Kalevala Study Guide

Kalevala by Elias Lönnrot

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Introduction

The *Kalevala* is Finland's national epic, drawn from a rich oral tradition with roots stretching back more than two millennia. Its compiler was Elias Lonnrot, a physician and folklorist who travelled throughout the Finnish-Russian borderlands recording the lyrics, ballads, charms, and epics sung by the rural people. From these poems (called runes) he assembled a coherent whole, a literary epic which fired the imaginations and the national consciousness of the Finnish people.

Steeped in magic, by turns dreamlike and dramatic, the *Kalevala* recounts the mythic history of the ancient Finns in a series of fifty poems. Its heroes are the sons of Kaleva: the wise shaman Vamamolnen, the skillful smith Ihnarinen, and the feisty warrior Lemminkainen. Stories of their interactions with one another, the spirit world, the natural world, and with their northern neighbors, the tribe of Pohjola, unfold in the resonant, musical cadences of Finnish oral poetry.

The *Kalevala* became the foundation of Finnish cultural identity. Published in its final form in 1849, Lonnrot's epic immediately took its place alongside the Greek *Iliad* and *Odyssey,* the German *Nibelungenlied,* and the Norse *Eddas.* It established Finnish as a literary language and inspired a flowering of Finnish art and music, and also played a crucial role in the Finns' struggle for independence, giving them a heroic history and a focus for their national pride.

Author Biography

Elias Lonnrot was born in the southern parish of Sammatti, Finland in 1802, the fourth of seven children in a poor tailor's family. In spite of his humble background, Lonnrot managed to attend the University of Turku, where he studied folklore and linguistics while supporting himself with various jobs. At Turku, Lonnrot became involved with the Finnish nationalist movement. He was strongly influenced by the ideas of Professor Henrik Gabriel Porthan, a historian who encouraged the study of folklore and believed that a nation's cultural identity must be rooted in the language and oral traditions of its ordinary folk.

Following the Turku fire of 1827, the University relocated to Helsinki, where Lonnrot continued his studies and earned his medical degree in 1832. From 1833 to 1853 Lonnrot worked as district physician and travelling health inspector in the remote northern town of Kajaani. Though he was the only doctor in this part of northeastern Finland, the job did not occupy his full time except during outbreaks of epidemic, giving Lonnrot time to pursue his study of Finnish language and folklore.

Between 1830 and 1850 he took several leaves of absence to travel to rural Finland, Ingria, Estonia, and eastern Karelia, meeting traditional singers and gathering folk poetry. During one of his research trips, he was struck by the idea of arranging these poems and fragments into a single, coherent epic narrative, writing in 1834:

As I compared [the results of my collections on my fourth journey] to what I had seen before, I was seized by a desire to organize them into a single whole in order to make of the Finnish legends of the gods something similar to that of the *Edda,* the saga of the Icelanders. So I threw myself into the labors before me immediately and continued working for a number of weeks, actually months

The result was *The Kalevala, or Old Karelian Songs from the Ancient Times of the Finnish People.* Published in 1835, it consisted of thirty-two runes (poems) totalling 12,978 lines. Lonnrot continued his field-work, and in 1840-41 he published the *Kanteletar,* a collection of ballads and lyric poetry intended as a companion to the *Kalevala,* Lonnrot's work awakened the Finnish national consciousness and inspired others, most notably D. E. D. Europaeus and M. A. Castr6n, to undertake their own poetry-collecting trips. The mass of oral material Lonnrot and others gathered during the 1830s and '40s caused Lonnrot to revise the *Kalevala,* and by 1849 he had finished a greatly expanded and modified version. Published under the title *New Kalevala* (and today known simply as the *Kalevala*) it superseded the shorter 1835 edition.

Though he is remembered chiefly as the compiler of Finland's national epic, Lonnrot was also a pioneer of the Finnish Language Movement. He spent nearly forty years compiling the first Finnish-Swedish dictionary. He also founded the first Finnish language periodical, translated books on medicine and agriculture for use by non-specialists, and conducted linguistic field research with M. A. Castren, the founder of the study of Finno-Ugric languages. In 1853 he succeeded Castren as Professor of Finnish Language and Literature at University of Helsinki. He died in Sammatti in 1884.

Plot Summary

Creation (poems 1-2)

The world is young and empty, and the Air-daughter, weary of being alone, steps down into the ocean. Impregnated by the wind and sea, the Air-daughter/water-mother floats for seven centuries without giving birth. A sea-bird nests on her knee and lays seven eggs. When they begin to hatch, the water-mother jerks her knee, scattering the eggs into the water and smashing them to pieces. From the egg fragments are formed the earth and the heavens, the clouds and the stars, the moon and the sun. The water-mother shapes the shoreline and seabed. Finally she gives birth to Vainamoinen, who floats to shore.

Finding himself in a treeless land, Vainamoinen has the boy Sampsa Pellervoinen plant all kinds of trees. Only the oak refuses to sprout. A creature arises from the sea, bums a pile of hay, and sows the acorn again in the ashes. This time the oak grows so tall that its branches overshadow the whole earth, blocking out the sun and moon. Vainamoinen calls upon his mother, who sends a tiny sea-creature to cut down the oak with three strokes of his axe. Those who gather fragments of the fallen oak are blessed with magic, happiness, and love.

Now the sun and moon shine once more. Birds sing and berries ripen, but the barley does not grow. Vainamoinen cuts a great clearing in the forest but leaves one birch tree standing so that the birds will have a place to rest. The eagle, grateful for this kindness, strikes a fire to help Vainamoinen burn the clearing. Vainamoinen plants his barley in the ash-rich soil, prays to the earth and the clouds, and comes back a few days later to find that the barley has taken root.

Aino (poems 3-5)

Vainamoinen's fame as a singer and wise man spreads to the Northland, arousing the envy of a young Lapp named Joukahainen. Heedless of his parents' warnings, Joukahainen sets off for Kalevala to challenge Vainamoinen. Vainamoinen easily defeats the young upstart, backing him into a swamp. As Joukahainen sinks up to his neck in the mire, he offers his sister Aino to Vainamoinen as a bride. Vainamoinen releases Joukahainen, who flees back north and tells his family the story. Though his mother is overjoyed at the prospect of having such a famous son-in-law, Aino is miserable.

Vainamoinen encounters Aino while she is out cutting leafy birch twigs to use as whisks in the sauna. When he asks her to be his wife, she tears off her jewelry and ribbons and runs home weeping. Her mother urges her to cheer up. Tearfully insisting that she does not want to be the wife of an old man, Aino runs off and loses her way in the woods.

Finally she reaches the sea, where she goes for a swim and drowns. Her mother mourns.

Vainamoinen, also distraught at Aino's death, goes to the water to search for her body. He catches a strange fish and is about to cut it open when it leaps back into the water and reveals that it is Aino. He begs her to come back into the boat, but she refuses, leaving the old man disconsolate. Vai'nambinen returns home, wondering aloud how he will get over his grief. His mother speaks from beneath the waves, advising him to travel northwards and woo the maidens of Pohjola.

The Forging of the Sampo (poems 6-10)

Aino's resentful brother Joukahainen lies in wait with a crossbow and tries to shoot Vainamoinen, but the arrow hits Vainamoinen's horse instead. Vainamoinen falls into the water and is washed out to sea.

Vainamoinen drifts for many days. An eagle spots him and, remembering the birch tree that Vainamoinen spared, carries him to the shores of Pohjola. The Mistress of the Northland (Louhi) receives him well, but Vainamoinen is homesick for Kalevala. Louhi promises she will return him to his homeland and give him her daughter in marriage if he will forge a Sampo for her. Vainamoinen pledges he will send the master smith Ilmarinen to make the Sampo, and Louhi sends him home in her sleigh.

On his way, Vainamoinen meets Louhi's daughter and asks her into his sleigh. She assigns him several seemingly impossible tasks, which he performs without difficulty. The maiden then challenges him to carve a boat out of pieces of her spindle and launch it into the water without touching it. When Vainamoinen begins carving, his axe slips and cuts a deep gash in his knee. Unable to remember the charm for healing wounds made by iron, Vainamoinen limps away, bleeding heavily, and eventually finds an old man who can heal him. Vainamoinen sings about the origin of iron, and the old man weaves this information into a charm that stops the flow of blood.

Vainamoinen returns home and tries to convince Ilmarinen to go to Pohjola and forge a Sampo, When Ilmarinen refuses, Vainamoinen sings up a wind to carry the unwilling smith to Pohjola. Ilmarinen forges the Sampo, a bright metal mill that magically produces salt, money, and endless bins of grain for the people of the North. When he asks to marry Louhi's daughter, though, the maiden says she has too many tasks at home and cannot leave with him. Dejected, Lmarinen sails back to Kalevala.

Lemminkainen's Adventures (poems 11-15)

The wanton young Lemminkainen goes to woo the island maiden Kylliki, who has refused all suitors. He gets work as a herdsman on the island and manages to seduce all the other women living there. Kylliki is the only maiden he cannot charm, and he finally abducts her. Kylliki weeps, saying she does not want a husband who is forever going off to war. Lemminkainen swears he will not go to war as long as Kylliki refrains from visiting the village.

When Kylliki forgets her oath and goes down to the village, Lemminkainen deserts her in a rage and goes north to court the Maiden of Pohjola. His mother tries to stop him, and Lemminkainen throws down his comb, saying that blood will run from it if he is killed. Arriving in Pohjola, Lemminkainen sings his way past the guard dog and casts a spell over all the men except for one herdsman whom he sneeringly dismisses. Insulted, the herdsman runs off to the river Tuoni to prepare an ambush for Lemminkainen.

Lemminkainen demands one of Louhi' s daughters, and Louhi assigns him several tasks to perform. He catches the Demon's Elk and bridles the Demon's foam-jawed horse, but when he goes to the river of Tuoni (Death) to shoot the swan, the herdsman kills him and throws him into the water, where Tuoni's son cuts him to pieces.

Lemminkainen's mother and wife know he is dead when blood drips from the comb. His mother rushes to Pohjola, where Louhi tells her what has happened. Lemminkainen's mother searches the river Tuoni for pieces of her son's body, which she reassembles and sings back to life with charms and ointments.

Vaindmoinen's Adventures (poems 16-17)

Vainamoinen builds a boat by chanting but cannot remember the three words for getting it into the water. His search for the words takes him to Tuonela, the land of the dead. Tuonela' s inhabitants try to trap Mm there with nets, but he sings himself into a snake and slips away.

Vainamoinen goes to get the words from the sleeping giant Antero Vipunen. When Antero swallows him, Vainamoinen hammers at the inside of his stomach and refuses to leave until Antero relents and reveals all his magic songs.

Courting the Maiden of Pohjola (poems 18-19)

Vainamoinen finishes building his boat and sails northward to court the maiden of Pohjola. On the way he passes Ilmarinen's sister Annikki, who rushes off to warn her brother of Vainamoinen's plans. Ilmarinen bathes and sets off for Pohjola on horseback. Seeing the two suitors approach, Louhi advises her daughter to choose Vainamoinen for his wisdom and wealth, but the maiden says she prefers Ilmarinen, the handsome forger of the Sampo.

Louhi tells Ilmarinen he can have her daughter only when he has plowed a field of vipers, captured Tuoni's bears and wolves, and caught the pike from Tuoni's river. Ilmarinen succeeds with the maiden's help, and Vainamoinen returns home, filled with regret that he never married in his youth.

Ilmarinen's Wedding (poems 20-25)

Preparations are made for the great wedding feast in Pohjola: a giant ox is slaughtered, beer is brewed, and guests are invited, butLouhi warns her servant not to invite Lemminkainen because of his reputation for picking fights. Wedding guests sing songs of celebration and praise as well as laments for the bride who must leave her home.

Bride and bridegroom journey to Umarinen's home. There is another feast at which Vainamoinen sings their praises. On his way home, Vainamoinen's sleigh breaks down, and he has to fetch a spike and a drill from Tuonela to repair it.

Lemminkainen's Second Journey to Pohjola (poems 26- 30)

Enraged at not being invited to the wedding, Lemminkainen storms off towards Pohjola, disregarding his mother's warnings about the dooms that await him on the way. He chants his way past many perils, barges into the hall, and engages the Master of Pohjola in a contest of spells and of swords. Lemminkainen slays the Master and flees from Louhi and her soldiers.

Lemminkainen's mother directs him to an island where he can take refuge. True to form, he seduces all the women and eventually has to flee from the island men who want to kill him. He survives a shipwreck and swims home only to find that the armies of Pohjola have burnt his house down. Believing his mother to be dead, Lemminkainen wanders off weeping, but he soon finds her hiding in the woods.

Lemminkainen takes his old friend Tiera and sets out to fight against Pohjola. Louhi sends the Frost to freeze them, but Lemminkainen banishes Frost with spells. Tiera and Lemminkainen wander around wretchedly for a while before finally heading homeward.

Kullervo (poems 31-36)

Untamo wages war on his brother Kalervo, slays his people, and takes his infant son Kullervo. Kullervo grows into a troublesome boy, and Untamo sells him to Ilmarinen as a slave. Umarinen's wife hides a stone in Kullervo's bread before sending him to watch the herd. The stone breaks Kullervo's knife, and in vengeance he sends bears and wolves disguised as cattle to kill Ilmarinen's wife.

Kullervo flees and learns that his family is still alive. He finds his parents, who tell him his sister was lost long ago. When Kullervo proves inept at most tasks, his father sends him to pay taxes. On his way home he meets and seduces a young woman who turns out to be his lost sister. She drowns herself in shame. Ever vengeful for the mistreatment he has suffered in his life, Kullervo destroys Untamo's farm before killing himself as well.

Ilmarinen's Second Journey to Pohjola (poems 37-38)

Ilmarinen mourns his dead wife. After an ill-considered attempt to forge a new wife out of gold and silver, Ilmarinen returns to Pohjola to ask for Louhi's other daughter. When he is rejected, he abducts the maiden. She complains and insults him until he becomes angry and turns her into a seagull.

The Theft of the Sampo (poems 39-42)

Ilmarinen tells Vainamoinen about the great prosperity Pohjola enjoys thanks to the Sampo. The two friends set out to retrieve the Sampo for Kalevala, and Lemminkainen joins them. On the way, their boat becomes stuck on an enormous pike's back. They manage to kill the pike, and Vainamoinen makes a kantele (a harp) out of its bones. Many try to play it, but only Vainamoinen succeeds; his music is so beautiful and moving that all the creatures in the world come to listen.Tears roll down Vainamoinen's cheeks and turn into pearls when they hit the water.

When the three arrive in Pohjola, Louhi refuses to share the Sampo. Vainamoinen plays her soldiers to sleep with his kantele, and the three heroes steal the Sampo. Louhi awakes and sends a storm after their ship, causing the kantele to fall overboard.

War Between Pohjola and Kalevala (poems 43-49)

Louhi pursues the heroes, and there is a great sea battle, during which the Sampo is broken. Defeated, Louhi returns to Pohjola with only the Sampo's lid; Vainamoinen gathers the other fragments and plants them joyfully.

Unable to find his pikebone kantele, Vainamoinen makes a new one of birch. Louhi curses Kalevala with plague, but Vainamoinen heals the people with charms and ointments. Louhi then sends a bear to destroy Kalevala's herds, but Vainamoinen kills the bear and there is a great feast, at which Vainamoinen sings songs sweet enough to bring down the sun and moon.

Louhi then captures the sun and moon, hiding them in a mountain and putting out the fires of Kalevala. Ukko (God) kindles fire for a new sun and moon. The fire falls to the ground, and Ilmarinen and Vainamoinen go to find it. They release the fire from a fish that has swallowed it, and it burns out of control, injuring Ilmarinen and destroying many lands before the heroes can subdue it. Ilmarinen uses it to forge a new sun and moon but cannot get them to shine. He journeys to Pohjola and compels Louhi to release the sun and moon.

Marjatta (poem 50)

The virgin Marjatta swallows a lingonberry, which causes her to conceive and bear a son. After some dispute, the boy is baptized and declared King of Karelia. Vainamoinen departs from Kalevala, leaving behind his birch kantele and his songs and prophecying that he will return someday when the people need him.

Parts 1 and 2

Parts 1 and 2 Summary

This epic poem is a compilation of several Finnish folk tales, including a creation myth and several stories of the hero Vainamoinen, reckless Lemminkainen, and the witch Louhi. In the tradition of other epic poems, there are lessons and morals to be gleaned from each story.

Part 1 - In several introductory stanzas, the Storyteller speaks of his need to tell his story, his desire to pass on ancient legends the way his father and his mother did, and how he collected and preserved the tales he heard. He begins by telling how the world was made.

The Daughter of the Air comes to Earth and is renamed the Water-Mother, impregnated by the sea but unable to give birth. She swims all over the world in search of relief from her painful, protracted pregnancy. Shortly after uttering a prayer for help, she is spotted by a bird, also looking for a place to make a home and give birth. The bird comes to rest on her knee and lays several eggs, but as they're hatching, the Water-Mother is startled by a sudden upsurge of energy within her, jumps up, and spills the eggs into the water, where they break. Over time their shells form land, shaped by the Water-Mother, who has yet to give birth to the child within her, now given the name Vainamoinen.

Vainamoinen, already an old man, prays for help in freeing himself from his mother's womb. He finds the strength, pushes his way into the world, spends several years on the sea, and finally emerges onto land. At the conclusion of this part of the poem, the Water-Mother is finally given a name - Ilmatar.

Part 2 - Vainamoinen roams the barren land on which he has found himself, wondering, who will sow the seeds to populate it with trees. Two farmers appear, planting seeds and nurturing them to life. Vainamoinen is pleased to see that all the trees grow tall and strong, except for the oak. He gives it more time, but it remains inert. A fire is prepared, and in its ashes, Vainamoinen plants an acorn, from which an oak finally grows, so tall and strong and leafy that it blots out the sun. The other plants quickly weaken, and Vainamoinen cries out for someone to come and chop the tree down. A very small man emerges from the sea and claims that he's the man for the job. When Vainamoinen questions how someone so small could possibly chop down so large a tree, the man suddenly transforms into a huge, armor-clad warrior, chops down the tree, and sends chips flying into the air and the sea. The chips travel the world, and some are collected by "the little maid of Pohja," who takes them to a sorcerer to be made into arrows.

The land once again flourishes. Plants and trees and crops all grow, with the exception of the barley. A small bird tells Vainamoinen the barley will not grow until the land is cleared, and Vainamoinen sets to work clearing away all the trees, leaving behind a single birch tree. An Eagle perches on the birch, congratulates Vainamoinen for being so clever as to leave a place for the birds, and mystically creates a fire that burns away all the other trees. Vainamoinen plants barley in the ashes, praying to both the Earth Mother and the Sky God to nurture it. The barley grows and flourishes, and a Cuckoo asks Vainamoinen why he left the birch standing. He tells her he left it for her and the other birds to make a home in, and make the world more beautiful by resting there and singing.

Parts 1 and 2 Analysis

This section is essentially a creation myth of the sort found in almost every culture in the world. In Part 1, the image of a female figure giving birth to the world and to primeval life, repeated twice here in the figures of Ilmatar and the bird, are common to many such myths, while similar explanations of how land was formed also frequently appear.

Part 2 recounts another kind of myth, explaining the origins of the cycle of life - birth, death, and rebirth. The image of life being born (or reborn) from the ashes of a fire that destroyed previous life is common in several myths, particularly in the story of the Phoenix, the magical bird who was reborn from the ashes of the fire with which it destroyed itself. The moral, or teaching, of this version of the archetypal, or universal, story, is of the necessity for good stewardship, or having a responsible and nurturing relationship with nature. Vainamoinen is clearly an example of excellent stewardship, respectful of nature, willing to do what it takes to ensure that it flourishes, and aware that care of nature results in great beauty. This is understood from the final verses in this section, in which he refers to the beauty brought to the world by the cuckoo.

In the same way he plays a key role in this myth, Vainamoinen plays a central role in many of the poem's various narratives, and is a central figure in Finnish folklore in general. Later poems reveal that he's strong, wise, and adventurous, but occasionally over-emotional and/or foolish. He bears similarities at various times to King Arthur, Paul Bunyan, god-like heroes/magicians like Hercules and Orpheus, the all-too human gods in Hindu mythology, and spiritual figures like the Buddha.

The appearance of the "the little maid of Pohja" foreshadows Vainamoinen's journey to the land of Pohja beginning in Part 7, and is in fact one of the characters he encounters there. The sorcerer for whom "the little maid" collects the wood chips is perhaps, Louhi, an aged witch and the little maid's mother, who is a key antagonist for Vainamoinen and the other heroes on many occasions throughout the poem.

Parts 3, 4, and 5

Parts 3, 4, and 5 Summary

This section tells the brief but moving story of one of the poem's key relationships, that of Vainamoinen and Aino.

Part 3 - As time passes, Vainamoinen gains a reputation for being a wise and wonderful storyteller and singer. The young and impetuous Joukahainen, against the wishes of his parents, resolves to challenge him. When they meet, Joukahainen boasts that he can tell better stories, and proceeds to offer examples. His stories are childish, shallow, and at one point, outright lies. Vainamoinen becomes more and more impatient, finally causing a swamp to rise up around Joukahainen. As the swamp envelops him, Joukahainen offers Vainamoinen gold, horses, armor, land - anything and everything he can think of to get him to reverse his enchantment. Again and again Vainamoinen refuses. In final desperation, Joukahainen offers Vainamoinen his sister Aino. Vainamoinen, happily believing Aino will take care of him, reverses his enchantment and allows Joukahainen to return home. Joukahainen tearfully explains to his mother what he's done, but his mother is pleased that Aino will be married to someone of such repute and such power. Aino, however, is unhappy at the prospect of leaving her family and cries for days. Her mother tells her to be glad, saying her family's home isn't the only place where the sun is shining, flowers are blooming and crops are flourishing.

Part 4 - While walking through the forest, Aino encounters Vainamoinen, who tells her to wear her jewelry, including a beaded necklace and a cross, to please him and not herself. Refusing to do so, she takes off her jewelry and drops it on the ground, and then runs home weeping. She tells her father and her siblings that she lost it all, but then confesses to her mother what really happened. As Aino weeps at the thought of being married to an old man and at being poor, her mother tells her she too was fearful of being poor and of being able to bring no dowry (financial endowment from her parents) to her marriage. She tells a long story of how she went into the woods, asked for help, and was guided to a rich storehouse of jewelry and clothes, how after she married she put all the gold and clothes back into the cave, and how to find it. The next day Aino goes to the cave, puts on all the jewelry and clothes, and wanders through the forest. She comes across a pond in the woods, dives in, and allows herself to be drowned.

