

ÓÐINN'S SELF-SACRIFICE—A NEW INTERPRETATION

II: The Ritual Landscape

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The Ritual Landscape

THE next step¹²³ in this presentation of a new interpretation of the rite reported in *Hávamdl* 138ff. is an investigation of the 'ritual landscape'—the mythical/topographic surroundings in which Óðinn's self-sacrifice was thought to have occurred. Our text itself is hardly expansive on this subject. It affords us with only one bit of explicit data: Óðinn hangs on an unnamed tree, *er mangi veit, hvers hann af rótom renn*.¹²⁴ Despite its superficially cryptic quality, this allusion is quite sufficient—to us, just as it must have been to the audience for whom it was written. The tree in question is not named because that was not necessary; the one fact cited placed the self-sacrifice clearly at the center of a ritual landscape familiar to the hearer. From earliest childhood on, he must have been bombarded constantly with descriptions of the entirety and of the individual details of this extremely significant mythical locality to an extent that an actual naming of the tree would have seemed disappointingly prosaic. If we are to attempt to understand Óðinn's self-sacrifice as the *Hávamdl*'s intended audience did, we must first become as familiar with its topography as a member of that audience must have been.

The central difficulty in establishing a clear picture of that ritual landscape is inherent in the nature of the tradition. As we must assume that the rite described in the *Hávamdl* was familiar to the intended audience, we must understand that the text was not intended to provide

¹²³ The first half of the present article, "Óðinn's Self-Sacrifice—A New Interpretation. I: The Ritual Inversion," appeared in *Scandinavian Studies* 43 (1971), pp. 119 to 142. Abbreviated titles, editions cited, etc., are carried over into this part.

¹²⁴ *Háv.* 138/8–9. The attribute *vindga* (*Háv.* 138/2) or, for that matter, *vinga*, leads nowhere, as there is no other topographically fixable mythological tree reported to be of that description.

a clear, concise first source of information—but rather, a poetic presentation based on well-known ‘mythical fact’. The artistic effectiveness of such a text must depend to a large extent on replacing pedestrian directness with literary fancy. The discovery that one and the same person, place or thing is referred to under many different names should not be surprising. If our text were skaldic verse, we would accept such polyonymy simply as the poet’s method of satisfying the strict metric demands of his chosen form. But the relatively unrestricted eddic strophe is far less demanding; such an explanation can not be the only one. The massive complex of *heiti* and *kenning* structures which we are about to discuss must be the result, on the one hand, of a desire to replace *tabu* lexemes with *noa* correspondencies and, on the other, of a feeling of the need for elevated and esoteric language when dealing with the religious *tremendum*.¹²⁵

The religious decoding of the relevant textual corpus therefore depends largely on establishing the identities obscured by polyonymy. Since the ritual landscape under discussion is one of the most complex present in primitive Germanic Religion, a complete coverage of every detail would go far beyond the limitations of this article. Fortunately, it is possible to concentrate our attention on a handful of significant items only, without detracting either from the strength or from the validity of the argument.

a. *The Tree*

According to the *Hávamál*, Óðinn hangs on a tree, the roots of which are ‘unknown’. The same feature is ascribed to another tree, *Mímameiðr*, known to us only from the *Fjölsvinnsmál*.¹²⁶ Since the name *Mímameiðr* is a *hapax-legomenon*, the identity of this tree with the one on which Óðinn hangs would be a *cul-de-sac*—if it were not for the fact that the *Fjölsvinnsmál* offer us a further clue. The line: *er breiðaz um lǫnd ǫll limar*¹²⁷ reminds us of Snorri’s description of the tree *Yggdrasill* both in content and choice of words: *limar hans dreifask um heim allan*.¹²⁸ It is logical that only one tree be thought of as extending out over the

¹²⁵ See Heiler, *Religion*, pp. 266ff.

¹²⁶ *Fjm.* 20, 24; cited according to Boer, *Edda*.

¹²⁷ *Fjm.* 19/8–9.

¹²⁸ *Snorra-Edda*, pp. 22.

entire universe—so it appears that *Yggdrasill*, *Mímameiðr* and the tree of Óðinn's self sacrifice are identical. This supposition is further supported by a highly likely identity of the two 'watch-cocks': *Viðófnir*¹²⁰ and *Gullinkambi*.¹³⁰ A superficial objection to the identity of these three trees might be based on the consideration that we do know a great deal about *Yggdrasill*'s roots: their three-fold division, where they 'run', even who is gnawing away at them¹³¹—whereas the roots of the other two trees are characterised as 'unknown'. But as *Yggdrasill*'s roots lie beyond the world of man, the formula may simply mean that no living mortal can know of them from first-hand experience.

Before we can investigate *Yggdrasill* further, we must turn our attention to another tree: *Hoddmimir*.¹³² Our only data on this tree is that the two humans destined to survive the *ragnarøk*, Líf and Lífðrasir, will hide in it during the *finbulvetr*.¹³³ That is to say, in the language of religious symbolism, that after the *ragnarøk* Líf and Lífðrasir will be 'reborn' from the tree *Hoddmimir*. A normal winter lasts three months, but the *finbulvetr* is three times as long¹³⁴—which adds up to the nine months of a normal pregnancy. W. Hunke suggests a similar symbolism behind the *nætr allar nío* of Óðinn's hanging on the tree;¹³⁵ her interpretation of the god's self-sacrifice as a birth (or

¹²⁰ *Fjm.* 23–24, etc.

¹³⁰ *Vsp.* 43. Supporting the identity, see Sijmons/Gering, I/56, I/414; Boer, *Edda*, II/384. The *Völuspá* does not explicitly place *Gullinkambi* perched on *Yggdrasill*. But his cries awaken the *einherjar*, who are quartered in *Valhöll*. As will be demonstrated below, *Yggdrasill* stands in the immediate proximity of *Valhöll*, making the tree as the cock's perch quite plausible.

¹³¹ See *Grm.* 31–35; *Snorra-Edda*, pp. 22, 24; etc.

¹³² In the *Codex regius: Hoddmimir*, with a short *i*; see *Håndskriftet Nr. 2365 4to. gl. kgl. Samling på det store kgl. bibliotek i København (Codex regius af den ældre Edda)* [*Codex regius*], ed. by L. F. A. Wimmer & Finnur Jónsson (= *STUAGNL* I), København 1891, p. 16. The long vowel appears in most of the other manuscripts; see the Neckel/Kuhn *Edda*-edition, p. 53, textual apparatus. As will be demonstrated later, the *Codex regius* is not dependable in the matter of vowel length.

¹³³ *Vm.* 44–45.

¹³⁴ *Snorra-Edda*, p. 70.

¹³⁵ W. Hunke, "Odins Geburt," in: *Edda, Skalden, Saga* (Grenzmer-Festschrift), ed. by H. Schneider, Heidelberg 1952, pp. 68–71, see p. 70. We should also recall the creation of Ask and Embla (*Vsp.* 17; *Snorra-Edda*, p. 16), to which the 'rebirth' of Líf and Lífðrasir provides a parallel.

rebirth) within the complex of an initiation is quite compatible with that of this author. In any event, the functional parallelity of *Hoddmímir* and the tree of the *Hávamál* rite shows these two trees to be identical too.

The 'world ash tree'—*askr*¹³⁶—has two 'given names': *Yggdrasill* and *Læraðr*.¹³⁷ The etymology of the latter is difficult,¹³⁸ but the former is accepted to mean 'Ygg's [Óðinn's] horse'.¹³⁹ As we are familiar with *Sleipnir* in this capacity, *Yggdrasill* is certainly intended to be understood figuratively and only in conjunction with the god's self-sacrifice. There should be little objection to the assertion that Óðinn hangs from the world ash—the 'tree κατ' ἐξοχήν' of primitive Germanic Religion.¹⁴⁰

Our information on the world ash is by no means limited to internal Germanic evidence; the 'cosmic tree' is a religious concept of extremely wide distribution. Comparison of the cosmic tree in the Germania with Indic, Iranian and Greek parallels shows clearly that we are working with a genetically related complex of common Indo-European, if not Proto-Indo-European provenience.¹⁴¹ Recent Germanistic preoccupation with shamanistic religious cultures in Central and North Asia has led to speculation that Germanic/shamanistic parallels, including the mythical cosmology in general and the cosmic tree in particular, are to be explained as the

¹³⁶ That the *ascr* and *Yggdrasill* are identical is witnessed by many juxtapositions, for example: *Vsp.* 19; *Grm.* 31, 32, 34, 35, 44, etc.

¹³⁷ *Grm.* 25–26. The identity of *Læraðr* and *Yggdrasill*, discounting that of their physical position, can be supported by a comparison of *Grm.* 26 and *Vsp.* 19. The identity of *Hvergelmir* and *Urðar brunnr* will be discussed below. Also see *Snorra-Edda*, p. 22, although Snorri's reductions of polyonymy cannot be trusted unless supported by firmer evidence.

¹³⁸ J. de Vries, *Altnordisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* [*Wörterbuch*], Leiden 1962², p. 372; but also see: de Vries, *Religionsgeschichte*, II/385.

