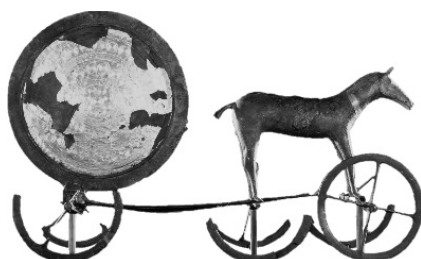


Traditional Cosmology Society  
40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference



As Above, So Below: Explorations in Myth and Ritual Throughout the World

**Programme**

5-9<sup>th</sup> April 2024

University of Edinburgh

Main Venue:

50 George Square, Project Room,

Edinburgh, EH8 9JU



FRIDAY, 5<sup>th</sup> April

**VENUE: 50 GEORGE SQUARE, PROJECT ROOM**

**17:30 – 18:00**

**PARTICIPANT REGISTRATION**

**18:00 – 19:00**

**KEYNOTE 1**

LOUISE S. MILNE

Visual Figuration and the Otherworld

*University of Edinburgh / Edinburgh Napier University*

SATURDAY, 6<sup>th</sup> April

**VENUE: 50 GEORGE SQUARE, PROJECT ROOM**

**09:00 – 09:20**

**Welcome & Coffee**

**SATURDAY MORNING I: Indo-European Mythology**

CHAIR: Terry Gunnell

**9:30 – 10:40**

**KEYNOTE 2**

EMILY LYLE

As Below, So Above: The Proto-Indo-European “Government” and the Pantheon

*University of Edinburgh*

**10:40 – 11:10**

NATALIYA YANCHEVSKAYA

The Deadly Year

*Princeton University*

**SATURDAY MORNING II: Ritual & Celtic Mythology**

**11:10 – 11:40**

JOHN LEAVITT

The Actualization of Myth in Ritual, with Celtic Examples

*University of Montreal*

**11:40 – 12:10**

FRÉDÉRIC ARMAO

Uisneach Reborn: Myths, Folklore and Popular Customs of the Hill at the Centre of Ireland

*University of Toulon*

**12:20 – 14:00 Lunch**

**SATURDAY AFTERNOON I: Near East & Egypt**

**CHAIR:** Virginia Blankenhorn

**14:00 – 14:30**

JOANNA POPIELSKA-GRZYBOWSKA

New Year, the Myth of Establishing maat and Mission of the Pharaoh in the *Pyramid Texts*.

*Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw*

**14:30 – 15:00**

ONDŘEJ PAZDIREK

Translating Creation: Terms for the Biblical Concept of Creation in Translations

*Masaryk University, Brno*

**15:00 – 15:20 Coffee Break**

**SATURDAY AFTERNOON II: Far East**

**15:20 – 15:50**

MICHAL SCHWARZ

Wealth as the interaction with Heaven: Evolution of Cosmological Offerings, Rituals and Beliefs in Inner Asia, Korea and Vietnam

*Masaryk University, Brno*

**15:50 – 16.20**

ONDŘEJ SRBA

“Our Master Has Eyes like a Pen for a Thousand Sheep”: Parallel Processes in the Realms of Spirits and Humans as Viewed by the Mongolian Oral Tradition and Vietnamese Narratives by Nguyễn Dữ

*Department of Mongolian, Korean and Vietnamese Studies, Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University, Brno*

**16:20 – 16:50**

XIAOTING ZHENG

The Chinese Myth of Writing and Language in Victor Pelevin’s Prose

*Beijing Foreign Studies University*

**17:00 – 17:30 Reception**

**17.30-19.00**

**VENUE: SCREENING ROOM G.04**

**Film Screening:** Followed by Q&A

SEÁN MARTIN

Edinburgh Napier University

***A Vast Shadow House: David Lindsay's Vision* (2022)**

A documentary about the Scottish metaphysical fantasy writer David Lindsay (1876-1945), best known for his novel *A Voyage to Arcturus* (1920), a work admired by C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, and Philip Pullman. This film explores visually how Lindsay's work drew on Norse myth, German Romanticism and Great Mother traditions, to critique a post-Great War world, haunted by the phantom presence of a higher Gnostic reality, the Sublime. Featuring Harold Bloom, Alan Moore, Bernard Sellin, Adelheid Kegler, Brian Stableford, and others.

SUNDAY, 7th April

**VENUE: 50 GEORGE SQUARE, PROJECT ROOM**

**SUNDAY MORNING SESSION: Celtic Mythology**

**CHAIR:** Elizabeth Warner

**09:00 –10:10**

**KEYNOTE 3**

JOHN CAREY

King Cormac in the Otherworld: A Realm of Gods, or Angels?