One by one, predatory forest animals that saw Aino drown herself promise to carry the news to her family, but one by one they become distracted by potential prey. The job falls to the Hare, who travels to Aino's home and passes on the sad news. Aino's mother weeps so much that her tears become rivers and waterfalls, by which beautiful birch trees grow and provide homes for cuckoos, who sing mournful songs. Aino's mother says she will never again hear the song of the cuckoo without thinking about her daughter.

Part 5 - Vainamoinen hears of Aino's suicide, goes fishing for her body, and pulls in a large salmon. As he's imagining all the meals he'll have, the salmon slips back into the water and explains that it is in fact Aino. She tells him he didn't have the wisdom to hold onto her, and then disappears into the water, never to be seen again. Vainamoinen catches other fish, but then mourns the loss of Aino, referring to how he waited for years for the right woman to be his bride and to how the joyful song of the cuckoo now seems sad. He wishes that his mother were still alive, which causes her to awaken from a long sleep at the bottom of the sea. She advises him to look for a bride in the land of Pohja.

Parts 3, 4, and 5 Analysis

It's interesting to note how Vainamoinen, in his happiness at the prospect of a bride, almost seems to be a longing he didn't realize he had. His joy at both his discovery and at having his longing fulfilled contrasts vividly with Aino's unhappiness, which seems typical to the point of being archetypal. She, like so many young people before or since, fears leaving what is safe and known for what is unknown and perhaps even unknowable. This is an example of how stories in *The Kalevala*, and in other such mythic poems, reflect universals of human nature in their culturally identified specifics. Another example of this can be found in the tale of Joukahainen, which also contains echoes of, for instance, the Greek myth of the young Phaeton challenging the god Apollo - an archetypal story of impetuous youth challenging wise old age.

The second part of Aino's tale contains a common symbol in several myths, that of the cave. Traditionally caves represent mysterious, hidden sources of inner strength and courage, or revelations of previously undiscovered truths. Generally, the treasures of a cave, either literal or spiritual, are only gained after a period of trial. Examples of such caves might include Aladdin's cave, full of literal treasure, or the tomb in which Christ was buried and from which he resurrected, which contained a spiritual treasure. The irony in this tale is that Aino uses the strength found in her cave not to face her fears, but to avoid facing those fears in the most final way possible - by ending her life.

An interesting element in this section is the reference to the cross and beaded necklace Aino wears, which suggests that Aino is not only Christian but Roman Catholic - a cross on the end of a beaded chain is an apt description of a rosary, used to aid prayer in Roman Catholicism. By contrast, Vainamoinen throughout the poem is on many levels more pagan than Christian - he is a powerful mystic and deeply connected to nature. There are Christian overtones in the poem, as Vainamoinen and several other characters refer to an all-powerful, single Creator, who could be seen as the equivalent of the Judeo-Christian God, or the Islamic Allah. Also in this section, the creation myth aspect of the poem emerges in the story of the tears of Aino's mother becoming rivers and waterfalls, and also how the song of the cuckoo became sad.

The third part of Aino's story serves mostly to propel Vainamoinen into the next phase of his adventures. It's possible to understand Aino's comment about Vainamoinen being unable to hold her as a reference to her as a woman and as a fish, which is interesting because at no point did Aino give him an opportunity to do anything TO hold her. But because the loss of the fish is juxtaposed with narration listing all the meals Vainamoinen plans to have, the story can be seen as a warning against being distracted, as a lesson in paying attention. From that perspective, the losses of Aino as fish and as woman become parallel - on neither occasion was Vainamoinen paying real attention to her, or doing what he needed to do to win and/or hold on to her.

The land of Pohja, mentioned by Vainamoinen's mother as the destination in his next journey, was first referred to in Part 2, as the home of "a little maid." Vainamoinen's journey there in the following section is the first of many adventures that take place in Pohja throughout the poem.

Parts 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10

Parts 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 Summary

This section recounts the tale of Vainamoinen's journey to Pohja.

Part 6 - Vainamoinen begins his journey, riding a magical elk that can run on water. Joukahainen, who has been growing increasingly jealous and resentful, prepares a mighty crossbow and poison-tipped arrows with which to shoot him. Joukahainen's mother advises him strongly not to do it, but he pays her no attention and hunts Vainamoinen down. Finally spotting him crossing the ocean, Joukahainen fires three bolts from the crossbow. The first two miss, but the third strikes Vainamoinen's elk and kills it. Vainamoinen is forced to swim for his life. Meanwhile, Joukahainen returns home and brags to his mother about what he's done, but his mother tells him what he's done is evil.

Part 7 - After swimming for several days and nights, Vainamoinen is contemplating whether to make his home in the sea, when he is rescued by the eagle who made its home in the oak in Part 2. The eagle flies him to the shores of Pohja, where Vainamoinen feels so alone and so abandoned that he begins to weep. The "little maid", in the midst of her daily chores, hears him and then recounts what she hears to Louhi. Louhi recognizes the weeping as that of a warrior in trouble, and magically flies out to meet Vainamoinen. After finding out who he is and hearing of his journey, Louhi takes him to her home, bathes him and attempts to feed him. Vainamoinen refuses the food of a strange land, saying all he wants to do is return home. Louhi asks what he will give her in exchange for helping him get there. He offers her gold and riches, but she says what she really needs is someone to construct a Sampo (a grinder or mill) from materials she's collected but is unable to put together. Vainamoinen says he's not able to do it himself but knows someone who can, a blacksmith whom he says forged the sky and the air. Louhi offers her daughter as a reward to the man who makes the Sampo, and then prepares a magical horse for Vainamoinen to ride back home, giving specific instructions on how it must be safely ridden. Vainamoinen begins his journey home.

Part 8 - While riding in the sky, Vainamoinen encounters a beautiful young woman weaving the rainbow - the Maid of Pohja, later revealed as the daughter Louhi referred to in Part 7. Vainamoinen, unaware of her identity, is so smitten with her that he invites her to travel with him and to become his wife. At first she tells him the life of an unmarried girl is better than that of a wife, and then, when he persists in his demands she sets him a series of apparently impossible tasks (such as tying an egg in knots) that he accomplishes with ease. She sets him one last task, the construction of a magical boat. Vainamoinen brags that no-one is as good a boat builder as he is and sets to work, but just as he's nearing completion, he cuts himself with his iron axe. He tries his own magic to seal the wound, but can't remember the words relating to the creation of iron that would complete the spell. He then tries to stop the flow of blood with herbs, but it doesn't work. Finally, he undertakes a journey through Pohja to find someone to help him, at last coming upon an Old Man, who says he can heal any wound.

Part 9 - The Old Man comments on how much blood is gushing from Vainamoinen's wound, and then admits that he is also unable to remember the correct words to complete the spell. In an effort to help him remember, Vainamoinen speaks at detailed length about the origins of iron, including how it was created, and how the mighty blacksmith Ilmarinen tamed it. The story reminds the Old Man of the correct words, and he sends his son to collect the ingredients for a magical ointment in order to complete the spell. After a long and complicated process of brewing, the Old Man sews up Vainamoinen's wound and applies the ointment. As he does so he comments that he's not working in his own name but in the name of the Creator, applying the Creator's knowledge and the Creator's will on earth. Vainamoinen's wound is healed, gives thanks to the Creator, and comments that he's learned his lesson - never again will he brag about his skills, since the Creator sees and knows all things and punishes all vanities.

Part 10 - Vainamoinen journeys home and goes straight to the home of Ilmarinen, who asks where he's been for so long. Vainamoinen tells him of Louhi and of the Maid, and asks him to make the Sampo. Ilmarinen refuses, and Vainamoinen tricks him into riding the wind to Pohja, where he's found by Louhi and is introduced to the Maid, whose beauty inspires him to work on the Sampo in hope of marrying her. After a long search, he finds the right place to work. His forge is a mystical one, creating things on its own, and every few days, produces something new, in all cases beautiful but non-functional. Ilmarinen destroys everything. Finally, the Sampo, constructed to Louhi's specifications, appears and actually works. Ilmarinen takes it to Louhi, who receives it happily and hides it deep in a mountain like a treasure. Ilmarinen then asks the Maid to fulfill the bargain and marry him, but she refuses. Ilmarinen, sad and frustrated at being rejected, is sent home by Louhi and tells Vainamoinen the Sampo is finished and works well.

Parts 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 Analysis

Echoes of *The Odyssey*, the legendary Greek epic poem about the journeys of the hero Odysseus, sound loudly in this section, and not for the last time. Vainamoinen's travels to Pohja, the characters he meets there and the tasks he must perform all resemble, not so much in detail but in broad outlines, Odysseus' travels and adventures as he travels home from the Trojan War. In fact, characters like Louhi (the powerful, wise, ugly old woman), the Maid of Pohja (the beautiful young virgin), the Old Man (the old man with secret knowledge) and Ilmarinen (the skilful ally) all appear, in one form or another, in many mythic tales in many cultures. In short, *The Kalevala* and *The Odyssey*, like so many other epic, mythic stories, are full of archetypes, characters embodying certain universal human traits and have similar effects on the lives of the central characters of those stories no matter what socio-cultural context they appear in.

There are also resemblances here and throughout the poem (particularly in the following section featuring the roguish Lemminkainen) to other Greek myths like that of Hercules, who is set several apparently impossible tasks in the same way as

Vainamoinen is set such tasks by the Maid, and who accomplishes them in similar fashion, albeit without wounding himself. Later in the poem Vainamoinen is again set several tasks, again accomplishes most of them, and again encounters a nearly impossible challenge to completing the final one. There is also a resemblance here to several fairy tales, in which a hero (or heroine, in the case of Cinderella) is set apparently impossible tasks before true love can come into his/her life.

An interesting element of this section is that there is a myth within a myth - specifically, Vainamoinen's story in Part 9 about the creation and evolution of iron. In this tale, the resemblance between Ilmarinen, who tames iron, and the Greek god Hephaestus, the master craftsman, who forges and tames thunderbolts, is clearer than at any other point in *The Kalevala*. The most significant difference is that where Hephaestus was crippled, Ilmarinen is physically whole and is in fact physically attractive. This latter aspect of his character makes his rejection by the Maid somewhat poignant, and there may be some possibility that Ilmarinen is crippled emotionally by the rejection of the Maid. This aspect to his character is explored further, when he returns to the narrative in Part 16 and in the rest of the narrative, when he comes across as both morose and unlucky.

Also in Part 9, the Old Man's reference to the Creator reiterates an idea first discussed in relation to Part 4, the presence of Christianity. When the Old Man refers to a Creator, it sounds like monotheism, or a religion like Christianity in which faith is centered on a single god. This is different from the polytheistic religions like that of the Greeks, Romans, Hindus or the people in *The Kalevala*, in which there are many gods, each representative of a particular aspect of human life and/or existence.

At the end of Part 9 Vainamoinen speaks one of the few overt lessons or teachings of the poem. He does this on several occasions, making the stories come across as part Aesop's Fable and part *Just So Story*, one of several fables written by the British author Rudyard Kipling. The warning here is against bragging or boasting, and since the consequences of such bragging play important roles in several stories in the poem, it can be understood at this point that Vainamoinen's warning serves both as foreshadowing and a summing up one of the poem's unifying themes.

Parts 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15

Parts 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15 Summary

This section tells the first of several stories in the poem about Lemminkainen, a fun-loving rogue with a long suffering mother and a penchant for beautiful young women.

Part 11 - Kyllikki is a beautiful princess, wooed by the Sun and the Moon, among others, as a potential wife for their sons. She refuses them all. Lemminkainen, a lively and ambitious young shepherd, resolves to win her for himself. Against the advice of his beloved mother, he travels to Kyllikki's homeland, Saari, to woo and win her. He gets a job as a shepherd, has shallow relationships with several women, and finally encounters Kyllikki, who immediately and repeatedly rejects him. Lemminkainen refuses to give up, finally kidnapping her while she's out with a group of friends. She pleads repeatedly with him to release her, but he promises to give her a happy life. Finally, they speak vows of marriage before the Creator, and he takes her home. As they approach, she fearfully asks who lives in the small and ill-kept hovel ahead of them, becoming even more fearful, when she realizes it's his home, but he vows to build her bigger and better houses. He introduces her to his mother, who offers thanks to the Creator for giving her such a beautiful daughter in law and sets about making the hovel comfortable for her.

Part 12 - Kyllikki and Lemminkainen live happily for a while, but one night, when Lemminkainen comes home late Kyllikki goes into the village and joins the dancing. Lemminkainen angrily confronts her, accusing her of lying, when she says she had a dream that the house caught fire and burned down. He resolves to travel to Pohja, where he will fight with the men and find himself a proper bride. His mother repeatedly advises him against going, but Lemminkainen is obstinate and leaves. He makes extensive preparations, including putting on some mighty armor, and after praying to the gods to protect him sets off on his mission. After several days of traveling, he's looking for a place to spend the night, when he chances on the home of Louhi, where magicians and warriors are gathered around her fire singing and telling stories. Lemminkainen joins in, singing magical songs that banish all the other singers from the room - all except the moody blind shepherd Markahattu, whom Lemminkainen identifies as evil. Markahattu leaves, lying in wait to confront Lemminkainen, when he returns home.

Part 13 - Lemminkainen demands that Louhi give him her daughter in marriage. She refuses, saying he's already married. He insists, and she tells him the only way he'll be allowed to marry her daughter is if he goes out on snowshoes and captures a mighty elk. Lemminkainen brags that it will be easy, procures a pair of snowshoes, and sets out. Meanwhile, the gods hear him bragging and decide to teach him a lesson, shaping an elk out of wood and other materials and telling it to lead Lemminkainen on a wild goose chase. While Lemminkainen is searching far and wide, the elk attacks a village, the cries of the villagers attract Lemminkainen's attention, Lemminkainen races for the village, and the chase is on. The elk tries to lead Lemminkainen astray but he proves too strong and too fast and eventually catches it. The elk fights mightily to avoid capture, but Lemminkainen eventually collars it, bragging that now he'll be able to lie with Louhi's beautiful daughter. Perhaps as a consequence of the bragging, the elk shatters the collar and runs away. Lemminkainen is about to pursue it again, when his snowshoes break. He "bows his head in deep depression" and prays that no hunter will ever again go hunting elk in this forest.

Part 14 - Lemminkainen considers whether to continue to pursue the elk or go home. He prays extensively to the gods for guidance and for a new pair of snowshoes. When he doesn't receive them, he wanders through the forest without them, encountering a cave where the gods of the forest live. He charms them into giving him a new pair of snowshoes, and also into guiding him to the elk, which he captures and takes to Louhi. He demands again to be given her daughter's hand in marriage, but she sets him another challenge - to capture one of the god's horses. Lemminkainen ventures out, charms the horse, brings it back to Louhi, and again demands her daughter's hand. Again Louhi sets him a challenge - to capture a sacred swan. Lemminkainen sets out, but before he can find the swan is shot by Markahattu (from Part 13.) Lemminkainen dies, lamenting the fact that he didn't ask his mother for advice on how to survive. Markahattu throws him into a river, where he's cut to pieces by an angry river god. The pieces travel down the river, drifting further and further apart.

Part 15 - Lemminkainen's mother mystically becomes aware that her son is dead, and travels to Pohja to find him. She encounters Louhi, who at first lies and says she hasn't seen Lemminkainen, but then reveals the truth - that because he wanted to marry her daughter, she sent him on a quest. Lemminkainen's mother goes on a long search for him, and finally, after asking for help from several animals and the Moon, the Sun tells her that Lemminkainen was killed, torn apart, and cast into the river. In desperate grief, Lemminkainen's mother goes to Ilmarinen and asks him to fashion a rake for her with which she can dredge the river and find the pieces of Lemminkainen's body. Ilmarinen does as she asks, and Lemminkainen's mother drags the river and the oceans until she finds every last scrap of Lemminkainen's body. She then begins the long and mystical process of putting him back together, invoking various gods and utilizing the help of a bee, which gathers the ingredients for several essential ointments. Finally Lemminkainen is brought back to life, and his mother convinces him to abandon his plans to marry Louhi's daughter and come home with her.

Parts 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15 Analysis

Another archetypal figure is the central character of this section - Lemminkainen, described over and over again as lively and playful, but in fact coming across as reckless and just plain lucky. He resembles several similar characters in other mythologies - Loki in Norse mythology, Trickster in Native American mythology, and Hermes in Greek mythology. Whatever the situation he gets himself into, he seems able to find a way out, whether through his own use of charm or the help of his long suffering mother.

Lemminkainen's adventures in this section again resemble both Greek myths and romantic fairy tales, in that he must go on a journey (a traditional "quest" narrative), and search for tools he needs to accomplish several apparently impossible tasks before he can realize his goal. Also, his death at the hands of the blind shepherd Markahattu resembles that of the Norse hero Baldur, whose death was the result of a weapon being thrown by a blind man (in Balder's case, his blind brother.) Finally, the story of how he was cut into pieces and sewn back together by his mother resembles the Egyptian myth of Osiris, who was himself cut to pieces by his evil brother Set and brought back to life by the loving ministrations of his wife Isis. The point here is not made to suggest that the storytellers, who fashioned *The Kalevala* plagiarized these story ideas, but rather to reinforce the previously discussed point about the universal, archetypal nature of these stories. Again, all the various resemblances illustrate how certain truths about the nature of humanity are common to all cultures and belief systems.

Again, the poem's unifying theme relating to arrogance and bragging appears, this time in the context of Lemminkainen's awareness that such bragging has brought the anger of the gods down on him and forestalled his capture of the elk (Part 13.) The fact that the realization is only temporary and that he goes off to make another, equally over-confident attempt is a clear indication of both his character and the thematic implications of his actions. His death, in fact, might be considered the ultimate reiteration of the poem's core thematic point - saying, in effect, brag and you die.

It's interesting to note that Lemminkainen's mother uses similar words in testing and applying the ointment as the Old Man used when treating Vainamoinen (Part 9.) Also interestingly, she stops just short of using the same words in praise of the Creator, referring to a series of gods INCLUDING the Creator. There is nevertheless the sense that she does hold the Creator as being above the other gods in terms of power and grace.

Parts 16 and 17

Parts 16 and 17 Summary

This section returns the focus of the narrative to Vainamoinen, telling the story of his efforts to complete a magical boat.

Part 16 - Vainamoinen plans to construct a boat, and sends his friend Sampsa on a quest around the world in search of wood. After several trees deny him permission to cut them down and make them into a boat, Sampsa discovers an oak tree that agrees to his proposal. He cuts down the tree, shapes the wood, and takes it back to Vainamoinen, who constructs his boat. As it nears completion, he discovers he is missing three magic words that would make it fully seaworthy, and after unsuccessfully searching for the words in the forest, he journeys to the Underworld. At the entrance, he at first lies to the Daughter of the Underworld about what brought him there, referring to having been brought by iron, water and fire, among other causes. Each time the Daughter refuses to believe his lies. Finally Vainamoinen admits the truth, and the Daughter of the Underworld warns him that the living are rarely allowed to leave, but Vainamoinen brags about his strength and courage and is allowed in. He is captured by spirits of the Underworld but escapes by transforming himself into a small snake-like animal. When he returns to the world of the living he warns other living beings to never journey to the Underworld while they're alive, since there are many horrors there.

Part 17 - Vainamoinen learns that the giant monster Vipunen knows the magic words he seeks. He prepares himself and journeys across the world to Vipunen's lair. While struggling against Vainamoinen's attempts to trick him into revealing the words, Vipunen accidentally swallows him. At first Vainamoinen is disturbed, but then realizes he's in a perfect position to manipulate Vipunen into giving him the magic words, transforms his clothes into a blacksmith's shop, lights a fire, and starts work. Vipunen becomes increasingly uncomfortable and tries to talk Vainamoinen into leaving. He doesn't reveal the magic words, and Vainamoinen refuses to go. Vipunen speaks at great length about the other heroes he's swallowed who haven't been nearly as difficult, calls for help from several gods, and issues increasingly violent threats. Vainamoinen says he feels perfectly at home, and will not leave until Vipunen passes on all his wisdom. Vipunen realizes he has no choice, and sings all the songs of wisdom and magic that he knows. When he's finished, Vainamoinen packs up and leaves, returns home, and completes his boat.

Parts 16 and 17 Analysis

Once again, a traditional quest story/myth forms the backbone of the action as Vainamoinen searches for the various components of his magical boat. The purpose of the boat is revealed in the following section, but there is a self-contained lesson to be learned from this particular aspect of the tale - if Vainamoinen had not encountered

Vipunen, he never would have accumulated so much knowledge. This is the point of many quest myths - that the journey is as important, if not more so, than the goal.

It's never made explicitly clear why Vainamoinen lies to the Daughter of the Underworld about how he got there. It can be inferred, however, that he knows that the Daughter is right, that it's difficult for the living to leave the Underworld once they're there. In other words, he pretends to be dead so he can have an easier journey. Once the truth is out, the poem's central theme about the dangers of bragging comes into play - Vainamoinen brags that he has no reason to fear being a prisoner, but in fact does end up imprisoned.

Part 17 contains echoes of other stories of humans being swallowed by giant monsters, particularly that of Jonah and the whale in the Bible. Such stories are often metaphorical examinations of the tensions between humankind and nature, with the truths learned by those swallowed representing truths that humankind can learn from the natural world. The story here is no exception, with the stories passed on to Vainamoinen by Vipunen clearly following into that category.

Parts 18 and 19

Parts 18 and 19 Summary

This section tells the story of the rivalry between Ilmarinen and Vainamoinen for the affections of Louhi's daughter.

Part 18 - At this point, it's revealed that Vainamoinen constructed his boat to take him to Pohja to court Louhi's daughter, the Maid of Pohja. As he sails, the goddess of the twilight, Ilmarinen's sister Annikki, asks where he's going and why. After lying several times and after Annikki calls him on his lies, Vainamoinen tells her the truth. Annikki leaves him and quickly journeys to tell Ilmarinen, whom she knows also wants to marry the Maid of Pohja. Assisted by Annikki, he bathes and dresses, and then departs riding a magical sledge. He catches up to Vainamoinen, and they agree to not take the Maid by force, giving her the chance to choose for herself which of them she wants to marry. Vainamoinen speeds ahead and arrives in Pohja first. As he's coming ashore, the barking of watchdogs warns the Lord of Pohja, the Maid's father, that visitors are approaching. After failing to get anyone to go and see what the visitors want, the Lord of Pohja goes himself, encounters Vainamoinen, and returns home to tell his daughter Vainamoinen has arrived and is seeking her hand in marriage. The Maid tells him she has no interest in marrying an old man like Vainamoinen. When Vainamoinen appears and makes his proposal, she tells him a different story - she doesn't like sailors, and will not marry him.

