hearer, which he may be able to meet only with difficulty or after acquiring familiarity with the style. It was not just a matter of using obscure vocabulary, but also of hiding meanings in symbolisms (West 2007, 77).

The analysis of a poetic text begins with the literal level, or the identification of different devices of the poetic grammar and their importance in terms of form and content; only then their symbolical meaning may be uncovered. The current dissertation adopts the model of analysis of poetic grammar introduced by Watkins:

> We may consider poetic language as a sort of grammar, in our case an Indo-European grammar, which distinguishes levels of sound and levels of meaning. On the level of sound alone, where meaning *per se* and meaningful units not in play, we have the domains of METRICS and other rhythmic features and of the various sound devices which we can refer to globally as PHONETIC FIGURES, such as alliteration and rhyme. On a higher level, this poetic grammar has a morphological component, where sound and grammatical meaning alone are in play: we have the domain of GRAMMATICAL FIGURES. Figures of grammar may also – but do not necessarily – involve meaning *per se*, i.e. lexical meaning. On a still higher level, lexical meaning is pertinent and obligatory, both in vocabulary, i.e. DICTION, and in the syntactic and semantic components of the grammar. Vocabulary and syntax are the domain of FORMULAS, which are the vehicles of semantic THEMES. These themes are collectively the verbal expression of the culture of the Indo-Europeans (Watkins 1995, 28).

The poetic devices as constituent parts of poetic grammar may interact on a paradigmatic and on a syntagmatic level. The poetic devices referring to the same poetic image forms a paradigm, e.g. the epithet *orm eitrfán* 'poison-gleaming serpent' (*Hymiskviða*, stanza 23) belongs to the paradigm of the enemies of the thunder god. This paradigm embraces the whole range of poetic devices which describe the archetypal snake (e.g. the kenning *úlfs hnitbróður* 'wolf's intimate-brother' (Ibid.). In comparativist perspective, the paradigm may also include examples from other traditions when those examples denote the same concept (e.g. the epithet describing the dragon in Beowulf as *gryrefāhne* 'gleaming horror' (line 2576) may be linked to the description of the mythic serpent).

When the units of poetic grammar are analysed syntagmatically, i.e. as parts of a sequence, their association with motifs and narrative is disclosed. For instance, the aforementioned epithet *orm eitrfán* 'poison-gleaming serpent' refers to the motif of combat between the thunder god and the Midgard Serpent; as the narrative proceeds, it may be linked to the motif of

the thunder god's victory (as rendered in the kenning *orms einbani* 'the serpent's sole slayer' (Ibid. 22). Overall, the analysis of a poetic device establishes its connections with other similar poetic devices (paradigmatic level) and determines its connection with a motif and narrative (syntagmatic level).

On the phonetic level, the significance of phonetic devices (rhyme, alliteration, onomatopoeia, assonance) is revealed. In medieval Germanic poetry, a distinctive feature is alliterative verse, whereas Lithuanian folk songs employ rhyme and onomatopoeic refrains as the principal phonetic devices. While phonetic devices may be viewed as 'archaic mnemonic tools, suitable for mouth and mind' (Brink 2005, 75), their purpose is not exhausted by the suitability for memorisation and poetic efficiency. Another important function of phonetic devices is the demarcation and emphasis on certain phrases, or, as Watkins puts it, 'the function of such figures of sound and grammar is INDEXICAL: they serve to point to the message, the poetic text, and call attention to it' (Watkins 1995, 29). Therefore, on the literal level, phonetic devices are the first guiding signs towards the semantically marked phrases, or poetic figures.

Further on, the analysis deals with the investigation of diction, or specifically chosen poetic devices, employed in a poetic text. A unit of poetic grammar, be it a metaphor, a simile, or a kenning, should not be regarded as a self-serving poetic invention; it rather bears the mythic imprint which is recognised by the audience as a certain mythological 'norm'. The recurrent poetic devices employed in traditional oral poetry constitute common Indo-European phraseology, according to West:

> In looking for Indo-European idioms, therefore, it is not necessary to limit ourselves to comparisons where all the terms stand in etymological relationship. It is legitimate to adduce expressions that are semantically parallel, even if the vocabulary diverges, provided that they are distinctive enough to suggest a common origin (West 2007, 79).

Semantic affinity of various poetic expressions allows for the comparison between different poetic traditions to be made. Indo-European poetic grammar thus comprises poetic devices that differ in terms of vocabulary and syntactic layout but share common semantic characteristics due to the common archetypes they derive from. Among others, West introduces the following phraseological units and figures of speech characteristic of the Indo-European diction (cf. West 2007, 78-85)[37].

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[37] The examples provided with each different figure of speech have been selected by the author of this dissertation. Here and further in the text, the original text (Old Icelandic, Old English or Lithuanian) is written down in italics, and English

Phraseological units:

- Compound words – stable phrases consisting of an adjective and a noun which convey universal concepts e.g. *ginregin* 'the holy gods'[38] (*Hymiskviða*, stanza 4);

- Kennings – periphrases which combine two elements to designate the third one, e.g. *sunu Healfdenes* 'Healfdene's son'[39] meaning Hrothgar (*Beowulf*, line 268);

- Epitheta ornantia – phrases featuring an epithet which expresses permanent characteristics of the described object, e.g. *helgar kindir* 'holy races' (*Vǫluspá,* stanza 1).

Universal poetic expressions:

- Similes – the comparisons of two different objects or phenomena which imply their metaphorical connection, e.g. *lekia kulkelės/ kaip bitės, kaip bitės* 'the bullets are flying like bees, like bees' (Juška 1954, 625)[40].

Figures of speech:

- Polar expressions (merisms) – combinations of two opposing concepts which represent another concept as an entirety, e.g. *meiri oc minni, mǫgo Heimdalar* 'greater and lesser, the offspring of Heimdall' (*Vǫluspá,* stanza 1);

- Anaphora – figure of speech defined by the repetition of a semantically significant word in the sequences of phrases or verses, e.g. *Heill þú farir, heill þú aptr komir,/heill þú á sinnom sér!* 'Journey safely! Come back safely!/ Be safe on the way!' (*Vafþrúðnismál*, stanza 4);

- Juxtaposition of opposed terms – syntactic grouping of contrasting terms, e.g. *duguþe ond geogoþe* 'warriors old and young' (*Beowulf*, line 160);

- Juxtaposition of like terms (polyptoton) – a figure of speech which presents the juxtaposition between different forms of the same word, e.g. *Oi rūta rūta,/ Rūtele žalioji,/ Kodėl nežaliuoji/ Šitą vasarėlę?* 'Oh rue, rue, oh green rue,

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translations are given in quotation marks. Translations of Lithuanian folk songs are mine: Giedrė Buivytė.

[38] Here and further in the text, the translation of the *Poetic Edda* (including anglicised versions of names) by Carolyne Larrington (2014) is quoted.

[39] Here and further in the text, the Modern English translation of *Beowulf*, including names and place-names, by M. Alexander (1973), is quoted. In the cases where word-by-word translation of a specific phrase is required, I propose my own translation which was made using the *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* by Bosworth and Toller (1973).

[40] Here and further in the text, the songs quoted from *Lietuviškos dainos* 'Lithuanian songs' by Juška (1954) are referenced by indicating the song number, not the page number.

why don't you grow green this summer?' (*Lietuvių liaudies dainynas* 1989, 272);

- Priamel (preambulum) – a poetic device which is defined by the repetition of phrases, the last of which concludes the sequence, e.g. *Lítilla sanda, lítilla sæva/ lítil ero geð guma* 'Of small sands, of small seas,/ Small are the minds of men' (*Hávamál*, stanza 53);

- Belaghel's law, or the 'Augmented Triad' – enumeration of three names or objects with a semantic emphasis on the third constituent of the sequence, e.g. *Sėjau rūtą, sėjau mėtą,/ Sėjau lelijėlę,/ Sėjau savo jaunas dienas/ Kaip žalią rūtelę* 'I have sown a rue, I have sown a mentha, I have sown a lily, I have sown my maiden days/ Like a green rue' (*Lietuvių liaudies dainynas* 1989, 40).

It should be noted that poetic formulas may be embodied in most of the above indicated phraseological units and figures of speech. Poetic formulas represent the essence of a tradition, e.g. the formula *wine Scyldinga* 'the protector of Scyldings' (*Beowulf*, lines 30, 170, 1183, etc.) refers to the motif of sacral kingship in the Anglo-Saxon England.

In the context of this thesis, it is important to stress the distinction between poetic and mythic formulas. Poetic formulas are poetic phrases which are employed in the traditional oral narrative more than once and occupy a distinct position in terms of metre. Not all poetic formulas can be defined as mythic; although mythic formula is essentially poetic in nature, it may be recognised based on its relation to myth and/or ritual. For instance, the epithet *sīdfæþmed scip* 'broad-bosomed ship' (*Beowulf*, line 302) is a poetic formula denoting a ship, meanwhile *æþelinges fær* 'a hero's vessel' (Ibid. line 33) denotes hero's funeral ship and refers to the crossing of water after death in the mythic worldview.

On balance, poetic grammar constitutes an intricate system of poetic devices which contribute to the overall structure and meaning of traditional oral narrative. The analysis of poetic grammar allows making connections between the poetic narratives of different traditions.

2. OVERVIEW OF THE PRIMARY SOURCES

Traditional oral poetry, being essentially performative, was recorded in a textual form when the written word became more common in the cultural life of medieval societies. The introduction of literacy coincided with a distinctive stage of the evolution of traditional oral narrative. Even though it still contained the poetic characteristics necessary for the oral composition and transmission of poetry, in many cases, the society which practiced pagan rituals and believed in myths remained in the past. Accordingly, the mythic themes of poetic narratives either underwent transformations or were intermingled with Christian themes. Therefore, the early records of traditional oral poetry are a product of the contemporary historical and social milieu; nonetheless, they preserve information on the archaic worldview and belief system.

2.1. The Old Icelandic Tradition

The knowledge about the mythology of a certain tradition may be gained through various channels: history, toponymical records, material artefacts, and literature. A valuable literary source of Germanic mythology is presented in the *Poetic Edda* – a collection of Old Icelandic poems recorded in the manuscript known as *Codex Regius* (dated around 1270). The manuscript was owned by Bishop Brynjólf Sveinson and given to the king of Denmark in 1622 – hence its name, *Codex Regius*, 'King's Book' (Larrington 2016, xi). It was stored at the Royal Library in Copenhagen until the early 70s, when the manuscript was returned to Iceland and is now housed in Reykjavik, Arnamagnæn Institute.

The *Poetic Edda* was recorded under peculiar historical and cultural circumstances. Scandinavian settlers arrived in Iceland in the 9th century, and in the 10th century the country entered the process of Christianisation. Christianity brought education and literacy among other reforms and provided the means to record the material which had previously been transmitted only orally. The development of Old Icelandic literature aimed at the preservation of the Icelandic cultural heritage; however, it was recorded by people with Christian values (Clunies Ross 2000, 117). The poetic sources were fragmented and presented a challenge for the medieval Christian literates who tried to decipher and record them (Harris 2011, 253). Even though these narratives most probably were viewed as the remnants of heathen times, they were deemed aesthetically and culturally important by the persons of higher classes who recorded them.

The myths recounted in the Eddic poems were closely related to the organisation of the Old Icelandic society:

> There is comparability between the often-repeated stand-offs between gods and giants and the behaviour of feuding chieftains and their supporters in thirteenth-century Iceland. <…> The 'reality' of the world of the gods thus partakes of the same basic metaphysical reality as that of the humans represented in predominantly non-mythic textual genres (Clunies Ross 2000, 122).

It should be noted that even though the pagan religion was losing its position at the time the poems were recorded, the belief in the bond between the gods and the profane people was still strong enough in the worldview of medieval Icelanders (cf. Lindow 2005, 30). This premise may also account for the fact that not only the poems themselves, but the knowledge about mythical universe had been transmitted orally and this pre-existing knowledge was crucial for the audience in order to comprehend the mythic references in a usually fragmented narrative (Clunies Ross 2005, 96-99). In this way, certain fragments of mythic narratives and old beliefs continued to exist in the consciousness of the society even after the conversion to Christianity.

The *Poetic Edda* is viewed as one of the most important sources of Germanic mythology and heroic legends, and also as a striking example of medieval oral poetry (cf. Sørensen 2000, 20). Although recorded in the 13th century, Eddic poems are believed to have previously existed in the oral tradition (cf. Clunies Ross 2000, 44-45). The existing scholarly studies contribute to the theory that the poems of the *Poetic Edda* may originate from oral sources. Lönnroth discusses the peculiarities of the Eddic narratives in relation to the oral performance theory:

> we may say that many of these Eddic poems in direct speech appear to serve as a kind of indirect exhortation of their audience, delivered in a prose context as a lyrical-dramatic intermezzo, in which the performer assumes the role of one or more legendary characters, who have often already been introduced in the prose narrative. This could explain why in the Edda there are so many purely didactic poems which are set within a narrative-dramatic framework: the proverbial wisdom of *Hávamál*, for example, is presented as the sayings of Odin in Valhalla; the magic lore of *Sigrdrífumál* is presented as a valkyrie's speech to Sigurd on a magic mountain; the lecture on poetic vocabulary in *Alvíssmál* is presented as a dramatic contest of wisdom between the god Thor and the elfman Alvíss, etc. These dramatic settings should not be regarded simply as conventional pedagogical devices (like the dialogue form in so many learned treatises of the Middle Ages) but as necessary props used by the oral performer in presenting a dramatic scene, which was supposed to form part of a longer narrative – a heroic legend or a myth (Lönnroth 1971, 8).

Besides the dramatic and performative characteristics, the Eddic poems display other traits of oral composition, such as diction, phonetic devices and

metre. Diction includes different poetic expressions, especially compounds, kennings created from nouns and adjectives, and new coinages (Schorn 2016, 271-273). Phonetic and metric characteristics comprise alliteration, stanzaic composition, the metres *fornyrðislag* and *ljóðaháttr* (in the majority of poems), and *málaháttr* and *galdralag* (in fewer cases) (Ibid. 273-274). The Eddic poems are 'rhythmic and clipped in progression, complimenting a lexicon that is highly allusive and idiomatically distinct from literary prose' (Ibid.) The concise syntactic form and specific diction reveal that the Eddic poems most probably are the product of oral composition.

In the contemporary translations of the *Poetic Edda*, the poems are usually divided into mythological lays and heroic lays. Mythological lays concentrate on gods, their quests and acts of cosmic significance. Klingenberg proposes the following schematisation of the traditional oral narrative in the poems of the *Poetic Edda*:

> In the poem as a whole, the conceptual element is developed at the expense of epic narration. Myth catalogues assume an audience initiated in mythological lore. The deeds of the gods and other individual myths are compressed into highly terse utterances, abbreviations which have a referential function insofar as they assume more extensive narration elsewhere of the myth to which they allude. Enumerations may also have an epic function in developing the narrative frame, and further, a function which serves the overriding or transcendent idea of the poem as a whole (*Lokasenna, Grimnismal*). An appropriate selection of the enumerated lore (maxims, myth abbreviations) may be used to construct a conceptual montage (Klingenberg 1985, 135-136).

Hence the knowledge of the mythological system was required to follow and comprehend the narrative of Eddic poems. The poetic diction employed by the poet revealed the theme of the poem to the audience.

In this dissertation, several mythological and heroic poems of the *Poetic Edda* have been analysed. Brief synopsis of each poem is presented below.

Vǫluspá ('The Seeress's Prophecy'). This is the introductory poem of the *Poetic Edda* which provides a detailed account of the cosmogonic-eschatological cycle of Germanic mythology. The poem recounts how the god Odin summons a *vǫlva* (or seeress) to gain the knowledge of the events of the past and the future. Reluctantly, the seeress starts her recitation with a cosmogonic story: the creation of the earth, the golden age wherein the gods ruled peacefully until the appearance of three ominous maidens. Further on, the seeress tells about the war between the *Æsir* and the *Vanir*, after which the two groups of gods are united. Then the seeress recounts the events of the future, namely *Ragnarǫk*, which is preceded by the death of god Baldr. The depiction of the final battle ensues, where the forces of chaos destroy the world; Thor kills the Midgard Serpent and perishes from its venom, and Odin

is killed by the wolf Fenrir. The prophecy ends with a vision of a new earth and the reappearance of several of the gods, including Baldr, as well as the serpent *Níðhǫggr*.

Hávamál ('Sayings of the High One'). The speaker of the poem is thought to be the god Odin. The poem constitutes an example of wisdom poetry and offers guidance on social conduct; it also recounts Odin's encounters with two women (Billing's daughter, who deceives him, and Gunnlod, who offers him the mead of poetry). The poem is considered to be a compilation of several poems based on gnomic theme (Larrington 2016, 13).

Vafþrúðnismál ('Vafthrudnir's Sayings'). The poem is almost entirely told in a dialogue form: the god (Odin) travels to the wise giant *Vafþrúðnir* (Vafthrudnir), and, having disguised himself as *Gagnráðr* (Gagnrad), is engaged in a wisdom competition with the giant – a series of questions is asked by Vafthrudnir, and a series of questions is asked by Odin. The questions are encyclopaedic in nature and provide information on the origin of the elements of the cosmos and the names of various mythic entities.

Grímnismál ('Grimnir's Sayings'). The poem recounts how Odin and his wife Frigg discuss the fortune of two brothers Geirrod and Agnar, who were raised by the disguised divine couple. Geirrod is a king who acquired a reputation of being cruel to his guests; Odin disguises himself as Grimnir and travels to Geirrod's kingdom to investigate these rumours. Geirrod tortures the disguised Odin with fire and starvation; finally, Odin reveals himself. Geirrod loses the god's favour so that Agnar, who has previously offered a drink to the disguised god, is consecrated as the king.

Hymiskviða ('Hymir's Poem'). Gods visit Ægir who demands a big cauldron to brew beer for the guests. Tyr and Thor travel to the giant Hymir who owns a cauldron of necessary proportions. In a competition of strength, the gods obtain the cauldron (after outwitting the giant). The poem also describes a fishing expedition of Thor and Hymir, where Thor almost catches the World Serpent *Jǫrmungandr* and exhibits his strength.

Skírnismál (Skirnir's Journey). God Freyr falls in love with a giantess Gerd and summons his servant Skirnir to woo her. Skirnir travels to the house of Gerd's father and offers her gifts; when the maiden refuses Skirnir's offerings, he resorts to threats and finally evokes magic runes. Only then Gerd agrees to meet Freyr to consummate their union.

Alvíssmál ('All-wise's Sayings). The poem tells of the intent of dwarf *Alvíss* (All-wise) to marry Thor's daughter. Eager to prevent this marriage, Thor proposes a contest of wisdom which goes on all night; with the first ray of the sun, the dwarf turns into a stone. In the contest, the dwarf recites a variety of poetic synonyms which denote natural phenomena.

In this dissertation, the following heroic poems of the *Poetic Edda* were investigated in order to identify the main concepts of the heroic world in the Old Icelandic tradition.

Helgakviða Hundingsbana I ('The First Poem of Helgi Hundingsbani'). The poem recounts the birth of the hero Helgi and the slaying of Hunding. Helgi participates in a combat to win the valkyrie Sigrun as his bride, which he successfully achieves. The prelude to the battle includes a scene of flyting between Sinfiotli and Gudmund, where they exchange various accusations. The events depicted in this poem are incorporated in the *Volsunga saga*, a cycle of heroic poems about the Volsung clan.

Helgakviða Hundingsbana II ('The Second Poem of Helgi Hundingsbani'). The poem echoes some elements from the first poem about Helgi: the way he is allotted his name, his love story with the valkyrie, and the flyting. The poem contains a significant passage which depicts the meeting of the deceased Helgi and Sigrun in his burial mound.

Fáfnismál ('The Lay of Fafnir'). Encouraged by Reginn, Sigurd kills the dragon Fafnir by stabbing him in order to win the golden hoard guarded by the dragon. Sigurd has a dialogue with the mortally wounded dragon that shares his wisdom and warns Sigurd about the treacherous Reginn and the golden hoard which will bring his doom. After accidentally tasting the blood of the dragon, Sigurd becomes able to understand the speech of birds who tell him about his future bride Gudrun and the sleeping valkyrie Sigrdrifa.

Guðrúnarkviða I ('The First Poem of Gudrun'). The poem focuses on Gudrun's inability (or unwillingness) to express her grief after Sigurd's death. She is not moved by the sorrowful stories of other women; however, when the dead body of Sigurd is uncovered, she finally weeps and expresses her sorrow in a lament.

Sigurðarkviða hin skamma ('Short Poem about Sigurd'). The poem describes a series of events, following Sigurd's arrival at Giuki's court where Gudrun becomes his wife; later he travels to woo Brynhildr for Gudrun's brother Gunnar. The poem describes the death of Sigurd, the subsequent marriages of Gudrun, and Gunnar's encounter with Oddrun. Nonetheless, the greatest emphasis is put on the character of Brynhildr who changes 'from relentless, monstrous avenger to sorrowing, yet unregretful, bride in death' (Larrington 2016, 177).

Guðrúnarhvǫt ('The Whetting of Gudrun'). After her daughter Svanhild is trampled to death by horses on the order of her husband king Iormunrekk, Gudrun urges her sons to avenge her death. The poem contains the motifs of Gudrun's lament and her preparations for death on the funeral pyre.

Hamðismál ('The Lay of Hamdir'). Gudrun's sons Hamdir and Sorli travel to king Iormunrekk's court to avenge the death of their half-sister Svanhild. While they manage to maim the king, he discovers that stoning revokes the magical invulnerability of the brothers.

On balance, mythological and heroic poems of the *Poetic Edda* encompass a variety of themes and motifs which relate to the mythic worldview of the Old Icelandic society.

2.2. The Anglo-Saxon Tradition

The Anglo-Saxon poetic tradition is marked by the fusion of two main trends: the Germanic military culture which spread in England in the 5th century, and the Christian religion which was introduced in the end of the 6th century (Fulk and Cain 2013, 2). The poetic tradition inevitably reflected the mixture of these two cultural trends. The Anglo-Saxon poetry evolves from the lore of the archaic warrior society: 'If a tradition of professional-level oral poetry existed in later Anglo-Saxon England, it was probably an Old Germanic inheritance and was related to a pre-feudal social system, constructed on an agricultural base, whose stability depended on close ties between rulers and a class of warrior-thanes' (Niles 1992, 362-363). Niles distinguishes the following characteristics of the Anglo-Saxon poetry: priority of rhythm over metre, lack of prosodic effects, few elaborate metaphors (but numerous synonymic poetic expressions), occasional ornamental use of words and phrases, half-line as the main syntactic and rhythmic unit, formulaic substitution within the half-line, usage of compounds in order to achieve alliteration (Ibid. 371-372). Many of the indicated poetic characteristics are essential for the oral composition and oral performance of poetry.

A monumental creation in the corpus of the Anglo-Saxon poetry, the Old English poem *Beowulf* (dated 8th – 11th century) [41] still ignites discussions and inspires new interpretations, including the analysis within the framework of oral-formulaic theory. It is presumed that the *Beowulf* manuscript has been stored in a monastery library; in the 16th century, the manuscript was in possession of Laurence Nowell (hence the name of the manuscript, *The Nowell Codex*) (Johnston 2005, 9-10). The manuscript was transferred to Sir Robert Cotton, an avid collector of antique books; in Cotton's collection, the manuscript was included in *Cotton Vitellius A.XV* (Cotton's library, Vitellius

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[41] The date of composition of *Beowulf* has been the object of many studies. The style, language, historical circumstances and comparison with other poems of similar period have been set as the criteria to define the date of the poem (cf. Colin Chase's *The Dating of Beowulf* (1997) for the detailed accounts on many of these criteria).

bookcase, shelf A, position 15) (Ibid.). The manuscript was later transferred to the British museum and finally – to the British Library, where it is now stored.

Beowulf was composed in the wake of turbulent historical times when the societal organisation and political environment of the Anglo-Saxon England underwent major changes:

> Rather than reflecting the stable conditions of a single or simple age, *Beowulf* represents a broad collective response to changes that affected a complex society during a period of major transformations. To note only the most obvious of these changes: by the time that this poem was put down in writing, the English-speaking peoples of Britain had turned away from pagan beliefs and had accepted the teachings of Christianity. They had weathered the storm of Viking invasions and had established control of a mixed and somewhat turbulent Anglo-Scandinavian society. They were no longer competing against one another as separate tribes ruled by warlords or regional kings but had developed a unified kingdom, built largely on the Carolingian model and administered through coinage, written documents, and a state bureaucracy. The changes that affected the society to which Beowulf pertains were momentous, and by their workings the nation that we call England came into being (Niles 1999, 123-124).

It should be noted that the *ethos* of *Beowulf* reveals the cornerstone principle of the warrior society: the relationship between the king and his comitatus. The warriors demonstrated their loyalty for the king in a battle, whereas the king provided his retainers with weapons and feasts (cf. Fulk and Cain, 2013, 3-4). The poem may be said to mark the disintegration of this type of society, as Beowulf fights all his battles alone, except for the final encounter with the dragon. The *ethos* of the poem reflected the changing society inasmuch as the heroic acting personae of the heathen period gave way to the new concept of a Christian hero. Fulk and Cain note that Beowulf is more akin to the righteous Christian heroes than to the traditional warrior-heroes (Ibid. 280). The main motifs of the poem, correspondingly, have been interpreted in relation to both Germanic mythology and Christian teaching.

The oral nature of *Beowulf* has been an object of discussions ever since F.P. Magoun's article *Oral Formulaic Character of Anglo-Saxon Narrative Poetry* (1953) which analyses the formulas encountered in *Beowulf* as the substantial proof of its oral origin. In the Anglo-Saxon England, literacy was not widespread and oral techniques were vital in the transmission of poetic narratives: 'a narrator, whether of common law pleadings or of epic and romance, had originally reconstructed his tale in due form on the basis of a few remembered formulas' (Clanchy 1979, 222).

Likewise, Niles provides an assumption that *Beowulf* was created as part of the oral tradition:

The main stylistic and substantive features of Beowulf fall into place when one conceives of its author not as a closet Virgil who sprinkled his work with oral formulas, but rather as a man of words so steeped in the style and subjects of his oral tradition, as Homer and Hesiod were in theirs, that he was able to compose works like this fluently, although only one of them has happened to survive (Niles 1999, 98, 102).

In terms of composition, *Beowulf* manifests a chiastic structure, or ring composition – a symmetric recurrence of motifs[42]. Niles points out that the sequences of motifs in Beowulf usually echo each other in a complimentary fashion:

In *Beowulf*, few narrative events stand alone; most seem linked to other events in a complex network of interrelationships. Equally characteristic of the poet's style is the way in which thesis is answered by antithesis. The horror of the second night in Heorot is answered by the calm of the third; solemn farewells are answered by joyful greetings; the once infested waters become miraculously cleansed. Rarely in *Beowulf* is an event repeated in the same terms and with the same emotional coloring. More often, one event is balanced by another that resembles it in certain respects but differs in others (Niles 1979, 927).

The ring composition may also be observed in the general structure of the poem: *Beowulf* begins and ends with a description of a funeral (of the legendary king Scyld Scefing and of Beowulf respectively).

Although *Beowulf* was recorded in the Old English language, the poem takes place in Scandinavia. The poem begins with the description of the lavish funeral of king Scyld Scefing who was the first in the line of Danish kings, the Scylding dynasty, and who mysteriously arrived from over the sea as a child. The narrative proceeds to describe king Hrothgar, a descendant of king Scyld Scefing, and the building of the magnificent mead-hall of Heorot where the warriors gather and spend their days in prosperity. The monster Grendel, who hates the content life of the warriors, comes at night and takes with himself thirty of king Hrothgar's warriors. His attacks continue, until the king of Geats, Beowulf, hears of the troubles of king Hrothgar's court and travels to his aid. When Grendel comes to attack Heorot, he kills one warrior but when he tries to attack Beowulf, the hero mortally wounds the monster by tearing his arm off. In the morning, king Hrothgar and his court rejoice at Beowulf's victory and award him with precious gifts. The Heorot hall is attacked once more, this time by the vengeful Grendel's mother. Beowulf travels to the mere

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[42] Watkins describes the ring composition as a common poetic device in the Indo-European tradition: 'It is a signal of demarcation: a series of sentences is thereby symbolically transformed into a finite set, a closed text or text segment. This device, sometimes with more complex "nesting" of recurrences, is an extraordinarily widespread compositional technique in the archaic Indo-European world and is not terribly common outside it' (Watkins 1995, 34).

where Grendel's mother lives in order to confront her. After descending under water, Beowulf tries to attack Grendel's mother with his sword, but it fails; after a physical confrontation, he notices an ancient sword in the hall, and it is with this weapon that he is able to overcome Grendel's mother. Beowulf also severs Grendel's head from his dead body and comes back to his fellow warriors. Awarded with gifts by king Hrothgar and having assured mutual loyalty, Beowulf and his men return to their country. After a period of time, succeeding the deaths of Hygelac and his son, Beowulf is seen as an old king, having ruled Geats for fifty years. An incident occurs when a dragon, angered by a slave's attempt to steal a vessel from the hoard he has been guarding, begins to ravish the land. Beowulf sets off to fight the dragon alone; he has three encounters with the dragon and overcomes it only with the help of Wiglaf; however, the dragon manages to injure Beowulf and poison him with its venom. Dying Beowulf orders to build him a burial mound near the sea. The poem ends, as it began, with a funeral scene: a magnificent barrow is built for Beowulf, a Geatish woman sings a lament, and men utter the words of praise for the dead hero.

Besides *Beowulf*, the analysis of several other Anglo-Saxon poems was included in the empirical part of this dissertation.

The Dream of the Rood. Written in alliterative verse, the poem is recorded in the *Vercelli Book* (10th century); several parts of it are also inscribed in runic alphabet on the Ruthwell Cross, a stone monument in Scotland (Amodio 2013, 230). The *Vercelli Book* incorporates twenty-three prose homilies and six religious poems in Old English (two of which are ascribed to Cynewulf). In *The Dream of the Rood*, the dreamer envisions the cross, on which Jesus was crucified, bedecked with gems and stained with blood. The dream-vision genre was widespread in medieval England. Dream-vision embodied a journey from the material world to the spiritual realm: 'by visualizing more and more abstract representations of some earthly object or person, the dreamer manages to perceive its immaterial counterpart in the heavenly realm of Platonic form' (Marti 2002, 179). In *The Dream of the Rood*, the cross tells the story of Crucifixion from its own perspective: it becomes a part of Christ's sacrifice and thus gains a high spiritual value. The Christian worldview of the poem is deeply intertwined with the Germanic heroic tradition: 'Christ becomes an active hero, stripping himself and ascending the cross, while the cross is something of a thegn to him, wishing, but not daring, to lay low his enemies, and eventually suffering the afflictions of an exile deprived of his lord' (Fulk and Cain 2013, 203). The heroic poetic diction employed in a Christian context marks the period of transition from the pagan to the Christian tradition.