*University College Cork*

**10:10 – 10:40**

ELIZABETH GRAY

The Complex and Paradoxical Figure of Eochaid Ollathair (The Dagda)

*Harvard University*

**10:40 – 11:10**

MAXIM FOMIN

Studying Celtic Mythology and Celtic Figures of Divine Status in Light of Recent Archaeological Discoveries

*Ulster University*

**11.10-11.40 Coffee Break**

**11:40 – 12:10**

GRIGORY BONDARENKO

The Takings of the *Síde*: Irish Autochthones and their Abodes

*Capital Normal University, Beijing*

**12:10 – 12:40**

TATYANA A. MIKHAILOVA

Culann the Smith: In Search of a Lost Deity and a Forgotten Ritual

*Institute of Linguistics, Russian Academy of Sciences, RSUH, Moscow*

**12:40 – 14:10 Lunch Break**

**SUNDAY AFTERNOON SESSION: Celtic Mythology and Folklore****CHAIR: Frog****14.10-14.40**

ULLRICH KOCHER

“Who Ever Walked Around the Flame” – Fire Rituals and Counterculture

*University of the Highlands and Islands***14.40-15.10**

RACHEL MARTIN

Serpents, Saints, and Songs: Tracing Saint Bride in *Carmina Gadelica**Harvard University***15:10 – 15:40**

MAIRÉAD NIC CRAITH

Celtic Myth and the Ecological Crisis

*University of the Highlands and Islands***15:40 – 16:00 Coffee Break****16:00 – 16:30**

NINA WILLMS

The Veil is Torn Apart: Ritual Performance at Edinburgh's Samhuinn Fire Festival

*University of Edinburgh*



**16:30 – 17:00**

JENNY BUTLER

As Above, So Below: The Macrocosm and Microcosm in Wiccan Magical Practice

*University College Cork*

**17:45 – 18:30 Reception**

**18:30 – 19.00 Musical Performance**

FRASER FIFIELD WITH THALIA BLACKING AND KATHERINE CAMPBELL

*Traditional Artist in Residence, University of Edinburgh*

MONDAY, 8<sup>th</sup> April

**VENUE: SCREENING ROOM G.04**

**09:00 –10:20**

**KEYNOTE 4**

TERRY GUNNELL

Through the Eyes of the Mask: The Man-God in the Hall

*University of Iceland*

**VENUE: 50 GEORGE SQUARE, PROJECT ROOM**

**10:20 – 10:40**

**Coffee Break**

**MONDAY MORNING SESSION: Northern Mythology**

**CHAIR:** Nataliya Yanchevskaya

**10:40 – 11:10**

KATHERINE BEARD

Why Carry a Chair? Examining the Role of the Ritual Seat in Old Norse  
Mythology, Literature, and Archaeology

*University of Oxford***11:10 – 11:40**

MORTEN WARMIND

Mjollnir Revisited

*University of Copenhagen***11:40 – 12:10**

FROG

As Above so Below and Back Again: Echoing Cosmological Acts and  
Constructing Them in Return

*Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies***12:10 – 12.40**

JOSHUA ROOD

When Myth and Materiality Meet: Encountering the Mythological in Modern  
Nordic Neo-Paganism

*University of Iceland***12.40 - 14:10 Lunch Break**

**MONDAY AFTERNOON SESSION: Global Perspectives****CHAIR:** Louise Milne**14.10 – 14.40**

ANNA PAGÉ

Acts of Creation: Cosmogony, Foundation Myths, and Extraordinary Births

*University of Vienna***14:40 – 15:10**

SVETLANA ADONYEVA

Heaven and its Inhabitants: The Angelology of the Ceilings of Northern Russian Churches

*St. Petersburg State University***15:10 – 15:40**

EVY JOHANNE HÅLAND

From the Festival of *Agia* (Saint) Marina, Theseiou, Athens, to the Ancient Demetrian Thesmophoria Festival*Lifetime Government Grant Holder (Norwegian, statsstipendiat)/National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Department of Archaeology and History of Art, Marie Curie Intra-European Fellow, Alumna, Norway and Greece***15:40 – 16:00 Coffee Break****16:00 – 16:30**

LAURENT SÉBASTIEN FOURNIER

Performing the City: Using Myths and Rituals to Understand Urban Identities and Beliefs

*Université Côte d'Azur, Nice*

**16:30 – 17:00**

THERESE SAINT-PAUL

The Lost Voice of the Weaving Goddess in *The Lay of the Mantle*

*Murray State University, Murray, Kentucky*

**18:30 Conference Dinner**

Ecco Vino, 19 Cockburn Street, Edinburgh EH1 1BP

TUESDAY, 9<sup>th</sup> April

**09:00 – Excursion to Hopetoun House**

South Queensferry, EH30 9RW

Meet outside 50 George Square

Guided Tour

**13:00 – Return from Hopetoun House**

## ABSTRACTS

**Adonyeva, Svetlana**

Professor of Russian Folk Culture, St. Petersburg State University, Russia  
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### **Heaven and its Inhabitants: The Angelology of the Ceilings of Northern Russian Churches**

One of the most striking artifacts of old Russia that have survived to this day in the Russian North are the painted ceilings of wooden churches and chapels, which are called "heaven". Eighty-seven temples were identified that were blocked by the "sky" in the Vologda, Arkhangelsk, Murmansk regions and the Republic of Karelia, but in addition, similar ceilings were found in the Moscow and Novgorod regions. The "SKY" is a special-shaped ceiling structure, which is a flat polyhedral pyramid, the radial faces of which go from the edges to the center, where they rest against the central ring. The earliest reliably known examples of such overlaps are dated to the seventeenth century. The location of God and the angels is connected with heaven. In Christian churches, it is the dome that is the symbol of the Kingdom of Heaven and it was there that scenes were depicted that could only take place in heaven. Following the Byzantine tradition, Russian icon painters began to depict Christ, the Mother of God, angels and other characters of the highest spiritual hierarchy on the vaults. In the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, all this was reworked by the Northern icon-painting art for the possibilities of wooden temples and the term "heaven" acquired a literal meaning - a person raised his head and saw an angelic host above him. The invisible world of angels and archangels became visible as soon as you raised your head. In my paper I want to consider the images presented on the ceilings of temples as a form of visualization of the invisible world offered to the visitor.