¹³⁹ De Vries, *Wörterbuch*, p. 676.

¹⁴⁰ Detter and Heinzel simply take this for granted: Detter/Heinzel, II/139f. Sijmons and Gering stop short of stating an identity, although they make the suggestive comment: "Die schwache form des adj. [*vindga*] ist völlig am platze, da der dichter an einen bestimmten baum denkt: 'an jenem (wohlbekannten) windumtosten baume'; Sijmons/Gering, p. 147. De Vries also is certain that Óðinn hangs from the world ash: *Religionsgeschichte*, II/75, II/381, etc.

¹⁴¹ See de Vries, *Religionsgeschichte*, II/382–392.

result of Germanic borrowings from shamanism.¹⁴² It seems far more likely that such parallelism is due to Germanic preservation of inherited tradition on the one hand, and Central and North Asiatic borrowings from, or via Iran on the other.¹⁴³ A similar dependence on Iranian materials is characteristic also of Judaism, where it entails not only cosmological concepts but also such items as paradise, angels, the war between good and evil, eschatology, etc.¹⁴⁴ It is then not surprising to find these features preserved both in Christianity and Islam, considering their dependence on Judaism as well as the increased contact with the Iranian cultural epicenter made possible by the political developments of the Hellenistic Era.

b. The Cosmos

The overall religious conceptualisation of the cosmos, in which the cosmic tree plays a major role, is of importance to this investigation for two reasons. Firstly, it offers evidence directly comparable to our ritual inversion complex and, secondly, the duplication of the universe in temple architecture allows indirect comparison.

A simplified description of this religious *Urkosmos* will have to suffice.¹⁴⁵ There are three horizontal levels: above the earth curve the heavens like an overturned bowl—below its surface lies the underworld. The heaven is usually thought of as a male deity whereas the earth is female;¹⁴⁶ the underworld is fittingly sexless, although a tendency to feminine gender is present, especially where the underworld is thought of as a mirroring of the world of the living. In the center of the earth's

¹⁴² For categoric opposition to the presence of shamanism as a religious type in primitive Germanic Religion see: J. Fleck, "The 'Knowledge-Criterion' in the *Grímnismál*: The Case against 'Shamanism,'" to appear in: *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 86 (1971).

¹⁴³ See, for example, U. Harva, *Die religiösen Vorstellungen der altaischen Völker* (= *FFC* 125), German translation by E. Kunze, Helsinki 1938, pp. 20–140.

¹⁴⁴ See: Ringgren, *Religion*, pp. 97, 147f., 285, 287f., 294f.

¹⁴⁵ For a more complete presentation, see: de Vries, *Religionsgeschichte*, II/383–392; Harva, *op. cit.*, pp. 20–89, for comparable external material and bibliography.

¹⁴⁶ In Egyptian religion, the roles are exchanged: Nut, the heavens, is female—her mate, Geb, is the earth-god. See: S. Morenz, *Ägyptische Religion*, Stuttgart 1960, pp. 277, 280; E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Gods of the Egyptians*, 2 vols., London 1904 (photo-reprint: New York 1969), II/94–112.

flat surface is a mountain, on top of which the cosmic tree grows. The tree connects the center of the earth with the center of the heavens, usually identified as the North Star because the 'heavens revolve around the tree', which is thought of as a fixed axis. This axis often is believed to continue on down to the center of the underworld, either in the form of the tree's roots or as an inverted mirror image of the tree itself.¹⁴⁷ Where the trunk of the tree meets the surface of the earth there is a fountain or lake, often specifically a 'milk lake',¹⁴⁸ which is dependent on the tree for all or some of its fluid content.¹⁴⁹ This body of liquid is the source of all the rivers which flow down through the world, making it fertile.¹⁵⁰

This cosmological configuration is often reproduced as a microcosm in the architecture of the cosmic temple and/or the lay-out of its surrounding grounds. The tree, or its symbolisation in the form of a pole, tower, spire or other upright, stands in the center of the sacred area. Next to it lies the fountain or pool. The central position may be pre-empted by the temple itself—in this case, the tree is preserved as a central structural feature, such as a supporting column or an altar, or it may be placed on the roof of the temple¹⁵¹ or next to it. In such

¹⁴⁷ The concept of the mirror-image cosmic tree belongs to the typical inversion of the world of the living in the world of the dead. For an example of the inverted tree in ritual use, see: Eliade, *Initiation*, p. 17.

¹⁴⁸ De Vries, *Religionsgeschichte*, I/270; Harva, *op. cit.*, 85–89.

¹⁴⁹ The *ka'bat*, which serves as the geographic center (*qiblat*) of the Moslem world (see: *Qur'ān*, II/143ff.), stands in the middle of the rectangular courtyard of the great mosque at Mekkah. In this ritual landscape the tree is absent; the minarets, seven in this case, are functionless repetitions of the mountain of the landscape (*ziggurat*-representations). The *brunnr* is present in the spring *Zemzem*. See: Burton, *Pilgrimage*, II/294ff (with an architectural floor-plan of the mosque); Heiler, *Religion*, p. 39f.

¹⁵⁰ See: Harva, *op. cit.*, pp. 85ff., and U. Holmberg [Harva], *Der Baum des Lebens*, Helsinki 1922/23, pp. 70ff.

¹⁵¹ The Indian *stupa* and Sino-Japanese *pagoda* represent the mountain *Sumeru* with the cosmic tree growing on its summit. The seven (or nine) rings, which surround the upright of the roof ornament, represent the seven (or nine) heavens which it transverses. See: *Märchen aus Tibet*, ed. and tr. by H. Hoffmann, Düsseldorf/Köln 1965, p. 247; Hideto Kishida, *Japanese Architecture*, Tōkyō 1954, pp. 58f.; W. Willets, *Chinese Art*, 2 vols., Harmondsworth 1958, II/723ff.; L. A. Waddell, *The Buddhism of Tibet*, Cambridge 1958², pp. 262ff.; Holmberg, *op. cit.*, pp. 33–51.

cases, the fountain or lake is preserved as an interior fountain, baptistery, cistern or crypt. This parallelism of the mythical cosmos and the temple microcosm is typical of Indic¹⁵² and Iranian¹⁵³ religion and Judaism,¹⁵⁴ including also their 'religious colonies'. Further discussion below should suffice to show that it was also typical of primitive Germanic Religion.

c. The Fountain or Lake

At the foot of the world ash *Yggdrasill* there is a fountain.¹⁵⁵ If the goat *Heiðrún* is able to eat the branches of *Læraðr* while standing on the roof of *Herjaþörs holl*,¹⁵⁶ then *Yggdrasill* must stand on or next to *Valhöll*. The stag *Eikþyrnir* also eats *Læraðr*'s branches while standing on *Valhöll*'s roof.¹⁵⁷ A liquid drips down from *Eikþyrnir*'s antlers into a body of water below.¹⁵⁸ This fountain or lake, called *Hvergelmir*, is the source of all rivers. We must also recall to mind that *Yggdrasill* is 'moistened' by a white liquid, which, in turn, irrigates the valleys.¹⁵⁹

According to the description of the great temple at Upsala by Adam of Bremen, the temple, tree and fountain stood next to one another.¹⁶⁰ It is true that this famous temple was not placed on a mountain, but, to the contrary, in a valley. Nevertheless, the importance of physical elevation for the Germanic temple in general is successfully documented by A. Thümmel.¹⁶¹

¹⁵² See: J. Gonda, *Die Religionen Indiens [Indien]*, 2 vols., Stuttgart 1960, 1963, I/327f.

¹⁵³ See: G. Widengren, *Iranische Geisteswelt*, Baden-Baden 1961, pp. 29ff.

¹⁵⁴ See: Ringgren, *Religion*, pp. 147ff.

¹⁵⁵ *Vsp.* 19.

¹⁵⁶ *Grm.* 25. The proximity of *Valhöll* and *Urðar brunnr* is further supported by *Háv.* 111.

¹⁵⁷ *Grm.* 26.

¹⁵⁸ *Grm.* 26/4-6:

*enn af hans hornom drýpr í Hvergelmi,
 þaðan eigo vötn öll vega.*

¹⁵⁹ *Vsp.* 19:

*Ásc veit ec standa, heitir Yggdrasill,
 hár baðmr, ausinn hvítaauri;
 þaðan koma döggar, þærs í dala falla,
 stendr æ yfir, grænn, Urðar brunni.*

¹⁶⁰ Adam of Bremen, *ed. cit.*, p. 470.

¹⁶¹ A. Thümmel, "Der germanische Tempel," in: *PBB* 35 (1909), pp. 121ff.

Acceptance of the obvious polyonymy in the case of the world ash begs the question: Was the body of liquid at *Yggdrasill's* foot also known by several different names? In the *Völuspá*, the fountain at the foot of the world ash is called *Urðar brunnr*.¹⁰² *Urð* is well known to us as one of the three norns;¹⁰³ but there is no evidence other than this name to support a particular relationship between this one norn and the fountain. *Urðar brunnr* is best understood as a *pars pro toto*-style *kenning*, meaning 'the fountain of the norns'. It could just as well have been referred to as the fountain of *Skuld* or *Verðandi*—in this case, *Urð* was chosen because, of the three, her name alone fit the alliteration. In any event, the norns must be thought of as possessors of numinous knowledge. Since they perform their mythical function at this body of water, we must watch for a relationship between the *brunnr* and such knowledge in our further evidence.