Part 19 - Ilmarinen arrives, and expresses his desire to marry the Maid. Louhi sets him a series of tasks, all of which he accomplishes after being advised how to do so by the Maid and after calling on his skill at the forge to magically construct the tools he needs. Once all three have been completed, Louhi gives him permission to marry her daughter. At that point, one of Louhi's other children, who is seated on the floor, sings a long story about an eagle that carried away a beautiful maiden. Meanwhile, a disconsolate Vainamoinen returns home, telling friends how an old man (like him) should never try to court a young woman (like the Maid) at the same time as a young man (like Ilmarinen.)

Parts 18 and 19 Analysis

Two narrative patterns encountered in previous sections of the poem are repeated in this section. The first is Vainamoinen's lying, which as was the case in previous instances when it occurred, comes into play because Vainamoinen knows that complications and perhaps even dangers will result if he tells the truth. This instance is no different, since as soon as he tells the truth Annikki makes it possible for Ilmarinen to become a rival for the affections of the Maid.

The second pattern is the setting and accomplishing of a series of tasks. Once again, echoes of the Greek myth of Hercules and of traditional fairy tales are awakened as the result of Ilmarinen's struggle to prove worthy of the Maid of Pohja. As is the case in many such stories in which this narrative pattern appears, the tasks tend towards struggles with the fantastical. This suggests that the archetypal or universal story being played out is that of struggle against that which is unnatural (singleness or unmarried-ness) so that the natural order (marriage or couple-hood) can be achieved.

The story about the eagle and the maiden can be interpreted as symbolizing the story of Ilmarinen and the Maid. In the same way as the eagle carries away the maiden, Ilmarinen is carrying away the Maid. Meanwhile, the figure of the Child on the Floor, who tells the story appears several times in the following sections, offering alternative perspectives in similar fashion to the Child here. The metaphorical value of this figure is defined fully in the final part of the poem.

Parts 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, and 25

Parts 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, and 25 Summary

This section tells the story of the wedding of Ilmarinen and the Maid of Pohja.

Part 20 - Extensive preparations are made for the feast to follow the wedding of the Maid of Pohja and Ilmarinen. First an ox is bred and raised to provide the meat, but proves too large and too strong and too angry for an ordinary butcher to slaughter and prepare. After months of searching, a sufficiently skilled and mighty butcher is found. While the ox is prepared, Louhi worries about how to provide enough beer for the guests. She puts a young maiden in charge of brewing it, and the maiden sets to work, securing the help of a bear and a bee. After intensive and exhaustive effort, the beer is set to brew. At that point, from his island home Lemminkainen sees smoke from several fires. Assuming it's the result of fires caused by war, Lemminkainen travels to join the battle. When he learns the fires have been set to help prepare beer, Lemminkainen assumes it's for the feast to celebrate HIS wedding to the Maid of Pohja. Meanwhile, Louhi is drawing up the guest list for the wedding, and Lemminkainen is NOT to be invited - he's too reckless and causes too much trouble. Invitations are delivered to all the people of Pohja and the surrounding lands - all except Lemminkainen.

Part 21 - Louhi issues detailed and extensive orders about how Ilmarinen and his horse are to be treated. When Ilmarinen arrives, Louhi greets him graciously and a feast of welcome begins. Huge amounts of food and drink are consumed. Vainamoinen, a guest at the wedding, drinks a toast to storytellers and asks who shall entertain the company with stories. A Child on the Floor offers, saying that in spite of not knowing much the stories can still be entertaining. An Old Man by the Fire comments that the stories of children are shallow lies, adding that in his younger days he was a great story-teller. Vainamoinen volunteers to sing his stories, and as the evening progresses the guests enjoy themselves greatly. Vainamoinen concludes by singing the praises of the Creator, and asks for blessings on the lives of those in attendance.

Part 22 - As the feast ends, Louhi asks Ilmarinen why he's still there, explaining that the Maid isn't yet ready to be married and has much to accomplish. Meanwhile, several old women of the household speak to the Maid in intensive, painful detail about how her life will be different once she's married. They tell her she will never again feel as safe and as loved in her husband's home as she is in her family's, how she will be badly treated by her husband and her in-laws, and how she will be always working. The Maid bursts into tears, grieving for what she's lost and for the pain that her parents will experience when they see the suffering she's experiencing. A Child on the Floor (which may or may not be the same one that spoke earlier) tells her to calm herself and not listen to what the old women are telling her. The Child says the man she's chosen to marry is the best of men and reassures her that while she may have to work hard, he'll always treat her well and that great blessings await her.

Part 23 - The old women instruct the Maid in great detail how she should live once she's married, how to cook and clean, treat her in-laws, and tend her garden. One tells a long and detailed story about how she was treated like a slave, sexually and physically abused, and ran away to her brother's. She tells how he failed to recognize her and how his wife forced her to leave, saying she was forced to wander the world and beg for her living. She concludes by saying those who helped her were few and far between, and that she can't imagine how she came to live such a life.

Part 24 - Ilmarinen is instructed, in less detail and at shorter length, on how to treat his bride. He's told to always respect and cherish her, to not demand too much of her, and only punish her, when she deserves to be punished. He's told only to beat her as a last resort, and to strike her only where wounds can't and won't be seen, otherwise they will both be mocked by people in the village. The Old Man by the Fire speaks up, telling Ilmarinen how foolish he is to get married and speaking at length about how awful his marriage was to a nagging, violent woman, and how she only treated him well after being threatened with a beating. At that moment, the Maid realizes that the time is drawing near for her to leave. She weeps as she bids farewell to her parents and her home, saying only her horse and her dog will recognize her if and/or, when she returns home to visit. Ilmarinen lifts her into his sledge, pronounces his farewell to the wedding guests and the land of Pohja, and leaves. As the newlyweds depart, children of Pohja sing their farewells. Ilmarinen and the Maid ride for three days, finally reaching Ilmarinen's home.

Part 25 - Ilmarinen and his bride are welcomed home by a large group of wedding guests led by Ilmarinen's gracious mother, Lokka. She speaks at length about how eager she is to hear the stories of his adventures, how long she and the other guests have been eager for his return, and how glad she is to meet the bride. Another Child on the Floor speaks contemptuously about how ugly and unaccomplished the bride is, but Lokka says there couldn't be a more beautiful or sweeter bride. She promises to treat her well, and tells her she will live a good life there. A feast of welcome begins, and Vainamoinen sings Lokka's praises along with those of her husband, the bridesmaid, the land, the house, and the wedding guests. Once he's finished, he leaves the party on his sledge, singing as he travels home. He accidentally runs over a rock and breaks his sledge, magically fetches the tools to repair it and sings a forest into being so he can harvest the wood to replace the broken parts. When the sledge is ready, he climbs into it and continues his trip home.

Parts 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, and 25 Analysis

Part 20 consists of a pair of short quest stories, of the ox and the beer. There is no hero per se in the ox narrative, while the heroine of the beer narrative is the maiden in charge of the brewing, but nevertheless there are near-impossible tasks to be accomplished. Both narratives illustrate the archetypal experience of the search for perfection, dramatizing how such searches can be long and arduous but ultimately rewarding. Lemminkainen's appearance at the end of his section, including his assumption that the preparations are being made for him and the revelation that Louhi doesn't want him at the wedding, foreshadow the action of the following section, in which he learns the truth, reacts with impulsive anger, and faces the dangerous consequences of that anger.

The rest of this section consists mostly of challenges faced by the bride and groom, challenges of a different quality but similar intent to the many challenges faced by other characters both up to and following this point in the story. Where those challenges are mostly physical and at times intellectual, the challenges faced here are emotional. The bride in particular is forced by the old women to face the archetypal challenges that go along with leaving the safety and familiarity of home for the first time, while the groom is essentially challenged to behave responsibly. In other words, where other characters, in many cases, have had to conquer physical monsters, the bride has to conquer the spiritual monsters of unhappiness and fear presented to her by the old women. This is particularly true of the story in Part 23, which seems to be intended to trigger fear in the same way as , for example, Vipunen tells his stories to trigger fear in Vainamoinen. The challenge here is to deal with fear by displaying courage. Vainamoinen certainly does it, and it's possible to see the bride's decision to go ahead with her marriage as her facing down her challenge in a similar way. Meanwhile, the groom is challenged (albeit to a less dramatic degree) to conquer the spiritual monster of disrespectful behavior. It's interesting to note that wife beating, to a significant degree, qualifies as such behavior only when undertaken without just cause. The fact that there is such a thing as just cause at all is unfortunately an example of the perspective held by many patriarchal (male oriented) cultures on how women should be perceived and treated.

This perspective on the role of women is balanced at least to some degree by the presence of so many strong, wise, powerful female characters, many of whom embody various aspects of the archetype of the Mother. These include Vainamoinen's life giving and world shaping mother (the Water-Mother), Lemminkainen's wise and patient mother, the Maid's protective and powerful mother (Louhi), Ilmarinen's gracious and generous mother (Lokka.) Later in the poem, there is Kullervo's forgiving mother. There are other powerful female figures in the poem, including Ilmarinen's sister Annikki, the Daughter of the Underworld, and the monstrously evil Loviatar in Part 45. Most of these characters, Loviatar being the most notable exception, offer wisdom, perspective and a broader scope of feeling, as opposed to male characters like Ilmarinen and Vainamoinen and Lemminkainen, who while powerful tend to act and/or react without wisdom. It's significant that there are very few male figures specifically defined as fathers - the Lord of Pohja is one of only a very few, and he plays a very minor role in the action, indicating that more valuable and universal lessons can be gleaned from the female perspective. In short, throughout *The Kalevala* the female/mother archetype embodies and symbolizes the broader, order-inspired and instinctive meaning of life. The various male archetypes, by contrast, embody and symbolize the narrower, more chaotic and ill-reasoned.

A related point here is that none of the Children, who speak from the Floor, are identified by gender. It would be tempting to suggest that the ones, who speak with wisdom and grace (in Parts 19 and 22) are female, while the ones, who speak in more disparaging terms (in Parts 21 and 25) are male. Another possibility, however, and one with deeper meaning, is that the Children speak a truth regardless of their gender. The Child in Part

19 speaks in metaphor about an archetypal truth about marriage, the Child in Part 21 speaks a realistic truth about the relative lack of depth in youthful stories, and the Child in Part 22 speaks a truth about the goodness of Ilmarinen. The Child in Part 25 speaks what at first appears to be a falsehood, in that the bride at that point appears to be good and vulnerable. Later in the poem, however, she reveals a nasty side (Parts 32 and 33, when she ill-treats Kullervo), of which the Child's comments here are foreshadowing. "Out of the mouths of babes", goes the old saying. It would seem that the function of the Children here is to bear witness to its truth.

One last element to note is how Vainamoinen, perhaps in contrast to other male figures around him (particularly the miserable Old Man by the Fire), is portrayed as gracious and understanding, particularly since he was so heartbroken at losing the Maid of Pohja to Ilmarinen. His conduct at both feasts is exemplary in its generosity, indicating that he carries with him a great deal of what might be called the spirit of the mothers.

Parts 26, 27, 28, 29, and 30

Parts 26, 27, 28, 29, and 30 Summary

This section tells the story of what happens, when Lemminkainen reacts to not being invited to the wedding.

Part 26 - Lemminkainen becomes angry that he isn't welcome at the wedding, and prepares to go anyway. As he's bathing and dressing himself, his mother warns him of the dangers he will encounter on his journey. Lemminkainen boastfully describes what he will do to win each encounter, and sets off. He meets with every hazard she predicted, overcoming each of them with magic, cleverness, strength and / or charm.

Part 27 - Lemminkainen arrives at the wedding, strides into the midst of the festivities, and demands to be greeted properly, fed properly, and given the best ale. The Lord of Pohja responds angrily to his arrogance but commands that he be given food and drink. Lemminkainen finds worms in the food brought him and hates the flavor of the ale, and again challenges the Lord of Pohja to treat him properly. The Lord of Pohja angrily conjures up a stream for him to drink from, but Lemminkainen says he's not an animal and won't drink from water so muddy. They then begin a conjuring duel, with the Lord of Pohja and Lemminkainen each conjuring different animals. After a while, their weapons change from magic to swords, and Lemminkainen cuts off the Lord of Pohja's head. He puts it up on a pole in the courtyard for all to see and flees. Louhi, aged wife of the Lord of Pohja, conjures up an army to go after him.

Part 28 - Lemminkainen quickly makes his way home, where he asks his mother to help him get ready for a long journey. After she repeatedly asks him why he has to go so far so quickly, and after repeatedly lying about it, he finally confesses he's being chased by an army and asks where he can hide. After rejecting several possibilities, she gives him directions to the country where she and Lemminkainen's father first made their home.

Part 29 - Lemminkainen arrives on an island populated by young, beautiful women. Lemminkainen enjoys their company for months, apparently having sex with every one, even an older woman, who at first he had rejected. He wakes one morning with the desire to return home, constructs a boat using his magic, and as the women all grieve, sets sail. He discovers, when he gets there that much of what he remembers has been destroyed, and his mother is apparently dead. At first, he's unable to find out what happened to her, but eventually discovers her footprints and follows them into the forest, where he is overjoyed to learn she is still alive. They have a happy reunion, and Lemminkainen's mother explains that the country was ravaged by armies from Pohja, who came searching for him. For his part, Lemminkainen says the country where he was hiding for so long was quite beautiful, but the women there were unattractive and obnoxious.

Part 30 - Lemminkainen, angry at what the armies of Pohja did to his homeland, resolves to go into battle against them. He pays no heed to the warnings of his mother, instead going in search of his friend, the warrior Tiera. Lemminkainen overcomes the objections of Tiera's family and the two set off in a boat for Pohja. Louhi sends Frost to challenge him. The boat freezes in the water and Lemminkainen and Tiera both come close to freezing, but Lemminkainen charms Frost into leaving them alone. When Frost leaves, the boat can again move, but the two wanderers can't find their way to Pohja. As they wander, they become lonely for their mothers and for their homeland. Finally, they turn and go back, with Lemminkainen returning Tiera to his family and to his own mother. The Storyteller then comments that he is now going to turn his attention to another story.

Parts 26, 27, 28, 29, and 30 Analysis

The Trickster-ish character of Lemminkainen takes focus again in this section, which tells how his arrogance and impulsiveness get him into difficult situations. Several motifs from previous stories in the poem are repeated - the bragging, Lemminkainen's use of charm and magic to get him out of trouble, the wise but unheeded words of a mother figure. A new element introduced here is his mythic sexual prowess. Perhaps this is another manifestation of his magical abilities, being able to enjoy so many women so fully. An interesting detail is his "enjoyment" of the unattractive older woman. The question is whether this defines Lemminkainen as indiscriminate or compassionate. Given the general nature of his character, it would seem to be the former - he's an adventurer, so it seems reasonable to suggest that for him, having sex with an unattractive woman is simply another adventure. One question that arises from this section is why does he lie and tell his mother the women were unattractive? It may be that even though he's disobeyed her, he still wants to appear to be a good boy, and so doesn't even hint at the possibility he was naughty with the women. In other words, his lies are similar to Vainamoinen's, in that they're uttered because both Vainamoinen and Lemminkainen know they're going to get in trouble if they tell the truth.

The way Lemminkainen and Tiera become lost is perhaps symbolic of the way human beings in general can become lost, far away from who they are emotionally and / or spiritually, unable to define a path forward for themselves. Their reaction to their situation (recalling how pleasant their home life is) combines with the resolution to their dilemma (returning home) to suggest that the way to avoid becoming spiritually lost is to not leave the spiritual home. In other words, stay true to your values, truths and beliefs, and you'll always be able to feel secure and safe. Once again, the specific myth makes statements about a general human condition.

Parts 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, and 36

Parts 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, and 36 Summary

This section introduces and follows a new character, the vengeful Kullervo.

Part 31 - The intense rivalry between the brothers Kalervo and Untamo results in Untamo attacking Kalervo's home and family, destroying everything and killing everyone except a young pregnant woman. The woman gives birth to a male child, who is named Kullervo, and who turns out to be Kalervo's son. While still very young, Kullervo vows to take revenge on Untamo for killing his father. Untamo and his advisors agree to kill him, but several attempts fail. Untamo then tries to break Kullervo's spirit, and gives him several menial jobs. Kullervo fails at them all and is then sold to Ilmarinen, who pays Untamo in broken tools.

Part 32 - Ilmarinen's wife, the Daughter of Louhi, takes an instant dislike to Kullervo, and on his first day as a cattle herder, bakes a stone into a loaf of bread for his lunch. She speaks a long, poetic prayer for the safety and productivity of her cattle, and then sends them out with Kullervo.

Part 33 - Kullervo drives the cows to pasture, lamenting his unhappiness. Later, when he cuts the loaf of bread, and breaks his knife on the rock. He is immediately stricken with angry grief because the knife was the only thing he had of Kalervo's. He wonders aloud what he can do to take his revenge on Ilmarinen's wife, and a nearby crow advises him. Kullervo drives the cows into the swamp, where they're devoured by wild beasts. He then forms a magical horn, with which he summons other beasts. He disguises them as cows and takes them back to the farm, where Ilmarinen's wife sits down to milk them and is torn apart. She pleads for help, but Kullervo refuses, and she dies.

Part 34 - Kullervo wanders the forest, in search of meaning for his life and lamenting his lack of family. An old woman tells him his family yet lives, and gives him directions how to find them. Kullervo travels further, reunites with his family, and hears the story of how his sister disappeared one day while gathering berries.

Part 35 - Kullervo tries to make himself useful around his family's farm, but ends up damaging nearly everything he touches. Finally, his father sends him into town to do a financial errand, and on his way back from successfully completing it, he attempts to woo several young maidens into his cart. Most of the maidens refuse, but a beautiful blond maiden is lured by promises of money and comfort. She climbs into the cart, Kullervo caresses her and holds her, and they spend the night together. The following morning she asks him what family he comes from. He tells her he's the son of Kalervo, and then asks about her family. Now very upset, she reveals that she is Kalervo's daughter, the girl who got lost while picking berries. She tells him hat happened on the day she got lost, and then full of remorse about what happened between them the night before, she kills herself by jumping into a raging river. Kullervo sadly returns home and tells his parents what happened. His mother tells him to go away and stay away for as many years as it takes for him to get over his anguish. Kullervo refuses, saying he has yet to take revenge on Untamo for what he did to his family.

Part 36 - Kullervo makes plans to wage private war against Untamo's family. His mother asks him what she and the rest of the family will do without him, and Kullervo speaks dismissively about everyone but his mother. In turn, as he bids farewell to his father, brother and sister, Kullervo is himself dismissed. Only his mother speaks fondly to him as he leaves. As Kullervo journeys to the homeland of Untamo and his family, a messenger brings word that everyone in his family has died, and that it's Kullervo's responsibility to return home and arrange for their burials. Kullervo refuses, commenting on how badly they treated him. He speaks lovingly only of his mother, grieving plainly and giving directions for a sacred, reverent burial. After giving those instructions, he comes upon Untamo's family, slaughters every one of them single-handedly, and returns home. He finds his mother's grave and grieves again for her. Speaking from the grave, she urges him to let himself be led by the family dog into the forest to ask for help, strength and guidance from the trees. Kullervo goes into the forest, and on his journey passes the spot where his sister killed herself (Part 35.) Overcome with remorse, he kills himself. Upon hearing of his death, Vainamoinen sings a lament, warning parents to be careful how they raise their children.

Parts 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, and 36 Analysis

There are echoes in this section of the Ancient Greek myth of the House of Atreus, in which the consequences of the murderous sins of a pair of brothers played out in the tortured lives of their children in the same way as the quarrel between Untamo and Kalervo plays out in the lives of Kullervo and his siblings. In both cases, the story is an archetypal one, warning not of the dangers of raising children badly as is suggested by Vainamoinen's epilogue, but of the spiritually corrosive nature of revenge, the trigger and the core of the tragically murderous cycle of action and reaction. There are also faint echoes here of the Oedipus myth, in which the hero unwittingly has sexual relations with his mother in the way Kullervo has sexual relations with his sister. Again, the destruction of both participants is the end result, developing a comparatively archetypal theme of the dangers of incest. Once again in this section, it can be seen how different cultures in different ways explore the same social themes.

There are several significant details in this section. The first is the sudden shift in the character of Ilmarinen's wife, the Daughter of Louhi from earlier in the poem. At no point in her earlier appearances was there any indication that she was the kind of woman, who would treat Kullervo as badly as she does. Her behavior is foreshadowed, as previously discussed, in the comments of one of the Children on the Floor in Part 25, but in terms of her actual actions there is no warning. Has marriage treated her that badly? There is no way to tell. Was she always a nasty person? She did, after all, reject Vainamoinen's courtship in the hopes of being wooed by someone younger, but that's not necessarily nasty. Has her character been rewritten simply for the sake of giving

Kullervo's story the villain it needs? Possibly, given that *The Kalevala* was probably shaped in the same way as several other similar epics - ancient, verbally recounted folk stories told by different bards with different perspectives that were only put together into a unified form relatively late in their socio-cultural development.

Yet another wise mother figure appears here - Kullervo's mother, the latest in a long line of such figures in *The Kalevala*. A particularly noteworthy aspect of her appearance is her guidance from the grave - does she know that she's sending Kullervo to his death? On one hand, it could be argued that the spirit is operating out of compassion, genuinely wants him to heal, and genuinely believes being in the forest can help him do that. It could also be argued that from her perspective in the afterlife, she can see the depth of Kullervo's remorse and guilt and pain, knows that if he goes into the forest he'll be overcome, and believes that as a result he'll take his own life. In that scenario, she either wants him to be free of that remorse or wants to take revenge on him for killing her daughter. Following the pattern of other mothers in the poem, either is possible - Louhi is prepared to do the cruelest things in the name of revenge, while Lemminkainen's mother loves him enough to do anything to make his life better,. Which camp does Kullervo's mother fall into? In the context of this section's theme relating to revenge, there is every reason to believe that Kullervo's mother, as warm as she is in the beginning, by the end falls into the vengeful Louhi camp.

Finally, there is a rare father figure in this section - Kalervo, who for whatever reason is remarkably dismissive of his son even before the incest with his sister. Is Kullervo fated to be, for lack of a better phrase, a loser? Does his ineptitude result from having inherited the previously discussed bad karma from his father and uncle? Or is his behavior the true motivator of Vainamoinen's little speech at the end, warning people to be careful how they raise their children. There is every possibility that all three are at least partially true.