**Armao, Frédéric**

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**Uisneach Reborn: Myths, Folklore and Popular Customs of the Hill at the Centre of Ireland**

The hill of Uisneach (co. Westmeath, Ireland) is approximately situated at the centre of Ireland and seems to have been venerated “from time immemorial”. The place is mentioned in numerous medieval Irish manuscripts that confirm its association with ancient Irish myths and its sanctity has been attested by recent archaeological investigations. Uisneach is now privately owned; it has become a working farm and the current owner has built a “visitor’s centre” at the foot of the hill which welcomes families and “Celtic” enthusiasts all year long. In addition, a new celebration has been held for the past ten years on top of Uisneach at the beginning of May every year. The *Uisneach Fire Festival* welcomes thousands of people and is supposed to echo ancient Irish customs: both Uisneach and the beginning of the month of May (which was marked by the ancient Irish festival of *Bealtaine*) were prominent in ancient Irish (i.e. supposedly Celtic) tradition. This paper will summarize the research undertaken recently in the context of the publication of a book dedicated to Uisneach and the evolution of its tradition throughout centuries. This evolution, and perhaps more accurately the “rebirth” of the sanctity of the hill, will be analysed and accounted for. The symbolic rebirth of the festival does not actually build on continuity and should rather be understood as a form of “recycling” of older myths and traditions: those traditions have been modernized and updated for a number of reasons that will be clarified.

**Beard, Katherine**

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**Why Carry a Chair? Examining the Role of the Ritual Seat in Old Norse Mythology, Literature, and Archaeology**

This paper investigates the symbol ritual seat, often a throne or chair (*kubbstol*), and why people may have worn or carried small chair-like amulets. This paper will do so by considering both medieval literature and Viking Age archaeology. Several dozen chair amulets have been found to date, and more are coming to light because of advances in digital collection technology. Some miniature chair

amulets have been found in inhumations, including the grave of a likely ritual specialist, evoking imagery of the *seiðr* platform as found in the description of Þorbjörg lítil-völva and her magic practice in *Eiríks saga rauða*. Óðinn's mythological seat Hliðskjálf is referenced by name a handful of times in the extant literature and is often questionably connected to these small amulets in scholarship. Should it be?

Beyond mythical seats, the high seat (*hásæti*) is quite a common motif in medieval Icelandic literature. The throne is often associated with kingship, power, and connections to other worlds, such as in Snorri's *Heimskringla*. *Hásæti* relate to kingship and rulers, often bestowing powers upon people (and in one case, a dog), and is used as a literary device related to transitions of power and dynastic destruction. The chair/throne's prevenience and amuletic status may correlate to its persistence as a significant literary theme in medieval Icelandic literature. By examining the extant Old Norse corpus and the ever-growing archaeological record, further insights can be gained regarding the throne as a sacred symbol to the peoples of the Viking Age.

### **Bondarenko, Grigory**

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### **The Takings of the *Síde*: Irish Autochthones and their Abodes**

A short early Irish tale *De Gabáil in t-Śída* ("On the taking of the *síd*") is one of the earliest accounts telling us how Óengus (In Mac Oäc) got hold of the famous mound (*síd*) at Bruig an Bóinne (Eng. Newgrange). Throughout early Irish literature Óengus is well known as a trickster-god and his first trick ever was to extend the time, when he basically repeats his father's action, his extension of time, that very time when the "young son" was conceived and born according to *Tochmarc Étaíne* ("The Wooing of Étaín"). Our paper focuses on the possible distinction between 'older' and 'younger' gods in these early Irish narratives. What are the different ways they exchange and implement power and how these characters were appropriated within the framework of early Irish literature – we will try to approach these issues.

**Butler, Jenny**

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**As Above, So Below: The Macrocosm and Microcosm in Wiccan Magical Practice**

“As above, so below” is a maxim encapsulating the esoteric principle that there are correspondences between phenomena in the universe, between different forms of life and across different planes of existence. The phrase is derived from the hermetic text *Tabula Smaragdina* or “The Emerald Tablet” and has influenced the development of various kinds of magical systems and practices, including forms of modern witchcraft such as Wicca. This paper draws on ethnographic research to explore understandings of the macrocosmic and microcosmic in the cosmology and practices of Wiccans in Ireland. The analysis focuses on the use of Celtic myth in their rituals and how symbols and motifs of this mythological canon relate to their understandings of a macro and microcosm. The paper examines how these cosmological understandings guide practitioners in their interactions with the spiritual world.

**Carey, John**

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J.Carey@ucc.ie

**King Cormac in the Otherworld: A Realm of Gods, or Angels?**

The tale *Echtrae Chormaic* has been characterised by eminent scholars as representing ‘genuinely old tradition’ (Dillon), and as being potentially ‘a reflex of the oldest traditions about Cormac mac Airt’ (Ó Cathasaigh). On the other hand, none of the surviving versions is early (two are late Middle Irish, and one Early Modern Irish); and the most conservative of these versions includes a colophon which speaks of Cormac’s Otherworld experience as a ‘divine visitation’, and associates it with visits by angels to the pagan Irish. Further aspects of the narrative, such as the apparent use of allegory, are also suggestive of Latin literary influence. This paper will assess a range of interpretive possibilities, seeking to ascertain what light the text can shed on the place of the native supernatural in the collective imagination of twelfth-century Ireland.



