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A disciplinary history of Latvian mythology



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Department of Estonian and Comparative Folklore, Faculty of Philosophy

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INTRODUCTION

This is a thesis on the history of a discipline that does not exist. A discipline that has no chair in any research institution, that does not provide a degree, that freely fluctuates between lay and expert discourses. Research on Latvian mythology is a discipline dwelling under the names of various other disciplines; not interdisciplinary by nature, emerging from time to time under different titles, within different contexts, and hiding different agendas. At the same time, its subject matter is constantly present: it circulates within the systems of knowledge production, infused with claims of authority, power, and authenticity. Therefore, the first task is to define: what does the term 'Latvian mythology' really mean in this thesis?

Anchoring the subject matter

Leaving aside epistemological questions of whether there are narratives which from a particular point of view can be categorised as myths, or whether a class of phenomena characteristic to such narratives exist, mythology is certainly a system – derived from the lived experience, historical evidences, and folklore materials with instruments of selection, interpretation, and systematisation. The individuals or groups of people sharing such narratives have lived without having to categorise and separate their myths in analytical terms. Once conceptualised, myth has been the object of scholarly interest over at least the last two centuries. During that time, multiple definitions of myth have been produced, from contradictory definitions to those complimenting each other, universal and particular, related to ancient religions (Frazer) as well as to shared structures of the unconsciousness (Jung) or specific modes of signifying (Barthes) – just to mention some opposite directions where this vast field stretches. Systematisation of this variety is an area of scholarly interest in its own right. Such is the agenda of the voluminous treatise on mythography by William Doty (2000); multiple definitions and variations of mythological research are also presented in the collections of articles edited by Alan Dundes (1984), restricting the variety of theories to those more or less contributing to the definition of myth as “sacred narrative explaining how the world and man came to be in their present form”; similarly the overview of historical developments and closer analysis of several influential directions provided by Laurie L. Patton and Wendy Doniger (1996). Research into mythology is a discipline with genuinely blurred boundaries. Most often conducted within the areas of folkloristics and history or studies of religion, it is friendly with research into literature as well as archaeology and philology, akin to social and cultural anthropology, it sometimes borrows vocabulary from theology and becomes part of ethnology. Moreover, these disciplines as well as others not mentioned here have various theoretical schools, branches and directions, not so rarely

overlapping with each other or constituting interdisciplinary approaches – thus the variety and niceties of definitions of myth only increases.

As my research concerns scholarly production of Latvian mythology, I will avoid ready-made definitions of myth and mythology which may narrow the research subject according to formal criteria, but instead use a genealogical model: following the self-defined object of study as it is embedded in scholarly discourse. Specifically, the point of departure of this study is works written by academic researchers and entitled *Latvian mythology*, or which directly define that they concern Latvian mythology. As such, ‘Latvian mythology’ might be initially defined as a system of supernatural beliefs shared throughout the period of at least several hundred years by people speaking Latvian and its dialects. It is related to religious practices and narrated in folklore materials. Depending on a particular researcher’s standpoint, it was defined as the “old Latvian faith” (Šmits 2009), the dimension of tradition within religion, besides cult and dogma (Straubergs 1934–1935), temporally restricted to “ancient Latvian religion in late Iron Age” (Adamovičs 1937), positioned as a set of views characteristic to pre-class society (Niedre 1948), etc. These and the other definitions I discuss in thesis share the idea of the linguistically marked ethnic particularity of this mythology (therefore it is ‘Latvian’) and, to some extent, its elements. However, the structure and exact content of this system differ from work to work, not to mention investigations concerning, for example, only one deity, characteristic, or domain of the ancient world-view.

The next step is mapping the transformations and variations that the same self-defined subject matter undergoes in the works of various researchers, thus finding both its ancestors and offspring. This procedure will allow a complete map of disciplinary history to be accomplished, at the same time avoiding formal (due to an existing definition) or institutional (choosing one particular existing discipline) biases. Such an approach is chosen to focus attention on the scholarly construction of the research subject, discovering the initiatives that lie beyond it and the contexts that shape each particular form that it takes. Consequently, it is an investigation into the knowledge production process rather than the content of knowledge, analysis of representational form rather than the object of representation. From this perspective the history of research into Latvian mythology had not been written: all previous works concerning the subject matter either touch it as a part of folkloristics (e.g. Ambainis 1989) or analyse exclusively theoretical approaches and sources for similar research (e.g. Biezais 2008).

Scholars with different backgrounds and interests have been concerned with the reconstruction, description and explanation for presumed Latvian myths and, especially, mythical beings like gods and deities. The lines between description, explanation and analysis, selection and interpretation of particular evidences from the past, or texts, or their characteristics are not clear, and cannot be made without categorisation and reduction of some kind. No ethnographic description or evidence from the past is free from theory; and even

though some notions seem common knowledge, yet their understanding differs among various parties involved. The criteria for what constitutes mythology differ between the fields of knowledge and between those who engage in them. Even in one field, Latvian folkloristics for instance, there are obvious differences in this regard between more historically or philologically inclined scholars, or scholars belonging to different institutions. What was incontrovertible evidence for the antiquarian enthusiast of the nineteenth century was not the same for the researcher working in 1960s, and what constitutes ancient mythological world-view is not identical for historian of religion and comparative mythologist. Those are not the same gods which theologians, archaeologists and linguists appear to be analysing. The differences are even more obvious when it comes to selection and interpretation of folklore materials. This is equally true of the methods of those who rely principally upon comparative-historical reconstructions as opposed to those who engage in phenomenological analysis; of writers guided by maxims of this or that school and inspired by events of their lifetime, philosophy, or culture. Therefore, instead of trying to establish agreement upon the subject matter, I am examining differences between works of researchers who had selected and interpreted evidences from the vernacular culture and ancient manuscripts to construct their object of study, and thereby have affected the view on the sources themselves. Facing such diversity, this study does not attempt to provide a total overview and examine in detail everything that has been written on Latvian mythology. My aim is rather to connect and compare on the one hand the most influential works written on the subject matter and, on the other hand, sketch the diversity of the field, linking analysis of radically different approaches. Thus, the final result is a virtual map of ideas – with multiple centres and peripheries stretching across time. For this reason, I have made no attempt to submit the more technical notions involved in studies of myth to critical examination, even though some of them (e.g. ‘syncretism’ or ‘genre’) raise issues of substantial significance. Instead, the research is focussed on the genesis of particular scholarly productions and their intertextual dimension, tracing origins of particular ideas and giving an account of the historical and institutional circumstances in which they were conceived: their role in political settings and determination by developments of cultural, including academic, history. No knowledge emerges outside society and history, therefore an analysis of knowledge production necessarily requires analysis of the social, political, and even economic settings of its origins in genetic and historical terms as expressions of the particular stage in the development of society and scholarship. Knowledge of the social history, of the modes which determine the shape taken by circulation of knowledge and power in particular times and places, and of problems which these generate, is also needed to assess the full significance and purpose of disciplines which seemingly deal with the subjects distant from the society within which these disciplines emerge and develop. Therefore the knowledge of social, ideological,

and intellectual conditions is undoubtedly indispensable in writing about any disciplinary history.

Still, to avoid losing the subject matter in its contexts, special attention is paid to mythological space; the latter is described either particularly, or in passing, in the majority of reconstructions of Latvian mythology. Several reasons advocate this particular choice for closer study: (1) comparability due to presence in multiple studies, (2) interdisciplinarity due to presence in studies divided by different perspectives, (3) reconstructive sensitivity, clearly showing the importance of initially selected source materials, (4) structural independence: space as an 'empty' notion is not necessarily bounded to a pantheon of gods or other elements of mythology, (5) interconnectivity: the understanding of mythological space as part of a specific world view that connects 'high' religious realms with everyday cult practices; this is the setting where life and afterlife coexist, inhabited equally by humans, spirits, and gods; it is the parchment on which living experience is written in the form of myth. Thus, I will describe several models of mythological space to analyse the contexts that had shaped them.

Project positioning

Initially interested in mapping Latvian mythological space, an idealistic project that fuelled my BA and MA theses, I encountered puzzling diversity in the secondary sources. Recognition that both my interest and the causes of this diversity are grounded outside the subject matter led to me re-think the whole project and to question its epistemological grounds. This might be the most personal, biographical reason for my current study. Self-insight, a form of reflexivity. Further, the reflexive relationships between cause and effect gradually became central for my research – for positioning on the local and international level, and for the theoretical apparatus adopted and constructed to write the disciplinary history of Latvian mythology.

Rooted in the occidental hierarchy of knowledge production¹, according to which status and scholarly authority are distributed, followed by recognition, influence and funding, and apart from complicated routine, academic practice is still a matter of belief. I believe that my study will contribute, both with its generalisations and particularities, to the discourse of reflexive disciplinary history writing from which it has emerged. In the same way that Irish folklore has been located in the international arena by Diarmuid Ó Giolláin, American folkloristics and the discipline of *Volkskunde* in German-speaking countries

¹ Although views of various agents involved my differ, even the views of the same agents in various situations, different types of knowledge (as rumours, evening news, scholarly writings, statements of the church or governmental officials, textbooks etc.) differ by truth value generally attributed to them. Assuming such general hierarchy, each of these levels with their own rules of construction have their centres and peripheries, defining further differentiation.

revised by Regina Bendix, the history of Finnish folkloristics, politics and concerns with tradition analysed against the background of the diverse facets of modernity by Pertti Anttonen, and the history of Estonian folkloristics and ethnology explored by collective of authors in edition by Kristin Kuutma and Tiiu Jaago. This is to mention just but a few seminal folkloristics-related books from the blooming field of knowledge production analysis in the social and human sciences, characterised by multiple articles published in academic journals, research projects conducted and their outcomes presented at various conferences, congresses, and workshops. It seems that after the crushing wave of post-modern, -colonial, -structural, -feminist and other criticisms, resulting in short-lived denial or contra-critique by some parties involved in the business of representation, and in unbound relativism and the so-called crisis of representation for other parties, the closely related disciplines of folkloristics, anthropology and ethnology have reached a new stage of development, building new identities in the complex world of twenty-first-century scholarship – with strong interdisciplinary focus, with awareness of political processes and the power relationships with which the scholarship is involved, and with awareness of these disciplines' own historical roots. Historical roots not as a romantic biological metaphor or linear sequence of progressive developments through the time, but more as a subconsciousness of scholarship – long forgotten or denied memories of formative moments, indirectly manifesting in the contemporary world, lurking behind the seemingly innocent and clear concepts, ideas, and directions of research. Paraphrasing Bourdieu (2000), by turning to study the historical conditions of production, practitioners of human sciences can gain a theoretical control over their own structures and inclinations as well as over the determinants whose products they are, and can thereby gain the concrete means with which to reinforce their own capacity for objectification. My dissertation is intended to contribute to this discourse in several ways. First of all, by warmly welcoming any generalisations and extrapolations in order to demonstrate a multi-sited or multi-dimensional approach to particular disciplinary history. This is not primarily theoretical work; despite the fact that it includes the program of consecutive steps I follow to reach my goal, accompanied by mandatory disclaimers against the totalising of knowledge produced, its main procedure is historiography – bound to the subject matter, form of knowledge, and place. Still, analysing the social, epistemological, and political conditions that have shaped the research into Latvian mythology, I hope a foreign reader or a reader involved in another academic field can use my findings at least by analogy, or explore them to lay the foundations of his or her national disciplinary history, either by concentrating on the similarities of the knowledge production in particular historical periods, or by comparatively highlighting the differences and their causes, discovering which determinants are variable and which are invariant in different research traditions or trajectories. On the other hand, selected parts of this thesis may compliment already established fields of study by providing illustrative cases of national particularity. For example, for

research on cultural nationalism in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (chapter two of the thesis) or the formation of national disciplines and academic institutions in the interwar period, related to state nationalism (chapter three); similarly, for the generally less researched areas of academic endeavour of the post World War II exile scholars or construction of the disciplinary identity in new Soviet republics (chapter four). The different angles from which my case studies are conducted provide material for institutional, social, political, or discursive investigations. Portraits of *homo academicus latviensis*, an Eastern-European relative of Pierre Bourdieu's *homo academicus gallicus*, may as well illustrate the intellectual history of a particular period and region. At the end of the day, my study following the subject matter shared by different disciplines might challenge the general mode of writing the disciplinary histories from perspectives of the same disciplines, thus being restricted by the same determinations which historically constituted the boundaries of the fields of knowledge. To achieve this, I compare comparative mythologists from different backgrounds and led by different agendas, point out the shared folkloristics and history of religions resources, and invoke the context of global trends and meta-theories.

One may ask, as I did myself, what is the rationale of writing Latvian disciplinary history in an Estonian university? It turned out to have the unique benefit of uniting the insider and outsider perspectives on the subject matter. As an outsider, apart from receiving appropriate training and guidance for the task, I may more clearly objectify the field of analysis, relatively excluding my position from the power play that shapes the rules of the game of truth in the institutions of higher education in Latvia. 240 kilometres² seems a small distance geographically, but it provides enough critical distance for research into still-living history. At the same time, as an insider, a native speaker and employee of the Archives of Latvian Folklore, the central institution of the field in Latvia, I am able to explore the niceties that may pass unnoticed for 'a total outsider', receive valuable consultations and support from my colleagues, as well as utilise my knowledge in other areas of Latvian culture and history, accumulated during more than a decade of study and research. At the same time, my belonging to the Latvian scholarly community demands recognition of my double agenda and leaves reflexivity as the only way to legitimise my position within the contemporary arena of academic knowledge production. Positioning within the current epistemic situation differentiates this research from works written by Latvian exile scholars, who were in a formally similar situation in the years after World War II. Symbolically, closer parallels might be drawn with the studies in Tartu of Juris Alunāns and Anna Bērzkalne. Alunāns was the first Latvian writing on mythological subjects in the mid nineteenth century, but Bērzkalne was the first Latvian folklorist to acquire a doctoral degree in Estonian and comparative folkloristics, in 1942. Positioned in the international

² The distance from the hometown of the University of Tartu to Riga, the capital of Latvia.

arena, my thesis still is intended to contribute to Latvian scholarship – demonstrating the historical roots discussed above and thus establishing the grounds for more self-aware, efficient scholarly practices in the future. Such disciplinary history is especially necessary regarding the interwar and Soviet periods; this is the relatively recent past, which had not been properly revised, categorised and analysed. Similarly, the history of research into Latvian mythology has been only partially written in other studies – from narrow disciplinary context or restricted by aims of researching particular mythological motifs or structures. These previous, narrower historiographies are a valuable source for my research, at the same time they also constitute part of the object I am researching and are, from such a perspective, treated as historical evidences.

Creation of the context: methodological considerations

Stemming from the textual nature and above-described genealogical definition of the subject matter of my research, its method in a nutshell could be summarised as a kind of discursive analysis. Centred on the ‘Latvian mythographies’, it is a back and forth reading of widening circles of texts constituting the contexts of those primary texts, contextualising the latter within circumstances of their production and foregrounding the intertextual connections that link them. The primary corpus of texts consists of monographs, introductions to folklore collections, journal and newspaper articles, and encyclopaedia entries concerning Latvian mythology. The secondary or contextual corpus consists of memoir literature, biographies and autobiographies, archival materials, related historiographies, popular and educational articles, and other texts concerning the primary texts, their authors, or institutional settings within which these texts were produced. The findings of such reading are contextualised within the framework of general socio-political and scholarly histories.

The current presentation of the results of my research is subordinated to its aims: to demonstrate how a particular object of study is constructed, how it gains or loses its scientific legitimacy, how its variations are related to the theoretical, social, institutional, and political positions of its creators during different periods of time and within various traditions of research. By relating the space of works or discourses taken as differential stances, and the space of the positions held by those who produce them, the methodology of this thesis suggests a tendency towards the sociology of knowledge production conducted from constructionist positions. However, the more precise umbrella term for integrating theories, life histories, institutional histories, and political histories into a complete whole, would be reflexive cultural critique. As such it takes the constructionist critical position towards the nature of scholarly objects (cf. REP: 1778), respects concerns towards representation and textuality shared by range of theories emerging in late twentieth century cultural studies, ethnology and anthropology, and highlights reflexivity as one of the central terms in understanding scholarly productions. The notion of reflexivity, various theories con-

cerning and exploiting it as well as its implications for the current study are analysed in the second half of the first chapter of the thesis. Briefly, reflexivity designates a bidirectional relationship between cause and effect. It is a recognised property of language as well as financial markets, sociological research and philosophical thinking. In my study, reflexivity first of all refers to the relationship between knowledge and power: between scholarly projects and the agendas from which they were defined. As a result, the basic structure of the work involves moving from general context to author biographies, from analysis of their involvement in studies of myth to particular descriptions of mythological space, and then back again to general context, showing the mutual influences between these levels.

Structure and content

My starting point is the connection of (a) intellectual history that gave birth to studies of mythology and (b) theory that provides tools and grants legitimisation of such history. As will be argued further, early studies of other mythologies provided models that later served for the studies of Latvian mythology; therefore it is the necessary context for the understanding of the seemingly distant subject matter: regarding both theoretical models and modes of political instrumentalisation of such studies. Similarly, the methods of analysis applied in the course of this thesis are informed by seminal works relating to studies of the historical establishment of the discipline. Therefore, the first chapter of the thesis contains, firstly, investigation of the general history of studies of mythology, and folklore as its main source, secondly, analysis of the modality of power and knowledge circulation specific to the field, in this case, focusing upon nationalism as the main ideology behind it, and, thirdly, description of the theoretical framework of the thesis, from the philosophical ideas and theoretical developments behind it to the formulation of reflexive disciplinary history. A historical overview highlights the influential heritage of Johann Gottfried von Herder and the Grimm brothers, people who have played the central roles in the establishment of folkloristics and comparative mythology, shaping the discourse on the temporal and class Other with scholarly authority, bounding language, vernacular culture, and the idea of national spirit in the politically charged whole, which further led to the emergence of both popular interest in the subject matter and diverse directions of scholarly investigation. Analysis of their works, pointing out the relationship between scholarly endeavours and political ideologies, especially nationalism as it is characterised in one of the sub-chapters, is to a large extent informed by postmodern and post-structural philosophy. As this also forms the background of my theoretical approach, the central ideas of Foucault and Lyotard as the most influential representatives of this school of thought are summarised; as such, they help to understand more specific developments of the human and social sciences that led the discipline to the so-called crisis of representation in the 1980s. The crisis, both calling for the

revision of the previous scholarship and the finding of a new approach to the subjects of anthropology, folkloristics and kindred disciplines, is examined in a separate sub-chapter, helping to characterise the theoretical environment from which the reflexive approach emerged. As the latter constitutes the methodology of this thesis, the notion of reflexivity, understanding of social construction of the object of study, and several techniques of analysis constitute a corresponding section. Finally, I will conclude the chapter by conceptualising the method and particular consecutive steps of analysis upon which other parts of the thesis are built.

The second chapter sets temporal, national, institutional, and discursive borders of the subject matter as well as highlighting its internal dynamics and, as a summary, provides the periodisation of scholarly research into Latvian mythology from the rise of romantic nationalism to the re-establishment of independence in the 1990s. First of all, the chapter contains chronological and analytical description of the sources used in the reconstructions of Latvian mythology: historical records, folklore materials, and linguistic data, mapping their availability within different periods of scholarly interest and briefly characterising the nature of sources: principles of collection and edition, time of publication, and problems connected to their nature. Concerning linguistic data, two case studies are provided to illustrate the role of comparative linguistics and its history in the research of the subject matter. Further analysis deals with the establishment and dynamics of scholarly research into Latvian mythology: relating its origins to cultural nationalism in the nineteenth century, drawing borders between the lay and expert versions of the same subject matter, describing early developments of scholarly research, and then proceeding to process the institutionalisation and initiatives related to it. The nationalistic nature of the research is juxtaposed to international relationships established by individual actors within the field and relating it to general intellectual history of the time period observed. After drawing the borders of the research area, scholarly activities are analysed according to modes of internal dynamics and general political/historical context; as a result distinguishing several discursive clusters, characterised by mutual differences and internal coherence. Specifically, these are (1) the conceptualisation of mythology in the Soviet Socialistic Republic of Latvia, (2) works written at the same time by scholars belonging to the Latvian exile community, (3) Latvian mythology as a part of Baltic mythology, (4) its place and modality within the Moscow-Tartu school of semiotics, (5) merger and revision of all other research traditions during the decline and fall of the Soviet Union, forming the contemporary situation. The conclusion of the chapter summarises these developments and provides periodisation of the research into Latvian mythology according to the major factors and historical contexts that have influenced the scholarship.

The third chapter concerns analysis of the most fruitful time in research into Latvian mythology: the interwar period, roughly from 1918 (establishment of the Republic of Latvia) to 1944 (the second Soviet occupation). Former

developments important for the scholarship of this time, which are not characterised in the second chapter, are here integrated into the analysis of scholarly biographies and relevant works. First of all, twofold mapping is performed, characterising the main approaches to mythology and key personalities related to them, unfolding the diversity of studies, the nature of dialogues between various researchers, and the nature of criticism regarding both previous studies and contemporary versions. From the sociological approach to phenomenology of religion, theoretical standings as well as their embeddedness in life histories and careers of scholars representing them are described and contextualised within general disciplinary and institutional developments. After this overview, the political dimension of knowledge production as it relates to two influential scholars – Kārlis Straubergs and Arveds Švābe – is analysed in detail, providing more precise biographical and historical context that enlightens their theoretical standing and particular form the interest in mythology took in their works. Similarly, two case studies of the conceptualisation of mythological space follow, showing the models generated by two different understandings of mythology, based on different methodology and sources. A special conclusion to this chapter analyses the influence of the understanding of folklore genres as theoretical highlight of this time, demonstrating how meta-theory regarding source material influences succeeding research in a relatively self-contained field of knowledge. At the end, I propose several conclusions regarding the regime of truth and dynamics of theories in the interwar period.

The fourth chapter concerns disciplinary history (more precisely, histories) after World War II, most notably characterised by the emergence of parallel, self-contained research traditions, each differently related to prior developments. Thus, the first section deals with the research into Latvian mythology by Latvian exile scholars, more closely examining continuities and discontinuities in the mythology-related writings of Kārlis Straubergs and characterising the most comprehensive and voluminous study of ancient Latvian religion by Haralds Biezais. Again, scholarly production is contextualised with the life histories of both scholars and the institutional settings where it took place, proposing a hypothesis of particular academic and psychological strategies, characteristic to exile circumstances. Similarly, a closer look at transformations of continued research as well as discontinuities and dialogue with the past is taken regarding the versions of mythological space by both authors, notably differing in their approaches and aims. The section on Soviet Latvian mythology examines the construction of new disciplinary identity, taking into account the structural reorganisation and centralisation of academia, the role of censorship in the totalitarian state, criticism and quotation culture as means of establishment of the scholarly authority, investment in Marxism-Leninism doctrine, and, above all, the constitution of a radically different regime of truth, characterising the circulation of knowledge and power in this setting. With this chapter so far concerning mainly the first post-war decades of national exile and

Soviet scholarship, I will further examine general theoretical context of comparative Indo-European mythology and research of Baltic mythology as its branch in the second half of the twentieth century. Here, in addition, the relationships of comparative linguistics and comparative mythology are questioned, at the same time providing insight into the main developments of the discipline in a corresponding period of time. A special case study concerns the editorial practices of two publications on Baltic mythology, created from the perspective of archaeology and related to recent developments in gender studies and feminist ideology. Finally, the last section of the fourth chapter contains the analysis of conceptualization of the Latvian mythology within works by scholars belonging to Moscow-Tartu school of semiotics. While general agenda of the School is characterized also in the second chapter, here insight into works of particular scholars shows the relationship of the subject matter to reconstruction of Indo-European proto-myth as well as unique model of categorising Baltic, including Latvian, mythology in seven layers. In conclusion of the chapter I will map the parallel research trajectories of the post-war period, generalising the relationship between political environment, mode of knowledge production and content of work produced.

I will summarise findings and conclusions of all chapters within the general conclusion of the thesis, providing a set of the most important influences that had shaped the research into Latvian mythology in the twentieth century, in addition featuring a summarising comparison of disciplinary dynamics in Latvia and Estonia. Such comparison is chosen to highlight the similarities in construction of national and academic identities in both countries. Here comparative historical analyses allows the juxtaposition of knowledge produced and the context of production, because the former has been related mostly to linguistic and ethno-genetic discourse uniting Latvia and Lithuania, while the latter illustrates the importance of the common history of Latvia and Estonia over several centuries – an important influence shaping the disciplinary history, but unreachable through reading only works on Latvian mythology. The conclusion is followed by the bibliography and appendices, containing materials referred to in the body text of the work.

Creation of the text

Informed by postmodern disbelief in generalising masternarratives, I am aware of the constructed nature of scholarly authority in my own text, thus admitting the impossibility of total the contextualisation of the subject matter that would provide the absolute truth regarding history of research into Latvian mythology. Quite to the contrary, I have been working with all respect to concept of ‘partial truth’ as it was developed by James Clifford in the mid 1980s within the discourse of anthropology. Still, partial but more focussed insights into various dimensions of the academic practices of various periods of time might provide the material necessary to draw general conclusions on disciplinary history

without doing violence to truth by selecting and shaping the facts of the past to fit the linear and complete form of an academic narrative. Here the seemingly fragmentary structure of the thesis serves to separate and highlight conclusions, drawn from each particular fragment. Naturally, focus on this or another context, researcher, or political ideology is also related to my personal strengths in scholarship. Philosophical dimensions are definitely related to my previous studies of philosophy at the University of Latvia; emphasis on the context of folkloristics in research into Latvian mythology reflects my current disciplinary alignment with the field, studying at University of Tartu and working at the Archives of Latvian Folklore, participating in a research project concerning the history of Latvian folkloristics in the interwar period. Similarly, involvement in research projects related to cultural nationalism and the institutionalisation process of cultural initiatives allows me to describe these contexts of knowledge production in more detail. Every historiography is an autobiography.

CHAPTER I:

History, postmodernism, and reflexivity in relation to folklore and myth

This chapter concerns the outlines of European intellectual and political history which was the setting for punishable idolatry and superstitions becoming mythology, and the vernacular culture of the lower classes becoming gems of true poetry and treasures of a nation – in a nutshell it characterises the establishment of the scholarly disciplines researching mythology. Starting with the definition of the epistemic-temporal units of my research, I will highlight some crucial turns in the discursive formation of modernity, the latter serving as the most general knowledge production context. Special sections concern the contributions of Herder and the Grimm brothers as central figures in the development of national romanticism, folkloristics, and research on mythology: Herder placed folk materials at the core of emergent European politics of culture, while the Grimms and their associates sought to recover a Germanic past that could be used in building a united Germany, within their scholarly practices permanently interlinking the categories of particular social groups, land, language, history and national spirit. The Grimms' strategies of positioning and creating their research objects, and the rhetoric they used in legitimating the latter in some form have been evident in anthropology, folklore, and linguistics to the present. Further, the history and present state of the field are linked introducing several postmodernist and post-structuralist ideas, especially as developed by Lyotard and Foucault. This is the very setting which allows and shapes analysis of disciplinary history as it is presented at the beginning of this chapter; this is also the philosophical background of the changes that took place in the human and social sciences in the second half of the twentieth century, culminating in the so-called crisis of representation. Therefore, the later section concerns the characteristics and conditions of this crisis, especially in fields related to the subject matter of this thesis. After this historical outline, I will move to the reflexive approach towards ethnography and history, principally outlined as an answer to crisis of representation. After examining the principle of reflexivity, the milestones of further reflexive analysis are set by mapping the most important context of power and knowledge circulation for the discipline – the birth of nation-states and reflexive relationship between the nationally oriented culture politics and mythology-related disciplines of humanities. Finally, the conclusion draws on insights of each section to summarise the research methodology for following chapters of the thesis.

I. Dialectics of modernity and folkloristics

I.1. Construction of the research object

The history of the scholarly research of Latvian mythology reaches back only about a century. Still, there are grounds to claim that up to the most recent developments, Latvian mythology has been influenced by intellectual movements, political ideas and philosophical trends, which, geographically, temporarily, and disciplinarily had occurred at a distance from the subject matter of this thesis. First of all, these are conditions and ideas that gave birth to the disciplines of folkloristics and the comparative research of mythology. And, as over and over proved by the scholars whose works are analysed below in the thesis, Latvian folklore has been the main source for the research of Latvian mythology; therefore, the conditions that shape the conceptualisation, collection, and interpretation of folklore materials are equally important for research on mythology. Consequently, this raises the question of the conceptualisation of research that would take into account equally the genesis and subsequent genealogy of the discipline with its specific choices, interruptions, discontinuities and transformations. On the meta-level, it is a question of separating the particular field for more rigid analysis. As a whole this field the scholarly research into Latvian mythology; preliminary analysis already showed the emergence of certain clusters within the field, characterised by resemblances, cross-references on various levels and patterns of research. At the same time, the field in general appeared to be too heterogeneous for a coherent analysis. In sum, there is a problem of balance between mapping the field temporally in its historical succession, and theoretically, discovering the intertextual dimension and its determinants. A similar problem has also been faced by the philosophy of science, and I find that a solution developed within this discipline selectively might also be applicable to my research. In this regard, I have chosen to use Larry Laudan's term 'traditions of research' to designate different strands within the research on Latvian mythology. Laudan's definition is as follows: "a research tradition is a set of general assumptions about the entities and processes in a domain of study, and about the appropriate methods to be used for investigating the problems and constructing the theories in that domain" (Laudan 1989: 374). As such, 'research tradition' is an answer to two main theories of scientific change, represented by Thomas Kuhn with his highly influential notion of 'scientific paradigm', and by Imre Lakatos with 'research programmes', the latter itself being a revision of Kuhn's paradigm (Laudan 1989: 372; REP: 4458). Kuhn pointed out the problematic status of the concept of paradigm with its two – general and particular – meanings (Kuhn 1996: 175). For my research, the design of Kuhn's concept also seems too dependent on specific modes of knowledge transfer – the articulation of 'normal science' in textbooks (ibid.: 34, 137), the experimental mode of knowledge accumulation (ibid.: 61), and, problematic to all so-called human sciences, the relation to natural phenomena (ibid.: 89, 109, 135). Equally problematic are this concept's

relation to another rather uncertain concept – ‘the scientific community’ (ibid.: 176) and the incompatible nature of paradigms (ibid.: 94), pointed out also by other scholars as one of the main flaws of Kuhn’s theory (e.g. Laudan 1989: 370; REP: 4425). Several of these problems as well as the concept’s general dependence on research into “empirical and logical content” (Laudan 1989: 372) are also shared by Lakatos’ ‘research programmes’, both projects rather ignoring the influence of external and non-structural factors upon the knowledge production that has become a self-evident procedure in contemporary scholarship. How far it concerns the relationship between scientific progress and rationality as main factors explaining the changes in scholarship and thus allowing to map the ruptures and revolutions of thought, dividing larger periods of ‘normal science’, I tend to adopt the concept of research traditions, for it to offer “a healthy middle ground between (on the one side) the insistence of Kuhn and the inductivists that the pursuit of alternatives to the dominant paradigm is *never rational* (except in times of crisis) and the anarchistic (‘anything goes’) claim of Feyerabend and Lakatos that the pursuit of any research tradition – no matter how regressive it is – *can always be rational*” (Laudan 1989: 379). In a way the same problem – larger-than-theories epistemic-temporal units of analysis in knowledge production – form a totally different point of view and on a different level was approached in early works by Michel Foucault. The most comprehensive of his terms – episteme³ – designates a kind of linguistic system, characteristic to certain periods of thought (REP: 2886). Such are, for example, classical episteme (see Foucault 1994: 309) or modern episteme (ibid.: 385), the latter still determining the knowledge production mode in the Western world today. Examining this notion lies beyond the scope of my treatise, and the adaptation of reflexive theory involves certain doubts of such a possibility – accepting Foucaultian division means to work ‘from inside’ the modern episteme, while theoretically it was constructed against a background of classical episteme and is therefore otherwise self-referring; however, there are particular relationships between my object of research and modernity that will be analysed below, to some extent as an integral part of this modern episteme. Too broad is also another concept developed by Foucault in the form of ‘discursive formations’. The discursive

³ “By episteme, we mean, in fact, the total set of relations that unite, at a given period, the discursive practices that give rise to epistemological figures, sciences, and possibly formalized systems; the way in which, in each of these discursive formations, the transitions to epistemologization, scientificity, and formalization are situated and operate; the distribution of these thresholds, which may coincide, be subordinated to one another, or be separated by shifts in time; the lateral relations that may exist between epistemological figures or sciences in so far as they belong to neighbouring, but distinct, discursive practices. The episteme is not a form of knowledge (*connaissance*) or type of rationality which, crossing the boundaries of the most varied sciences, manifests the sovereign unity of a subject, a spirit, or a period; it is the totality of relations that can be discovered, for a given period, between the sciences when one analyses them at the level of discursive regularities.” (Foucault 2002: 211).

formation of Latvian mythology, even if one investigates it strictly within the modern episteme, would contain multiple practices and discourses far beyond the scholarly research of the subject matter. Some of them – such as clerical/judicial actions against the remains of heathen sacrifice customs in the mid-nineteenth century or the role of the mythology-related imaginary in formation of national fine arts – still require fundamental research; others, characterised by more explicit intertextual links with scholarly discourse, for example reconstructions of the ancient pantheon in poetry and national epic, are sketched in the second chapter of the thesis (p. 40–46)⁴. Foucault himself also states that “Discursive formations can be identified, therefore, neither as sciences, nor as scarcely scientific disciplines, nor as distant prefigurations of the sciences to come, nor as forms that exclude any scientificity from the outset” (Foucault 2002: 199–200). The oeuvre of a certain author as well as the body of work relating to certain theories, form part of corresponding discursive formation; however, following an author or theory is not enough to characterise the specifics of the given formation. Therefore, informed by works of Foucault and many who have been influenced by him in the research of knowledge production, I intend to use the term ‘research tradition’ to mark clusters within disciplinary history, while also taking into account relations between disciplinary and non-disciplinary domains within multiple registers of discursive formation to which the tradition belongs, also following Foucault in rejection of a uniform model of temporalisation (Cf. Flynn 2005: 37). In addition to ‘research traditions’ I am using term ‘research trajectories’ to emphasise the simultaneous existence of several teleologies for one and the same discipline.

Although somewhat inevitable, the application of terms ‘(research) tradition’ and ‘modern (episteme)’ might appear highly confusing if not contradictory within the a treatise on mythology scholarship – the former term, besides its widespread everyday usage, is one of the core concepts of the discipline, the latter is often used juxtaposing it to the phenomena it researches and, sometimes, also the very practice of research. As such, these relationships must be examined more closely to separate the research traditions from the research of traditions, and modernity as an epistemological constituent from modernity as discursive temporal marker. One of the most concise studies of these themes is Pertti Anttonen’s *Tradition through modernity: Postmodernism and the Nation-State in Folklore Scholarship* (2005). The author’s starting point, which I choose to follow, is the concept of tradition. Here tradition “is inseparable from the idea and experience of modernity, both as its discursively constructed opposition and as a rather modern metaphor for cultural continuity and historical patterning” (Anttonen 2005: 12). Taking this constructivist point of view, it is necessary to locate particular traditions (or myths, or folklore) as well as related disciplines, which state they research such subject matters, within the

⁴ If not indicated otherwise, numbers in brackets refers corresponding chapter and section of the current thesis.

conditions and discourses which gave birth to them, namely, modernity. Perhaps the most general definition would conceptualise modernity as a Euro-centric spatial-temporal marker characterising culture and society between the Renaissance and postmodernism; more precisely – Western European culture since the Enlightenment and French Revolution, when it was conceptualised and also implemented a new world order, followed by the long nineteenth century with industrialisation, urbanisation, the birth of political ideologies, secularisation, institutionalisation of multiple new academic disciplines, and other changes constituting the Western world as it is now. The late eighteenth century faced the rise of two somewhat juxtaposed but inseparable philosophical and cultural movements: the Enlightenment and Romanticism. The concepts of customs, traditions, folklore, and myth were to a large extent outlined within the dialectics of these two movements, often conceptualised within diverse pro-modern and anti-modern discourses, described in more detail by P. Anttonen (2005). From the pro-modern perspective, traditions, customs, and often also religion are treated as regressive superstitions, negatively valuated forces that lay in the way of a universal, rational evolution of science and technology with accompanying forms of consciousness. A diversity of pro-modern conceptualisations of the ‘ways of the past’ in this thesis is exemplified with the conceptualisation of folklore as a heritage of the (modern) nation-state’s identity (p. 79–82) and a threat to the newly constructed collective identity of a totalitarian state (p. 87–90). Traditions and forms of social organisation related to them acquire a positive evaluation from the anti-modern perspective. Since modernity is the status quo, anti-modernity rather than challenging it and offering a different model is a critique of the current state of things, often bearing strong nostalgic connotations. Again, this tendency is articulated in multiple ways: from idealising the spatial (e.g. Rousseau’s concept of the ‘noble savage’), temporal (e.g. the concept of the ‘Golden Age’, for example, also attributed to the Latvian and Estonian past by Garlieb Merkel: cf. p. 74–77), or class (e.g. in Herderian concept of *Volksgeist* and conceptualisation of rural life as a pastoral idyll from an urban perspective) Others⁵ to the emergence of neo-pagan and other revivalist movements, as well as manifesting in state propaganda materials (e.g. p. 129). The critique of changes created or represented by industrialisation, technologisation, bureaucratisation,

⁵ The concept of ‘Other’ established its importance within the arena of philosophy and critical thinking as late as the second half of the twentieth century; however, different kinds of ‘Other’ had already been the subject of thought a long time before. For example, “In the eighteenth century the concern with the Other was also a concern with the progressive goals of civilizing and educating. In the search for suitable governmental policy, much research needed to be accomplished, and such pragmatically oriented effort already had established itself before the revolutionary period” (Bendix 1997: 34; cf. Foucault 1978). Important for the research on cultural history is the recognition that scholars construct the Other they purport to describe. Their works also simultaneously construct the image of themselves and their readers (cf. Briggs 1993: 387).

commercialisation, different forms of alienation, etc., doubles in a narrative ethos of loss and decadence, claiming the disappearance of communality, sacredness, and spirituality (Anttonen 2005: 41). Among the central terms uniting discursive realms of scholarly research and critique of modernity has always been ‘authenticity’, attributed to pre- or anti-modern phenomena on the one hand, and involved in the establishment of scholarly authority as an evaluating expertise on the other hand (cf. Bendix 1997). Thus both value-laden discourses – pro-modern and anti-modern – contribute to conceptualisation of the research field shared by such disciplines as philology, folkloristics, history, and anthropology. Instrumentalised in political currents of the nineteenth century, these disciplines were most often (and to a large extent still are) related to a particular ideology: nationalism. And, as Anttonen states, “Nationalism is a modern ideology, but nationalists are often traditionalists. Thus, the promodernist and antimodernist perspectives on modernity are in a dialectical rather than in a categorically oppositional relationship to one another” (Anttonen 2005: 42–43). Within the discourse of nationalism, tradition (language, myth, folklore) as bearer of identity has often been ‘naturalised’, i.e. regarded as a natural phenomena instead of a socially and historically constructed reality. Naturalisation can occur at a rhetorical level, manifesting in unquestioned biological metaphors of an individual’s or nation’s ‘roots’ or ‘genes’; furthermore it can be developed into determinist scientific discourse, characterising nations or races. Summarising, modernity as a temporally analytical category gave birth to its opposite – tradition; consequently, modern conceptual framework and methodology are formed to research pre-modern phenomena.

I.2. Herder and the location of the Other

Through a convergence of romantic nationalism and scientific perspectives in the second half of the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth century a set of rhetorical, analytical, and political practices was developed for creating, representing, and interpreting the discourses of marginalised groups along with evocation of the national idea. As wrote the theologian Johann Gottfried von Herder (1774–1803), a personality equally important for the birth of folklore studies⁶ and nationalism (cf. Leerseen 2006, Bendix 1997, Nisbet 1999), national language, culture and character are as natural as fauna:

These human beings then – it is alleged – invented for themselves such a regional and national language of their own as had a whole construction that was made only for this region. On this account, the little Lapp, with his language and

⁶ Herder’s *Volkslieder nebst untermischten andern Stücken* (1778–79) also featured the first publication of Latvian folksongs. For Herder folksongs were anthropological and historical documents in which a nation records its own natural history (cf. Nisbet 1999).

his thin beard, with his skills and his spirit, is as much a human animal original to Lapland as his reindeer [is an animal original to Lapland]; and the Negro, with his skin, with his ink-bubble blackness, with his lips, and hair, and turkey language, and stupidity, and laziness, is a natural brother of the apes of the same clime. One should – it is alleged – as little dream up similarity between the languages of the earth as between the [physical] formations of the [different] races of human beings

(Herder 2002 [1772]: 150).

Stereotypes of his time, with no rude intentions invoked here by Herder, also demonstrate the above mentioned role of Other as pure, precise example illustrating the natural order of things: the differences as well as similarities of nations in their relation to natural environment. These similarities and differences were in a way treated as essences, in almost timeless terms (cf. Leerssen 2006: 123). Herder's belief in the individuality and uniqueness of every nation thus establishes the basis of cultural relativism. Notwithstanding this, the Herderian concept of folk (*das Volk*), inspiring the advance of literary and scholarly romanticism as well as later acquiring rather dark connotations in the policy outlined by forerunners of the national socialism, involves not only the natural cum geographical, but also the class dimension. Post-medieval European colonial expansion as well as the involvement of Herder's fellow intellectuals in the discovery of Sanskrit and incredibly rich culture of (ancient) India had created the image of a radically exotic Other⁷. Herder brought this idea closer to home: discovering or rather constructing the locus of authentic, pure, and natural spiritual culture in the rural way of life in one's own region, and describing it in almost ecstatic, emotionally saturated language. "Native songs and poetry were an answer to his search, showing humans' blissful use of their reflexive capability – blissful in that the sentient aspects of being and thinking were not at the corroded stage of Herder's contemporaries" (Bendix 1997: 37). Important to understanding Herder's conception of the folk is the fact that it was not a simply lower class of society, less influenced by modern culture, except the rural lower class, because "*Volk* does not mean the rabble in the alleys; that group never sings or rhymes, it only screams and truncates" (Herder 1807 [1774], quoted from Bendix 1997: 40). This illustrates one more, the cleansing dimension of the folklore project, presuming an ideal folk culture opposed not only to high culture but also to the everyday lore of the rising urban proletariat. Therefore, the role of the intellectual elite was not only to salvage the manifestations of folk spirit but also to make the distinction between pure and contaminated, true and false, authentic and inauthentic materials; briefly, there is a need for a specialist who would restore the original beauty of folklore materials. Championed by Herder, "the powerful union of the rhetorics of authenticity, nationalism, and nature with the rhetoric of science was crucial

⁷ On early colonial policy and imagination see Greenblatt 2007; on the discourse of Orientalism and its role in shaping of European identity: Said 2003.

in that this hybrid discursive complex reserves, to scholars, textual authority over language, folklore, and the culture of Others” (Briggs 1993: 404). Starting from the exchange of ideas in short-living literati journals, personal correspondences between the members of vast network of European intellectuals, and the collection and publishing practices of folklore materials a methodology and corresponding theories of folklore genres, age, authenticity etc. were crystallised many decades ahead of the institutionalisation of the discipline.

1.3. The Grimm brothers and the setting of scholarly standards

In this respect, the key figures are German scholars, brothers Jacob Grimm (1785–1863) and Wilhelm Grimm (1786–1859). The brothers “clearly stood on Herder’s shoulders, embracing his nationalist project and advancing his lead in providing it with linguistic and textual base” (Briggs and Bauman 2003: 197); within the debates on modernity they “pioneered a cosmopolitan practice that assimilated provincialism and nationalism as its discursive foundation” (ibid.: 198). Treated variously as disciplinary heroes or discredited patriarchal figures, the Grimm brothers stand at the cradle of folkloristics and research on mythology. Like most intellectuals of their time, the brothers’ scholarly interests combined various subjects from legal studies and cartography of Germanic languages to publication of folklore collections and ancient manuscripts. The point of departure for the Grimms’ both political and scholarly endeavours was linking the language and the nation, the linguistic and the ethnic category. This idea was related to recent developments in the research on languages. Actually, “the formulation of ‘Grimm’s Laws’ around 1820 (systematizing consonant shifts marking the branching between and within language families) was a triumph of the comparative-historical method, raised linguistics to the status of a prestigious science and made [Jacob] Grimm’s name as one of the Europe’s foremost scholars” (Leerssen 2006: 260). The Grimms’ most popular work for the general public, *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (*Children- and House-tales*, 1812; hereafter referred to as *KHM*), is a collection of fairytales still enjoying popularity and multiple new editions in various languages. While other collections of tales were already published at this time, the preface and notes of *KHM* were a complete novelty in the publication of “simple folktales” (Bendix 1997: 50). “The Grimms created a model of textual stability and fidelity, sometimes expressed as *Echtheit* or authenticity, in vernacular transmission” (Briggs and Bauman 2003: 207). This textual ideology called for the collection and publication of texts as pure and unchanged as possible, with accuracy preserving the initial tale and adding no details. At the same time, the Grimms applied multiple metadiscursive practices that transformed the tales in a host of ways, summarised by Briggs and Bauman (2003: 208–211): they introduced direct speech, identified characters with personal names⁸, added proverbs to text

⁸ For example, there were no names for Hansel or Gretel in original *KHM* manuscripts.

both helping to motivate characters and actions as well as increasing their aura of traditionality and authenticity, constructed many tales from fragments or from several shorter narratives, created symmetrical repetitions of actions and episodes, and crafted clear social types⁹ that exemplified moral conduct (cf. Briggs 1993). Thus, the editorial practices of early collectors and publishers were intended to restore texts to their imagined, ideal traditional form¹⁰ with all their aesthetic appeal and claims of ancestry, etc.¹¹ In this way the shaping of the literature of the nursery contributed to the emergence of the bourgeois family and its child-rearing practices (Briggs 1993: 393). The brothers' interests later took different paths concerning particular genres, Jacob Grimm taking up the challenge to recover and reconstruct German (Teutonic) mythology, restoring it from the remains dwelling in the language as well as analysing various folklore genre¹² to classification, to which both brothers had contributed. The language, a national language, was perhaps the first composite social-natural¹³ phenomena defined as such by scholarship of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and thus being a firm ground for further investigations in related fields. Jacob Grimm, investing enormous labour in restoring Old High German and Middle High German, in the preface of the second edition of *Deutsche Mythologie* (1844) legitimates his new subject of research on these very grounds: "One may fairly say, that to deny the reality of this mythology is as much as to impugn the high antiquity and the continuity of our language: to every nation a belief in gods was as necessary as language" (Grimm 1883 [1844]: vi). The language as an object of research led to methods of research and

The comparative-historical method turned Grimm-style philology into the nineteenth century's cutting-edge discipline. Grimm was to apply the method to his research of literary imagination, comparing mythologies, saga material and themes like the animal fable. Philology, in short, became something that embraced linguistics, literary history and cultural anthropology

(Leerssen 2006: 123).

⁹ For example, the mother of Snow White (*KHM* 53) from the first edition (Brüder Grimm 1812) is replaced by a stepmother in the second edition (Brüder Grimm 1819).

¹⁰ Not in terms of surface, but by the degree to which oral texts and their written representations express the 'spirit', 'force', 'naïveté', 'freedom', 'innocence' and the like presumably underlying the creation of oral texts (cf. Briggs 1993: 400).

¹¹ Regarding similar practices in fundamental editions of Latvian folklore materials see p. 59–63 of this dissertation.

¹² "In addition to the fairy-tale and folk-tale, which to this day supply healthy nourishment to youth and the common people, and which they will not give up, whatever other pabulum you may place before them, we must take account of Rites and Customs, which, having sprung out of antiquity and continued ever since, may yield any amount of revelations concerning it" (Grimm 1883 [1844]: xvi).

¹³ Cf. shift from the God-created to human language in Herder's "On origins of language" (1772).

Comparative linguistics were leading the way to studies of mythology by providing a method; as it is explained with Jacob Grimm's preferred water metaphor: "Now if such inferences as to what is non-extant are valid in language, if its present condition carries us far back to an older and oldest; a like proceeding must be justifiable in mythology too, and from its dry watercourses we may guess the copious spring, from its stagnant swamps the ancient river" (Grimm 1883 [1844]: vi). While Herder was concerned with the influences of modern culture on authentic folk culture, thus locating it away from the contaminated quarters of the working people in urban settlements, Jacob Grimm, taking into account his comparative studies of language and methodology of restoration the original forms developed during the edition of *KHM*, isolated both language and epos in their pure, i.e. more valuable, authentic form: "Every nation seems instigated by nature to isolate itself, to keep itself untouched by foreign ingredients. Its language, its epos feel happy in the home circle alone; only so long as it rolls between its own banks does the stream retain its colour pure" (Grimm 1883 [1844]: xxiv). As a result, multiple reconstructive studies of mythology, including Latvian mythology, show purging of any possible foreign elements, seeking the historically purest form, the mythology shared by predecessors of one particular nation only. Not only the scholarly, but also an aesthetic and emotional justification of the research object was necessary, in a way making it more appealing for the imagined audience: "Crude, unkempt it cannot but appear, yet the crude has its simplicity, and the rough its sincerity. In our heathen mythology certain ideas stand out strong and clear, of which the human heart especially has need, by which it is sustained and cheered" (Grimm 1883 [1844]: xlvii). At least it appears so judging from this and other¹⁴ statements by Jacob Grimm. In the long run, the rationale of such justification also contributes to the establishment of national research institutions.

I.4. Archival politics and the loss of identity

As the majority of reconstructions of Latvian mythology are based on folklore materials, they are to some extent influenced and restricted by practices of folklore collection, the latter being determined by the agendas of collectors. Folklore as culture of the Other and myth as the religion of the Other are juxtaposed to our, modern, world, serving as metaphors for that which is solid,

¹⁴ For example: "Polytheism is tolerant and friendly; he to whom all he looks at is either heaven or hell, God or devil, will both extravagantly love and heartily hate. But here again let me repeat, that to the heathen Germans the good outweighed the bad, and courage faintheartedness: at death they laughed" (Grimm 1883 [1844]: lii). Interestingly, due to German national socialist propaganda institutions' appeal of German mythology and war gods, the research and particular interpretations of German mythology has been an issue of scholarly suspicions also at the second half of the twentieth century (see Lincoln 1999).

fixed, unchanging, and thus providing psychological shelter from the ephemeral world. At the same time, against the background of overwhelmingly progressing (or, at least, changing) modernity, studies of folkloristics had shaped their object of study as something belonging to vanishing, pre-modern, pre-literate societies which seemingly lack all aspects of internal social organisation (see Anttonen 2005). With the advancement of the modern world, these societies are disappearing, echoing into the institutionalised nostalgic paradigm of loss: “Loss of culture, loss of tradition, loss of identity, loss of traditional values, loss of morality, and loss of exceptionally valued folklore genres” (Anttonen 2005:48). Such, for example, was the agenda behind establishment of the Archives of Latvian Folklore, calling for the collection of treasures very soon to be lost (p. 79–82). Folklore, collected at the moment of now, is disappearing; from the contemporary scholarly standpoint the only way to capture the pre-modern worldview is to reconstruct it from remains. Regarding ethnography in the broader sense, James Clifford argues that its disappearing object is, in significant degree, a rhetoric construction legitimating this representational practice (Clifford 1986b: 112). Recovery of lost knowledge as a method of research of mythology was established by the Grimm brothers and their theory of survival. As stated Jacob Grimm on the Christianisation of heathens:

The heathen gods even, though represented as feeble in comparison with the true God, were not always pictured as powerless in themselves; they were perverted into hostile malignant powers, into demons, sorcerers and giants, who had to be put down, but were nevertheless credited with a certain mischievous activity and influence. Here and there a heathen tradition or a superstitious custom lived on by merely changing the names, and applying to Christ, Mary and the saints what had formerly been related and believed of idols

(Grimm: 1882 [1835]: 5).

So, the research on the mythology of the European people became the archaeology of these remains, which had survived under the mask and translation of Christian appearances. In addition, the very coinage of the term ‘folklore’ by William Thoms in 1846 was already fallowed by the definition of “a slowly but surely disappearing knowledge” (Ben-Amos 1984: 104). It must therefore be collected, archived, edited, and stored. Thus, archival institutions, publication ventures, and editorial practices play an important role in disciplinary history (p. 59–63), providing the material for analysis and reconstruction of the mythology. This way, the social practice is transformed into a textual representation, acquiring its own meaning within the general cultural policy:

The archive paradigm in folklore studies, which is stronger in some countries than in others, implies a political standpoint according to which cultural identity is best protected and argued for by depositing representations of both vibrant and receding practices in the archive and then selecting material for public

presentations, for example in the form of museum displays or books targeted at the consuming and reading public. Folklore speaks – for example the language of nationalism – through collections

(Anttonen 2005: 52).

In a way, scholarly pursuit of truth beyond the folklore materials is already caught in the illusion of authenticity created by the archival politics of selecting items valuable to be collected and represented; in this way the scholarly study of mythology manifests in the third level of representation – where the first level is a living tradition, amorphous vernacular reality, and the second is selected, categorised according to genres, stored folklore materials. Involving the power relationships, creating a collection is not a merely innocent activity: “It is an activity pertaining to the politics of culture and history and contributing to the discourses on difference and the political construction of continuities and discontinuities” (ibid.). Latvian folklore in archival materials is also haunted by collectors’ agendas on the one hand and the aesthetics of perfect taxonomy on the other hand (cf. Vilks 1944). For a long time until the invention of audio and video technologies and their application to folklore collection, the main form of representation of vernacular entities was text. These are fragments (as are video and audio materials) of a larger whole, which have been decontextualised and transformed into literary imitations of their original orality (cf. Briggs and Bauman 2003). Such textual representations are politically charged for two reasons: firstly, according to archival practice they bear territorial identifications complementary to the construction of national and regional cultures and consequently the incorporation of particular areas and populations into particular political and ideological entities. This practice, in its turn, was to a large extent formed by the Finnish school of folkloristics, the scholarly environment in which the first folklore archive was founded, and which had also informed initiatives behind the Latvian analogue (p. 79–82). Secondly, since the formation of the subject called “national literature” and its circulation within the corresponding educational systems, entextualised folklore texts are later contextualised within the linear narrative of literature studies as “first, oral literature” (cf. Meistere 2000, Leerssen 2006); that, in its turn, serves for identity construction, testifying the age of a nation’s culture, an important characteristic with which to claim the cultural and political autonomy of particular ethnic group among other nations. Folklore is becoming a territorially bounded representation of the folk, and mythology – of the most ancient (and thus must valuable in political debates) layer reconstructed from this representation. Even more than in scholarly discourse, folklore-derived mythology has been exploited for the construction of anti-modern identities in lay discourse from epic pagan-metal hymns to quasi-theological systems of neo-pagan religions in multiple countries, including Latvia (see p. 70–74). In both scholarly and lay projects, it is essential to note the discontinuity of living tradition: “That which was perceived as vanishing came to be valorized,

politically established as cultural heritage in a national arena and/or regarded as an embodiment of preferred moral properties” (Anttonen 2005: 58). So, the discourse of loss contributed to the establishment of archival institutions, which later served and still serve as the material basis of the scholarship concerning tradition, thus establishing a temporally conditioned timeless object.

2. From deconstruction to reflexivity

2.1. Framework: Postmodern analysis of knowledge and power

The mode of analysis explored in the previous section of the thesis as well as applied below to the research on Latvian mythology is particular to the self-conscious, reflexive approach of the human and social sciences topical since the last decades of the twentieth century. In addition to initiating paradigmatic shifts within various disciplines, some philosophical ideas of the era have been highly influential on the meta-level, later directly or indirectly resounding in a multitude of studies concerned with the histories of knowledge production. My study would also be impossible without the critical distance that allows observation of the modern developments of the discipline without being determined by the same epistemological conditions that constituted all previous research into Latvian mythology. The theoretical framework of approaching knowledge as a socially constructed object is anchored within postmodern (also including post-structural) philosophy (cf. Anttonen 2005, Flaherty 2002). Postmodernity is not simply a development of modernity, it is rather a movement defining and criticising (deconstructing) modernity and its various manifestations in the sciences, arts, literature, and philosophy. “One of the main tasks of postmodern thought was to retrieve the gestures and motifs that modernity has been compelled to erase in order to institute itself as an ever renewable project or method. Postmodernity appears in its own right once these projects and methods can no longer guarantee their own legitimacy” (REP: 261), previously secured by various meta-narratives. Thus, postmodern thought can be understood as a wide-ranging effort to come to terms with – and not simply denounce or repair – the failure of all philosophical attempts to secure the legitimacy of knowledge (ibid.). Post-structuralism as a particular branch of postmodern thought sought to transform human sciences through critique of structuralist presuppositions. Post-structuralists continued to accept structuralism’s elimination of the conscious subject but maintained that human existence could not be adequately understood without taking account of non-structural causal factors such as power and desire (REP: 6759). As important as structural studies in their Western or Soviet manifestations have been for the research into mythology, post-structuralism is important for the analysis of these studies and their contexts. The postmodern approach called into question the very foundations of folklore, mythology, and related studies. First of all,

these were questions of the construction of research object – what does the term ‘folk’ mean, what is its political value, how is it constructed in relation to understanding language, society, morality and other dimensions of human life (cf. Dundes 1980); similarly, what is ‘lore’, why had it been separated as a distinct category from other forms of knowledge and narratives, how are its narrative qualities defined, how and why are particular forms categorised, and how are these forms based on and intertwined with the notion of ‘folk’ (cf. Ritchie 1993: 365, Abrahams 1992: 32, Bauman 1986)? Secondly, these were questions related to all human sciences – how is scholarly authority established, how do scholarly studies contribute to politics? What legitimises particular discourses and how they are embedded in power relationships and socio-economical or symbolical hierarchies? Many of these questions will also be asked within the following pages of the thesis, in relation to this or other facets of the research on Latvian mythology, thus adding a somewhat deconstructive dimension to the study.

In the context of my research, especially influential as well as characterising the general agenda embraced by post-structural and postmodern scholarship are ideas of French philosophers Michel Foucault (1926–1984), Jean-François Lyotard (1924–1998) and Pierre Bourdieu (1930–2002). As Foucault’s and Lyotard’s works manifest two opposite poles of the postmodern approach – a scrutinised bottom-up exploration of power and truth relationships on the one hand and abstraction and categorisation of the most general discursive formations on the other hand – a short insight into their main ideas might well illustrate the basic trajectory of influential French deconstructive thought and its relation to the writing of the disciplinary history. Foucault’s works deserve special attention. Not that my intention is to adopt his methodology (if the ‘archaeology of knowledge’ could be called so), more because of his works’ immense influence on authors and approaches, which has informed my own research to a more significant extent than Foucault’s own writings. Among others, the Writing Culture movement, the Linguistic Anthropology of Charles Briggs and Richard Bauman, and the New Historicism of Stephan Greenblatt certainly must be mentioned here. Foucault’s approach also allows the maintenance of equilibrium between the history of ideas (a linear, causal account of the human sciences) and the history of science (a Kuhn-style research of paradigmatic developments). Consequently, my interest lies not in an overview or critique of Foucault’s works, but in highlighting and defining the terms and ideas which – to a large extent through other authors – have emerged as central for my thesis; for example, ‘discourse’, ‘power’, and ‘knowledge’, overlapping with Lyotard’s ‘metanarratives’ and ‘legitimation of knowledge’. Both Foucault and Lyotard attacked so-called grand narratives – globalising discourses of all kinds and with them any claim to speak for a unified and comprehensive scientific view of the world. As such it is a study of texts, in both literal and extended senses of the notion of texts; at the same time, the aim is to reveal relationships between these texts, the fabric of discourse, forming

the rules of the practices in which the genres of discourse are embodied (cf. REP: 8082).

Michel Foucault analysed historical configurations of the relations between power and knowledge production¹⁵, and mechanisms of how the so-called ‘human-sciences’ invent, construct or discover their objects of study (Foucault 1984, 2002, cf. Kuutma 2006a: 18). In addition to the factual history of particular institutions (e.g. clinic or prison), it is the reconstruction of epistemic context within which particular bodies of knowledge become intelligible and authoritative. Although Foucault’s influence within the current thesis is considered mainly at the level of analytical position, his main works investigate the emergence of particular disciplines and practices that took place simultaneously with the emergence of scholarly interest in folklore and mythology, in the same context of western thought. Regarding this context, crucial for my thesis concepts of Foucault’s studies, knowledge and power are correlated with the third term – truth (or ‘regime of truth’¹⁶). The latter, in a nutshell, is understood as a particular, contested, historically changing, reflexive disposition between the content of knowledge and power relationships, shaping the former and legitimised by, as well as legitimising, the later. The political economy of truth is characterised by several tendencies: truth is centred on the form of scientific discourse and the institutions which produce it; it is subject to constant economic and political incitement (the truth is demanded as much for economic production as for political power); it is the object of immense diffusion and consumption; it is produced and transmitted under the control, dominant if not exclusive, of a few great political and economic apparatuses; and it is the issue of a whole political debate and social confrontation of different groups (Foucault 1980: 73). In academic discourse, textual economy of truth functions through scholarly authority, constructed on both extra-textual (status, institutional affiliations, publishing context, etc.) and intra-textual (sources, rigour of method, field of references) levels. Both dimensions – political and textual – of truth and their correlations constitute the regime of truth of particular research traditions.