Parts 37, 38, and 39

Parts 37, 38, and 39 Summary

This section lays the groundwork for the poem's lengthy climactic confrontation between its three main heroes - Vainamoinen, Lemminkainen and Ilmarinen - and Louhi.

Part 36 - Ilmarinen grieves intensely for his dead wife. Finally, after several months, he goes to his forge and prepares to create a new wife for himself out of gold and silver. Several initial attempts fail, and the materials are thrown back into the forge. Finally he creates a statue of a beautiful woman, lays her in his bed, and bathes himself in readiness for sleeping with her. He lies down beside her and falls asleep, but then wakes to find her cold, unresponsive, and not pleasant to sleep with. He takes her to Vainamoinen in the hopes that he will find her attractive, but he says she's not the right woman for him. This section ends with a warning from the Storyteller to the younger generation to not let themselves become attracted to women of gold and silver.

Part 38 - Ilmarinen gives up his metallic bride and returns to Pohja to find another. Upon learning that her daughter is dead, Louhi refuses to allow him to take another of her children. Ilmarinen tries anyway, singing to Louhi's remaining daughters through an open window. A baby seated on the floor hears him and sings back that none in the house will listen. Another daughter of Louhi does hear him, however, and sings back that she will not go with him. Ilmarinen kidnaps her and carries her home. She bemoans her fate all the way. They stop for the night at an inn, where Ilmarinen's new bride amuses herself with another man while Ilmarinen sleeps. Ilmarinen wakes up, discovers what has happened, and tries to decide how to punish her. Finally he changes her into a seabird, and she flies off. Ilmarinen then returns home, telling Vainamoinen how badly things went and adding that life is good in Pohja now that they have the Sampo, which is constantly providing food for the people.

Part 39 - Vainamoinen tries to convince Ilmarinen to accompany him to Pohja to steal the Sampo, but Ilmarinen tells him it's kept inside a mountain. Vainamoinen says if Ilmarinen makes him the right kind of sword, they can get the Sampo out . Ilmarinen sets to work, and soon finishes a sword that can cut a mountain in two. The two heroes then set off on their journey on horseback. They encounter a boat, which speaks to them of loneliness and how its purpose isn't being fulfilled. Vainamoinen magically fills it with oarsmen and beautiful female passengers, and sets it to sail to Pohja. Lemminkainen, alone and unhappy because his food stores have all run out, hails them. Upon learning that they're sailing to Pohja he insists upon coming along, and joins the expedition.

Parts 37, 38, and 39 Analysis

Aside from laying the foundations for the much longer section that follows - the invasion of Pohja by Vainamoinen, Ilmarinen and Lemminkainen - these three brief sections contain a few elements noteworthy on their own merits. The first is the metaphoric warning contained in Part 36, the story of Ilmarinen's golden wife. Vainamoinen's comment in the end is less a literal warning about falling in love with golden women as it is a more general warning about falling in love with gold (ie riches, wealth, possessions) in general. The repeated references to how cold the golden woman is suggest that gold and money in general are "cold comfort", and that the love of gold is a false kind of love. A second noteworthy element is the reappearance of the "baby on the floor" motif. As was the case in its previous appearances, the Baby (or Child, as was the case earlier) speaks an uncomfortable truth - uncomfortable, that is, for Ilmarinen, who has no interest in hearing what the Baby has to say.

A third significant element is the glimpse of the lonely boat, which suggests that all beings, all creation, must be allowed to fulfill their true purpose in the world. Finally, the appearance of Lemminkainen is the first time in the poem that he directly encounters Vainamoinen and Ilmarinen. The combination of the playful, reckless Lemminkainen with the wiser Vainamoinen and the somber Ilmarinen is an interesting one, and contains a great deal of potential for conflict, potential fulfilled in the following sections.

Parts 40, 41, 42, 43, and 44

Parts 40, 41, 42, 43, and 44 Summary

Part 40 - Lemminkainen, Vainamoinen, and Ilmarinen encounter a mighty waterfall. Lemminkainen creates magic that allows them to pass through it. Next the boat runs aground, and Lemminkainen discovers it's stuck on the back of a giant pike. He grabs a sword and brags that he can kill it, but fails. Ilmarinen mocks him for being too young, saying only a real man can kill the pike. He too tries and fails. Finally Vainamoinen gently reminds them that he's the oldest and most manly there, reaches down with his sword, kills the pike, slices it in two, and prepares it to be eaten. Once the pike's bones are bare and dry, Vainamoinen constructs a kantele (harp) out of them. One by one Ilmarinen, Lemminkainen, the oarsmen and the maidens all try to play it, but without success. When the ship arrives in Pohja, the people there, including Louhi, also attempt to play it and also have no success. They talk about throwing the kantele into the bottom of the sea, but the kantele says it will only allow itself to be played by the one who constructed it, Vainamoinen.

Part 41 - Vainamoinen plays the kantele, charming all the people, the animals, the spirits and even his mother, the Water-Mother, into coming and listening. They are all deeply moved by his music and begin to weep. Vainamoinen himself weeps, his large tears falling into the ocean. He recruits a willing duck to retrieve them, and the duck dives deep, only to find that the tears have become pearls. She brings them to the surface.

Part 42 - Vainamoinen, Ilmarinen and Lemminkainen encounter Louhi, who refuses to give them the Sampo. Vian plays the kantele, magically lulling Louhi and her soldiers into sleep. He, Ilmarinen and Lemminkainen then free the Sampo from its mountain, carry it to their boat, and set sail for home. Lemminkainen arrogantly sings loudly of their triumph. A heron, startled by his singing, flies screeching back to Pohja, where he wakes Louhi. She angrily discovers the Sampo has been taken and sends mists, storms, and sea-quakes after the thieves. They survive, but the kantele falls overboard and sinks into the sea. Vainamoinen grieves and Ilmarinen weeps, but Vainamoinen tells him that a ship is no place for weeping. They sail for home, still in possession of the Sampo.

Part 43 - Louhi gathers her soldiers and sets sail on a large vessel in pursuit of Vainamoinen and the others. Lemminkainen, in the lookout, sees her coming and warns Vainamoinen, who magically conjures a large and dangerous reef on which Louhi's ship is destroyed and her crew killed. Louhi transforms into a giant eagle with razor-sharp talons and attacks Vainamoinen's ship. In the battle, the Sampo falls overboard and shatters. Vainamoinen and Louhi each rush to salvage it, but Louhi only retrieves one small piece before she is forced by fatigue to return home. Vainamoinen gathers more pieces of the Sampo and returns home, planting the pieces in the ground. He prays to the Creator that the pieces of the Sampo will make the land prosperous and safe.

Part 44 - Vainamoinen gets Ilmarinen to construct a giant rake with which he can search the lake for the kantele, but he is unsuccessful. Later, as he's walking through the forest, Vainamoinen encounters a lonely birch tree, which is sad because it feels vulnerable and useless. Vainamoinen makes it into a new kantele, stringing it with the hair of a beautiful singing maiden. Once the harp is complete, he plays and sings, drawing people and animals to him with it in the same way as he did with the first kantele.

Parts 40, 41, 42, 43, and 44 Analysis

This section marks the beginning of the poem's climax, the epic confrontation between Louhi and Vainamoinen. Aside from being recounted with a powerfully engaging sense of action and suspense, this section is most notable for finally defining the metaphoric meaning of the Sampo. Essentially, it represents prosperity. The fact that it's created by one person (Ilmarinen, with the assistance of Vainamoinen) and used by another (Louhi) can be seen as representing the way prosperity for some is gained on the backs and/or from the labor as others. The fact that those who created it steal it back represents the somewhat socialistic idea that prosperity belongs with the people who work to create it, rather than with the people, who merely live off that work. Finally, the fact that the Sampo is destroyed represents the way that prosperity is destroyed by conflict and war.

The theme relating to the dangers of bragging reappears briefly in Part 40, used to comic effect as Lemminkainen and Ilmarinen both brag that they can kill the pike and fail. Another aspect to the poem that recurs here is resemblance to other myths. In this case, Vainamoinen's playing of the kantele and the enchanting of both animals and people clearly resembles the Greek myth of Orpheus, whose music (played on the lyre, a different kind of harp) was so beautiful and so powerful that animals and humans and even the dead would gather to listen to it.

Once again there is a veiled reference to Christianity in Vainamoinen's prayers to the Creator. Throughout this section, and indeed throughout the poem, various gods and/or spirits have been discussed and/or invoked. Behind them all, however, more powerful than them all, the Creator is the ultimate spirit, and as such corresponds to the Christian God. This unifying, monotheistic spiritual presence in *The Kalevala* is what sets its spiritual/religious context apart from that of other epic poems, which in many cases was polytheistic, or set in the context of a religion with many gods.

In Part 44, Vainamoinen is asked for the second time to construct a special rake - the first was earlier, way back in Part 15, when Lemminkainen's mother asked him to construct one so she could find the pieces of her son's body.

Parts 45, 46, 47, 48, and 49

Parts 45, 46, 47, 48, and 49 Summary

Part 45 - Louhi, hearing of the Sampo-born prosperity in Vainamoinen's homeland, seeks revenge. Hearing her plea, an evil female spirit named Loviatar allows herself to be made pregnant by a raging storm, and later gives birth to nine children named Cancer, Plague, Gout, etc. Louhi sends them to Vainamoinen's homeland, where they ravage his people. Vainamoinen prays to the Creator for help, and then with the assistance of an Old Man prepares several ointments and potions, which are applied to both the people and the land. All the diseases are healed, and peace and prosperity are restored.

Part 46 - Louhi, upon hearing that her plagues have been defeated, sends a giant bear to attack Vainamoinen's homeland. Vainamoinen has Ilmarinen construct a new and more powerful spear, kills down the bear, sings the praises of its strength and courage, and then skins it and prepares its meat for a feast, singing the tale of the bear's origins to the people, who have gathered to eat it. At the conclusion of the feast he sings a prayer to the Creator that soon they all may again be together and have occasion to celebrate.

Part 47 - As Vainamoinen plays and sings, the Sun and Moon come down from the heavens to listen. Louhi captures them and locks them away in a cave. The Creator is unhappy that the world is now so dark, creates a new flame and sends it to Earth. Vainamoinen and Ilmarinen see it, and when earth is not lit and warmed in the way it was, go searching for it. They eventually learn that the fire was swallowed by a giant fish and taken to the bottom of a vast lake. They attempt with nets to catch it, but fail. Other fish in the lake wonder if all the strong men have gone, but Vainamoinen promises that there are still some men left, and the children will grow into men as well.

Part 48 - Vainamoinen and Ilmarinen construct another net, and with the help of a dwarf from the bottom of the lake, bring the fish that swallowed the fire up from the bottom, slit it open, and release the fire. It flames suddenly and powerfully, severely burning Ilmarinen, escaping into the forest, and generating much destruction. Ilmarinen prays to the Creator for help in subduing his gift of fire, calls for help from the cold and frosty land of Pohja, subdues the fire, and in the process has his burns healed.

Part 49 - Ilmarinen attempts to construct a new sun out of gold and a new moon out of silver. Just like the gold and silver maiden he constructed earlier, however, his new creations are cold. Vainamoinen performs some magic and discovers that the real sun and moon have been imprisoned in a cave in Pohja. He arms himself, travels rapidly to Pohja, slaughters the soldiers who guard the cave, and then discovers that he can't open the locks. He quickly hurries back to Ilmarinen, whom he tells to create weapons to help him break the locks. As Ilmarinen works, Louhi, who has heard that Vainamoinen is planning to steal back, the sun and the moon, takes the form of a bird and visits

Ilmarinen to find out what the plan is. When she sees that he's also constructing a collar and chain to hold her, she flies back home, frees the sun and the moon, and then flies back to Ilmarinen to tell him they've been released. Vainamoinen sees what has happened and immediately sings a grateful, praiseful song to both sun and moon.

Parts 45, 46, 47, 48, and 49 Analysis

This section chronicles Louhi's three attempts to take revenge on Vainamoinen for stealing the Sampo. It's possible to interpret at least two of these attempts as additional examples of the creation myths that are scattered throughout the poem - the story of Loviatar, the dark story of how disease came into the world, and the story of the sun and moon, which is the story of the healing and life giving power of light. Interestingly, both these stories contain resemblances to similar Greek myths. Loviatar's story echoes the Greek myth of Pandora's Box, in which all the troubles of the world were released, when Pandora's curiosity got the better of her, and she opened the box she'd been told to keep closed. Meanwhile, in the story of how the Creator sent fire to earth there are echoes of the story of Prometheus bringing the gift of fire from the gods to warm humanity.

It's perhaps significant interesting to note that at the same time as there are more references to the Creator in this section than there are in others, there are also fewer incidents of bragging. Neither Vainamoinen nor Ilmarinen actively boasts of his abilities, even though Ilmarinen's attempts to construct a sun and moon might be interpreted as a different kind of bragging, by action rather than by word. This idea is supported by the perhaps non-coincidental burning he suffers from the true light of the Creator - is he hurt because he arrogantly and foolishly tried to replace the Creator's creations? In any case, the point here is that Vainamoinen and Ilmarinen seem more aware than ever of the Creator's presence, and brag less because they trust and honor the Creator more.

Part 50

Part 50 Summary

Part 50 - The spoiled and unmarried virgin Marjetta eats a cranberry and becomes pregnant. When the time comes for Marjetta to have her baby, her parents turn her out of the house for having loose morals. Marjatta calls on the Creator for help. He guides her to a stable where she gives birth to a little boy. She cares for it and nurtures him until one day he accidentally falls off her lap and disappears. She searches for him for days, and finally finds him in a swamp. She then takes him to an Old Man to be baptized, but the Old Man tells her he won't do it until the boy has been tested and judged. Vainamoinen says because he was born from a berry he should be left on the ground to return to the earth the way a berry would if it fell from a bush. The boy speaks angrily about how Vainamoinen, for all his faults, was never abandoned. The Old Man quickly baptizes him and names him a king. Vainamoinen becomes jealous and leaves, but not before constructing another Sampo and kantele to leave for his people.

The Storyteller concludes his tale, affirming his belief that what he does is wondrous in spite of having had to wander the land and be reviled by those who don't want to hear his stories. He describes those stories as creating a path for the younger generation to follow.

Part 50 Analysis

The sense of Christianity that pervades this poem is never so apparent as it is in this final section, in which the parallels to the Christ story are many and clear. Marjatta is obviously a parallel to the Virgin Mary, the birth of her son is just as obviously a parallel to the birth of Christ (even down to it taking place in a stable), and the story of his disappearance is a parallel, albeit a less obvious one, to the story in the Bible of the disappearance of Christ. In that story he was visiting Jerusalem with Mary and Joseph, he disappeared, they searched frantically, and finally found him in a temple speaking with the learned men. In these men, there is perhaps a parallel to the character of Vainamoinen, who is lectured by the boy in the same way as the learned men in the story, and indeed throughout the New Testament, were lectured by Christ. It's in this story that the full meaning of the previously discussed motif of the Child/Baby on the floor can be discerned. The Baby here speaks in a similar fashion to those earlier Children - he's angrier than they are, but he does in effect speak a truth in the same way as those others. The earlier Children on the Floor, therefore, can now be seen as speaking the truth in the same way as the Christ-like baby here speaks the truth.

Vainamoinen's jealousy at the conclusion of this section is something interesting to note, in that it can conceivably be seen as coming from the same place as the bragging that he and other characters have previously displayed - an overactive sense of ego, a kind of arrogance. In the same way as Vainamoinen and other characters have thought their strength was/is unbeatable, Vainamoinen indicates here that his opinion should not be challenged. Because he is challenged by a Christ-figure, the point made in this little sequence of encounters is that ego, in the form of bragging or jealousy or anger, is un-Christ-like and must be defeated, a point that reinforces the several occasions earlier in the poem in which bragging was punished.

In the final few words of the Storyteller there is yet another echo of Christ, who was himself forced to wander the land and face the anger and rejection of those who didn't want to hear his stories/truths. The Storyteller's conviction that he's preparing the way for a younger generation likewise parallels Christ's conviction that his was the way to God and/or heaven. On a non-theological level, the Storyteller's comments can be seen as suggesting that the poem's tales be considered and remembered for their moral value, the guidance they provide for young people trying to live a moral life.

Characters

Ahti of the Island

See Lemminkainen

Aino

The character of Aino is Lonnrot's own invention and addition to the *Kalevala.,* On one of his field trips to eastern Karelia, he heard a song about Anni, a reluctant bride who hangs herself in her wedding clothes rather than be married. Seizing on this motif, Lonnrot expanded on the basic story and created the character of Aino. She appears in Poems 3-5 as Joukahainen's sister, promised in marriage to Vainamoinen in exchange for Joukahainen's freedom. Unwilling to marry an old man, Aino runs away weeping. She drowns herself in the sea and is transformed into a fish. Vainamoinen catches her, but does not recognize her until she leaps out of the boat, reveals her identity, and swims away, never to be seen again. The Finnish composer Jean Sibelius (1865-1957) named his home "Ainola" after this character.

Death's Daughter

See Tuonetar

Demon

See Hiisi

Devil

See Lempo

Annikki

In Poem 12, Annikki is the name of Lemmirikainen's sister, who tells him that his wife Kyllikki has broken her vow not to go into the village. In Poem 18, Annikki is the name of Umarinen's sister, who questions Vainamoinen on his way to the Northland and then runs to tell her brother what the old man is up to. In general, the name Annikki seems to be associated with characters who are tattletales.

'Eternal Sage"

See Vainamoinen

Far-Mind

See Lemminkainen

Flower of Saari

See Kyllikki

Him

Hiisi is foremost among the many evil spirits referred to in the Kalevala. He does not participate directly in the action of the epic, but his name is mentioned in Poems 4, 6,14-17, 19-20, 23, 25, 32, 35,45, and 47. When Lemminkainen first journeys to the Northland, Louhi has him capture Hiisi's Elk, a creature made of wood and grass and brought to life by magic.

Ilmarinen

One of the three main figures in the Kalevala, Ilmarinen the smith is a great Finnish cultural hero, second only to Vainamoinen. Ilmarinen's name derives from the Finnish word *ilma,* meaning air, and the ancient Finns may have considered him a deity of the weather and elements. There is no trace of this divine identity in Lonnrot's epic, however, except for the mention that Ilmarinen once hammered out the sky and the stars themselves. Rather, he is depicted as the steadfast, skillful craftsman, forever laboring at his forge.

Ilmarinen's most famous feat is the creation of the Sampo, a mysterious mill that provides its owner with endless prosperity. Less successful are the gold and silver bride he forges to replace his dead wife and the new sun and moon he makes after Louhi steals the real ones: the bride is cold, and the sun and moon do not shine.

In many ways, Ilmarinen occupies the middle ground between wanton young Lemminkainen and celibate old Vainamoinen. Ilmarinen, who woos and marries Louhi's daughter, is the figure of a man in his prime, representing mature, married sexuality.

Ilmarinen's wife

See Maiden of Pohjola

Joukahainen

Joukahainen is the young upstart from the northern regions who foolishly challenges Vainamoinen to a singing match in Poem 3. His childish, secondhand verses are no match for the wise old man's vast knowledge. When Vainamoinen sings him into a swamp, Joukahainen saves his own skin by offering his sister Aino as a bride to the old man. After Aino drowns herself, Joukahainen bears a grudge towards Vainamoinen and tries to ambush and kill him (Poem 6). Not realizing that his arrow has missed Vainamoinen and hit his horse instead, the young Lapp boasts of the deed to his mother, who upbraids him for shooting at the great man.

Jouko

See Joukahainen

Jumala

SeeUkko

Ahtinen Kauko

See Lemminkainen

Kalervo

A Karelian fisherman and farmer, Kalervo is Untamo's brother and Kullervo's father. A longstanding and bitter feud between the brothers escalates until Untamo kills Kalervo and destroys his lands (Poem 31). Only Kalervo's wife, pregnant with Kullervo, is left alive. The name "Kalervo" is possibly a variant of "Kaleva."

Kaleva

Kaleva, the patronymic ancestor of the Kalevala tribe, does not appear personally in the epic Lonnrot speculated that "Kaleva was the very oldest Finnish champion. He may be the person who first established himself permanently on the Finnish peninsula and whose clan spread into the hinterland."

"Kalevala" means "Kaleva's District," and its inhabitants, including Vainamoinen, Ilmarinen, and Lemminkainen , are known as "Kaleva's sons." Kaleva's District seems to lie several days' journey south of Pohjola, along a sea or a bay.

Kaukomieli

See Lemminkainen

Kauppi

Kauppi is the ski-maker who builds the skis that Lemminkainen wears to track down the Demon's Elk in Poem 13.

Kullervo

Kullervo, son of Kalervo and nephew of Untamo, is a tragic figure whose story unfolds in Poems 31-36. Mentally unbalanced after having been badly raised as an orphan on his uncle's farm, Kullervo is a bother and inconvience for everybody to deal with. He is lazy, stupid, bitterly defiant, and unfit to do a young man's work; he makes a mess of Untamo's farm, ruins the threshing, and Mils a small child he was assigned to babysit. Finally Untamo rids himself of the troublesome youth by selling him to Umarinen as a serf.

For some reason, Ihnarinen's wife mistreats Kullervo, baking a stone into his bread before sending Mm off to watch the cattle herd. When Kullervo cuts into the bread, he breaks his knife on the stone and is thrown into a vengeful rage: the knife, he laments, was the only legacy he had from his dead father. Apparently Kullervo possesses enough magical powers to turn wolves and bears into cattle, which he sends to kill Umarinen's wife.

Kullervo then wanders off and finds that his parents are still alive, though his sister is lost. He rejoins the family but does not seem to.fit in; once again, he botches all the chores assigned to him, until his father gives up and sends him far away on a tax-paying errand.

Murder and mishaps are followed by incest: Kullervo unwittingly sleeps with his own sister. Unable to live with the shame, the sister kills herself. Kullervo does not go into hiding; instead, he returns home and announces his intention of taking vengeance on Untamo. His mother laments his departure, but his fathers and siblings speak harshly to him, and he repudiates them in turn. He lays waste to Untamo's farm, then returns to the spot where he defiled his sister and kills himself with his own sword.

Kullervo is the embodiment of the poorly-raised and unloved child who grows into antisocial, inept, and vengeful man, bringing damage and death wherever he goes. Noting the predominance of guilt and death in Kullervo's tale, Juha Penbkainen interprets it as "a Finnish tale of fate which dramatically relates the obvious fact that it is impossible to avoid death. It presents life as tragic and incomprehensible." *(Kalevala Mythology,* p. 220.)