The Nine Herbs Charm. The Old English semi-metrical charm is recorded in the manuscript titled *Lacnunga* (10th century). The Old English charms are significant examples of oral tradition as they were orally performed in a ritual intended to alleviate an illness. Olsan notes that Latin terms *carmen* and *incantatio*, as well as Old English *galdor* can all be translated as 'charm' which implies that charms may have been chanted as part of a magic ritual (Olsan 1992, 116-117). *The Nine Herbs Charm*, together with several other charms incorporated in the manuscript, is believed to be intended for *fig* 'haemorrhoids' (Cameron 1993, 144). The healing essence of the charm lies in its intention 'to bind the world through language in its primeval perfect function' wherein language imposes order on an otherwise chaotic world (Hill 2010, 55). The charm invokes the names of nine herbs and mentions their healing properties; similarly, for the purpose of healing, the charm summons both pagan and Christian deities.

The Riddles of the Exeter Book. The Latin tradition of riddling had a profound influence on the Anglo-Saxon poetic tradition. The Latin collections of riddles, or *enigmata*, by Symphosius, Aldhelm, Tatwine, and Eusebius, were dispersed in the Anglo-Saxon England and served as the source of inspiration for the Anglo-Saxon *Riddles* of the *Exeter Book* (Bitterli 2009, 3-4). There are over ninety riddles in the *Exeter Book* (10 century) which survive in three groups. The riddles of the *Exeter Book* exhibit the inclination of the Anglo-Saxon people towards 'descriptive, literary riddles that frequently turn on metaphorical word play'; the subjects of the riddles usually include commonplace objects, such as *dough* (45), *fire* (50), *onion* (65), etc. (Amodio 2013, 305-306). Not all the riddles have generally established solutions – some of them, due to often obscure and misleading descriptions, have several solutions or remain unsolved. In terms of poetic diction, such acting personae as peasants, servants, or personified objects may cause 'the riddles seem a continual exercise in deflation, turning the heroic diction that they share with the rest of the native verse tradition into something like mock epic' (Fulk and Cain 2013, 52). Thus, the riddles reveal a unique aspect of the heroic worldview: the profane perspective. Many of the riddles contain formulaic expression *saga hwæt ic hatte* 'say what I am called'[43]. This expression is usually uttered by an inanimate object, which is 'often termed in Old English by the unrevealing catch-all noun *wiht*, "creature" by means of the literary device of prosopopoeia' (Wilcox 2005, 47). The riddles required 'a culturally

[43] Orchard discusses different versions of this formula, e.g. ''what the guest is called, or the man of whom I here speak' ('*Mon, se þe wille, / cyþe cynewordum hu se cuma hatte, / eðþa se esne, þe ic her ymb sprice*' [Riddle 43.14b-16])' (Orchard 2005, 287).

literate audience' (Riedinger 2004, 40) which could be able to decipher the solution based on elaborate and often purposefully confusing imagery of the riddles.

The Wife's Lament. The poem is incorporated in *The Exeter Book* and constitutes an elegiac monologue of a woman separated from her husband. Evil intentions of the kinsmen of her husband and his absence lead to the narrator's exile – she lives in a distant, hostile and desolate place, and experiences constant loneliness and longing. In the ancient Greek tradition, several types of lament were distinguished: *thrênos* was 'the set dirge composed and performed by professional mourners' whereas *góos* meant 'spontaneous weeping of kinswomen' (Alexiou 2002, 103). *The Wife's Lament* may be seen as a *góos* type of lament as the Wife expresses her personal feelings of grief and loss. In terms of genre, the poem is usually identified as an elegy as it conveys sombre themes and depicts a desolate worldview. Klinck notes that the key feature of elegies found in *Exeter Book* is the motif of separation, embodied in the distance between a person and their desire (Klinck 1992, 225). In the Old English elegies, the motifs of separation and longing shift 'from personal suffering, through meditation on transience, to a contemplation of the eternal' (Ibid. 226). Likewise, *The Wife's Lament* progresses from the expression of the Wife's grief to a generalised piece of wisdom poetry.

2.3. The Lithuanian Tradition

The major part of the corpus of Lithuanian folk songs was collected in 18th-20th centuries, and 16th – 18th centuries are presumed to be the era when the poetic style of the songs was perfected (Sauka 2007, 25). The first written records of Lithuanian folk songs were made by Pilypas Ruigys (Philip Ruhig), a philosopher, philologist and clergyman of Lithuania Minor. In his Latin manuscript *Lietuvių kalbos tyrinėjimas* 'A Study of Lithuanian Language' (dated around 1708), the scholar quoted three Lithuanian folk songs. Donatas Sauka, a renowned scholar of Lithuanian folklore and literature, states that the date of this publication marks the end of the development of the classical Lithuanian poetic tradition (Ibid. 371). The first collection of Lithuanian folk songs *Dainos oder Litauische Volkslieder*[44] was compiled and published in

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[44] Among the first collections of Lithuanian folk songs were *Dainos Žemaičių* 'The Songs of Samogitians' by Simonas Stanevičius (1829) and *Dainės žemaičių* 'The Songs of Samogitians' by Simonas Daukantas (1846). A sizeable compilation of Lithuanian folk songs was published by Georg Heinrich Ferdinand Nesselman (*Lietuvių liaudies dainos*, 'Litauische Volkslieder', 1853).

1825 by Liudvikas Rėza (Ludwig Rhesa). Yet, the greatest endeavour in the field of recording and preservation of Lithuanian folk songs was made by brothers Antanas Juška and Jonas Juška. In the region of Veliuona, Antanas Juška collected roughly five and a half thousand songs and 1500 melodies which were published as *Lietuviškos dainos* 'Lithuanian songs' in three volumes in 1880, 1881, 1882, and *Lietuviškos svotbinės dainos* 'Lithuanian Wedding Songs' in 1883 (Ibid. 378-379). Currently, the studies of Lithuanian folklore are conducted at the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore[45]. The first volume of *Lietuvių liaudies dainynas*, 'The Book of Lithuanian Folk Songs' (provided with scholarly introductions and melodies and comprising various genres of songs) was published in 1980; the publishing of the collection is ongoing, and it currently contains 23 volumes.

Lithuanian folk songs have preserved archaic themes and motifs due to the fact that Lithuania was Christianised only in the late 14th century (whereas the first book in the Lithuanian language was published in the 16th century):

> Owing to special historical circumstances, not reproducible, the Lithuanian people until today have retained those living primitive creative elements which their Western European brothers long ago hastened to experience, to bury, and to forget. In Lithuanian poetic folklore those elements have not only not perished, but passing from age to age, from generation to generation, ever adapting themselves to the mood and tendencies of modern life, an incomparably gigantic mirror, generally reflect the path of the historical development of poetical folklore. In Lithuanian folklore there still survive the oldest living folk creative forms, the oldest motives. Many of the variants show how from one of the older forms grow up the later newer forms, until at last the shape of the modern song (daina) is reached (Sruoga 1932, 302).

Although it is difficult to evaluate the archaic components of the songs due to the lack of early records, even the folk songs recorded as late as in 20th century still contain the themes and images that can be traced back to a much earlier period and the mythical worldview. The folk songs are divided into genres based on their contents and function; the formulaic structure of songs and the traditional images usually allow identifying their genre[46]. The most

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[45] Since the 20th century, Lithuanian folk songs have been recorded and studied systematically: in 1930 the Folklore Comittee was established, and in 1935 the Lithuanian Folklore Archive began its activity. During the Soviet period, the Institute of Lithuanian Language and Literature continued the work of gathering, organising, and cataloguing songs as well as other sources of folklore.

[46] Dan Ben-Amos provides valuable insights on the formulaic nature and cultural referentiality of folklore: 'The textual marks that set folklore apart as a particular kind of communication are the opening and closing formulas of tales and songs and the structure of actions that happen in-between. The opening and closing formulas designate the events enclosed between them as a distinct category of narration, not to be confused with reality. <…> Furthermore, these artistic forms are culturally

archaic songs usually have a laconic structure and a concise poetic dictionary; they lack proper names, historical facts or loanwords from other languages, which are characteristic of the songs composed in later centuries.

Specific principles of composition govern the arrangement of motifs in the poetic narrative of Lithuanian folk songs. Possibly the most widely distributed feature of folk songs is their parallelism – the basic structural element, which often manifests in a parallel between human life and nature or the cosmos. Sruoga discusses such parallelism in detail:

> In the primitive daina, subject and object are confronted according to the category of action – such is the basis of the parallelism of the folk poetical style. The simplest parallelism formula, common to all mankind, is the dual-member parallelism. In the daina's verse at once is given some picture of natural phenomena, which constitutes the first member of the parallelism. By its side is given a miniature from human life – the second member of the parallelism. Both members are linked together by internal ties the substance of which lies in the common features of the existing act; i.e. there are confronted two motives, one of which is a condition that one explains the other (Ibid. 306-307).

A typical instance of dual-member parallelism may be observed in the songs where the members of a family are compared to trees: a father/brother – to an oak tree, a mother/sister – to an apple tree (grammatically, the gender of the noun indicating a tree corresponds to that of the human being)[47]. Parallelism established the use of fixed imagery in a song and required a specific versification: an equal number of lines had to be devoted to each member of parallelism (Sauka 1970, 130).

Common poetic devices of Lithuanian folk songs include onomatopoeic interjections (which in many cases help to identify the generic dependence of the song, e.g. refrains *leliumai*, *kalėda* are common in Christmas songs), pleonastic phrases (*rožė žydėti* 'to blossom roselike'; *gegužėle kukuoti* 'to cuckoo cuckoo-like'; *sakalu lėkti* 'to fly falcon-like' (Sruoga 1932, 319), diminutives (which are widely used not only with nouns and adjectives but also with adverbs and even interjections). Diminutives are abundant in Lithuanian folk songs; not only are they employed to facilitate the formation of verses but also to emphasise semantically significant words (Sauka 1970, 176-178). The use of epithets has to be mentioned separately because in Lithuanian folk songs epithets are recurrent and usually contribute to stable

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recognized categories of communication. They have special names or identifying features distinguishing them from each other and from other modes of social interaction, pointing to the cultural awareness of their unique character' (Ben-Amos 1971, 10).

[47] For a detailed study of this topic, see an article by Dainius Razauskas *Medžių lytys ir jų santykiai. Žingsnis į dendromitologiją* (2016).

poetic images[48]. Epithets refer to the essential aspect of a defined object and are usually tautological in their description, e.g. *žalioji girelė* 'a green forest', *lygus laukelis* 'a flat field' (Sauka 1970, 183). Nonetheless, the use of different epithets modifies the meaning of the object defined, as seen in the case of epithets regarding the colour white:

> From time immemorial for the Lithuanians the colour white has been the emblem of goodness, sincerity, innocence, joy, etc. When the singer wishes to describe the sun, he says that the sun is red, and that the sun is like gold. But when the singer wishes to emphasize the good attributes of the sun, when he wishes to enjoy its good works, he then sings that the sun is white. And in songs about a mother, by the epithet 'white' he most frequently wishes to say that the mother is good. In the Lithuanian maidens' flower-garden a very loved plant is the diemedėlis (lad's love – *artimesia abrotanum*). It is beautiful because it is green; but in the dainos it is often sung of as 'baltas (white) diemedėlis'. Only when it is recalled that white is the emblem of goodness and joy is this formula comprehensible (Sruoga 1932, 320).

The symbolism of colours, as well as of traditional epithets, is vital in the understanding of the Lithuanian poetic tradition. Epithets frequently reveal the worldview rooted in binary oppositions, e. g. *senas tėvelis/močiutė* 'old father/mother' vs. *jaunas sūnelis/dukrelė* 'young son/daughter'; they also contribute to parallelism, e.g. *šaltas akmenėlis* 'a cold stone' vs. *kieta širdelė* 'a hardened heart' (Sauka 1970, 183).

The genre of Lithuanian folk songs that displays an abundance of enigmatic references to myth is *Kalendorinių apeigų dainos*, or the songs of calendar festivals. The names of these songs reflect their connection to specific festivals; closely related to the yearly cycle, they signify the idea of life and fertility (Ūsaitytė 2007, 9). Christmas songs were related with the rituals of winter solstice, the songs dedicated to the festival of *Užgavėnės* (the equivalent of Mardi Gras/Shrove Tuesday) marked the end of winter, Easter was accompanied by the songs called *lalavimai* (intended as greetings on the

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[48] Veselovsky equates the stability of an epithet to the stability of ritual, ceremony and etiquette, which were formed and developed within thousands of years. He maintains that epithet is as one-sided as a word that describes a typical quality but nonetheless does not exclude the possibility of other descriptions ('Об эпитете можно сказать то же, что о воображаемом постоянстве обряда, церемонии, этикета, которое Спенсер считает особенностью первобытного общества, так называемого обрядового правительства: постоянстве, разлагающемся со временем и уступающем разнообразию. Но обрядовые правительства – уже продукт эволюции, за их постоянством лежат тысячелетия выработки и отбора. Так и с эпитетом: по существу он так же односторонен, как и слово, явившееся показателем предмета, обобщив одно какое-нибудь вызванное им впечатление как существенное, но не исключающее другие подобные определения' (Веселовский 1989, 64)).

occasion of spring), and St. John's feast was accompanied by *kupolinės* (songs celebrating the blooming vegetation).

The theme of wooing and marriage dominates Lithuanian folk songs; the wedding songs (*Vestuvinės dainos*) constitute the genre that is attested most abundantly in the corpus of folk songs. Originally, these songs have been closely related to the wedding rituals; they introduce the idealised images of the bride, the groom and their future married life which conforms to the extant social customs (Sauka 2007, 63).

Lithuanian work songs (*Darbo dainos*) accompanied different types of agricultural work: ploughing, gathering of hay, rye harvesting, oat harvesting, buckwheat gathering, shepherding, milling, spinning, etc. In a peasant's life, the gathering of harvest was a notable event which signified that he successfully accomplished his works and, in this way, adhered to the yearly cycle of nature (Misevičienė 1993, 8). The songs of rye harvesting should be mentioned as they accompanied different rituals related with the beginning and the end of the work. Binding the first sheaf of rye (called *svečias*, *diedas* 'a guest', 'a man') and bringing it home, and making *jievaras* (a special festive wreath) from the last sheaf of rye symbolised fertility and prosperity. The wedding theme, often observed in the songs of rye harvesting, derived from practical considerations: the field work revealed the desired qualities of the future bride or groom; the relative prosperity of a family after gathering the harvest made autumn a suitable time for weddings.

Military-historical songs (*Karinės-istorinės dainos*) include songs which depict the battles with enemies, warrior's life, military service, and death. Although in the course of history Lithuania underwent many wars and warriors formed a separate class in the medieval Lithuanian society, military-historical songs as a genre reflect the reality of peasants – a social class whose interests were distant from the heroic ideals[49]. Instead of depicting heroes and their deeds, the songs offer a peasant's attitude towards war as a catastrophic event and reflect the worldview which is essentially lyrical (Sauka 2007, 92). Making connections between the songs and historical facts is difficult as the songs lack the depictions of historical persons and events and usually render only a remembrance of military events in the collective poetic memory (Jokimaitienė 1985, 32). The earliest historical-military songs allude to the period of wars between Lithuanians and the crusaders; this historical period is

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[49] Maceina makes an assumption that together with the Lithuanian warrior class, which was dominant in medieval times, songs of heroic character must have existed. The author claims that the disintegration of Lithuanian heroic songs must have coincided with the Christianisation of the country, when warrior ideals were gradually replaced with the peaceful ideals of peasant society (Maceina 1994, 53-73).

presumably reflected in *Sudaičio sutartinė* (Sudaičio polyphonic song) and its variations. The song was mentioned in the 16th century by Maciej Stryjkowski and was published as a part of collection of polyphonic songs in 1849. Historically, the song may refer to the period of wars with the crusaders (11-13th centuries) or the internal conflicts between dukes. The military-historical songs which represent the events of later periods usually depict the family environment of a departing warrior. Common motifs include the preparation of garments/sword for the battle by the warrior's sisters/his beloved maiden, his promises to bring them gifts, waiting for the brother's return, the return of the horse who brings the news about the death of the brother (Sauka 2007, 97).

A note on *Sutartinės*, or multipart polyphonic songs, should be made. The performance of these songs includes singing (usually by women), accompaniment of traditional instruments (panpipes, wood trumpets, etc.), and moderate dance moves. *Sutartinės* are archaic songs which exhibit the polyphony of two or three voices. In *Sutartinės*, the themes of work and kinship are developed in detail (although other themes, such as war, are also prevalent) (Slaviūnas 1958, 17). Sauka observes that the world depicted in *Sutartinės* is plain, unburdened with subjective reactions and emotions – probably due to the fact that the performance of the songs was incorporated in the collective work of peasants (Sauka 1970, 27). Thus, the poetic vocabulary employed in *Sutartinės* is concise, and an important part is played by refrains which have a musical and euphonic function as seen in various onomatopoeic words and their derivatives – *čiūto*, *dauno*, *sodauto*, *linago*, *tatato*, etc. (Sauka 2007, 136). The refrain is also significant for the continuity of performance. The performance of *Sutartinės* may be defined by the concept of a circle: the songs have no ending cadences – they end when the principal singer stops the song by making a specific noise (Vyčinienė 1997, 24). The continuity of singing and the distinct movements which accompanied the performance pertain to the sacral meaning of these songs.

A distinct genre of Lithuanian folklore is laments, or *Raudos*. Laments are recited on certain grievous occasions such as death, farewell of the bride during marriage, departure of men to war or another tragic event (Sauka 2007, 143). Bridal laments and funeral laments are predominant in the corpus of Lithuanian laments. Bridal laments pertain to the loss of chastity, loss of youth, and parting with family home. Funeral laments include such motifs as trying to wake the deceased one, the building of a house (metaphor for a coffin), preparing for a long journey, meeting the souls of deceased relatives in the afterlife, and the concerns about the future well-being of the remaining family. The poetic form of laments includes rhetorical questions, attempts at a dialogue with the deceased, a lack of stanzaic structure (which is replaced

by a syntactic unit); quite often the beginning of a funeral lament contains a string of epithets which refer to the deceased one (Sauka 2007, 147). The images presented in funeral laments are symbolic and may be viewed as archetypal and rooted in the oral tradition.

2.4. Comparing the Elements of Poetic Narrative

The poetic narratives of Germanic and Lithuanian traditions include distinct themes and motifs. The following model of analysis allows identifying the unique motifs of each tradition based on the type of narrative and the variations of a common theme.

Poetic narrative	Acting personae	Theme	Motifs
Mythic *Poetic Edda*	Gods	The order of the world established by Gods	Creation of the earth, combat with the elements of chaos, the union of heaven and earth
Heroic *Beowulf*	Heroes	The order of a warrior society centred around the hero	Combat with monsters, gift-giving, imperishable fame
Folk Lithuanian folk songs	Lay people	The progress of a profane life as a reflection of divine existence	The bride and groom in the wedding ritual, cosmogony in the yearly festivals, death in the profane society

The core of the analysis in this dissertation focuses on the narrative structure, imagery and motifs. Each element of the poetic grammar is analysed taking into consideration its symbolic meaning and referential value which indicates a specific motif and its context.

Poetic Narrative	Motif	Image	Poetic device / formula	Example
Mythic *Poetic Edda* (*Vǫluspá*)	The centre of the world	Magnificent hall of gods	Epithet	*Sal <...> sólo fegra* 'a hall <...> fairer than the sun': *64. Sal sér hon standa, sólo fegra, gulli þacþan, á Gimlé; þar scolo dyggvar dróttir byggia oc um aldrdaga ynðis nióta.* '64. A hall she sees standing, fairer than the sun, thatched with gold, at Gimle; there the noble fighting bands will dwell

				and enjoy the days of their lives in pleasure.'
Heroic *Beowulf*		Magnificent hall of heroes	Epithet	*medoærn micel* 'a grand mead-hall': *Him on mōd bearn* *þæt healreced hātan wolde,* *medoærn micel men gewyrcean* *þon[n]e yldo bearn ǣfre* *gefrūnon* (lines 67-69). ' It came into his mind that he would command the construction of a huge mead-hall, a house greater than men on earth ever had heard of".
Folk Folk songs		Magnificent estate of peasants	Epithet	*didis dvarelis* 'a grand estate': *O kad aš ėjau* *Per didį dvarelį,* *Dvaružis sudunzgėjo,* *Vainikėliai mirgėjo* (Juška 1954, 21). 'As I was walking over the grand estate, the estate resounded, the wreaths were flitting'

In the poetic grammar, the level of poetic diction is interwoven with the level of phonetics/syntactic composition. Such phonetic and compositional devices as alliteration, rhyme, stanzaic structure, organisation of text into lines shape the poetic text and place a semantic focus on certain parts of the poetic text. In the above table, it is possible to notice the stanzas of four lines and alliteration (*Sal sér hon standa, sólo*) in the extract from the *Poetic Edda*, alliteration and composition based on half-lines in the extract from *Beowulf* (*medoærn micel   men gewyrcean*), and the stanzas of four lines based on rhyme (*sudunzgėjo/mirgėjo*) in the extract from Lithuanian folk song. On the level of poetic diction, the motifs are rendered in distinct epithets.

3. THE METAMORPHOSIS OF MYTH INTO POETRY AND SONG

Over the course of years myth was transformed into poetry and song; as the process takes long time, the original mythic motifs and images evolved and acquired poetic forms that are distant from their mythic source. Gadamer proposes that the acknowledgement of the 'text's alterity' is the crucial stage of its interpretation: 'the important thing is to be aware of one's own bias, so that the text can present itself in all its otherness and thus assert its own truth against one's own fore-meanings' (Gadamer 2004, 271-272). This principle holds especially true in the interpretation of traditional oral narrative inasmuch as its elements constitute parts of a closed system with defined meanings which is usually distant from the interpreter in temporal and cultural terms[50]. Hermeneutics offers a tool for overcoming the distance between the interpreter and the text. As Gadamer claims, hermeneutics is the way to decipher and comprehend the creations of époques different from ours, i.e. 'everything that is no longer immediately situated in a world – that is, all tradition, whether art or the other spiritual creations of the past: law, religion, philosophy, and so forth' (Ibid. 157). While Schleiermacher proposes that it is the historical context that enables a holistic understanding of a text ('the vocabulary and the history of the era of an author relate as the whole from which his writings must be understood as the part' (Schleiermacher 1998, 24)), emphasis on historical circumstances does not satisfy Gadamer who claims that 'reconstructing the original circumstances, like all restoration, is a futile undertaking in view of the historicity of our being' (Gadamer 2004, 159). A historical reading of an archaic text attempts to reveal its authentic meaning, meanwhile the possibility to come closer to myth and mythic consciousness may be achieved by means of interpretation[51].

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[50] While Ricoeur stresses the historical and spatio-temporal distance of the modern man from the world of myth (Ricoeur 1969, 5), he nonetheless provides a general conclusion that it is hermeneutic interpretation that allows the reader to go back to the tradition and 'the very work of interpretation reveals a profound intention, that of overcoming distance and cultural differences and of matching the reader to a text which has become foreign' (Ricoeur, 1974, 4).

[51] An important issue in hermeneutic interpretation of mythical elements in poetic texts is encountered in the method of demythologisation introduced by a theologian Rudolf Bultmann. In Bultmann's view, the modern man who lives in a world governed by the scientific principles cannot experience the reality the same way the archaic man did, hence the mythical elements and the supernatural aspects of narrative must be removed in the process of hermeneutic interpretation. In the modern world, where 'the forces and the laws of nature have been discovered, we can no longer believe in spirits,

The interpretation of traditional oral narrative may be carried out by employing the hermeneutic circle which presupposes the progress from pre-existing understanding of things to the understanding of things achieved by interpretation. Heidegger suggests that such pre-existing knowledge, or 'fore-having', is the first and fundamental stage of the hermeneutic circle: 'anything understood which is held in our fore-having and towards which we set our sights 'foresightedly', becomes conceptualizable through the interpretation' (Heidegger 1962, 191). The hermeneutic circle, as far as it regards the interpretation of traditional oral poetry, begins with the perspective of the archaic man who reads and interprets the natural world as a certain 'text' composed by divine beings. Myth here serves as a means for an archaic man to organise his experience into a whole of interconnected images and events by employing objectification and narrative, therefore it 'is not in the first instance a fiction imposed on one's already given world, but is a way of apprehending that world' (Wheelwright 1968, 150). Mythic narrative thus discloses the mode of being which enables the archaic man to identify himself as part of nature and part of the cosmos – his reality is sanctified by the connection with the divine sphere. Further on, myth may be regarded as the 'pre-existing knowledge' of the archaic poet, and it may be further intimated that it is the poet who interprets the myth and encodes it in symbols in the poetic narrative.

Lastly, it is the reader who completes the hermeneutic circle by conducting an interpretation of the poetic text[52]. The poetic narrative cannot be analysed only structurally because interpretation requires that 'we must go beyond

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whether good or evil' (Bultmann 1961, 4). Therefore a narrative is capable of revealing the initial message about reality only when stripped of the mythical elements. In his discussion of Bultmann's ideas, Paul Ricoeur provides a more comprehensive description of this process as he claims that 'to demythologize is to interpret myth, that is, to relate the objective representations of the myth to the self-understanding which is both shown and concealed in it' (Ricoeur 1974, 391). In this respect, the interpretation of mythical narrative and, correspondingly, poetic narrative, acquires the focus that is directed towards its symbolic structure and levels of signification.

[52] The poetic devices must be subjected to the hermeneutic interpretation taking in mind both the context and the type of the poetic narrative. As Copeland maintains, in addition to Gadamer's principle *pars pro toto*, 'We might add that whole and detail involve the grasp not only of the text itself, but also of a spectrum of circumstances surrounding the text, from the text's initial conception to its execution, and to its reception and interpretation' (Copeland 1995, 19). The hermeneutic reading of the text thus becomes praxis, or 'the activity of practical wisdom' as described by Copeland.

structural analysis and analyse the text holistically, looking from sense to reference, from what the text says, to what it talks about' (Scott-Baumann 2009, 83). Therefore, the interpretation of a poetic text is not limited to the identification of poetic analogues of mythic motifs and archetypes; the challenge lies in placing them into a unified system of mythical thought.

3.1. Before Heaven and Earth: *Ginnunga Gap*

In this dissertation, two parts of the mythological cycle – cosmogonic and eschatological – are analysed. The cosmogonic direction encompasses the narratives which deal with the creation of the world (cosmogony itself), and the narratives which reveal the theme of hierogamy – the sacred union of heaven and earth and the resulting fertility of soil.

Cosmogony, or the story of the origin of the cosmos, is an important part of most myths; it explains the origin of the existing elements of the world and characterises the time of creation as the sacral time. Eliade describes myth as a type of sacred history – 'there is always a *primordial history* and this history has a *beginning*: a cosmogonic myth proper, or a myth that describes the first, germinal stage of the world' (Eliade 1967, 74). Cosmogonic myth thus forms the initial stage of a mythic narrative and is rendered by different means in the mimetic narrative.

The essential cosmogonic motif is that of creation of the cosmos from the primeval chaos or nothingness. The *Poetic Edda* presents one of the most detailed accounts of cosmogony in Germanic mythology. Several Eddic poems introduce cosmogonic motifs, namely, *Vǫluspá*, *Vafþrúðnismál*, and *Grímnismál*. The cosmogonic motifs revealed in the *Poetic Edda* provide differing (yet not incompatible) accounts of the creation of the world. While in *Vǫluspá* the creation of the earth by gods (*Burs synir* 'sons of Bur') is depicted (stanzas 3-6), *Vafþrúðnismál* recounts the fashioning of the earth from the body of the giant Ymir (stanza 21) and the origin of heavenly bodies and natural elements (stanzas 23, 25, 27, 37), and *Grímnismál* (stanzas 40-41) delineates an account of the creation of the earth from the body of giant Ymir.

Lönnroth devised a structural scheme to account for the key elements of mythic cosmogonic narrative:

> 1. X (a mythical sage) should be challenged to tell Y about the creation.
> 2. X should describe the cosmic order resulting from creation as centred around the basic dichotomy 'green and low earth/high heaven', expressed in the alliterative *iorð/upphiminn* formula (or a slight variant such as *eorðe/uprodor*).

3. Other natural elements such as the sea, mountains, trees, the sun and the moon should preferably be enumerated (Lönnroth 1981, 317).

Lönnroth's scheme is applicable to *Vǫluspá*: it is Odin who challenges the seeress to recount the creation of the cosmos. Her story begins with a depiction of the state of primordial chaos (Stanza 3):

3. *Ár var alda*, *þat er Ymir bygði*,	3. Early in time Ymir made his settlement, -
Vara sandr né sær né svalar unnir;	there was no sand nor sea nor cool waves;
iorð fannz æva né upphiminn,	earth was nowhere nor the sky above,
gap var ginnunga, *enn gras hvergi*.	a void of yawning chaos, grass was there nowhere.

The stanza begins with the formulaic phrase *Ár var alda* 'Early in time' which has equivalents in many Indo-European traditions[53]. The 'old age' may be compared to Eliade's concept *in illo tempore* – the sacral age where the creative acts of gods were performed (cf. Eliade 1959, 85, Ólason 2013, 29). According to Gurevich, the word *ár* 'year' which had other meanings, such as 'harvest', 'crop', 'abundance', was associated with the cyclical temporal perspective (Gurevich 1969, 48). In this respect, the formula pertains to the manifestations of creation and fertility in nature, i.e. yearly harvests.

The introductory formula refers to the time of creation which is characterised by the absence of the basic attributes of the natural world: it explicates the dichotomy between the elements of nature and the void that existed before the creation (*gap var ginnunga*, 'a void of yawning chaos'[54]), and between chaos and the cosmos. This dichotomy is expressed by juxtaposition of contrastive terms: sea and waves are contrasted with sand; the earth is contrasted with heaven, and the yawning gap is contrasted with grass. When the contrasting terms form a whole, they can be regarded as merisms, e.g. 'sea' and 'sand' form the whole which refers to the surface of the earth. The contrast between nature and a void is highlighted by the use of alliteration: the words *gap*, *ginnunga*, and *gras* all appear in the same line and have equivalent value in the sentence, in this way stressing the dichotomy. Stanza 4 of *Vǫluspá* presents the earth, thriving and green with plants: *þá var grund gróin grænom lauki* 'then the ground was grown over with the

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[53] Cf. the examples provided by Watkins: 'There was a king ...', Sanskrit *asid raja,* Old Irish *boi ri,* Lithuanian *buvo karalius,* Russian *zil-byl korol' (car')'* (Watkins 1995, 25). Lönnroth notes that *Ár var* as an introductory formula is also included in the heroic Eddic poems – *Helgakviða Hundingsbana I*, *Guðrúnarkviða I*, *Sigurðarkviða hin skamma* (Lönnroth 1981, 312). The scholar remarks that this formula is employed 'as a signal to the audience that the performance has just started and that the story concerns some mythical event far back in time' (Ibid.).

[54] See Dronke 1997, 112-114 for an elaborate scholarly discussion on the etymology of the phrase and its relation to place-names.

green leek'. Dronke emphasizes that the leek is symbolic and conveys 'the rich growth of the first earth, taller and more glorious than grass' (Dronke 1997, 116). The cosmogonic act not only overcomes chaos and void but also brings vast fertility and an abundance of life.