Consequently, outlining the power-related dynamics of knowledge production in the field of Latvian mythology, I am analysing institutional history, political and economic demands of particular forms of knowledge, consumption, contestation, and configuration of scholarly produced knowledge outside

¹⁵ These two notions are also inseparable for Lyotard: “knowledge and power are simply two sides of the same question: who decides what knowledge is, and who knows what needs to be decided?” (Lyotard 1984: 8–9). Both authors, analysing the interlinkage between science, ethics and politics, also speak about the same setting – the occidental society.

¹⁶ “In short, there is a problem of the regime, the politics of the scientific statement. At this level it’s not so much a matter of knowing what external power imposes itself on science, as of what effects of power, circulate among scientific statements, what constitutes, as it were, their internal regime of power, and how and why at certain moments that regime undergoes a global modification” (Foucault 1984: 55–56).

academia. Although the Soviet configuration of the discipline shows exemplary exception (p. 153–154), in general the connection between power and knowledge is neither only institutional use of knowledge as a means of domination, nor a direct political control of knowledge production. Truth virtually exists within the network of power relations; as such it is a social phenomenon. Crucially, power is not possessed by a dominant agent, nor located in that agent's relations to the dominated. Instead, it is distributed through complex social networks; power, in the ultimate Foucaultian sense, is internalised by all participants of social relationships. The actions of the peripheral agents in these social networks are often what establish or enforce the connections between what a dominant agent does and a subordinate agent desires (cf. Rouse 2005: 109). Any academic text, gesture, procedure is infused with power – it determines its place in the hierarchy of knowledge as the reverse side of the scholarly authority. “Bodies of knowledge are not autonomous intellectual structures that happen to be employed as instruments of power. Rather, precisely as bodies of knowledge, they are tied (but not reducible) to systems of social control” (REP: 2886). Similarly, as demonstrated by Bourdieu (1988) any academic position (or a position contesting it from outside academia) is located within the certain social dispositif. Of course, there are large-scale structures of power¹⁷ (the state above all), but more likely it is a chain or ‘horizontally maintained’ system of relations, characterised by multiple disjunctions and contradictions which isolate particular focal points from one another. Due to the dynamic structure of power relationships and their involvement in knowledge production the analysis of this process must also be reflective about its historical limits and be experimental in spirit. However, the writing of disciplinary history cannot be reduced to analysis of power relationships, for then the latter would become an all-embracing, almost transcendental principle. Power, separated as an analytical category and external factor, cannot exist without knowledge of the latter's own rules of articulation and a language that ultimately unites both factors of knowledge production – knowledge and power.

Foucault representing a more post-structural approach to the objects of his studies, Lyotard was a philosopher generally considered the leading theorist of postmodernism. The term ‘meta-narratives’ or ‘grand narratives’ mentioned above is one of the key concepts in his highly influential study *La Condition postmoderne* (*The Postmodern Condition*, 1984 [1979]). In opposition to the thinking of the German social theorist Jürgen Habermas, Lyotard defined postmodernism as a suspicion towards the meta-narratives that have served to

¹⁷ Rouse's comparison of power modalities and styles of reasoning clarifies it: “There can be various modalities of power (such as juridical power or bio-power), which are different modes of alignment through which the effect of actions upon other actions is distributed, just as there can be different styles of reasoning through which statements can bear on the truth or falsity of others” (Rouse 2005: 117–118).

legitimate¹⁸ (scientific and academic) knowledge since the establishment of modern academia¹⁹ (Easthope 2001: 19; cf. Lyotard 1984). So, “The grand narrative has lost its credibility, regardless of what mode of unification it uses, regardless of whether it is a speculative narrative or a narrative of emancipation (Lyotard 1984: 37). While the two narratives mentioned here refer to dominant modes of modern academic practices, regarding folklore studies and mythology, the loss of the grand narratives means that “the old poles of attraction represented by nation-states, parties, professions, institutions, and historical traditions are losing their attraction” (ibid.: 14). This loss, as will be demonstrated further, resulted in a crisis of disciplinary identity in the 1980s. Reaction to this was twofold – deconstructive analysis of disciplinary history and contemporary practices on the one hand, and efforts to find new ways to differently legitimise these practices on the other hand, the latter resulting in diverse experimental approaches. However, in the light of Lyotard’s theory, my intentions are to discover the precise disposition of “old poles of attraction represented by nation-states, parties, professions, institutions, and historical traditions” constituting the context of research of Latvian mythology. An important facet of such analysis is the tension between academic and non academic knowledge of the subject matter, often contesting each other by references to different “poles of attraction” (p. 155–161). As knowledge is not the same as science, questioning scientific legitimacy has no less socio-political than epistemological implications. Lyotard’s distinction between two kinds of knowledge – scientific knowledge and narrative knowledge – illuminates the knowledge legitimisation process in folkloristics especially clearly:

The scientist questions the validity of narrative statements and concludes that they are never subject to argumentation or proof. He classifies them as belonging to a different mentality: savage, primitive, underdeveloped, backward, alienated, composed of opinions, customs, authority, prejudice, ignorance, ideology. Narratives are fables, myths, legends, fit only for women and children
(Lyotard 1984: 27).

This unequal relationship is an intrinsic effect of the rules specific for the academic knowledge production process: it is governed by the demand for legitimisation. Scholars of folklore and related fields, categorising narrative

¹⁸ “In this case, legitimisation is the process by which a “legislator” dealing with scientific discourse is authorized to prescribe the stated conditions (in general, conditions of internal consistency and experimental verification) determining whether a statement is to be included in that discourse for consideration by the scientific community” (Lyotard 1984: 8).

¹⁹ Briefly, here he examines two two major versions of the narrative of legitimisation. One is more political, the other more philosophical; both are of great importance in modern history, in particular in the history of knowledge and its institutions. The subject of the first of these versions is humanity as the hero of liberty. The second version envisages nation-state bringing the people to expression through the mediation of speculative knowledge (Lyotard 1984: 31–34).

knowledge as an object of their investigation, on the same grounds build the authority of their own, scientific voice: a seemingly innocent distinction is turned into hierarchy, knowledge production – into power play. To a large extent, the knowledge production process in these fields is the circulation of signs and statements from one field of knowledge to another, and the debates defining rules of this circulation.

Multiple inspirations, sources, and methods explored in the current thesis testify to Lyotard's statement that the erosion of both grand narratives – the one stemming from the emancipation ideas of the Enlightenment and the one based on speculative discourse – results in the questioning of the classical dividing lines between various fields of science. Disciplines disappear, overlappings occur at the borders of sciences as well as between sciences and other forms of discourse, and from these new territories are born. One of the consequences of the general shift within knowledge production was the rise of the interdisciplinary approach, in which the relation to knowledge is not articulated in terms of previous meta-narratives, but in terms of the users of a complex conceptual and material machinery and those who benefit from its performance capabilities (*ibid.*: 52). Regarding anthropology and related disciplines, Clifford Geertz characterised this era as a reconfiguration of social thought: as a mixing of genres, a turning away from the ideal of explanation governed by laws and instances towards one based on case studies and interpretations, and drawing on analogies of game, play, and text (just to mention few) in explanation of social phenomena. He titled this process of reconfiguration 'blurred genres'. The differences between forms of textual production fade and the classification of works and the labelling of authors as representatives of one certain discipline become more and more difficult. Therefore, the blurring of genres is not just "another redrawing of the cultural map", but "an alternation of the principles of mapping" (Geertz 1983). Ethnography has become, as stated by James Clifford, a hybrid textual activity: it traverses genres and disciplines (Clifford 1986: 26).

Summarising, any process of knowledge production (distribution, implementation, and contestation) involves the power relationships which are in a way synonymous for social relationships, including transnational paradigms as well as disposition of subjects at the grassroots level. In the analysis of disciplinary history – which, in my case, is an analysis of the circulation of statements from religious, aesthetic and vernacular domains to the field of scholarly authority and the configuration of this field – power relationships embody extra-textual factors within the process of knowledge production: intellectual and emotional personal motivations, external demand, subordination to hegemonic structures as well as resistance, choice of the research object and means of scholarly authority to construct it. Consequently, a complete analysis of such disciplinary history, as of Latvian mythology, should include both mapping of the historical framework within which it emerged and developed, as well as close-up analysis of the particular institutions and agents shaping it. To complete it, Foucault and Lyotard provide tools of analysis for relationships of knowledge and power

from different historical perspectives, mapping the trajectory of knowledge production between the rise and decline of the project of modernity. Therefore, with respect to specifics of the field, in remaining part of this chapter I will review the consequences of the ‘legitimisation crisis’ in folkloristics and related disciplines, to fine-tune the methodology of subsequent research with more precise and contemporary insights.

2.2. Disciplinary specifics: The crisis of representation

The general developments of academic knowledge production, as outlined by Lyotard, also resulted in the so-called crisis of representation in the human and social sciences with its highest point in the 1980s. “An essentially realistic epistemology, which conceives of representation as the reproduction, for subjectivity, of an objectivity that lies outside it – projects a mirror theory of knowledge and art, whose fundamental evaluative categories are those of adequacy, accuracy, and Truth itself” (Jameson, in Lyotard 1984: viii). Based on these three notions, questioning the legitimacy and praxis of the scholarly paradigm led to recognition of their socially constructed, historically and culturally determined nature. This questioning, embedded in the discourses of post-structuralism and postmodernism, was coded in multiple ways, variously associated with the narrative, critical, interpretive, linguistic, postcolonial, feminist, and critical race turns in the human disciplines (cf. Flaherty 2002; Denzin 2002). Scholars of folkloristics, cultural anthropology, ethnology, and other disciplines representing the Other became aware of the impossibility of directly capturing the lived experience; thus surfaced the problems of the authority of texts, the very textual nature²⁰, involving multiple meta-textual practices of these representations, and, after all, the relationship between the object represented and the representational form. With the researcher’s scientific, authorial, authoritative voice lost in these debates, the process of writing ethnography needed to be completely restructured. This, in its turn, took two paths: the critical revision of the history of the discipline²¹, and the inquiry into new approaches. Several milestones in the process were set during the

²⁰ From this also stems the plurality of multiple equally valid interpretations: “A given society or set of cultural practices (i.e., texts) can be interpreted in any number of equally valid ways because there is no one correct interpretation. Furthermore, while interpretations are always controversial and contested, there can be no recourse to “the facts” (i.e., data) because what one considers the facts is a function of one’s interpretive stance. On what basis, then, can one claim any authority to represent others ethnographically?” (Flaherty 2002: 481). Clifford stated that the ethnographic texts are allegoric *per se*, at the level both of their form and content (Clifford 1986b).

²¹ For example, Clifford (1986) on Clifford Geertz, Crapanzano (1986) on George Catlin, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, and Clifford Geertz; Rosaldo (1986) on E. E. Evens-Pritchard and Emanuel Le Roy Ladurie; Rabinow (1986) on James Clifford and Clifford Geertz, Marcus and Fisher (1999 [1986]) on Edward Said, Freeman (1983) on Margaret Mead, etc.

advanced seminar of the School of American Research in Santa Fe, later represented in the collection of articles *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Clifford and Marcus 1986). The book created a separate critical discourse or even a movement (Crapanzano 2010: 39), also resulting in the publication of *After Writing Culture* (James, Hockey and Dawson 2004 [1997]) and *Beyond Writing Culture* (Zenker and Kumoll 2010). The latter summarises vast criticism of the movement (2010: 4–8), ranging from issues of epistemology to politics, especially by ethnographers from the feminist associated circles (cf. Wolf 1992). Nevertheless, taking into account the critical dimension as well as historical distance and differences in the fields of interest, several concepts and ideas, formulated in the first and developed in following *Writing Culture* books, have informed also the reflexive methodology explored in my thesis.

First of all, it is the recognition of textual nature of scholarly productions, with multiple implications of the fact. As the title suggests, James Clifford marked out the writing as a key concept of the ethnography. It is central both to fieldwork and thereafter, the aspect previously somewhat slipped under the radar of ideology claiming transparency of representation and immediacy of experience. Writing involves historical, political and linguistic processes; it is genre-dependant, essentially constructed and artificial practice. In this regard, apart from literary theory, *Writing Culture* reflects the influences and methodological concerns of other fields: textual criticism, cultural history, semiotics, hermeneutic philosophy, and psychoanalysis. The first response to this highlighting of writing was the emergence of new subgenre of ethnographic writing, the self-reflexive ‘fieldwork account’. More and more works now hosted not just the author’s voice, but also foregrounded the essentially dialogical if not polyvocal relationships behind the production of the ethnographic account. Ethnography moved into areas long occupied by sociology, the novel, or avant-garde cultural critique, rediscovering otherness and differences within the cultures of the West (Clifford 1986a: 23).

Secondly, it is the agreement of the *Writing Culture* contributors that truths produced regarding Others are inherently partial²² – committed and incomplete, but recognition of this partiality can be a source of representational tact. Regarding the writing of disciplinary history and analysis of scholarly production, because a check-list still might serve Clifford’s summary of ways in which ethnographic writing is determined:

²² Vincent Crapanzano elegantly describes the mediating work of an ethnographer with an allegory: “When Hermes took the post of messenger of gods, he promised Zeus not to lie. He did not promise to tell the whole truth. Zeus understood. The ethnographer has not” (Crapanzano 1986: 53).

(1) contextually (it draws from and creates meaningful social milieux); (2) rhetorically (it uses and is used by expressive conventions); (3) institutionally (one writes within, and against, specific traditions, disciplines, audiences); (4) generically (an ethnography is usually distinguishable from a novel or travel account); (5) politically (the authority to represent cultural realities is unequally shared and at times contested); (6) historically (all the above conventions and constraints are changing)

(Clifford 1986a: 6)

These determinations with emphasis on one or another are also highlighted in the case studies on Latvian mythological space, in chapters three and four of the thesis.

The third important notion, rooted in both previous concepts, is ‘representation’. As classical anthropology was in business of representing the spatial Others, concerns of folkloristics used to be temporal Others; both fields of kindred representational practices negotiate cultural distance, are based on scholarly authority, and invent their object of research. Representation, in the texts concerning its crisis, is most often understood in two meanings: (1) as a textual practice, where scholarly texts are representing reality, lived experience²³ (a phenomenological and hermeneutical question), and (2) as a political practice, a mediation of the voice of certain groups or cultures²⁴ (an ethical and political question). Distantly echoing Lyotard’s systematisation, Marcus and Fischer summarised the “crisis of representation” as the result of an interplay of two projects in anthropology: first, ethnography’s commitment to a systematic (if gradual, or partial) description of given cultural and social units; and second, anthropology’s chronic dream of discovering an encompassing totality, rooted in dominant social theories of last century (Marcus and Fischer 1986: 4). In general, the crisis was a turn away from the positivist science pretensions of representing presumed objective reality.

²³ Already since the 1950s theoretical debates have shifted to the level of method, to problems of epistemology, interpretation, and discursive forms of representations themselves, employed by social thinkers (cf. Markus and Fisher 1999). Dell Hymes with his ethnography of speaking also contributed to removing of such classicist positivist principle – the injunction to treat texts as objects, thus offering prospects for inquiry into the pragmatic, historical, and political dimensions of storytelling practices (cf. Fabian 2001: 90). The emergence of so called ‘interpretative turn’ in anthropology was most prominently represented by Clifford Geertz and rejection of ‘the visualism’ as in studies by Walter Ong (cf. also Rosaldo 1986).

²⁴ Already before the seminal works of Lyotard and other postmodernists were written, a notable body of critical writing in the field of culture studies was produced, for example, since 1950s reflecting on power inequalities in research concerning colonial subjects: imperial relations, formal and informal, were no longer accepted rule of the game – to be reformed piecemeal, or ironically distanced in various ways (Clifford 1986: 8, cf. Said 1978). Similarly influential critical approach was articulated also by the authors related to the third wave of feminism and, for example, doubting the gender representations (see Gamble 2004).

As already discussed, united by particular politics of representation, ethnology, social and cultural anthropology, and folkloristics all have in common the salvaging of distinct cultural forms of life from the apparent processes of global Westernisation and modernisation; all these disciplines form part of a much broader discursive economy and operate within a wide range of institutional settings. “Folklore has a long history of interest in the local subjects that were stripped of agency – subjects that because of their embeddedness in their local context were invisible within the abstracting masternarratives of modernism” (Ritchie 1993: 366). Folklorists presumed to speak on the behalf of some voiceless group or individual, implementing hegemonic scholarly authority over them and ignoring the ways in which context mediates presentation in both performance and scholarly production. From this perspective, folkloristics, similarly to kindred disciplines, had to deal with the questions of representation in both meanings – as a textual production, as well as “political” statements lurking behind the apparently innocent collections of folklore. Representation continues to invent itself as an agency.

However, the crisis of representation, accumulating critique of the research conducted in previous decades, was a historical period with its own specific historical constraints. As Rabinow, referring to Fredric Jameson, conceptualised this determination:

The post-modernist is blind to her own situation and situatedness because, qua post-modernist, she is committed to doctrine of partiality and flux for which even such things as one’s own situation are so unstable, so without identity, that they cannot serve as objects of sustained reflection. Post-modernist pastiche is both critical position and a dimension of our contemporary world

(Rabinow 1986: 252).

Johannes Fabian points out that in this discourse objectivity as an epistemological problem has disappeared, as a result of a displacement of focus from knowledge production to knowledge representation; emphasis on the latter also favours a displacement of critical attention from scientific objectivity to literary authority (Fabian 2001: 21). Postmodern awareness and the general increase of interdisciplinary studies have resulted in the formation of a reflexive approach in the human and social sciences; the so-called crisis of interpretation seems to be the main source of reflexive initiatives in anthropology, folkloristics and related fields (cf. Bourdieu 2000 [1997]: 118). It has informed also the methodology of the thesis conceptualised below.

2.3. Reflexive ethnography and history

In general, reflexivity refers to circular relationships between cause and effect. A reflexive relationship is bidirectional; with both the cause and the effect affecting one another in a situation that renders both functions causes and

effects. Reflexivity also is a term variously applied to certain properties of the grammatical systems and lexical forms of language, to the meanings of such forms, to the mental or cognitive capacities of language users, to the textually formed discourses that users create, to states of agentive consciousness of people acting in social situations, and to the special case of researchers as agents seeking to understand social behaviours such as the use of language in society (Silverstein 2006). Defining the epistemological constraints of the reflexive history of scientific knowledge production, Barbesino and Salvaggio differentiate three forms of reflexivity: cognitive, structural, and embedded reflexivity (1996: 3). Cognitive reflexivity refers to the capacity for awareness and reflection. Although it is intrinsic to a variety of human activities as reflexive monitoring, cognitive reflexivity might as well serve as a basic ontological or epistemic principle, as in various forms of philosophy (cf. Tauber 2005). On the meta-level, such self-awareness demands the duality of theory, which is simultaneously part of the object it tends to describe, is taken into account. Structural reflexivity refers to dimensions of representation involving self-reference by a statement or set of statements. Thereby it may produce one of two logical opposites – tautology or paradox. Tautological statements have infinite truth value, but paradoxical statements are often legitimised creating the meta-level of reference which seemingly dissolves the paradox by restricting the field of reference to a certain portion of statements. While a researcher is central for cognitive reflexivity and structural reflexivity characterises the discourse, embedded reflexivity refers to construction of the research object: the inseparability of representation and represented. Ultimately, it claims that observation of a phenomenon cannot be conceived as independent of this phenomenon. “Within radical constructivism, the notion of embedded reflexivity can be expressed by saying that one can only observe what one can distinguish and indicate. One needs a distinction in order to articulate the field one is faced with and to produce a cut, for in the world there are no distinctions and no negations” (Barbesino and Salvaggio 1996: 4). While in my study these three forms of reflexivity refer to circular relationships at the levels of the agent, discourse, and structure of the research of Latvian mythology, an overall design of the reflexive historiography requires the recognition of reflexivity as a positive move, liberating instead of constraining the study. This serves the notion of ‘collective critical reflexivity’ developed by Pierre Bourdieu. This would consist of objectifying the subject of objectification, i.e. by dispossessing the knowing subject of the privilege it normally grants itself and by bringing to light presuppositions it owes to its inclusion in the object of knowledge.

These presuppositions are of three different orders. To start with the most superficial, there are those associated with occupation of a position in social space, and the particular trajectory that has led to it, and with gender (which can affect the relationship to the object in many ways, in as much as the sexual division of labour is inscribed in social structures and in cognitive structures, orienting for example the choice of object of study). Then there are those that are

constitutive of the *doxa* specific to each of the different fields (religious, artistic, philosophical, sociological, etc.) and, more precisely, those that each particular thinker owes to his position in a field. Finally, there are the presuppositions constituting the *doxa* generically associated with the *skholé*, leisure, which is the condition of existence of all scholarly fields

(Bourdieu 2000: 10).

Such reflexivity as a collective enterprise should enable scientific reason to control itself more closely, in and through conflictual cooperation and mutual critique, and so to move towards independence on constraints and contingencies to which the rationalist convictions aspire and by which it is measured (ibid.: 122). Finally, bringing into the light the social limits of objectification would renounce the absolutism of classical objectivism without falling into post-modern relativism.

Reflexive theory in ethnography and reflexive history share common inspirations mentioned in the previous sections of the thesis. Dealing with cultural Others, reflexivity is “the awareness of looking at oneself looking at the other, and how these simultaneous gazes qualify and construct each other, has made the anthropologist / ethnologist / folklorist aware of how ethnography is in a fundamental way an act of representation that cannot be independent of the discursive processes in which the objectified other is made an object” (Anttonen 2005: 22, cf. Kuutma 2005a: 10). Adapting the insights from reflexive ethnography, reflexivity in my study manifests in three dimensions: subjective self-awareness (or cognitive reflexivity), conception of method, and object of study. Regarding the first, I will presume an identity of historiography and ethnography, therefore following Johannes Fabian’s claim that “all ethnobiography is connected to (auto)bio-graphy”, and moreover, “critically understood, autobiography is a condition of ethnographic objectivity” (Fabian 2001: 12). Regarding the second, reflexive research of disciplinary history is, paraphrasing George E. Marcus, a ‘multi-sited historiography’ that avoids totalising meta-narratives. It can define its object of study through several different modes or techniques, such as: following the people, following a certain thing, following the metaphor, following the plot, story, or allegory, following a life or biography, etc. At the end of the day, “In this cognitive and intellectual identification between the investigator and variously situated subjects in the emergent field of multi-sited research, reflexivity is the most powerfully defined as a dimension of method” (Marcus 1998: 97). Explored in the writing of disciplinary history, any combination of these techniques supposes the highlighting instead of hiding the political and ethical dimensions of scholarly production, as well as foregrounding structural and embedded reflexive properties of the research object as it was historically constructed within the field of study. Regarding the third meaning of reflexivity in my work, the reflexive disciplinary history of Latvian mythology is overwhelmingly a study of texts. Texts as a source of other texts, intertextual connections of texts, texts as scholarly production, decontextualised and

entextualised texts, etc. Concerning their textual nature, my reading of the scholarly productions of the past is informed by the approach of new historicism²⁵. With all respect to literary theory as a main inspiration, new historicism is an interdisciplinary approach that equally draws upon a systematic, one can say, textual understanding of cultural phenomena and their embedment in the social fabric. The focus on the historicity of the text (or, ultimately, a semiotic system) highlights the negotiations and economy of exchange at the moments when, via conventional and institutional practices, the discursive formations of one domain (e.g. aesthetic or cult-related) are transferred into another (e.g. scientific). However, “New historicism is a collection of practices rather than a school or a method” (Greenblatt 2005: 3). Resisting disciplinary hegemony, it insists on a contextual way of reading historical documents²⁶; it recognises construction of historical truth within the narrative on history, but simultaneously rejects corresponding grand narratives and well established views on particular historical periods. Ultimately, it admits the rootedness of each interpretation in the historical moment when this interpretation takes place. New historicism questions reflexive relationships between art and society and between various institutionally demarcated discursive practices (for an extended list of characteristics see Greenblatt 2005: 22).

Greenblatt had informed my study regarding the textual level of the subject matter, but the analysis of metadiscursive²⁷ practices I have conducted with the help of the method of linguistic anthropology represented by Charles L. Briggs. His approach was illustrated above by analysis of Grimms’ work and its role in the construction of early disciplinary identity. Referring to Foucault, Briggs has paid special attention to the history of scholarship: “Institutional histories similarly not only accept the authority of the discourse they examine but generally are accorded a lower rung in the textual hierarchies that define disciplines. Rather, critical historical research can play a crucial role in critically scrutinizing our tendency to see concepts and theories as neutral, objective tools” (Briggs 1993: 388). First, this statement means awareness of the nature of all scholarly formulations as socially and politically situated constructions that enter into creating, sustaining, and challenging relationships of power and inequality (Briggs 1993, Briggs and Bauman 2003). Second, it supposes close reading unveiling the very metadiscursive practices, along with strategies used

²⁵ Stephen Greenblatt is the most influential practitioner of new historicism or cultural poetics. The approach itself shares the influence of both Geertz’s *Interpretation of Cultures* and Foucault’s *The Order of Things* (cf. Greenblatt 2005:4) with the *Writing Culture* movement.

²⁶ Defined as such primarily by belonging to the past not to a particular genre; new historicism constantly re-examines the relationship between ‘literature’ and ‘history’.

²⁷ Drawing from Foucault’s understanding of the discourse, “metadiscursive practices characterize discourses that seek to shape, constrain, or appropriate other discourses”, and they can be used both in “generating shared meaning and obscuring meaning or rendering it ambiguous” (Briggs 1993: 389–390).

in mobilising them and rhetorics used in justifying them. These practices constitute powerful means of situating themselves in social, historical, and political terms. Multiple metadiscursive practices centre around entextualisation – “the formal processes associated with producing particular types of texts in the service of social and political agendas” (Briggs 1993: 390). The analysed texts, at the same time, are not perceived as static, immanent structures. Thus, one more key-term of my analysis is ‘intertextuality’; this means that the structure, content, and significance of individual texts and contexts emerge dialogically in the active interface between utterances²⁸. “Like textuality, intertextuality is a social product; both the relative importance of the role that intertextuality plays in a particular utterance and the way in which it is utilized thus involve questions of tactics, strategies and discursive constraints” (ibid.). Since scholars link the texts they study to other texts, analysis of foregrounding and backgrounding the intertextual links and gaps is crucial for research of the knowledge production process. Elements of contextualisation link each intertextual element indexically to both the specific social and discursive setting in which it is produced and received, as well as to broader social, political and historical parameters. Likewise, decontextualisation and recontextualisation are processes linked to extra-textual practices²⁹, leading, for example, to commodification or exploitation of texts for propaganda purposes. So, both decontextualisation and recontextualisation within the thesis will be seen as strategic social processes. At the moment, concluding with the reflexive dimension of the method of my study, as close reading of socially and politically embedded historical texts, I will further outline the reflexive properties characteristic to the object of this study.

In addition to the history of religion, the overwhelming context of the research into Latvian mythology has been folkloristics – by folklore constituting the main source of the reconstructive and further comparative studies of myths or particular motifs, and by folkloristics constituting the dominant institutional as well as methodological framework of such studies. Therefore it is necessary to take a look at how folkloristics, involved in studies of Latvian mythology, have constructed their object of study – texts, customs, belief systems, etc., which, again referring to the discursive dynamics of modernity, might be summarised under the umbrella term ‘tradition’. The particular understanding of this object and implications of its existence, as they will be more closely analysed below, emerged already in the 1980s. Here I would like to stress two now classical discussions regarding tradition’s authenticity and relation to history. The first is a particular understanding of tradition as outlined in the

²⁸ For more on the relations of intertextuality and sociality see Briggs and Bauman 1992.

²⁹ The link between these specific terms is well illustrated by Briggs’ note on *KHM*: “Herein lies part of the popular success of the tales; being both more highly entextualized and much more structurally homogeneous, the narratives were ready made for decontextualization from the collection and subsequent recontextualization in a host of new formats, including reading and retelling in nurseries” (Briggs 1993: 396).

breakthrough essay by Richard Handler and Jocelyn Linnekin (1984). Departing from textual analysis, the motto of reflexive history might be Handler and Linnekin's statement that "the past is always constructed in the present" (1984: 286). This does not mean that there is no correspondence with the past; but, as society and tradition are meaning processes rather than bounded, natural objects, the construction of historical continuity or discontinuity is never a pure fact. Therefore, "We must understand tradition as a symbolic process that both presupposes past symbolisms and creatively reinterprets them. In other words, tradition is not a bounded entity made up of bounded constituent parts, but a process of interpretation, attributing meaning in the present though making reference to the past" (Handler and Linnekin 1984: 287). The authors' understanding of tradition as a socially and symbolically constructed entity (and as such neither genuine nor spurious) that never exists apart from its interpretation also corresponds to the somewhat narrower but still influential notion of 'invented tradition', developed by Eric Hobsbawm:

'Invented tradition' is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past

(Hobsbawm 2009 [1983]: 1).

These can be both 'traditions' actually invented, constructed and formally instituted and those emerging in a less easily traceable manner within a brief and dateable period. Although the many large-scale events, symbols or ceremonies mentioned by Hobsbawm aim for fixity, it is now a generally accepted view that traditions in general can be dynamic, contested and claimed by different, sometimes even openly opposite, groups at different moments (cf. Anttonen 2005, Edensor 2002). Importantly, they are always responses to novel situations which take the form of reference to old situations, or which establish their own past by quasi-obligatory repetition; thus, the inherent structural reflexivity serves as a means of legitimising the invented traditions. Where Handler and Linnekin in the above mentioned essay generalised two studies of contemporary societies, Hobsbawm was more concerned with the changes of public sphere, and subsequent formation of new ritual and symbolic representation in the second half of the nineteenth century, i.e. the age of rapid changes brought on by modernity, industrialisation, and the formation of nation states; in other words, in a time which also gave birth to folkloristics. However, in both cases traditions appear as rhetorical constructions that denote an active political process of creating historical meaning. As my study does not concern traditions as such but the research on traditions as a framework for the research of mythology, these two complimentary perspectives on tradition are chosen to highlight its embedded circular relationship, i.e. reflexivity. Consequently, in the following subchapters I will elaborate on the reflexive properties of the

studies on Latvian mythology, as conceptualised within the scholarly discourse and, which at the same time, legitimises the founding of this discourse.

3. Reflexive links to nationalism

For research into Latvian mythology, the most important context revealing the reflexive relationship between cause and effect in the circulation of power and knowledge is the symbolic and ideological construction of the Latvian national idea and nation-state. Although the latter has been in existence for only two comparatively short periods, now extending for four decades in total, research into mythology was to a large extent shaped by cultural nationalism, manifested first in imperial, later in nation-state, settings, and then contested by Soviet ideology. Nationalism is one of the key elements, if not the main one, in historical construction of the disciplinary identity north and east from Germany: i.e. Eastern and Central European countries whose sovereignty was established on more ethnic than territorial principles after the fall of Empires following World War I, proceeded by processes of identity building via culture and scholarship, similar from country to country³⁰.

3.1. Imagined communities: The process of articulation

Perhaps conditions for the emergence of nationalism or the causes of it (if there is causality in history) are as many as the scholars trying to explain them. The same applies to definitions of the term 'nation'; however, most of the definitions include among their criteria territoriality, a named human population, a common historical memory, and a density of socio-cultural communications (Ó Giolláin 2000). However, before introducing the 'genealogy' of nationalism as well as shared agendas and historical dynamics which relates it to the birth of scholarly interest in mythology, it is necessary to remind ourselves of the distinction of nationalism as articulated political ideology and nationalism as a constituent of national identity, deeply rooted in cultures and everyday life. Here I refer to Tim Edensor's functional definition of national identity as an ever-shifting matrix, a multidimensional and dynamic composite of networks:

³⁰ Although early nationalistic movements rarely showed political ambitions towards the establishment of the independent state, at this point I would agree with Joep Leerssen regarding the simultaneous or overlapping coexistence rather than the linear sequence of three phases of nationalism defined by Miroslav Hroch: (A) 'scholarly' nationalism with the interest in languages and antiquities, (B) demands for social reform based on the culturally articulated self-awareness, and (C) spread and intensification of these ideas into a mass movement, often formulating an agenda of separatism (cf. Leerssen 2006: 164).

Such a metaphor emphasises the relationality of the social without subjecting it to an overarching, systemic order, and insists on an ever-increasing multitude of connections and chains of relationality. Within such a matrix, national identity is being continually *redistributed*. For emphatically, the evolution of multiple connections does not necessarily dissipate the power of national identity, although it undoubtedly decentres the authoritative formations consolidating around high culture, official political power and national meta-narratives. Rather, points of identification with the nation are increasingly manifold and contested, are situated within dense networks which provide multiple points of contact
(Edensor 2002: 30).

Analysing the scholarly discourse, it is therefore mandatory to recognise that academic agents are simultaneously present at several such networks and thus interacting with the national agenda (simultaneously as its creators and subjects) on various dimensions; importantly, this relationship is bidirectional *per se*.

Historically, the term ‘nation’ gained its currency in political debates around the second half of the eighteenth century and established its prime value during the nineteenth. Even though ethnic and language diversity has already existed for thousands of years, ‘nation’ as in ‘nationalism’ is rather a modern development or invention. Among the conditions making possible the imagination of nation is definitely the emergence of linear, homogeneous, empty time in which the narrative of history takes place (Anderson 2006, cf. Benjamin 2007). Multiple explanations relate nationalism to different features of emerging capitalism; for example, the latter made possible advancement of print technology and the emergence of print markets in vernacular languages juxtaposed to previously dominating Latin³¹ (Anderson 2006) and was a cause of the emergence of the public sphere (Habermas 1993, cf. Leerksen 2006) – the set of social institutions that allow for (open and rational) debate between citizens in order to form public opinion. Such debate is conducted face to face, as in associations, clubs, and coffeehouses, or through the exchange of letters and other written communication as well as might be communicated by journals, newspapers or other media. The emergence of the public sphere in the eighteenth century was almost exclusively related to the emergent bourgeoisie, since the aristocracy had no need for it and lower classes no means for it (cf. Edgar 2006: 124; Goode 2005). For example, newspapers allowed the simultaneous communication of the same ideas and information for communities of unlimited size using the same language, binding the social space and this inclusive marker of identity. The historical novel is another emblematic example, creating shared memory of the language community. Invention of the standardised, unified print language allowed communication between people of the same (not yet formed) nation members belonging to distant dialect groups.

³¹ As concludes Anderson: “the fall of Latin exemplified a larger process in which the sacred communities integrated by old sacred languages were gradually fragmented, pluralized, and territorialized (Anderson 2006: 19).

Benedict Anderson proposes that nationalism has to be understood by aligning it not with self-consciously held political ideologies, but with the large cultural systems that preceded it – religious community and the dynastic realm (2006). With the Reformation, the spread of religious texts in vernacular languages, and, ultimately, the rise of Enlightenment rationalism and subsequent secularisation, nationalism took shape as a kind of ‘secular religion’, promising the belonging to a broader and timeless community, the meaning of life, and, even more importantly, the meaning of death. Although before the late eighteenth century ideas of particular national characters and related stereotypes were already circulating in Europe (Leerssen 2006), only around the time of French Revolution were ideas of nation and language theoretically and further also politically linked; to a large extent, almost singlehandedly by Herder³². “Rousseau had proclaimed the sovereignty of the nation against the power of princes; Herder had proclaimed the categorical separateness of nations mutually; both exalted natural authenticity above civilized artificiality” (Leerssen 2006: 101). In this way nationalism successfully combined ideas of the somewhat opposite Enlightenment and Romanticist movements.

Standardisation and modernisation of vernacular languages went hand in hand with the blooming field uniting lexicographers, grammarians, philologists and other intellectuals professionally interested in languages, many of them also holding central positions in nationalist movements (e.g. the Grimm brothers in Germany or Juris Alunāns in Latvia). Theorisation of language was theorisation of nation and vice versa. In addition the study of folklore and creation of popular epic poetry, publications of grammars and dictionaries, appearance of periodicals and staging of plays in standardised vernacular language simultaneously contributed to the same process. The formation of the Latvian nation well characterises the complex relationship between nationalism and language politics. The provinces, inhabited by Latvian-speaking people, were ruled by the local Baltic German (German-speaking) elite under the political administration of the Russian Empire. While upward social mobility in the nineteenth century Baltic provinces almost definitely meant learning German, the entire Russian Empire was undergoing the implementation of centrally governed “official nationalism”, in this case Russification as a mean of combining naturalisation with retention of dynastic power (cf. Ó Giolláin 2000). While previously the language of the court at St. Petersburg was French, under the reign of Alexander III (1881–1894) Russification became official dynastic policy. In 1887, in the Baltic provinces, Russian was made compulsory as the language of instruction in all state schools above the lowest primary classes, a

³² See Anderson 2006. Leerssen also notes that “Most of the ‘national awakenings’ that took place in Central and Eastern Europe, from Germany to Bulgaria and from Slovenia to Finland, can be more or less directly traced back to the philosophy and influences of Herder; and all of the Romantic (and later) preoccupation with popular culture, from the Grimms’ collection of fairytales to the birth of folklore studies, is due to him” (Leerssen 2006: 97; cf. Ó Giolláin 2000: 73–75 on periodisation).

measure later extended to private schools as well (Anderson 2006: 87). Promotion of the Latvian language in this situation formed a contra narrative to imperial homogenising efforts, created common communication space for the members of the emerging nation, as well as served for symbolic claims of both ancestry and modernisation, adapting the vocabulary and print to current needs.

Parallel to the “discoveries” and research into languages, all across Europe

Existing customary traditional practices – folksong, physical contests, marksmanship – were modified, ritualized and institutionalized for the new national purposes. Traditional folksongs were supplemented by new songs in the same idiom, often composed by schoolmasters, transferred to choral repertoire whose content was patriotic-progressive (...), though it also embodied ritually powerful elements from religious hymnology

(Hobsbawm 2009: 6).

Nationalisms of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries not only adapted and recontextualised the old signs, customs, ceremonies or languages, but also created a set of new and powerful symbols, especially reaching the level of nation-state. The national flag and anthem, patriotic monuments, commemoration days, and national holidays are only the surface of a vast symbolic universe constituted by claims of shared language, myths, blood, and territory. The human sciences in this process served for the articulation of national culture and identity, gradually becoming institutionalised and instrumentalised according to demands of dominant power dispositions in each ‘national society’. Here nationalism and research of folklore and mythology engages in long-lasting reflexive relationship of mutual legitimisation.

3.2. An international discipline with a national agenda

Research of mythology and folklore are double-bound to nationalism. First of all, there was scarcely any folklore collector or researcher who was not at the same time a nationalist: from the emblematic figure of Herder and the composer of the Finnish national epic Elias Lönnrot, to Latvian folksong editor Krišjānis Barons and pedagogic researcher Jānis Alberts Janons. Defining national mythology, extracted from folklore materials, takes the same route: as within Jacob Grimm’s politically charged reconstruction of Teutonic mythology in the first half of the nineteenth century, or Latvian exile researcher Haralds Biezais’ history of Latvian religion project more than a hundred years later (p. 147–149). Secondly, the whole enterprise of folklore collection and the rise from everyday tokens to ‘national treasure’ was conducted by a comparatively small segment of society, intellectuals operating in the public sphere. “Thus, instead of ‘the nation awakens’, as the common metaphoric phrase goes, pre-modern forms of society have become modern by way of nationalizing the rural populations and by drawing peasants and other subjects of the state into nationhood and

constructing their collective identification on the basis of their membership in the nation-state” (Anttonen 2005: 87). Of course, in the Latvian situation of the nineteenth century when folklore was first collected in significant amounts, ‘nation-state’ is more likely to have been understood as ‘nation-hood’, hence the separatist ideas began to form only in early twentieth century, first under the slogan “free Latvia in free Russia” and only later defined in terms of full sovereignty. As shown by the examples drawn from national romanticist mythologies (p. 74–77), the collection of folklore and the invention of folklore went hand in hand; similarly, a national epic, composed by an educated writer, served for the same purposes as songs and tales collected from the peasantry. “By transforming tradition into heritage, and by metonymising tradition in the course of representation, folklore scholarship has created ‘national texts’ that are authored by ‘the folk’ and speak in the voice of ‘the nation’” (Anttonen 2005: 88). The territory inhabited by speakers of one language became gridlines for folklore collection, and the folklore collected became the mean of symbolic mapping of the territory. Here an institutionalised network of collections, archives and learned societies, usually located in the national or imperial capital, becomes a setting for the politically charged entextualisation of folklore, the latter being collected as a rule outside the capital and social class involved in the activity.

Importantly, folkloristics and research into mythology as national disciplines at the same time were genuinely international: models, ideas, and theories were adapted from abroad to construct each ‘national folklore’³³; thus, the discipline piratised its uniqueness, as Anderson would say, the same way as nationalism does. National scholarly disciplines, like nationalisms, bear Wittgensteinian ‘family resemblances’. Leading ideologists and researchers often formed networks that by far exceeded national boundaries, exchanging ideas, negotiating, and contributing to the same cause from locations rather distant from their beloved fatherland, for example – in imperial centres researching and promoting the native periphery.

3.3. Mythology as a national history

A few years after the establishment of the world’s first department of history, in 1822, already internationally recognised German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel wrote in the introduction to his *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History* the following phrase: “A culture which does not yet have a history has made no real cultural progress” (Hegel 1993 [1822]: 13). Empty, homogeneous time was cleared from the stories of creation and end of times, liberated from the Salvation and Second Coming; it yearned to be filled with

³³ E.g. see p. 79–82 for the detailed analysis of inspirations and influences behind the establishment of central folklore research institution in Latvia – the Archives of Latvian Folklore.

events of the same importance, and a new academic discipline was born – history –, probably, the most political discipline of all, judging the justice of millennia. The past became new currency in an emerging market of nation states, competing for a piece of eternity, proofs of existence in a past that would guarantee hope for the future. Ancient manuscripts were discovered, sources collected, and medieval epics published all over Western Europe (cf. Leerssen 2006); where evidences were lacking, sometimes even forgery helped (on Czech “medieval” manuscripts see Hroch 1999). Certainly, states that already existed for hundreds of years like Britain, Portugal or France were in privileged positions: their historical existence would not be doubted. Poland and Lithuania too, in the nineteenth century divided by empires, had their glorious medieval past to which refer to, but regarding further north, the chronicles spoke only of either tribal communities or already conquered lands. Therefore, the Baltic provinces³⁴ and Great Duchy of Finland among other territories with emerging national self-consciousness were left without the symbolic resources to claim their existence in the past and thus their right to exist in the future. “History was considered the mark of civilisation for a modern nation, and in Hegelian thinking national history, especially the heroic age in its antiquity, served to indicate the presence of the national spirit, which would guide peoples in their state formation” (Anttonen 2005: 170). While the research of history bloomed in ‘old states’ and the discipline of anthropology was formed in colonial centres, interest in local myths and folklore developed faster in the subjected and divided territories of Europe. Here history meant the continuation of immemorial oral traditions and customs. Thus, entextualised oral history and reconstructions based on it provided a symbolic, nevertheless not inferior, replacement of documented or otherwise obvious continuity with the past: to win the game the rules were slightly changed. Even though Hegel himself excluded such sources from the process of world history³⁵, as well as direct relations between ethnicity and the state³⁶, the very teleology of spirit (the dialectic progress of self-realisation of Absolute Spirit, manifesting also in the body of the state), combined with the Herderian idea of national spirit appears over and over again in political and historical claims. This way, the claiming of “fully fledged rights of Latvia among other nations” was an operating agenda for both writers of mythology-saturated national epic poetry (p. 74–77) and the establisher of the Archives of Latvian Folklore (p. 79–82). Laments for the lost

³⁴ Courland, Livland, and Estland – the territories now constituting most of Latvia and Estonia.

³⁵ “From this category of original history I would exclude all legends, folksongs, traditions, and poems; for legends and traditions are but obscure records [of actual events], and are accordingly the product of nations – or parts of them – whose consciousness is still obscure” (Hegel 1993 [1822]: 12).

³⁶ The political theory, underlying Hegel’s philosophy of history, was far removed from that of modern nationalism with its demand that nations should form states and that the international order be a system of nation states (McCarney 2000: 155).

traditionality and vanishing treasures of folk poetry were a discourse simultaneously confirming the birth of modernity; collected textual antiquities were a construction of the past for the future.

Folkloristics as an institutionalised scholarly discipline was established as late as in the twentieth century; therefore the early research on folklore and mythology in the nineteenth century is more likely to be seen as practices inseparable from other forms of knowledge production. The convergence of scholarly and political agendas in the field constituted by practices of poetry, historiography, mythography, and folklore research most clearly manifests in the emblematic form and idea of the ‘national epic’. Starting with the discovery of the *Mahabharata* and publication of the notorious Macpherson’s *Ossian* in the late eighteenth century, featuring reconstructions of medieval manuscripts of *Beowulf* and *Die Niebelungen*, the creation of the image of a glorious Finnish past in Elias Lönnrot’s *Kalevala* and the defining idea of lost Latvian freedom in Andrejs Pumpurs’ *Lāčplēsis*, the long nineteenth century was indeed an epic time (cf. Leerssen 2006, Taterka 2010). Discovered from the past or narrating the past, authored or un-authored epics served as the ultimate proofs of national histories; as summarises Anttonen, “History in this context meant the nation’s narrative or historical image about itself” (2005: 171). The symbolic and political value of the epic here outweighs its closer relations to poetic creation rather than precise historical record. While for each nation ‘owning’ a particular epic served for the definition of the national past and national spirit, in the international arena epic compositions were juxtaposed against each other and contested; thus, for example, Wilhelm Jordan³⁷ stated that “characteristics of epos are reached only then, when the completed drama of such heroic saga, taking place on the background of gods’ saga, reflects the destiny and worldview of culture-nation³⁸” (Jordan 1876: 43). Here Jordan positions non-Arian Estonian and Finnish epics as only “sprouts” of real epic; this claim had reached the ears of the author of the Latvian *Lāčplēsis*, shaping the plot of the latter (cf. Taterka 2010: 73). Summarising, on the metalevel research on mythology and the writing of history have reflexively influenced each other: mythology becoming a subject of history scholarship and history being articulated as a modality of mythology.

³⁷ Carl Friedrich Wilhelm Jordan (1819–1904), German writer and politician. Philosophically radical Hegelian, with political views close to some variations of racism.

³⁸ “Erreicht aber sind die Eigenschaften des Epos erst dann, wenn auf dem Hintergrunde folcher Göttersage ein geschlossenes Drama der Heldensage die Schicksale und die Weltanschauung eines Culturvolkes spiegelt”, translated by Ieva Jirgensone.

4. Conclusion: Positive program of reflexive disciplinary history

Following the agenda of reflexive interpretation of disciplinary history and keeping in mind previously discussed circumstances of emergence of scholarly interest in the Other, here I will conceptualise the methodology of the thesis and summarise the insights that have informed it. In general, this methodology is the analysis of links influencing each other on different levels within the circulation of power and knowledge from the most general construction of the scholarly subject to particularities in specific texts, identifying the dynamics of international and local tendencies and underlying assumptions in various phases of the knowledge production process. A point of departure for such multi-sited research is the mapping of the field bibliography-wise, thus choosing the basic material for further analysis (scholarly productions of Latvian mythology and subjects close related to it) and simultaneously discovering continuities and discontinuities in the research of particular themes and motifs – according to both temporal and geographical markers. The second step is periodisation, dividing the selected bibliography into clusters according to their main resemblances: the general political context and implications of research, theoretical trends and influences, availability of sources, and the institutional settings where the research took place. The next step is the close reading of the texts selected, foregrounding the cognitive, structural, and embedded reflexive properties, and, as a result, contextualising them on consecutive discursive and metadiscursive levels: (1) the general socio-economic and political context in which the research took place, i.e. the political system, hegemonic political ideologies and counter-ideologies, nature of dominant social groups, regime of cultural production, language politics, education, research and publishing conditions, general intellectual climate; in short, the historical context; (2) the stage of development and level of institutionalisation of the discipline in a particular historical period, related to power structures in society and conditions for scholarly research; (3) the particular institutional histories and agendas behind them, institutional determinants of knowledge production; (4) life histories and experiences of the scholars authoring particular works; their nationality, class, origins, and political views, status in society and academia, relations to other groups within society and other researchers, professional position, religious views, etc.; (5) the conceptualisation of the research subject in particular texts and measuring it against the availability and choice of sources; (6) local and international theoretical trends: intertextuality as defined by direct and indirect references to particular theories, authors and works of other authors; (7) intertextuality within the works of the same author: regarding the same or other research subjects; tracing the developments, continuities and discontinuities in the whole corpus of a particular researcher's works; (8) attention to explicit or, more typically, implicit claims of authority and expertise within each particular text, referring to the politicised space where the

text is produced; (9) tracing the editorial practices involved in the production of particular text: entextualisation and recontextualisation of sources, censorship, etc.

The fact that there are too many variables involved and structural discrepancies between the lived experience and its representations does not allow total contextualisation, therefore I will describe some contexts more explicitly regarding particular periods of time or traditions of research, and some contexts more explicitly regarding others. Thus, without claims of absolute truth, illustrating the general dynamics of knowledge production in the field analysed. As historical context is a construction itself, the contextualisation is conditioned by reconstruction of the above listed levels of contexts. As such it is based on my general knowledge as well as specially conducted research into history and the culture dynamics of the time periods observed. An additional level of reconstruction involves research on institutional histories and a history of other determinants of the field, for example, the nature and availability of sources for the research. Biographical contexts are reconstructed by a reading of the biographies and auto-biographies of researchers, related official documents, personal letters, documented memories of contemporaries, popular publications by/about the researchers. Bibliographical context is reconstructed during the mapping of the field, by reading scholarly bibliographies and references in other works. Intertextual connections are located at the level of particular texts – either foregrounding explicit references or discovering implicit similarities with other texts produced in the field. Editorial context is discovered by comparing different editions, where such are available, and comparing entextualised materials to sources, also relying on analysis already done by other authors touching the history of folkloristics.

Answering the *Writing Culture* authors' warnings and accepting Bourdieu's demand for critical reflexivity, I am aware of my own involvement in knowledge production, the personal and institutional contexts that shape it, and reliance on common and specific knowledge with strengths in some fields and less knowledge in others. Among the major influences that have shaped my current research several exemplary studies of disciplinary history must also be mentioned; in chronological order they are *In Search of Authenticity* (1997) by Regina Bendix – the book which, through a prism of a single highly influential notion, discovers the formative powers of the discipline and the relationship between political and epistemological claims of truth; the first substantial deconstructive study of the formation of Latvian national self-image and interest in folksongs – *Dziedātājtauta (Singing nation)*, 2000) by Dace Bula; *Tradition through Modernity* (2005) by Pertti J. Anttonen, a treatise on postmodernism and the nation-state in folklore studies which inspired me to study the disciplinary history by both providing a multidimensional analysis of the dialectics of tradition and modernity, and by exemplary analysis of Finnish disciplinary developments, bearing many close parallels with those of Latvia. In addition to these monographs, all of them based on the doctoral dissertations of

the authors, I rely on the insights and framework of an Estonian collection of articles *Studies in Estonian Folkloristics and Ethnology* (2006), edited by Kristin Kuutma and Tiiu Jaago. A reader and reflexive history, this book provides exemplary studies, again, touching upon many developments common with Latvian folkloristics and research of mythology.

CHAPTER II: Genesis and historical dynamics

In this chapter I will draw the epistemological, temporal, and institutional borders of the research into Latvian mythology, as well as provide the basic mapping and periodisation of the discourses related to the subject matter. In addition, the chapter contains an overview of general trends and processes characteristic to knowledge production within the field of mythology. These trends and processes are definitive for closer analysis of particular personalities, schools, and traditions of research analysed in detail in the remaining parts of the thesis. Consequently, the first section concerns the sources of Latvian mythology reconstructions – from historical records, containing evidence on cult practices, beliefs, and deities, to folklore materials, briefly outlining the history of collection and publishing, as well as problems and critique related to editorial practices and the selection of texts for publishing. A separate subchapter concerns linguistic data and their application in studies of mythology, featuring two case studies that demonstrate the role of this material in two different historical and scholarly contexts. Further, I will define the research field's genealogy, locating it in a broader ideological context, and characterising the internal (institutional) and external (international) relationships forming the structure of this academic discourse. At the beginning, research into folklore and mythology are analysed in context of the form that Latvian nationalism had historically acquired; thus, the relationships of the field and ideology, defined in the first chapter, here are explored in a Latvian context. After setting the border between scholarly and public discourse on Latvian mythology, I will outline a short history of the interest in mythology: from the literary-cum-scientific publications of national romanticists to the early efforts of scholarly research, and, finally, the institutionalisation of the research in the 1920s. While so far primarily the developments of cultural nationalism are illustrated, a separate subchapter 'counterbalances' them by analysis of the international dimension in the formation of the scholarly discourse on the subject matter.

As this section, apart from analysis of the knowledge production relevant for the history of scholarship, to a large extent also introduces and characterises the research on mythology in the interwar period, in the following section I will introduce research traditions dominating after World War II: characterising the place of Latvian mythology in Soviet Latvian academia, its role and modality in the research conducted by exile scholars abroad, its contextualisation in the broader field of research – Baltic mythology – and its place within the studies conducted by scholars belonging to the Moscow-Tartu school of semiotics. The last sub-chapter concerns the changes of research practices and political implications in the years around the fall of the Soviet Union, also marking the border of the history of the research analysed in this thesis. The main purpose of the last section is the characterisation of power-knowledge dynamics in times of change when contradictory currents coexist and contest each other; however, in

the form of a shorter overview, the developments of mythology research are followed up to today. The conclusion of the chapter provides periodisation of the scholarly research of Latvian mythology.

I. Sources of reconstructed mythology

I.1. Sources: Historical records

The problematic nature of the disciplinary history of Latvian mythology to a large extent rises from the uncertain nature of subject matter. Perhaps every scholar would agree that “Latvians do not have myths in the sense of tales of gods, heroes, or actions that introduce things important for human life or establish any essential customs” (Pūtelis 2000: 26)³⁹. Despite this, there was a historical necessity to write the Latvian mythology. Therefore, such stories and the world they represent were reconstructed from a contemporary perspective with the recourses available to the modern researcher. Overall, the reconstructions of Latvian mythology are based on two groups of sources: historical records (chronicles, travellers’ notes, lexicons, church visitation protocols, etc.) in which cult practices, customs, beliefs, or the names of deities are mentioned, and folklore materials that were collected, with a few exceptions, from the beginning of the second half of the nineteenth century, i.e. in an already modern society. Initiated by Baltic German activists, *learned man*, the process of folklore collection was soon taken over and popularised by the ethnic Latvian nationalistic movement, acquiring powerful ideological connotations and, in some cases, also benefiting in financial and social respects from imperial Russian academia’s agenda of ethnographic mapping of territory (e.g. Brīvzemnieks-Treuland 1981). The collection, editing and publication of folklore materials continues today; however, the largest bodies of folklore texts had been published prior to 1944⁴⁰, and, in contrast to the archival materials, in such a form were more or less equally available for all researchers of the post-war period. Until that the availability of historical records differed during the first half of the twentieth century, determining the possibilities of reconstructions source-wise. The majority of such records were available to the public in the 1930s, courtesy of a print of Wilhelm Mannhardt’s *Letto-Preußische Götterlehre* (1936), publication of sources of Latvian history in Arnolds Spekke’s *Latvieši un Livonija 16. g. s. (Latvians and Livonia in 16th century, 1935)* and *Die Jahresberichte der Gesellschaft Jesu über ihre*

³⁹ Cf. the summarising definition of myth by Alan Dundes: “a sacred narrative explaining how the world and man came to be in their present form” (Dundes 1984: 1).

⁴⁰ The year of the second Soviet occupation, which created parallel, at the ideological level juxtaposed, communities of folklore research: Latvian exile scholars, generally continuing the interwar period ‘nationalistic’ scholarship, and Soviet Latvian scholars, bounded to principles of Marxism and Leninism.

Wirksamkeit in Riga und Dorpat 1583–1614 (1925) by Edith Kurtz, and *Baznīcas visitācijas protokoli* (*Church visitation protocols*, 1931) by Kārlis Bregžis (cf. Adamovičs 1940e).

The institutionalisation of the discipline around the 1920s saw the establishment of scholarly authority by two kinds of practice: source criticism and criticism of previous disciplinary developments. While the latter is characteristic to any significant turn in academic discourse, the former seems to have gained its more complete form exactly in this period. As a result, several authors belonging to the interwar period have extensively discussed the historical sources available for their mythological research, although in the ensuing analysis not all of them provide correct references to the sources used. For example, introducing his *Latviešu mitoloģija* (*Latvian mythology*, 2009 [1918]), Pēteris Šmits lists the historical records of the eighteenth century in detail as the most comprehensive sources, consolidating many previous evidences. On the other hand, following the literary tradition early authors were re-writing each other's texts and non-critically adding all available data from the mythologies of neighbouring regions, thus creating catalogues of gods that were later used in the composition of Latvian mythic pseudo-pantheons by the nineteenth century romanticists. As the latter were the primary subject matter of scholarly critique by Šmits and his contemporaries, such source criticism serves both for reconstructive purposes and for contestation of earlier (re)constructions of Latvian mythology.

In regard to those historical records of the eighteenth century that assimilate many earlier sources, Šmits (2009) and other authors (e.g. Straubergs 1934, Adamovičs 1940d et al.) most often mention August Wilhelm Hupel's *Topographische Nachrichten von Lief- und Ehistland* (1774–1782), and *Vollständiges deutschlettisches und lettischdeutsches Lexicon* (1777) by Jacob Lange. The latter includes and elaborates on information from the *Gelehrte Beyträge zu den Rigischen Anzeigen* newspaper, where the Latvian pseudo-pantheon was published in Riga by an unknown author in 1761 and by Johann Jacob Harder in 1764. While the author(s) of the *Gelehrte Beyträge* article consolidates descriptions of pagan religion from Paul Einhorn's works (1636 et al.), Lange's lexicon is also the source of the often quoted mythological appendix of *Lettische Grammatik* by Gotthard Friedrich Stender (*Neue vollständigere lettische Grammatik, nebst einem hinlänglichen Lexico, wie auch einigen Gedichten, verfasst von Gotthard Friedrich Stender*. 2nd edn.⁴¹, 1783).

Among the most comprehensive reports on historical records mentioning mythological beings and practices are several articles by Kārlis Straubergs (e.g. Straubergs 1934, 1943, 1949). In addition to listing the documents he used in his reconstruction of genuine Latvian mythology, Straubergs also provided an overview of sources of Lithuanian and Prussian mythologies, thus

⁴¹ In the first edition (1761) the author listed fewer deities, without a separate appendix (cf. Pūtelis 2000).

demonstrating the implicit conception of historical and linguistic unity that determined the legitimate mythology reconstruction in this time. However, there are no historical records from the times of one united population, from which Latvian, Lithuanian, and Prussian tribes emerged. The earliest record from the ones Latvian scholars have referred to, a short note on the religious practices in presumably the Baltic coastal region, was found in Roman historian Tacitus' *De Germania* (98 AD). Early but rather poor references on the subject matters are also provided by Adam of Bremen in his chronicle *Gesta Hammaburgensis Ecclesiae Pontificum* (1075), a bull issued by Pope Innocent III (1199), texts by Oliverus von Paderbor (1212), Ghillebert de Lannoy (1413) and the statutes of the city of Riga, *Statuta provincialia concilli Rigensis* (1428). More evidences were recorded in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, representing various genres and interests of the authors⁴². As these early records were rather fragmentary and heavily influenced by the agendas of their authors, most of them representing the Christian clergy, they remained only as a secondary source that was used to support hypotheses based upon the studies of folklore materials. Historical documents therefore required double caution: first, to separate the views of their authors from historical reality they observed, and second, to locate this historical reality in the temporal continuum, associating it with the period of observation only or claiming it as remains echoing earlier times.

1.2. Sources: Folklore materials

In the majority of scholarly reconstructions (Straubergs 1934–1935 might be regarded as an exception), historical records were secondary to folklore materials. As the latter, collected mainly in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, include both remains from the most archaic ideas as well as to some extent reflecting contemporary reality, historical records served mainly for the temporal mapping of the dynamics of mythology, allowing us to date one or other notion encountered in folklore. Folklore, on the other hand, also has its determinants: “It is of utmost importance that the collected materials be viewed as representations created in particular rhetorical contexts, employing particular

⁴² The works most often referred to include *Cosmographia* by Sebastian Münster (1550), the travel notes of Johann David Wunderer (1589) and Reinhold Lubenau (1585), a report by Salomon Henning (1589), *Chronica der Prouintz Lyfflandt* by Balthasar Russow (1584), annual reports of Jesuit collegiums, *Encomion Urbis Rigae* by Heinrich Ulenbrock (1615), *Livonicae Historiae Compendiosa Series* of Dionysius Fabricius (1611–1620), protocols of legal proceedings (especially witch and werewolf trials), works by Paul Einhorn *Wiederlegung der Abgötterey und nichtigen Aberglaubens* (1627), *Reformatio gentis Letticae* (1636), and *Historia Lettica, das ist Beschreibung der Lettischen nation* (1649). Various customs were also described by Christian Kelch in his *Liefländische Historia* (1695). Relevant fragments of almost all texts mentioned here were recently republished in *Sources of Baltic religion and mythology* (Vēlius 1996, 2001, etc.).

strategies in the making of the present, and that their nature as such be integrated into both their analysis and the estimation of their political significance” (Anttonen 2005: 81). Although some folksongs were collected in the eighteenth century⁴³ and some minor collections of songs and materials of other genres published in the first half of the nineteenth century, an amount of materials large enough to claim the scholarly validity of analysis based on them started to accumulate only in the second half of the nineteenth century. Therefore an overview of only so-called fundamental editions of folklore materials is provided below, referring to publications most often cited by researchers into Latvian mythology.