Kylli

See Kyllikki

Kyllikki

KylhkM is an aloof and beautiful maiden nicknamed the "Flower of the Island." LemminkSinen woos her unsuccessfully and finally takes her by force. She and her new husband swear a mutual oath: he will not go off to war as long as she does not go gadding about the village. Her mother-in-law is quite pleased with her, but the happy marriage does not last long. When Kyllikki breaks her promise and goes down to the village alone, Lemminkainen deserts her in a rage, returning to his adventurous bachelor life.

Lemminkainen

Impetuous, young, handsome, and warlike, Lemminkainen is one of the three main heroes of the *Kalevala.* He embodies the heroic, manly virtues of the Viking Age: courage, strength, fighting zeal, restlessness, and sexual appetite. He is always ready to avenge any affront to his honor. Though he is knowledgeable, it is fair to say he is not always wise; his headstrong and belligerent ways earn him a bad reputation and get him into trouble on more than one occasion. Twice he swears not to go to war, and both times he breaks his oath. He repeatedly ignores his mother's warnings and rushes off northwards on knightly quests. He is often injured and is eventually killed while pursuing his warlike activities.

Lemminkainen is called "Wanton Loverboy" in Keith Bosley's translation of the *Kalevala,* and critic Michael Branch describes him as a "stone age Don Juan." Both epithets are appropriate, since his name is most likely derived from the word *tempi,* meaning erotic love. He seduces all the women of two separate islands and is unable to settle down for long with a wife before deserting her to woo someone else. However, there is more to Lemminkainen's character than libido and aggression.

Lemminkainen seems to possess great skill as a sorcerer. He may even be a shaman. On both his journeys to Pohjola, his knowledge of spells enables him to overcome dangers and avoid fatal traps. He sings Louhi's soldiers into a stupor and bests the Master of Pohjola in a contest of magic. In fact, apart from Vainamoinen, Lemminkainen seems to be the most powerful magician in Lonnrot's epic.

The many facets of Lemminkainen's nature may be explained by the fact that Lonnrot has combined several heroes from folk poetry into one composite character. Thus some of Lemminkainen's adventures were originally associated with other legendary figures who do not appear in the *Kalevala.*

Lempo

Lempo is an evil spirit who assists Hiisi.

Lokka

Lokka is Ilmarinen's mother, who is mentioned in Poem 25 and called a "daughter of Kaleva."

Louhi

Louhi is the Mistress of Pohjola ("Sariola"), the dark and cold land three days' journey north of Kalevala. Her tribe is apparently matriarchal, for though Louhi has a husband (killed by Lemminkainen in Poem 27), she is clearly the leader of her people. She is a powerful sorceress, but her magic is not as strong as Vainamoinen's. At first, relations between her people and Vainamoinen's are fairly peaceful, and her daughter marries Ilmarinen in Poems 20-25. After the theft of the Sampo, though, Louhi becomes Kalevala's nemesis, sending plagues, beasts, and darkness in an ultimately unsuccessful effort to destroy the southern tribe.

Louhi is Finland's "Witch of the North," a figure to frighten children in bedtime stories. Anselm Hollo and others suggest that the negative depiction of the Mistress of Pohjola is unfair, a literary consequence of men's struggle to dominate women at various times in history: "it must be said that the *Kalevala* is, possibly due to the time of its collection and compilation, a remarkably patriarchal cycle of narrative poems ... Louhi, the powerful and from our heroes' point of view 'vicious' Lady of the Northland, is Kali, the Great Mother, who is apt to devour feeble ambassadors. Her powerful and decisive presence in the epic as we have it now does seem to hark back to a time when a battle was waged between an ancient, shamanistic matriarchal culture and upstart bands of 'heroes'..." (Hollo, "The *Kalevala* through my years," 1985, p. 13).

Loviatar

See Tuonetar

Lyylikki

See Kauppi

Osmo

See Kaleva

Osmoinen

See Kaleva

Maiden of Pohjola

The Maiden of Pohjola is Louhi's unnamed eldest daughter, famed for her beauty and courted by both Ilmarinen and Vainamoinen. She asserts her own will in the matter, choosing Ilmarinen against her mother's advice and secretly helping him to complete his three courtship tasks. She marries Ilmarinen in Poems 20-25 and journeys to his home, where she seems to undergo an strange personality shift. When we next meet her, it is as the spiteful mistress who bakes a stone into her slave Kullervo's bread before sending him out to herd the cattle. In vengeance, Kullervo sends bears and wolves back to Ilmarinen's farm disguised as cows. When Ilmarinen's wife goes to milk them, they tear her to pieces. Ilmarinen mourns her death.

Mana

See Tuoni

Matjatta

Marjatta appears in the final poem of the Kalevala. Her story parallels that of the Virgin Mary: she is the purest and most modest of all virgins, but when she eats alingonberry and miraculously conceives a child, others revile her and refuse to let her into their saunas to give birth. Finally she finds a stable, where she delivers a son. He is crowned King of Karelia, causing Vainamoinen to depart from the earth.

Master of Pohjola

The Master of Pohjola, Louhi's husband, appears only in Poem 27, when Lemminkainen barges into his hall with belligerent words. The Master engages Lemminkainen in a contest of sorcery but is unable to beat him. He then grabs a sword off the wall, and the two fight furiously until Lemminkainen wins, cutting off the Master's head.

Mielikki

Mielikki is Mistress of the Forest, Tapio's consort, mentioned in Poem 14.

Mimerkki

See Mielikki

Otso

See Otsonen

Otsonen

Otso(nen), the "forest'sapple," is a euphemis-tic name for the bear, used by the people of Kalevala in Poem 46 because the word "bear" is ritual-ly taboo.

Pakkanen

Pakkanen is the personification of cold and winter.

Sampsa Pellervoinen

Sampsa, whose surname means "of the fields," is the tiny boy who helps Vainamoinen sow trees all over the earth in Poem 2. Vainamoinen calls on him again in Poem 16, asking him to find an oak from which he can carve his boat. Sampsa travels all over the land speaking to various trees until he finds and an enormous oak in the far south. He cuts it down and brings it to Vainamoinen.

Ahti Saarelainen

See Lemminkainen

Short-and-Squat

See Tuonetar

Suvantolainen

See Vainamoinen

Tapio

Tapio is the god of the forest; his realm is Tapiola. There is evidence that worship of Tapio and other forest spirits continued well into the Christian era: in 1828, Lonnrot journeyed to the home of a great Karelian hunter and singer named Kainulainen. He records that Kainulainen sang songs to the forest gods and goddesses and attributed his hunting success to their favor.

Tellervo

Cattlemaid of Tapio and perhaps his daughter, Tellervo is one of the forest spirits. She is mentioned in Poems 14, 32, and 46.

Tiera

Tiera appears in Poem 30 as Lemminkainen's old friend and comrade-in-arms, whom Lemminkainen enlists to help him attack Pohjola. Like Lemminkainen, Tiera has a knight-errant personality; his lust for adventure and battle make domestic life unsatisfying for him, and he readily agrees to leave his new bride at home and accompany his friend.

The two warriors sail off impulsively towards Pohjola, but Louhi sends a frost to freeze them, and they lose their way. After wandering for a time in cold, unfamiliar lands, Tiera suggests that they are wasting their time and should call off their adventure before they both get killed. Lemminkainen agrees, and the two friends return to their separate homes, having achieved nothing.

Tuonetar

Mentioned in Poems 16, 23, and 45, Tuonetar meets Vainamoinen at the River of Death and tries to thwart his attampt to enter the underworld.

Tuoni

Tuom is the ruler of the underworld. His realm, called Tuonela or Manala, lies just across Tuoni's River. None but the dead may enter Tuonela, but Vainamoinen ventures there twice in search of knowledge and materials (Poems 16 and 25).

The idea that the dead, in order to reach the underworld, must cross a river or stream is a notion common to many mythologies. In Finnish myth, Death's Realm lies to the far north, near Pohjola. This proximity may explain why Louhi's courtship tasks often involve Tuoni's animals or his river.

Tursas

Tursas is a benign water spirit who helps Vauiamoinen with his sowing in Poem 2. Tursas should not be confused with the evil sea monster Turso.

Turso

Turso is an evil sea monster sent by Louhi to retrieve the Sampo from the three heroes in Poem 42. Turso should not be confused with Tursas, a friendly water spirit.

Ukko

Ukko, meaning "ancient one," is a pagan deity similar to the Norse thunder god Thor; *ukkonen* is the modern Finnish word for thunder. Eventually Ukko came to be equated with the Christian god (Jumala means "God"). In the Kalevala, Vainamoinen often prays to Ukko.

Untamo

Untamo is Kalervo's estranged brother and Kullervo' s uncle. Not much explanation is given for the fraternal strife between Untamo and Kalervo. In Poem 31, Untamo wages war on his brother and kills him. Only Kullervo's pregnant mother survives, and Untamo takes her back to his own home. When Kullervo is born, his uncle tries to make use of him around the farm, but since the boy does more harm than good, Untamo finally sells him to Umarinen as a serf (Poems 34-6). Later Kullervo returns to kill Untamo and destroy his farm.

Untamoinen

See Untamo

Vainamoinen

Vainamoinen is the central character of the *Kalevala.* He is born from the sea at the beginning of the world. In oral tradition he is often depicted as a god, but in the *Kalevala* he is a great shaman and singer, an "Eternal Sage" and prophet who prays to Ukko. Shamans are magician/priests able to achieve trance states in which they leave their bodies and travel in the spirit world, to see into the future, prophesy, and commune with the gods. Vainamoinen's visits to Antero Vipunen and Tuonela in search of knowledge can be read as the dream- or trance-journey of a shaman. More skilled in both music and magic than any other living human being, Vainamoinen outsings Louhi, Joukahainen, and even Death. Like the myth of the Greek singer Orpheus, Vainamoinen is able to enchant all hearers with his music and thus is able to escape from the underworld

As a Finnish cultural hero, Vainamoinen is depicted as bringing both fire and agriculture to his people in their earliest history (Poems 4 and 48). He heals them of disease (Poem 45), and secures their prosperity by carefully collecting and planting the pieces of the broken Sampo (Poem 43). His birth is described in the opening poem, but he only appears in the narrative as an old man. On two occasions, his great age prevents him from winning a bride. Like King Arthur in British folktales, Vainamoinen is not lucky in love. The fate of such great men is to serve as a founding father of a whole nation, not to find personal happiness with a wife and family of his own. When Vainamoinen departs the earth to make way for Marjatta's son, he leaves his songs and his kantele behind as a gift to his tribe. Also like King Arthur, Vainamoinen predicts that someday he will return from "the land between earth and sky."

Vainamdinen, born of the sea or "water-mother," always prefers to travel by sea. He builds boats and makes a harp from fish-bones. His name is probably derived from the word *vai'nd,* meaning "slow-flowing river."

VainSmoinen is the only character in the *Kalevala* who experiences moral growth. In the first twenty poems, he is often depicted as an unsuccessful would-be suitor whose offers of love are continually rejected by young women. By Poem 25 he has become a more selfless character, devoting himself to the happiness of others. Though his attempts to win the love of the Maiden of Pohjola were rejected, he bears no grudge when his friend Ilmannen wins her in marriage, and even sings at their wedding. When the Sampo breaks, he is wise enough to gather up the fragments, realising that even they will bring posperity to the people. When Louhi tries to destroy the people of Kaleva in the second half of the epic, it is Vainamoinen who steps in again and again to save them.

Antero Vipunen

Antero Vipunen is an ancient giant, a great shaman who now lies underground, more or less dead, with trees growing above him. In Poem 17, Vainamoinen visits the sleeping giant to obtain his knowledge. Vipunen revives enough to swallow Vainamoinen, in a scene reminiscent of the biblical story of Jonah and the whale. Vainamoinen hammers on Vipunen's innards until the giant finally reveals all his spells and releases him, Vipunen is a puzzling character: it is never clear, for instance, whether he is alive or dead, and whether his body is decomposed or intact. All we know is that he is a repository of ancient knowledge and magical songs. John Alphonso-Karkala, in *Transmission of Knowledge,* 1979, suggests that Antero Vipunen symbolizes the collective unconscious: "What the poet seems to suggest in the personification of the primeval character of Vipunen is that Vainamoinen, perhaps, goes to the cumulative fund of ancestral knowledge of the Finno-Ugric people, and in fact, searches deep in the collective unconscious of the race in the Jungian sense. This includes not only the living, but also those people who have ceased to exist, but whose experience, knowledge, visions, and wisdom continue to live among the surviving members of the race."

Themes

Magic and Ritual

Finnish poetry is steeped in magic. In the world of the *Kalevala,* knowledge of spells and skill in singing are prized above other qualities such as morality, valor, or strength. Scholars categorize the *Kalevala* as a "shamanistic" epic because its heroes are sorcerers and singers rather than kings and warriors. Almost every action in the poem is accomplished by incantation, even everyday activities like building a boat, brewing beer, or binding a wound.

Some critics complain that the charms and ceremonial songs are extraneous, and that they distract from the flow of the epic. However, spells and rituals pervade the *Kalevala* because they were a prominent feature of Finnish rural life.

Ldnnrot's own written comments make clear that one of his chief aims was to create for Finnish posterity a sort of poetical museum of ancient Finno-Karelian peasant life, with its farmers, huntsmen, and fishermen, seafarers and sea-robbers, the latter possibly faint echoes from the Viking Age, also housewives, with social and material patterns looking back no doubt centuries—all reflecting a quickly passing way of life.

Man and Nature

Many of the songs and rituals reflect human attempts to appease and control nature. The world of the *Kalevala* is marked by animism, the worship of nature spirits such as the forest god Tapio. Umarinen's wife chants spells to protect the cattle from wild beasts, Louhi conjures up a frost which Lemminkamen subdues with spells, and Vainamoinen's people sing a ceremonial song to welcome and placate the bear that Vainambinen has slain. Such rituals reflect the ancient Finns' daily struggle for survival in a harsh natural environment. For these people, the symbol of success and prosperity is the mythic Sampo, a magical mill which grinds out abundant food and wealth for the tribe that owns it.

Order and Chaos

Another recurrent theme is the creation of order out of chaos. In the creation poem, the water-mother shapes the sea and shoreline out of broken eggs. Vaina'moinen turns a wilderness into a barley field, and he repeatedly takes shattered fragments (of wood, of the magic mill the Sampo, for example) and makes them into something useful. Lemminkainen's mother is even able to reassemble the pieces of her son's body and sing him back to life. In some ways, these actions parallel Lonnrot's own labors in creating a single coherent epic narrative out of scattered bits of folk poetry.

For Finns, the sauna is both a site and a symbol of this transition from chaos: "sauna bathing transforms situations of disorder to order—for example, it can change illness to health, drunkenness to sobriety, anger to calm, and weakness to strength" (Yvonne Lockwood, *Immigrant to Ethnic,* 1986). The sauna turns Ilmarinen from a soot-smeared laborer into a handsome suitor, and it delivers Marjatta from her labor pains.

Life and Death

Finnish people believed that the line between life and death was a fine one. A person's death was not seen as an ending, but rather as a transitional between physical life and the other realm, the honored community of the dead.

This realm is Tuonela or Manala—the realm of the dead, across the river of Tuoni It is similar to Hades, the underworld or world of the dead described in Greek mythology, even to its encompassing border of a river. In the *Kalevala,* Tuoni's daughter plays the role of the Greek Charon the ferryman, who will not allow the living to enter Death's realm. Finnish mythology about Tuonela originally resembled Greek myths, too, in describing it as the realm of the righteous and unrighteous dead alike. Under the influence of Christianity, Tuonela came to be depicted negatively, as a gloomy, hell-like place, to which only the evil dead are sent.

Because of the cyclical nature of life and death in the *Kalevala,* and traditional attitudes toward death in ancient Finnish culture generally, death is often a transformation rather than an ending. Vipunen, "dead these many years," sleeps underground and can still speak and sing to Vainamoinen. Aino drowns in the sea but returns as a fish. Lemminkainen is not only murdered but dismembered and scattered in a river, but with the help of spells and ointments his mother is able to reassemble and revive him. The heroes themselves do not die: Vainamoinen has been alive since the beginning of the earth, and in the final poem he departs for another world "between earth and sky," promising to return someday.

Only in the Kullervo tragedy does a death have the air of grim finality; the many characters who die in the Kullervo cycle are neither transformed nor resurrected. Fate has made Kullervo a bringer of death. Ruin follows wherever he goes; he kills some people deliberately and others by accident, and in the end both he and his sister are driven to suicide by guilt.

War and Peace

As opposed to most oral traditions that have contributed to national epic literature, the Karelian-Finnish runes primarily depict peaceful labor. The heroism of the battlefield is given little place in these works. In many cases, rivals or enemies try to defeat each other with songs rather than swords. The fight between Lemminkainen and the master of Pohjola turns bloody only after a battle of spells ends inconclusively. Occasionally there is individual conflict: Vainamoinen and Lemminkainen are each ambushed by a resentful enemy who tries to kill them, and Lemminkainen starts a bitter blood-feud with

Pohjola when he kills Louhi's husband. The major strife is the war that erupts between Pohjola and Kalevala after the theft of the Sarnpo.

Good and Evil

By the end, the war between Pohjola and Kalevala can be seen as a struggle between good and evil. Even after the reason for the war—the Sampo—has been lost at sea, the witch Louhi remains bent on the total destruction of Vainamoinen's people. Her weapons are the terrors of primitive people: disease, ferocious animals, and the extinguishing of fire and sun. Pitted against Louhi's evil are the cultural heroes whose actions protect the people and enhance their lives. Vainamoinen and Ihnarinen have brought fire, agriculture, knowledge, technology, and medicine to the Finns, and in the end they save the tribe from the malevolent schemes of its enemies.

Style

Compilation

In 1835 Elias Lonnrot wrote, "Already while reading the songs previously collected, particularly those collected by Ganandre, I at least wondered whether one might not possibly find songs about Vainamoinen, ITmarinen, and Lemminkainen and other memorable forebears of ours until from these had been got longer accounts, too, just as we see that the Greeks [in the Homeric poems] and the Icelanders [in the *Poetic* or *Elder Edda]* and others got songs of their forebears. On his research trips, Lonnrot heard hundreds of individual short poems (a typical Finnish rune or epic song ranges from 50-400 lines and treats a single episode), which he judged to be imperfectly preserved. Bits had been forgotten, and in many cases Christian interpolations had replaced original names and themes. His wish was to take these distorted and corrupted poems and, by comparing as many variants as possible, attempt to reconstruct the truest versions.

In traditional Finnish rune-singing or chanting, two singers sat together with hands joined, while a third accompanies mem on a kantele, a stringed musical instrument. The first singer sings one line, then the second responds, both of them swaying back in forth in rhythm with the music. During his researches, Lonnrot sat near the singers, copying down their words by hand.

Lonnrot did not compose the *Kalevala* from complete poems; in fact, researchers have determined that Lonnrot took no more than a few lines from each song variant. Contemporaries joked that he stitched these fragments together like a tailor (Lonnrot's father was a tailor). Others have compared him to a mosaic-maker. In fact, as Domenico Caparetti pointed out in 1891, Lonnrot's own technique was the same as that of the folk performers he was recording, but using pen and paper rather than voice or kantele to tell his stories.

Plot Structure

Lonnrot imposed a thematic structure and coherence on the *Kalevala* to make it resemble existing works of epic literature. One plot device he introduced was the gradually mounting hostility between Pohjola and Kalevala. For the sake of unity, Lonnrot also substituted names and frequently combined several characters into one.

Lonnrot has been compared to the ancient Greeks who composed the Homeric epics; unlike the *Aeneid, Iliad,* and *Odyssey,* however, the *Kalevala* has an entirely earthly setting and a predominantly human cast of characters. Because Lonnrot was more concerned with human history than with the activities of the gods, he strengthened the historical, realistic elements in the poetry and reduced the Christian and mythological material.

Formulas and Repetition

Although he recast the runes into an a single long work of literature, Lonnrot retained all the poetic characteristics of his oral material, including stock epithets and formulas, "oral fossils" which may date back as far as 2000 years. Formulas include frequently repeated phrases like the Iliad's "wine-dark sea" or the *Kalevala's* "Steady old Vainamoinen, Eternal Sage." A typical feature of oral composition, formulas help singers remember the poems and retain the poetic metre of their singing.

Repetition—particularly threefold repetition— is also characteristic of Finnish oral poetry. The *Kalevala* is filled with triads: there are three heroes, embodying three qualities: the wise old singer Vainamoinen, the diligent craftsman Ilmarinen, and the reckless young lover Lemminkainen. Each in turn courts the Maiden of the North, and their courtship tasks are always grouped in threes. Kullervo attempts to seduce three maidens on his way home; Louhi tries three times to destroy Kalevala, and so on.

Parallelism

Repetition in the *Kalevala* often takes the form of parallelism: a line or verse followed by another line that repeats the same thought in slightly different wording: "Bring a trump from beyond, from the pole of heaven yonder bring a honey-trump from heaven a mead-trump from mother earth." (32: 117-20) Repetition of this type lends to the cadences and echoes that make *Kalevala* poetry unique and difficult to imitate.

Lonnrot also employs a parallelism of motifs, which gives the entire work a certain symmetry and resonance. The sun and moon are blotted out in both the second and the second-to-last poems; the oak fragments in Poem 2 parallel the Sampo fragments in Poem 43, and Vainamoinen's birth at the beginning of the epic is balanced with his departure from the world at the end. Rhetorical techniques such as these contribute to the thematic consistency and unity of Lonnrot's epic and keep it from being a disconnected aggregate of poems.

Poetics

Finnish folk poetry consists of eight-syllable trochaic lines (a trochee is a two-syllable foot, with stress on the first syllable). It is unrhymed, and like most oral poetry, it relies heavily on alliteration, as can be seen in the opening lines:

Mieleni minun tekevi, Aivoni ajattelevi Lahteani laulamahan, Saa'ani sanelemahan, Sukuvirtta suoltamahan, LajivirttS laulamahan (Mastered by desire impulsive By a mighty inward urging I am ready now for singing Ready to begin the chanting Of our nation's ancient folk-song Handed down from by-gone ages).