It is important to note that in the Old English heroic poem *Beowulf*, Beowulf's armour is praised as it saves him from perishing *under gynne grund* 'deep under ground' (line 1551) (or 'under the broad earth' in Greenfield's translation). The formula may be compared to the Old Icelandic *gap var ginnunga* 'a void of yawning chaos' (Old English *gynne* and Old Icelandic *ginnunga* bear etymological similarities[55]). It follows that the chaos described in the specified mythic and heroic narratives displays a common anthropomorphic characteristic of 'gaping'.

The dialogue between Odin and the seeress resembles the practice of riddling – an archaic way of transmitting the encoded knowledge. Murphy notes that riddling belongs to the oral tradition as 'its conventional motifs are amazingly durable in oral transmission' (Murphy 2011, 5). In the *Poetic Edda*, questions in the form of a riddle convey the wisdom about mythology to the audience. In the case of *Vafþrúðnismál*, *segðu þat/ segðu mér* 'tell that/ tell me' is the introductory formula which is followed by a question about the Norse mythology:

15. 'Segðu þat, Gagnráðr, allz þú á gólfi vill þíns um freista frama, hvé sú á heitir, er deilir með iotna sonom grund oc með goðom.'	15. 'Tell me, Gagnrad, since on the hall-floor you want to try your skill, what that river is called which divides the land between the sons of giants and the gods.'

The questions asked by Vafthrudnir have a formulaic structure which introduces the question *hvé sú á heitir* 'what is called' and only then describes the object or incorporates the latter in the formula: *hvé sá vǫllr heitir* 'what that plain is called' (stanza 17). Fleck, following de Vries, argues that the wisdom poetry rendered in the lays of *Poetic Edda*, may have constituted a part of oral tradition which was transmitted to audiences by a sage, or *þulr* (Fleck 1970, 49). This wisdom is considered by the author as the vital part of

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[55] The Proto-Germanic **gīnan* means 'to gape, yawn', similarly as in ON *gína* and OE *tō-gīnan*; it may be compared with Hitt. *kīnuzi ~ kinuu̯anzi* 'to open (up), break open' < **ǵʰh₂-i-nu-*; Lat. *hiō, -āre* 'to be wide open, gape', Lith. *žióti* (*žióju*) 'to open (one's mouth)', OCS *zijati* 'to open (one's mouth)', Ru. *ziját'* (*zijáju*) 'yawn, gape', SCr. *zìjati* 'yawn, shout' < **ǵʰh₂-i-eh₂-ie-* (*Etymological Dictionary of Proto Germanic* by Kroonen 2013, 178).

initiation of a new king as a successor in sacral kingship. The expertise in mythic knowledge in the medieval society may have been considered as the sign of wisdom, authority, and ability to enter into contact with the divine realm.

In *Beowulf,* no direct references to cosmogony in mythical terms (the origin of the earth, heavenly bodies, or people) are observed. The *ethos* of the poem constitutes a warrior society centred around the figure of the king. Respectively, cosmogony acquires a different shape: the creation of the world is reflected in the emergence of a community, where peace is assured by the king whose heroic deeds protect the society from chaotic extraneous forces. In *Beowulf*, cosmogony is primarily concerned with the creation of the social order; still, the social order is in alignment with the larger cosmic pattern, as revealed by the scale of the events that take place.

The poem opens with the story of Scyld Scefing[56], the king of the Danes. In terms of sacral time and cosmogony, the kingship of Scyld Scefing may be viewed as a certain golden age, or *illo tempore* in Eliade's terms. Helterman states that the ahistoricity of Scyld Scefing makes him the prototypical king: he is not involved in kinship feuds and his kingship thus may be viewed as ideal (Helterman 1968, 6). Further on, the poem recounts the succession of the Scylding dynasty: his son Beow is succeeded by Healfdene, one of whose four sons is king Hrothgar. Clemoes emphasizes the strong bond between the king and his dynasty in the times when the tribal settlements underwent constant shifts and were in a need of a strong ruler:

> Those strongest in mind and body would have been at a premium then just as they were in the poetry; and, given the normal expectation of 'like father like son', it would not have been long before an aristocracy was re-established in these settlement, and immediately post-settlement conditions. The significance of poetry's patronymics would have been experienced with pristine force. New dynasties were being born out of the shake-up of tribal groupings caused by migration. The most common designation for an emergent ruler, *cyning*, related him to his kin (Clemoes 1995, 10).

The enumeration of the kings of the Scylding dynasty serves as an introduction to the heroic narrative. The obscure origin of the first king of the dynasty, Scyld Scefing, refers the audience to ancient times. Gurevich asserts that the counting of generations was related to a certain 'kinship time' which allowed a person to identify himself with the society of his forefathers; 'a man was included in a certain group as a real bearer of relations which bound the present with the past' (Gurevich 1969, 50). In terms of narrative, Andersson

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[56] The name of king Scyld Scefing may be connected to the pagan rituals of Anglo-Saxons where a sheaf of rye was used as a sacral symbol pertaining to the grain-deity and fertility (Chaney 1970, 89).

claims that such references to the generations of ancestors may be treated as 'an expanded and itemized version of the invocation of antiquity traditionally used to preface the heroic lay' (Andersson 1980, 92). Although Scyld Scefing is not explicitly presented as a mythical forefather, nonetheless, the figure of the king embraces two temporal directions of the narrative: the ancient time of the begetter of a dynasty and the 'contemporary' time of king Hrothgar, when the main events of the poem take place. These two temporal directions merge by recounting the generations, thus producing indirect parallels between the first king of the dynasty and the succeeding ones.

With reference to the Lithuanian tradition, it should be noted that in Lithuanian etiological legends the description of pre-cosmogonic state of the cosmos usually includes the element of water: *nebuvo nieko, tik vanduo* 'there was nothing except for water' (Laurinkienė 1990, 44). In etiological legends which recount the creation of the world, water is often introduced as the primordial element e.g. God and devil drift on a boat in water; God orders devil to dive to the bottom of the ocean and bring some soil from which later on the earth is created (Būgienė 1999, 29-30). Laurinkienė claims that in Lithuanian folk songs the cosmogonic act is conveyed in the manifestation of an object (an island, a stone, an armchair, a boat) in a body of water or other vast space which symbolises the pre-cosmogonic chaos[57] (Laurinkienė 1990, 52).

3.2. *From the Flesh of Ymir*: Body Imagery in Creation

In the world of Eddic mythology, the cosmos is created from the flesh of the giant Ymir. Clunies Ross notes that even though *Vǫluspá* does not recount the story of Ymir's dismemberment to create the cosmos, the stanza which introduces Ymir in relation to the cosmos is immediately followed by the stanza which introduces the sons of Burr as the creators of the earth[58] (Clunies

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[57] Vėlius associates the traditional images of an estate, boat, bridge, an armchair etc. encountered in Christmas songs as variations of the cosmogonic image of the world tree which unites the tree parts of the universe: the Underworld, the earth, and heaven. (cf. Vėlius 1983, 165-167).

[58] 'Sons of Burr' in stanza 4 of *Vǫluspá* refer to Odin and his brothers, Vili and Ve (Larrington 2014, 283). As attested in Snorri's *Edda*, Burr was the son of Buri, who was licked from an ice-block by the cow Authumla; the same cow provided nourishment to the giant Ymir in the primeval times (*Prose Edda*, translated by Brodeur, 1929 18-19). In Snorri's account, the sons of Burr 'took Ymir and bore him into the middle of the Yawning Void, and made of him the earth <…>' (Ibid. 19-20). Moreover, according to Snorri's version, Buri's wife and the mother of Odin, Vili, and Ve was a giantess Bestla. As Clunies Ross states, the giantess Bestla probably was perceived as related to the other giant, Ymir; 'thus, in killing Ymir, Bestla's sons

Ross 1994, 154). The scholar surmises that 'there still seems to be some connection between the unformed nature of the world while Ymir lived and the subsequent creation of *miðgarðr*, judging by the sequence in which these events are mentioned' (Ibid.). The elements of narrative describing the giant Ymir and the primeval chaos may be interpreted as complimentary motifs which allow perceiving the pre-cosmic state of the Germanic mythic universe in greater detail.

The affinity between the cosmos and the human body is one of the main perceptions in mythical consciousness, as noted by Cassirer (also, cf. Gurevich 1969, 42):

> Myth travels the same road: wherever it finds an organically articulated whole which it strives to understand by its methods of thought, it tends to see this whole in the image and organization of the human body. The objective world becomes intelligible to the mythical consciousness and divides into determinate spheres of existence only when it is thus analogically 'copied' in terms of the human body. Often it is the form of this copying which is actually thought to contain the answer to the mythical question of origins and which hence dominates all mythical cosmography and cosmology. Because the world is formed from the parts of a human or superhuman being, it retains the character of a mythical organic unity, however much it may seem to disperse into particulars (Cassirer 1955, 90).

The Eddic poem *Vafþrúðnismál* likewise provides clues about the creation of the world from the flesh of Ymir. In a contest of wisdom with god Odin, the giant Vafthrudnir recites cosmogonic events. The affinity of the cosmos and human body may be observed in the following stanza from *Vafþrúðnismál*:

Vafðrúðnir qvað:	Vafthrudnir said:
21. *'Ór Ymis holdi var iorð um scǫpuð,*	21. 'From Ymir's flesh the earth was shaped,
enn ór beinom biorg,	and the mountains from his bones;
himinn ór hausi ins hrímkalda iotuns,	the sky from the skull of the frost-cold giant,
enn ór sveita siór.'	and the sea from his blood.'

Clunies Ross notes that giants as the primordial forms of life 'were thought to have been created from primeval, heated and poisonous matter which took anthropomorphic form. There is thus a negative value attached to the first animate being, signalled through the class "giant" and the epithet "poisonous"' (Clunies Ross 1994, 156). Nonetheless, according to the author, the dismemberment of the primeval giant gains positive value as it manifests

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murder a senior male kinsman on the mother's side, a common theme in Indo-European mythology' (Clunies Ross 1994, 158, cf. Oosten 2015, 37). In this way, the patrilinear triad of gods is established.

the creation of the cosmos – 'this act of destruction appears as a creative, ordering event through which the natural world comes into being' (Ibid. 157). If Ymir is viewed as an embodiment of the primeval chaos, it is natural that chaos has to be 'destroyed' in order to create a structured cosmos. It is more appropriate to view the dismemberment of the giant Ymir as a sacrifice due to the fact that his remains are vital in the creation of the world.

3.3. Between Heaven and Earth: *the Heaven Above* and *the Earth Below*

One of the essential cosmogonic motifs is the opposition between sky and earth that reflects the basic scheme of the organisation of the world: the earth is below, and the sky is above (cf. West 2007, 340-342). In *Vǫluspá*, the phrase *iorð fannz æva né upphiminn* 'earth was nowhere nor the sky above' (stanza 3) is formulaic and establishes the existence and interrelation of two main oppositions of the world: heaven and earth (cf. Meletinsky 1968, 90-91). The use of this formula bears a sacral significance as it 'does not seem to occur in arbitrary contexts, but, on the contrary, is restricted to statements of a religious-mythological character, primarily concerning the creation or the destruction of the world' (Larsson 2005, 414). The formulaic introduction of heaven and earth points to the cosmogonic narrative. Lönnroth claims that this formula might have been one of the basic referential units for medieval oral poets when they constructed a cosmogonic narrative (Lönnroth 1981, 314). The scholar further argues that the formula *iorð/upphiminn* is essential in establishing the natural order, yet it can be employed to refer to both creation and destruction: chaos may precede the natural order in the form of *ginnunga gap*, and chaos may succeed the natural order in the form of *Ragnarǫk* (Ibid. 323). Accordingly, the formula may be connected with different types of protagonists: 'a "wise sage figure" is associated with the "creation version" of the *iorð/upphiminn* formula, while a more heroic figure (like Thor or Sigurd) is associated with the "destruction version" of that same formula.' (Ibid.) The formula thus may signify the natural order established during the creation (cosmogonic narrative) and the threatened natural order after the cosmogonic act (the eschatological narrative).

With reference to Lönnroth (cf. p. 53), after the creation of the earth the cosmogonic narrative introduces the elements of the natural world. In *Vǫluspá*, before the act of creation takes place, the sun, the personified moon and the stars are seen as constitutive parts of the primeval chaos:

5. *Sól varp sunnan*, *sinni mána*,	5. From the south, Sun, companion of the moon,
bendi inni hœgri um himinioður;	

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sól þat né vissi, hvar hon sali átti,	threw her right hand round the sky's edge;
Stiornor þat né visso, hvar þær staði átto,	Sun did not know where she had her hall, the stars did not know where they had their stations,
máni þat né vissi, hvat hann megins átti.	the moon did not know what might he had.

Further on, the gods are introduced as the rulers of the natural world[59]; gods turn the pre-cosmic disarray into a harmonised cosmos by arranging the heavenly bodies and their functions. The disarray is stressed by the repetition of the phrase *þat né vissi* 'did not know' – the heavenly bodies are seen as disorganised anthropomorphic entities. Acker states that the role of gods in this case is to sanctify the cosmic cycles:

> The legislation enacted by the gods appears to consist mainly in the regulation of planetary motions, so that the periods of the day (morning, evening, etc.) can from this point on be reckoned and named. Clearly it is the interests of human society, not of the stars and planets, which are the center of attention. It would be useless to attempt to interpret the sibyl's words as some kind of lecture in popular astronomy. It is more useful to interpret her words as an attempt in mythic form to legitimize the divisions of the working day that existed on Icelandic farms during the greater part of the Middle Ages (Acker 2002, 32).

It is important to mention the anthropomorphic image of the sun, as it manifests the parallel between a heavenly body and a human body. When the sun 'casts her hand' over heaven, it should be understood as a metaphor for the sun's shining. The phrase *sinni mána* 'companion of the moon' is a kenning which refers to the sun and might have been easily deciphered by the medieval listener.

Meanwhile in *Beowulf*, the opposition of heaven and earth represents the structure of the world where heroic deeds are performed. The alliterative phrase *wēox under wolcnum* 'grew under the heavens' (line 8)[60] describes the heroic youth of king Scyld Scefing. The formula *under wolcnum* is repeated in *Beowulf* several times in different contexts, as noted by Andy Orchard (2003, 88): with reference to Grendel, who approaches Heorot – *wōd under wolcnum* 'strode under heaven' (line 714), with reference to king Hrothgar –

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[59] As Ciklamini notes, the creation of the world from Ymir's flesh effectively terminates the rule of the giants and marks the beginning of the rule of gods: 'Ymir's murder initiates the new era, Oðinn's reign. Ymir's body not only provides the substance of the new universe, but also causes the annihilation of his race' (Ciklamini 1963, 142).

[60] See Foley (1990, 220-221) for remarks on this formula, its phraseological significance and its metrical position; S.M. Griffith (2005, 152-153) for a comparison of the formula and its semantic context in *Beowulf* and the *Metres of Boethius*.

wēold under wolcnum 'ruled under heaven' (line 1770); it also describes the water of the mere of Grendel's mother, which was stained with blood – *wæter under wolcnum* 'water under heaven' (line 1631). Even though the formula is employed in different scenes, one can notice that it is usually used either in relation to the heroic deeds of the king, or to the destructive forces that threaten society. Anita Riedinger notes that in Old English poetry (and *Beowulf*, specifically) this formula undergoes changes: while the concept of heaven remains stable, it is conveyed by different poetic devices, 'either by a synonym, such as *roderum* or *swegle*, or by synecdoche, such as *tunglum* or *wolcnum*' (Riedinger 1985, 298)[61]. It is important to note that the formula which means 'under heaven' is often paired with the formula 'on earth' (both may be conveyed by different synonyms), but the combination of these two phrases is usually stable and refers to the world as a whole. Consider the following examples:

Ðǣr wæs Bēowulfes	Beowulf's feat
mǣrðo mǣned; monig oft gecwæð,	was much spoken of, and many said,
þætte sūð nē norð be sǣm twēonum	that between the seas, south or north,
ofer eormengrund[62] ōþer nǣnig	*over earth's stretch* no other man
under swegles begong sēlra nǣre	*beneath the sky's shifting* excelled
rondhæbbendra, rīces wyrðra.	Beowulf,
(lines 856-861)	of all who wielded the sword he was
	worthiest to rule.
hrægl ond hringas, healsbēaga mǣst	With robes and rings also, and the richest collar
þāra þe ic on foldan gefrægen hæbbe.	I have ever heard of *in all the world.*
Nǣnigne ic under swegle sēlran hȳrde	never *under heaven* have I heard of a finer
hordmāðmum hæleþa, syþðan Hāma ætwæg	prize among heroes – since Hama carried off
tō þǣre byrhtan byrig Brōsinga mene	the Brising necklace to his bright city.
(lines 1195-1199).	

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[61] The primary meaning of the word *wolcn* is 'cloud' (the meaning 'heaven' is semantically implied), and this is the reason why the author refers to the formula as synecdoche. Riedinger also provides a valuable remark on the intentionality and significance of formulas – some formulas are repeated due to the restrictions of metre, prosody, and alliteration, whereas others are repeated due to their thematic importance (Riedinger 1985, 304). Lord adds that such 'thematic' formulas 'receive their significance from their traditional contexts; and are used by the poet in order to evoke the essence of those contexts' (Lord 1995, 129-130).

[62] The formulas are distinguished by typographical emphasis (no italics in the quotation from the original text, and italicised text in the English translation).

The poetic expressions presented above (*ofer eormengrund* 'over earth's stretch', *on foldan* 'in all the world', *under swegles begong* 'beneath the sky's shifting', *under swegle* 'under heaven') may be considered formulaic as defined by Riedinger (components of the formula are replaced by poetic equivalents). The formulas echo epic structure of the world, as in the Eddic poetry – heaven is above the earth, therefore, in all the phrases the described object is 'under heaven' and 'on/over earth'.

In the Anglo-Saxon riddles, the opposition of heaven and earth is related to agricultural fertility and is conveyed in the image of the earth as the source of life. Consider the beginning of *Riddle 73*:

Ic on wonge aweox, wunode þær mec feddon	I grew on a field, dwelled there; I was fed by the ground and clouds of heaven,
hruse ond heofonwolcn, oþþæt me onhwyrfdon,	until the hostiles ripped me, wise in years, out of my living place[63]
gearum frodne, þa me grome wurdon,	
of þære gecynde þe ic ær cwic beheold	

(lines 1-4).

The earth is introduced as *wong* 'a field, a grassy plain' in the phrase *on wonge* 'on a field' which reveals the characteristics of vastness and fertility of the earth; the phrase may be connected with the above discussed formula 'on earth'. The fertility resulting from the interaction of heaven and earth is rendered in the phrase *feddon hruse ond heofonwolcn* 'fed by the ground and clouds of heaven' which implies the archetypal roles of Father Sky and Mother Earth, who beget and feed all that is alive[64].

In Lithuanian folk songs, the motif of heaven and earth often exposes their typical Indo-European qualities. Ūsaitytė provides a following example which emphasizes the highness of heaven and the vastness of earth:

Aukštas dangus,
Plati žemė,
Ant žemės gėrybės (Ūsaitytė 2003, 114).
(High heaven, broad earth, prosperity on earth).

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[63] Translation mine: Giedrė Buivytė.

[64] West provides examples of the divine pair of sky and earth from the Vedic poetry (*Dyáuś ca naḥ pitā́ Pṛthivī́ ca mātā́* 'Heaven is our father and Earth our mother') and the ancient Greek poetry ('In Greek epic formula Zeus is "the father of gods and men"; Earth, as we have seen, is celebrated as "the mother of the gods" or mother of all') (West 2007, 181). Meanwhile Toporov traces the names of the archetypal pair in the Baltic and Slavonic traditions: IE Father Sky is reflected in Balto-Slavic *Zem-pat-*, which in the mythic vocabulary becomes *земляной, земляник* (Russian), **Zemepatis* (Lithuanian), **Zemes tēvs* (Latvian). Correspondingly, IE Mother Earth is reflected in Balto-Slavic **Zem-māte*, which in the mythic vocabulary becomes *Мать сыра земля* (Russian), *Žemė-motina* (Lithuanian), *Zemes māte* (Latvian) (Toporov 2000, 253).

In songs, the earth is quite often represented by a separate image (not associated with the image of heaven). A common motif is that of the 'shaking earth' as in the following military-historical song:

19. Saulelė ties mumis
Nežibėjo,
Žemelė po mumis
Sudrebėjo (Juška 1954, 1173).

('The sun was not shining over us; the earth was shaking under our feet').

In this extract, the earth may be seen in opposition to the sun: the sun is 'above', whereas the earth is 'below'. As the sun is associated with the sky and heavenly bodies, the imagery still pertains to the fixed order of the cosmos: heavenly bodies are above the earth. The song recounts the experiences of Lithuanian soldiers in the Prussian army and narrates the events in the field of battle. As the extract is taken form a late military-historical song, the motif of shaking earth most probably lacks deeper symbolism and conveys a realistic account of the events of a battle (shaking earth thus is a result of firing cannons, weapons, etc.) (cf. Ūsaitytė 2003, 116). Nonetheless, the motif of the shaking earth is one of the common motifs depicting earth in the Lithuanian folk songs. According to Ūsaitytė, the formula *žemė dreba* 'the earth shakes' is employed in two differing contexts: it may depict loss, tragedy, and tumultuous events, and it may also represent strength and vitality of the acting personae (Ibid. 115-119). The image of the earth evokes such characteristics as permanence and stability; therefore, the motif of shaking earth reveals a climactic moment depicted in the poetic narrative.

A curious example of formulaic representation of heaven and earth may be found in a Lithuanian charm against the bite of a snake: *Žemės žemybė, dangaus aukštybė ir kirmėlių piktybė. Padėk, Dieve, ir visi šventi!* 'The lowness of earth, the highness of sky and the anger of worms. Help, God, and all the Saints!' (Vaitkevičienė 2008, 215). The alliteration (*Žemės žemybė*) emphasises the position of the earth in the structure of the world and also marks the introduction of the charm. Here the earth and the sky are defined by their corresponding positions 'low' and 'high'; the phrase is intended to refer to the established harmony of the world and also to evoke the spiritual help (i.e. Christian saints). The snake is introduced as *kirmėlė* 'a worm' (cf. Anglo-Saxon *wyrm*, which means both 'serpent' and 'worm'). The image of the snake is reduced to that of a worm which implies humiliation of the evil force in order to reduce its power. The image of the snake/worm is characterised by its malevolent nature – the word *piktybė* 'anger' implies its bad intentions. The image of the earth riddled by angry worms/snakes in this charm may be compared with the image of the World Snake which encircles the Middle-

Earth in Germanic mythology: the harmony of the world is threatened by chaos manifest in the form of a snake. Inasmuch as the healer calls for the help of God and saints, a Christian reading is significant as well – the snake may be viewed as a transformation of the snake of Eden. Therefore, the charm may be also perceived as a prayer.

3.3.1. The Sacred Marriage: *Shaking the Earth*

Hierogamy, or the sacred marriage between heaven and earth, is one of the central themes in the mythic narrative; it is reflected in the customs of a society as well. Hierogamy is interrelated with cosmogony: the creation of the world is seen as a premise for further acts of divine/human procreation and fertility. Thus, the wedding narrative usually employs numerous references to cosmogonic motifs and in this way connects the cosmic/divine, heroic, and profane perspectives of creation. The union of heaven and earth, and of a god and a goddess may be viewed as a sacral prototypical event which is later imitated by profane people in order to sanctify their marriage. Eliade stresses that the fecundity of earth was closely associated with human fertility in the archaic worldview:

> Woman, then, is mystically held to be one with the earth, childbearing is seen as a variant, on the human scale, of the telluric fertility. All religious experiences connected with fecundity and birth *have a cosmic structure*. The sacrality of woman depends in the holiness of the earth. Feminine fecundity has a cosmic model – that of Terra Mater, the universal Genetrix (Eliade 1959, 144).

In the mythic narrative of the *Poetic Edda*, the archetypal pair of heaven and earth may be seen in the figures of the god Freyr and the giantess Gerd; the wooing of Gerd constitutes the prototypical course of events that result in the implied consummation of their marriage. The folk narrative of Lithuanian wedding songs introduces the customs of courtship and the idealistic images of profane bride and groom.

The Old Icelandic poem *Skírnismál* ('The Lay of Skirnir') may be interpreted in relation to the mythic marriage of the Sky God and the Mother Earth. The wooing of Gerd includes a thunder-like sound, which leads to an assumption that in 'The Lay of Skirnir' a transformation of the god of thunder is attested:

14. Hvat er þat hlym hlymia, er ec hlymia heyri nú til ossom rǫnnom í? iorð bifaz, en allir fyrir sciálfa garðar Gymis.	'14. What is that noise of noises which I hear now making a noise in our dwellings? The earth trembles and all Gymir's courts shudder before it.'

The phrase *iorð bifaz* 'the earth trembles' pertains to the motif of the shaking earth. In Lithuanian folk beliefs, the first thunder of spring is thought to shake the earth and to wake it up symbolically – this action brings the growth of grass and crops (Balys 2000, 21). Shaking earth is sometimes compared to a trembling young girl:

Pasiklausyki,
Mano mergele,
Kaip čia žemužė dreba,-
Taip tu drebėsi,
Mano mergele,
Kai mano valioj būsi! (Juška 1954, 603).

'Listen, my maiden, how the earth shakes – you shall shake alike, my maiden, when you shall be at my will'.

Stundžienė interprets the motif of force or threat employed by the groom (and rendered in the motif of shaking) as a reflection of initiation ritual where the bride symbolically yields to the will of the groom (Stundžienė 2004, 23-24). The motif of the shaking bride/shaking earth connotes yielding: the earth yields to cultivation and fertility, and the bride yields to the groom (and the subsequent marriage).

3.3.1.1. The Glowing Bride

Following the creation of the world as described in *Vǫluspá*, the archetypal union between heaven and earth results in the fecundity of soil – *þá var grund gróin grænom lauki* 'then the ground was grown over with the green leek' (stanza 4) (Dronke 1997, 396). In the narrative of divine marriage, the archetypal pair of heaven and earth is substituted with the god Freyr and the giantess Gerd (*Skírnismál*).

The course of proposal depicted in *Skírnismál* consists of three main stages: offering of gifts, threats, and invocation of magic runes. Bornholdt notes that the pattern of wooing which consists of the specified basic stages is a common feature of the bridal quest in the Germanic tradition (Bornholdt 2005, 200). The central theme of *Skírnismál*, that of wooing a recalcitrant bride, have been interpreted by numerous scholars as a variation of the theme of hierogamy, where the fertility god Freyr is viewed as a transformation of the archetypal sky, and the giantess Gerd – as a transformation of the archetypal earth. Their marriage, in turn, may be viewed as a union intended to bring fertility. Another important vein of research views their marriage as a confirmation of the social order prevailing in the domain of gods. Vestergaard notes the intricate relationship between gods and giants: giantesses are allowed to marry the gods of Vanir (the cases of Freyr and Gerd,

Njord and Skadi), yet the goddesses of Vanir themselves marry only the gods of Aesir, not the giants (Vestergaard 1991, 29-30). Marriage of the goddesses to the giants would be 'a threat to a world order that rests on the superiority of gods over giants' (Ibid., cf. Clunies Ross 1994, 95-97).

In the analysis of the divine marriage, it is appropriate to discuss the images of Gerd and Freyr, the respective bride and groom. In *Skírnismál*, Gerd is seen through the eyes of Freyr:

Freyr qvað:	Freyr said:
6.'*Í Gymis gǫrðom ec sá ganga*	6. 'In Gymir's courts I saw walking
mér tíða mey;	a girl pleasing to me.
armar lýsto, *enn af þaðan*	her arms shine and from them
alt lopt oc lǫgr.'	all the sea and air catch light.'

Dronke claims that the image of the sea employed to describe the brightness of Gerd allows identifying her with the earth which was brought from the ocean in the Norse cosmogonic myth; the scholar sees it as a reason why she 'still resides in the sea when the sky god woos her' (Dronke 1997, 396). In terms of poetic grammar, the exceptional qualities of Gerd are emphasised by alliterative phrase *allt loft ok lögr* 'all the sea and air' which strengthens the impression of her brightness. West notes that the image of a beautiful maiden/goddess with shining arms is also represented in the ancient Greek poetry, where Hera, Helen of Troy, Andromache and others are described as 'white-armed' (West 2007, 84).

The image of Gerd can be paralleled to the image of Thor's daughter *Þrúðr* as the bride in *Alvíssmál*. In the poem, the dwarf *Alvíss* (All-wise) intends to marry Thor's daughter and describes her as 'glowing' (the epithet *fagrglóa* 'beautiful glowing lady' (stanza 5)). Another epithet characterises the maiden as *miallhvíta* 'snow-white':

7. '*Sáttir þínar er ec vil snemma hafa*	7. 'Your consent I'd quickly like to gain
oc þat giaforð geta;	
eiga vilia, *heldr enn án vera*,	and to get a bridal agreement;
þat iþ miallhvíta man.'	I had rather have her than go without the snow-white girl.'

The groom (either Freyr or All-wise) views the bride as 'bright' and 'glowing' which indicates a keen attitude of the groom and emphasises the high status of the bride.

Lithuanian wedding songs contain reflections of the archetypal union between heaven and earth. When the rituals associated with marriage are performed, the profane life intersects with the divine realm: 'life is lived on a twofold plane; it takes its course as human existence and, at the same time, shares in a transhuman life, that of the cosmos or the gods' (Eliade 1961, 167).

In Lithuanian folk songs, profane humans are frequently paralleled to anthropomorphic heavenly bodies and the profane marriage is symbolically incorporated in the larger cosmic setting. Among the images depicting a bride, common is the parallel between the morning star (*Aušrinė*) and the bride, e.g. in the song of the Feast of St. John, *Užteka saulužė* ('The Sun is Rising'):

1. Užteka saulužė, daulėliu lėliu,
Aplinkui danguži, daulėliu lėliu.
2. – Apeiki, sauluže, daulėliu lėliu,
Aplinkui oruži, daulėliu.
3. Paskaityk, sauluže, daulėliu lėliu,
Ar visos žvaigždutės, daulėliu.
4. Jau skaitau neskaitau, daulėliu lėliu,
Jau vienos ir nėra, daulėliu.
5.Šviesiausios žvaigždužės, daulėliu lėliu,
Kur anksti užtekėjo, daulėliu,
6. Kur anksti užtekėjo, daulėliu lėliu,
Ir vėlai nusileido, daulėliu.

7. Užteka saulužė, daulėliu lėliu,
Aplinkui danguži, daulėliu lėliu.
8. Apeiki, motuše, daulėliu lėliu,
Aplinkui dvaruži, daulėliu.
9. Paskaityk, motuše, daulėliu lėliu,
Ar visos dukružės, daulėliu.
10. Jau skaitau neskaitau, daulėliu lėliu,
Jau vienos ir nėra, daulėliu.
11. Vyriausios dukružės, daulėliu lėliu,
Kur anksti atsikėlė, daulėliu,
12. Kur anksti atsikėlė, daulėliu lėliu,
Ir vėlai atsigulė, daulėliu.
(Juška 1955, 637)[65]

('The sun is rising across the sky. The sun counts the stars; one star is missing – the brightest star which rose early in the morning and set late into the night. Mother is walking across the estate. Mother counts her daughters; one daughter is missing – the eldest daughter who woke up early in the morning and went to sleep late into the night.')