From various genres, the most important source in reconstructions of Latvian mythology has been folksongs. Here – as stated in the first chapter – two ‘replacements’ of ideologically important national history perfectly coincide: oral poetry itself and the mythology reconstructed from oral poetry. In this context, the positive reception of Herder’s ideas about oral poetry as the most ancient source of a nation’s history and a form of culture expressing the uniqueness of the nation must be seen against the backdrop of Latvians having few written sources on their history, all of them representing the non-ethnic perspective, and no literary monuments, but a rich living folksong tradition. The collection process was mediated by Latvian-language published periodicals and organised mainly by learned societies, negotiated by members of the recently emerged and rapidly developing ethnically oriented public sphere. In 1878, the circle of learned Latvians in Moscow⁴⁴ decided to publish a selection of “the best Latvian folk songs”. The editorial and collection work was started jointly by Frīcis Brīvzemnieks-Treuland (1846–1907) and Krišjānis Barons (1835–1923). Barons later completed the task alone and the first fundamental edition of folksongs, *Latvju dainas (Latvian folksongs)*, was published by Barons and Henry Wissendorff (1861–1916) in six volumes from 1894 to 1915 (two repeated editions in 1922–1923 and 1989–1994, concise edition in 1928–1932). Conducting the tasks of collecting and cataloguing the folksongs, Barons lived outside Baltic until 1893. At the time of publication of the first volume (1894) 16 000 previously published songs and more than 130 000 songs in manuscript were already in Barons’ possession (Ambainis 1989: 67). With so large a corpus, and the number of songs still increasing, it had been decided to publish as comprehensive edition as possible (*ibid.*), partially also for future research needs (Barons 1894: xi). Critically revising the previous much smaller folksong editions, the author’s approach was influenced by the works of Russian folklorists, but was based mainly on his own understanding what is a ‘proper folksong’ and what could be the best way to arrange the collection (Ambainis

⁴³ E.g. by Herder’s request to August Wilhelm Hupel in 1777 (cf. Ambainis 1989: 23).

⁴⁴ Since there was no classical university in Riga at this time, Latvian intellectual centres were formed in Moscow, St. Petersburg and Dorpat (the contemporary Tartu in Estonia, then a university city in the northern part of Livland province).

1989: 68). As a result, songs were organised according to their content in chapters on the human lifecycle, daily life, economic activities, crafts and trades, social positions and classes, international relations, and defence of the fatherland. This classification not only ignored real-life performance contexts, but also served for the creation of monolithic national ideology by reflecting current ideas and needs on the structure of the edition. Barons' editorial practices were subsequently criticised rather often (e.g. Vilks 1944, Švābe 1952a, Arājs 1959, Rudzītis 1964). The main points of this critique are summarised by Elga Melne: often separate song texts were re-arranged, eight-line songs divided into two four-line songs and placed separately to fit the thematic structure of the edition, from the six-line songs the last two lines were dropped, and some words were changed, thus also changing the motif and meaning (Melne 2000). One of the essential directions of criticism points toward the relation of Barons' criteria of authenticity in the selection of folksongs. Briefly, it is the national romanticists' idealistic notion of pure, beautiful, unchanging folk poetry. In the introduction to the first volume Barons wrote:

Getting to the real, healthy core of our folksongs, the best ideal efforts of human spirit appear, the most beautiful, most virtuous, the deepest feelings of human heart and soul... Such an unfading core we encounter in all...our folksongs. And this sublime core is expressed in simple, but sincere, deeply felt, and relevantly significant words that deeply touche everyone's heart. This is characteristic of a real poetry

(Barons, 1894: XVIII).

According to Barons' criteria of authenticity, songs of obvious recent origins and popular songs (*ziņģes*) are left out of the edition together with apparently counterfeit, faulty, and incomplete texts. The selected texts were further divided into types consisting of "original songs", repetitions, and variations. Barons' conception of authenticity here demonstrates obvious similarities with Herder's and Grimms' ideas, leading to similarities in editorial practices (p. 26–28). In 1928, Barons' work was followed by the publication of *Latvju tautas dainas* (*Latvian folksongs*) in 12 volumes by Roberts Klaustiņš. In 1936, the Archives of Latvian Folklore published *Tautas dziesmas* (*Folk songs*) – a sequel to Barons' edition, consisting of newly collected texts. After World War II, exiled Latvians in Copenhagen published *Latviešu tautas dziesmas* (*Latvian folk songs*) in 12 volumes (1952–1956), combining editions of Barons and the Archives of Latvian Folklore. At the same time (1955), a selection of folksongs was published in Soviet Latvia by the successors of the Archives of Latvian Folklore, the Institute of Ethnography and Folklore. All three volumes of this edition came up with a new classification system, one that foregrounded social relationships. Such classification was based on the newly constructed disciplinary identity, related to Marxist-Leninist dogma that folklore necessarily reflects the ideas and endeavours of the working people (p. 155–159). The first

volume of the contemporary academic folksong edition *Latviešu tautasdziesmas* (Latvian folksongs) was published in 1979. This work continues today and nine out of the 15 planned volumes have been published.

The first fundamental collection of Latvian folktales and legends was published in seven parts by Ansis Lerhis-Puškaitis (1859–1903) in 1891–1903. The second half of the seventh part remained unpublished until 2001 due to the editor's death. Lerhis-Puškaitis both organised activities of the narrative folklore collecting and included in his edition previously published texts. The published material is not differentiated according to folklore genres; it includes fairytales and legends, beliefs, stories, etc. Arrangement was influenced by the author's disposition towards the so-called anthropological school, foregrounding the principles of animistic theory: the origins of supernatural beliefs and myths from the cult of the dead souls. Consequently, the main content of folktales was also presented:

The basic ideas of legends, folktales and fairytales stem from the same root: meetings between beings of this world and beings of the netherworld. Although hero-tales and fairytales are dressed in sweet and lovely depictions..., the real matter and body of this splendour peeps through: also their dead souls (*veļi*) go and dead souls come – the same way as in simple tales on witches, dragons, riding-hags, werewolves, misleaders (*vadātāji*), and [buried] money

(Lerhis-Puškaitis 1903: iv).

From more recent perspectives, the main weakness of Lerhis-Puškaitis' approach was interpreting all folklore material with a single explanation; moreover, he claimed that all Latvian folklore is created by the Latvian people and invariably transmitted from generation to generation, and that there are no influences from other nations or religion, such as Christianity (cf. Ambainis 1989: 72; Pakalns 1985); therefore this edition also demonstrates the similarities with rhetorics exploited in Grimms' prefaces to *KHM*. Twenty years later, Arveds Švābe started arranging materials published by Lerhis-Puškaitis according to the classification of Antti Aarne (Švābe 1923–1924). The corpus was also supplemented with new tales; after the publication of two volumes, Švābe's work was continued by Pēteris Šmits, resulting in still the most voluminous publication of folktales in 15 tomes (1925–1937). In a similar way to the folksongs in Copenhagen, the Latvian exile community republished Šmits' edition of *Latviešu tautas teikas un pasakas* (Latvian legends and folktales, 1962–1970) in the USA, supplemented with an introduction by Haralds Biezais and motif index by Liene Neulande. *Latviešu pasaku tipu rādītājs* (Latvian folktale type index), based on the Aarne-Thompson classification system, was published in 1977 by Alma Medne and Kārlis Arājs in Soviet Latvia.

A collection of folk music melodies was published by Andrejs Jurjāns in six volumes of *Latviešu tautas mūzikas materiāli* (Materials of Latvian Folk Music, 1894–1922, the last volume published post mortem in 1926). Charms, beliefs

and customs for the researchers of the first half of the twentieth century were available mainly from publications in periodicals, the collection of Fricis Brīvzemnieks-Treuland (1881), appendices of Barons and Wissendorff's folksong edition and materials gathered in the Archives of Latvian Folklore. *Latviešu buramie vārdi* (*Latvian charms*) was published in two volumes only in 1939–1941 by Kārlis Straubergs, and *Latviešu tautas ticējumi* (*Latvian folk beliefs*) in four tomes in 1940–1941 by Pēteris Šmits (post mortem). The fundamental edition *Latviešu tautas paražas* (*Latvian folk customs*) was published in 1944 by Kārlis Straubergs. Overall, the publication history of fundamental editions reflects the intertwined demands to legitimate national history, or, as it has been worded often, to demonstrate national treasures on the one hand, and the availability of the sources for research on the other hand. Consequently, the editions represent the political agendas of the collectors and publishers, contemporary trends in the classification and publication of materials, and theories related to these trends. Moreover, several publications of folklore materials also reflect editors' understanding of mythology; for example, integrated in the overall framework of the edition as in Lerhis-Puškaitis folktales, or manifesting in separate chapter of "the mythological folklore" as in Straubergs' charms edition. Thus, the particular conceptions of mythology influence the selection and arrangement processes of its research sources.

1.3. Sources: Linguistic data

Research into Latvian mythology has always been shaped by tension between ethnic, regional, linguistic and political markers. These factors, often far from fully articulated, legitimise one or another definition of the research object. Ethnicity that is a given fact for the researchers of twentieth century was not a historical reality due to the formation of Latvian nation during the second half of the nineteenth century. In reconstructions of Latvian mythology, ethnicity is in a way backdated to the tribal society of the Late Iron Age or even earlier (e.g. Adamovičs 1937). The tribes that inhabited the territory of contemporary Latvia before the arrival of German crusaders were far from united politically, and their beliefs differentiated depending, for example, on Scandinavian influences in the south-west or Slavonic influences in the east, or Livonian⁴⁵ in the northern and coastal regions. Moreover, Livonians, who historically inhabited a rather large part of Latvia, were totally excluded from all major works entitled *Latvian mythology* and, with a few exceptions, were marginalised as an alien influence on Latvian monoethnic beliefs. This exclusion is perhaps one of the

⁴⁵ Livonians or Livs, *Lībieši* or *Liivi* was a tribe, later – minority group in Latvia, of Finno-Ugric origins, i.e. non-Indo-European. Although rapidly decreasing in number (only a few native speakers are alive today), they had always been problematic in the Latvian national discourse.

most precise illustrations of conflicting political and scholarly agendas, demonstrating a strong correlation of territorial and linguistic concepts. In the nineteenth century, due to linguistic affiliations, the remnant of ethnic Livonians encountered two competing nationalising processes: the Latvian and the Estonian (see Bolin Hort 2003: 39); since then research concerning Livonian language and culture was conducted mainly by Estonian and Finnish scholars. One of the conceptual models used in research into Latvian mythology that allows such exclusion is based on comparative linguistics. The Latvian language belongs to the Indo-European language family, representing the Baltic branch of languages⁴⁶. It is very tempting to assume that cultural similarities are identical to linguistic similarities. Theories on the migration and development of languages also allow us to date cultural heritage back to the times of the united Indo-European language, spoken by the Indo-European community, thereby claiming extraterritorial extended historical continuity (e.g. Šmits 2009 [1918]). In addition, several mythological research strategies emerge from the recognised linguistic affinities.

I have chosen two cases to illustrate the basic conceptual framework of Indo-European related linguistic theories and the research of culture. The first is an overview of *Valodas liecības par senajiem baltiem* (Language evidences on ancient Balts, 1932) with references to *Latviešu mitoloģija* (Latvian mythology, 2009 [1918]) by Latvian scholar Pēteris Šmits, and the second concerns *Indo-European and the Indo-Europeans* (1995 [1984]), written by two prominent authors belonging to the Moscow-Tartu school of semiotics: Thomas Gamkrelidze and Vjačeslav Ivanov. Multiple references suggest that Šmits' works, especially *Latvian mythology*, were among the most influential in the interwar period, setting the standard for the research of mythology in its time. The study by Gamkrelidze and Ivanov is among the largest research projects of Indo-European matters in the last decades of the twentieth century. Within the contemporary debates on IE issues, "Gamkrelidze's so-called Glottalic Theory is one of the major proposals in the market of ideas in the field, and his Caucasian homeland hypothesis is one of the main current contestants, next to the late Marija Gimbutas' (1921–1994) Kurgan or Eurasian Steppe hypothesis and Colin Renfrew's (b. 1929) Anatolian theory" (Koerner. Online). At the same time, Glottalic Theory seems to be often criticised (ibid., see also Malroy and Adams 2006: 52). However, compared across a time of almost 50 years between their publication, these works each locate the view on the Indo-European language and culture in their particular theoretical, historical and ideological settings. Along with an insight into the authors' argumentation linking linguistic and mythological fields, I will outline the corresponding versions of reconstructed common Indo-European mythologies, for the latter might serve for comparison with the versions of Latvian mythology analysed in

⁴⁶ That includes Latgalian, Lithuanian, Samogitian and several extinct languages such as Old Prussian, Galindian, Sudovian, Old Curonian, Selonian, etc. (Baltic languages 2010).

other chapters of the thesis. On the basis of linguistic analysis, sometimes supported by archaeological evidence (or its absence), Šmits claims the unity, localisation, and superiority of the ancient Indo-European group, the Balts. He is also rather supportive of the hypothesis that the Indo-Europeans in general had originated somewhere in territory of ancient Lithuania (Šmits 1932b: 63) while, however, stating that we must be cautious regarding such ancient pre-history. Therefore, the main argument is that the Balts have lived in this region since separation from other Indo-European tribes, at the coast of the Baltic sea, north-west of the Slavs. It has been the centre of culture of the region; and, expanding towards north, militarily advanced crop-growing Balts had assimilated some unidentified stone-age tribes that lived in northern Latvia (Šmits 1932b: 71, 75). According to Šmits, many loan words in Estonian and Finnish prove that the culture of the Balts had been superior to theirs, with perhaps even Balts ruling over ancient Finns (Šmits 1932b: 69). The Latvian and Lithuanian subgroups separated during the first millennia of the Common Era, although Latgalian as a dialect of Latvian developed much later (Šmits 1932b: 71). In *Latvian mythology* (2009) Šmits relies on argument from the field of comparative linguistics, stating that the languages of the Baltic people, living at a distance from the Mediterranean region, had preserved the purity of language most closely resembling the hypothetical ancient Indo-European language. Therefore, Baltic mythology must also be similar to Indo-European mythology, at least more than the views of people belonging to other Indo-European language groups (Šmits 2009: 9). Summarised, his version of this common Indo-European mythology consists of the following features: heaven as the father and earth as the mother, represented by higher celestial god and *Zemes māte* (Mother of Earth); the marriage of *Saule* (Sun) and *Mēness* (Moon); specific mythological beings Sons of God and Daughters of Sun; other celestial deities related to thunder, dawn, wind, fire, and water; patrons of particular spheres and activities (Šmits 2009: 10). More likely, these deities had neither been completely anthropomorphised, nor totally undeveloped and merely refer to the pre-animism stage of evolution. However, Šmits is rather concise regarding the characterisation of how Baltic mythology later developed a particular form of this Indo-European mythology. There he mentions only the higher level of anthropomorphism (Šmits 2009: 10) and differentiates between the names of the same deities for different Baltic sub-groups: Prussians, Lithuanians and Latvians (Šmits 2009: 11). After referring to evidence provided by medieval and early modern authors, Šmits states that “According to these evidences, we see not only kinship within mythology of Baltic peoples but also great similarity of the later with ancient Indo-European customs” (Šmits 2009: 10). From the comparative perspective Šmits concludes that mythological Mothers are specific Latvian beings, almost never encountered in other Baltic mythologies, neither Prussian nor Lithuanian, therefore it must be ‘a new phenomenon’, originated outside Indo-European culture (Šmits 2009: 66). Definitely, such a line of thought points out the particular pattern of dating:

relating the subject matter, Latvian mythology, exclusively to Indo-European heritage, despite the fact that specific but integral feature of it – the cult of the Mothers – could be dated as older. Šmits does not refer to any particular researcher, stating that “these Mothers (*Tuule-ema*, *Mere-ema*, *Vee-ema*, etc.) are also a rather new phenomenon in Estonian mythology”; therefore, the origins of this cult must be located with the pre-historic inhabitants of the contemporary Vidzeme region (in northern Latvia, bordering with southern Estonia) and integrated in Latvian (genuinely Baltic) mythology around the turn of eras (Šmits 2009: 66). In this way Šmits’ reconstruction of Latvian mythology reflects the construction of the Latvian nation as rather an ethnic and linguistic, than territorial, concept.

Conducted half a century later, the study by Gamkrelidze and Ivanov reflects the general evolution of linguistics in the second half of the twentieth century, related to overcoming of antinomy of diachrony and synchrony established by Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913). New theoretical developments led to return to the questions that arose in classical Indo-European comparative-historical linguistics, and their revision in the light of new methodology. Moreover, since the common recognition of language as a social phenomenon, linguistics were more closely related than ever to general cultural anthropology; as the authors claim: the study of languages must be conducted in close relation to the study of culture and vice versa (cf. Gamkrelidze and Ivanov 1995: vii). Importantly, structurally inclined analysis of culture also indicates a shift from historical to meta-level positioning of the subject matter. In this case, the meta-level is located on the temporal dimension, thus creating and shaping a new study subject: Proto-Indo-European (hereafter referred to as PIE) language and PIE culture related to it. As Roman Jakobson states in the foreword: “The book naturally transforms the time-honoured, spatially and temporally uniform view of Proto-Indo-European and creates a model of dynamic synchrony which fully comprehends the foundations of the protolanguage, its evolutionary shifts, its internal, regional differentiation, and its recurrent intersections with neighbouring linguistic areas” (ibid.: xx). Natural languages, opposite to artificial formal systems, are context-sensitive; therefore the reconstruction of such a protolanguage and proto-culture are connected parts of a single whole: the reconstructed proto-lexicon is analysed in semantic fields, and the corresponding prehistoric realia are reconstructed in relation to the lexicon as a structural system. This cross-disciplinary comparison is carried out primarily in the fields of mythology and ritual (cf. ibid.: xxi). According to the reconstruction by Gamkrelidze and Ivanov, ritual and mythological areas reflect the basic dualistic principle characteristic to Indo-European society. Based on particular marriage arrangements, the binary organisation influenced other areas of social life as well as spiritual views, manifesting in the myth of two kings as tribal founders, dual kingship in later (e.g. Ancient Greek) cultures, and the cult of the divine twins, children of the sun god, in various mythologies of the Indo-European people (Gamkrelidze and Ivanov 1995: 679), including also the case

of the Latvian *Dieva dēli* (Sons of God); the Latvian *Saules meitas* (Daughters of Sun) also correspond to the same myth. The Latvian agricultural deity *Jumis*, represented by a double fruit or a double head of grain, is also related to the same PIE twins motif. Incest between the divine twins in different variants of myth

can be regarded as a retention in the mythic world of a prototype of legally sanctioned marriage between cross cousins, i.e. between a man and the daughter of his father's sister or mother's brother. It must be assumed that originally each of the twins symbolically represented his or her 'half' of the tribe, which entered into marriage and affinal relations with the other half

(Gamkrelidze and Ivanov 1995: 681)⁴⁷.

With further developments and the increasing complexity of social relations, this original dualism was completely transferred to the realms of myth and ritual, remaining also in the lexicon and semantics of reconstructed PIE (in terms like 'half' and 'double', as well as lexical antonyms like 'good' and 'bad', 'high, top' and 'low, bottom', 'wide' and 'narrow', 'full' and 'empty', 'large' and 'small', etc.), further allowing interpretation of two cosmic creative principles in various historical traditions (ibid.: 683). Specific is the binary opposition of right and left: the impossibility of reconstructing the proto-form of 'left' is explained with connotations on the semantic level relating 'left' to meanings like 'bad', 'unfavourable', and 'unjust'; this meaning is tabooed and replaced differently in various Indo-European dialects and dialect groupings, but the principle of 'value-laden' binary opposition extended to various areas of culture. Overall, the original binarism was gradually replaced or supplemented during the rise and formation of several functionally distinct social groups, i.e. three or four social classes. According to the authors,

The reconstructed dual social structure of Indo-European, conditioned by the binary nature of marriage and affinal relations, and the increasing complexity of the society as discrete social groups formed, presuppose analogous structures in the religious conceptions of the ancient Indo-Europeans, where earthly social relations would have been reflected in a mythically transformed shape

(Gamkrelidze and Ivanov 1995: 692).

Thus, the projective nature of religious structure reflecting real social relations confirms Dumézil's theory of tripartite society and the three functions characteristic to Indo-European mythology. Despite this, linguistic and historical-comparative data allow certain reconstruction of only two main deities belonging to the PIE pantheon: the highest deity is the sky god who occupies the dominant position in the pantheon, reflecting the patriarchal

⁴⁷ For a different angle on the reconstruction of the establishment of marriage institutions according to mythology see Švābe 1923 or p. 109–113.

structure of the family, and is related to the social class of priests (ibid.: 693); the other original deity is also a male figure, the thunder and lightning god, who is also a god of war and military campaigns, functionally correlated with the Indo-European social class of warriors. Both highest deities are opposed to each other as personifications of the major natural forces causing sunny and rainy weather – circumstances related to the fertility of the earth, i.e. agricultural activities, correlated with class of farmers. The names of the separate god protecting economic activities in the ancient Indo-European traditions are not etymologically related and thus cannot be traced back to a single Indo-European proto-form (ibid.: 694). The absence of such evidence also suggests that the earliest pantheon contained two gods sharing various functions and reflecting the above mentioned binary principle. Exploring transformations of the original pantheon in various historical traditions, the authors referred also to Baltic mythology:

For Baltic mythology we can reconstruct an opposition of two major gods, who continue the ancient Indo-European gods: Balt. **Deiwas* (O. Pruss. *deiws*, Lith. *diēvas*, Latv. *dievs* ‘god’), who is described in Lithuanian and Latvian folklore texts as living in the sky; and Balt. **Perkūnas* ‘thunder god’ (Lith. *Perkūnas*, Latv. *Pērķūns*), who is regarded as having formerly lived on the earth but was taken up into the sky by **Deiwas*

(Gamkrelidze and Ivanov 1995: 699).

While these two case studies – of Šmits, and of Gamkrelidze and Ivanov’s works – shed light on different roles and conclusions of comparative linguistics in relation to the reconstruction of Latvian mythology in two distant periods of time and their academic contexts, closer analysis of Šmits’ vision of the ancient Latvian pantheon is outlined in the next chapter (p. 107–109), while an extended overview and analysis of Moscow-Tartu school of semiotics’ version of Latvian mythology and its relationship to the reconstruction of Indo-European proto-myth is provided in the fourth chapter (p. 171–176) In general, the historical, folklore, and linguistic sources can be regarded as the basis for the research on Latvian mythology. So, in the following section of the thesis the political, cultural, and institutional superstructure of scholarly activities is analysed.

2. The creation of Latvian mythology

2.1. The creation of Latvian mythology: The context of nationalism

In the beginning, interest in Latvian mythology was related to the agenda of the Christian church, trying to explore, Christianise, and dominate the pagan lands; later it was embedded in Enlightened curiosity, discovering the nature of exotic

natives, soon developing in German subject of fiction (Merkel), appreciation (Herder), or scholarship (Mannhardt). In the second half of the nineteenth century these trends were adopted and elaborated by literati and scholars of ethnic Latvian as well as Baltic German origin, starting the formation of an extensive corpus of knowledge that was developing into a distinctively national and often nationalistic discipline. Even after only brief comparison with other disciplinary histories, there is no reason to assume that Latvian folkloristics was somewhat different from the other national disciplines in Europe. Since the formation, the ideological regime of Latvian mythology scholarship was the national agenda. “The close link between folklore studies and nation making has not only been taken for granted but it has been seen as constituting one of the cornerstones for the discipline and its identity” (Anttonen 2005: 90). Therefore, it is easy to see similar relations between the political disposition and content of knowledge production in various European countries. Those relations have been scrupulously analysed by many scholars from one or other point of view. There are analyses of ethnographic research institutions serving national goals even up to the modelling of social planning in Sweden by Barbro Klein (2006), the nationalisation of folklore scholarship in Estonia by Ülo Valk (2007), folkloristics’ role in creating nationalistic representations in Finland (Anttonen 2005) and Estonia (Kuutma 2006), or the search for authenticity within the German discipline of *Volkskunde* in Germany and Switzerland (Bendix 1999).

Following this direction of analysis, the research of mythology, carried out as a part of the research into folklore in general, was a tool for nation-building. “Since myths deal with the basic questions of culture and human existence, research into them has been felt to be important both when formulating the general cultural history of Europeanness and when constructing a cultural identity for small peoples” (Siikala 2008: 5; cf. Branch and Hawkesworth 1994). This is not to say that myths provide the direct means for national ideology, they are the very basis of this ideology, the national knowledge. Invoking Foucaultian analysis of knowledge and power, influence of cultural production on state politics involves not only a straightforward adaptation of poetic ideals by political leaders, but also a transmission through the field of learning and scholarship (Leerssen 2006). Illustrative here are the role, genesis and functions of the national epic, closely related and often blended with ethnic mythology. Therefore one could say that the research into mythology was a construction of particularly Latvian culture heritage, further displayed and contested in the public space. In other words, it was construction of the present by writing about the past. Consequently, the majority of researchers have tended to emphasise unique Latvian structures, deities, customs and other features that characterise Latvian mythology and distinguish it from the other religious practices in the region or within the language group (e.g. Šmits 2009 [1918]). Comparison with the sources and practices of other nations is also applied; but, regarding reconstruction of the mythological world view, sources

that do not seem to support the dominant narrative of an ancient, monoethnic Latvian nation, for example, everything bearing Christian influences, are often excluded from the accounts on myths. The collecting of folklore materials has been an issue of honour and contestation in the national arena; over and over the statements that it will grant “decent place among the other nations” (Brīvzemnieks-Treulands 1881) and “full and undisputable rights to exist besides the large nations of culture” have been repeated (Bērzkalne 1925).

Folklore is the collection of the culture that is used in the creation and supplementation of a nation’s symbolical capital the most. Evidence of a nation’s history and destiny, examples of pure and pleasing native language, national heroes, as well as traits of the nation’s character and mentality have been sought and found in it. But already since the times of Herder, folklore itself and folk traditions, whether nationalism has political, cultural-political, or a touristic nature, become a symbol that discloses nation’s particularity (the essence) (Bula 2000: 44).

While serving for the creation and mapping of the imagined Latvian community in the nineteenth century, folkloristics remained a civic activity. By proving the existence of Latvian history, mythology gave hope for the coming Latvian future (cf. p. 50–52). When this future was fulfilled by the establishment of a nation state, official discourse, financial and moral support, the rhetoric of patriotism and the establishment of various research institutions proved that folklore research was of national importance, defining a notable part of national culture – the ideological assets of the state (cf. Bula 2000), positioned by the dominant agents of the discipline. As a matter of fact, the national orientation of folkloristics can also be sustained after the decline of a particular national state. For instance, the tradition of research established in interwar Latvia was continued abroad by scholars who went in exile. Moreover, during a regime hostile to national ideology, folkloristics also continues to maintain this narrative: “or nation-symbolic meaning remains unquestionable in all ages, independently from interpretation” (Meistere 2000: 44).

2.2. The creation of Latvian mythology: Mythology in public discourse

Since its beginnings, the research into mythology has gone hand in hand with the public, non academic circulation of the same themes. Apart from more direct political instrumentalisation of folkloristics characterised in the previous chapter, folklore and mythology are encountered in multiple discursive realms from the doctrines of the neo-pagan movements to creative activities, marketing, and literature. Mythology is a highly contested realm of knowledge production: lay and expert versions dynamically change into one another, multiple parallel instances of expertise coexist in selective and diachronic

processes of activation of particular mythology-related signs and narratives in public domain. Like any other humanity, folkloristics operates both in societal and scholarly environments; common knowledge of the subject matter is already spread within the system of primary education. On the one hand, the general public legitimises the knowledge constructed academically. On the other hand, this knowledge is selectively interpreted and blended with other narratives in public domain, thus creating a new level of discourse on Latvian mythology.

The particular nature of Latvian mythology as a research subject also contributes to the pluralism of views on its features and meaning: narratives on mythology have special epistemic status due to their composite sources, blurring of disciplinary boundaries, and previously mentioned involvement in political and, recently, lifestyle agendas. It is by no means a top-down process of dissemination and appropriation of scholarly knowledge. Although, due to specific historic circumstances, Latvian mythology is available only through (mostly scholarly) reconstructions, sources of these reconstructions were created by non-experts, something that applies to both kinds of previously described sets of texts: historical records and collections of folklore materials. Especially in the early stages of disciplinary developments, the collection of folklore materials was a process contributing to the articulation of the national idea, involving both the learned elite and lower classes, mobilised by the printed press. Only later these materials were appropriated within the discursive realm of institutionalised knowledge production. The first fundamental editions of folklore materials and subsequent interpretations show ‘expertise by initiative’ where the collector and publisher becomes an expert due to his role. Later this enterprise became more and more narrowly academic, and in the collection of materials a more important role was played by the ethnographic expeditions instead of public initiatives and correspondences; the moral agenda was replaced by the theoretical and technical necessities of the research.

“Common knowledge of Latvian mythology” circulates in everyday discursive realms with or without direct references to academia; in this form of knowledge claims of authenticity are implicit, a hierarchy of sources absent, and references are not present. The realm of mythology outside academic circles blooms both at the conscious and un-conscious level. It stretches from the images in arts and texts of songs to discussions in internet portals, anachronistically blending all available inspirations and information. To illustrate this process, I am hereby presenting insights into several discursive fields. Both in the times of Soviet rule and independent Latvia, mythological motifs have been reflected in brand names and place names. For example, there were several collective farms with names like mythological beings: *Lāčplēsis*,

*Auseklis, Laima, Dzīvais vārds, Saule, Ozols, Spīdola, Rūķis*⁴⁸. Rock bands are titled with the names of the thunder god, for example *Skyforger* and *Pērkons*⁴⁹, while brands of popular consumer goods are called *Laima, Lāčplēsis* and *Līgo*⁵⁰. Some of these motifs are inspired by mythological folklore, some of them by national epic that in a way translates fragmented mythology into monolith ideologically powerful narrative, reaching almost all members of the nation: here the knowledge constructed by experts and lays are on the same epistemic level. Knowledge production, by fragmentation and decontextualisation in the public realm, is an on-going process. In contrast to narrowly academic practices, it recently includes, for example, a public lecture on Latvian mythology and the erotic by a popular psychoanalyst (see Tamuleviča 2010. Online), and an educational post in the online discussion board of a maternity portal (Deģe 2009. Online). Internationally acknowledged folk-metal band *Skyforger* educates local and foreign public alike on its multi-language webpage, also providing their own critical perspective⁵¹ on disciplinary history:

During the two decades of Latvian independence from 1918 to 1940, Latvian mythology was interpreted with very romantic and patriotic feeling, basing very little on historic fact of belief as it was in the past. Several gods and mythological beings were created on the spot and placed in the pantheon of ancient Latvian gods. In addition, the interpretation of mythology was greatly distorted by the “white Latvian” movement

(Kvetkovskis 1999. Online).

An interpretation of Latvian mythology becomes a means of strategic positioning of oneself or one's product in the public domain, whose members recognise and appreciate such identity constructs. At the same time, discussions in online forums illustrate the composite sources of popular knowledge about mythological issues. There are bits and pieces from the ideas acquired via formal education, by reading books, from personal conversations, etc. For example, analysis of the narrative thread in one online discussion board shows theories of fetishism and matricentric-religion, notions of contemporary and pre-Christian folklore, discussion on adopted and authentic gods, the cult of the dead and then, suddenly, protestant ethics of honour and work (Kedriks 2004. Online). While such online discussion hardly can be called a structured narrative, the self-contained realm of mythological discourse can be found in esoteric new-age circles. Usually these are theories that go well beyond

⁴⁸ The first is fairytale character from the national epic, next two are ancient Latvian deities, followed by “Living word”, “Sun” – also a deity, “Oak”, another mythical character from national epic, and, finally, “Dwarf”.

⁴⁹ Thunder god.

⁵⁰ Namely: deity, mythological character, and linguistic entity related to summer solstice festival.

⁵¹ Seems that here some developments typical for the nineteenth century are located in the interwar period.

interpretation of mythology only, providing a whole new view on folklore in general, and contesting rather than utilising expert knowledge. Here folklore and mythology are described as “written in the language of symbols” and available only for initiates; according to the theories of ‘parallel science’ of the New Age movement, claims of uniqueness and authenticity are made, contributing both to securing the authority of these experts and the building of the image of Latvians as a chosen nation. The most extreme examples also feature the ideas that folksongs are about 65 thousand years old and “Therefore, this is the minimum age of our nation and culture. (...) Latvian folksongs and legends prove that our ancestors remembered developments before the ice age very well” (Pokaiņi – pasaules centrs. Online). On the one hand, this discursive realm resembles the earlier periods of the research into mythology, such as the instrumentalisation of the subject matter for the sake of defining and positioning the nation. On the other hand, replicated in multiple versions within the international arena, it shows globally the distributed structures and inspirations of such claims.

Notwithstanding this, the most coherent and long-lasting corpus of non-academic knowledge regarding mythology belongs to the neo-pagan *Dievturi*⁵² movement. They emphasise three deities: *Dievs* (God), *Māra*, and *Laima*, referring to other mythological beings as personifications of natural forces or something else (cf. Brastiņš 1966). The first attempt to establish non-Christian, folksong-based religious organisation was made during World War I, and two *Dievturi* organisations were officially registered in 1926 and 1927. Doctrinal and ritual formalisation of the movement followed in a few years. This folksong-based religious movement was saturated with nationalistic ideology. As its leader Brastiņš wrote in the newspaper *Brīvā Zeme* (*Free Country*) in 1934: “Dievturība is a religious answer to questions which touch on the place of ethnic Latvians in the Latvian state, Latvian identity; also religious identity and the responsibility of the ethnic majority regarding processes in this country” (Quoted from Misāne 2005). After World War II, the *Dievturi* movement continued to practice within Latvian exile communities and renewed their organisation in the independent Latvia at the end of the twentieth century. As elsewhere, Latvian esoteric and neo-pagan religious movements reside in the area between folkloristics and occultism. It seems that earlier there was a tendency to prefer the former, while later, with increased marginalisation and fragmentation of the discourse, the latter was preferred. Regarding this dynamic, the following hypothesis might be drawn: in the first half of the twentieth century such religious movements manifested the anti-Christian sentiment related to Christianity as a religion brought by conquerors to a now free nation; in the 1990s, after the decline of the Soviet Union, alternative spirituality was more likely shaped by the suddenly freely available information and theories, accompanied also by freedom of civic organisations and free

⁵² Literally: God-holders.

speech. Therefore the more enclosed and folklore-oriented ‘traditional’ neo-pagan movements, and the more fragmented, new religious and esoteric movements, doctrinally referring to multiple sources, could be separated, at least from the perspective of knowledge production. Of course, similar developments in other countries and the challenges of the rapidly changed socio-economic and cultural situation after the fall of USSR significantly contributed to the process.

2.3. The creation of Latvian mythology: The first pantheons

As demonstrated in the previous sections, reconstructions of mythology involving scholarly authority and corresponding institutions are rather recent phenomena. Historical records are more or less of an incidental character due to the circumstances of their creation and discovery, and folklore collections were originally formed within the agenda of the mass movement. Similar tendencies can also be found in reconstructions of Latvian mythology, based on these sources. Simultaneously to the accumulation of the sources the first efforts of interpretation also appeared. For example, large-scale comparative projects created outside the territory of Latvia and contributing to the main developments of the discipline in Western Europe, like Leopold von Schroeder’s *Arische Religion* (1914). The most well known instances of this trajectory are Wilhelm Mannhardt’s *Die Lettischen Sonnenmythen* (1875) and *Letto-Preussische Gotterlehre* (1870), promoting the theory of solar mythology. Despite the decline of the solar trend of interpretation, the latter collection of texts remains one of the most comprehensive resources relating to the historical records on the ancient Baltic tribes. On the other hand, pseudo-mythological pantheons were published in the local media, invented by national romanticists who, following the textual wide-spread and historical textual practice, tended to construct Latvian mythology according to Prussian or even Ancient Greek examples. This tendency corresponded to discovery of national mythologies, established by the publication of *Deutsche Mythologie* by Jacob Grimm (1835) and the role of such enterprise in building of the national idea (cf. Leerssen 2006). However, the first fabulae – hierarchic catalogues with short explanations – of presumably Latvian gods were published already by Einhorn (1636), Lange (1777) and Stender (1783). The latter, comparatively easily available, informed many national romanticists in the search for, and creation of, the Latvian past (cf. Pūtelis 2000). Similarly, if not more inspiring, was the idyllic scene of ancient Latvian and Estonian life, conjured by Garlieb Merkel (1769–1850) in *Die Vorzeit Liefland* (1798) and *Wannem Ymanta: Eine lettische Sage* (1802). “Merkel was a somewhat pathos-ridden romantic firebrand of Livonia-Latvia, who had imbibed Voltaire, Rousseau and Herder in equal measure, and whose publicistic activism bore on social justice and literature alike” (Puhvel 2003. Online). Still, Merkel did not invent any deities,

he just composed his pantheon from previously published Old Prussian, Lithuanian and Latvian catalogues (cf. Rozenbergs 1997).

As Merkel created historical vision of Livland that included both Latvian and Estonian parts according to his agenda, shared Latvian and Lithuanian history was depicted in rather similar manner by Lithuanian historian Teodor Narbutt (1784–1864), also serving as a source of inspiration for Latvian romantic nationalists. The first effort to create a Latvian national pantheon by an ethnic Latvian, based on Teodor Narbutt's *Mitologia litewska* (*Lithuanian mythology*), the first part of *Dzieje starożytne narodu litewskiego* (*History of Lithuanian nation*), was carried out by Juris Alunāns (1832–1864) in 1856 (cf. Prusinowska 2008). Alunāns was one of the central personalities in the early years of the Neo-Latvian movement⁵³: a translator, one of the founders of national poetry, and developer of the modern Latvian language. As many Neo-Latvians, he studied at the University of Dorpat (Tartu). His article “*Latviešu valoda*” (“Latvian language”; *Mājas viesis*, 1858, no. 19) could be considered as a manifesto of early Latvian nationalistic ideology (Priedīte and Sočņevs 1995: 373). In other article, “*Dievi un gari, kādus vecie latvieši citkārt cienījuši*” (“Gods and spirits, once venerated by ancient Latvians”; *Mājas viesis* 1856, no. 23), he lists more than twenty names of mythological beings, some genuinely Latvian, like *Saule*, *Laima*, or *Pērkons*, some purely invented like *Anšlavs* un *Pramšāns*, and some from Old Prussian like *Potrimps* and *Pakuls*. The same list some years later was extended and arranged in a hierarchical table by another poet and Neo-Latvian Auseklis (Miķelis Krogzemis, 1850–1879), and also published as genuine (see Auseklis 1923: 545–550). Auseklis had composed several poetic legends on the Golden Age in Latvian history, featuring mythological persons and motifs. Auseklis’ metaphor *Castle of Light* is repeated by multiple authors for more than a century and is still an often-encountered trope in nationalistic discourse today. However, the best known “poetic pantheon” comes from “the council of gods” scene in the Latvian national epic *Lāčplēsis* (*Bearslayer*) composed by Andrejs Pumpurs (1841–1902) in 1888, bearing great resemblance to the ancient Greek pantheon.

The steeds of Perkons saddled in the court,
With trappings glowing waited in the morn;
The sun’s first rays a dazzling glitter brought,
As polished harness glinted in the dawn.
And Patrimps, God of Plenty, held in yokes
His beeswax-yellow steeds with flowing manes;

⁵³ Lat.: *Jaunlatvieši*, a name adopted by local historians for members of ‘first national awakening’, a movement similar to those in other Eastern and Central European countries. The term Young Latvia (*junges Lettland*) appeared in public for the first time in the review of Alunāns’ collection of poetry and translations *Dziesmiņas* by pastor Wilhelm Brasche (Brasche 1856).

Of golden stalks his winged chariot's spokes-
 Its course ensures the timely suns and rains.
 Dread Pakols, God of Death, had horses black,
 Yoked closely to his sledge of human bones;
 Of ribs the runners, driver's seat and back,
 Shinbones as shafts, arrayed in sombre tones.
 While Antrimps, of the Sea, had steeds all scaled,
 And chariot swift of reeds of ocean green.
 Of shells whose beauty yet was still unpaled
 Its supple seat was formed, as could be seen.
 And Liga fair, the Goddess of sweet Song,
 In flower-decked chariot seated high in state,
 By swiftest horses queen-like drawn along,
 With Puskaitis passed through the Rainbow Gate.
 The Gods' proud Sons, all mounted brave and bold,
 On fiery steeds into the courtyard rode.
 Their saddles shone, their bridles gleamed with gold,
 With diamond bits their snorting horses glowed.
 Soon Austra, Morning Goddess, came in haste,
 And Laima too, the greatest Goddess there,
 While Tikla, Virtue's Goddess stern and chaste,
 Thence travelled fast, bedecked with roses fair.
 Last, drawn by prancing stallions swift and strong,
 Up came the beauteous Daughters of the Sun.
 Firm holding golden reins they dashed along;
 A flower-strewn course their chariots thence had run

(Pumpurs 2006 [1888]).

The English translation presented here is written in verse, while the Latvian original consists of 4 700 lines in free verse. Highly eclectic, this poem echoes the romantic world of Auseklis' writings, refers to Latvian and Estonian folklore, and certainly reflects the pan-European tendency of discovering or composing national epics in the nineteenth century (cf. Taterka 2010; Leerssen 2006). The conceptual axis of the epic here is Neo-Latvians ideas inspired by Garlieb Merkel (cf. Rozenbergs 1997). Plot, characteristic to fairytale, is projected upon the historical situation of the thirteenth century. It is an idyllic world, easy to identify with contrasting oppositions: ancient gods, *Lāčplēsis* and his people on the one side, and chthonic creatures, German conquerors and Latvian traitors on the other side. At the same time, *Lāčplēsis* was by no means a unique composition, regarding both its aims and mythology-related content: between 1860 and 1890 about ten longer or shorter compositions intended to represent Latvian epic poetry were made, some of them equally celebrated by the general public and discussed by literary critics (Bula 2002). Pumpurs' composition turned out to be the most successful in the long-term, now for more than century shaping the national imagery and providing a particular version of Latvian mythology.

From the point of view of historical reception, the researcher of new religious movements Agita Misāne doubts that the authors of these invented gods seriously believed in their existence and suggests that

it rather must be considered as a cultural-national play or clumsy endeavour of research, inspired by intellectual atmosphere of this time. (...) Poets praised gods, whose cult was never directly suggested, which symbolised the bright and clear spiritual constitution of the lost Latvian Golden Age. With this the value of ancient Latvian religiosity was acknowledged, the one characterised as pagan brutality by Baltic German authors, apart from it being opposed to Christianity on the conceptual level

(Misāne 2005).

However, as many examples from the previous chapter suggest, the invented mythological beings exist in the public realm with the same epistemic status as deities discovered by academic researchers. Mythological images, surviving from the times of tribal society or invented just recently, circulate between different domains of knowledge with or without scholarly claimed authenticity.

2.4. The creation of Latvian mythology: The birth of scholarship

First two decades of the twentieth century both politically and scholarly mark the transitional period from earlier efforts in folkloristics by romantic nationalists and enthusiasts operating within the academia of the Russian Empire to institutionalised knowledge production in the independent Republic of Latvia in the interwar period. Certainly, the line of division between two periods is not strict; however, interruption of scholarly activities by World War I and subsequent political changes allow us to mark qualitative differences. Already since the last years of the nineteenth century, the leftist *Jaunā Strāva* (New Current) movement⁵⁴, acquired more influence and representation in the public realm, shifting emphasis from cultural nationalism to political struggle and workers' rights; therefore, folklore too, being a rather central theme in the previous era, was somewhat marginalised during the decades around the Revolution of 1905. Several leading researchers of the interwar period had just started their careers during the war (e.g. Švābe and Straubergs); only a few scholars were equally active before and after 1920.

⁵⁴ New Current emerged in mid 1880 as an alternative to the more conservative circles of Latvian activists, which were following in the footsteps of Neo Latvians and were oriented primarily towards cultural and education activities. Centred on the newspaper *Dienas Lapa* (The Page of the Day), New Current mobilised broad masses of workers in the industrially developed regions of Latvia on the basis of both nationalist and socialist agendas (Cf. Cerūzis 2001).

The most prominent scholar of Latvian mythology around the turn of the century was Jēkabs Lautenbahs-Jūsmiņš (1848–1928), writer and poet, and professor at the University of Dorpat (Tartu) and later the University of Latvia. Lautenbahs-Jūsmiņš linked his interest in mythology with the field of literature, declaring that “Belles-lettres cannot fully bloom before the mythology, which is the foundation of every national literature, is clearly researched, known” (Lautenbahs-Jūsmiņš 1881). Following the popular theory of decline – which states that folklore materials reflect the remains of ancient myths⁵⁵, the idea championed by Jacob Grimm – Lautenbahs-Jūsmiņš used it as a key to interpreting folklore materials and explaining his approach in multiple published articles (cf. Ambainis 1989: 55), including a series of articles “*Latviešu mitoloģija*” (“Latvian mythology”) based on the lectures he gave at the University of Dorpat (Lautenbahs-Jūsmiņš 1882). Rather freely using historical records from the entire Baltic region as well as sometimes obviously forged folklore texts, he discovered and interpreted multiple ancient Latvian deities. Regarding theory, he invented “law of progressive humanisation”, which explains how the mythic-creative folk spirit gradually declines from the age of mythical god tales towards the age of pre-historic hero tales, and further towards the age of contemporary folktale and legend (cf. Ambainis 1989: 55). Lautenbahs-Jūsmiņš is also one of the most active exploiters of mythical motifs in creating his own fiction. The introduction of his collection of poems entitled *Līga* (1880) features a list of deities that are mostly common with those of Alunāns’ and Auseklis’ *fabulae*. The mythological past was also explored in the epic poems *Zalkša līgava* (*Bride of the grass-snake*, 1880) and *Dievs un velns* (*God and Devil*, 1885), but most extensively in the monumental epic *Niedrīšu Vidvuds* (*Vidvuds from Niedrīši*, 1891). The latter, in 24 chants each about 500 lines long, recycles diverse Latvian folklore materials, mainly legends, around a plot derived from Merkel’s works and to some extent based on speculations of Simon Grunau and Joannes Maeletius⁵⁶. In contrast to from the writings of Auseklis and other Young Latvians, Lautenbahs’ works were also appreciated by the Baltic German learned elite, i.e. *Lettische-Litterarische Gesellschaft*, whose members, like pastors August Bielenstein and Robert Auning, also contributed to the research on mythology with articles on various related subjects. The theory of decline was already opposed by followers of the anthropological school (claiming that mythology evolves from the cult of the

⁵⁵ Myths, like language, have had their ‘high’, perfect forms, with the advancement of culture they decline (Grimm 1883: vi).

⁵⁶ Joannes Maeletius’ *Libellus De Sacrificiis Et Idolatria Veterum Borussorum, Liouonum, aliarumque uicinarum gentium* (1563) and Simon Grunau’s *Cronika und beschreibung allerlünstlichenn, nützlichsten und waaren historien des namkundigenn landes zu Prewssen* (ca. 1525) were highly controversial documents that have frequently served in favour of the argument for a united Prussian-Lithuanian-The ancient Latvian nation, state and religion. Grunau’s chronicle is also supposed to be the main source of Narbutt’s *Lithuanian mythology*.

dead) in the 1890s, for example by Ansis Lerhis-Puškaitis, Kārlis Kasparsons (1865–1962), and among others Mārtiņš Bruņenieks who was also active in the interwar period (p. 113–115).

An exemplary figure of this transitional period was Pēteris Šmits (1869–1938; p. 107–109). Maintaining his independence from local cultural politics, Šmits closely followed the local developments in linguistics and folkloristics while working in St. Petersburg and in the Far East. On the one hand, he challenged contemporary practices, for example, reviewing fundamental editions of folklore materials, while on the other hand he secured his positions in scholarly discourse by participating in the activities of the *Rīgas Latviešu biedrības Zinību komisija* (the Riga Latvian Society Science Committee), the central body of Latvian intellectual activities of this time. A result of his concerns with Latvian culture, early articles were collected in *Etnogrāfisko rakstu krājums* (*Collection of ethnographic writings*) in three tomes (1912–1923). The young scholar criticised the title of the first Latvian folksong edition *Latvju dainas* (Šmits 1894a) and the national epic of Lautenbahs-Jūsmiņš (Šmits 1894b), researched the language of folksongs and the customs represented in them, and analysed various mythology-related motifs. The latter direction of research resulted in the first monograph on Latvian mythology (1918), crucial for the research of this theme in the interwar years. Šmits represents a critical perspective regarding the authenticity of folksongs, often criticising forgeries or changed texts (cf. Ambainis 1989: 63). He has also authored the theory of the Golden Age of folksongs in the 13th–16th centuries, followed by a decline due to increasing subjugation of peasants by ruling powers (see p. 107–109). With a reputation established before World War I, Šmits became one of the most eminent researchers of folklore and mythology after the declaration of independence in 1918, while works published by his earlier contemporaries became academic heritage: sometimes still criticised, sometimes referred to, but mostly forgotten.

2.5. The creation of Latvian mythology: The institutionalisation of research

The *Latviešu folkloras krātuve* (the Archives of Latvian Folklore, established in 1924; hereafter referred to as the *LFK*) is still the main folklore collection and research institution apart from the University of Latvia (established in 1919). Considering the role of folkloristics in the early history of nationalism in Latvia, the establishment of the *LFK* was an institutionalisation of existing practices, especially the collection of folklore materials. Even in the nominal sense *krātuve* literary means ‘depository’, ‘storage’, sharing the same root as the verb *krāt*, to collect. Similarly to the situation in Finland, folklore was considered a replacement for national history, necessary for any fully fledged nation (cf. Anttonen 2005); it is also declared so in a programmatic *LFK* booklet,

published in 1925: “And especially to us, Latvians, it is important to collect as much as possible evidences on our ancient life and poetry, because only by saving and cultivating their previously formed particularity do small nations acquire full and undisputable rights to exist beside the large nations of culture” (Bērzkalne 1925: 11). The establishment and organisation of the *LFK* was to a great extent influenced by the example of the oldest institution of this kind, the Finnish Literature Society Archives in nearby Helsinki, with Finnish experts (e.g. Kaarle Krohn) coming to Latvia to lecture about the work principles of the archives. The legal act of establishment was signed by philologist and folklorist Kārlis Straubergs, the government Minister of Education at this time. However, the initiative came from Anna Bērzkalne (1891–1956), a teacher, folklorist, and one of the first academically educated Latvian philologists. Bērzkalne accomplished the study of philology at the Kazan Women’s Higher Courses (1913–1917), defending her thesis *О фонетических изменениях в индоевропейских языках* (*On phonetic changes in Indo-European languages*) and obtaining a *cand. phil.* degree. There she studied comparative linguistics and folkloristics with Professor Walter Anderson, eminent Baltic German philologist and follower of the historic-geographical school of folkloristics. Bērzkalne, together with the establisher and head of the Estonian Folklore Archives Oskar Loorits, continued her studies under the supervision of Anderson later (1922–1942) at the University of Tartu, Estonia. In 1942 she defended her thesis *Dziesma par žēlumā nomirušo puisi* (*The Song of the Youth who Died in Sorrow. Its Primary Form and Latvian Versions*, 1942) and aquired doctoral degree in Estonian and comparative folkloristics. It was the first and is still the only research into Latvian folksongs based exclusively on the methods of the Finnish school. Bērzkalne’s initiative of establishing the *LFK* was directly related to her preference for this particular school of folkloristics: such an institution would serve for the collecting and mapping of folklore materials, thus creating the data base for historical-geographical investigation of particular songs, tales or other units of folklore. The *LFK* started operating in 1925, headed by Bērzkalne. From 1924 to 1927 she made several journeys abroad, getting acquainted with the experience of archival institutions in Finland, Denmark and Germany. Bērzkalne was asked to resign in 1929 by officials of the *Pieminekļu pārvārde* (the Authority of Monuments) for reasons somewhat obscure. Presumably, the decision was an indirect result of conflict involving unlawful activities in the Authority of Monuments (cf. Vīksna 2008), backgrounded by Bērzkalne’s personal conflict with Pauls Gailītis, head of the Authority of Monuments. At this time the *LFK* also came forward with legal initiatives that would subordinate the institution directly to Ministry of Education, thus granting independence from the Authority of Monuments (*LFK* protocols [1929]: 27), but the Authority of Monuments proposed an opposite initiative. As a result, Bērzkalne left the position and it was taken by the same previous Minister of Education, Straubergs, who led the institution until 1944. Bērzkalne returned to the *LFK* (then the Institute of

Folklore) only in 1945. Keeping in mind the almost totally masculine nature of the highest academic and political circles, gender issues might have been in play as well, or, at least, might be considered important background to these events.

The original LFK statement of purpose heavily exploits the rhetoric of folklore as something belonging to times gone by, juxtaposed to the modern situation; folklore is called “the treasures of our forefathers”, stored in the “people’s (i.e. nation’s) memory”. Moreover, a moral imperative is evoked in the agenda of salvaging activity:

And if we, Latvians, now at the very last moment, when our old generation, weakened by the war and the paths of refugees, rapidly perish, will not try with the greatest energy and selflessness to save at least to some extent the disappearing heritage of our ancestors, then later it will be an indelible shame for us: that because of negligence, carelessness, and spiritual laziness we had let treasures of our forefathers to perish

(Bērzkalne 1925: 4).

Technically, one of the main tasks of the newly established institution was related to Barons’ folksong edition. It had turned out, despite the large quantity of folksongs collected, that 218 of 526 Latvian parishes were not represented at all, and more than 200 other parishes were represented poorly. The explanation for these so-called ‘mute parishes’ was related to early folklore collecting practices, which were based solely on the enthusiasm of particular individuals. If there were none in a particular parish and it was not visited during the few ethnographic expeditions that took place until World War I, folksongs just did not reach the editor of *Latvju Dainas*. In order to collect more folksongs, and other folklore materials as well, the LFK introduced questionnaires, sometimes simply urging the teachers to instruct their pupils how to record narratives and song texts from their elderly relatives. Questionnaires were both distributed separately and also printed in newspapers. One fieldwork expedition was organised (apart from the individual expeditions of scholars) and even an ethnographic movie *Dzimtene sauc (the Fatherland Calls)*⁵⁷ was made in 1935. The scholarly work at the LFK resulted in 28 books published, including the folklore collections, scholarly articles, thematic materials, and folk music melodies, until the LFK’s reorganisation by Soviet power. In addition to written texts, audio materials were recorded from 1926 when three phonographs were bought. Altogether in this period more than 2.5 million folklore units were stored in the LFK.

Under the first Soviet (1940) and subsequent German occupation the LFK managed to continue its work, also conducting fieldwork expeditions to several

⁵⁷ Technically, the movie was commissioned by the Department of Propaganda and the LFK was just a consulting institution. Bearing strong nationalistic connotations, the movie intended to represent an ethnographically authentic wedding at a wealthy peasant’s home.

locations in Latvia in 1943. After the war, in 1945 the *LFK* was reorganised into the Institute of Folklore at the University of Latvia, and in the next year included in the newly founded Academy of Sciences. In 1950 the Institute of Folklore was reorganised into the Institute of Folklore and Ethnography; then, in 1956 it was again divided with the ethnologists forming a department at the Institute of History, while the folklorists were included in the Institute of Language and Literature. The institution's work was mainly focused on fieldwork, from 1947 conducting an expedition almost every year and as soon as possible exploring the opportunities of the up-to-date technologies of photographic, audio and video recording of traditional materials as well as of so-called Soviet folklore. All in all, about 300 000 units of folklore were collected during the post-war period. According to Ojārs Ambainis, during the first post-war fieldwork trips "the folklore collectors' attention was focused on the research of folkloristic processes in the context of revolutionary struggles as well as deep social contradictions of the post-war period" (1989: 93). Later, special expeditions were organised to regions bordering other republics of the Soviet Union with the purpose of collecting materials reflecting international relations. The Institute published multiple editions of selected materials belonging to various folklore genres, scholarly articles, and also several books for wider audiences, especially youth, often with an obviously educational or ideological character. The work of cataloguing folklore materials was also continued.

In 1992 the original name of the *LFK* was restored. Since that time the institution has been part of the Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art, until 1999 subordinated to the Academy of Sciences and now to the University of Latvia with the status of independent agency. In the current period the main activities of the *LFK* consist of research, publication (including the academic edition of folksongs), digitising and cataloguing collected materials, and the collection of new materials.

2.6. The creation of Latvian mythology: International relationships

There is probably not, and has never been, such thing as "a local discipline", even if the subject matter of research is exclusively located in a particular geographic, linguistic, or ethnic area. The discipline of folkloristics proves this statement. Although in each particular case it is involved with the local or national culture, language, oral poetry, customs, etc., its methodological and ideological dimensions were developed within the international network of intellectuals all across Europe since the eighteenth century (cf. Leersen 2006). Moreover, regarding the Baltic region, it is rather problematic to speak about national research before the establishment of national states which emerged in margins of the declining Russian Empire only as an outcome of World War I. In

addition, the comparative dimension of folkloristics and mythology, defining particular units of comparison according to formal (concerning the discipline's involvement with comparative linguistics) or historical (defining cultural groups rather independently from the gridline of geo-political maps) criteria, is hard to localise on the map of nation-states. However, folkloristics' relationship to national agenda suggests the projection of local or national subject matter of research on the disciplinary status of the scholarship. Academic research into Latvian mythology was formed in the age of empire states, with related intellectual centres scattered across the continent from Vladivostok to St. Petersburg and from Helsinki to Berlin. The situation is no less easy to conceptualise after World War II, when 'national' signifies a displaced research subject within the exile community on the one hand, and is a sovietised science of the USSR on the other hand. While the disposition of research on Latvian mythology in these pre-national and post-national periods has been outlined in the corresponding sections of this thesis, the study below is intended to characterise the international connections and influences in the interwar period, i.e. during the first Republic of Latvia (1918–1940). Starting to develop between the newly established research and education institutions already in 1920s, partially maintaining the old connections in new situations, partially building new networks of international cooperation on the strong basis of national specialisation, the 1930s was indeed a decade characterised by a strong will to cooperate in terms of scholarly exchange, organisations and publications (cf. Rogan 2008).

Researchers of Latvian mythology during this time worked for the most part at two local institutions, the Archives of Latvian Folklore, and the University of Latvia, at either the Faculty of Theology or the Faculty of Philology and Philosophy. Scholars like Kārlis Straubergs (1890–1962), Pēteris Šmits (1869–1938), Jānis Alberts Jansons (1892–1971), Alma Medne (1907–1950) and others, during their studies and later professional careers, established both formal and informal relations with colleagues and institutions of other European countries (Lithuania, Estonia, Finland, Sweden, Germany, etc.). Correspondence, research trips, and presentations at international conferences were the most common forms of communication apart from the visits of foreign scholars to Latvia and publications in foreign languages targeting an international audience (cf. Treija 2010). The more intense relationships between Latvian and Northern – Estonian and Finnish – folklorists was maintained by Anna Bērzkalne, student of Walter Anderson and founder of the Archives of Latvian Folklore. Methodology and praxis developed by Finnish folklorists were exemplary both for her research activities and the initial years of the *LFK*. Like many other Latvian scholars, Bērzkalne studied at the University of Tartu in Estonia. Her supervisor, Anderson, introduced her to eminent Finnish folklorist Kaarle Krohn (1863–1933), authority of the blooming Finnish (cultural-geographic) school of folkloristics (Vīksna 1996). Well-established Finnish folkloristics became a kind of an etalon for the discipline in Latvia. Head of the

Estonian Folklore Archives Oskar Loo (1900–1961) later writes that employee of the Archives of Latvian Folklore Alma Medne will someday become the Latvian Aarne⁵⁸, while Anna Bērzkalne will become the Krohn (ABF 7, 58; quoted according to Treija 2010). Indeed, the *LFK* was established according to the agenda of the Finnish school and used the latter's methods of collection, systematisation and storage of folklore materials (Bērzkalne 1925, Treija 2010). Bērzkalne also visited corresponding institutions abroad – in Helsinki, Berlin, and Freiburg. She promoted the achievements of Finnish and Estonian folklorists in the popular press, praising the work of Jakob Hurt and Matthias Johann Eisen (Bērzkalne 1926). Illustrating one mode of cooperation, Bērzkalne had extended correspondences with at least 43 foreign folklorists, many of them from Finland, such as Kaarle Krohn⁵⁹, Martti Haavio (1899–1973), Elsa Enäjärvi-Haavio (1901–1951), Viljo Johannes Mansikka (1884–1947), and Uuno Taavi Sirelius (1872–1929) (cf. Treija 2010). A more than two-decade cooperation and friendship relates her to contradictory Estonian scholar Oskar Loo (Treija 2009). Otherwise, the main influence of Finnish folkloristics, although no longer on a personal level, comes from the fundamental editions of folktales and legends: the international standard established by Antti Aarne was exemplary for publications by Švābe (1923–1924) and Šmits (1925–1937), as well as Medne (1940). Naturally, the tale-type index of Latvian folktales was also arranged according to the same approach (Arājs and Medne 1977).

