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VOLUME II

MYTHOLOGICAL POEMS

Edited with Translation
Introduction and Commentary
by
URSULA DRONKE

Y.L.

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LANDSBÓKASAFN ÍSLANDS

For my daughter

PREFACE

As the main poems in this volume I have chosen five which are among the greatest of Norse poems and which all relate in some way to the period from the ninth to the eleventh century, when Norsemen were in most familiar contact with the Irish and the Anglo-Saxons. Assimilation of distinct traditions from these neighbour nations is most marked; at the same time all five poems share a mature affinity of style from being conserved as living poetry for two centuries in Iceland. The purpose of this edition is literary: to open up for the common reader the delights of the complexities and felicities of the poems and the beauty of the language, and to show the poets' intellectual command of their themes, mythological, religious, and human. To this end I have tackled in commentary and discussion many problems which I know it is not in my competence to solve, in the hope that other scholars may be able to.

The five sections relating to the main poems are each introduced by a detailed table of contents, to clear the approach for the reader. Inevitably the section for *Vǫluspá* is the most intricate of all, as it is the most intricate of poems. Text and translation of *Baldrs Draumar* are given as an Appendix to *Vǫluspá*.

Volumes III and IV are already well advanced in their preparation. I am fortunate and delighted to have the counsel of Professor Ingeborg Glier in presenting the Sigurðr poems in relation to German tradition in Volume III, and of Dr Clive Tolley, who will be co-editor with me of the second collection of mythological poems in Volume IV.

Volume I is to be reprinted with corrections and bibliographical updating.

I owe a very great debt to many people for the enlightenment their work has given me and for their ready advice. Peter Dronke's deep interest and knowledge in so many fields, literary, artistic, philosophical, have been a constant source of orientation for me when I might otherwise have been lost in the wealth of ideas presented by these Eddic poems. Many other learned friends have advised me and answered my questions with unfailing kindness. For their warm letters from Iceland, bringing news of new scholarship, I am particularly indebted to Guðrún Helgadóttir, Sverrir Tómasson, Stefán Karlsson. Friends on the Continent have kept me in touch with their work: Kurt Schier, Klaus von See, Gerd Weber, Hubert Seelow, Wilhelm Heizmann, Folke Ström, Lars Lönnroth, Jonna Louis-Jensen. The work of Margaret Clunies Ross has been a great stimulus to

me, in its vital originality. I have benefited much from the insight and wit of Roberta Frank. I am deeply indebted to Sukumari Bhattacharji for her guidance on Indian sources and the generous gift of her writings; I remember with delight her swift mind and rare learning in discussion in Oxford and her cordial hospitality in Calcutta. Closer to home I have even longer debts: to Joan Turville-Petre, Peter Foote, Brian and Guðrún Dodsworth, Michael Lapidge, David Dumville, Thomas Charles-Edwards, Sebastian Brock, Arthur Hatto, Michael Barnes, Olive Sayce, Nigel Palmer, Lotte Motz, Erich Poppe, Jacqueline Simpson, for readily giving me their expert advice. For the benefits of their scholarly companionship over many years and for the freshness of vision in their researches, to which frequent acknowledgement is made in this volume, I have many younger scholars to thank, especially Heather O'Donoghue, Diana Whaley, Alison Finlay, Daphne Davidson, Susan Blackall, John Hines, Guðrún Nordal, Carolyne Larrington, Ian Graham, John Enoch, Alan Davey, Peter Robinson, Andy Orchard, Ian Shiels. I thank Richard North for many stimulating suggestions and interpretations. To Clive Tolley I owe a special debt of thanks for his great help in presenting Volume II. He has organized the very complex script for the printer and watched over its accuracy with impeccable scholarship; specific ideas that are his are marked CT. What flaws remain are all mine. The value of Tolley's own mythological researches for the content of the volume will be evident from the frequent reference to his writings in the course of discussion.

The work on *Rígsþula* is dedicated to Gesche Kähler and the late Martin Dreher, who first asked to read the poem with me in Munich in 1973.

Cambridge
June, 1996

U.D.

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The Franks Casket, front panel. Scene in Weland's smithy *frontispiece*
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THE MANUSCRIPTS

THE four heroic poems edited in Volume I are preserved only in the Codex Regius (R), written in Iceland *c.* 1270. Four of the mythological poems edited in Volume II are also preserved in that MS: *Vǫluspá*, *Vǫlundarkviða*, *Skírnismál*, and *Lokasenna*. A short description of R and its history is given in Volume I. xi–xiii (R is there referred to as CR).

A variant version of *Vǫluspá* is preserved on two leaves (H) inserted into an early fourteenth century Icelandic MS., Hauksbók. On the dating of these two leaves see *Vǫluspá Introduction* III. A.

Two thirds of the text of *Vǫluspá* can be found either cited or rendered in prose in Snorri Sturluson's *Gylfaginning*, of which there are four main MSS., listed in *Vǫluspá Introduction* III. A, where the relationship of the variant texts of the poem is examined in detail. For a most helpful and lucid account of the SnE MSS. see Faulkes (*b*), xxix–xxxiii; see also G. Lorenz 1–8 for further documentation.

A fragmentary MS., written in Iceland between 1300 and 1325, AM 748 I 4to (A), contains on six of its surviving twenty-eight leaves three entire Eddic poems, *Baldrs Draumar*, *Grímnismál*, *Hymiskviða*, and parts of four others, *Hárbarðslióð*, *Skírnismál*, *Vafþrúðnismál*, and *Vǫlundarkviða*. The first twenty-seven stanzas of *Skírnismál* occur in A. Comparison of the two texts of these stanzas is given in *Skírnismál Introduction* IV. Only a few lines of the prose prologue of *Vǫlundarkviða* are preserved in A at the end of the sixth leaf, when a lacuna begins.[1]

Rígsþula is preserved, with a beginning and middle, but without an ending, only on two sides of a single leaf in the Codex Wormianus, one of the main MSS. of the *Snorra Edda*, from *c.* 1350 or somewhat later (see *Vǫluspá Introduction* III. A). The problems of the text and the lost ending are discussed in *Rígsþula Introduction* II. A and I. B, and commentary to 49/1.

Facsimile editions and transcriptions of the MSS. used in the present edition are listed at the beginning of the Bibliography.

[1] In both R and A *Vkv* appears to be considered a mythological rather than a heroic poem, in R preceded by *Þrym* and followed by *Alv*, in A preceded by *Hym*. That *Vkv* may have been commonly copied in collections of mythological poems would account for the fact that palaeographically *Vkv* is closer to the mythological poems than to the heroic (Lindblad 261–2).

THE PRINTED TEXT

I HAVE made some small changes to the printing procedures in Volume I:

1. I have kept abbreviations for MSS. (e.g. R, H) in roman type on all occurrences; SnE (roman) means 'the MS(S). of Snorri's *Edda*', *SnE* (italics) refers to the edition of Finnur Jónsson.

2. For *Vǫluspá* I have used a different method of presenting textual variants, placing the SnE variants separately below those of R and H, to make the textual relationships clearer.

3. To the notes in Volume I. xiv–xv on the spellings of consonants in R, I would now add reference to the frequency with which 'N' is used for *n* (and not, as more conventionally, for *nn*): e.g. mǫraN (for *mæran*, *Vsp* 2/7), leikiN (*Vsp* 22/6), folgiN (*Vsp* 31/4), matkaN (*Vsp* 57/4), vaNa (*Skm* 18/3). In *Vsp* 26/2 the reverse is also seen, where single 'n' stands for *nn/N*: þrungin. I have not noted such spellings among the variants unless a problem of interpretation is involved. See JH I. xi–xiv.

4. MS. abbreviations are expanded using superscript characters in the citation of MS. forms; MS. macrons and ampersands are retained in the citations. Fine distinctions (such as the variant forms of *r*) are not maintained, however; for these, the facsimile editions and transcriptions listed in the Bibliography should be consulted. MS. forms are enclosed in single speech marks when it is clearer so to distinguish them.

5. The spelling of ON personal names and place names has been normalized in discussion and commentary, when the names are not italicized (as in citation of the ON text), e.g. Freyja / *Freyia*, Gefjun / *Gefion*, Járnviðr / *Iárnviðr*.

6. When citing in discussion from a diplomatic text (such as *SnE*) I have normalized the spelling, unless there was reason not to do so.

7. I have introduced long vowel marks in italicized citations of OE, OHG, and OS words to make philological argument and comparisons with ON clearer. In the occasional citations of Sanskrit words, drawn from printed texts of varied styles, I have standardized OUP accentuation, as in for example W. D. O'Flaherty's *Asceticism and Eroticism in the Mythology of Śiva*, 1973.

8. I have used cross-references to sections and subsections rather than to pages. The general table of contents at the beginning of the volume refers to the fuller indexes of contents that precede the individual poems and provide page references to the sections and subsections of the discussion.

9. In the case of three poems, *Vǫluspá*, *Vǫlundarkviða*, *Skírnismál*, I have traced the sequence of ideas, or actions, in the Introduction, noting the relevant stanza in the margin, and referring to this stanza as 'ad loc.' in subsequent discussion. In the case of *Rígsþula* and *Lokasenna* the same procedure is not so fitting and I have not used it.

10. Bibliographical references have been kept as brief as possible. The Bibliography at the end of the volume contains full details of all works cited; in the main text, references are confined to the author's surname (with initials if necessary), or to the title of the work cited, as appropriate, followed by the volume number and the page reference. Different works by one author are identified as (*a*), (*b*), etc., and are so listed in the Bibliography. The most commonly cited authors and works are abbreviated still further; the abbreviations are included in the Bibliography. Norse and other medieval works are generally listed by their titles, even when the author is known.

Symbols used in the texts

Italics indicate emendation, or MS. rubrics.

[ ] enclose letters or lines that are not in the MS, but are supplied by conjecture or by analogy with the practice of the text elsewhere, or from another MS.

† † enclose text in the edited version transferred from another place in the MS.

` ´ enclose text in the textual notes written above the line in the MS.

‡ ‡ enclose text as yet uninterpreted.

° indicates an editorial omission from the text of the MS., where the omission alters the sense (other omissions, usually erroneous scribal repetitions or anticipations of the text, are noted in the textual notes only).

A line of dots indicates that one or more lines are omitted in the MS.

Smaller type indicates lines not considered by the editor to be part of the poet's original text. MSS. make varied use of capital letters: in R, a large capital marks the beginning of a poem, and of a preceding prose prologue. Marginal capitals are used sporadically; these are noted in the textual notes. A capital is used, within the continuous text, to mark the beginning of a stanza (or, in the prose, of a sentence): these capitals, and their absence, are noted in this edition only when they do not correspond with the beginnings of stanzas (or sentences) as printed here.

ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations of a purely bibliographical nature, and abbreviations for Eddic poems, will be found in the Bibliography. Manuscripts are listed at the beginning of the Bibliography.

acc.	accusative
adj.	adjective
adv.	adverb
AM	Arnamagnaean
c.	century
c.	*circa*
ch.	chapter
col.	column
conj.	conjunction
Dan	Danish
dat.	dative
ed.	edited by
edn.	edition
esp.	especially
f.	following
fem.	feminine
Fig.	figure
fol.	folio
gen.	genitive
Gmc	Germanic
hap. leg.	hapax legomenon, i.e. 'only occurrence'
IE	Indo-European
indic.	indicative
Introd	Introduction
l.	lege, i.e. 'read'
Lat	Latin
lit.	literally
masc.	masculine
ME	Middle English
MHG	Middle High German
ModE	Modern English
ModIcel	Modern Icelandic
ModNorw	Modern Norwegian
MS.	manuscript
n.	note
n.d.	no date
neut.	neuter
no.	number
nom.	nominative
n.p.	no place
Norw	Norwegian
OE	Old English
OF	Old French
OHG	Old High German
OIcel	Old Icelandic
om.	omitted
ON	Old Norse
ONorw	Old Norwegian
OS	Old Saxon
OSwed	Old Swedish
p.	page
part.	participle
PE	Poetic Edda
prep.	preposition
pret.	preterite
pl.	plural
pres.	present
pron.	pronoun
repr.	reprinted
rev.	revised by
s.a.	sub anno, 'under the year'
sb.	substantive
sc.	scilicet, 'namely'
sg.	singular
Skr	Sanskrit
Suppl.	Supplement
s.v.	sub voce, 'under the word'
trans.	translated by/translation
v.	verse, versus
vb.	verb
v.l.	varia lectio, 'variant reading'
vol.	volume

VQLUSPÁ

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VǪLUSPÁ

1 Hlióðs bið ek allar
[helgar] kindir
meiri ok minni
mǫgo Heimdal[l]ar.
Vildo at ek, Valfǫðr,
vel fyr telia
forn spiǫll fira,
þau er fremst um man.

I ask for hearing from all
hallowed seed,
greater and humbler
sons of Heimdallr.
You wish me, Sire of the Slain,
well to narrate
the world's old news,
such as I remember from remotest times.

2 Ek man iǫtna
ár um borna,
þá er forðom mik
fœdda hǫfðo.
Nío man ek heima,
nío íviði*ur*,
miǫtvið mæran,
fyr mold neðan.

I remember giants
born early in time,
who long ago
had reared me.
Nine worlds I remember,
nine wood-ogresses,
glorious tree of good measure,
under the ground.

3 Ár var alda,
þar er Ymir byggði:
vara sandr né sær
né svalar unnir.
Iǫrð fannz æva
né upphiminn:
gap var ginnunga,
en gras hvergi,

It was early in the ages
when Ymir made his dwelling:
there was not sand nor sea
nor chill waves.
Earth was not to be found
nor above it heaven:
a gulf was there of gaping voids
and grass nowhere,

4 Áðr Burs synir
biǫðom um ypðo,

Before Burr's sons
lifted up seashores,

In H *forms of* u/v, d/ð *can be much alike.* 1/2 helgar] *so* H; *om.* R 1/4 -dallar] *so* H; -dalar R 1/5 Vildo] villtv H Valfǫðr] vafǫðrs H 1/6 fyr] fram H 1/8 er] er ek H 2/3 þá] *See MS.* R *corrections 1.* 2/6 íviðiur] *so also* H (i uiðiur). *See MS.* R *corrections 2.* 3/3 sær] sior H (SnE) 3/7 ginnunga] *See MS.* R *corrections 3.* 3/8 hvergi] ekki H (SnE) 4/1 Burs] bors H (SnE *prose*) 4/2 um] of H

For SnE *readings I have used the text and variants of FJ (SnE) and JH and the variants in Bugge (a), 26–33, and only consulted the MSS. in a few cases of particular problematic interest.*

3/1–8 *SnE* 11 3/1 alda] halda SR 3/2 þar] *so* U; þat SR, T, W Ymir byggði] ecki var SnE 3/3 vara] varat W sær] sior U; siár W 3/4 unnir] vnd^{ir} U (*i.e. 'wounds'*) 3/5 æva] *so* W; e^{ig}i SR, T, U 3/8 hvergi] *so* U; ecki SR, T, W 4/1 Burs] *so* U *in chapter title;* Bors *SnE prose 14*

þeir er miðgarð
mæran skópo.
Sól skein sunnan
á salar steina—
þá var grund gróin
grœnom lauki.

they who moulded
glorious Miðgarðr.
Sun shone from the south
on the stones of that mansion—
then the ground was covered
with the green leek's growth.

5 Sól varp sunnan,
sinni mána,
hendi inni hœgri
um himiniǫð*u*r.
. . . .
Sól þat né vissi,
hvar hón sali átti,
stiǫrnor þat né visso,
hvar þær staði átto,
máni þat né vissi,
hvat hann megins átti.

Sun flung from the south
—moon's partner in travel—
her right hand
round the rim of the sky.
. . . .
Sun did not know
where she had mansions,
stars did not know
where they had stations,
moon did not know
what might he had.

6 Þá gengo regin ǫll
á rǫkstóla,
ginnheilog goð,
ok um þat gættuz:
nótt ok niðiom
nǫfn um gáfo:
morgin héto
ok miðian dag,
undorn ok aptan,
árom at telia.

Then the powers all strode
to their thrones of fate,
sacrosanct gods,
and gave thought to this:
to night and her offspring
allotted names,
called them morning
and midday,
afternoon and evening,
to count in years.

7 Hittoz æsir
á Iðavelli,
þeir er hǫrg ok hof
hátimbroðo.
Afla lǫgðo,
auð smíðoðo,
tangir skópo
ok tól gørðo.

Æsir met
on Eddying Plain,
they who built towering
altars and temples.
They founded forges,
fashioned wealth,
moulded tongs
and made tools.

4/3–4 miðgarð mæran] męran miðgarð H 4/6 á salar steina] *See MS.* R *corrections 4.* 5/1 Sól] *marginal capital* R 5/4 um himiniǫður] of ioður H; -iodyr R 5/5–10 *See Problem II* (*i*) (*a*). 6/1 gengo] gen | gengo R 7/3–4 þeir — hátimbroðo] afls kostuðu allz freistuðu H. *See Problem VI* (*vi*). 7/5 Afla] *See MS.* R *corrections 5.*

5/5–10 *SnE* 15 (with line order 5–6, 9–10, 7–8)

8 Teflðo í túni,
teitir vóro—
var þeim vettergis
vant ór gulli—
unz þriár kvómo
þursa meyiar,
ámátkar miǫk,
ór iǫtunheimom.

They played chequers in the meadow,
they were merry—
for them there was no
want of gold—
until there came three
ogres' daughters,
of redoubtable strength,
from Giant Realms.

9 Þá gengo regin ǫll
á rǫkstóla,
ginnheilog goð,
ok um þat gættuz,
hv*árt* skyldi dverga
dróttir skepia
ór Brimis blóði
ok ór Blá*in*[s] leggiom.

Then the powers all strode
to their thrones of fate,
sacrosanct gods,
and gave thought to this:
whether they should create
companies of dwarfs
from Brimir's blood
and from Bláinn's limbs.

10 Þar [var] Mótsognir
mæztr um orðinn
dverga allra,
en Durinn annarr.
Þeir manlíkon
mǫrg um gørðo,
dvergar, ór iǫrðo,
sem Durinn sagði:

There did Mootsucker
become most esteemed
of all dwarfs,
and Doorward next.
They fashioned many
figurines,
these dwarfs, out of earth,
as Doorward told:

11 'Nýi ok Niði,
Norðri ok Suðri,

'New Moon and No Moon,
North and South,

8/3 vettergis] uettugis H 8/5 þriár] *so in full* H; iii. R 8/6 þursa] þussa H 9/1–4 Þá — gættuz] *so* H; *abbreviated* Þá g. r. a. ar. R *On the dwarf stanzas,* 9 – 16, *see Problem II* (*i*) (*b*). 9/5 hvárt] *so FJ* (*b*) *ad loc.*; hv^{er}r R; hu^{er}er H. *See Problem II* (*i*) (*b*). skyldi] skylldu H dverga] du^{er}gar H 9/6 dróttir] *so* H (drott^{ir}); drotin (*i.e.* dróttin) R 9/7 Brimis blóði] brimi bloðgv H (SnE) 9/8 Bláins] *so, or possibly* blams, H (SnE); blám R (*cf.* lægiarn[s] líki *34/3*) 10 – 16 *For dwarf name variants see Vsp Introd* III. E. 10/1 var] *so* H (u^{ar}); *om.* R 10/2,6 um] of H (SnE) 10/5 manlíkon] manlikan H 10/7 dvergar] du^{er}ga H ór] i H (SnE) 11/1,2,3 ok] *not in* H (SnE)

9/1–8 *SnE* 20 9/1–4 *abbreviated in* U, *although the lines have not previously been cited* 9/4 um] *so* T, U, W; of SR 9/5 hvárt] hverr U, W; at SR, T 9/6 dróttir] drott of SR, T, W; drot v̄ U skepia] spekia U 9/7 Brimis blóði] *so* T; brimi bloðgo SR, U, W 9/8 ór] *om.* U Bláins leggiom] *so* W (blaens); blams leggiū T, U; blam slegiv SR **10/5–8 *SnE* 21** 10/5–6 Þeir mannlíkon . . . gørðo] *so* U; þar manlikvn . . . gerþvz SR, T, W 10/6 um] *so* U; of SR, T, W 10/7 ór] i SR, T, U, W 10/8 sem — sagði] sem þeim dyrinn kendi U **11 – 16 *SnE* 21, as for R, H above** 11/1,2,3 ok] *so* W; *not in* SR, T, U

Austri ok Vestri,
Alþiófr, Dvalinn,
Bivǫrr, Bávǫrr,
Bǫmburr, Nóri,
Án ok Ánarr,
Ái, Miǫðvitnir,

East and West,
All-thief, Dawdler,
Trembler, Trumbler,
Tubby, Shipper,
Friend and Fighter,
Old Father, Mead Wolf,

12 Veigr ok Gandálfr,
Vindálfr, Þráinn,
Þekkr ok Þorinn,
Þrór, Vitr ok Litr,
Nár ok Nýráðr—
nú hefi ek dverga
—Reginn ok Ráðsviðr—
rétt um talða.

Potion and Sprite Elf,
Wind Elf, Yearner,
Docile and Darer,
Thrive, Clever and Colour,
Corpse and New Counsellor—
now I have the dwarfs
—Power and Plan-wise—
correctly counted.

13 Fíli, Kíli,
Fundinn, Náli,
Hepti, Víli,
Hannarr, Svíorr,
Frár, Hornbori,
Frægr ok Lóni,
Aurvangr, Iari,
Eikinskialdi.

Trunky, Creeky,
Found, Needly,
Handle, Drudge,
Craftsman, Dwindler,
Brilliant, Horn Borer,
Famous and Lagooner,
Loam Lea, Earthy,
Oakenshield.

14 Mál er dverga
í Dvalins liði
lióna kindom
til Lofars telia,
þeir er sótto
frá Salarsteini
Aurvanga siǫt
til Iǫrovalla.

It is time to trace the dwarfs
in Dawdler's troop,
for men's progeny,
back to Praiser—
those dwarfs who sought,
from Mansion's Stone,
the homes of Loam Leas
at Earth Plains.

15 Þar var Draupnir
ok Dólgþrasir,

There was Dripper
And Strife Eager,

11/5 Bivǫrr] *initial capital* H 12/1 ok] *not in* H (SnE); *written* 7|7, *the first deleted* R 12/1,4 *See MS. R corrections 6 and 7.* 12/6 dverga] rekka H (*cf.* SnE *variant 12/7*) 13/7 Aurvangr] *initial capital* H 14/1 Mál] *no initial capital* H 14/5 þeir] þ^{ei}m H 14/6 frá Salarsteini] *See MS.* R *corrections 8.* 14/7 Aur-] ær- R; ǫr- H

12/1 ok] *not in* SnE 12/6,8 *not in* SnE 12/7 Reginn ok] Reckr SnE **14/5–8 *SnE* prose 21** 14/6 Salarsteini] Svarins (Svarnis U) havgi SnE 14/7 Aur-] *so* SR, T, U; or- W

Hár, Haugspori,
Hlévangr, Glói,
Skirvir, Virvir,
Skáfiðr, Ái,

High, Grave Treader,
Shelter Field, Gleamer,
Joiner, Groiner,
Crooked Finn, Old Father,

16 Álfr ok Yngvi,
Eikinskialdi,
Fialarr ok Frosti,
Finnr ok Ginnarr.
Þat mun uppi,
meðan ǫld lifir,
langniðia tal
Lofars hafat.'
. . . . .

Elf and Yngvi,
Oakenshield,
Hider and Frosty,
Finn and Potent.
Uplifted in memory
as long as the world lives
will be this list
of Praiser's lineage.'
. . . . .

17 Unz þrír kvómo
ór því liði
ǫflgir ok ástgir
æsir at húsi.
Fundo á landi
lítt megandi
Ask ok Emblo
ørlǫglausa.

Until three came
out of that company,
mighty and loving
Æsir to a house.
They found on land,
little capable,
Ash and Embla,
without destiny.

18 Ǫnd þau né átto,
óð þau né hǫfðo,
lá né læti
né lito góða.
Ǫnd gaf Óðinn,
óð gaf Hœnir,
lá gaf Lóðurr
ok lito góða.

Breath they had not,
spirit they had not,
no film of flesh nor cry of voice,
nor comely hues.
Breath Óðinn gave,
spirit Hœnir gave,
film of flesh Lóðurr gave
and comely hues.

19 Ask veit ek standa,
heitir Yggdrasill,

An Ash I know there stands,
Yggdrasill is its name,

16/1 Álfr] *no initial capital* R 16/5 Þat] *initial capital* H mun] man æ H 16 – 17 *There is no indication in the MSS. of a lacuna between these stanzas.* 17/1 þrír] þriár R; þriar (a *erased*) H 17/2 ór því liði] þussa meyar (*erased, but no text substituted*) H 17/3 ǫflgir ok ástgir] æstk^{ir} ok ǫflg^{ir} H 18/1 Ǫnd] *no initial capital* R, H 18/5 Ǫnd] *initial capital* R, H

19/1–8 *SnE* 25 19/1 standa] *so* U; avsinn SR, T, W 19/2 Yggdrasill] *so* T, U, W; Yggdrasils SR

hár baðmr, ausinn
hvítaauri.
Þaðan koma dǫggvar
þærs í dala falla.
Stendr æ yfir grœnn
Urðar brunni.

a tall tree, showered
with shining loam.
From there come the dews
that drop in the valleys.
It stands forever green over
Urðr's well.

20 Þaðan koma meyiar
margs vitandi,
þriár, ór þeim sæ,
er und þolli stendr.
Urð héto eina,
aðra Verðandi
—skáro á skíði—
Skuld ena þriðio.
Þær lǫg lǫgðo,
þær líf kuro
alda bǫrnom,
ørlǫg seggia.

From there come maidens
deep in knowledge,
three, from the lake
that lies under the tree.
Urðr they called one, 'Had to be',
the second Verðandi, 'Coming to be'
—they incised the slip of wood—
Skuld the third, 'Has to be'.
They laid down laws,
they chose out lives
for mankind's children,
men's destinies.

21 Þat man hón fólkvíg
fyrst í heimi,
er Gullveigo
geirom studdu
ok í hǫll Hárs
hána brendo—
þrysvar brendo
þrysvar borna,
opt, ósialdan—
þó hón enn lifir.

She remembers the war,
the first in the world,
when Gold Brew
they studded with spears
and burned her
in Hárr's hall,
three times burned her
three times reborn
—often, not stinting—
yet she still lives.

22 Heiði hana héto
hvars til húsa kom,
vǫlo vel spá

Bright Heiðr they called her
at all the houses she came to,
a good seer of fair fortunes

19/3 baðmr] *See MS.* R *corrections 9.* 20/1 Þaðan] *marginal capital* R. *See MS.* R *corrections 10.* 20/3 sæ] sal H (SnE). *See Problem III (ii) (a).* 20/4 und] a H 20/9 Þær] *initial capital* R, H 20/12 seggia] at segia H. *See Problem III (iv) (a).* 21 *Here the order of stanzas in* H *diverges from that in* R. *See Problem VI (i).* 21/3 Gullveigo] gullueig H. *See MS.* R *corrections 11.* 21/4 studdu] studdi H 21/7 þrysvar] *initial capital* R; þrysvar brendo *written twice* H 22/3 vǫlo] ok vǫlu H

19/3 baðmr] borinn U ausinn] heilagr SnE 19/6 þærs] *so* W; þær U; er SR, T dala] *so* T; dali SR, U, W 19/7 Stendr] *so* U, W; stendr hann SR, T æ] *om.* U yfir] fyr^{ir} T **20 *SnE* prose 23** 20/3 ór þeim sæ] ór þeim sal SnE

—vítti hón ganda.
Seið hón kunni,
seið hón leikin.
Æ var hón angan
illrar brúðar.

—she conjured spirits who told her.
Sorcery she had skill in,
sorcery she practised, possessed.
She was ever the darling
of an evil wife.

23 Þá gengo regin ǫll
á rǫkstóla,
ginnheilog goð,
ok um þat gættuz:
hvárt skyldo æsir
afráð gialda
eða skyldo goðin ǫll
gildi eiga.

Then the powers all strode
to their thrones of fate,
sacrosanct gods,
and gave thought to this:
whether the Æsir should
pay such a price
and all the gods
get recognition?

24 Fleygði Óðinn
ok í fólk um skaut—
þat var enn fólkvíg
fyrst í heimi.
Brotinn var borðveg[g]r
borgar ása.
Knátto vanir vígspá
vǫllo sporna.

Óðinn flung
and shot into the host—
it was war still,
the first in the world.
Torn was the timber wall
of the Æsir's stronghold.
Vanir were—by a war charm—
live and kicking on the plain.

25 Þá gengo regin ǫll
á rǫkstóla,
ginnheilog goð,
ok um þat gættuz,
hverr hefði lopt alt
lævi blandit
eða ætt iǫtuns
Óðs mey gefna.

Then all the powers strode
to their thrones of fate,
sacrosanct gods,
and gave thought to this:
who had laced all
the air with ruin
and to the giant's kin
wedded Óðr's girl?

26 Þórr einn þar vá,
þrunginn móði

Þórr alone smote there,
swollen with wrath

22/4 vítti] uiti H 22/5 seið hón kunni] seið hon hvars (h *corrected from* k) hvn kuñi H 22/6 leikin] leikiN R; hvgleikin H. *The* R *reading (with* N *for* n; *see JH I* § *6.11) must be correct: see commentary ad loc. and Problem III (iv) (b).* 22/8 brúðar] *See MS.* R *corrections 12.* 23/1 Þá *marginal capital* R 23/1–4 Þá — gættuz] *so* H; *abbreviated* Þa g. r. a. a. R 24/4 fyrst] fyR H 24/5 -veggr] *so* H; -vegr R 25/1–4 Þá — gættuz] *so* H; *abbreviated* Þa g. r. a. R 25/5 hverr] *so* H (SnE); hv^{er}ir R 26/1 vá] *so* H (SnE); v^{ar} R

25/1–8 *SnE* 47 25/1–4 Þá — gættuz] *so* SR, T, W; *partly abbreviated* U 25/4 um] *so* U, W; of SR, T 25/5 hverr] *so* SnE **26/1–8 *SnE* 47** 26/1–4 *follow* 5–8 *in* SR, T, U; 5–8 *are not in* W 26/1 þar] þat SR, W vá] *so* T, U, W; vaN SR

—hann sialdan sitr,
er hann slíkt um fregn!
Á gengoz eiðar—
orð ok sœri,
mál ǫll meginlig,
er á meðal *vóro*.

—he seldom sits idle
when he hears such a thing!
Oaths paid for oaths,
the vows and sworn pledges,
all the words of weight
that intervened.

27 Veit hón Heimdal[l]ar
hlióð um fólgit
undir heiðvǫnom
helgom baðmi.
Á sér hón ausaz
aurgom forsi
af veði Valfǫðrs.

She knows Heimdallr's
hearing is couched
beneath the bright-nurtured
holy tree.
A stream she sees springing
with loamy flood
from Sire of the Slain's forfeit.

Vitoð ér enn, eða hvat?

Do you still seek to know? And what?

28 Ein sat hón úti,

þá er inn aldni kom,
Yggi*u*ngr ása,
ok í augo leit:
'Hvers fregnið mik?
Hví freistið mín?
Alt veit ek, Óðinn,
hvar þú auga falt:
í enom mæra
Mímis brunni!
Drekkr miǫð Mímir
morgin hverian
af veði Valfǫðrs!'

Alone she held séance out in the night,
when the old fellow came,
Æsir's Son of Dread,
and looked into her eyes.
'What do you ask me?
Why do you try me?
I know it all, Óðinn,
where you lodged your eye:
in the famed
fountain of Mímir!
Mímir drinks mead
every morning
from Sire of the Slain's forfeit!'

Vitoð ér enn, eða hvat?

Do you still seek to know? And what?

26/4 um] of H (SnE) 26/8 vóro] *so* H (voru) (SnE); fóro R. *See Problem V (ii) (a).* 27/1 Veit] *marginal capital* R 27/1 -dallar] *so* H; -dalar R 27/6 aurgom]aurgō R; ǫrgū H 27/8 Vitoð ér] uitu þ^er H 28 – 33 *not in* H. *See Problem VI (ii) (a).* 28/3 Yggiungr] ygióngr R 28/8 *See MS.* R *corrections 13.* 28/13 Valfǫðrs] *abbreviated* v. R (*cf.* 27/7) 28/14 Vitoð — hvat] *abbreviated* v. e. e. h. R

26/4 um] of SnE 26/8 vóro] *so* T (voru); forv SR, U **28/7–14 *SnE* 22** 28/8 þú] *so* T, U,W; á SR 28/9 í enom] i hinū W; j þ^eim enō T, U; vr þ^eim enū SR mæra] meira T 28/11 miǫð] moð SR 28/13 veði] *so* T, U, W; *corrected from* veiþi SR 28/13–14 Valfǫðrs — hvat] *unabbreviated* SnE 28/14 Vitoð ér] *so* T; vitvð þer SR; viti þer U; vitu þer W

29 Valði henne Herfǫðr
hringa ok men.
Fé[kk] spiǫll spaklig
ok spáganda:
sá hón vítt ok um vítt—
of verǫld hveria.

War Sire chose for her
rings and necklaces.
He got wise news
and spirits of prophecy.
She saw far, and far beyond—
over every world.

30 Sá hón valkyrior
vítt um komnar,
gǫrvar at ríða
til goðþióðar.
Skuld helt skildi,
en Skǫgul ǫnnor,
Gunnr, Hildr, Gǫndul
ok Geirskǫgul.

She saw valkyries
come from afar,
ready to ride
to the realm of the gods.
Skuld bore a shield,
and Skǫgul was with her,
Gunnr, Hildr, Gǫndul
and Spear-Skǫgul.

Nú ero taldar
nǫnnor Herians,
gǫrvar at ríða
grund, valkyrior.

Now are listed
the ladies of War Lord,
ready to ride,
valkyries, over the earth.

31 Ek sá Baldri,
blóðgom tívor,
Óðins barni,
ørlǫg fólgin.
Stóð um vaxinn,
vǫllo[m] hæri,
miór ok miǫk fagr,
mistilteinn.

I saw for Baldr—
for the bloodstained sacrifice,
Óðinn's child—
the fates set hidden.
There stood full-grown,
higher than the plains,
slender and most fair,
the mistletoe.

32 Varð af þeim meiði,
er mær sýndiz,
harmflaug hættlig:
Hǫðr nam skióta.
Baldrs bróðir var
of borinn snemma:
sá nam, Óðins sonr,
einnættr vega.

There formed from that stem,
which was slender-seeming,
a shaft of anguish, perilous:
Hǫðr started shooting.
A brother of Baldr
was born quickly:
he started—Óðinn's son—
slaying, at one night old.

29/1 Valði] *marginal capital* R 29/3 Fékk] fe R. *See commentary.* 30/9–12 *See Problem II (ii).* 31/6 vǫllom] vollo R 32/1 Varð] *marginal capital* R 32/2 mær] m^er, *i.e.* mér *or* mær, R. *JH I. 8 compares* (Hǫgna) mær *HH II 17, which has the same abbreviation.* sýndiz] *See MS.* R *corrections 14.*

33 Þó hann æva hendr
né hǫfuð kembði,
áðr á bál um bar
Baldrs andskota—
en Frigg um grét
í Fensǫlom
vá Valhallar.

Vitoð ér enn, eða hvat?

He never washed hands,
never combed head,
till he bore to the pyre
Baldr's adversary—
while Frigg wept
in Fen Halls
for Valhǫll's woe.

Do you still seek to know? And what?

34 Hapt sá hón liggia
undir Hveralundi,
lægiarn[s] líki
Loka áþekkian.
Þar sitr Sigyn,
þeygi um sínom
ver velglýioð.

Vitoð ér enn, eða hvat?

A captive she saw lying
under Cauldrons' Grove,
in the shape of malignant
Loki, unmistakable.
There Sigyn sits,
surely with little
delight in her husband.

Do you still seek to know? And what?

35 Á fellr austan
um eitrdala,
sǫxom ok sverðom:
Slíðr heitir sú.

A river falls from the east
through venom-cold dales,
with knives and swords:
Savage is its name.

36 Stóð ſyr norðan,
á Niðavǫllom,
salr ór gulli
Sindra ættar;
en annarr stóð
á Ókólni,
biórsalr iǫtuns,
en sá Brimir heitir.

There stood to the north
on Dark of the Moon Plains
the hall made of gold
of Sindri's race.
Yet another stood
on Never Cold,
the beer hall of a giant,
and he is named Brimir.

33/7 vá] *See MS.* R *corrections 15.* 33/8 Vitoð — hvat] *abbreviated* v. e. e. e. h. R 34/1–4 Hapt — áþekkian] *here* H *reads:* Þa kna vala vigbond snua helldr v^{oru} harðgior hǫft or þǫrmū. *See Problem III (iii) (a).* 34/3 lægiarns] *See commentary.* 34/7 velglýioð] uel | glyiut H 34/8 Vitoð — hvat] *abbreviated* v. þ. e. h. R; vitu þer eñ eða huat H *After* 34 *and before* 41 H *cites a full version of Refrain III, see Problem VI (iii). On variant lines 5–6 see textual variants to 43* R *and Problem III (iv) (c). It is notable that in the first instances of Refrain III, in* H *and in* R *(43/1),* nú *is omitted; see Problem I (i) (b).* 35, 36 *not in* H; *see Problem VI (ii) (b).* 36/1 Stóð] *no initial capital* R 36/2 -vǫllom] *corrected from* -fiollō R (*cf.* SnE *prose*). *See MS.* R *corrections 16.*

36 *SnE* prose 74 36/2 -vǫllom] -fiollom SR, W; *cf.* a fiollom nockurum T

37 Sal sá hón standa
sólo fiarri,
Nástrǫndo á,
norðr horfa dyrr.
Fello eitrdropar
inn um lióra.
Sá er undinn salr
orma hryggiom.

A hall she saw standing
remote from the sun
on Dead Body Shore.
Its door looks north.
There fell drops of venom
in through the roof vent.
That hall is woven
of serpents' spines.

38 Sá hón þar vaða
þunga strauma
menn meinsvara
ok morðvarg*a*
ok þannz annars glepr
eyrarúno.
Þar s*aug* Níðhǫggr
nái framgengna,
sleit vargr vera.

She saw there wading
onerous streams
men perjured
and wolfish murderers
and the one who seduces
another's close-trusted wife.
There Malice Striker sucked
corpses of the dead,
the wolf tore men.

Vitoð ér enn, eða hvat?

Do you still seek to know? And what?

39 Austr sat in aldna
í Iárnviði,
ok fœddi þar
Fenris kindir.
Verðr af þeim ǫllom
einna nøkkorr
tungls tiúgari
í trollz hami.

In the east she sat, the old one,
in Iron Wood,
and bred there
the broods of Fenrir.
There will come from them all
one of that number
to be a moon-snatcher
in troll's skin.

37/1 sá] sier H. *On the divergence of tense in* 37, 38, 39 *see Problem III (i) (a).* 37/5 fello] falla H (SnE) 38/1 Sá] Ser H 38/3–4 meinsvara ok morðvarga] *See MS.* R *corrections 17.* 38/4 morðvarga] *so* H; morðvargar R (SnE) 38/5 þannz] *See MS.* R *corrections 18.* 38/6 eyrarúno] eyrna runa H 38/7 saug] *so* H; svg R 38/10 Vitoð — hvat] *abbreviated* v. e. e. e. h. R; vitu þ^{er} *etc.* H *After* 38 *and before* 44 H *cites Refrain III, lines 1–4 abbreviated:* Geyr nu garmr miok f^{yrir} gn. h. f. man sl. eñ f. 39/1 sat] byr H (SnE) in] hin H (SnE) 39/3 fœddi] feð^{ir} H (SnE) 39/8 trollz] trǫllz H (SnE)

37/1–8 *SnE* 75 37/1 sá hón] veit ec SnE 37/3 -strǫndo] *so* SR, W (-strǫndu); -stravndū T, U (*and* SnE *prose*) 37/5 fello] falla SnE 37/6 um] *so* U, W; of SR, T **38/1–4, 7–8 *SnE* 75** 38/1 Sá hón] Skvlv SnE morðvarga] morðv^{ar}gar SR, T, W; morðingiar U 38/7 saug] q^{ue}lr SnE **39/1–8 *SnE* 19** 39/1 sat] býr SnE in] hín W aldna] arma U 39/2 -viði] -uidiom T; viðiu W 39/3 fœddi] fæþ^{ir} SnE 39/5 af] *so* U, W; ór SR, T 39/6 nøkkorr] hu^{er}ra T 39/7 tungls tiúgari] tungl tuigan T; tungls t^{re}gari U 39/8 trollz] *so* U; tr*æ*llz SR, T, W

40 Fylliz fiǫrvi
feigra manna,
rýðr ragna siǫt
rauðom dreyra.
Svǫrt verða sólskin
of sumor eptir,
veðr ǫll válynd.

It sates itself on the life-blood
of fated men,
paints red the powers' homes
with crimson gore.
Black become the sun's beams
in the summers that follow,
weathers all treacherous.

Vitoð ér enn, eða hvat?

Do you still seek to know? And what?

41 Sat þar á haugi
ok sló hǫrpo
gýgiar hirðir,
glaðr Eggþér.
Gól um hánom
í Galgviði
fagrrauðr hani,
sá er Fialarr heitir.

There sat on the grave-mound
and struck his harp
the ogress's herdsman,
happy Eggþér.
Above him crew
in Gallows Wood
the gleaming red cock
that is named Fialarr.

42 Gól um ásom
Gullinkambi—
sá vekr hǫlða
at Heriafǫðrs—
en annarr gelr
fyr iǫrð neðan,
sótrauðr hani,
at sǫlom Heliar.

Over the Æsir crew
Comb of Gold
—he wakes the warriors
at War Sire's dwelling—
while another crows
beneath the earth,
a rust-red cock
at the halls of Hel.

43 Geyr [nú] Garmr miǫk
fyr Gnipahelli—
festr mun slitna,
en freki renna.
Fiǫlð veit hón frœða—

Now Garmr bays loud
before Looming Cave—
the fetter will break
and the ravener run free.
Much she knows of old knowledge,

40/1 Fylliz] *no capital initial* H 40/5 Svǫrt verða] *so* H (SnE); svart v^{ar} þa R 40/6 of] um H (SnE) 40/8 Vitoð — hvat] *abbreviated* v. e. h. R; uitu þ^{er} einn en ędr hvat H (SnE) 41/4 Eggþér] egð^{ir} H 41/5 um hánom] yf^{ir} H 41/6 Gálg-] *so* H; gagl- R 41/8 sá er] en sa H (*cf.* 36/8) 42/1 um] yf^{ir} H 42/4 at Heriafǫðrs] at hiarar at h^{er}iafꝛðrs R (*no correction marks*) 43/1 nú] *om.* R, H. *See Problem I* (*i*) (*b*). miǫk] *See MS.* R *corrections 19.* 43/2 Gnipa-]ˀgnupa- H (*cf.* gnipa- *three times subsequently*) 43/3 festr] *See MS.* R *corrections 20.* mun] man H 43/5 Fiǫlð — frœða] fram̃ se ek lengr H

40/1–8 *SnE* 19 40/5 Svǫrt verða] *so* SnE 40/6 of] *so* SR; um T, U, W 40/7 veðr] *so* W; v^{er}þr SR, T, U válynd] *so* T; va. ly. U; valvnd SR, W 40/8 Vitoð — hvat] *so* SR, T; uitu þer *etc.* W; v. einn (i *erased*) ok h. U

fram sé ek lengra,
um ragna rǫk
rǫmm, sigtíva.

ahead I see further,
over the fate of the powers,
virulent fate of victory's gods.

44 Brœðr muno beriaz
ok at bǫnom verða[z],
muno systrungar
sifiom spilla.
Hart er í heimi,
hórdómr mikill
—skeggǫld, skálmǫld
—skildir ro klofnir—
vindǫld, vargǫld—
áðr verǫld steypiz.
Mun engi maðr
ǫðrom þyrma.

Brothers will fight
and kill each other,
sisters' children
will defile kinship.
It is harsh in the world,
whoredom rife
—an axe age, a sword age
—shields are riven—
a wind age, a wolf age—
before the world goes headlong.
No man will have
mercy on another.

45 Leika Míms synir,
en miǫtuðr kyndiz
at en[o] galla
Giallarhorni.
Hátt blæss Heimdallr
—horn er á lopti—
mælir Óðinn
við Míms hǫfuð.
†Skelfr Yggdrasils
askr standandi,†
ymr it aldna tré
en iǫtunn losnar.

Mímr's sons sport,
but fate's measure is lit
at the sound of the clear-ringing
Clarion Horn.
Loud blows Heimdallr
—the horn points to the sky—
Óðinn talks
with Mímr's head.
†Yggdrasill shivers,
the ash, as it stands.†
The old tree groans,
and the giant slips free.