The *Völuspá* provides us with the name of still another body of water: *Mímis brunnr*.¹⁰⁴ This name recalls the world ash *kenningar*: *Mímameiðr* and *Hoddmímir*, already discussed above. It is clear that we will have to concern ourselves with the mythical figure *Mímr* too. De Vries attempts to distinguish between the three *Mím*-names: "So haben wir nebeneinander und deutlich verschieden: das Haupt von *Mímr*, den Baum von *Mími* und die Quelle von *Mímir*."¹⁰⁵ But de Vries goes on to cite material which places this clear-cut trichotomy in question. As far as the ritual landscape is concerned, the name *Mími* is associated with the tree *Mímameiðr*, the world ash. At the foot of that tree is a body of liquid. The name *Mímir* is associated with a *brunnr*—and in this fountain *Mímr* drinks mead daily out of *Valföðrs veð*.¹⁰⁶ Óðinn's 'pledge' is usually understood to be identical with the god's

¹⁰² *Vsp.* 19/8.

¹⁰³ *Vsp.* 20.

¹⁰⁴ *Vsp.* 28/9–10.

¹⁰⁵ De Vries, *Religionsgeschichte*, I/246; following de Vries' lead, this article also will ignore the smith *Mime* and the sword *Mimming*. For opinions supporting an identity of the *Mím*-names, see: Sveinbjörn Egilsson, *Lexikon Poeticum Antiquæ Linguae Septentrionalis*, 2nd. ed. by Finnur Jónsson, Kopenhagen 1932, p. 408; H. Gering, *Vollständiges Wörterbuch zu den Liedern der Edda* [*Wörterbuch*], Halle (Saale) 1903, column 1324.

¹⁰⁶ *Vsp.* 28/11–13.

missing eye.¹⁰⁷ A holy liquid pours from *Valfǫðrs veð* onto, or into Heimdallr's horn, which lies hidden under the world ash.¹⁰⁸ Unless we are willing to accept the bizarre solution that there are, at the foot of *Yggdrasill*, several different bodies of liquid out of which the rivers of the world flow, we must accept the identity of *Hvergelmir*, *Urðar brunnr* and *Mímis brunnr*. Since *Mímis brunnr* lies at the foot of *Mímameiðr*, it seems far more likely that Mímir and Mími are an identity obscured by a mythologically insignificant nominal class deviation¹⁰⁹ than that they were distinct individuals, placed together in the ritual landscape by coincidence or due to name-attraction.

Whereas the names *Mími* and *Mímir* are known to us only in connection with items present in the landscape, Mímr has a genuine mythological function. His embalmed head is a source of numinous knowledge, to which Óðinn turns for advice.¹⁷⁰ The location of the place where this head is kept is not stated explicitly in our texts. But once the reader is willing to relinquish the non-functional trichotomy of the *Mím*-names, it becomes logical to look for **Mím*-'s head in the neighborhood of his tree and his fountain. Let us recapitulate, using the head as our 'first cause'. Óðinn keeps his advisor in the proximity of *Valhǫll* for obvious reasons. Next to *Valhǫll* are the world ash and the body of liquid at its foot. They may be given the *kenningar* 'Mímr's tree' and 'Mímr's fountain' because 'Mímr's head' carries out its function as a repository and source of numinous knowledge in their immediate neighborhood. The *kenningar* ascribing the *meiðr* and

¹⁰⁷ See: Detter/Heinzel, II/36f.; Sijmons/Gering, I/37; de Vries, *Religionsgeschichte*, II/82; etc.

¹⁰⁸ *Vsp.* 27.

¹⁰⁹ Such nominal class deviation is not unusual; we should recall Óðinn/Óðr, Njǫrðr/Nertus, Ullr/Ullinn, etc.; see: de Vries, *Religionsgeschichte*, II/87f., II/164f. The masculine gender of the recorded *Mím*-names should not be considered mythologically significant. Mímr, etymologically speaking, is the personification of thought or memory; see: de Vries, *Wörterbuch*, p. 587; J. Pokorny, *Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 2 vols., Bern 1948-1969, I/726ff. And, as such, Mímr is sexually genderless—but parallelity with the norns, *vǫlva* and other *Wissende* of the landscape would suggest feminine sex.

¹⁷⁰ *Vsp.* 46; *Ynglinga saga* IV.

brunnr to Mímr are perfectly parallel to *Urðar brunnr*, ascribing the same *brunnr* to Urð for the same reason.¹⁷¹

d. Mímr and Kvasir

Let us now limit our consideration of the ritual landscape in which Óðinn performs his self-sacrifice to three functional 'items':¹⁷²

1. In his self-sacrifice the god hangs on a tree. That tree is the world ash, the cosmic tree, the central axis connecting the heaven and the earth.
2. At the foot of that tree is a body of liquid. This lake or fountain is the source of all rivers, and, thereby, of the earth's fertility.
3. The third item is remarkably protean—as evidenced by its wealth of forms and names. At this point we can only say that, regardless of its external appearance, it is situated in or near the body of liquid at the foot of the cosmic tree and its function is devoted to numinous knowledge.

This third item seems to be the key to much of the significance of the ritual landscape. There can be no doubt that the norms belong to it. So does Mímr's head. As the head drinks mead—in such a context certainly no ordinary drink, but rather the 'poet's mead', a source of knowledge in itself—from *Valþǫðrs veð* daily, that object, be it the god's eye or something else unknown to us, may belong to the third item too. Regardless of whether or not they are identical with Mímr's head and Heimdallr's horn, *Heiddraupnis hauss* and *Hoddrofnis horn*¹⁷³ combine the elements of the fluid and connection with numinous knowledge—in this case, runes. Finally, the three containers which Snorri calls *Óðrærir*, *Són* and *Boðn* must be considered.¹⁷⁴

An important facet of Mímr's role in this complex lies in his

¹⁷¹ This also holds true for the demands of the alliteration:

stendr æ yfir, grænn, Urðar brunni (*Vsp.* 19/7-8)

Mímameiðr hann heitir, en þat mangi veit (*Fjm.* 20/1-2)

í inom mæra Mímis brunni (*Vsp.* 28/9-10)

Snorri's placement of the three identical springs—*Hvergelmir*, *Mímis brunnr* and *Urðar brunnr*—each below one of the roots of *Yggdrasill* (see: *Snorra-Edda*, p. 22) is clearly a secondary attempt to provide symmetry.

¹⁷² Only these three are functional in the rite in question. The fact that *Valhöll*, for example, is present in the landscape, is of no importance here. In fact, the placing of Óðinn's residence at the site of his self-sacrifice is more likely secondary.

¹⁷³ *Sd.* 13.

¹⁷⁴ *Snorra-Edda*, pp. 84f. As Indic evidence to be presented later shows, the

parallelity with Kvasir. The *Ynglinga saga*¹⁷⁶ tells us of the exchange of hostages after the war between the *Æsir* and the *Vanir*; the latter sending Njörðr, Freyr and Kvasir in return for Hœnir and Mímr. Snorri states that the *Vanir* felt that they had been short-changed because Hœnir depended entirely on the wise Mímr for advice. For this reason, the *Vanir* killed Mímr and sent his head back to Óðinn. Here the tradition—or at least Snorri's version of it—seems confused. According to Snorri, neither Njörðr nor Freyr seems to have been particularly endowed with outstanding intellectual powers; this is why the wise Kvasir was sent along with them. Clearly, Mímr was sent along with Hœnir to the same end. In such a reciprocal arrangement no fraud can have been intended or was present. A more logical motivation for the killing of Mímr should be offered, if possible.

According to the *Snorra-Edda*,¹⁷⁶ Kvasir was created out of the combined sputum of the *Æsir* and *Vanir*. The drink of reconciliation brought to fermentation by the addition of the spittle of the concerned parties is an ancient practice.¹⁷⁷ Kvasir is also the personification of another important drink: in order to become the 'poet's mead', he must be killed and his blood drained from his body.¹⁷⁸ Mímr's murder is best understood as a parallel to Kvasir's death. As stressed in the first half of this article, Kvasir's nature is identical with his blood; his mythical functionality is expressed entirely in the two drinks he embodies. Mímr's only genuine mythological function is that of a source of knowledge, firstly, according to the relative chronology of our materials, to Hœnir—later to Óðinn. Mímr's nature is therefore identical with his head: the repository of knowledge and speaker of advice. It is a valid question to ask if Mímr was thought of originally as the possessor of a complete body at all. In any case, the structural parallelity of the figures of Mímr and Kvasir can not be denied.¹⁷⁹

three containers for the mead are not an invention on Snorri's part, but based on inherited tradition; also see: de Vries, *Religionsgeschichte*, II/71f.