The next Head of Archives of Latvian Folklore Kārlis Straubergs similarly maintained intense international relationships, but on a slightly different level – in close cooperation with the state elite and according to dominant political ideology. Straubergs' extensive involvement in politics and foreign affairs is analysed in the next chapter (p. 126–130); as a scholar he made several short journeys abroad, for example, he participated at the ethnographic congress in Rome in 1929, together with students attended the Nordic Museum in Stockholm, and greeted Kaarle Krohn at his seventieth birthday in Helsinki in 1933, etc. Probably, his activities in this field allowed him to more easily adapt to changes of working conditions after World War II, when Straubergs continued his scholarly career in Stockholm at the same Nordic Museum (cf. Straubergs 1995).

Similarly to Bērzkalne, folklorist and teacher Jānis Alberts Jansons (1892–1971) also obtained his doctoral degree abroad. Although he has not shaped the process of institutionalisation of the discipline, and mythology was never a central subject of his research, the life history of Jansons well illustrates another

⁵⁸ Antti Aarne, researcher of folktales.

⁵⁹ Funds of Academic Library of the University of Latvia store 27 of Kaarle Krohn's letters to Anna Bērzkalne, showing his support and willingness to help with advice regarding various questions. Krohn twice visited Riga and sent the most up to date literature to the Archives of Latvian Folklore. In turn, Bērzkalne wrote an introduction to a publication of Krohn's research on Finnish charms in Latvia (Krohna 1930).

trajectory of international relationships. His contribution to the research on Latvian mythology is part of the unique study relating to Latvian masks and mummary, *Die lettischen Maskenumzüge* (1933; in Latvian: Jansons 2010). In this study, based on his doctoral thesis, Jansons applied the methodology of cultural-historical ethnology, or the so-called theory of culture circles, the German *Kulturkreislehre* school. Initially, Jansons studied Germanistics in St. Petersburg (1913–1917), then acquired a master degree in Baltic philology at the University of Latvia (1926). During his studies in Latvia, Jansons developed an interest in Latvian ethnography and mythology, to a large extent thanks to the guidance of Pēteris Šmits (Karulis 1992: 53). Jansons also attended a course on the general history of religion at the Faculty of Theology by Prof. Immanuel Benzinger (1865–1935), who also raised an interest in Latvian religion in Ludvigs Adamovičs and Eduards Zicāns – the most productive researchers of Latvian mythology from the perspective of studies of religion (Jansons 2010: 37). Among Šmits' acquaintances was German philologist and folklorist Adam Wrede (1875–1960), with whose help Jansons met his future supervisor Julius Lips (1895–1950), the director of the ethnological museum of Cologne and associate professor of ethnology at University of Cologne (Plaudis 1977: 32). Lips had been a student of Fritz Gräbner (1877–1934), one of the establishers of the *Kulturkreislehre* school. So, from 1927 to 1929 Jansons studied at the universities of Bonn and Cologne, and defended his thesis in 1934 with the above mentioned monograph on Latvian masks (Jansons 2010). In short, the theory of culture circles proposed the mapping of locations from whence ideas and technology subsequently diffused over large areas of the world⁶⁰. It was supposed that a limited number of *Kulturkreise* developed at different times and in different places, and that all cultures, ancient and modern, resulted from the diffusion of traits from these centres of innovation (cf. Kulturkreis 2011). During his studies in Germany, Jansons also visited Lithuania for several months in 1927, acquiring knowledge of the Lithuanian language and culture that later served for the comparative purposes in his research (Plaudis 1977).

It is as impossible as unnecessary to categorise institutional developments strictly along the division of national and international fields; however, the above outlined life histories illustrate the dynamics of international relationships in the formation of the national discipline: the personal rather than formal connections of Anna Bērzkalne behind the establishment of the central research institution of the field, the political cum academic activities of the next head of this institution Kārlis Straubergs, and route from personal acquaintances to unique scholarly career by Jānis Alberts Jansons. Since describing international connection of every Latvian folklorist is neither the place nor the purpose of this thesis, it can be certainly stated that research into Latvian

⁶⁰ The twentieth century German school of anthropology was closely related to the Diffusionist approach of British and American anthropology, and basically developed from the nineteenth century theories of unilineal cultural evolution.

mythology was positioned in the international arena not only on the theoretical level, with references to various schools and authorities, but also at the level of personal mobility and connectivity. In its turn, this justifies the attention given to individual agents in the writing of the disciplinary history. However, as the activities of agents are to a large extent determined by the existing power structures, before analysis of other personal histories a contextual map must be drawn to locate and relate these personal histories.

3. The Dynamics of research

With the above described recognition and accumulation of sources for the research, crystallisation of the methodologically rigid scholarly discourse from poetical cum politically instrumental practices, and finally, institutionalisation of scholarship and establishment of relations between the local and international academic arenas, developments of the research into Latvian mythology until World War II formed a heterogeneous but still relatively uniform discourse. Drawing very rough lines, this process can be characterised as centred on the territory which in 1920 became the Republic of Latvia⁶¹. The territory was the field of research for intellectuals often dwelling outside it, for example, in imperial centres. It was mapped by the historical-geographical method of folkloristics, and, of course, was one of the basic components in national imagery, the latter forming a reflexive link with the discipline. Most of the publication ventures were here; similarly, the main research institutions were located in Riga, the capital city; careers of scholars interested in mythology-related questions were mainly related to these institutions. World War II and the total change in ideological regime in the territory of Latvia, then becoming the Latvian Soviet Socialistic Republic (the LSSR) was the cause of the establishment of several distinctive new academic discourses. First of all, it was the territorial, institutional, and ideological division between the newly created Soviet Latvian folkloristics and scholars belonging to the Latvian exile community. Secondly, Latvian mythology became a subject within the broader research projects related to the blooming scholarship of Proto-Indo-European language and culture and was therefore integrated into research projects relating to the Baltic sub-branch of the Indo-Europeans as well as later in reconstructions of Indo-European proto-myths. The following cluster of subchapters will provide a general insight into these four research trajectories, analysed in detail in chapter four.

⁶¹ Borders were established during the process of negotiation after World War I, involving the newly established republics of Estonia and Lithuania, and Soviet Russia. Conceptualisation of the territory was a mixture of ethnic considerations and the need to preserve transport infrastructure; controversial claims were arbitrated by British officials (see Bolin Hort 2003).

3.1. The dynamics of research: Soviet Latvian academia

Political and ideological changes that occurred in Latvia after the World War II had far reaching consequences for the humanities and social sciences. Structural changes were determined by several factors: first of all, the general restructuration and centralisation of academic practices, directly related to the demands of censorship and ideological control; secondly, the implementation of a single correct interpretation, i.e. a defined theoretical framework and dogma imposed from above (Moscow), envisaging the sufficiency of a single discourse and, again, in a different way reflecting the processes of centralisation. The new connection between scholarly and political domains was produced within the complex maze of a governmental academic policy climate, changing the specifics of the discipline and institutions, and the personal behaviour of individual actors over decades.

At first glance, the disciplinary developments that took place in the LSSR might be regarded simply as an implementation of Marxist-Leninist dogmas, accompanied by the bureaucratic process of restructuration and centralisation of academic environment according to the All-Union standards. Despite this, the adaptation of the Soviet Russian academic model with its own complex history and inner contradictions created a problematic relationship with the disciplinary heritage: on the one hand, new knowledge-power connections, intimate as never before, required total, revolutionary changes and the abandoning of so-called “bourgeois nationalist” scholarship, especially in the politically sensitive humanities⁶². On the other hand, folklore materials were collected, selected, categorised, and published during the previous epochs, bearing the influence of national agenda and pre-Soviet theories; in addition the whole generation of post-war researchers was educated and most of them had started their careers during the interwar-period. Although the relationship between political power structures and academia generally followed the same model and agenda throughout the existence of the LSSR, the first post-war years were characterised by a specific modification of the Soviet regime, namely, Stalinism⁶³. Drawing allusions to Hegel, Lyotard had generalised the latter as follows: “In Stalinism, the sciences only figure as citations from the metanarrative of the march towards socialism, which is the equivalent of the life of the spirit” (Lyotard 1984: 37). According to Maxim Waldstein, the Soviet academic system, as it existed by the mid-1950s, was a magnificent experiment in coalescing knowledge and power in the massive apparatus of the “empire of knowledge” (Waldstein 2008). Highly centralised and hierarchical, fully founded by the state, this apparatus was an outcome of the compromises between conflicting objectives within the politics of socialist modernisation and

⁶² Of course, such examples as dogmatised economics and Michurinist biology also clearly demonstrate the Communist Party dictate in the social and natural sciences.

⁶³ For the history and detailed analysis of the terms ‘Stalinism’ and ‘Stalinisation’ as well as the implications they bear see LaPorte, Morgan and Worley 2008.

the interests of the groups that were supposed to implement these politics. Here political legitimacy based on knowledge claims was contested by claims for egalitarian representation. Academics, especially of the highest level, were granted high official prestige and multiple privileges. At the same time, the Communist Party often promoted lower class cadres to academic positions, thus further politicising academia (see p. 159–161 for case of Jānis Niedre in Latvia). On the one hand, there were social distinction, prestige, relative security, and extensive funding independent from the market or public demands; on the other hand,

intellectuals felt highly vulnerable in the atmosphere of unpredictability nourished by the Stalinist policies of the ‘permanent revolution’. Their institutional position, professional competence and personal security were in constant danger. This was particularly true to the situation of educators and specialists in human sciences, where knowledge seemed to be more transparent to the authorities and thus more vulnerable to their interventions

(Waldstein 2008: 17).

However, while basic traits and ideological regime generally remained the same throughout the Soviet era, at least two more periods in the disciplinary history of the Soviet Latvian folkloristics can be defined: the first eight years, i.e. until the death of Stalin in 1953, was followed by thirty years characterised by relative stability; but the decline of Soviet state brought significant changes in research and publishing practices in the second half of the 1980s⁶⁴. However, changes in the knowledge production process did not perfectly coincide with the sub-periods of political history, marked by economic and ideological changes brought by one Soviet leader replacing another. It is more likely that, in the Soviet Republic of Latvia the bibliographically empty period relating to research on mythology (between the late 1950s and mid 1980s) separates two distinct research trajectories within the period. The first one constructed within the Stalinist dispositif, and the second introducing and coinciding with the so-called *Perestroika* (restructuring) movement within the Soviet political system.

During the Soviet period, in new Soviet republics as well as later in other Socialist block states, Marxism-Leninism was adopted as the leading philosophy and historical materialism was supposed to dictate methodology (cf. Brinkel 2009; Kiliánová 2005). Drawing parallels with the changes in fine arts, differences from country to country could be characterised with the imperative ‘Soviet content in national form’, where content means knowledge produced, and form, national differences; in the case of folkloristics the form would be language, historical situation, and sources explored. If there are parallels between traditions and the research into traditions, the Soviet Latvian

⁶⁴ Concerning intellectuals’ agenda and changes in academic approaches the latter might be rather called a transitional period between two research traditions. As such it is analysed below, p. 99–101.

folkloristics might be associated with the term ‘invented tradition’ in the Hobsbawmian sense: claiming historical continuity in totally changed knowledge production settings. If, previously, the research on mythology had been conducted within several disciplines, in the LSSR the texts written on myths were related only to the discipline of folkloristics. Soviet Latvian folkloristics generally conducted historical research into folklore genres, paying much of attention to the representation of class-struggle; a new sub-discipline was even created: the research of Soviet folklore, namely the revolutionary songs and *kolkhoz* ‘folksongs’ that were created as evidence of folk traditions’ continuity. However, this straightforward invention of cultural heritage was still practiced only within particular genres, mainly folksongs and proverbs. Questions related to mythology or any form of cult practice were mainly left outside the official discourse as belonging to the reactionary past (cf. Ambainis 1989). Within the context of on-going campaigns of scientific atheism⁶⁵ as the Soviet world-view (Kääriäinen 1993), one of the obvious reasons for the absence of mythology-related materials was their dangerous closeness to religion, compromising the official definition of folklore as a narrative of the working class and class struggle (p. 153–159). Notwithstanding this, references to folklore materials containing mythological motifs were unavoidable in large-scale research projects. In a few texts touching the subject matter, mythology was explained in passing as a creation of fantasy, the remains of totems, the product of opposition to the ruling class, or as an instrument of oppression. To legitimate such a research object Soviet folklorists exploited a specific rhetorical strategy, based on the paraphrasing and citing of unquestionable authorities such as Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Maxim Gorky, etc. Returning to Anttonen’s distinction of pro- and anti-modern attitudes in the history of the research of tradition-related subject matters (Anttonen 2005), it can be said that while the Western European approach to mythology from the times of Herder is well known for its nostalgia and grief for lost innocence, Soviet ideology offers a radically pro-modern attitude by juxtaposing the ‘traditional’ and the Soviet worldviews. The former were characterised as backward and dangerous, the latter as progressive, valuable, and to be achieved at all costs. Related to specific academic climate during the rule of Josef Stalin, until the mid 1950s and the development of Soviet semiotics about a decade later, mythology was mentioned in scholarly writing, but not researched. The essence of the attitude towards this subject matter was clearly dictated by Stalin himself:

⁶⁵ Here: state-governed anti-religious propaganda, developing from Lenin’s Militant Materialism programme.

Old customs and habits, traditions and prejudices that are inherited from the old society, are the most dangerous enemy of socialism (...) Therefore, the struggle against these traditions and customs, their mandatory overcoming in all fields of our work, and ultimately the education of new generations according to the spirit of socialism – these are the current tasks of our party; without realising them the victory of socialism is impossible

(Stalins 1952: 229, 230).

In summary, the research into mythology in the LSSR or, more precisely, its relative absence, cannot be explained outside the context of the highly integrated, centralised and hierarchical structure of knowledge production in the Soviet Union. Despite this, it had ‘national particularities’ related to institutional and personal histories. Therefore this general overview is followed by closer analysis of Soviet Latvian folkloristics in chapter four, which explores the discursive practices of the construction of new disciplinary identity and the positioning of mythology within it (p. 155–159).

3.2. The dynamics of research: Exile scholars

World War II and the occupation of Latvia by Soviet, German, and finally again Soviet forces marked the transitional period in disciplinary history, resulting in two parallel research communities for almost half a century: one in Soviet Latvia and one in exile Latvian diasporas across the world. Both communities were initially developed by researchers already more or less active during the previous period and now adapting to a complex post-war situation, either exploiting Soviet ideology and methodology in the LSSR, or continuing nationally oriented research related to a state no longer in existence. Subsequently, in the first decades after World War II exile Latvians generally continued their previous research, although, of course, the institutional basis, availability of materials and other conditions were different. Combining two roles, the one of displaced person and the other of scholar, exile scholarship represents yet another specific modification of knowledge production and its ideological connotations in the field of mythology research. Contributing to both causes of national identity and research resources, both the most voluminous editions of folksongs and folktales were re-published in Denmark and the USA (cf. p. 59–63). With the decades following the first post-war years came the next generation of the exile community, more integrated in Western research institutions and benefiting from the combination of local citizenship and original knowledge of a comparatively *niche* culture and language, adapting more recent methods and directions of research rather than directly continuing the agenda of the interwar-period.

Of the Latvian intellectuals, who, considering the threats to personal security and termination of academic practice, succeeded in going into exile, the most significant for the research of Latvian mythology were Kārlis Straubergs,

Arveds Švābe, and Haralds Biezais. The cases of both the former illustrate the changes of scholarly practices against the backdrop of radically changed social status, while Biezais, belonging to the younger generation, started his scholarly career anew. Švābe and Straubergs both left Latvia in 1944, after publishing their last works in their native country. Both were influential personalities in the Republic of Latvia (see. p. 126–130 and 130–133) with well-established international relations, and both of them also took leading positions within the political structures of the exile community. Escaping the approaching battle front and the second Soviet occupation, Straubergs went directly to Sweden together with his wife and four children in autumn 1944. He soon took a position in the *Institutet för folklivsforskning* (the Folk-life Research Institute) at the *Nordiska Museet* (the Nordic Museum) in Stockholm. He became head of the influential Latvian organisation *Latviešu Nacionālais fonds* (the Latvian National Foundation), and after 1952 was also involved in the activities of the *Latvijas Nacionālā Padome* (the National Council of Latvia), later taking part in the foundation of the *Latviešu Zemnieku savienība trimdā* (the Latvian Peasants' Union in Exile) as well as participating in the *Latviešu Akadēmiskā organizācija* (the Latvian Academic Organisation) and other public societies. Straubergs died in Stockholm in 1962 and was re-buried in Latvia in 1990. In exile Straubergs continued working immediately: in 1946 he published an article on sacred woods and two articles on Swedish marriage in Swedish, as well as the book *Lettisk folktro om de döda* (*Latvian folk beliefs on the dead*, 1949), as well as research on werewolves in the Baltic region. An article on mythological space and the netherworld “Zur Jenseitstopographie” (“On Topography of the Netherworld”, 1957) was published in German in the *Journal of Scandinavian Folklore*. His voluminous treatise on Latvian folklore in English unfortunately remains unpublished. Straubergs was also one of the main editors of an edition of Latvian folksong in twelve tomes (1952–1956), also authoring sixteen articles on different folklore related themes included in this edition⁶⁶. One of strategies of exile scholarship is perfectly illustrated by Straubergs' answer to the question about exile and the mission of exile Latvians' in an interview: “I can speak only about myself, my job. It is like scholarly travel. Like the University of Latvia or Ministry of Education have commissioned me to do some scholarly task researching materials that are in the archives, museums, and libraries of this place” (Kārklīšs 2003: 319).

Arveds Švābe left Latvia in the same year, 1944, but arrived in Sweden by a different route. In august of 1940, the newly established Soviet institutions transformed the positions of vice-directors of the Institute of History of Latvia occupied by Švābe and Fricis Balodis, as well as the manager's position occupied by Kārlis Straubergs, into formal duties without salary. In 1943, German officials prohibited Švābe from providing lectures and examining students at the University of Latvia, and later closed the Department of the

⁶⁶ For reprints of the latter as well as selected bibliography see Straubergs 1995.

History of Latvia and fired the professor. The following year Švābe became a refugee in Germany, but there he was arrested and imprisoned in Dachau concentration camp. After release Švābe spent a few years in Germany, similarly to Straubergs, actively taking part in political life. First, he participated in the foundation of the *Minhenes latviešu pagaidu komiteja* (the Interim Committee of Latvians of Munich) and became its head. Further, Švābe was involved in the activities of other exile organisation like the *Bavārijas Nacionālā komiteja* (the National Committee of Bavaria), and in August of 1945 became one of the founders of the main political organisation of Latvian exile community worldwide, the *Latviešu Centrālā komiteja* (The Latvian Central Committee). In Germany Švābe was committed predominantly to literary activities, publishing poems and a novel, editing two newspapers and participating in poetry readings and other public events (cf. Švābe 1947). In 1949 Švābe moved to Sweden, joining Straubergs at the Folk-life Research Institute by taking the position of an archivist. In Sweden the previous editor of the fundamental *Latviešu konversācijas vārdnīca* (*Latvian lexicon*) became the editor of first three tomes of *Latvju enciklopēdija* (*Latvian Encyclopaedia*, 1950–1956), and together with Straubergs supervised the edition of Latvian folksongs in 12 tomes. His scholarly activities were mainly related to the history of Latvia, apart from several articles published in the folksong edition. Most of these articles repeat Švābes' publications on Latvian folksongs from the 1930s (p. 109–113) as well as continuing some themes already initiated in 1917 (e.g. war folksongs) and the conclusions of the last article published in Latvia in 1944 (Vilks 1944).

Among other exile scholars, theologian, priest, and historian of religion Haralds Biezais (1909–1995) was definitely the most influential researcher of Latvian mythology in this time. While still living in Latvia, during the interwar period his interests were mainly related to theology and clergy practice. After the Soviet occupation in 1944, Biezais left the country and went in exile to Sweden. In addition to clerical obligations, Biezais became an assistant at the chair of Systematic theology in the University of Uppsala, at the same time studying philosophy and history. Subsequently, the first of his main works in the field of Latvian mythology was his doctoral thesis *Die Hauptgöttinnen der alten Letten* (1955); this was later followed by the fundamental monographs *Die Gottesgestalt der lettischen Volksreligion* (1961), *Die himmlische Götterfamilie der alten Letten* (1972) and *Lichtgott der alten Letten* (1976), numerous articles, entries in encyclopaedias, and presentations at conferences. In 1971 Biezais started a professorship of religion history at the Faculty of Theology at the University of Åbo/Turku in Finland (p. 147–149). The last largest research into Latvian mythology in exile was published by Biezais' colleague and spouse, folklorist working at University of Uppsala Liene Neulande (1921–2010). Her monograph based on dissertation *Jumis, die Fruchtbarkeitsgöttheit der alten Letten* (1977) was also translated into Latvian and published with minor revisions in 2001 (Neulande 2001; cf. Sūrmane 2002).

Although many of the works of Latvian exile scholars continued the interwar tradition of research or discussion, with the national academia gone after World War II this is the first time in history when so many scholarly books and articles on Latvian mythology were published in foreign languages, thus introducing the subject matter to wider circles of international scholarship. Consequently, these texts serve as a stepping stone for further comparative research into Baltic mythology.

3.3. The dynamics of research: Latvian mythology within Baltic studies

While Soviet Latvian folklorists and Latvian exile researchers continued to conceptualise the subject matter as Latvian mythology, outside these circles the post-war period is also characterised by increasing interest in Baltic mythology. Latvia is one of the Baltic countries and Latvian is one of the main languages constituting a sub-branch of Baltic languages⁶⁷. Similarly, Latvian mythology is an integral part of Baltic mythology. The term ‘Baltic mythology’ might have three slightly different meanings: first, mythology of particular Indo-European tribes after the separation from other Indo-European groups and before the final differentiation into Prussian, Latvian, and Lithuanian groups; second, the mythology of tribes that were living in the region before arrival of Indo-European people; third, a combination of both systems. The choice of particular meaning is determined by each researcher’s emphasis on linguistic, territorial, or historical definitions of the subject matter. Before World War II, Baltic identity was somewhat blurred because the nationally oriented researchers mainly preferred separate national mythologies. The emergence of Baltic mythology as a research object demonstrates the partial integration of previously national academic heritages in new theoretical and political contexts.

In general, the studies of Baltic mythology or Baltic religion gained a foothold some time after the popularisation of Indo-European related research after World War II in western countries. Due to the rise of interest in the Indo-European past, the sources of this past became a problem; European culture being largely Christianised, other sources had to be found. This Other image of Europe was found in Eastern Europe, and especially in the Baltic countries. Located somewhere between the Orthodox East, Protestant North and Catholic South, Latvian and Lithuanian folklore still bore the visible traits of their pagan pasts, mutually influencing neighbouring Finno-Ugric Estonia. Moreover, extended archaeological and linguistic research had shown one more dimension – the Proto-Indo-European mythological material. As Jaan Puhvel said about early Lithuanian culture: “Lithuania was the last place in Europe to be

⁶⁷ However, although Estonia is also a Baltic country, Estonian belongs to different – Finno-Ugric – language family.

Christianized (from Poland), merely officially from the top, during the early fifteenth century (...) Entrenchment is in fact a key characteristic of Baltic culture, and linguistically this branch is the most conservative and archaic of all surviving Indo European subgroups” (Puhvel 1989: 223). Although the territory of Latvia was formally Christianised earlier, the languages are very closely related, and, moreover, a substantial amount of regional folklore is collected in Latvian.

However, there are many reasons for the formation of the monolithic research object called ‘Baltic religion’ or ‘Baltic mythology’, in opposition to the former distinction into Latvian, Prussian, and Lithuanian mythologies as self-contained realms. First, after World War II there were no longer independent geopolitical entities in this region and construction of distinct national identity was no longer supported by politics. In addition, the local academic establishment no longer had any relation to the former nation-states, thus the research agendas reflected different aims. Second, often the very interest, or at least methods of research, came from Indo-European linguistics, which operated with the umbrella term ‘Baltic languages’ as opposed to references to individual languages that were so important within the national scholarships. And finally, the further into the past the researchers’ interest went (e.g. the early archaeological cultures or Proto-Indo-European ideology), the harder it was to connect it with the comparatively new reality of nation-states, which could define the research subject. So, the area of research became composed of Prussian, Latvian, and Lithuanian folklore materials as well as linguistic and archaeological evidence, often with the addition of Slavic or Finno-Ugric information. This re-definition of the research object also widened the circle of researchers consequently interested in Latvian mythology. At the same time, the research on Latvian mythology was, and still is, determined by scholars’ language skills. If one does not have a command of Latvian, there are limited resources of historical records originally written in German or Latin: only few contemporary works were written or translated into some well-known languages, with the same applying to folklore materials. Therefore publications by exile Latvians in foreign languages mentioned above were significant to the formation of this new research object, providing sources and conclusions for comparative research from the perspective of Latvian history.

Not only the political, but also the theoretical context of Latvian mythology research had entirely changed since the end of World War II. In general, the post-war period, after the revolutionary works by George Dumézil, was dominated by Indo-European scholarship (for an overview of these developments see p. 166–171). This field was also rapidly developing because of the necessity to find a new unity that could transcend the differences, doubts and dead-ends created by the war. Moreover, according to Martin Litchfield West: “Comparative Indo-European mythology remains and is bound to remain a poor relation of comparative Indo-European philology. It is easy to see why. People change their gods and their mythologies more readily and quickly than

they change their declensions and conjugations, and more capriciously” (West 2007: 24). This relation of both disciplines was also reflected in the succession of the research on Latvian mythology: the previous research tradition with its historical or religious-phenomenological methods played a rather minor role in contemporary linguistically-oriented exploration of the Baltic past. The post-war period also brought an accumulation and interpretation of archaeological findings.

During the century that has just passed, thanks to new discoveries, a more independent and free archaeological approach, more precise and sophisticated methods of dating and the new support of sciences such as the genetics of populations, paleobotany, archaeozoology, anthropology and linguistics, has revolutionised the profile of pre-history

(Percovich 2006).

In result, Latvian as a constitutive part of Baltic mythology acquired one more meaning: the mythology of pre-historic times. More ancient mythological notions were reconstructed and separated from the Indo-European part of Latvian mythology. A well-known author using such a distinction was archaeologist Maria Gimbutas (1921–1994). Specialisation in the Neolith Age allowed her to put forward the hypothesis of a matriarchal society before the conquest of Indo-European tribes. While her most popular books, such as *The Goddesses and Gods of Old Europe* (1974); *The Language of the Goddess* (1989) and *The Civilization of the Goddess* (1991) deal with European pre-history on a broader scale, she has also paid special attention to the Baltic region; this consequently resulted in a particular, archaeology-based version of Baltic mythology (p. 166–171).

In some respects, Baltic mythology was also a more advantageous research object from the political perspective: due to above mentioned developments of the geopolitical and theoretical circumstances, the consolidation of Latvian, Lithuanian, and Estonian oriented research would result in more awareness and recognition. Although it is doubtful that any particular scholarly practices were directly and consciously motivated by this argument of public relations, national awareness was definitely on the cards. Besides scholarly works whose publication language was more likely to be determined within an institutional and financial context, exile national organisations also prepared various popular materials targeting foreign-language audiences. An illustrative example is the encyclopaedic edition *Latvia: Country and People*, published in Stockholm in 1967. The book, among treatises on different subjects, included a bibliographic article by Kārlis Straubergs on Latvian folklore. The agenda of this edition was explained in one of the reviews:

In countries where the dominant language is English, a relative inertness concerning the areas of research on the eastern Baltic still prevails. Therefore Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians, and, currently to a smaller extent, Finns now and then must themselves invest great efforts and considerable funds informing people about their countries. (...) Hopefully, this book *Latvia: Country and People* will not only serve as a handbook but will also extensively stimulate research on Latvia and the Baltic region generally

(Ekmanis 1970).

Related or not, the activities of Baltic exile communities were also paralleled by the institutionalisation of Baltic studies through the establishment of separate centres for Baltic studies, institutes, or other academic units at Western universities. A new level of cooperation and institutionalisation was reached in 1968 with the establishment of the Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies (AABS), which, since 1970, has also been the publisher of the *Journal of Baltic Studies*. Similarly, the main exile organisations, each representing one of three Baltic countries, established an umbrella organisation, the *Pasaules baltiešu apvienība* (the World Association of Baltic People) in 1972. Summarising, the emergence and increasing popularity of the new context of Latvian mythology – Baltic studies – illustrates the reflexive link between knowledge production and political power. The disappearance of the independent nation-states changed both the agendas of research and their material foundation, simultaneously creating new environments of scholarship. The new research object required new academic politics and vice versa. On the other hand, the new context was also related to new discoveries and theoretical developments in the field.

3.4. The dynamics of research: The Moscow-Tartu school of semiotics

The death of Josef Stalin in 1953 was followed by the so-called Khrushchev⁶⁸ Thaw when political repressions, control and censorship were reversed or, at least, significantly decreased all over the USSR. States of the Union also faced comprehensive cultural, economic and social reforms. Gradually the changes reached the social and human sciences, allowing new approaches and openings for the exploration of new or previously unwelcomed fields of research. In folkloristics this meant, for example, the return of Vladimir Propp's structural analysis, previously condemned as reactionary formalism. So, starting from the late 1950s, the attitude towards researching mythology also changed; Latvian mythology, being still somewhat avoided in local research institutions, became an object of interest in the larger research projects dedicated to Indo-

⁶⁸ Nikita Khrushchev (1894–1971), First Secretary of the Communist party of the Soviet Union from 1953 to 1964, Chairman of the Council of Ministers from 1958 to 1964.

European issues and the semiotics of culture. These were also among the central interests of the Moscow-Tartu school, a unique Soviet academic and intellectual movement established in the 1960s by long-lasting cooperation between two centres of research – Tartu in Estonia and Moscow in Russia. Usually called the Moscow-Tartu school of semiotics, it covers to a broad range of research fields from machine translation to the semiotics of cinema, the reconstruction of proto-myths, and criticism of the arts. Its background was comprised of Yuri Lotman's (1922–1993) semiotic theory, Roman Jakobson's (1896–1982) linguistics, and the syntagmatic structuralism of Vladimir Propp (1895–1970).

Contrary to other directions of research outlined above, in respect of the trends and historical-social circumstances of scholarship, the Moscow-Tartu school appears to be a more consolidated, self-referring scholarly system, a school with its own authorities, methods and sources. Even its terminology may seem close to esoteric in its complexity. The emergence of this movement was possible only after the death of Stalin, when formalism and structural theories became the subjects of scholarly research and were no longer treated as a radical danger to the official doctrine of Marxism-Leninism. Begun as interdisciplinary disputes between the linguists and mathematicians, this direction soon acquired its shape under the umbrella term of semiotics. Interest in formal sign systems on the one hand and natural languages on the other hand left it outside the political risk-zone. However, multidisciplinary research soon led to problems beyond pure linguistics, specifically, to the studies of culture. It also led beyond the borders of the USSR; seminars and summer schools in Tartu were attended by famous linguist Roman Jakobson who had previously left the Soviet Union, and even by the main figure of Western structuralism Claude Lévi-Strauss. One of the successful accomplishments of the Moscow-Tartu school was the establishment of semiotics as a discipline in its own right. However, academia was controlled by political bureaucracy and therefore the term 'semiotics', with its Western connotations, was better avoided. Thus, semiotics developed as 'modelling systems': natural languages were defined as primary modelling systems and myth, literature, theatre and other 'texts' were called secondary modelling systems. Since the 1970s, culture had become the central interest of researchers belonging to the Moscow-Tartu school. Culture was understood as a functional correlation of various sign systems with their mutual relations and hierarchical organisation in different settings or texts, in the broadest sense of the last term, and structural arrangement of signs in semantic oppositions became one of the basic principles of analysis (for more background and history see Liukkonen 2008, Moscow-Tartu school 1998. Online; or Waldstein 2008).

Formulaic, repetitive, variable, stable: myth and folklore are especially appropriate objects for such analysis, being favoured by the founders of both Western and Soviet structuralism. Consequently, linguistic anthropology of myth and folklore also forms a significant volume of the research conducted within this school of thought. Diachronic investigation into mythological motifs

allowed comprehensive conclusions, including the discovery of the most archaic levels of narratives within the contemporary textual productions, for example, poetry. Therefore, the search for archetypes as the most basic, most persistent structures of culture took place at the meta-level, integrating various historical forms of the same narrative into a unhistorical framework of analysis.

Based on these ‘archaist’ concepts, Tartu-associated Moscow linguists and anthropologists followed two major directions in their studies of myth and folklore. One was the reconstruction of archaic and archetypical forms of myth and the other consisted in tracing the role they played in shaping literature and culture of more ‘historical’ epochs (so-called “historical poetics”). The first direction was pursued in the voluminous studies, often co-authored by Viacheslav Ivanov and Vladimir Toporov, on Indo-European and Slavic mythology

(Waldstein 2008: 113).

Regarding the Indo-European issues, the highest point of research was reached in 1984 when two huge volumes of *Indo-European language and Indo-Europeans* were published by Thomas V. Gamkrelidze and Vjačeslav Ivanov. In this project, the grammar and lexica of the hypothetical original Indo-European language were discussed, and assumptions were made on the social structure, religion, and material culture of the hypothetical tribe that spoke the language. The mythology forms a substantial part of this study, including multiple examples from the Latvian area (cf. above p. 63–68). This direction of research implied not only the discovery and reconstruction of archetypical stories but also the “reconstitution of the whole ‘mythopoetic’, or myth generating, universe of the ancient proto-Indo-Europeans and proto-Slavs in its major structural coordinates” (Waldstein 2008: 113). Ultimately, this reconstitution would allow the understanding of human culture in general, discovering the universal grid of primordial differences and resemblances that constitute the invariant paradigm of subsequent transformations, or the universal scheme of basic semantic oppositions (cf. Waldstein 2008). As suggested by the colossal scale of this project, materials on Latvian mythology played a rather minor role within the whole corpus of works by scholars representing the Moscow-Tartu school. In general, resources relating to Latvian language and folklore were used for meta-level reconstruction projects; context-wise, Latvian mythology was first examined at the Baltic level, secondly at the Balto-Slavic level, and finally at the most remote, Indo-European, level (p. 171–176). From the point of view of ideological analysis, it is important to repeat that the pattern of research in this school of thought was not historic but linguistic and structural. Despite this, diverse questions regarding Latvian mythology and the linguistic material it carries were also analysed separately. Several articles were published in multiple volumes of *Balto-Slavic research*, the complex interdisciplinary series, started in 1981, as well as in Post-Soviet Latvia. Some of these and their context will be analysed in detail in chapter four.

3.5. The dynamics of research: The transition from Soviet to national scholarship

The approaches and conclusions of the Moscow-Tartu school acquired real significance to local research into Latvian mythology in the last two decades, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and its academic system in 1990. The breakdown of the USSR, expressed as the so-called National Awakening in the Baltic states, showed once again the political instrumentalisation of folklore. The popular trope the “singing revolution” applied to events of these years has been used to describe their non-violent and culturally oriented nature. Folklore and the folklorist movement played an import role in defining the new national identity – articulated in song and folklore festivals – by comprehensive use of ethnographic symbols and rhetorics referring to cultural heritage and ethnic uniqueness (cf. Bula 2000, Kuutma 1998, Lindquist 2003). With folklore everywhere on stage, expert and lay knowledge of folklore became interwoven in a broad range of discursive practices. Public folklore blooming, academia also experienced, figuratively speaking, a sort of explosion: large numbers of previously forbidden, unavailable, or unwelcomed theories and works produced during the previous fifty years in the Western world became subject to discussion, uninterrupted by censorship and political control. The situation regarding works of the pre-Soviet period or exile authors was also similar. Various patterns of continuities and discontinuities show the contradictory nature of this reclaimed academic heritage: on the one hand, filling the gaps left by the preoccupation with certain themes and genres by Soviet Latvian scholarship, and on the other hand, often being outdated from the theoretical perspective.

Since the mid-1980s mythology again became the subject matter of research by Latvian folklorists, introducing de Saussure’s distinction of language and speech (Bula 1986), localising the Latvian netherworld in folksongs (Pakalns 1986), relating personifications of God and the Devil to a particular mode of mythological thinking (Drīzule 1986), or seeking a Latvian version of the Frazerian resurrection deity (Kursīte 1988). The first reaction to political change was rather radical; accordingly, the changing relationship between the circle of references and the ideological regime of knowledge production is clearly evident in two collections of articles, edited by Jadviga Darbiniece (1988 and 1992). The publications are separated by the restoration of Latvia’s independence in 1990. Consequently, in the first collection, produced in the LSSR, the vocabulary of the Moscow-Tartu School was applied and authorities referred to; in the second collection the circle of references notably differs, including many names from the interwar period and exile scholars; new theoretical approaches were also introduced. Among other publications from the transitional period, translations of classical works were rather rare: the dominant formats for this accumulation of new knowledge were shorter articles

and re-prints of works already written in Latvian⁶⁹. A freshly discovered theoretical approaches to research into mythology was a synthesis of archetype (Jungian) psychoanalysis and the phenomenology of religion, championed by exile Latvian scholar and poet Roberts Mūks, who also introduced Latvian readers to the works of Mircea Eliade (1907–1986) and provided an overview of other popular theories of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Mūks 1991)⁷⁰. Andris Rubenis published an original compilation based on Moscow-Tartu school works, called *Cilvēks mītiskajā pasaules ainā (the Man in the mythical worldview)*, 1994); originally written in other languages, the main works of Haralds Biezais were translated and commented upon. Biezais himself published several purpose-written articles, introducing recent trends in research on religion and observing particular folklore-related questions⁷¹. Researcher, and later the president of Latvia (1999–2007), Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga published several works on ancient religion and mythical Sun both in Canada and Latvia (cf. Lūse 1997).

Starting with the Janīna Kursīte's article "Pasaules radīšanas (kosmoloģiskā) mīta atspulgs latviešu tautasdziesmās" ("Reflection of the world creation (cosmological) myth in Latvian folksongs", 1991) Moscow-Tartu school informed mythopoetic studies were nationalised and localised in Latvia. Further, this approach was anchored with several other notable publications by Kursīte a few years later. Her authority as one of the leading and most active current researchers notably contributed to the continuity of structural-semiotic studies within the local research institutions (see Kursīte 1996, 1999). Member of Parliament, Dean of the previous Faculty of Philology of the University of Latvia, Vice Rector of the Academy of Culture (1995–1997), Full Member of Latvian Academy of Sciences since 1997 are just several current and previous positions that make her one of, if not the most influential folklorist in Latvia today. Trained at the Faculty of Philology at the University of Tartu in the early 1970s, she continued her scholarly career at the Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art in Riga, acquiring a Doctor's degree in Philology in 1982 and a Habilitated Doctor's degree in Philology in 1993 (see Latvian Scientists. Online). Kursīte's scholarly interests are manifested in publications, the organisation of fieldwork, and courses given at the University of Latvia, ranging from Baltic mythology and Latvian folklore to the poetics of poetry and national identity. Following the methodology of the Moscow-Tartu school, Kursīte discovers particularly Latvian archetypes, connects the ancient mythical images with contemporary cultural products, contextualises these archetypes

⁶⁹ In addition, from the interwar period, like Straubergs' *Latvian charms* and *Latvian folk customs*.

⁷⁰ The ones by M. Müller, H. Spencer, J. Frazer, G. van der Leeuw, S. Freud, etc.

⁷¹ Like the notion of folksong, variation in folksongs, deity *Laima*, the genesis of witches, Dievturi movement, and critique of structural analysis of Latvian mythology. In context of the return of Dievturi the discussion of Vitauts Kalve (1913–1989) and Konstantīns Karulis (1915–1997), regarding the authenticity of deity *Māra*, must also be mentioned.

with the supposed Indo-European world-view, and maps the Latvian mythological world according to the set of semantic oppositions. Thus, despite the origin of this theory in the USSR, contemporary research on Latvian mythology may be again characterised as nationally oriented, in a similar way to the spirit of the interwar period. Kursīte's approach is followed by many of her students (e.g. Smilgaine 2004 on mythological space in lullabies). Mythology and mythological space were also subject matters for works written by several researchers now working at the Archives of Latvian Folklore and regional universities. Guntis Pakalns analysed the notion of the soul in folksongs (Pakalns 1991b) and the location of the Latvian mythological land of the dead, questioning exclusively folksong-based approaches regarding the latter (Pakalns 1991a); his stance concerning the so-far reconstructed mythologem of the doors of God's House was similarly critical (in Darbiniece 1992). Elza Kokare was the only researcher of this time concerned with the systematic analysis of ancient Latvian mythology as a system. In two comprehensive articles (Kokare 1991; Darbiniece 1992) she briefly outlined the research history of Latvian mythology, its sources and their validity, as well as reconstructing a dynamic system of Latvian deities, emphasising the relativity of their appearances within different genres of folklore and according to geographical distribution, originally categorising mythological beings into seven semantic/functional groups. Although several years later, the head of the Archives of Latvian Folklore Dace Bula wrote the only reflexive history monograph on Latvian folkloristics, deconstructing the notion of the 'singing nation': a stereotype based on fusion of national romanticism, promotion of folklore collecting, and early mass mobilisation by the song festivals movement (Bula 2000). Here she also defined the role of folksongs, a dominant genre of Latvian folklore, in the 1990s: "Reference to folksongs serves as a rhetorical precaution against the loss of national identity, cosmopolitisation of culture, and invasion of mass culture, which are foreseen due to Latvia overcoming the Soviet era's detachment from the cultural context of Europe and the world" (2000: 4). While such concerns in the majority of cases manifest within the area of public folklore, recent publications characterise academic discourse on Latvian mythology as a contested realm of knowledge production where different traditions of research are continued and re-vitalised in the works of particular authors or, on the contrary, ignored or referred to as historical facts in the works of others. During the last few years the new national research tradition relating to mythology has crystallised into two trajectories – heritage scholarship, represented by translations and publications of works previously unavailable in Latvian (e.g. Biezais 2006 and 2008), and original research, both concerning the sources of the research (e.g. in multiple articles by Aldis Pūtelis) and mythological phenomena⁷².

⁷² Although as yet there are no published monographs, to my knowledge at least two doctoral dissertations have been written and successfully defended: by Gatis Ozoliņš (2006)

4. Conclusion: Periodisation of the research

The scholarship of Latvian mythology has developed alongside the main political events of the twentieth century, followed by the accumulation of the ideological resources necessary for the formation of new scholarly paradigms. The most significant of these events were both World Wars with the establishment and decline of the independent republic, and the regaining of sovereignty during The Third National Awakening in 1990. As the current chapter of the thesis demonstrates, several research trajectories can be distinguished among the general history. However, scholarly history does not exactly follow political history due to the dynamic character of knowledge production. Overlapping and heterogeneous, these trajectories or traditions of research are constituted by differences in at least four facets: the availability of sources, theoretical trends, political regimes, and personal agendas. Keeping in mind the reconstructed nature of Latvian mythology, the availability of sources is the first and foremost condition determining the possibility and shape of myth-related scholarly practices. The selection of particular sources, methods and purposes of interpretation corresponds to the theoretical trends that have developed over time. This, in its turn, is a synchronic process: differing from researcher to researcher, at the same time preferring the most up to date or older theories. While sources are local (as are folklore materials) or related to a nearby region (as are historical records), theoretical trends and their international transmission locate each research tradition in the context of general disciplinary developments. Each political regime, in its turn, determines the ideological articulation of knowledge production in a range from opposition, to subjection to state power and its agenda. While these three facets characterise the mandatory, to some extent 'objective' circumstances shaping research into mythology, the personal agendas of the researchers involved are active variables that shape research from the set of potentialities.

Thus, the mid and second halves of the nineteenth century faced the initial stage of the conceptualisation of Latvian mythology, involving, on the one hand, the emerging ethnic intelligentsia with the national romantic agenda, and, on the other hand, comparative mythologists of German origin. Fusion of scholarly and popular narratives was a distinct feature of this time, often occurring due to the sharing of multiple roles by one and the same person: being a scholar, poet, and Neo-Latvian. Sources for the research were collected at the same time: folklore materials, resulting in the first voluminous editions, and historical records, gathered and studied. A critical perspective on sources evolved with the increase of quantity and necessity to develop editorial practices for the publications. The arsenal of theories available for researchers came either from German comparative linguistics and comparative mythology,

on totemism in folksongs, defended in Daugavpils, and Sandis Laime (2012) on *raganas* (witches, fairies) defended in Riga.

articulated in directions of solar (or other forces of nature) mythology, and recognition of kinship between mythologies of people speaking in Baltic languages, or from the British school of anthropology, providing the theories of emanism and animism, as well as an evolutionist perspective on studies of religion. Disposition towards political ideology also varies greatly depending on particular researchers' standing and agenda. On the one hand, there were explicit contra Baltic German and to some extent contra Russian Empire narratives, articulating ethnic identity against a background of Enlightenment political ideals and often targeting the larger imagined community rather than the narrow circles of academia. On the other hand, allegiances were formed with the institutional bodies of the Russian Empire and its intentions of ethnographical mapping of its subjects; here the ambivalence of a situation in which national narratives were articulated within the virtual network of intellectuals centred around the universities in Moscow, Dorpat and St. Petersburg played out. Moreover, scholars belonging to local a German-speaking elite increase the complexity of this time with their own agenda, bearing somewhat colonial traits that result in a strong tendency to backdate and articulate as (static, deceasing, lower) heritage the Latvian culture and mythology within it (cf. Bīlenšteins 1995). The turn of the century brought the decline of national romanticism, giving the stage to more instrumental and mass oriented ideas of political leftist ideology, as well as increasing the professionalisation of the discipline and fortification of theoretical positions. Simultaneously with the appearance of new approaches (e.g. psychoanalysis or the sociology of religion) World War I broke out, to a large extent terminating the debates and developments in research formed in the previous two decades. Within the margins of war new approaches were developed and rose to full recognition in the qualitatively different interwar period.

World War I was followed by the first monograph in the field, still among the most popular, the book titled *Latviešu mitoloģija* (*Latvian Mythology*) by Pēteris Šmits, and by the declaration of the independent Republic of Latvia in the same year, 1918. Simultaneously with the establishment of research and teaching institutions, research on Latvian mythology as a self-contained realm of knowledge also acquired its shape. The whole area of folkloristics went through processes of institutionalisation and nationalisation, bounded by the newly established state and devoting the discipline's efforts to discovering and articulating the national particularity. Despite the unification of the ideological regime of knowledge production, the theoretical dimension differed even more than before, referring to multiple academic trends developing at this period of time worldwide. As analysed further, researchers' personal agendas played an obvious role, depending on disciplinary background (varying from history and philology to studies of religion), involvement in other fields of research, political standing (especially in the early years), institutional affiliation, etc. More consolidated sources were available for the reconstructions of mythology, still some of the largest editions, for example, of customs or charms, were

published only at the very end of the period, as well as Mannhardt's *Letto-Preussische Gotterlehre* (1936) which provided one of the most important collections of historical records. The research work conducted during the interwar period was suspended by World War II. Some scholars continued working, some went into exile, while some became victims of the Soviet regime. As a result, the post-war situation developed two different traditions of research on Latvian mythology.

After 1944, mythology was kind of a forbidden subject in the Soviet Socialistic Republic of Latvia due to its closeness to studies of religion and low compatibility with the new definition of folkloristics. Mythological subject matters were interpreted strictly along the lines of Soviet Marxism and Leninism. Soviet Latvian folklorists mainly conducted historical research of folklore genres, paying much attention to representations of the class struggle. Briefly, the theoretical approach was already determined by the political regime; therefore researchers' personal agendas had not such an influence as before, or abroad. In this setting, a sophisticated culture of references justifying the chosen subject matter was developed in order to quote unimpeachable Communist Party authorities. The availability of sources was better than ever, but discussion using the ideas and authors of the previous period was seen as unmasking their incorrect ideology and lack of understanding of the materialistic world-view. Summarising, "For almost 50 years the progression of Latvian folkloristics is defined by the advantages of Soviet research schools as well as their imposed self-isolation and disassociation from the baneful influence of 'alien thinking'" (Bula 2004: 19).

At the same time, several scholars went in the exile and continued their work abroad, the most prominent of them in Sweden. The heritage of the exile generation was used to transform the research into Latvian mythology according to new principles – shifting the emphasis from folkloristics towards the history of religion, and re-interpreting mythology according to the most up to date theories. In Western scholarship these new principles also manifested in the redefinition of the research object – Latvian mythology was more often analysed as a constitutive part of Baltic mythology or Baltic religion – re-contextualising the data gathered within the national tradition of research. Although several studies (e.g. that by Biezais) show no lack of sources for reconstructions, both major publications of folksongs and fairytales were re-published abroad in this period. As émigré scholars mainly continued working on the same themes, their ideological alignment remained the same: towards the idea of sovereign Latvia, positioned in the totally different post-war situation. Very little research has been performed on the specifics of exile mentality and the possible influences of such a disposition on knowledge production; however, it is probably that researchers' personal agendas and new institutional affiliations played an important role in shaping the research done.

Later the practices of Soviet Latvian and exile scholars were paralleled by a completely different discourse that developed in a different environment – by

the so-called Moscow-Tartu school, the leading semiotic and linguistic research project in the Soviet Union, based, according to its title, outside the territory and institutions of the LSSR. The project's scope, interdisciplinary nature and volume of research works produced make it hard to label; especially in relation to continuity after the change of political regime in 1990. At the same time, the success of this school in its particular political situation came from the methodologically constructed un-historicity of structural and comparative-linguistic approach to cultural studies, reaching far beyond the sphere of expertise of Marxism-Leninism. Thus, this discourse provided the subject matter for one more strategy of coping with power relations with knowledge production, again modified by the diversity of scholars' personal agendas and the contexts of every particular research project.

More recent developments of folkloristics in Latvia show a complex scene of theoretical plurality in the context of a re-established nation state and its agenda, at the same time challenged by the postmodern demands of ideological criticism. The advanced methodology developed within the Moscow-Tartu School was questioned, nationalised and continued. Simultaneously, recognition and popularisation of previously "ideologically improper" research took place, as well as the exploration of brand new approaches to the same subject matter in circumstances of more widely available sources than ever. At this stage a geographical consolidation of previously parallel scholarly trajectories occurred. From these periods, the most fruitful in the field of research into Latvian mythology was the interwar period. As a time of establishment of institutionalised research of subject matter, it is analysed in the next chapter of the thesis, paying special attention to key personalities, their main works, and the contexts shaping these works.

CHAPTER III:

The interwar period

This chapter concerns the academic research into Latvian mythology within the disciplines of folkloristics, history, and the studies of religion in the interwar period. I have divided it into three sections, each focused on a specific dimension: the first section maps the period from the perspective of the main theoretical trends and introduces the personalities central to the field, with a separate sub-section covering folklore genres as the most influential factor in the conceptualisations of mythological space; the second section features two case studies of life histories and the intertwined relationship of academic and political endeavours; and the third section demonstrates how the above described contexts influence particular studies of mythological space. The chapter is concluded with a summary of the main traits of this period. Each cluster of subchapters might be read independently from the other two. The themes and personalities described in this chapter may seem to overlap, but the repetition of certain names is chosen purposefully to separate and emphasise this or that other facet of knowledge production: the general context, the power relationships, and theoretical dynamics.

Pēteris Šmits represents the link between scholarship before and after World War I; he was also an important person for the establishment of independent Latvian academia and folkloristics as an independent discipline. Arveds Švābe contributed to unique interdisciplinary studies of mythology and folklore, exploring the potential of these sources in the fields of history, law, and sociology. The works of Mārtiņš Bruņenieks and his discussions with other authors represents the role of animistic theories in texts written on Latvian deities and customs. The phenomenology of religion as one of the methods in research on Latvian mythology, especially popular in the Faculty of Theology at the University of Latvia, is analysed in a separate subchapter, introducing the main works and ideas of Voldemārs Maldonis and Ludvigs Adamovičs. The life history and main works of Kārlis Straubergs, head of Archives of Latvian Folklore, is generally contextualised at the beginning, while his political career and its relationship with academic endeavours is analysed in a separate subchapter. Moreover, two articles by Straubergs on mythological space are analysed within the third section: written at the beginning and end of the interwar period, they illustrate the changes of theoretical setting and relationship to life history of this scholar in this period. To demonstrate a different trajectory of equally influential political and academic careers, a separate subchapter concerns power and knowledge relationships in the works and life of Švābe. Due to its comprehensive nature, the conception of Latvian mythological space in the works of Adamovičs is overviewed separately from the initial subchapter on this scholar.

I. Personalities and theories

I.1. Personalities and theories: Pēteris Šmits

Pēteris Šmits (1869–1938) was a recognised and influential scholar in three disciplines: philology, folkloristics, and sinology. Over almost thirty years working far from Latvia (in St. Petersburg, Vladivostok and China) he was still actively reviewing publications on Latvian folklore and ethnography as well as publishing his own research in these fields. As a well-known scholar Šmits returned to Latvia in 1920 and started lecturing at the newly established University of Latvia. In addition to other research activities, he was the editor of the largest collection of Latvian folktales and legends (1925–1937) and also the author of the largest edition of Latvian beliefs, in four tomes (post mortem, 1940–1941). His bibliography consists of more than five hundred entries (Ozols 1939, Hartmut 1982). From 1920 to 1938 the professor worked in the Faculty of Philology and Philosophy at the University of Latvia. For two years he was also a dean of the same faculty, among his positions were head of the Society of Philologists, member of the collegium of Archives of Latvian Folklore, and head of the Science Committee of the Riga Latvian Society (Endzelīns 1940: 7). At the University of Latvia he lectured on general and Baltic philology, folklore, Latvian mythology⁷³, Latvian traditions, Chinese language and culture, etc. (Rozenbergs 1998: 115). A large number of Šmits' works consist of short or mid-length articles on particular notions or historical facts in folksongs. Gradually generalising his research as well as reflecting the ideas of German politician and scholar Otto Böckel (1852–1923), Šmits developed the theory of the age of folksongs. Accordingly, folksongs mainly depict three periods of time: the relative freedom of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the loss of peasant freedoms in the following two centuries, and the age of decline in the last three centuries. Regarding the latter, he refers to the “well known theory” that subjugated people are still good singers, but no longer the creators of songs (Šmits 1932a: 13; 1937 etc., cf. Böckel 1906).

Latviešu mitoloģija (Latvian mythology, 1918, 1926, 2009) by Šmits is the first systematic scholarly work on the subject matter. Although often criticised (critiques by fellow researchers is included in the corresponding overviews on other authors) regarding methods and lack of the depth of research due to too broad a range of features observed, it established a base for many further publications in the field. Šmits' bibliography includes several works giving general overviews of Latvian mythology; the most comprehensive is the second edition of *Latvian mythology*, published in 1926. The principle of this book is defined in its conclusion: “The purpose of this writing was awakening readers' love of the people's old belief” (Šmits 2009: 110). In general, Šmits calls the mythology the “remains of the ancient pagan belief” (Šmits 1932b: 176); in addition, he writes about the ‘myths of ancient times’ which one can reconstruct

⁷³ Academic years 1921/22, 1926/27, 1931/32, 1934/35, 1937/38.

with the methods of comparative mythology using the myths of Lithuanian and other Indo-European nations. Further, the evidence from ancient Latvian, Lithuanian and Prussian languages should be verified with materials from the fields of archaeology and ethnography (Šmits 1937, 2009). In *Latvian mythology* various mythological theories, possibilities for the application of folklore material in research, the Indo-European proto-language and people who spoke it, particular deities and patrons, household cults and the worship of mythological Mothers, eschatology, ancient celebrations and rites, and flora and fauna in mythological material are observed. At the same time, the work also includes multidirectional critique, thus characterising the status quo of the discipline at this time. First of all, Šmits opposes theories and pseudo-pantheons created by early mythographers like Lithuanian Teodor Narbutt (1784–1864) and Latvian Juris Alunāns (1832–1864). Second, he points out un-authentic or forged sources of Latvian mythology and mentions several people whose contributions of folklore materials should not be trusted. Third, is the critique of fellow researchers, especially, Mārtiņš Bruņenieks⁷⁴. Šmits also established a certain standard regarding the use of folklore material in the reconstruction of mythology. Here he advocated folksongs as the most reliable genre, because in fairytales and legends there are too many international motifs, while customs and beliefs are too heavily influenced by Christianity (Šmits 2009: 109).

Informed by the works of Edward Burnett Tylor, Tito Vignoli, Georg Friedrich Creuzer and Carl Gustav Carus, the author briefly outlines the development of the discipline in the nineteenth century: from fetishism or naturism to animism, which had divided into two branches: manism (based on the cult of ancestors) and animatism (suggesting different origins of gods related to the cult of ancestors); a further theory is emanism, developed from the concept of *mana*. Šmits characterises the animism and its branches as an outdated theory, on this ground criticising its followers in Latvia. Šmits also states that totemism is not characteristic to Indo-Europeans: “if it had existed in pre-historical times, then in known Indo-European myths there is no evidence on totems” (Šmits 1926: 96). Further he also describes “the well-known features of totemism” to clarify his point (Šmits 2009: 97).

In *Latvian mythology* Šmits refers to the languages, customs and myths of more than twenty nations. The linguistic comparison is especially important because it is the ground upon which Šmits bases reference to the ancient Indo-European proto-language, which allows him to speak about the proto-mythology common to people who spoke this language (p. 63–68). Unique among the comparative material are references to ancient Chinese myths and beliefs, although this is not surprising, bearing in mind that Šmits was also a

⁷⁴ Contrary to Bruņenieks, Šmits belonged to the circle of researchers who claimed that deity *Māra* is Christian borrowing: it is Virgin Mary who, within the vernacular religion, has appropriated several features of other deity, *Laima*. The authenticity of *Māra* is questioned still today in public debates; one of the reasons of this long discussion might be her status in neo-pagan pantheon (cf. Brastiņš 1966).

sinologist. In general, Šmits' approach of comparative mythology is based on comparative linguistics. If there is a lack of sources on particular questions of Latvian mythology, Šmits invokes the existence of the same phenomenon in the ancient Indo-European community, most often referring to Leopold von Schroeder's *Arische Religion* (1914). However, these are more like references to materials from different nations collected by Schroeder rather than Schroeder's theoretical framework, which was based on the hypothesis that the basis of religion is respect for nature, the cult of the dead, and moral consciousness.

I.2. Personalities and theories: Arveds Švābe

Arveds Švābe (1888–1959) was one of the brightest and most contradictory Latvian intellectuals of the first half of the twentieth century. Švābe survived two revolutions and two World Wars and was exiled in Vladivostok, Germany, and Sweden; becoming from a peasant boy a member of parliament, a university professor and Vice-Director of the Institute of History, he has left an impressive heritage in the fields of Latvian history, folkloristics and law studies (see p. 70–74 for a detailed life history and political career). Švābe gained his fame mainly from works on history and the history of law; in a way, his contribution to research on folkloristics and mythology needs to be re-discovered today. Firstly, he did not work in the Archives of Folklore and did not read courses on folkloristics in the interwar period; secondly, in the post-war period his works were officially forbidden in Soviet Latvia⁷⁵ and taken out of public circulation. Evaluation of his texts was straightforward: “As it is well known, providing rich folk materials A. Švābe in his writings on Latvian culture and history expresses ideas of bourgeois nationalism, later reaching undisguised forgery of Latvian history and the glorification of fascism” (Ambainis 1958: 44). Not so “well known” are the facts that before the institutionalisation of Latvian folkloristics Švābe published several unique interdisciplinary studies and was the first to start classification of Latvian folktales and legends according to the contemporary system developed by Antti Aarne. Summarising, his approach to folkloristics was original and on some questions opposite to the dominant tendencies of research.

Among his other interests, Švābe worked intensively on research into folklore four times – during and after World War I, in the 1930s, during World War II, and in exile in Sweden. However, only writings from the first period are related to mythology. His interest in folkloristics started during the studies of aesthetics and art theory in Moscow. The first influences on research into folksongs from a sociological point of view can be traced back to *Arbeit und Rhythmus* (1909) by Karl Bücher and the anthropological essay “Burtņieka pīlī”

⁷⁵ All his works except those published before 1917 were to be removed from public circulation (Cf. Arveds Švābe: zinātniskā darbība. Online).

(“In the castle of *burtnieks*”) by Kārlis Zalts. Consequently, the first article in the discipline published by Švābe is “Latvju dainas kā materiāls socioloģiskai estētikai” (“Latvian folksongs as a material for sociological aesthetics”, 1914) in the leftist newspaper *Domas (Thoughts)*. Next year this was followed by “Latviešu Dievs un latviešu velns” (“Latvian God and Latvian devil”) and “Отклики национальной борьбы в латишском мифотворчестве” (“Echoes of the national struggle in Latvian mythography”); in both articles God and the devil were analysed in the context of their historical emergence and to some extent related to class struggle.