43/6 fram — lengra] fiǫlð kañ ek segia H. *See Problem III* (*iv*) (*c*). 43/8 -tíva] -tyva R 44/2 verðaz] *so* H; verða R (SnE) 44/7 skeggǫld] *miswritten* skeggǫll H 44/8 ro] *not in* H (SnE) 44/9 vindǫld] *initial capital* H 44/10 steypiz] *here* H *adds* grund^{ir} gialla gifr fliugandi. *See Problem VI* (*iv*) (*a*). 44/11 mun] man H 45/1 Leika] *marginal capital* R 45/3 eno galla] en galla R; hinu gamla H 45/9–12 Skelfr — losnar] *so* H (Skelfr *with initial capital*). *In* R *9 – 10 follow 11 – 12. See MS.* R *corrections 21.* 45/12 losnar] *here* H *adds* hræðaz allir á helvegꝛ æðr surtar þañ sevi of gleyp^{ir}. *See Problem VI* (*iv*) (*b*). *In* H *49 follows here; see under 49* R *below.*

44/1–12 *SnE* 70 44/2 verðaz] *so* SR, W; v^{er}ða T, U 44/5 í heimi] *so* U; með hꝛlðꝛ SR, T (haldō), W 44/7 skeggǫld] *so* U; skegiolld SR, W; skegiald ok T 44/8 ro] *not in* SnE klofnir] *so* SR, T, W; klofna U 44/10 áðr] *so* SR, T, W; undz U 44/11–12 mun — þyrma] mvn enn maðr oþrvm þyrma U; *not in* SR, T, W (*but cf. prose introducing 44*) **45/5–12 *SnE* 73** 45/6 lopti] *so* T, U, W; lopt SR 45/7 mælir] *so* U, W; *abbreviated* mey SR, me (*miswritten* nie) T 45/8 Míms] mimis T, U 45/11 aldna] *so* T,W; alna SR, U 45/12 en — losnar] æsir e^{r}v a þingi U (*from 49/4*) *After* 45/12 *a sequence of eight stanzas follows* (*in the order 49, 47 – 48, 50 – 54* R) *without prose interruption. U has only 49 and 54.*

46 Geyr nú Garmr miǫk
fyr Gnipahelli—
festr mun slitna,
en freki renna.
Fiǫlð veit hón frœða—
fram sé ek lengra,
um ragna rǫk
rǫmm, sigtíva.

Now Garmr bays loud
before Looming Cave—
the fetter will break
and the ravener run free.
Much she knows of old knowledge,
ahead I see further,
over the fate of the powers,
virulent fate of victory's gods.

47 Hrymr ekr austan,
hefiz lind fyrir.
Snýz Iǫrmungandr
í iǫtunmóði.
Ormr knýr unnir,
en ari hlakkar—
slítr nái neffǫlr.
Naglfar losnar.

Hrymr drives from the east,
hoists his shield before him.
Mighty Wraith coils
in giant wrath.
The snake flails the waves,
and the eagle exults—
pale-beaked rips corpses.
Nail Boat slips free.

48 Kióll ferr austan:
koma muno Muspellz
um lǫg lýðir,
en Loki stýrir.
Fara fífls megir
með freka allir—
þeim er bróðir
Býleipz í fǫr.

A ship moves from the east:
there shall come Muspell's
levies by water,
and Loki is pilot.
The giant's sons are journeying
all with the ravener—
Býleiptr's brother
keeps them company.

49 Hvat er með ásom?
Hvat er með álfom?
Gnýr allr iǫtunheimr.
Æsir ro á þingi.
Stynia dvergar

What troubles the Æsir?
What troubles the Elves?
Giant Realm is all aroar.
The Æsir are in council.
Dwarfs groan

46 *cf.* 43 46/1 Geyr — miǫk] *abbreviated* Geyr nv g. R. *No more of the stanza is given.* 47/7 neffǫlr] niðfǫlr H (SnE) 48/5 Fara] farar H fífls megir] fiflmeg^{ir} H 48/6 allir] a$\overline{\text{þ}}^{r}$er H (*probably first written* a$\overline{\text{þ}}^{r}$; *see Hkb 191, n. 6*) 48/8 Býleipz] byleistz H (SnE) fǫr] f^{er}d H 49 *in* H (SnE) *follows 45* R. *See Problem III* (*i*) (*b*). 49/4 ro] eru H

47 *SnE* 73 (not U) 47/6 en — hlakkar] *so* W; a$\overline{\text{v}}$rn m$\overline{\text{v}}$ hlacka SR, T 47/7 neffǫlr] niðf**a**vlr SR, T, W **48 *SnE* 73 (not U)** 48/3 um] *so* T, W; of SR 48/5 Fara] *so* W; þar ró SR, T fífls] fifl- SR, W; fifs- T 48/8 Býleipz] byleistz W; byleiz SR, T (*cf. SnE prose 34:* byleistr SR, T (bly-), W; byleiptr U) **49/1–8 *SnE* 73** 49/2 Hvat — álfom] hvat með asyniv̄ U 49/3–4 Gnýr — þingi] *not in* U Gnýr] *so* W; ymr SR, T 49]4 ro] *so* SR, T; ero W

fyr steindurom,
veggbergs vísir.

at the granite doors,
well knowing their immuring rock.

Vitoð ér enn, eða hvat?

Do you still seek to know? And what?

50 Surtr ferr sunnan
með sviga lævi:
skínn af sverði
sól valtíva.
Griótbiǫrg gnata,
en gífr rata.
Troða halir helveg,
en himinn klofnar.

Surtr moves from the south
with the scathe of branches:
there shines from his sword
the sun of Gods of the Slain.
Stone peaks clash,
and troll wives take to the road.
Warriors tread the path from Hel,
and heaven breaks apart.

51 Þá kømr Hlínar
harmr annarr fram,
er Óðinn ferr
við úlf vega,
en bani Belia
biartr at Surti.
Þá mun Friggiar
falla angan.

Then is fulfilled Hlín's
second sorrow,
when Óðinn goes
to fight with the wolf,
and Beli's slayer,
bright, against Surtr.
Then shall Frigg's
sweet friend fall.

52 Þá kømr inn mikli
mǫgr Sigfǫður,
Víðarr, vega
at valdýri.
Lætr hann megi Hveðrungs
mund um standa

Then comes the tall
child of Triumph's Sire,
Víðarr, to strike
at the beast of slaughter.
Into Hveðrungr's son
with his hand he sets the sword

49/6 -durom] -dyrv̄ H 49/7 veggbergs] vegb^{er}gs H (SnE), *cf.* borðvegr, -veggr *24/5* 49/8 Vitoð — hvat] *abbreviated* v. e. e. h. R; uitv þ^{er} *etc.* H *After* 49 *and before* 47 H *cites Refrain III, lines 1–3 abbreviated:* Geyr nu garmr miok f^{yrir} gnipa helli f. m. 50/2 lævi] lęfi R; levi H (*see Hkb 191, n. 9*) 50/6 rata] hrata H (SnE) 51 – 3 *See Problem III* (*i*) (*c*). 51/1 Þá] *marginal capital* R 51/3 er] eñ H 51/7 Þá] þar H (SnE) mun] man H 51/8 angan] *so* H; angan | tyr R; *a scribe has absent-mindedly read a rare word as part of a familiar heroic name.* *After* 51 *and before* 52 H H *cites Refrain III, lines 1–3 abbreviated as after* 49/8. 52 *is replaced in* H *by a variant stanza* (*52 H*). *See Problem III* (*iii*) (*b*).

49/6 steindurom] *so* SR, T; steindyrv̄ W; steins dyrv̄ U 49/7 veggbergs vísir] *not in* U vegg-] *so* SR; veg- T, W 49/8 Vitoð — hvat] *so* SR; vitu þ^{er} *etc.* W; viti þer *etc.* U **50/1–8 *SnE* 12 (1) and (not in U) 73 (2)** 50/1 Surtr] Svartr U 50/2 lævi] *so* W; levi U; leifi SR (1), T; leivi SR (2) 50/6 gífr] guþ^{ar} U rata] *so* SR, T (1), W (1); hrata T (2), U (1), W (2) 50/7 Troða — helveg] traða — helvega U **51/1–8 *SnE* (not in U) 73** 51/2 harmr] *so* T; hamr SR, W 51/7 Þá] þar SnE 51/8 angan] *so* SR, W; añan T **52/1–8 *SnE* (not in U) 74** 52/1–3 Þá — vega] gengr oþins son við ulf vega viþarr of veg SR, T (sonr), W 52/6 um] of SnE

hiǫr til hiarta—
þá er hefnt fǫður!

to halt in the heart—
then his sire is avenged!

53 Þá kømr inn mæri
mǫgr Hlǫðyniar,
gengr Óðins sonr
við *orm* vega.
Drepr hann af móði
miðgarz véor[r]
—muno halir allir
heimstǫð ryðia—
gengr fet nío
Fiǫrgyniar burr
neppr frá naðri
níðs ókvíðnom.

Then comes the glorious
child of Hlǫðyn,
Óðinn's son strides
to fight the serpent.
He smites in fury,
shrine-guarder of Miðgarðr
—all heroes will abandon
the homestead of earth—
he steps nine paces,
Fiǫrgyn's child,
failing—leaving slain the snake
that had not feared its vile act.

54 Sól tér sortna,
sígr fold í mar,
hverfa af himni
heiðar stiǫrnor.
Geisar eimi
við aldrnara,
leikr hár hiti
við himin siálfan.

The sun starts to blacken,
land sinks into sea,
the radiant stars
recoil from the sky.
Fume rages against fire,
fosterer of life,
the heat soars high
against heaven itself.

55 Geyr nú Garmr miǫk
fyr Gnipahelli—
festr mun slitna,
en freki renna.
Fiǫlð veit hón frœða—
fram sé ek lengra,

Now Garmr bays loud
before Looming Cave—
the fetter will break
and the ravener run free.
Much she knows of old knowledge,
ahead I see further,

53/3 gengr] *See MS.* R *corrections 22.* 53/4 orm] ulf R (*cf. 52/1–2* SnE) 53/6 véorr] uęor R 53/8 ryðia] *See MS.* R *corrections 23.* 53/12 níðs] *See MS.* R *corrections 24.* 54/1 Sól] *torn away* H 54/6 við aldrnara] ok alldrnari H (SnE) 55/1 Geyr] *no initial capital* R 55/1–8 Geyr — sigtíva] *abbreviated* Geyr n. R; Geyr [nu *torn away*] garmr miok f^yrir gnipa helli festr man slitna eñ freki r. H

53/1–2, 11–12, 7–8, 5–6 *SnE* (not in U) 74 53/1 Þá kømr] gengr SnE mæri] meiri T 53/5 Drepr — móði] er af moþi drepr SnE (*following 7–8*) 53/6 véorr] *so* SnE 53/7 halir] hall^ir SR 53/8 heimstǫð] heimsteið SR 53/9 gengr fet nío] *not in SnE 74, but cf. SnE prose 72:* Þorr . . . stigr þaðan bræt ix. fet 53/11 neppr frá] nepr at SR; neprar T; neppr af W 53/12 ókvíðnom] *so* SR, W; okuidiō T **54/1–8 *SnE* 74** 54/1 tér] mv̄ SnE 54/2 sígr] *so* U; sæckr SR, T, W 54/4 heiðar] heiðū (*sc.* himni) W 54/6 við aldrnara] ok aldrnari SnE

um ragna rǫk
rǫmm, sigtíva.

over the fate of the powers,
virulent fate of victory's gods.

56 Sér hón upp koma
ǫðro sinni
iǫrð ór ægi
iðiagrœna.
Falla forsar,
flýgr ǫrn yfir,
sá er á fialli
fiska veiðir.

She sees come up
a second time
earth out of ocean
once again green.
The waterfalls flow,
an eagle flies over,
in the hills
hunting fish.

57 Finnaz æsir
á Iðavelli
ok um moldþinur
mátkan dœma
[ok minnaz þar
á megindóma]
ok á Fimbultýs
fornar rúnar.

Æsir meet
on Eddying Plain
and discourse on the mighty
enmesher of earth,
and call to mind there
the momentous judgements
and the Gigantine God's
ancient runes.

58 Þar muno eptir
undrsamligar
gullnar tǫflor
í grasi finnaz,
þærs í árdaga
áttar hǫfðo.

There will once more
the miraculous
golden chequers
be found, in the grass,
those that in the old days
they had owned.

59 Muno ósánir
akrar vaxa—
bǫls mun allz batna,
Baldr mun koma.
Búa þeir Hǫðr ok Baldr
Hroptz sigtóptir,
vés valtívar.

Without sowing
cornfields will grow—
all harm will be healed,
Baldr will come.
They inhabit, Hǫðr and Baldr,
Hroptr's walls of triumph,
gods of the sanctuary.

Vitoð ér enn, eða hvat?

Do you still seek to know? And what?

56/1 Sér] *marginal capital* R; Se *torn away* H 57/1 Finnaz] Hittaz H 57/5–6 ok minnaz — megindóma] *so* H; *not in* R 58/1 Þar muno eptir] Þa munu æser H 58/4 finnaz] fiña H 59/1 Muno] *marginal capital* R 59/3 mun] man H 59/4 Baldr mun] man balldr H 59/7 vés valtívar] vel valtivar R, H (ual- *corrected from* ?uell-; *see Hkb 191, n. 19; JH 14 ad loc.*). *See Problem I* (*i*) (*c*). 59/8 Vitoð — hvat] *abbreviated* v. e. e. h. R; uitu þ^er etc. H

60 Þá kná Hœnir	Then Hœnir picks out
hlautvið kiósa,	the twig of augury,
ok b*u*rir byggia	and sons of the two brothers
brœðra tveggia	set up their home
vindheim víðan.	in the wide wind realm.
Vitoð ér enn, eða hvat?	Do you still seek to know? And what?
61 Sal sér hón standa	A hall she sees standing,
sólo fegra,	brighter than the sun,
gulli þakðan,	roofed with gold,
á Gimlé.	on Refuge from the Flames.
Þar skolo dyggvar	There shall the worthy
dróttir byggia	warrior bands dwell
ok um aldrdaga	and all their days of life
ynðis nióta.	enjoy delight.
62 Þar kømr inn dimmi	There comes the shadowy
dreki fliúgandi,	dragon flying,
naðr fránn, neðan	glittering serpent, up
frá Niðafiǫllom.	from Dark of the Moon Hills.
Berr sér í fiǫðrom	He carries in his pinions
—flýgr vǫll yfir—	—he flies over the field—
Níðhǫggr, nái.	Malice Striker, corpses.
Nú mun hón søkkvaz.	Now will she sink.

60/2 hlautvið] hlutvið H 60/3 ok] er H burir] *so* H *and, originally,* R; *see MS.* R *corrections 25.* 60/6 Vitoð — hvat] *abbreviated* v. e. e. h. R; vitv þ^{er} *etc.* H 61/8 nióta] *here* H *adds* Þa kemr hiñ riki at regindomi ǫflugr ofan sa er ǫllu ræðr. *See Problem VI (v).* 62/1 Þar] *not in* H; *marginal capital* R 62/3 neðan] *See MS.* R *corrections 26.* 62/4 Niðafiǫllom] *See MS.* R *corrections 27;* niða H 62/8 mun] man H

61/1–8 *SnE* 26 61/1 sér hón] veit ec SnE 61/3 þakðan] *so* U, W; betra SR, T 61/5 Þar] *so* SR, U; þann (*sc.* sal) T, W

INTRODUCTION

I. *The Structure of the Poem*

Vǫluspá, after the manner of visionary poems, is often allusive and enigmatic, with abrupt, unexplained transitions of scene and thought. The structure, or sequence of meaning, is not, therefore, always clear beyond question.

For the text of *Vǫluspá* we have three main sources, and some of the differences between them in order and content are substantial. Without a conception of the structure of the poem we have no basis for determining the best text. At the same time, without some evaluation of the texts we cannot determine the structure. The two studies, poetical and textual, must develop alongside each other.

A tracing of the poet's sequence of thought through each stanza of the poem is given in *Vǫluspá Introduction* II. A detailed comparison of the variant texts, R, H, SnE, is given in *Vǫluspá Introduction* III. As a preface to these two detailed studies, I outline now the broader framework of the poem and the broader differences between its texts.

A. The grand architecture of *Vǫluspá* (1 – 20, 43 – 62)

The grand architecture of the poem is confirmed by all three sources. R and H present a virtually identical text of the opening and close of the poem, the first and last third of it: the birth of the world and its gods is seen to pass into their death, and from that death a fresh world, younger gods, spring. The new world rouses echoes of the old: lines at the close of the poem strike chords that were heard in the beginning. The movement of growth and time is punctuated by refrains, one supplanting, or intruding upon, another, as the sedateness of established order disintegrates before the threat of change, and that threat fulfilled in turn becomes the promise of limitless futurity.[1]

One divergence between the texts of R and H could affect our perception of the structure of the poem. Before what is the final stanza in both MSS. (62), a four-line stanza is included in H but not in R. The lines proclaim the coming of an unnamed 'Powerful One', all-ruling, from above, to the

[1] The refrains will be referred to in discussion as Refrain I (*Þá gengo regin ǫll* . . . 6/1–4, 9/1–4, 23/1–4, 25/1–4), Refrain II (*Vitoð ér enn, eða hvat?* 27/8, 28/14, 33/8, 34/8, 40/8, 49/8, 59/8, 60/6), and Refrain III (*Geyr nú Garmr miǫk* . . . 43/1–8, 46/1–8, 55/1–8).

'Great Divine Judgement/Empire' (the term used, *regindómr*, is unique and therefore uncertain in meaning). Some scholars have accepted this stanza as the Christian keystone of the poem. I see good reason to discard it as an interpolation.

The third source for the text of *Vǫluspá* is Snorri Sturluson's mythographic colloquy, *Gylfaginning* (*c.* 1225). Snorri has known *Vǫluspá* well, citing or paraphrasing over forty stanzas. The chronological course of *Vǫluspá* is preserved within *Gylfaginning*, in that questions and answers concerning the origins of the cosmos come near the beginning, while those concerning its dissolution and resurgence come near the end—a very obvious chronological pattern, but not one that controls any other Norse mythological poem (though Óðinn's questions in *Vafþrúðnismál* 20 – 54 follow, somewhat meanderingly, a similar time-scheme). It is not Snorri's concern, however, to present a narrative of the cosmic cycle comparable to that in *Vǫluspá*, and he does not reproduce the striking thematic links between the old world and the new (as in, for example, 8 and 58), though it is evident that he had before him the stanzas that contained these links. He has planned his opening cosmology on the lines rather of Genesis than of *Vǫluspá*, with the supreme god, creator of all things, as the instigator of the world's being. On to that opening he grafts the native traditions, plundering *Vǫluspá* for cosmological information, selecting and interweaving this with ample matter from other Eddic sources, and adapting his citations to his colloquy schema. The last third of *Vǫluspá* is rendered with less interruption from other material, for here, if we judge by extant texts, there is less detailed material to be gathered from elsewhere. Here Snorri cites a sequence of nine stanzas from *Vǫluspá*, from the sounding of the horn of Heimdallr to the sinking of the earth into the sea.

The structural use of the three refrains in the poem is, of course, not in any way reflected in *Gylfaginning*, which has a different structure of its own, but Snorri has known all three: Refrains I and II occur in stanzas cited (Refrain I is thus cited twice; *SnE* 20, 47, 73), Refrain III is echoed in the prose narrative (*SnE* 72).

Snorri shows no knowledge of the penultimate stanza of H.

There seems to me no reason to think that the text which was omitted where the interpolation of the dwarf stanzas occurs (between 9 and 17) would have significantly altered the structure of the poem.

B. The progress to Ragnarǫk (21 – 42)

In the central third of the poem selected events in the life of the gods are told with acute brevity. They lead to the first portents of Ragnarǫk, 'the destiny of the gods'.

This central section of the poem shows the greatest divergence between R and H. R has twenty-two stanzas here, H only fourteen, even omitting any reference to Baldr's death. In R the logic underlying the sequence of selected events is, I think, clear (see *Vǫluspá Introduction* II). The stalemate of the Æsir–Vanir war arises from the power of the Vanir to return to life after death (24): this looks ahead to the return of Baldr. The plot of the giants, the underworld powers, to wed to themselves the seductive Freyja—who maintains by her magic the terrestrial cycle of rebirth after death—would put an end to regeneration in the world of light, including the regeneration of Baldr (25). Outwitting the giants involves the gods in a comedy of errors in which they break their oaths: this lays open the fatal way to the killing of Baldr. He is killed by the mistletoe, the one object on earth that had never sworn not to harm him. Had Loki not been clever enough—in his treacherous disguise—to find out this fact about the mistletoe, Baldr would never have died. And he was the sacrifice necessary for the renewal of the world, after its death at Ragnarǫk.

In this mysterious section of the poem the omissions and rearrangements in H obliterate the motivation evident in the text of R and supply no other to take its place. It is clear that H is here greatly inferior to R (see *Vǫluspá Introduction* III).

Snorri cites wholly or partially seven stanzas from this section of the poem (including 28, which H omits) and paraphrases 36 (which H also omits). He thus confirms the text of R, as against H, at these two points.

Snorri cites nothing from the four-stanza sequence relating to the Æsir–Vanir war (21 – 4), which is in both R and H. He may well not have understood it in detail.

C. The sibylline voices

The poet has given a dramatic form to his great theme for which I know no parallel. He has only a single speaker, but he creates a spirit world for her to converse with. The speaker is 'I', the other is always 'she'. The poet warns us from the outset that even the 'I' is not necessarily a stable human being: she is alive, ostensibly human, addressing a human audience in stanza 1, and yet in stanza 2 she remembers being a primordial fosterling in the giant world of death. The poet is preparing us for a poetic world of heightened imagination, in which *vǫlur*, reincarnated, remembered their former lives, gazed in trance at the hidden habitations of the cosmos, spoke with spirits under the night sky, had constantly close to them, talking, a 'she', a second self, another being, who communicated her own experiences. The poet creates this haunted, reverberating atmosphere well.

Einar Ólafur Sveinsson, commenting on the alternation of the pronouns

ek and *hón* in *Vǫluspá*, points out that 'it is well known that mediums in trance speak of themselves in the third person; the same happens in the case of the "split personality". The poet has known such phenomena from the *vǫlur* of his own time, and from there it has come into his poem'.[2] I too would relate the alternation between *ek* and *hón* in *Vǫluspá* to mediumistic practice known to the poet, but I would assume, because of his skill, and his reticence, in his use of this device, that he had already learned from the handling of it by other poets. His sophistication in the use of earlier poetic traditions is also evident from the fact that he has for the sibylline structure of his poem chosen two pre-existing sibylline models and interlocked them: (*a*) that of the didactic *vǫlva*, whose mission is to instruct mankind, like a sibyl in an Oracle (we know of no Norse analogue extant, but the poet may have done so), and (*b*) that of the prophetic *vǫlva* who tells Óðinn of Baldr's imminent death (a *vǫlva* encountered elsewhere only in *Baldrs Draumar*). The poet interlocks these two models by using a mediumistic play on the two *vǫlva*-personae, *ek* and *hón*. 'I' will be the living, teaching *vǫlva*, who reveals to men her occult knowledge, 'she' the prophetic *vǫlva*, who plays a vital part in the life of the gods themselves. Working—I suggest—from the existing tradition of the prophetic *vǫlva*, the poet has tacitly extended her role in his own poem. He introduces at first an uncharacterized 'she', very distant in time, who 'remembers' the first war in the world (21 – 4). She could be any kind of spirit communicating with the living *vǫlva*, such as one might expect in a *séance*. Then, closer in time, and closer to the now perjured gods (26), 'she' reappears, knowing Heimdallr's fears and gazing at the gushing fountain in which Óðinn has uselessly put his faith (27). This 'she' is ready to confront Óðinn with her scorn (28) and rise—with the satisfaction of his bribes—to the height of her prophetic stature (31).

Einar Ólafur summarized briefly the distinct use of 'I' and 'she' in the poem: 'If one examines the text, "I" occurs when the *vǫlva* addresses her audience in the beginning of the poem and when she speaks of her knowledge of past time and of the present (*man*, *veit*), while "she" is chiefly used in relation to the future and the *vǫlva*'s trance and visions'.[3] But as the poet places his references to 'I' and 'she' very sparingly, and if we look at *every* instance of these pronouns, we can see that his poem has a more intricate dramatic time-structure than Einar Ólafur suggests; not only is 'she' used in relation to the past, at a well-calculated moment in the poem (21), when

[2] Það er alkunna að miðlar í dái tala um sjálfa sig í þriðju persónu, sama gerist við persónuklofning. Þvílík fyrirbrigði hefur skáldið þekkt frá völum samtímans, og þaðan er það komið í kvæði hans. (324)

[3] Ef að er gáð, stendur *ek*, þegar völvan ávarpar áheyrendur í upphafi og þegar hún ræðir um vitund um liðinn tíma og nútíð (man, veit), en *hon* er helzt viðhaft um framtíð og um leiðslu og sýnir völunnar. (Sveinsson 324)

there is no question of trance or vision, but 'I' is used of seeing into the future—*fram sé ek lengra*—as one *vǫlva* scornfully outpaces the old knowledge of the other (43, 46, 55). How should we interpret the poet's meaning when for the first and only time he uses the past tense with 'I', in relation to the vision of Baldr's fate (31)? He interrupts the reported narration of the prophetic *vǫlva*'s visions, 'she saw . . .' (*sá hón vítt ok um vítt . . . Sá hón valkyrior . . .* 29/5, 30/1), with a startling change of person, 'I saw . . .' (*Ek sá Baldri . . . ørlǫg fólgin*, 31/1–4). These cannot be words the prophetic *vǫlva* addressed to Óðinn; she speaks to him in the present tense (28). Should we say that she is now telling the living *vǫlva* of her vision in the past, or that the living *vǫlva* is breaking in, declaring that she too had seen such a vision in the past? Or do they speak in unison of their identical experience? I suggest that the poet has designed this knot of tense and person to be a high dramatic moment on the imagined stage of his *séance*, when the clocks have melted and both *vǫlur* speak as one, from their different ages directly addressing mankind. The poet is beginning to dismantle his models of 'I' and 'she' and let the outlines of their initial distinctness fade, as the immediate present absorbs them both. After the weeping for Baldr (33), the *vǫlva* saw (*sá hón*, 34, 37, 38) the otherworld realms of pain and punishment; these are not things of the past, and verbs in the present tense now begin to thread their way through the text.

Until the old world is dead (54) we are not confronted again by the contrast of two *vǫlur* figures, *ek* and *hón*, except in the refrain of 43, 46, 55. Otherwise, an unspecified narrator now suffices—whom we would suppose to be the didactic *vǫlva* of the opening, carrying out her task, with only the repeated refrain cry—*Vitoð ér enn, eða hvat?*—to remind us of her presence. Why, then, has the poet revived the dichotomy in the refrain stanzas 43, 46, 55? If in these two lines,

Fiǫlð veit hón fræða—
fram sé ek lengra,

hón still refers to the prophetic *vǫlva* and *ek* to the living *vǫlva*, then the poet has deliberately arranged a role-reversal. The once forward-looking prophetess is regarded as the antiquarian, while the living *vǫlva* (for whom of course Baldr was dead before the prophetic *vǫlva* prophesied it) is now avidly looking ahead at the new events. Yet, ironically, that antiquarian knowledge, that *fræði*, becomes new news again, when another 'she' sees the great happening of the past repeating itself, and the earth rises 'a second time' for gods to live in (56):

Sér hón upp koma
ǫðro sinni
iǫrð ór ægi
iðiagrœna.

I have referred to *hón* here as 'another she', not for textual, but for subjective reasons. There is no textual reason why she should not 'be' the prophetic *vǫlva* 'she' again, 'seeing' in the present tense as in 27/5. Yet at this sudden moment of elation the reader rejoices in the newness of the unexpected visionary 'she', an almost celestial figure in her point of vantage above the rising earth; it seems unnecessary to relate her to any other image in the poem.

The poet is lavish with such surprises. He could, had he wished, have composed *Vǫluspá* with a single *vǫlva*-figure—*Þat man ek fólkvíg . . . Veit ek Heimdallar / hlióð um fólgit . . . Valði mér Herfǫðr / hringa ok men . . . Fiǫlð veit ek frœða, / fram sé ek lengra . . .*—in a way that Snorri would no doubt have preferred. But he has not done so, he has chosen instead the Norse sibylline mode of the *séance* and its spirit voices to 'naturalize' his Christian themes among Norsemen. So he ends his poem, subtly, in the Norse way, with the return of the prophetic spirit to her underworld of silence.

The dramatic frame of the poem is confirmed by R and H (there are fourteen instances of the alternating *ek* and *hón* in the parallel sections of the text).

Snorri makes no reference to the contents of the first and last stanzas of *Vǫluspá* (in which the dramatic frame of the poem is most clearly revealed), but he refers to the poem as *Vǫluspá* (*svá segir í Vǫluspá*) and introduces the list of dwarf-names (11 – 16) as the *vǫlva*'s utterance: *Ok þessi segir hón nǫfn þeira* (*SnE* 20, 21). In citations that refer to the *vǫlva* as 'she' in the poem, Snorri has substituted 'I' or another alternative (see *Vǫluspá Introduction* III).

The three sources are remarkable testimony to the manners of reception of an Eddic poem by readers of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

II. *The Sequence of Ideas: A Reading of the Poem in the Codex Regius Text*[4]

A. Prologue: the *vǫlva*'s authority (1 – 2)

Stanza 1 With serene formality a speaker calls for silence from men of all ranks. Though some of the terms she uses—*allar . . . kindir, meiri ok minni*—suggest

[4] The detailed argument and documentation on which this reading is based are given in the commentary. Translations in the discussion are intended to render the relevant sense of the ON, and are not necessarily identical to those in the parallel translation.

wide-ranging variety, she regards her audience in the single light of sanctity. They are hallowed—*helgar*—by the bond of a common divinity, their descent from a god. That god is Heimdallr, the prime mover of procreation in men, and himself the most archaic of divine births.

The speaker turns familiarly—so it would seem—to Óðinn, placing upon him the responsibility for the present occasion: 'You wish me to expound in this presence—*vel fyr telia*—the most ancient news I recall'.

The scene that rises to the mind is of a priestess in a hallowed assembly. Beside her stands a statue of Óðinn, armed: he is Valfǫðr, father of the slain in battle. The living are Heimdallr's sons, the dead are Óðinn's. Her human audience belongs to both.

The confident opening, the casual diction—*meiri ok minni . . . Vildo . . .*—and the unportentous phrasing of what is required of her—*forn spiǫll fira*, 'the world's old news'—give to the speaker a momentary air of normality.

This is dispelled by the next stanza. She remembers, not at once *forn spiǫll*, but her own infancy long ago: the figures around her, giants, and the landscape, the realms of death.

As she assembles her memories, she reveals her authority: knowledge of Stanza 2
the past learned at the knees of the first inhabitants of the cosmos, and knowledge of the future learned from the prescient dead. Her memory goes to the brink of time: she recalls the nine *íviðiur*, the 'wood-ogresses' who are the giantess-roots of the world tree: recalls them even before their holy offspring, Heimdallr, was born *við iarðar þrǫm*, 'at the edge of the earth' (*Hyndlulióð* 35), when he was still in gestation in the timber of their nine bodies *fyr mold neðan*, 'underground'.

Though the memories she reveals are awesome, there is no suggestion that she is unhuman. She was fostered by giants, but it is never said that she herself is a giant. She remembers the nine worlds of death beneath the earth, but we are not told that she had been roused from the grave, as the ogress-*vǫlva* in *Baldrs Draumar* was roused, irascible and reluctant, by the spells of Óðinn (*Baldrs Draumar* 4 – 5). On the contrary the poet leaves her nature unidentified and without physical image. Her vast memory invests her with a spiritual dominion, and her presence is wholly purged of the grotesque. She—and through her the poem—is calm, controlled, precise, until the growing horror of events disturbs even her composure.

Her sovereignty of mind, her detachment, are made apparent as she contemplates the mysteries of the cosmos, by the concrete and pragmatic term she uses for the world tree itself. Though transcendental, it is also existential—a *miǫtviðr*, a tree of measured sufficiency, supplying the existence of the universe. The poet plays here upon an idiom of husbandry: *miǫt*

is a man's correct calculation, measured estimate, of what he needs for his practical purposes, his shelter or his warmth:

Þurra skíða	*Of dry palings*
ok þakinna næfra	*and birch bark for roofing*
þess kann maðr miǫt,	*a man can know the measure he needs,*
ok þess viðar,	*and of the wood*
er vinnaz megi	*that will suffice*
mál ok missere.	*for three months and for six.*

(*Hávamál* 60)

The concept of a measured scheme, *miǫt*, for the tree, *viðr*, confirms the numerical exactitude of *nío heima, nío íviðiur*. All is planned and ordered, and at the beginning of the world this planned sufficiency appears immense. Yet by its nature all *miǫt* is finite, and fate itself may be seen as a measured thing, *miǫtuðr* (45). In the poet's use—perhaps his coinage—of the term *miǫtviðr* he associates the tree with its measured end.

The poet introduces no further direct reference by the *vǫlva* to herself until the tale of the establishment of the cosmos is almost complete (19), but he maintains her allusiveness of style, as of a person speaking of familiar things, a style specially designed for her (there is nothing like it elsewhere in Norse). It is the poet's way, firstly, of condensing the recital of events, and, secondly, of concealing the illogicalities in his mythological synthesis which a fuller exposition would betray.

B. The establishment of the cosmos (3 - 20)

1. *The beginnings* (*3 - 4/4*)

The evolution of the world is swiftly depicted in distinct, deftly integrated statements. In realistic terms the myths that the poet integrates are irreconcilable, but because of his brevity and skill in the selection and placing of detail this passes unnoticed.

He uses three independent myths of the origin of the world:

1. That of the giant birth of the world tree, axis of the universe and parent of life (cf. 2, 19).
2. That of the lifting of the first earth out of the primordial ocean (cf. 4).
3. That of the primordial giant corpse from which the earth and sky were fashioned (cf. 3, 4).

The first myth, that of the world tree, the god Heimdallr, son of nine giant mothers, is distinct from the other two myths of origins, in that it articulates a religious mystery; it is not in the first place a narrative legend.

The poet has, on that account, presented the three great images of the tree—its generation (2), its shedding of vital moisture upon the earth (19), its revelation as a sentient god guarding the world (27)—as the direct expression of a *vǫlva*'s psychic knowledge. The mystery of the tree is familiar and palpable to her. At first (in stanza 2) the poet holds this mystery outside of the chronological narrative of cosmic growth that he is about to give (in stanza 3: *Ár var alda* . . .). But later he integrates the images of the tree into his narrative theme of time, showing earthly vitality rooted in fate (19) and the axis of the world braced against attack (27). In the last brief glimpse of the tree (45), it is old and shaking, bare of any mystery, a part, now, of the destructible world.

To form the setting for the two remaining myths of the origin of the world, the poet combines three conventional ways of portraying the vacuous condition of pre-existence.

Stanza 3

Firstly, he itemizes the familiar furniture of the world that did not yet exist—sand, sea, waves, earth and heaven, and grass—to convey the desolation of absence. The poet of the *Wessobrunn Prayer* elaborates a similar melancholy picture of desertion—*noh sunna ni scein, noh māno ni liuhta*, 'neither sun shone, nor moon gave light'—before the world was created by God.

Secondly, he presents a single image of total vacuity, the endless yawning emptiness of the primordial void, the *Ginnungagap*. This traditional name is, etymologically speaking, a Gordian knot of ancient verbal elements signifying 'gaping', 'vacuous', 'vast', 'potent'. The poet gives a fresh vitality to the old name by reversing its elements and making of it a positive statement: at that time the void existed—*gap var ginnunga*—in strong contrast to the negatives that surround it.

Stanza 4

Thirdly, to provide for the eventual appearance of the earth, the poet turns to the notion of a primordial and seemingly vacuous element from which matter may emerge, namely water. He does not say that it was out of water that earth was first lifted, for he can only retain the haunting negation, 'no sand, no sea, no chill waves', with which he began his cosmogony, without offending the hearer's imagination, if he refrains from stating explicitly immediately in the next stanza that Burr's sons lifted land 'out of ocean'. That he intends this form of creation myth, however, is plain from his later stanza (56), where earth is seen rising 'a second time' out of ocean:

Sér hón upp koma	*She sees come up*
ǫðro sinni	*a second time*
iǫrð ór ægi . . .	*earth out of ocean* . . .

The poet is able to let the image of the empty aboriginal *gap* pass so smoothly into the implication of an ocean out of which earth may be lifted,

for two external reasons: (*a*) because in other Norse myths, which would be familiar to his audience, the primordial element out of which life first sprang was conceived of as water: so, according to *Vafþrúðnismál* 31, the first giant body—which is to be the substance of the cosmos—grew out of the freezing spume of waves:

Ór Élivágom	*From Snow Storm Waves*
stukko eitrdropar:	*sprang venom-cold drops:*
svá óx, unz varð ór iǫtunn . . .	*that so grew, till a giant emerged . . .*

and (*b*) because popular Norse superstition (or ironic humour) identified the mythological *Ginnungagap* with the wildest of real oceans known to Norse sailors, the 'vast chasm of the abyss', *inmane baratrum abyssi*, as Adam of Bremen called it, that surged at the northern limits of their world, like a remnant of the bleak gulf at the start of time that the ancient myths told of. The reminder of that bleak gulf's name in the deliberately reversed phrasing—*gap var ginnunga*—effectively makes the transition from the non-existence of the familiar landscape of the known world—sand, sea, waves—to the positive presence of the primordial waters that await their first event, the emergence of earth.

At the head of existence the poet has set the figure of Ymir the giant. He and the *gap* are the only things that 'are'.

Ár var alda,	*It was early in the ages*
þar er Ymir byggði.	*when Ymir made his dwelling.*

Ymir is placed there as a necessary antecedent for *Burs synir* (4/1), the giant's sons who are to be the first gods and who first lift up land from the primordial waters. That Ymir should have 'dwelt', *byggði*, gives him anthropomorphic associations, which prepare the imagination for the manual activities of the 'sons of Burr'—*ypðo . . . skópo* (4/2, 4).

Snorri's version of the first lines of stanza 3 is different:

Ár var alda,	*It was early in the ages*
þat er ekki var . . .	*when nothing existed . . .*

Snorri may be following an older poem, and the poet of *Vǫluspá* may have altered it to suit his own. For if, in the context of *Vǫluspá*, without the fullness of Snorri's mythography to guide us, we were told only that 'nothing existed' until these 'sons of Burr' moved on to the scene, where should we suppose they came from? With Ymir there, they are accounted for.

The poet knows that his audience will know at least two traditions about Ymir: (*a*) that all giants are descended from him: *Eru . . . iǫtnar allir / frá Ymi komnir* (*Hyndlulióð* 33), and (*b*) that earth was fashioned out of his flesh: *Ór Ymis holdi / var iǫrð um skǫpuð* (*Vafþrúðnismál* 21, *Grímnismál* 40). He relies on

the first tradition to establish Ymir as ancestor of *Burs synir*. The second tradition, that Ymir's corpse was used as the first primordial solid matter, conflicts with the variant creation legend he has chosen, that land was lifted out of water. He smoothly ignores the contradiction, however, and simply comments that it was the lifters of the land 'who fashioned famed Miðgarðr', *er miðgarð / mæran skópo* (4/3–4). The myth of the fashioning of earth from Ymir's flesh, sea from his blood, heaven from his skull, is well attested in Eddic and skaldic verse, and the poet's audience would no doubt await some reference to it after the emphatic introduction of Ymir dwelling in space. The poet satisfies them with his swift aside—*þeir er miðgarð / mæran skópo*—leaving them free to identify *biǫðom* (4/2) with the traditional corpse if they wish and implying that the necessary speed of his narrative will not allow him to specify exactly how this remodelling of primordial matter proceeded—as, for example, the poet of *Grímnismál* does:

en ór hans brám	*and from his [the giant's] eyelashes*
gerðo blíð regin	*the benign powers made*
miðgarð manna sonom.	*Miðgarðr for men's sons.*

(*Grímnismál* 41)

The poet eases his audacious synthesis of the two ill-fitting myths by subordinating syntactically, in a relative clause, his allusion to the myth for which he has no structural use. He places his narrative emphasis—*biǫðom um ypðo*—on the form of creation myth that he can use for his cyclic theme. At Ragnarǫk the earth sinks into the sea—*sígr fold í mar* (54)—and when the new era comes, it rises 'a second time' (56).

Of the three legends of cosmic origins that the poet shows he has known, that of earth emerging from the sea is the only one that will serve his cyclic theme. The poet has chosen it for that reason. A second Heimdallr or a second giant corpse could not have represented so spontaneously the natural repetitiveness of cosmic renewal.

2. *Sun and moon and the establishment of time* (*4/5 – 6*)

When the earth is lifted from the waters and Miðgarðr is shaped, the warmth of the sun shining from the south on the stony new realm provokes a verdure that the void notably lacked—*gras*. The 'grass' in this first age is the glorious, healing 'green leek', that dwarfs all other grasses, for in the first age the commonest things are superlative.

As growth starts, so does time, propelled by the sun and moon. Time is movement, change. From her zenith, her stance in the south, the sun cast Stanza 5

her right hand along the edge of the sky. Partnered by the moon, she purposes to set the sky revolving, as it is said in *Vafþrúðnismál* 23:

himin hverfa	*turn the sky*
þau skolo hverian dag	*they shall every day*
ǫldom at ártali.	*for men to reckon the years.*

On that account, in the next stanza of *Vǫluspá*, when the regular turning of the sky has started, the divine powers can name the common units of time—mornings and middays, born out of night—and establish chronology—*árom at telia* (6/8).

Into this traditional sequence of ideas on the start of time break six incantatory lines of pathetic fallacy: they depict the heavenly bodies in unhoused bewilderment, not 'knowing' their proper place or power. This is in abrupt contrast to the actions of sun and moon in the preceding lines, 4/5 – 5/4, where all is decisive and well placed: the sun shines correctly from the south, vigorously flings out her stronger hand to grasp the horizon; the moon is, correctly, her travelling companion. In the poem, the first act of the gods in their parliament is not to fix the heavenly bodies in their right places, but to make practical use of a heavenly routine that is clearly already fixed (6/5–10). I would regard lines 5/5–8 as an unskilled interpolation, drawn from a variant version of primordial times and attracted into the poem as a supplement to the repeated negations of stanza 3. The resulting conflict of statements about the behaviour of sun and moon can hardly be the work of the original poet, the most subtle of synthesizers (cf. 4/1–4).

The insertion of 5/5–8 into the text has caused the loss of the poet's second *helmingr*, just as the insertion of the *þula* of dwarf-names has caused the loss of the poet's text between stanzas 9 and 17.

To achieve his span of cosmic history the poet has cut traditions sometimes to the briefest of allusions. He does not, for instance, explain the sudden existence of sun and moon. In stanza 6, however, he shows his knowledge of old genealogical legends of the cosmos, when he refers to the times of day as night's 'descendants'. The only Norse accounts before Snorri of the origin of sun and moon are also of a genealogical nature. According to *Vafþrúðnismál* 23, the sun and moon are children of the same father; the sun herself will have a daughter who, after Ragnarǫk, will tread her mother's smooth path in the sky (*Vafþrúðnismál* 47). It would seem likely that in the myths familiar to the poet and his audience it was genealogy that accounted for the sun and moon, just as it did for the times of day, and that we have not lost from the poem any physical account of the creation of sun and moon. Snorri is unique in making the Norse gods establish all the luminaries by taking sparks from *Muspellsheimr* and setting

them in *Ginnungagap*. He degrades the brother-and-sister Sun and Moon of *Vafþrúðnismál* tradition into impostors, falsely named by their father, and by so doing betrays the secondary nature of his own myth (*SnE* 17–18).

3. *The gods and the refrain of power* (6, *cf.* 9, 23, 25)

The first hint of civilization, the calculation of time, is accompanied by the protocol of government. Divine powers now emerge, with the trappings of sanctity, responsibility, and rule. The poet has traced their evolution with great economy of words, in a sequence of appellations progressing from the giant proto-gods, *Burs synir*, cosmic weight-lifters and sculptors of primordial matter, to *regin á rǫkstóla*, judicious potencies enthroned, numinous committee-men—*ginnheilog goð . . . um þat gættuz*—who with due ceremony ensure the smooth maintenance of their universe. This brief picture (6/1–4), which epitomizes the gods' active controlling power as they stride purposefully to their seats, the poet uses as a refrain to link together distinct episodes of the gods' history, until, on the edge of Ragnarǫk, it shrinks from a vigorous, glowing scene to a small statement— Stanza 6

Æsir ro á þingi	*The Æsir are in council*

—as their power is overwhelmed in the giants' uproar (49).

That the gods are themselves subject to the newly ordered course of time, the poet has indicated by his ambivalent, and unparalleled, term for their thrones: *rǫkstólar*. *Rǫk* can imply 'authority', but it can also imply 'fate'. The *rǫk*, the course of happenings that develops under the gods' control, becomes a destiny—*ragnarǫk*—that carries them with it.