¹⁷⁶ *Ynglinga saga*, Chapter IV.

¹⁷⁶ *Snorra-Edda*, p. 82.

¹⁷⁷ See: de Vries, *Religionsgeschichte*, II/67f. and the bibliography listed there.

¹⁷⁸ Note the similarity to the English folklore figure of John Barleycorn; see: J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, 13 vols., London 1955³, V/230.

¹⁷⁹ See: G. Dumézil, *Loki*, German tr. by I. Köck, Darmstadt 1959, pp. 224–

e. The Horn

Still another mythological object must be considered in discussing the third item of the ritual landscape: the *gjallarhorn*. This horn is mentioned twice in the *Snorra-Edda*. Firstly, Mímr drinks from the *gjallarhorn*—that is the source of his wisdom.¹⁸⁰ Directly thereafter, *Völuspá* 28 is cited, in which Mímr drinks from *Valþóðrs veð*. As mentioned above, this 'pledge' is supposed to be the god's eye, which he exchanged for 'inner sight'.¹⁸¹ Doubtless, the inacceptability of drinking out of an eye led to many bizarre attempts to solve the riddle of this passage. One of the more rational theories is based on an identity of Heimdallr's horn and Óðinn's eye.¹⁸² Before investigating this possibility further, let us add the evidence provided by the complex surrounding Snorri's second mention of the horn.

At the beginning of the *ragnarøk*, Snorri tells us, Heimdallr will blow the *gjallarhorn*.¹⁸³ Heimdallr's *hljóð*¹⁸⁴ lies hidden under the world ash tree. It seems very likely that the 'blowing' of the horn is the result of the influence of Christian apocalyptic legend;¹⁸⁵ but that would not explain Heimdallr's original connection with the horn as a drinking utensil. In both strophes of the *Völuspá* in which the horn is mentioned,¹⁸⁶ we are dealing with the cosmic tree, its fountain, the mead, Óðinn's *veð* and Mímr's head. Furthermore, Heimdallr's association with the cosmic tree is so firm,¹⁸⁷ that his presence in the ritual

230. Dumézil offers an explanation of the Hœnir/Mímr correspondency which is very interesting, but perhaps too dependent on psychological interpretation.

¹⁸⁰ *Snorra-Edda*, p. 22.

¹⁸¹ See: de Vries, *Religionsgeschichte*, II/81ff.

¹⁸² For an extreme statement of this position, see: A. Ohlmarks, *Studien zur altgermanischen Religionsgeschichte*, Leipzig 1943, pp. 113–121; A. Ohlmarks, *Heimdalls Horn und Odins Auge*, Lund 1937, *passim*.

¹⁸³ *Vsp.* 51; *Snorra-Edda*, pp. 72f.

¹⁸⁴ In the meaning 'ritual silence' (compare *Vsp.* 1), see: de Vries, *Religionsgeschichte*, II/241.

¹⁸⁵ See: de Vries, *Religionsgeschichte*, II/239, II/398.

¹⁸⁶ *Vsp.* 27, 46.

¹⁸⁷ See: de Vries, *Religionsgeschichte*, II/240f.; de Vries, "Heimdallr, dieu énigmatique," in: *ÉG* 10 (1955), pp. 257–268; F. R. Schröder, *Altgermanische Kulturprobleme*, Berlin/Leipzig 1929, pp. 110–118; F. R. Schröder, "Heimdall" [*Heimdall*], in: *PBB* (Tübingen) 89 (1967), pp. 1–41, *passim*.

landscape would be assured even if he were never mentioned in connection with the *gjallarhorn*. Heimdallr, as we shall see later, is the personification of a particular aspect of the tree. 'Heimdallr's horn' is then simply another parallel to *Mímameiðr* and *Urðar brunnr*; it is Heimdallr's horn because it is to be found where Heimdallr performs his mythologic function.

Völuspá 46, one of the poem's two passages citing the horn, adds a further bit of information concerning Mímr: the mention of *Míms synir*, generally understood to be the sons of Mímr.¹⁸⁸ If, as suggested above, Mímr was thought of as a bodiless head, then any progeny ascribed to him would be hard to explain. It should first be noted that no other text offers us any further information concerning these 'sons of Mímr'. Investigation of the manuscript shows us that that reading is by no means certain; the *Codex regius* actually reads: *mims sýn~*.¹⁸⁹ [see editor's note, p. 413]. The grave accent can not be taken as a proof that the *y* is a short vowel;¹⁹⁰ its use in the *Codex regius* is far from consistent.¹⁹¹ The *y* of the manuscript in the words *sigtyva*, *snýz* and *knýr*,¹⁹² chosen from the immediate neighborhood of *mims sýn~*, is clearly to be read as *y*. The vocalisation of the *r*-abbreviation is equally unsure;¹⁹³ there is no justification (short of the conjecture: *synir*) for limiting the possibilities to *-ir*. The *sýn~* of the manuscript makes far better sense if read as the plural of *sýn* with the meaning: 'Gesicht, Gesehenes, Vision', according to de Vries.¹⁹⁴ *Völuspá* 46/3-4 in the *Codex regius* reads: *at en galla gial/lar horn*; here *galla* will belong to *gala* rather than to *gjalla*.¹⁹⁵ The original drinking horn, which, as a 'member of the third item', is indeed concerned with the transmission of numinous knowledge (*gala*), has been confounded with the loud blast (*gjalla*) of the Christian trumpet of the judgment day. As long

¹⁸⁸ See: Detter/Heinzel, II/61; Sijmons/Gering, I/60.

¹⁸⁹ *Codex regius*, p. 3, line 32.

¹⁹⁰ See: H. Spehr, *Der ursprung der isländischen schrift und ihre weiterbildung bis zur mitte des 13. jahrhunderts*, Halle (Saale) 1929, p. 152.

¹⁹¹ *Codex regius*, p. xlv f.

¹⁹² *Codex regius*; p. 3, line 28; page 4, lines 4-5; p. 4, line 5.

¹⁹³ *Codex regius*, p. xlix f.

¹⁹⁴ See: de Vries, *Wörterbuch*, p. 573; H. Gering, *Wörterbuch*, column 1014.

¹⁹⁵ See: Sijmons/Gering, I/60. According to this reading, no "häßliche tautologie" would be present.

as the horn is understood as a musical instrument, we expect to have someone (e.g., Heimdallr) blow it; but if the drinking horn is concerned purely with the mead-complex, no such additional figure is necessary. If we think of the horn as a container for the 'poet's mead', the knowledge source from which the wise Mímr draws his characteristic wisdom, we can understand that a drink at the outbreak of the *ragnarøk* would set Mímr's senses into motion. Óðinn is then the recipient of this information, as usual, via Mímr's head. Once the 'sons of Mímr' and the Christian trumpet-blast have been removed, *Völuspá* 46 becomes a unified and extremely meaningful strophe.

The Sexual Symbolism of Óðinn's Self-Sacrifice

In the rite reported to us in the *Hávamál*, Óðinn hangs head downward from the cosmic tree. He is wounded by a spear—his blood must drip down—and below him, at the foot of the tree, is a body of liquid. This *brunnr* is, due to its association with the norns, the 'poet's mead', Mímr's head, etc., a locality constantly connected with the transmission of numinous knowledge. It seems only logical that, considering its physical position and association with such knowledge, it is the source from which Óðinn took up the runes. In this *brunnr* are 'housed' entities which we know of as Heimdallr's horn, Mímr's head and *Valþörs veð*, etc. Óðinn's ritual inversion contains not only the standard elements of the initiation, but also incorporates features of a ritual sacrifice. Another such sacrifice was that of Kvasir, whose blood was drained into a container and became the 'poet's mead'. Functionally parallel is the case of Mímr, whose embalmed head lives on as a source of knowledge. Mímr drinks mead (= Kvasir) daily from *Valþörs veð*. This configuration suggests a further parallelity: Óðinn's 'pledge' is a part of his physical body, consigned to the *brunnr* at the time of his ritual slaughter, which lives on there, associated with numinous knowledge, as do Kvasir's blood and Mímr's head.