As Švābe had always considered mythology a mirror image of a particular society, historical records were essential to his interpretation of folklore texts and vice versa – folklore was treated as a source for historical research. Importantly, Švābe recognised mythology as a dynamic system that changes and develops over time. Therefore, in his first works the young researcher already paid attention to folklore’s contexts of genesis and performance. Instead of *folk* lore he analysed the lore of masters and servants, recruits and peasants. In “Echoes of national struggle” Švābe referred to Wilhelm Wundt’s *Völkerpsychologie* regarding the mutual relationships of various folklore genres. There Švābe also stated that folktales, although internationally distributed, are an older genre than folksongs, and despite the international motifs, folktale is also a national genre, because mythography is always rooted in particular economical and social circumstances. At the same time, the article shows a tendency to solve theoretical problems of the broadest scale through the narrowly folkloristic investigation of folksongs, customs, and tales. This tendency also characterises Švābes work in the field later, going jointly with a genuinely interdisciplinary approach.

Since his high school days Švābe had been involved in leftist activities: participating in illegal meetings on the eve of 1905’s Revolution, becoming one of the most popular lecturers at the workers’ clubs all over the Latvia and working in Social Democrat newspapers. It is the obvious context for the turn of interpretation that he chooses in one of the early articles “Latvju dainu estētiskās tradīcijas” (“Aesthetic traditions of Latvian folksongs”, 1923; based on “Latvian folksongs as a material for sociological aesthetics”). In this essay folklore materials are used for the study of ethnological aesthetics, referring to the works of Charles Darwin. According to Švābe’s position, the poetics of folklore are totally historically determined; therefore, such analysis provides an opportunity to objectively research a particular nation’s world-view. As in his other early essays, folksongs are analysed in their historical context, but their content is perceived as a dynamic system, without preference for examples from one or other age. At the end of the day, this led to a characteristic class-relationship related conclusion: “Such was the tendency of economic life: to deprive *ornamentals* from the lower class of people and to give it away to servitude to the higher classes. But this tendency was not fulfilled: it was

broken by the German yoke, in the end making all Latvians servants of alien masters” (Švābe 1923: 17).

The most original of Švābes early works is probably the article “Ozols un liepa latviešu reliģijā” (“Oak and lime in Latvian religion”, 1920, 1923). Here the author tries to prove two very ambitious statements: first, the cult of oak and lime trees is enclosed and exclusively part of the Latvian religion, and second, it is very close to an early form of religious consciousness from the evolutionist perspective – totemism. For this purpose Švābe explored more than a thousand folksongs, some customs, and historical records. The theoretical background of the article mainly consists of publications by Émile Durkheim and James Frazer. Švābe also refers to Šmits’ *Latvian mythology*, the most detailed study of the subject matter at this time, although he disagreed with Šmits’ conclusions. Referring to Durkheim, Švābe separates the fields of religion and magic, and consequently states that the cult of oak and lime trees is a religious system with multiple laws, obligations, and cult practices, etc. This line of thought also has its ideological undertones: the Latvian nation-state had just recently been established, and its own, exclusively Latvian ancient religion could serve as convincing grounds for a decent national identity. The other question, about the totemistic nature of this cult, is problematic. If convincingly solved, this question would definitely grant the author international recognition. Švābe’s ambitions are well characterised by this particular quote of his from Frazer’s *Totemism and exogamy* edition of 1867: “If proved for one Aryan people, it might be regarded as proved for all; since totemism could scarcely have been developed by any one Aryan branch after the dispersion, and there is no evidence or probability that it ever was borrowed” (Frazer 1910: 86; Švābe 1923: 69). Therefore, if Švābe could prove that ancient Latvians had a totemistic religion, he could prove that all Aryan people had it; hence, every religion passes through the same consequent stages of development until it reaches the monotheism. After the analysis of totemism, and the exogamy⁷⁶ in the cult of oak and lime trees that usually followed it, Švābe concludes that ‘quasi totemism’, namely a particular type of social and religious relationship similar to gender-totemism described by Frazer earlier⁷⁷, could be characteristic to Latvians. Interestingly, the author also relates this quasi totemism to class relationships stating that “the belief in oak and lime trees was only a masters’/landlords’ belief” (Švābe 1923: 71). In general, this article precisely characterises the scope of Švābes research and his orientation towards the international scientific community. Research related to exogamy later served as a basis for the author’s first monograph *Dzimts satversme (Constitution of the kinship group, 1921)*, a work notably influenced by the sociological conceptions

⁷⁶ Švābe sees the remains of exogamy in the often encountered formula “taking of wife from over-district”; from this he concludes that there was a ban on marriage inside one clan or tribe in times when there were no districts as territorial units.

⁷⁷ Švābe admits that Frazer had declined this term himself, but does not see it as an obstacle for application to studies of the Latvian mythology.

of William Westermann, Friedrich Engels, Lewis Henry Morgan, Maksim Kovalevsky, and Pavel Vinogradov.

In the concise article “Latvju saule” (“Latvian Sun”, 1920a, 1923), folklore is analysed as contextual and class-related narrative in a similar way to *Aesthetic traditions of Latvian folksongs*; after referring to multiple folksongs the conclusion is that the mythological Sun belongs to the ruling class; and, reflecting this class, the Sun is accompanied by the institution of servants. In 1917–1919⁷⁸ Švābe conducted research into war folksongs, the theme to which he returned to in exile after more than three decades. Švābe traces the developments of the genre, relating the content of folksongs with particular forms of military service, from raids on neighbouring tribes to regular service in the Tsar’s army. As Švābe in his early studies seldom referred to comparative materials from other folklores, this article is unique due to its multiple references to corresponding Lithuanian folksongs. Švābe adopts the point of view of Charlotte Burn (Burn 1914) who regarded the ballad as the oldest form of narrative poetry. The analysis of ballads besides archaeological evidence and historical records led Švābe to summarise that Latvians (mainly Latgalians) were peaceful crop growers and the opposite to neighbouring belligerent tribes, especially the Livs. Concerning research into mythology, the statement in this article that the Moon was a Latvian deity of the war is interesting; unfortunately, this line of thought was not developed further.

Švābes interest in researching folktales was summed up in the article “Pasaku psiholoģija un motīvi” (“The motifs and psychology of folktales”, 1923 [1921]). Here Švābe’s point of departure was the above-mentioned thesis by Wundt’s that fairytales represent an older form of narrative than folksongs; therefore, they are a suitable source for the research of mythology. Further, understanding the psychological motifs, origins, passing, and performance of fairytales is claimed as necessary for their adequate interpretation. Švābe also refers to Wundt on the classification of myths, and to Durkheim on the relation between myths and religion; several theories of mythology are also described and evaluated. The author clarifies his own point of view when introducing Latvian readers to the theory of collective representations and the pre-logical mode of thinking conceptualised by the famous French ethnologist Lucien Lèvy-Bruhl. The article is also important for the historical research on Latvian folktales as a genre, because Švābe also introduced here tale type classification by Anti Arne. Švābe was also the first to prepare the edition of Latvian folktales (1923–1924) according to Aarne’s *Verzeichnis der Märchentypen* (1910), including references to corresponding Finnish, Estonian, German, and Russian tales. Altogether two volumes or nine books (700 pages) were published and the work was then continued by Pēteris Šmits. Further specializing in history and studies of law, Švābes’ interests in folkloristics changes from social aesthetics,

⁷⁸ The article was published in several numbers of the monthly “*Taurētājs*” (*The Herald*) in Moscow.

folktales and mythology to the reconstruction of historical facts and the ancient legal system reflected in folklore materials (e.g. Švābe 1932). Articles written after 1930 are most often based on folksong analysis and published as introductions to particular chapters of folksong editions (Švābe 1930a, b; 1931a, b; 1952, 1953a, b, etc.); no theoretical problems of the previous scale were solved. Exceptional from the period of World War II is a historical review and analysis of all previous Latvian folksong research, “Daži dainoloģijas jautājumi” (“Some questions of the folksong research”, 1944), published with the pseudonym Arveds Vilks. Here Švābe also provides outlines for future scholarship – oral tradition and a tradition bearer centred approach to folksongs⁷⁹. During the war Švābe prepared a more than one-hundred-page manuscript *Folklorā* (*The Folklore*, LVVA 7118) in which he outlines the history of folkloristics and suggests basic scientific principles that would establish it as a scientific discipline in its own right. Multiple references and the structure of the text suggest that, supplemented with the overview on historical sources of Baltic folklore, it is a rather close adaptation of Arnold van Gennep’s work of the same title – *La folklore* (1924), updated with the most recent debates within the field (Bula 2012). Unfortunately, the manuscript remains unpublished.

1.3. Personalities and theories: Mārtiņš Bruņenieks

Articles by Mārtiņš Bruņenieks (1866–1950) represent the opposition to most popular theories of the interwar period, as the latter were manifested in works of established scholars from the official research institutions. From 1888 to 1892 he studied Slavonic philology in Moscow, then worked as a teacher in Riga until 1892 when he moved to Kiev, also teaching and lecturing at the local university. A supporter of the New Current’s ideas, he published in *Dienas Lapa* and other periodicals in the late nineteenth century. In 1922 Bruņenieks returned to Latvia and became a teacher in the small town of Jēkabpils. This marginal position in the field of education might well be correlated to his oppositionist stance within the interwar discourse on mythology. From 1944 he held an associate professorship of German language at the University of Latvia, despite being decorated by the Cross of Recognition in 1939 (cf. Sēnala 2006).

Bruņenieks constantly defended two principles that had found no other follower amongst the leading scholars of the interwar period – the theory of animism, i.e. the emergence of religious life from the cult of the dead, and the notion of *Māra* as a genuine Latvian deity instead of a localised Virgin Mary. In the field of mythology research, all of the author’s efforts were devoted to elaboration and defence of these two themes. Following the leading nineteenth

⁷⁹ Although there are no direct references, the concepts and vocabulary explored demonstrate certain parallels with the ideas introduced to international scholarship by Carl Wilhelm von Sydow (e.g. biology of tradition, emphasis of the role of tradition bearers) and Milman Parry (e.g. the notion of ‘formula’).

century animistic theory of Herbert Spencer and Sir Edward Tylor, Bruņenieks in general extended their approach with notions of the “oldest stage of religion” – pre-animism or emanism, as formulated by Konrad Theodor Preuss and Alfred Vierkandt (Bruņenieks 1928: 20) – a belief that everything, tree, animal, human, etc., emanates a particular force. Bruņenieks also saw pantheism in the ancient Latvian world-view (Bruņenieks 1930), an idea popularised in his time by poetry and articles by romantic Latvian poets like Fricis Bārda (cf. Zeiferts 1934: 496; Bārda 1990). Interestingly, Bruņenieks disagreed with the majority of scholars on the role of particular folklore genres in the reconstruction of Latvian mythology. Thus, he doubted the role of folksongs, stating that they were more likely to represent poesy and fantasy, and images in folk songs are not related to real cult practices. Instead, one should prefer customs and folktales (Bruņenieks 1926: 1; 1930: 3). Although there is no evidence of such a custom in ancient Latvia, Bruņenieks referred to various other cultures to claim that the cult of ancestors arises from the practice of burying dead under the hearth. Informed by Durkheim’s *Elementary forms of religious life* (1911), the author stated that notions of ‘soul’ and, further, ‘deity’ arose from particular burial customs (cf. Coulanges 1905 [1864]). His argument is that the similarity of Latvian beliefs with those of cultures that had such burial practices⁸⁰ prove the validity of this concept also when researching the Latvian material. Following the same direction, Bruņenieks stated that both winter and summer solstices are festivities of the spirits of the dead (Bruņenieks 1928; 1930). While the majority of researchers agreed that *Māra* represents a localised version of the Virgin Mary that has acquired some functions of pagan deities like *Laima*, Bruņenieks disagreed and insisted that *Māra*’s origins lay in ancient India and that the name comes from a Sanskrit stem *mṛ* meaning ‘to destroy’, ‘kill’. He developed this hypothesis in classical comparative-mythology style relating *Māra* to the Roman god of war Mars, the Slavic evil spirit *Kikimora*, and *Holda* from German mythology. Moreover, he claimed that *Laima* and *Māra* is the same bipolar deity, identical also with *Veļu māte*, Mother of the Dead⁸¹. According to the animistic approach, this deity is the same dead mother of the kin, while God is the dead father of the kin. This leads to exclusion of other Mothers from the ancient Latvian pantheon, claiming that “they are poetical personifications” (Bruņenieks 1926:13) with the exception of the Mother of Milk and the Mother of Satiety. Interestingly, as functions of *Māra* are often related to cows (in his version also functions of the Mother of the Dead), Bruņenieks noted that these are remains of totemistic beliefs (Bruņenieks 1926:22).

⁸⁰ In addition to common references to Lithuanian, Prussian, German and Slavonic folklore materials, Bruņenieks’ comparative scope includes references to Judaic, Indian, Roman, Sicilian, Ancient Greek and Fijian materials as well as the Old Testament and the writings of Paracelsus.

⁸¹ Regarding various identities of one deity, Bruņenieks refers to Sigismund Freud’s *Totem and taboo*.

Often criticised by fellow scholars, Bruņenieks maintained his positions by replying with the same. The most criticised was Šmits because the latter derived deities from abstract notions, underestimated the summer solstice, pointed out Christian characteristics and the late emergence of folksongs, denied the morality of medieval Latvians, etc. Adamovičs' *Ancient Latvian religion* is a "compilation based on Šmits' works and has a little to do with scholarship" (Bruņenieks 1938: 72). Edgars Rumba was criticised for interpretation of Māra and Laima, but Ernests Brastiņš for plain fantasy. Bruņenieks invests comparatively more efforts than other scholars to criticise Brastiņš and his neo-pagan *Dievturi* movement, being ironic both about their cult practices and interpretations of folklore, perhaps because he is closer to public discourse himself. Briefly, the "Method of explaining folksongs and names by *Dievturi* requires lots of fantasy that has nothing to do with research. We need to start with some courage and immodesty and we will overcome all difficulties. We will do everything with a few phrases; there is no place for scholarship." (Bruņenieks 1930: 17). To sum up, Bruņenieks consequently followed his theoretical preferences from the nineteenth century; not being involved in Latvian research institutions, he remained a loner on the folkloristics scene, despite which, noticeably participating in the creation of the discourse. Perhaps due to his publishing activities, mainstream scholars criticised Bruņenieks' works more than any other amateur's works.

1.4. Personalities and theories: Kārlis Straubergs

A scholar I have mentioned already multiple times, Kārlis Straubergs (1890–1962) illustrates extremely well the combination of political, cultural and academic activities, all of them benefiting from each other. Briefly, Straubergs acquired a degree in classical philology in the University of Moscow and studied archaeology at Moscow's Institute of Archaeology, after returning to Latvia obtaining a Doctor of Philology degree at the University of Latvia. Straubergs later provided courses on Greek and Latin antiquities, magic and Latvian mythology. His education definitely influenced both the themes he was interested in and the methods of analysis he used. Thus, for example, the fundamental edition of Latvian charms (Straubergs 1939–1941) was preceded by extensive research into magic in Greek antiquity. In general, Straubergs' writings on witchcraft and charms resemble archaeology of discourse: while searching for the roots of particular Latvian charms, he introduces the reader to traditions of medieval European, Ancient Greek, and even Cabalistic magic. While chairing the Archives of Latvian Folklore, he published several articles on the history of Latvian folkloristics and its most ancient sources, also authoring the entry on Latvian mythology in the prestigious *Latviešu konversācijas vārdnīca (LKV)* – the largest lexicon published in interwar Latvia. Regarding the mythical cosmogony, Straubergs introduced the theory of vertical and horizontal divisions of the world, an outcome of the cross-genre analysis of

folklore texts. In comparison to other researchers, he had paid a lot of attention to the questions of cult accompanying mythical narratives. Religion consists of three facets: cult, dogma, and myth, as Straubergs states in the entry on Latvian mythology in the *LKV* (Straubergs: 1934–1935). Although there is no evidence of ancient Latvian religious dogma, and because evidence of cult (from the historical records and archaeological findings) and the remains of myths are not so easy to connect, Straubergs further defines his object of study as “Latvian religious thought”.

Straubergs could be considered a follower of Šmits, especially regarding this entry in *LKV*. Many references to Šmits’ *Latvian mythology* are also within the articles “Viņa saule” (“The other world”, 1922) and “Pasaules jūra” (“World Sea”, 1937), analysed in detail below (p. 134–137). In general, Straubergs most often compared the mythological and religious elements from historical records with the materials of Latvian folklore, avoiding parallels of too broad a scale. He was cautious regarding the folksongs, but explored historical records comparatively more than fellow scholars. Consequently, of all researchers of Latvian mythology, the broadest circle of references to medieval and early modern historical records belongs to Straubergs, often borrowing them from Mannhardt’s works. Interestingly, in the *LKV* entry on Latvian mythology he not once referred to folksongs; from other genres only some customs and beliefs are mentioned – everything else is taken from Šmits’ *Latvian mythology*. In the longer term, his comparative scope evolved: in “The Other World” Latvian mythology was compared only with Ancient Greek and Latin sources, for example the works of Homer, Vergil, Lucian and others; fifteen years later, in “World Sea” Egyptian, Russian and, according to his own words, “traditions of many other people” are also mentioned. Multiple references to different European people, especially the Celts and Scandinavians, are encountered in works published after World War II (e.g. Straubergs 1948 and 1957). Straubergs most extensively manifests his interest in the mythical netherworld within the latter work, articulated for the first time in the works published in the 1920s (p. 143–146).

Referential practices in Straubergs’ writings on folklore may testify to his insecurity in a relatively unfamiliar field, combined with the pressure of the high administrative position he occupied in it. Like other authors of this time (e.g. Šmits 2009 [1918]; Adamovičs 1937), Straubergs established a stance claiming distance from the outdated nineteenth century theories; however, in between he related solar mythology represented by Max Müller and similar authors to the “Sun henotheism of Macrobius⁸²” (Straubergs 1922: 615); this, again, says more about the author’s background than the sources of the grand comparative projects he refers to. A more extended overview of older mythological theories was included in the article “Grieķu mītu iztulkošana un

⁸² Ambrosius Theodosius Macrobius, fl. 410–30 CE, a senior civil servant of the Western Empire and Latin encyclopedist.

mitoloģiskās teorijas” (“Interpretation of Greek myths and mythological theories”, 1926), covering the history of the research of myths from the ancient Greeks to the beginning of the twentieth century. Here the most up-to-date theories were summarised under the term ‘anthropological direction’. Straubergs conducted his own research in contrast to the heritage of great nineteenth century and fin de siècle projects, defined as belonging to outdated theories: here Sir Edward Burnett Tylor and Herbert Spencer were categorised as animists, while Sir James George Frazer was categorised as a pre-animist, as were Wilhelm Wundt and Emil Rhode.

In brief, Straubergs interpreted mythology simultaneously as a philologist and historian or archaeologist. The latter feature, accompanied by extensive historiographical grounding of almost every question observed, allows us to draw close parallels between the works of Straubergs and Švābe. Straubergs’ statement that it is necessary to research common Latvian-Estonian folklore material to “separate alien – Russian and German – influences” (Straubergs 1933: 19) is interesting in relation to the dominant theories about the common origin of Latvians and Lithuanians that also involve common mythology. Nevertheless, this statement was made by an official figure – the head of the Archives of Latvian Folklore and chairman of the *Latviešu-Igauņu biedrība* (Latvian-Estonian Society), in the context of not-so-happy relations with Estonian colleagues (cf. Treija 2010) and published in the bilingual Society’s newspaper.

Characterising the internal dynamics of the field, in *Latviešu folklorā* (*Latvian folklore*, 1940: 587) Straubergs pointed out traits of criticised theories in the works of his contemporaries: “Professor Adamovičs sees *mana*-like beliefs in the ancient Latvian *Jumis* and *Laima*. In *Pūķis* he finds characteristics of fetishism; professor A. Švābe sees totemism in the cult of oak and lime-tree”. Straubergs also criticised Eduards Zicāns⁸³ for “overly direct references to Mannhardt” (Straubergs 1937: 172). I will further outline the relationship between Straubergs’ political involvement and knowledge production (p. 126–130), as well as more detailed analysis of his writings on mythological space (p. 134–137 and 143–146). Summarising so far, the scholarly activities of Straubergs were more inclined to analysis (and later also editing) of sources rather than building systematic research regarding mythological subject matters. Mythology was intimately connected to other research areas, determined by his background, interests and the positions held.

⁸³ Professor at University of Latvia (1942–1944), Dr. Theol. Eduards Zicāns (1884–1946) authored few articles on particular motifs of Latvian mythology, majority in German.

I.5. Personalities and theories: The phenomenologists Voldemārs Maldonis and Ludvigs Adamovičs

Most of the researchers who were interested in Latvian mythology had a philological or theological background. Both these disciplines are related by specialisation in the historical dimension of the subject matter. The theological direction, or that of the history of religion, relating to research on Latvian mythology in the interwar period was represented by several professors from the Faculty of Theology at University of Latvia and also by practising clergymen. Protestant pastor, graduate of the Faculty of Theology of the Universities of Dorpat (Tartu, Estonia) and Marburg (Germany), Professor of theology and philosophy, Dean of the Faculty of Theology at the University of Latvia, first Latvian General Superintendent Voldemārs Maldonis (1870–1941) characterises this relation between the disciplines of folkloristics and history of religion very well – by conceptualising and applying methodology of the latter to the matters of the former. In the opening of his article “*Jumis*” (1925) Maldonis emphasised that he will deliver religiously ethical description, rather than culturally historical or mythological. Maldonis used the concept of sympathetic magic as a connector between the already given domains of religion and ethics. His article also contains an original opinion regarding God in the ancient Latvian world order: “The God himself for Latvians is only one god, others are personifications and anthropomorphisations, executors of God’s will in this organism, nature, the life of a man.” (Maldonis 1925: 66). This rather marginal theory of original monotheism is expanded and explained in other articles on Latvian mythology (e.g. Maldonis 1935a). Regarding the disciplinary history another article published in the same year – “*Reliģijas fenomenoloģija*” (“Phenomenology of Religion”, 1935b) is more interesting. It is unique as one of the very few studies dedicated to the characterisation of the theoretical and historical developments of a single method. Aimed at the general public, with Christian orientation, the essay was based on a summary of a book with the same title by Dutch scholar Gerardus van der Leeuw. Unfortunately, there are no data that could prove the connection between popularisation of this method by Maldonis and later published works on Latvian mythology by Ludvigs Adamovičs, another follower of this approach. At the same time, both authors have a common field of references for they quote the same work by van der Leeuw, the writings of classical philologists Hermann Usener (1834–1905), Rudolph Otto (1869–1937), and Lévy-Bruhl⁸⁴.

Comparatively more systematic and contemporary analysis of Latvian mythology is provided by a Protestant clergyman, theologian and church historian, professor of theology, and Minister of Education of the Republic of Latvia in the first year (May 1934 – July 1935) of nationalistic authoritarianism

⁸⁴ Curiously, the latter is labelled as a phenomenologist by Maldonis. This fact may indicate a particular understanding of the phenomenology of religion in the works of Maldonis.

Ludvigs Adamovičs (1884–1943). Also a graduate of the Faculty of Theology at the University of Dorpat (1904–1909), after a short time in church service he became a Docent of Church History in the Faculty of Theology at the University of Latvia in 1920. He held this office from 1920 to 1929, and acted as a professor from 1920 to 1940, twice also serving as Dean of the Faculty of Theology and Vice-Chancellor of the University. Similarly to his colleagues folklorists, Adamovičs actively maintained international relations, for example, participating in the founding of, and later chairing, the *Latviešu un somu biedrība* (the Latvian and Finnish Society), visiting Finland in this capacity and publishing articles on the Finnish people and history (Freimane and Talonen 2005).

When the faculty of Theology was abolished by the Soviets in 1941, the professor lost his position and later, during the Night of Terror, on June 14, 1941, he and his family were arrested and deported to Siberia. In the summer of next year he was sentenced to death in Solikamsk concentration camp as an enemy of the people (Freimane and Talonen 2005; Ķiploks 1993). Working the whole interwar period as a lecturer of church history and religion, he embodied the agendas of both Christian scholar and official representative of the national state. Adamovičs' scholarly interests mainly consisted of research into the history of the Protestant church in Latvia. In the second half of the 1930s he started to publish articles on issues of Latvian mythology, paying special attention to the deity *Jumis* (Adamovičs 1932, 1940a), the household demon *pūķis*, 'dragon' (Adamovičs 1940c), ancient cosmology (Adamovičs 1938, 1940d) in folk songs, and the phenomenological reconstruction of ancient Latvian religion (Adamovičs 1937, 1940e). Despite the fact that mythological subject matters cover only a tiny part of his more than 1000-entry-long bibliography (including Acts and Statutes he signed as the Minister of Education: Freimane and Talonen 2005), published in the last years of interwar period, his works represent the most sophisticated system of Latvian mythology created during this period. His theological background enabled him to apply an approach different from fellow scholars, historians and philologists.

A key to his approach is a reference to van der Leeuw's *Phenomenologie der Religion* in which Adamovičs finds his definition of mythology: "Mythology is a secondary phenomenon of religion, a projection of the religious experience into the domain of mind and fantasy. The power that man undergoes in religious experience and what he, likening to himself, rewards with will, acquires in man's consciousness name and shape" (Adamovičs 1936: 210). His method, on the other hand, is closer to Levy-Bruhl's: "Penetration of the primitive man's structure of mentality creates access to the structural-psychological research of mythology" (ibid.). On the other hand, according to Adamovičs (again, referring to van der Leeuw) the basis of this structural-psychological research is the theory of polytheism developed by Usener. Adamovičs also compliments Straubergs' definition of religion (p. 116), adding to cult, myth and dogma the fourth, in his opinion the most important component, religious experience.

From this point he introduces the notion of sacred or numinous, referring both to Rudolph Otto and Alberts Freijs⁸⁵. The author exits the common Latvian mythology research circle of ethnographic references by introducing of works by Paul Tillich (e.g. *Mythus, begrifflich und religionspsychologisch*, 1930) and Wilhelm Wundt, previously mentioned mainly by Švābe. Similarly to Šmits, Latvian mythology is verified against the Arian religion described by Leopold von Schroeder. Regarding other comparative materials, Adamovičs was accustomed to refer to Mannhardt's works or materials quoted by Šmits and Straubergs. However, the comparative part of his research is not as extensive as other leading scholars, being mainly composed by references to ancient Hindu, Greek, Roman, Arian, and, most of all, Lithuanian and Prussian mythologies.

Adamovičs has paid attention to almost all facets of Latvian mythology – cosmology, eschatology, particular deities like *Jumis* and *Saule*, the structure of the ancient Latvian pantheon, and cult practices in general, etc. Subjects of his special interest were three mythologemes – *Debesu kāpnes* (Stairway to Heaven), *Debesu sēta* (Heavenly Yard) and *pūķis* (dragon)⁸⁶. Concerning the ancient Latvian pantheon, it should be mentioned that Adamovičs was also among those authors who doubted the authenticity of *Māra* as a genuine Latvian deity. His unique contribution to the research into Latvian mythology is very much expressible through the two terms 'differentiation' and 'integration'. Both notions are frequently used in the scholar's works – in separate articles within the *LKV*, a monograph on ancient Latvian religion (1937) and texts on various issues (1938, 1940a, 1940b, etc.). Despite this, his standpoint sometimes was contradictory. For example, regarding mythological Mothers: in the more theoretical article "Diferenciācija un integrācija latviešu mitoloģijā" ("Differentiation and Integration in Latvian Mythology", 1936) Adamovičs mentions that Mothers could be deities differentiated within particular realms, but he will not look closer at this question (Adamovičs: 1936). In the article "Mātes kults" ("The Cult of Mother", 1935–1936b) he wrote that all Mothers are the result of the Earth Mother's differentiation, further summarising that the process of differentiation and integration in Latvian mythology testifies to the fact that Latvians have always dwelled in religious understanding of particular natural processes and that the Latvian religion had a living character (Adamovičs 1935–1936b). One more notion, distinctive to Adamovičs' work, is a 'natural basis'. In a way, it leads away from the psychological explanation of religious phenomena to a more materialistic understanding of mythogenesis. This is especially clear in his explanation of the solar myth: here Adamovičs tried to explain every Sun-related deity with one or other optical phenomena,

⁸⁵ Alberts Freijs (1903–1968) was an archbishop of the Latvian Evangelic Lutheran church and author of more than 800 publications on diverse themes.

⁸⁶ The first two are scholarly abstractions composed of multiple folklore motifs; they are encountered only in texts about mythology, not within the sources. The last one is a generic household deity, Est.: *puuk*.

thus at the end arriving at rather complicated abstract structures (Adamovičs 1937).

Describing the ancient Latvian belief systems, Adamovičs used both the notions 'religion' and 'mythology' equally. However, his major work on mythology is titled *Senlatviešu reliģija vēlajā dzelzs laikmetā* (*Ancient Latvian Religion in the Late Iron Age*, 1937). Interestingly, in this book he defined, in comparison with other authors' approaches, a narrower field of description. It is not ancient Latvian religion as such; it is religious life at the beginning of the thirteenth century, at a time when the first crusaders settled in their respective territories. Although both books cover the same field, he differentiates his research from Šmits' *Latvian mythology* as an insight into the history of religion, rather than folkloristics. Stressing the disciplinary differences, Adamovičs points out that Šmits' material is not ordered according to historical genesis, it contains both older and more contemporary phenomena, including echoes from Catholicism and, in general, "Šmits has had no purpose to write a history of ancient Latvian religion" (Adamovičs 1937: 47). Adamovičs' version of the subject matter he both publishes as a monograph and teaches within the degree course at the University of Latvia⁸⁷. Adamovičs is also more careful regarding the systematisation of Latvian mythology:

Mythical motifs are already developed in particular myths that, unfortunately, have not survived in the form of broader and more complete narratives. But only in fragments; moreover, rather changed by poetic freedom and partially deformed under alien influences. Thus in a way one can see such variety and even contradictions. Therefore, reconstruction of myths is not an easy task as well. Starting from attested fragments and elements the mythical character of which is unquestionable, one must try to see their mutual connection, one must find a system in which they fit according to their psychology of structure

(Adamovičs 1940a: 321).

In the programmatic article on the research into the history of ancient Latvian religion (Adamovičs 1940e) the author assigned himself the task of discovering several important structural-psychological features of the ancient Latvian religion, and to describe them in German in order to introduce a broader audience to the issues of Latvian mythology. Here almost ten pages consist of a description of the sources of Latvian mythology, from a list of the most ancient historical records to an evaluation of folklore material. Adamovičs preferred customs and beliefs instead of folktales; the latter are regarded as just secondary sources. Content-wise, Adamovičs arranged Latvian mythology according to five main powers: life, death, growth and fertility, well-being, and personal happiness. These forces mutually overlap and create particular mythologemes.

One of the most significant of Adamovičs' works on Latvian mythology is a cosmological study *Senlatviešu pasaules ainava* (*Ancient Latvian world*

⁸⁷ With the title *Introduction to the History of Latvian Church* (1923).

outlook, 1938). Following the analysis of folklore materials, Adamovičs' included in this worldview *Debesu kalns* (the Heavenly Mountain), *Pasaules koks* (The World Tree)⁸⁸, and the mythical river Daugava; these mythologemes were placed in a tripartite world of Heaven, earth, and underworld. The entrance to Heaven and to the underworld is located either beyond *Pasaules jūra* (The World Sea), or at the horizon. I will explain the niceties and construction of this system later (p. 137–140) while here pointing out the related interdisciplinary dialogue: regarding these topographical dispositions Adamovičs refers to Straubergs, but criticises him in relation to other questions: his understanding of mythology in general, the location of the underworld, localisation of recently developed deities in Heaven, etc. Similarly, although Adamovičs sometimes provides astral-natural explanations for myths relating to the heavenly bodies, he criticises the work of Professor Vasīlijs Sinaiskis, for whose field it was too broad a fantasy. A chapter called “*Pūķis – pārticības fetišs*” (“Dragon – the fetish of prosperity”, Adamovičs: 1940c: 339) in the treatise on dragon in Latvian mythology also appears somewhat contradictory: despite following the most up to date theories elsewhere, here Adamovičs operates with a much older vocabulary (cf. Vignoli 1885).

In general, Adamovičs paid rather lot of attention to the works of fellow researchers: he criticised Bruņenieks for a biased adherence to animism, Maldonis for finding monotheism in Latvian beliefs, and Zicāns for “too eager finding of broad epic connections, and trust in the stability of the folksong form” (Adamovičs 1937: 49). In fact he refers truly positively only to his colleague Edgars Rumba's⁸⁹ research regarding the deity *Laima*. Writing on mythology in the late 1930s, when a significant amount of scholarly research was already accumulated, as well as being in rather an independent position from the power relationships of the discipline of folkloristics, allowed Adamovičs to critically overview the disciplinary developments and firmly position himself against other scholars involved in research of the subject matter⁹⁰. In summary, works by Adamovičs as well and his colleagues Rumba and Zicāns started a new trend in research on Latvian mythology from the point of view, and applying the methodology of, the history of religion; thus, both complimenting and paralleling trajectories of research created by folklorists and historians. Unfortunately, the tragic events of World War II stopped this development until the second half of the 1950s when Haralds Biezais started his research into Latvian religion from a related perspective in Sweden.

⁸⁸ In addition, these both are “scholarly mythologemes”.

⁸⁹ Priest and professor at the University of Latvia, Dr. Theol. Edgars Rumba (1904–1943) had authored a few articles on particular Latvian deities in the 1930s.

⁹⁰ Thus, in the relevant entry of the *LKV* the author categorises all research of the subject matter up to the year 1936: the works of Bruņenieks, the folklorists Ludis Bērziņš and Pēteris Šmits, the historian Švābe, and fellow theologians Zicāns and Maldonis (Adamovičs 1936–1937: 27459).

I.6. Personalities and theories: Preference for particular folklore genres

Summarising this overview of the interwar period: across the key scholars in mythology related fields and different disciplines, the main factor determining particular conclusions on the subject matter appears to be preference for one or other folklore genre as a primary source from which to reconstruct Latvian mythology. Two main groups of folklore materials in this context are folk poetry and narrative folklore, mainly consisting of folktales. The bibliography of this period shows only one study dedicated to narrative folklore, that is, fairytales; at the same time several titles indicate an interest in mythological motifs in folk poetry. However, the majority of texts have generic titles that indicate no preferences for this or another genre, therefore a closer look must be taken. Švābe was the only one who, referring to Wundt⁹¹, declared that narrating and lyric poetry is of the same age, and that of all forms of expressive poetry not the epic, but rather the legend and the folktale are the primeval modes of narrative (Švābe 1923). If, according to this idea, folktales could serve well for research into Latvian mythology, the question of their national origin is more problematic – are folktales truly local or just transmitted and translated from neighbouring people. Švābe prefers the former option, stating that the motifs are similar, but plots could be specific to any nation, thus legitimising the use of narrative folklore in the reconstruction of local belief systems. Otherwise, Švābes contribution to the discussion on folklore genres was original by proposing the splitting of form-defined larger categories into more specific sub-categories defined by origin and transmission: according to gender, social class, profession, etc. (Švābe 1923: 103), which also highlight the importance of individual tradition bearers (Vilks 1944).

The contrary hypothesis of international transmission and adaptation was supported by Šmits. Already in 1908 he had warned potential readers that “we must be especially aware to seek and find the production of our ancestors from ancient pagan times in any folktale” (Šmits 1908, cf. Švābe 1923: 96). Although Šmits agreed that stylistic elements and local realities accompany international motifs (Šmits 1912, cf. Švābe 1923: 98), according to him, national mythology cannot be found there. First, because Latvian folktales originated more recently than folksongs (Šmits 1925–1937) and are thus more likely to reflect historical rather than pre-historical reality. Comparative mythology also serves to prove this statement because only a few genuine mythological beings are present in

⁹¹ References to Wundt, made by Švābe and Adamovičs, might suggest a tendency towards the holistic model in national scholarship: Wundt's *Völkerpsychologie* extended Grimm-style linguistics, already inclined towards solving questions of culture and identity, into the realm of national characterology (Leerssen 2006: 210). Although none of these authors had written a work of the same scope as Wundt's, claims of strong links between language, people, myths, traditions might be backgrounded against respective texts on Latvian mythology.

folktales. Although Šmits mentioned the hypothesis of Latvian folktales as a common Indo-European heritage, his conclusion on this subject matter is quite sceptical. It seems that few words are preserved from the ancient proto-language and so the continuity of more complex, larger phenomena should be doubted. The multitude of similarities between Latvian and Estonian folktales, which both represent very different language groups, for Šmits supported the hypothesis of horizontal (synchronic) rather than vertical dissemination of this genre. At the end of the day, he discussed the origins of folktales and concluded with the thesis that they are a kind of corrupted historical account with multiple similarities to dreams. Although familiar with Freud's work, Šmits did not continue this parallel of dreams, folktales and myths. In his *Latvian mythology* the most important sources of reconstruction are chronicles and other historical documents that are verified by means of comparison with other Indo-European mythologies and against the background of folklore. Dominating among folklore materials are folksongs, second place is occupied by beliefs and customs, sometimes charms are mentioned, and only then follow a few references to folktales. Mythological space or world order is mentioned just implicitly here. In Šmits' works it is derived from the functions of gods: heavenly gods live in heaven, those who are related to the dead live under the ground, those who are praised in woods live in the woods, and so forth.

Regarding preferences for folklore materials, almost all Latvian scholars agree with Šmits, although not explicitly repeating his arguments. The most common is the argument about form and content; for example, Straubergs wrote, "Ancient Latvian thoughts about the world one must search for in folksongs, where they are preserved not due to their picturesque nature but because folk poetry, contained by rhythm, passes more easily from generation to generation in unchanged form" (Straubergs 1937: 169). Nevertheless, in other texts Straubergs analysed Latvian mythology almost exclusively on the basis of historical sources (e.g. Straubergs 1934), with the exception of his first publication on mythological space (Straubergs 1922), where the research was overwhelmingly based on folktales; several folksongs and comparative materials from other mythologies served only to support this material. Here the choice of folktales allowed him to describe the journey of a mythical hero downwards to the underworld, returning horizontally over the sea, arriving in a different time. This space-time anomaly is a unique feature of fairytales, not present in any other folklore material. Straubergs' more recent treatise of similar subject matter (Straubergs 1937) was based almost exclusively on folksongs; folktales were mentioned just as an additional source. The first part of his collection of Latvian charms, also containing a chapter on charms with mythological motifs, was published only in 1939. Here Straubergs claimed that charms are in any case not usable as primary sources for the research of mythological issues because they contain too much international material (Straubergs 1939: 383).

Both narrative and poetic folklore were analysed equally in the article on the Latvian god *Pērkons* by Eduards Zicāns (1935), but the study of eternity in Latvian folk belief (1940) by the same author was exclusively dedicated to analysis of folktales, moreover to one type of folktale. Zicāns explains the differences of space models in different folklore materials by historical developments: the local tripartite space is older and pagan, while the location of the other world far away is a result of Christian influence. A historian of religion, Adamovičs repeated the same hierarchy of sources from historical documents to folktales (Adamovičs 1940a) as Šmits almost twenty years after the publication of Šmits' *Latvian mythology*. Here Adamovičs referred to Wundt, stating that mythological folktales are only childish transformations of higher myths (cf. Adamovičs 1940b: 439); perhaps because of the Wundt's influence he still used quite a lot of narrative folklore materials in his research into particular issues like the ancient world order and the dragon in Latvian mythology (Adamovičs 1940c). In his study of ancient Latvian cosmology (Adamovičs 1938), he merged folksong and folktale materials cross-referring from one to another. At the same time he also wrote about the incomplete space model as belonging to a historical transitional period in which the other world is located just beyond the horizon. Unlike Zicāns, Adamovičs stated that the tripartite model was already present before the Christian conquests. Mārtiņš Bruņenieks, in his turn, was rather reserved towards the folksongs and used customs and beliefs to prove the theory of animism (e.g. Bruņenieks 1930, 1926, 1938).

Theories of folklore genres, their ages, historical dynamics, and origins are also related to the problem of the historical location of Latvian mythology: scholars have discussed it as the Bronze or Iron Age, have related it to arrival of the Germans, postponed it to thirteenth to sixteenth century, or to this and later periods together, sometimes just avoiding this issue by talking about generic, national mythology. No substantial historical record reaches before the thirteenth century; therefore, any 'earlier mythology' relies on evaluations of the age of sources that were often carried out on the basis of intuition (cf. Biezais 2006). Presumably, the preference of poetic over narrative folklore in reconstructions of mythology had its roots in the formation of the discourse in the times of Herder. As Regina Bendix suggests, "The focus on the poetic and its authenticated locus in folksong contributed to the privileged position that such song took among the genres of expressive culture which would eventually shape the canon of folklore studies" (Bendix 1997: 44).

Concluding, narrative folklore in this period got less attention than folksong for several reasons. One could be the general intellectual background, which manifested concerns about national authenticity and originality. Another is the availability of sources: unlike materials relating to other genres, there were already enough systematically published folksongs in the early 1920s to verify almost any hypothesis. The most interesting is the fact that the situation surrounding descriptions of mythological space was slightly different. Here

fairytale seem almost to dominate, perhaps due to clearly defined borders and meanings of different parts of the world and their structural relations.

2. Power and knowledge

In this section I will provide a more detailed insight into the life histories of two outstanding scholars whose works, forming different perspectives on folklore and mythology, were analysed above – Straubergs and Švābe (p. 115–117 and 113–115). If previously the analysis was conducted in more narrowly academic context, as related to their other scholarly interests and the works of other scholars, this insight demonstrates the specific social and political context of knowledge production during a particular period, with its roots in World War I, developments during the interwar period and the aftermath during and after World War II. Both cases provide enough similarities to illustrate the *Zeitgeist* of the era and enough differences to illustrate the diversity within one period of research.

2.1. Power and knowledge: Kārlis Straubergs

Kārlis Straubergs (1890–1962) was definitely one of the most influential personalities within the field of folkloristics and beyond in interwar Latvia. Straubergs' intellectual heritage takes in folkloristics, classical philology, history, as well as his own poetry and multiple translations. Professor, lecturer at the University of Latvia, and head of the Archives of Latvian Folklore for fifteen years, Straubergs merged his scholarly career with political ambitions. Government Minister of Education for a short period (1924), Straubergs later occupied high positions in multiple civic societies and public organisations, often appearing together with members of the business, military and bureaucratic elites, as well as high-ranking foreign diplomats in the pages of newspapers. His bibliography, including translations and poems, consists of 810 entries (Apele 1993). In addition to more than four hundred rather long entries in the *LKV*, there are monographs and articles on questions of history, archaeology, ethnography, ancient cultures, Latvian folklore, and mythology. Apart from Latvian, several publications were also in Russian, Polish, Italian, Latin, German, and Swedish, thus targeting the international audiences. In a way, Straubergs represents the type of intellectual particular to Eastern Europe: influential, almost authoritarian, closely related to power structures. As such, he claimed the symbolic power of the nineteenth century national awakening, at that time led by the avant-garde intelligentsia of the rising middle class (cf. Milošs 1998).

Straubergs was born into a wealthy peasant family⁹² in Jelgava district of central Latvia. One can say, he was born into a folkloristic environment. One of his first teachers at the local primary school was Ansis Lerhis-Puškaitis, the editor of the first fundamental Latvian folktale edition, while decades later Straubergs recorded from his parents and other household members more than 500 items of folklore material⁹³. Straubergs graduated from the Classical Gymnasium of Jelgava with a golden medal, at the same time earning his first capital by providing private lessons to children of wealthy families for a gold rouble an hour. The next gold medal Straubergs earned in 1916, graduating from the University of Moscow with a degree in classical philology. Simultaneously (1912–1915), he acquired the degree of qualified archaeologist from the Moscow Institute of Archaeology (Straubergs 1995). During World War I the young scholar was mobilised in the Tsar's army, joined the Latvian Riflemen battalion and in the same year, 1916, organised the Latvian Riflemen Museum of War in Riga, becoming its first director. In 1917 Straubergs participated in the first congress of Latvian teachers in Dorpat (Tartu) in order to start negotiations on the establishment of the University of Latvia. Demobilised due to poor eyesight, Straubergs left the approaching battle front for Moscow at the end of 1917. During this refugee period he occupied a teacher's positions at several high schools and towards the end of the war became a director of the local Latvian gymnasium. After returning to Latvia in 1918, Straubergs joined military circles again, now voluntarily, and headed the Museum of War until 1920. The University of Latvia was established in 1919 and Straubergs started his scholarly career in the same year as an associate professor of classical philology in the Faculty of Philology and Philosophy. Full professorship was granted after the defence of his thesis *Latīņu paraugu iespaids Horācija dzejā* (*The influence of Latin models on the poetry of Horatio*), for a PhD degree in philology. During his career, Straubergs occupied various posts in the same faculty: secretary, librarian, and also, ultimately, dean. Straubergs became a member of the Board of the university (1925–1940) and pro-rector in charge of student matters (1941–1943). In the 1930s Straubergs was also a director of *Kr. Barona Tautas Augstskola* (Kr. Barons' People's University) for several years and then a board member and manager of *Latvijas vēstures institūts* (the Latvian History Institute). While this could already seem a burden of duties heavy enough for one person, Straubergs participated in shaping of academic policies within various committees at the University of Latvia and the Ministry of Education, being a board member of *Valsts vēsturiskais muzejs* (The State Historical Museum) and head of various government bureaus and other structures covering education and the policy of

⁹² Insufficient quantitative data does not allow us to draw a strong correlation between the social background, choice of disciplinary field, and political ideology of Latvian scholars of this period; however, there might be parallels.

⁹³ Collection no. 880 at the Archives of Latvian Folklore.

culture (cf. Straubergs 1995). Even in less official academia-related activities Straubergs occupied leading posts, for example, heading the *Fraternitas Livonica* section of the students fraternity, becoming an honorary member and remaining so until the end of his life. Multiple duties obviously did not interfere with his lecturing obligations: from 1919 Straubergs delivered numerous lectures and seminars on ancient Greek and Latin language, grammar, literature, and magic, etc.; in the 1938/1939 academic year he also lectured on Latvian mythology.

As mentioned above, Straubergs was a member of the government for only a short period of time; nevertheless, many of his activities were at the level of the higher society and political elite. Straubergs often spoke at various meetings, commemoration events, anniversaries, exhibition openings, and other public events⁹⁴. Multiple such events were because of Straubergs leading position in two organisations of international cooperation and culture exchange: *Latviešu un itāliešu tuvināšanās biedrība* and *Latviešu un poļu tuvināšanās biedrība* (The Latvian-Italian, and Latvian-Polish, Mutual Relations Societies). The significance of these positions must be considered in the context of the political regime of Latvia in the late 1930s, after Kārlis Ulmanis' coup d'état in May 1934⁹⁵. Presumably, the Italian fascist *duce* Mussolini served to some extent as a role model for Latvian *father of the people* Ulmanis. Intense diplomatic and culture contacts were established between both states and the leaders greeted each other with telegrams. The Latvian-Italian Mutual Relations Society was established at the end of 1934 starting with about 100 activists and soon acquiring several hundred members. Oriented towards the higher society, the organisation's events took place in Riga's most prestigious venues. The Latvian-Italian Mutual Relations Society illustrates *par excellence* the social

⁹⁴ For media coverage of Straubergs societal activities see *Latvijas kareivis*, 31.01.1932, 28.10.1934, 22.05.1935, 24.10.1937, 8.01.1938; *Valdības Vēstnesis*, 21.08.1928; *Students*, 7.02.1929; *Jaunākās Ziņas*, 07.10.1936, 8.03.1937, 10.03.1937, 04.05.1937, 18.10.1937, 17.06.1938; *Brīvā Zeme*, 04.05.1937, 20.08.1937, 29.04.1938, 04.05.1938; *Rīts*, 24.11.1934, 16.06.1935, 18.06.1935, 19.12.1935, 28.01.1936, 17.01.1937, 6.05.1937.

⁹⁵ Benito Mussolini partially established his regime in Italy in 1924 and gained full control over the country a few years later; in Poland Marshal Josef Pilsudski led a military coup in 1926, and headed a military dictatorship afterwards. Similar developments also took place in the Baltic states: firstly, a military coup d'état in Lithuania in 1926 resulted in an authoritarian conservative government led by Antanas Smetona; secondly, in October 1934 President Konstantin Päts dismissed the Estonian parliament – *Riigikogu* – and replaced it with a bi-cameral assembly. The replacement of parliamentary democracy by authoritarian regimes in interwar-period Europe came about because of multiple developments that varied in significance from country to country: the invention of new propaganda techniques and rise of the mass media, dissatisfaction with the outcomes of World War I, the global economic crisis of 1929, fear of the rising powers of the Soviet Union, etc. Although European dictatorships differed in their historical roots, social contexts, and ideologies, the trend towards “the rule of the strong leader” and cult of personality that usually accompanies it were in common (cf. “History of Europe”).

life of its time as well as the relationship between intellectuals and artists and the ruling power. For example, in the year after the establishment of the Society its first significant event took place in the form of an exhibition of Italian graphic art. The opening was attended by the State President, several government ministers, the Mayor of Riga, the ambassadors of nine foreign countries, rectors of universities and other representatives of the elite (*Latvijas kareivis*, 09.04.1935). Straubergs draws parallels to the fascist rise to power – March on Rome in 1922 – and local developments in one of his speeches: “The march on Rome swiftly turned the wheel of history creating chances of a new life in the light of new ideas, honouring the unity of the nation and its firmness of will. Events of the 15th May, when the leader of our nation Ulmanis led a new Latvia on a bright path to its future, let us more clearly understand the meaning of this march” (*Rīts*, 29.10.1935). Straubergs was interested in contemporary Italy as an heir of Latin culture because of his expertise in classical philology; at the same time, in these circumstances this was the perfect opportunity to combine academic interests, political ambitions, and social life.

One more suggestive project is a book on Ulmanis’ native district *Bērmuižas pagasta vēsture* (*History of the Bērmuiža district*, 1937), co-authored by Straubergs and his older brother, well-known historian Jānis Straubergs. The research and publication of the book was funded by the local municipality and the book was dedicated to Ulmanis and solemnly presented to the leader on his 60th birthday (*Jaunākās Ziņas*, 13.09.1937). Straubergs’ involvement with state ideology was directly related also to folkloristics, for example, giving public lectures⁹⁶ and consultations on ethnographic specifics for the entertaining propaganda movie *Fatherland Calls*⁹⁷ (1935). Stills from the movie were also used as illustrations for the book *Senās suitu kāzas un ķekatas* (*Wedding and mummerly of the ancient Suits*, Šperliņš 1937), published by the Archives of Latvian Folklore. It is still unclear how Straubergs became the head of the same institution in 1929. Shortly before it happened, the establisher and head of the institution Anna Bērzkalne had a conflict with officials of the Board of Monuments regarding the finances of the LFK. Next, the board asked Bērzkalne to leave her position, although soon one of board’s officials was incriminated for theft of the Archive’s funds (Vīksna 2008). There

⁹⁶ In 1935, Straubergs gave a lecture on Latvian traditions at a meeting of lecturers from the Ministry of the Home Office’s Department of Information and Propaganda; three years later, with the support of the highly influential General Balodis, Straubergs provided a lecture called *New states in the light of history* at several army garrisons (*Brīvā Zeme*, 5.01.1938).

⁹⁷ Unfortunately, only fragments of the movie have survived until today. However, the press release retells the plot and moral of this story: Jānis, the son of a local wealthy peasant, had gone abroad, travelled a lot and now returns to his father’s home fashionable and educated. Heavy peasant work no longer appeals to him as well as many other things in his native country. Then he meets beautiful Anna, but she sets aside the absent-minded man. After some time Jānis changes and becomes a proper hard working peasant. Ultimately he conquers Anna’s heart (*Rīts*, 30.08.1935: 4).

is no direct evidence linking Straubergs with the people involved, but his duties in the new position started with conflict with new colleagues – the collegium of the Archive. Personal relations with Bērzkalne were also far from good and this probably also influenced the relationship between the *LFK* and the Estonian Archives of Folklore, the head of which was Oskar Loorits: “As suggests correspondence between Anna Bērzkalne and Oskar Loorits, cooperation of Riga and Tartu after 1929 was sporadic and insignificant; the relationship between Kārlis Straubergs and Oskar Loorits at particular periods of time could be characterised as hostile” (Treija 2008: 65). In the later correspondence Straubergs is even suspected of censorship in the post⁹⁸. Despite Straubergs’ influential protégées, Bērzkalne’s suspicions could also be raised from the official position of the Republic of Latvia: Loorits was declared *persona non grata* in 1935, and he was expelled from Latvia during the Baltic congress of history in 1937 (Blumberga 2004, from Vāstrik 2005: 205). As a result, Straubergs as the head of the Archives of Latvian Folklore tried to improve relationships by several programmatic publications in a bilateral Latvian-Estonian monthly magazine (e.g. Straubergs 1935). However, the professor was more successful establishing other international connections. In addition to the above mentioned activities in the Latvian-Italian and Latvian-Polish societies, for some time Straubergs also headed the Latvian-Swedish Mutual Relations Society. During his career, he was commissioned to more than fourteen countries, participated in international conferences and congresses and as well as receiving the higher Latvian decorations also received several foreign orders. Interestingly, Straubergs first official journey, after becoming head of the Archives of Latvian Folklore, was to the Nordic Museum in Sweden: the institution that became his workplace in exile.

2.2. Power and knowledge: Arveds Švābe

Arveds Švābe stands beside Kārlis Straubergs in cultural history as one of the leading Latvian intellectuals in the first half of the twentieth century. However, his life, career, and rise to authority were totally different until the last exile years when both scholars worked at the same institution in Sweden. Throughout his lifetime his political alignment shifted from far left to right, and, always being passionate about his stand, Švābe has left significant heritage in the fields

⁹⁸ “Our university undergoes reorganisation, perhaps yours alike as well. I have asked the rector for permission to teach the students method of comparative folkloristics. However, if professor Straubergs will be in charge, I prefer working the same way as until now [...]. Please send me some message as soon as possible. I was not sure about the connections of the above-mentioned great person with the censorship of the post, and I had no intentions to inform him about the progress of my scholarly work. Therefore I had no desire to write letters. Now, I hope, other persons work in the post office” (*Eesti Kirjandusmuuseumi Eesti Kultuurilooline Arhiiv* f. 175, m.: 9, 1, 35/35, quoted according to Treija 2008: 41).

of Latvian history, culture, folklore, literature and law studies. A scholarly bibliography consisting of 650 entries and 28 publications of novels and poems speak for themselves, not to mention the multiple texts Švābe edited, including all 21 tomes of the *LKV* (Caune 1998).

Švābe was born into a peasant family; his father worked as an overseer at a local manor house in Lielstraupe district. The family was rather well off and Švābe started school at the local parish school, then continued in the towns Cēsis, Valmiera, and Jelgava. At the turn of the century Švābe got acquainted with the ideas of *Jaunā strāva* (The New Current), the politically left ideological movement, centred around the newspaper *Dienas Lapa* (*The Page of the Day*); it mobilised broad masses of workers in the industrially developed Latvian-speaking regions using both nationalist and socialist agendas. In Latvia this movement became the main force in the 1905 revolution (cf. Cerūzis 2001). Still learning in secondary school, Švābe participated in illegal meetings and distributed revolutionary proclamations in his native town. During the response young Švābe was caught and sentenced to death; luckily, he was released due to his status as a minor. Until the end of the decade Švābe attended various courses and obtained the rights of a private tutor, later on taking a teacher's position in a gymnasium in the north-west Latvian town of Rūjiena. In addition to fulfilling a teacher's duties, Švābe actively participated in the activities of a local temperance association, which gathered politically left elements from nearby parishes (Švābe 1947).

Švābe terminated his teacher's career to study at the *Московский народный университет Шаневского* (People's University of Shanovsky, Moscow). During his studies (1911–1915) his interests shifted from the natural sciences to history and philology, sociology, aesthetics, and later to law and economics. The diversity of his interests is consequently reflected in his early writings on folklore and mythology (p. 109–113). During his studies Švābe lived for the most part in Moscow and returned to Latvia from time to time, to earn some money by publishing in the social democrat newspapers (*Jaunā Dienas Lapa* and *Domas*) and public lectures at workers' associations. Despite not being on good terms with the Latvian leftist student society in Moscow Švābe became one of the most popular lecturers in the leftist circles in Latvia. In 1914, he married Līna Maria Aure and once again became a teacher, now in Riga. After a short period they returned to Moscow and Švābe continued his studies at university, exploring the latest works of English and French folklorists as well as Russian ethnographers in *Библиотека Румянцева* (Rumyantsev's Library). Developments of the First World War forced the young family to leave Moscow. Secured by forged documents, they departed to the Far East. In Vladivostok and Harbin there were relatives of Švābe and at the Far East Institute in Vladivostok the already well-known Latvian Sinologist and folklorist Pēteris Šmits worked. Unfortunately, meeting with the fellow scholar brought only disappointment as he was not familiar with works Švābe had studied (Wundt, Frazer, Lévy-Bruhl, Durkheim, etc.), also his library turned out

to be rather poor, with folkloristics represented only by a few German handbooks (Švābe 1947). Consequently, Švābe ordered Frazer's *The Golden Bough* from London. He worked as a junior post servant (1916–1919) on the Vladivostok-Harbin railway line, long and uneventful train trips providing the opportunity to work with Latvian folksongs: here some of his early texts were written, published later in Moscow and Latvia. Švābe was also actively involved in the local Latvian political activities⁹⁹ and in the autumn of 1919 returned to Europe by ship, carrying in his luggage secret intelligence documents (Švābe 1947).

After returning to the now independent Republic of Latvia, Švābe made capital of his established connections: he was for seven years enlisted in the Social Democrat Workers Party, worked as a civil servant in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for a short period, stood as a candidate in elections and became a member of the parliament. Participating in the work of the Committee of Education and Culture, he passed laws on libraries and archives. The status of parliamentarian provided access to the archives of Livonian knighthood, containing multiple unique sources of history which Švābe explored. In 1921 Švābe matriculated the Faculty of Economics and Law at the University of Latvia. He graduated with a lawyer's degree in 1926. During the 1920s Švābe occupied various different roles as head of *Latviešu rakstnieku un žurnālistu savienība* (the Latvian Writers' and Journalists' Union), board member of *Latvijas Nacionālais teātris* (the Latvian National Theatre), etc.

While studying (1921–1923), Švābe rewrote the history of Latvia for schools according to the official ideology and published a collection of articles on folkloristics called *Raksti par latvju folkloru* (*Articles on Latvian folklore*, 1923). Considering the authors and theories referred to, it was the most up-to-date research in the field. In the same year Švābe pioneered the publication of Latvian folktales and legends according to the Antti Aarne classification. Simultaneously he worked in other directions – publishing his first anthology of poems and a substantial study of feudal rights. 1926 turned out tragically due to the suicides of his, and his close friend Pāvils Rozītis', wives, followed by a loud scandal in the local tabloids. Švābe became the chief editor of the *LKV*, which was intended as an embodiment of all national knowledge; in subsequent years he authored about 300 entries in this edition. During the 1930s Švābe published several articles on Latvian writers and Latvian folklore in *Enciclopedia Italiana* (*Italian Encyclopaedia*). In 1930 Švābe became an associate professor of Latvian legal history in the Faculty of Economics and Law Scholarship at the University of Latvia. Apart from the overall importance of national history in the construction and legitimation of the nation-state

⁹⁹ Initially it is Vladivostok's department of the leftist *Latvijas pašnoteikšanās savienība* (Union of Latvian Self-Determination), then the central office of *Sibīrijas un Urālu latviešu Nacionālā padome* (National Council of Latvians of Siberia and the Urals). In 1919 Švābe took the position of office secretary.

(Hobsbawm 2009, Leerssen 2006 et al.) Švābe's *Grundriss der Agrargeschichte Lettlands* (1928, English, French, and Latvian 1929) also played a practical role: it was used to defend against the claims the Baltic German landed gentry and nobility made to the League of Nations. Consequently, for this research into legal history, Švābe was decorated with a third degree Three-star order. Although Švābe returned to folkloristics with several publications in a folksong edition by Roberts Kļastiņš (Švābe 1930a, b; 1931a, b), his main field of interest was legal history. In 1932 Švābe defended the thesis *Livonijas bruņinieku senās tiesības* (*Ancient Rights of the Livonian Knights*) and obtained the degree of Doctor of Law. Further, Švābe became a professor at the same faculty, actively published and took multiple responsibilities at various public and educational organisations. After two years he started a professorship in the Faculty of Philology and Philosophy, reading courses on the modern and general history of Latvia. At the end of the 1930s Švābe occupied the position of vice-director of the Institute of Latvian History (*Latvijas vēstures institūts*). He also continued his creative career, took up public responsibilities, and among all these activities became an associate of the Estonian Science Society (Švābe 1947, Caune 1998).