4. *The golden age* (7 – 8)

The focus on the gods becomes closer: they become more familiar, more secular. We see them in all kinds of activity—building, forging, merry-making, betting—gods in the image of man. The poet now calls them by the cult name men use for them, *æsir*, and appropriately shows them raising their own temples and altars—archetypes that men will copy—and fashioning wealth, the symbolic basis of good fortune for gods and men. But we may note that the poet also places these fortunate gods upon a plain whose name perpetuates the theme of change that the inauguration of revolving time began: *Iðavǫllr*, the field that comes and goes, retreats, returns. Stanza 7

Relaxing in a grassy meadow over their magical gaming-board, they gamble for gold—they have enough of it to play with: Stanza 8

var þeim vettergis	*for them there was no*
vant ór gulli.	*want of gold.*

Their happy game is the image of the radiant first age of the world: no lack, no diminution, a perpetual motion of profit. And no rivalry—they play only against themselves. Their game makes the world go round in felicity, but it has its hazards. Others may want to play it. And indeed their self-satisfaction provokes challenge from a different world, one that had faded from the hearers' memory as the bright cosmos grew. Out of the realms of the giants three young ogresses come with their uncanny powers and bring to an end the gods' wealth of gold. I have suggested—as the poet does not tell us the full story—that the girls play the gods for their board and its golden pieces, and as the gods see they are losing, in their fury of temper they overturn or break the board, refusing to play any more, leaving the gaming pieces fallen on the ground—*í túni*—not to be picked up until they are found again *í grasi*, ready for the *tafl*-game of the next golden age (58).

For the gods of the first world, however, the age of automatic gold is over. They underestimated their giant visitors, just as Fróði did, when he made slaves of two itinerant giant girls—'You chose us for strength . . . but did not ask about ancestry' (*Grottasǫngr* 8)—until in rebellion they shattered his gold-grinding mill-stone.

A perpetually gold-winning board-game, a perpetually gold-grinding mill—to such illusions of permanence the giants will always put an end.

5. *Gold-mining dwarfs* (9)

Stanza 9

When they lose their birthright of easy gold, the gods arrange for an alternative source, through the creation of creatures who will reside where gold is, in the stony veins of the earth. The dwarfs are to be made of the same elements as the sea and mountains—which are the blood and bones of the cosmic giant Ymir—and they will have their home in his rocky limbs (cf. 49/6, 7).

Now that the gods are no longer their own goldsmiths (cf. 7), it is to the dwarfs that they will turn for their golden needs: a boar for Freyr, an otter's wergild, long hair for the clipped head of Sif (*SnE* 122–3, 127).

6. *An interpolation and lacuna in the text* (10 – 16)

Stanzas 10 – 16

The allusion to the creation of the dwarfs in stanza 9 has attracted into the poem from another source the account of their making—out of earth—in stanza 10, followed by a long *þula* of dwarf-names. This interpolation coincides with the loss of at least one stanza of the original poem. The lost text would have included an introduction to the next event, the creation of man; as it is, this event begins in mid-sentence, 'until . . .'.

7. *The first man and woman and the tree of life* (17 – 20)

Giants, gods, dwarfs are in existence; only mankind is not yet there. Though some prelude to the creation of man must be lost from the poem—and no other source supplies this loss—the act itself is clear enough. Stanza 17

The four stanzas 17 – 20 form a finely composed sequence, in which the poet identifies the kinship of man and world tree.

Moved by the impulse of power and benevolence—*ǫflgir ok ástgir*—three Æsir come to the 'house' that is Miðgarðr, as yet empty of man. They find on the shore, *á landi*—for Miðgarðr is surrounded by seas—two bits of wood, Askr and Embla, with no powers and no destiny—*ørlǫglausa*.

Their inert state of impotence, like that of the empty primordial world (3), is itemized in negatives.

All the elements of life that Askr and Embla do not possess the Æsir punctiliously supply. The gifts they give have a rich ambiguity, as if the poet meant to arrest the hearers' attention with the fullness of the senses of his words. Life and breath—*ǫnd*—are given as one gift. Divine inspiration and the immortal intellect—*óð*—are given as another. The physical gifts—the covering of flesh and blood—*lá*—on the wooden bones, the graces of manners and utterance—*læti*—and the wholesome colouring and countenance of humanity—*lito góða*—come last. These new beings are not primitive or simple physically or mentally, but as subtly endowed as Milton's first pair. Stanza 18

As if in response to this tale of the first human Askr, the *vǫlva*'s mind turns to the world tree. She arrests her narrative of events to affirm the existence of a greater Askr towering—*hár baðmr*—over the valleys of the world: *Ask veit ek standa*. She depicts it gleaming with fecundity, nourishing the earth: a tree no longer in the womb of ogresses underground (2), but green against the sky. Both Askar, parent tree and human branch, have been radiantly transfigured by their emergence into life. Stanza 19

But for both Askar this life in them is inseparable from fate. The great Askr stands evergreen over the well of fate, as if the greenness—*litr góðr*—were dependent upon the water of destiny at its roots. The human Askr was *ørlǫglauss* before he breathed with life, but with his 'birth' fatal entities of time—Past, Present, and Future—determine his destiny, as surely as the norns twine the strands of fate—*ørlǫgþættir*—for the infant hero Helgi (*Helgakviða Hundingsbana* I 2 – 3). Stanza 20

The poet has drawn together in these four stanzas, 17 – 20, several distinct traditional notions: he links each one of these notions to another by a single point of likeness. The myth of the fashioning of the first man and woman out of wood is linked to the myth that the world tree is the parent of mankind: the bridge between them is the common material—the ὕλη—of

man and tree. The world tree has at its foot a well of fate. In that water women-of-the-lake live, who emerge to determine the destinies of men. So the poet moves, conjoining, from *Askr* to *Askr*, from *brunnr* to *sær*, to the three lake-maidens, wise from the oracular element they inhabit, who come to cut upon the material of man himself—a piece of wood—*á skíði*, the lottery mark, the rune, that decides his fortune.

The original condition of fatelessness of the two wooden pieces—*ørlǫglausa*—which seemed so pathetic at the opening of the sequence, finds ironic rectification at the close, with the institution of the fatal lottery, *ørlǫg seggia*, into which the marked man, the wooden lot, is cast.

C. Progress to Ragnarǫk and the dissolution of the world (21 – 53)

This complex central part of his history the poet has designed as a preparation, narrative, moral, and emotional, for his depiction of the ending and renewing of the world. For his new purpose the poet introduces a new sibylline perspective, that of a *vǫlva* explicitly contemporary with crucial events in the life of the gods, to whom they turn for her superior powers of vision (on the *vǫlva* figures see *Vǫluspá Introduction* I. C).

1. *Narrative prelude: three events before Ragnarǫk (21 – 33)*

Out of the rich variety of 'events' in the myths of the gods known to him, the poet has selected three for his purpose:

1. The divine war of Æsir and Vanir.
2. The giant builder's attempt to possess the goddess Freyja, the sun and moon.
3. The killing of Baldr.

The poet links these events thematically both with each other and with the cyclic course of Ragnarǫk and the world's renewal. I hope to make this clear as each event is discussed in detail.

The poet's version of these three myths is allusive in the extreme: riddling for us, with our fragmentary knowledge of the traditions he knew, and, no doubt, demanding enough for his original audience. He expects a very full acquaintance with the narratives behind his allusions (e.g. in stanza 25) and a mental agility quick to catch the connections he is making, perhaps for the first time, between distinct myths. His presentation of a story may be in an epitome so succinct that events are telescoped, and a single word or phrase may be designed to bring a host of relevant associations into play without weakening the focus of the verse by fuller exposition. The details he chooses to select from his sources, and to stress

most vividly, indicate his poetic intentions. His enigmatic style reaches its height in this section of the poem.

(i) *The divine war of Æsir and Vanir (21 – 24)*

There are two wars fought in the poem, the first in the world and the last. Stanza 21
The first ensures that the gods will have the power to survive the second.

The living *vǫlva* (as I shall call her), who speaks of herself as 'I' in stanzas 1, 2, 19, now reports the memories of a second *vǫlva* figure, 'she', who communicates with her:

Þat man hón fólkvíg,	*She remembers the war,*
fyrst í heimi . . .	*the first in the world . . .* (21)

In her recollections of this war six scenes stand out. The first scene is not, however, as we might expect, a scene of pitched battle between armies—*fólkvíg*—but of an attack upon an individual, a female. Gullveig—whose name associates 'gold' with two known senses of *veig*, 'martial strength' and 'intoxicating drink'—was struck with spears and burnt. Neither form of assault killed her: after the third burning, as the *vǫlva* comments, in the present tense, 'she still lives' (*þó hón enn lifir*). I suggest that the Æsir—for she is burnt in Óðinn's hall (21/5–6)—are desecrating and trying to destroy a golden image of the 'bride of the Vanir', *Vanabrúðr* Freyja, whose divinity characteristically manifests itself in a multiplicity of distinct figures with distinct names (*SnE* 38, 126).

We have a parallel for just such a female idol as I take Gullveig to be—gold-adorned, and with the sensual and warlike propensities of Freyja—in the tutelary goddess of Jarl Hákon, Þorgerðr Hǫlgabrúðr. Legendary tradition claimed that she defeated the formidable Jómsvíkingar for him in 994, bringing against them storm and colossal hailstones. She was herself seen fighting in Hákon's host, each finger launching an arrow, each arrow reaching its prey. Gullveig's fighting role in the Æsir–Vanir war might have been of this magical kind, while her golden idol would remain in its temple, vulnerable to the Æsir, just as Þorgerðr's idol was to Óláfr Tryggvason.

When the Æsir try to stop Gullveig's hostile witchery by burning her, they find she is an indestructible elixir, reborn purified—as burnt gold will be—from every killing. When Óláfr sets fire to Þorgerðr, she is burnt to ashes. For the Christian, her power of renewal no longer exists.

The poet avoids any exposition of the motives and strategies of the war; we are meant to know them. He confines his narrative to the *vǫlva*'s memories of actions that convey the vehemence and frustration of the Æsir in their dealings with the Vanir.

The second scene from the Æsir–Vanir war recalls the insidious passage Stanza 22

of this bright, elusive deity—now in human form with a human *vǫlva*'s name, Heiðr—through the homes of men, as *vǫlva* and *seiðkona*, prophesying prosperity, seducing human society into allegiance to her cult—the cult of the Vanir—by the fascination of the occult practices of *seiðr* and the ribaldries of its rituals. To those who do not subscribe to such a cult—the Æsir, for instance—these rites are repellent, obscene, reprehensible, and corrupting to the women-folk, who model themselves on Freyja, their favourite—an 'ill Vanabrúðr' to the Æsir—palpably manifest in her *seiðkona*.

Stanza 23 With the Vanir gaining so strong a hold on the hearts of men, the Æsir could see their own worship and tribute waning. The third scene from the *vǫlva*'s memory is of the powers striding once again to their thrones, to ask themselves in indignation whether they should endure such loss, share the revenues of godhead with the Vanir, allow them to join with them in a single sacred community.

Stanza 24 On the heels of their question comes the next scene from the past. Óðinn flung his spear over the Vanir host. The powers in council must—we assume—have decided upon a negative answer and determined to reject the upstarts.

Here the poet emphasizes that the primordial war was not as yet over—*þat var enn fólkvíg / fyrst í heimi*. As it was the first war in the world, this would be the first time that Óðinn had used his magic spear-cast, which was to become—in tradition—his unbeatable military trick, dooming his enemies to defeat and death. On this occasion, however, it did not have that effect, for the two last swift scenic glimpses are of the Vanir's successes: the Æsir's wooden ramparts have been shattered, and the Vanir are not corpses on Óðinn's field of slaughter, doomed by his spear, but alive, digging their heels into that field with vigour—*knátto . . . vǫllo sporna*. The phrase the poet uses here resembles one used of the successful birth of two babes who 'kicked the ground' when released from the womb by the incantations of Oddrún:

ríkt gól Oddrún	*powerful charms Oddrún chanted,*
ramt gól Oddrún	*potent charms Oddrún chanted,*
bitra galdra	*savage spells*
at Borgnýio.	*over Borgný.*
Knátti mær ok mǫgr	*A girl and a boy*
moldveg sporna . . .	*kicked the ground . . .*

(*Oddrúnargrátr* 7 – 8)

The poet—I suggest—has telescoped his narrative of the war, focussing on the success of the Vanir and omitting to state what preceded it. If, however, we follow the hint of parallelism in phrases *knátto . . . vǫllo sporna*

and *knátti . . . moldveg sporna*, and note that the term 'born' is used of the revival of Gullveig after her burning (21/7–8):

þrysvar brendo	*three times they burned her*
þrysvar borna . . .	*three times reborn . . .*

we could suppose that the Vanir—like Gullveig—have revived 'reborn' from Óðinn's spear-cast—perhaps frequently repeated, *opt, ósialdan*—and the Æsir find to their dismay that their victims are—as she was—'still living'.

There is a significant parallel to this military situation in the legend of the *Hjaðningavíg*—the battle, or slaughter, of the men of Heðinn. That *víg* became a perpetually renewed battle, when Hildr Hǫgnadóttir each night raised the slain forces of her father and of her abductor, Heðinn, so that each day the killing might continue until Ragnarǫk (*SnE* 153–5).

The poet of *Vǫluspá* tells us that it is through a form of magic utterance—*vígspá*—that the Vanir are able to walk the earth again. It is by magic utterance too that Oddrún, acting as 'earth-mother', or midwife, brings the vigorous children to birth. The poet Bragi, who tells of the *Hjaðningavíg*, does not, in the stanzas that Snorri cites from the *Ragnarsdrápa*, specifically attribute magic utterance to Hildr, but he calls her a witch, *fordæða*, and adds an ironic epithet, *fengeyðandi*, 'booty-wasting', pointing out the fact that by so assiduously raising up the dead from the battlefield and allowing neither side to be the conqueror, she deprives the pillager of his accustomed revenue.

As a witch and a commander of the dead, Hildr—a Norse Bellona, for her name means 'War'—reflects the character of the goddess Freyja. Freyja is the arch-witch, mistress of *seiðr* (Loki calls her *fordæða*, *Lokasenna* 32), and she has authority over the dead equal to Óðinn's:

hálfan val	*half of the slaughter*
hón kýss hverian dag,	*she selects every day,*
en hálfan Óðinn á.	*and half Óðinn has.*

(*Grímnismál* 14)

Hildr brings the dead to life. Freyja brings the living into the world; she has the talisman of birth, the necklace-girdle drawn from the sea. In the Norseman's metaphor, resurrection from death is a birth, and death a gestation of life. In this realm of transformations Freyja's power lies.

By building upon these traces of analogy in other texts with the events and ideas glimpsed in the allusive text of *Vǫluspá*, we can see the outlines of the myth that underlay the truce between the Æsir and the Vanir, their union in a single divine 'guild' (*gildi*).

As Snorri says, the war of the Æsir and Vanir ended because neither side

could vanquish the other (*Ynglinga Saga* ch. 4). The deadlock was only resolved by their union. By this union the unfailing killing power of Óðinn was united with the unfailing regenerative power of Freyja. Death became no more than the necessary condition for the renewal of life, a sacrifice made to ensure the future. So Freyja became, in social terms, the gods' *blótgyðja*, their 'priestess of sacrifice' (as Snorri says). Her magic knowledge, her *seiðr*, ensured that their sacrificial rites did not fail.

(ii) *The giant builder's attempt to possess the goddess Freyja (25 – 26)*

The war between the Æsir and the Vanir had changed the constitution of the gods, and introduced into the Æsir community deities who were professionally, as it were, masters in the art of reviving life after death—an art the gods will have great need of at Ragnarǫk.

Stanza 25 In the next episode their possession of this divine power is threatened. Now the gods see how disastrous it would have been if the *Vanabrúðr*—the goddess whom the Æsir had once tried to destroy—had indeed been lost. Again the giants are encroaching. They had put an end to the golden age of the gods (8), and now they plan to possess Freyja and steal away the divine power to live again. It is to this myth that the poet now alludes.

Assuming that his audience will know the outcome of the gods' famous first war without further exposition, the poet moves on, letting the tale of the giant who came to the gods disguised as a stone-mason (unctuously offering to build a wall round Ásgarðr 'as a protection against the giants') fit into his text as a natural consequence of the war. For the gods badly need a replacement for their battered wooden *borðveggr* (24), and who could provide it better than one of those legendary rock-shifters, the giants? (cf. *Grottasǫngr* 11). And the giants, no doubt, have noted that the gods have a beautiful new goddess. A wall for a wife. What exchange could be better?

The full tale of this comedy is told only by Snorri (*SnE* 45–7). The disguised giant offered the gods a contract: he would build the wall in three seasons and receive as fee Freyja and the sun and moon. The gods converted this offer into a wager: the builder must finish the wall in a single winter, and if any scrap of the work remained undone by the first day of summer, he would get nothing from them. And he must have no man to help him. He therefore asked if he might have the help of his horse. It was Loki who advised that he should. With predictably frightening results.

From the story the poet reproduces only two scenes: (*a*) the council of all the powers when they found themselves on the brink of disaster, and (*b*) the smashing of the presumptuous giant by Þórr. In (*a*), the council scene, the poet shows what the gods saw in their appalled thoughts. The poet knows that his audience will know that the builder was about to complete the wall—with the help of his herculean horse—in the impossibly short time

deliberately fixed for him, and that he would at any moment carry off with him his wages—Freyja and the sun and moon—solemnly pledged to him by oath-bound covenant.

The gods in council had seen the builder's progress; they knew that the first day of summer would be their last dawn. Already the air about them seemed *lævi blandit*—malignly touched by the deadliness of perpetual dark; they saw Freyja already delivered, wedded, to the builder. She was not now a sensual witch in their eyes—an *ill brúðr*—but a tragic figure, that 'girl of Óðr's' who wept golden tears, and was lovely even in her weeping—*it grátfagra goð* (*SnE* 38, 110, 126).

By the swift allusion in his phrase *Óðs mey*, the poet recalls the mourning aspect of the goddess, when she goes, Isis-like, seeking her departed husband (as Snorri tells). This is her winter wretchedness, her barrenness, and that of the world in sympathy with her. If she were lost for ever to the gods, that winter of the world would never end. Such a fear gives a foretaste of Ragnarǫk, when the sunshine would grow black (40) and a monstrous winter ravage the earth (*Vafþrúðnismál* 44).

Who had brought the gods to this pass? They looked round for a culprit. The poet gives the lightest of verbal touches to show the answer to their questions. The culprit was, as usual, their redeemer. If the air—*lopt*—seemed laced with ruin—*lævi blandit*—who would be responsible but Loptr himself, Loki *inn lævísi*, connoisseur of disaster, expert in blending evil with the good things of the gods, whether it is their mead—*blend ek þeim svá meini miǫð* (*Lokasenna* 3)—or their air.

Omitting any hint of the hilarious solution that Loki hit upon—to turn himself into a filly and lure away the builder's indispensable stallion, so that the wall could not be finished in time—the poet focuses on the last scene of the story (which seems in Snorri's version no more than a conventional epilogue): the killing of the builder, now exposed as a giant, by Þórr. Explaining nothing, the poet shows only a furious Þórr leaping up with zealous satisfaction to annihilate the giant—for who would keep an oath to such a monster? Stanza 26

Á gengoz eiðar,	*Violated were the oaths,*
orð ok særi,	*the vows and sworn pledges,*
mál ǫll meginlig,	*all the words of weight*
er á meðal vóro.	*that were between them.*

All done in one explosive moment.

In his intensely cryptic presentation of this tale, the poet throws into relief three of its constituent elements:

1. The compulsive disastrousness of Loki *inn lævísi* that almost destroys the world.

2. The figure of the weeping goddess, who can no longer hope for a living lord when she is married into the giant realm of death (cf. *Skírnismál* 31, 35).
3. The error of the indignant gods when they break their oaths to the deceitful giant.

These narrative elements find their counterparts—another mischief of Loki's, another goddess weeping, other oaths made vain—in the next event, the killing of Baldr.

(iii) *The killing of Baldr and its prelude* (*26 – 32*)

(*a*) The oaths. In stanza 26 the poet has a double purpose in emphasizing the broken oaths: he means (i) to warn his audience that the error was ominous, and (ii) to indicate the price that the gods paid for it. This was not just another case of a ring-oath cynically sworn and broken by Óðinn (*Hávamál* 110), for which he is never penalized. These oaths sworn by the gods to the giant—even though he deceived them—had consequence.

A contrast in tone between the two halves of stanza 26 underlines the gravity of the oath-breaking. The first half is emotional, fiery with rage and triumph, the second is objective, heavy with reckoning, as the weight of the sworn oaths is borne in on the mind—*eiðar, orð, sœri, mál meginlig*. There is irony, at once comic and ominous, in Þórr's swelling sense of moral outrage at the giant's impudence—

hann sialdan sitr,	*he seldom sits idle*
er hann slíkt um fregn!	*when he hears such a thing!*

when he is committing a moral error himself, breaking the oaths of the gods.

It is ancient knowledge that oath-breaking will have ugly consequences, as the valkyrie Sigrdrífa warns her hero:

Grimmar limar [MS. *simar*]	*Bitter branches*
ganga at trygðrofi.	*go to troth-breaking.*
Armr er vára vargr.	*Wretched is the ravener of vows.*

(*Sigrdrífumál* 23)

Within the story of the giant builder, however, as Snorri tells it, there are no ominous consequences to the gods' oath-breaking. The gods win the wager, and the giant was simply a fool to trust them. But a Norse poet, whose subtle profession trained him in the perception and exploitation of likenesses and parallels, could observe—from his stock of myths—that 'a time would come' in the traditional history of the gods when they also would put their trust in oaths, and they would be fooled too. This time the

oaths are not broken, but deficient: there is one oath unsworn—the mistletoe's—that destroys the rest, justifying the proverbial fear: *Eið láta þú . . . einn . . . alla verða*, 'Do not let one oath invalidate all' (Sigvatr Þórðarson, *Vestrfararvísur* 8).

In his emphasis on the gods' oaths, giving all the synonyms for 'oath' in a manner that suggests a binding legal formula as well as the great number and variety of oaths sworn, the poet points ahead to the innumerable solemn oaths that every creature, every substance swears not to harm Baldr. Once again we depend on Snorri for a full story (*SnE* 63–5). When Frigg has exacted all these oaths, and had them witnessed, the gods have a heady sense of security. For a halcyon moment they are convinced that their charmed life can go on for ever. They devise a sport—*skemtun*—out of the saving oaths. Exultantly (*þótti þetta ǫllum mikill frami*, as Snorri says) they pelt Baldr and hack at him, unable to hurt him, on the very ground of their sacred assembly. Tempting providence. So the envious and assiduous Loki, resenting Baldr's impunity (*líkaði honum illa, er Baldr sakaði ekki*), finds out that Frigg had thought one thing too young to take the oath, the mistletoe, and she had never asked it. It is the one 'weapon' that can kill Baldr without breaking an oath.

With ingenious succinctness, to show the fatal link he is making between the breaking of the oaths that assure the giant builder's safety and the circumventing of the oaths that protect Baldr's life, the poet lets the second happening be 'read into' the account of the first by using phrases with double meaning.

So, *á gengoz eiðar* (26/5) may signify 'oaths were infringed, violated', but also 'oaths had equivalent rating', in legal terms 'cancelled each other out'. The phrase *á gengoz* occurs with this second significance in *Reykdœla Saga* ch. 18, after the fight at Geirastaðir: *sú var gørð þeira, at á gengusk vígin húskarlanna*, 'this was the settlement they made, that the killings of the house-carls were reckoned equivalent, cancelled each other out'. In *Vǫluspá*, in an instant of insight into fate's balance sheet, the *vǫlva* has seen the gods' perjury as 'paid for' by the killing of Baldr.

The phrase that closes this stanza—*á meðal vóro* [MS. *fóro*]—may also be endowed with a double meaning. Oaths and solemn affirmations 'were [MS. went] between' the gods and the builder, when they made their commercial pact and gave *grið*—promise of personal safety—to the builder. Similar oaths of *grið* 'existed, stood, intervened between' Baldr and his death.

For the translation parallel to the text I have adopted this second reading.

By associating the two ineffectual oath-swearings through verbal ambiguity at this moment of the killing of the giant, the poet implies—for

those who understand his riddle—that a moral judgement resides in the *forn rǫk*—the ancient course—of events. The myth of the giant builder will have been chosen as the 'second event' before Ragnarǫk, (i) because it dramatically unveiled the dangers of Ragnarǫk ahead, now escaped by a hair's breadth: no sun, no moon, no life renewed each year, and (ii) because it contained the motif of oath-swearing and oath-breaking which could be brought into ominous relationship with his 'third event' before Ragnarǫk, the killing of Baldr. No other myth that we know could have served so well.

Stanza 27 (*b*) The *vǫlva* involved: a *vǫluspá* within *Vǫluspá*. From the note of ill-omen sounded by the oath-breaking in stanza 26, the poet develops a theme of dread. He never again shows the divine world as a scene of carefree gaming, or confident giant-smashing, or even of dignified councils, but as a world of gods secretly on guard, in the darkness of night probing the future.

The cause of this change in the gods' world is the premonition they are given of Baldr's death, the intimation of their own mortality, when Baldr has unquiet dreams (*Baldrs Draumar* 1), just such dreams as haunt a human hero before his killing.

To open the theme of dread, the poet does not tell of Baldr's evil dreams, but reverts instead to the figure of the *vǫlva*, the eye-witness of the deeds of the gods, whom he first introduced into the poem for her recollections of the gods' first war:

Þat man hón fólkvíg	*She remembers the war,*
fyrst í heimi . . .	*the first in the world . . .*

At that point in the poem, the verb 'remembers', though in the present tense, did not evoke the immediate presence of the *vǫlva*. 'Remembering' kept her in the past, aloof from the happenings of the present, and the narrative of the deeds of the gods—their war, their wager with the giant builder—unfolded without any further reference to her. But now, in the shadow of the oath-breaking, she emerges as intensely alive, herself an actor in events, knowing and seeing—*Veit hón . . . sér hón*—in the present moment (27).

What she knows and sees are the anxieties of the gods in the face of Ragnarǫk. Her insights spring from the tree and the well, the secret heart of the world, and are expressed in visionary terms.

(1) Heimdallr as watchman. Beneath the holy tree that is *heiðvanr*—'accustomed to bright mead' from the well at its foot—the *vǫlva* 'knows' that the miraculous hearing (*hlióð*) of Heimdallr is couched. Tree of the world, he is the divine sentinel. To catch all sounds, his 'ear' is to the

ground, where his tree-roots in the nine realms of the underworld attend the vibrations of the giants' coming.

She knows that beneath the tree the sound (*hlióð*) of Heimdallr's horn lies silent. It will be heard at Ragnarǫk (45). Until then the horn stays, a drinking horn for the mead of wisdom, by the well at the foot of the tree. Sigrdrífa speaks of this horn, dripping runes, in a distinct mythological context in *Sigrdrífumál* 13 (see (2) below).

The poet here employs the two senses of *hlióð* to recall both Heimdallr's 'hearing' and his 'sound'—that is, his echoing horn. Like any good sentinel, he hears and is heard.

It is by the second implicit allusion, to the horn of alarm, that the full significance of the *vǫlva*'s knowledge at this particular moment of time is conveyed, because it gives the new immediate context of Heimdallr's 'listening'. Heimdallr—*vǫrðr goða*—has always listened, but whereas once what he heard were sounds of life—the wool growing on sheep's backs or the grass growing on the ground (*SnE* 33)—now it will be sounds of death, of the giants' coming.

By deliberately imposing, in hermetic manner, the 'sound' of alarm upon the 'listening' of the god, the poet turns what would have been a piece of commonplace mythological knowledge—as, for example, in Snorri: 'Heimdallr . . . is watchman of the gods and sits there at heaven's end to guard against hill-giants' (*SnE* 32–3)—into a dramatic and specifically timed anticipation of Ragnarǫk.

(2) Óðinn's old-world runes—*Fimbultýs fornar rúnar*. The hint of a visual element in the first half of the stanza, in the image of the tree, is vividly developed in the second, as the *vǫlva*'s thought moves from what she knows to what she sees. The bright mead that is the tree's nurture (cf. *heiðvǫnom*) appears to her now as a river welling up with loamy—that is, fertile—flood from the 'pledge' (*veð*) of Óðinn. This pledge is his own eye, deposited in the well of Mímir at the foot of the tree (as the *vǫlva*'s words to Óðinn in the next stanza indicate, 28/7–13). According to Snorri (*SnE* 22), Óðinn gave this pledge for a drink of mead from that well of knowledge.

No single extant myth corresponds to the *vǫlva*'s vision of a fertile river gushing from Óðinn's eye. To create for the *vǫlva* a vision that relates directly to his theme at this moment of the poem—the approach of Ragnarǫk—the poet has drawn elements from three variant legends of Óðinn's acquisition of wisdom.

The primary legend that the poet uses is that of Óðinn's bargain with Mímir, an eye for a drink. This explains why Óðinn's eye is in the mead-well of Mímir (28) and why it should be called a 'pledge' (27). But it does not explain the gushing river—*á sér hon ausaz*. This is illuminated, however, by stanzas 13 and 18 – 19 of *Sigrdrífumál*.

In a mysterious and elaborate sequence the sagacious valkyrie Sigrdrífa traces the origin of the flow of wisdom—symbolized as 'thought-runes', *hugrúnar*—into the world of gods, elves, and men. Here wisdom is not a draught that Óðinn has drunk and regurgitated for the benefit of the world, as in the case of the mead of poetry stolen from the giants. By a more subtle and magical process he 'interpreted' (*réð*) the thought-runes, 'carved them' (*reist*) and 'pondered them' (*um hugði*) 'from out of the liquid' (*af þeim legi*) that had brimmed over from a skull and a horn, which, it would seem, rose from, or hung over, the well of mead.

These runes of heady provenance were carved on innumerable objects—on the teeth of Óðinn's horse Sleipnir, on the nail of a norn, on a bear's paw . . .—then scraped off and stirred about in 'the holy mead'—*hverfðar við inn helga miǫð*—and sent far and wide—*á víða vega*—into the world. These runes, thus moistened with sanctity, may be used for good fortune—*at heillom*—as long as the world lasts, that is, until the powers are rent—*unz riúfaz regin*—at Ragnarǫk.

Sigrdrífa establishes an image of Odinic runic wisdom as a world-flooding stream originating in mead and sanctified by mead, but she does not use any term that suggests this branching flow of wisdom was fecundating (cf. *á . . . aurgom forsi*). The association of wisdom and fertility is found, however, not only in the punning use of *fróði*, 'wise and fertile', as an epithet for Freyr in *Skírnismál* 1, 2, but also in the context of Óðinn's acquisition of the mead of poetry, when he describes his new vitality after a drink of the precious mead—*drykk . . . ens dýra miaðar*—from the giant's cave:

Þá nam ek frævaz	*Then I began to grow fecund*
ok fróðr vera . . .	*and be wise . . .*

(*Hávamál* 141)

Here in *Hávamál*, as in *Sigrdrífumál*, there is a tone of rejoicing over the wisdom that Óðinn has brought into the world, a sense of confidence in a future rich in the promise of power through knowledge. This is not so in *Vǫluspá*. The *vǫlva*'s sardonic tone borders on insult when she tells Óðinn that she knows where he has 'hidden' his eye (much as Loki mocks Týr for lacking the hand that he had pledged, for the sake of all the gods, in the jaws of the chained wolf, *Lokasenna* 38). There is no suggestion in her words (28/7–13) that Óðinn's act was either laudable or fruitful. For times have changed. When Óðinn acquired wisdom as the legends in *Hávamál* and *Sigrdrífumál* tell, he was like a culture-hero in the early world, when the rending of the powers seemed a long way off (there can hardly be any irony in the phrase *unz riúfaz regin* in the context of *Sigrdrífumál* 19). In *Vǫluspá*, by contrast, allusion to Óðinn's acquisition of wisdom is not made in the

course of the history of the early world (which the *vǫlva* tells, 3 – 20), but near its end, as Ragnarǫk draws close. It is at this ominous moment that the poet has chosen to emphasize the bitterest variant of the legends of Óðinn's acquisition of wisdom, the forfeit of his eye, and to impose upon the vision of the god's traditional benefaction, the fructifying mead of wisdom—here the river *aurgom forsi*—a grotesque image of his futile sacrifice, *veð Valfǫðrs*, the eye in the well.

The poet demonstrates the futility of the forfeit by placing immediately after it the first instance of the *vǫlva*'s challenging refrain—'Do you still seek to know? And what?' Óðinn has given half of his sight to gain knowledge, and yet here he comes to the *vǫlva* (28), craving her knowledge and her foresight, because his own fail him. His wise powers are being outpaced by time and in the new world will be talked of as things of the past—*Fimbultýs fornar rúnar* (57). The stream of Odinic wisdom, the *hugrúnar*, his brainchildren, the *fræði* that fecundates with the rich flood that the *vǫlva* now sees, will last no longer than Óðinn himself—*unz riúfaz regin*.

From the veiled premonitions of Ragnarǫk in stanza 27 until the last cockcrow before the giant's attack (43), the poet moves his scenes to and fro in time and tense, reflecting the tightening links between past, present, and future in the *vǫlva*'s thought. Her professional cry—*'Vitoð ér enn, eða hvat?'*—rings out now at all moments of time, a refrain in response to perennial anxiety.

(3) The vision of Baldr's fate—*ørlǫg fólgin*. The *vǫlva*'s awareness of the apprehensions of the gods is set in the present (27); the following scene, of her prophecy to Óðinn of Baldr's fate, is set in the past (28). Despite the 'dislocation' of time, the apprehensions anticipate the scene. Óðinn comes, aged but still terrible—if we may so interpret the nonce name *Yggiungr*—bearing with him the fears of the Æsir that Baldr's bad dreams have roused. Stanza 28

By direct narrative and direct speech, the poet makes Óðinn's visit to the *vǫlva* the scene of closest focus in the poem.

She was sitting out in the night communing with spirits, when the old one came. The motif of his sight—*veð Valfǫðrs*—recurs with narrative force. He looked into her eyes—*í augo leit*—to exert his will on her. By his look she knew he was going to try her—vex her—with some exacting and painful question: *'Hvers fregnið mik? / Hví freistið mín?'* The plural verb—elsewhere she addresses him as *þú*—shows that she knew he came with the question of all the gods. The attack of his glance she countered with a taunt of words, the betrayal of his secret. She could see as he looked at her that he had only one eye, and she knew well enough where he had put the other: *'Alt veit ek, Óðinn, / hvar þú auga falt!'* Mímir can breakfast every morning from that mead, a single sip of which cost you—Óðinn!—your eye. That is the tone of her sour raillery.

Stanza 29 But the temptation of his glittering bribes dispelled her hostility, and avaricious pleasure released her powers. Her sight ranged effortlessly through every world. She might seem to be oblivious of Óðinn's presence, but her whole message is directed to him (stanza 31).

Stanza 30 In her wide gazing her attention was arrested by a cavalcade out of the distance, valkyries directing their course to the realm of the gods—*til goðþióðar*. Scenting battle, they came to choose the slain, closing in, raven-like, for *Hǫðr*'s—'Battle's'—defeat of the 'Prince'. They were coming to the land of the gods for Baldr's death, as they came for that of Hákon—the good *konungmaðr*—to Norway (as Eyvindr tells in *Hákonarmál*).

Stanza 31 Her sight of distant worlds, of valkyries riding, the poet presents in objective narrative form: 'she saw . . . she saw . . .'. For the central insight of her vision, the apparition of Baldr with blood on him, the poet changes to the direct speech of the *vǫlva* herself: 'I saw . . .'. She is now speaking not only to Óðinn, but to the living *vǫlva* and her human audience, telling them what once she had to tell him: so urgent is her message (see *Vǫluspá Introduction* I. C).

For the climax of the *vǫlva*'s prophetic vision of Baldr's death, the poet reverts to the compressed and hermetic style of stanza 27, her earlier occult intuitions.

It would seem from the sequence of her images that she first saw an apparition of Baldr bleeding, and then the sight of the mistletoe that became the spear that killed him. In the placing of her phrases priority is given to the tragic end, the shock of feeling, as she makes the bleeding body of the god strike the mind of her audience first, before any word of the cause of it. The poet does not, however, make her say sensationally, 'I saw Baldr covered in blood'. He makes her subordinate the visual fact of what she saw to her recognition of the determining force that underlay the killing, the latent fate—'I saw the fate set hidden—*ørlǫg fólgin*—for Baldr, covered in blood'.

But *ørlǫg* can be plural in sense as it is in form. Baldr's death is not the whole of her vision. By the end of the stanza we can perceive that her statement is a revelation of not one destiny, but two. Baldr's death is presaged by the sight of blood on him. His return to life after death is prefigured by the plant that killed him.

The poet has made the image of the high-growing twig tranquil and precise: *Stóð um vaxinn . . . mjór ok miǫk fagr*. The *vǫlva* was struck by its maturity—*vaxinn*. Frigg had once thought the mistletoe too young to take the oath to spare Baldr, but now it was *vaxinn*, 'adult', grown into an active agent of death—*harmflaug* (32)—when set in motion by Loki *inn lævísi*. The fairness and fragility of the plant were, then, deceptive, for it could kill.

Within the signs of tragic deception in the slender plant, however, the

vǫlva saw the tracings of great promise, for proverbially *miór er mikils vísir*, 'tiny is the tendril of a mighty growth' (see the *lausavísa* attributed to Óttarr svarti, *Flateyjarbók* III. 243). The description of the mistletoe as *miór*, 'slender', is not simply realistic, but weighted with proverbial implication. The thin twig will have great consequence.

Deliberately, as he constructs the magical glimpse of the mistletoe, the poet withholds the secret that it *is* the mistletoe he is describing until the last line of the stanza. Until that line, elements in the vocabulary that the poet uses rouse associations of Baldr, half suggest that the god himself is being described—not bloody and prostrate with death, but erect and vital with growth, young and radiant as ever. The words *stóð . . . vǫllom hæri* recall an idiom such as *mikill á vallarsýn* ('tall from a sight of him on level ground') used of a man's stature. The slenderness—*miór*—would fit well the youthfulness suggested by the phrase *Óðins barn*. *Barn* is nowhere else used of a god: so Sturla Þórðarson writes of his thirteen-year-old daughter after the ordeal of the Flugumýrr burning, as of one too young to suffer: *Var hon mjǫk þrekuð, barn at aldri*, 'She was greatly exhausted, a child in years'. And the great beauty—*miǫk fagr*—which has to some scholars seemed wholly inappropriate as an epithet for the mistletoe, recalls the proverbial physical perfection of Baldr, *svá fagr álitum ok bjartr, svá at lýsir af honum*, 'so gleamingly fair of countenance and so bright, that radiance shines from him' (*SnE* 29). Over this evocation of Baldr's living presence the poet then imposes the identity of the mistletoe, lending to the dying god the mistletoe's evergreen connotation of survival through winter's death. The mistletoe is transfigured—*miǫk fagr*—in likeness to the god, as his *ørlǫg* is identified with its own. This identification of god and plant is the *vǫlva*'s most memorable achievement of *collatio occulta*.

There is still one more element of significance in stanza 31. The *vǫlva* speaks of Baldr as *tívorr*, 'a sacrifice', and the manner of his death, as it is described in stanza 32, is indeed that recorded elsewhere of a sacrifice to Óðinn, with the same ironic reversal of expectations, the same transformation of a slender plant into the relentless spear of the god. By the word *tívorr*, the poet here touches upon the religious base of the richly elaborated legend of Baldr. Men sacrifice in winter for the renewal of the year and its growth. Now at that same season, when the mistletoe is at its most glorious, Baldr will be sacrificed for the renewal of the world after Ragnarǫk. When the new world comes, he will return to it (59). Though killed by an Odinic spear, like the Vanir in their ceaseless war (24), he will come back to life as they did. The *vǫlva*'s vision shows Óðinn what must be done.

(iv) *Post mortem*

Stanza 32 After the apparition of the sacrificed god and the radiant mistletoe, a subdued declaration of the killing is made. We revert to the *vǫlva*'s narrative, relating, without enigma, though the facts are fabulous, how the thin twig became a murdering javelin, when Hǫðr 'started shooting'—a blind marksman, least likely of killers—and how a new son of Óðinn, specially begotten, grown to manhood in a single night, now 'started slaying'. His body he dedicated to vengeance: 'he neither washed hands nor combed head' until he could carry Hǫðr's corpse to the funeral pyre.

Up to now in the poem there have been many styles, reflecting the variety of the material on which the poet has drawn: there has been realistic narrative—*teflðo í túni, / teitir vóro* (8)—and fairytale narrative—*þaðan koma meyiar . . . ór þeim sæ, / er und þolli stendr* (20)—and mystic surrealism—*á sér hón ausaz . . . af veði Valfǫðrs* (27). But only here, in the vengeance for Baldr, is there symbolic mummery. With lightning speed a new son of Óðinn replaces the old, and immediately on his birth invests himself fanatically with vows like a grown Viking.

Stanza 33 After this vigorous male satisfaction of vengeance comes the weeping of Frigg, the mother. By *not* stating that she wept 'for Baldr', but for 'Valhǫll's woe', the poet suggests the significance of Baldr's death as the precursor of that of all the gods in Ragnarǫk.

The *vǫlva*'s refrain, 'Do you still seek to know? . . .' catches up this hint of omen and recalls the figure of the *vǫlva* in preparation for the next vision.

2. *Moral prelude: punishments and portents before Ragnarǫk (34 - 46)*

When the *vǫlva* had taken Óðinn's bribes, her sight ranged over every world—*of verǫld hveria* (29). The gods' world—*goðþióð*—had been violent Stanza 34 with action and emotion. The world she now gazed on was static and remote as a picture, all action transfixed in a timeless continuum. Her shamanic eyes pursued the painted scenes, punctiliously recording the names of places—of plains, of a river, a beach, a forest, of habitations and their owners—and noting the points of the compass to which she turned to see them—*austan . . . fyr norðan . . . sólo fiarri . . . austr*. The physical reality this gives to the landscape fits the scenes transfixed in it. Most of these assail the mind with physical pain and revulsion, for it was the foulness of physical punishment that she saw, and the threat of physical monstrosity.

No logical sequence to the succession of scenes and images is marked by the poet, but some associative links between them are strong.

In the world her mind now journeyed in, the first sight that grew clear to the *vǫlva*'s eyes was evoked by the immediately preceding scene in the

gods' world, the scene of Frigg weeping. It was Loki the *vǫlva* saw, and Loki was the one creature who would not weep. The *vǫlva*'s eyes were drawn to the realm of torment by that sin of Loki. He had killed Baldr twice: engineered his slaying by the blind Hǫðr, and then refused to undo the act by weeping him back to life again—as Hel herself would have allowed. In this blatant refusal to repent, Loki plays the part of the incorrigible sinner.

The *vǫlva* identified him slowly, first by the fettered shape—*hapt*, then by an intuition of the malignity of it—*lægiarns líki Loka*, finally by absolute recognition—*áþekkian*. By this term, *áþekkian*, the poet draws in the whole story of Loki's refusal to weep. For then, not wishing to be recognized, Loki had disguised himself as a giantess with the name of *Þǫkk* (*SnE* 67–8). But now his guilt had no disguise, and—with a pun on his pseudonym—to the *vǫlva* he was *áþekkian*, 'recognizable'.

Loki's repellent torment is not described: we see only the wry distaste of Sigyn his wife, who must catch the serpent's dripping venom in a basin to stop it falling upon him. She 'sits' there, still in the present, like the figure of her on the Gosforth Cross.

Loki's captivity was located underground, in the legendary place of exile and punishment below the roots of the world tree. From his suffering the *vǫlva*'s vision moved to that of human sinners (38), and the landscape she surveyed acquired a more natural topography, familiar to the human eye in its general features, yet made alien in certain details by elaborate fantasy. The underworld river was murderous with cutting blades, its valleys Stanza 35 deathly cold (35). In the north a hall stood on plains—as a hall well might— Stanza 36 but it was of gold, and the plains were stretches of interlunar night (36). The beach she saw was a sunless shore where corpses were washed up, and Stanza 37 the hall that stood on it, of homely construction, with door and roof vent, was woven of snakes' backs: through the roof vent their poisonous slaver dripped (37). It is a macabre panorama of an underworld that the *vǫlva* saw: at one extreme—of contentment—dwarfs in their darkness lived amid golden abundance, and the beer-brewing giant of the ocean delighted in his banqueting hall on a terrain of perpetual—fermenting—warmth (36). At the other extreme—of misery—human sinners waded endlessly in the floods that bore down against them (38). There was no joy in this realm for Stanza 38 human beings—death was their due. The winged serpent of spite (cf. 62) and the outlaw wolf were devouring men's bodies in an ultimate annihilation—sucking or tearing the flesh (the poet is very specific—*saug, sleit*) according to their kind. In this place of human damnation, the monotonous and fearful tyranny of poison, of cold, of serpents and hostile waters—mutilating, drowning, belabouring—culminates in the final humiliation of man as food for beasts, a shame so abhorrent that every killer will cover his

victim's corpse *svá at hvárki æti fuglar né dýr*, 'so that neither birds nor beasts may eat it' (*Grágás* II. 154). Despite these encroaching horrors, I would see in the brief interlude of contentment, with gold and Ægir's beer, in stanza 36, the poet's hermetic statement of future promise (see commentary ad loc.).