**Frog**

Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies, Finland

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**As Above so Below and Back Again: Echoing Cosmological Acts and  
Constructing Them in Return**

This paper outlines a semiotic approach to mythology and its relationship to ritual, illustrated centrally through applications to Viking Age and Medieval Scandinavian traditions on the one hand and Finno-Karelian traditions on the other. Within this approach, the elements of both mythology and enactable, performable elements of rituals are approached as socially accessible signs. Signs of cosmological mythology may be shared with ritual, and the meanings and significance of such signs are constructed in dialectic between them. Four types of cases will be outlined and discussed: (1) accounts of rituals and religious activities described among cosmological actors and/or in cosmogonic time; (2) human rituals that enact or reperform particular cosmogonic events; (3) human rituals that enact paradigms of actions and relations among cosmogonic actors; (4) a human ritual that emerged through interpreting situation-specific factors through relationships to mythology leading to the emergence of a new ritual; (5) rituals embedded in cosmological models and situated in relation to their actors without tight connections to cosmological events.

The final type of case highlights that mythology may vary considerably within a community, and that it nests in social practices, with social institutions of ritual specialists as mooring posts of its stability and durability. The studies illustrate how ritual and cosmological mythology can be co-constructive. This co-construction and its connection to ritual specialist institutions may have long-term consequences in what cosmological mythology advances to greater centrality, what may wane, and how mythology may transform over time.

**Fomin, Maxim**

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### **Studying Celtic Mythology and Celtic Figures of Divine Status in Light of Recent Archaeological Discoveries**

The sources available for the study of Celtic mythology are diverse. They include archaeological data, etymological reconstructions from the field of comparative linguistics and philology drawing upon various linguistic items available in the Celtic continental and insular inscriptions, as well as themes and topics available in medieval Irish and Welsh texts. Researchers complement this by descriptions of various Celtic religious and mythological phenomena available in the writings of classical historiographers, but one needs to treat their works with caution. In my contribution, I will attempt to review the range of archaeological data available, discussing discoveries made at such sites as the giant Hallstattian mounds is the Magdalenenberg (Villingen-Schwenningen), Heidenbühl (Allensbach-Kaltbrunn, Constance), Eberdingen-Hochdorf (near Stuttgart), Gutenberg (Lichtenstein), and Glauberg (Frankfurt) including the discussion of the symbolism and meaning of the anthropomorphic figures found at such sites. These findings will be complemented and compared to the data available on the bass reliefs from Vendoeuvres and Reims, sanctuaries of Donon and Gournay-sur-Aronde, finishing off with the discussion of religious scenes depicted on the Gundestrup Cauldron, the etymological reconstructions of appellation of the Celtic Stag God Cernunnos, and what one could learn from the iconography of the deity and its veneration among the Celts of the Roman Gaul.

**Fournier, Laurent Sébastien**

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**Performing the City: Using Myths and Rituals to Understand Urban Identities and Beliefs**

Trying to investigate the mirroring of the gods by humans particularly in ritual contexts, this presentation will use historical and cultural anthropology to find out what differences and similarities can be found between the traditional “royal entries” in European cities in the Middle Ages and Early Modern periods, and more contemporary rituals in twenty-first-century urban events. If the figure of the leader was central in the past rituals, it is most often replaced today by fantasy characters, legendary animals or imaginary monsters. Such a change opens up a questioning on the evolution of popular beliefs and on the mythological significance of supernatural beings that are staged in contemporary urban rituals. The presentation will show that “the world below” can build up several different registers of representation relating to “the world above”. Each society orders its beliefs through rituals that evolve from one era to another. We will see how modern urban events featuring fantastic figures, such as unicorns or dragons for example, contribute to perform some of the new beliefs of our contemporaries regarding the city and citizenship.

**Gray, Elizabeth A.**

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**The Complex and Paradoxical Figure of Eochaid Ollathair (The Dagda)**

Eochaid Ollathair (“Great Father”), nicknamed “The Dagda” (“The Good God”), is a complex and paradoxical figure among the Tuatha Dé (“Peoples of the Gods”), who appear in medieval Irish materials as the deities of pagan Ireland. In the euhemerizing chronological scheme found in the twelfth century *Lebor Gabála Éirenn* (“The Book of the Conquest of Ireland”), Eochaid is king of the Tuatha Dé, whose reign follows that of Lug, the victorious battle leader in *Cath Maige Tuired* (“The [Second] Battle of Mag Tuired”). The Dagda is also known as master of poetic and druidic arts, ‘God of Druidry’. His literary persona includes elements that are far from attributes of kingship or marks of high status. Wearing dun-coloured clothing, carrying a forked staff, an object associated with

swineherds, he wields a club rather than a sword in combat. He is an earth mover and fortress builder, who acts as a kind of Rabelaisian “Wise Fool”. Given that discussion of the Dagda is a gargantuan task, this paper’s limited focus is to consider contradictory aspects of his characterization and to identify literary materials that might shed light on their development.