History, as written by Švābe from the Latvian/nationalist position, contradicted the Soviet and German scholars' elevation of events and their meaning; for the former, the questions of class struggle and connections with Russian progressive forces are undermined, while for the latter the Baltic German role in history is depicted in a rather unpleasant light. Naturally, the established research institutions of Latvian history could not continue to operate under the Soviet or German occupation powers during World War II. In 1940 Švābe's, as well as Strauberg's, posts at the Institute of Latvian History were reorganised as without salary (Zelmenis 2007: 17). In 1943 German institutions forbade Švābe from lecturing and examining students; later the department of Latvian history was closed and the professor dismissed. The Approaching battle-front forced him to leave Latvia. In the same year Švābe was arrested and imprisoned in Dachau concentration camp in Germany. After release, Švābe lived in Germany for a few years, contributing to Latvian exile society with publications and membership of various exile Latvian political organisations (p. 90–93).

To conclude, as with the case of Straubergs, Švābe's research into folklore and mythology was shaped by the scholar's other activities and political position. As folklore was only rather secondary in Švābe's interests, his scholarly production cannot be analysed apart from the wider context, which touches on approaches utilised, purposes of research, and opportunities of time for production.

3. Mythological Space

The first section of this chapter contextualised the research into Latvian mythology within the contested theoretical flows and approaches dominant in different fields related to the subject matter and represented by particular scholars. Case studies of power and knowledge relationships in the life histories of two of them – Straubergs and Švābe – contextualised research in the interwar period political and cultural landscapes, illustrating the changing ideological and personal agendas and their relationship to the scholarship of the new nation-state. Consequently, here I will trace the relationship between the above described contexts and particular texts on Latvian mythological space, presented as an insight into the reconstruction of mythological space by two different authors of this period: Straubergs and Adamovičs. Their above described differences allow us to track dependencies of the research outcomes from the multiple factors constituting a particular researcher's standing. These two studies will also serve as a point of reference for further developments of the subject matter, analysed in the next chapter of thesis.

3.1. Mythological space: Straubergs' eschatology

Although Straubergs published only two articles regarding the structure and particular semanthemes of the mythological space during the interwar period¹⁰⁰, his contribution perfectly illustrates the dynamics of the discipline as they relate to both changes in his own scholarly approach and discussions within the field. The first of the articles is written by a young scholar, a classical philologist in the time when the discipline of folkloristics was not yet institutionalised in interwar Latvia and discussions on the research of mythology were rather sporadic. The second article was written by a prominent scholar, head of the Archives of Latvian Folklore, fifteen years later. At this time several scholars had already published their research on the subject matter, and the author himself was professionally involved in folkloristics, both with his political activities and by publishing multiple articles and entries in the *LKV* (p. 115–117). Consequently, both articles will be briefly analysed to illustrate how these circumstances had shaped Straubergs' notion of Latvian mythological space.

Vīņa saule (*Netherworld*, 1922) starts with the Latvian folktale of a miserly man who gets lost in the forest and finds a clearing with a wonderful meadow where a rich meal is served; but the man could touch nothing, and all the other guests are dead. Straubergs starts his analysis of this tale on familiar terrain drawing parallels with the descriptions of the Elysian fields (the Islands of the Blessed) in *A True Story* by Lucian of Samosata (c. 125–180 AD), a rhetorician and satirist who wrote in Greek. Straubergs goes on to refer to several folksongs and customs characterising the ambivalent attitude of ancient Latvians towards

¹⁰⁰ He continued this theme in the article “Zur Jenseitstopographie” (1957) in exile.

death in general; at this stage he extends Latvian and Greek parallels by etymological analysis of terms relating to death and burial (Straubergs 1922: 607). In a similar way, referring to Latvian folktale motifs on the one hand, and Homer and Plato on the other hand, Straubergs exemplifies one more probable journey to the netherworld: the soul's possibility to travel in dream in the same way as after death. Interestingly, the author states that "The fact that everything we know about the soul until its burial are the traditions of ancient Indo-Europeans does not need any evidences" (ibid.: 608). Straubergs' next step, a description of the guardian spirits at the entrance of netherworld, is based on the parallels between Homer's *Odysseus* and Latvian folksongs. After brief mapping of other features of Ancient Greek eschatology, Straubergs describes the Latvian underworld in more detail. The ruler of the underworld is the same as of this world – God (*Dievs* or *Dieviņš*); the netherworld is sometimes called *Vāczeme* (a name that coincides with the Latvian name for Germany), sometimes depicted as *Dieva kalns* (God's Mountain) where the dead live and work. On these and some other questions Straubergs refers to Šmits' *Latvian mythology*, noting that this particular question has been addressed thoroughly enough there. Straubergs' passage on the temporal specifics of travel to the netherworld is based solely on material from tales: "However, such travels to the netherworld are not so simple – a few moments spent there are a whole eternity, and man, after returning from there, turns into dust" (ibid.: 611). Describing the brightness of the netherworld (diamond rooms, glass mountains, etc.), the author draws parallels with Greek myths, explaining the brightness of the land of the dead through its relation to the cult of Sun. Straubergs admits that the entrance to the netherworld is located in various places in different narratives. It could be inside a mountain, in forests, in swamps, beyond the rivers, beyond the sea, over the dells, as well as inside the sea or in a lake, in a graveyard; it can also be located directly underneath and one could go there through a spring, a whirlpool, a hole beneath a stone, etc. The genre factor is important here: the common source of information on the underworld are tales depicting a hero's travels to this realm and back. These tales disclose the difference between the location of the entrance and exit of the underworld. If the former was a cave in the forest, the latter could be by a long flight across the sea on the wings of a huge bird. Straubergs argues that this fact could be related to the Sun's path, and this corresponds to heavenly body-related semantics in the descriptions of that realm. Moreover, as this world is called *pasaule* or *šī saule* (literally 'under-sun' or 'this sun'), the otherworld is called *aizsaule* or *viņsaule* (literally 'beneath-sun' or 'that-sun'). Here the Sun is the connection between this and the other world. Still, the netherworld is not always located in the west, at the end of the Sun's path, the place can be just 'somewhere far away'. In most tales it is depicted rather similarly to our world, with houses, fields, trees, etc. Other tales mention the Mother of the Dead (*Veļu māte*) as a ruler of the underworld, together with her servants who bring the souls of the dead to the last journey. The last motif is again explained with references to the

Ancient Greeks. These parallels also extend to the connection of the cult of the dead with magic practices related to chthonic deities and spirits who endanger the living from beyond the grave. According to Straubergs, the same cult practices also indicate the localisation of the underworld beneath our world: not only are dead bodies buried in the ground, but souls also live there¹⁰¹. The entrance of the underworld is somewhere near, and its inhabitants can visit this world rather easily. At the end the author concludes that

the eschatology of our nation is not to be regarded as a uniform product, due to its old age several notions of different age are reflected and combined there; the fate of the dead is related to the main deities – *Dieviņš* (*Dievs*) and Mother of Sun – who receive souls. Mother of Earth is a saver, guardian of flesh; she melts with Mother of the Dead later, when both these parts of human, so-to-say, further existence, are carried towards one place: the underground. In general, in the development of our eschatology many things are the same as other peoples
(Straubergs 1922: 618).

Interestingly, the last sentence illustrates the comparative view, which is rather unrelated to the selection of comparanda according to the synchronic historic-cultural or comparative-linguistic criteria dominant in other comparative studies of Latvian mythology. Otherwise, a more or less systematised heterogeneity of ancient Latvian beliefs about the underworld, denomination of related deities and nature of their invariance are the main variables in studies of the subject matter.

In the opening of the other article, “Pasaules jūra” (“World Sea”, 1937), Straubergs states a preference for a different genre selection from the one explored in “Netherworld”: “Ancient Latvian notions regarding the world must be researched in folksongs, where they are preserved due to their picture-squeness as well as [the fact] that folk poetry, contained by the rhythm, in general can more easily cross over in an unchanged manner from generation to generation” (Straubergs 1937: 169). Likewise, from the range of cosmological phenomena Straubergs highlight the way of the Sun as the most conservative view. In general, the article is an extension of these two ideas. Consequently, referring to more than one hundred folksongs, Straubergs reconstructs the following structure of the mythological space: the Sun rises on the Heavenly Mountain, crosses it during the day and the sets into the sea, on the next morning starting this journey over again. During the night the Sun makes the journey back across this sea. The sea, therefore, constitutes the opposite world, the counterpart of our world. Straubergs draws parallels between the Latvian mythical sea and the Ancient Greek Ocean that surrounds the earth on all sides. In this mythical sea lives *Jūras māte* (Mother of the Sea); *Veļu māte* (Mother of the Dead) also comes from the same direction. In the middle of the sea lies a

¹⁰¹ For the final development of his conclusions on Latvian customs and beliefs regarding the dead see Straubergs 1949.

mythical stone or island where various mythical actions take place. Another motif, *Saules koks* (Tree of the Sun), is localised identically: in the middle of the sea, in the path of the Sun. Some folksongs refer to this tree as a dwelling place of celestial deities. The notion of *Vāczeme* as the land of death is mentioned here as well. Straubergs calls it “the more ancient cosmology”, noting that the folktale materials supplement it: here he again refers to the tale of the hero’s journey across the sea to or from the netherworld. Nevertheless, the author states that “The way of the Sun is also the ancient way of souls; and the place, where it [i.e. Sun] sleeps during the night, in many folktales forms a dwelling place of souls with an undertone of Paradise or similarities to our world” (Straubergs 1937: 172). Moreover, Straubergs argues that this stone or tree (World Tree) in the middle of the sea is also a dwelling place of the higher deities: God, Sun, Moon, etc. Straubergs also admits that God as the ruler of heaven is a more recent motif, and therefore this folksong cosmology must also be considered to include views from different periods.

Although the second article is dedicated to a particular semantheme – The World Sea – while the first one concerns the netherworld in all its varieties, differences in both reconstructions of mythological space are obvious: in addition to Straubergs’ attitude towards the validity of particular folklore genres, there is a shift from the dominant use of folktales to the dominant use of folksongs. The second article includes only a few references to Ancient Greek mythology, which was the main parallel in the first. In a way, these reconstructions reflected other contemporary research interests of the author. As head of the Archives of Latvian Folklore Straubergs has published multiple calls to send in particular folklore materials, among them verbal charms. As these calls, and the volume and scope of his *Latvian Charms* (1939–1941) suggest, he had started working in this direction already in 1937. Consequently, a new source of references is introduced in “*World Sea*” consisting both of material from Latvian charms and references to a charm study by prominent Finnish scholar Viljo Mansikka (*Über russische Zauberformeln*, 1909).

3.2. Mythological space: Adamovičs’ world outlook

Ludvigs Adamovičs represents a differing background and institutional affiliation from Straubergs, and the context of his work on Latvian mythology is also entirely different: his program is based on the theory of the phenomenology of religion, referring to van der Leeuw and the hypothesis of differentiation and integration as the main processes that characterise religion as a dynamic system (p. 118–122). Naturally, the views of both scholars also differ on mythological space. Adamovičs’ *Senlatviešu pasaules ainava* (*Ancient Latvian world outlook*, 1938) is perhaps still the most complete description of spatial dispositions in Latvian mythology. At the same time this forty-page-long article overviews and questions all previous research on the issues has analysed. Later the author summarises his conception of mythological space according to three themes: the

Heavenly Mountain, the Sun Tree, and three levels of the world. The Heavenly Mountain represents the sky, the Sun Tree represents the World Tree, located in relation to the Sun's path, and the three levels of the world consist of Heaven, Earth (or This World), and the Netherworld (Adamovičs 1938: 364–366. See Appendix I for the translation of original Adamovičs' description of this world-view – p. 195–196). So, according to Adamovičs, mythological space consists of variations between mutually displaceable semanthemes and routes between the basic structure of the three levels. Variations across the genres, within one genre, and across geographical locations where particular folklore materials had been collected are problematic in light of a single unchanging ancient Latvian world outlook and cosmology. After describing a variety of Sun Trees, the author states that “Such examples are more likely evidence of a free combinations of mythical folk songs than the basis of joining them together in one view” (Adamovičs 1938: 22). However, by trying to provide a logical description of mythological space, Adamovičs uses various devices of interpretation to establish one primary system of which other variations are seen as deviations akin to a course of profanation.

An eloquent illustration of such an interpretation is the example of the World Sea semantheme. Adamovičs refers to the above analysed article “World Sea” (1937) by Straubergs several times and accepts his notion of sea all around the world, although closer analysis of folklore material shows this assumption to be somewhat problematic for the folklore of east Latvia, i.e. regions that are further away from the coast of the Baltic Sea. As there is no evidence of the notion of the sea or any other large water body in the eastern direction, Adamovičs just notes that “folklore about this matter was somewhat reserved” (Adamovičs 1938: 4). Furthermore, he claims that “Regarding the position of the sunset, as we see, empirical experience in the eastern part of Latvia has overshadowed the notion of the World Sea. It is substituted by the lake and the broad Daugava, in addition to the mythical places ‘beyond the nine lakes’ or ‘where the nine rivers flow’” (ibid.: 7). However, during further investigation, the World Sea remains important only as far as it is located in the west, because that is the place where, according to Adamovičs, all three levels of the world meet. While folklore materials provide different locations for the passages between the worlds, Adamovičs here refers to the comparative study by Wundt (Adamovičs 1938: 31; cf. Wundt 1909: 220). Therefore, mentioning of the sea or river Daugava in relation to the sunset is also interpreted as a reference to the “far west, mythical border zone of the world where a natural horizon is visible” (Adamovičs 1938: 23). Following this example, other references to the sea are reduced to the World Sea in the west. A similar pattern of interpretation also characterises the author's analysis of the World Tree semantheme. Likewise, he refers to Wundt's idea: “The World Tree that spreads its roots among the depths of earth and reaches the sky with its branches, holding together the whole world, being in the middle of the earth itself, which overshadows the whole world with its leaves and hosts heavenly bodies in its branches. The prototype

of the World Tree is the Tree of Life” (Adamovičs 1938: 15; cf. Wundt 1909: 193, 210, 214, 219). Adamovičs finds the Sun Tree to be the main Latvian variation of this semantheme and also locates it in the far west – where Sun sleeps at night. Even though he admits that the same World Tree also grows in the underworld, as depicted in folktales (Adamovičs 1938: 34), the other locations of the Sun Tree are considered to be a deformation of the original myth (ibid.: 26). This is explained either by a poetic play on words or by mythical syncretism where other trees acquire the characteristics of the Sun Tree.

There are also several other places where Adamovičs speaks of profanation or degradation of original mythical notions. For example, regarding folklore materials in which Sun Tree could be found by a shepherd girl (Adamovičs 1938: 17) or God could hide in a wormwood or mugwort¹⁰² bush (ibid.: 29) or sleep under a grey stone (ibid.: 28). Such a devolutionist view of myth is somewhat contradictory to his notion of the ‘natural base’ as the primary source of the mythical imagination. Mythical semanthemes are not only grounded in this ‘natural base’ but also designate the more ancient, older level of the world-view. On various themes, Adamovičs states that this or that notion has already evolved from its natural base, i.e. physical object: God as the sky and the Sun as the sun are primary images. The greater their anthropomorphic features, the more recent a stage of mythological development they characterise (e.g. Adamovičs 1938: 11, 25, 31). Such development also implies several world structures – from ‘less developed’ or ‘nature-like’ to ‘more developed’ with the Heavenly Yard and its inhabitants characterised by an elaborate social structure.

Other interesting questions in Adamovičs’ mythical world order touch on ‘*Vāczeme*’. Literally translated it is the ‘Land of Germans’, and the contemporary name in the Latvian language for Germany is a shortened form of ‘*Vāczeme*’ – *Vācija*. In several folk songs it bears the characteristics of the netherworld; Šmits admits that theorists leaning towards animism consider ‘*Vāczeme*’ as a land of the dead, while he explains these characteristics as a simple misunderstanding, because Germany is located to the west of Latvia (Šmits, 1926: 65). Adamovičs makes a cursory reference to this question, stating that ‘*Vāczeme*’ for ancient Latvians meant “the place of otherness” due to an encounter with the different culture brought to Latvia by Germans. At the same time, he admits that many mythical elements in descriptions of ‘*Vāczeme*’ require special attention and ‘*Vāczeme*’ is not only a place of otherness, but also of wrong-way-round-ness (Adamovičs 1938: 20–21).

The same description applies also to the Opposite World where Straubergs (1937: 171) locates the “home of the Sun, Moon, God, and all higher powers, and souls” (Adamovičs 1938: 19). While Straubergs claimed here that the idea of God and God’s location in Heaven is comparatively new, Adamovičs states that both Sun and God live in Heaven and that a “special home of the gods and

¹⁰² *Artemisia absinthium* and *Artemisia vulgaris*, widespread slightly hallucinogenic plants.

dead souls far away at the horizon is not a primary independent concept, but only a transitional combination” (Adamovičs 1938: 31). Instead, Adamovičs proposes that the Sun, God, God’s sons and other deities spend their nights in the Great Heavenly Yard. That is generally everything that the author writes about the third level of the world – Heaven. The situation is considerably different when it comes to the underworld. Adamovičs, like Straubergs, refers to many folktales describing various paths to the underworld (caves, wells, springs, etc.) and out of it (directly, across the sea, by flying, etc.), referring also to the locations of those entrances and exits both in this world and the far west, inhabitants of the underworld, and heroes’ quests. In this tripartite world-structure the question of the home of the dead souls, a subject not considered by Adamovičs remains problematic. Other issues discussed in *Ancient Latvian world outlook* are also characteristic to other scholarly productions of the interwar period, acquiring the most comprehensive form in this essay by Adamovičs, interpreted according to the theories he preferred.

4. Conclusion: Diversity within uniformity

The first task of scholarly research in the interwar period was to re-evaluate the romantic heritage of the nineteenth century and find new approaches to the interpretation of the large corpus of collected folklore materials. In most cases, the methodological approaches were borrowed from comparative linguistics, history, and the phenomenology of religion. Findings from folklore materials were supported by the oldest written sources, such as the protocols of witch trials, travellers’ notes, chronicles, and even writing by the Roman historian Tacitus¹⁰³. The majority of research work was done by well-established mainstream scholars (e.g. Ludvigs Adamovičs, Kārlis Straubergs, Pēteris Šmits). Following the older theories, such as animism (Mārtiņš Bruņenieks), the attempt to find totemistic traits in Latvian folklore (the early works of Švābe), as well as efforts to create new religion on the basis of folklore by neo-pagan movements is also characteristic to this period.

Analysis of several articles on mythological space allows us to separate three interconnected dimensions that unite the works written in this period: dependence of the research on the preference of particular folklore genres, partially based in the general theoretical choices, determined on the ‘local’ level by scholars’ institutional background, and on international level by available theories, as can be observed within the field of references each author creates; at the same time, preferences for particular genres are inevitably connected to claims of authenticity and ideological regime of knowledge production of this period, related to identity construction of the newly established nation-state. Here is the third connection, particularly highlighted in the life-stories of

¹⁰³ Publius (or Gaius) Cornelius Tacitus (ca. 56 – ca. 117)

Straubergs and Švābe: the entanglement of career and politics. The field of references for all three dimensions is the easiest to map. Briefly, in the references of publications on Latvian mythology a variety of popular names from the international arena appear. The field of references often contains such great *fin de siècle* names as Sir Frazer and Sir Edward Burnett Tylor (Šmits 1918, Švābe 1920 et al.). From the publications of the early twentieth century Arnold van Gennep and Emile Durkheim are referred to, while several researchers have mentioned Wilhelm Wundt and Sigmund Freud. From authorities on ancient culture there is Hermann Usener with his seminal work on the differentiation principle in religions (e.g. Adamovičs 1940b). Researchers, more oriented towards the history of religion, borrow their basic assumptions from phenomenologist of religion Gerard van der Leeuw, and from such classics as Rudolph Otto with his influential theory of sacrality (Maldonis 1935b, Adamovičs 1937 et al.). The theory of culture was known through the works of Ernst Cassirer; references also prove that the works of Lucien Lévy-Bruhl were familiar to several Latvian researchers of this period. This variety highlights two important features of the research. First, it was in line with the tendencies in international academia. Folkloristics has the capacity to be at the same time very local and very international and this duality must be considered when researching disciplinary history, contributing to and using the comparison with the situation in other countries (Anttonen 2005). Second, from these names of scholars it is obvious that the approaches and their theoretical backgrounds were rather diverse. This diversity to some extent illustrates the fact that at this time only one professionally trained folklorist and no professional specialists of mythology were working in Latvia (Ambainis 1989). Some of the researchers came from the field of classical philology, some were archaeologists or historians, for others mythology was just one of the interests while their main academic specialisations were studies of religion or law. Of course, these respective backgrounds left particular traits in their writings. Still, all authors of this research tradition were writing more or less within the constraints of one ideological regime, contrary to the diversity at this level in the post-war period, as will be demonstrated in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV: Parallel trajectories

Continuing mapping the field, in this chapter I will analyse various political and theoretical developments in context of the research into Latvian mythology from the end of World War II until the transitional period marked by the decline of the Soviet Union¹⁰⁴. As the political division of the Western and Soviet worlds was the main factor determining the dynamics and content of knowledge production, slightly changing focus from section to section characterises several rather self-contained scholarly environments that influence the research on Latvian mythology; again, analysis of mythological space is used to typify the impact of institutional, political, theoretical, and personal factors on the subject matter. Accordingly, the first section below describes Latvian mythology and Latvian mythological space as they were conceptualised and described by Latvian scholars who went into exile after the war and worked in Sweden. Here the dialogue with interwar period discourse, continuities, and discontinuities is described in light of the hypothesis regarding exile mentality and its impact on scholarly production. The next section focuses on the changes and developments of the discipline during the same period in Soviet Latvia, highlighting the problematic nature of the research subject in the first post-war decades. Against a background of institutional reorganisation, the role of certain personalities is analysed and the relationships between the centre and the periphery in Soviet Latvian academia are mapped. Here the political conditions of scholarly production are accentuated, correlating scholarly practices with propagandist mythography. In the third section I will shift focus towards the more general level of the context of the research into Latvian mythology in this period, characterising the main developments and status quo of the Indo-European studies. A case study of two editions of the same work on Baltic mythology provides closer insight into both the theoretical dynamics and ideological conditions shaping the sub-field of this area. This case study contains one more different version of Latvian mythology. The specific version of Indo-European studies in the context of more recent Soviet (Russian) academia is analysed in the fourth section of this chapter. Here the role of Latvian mythology as material for a more general mythological reconstruction is accentuated, illustrating the application of a Moscow-Tartu-school-specific methodology and agenda in research on the subject matter. The concluding part of the chapter summarises the main features of the parallel trajectories, according to which research on Latvian mythology took place in the post-war period.

¹⁰⁴ On transitional period see pages 99–101 in chapter two.

I. Exile scholars

I.1. Exile scholars:

The quest into the netherworld by Kārlis Straubergs

The two most productive scholars researching Latvian mythology or religion, and mythological space as a composite part of it, within the Latvian exile community were Kārlis Straubergs and Haralds Biezais, both of whom lived and worked in Sweden. Coincidentally, their works cover the opposite parts of the subject matter: while Straubergs was interested in a chthonic netherworld, the topography of the Land of the Dead, and customs related to magic, death, and sacrifice, the main works of Biezais cover the sphere of celestial deities and the high religion of the ancient Latvians. Such a division of interests might be determined by the scholars' different backgrounds and previous interests. At the same time, these also might be the strategies of intellectual and psychological coping with loss of fatherland; especially, keeping in mind Straubergs' very high positions in interwar Latvia in both scholarly, social, and political areas. Similarly, Biezais' detachment from the Latvian (national) evangelical church resulted in a shift of emphasis from priestly to scholarly duties.

Straubergs' main work of this period is the comprehensive exploration of Latvian customs and beliefs regarding death and burial practices *Lettisk folktro om de döda* (*Latvian folk beliefs on the dead*, 1949), published in Swedish with a summary in German. This work marks the change of research context in several ways. The first, obviously, is the publishing language, related to institutional affiliation. The second is the slightly different choice of the comparative material in the reconstruction of the most ancient Latvian beliefs: in the two above analysed articles on mythical space (p. 134–137) references to Ancient Greek and Latin texts prevailed¹⁰⁵. However, this comparative material is only a secondary source; the research is based on the interpretation of archaeological findings, historical records, and folk traditions. From the folklore materials other than customs and beliefs, the author singled out folksongs (Straubergs 1949: 131), although referring also to charms. Though Straubergs held a degree in archaeology, this is the first mythology-related work where he so extensively uses archaeological data and related chronology, thus distinguishing the customs of different historical periods. These meta-data of the research, on the one hand represent Straubergs as a mature scholar, operating with a very wide range of facts from different perspectives, guaranteeing the unique quality and sense of depth of his most recent writings. On the other hand, the slight changes in methodology and choice of sources might reveal efforts to establish scholarly authority in a new, contested environment of

¹⁰⁵ Here Straubergs introduces mainly Nordic – Swedish, Danish, and Norwegian, as well as Finno-Ugric (such as Estonian, Finnish, and Karelian) – traditions. In addition to the typical Baltic (Lithuanian and Prussian) context, several references are also made to Russian, Scythian, German, Italian and other beliefs or conceptions regarding the dead.

academic knowledge production, i.e. Swedish research institutions. First of all, the problematic post-war Swedish-Soviet relationship, including Sweden handing over to Soviet officials more than one hundred Latvian refugees associated with the Latvian Legion in 1946 must be considered. This created a sense of insecurity and distrust in the remaining Latvian émigré community, which feared a similar fate. In this general climate, Straubergs was involved in some sort of political scandal and, perhaps due to denunciation, deported for ten months from Stockholm to Jönköping in Central Sweden (Kārklīš 2003: 318). However, his position in the *Institutet för folklivsforskning* (Institute of Folklife Research) at the *Nordiska Museet* (Nordic Museum) was secured. The second important matter involves the disciplinary configuration of Swedish academia. Unlike Latvia, where Straubergs headed the Archives of Latvian Folklore, an institution primarily researching texts, i.e. folklore, since 1930 related subject matters in Sweden had been divided between two slightly different disciplines – *folkminnesforskning* (folk memory studies) and *folklivsforskning* (folk life studies). The former, most prominently represented by Carl Wilhelm von Sydow at the University of Lund, could be considered an equivalent of folkloristics; the latter, conceptualised and promoted by Sigurd Erixon (1888–1968) at the Nordic Museum and the University of Uppsala, was closer to ethnography or ethnology. The rivalry between the disciplines ended in 1944 when von Sydow retired and Erixon restructured the academic system in both cities according to his vision a few years later (Jacobsen 2001: 15, cf. Klein 2006). Therefore, the Straubergs' affiliation with the Institute of Folklife Research probably also implied participation in these politics, at least at the level of positioning and methodology of research.

Concerning the reconstruction of Latvian mythology, *Latvian folk beliefs on the dead* continues the interwar period discussion of differentiation in the ancient Latvian pantheon, especially regarding the mythological Mothers. Referring to Šmits, Straubergs states that all mythological Mothers are products of the differentiation of *Zemes māte* (Mother of Earth), who greeted the dead in the afterlife according to the most ancient beliefs; afterwards this function was attributed primarily to *Veļu māte* (Mother of the Dead), and in some cases also to *Kapu māte* (Mother of Graves), *Mēra māte* (Mother of Plague), *Smilšu māte* (Mother of Sand), or other mythological beings. Mythological space here is mentioned only in passing. In this respect, Straubergs' lengthy article “Zur Jenseitstopographie” (1957), published in German eight years later is significant. This work continued both the mapping of the netherworld, started in the interwar period (Straubergs 1922, 1937), and, changing the focal point of research from ancient Latvian to a broader perspective, orientation towards the international audience. This trend, already encountered in *Latvian folk beliefs on the dead*, manifests here in two ways. Firstly, it is the already mentioned change of focus. Although defined nowhere in the article, the field researched

by Straubergs is the pan-European conception¹⁰⁶ of the world structure; it is not, as previously, only Latvian beliefs. It therefore includes conceptions of different linguistic groups that have lived and are living in Europe. Usually separately analysed, Indo-European and Finno-Ugric ideas are combined into a monolithic vision or map of the mythical world. Thus, the article is rather a contribution to general European cultural history than a comparative mythology. Secondly, and directly related to this new agenda, Straubergs moved more away from Latvian folklore as well as from the classical Greek and Latin texts characteristic to his earlier works. As a result, the main sources of Straubergs' reconstruction were late medieval and early modern written texts¹⁰⁷. This fact might also reflect problems with the available sources on specific Latvian matters as materials in Latvia were no longer accessible.

In general, the reconstructed topography resembles those outlined in Straubergs' earlier articles, analysed above, and the section relating to the lower planes in Adamovičs *Ancient Latvian World Outlook*. The conception of netherworld is also analysed according to the historical developments of burial practices, as described in the first part of *Latvian folk beliefs on the dead*. Accordingly, the land of the dead is originally located at the nearest burial place, and its semantics are traced back to particular forms of burial. Later, the other world was relocated to different places, varying according to particular periods and cultures. Although in several cultures this location lies in heaven, Straubergs states that the idea of a distant location in a the horizontal perspective (1957: 58) or downwards (1957: 76) is more dominant. Contributing to studies of comparative mythology, he also claims the universal resemblance of that and this worlds in the views of various people from the Ancient Egyptians to Latvians. In the latter case, it is often the peasant's farmstead, where the dead are working and living similarly to the people of this world (cf. the conception of God's farmstead by Haralds Biezais, p. 149–152); although there is a motif of climbing to a such place in heaven both in folksongs and folktales, from the broader comparative perspective Straubergs is reserved on the location of such a place above (1957: 59). Similarly, when deciding between the location of this distant place in the north as encountered in some cultures, and in the west, Straubergs prefers the latter. This choice is related to connection between the sun's path and disappearance in the night; as the sun appears each morning in the east and earth, according to ancient worldview, is flat, there should be an anti-world, a space where the sun travels back from the west to east and, in religions where the sun is anthropomorphic, also rests at night. In a way, this as well as other ideas relating to the structure of the mythical world is an extrapolation of the author's previous conclusion

¹⁰⁶ Definition "oldest European traditions" is mentioned bypassing in the middle of the article (Straubergs 1957: 69).

¹⁰⁷ Here the Mannhardt's sources of Baltic mythology, dominating in Straubergs interwar-period texts dedicated to Latvian mythology, are accompanied by Old Norse Eddas, works of Olaus Magnus, Saxo Grammaticus and other, mostly Nordic, authors.

(Straubergs 1937) on a related but more general research object, thus maintaining the integrity of the intellectual trajectory despite the changed contexts of its implementation. Previously not encountered in Straubergs' works is the idea that the watershed, which souls of the dead cross in their journey westwards, could also be a river, like the mythical Styx for the Ancient Greeks, or a real river like the Rhine (as noted by Procopius¹⁰⁸), Danube (according to Tacitus), or Daugava in Latvian tradition. In addition, while characteristics of the netherworld remain the same as in his previous articles (back to Straubergs 1922), the tendency of the underworld to gain the characteristics of Christian hell now leads him to the unique idea of particular local variations as 'special hells' (*Sonderhöllen*); here Straubergs refers to protocols of witch and werewolf trials in sixteenth to seventeenth century Livonia, another set of texts he is specialised in. Unlike in other works on netherworld, in "Zur Jenseitstopographie" Straubergs also analyses the process of rebirth or reincarnation in European tradition. Consequently, ancient views on the idea of where the soul of a child comes from support the hypothesis of a netherworld separated from this world by water (i.e. the soul is carried by the river) or located below (the soul is found at the places that otherwise mark the entrance into the netherworld).

In the field of mythology research Straubergs took advantage of his belonging to two language-defined research communities: publishing a summarising translation of the first two parts of *Lettisk folktro om de döda* as a separate article in Latvian as "Pie mūžības vārtiem" ("At the gates of eternity", Straubergs 1995 [1956]). Continuing the themes related to death and burial, Straubergs just decreased the number of folklore references mainly in favour of folksongs, as the article was published within the Latvian folksong edition. Published just before the author's death, "Opferstätten und Opfersteine im lettischen Haus- und Familienkult" ("Offering and Sacrifice in Latvian House- and Family-cult", 1962¹⁰⁹; translated reprint in Latvian: Straubergs 1995b) concludes Straubergs' research into Latvian mythology and related subject matters, perfectly illustrating his interests, approach, and style. His style was the investigation of religious and magic practices related to lower deities and spirits, research-wise based on the early modern and later (up to 1867) historical records, mainly church visitation protocols as well as some folklore materials. His last article was in a way also a micro study of the mythical space, mapping the sacrificial and cult space near every homestead. Unfortunately, this new research direction was not continued due to author's own passing to the netherworld.

¹⁰⁸ The Byzantine historian Procopius of Caesarea (ca. 500–ca. 565), one of the last classical Greek historians.

¹⁰⁹ Originally published in *Commentationes Balticae*, Bd. VIII/IX, H. 6, Bonn.

I.2. Exile scholars: The celestial pantheon and mentality of Haralds Biezais

In some respect, Haralds Biezais continued the interwar period research tradition as his interest in genuinely Latvian material for the reconstruction of mythology bordered on a scrupulous purism excluding all possible influences. His version of Latvian mythology is to a large extent ‘a folksong mythology’ due to the particular status of folksongs among other Latvian folklore materials. All his main works are dedicated to the Latvian pantheon (p. 90–93), while references to his research are often encountered in works on Baltic mythology¹¹⁰. Biezais’ interest in Latvian polytheism, which relates to the concepts of kingship in Indo-European mythology, and absence of interest in lower mythological beings and chthonic deities, has been interpreted as a particular exile Latvian political or psychological position and strategy of dissociation (Leitāne 2008). In this regard, one more facet of exile protestant pastor Biezais’ interests must be mentioned – the outcasts of the official Christian church, a subject both of his publications and interest on a personal level (Beitnere 2001: 243), manifested in travel, meetings, and correspondence. Dagmāra Beitnere also emphasises frequent use of the first person plural in writings about Latvian history, in a given political situation referring to an imagined community of Latvians (cf. Beitnere 2001: 247). Biezais defined his approach, already positioning himself close to the previous research and standards of study in his doctoral thesis *Die Hauptgöttinnen der alten Letten* (1955; translated and published in Latvian 2006) and consistently followed the principles set. Independence from the institutions where works of the interwar period researchers were published (mainly the University of Latvia and the Archives of Latvian Folklore), as well as temporal distance from that setting of knowledge production with all its academic politics and power relationships, allowed Biezais both to conceptualise previous research as a whole and to develop an impartial critical perspective. In this respect, Biezais’ works are not only studies of particular issues, but are also a revision of preceding scholarly activities, at least regarding the themes he was interested in. Here the critique of others’ positions contributes to explanation of his own theoretical and methodological position.

Consequently, he claimed that neither female deities nor their relation to the corresponding deities of other Indo-European people had been properly researched (Biezais 2006: 13). Regarding the latter, he warned that conclusions of comparative linguistics on phonological similarities do not guarantee similarities of the same phenomena in the area of religion; therefore, from this perspective previous research must also be revised (ibid.: 14). However, linguistic data as such are to some extent still the source for research of ancient

¹¹⁰ In addition, his own article on Baltic religion in *Encyclopaedia Britannica* concerns the entire Baltic region but it is based mainly on the materials of Latvian mythology (see Biezais 2009).

religion (ibid.: 16). Apart from a little evidence from the historical records, Biezais' reconstruction of ancient mythology was based on folklore materials. The latter were analysed with respect to the psychological and social contexts of the time when the materials are collected, i.e. the nineteenth century and first half of the twentieth. An important part of such analysis was the extraction and separation of Christian traits from recent vernacular religion. Following the standards defined in Kaarle Krohn's *Skandinavisk mytologi* (*Scandinavian mythology*, 1922), Biezais found relevant Latvian mythology to research in folksongs, charms, legends, and partly also folk traditions (2006: 16). However, he was reserved towards the application of folktale material for several reasons, although he recognised it as containing adequate evidence on religious phenomena. Firstly, folktales more than other genres contain international travelling motifs. Secondly, there had been no comparative research into Latvian folktales that would allow evaluation of this material and its authenticity. Thirdly, according to Wikman's *Nutida traditionsforskning* (*Contemporary tradition research*, 1950), storytellers do not believe the tale content corresponds to reality. Moreover, the primary social function of folktales is other than that of myth and they have no relation to history (Biezais 2008: 13).

Biezais methodology was informed by such works as Wilhelm Schmidt's *Handbuch der Methode der kulturhistorischen Ethnologie* (*The Culture Historical Method of Ethnology*, 1937), Karl Wikman's *Die Einleitung der Ehe* (*Introduction of Marriage*, 1937), Sigurd Erixon *Regional European Ethnology* (1937), and especially Albert Eskeröd *Årets äring* (*Year's Harvest*, 1947) (Biezais 2006: 16). Consequently, "for the first time in the research of Latvian religion the principle of spatial unity is followed and applied; in addition, particular traditions are localized. In the research of folk life it is called geographical method" (2006: 15). It is the mapping of particular traditions that due to the lack of precise historic evidences is a prerequisite of international comparison. Biezais mentioned Šmits' *Latvian mythology* and Adamovičs' *Latvian religion* as the predecessors of his works; however, this is rather useless because of the lack of strict methodology regarding the evaluation of sources used:

Uncritical application of sources can be observed both in the works of those who tried to call into being the ancient Latvian religion, as well as in more serious works related to names of Zicāns, Straubergs, Rumba, Šmits, Bruņenieks, etc. This approach to sources in extended perspective is rooted in national romanticism. These researchers often subordinate the texts of songs, views, and ideas to their own vision

(Biezais: 2006: 20).

Particularly detailed analyses was dedicated to conceptions developed by Švābe and Šmits of the dating of folksongs, including criticism of Šmits theory of a Golden Age and decline in creation of new songs (2006: 28–43). Biezais was also aware of the "wild flora of speculations and statements on vernacular

religion that are found on any nation and any time, but which have especially flourished on the subject of Latvian folk religion”, but left it aside, his discussions remaining within the academic discourse only (Biezais 2008: 12). He also closely followed the developments of the discipline in Soviet Latvia (cf. Biezais 1970. Online), which allowed him to state that

After the second Russian occupation in 1945, no works on Latvian religion are published. In particular cases direct or indirect references to Latvian mythology could be found in some folkloristic texts. Nevertheless, these passing references, made by scholars totally cut off from the Western-European research of history of religion, do not have any serious meaning

(Biezais 2008 [1961]: 10).

In general, Biezais’ works exemplify the complicated situation of scholarly production in displacement: as a Latvian he continued to pursue the ideals of national scholarship, as a scholar critically revised the previously produced works on the subject matter, and as a refugee enclosed this criticism in an aura of nostalgic longing for a lost paradise. In this respect a close parallel could be drawn with the life and work of another outstanding exile historian of religion – Romanian Mircea Eliade (cf. Ellwood 1999). The particular version of mythological space, reconstructed by Biezais within these contexts, is presented below.

I.3. Exile scholars: Mythological space in discussion with the past

Questioning conclusions made by Adamovičs and other interwar period researchers, Biezais described mythological space in the chapter “Worldview and mythical world outlook” in *Seno latviešu debesu dievu ģimene* (Heavenly gods’ family of ancient Latvians, 1998 [1972]), also analysing a particular motifs in detail in *Dieva tēls latviešu tautas reliģijā* (Image of God in Latvian folk religion, 2008 [1961]). In “Worldview and mythical world outlook”, Biezais warned that his aim is not to give a complete description or explanation of the ancient Latvian worldview, but only to explore those moments “that are related to the sun and its role in mythical and religious experiences” (Biezais 1998: 136). Despite this, his description of the world structure was rather comprehensive. Biezais also had no difficulty relating mythical phenomena to their natural base, admitting, that the interpretation of myths is about meaning rather than images (Biezais 1998: 136, 2008: 67). Instead, his interpretations have more social insight, reconstructing, on the one hand, the heavenly family and, on the other hand, relating it to peasant psychology.

His disagreement with the interwar period researchers Adamovičs, Straubergs and, to some extent, Zicāns is mainly limited to a differing evaluation of folklore genres. As stated earlier, his interpretation led to an almost exclusively

folksong mythology. Of course, Biezais was also aware of a thick layer of Christian syncretism in folksongs. Although most of them were collected during the nineteenth century or later, Biezais stated with certainty that the Latvian peasant from whom the songs were collected lived in this period in a world of religious notions closely related to his pre-Christian religion (Biezais 1998: 141). This is in stark contrast to his view of folktales; he claimed that Latvian folktales and views included in them represent “shared traditions of European culture” and therefore reflect rather Christian views (Biezais 1998: 145). On this basis, he contested the tripartite world structure advertised by Straubergs (1922) and Adamovičs (1938), because both of them referred only to folktales. As an alternative to this, Biezais offered a simple division of ‘this world’ and the invisible other world in which the latter is inhabited by the souls of the dead, dwelling in an environment more or less similar to ‘this world’ (Biezais 1998: 144). According to him, the location of this realm is somewhat virtual rather than located in some particular region of mythical geography – the far west or elsewhere.

Interpreting folksongs, Biezais came to the same conclusion as Adamovičs regarding the Heavenly Mountain – it represents the sky. The sun travels across or around it in a circular movement. Biezais explained the variations of this movement in different folksongs as ‘varying perceptions of individual creators of the texts’, thus making him the first to consider the role of tradition bearers in Latvian mythological narratives. His interpretation of the World Sea is also interesting. Biezais argued that neither the notion of World Sea surrounding the entire world nor the notion of the underground sea are clearly expressed in folklore materials or other genuine sources of Latvian mythology (Biezais 1998: 174), and therefore such notions have to be left out of consideration if one remains within the materials of Latvian folklore only. He also denied Adamovičs’ aforementioned argument that the sea is substituted by other water bodies in Eastern Latvia due to the lack of a real sea, referring to folksongs recorded in the very east of Latvia that mention sunset at sea. At the same time, he disagreed also with Straubergs (1937) and proposed the sea as another metaphor for Heaven (Biezais 1998: 175, 176). Moreover, he further stated that this notion could be older than the idea of the Heavenly Mountain, although neither view is contradictory.

While other researchers using folktale material have described the underworld in detail, Biezais paid special attention to Heaven and to the Heavenly Yard. The hosts of this realm are the Sun and God (Biezais 1998: 146, 2008: 81). The Heavenly Yard has also been described earlier (e.g. Adamovičs 1940a). The novelty in the works of Biezais is a caution regarding the construction of the Yard from separate semanthemes scattered across the body of folklore materials. He supposes that the buildings of God’s household are located around a central yard, that there might be three springs, and the surroundings consist of forests of oaks, limes, pines, birches and spruces. Silk meadows and golden mountains, gardens, rivers, springs and the sea are part of

ancient Latvian heavenly topography (Biezais 2008: 86). Still, he admitted that there is no direct evidence about God's house or the Heavenly Yard in folksongs (Biezais 2008: 81), therefore those images are deduced from the descriptions of actions of God, his sons and other inhabitants of the realm and also from particular semanthemes like 'God's front door' (cf. Pakalns 1992). His final conclusion was as follows: "Due to poor sources, only the fact that God also has his house in Heaven must be accepted" (Biezais 2008: 84). Nevertheless, there is one building from the Heavenly Yard that has attracted the special attention of the author – the Heavenly Bath-house or Sauna. It has all common celestial mythical signifiers – gold, silver and diamonds. Only the fact that it is almost never mentioned in connection with God, at least not in the sources Biezais trusts, is somewhat problematic. Instead, in this bath-house one can more often encounter sons of God and daughters of the Sun, and sometimes also the Moon and other celestial deities (Biezais 2008: 325). Analysing the meaning of this semantheme, Biezais reached several conclusions that are important for his scholarly programme in general. First of all, it is a direct all-embracing correlation of empirical reality and transcendental realms. Therefore, the special place of bath-house in the Heavenly Yard is derived from its special place in the Latvian peasant's household – as the place of birth, various rituals, and the dwelling place of several lower mythological beings. This also implies a shift in religious studies from texts to contexts. As Biezais wrote: "In broader interconnection, this uncommon feature of Latvian mythology supports the direction of research that demands that religious studies pay more attention to the ecological facet" (Biezais 2008: 327). Furthermore, the Heavenly Bath-house seems to be unique to Latvian mythology with no direct analogies in other religions (Biezais 2008: 327). This shows the interrelation of comparative studies with nationally oriented research based on folklore materials of one language group only, and verifies ethnic mythology as a particular object of study, because features like this would be unnoticed when researching older or broader levels of mythological notions in Baltic or Indo-European mythology.

Apart from this discourse relating to writings of prominent scholars, narratives on Latvian mythology and Latvian mythological space in the exile community were also constructed by other authors exploring other approaches. For example, in 1962 a student of Maldonis, Dr. phil. Kārlis Polis (1876–1969), published 500 copies of his book *Dievs un dvēsele kā reliģiozs priekšstats aizkristietisko latviešu tradīcijās* (*God and Soul as a Religious Notion in Pre-Christian Latvian Traditions*) in the USA. Polis examined the same sources as Biezais, paying additional attention to archaeological evidence. However, due to the differences in the agendas behind the research and in corresponding methodology, according to which particular folksongs are selected and interpreted, the conclusions both authors reached were radically different. For example, Polis claimed the special status of Latvian mythology, arguing that the "Pre-Christian Latvian God has no essential similarities with the gods of neighbouring people – Slavic, Germanic, Finno-Ugric, etc. The seeming

connection of characteristic elements of the thunder god *Pērkons*, the Sun, and *Laima* with gods of neighbouring peoples is a common religious feature of all humanity, like the barrowing of the ancient Arians from the Indo-European pre-people” (Polis 1962: 147). Also original is Polis’ vision of mythological space, including perhaps the most detailed scenic description of the netherworld. The netherworld, according to Polis, is a total contrast to this world. There are silver and golden hills, silk grass, silver birch-trees, and oaks with golden leaves. The way of souls leads there through the Land of the Dead where the souls “get rid of everything earthly” and, kindly escorted by the Mother of the Dead, cross the river *Ilga* (Eng.: Longing) and reach the gates of the netherworld, “shining in all colours of the rainbow”. Here the souls are greeted by the Sons of God and in their company go along a “broad, white road, illuminated by invisible light”; sweet, gentle smells linger around and wonderful music flows across the beautiful landscape where silver, golden, and diamond horses, and magical cows graze. At the horizon stand silver and golden mountains; on the top of one silver mountain a young man ploughs, and a golden ladder leads there. “Surprised by everything experienced, the souls slowly continue the way”, and silver birch trees present one silver bough to each soul; suddenly, silver fog pours over the souls. “After a turn in the road, at the river” a magnificent oak grove grows. Golden leaves and acorns seduce the souls, and a golden fog pours over them. Further, huge silver gates, incrustated with pearls and gold, open to the yard of *Mīļš-Dieviņš* (Dear-God) where a great golden apple tree with diamond leaves grows. The souls are greeted by the deity *Laima*; after singing songs to God, the souls enter “God’s maisonette” and stay there forever (Polis 1962: 226–227).

Apart from this description, Polis also reconstructs the dynamics of the ancient Latvian religion of the Bronze and Stone Ages. Remembering the works of Merkel and the Neo-Latvians, one has no choice but to agree with Biezais that, “Such ideas of Polis are created by uncritical national romanticism and also are characteristic to this direction. However, they have little to do with the scholarly research on the subject matter” (Biezais 2006: 44). Concerning the general discourse on Latvian mythology, it is notable that the vision outlined above was published more than a hundred years after the heyday of national romanticism, while the sentiments expressed remain the same. While this comparatively marginal version of Latvian mythology is saturated with national romanticist ideology once again claiming the status of scholarly knowledge, in the native country of the author neither nationalism nor mythology are subjects to discuss with positive connotations. Hence the opposite situation is explored in the next section, regarding the status of the discipline in the Latvian Soviet Socialistic Republic.

2. Soviet Latvian mythology

2.1. Soviet Latvian mythology: The politics of mythology

Perhaps to understand the disposition of disciplinary practices in Soviet Latvia a distinction between two broadly accepted meanings of the 'term' myth must be introduced: the interplay between these two meanings is exactly the key factor in several dimensions defining the process of knowledge production that the current treatise explores. The first meaning of this term is the one historically constituting the object of study of folkloristics and the history of religion, i.e. myth as a narrative component of a religion and a structural determinant of a pre-modern worldview. The second meaning of the term is myth as a specific relationship of signification, a type of speech, a metalanguage. It is a second-order semiological system in which a sign (the sum of concept and image) becomes a mere signifier (Barthes 1977). Resembling ancient sacred narratives or not, the contemporary mythology in this meaning saturates the discourses of culture, politics, advertising, etc. Most importantly, the change in signification system implies a different mode of discourse, hiding a primary semiological system behind the natural language. Without going deeper in Roland Barthes' theory, we can specify this mode of discourse as ideology, an instrumentalisation of power relationships. Returning to the subject matter, Soviet Latvian research into mythology is constituted by a subordination of myth as a phenomenon of religion, to myth as ideology. The power imbalance in Soviet knowledge production apparatus is reflected in the same way: the Communist Party, drawing its legitimisation from Marxist-Leninist science, dictates truth to the sciences. Rephrasing Bacon: in this system power is knowledge rather than vice versa. A particularity of Soviet culture and society, a context for academic research into myths, is the tension between both meanings of myth in power dimensions between academia and the public sphere. Tension rises from an overlapping of these meanings: the mythical nature of Soviet ideology content-wise too closely resembles the mythical nature of religion or myths in the primary sense¹¹¹. If this structural resemblance was also to be activated within the knowledge production system, a short circuit in power relationships would occur. In other words, the ideology could not be allowed to be de-mythologised. If the above-described circumstances have a truth value, they also explain the specific modification of the studies of mythology in the Soviet Union and, consequently, Soviet Latvia. The bibliography shows that no works on Latvian mythological space, as well as hardly any on mythology as such, were written in the LSSR. One of the reasons is the specific definition of folklore, which is also related to the general regime of truth and political ideology in the USSR, described in the next subchapter.

¹¹¹ Descriptive terms such as 'myth' and 'ritual' enjoyed considerable frequency in Western analyses of the Soviet political system even during the Soviet period (McClure and Urban 1983). E.g. Kolakowsky 1989.

At the same time, research on ancient mythology or vernacular religion was replaced by active folklore and myth-making within the public sphere and, further, research into materials produced in the academic sphere, creating a reflexive, circulatory relationship between these two domains of knowledge production. The research object of Soviet folkloristics became new folksongs, tales, and proverbs. Speaking of the above mentioned tension between modes of myth, in several of these genres religious or mythical elements were simply replaced by images appropriate for the regime. A special place in this new mythography was reserved for leaders of the people: Lenin and Stalin, gradually assumed the legendary proportions of mighty giants, epic heroes (cf. Kunitz 1928, Panchenko 2005, Cābere 2009). In addition to the recycling of biographical data, new narratives tended to replicate already known myths and legends, creating a dense net of allusions with saints and heroes: “As explorations of ritualistic and religious elements in early Soviet culture suggest, motives recognisable from the folk tradition of oral narratives played an important role in propagating an authoritarian type of leadership among the first generation of post-revolutionary readers” (Skradol 2009: 21). Of course, in comparison to the first post-revolutionary generation in Soviet Russia, the post-war society of the Baltic states was far more advanced and, importantly, for the most part lacked the Russian Orthodox background. Still, in one form or another, mythogenesis was cultivated in official narratives, for example, via newspapers and radio broadcasting, by literary practices from authored novels to altered life-histories and memories, in architecture, fine arts, and movies, etc., forging the new world-view and constructing collective identity. The purpose of this new mythology was

to shape people’s perception about significant questions, pertinent to their existence, building an irrational orientation system for rational reality. Soviet myths simplify reality, facts, events or phenomena, arranging these into a system based on strict binary oppositions – a black and white view of the world. Myths had to be simple, effective and unequivocal

(Ansone 2008: 6).

According to these principles, the whole Soviet culture industry built a system of mythical imaginary. Rituals of annual political celebrations and “red corners” with leaders’ icons added the cult dimension to this religion-like system. Likewise, narratives of exceptional moments during the founding of the Soviet Union and building of Communism were produced, writing a ‘sacred history’. Reflecting the dominating centralisation of cultural production, Soviet Latvian mythology consisted of translations and adaptations of myths produced on an All-Union level. Ancient mythology as an object of academic research was overshadowed by cultural production of contemporary mythology in the public sphere.

2.2. Soviet Latvian mythology: The establishment of a new discipline

While within the exile community the research into mythology continued to develop according to the different disciplinary trajectories of folkloristics and the history of religion, as represented by the authors analysed in the first section of this chapter, research into the subject matter in the Soviet Socialistic Republic of Latvia was consolidated under the umbrella of folkloristics – a branch of linguistics and literature studies in local academia. The discipline, with a one-hundred-year-old history and sources shaped by this history, could not be restarted from a zero point, also keeping in mind the matter of human recourses: scholars who continued their careers, or at least had been educated within the previous regime, like Anna Bērzkalne, Alma Medne and Jānis Alberts Jansons, used discursive and rhetorical strategies to continue pursuing, in modified form, the research they had begun previously. Thus, one of the cornerstones of new disciplinary identity was uncompromising critique of previous developments (e.g. Niedre 1948, Ambainis 1958, Ozols 1968), especially regarding the works of Baltic exile scholars, prohibited or limited to only a narrow circle of readers in the LSSR.

The necessity of active identity construction and legitimation of research is also illustrated by often repeated self-definitions of folkloristics, its research object and purposes. These definitions show the heterogeneity within the seemingly uniform period of Soviet rule, again related to ideological changes in the USSR. Therefore the two definitions below – from the beginning and from the end of Soviet period – are juxtaposed to demonstrate the ideology implicit in the construction of disciplinary identity. The first of these definitions was written during the period of Stalinism (see p. 87–90) and correspondingly reflects the hegemonic ideological trends:

Folklore is the oral art of the vast masses of working people¹¹², their ideological formation. Folklore expresses the views, thoughts, seeking, endeavours, and thirst of the working people; folklore reflects their worldview, shows their life and struggle. Folklore is the oral poetry of working people's far and recent past, present, and future as well. Folklore is various songs of the folk, rich narratives, various compositions of small genres (...). Vast masses of people composed and repeated it in remote past, when they yet had no written literature, working people composed and repeated it while struggling against noblemen and capitalists, they compose and repeat it while building the socialism

(Niedre 1948: 5).

The following adjustment is also noteworthy: "Soviet science, as already said, labels the oral poetry of working people, excluding various beliefs, such as

¹¹² The Latvian term *tauta* in different contexts means 'nation', 'folk', or 'people'. Translation of this term in this thesis is kept as close as possible to given context, as in the compound terms 'working people', 'folk art', and 'Soviet nations'.

witchcraft, customs etc., with the term ‘folklore’. Those catch folklorists’ attention as poetical creations or ornamentation of people’s poetry” (Niedre 1948: 6).

Three important rhetorical moves are made here, basically connecting folklore and class-struggle: first, the de-nationalisation of folklore, locating its creative sources in the lower classes according to international Soviet paradigm; second, the narrowing of the definition of folklore genre-wise, excluding materials that could compromise the idea of the linear development of class-struggle with clear division lines between the cultures of oppressors and oppressed, including an exclusively positive evaluation of the latter. The third move leads towards the particular understanding of contemporary folklore, shifting the emphasis from the cultural heritage of pre-modern society to ongoing process of modern society, of course also narrowing it by class and relating it to the narrative of struggle. As *Latviešu folklorā* (Latvian Folklore, Niedre 1948), with the above quoted definition, characterises the beginning of Soviet Latvian folkloristics, *Latviešu folkloristikas vēsture* (History of Latvian Folkloristics, Ambainis 1989) characterises the decline of these trends in the last year of LSSR existence. Here too the opening paragraph defines the field:

In the culture and history of any people, in any period of social development, a significant role is played by folklore – one of the oldest forms of social consciousness. The origins of folklore as ideology are simultaneous to the most ancient manifestations of human spiritual activities. The later modes and forms of folklore take shape together with the development of human language and practical activity. The first man’s efforts of seeing, summarising, and generalising the most important observations in the individual’s life, as well as understanding the regularities of the society, environment, and world from which the existence and further development of particular human and collectives are dependant, are found in it. From the ancient, syncretic forms of spiritual culture, folklore later outgrew as a particular mode of folk art, in which people’s conceptual, artistic, scientific, and merely practical views are collected over the course of many centuries. The world-view and aesthetic basic principles of folklore become a base of national literature; evaluation of the moral, ethical, and social principles stored in folklore, secures the preservation of social and national continuity

(Ambainis: 1989: 5).

In this definition, published half a century later, the most obvious feature, of course, is the (re)introduction of the term ‘national’. The previously dominant narrative of class struggle is also absent, although it heavily influences periodisation and interpretation in further pages of Ambainis’ book. Importantly, this definition leads towards the more comprehensive understanding of folklore as a particular form of the human (not class) consciousness. Published in the last

years of the LSSR, it proves the sensitivity of the humanities towards the political developments going on all over the Soviet Union¹¹³.

One of the rare articles on Latvian mythology published during the early years of Soviet Latvia was written by Arturs Ozols (1912–1964); it is a chapter in introduction to a new edition of folksongs. Ozols was one of the most influential folklorists of his time, head of the Department of Latvian Language and Folklore at the University of Latvia, vice-chairman in scientific work of the director of the LSSR Academy of Sciences Institute of Folklore and Ethnography (cf. Biezais 1970, Jērāns 1986). While, in Sweden, Biezais described the ancient Latvian pantheon, Ozols in Soviet Latvia argued that Soviet folklorists, who were armed with Marxist-Leninist theory, objectively research, care for, and bring to light treasures of the people's art (Ozols 1955: 48). 'Objectively' here means the discovering of a class struggle beyond the creation of folklore. Ideological constraints and angle of interpretation dominating in the earliest Soviet Latvian folkloristics are well illustrated by the course on methodology of Soviet folkloristics within the programme of Latvian folkloristics at the State University of Latvia in the 1949/50 academic year (Ozols 1968: 194–195; for English translations see Appendix II – p. 197). Here the above-mentioned uncertainty of disciplinary identity, manifested in the ongoing critique of bourgeois folkloristics, is reflected in four points out of five. The programme also clearly shows the invention of a new identity along with the invention of new a research object – the contemporary, i.e. Soviet, folklore of working people. Thus, the continuity of discipline was constructed on a meta-level: referring to its research object, but not to the scholarly endeavours of past generations, which were practically continued by the heirs of the Archives of Latvian Folklore and the University of Latvia. Folklore was not only invented, but also instrumentalised as a tool of propaganda and education, and as such its purpose was “to mobilise the working people in the struggle of collective construction, the struggle for new cultural achievements, raising the might of the Soviet Union” (Niedre 1948: 225). While many researchers have paid attention to the contradictory nature of Soviet folklore as the discursive construction of an artificial subject (cf. Miller 1990, Panchenko 2005), an example of one such new folksong speaks for itself, illustrating the subject matter:

Worker extends hand to worker,
Struggle will banish the spectre of crisis.
The worker will build himself a new state,
On work and reason it will be founded

(Ozols 1968: 219).

¹¹³ For changes of the meaning of term 'folklore' during Soviet period in Estonia see Jaago 1999.

This is defined as a folksong probably due to its ‘classical’ four-line form and origins from the lowest level of society, in this case, prisoners¹¹⁴. However, it has no metric features characteristic to Latvian folksongs, and it was excerpted from an originally written source. During field expeditions, Soviet folklore was also often composed by local activities specially to match the collectors agenda.

Research into mythology in this framework of Soviet folkloristics had a special status because of the twofold necessity to legitimise a research subject close to religion. Such legitimisation was obtained by two strategies: pre-defined interpretation, analysed in detail below (p. 159–161), and the practice of using canonical references, characteristic to the discipline, and to the humanities in general, in this period¹¹⁵. First of all, it is Karl Marx who unfortunately had not written anything on mythology in particular but has a short note on Greek art; therefore, this very note was cited in almost all material regarding mythological subject matters:

We know that Greek mythology is not only the arsenal of Greek art, but also its basis. (...) All mythology subdues, controls and fashions the forces of nature in the imagination and through imagination; it therefore disappears when real control over these forces is established. (...) Greek art presupposes Greek mythology, in other words that natural and social phenomena are already assimilated in an unintentionally artistic manner by the imagination of the people
(Marx 1999 [1857]).

Careful reading of other canonical authors (e.g. Lenin and Stalin) also provided similar, rather de-contextualised material. In this regard, the writings of Friedrich Engels and Maxim Gorky were applied as a kind of cornerstones of Soviet (Latvian) approach to mythology. Engels had defined mythology as “fantastic reflection of reality in humans’ minds” (Niedre 1948: 34) and the origins of supernatural beliefs as a coping strategy with external forces¹¹⁶. Engels’ thesis of ‘fantastic reflection’ and its foundation in economic relations discovered by Marx were synthesised by Maxim Gorky and retold to Latvian readers by Jānis Niedre:

¹¹⁴ Originally *LFK* collection no. 908, item no. 1379. Collection no. 908 mainly consists of the excerpts from (presumably political) prisoner’s notes and diaries, stored in the Latvian State Archives.

¹¹⁵ See p. 87–90 for Stalinism and Soviet science.