Stanza 39 From the ugly scene of death, where monsters are the licensed agents of human punishment, the focus of the *vǫlva*'s vision moved to a no less ugly scene of birth: a new breeding ground of monsters with a vaster purpose. In a sterile wood an old ogress was giving birth to giant wolves. With sudden insight the *vǫlva* announced that one of these will attack the cosmos, wrenching the moon from it, like a thieving troll.

After the savagery of the landscape of torment, the quiet picture of the sedentary 'old one' in the wood seems at first a respite from horror. But that is illusory. Every unnatural detail builds to a climax in which nature itself is crippled: the female breeding in old age, the miscegenation of anthropomorphic being (as we must suppose her to be) and wolf, the immutable black lifelessness of the iron forest where the new life begins, bred to kill the physical world.

Stanza 40 Already the new progeny is sating itself on a wolfish fare of human lives, a rain of blood falling from its ravenous feeding on to the homesteads of the gods, staining them with ill omen. In this dark blood-rain the summers have no glint of sun and the weather is cruel.

Stanza 41 These oppressive portents in the *vǫlva*'s vision are suddenly replaced by a bright scene: a merry herdsman was sitting, playing a harp; in a tree above him a vivid red cock was crowing. Yet this pastoral peacefulness had an undertow of warning. The harpist's seat was a grave-mound; he himself belonged to the giant world—*gýgiar hirðir*—and the wood in which the cock Stanza 42 was crowing was a hung with corpses. When we hear in the next stanza that two more cocks began to crow, one to wake Óðinn's champions in Valhǫll, and one in the halls of Hel to wake the valorous dead, we can be sure that this minstrel's lay is an *aubade* to war.

Any minstrel striking his harp to inspire warriors before a battle must appear *glaðr*—confident, elated at the strenuous prospect of destroying an enemy. But this minstrel exulted with good reason: he knew that this time the giants would be the destroyers. The happy echo of his harp from the grave-mound was rousing them to victory.

Stanza 43 The alert of the cockcrows is followed by the incessant barking of a dog. It is the watchdog chained at the cavernous mouth of the underworld, frantic as it senses that the chase of war is on and that other chains are breaking—*festr mun slitna / en freki renna*. The *vǫlva*, like the dog, is gripped by awareness of the moment. When the wolf breaks his chains, it is Ragnarǫk. She now sees ahead, beyond the wisdom of the past, to the fate of the gods—adamant and unpalatable: *rǫmm*.

Distraught at the harshness of what she sees ahead, the *vǫlva* borrows Stanza 44 one leaf from the Christian sibyl to warn with homiletic power of the moral evils and earthly wars that are to engulf humanity in its last days, as the world plunges to perdition. Her Christian theme grows easily exuberant with Viking imagery—*skildir ro klofnir*.

Her trenchant prophecy of moral and physical chaos fulfils the fears of punishment that the visions of the underworld aroused (38 – 40).

While men 'play' with evil and war, Heimdallr's horn rings out to Stanza 45 proclaim the end of the time measured and apportioned to the world—*miǫtuðr*. The tree that is the world sways and moans in decay. Óðinn, a slave of habit, consults his oracle—the embalmed wisdom in Mímir's skull—though there can be little knowledge he needs now.

Already the god-turned-giant, Útgarða-Loki, is breaking from his fetters. The last earthquake his tormented body will ever cause has shaken the tree for the last time.

The dog's bark becomes a refrain of urgency: the wolf is racing to an end Stanza 46 the *vǫlva* foresees.

3. *Emotional prelude: compassion for the fated gods (47 – 53)*

In the last war in the world the modest pantheon of gods is confronted by the vast growth of the giant world, which had been breeding irrepressibly from the beginning of time. This excess of nature in size and number had always troubled the gods, when they thought of the future: they had chained the young wolf (*SnE* 35) when he began to grow enormous, and Þórr had carried out—in the interests of humanity—a periodic cull of the giant population:

Mikil myndi ætt iǫtna	*Big would be the giant race*
ef allir lifði—	*if all of them lived—*
vætr myndi manna	*there would hardly be any men left*
undir miðgarði.	*in Miðgarðr.*

(*Hárbarðslióð* 23)

But time now shows that these efforts were in vain.

The giant forces deploy themselves, converging from east and south with Stanza 47 noise and speed and formidable order. Though her narrative is of the future, the *vǫlva* tells it in the present tense, a commentary on a pageant already clear and open to her sight.

A giant charioteer heads the surging succession of attackers, formally signalling the start of war with upraised shield. The sea-serpent that ties the earth together (*moldþinurr*, 57) now discards its function, lashing across the ocean to confront for the last time its primordial enemy, Þórr. Old

grudges seek satisfaction, old wives' tales come true. Already there are corpses for the eagle to exult over, and the ship made of dead men's nails is slipping from its moorings—*losnar*—with an uncanny life of its own. Ragnarǫk could not happen—they said—before that ship was ready to ferry
Stanza 48 the hosts of death. Loki steers them: the route to the gods' realm will be well known to him.

Stanza 49 And what do the gods feel, as the uproar of the giants' world deafens their ears? What could be troubling them? In the midst of this uproar, as the hydra-headed enemy swarms towards the gods, the poet repeats what was probably an old, popular, ironic question that the giants put to the gods in the numerous tales of their frictions, when the giants knew they had the upper hand and teased the gods with their innocent enquiry (cf. *Þrymskviða* 7). The poet is deliberately recalling the other occasions in the gods' history when they were in consternation because of the giants and the same question might have been asked. But those other occasions ended happily for the gods, and humorously. No other occasion, no other trouble was like this one. Yet, as always, the gods gather in council—*æsir ro á þingi*—upholding the dignity of custom, while around them all other custom is abandoned in despair. Even the dwarfs come to the doors of hated daylight, forced by one terror to face another—to be turned into stone.

Stanza 50 The last scene in the pageant of attackers unfolds: the last adversary, Surtr, the jet-black fire-giant from the torrid south, comes against the gods brandishing the sword of their own sun, to burn down their world.

Now the rocky hills crack—*griótbiǫrg gnata*—hills that once the great gods had made from a giant's bones (*Vafþrúðnismál* 21)—and the evicted troll-women trek in search of new lodging. The warrior dead march from Hel, and the sky breaks open.

Stanza 51 Against this sensational scenery the action of the battle itself is epitomized simply in four single combats, told like elegies. The striding out of Óðinn against the wolf and of Freyr against Surtr are two brief instances of action set in the frame of the long sorrow of Frigg. Óðinn's death is her 'second sorrow': first she wept for Baldr, and now the last joy left to her will go, when Óðinn falls—*mun Friggiar / falla angan*. The overwhelming event is her sorrow, not his death, as the poet tells it. Nowhere else in the extant sources is the relationship of Óðinn and Frigg accorded such tenderness. Nowhere else is grief for Óðinn made equal with grief for Baldr.

Freyr is seen shining—*biartr*—as he moves to his eclipse, as if he brought all his fair weather with him. Until now he has been the gods' champion—*bani Belia*—titled with the victory of that archaic contest when he slew with antlers the reigning bull and took the sovereignty. But now his vital sunlight is in Surtr's hands, to become a blaze that brings 'hurt to pliant boughs'—*sviga læ*—and all the growth Freyr gave to the earth is burned to

blackness. Nowhere else is this conventional form of kenning for 'fire'—'the terror of the birch tree'—used with such full significance.

Alacrity of vengeance accompanies Frigg's weeping once again (cf. 32 – Stanza 52
3). Óðinn's son, the silent Víðarr, destroys the adversary his father could not. The care he dedicates to the killing expresses his filial piety better than spoken words.

Þórr's divinity is in his defending strength—*miðgarz véorr*—and in the Stanza 53
passionateness with which he employs it—*drepr af móði*. These are the two elements of his nature that survive him in his sons, *Magni* and *Móði*, in the new world (*Vafþrúðnismál* 51). But this strength and passion drain from him now. Four words convey the dimension of his failure as he dies—*gengr fet nío . . . neppr*. His steps are numbered, as he treads each realm of death, and he has barely the strength to take them. Though he leaves the serpent dead behind him—*gengr . . . frá naðri*—this triumph has no significance now. It cannot save Miðgarðr if he is gone. The last scorn is for the envious sacrilege, the *níð*, of the snake that killed the sacred guardian with its venom.

D. After Ragnarǫk: the ending and renewing of the world (54 - 62)

Swiftly the world acquiesces in its end. Sun, earth, stars surrender their Stanza 54
existence. In the earlier days of bad omens, the sunlight was blackened by the bloodstained air (40): now the sun itself turns black. The mountainous earth, whose heights had crumbled (50), now lowers itself wholly beneath the sea's level. The melancholy loss of the brightness of the stars leaves an utter darkness for the final fire to rage in. This fire is not conceived of in terms of light, but as a boisterous growth of vapour and heat, life-destroying, leaping to the limits of the firmament.

The refrain of the barking dog recurs for the last time, drawing us back to Stanza 55
the present moment—before Ragnarǫk, before the wolf breaks free—and yet reminding us that the *vǫlva* can see even beyond those terrors—*fram sé ek lengra*.

Though she herself ('I') can 'see further', the eyes of another 'she' watch Stanza 56
'for a second time' the earth coming out of ocean. Already it is flourishing in an unfailing cycle of green—*iðiagræn*—restored to its peaceful and regular nature. The eagle does not now tear at carnage (47), but hovers for the salmon leaping in the mountain falls. It is a magical renewal; there is no longer any need for the labours of creation.

The Æsir are to be found again on Iðavǫllr—the plain has renewed itself, Stanza 57
as its name foretells—and they talk, reminding themselves of the past world, seemingly with great detachment. There is no suggestion of recrimination or reproach or rejection of that old world.

Stanza 58 The golden pieces from their last golden age (8) will come back into their hands—found in the grass. Here the *vǫlva* resumes a prophetic tense—*þar muno . . . finnaz*—and her tone is glowing—*undrsamligar / gullnar tǫflor*.

Stanza 59 From this good fortune of the finding of the golden pieces there follows a full and confident prediction of a new earthly felicity. Corn will spring up without sowing—like the green leek in the first world (4). All harm will be healed, for Baldr, the Prince, will come. The fortune, the *heill*, of the world has been restored by his death, and with Hǫðr, the innocent instrument of this good fortune, he builds upon the triumphant foundations that had been Óðinn's.

Stanza 60 Hœnir, priestly god of resurrection—significantly the only one of the old gods to be named beside Baldr and Hǫðr in the new world—now probes the future by sacred lottery. Like a good Norse builder planning a home he uses divination to disclose the most auspicious site. For the sons of the brothers Baldr and Hǫðr (so I understand *brœðra tveggia*), that site is heaven, the wide wind realm. It is a new location for Norse gods, but one to which the Christian god is well accustomed.

We know of no son of Hǫðr, but to Baldr Snorri attributes a son, Forseti (*SnE* 33–4). If Forseti is one of the 'sons of two brothers' to whom the poet alludes, then a future of firm peace is here foreseen. For Forseti is the god who 'puts all dissensions to sleep' (*Grímnismál* 15). His dazzling home—*þar Forseti / byggir flestan dag*—is called Glitnir, roofed with silver and raised on pillars of gold. It mirrors the moonlit and sunlit heavens that are his destined lot. Like the Christian god, he will administer justice 'from above'.

Vitoð ér enn, eða hvat?

Stanza 61 The *vǫlva* has a final promise, if her audience seeks to know it. It is a vision that 'she' sees—*sér hón*—of the future, of a hall rising up, more radiant than the sun, roofed with gold. It is the glorious counterpart, as echoes of phrase emphasize, of that ugly hall of poison, remote from the sun and fabricated out of living snakes, that she saw in the realm of punishment, on the corpse-strewn beach (37).

The radiant hall is sheltered from fire, as its name tells—no flames of perdition shall touch it. In that hall the noble companies of warriors who fought by the side of the gods shall live on in joy.

Stanza 62 The noble are happy and live on. But what of the ignoble? Those who have not deserved life get death, and that is what the *vǫlva* now sees. The dragon that eats the corpses in the realm of punishment (38) flies up from the lightless landscape to take away from the last battlefield the dead that are its appointed food. Over the plain—*vǫllr*—where the gods had fought—

Vígríðr heitir vǫllr, *Slaughter-ridden is the field's name*
er finnaz vígi at *where they will meet in the fight,*
Surtr ok in sváso goð *Surtr and the sweet gods*

(*Vafþrúðnismál* 18)

—it flies off with fodder-laden wings. In the last two stanzas of the poem, the battle of Ragnarǫk has been given the outline of a moral battle for mankind, borrowed from Christian teaching.

The *vǫlva* now tells her audience that the *séance* is over: the spirit has abruptly intimated to her that she now means to descend to her own world.

III. *The Texts of* Vǫluspá *and their Relationship*

A. MSS. of the poem used in the present edition

Vǫluspá is the first poem in the Codex Regius (R, *c.* 1270). With *Hávamál* it forms an Odinic diptych opening the sequence of mythological poems in the codex.

Two leaves preserved in Hauksbók (in the central section of the *bók*, AM 544 4to, fols. 20, 21) contain a text of *Vǫluspá* (H). The hand of these leaves, later than those of Haukr Erlendsson († 1334) and his two scribes, has been variously dated from 'hardly later than 1330' (see Bugge (*a*), xxii) to mid-fourteenth century,[5] and may well be that of the scribe of the Codex Wormianus (W, *c.* 1350 'or a little later', JH II. x). The slight scribal differences between the two texts could (Stefán Karlsson has pointed out to me) arise from the fact that one text may have been written earlier in the scribe's career than the other. The problem is complex in that several other hands have also been identified with that of the Codex Wormianus (see Jakobsen 45–50; Benediktsson 18–19). Nevertheless W has one or two readings that might indicate a connection with H (cf. 9/8, 48/8, 53/11).

In the present edition the numbering of the stanzas of the poem, 1 – 62, follows the order of the text in the Codex Regius. No stanzas found only in the Hauksbók text have been included as part of the text of this edition.

Twenty-eight stanzas from *Vǫluspá* are cited, wholly or in part, in the text of *Gylfaginning* in the *Snorra Edda* (SnE). These citations are preserved, with variants, in the four main MSS. of SnE: Codex Regius (SR, *c.* 1325); Codex Wormianus (W: see above); Codex Trajectinus (T, *c.* 1600; this is a copy of a text from the second half of the thirteenth century); Codex Upsaliensis (U, *c.* 1300; this MS. cites five fewer verses from *Vǫluspá* than the other three MSS.).

[5] So *Hkb* cxxxiii, SN 15. For the dating of Hauksbók itself to the period 1302–10 see Karlsson (*a*). On the link with the scribe of W see, most recently, Tómasson (*b*).

The twenty-eight stanzas which, or from which, Snorri cites are: 3, 5, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 19, 25, 26, 28, 37, 38, 39, 40, 44, 45, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 61. Snorri also occasionally gives a prose paraphrase of verses he cites, or of other verses which he has not chosen to cite (e.g. 7, 14, 17, 18, 20, 36, 45, 56, 57, 58, 59). These paraphrases are sometimes very close to the verse text and may corroborate it or offer variants.

At two points in *Gylfaginning*, Snorri appears to be influenced in his narrative by a version of events that is reflected only in the text of H, (*a*) in the place of 34/1 R: cf. *SnE* 69, lines 20, 23, and (*b*) in the place of 52 R: cf. *SnE* 71, lines 9–14.

I have not myself consulted any paper MSS. of *Vǫluspá*. I am much indebted to Peter Robinson, who has worked on the collections in which they occur, for checking certain points for me.

B. The history of the text

1. *A general foreword*

Two interpolations, to which all three sources, R, H, SnE, bear witness (5/5–10 and 10 – 16) indicate that *Vǫluspá* has not been preserved in its original form without flaw. Apart from these two interpolations, and the consequent loss of original lines (either deliberately discarded by the interpolator, or lost at the time the interpolation was made), R offers a text that is, although often difficult, practically never corrupt or impossible to interpret one way or another. No serious emendations or changes of stanza order are needed. Because R is demonstrably intelligible, it is easier to see what has happened in H.

2. *Causes of error in the transmission of the text*

The poetic character of *Vǫluspá* is relevant to any attempt to reconstruct the history of its transmission. Both its form and its material scope have led to alterations by copyists:

1. The poem is composed in a sophisticated form, not elsewhere recorded in Germanic, representing an idealized performance of a heathen *vǫlva*. The form reproduces the mediumistic technique of communication with a spirit informant, involving the alternation of personae, of 'I', the performing *vǫlva*, and 'she', the spirit informant, who, in this instance, and perhaps traditionally, is herself a *vǫlva*. The poet, of course, explains nothing, and his artifice may well have proved puzzling in the centuries when Eddic MSS. were being written. Certainly Snorri simplifies the *vǫlva* and her informant to a single figure 'I' in his citations, and a reviser

(perhaps Snorri himself) has removed from the H text the significant contrast of 'she' and 'I' in Refrain III.

2. Together with the tradition of the *séance* form and its multiple voices, the poet inherited the convention of ambivalent speech and seeming dislocation of thought and tense by which the *vǫlva*—like pythoness or sibyl—challenged the minds of her audience (see, for example, 26, 31). The poet has refined these expressional traditions with a poetic mastery paralleled only in the greatest of the heathen skalds. In a later Christian century both misunderstanding and scholarly impatience with a seemingly disjointed sequence of ideas have provoked attempts to 'normalize' and reorganize the poem: attempts made both by Snorri and the later reviser of the central section of the H text.

3. For the huge scope of his poem the poet had drawn upon a very great number of legends. Few of these he tells in full, but pointedly selects, alludes, adapts. This again is provocation to hearers and readers, who know fuller or preferred versions, to interfere with his text. Such provocation would account for the three interpolations I have signalled in the R text and for most of the additional lines in H.

3. *An outline of the history of the text*

I offer a simplified reconstruction of the text of *Vǫluspá* in the stages 1. to 7. below. Discussion of the detailed problems involved is given below in section C: *Analysis of textual Problems* (*I–VI*).

1. *Vǫluspá* was orally composed ±1000, with a structure that is fundamentally that of the R text.
2. A written text, *R I, was made, in which this structure was maintained, ±1200.
3. Early in the course of transmission, a version of *R I was made, *R II, which was impaired:
   (*a*) by scribal error (e.g. *þriár*, 17/1; omission of *nú*, 43/1; *vel*, 59/7). See *Problem I*;
   (*b*) by critical interference, namely by the two interpolations noted in B. 1 above, which affect R, H, and SnE. A third interpolation, following 30/8, cannot be assigned a relative date, as it occurs only in R.

   Associated with the two interpolations affecting R, H, and SnE is the loss (i) of the original text of 5/5–8, (ii) of the original stanza(s) between 9 and 17, and, probably, (iii) of the original wording of 9/5, which seems to have been adjusted to fit the interpolated stanza 10. See *Problem II*.
4. A written text, which I shall call *H I, was derived from *R II. It existed

when Snorri was writing *Gylfaginning* (*c.* 1225). It was probably made under his direction, to aid his own work.

There is no evidence that *H I did not have the same stanzas, in the same order, as 21 – 43 R (see 7 (*a*) and (*b*) below).

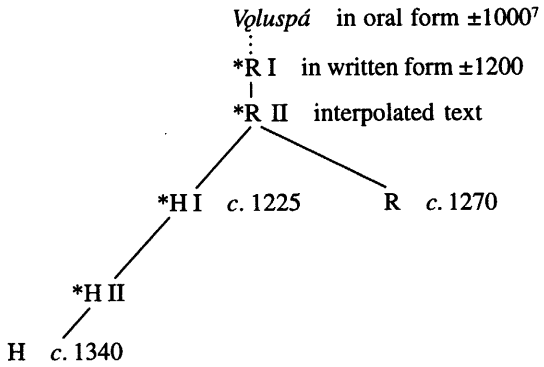
The text of the verses from *Vǫluspá* cited in *Gylfaginning* differs significantly in a number of places (in all SnE MSS.) from the text of R and agrees with the text of H.

In several instances where the texts of R and H diverge, the H text has been used by Snorri, in his prose account, without citation of the verse.

In several instances the texts of R and H diverge where there is no parallel text in SnE. These H variants to R could be said to share the thoughtful characteristics of the H, SnE variants to R, rather than the far from thoughtful roughness of the changes attributable to *H II in 7. below. See *Problem III* (iv).

5. In some of the citations from *Vǫluspá* SnE has significant readings that are not found in R or H. These would seem to be Snorri's own considered alterations, rather than variants drawn from another, otherwise unknown, text of the poem, or from oral tradition. See *Problem IV*.
6. Either before or after it was copied in *H I, the text of *R II was copied with a few significant flaws that can be corrected from H. These textual flaws survive in R. See *Problem V*.
7. Probably after, and independently of, the composition of *Gylfaginning*, at a date, or, more probably, dates, not easy to determine, the text of *H I was revised, and also damaged, to form *H II, on which H was based.[6] See *Problem VI*. To the *H II text I would attribute the following changes:
   (*a*) the rearrangement of five stanza sequences, 21 – 4 R, 25 – 7 R, 37 – 8 R, 39 – 40 R, 41 – 3 R, into a different and, for the most part, haphazard order;
   (*b*) the omission of two stanza sequences, 28 – 33 R, 35 – 6 R;
   (*c*) the insertion of two additional instances of Refrain III;
   (*d*) the insertion of two lines descriptive of end of the world terrors, very loosely fitted to the context, between 44/10 and 44/11;
   (*e*) the insertion of four ill-fitting lines, partly corrupt, relating to Ragnarǫk, after 45/12 and before 46/1;
   (*f*) the insertion of a four-line stanza, of Christian provenance, immediately before the final stanza of the poem;
   (*g*) the substitution of two inept lines in place of 7/3–4;
   (*h*) the substitution of *þussa meyar* for *ór því liði*, 17/2.

[6] I am not able, within the scope of this edition, to examine the relationship of *H II to H itself. See *Problem III* (iv) (*b*).



C. Analysis of textual Problems (I–VI) relating to the history of the text[8]

Problem I: Scribal error in *R II

(i) *Scribal error in* *R II *transmitted to* R *and* H

(*a*) 17/1. In 17/1 *þriár* should read *þrír*, to agree with the subject *æsir* in 17/4. This must be a scribal error. The scribe who interpolated 10 – 16 (or possibly, of course, a scribe who made a copy of *R I before the interpolation was made) has caught sight of, or remembered, as he wrote 17/1: *Unz þrír kvómo*, the very similar line 8/5: *unz þriár kvómo*, and has incorrectly written that. Perhaps by letting his eye be caught by the similarity of 8/5 and 17/1 the scribe lost the original lines preceding 17/1. The relationship between the scribal error *þriár*, the interpolation 10 – 16, and the loss of lines of the original text preceding 17/1 is very difficult to reconstruct: it seems a build-up of errors. On the H reading *þussa meyar*, 17/2, see *Problem VI* (vii).

(*b*) 43/1. In the first occurrence of Refrain III in R and in H the significant and metrically useful *nú* (43/1) is omitted, although it occurs in all the other instances of Refrain III in both texts. I have considered this omission an error inherited from *R II.

[7] For the long oral period this reconstruction is inevitably conjectural, as we have no explicit account of the composition of any Eddic text (though some late 10 c. skalds appear to know some of such texts). The palaeographical evidence of Eddic MSS. does not suggest a date for their exemplars earlier than 1200 (Lindblad 273–6). Earlier evidence of less formal writing down of individual poems is, I imagine, less likely to have survived.

[8] Here, as elsewhere in the edition, the stanza numbering refers to the text in the present edition. In discussion of variant texts, however, stanzas will be referred to as, e.g. 34 R, 34 H, 52 R, 52 H, 53 SnE (to avoid confusion with the page numbering, *SnE* 12 etc.).

(*c*) 59/7. In 59/7 the phrase *vel valtívar* is often emended to *vé valtíva*, 'sanctuary of gods of the slain', to form a syntactical parallel to *Hroptz sigtóptir* in the preceding line:

Búa þeir Hǫðr ok Baldr	They inhabit, Hǫðr and Baldr,
Hroptz sigtóptir,	Hroptr's walls of triumph,
vé valtíva	the sanctuaries of gods of the slain.

The similarity of phrase—*byggia vé*—in *Vafþrúðnismál* 51 is persuasive here:

Víðarr ok Váli	Víðarr and Váli
byggia vé goða,	dwell in the gods' sanctuary,
þá er sloknar Surta logi.	when Surti's fire dies away.

I would suggest a smaller emendation, however, and assume that *vel* in *R II was a misreading of *vés*, arising from confusion of long ſ with *l* (see commentary to 34/3 *lægiarn*[*s*] *líki*). This would give a syntactical analogy with 49/5–7, where the parallel terms (subjects of the verb) are also separated by a line:

Stynia dvergar	Búa þeir Hǫðr ok Baldr
fyr steindurom,	Hroptz sigtóptir,
veggbergs vísir.	vés valtívar.

So too in *Vǫluspá* 20/10–12, where the parallel terms are in the accusative: *Þær líf kuro / alda bǫrnom, / ørlǫg seggia*.

For the phrase *vés valtívar*, 'gods of the sanctuary', compare Kormakr's term for Sigurðr Jarl, *vés vægivaldr*:

Hver myni vés við valdi	What man born would contend
vægi kind of bægjask?	against the defending lord of the sanctuary?

(*Sigurðardrápa* 6)

(ii) *Scribal error in* *R II *transmitted to* R *and* SnE

In 53/4 the MS. reading *úlf* for Þórr's opponent cannot be correct. It no doubt springs from the confusion of alliterating phrases *Óðinn . . . úlf* and *Óðins sonr . . . orm* in the sequence of attacks. If Snorri has known the erroneous reading *úlf* in 53/4 (see *Problem III* (i) (*c*)), it must have occurred in *R II.

Problem II: Interpolations

(i) *Two interpolations common to* R, H, *and* SnE, *inherited from* *R II

(*a*) 5/5–10: the sun, stars, and moon in uncertainty. In the discussion of the sequence of ideas in the poem (*Vǫluspá Introduction* II) I have pointed out

the factual discrepancies between these lines and those that precede and follow them in the poem. On these grounds I think they must be unoriginal, and that we have lost the poet's second *helmingr* of stanza 5.

(*b*) 10 – 16: the dwarf stanzas. Few critics think the dwarf stanzas an original part of the poem. At least three questions occur to the reader which make him wish to reject them: why should a poet who touches so rapidly on all other myths that concern him, spend seven stanzas on dwarfs? why do we have two versions of the creation of the dwarfs, one in stanza 9 and one in stanza 10? why is there a break in continuity after the last dwarf stanza, before the next episode, the formation of man, which begins in mid-sentence, 'until . . .' and contains a feminine numeral for a masculine noun? In the two other Eddic poems that contain substantial name-lists, *Grímnismál* and *Rígsþula*, these lists are of structural importance, well integrated into their poetic setting. This is clearly not the case with the dwarf-names in *Vǫluspá*.

Stanza 9 must be retained as part of the original poem, if only to account for the interpolation of 10 – 16. Without the allusion to the creation of the dwarfs in 9, the interpolation would not have been thought of. Stanza 9 has also a well-planned place in the sequence of ideas in the poem (*Vǫluspá Introduction* II) and can be accepted in its own right. It would seem, however, that the interpolation of stanza 10, with the statement that the two master-dwarfs created the other dwarfs 'out of earth' has led to textual trouble in 9/5. In his prose Snorri states that the dwarfs quickened of their own accord like maggots in the flesh of Ymir (that is, I assume, his interpretation of 9/5–8, the plan to create dwarfs out of the sea-blood and rock-limbs of the cosmic giant, namely Ymir). Snorri omits, therefore, 10/1–4, which tells of the creating of the dwarfs by the two master dwarfs, and alters the verse 'they created many man-shaped figures out of earth' to 'many man-shaped figures formed themselves out of earth'. When 9/5 is cited in SnE, it too has to be changed. The gods must not consider 'who' (*hverr*) should create the dwarfs, as this does not fit their maggot-like origins. Instead, in SR, T, they simply consider 'that' (*at* in place of *hverr*) the dwarfs should be created (*SnE* 20–1).

We may now begin to wonder whether perhaps the reading *hverr* (R, W, U) has been introduced in *R II by the interpolator in order to anticipate the naming of the dwarf creators in 10 (*hverer* H might relate to the plurality of the two creators). We might then wish to improve the text, not only by eliminating stanzas 10 – 16, but by adopting Finnur Jónsson's emendation *hvárt* for *hverr* (cf. 23/5), as I have done. The gods deliberate on the usefulness of bringing dwarfs into existence, to take over the tools and the anvils. The answer to their question is clearly 'yes'. From there to the creation of

man might be a swift step for so agile a poet, but I cannot guess what way he chose.

(ii) *A third interpolation in* R

After 30/1–8, describing the cavalcade of valkyries and listing the names of five of them, there follow four summarizing lines in a conventional *þula* style: 'Now are listed . . . the valkyries' (compare the interpolated lines 12/6–8: 'Now I have counted . . . the dwarfs correctly'). Most editors consider 30/9–12 an interpolation, irrelevant to the context. H and SnE do not have stanza 30 or its context; we cannot, therefore, judge whether or not the interpolation occurred in *R II.

Problem III: Divergence from *R II *in* H *and* SnE

Comparison of the three extant texts of stanzas of *Vǫluspá* suggests that a copyist directed by Snorri, or possibly Snorri himself, revised *R II in anticipation of the writing of *Gylfaginning*. This revised text, *H I, was given preference over *R II by Snorri in a majority of instances.

The principal aim of the revision of the text of *R II appears to have been to standardize, to cut out anomaly or irregularity, so that the verse text could be used by Snorri without incongruity in his prose context.

(i) *Divergence between* R *and* H, SnE (*verse citations*)

(*a*) Standardization of tense in 37 – 39 in H, SnE. In three stanzas, 37, 38, 39, describing the *vǫlva*'s vision of the otherworld, five verbs are in the past tense in R, but in the present tense in H, SnE:

37/1	R Sal sá hón	H Sal sér hón *SnE* 75 Sal veit ek
37/5	R Fello eitrdropar	H, *SnE* 75 Falla eitrdropar
38/1	R Sá hón þar	H Sér hón þar *SnE* 75 Skulu þar
39/1	R Austr sat	H, *SnE* 19 Austr býr
39/3	R ok fœddi þar	H, *SnE* 19 ok fœðir þar

It is noticeable, however, that, while H has in 38/1 the present tense *sér* (cf. *skulu* SnE), it has the past tenses *saug*, *sleit* in 38/7, 9, like R. The time scheme of this stanza in H thus becomes nonsensical. SnE is more consistent: *skulu* is followed by the present tense *kvelr* in place of *saug* in 38/7 (38/9 is not cited). Similarly, while H has present tenses *býr*, *fœðir* in 39/1, 3, like SnE, it has past tenses (five times) where R has past tenses in 41 and 42 (stanzas stylistically comparable, in the context of the vision, to 39/1–4). SnE does not cite 41 and 42. The half-finished standardization of the present tense in H in the *vǫlva*'s otherworld vision would seem to be linked with Snorri's editing only of lines selected for citation in *Gylfaginning*.

The interchange of past and present tenses develops dramatically in the 'otherworld' sequence in 34 – 42, as the action of the poem approaches the threshold of the present (*Vǫluspá Introduction* II, *stanza 34*). Snorri has noted the interplay of tenses; he has deliberately levelled the present tense of 40 into 39 (*SnE* 19). But he is not regularizing the tenses of the R text just for regularity's sake, he is building up a didactic scenery, *in the present*, of the world's structure, of heaven and of hell. The first two citations from *Vǫluspá* that contribute to this scenery are in the present tense already, 19 and 61. The great ash tree of the world is standing, evergreen . . . The gold-roofed hall is standing, waiting for the valorous dead (*SnE* 25–6). When Gangleri asks about human life after Ragnarǫk (*SnE* 74), he is told that, for the virtuous, there is not only the gold-roofed hall Gimlé, but the two halls described in the *vǫlva*'s vision in 36. The *vǫlva* saw them in the past, but Snorri describes them in the present—with beer, warmth, and gold, ready to welcome men. So, too, it seems equally fitting to him to present the poisonous hall (*SnE* 75) waiting for sinners as it looks in the present: the poison drops 'are dripping' from the roof vents. Had not the poet himself led the way in this: the hall 'is woven' of serpents' spines? On Snorri's readings *veit ek* 37/1, *Skulu þar* 38/1, see *Problem IV* (*f*).

(*b*) Standardization of stanza sequence in 45 – 50 in H, SnE. In R the relentless sequence of attack:

Hrymr ekr austan . . .	(47)
Kióll ferr austan . . .	(48)
Surtr ferr sunnan . . .	(50)

is interrupted just before the climax of Surtr's coming, and the consequent collapse of the rocky world, by a 'stanza of consternation' (49) in which the state of mind of the victims of this attack is glimpsed—

Hvat er með ásom?
Hvat er með álfom?

'What troubles the Æsir? . . .' The ironic, colloquial question comes as an echo of a giant voice from the past (*Vǫluspá Introduction* II, *stanza 49*). Then the giants were premature in their mockery, but now the tables are turned. There is no mistaking the roar from Jǫtunheimr (49/3). The dwarfs in the stone can tell that the earth's last hour has come (49/5–7). Their fears—in 49—are fulfilled in 50—*griótbiǫrg gnata* (50/5). The poet has deliberately set the coming of Surtr (50/1–4) within a frame (49/5–7 and 50/5–8) of the collapse of the physical earth and the ending of its hidden life—of the dwarfs and the trollwomen inside the hills and the heroes underground in

Hel. (It can hardly be accident that the poet chose the subterraneans to point his intention.) The reason for leaving 49 where it is in R seems good.

H and SnE, however, place 49 immediately after 45. 49 is a 'consternation stanza'. 45 also might well be considered a 'consternation stanza' (with Heimdallr blowing his horn, the world tree shuddering, the 'giant' breaking loose, and Óðinn consulting the prophetic skull). A conscientious reviser might then place the two 'consternation stanzas' together and set the three 'attack stanzas' (47, 48, 50) after them. This is the ordering in SnE. H also places 49 after 45, but follows with 46 (Refrain III, which Snorri always omits), and then 47, 48, 50, as in SnE. It looks as if we see here two stages in Snorri's revision of this stanza sequence.

(*c*) Deconstruction in H, SnE of the battle sequence 51 – 53. In the three 'attack stanzas' 47, 48, 50 there is a notable parallelism of sentence structure in the opening lines: subject . . . verb of action . . . adverb of direction. In the three 'defence stanzas' immediately following, 51, 52, 53, there is an equally notable parallelism of phrasing: all three stanzas open with the words *Þá kømr*.

In 51 the opening phrase is used abstractly: *Þá kømr . . . fram*, 'Then comes to pass Hlín's second sorrow', and the verb of battle action is placed in a subordinate clause, 'when Óðinn goes—*ferr*—to fight the wolf'. In 52 and 53 the opening phrase transfers the focus directly to action. In 52 *Þá kømr* is the stride of silent Víðarr against the wolf, when he coolly sites the thrust of his sword and lives to exult in it. In 53 *Þá kømr* heralds the last combatant, Þórr, not, like Víðarr, self-controlled, but raging, striking his hammer-blow and dying under his victim's revenge.

In 53 the verbs presenting Þórr's course of action suffice to indicate the rise and fall of his strength. He 'comes' to the arena of battle, he 'goes' against the monster, he 'strikes' in fury. Then a prophetic interjection warns us that he has *not* saved Miðgarðr from desolation—'all the heroes will leave the homestead of the world'—and he 'goes', dying, away from the enemy he had killed. His fabled hammer-blow is the climax of the stanza, as of his strength, and it comes at the centre of the action (53/5–6).

Neither H nor SnE retains the triple repetition of *Þá kømr* in 51, 52, 53. Both H and SnE have the same text as 51, and in the same position following 50. In their treatment of 52 and 53, however, H and SnE differ from each other.

In H there follows after 51 a repetition of Refrain III (see *Problem VI* (iii)). Then, after Refrain III, a stanza follows that is not found elsewhere but which has probably been the source of lines in SnE prose (see *Problem III* (iii) (*b*)). The stanza is difficult to decipher in the MS. The menace of the attacking serpent and (?) wolf is described, and there is allusion to the

future confrontation of the serpent by 'Óðinn's son, when the wolf has been killed (?), [and] Víðarr's kinsman (?)'. At least it seems clear that this stanza does not directly *narrate* either the killing of the wolf by Víðarr (as 52 does), or Þórr's encounter with the snake (as 53 does). The author of these allusions to the fights is interested in stating their future certainty, not—like the author of 52 and 53—in recreating their happening.

In H, after this unique stanza, there follows one that is badly obscured, but which is, as far as one can tell, an eight-line variant of 53 similar to that in SnE. Then follows, in H as in SnE, 54, the dissolution of the cosmos. Thus H offers no version of 52, but for convenience I refer to the unique stanza in its place as 52 H.

SnE, on the other hand, does offer a version of 52, following 51. The last five lines of the stanza are as in 52, but Snorri has replaced the first two lines of 52 by lines 3–4 of 53, making a necessary adjustment in 52/3 to accommodate the change:

52 R	52 SnE	53 R
Þá kømr inn mikli	Gengr Óðins son	Þá kømr inn mæri
mǫgr Sigfǫður,	við úlf vega,	mǫgr Hlǫðyniar,
Víðarr, vega	*Víðarr of veg*	gengr Óðins sonr
at valdýri . . .	at valdýri . . .	við úlf vega . . .

The line *við úlf vega* has already occurred in all three texts in 51/3–4: *er Óðinn ferr / við úlf vega*. In 53/4 *úlf* cannot be correct, and is commonly emended to *orm*. The error no doubt arises from scribal confusion with 51/4 (see *Problem I* (ii)).

The altered text of 52/1–2 in SnE has caused a very weak reading in line 3 to avoid repetition of *vega*: *Víðarr of veg* (? 'on his way'). Why did Snorri make this change? The copy, or copies, of 52 that he knew *may* have been defective in the first two lines. Yet his description of Víðarr (*SnE* 33) as 'almost as strong as Þórr' (*hann er sterkr næst því sem Þórr*)—a statement found in no other source—may well be his own interpretation of the emphasis on Víðarr's great size—*inn mikli*—in 52/1, and the fact that his superb fight at Ragnarǫk comes just before that of Þórr (52, 53).

The adoption of a variant opening for 52 in SnE is probably to be associated not with any defective text of 52, but with the intention evident in H and SnE to simplify and standardize the sequence of actions in the following stanza, 53. Both H and SnE begin their versions of 53 with the verb *Gengr*. On that account Snorri may have altered the opening of 52 also, to imitate from the R text the initial repetition of action, with *Gengr . . . Gengr* corresponding to *Þá kømr . . . Þá kømr* in 52, 53.

It may have struck Snorri as a happy coincidence that the faulty reading *úlf* in 53/3–4 made those lines a perfect opening for 52, the account of

Víðarr's combat. If so, the reading *úlf* in 53/4 would seem to be a scribal error going back to *R II (see *Problem I* (ii)).

A comparison of the three texts of 53 provides a wider context for the understanding of the variants of 52. To aid the comparison I have divided 53 into sections (*a*) to (*f*) and asterisked the sections in H and SnE where the wording differs from R. The text of H is very difficult, often impossible, to decipher here; I have followed the suggestions of Jón Helgason (JH I. 40–1), though uncertain of his reading *frá* in (*f*). See *Problem V*.

53 R	53 H (reconstructed)	53 SnE
(*a*) Þá kømr inn mæri mǫgr Hlǫðyniar,	(*e*) Gengr fet níu Fiǫrgyniar burr	*(*a*) Gengr inn mæri mǫgr Hlǫðynjar
(*b*) gengr Óðins sonr við úlf [*l.* orm] vega.	(*f*) neppr ?*frá/af* naðri níðs ókviðnom.	*(*f*) neppr at [af W] naðri níðs ókviðnom.
(*c*) Drepr hann af móði, miðgarz véorr	(*d*) Munu halir allir heimstǫð ryðia,	(*d*) Munu halir allir heimstǫð ryðja,
(*d*) —muno halir allir heimstǫð ryðia—	*(*c*) er af móði drepr miðgarðs véurr.	*(*c*) er af móði drepr miðgarðs véurr.
(*e*) gengr fet nío Fiǫrgyniar burr		
(*f*) neppr frá naðri níðs ókviðnom.		

1. *gengr* (*b*) and (*e*)

In 53 in both H and SnE the two sentences beginning with *gengr* have been reduced to one (Snorri having used (*b*) to open his version of 52).

The author of *H I (irrespective of the scribal error in (*b*)) was able to omit the statement that Þórr went to fight the snake (I suggest), because he had already included in his text the unique stanza, 52 H, that alludes to this encounter (*mun Óðins son / ormi mæta*). He therefore follows (*e*) with (*f*), as in 53 R.

Snorri has not been able to follow *H I exactly here, because he has preferred to retain 52 R (substantially), rather than adopt 52 H in its stead. To supply the statement of Þórr's attack upon the snake, missing from 53 H, Snorri has very delicately converted the *H I text of (*f*): (i) by changing the preposition before *naðri* (whether *frá* or *af*) to *at*, so that Þórr 'goes against', 'attacks' the snake (cf. 51/6: *at Surti*; 52/4: *at valdýri*); (ii) by adopting *(*a*) instead of (*e*) as the opening of the stanza (*fet nío* in (*e*) being relevant only to the dying of Þórr, not to his advance on the snake); and (iii) by taking *neppr*, 'failing', 'ebbing in strength' to imply that at the very start of the encounter Þórr's inadequacy and imminent failure are apparent (cf. *SnE* 72: . . . [*Þórr*] *hefir fullt fang at berjaz við Miðgarðsorm*; also commentary

to *Lokasenna* 58). Though Snorri must have known that (*f*), as well as (*e*), in his source related to the last moments of Þórr (cf. *SnE* 72: *Þórr berr bana orð af Miðgarðsormi ok stígr þaðan níu fet; þá fellr hann dauðr* . . .), he seems to have been confident that (*f*) could be turned to use as a foreboding account of Þórr's first attack by a simple change of preposition.

2. The reversal of (*c*) and (*d*)

The narrative significance of the succession of the four finite verbs in 53—*kømr* . . . *gengr* . . . *drepr* . . . *gengr*—which I noted at the beginning of *Problem III* (i) (*c*), is lost in H and SnE, not only by the omission of two of the verbs (*kømr* and one instance of *gengr*), but by the displacement of the central climax, Þórr's hammer-blow. This is relegated to the end of the stanza, and set in a subordinate clause. To relate (*c*) to (*d*), now that the death of Þórr has been told in the preceding (*e*) and (*f*), the author of *H I has resorted to a common narrative-prophetic formula that links the happening of two events: some event happens—or will happen—*when*, or *before*, or *after*, some other event happens. The events are commonly grievous, ominous, crucial in some way. The poet of *Vǫluspá* employs this formula tenderly in 51 (*Then* Frigg's second sorrow will come, *when* Óðinn encounters the wolf) and with a magnificent touch of drama in 44 (Brothers will fight and kill . . . *before* the world casts itself away). The text of H offers three further instances of this prophetic formula, all pedestrian and quite lacking in the *Vǫluspá* poet's genius: (i) in the revision of (*c*) and (*d*) now under discussion: 'all men will leave the homestead of the world, *when* the guardian of the earth strikes in wrath'; (ii) after 45/12: 'all men will feel terror on the paths of Hel, *before* Surtr's kinsman swallows [Óðinn ?]': see *Problem VI* (iv) (*b*); (iii) in 52/5–6 H: 'Óðinn's son will encounter the snake, *after* the death of the wolf . . .': see *Problem III* (iii) (*b*).

Snorri is satisfied with the same ordering of (*d*) and *(*c*) as in H. I interpret (*d*) as a timeless maxim—'all men will leave the earth (in death)'—which is given prophetic force by its immediate context, and is intended to be left with syntactical independence, as it stands in 53.

The chief concern of the reviser(s) of 53 has been to try to make of it despite its rare diction a platitudinous piece of information in a regular eight-line stanza, offering two statements: (*a*) that Þórr dies after killing the snake (H), or is already touched by death as he attacks the snake (SnE); and (*b*) that his hammer-blow marks the moment when all men will depart from this world in death. The original narrative structure of the stanza has been turned upside down, the end, Þórr's death, being placed at the beginning, and the prophecy of the desertion of the earth being given precedence over the act that strove to prevent it.

(*d*) Miscellaneous divergences in single words or phrases. There are some instances of minor variants where it does not seem possible to determine which is the preferable reading, e.g. 47/7, *neffǫlr*; H, SnE *niðfǫlr*. I have considered these individually in the commentary.

(ii) *Divergence between* R *and* H, SnE (*prose*)

(*a*) Standardization of dwelling place: from lake to hall (20/3). In 20/3 the three wise maidens in R emerge 'from the lake'—*ór þeim sæ*—'that lies under the tree'—*er und þolli stendr*. In H they emerge 'from the hall'—*ór þeim sal*—under the tree. That R *sæ* is not necessarily a scribal error for *sal* is shown by the little tag-line of Kormakr's in his *Sigurðardrápa* 4: *komsk Urðr ór brunni*, 'Urðr emerged from the well'. In the tenth century, it would seem, the most venerable of the three fatal maidens was certainly expected to come out of the water at the foot of the tree, and this is the image the poet of *Vǫluspá* wanted for his three *meyiar margs vitandi*.