A parallel is drawn between the brightest star which was the first to rise and the eldest daughter, who was the first to wake up (the song was sung when a daughter left her family house to be married). The sky with heavenly bodies is paralleled to the estate inhabited by human beings. In Lithuanian mythology *Aušrinė* is the anthropomorphic morning star (from Lithuanian *Aušra* 'Dawn'); she is usually defined as an exceptionally beautiful sky goddess, the lover of the moon[66]. According to Razauskas, *Aušrinė* is the mythical prototype of a bride (Razauskas 2011, 21). Moreover, Vėlius provides a remark on the Lithuanian word *tekėti* which both means 'to rise' (used to denote the rising of the Sun or other heavenly bodies) and 'to get married' (used for women only) (Vėlius 2014, 123). The bride is usually described by various stable epithets, all of which refer to brightness or colour white (the girl

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[65] Here and further in the text, the songs quoted from *Lietuviškos svotbinės dainos* 'Lithuanian wedding songs' by Juška (1955) are referenced by indicating the song number, not the page number.
[66] In the Baltic languages, the Moon is of masculine gender. It is noteworthy that in Baltic mythology, the Moon is usually introduced as the husband of the Sun.

is said to be *balta kaip gulbelė* 'white as a swan' (Juška 1955, 63) also *balta graži lelijėlė* 'a white beautiful lily' (*Lietuvių liaudies dainynas* 1995, 291). The colour white implies a variety of positive connotations – respectful attitude, affectionate feelings among family members, and festivity (a white linen cloth was given as a gift to the participants of a wedding) (Sauka 1970, 187).

The antithesis of the image of a glowing bride may be observed in Lithuanian orphan's songs. The song *Vai žydėk žydėk* 'Oh blossom, blossom' describes a poor orphan girl as an unlikely bride who is paralleled to a barren apple tree:

1. Oi, žydėk, žydėk,
Sausa obelėle,
Oi, žydėk, žydėk,
Sausa be lapelių (*Lietuvių liaudies dainynas* 1989, 164).

('Oh blossom, blossom, barren apple tree, oh blossom, blossom, barren apple tree with no leaves').

This song bears sorrowful undertones: the low social status and solitude of the poor bride are highlighted in the second part of the song:

5. Oi, tekėk, tekėk,
Jauna mergužėle,
Oi, tekėk, tekėk,
Jauna be tėvelių (Ibid.)

('Oh, get married, get married, young girl, oh get married, get married, young girl with no parents').

The elements of poetic grammar contributing to the effect and meaning of the song are repetition ('oh blossom, blossom') which stresses the contrast between the circumstances (inability of a barren tree to blossom) and the ideal (a blossoming tree), personification (the apple tree is addressed as a living and understanding entity), and epithets ('barren apple tree', 'apple tree with no leaves') which stress the unfavourable state of the tree, and, in parallel, of the poor bride.

In Lithuanian folk songs (especially wedding songs and Christmas songs related with the wedding theme) the bride is asked riddle-like questions which test her wisdom (e.g. in the song *Pasakyk, mergele* 'Tell me, girl' the young girl is asked to tell *kas bėga be kojelių* 'what runs without legs' (water), *kas auga be šaknelių* 'what grows without roots' (a stone)[67] (Vėlius 2014, 107).

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[67] In the riddles, characteristics of human beings are frequently transposed onto the elements of nature – a practice which implies an anthropomorphic worldview (Stundžienė 1999, 99).

The riddling is sometimes mentioned directly, as seen from the word *atmink* 'solve [a riddle]':

2. – Ei, atmink, atmink,
Jauna mergužėle,
Kas margas nerašytas? (Juška 1954, 30)

'Solve [a riddle], young girl, what is coloured without painting?'

The young girl solves the riddles by uttering the phrase *ne mergužė būčiau, kad aš nežinočiau* 'I would not be a young girl if I did not know' (Ibid.). The riddles encountered in the song deal with the names of birds, elements of nature, and the parallels of trees and family members. The demonstration of wisdom may have been required as a certain 'qualification' of a bride in order to confirm her readiness for marriage. Some songs contain only fragments of riddles:

Akmuo be kraujo,
Vanduo be sparnų,
Papartis be žiedelių (*Lietuvių liaudies dainynas* 1995, 387).

(A stone without blood, water without wings, a fern without blossoms).

The fragments of riddles serve as references to the wedding narrative: the song further recounts a young man's return home early in the morning – when his father scolds him, the young man replies that he is going to bring home a bride.

3.3.1.2. The Groom on the Horse

In the mythic narrative of the *Poetic Edda*, the groom, Freyr, is 'the shining god of fruitfulness and peace' (Dronke 1996, 250). Curiously enough, although Freyr is the groom in *Skírnismál*, he borrows his most valuable possessions to his servant Skirnir who shall need them to succeed in the matchmaking. These possessions – Freyr's sword and his steed – exhibit supernatural qualities:

Freyr qvað:	Freyr said:
9.'*Mar ec þér þann gef, er þic um myrqvan berr,*	9. 'I'll give you that horse which will carry you through the knowing,
vísan vafrloga,	dark, flickering flame,
oc þat sverð, er siálft mun vegaz,	and that sword which will fight by itself
ef sá er horscr, er hefir.'	if he who wields it is wise.'

According to West, in the Indo-European tradition the horse had a distinguished place: 'the horses are represented as intelligent, indeed wise, as well as brave and loyal, and often gifted with mantic knowledge' (West, 2007, 467). The magical horse of Freyr may be compared to Sleipnir – the steed of

Odin known for his capability to travel through the air and to the underworld (Ellis Davidson 1990, 142)). The ability of the Freyr's horse to overcome supernatural barriers proves useful as Gerd lives in the hostile land of giants, on a high mountain, and her house is surrounded by a fence and guarded by fierce dogs[68]. Further on, when Gerd is compared to Persephone from the Greek mythology, the similarities between their abodes may be observed. The house of Gerd's father stands in the hostile land of giants which poses the risk of death to the strangers, meanwhile the kingdom of Hades, or the Underworld, is the abode of the dead. Both dwelling places are guarded by dogs – the house of Gerd's father is guarded by savage dogs, and Hade's kingdom is guarded by a three-headed dog Cerberus.

Another important attribute of Freyr is his sword, described as fighting for itself (stanza 9) at the beginning of the poem; later on, when Skirnir threatens Gerd with the sword, he describes it as *mjóvan, málfáan* 'slender, inlaid' (stanza 25). The image of Freyr accompanied by his steed and his sword is characteristic of the Germanic tradition, where the warrior's prowess occupies the highest place in the system of values.

In *Alvíssmál*, a reversed image of the divine groom is encountered. Gods' superiority over dwarfs is seen in Thor's refusal to grant his approval for the marriage of his daughter and the dwarf All-wise. Marriage in the world of gods is a means to strengthen the extant social order[69]; therefore, the deviations from this order are discouraged. This is the reason behind Thor's ridicule of All-wise that betrays his attitude toward the socially unacceptable marriage:

2.'*Hvat er þat fira, hví ertu svá fǫlr um nasar,*	2. 'What sort of creature is that, why so pale about the nostrils,
vartu í nótt með ná?	did you spend the night with a corpse?
þursa líki þicci mér á þér vera,	The image of an ogre you seem to me,
ertattu til brúðar borinn.'	you were not born for a bride.'

The humiliating description of All-wise by Thor presents a distorted image of a groom: the desirable qualities of health and strength are replaced by weakness (paleness) and a grotesque physical appearance. All-wise's implied associations with death are contrasted with the fertility implied in marriage.

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[68] Motz notes that the motif of the barriers and guards surrounding the bride's abode is common in Germanic myth and folklore: 'a living fire, a wooden fence, and a guardian and his dog protect the privacy of the Lady Menglǫð, and a wall of flame guards Brynhildr's sleep' (Motz 1981, 126).

[69] Thor's daughter *Þrúðr* (Old Norse 'strength') 'is a source of strength to her father and to his society as long as he is able to control her disposal in marriage' (Clunies Ross 1994, 112).

In the discussion of the traditional image of the groom, the role of Skirnir, the matchmaker, has to be mentioned. Dronke views Skirnir as a personification of sun's ray: 'It is he, not the sun himself, who penetrates deep down to provoke the self-satisfied earth to wedlock. He is the awakening shaft of light and warmth that puts an end to the infertile winter' (Dronke 1997, 399-400). It is Skirnir's persistence that breaks down Gerd's unwillingness to marry Freyr.

In the Lithuanian tradition, the groom is usually introduced by employing the diminutive *bernelis, bernužėlis* 'a young man'. An important attribute of the young man in the Lithuanian tradition is his horse – an essential possession required to conquer the distance between him and his beloved:

-Žirgužėli, juodbėrėli mano,
Vai, ar eisi su manim drauge,
Ar padėsi kelelį keliauti? (*Lietuvių liaudies dainynas* 1989, 94).

('My horse, my dark horse, will you come with me, will you help me in my journey?')

As Vėlius states, the feeding and saddling of the horse and riding to see the young girl are among the main 'tasks' performed by the young man, as reflected in different types of wedding songs (Vėlius 2014, 138). The horse is a companion in the young man's quest; it is sometimes depicted as an anthropomorphic creature having supernatural powers. In the following extract, the horse is capable of confirming the suitability of the groom for marriage:

Žirgelis atsakė,
Bėrasai atsakė:
-Skaistus žento būdelis,
Puikus žento rūbelis
Ir gražus razumėlis (*Lietuvių liaudies dainynas* 1989, 108).

('The horse answered that the groom was of gentle nature, his clothing was handsome, and his mind was bright').

Sruoga notes that the horse symbolises the readiness of the young man for the marriage (in the same way, as the rue wreath of the young girl symbolises her readiness for the marriage) (Sruoga 2003, 224). In Lithuanian tradition, as well as in Germanic, a horse (of exceptional physical and/or magical qualities) is the necessary attribute of a groom.

3.3.1.3. *Gift Giving* as Proposal

In the *Poetic Edda*, Skirnir commences the wooing of Gerd by offering her gifts of exceptional nature which are rich in symbolism. At first, Skirnir offers the maiden eleven golden apples:

19. '*Epli ellifo hér hefi ec, algullin,*
þau mun ec þér, Gerðr, gefa,
frið at kaupa, at þú þér Frey qveðir
óleiðastan lifa.'

19. 'Eleven apples here I have all of gold,
Those I will give you, Gerd,
To buy your favour, that you may say that to you
Freyr's the least loathsome man alive'

According to the *Prose Edda* by Snorri Sturluson, the golden apples were guarded by the goddess Idunn; they were the source of eternal youth and immortality of the gods (*The Beguiling of Gylfi*, translation by Brodeur 1916, 39). In comparison, in Greek mythology, golden apples were presented to the goddess Hera as a gift from the goddess Gaia (the personified Earth) on the occasion of the wedding of Hera and Zeus. In the Lithuanian tradition, apples are also a common gift offered to the bride:

7. Ar priims davanelas-
Raudanus karalalius,
8. Raudonus karalalius,
Saldziuosius abuolalius (*Lietuvių liaudies dainynas* 1994, 149).
'Will [she] take the gifts- the red beads, the red beads, the sweet apples'.

Recurrent epithets describing apples usually denote their red colour (e.g. *obuolėlis raudonais krašteliais* 'a red apple' (*Lietuvių liaudies dainynas* 1989, 134-136)) and sweet taste, as seen in the above extract. Basanavičius notes that the rolling and throwing of apples is employed as a metaphor for courtship in the folk songs (Basanavičius 2003, 270-273).

Another gift, offered to Gerd by Skirnir, is the ring Draupnir:

21. '*Baug ec þér þá gef, þann er brendr var*
með ungom Óðins syni;
átta ero iafnhǫfgir, er af driúpa
ina níundo hveria nótt.'

21. 'I shall give you a ring, the one which was burnt
with Odin's young son;
eight are the equally heavy ones, that drop from it
every ninth night.'

Draupnir was a magical ring of Odin, which had the ability to multiply itself. This ring is of great importance in relation to the cycle of death and rebirth: it was placed on Baldr's funeral pyre by Odin and retrieved from Hel by Hermod, as attested in the *Prose Edda* (translation by Brodeur 1916, 72-74). Lindow states that 'the passage of Draupnir through funeral fire and the world of the dead must truly have enhanced its value' (Lindow 2002, 98). The self-reproducing golden ring embodies not only renewal and endurance, but also the possibility of rebirth, or return from the world of the dead, which may be connected to the seasonal rituals (specifically, the return of the fertility of soil after winter). The phrase *Baug ec þér þá gef* 'I shall give you a ring' is formulaic and, in this context, indicative of a wedding narrative. In a heroic

narrative, the giving of rings is usually the privilege of the king who rewards his loyal earls with such gifts.

In Lithuanian folk songs, gift-giving constitutes an essential motif in the wedding narrative. As an ancient tradition, gift-giving may reflect the divine model of behaviour, inasmuch as 'human marriage is regarded as an imitation of the cosmic hierogamy' (Eliade 1959, 145). Lithuanian Christmas songs often recount the respective activities of a young girl and young man and their subsequent exchange of gifts which echoes the traditional course of wooing:

1. Leliumai,	*4. Leliumai,*
Anta dvaro, leliumai,	*Kilpinėlas narstė, leliumai,*
Nauji palocai, leliumai.	*Ir antelas gaudė, leliumai.*
2. Leliumai,	*5. Leliumai,*
Tuose palocuose, leliumai,	*Ir anteles gaudė, leliumai,*
Bernelis sėdėjo, leliumai.	*Ir mergelai siuntė, leliumai.*
3. Leliumai,	*6. Leliumai,*
Bernelis sėdejo, leliumai,	*Aisi neaisi, leliumai,*
Kilpinėlas narstė, leliumai.	*Nor paminėsi, leliumai.*
	(*Lietuvių liaudies dainynas* 2007, 117)[70].

('In the middle of an estate there stood a palace. A boy was sitting in the palace, sharpening arrows, shooting ducks, and sending them over to a girl as presents. Whether you were to be my beloved or not, you would at least remember my good nature and well-set stature.')

Some songs include a direct offering of gifts, such as *Mergužėle lelijėle,/ ar priimsi dovanėles?* 'dear maiden, little lily, will you accept the gifts?' (Juška 1955, 26). Traditional gifts offered by the young man to the girl may constitute *aukso žiedelis* 'a golden ring' (*Lietuvių liaudies dainynas* 1993, 251), *rūtelių sėklos* 'rue seeds' (*Lietuvių liaudies dainynas* 1989, 92-100), *žalių rūtų vainikėlis* 'rue wreath', *žalio šilko kasnykėlis* 'green silk ribbon' (Ibid. 102). The golden ring is a traditional symbol of marriage, meanwhile the rue herb and its seeds or wreath symbolise the chastity of the young girl; the colour green implies fertility in general.

3.3.1.4. Refusal, Threats and the Curse of Infertility

In the *Poetic Edda*, when the gifts do not produce the desired effect, Skirnir employs various threats to persuade Gerd to accept the union with Freyr. Gerd's association with vegetation rites may be seen in Skirnir's curse that threatens her to be confined in Hel:

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[70] The annotation of the song in English is by Sigita Tupčiauskaitė (in *Lietuvių liaudies dainynas* 2007, 717).

35. *Hrímgrímnir heitir þurs, er þic hafa scal,*
fyr nágrindr neðan;
þar þér vílmegir á viðar rótom
geita hland gefi!
Oðri dryccio fá þú aldregi,
mær, af þínom munom,
mær, at mínom munom.

35. 'Hrimgrimnir he's called, the
giant who'll possess you
down below the corpse-gates,
where bondsmen will give you
goat's piss at the tree-roots;
finer drink you will never get,
girl, at your desire,
girl, at my desire!'

Skirnir's threats paint a desolate picture for Gerd: the alliterative phrase *nágrindr neðan* 'below the corpse-gates' and the phrase *á viðar rótom* 'at the tree-roots' refer to Hel as her future abode. The *geita hland* 'goat's piss' may be seen as an inversion of traditional custom of drinking mead: the humiliation symbolised by the 'goat's piss' is juxtaposed with the esteem and dignity symbolised by mead. Skirnir's threat bears certain similarities to the Greek myth of Persephone, the daughter of Zeus and the harvest goddess Demeter, who had to spend a part of the year (the winter months) in Hades. The difference between Gerd and Persephone is that Gerd finally consents to the union with fertility god Freyr and therefore is not compelled to live in the underworld:

> Gerd in Skírnismál has something in common with Persephone, since it is made clear that if she remains below in the dark kingdom of the underworld there will be nothing to hope for but sterility and famine. She does not become the bride of the underworld ruler, however; her bridal is to be in the upper world when she consents to meet Freyr at Barri (Ellis Davidson 1998, 86).

Skirnir threatens the incalcitrant maiden with a desolate existence once again:

31.
Með þursi þríhǫfðoðom þú scalt æ nara,
eða verlaus vera;
þitt geð grípi,
þic morn morni!
ver þú sem þistill, sá er var þrunginn
í ǫnn ofanverða.

31. 'With a three-headed ogre you
shall linger out your life,
or else be without a man!
May your spirit be seized!
May pining waste you away!
Be like the thistle which is
crushed
at the end of the harvest!'

Herewith the infertile life (either with 'a three-headed ogre' or with no husband at all) is compared to that of the thistle, which is cast aside and destroyed. Harris argues that a curse which invokes the name of the thistle may have been a common phenomenon: 'Rather the answer must begin with the probable existence of an old, perhaps common Germanic, tradition of cursing with the thistle – a role that its form with prominent 'head,' autumnal 'fragility,' and annual 'death' might easily suggest' (Harris 2002, 82). The

juxtaposition of two images is manifest in the comparison: one image is that of a young and 'shining' maiden while the other is that of a withering plant. The striking imagery represents the contrast between life and death as two different parts in the natural cycle: 'Gerðr, representing the earth and its fields, is refusing to grow well, when she rejects Freyr and his golden gifts, and that the injurious curse that Skírnir places on her is revealing to her the ugly results that will follow her obstinacy' (Dronke 1997, 397). The curse *ver þú sem þistill* 'be like the thistle' is a poetic formula which pertains to the prevention of fertility. Gerd finally yields as Skirnir threatens to use magic runes which will cause Gerd to experience *ergi oc oði oc óþola* 'lewdness and frenzy and unbearable desire' (stanza 36). The union of Gerd and Freyr is a victory (even if reluctant from Gerd's side) of fertility over infertility.

The connection between the fertility in marriage and the agricultural harvest in the yearly cycles may also be noticed in the low mimetic narrative of Lithuanian folk songs which is dominated by the motifs of 'genesis and work' (Frye 1973, 154). Traditionally, in Lithuanian villages marriages were celebrated in autumn, after gathering the harvest. This custom is reflected in the work songs which introduce autumn as the wedding season. In the following extract from a song, the young man is encouraged to propose to the young girl only in autumn, when the harvest is already gathered:

5. Jot pas mergelę,
Jot pas mergelę
Tik rudenėlį,
6. Kai bus rugeliai,
Kai bus rugeliai
Su želmenėliais (*Lietuvių liaudies dainynas* 1993, 159).
('I will ride to my girl only in the autumn, when the rye sprout.')
A similar example may be noticed in the following song:
Vodegoj pjoviou,
Vodegoj pjoviou,
Nelaukus rudenėlia
Ištekėjou (Slaviūnas 1958, 55[71]).
('I was gathering the rye and I was left behind all workers; I did not wait for autumn to get married.')

In this song, autumn is also mentioned as the traditional season of marriage – however, the girl gets married before the autumn comes. The fact that the girl falls behind her work in the field (which is described using a derogatory word *vodega* [*uodega*] 'tail') is related to the fact that she did not follow the

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[71] Here and further in the text, *sutartinės* quoted from the collection by Slaviūnas are referenced by indicating the song number, not the page number.

usual marriage customs and therefore she is subjected to derision (cf. Stundžienė 1998, 154). The premature marriage suggests the deviation from established social norms (possibly, the girl's loss of chastity). The comparison of the link between autumn, harvest, and marriage in the Lithuanian and the Old Icelandic poetic texts reveals that human fertility is perceived within the cycle of nature's fertility. As hierogamy constitutes a sacral union between heaven and earth, bride's refusal to participate in it causes threats, curses and derision.

The motif of the bride's refusal is common in Lithuanian wedding songs. When the groom does not seem suitable for the bride, his gifts are not accepted:

3. Žada anas man   *4. Man nereikia*
Aukso žiedelį,   *Aukso žiedelio,*
Perlų vainikėlį   *Perlų vainikėlio*
Žada anas man.   *Man nereikia.*
                                    (*Lietuvių liaudies dainynas* 1993, 251)

('He promises me a golden ring, he promises me a pearl necklace. I do not need the golden ring, I do not need the pearl necklace.')

The gifts offered by the young man are conveyed by the poetic formulas *aukso žiedelis* 'golden ring' and *perlų vainikėlis* 'pearl necklace' which are indicative of the wedding narrative. The specified poetic expressions may be considered as formulas due to their wide distribution in the corpus of wedding songs. By not accepting the offered gifts, the girl denies the proposal; this motif may be compared to the repeated refusal of Gerd in the Germanic mythic narrative.

In Lithuanian folk songs, the wooing theme often contains the motif of force imposed by the young man:

4. Pririšau žirgelį prie tvoros,
Prie žalių rūtų darželio.
5. Išlaužė žirgelis tvorelę,
Išmindžiojo žalias rūteles (Juška 1954, 668).

('I tied my horse to the fence which guarded the rue garden. The horse broke down the fence and trampled over the green rues').

The trampling of the green rues by the horse symbolises the young girl's loss of chastity (the rues are sometimes 'fed' to the horse (Juška 1954, 517)); the epithets *rūtų darželis* 'rue garden' and *žalios rūtos* 'green rues' are prevalent formulas in the corpus of folk songs. The formulaic status may be confirmed by the significant position of these epithets in the poetic narrative: they usually mark the centre of the bride's world – as Vėlius states, the marriage cannot take place if the young girl has not sewn the rues and does not have a rue wreath to wear (Vėlius 2014, 134). It may be surmised that

Skirnir's threats which cause Gerd to yield in the *Poetic Edda* and the trampling of rues which symbolises the yielding of the young girl in Lithuanian folk songs pertain to the same motif of fertility's (forced) victory over infertility and thus may be considered as a reference to the archetypal union between heaven and earth.

A variation of the motif of fertility is observed in the introductory part of the *Anglo-Saxon Riddle 35*:

Mec se wæta wong, wundrum freorig,	Me the wet cold field wonderfully brought forth from its womb.
of his innaþe ærist cende.	I was not made of a fleece of wool
Ne wat ic mec beworhtne wulle flysum,	or hair through excellent skill, I thought.[72]
hærum þurh heahcræft, hygeþoncum min (lines 1-4).	

The analysis of the riddle in the context of hierogamy is based on the insights of Mercedes Salvador-Bello: the scholar distinguishes direct and indirect clues in the medieval riddles: one has to consider the implicit meaning hidden in the indirect clues of the riddle in order to solve it (Salvador-Bello 1998, 17). The epithet *wæta wong* 'wet field' is a direct clue – the earth is presented by a synonym *wong* 'field' and is characterised as *wæta* 'wet' (the stable epithet which implies fertility). However, the epithet *freorig* 'cold' contrasts with the function of fertility as coldness is incompatible with life which is begotten in the womb. Inasmuch as the answer to *Riddle 35* is 'Mail coat', the cold womb of the earth may be associated with the coldness of iron: the cold womb (the earth) produces a cold offspring (iron).

3.3.1.5. *Cup Bearing* as Betrothal

In the *Poetic Edda*, the course of proposal is completed when the giantess Gerd offers a drink to Skirnir as a sign of her acceptance to be the bride of Freyr:

Gerðr qvað:	Gerd said:
37.'*Heill verðu nú heldr, sveinn, oc tac við hrímkálki,*	37. 'Be welcome now, lad, and receive the crystal cup,
fullom forns miaðar!	full of ancient mead;
þó hafða ec þat ætlað, at myndac aldregi unna vaningia vel.'	though I have never thought that I should ever love one of the Vanir well.'

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[72] Translation mine: Giedrė Buivytė.

Offering the cup to Skirnir symbolises Gerd's role as the cup-bearer (formulaic expression *tac við hrímkálki* 'receive the crystal cup'). When the bride welcomes the matchmaker (Skirnir) by offering him a drink, the ritual of proposal is completed – Gerd agrees to meet Freyr in the grove of Barri in nine days time[73]. In Norse mythology, nine was a sacral number: there were nine worlds united by the world tree Yggdrasil; Odin hung from Yggdrasil for nine days in order to learn the knowledge of the runes. Number nine was also important in the ritualistic practices of Norsemen: in some parts of Scandinavia, sacrifices were made every nine years, nine men or animals were sacrificed on such occasions (Andrén 2004, 35-36). Dronke views Barri as 'the ideal place of union for the god and his bride, for it was into a grove, remote and pure, castum nemus, that the goddess Nerthus entered when she descended to earth' (Dronke 1996, 253). The sacred groves were associated with the goddess of fertility, Nerthus, as recorded in *Germania* by Tacitus:

> None of these tribes have any noteworthy feature, except their common worship of Ertha, or mother-Earth, and their belief that she interposes in human affairs, and visits the nations in her car. In an island of the ocean there is a sacred grove, and within it a consecrated chariot, covered over with a garment. Only one priest is permitted to touch it. He can perceive the presence of the goddess in this sacred recess, and walks by her side with the utmost reverence as she is drawn along by heifers. It is a season of rejoicing, and festivity reigns wherever she deigns to go and be received (1876, chapter 40, translated by Church and Brodribb)[74].

In Lithuanian folk songs, when the matchmaker's quest ends in success, a cup of mead or wine is offered to the matchmaker:

Sėskit, sveteliai,
Už baltųjų skomelių,
Gerkit, sveteliai,
Saldų gardų vynelį (*Lietuvių liaudies dainynas* 1983, 210).

(Dear guests, be seated at the white table, dear guests, please taste the sweet wine').

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[73] As Dronke notes, *hýnótt* was a marriage custom based on which 'a time of chastity between the vows and the consummation of marriage' had to be observed. (Dronke 1996, 253). This marriage custom may be echoed in the motif of the nine days preceding the union of Freyr and Gerd.

[74] 'Reudigni deinde et Aviones et Anglii et Varini et Eudoses et Suardones et Nuithones fluminibus aut silvis muniuntur. Nec quicquam notabile in singulis, nisi quod in commune Nerthum, id est Terram matrem, colunt eamque intervenire rebus hominum, invehi populis arbitrantur. Est in insula Oceani castum nemus, dicatumque in eo vehiculum, veste contectum; attingere uni sacerdoti concessum. Is adesse penetrali deam intellegit vectamque bubus feminis multa cum veneratione prosequitur. Laeti tunc dies, festa loca, quaecumque adventu hospitioque dignatur' (Tacitus 1970, chapter 40).

The phrase *gerkit, sveteliai, saldų gardų vynelį* 'dear guests, please taste the sweet wine' symbolises the acceptance of the groom by the bride and her family. Basanavičius observed that the agreement on marriage is also confirmed by other symbolic gestures, e.g. when the bride offers the groom a rue wrapped into a linen cloth (Basanavičius 2003, 263). Thus in Lithuanian wedding rituals, cup bearing was inseparable from the symbolism of the rue which signified the chastity of the bride.

3.3.1.6. The Wreath of Rue

In Lithuanian folk songs, the phrase *Rūtų vainikėlis* 'rue wreath' is a recurrent poetic formula employed in reference to the young girl, a bride-to-be. The significance of the rue wreath varies from a symbol of maidenhood beauty and pride of an unmarried girl to the symbol of a bride in the wedding ritual (Sauka 1970, 367). Traditionally, rue wreath symbolised the girl's readiness for marriage – her maturity, chastity, and vitality; as an emblem of these valuable qualities, it was used in the wedding ritual (Sadauskienė 2010, 140). The rue wreath was twined on the wedding eve and adorned the bride during the wedding (Sauka 1970, 367); sometimes it was carried to the bride by the groom and his retinue during the preparations for the wedding (Kerbelytė 2011, 379). In the course of matchmaking, rues were also used as a sign of acceptance of the proposal by the bride and her family (cf. Vėlius 2014, 158):

12. Susijojo daug bernelių
Pas tą vieną mergužėlę.
13. Duok, močiute, alaus midaus,
Neduok, močiute, vainikėlio:
14. Kai paduosi vainikėlį,
reiks išduoti mane jauną (Juška 1955, 78).

'Many young men rode to visit a young girl. Mother, offer them beer and mead, yet do not give away my wreath: when you give away my wreath, you will have to give me away'.

As proposed by Van Gennep, the process of marriage is a period of transition, marked by the state of liminality (Gennep 2004, 21). Wedding songs describe the liminal state of the bride: in a traditional society, it was the bride who underwent the change of social circumstances (cf. Černiauskaitė 2007, 128). The liminality is reflected in the motifs which symbolise the loss

of youth, and especially of maidenhood (Stundžienė 2004, 18), hence the recurrent motif of the sinking rue-wreath[75]:

Ar plačiai nunešė
Ma valnias dieneles
Gilus Dunojėlis
Ar giliai nuskendo
Rūtelių vainikėlis
Į gilų Dunojėlį? (*Lietuvių tautosaka* 1964, 557).

 (How far did the deep Danube carry away the days of my youth, how deep did the rue wreath sink in the deep Danube?')

The transition from one stage of life to another demands a sacrifice (the sinking rue wreath symbolises defloration[76]). Similarly, dew on the girl's rue wreath symbolises her lost chastity (although the motif of a broken or a frozen rue may symbolise a woe or bad news in other contexts of songs (Sauka 2007, 76-77)). In the following extract, the young girl explains to her mother why her rue wreath is wet with dew:

-Anksti rytą rytmetėlį
Rūteles ravėjau,
Dėl to mano vainikėlį
Raselė užkrito (Juška 1954, 42).

'Early in the morning I was weeding my rues, that is why the dew fell on my rue wreath'

The mother of the young girl usually deems her explanation to be a deception as the dew on her wreath indicates that the girl has met with her beloved.

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[75] In Lithuanian folk songs, the motif of a sinking rue wreath is employed interchangeably with the motif of a sinking girl; a young man usually comes to the girl's aid. Potebnia analyses a similar motif in Latvian folk songs, e.g. the daughter of the Sun is sinking in the sea, and the sons of God come to her aid (Potebnia 1883, 191).