### **Gunnell, Terry**

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### **Through the Eyes of the Mask: The Man-God in the Hall**

The main theme of this conference, “As above, so below”, refers directly to a key feature of many religious rituals in which performative power is gained from the invocation of what Mircea Eliade referred to as “sacred time”, in which two worlds (those of the mythical world and the present) temporarily blend into one, something that has the potential of simultaneously creating a “sacred space” in which both words and actions gain greater meaning (cf. recent work by Neil Price, Emily Lyle and Simon Nygaard). This lecture will build on a number of earlier lectures and papers in which I have considered various aspects of the rituals that may have taken place in the halls and cult houses of the Nordic rulers in the pre-Christian world. Focus will be placed on the role of the mask-helmet, such as that found in Sutton Hoo, and the potential that it would have had to transform the wearer into a hybrid man-god, simultaneously temporarily transforming the nature of the immediate surroundings and the audience situated within them.

This aspect of multiple hybridity will be placed initially in the context of not only other local traditions involving features of hybridity such as those relating to the animal fylgja, hamskipti, the berserker and the ulfheðnir. However, it will go on to consider the ways in which the new Nordic national rulers had learnt from how both the Roman emperors and new Christian rulers of the Frankish empire had effectively extended their power by personally adopting semi-godlike hybridity, something that naturally continues amongst many rulers up to this day. Examples will be also given of the ways in which extant Old Nordic poetic works such as *Grímnismál*, *Vafþrúðnismál*, *Eiríksmál*, *Hákonarmál*, and even *Völuspá* seem to preserve memories of such temporary transformations of the hall into a mythic space as part of rituals relating to rites of passage of one kind or another.

### **Håland, Evy Johanne**

Lifetime Government Grant Holder (Norwegian, *statsstipendiat*)/National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Department of Archaeology and History of Art, Marie Curie Intra-European Fellow, Alumna, Norway and Greece  
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#### **From the Festival of *Agia* (Saint) Marina, Theseiou, Athens, to the Ancient Demetrian Thesmophoria Festival**

The festival dedicated to *Agia* Marina, who protects against illness in general and sick children in particular, is celebrated on 17 July. Her cult is widespread in the eastern Mediterranean world and her relics are found in several places, such as in her modern Athenian church, which is situated above her older cave-church, close to the ancient Athenian Pnyx, where the ancient Athenian citizen-wives met during their Thesmophoria festival dedicated to the grain Goddess, Demeter, around sowing time. Women are the primary visitors also in the modern celebration, and the results from my fieldwork on this festival in 1992 and after the turn of the century are central in the present paper which will compare the two celebrations in order to shed fresh light on the ancient festival to which we have sparse source material since the sources were produced by men, despite the fact that they were not permitted to participate in this female event.

### **Kockel, Ullrich**

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#### **“Who Ever Walked Around the Flame” – Fire Rituals and Counterculture**

Taking poet Stefan George’s influence on the mythology of the German Youth Movement as its starting point, this paper explores the syncretic use of fire in countercultural rituals in the context of a wider appropriation of cultural forms and expressions. Selected examples of literary representations are briefly reviewed. The paper concludes with a critical examination of contemporary Nativist and other countercultural appropriations of such rituals.

**Leavitt, John**

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**The Actualization of Myth in Ritual, with Celtic Examples**

Since the works of Lévi-Strauss and Turner, the tendency, at least in theory, has been to separate myth from ritual and treat each entirely independently of the other. Yet in practice the two are usually found together: most important mythic narration takes place in ritualized contexts; most ritual involves at least a rudimentary story involving the transempirical. This is a connection or a contiguity relation, myths being the stories of the deeds and personae of forces and beings who are made present or called upon in ritual. But the two share a further relationship of similarity: most myths are poetically structured, involving repetition and patterning of scenes and events; and we think we recognize ritual at least in part by the repetition and patterning of its acts. Given that in both cases the aesthetic or poetic function is present and usually front-and-center, I will argue that the two are in fact one, the expression of the poetic function in words and/or in acts with an eye to the transempirical, as it may also be expressed in images, music, and any other medium. Here I will consider two examples of myth/ritual unity, both of which take place in late summer: the Grande Troménie of Locronan in Brittany and the pilgrimage to Croagh Patrick in Ireland. If there is time, a comparison will be made to mythoritual practices in the Central Himalayas of northern India.

**Lyle, Emily**

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**As Below, So Above: The Proto-Indo-European “Government” and the Pantheon**

The organization of the Indo-European gods at the time of their foundation that can be elicited through study of the historically known cultures was based on the model of a six-generation kindred with a woman (the ancestress) at the point of origin of a matrilineal system of succession and a man (the king) in the focal generation which is the fourth. The ten people/gods in the system are two kings (the king of the living and the king of the dead), two females (the queen and the ancestress, coded by the colour yellow), six males in two sets of three (relating to the sacred, physical force and prosperity and coded by the colours white, red

and black). The people in the kindred could not all be alive simultaneously, but they can be represented by ten people within each generation and each generation corresponds to a reign. The king embodies the totality and, at his inauguration, receives the qualities of the other nine gods/people who are the kingmakers through the medium of objects or actions. The queen selects the king through the presentation of a cup of liquid and it has recently been suggested that the cup may be a relic consisting of the cranium of a sacrificed man representing the king of the dead. Exploration of the regalia could give clues to the roles, both within the king's household and outside it, of the set of people who formed the "government" of this tribal society and corresponded to the gods.