Snorri does not cite the stanza, but gives a close paraphrase of the first lines in prose, linking them with the preceding stanza: *þar stendr salr einn fagr undir askinum við brunninn, ok ór þeim sal koma þrjár meyjar*... ('There stands a fair hall beneath the ash beside the well, and from that hall come three maidens ...', *SnE* 23). He sets this paraphrase in a section answering Gangleri's question: 'where do the gods have their chief or holy place?' This place, he is told, is the ash Yggdrasill and the well beside it. Snorri then moves in somewhat headlong fashion (following without sophistication the relevant stanzas in *Grímnismál*) from the ash as the place of the gods' judgement courts, to its roots and their realms, to Mímir's well, to the rainbow way, Bifrǫst, by which the Æsir ride to the courts (the names of their steeds are included for good measure), then to the fire burning red over Bifrǫst, which prevents the hill-giants from invading heaven (*himinn*). This leads Snorri to the permanently protected places of heaven, among which he places the *salr* from which the three fate-allocating maidens come.

In writing this passage, did Snorri himself alter *sæ* in the text of *Vǫluspá* to *sal*, to simplify his account of the inhabitants of 'heaven', normalizing the three maidens into hall dwellers like so many others in the poem (cf. 33/6, 36/3, 7, 42/8, 61/1), rather than leaving them in a lake-nymph category of their own? I suspect that he did. Snorri knew the tradition that 'Urðr emerged from the well', for he cites in *Skáldskaparmál* Kormakr's stanza (*SnE* 152). But he may not have recognized this old tradition in the *Vǫluspá* wording *koma ... ór þeim sæ*, which is not, after all, the same as *ór brunni*. The imperfect identity of *sæ* with *brunni* in 19/8 may have seemed to him an obvious sign of error, and he may have suggested the correction to *sal* in a redaction of *Vǫluspá* being prepared for his use. In the course of his writing he would then cite this redaction as his text.

Alternatively (though I think this very improbable), an earlier copier of a text of *R II (from which *H I then descended) noted the anomaly of *sæ* following *brunni*, and introduced the reading *sal*.

That a scribe of the H text of *Vǫluspá* had extracted the reading *sal* from Snorri's prose text seems very unlikely.

(*b*) Standardization of vocabulary (57, 58). In 57/1 the H reading *hittaz* echoes *hittoz* in 7/1 (in both R and H), making the establishment of the new world a more systematic parallel to that of the old. In 57/1 R reads, less systematically, but more subtly, *finnaz*. While *finnaz* can mean 'meet each other', it can also mean 'are to be found', 'are there for the finding'. Just so will the wondrous gaming pieces 'be there for the finding', and 'be found', in the grass (*í grasi finnaz*, 58/4). The first earth before its creation was not to be 'met with', or 'found', anywhere in *Ginnungagap* (*iǫrð fannz æva* ... 3/5), because it did not exist. Now, in the new world (57/1), the Æsir are to found meeting on Iðavellir: they exist. *Hittaz* does not have the connotation of 'being in existence', and, indeed, in 7/1, such a connotation would not be relevant. There the Æsir—who had already manifested their presence in parliament—were foregathering in a purposeful meeting—*hittoz*—to set up their forges of wealth. But in the new world everything happens miraculously of its own accord, and the Æsir find themselves together once more. The reading *finnaz* in 57/1 is clearly the original, which has been 'corrected' by the author of *H I too zealously.

In 58/1 and 4 the text differs significantly from that of H. Again the author of *H I has preferred a pragmatic statement to a mysterious one:

H	R
Þá munu *æsir*	Þar muno *eptir*
undrsamligar	undrsamligar
gullnar tǫflur	gullnar tǫflor
í grasi *finna*,	í grasi *finnaz*,
þærs í árdaga	þærs í árdaga
áttar hǫfðo.	áttar hǫfðo.

The H text loses the joyous nostalgic backward glance of *eptir*, linking with the last two lines of the stanza, and the fateful impersonality of *finnaz*.

Snorri does not cite 57 or 58, but the H text can be discerned in his curt prose summary. The gods *setjaz þá allir samt* (which is closer to *hittaz* than to *finnaz*), and they find the golden pieces in the grass: *Þá finna þeir í grasinu gulltǫflur þær, er æsirnir hǫfðu átt* (*SnE* 75).

(iii) *Two substantial substitutions for the* R *text in* H, *which can be associated with* SnE

(*a*) 34/1–4. In 34/1–4 the *vǫlva* 'saw' Loki lying fettered under 'Cauldrons' Grove'. In 34/5 we are told 'There sits Sigyn . . .'. The lines 34/1–4 are replaced in H by a statement of Váli's binding of (we assume) Loki, but without reference to the location of the deed. When H resumes, therefore, with 34/5, the text offers nowhere for Sigyn to sit. The *conjointure* is very clumsy. We may note that the H text replacing 34/1–4 is continuing the narrative mode of 33 and its theme of vengeance for Baldr, though 33 is not extant in H.

The interpolated lines in H appear to have a scribal error, as no nominative subject is expressed. This is usually emended:

Þá kná Vál*i* [MS. vala]	Then did Váli
vígbǫnd snúa:	slaughter bonds twist:
heldr vóru harðgiǫr	made fairly grim
hǫpt ór þǫrmum.	were those fetters of guts.

Váli is well known in Eddic tradition as son of Óðinn, avenger of Baldr, killer of Hǫðr, survivor, with Víðarr, in the new world after Ragnarǫk. Nowhere, except in H, is he said to have placed the bonds upon Loki, but, as he was begotten expressly to avenge Baldr, it is logical enough that the binding of Loki should be attributed to him.

The author of *H I has taken these lines from traditions (written or oral) external to *Vǫluspá*; indeed, they seem to represent the kind of traditions that the poet himself has been careful to avoid. Snorri, on the other hand, has found the lines interesting. Out of them he has invented a new son for Loki, Váli Lokason. He appears to have interpreted the H text *Vála vígbǫnd* as 'bonds from Váli's act of slaughter', since he relates that Váli Lokason was changed into a wolf by the Æsir and straightway tore apart his brother Narfi. The Æsir used Narfi's intestines as bonds for Loki (*SnE* 69). The story is found in a variant form in the prose epilogue to *Lokasenna*, but without reference to Váli.

The prominence of *Hapt* at the opening of 34 R could perhaps have recalled the 'fettering' lines—cf. *hǫpt ór þǫrmum*—to the author of *H I, and prompted his variant text.

(*b*) 52. In place of 52, describing Víðarr killing the wolf, H has a unique eight-line stanza (52 H; see *Problem III* (i) (*c*)). Its only point of similarity with 52 is the occurrence of the name Víðarr:

Gínn lopt yfir	Across the sky gapes
lindi iarðar,	the girdle of earth,
gapa ýgs kiaptar	the jaws of the fearful wolf [MS. serpent]
úlfs [MS. orms] í hæðum	yawn in the heights.
Mun Óðins son	Óðinn's son will
ormi mœta,	encounter the serpent,
vargs at dauða	after the death of the wolf
[ok] Víðars niðia.	[and] Víðarr's kinsman (i.e. Óðinn).

Since *kiaptar* is used of the wolf (cf. *Vafþrúðnismál* 53), but never of the serpent, I have emended *orms* (by no means clear in the MS.) to *úlfs* (cf. the reverse confusion of *úlf* for *orm* in 53/4). As the stanza summarizes by allusion actions that are narrated in 52 (in R and SnE) and 53 (in R, H, and SnE), it is clearly extraneous to the poem, but Snorri seems to have used it for his prose picture of the advance of wolf and serpent side by side, *SnE* 71: *Fenrisúlfr ferr með gapanda munn, ok er hinn neðri kjǫptr við jǫrðu, en hinn efri við himin: gapa myndi hann meira, ef rúm væri til*. Here the words *gapa*, *kjǫptr*, *við himin*, though in context conventional, have their parallels in the verse. *Miðgarðsormr —er hann á aþra hlið úlfinum*—does not, in SnE, gape in rivalry with the wolf. Snorri has rather been inspired by *Gínn lopt yfir/lindi iarðar* to develop his image of the serpent bespattering air and ocean—*dreifir lopt ǫll ok lǫg*—with its poison. Did it not seem probable that Snorri knew this stanza, we might have more readily attributed it to *H II.

(iv) *Divergence between* R *and* H *where there is no* SnE *parallel text* (*other than instances considered under* Problems V *and* VI)

Occasionally H differs significantly from R in a manner similar to that of the most notable H, SnE variants, where the principal aim is standardization. I select three variants for consideration here.

(*a*) 20/9–12. In 20/9–12 the sequence of ideas in the R text is lost in the H text. In R—

Þær lǫg lǫgðo,	They laid down laws,
þær líf kuro	they chose out lives
alda bǫrnom,	for mankind's children,
ørlǫg seggia	men's destinies

—*líf* and *ørlǫg* are syntactically parallel: when the wise maidens choose life for men they choose also their fate. The delicate development from 'life' to 'fate' indicates the ultimate identity of the two concepts (a theme sounded in the two preceding stanzas). Instead of *ørlǫg seggia* H reads *ørlǫg at segia*: the maidens 'chose lives for mankind's children, to declare their fates'. The

logic of the new reading can hardly have seemed perfect even to its author, but the conventional association of the verb *segia* with *ørlǫg* (cf. *Lokasenna* 25, 29) was evidently strong enough to make him alter the phrasing of R.

(*b*) 22/5–6. In 22/5–6 the poet plays on the word *seið* (*a*) as accusative of *seiðr*, 'sorcery', and (*b*) as preterite of *síða*, 'to practise sorcery'. This grammatical pun enables him to link Heiðr's knowledge with her practice in a minimum of words, achieving a brisk contrast between the weight of her knowledge—*seið hón kunni*—and the instability of her mind in performance—*leikin*.

In H the grammatical pun has been removed. *Seið* is now standardized as the preterite verb in both instances, through the introduction in 22/5 of phrasing suggested by 22/2: *seið hón hvars hón kunni*, 'she practised sorcery wherever she could'. This foolish change destroys the image of Heiðr's unhindered power, that previously dominated the stanza.

To be associated with this alteration of the R text, is, I think, the reading *hugleikin* in H for *leikin*, 22/6. A revising copyist may have thought *leikin* obscure (but see commentary) and attempted to define the term more precisely by attaching *hug-*, presumably intending 'mentally possessed, entranced'. This would seem to be his own coinage, since elsewhere *hugleikinn* is recorded only in impersonal usage: 'pleasing to the mind'. Heiðr *could* be practising her magic 'to her heart's content', but I find no parallel for this syntax.

I have considered these variants in 22/5–6 H as occurring possibly during the making of *H I, but they might well have been introduced later, i.e. during the making of *H II, when, no doubt, the desire to standardize was still strong. It may be significant that *hón*[2] in 22/5 H is the only instance of the spelling 'hun/hvn' in H: a form not found in Icelandic records before the beginning of the fourteenth century. Also notable is the fact that in the same line the *h* of *hvars* has been corrected from *k*, which suggests that the scribe of H either had the text of R (which *could* also be that of *H I) before him, or at least knew it, and had begun to write *kunni*.

(*c*) 43/5–6. Refrain III (43) is only written in full in its first occurrence in both R and H. In this full version lines 5–6 differ in the two texts:

R Fiǫlð veit hón frœða,	H Fram sé ek lengra,
fram sé ek lengra . . .	fiǫlð kann ek segia . . .

The H text exhibits here the same simplification of the two *vǫlur* personae that characterizes Snorri's citations from *Vǫluspá* (see *Problem IV* (*f*)). It is not found elsewhere in H. As Snorri does not cite Refrain III, however—though he evidently knew at least the opening of it—we have no means of

dating the formation of the H variant of Refrain III. It could have occurred first in *H II, but I am inclined to think it a revision designed by Snorri, which he never used.

Problem IV: Snorri's variants, not shared by R, H

A few readings in stanzas cited by Snorri are not in R or H:

(*a*) 3/2. In 3/2 Snorri has *ekki var* (*SnE* 11, all MSS.), as against R, H *Ymir byggði*. Snorri might have known a now lost Old Norse poem about the primordial void in which the line *þar/þat er ekki var* occurred—cf. *Wessobrunn Prayer* 6: *Do dar niuuiht ni uuas*—or he might have invented it himself; but it is unlikely that it occurred in the poet's text of *Vǫluspá* (*Vǫluspá Introduction* II, *stanza 3*). We may note that Snorri cites this stanza when he is describing the cosmos *before* Ymir was formed in it (*SnE* 12). If Ymir's name stood here in the text Snorri was using, he would have to remove it, as he had not yet mentioned Ymir in his prose. I suppose that is what he did.

The progressive standardization of the language in the SnE texts of stanza 3 is remarkable. SR and T have *ekki* not only in line 2, but also in line 5 (with U; cf. R, H, W *æva*) and in line 8 (with W, H; cf. R, U *hvergi*).

(*b*) 5/5–10. In 5/5–10 (*R II interpolation) Snorri has changed the order 'sun . . . stars . . . moon' to 'sun . . . moon . . . stars', i.e. to a more conventional ranking of these heavenly bodies (*SnE* 15).

(*c*) 9/5, 10/5–7. In 9/5 I would attribute to Snorri the reading *at* (SR, T) and the revisions in 10/5–7 (SR, T, W). These are discussed in the context of the interpolation 10 – 16 (*Problem II* (i) (*b*)).

(*d*) 19/1, 3. In 19/1, 3 Snorri (*SnE* 24–5) ties the poetic text more closely to his description of the holy water that laves the world tree, introducing the concept of holiness here for the world tree itself from a later stanza (27/4), which he does not cite:

R, H Ask veit ek standa,	SnE Ask veit ek ausinn [standa U],
heitir Yggdrasill,	heitir Yggdrasill,
hár baðmr, ausinn	hár baðmr heilagr,
hvítaauri.	hvítaauri.

The revision is neat, with the skaldic-style link between the first and fourth lines: 'I know an ash tree, drenched—Yggdrasill it is called, high, holy tree—with shining white loam'. No doubt Snorri's juxtaposition of *heilagr*

and *hvítaauri* is intended to emphasize the religious overtones of *hvíta-* for Christian readers and to suggest the laving of the tree, with *vatn heilagt* and *hvítaaurr*, as an image of heathen 'baptism' that prefigured the Christian. The laving by the norns, to save the tree's life, would seem to be a contribution of Snorri's to explain the term *ausinn* in context. The laving is found in no other source. Snorri adds that all things that enter that well become as white as the membrane within an eggshell (cf. Psalm 50: 9: *Domine. . . lavabis me, et super nivem dealbabor*).

(*e*) 26/1. In 26 (*SnE* 47) the two *helmingar* are reversed in SR, T, U (W omits 26/5–8). In 26/1 (now line 5 in SnE) SR reads *Þórr einn þat vann*, where *þat* has as antecedent—through the reversal of the *helmingar*—the ominous oath-breaking elaborated in 26/5–8: 'Þórr alone achieved that'. In his prose Snorri follows the order of his revised verse, noting the gods' decision not to respect their oaths to the giant *before* he describes Þórr's triumphant hammer-blow. He has defused the tragic implications of the oath-breaking coming in the verse *after* Þórr's 'triumph' by placing it before, so that the happy ending of his own story is not disturbed. I suggest that, having made this decision, Snorri sought to provide a grammatical connection between the two *helmingar*, with a connective *þat* and an unobtrusive verb, *vann*, 'effected', 'did'.

(*f*) 37/1, 38/1, 61/1. In 37/1 (*SnE* 75) Snorri reads *Sal veit ek standa* in place of *Sal sá* (*sér* H) *hón standa*, and in 38/1 he reads *Skulu þar vaða* in place of *Sá* (*sér* H) *hón þar vaða*. In 61/1 (*SnE* 26) Snorri also reads *Sal veit ek standa* instead of *Sal sér hón standa* (R and H). He has precedents for his choice of phrasing in 19/1: *Ask veit ek standa* and 61/5–6: *Þar skolo dyggvar / dróttir byggia*, which would help him to remove the second *vǫlva* figure, *hón*, from the text. The change to present tenses in 37/1 H, 38/1 H, with retention of *hón*, suggests that Snorri first contemplated keeping the vision framework with *hón*, setting it in the present tense (cf. his reference to the *vǫlva* before the citation of the dwarf *þula*: *Ok þessi segir hón nǫfn þeira*, *SnE* 21), but subsequently decided that it gave unnecessary complexity to his own didactic structure. In effect, he has standardized the supernatural knowledge ('I know') of the *vǫlva*, and never referred to her visionary powers ('she sees/saw'). He has cleverly used the prophetic parallel of 61/5 (*Þar skolo . . .*) to avoid the visionary reference, *Sá hón*, in 38/1, so providing a closer comparison, verbally, for the fates of the good and the evil: *Skulu þar vaða . . . menn meinsvarar*. Snorri's levelling of phrasing through these citations resembles the standardization of vocabulary in 57, 58 in H (see *Problem III* (ii) (*b*)).

(*g*) 38/7. In 38/7 (*SnE* 75) Snorri reads *kvelr*, 'torments', for R, H *saug*, 'sucked'. To suck corpses is natural to a snake; to torment corpses is not possible, unless of course they are still alive in hell. This is no doubt Snorri's meaning. He has wished to strengthen the Christian associations of the otherworld scene. On the present tense see *Problem III* (i) (*a*).

(*h*) 53/11. In 53/11 (*SnE* 74) Snorri reads *at naðri* (SR). On the interlocking revisions of this stanza in H and SnE see *Problem III* (i) (*c*).

(*j*) 61/3. In 61/3 instead of *gulli þakðan* SR and T read *gulli betra*. As Snorri extols this hall of the virtuous dead as one that *skal standa, þá er bæði himinn ok jǫrð hefir fariz* (*SnE* 26), it is conceivable that he preferred, for his context, the moralizing comparison, 'better than (deluding) gold', to the heathen extravagance of a golden roof. The parallelism in 'fairer than the sun', 'better than gold', may have attracted him: a variant, no doubt, of his own devising.

Problem V: Textual flaws in R *that are not in* H

I divide these flaws into two categories: those about which I feel as certain as one can be, and those about which I do not.

(i) *Scribal slips in* R

(*a*) Omissions: 1/2, 57/5–6. Two small omissions are of importance to the poem: 1/2, *helgar*, and 57/5–6, *ok minnaz þar / á megindóma*. There can be little doubt that H in both instances preserves the text of the original poem. Snorri's curt synopsis of 57/5–8 would seem to support the wording of H here: *minnaz á rúnar sínar* (*SnE* 75).

(*b*) Other copying errors: 25/5, 26/1, 40/5, 45/9–12, 38/4. Five errors in the copying of words or line order:

1. 25/5: 'hv^{er}ir'; H *hverr*. H is correct here, since the singular anticipates the expected answer: Loki. All SnE MSS. read *hverr* (*SnE* 47).
2. 26/1: 'v^{ar}'; H, T, U, W *vá*, SR *vann* (*SnE* 47). See *Problem IV* (*e*).
3. 40/5: 'svart v^{ar} þa'; H *svǫrt verða*. H is correct here: the future-present tenses in this stanza (*fylliz, rýðr, verða*) are a continuation of the future-present in the preceding stanza where *verðr* 39/5 marks a conspicuous shift from the past tenses *sat, fœddi* 39/1, 3 (see *Problem III* (i) (*a*)). All SnE MSS. read *svǫrt verða* (*SnE* 19). The error in R could also be associated with an assumption on the part of the copyist that *sólskin* was singular.

4. 45/9–12: this correct line order is in H, SnE. In R lines 9–10 follow 11–12 (which are twice written). A similar error in line order in R has been corrected by the scribe in 38/3–4. In H the four lines interpolated after the climax line 45/12 have no structural connection with the preceding stanza. See *Problem VI* (iv) (*b*).

5. In 38/4 R reads *morðvargar* instead of acc. *morðvarga*, as H, after *Sá hón*. The error in R might derive from some remembered reading of the SnE text: *Skulu . . . morðvargar*, but, as 38/3–4 were first miswritten *menn morð vargar meins vara ok*, and later corrected by the scribe himself, the ambiguous form *menn* may have caused the nom. pl. *vargar* without influence from SnE. See *MS* R *corrections* 17.

(ii) *Less certain scribal slips in* R

(*a*) 26/8: 'foru' R, 'voru' H, 'fóru' SR, U, 'voru' T (26/5–8 omitted in W). I have adopted the H reading in the present text.

(*b*) 41/6: *gaglviði* R, *galgviði* H (41 is not cited in SnE). I have adopted the H reading in the present text (although it is the 'easier' reading). See commentary.

(*c*) 53/11: *neppr frá* R, *neppr af* W, *nepr at* SR, *neprar* T. H is today quite illegible at this point. Jón Helgason (I. 46) thought he could 'glimpse parts of words and letters' among which were *nepr fra*, but he could not be wholly sure of these. He was using an ultraviolet lamp on the text of H for the first time. His tentative transcription raises some doubts, however. He prints *fra* in full: the two other instances of *frá* in H are abbreviated 'f^{ra}'. In R *frá* is twice abbreviated 'f^{ra}' (53/11, 62/4), once written in full (14/6). MS. forms of *af* (where the two letters are joined as one) and *frá* (where the abbreviation for *ra* stands immediately above *f*) might easily be confused by a scribe, or a reader of a partially obliterated text. I think it possible that R *frá* is an error for *af*, but I am not sufficiently confident to adopt *af* in the text without better evidence from H (although W, possibly the scribe of H, reads *af*; see commentary to 53/11).

If it could be determined that H read *frá* in 53/11 we could (*a*) accept *frá* as the original, although less idiomatic, reading; or (*b*) consider R, H *frá* as an error in *R II which has been 'corrected' to the more idiomatic *af* in W and deliberately changed to *at* in SR, for new contextual reasons; or (*c*) consider R, H *frá* as an error in a copy of *R II not used by Snorri, whose copy of *R II read *af*.

Problem VI: The further development of the H *text: changes not directly attributable to Snorri*

(i) *Rearrangement of the stanza order 21 – 43, causing accidental omission of 28 – 33*

The distinctive feature of the H text is the attempt to reorganize the central section of the poem. I shall call the author of this attempt 'the reviser'.

I have traced a sequence of ideas in 21 – 43 (*Vǫluspá Introduction* II), with which the text of H, as far as it goes, can be compared. I say 'as far as it goes', because H lacks the climax of this section of the poem, the vision of Baldr's death and the killing of Hǫðr (28 – 33). The omission of the death of Baldr leaves lines in H without context: the punishment of Loki (34), for example, and the return of Hǫðr and Baldr (59). The omission of Baldr's death cannot have been an intentional characteristic of any well established oral version of the poem, and it is difficult, indeed, to imagine the omission occurring even in a casual oral recitation. It might easily have arisen, however, by a 'clerical error' in a scriptorium. In order to rearrange these twenty-three stanzas (or prepare selections for recitation) a reviser might have copied the distinct stanza sequences on separate *schedulae*. The *schedula* containing 28 – 33 might have been overlooked, or missing (see *Problem VI* (ii) (*a*)), when *H II was being created. The most that we can do in these circumstances is to consider what we think is lost, or what gained, by the changes apparent in H, when compared with R. The author of *H II may have been in the unenviable position of having to reconstruct a text of the poem from no more than its beginning and end sequences and a box of unnumbered and incomplete slips for its centre.

(*a*) 20 H, 25 – 27 H. In R it is clear that 20 closes one section of the poem and 21 begins another. In 21 there is the striking return to the figure of the *vǫlva*, but with a change of persona, *hón*—'*she* remembers'—occurring for the first time. There is also the sense of a new start, conveyed by the phrase *fyrst í heimi*—'the first pitched battle in the world . . .'.

The poet's signalling of this new phase of his poem has not been recognized in H. H does not follow 20 with 21 – 4 (the Æsir–Vanir war), but with 25 – 6 (the tale of the giant builder). The repetition after 20 of the familiar Refrain I (in 25) effectively destroys any sense of a 'new start'.

The placing of sequence 25 – 6 before 21 – 4 is also unfortunate, since the gods' fear of losing Freyja (25/7–8) chronologically follows the account of the Æsir–Vanir war: Freyja did not belong to the pantheon before that war happened. And it would be when their wooden wall was shattered in the war (24/5–6), that the gods would need the new stone wall the giant

builder offered. The chronological ordering of events is emphatically observed in the first and third sections of the poem, where R and H do not greatly differ. In R an equally clear chronological ordering is observed also in the central section (21 – 43).

In 27 the *vǫlva* 'knows' and 'sees' the gods' apprehension of their end. In R this is a finely placed bridge stanza between the ominous oath-breaking (26) and the visit of Óðinn to the *vǫlva* to learn of Baldr's fate (28 – 33). The first occurrence of Refrain II—*Vitoð ér enn, eða hvat?*—at the close of 27 subtly introduces an allusion to the *séance* technique of question and answer immediately before the approach of Óðinn, who is coming with his questions (cf. *'Hvers fregnið mik?'* 28/5). As H does not have the sequence of Óðinn's visit, the image of the all-knowing, all-seeing *vǫlva* in 27 loses in H its specific contextual significance. There is no evidence that the reviser intended to place 28 – 33 in his H text after 27 (see discussion of 34 H below); there is no evidence, therefore, that he was aware of the poet's own well-constructed sequence.

(*b*) 39 – 40 H. After 25 – 7 the reviser has placed 39 – 40. In R these stanzas come within the framework of the *vǫlva*'s otherworld vision. 39 and 40, however, are not explicitly visionary stanzas, dependent on the framework, but prophetic: they prophesy the birth of the monstrous wolf, who 'in troll's skin' will seize the moon (39/5–8). The reviser may well have seen a thematic connection here with the attempt of the giant builder to carry off the sun and moon (alluded to in the wording of 25/5–6). On that account he may have juxtaposed the two sequences. So, the *vǫlva*'s cry—'Do you still seek to know . . .?—at the end of 27, is followed suitably enough by the appalling prophecy in 39 – 40, and the link between the two sequences confirmed by the repetition of her cry at the end of 40.

(*c*) 21 – 24 H. The sequence of the Æsir–Vanir war, 21 – 4, now follows 39 – 40 in H. There is no logical or thematic link between these two sequences, but the reviser might possibly have intended a moral one, to continue his theme of foreboding with renewed moral emphasis. War is, like the oath-breaking of 26/5–8, a reprehensible thing, especially among those who claim to be gods, and especially if it results in union with the degenerate Vanir and their 'ill Vanabrúðr'—or so a Christian reviser, like many later scholars, might think. But the tone of the verse in the Æsir–Vanir sequence is buoyant and witty—as befits its propitious outcome—and quite unlike the oppressive, menacing tone of the preceding stanzas 39 – 40 in H. This juxtaposition has little to recommend it.

(*d*) 34 H. After the Æsir–Vanir war sequence there follows 34. In the variant H text of lines 1–4 Váli does his brutal fettering; his victim, Loki, is

not named. The emergence of 34 in the text of H is only understandable if 32 – 3, or a variant equivalent, had preceded it, at least in the reviser's mind. It cannot have been the considered intention of the reviser to place the binding of Loki immediately after the Æsir–Vanir war, with which Loki has no connection in any source. If the reviser had intended to place the whole sequence 28 – 33 immediately after the Æsir–Vanir war sequence (21 – 4), there are certain general parallels in subject-matter that might have prompted him to do so: Óðinn and a *vǫlva* appear notably in both sequences, and shield-bearing valkyries (30) relate to the theme of war. These are, however, such poor reasons poetically for placing the two sequences together, that one hesitates to mention them.

Nevertheless, an intended order of 21 – 4, 28 – 33, 34 in *H II is conceivable.

(*e*) 43 H, 41 – 42 H. After 34 the reviser has placed the first occurrence in H of Refrain III, a variant version of 43. He may have done so in order to juxtapose menacingly the binding of Loki (34/1–4 H) and the prophecy of bonds breaking at Ragnarǫk—*festr mun slitna* (43/3). If he had then decided to omit (as he does) 35 and 36, regarding them perhaps as misplaced and morally valueless scenes of otherworld geography, he may have introduced Refrain III to provide continuity in their place. Unfortunately, by doing so he has destroyed the poet's design, by which 41 and 42 lead up to and prepare for 43, the first dramatic occurrence of Refrain III, moving from the sights and sounds of the past to the last warning of the cock's crow and dog's bark in the terrifying present. In H, however, these two anticipatory stanzas are made to *follow* the first occurrence of the Refrain, not to lead up to it.

(*f*) 37 – 38 H, 43 – 44 H. After 42 the reviser turns back to plunder the stanzas of the *vǫlva*'s otherworld vision, selecting 37 and 38 to follow 42. He may have seen a possible link between the 'halls of Hel' in 42/8 and 'hall remote from the sun' in 37/1–2, but above all he may have wished to bring the scenes of human sinners and their punishments after death (37, 38) closer to the scenes of living human evil in 44. This is in fact what he does (first interposing a second instance of Refrain III to smooth the transition).

In H the sequence of stanzas after 20 has now become: 25, 26, 27, 39, 40, 21, 22, 23, 24, 34, 43, 41, 42, 37, 38, 43, 44. After 44 the text of H follows the stanza order of R, with variations noted in *Problem III* (i) (*b*) and (*c*) and some insertions of additional lines noted in *Problem VI*.

(ii) *Omission of two stanza sequences*

(*a*) 28 – 33. I have attributed this omission to 'clerical error' (see *Problem VI* (i)). Among the sequences in this section of the poem 28 – 33 is unique,

not only in length, but in forming a complete scene, much as *Baldrs Draumar* does. It could have been set aside for use independent of *Vǫluspá*.

(*b*) 35 – 36. 35 may have been dropped from the text because it is not explicitly relevant to anything retained in H. In R the picture of the savage river Slíðr follows a reference to Hveralundr (34/2), i.e. to its source (see commentary); but that reference has been cut from the H text. 36 has no relevance whatever to the minatory text of H, and has no doubt been rejected on that account.

(iii) *Insertion of two additional instances of Refrain III*

Refrain III occurs three times in R (43, 46, 55), five times in H. The occurrences in H are:

1. after 34 and before 41 (34 H, 43 H full version, 41)
2. after 38 and before 44 (38, 43 H abbreviated, 44)
3. after 49 and before 47 (49, 46 H abbreviated, 47)
4. after 51 and before 52 H (51, 46 H abbreviated, 52)
5. after 54 and before 56 (54, 55 H abbreviated, 56)

In H only in 1. and 4. is there no connection with a following R stanza. In 5. the regular R sequence is already being followed in H. It is noticeable that 1. and 4. introduce Refrain III where there has been a substantial alteration to the text of R. This may suggest that the reviser wished to strengthen the impression of unity at the places where he felt it was weakest.

(iv) *Two insertions of popular portentous verse in the context of Ragnarǫk*

(*a*) After 44/10 H reads:

grundir gialla,	the lands shriek,
gífr fliúgandi	trollwomen [are] flying

As the lines do not fit the syntax of the preceding stanza, they are no doubt a reminiscence from some other source, which the interpolator thought fitted the context of the collapse of the world—*verǫld steypiz* (44/10). I have suggested that the lines are 'popular' because they are rough and reflect the terrors of popular tradition. It may have been the currency of just such popular traditions in his day that made it natural for the poet to allude to the roar of the giants' realm (49/3) and the disturbed trollwomen—*gífr rata* (50/6)—in his own more sophisticated poem. I have not found parallels, as yet, to the phrasing of these two lines.

(*b*) After 45/12 H reads:

hræðaz allir	all men will be panic-stricken
á helvegum,	on the paths of Hel,
áðr Surtar þann	before Surtr's kinsman
sefi of gleypir	swallows that one [?]

The text is evidently corrupt. Two lines could have been lost after *Surtar*. The only one swallowed at Ragnarǫk is Óðinn; this would make 'Surtr's kinsman' the wolf. Such a relationship is nowhere else mentioned. Surtr could here, as elsewhere (see *LP* s.v.), be a general term for 'giant', who would then be Loki, father of the wolf. This unsatisfactory argument does not mend the text. But it seems possible to accept these lines as another example of the 'formula of popular prophecy' in H, comparable to 52/5–6 H and 53/5–8 H (see *Problem III* (i) (*c*)). The clumsiness of this insertion is underlined by the fact that the tradition that Óðinn was swallowed by the wolf (*Vafþrúðnismál* 53) is one discarded by the poet (51).

(v) *Insertion of a Christian stanza between 61 and 62*

61 offers an image of the gold-roofed hall where the virtuous companies of men will live for ever in joy. 62 offers a scene of the removal of the dead to the underworld to be dragon's food. Judgement of some kind is implied, but not stated. In H a four-line stanza has been inserted between these two stanzas to provide an explicit reference to Judgement:

Þá kemr hinn ríki	Then comes the Sovereign
at regindómi,	to divine Judgement/Empire,
ǫflugr, ofan,	full of power, from above—
sá er ǫllu ræðr.	he who governs all things.

It is possible that *regindómi* has no reference to Judgement, but means only 'divine authority, jurisdiction', on the analogy of *konungdómr*. *Regindómr* is recorded nowhere else, but the analogy of *til reginþinga*, 'to the supreme assemblies', in *Helgakviða Hundingsbana* I 51 (SG) supports a concrete interpretation for *-dómr* as 'court of judgement': the judicial place to which the All Powerful 'comes' (*kemr at*). I do not think that the suggestion is well founded that *hinn ríki* is Heimdallr, and that therefore the stanza is part of the original text of *Vǫluspá* (see commentary to *62 H*).

(vi) *Two inept lines substituted for 7/3–4*

This is the only instance in stanzas common to both texts, where H has wording totally different from R. The Æsir have met to fabricate wealth; the poet mentions that they have already built their temples: 'those (Æsir)', *er hǫrg ok hof / hátimbroðo*. Instead of this allusion to their artisan achievements, H reads *afls kostuðu, / allz freistuðu*, 'they exerted their strength, they

tried everything', as if, indeed, the Æsir were finding themselves in difficulties. The scribe responsible for this substitution may have had a bad text. His substitute reading may have been called into his mind from some (humorous, unidentified) source by the word *afla* in 7/5.

(vii) *Substitution of* þussa meyar *for 17/2*

It would seem that the writer of *H II has introduced a feminine plural from 8/6, *þussa meyar*, into 17/2, to agree with *þriár* in 17/1. So he superficially tidies up the first two lines of the stanza grammatically, discarding 17/2, *ór því liði*, which probably meant as little to him as it does to us.

D. MS. R corrections[9]

The writing in the text of *Vǫluspá* in R appears to have been corrected in twenty-seven places. I set out below all the instances of correction. The majority are clearly those of the original scribe (marked *); a few seem to be those of a later hand (marked **). Assigned to the later hand are (*a*) erasures which delete what the original hand had already deleted by subscript dots (e.g. (4), (7) below); (*b*) erasures of error apparently not noted by the original scribe (e.g. (21), (26) below); (*c*) erasures that introduce error into the text (e.g. (2) (*b*), (11), (18) below; see FJ Facs lxix).

In one instance, it would seem, the original scribe has introduced an error by his 'correction' (25).

1. * 2/3 *þá* corrected from 'þa᷎' by subscript dot (note 'þa᷎', 1/8, in the line immediately above).
2. 2/6 'iviþi^{ur}'
   * (*a*) the original scribe has begun to write an erroneous tall letter instead of *v* (or possibly a superscript *r*, cf. 'vi^{r}þi', fol. 7, line 2), and then corrected clearly to *v*.
   ** (*b*) a later hand has scraped away the superscript abbreviation for *ur*, but it can still be traced by ultraviolet light (Karlsson and Tómasson 227–8). Compare the superscript abbreviations for *ur* in 'sigfa᷎ð^{ur}' and 'fa᷎ð^{ur}' fol. 4, lines 15, 17. This abbreviation is rarely used elsewhere in R for the fem. pl. ending regularly written as 'or' (CT).
3. * 3/7 *ginnunga*: *i* corrected from *r* (probably an anticipation of *gras*, 3/8).
4. 4/6 *á salar steina*
   * (*a*) corrected from *af salar steini* (cf. 14/6) by the original scribe, who deleted *f* by subscript dot and wrote *a* over *-i*.
   ** (*b*) a later hand has erased *f*.
5. * 7/5 *afla*: *af* corrected from 'a᷎' (probably an anticipation of 'a᷎ð', that opens the next verse-line).
6. * 12/1 *ok* (ampersand) written twice ('7 | 7'); *ok*[1] deleted by subscript dots.
7. 12/4 *Vitr ok Litr*
   * (*a*) *Vitr ok Litr* at the end of a line are followed at the beginning of the next line by *ok* (ampersand) *Vitr*, which has been deleted by the original scribe by subscript dots. Four MSS. have the order *Litr ok Vitr*.
   ** (*b*) a later hand has erased *ok Vitr*.
8. * 14/6 *frá salar steini* corrected from *Aurvanga siǫt til* (an anticipation of 14/7) by the original scribe (see FJ Facs 97 for full analysis of this correction).
9. * 19/3 'hárbaðmr' corrected from 'hárbarmr' (cf. *BDr* 9/1–2: *hávan hróðrbarm*, 'tall tree of fame'; *Grím* 40/5: *baðmr* written *baðrmr*).
10. * 20/1 *Þaðan*: *ð* written over *t* (or possibly *r*).
11. ** 21/3 'gull ueigo': a later hand has erased *-o*. Cf. H text.
12. * 22/8 *brúðar* corrected from *þióðar* ('brv' written over 'þio').
13. * 28/8 'þit' (following *auga falt*) is deleted by subscript dots.
14. * 32/2 *sýndiz*: *d* inserted above the line, with omission stroke.
15. 33/7 *vá*
   * (*a*) corrected from 'uorþr', *a* superscript, 'orþr' deleted by subscript dots.
   ** (*b*) a later hand has crossed through the whole word.
16. * 36/2 'vollō' corrected from 'fiollō', *v* superscript, *fi* deleted by subscript dots.
17. * 38/3–4 'm̄ meins vara 7 morð vargar' first written 'm̄ morð vargar | m̄eins vara 7', corrected by superscript signs over 'morð' and 'meins'.
18. ** 38/5 *þannz*: *z* erased, but still legible.
19. * 43/1 'mioc': *m* is clumsily written, as if the scribe first meant to write 'nu' or 'nv' (cf. 46/1, 55/1).
20. * 43/3 *festr*: *f* corrected from *v*.
21. ** 45/9–12 'ymr iþ aldna tre eN iotvN losnar scelfr' on fol. 4, end of line 2, has been erased, but is still legible. The words are repeated on the following line.
22. * 3/3 'gēgr': *g*[2] corrected from *n* (crowded at the end of the line).
23. * 53/8 *ryðia*: *r* corrected from *s* (a repetition from preceding *stoð*).

[9] FJ Facs 94–101 gives a detailed description of all the corrections and peculiarities of the text of *Vsp* in R. The ultraviolet photograph of the MS. made by Arne Mann Nielsen for the Arnamagnæan Institute, Copenhagen, clarifies the text even further.

24. * 53/12 *niðs*: *s* corrected from another tall letter, either *l* or more probably the first stroke of *h* (cf. 'niðhaʀgr' fol. 19, line 29).
25. * 60/3 'byrir' altered by the original scribe from 'bvrir' (which must be correct).
26. ** 62/3 'neþan' is followed by a word ('nepp'?) at the end of the line. It has been erased, probably by a later hand.
27. * 62/4 'niþa': *a* corrected from *u*.

E. MS. variants of the dwarf-names in *Vǫluspá* 10 – 16[10]

10/1 R
1. motsognir R, B, motsǫgni A, moðsognir H, T, U, W, mo[ð]sognir SR (*torn*)

10/4 R
2. dviriN R, H, SR, T, W, dyriN U (*cf.* dvrnir A, B)

11/1–4 R
3. nyi *all MSS.*
4. niþi *all MSS.*
5. norðri *all MSS.*
6. suðri *all MSS.*
7. ǫstri *all MSS.*
8. vestri R, H, SR, T, U, W
9. alþiofr R, H, U, W, A, B, alþiolfr SR, T
10. dvaliN *all MSS. See 55. below.*

(*not in* R)
11. nær H, SR, T, U, W, A, narr B
12. naiñ H, SR, T, U, W, A, B
13. nipingr H, SR, T, W, niningr U (*cf.* nifængr A, B)
14. daiñ H, SR, T, U, W

11/5–8 R
15. bivǫR R, bifvR H, SR, W, bifr T, bivor U, bivoR A, B
16. bavǫR R, bafvR H, SR, bafr T, bavR U, bauuR W, blavoR A, bavoR B
17. bǫmbuR R, bǫmbvR H, bavbavR SR, baumbr T, bambavR U, bvmbvr A, B
18. nori R, H, SR, T, U, W
19. an R, H, oriñ T, oṛ U, ori W (*not in* SR). *See 64. below.*
20. anaR R, onaR H, SR, T, W, A, B, aNaR U
21. ai R, H, W, A, B, OiN SR, T, oñi U
22. mioðvitnir R, H, T, U, W, A, B, moð- SR

12/1–8 R
23. veigr R, ueggr H, vigr SR, T, W, viGr U
24. gandalfr R, H, SR, T, U, W, B, gandalf A

[10] I have not here reproduced the accents occasionally marked in the MSS. (e.g. *nár, hár*). Distinction is often difficult to make between 'u' and 'v' in the MSS. In U 'n' and 'N' are often very similar.

25. vindalfr *all MSS.*
26. þraiN R, þoriñ H, SR, T, U, W, A, B
27. þeccr R, þrar H, A, B, þror SR, T, W, þior U
28. þoriN R, U, A, B, þraiñ H, þroī SR, T, W
29. þror R, H, A, B, þeckr SR, W, A, B, þetr T (*not in* U)
30. vitr R, U, A, B, litr H, SR, T, W
31. litr R, U, A, B, vitr H, SR, T, W
32. nar R, nyr H, SR, T, W, (*following* nyraþr) A, B (*not in* U)
33. nyraþr *all MSS.*
34. regiN R, H, A, B, reckr SR, T, U, W, A, B (*cf.* H rekka, *in place of* dverga, 12/6, *preceding* regiñ)
35. raðsuiðr *all MSS.*

13/1–4 R
36. Fili *all MSS.*
37. Kili *all MSS.*
38. fundiN R, H, SR, T, U, W
39. nali R, H, vali SR, T, U, W
40. hepti R, hefti H } heptifili SR, T, U, W, A, B
41. vili R, fili H }
42. hanaR R, H, hannerr A, B, har SR, T, U, W, A, B. *See 59. below.*
43. sviaR R, svidR H (*see Bugge* (*a*) *ad loc.*), siaR SR, sniar T, segir U, sviaR W

(*not in* R, SnE)
44. billingr H
45. bruni H
46. billdr H
47. buri H (*cf.* bviñ A, buiñ B)

13/5–8 R
(*not in* SnE)
48. frar R, fror H
49. hornbori R, A, B, fornbogi H
50. frǫgr R, frǫg H
51. loni R, H (*cf.* liomi, loiñ A, B)
52. ǫrvangr R, H (*cf.* ǫrvargr A, B)
53. iari R, H (*cf.* iaki A)
54. eikinskialldi R, H, A, B. *See 73. below.*

14/2 R
55. dvaliNs R, dualins H. *See 10. above.*

14/4 R
56. lofars R, H, lofar A, B, lovaR SR, U, W

15/1–4 R
57. drǫpnir R, H, SR, T, W, A, B, draufnir H, dramir U
58. dolgþrasir R, H, dolgþvari SR, T, U, W
59. har R, H, U, havR SR, T, W. *See 42. above.*

60. hǫrgspori R, H, hvgstari SR, T, U, W, B, hǫgstari A
61. hlǫvangr R, hlevargr H, hleðiolfr SR, W, hleðiofr T, hleiþolfr U, hlioðolfr A, B
62. gloi R, gloiñ H, SR, T, W, A, B, gloni U

(*not in* R, H)
63. dori SR, T, U, W, A, duri B
64. ori T, U, W, A, B (*not in* SR). *See 19. above.*
65. dvfr SR, T, U, W, A, B
66. andvari SR, T, U, W, B, andvarn A

15/5–6 R
67. scirv^{ir} R, U, W, A, B, skirf^{ir} H, T, skirpir SR
68. virvir R, H, T, U, W, A, B, virpir SR
69. scafiðr R, H, SR, T, U (*defective,* sk.fiðr), W, A, B
70. ai R, H, SR, T, U, W. *See 21. above.*

16/1–2 R
71. alfr *all MSS.*
72. yngvi R, H, U, ingi SR, T, W
73. eikinscialdi *all MSS.* (*spelt* -skialli U). *See 54. above.*

16/3–4 R (*not in* H)
74. fialaR R, falr SR, T, U, W (*cf.* farli A, B)
75. frostri R, frosti SR, T, U, W, A, B
76. finR R, fiðr SR, T, U, W, A, B
77. ginaR R, SR, T, U, W, A, B

16/8 R
78. lofars R, H. *See 56. above.*

All the dwarf-names in R occur also in the combined texts of H and SnE. H does not have the four names in 16/3–4 R. SnE does have these names. SnE does not have the sequence of seven names in 13/5–8 R. H does have this sequence. H has four names that are not in R or SnE: they are inserted between the sequences in 13/1–4 and 13/5–6 R.