For more on the poetic devices used in the *Kalevala,* see Robert Austerlitz, "The Poetics of the *Kalevala," Books from Finland,* Vol. 29, No. 1, 1985, pp. 44-47. For more on

Lonnrot's method of composition, see Domenico Comparetti, "Conciuions," in his *Traditional Poetry of the Finns,* translated by Isabella M. Anderton, Longmans, Green, and Co., 1898, pp. 327-59; reprinted in *Classical and Medieval Literature Criticism,* Vol. 6, Gale Research, pp. 219-227.

Historical Context

In Search of a National Identity

1809 marked a turning point in Finland's history. Following the Napoleonic wars of 1808-09, Finland was annexed to Russia as an autonomous Grand Duchy, a distinct political entity with its own governing body, subject to the czar's ultimate authority.

Finland had been ruled by Sweden for 600 years prior to the annexation, and the people of the central Turku region were so heavily assimilated into the dominant foreign culture that many of them thought of themselves as Swedes. Though over 85% of population continued to speak Finnish, Swedish had long been the official language of Finland's administration, education, and literature. Suddenly cut off from their Swedish affiliation, and having little in common with the new Russian rulers, the intelligentsia of Finland experienced something of an identity crisis.

Ethnic self-definition seemed to be based, at this point, on little more than a process of elimination. As a saying of the time went, "we are not Swedish; we can never become Russians; let us therefore be Finns." Educated Finns yearned for a national identity that would earn them respect and put them on the same footing as the other civilized nations of Europe; however, with no literature of their own, no history, and scarcely any knowledge of their country's language and traditions, they had no basis for such a national identity.

Romanticism

A band of University of Turku scholars, inspired by Romanticism, was already engaged in a quest to reconstruct a Finnish national consciousness. A school of thought associated with the German scholar Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744-1803), Romanticism posited that culture is an organic unity that grows out of a people's interaction with their particular ecological surroundings."Herder claimed that apeople's character expressed itself in the form of folk poetry and other cultural systems, which thereby took on the aspect of a mirror of the national soul." (Friberg, p. 16) Thus Romanticism looked to the Folk—peasants living in the remote rural areas least touched by outside influences and modern developments—for the foundation of a national consciousness.

Herder's ideas echoed what Finnish professor Henrik Gabriel Porthan (1739-1804) had been teaching his students at the University of Turku. Believing that the essence of Finnishness was to be found in the oral traditions of the peasants, Porthan encouraged students to collect folklore in an attempt to recover the ancient cultural unity that had been dismembered and buried through the disruptions of history and foreign intervention. His teachings inspired a group of students to apply their linguistic and historical training to the project of cultural reclamation. One of these so-called "Turku Romanticists" was Elias Lonnrot, who would eventually compile the *Kalevala.*

Romantic nationalism had already begun to take hold among intellectual circles, but it was the uncertainty produced by the 1809 annexation that lent urgency to the scholarly quest for a Finnish national consciousness. "Following the establishment in 1809 of Finland as a Grand Duchy in the Russian Empire, Finnish interest in Herder's and Porthan's ideas grew in strength, and the cultivation of a national identity became a veritable duty for many educated Finns despite the fact that most of them scarcely understood Finnish at all." (Michael Branch, 1985)

A National Epic

Ironically, when the first edition of the *Kalevala* was published in 1835, many Finns had to read it in Swedish translation. Nevertheless, they were aware of its importance and welcomed it for what it represented. At a stroke, Lonnrot's national epic gave Finns what they lacked: a rich and versatile literary language, an ancient and heroic past, and a link to the land. It provided an incentive to learn the Finnish language and fed the nationalist aspirations of "those who, fascinated as they were with the radiance and splendour of the ancient songs and ballads of our people, dared to believe in the talents of the Finnish nation, and who were bold enough to begin laying the foundations of an intellectually independent Finnish people." (236)

Towards Independence

As one of the first books written in Finnish, the *Kalevala* gave the Finns a language not only worthy of literature, but also admired by foreigners, some of whom even attempted to imitate the meter of *Kalevala* poetry To "a nation yearning for self-expression" (Karner, p. 160), the *Kalevala* provided the model for an emerging literature. Literary works in Finnish, previously censored, began to be produced, and many of them had a nationalistic flavor.

The *Kalevala* was a spur to the Finnish Language Movement and helped foster national unity and democracy. If the peasants held the keys to ethnic identity, then the elites would need to learn Finnish in order to share in that cultural heritage. Previously the social distinctions had been drawn along language lines; the upper and middle classes had become cut off from the peasants. The *Kalevala,* however, was something all Finns could share, including the rural people, who saw their own lives reflected in the poems. Thus the *Kalevala* bridged both language and class barriers and reversed the prejudice that had held the Finnish language to be inferior. As "people of different social classes began to interact for the common goal of Finnish culture," liberal, democratic ideals of equality were also strengthened (Karner, p. 160).

During the middle years of the century, the Finnish Language Movement made significant strides, though it had to struggle against the pro-Swedish party, whose adherents claimed that the elite Swedish-speaking minority in central Finland constituted a separate nationality and that Swedes were racially superior to Finns. In 1858 the first secondary school to teach in Finnish opened. The *Kalevala* began to be taught in school, and in 1863 the czar was persuaded to elevate Finnish to equal status with Swedish as an official language of the Grand Duchy.

Russification and Resistance

At first, the Russian authorities allowed and even encouraged Finland's budding nationalism, reasoning that it would weaken whatever remained of the Duchy's old ties to Sweden. In the 1890s, however, Czar Nicholas II reversed this policy of tolerance and instituted a program of Russification. His aim was the complete assimilation of all the provinces in the Russian empire, including Finland. With the February Manifesto of 1899, Russia usurped Finland's right to govern itself, declared Russian the official language of Finland, abolished the Finnish military, and made Finnish men subject to conscription into the Russian army.

The country was thrown into immediate turmoil. The *Kalevala* had helped generate European interest in Finland's independence, and the intellectuals of Europe showed their support for the nationalist cause with a petition to the Czar entitled "Pro Finlandia." Paradoxically, however, the epic had alienated the Finnish church. The clergy considered the *Kalevala* pagan and attempted to squelch the widespread fascination with folk poetry and pre-Christian myths. Because the nationalists drew so much of their inspiration from the *Kalevala,* the church opposed them and backed the czar's Russification efforts.

However, the decades spent building ethnic solidarity had prepared Finns to face the crisis of Russification. The achievements of this period, including universal suffrage and opening of higher education to Finnish language speakers, paved the way for the resistance. There followed violence, anti-Russian demonstrations, and a general strike, as the struggle against assimilation continued through World War I.

On 6 December 1917, in the wake of Russia's Bolshevik revolution, the Finnish Parliament declared Finland independent, and one month later Lenin recognized the fledgling nation. Over the course of a century and with the help of the its national epic, the Finnish nation had both discovered and invented itself.

For more information of the *Kalevala'* s role in the Finnish independence movement, see Tracy X. Karner's article, "Ideology and nationalism: the Finnish move to independence, 1809-1918," *Ethnic and Racial Studies,* Vol. 14, No. 2, April 1991, pp. 153-169. See also Eino Friberg's introduction to the *Kalevala* (1988) and Lauri Honko, "The *Kalevala* Process,' *Folklife Annual 1986,* pp. 66- 79.

Critical Overview

Foreign Reception

The *Kalevala* was translated into several languages soon after its initial publication and was hailed by European scholars as one of the world's great epics. A commentary by German linguist Jacob Grimm (of *Grimm's Fairy Tales)* had brought the *Kalevala* international recognition and prepared the way for its positive reception by other critics. Friedrich Max Muller, the influential German-born British philologist, said "The *Kalevala* possesses merits not dissimilar from those of the *Iliad,* and will claim its place as the fifth national epic of the world, side by side with the Ionian songs, with the *Mahabharata,* and *Shanameh,* and the *Nibelunge*" (quoted in *Public Opinion,* Sept. 15,1888).

Reception in Finland

The majority of Finnish-speaking people knew little of the *Kalevala* when it was first published. Ironically, many members of Finland's urban intelligentsia first read their national epic in M. A. Castren's 1841 Swedish translation. They greeted the *Kalevala* with excitement and treated it as a source of ethnic pride. "The thought that our remote people, although it had up till then made only small contributions to the common progress of human civilisation, had produced a folk-epic which could claim a prominent place in the literature of the world, awakened in the minds of the educated classes of our nation that faith in our future which was essential if we ever hoped to raise the Finns to the level of a civilised nation in the deepest sense of theword."(E.N.Setala)

Because it had such a decisive impact on the Finnish nationalist movement, the *Kalevala* was often treated with an uncritical reverence that hindered attempts to analyze it. Even today, some Finns regard the *Kalevala* as something of a sacred artifact: in a 1985 article celebrating the *Kalevala,* Paavo Haavikko proclaims "The *Kalevala* is not for criticism. It is there to be admired." ("What has the *Kalevala* Given Me?" *Books from Finland,* Vol. 29, No. 1,1985, p. 65.)

The Romantic View

Members of the Finnish Literature Society were of the opinion that Lonnrot had "found the *Kalevala* in the forest"— that is, they thought the *Kalevala* was the collective masterpiece of the Finnish folk, rescued from oblivion and painstakingly restored to its "original" form by Lonnrot.

This Romantic view ignores Lonnrot's own artistic contribution to the *Kalevala.* Whatever his enthusiastic contemporaries would have liked to believe, he had not "found" a national epic lying magically intact in the backwoods of Karelia, nor did he claim to have reconstructed something that had existed in antiquity. Rather, he had chosen fragments from the huge, shapeless mass of oral poetry and turned them into a work of epic literature. As he wrote to a friend in 1848, "I must explain to you that from the runes collected to date I could get at least seven volumes of *Kalevalas,* each unlike the other." (Lauri Honko, "The *Kalevala* and Finnish Culture," p. 49) However, despite the fact that the 1849 *Kalevala* differed markedly from the earlier edition in both structure and content, the Romantic notion of a restored original persisted for some years.

Backlash

One of the works to which the *Kalevala* had been compared was the Scottish *Ossiad,* a collection of supposedly ancient poems that had been useful in Scotland's national movement. In the 1880s, the discovery that the *Ossiad* was a modern fraud raised doubts about the *Kalevala*'s authenticity and led to charges of "fakelore" (John Alphonso-Karkala, "Transformation," 1986). In order to refute C. G. Estlander's contention that Lonnrot had written the entire epic himself, scholars threw themselves into the study of the oral poetry on which it was based. They were able to prove that the *Kalevala,* like the *Iliad* or *Nibelungenlied,* was indeed compiled from genuine folk material, with only a few additional lines supplied by Lonnrot.

Some criticism was aimed at Lonnrot for his role in the composition. A. I. Arwidsson and C. A. Gottlund criticised him for blurring the poems together and distorting the original material. Many, beginning with Gottlund, have objected to the non-epic material in the *Kalevala:* "He poured and stirred into the epic materials quite different in nature and of differing periods, mixing all manner of charms and conjurer's words into it, long incantations. . .and other ancient prattling, wedding verses, as well as additional superfluous verses" (quoted in Juha Pentikainen, *Kalevala Mythology,* pp. 25- 6). However, the Italian scholar Domenico Comparetti recognized the value of this material: the charms "tell of the life of the people and relate this to its religious past, its remembrances and ideals" (quoted in Juha Pentikainen, *Kalevala Mythology,* p. 66). Charms were consistent with Lonnrot's purpose of preserving a record of Finnish rural life, and he deliberately added many more of them to the 1849 edition of the epic.

Mythological vs. Historical Interpretations

Lonnrot himself took a historical view of folk poetry, believing that it preserved the deeds of ancestors who had lived during Finnish Viking Age, albeit filtered through centuries of poetic imagination. Nevertheless, Jacob Grimm's mythological interpretation of *Kalevala* poetry predominated among European Romantics. According to Grimm, ancient folktales should be read as myths rather than historical records, and Vainamoinen, Ilmarinen, and Lemminkainen should be seen as gods. Many in Finland adopted this view that the the struggles in the *Kalevala* were symbolic or divine, because it seemed to put the *Kalevala* on a more equal footing with the Greek epics.

M. A. Castren dismissed the controversy: "For a mythologist, it is quite the same whether Pohjola or *Kalevala* existed in reality or not, and how they existed: he clarifies only what people thought about those places" (quoted in Juha Pentikainen, *Kalevala*

Mythology, p. 9). For him, the poetry was significant not for its historical accuracy, but as an expression of what the ancient Finns thought about their surroundings and their experiences.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2
- Critical Essay #3
- Critical Essay #4
- Critical Essay #5
- Critical Essay #6
- Critical Essay #7
- Critical Essay #8
- Critical Essay #9
- Critical Essay #10

Critical Essay #1

In the following essay, Miller discusses the importance of the Finn's national epic to a sense of national pride and as an historical artifact.

It is said that "the Finnish people through the *Kalevala* actually sang themselves into existence" (Eino Friberg, in *The Kalevala, Epic of the Finnish People,* 1988). What made this epic such a powerful unifying force during a period of national awaken-mg? For the Finns, the *Kalevala* was more than simply a collection of fifty poems compiled by a country doctor in his spare time. It was "a portrayal of Finnish mythology," "the mythological dream of the Finnish people," and "a statement of the worldview of the Finnish people" (Juha Pentikainen, "The Ancient Religion of the Finns"). Through *Kalevala* poetry, the Finns developed a language and a system of symbols for describing and envisioning their world.

Critical Essay #2

In the middle ages, the emerging nations of Europe used quasi- historical literature to forge national idendities. France's *Song of Roland* glorified Charlemagne and Frankish valor, while the Arthurian legends captured the English imagination. As paganism gave way to the universalizing force of Christianity, Icelandic poets rescued the Norse gods from oblivion, giving the Scandinavian people a link to their pre-Christian past and a source of ethnic cohesion. For these and other European countries, transferring oral mythology into writing was part of a process of self-definition.

Finland's legends, however, remained unrecorded into the nineteenth century. The church had attempted to banish the ancient Finnish demigods, shaman-heroes, and nature spirits, and centuries of cultural and political domination by Sweden had driven the legends even further to the periphery of the nation's cultural life. Preserved only in the songs of peasants, these myths were unknown to the outside world and familiar only in a vague and fragmentary way to most Finns; before Lonnrot set out to compile the folksongs into an epic, it was difficult to discover anything about what Vainamoinen, Ilmannen, and the other figures from Finnish legend had meant to the Finnish people.

The Romantics had begun to suspect, though, that this scattered oral poetry was Finland's greatest cultural treasure. Eighteen years before the *Kalevala's* first publication, K. A. Gottlund remarked, "If we wished to gather together the ancient folksongs and compile and order them into a systematic whole; whatever may become of them, an epic drama or what have you, it may bring to life a new *Homer, Ossiad,* or *Nibelungenlied;* and in its singular creative brilliance and glory, awakened to its sense of independence, the Finnish nation would receive both the admiration of its contemporaries as well as that of the generations to come." (K. A. Gottlund, *Swedish Literary News,* No. 25, 21 June 1817). Lonnrot's stated aim was more modest: "It is quite all right if [the songs] at least show that our forebears were not unenlightened in their intellectual efforts" (Preface to the *Kalevala,* in Magoun's 1963 translation).

In fact, both Lonnrot's hopes and Gottlund's grandiose predictions were fulfilled. The *Kalevala* showed the world that the Finns, far from being unenlightened or backward, had a long history of intellectual and artistic creativity. Lonnrot's epic drew international admiration and legitimized Finnish culture in the eyes of other Europeans. To have a national epic of world standing was a great source of pride to the Finns.

Perhaps even more significant was the effect *Kalevala* mythology had on Finns' capacity to express themselves. The *Kalevala* gave them a rich source of subject matter, themes, and characters; moreover, it was their own mythology. Within a few decades of its publication, the *Kalevala* began to be universally read and studied in schools; hence when one referred to "Vainamoinen" or "the Sampo," practically every Finn would understand the allusion and what it symbolized.

By 1860, artistic and literary works inspired by the *Kalevala* began to appear. Aleksis Kivi, for example, built his *Kullervo* tragedy on the *Kalevala*'s plot but deepened the characterization of the evil and malicious figure. By explaining Kullervo's violent rage as a result of his oppression and enslavement, Kivi magnified the political reality of his own day. Such artistic elaboration on *Kalevala* themes resonated with Finnish audiences and and helped foster dreams of independence.

The period of Russification which began in the 1890s coincided with a period of great interest in folk romanticism as well as a flourishing age of Finnish art. The music of Jean Sibelius, the poetry of Eino Leino, and the writings of Juhani Aho were all inspired by *Kalevala* mythology. This creative activity was in part a form of resistance, an affirmation of the Finnish national identity in the face of a foreign power's attempts to erase it.

Critical Essay #3

Nineteenth-century Finns looked at their ancient poetry and saw allegories for their current political situation. Thus the *Kalevala* mythology provided people of various backgrounds with a common frame of reference for describing then-world and investing their own experiences with meaning.

Like all dreams, the "mythological dream of the Finnish people" expressed itself through the language of symbols. The oak that blotted out the sun might represent the shadow of foreign rule, and Pohjola could be equated with any enemy of the Finns. The reassembly and revival of Lemminkainen could be read as a metaphor for Finnish culture itself, with the folklorists playing the part of Lemminkainen's mother, singing the dispersed parts of a great whole back into life. Much of the literature of the day invoked Kullervo as the embodiment of social revolution. The *Kalevala* is full of such symbols, but the most potent of all is the Sampo, a mysterious object which could be interpreted in many ways depending on the needs of the teller of the tale.

An 1986 political poem by Eino Leino, for example, uses the Sampo as a symbol of the Finno-Ugnc people's ancient renown— fragmented and buried, yet not completely lost:

Beloved is a father's labored field, sweet the bread baked by a mother, stubborn a stranger's soil, bitter a stepmother's cake. Long our Finland ate barkbread, begged alms along the roads, gathered with its tears too many crumbs from others. But one day the begging will cease and the stranger's insult will end and Finland will stand tall and the people will raise their heads Already Vaino's crop takes root and Kaleva's grain grows, and lack of bread is banished from the land and the longing for a stranger's crop! Thus the ramparts of the Finnish state will rise So the Finnish Sampo will be readied. The wave hath taken the Sampo and borne off the wondrous work of Ilmarinen and the renown of the Ugric tribes lies buried 'neath the skirts of night. But leaning on familiar strength we discover stars in the night and with love in our eyes find bits of Ilmarinen's labor, (translated in Pentikainen 1989. 223)

A Finnish audience would have recognized and appreciated Leino's poignant allusions to *Kalevala* Poems 23, 2, and 43. Such literary resonances allowed Finns to feel they were linked to the my thi-cal time when Vainamoinen had buried pieces of the Sampo with a prayer for his people's future:

Grant, Creator, vouchsafe, God grant that we may be lucky that we may live well always that we may die with honour in Finland the sweet in Karelia the fair' Keep us, steadfast Creator and guard us, fair God from the whims of men from the wiles of hags .. Build an iron fence construct a stronghold of stone round my property on both sides of my people .. that no foe may eat too much no enemy steal the wealth ever in this world not in a month of Sundays (43:401-434)

Eighteenth-century Finns could see themselves as the inheritors of Vainamoinen's blessing and prophecy.

Critical Essay #4

J. G. Linsen, the Chairman of the Finnish Literary Society, greeted the initial publication of the *Kalevala* by declaring "Finland can now say to itself: L too, have a history.'" It was a poetic, fictionalized history, but it gave Finns something on which to model their expectations of the future. Reaching back to a time before Swedish domination began, the *Kalevala* depicted an idyllic epoch in Finnish history. The people of Kaleva are autonomous, noble, and prosperous; moreover, they are wiser and more resourceful than the northern enemies who try to destroy them. They have a deep knowledge of their natural environment and an amazing facility with the Finnish language, two things from which nineteenth-century Finnish intellectuals were largely cut off.

Though the *Kalevala* contains songs about the exploits of great men, Lonnrot deliberarely made it an epic about the daily life of an entire people. It is heroic but homey, concerned with such activities as preparing for a feast, brewing beer, heating the bath, taking a sauna, and tending to livestock. It depicts the rhydims of the tribe's life: courtship and marriage, childbirth, building and repair, injury and healing, planting and hunting, music and feasting. Thus the *Kalevala* linked Finns to the timeless customs of previous generations. The peasants saw their own lives reflected in the *Kalevala,* and elites saw the heritage they had misplaced. (The world of the *Kalevala* is in many ways a model for a more democratic society; it is free of aristocracy and hierarchy, and wealth is shared by the entire tribe.)

As anyone who has lived abroad knows, these simple, familiar things combine to create a sense of home, of a place where one belongs and which one is willing to defend. The sweetness of home and the unpleasantness of foreign lands are recurrent themes in the epic: brides weep in despair at leaving their own people; Vainamoinen sighs with homesickness when he is detained in Pohjola, and Kullervo epitomizes the wretched, wandering exile with no kin to claim him.

The idealized world of the *Kalevala* offered Finns a meaningful connection to their land, to their customs, and to one another in the face of an external enemy.

Critical Essay #5

When their previously unregarded country suddenly attained world recognition, it was a source of pride for the Finns. Ethnic pride is a useful but potentially dangerous force; there is always the chance that it will be carried too far, mutating into national chauvinism and expansionist zeal. This happened in the 1920s, when a group of Finns nearly sang themselves into war. Finland's political right wing wished to expand the nation's borders to include eastern Karelia, still in Russian territory after the peace of 1920. They combed the *Kalevala* for metaphors to inspire and justify the dream of a Greater Finland. To them, the stealing back of the Sampo might represent the rescue of Karelia from "foreign" domination. The movement was brief and unsuccessful, but it illustrated the way national mythologies can be twisted into war propaganda. The appeal of the *Kalevala* endures long after Finland achieved its independence. Finnish children study the epic from the age of twelve to fourteen, and it provides the basis for behavior and activities at annual *Kalevala* festivals. Thus the *Kalevala* has become for today's Finns a cultural icon rather than a work of literature to be enjoyed; it is a focus of pride, a cherished relic of Finland's national awakening and coming of age. As such, it is perhaps valued most by Finnish emigrants to other lands, because it reminds them of who they are and whence they came.

According to Lauri Honko, "The powerful need for a national political self-consciousness was the greatest single factor in the *Kalevala's* success." Perhaps this assessment is still true. Today, in a homogenized and shrinking world where one country is much like another, people's desire for ethnic affiliation and cultural pride seems stronger than ever. To some extent, national myths like the *Kalevala* still answer that need.