**Martin, Rachel**

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**Serpents, Saints, and Songs: Tracing St. Bride in *Carmina Gadelica***

Since the publication of Alexander Carmichael's *Carmina Gadelica*, it has been taken for granted that there is a close tie between Scottish Saint Bride and serpents, given the presence of a charm in the collection which prominently features a serpent coming out of a hole, and an account of an old woman beating a serpent in effigy on St. Bride's Day. Beginning with Carmichael himself and continuing into Donald Mackenzie and Marian McNeill, the overwhelming idea has been that there is some pre-Christian backing to this tradition. This paper argues that, while the charm itself appears to be genuine (despite the long-running debate over Carmichael's reliability) and has numerous attestations throughout the folk tradition, there does not appear to be any evidence to suggest that Bride is unique in this regard, or that her connection with a serpent extends to the pre-Christian Irish figure. Instead, if there is a link to the pre-Christian figure, it might, tentatively, be found in the *fonn feadalaich* (tuneful whistling) that is mentioned in one of the variants collected by Carmichael, which might find a parallel in the supernatural figure Brigit's association with keening in the medieval Irish tradition.

**Milne, Louise S.**

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**Visual Figuration and the Otherworld: The Case of the Water-woman**

The basic idea of a female spirit attached to a place of water has endured for millennia in literature, folklore and the visual arts. Supernatural aquatic women – mermaids, sirens, nymphs and nereids, of sea, shore, spring, river and cave – exist at the interface between the natural world and the otherworld; they are also markers for that boundary. They are visualised as manifesting in a remarkable variety of forms, from ideal female nudes to monstrous hybrids. Central also to the mythos of the water-woman is the transformative power of desire; experienced by, or exerted on, either the entity herself or her beholder. Focussing on traditions involving the Homeric sirens and the aquatic transformations described in Ovid, with excursions into Celtic, Northern European and folkloric sources, I explore the related issues of hybridity and desire in treatments of the water-woman from Classical antiquity through the Middle Ages and into the Renaissance.

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**Culann the Smith: In Search of a Lost Deity and a Forgotten Ritual**

The smith Culann is primarily associated with the initiation of the young hero Setanta, the protagonist of the Ulidian cycle of tales. After killing Culann's hound, the hero becomes 'the dog of Culann' and receives a new name, Cú Chulainn, which determines his future role as the protector of Ulster. The episode serves to reveal the importance of Culann's role in the "Ulidian" micro-ethnos, as described by the medieval compiler: firstly, as a sacred craftsman (*cerdd*), he takes part in a heroic initiation rite; secondly, he is the owner of a monster-dog which performs the function of a "dragon" in Irish heroic biography; thirdly, he is a hospitaller who prepares a ritual feast for the king (in the LU-version of the saga, *óegidacht*, "traditional meeting"). Hence the paucity of references to such a high-status character in the Ulidian tales cannot but appear odd.



However, allusions to Culann are not uncommon in later folk narratives. In some folk versions of the plot, Culann is associated with the Isle of Man, where Conchobar goes for Culann to forge magic battle armour for him. With the help of this powerful armour, Conchobar takes the kingship of Ulster and brings Culann to live in Ireland. Culann's name originates from *\*Colionos*, derived from the Indo-European term *\*kolo* – “to strike”, the same derivation is characteristic of the theonym *Su-Cellos*, a Gaulish deity traditionally portrayed with a hammer and a dog. It can be suggested that the Irish archaic tradition preserved relicts of the Celtic figure of a Divine Smith, virtually unrecognizable in later Medieval literature. The methodology of comparative mythological analysis sheds light on the hero's character and the calendar ritual on which the feast prepared by Culann the Smith was based.

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### **Celtic Myth and the Ecological Crisis**

The Kerry philosopher John Moriarty has blamed the current ecological crisis on our “Fomorian” way of thinking, arguing that Balor's evil eye of consumerism has corrupted us. This paper explores Celtic mythology as a resource for coping with climate crisis. It asks what relevance, if any, our Celtic myths have for addressing the associated human ecological challenges, how we may distinguish myths that liberate from those that incarcerate, and how we avoid reading meanings into these myths that are not actually there.

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**Acts of Creation: Cosmogony, Foundation Myths, and Extraordinary Births**

Stories about the births of heroes and other important individuals are a familiar and well-studied aspect of mythological systems. Studies of the “conception/birth” section of what is commonly referred to as the “heroic biography” demonstrate that an underlyingly consistent narrative structure can be subject to significant variation in its expression in individual stories, with many different possible combinations of motifs used to mark the birth as extraordinary. These same collocations of motifs are present also in other stories about acts of creation, including those that take place on a larger scale than the births of individuals. Among the many varied forms that creation myths can take are those that model cosmogony as an act of childbirth, which is also a frequent element of foundation myths. This paper considers the narrative structures and motifs present in stories about the extraordinary births of individuals and how they are paralleled in both foundation myths and cosmogonic myths, creating a link between acts of creation on the human, divine, and cosmological planes.