H and SnE have four names that are not in R: they are inserted between the sequences 11/1–4 and 11/5–8 R.

It would seem that after the interpolation of the dwarf stanzas in *R II several additions and subtractions were made to the names listed, but none of these changes has disturbed the basic structure of the interpolation, beginning with the dwarfs' creation, telling of their migration and final establishment and fame: a unique record of unexpected tradition, made in an unfortunate place.

IV. *The Christian Context of* Vǫluspá

The poet of *Vǫluspá* must have lived, at some time of his life, in a community where Christian thought was familiar and he had come to comprehend at least certain aspects of it well. He has external effects in his poem that could come from eschatological homilies or apocalyptic visions of sinners in hell (44, 38).[11] The image of the bleeding Baldr (31), and of the weeping mother (33), recall Christian stereotypes. A native Norse genre of religious prophecy may have existed, to which *Vǫluspá* conforms, but the only other record that might relate to it is the Irish account of Ota 'giving her answers' in Cluain Mic Nois (see commentary to 1/1), which allows us little insight into context or structure. The *vǫlva* in *Vǫluspá* is the only Nordic sibyl who expressly concerns herself with divine matters, in extant sources. Centuries before *Vǫluspá* would have been composed, however, the pagan Sibyl of the classical world had an established place in Christian tradition, particularly since Augustine cited her song on the 'Sign of Judgement' in *The City of God* (*c.* 425), translating it from the original Greek into Latin.[12] In England the Greek text was translated independently into Latin by two poets *c.* 700.[13] The *Cantus Sibyllae* was made part of the Christmas Office of the Church from the ninth to the eleventh century; from the late ninth century musical notation survives in about fifty liturgical MSS. throughout Europe.[14] The *Cantus*, with its vivid portents and horrors as the earth breaks apart—and with its thrilling music—could have been heard by Norsemen in England. It is conceivable also that they could have known of Latin Sibylline Oracles, since one such Oracle has been discovered,[15] that could have been known in the ninth century in the north of England, or even, much earlier, in Ireland.

This beautiful Latin poem of 136 lines, *Prophetia Sibyllae magae*, has many of the characteristics of the Greek *Sibylline Oracles* and some of *Vǫluspá*. It is

[11] Belief in the approaching end of the world was so widespread in early Christendom, and, indeed, in pre-Christian belief, that it would always have been part of the intellectual context of the Europe the Norsemen knew. In 601 Pope Gregory the Great wrote to the recently converted Ethelbert of Kent that 'the End of the present world is already near . . . the unending kingdom of the Saints is approaching. As this same End of the world is drawing nigh, many unusual things will happen—climatic changes, terrors from heaven, unseasonable tempests, wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes' (cited from McGinn 64; McGinn's book is an invaluable lucid documentation of the subject). Widespread, non-Christian concepts of the end of the world would seem to have blended readily with the Christian, as in *Vsp* and the OHG *Muspilli* (see McGinn 80–1). Four hundred years after King Ethelbert the Anglo-Saxon homilists were still confronting the same problem (see commentary to *Vsp* 38/3–4).

[12] St Augustine of Hippo, *The City of God* xviii. 23.

[13] Bulst 105–6; P. Dronke (*f*), 10–12 and n. 15; UD (*j*), 5–6.

[14] UD (*j*), n. 7.

[15] P. Dronke (*f*), 16–23; UD (*j*), 4–9 (where the debate between A. C. Bang and Viktor Rydberg on the influence of the *SO* on *Vsp* is also discussed).

uttered by a virgin, dedicated to God, who writes her songs from his knowledge:

Mundus origo mea est, animam de sidere traxi.
Intactum corpus concutit omne deus...
Carmina quae scribo, noverit illa deus...

The world is my origin, my soul I have drawn from a star,
All my virgin body God sets trembling...
The songs I write are those God has known...

Her song now is of the glorious creation, of Christ's coming to take away the sins of the world, of the terrors those sins are bringing, of God's sorrow that he ever created man and redeemed him with his blood, as time runs out and the world is dwindling in decay. But the sibyl has faith that God will give to believers a new radiant world that will last forever: 'If I am worthy, may he take my soul and set it in a star'. Even from this brief glance at the *Prophetia*, we can see the striking differences of *Vǫluspá*. Yet the likenesses—in the sibylline framework, in the historical-cosmological progress of the narrative within the frame—are almost as striking as the differences.[16]

The earliest of the three MSS. of the *Prophetia* are two from the ninth century: one of these stems from Tours or a scriptorium influenced by Tours. Alcuin of York was Abbot of Tours from 794 to 804. The link between the Carolingian and the Anglo-Saxon schools was strong. It is conceivable that the *Prophetia* could have been known, therefore, in England, and especially in the north.

The *Prophetia* may well have been composed in seventh century Spain.[17] This is a time when strong links can be traced between Spain and Ireland: apocryphal legends that are otherwise preserved only in Spain appear in seventh and eighth century Ireland.[18] At least two routes would therefore be open for the transmission of a Latin sibylline poem to the British Isles.

These are the external features of *Vǫluspá* that appear to reflect Christian modes. More startling is the analogy between inner motivation in the poem and a Christian theological theme. Loki is given an elaborate Judas-role to play. He must achieve the killing of Baldr. He has already prepared for the gods the preliminary moral path to misfortune—their *ørlǫg*[19]—by making it impossible for them *not* to break their oaths (26): did he not recommend

[16] See *Excursus* below. [17] P. Dronke (*f*), 16, and n. 24. [18] Dumville (*b*), 321–4.

[19] See *Vǫluspá Introduction* II, stanza 28; I have attempted a fuller analysis of the moral structure of *Vsp*, compared with that of the *Prophetia*, in UD (*j*), 9–16. Cf. also *Lks* 25. The act of Loki in entangling the gods in oath-breaking in the giant builder story would already be in the traditions known to the poet of *Vsp*, to be used by him as he planned his theme. In its original context Loki's act would be as well-meaning as Frigg's maternal decision not to ask the little mistletoe for its oath.

granting the giant builder his horse, on which the builder's success depended (*SnE* 45)? Then he shatters the defences round Baldr's life by finding the weak spot, the mistletoe. When Baldr is killed, the gods send the valiant Hermóðr to ask Hel for Baldr's release, and Hel agrees, if he proves to be so deeply loved that every thing in the world will weep for him (*SnE* 66–7). Loki must now refuse to weep; and so he does. Baldr remains in Hel until the earth is reborn for him to dwell in and to bless.

In achieving Baldr's death Loki is performing Óðinn's will: Óðinn was shown the secret of Baldr's sacrifice by the *vǫlva* (31), and Baldr's killing is enacted in the manner of an Odinic sacrifice (32). So too in achieving Christ's death Judas was performing God's will. If Judas had repented before betraying Christ, God would have had to find some other way of making Judas bring about Christ's death and with it the redemption of the world. The devil wanted the crucifixion stopped, because Christ crucified would harrow hell, take from the devil all his subjects, his empire of death. So the tradition grew up that the dream of Pilate's wife (Matthew 27: 19) was inspired by the devil, to make her persuade her husband that Jesus was a just man and not to be condemned.[20] Judas's sin was permitted by God or it would not have happened. A *vǫlva*'s prophecy is a fitting place to present such problems of predestination.

The death that all creatures weep for—that of Christ, that of Baldr—is also a death they give thanks for, because it is a relighting of life: *Lumen Christi—Deo Gratias* in the Mass for Holy Saturday, as the candles are relit. Loki disguises himself as a giantess called *Þǫkk*, 'Thankfulness', when he visits Frigg and learns that the mistletoe never swore *not* to harm Baldr. He keeps this disguise too when he is asked to weep for Baldr: *Þǫkk mun gráta / þurrum tárum / Baldrs bálfarar*, 'Thankfulness will weep with dry tears at Baldr's burning' (*SnE* 67–8). His alias is, I suggest, an allusion to the Christian thanksgiving (and a hint that Loki knows perfectly well his own theological role).

[20] *In Matthæi evangelium expositio* IV. xxvii, *PL* 92, col 121 (Carolingian commentary, *c.* 750–800, wrongly attributed to Bede; McNally 106): Hac enim vice, non ante, se intellexit diabolus per Christi mortem nudandum, et spolia humani generis sive in mundo, sive apud tartaros, amissurum: et ideo satagebat per mulierem, per quam spolia mortis invaserat, Christum eripere de manibus Judæorum, ne per illius mortem ipse amitteret mortis imperium ('For not before this moment did the devil perceive that he was to be despoiled by the death of Christ and that he would lose his prize of the human race, both in this world and in hell; and therefore he set about snatching Christ from the hands of the Jews, by means of a woman—the same means through which he had seized the prize of death'). There are earlier, but more remote, references to the devil's use of Pilate's wife (e.g. the apocryphal letters of St. Ignatius to the Philippians IV refer to the devil's disturbance of her dreams; *Padres Apostólicos* 528). On the motif of Pilate's wife, Procula, in drama see Sticca 95–9. In verses of Eriugena († *c.* 870) the Devil blames himself for the death of Christ: 'Had I recognized the man, he had never hung upon the cross. / The lowly form of his human body undid my wits' (Eriugena 92–3, lines 49–50).

The long intrigue of Baldr's killing in *Snorra Edda* seems like a loose-limbed dramatic sequence of comic and tragic scenes, with more than a hint of burlesque.[21] Loki's trickster role of disguise and deceit has been a witty one in Snorri's sources, but in *Vǫluspá* his deeds are not found funny. When the *vǫlva* recognizes his chained figure beneath Cauldrons' Grove (34), she sees it as malignant; but the scene of *Þǫkk*'s refusal to weep (to which the *vǫlva* alludes in her term *áþekkian*) can never have been anything but impudently comic.[22] That in the tenth century there should have been in ON a near-fabliau treatment of sacred matters, Christian and heathen, does not necessarily reflect the irreligiosity of the heathen[23] (cf. the relationship of God and the devil in the Book of Job). Judas as a comedian can already be seen in outline in a legend in a homily in the *Leabhar Breac*: when he saw the suffering inflicted on Christ 'a kind of repentance seized him' and he flung back the thirty pieces in the temple. On the third day, when Christ would rise from the dead, Judas deliberately hanged himself, so that his soul would be in hell when Christ came to harrow it and it would be one of the first saved. 'But Jesus did not allow the soul of Judas to go to hell till he had brought the Captivity from thence, so that the soul of Judas was the first soul on which hell closed after that.'[24] Jesus has out-tricked the trickster. I think it not impossible that Christian apocryphal stories of this kind could have helped to shape the role of Loki in the Norse legend of Baldr.

If we seek for analogues for some of the key events in the story of Baldr's death the closest are Christian, from Ireland and Anglo-Saxon England:

1. Hǫðr, whose shaft struck Baldr, was blind; so too was Longinus, whose spear pierced Christ on the cross. In the poems (*c.* 750–70) of Blathmac (213–32), after 'they tore from him his pure raiment' and 'lots

[21] In *Hrafns Saga Sveinbjarnarsonar* 10–11, ch. 7, a man involved in a killing offers his head to the son of the dead man (and is granted it; *c.* 1197). A local ditty was made up at the time: *Hvatvetna grét / —hefi ek þat fregit: / býsn þótti þat— / Baldr ór helju. / Þó hefir hæra, / þá er hǫfuð færði, / Þormóðr þotit. / Þat er ólogit.* 'Everything wept—so I have heard: a weird thing it was—[? to get] Baldr out of Hel. Yet more loudly, when he proffered his head, did Þormóðr howl. That is not telling a lie.' Would this allusion have made much impact in the district if there had not been noisy popular re-enactments of 'Baldr's story' for general entertainment?

[22] The second half of Þǫkk's stanza is as insensitively rude as Loki can make it: *Kyks né dauðs / nautka ek karls sonar: / haldi Hel því, er hefir!* 'Alive or dead, I had no use for the old fellow's son: let Hel hold on to what she has!' Such broad iconoclasm would be very popular.

[23] See Flower 102 on the relationship of pagan and Christian sentiment in Ireland: 'The hero and the saint rail upon one another in good set terms. The extreme expression of this conflict is in the quatrain which the Irish-speaking peasantry of to-day still declaim with a peculiar pleasure: "If I saw God and Oscar hand to hand on a hill, were I to see Oscar down, I would say that God is a strong man." This is not, as some have thought, evidence of a pagan reaction or of medieval anti-clericalism; it is with the poets who composed and the peasants who repeat the poems merely the delight in developing the implications of a situation to their last extreme'. It seems to me that this delight is much in evidence in some of the Irish Biblical Apocrypha.

[24] See Dumville (*b*), 302–3.

were cast' for it, 'when they thought thus that Jesus could be approached, Longinus then came to slay him with the spear'; this pierced his heart, and with his blood Christ quickly cured 'the fully blind man who, openly with his two hands, was plying the lance'. The allusive text seems to imply that the blind Longinus was brought by others to kill Christ, when they thought the moment was right (i.e. ? when his raiment would not be spoiled). The blindness of Longinus is first mentioned in Western tradition by Blathmac, and first clearly illustrated in an Irish gospel book of *c.* 800.[25]

2. Hermóðr's visit to Hel to release Baldr has the outlines of the Harrowing of Hell, in which Hermóðr has the role of Christ and Baldr that of the holy dead held in captivity. This originally unorthodox belief is documented in Ireland and Spain as early as the seventh century;[26] and in an Anglo-Saxon MS. from the early ninth century, 'The Book of Cerne', itself a copy of an eighth century Northumbrian MS., there is preserved a remarkable representation of the Harrowing of Hell, with choruses of holy ones and utterances of Adam and Eve—perhaps 'our earliest surviving example of Christian dramatic literature, written specifically to be acted'.[27]

3. The weeping of all creation for Baldr has its Old English counterpart in the *Dream of the Rood*: *Wēop eal gesceaft, / cwīðdon Cyninges fyll. / Crīst wæs on rōde.* 'All creation wept, bewailed the King's fall. Christ was on the cross' (55–6). This poem is in a late tenth century MS. Citations from the same poem, however, are cut in runic letters on the margins of two carved panels on the Ruthwell Cross in Dumfriesshire. The OE dialect is Northumbrian and the Cross most probably from 700–50. Here, on one of the fragmentary upper panels, are preserved the runes]**dægisgæf**[, perhaps representing an original *wæpdæ gisgæft*, corresponding to the *Dream of the Rood*'s *wēop eal gesceaft*.[28] Where there are parallel passages in inscription and poem, the wording is closely similar; the part of the poem from which the citations are drawn might well be from the time of the Ruthwell Cross itself.[29] In Blathmac the sun 'mourned its lord' (241–2), God's elements keened their hero (257–64).

If the extant Norse traditions of Baldr are so greatly influenced by traditions of Christ, could it be that the Norse legend of Baldr was in fact a

[25] Figurally, the healing of Longinus's blindness signifies the revelation of truth to the unbeliever (see Dumville (*b*), 306–7). Christ's healing of the blind man (Mark 10: 46–52) is depicted on the Ruthwell Cross, no doubt for the same figural reason.

[26] Dumville (*b*), 301, 321–30.

[27] Dumville (*a*), 374–406 (citation 381 n. 22); also P. Dronke (*h*), xxvi–xxviii for discussion and substantial citation, with translation of the text.

[28] See Howlett 91 for discussion.

[29] See the helpful edition of the *Dream of the Rood* by B. Dickins and A. S. C. Ross.

wholly Christian invention? I would think this improbable, because too many pre-Christian foundations are visible: the sacrificial killing of the king at the will of the god; the cyclic fratricide of the consort of the goddess, establishing the ancient role of the *bróðurbani*; the reincarnation, or return to life, of the killed one; the weeping for the lost lord.[30] We have no extant Norse analogue for Hermóðr's ride to Hel to release a captive of death. If Freyja, in her search for Óðr, had reached the gates of Hel, she would probably have received the same answer to her quest as Aphrodite did: that Hel was holding her lover captive until the spring. That Baldr stays in Hel until the resurgence of the earth is part of the heathen pattern, not the Christian.[31] That the Norse legend of Baldr was intended to be a heathen legend and understood as such is perhaps confirmed by the euhemerization of the legend by the Christian poet of *Beowulf* 2430–40.

Readers of *Vǫluspá* will wish to make their own assessments of the character of the poem and its genesis. I present material towards this assessment, some of it new in the context; there is certainly more to be found. I do not think, from the close of the poem with its confident return of a multiplicity of deities, that the poet was himself a Christian, but that he admired the Christian religion well enough to idealize the world after Ragnarǫk in near-Christian terms, and that he enjoyed the sophisticated paths of Christian theology as much as his Irish friends did, and the breadth of Christian sibylline vision. At the same time he built his theme by allusions to purely heathen material—the gods' disastrous *tafl*-game, the Æsir–Vanir war, the giant builder, Hœnir the priest, 'bird of dawning'—in a way that only a Norse audience learned in heathen lore could savour and—probably—only a Norse court of heathen-born skalds could provide. His range of *vǫlur* figures suggests a variety of lively social, as well as poetic, tradition behind their depiction, which the literary oracular Sibyls cannot match. As most readers of *Vǫluspá* have felt, the poet must have lived through the last decades of the tenth century and probably into the eleventh, familiar with heathen and Christian courts, but with the freedom of an Icelander subject to none of them.

[30] On these pre-Christian motifs see *Vsp* commentary on 31/2, 32/5–8, 1/2, 25/8.

[31] A seasonal pattern of captivity and delayed release probably existed side by side with a shamanic pattern of the rescue from death without seasonal delay by the shaman saviour. So traditions of Orpheus have both the loss of Eurydice and her rescue (see P. Dronke (*a*), 198–215, on Orpheus as *figura* of Christ 206–10).

Excursus: some motifs compared in *Vǫluspá* and Sibylline Oracles[32]

1. *The Sibyl herself*

In *Vǫluspá* three types of sibylline figure are used: (*a*) *Vǫlva* A ('I'), the speaker of the poem, addressing mankind; (*b*) *Vǫlva* B ('she', and briefly 'I' in one dramatic episode from the past), whose memories, thoughts, actions, and visions of past, present, and future are reported by *Vǫlva* A; (*c*) *Vǫlva* C ('she'), a narrative figure in a myth of the past, Heiðr.

In *SO* there is only one sibyl ('I'), speaking the *Oracle*.

(i) *Her origins*

Vǫlva A declares she was fostered long ago by giants and remembers an archaic underworld. She lays claim, therefore, to great age, but does not (I think) specify her parentage.

Vǫlva B lives within the world of the gods and is consulted by them. We are not told her origins, but if it is she who 'will sink' at the end of the poem (as I think the poet intends—or allows: he keeps the outlines of the *vǫlur* figures A and B deliberately indefinite), we must suppose her to belong also to the world of the dead.

Vǫlva C appears to be a human metamorphosis of Gullveig, an icon of Freyja, re-enacting a myth that *Vǫlva* B remembers happening.

In *SO*, in so far as her origins are mentioned, the Sibyl is variously:

1. A daughter-in-law of Noah, speaking in the age after the flood (I 287, III 827);
2. An intimate (γνωστή) of Isis in Egypt (V 53, 484);
3. A daughter of Priam and Hecuba (*TS* 264);
4. Platonically described as a creature of the world, whose soul is drawn from a star (*Prophetia* 1).

In none of the *SO* is the Sibyl associated with the primordial world (as is *Vǫlva* A), but rather with an antique historical age.

[32] The Greek texts referred to here are from Kurfess (*Oracles* I–VIII and XI, dating from the second century BC to the second century AD); English translations by Collins (*a*), 317–472. For the Latin Tiburtine Sibyl see Kurfess 264–79; for the Greek earlier version see Alexander. For the *Prophetia Sibyllae magae* see Bischoff 150–71 for the full text; English translation (not very close at some points) in *New Testament Apocrypha*. In citations and paraphrases the English rendering is my own. In references to the *SO* I give the number of the *Oracle* followed by the first line only of a passage (which may be fairly long). For recent authoritative surveys of the problem of the Sibylline books see Collins (*b*), and Momigliano. For documentation of the ancient Greek Sibyl (from whom, despite her fame, no texts survive: she belongs to such antiquity) see Rohde II. 21, n. 1, 63–9, 413–14 (on double *persona* and ἔκστασις).

(ii) *Her status and moral stature*

Vǫlva A has a priestess-like authority; she is a link between god and men, telling them of their past, as Óðinn asks her to. She speaks as his equal. It is unthinkable that she could be touched by moral censure.

Vǫlva B is not in contact with human society, except in her communication with *Vǫlva* A. She has little reverence for the gods. She is not a priestess, but, in the one close portrayal of her, hermit-like, and avaricious. She could castigate the world with pleasure (44).

Vǫlva C represents a 'holy woman' of a less reputable, but more realistic kind, roaming to the hospitality of one farm after another, flattering, fortune-telling, sharing secrets with the women. She does not get her occult wisdom from a deity, but from spirits, when she is 'possessed'. Her behaviour is morally censured by some.

In *SO* the Sibyl is never said to be a priestess (there were no priestesses in Jewish or Christian tradition), though she is driven to her prophecies by God (I 5; II 1; III 1, 162, 297, 490, 821; IV 1, 18; VIII 359; IX 322). Only the first Sibyl opens her *Oracle* by stating that it was God's command to her to inform mankind how the world was made: 'Now, defiled Man, take good note that you do not scorn my instruction, that comes from the most exalted Lord . . .' (I 5; nothing could be further from the glowing and complimentary words of *Vǫlva* A, courteously requesting silence). The literary ancestry of the Sibyl as a heathen priestess or pythoness can sometimes be glimpsed: she is an intimate servant of Isis, concerned with oracle and temple (V 53); she declares she is not the oracle-teller of false Phoebus, but of mighty God, and she speaks with holy mouth (IV 4, 6, 22; also XI 315); she is reviled and persecuted by the Greeks, called shameless prophetess, daughter of Circe, raving sibyl of falsehood, but she will in the end be revealed as a true prophetess of God (III 813; there is a touch of similarity here with the Æsir's view of Heiðr). In the Greek *SO* the Sibyl may claim to be God's high prophetess, but it is never said that she is recognized as such. She is not (like *Vǫlva* A) in harmony with her audience, but more often a voice crying in the wilderness. Only the Tiburtine Sibyl bears some resemblance to *Vǫlva* A in her calm control and sense of sacred occasion: she is a woman of rank, the Emperor of Troy sends an embassy to escort her, the Roman senators approach her with deference; she refuses to reveal the sacred mystery of their dream in the pagan filth of the Capitol, but asks that they proceed to the Aventine (where her prescient mind no doubt told her the earliest Roman churches were to be built).

In *SO* the Sibyl may be a wanderer (as is *Vǫlva* C). She has been commanded by God to go prophesying throughout the world, addressing its kings; she leaves the walls of Babylon to bring warning to the Greeks (III

162, 810). She goes from city to city (VIII 3); the Tiburtine Sibyl moves from continent to continent (*TS* 264).

While the Sibyl may be unjustly reviled by those who reject her terrible warnings (III 813), in other *SO* she passionately associates herself with the evil of the world and confesses her own devastatingly immoral life—whoredom, harshness to the poor, abortion of an incestuous child (II 339, VII 159). In II the confession ends with a prayer for mercy; in VII (which has the more sensational exposure of crimes) the confession ends with a prayer to the people to stone her, so that with death she may atone for her evil life and lift up her eyes to heaven. She is an extreme Magdalene figure, the opposite of the virginal, cloistered Sibyl of the *Prophetia*.

2. *The moments of time*

(i) *Cyclic time*

In *Vǫluspá* a cyclic chronological structure is finely worked out from the beginnings of the cosmos to its disintegration and renewal. The parallel between the emergence of the first earth and the second is distinctly marked, as between the first golden age and the second. It would seem to be the *same* earth returning, green once more, the *same* golden chequers found in the grass, the *same* Odinic precincts that the young, reborn gods inhabit. The Norse poet appears to emphasize the identity of the old and the new, the past and the present, as in a cycle of nature.

In *SO* in no one text is the history of the cosmos traced from its beginning to dissolution and renewal as in *Vǫluspá*. Elements of such a pattern are discernible now in this poem, now in that, but these fragments of allusion may be remnants of a more archaic conception of cosmic renewal that had no fundamental place in Jewish or Christian theology and was replaced by the belief in renewal through moral worth. The first Sibyl, who describes with ardour the golden age after the Flood—the happy age in which she herself lived, when all was in God's care (I 283)—makes no return to this theme (in her extant text). The fourth Sibyl frames her denunciation of the ten ages of nations after the Flood within an exaltation of God's creation of terrestrial beauty for man—'shadowy night . . . and streaming sun . . . fish-teeming ocean . . . perpetual springs . . . the vine and the olive'—all to be destroyed through the rejection of God by man—and the restoration of that world after the Judgement. 'Miserable man, repent . . . cast away swords . . . and the killing of men, and pride. Purify your whole body in ever-flowing rivers . . . stretch your hands to heaven and beg forgiveness . . . God will have pity, he will not destroy you.' He will burn everything to black ashes, but when all is burnt, he will resurrect men and

judge them and give life and imperishable riches to the righteous. When they see the glorious sun they will thank him. 'Happy is the man who will live then on earth' (IV 10, 162). So the loving act of creation is performed a second time.

(ii) *The present moment and the signs of the end*

In *Vǫluspá* the present moment in which *Vǫlva* A speaks is the 'real' present moment, that of the poet and his audience. In relation to the gods' history this present moment comes after the weeping (33) and the punishment (34) for Baldr's death, and before Ragnarǫk (45 onwards). The present is, then, the ominous and emphatic lull before the sound of Heimdallr's horn, when for the first time in the poem the moral evil in the world of men is laid bare in the *vǫlva*'s vision in eschatological scenes of expiation (38). Portents of the end of the physical world begin to appear (40) and the dog of death can be heard barking (43). It is the 'now' of every man's life, full of warning and guilt.

In the *Prophetia* the present moment is, as in *Vǫluspá*, the 'real' present, since it is a homily for men who will soon face judgement. But in the Greek *SO* the present may be a fictional moment chosen from the remote past—just after the Flood (I 287), or the building of the Tower of Babel (VIII 4), for example—so that the Sibyl may recount after that mythical time the fall of all the great historical empires through their arrogance and vice and wars. Her prophecies *ex eventu* give credence to her vision of the end of the world to come (cf. IV 49–151, V 1–246, etc.). Not once, therefore, but many times in the course of a *SO* the moral evils of man may be described (III 492, 545, 601, V 89, 166, 386), and the horrors of God's wrath upon the wicked and sure hope of his protection for the pious continually recur (II 6, 52, 154, etc.).

The signs of the end in *SO* are elaborate: fantasy, superstition, and a ghastly realism all play their part (as in *Vǫluspá*): drops of blood fall on the earth, stones speak, a battle is seen in the clouds; sun will sink into ocean and rise no more; in a great famine men will eat their parents; after the evil wars the sea will be so crammed with human flesh that it will be easy to count the few men and women left alive; in the last age there will be the premature senility of man: children will grow grey-haired in their sleep, men will be imbecile of wit and women barren (III 799, V 466, II 154). Weeping and dirge will be the sounds of the last days (II 157, V 350, 476), and indeed the Sibyl herself may see her whole *Oracle* as a lament: 'O wretched Rhodes, for you first I shall shed my tears' (VII 1). Only once in the *SO* does a sibyl say she 'saw' portents (V 512): 'I saw the threat of a blazing sun in the stars / and the ghastly wrath of a moon in the lightning. / The stars were in travail, big with war: God set them fighting. / . . . Lucifer

directed the battle, mounted on the Lion's back . . .' It is the seasons in conflict, a war of constellations and signs of the zodiac, which rages until Ouranos strikes down the fighters. Falling, they set all the earth ablaze. The sky is left starless.

(iii) *The last battle and the end of the world*

The *SO* show no great interest in a last battle between God and his enemies before the ending of the world, such as we find in *Vǫluspá*. Only the *Oracle of Baalbek* (an earlier version in Greek of *TS*) and *TS* itself have a decisive battle between God and Antichrist. In the Greek text, Antichrist, the last earthly ruler, 'son of perdition', who turns the sun into darkness and the moon into blood, will be slain with all his host by Christ, who will come from heaven like a flashing star (*OB* 29). In the Latin, the Archangel Michael will, by God's power, slay Antichrist on the Mount of Olives (*TS* 279).

So catastrophic have been the signs of the end of the world, that the end itself hardly outclasses them. For one Sibyl the old world ends in cosmic darkness lit by a stream of fire from heaven that annihilates everything—even Hades—while the stars crash into one whole and fall into the sea (II 194); for another, God will shake the earth and tear down mountains, so that every cleft will be filled with corpses (III 672); for yet another, the world will bellow when earth, men, cities, and sea are burned up by God (IV 173). Most perfectly, the elements of the cosmos will cease to exist when God shall fold up heaven like a book, and the sky fall on earth and sea, and a tireless torrent of fire melt all creation into one, resolving it into purity (II 80, 212). The cosmos will be no cosmos—ἔσται κόσμος ἄκοσμος—when mankind has gone from it (VII 123).

(iv) *The new earth*

The new earth that materializes after the destruction of the old is only for the blessed: a radiant realm of life free from cares, where triple springs of wine, milk, and honey flow—an earth free to all men, without walls or fences, that brings forth fruit of its own accord—a life of wealth without masters—no beggary or slavery, no seasons, no morning or night—only a 'great daylight' (II 313, 29; also III 371, 620, 741, 767, V 381, VII 146, VIII 206). It is not said in any of the *SO* how the new earth will come into being, nor where it will be. Angels take the blessed up to it, 'where the deathless path of mighty God leads' (II 315). The sons of God live in peace round the temple and God protects them 'as if encircling them with a wall of blazing fire' (III 702). In the *Prophetia*, more simply, the new world is pure radiance:

Ipse pater nivei latens in limine mundi
Ipse dabit nitorem suis consistere sanctis.

The father himself, secluded in the precincts of that snowy world,
himself will give his saints right to rest in that radiance.

(74–5)

For the Norse poet the old warrior image of human happiness as the dwelling together of a band of loyal men under a golden roof—more glittering than the gilded shields on Valhǫll—as secure from all vengeful foes as they are free from guilt, on Gimlé—is good enough to be an image of heaven.

COMMENTARY ON THE TEXT

1/1 *Hlióðs bið ek*: the call for hearing, silence, establishes the situation of speaker and audience. No other Eddic poem begins in this way. Tenth century court poets, however, used such openings; so Glúmr Geirason presents his poem, symbolized as Óðinn's drink:

Hlýði, hapta beiðis — *May generous princes listen!*
hefk, mildingar, gildi! — *I have the gods' commander's drink!*

(*Gráfeldardrápa* 1)

and Eyvindr Finnsson:

Vilja'k hljóð — *I should like silence*
at Hárs líði . . . — *for Óðinn's liquor . . .*

(*Háleygjatal* 1)

Tacitus noted (*Germ* xi) that the priests had the right of control over Gmc assemblies and it was they who called for silence: *Silentium per sacerdotes, quibus tum et coercendi ius est, imperatur*. The *vǫlva* in *Vsp* appears to combine sacral and skaldic traditions, which may always have been deliberately associated in heathen times, when skalds presented their verse as the inspiration of Óðinn. Norse historical sources do not record any *vǫlva* addressing an audience in a temple or a hallowed assembly. The Irish chronicle *Cogadh Gaedhel re Gallaibh*, 'The War of the Gaedhil with the Gaill', however, records that, when the Viking Turgeis plundered the monasteries of Meath and Connacht, *c.* 838, 'Cluain Mic Nois was taken by his wife. It was on the altar of the great church she used to give her answers–*a frecartha*' (226; cf. 12–13 and n. 8 for the later MS.). As a *vǫlva*, Turgeis's wife Ota would be answering men's questions about the hidden matters that caused them anxiety. This traditional interrogation of the *vǫlva* is reflected in the phrases in *Vsp* 28/5: *Hvers fregnið mik?* 27/8, etc.: *Vitoð ér enn, eða hvat?* (also *BDr* 8/2–4, etc.: *Þik vil ek fregna . . . vil ek enn vita*; *Hyndl* 31/1–4, etc.: *Mart segium þér . . . viltu enn lengra?*). The old interrogatory practice is grandiosely extended in the fiction of *Vsp*, where the *vǫlva* is asked by Óðinn to reveal cosmic knowledge to the whole of mankind: whereby she gains a Sibylline dignity (see *Vsp Introd* iv). We may note that the sacral dignity of the Gmc seeress is fiercely challenged by Bruder (151–62, 'Die Frau im sakralen Bereich: Die Seherin') on the grounds that the idealized evidence of Tacitus in his *Germania* is virtually contradicted in his *Historiae* (as well as in other classical sources); and that the seeress was agent only of a lower form of cult, namely that of magic, without a genuine function or high rank in her society. If Bruder were wholly right, then the *vǫlva* of *Vsp* might indeed owe her towering stature entirely to the Christian Sibyl. But Ota was the wife of a chieftain, evidently performing a traditional function in her society. The North Gmc seeress at least seems to have known her worth and been revered for it. It is the goddesses who are

most valued for their visionary powers (*Lks* 21, 29), and *vǫlur* who are consulted by Óðinn.

1/1–2 *allar helgar kindir*, 'all the hallowed families (of men)', syntactically parallel to *mǫgo Heimdallar*, 1/4 (DH). The senses of *kind* (cognate with Lat *gens*) range from 'begotten being', 'progeny' (cf. *leysa kind frá konom*, 'to deliver offspring from women', *Sigrdr* 9/3; *Fenris kindir*, 'creatures begotten by Fenrir', *Vsp* 39/4) to 'species', 'race' in sg. only (cf. *Svía kind*, 'the race of Swedes', *Ytal* 5/11; *Hrímnis kindar*, 'of the giant Hrímnir's species', *Hyndl* 32/6; *rǫgna kindar*, 'of the race of the divine powers', *Hyndl* 35/4). The pl. *kindir* is not recorded used of the gods. To interpret the phrase as relating to the gods would be contextually and idiomatically incorrect.

helgar: as an epithet for human beings, *heilagr* is rare except for saints, but that may only reflect our lack of heathen sources. The *vǫlva* calls mankind 'hallowed' here to invest them with their sacred stature and privileges: (*a*) they are *helgir* as sons of Heimdallr, the only god whom Snorri describes individually as *heilagr*, *SnE* 32; like the Christian 'sons of God', they are holy because their god is holy, cf. *Sancti estote, quia ego sanctus sum, Dominus Deus vester*, Leviticus 19: 2, 1 Peter 1: 15–16; (*b*) as true worshippers of the gods, they are allowed to enter the hallowed ground of this sacred assembly (not like the Christian poet Sigvatr, who was barred from a Swedish house, where Óðinn-worship was being held, because they said that the place was holy, *sǫgðu . . . heilagt*, *Austrfararvísur* 4; (*c*) they have divine protection because they are innocent of crime, *friðhelgir* (not like Vígfúss Víga-Glúmsson, who, after killing a man, might not stay at his home, which had a temple to Freyr, *fyrir helgi staðarins*, 'because of the holiness of the place', *Víga-Glúm* 66). Legal terminology based on *heilagr* continues in Christian times (*helga*, 'to proclaim inviolate'; *helgi*, 'immunity from attack'). The heroic name *Helgi* in the Helgi lays relates to his hallowed immunity from final death. *Helgi endrborinn* is a fabulous symbol of perpetual rebirth (see the close of *HHv* and *HH* II). To address mankind as *helgar kindir* is therefore a most fitting opening that the *vǫlva* has chosen for her *spá*, whose theme is the renewal of life. De Boor notes the transition from the realistic concept of the human assembly to the idealization of the whole of mankind assembled there (218, n. 22: 'Diese richtig aufgefasste reale Grundvorstellung wird durch *allar* und die Apposition der nächsten Zeile zu ideeller Allgemeinheit gesteigert.'). See also Baetke (*a*), 122–54.

1/3–4 *meiri — Heimdallar*: reference is to the three estates of men, at whose begetting Heimdallr–Rígr assisted. In *Ríg* we see him entering homes from the lowest to the highest; in *Hyndl* 43 he is said to be 'related by marital bond to each and every dwelling' (*sif sifiaðan / siǫtom giǫrvǫllom*).

meiri ok minni, 'of greater and lesser social importance', is elsewhere found only in prose texts. That it was common in the Norse pre-literary period, however, is shown by the ME hybrid phrase *mare/more and minne* (a frequent poetic tag; cf. *MED* s.v. *min*(*ne* adj. 1)). In OE equivalent phrases *māran* would be contrasted with *mǣtran* or *lǣssan* (see BT s.vv.).

Heimdallar: the nom. *Heimdallr* is confirmed by the rhyme with *fallinn* in *Húsdr* 10/4 (*SnE* 90). There would be no reason for simplifying *-ll-* in the gen. *Dallr*, however, is a rare, probably archaic, word for 'tree', recorded as such ('arbor prolifera') only in Biørn Haldorsen's *Lexicon*. Both Haldorsen and Blöndal gloss *dallr/dallur* signifying a bowl of wood (with lid and handle) for liquid food (in northern Iceland). Elsewhere, such a bowl was called *askr/askur*, presumably because it was made of wood (not necessarily ash-wood). By analogy, a wooden bowl might be called *dallr* because it was made from the wood of a tree/*dallr* (again, not necessarily of a specific tree). The nom. form *Heimdalr* occurs once (*SnE* 99), the gen. form *Heimdalar* eleven times (Pipping 1. 7). *Dalr* is a poetic term for 'bow' (gen. *dals* and *dalar*; *LP* s.v.), listed in *Þulur* IV (*Skjald* B 1. 665), *SnE* 203, beside *almr*, 'elm-wood bow', and *ýr*, 'yew-wood bow'; *dalr* may have become a bow-*heiti* because *dalr* also was a tree name, a variant, presumably, of *dallr*. The ram-*heiti Heimdali* (gen. *-dala*) in *Þulur* IV aa (*Skjald* B 1. 670), *SnE* 210, may have arisen from popular interchangeability of *-dall-* and *-dal-* in Heimdallr's name. The ram may have been named after the god both because it was the proper sacrifice to the god, sharing his identity (see Tolley (*a*), 344–6), and because, like the god, he was the father of flocks (*kindir*). No doubt it was in this shepherding capacity that he listened to the growing of the grass and of his sheep's wool (see *Vsp Introd* II. C. 1 (iii) (*b*) (1)). On the mythologems associated with Heimdallr see Pipping, *Eddastudier*, esp. 1; Tolley (*a*), 326–61, 'The god Heimdallr as a hypostasis of the world axis'; UD (*i*), 666–76, 'Arbor parens: god as world tree and world pillar'.

1/5 *Vildo* i.e. *Vilt þú*. For the inverted and assimilated form of the 2nd person sg. pres. indic., when not interrogative, cf. *Háv* 45/3: *vildu*; *Hárb* 48/2, 3: *mundo . . . muntu*; Bugge (*a*), 34, n. *.

I assume that the poet here implies a situation that may often have been a real one in heathen times, namely that a speaker addresses the statue of a god before an audience, either in the temple itself, or brought out to the *þing*. Adam of Bremen II. lxii refers to a statue of Þórr in Sweden *stans in concilio paganorum* (it is unlikely that *in concilio* here would mean within the temple at Uppsala, as the footnote to the text suggests). In *Vsp* the *vǫlva* addresses the (image of the) god with a direct familiarity, much as Óláfr Tryggvason is represented as addressing the image of Freyr at the Þrándheimr assembly (*Flat* 1. 402): '*Nú skal ek prófa þik, Freyr, hvárt þú mátt mæla ok svara mér*', 'Now I shall put you to the test, Freyr, and see whether you can speak and answer me'. The saga writer implies that the Christian is, with sarcastic punctiliousness, according the same respect to the stolid image as a heathen worshipper would, by assuming that it possessed living senses.

Valfǫðr: in the temple at Uppsala Óðinn was depicted armed (Adam of Bremen IV. xxvi: *Wodanem vero sculpunt armatum*). The name the *vǫlva* chooses to address him with here would be apt for his image as god of war (which is much emphasized in the poem: *Valfǫðr(s)*, 1/5, 27/7, 28/13; *Herfǫðr*, 29/1; *Heriafǫðrs*, 42/4; *Sigfǫður*, 52/2).

We are never told that Óðinn had priestesses in his cult (as Freyr had), but the

Óðinn-worship in Sweden, from which Sigvatr was excluded (see commentary to 1/1–2), appears to have been in the charge of a woman. I think it probable that the poet intends to convey a similar functionary role for his *vǫlva*, with the setting of the assembly and the hint of a statue of the god. Any religious function the *vǫlur* possessed would be lost in a society converted to Christianity, while the 'secular' magic, protective spells, clairvoyance, could continue to thrive (as the written sources suggest they did; cf. *Eiríks Saga rauða* ch. 4).

1/6 *fyr telia*, 'expound before this audience'. The phrase, common in prose, but not found elsewhere in verse, implies the setting out of the facts of a case (cf. *Íslb* 17: *talði fyrir mǫnnum á marga vega, at þat skyldi eigi láta verða*, 'presented men with many arguments why that should not be allowed to happen').

1/7 *forn spiǫll fira*: it is not possible to render adequately this ambiguous, seemingly colloquial phrase.

firar: cognate with *fjǫr*, 'life', in different poetic contexts (it is not used in prose) refers to (*a*) men (e.g. *Háv* 26, *Fáf* 2); (*b*) gods (e.g. *Lks* 25); (*c*) a god and a man together (e.g. Þórr and Þjálfi, *Þórsdr* 10); (*d*) loosely, in the phrase *rǫk fira*, to (anthropomorphic) beings in general, gods, giants, elves, dwarfs, men (e.g. *Alv* 9, 11, etc.), as well as (*e*) to the uncertain category of the swan maiden (see commentary to *Vkv* 2/3). The phrase *með firom*, 'among men', appears to be used in the general sense 'in the world (in which men live)' in *Skm* 27, *Vafþ* 44, as in OS and OHG (cf. *Wessobrunn Prayer* 1). A general sense 'of the (living) world' would fit well enough also for *fira* in *Alv* and *Vkv*, (*d*) and (*e*) above. I have therefore rendered *fira* in *Vsp* 1/7 as 'the world's', to embrace, without specifying, giants, gods, dwarfs, men, wild life, and monsters.

spiǫll signifies 'things told': reports of happenings, news, information (cf. *Ghv* 9: *Gekk hón . . . at telia . . . móðug spiǫll*, 'She went to relate grievous tales (of what had happened in her life)'; *HH* I 36: *Fátt mantu, fylkir, / fornra spialla, / er þú qðlingom / ósǫnno bregðr*, 'You remember few of the facts reported from the past, when you accuse noblemen of what is not true'; *HHv* 31: *Hvat kantu segia / nýra spialla / ór Nóregi?* 'What fresh news from Norway have you to tell?' (cf. *Beowulf* 2898); *Guð* II 5: *Gekk ek grátandi / við Grana ræða, / . . . ió frá ek spialla*, 'I went weeping to talk with Grani, . . . I asked the horse what he could tell me [of Sigurðr's fate]').

forn signifies 'from past times'. When Christianity becomes the new, modern religion, *forn* signifies the old heathenism: *forn siðr*. At the opening of the poem Óðinn has asked (we are told) for a recital of the past history of the world, *forn spiǫll*. At the centre of the poem (29), he bribes a *vǫlva* to see into the future. He is then given *spiǫll spaklig*, 'wise, i.e. far-sighted, information' about the future (see commentary to 29/3). The two occurrences of *spiǫll* balance each other, marking the structure of the poem, the change of concern from the old past to the new future. When the Æsir reassemble on the new earth (57), they recall the *fornar rúnar*, 'heathen wisdoms of the past', which Óðinn possessed. From which—are we meant to understand?—the new wisdom came (for *forn*, 'heathen', see Fritzner s.v. § 5).

Behind the phrase *forn spiǫll fira* there lies also the fact that the *vǫlva* will be recounting the 'old tales of men, i.e. that men have told before'—as the poet well knew, because those tales were his source. But in the context, this interpretation remains as an ironic truth in the background, since the *vǫlva* makes it quite plain in stanza 2 that she speaks from superhuman knowledge, telling of what men could *not* know. The poet has chosen the phrase for more than one relevant sense.

1/8 *fremst um man*: *fremst*, 'furthest back in time', relates to *fram* in its sense 'far into the past' (cf. *Íslb* 4: *at ætlun ok tǫlu . . . Þorkels . . . es langt munði fram*, 'according to the opinion and reckoning of Þorkell who remembered far back into the past'). Compare Óðinn's request to Vafþrúðnir to tell his earliest memories and knowledge: *hvat þú fyrst mant / eða fremst um veitzt*, *Vafþ* 34.