¹¹⁶ “All religion, however, is nothing but the fantastic reflection in men’s minds of those external forces which control their daily life, a reflection in which the terrestrial forces assume the form of supernatural forces. In the beginnings of history it was the forces of nature which were first so reflected, and which in the course of further evolution underwent the most manifold and varied personifications among the various peoples” (Ozols 1955: 46, quoted from Engels’ *Anti-Dühring*).

An image was consolidation of the sum of particular experience and was accepted as an idea which aroused the creative power, increased the lacking real, provided by the people's own desires. Therefore, myths are not infertile fantasy, but the very reality in their fundamentals, which are supplemented with fiction and called to lead the activity of collective

(Niedre 1955: 35).

From collective activity, line of thought leads to the role of work and the working class. Ozols' reference to Gorky, paraphrasing the same fragment of Engels which was chosen by Niedre, is quoted here at length to illustrate the scholastic nature of this period's rhetorics:

In addition to many other questions of folklore, the basic meaning of the mythological substance of folklore is also illuminated by the great writer of the world and thinker M. Gorky: "I do not doubt that you know ancient folktales, myths, and legends, but I would very much like that their basic meaning would be understood more deeply. This meaning is reducible to the efforts of the ancient working people to ease their work, to increase its productivity, likewise, to arm themselves against four-legged and two-legged enemies as well as with the means of the power of the word – 'witchcraft', 'charming' – to influence elemental, hostile natural forces.

By idealising Man's abilities and somewhat anticipating his potent development, myth creation in its foundations was realistic. In every blink of the ancient imagination it is easy to find its stimulus, and this stimulus is always Man's desire to ease his work. Certainly, this stimulus was created by the workers of physical labour. And indeed, certainly, god had not come into existence and existed for such a long time in the daily life of working people, if it would not be particularly useful for the rulers of the land, exploiters of the work..."

(Ozols 1955: 6–7, cf. Gorkijs 1946).

The most distinct characteristic of these definitions is the absence of religious terminology that is a constitutive element of other approaches to mythology, both in the fields of folkloristics and the studies of religion. Here, instead of sacrality, the struggle of the working people appears as a central term, corresponding to the Marxist understanding of class struggle as a vehicle of history. Such understanding also implies the stretching of religious experience and related narratives in Procrustes' bed of historical materialism, interpreting them either as a metaphor for social and natural phenomena or as an instrumental ideology of the oppressors.

2.3. Soviet Latvian mythology: Revisions and prohibitions

The developments of folkloristics that took place until the Soviet era were, with few exceptions, harshly criticised in multiple ways, thus simultaneously constructing a new identity for the discipline. Leaving aside the very differences in understanding of folklore and the role of folkloristics, this critique labels and

characterises particular researchers and their heritage, drawing strict line between the historical periods. This approach was regularly practiced by Jānis Niedre (1909–1987), unmasking and evaluating the previous regime in multiple publications. Niedre, who previously worked in the Ethnographic section of the Museum of History (1928–1934), was a member of the Communist party from 1934. In that year he was sentenced to three years in prison for anti-government political activities, then rose to power immediately after the occupation of Latvia by Soviet forces, heading the central censorship institution¹¹⁷, later becoming assistant director of the Folklore Institute and occupying other high positions in the state machinery (Štrāle. Online; cf. Samsons 1968: 138, Zelmenis 2007: 17). Written from the hegemonic position, his articles in the press and programmatic book *Latviešu folklorā* (*Latvian folklore*, 1948) established and defined ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ in a way characteristic to a totalitarian state. Figuratively speaking, Niedre was treated with his own medicine after the next change of political regime: in 1990 Anda Kubuliņa used almost the same rhetoric as Niedre to describe his contribution to the discipline, also pointing out the probability of specific personal disposition in Niedre’s attitude towards the more talented scholars. In the latter regard, it is relevant that Niedre used his position to acquire an academic degree without fulfilling such requirement as graduation of university (Kubuliņa 2000/2001: 161).

During the post-war decades Švābe, despite the rather leftist ideas in his early writings, was called the “bourgeois nationalist who, for example, claimed that Latvian folk art is the production of the higher classes¹¹⁸. Švābes views are supported by L. Bērziņš, P. Šmits, and the apologist for the ‘Finnish school’ in Latvian folkloristics Anna Bērzkalne. Even working in a Soviet research institution, Anna Bērzkalne expressed the views of western bourgeois arch-reactionary folklorists” (Niedre 1953: 56; cf. Niedre 1947, Medne-Romane 1950: 87, Ozols 1968: 56). Šmits was also criticised for searching for too many written folklore sources and thus undermining the creative spirit of the people (Niedre 1953: 58), as well as for overestimating the loans in narrative folklore (Niedre 1948: 13, Ozols 1968: 56). Not only particular theories, but also some directions of research were not welcomed: “As mentioned before, the collection of folklore developed as the search for unreal delusions. The collection of Latvian folklore in this morbid direction was especially driven by P. Šmits with his articles, and K. Straubergs with his descriptions of charming and magic” (Niedre 1948: 61). The following, perhaps, is said about the same: “Ignoring the healthy evaluation of life by the working people, Latvian bourgeois collectors

¹¹⁷ *Preses un biedrību departaments*, the Department of Press and Associations, and later *LPSR Galvenā literatūras pārvalde*, The Main Authority of Literature of the LSSR.

¹¹⁸ Švābes personality and works are an exemplary case of this ideologically laden criticism: he had been involved in national academic politics, he was in exile, and some his writings were easy to interpret as reflecting Hans Naumann’s theory of “*gesunkenes Kulturgut*”. The latter was one of the central objects of criticism in Marxist-Leninist folkloristics in general (cf. Dorson 1963).

of folklore were chasing the decadent reverie of a few intellectuals, often the shallowness of these men identifying with folk poetry” (Niedre 1948: 61).

Švābe’s works published after 1917 were taken out of public circulation in the LSSR (*Arveda Švābes zinātniskā darbība*. Online) after he went exile. Later it was written that Švābes views on the history of folkloristics were unacceptable because he illustrated the tendency of pro-western understanding of the discipline: “Bourgeois scholars, touching the questions of history and methodology of Latvian folkloristics, had tried to conceptualise them as though Latvian folklorists had always been under the influence of western scholars’ theories and methods, and that Latvian folkloristics was mere imitation of western folkloristics, illustrated by Latvian folklore materials” (Ozols 1958: 56). Soviet Latvian historiography, at the same time, tended to foreground the links between Latvian and Russian scholars and theories (e.g. Инфантьев 1951, Ambainis 1958), contributing to the centre-periphery hierarchy in Soviet science which itself related to the special role of Russia in Soviet discourse.

Ojārs Ambainis (1926–1995) was a researcher associated all his life with the Archives of Latvian Folklore (*Etnogrāfijas un folkloras institūts*, The Institute of Ethnography and Folklore during the Soviet period), primarily specialising in research on folktales. He was also the author of the only history book on Latvian folkloristics (Ambainis 1989). A shorter historical overview of disciplinary developments is also included in his dissertation (Ambainis 1958). There Ambainis recognised Švābe’s pioneering role in analysis of class-structure and social relations in Latvian folktales, despite this claiming that “In his judgements the author often arrives at reactionary, un-scientific conclusions” (Ambainis 1958: 46). In general, criticism of previous academia sometimes went as far as this laconic conclusion: “There was no Latvian folkloristics in the Pre-Soviet period” (Niedre 1948: 61). Revision of previously produced works and theories is an integral process of knowledge production; however, a particular regime of truth dictates the mode of this critique. As interwar period researchers positioned themselves against the scholars and publicists of the nineteenth century, mainly on the basis of theoretical differences, Soviet Latvian scholars, willingly or not, positioned themselves against interwar period academia on the basis of political differences which, in their turn, dictated theoretical position. The latter, dogmatic in its nature at each stage of development, still had its dynamics.

2.4. Soviet Latvian mythology: The single correct interpretation

In the Soviet countries, the interpretive framework of folklore was shaped to invest Marxist-Leninist doctrine with scientific legitimacy, and use it as an ideological foundation for the building of the new society. The ideological means of discipline were foregrounded, creating a kind of self-referring

structure of knowledge production with biased objectivity; such a system was claimed to be objective because of its very un-objectivity. First of all, as stated in the previously given definitions of folklore, some folklore materials were more preferred than others. If during the interwar period there was a tendency to prioritise folksongs through formal-historical arguments, during the Soviet era this selection was made according to content of the narrative – the authenticity of folklore materials and thus their value to research was determined by their correspondence to the narrative of the working class; in this context, to a large extent formulated by Gorky (cf. Dorson 1963) these ‘dialectics’ of labour were enough for the explanation of mythological phenomena as well (e.g. Ozols 1955). Secondly, the interpretation of these selected materials was further shaped by the adaptation of works by scholars recognised by Soviet power, e.g. Yuri Sokolov, Sergei Aleksandrovič Tokarev, or Vsevolod Zelenin. The recognition or condemnation of particular theories was a dynamic process. In the first decade after the 1917 Russian Revolution, the work of literary scholars and folklorists in the Soviet Union was relatively less censored and controlled. Various trends, such as formalism, the Finnish school, and the historical school, freely coexisted (Oinas 1973). The 1930s brought the establishment of a single correct dogma in various areas including the arts and humanities; this process corresponded to the Stalinistic purge in the Communist party and Stalin obtaining absolute power by exiling or destroying other Communist party leaders, such as Leon Trotsky. In an Orwellian way the power-knowledge modification in the Soviet Union included not only censorship and critique, but also public confessions and the acceptance of Truth¹¹⁹:

Leaders of the ‘historical school’ whose interpretations had dominated Russian folklore study publicly acknowledged their contamination from reactionary Western scholars. Propp renounced formalism, Andreyev the Finnish method, Zhurminsky and Sokolov the vulgar sociology of Hans Naumann. Academicians Y. M. Sokolov and Veselovsky Miller now recognized their neglect of the creative factor in the poetic compositions of the working class, and their failure to perceive the true social and class nature of oral poetry and legend

(Dorson 1963: 97–98).

In the LSSR, the programmatic writings of Niedre illustrate this shift of the official position regarding ‘New Linguistic Doctrine’ founded by Russian philologist and archaeologist Nikolai Yakovlevič Marr (ca. 1864–1934) in the 1920s. Briefly, Marr built a brilliant academic career¹²⁰ using Marxist phraseology and presenting his doctrine as the only Marxist alternative to

¹¹⁹ Gennady Batygin in this respect points out the interesting similarity of communist ideology and early protestant movements, “where public repentance and the open display of personal lives were the basic requirements of engagement” (Batygin: 2004: 16).

¹²⁰ Up to the position of head position in the Section of Materialist Linguistics of the Communist Academy and receiving the Order of Lenin.

bourgeois comparative linguistics. In his works the stages of glottogonic development are linked to historical socio-economic formations (Yakubovich 2005). In 1950, however, Marr's teachings were declared anti-Marxist in Stalin's article "Marxism and questions of linguistic science" published in the central Soviet newspaper *Pravda* (20.06.1950; cf. Stalin 1972). Initially, Niedre claimed that Marr's theory, explaining the oldest stage of human developments, is one of the basic components of Soviet folkloristics: it shows the process of mythogenesis, explains the formation of particular folktale motifs, and appropriately questions the borrowing of folktale motifs (Niedre 1948: 26, 125–6, etc.). Just five years later Niedre celebrates Stalin's article, stating that, "In this work not only N. Y. Marr's anti-Marxist, idealistic teachings on language are unmasked down to their roots, but also Marxist-Leninist science is elevated to a new, higher level" (Niedre 1953: 66). Marr's theory is now called "pseudoscientific linguistics", "wrong statements", and "vulgarisations", which had contaminated Soviet folkloristics with "vulgar and idealistic statements", leading to "formalistic archaism" (Niedre 1953: 66–68).

The gap between the necessity of politically correct theory and scholarly praxis comes into the light when reading Niedre's *Latvian folklore*: in the chapter regarding Latvian mythology, Niedre just briefly retells Šmits' *Latvian mythology* with minor adjustments. In general, apart from the rhetorics of class struggle and the relation of particular notions to corresponding socio-economic formations, the most significant novelty of the time is the (re)introduction of the theories of animism and totemism, somewhat adjusting the ideas of the British anthropological school to the linear course of history defined by Marxists. Regarding totemism, the most referenced author is Russian ethnographer, researcher of Slavonic mythology Dimitry Konstantinovich Zelenin (1878–1954). Animism and totemism are also mentioned in practical works in Latvian folkloristics (at the above-mentioned programme at the State University of Latvia for the 1948/1949 academic year) in the mythology-related part, the "Analysis of the reflection of primitive worldview in material of folklore" (Ozols 1958: 200). These tasks allow the projection of the materialistic worldview onto earlier forms of consciousness, explaining religious practices with evolutionary theory, the role of labour and, further, the class struggle. On the whole, a lot of effort was invested defining (adopting from the centre) and adjusting a single correct (i.e. official) theory; despite this, bearing in mind the reasons outlined above, the implementation of these theories hardly ever took place because of the problematic nature of the research object itself.

3. Indo-European studies

The discipline of folkloristics in Soviet Latvia was a rather self-contained realm of knowledge production: structured along the clear lines of power hierarchy, censored and isolated from the academic world outside Socialist countries. The

knowledge production process was legitimised according to Marxist-Leninist doctrine and derivations of this ideology by Soviet Russian scholars of the field. At the same time – in the post-war years – Western European and American scholarship continued developing in other directions, mythology being reconstructed and interpreted by the new methodology of structuralism (especially in France and the USA), the history of religion (in Sweden) and other freely contesting theories. Outside the LSSR, the research into Latvian mythology in the second half of the twentieth century to a large extent took place within the framework of Indo-European studies, articulated in multiple fields from comparative linguistics to history, archaeology, and the structural study of myth.

3.1. Indo-European studies: The birth of modern scholarship

The special place of Baltic languages and ancient religions, mainly Latvian and Lithuanian, in reconstructive research of Indo-European culture has often been mentioned in post-war Western scholarship (cf. Mallory 1989: 82; Gimbutas 1963; Puhvel 1989). However, the idea of Indo-European studies was present a long time before the division of the world by Iron Curtain. The field itself was established with Sir William Jones's pronouncement before the Asiatic Society in Calcutta in 1786, that Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, Germanic, and Celtic languages have more in common than can be ascribed to accident, and that they all sprung from a common source that perhaps no longer exists (Mallory and Adams 2006: 5). Soon the first hypotheses regarding the common Proto-Indo-European culture, including mythology and religion, were developed according to the methodology, knowledge and ideology of the respective period. Yet, from the contemporary perspective one has to agree that

The earlier scholarly history of such study is a sad, not to say an embarrassing chapter. In the middle of the nineteenth century, the first intoxication of the discovery of Vedic Sanskrit, the then current naturist doctrine of myth interpretation, and personal idiosyncrasy coalesced in the fertile brain of F. Max Müller to produce a first flowering of comparative Indo-European mythology; it was essentially a loose derivation of Greek mythic names from Sanskrit prototypes, propped up by the tenet of the omnipresence of sungods and solar allegory, and the doctrine of the disease of language and the decay of metaphors (Puhvel 1968: 57).

Probably, there is no concise study of the linguistic aspects of the Indo-European people that does not contain a reference to Swiss scholar Ferdinand de Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics*, first published in 1916 from the notes of his students. It is generally agreed, that the book and its multiple translations ushered in a revolution in linguistic thinking during the 1920s and 1930s that is still felt today in many quarters, even beyond linguistics proper

(Koerner 2006: 753). De Saussure in his ground-breaking study not only outlines the principles of comparative linguistics for more than half a century, but also, in the light of new methodology, re-evaluates the principles of linguistic comparison which, until his time, has served for the purposes of comparative mythology. First of all, de Saussure pointed out the mistake of earlier linguistic scholars in promoting Sanskrit to prototype due to it simply being the oldest documented IE language (cf. de Saussure 1966: 215). In this way the possibility for a new comparative, non-reductive reconstruction project was opened. Secondly, according to de Saussure, every language is a continuation of what is spoken before; therefore more archaic languages can be encountered simultaneously with more modern languages, i.e. more changed languages, in comparison to the common proto-language. In this respect, Saussure marks out Lithuanian, attested only since 1540, as no less valuable than Old Slavic, which was recorded in the tenth century, or than the Sanskrit of the Rig Veda for that matter. Containing the more archaic language state, sixteenth-century Lithuanian is older than the Latin of the third century B.C. (Saussure 1966: 24, 216). Consequently, the linguistic data on the mythological subject matters have similar implications, and, consequently, this implies the special role of Baltic mythology in reconstruction of Proto-Indo-European mythology¹²¹. Still, these reconstructions were caught up in the discourse of ‘Aryans’ not only for most of the nineteenth century, but also in the 1930s and 1940s, particularly in Germany, with terrible consequences (Lincoln 1999: 121). Another highly influential scholar of linguistics – Émile Benveniste (1902–1976) – took diachronic analysis further by considering that the systems of representation and the social structures are organised like linguistic structures. Through analysis of the IE languages, Benveniste dedicated himself to reconstruction of the culture and history that are signified within these social structures (Guimarães 2006: 737).

Saussure’s work in linguistics was also the origin and model of structuralism, later adapted to anthropology (by Lévi-Strauss), to psychoanalysis (by Lacan), and to literary theory (by Barthes) (REF: 6759). The influence of Saussure on Indo-European linguistics was as great as the influence of Georges Dumézil’s (1898–1986) works on the studies of Indo-European religion and ideology. The foundation of Dumézil’s theory and much more that has been written about Indo-European mythology has its origins in the sociological approach to the study of religion championed by Emile Durkheim, which assumes that myths express certain social and cultural realities, i.e. that important social and cultural realities are inevitably “collectively represented” by supernatural beings and concepts (Mallroy 1989: 130). Proceeding from this point, Dumézil revolutionised the field of comparative mythology, especially comparative Indo-European mythology, which since the second decade of the

¹²¹ The singling out of Lithuanian from other Baltic languages can probably be related to its role in Saussure’s career – the study of Lithuanian dialects was one of his first works.

twentieth century has been undergoing a sort of crisis due to the eclipse of the great comparative projects of the nineteenth century, e.g. Max Müller's solar mythology, the stormgods of Adalbert Kuhn, the moon myths of Georg Hüsing, the animal allegories of Angelo de Gubernaitis, and the *Arische Feuerlehre* of Johannes Hertel (Littleton 2005: 2518, Puhvel 1968: 57). Starting with his doctoral thesis *Le festin d'immortalité: Etude de mythologie comparée indo-européenne* (*The Feast of Immortality: A Comparative Study of Indo-European Mythology*, 1924), Dumézil initially attempted to develop a "new comparative mythology", grounded in Frazerian model of the study of kingship, religion, and magic. By 1938, he began to draw upon a wholly different theoretical base – Durkheim's sociology of religion. Over the course of the next decade, Dumézil arrived at a comprehensive model of the common Indo-European ideology – that is, the tripartite cognitive model in terms of which the ancient (and not so ancient) Indo-European speakers ordered their social and supernatural universes (cf. Grottanelli 1996; Littleton 2005). Within this trifunctional ideology human and divine phenomena are hierarchically classified as belonging to one of the functions: sovereignty and sacredness, war and physical force, or the third function related to production, health, fertility, and wealth. The basic tripartite division is manifested in the structure of the world and understanding of the human body, each 'level' is also associated with particular colours, animals, natural forces, etc., thus providing the gridlines for semantic analysis of cultural entities. An idea much contested afterwards was that this trifunctional ideology is exclusive to Indo-Europeans (Grottanelli 1996, Lyle 2006). The very structure is questioned and adjusted, for example, by elaborating primary binarism (Gamkrelidze and Ivanov 1996), or finding additional matrilineal pattern: "the stories I have studied today have suggested the strong presence of an ancestress (or primal goddess), from whom the kings are descended and take their eligibility. There is also another female, a young one who is a queen" (Lyle 2006: 67). Notwithstanding this, Dumézil's works are the firm foundation upon which the contemporary comparative studies of Indo-European mythology rest as liberated from the political contamination of previous, Aryan, discourse. They also form crucial context for the research into Latvian mythology in the second half of the twentieth century.

3.2. Indo-European studies: Baltic mythology and the recontextualisation of Old Europe

The accumulation of knowledge on Proto-Indo-European language, culture, religion, and migration routes allows us to more clearly separate and research the older layer of European culture by more sophisticated analysis of linguistic data and interpretation of archaeological findings. Certain parallels could be drawn between the role of the IE layer of Baltic mythology in reconstruction of PIE mythology, and the older layer of Baltic mythology in reconstruction of

Old European mythology, at least its regional variety. The historically and politically determined changes in understanding Latvian mythology as a constitutive part of Baltic mythology (cf. p. 93–96) are also related to the developments of IE scholarship as the latter are outlined in the previous subchapter. Both layers of Baltic mythology were described by a Lithuanian origin American scholar, educated in Germany, holding a doctor's degree in the field of archaeology with minors in ethnology and the history of religion – Maria Gimbutas (p. 93–96). Gimbutas provides an interesting case in the study of Latvian mythology within the concept of Baltic mythology because of her mixed identity, disciplinary background, and seminal influence on both Indo-European studies and late feminist archaeology (cf. Marler 1995. Online).

However, her unique contribution to the current study is the publication history of one Gimbutas' books, illustrating the contextual determination of knowledge production in the studies of Latvian mythology during the post-war period. Two editions of *The Balts* by Marija Gimbutas (Gimbutas 1963, Gimbutiene 1994) show differences of some kind regarding all facets of the research – sources, theories, and conclusions. Even the vocabulary differs. There are at least two obvious reasons for this. First is related to the changes in the author's views, manifested in her other publications between the two editions, briefly, the introduction of the concept of matricentric pre-historic European religion (e.g. Gimbutas 1996 [1974]), paralleling developments in feminism theory. Since the 1970s a number of feminist scholars like Helen Dinner, Elizabeth Gould Davis, Evelyn Reed, and Marilyn French have postulated the existence of matriarchal clans or even the universal structure at pre-historic times (cf. Gamble 2004: 271). However, although Gimbutas' interests might be related to this scientific-cum-ideological current, the research into ancient goddesses would be impossible without rapid developments in her field of specialisation – archaeology, consisting both of multiple new discoveries and changes in interpretation and dating¹²² of findings. The second factor determining the differences of both editions are the particular conditions of publication. The edition of 1963 was published in London, within the context of Western scholarship. The Latvian language edition of 1994 was based on the Lithuanian language version, published in Soviet Lithuania in 1985. The latter may also explain the shift in the dictionary from 'Baltic religion' to 'Baltic religion and mythology', a reflection the problematic nature of studies of religion in the Soviet Union. A more detailed comparison below characterises the differences in conceptualisation and categorisation of the phenomena of Baltic and Latvian mythology in both editions.

The positioning of the subject matter in relation to more general research fields remains the same; however, against this background conceptual differences are more obvious. For example, in 1963 the author stated that:

¹²² Radiocarbon dating was discovered in the 1950s.

The customs, beliefs, mythological songs and folk art symbolism of the Lithuanians and Latvians are amazingly replete with antiquity. The Christian stratum is recent and can be easily detached. For comparative religion, the value of the Lithuanian and Latvian folklore and folk art is the same as that of the Baltic languages for the reconstruction of the ‘mother tongue’ of the Indo-Europeans

(Gimbutas 1963: 180).

In 1994 the same statement is worded as follows:

As the Christian stratum is comparatively recent, it can be easily detached. Underneath lay the corn-bins of antiquity: some still living elements of Baltic mythology reach not only into pre-historic, and not only into the times of Indo-European proto-people, but also into more ancient times. For a comparative mythology, the value of Lithuanian and, in my opinion, also Latvian oral poetry is the same as that of the Baltic language for the reconstruction of the Indo-European proto-language

(Gimbutiene 1994: 174).

Originally, the basic source for the reconstruction of the ancient Baltic religion for Gimbutas was folklore, which splendidly supplements the evidence of recorded history and the archaeological monuments (1963: 180). Recorded history was more criticised in the more recent edition (1994: 175), instead introducing data from linguistic comparison as the more important source. This new edition also refers to Dumézil’s research and the theory of three functions, as well as being updated with references to works by Biezais, and the Lithuanian scholars Norbertas Vėlius (1938–1996) and Algirdas Greimas (1917–1992), published in the decades following 1963. The first edition was informed by the novelty of its time: discovery of previously unknown remains of cult buildings in the excavations of 1955–1957¹²³; thus, allowing us to speak about the previously doubted level of institutionalisation of ancient religion in the Baltic region, corresponding to the evidence of a few written sources from the fourteenth century.

Gimbutas’ version of the ancient Baltic religion and mythological space, described in 1963, is comparatively monolithic. Advancing from the analysis of burial customs and archaeological evidence to references to cult practices and celestial deities in the works of other researchers, it consists of a description of the “hill of the dead” which reflects Bronze Age graves and the “heavenly hill” in folklore materials:

¹²³ South of Smolensk, in Soviet Russia; the region was previously inhabited by the eastern Balts.

If the realm of the *vēlēs*¹²⁴ on “a high sandy hill” in the neighbourhood of the village reflects the more realistic side of this people’s beliefs about life after death, there also exists an imaginary hill, or a steep stone hill, which the dead have to climb, and therefore they need to have good fingernails or the aid of animal claws. On this steep hill *Dievas* (God) resides and summons the *vēlēs* (Gimbutas 1963: 189–190).

Further, referring to Straubergs’ *Lettisk folkro om de döda*, the author briefly describes the topography of the netherworld: beyond the heavenly hill the long road of souls continues through the sky (Milky Way) or over the water by boat as the Sun does it during the night. “There the Sun sleeps, there she washes her horses and there appear other gods, *Dievas*, the Thunder god, the Moon, and the deity of the Sea. And somewhere in this remote place are the grey stone and the sun tree” (1963: 190). The sun tree stands on the stone, at the end of “the way of the Sun”. There is the realm of gods and light, the end of the visible world.

With names in both Latvian and Lithuanian mythologies, Earth is the Great Mother. “Her functions are distributed among the separate minor deities of forest, field, stones, water and animals, who in Latvian folklore acquired the names ‘Mother of Forests,’ ‘Mother of Fields,’ ‘Mother of Springs,’ ‘Mother of Domestic Animals’” (1963: 192). Apart from this, the Lithuanian male deity of the homestead, *Žemėpatis* or *Žemininkas*, who was considered to be a brother of *Žemyna*, the Earth deity is mentioned here. Further, the deities of homestead and the patrons of particular areas are identified, differing slightly in Prussian, Lithuanian, and Latvian sources. The higher deities in this version are the sky god *Dievs*, the thunder god *Perkūnas*, *Laima*, the goddess of fate, and *Velns*. These four gods, with minimal differences in names, are similar to all Baltic subgroups. From the lowest circles Gimbutas mentions fairies, water spirits and spirits of other areas (it remains unclear how these spirits, represented by male deities in Lithuanian variation, and mythological Mothers in the Latvian variation, are related to the Mother of Earth). Other celestial deities are the Divine Smith, and less anthropomorphic deities identical with Sun, Moon, morning star, etc. Referring to Mannhardt’s sources, the author introduces a particular deity of fire. Concerning the mythological space, Gimbutas version is distinctive with the mentioning of multiple castles where the celestial deities dwell. Dievs’ “large fenced homestead recalls a castle, having three silver gates and comprising manor, farmhouses and vapour bath, with a garden and forest trees around. It is located beyond the sky; beyond the stone, silver, gold or amber hill” (1963: 200). There his sons also live. *Saule* and her daughters also “had a castle with silver gates beyond the hill in the valley or at the end of the water” (ibid.), and *Pērkons*’ castle is on the high hill in the sky (1963: 202).

In the more recent version of *The Balts* this pantheon was separated into two parts and hierarchically re-arranged. Thus, Gimbutas separates two groups of gods: “mythical beings inherited from the matricentric ancient Europe” and

¹²⁴ Lat.: *veļi*, souls of the dead.

“gods and goddesses with Indo-European origin”. The first group consists of three life-giving and life-taking female deities: *Laima*, *Ragana*, and *Žemina*. Each of these has several related goddesses. *Laima* is the deity of fate and birth. Related to her are, for example, the Latvian *Māra* and Lithuanian twin-sister of *Laima* – *Giltinė* (Death). *Ragana* is the lunar deity of death and reincarnation. *Žemina* is Mother of Earth and Mother of the Dead. Higher deities of pre-historic times are *Čūska* (Snake, female) and *Zalktis* (Grass snake, male). Secondary deities of this pantheon are *Lauma* (The Fairy), a representative of *Laima* and *Ragana* on Earth, and *Austėja*, patroness of brides and expectant mothers. Various (male and female) patrons of particular areas and functions are related to *Žemina*. In this version, the Lithuanian material is somewhat dominant (cf. Gimbutiene 1994: 176–186). The other group, symmetrically, also includes three main gods, male: *Dievs*, *Pērkons*, and *Vēls/Vēlins* (Lat.: *Velns*). *Dievs* is the god of heaven, light, peace and friendship, the patron of the day and contracts; *Pērkons* is the god of thunder, justice and soil fertility; the third is the “evil and cruel god of the death and underworld realm”, but he is also god of cattle. Secondary deities of this pantheon are all celestial deities (Moon, Sun, God’s sons, Sun’s daughters, Dawn, morning star) as well as the divine smith and two Lithuanian deities of fire (Gimbutiene 1994: 187–198).

Interestingly, descriptions of the netherworld in the Latvian language edition are absent; this relates to both the road of souls¹²⁵ and the castles of the celestial deities. A reason for this difference, aside from the possibility of simple economy of the text, might be related to the intellectual climate of 1985 when the Lithuanian language edition was published in Soviet Lithuania. The notion of mythological space was probably too far from the Soviet materialistic master narrative; explanation of it would imply the dimension of sacredness as integral part of the interpretation, an ultimate idealism. Exclusion of the gods’ castles might also be related to ‘wrong’ implications relating to class-structure, which further could be associated with the creation and role of folklore materials¹²⁶. In general, close comparison of the two editions (with Latvian as translated Lithuanian) clearly shows the interrelation of the following factors in knowledge production: overall development of the discipline (new data and methods), the presence and possible influence of contemporary theoretical trends (feminist discourse), and the impact of the ideological regime on editorial practices. The latter is usually questioned when talking about editions of folklore materials (e.g. Briggs and Bauman 1992 or Melne 2000), but obviously also strongly influences scholarly texts in the politically vulnerable fields of the humanities.

¹²⁵ In addition, the article on netherworld (Straubergs 1957) is removed from the bibliography of the Lithuanian-Latvian edition.

¹²⁶ Cf. the above described situation in early Soviet Latvia and Niedre’s critique of Švābe and Bērzkalne regarding the origins of folklore – p. 159–161

Metadiscursive practices and rhetorics, characteristic to the last years of the Soviet empire when socialist science was still the official position, but the presence of Western influence was already inevitable, show the most extended structural reconstruction of the ancient Baltic world outlook by the Soviet Lithuanian scholar Norbertas Vėlius (1938–1996). The English translation *The World Outlook of the Ancient Balts* was published in 1989, while the Lithuanian original, in 1983, i.e. around the same time as the Lithuanian version of *The Balts* (1985) came out of the press. On the one hand, Vėlius mandatorily refers to “the founders of Marxism-Leninism” (1989: 10), while on the other hand exploring the comparatively progressive methodology of the Moscow-Tartu school as well as referring to the French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss. Based mainly on Lithuanian materials, the book places a background of historical reality behind the timeless study of archaisms manifested in folklore and ethnology: “The present book attempts to interpret only the most general features of Baltic world outlook and does not aim for the reconstruction of the Weltanschauung or social structure of a concrete historical period” (ibid.). Such positioning, apart from personal theoretical preference, might have been chosen to avoid discussion on the compatibility of the ideological implementations of the work with the dominant regime of truth. A short note gives information, at least about the latter, legitimising another mythological study by Vėlius on the chthonic netherworld. Here the author legitimises his historical-comparative research on the devil (Lit.: *velnias*) stating that “Without the proper knowledge of the origin and essence of this mythological character it is impossible to understand and give a proper evaluation of this image in traditional and contemporary art or to use it for atheistic purposes” (Vėlius 1987: 288).

4. From Moscow to Tartu

4.1. From Moscow to Tartu: Reconstructions of the proto-myth

Latvian mythology within Indo-European studies acquired a particular form and function for the reconstructive research purposes of the Moscow-Tartu school of semiotics. Taking place in the 1970s–1990s, this particular context united, on the one hand, discussion and cooperation with contemporary Western scholars and the theories they represented, and, on the other hand, specific modification of the power-knowledge relationship, characteristic to post-Stalinist Soviet scholarship (p. 96–99). Regarding Proto-Indo-European mythology, the Moscow-Tartu school scholars adopted and contested Dumézilian tripartite ideology (see above p. 164–166). Nevertheless, for the unique contribution of this school to research into Latvian mythology syntagmatic structural analysis, leading to reconstructions of the plots of myths rather than the religious systems they belong to, is quintessential. T. M. Nikolayeva claims that “The research concerning reconstruction of the proto-myth (as well as research of an artistic

text) is the strongest part of the Moscow school of semiotics (...) and has no match among semiotics of the whole world” (Николаева 1997: XXV). The leading scholars of this direction are definitely Vjačeslav V. Ivanov (Иванов, 1929) and Vladimir N. Toporov (Топоров, 1928–2005); multiple works on the subject matter have also been written by other current or former employees of The Institute of Slavonic and Balkan Studies at the Russian Academy of Sciences, working at the Department of Structural Typology (Николаева 1997). A more structural than semiotic study of myth was championed by Eleazar M. Meletinsky (Мелетинский, 1918–2005), who was affiliated with the Russian State University for the Humanities. During the 1970s and early 1980s, the structure of proto-mythic plot and the linguistic key-elements were reconstructed, especially regarding the Slavonic version of this myth and its connection to the Baltic version (Топоров 1986: 49). The reconstruction of the proto-myth¹²⁷ by Moscow-Tartu school representatives is inseparably connected with the notion of mythopoetic, mentally structured space. As such it is somewhat trans-temporal, or, more precisely, trans-historical. Such overwhelmingly diachronic structural analysis “makes them spatialize time and reduce the variety of cultural phenomena to their supposed ‘archetypes’ in the primordial mythopoetic thought of humankind” (Waldstein 2008: 118). Consequently, the understanding of cultural phenomena tended to be reduced to “reconstruction of origins” that would allow an understanding of the deep-structure functions of the phenomena. Such mythopoetic studies involves multiple risks: for example, epistemological difficulty, because the reconstruction of one’s own conditions is already determined by these conditions; secondly, very high arbitrariness of interpretation by connecting distant phenomena via reference to common deep structure. At the end of the day, if everything can be speculated about as the echoes of proto-myth, such an approach loses meaning.¹²⁸

Although there were different trends in the Moscow and Tartu studies of myth and folklore, the scholars concerned with the reconstruction of IE proto-myth basically organised their efforts on three levels: the reconstruction of primary plot; research into the forms and transformations of basic characters of this primary plot; research into the secondary characters and typology of their

¹²⁷ Briefly, the proto-myth is about the fight of an anthropomorphic hero (thunder god) with a teriomorphic antagonist (serpent, dragon, etc.). In the beginning, the thunder god is somewhere on the top; usually, on the hill, in heaven, at the upper part of tripartite World Tree. The serpent is underneath, at the roots of the World Tree. The serpent steals cattle and hides them in the cave, behind the cliff; the thunder god smashes the cliff and frees the cattle (or humans). The serpent tries to hide under different living creatures or turns into them, hides under the tree or stone. The thunder god smashes the tree or stone with his weapon, the thunderbolt. After victory, it starts to rain and the body of serpent is covered by water. The proto-myth is related to other basic myths, for example about the World Tree or Heavenly Wedding (cf. Николаева 1997).

¹²⁸ For a summary of the different trends of criticism of mythopoetic analysis see Waldstein 2008: 118–120.

incarnations, various national traditions and their incorporation into mythopoetic space. Further in reconstruction of the proto-myth or its elements temporally and geographically distant, languages and texts are explored; the combination of synchronic and diachronic linguistics allows, for example, analyses based on a pairing of Old Scandinavian and Iranian (Топоров 1997). In the same way, Baltic languages and mythologies are contextualised not only with the neighbouring East-Slavonic or Scandinavian, but also with Balkan; thus, creating the specific Baltic-Balkan perspective (Судник и Цивьян 1981, 1997). Toporov suggests that the plot of proto-myth, although not elaborated, is represented in Latvian folksongs with surprising completeness in comparison with other traditions, even such recognised traditions as Ancient Indian. Furthermore, in this respect materials of Latvian folklore are more telling than the Lithuanian (Топоров 1986: 48). In this regard, Latvian folksongs provide valuable insights into the motivation behind the events of proto-myth, the related characters (e.g. *Jānis*, *Laima*, *Māra*), and the main antagonist.

4.2. From Moscow to Tartu: Layers of Latvian mythology

The pantheon of ancient Indo-European origin Latvian deities, as reconstructed by Ivanov and Gamkrelidze, was already described in chapter II (p. 63–68). Therefore here I will characterise the relationship of this reconstruction to the above-mentioned proto-myth as well as a particular interpretation of the Latvian mythology within the framework of mythopoetic studies by scholars of the Moscow-Tartu school of semiotics. In comparison to other research traditions characterised so far, this School is unique for several reasons. Leaving aside the already highlighted methodological facets and contradictory relations to the totalitarian state, its detachment from the previous research in the field might be emphasised, referring to it as neither positive, nor negative. The school's theoretical particularity as well as massive advancement in research create the self-contained realm of knowledge within which a particular place is reserved for Latvian mythology. For the first time in history, obvious political implications, characteristic to works written on the subject matter previously or at the same time in the LSSR, are obviously absent. Since complete analyses of the School's heritage in Baltic and Indo-European scholarship requires study far beyond the scope of this thesis, the insight provided below is based on three selected articles – two on Latvian and one on Baltic mythology. On the one hand, the following analysis demonstrates how the School's leading scholars, Ivanov and Toporov, relate the material on Latvian mythology to Indo-European proto-myth. On the other hand, it is intended to characterise the particular style of reasoning which allows and forms this relationship: the above-mentioned high arbitrariness of interpretation, diachronic comparison of cultural phenomena, almost Gnostic and trans-historical systematisation, and reduction to “origins”, related to the discourse on archaisms.

In the article “*О мифопоэтических основах латышских дайн*” (“On the mythopoetic foundations of Latvian folksongs”, 1986) Ivanov emphasised the rich layer of mythological archaisms in Latvian folksongs, paying close attention to a particular motif related to proto-myth: the Heavenly Wedding of divine twins, articulated as the wedding of *Dieva dēli* (God’s Sons) and *Saules meitas* (Daughters of Sun). The reconstruction of Latvian mythology here was in a way subordinated to already reconstructed IE motif, in Ivanov’s words: “The comparative-historical analysis shows that the plot comes from the common Indo-European motif of a partly successful or completely unsuccessful wedding of the divine twins, burdened with astral symbolism in the Latvian variation” (Иванов 1986: 6). Continuing the analysis, the Latvian deity *Jumis* was related to the same Indo-European twin motif, bearing linguistic resemblance with Vedic twin character *Yama*, who features in corresponding versions of the myth¹²⁹. Function-wise, the motif of the Heavenly Wedding is related to the prohibition of incest. Further analysis of the legal aspects beyond the proto-myth leads to one more pair (twin) figure in Latvian mythology. It is the pair of Heaven and Earth, related to creation of the world. According to Ivanov, all these three twin figures suggest the initial dual mythical oppositions – the very foundation of early Baltic and Slavonic mythological systems (Иванов 1986: 18). Unity of the oppositions can be represented also by similarly widespread androgenic motif or figure, also represented by the same Latvian *Jumis* in earlier variations of myth – before the emergence of his female counterpart (*Jume*, *Jumala*). Graphical representation of *Jumis* consists of two symbolic horse heads, corresponding to the motif of the divine twins, which are related to horses too. The Heavenly Wedding in Baltic mythology is often also articulated in ‘astronomical code’ – as the Wedding of the Sun and Moon or other anthropomorphised heavenly bodies. In this version of myth, folksongs frequently feature the figure of the Heavenly Smith or God-Smith, fighting with its mythical enemy. Introduction of this figure allowed Ivanov to unite Latvian folklore with Estonian and generally Baltic-Finnish and Scandinavian folklore (Иванов 1986: 24) as well as to refer to an older layer of mythology, the remains of the megalithic culture present in Europe long before the arrival of Indo-European tribes (cf. Иванов 1986: 25).

In addition, Toporov’s contribution demonstrates research into Latvian mythology almost exclusively from folksongs, but with a slightly different emphasis, folksongs as a source for the linguistic reconstruction of PIE mythology. In the article “*К реконструкции одного цикла архаических мифопоэтических представлений в свете “Latvju dainas” (к 150-летию со дня рождения Кр. Барона)*” (“On the reconstruction of the cycle of archaic

¹²⁹ Both *Jumis* and *Yama* have their female counterparts in corresponding traditions. However, the number of wedding parties varies both in Latvian traditions (one, two, or several Sons of God and one or several Daughters of Sun) as well as in comparison to other Indo-European groups, e.g. three and one in Celtic, or thirty and thirty in Hittite, traditions.

mythopoetic views in light of ‘Latvju dainas’ (on the 150th anniversary of Kr. Barons’ birthday)”, 1986) Toporov emphasised the role of Latvian mythological folklore in reconstructing the thunder god’s opponent in proto-myth, a chthonic character related to linguistic form **Vel-*¹³⁰. In folklore materials, partially due to more recent Christian influences, it is often *Velns* (Devil). Particular to Latvian mythology is the relation of this stem to a female character, *Veļu māte* (Mother of the Dead), while *Velns*, and the thunder god’s normal antagonists in other traditions, are male figures. Even though the Mother of the Dead might seem to belong to mythology other than IE (cf. Gimbutas 1963), the author suggests that both male and female *Vel-* characters represent two different storylines of the same proto-myth: the character of *Velns* is related to the fight with the thunder god, while *Veļu māte* denotes the realm of punishment where the opponent of the thunder god is imprisoned after the fight, respectively, the realm of the dead (Топоров 1986: 51). Regarding the tendency of IE dualism, *Veļu māte* in this plot might also be the female counterpart of *Velns*, acquiring this name from the cult of mythological Mothers particularly characteristic to Latvian mythology. Importantly, she can be related to Mother Earth, in her turn, a female counterpart of Father of Heaven (*Dievs*, God). As the thunder god is the transformation of this supreme deity, Toporov arrives at the conclusion that the Latvian *Veļu māte* is a unique source for the reconstruction of the name of thunder god’s wife in Indo-European proto-myth – **Vela* (Топоров 1986: 52). Her main characteristic is her relationship to death, her main attribute are the keys of the underworld. Symbolism of death also extends to the motif of water, often accompanying the Mother of the dead and the realm of the dead (for example, in some folksongs *Veļu māte* dwells in the sea). This relationship resembles the release of water at the end of the plot of proto-myth, thus showing a double binding of the **Vel-* figures to the symbolism of water.

Ivanov and Toporov also provided a unique systematisation of Baltic (here including Latvian) mythology in seven levels, according to the function of the mythological being or character, level of anthropomorphisation, and topicality in human life. This highly abstract system was reconstructed on the basis of the mythologies of the Baltic tribes living south and west of the Baltic sea at the turn of first and second millennia AD, next to the Slavs and Baltic Finns (Ivanov and Toporov 1995: 112). Latvian mythology was reconstructed mainly from folklore materials; the authors also mention the important role of folk art (ethnographic items) in the course of the research. The linguistic data, applying the comparative-historical method, allowed them to separate the ancient IE level – the remains of the proto-myth and names of its characters. Overall, the authors analysis is somewhat reductive: “The main traits of Baltic mythology are manifested in the set of basic semantic oppositions, describing temporally-spatial, social, and evaluative characteristics of the world” (ibid.: 114). In this setting, the first level of Baltic mythology unites the higher deities belonging to

¹³⁰ This is a linguistic proto-form.

the Pan-Baltic pantheon and mythological plots. In Latvian mythology these deities are *Dievs*, *Pērkons*, *Dieva dēli*, *Saules meitas*, *Jumis*, *Velns*, and probably also *Zemes māte*, i.e. characters of the proto-myth and Heavenly Wedding¹³¹. Another myth with common characters in all Baltic mythologies is the Heavenly Wedding between members of the Heavenly Family: *Auseklis* (the morning star), sun, moon, stars, *Austra* (morning blaze). The second level consists of deities related to agricultural cycles and particular functions related to seasonal rites. They include the Latvian *Ūsiņš*, mythological Mothers, and to some extent also Christian saints of vernacular religion, and spirits of locations or elements. The third level includes mythological characters with more abstract functions. For example, *Laima* (deity of fate), Death (Lithuanian *Giltinė*), folkloristic characters doubling the deities of proto-myth, like *Saule* (Sun), *Mēness* (Moon), and other astral deities. The fourth level unites characters who start some historical tradition later mythologised. In some manifestation, individualised characters of proto-myth also belong here: *Velns*, *Veļu māte*, *Jumis*, as well as *Lauma*. The fifth level includes spirits and characters of folktales inhabiting forests, waters, fields, etc. To the sixth level belong classes of un-personalised and often un-anthropomorphised spirits. Such are fairies, witches, dwarfs, nightmares, werewolves, different kinds of ghosts, and mythologised snakes. Many Latvian mythological Mothers and *Mājas kungs* – Master of the House, the spirit of each homestead – are related to this level. The seventh level includes man in mythologised hypostasis, first of all as bearer of spirit and participant in ritual. Similarly, priests and seers, different ritual and cult practices, festivities, symbols, ritual items and texts, idols, and sanctuaries are related to this level (Ivanov and Toporov 1995). The necessity of such categorisation, nevertheless, remains unclear.

In summary, Latvian mythology within the works of Moscow-Tartu school of semiotics scholars was conceptualised primarily according to its relation to the IE proto-myth; syntagmatic structural analysis revealed the mythological system as a part of meta-text (the deities are defined primarily as ‘characters’ of mythical text) and diachronic comparative analysis validated this against the gridline of basic semantic oppositions and further developments of constitutive elements of the Indo-European worldview (thus allowing high variability and replacement of particular elements). This was localised in the timeless perspective of the text, unrelated to historical religious practice and religious experience, which are foregrounded in the approach to the subject matter from the perspective of the history of religion.

¹³¹ “In the most ancient reconstructed form of Baltic myth, one of the [divine] Twins was God’s son, another his daughter. But the further development of the plot, avoiding the obvious incestuous quality of this wedding between them, leads to a division of twin-brother into two brothers, accompanied by one sister” (Ivanov and Toporov 1995: 117).

5. Conclusion: The mapping of the post-war period

A period from the end of World War II until the decline of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s brought the division of the research of Latvian mythology into several parallel trajectories. While in interwar period Latvia it was consolidated under the same political circumstances and mainly centred around two research institutions: the University of Latvia and the Archives of Latvian folklore, resulting in variability of mythological reconstructions only along the lines of theoretical trends preferred by scholars, each with his or her own personal background and agenda, the outcome of World War II resulted in a previously unseen variety of totally different approaches to the same subject matter, now differentiated not only by theoretical position but also by juxtaposed political ideologies, themselves containing historical dynamics. With knowledge production institutionalised at the level of the second half of the twentieth century, institutional basis became the dominant factor shaping research according to corresponding state ideologies. Several variations of reconstructions of Latvian mythology and mythological space, produced within this period, tend to contain isolated circles of references; thus, allowing us to speak about the existence of parallel, unconnected research traditions.

First, maintaining both positive and critical continuity with the research done in the interwar period is a discourse on Latvian mythology created by exile scholars who left Latvia at the end of the war. From a certain perspective it might be supposed that the cases of Kārlis Straubergs and Heralds Biezais, as analysed above, reflect different strategies of psychological and intellectual coping with displacement. Reflected in the choice of the research themes, they manifest in two juxtaposed sets of works on Latvian mythology: on death and the netherworld by Straubergs and on celestial deities and Heaven by Biezais. At the same time, Straubergs continued his own research, made during the interwar period, adjusting it to the new setting of knowledge production by emphasising broader parallels to the subject matter in the history of European culture, while Biezais consolidated and revised all prior Latvian mythology research in the light of a comparatively new discipline: the comparative history of religion. Notable is the fact that works of both scholars were published in German and other European languages, thus making the subject matter accessible to a wider circle of scholars. Nevertheless, these academic versions of mythology in the exile environment were contested by a continuing trend of lay writings bearing strong national romanticist connotations.

Relationships with the past were differently maintained in the newly established academia of Soviet Latvia. After centralised reorganisation of the research and teaching institutions, an uncompromising critique of the scholarship of the interwar period served as a tool with which to build new disciplinary identity along with the All-Union invention of a new research object – Soviet folklore. Here scarcity of the works on mythology-related subject matters by scholars was paralleled by active ideological mythmaking and construction of

new collective identity in the public sphere, adopting models developed earlier in the Soviet Russia. The absence of studies on mythological space marks a particular theoretical disposition: the exclusion of religious scholarship from academia, and the conceptualisation of folklore as a narrative of class struggle and manifestation of working people's spirit. Under the aegis of Stalinism, the first decade of Soviet Latvian folkloristics show straightforward dependence of methodology and theoretical approaches on centrally defined ideological positions; this mechanism was also implemented by the censor and vice director of the Folklore Institute Jānis Niedre.

Research into Latvian mythology acquired a new dimension in Western scholarship in the post-war period. Within the globally changing academia it became more often encountered within the comparative studies of Indo-European mythology or Baltic mythology. The former, informed by Saussurean linguistics, recovered from being discredited by Arian discourse, which, derived from earlier large-scale comparative projects, was enthusiastically exploited by ideologists and scholars of interwar Germany. Since the end of the war it was to a large extent tuned by Dumézil's discovery of tripartite Indo-European ideology. Particularly interesting is the version of Latvian mythology as a part of Baltic mythology conceptualised by Maria Gimbutas. In this regard, the analysis of two temporarily and geographically distant editions of the same book demonstrated the changes of knowledge production shaping the subject matter on two different levels: as determined by introduction of new theoretical trends and development of the discipline, and as determined by political contexts influencing editorial practices.

Comparative research on Indo-European mythology, including its Baltic and Latvian parts, was articulated in a particular form by the scholars of the Moscow-Tartu school of semiotics. Here, mainly in works of the leading researchers Ivanov and Toporov, folklore and linguistic data relating to Latvian mythology was integrated into reconstructive research on Indo-European proto-myth, in a way creating a timeless perspective of textual study. In this way a unique version of the systematisation of Baltic mythology according to seven levels was produced. This direction of research, developed in the 1970s and 1980s, continues today bearing a high level of credibility despite its origins in a now-defunct totalitarian state. Comparison of this trajectory with that of Soviet Latvia highlights the hierarchical relationship of the centre and the periphery in disciplinary history.

CONCLUSION

Writing of any history is an action of selection and interpretation, possible only from a certain distance: therefore there is no history of today, while yesterday already becomes an object of history writing. This is also the reason why this thesis defines its subject matter temporally bounded to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, covering the most recent developments only in the form of overview. When writing a disciplinary history, distance allows us to separate trends and define key personalities related to the establishment and maintenance of these trends or patterns, whether they would be theory-related, marking a particular style of reasoning, or constituting a legitimising rhetoric. Similarly, writing about the past is always writing for the present and future. From this point of view, this thesis is intended to explore the determination of scholarly practices, showing how the object of research was historically constructed and embedded in broader intellectual, institutional, and textual contexts.

The realms of mythology

Often overlapping, interest in mythology-related subject matters and research on mythology are separated by the institutionalised nature of the latter, as well as the presence of particular means of creating the scholarly authority within the academic context. Both modes of investigation serve various agendas and supplement each other. Narratives on mythology have special epistemic status due to their composite sources, blurring of disciplinary boundaries in construction of the research subject, and involvement in political and, recently, lifestyle agendas. This makes mythology a highly contested realm of lay and expert knowledge. With no direct and systematic evidence regarding the hierarchy of ancient Latvian gods, mythical topography, economics of divine patronage and other categories of scholarly reconstructions, the latter are completely based on the indirect textual representations of lay knowledge.

The earliest historical documents were of secondary derivation, shaped by agendas of other people rather than the subjects of mythology – crusaders, Christian clergy, or travellers – interpreting the beliefs of local inhabitants. More recent records represent the contesting Enlightenment and Romanticism ideas, while the late nineteenth century folklore collections were shaped by particular editorial practices favoured by patriotically inclined enthusiasts on the eve of national awakening. Consequently, the source material for Latvian mythology research is a partial representation of lost beliefs and ritual practices. Since the emergence of institutionalised research into Latvian mythology these sources have been applied selectively to the construction of expert knowledge, depending on disciplinary affiliations or personal careers, current theoretical trends or ideological agendas. The most prominent principle appears to be the changing interpretation of the theory of folklore genres, which delineated the preference for particular folklore materials in reconstructive practices. Data of

historical reconstructions or comparative mythological research were often verified against the statements of comparative philology, another powerful actor in the construction of Latvian mythology as a field of expert knowledge.

However, these scholarly constructions have been contested by popular opinion, negotiated within different agendas, and applied in a selective way. First of all, expert knowledge has been indirectly and directly utilized in identity discourses from national identity to the construction of contemporary marketing and sub-cultural images; it also plays an important role in neo-pagan religious movements serving for purposes of reinventing ritual practices. This impact of established expert knowledge is evident in the practice of festivities as well as in fine arts. On the other hand, this recent lay interpretation of scholarly knowledge contests the latter on grounds other than the oppositional intellectual trajectories in academia. Lay perception in this field relates to expert knowledge in the same way as vernacular religion relates to official church doctrine. It is a juxtaposition of the on-going construction of public opinion based on different, often acronychal sources of archival knowledge and reconstructions created by scholars of past and present.

Timeline

The scholarly construction of Latvian mythology as a self-contained realm of knowledge was shaped in the early twentieth century, further evolving and changing in different political contexts and in response to prevailing ideological agendas. Still, the historical records which served as secondary sources for this construction, dates back to ancient Rome, growing in number in the Middle Ages, when descriptions of heathen religion became a part of mapping the borders of the Christian world and, consequently, advocating the necessity of expansion. Several publications from the seventeenth century already feature catalogues of Latvian deities, extended by each subsequent author until the introduction of the primary source of mythology research, namely folklore collections, in the nineteenth century. The same nineteenth century is also characterized by the widespread ideological movement of cultural nationalism, acquiring its particular expressions in each country but united by common interest in language and history, as well as by other similarities in culture building processes. In this mode, Latvian mythology simultaneously became a discovery for intellectuals interested in the ethnographic and historical definition of emerging Latvian nation, as well as a source of creative inspirations for writers and poets. Needless to say, these two groups often shared the same personnel; thus, the discovery and invention of mythology were inseparable. The last decades of the century faced more socio-political articulation of the national movement; consequently, interest in mythology was no longer among the main arguments proving the nation's ancient history and rights to exist. Simultaneously with the developments of comparative mythology in other parts of Europe, Latvian mythology became an object of more academic interest,

taking shape according to one or other current theory. At the same time, increasing collections of folklore material allowed the introduction of new modes of scholarly authority, based on the newly created methodologies of research and interpretation of folklore materials. Fragmentary, interested only in particular deities or phenomena, scholarly discourse on Latvian mythology formed until World War I. Establishment of the independent nation-state in 1918 coincided with the publication of the first comprehensive monograph on the subject matter, describing Latvian mythology as a system.

The interwar period was the time of the institutionalisation of the discipline by establishment of the national research and education institutions and formation of local academia, resulting in comparatively large number of publications touching the subject matter from various perspectives. This period also brought the first discussions and publications on Latvian mythological space, a constituent of the Ancient Latvian worldview. International by circle of references and national by construction of research object, the scholarly interest in Latvian mythology at this time shows a strong correlation with national identity discourse and politics; often also featuring politically active scholars (among them two government Ministers of Education). Despite the ideological similarities, the period is characterised by the diversity of theories applied to Latvian source material. The latter was interpreted in light of totemism (Švābe) and animism (Bruņenieks), from the points of view of the phenomenology of religion (Adamovičs, Rumba, and Maldonis) and a hard to define mix of cultural history and comparative mythology (Straubergs). Šmits laid the foundations of the new disciplinary identity by uncompromising critique of all previous mythographies, especially those inspired by national romanticism, as well as by defining the role of comparative linguistic analysis for the research on Latvian together with Lithuanian mythology. Models of mythological space, proposed by scholars of this time, appear to be dependent on preferences of folklore genres by each author writing on the subject matter. Generally speaking, the research into mythology occupied the space in academia between folkloristics and the history of religion, with representatives of the both sides interpreting the same sources according to their research agendas.

Research into Latvian mythology took several parallel trajectories after World War II: first, in the Latvian exile community the idea of a national research object was shaped by new institutional and intellectual contexts, as well as being influenced by researchers' personal responses to the exile situation, echoing in continuities and breaks with the previous research. Thus, the chthonic realms of Latvian mythology were integrated into the pan-European comparative framework (Straubergs), while the celestial spheres were analysed in the light of the history of religion (Biezais); at the same time, on margins of the academic discourse, the construction of Latvian mythology and mythological space continued in the mode of national romanticism (Polis), once again stressing the role of mythology in the conceptualisation of national uniqueness. Apart from this, research into Latvian mythology showed a

tendency of integration into the broader subject matter of Baltic mythology (e.g. Gimbutas and Vēlius). The scholarship took rather the opposite direction within the research and education institutions in post-war Latvia, i.e. in the LSSR. In line with the new political regime's antipathy towards religious ideas, as well as according to new institutional setting, studies of mythology were exclusively subordinated to the field of folkloristics. The latter, in its turn, was defined roughly as the oral literature of the working class and its predecessors. At the same time, contemporary Soviet ideology-laden folklore was positioned as the central object of collection and analysis. In this setting, the mythology-related research was possible only as an exception, resulting in a couple of articles and a few fragmentary notes. However, this clearly shows the new regime of truth and specific Soviet modes of legitimisation of knowledge: the construction of a new disciplinary identity by means of political critique, the establishment of a single correct interpretation, and a specific, hierarchic quotation culture. Slight changes to the political regime after the death of Stalin, as well as the complex interplay between the centre and the periphery in Soviet academia allowed the emergence of the so-called Moscow-Tartu School of semiotics. With one of its major branches developing towards semiotic and structural studies of culture, the school also embraced studies of Latvian mythology within the circle of its interests. However, the subject matter here was utilised as source material for broader-scale comparative reconstructions rather than explored for its own sake. Here Latvian mythology added significantly to the reconstruction of Proto-Indo-European culture (Gamkrelidze and Ivanov) and clarification of some motifs of Indo-European proto-myth (Ivanov and Toporov), also being conceptualised from both Baltic and Baltic-Balkan perspectives. The most recent cluster of knowledge production involving the subject matter might be located in the late 1980s and 1990s, characterised by the merger of all previous research traditions; again, the disciplinary identity underwent the process of re-positioning. On the one hand, on-going research continued, and due to censorship the unavailable works from the interwar period and the exile researchers were discovered and celebrated, on the other hand, the new national idea demanded the revision and critique of previously written works, as well as the new market economy and system of education and research demanding the reshaping of publication and research practices. In sum, the density of similar factors allows us to separate several clusters of Latvian mythography along a timeline that is characterised by on-going disciplinary identity construction, based on the dialectics of continuity and critique of the past. Ironically, here the Eliadean idea of ethereal return, characterising the nature of myths, might also be applied to the study of mythology.

Northern parallels

If the knowledge production process shapes the object of knowledge, not vice versa, then because the conditions of this process are similar, the outcomes too

must be similar. Latvian mythology, as stated by almost any researcher of the subject, has the same, relatively recent origins as Lithuanian mythology; multiple similarities point towards a common Baltic mythology, part of the lived experience before the separation of Prussian, Latvian and Lithuanian tribes. Such similarities and common origins are promising for object-focused research. At the same time, Latvia and Estonia had similar or closely parallel historical processes for several hundred years, as well as similar social structures, a common historical Baltic-German elite, etc. Indeed, as is shown in comparative Appendix III of this thesis, the similar conditions and socio-political contexts of knowledge production also generated a significant volume of similarities in the scholarly practices and their relation to the dynamics of power. At the same time, objects of inquiry – Latvian and Estonian mythologies – had always remained different by content and distance under the researchers' gaze. Therefore, the additional comparative study of knowledge production highlights the importance of the process-focused instead of object-focused approach to writing the disciplinary history.