[76] Consider Sruoga's insights on the symbolism of the rue wreath in Lithuanian tradition: 'A rue wreath in Lithuanian dainos always signifies innocence. To lose the wreath, to forget or drop it somewhere means to lose innocence, whether or not the wreath is dropped purposely or somebody throws it down, or the north wind blows it from her head. A lost, forgotten or blown off wreath the maiden will never again place upon her head – lost innocence will never again return. When the maiden unplaits the wreath – she is preparing to marry. If she surrenders her innocence to the young man from love – she burns her wreath in the fire; if from compulsion – she treads the wreath in the mire or stuffs it more deeply into the chest or flings it into a corner to become dust-laden. When a maiden is pleasing to a young man, and he raises his hat, she raises her wreath; when she is going out to meet him she carries the wreath in her hand (Sruoga, translated by Harrison 1932, 321).

3.3.2. The *Axis Mundi*

The centre of the world, or the *Axis Mundi*, was a vital notion in the mythic thought. Eliade states that an unfamiliar space had to be organised and centred in order for an archaic man to build his life: 'the discovery or projection of a fixed point – the center – is equivalent to the creation of the world' (Eliade 1959, 22). The centre of the world was often embodied in the motif of the world tree. The motif of the world tree as the pillar and central axis of the universe is a common one in different mythological traditions (West argues for the North-Asian rather than Indo-European origin of this motif (see West 2007, 345-347). In different traditions, the motif of the world tree retains its significance and offers a glimpse at the structure of mythic universe.

3.3.2.1. The Tree '*Wet with Dew*'

The structural organisation of the Germanic universe is centred around the world tree Yggdrasil, as attested in *Vǫluspá* (stanzas 2, 19, 27, 47), *Grímnismál* (stanzas 29-35), and *Hávamál* (stanza 138). The mythical tree is depicted in *Vǫluspá* as follows:

19. *Asc veit ec standa*, *heitir Yggdrasill*, *hár baðmr*, *ausinn hvítaauri*; *þaðan koma dǫggvar*, *þærs í dala falla*, *stendr æ yfir*, *grænn*, *Urðar brunni*.	19. An ash I know that stands, Yggdrasil it's called, a tall tree, drenched with shining loam; from there come the dews which fall in the valley, green, it stands always over Urd's well.

In *Vǫluspá*, Yggdrasil is described by the epithets 'mighty Measuring-Tree' (*miǫtvið mæran*, stanza 2), 'bright-grown, sacred tree' (*heiðvǫnom helgom baðmi*, stanza 27), 'ancient tree' (*aldna tré*, stanza 47) which connote the supernatural magnitude, old age and sacrality of the tree. Yggdrasil is also characterised by an epithet 'drenched with shining loam' (*ausinn hvíta auri*, stanza 19) which refers to dew/rain as the outcome of the primordial union between heaven and earth. The description of the tree as green (*grænn*) introduces the symbolism of the colour green as the colour of life. Inasmuch as *Vǫluspá* constitutes a mythic narrative, the magnitude, fertility, might, and vitality of the world tree Yggdrasill attest to its significance as an archetypal image. In addition, its spatial orientation in

regard of water, namely, the sacred well of *Urðr* (Urd)[77] is linked to another archetypal image. This archetypal image may be verbalised in the formula 'a tree by the spring', the poetic variations of which are conveyed in the discussed epithets.

The world tree Yggdrasil serves as a structural representation of the universe in Germanic mythology: in *Vǫluspá*, stanza 2, the seeress mentions the nine worlds in relation to the 'Mighty-Measuring tree'. As attested in *Grímnismál*, under its roots Yggdrasil unites *Hel* (the realm of the dead), *Jǫtunheimr* (the realm of giants), and *Miðgarðr* (the realm of people):

31. *Þriár rotr standa á þriá vega*	31. Three roots there grow in three directions
undan asci Yggdrasils;	under Yggdrasill's ash;
Hel býr undir einni, *annarri hrímþursar*,	Hel lives under one, under the second, the frost-giants,
þriðio mennzcir menn.	under the third, humankind.

Meletinsky distinguishes two main directions of spatial orientation in Norse mythology, namely, the horizontal and the vertical. The horizontal direction is mainly substantiated by the dichotomy 'centre/periphery' which is manifest in the realms of *Miðgarðr* and *Útgarðr* (Meletinsky 1973, 46-47). Hastrup elaborates on this distinction:

> Miðgarðr was the central space, as implied by the name, inhabited by men (and gods), while Útgarðr was found 'outside the fence', beyond the borders of Miðgarðr, and inhabited by giants and non-humans. We note here the close parallel to the conceptualization of the farmstead (*innangarðs*) and the surrounding uncontrolled space (*útangarðs*) (Hastrup 1985, 147).

Hence the horizontal direction of space in mythic narrative was based on the existing cultural and geographical divisions of the medieval Icelandic society[78].

The vertical direction of spatial orientation is based on the opposition of the underworld, *Hel*, and the abode of gods, *Ásgarðr*[79]. The profane people,

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[77] Urd's well (*Urðar brunni*) is the sacred well under the roots of Yggdrasil, where the three Norns decide the fates of men (*Vǫluspá*, stanzas 20-21); near the sacred well the gods hold their meetings (*Hávamál*, stanza 111).

[78] Gurevich proposes that the mythic perception of the cosmos was mirrored in the historical arrangement of farmsteads in medieval Iceland (Gurevich 1969, 45-46). The topography of settlements corresponds with the pattern of the basic elements of the universe – 'At every important point of the world, namely, in its centre on earth, in heaven, at the place where the rainbow, which leads from the earth to heaven, begins, and where the earth joins heaven – everywhere there are farmsteads, mansions, burghs' (Ibid.).

[79] In connection to Yggdrasil, various zoomorphic representations of its vertical sections are noticed. Cf. Meletinsky: 'Yggdrasil divides the world into three sectors by means of a double opposition between high and low. The tree is symbolized by a

living in *Miðgarðr*, could access these realms only after death; hence these vertical oppositions are closely connected with the realms of the dead, *Valhǫll* and *Hel* (which, according to Meletinsky, are represented by the Valkyries and the Norns respectively (Meletinsky 2000, 224)). In *Vǫluspá*, different types of afterlife are presented: Hel, or the Underworld, is associated with suffering, meanwhile *Valhǫll* and *Fólcvangr* (halls of Odin and Freyja accordingly) are associated with heroic death.

In Lithuanian folk songs, the relationship of centre and periphery is also embodied in the motif of a tree which is employed as a vertical marker of space (a transformation of the *Axis Mundi*). The motif is usually encountered at the beginning of a song; in spatial terms, the tree is usually depicted as standing in the middle of a field or a lake, thus presenting the opposition between a vast unorganised space and the concrete image of the tree:

1. Vidur jūrių ir marelių
Aukštasis kalnelis,
2. Ant to kalno kalnužėlio
Žalias ąžuolėlis (Juška 1954, 395).

('In the middle of the sea there is a high hill, a green oak tree grows on that high hill').

The oak tree was believed to be a sacred tree in pagan Lithuania: historical records mention it as the tree of the thunder god *Perkūnas*, or as the tree of gods (Balys 2000, 31, Vėlius 2012, 106). It is possible to assume that this sacred and venerated tree was also viewed as the archetypal world tree in pagan Lithuania[80]. In addition, Germanic thunder god Thor is also associated with the oak tree – as stated in *Vita Bonifatii auctore Willibaldi* ('Life of Saint Boniface by Willibald'), the sacred oak tree of Jupiter (for which pagans had their own name) in Hesse, Germany, was cut by Saint Boniface. It is presumed that in the Germanic religion this tree was 'a symbol of the mythical world-pillar which sustained the sky' (MacCulloch 1998, 143). It was the perceived

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zoomorphic series located on various levels: the eagle represents the upper reaches of the tree, the serpent below, and elk the middle. The squirrel is a kind of mediator as it races up and down the trunk. Yggdrasil is linked to Heimdallr, who is custodian of the tree and to a certain extent also its anthropomorphic representation, which may have been zoomorphic in earlier versions' (2000, 224).

[80] Numerous historical sources note the veneration of trees in medieval Lithuania; separate cases of tree veneration were recorded even in the XXth century (Balys 2000, 31-32). Balys distinguishes several stages of veneration of trees: the belief in the magic power of a green twig; the belief in the similarity of trees to human beings; the belief that specific spirits and deities dwell in trees; the belief that the soul of a dead man dwells in a tree (especially in a tree which grows on a grave); finally – the infusion of Christian elements, e.g. placement of crosses on venerated trees (Ibid. 33-35).

connection with the divine realm that made the oak tree a vital element in pagan rituals.

In Lithuanian folk songs, the recurrent image of a tree with nine branches is usually interpreted as a reference to the cosmic world tree (cf. Laurinkienė 2000, 31, Vėlius 2014, 132):

2. O ir išdygo
Žalia liepelė,
Viršūnužėj kvietkelė
Su devyniomis šakelėms (Juška 1955, 289).

'A green linden tree has sprouted; on its top there is a flower with nine branches'

A green linden tree with nine branches may be compared to the world tree Yggdrasil in Germanic mythology which unites nine worlds. The green colour of a tree was associated with its inexhaustible vitality; such stable epithets as 'green leaf, green branch, green tree, green forest, green rue' were recurrent in the poetic vocabulary and expressed the ideal qualities of important objects (Stundžienė 2010, 28). The number 'nine' is a sacral number – as West maintains, 'the number nine, or by augmentation thrice nine, occurs often enough in Indo-European religious contexts to suggest that it was a traditional sacral quantity' (West, 2007, 329). Another folk song recorded by Rėza begins with the building of a ship with eight corners, *Ant kožno kampo/ Po liepos medį/ Su devyniomis šakatėmis* 'On each corner there is a lime tree with nine branches', and on each branch a beautiful bird sings (Rėza 1958, 31). Balsys maintains that the beginning of the song offers a universal exposition which may develop into a paradigm of either death or life (inasmuch as the motif of birds singing on the branches of a tree may be incorporated into a courtship narrative or that of a lament) (Balsys 2003, 27). The current song proceeds with the courtship narrative as the young man who built the magnificent ship sails to meet a young girl.

The motif of a tree in Lithuanian folk songs gains cosmological importance when it is described in relation to other elements of nature, as seen in the following extract from a work song:

3. Per viršų medelių
Šviesi saulelė teka,
Ei ei ei ei ei,
Šviesi saulelė teka,
4. Per apačių šaknelių
Čystas vandenys bėga,
Ei ei ei ei ei,
Čystas vandenys bėga (*Lietuvių liaudies dainynas* 1993, 135).

('Bright sun is rising over the tops of the trees; over the roots [of the trees] bright water is running.')

In the song, the epithet *šviesi saulelė* 'bright sun' may be associated with the early morning, i.e. the time which symbolises the beginning – hence its cosmogonic connotations. The epithet *čystas vandenys* 'clear water' bears the symbolism of purity and sanctity and thus may be compared to the sacred Germanic well of Urd (cf. *Po kleveliu šaltinatis,/ Čystas vandenatis,/ Kur ateit saulės dukrytės/ Anksti burną prautsis* 'There is a spring under the ash tree, clear water runs there; the daughters of the sun come there to wash themselves' (Rėza 1958, 173))[81]. The images of the sun and water echo the vertical organisation of the world in relation to the world tree,[82] where the sun is associated with the upper part of the tree, and the water is associated with the lower part of the tree.

The archetypal world tree is also described in relation to dew:

1. Ant tėvelio dvaro
Balta liepa auga,
Po tąj liepele
Aukso rasa krinta (*Lietuvių liaudies dainynas* 1993, 180).

('At father's estate, a white linden tree grows, under that linden tree, golden dew is falling').

The song begins with the image of *tėvelio dvaras* 'father's estate' which occupies a central position in profane worldview. The epithet *balta liepa* 'a white linden tree' marks the transition from the literal description towards the metaphorical: the colour white does not refer to the external characteristics of the tree but rather pertains to its symbolic essence. The epithet 'white' is juxtaposed with the typical epithet 'green' which is frequently employed in Lithuanian folk songs. In the quoted song, an orphan girl intends to wash herself with golden dew in order to become more radiant (in ancient Lithuanian rituals, dew was thought to induce health and fertility (Stundžienė 1999, 91)). The image of golden dew, *aukso rasa*, is also symbolic; it may be compared to the motif of golden rain from the Greek myth of Zeus and Danae – in both instances golden dew/rain refers to fertility. In the song the dew is denoted as 'golden' – an epithet which metaphorically depicts the shining of

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[81] Sacred springs were common in ancient Lithuania. Besides the historical records which confirm this fact numerous times, various hydronyms incorporate the word *šventas* 'sacred' in their names: *Šventežeris*, *Šventelė*, *Šventoji*, *Šventupė*, *Alkupis* (Balys 2000, 14; cf. Balsys 2015, 19).
[82] The concept of the world tree in Lithuanian folklore may be related to the Lithuanian (and Baltic in general) pagan tradition, where sacred trees and forests were venerated and served as the setting of rituals (on historical and archaeological evidence see Vaitkevičius *Alkai: baltų šventviečių studija* (2003)). In the pagan times, trees having exceptional characteristics, such as great size and curious shape, were considered to be sacred (Stundžienė 2010, 17).

dew during sunrise and implies its high symbolic value. In comparison, Yggdrasil is also seen drenched in 'shining loam'; the word *hvíta*, translated by Larrington as 'shining', has the primary meaning of 'white'. Thus in the Lithuanian and the Old Icelandic traditions stable epithets describe dew as golden, white, or shining in order to reveal its exceptional worth in connection to fertility.

The variations of the motif of *Axis Mundi* may be observed in Lithuanian folk songs which contain allusions to the cosmogonic myth. Beresnevičius claims that the introduction of a cosmogonic motif in a song, regardless of the further narrative, transfers the singing person to the sacred reality, where the narrative of the song and all its elements become a sacral event (Beresnevičius 1998, 40). In the following Christmas song, the central motif is that of an elk with nine horns; it may be viewed as a transformation of the *Axis Mundi*, or the world tree as it represents a microcosmos:

1. Atlakia alnias
Devyniaragis,
Oi kalėda kalėda.
2. Ir jis atlėkis
Vandeny žiūro,
Oi kalėda kalėda.
3. Vandeny žiūro
Ir ragus skaito,
Oi kalėda kalėda.
4. An ragelių –
Nauja seklyčia
Oi kalėda kalėda.
5. Toj seklyčioj
Kavoliai kala
Oi kalėda kalėda,
6. Kavoliai kala,
Zlotnykai laja,
Oi kalėda kalėda.

7. Tai jiej nukalė
Aukso žiedelį,
Oi kalėda kalėda,
8. Aukso žiedelį,
Aukso kūbkelį,
Oi kalėda kalėda.
9. Tai jiej nulėjo
Rūtų vainikų,
Oi kalėda kalėda.
10. Rūtų vainikas
Bus mergužėlei
Oi kalėda kalėda.
11. Aukso žiedelis
Bus vinčiavoniom,
Oi kalėda kalėda.
12. Aukso kūbkelis
Bus privitoniom,
Oi kalėda kalėda[83] (*Lietuvių liaudies dainynas* 2007, 578).

('A nine-horn elk came. Once he came, he looked into water and counted his horns. On his horns, a new house is built; in it, smiths are forging iron and goldsmiths are moulding gold. They forged a golden ring, a golden glass, and a rue wreath. The

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[83] The word *kalėda* is a typical refrain of Lithuanian Christmas songs (the festival itself is called *Kalėdos* in Lithuanian). Sauka points out that this refrain has analogues in Slavic tradition and may be traced to the Latin *Calendae Januariae* – the festival of the first days of the month of January, devoted to Janus, the god of transition, changes, and new beginnings (2007, 119).

wreath is for the girl, the ring will be used for the wedding, and the glass – for the treat.')[84]

The archaic image of an elk with nine horns is related to the mythic perception of the world. In terms of seasonal changes, the elk brings the sun on his horns – hence the images of golden round objects, such as ring, wreath, and glass which imitate the disc of the sun. Balys notes that the symbolism of the sun was employed to induce the vegetative powers of the plants during the critical period of winter (Balys 2000, 342). The Christmas songs were usually performed around the time of the winter solstice, the period of the year when the nights are the longest and darkest; the songs may have accompanied the changes of the yearly cycle, namely, the period after the winter solstice, when nights become shorter and the summer is coming (Laurinkienė 2000, 32). The darkest period of the year was also thought of as dangerous for the human beings – it was believed that the evil forces and the agents of the underworld gain more power during this period of the year (Vaicekauskas 2005, 62). Thus, the solar imagery of Christmas songs embodies the symbolical meaning of light's victory over darkness.

Besides the references to the mythic perception, the song should be discussed in connection to the peculiarities which surrounded the celebration of the yearly cycles in the peasant community. During Christmas period, rituals, games and divinations were practised by peasants to gain knowledge about the coming year, health, and, most frequently – about the future wife or husband (for young unmarried people). Therefore, Lithuanian Christmas songs usually introduce the themes of courtship and wedding. The analysed song and its variants depict smiths who forge objects used in the wedding ritual: a wreath, a ring, a glass (Kerbelytė 2011, 387)[85]. Thus, the song employs a cosmogonic setting to introduce a courtship narrative.

A note on the image of an elk in the analysed Christmas song and the image of a hart in Eddic poetry has to be made. In the Lithuanian song, the microcosmos (a new house on the elk's horns) exists near water (the elk is looking into the water). The link between the image of an elk and the element of water may be interpreted in connection to cosmogony, as the earth emerged from water, the embodiment of the primeval chaos. Meanwhile in Norse mythology (as attested in *Grímnismál*), the mythic hart is called *Eicþyrnir*

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[84] The annotation of the song in English is by Sigita Tupčiauskaitė (in *Lietuvių liaudies dainynas* 2007, 717); I introduced a few minor additions to her version.

[85] Kerbelytė compares the image of the nine-horned elk with the image of a bull from a Russian charm for the *male malady* (italics by Kerbelytė) and asserts that the image of a horned animal looking into water may be construed as a sexual symbol (Kerbelytė 2011, 387).

'oak-encircler' (as translated by Wiener and Lindow 1992, 156); it is associated both with Valhall, the hall of god Odin, and the world tree Yggdrasil. The hart is seen standing on the roof of Odin's hall and nibbling the sacred tree:

26.*Eicþyrnir heitir hiortr, er stendr á hǫllo*	26. 'Eikthyrnir is the hart's name,
Heriafǫðrs	who stands on Father of Hosts hall
oc bítr af Læraðs limom;	and browses on Lærad's branches;
enn af hans hornom drýpr í Hvergelmi,	and from his antlers there's dripping
þaðan eigo vǫtn ǫll vega.	into Hvergelmir,
	from thence all waters make their way'

It may be observed that both the elk from Lithuanian song and the hart from the *Poetic Edda* are depicted near water; the cosmogonic and cosmological function of the world tree (and its transformations) is related to water as the source of life.

3.3.2.2 The Mead-Hall

In the heroic world, the relationship of centre and periphery is conveyed in the image of a mead-hall which represents the centre of the known world as opposed to the dangerous distant lands. In *Beowulf*, this relationship is reflected in the opposition between the mead-hall Heorot inhabited by warriors and the hostile wastelands inhabited by monsters. The mead-hall is the centre of the heroic world: there, the king and his comitatus gather to discuss the everyday issues and to feast. Hume notes that the poetic depiction of life in the hall was striving to render an ideal picture of the mead-hall, 'a settlement that brought lord and retainers into close, personal, daily contact' (Hume 1974, 64). It is also the perceived centre of the earth and of the human world – the place where the mead-hall stands is called *middangearde*, or the 'middle earth' (lines 75, 504, 751, 1771, 2996). J. R. R. Tolkien claims that the locus of *Beowulf* is closely related to *Miðgarðr*, the Middle Earth of the Old Icelandic mythology:

> When we have read his poem, as a poem, rather than as a collection of episodes, we perceive that he who wrote *hæleð under heofenum* may have meant in dictionary terms 'heroes under heaven', or 'mighty men upon earth', but he and his hearers were thinking of the *eormengrund*, the great earth, ringed with *garsecg*, the shoreless sea, beneath the sky's inaccessible roof; whereon, as in a little circle of light about their halls, men with courage as their stay went forward to that battle with the hostile world and the offspring of the dark which ends for all, even the kings and champions, in defeat (Tolkien [1936] 2002, 115).

In this respect, *Miðgarðr* is represented by the warrior society, in the narrower sense – by the warriors of the mead-hall Heorot, which is the 'centre' of the world in terms of centre/periphery dichotomy. The periphery – the dangerous *Útgarðr* – is represented by the chaotic forces that challenge the social order. The erection of Heorot employed *manigre mægþe geond þisne middangeard* 'many a tribe over middle earth' (line 75) who built a *healærna mæst* 'greatest of houses' (line 78) which symbolises the prosperity of the king and his warriors. Dronke notes the parallel between the warriors who live in joy and prosperity after the building of Heorot and the gods in *Vǫluspá* after the creation of the world (Dronke 1966, 308). The following extracts from the narratives manifest a distinct resemblance:

8. *Teflðo í túni, teitir vóro,*	8. They played chequers in the
var þeim vættergis vant ór gulli,	meadow, they were merry,
unz þriár qvómo þursa meyiar,	they did not lack for gold at all,
ámátcar mioc, ór iǫtunheimom.	until three ogre-girls came[86],
(*Vǫluspá*, stanza 8)	all-powerful women, out of Giant-
	land.
Swā ðā drihtguman drēamum lifdon	So the company of men led a
ēadiglice, oð ðæt ān ongan	careless life,
fyrene fre(m)man fēond on helle;	all was well with them: until One
(*Beowulf*, lines 99-101)	began
	to encompass evil, an enemy from
	hell.

In both instances the cosmic order is threatened by the forces of chaos, i.e. the maidens from the Giant-land and Grendel, 'an enemy from hell', who share similar characteristics: they come from the realm that is associated with death and destruction.

In Lithuanian folk songs, the relationship of centre/periphery is reflected in the motif of an estate (usually, *tėvelio dvaras* 'father's estate') which constitutes the centre of peasant's life. The song about the nine-horn elk, quoted in the previous chapter, introduces the image of *nauja seklyčia* 'a new house' built on the horns of the elk. This image pertains to both cosmology (the house is perceived as the centre of the profane world) and cosmogony (the building of the house symbolises the order imposed on chaos). Similarly,

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[86] The 'three girls' remain fairly mysterious figures in the Norse mythology – Larrington notes that their coming indicates the end of the Golden Age (Larrington 2014); they may be associated with the three fates that are introduced later on in the poem. As Dronke claims, 'These giant-maids are ominous and their intrusion is clearly designed to disturb a new creation: the giant world is the world of the dead, of the chthonic forces hostile to cosmic order' (Dronke 1966, 308).

in the mythic narrative of *Vǫluspá*, after the creation of the world, a dwelling for gods is built, *hǫrg oc hof* 'altars and temples' (stanza 7) and a mead-hall for warriors, Heorot, is erected in the heroic narrative of *Beowulf*.

The father's estate is often depicted standing in an exceptional place:

1. Ant kalnelio, ant aukštojo,
Stov margas dvarelis.
2. Tam dvarely, tam margajam,
Sėd senas tėvelis (Juška 1954, 55).

'On a hill, on a high hill, a bright estate stands. In the estate, in the bright estate, the old father is sitting'.

Father's estate which stands on a high hill may refer to a sacral place in the Baltic worldview. The veneration of hills was closely related with the cult of Perkūnas and fire[87]; fires dedicated to Perkūnas were burnt on hills (Balys 2000, 6). A special term, *alkakalnis*, was used to denote the sacred hills, and it is presumed that rituals might have been performed on them (Ibid.). The father's estate is described by the epithet *margas* 'bright, colourful' which implies fine craftsmanship and magnificence of the defined object (Sauka 1970, 189). The father's estate also exhibits cosmological characteristics and is sometimes depicted in relation to the heavenly bodies:

9. Ant tėvelio dvaro, lelimoj,
Saulelė tekėjo, lelimoj.
10. Ant tėvelio dvaro, lelimoj,
Mėnulis ritėjo, lelimoj.
11. Ant tėvelio dvaro, lelimoj,
Žvaigždės šokinėjo, lelimoj (*Lietuvių liaudies dainynas* 2007, 577).

'The sun was rising over the father's estate. The moon was rolling over the father's estate. The stars were bouncing over the father's estate'.

The father's estate is depicted in relation to cosmological dynamics: the movement of heavenly bodies and the day/night cycle renders the estate as the stable centre of cosmos in the profane worldview.

3.3.2.3. Sacral Kingship

In the Germanic society, as well as in other Indo-European societies, a tripartite organisation of the world is manifest: the Germanic king ruled or 'administrated' the country, led warriors in the battle and assured the fertility of his land. In the *Poetic Edda*, Thor is described as *Véorr* 'protector'

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[87] Balsys notes that the early records of Baltic religion and mythology indicate special places related to theophanies, such as holy stones, springs, hills and trees (hills of Perkūnas, stones of Perkūnas, hills, armchairs, tables of God, the trees of exceptional looks), etc. (Balsys 2013, 76).

('protector of humans' in Larrington's translation) (*Hymiskviða*, stanza 21 [22]) which reveals the notion that only the worthiest warrior is able to protect the world. The sacral kingship of a Germanic king manifested in the fusion of his political and religious functions: 'it is not that he is simply a priest; he is the leader of the folk and the guarantor of their heil who acts so that the gods may bless them' (Chaney 1970, 12). The king acts as an intermediary between gods and his people in order to assure the prosperity and the well-being of his folk. The ruler's ability to effectively fulfil the mediating function was a crucial condition of his kingship: the king who lost the favour of gods, and, accordingly, his power to protect his people, was no longer considered to be a good king[88].

In *Beowulf*, the heroic narrative revolves around the archetype of the king as the sacral ruler who assures safety and prosperity of his people in the warrior society. The main task of Beowulf as the protagonist of the heroic narrative is to fight the monsters which threaten the peace and security of his land. Beowulf's victory over monsters ensures peace as the hero himself promises (lines 1671-1674):

Ic hit þē þonne gehāte, þæt þū on Heorote mōst	Now, I say, you may sleep in Heorot Free from care – your company of warriors
sorhlēas swefan mid þīnra secga gedryht,	And every man of your entire people,
ond þegna gehwylc þīnra lēoda,	Both the young men and the guard.
duguðe ond iogoþe, þæt þū him ondrǣdan ne þearft,	Gone is the need To fear those fell attacks of former times
þēoden Scyldinga, on þā healfe,	On the lives of your earls, my lord of Scyldings.
aldọrbealu eorlum, swā þū ǣr dydest.	

King as the leader of his warriors is seen in the following epithets: *gūðrōf* 'war-brave' (line 608), *hæle hildedēor* 'fearless in fight' (line 1646), *heaðorōf cyning* 'war-noble king' (line 2191). Warrior's prowess is seen as the basis for leadership:

Þā wæs Hrōðgāre herespēd gyfen, wīges weorðmynd, þæt him his winemāgas georne hȳrdon	Then to Hrothgar was granted glory in battle, mastery of the field; so friends and kinsmen

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[88] In case of the king's inability to perform his functions, the king had to be replaced in order to assure the well-being of the society: 'When the king's "luck" or charismatic power is maintained, the favour of the god rests with the tribe; when he has lost his "luck" and is impotent to secure the divine blessings, his people are justified, even obliged, to do the only thing possible, to replace him with another who can make the office once more effective' (Chaney 1970, 12).

(lines 64- 66)   gladly obeyed him

Beowulf's leadership is supported not only by his bravery but also by his supernatural strength which is demonstrated in the encounter with Grendel:

Sōna þæt onfunde fyrena hyrde,	The upholder of evils at once knew
þæt hē ne mētte middangeardes,	He had not met, on middle earth's
eorþan scēata on elran men	Extremest acres, with any man
mundgripe māran; Hē on mōde wearð	Of harder hand-grip: his heart
forht on ferhðe; nō þȳ ǣr fram meahte.	panicked.
(lines 750-754)	He was quit of the place no more
	quickly than that.

The strength of Beowulf is emphasised by employing the formula *middangeardes, eorþan scēata* 'on middle earth's extremest acres' which repeats the name of the earth twice to proclaim how exceptional the hero's strength is.

The function of king Hrothgar as the protector of his land and people (cf. Clemoes 1995, 127) is reflected in the epithet *ēþelwearde* 'the land's guardian' (line 616) which may be seen as formulaic (with numerous variants, such as *helm Scyldinga* 'protector of Scyldings', lines 371, 456, 1321, *eorla hlēo* 'defender of earls' (lines 791, 1035, 1866, etc.). A similar aspect of Beowulf's kingship is reflected in the epithet *folces hyrde* 'shepherd of the people' (line 610). The shepherd's responsibility to protect his sheep from wolves and other dangers may be compared to the king's responsibility to protect his people from various perils. This formula probably is of Christian origin and may be compared to the epithet 'good shepherd' in different biblical passages, i.e. 'I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep' (John 10:11)).

As Clemoes states, the social function of the king as the distributor of wealth among the warriors is reflected in the formula *beahgifa* 'the giver of rings': 'while 'ring-giving' traditionally stood for all bestowal of benefits by a leader, the compound noun *beahgifu* provided the nucleus of a standard unit of Old English verse' (Clemoes 1995, 124). Beowulf's fight with the dragon (the symbol of greed, destruction, and chaos in general) may be connected to the social chaos caused by blood-feud. This chaos disrupts the order of the society embodied in 'gift-exchange relations and consecrated customs which are alliance and blood kinship' (Watkins, 1995, 446) and if unstopped, leads to its destruction. The theme of social chaos embodied in the motif of killing one's own kinsmen is recurrent in numerous episodes of *Beowulf*: Hrothgar tells Beowulf the story of Heremond who kills his own comrades in a fit of anger (line 1713), and in the second part of the poem the conflicts between Germanic tribes are described (*hū ðā folc mid him fǣhðe tōwehton* 'the

peoples had stirred up the strife between them' (line 2948)). In contrast, Beowulf righteously stresses that he shall not experience the wrath of God for killing his fellow men – the claim which supports his fame as the lord who is *lēodum līðost* 'the kindest to his people' (line 3182). Therefore, Heremond and Beowulf embody the oppositions which convey the socially acceptable and the erroneous way of living.

In the Lithuanian tradition, the motif of sacral kingship may be observed in a unique military-historical song, *Sudaičio sutartinė* (Sudaičio polyphonic song). In historical context, the song reflects the struggle of the Lithuanian people against the foreign invaders (usually the Crusaders) (Krištopaitė 1965, 26). The poetic narrative revolves around the duke who is reproached for not guarding the castle and the warriors who were killed by the enemies while being asleep; further on, the duke laments the death of warriors:

-Ko tujei, kunigėli,	*-Ne taip gaila man pilelės,*
Sudaičio,	*Sudaičio,*
Ilgai pamigėli,	*Kaip man gaila karelių,*
Sudaičio?	*Sudaičio.*
Miegą bemigantem,	*Aš pilelę supilsiu,*
Sudaičio,	*Sudaičio,*
Iškirta karelius,	*Dvejais trejais meteliais,*
Sudaičio,	*Sudaičio,*
Išpylė pilelę,	*O karelių nebužauginsiu,*
Sudaičio.	*Sudaičio,*
Katro tau, kunigėli,	*Nei dešimtis metelių,*
Sudaičio,	*Sudaičio*
Daugiau pagailėja,	(Slaviūnas 1959, 1207).
Sudaičio,	

(Why, oh duke, have you been sleeping for so long? While you were sleeping, the warriors have been killed, the castle has been destroyed. What did you pity more? I do not pity the castle, but I pity the warriors. I will build a castle in two or three years; I will not be able to bring up warriors even in ten years).