We are accustomed to think of *Valþörs veð* as identical with Óðinn's eye, left behind in payment for wisdom. The source for this myth is, once again, that same passage of the *Snorra-Edda*, which has concerned us throughout our investigation of the sacred landscape:

... ok heitir sá Mímir, er á brunninn; hann er fullr af vísindom, firir því at hann drekkur ór brunninum af horninu Gjallarhorni. Þar kom Allþöðr ok

*beiddiz eins drykkjar af brunninum, en hann fekk eigi, fyrr en hann lagði
 auga sitt at veði; svá segir í Völuspá:*

*Allt veit ek Óðinn, hvar auga falt
 í þeim enum mæra Mímis brunni;
 drekkir mjǫð Mímir morgun hverjan
 af veði Valsþǫrs. Vituð þér enn eða hval?¹⁰⁰*

The idea that such knowledge can not be gained without payment is quite natural; unless the god were to steal the mead—an act not below his dignity. Furthermore, we know that Óðinn was one-eyed—but this need not originally have had anything to do with his *veð*. Rudra, Óðinn's most consistent Indic parallel, was also one-eyed;¹⁰⁷ but we know nothing of a wisdom purchase or 'pledge' in his case. It is true that an eye might seem a logical symbolic payment for 'inner sight'—but we must question in what nature it might serve as a *veð*. Knowing Snorri as we do, it seems far more likely that his equivalency of the god's missing eye with the *Valsþǫrs veð* of the *Völuspá* strophe he intended to quote was his own attempt to supply an acceptable ætiological explanation for the god's well-known infirmity. Seen in a religious sense, of course, it is far more significant that Óðinn has one single eye, than that he may ever have 'lost' one¹⁰⁸—the misunderstanding that this condition represented an infirmity at all is probably also Snorri's invention. In any event, it is clear that the source of the mead in the *Völuspá*, in strophe 28 as well as in strophe 27, is *Valsþǫrs veð*—the poetic source makes no mention of the god's eye in connection with the liquid. Since the *veð*, not explicitly defined in the *Völuspá*, and the horn are both containers for that liquid, we might tend to consider them an identity. But this need not be the case at all. Let us consider the possibility that *Valsþǫrs veð* is something which might be preserved in the horn and drunk out of it. Then the *veð* would appear to be identical with the 'poet's mead'—the liquid and not the container.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ *Snorra-Edda*, p. 22.

¹⁰⁷ See: de Vries, *Religionsgeschichte*, II/95.

¹⁰⁸ Óðinn's having only one eye (or even being 'blind') need not be an 'infirmity'; when sitting in his *háseti*, *Hliðskjálf*, the god is able to see at his will throughout the cosmos; see: *Snorra-Edda*, pp. 16, 25. Our texts provide no documentation for any weakness of sight on Óðinn's part.

¹⁰⁹ A possible source for the contamination of the ætiological explanation for Óðinn's missing eye with the complex of the ritual landscape is the frequent

Behind this massive complex of parallel names, objects and activities—a complex which we have by no means exhausted—looms the rite of Óðinn's self-sacrifice. Up to now, we have been more concerned with the details of that ceremony than with its results. As argued in the first half of this article, I believe that it was through the self-sacrifice that Óðinn achieved his position of preëminence in the Germanic pantheon. To use Dumézil's terminology, Óðinn rises to power by virtue of the fact that he assumes responsibility for all three functions of the Indo-European trinity.²⁰⁰ In this rite, Óðinn not only reasserts his competence as a god of the first function—it also marks his assumption of secular rulership, generally an attribute of the second function, by the establishment of a sacred kingship.²⁰¹ If the rite is indeed such a source of universal domination, it must also incorporate Óðinn's new responsibility in the third godly function—as the fountainhead of cosmic fertility. This requirement is more than fulfilled in the overwhelming sexual symbolism of the ritual landscape.

The cosmic tree, which serves as the connecting axis between a masculine heaven and a feminine earth, is supremely phallic in nature.

polysemy: 'eye' and 'fountain, water source' (for example, Arab. 'in); see: de Vries, *Religionsgeschichte*, II/82. If this were definitely the case, the Óðinn's 'eye' might simply indicate the *brunnr* of the landscape just as *Mímis brunnr* and *Urðar brunnr* do.

²⁰⁰ It is generally accepted that Óðinn was originally a 'minor deity', comparable to the Indic Rudra or the Græco-Roman Mercurius; see de Vries, *Religionsgeschichte*, II/93ff. He later figures as the supreme god of the Germanic pantheon in a large number of texts. This raises the question of his acquisition of power. In actuality, it would seem that Óðinn's 'promotion' is only one of a set of parallel monotheistic cult developments triggered by the degeneration of the trifunctional godly trinity in the Germania. On the 'church political' level, it is clear that believers in Óðinn alone—or, for that matter, in Þórr or Freyr alone—would expect the one god in whom they placed their trust to be 'responsible' for the entire scope of godly activity and not just for his previous function in the trinity; see J. Fleck, *Die Wissensbegegnung in der altgermanischen Religion [Wissensbegegnung]* (diss.), München 1968, pp. 68ff. But such an extension of responsibility would have to be supported on the mythical level—and that need is well satisfied by the rite under discussion.

²⁰¹ See: J. Fleck, "Konr—Óttarr—Geirroðr: A Knowledge Criterion for Succession to the Germanic Sacred Kingship" [*Kingship*], in: *Scandinavian Studies* 42 (1970), pp. 39–49.

This configuration offers us the cosmic formulation of the *ἑρὸς γάμος*²⁰² in its purest form. The white liquid, which drips down the tree to fertilize the world, is, beyond doubt, the heavenly sperma.²⁰³ The phallic nature of the tree is further supported by its personification in the god Heimdallr,²⁰⁴ who functions as the sexual hypostasis of Óðinn. As Rígr, he 'lies' between the future parents of the *ἑπώνυμοι* of the Germanic social classes, thereby leading directly to the birth of Præl, Karl and Jarl,²⁰⁵ the *heiti* 'Rígr' may well refer to his rigidity as the erect penis.²⁰⁶ Once freed of Victorian modesty, Loki's dig: *aurgo baki þú munt æ vera*,²⁰⁷ is perfectly clear in meaning—even without deciding in favor of *qrðugr*, 'erect, stiff', or *aurugr*, 'wet, dew-rich',²⁰⁸ although comparison with *aurgom forsi af veði Valsþörs*²⁰⁹ supports the latter. This moisture is conceptualized on two levels. In the cosmic context it flows on from the *brunnr* to fertilize the entire world; but in the specialized complex of Óðinn's self-sacrifice, things are far more complicated. To begin with, we must assume that the god's ritual rebirth after 'nine nights' hanging inverted in the foetal position was the result of an impregnation. Here, the blood from his spear-wound provides the sperma, which drops into the *brunnr* below. This body of liquid serves cosmically as the genitalia of the female earth within the context of the *ἑρὸς γάμος*. But more particularly, the horn, contained within the fountain, serves as a uterus in which Óðinn's seed performs a two-

²⁰² See: de Vries, *Religionsgeschichte*, I/468; F. R. Schröder, "Die germanische Religion," in: *Die Religionen der Erde*, ed. by C. Clemen, München, undated 2nd. ed., pp. 219–236, p. 229; F. R. Schröder, "Mythos und Heldensage," in: *GRM* 36 (1955), revised in: *Zur germanisch-deutschen Heldensage* (= *WdF* XIV), ed. by K. Hauck, Darmstadt 1961, pp. 285–315, p. 296; Heiler, *Religion*, p. 243ff.; J. de Vries, *Keltische Religion*, Stuttgart 1961, p. 240ff.; Widengren, *Religionen*, p. 47ff.; Gonda, *Indien*, I/168ff. For a cosmic union in which both partners are celestial deities, see: L. v. Schröder, *Arische Religion*, 2 vols., Leipzig 1914, 1916, II/392–437.

²⁰³ For the manichæan concept of the heavenly seed, which drops down to fertilize the earth, see: Widengren, *Religionen*, p. 304f.

²⁰⁴ See: Schröder, *Heimdall*, pp. 6, 8, *et passim*; de Vries, *Religionsgeschichte*, II/240ff.

²⁰⁵ *Rp.* 5–7, 19–21, 33–34; also note: *Vsp.* 1/1–4.

²⁰⁶ See: de Vries, *Wörterbuch*, p. 446.

²⁰⁷ *Ls.* 48/4–5.

²⁰⁸ See: Sijmons/Gering, I/302.

²⁰⁹ *Vsp.* 27/6–7.

fold function. Firstly, within his initiation, it leads to his own rebirth on a higher religious level, that of dominance over the other gods; Óðinn's ambivalent role of parent/child is expressed in the words: *ok gefinn Óðni, síðlfr síðlfom mér*.²¹⁰ Secondly, his sperm is preserved in the horn, where it is identical with the 'poet's mead', awaiting a future function.

Just as the *τέπος γάμος* of the ritual landscape functions on separate levels—world fertility and Óðinn's ritual rebirth—the cosmic and personal functions are multileveled. The cosmogony, Baldr-*vita* and eschatology of the *Völuspá* are cyclic on different 'scales'. On the cosmic level, they represent the entirety of time—on the human level, they represent the agrarian year.²¹¹ In the same way, Óðinn's sperm, preserved in the horn, effects a cyclic regeneration. On the human level, it continues in the nature of the sacred king, whose body is simultaneously identical with the abstract charisma of his power to rule, but also with his family, government officials and subjects on the one hand and with his palace, capital city, country and the universe on the other. Óðinn's seed, preserved in the *brunnr*, constitutes an assurance of the recreation of the universe out of the 'waters' after the *ragnarøk*:

*Sér hon upp koma ρðro sinni
 iρrð ór ægi, iðiaρcæna*²¹²

and the rebirth/return of the gods,²¹³ as well as the preservation of humanity, Líf and Lífðrasir, contained through the *ragnarøk* in his *membrum virile*, the cosmic tree. Therein lies, according to this interpretation, the delayed function of the seed shed by Óðinn in the rite which led to his cosmic dominance—and, considering this function, *veð Valþjóðrs* seems a very well chosen *kenning*.²¹⁴

This author is by no means unaware of the general scepticism

²¹⁰ *Háv.* 138/5–6.