Recognition of the local peasants' languages, beliefs, and customs in both countries was inspired by the same Enlightenment and Romanticism related ideas, manifested in the works of Herder and Merkel. Similarly, the interest in such phenomena and legitimization of it as culture was introduced by members of a local, non-native-speaking (mostly Baltic-German) elite; this played a rather similar role in articulation of the national idea to that played by the Swedish-speaking elite in the Great Duchy of Finland (cf. Anttonen 2005). The abolition of serfdom contributed to the emergence of a new, upwardly mobile, native-speaking middle class and intelligentsia, showing similar patterns of networking and organisation in learned societies and publication ventures. The universities of Dorpat (Tartu), St. Petersburg, and Moscow became intellectual centres for both Latvians and Estonians. Distribution of identical calls for the collection of folklore introduced this form of activity as a tool for mobilising the masses towards the formation of national consciousness. Until World War I, a significant amount of folklore material was collected and published in both countries, paralleled by the emergence of national literature merging the realms of creativity, folklore, and mythology in canonical national epics. Institutionalisation of the humanities took rather similar turns during the interwar period, leading to rather similar research patterns and regimes of truth related to the political and academic configuration of both newly established nation-states. Conducted from the common centre – Moscow – reorganisation of research and education institutions resulted in mirror images of Latvian and Estonian folkloristics, articulated according to the ideology of Marxism-Leninism. At the same time, Latvian and Estonian scholars in exile communities in Sweden continued their endeavours (for example, Loorits and Straubergs) or started new, comprehensive projects of mythology studies under the light of the history of religion (like Paulson and Biezais). In general, Finnish scholarship, due to the origins and construction of the discipline according to the similarities and

differences of languages discovered by comparative linguistics, always had played a rather similar role in research into Estonian mythology as had Lithuanian scholarship regarding Latvian mythology. In respect of the dynamics of knowledge production, research conceptualising Baltic mythology with its integral part of Latvian material might be paralleled with the research conceptualising the Finno-Ugric worldview. At a more general level of comparison, two parallel fields of scholarship concerning the subject matter in views of corresponding nations are the Indo-European studies on the Latvian side and the Uralic or North-Europe-Asian studies on the Estonian side.

Reflexivity

Histories of disciplines allow us to recognize that knowledge is made, not found, and that knowledge, once made, is put to use beyond the small community of knowledge-making specialists. In any field addressing ‘culture’ this means, of necessity, that versions of a field’s knowledge themselves become part of culture, filtered through individual or group interests, in turn to become part of disciplinary investigation (Beck, Giddens and Lash 1994: vi–vii¹³²). This process may be inherent to all inquiry, but it is defining for disciplines that address culture. Cultural knowledge-making contributes to the instability and transformative of that which is studied

(Bendix 1997: 220).

Reflexivity in studies of culture means recognition of the vicious circle that runs through the realms of epistemology, psychology, politics, and history. There are no facts, no matter how vague or unrecognised, without theory behind them; there is no theory without the academic apparatus of knowledge production and legitimation; there is no academia without society and its culture. As this determination goes in both directions – from particular details to systems and back – neither inductive, nor deductive methods are sufficient to explain the whole process. Recognition of the vicious circle in knowledge production also questions the position of the author; the classical “death of the author” is not an option anymore, especially in the sciences, where construction of scholarly authority is part of discursive rules. The author might be dead as a romantic genius, as the god-like creator *ex nihil*. At the same time, the agency of author represents the reflexive link between embeddedness in cultural and scholarly contexts on the one hand, and creation of these contexts on the other hand. Or, “Behind the discourse on what constitutes the disciplinary subject reside relationships between the self and the subject, the self and the profession, and the self with the self” (Bendix 1997: 219). Paraphrasing the famous proposition of Aristotle, the author is by nature a political animal. Since politics is a power

¹³² Beck, Ulrich; Giddens, Anthony and Lash, Scott (1994) *Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

play, power dictates knowledge, and knowledge feeds power. As demonstrated in this thesis by analysis of the scholarly production of different periods and regimes, this appears to be a universal principle of the field: research into Latvian mythology emerged and evolved alongside nationalism, intertwining with it, changing the modality of this relationship through time, but never leaving it. Moreover, folklore studies contributed similarity to the politics of nationhood as well as to the totalitarian vision of a liberated working class. Nevertheless, the knowledge-power linkage is by no means simple. Individual actors and multiple agencies are bounded in multidimensional and multi-hierarchical dynamic networks where microcirculation of power occurs: the relationship between fellow researchers might be as significant as the relationship between the government ministry and local academia. Each of the involved parties is somewhat related to the other; the only real possibility for finding causality in these relationships is mapping the density and the most significant junctions in the network. Similarly, knowledge is not a substance; even the most complete bibliography or library containing absolutely every text on the subject matter will represent only a representation of knowledge and some level of intertextuality. The locus of the meaning remains in the contexts. Once written and published, texts gain their importance by reading; the questions of who reads and how they interpret these texts are as important as the questions of who authors them and how the author's voice is constructed. Consequently, research into the disciplinary history is an on-going process of selection, interpretation, reconstruction of contexts, and negotiation of various dilemmas: fragmentary and multidimensional living experience requires a distance to be observed, but the distance always comes with the sacrifice of details for the sake of generalisation. Another dilemma is created by the dialectics of familiarity and alienation understanding temporally (as well as geographically) distant milieus, especially working in their shadow. An insider's view on the discipline is privileged by access to particular discourses and keys of interpretation that define this view as insiders. At the same time, the shadow of the discipline in which the researcher belongs might hide relationships and details which only an outsider might find. However, I believe this research concerning the disciplinary history of Latvian mythology benefits from my double position: being an insider in Latvian academia and writing this history within an Estonian university. With an honest and maximally rigorous approach to the 'partial truth' of history as it touches on the developments and dynamics of scholarship concerning Latvian mythology, this thesis welcomes exploration of all other approaches that have been and will be elaborated under the principles of reflexive studies of ethnography and disciplinary histories.

SUMMARY IN ESTONIAN

Läti mütoloogia distsiplinaarne ajalugu

Väitekiri käsitleb teadmisloome protsessi mütoloogia uurimise valdkonnas folkloristika, ajaloo ning religiooniuuringute piirialal. Väitekirja autor defineerib refleksiivse historiograafia metodoloogia, mis lähtub postmodernistlikust ning poststrukturealistlikust diskursusest, lingvistilisest antropoloogiast, kriitilisest kultuuriuuringutest ja teaduse sotsioloogiast, ning rakendab seda. Analüüsis keskendutakse institutsionaalsele teadusteadmiste loomele, uurides põhjuste ja tagajärgede vastastikuseid suhteid tekstides ja praktikates, mis puudutavad geograafiliselt ning lingvistiliselt konstrueeritud uurimisobjekti – läti mütoloogiat.

Uurimisaines ja meetod

Mütoloogia uurimine on distsipliin, mille piirid on äärmiselt hägused. Kuigi neis on sageli kattuvusi, eristab mütoloogia uurimist huvist mütoloogiaga seotud teemavaldkondade vastu esimese institutsionaliseerunud olemus ning konkreetsete vahendite olemasolu sellele teadusliku autoriteedi andmiseks akadeemilises kontekstis. Mõlemal uurimisviisil on mitmesugused eesmärgid ning nad täiendavad teineteist. Mütoloogiat puudutavatel narratiividel on episteemiline eristaatus tänu nende liitallikatele, distsiplinaarsete piiride hägustumisele uurimisainese konstrueerimisel ning kaasatusele poliitilistesse ja viimasel ajal ka elustiiliga seotud eesmärkidesse. See muudab mütoloogia nii erialakaugete kui ka ekspertteadmiste tuntavalt poleemiliseks valdkonnaks. Et vanade läti jumalate, müütilise topograafia, jumaliku patronaazi ökonoomika ning teiste teaduslike rekonstruktsioonide kategooriate kohta puuduvad otsesed ja süstemaatilised tõendid, põhinevad need kategooriad täielikult mitteerialaste teadmiste kaudsetel tekstuaalsetel representatsioonidel. Et minu uurimistöö tegeleb läti mütoloogia teadusliku produtseerimisega, valdin müüdi ja mütoloogia valmisdefiniitsioone, mis võivad uurimisainest kitsendada formaalsetest kriteeriumidest lähtuvalt, ent kasutan selle asemel genealoogilist mudelit: järgin enese defineeritud uurimisobjekti nii, nagu see on teaduslikus diskursuses kinnistunud. Eelkõige on minu uurimuse lähtekohaks teosed, mille on kirjutanud akadeemilised uurijad ning mille pealkirjaks on “Läti mütoloogia” või mis otsesõnu määratlevad, et käsitlevad läti mütoloogiat. Ajaliselt on käesoleva dissertatsiooni vaadeldav aines piiritletud 19. ja 20. sajandiga, uuemat arengut käsitletakse üksnes ülevaatlukult.

Nende variatsioonide kaardistamine, mida seesama defineeritud aines teeb erinevate uurijate töödes, võimaldab täielikult kaardistada distsiplinaarset ajalugu, vältides ühtlasi formaalset (olemasolevast definiitsioonist tulenevat) või institutsioonilist (üht konkreetset distsipliini eelistavat) kallutatust. Niisugune käsitus on valitud, et koondada tähelepanu uurimisainese akadeemilisele

konstrueeritusele, avastades selle taha jäävaid algatusi ning kontekste, mis annavad kuju igale konkreetsele vormile.. Oletatavate läti müütide ning eriti müütiliste olendite, nagu jumalad ja jumalused, rekonstrueerimise, kirjeldamise ja seletamisega on tegelnud erineva tausta ning huvidega õpetlased. Kriteeriumid, mis moodustavad mütoloogia, erinevad teadmisvaldkonniti ning olenevad sellest, kes nendega tegelevad. Seega uurin ma sel teemal ühtsuse taotlemise asemel uurijate erinevusi, kes on valinud ning tõlgendanud materjali vernakulaarsest kultuurist ja vanadest käsikirjadest, et konstrueerida oma uurimisobjekti, ning seeläbi mõjutanud arvamusi allikate kohta. Seesuguse mitmekesisusega silmitsi seistes ei ürita käesolev uurimus pakkuda täielikku ülevaadet ega üksikasjaliselt uurida kõike läti mütoloogia kohta kirjutatud. Pigem on mu eesmärgiks ühendada ja kõrvutada ühelt poolt sel teemal kirjutatud kõige mõjukamaid töid ja teisalt visandada selle valdkonna mitmekesisus, ühendades radikaalselt erinevate käsitluste analüüse. Seega on lõpptulemuseks ideede virtuaalne kaart, millel on mitmeid, üle aegade ulatuvaid keskmeid ja perifeeriaid. Erilist tähelepanu pälviv mütoloogiline ruum. Niisuguse valiku tegemisel lähemaks vaatluseks on mitu põhjust: (1) võrreldavus arvukate uurimuste olemasolu tõttu; (2) interdistsiplinaarsus tänu käsitlusele uurimustes, mille perspektiivid erinevad; (3) rekonstruktiivne sensitiivsus, mis näitab selgelt valitud allikmaterjalide olulisust; (4) struktureaalne sõltumatus: ruum kui tühi mõiste ei ole tingimata seotud panteoni ega teiste mütoloogiliste elementidega; (5) interkonnektiivsus: mütoloogilise ruumi mõistmine osana konkreetsest maailmavaatest, mis ühendab nn. kõrgeid religioosseid valdkondi argise kultuspraktikaga; sel taustal eksisteerivad ühiselt praegune ning tulevane elu, seal elavad võrdselt inimesed, vaimud ja jumalad, see on pärgament, millele müüdi kujul on kirjutatud elav kogemus. Nii kirjeldan mitut mütoloogilise ruumi mudelit, analüüsimeks neid kujundanud kontekste.

Et mu uurimismeetod tuleneb uurimisainese tekstuaalsest loomusest ning ülalkirjeldatud geneoloogilisest defineerimisest, võib selle lühidalt kokku võtta omamoodi diskursiivse analüüsina. Keskendudes läti mütograafiatele, on tegu neile esmastele tekstidele konteksti moodustavate, tekste nende loomise asjaoludes kontekstualiseerivate ja neid ühendavaid intertekstuaalseid seoseid esiplaanile toovate avarduvate tekstiringide edasi-tagasi lugemisega. Esmane tekstikorpuse koosneb monograafiatest, folkloorikogumike sissejuhatustest, ajakirja- ja ajaleheartiklitest ning entsüklopeediakannetest, mis puudutavad läti mütoloogiat. Teisene ehk kontekstuaalne korpuse koosneb memuaarkirjandusest, biograafiatest ja autobiograafiatest, arhiivimaterjalidest, teemaga seonduvast ajalookirjutusest, populaarsetest ja harivatest artiklitest ning muust esmaseid tekste puudutavast, nende autoritest ning institutsioonilisest taustast, millel need tekstid valmisid. Niisuguse lugemise tulemused paigutatakse üldise ühiskondlik-poliitilise ja akadeemilise ajaloo konteksti.

Minu uurimistöö praegune esitusviis on allutatud selle eesmärkidele: demonstreerida, kuidas on konstrueeritud konkreetne uurimisobjekt, kuidas see saavutab või kaotab oma teadusliku legitiimsuse, kuidas selle variatsioonid on

seotud loojate teoreetiliste, sotsiaalsete, institutsiooniliste ja poliitiliste positsioonidega eri ajaperioodidel ning erinevates uurimistraditsioonides. Sidudes eristavate hoiakutena tõlgendatavate tööde või diskursuste ruumi nende tootjate positsiooni ruumiga, läheneb käesoleva väitekirja meetod konstruksionistlikust lähtekohast läbiviidud teadmislomesotsioloogiale. Ent täpsem katustermin, mis ühendab teooriad, elulood, institutsioonilise ja poliitilise ajaloo ühtseks tervikuks, on refleksiivne kultuurikriitika. Sellisena võtab see akadeemiliste objektide olemuse suhtes konstruksionistliku kriitilise hoiaku, austab representatsioonile ja tekstuaalsusele pööratavat tähelepanu, mida jagab hulk 20. sajandi lõpu kultuuriuuringutest, etnoloogiast ja antropoloogiast tulenevaid teooriaid, ning peegeldab refleksiivsust kui üht akadeemilise produktsiooni mõistmise keskset terminit. Minu uurimuses osutab refleksiivsus eelkõige teadmise ja võimu suhtele: kuidas suhestuvad akadeemilised projektid ja eesmärgid, millest lähtuvalt neid defineeriti. Seetõttu liigub töö ülesehitus üldisest kontekstist autorite biograafiateni, nende müüdiuuringutega seotuse analüüsimiselt mütoloogilise ruumi konkreetsete kirjeldusteni ning jälle tagasi üldkonteksti juurde, näidates nende tasandite vastastikmõjusid.

Sisu

Väitekirja 1. peatükis vaadeldakse esiteks mütoloogiauuringute üldajalugu ning folkloori kui selle peamist allikat; teiseks analüüsitakse valdkonnale iseloomuliku võimu ja teadmisingluse modaalsust, keskendudes rahvuslusele kui peamisele ideoloogiale selle taga; kolmandaks kirjeldatakse väitekirja teoreetilist raamistust, alates selle taustaks olevatest filosoofilistest ideedest ja teoreetilistest arengujoontest kuni refleksiivse distsiplinaarse ajaloo formuleerimiseni. Ajalooline ülevaade rõhutab folkloristika ja võrdleva mütoloogia rajamisel keskset osa mänginud Johann Gottfried von Herderi ning vendade Grimmide mõjukat pärandit, mis oma teadusliku autoriteediga kujundas diskursust Teisest nii ajalisest kui ka klassi seisukohast, sidudes keele, vernakulaarse kultuuri ning rahvusliku vaimu idee poliitiliselt laetud tervikuks, mis viis nii üldrahvaliku huvi tärkamiseni selle valdkonna vastu kui ka teadusliku uurimistöö mitmekesiste suundadeni. Nende tööde analüüs, mis osutab akadeemiliste püüdluste ja poliitiliste ideoloogiate, eriti rahvusluse, nagu seda ühes alapeatükis iseloomustatakse, vahelistele suhetele, lähtub suuresti postmodernistlikust ja poststrukturealistlikust filosoofiast. Et see moodustab ka minu teoreetilise käsitluse tausta, tehakse kokkuvõtte Foucault' ja Lyotard'i kui selle mõttevoolu kõige mõjukamate esindajate ideedest; need aitavad meil mõista humanitaar- ja sotsiaalteaduste konkreetsemaid arengujooni, mis viisid distsipliini nn. representatsioonikriisini 1980ndatel aastatel. Seda kriisi, nii nõuet üle vaadata varasem uurimistöö kui ka antropoloogia, folkloristika ja sugulasdistsipliinide uurimise ainese uue käsitluse leidmise vajalikkust vaadeldakse eraldi alapeatükis, mis aitab iseloomustada teoreetilist keskkonda, millest refleksiivne käsitlus võrsus. Et viimases seisnebki käesoleva dissertatsiooni metodoloogia, moodustavad

refleksiivsuse mõiste, arusaam uurimisobjekti sotsiaalsest konstrueeritusest ning mitmed analüüsitehnikad omaette alaosa. Peatüki lõpetab meetodi ning väitekirja teistele osadele aluseks olevate konkreetsete järjestikuste analüüsi-sammude kontseptualiseerimine.

2. peatükk seab ainesele ajalised, rahvuslikud, institutsioonilised ja diskur-siivsed piirid ning rõhutab ka selle sisedünaamikat ja kokkuvõttena pakub välja läti mütoloogia teadusliku uurimise periodiseeringu, alates romantilise rahvus-luse esilekerkimisest kuni iseseisvuse taastamiseni 1990ndatel aastatel ning järgnenud arenguni. Kõigepealt sisaldab peatükk läti mütoloogia rekonstrueeri-misel kasutatud allikate – ajalooliste ürikute, folkloorimaterjali ning lingvisti-liste andmete – kronoloogilist ja analüütilist kirjeldust, kaardistades nende kättesaadavust erinevatel akadeemilise huvi perioodidel ning iseloomustades lühidalt allikate olemust: kogumise ja toimetamise põhimõtteid, avaldamisaega ning nende olemusega seonduvaid probleeme. Lingvistiliste andmete puhul esi-tatakse kaks juhtumianalüüsi, et illustreerida võrdleva keeleteaduse ja selle ajaloo rolli ainese uurimisel. Edasine analüüs vaatleb läti mütoloogia teadusliku uurimise alustamist ja dünaamikat: selle päritolu sidumist kultuurilise rahvus-lusega 19. sajandil, piiride tõmbamist sama ainese rahvalike ning ekspertver-sioonide vahele, teadusliku uurimistöö varajase arengu kirjeldamist ning see-järel edasiliikumist institutsionaliseerimisprotsessi ning sellega seotud algatuste juurde. Teadusliku uurimistöö rahvuslikku iseloomu kõrvutatakse rahvusvahe-liste suhetega, mida üksiktoimijad sellel väljal on loonud ning mis on seotud vaadeldava ajavahemiku üldise intellektuaalse ajaloo-ga. Uurimisvaldkonna piiritlemise järel analüüsitakse teadustegevust, lähtudes sisedünaamika laadidest ning üldisest ajaloolis-poliitilisest kontekstist; selle tulemusena eristub mitu dis-kursiivset klastrit, mida iseloomustab erinevus üksteisest ning sisemine sidusus. Täpsemalt on need (1) mütoloogia kontseptualiseerimine Läti Nõukogude Sotsialistlikus Vabariigis; (2) läti pagulaskogukonda kuuluvate teadlaste samal ajal kirjutatud tööd; (3) läti mütoloogia balti mütoloogia osana; (4) selle koht ja modaalsus Tartu-Moskva semiootikakoolkonnas; (5) kõigi teiste uurimistradi-tioonide liitmine ning revideerimine Nõukogude Liidu murenemise ja lagu-nemise järel, mis andis tulemuseks praeguse olukorra. Peatüki järelduste osas tehakse arengust kokkuvõtte ning pakutakse välja läti mütoloogia uurimise periodiseering vastavalt peamistele teguritele ning ajaloolisele kontekstile, mis on neid uuringuid mõjutanud.

3. peatükk on pühendatud läti mütoloogia uurimise kõige viljakamale ajajär-gule, sõdadevahelisele perioodile, mis kestis ligikaudu 1918–1944. Siia lõimi-takse teaduslike biograafiate ning asjakohaste teoste analüüsi varasemad arengujooned, mis on selle aja teaduse jaoks olulised ja mida pole 2. peatükis käsitletud. Kõigepealt tehakse kahekordne kaardistamine, iseloomustades pea-misi mütoloogia käsitusi ning nendega seotud võtmeisikuid, tutvustades uuri-mistöö mitmekesisust, mitmesuguste uurijatevaheliste dialoogide olemust ning

nii varasemaid uuringuid kui ka kaasaegseid versioone puudutava kriitika olemust. Kirjeldatakse teoreetilisi hoiakuid sotsioloogilisest käsitlestest religiooni fenomenoloogiani ning nende paiknemist neid esindavate teadlaste elulugudes ning karjääris ning esitatakse see distsiplinaarse ja institutsioonilise arengu üldises kontekstis. Pärast seda ülevaadet analüüsitakse üksikasjaliselt teadmisloome poliitilist mõõdet kahe mõjuka teadlase – Kārlis Straubergsi ja Arveds Švābe näitel, tutvustades täpsemalt elu- ja ajaloolist konteksti, mis mõjutas nende teoreetilisi hoiakuid, ning konkreetset kuju, mille mütoloogiahuvi nende töödes võttis. Ka järgneb kaks juhtumianalüüsi mütoloogilise ruumi kontseptualiseerimisest, kus demonstreeritakse mudeleid, mida on tekitanud kaks erinevat arusaama mütoloogiast, mis tuginevad erinevatele meetoditele ja allikatele. Peatüki kokkuvõttes analüüsitakse folkloorižanride mõistmise mõju kui selle aja teoreetilist kõrghetke, demonstreerides, kuidas allikmaterjali puudutav metateooria mõjutab järgnevat teadustööd suhteliselt eneseküllases teadmisvaldkonnas. Viimaks esitatakse mitu järeldust sõdadevahelise perioodi teooriate tõerežiimi ja dünaamika kohta.

4. peatükk puudutab distsipliini ajalugu pärast II maailmasõda, mida kõige märgatavamalt iseloomustab paralleelsete eneseküllaste uurimistraditsioonide esiletõus, mis suhestuvad varasema arenguga eri viisil. Nii tegeldakse esimeses osas läti mütoloogia uurimisega läti pagulasteadlaste poolt, vaadeldes lähemalt järjepidevust ning katkestusi Kārlis Straubergsi mütoloogiateemalistes kirjutistes ning iseloomustades Haralds Biezaisi kirjutatud kõige mahukamat ja põhjalikumalt läti muinasu uurimust. Taas paigutatakse teadusloome mõlema teadlase eluloo ja selle taustaks olnud institutsioonilise keskkonna konteksti ning pakutakse välja hüpotees pagulaskogukondadele iseloomulikest akadeemilistest ja psühholoogilistest strateegiatest. Samuti vaadeldakse lähemalt teadustöö jätkamise teisenemist ja katkestusi ning dialoogi minevikuga mõlema oma eesmärkide ja käsitletuste poolest märgatavalt erineva autori versioonis mütoloogilisest ruumist. Nõukogude Läti mütoloogiale pühendatud alaosas käsitletakse uue distsiplinaarse identiteedi loomist, arvesse võttes akadeemilise tegevuse struktuuri ümberkorraldamist ja selle tsentraliseerimist, tsensuuri rolli totalitaarses riigis, kriitika- ja tsiteerimiskultuuri teadusliku autoriteedi kehtestamise vahendina, investeerimist marksismi-leninismi õpetusse ning eelkõige radikaalselt teistsuguse tõerežiimi rajamist, iseloomustades teadmiste ringlust ja võimu sellel taustal. Kui algul käsitleb käesolev peatükk peamiselt esimesi sõjajärgseid aastakümneid rahvuslikus paguluses ning Nõukogude teaduses, uurin edasi indoeuroopa võrdleva mütoloogia teoreetilist üldkonteksti ning balti mütoloogia kui selle eriharu uurimist 20. sajandi teisel poolel. Siin esitatakse lisaks küsimusi võrdleva keeleteaduse ja võrdleva mütoloogia kohta, andes samal ajal aimu peamistest arengujoontest kummaski distsipliinis vastaval ajaperioodil. Konkreetse üksikjuhtumi vaatlus on seotud toimetamispraktikaga kahes balti mütoloogiat käsitlevas trükises, mis on loodud arheoloogia perspektiivist ning seotud hiljutise arenguga sugupooleuuringutes ning feministlikus

ideoloogias. Lõpuks sisaldab 4. peatüki viimane alalõik läti mütoloogia kontseptualiseerimise analüüsi Tartu-Moskva semiootikakoolkonda kuuluvate õpetlaste poolt. Selle koolkonna üldeesmärgistikku on iseloomustatud ka 2. peatükis, siin näidatakse konkreetsete teadlaste töid vaadeldes ainese seostamist indoeuroopa protomüüdi rekonstrueerimisega ning balti, sealhulgas läti mütoloogia seitsmeks kihiks liigitamise ainulaadset mudelit. Peatüki kokkuvõttes kaardistan sõjajärgse perioodi paralleelseid teadustrajektoore, seostades poliitilise keskkonna, teadmisloome laadi ning tehtava töö sisu.

Kõigi peatükkide tulemused ja järeldused resümeeritakse väitekirja üldkokkuvõttes, milles on kirjas läti mütoloogia uurimist 20. sajandil enim kujundanud mõjurite kogum ning esitatakse lisaks kokkuvõtlik võrdlus distsipliini dünaamikast Lätis ja Eestis. Sellist võrdlust kasutatakse, rõhutamaks rahvusliku ja akadeemilise identiteedi sarnasusi mõlemas riigis. Siinkohal võimaldab võrdlev-ajalooline analüüs kõrvuti seada loodud teadmist ning loomiskonteksti, sest esimene on olnud seotud peamiselt lingvistilise ja etnogeneetilise diskursusega, mis ühendab Lätit ja Leedut, kuna viimane illustreerib Eesti ja Läti sajandeid kestnud ühise ajaloo olulisust – sel on olnud suur mõju distsipliini ajaloo kujunemisele, kuid see jääb kättesaamatuks, kui lugeda üksnes läti mütoloogia alaseid töid. Kokkuvõttele järgnevad kirjandusloend ning lisad, mis sisaldavad töö põhiosas viidatud materjale.

Ajaline järgnevus

Varaseimaid ajaloolisi dokumente ei kujundanud mütoloogia subjektide, vaid teiste inimeste tegevus – ristirüütlite, kristlike vaimulike või reisijate omad. Hilisemad ürikud esindavad valgustusaja ja romantismi võistlevaid ideid, samas kui 19. sajandi lõpuosa rahvaluulekogumist kujundasid konkreetset toimetamispraktikad, mida soosisid patriootliku hoiakuga entusiastid rahvusliku ärkamise eelõhtul. Seetõttu on läti mütoloogia uuringute allikmaterjali näol tegemist kadunud uskumuste ja rituaalse praktika osalise representatsiooniga. Läti mütoloogia institutsionaliseerunud uurimise tekkest saadik on neid allikaid raketdatud ekspertteadmiste konstrueerimises selektiivselt olenevalt distsiplinaarsest kuuluvusest või isiklikust karjäärast, hetkel valitsevatest teoreetilistest trendidest või ideoloogilistest eesmärkidest. Kõige märgatavam printsiip näib olevat folkloorižanride teooria muutuv tõlgendamine, mis visandas konkreetsete folkloorimaterjalide eelistamise rekonstrueerivas praktikas. Ajalooliste rekonstruktsioonide või võrdlevate mütoloogiauurimuste andmeid tõestati sageli, kõrvutades neid võrdleva filoloogia väidetega, mis oli teine võimas mõjur läti mütoloogia kui ekspertteadmiste valdkonna konstrueerimisel. Juba 17. sajandist pärineb mitu publikatsiooni, mis sisaldavad läti jumaluste nimekirju, mida iga järgnev autor täiendab, kuni mütoloogiauuringute esmase allika, nimelt rahvaluulekogude sissetoomiseni 19. sajandil. Sedasama 19. sajandit iseloomustab ka laialt levinud kultuurilis-rahvuslik ideoloogiline liikumine, mis igas riigis

omandas talle iseloomuliku väljenduskuju, kuid mida ühendas ühishuvi keele ja ajaloo vastu ning teised kultuuri ülesehitamisprotsessis ilmnevad sarnasused. Selles laadis sai läti mütoloogiast üheaegselt avastus tärkava läti rahvuse etnograafilisest ja ajaloolisest defineerimisest huvitatud intellektuaalide jaoks ja ka loomingulise inspiratsiooni allikas kirjanikele ning luuletajatele. Mütoloogia avastamine ja leiutamine olid lahutamatud. Sajandi viimastel aastakümnetel seisti silmitsi rahvusliku liikumise ühiskondlik-poliitilisema väljendusega: see tõttu polnud huvi mütoloogia vastu enam peamiste argumentide seas, mis tõestasid rahvuse iidset ajalugu ning eksisteerimisõigust. Samal ajal mujal Euroopas aset leidnud arenguga võrdleva mütoloogia vallas muutus läti mütoloogia akadeemilisema huvi objektiks, kujunedes vastavalt ühele või teisele päevakorralisele teooriale. Samal ajal võimaldas folkloorimaterjalide kogude kasv kasutusele võtta uusi teadusliku autoriteedi laade, mis tuginesid folkloorimaterjalide vastloodud uurimis- ning tõlgendamismeetoditel. Läti mütoloogia teaduslik konstrueerimine eneseküllase teadmisvaldkonnana kujunes välja 20. sajandi alguses, edasi arenes ja muutus see erinevates poliitilistes kontekstides ning vastusena domineerivatele ideoloogilistele suundumustele.

Sõdadevaheline periood oli distsipliini institutsionaliseerimise aeg rahvuslike uurimis- ja haridusinstituutide loomise ja kohaliku teadlaskonna moodustamise kaudu, mille tulemuseks oli üsna suur publikatsioonide hulk. Teaduslik huvi läti mütoloogia vastu, mis viitamishaardelt oli rahvusvaheline ning objekti konstrueerimise poolest rahvuslik, näitas üles tugevat korrelatsiooni rahvusliku identiteedi diskursuse ja poliitikaga, sageli olid teadlased ka poliitiliselt aktiivsed. Siiski on sellele perioodile, vaatamata ideoloogilistele sarnasustele, iseloomulik Läti allikmaterjalile rakendatavate teooriate mitmekesisus. Materjali tõlgendati totemismi ja animismi valguses, religioonifenomenoloogia ning kultuuriloo ja võrdleva mütoloogia segu vaatepunktidest. Tolleaegsete teadlaste pakutud mütoloogilise ruumi mudelid näivad sõltuvat sellest, mida iga sellest teemavaldkonnast kirjutav autor eelistas. Üldjoontes hõivas mütoloogia uurimine akadeemias folkloristika ning religiooniloo vahelise koha, mõlema poole esindajad tõlgendasid samu allikaid vastavalt oma uurimiseesmärkidele.

Pärast II maailmasõda kulges läti mütoloogia uurimine mitmel paralleelsel trajektoiril: kõigepealt kujundasid läti pagulaskogukonna ideed rahvuslikust uurimisobjektist uue institutsioonilise ja intellektuaalse konteksti ning sellele avaldasid mõju uurijate isiklikud reaktsioonid pagulusele, milles kajastusid järjepidevus eelnenud uurimistööga ning murrangud selles. Nii lõimiti läti mütoloogia ktoonilised valdkonnad pan-Euroopa kõrvutavasse raamistikku, kuid taevaseid sfääre analüüsiti religiooniloo valguses; samal ajal jätkus akadeemilise diskursuse äärealadel läti mütoloogia ja mütoloogilise ruumi konstrueerimine rahvusromantilisest vaimust, taas rõhutades mütoloogia rolli rahvusliku ainulaadsuse kontseptualiseerimisel. Muidu ilmnis läti mütoloogia uurimises tendents lõimuda laiemasse ainesesse – balti mütoloogiasse. Sõjajärgse Läti – Läti NSV – teadus- ja haridusasutustes võttis uurimistöö üpriski vastandliku suuna. Järgides uue poliitilise režiimi vastumeelsust religioossete

ideede vastu ning uue institutsioonilise tausta tõttu allutati mütoloogia uurimine eranditult folkloristika valdkonnale. Viimast omakorda defineeriti ligikaudu töölisklassi ning selle eelkäijate suulise kirjandusena. Samal ajal võeti kollektioneerimisel ja analüüsimisel keskseks objektiks kaasaegne, Nõukogude ideoloogiast laetud folkloor. Niisugusel taustal oli mütoloogiaga seostuv uurimustöö võimalik vaid erandkorras, andes tulemuseks paar artiklit ning mõned fragmentaarsed märkmed. Kuid see näitab selgesti uut tõerežiimi ning spetsiifiliselt nõukogulikke teadmiste legitimeerimise laade: uue distsiplinaarse identiteedi konstrueerimist poliitilise kriitika kaudu, üheainsa õige tõlgenduse sisseviimist, ning spetsiifilist hierarhilist tsiteerimiskultuuri. Kerged muutused poliitilises režiimis pärast Stalini surma ning ka keskuse ja perifeeria kompleksne vastastikmõju Nõukogude akadeemilises elus võimaldasid niinimetatud Tartu-Moskva semiootikakoolkonna esiletõusu. Et koolkonna üks peamisi harusid arenes semiootiliste ja strukturalistlike kultuuriuuringute suunas, hõlmas selle huvide ring ka läti mütoloogia uurimist. Siin lisas läti mütoloogia olulise osa protoindoeuroopa kultuuri rekonstrueerimisele ning indoeuroopa protomüüdi mõnede motiivide selgitamisel, kui seda kontseptualiseeriti nii balti kui ka balti-balkani perspektiivist. Kõige hilisema seda materjali puudutava teadmisloome klatri võib paigutada 1980ndate aastate lõppu ja 1990ndatesse aastatesse ning sellele on iseloomulik kõigi varasemate uurimistraditsioonide segunemine; taas tegi distsiplinaarne identiteet läbi ümberpositsioneerimisprotsessi. Ühest küljest jätkus käimasolev teadustöö ning taasavastati ning tunnustati sõdadevahelisest ajast või pagulasteadlastelt pärinevaid töid, mis olid olnud tsensuuri tõttu kättesaamatud; teisalt nõudis uus rahvuslusidee varem kirjutatud tööde ülevaatamist ja kritiseerimist ning uus turumajandus- ja haridus- ning teadussüsteem nõudsid avaldamis- ja uurimispraktika ümberkujundamist.

Võrdlev lõppsõna

Kui teadmisloomeprotsess kujundab teadmise objekti ja mitte vastupidi ning selle protsessi tingimused on sarnased, peavad sarnased olema ka tulemused. Nagu peaaegu kõik selle ainesega tegelnud teadlased on öelnud, on läti mütoloogial samasugune suhteliselt hiline päritolu kui leedu mütoloogial; arvukad sarnasused osutavad ühtse balti mütoloogia poole, mis oli preisi, läti ja leedu hõimu kogemusliku elu osa enne nende lahknemist. Niisugused sarnasused ja ühine päritolu on paljutõotavad objektikeskse uurimistöö jaoks. Samas on ka Lätil ja Eestil olnud sadade aastate vältel ühesuguseid või tugevasti paralleelseid ajaloolisi protsesse ning ühesuguseid sotsiaalseid struktuure, ühesugune ajalooline baltisaksa eliit jne. Sarnased tingimused ja teadmisloome ühiskondlik-poliitiline kontekst on tekitanud olulisel määral sarnasusi ka teaduspraktikas ning selle suhtes võimuga. Samal ajal on uurimisobjektid – läti ja eesti mütoloogia – jäänud alati sisult erinevaks ning uurija pilgule kaugeks. Seetõttu rõhutab teadmisloome täiendav võrdlev uurimine objektikeskse käsitlemise asemel protsessikeskse käsitlemise tähtsust distsipliini ajaloo kirjutamisel.

ABBREVIATIONS

- ABF – Fund of Anna Bērzkalne at the Academic Library of the University of Latvia (*Annas Bērzkalnes fonds LU Akadēmiskās bibliotēkas Rokrakstu un reto grāmatu nodaļā*)
- Est. – Estonian
- IE – Indo-European
- KHM – *Kinder- und Hausemärchen* (a book by the brothers Grimm)
- Lat. – Latvian
- LFK – *Latviešu folkloras krātuve*, Archives of Latvian Folklore
- Lit. – Lithuanian
- LKV – *Latviešu Konversācijas vārdnīca* – Latvian lexicon
- LSSR – Latvian Soviet Socialistic Republic
- LVVA – *Latvijas Valsts vēstures arhīvs* (Latvian State Historical Archives),
- PIE – Proto-Indo-European
- REP – Routledge Encyclopaedia of Philosophy
- USSR – Union of Soviet Socialistic Republics

APPENDICES

Appendix I

Latvian mythological space by Ludvigs Adamovičs (Adamovičs 1938: 364–366)

1. Heavenly Mountain. Ancient Latvians have imagined the sky in the form of a high mountain, called the Mountain of Pebbles, Silver Mountain or Ice Mountain. The first two designations denote a bespangled sky, while the third derives from an explanatory myth on the formation of snow. The Heavenly Mountain descends into the World Sea. In several folk songs, the mountain has transformed into a table with four corners. On this mountain, or by it, or around it, or otherwise the Sun moves in its daily orbit. Completing it at the foot of Mountain, she (the Sun) starts her nightly return path through the World Sea and the underworld in a silver or gold boat. Changing the mode of movement at the seaside, the Sun swims her horses. In the areas where such a clear notion of the sea in the West is absent, the Sun sets on a lake, the great river Daugava, or in some mythical place where there are nine lakes or where nine rivers meet.

Some songs depict the Sun in unceasing movement, but some tell of her resting in the middle of the day or sleeping at night. Those songs testify to the developing anthropomorphisation that distinguishes the mythological figure of the Sun from her natural basis – the sun.

Furthermore, the ways of the ancient Latvian God (Heavenly Father) on Heavenly Mountain are depicted mainly as driving – across the hill or the reeds, gravel or copper bridge, i.e. rainbow. The most frequently sung about is his trip “down the hill”.

2. Sun Tree. Ancient Latvians were aware of the special Sun tree, which is a particular derivation of the mythical World Tree, a projection of the Milky Way in myths. In the descriptions of this tree, bright precious metals – silver and gold – are not spared. A frequent depiction presents the tree such as a birch with three leafs or forked branches where the Sun, Moon, God, Laima, Auseklis [morning star], or Daughter of the Sun rests or act.¹³³ Moreover, it seems that the setting and rising of Sun is always connected with the same tree.

The mythical place where the Sun Tree grows is “at the side of the Sun’s path” or “at the side of the sea path”. It is at the far West where the Sun’s daily orbit ends – at the seaside, beyond the lake, in Daugava; in other words at the mythical border zone of this world, where the natural horizon is visible and the slope of the Heavenly Mountain approaches the earth. Laying its roots here, the Sun Tree extends all over the sky and appears as the true tree of Heaven.

This is how ancient Latvians have imagined that beyond all lakes and hills at the very edge of the earth or edge of the sea, the borders of this world, Heaven (Heavenly Mountain) and the underworld (“other world”) meet. There the mythical Heavenly Tree grows in whose branches the Sun, Moon and other heavenly bodies each settle at a particular time. There the Sun rose every morning, adorned herself and her daughters as well to shine all over the world.

¹³³ Latvian: Saule, Mēness, Dievs, Laima, Auseklis, Saules meita.

Perhaps in the beginning this Sun Tree was imagined in the shape of a wonderful shining oak (“golden branches, silver leaves”), but later free poetic fantasy lost the real mythical meaning of the Sun Tree and started to imagine other trees like the Sun Oak, imagining them “at the side of Sun’s orbit”. Around this time, the mythical notion of this path also ceased to exist. There only remained the abstract notion of a Sun Tree that could be applied to an oak as well as to a lime or birch, or willow, hazel and sallow, or even a reed. In the end, the oak was placed in the mythical heavenly Daugava, which according to origins is the same Sun Tree, the projection of the Milky Way in the world of myths. But the slender reed remained on the stone or on the island in the middle of the sea, or beyond the sea that [stone] is the landmark of this and the other world, at the very horizon. Some songs suggest that in their imagination inhabitants of particular farms also decorated their sacred oaks (sacrifice oaks) with the elements of the Sun Tree myth. Other songs imagine the Sun as an apple, pea, nut or ball that rolls along the branches of the Sun tree.

3. Three levels of the world. Overall, the ancient Latvian God means the sky: there his dwelling place must be. Folk songs that tell of God sleeping on the earth (under a stone, in a vervain bush) do not seem to be taken seriously in the reconstruction of myths. An idea propagated by Professor Kārlis Straubergs and outlined in the article *World Sea* (Senatne un Māksla 1937, IV) that God, the Sun and Moon dwell in the underworld does not seem well founded. Ancient Latvians do not separate this and the opposite world, instead [they separate] three levels of the world: Heaven, earth and underworld, which meet in the World Sea at the horizon. The path from one level to another leads through the horizon and across the World Sea.

Direct traffic in a vertical direction is also possible. From earth it is possible to get to Heaven by the heavenly stairway: the branches and leaves of a tree, beanstalk or rose. The direct route to the underworld is depicted in folktales: it goes into the earth through a well, spring, deep cave, or hole. These folktales already know and mention the other way – from the underworld one can get onto the earth across the World Sea and through the horizon. They know also of travels to the sky, there and back. Sometimes special stairs are used, but a direct path to Heaven is also familiar via smoke or a broom, with return by a rope fastened to a cloud. But folktales also relate that it is possible to go to Heaven across the big sea, i.e. through the horizon. There is a crossroads where three roads meet or separate: to Heaven, earth and the underworld.

In their basic elements, those views of ancient Latvians concur with general notions of the world-view and the world tree as they are depicted by W. Wundt – *Völkerpsychologie II Bd. Mythos und Religion, Dritter Teil* (1909) but Latvians have their features; nice poetical depictions stand out especially.

Appendix II

The course on methodology of Soviet folkloristics within the programme of Latvian folkloristics in State University of Latvia in academic year 1949/50 (Ozols 1968: 194–195)

1. Term of folklore and folkloristics (1h)

Folklore – ‘people’s art’ – as one of the ideological formations by working people. Folklore as an oral poetry. The folklore of workers, peasants and other social groups. Children’s folklore. Regional folklore. Other forms of people’s art (music, choreography, applied art, and other art). Folkloristics as a Soviet science and critique of bourgeois folkloristics.

2. The class-related, party-related, and people-related character of folklore (3h)

Folk/people as creators of all values of material and spiritual culture. Changes of the notion ‘folk’ in particular socio-economic stages. Doctrine of Marxism-Leninism on the folk art and character of the folk art. Pre-Soviet folklore as expression of the longing and endeavours of the exploited working people. Soviet folklore – folklore of the nations free from exploiters. Folklore as a reflection and explanation of real life in particular socio-economic environment. National character of the folklore. Bourgeois theories of ‘nation’s spirit’ and critique of the cosmopolitan conception.

3. Folklore as a historical category (3h)

Folklore as a folk poetry that consistently accompanies people in their history from the most distant past until today. The problem of the periodisation of folklore. The principles of Soviet periodisation. Bourgeois unhistorical understanding of folklore and its critique.

4. Specifics of folklore compared with literature (3h)

Particularity of the conceptual and artistic foundation of folklore. Complexity and diversity of the folk art. Tradition, improvisation and creativity in formation of folklore. Relations of the individual and collective in formation of folklore. Question of author and performer in folklore. (...). Mass dissemination of the folklore materials. Soviet methods of collection of folklore and critique of bourgeois methods.

5. Interaction of folklore and literature in relation to the history of nation (2h)

Folklorisation of revolutionary and democratic compositions of Russians, Latvians and other nations. Genres of folklore and problem of classification of folklore materials.

Appendix III

Some Latvian Estonian parallels

The purpose of this appendix is based on two ideas – the conflicting meaning of the term ‘Baltic’, mentioned multiple times in the thesis, and determination of knowledge-production practices by historically rooted socio-political conditions. It is intended to demonstrate some parallels, similarities and points of intersection between Latvian and Estonian folkloristics and the research of corresponding mythologies. My point of departure is the differences in historical, geographical, and linguistic definitions of the term ‘Baltic’. Briefly repeating what has been previously stated, the term ‘Baltic states’ refers to the interwar and current republics of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia; the term ‘Baltic languages’ refers to the branch of Indo-European languages, including the languages and dialects of Latvian and Lithuanian, but excluding Estonian. Usually based on the latter, coming from comparative linguistics understanding, the term ‘Baltic mythology’ refers to a common Latvian and Lithuanian ancient religion, reconstructed foremost from folklore materials. At the same time, the correlation of nation-building processes and interest in folklore, the latter gradually developing in institutionalised scholarly practices, constitutes the close relation of Latvian and Estonian disciplinary histories of folklore and mythology research on political, institutional, and personal levels. In other words, the Latvian and Lithuanian historical and socio-political differences, crucial for the formation of corresponding ethnic nationalisms in the nineteenth century, had resulted in differences in the instrumentalisation of folklore and formation of disciplinary histories. First of all, during the period of nation building, Lithuania had an important symbolical resource the two other emerging Baltic countries lacked – the glorious pasts of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (13th–16th century) and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (until 1795). Secondly, although in the nineteenth century the territories of all three contemporary republics constituted parts of the Russian Empire, the social-ethnic structures and administrative politics differed considerably.

Poland-Lithuania was dominated by a Polish-speaking elite and represented the Catholic region of the Russian Empire. Russian replaced Polish as administrative, literary, and educational language after the failed rebellion against Romanov rule in 1830–1831. Vilnius University was closed until 1919 and most of the nobility went into exile. After the next failed rebellion in 1863, the printing of books in Polish and Lithuanian was forbidden. Consequently, there was neither an indigenous Lithuanian press, nor schools necessary for the emergence of a Lithuanian-speaking middle-class (cf. Baltic States, history of 2010; Bolin Hort 2003).

The situation in Lutheran, Baltic-German dominated provinces was slightly different. First of all, until the establishment of corresponding independent countries, the territory was united in administrative terms. Moreover, the same aristocratic families were split between all three Baltic provinces – Estland in the north, Courland in the south, and Livland, which included parts of contemporary northern Latvia and southern Estonia, including Yuryev, or Dorpat, contemporary Tartu, as the closest intellectual centre with a university for Latvians. On the one hand, this prevented the development of a ‘privileged’ relationship between the elite and one or other group of so called “Un-Germans” (Ó Giolláin, 2000: 78); on the other hand, it resulted in a never-accomplished Baltic-German nation building project, envisaging the creation of *einer ganz deutschen Heimat* and full-scale Germanisation of the peasantry (Bolin Hort

2003: 34). This possibly separatist idea rouse suspicion of the Imperial administration and resistance against contesting Estonian and Latvian nationalist projects, the latter taking advantage of Russophile rhetorics to gain political capital against the elite. In general, society, within which the interest in folklore and mythology emerged, was so similar, that the terms 'Estonian' and 'Latvian' can easily replace each other in written history:

In the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Estonian language was mainly spoken by rural people of the countryside. The landlords, who formed the noble elite of the society and represented high culture, spoke Baltic German. The population was thus divided by a clear social and ethnic borderline, which was difficult to cross from either side. The nobility and the Estonian folk were nonetheless not completely isolated from each other. They belonged to the same Lutheran church and had daily contact on the manors. The first peasant schools had been founded in the late seventeenth century, and by the early nineteenth century, literacy was widespread

(Valk 2009: 153).

A similar class structure and the impact of Enlightenment ideas in the nineteenth century also resulted in the establishment of similar scientific cum pro-ethnic Baltic German organisations: *Gelehrte Estnische Gesellschaft* (*Õpetatud Eesti Selts*, est. 1838) in Estonia and *Lettisch-Literarische Gesellschaft* (*Latviešu literārā biedrība*, referred to also as *Latviešu draugu biedrība*, est. 1824), both with the purpose of studying the corresponding people's history, archaeology, ethnography, language, folklore, and kindred subjects. Societies consisted of both Baltic Germans and upwardly mobile Latvians and Estonians; in addition to the social activities and publication of the research done by their members, the organisations to some extent cooperated with and supported later established independent ethnic societies. The very beginnings of scholarly interest in collecting and publishing folklore and folksongs in particular was inspired in both countries by the same source: Johann Gottfried Herder's edition of *Volkslieder* (*Stimmen der Völker in Liedern*, 1778–1779). The idyllic vision of the Baltic German enlightener Garlieb Merkel served as an inspirational source for the creation of poetic ethnic histories of both countries, linking the emerging national aspirations with the imagined golden age of ancient independence that existed before the German conquest in the thirteenth century (cf. Valk 2009).

While Lithuanians had no national epic, the main text uniting the fictional and mythological realms with the national romanticist agenda was composed in Estonia by Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald (*Kalevipoeg*, original version composed in 1853, published for the first time 1857–1861) and in Latvia by Andrejs Pumpurs (*Lāčplēsis*, composed in Tartu 1888). While the author of *Kalevipoeg* was informed by Finnish epic in the form of Lönnrot's *Kalevala* (1835), Pumpurs positioned his work against both Finnish and Estonian Non-Arian predecessors¹³⁴ in *Lāčplēsis* (Taterka 2010). Notwithstanding this, the last lines of both epics are the same, telling of the hero's return in the future. Kreutzwald, the author of *Kalevipoeg*, also presented the first appeals to Estonian readers to collect folklore, publishing *Üks küsimine* (An Appeal) in 1843 and 1861 (Jaago 2005a: 28–9). Similar appeals, for the first time addressing the ethnic majority, were published in Latvia: in 1858 by Georg Buttner (1815–1883) and in 1862 by August Bielenstein (cf. Ambainis 1989). Systematic collection of folklore,

¹³⁴ Referring to Jordan 1876.

acquiring the shape of a mass movement by the involvement of multiple informants and various publicist activities, started in both countries in the second half of the nineteenth century. Here Lerhis-Puškaitis' folktales and Krišjānis Barons' folksong collections in Latvia are paralleled with the grand-scale project *Monumenta Estoniae Antiquae* by pastor Dr. Jakob Hurt (1839–1907), from 1872 president of the influential Society of Estonian Literati (*Eesti Kirjameeste Selts*, est. 1872). Like Barons, Hurt also both coordinated collecting and edited the materials gathered. However, publication of *Monumenta*, with folklore texts arranged originally according to geographical division in parishes, started in 1875 and continues today. The total amount collected by Hurt is more than one hundred and twenty thousand pages. Interestingly, both the greatest folklore collectors worked for a long time in other parts of the Russian Empire, Hurt in St. Petersburg and Barons in Moscow (cf. Jaago 2005b: 45), which is characteristic of the transnational building of cultural nationalism (cf. Leerssen 2006).

Located in the old province of Livland, the University of Tartu has definitely played one of the central roles in the research into Latvian mythology starting from the early Latvian intelligentsia studying there and finishing with research done within the Moscow-Tartu school of semiotics¹³⁵. The University of Latvia was established in Riga only after Latvia gained independence in 1919. During the following years of independent, separated academic circles, formal contacts between Latvian and Estonian scholars were formed in conferences and seminars. Organising the research according to the Finnish example, folklore archives were established in both countries in the 1920s. Not only parallel but close contacts between both institutions were established by Anna Bērzkalne and Oskar Loorits, both students of the eminent promoter of Finnish school of folkloristics Walter Anderson (1885–1962), who occupied the chair of folklore at the University of Tartu (Treija 2008, 2009). Concerning the special role of comparative linguistics in the formation of the discipline, a Latvian Finno-Ugric minority, the Livs, has always been a research object of special interest for Estonian scholars, who often devote much more effort than their Latvian colleagues (cf. Rämmer 2006; Šuvcāne 2003). However, apart from this question, positioning of the scholarly activities pro or contra the common ruling ideologies shows symmetrical similarities within all periods of research outlined in the thesis as well as rather similar preferences of theoretical approach. For example, regarding the early disciplinary developments, the comparison of life stories and activities demonstrates multiple similarities between Pēteris Šmits (1869–1938) and Matthias Johann Eisen (1857–1934): both worked for decades outside their homeland in the Russian Empire, still actively publishing on folklore related issues already at the end of nineteenth century, and both became professors at Universities in their newly established countries. Eisen was a pastor by vocation, while Šmits was a scholar; still, both of them were first to write and publish the first systematic study of mythology of the corresponding nations (cf. Kuutma 2005), in addition to leaving a rich heritage as folklore collectors and publishers. Similarly, the interwar period saw both

¹³⁵ Among the graduates of Tartu University are such notable scholars as the already mentioned Neo-Latvians Juris Alunāns and Krišjānis Barons, Professor Jēkabs Lautenbahs-Jūsniņš, scholar and leader of the pro-Latvian Baltic German movement August Bielenstein, researchers of religion Ludvigs Adamovičs and Voldemārs Maldonis, historian and archaeologist Francis Balodis, researcher of folksongs Ludis Bērziņš, linguists Jānis Endzelīns and Kārlis Mīlenbahs, who to a large extent created modern Latvian language and grammar, head of the Archives of Latvian Folklore Anna Bērzkalne, as well as Andrievs Niedra, Janīna Kursīte, and other members of the intellectual elite (cf. Stradiņš 2003).

studies of particular themes and preparation for fundamental editions of folklore materials in the newly founded archives, published at the end of the period, like Kārlis Straubergs' *Latvian folk beliefs* (1944) or even later on, Loorits' *Grundzüge des estnischen Volksglaubens* (1949–1957). Very active involvement in the fields of social and cultural politics, the international scale of interaction, leading positions in research institutions, suspension of practice during the German occupation and exile to Sweden in 1944 are common facts of the life histories not only of Straubergs and Loorits, but also several other leading Latvian and Estonian folklorists.

The general and disciplinary histories of both countries were also shared also after World War II: the Soviet occupation brought re-organisation of research and teaching institutions, while the range of interpretations was decreased to a single correct version – that of Marxism-Leninism –, knowledge production was strictly controlled by political instances, and many celebrated scholars had suffered during the war or repressions, or went into exile. Consequently, the research into folklore developed parallel – in Soviet and exile – settings for both countries. A comparison with research into Estonian mythology in the corresponding period is provided to highlight the centralisation of institutional dynamics in the Soviet Union as well as subordination of the 'national' research object to more general developments of the discipline, as characterised below by parallels between the equally influential fields of Indo-European and Finno-Ugric studies. The year 1944 saw the exile of the head of the Estonian Folklore Archives Oskar Loorits. Fate brought him together with his Latvian colleague, head of the corresponding institution, and also a controversial scholar, Kārlis Straubergs in Sweden. Both continued working in archival institutions, Loorits in Uppsala Dialect and Folklore Archives (Västrik 2005: 2004). By both continuing their previous research, their publications show close parallels regarding the exploration of chthonic phenomena, death, and the underworld. Thus, the more comparative perspective of Straubergs, developed in a book (1949) and series of articles (1956, 1957, 1962), illustrates the same dimension that is analysed by Loorits in light of cultural history in his monumental work *Grundzüge des estnischen Volksglaubens I–III (The Main Features of Estonian Folk Beliefs, 1949, 1951 and 1957)* and *Eesti Rahvausundi Maailmavaade (The World of Estonian Folk Religion, 2nd rev. edn., Stockholm 1948)*.

While more general description of ancient Latvian religion according to the methods of phenomenology of religion and comparative-historical studies was developed in several books by another exile scholar Haralds Biezais, the most significant works on corresponding Estonian subject matter belong to Ivar Paulson (1922–1966). His studies in Tartu were interrupted by World War II; Paulson then went to exile and finished them at the University of Hamburg, receiving the *Dr. Phil.* degree in 1946 with a dissertation in ethnology. After emigration to Sweden, Paulson, similarly to Biezais, received a Doctor of Philosophy degree in the field of the history and psychology of religion at the University of Stockholm in 1958. Just a year later he was appointed to the position of lecturer (docent) of the history of religion at Stockholm University, where he remained until his death. Paulson's *Vana eesti rahvausk (The Old Estonian Folk Religion: Stockholm, 1966; reworked version in English: Bloomington, post mortem, 1971)* is a cross-section of Estonian folk religion against the background of the general history of religion. Due to lack of comprehensive written sources from the more distant past, Paulson like Biezais based his work on folklore materials, adjusting the religious-historical method and, to a large extent, also avoiding linguistic analyses "since these are quite unreliable and vague, and require a more competent philological and linguistic study" (Paulson 1971: 208), but taking into account the archaeological

data. As Biezais positions his work against the previous research and introduces “the new and complete analysis of the subject matter”, Paulson similarly comes with a brand new approach and evaluates previous research regarding the subject matter:

Such an ecological point of view is new in the treatment of Estonian folk religion; in the past this subject has been treated in terms of cultural history, an approach which dominates Loorits’ works, for example. The latter have been a valuable source of materials for the present work because they are on the whole based on data and information available only from the archives in Estonia, a source to which the author of the present survey has had no access

(Paulson 1971: 8, cf. also 208).

Paulson’s ecological approach corresponds to the international trend of ecology of tradition, a specific research methodology for the comparison of popular traditions, later developed by Finnish scholar Lauri Honko during the 1970s and 1980s (Anttonen V. Online, 2007). Moreover, the Finnish scholarship, due to the origins and construction of the discipline according to the similarities and differences of languages discovered by comparative linguistics, plays a rather similar role in research into Estonian mythology as Lithuanian studies do regarding the Latvian. In respect of the dynamics of knowledge production, research conceptualising Baltic mythology with its integral element of Latvian material might be paralleled with the research conceptualising the Finno-Ugric worldview. The latter, however, is attributed to temporally and geographically more distant people than the neighbouring Latvians, Lithuanians, and Prussians. On a more general level of comparison, two parallel fields of research concerning the subject matter in the views of corresponding nations are Indo-European scholarship on the Latvian side and Uralic or North-Europe-Asian studies on the Estonian side¹³⁶.

At the same time, the Soviet era brought simultaneous re-organisation of the research and teaching institutions in both Soviet Estonia and Soviet Latvia. According to the general plans of centralisation and institutional domination of literature studies, folklore research and archival centres were renamed and incorporated in other institutions. Thus, the Estonian Folklore Archives became a department within the Fr. R. Kreutzwald Literary Museum while folklore studies at the University of Tartu were incorporated into the literature program. Overall, the changes in both countries followed the standardised Soviet system of higher education. In 1945, the Institute of Folklore was established at the Faculty of Philology of State University of Latvia, also including the former Archives of Latvian Folklore. The institute in 1946 was incorporated into the newly established Academy of Sciences of the LSSR. Six years later it became the Institute of Ethnography and Folklore, but after five more years the folkloristics section was subjected to other organisation, the *Zinātņu Akadēmijas A. Upīša Valodas un literatūras institūts* (the Academy of Sciences Institute of Language and literature of Andrejs Upītis) (Ambainis 1989: 91). In 1947 the Estonian Language and Literature Institute was founded as part of the Soviet Estonian Academy of Sciences in Tallinn, mirroring the same process in Latvia and other Soviet republics. Consequently, the Department of Folklore at this institution became the third folklore research centre in

¹³⁶ These contexts have also been illustrated by other publications by Paulson, for example: *Die Religionen der finnischen Völker*, in I. Paulson, Å. Hultkrantz, and K. Jettmar (eds), *Die Religionen Nordeasiens und der amerikanischen Arktis* (1962), and *Die primitiven Seelenvorstellungen der nordeurasischen Völker* (1958).

Estonia (Valk 2007: 288). Institutions in both countries actively conducted fieldwork, documenting the remains of “previous forms of consciousness” as well as the new lore of the working people, the new research object called Soviet folklore. With folklore treated as mainly oral poetry and a historical prelude to written literature, textual studies of archival materials and subsequent publications remained the dominant form of scholarship in both countries. Scholars who were not arrested or did not go into exile maintained relative continuity in the field of folkloristics in both countries; for example, former students of Walter Anderson (he had left for Germany) Anna Bērzkalne in Latvia and Eduard Laugaste (1909–1994, Professor of folkloristics at The University of Tartu 1974–1991) in Estonia (cf. Valk 2007: 288). At the Estonian Language and Literature Institute outstanding scholar Ülo Tedre spent nearly all of his working years, a member of its folklore section ever since 1949, first as a student assistant and later as a researcher. During the period of 1962–1990, in total for almost 30 years, he was head of the Folklore section of the Institute; afterwards working as a senior researcher in the department of folkloristics. Similarly to Arturs Ozols in Latvia, Estonian scholar Ülo Tedre was remarkably versatile as a folklorist; both of them also participated in preparation of the most recent academic edition of folksongs (cf. Saukas 2003; Leete et al. 2008). Interestingly, while Latvian folkloristics is a discipline still influenced by the Moscow-Tartu school of semiotics, the latter’s mythopoetic studies did not acquire much interest from Estonian folklorists. As an exception only the works of Aino Laagus (1944–2004) might be mentioned: in the early 1970s Laagus worked out situation analysis and applied a structural-semiotic approach to several themes¹³⁷ of Estonian folklore (Jaago 2009).

¹³⁷ The situation analysis was applied both to folklore and recent oral history texts. Other works of this author also deal with mythological subject matters, e.g. *Eksimise motiiv eesti mütoloogias* (*The motive of going astray in Estonian mythology*, 1976) and *Ühest vanast kihistusest eesti metshaldjauskumustes* (*On an old substratum of Estonian forest-spirit folk beliefs*, 1976), or *Eesti metshaldjas* (*The Estonian forest spirit*, 1976), and *Eesti metshaldjatekstide struktuur ja semantika* (*The structure and semantics of texts on the Estonian forest spirit*, 1990).

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