The song depicts the raid of the enemies in concise phrases which consist of a verb and a noun in diminutive form: *Iškirta karelius* (the warriors were killed), *Išpylė pilelę* (the castle was destroyed). The archaic diminutive forms of the words 'duke' (*kunigėlis*) and 'warriors' (*kareliai*) attest the archaic origin of the song (Krištopaitė 1965, 29). The duke is seen as the leader of Lithuanian warriors who is responsible for their safety and well-being. His lament over the dead warriors also conveys the worries about uncertain future (Sauka 2007, 94). The song represents a ritualised lament which expresses the loss of an entire social group. In the context of folk narrative, where family relationships are of great importance, the duke is seen almost as a fatherly figure ('I will not be able to bring up warriors in ten years'). This semantic

aspect may be linked to the concept of sacral kingship, where the king is the protector of his people.

The refrain (*Sudaičio*) has been discussed as both a name of a historical duke (although no historical records confirm such name) or as a typical onomatopoeic refrain of polyphonic songs (in comparison with other refrains of war-themed *sutartinės – sudauto*, *sodauto*, *sadautoj*, etc.) (Slaviūnas 1959, 7-8). The refrain is also important for the performance of the song as it establishes the rhythm and facilitates the multi-part polyphonic singing.

3.3.2.4. Peace-weaving

The poem *Beowulf* notably introduces the motif of maintaining the peace and prosperity in the warrior society by means of arranged marriage, namely, peace-weaving. This motif reflects the social realities of the Anglo-Saxon England – arranged marriages were practiced in order to avoid tribal feuds and disputes. Therefore it is important to take a closer look at the motif of peace-weaving as embedded in the kenning *freoðuwebbe* 'peace-weaver' (*Beowulf*, line 1942). According to Welsh, 'The role of the Germanic peaceweaver is twofold: to create by her marriage peaceful bonds between two previously or potentially hostile kin-groups, or tribes, and after her marriage to encourage and support peaceful and harmonious relations among the members of the kin-group, especially the comitatus, that she has joined' (Welsh 1991, 7)[89]. However, marrying a noble princess from a rival tribe had an inherent risk of instigating a feud rather than avoiding it. Fell emphasises the ambivalent situation of the peace-weaver, whose loyalties are divided between her husband and her kinsmen: 'On the one side will be her husband and any children she may has borne him. On the other will be the kinsmen of her family by blood, her father and her brothers' (Fell 1984, 37). As seen in the following passage, the arrival of queen Freawaru from Denmark inspires tensions among Heathobards:

Mæg þæs þonne ofþyncan ðēodne Heaðo-Beardna	The lord of the Heathobards may not like it well
ond þegna gehwām þāra lēoda,	
þonne hē mid fǣmnan on flett gǣ̂ð:	at the bringing home of his bride to the hall:
dryhtbearn Dena, duguða biwenede;	

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[89] Overing states that in a masculine warrior society the role of a peace-weaver cannot actually be fulfilled – 'the system of masculine alliance allows women to signify in a system of apparent exchange but does not allow them signification in their own right, that is, outside the system of signification' (Overing 2000, 224).

| (lines 2032-2035) | nor may it please every earl in that nation
to have the pride and daring of
Denmark at table. |

The phrase 'peace-weaver' is encountered only once in the poem; it is featured in the passage that describes queen Modtryth, the wife of king Ofa. The poem tells that as a king's daughter, Modtryth was of violent temper and caused the death of many of her suitors. The poet deems her manner as 'unqueenly' and sees it as a distinct antithesis of the behaviour of a peace-weaver:

Ne bið swylc cwēnlīc þēaw	Unqueenly ways
idese tō efnanne, þēah ðe hío ǣnlicu sȳ,	for a woman to follow, that one who weaves peace,
þætte freoðuwebbe fēores onsǣce	though of matchless looks, should demand the life
æfter ligetorne lēofne mannan.	of a well-loved man for an imagined
(lines 1940-1943)	wrong!

The poetic device of juxtaposition is employed in this passage: the peace-weaver as the female embodiment of peace and life-assurance is contrasted with the woman who causes death (*fēores onsǣce* 'demand the life'). Overing proposes that the metaphorical process of weaving pertains to kinship: 'as peace-weavers, women enact and embody the process of weaving, they weave and are woven by the ties of kinship' (Overing 2000, 224). Meanwhile Chance investigates the role of the peace-weaver and concludes that the medieval queen metaphorically weaves together 'lightheartedness, gentleness, and possibly that constructive eloquence used in counselling' (Chance 1986, 5). Modtryth's behaviour complies with none of the above mentioned functions, even more so, by flouting them, the maiden becomes a threat to the order of society. However, Modtryth overcomes her violent temper after she is married to the king Ofa and gradually acquires more qualities of a traditional queen:

þæt hīo lēodbealewa lǣs gefremede,	little was the hurt or harm she brought
inwitnīða, syððan ǣrest wearð	on her subjects then, as soon as she
gyfen goldhroden geongum cempan	was given,
(lines 1946-1948)	gold-decked, in marriage, to the mighty young champion.

This change of Modthryth resembles the 'taming' of Gerd by Skirnir and implies that the maiden's compliance with the social norms brings peace to her family and to the whole society.

In *Beowulf*, the social role of the queen as a peace-weaver and the challenges of her position are surmised in the speech of queen Wealhtheow (lines 1169-1187). She addresses Beowulf after his victory over Grendel and

expresses the traditional worries experienced by a queen in a feuding society. The social role of the queen as the cup-bearer is observed in the formula *onfōh þissum fulle* 'accept this cup' which connotes the function of hospitality and also has a ritualistic meaning – the mead cup usually is passed to the noblest warrior and only then to the others (Chance 1986, 1). Orchard notes that in her speech the queen frequently employs imperatives yet this seemingly imposing manner is abandoned in the following lines which betray the queen's worries about the future of her family and her people (Orchard 2003, 220). The speech of Wealhtheow fully exposes the vulnerable position of the queen in the times of blood-feuds. In case of king Hrothgar's death, Wealhtheow together with her children and kinsmen are left at the mercy of Hrothful, king Hrothgar's nephew. In her monologue, the queen vocalises her position as a peace-weaver; while the king protects his people with heroic deeds, the queen aims at maintaining peace with her words.

3.3.3. Establishing Cosmic Truth and Order: '*Hero Slays Serpent with Weapon*'

The cosmogonic narrative deals with the creation of the existing cosmos from the primeval void, or nothingness. However, once established, the cosmos is constantly threatened by the agents of chaos. An important theme in the mythic narrative is the battle between the hero and the serpent. Scholars V.V. Ivanov and V.N. Toporov reconstruct the scheme of the combat between the God of Thunder and the Serpent as follows:

> A. The God of Thunder is placed in the upper position, usually on top of a mountain, near the top of the tripartite world tree, oriented towards four cardinal directions.
> B. The Serpent is placed in the lower position, near the roots of the tripartite world tree, on the black wool.
> C. The Serpent steals the cattle (and hides it in a cave, behind a rock); the God of Thunder shatters the rock, and frees the cattle (or people).
> D. The Serpent hides behind different living creatures or turns itself into them (e.g. human being, horse, cow, etc.); The Serpent hides behind a tree or a rock.
> E. The God of Thunder riding on his horse or in his carriage uses his weapon (hammer – thunder) to smite the tree and burn it down or to smite a rock and shatter it.
> F. When the God of Thunder defeats the Serpent, water appears (rain falls); the Serpent hides in the waters of the earth (Ivanov, Toporov1974, 5).

Overcoming of the serpent, the embodiment of chaos and imbalance, leads to the harmonisation of the cosmos and in this respect is related to the creation myth or, as Watkins puts it, 'The dragon-killing myth represents a symbolic victory of order over the forces of chaos, as we have seen; of growth over

stagnation in the cycle of the year, of rebirth over death' (Watkins 1995, 446). The motif of slaying the serpent by the hero is a constitutive part of mythical cycle which begins with cosmogony and ends with the destruction of the world. Although this fight takes place after the creation of the world, it is intended to maintain the extant cosmic order as the conflict between chaos and the cosmos is everlasting. As the mythic worldview is cyclical, the divine death (and the heroic/profane death in corresponding heroic and folk narratives) is perceived as part of the cycle which starts anew once the stage of death and destruction ends.

In the mythic narrative of the *Poetic Edda*, it is the thunder god Thor who fights the World Serpent *Miðgarðsormr* (or *Jǫrmungandr*). Meanwhile in the heroic narrative, Beowulf fights three monsters who hinder the peace and stability of the society. The transformations of the serpent-slaying myth pervade not only heroic lore but also other types of traditional oral narrative. In the folk narrative, the motifs of the encounter with the serpent are observed in Lithuanian charms, Old English *The Nine Herbs Charm* and *Riddle 45* of the *Exeter Book*. In the mythic narrative, the fight between the thunder god and the World Serpent is of cosmic significance; in the heroic narrative, the interests of the community depend on the outcome of the fight between the hero and the monsters, and in the folk narrative the allusions to the mythic fight reflect the struggles of profane people against chaos embodied in war, sickness, etc.

A note has to be made on the records of the discord between *Perkūnas* (the thunder god) and *velnias* (the devil) in Lithuanian folklore. The folk narratives describing this discord incorporate numerous motifs distinctive to the Indo-European myth of the battle between the thunder god and the serpent. Balys discussed these motifs and compared them to similar motifs from Scandinavian and Baltic traditions in his study *Griaustinis ir velnias Baltoskandijos kraštų tautosakoje* 'The Thunder God and the Devil in the folklore of the Baltoscandic regions' (1938). The Lithuanian motifs recount that the discord arises due to a theft: *velnias* steals various objects belonging to *Perkūnas*, such as a smoking pipe, a knife, an axe (Balys 1998, 128-129). Similarly, in the Poetic Edda, (*Þrymskviða*), the hammer of Thor is stolen by the giant named Thrym (Ibid. 127). Perkūnas[90] hunts the devil[91], who hides in

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[90] In Lithuanian legends, Perkūnas is usually seen in an anthropomorphic form: as a tall man (huntsman) with a brown beard, as an old man, as a dark man (Balsys 2017, 146-147).
[91] The devil is often depicted in an anthropomorphic form (a young man, a young master, a forester, etc.) or zoomorphic form (a black cat, a small goat, a hare, etc.) (Balys 1998, 144-155, Vėlius 1987, 41-45).

water, in the hollow of a tree, on or behind a stone, and mocks the thunder god. *Perkūnas* smites *velnias* with lightning (sometimes, when the thunder god is depicted as a huntsman, he employs arrows, etc.) yet is unable to overcome the devil without the help of an ordinary man who kills the devil with a bullet made of a silver object (Ibid. 144-155). These briefly introduced motifs of Lithuanian folk tales are linked to the scheme proposed by Ivanov and Toporov. The devil may be seen as a transformation of the Indo-European serpent as it retains its basic functions (stealing from the thunder god, hiding, and the final defeat).

3.3.3.1. *Overcoming of Adversary*: the Hero and the Cosmic Serpent

In the Germanic tradition, Thor was one of the main divine figures, 'the god supreme not only over stormy sky, but also over the life of the community in all its aspects' (Ellis Davidson, 1990, 75). His importance for the community stems from his strength and ability to fight the forces of chaos which threaten the gods, and which are embodied in the World Serpent and the giants (Clunies-Ross 1994, 258-262). In the *Poetic Edda*, the fight between the thunder god Thor and the *Miðgarðsormr* ('Midgard serpent', or World Serpent) is attested in *Vǫluspá* and *Hymiskviða*.

Hymiskviða recounts Thor's fishing expedition and his encounter with *Miðgarðsormr*, the serpent surrounding the world[92]. Clunies Ross ascribes the narrative of the poem to quest narratives, where gods have to leave *Ásgarðr* and travel to a distant and hostile area (usually, the land of giants) in order to obtain a desirable object (Clunies Ross 1989, 10). In the poem, Thor pulls the serpent out of water, but his triumph is not final as the serpent returns to its watery realm:

23. *Dró diarfliga dáðraccr Þórr*
orm eitrfán upp at borði;
hamri kníði háfiall scarar,
ofliótt, ofan úlfs hnitbróður.

23. Then very bravely Thor, doer of great deeds,
pulled the poison-gleaming serpent up on board.
With his hammer he violently struck, from above
the hideous one, the wolf's intimate-brother's head.

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[92] Dronke maintains that the origin of the narrative of Thor's encounter with the World Serpent, as depicted in *Hymiskviða*, is of Christian rather than of Indo-European origin due to the fact that the serpent is not described as a threatening force (Dronke 2011, 89-100).

24. *Hreingálcn hlumðo, enn hǫlcn þuto,*
fór in forna fold ǫll saman.
Søcþiz síðan sá fiscr í mar.

24. The sea-wolf shrieked and the
rock-bottom re-echoed,
all the ancient earth was collapsing
. . . .
then that fish sank itself into the sea.

In terms of poetic grammar, both the god of thunder and his adversary are depicted by employing kennings. The Indo-European formula 'HERO SLAYS SERPENT'[93] is reflected in the kenning which describes Thor as *orms einbani* 'the serpent's sole slayer' (stanza 22), and in the epithet describing his adversary as *orm eitrfán* 'poison-gleaming serpent' (stanza 23). Kennings describing Thor highlight his place in the pantheon (*Óðni sifiaðr* 'Odin's kinsman' (stanza 21), his role and deeds (*dáðraccr* 'doer of great deeds') (cf. Clunies Ross 1989, 18). Kennings, pertaining to Thor's adversary, the serpent, introduce it as *goð fía* 'enemy of the gods' (stanza 22) which highlights the conflict between the serpent and the gods, and *úlfs hnitbróður* 'wolf's intimate-brother' (stanza 23) which exhibits its kinship to another mythic monster, the wolf Fenrir. Based on these kennings, the World Serpent may be included in the paradigm of mythic adversaries of the god of thunder. The phrase *umgiorð neðan allra landa* 'All-Lands-Girdler' (stanza 22) establishes the cosmological place of the serpent: it is below (*neðan*) in relation to the position of Thor and it also encircles the land which is, undoubtedly, *Miðgarðr* (Clunies Ross states that this description allows placing the serpent on the horizontal plane of Norse cosmology (Clunies Ross 1989, 10)). In this respect, the serpent may be viewed as the Indo-European 'monstrous reptile associated with water, lying in it or blocking its flow' (West, 2007, 255). The element of water has chaotic qualities and 'is both a symbol of and vehicle for the natural forces that cannot be confined' (Clunies Ross 1994, 53). With reference to the tripartite division of the world, water is often presented as the realm of underworld or a path leading to it. Therefore, demonic creatures residing in the deep waters may be seen as representatives of the underworld.

The image of the god of thunder is closely associated with the natural phenomena (thunder and lightning) and retains such qualities as the sound of thunder: in *Hymiskviða*, when Thor strikes his adversary *hǫlcn þuto* 'the rock-bottom re-echoed'. Similarly, in *Beowulf*, Beowulf's fight with Grendel attests the strength of both the hero and his adversary as the great hall of Heorot resounds from the exposure:

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[93] In *Rigveda*, the thunder god Indra is often referred to as *vṛtrahán-*, '*vṛtra*-smasher' (*Vṛtráḥ* refers to the dragon who blocks the flow of water) (West 2007, 246). Similarly, in Old Hitite, the weather god *Tarḫunnas* is described as the killer of the serpent: '*Tarḫunnas* came and he killed the serpent' (Watkins 1995, 321).

Dryhtsele dynede;	*Denum eallum wearð,*	The crash in the banqueting-hall came to the Danes,
ceasterbūendum,	*cēnra gehwylcum,*	The men of the guard that remained
eorlum ealuscerwen.	*Yrre wǣron bēgen*	in the building, With the taste of death. The deepening rage
rēþe renweardas.	*Reced hlynsode.*	Of the claimants of Heorot caused it
(lines 767-770)		to resound.

The phrases *dryhtsele dynede* 'the banqueting-hall resounded', *reced hlynsode* 'the building resounded' may be compared with the scene of Thor's encounter with *Miðgarðsormr*, when the bottom of the sea resounds and the earth itself shakes. In the first phrase, *dryhtsele dynede*, alliteration of the dull *d* sound resembles the sound of the thunder[94] and implies the magnitude of the fight.

It may be concluded that *Hymiskviða* conveys the Indo-European formula 'HERO SLAYS SERPENT' in formulaic variations *orms einbani* 'the serpent's sole slayer' and *hamri kníði* 'with his hammer he violently struck'. The common Indo-European motifs include the adversary of the thunder god in the shape of a serpent, the god's weapon (hammer), the positions above/below of the thunder god and the serpent respectively.

The second encounter of Thor with the World Serpent takes place during *Ragnarǫk*. As recited in *Vǫluspá*, Thor strikes the serpent (presumably killing it), yet dies himself afterwards:

56. *Þá kømr inn mæri mǫgr Hlóðyniar,*	[56.] 53. Then comes Hlodyn's
gengr Óðins sonr við úlf vega;	glorious boy:
drepr hann af móði miðgarðz véor,	Odin's son advances to fight the
muno halir allir heimstǫð ryðia;	serpent,
gengr fet nío Fiorgyniar burr	he strikes in wrath Midgard's
neppr frá naðri, níðs óqvíðnom.	protector,
	all men must abandon their homesteads;
	nine steps Fiorgyn's child takes, exhausted, from the serpent which fears no shame.

Several poetic devices in this stanza refer to Thor as the son of *Jǫrð* (Earth), as seen in the epithet *mæri mǫgr Hlóðyniar* 'Hlodyn's glorious boy' and a

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[94] The ancient Sanskrit *Upanishads* (*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 5.2.2*) tell of the three main virtues embodied in the alliterative words *damyata* 'restrain yourselves', *data* 'give', and *dayadhvam* 'be compassionate' which are proclaimed by the voice of thunder: 'this same thing does the divine voice here, thunder, repeat: Da! Da! Da! that is, restrain yourselves, give, be compassionate' (translated by Hume 1921, 150).

synonymous phrase *Fiorgyniar burr* 'Fiorgyn's child'[95]. According to Dronke, the poetic devices which portray the Earth as Thor's mother are employed purposefully to stress the fact that both men and gods must leave their homesteads (Dronke 1997, 150). As Larrington notes, the kenning *miðgarðz véor* 'Midgard's protector' is expected to describe Thor, yet as it is Thor who strikes the serpent (formula *drepr hann af móði* 'he strikes in wrath'), the kenning may paradoxically refer to the Midgard Serpent which encircles the earth (Larrington 2014, 285). Even though the serpent is killed, the destruction of the world is imminent and follows Thor's own demise. As Dronke suggests, the verbal paradigm of this stanza demonstrates the rise of Thor's strength to the climax and its subsequent decline: 'He 'comes' to the arena of battle, he 'goes' against the monster, he 'strikes' in fury <…> and he 'goes', dying, away from the enemy he had killed' (Dronke 1997, 70). Thor's death precedes the destruction of the doomed world; his strength is insufficient to escape the fate.

In *Beowulf*, the narrative of the poem is structured around the three fights between Beowulf and his adversaries: Grendel, Grendel's mother, and the dragon. The motivation of Beowulf in each fight is socially acceptable and approved by the code of warrior behaviour – the hero must attain glory, avenge his kinsmen and provide his people with material well-being. The threats to Heorot (and the extant social order) are embodied in poetic imagery: 'Chaos and Unreason are represented by images of fire, the sea, and darkness, all encroaching upon the land and the light, upon the created human world' (Grant 1975, 47). Thus, Beowulf's fights with different monsters, the embodiments of chaos, may be interpreted as an act of repetitively establishing harmony in the society.

The first fight of Beowulf is his encounter with Grendel. Whereas Heorot is perceived as the symbol of the prosperity of king Hrothgar's warriors, Grendel becomes a threat to the very core of the social order. Here Beowulf is seen as the protector of the earls – 'the symbolic social force of Beowulf as

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[95] In Celtic Gaul and Britain his name was *Taranis, Taranus*, or *Tanarus*, corresponding to Old High German *Donar* or *Thunar*, Old Norse *Þorr* which may be traced back to **Þunaraz* (cf. English 'thunder') (West, 2007, 249). The name for god of thunder might have been coined from onomatopoeia for thunder, which may be compared to Lithuanian euphemism for the god of thunder *Perkūnas – Dundulis, Burzgulis*, which refer to the sound of thunder. Further connection of the Germanic name Thor to the Lithuanian *Perkūnas* may be found in relation to the goddess *Fiǫrgyn*, the mother of Thor, identified with the earth, and her male counterpart *Fiǫrgynn* (both go back to **Perkwún(i)yos, *Perkwunı*) who 'was once Thor's father and himself the old Germanic storm-god' (Ibid. 250).

eorla hleo was pitted against a creature whose very existence was a threat to organized society' (Clemoes 1995, 132). Grendel's hostility towards the community is seen in lines 154-155: *sibbe ne wolde/ wið manna hwone   mægenes Deniga* 'peace was not on his mind/ towards any companion of the court of Hrothgar'. In the poem Grendel is described as the 'kin of Cain' (line 107), relating him to the biblical story of fratricide. As William Whallon states, 'perception that the monsters of the moor are allied to the man who slays his kinsman' resulted from the fusion of heroic myth and the early Christian teachings (Whallon 1962, 93). Both Grendel and Cain demonstrate envy which is the main cause why Cain kills his brother and Grendel kills the warriors of Heorot. The comparison of Grendel and Cain conveys a warning about feuds kindled by envy.

Grendel is also associated with fire (or the fire of hell in a Christian reading (Grant 1975, 47)). From the perspective of Germanic mythology, fire may be linked to destruction as embodied in the events of *Ragnarǫk*. When Grendel approached Heorot with evil plans, *him of ēagum stōd/ ligge gelīcost lēoht unfaēger* 'Out of his lurid eyes,/ Leapt like a flame, an unfair light' (lines 726-727) (in comparison, the third adversary encountered by Beowulf, the fire-breathing dragon, is directly associated with the destructive power of fire). Grendel is also linked to water (or, more precisely, water as a chaotic element of the Underworld). Grendel is introduced in relation to the water of marshes, moors, and mist: *mǣre mearcstapa sē þe mōras hēold/ fen ond fæsten* 'the fell and fen his fastness was,/ the marsh his haunt' (lines 103-104); *Ðā cōm of mōre under misthleoþum/ Grendel gongan* 'Down off the moorland's misting fells came/ Grendel stalking' (lines 710-711)[96].

Finally, Grendel is represented by various images pertaining to darkness (*sē þe in þȳstrum bād* 'dwelling in darkness' (line 87, also lines 703, 707, 755, etc.) (cf. Huppe 1984, 56, Renoir 1982, 22). Lapidge compares Grendel to Old Norse *draugr*, a man who was not properly buried and came to terrorise the living people at night. An encounter similar to that of Beowulf and Grendel is depicted in Old Norse *Grettis saga*, where the protagonist *Grettir* fights the draugr *Glámr*: 'Grettir waits alone in the hall, seated on a bench; Glámr seizes him; a violent wrestling match ensues' (Lapidge 1993, 376). Grettir cuts Glámr's head off, yet due to the glare of the latter's eyes he becomes cursed. Meanwhile Beowulf rips off Grendel's arm and beheads his corpse later, after the encounter with his mother.

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[96] Chambers provides some evidence from Old English contractual documents, where the name 'Grendel' is featured in the place names of certain types of land, i.e. meres and swamps in particular (Chambers 1959, 304-307).

The second fight of Beowulf is his quest for Grendel's mother who came to Heorot to seek vengeance for her son. Beowulf has to venture into the supernatural sphere – the distant and dangerous mere of Grendel's mother. This quest and fight coincide with the structural pattern of monomyth proposed by Joseph Campbell:

> A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man (Campbell 2004, 28).

Grendel's mother, as well as her son, exhibits kinship to other monsters encountered in the Germanic tradition – Grendel is called *þyrse* 'troll' and *eoten* 'troll, monster' (lines 426, 761); in the lair of his mother a sword made by ancient giants is found by Beowulf (line 1558). Through their association with the giants, Grendel and Grendel's mother may be linked to the primeval chaos.

Grendel's dam is related with the destructive aspects of water: *sē þe wæteregesan wunian scolde/ ċealde strēamas* 'She had been doomed to dwell in the dread waters,/ in the chilling currents' (lines 1260-1261). Elaborate imagery is employed to depict the mere where Grendel's mother lives:

Hīe dȳgel lond	Mysterious is the region
warigeað wulfhleoþu, windige næssas,	they live in – of wolf-fells, wind-picked moors
frēcne fengelād, ðǣr fyrgenstrēam under næssa genipu niþer gewīteð,	and treacherous fen-paths: a torrent of water
flōd under foldan. Nis þæt feor heonon	pours down dark cliffs and plunges into the earth,
mīlgemearces, þæt se mere standeð;	an underground flood. It is not far from here,
ofer þǣm hongiað hrinde bearwas,	in terms of miles, that the Mere lies,
wudu wyrtum fæst wæter oferhelmað.	overcast with dark, crag-rooted trees that hang in groves hoary with frost.

(lines 1357-1364)

The wilderness that must be crossed to reach the mere of Grendel's mother emphasises the distance between the realm of people and the realm of the unknown (dichotomy centre/periphery). Upon catching sight of the mere of Grendel's mother, the warriors notice that it is inhabited by *wyrmcynnes fela* 'race of serpents' and *sellice sǣdracan* 'strange sea-drakes' (lines 1425-26). The structural position of the mere echoes the cosmology of Norse myth: the mere is below the earth '*under foldan*' (or rather the middle-earth, the abode of people), and is inhabited by dangerous snake-like creatures.

Beowulf's victory over Grendel's mother clears the water from the malevolent creatures. It may be construed as a cosmogonic act, when the forces of chaos are purged, and water is purified:

wǣron ȳðgebland eal gefǣlsod,	Both the deep reaches and the rough wave-swirl
ēacne eardas, þā se ellorgāst	
oflēt līfdagas ond þās lǣnan gesceaft.	Were thoroughly cleansed, now the creature from the otherworld
(lines 1620-1622)	
	Drew breath no longer in this brief world's space.

In the Christian perspective, the passage may be compared to the harrowing of hell, when Christ descended to hell to free the spirits inhabiting it; moreover, the purified water may be associated with baptism[97].

Beowulf's victory over Grendel's mother is depicted in a detailed and vivid imagery:

Hē gefēng þā fetelhilt, freca Scyldinga	The Scylding champion, shaking with war-rage,
hrēoh ond heorogrim, hringmǣl gebrægd	
aldres orwēna, yrringa slōh,	caught it by its rich hilt, and, careless of his life,
þæt hire wið halse heard grāpode,	brandished its circles, and brought it down in fury
bānhringas bræc; bil eal ðurhwōd	
fǣgne flǣschoman; hēo on flet gecrong.	to take her full and fairly across the neck,
(lines 1563- 1568)	
	breaking the bones; the blade sheared through the death-doomed flesh. She fell to the ground.

The phrase yrringa slōh 'brought it down in fury' (or 'in wrath struck', as translated by Greenfield) reveals a transformation of the formula 'HERO SLAYS SERPENT'.

The third fight of Beowulf, which exhibits numerous similarities with the mythic narrative, is his encounter with the dragon. This fight echoes the cosmic fight of the Thunder God with the World Serpent yet takes place in a different dimension – not in the cosmic realm but in the heroic world. The dragon constitutes a threat both to the physical well-being and the social structure of the warrior society:

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[97] McNamee (1960, 93-94) quotes the following blessing of the water intended for baptism: 'Therefore may all unclean spirits, by thy command, O Lord, depart from hence; may the whole malice of diabolical deceit be entirely banished: may no power of the enemy prevail here; may he not fly about to lay his snares; may he not creep in secretly; may he not corrupt with his infection. May this holy and innocent creature be free from all the assaults of the enemy and purified by the removal of all his malice'. In this respect, McNamee offers viewing Beowulf's descent into the mere as part of the ceremony of baptism.

> The dragon functions as the hero's adversary by posing a distinct physical threat to society – a function that is accented by the dragon's antisocial habitat: the dragon must come *from* wilderness *to* a social group in order to attack it. Its ontological status as an outsider achieves thematic significance as a direct result. Corresponding to the hero's benevolent distribution of wealth, the dragon's adversarial relationship with the hero is exemplified in its malevolent hoarding of treasure (Evans 1985, 100).

When Beowulf recounts his deeds before his final battle with the dragon, he establishes his own heroic status and his speech 'becomes part of the construction of the history of the Geats and a significant part of the poem's creation of its hero' (Clark 1997, 289). Beowulf's encounter with the dragon consists of three stages: three times Beowulf and the dragon meet in combat, and the third time is fatal for both of them. Upon the first sighting of Beowulf, the dragon demonstrates fury:

Hete wæs onhrēred, hordweard oncnīow	The hoard-guard recognized a human voice,
mannes reorde; næs ðǣr māra fyrst frēode tō friclan. From ǣrest cwōm	and there was no more time for talk of friendship:
oruð āglǣcean ūt of stāne,	hatred stirred. Straightaway
hāt hildeswāt; hrūse dynede.	the breath of the dragon billowed from the rock
(lines 2554- 2558)	in a hissing gust; the ground boomed.

The kenning which describes the dragon, *hordweard* 'the hoard-guard', refers to the function of the Indo-European serpent as the guardian of valuable goods. The dragon is depicted as living in a desolate place which resembles the hostile lands of *Útgarðr*. The phrase *hrūse dynede* 'the ground boomed' may be seen as an allusion to the mythic fight (the earth shakes after Thor's encounter with the World Serpent as well).

In his first encounter with the dragon, Beowulf strikes the adversary (*gryrefāhne slōh* 'struck the gleaming horror' (line 2576)) but his sword fails him. The second time Beowulf strikes with all his force, (*mægenstrenġo slōh* 'dealt out a sword-blow with his full strength' (line 2678)) yet the sword breaks and the endeavour does not result in victory either. In the third encounter, it is Wiglaf who delivers the fateful blow to the dragon, and only then Beowulf plucks all the strength and kills the dragon with his stabbing knife: *forwrát Wedra helm wyrm on middan* 'the Geats' Helm struck through the serpent's body' (line 2705). Beowulf himself dies shortly afterwards from the wound inflicted by the dragon. The repetition of poetic phrases rendering how Beowulf struck he dragon, together with frequent references to the dragon as *wyrm* 'snake, worm, dragon' (*ðā se wyrm gebēah* 'the fleetness of the serpent wound itself together', line 2567) allow identifying these formulaic expressions as transformations of the formula 'HERO SLAYS SERPENT'.

The recurrent predicate *slōh* 'struck' may be seen as a variation of the predicate 'kills' from the basic formula identified by Watkins; the same predicate is repeatedly employed to refer to Thor's fight with the Midgard Serpent (*kníði* 'struck' (*Hymiskviða,* stanza 23), *drepr* 'strikes' (*Vǫluspá*, stanza 56)).