²¹¹ See: J. Fleck, *Wissensbegegnung*, pp. 79f.

²¹² *Vsp.* 59/1–4.

²¹³ *Vsp.* 62–65.

²¹⁴ De Vries seems to have been thinking in this direction when he stated that Óðinn "für die Menschen das Wasser des Lebens erworben hat"; see: de Vries, *Religionsgeschichte*, II/20. Unfortunately, he did not pursue this idea to its logical conclusion.

leveled at present at any and all attempts to interpret religious phenonema in terms of sexual symbolism. There can be little doubt but that this scientific method has suffered considerable abuse since the 'Freudian school' first made it popular. But there is a difference between interpreting everything in terms of phallic symbols discovered everywhere and calling attention to the cosmic sexuality inherent in one particular rite. We know that the phallos was venerated in primitive Germanic Religion; here the *Völur*-verses²¹⁵ provide direct evidence. The importance of Óðinn as a god of fertility is manifest,²¹⁶ even if seldom foremost in our minds when we think of that god. The stories of his amorous adventures are well documented; in particular, the obvious sexual symbolism of the theft of the 'poet's mead' by means of the seduction of Gunnlóð²¹⁷ is worthy of note, as related to our complex both by content and its position in the *Hávamdl*. Despite the excellent case for this prime example of the *ἱερὸς γάμος* in the Germania, which can be argued from the weight of internal evidence, once again much of the burden of supporting the particulars of this interpretation must be carried by comparison with genetically related religious systems.

The Blood/Sperm/Mead Complex

External sources offer substantial support for the Germanic blood/sperm/mead-identity as it appears within our ritual landscape. To begin with, ancient Greece furnishes two examples of the blood/sperm identity: Gaia, the earth, is impregnated by the blood of Uranos, the heavens, resulting in the birth of the Erinyes.²¹⁸ Fertilization by the blood of Acheloos results in the birth of the sirens.²¹⁹ In both cases, the blood is shed from a wound. The same cultural area provides

²¹⁵ *Eddica minora*, ed. by A. Heusler & W. Ranisch, Dortmund 1903, pp. 123-126; see: de Vries, *Religionsgeschichte*, II/207f.

²¹⁶ In particular see: J. de Vries, *Contributions to the Study of Othin especially in his Relation to Agricultural Practices in Modern Popular Lore* (= *FFC* 94), Helsinki 1931.

²¹⁷ *Háv.* 105-107; *Snorra-Edda*, p. 84.

²¹⁸ See: K. Kerényi, *Die Mythologie der Griechen*, 2 vols., Darmstadt 1964³, 1958, I/27.

²¹⁹ See: K. Kerényi, *op. cit.*, I/59.

evidence of blood sacrifice, simultaneously as an initiation and ritual slaughter: "Im Tempel der Artemis zu Tauropolis ritzten sich die Frommen mit dem Schwert am Halse zum Zeichen der Schlachtung."²²⁰ The sexual character of the Artemis-rites hardly needs to be mentioned. Further examples of the blood/sperma identity from the field of folklore are collected under *Motif T541.1*.

The genetic identity of the Germanic 'poet's mead' and the Indic *amṛta* is generally accepted.²²¹ *Amṛta* is both by etymology and mythical function the essence of fertility.²²² It should be recalled that both the Indic and Germanic complexes center topographically around the cosmic tree and the body of liquid at its foot. Óðinn's theft of the mead is a clear parallel to Garuḍa's theft of the *soma* (= *amṛta*).²²³ Both myths share the drink itself, its function, its containers, the thief's overcoming the obstacles set in his way by changing his form and, of course, the flight in bird form. Comparison with the Germanic 'poet's mead' is particularly striking when one surveys a list of the attributes applied to *soma* in the *Rg-Veda*:²²⁴

²²⁰ Heiler, *Religion*, p. 215.

²²¹ See, for example: de Vries, *Religionsgeschichte*, II/68, II/131f., II/383f., II/391. The Indic 'amṛta-saga' is no less complicated than its Germanic parallel; see: Oldenberg, *Veda*, pp. 172ff. The opposition of the *amṛta*-theft by Indra or Garuḍa is mirrored in Óðinn's theft of the mead in godly and/or bird form. The various sources of the *soma* are not necessarily contradictory: the churning of the sea represents the cosmic *lepōs γάμος* of the ritual landscape—the *soma* is 'mountain born' because of the mountain on which the tree and body of liquid stand. The source 'from above' corresponds to the 'heavenly seed' in contrast to the *soma* it produces. Its source as 'carried from above by the eagle':

*ṛjīpī śyeno dadamāno aṅsum parāvataḥ śakuno mandram madam somam
 bharad dādṛhāṇo devāvān divo amuṣmad uttarād ādāya* (*Rg-Veda* IV, 26/6)

refers, of course, to its secondary source through its theft; see: A. B. Keith, *The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanishads* (= *HOS* 31-32), 2 vols., Cambridge, Mass. 1925, I/169.

²²² See: M. Mayrhofer, *Kurzgefasstes etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindischen*, 3 vols., Heidelberg 1956ff., II/674; Gonda, *Indien*, I/65.

²²³ Compare *Háv.* 104-107 and *Snorra-Edda*, p. 84f. with *The Mahabharata*, ed. cit., I/88ff.

²²⁴ Cited according to: *Der Rig-Veda* (= *HOS* 33-36), 4 vols., translation and commentary by K. F. Geldner, Cambridge, Mass. 1951-57. Exact passage information appears in the index (vol. 4), pp. 227ff.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Knowledge | |
| <i>Allwissender</i> | <i>allererster Seher</i> |
| <i>allwissender Meister</i> | <i>Seher des Himmels</i> |
| <i>weiser</i> | <i>Weitblickender</i> |
| <i>Allseher</i> | <i>Weltschauender</i> |
| <i>Hellsehender</i> | <i>von unerreichter Schergabe</i> |
| <i>Seher</i> | |
| 2. 'Poet's Mead' | |
| <i>Barde</i> | <i>die grössten Meister haben seinen</i> |
| <i>beredter Führer des Worts</i> | <i>Trunk erlangt</i> |
| <i>Ratfinder</i> | <i>bringt dem Sänger die Meisterschaft</i> |
| <i>wird durch die Dichtung beredt</i> | <i>vom Adler gebracht</i> |
| <i>in drei Kufen</i> | |
| 3. Cosmological/Sexual | |
| <i>Born</i> | <i>den hellen Samen milchenden, bullen-</i> |
| <i>Keim der Gewässer</i> | <i>hafter Saft</i> |
| <i>König der Gewässer</i> | <i>Same des Hengstes</i> |
| <i>fließt in Strömen der Süßigkeit</i> | <i>himmlischer Rahm</i> |
| <i>im Nabel der Erde</i> | <i>gleich Milch</i> |
| <i>Nabel der Unsterblichkeit</i> | <i>klarer Rahm</i> |
| <i>Träger der Erde</i> | <i>klarer Regen</i> |
| <i>Pfeiler des Himmels</i> | <i>vereinigt sich mit des Himmels</i> |
| <i>des Himmels höchster Pfeiler</i> | <i>milchreichem Samen</i> |
| <i>setzt sich in den Schoss der</i> | <i>salbt den tausendzweigigen, grünen,</i> |
| <i>Opferordnung</i> | <i>strahlenden Baum</i> |
| <i>legt in der Aditi Schoss den Keim</i> | |

The *soma*-rites themselves offer features of striking similarity to those of our Germanic complex. The sacrificial animal is not hanged in inverted position, but tied (by the neck) to the sacrificial post;²²⁵ this post is clearly the cosmic tree, providing an ascent to the heavens for both initiant and *hotr*.²²⁶ In another part of the rites, a pot of milk plays an important role—it is revered as the focal point of that part of the sacrifice. At the end of the rite, the utensils are placed on the ground in the form of a human body; the milk pot is the head.²²⁷ The individual for whom the *soma*-rites are being performed is an initiant;

²²⁵ See: Gonda, *Indien*, I/90.

²²⁶ See, for example: *The Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa* (= *SBE* XII, XXVI, XLI, XLIII, XLIV), 5 vols., translated by J. Eggeling, Delhi/Patna/Varanasi 1966², II/162ff., III/32ff.; A. B. Keith, *op. cit.*, I/67; Gonda, *Indien*, I/159.

²²⁷ See: Gonda, *Indien*, I/153.

he experiences a rebirth, *dīkṣā*, into a higher sacred level of existence. During much of the rites, he may not be called by name or leave his special hut, which is the uterus in which he matures, fasting until he is lean. In this initiation, the horn of a black antelope (no musical instrument!) is the symbolic uterus in which the initiate grows; in Gonda's words: placed "nach vedischer Auffassung in der Tat in den Zustand eines Embryos."²²⁸ At the end of the sacrificial day, his belt ('Varuṇa's cord') is loosened and all items consecrated with *soma* are thrown into a body of water.²²⁹ The *soma*-rites as a unit contain all the functional elements of Óðinn's self-sacrifice. The ritual inversion, not explicitly present here, has been established in the first half of this article as a form of *tapas* with a function parallel to its use in Óðinn's case. Blood, which is almost entirely functionless in older Indic religious rites, is replaced with the corresponding *soma*.