Source: Deborah Jo Miller, for *Epics* ***for*** *Students,* **Gale Research, 1997.**

Critical Essay #6

The following discussion of the genesis, form, content, and national importance of the Kalevala *is taken from a chapter on Balto-Finnish epic literature. The editors have included only those footnotes that apply to the excerpted material reprinted below.*

Critical Essay #7

Lonnrot's contemporaries... were of the opinion that Lonnrot had "found the epic in the forest," i.e., had restored the original form of the epic. That is, of course, only an illusion. In reality, in its structure the *Kalevala* was entirely Lonnrot's compilation. This compilation was based on the best and most complete variants of the songs that he had at his disposal, with the addition of verses from other variants and even from other songs. Research has revealed that Lonnrot did not take more than three or four consecutive lines from the same variant. Therefore, the majority of sequences of lines (verses) in the *Kalevala* never appeared this way in the oral tradition. This technique of compilation is unique in world literature. It has been pointed out half jokingly that Lonnrot, who in his youth worked for his father as a tailor's apprentice, made use of his tailoring skill while compiling the *Kalevala.*

The *Kalevala* reflects Lonnrot's ideas of the epic, his worldview, and his taste. Working with a definite artistic goal in mind, he chose from the vast material he had at his disposal the portions suitable for the epic and discarded those that were contradictory or violated the style. If it was necessary for the epic as a whole, he developed some seemingly insignificant details into important components of the work. His editorial practices betray his tendency to reduce the Christian and legendary features, while strengthening both the heathen and the historical-realistic elements. He normalized the language, corrected the metrical defects, occasionally changed the names of persons and places, and created linking verses wherever necessary. The few hundred linking verses added by the compiler form less than five per cent of the epic, and even these are adaptations of verses used in folksongs.

The most important building materials for the creation of the *Kalevala* were the epic songs. Lonnrot had in his possession about thirty different epic songs, each of them in numerous variants. In addition, he used lyric songs, charms (incantations), wedding songs, laments, and proverbs. The charms were employed generously; about one-fifth of the whole epic is made up of charms. There are sections in the *Kalevala* which look more like collections of charms than parts of an epic, such as the curing of Vainamoinen's knee wound, the driving out of the cattle by Ihnarinen's wife, and Vainamoinen's trip to Antero Vipunen. Because of its richness in charms, the Italian scholar Domenico Comparetti called the *Kalevala* "the epic of charms."

The *Kalevala* was developed by Lonnrot into a broad panorama of the life of two tribes—the Kalevala and the Pohjola. The relations between them are shown both under peace-time conditions and in times of hostilities. The people of Pohjola are represented by the ruling family headed by Louhi. The heroes of Kalevala are not members of the same family, but they have close relations. Vainamoinen often calls nmarinen his brother, and he undertakes voyages together with him and Lemminkainen. Kullervo is Ilmarinen's serf.

Only a few episodes in the *Kalevala* can be termed heroic. All of these reflect the Viking Age, when the heroic ideal of men was to surpass all others in strength and courage and win fame for posterity. This spirit appears in the fierce struggle of Vainamoinen and his companions with the forces of Pohjola in order to obtain the Sampo. We also find it in some folksongs about Lemminkainen which were originally associated with other heroes. The last phase of Lemminkainen's duel with the master of Pohjola in the *Kalevala* is modelled after the song of Kaukomieli (or Kauko or Kaukomoinen). Kaukomieli, during a drinking bout, kills Veitikka (rascal) because he spilled beer on his mantle. This garment was the symbol of his stature as a warrior, since it had been gained "by blood." Following the feudal notion of honor, its soiling could be compensated for only with blood.

Lemminkainen's abandonment of his young wife Kyllikki on the Island in the *Kalevala* is based on the "Ahti and Kyllikki Song," and is in the same spirit. For Ahti Saarelainen ("Ahti of the Island") the passion for sea adventures and battles is so strong that he hears even his boat complaining for not going to war. When Ahti's wife breaks her promise, he decides to leave her and set out to sea. His young companion Teuri (Tiera), who like Ahti has just married, cannot contain his craving for battle and hastens along with him.

Critical Essay #8

Except for these episodes, the *Kalevala* is not a heroic epic in the usual sense of this term, but can best be termed a shamanistic epic in which great deeds are accomplished, not by feats of arms, but by magical means—by the power of words and incantations. Thus it belongs to the peculiar arctic culture extending from Lapland to eastern Siberia and across the Bering Strait as far as Greenland. Its heroes are shamans and sorcerers who transcend the limits of the real world. Some of them are even demigods and culture heroes who participated in the creation or rendered great services to the people.

In Vainamoinen the Finns have the figure of an eternal sage, a great shaman, who in his capacity as the spiritual leader of his tribe possesses the deepest knowledge. He undertakes a journey to the other world in search of knowledge and encounters deadly dangers on his way, as do the shamans of the arctic peoples in their "soul travels." For the same purpose he pays a visit to the dead shaman Antero Vipunen, whose body, during its long separation from the soul, has so badly rotted that the soul cannot return to it anymore. In the singing competition with Joukahainen, Vainamoinen sings his magic song so powerfully that his opponent sinks into the swamp and his horse and harness are transformed into different beings and things. In the song about his mastery at kantele playing, Vainamoinen reaches the stature of the ancient Orpheus; he enchants all the animals and birds of the forest, the fish of the sea, and the nature spirits. His music makes all those present, including the musician himself, shed tears. He builds a boat from a bit of distaff and creates a reef from pieces of flint and tinder-fungus on which Louhi's warship goes aground. Martti Haavio assumes that some of the songs of Vainamoinen may have been created at the latest in the ninth century in the coastal areas of western Finland, on the basis of legends about a great shaman who lived in Finland and enjoyed high esteem among the members of his tribe.

In his attempt to abolish darkness, Vainamoinen (together with his companion Umarinen) brings fire to the people and thereby acquires the dimensions of a demigod, a culture hero.... As culture heroes finally vanish, so Vainamoinen—after his young successor, the "King of Karelia," has emerged— disappears (according to numerous variants) into the mouth of the Maelstrom. However, traces of him still appear in the elements where he once toiled, traces such as "Vainamoinen's scythe" (Orion) and "Vainamoinen's route" (a calm streak on the surface of rippling water) on the waters.

Ilmarinen is also known in Finnish mythology as a culture hero, as the great smith who created the vault of the sky and furnished it with stars. A northern relative of Hephaestus, he succeeded in obtaining iron from crude ore in order to forge the Sampo. With Vainamoinen he obtained the first spark of fire which had fallen from the sky and entered the belly of a blue trout. Originally he may have been the ruler of the weather. The popularity enjoyed by Ilmarinen among the people caused him to be extended into numerous secondary roles.

Lemminkainen's figure in Finnish folklore is very complex and has caused widely differing interpretations. His shamanistic nature appears in a journey to the festivities in Paivola (in the *Kalevala:* Pohjola), during which he overcomes three deadly perils, and also in his slithering unnoticed into the house in the shape of a snake. The singing competition between Lemminkainen and the master of the house can be compared to that of Vainamoinen and Joukahainen. Both are contests of magic between two sorcerers in which the local sorcerer triumphs. As Martti Haavio recently demonstrated, the song of Lemminkainen's journey evidently was created under die influence of the Russian bylina "Vavilo and the Troubadours," which in turn goes back to an ancient Egyptian story.

Lemminkainen's chivalric features, as mentioned above, are carried over from other figures. Due to a similarity between Lemminkainen and Kaukomieli, Karelian singers had attributed some of Kaukomieli's adventures to Lemminkainen and vice versa. Lonnrot, however, went still further in the *Kalevala*- he transferred the events connected with another Viking Age figure, Ahti Saarelainen, to Lemminkainen and added the names of Ahti and Kauko or Kaukomieli as secondary names of Lemminkainen.

Kullervo, Ihnannen's vengeful serf-boy, applies witchcraft to turn wolves into cows and bears into cattle; these kill Ilmarinen's wife (the former maiden of Pohjola). Louhi, the mistress of Pohjola, is the personification of the powers of witchcraft, although in the use of magic she ultimately proves inferior to the Kalevala heroes.

The *Kalevala* as a work of art cannot escape criticism. The action is thin in comparison with the great bulk of the epic, and some digressions that delay or interrupt the main course of events are rather tedious. In the eighth song, Vainamoinen wounds himself in the knee while building a boat. When we meet him again in the sixteenth song, he is still busy building it. The epic also suffers from repetitions Vainamoinen goes to the realm of death twice, and he enchants people and animals twice with his kantele playing. Kullervo's demonstration of tremendous strength is also described twice. Vainamoinen and Lemminkainen get into similar troubles at sea, and so forth.

The *Kalevala* is both a wooing and a war epic. However, there is much more wooing than righting in it. There are seven or eight wooing stories, but only three or four descriptions of combat; the latter include the death of the master of Pohjola, die theft of the Sampo, the destruction of Untamo's farm, and Vainamoinen's last fights with Pohjola. The combats are described very briefly.

The Finns have no other work whose influence would have been as all-encompassing as that of the *Kalevala.* The *Kalevala* has enriched all areas of Finnish art, most notably in the paintings of Akseli Galle'n-Kallela and sculpture of Vaino Aaltonen, in Jean Sibelius' symphony *Kullervo,* and in musical compositions of Aarre Merikanto and Uuno Klami. In literature, numerous classical works owe then-existence to the *Kalevala,* from Aleksis Kivi's drama *Kullervo* to Eino Leino's *Helkavirsid.* A complete change in the literary language was effected by the *Kalevala:* under its influence, the awkward Finnish language gradually developed into a vehicle capable of expressing all the nuances of human thoughts and moods. Most importantly, however, the *Kalevala* awakened national ideas, interests, and aspirations. In the hard times of Finnish history at the turn of the century and during the 1930s and 40s, the *Kalevala* was an essential source of strength from which the people drew their faith for the future.

Vjajne [Vaino] Kaukonen, "Sozdanie eposa 'Kalevaly,'" in *Ucenye zapiski Leningradskogo untversiteta,* 314: *Finno-ugorskqja filologija* (Leningrad, 1962), p. 113.

Martti Haavio, *Vainamoinen: Eternal Sage,* Folklore Fellows Communications, no. 144 (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1952).

E. M. Meletinskij, *Proisxozdenie geroiceskogo eposa* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo vostocnoj literatury, 1963), p. 137.

Haavio, pp. 20 ff.

Lauri Honko, "Finnische Mythologie," in *Worterbuch der Mythologie,* E: *Das alte Europa,* ed. H. W. Haussig (Stuttgart: E. Klett, n.d.), pp. 309-11.

Martti Haavio, *Suomalainen mytologia* (Porvoo and Helsinki: Werner Sbderstrbm, 1967), pp. 238 ff.

For a summary of these criticisms, see Collinder, "The Kalevala and its Background," pp. 32-34.

Martti Haavio, "Das Kalevala—ein nationales Symbol," in *Finnland: Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Porvoo and Helsinki: Werner Sbderstrom, 1961), pp. 234-35.

Source: Felix J Oinas, "The Balto-Finnish Epics," in *Heroic Epic and Saga: An Introduction to the World's Great FolkEpics,"* Indiana University Press, 1978 , pp 286-309.

Critical Essay #9

In the following excerpt, Rexroth examines reasons that the Kalevala *has endured as a work of literature that still has meaning for modern readers.*

Philosophical critics in the nineteenth century decided that a culture is most solidly based on a great epic which incorporates all the prime factors in the national or folk consciousness—or "unconscious." There is a whole nest of very disputable assumptions hidden here. First, that Greek culture was solidly based. It was not. Its glory was in its dynamic equilibrium—which was short-lived. National consciousness does not come from the *Nibelungenlied* or *The Iliad.* It is an intellectual notion, born with the nation-state, which came to fruition with the State as an Armed People in the French Revolutionary Wars and degenerated into the idea of the "folk unconscious" in the long drawn-out struggle of the Germans for a national identity.

All national literatures today seek for epic foundations—the *Shahnama, The Knight in the Leopard Skin, Digenes Akritas, iheRamayana* and *Mdhabharata,* the Serbian Ballads; even Dante's *Divine Comedy* has been forced into the service of the national consciousness. (The Italian national epic is in fact the operas of Verdi.) In many cases these constructions are purely synthetic, as manufactured for the purpose as ever was Virgil's *Aeneid* for Augustus, or Kallimachos' Serapis Cult for Ptolemy. Yet astonishingly, this does not necessarily invalidate them.

It would be easy to narrow the definition of a classic to the point where it applied only to literature that fulfilled such a role. Conversely, all literature that deserves the name of classic does, in a sense, define the consciousness of a particular people and yet is in extension a moment in the conscience of mankind. In the narrowest sense again, many synthetic epics, written as myths to shape the life of a people, have been successful and have been classics in the wider sense as well. The *Aeneid,* the *Kojiki* and *Nihongi,* the *Kalevala,* the history plays of Shakespeare, the *Shah-nama,* these are all synthetic myths, made by intellectuals, which succeeded. They did provide foundations for the structural relationships through which their peoples saw themselves. There is nothing really strange about this. The *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and even *The Epic of Gilgamesh* are literary products. The notion that they were grunted out by Folk sitting about a fire and munching bones was a hallucination of a few nineteenth-century German scholars.

If effect on his own people is a measure; if intensity, profundity, and duration of impact is a measure, the most successful of all was Elias Lonnrot. "Who on earth was he?" most people will say. He was a country doctor in the most remote country in Europe, a country that had never been a nation and would not become one for another century: the Grand Duchy of Finland. As with so many country doctors, his hobby was philology and folklore. Early in the last century he began collecting the folk songs and narrative ballads of the peasantry, especially in the most remote regions—along the borders of Lapland, and in the forests of Karelia. He became convinced that these songs were fragments of a connected epic narrative that had once been as coherent as the *Iliad,* or the *Nibelungenlied.*

In this assumption he has been proved wrong, but it does not matter. As he worked his folk materials into what he imagined the original must have been, he produced the most successful constructed myth in modern literature, and one of the most successful of all time. The *Kalevala* saturates Finnish life. Its deep, resonant evocation of the natural environment, the rich dark green or snow-white land of forests and lakes and pastures where herdsmen, hunters, and fishers go about their timeless ways; its strong matriarchal bias; its ironic acceptance of the tragic nature of life, its dry humor; its praise of intelligence and hospitality as prime virtues—all these elements go to sustain the unique Finnish character to this very day, and that amongst the most advanced sections of the intelligentsia as well as amongst the common people.

Yet most non-Finnish readers find the *Kalevala* puzzling and hard to read. In the first place, the trochaic meter, which is natural to Finnish, sounds artificial and monotonous when imitated by German and English translators. In *Hiawatha,* Longfellow deliberately imitated the *Kalevala* in meter, method, subject, and purpose. He took one of the first comprehensive collections of American Indian legends, itself distorted and Europeanized, and formed them into a connected narrative with many elements of the story borrowed from the *Kalevala.* He cast his American epic in the same eight-syllable trochaic lines and used the same repetitive devices and fixed epithets—none of them natural in English or American speech.

He hoped to write a poem that would connect white Americans with the earth beneath their feet through the Indian past, as the Greeks had been connected with groves and springs and mountains through their nymphs and satyrs and local deities. For two generations *Hiawatha* was taught in school and every American child could recite it, and the poem did play, feebly, something of the role Longfellow had hoped for it. Then it began to fail, and today most Americans, young or old, consider it comic, if they have ever heard of it. Yet the *Kalevala* is still successful amongst Finns who read Paul Eluard and Finns who read nothing. Why?

First, both Elias Lonnrot and his peasant informants were much better poets. Recited in the original language, the *Kalevala* has a gripping sonority and haunting cadences that make it quite unlike any other great poem in any language, and the repetitions and recurring epithets have a chime and echo very different from Longfellow's mechanical use of them. Longfellow's trochaics have the thump of doggerel and, since the meter is so unnatural in English, sound absurd. Lonnrot's meter swings; the rhythms are native to the language, and he continuously varies them; his trochees shift back and forth across the beat—swing, in other words. It is the difference between a heartbeat and a metronome.

The plot of *Hiawatha* is as clear as Longfellow could make it, far clearer than his sources—an incomparably more logical narrative than anything in the *Kalevala.* Modern research has proved that Lonnrot's sources were inchoate indeed, much of them not narrative at all. He reworked them into a most extraordinary pattern—not a story or series of tales, but a long-drawn-out dream sequence. The heroes of the *Kalevala* are not warriors or knights-errant; they are shamans—magicians, smiths, and dreamers—

men of mystery and cunning. Their adventures are inconclusive, often seemingly pointless, and cryptically frustrating, and their connections are hidden underground.

The original Hiawatha was such a person too, but Longfellow exorcised him—took away his magic—and assimilated him to nineteenth-century rationalism. Lonnrot did the opposite. He awoke the night side of the nineteenth-century professional and middle-class mind, represented by himself, and connected it with the prehistoric culture of the subarctic medicine men which he found surviving amongst the Finnish peasantry.

No wonder Carl Jung was fascinated by the *Kalevala.* It is a kind of socially negotiable Jungian dream, full of archetypes and animuses and ammas, totemic symbols of the soul; Methuselah figures; sacred, unobtainable maidens; impossible tasks and mystic beasts—all set in the forests, lakes, and waterfalls of primeval Finland, All its tales seem to be moving toward an unknowable end—the ultimate integration of the integral person—just like the dreams of Jungian patients under analysis.

Yet the *Kalevala* is far more than any psychoanalytic text. Its heroes struggle in dreams, but they simultaneously live wide awake in the Finnish land, in conflict with a hard but beautiful environment. They are undivided beings, in a real world. In our modern destructive world civilization, Finland stands out as enjoying a high level of ecological success. The Finns cope with their setting of living nature far better than do the Russians or Americans. This talent is reflected in and reinforced by the *Kalevala,* certainly the most ecological of epics. In the poem, as in Finnish life, there survives that ecological life philosophy without which no subarctic people could endure. Like the Lapps or Eskimos, they must cooperate with nature or perish. They are still there. So the *Kalevala* succeeds and endures because it expresses not just a national consciousness, but the consciousness of the kinship of a race of men with all living creatures about them. Maybe it was put together by a country doctor five generations ago, but it is the opposite of a synthetic epic: it is a synthesis of nature, man, time, and place.

Source: Kenneth Rexroth, "The *Kalevala,"* in *Classics Revisited,* New Directions, 1968, pp. 24-8.

Critical Essay #10

In the following excerpt, Magoun notes ways that the Kalevala *is significantly different from most national epics, and proposes that first-time readers of this work abandon the usual approach of a straight-through reading and instead read different sections or story cycles almost at random. He identifies several sections that stand well on their own and repay suck an approach.*

Again and again the *Kalevala* has been described as the national heroic epic of the Finnish people, a description which, at least outside Finland, has tended to do the work a certain disservice by raising expectations that the reader is not likely to find fulfilled, regardless of what else he may find that is richly rewarding at a poetical, folkloristic, or ethnographic level. Any talk about a national heroic epic is bound to evoke thoughts of the Greek *Iliad* and *Odyssey,* the Old French *Chanson de Roland,* or the Middle High German *Nibelungenlied,* all of which possess a more or less unified and continuously moving plot with actors who are wealthy aristocratic warriors performing deeds of valor and displaying great personal resourcefulness and initiative, often, too, on a rather large stage. The *Kalevala* is really nothing like these. It is essentially a conflation and concatenation of a considerable number and variety of traditional songs, narrative, lyric, and magic, sung by unlettered singers, male and female, living to a great extent in northern Karelia in the general vicinity of Archangel.

Lonnrot's title *Kalevala* is a name rare in the singing tradition; it describes a completely legendary region of no great extent, and is rendered here "the Kaleva District." The personal name Kaleva upon which the local name is based refers to a shadowy background figure of ancient Finnish poetic legend, mentioned in connection with assumed descendants and with a few nature or field names. The action, like that of the Icelandic family sagas, is played on a relatively small stage, centering on the Kaleva District and North Farm.... The actors are in effect Finno-Karelian peasants of some indefinite time in the past who rely largely on the practice of magic to carry out their roles. Appearing at a time when there was little or no truly bellelettristic Finnish literature, the *Kalevala* unquestionably—and most understandably—became a source of great satisfaction and pride to the national consciousness then fast developing among the Finns, who had been growing restive under their Russian masters. To some extent the *Kalevala* thus became a rallying point for these feelings, and permitted and in a measure justified such exultant statements as "Finland can [now] say for itself: I, too, have a history!" *(Suomt voisanoa itselleen: minullakin on historiaf).*

Lonnrot's own comments in his prefaces ... make clear that one of his chief aims was to create for Finnish posterity a sort of poetical museum of ancient Finno-Karelian peasant life, with its farmers, huntsmen and fishermen, seafarers and sea-robbers, the latter possibly faint echoes from the Viking Age, also housewives, with social and material patterns looking back no doubt centuries—all reflecting a way of life that was, like the songs themselves, already in Lonnrot's day destined for great changes if not outright extinction. Thus, from Lonnrot's point of view the many sequences of magic charms and wedding lays, at times highly disruptive to the main narrative, are for what they tell of peasant beliefs and domestic life quite as significant as the narrative songs about the Big Three— Vainamoinen, Ilmarinen, and Lemminkainen.

Owing to the special character of its compilation or concatenation, the *Kalevala* possesses no particular unity of style apart from the general diction of the Karelian singers and the indispensable ubiquitous traditional formulas___Comprising miscellaneous materials collected over many years from many singers from all over Karelia and some bordering regions, these poems range in style and tone from the lyrically tragical, as in Poem 4, to almost sheer horseplay, as in Poem 3; some are poems of warfare, while a number consist of magic incantations and magic charms. Among the most interesting, though perhaps superficially pedestrian, are the so-called "Wedding Lays" (Poems 21-25), with their keen, detailed observations on the daily life of the Karelian peasant. All call for quite varied styles in any English rendering.

The digests at the beginnings of the poems are Lonnrot's and were written in prose. Lonnrot is also the artless composer of Poem 1, lines 1-110, and Poem 50, lines 513-620; both these passages are pure flights of Lonnrot's fancy, and, despite a semblance of autobiography, bear no relation to the author's life.

In reading a new poem or a sequence of poems it is normal to begin at the beginning and read straight ahead, but in the case of the *Kalevala* this natural procedure has little to recommend it, since in a general way the present order of the poems is quite arbitrary, differing considerably, for example, from that of Lonnrot's 1835 *Old Kalevala.* Instead of starting with Poem 1 and reading through to the end, the reader is likely to derive greater satisfaction by beginning with some single story cycle— say, the Lemminkainen stories (Poem 11 and following); though not in sequence, these can easily be picked out from the table of contents. One might then pass on to the Ilmarinen stories and to those dealing with Kullervo. The Vainamoinen poems form a somewhat miscellaneous group, and Vainamoinen keeps appearing here and there in a large number of poems dealing primarily with the other principals.