Dronke claims that the narratives describing Thor's fight with the serpent and Beowulf's fight with the dragon share a similar sequence of motifs: they both kill their adversary but die from its venom, Beowulf is possibly succeeded by Wiglaf and Thor's son Magni succeeds him in the new world that emerges after *Ragnarǫk* (Dronke 1996, 316). According to Irving, after assisting Beowulf to fight dragon, Wiglaf becomes his successor – they are viewed as 'no longer vaguely kinsmen but as the closest of family members, father and son', based on the fact that Beowulf leaves his warrior's belongings to Wiglaf (Irving 1993, 367-368). Wiglaf's behaviour here reflects his 'ideal loyalty' (Clemoes 1995, 123), the quality of exceptional value in the warrior society. However, Wiglaf's status as the successor of Beowulf remains doubtful, inasmuch as the woman who sings the lament at Beowulf's funeral expresses worries about uncertain future.

Beowulf may be compared to another prominent dragon-slayer of the Germanic tradition, Sigurd. *Fáfnismál* ('The Lay of Fafnir') introduces Sigurd as the slayer of the dragon Fafnir:

Reginn qvað:	Regin said:
23.	23. 'Hail to you, Sigurd, now you've
'*Heill þú nú*, *Sigurðr*! *nú hefir þú sigr vegit*	won the victory and have brought down Fafnir;
oc Fáfni um farið	of those men who tread upon earth
manna þeira, er mold troða,	I declare you've been raised the least
þic qveð ec óblauðastan alinn.'	cowardly'.

As representatives of the heroic narrative, Beowulf and Sigurd perform the outstanding deed of defeating the supernatural dragon. Both heroes are described by the same formulaic sequences which reveal that their strength and courage are unmatched by any man on earth (formula *er mold* 'on earth').

The transformations of the mythic fight between the thunder god and the serpent are observed in the low mimetic narrative of Lithuanian charms against snakes, the Anglo-Saxon *Nine Herbs Charm* and *Riddle 45* of the *Exeter Book*. It should be noted that in these charms, yet another dimension of narrative is presented – the chaos is neither of cosmic nor heroic proportions, it is rather the chaos of the profane world, embodied in illness. The healers who recite the charms strive to restore the order of the human body, i.e. health.

The following Lithuanian charm against the bite of a serpent demonstrates certain similarities with the scheme of mythic combat identified by Ivanov and Toporov: *Atlaisk geluonį, jei neatlaisi – juodas marias, žalias ųžuolas, un ųžuola griausmas, jei neatlaisi – tavi razmuš in dvylikų kavalkų* (Vaitkevičienė 2008, 196) 'take back your venom, if you do not take it back – a black sea, a green oak tree, thunder over the oak tree, if you do not take it back, you will be struck into twelve pieces'. The sound of the thunder, '*griausmas*', may be interpreted as a reference to the thunder god. Even though the subject is implicit, the predicate *tavi razmuš* 'you will be struck' may be linked with the predicate 'slays' in the formula 'HERO SLAYS SERPENT'. The black sea and the oak tree refer to the cosmogonic myth; the colour black indicates chaos, meanwhile the image of the oak tree embodies the centre of the world.

In a different perspective, many of Lithuanian charms against snakes include a polite address to the snake or even a supplication. Vėlius observes that grass-snakes were linked to the underworld and fertility; the latter aspect is seen in the connection between the word žaltys 'grass-snake' and the words *žalias* 'green', *želti* 'to sprout', *Žilvinas* (the snake's proper name) (Vėlius 2012, 441). Zavjalova notes that in Lithuania, snakes had their habitats in hollow trees, so they were usually associated with trees and forests (Zavjalova 1998, 74). The scholar argues that the veneration of snakes (specifically, grass-snakes) was a widespread custom[98], therefore the antagonistic attitude towards snakes (as reflected in the epic character of the investigated charm) must have been a result of later transformations (Ibid.). Based on historical records of Baltic mythology, Balsys proposes an inference that grass-snakes might have been viewed as zoomorphic manifestations of certain pagan deities (*Mara*, the patron of cows in Latvian legends; *Aitvaras*, a household deity, in Lithuanian legends) (Balsys 2017, 154). These insights reveal the ambiguous meaning of the archetype of snake in Lithuanian tradition inasmuch as it may pertain to both life and death, illness and vitality.

In comparison, in the Anglo-Saxon *Nine Herbs Charm*, the healer summons the strength of the god Woden (Odin) to smite the serpent into nine parts:

ðas VIIII magon	*wið nygon attrum.*	A serpent came crawling, it
Wyrm com snican,	*toslat he man;*	wounded no one.
ða genam Woden	*VIIII wuldortanas,*	

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[98] The veneration of grass snakes in medieval Lithuania is recorded in numerous chronicles, e.g. *De antiquibus Borussiae* (1518) by Erasmus Stella, *Preussische Chronik* (16th century) by Simon Grunau, *The Simple Words of Catechism* (1547) by Martynas Mažvydas, and others (cf. *Baltų religijos ir mitologijos šaltiniai, Vol. III*).

sloh ða þa næddran, þæt heo *on VIIII tofleah.* *þær geændade æppel and attor,* *þæt heo næfre ne wolde on hus bugan.* (lines 31-35)	Then Woden took nine glorious twigs, Struck then that adder so that she flew apart into nine pieces. There apple and poison made an end That she never should dwell in a house (Cameron 1993, 145).

This excerpt from the metrical charm contains a transformation of the formula 'HERO SLAYS SERPENT' – *sloh ða þa næddran* 'Struck then that adder'[99]. The number of pieces into which the serpent is divided is nine – a sacral mythological number. The apple which counteracts the venom is an important motif in Germanic mythology – the golden apples guarded by goddess Idunn provided immortality for gods. In the charm, the nine herbs symbolically pertain to Woden's magic twigs ('Then Woden took nine glorious twigs'): ordinary plants, used by the healer, become a magic weapon against illness, when they acquire a symbolic meaning. In this charm, the healer is a warrior in a profane context: he fights not the mythical monsters of cosmic proportions but a human malaise. The human illness adheres to the paradigm of monsters as it damages the structural unity of the human body in a similar way as the monsters destroy the unity of the cosmos or a society. Further lines present the origin of the herbs:

þa wyrte gesceop witig drihten, *halig on heofonum, þa he hongode;* *sette and sænde on VII worulde* *earmum and eadigum eallum to bote.* (lines 36-40)	These herbs the wise Lord created, Holy in heaven where he hung, Ordained and sent into the seven worlds, For poor and for rich, a cure for all (Ibid.)

These lines allude to the narrative presented in the *Poetic Edda*, *Hávamál*: Odin hung himself from the world tree Yggdrasil for nine nights, wounded with a spear, in order to gain wisdom and the knowledge of ancient runes (stanzas 138-139). The 'seven worlds', *VII worulde*, mentioned in the charm, may refer to the nine worlds of the Norse cosmology, with the replacement of one magical number by another. The alliterative phrase *halig on heofonum* 'holy in heaven' reveals the Christian meaning of the charm, thus the motif of hanging God may also be associated with Christ hanging on the cross. Pagan and Christian readings of the charm highlight the aim of the self-sacrifice of

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[99] Neville discusses the word *onflyge*, usually translated as 'venom' or 'infection' in relation to the description of dragon in Beowulf, where it is referred to as poisonous *lyftfloga* 'air-flyer' (2315a) and *widfloga* 'far-flyer' (2346a) (Neville 1999, 118).

god: Odin hung himself in order to gain secret wisdom, and Christ suffered on the cross to redeem the humanity.

Furthermore, a transformation of the mythic serpent may be observed in the image of a bookworm in the *Riddle 45* of the *Exeter Book*:

Moððe word fræt. Me þæt þuhte *wrætlicu wyrd, þa ic þæt wundor* *gefrægn,* *þæt se wyrm forswealg wera gied* *sumes,* *þeof in þystro, þrymfæstne cwide* *ond þæs strangan staþol. Stælgiest ne* *wæs* *wihte þy gleawra, þe he þam wordum* *swealg.*	A moth devoured words. That seemed a curious deed, which I learnt with wonder, that this worm swallowed certain songs of man, a thief in darkness, ate mighty sayings that strengthen the foundation. A thievish guest did not become any wiser because he swallowed those words[100].

The interpretation of the bookworm as a transformation of the mythic serpent is based on its association with darkness (*þeof in þystro* 'a thief in darkness') and destructive deeds (*stælgiest* 'thievish guest'). The phrase *stælgiest* may be compared to Grendel's description in *Beowulf* as   *ellengǣst* 'powerful spirit' (line 85). Clemoes stresses the ambivalence of the second part of the compound describing Grendel: '*gǣst* (with long *æ*) means 'demon' or 'spirit' (cf. ModE *ghost*), whereas g*æst* (short *æ*) means 'visitor' (cf. ModE *guest*) (Clemoes 1995, 377). Bearing this aspect in mind, bookworm's description as *stælgiest* seems to exhibit some of the same ambivalence. Based on implicit references to mythic motifs, both Grendel in the high mimetic narrative and the bookworm in the low mimetic narrative belong to the same paradigm of the creatures of darkness, guests/ghosts who inflict damage. Salvador-Bello notes the alliteration (*wrætlicu wyrd, wundor, wyrm, wera, wihte)* which revolves around the key element – *word* as a metaphor for parchment (Salvador-Bello 2015, 354). Williamson adds that the riddle also bears elegiac character – the replacement of oral tradition with written word is seen as the former's gradual demise:

> The old form of memory, the rhythmical word-hoard, has given way to the material storehouse of the vellum page. What the mind of the singer guarded and passed on, the book makes plain and perishable. The voiceless word is ravaged by time and the worm (Williamson 1982, 193).

The interpretation of the bookworm as a symbol of destruction discloses that words are perceived as an intangible resource and they are easily

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[100] Translation mine: Giedrė Buivytė.

destroyed when made tangible; in Williamson's reading, the bookworm becomes a symbol of the decay of oral tradition.

3.3.3.2. The Magic Sword

The weapons of gods and of warrior-heroes are of utmost importance as they determine the outcome of the combat against chaos. Thor's weapon is the hammer *Mjǫllnir*[101] which aids the god in smiting the serpent as seen in the formula *hamri kníði* 'with his hammer he violently struck'. In *Hymiskviða*, the hammer is introduced on numerous occasions as the mighty weapon of Thor, the blow of which makes the earth resound.

The weapon of Norse god Freyr is his magic sword – *þat sverð, er siálft vegiz / við iotna ætt* 'that sword which fights by itself / against the giant race' (*Skírnismál,* stanza 8). Freyr's sword is a specimen of exceptional craftsmanship, as rendered in alliteration *mióvan, málfán* 'slender, inlaid' (Ibid. stanza 25). However, in order for the magical qualities of the sword to manifest, an exceptional and worthy master is required: *þat sverð, er siálft mun vegaz,/ef sá er horscr, er hefir* 'that sword which will fight by itself / if he who wields it is wise' (Ibid. stanza 9). Freyr gives his sword to Skirnir when the latter departs to woo Gerd; it is through lack of his sword that Freyr is slayed in *Ragnarǫk*.

Meanwhile in the warrior society depicted in *Beowulf*, swords were the 'trusted companions' of the heroes – they often were given names and sometimes were personified[102] (Culbert 1960, 15). Orchard notes that in *Beowulf* different words are employed to denote a sword (*bil*, *brond*, *ecg*, *heoru*, *mece*, *sweord*) which are combined with different adjectives and compose a variety of poetic expressions referring to a sword:

> by compounding these simple words, he could also add to the list the terms *beadomece*, *guðbil*, *guðsweord*, *hildebil*, *hildemece*, *wigbil*, all of which essentially mean 'battle-sword'; he could form other compounds based on these words to describe other attributes of the weapon, such as *ealdsweord* ('old sword'), *gomelswyrd* ('old sword'), *hæftmece* ('hilted sword'), *maðþumsweord* ('treasure-sword'), *wægsweord* ('wave-patterned sword');

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[101] The name of the hammer *Mjǫllnir*, the weapon of Thor, has equivalents in other Indo-European languages and is often associated with lightning: 'These terms relate on the one hand to a series of words in other languages meaning 'hammer' or 'mallet' (Luwian *maldani-*, Latin *malleus*, Russian *mólot*, Breton *mell*), and on the other to words meaning 'lightning' (Old Church Slavonic *mlŭnĭji*, Russian *mólnija*, Old Prussian *mealde*; Welsh *mellt*; cf. Icelandic *myln* 'fire') (West 2007, 253-254).
[102] In her study of nominal compounds denoting swords in *Beowulf*, Brady states that the poem may have preserved the names of the archaic swords which had been passed as heirlooms from one generation to another (Brady 1979, 91).

he could describe a type of sword (such as *brogdenmæl*, *hringmæl*, *sceadenmæl*, or *wundemæl*, all of which are varieties of damascened or otherwise adorned weapons); or he could introduce metaphor, and refer to a sword as a 'battle-light' (*beadoleoma* or *hildeleoma*) or a 'war-friend' (*guðwine*) (Orchard 2003, 69).

In terms of weaponry used in fights, Beowulf's endeavour becomes more complex and dangerous with each adversary: 'there is a commensurate increase in the amount of armoury brought to bear against the male (no weapons), the bestial female (two swords), and the serpent (two swords and a shield), as Beowulf steadily shifts from a primary defensive role to an aggressive one, motivated to varying degrees in each of his battles by thoughts of glory, vengeance, and treasure' (Orchard 1995, 29). The swords selected by Beowulf indicate the scale of the forthcoming combat and imply that exceptional weapons are required to fight supernatural monsters.

In his encounter with Grendel, Beowulf uses no sword in order to participate in a fair fight, as Grendel does not use a sword (Culbert 1960, 14). In his combat with Grendel's mother, Beowulf uses *Hrunting*, Unferth's sword, which breaks. Beowulf overcomes Grendel's dam with the ancient sword of the giants that belongs to the paradigm of exceptional or supernatural weapons (*ealdsweord eotenisc   ecgum þȳhtig* 'old sword of giants with firm edges') (line 1558). In the fight with the dragon, Beowulf's trustworthy sword, *Nægling*, fails him. The failure of the sword not only bears the blame of Beowulf's subsequent defeat but also emphasises his strength which is too great even for a magnificent sword (Culbert 1960, 19). The hero is inseparable from his sword as the main weapon to win the fight; yet the hero's strength, courage, and honour are considered more valuable than the most unique weapons.

3.3.3.3. 'Anti-Hero Slays Hero': *Imperishable Fame*

The final battle between Beowulf and the dragon bears fundamental similarities to the events of *Ragnarǫk* – in both narratives, the anti-hero kills the hero (the dragon kills Beowulf, the Midgard Serpent kills Thor, Fenrir kills Odin) and the forces of chaos seemingly reign. Both these fatal endeavours mark the end of an era: the death of gods signifies the destruction of the world, meanwhile the death of Beowulf, who has no heirs, signifies the future extinction of the race of Geats (O'Donoghue 2014, 22-23). Even so, the death of Thor and other gods does not merely establish the reign of chaos but rather marks the end of a cosmic cycle – 'Chaos and Unreason – the monsters – do not win; they destroy what is ripe for destruction, a decaying and tainted world, but a world whose defenders have sufficient strength to destroy their

destroyers' (Dronke 1966, 303). The destruction of the old world in the *Poetic Edda* and the old society in *Beowulf* lays path to a new world and a new society.

After the death of a hero, his heroic legacy lives on, as conveyed in the formula 'IMPERISHABLE FAME' (Watkins 1995, 173). The Indo-European poet was the one who made the hero immortal by means of his poetic craft (Ibid. 70). The main source of fame in warrior's life, i.e. the courage in combat, is praised in numerous passages of *Beowulf*:

wyrce sē þe mōte	we must earn some
dōmes ǣr dēaþe; þæt bið drihtguman	renown,
unlifgendum æfter sēlest	if we can, before death; daring is the thing
(lines 1387-1389).	for a fighting man to be remembered by.

In the phrase *dōmes ǣr dēaþe* 'renown before death' repetition of the hard-sounding letter d reveals that the principle of earning fame is firm and unchangeable; the first element of the phrase is emphasised.

Even though Beowulf's comitatus betrays him in his final battle, his heroic deeds ensure that his good name is remembered by his people:

> the survival of the reputation his *lofdæda* have won in the memories of those who mourn him (and in the fact of the epic itself) suggests that we consider extended senses of the word *geþeon*. For Beowulf, as far as for other heroes of Old English literature, 'to prosper' is not merely to achieve limited earthly success but more importantly to do those 'praiseworthy deeds' with which he simultaneously accepts and defies death (Hansen 1982, 56)[103].

In other words, for the hero, his individual well-being and prosperity is of secondary importance as his main aim is the demonstration of his strength and of his will to protect his people. Therefore the remembrance of kings signifies their relationship with their people – king Scyld Scefing is remembered as *lēof landfruma* 'beloved ruler of the land', *lēofne þēoden* 'beloved prince', *bēaga bryttan* 'the giver of rings' (lines 31, 34-35), and Beowulf is remembered as *mǣrne þēoden* 'famed chieftain', *hlāford lēofne* 'beloved lord' (lines 3141-3142).

It should be noted that the imperishable fame was bestowed upon the hero by gods or earned by the hero himself (West 2007, 397). In the heroic poem *Helgakviða Hundingsbana I* of the *Poetic Edda*, Helgi's fame is predetermined at hero's birth:

2. Nótt varð í bæ, nornir kómu,	2. Night fell on the estate, then came norns,
þær er öðlingi aldr of skópu;	

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[103] *Lofdæd* may be translated as 'a deed deserving praise', and *geþeon* as 'to thrive, flourish, prosper' (*Bosworth-Toller Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*).

þann báðu fylki frægstan verða	those who shaped fate for the prince;
ok buðlunga beztan þykkja.	they said the war-leader should be most famous
	and that he'd appear the best of princes.

The Norns endow Helgi with heroic glory as conveyed in the epithet *fylki frægstan* 'war-leader famous'. The epithet establishes war-related prowess as the most important quality of a hero due to which his name lives on after his death.

3.4. *Orbis Alius*: Other Earth

In the mythic worldview, death is seen as a part of cosmic cycle and not as a finite end. The mythical perception of death and afterlife is revealed in laments and eulogies for great kings, as well as in the descriptions of divine, heroic, and profane funeral customs.

In the mythic worldview, death is seen as the passage to the afterlife; it is embodied in a variety of interconnected motifs: journey, passing through the funeral pyre, opening of the gates, transmigration of the soul to the elements of the natural world. The mythic narrative of the *Poetic Edda* contains the motifs of the death and burial of the god Baldr that establish cremation as the proper way of burial and laments as the accompanying ritual. The different realms of the afterlife are introduced in the motifs and imagery of Valhall and Hel. The heroic narrative of *Beowulf* recounts the death of the heroic king as a fateful event in the warrior society and introduces the burial customs following the death of the king. The folk narrative of Lithuanian laments presents the afterlife as a domain which mirrors the world of the living.

3.4.1. The '*Dying God*' Myth

The death of gods is one of the most significant motifs in the Germanic mythic narrative as it commenced the cosmic destruction – 'the gods themselves were doomed to fall before the powers of darkness, and heaven and earth to pass away' (Ellis Davidson 1990, 212). In *Vǫluspá*, the death of the god Baldr is seen as the precursor to *Ragnarǫk* (cf. Meletinsky 2000, 226). According to the myth, the mother of the god Baldr, goddess Frigg, asked all things on earth not to harm the god. The mistletoe, however, was not asked to vow not to hurt Baldr and was later used by the god Loki to trick the blind god Hodr into killing Baldr.

In the mythic narrative of the *Poetic Edda*, the destruction of the world is not seen as finite. The earth rises anew after *Ragnarǫk*, and the god Baldr comes back: *Muno ósánir acrar vaxa,/ bǫls mun allz batna, Baldr mun koma*

'without sowing the fields will grow,/ all evil will be healed, Baldr will come' (stanza 62). The image of growing fields connotes the fertility of the new earth (which may be compared with the fertility of the first earth, which was green with leek). The cyclical perception of time in myth is attested in the last stanza of the poem which tells that the World Serpent (*naðr fránn* 'the gleaming serpent') exists in the second earth as well. The existence of gods and their supernatural adversaries in the new universe implies that the battle between chaos and the cosmos is cyclical.

From the perspective of vegetation myths, it is essential to mention the motif of metempsychosis, or the transmigration of the soul into plants and animals after death, in Lithuanian funeral laments. The motifs where the deceased person is expected to 'return' in the form of a plant are common. Therefore in laments the deceased person is addressed and asked into what kind of plant he/she will be transformed: *Dai pasakai, dukrele, dai pasakai, slūgele, Dai kokiu žolynėliu tu sprogsi, Dai kokiu žolynėliu tu žydėsi* 'Tell me, my daughter, what plant shall you become, what blossoms shall you bear?' (*Lietuvių tautosaka* 1964, 530). The symbolical incorporation of the human life into the cycles of nature is also seen in the parallel between death and winter: *O šią naktelę buvo šalnelė, o visų mergelių žolelės pašalnojo, o mano sūnelį iš šaknelių išrovė* 'This night the frost has bitten the flowers of all the girls, the frost has uprooted my son' (Ibid. 315). The motif of metempsychosis is also echoed in the recurrent parallels between the deceased person and a tree: *O aš nuaisiu in žalią girelę, o aš atsistosiu po žaliu aržuolėliu, o prakalbės žalias aržuolėlis: O, siratėle, ko stovi po mano šakelėmis, mano šakelės – ne tėvelio baltos rankelės* ('I shall go to the green forest, I shall stand under a green oak tree. The oak tree shall say: why are you standing under my branches, my branches are not father's white arms' (Basanavičius 1926, 10)). While death symbolises the phase of autumn/winter in the natural cycle of the year, mythical thought also implies rebirth in the spring. The metaphorical 'birth' of a human being in the form of a plant therefore confirms the cyclical worldview where the cycle of death and birth is continuous, and the death of a human being constitutes an integral part of it.

The motif which conveys the merging of a human being with the elements of nature after death is observed in Lithuanian military-historical songs. The death of a warrior in the field of battle is usually depicted by employing the imagery of nature:

14. Kirto galvelę
Kaip kopūstužį,
Bėgo kraujužėlis
Kaipo upužė,

Virto brolio liemenėlis
Kaip girios ąžuolėlis! (Ibid.).

('The head was cut off like a cabbage, the blood was flowing like a river, and the brother fell down like an oak tree').

The imagery of the song implies a great affinity between a human being and the elements of nature which is exposed in numerous comparisons – the flowing blood is compared to a river, the body to an oak tree[104], etc. The significance of the warrior's death is within the proportions of the folk narrative: the images are constrained by the experiences of a peasant (nature and agriculture are the key elements). The elaborate poetic depiction of the warrior's death reveals the meaningfulness and purposefulness of the demise in the field of battle inasmuch as the battle was fought to defend the native land (Krištopaitė 1965, 37-38).

The cosmic significance of human death is seen in the motif of the personified sun who offers the sisters to help mourn the death of their brother:

Devynis rytus
Migluže eisiu
O šį dešimtą
Nė n'užtekėsiu! (Juška 1954, 1137)

('Nine mornings I will rise covered in mist and on the tenth morning I will not rise at all').

As the sun is the source of light, warmth, and life, the mourning contrasts with its usual functions and emphasises the exceptional effect of the warrior's death, while the number nine connotes the magnitude of the mourning (Krištopaitė 1965, 52). This motif suggests a projected sympathetic relationship between a human being and the cosmos where the death of a human being temporarily alters the natural cosmic cycle.

3.4.2. Death as Sleep

A common depiction of death is its metaphorical representation as sleep. In the Old English poem *Beowulf*, death is conveyed as sleep in numerous passages: *uppe lægon,/ sweo[r]dum āswefede* 'up they lay/ put to sleep by swords' (lines 566-567), *æfter billes bite   blōdfāg swefeð* 'from the bite of a bill-blade sleeps, stained in blood' (line 2060). The heroic aspect of Old English poetry is observed in the connection of the 'sleep of death' to battle – the death is usually depicted as violent, caused by a sword.

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[104] The transformation of human beings into trees and other elements of the natural world is an archaic motif, which is also observed in the Lithuanian folk tale *Eglė žalčių karalienė* 'Eglė the Queen of Grass-serpents' (Krištopaitė 1965, 50), discussed on p. 143-144 of this dissertation.

In Lithuanian funeral laments, the simile that refers to death as sleep and the deceased person as merely sleeping is noticed on numerous occasions. Therefore the laments frequently include the motif of trying to wake the dead person:

Kelkis, motule, kelkis, širdele,
Nuog balto patalėlio, nuog pušų lentelių!
Kol neprakalbi į mane, siratą, nei vieno žodelio?
Ar mano motulės akmens širdelė? (*Lietuvių tautosaka* 1964, 522).

('Wake up, my dear mother, rise from your bed, from the pine-wood planks. Why are you not talking to me, is your heart made of stone?')

The metaphor of death as sleep is extended when the bed, *baltas patalėlis*, is identified as pinewood planks (the coffin). In the lament, the dead mother is addressed as if she was alive and able to wake up and give an answer – death is not perceived as the end of person's existence but rather as its continuation on a different level. This attitude towards death is characteristic of the mythic worldview, according to Cassirer:

> mythical thinking makes no clearer distinction between life and death than between sleeping and waking. The two are related not as being and nonbeing, but as two similar, homogeneous parts of the same being. In mythical thinking there is no definite, clearly delimited moment in which life passes into death and death into life (Cassirer 1955, 36-37).

Lithuanian laments present a recurrent motif of a cuckoo bird, which tries to wake the deceased person: *ir kad sulėktų raibos gegutės, kad jos sutūptų ant žalių šakelių, kad jos kukuotų garsiais balseliais, kad vis budzytų mūsų mocinėlį iš to aukšto kalnelio* 'I wish that cuckoo birds would gather on green branches to cuckoo and wake our mother in the high hill' (Basanavičius 1926, 37). The cuckoo bird is usually depicted as singing a song in a tree that grows on the grave – 'it could be assumed that the tree growing on the grave is a posthumous dwelling for the soul which acquired the form of the cuckoo bird, and the singing of the cuckoo bird may be seen as the melodic expression of the world of the dead, a sacral language by means of which the other world sends signs to this world' (Vaitkevičienė 1998, 31). The image of a cuckoo bird embodies a mediator between the world of the living and the world of the dead. The two worlds are interrelated: the living perceive that the dead communicate with them when they hear the cuckoo bird; the dead are not seen as isolated and voiceless – they speak through the elements of nature.

3.4.3. '*Heaven Swallowed the Smoke*'

Funeral pyre is one of the central motifs related to the mythic perception of death and funeral rituals. It may be considered as a metaphorical representation of the passage to the afterlife. The description of Baldr's death

in *Vafþrúðnismál* introduces the motif of funeral pyre and the custom of burial by burning:

Óðinn qvað:	Odin said:
54 *'Fiolð ec fór, fiolð ec freistaðac,* *fiolð ec reynda regin:*	54. 'Much have I travelled, much have I tried out, much have I tested the Powers;
hvat mælti Óðinn, áðr á bál stigi, *siálfr í eyra syni?'*	what did Odin say into his son's ear before he mounted the pyre?'

The perception of death as an altered state of being (rather than non-being) is seen in Odin's communication with the dead son (presumably, Odin whispered to Baldr's ear the secret of his resurrection (Larrington 2014, 288)). In *Vǫluspá*, the alliterative phrase *bál um bar* 'bring to the funeral pyre' is employed in reference to funeral:

33.*Þó hann æva hendr né hǫfuð kembði,* *áðr á bál um bar Baldrs andscota;*	[33.] 34. He never washed his hands nor combed his hair, until he brought Baldr's adversary to the funeral pyre;

The funeral pyre of a god serves as a mythic prototype for the establishment of cremation as the proper type of burial. The funeral pyre is related to the Germanic belief that the rising smoke signifies the welcoming of the soul of the warrior at Valhall, Odin's hall for dead warriors. This belief is mentioned in the Old Norse collection of sagas *Heimskringla* (13th century) by Snorri Sturluson:

> Óðinn was burned when he was dead, and that burning was carried out most magnificently. Their belief was that the higher the smoke rose into the sky, the loftier in heaven would be the one who had been burned, and the better off the more wealth that was burned with him (*Ynglinga Saga*, translated by Finlay and Faulkes 2011, 13) .

A half of dead warriors was chosen by valkyries and introduced to Valhall; another half of those slain in the battle went to Folkvang, the hall of the goddess Freyja; the dead who did not earn the warrior's renown entered Hel, the underworld space ruled by the eponymous goddess. Valhall is described in *Griminsmál* as follows:

8.*Glaðsheimr heitir inn fimti, þars en* *gullbiarta*	8. 'Gladsheim a fifth is called, there gold-bright Valhall
Valhǫll víð of þrumir;	extends out widely;
enn þar Hroptr kýss hverian dag *vápndauða vera.*	there Odin chooses every day those dead in combat.

Odin's hall *víð of þrumir* 'extends out widely' and is described by the epithet *gullbiarta* 'gold-bright' which connotes the exceptional status of the hall designed for dead warriors. In pagan Germanic tradition, seemingly, the

warrior's life was believed to continue in the afterlife, as rendered in *Vafþrúðnismál*:

Vafðrúðnir qvað:	Vafthrudnir said:
41. *'Allir einheriar Óðins túnom í hǫggvaz hverian dag*;	41. 'All the Einheriar fight in Odin's courts every day;
val þeir kiósa oc ríða vígi frá,	they choose the slain and ride from the battle;
sitia meirr um sáttir saman.'	then they sit the more at peace together.'

The word *Einheriar* refers to the warriors who earned the right to dwell next to Odin, the chief of gods, and regain their occupation in the afterlife. At Valhall they fight every day in preparation for *Ragnarǫk* yet enjoy a peaceful afterlife in general. In relation to *ethos*, the cultural context implies that the medieval warrior society considered heroic death the worthiest of divine approval.

In *Beowulf*, the funeral pyre constitutes the common type of burial and reflects the beliefs about the afterlife. The personification *Heofon rēce swe[a]lg* 'Heaven swallowed the smoke' (line 3155), which refers to the funeral of Beowulf, and the alliterative phrase *wand tō wolcnum wælfȳra mǣst* 'spiralled into the clouds the greatest fire of the slain' (line 1119), which refers to the funeral of Hnæf, may allude to the journey of the dead to the afterlife. The spectacular smoke spiralling into heaven may be interpreted as a symbol of the warrior's fame as well. Gwara sees this motif as an ambiguous one as it remains unclear whether Beowulf's soul was accepted by god(s) or merely left his body (Gwara 2008, 342). Hill suggests that the smoke of Beowulf's funeral pyre, as well as that of the pyre of Hildeburh's son, introduced in the song of a scop, may imply 'his innocence and his noble virtue' (Hill 1995, 158). The orientation of the smoke upwards, towards the sky, and the 'acceptance' (swallowing) of the smoke by heaven may contribute to the premise that the rising smoke symbolises the acceptance of the soul by the divine realm. Moreover, the belief that the cremation ceremony was perceived as the beginning of the hero's journey to the afterlife may be illustrated by the placement of weapons on the funeral pyre together with the dead hero. The invaluable weapons signified the status of the hero and were seen as a necessity for a warrior in the afterlife. Alliterative phrases are employed to describe the weapons placed on Beowulf's funeral pyre (*helm[um] behongen, hildebordum* 'hung with helmets, with battle-shields', *beorhtum byrnum* 'with bright byrnies' (lines 3139-3140) (in comparison, the bedecked boat of king Scyld Scefing is also equipped with *hildewǣpnum ond*

heaðowǣdum 'weapons of battle and war-dress', and *billum ond byrnum* 'bill-blades and byrnies' (lines 39-40)).