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**Translating Creation: Terms for the Biblical Concept of Creation in Translations**

This paper analyzes the translations of Biblical terms expressing God's creative act (especially the Hebrew *bara'* “to create”, *asah* “to make” and *yatsar* “to form”) in the Genesis creation narrative into various languages and the semantic and interreligious implications of these translations. The paper will primarily focus on the East Asian region (China, Vietnam, Korea), whose religious identity was shaped by non-monotheistic religious traditions. In particular, I attempt to examine whether and how the translations distinguish the language used to describe Creation as a sacred act associated exclusively with the monotheistic God (“Above”) from the language used about human acts belonging to the profane realm (“Below”), and how Biblical cosmology is reflected in languages and cultures shaped by different religious systems.

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**New Year Festival, the Myth of Establishing *maat* and the Mission of the Pharaoh in the *Pyramid Texts***

The author of the paper aims at presenting the New Year Festival as expressed in the *Pyramid Texts*, with reference to both contextual and co-textual arguments. The analysis will be concerned with scrutiny and discussion of the contextualisation of the days of the festival in question within the necessity of establishing *maat*, making gods and the mission of the pharaoh. The question as to what these concepts may mean will be addressed and scrutinised. Moreover, the fascinating and riveting nuances of the meaning of the concepts of *maat* and of making gods as features of kingship mirrored in the festive acts presumably performed in ancient Egypt will be discussed in the lecture. This paper constitutes a part of a broader theme studied by the author and is concerned with analyses of *primaeva elements*, mythological threads and the ritual “mission” of the king described by the Ancient Egyptians in the *Pyramid Texts*.

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**When Myth and Materiality Meet: Encountering the Mythological in Modern Nordic NeoPaganism**

This presentation explores the phenomena in which modern communities of Nordic NeoPagans (Asatruar) collectively experience what they interpret as encounters or interactions with deities or other beings belonging to their mythologies within a public or community arena. Through these experiences, the myths themselves become present, and actively intertwine themselves with the histories of those communities. A known example, covered in the presentation, is the story of how a thunderstorm raging over Reykjavík while the NeoPagan organization, Ásatrúarfélagið struggled to gain legal recognition from the Minister of Justice became attributed to the god Þórr lending his support to the organization. This helped mythologize the Ásatrúarfélag's origin story and

sense of legitimacy. My research has shown that such events are common in Asatru communities and play a crucial role in their narratives of group identity, history, and even belief. This presentation will give examples, including the account of a community in Norway canceling a ceremony to honor the destructive entity, Fenrir, after a member was injured during preparation for the event, and the account of a man who had a minor stroke while reciting Hávamál in a ceremony that left him blind in one eye, like the god Óðinn. These subjective group experiences become sacred narratives of their own, fusing the mythology with their own living history. They play an important role in shaping and affirming community members' sense of their own collective history, as well as community beliefs, practices and taboos and are vital to the development of new religious communities.

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**The Lost Voice of the Weaving Goddess in *The Lay of the Mantle***

*The Lay of the Mantle* is a comical scenario which enjoyed wide popularity throughout the Middle Ages and beyond. It is seen as an early fabliau, a misogynistic parody of courtly literature, as its oldest version dates from the 12<sup>th</sup> c. French *Lai du Cort Mantel*. This paper will focus on a neglected aspect of the story: the magical mantle as a specific attribute of the fay. We follow the trail of mytho-archaeological elements in Celtic, Arthurian, Scandinavian and other European traditions to reassert Her voice and agency in the story, not only as an echo of the Sovereignty goddess who pervades Welsh and Irish mythological texts, but as an avatar of the Weaving Goddess, ruler of fate and destiny in many mythologies.

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**Wealth as the Interaction with Heaven: Evolution of Cosmological Offerings,  
 Rituals and Beliefs in Inner Asia, Korea and Vietnam**

The prehistoric inhabitants of inland Inner Asia were closely dependent on the Sun, Heaven and regular rains for securing food for the whole community and even empire. The cosmological will of Heaven and vertical relation to it became the legitimizing principle of power in Inner Asian political culture spreading as far as to Korea and Vietnam. Up today, this idea is surprisingly present even in the set of individual beliefs and rituals of people trying to reach prosperity in their businesses in densely populated Vietnam and Korea. And, similarly, this cosmological relation is important for the need of harmony with nature and natural order in pastoral communities in Mongolia. In the first part, this paper focuses on the constitution of state and imperial offerings as they are attested in the historical sources and on collected depictions from Korea and China. In the second part, the general background of the idea of appropriate vertical cosmological connection is further documented by Vietnamese rituals and work of female mediums. Here the provided offerings and communication with heavenly realms within the religion of the Four Palaces is compared with the beliefs in Mongolian ritual texts since modern Mongolian pastoralist communities attest similar type of beliefs. These rituals are now more important due to changing climatic conditions and aridity in Inner Asia.

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**“Our Master Has Eyes like a Pen for a Thousand Sheep”: Parallel Processes in  
 the Realms of Spirits and Humans as Viewed by the Mongolian Oral Tradition  
 and Vietnamese Narratives by Nguyễn Dữ**

In the traditional views of the Mongols and Vietnamese, the landscape populated by humans is inhabited in a parallel way by many diverse species of beings belonging to various forms of existence. Regardless of whether these beings are understood within the Buddhist concept of the six domains of

existence, or in a non-Buddhist context, their main shared characteristic is that they are considered masters possessing or exercising control over the area or particular components of the local landscape. The actions and processes taking place in the parallel realms are not necessarily ethical. The beings of the parallel realms can engage in activities that are directly or indirectly harmful to the inhabitants of the human realm. In this case, it is the imperially authorized administrative power of the human realm which has the authority to intervene and to bring the beings of the parallel realm into a harmonious state. The idea of mutual interdependence goes even further as the processes in the parallel realm (such as quarrels between the spirits) are attributed the ability to influence events in the human world. Similarly, vice versa, the events in the human realm are reflected in the processes in the parallel world of spirits. This paper will compare narrative samples from the oral tradition of the Mongolian cultural area (mostly from the author's own fieldwork) and the Vietnamese oral tradition processed for literature in the 16th-century collection *Truyện kỳ mạn lục* ("Unconventional Records of Strange Tales") by Nguyễn Dữ.