In ancient Iran it will be necessary for us to distinguish between the religions of Mithra and Ahura-Mazdāh. The distinguishing factor is the use of sacrificial blood for ritual purposes—a discontinuation of such use was one of the major goals of Zarathustra's reform movement.²³⁰ Typical of the Mithra religion was the steer-sacrifice, in which the blood of the victim is used in an initiatory baptism: "Neueinzuweihende Mithra-Gläubige wurden offenbar in einer Grube vor dem Altar mit dem Blut eines Opfertieres übergossen. Manches spricht dafür, daß selbst Menschenopfer vorkamen."²³¹ Among the Skyths, also an Iranian people, the blood of the sacrificial victims was used for ritual purposes.²³² This information is of particular interest to us since Herodotus²³³ provides us with a remarkable Skythian parallel to the Germanic *Staborakel* described by Tacitus.²³⁴ In the Mithra religion blood was not the only sacred fluid: *haoma*, etymologically and functionally

²²⁸ See: Gonda, *Indien*, I/151; Oldenberg, *Veda*, p. 398pp., 405ff., also see: de Vries, *Religionsgeschichte*, I/502; Eliade, *Initiation*, pp. 53ff; for the concept of the animal's horn as a uterus: *Märchen aus Tibet*, ed. cit., p. 15.

²²⁹ See: Gonda, *Indien*, I/157.

²³⁰ See: W. Hinz, *Zarathustra*, Stuttgart 1961, pp. 59–70.

²³¹ W. Hinz, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

²³² See: Widengren, *Religionen*, pp. 161f.

²³³ Herodotus, *Historien*, ed. cit., pp. 548ff.

²³⁴ See: *Die Germania des Tacitus*, commentated by R. Much, 2nd. ed. by R. Kienast, Heidelberg 1959, pp. 129ff., 134.

identical with the Indic *soma*, was the ceremonial drink.²³⁵ Evidence for a sacred *haoma*/blood parallelity is strong: "Ferner hatte—nach dem Hymnus—König Kanishka als Opferherr feierlich einen Krug (zum mischen von Wein und Bilsensaft [= *haoma*]?) sowie eine Schale bereitgestellt. In der Schale sollte für den 'Gott der Säfte', nämlich Mithra, das Blut des "schnellen, starken, wilden Rinder[stieres]" aufgefangen werden. Der König bohrte sein "rasch tötendes Schwert" dem Stier in den Leib und ließ "die rinnenden Säfte, die [Bluts-]Tropfen aufleuchten" als "Rauschtrank-Bereiter, der die Säfte bergend sammelt." Dann goß er die Schale mit dem Opferblut als Trankspende an den Altar für Mithra, . . .²³⁶ The presence of the two containers points to a two-fold parallel use of the sacrificial blood: the *Schale* for the altar and the *Krug* for the preparation of the *haoma*.

Evidence concerning the earlier *haoma*-cult is preserved, despite its unorthodox nature, in a younger Avestan text. There *haoma*, similarly to *soma* in the *Rg-Veda*, is accorded attributes which call attention to the drink's connection with numinous knowledge:

das allseitige Wissen
Haoma teilt denen, die gern dem Studium der Naska obliegen, Heiligkeit
und Wissen zu
*an Heiligkeit Herr des Wissens*²³⁷

Furthermore, *haoma* is ritually identical with sperma. In order to harvest its juice, the plant had to be pressed; for this purpose a mortar and pestle were used.²³⁸ The *Manneskraft*²³⁹ required in handling this tool refers to the vivid sexual symbolism entailed.²⁴⁰ From a series

²³⁵ See: H. S. Nyberg, *Die Religionen des alten Iran [Iran]*, translated by H. H. Schaeder, Leipzig 1938, pp. 83ff.

²³⁶ Hinz, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

²³⁷ Respectively: *Yasna* 9/17, 9/22, 9/27, cited according to: *Avesta*, translated by F. Wolff, Berlin 1960².

²³⁸ See: C. Bartholomae, *Altiranisches Wörterbuch [Wörterbuch]*, Berlin 1961², column 1786.

²³⁹ *Yasna* 10/2.

²⁴⁰ Entirely comparable is a similar symbolism present in modern German and evidenced, on the one hand, by the Viennese verb *budern* [bu:də-n] (= *coire*), and on the other by a street-jingle from Berlin:

Lene, Lene, wat haste mang de Beene?
En Butterfaß, en Butterfaß—det buttert ganz alleene.

of questions attributed to Zarathustra and answered by the personification of the *haoma*,²⁴¹ we learn who the first four mortals were, who prepared the ritual drink for the 'physical world'.²⁴² Each such act resulted in male progeny:

Vivahvant kelterte mich als erster Mensch für die stoffliche Welt; dies Los wurde ihm zuteil, dieser Erfolg stellte sich bei ihm ein; dass ihm ein Sohn geboren wurde, nämlich Yima, . . .

In the second case, the *haoma*-presser is *Āθwya* and the resulting son *Θraētaona*; in the third, the father *Θrita* and the sons *Urvāxšaya* and *Kərəsāspa*; and in the fourth, father and son are *Pourušaspa* and Zarathustra himself. The typical *ἱερὸς γάμος* of a Mother Earth fertilized by the 'Water of the Heavens' and the corresponding temple pool can be documented for the Mithra religion.²⁴³

In orthodox Ahura-Mazdāhism not only the bloody sacrifice but also the ritual use of *haoma* as a ceremonial drink fell prey to the Zarathustrian reform;²⁴⁴ Zarathustra gains the 'omniscient wisdom' by drinking water endowed with that quality by Ahura-Mazdāh.²⁴⁵ But Iranian evidence for the sexual symbolism of Óðinn's self-sacrifice is provided by a description of the ritual landscape and the legend concerning the prophet's fathering the *Saošyant*, the Ahura-Mazdāhian messiah.

The best source for the ritual landscape is the Pahlavi text *Bundahišn*.²⁴⁶ Unfortunately, the landscape in its entirety is not covered in one unified chapter, but must be gleaned from various sections concerned with its individual features:

The cosmic axis connects the center of the heavens with the center of the earth. The mountain *Tērak* is the center point of the earth (*Bundahišn*,

²⁴¹ *Yasna* 9/3–13.

²⁴² By this opposition indirect proof is offered that there must also have been an Iranian myth concerning a first celestial preparation of the *haoma*.

²⁴³ See: F. Cumont, *The Mysteries of Mithra*, translation of the 2nd. French ed. by T. J. McCormack, New York 1956, p. 115.

²⁴⁴ See: Nyberg, *Iran*, pp. 189ff.

²⁴⁵ *Bahman Yašt* II/5–6; in: *Pahlavi Texts* (= *SBE* V, XVIII, XXIV, XXXVII, XLVII), 5 vols., translated by E. W. West, Delhi/Patna/Varanasi 1965², I/196f.

²⁴⁶ In: *Pahlavi Texts*, ed. cit., I/1–151.

V/3), but it is also part of the mountain *Albūrz*. *Albūrz* touches the heavens (XII/3). The sun, moon and stars revolve around the *Tērak* (of the *Albūrz*); the point of contact is motionless and central—and therefore identical with the polar star (V/4ff., XII/4). From the *Albūrz* rises not only the *Tērak*, but also the mountain *Hūgar*, 'the lofty' (XII/2). At the summit of *Hūgar* is found a lake (XIII/4), called *Urvis* (XXII/11). Into this lake by means of canals flows the water of the spring *Arēdvīvsūr* (XIII/4). On the one hand, this water flows down from the mountain *Hūgar*:

Hūgar the lofty is that from which the water of Arēdvīvsūr leaps down the height of a thousand men. (XII/5)

On the other, the water flows back to the spring through another canal (XIII/4). From this canal, another leads off to the mountain *Aūsindōm* (XIII/5). But the mountain *Aūsindōm* rises from the center of the ocean (XII/6); a part of the spring-water feeds the ocean—another is drawn up to become rain (XII/6, XIII/5, XVIII/11). The mountain *Aūsindōm* stands between two trees (XVIII/10): one is the 'tree of many seeds'—the other, the *Gōkarṭ*-tree. The 'tree of many seeds' grows in the center of the ocean; its seed contains the origin of all plants and possesses curing power (XVIII/9). The *Gōkarṭ* grew out of the ocean on the first day of creation; it is necessary to the rejuvenation of the universe, since immortality (Skt. *amṛta*) is prepared from it (XVIII/1). Although these two trees stand close to one another (IX/6), the *Gōkarṭ*, also called the 'white *Hōm*' (= Av. *haoma*), grows at the spring *Arēdvīvsūr*:

