**Keywords 10/12/10**

**Väinämöinen**: Väinämöinen is the protagonist in the *Kalevala*, figuring in poems 1-10, 16-21, 25, 35-50. Väinämöinen is repeatedly referred to as old, wise, as a knower, and as a singer. The name Väinämöinen comes from the word *väinä*, which means a broad, slowly flowing river or strait (the –möinen ending designates 'of' or 'kind'). There are many theories about who Väinämöinen is or was: that he was an ancient singer or bard; the son of the giant Kaleva; the God of water (allusion to the root word in his name); the son of an ancient prince, who was deified after his death; a special shaman living on the shore of the Väinä River (Finnish name for a River originating in Russia and emptying into the Baltic at Riga (*Daugava* in Latvian)); a shaman among arctic fishing peoples; an ancient Viking hero. These various theories include four main views, that Väinämöinen was an ancient god, a cultural hero, a shaman, or a sea hero.

**Gender**: The cultural construction of sexual difference. In contrast to the definition of biological difference (sex), gender refers to the cultural roles, attitudes, expectation, and practice we associate with men and women. Notions of gender are powerful and often defining in the way people think about themselves and others, at the same time as they are malleable and vary by culture and over time. In the *Kalevala*, gender is in the foregound in the Aino cycle and also in the wedding cycles. It also figures prominently in distinguishing between Kaleva and North Farm. In many ways, North Farm is the cultural Other to Kaleva, and things are depicted as different and foreign there, as a means of defining the good and the normal in Kaleva. Most prominently, it is a woman portrayed as a witch who is the patroness of North Farm, while Väinämöinen appears to be the leader of Kaleva. At the same time, figures such as Aino are filled out as 'rounded' sympathetic figures, who suffer because of the patriarchal system under which they live. Paying attention to gender in Kalevala helps deepen our understanding of many conflicts in the novel.