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### **Mjollnir Revisited**

In 2011 Lasse Sonne defended his dissertation 'Vikingetidens Thor-kult: historiske studier i vikingetidens religion,' published in 2013 as 'Thor-kult i vikingetiden: historiske studier i vikingetidens religion'. In his very thorough and critical study Sonne casts doubt on the identification of hammer-like pendants from the end of the Viking Age as depictions of Thor's hammer, and even questions whether they are hammers at all. The latter point was cleared up by the find of a hammer-pendant in 2014 with the runic inscription 'HMAR\*IS' or 'It's a hammer'. It is true, that a hammer is a strange weapon and attribute for a god who is not a blacksmith, so it is reasonable to look closer at Mjollnir and its place in the Nordic mythology and religion.

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**Above and below: Cosmography of the “Other World” of the Dead in Russian Traditional Culture**

Aspects of this topic are reflected in many different Russian sources. The location of regions occupied by the souls of the dead and what happens to them there is addressed, for example, in iconography and in a wide range of narratives, including the medieval visions of holy men, tales of visitations to the other world by the living during episodes of hypersomnia (“*letargicheskii son*”) or in a state of unconsciousness, and, in more recent times, the dreams and beliefs of village people about the whereabouts and fate of their dead loved ones. I have recorded many such stories while conducting fieldwork in the Russian North. Whether or not we believe in the existence of heaven and hell, whether or not we think of them as states of being, most of us probably have in our minds the notion of actual places, situated “up above” or “down below,” and associated with the idea of judgement, rewards and punishments. Such notions are reflected in the icons and frescoes of the “Last Judgement” in Russian Orthodox churches, for example. However, on closer inspection of written and oral sources of information about the afterlife we can see that the spaces occupied by the dead, both bodies and souls, is considerably more diverse and contradictory. This is particularly true of contemporary Russian folk beliefs, which are intimately bound up with the practicalities of care for and remembrance of the dead and in which locations such as “above” and “below” are especially problematical. In this paper I hope to highlight the geographical peculiarities of these various “otherworldly” territories and the occupations and concerns of their inhabitants.

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**The Veil is Torn Apart: Ritual Performance at Edinburgh's Samhuinn Fire Festival**

This presentation explores the experience of embodied ritual performance from the perspective of a performer in the 2023 Samhuinn Fire Festival in Edinburgh. As a performer at this public event, I adopted an embodied ritual persona that I found difficult to emerge from after the performance was over. Beginning with a personal artistic reflection, I will situate this ritual performance experience within academic discourse in performance studies and traditional cosmology. I seek to address performance-based methods, embodied ritual performance and modern creative re-imaginings of the Celtic myths and seasonal festivals. This presentation will conclude with an invitation to discuss ways forward as I begin my research.

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**The Deadly Year**

This paper takes into consideration a wide range of Indo-European myths, mythological motifs, and rituals that view the year as an epitome of, on the one hand, time and order, and on the other, death. I start with the Vedic tradition – year-related motifs as they are presented in the R̥gveda and the Upaniṣads, then continue to Zoroastrian and later myths of South Asia and Iran and compare them with Armenian, Greek, Germanic-Scandinavian, Celtic, and Slavic materials representing the year as death. I analyze multiple deities of time and year across several Indo-European traditions and demonstrate their close relationship with death and the world of the dead. As a conclusion, I make an attempt to reconstruct a possible Indo-European concept of the deadly year and features of a common Indo-European deity of time and death.



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### **The Chinese Myth of Writing and Language in Victor Pelevin's Prose**

Inspired by Hungarian writer Gyula Hernádi's *The Temple of Happiness* (*A boldogság templomai*, 1986), a Russian postmodernist writer Victor Pelevin wrote a short story *Runic Divination or Ralph Bloom's Runic Oracle* (1990), in which he argues that the heavenly gift of language is the common archetype of all cultures, and that if the Runes were a gift received by Odin, the father of the gods, then the trigrams of the *I Ching* were given to Fu Xi by Heaven. In the ancient Chinese mythology, Fu Xi is a creator god on a par with Nuwa. When Fu Xi had come to rule everything under heaven, looking up he contemplated the brilliant images exhibited in Heaven, and looking down he surveyed the tracks of birds and beasts in the earth. This inspired him to invent a set of eight trigrams. Pelevin in his later works also used various metaphors for words, like mirror, shadow, stepladder and empty scriptures (from *The Journey to the West*). Also, in his short story on Chinese theme *The Notes on Catching the Wind* he said, "The world is simply a reflection of the Chinese characters". In my paper I would like to analyse how these Chinese origin myths are perceived and reflected in contemporary Russian prose and how they are influenced by other relevant European myths resulting in creating a new mythological metatext.

## NOTES