2/4 *fœdda*: fem. acc. sg., the first indication that the speaker is female. I take the sense to be 'fostered', 'reared', rather than 'begotten', 'given birth to', since the subject is plural.

2/5–8 This coherent picture of the structure of the underworld has no exact parallel in any Norse text. The various elements appear diversely elsewhere; the poet has drawn them succinctly together.

2/5 *Nío heima* has its analogue in *Vafþ* 43: *Nío kom ek heima / fyr Niflhel neðan; / hinig deyia ór helio halir*, 'I have come through the nine worlds down to (? below) Niflhel; into those worlds men die from Hel (? i.e. from the grave)' (see commentary to *Skm* 35/3). Though here the geography of Niflhel and Hel is not clear to us, the 'nine realms' must be realms of the dead; from these Vafþrúðnir the giant gets his wisdom, and into these Þórr takes his nine dying steps (53/9).

2/6–7 *nío íviðiur, / miǫtvið mæran*: *Hyndl* 35 tells the sacred mystery of *einn . . . rǫgna kindar*, 'one of the race of the divine powers' to whom nine giant girls—*iǫtna meyiar*—gave birth. In the two lines of the (otherwise lost) *Heimdallargaldr*, 'Incantation of Heimdallr', that Snorri cites (*SnE* 33), Heimdallr declares himself to be the son of nine mothers, all sisters. These must be the nine giant girls of *Hyndl* 35. As Heimdallr is the world tree, these mothers must be his roots (well expressed as 'sisters'). The nine names attributed to the giant girls in *Hyndl* 36 contain no elements relating to trees or roots; it does not seem, therefore, that the tradition behind *Hyndl* 35 – 6 was much concerned with their physical image; their names are giantess names, no more. But the physical image of a tree growing out of a giantess's body is preserved in a curse—an area of expression where the grotesque is in its element—in *HHv* 16: the giantess Hrímgerðr is cursed into the earth, *Nío rǫstom / er þú skyldir neðarr vera, / ok vaxi þér á baðmi barr!* 'Nine miles deeper down you should be, and may a tree (*lit.* pine needle) grow on your bosom!' The same image, in a sublimer form, is probably to be seen in Egill's description of his son as the *kynviðr kvánar minnar*, 'the tree of the *kyn* of my wife', where *kyn* can be both 'family' and 'sex', 'womanhood' (*Sonat* 21, in a context of alllusion to the world tree, as in *Vsp* 17, 19).

2/7–8 *miǫtvið . . . fyr mold neðan*: in two Eddic texts the roots of the (world) tree are directly associated with the realm of the dead and with giants. In *Grím* 31, Yggdrasill has three roots: under one is Hel, under another the frost-giants, under the third mankind. In *Skm* 35 the tree's roots are below the 'pens of corpses' (see commentary ad loc.) within the giant Hrímgrímnir's domain.

For the nine giantess roots of the world tree the poet uses a rare term for giantess, *íviðia*, recorded also in *Hyndl* 48 (where it seems to be synonymous with *brúðr iǫtuns*, 'giant's bride', 50), and in a *þula* of *heiti* for troll women (*Skjald* B I. 659, c 3), and in *Forspjallsljóð* 1: *elr íviðja*, 'an *íviðja* bears offspring' (cf. the numerous offspring of the *járnviðja* Skaði; see commentary to *Vsp* 39/2). Whether the poet chose the word because it provided a punning allusion to the *viðr*, 'tree', of which they are the roots, or whether it was a traditional term for the giantess roots which became used more generally, I do not think we can tell. The formation *íviðia*, if the sense is 'giantess dwelling, living, in a wood, tree, tree root' is difficult to parallel, as prefix *í-* usually combines with a noun that has a verbal element (e.g. *íbúa*, 'inhabitant'). Connection with OE *inwidde*, adj. 'malicious' (see commentary to *Vkv* 28/7–8) is hardly probable when the 'glorious' great tree's roots are being described; giantesses are not usually given *heiti* referring to spiritual faults.

The nine underworlds relate to widespread archaic concepts of layered realms of existence below and above the earth's surface, held together by a single axle, the world tree or pillar. In Eurasian rituals the realms (usually nine or seven) are traversed by the shaman in his trances; they may be symbolized by notches on a single tree, or represented by a sequence of trees, which the shaman must climb (Harva (*a*), 135–44; Tolley (*a*), 423, 449 cites instances of the shaman descending to the underworld via the tree roots). The concept of nine heavens in Norse is preserved only in the list of their names in a *þula* of *Himins heiti* (*Skjald* B I. 671, ff): *Níu eru himnar / á hæð talðir*, 'Nine are the heavens counted on high'. Remnants of the system of nine layers above the earth and nine below, in which the earth's 'roots' grow above Tartarus, or Niflhel, can be seen in Hesiod, *Theogony* 722–8 (cf. pp. 359–61). In Hesiod the 'layers' have become distances, measured by time: a nine days' drop from heaven to earth, another nine days from earth to Tartarus.

2/8 *fyr mold neðan*: I have taken this to mean that the *vǫlva* first knew the world tree only as its roots, before it broke out into the light, but the reference might include more generally all the subterranean world she remembers (*nío heima . . . fyr mold neðan*).

3/1 *ár var alda*: I take *ár* as adv. and *alda* as gen. of respect. In *HH* I 1/1 the same phrase may have been imitated from *Vsp* or drawn from a common traditional store of narrative openings. I would suppose the interpretation of *ár* as a noun, 'beginning', offered by *LP*, Fritzner, to be secondary; it is not supported by texts that can be dated before the 12 c. (cf. *Stjórn* 122: *at morgins ári*, and *lausavísur* attributed to Óláfr helgi and Sneglu-Halli, *Skjald* A I. 221: 5/6, 388: 1/5).

3/2 On the relationship of this line to Snorri's variant version, see *Vsp Introd* III. C. *Problem IV* (i).

þar er Ymir byggði: *þar er*, 'when', is probably an old usage (cf. *Háv* 67: *tvau lær hengi / at ins tryggva vinar, / þars ek hafða eitt etit*, 'two hams were hanging up at my true friend's house, when I had (just) had one to eat [i.e. and was not hungry]'; also Þórarinn Máhlíðingr 1/1, *Eyrb* 38, *Skjald* B I. 105, where the translation should clearly be 'when'). The sense 'when' for *þǽr* is common in OE narrative poetry (e.g. *Andreas* 805, 932, 967).

Ymir: a synthetic life-story of Ymir is narrated by Snorri (*SnE* 12–16). He combines and elaborates material from Eddic and skaldic sources relating to Ymir and Aurgelmir (the cosmic giant under another name). There is no verse source that describes the origin of Ymir, but Snorri adapts the origin ascribed to Aurgelmir (*Vafþ* 31), so that Ymir emerges by condensation in the midst of Ginnungagap. We are nowhere told how Ymir begot the giant race attributed to him; Aurgelmir's offspring sprang from his armpit and from the rubbing together of his feet (*Vafþ* 33). There is no verse source that describes the killing of Ymir, though Egill's image of the roaring sea that drowned his son as the moaning wounds of the giant's neck, presupposes a killing (*Sonat* 3). We are not told that Aurgelmir was ever killed, nor that the cosmos was made from his body: in all sources it is made from Ymir's (*Vafþ* 21, *Grím* 40, 41; in *Magnússdrápa* 19 Arnórr sees the heaven overhanging human life as 'Ymir's aged skull').

Ymir is the older of the two giant names, being etymologically related to Lat *geminus*, 'twin', Skr *Yama* (first mortal to die, who becomes king of the dead, overlord of ancestors; archaic traditions of his twin sister–wife, *Yami*, on whom he begets mankind, are only fragmentarily preserved; *AEW* s.v. *Ymir*; Bhattacharji 48–9, 93–9, 107–8). The concept of an androgynous being, begetting from itself, as Aurgelmir does, is implicit in Gmc *Tuisto* (*Germ* ii; *AR* § 573). *Aurgelmir* is not a name of IE inheritance, but constructed of Norse elements, meaning, as I would understand them, the 'ocean that roars' (*gelmir*) round, over, the 'fertile, damp soil' (*aurr*), i.e. the submarine soil that will emerge as the earth (see commentary to 4/1). The icy origins of Aurgelmir reflect Nordic traditions (see Tolley (*a*), 69; (*c*), 74).

Snorri implies, but does not state specifically, that Óðinn and his brothers killed Ymir in order to get rid of the evil race of frost-giants (*SnE* 13–14), and then made the cosmos from his corpse. No other Norse source offers any reason for the killing, and Snorri was probably inventing here what seemed to him most likely. Ancient analogues would seem to confirm his guess. In the Akkadian Creation Epic, Marduk defeats the attack of his own ancestress, Tiamat the malignant water-mother, and makes earth and sky out of her:

> He cast down her carcass to stand upon it . . .
> Then the lord paused to view her dead body,
> That he might divide the monster and do artful works.
> He split her like a shellfish into two parts:
> Half of her he set up and ceiled it as sky . . .
>
> (*Enūma eliš* IV. 104, 135–8)

In the Rig-Veda the gods wish to create an ordered universe, but the demon Vṛtra holds in restraint the necessary elements, the sun and the waters, and must first be

killed (RV 149). Indra slays him. In some accounts he is said to have sacrificed him (W. N. Brown 79; Bhattacharji 258; Rig-Veda I. 32. 1–15). The primordial killing of Ymir may also have been conceived of as a sacrifice, in a religious tradition of origins going back to early Germanic times (Merkelbach 193–5; UD (*i*), 658–9). It is notable that Egill envisages Ymir's blood coming from his neck, that is, from a sacrificial, rather than a fighting wound.

byggði: the same verb is used of God dwelling in heaven in *Elucidarius* 471/25: *Hvar byggvir guð?* (translating *Ubi habitat Deus? PL* 172, col. 1111). *Byggva* is rarely, if ever, used absolutely as here, without any reference to place, or the person 'dwelt with'. But, given Ymir's peculiar circumstances, what else can the poet say? He was, no doubt, aware of his anomalous usage. The form of conjunction he has chosen, *þar er*, with its locative associations, helps to accommodate *byggði* in the context.

3/3 *sandr né sær*: for the same alliterative association cf. *Háv* 53: *Lítilla sanda / lítilla sæva / lítil ero geð guma*, 'By narrow shores of narrow seas narrow are the minds of men'; *Egil* 78: *Eru þar smáir sandar allt með sæ*, 'There there are beaches of fine sand all along the sea-coast'. SN 179 notes the emphasis on *sandr* as more likely to stem from Icelandic than Norwegian observation; yet the maxim in *Háv* 53 fits well the self-critical Norway that later produced *Brand* and *Skriket* (the analogy of *Háv* 53 with *Disticha Catonis* II. 6, suggested by von See (*e*), 63, does not, I think, offer a correct interpretation of *geð* in the context; cf. North (*b*), 42–6).

3/5–6 *iǫrð . . . upphiminn*: this alliterative pairing is common Gmc (cf. OE *eorðe . . . upheofon*; OHG *ero . . . ufhimil*; OS *erða . . . uphimil*; for illuminating documentation and discussion see Lönnroth (*b*), 310–27).

3/7 *gap var ginnunga*: cf. *Ginnungagap* as a place-name, *SnE* 12, 14, 15, 22. These references are preceded by the citation of *Vsp* 3, *SnE* 11. The name *Ghimmendegop* occurs in a scholion in a 15 c. MS. of Adam of Bremen IV. xxxviii as the Norsemen's term for the *inmane baratrum abyssi* in the extreme north.

gap, 'opening', is a place-name element in Norway (e.g. *Gapøen* for an island in the mouth of a fjord; Rygh XVII. 2 etc.), but not in Iceland (though vb. *gapa*, 'to gape with open mouth' is common; cf. *Skm* 28/7).

ginnunga presents a tortuous problem; it has no straightforward linguistic interpretation in terms of ON. I set out some assumptions which I find useful and which the meagre evidence seems to allow:

1. That *Vsp* 3/7 is based on a reversal of the two components in the mythical place-name *Ginnungagap*, without influence of other origin: i.e. *ginnunga* had no meaning or usage in ON that was not ultimately dependent on the place-name (which may have made it easier to reverse).

2. That *Ginnungagap* is a tautology, comparable to a phrase such as 'the gap of Chaos', in which the associated terms derive from the same root and originally had the same significance, namely, 'wide opening', 'chasm'. If *Ginnunga* had, like *Chaos*, become a specific name for the primordial void and the descriptive element in the name was no longer kept alive by current usage, then 'gap' would act as a gloss for the archaic name.

3. That *ginnunga* is not in origin an ON word, but a pre-literary borrowing of OHG *ginunga*, 'hiatus', 'rictus' (of a cavernous opening in the ground—*caecus hiatus*—or the jaws of a beast or demon) found frequently in glosses (Graff IV. 106–7; Steinmeyer–Sievers II. 395, 416, 427, 452, 453, 471, etc.; *AW* s.v. *ginunga*; pl. as well as sg. forms are recorded). I suggest that OHG *Ginunga* may have been a term for the heathen Gmc *Chaos* borrowed by the Norsemen together with *Muspell* (see commentary to *Vsp* 48/2), with a change of stem from *gin-* to *ginn-* by association with ON stem *ginn-* (see below).

Does the difference of stem preclude the likelihood of a borrowing? Adaptation of foreign names in oral tradition is not always philologically exact. ON has a strong vb. *gína*, 'to gape wide'. OHG *ginunga* is derived from vb. *ginen*, 'to be/gape wide open'; the stem vowel is short; cf. Walde 549, '*n*-Praesentien'; also OE *ginian* and *ginung* (glossing *barritus*, *garrulitas*, *morsus*, the accompaniments of open jaws; BT *Suppl.*). In OHG no form **ginnunga* is found, the stem with double consonant occurring only in derivatives of *ginen* with prefixes (e.g. *inginnen*, 'to make open', 'to cut apart', 'to begin'; *biginnen*, 'to begin'; *biginnunga*, 'beginning'). OE has equivalent verbs *be-*, *onginnan*; ON does not. The OE adj. *ginn*, 'spacious' (e.g. *geond ginne grund*, 'throughout the vast earth', *Widsið* 51) may be related to the ON, OE prefix *gin(n)-* which appears from its contexts to have an intensive force, based on ancient connotations of magnitude and power. So in ON *ginnheilog* and *ginnregin* (of the gods) and in runic **ginoronoR**, **ginarunaR** (where the stem could be with single *n*, since double consonants are not usually runically represented; the words are from a 7 c. and an 8 c. inscription on the Stentofta and Björketorp stones in southern Sweden, of Danish origin or influence, where these 'mighty' runes enforce a curse; cf. Jóhannesson (*a*), 78, 107; *Nordisk Kultur* VI. 46, 114, 173). So too in OE *ginfæst*, 'powerfully endowed' (of divine gifts), *ginnwīsed*, 'mightily instructed'. There is a clear association of magnitude and magical power in uses of the vb. *magna*, 'to make greater', 'to imbue with magic power' (see Fritzner s.v.), and of the past part. *aukinn*, OE *ēacen*, 'made big with child/with supernatural power' (cf. *Vkv* 36/2, *Hyndl* 35/3, 43/3, *Beowulf* 1621). In 13 c. ON prose texts a vb. *ginna*, 'to deceive', 'to bewitch', and *ginning*, 'deception', 'befooling', first appear. De Vries sees the origin of *Ginnunga-* in this vb., arguing that the magical connotations of *ginna* point to the essential significance of *Ginnungagap*, namely, 'primordial realm of space filled with magical powers' ('der mit magischen Kräften erfüllte Urraum', de Vries (*a*), 65). But, as *ginna*, with its magical associations, occurs so late in ON record, in contexts of no dignity (and does not occur in any other Gmc language), I think it more probable that in *Vsp ginnunga* retains its original etymological sense of 'yawning emptiness', from whose unimaginable magnitude the 'magic' of the supernatural powers would emerge.

Of poetic relevance to *Vsp* 3/7 is the OE phrase *gārsecges gin*, *Exodus* 431. The noun *gin* (or *ginn*: final *nn* was often simplified; Sievers–Brunner § 231, 1) occurs nowhere else in OE. It might be identified with ON *gin*, 'mouth', 'jaws' (cf. *Þórsdr*

15), or taken as an abstract noun related to adj. *ginn*, 'wide': so, either 'ocean's gaping jaws, gulf', or 'ocean's vast expanse'. In either case *gārsecges gin* contributes to the oceanic associations of *Ginnungagap* (see *Vsp Introd* II ad loc.).

The name *Ginnungagap* must have been established before Þjóðólfr composed *Haustl* (*c.* 900), since he models his phrase *ginnunga vé* upon it: as Þórr drives his chariot furiously to encounter the giant Hrungnir, *Knǫ́ttu ǫll . . . ginnunga vé brinna*, 'All the sanctuaries of the realm of space caught fire', while the ground below was lashed with hail (15/1–4), so violent was Þórr's thunderstorm. I take the *vé* to be the divine estates and temples of the gods, as we see them in *Grím* 4 – 17. They are the habitations of *Ginnungagap*: where once there was vacuity, the *gap*, now there are *vé*. That the *vé* should be set alight by Þórr's lightning may seem somewhat exaggerated, but so is the comedy of the rest of the poem. For another cosmic happening—but this time not comic—that affects the gods' homes in space, see *Vsp* 40: the corpse-eating, moon-snatching wolf stains *ragna siǫt* with blood. The interpretation (*LP*) of *ginnunga vé* as 'hawk's home' i.e. 'sky' is out of keeping with the poetic idiom of *Haustl.* Þjóðólfr would seem to have taken *ginnunga* as a gen.; I have done so too, assuming a pl.

4/1 *Burs synir*: no other poetic text attributes more than one son directly to Burr. The poet is probably dovetailing two separate traditions here, (*a*) that Burr was the father of Óðinn (*Hyndl* 30: *Var Baldrs faðir / Burs arfþegi*, 'Baldr's father was Burr's heir'; Þorvaldr blǫnduskáld *c.* 1100, in a kenning for poetry, using the variant *Borr*: 'the mead of Óðinn, son of Borr, Búri's heir', *SnE* 92); and (*b*) that Óðinn had a brother (or possibly two, cf. his name 'Þriði', though only one is named in early skaldic texts): *Vili* (*Ytal* 3/2) or *Víli* (*Sonat* 23/2). No poetic text except *Vsp* identifies the *Burs synir* with the *blíð regin* who 'made Miðgarðr' in *Grím* 41/2–3. Loki gives Frigg, Óðinn's wife, two lovers, Vili and Vé, but does not say that they are Óðinn's brothers (see commentary to *Lks* 26/4). In poetic tradition (e.g. *Vell* 4/2) Óðinn has a mother *Bestla*, 'Tree Bark', whose father was a giant *Bǫlþorn*, 'Evil Thorn' (cf. *Háv* 140; Hunke greatly illuminates this genealogy). Snorri amalgamates all these details, using the synthesis already in *Vsp* 4: Búri, who was licked from salty ice-rocks by the primordial cow (*SnE* only), had a son Borr, by no specified means. Borr's wife was Bestla, daughter of Bǫlþorn. By her Borr had three sons, Óðinn, Vili, and Vé. These sons of Borr kill Ymir and fashion earth and sky from his corpse in the centre of Ginnungagap (*SnE* 13–14).

The name *Burr*, 'Born One', 'Son' is fitting for a first-born primordial being (as de Vries notes, *AR* § 578; cf. the equally simple primordial name *Mannus*, *Germ* ii). The form *Borr* is virtually exclusive to SnE MSS. Elsewhere it is adopted, probably under Snorri's influence, in H 'bors synir', and occurs in one MS. variant, 'borðz [*i.e.* borz] niðiar' in *Egil lausavísa* 30 (i.e. *Skjald* A I. 54, *lausavísa* 21). Snorri may have adopted *Borr* to distinguish the name from the common noun *burr* (for which *borr* does not appear to be a common variant; but cf. MS. R reading *borar Bors* in the lines of Þorvaldr blǫnduskáld, *SnE* 92, noted above). For the stem vowel variation *u/o* see Jóhannesson (*b*) § 99. SN 54 suggests that the *Burs synir* might be more fittingly interpreted as Óðinn, Hœnir, and Lóðurr, as in *Vsp* 18, rather than Óðinn,

Vili, and Vé, as in *SnE*. But either attempt at interpretation destroys the poet's deliberate anonymity for these gigantic sons.

4/2 *biǫðom um yþðo*: *biǫð* neut. pl. of **beð* is a poetic term for 'land', occurring only five times (*Víga-Glúm* 31, *lausavísa* 2/8, needs emendation). Moberg, 38–51, notes that the ON instances of *biǫð* in a poetic context all relate to land beside, or rising above, water. In *Hǫfuðlausn* 2 Egill is approaching *Engla bjǫð* from the sea; in Kormakr's *lausavísa* 61, *Korm* 274, he declares that earth will sink into ocean—*bjǫð sekkva, / fœrask fjǫll . . . í djúpan ægi*—before as lovely a woman as Steingerðr will be born (Kormakr is reversing the raising of *biǫð* in *Vsp* 4/2 to become part of Ragnarǫk, with echoes of the wording and images of *Vsp* 50/5, 54/2, 56/3); in *Merlínusspá* II 68/7–8 bloody rivers shall flow down (to the sea) from the higher land—*af bjǫðum falla*. Swedish place-names confirm a sense of 'land, bank, shore, raised beside water'. Etymologically *biǫð* is probably to be related to IE terms for digging (e.g. Lat *fodere*), by which banks, dikes, are raised.

yþðo signifies both 'lifted up' and 'revealed', 'made known' (Fritzner s.v. *yppa* §§ 2, 3). Earth is lifted out of obscurity and then (4/4) becomes *mæran*, 'renowned', 'glorious'.

The legend that earth was raised from a watery void by the sons of a primordial giant is not found elsewhere in ON. The fragmentary records of a sea contest between Heimdallr and Loki for possession of the necklace of the fertility goddess Freyja can, however, be seen as an analogue, couched in symbolic terms, of the freeing of earth from ocean by a benign power (see commentary to *Lks* 20/1–8). To such a form of the myth there are analogues in Eurasian legend, couched in Christian terms, e.g. in which God orders the Devil to dive into the waters and bring up Earth; the Devil attempts to get possession of Earth, but God outplays him. (Harva (*b*), ch. 2 cites a fine range of analogues for the raising of earth from ocean in Finno-Ugrian and Siberian legend. Schier (*a*), 15–42 offers a valuable typological analysis of a far wider range of related legends, which suggests that the motif of diving into the cosmic waters for the earth, by a bird or a deity's helper, was the most archaic; Schier's documentation is a rich guide (42–52). Zimmer emphasizes the cyclic nature of such myths in Indian tradition (18): 'In one of the Purānic accounts of the deeds of Vishnu in his Boar Incarnation or Avatār, occurs a casual reference to the cyclic recurrence of the great moments of myth. The Boar, carrying on his arm the goddess Earth whom he is in the act of rescuing from the depths of the sea, passingly remarks to her: "*Every time I carry you this way . . .*".' Distantly, the Norse poet's myth belongs to the same tradition.) From the dualistic tale of Heimdallr and Loki—diving in the shape of seals (not birds) for the sea-kidney that is earth (*Húsdr*, *SnE* 99, 100)—it seems a long step to the quiet scene of the Burr's sons' uncontested raising of earth in *Vsp*. Imaginative simplification is, however, one of the poet's characteristics. The only text I know of to which his bears a flicker of resemblance is Genesis 1: 9: *Dixit vero Deus: Congregentur aquae, quae sub caelo sunt, in locum unum: et appareat arida. Et factum est ita*. The Burr's sons too made dry land 'appear', *yþðo*. I have called them cosmic weightlifters, but in fact

the poet has not used a strenuous verb (I do not suggest that he is copying Genesis, only that the likeness illuminates the Norse).

4/6 *á salar steina*: *salr*, 'hall', is figuratively used for 'earth' (envisaged as an enclosed dwelling-place; *AEW* s.v.) also in *Þórsdr* 7/8, where *salþak*, 'hall-roof', denotes the sky (see Davidson 597–8). More commonly *salr* is used of the sky (cf. *Alv* 12/6, *HH* I 3/7). The earth newly raised from sea for the first time, is barren rocks: a natural concept in Iceland or Norway. The second coming of earth out of ocean 'green again' (56/4) is un-, or super-, natural.

4/8 *lauki*: no doubt a symbolic use of 'leek' to convey the rich growth of the first earth, taller and more glorious than grass (cf. *Guð* II 2: *Svá var Sigurðr / uf sonom Giúka, / sem væri grœnn laukr / ór grasi vaxinn*, 'Sigurðr towered over the sons of Giúki like a green leak springing up from the grass'). *Gras* in the last line of *Vsp* 3 is deliberately contrasted with *grœnom lauki* in the last line of *Vsp* 4 to make explicit the physical progress time and the sun have caused. In later colloquial usage *laukr* might refer to a variety of plants, including grass, in Iceland and on the mainland; it is improbable that the poet intended *laukr* to signify no more than grass here (see Heizmann (*a*), 71–5 for fine discussion; *AR* § 199). For the felicitous connotations of *grœnn* see commentary to *Ríg* 1/2.

5/1–4 I interpret these lines in the light of *Vafþ* 23, taking *hverfa*, 23/4, as causative: *himin hverfa / þau skolo*, 'they (Sun and Moon) must make the heaven turn' (cf. Fritzner s.v. *hverfa*, vb. (*fð*) §§ 2, 4). The heaven itself may 'turn' (cf. *Heiðarvíga Saga* 313: *himinn hverfr*), but there is no parallel for intransitive vb. *hverfa* (*hvarf*), 'to move (across the heaven)', without a prepositional phrase (cf. *Grím* 27/8). The name of the father of Sun and Moon, *Mundilfœri*, occurs only in *Vafþ* 23 and in *SnE* 17 (taken from *Vafþ*), with MSS. variants to the second element *-fœri*, *-feri*, *-fari* which suggest 'bearing', 'moving', or a device for bearing or moving. *Mundil-* is commonly taken to be from *mund* neut., 'point of time', and to be a reference to the prompt time-keeping of the moon (*LP*). *Mund*, 'time', is not found in verse, however, and may not have been part of ancient vocabulary. *Mund* fem., 'hand', might be a better alternative (cf. Lat *manus*). Vigfússon s.v. *Mundilföri* suggests that the name is 'akin to *möndull* [handle for turning a handmill], referring to the veering round or revolution of the heavens'. *Mǫndull* (cf. *HH* II 3, 4, *Grott* 20) is thought to be related to Skr *manthati*, 'to stir, turn round', *manthá-* 'stirring spoon' (*AEW* s.v.), but there are no related verbs in Gmc, even though variants of *mǫndull* (and possibly *mundill*) are found in all the Scandinavian languages. If *Mundilfœri* did mean 'Carrier of the Mill-Handle', he would be the upper millstone itself, which 'carries' the *mǫndull/mundill* (fitted into a slot in the stone) and is turned by it. His two children might operate the handle together, as do Fenja and Menja (cf. *Grott* 23). I would relate the statements in *Vsp* 5/1–4 and *Vafþ* 23 to the archaic concept of the cosmic mill, by which the heavens turn on the world pillar, regulating seasons and time, and I would suppose that the lost lines 5/5–8 had made this theme clearer. Since Vigfússon's wise insight, we now have an incisive analysis of

comparative mythological material on the theme of the cosmic mill in ON, Finnic, and Indian by Tolley (*c*). The material bears the stamp of different cultures and eras and artistic intentions, but the central parallels, that Tolley undogmatically presents, are most impressive (see esp. 75–6).

5/5–10 I take these lines to be interpolated (see *Vsp Introd* II ad loc.).

máni . . . megins: cf. ME *Pearl* 1093: *þe maynful mone*.

6/1–4 The gods assemble in council in *BDr* 1, *Þrym* 14 (in identical phrasing: *Senn vóru æsir / allir á þingi, / ok ásyniur / allar á máli*, 'At once the Æsir were all in council and the Ásynior all talking'), and in *Haustl* 10 (*gættusk allar áttir / Ingvifreys at þingi*, 'all the kinsmen of Ingvifreyr took counsel in assembly'). In each of these cases the *þing* is held because of some fearful happening: Baldr has had dreams of death; Þórr's hammer has been stolen; the gods are growing old because Iðunn has been abducted. But in *Vsp* 6 there is no fear, no dilemma confronts the gods' sacred power; the human term *þing* is not used, the thrones relate to no mortal office. Of the instances of the 'gods-in-assembly' motif in ON verse (including the other instances in *Vsp* itself, 9, 23, 25, 49) *Vsp* 6/1–4 is unique in its serenity.

6/1 *regin*: related to terms of 'ruling', 'judgement' (cf. Gothic *ragin*, 'counsel, judgement', *raginon*, 'to be a governor'); in ON only used of divine or supernatural sovereignty (as an intensive prefix see *Hamð* 25/2).

6/2 *rǫkstóla*: see *Vsp Introd* II ad loc. For the implications of *rǫk* see *LP* s. vv. *rǫk*, *rekja*.

6/3 *ginnheilog*: see under *ginnunga* 3/7.

6/4 *um þat* I take to refer to the new development of the revolving heaven in the preceding stanza. There is no reason to suppose that an indirect question has been lost to which *þat* relates (as in 9/5, 23/5, 25/5), as SN suggests (no indirect question follows *Haustl* 10).

6/5 *niðiom*: ON poetic texts do not give more than fragments of the genealogy of Night and Day. In *Vafþ* 25/3, *Alv* 29/5 Night is the daughter of Nǫrr; in *Vafþ* 25/1–2 Day is the son of Dellingr. Snorri makes Day the son of Night and Dellingr, but there is no other extant source for this (*SnE* 17). In *Vafþ* 27 Winter and Summer have fathers. Tacitus notes that among the Germani night is regarded as ushering in day (*nox ducere diem videtur*, *Germ* xi). In Hesiod, *Theogony* 123–4, Night, child of Chaos, was mother of Day. *Vafþ* 25/4–6: *ný ok nið / skópo nýt regin* refers to the creation of a lunar programme, rather than of entities (though *Nýi* and *Niði* become personified, like *Norðri* and *Suðri*, as dwarfs; *Vsp* 11/1–2).

6/6 *nǫfn um gáfo*: the giving of names in the early world is often a divine prerogative and the accompaniment of creation (see Pritchard 68–9, Tablet VI; U. and P. Dronke 162–5).

6/9 *undorn*: the time between midday and the ninth hour (3 p.m.), replaced in the 11 c. by the Christian term *nón*. Later ON *undorn*, like its Gmc parallels, refers to the morning interval from the third hour till noon (see Vigfússon s.v. Etymologically *undorn* is related to Lat *interim*; *AEW* s.v.). An old place-name *Undunfell* (from **Undornfell*) in southern Vatnsdalr marks the position of the *afternoon* sun for the farm that lies north-east of it (B. M. Ólsen (*a*); *Vatnsdœla Saga* 72, n. 2; *Landn* 223).

6/10 *árom at telia*: lit. 'to reckon in years [the passing of the hours]'. For the awareness in Iceland of the importance for accurate chronology of the observation of each day's progress see *Íslb* 9, ch. 4.

7/1 *æsir*: the descendant of an ancient Gmc name, *Ansis*, first described by the Goth Jordanes (*Getica* p. 76, line 13; AD 551) as a name of honour signifying demigods, given by the Goths to their leaders (*non puros homines, sed semideos, id est Ansis*) 'by whose *fortuna* it seemed' (*quorum quasi fortuna*) the Goths had won a great victory over the Romans on the Danube (in the time of Domitian, AD 81–96). To the people it appeared that these leaders had shown themselves to be possessed of luck, which came from the gods, and after their death they would join the gods and be worshipped with them, continuing to give their luck to their people (as did the heathen King Eiríkr of Sweden, who was later made a saint; Rimbert, *Vita Anskarii* 62; *AR* §§ 312, 322). If the *æsir* were in origin great men deified in their lives and after death, this would throw light on their traditional association with the *álfar*, who were identified with the spirits of beneficent ancestors (see commentary to *Vsp* 49/1–2).

The etymology of *Ansis/æsir* is disputed (*AR* § 346; *AEW* s.v. *áss* 1; *IEW* 25–6; for a valuable summary of the scholarship on the etymology of **ansuz*, see Polomé). I would (with Meringer 159–60) relate *áss*, 'god', to *áss*, 'strong beam of timber', 'ridge-beam of a roof' (also of a undetermined etymology), because (*a*) this would relate *áss*, 'god', to a known concept of deity as a support, for the cosmos and for men, in the form of a tree or pillar (as in *Heimdallr*, *Irminsul*, Þórr's *ǫndvegissúla*), and (*b*) a comparable name is recorded by Dio Cassius (LXXII. 12. 1), writing *c.* AD 220) for a legendary Vandal leader, of the Hasdingi tribe, *Raptos* (i.e. 'rafter', ON *raptr*); he was partnered by a brother, *Raos* (i.e. 'reed', ON *reyr*, or 'thin tree-trunk'; *AR* § 499). Polomé's suggestion (43–4) that **ansuz* is a term closely linked in ancient IE religious vocabulary with the concept of 'magic bond' would fit well with the association of 'bonds' with the divine tree or pillar (see UD (*i*), 666 and 657–8), and so with *áss*, 'timber beam', etymologically. The evidence of runic inscriptions and personal names in documents shows that *ans-* (OE *ōs*) was a familiar element in the Gmc tongues from at least the fifth century.

7/2 *Iðavelli*: I have assumed that the name of the plain refers to the cyclic ebb and flow of the world (and its gods), a perpetually returning cosmos, relating *Iða-* to *iða* fem., 'eddy' (though the compound form is difficult to parallel), and thus to the same stem as *Iðunn*, goddess of renewal (see commentary to *Lks* 17/4–6); cf. Lat *iterum*, 'again', OE prefix *ed-* as in *edwenden*, 'turning again', *edniwe*, 'new again'.

Iðavǫllr will return after Ragnarǫk (57), as will the golden chess pieces (58), and indeed the *æsir* themselves. There is also no doubt a pun implied in *Iða-* on the industrious activity of the gods, their *iðja* and *iðn*. The suggestion (SN) that *iða-* imples the evergreenness of this *vǫllr*, growing every year unsown, is not appropriate after 4/7–8, or before 59/1–2.

7/3–4 *þeir — hátimbroðo*: that gods should build their own temples would seem to be a very ancient motif (as in the Akkadian *Creation Epic*, Pritchard 68, lines 51–72). The poet of *Vsp* is clearly influenced by *Grím* 5, 6, 12, 16, where some of the gods are said to have built their own dwellings. The vb. *hátimbra* occurs only in *Vsp* and *Grím* 16, where Niǫrðr 'lord of men . . . rules the high-built shrine' (*hátimbroðom hǫrgi ræðr*).

hǫrg ok hof: cf. *Vafþ* 38: *hofom ok hǫrgom*; *HHv* 4: *Hof mun ek kiósa, / hǫrga marga*. For a most helpful discussion of the distinctions that the extant sources suggest between these two places of heathen worship, see E. O. G. Turville-Petre 239–43. *Hǫrgr* has associations with worship in the open; its equivalents OE *hearg*, OHG *harug*, had the meaning 'grove' as well as 'temple', and *hǫrgr* may originally have denoted an uncovered sacrificial altar, built of stones (cf. *Hyndl* 10), and only later a roofed building, like *hof*. The term *hærgtrafum* in *Beowulf* 175 implies a timber-built temple (cf. *wearhtreafum*, 'house of the damned'; *Elene* 926), as does also, no doubt, the vb. *hátimbroðo*, *Vsp* 7/4. See also *AR* §§ 266–9.

7/5–8 *Afla — gørðo*: the scene of the gods forging their own wealth is designed to anticipate the creation of the dwarfs (9). No source independent of *Vsp* represents the Norse gods as a community of smiths (though semi-divine legendary communities of metal-working smiths are well known from elsewhere; Eliade (*b*), 106–7; *Der kleine Pauly* s.v. *Kabeiroi*). The gods are fashioning the abstract *auðr* with their concrete tongs and anvils, because *Auðr*, in myth, is the 'richness' of his sister, *Jǫrð*, the earth (on the text of *Hákonardrápa* here see Davidson ad loc.; *SnE* 115 line 23; *AR* § 311). The scene is succinctly symbolic and prepares us for the gods' wealth of gold in the following stanza.

8 Van Hamel points the way to the interpretation of this stanza. His documentation, and that of de Vries, *AR* § 299, provide the most significant evidence:

1. In choosing the game of *tafl* as the first conflict in the gods' career, the poet draws on older tradition that represents the antagonism of gods and giants as a contest of *tafl*. The fragment of evidence for this lies in the answer to one of the 'Riddles of Heiðrekr' (*Heiðr* 37, v. 55; *Fas* I. 219): 'Who are the thanes who . . . send their liegemen over the lands to settle in homesteads?' 'These are Ítrekr and Andaðr, sitting at their *tafl* game' (MSS. R, U), 'That is the *tafl* game of Ítrekr' (MS. H). In *Þulur* IV e *Ítreks jóð* i.e. 'offspring' are listed as 'Óðinn's sons' (*burir Óðins*); in *Þulur* IV b 4 *Andaðr* is a giant-*heiti*. Óðinn–Ítrekr (? 'Glorious Leader') contends with Andaðr ('Dead One') in a perpetual match of alternate winning and losing. In *Vsp* the first end-game will be Ragnarǫk, the second, Baldr's return. In stanza 8, however, the poet has not wished to reach Ragnarǫk yet, only to strike the

distant sound of it. He has therefore made the challenge less formidable than Death, and chosen a variant with three giant girl players, based, no doubt, on a legend, or type of legend, already well known—since otherwise he could hardly have alluded so cryptically to it and expected his audience to follow him on the stepping-stones of his text.

2. The evidence for the legend of the three *þursa meyiar*, other than *Vsp* 8, is, however, very slight. While there are tales of supernatural beings and witches who challenge a hero at a board-game for a high stake, sometimes in a series of three or even more games (as Midir plays Eochaid for his wife Etain, in the *Courtship of Etain* 30), I know of no instance of three such challengers coming as a team. Van Hamel 227 suggests that they stole the *tafl* board and pieces. One short episode in *Egils Saga einhenda* 177–8, ch. 13 (van Hamel 231) could be a reminiscence of such a theft story: three huge women, i.e. giantesses, own a miraculous *tafl* set, which plays of its own accord against any player. Did they steal it? For this there is no evidence, but when it is stolen from them, they fight furiously to keep it. The theft motif might have become misplaced in popular use of the story.

There is nothing furtive, however, about the giant girls' coming in *Vsp*. They come patently for confrontation—*ámátkar miǫk*—not (I suggest) to steal the *tafl* set, but to challenge the gods to play them for it. They want to get control of the mechanism of the gods' prosperity, just as, later (25), the giant builder wants to get the world's life—the sun, the moon, and Freyja—out of the gods' hands by a deceptive bargain. The gods will never (I suppose) have lost a *tafl* game, except to themselves (see 3. below). They will have regarded their *tafl* board as one whose owner always wins (like those in *lygisǫgur*; van Hamel 231). So, in total self-confidence, the gods will accept the girls' challenge. And now, to find themselves losing to outsiders—*female* giants—will be a shock to them such as they have never yet experienced, bringing, no doubt, furious resentment and dispute. At the last minute, on the brink of losing the game (I suggest), the gods will smash their *tafl* board rather than surrender it—as Arthur crushes the golden pieces in his hand, when he sees the game going against him (*Dream of Rhonabwy* 150; van Hamel 236), and Peredur throws the chessboard into the lake, when his favoured side is losing (*Peredur* 224; more *tafl* quarrels are cited by van Hamel 230).

3. In human affairs, it would seem, the board-game was believed to have a remote control over happenings. In the fiction of the *Dream of Rhonabwy* the fighting between Arthur's young knights and Owein's ravens is governed by the chess play of each leader. In a story preserved in Gmc historical traditional (Paulus Diaconus I. xx) Rodulfus, king of the Heroli (*c.* 500) stays in his camp during a battle and *ad tabulam ludit*. A watchman reports to him on the distant battle from a treetop (messengers report also to Arthur and Owein). Though for the Heroli the battle was disastrous, it would seem that Rodulfus had played a ritual game on their behalf (as de Vries, *AR* § 299, notes). The *tafl* the gods play in *Vsp* 8 is their ritual game to maintain the golden fortunes of the world through the movement of the celestial bodies over the heavens. As Needham points out (248): 'The game of chess, as we know it, has been associated throughout its development with astronomical symbolism, and *this was even more overt in related games now long obsolete* [my italics]. Investigation shows that the battle element of chess seems to have developed from a technique of divination in which the Chinese desired to ascertain the balance of ever-contending Yin and Yang forces in the universe. This was in use in +6th-century China, whence it passed to +7th-century India to generate the recreational game. This 'image-chess' (*hsiang chhi*) derived in its turn from a number of divination-techniques which involved the throwing of small models, symbolic of the celestial bodies, on to prepared boards. There were also intermediate forms between pure casting, and casting followed by combat moves.' I cite this passage because it illuminates in ON the symbolic link between *tafl* and the world's fortune, the contending of Ítrekr and Andaðr at *tafl*, and the association of throwing dice with *tafl* (so re-enacting, as it were, the element of chance in the world's fortune; in many Norse graves dice are found with *tafl* boards and pieces; Eldjárn 358–61; see also Page (*b*), 163–4). For the association of gaming-board, heavens, and divine power, see Blathmac (*c.* 750) 65, quatrain 192: 'He [Christ] owns the extent that he marks out of the seven heavens about the kingly seat; it is his hand that has strewn in them the gaming-board of beautiful stars'. Carney notes that the Ballincherry board has seven rows of seven holes, and the central hole ringed for the 'king' (Blathmac 146).

In the realm of mythology the *tafl* game, symbolizing the moving cosmos, is a variant of the cosmic mill, whose turning can bring good or evil fortune (cf. *Grott*). Their legends present variations on the myth of the golden age and its loss. The Finnish myth of the shattering of the prosperity-bringing *sampo* provides a vivid parallel (see Tolley (*c*), 63–7).

8/1 *teflðo í túni*: in *Haraldskvæði* 16 the warriors throw dice *í Haralds túni* (i.e. in the enclosed home-field, which had fine, manured grass).

8/3 *vettergis*: adverbial gen. of *vættr*, 'thing', with negative suffix *-gi*, with addition of gen. *-s* of masc. sg. (though *vættr* is fem.), with shortening of *æ* to *e* in a trisyllable or before consonant groups (Noreen § 476. 3).

8/7 *ámátkar miǫk*: from *ámáttigr*, a term used of powerful, imposing, and potentially menacing figures, such as giants (cf. *Skm* 10/8) and occasionally warriors (*HHv* 14/2; cf. *ámátligr*, used of a transvestite valkyrie *HH* I 38/3).

9/5 *hvárt*: see *Vsp Introd* III. C. *Problem II* (i) (*b*).

9/7 *ór Brimis blóði*: since the blood of Ymir formed the ocean (*Vafþ* 21/6), the old giant may well be called 'Ocean Wave' (*brim*, 'surging wave', of sea breaking against land, a term steadily in practical use, e.g. in the Frostaþing laws; see *brim*-compounds in Vigfússon, Fritzner). *Brimir* occurs in *Vsp* 36 (see commentary ad loc.) as another name for *Ægir* ('Ocean Giant'), who brews ale for the gods (*Hym* 1, 3; *AEW* s.v. *ægir*). What connection Ocean-*Brimir* has with *Brimis eggiar*, *Sigrdr* 14/2, we do not yet know.

9/8 *ór Bláins leggiom*: *Bláinn*, 'Blue/Black One', must be another name for Ymir, referring no doubt to his dark and deadly flesh from which the earth was made (*Vafþ* 21/1–2; cf. Flosi's wrathful complexion *stundum blár sem hel*, *Njál* 292). That the dwarfs are to be made from *Bláinn*'s 'limbs' would suggest that they are to be made out of stone or rock, since the 'limb of earth' is a rocky mountain (cf. *Húsdr* 5: *fróns* (earth's) *leggs* (limb's) *folk* (people) 'people of the mountain', 'giants' (see *SnE* 168; *AR* § 181).

10 – 16 As these stanzas cannot be an original part of *Vsp* (see *Vsp Introd* III. C. *Problem II* (i) (*b*)), I have not given space to a commentary for them. I do not think that material in these stanzas can be made relevant to *Vsp* 8 and 17 as Steinsland (*b*), 82–3, suggests. I have rendered the dwarf-names according to *LP* and SG for the most part (but preferring, for example, to relate *Fíli* to *fíll*, 'elephant', rather than a by-form of *fél*, 'file'). For the most recent learned and imaginative work on the names and traditions of dwarfs in ON see the articles of Motz, (*a*), (*c*), and (*g*), and her book, (*d*). Most remarkable in the dwarf material preserved in *Vsp* are the allusions to their history as a people, their descent from 'Lofarr', their migration from rocky land to fertile plains (so it would seem; 14), and to the undying fame of their names (16). See also commentary to *Vsp* 36/4.