Near to that tree [the 'tree of many seeds'] the white Hōm, the healing and undefiled, has grown at the source of the water of Arēdvīvsūr; every one who eats it becomes immortal, and they call it the Gōkarṭ tree, as it is said that Hōm is expelling death; also in the renovation of the universe they prepare its immortality therefrom; and it is the chief of plants. (XXVII/4)

These details can be reconciled in two different ways. Either a circulation of the water must be assumed—or we are dealing with specialized versions of the same ritual landscape producing polyonymy just as in the Germanic parallels. It seems more likely that the circulation of water implied in the canal system is the result of syncretistic attempts to harmonize already poorly understood attributes of the original cosmic lay-out.²⁴⁷ As soon as one accepts that *Motivverzweigung* and

²⁴⁷ A similar problem exists in the Germanic landscape if we take Snorri's placement of the body of liquid to be correct. In the *Snorra-Edda*, *Hvergelmir* is placed consistently in the underworld: pp. 11, 24, 75 (but apparently not on

functionally specialized polyonymy led to the confusion of the landscape assembled above, the same process of resolving identities used above to clarify the Germanic material can be employed here. The result is the standard ritual landscape. A similar procedure is called for in discussing the Iranian version of the birth of humanity from a tree (or trees),²⁴⁸ a myth with its Germanic parallel in the figures Ask and Embla.²⁴⁹ Matrō and Matrōyāō (also named Mašya and Mašyōi) grow from a *Rīvās*-plant²⁵⁰ which, according to West,²⁵¹ belongs to the rhubarb species. According to Hinz,²⁵² the *haoma*-plant also belongs to this species. Furthermore, the *Gōkart*, which must be considered the cosmic tree because of its role in the rejuvenation of the universe, is called the 'white *Hōm*'. The *Gaokərəna*,²⁵³ the Avestan tree from which the Pahlavi *Gōkart* derives, plays no important role in the preserved *naska*,²⁵⁴ but it seems quite plausible to assume that accidental phonetic similarity encouraged a functional parallelity with *Gāyōmar* (Av. *gaya-marətan*). And the preservation of *Gāyōmar*'s seed in various portions,²⁵⁵ one of which leads to the birth of Matrō and Matrōyāō, forms a perfect parallel to this author's interpretation of *Valfrōrs veð*.

But the most striking parallel to such an interpretation is preserved in the *Saošant*-legend,²⁵⁶ the apparent source of the Christian legend

p. 43). Both *Hvergelmir* and *Mimis brunnr* are placed below the earthly surface by locating them under two of *Yggdrasill*'s roots. How then does their water flow back up to the earth's surface to become the source for the world's rivers?

²⁴⁸ *Bundahišn* XV/1-5.

²⁴⁹ *Vsp.* 17; *Snorra-Edda*, p. 16.

²⁵⁰ *Bundahišn* XIV/2.

²⁵¹ See: West, in: *Pahlavi Texts*, ed. cit., I/53 footnote.

²⁵² Hinz, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

²⁵³ See: Bartholomae, *Wörterbuch*, column 480.

²⁵⁴ See: *Yašt* 1/30, *Sih rōčak* 2/7, *Vidēvdāt* 20/4.

²⁵⁵ *Bundahišn* XV/1-2:

On the nature of men it says in revelation, that Gāyōmar in passing away gave forth seed; that seed was thoroughly purified by the motion of the light of the sun, and Nēryōsang kept charge of two portions, and Spendarmat received one portion. And in forty years, with the shape of a one-stemmed Rīvās-plant, and the fifteen years of its fifteen leaves, Matrō and Matrōyāō grew up from the earth . . .

²⁵⁶ See: Widengren, *Religionen*, p. 106; Nyberg, *Iran*, pp. 305ff.

of the virgin birth. Just as Gāyōmarṭ's sperm is preserved for later use in creating Matrō and Matrōyāō, Zarathustra's sperm is thought to be preserved in the lake *Kṛsaoya*.²⁵⁷ When the time is ripe, the virgin *Ṛrədaṭ-feḍrī* will bathe in that lake, be impregnated by Zarathustra's sperm, and give birth to the *Saošant Astvaṭ-Ṛrəta*.²⁵⁸

Conclusion

This brings us to the end of the presentation of materials supporting a new interpretation of Óðinn's self-sacrifice;—a wealth of minor details could be added, but the results would remain the same. The *Hávamál* show us Óðinn hanging in the ritual inversion, head downward, from the cosmic tree. Sacrificed to himself, he is, in terms of the initiation, simultaneously creator and creation—a godly model for human initiations to follow, in which the acquisition of numinous knowledge leads to succession to the Germanic sacred kingship.²⁵⁹ Just as this rite secures the throne for others not entitled to it by primogeniture, it is the source of Óðinn's rise to supreme power. By performing it, he not only reënforces his position as a *Wissender*—he also steps beyond the limitation of his natural monofunctional role within the pantheon. To his function as god of numinous knowledge and its magical use he adds those of secular ruler and cosmic father. The landscape in which he performs the rite is the ritual landscape—that mythical topography which symbolizes the *ιερός γάμος* of the male heaven with the female earth. From his spear-wound, the stigma of his ritual slaughter, his blood drips down into the spring below, paralleling the cosmic seed which drips down *Yggdrasill* into the same *brunnr*. Óðinn's sperm is not only the source of his own ritual rebirth, but remains preserved in the spring in two separate functions: as the 'poet's mead' and as *Valþröðrs veð*, the cosmic father's 'pledge' of fertility to rejuvenate the universe after each cyclical *ragnarøk*. As the mead, it shares its place in the fountain with other sources of

²⁵⁷ *Yāšt* 13/62, 19/66, *Vidēvdāt* 19/6; the geographic location of the non-mythical lake is certainly secondary; see: Nyberg, *Iran*, pp. 304f.

²⁵⁸ *Yāšt* 13/129, 13/142, 19/92; see: Nyberg, *Iran*, p. 30; Widengren, *Religionen*, pp. 105ff.

²⁵⁹ See: Fleck, *Kingship*, pp. 40ff.

numinous knowledge: the norns, the *vplva*²⁰⁰ to whom Óðinn turns for information, and Mímr's head.²⁰¹ As *Valfǫðrs veð*, Óðinn's sperm is parallel to Kvasir's blood and Mímr's head; it is that part of his physical being which lives on after the victim's death in sacrifice (Óðinn's initiation entails a ritual death, as do all initiations!) to embody the abstraction of its particular function. The god's execution in the ritual inversion entails the implication of ritual slaughter. Such identity with the sacrificial animal connotes that separation from human society, which Zimmer stresses among the standard features of the initiation.²⁰²

The entire complex of the ritual inversion and the ritual landscape in our textual corpus is obscured by several factors, in particular: the poetic formulation of the content, which was familiar to the audience for which it was written—and the fact that literary treatment of the religious *tremendum* invites the sort of polyonymy already so typical of Germanic verse. But once the features of the ritual landscape and the self-sacrifice are reduced to prime components by re-

²⁰⁰ The parallelity of the *vplva* or *vplvas* to whom Óðinn appeals and the norns and Mímr's head is based on function rather than on topographic position in the ritual landscape. The *Vpluspá* is in no way explicit concerning the location of the *vplva*'s recitation or the place where she *sat úti*; *Vsp.* 28/1. The *Vplva* of *Baldurs draumar* is clearly an inhabitant of the world of the dead. On the other hand, a symbolic connection with the sexual symbolism of the ritual landscape may well be contained in the etymology of the word *vplva* itself; see: de Vries, *Wörterbuch*, p. 674 (→ p. 673).

²⁰¹ As argued above, Mímr's head is, by nature, sexless. The male gender ascribed to him and reflected in the confusion of nominal class structurings of the one name may be secondary, and therefore in no way detracts from the likelihood of his head representing a transformation of an otherwise feminine identity.

²⁰² See: Zimmer, *op. cit.*, pp. 164ff. To the theme 'life as an outcast in wolf's form' (for example: *Vǫlsunga saga*, Chapter VIII), see: Eliade, *Initiation*, pp. 81ff. To the term *vargr í véum* for an outcast from human society, see: de Vries, *Religionsgeschichte*, I/264. In this connection, the following paragraph from a Hittite collection of laws is of interest:

If anyone elopes with a woman and an avenger goes after them, if two men or three men die, there be no compensation [the reason being]: "Thou hast become a wolf." (Footnote: The implications of this formula are unknown.) in: *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, ed. by J. B. Pritchard, Hittite material translated by A. Goetze, Princeton 1955², p. 190.

solving identities, and the implications of the resulting configuration are developed through comparison with genetically related parallel religious data, both the rite and the significance of Óðinn's initiation on the tree emerge from the darkness which has enveloped them for many centuries.

[In the discussion of the *Codex regius* ms., SS has unfortunately been unable to reproduce Professor Fleck's transcription of the phrase *Mims synir* with complete accuracy because of technical limitations; an accent grave has been employed for the superscript dot on y, tilde for the *r*-abbreviation, and the long *s* is printed as *s*.—Editor.]