In the Lithuanian (and the Baltic in general) tradition, the cremation of the dead is attested in the historical records and in the myth of Sovijus. The myth is recorded in an excerpt of the *Malala's Chronicle* (1261) and recounts the death and burial of a man named Sovijus. Sovijus is buried by his sons in a grave, yet he complains that he could not rest as he was eaten by worms there. Afterwards the deceased is placed in a tree which is also found unacceptable due to bees and other insects; finally, when Sovijus is cremated, he is content and tells that he slept like a new-born in a crib (Vėlius 1996, 267-268). Beresnevičius observes that in the Baltic culture, as well as in other Indo-European cultures, the destruction of the body on a funeral pyre might have been viewed as the necessary premise for the soul to begin its journey to the afterlife (Beresnevičius 1995, 30). Greimas notes that the cremation rites in Lithuania and in the ancient Greece served the same purpose, i.e. facilitated the journey of the soul, unburdened by the body (Greimas 2005, 410). Razauskas provides different examples of the word *dūmas* 'smoke' in the Indo-European languages and notes its similarity with the ancient Greek *θυμός* 'spirit, soul' which leads to the inference that smoke may have been viewed as the vehicle of the soul on its path to the other world (Razauskas 2011, 146-148)[105]. On balance, the funeral pyre constitutes an important motif in the Indo-European poetry and reveals a certain dichotomy of the body and soul: the body is exclusively associated with the world of the living whereas the soul continues to exist after death.

The motif of funeral pyre is also important in connection to the suttee of the dead hero's wife. The mythic example is set by Nanna, the wife of the god Baldr: 'Then was the body of Baldr borne out on shipboard; and when his wife, Nanna the daughter of Nep, saw that, straightway her heart burst with grief, and she died; she was borne to the pyre, and fire was kindled' (*The Beguiling of Gylfi* 1916, 74). In the heroic section of the *Poetic Edda*, wives of the heroes are seen as willing to die on the pyre together with their husbands: Brynhyld intends to sacrifice herself on Sigurd's funeral pyre: *brenni mér inn húnsca á hlið aðra* 'burn the southern man beside me' (*Sigurðarkviða hin skamma*, stanza 66). Gudrun's lament (*Guðrúnarhvǫt*) includes the motif of self-sacrifice as well:

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[105] In the 17th century, Praetorius mentioned priests called *Szwakones* (derived from the word *žvakė* 'a candle' and *Dumones* (derived from the word dūmai 'smoke') who gain the knowledge of the spirit's passage to the afterlife by observing the smoke of a candle to (Balsys 2015, 84). Among Lithuanian peasants, similar divinations persisted until the beginning of the 20th century (Ibid.).

20.'*Hlaðit ér, iarlar, eikikǫstinn,*	[20.] 21. 'Nobles, build high the oak-wood pyre!
látið þann und hilmi hæstan verða!	Let it be the highest among the princes.
megi brenna brióst bǫlvafult eldr,	May fire burn up the breast so full of wrongs,
um hiarta þiðni sorgir!'	may sorrows melt about my heart.'

The most important aspect of the woman's self-sacrifice is her desire to be united with her husband after death: 'the woman is slain that she, together with the dead man's other possessions, may be his in another life' (Ellis 1968, 57). Here, as in previous instances, the funeral pyre and the ceremony of cremation are perceived as a means of transitioning to the afterlife.

3.4.4. The *Wælweg*: the Path to the Other Earth

In the mythic worldview, the deceased must cross a vast space in order to enter the afterlife. In the *Poetic Edda*, poem *Helgakviða Hundingsbana* II , the hero Helgi is seen as travelling to the place of his eternal rest which is situated in heaven:

49. '*Mál er mér at ríða roðnar brautir,*	49. 'It's time for me to ride along the blood-red roads,
láta fǫlvan ió flugstíg troða;	to set the pale horse treading the path through the sky;
scal ec fyr vestan vindhiálms brúar,	I must cross the wind-vault's bridge in the west,
áðr Salgofnir sigrþióð veki.'	before Salgofnir awakens the victorious people.'

The epithet *roðnar brautir* 'reddened ways' refers to dawn, whereas Helgi is depicted as returning to his place of eternal rest on his steed, treading the sky as if it was the ground. In this way, the warrior's afterlife mirrors his life in the world. The kenning *vindhiálm* 'wind-vault' describes the sky, and is incorporated into another kenning *vindhiálms brúar* 'wind-vault's bridge' which denotes the rainbow, *Bifrost*. The imagery of dawn, the sky, and the rainbow allow presuming that Valhall is situated in heaven.

Yet another way to reach the realm of the dead (as several realms of the afterlife existed in the Germanic worldview) was by crossing a body of water. Inasmuch as the Anglo-Saxons were a seafaring people, in *Beowulf* the archetypal image of the sea is perceived as a path to the afterlife: kennings *hronrāde* 'whale road' (line 10), *swanrāde* 'swan road' (line 200), *seglrāde* 'sail-road' (line 1429) establish the metaphorical perception of the sea as a road. The funeral of king Scyld Scefing takes place at the seaside: the king is

placed on an adorned boat together with his weapons and valuable possessions and the boat is sent to the sea. Water in *Beowulf* exhibits a cosmogonic and a chthonic meaning: the sea brought the king Scyld Scefyng from an unknown land as a child; he was returned to the sea after death (*hī hyne þā ǣtbǣron   tō brimes faroðe* 'he they carried to the sea's surf' (line 28), *lēton holm beran* 'they let the sea bear' (line 48), *gēafon on gārsecg* 'gave to the ocean' (line 49)).

In Lithuanian folklore, water also symbolises the distance between life and the afterlife which must be crossed by the souls of the dead[106]. In a folk song, the acting person expresses the desire to come to a land where there is no necessity for labour and which exists *už jūrų marių* 'beyond seas' (Beresnevičius 1990, 99). The narrative proceeds with an allusion that such land is the realm of the dead. A belief (already influenced by Christianity) that the souls of dead people repent in water has been noted by Balys (2004, 183-185).

In the Lithuanian tradition, the deceased person is seen as departing to the realm of the dead, hence, the recurrent motif of the journey: 'either when submerging in water, or travelling down to the underworld, or when ascending to heaven, the soul of the dead person had to overcome the distance that separates the domain of the living from the domain of the dead' (Beresnevičius 1990, 115). Therefore the motif of journey is prominent in funeral laments: *Motulė pasirengus/ Į didelę kelionėlę,/ Į aukštą kalnelį/ Į mėlyną šilelį* 'Mother is ready for her great journey to the high hill, to the blue forest' (*Lietuvių tautosaka* 1964, 520), *O dartės iškeliausi, mūsų mocinėla, in aukštųjį kalnelį in tų sierų žamelį* 'You are leaving, our mother, for the high hill, for the grey earth' (Basanavičius 1926, 35). The image of the high hill may be interpreted as a transformation of the *Axis Mundi*, inasmuch as the profane geographical space acquires a sacral meaning and connects the world of the living with the world of the dead. The formulas 'high hill' and 'great journey' imply that the soul of the deceased person transcends the profane space.

3.4.5. Opening the Sacred Door

The entrance to the sacred space of the afterlife is often embedded in the image of gates. In the *Poetic Edda*, Both Valhall and Hel are described as having borders and gates; the gate of Valhall is *Valgrind* as attested in *Griminsmál*:

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[106] Numerous Lithuanian hydronyms demonstrate the connection of *vėlės* 'the souls of dead people' with water, as seen in the names of lakes (*Veliuonis*, *Vėlys*), rivers (*Veliuonėlė/Velionka*, *Velionė*, *Velupys*, *Vėliupėlis*), springs (*Vėlių upelis*) (Balsys 2005, 41).

22. *Valgrind heitir, er stendr velli á,* *heilog,* *fyr helgom durom*; *forn er sú grind, enn þat fáir vito,* *hvé hon er í lás lokin.*	22. 'Valgrind it's called, standing on the plain, sacred before the sacred door: ancient is that gate, but few men know how it is closed up with a lock.

The perceived sacredness of death is embodied in the epithet *helgom durom* 'the sacred door'; moreover, the gate is described as 'ancient' which implies its connection with the beginning of time and cosmogony. The image of the lock connotes that only the worthiest are able to enter Valhall.

The description of the gates of Hel in *Lokasenna* specifies that Hel is situated in the lower part of the universe: *Hrungnis bani mun þér í hel koma,/ fyr nágrindr neðan* 'Hrungnir's killer will send you to hell,/ down below the corpse-gate' (stanza 63). The kenning *nágrindr* 'corpse gate' implies the destructive aspects of death related to the decay of the body and contrasts Hel with the posthumous existence of warriors in Valhall. The gates of Hel are mentioned in *Skírnismál* in the same formula *fyr nágrindr neðan* 'down below the corpse-gate' (stanza 35). In both lays, the formula is employed as a curse, thus presenting Hel as the undesirable afterlife, the opposition of Valhall.

In Lithuanian funeral laments, the border between the realm of the dead and the realm of the living is embodied in the archaic image of *vėlių varteliai,* 'the gates of souls'. The opening of these gates was perceived as a sacral act since the soul of a profane person gained access to the sacred domain of the afterlife:

> Within the sacred precincts the profane world is transcended. On the most archaic levels of culture this possibility of transcendence is expressed by various images of an opening; here, in the sacred enclosure, communication with the gods is made possible; hence there must be a door to the world above, by which the gods can descend to earth and man can symbolically ascend to heaven (Eliade 1959, 25-26).

The 'gates of souls' are usually introduced when the previously deceased persons are asked to open the gates for the recently deceased person: *O atkelkite vėlių vartelius, o atdarykite vėlių dureles, o priimkite mano vyrelį* 'Please open the gates of souls, open the doors of souls, please welcome my husband' (*Lietuvių tautosaka* 1964, 542). Another image that describes the space of the afterlife is conveyed by the formula *vėlių suolelis,* 'the bench of souls' (*pasodink į vėlių suolelį* 'welcome her on the bench of souls' (Juška 1954, 1178)). The acceptance of a soul by the community of the dead signifies a successful transition to the afterlife:

> For some peoples, only ritual burial confirms death; he who is not buried according to custom is not dead. Elsewhere a death is not considered valid

until after the funerary ceremonies have been performed, or until the soul of the dead person has been ritually conducted to its new dwelling in the other world and there been accepted by the community of the dead (Eliade 1959, 185).

In Lithuanian laments, the dwellers of the afterlife are specified as *vėlių pulkelis*, 'the gathering of souls'. The function of *vėlių pulkelis* is to welcome the recently deceased person: *o pasodinkite į vėlių suolelį, į lemtą pulkelį* 'please welcome him on the bench of souls, accept him at the destined gathering of souls' (Juška 1954, 1187). Thus, the afterlife reflects the social organisation and social customs that are observed in the life on earth.

3.4.6. Funeral Laments: '*Alone as an Aspen*'

One of the key characteristics associated with death is women's lament: in the Germanic mythic narrative, the tradition of laments is set by the goddess Frigg, the mother of Baldr and the wife of Odin. Weeping as the sign of mourning is attested in the *Prose Edda, The Beguiling of Gylfi*: 'Thereupon the Æsir sent over all the world messengers to pray that Baldr be wept out of Hel; and all men did this, and quick things, and the earth, and stones, and trees, and all metals' (translation by Brodeur 1916, 74-75). The lament of all nature may be associated with the dying god as a symbol of decreased fertility in the winter months; his resurrection then coincides with spring and the returned fecundity of soil. Frigg's weeping is also attested in the *Poetic Edda* (*Vǫluspá*), in the phrase *Frigg um grét* 'Frigg wept':

33. *enn Frigg um grét í Fensǫlom*	[33.] 34. and in Fen-halls Frigg wept
vá Valhallr - vitoð ér enn, eða hvat?	for Valhall's woe – do you want to know more and what?

The Anglo-Saxon poem The *Dream of the Rood* introduces a lamentation over Christ's death which exhibits similarities to the lamentation over Baldr's death: *Weop eal gesceaft,/ cwiððon cyninges fyll. Crist wæs on rode*. 'All creation wept,/ Lamenting the Lord's death: Christ was on the cross' (lines 60-61, translated by Williamson 2011, 211). In view of Norse mythology, this motif may be compared with Frigg's asking of all living creatures and inanimate objects to weep for Baldr; yet in this poem it is the Christian god who is lamented by all nature.

The motif of women's lament is also depicted as part of the traditional funeral ceremony in *Beowulf*. At Beowulf's funeral, a woman expresses the sorrow over the dead king in a lament:

swylce giōmorgyd (s)īo g(eō)meowle	A woman of the Geats in grief sang out
(æfter Bīowulfe (b)undenheorde	the lament for his death. Loudly she
(song) sorgcearig, sǣðe geneahhe	sang,

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þæt hīo hyre (hearmda)gas hearde (ondrē)de,	her hair bound up, the burden of her fear
wælfylla worn, (wīgend)es egesan,	that evil days were destined her
hȳ[n]ðo (ond) h(æftnȳ)d.	- troops cut down, terror of armies,
(lines 3150-3153)	bondage, humiliation.

The lament of the Geatish woman presumably reflects the traditional custom of performing laments – loud songs of grief, recounting the worries about the future. Lithuanian laments, especially those over a dead father, include a similar element of worries and fears regarding the future life: *O, tėveli mano, užpūs mane šiaurūs vėjaliai, užlys mane bangūs lietučiai* 'oh, my father, cold wind will pierce me, rain will fall on me'; *Kas mūs pagailės, kas meiliai kalbės, kas razumniai pamokis?* 'who will have mercy on us, who will speak to us kindly, who will teach us?' (Basanavičius 1926, 10). In the epic narrative, the worries pertain to the invasion of enemies and the foreseen feuds, whereas in the folk narrative, the worries include the lack of familial affection which is reflected in the imagery of autumnal nature.

The lament of the Geatish woman may be compared to the lament of Danish princess Hildeburh, recited earlier in the poem. Hildeburh was given as a wife to the king of the Frisians, Finn, in order to assure peace, however, her brother Hnæf had a fight with king Finn while visiting Frisia and in this way the queen lost her brother, her son, and her husband (Beowulf, lines 1063-1159). Her mourning is conveyed in the phrases *ides gnornode* 'the lady lamented', *geōmrode giddum* 'sorrowed with songs' (lines 1117-1118).

The motif of lament may be observed in the Old Icelandic heroic poems recounting the story of Gudrun (*Guðrúnarkviða I*, *Guðrúnarhvǫt*, *Hamðismál*) and in the Anglo-Saxon poem the *Wife's Lament* (cf. North et al. [2011] 2014, 259). In *Guðrúnarkviða I*, Gudrun is depicted sitting besides her dead husband Sigurd, unable to cry and express her grief in a traditional way:

1. Ár var, þaz Guðrún gorðiz at deyia, er hon sat sorgfull yfir Sigurði; gerðit hon hiúfra né hǫndom slá, né qveina um sem konor aðrar.	1. It was long ago that Gudrun intended to die, when she sat sorrowful over Sigurd; she did not weep or strike her hands together, or lament like other women.

The time of death and mourning is related to the mythical time, as indicated by the formula *Ár var* 'It was long ago'. Gudrun's sitting near the body of Sigurd is indicative of the custom of wake (Hill 2013, 108). Other actions specified in the stanza also represent the traditional way of mourning – weeping, striking the hands together, and lamenting. Gudrun's grief is voiced only after her sister Gullrond uncovers the dead body of Sigurd: then she begins to weep (*enn regns dropi rann niðr um kné* 'and drops like rain ran

down over her knees' (stanza 15)) and expresses her grief in a lament. Besides the metaphorical comparison of tears with rain, other examples of imagery related to nature are observed in the description of Gudrun's lament. In the praise of Sigurd, she emphasises his superior status among the noblemen by comparing him to a leek which towers over grass (*sem væri geirlaucr ór grasi vaxinn* 'as if a leek were grown up out of the grass' (stanza 18)). Meanwhile her lonely and fragile existence is compared to that of a leaf on a tree: *nú em ec svá lítil, sem lauf sé/ opt í iolstrom, at iofur dauðan* 'I am as little as a leaf/ among the bay-willows now the prince is dead' (stanza 19). Both Sigurd and Gudrun are symbolically incorporated into different stages of the vegetation cycle: the praise of Sigurd associates him with life and vitality (cf. the role of leek in the cosmogonic narrative as attested in *Vǫluspá*), whereas in the case of Gudrun a single leaf refers to loneliness and fragility.

In *Hamðismál*, Gudrun laments the loss of her family members by comparing herself with a lonely tree:

5.*Einstoð em ec orðin sem ǫsp í holti,*	5. I have come to stand alone like an aspen in the forest,
fallin at frondom sem fura at qvisti,	
vaðin at vilia sem viðr at laufi,	my kinsmen cut away as a fir's branches, bereft of happiness, as a tree of its leaves,
þá er in qvistscoða kømr um dag varm an.	when the branch-breaker comes on a warm day.

The comparisons drawn in the lament reveal a perception of death closely related with the vegetative cycles of nature. Dead family members are paralleled to broken branches, and Gudrun's bereavement is rendered in the image of a tree without leaves. The formula *orðin sem ǫsp* 'alone like an aspen' reflects the motif of a bereft queen in the time of blood feud.

The imagery employed in Gudrun's lament bears certain similarities to the Lithuanian folk tale *Eglė žalčių karalienė* 'Eglė the Queen of Grass-serpents'. In the folk tale, the grief over the death of her husband causes *Eglė* to transform herself into a spruce, and her children into trees (the sons are transformed into an oak, an ash, and a birch, whereas the daughter is transformed into a quaking aspen). One version of the folk tale includes a verse where *Eglė* curses her daughter, her sons, and finally herself:

- Kad tu pavirstum į drebulėlę,
Kad tu drebėtum dieną naktelę,
Kad tau išpraustų lytus burnelę,
Kad iššukuotų vėjas galvelę...
Stokit, sūneliai, stipriais medeliais,
Aš, jūs mamelė, liksiuos eglelė... (Basanavičius 1997, 426).

('You shall turn into an aspen tree, you shall shiver all day and all night, rain will wash your mouth, wind will comb your hair. Sons, stand as mighty trees, and I, your mother, shall become a spruce').

The transformation of a human being into a tree is rendered by employing the poetic device of personification: the girl, turned into an aspen, still retains her human needs (washing, combing her hair) yet these functions, previously performed by her mother, are transferred to nature (rain and wind). As Vėlius notes, the protagonists of the folk tale have a close connection with myth and the veneration of trees and snakes in ancient Lithuania: *Eglė* is named after a tree and finally turns into the eponymous tree; her husband *Žilvinas* is the king of snakes (Vėlius 2012, 436-437). In the folk tale, the motif of family discord is also prominent: the brothers of the female protagonist, *Eglė*, kill her husband – a stranger to their kin.

The Old English elegy *The Wife's Lament* constitutes a monologue of a wife who has been forced into exile; in her lament, she recounts her miserable state and the longing for the happy days with her husband. In comparison to the heroic poems reciting Gudrun's grief and laments, the poem represents the low mimetic narrative where the depicted events concern a wife, a husband, and the kinsmen of her husband. The narrative remains highly enigmatic – Klinck states that while the poem is not a riddle, it still contains some characteristics of a riddle as 'much of the poem's language refers not to action but to attitude, or the environment which creates and symbolizes it' (Klinck 1992, 54). Symbolic imagery is employed to depict the dwelling place of the woman who utters the lament. Her dwelling place is seen as cold and hostile:

Heht mec mon wunian on wuda bearwe,	I was made to dwell in a forest under an oak tree in that earth-cave.
under actreo in þam eorðscræfe.	Old is this earth-dwelling, I am
Eald is þes eorðsele, eal ic eom oflongad.[107]	seized with longing.

(lines 27-29)

Orton offers to view *Wife's Lament* as a transformation of the myth of hierogamy – the wife, who laments her husband, is likened to an abandoned fertility deity, and is compared by the scholar to Gerd of *Skírnismál* who is threatened with a similar sterile existence in the dark realm of Hel (Orton 1989, 231). Striking similarities may be found between the threats of Skirnir and the description of the dwelling place and the emotional state of the speaker in *Wife's Lament*:

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[107] The text of the poem in Old English is quoted from Klinck 1992, 93-94. The translation to Modern English is mine.

Skírnismál	Wife's Lament
till hrímþursa hallar þú scalt hverian dag/ kranga kosta laus 'to the halls of the frost-giants every day/ you shall creep without choice' (stanza 30)	*Heht mec mon wunian <...> in þam eorðscræfe* 'I was made to dwell <…> in that earth-cave' (lines 27-28)
þic morn morni! 'May pining waste you away!' (stanza 31)	*eal ic eom oflongad* 'I am seized with longing' (line 29)
þar þér vílmegir á viðar rótom/ geita hland gefi! 'where bondsmen will give you/ goats' piss at the tree roots' (stanza 35).	*under actreo* 'under an oak tree' (line 28).

As Hall notes, 'the associations of trees and the subterranean in the Poetic Edda seem to be death, and curses upon females' (Hall 2002, 11); it could only be added that based on the above examples, this conclusion at least partially applies to the *Wife's Lament*. The image of a *sumorlangne dæg* 'summer-long day' (line 37) implies the contrast between the summer as the season of fertility, and the wife's infertile existence in a cold cave under the earth. This image may be compared with the image of the lonely tree without leaves in Gudrun's lament which contrasts with the *dag varman* 'warm day' (stanza 5) in the heroic poem. The *wuda bearwe* 'forest' falls in the same paradigm as the lonely aspen from *Hamðismál*, i.e. the paradigm of trees which symbolise isolation, infertility and death and which may be linked to the seasons of autumn and winter.

Besides the allusions to the motif of infertility and vegetation in halt, the imagery of the poem may also be interpreted in connection to the Underworld. Lench suggests viewing the wife's existence as death-in-life: repetition of the words referring to earth (*eorðscræfe* 'earth-cave' (lines 28, 36), *eorðsele* 'earth-dwelling' (line 29)) imply the theme of funeral (Lench 1970, 19). Although it cannot be claimed with absolute certainty that the wife speaks from the world of the dead, in her bereft state she at least symbolically resides in the cold and dark dwelling associated with the realm of the dead. The phrases *under actreo* 'under an oak tree' and *in þam eorðscræfe* 'in that earth-cave', when combined, may be seen as references to the Underworld.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of traditional Germanic and Lithuanian poetry with a focus on the variations of narrative, along with common motifs and imagery as reflected in the poetic grammar, reveals a panoramic view of the traditional oral culture, rooted in the mythical thought. References to ancient gods, rituals and sacred places constitute a rich and extensive layer of traditional oral poetry. A traditional formula, epithet and kenning have been investigated in order to reveal the Indo-European themes and motifs. The hermeneutic interpretation of the Germanic and the Lithuanian poetic narratives within the methodological framework of archetypal literary criticism and comparative poetics is summarised in the following statements.

The research results provide several examples of the transformation of myth into different types of traditional oral narrative by means of *mimesis*, or imitation. Mimesis has been established as a relationship between different kinds of texts of oral tradition and has also served as a valuable tool for identifying shared characteristics of such texts. The transformation of myth into different modes and genres of traditional oral poetry by means of mimesis may be recognised upon close examination of the Indo-European myth of the combat between the thunder god and his supernatural adversary, the World Serpent. Thor is the Norse god whose strength and military fierceness (*drepr hann af móði* 'he strikes in wrath') distinguish him as an appropriate *Véorr* 'protector of humans'. The motif of Thor's victory is reflected in the formula *orms einbani* 'the serpent's sole slayer' which is a variation of the Indo-European formula 'HERO SLAYS SERPENT'. In the heroic narrative, the hero assumes roles attributed to god, i.e. he is responsible for the peace of land and the well-being of his people. In the heroic narrative, Beowulf fights his supernatural adversaries and imitates the actions of Thor; Beowulf's victory over Grendel's mother and the dragon is conveyed in the variations of the formula 'HERO SLAYS SERPENT': *yrringa slōh* 'in wrath struck' (line 1565) and *gryrefāhne slōh* 'struck the gleaming horror' (line 2576). In the folk narrative, the transformations of the formula pertaining to the slaying of serpent are echoed in Lithuanian charms against the bite of a serpent (the phrase *tavi razmuš in dvylikų kavalkų* 'you will be smitten into twelve pieces') where the healer imitates the mightiness and power of the god of thunder (in the Anglo-Saxon *Nine Herbs Charm*, the healer performed the functions of the god of thunder when he *sloh ða þa næddran* 'stroke that adder'). In the variations of traditional oral narrative, mimesis accounts for the phenomenon of similar formulas which reflect the transformations of a motif in different types of narrative.

Furthermore, the research results indicate that similar poetic formulas observed in the poetic narratives of Germanic and Lithuanian traditions usually refer to similar motifs: the creation of the world from chaos, the bride and the groom in the divine and the profane marriage, the hero's combat against the forces of chaos, the different embodiments of the centre of the world. The motif of crossing the border of the realm of the dead in the *Poetic Edda* is seen in the archetype of the gates of Valhall, called *Valgrind*. The archetype is rendered in the formula *helgom durom* 'the sacred door'. Meanwhile in the folk narrative (Lithuanian funeral laments) the archetype of gates is reflected in the phrase *vėlių varteliai*, 'the gates of souls' which have to be opened in order for the deceased person to enter the afterlife; they also represent the passage from the profane world to the sacred realm. In a similar vein, the motif of wisdom contest is reflected in the formulas *segðu þat/ segðu mér* 'tell that/ tell me' (the formulas used in a wisdom contest between god Odin and giant Vafthrudnir in *Vafþrúðnismál*), *saga hwæt ic hatte* 'say what I am called' (the formula observed in numerous Anglo-Saxon riddles), and *pasakyk, mergele* 'tell me, girl' (the formula employed to test the bride's wisdom).

Some of the selected poetic formulas encountered in all three traditions highlight the variations within the same motif. The motif of cup bearing is common in the mythic, the heroic, and the folk narrative, yet its implications are far wider than the literal sense of bearing a beverage. In *Skírnismál*, Gerd's acceptance to enter a union with the god Freyr is reflected in the motif of passing a cup of mead to the matchmaker Skirnir (formula *tac við hrímkálki* 'receive the crystal cup'). Similarly, the role of the bride as a cup bearer has a special importance in the poetic narrative of Lithuanian wedding songs – it confirms the girl's acceptance of the proposal (the phrase *gerkit, sveteliai, saldų gardų vynelį* 'dear guests, please taste the sweet wine'). Meanwhile the queen in the heroic narrative has the function of the cup bearer (formula *onfōh þissum fulle* 'accept this cup') which is connected to the social power of the queen – it is her immense privilege to decide which warrior is the worthiest to receive the cup first.

Mythic formulas in the traditional oral narrative are rendered in distinct poetic devices. One of the main phonetic devices employed in the traditional oral narrative is alliteration (*gap var ginnunga*, 'a void of yawning chaos' in the *Poetic Edda*, *wēold under wolcnum* 'ruled under clouds' (line 1770) in *Beowulf*, and *vėlių varteliai*, 'the gates of souls' in Lithuanian funeral laments). Alliteration directs the audience's attention towards the formula which is the main semantic component of a line. Another poetic device, characteristic of the Germanic tradition, is kenning, a poetic phrase which

frequently renders a mythic formula (In the *Poetic Edda*, the kenning *úlfs hnitbróður* 'wolf's intimate-brother' implies the kinship of the World Serpent to the wolf Fenrir; in *Beowulf*, the kenning which describes the dragon, *hordweard* 'the hoard-guard' refers to the function of the Indo-European serpent as the guardian of valuable goods). Besides, epithets form an important part of poetic grammar; they usually convey traditionally recognised characteristics of a god, a hero, or a profane man in a sacral context. Traditional characteristics of a bride emphasise her beauty and brightness: *fagrglóa* 'beautiful glowing lady' and *miallhvíta* 'snow-white girl' refer to Thor's daughter as the desired bride of the dwarf All-wise; in Lithuanian folk songs, the young girl, the bride-to-be, is referred to as *balta graži lelijėlė* 'a white beautiful lily' and by means of parallelism is compared to the morning star *Aušrinė*. The ideal characteristics of the object described are embedded in stable epithets and in this way connected to the archetype, the primordial image.

The hermeneutic interpretation of the poetic grammar reveals the significance of the motif of the world tree in the mythic worldview. In the *Poetic Edda*, Norse cosmology is embodied in the motif of the world tree Yggdrasil (epithets *miǫtvið mæran* 'mighty Measuring-Tree' and *heiðvǫnom helgom baðmi* 'bright-grown, sacred tree'). Meanwhile, in Lithuanian folk songs, the motif of the world tree is conveyed in the image of a profane tree (an oak tree, a lime tree, an ash tree, etc.) which bears cosmic and supernatural characteristics: it has nine branches (*liepelė su devynioms šakelėms* 'a linden tree with nine branches'), the sun rises over its top (epithet *šviesi saulelė* 'bright sun'), and clear water runs over its roots (epithet *čystas vandenys* 'clear water'). The formula *žalias ąžuolėlis* 'a green oak tree' represents the vitality associated with the mythic world tree.

When the shared characteristics of mythic, heroic and folk narrative are considered, the sacral aspect of myth stands out in all variations of narrative. The different degrees of sacrality may be observed in the transformations of the motif of a sacred hall/palace which reflects the concept of the *Axis Mundi*. The motif of the hall of the gods as the centre of the universe is rendered in the alliterative phrase *hǫrg oc hof* 'altars and temples' (*Vǫluspá*). In the mythic poems of the *Poetic Edda*, the sacrality is immediate, echoing the primeval mythical thought which perceives the natural world as sacred. Meanwhile the sacrality in the heroic narrative is of a social character: the sacrality is condensed in the figure of the hero, or king. The motif of the mead-hall as the centre of warrior's world and the seminal place for the king and his retainers to dwell is reflected in the epithet *medoærn micel* 'a grand mead-hall' (*Beowulf*). The folk narrative is marked by the 'everyday sacrality' – the

calendar festivals, work and significant life events of lay people attain their highest value in an attempt to contact the sacral sphere. The motif of *tėvelio dvaras* 'father's estate' pertains to a profane object which is viewed in relation to the divine realm: it usually stands on *aukštas kalnelis* 'a high hill' and constitutes a stable centre in the everlasting cosmic dynamics and the changes of family life.

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