The many magic charms, inserted here and there, can usually be skipped on a first reading of the poem or poems in which they occur, though some of the shorter are entirely appropriate in their contexts and do not appreciably obstruct the flow of the narrative. Some of the more extensive charms and series of charms—for example, the Milk and Cattle Charms of Poem 32 and the Bear Charms of Poem 46—can be enjoyed when read out of context.

There are surely many possible approaches to a first reading of the *Kalevala,* and the remarks in the preceding paragraphs should be taken only as the suggestion of one person, proffered in the hope of making a first acquaintance with this remarkable work a greater pleasure and more meaningful than the head-on approach.

Source: Francis Peabody Magoun,, Jr., in an foreword to *The Kalevala, or, Poems of the Kalevala District,* edited by Ellas Lonrott, translated by Francis Peabody Magoun, Jr., Harvard University Press, 1963 , pp. xm-xxiv.

Adaptations

The music of Finnish composer Jean Sibelius (1865-1957) has introduced countless non-Finns to the Kalevala. Sibelius visited Karelia in the 1890s and was enchanted by the rune singers. He based many of his orchestras on Kalevala poems. An appendix listing his works can be found in Keith Bosley's 1989 translation of the *Kalevala.* Recordings of Sibelius's music can be found in the classical music sections of most music stores.

Though the Kalevala has inspired many Finnish film and television productions, most have not been translated for English-speaking audiences. The 1959 film *The Day the Earth Froze* is based on the Sampo cycle and Louhi's theft of the sun and moon (it is dubbed in English and available on videocassette from J & J Video, Whitedstone, NY). A rather campy movie, *The Day the Earth Froze* is porably more familiar to American television viewers as episode #422 of *Mystery Science Theater 3000* (produced by Comedy Central; original air date January 16, 1993).

Pathfinder, a critically acclaimed 1988 film from Lapland, is *not* based on the Finnish epic; nevertheless, it depicts a world similar in many ways to that of the *Kalevala.* It is the story of a young Laplander straggling to stop the the marauding Tchude tribesmen who destroyed his village. In die film, which is based on a twelfth-century Lapp legend, one can recognize many cultural elements familiar from the Kalevala: the shaman with his rituals, the sauna, the use of skis and crossbows, and small arctic villages where people subsist by hunting and fishing. Directed by Nils Gaup; in Saami (Lapp) with English subtitles; 88 minutes; distributed by Fox Lorber Video.

Topics for Further Study

Various political factions have re-interpreted the *Kalevala* to suit their own ideological purposes. What elements of the *Kalevala* lend themselves to a political interpretation? How could both the political left and right use the same work of literature as a rallying point? Can the Finnish political parties' use of the *Kalevala* be compared to the Nazi propagandists' use of *Nibelungenlied* mythology during the 1930s and 40s? Do you know of analogous situations in other countries, where a work of imaginative literature has been pressed into the service of ideology? Is this an appropriate use of literature?

The *Kalevala* was a source of ethnic pride for the Finns who were struggling for national independence and recognition. Later generations of Finns, however, used the *Kalevala* to advance the aggressive, militaristic cause of "Greater Finland." Using examples from current world events, assess the benefits and the dangers of ethnic pride. You might consider the former Soviet republics, the Middle East, the United States, the former Yugoslavia, Serbia and Croatia, or Bosnia and Herzogovina. Is there a difference between ethnic pride and tribalism?

Some critics have argued that the *Kalevala* is anti-feminist. Do you agree, or would you challenge this assessment? Support your argument with examples from the text.

Lonnrot thought Finland's national soul lay with the oral traditions of the rural people, and he drew the material for the Finnish epic from these sources. A shared identity or myth is considered an important element in forming a sense of national pride and cohesion. There is no national epic of the United States, but North Americans do share some myths about their origins. If an Americal folklorist wanted to compile an American national epic, what elements might it draw from? Consider the many shared national myths about the Pilgrim settlers and the Westward expansion, for example. Would these be necessary elements in a national epic of the United States? What other elements would be necessary?

The book of poetry *Leaves of Grass* by the American poet Walt Whitman (1819-1892) has been interpreted as an attempt or first step toward an American epic. Can you find aspects of Whitman's work that seem to support or to disprove this idea?

Compare and contrast the structure, content, themes, or characters of *Kalevala* to those of the *Iliad, Nibelungenlied,* or another of the world's major epics.

What could an anthrolopogist infer about the material culture and daily life (diet, habits, clothing, etc.) of ancient Finns from reading *Kalevala* poetry?

Lonnrot has been called the last great Finnish folk singer because he took elements from various songs and wove them together into a new form. In what way is his method similar to, or different from, that of today's folk singers and rap artists who build new songs out of samples? The band Negativland claims that copyright law is the death of folk music. "True folk music, for instance, no longer exists. The original folk music process of actually incorporating previous melodies and lyrics as it evolved through time is no longer possible in modern societies, where melodies and lyrics are privately owned." ("Crosley Bendix on U.S. Copyright" [http://www.negativland.com/crosley.htmrj) If Lonnrot were setting out to compile the *Kalevala* today, what would he have to do to avoid lawsuits from the performers who claim ownership of the songs they present?

Compare and Contrast

***Kalevala* Period (c. 500 B.C.-c. 1200 C.E.):** The Finns lived in a largely classless society organized by tribe. Tribes (like the Kaleva and Pohjola tabes depicted in the epic) consisted of people united by geography, culture, kinship bonds, and often a patronymic ancestor. There was frequent contact among tribes.

1800s: In LQnnrot's day, Finland was ruled by a foreign power: the Swedes. Finnish society was split into two groups: an urban, educated class of people who spoke Swedish as their first language, and the rural majority, who still spoke Finnish.

Late twentieth century: Finland is a modern, independent, industrialized European nation, whose population is united by a common language and culture. Its government is socialist.

Kalevala **Period:** Independent tribes occasionally waged war on neighboring tribes, using sword and crossbow.

1800-1918: The Napoleonic wars made Finland a pawn in the conflict between Russia and Sweden. While still a part of Sweden, Finland was left to defend itself against advancing Russian troops. Later, when Finland became part of Russia, young Finnish men were routinely conscripted to serve in the Russian army. Finland struggled for many decades to achieve independence, which was followed immediately by a civil war between rival political factions.

Late twentieth century: Finland, a sovereign nation since 1917, is at peace.

Kalevala Period: In a rural, agricultural economy, women worked alongside men. The *Kalevala* reflects a society in which a woman was judged not by her beauty or manners, but by how well she performed practical daily tasks such as baking bread, preparing the sauna, or working in the fields.

1906: Finland became the first country to give its women full political rights, and nineteen women are elected to the Finnish parliament. Women had always worked in Finland, and with industrialization they moved into factory jobs (though at a lower wage than men).

Late twentieth century: More than 70% of Finnish women hold full-time jobs, and women make up 60% of the workforce in Finland's public sector. The Finnish 1987 Equality Act banned sex discrimination in the workplace. In Finland, as in America, the average woman's salary is still lower than a man's, even though women under 40 are better educated than men in the same age group. In 1987 the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church began accepting women for the priesthood.

Before 1000: The Finns were pagan, worshipping many gods and nature spirits and probably venerating dead ancestors as well. Spells and incantations were a part of daily life, used to ward off misfortune, protect cattle, make the crops grow, bless marriages, and appease the spirits of the natural world.

llth-13th centuries: Byzantine-Russian Orthodox Christianity reached Finland from the east, while Roman Catholicism penetrated from the southwest, and many of the Finns' pagan rites became integrated into Christian worship. The Catholic saints took over the role of local guardian spirits, or *haltijat,* who watched over buildings, localities, and economic activities.

1800s: Protestantism had replaced Catholicism in the sixteenth century, and most Finns were, like Ldnnrot, devoutly Lutheran. Nevertheless, many of the ancient pagan rites persisted into the early twentieth century in rural Finland.

Late twentieth century: Finland is Lutheran but largely secular.

What Do I Read Next?

Elias Lonnrot's *Kanteletar,* a collection of lyric poems and ballads, was published in 1840-41 as a companion work to the *Kalevala,* The poems in the *Kanteletar,* which come from the same oral sources Ldnnrot used for his epic work, give a vivid and varied picture of daily life in rural Finland: there are laments and jokes; songs of courtship, marriage, and loss; tales of hunters, heroes, women, and children; and much more. Keith Bosley translated one hundred of the *Kanteletar* poems into English for Oxford University Press's *World's Classics* series, 1992.

Lonnrot's *Old Kalevala* (1835) and *Proto-Kaleva* (c. 1835), along with excerpts from his 1927 university dissertation on Vainambinen, have been translated into English by Francis Peabody Magoun, Jr., *The Old Kalevala and Certain Antecedents* (1969).

The American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882) attempted to imitate the meter and spirit of the *Kalevala* in his narrative poem *The Song of Hiawatha* (1855), the tale of a wise and heroic leader of the Ojibway Indian tribe. Controversy surrounding *Hiawatha*—specifically, whether Longfellow had properly acknowledged the *Kalevala* as a source—brought the Finnish epic to many people's attention and and led to the first English translation of the *Kalevala.*

Selections from Eino Leino' s *Helkavirsia,* a collection of *Kalevala-inspired* poems written during the period of Russification at the turn of the century, have been translated by Keith Bosley under the title *Whitsongs* (Menard Press, London, 1978)

Emil Petaja, a Finnish-American author, wrote several science-fiction novels based on the *Kalevala* myths. Titles include *Stolen Sun* (1967) and *Star Mill* (1965).

For information about Finland, consult the FINFO and Virtual Finland websites at http://www.vn.fi/vn/um/finfo/findeng.html and http://www.vn.fi/vn/um/index.html. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland produces these pages and keeps them up to date.

Two Voyagers Ohthere and Wulfstan at the Court of King Alfred (Sessions of York, England, 1984) contains two ninth-century English merchants' accounts of their journeys to northern Norway and Finland. The logs, though brief, are packed with information and firsthand impressions. Explanatory essays accompany the primary sources.

P. H. Sawyer's *Kings and Vikings* (London, 1982) is a 182-page survey of the Viking Age, with emphasis on Scandinavian society and its links to Western Europe.

Heroic Epic and Saga: An Introduction to the World's Great Folk Epics, edited by Felix J. Oinas (1988) is a collection of fifteen articles on epic literature from the British Isles, Mesopotamia, India, Iran, Russia, Africa, and elsewhere. It also contains a brief and very useful introduction on oral tradition.

Homer's *Iliad* (c. 800 B.C.) and the Scandinavian *Eddas* (9th-13th centuries C E.) are works to which Ldnnrot compared his *Kalevala.* The former is the epic of ancient Greece, and the latter are collections of Scandinavian poetry about Norse gods and heroes.

The German *Nibelungenlied* and the Icelandic *Laxdaela Saga*, both written in the Middle Ages and available from Penguin Classics, provide interesting contrasts to the shamanistic world of the *Kalevala.*

Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival* (Penguin Classics), a thirteenth-century German chivalnc romance, features a hero much like Lemminkainen —powerful, yet rash and young. It tells of the quest for the Holy Grail, a mysterious object, somewhat analogous to the Sampo, which magically produces food and drink for its owners.

Further Study

Aaltonen, Hilkka (compiler). *Books in English on Finland: A Bibliographical List of Publications Concerning Finland until 1960, Including Finnish Literature in English Translation .* Turku University Library, Turku, 1964.

An exhaustive, unannotated bibliography on Finland Now out of date, but some parts may still be useful.

Alfonso-Karkala, John B. "Transmission of Knowledge by Antero Vipunen to Vainamoinen in Kalevala and by Sukra to Kacha in *Mahabharata,* "in *Proceedings of the 7th Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association, Vol 2, Comparative Literature Today: Theory and Practice,* edited by Eva Kushner and Roman Struc, Kunst and Wissen, Erich Bieber, 1979, pp. 619-23

Alfonso-Karkala examines the symbolism of Vainambinen's quest to obtain three magic words and suggests a Jungian interpretation of the figure of Antero Vipunen.

Bako, Elemer (compiler). *Elias Lonnrot and his Kalevala: A Selective Annotated Bibliography with an Introduction to the National Epic of Finland* Second Edition Library of Congress, Washington, DC, 1985.

Published to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the *Kalevala,* this twenty-nine-page bibliography is broken down by topic.

Books from Finland, Vol. 29, No 1,1985.

Books from Finland is a quarterly journal on Finnish literature. The first issue of 1985, subtitled' *'Kalevala* 1935-1985," is entirely devoted to the *Kalevala.* It contains numerous articles and essays, beautiful illustrations, and suggestions for further reading

Bosley, Keith (translator). *The Kalevala.* World's Classics Series, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1989

Bosley's 1989 edition is the most recent English translation of the *Kalevala* and is readily available in paperback. In his introduction, Bosley discusses the *Kalevala's* literary and historical context, summarizes the plot, and explains certain episodes and relationships found in the poem

Bradunas, Elena. "The Kalevala: An Introduction," *Folkhfe Center News,* October-December, 1984. Reprinted in *FoMtfe Annual,* 1986, pp 64-65.

A two-page introduction to the *Kalevala* written in honor of the epic's 150th anniversary.

Branch, Michael "Kalevala' from myth to symbol," *Books from Finland,* Vol 19, No. 1,1985, pp 1-8. Reprinted on the FINFO website [http-//www vn.fi/vn/um/finfo/english/kalevala html].

An excellent and easily accessible general introduction to the *Kalevala.*

Crawford, John Martin. *The Kalevala, The Epic Poem of Finland 2* volumes John A Berry & Company, New York, 1888

The first complete translation of the *Kalevala* into English, Crawford's verse edition includes a still-useful preface on the myths, language, and culture of Finland.

DuBois, Thomas. *Finnish Folk Poetry and the Kalevala.* New Perspectives in Folklore Series, Vol. 1. Garland Publishing, New York and London, 1995.

A study of the folk poetry and oral traditions that lie behind and beyond Lonnrot's epic. This is a scholarly work, containing a great deal of sophisticated literary analysis and detailed discussion of particular poems.

"Elias Ldnnrot," in *Ninteenth-Century Literature Criticism,* Vol 53, pp. 304-341 Gale Research, Detroit, ML Contains biographical information on Lonnrot, an excerpt from his Preface to the *Old Kalevala,* a wide-ranging collection of reprinted modern criticism, some photographs, and an annotated bibliography.

FTNFO: The Finland Information Pages http://www.vnfi/vn/um/finfo/findeng html

FTNFO is part of the Virtual Finland Website [http://www.vn fi/vn/urn/index.html]. It is produced by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland (Department for Press and Culture, Information Service Unit) and contains a wealth of information on all aspects of Finland, past and present.

The Finnish Literature Forum [http.//www.kaapeli fi/m7] An internet magazine publishing Finnish fiction, essays, interviews, poetry, and reviews, all in English translation.

Fnberg, Emo (translator). *The Kalevala, Epic of the Finnish People* Otava Publishing Company Ltd., Keuruu, Finland, 1988.

Recent verse translation of the *Kalevala,* with dozens of full-page color illustrations and three introductory essays on the epic's historical significance, structure, and translation.

Hollo, Anselm "The Kalevala through my years," *Books from Finland,* Vol 19, No. 1,1985, pp. 12-15.

A personal and half-humorous reflection on what it was like to grow up with the *Kalevala,*

Honko, Lauri, editor. *Religion, Myth, and Folklore in the World's Epics.* Religion and Society Series, Number 30. Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin and New York, 1990.

A collection of articles on epics from around the world Many of the articles focus on the *Kalevala* as epic literature, comparing it to epics from other countries such as Germany and China.

"The Kalevala and Finnish Culture," in Ralph J Jalkanen (ed.), *The Finns in North America: A Social Symposium.* Michigan State University Press, Hancock, Michigan, 1969, pp. 46-52

In this concise encyclopedia entry, Honko traces the *Kalevala's* impact on nineteenth-century Finland's national life and literature

"The Kalevala Process," *Folklife Annual,* 1986, pp. 66-79.

Here and elsewhere, Honko argues that the *Kalevala* is not merely an individual work, but a poetic evolution which began long before the runes were recorded and continues as each generation re-interprets Finland's folk poetry to suit its own needs and purposes. The article is illustrated with paintings depicting scenes from the *Kalevala* (courtesy of the Finnish embassy) and contains maps of Finland showing Lonnrot's seven field trips.

Johnson, Aih Kolemainen (translator) *Kalevala: A Prose Translation from the Finnish,* The Book Concern, Hancock, Michigan, 1950.

A prose translation of the *Kalevala,* followed by brief notes and a glossary.

"Kalevala," in *Classical and Medieval Literature Criticism,* Vol. 6, pp 206-288 Gale Research, Detroit, MI.

Contains an introduction to the *Kalevala ,* reprinted excerpts of criticism by various authors from 1835 to 1989, some photographs, and an annotated bibliography

Karner, Tracy X "Ideology and nationalism- the Finnish move to independence, 1809-1918." *Ethnic and Racial Studies,* Vol. 14, No. 2, April 1991. Pages 152- 169.

A detailed socio-histoncal study of the *Kalevala's* role in Finland's emergence as an nation.

Kirby, W. F. (translator). *Kalevala the Land of Heroes.* 2 vols. Everyman Series, London, 1907.

One of the better verse translations, preserving the trochaic meter of the Finnish original. Each poem is preceded by a brief synopsis.

Lehtonen, Juhani U. "Finnish Folklore." Written for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland and published by FINFO [httpV/www.vn.fi/vn/um/finfo/english/folkleng. html]. May 1993

A brief reflection on the way Finnish folklore has preserved the memory of rural life and old traditions in the modern age

Lockwood, Yvonne Hiipakka "Immigrant to Ethnic Symbols of Identity Among Finnish-Americans," *Folldife Annual,* 1986, pp. 92-107.

Lockwood discusses some of the symbols that give Finnish- Americans a sense of cultural identity: the sauna, Finnish food, the festival of Saint Urho, and the *Kalevala.*

Magoun, Jr.j Francis Peabody (translator) *The Kalevala or Poems of the Kaleva District,* Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1963.

Magoun supplements his prose translation with useful appendices, including Lonnrot's own introductions to the 1835 and 1849 editions of the *Kalevala* and a few scholarly essays on the epic (translator). *The Old Kalevala and Certain Antecedents,* Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1969.

The so-called *Old Kalevala* (published in 1835) and the unpublished *Proto-Kalevala* represent earlier stages in Lonnrot's work and provide an interesting comparison to the more familiar 1849 version, which we call simply the *Kalevala* but which was known in its time as the *New Kalevala,* The book also includes part of Lonnrot's 1927 dissertation on Vafnamoinen, photographs of his manuscripts, and a map of his travels.

"Materials for the Study of the Kalevala," in Ralph J. Jalkanen (editor), *The Finns in North America: A Social Symposium.* Michigan State University Press, Hancock, Michigan, 1969, pages 24- 45.

Contains a brief biography of Elias Lonnrot, an overview of the *Kalevala's* composition and publication, and notes for further research on its cultural significance.

Manninen, Merja. "The Status of Women in Finland." Written for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland and published by FINFO http://www.vnfl/vn/um/finfo/english/naiseng.html, 1996.

Surveys the history of women's rights in Finland from the beginning of this century to the 1990s

Oinas, Felix J. "The Balto-Finnic Epic," in *Heroic Epic and Saga. An Introduction to the World's Great Folk Epics,* edited by Felix J. Omas, pp 286-309. Indiana University Press, Bloomington, IN, 1978

Omas examines the *Kalevala* as a shamanistic epic, discussing its themes and form, the stages of its composition, and the milieu out of which it sprang He then summarizes Estonia's national epic, the *Kalevipoeg Studies in Finnic Folklore: Homage to the Kalevala*

Finnish Literature Society, Bloomington Indiana, 1985. Oinas's aim is to introduce English-speaking countries to the rich tradition of Finnish, Estonian, Karelian, and Ingnan folklore. The book contains fourteen separate articles, which survey various aspects of Finnic and Fmno-Baltic poetry and provide a literary context for the *Kalevala*

Pentikainen, Juha Y "The Ancient Religion of the Finns " Written for the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland and published by FINFO [http7/www.vn fi/vn/um/finfo/english/mumueng.html], n d

Pentikainen traces the history of Finnish settlement and examines the ancient traditions, rites, and beliefs of the Finns' ancestors.

Kalevala Mythology. Translated and edited by Ritva Poom. Folklore Studies in Translation Series, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Indiana, 1989.

A clearly written, comprehensive study of the *Kalevala,* this book provides English-speakers with an excellent introduction to most aspects of Lonnrot's epic. Includes maps, appendices, chronologies, bibliography, and photographs

Puranen, Rauni (compiler) *The Kalevala Abroad: Translations and Foreign-language Adaptations of the Kalevala* Suomalaisen Kirjallisuudenseura, Helsinki, 1985

An indexed list of foreign-language versions of the *Kalevala* up to 1985. The list covers thirty-three languages, from Armenian to Yiddish Sawm, Patricia E "Lfinnrot's Brainchildren The Representation of Women in the Kalevala." *Journal of Folklore Research,* Vol 25, No 3,1988. Pages 187-217

Sawin argues that LSnnrot deliberately inserted negative depictions of women Into the *Kalevala* to further a nationalistic and patriarchal agenda. Men are the heroes of the epic whereas female characters are either self-sacrificing or evil.

Screen, J E. O. *Finland* World Bibliographical Series, Vol. 31. Clio Press, Oxford and Santa Barbara, 1981.

An annotated list of sources on Finland up to 1981, broken down by topic, with some emphasis on history and art

Timonen, Senni "Lonnrot and His Singers," *Books from Finland,* Vol 9, No 1,1985, pp 24-29

Timonen examines specific folk-singers' contributions to LSnnrot's epic, noting that the individuals who gave Lonnrot his raw material and inspiration are sometimes overlooked.

Wilson, William A. "The Kalevala and Finnish Politics," *Journal of the Folklore Institute,* Vol 12, No. 2-3,1975, pp. 131-55.

Williams examines how, in the earlier part of this century, Finland's political left and right wings both tried to re-interpret the *Kalevala* to suit their own idelogical agendas

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Epics for Students (EfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, EfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of EfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of EfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in EfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by EfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

EfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Epics for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the EfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the EfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

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□Night.□ Epics for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from EfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Epics for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of EfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Epics for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of EfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

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