17/2 *ór því liði*: probably *því* is a corrupt reading. *Þriðia* might be a possible correction, 'from Þriði's (Óðinn's) host', emphasizing the number of times in legend that Óðinn has two companions (cf. *Haustl* and prologue to *Reg*; *AR* § 399). The possibility of interpreting *liði/líði* as 'ship' (see *LP* s.vv. 2) with reference to Skíðblaðnir, which could accommodate all the Æsir (*SnE* 48), occurs to me, but I can see no arguments in favour of it.

ǫflgir: the only other *áss* to be called *ǫflugr* is Heimdallr, when, as Rígr, he strides on his green way (*Ríg* 1/3), and, as Loki's opponent, he takes possession, *móðǫflugr*, 'strong in daring', of the 'gleaming sea-kidney', the jewel of earth (*Húsdr* 2).

ástgir: hap. leg. Elsewhere terms in *ást-* are used of personal relationships (e.g. *Sonat* 7: *ástvinir*, 'dear friends'; *Sigrdr* 21/4: *ástráð*, 'loving counsels'; cf. *Hym* 4/7) or of Christian love, but not of the Norse deities' attitude to mankind.

17/4–8 *at húsi*: a deliberate echo, I suggest, of *Ríg* 2/3 (or its source) *kom hann at húsi*. Proleptically *hús* here stands for the earth that is about to be dwelt in.

á landi: the Æsir find *Askr* and *Embla* on land, on the sea-shore, that is, because the model or mythologem underlying the scene is that of the coming of the divine driftwood—like Þórr's hall-pillar—over the sea to inaugurate the habitation of the new land (see UD (*i*), 680–1). So strong is the association of driftwood from the sea with the propagation of man on the earth, that in the prose preface to *Ríg* the god is said to stride first along a sea-shore before he comes *at húsi*—where he finds *Ái* and *Edda*, a variant of *Askr* and *Embla*, quite as *ørlǫglaus* without divine help as they.

Ask ok Emblo: while in *Vsp* the mythologem to which *Askr* and *Embla* primarily relate—*á landi*—is that of the divine driftwood, the fact that here there are *two* wooden figures links them to a second mythologem, that of the god as kindler of life betwen male and female, made of wood. In archaic fire-making rituals fire is sparked by boring with a hard spike of wood into a softer wooden block: a simulation of sexual action, in which the spark of life is given by the god. The ritual symbolizes and celebrates the restoration of life and fertility, after death, after winter, and is associated with sun-cults of the Bronze Age (see *AR* § 84 on the carving of such a ritual, with elaborate ceremonies, on the Kivik Stone, Skåne). Is *Embla*, however, a tree-name, like *Askr*? The evidence seems reasonably good: a fem. diminutive of *almr*, 'elm', might develop from **Almilon* > **Elmla* > **Emla* (by consonant simplification) > **Embla* (by introduction of a glide consonant, as in *Auðumbla*, MS. variant of *Auðumla*, *SnE* 13; see also Pipping II. 40–2. *Embila* is recorded as a woman's name in 11 c. Germany; Förstemann s.v.). From the Bronze Age also come finds in Denmark and Norway of phallic cult-figures made from fortuitously shaped branches, finished by carving, which may illustrate for us the concept of *Askr*, god or man, as driftwood (*AR* § 83).

There is yet one more tradition that may have contributed to the establishment of *Askr* and *Embla* as the primordial pair of humans. The ritual of fire-making is associated with twin-brother cults, whose symbol, two wooden pillars erect, on which a beam rests horizontally, closely resembles, and is no doubt intended to represent the apparatus for creating (the Promethean) fire (*AR* § 499, Fig. 22). Brother pairs appear as the earliest leaders of some Gmc tribes, e.g. *Raptos* and *Raos* (see commentary to 7/1), and *Amri* and *Assi* of the Vandals (*Origo Gentis Langobardorum* 34; Paulus Diaconus I. viii; *AR* § 369). The names of these brothers relate to timber or trees, *Assi* and *Ambri* being 'Ash' and 'Elm'. I would not dismiss the likelihood (as de Vries does, *AR* § 578, n. 5) that the name pairs *Assi* and *Ambri*, *Askr* and *Embla* are connected by a remote falling together of traditions. Both name pairs stand at the head of a 'genealogical' tradition, the first known names of a tribe, and of human kind. (I have no parallel for the conversion of a Gmc masc. name into a fem. (if that is indeed what happened to *Ambri*), but the existence of pairs in Gmc (*Nerthus/Njǫrðr*, *Fjǫrgyn/Fjǫrgynn*) suggests that such a conversion would present no problem.) In OE *Æsc* is a founder of a royal house, the *Æscingas* of Kent (improbably made the son of Hengist; *ASC* s.a. 455 ff.; Bede II. 5 however has the forms *Oisc*, *Oiscingas*). For a more ancient tradition that a generation of men were sprung from ash-trees, see Hesiod, *Works and Days* 143–4. It seems very probable that the names of the first man and woman in *Vsp* and in *Ríg* begin by design with the same initials as Adam and Eve; but at what moment this idea occurred I would not venture to suggest.

ørlǫglausa: masc. acc. pl., where neut. would be expected, but cf. *Helr* 14/2–3: *konor ok karlar / kvikvir fœðaz* (DH cite several instances).

18/1–2 *Qnd . . . óð*: I take *ǫnd* to be the breathing spirit of animation in the body which dies when the body dies (cf. *andask*, 'to expire'; *andaðr*, 'having breathed',

'dead'), and *óðr* to be the spirit of the mind, or soul, which does not die, but is continually renewed in another life (if the proper sacrifices are performed; see commentary on *Hœnir* 60/1). For the appropriateness of *ǫnd* as the gift of Óðinn, see commentary on *Yggdrasill* 19/2.

18/3 *lá*: lit. 'the line of shoal water along the shore, edged by the surf' (Vigfússon s.v.); used generally in skaldic verse for 'liquid', of poetry (*Húsdr* 1, *Vell* 2) and of blood (*Hákonarmál* 8: *oddláar*, 'weapon-point shallows'). In ModIcel *lá* also has the sense 'film, skin on the surface of water' (Blöndal s.v. 4; synonymous with *brá*, *brák*, *skán*, cf. Böðvarsson s.vv.). There is only one ON text I know where *lá* is used of a human physical feature, a *lausavísa* of Kormakr (*Korm* 211, 6/4); here *lá* appears to refer to Kormakr's skin: it is pale, sallow, *lá sǫlva* (acc.), and his lady thinks he is *allfǫlr*, 'extremely pallid'. In the introductory portrait of Kormakr (*Korm* 206) he is described as black-haired and *hǫrundljóss*, 'light of complexion (flesh-covering)'. Might *hǫrundljóss* be a flattering rendering of *lá sǫlva* and *allfǫlr*? I suggest that *Vsp lá* might similarly refer to the covering, mantle, of flesh with which Lóðurr clothes the wooden bodies of *Askr* and *Embla*. Compared with the wood it would be a moist covering, pulsing with the stream of blood, so that both aspects of *lá* (moving, tidal, liquid and mantled, still, covering over liquid) could be considered contextually relevant. Among the *heiti* in *Skáldskaparmál* (*SnE* 191) is *lá* for 'hair' (*Hár heitir lá*), which seems to have little relationship with other known senses of *lá*. I suspect it is Snorri's guess at the meaning of *lá* in *Vsp*, though it is not a meaning he gives in his paraphrase of the stanza (*SnE* 16). In the case of so brief a word, which could have arisen from various alternative contractions, etymology is not a sure guide in the search for meaning (see e.g. SG ad loc.). A relationship between *lá* in *Korm*, *Vsp*, and *lag*, 'layer', and other derivatives of *liggja*, if it could be argued, would be attractive, nevertheless. For a possible echo of *Vsp* elsewhere in *Korm* see commentary to 4/2.

læti covers aspects of behaviour ('expression', 'manners', 'bearing') as well as 'voice', 'utterance'. The poet may wish to imply all these human attributes here (even though in *Gríp* 39/2 *læti* expressly does not include 'speech'; SG).

18/4 *lito góða*: *litr*, 'colour', may imply more generally 'appearance', 'looks'; here it is probably also used symbolically for the living *viriditas* of the newly breathing twigs. I do not think it possible to read *goða*, 'of the gods', rather than *góða*, 'good', taking the phrase as an allusion (not necessarily Christian) to the creation of man in the image of God (Steinsland (*b*), 87 and n. 6). The relationship of man to god is well expressed in the identification of the two names *Askr* (17, 19), a mystical identification, that has little to do with the human physical implications of *lito*. The Norse gods, with their marked eccentricities, do not present a coherent image for copying, either physically or spiritually.

18/5–8 The three Æsir come like fairy godmothers with fortunate gifts for the new born infants (cf. the benign norns in *HH* I 2–4). De Vries (*b*), 34–5 (citing von der Leyen 123) summarizes an Indian analogue, a folk-tale in which four—or in some versions three—travellers of different callings create a woman, and then debate whose wife she should be: the woodcarver carves her of sandalwood, the weaver clothes her, the goldsmith adorns her, the priest, with a magic formula, gives her life. This tale illuminates, I think, the kind of story pattern influencing the poet here, though, as de Vries notes, the poet's 'main interest is for the psychical constitution of the human kind' rather than the material (as in the folk-tale). The poet was no doubt also familiar with legends of animated *trémenn*, clothed into valorous humanity by Óðinn, as in *Háv* 49 (see the thorough analysis of this motif by North (*a*), 238–75, 'Woden worhte weos'; also SN commentary to 17/8; Steinsland (*b*), 100–4).

18/7 *Lóðurr*: almost certainly a third name of Loki/Loptr (cf. *Lks* 19). If that is so, we have the same trio of gods, Óðinn, Hœnir, Loki, in *Vsp* as appears in *Haustl* (*c.* 900) to open the tale of the abduction of Iðunn, and in the prose prologue to *Reg* to open the tale of the killing of 'Otter' and the origin of the dragon hoard. While we cannot give an early date to the *Reg* prologue, it confirms that the initial trio was a familiar tradition, perhaps a conventional *mise en scène* for tales of Loki's ill-timed actions. Eyvindr denotes Óðinn as *vinr Lóðurs*, 'Lóðurr's friend' (*Hál* 9, *c.* 985). The 'friendship' of the trio is underlined when in *Haustl* Loki is twice called *vinr Hœnis* (3, 7) and Hœnir is called *vinr hrafnásar* (4; i.e. of Óðinn the Raven God), and in *Vell* 12 Óðinn is called *Lopts vinr* (see Davidson 122–3, 276–8). Snorri does not record the name *Lóðurr* in *SnE*; he may not have been sure of his identity, even though he cites *Hál* 9 in *Hkr* I. 108.

The meaning of *Lóðurr* (rhymed with *glóði* by Haukr Valdísarson, *Íslendingadrápa* 1/1, in the 12 c.) is difficult to determine, no doubt because it is of ancient origin. If it is related to *lóð*, 'vegetation', 'growth that covers the earth', it would be a fitting name for Loki in his creative role in *Vsp* 18, clothing the human twigs with an attractive physical exterior, as *lóð* can clothe the earth (cf. the pointed allusion to Loki's name *Loptr* in 25/5). On the possibility of a connection between *Lóðurr* and a fertility goddess **Loðkona*, see McTurk (*b*), 37–9, developing Sahlgren; *AR* §§ 511, 560.

19/2 *Yggdrasill*: the nom. form only occurs here (cf. *Yggdrasils askr*, 45/9–10). *Yggr*, 'Terrible One', is an Óðinn-name (*Grím* 53/2), *drasill* a poetic term for 'horse', so 'Óðinn-Horse'. This name must relate to sacrificial practice that goes back to ancient IE tradition. In Adam of Bremen IV. xxvii the sacrifice practised at Uppsala every nine years is described, in which the bodies of men, dogs, and horses are hung on the trees in the temple grove, and the trees are considered to be divine 'because of the death or putrefaction of the victims'. Though the sacrifice and veneration of horses is well attested in Gmc lands (*AR* § 258), the only recorded instance of the sacrifice of a horse on a tree is that at Uppsala. As de Vries notes, the archaic practice of horse sacrifice is most sharply illuminated by Indian religious texts. I set out briefly the most relevant points of interest for *Yggdrasill*:

1. *Drasill*, 'horse', relates etymologically to OHG *drāson*, *drāsjan*, 'to snort, breathe heavily, puff and blow'. In a 10 c. text of Virgil, *Georgics* III. 85, the gloss

drāsot is written over *volvit*, 'exhales' (Lewis and Short s.v. *volvo* I B 2), as the neighing horse snorts fury (*ignem*) from its nostrils (Graff v. 252). The horse's powerful breathing is significant (cf. *Germ* x). In an Indian ritual (*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* VII 3. 2. 12, cited by Coomaraswamy (*a*), 47–8, with other texts) 'the sacrificial horse is the Sun in a likeness, [it] is made to snuffle at the [bricks] of the Fire-altar' by the Priest. The bricks represent all worlds and all beings, the children of the Sun (who, as the Life of all things, is also the god Prajapati, 'Lord of children, people', a procreative aspect of Brahman; Bhattacharji 322–9). The snuffling of the horse 'bestows the Breath indeed upon' these children, for the god is in the horse: 'Prajapati . . . became the horse, and sniffed at them; they procreated themselves'. Compare Genesis 2: 7: '. . . God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life'. What is remarkable for ON in the Indian texts is that the breath of life is breathed by a horse, the god is identified with the horse, and the horse is sacrificed (for further illustration see Sauvé 185–6; also the valuable analyses of bracteate images of horses, whose mouths emit symbolically breath or utterance, in Motz (*h*), 20–7).

2. In Indian sacrificial practice the sacrificial tree or post may be regarded as standing for the sacrificer (Viennot 44). If the sacrificial tree is the world tree, and the sacrificer a god, the world tree then stands for the god himself. Sauvé cites the legend of Agni, the fire god, hiding from the other gods, and taking the form of a horse; he then lives in the world tree (here named *aśvattha*, 'horse-abode') for a year, identifying with both horse and tree (Sauvé 187).

3. In the Indian horse sacrifice ritual, the priest, as he prepares the sacrifice, whispers into the ear of the horse the enumeration of all the good fortunes that will come because of the sacrifice (*AR* § 216). So Óðinn whispers into the ear of the sacrificed Baldr—the *tívorr*, *heilagt tafn*—as he lies on the funeral pyre (*Vafþ* 54). We may guess that the secret is the renewal of the world's life and Baldr's. (Compare the healing of a horse by whispering in its ear in an OHG Charm, Braune 78, XXXI. 7. Wodan's magic power to heal a horse is seen in a Merseburg Spell, Braune 77, XXXI. 1b.) For rites of Indian horse sacrifice see esp. Dumont.

4. The sun as originator of life, and the horse as symbol of the moving sun (and therefore the appropriate sacrifice to be made for the renewal of the sun and the life it brings to the world), play a part in the mythology of Óðinn because he—or his IE ancestor—was a solar deity. He has only one eye, that sees everything—like the sun. He is a traveller visiting the homes of men—like the sun. His eclipse is to be swallowed by the great wolf—like the sun. And, like the sun, he is *Alfǫðr* (*Grím* 48). See commentary to 21/5 on Óðinn's *Há-* names; also *Rígsthula* I. D. *Theme II*.

This vast background of archaic fragments of tradition associated with the mythology of the sun helps to explain Óðinn's place as highest of the gods in Gmc and giver of breath to man in *Vsp*. It accounts also for the name of the world tree as *Yggdrasill*, the name of the god when he was himself the sacrifice and the sacrificer (*Háv* 138), identified with the sacrificial tree itself (see 2. above).

19/3 *baðmr*, 'tree', occurs also in *Vsp* 27/4, *Grím* 40/5 (*Sigrdr* 11/5 has a less clear instance). It is no doubt an archaic form related to Gmc **bauma-*, OE *bēam*, Gothic *bagms*, by ways not yet determined (*AEW* s.v., 'eine überraschende form'). *Baðmr* may become *barmr* by dissimilation, as in *BDr* 9/2: *hróðrbarm* for *-baðm* (Noreen § 238. 3 n. 14, § 253. 1 n. 1).

19/3–4 *ausinn hvítaauri*: the World Ash is laved by mud-rich water (I would suppose from the well at its foot, 27/5–6), an archetypal libation, happening here mysteriously without known agency. 'Guardian trees', representing the great tree, in the farms of Scandinavia and Germany, were given offerings of milk, beer, honey, to honour them and preserve their life (see *AR* § 249; Palm 60–3). Snorri interprets the moistening of the trees as just such a cult-libation, performed by 'norns' (*SnE* 24). Presumably he knew of the practice from his travels in Norway and Sweden and wished to make the myth in the poem more specific.

Aurr (as Vigfússon well explains s.v.) has two distinct connotations: (*a*) in heathen mythological/religious vocabulary it signifies Earth, lifted wet from primordial waters, the precious and sacred source of man (cf. *Germ* ii; *Aurgelmir* in *Vafþ* 32, 33), and is so recognized by the heavenly deities: *Iǫrð . . . kalla aur uppregin* (*Alv* 10); (*b*) in common parlance it is the mud of earth that clings to unshod feet (cf. *Rígsthula* 10/3), the alluvial deposit of rivers (becoming *eyrr*, new land from water once more), and finally a euphemism for excrement, a still fertilizing, but no longer sacred, soil (cf. *Lks* 48/4). *Aurr* in ambience (*a*) will imply the vivifying force of earth itself (*iarðar megin*, *Hyndl* 38/2).

For the compound formation *hvítaaurr* cf. *hvítabjǫrn*, *Hvíta-Kristr*.

19/5 *Þaðan*: the exact source of the dews—whether the *hár baðmr* or the *hvítaaurr*—is left ambiguous by the poet, in his swift collage of motifs. The libation, if realistic, would be upon the base of the trunk; the dripping dews would come from the overarching boughs. The lines suggest a cycle: the laving at the tree's base promotes its growth, so that from its great height it can in its turn enrich the earth.

19/5–6 *dǫggvar — falla*: in *HHv* 28 dew drops into the valleys—*dǫgg í diúpa dali*—from the manes of the valkyries' horses (a notion borrowed no doubt from the cosmic horse of the night, *Hrímfaxi*, 'Rime Mane', from whose bit the valley dews fall, *Vafþ* 14). The dew in *HHv* 28 brings a good season (*ár*); the morning dews in *Vafþ* 45 nourish the two seedlings of mankind in 'Hoard-Mímir's Wood' after the giant winter. For their traditional evocation of fecundity and continuous life the poet of *Vsp* alludes to the dew-wet valleys immediately before the climax of the never-fading tree (19/7). He leaves us with a 'natural' image of dew from the tree falling on to the cultivable land; the delightful fantasies of *HHv* 28, *Vafþ* 14 (and *Grím* 26) are not for his poem. For the motif of the nourishing liquid that drips from the world tree, see Tolley (*a*), 148.

19/8 *Urðar brunni*: in scholion 138 to Adam of Bremen IV. XXVI it is said that beside the great tree at the temple at Uppsala is a well where the heathens make their sacrifices, throwing into it a living man. If his body is not found, the people's prayer will be granted. If this is a true report, it suggests that great divine power and

wisdom were attributed to hallowed wells. No such serious cult traditions are told of *Urðr*'s well in ON texts: it is never used for any purpose, divinatory or votive. Indeed, in order to perform a function *Urðr* has to come out of it and carve runes (20/3, 7). *Urðar brunnr* has become a stage property, a symbolic place where a wise *þulr*—or Christ himself—may place his seat of authority (*Háv* 111; Eilífr Goðrúnarson, fragment cited in *SnE* 158; see also *SnE* 22; Weber (*a*), 148–54, and (*b*)). The poet of *Vsp* alone integrates *Urðar brunnr* thematically in the structure of his poem (*Vsp Introd* II stanzas 19 – 20), using *Urðr* in her abstract sense (Weber (*a*), 152–4).

20/3 *ór þeim sæ*: it is important to recognize that this is the poet's text, because *sær* relates to an ancient Norse belief, while v.l. *sal* does not. In PE only *Vsp* 20 and *Grím* 7 allude to an underwater realm, or realms, in which the wise maidens live, and where Óðinn and Sága drink in their hall 'where the cold waves echo above'. But, as Tolley points out ((*a*), 443–7), in Lappish tradition there is a spirit realm in the depths of lakes, the name of which, *Saiva*, is a borrowing of the primitive ON form of *sær* (**saiw*-); and in Finnish tradition also there is an underwater spirit realm, which is entered by a submerged opening, or cleft, in the rock, which is called a *lovi*, and this term is probably a borrowing of ON *klofi*, 'cleft'. The Norse terms would not have been borrowed if the Norse traditions had not been prevalent. The wisdom of the lake maidens accords with the universal association of magical and divinatory powers with water, and especially with wells (see *AR* § 248; *Akv* commentary to 27/7; Bächtold-Stäubli s.v. *Brunnen* §§ 4, 6, 7, 8, 10).

20/5–8 *Urð . . . Verðandi . . . Skuld*: the poet has given his three administrators of fate names that are virtually a declension of time, Past, Present, and Future. This is in keeping with the theme of temporal urgency that later invests the poem (*Vsp Introd* II stanza 27 onwards). No analogue has been found for their trio of names. Only *Urðr* has her origin in tradition. *Verðandi* is a present participle, advancing upon the past element in *Urðr*'s name, and (except in *SnE* 23) has no other occurrence either as a name or an active participle, as far as I can discover. The poet uses Skuld as a valkyrie name (see commentary to 30/1–8); he may well have known her as a legendary villainess (*Hrólf* 82–93). Skuld represents the future by virtue of her grammatical relationship to the verb *skulu*, a formidable future, if we judge by Vigfússon's interpretation of the vb.: '*Shall*, *must*, denoting fate, law, bidding, need, necessity, duty, obligation, and the like'. The originality of these lake maidens as a variant of 'norns' becomes evident from *AR* §§ 191–3, where analogous traditions are discussed. They do not weave threads or bring baptismal gifts; they run nature's lottery.

skáro á skíði: when Norsemen drew lots, each man had a similar wooden piece which he marked with his own symbol; the pieces (*hlutir*) were tossed together on a cloth and picked out by hazard by one of the men (cf. *Hkr* III. 73). The wise maidens in *Vsp* do both the marking and the picking out (cf. *kuro*, 20/10; *hlautvið kiósa*, 60/2). Tacitus, *Germ* x, describes a similar selecting of marked twigs by priest or paterfamilias for purposes of augury. *Skíði* implies a cut piece of wood (as in the *Hkr* incident) rather than a twig plucked from a living tree (as in Tacitus).

21 – 24 The poet presents the 'first war in the world' as a primordial event, a 'first happening' remembered by a *vǫlva* figure (*hón*) much as Vafþrúðnir remembers the birth and cradling of Bergelmir (*Vafþr* 35, also, for the *fyrst*-formula, 20, 26, 30, 34). It is a cult war between two distinct but complementary types of deity, who vie for worshippers and tribute. Because both types of god are essential to the well-being of the world and mankind, their war must necessarily end in a truce. It is, therefore, in a sense, a comedy war, and the poet has treated it as such. Dumézil first pointed to the traditional background of this mythical war, citing analogues from Indian myth ((*g*) 29–39, (*h*) 7–25; to which I would add Dionysus's assertion of his divine nature in the *Bacchae* of Euripides; in UD (*f*), 233–8, the Indian and Greek analogues are presented). Such a war is not, or not only, a conflict between older and newer deities ('hidden memories of the struggle between two faiths', SN 91, trans. 55), though such historical situations occur. The old mythical divine war expresses temperamental and ideological discord among men with, as so often, a touch of class at its roots. An illuminating comment on divine differences (not dissimilar to those between Æsir and Vanir) is given by Dodds (76): 'If I understand early Dionysiac ritual aright, its social function was essentially cathartic, in the psychological sense: it purged the individual of those infectious irrational impulses which, when dammed up, had given rise, as they have done in other cultures, to outbreaks of dancing mania and similar manifestations of collective hysteria; it relieved them by providing them with a ritual outlet. If that is so, Dionysus was in the Archaic Age as much a social necessity as Apollo; each ministered in his own way to the anxieties characteristic of a guilt-culture. Apollo promised security: "Understand your station as man; do as the Father tells you; and you will be safe tomorrow." Dionysus offered freedom: "Forget the difference and you will find the identity; join the θίασος [dance of worshippers], and you will be happy today." He was essentially a god of joy . . . And his joys were accessible to all including even slaves, as well as those freemen who were shut out from the old gentile cults. Apollo moved only in the best society, from the days when he was Hector's patron to the days when he canonised aristocratic athletes; but Dionysus was at all periods δημοτικός, a god of the people.'

Snorri's concern with the Æsir–Vanir war is virtually confined to its results—the integration of the gods, the creation of the mead of poetry—and throws little light upon the course of the war itself; *SnE* 82, *Yng* 12–13, ch. 4. I know of no allusion to the Æsir–Vanir *fólkvíg* in skaldic verse (a major source for Snorri), and it may be that Snorri had no detailed text for it other than *Vsp* 21 – 4, which he may have found too cryptic to use with any precision.

21/1 *man hón*: on the alternation of pronouns *ek* and *hón* see *Vsp Introd* I. C.

fólkvíg: for a fuller attempt to trace the action of this *fólkvíg*, see UD (*f*), 224–31.

21/3 *Gullveigo*: see *Vsp Introd* II ad loc. For the analogous idol Þorgerðr Hǫlgabrúðr see *Jómsvíkinga Saga* 36–8, 51–2; *Flat* I. 144, 213, 407.

21/4 *geirom studdu*: two senses of *styðia* may be played upon here, (*a*) 'to strike, hit with, thrust at' (*Sturl* (*a*) I. 6: *Bragi . . . styðr á hana reyrsprotanum*, 'Bragi strikes at her with a reed shoot'; *Ragndr* 6: *Mjǫk lét [Jǫrmunrekkr] styðja Gjúka niðja*, 'Vigorously [Jǫrmunrekkr] had the descendants of Gjúki pelted'), and (*b*) 'to prop up' (*Bisk* I. 528: *En svá stóðo þjǫkt spjót á Arone um hríð, at þá studdo hann aðrir spjótsoddar, er öðrum var at lagit*, 'But eventually spears were crowding so thick and fast upon Aron [Hjörleifsson], that some of the spears held him upright as others were launched at him'. As his sturdy corslet did not tear, it was long before his body fell to the ground). I translate *studdu* 'studded', in an attempt to convey both senses 'propped up' and 'struck into' (as by a nail; *OED* s.v. *Stud* sb.[1] I. I., II. 5).

21/5 *í hǫll*: so Óðinn himself was tormented between the fires of Geirrøðr's hall (*Grím* 1 – 2), and Hrólfr kraki and his men were tested by the fires of Aðils' hall (*Hrólf* 71–3, ch. 41). The power to bear intense heat is an attribute of shamans (Eliade (*b*), 82–3), which Óðinn and Gullveig display.

Hárs: an Óðinn-name not found elsewhere in Eddic verse, but familiar in 10 c. skaldic verse in kennings for 'ale' and 'battle' (*Hál* 1/2: *at Hárs líði*; 7/2; *at Hárs veðri*; *Vell* 11/3–4: *Laufa veðr . . . / lífkǫld, Hárs drífu*, 'sword-storms cold to life, [in] Hárr's blizzard'; 35/2–3: *rómu / Hárs við Hǫgna skúrir*, '[in] Hárr's uproar, against Hǫgni's (weapon-)showers'). Of these verses it is only in *Vell* 11/4 that a disyllabic form (e.g. ? **Háars*) is required by the metre (note the scribal attempt to provide a disyllabic form, *Skjald* A I. 125; a prepostion could also supply the needed syllable). Later skaldic texts, however, require a disyllabic form more frequently (so *LP* s.v. *Hǫarr*, noting at the same time that the spelling is always with *á*, *Hárs*). In *Vsp* 21/5 a disyllabic form would be expected. The only attested meaning for *hárr* is adj. 'hoary' (cf. OE *hār*, OHG *hēr* which has also the sense 'lordly'). This fits well with the Eddic Óðinn, *inn aldni*, 'aged', *Hárbarðr*, 'Hoary Beard', *fimbulþulr*, 'the Sage', white-haired with wisdom (cf. *Háv* 134: *at három þul*; *Fáf* 34: *inn hára þul*).

In Eddic gnomic tradition a distinct name for Óðinn, with a stem *Há-*, has been cultivated, however, with the sense 'high', 'tall': *Hár* and *Hávi* (strong and weak forms of the adj.). *Hár* occurs only in a list of Óðinn names in *Grím* 46 (cf. *Iafnhár* 49), but *Hávi* is the *alter ego* of Óðinn's mischievous, trickster self *Bǫlverkr*, 'Disaster-worker', in *Hávamál*, in whose hall—*Háva hǫllo í*—mysteries could be learned and many wise counsels (*Háv* 111/7–8; note the ironies of 109/3–5). Hávi's hall is not for burning people, but for hearing wisdom.

We never encounter Óðinn as *Hárr*, *Hár*, or *Hávi* acting in the nominative (*Hávi* is found only in *Þulur* IV jj 4 (*Skjald* B I. 673)). These are his possessive names, that stamp poetry, war, wisdom as his. At any time in the tradition of a god a fresh name might be cultivated for him—through syncretism, or to emphasize another aspect of him, or perhaps to replace an old ritual name whose significance was becoming arcane. This last possibility may be the cause of Óðinn's complex of *Há-* names, as Detter suggested in 1894. Óðinn had one eye and was popularly named 'weak eyed' and 'blind' (*Bileygr*, *Helblindi*, *Gestumblindi*). An ancient Gmc term for 'blind', a

direct relation of Lat *caecus*, survives in Gothic *haihs*, 'one-eyed': in ON this would be *hár* (cf. Gothic *-faihs*, ON *-fár* 'coloured').

From such a base-name, referring to the fundamental characteristic of a solar deity, as Óðinn was in one of his origins, verbal play among the poets might seize upon near homonyms *Hárr*, 'Hoary', *Hár/Hávi*, 'High', to denote other aspects of the half-blind god *Hár*. We may note that 'high' is a natural and technical term to use of the sun ('*Mun nú vera sólin svá há, at Ásbjǫrn, vinr yðarr, mun mega hanga?*' *Hkr* II. 202). The name *Hávi* in *Hávamál* could therefore be as ancient as *Hár*, 'Blind', epitomizing Óðinn's moral as well as solar overview, his zone of influence over the high and low wisdom that his poem contains. From Hliðskjálf he could see into all worlds, even, from beneath his deep hood, to the little spider whose knees are higher than its belly (*Heiðreksgátur*, Hauksbók text, *Hkb* 367/4–6). I doubt if the Norsemen waited till the Christian period to give Óðinn the name *Hávi*.

In two of the skaldic texts cited above the earliest SnE MS. U reads *Hás*, not *Hárs* (*Hál* 7/2, *Vell* 35/3; note the error in *Hál* 1/2 MS. SR 'h^{an}s'). *Hás* could be gen. sg. of *Hár*, 'Blind One', To account for the majority form *Hárs*, and for the metrically required disyllabic form, **Háars*, Detter suggested an underlying compound name, 'Blind/One-eyed warrior', which he reconstructed **haiha-harir*. The second element 'warrior' is difficult to reconstruct with confidence, since there is no runic form preserved, and in all possible analogues syncope has intervened (cf. *Einarr* from **aina-harjaz*, *AEW* s.v.). See the valuable assessment of the problem by von See (*e*), 64–72.

21/6 *hána brendo*: burning was the right punishment for a witch (see Ström (*a*), 189–98), just as it was the right way to refine gold (*brennt gull*).

21/10 *þó hón enn lifir*: a similar phase occurs in *Beowulf* 3167 of the golden treasures buried with Beowulf's ashes: *gold on grēote, / þǣr hit nū gēn lifað / eldum swā unnyt, / swā hit ǣror wæs*, 'gold in the ground, where now it lives still, as profitless to men as it was before'. So a fragment of pagan symbolism survives in a Christian moral context.

22/1 *Heiði*: the acc. sg. in *-i* relates this name to fem. *heiðr*, 'heath', i.e. high, treeless, uninhabited land (Noreen § 384; cf. the woman's name *Ragn(h)eiðr*), etymologically related (probably) to *heiðinn*, 'heathen' (*AEW* s.vv., following Trier). This would point to a very archaic origin for the *vǫlva*-name *Heiðr*: implying 'one who belongs to the old settlements of the land, within the old (? implying aboriginal) boundaries' (a fitting name for a follower of the Vanir cult; Trier, esp. 83–103). Other terms with the stem *heið-* may be played upon in Heiðr's name: (*a*) *heið*, 'radiant sky', *heiðr* adj., 'bright' (used almost exclusively of sky, sun, and stars) could evoke the gleaming gold of her old name, *Gullveig*; (*b*) *heið-* as an element in the names of *Heiðrún* (the goat that yields the 'shining mead' of the gods, *Grím* 25) and *Heiðdraupnir* (the skull that drips sacred mead, *Sigrdr* 13 – 18) could evoke the bright elixir—*veig*—in her old name (cf. *skírar veigar*, *BDr* 7), as well, perhaps, as the intoxicants used in her performances; (*c*) *heiðr* masc., 'honour', could be

evoked rightly, with reference to all the honour she was paid by her hosts (as was Þorbjǫrg lítil-vǫlva, *Eiríks Saga rauða* 207); (*d*) *heið* (of uncertain gender, see *LP*), 'fee', 'payment', could also be evoked, as a *vǫlva* certainly expected some return for her services (cf. *Vsp* 29). The senses (*a*) and (*b*) of *heið-* are, I think, evoked in *heiðvǫnom*, *Vsp* 27/3. The most valuable discussion of the term *heið-* signifying 'bright mead' is still that of Höckert.

22/3 *vǫlo velspá*: though *vel* and *spá* are written separately in R (as compounds not infrequently are), it is likely that *velspá* (hap. leg.) is intended to be a formation similar to *forspár*, 'foreseeing the future', *sannspár*, 'prophesying what proves to be true'. *Vel-* may imply both that Heiðr performs well, never failing to answer her audience's questions, and—even more—that she always gave favourable prophecies. Travelling wise women who told unflattering fortunes would not be popular; they would not be thought to have earned the hospitality lavished on them (cf. *Víga-Glúm* 41, ch. 12). *Háv* 87 – 8 warns against trusting *vǫlu vilmæli*, 'a *vǫlva*'s pleasing utterances'.

22/4 *vítti*: a vb. nowhere else recorded in ON, but from the context it would seem to be related to sb. *vítt*, which refers to objects, or apparatus, used in heathen worship or magic, prohibited in 12 c. Norwegian laws: *Engi maðr skal hafa í húsi sínu staf eða stalla, vítt eða blót eða þat er til heiðins siðar veit*, 'No man shall have in his house wand or altar, device for sorcery or sacrificial offering, or whatever relates to heathen practice' (*Eiðsivaþingslov* I. 24; see also I. 45; *NGL* I. 383). The appellation *vítta véttr*, 'creature of magic tools', is twice used in *Ytal* (3/3, 21/3) of witches working fatal spells. *Vítti*, *vítt* would seem to derive from the root *w(e)ih-*, seen also in ON *vígja*, 'consecrate', *vé*, 'sanctuary', and OE *wiglian*, 'to divine, prophesy': *vítti* (vb.) is probably formed from *vítt* (sb.) with a general sense of 'perform sorcery upon' (see Pipping IV. 1–12 on the etymology; he also regards *Lks* 24/3 *vétt* as a phonological variant of *vítt*; see commentary ad loc.) (CT). I have related *vítti* in *Vsp* 22 specifically to spirit conjuring because of the following *ganda*.

ganda: in a record of Lappish shamanism in the late 12 c. *Historia Norvegiae* a precise meaning for *gandus* (ON *gandr*) is given: 'There are some [of these magic-practising Lapps] who are revered as if they were prophets by the thick-witted common folk, because, by means of an unclean spirit, which they call a *gandus*, they will, whenever asked, predict to many people many future happenings, just as they turn out' (*Sunt namque quidam ex ipsis, qui quasi prophetae a stolido vulgo venerantur, quoniam per immundum spiritum, quem* gandum *vocitant, multis multa praesagia ut eveniunt quandoque percunctati praedicent*). In the account of a shamanic *séance* that follows, the shaman uses equipment which might be described as *vítt*: a cloth to cover him while he prepares for his spells, a drum-like vessel marked with images (of beasts, snow-shoes, a ship), symbols of the *gandus*'s magic modes of travel (*HN* 85–6). So too might Heiðr summon her helpful informative *gandir*. For detailed analysis of this Lappish *séance*, and of the significations of *gandr* and related terms, see Tolley (*a*), 360–76; (*b*), esp. 146–8; (*d*), 62–73. In the translation I have defined

the *gandir* as informative spirits to make clear that they are associated with Heiðr's prophetic powers in the preceding line.

22/5 *Seið*: *seiðr* was a professional exercise of psychic or 'magical' powers, designed to learn the unknown, control conditions and events, by communication with spirits and by the exploration of their world. *Seiðr* bears resemblance to forms of shamanism in these general aims as well as in its techniques of trance and the use of intoxicants for the purpose of ecstasy. *Seiðr* comprised also the power to cast spells: the greatest spell being that which brought the spirit of the dead or dying back to life (24/7–8). Etymologically, *seiðr* appears to belong among a group of IE words with an underlying sense of 'binding', but which often developed connotations of 'magical binding' (e.g. Welsh *hud*, 'illusion', Old Cornish *hüd*, 'magic, charm'); see S. Mann s.v. *soitos*. That the 'binding' in *seiðr* could refer both to the control of the spirits by the medium, and to the possession of the medium by the spirits, may have been an ambiguity accepted even in the pagan period (CT). For an introduction to literature on *seiðr* see *AR* § 237, and references there cited; for new guidance and detailed argument, see Tolley (*a*), 366–485 (on the possible relationship with Lappish *sieidi* see 373–4 and n. 16).

22/6 *seið*: here the pret. of *síða*.

leikin: here the suffix is that of the past part. of vb. *leika*, 'to play' (cf. *Lks* 19/5 where *leikinn* has the adjectival suffix, 'playful'). The passive implication of *leikin* suggests that Heiðr was 'played with, manipulated, possessed' by some external agency (as Simon Magus was 'manipulated, deluded' by the devil—*leikinn af djǫfli*—when he claimed that he had risen from the dead and would now proceed to fly to heaven, *Post* 192). The precise external agency may not always be specified (it is dangerous to utter names). So, in the case of the shepherd at Fróðá (*Eyrb* 146, ch. 53), who is driven out of his mind, people say he is *leikinn*; we are left to surmise that the malignancy of Þorgunna's lurking spirit has fastened upon him. Though *leikin* may imply that Heiðr was in trance or ecstasy, the assumption would be that this was the result of some influence outside herself (see Fritzner s.v. *leika* § 5; Blöndal s.v. *leika* VI. 4; also Dodds ch. 3, 'The Blessings of Madness', esp. 66–7: 'It is the common belief of primitive peoples throughout the world that *all* types of mental disturbance are caused by supernatural interference').

22/7 *angan*: in ON only here and *Vsp* 51/8 (cf. Blöndal s.v.), a figurative use of the literal sense 'sweet scent', 'perfume', not (apparently) so used elsewhere.

22/8 *illrar brúðar*: I take this to represent the popular moral disapproval of married women who were intimate with sorceresses and might themselves dabble in spells to pursue personal enemies or lovers (cf. Katla in *Eyrb* 28, ch. 15). In the context of the Æsir–Vanir war it reflects the view of the Æsir.

23 Because Refrain I serves different contexts, its terms of reference shift slightly. The nameless powers, *regin*, of 6/1 are assumed to be the Æsir in 9/1. In 23/1 they

must also be the Æsir, holding power still, though the term *goðin ǫll*, 23/7, implies that the Vanir are accepted as deities. The only way I can understand the stanza is to take *eða*, 23/7, as 'and' (a not uncommon sense, cf. 25/7; so too DH) rather than 'or'.

hvárt — gialda: *afráð* is a legal term for 'tax', 'dues', but in colloquial idiom *afráð gialda* has become a proverbial phrase meaning 'to pay excessively, suffer great loss, get the worst of a bargain' (see Fritzner s.v. *afráð*, *NGL* v s.v. *afráð*). If (as I understand it) the Æsir are faced with surrendering their monopoly of godhead and its revenues and joining with the all-too-popular Vanir, they are contemplating a very great loss in self-esteem and in wealth.

eða — gildi eiga: if they do agree to share with the Vanir, then they must be all gods together, recognized as equally genuine (*gild*) gods, to whom honour (*gildi*) is due, partners in the divine 'guild' and its sacred banquets (*gildi*), equally entitled to tribute (*gildi*). The poet plays on all the relevant senses of *gildi* noun, and *gildr* adj. (see Vigfússon, Fritzner s.vv.). The Æsir's only alternative to this unprofitable and demeaning share-policy is to attack again: which they do.

24/3–4 *þat var — heimi*: this seems an awkward way of saying that the first war had flared up again, but the attempt to improve it in H by substituting adv. *fyrr*, 'previously', is worse. A better original text may have been lost and the loss patched over in *R II by repeating 21/1–2.

24/5–8 See *Vsp Introd* II ad loc. for detailed discussion; also UD (*f*), 230–1.

25 – 26 See *Vsp Introd* II ad loc. for detailed discussion; also UD (*c*), where I have attempted a reconstruction of the hypothetical poem of the giant builder, which, I suggest, lay behind these two stanzas and Snorri's tale, *SnE* 45–7.

25/8 *Óðs mey*: only Snorri (*SnE* 38) tells us anything of Óðr: that he was Freyja's husband, that he departed on a long journey and Freyja wept for him and sought him over many lands. For the traditional grief of the goddess of love for her lost lover/husband see the funeral ode for Adonis attributed to Bion (text and fine translation by P. E. Legrand in Bion 193–8): Aphrodite, her hair unbound, no belt, no sandals, torn by thorns, crying aloud, runs through the deep valleys calling his name. There must have been an equivalent Norse tradition (see Alexiou, esp. ch. 4). Óðr's name is identical with *óðr*, 'spirit that survives death' (cf. *Vsp* 18/6): an almost allegorical husband for the goddess of resurrection. That Freyja should here be called *mær* makes her appear tender and vulnerable, as the context requires; *mær* is also used of other young wives (*Guð* I 16/8, *HH* I 5/3, *Sigsk* 15/7).

26/5 *Á gengoz*: for the two reflexive uses here involved see Vigfússon s.v. *ganga* D. Reflex. II; for the citation from *Reykdœla Saga* ch. 18 see *ÍF* 10. 210; note also *Bjarn* 175: *þeir léti þetta á ganga* [v.l. *á gangask* AM 488 4to], i.e. they agreed that the scurrilous verses of Bjǫrn and Þórðr should cancel each other out.

26/8 *á meðal vóro*: see Fritzner s.vv. *meðal* § 2, *milli* § 4; also *First Grammatical Treatise* 32: . . . *sé hann svá lítillátr í fróðleiksástinni, at hann vili nema lítla skynsemi heldr en engva, þá er á meðal verðr innar meiri, þá lesi hann þetta kápítúlum vandliga*, 'should he be so unassuming in his love of learning that he is willing to acquire a little understanding rather than none—when something stands in the way of [his acquiring] the greater learning—then he should read this chapter carefully' (my translation).

27 For detailed discussion of this complex stanza see *Vsp Introd* II ad loc.

27/2 *hlióð*: both 'hearing' (cf. *Vsp* 1/1) and 'sound' (*klukku hljóð*, 'sound of a bell'). In OE *Riddle* 14 (*ASPR* III. 187) the horn is described as a wind instrument, swallowing wind from some man's breast, summoning a troop to war, and also as a drinking vessel, filled by a courtly girl. I think it likely that in his use of *hlióð* in the sense 'sound' the poet of *Vsp* is alluding to Heimdallr's horn both as a sounding horn and as a drinking horn, as in the OE riddle (and, indeed, as Snorri understands it: Mímir is full of knowledge 'because he drinks from the well out of the horn Gjallarhorn', *SnE* 22). So *hlióð*, 'sound' i.e. 'horn', becomes associated with the well of mead (from which Óðinn takes his drink of wisdom, cf. 27/5–7, 28/7–12: a myth of which *Sigrdr* 13/6–10, including a dripping horn, seems to be a variant), as well as with Ragnarǫk, when the horn's *hlióð* must sound (45). As to the acute hearing of the world tree, Heimdallr, huntsmen say that birds in a tree will hear a distant gunshot much sooner than a man standing near them (and fly off), because the ground carries the vibrations more swiftly than the air, and they are communicated via the tree's roots to the birds.

27/3 *heiðvǫnom*: probably a play on two senses of *heið*, 'shining mead' and 'shining heaven', the tree's roots being in the mead, its branches on the heavens (see commentary to 22/1); as emphasis in the stanza falls later on the gushing mead-well I would give priority to that sense of *heið* in translating *heiðvǫnom*.

27/8 *Vitoð — hvat?*: for *vita* in the sense 'to seek to know/find out', see Fritzner s.v., § 8. *Eða hvat?* I think indicates that the *vǫlva* is inviting the next question: 'and what [next do you seek to know]?'.

28/1 *ein sat hón úti*: *sitja úti* traditionally implied 'to sit out of doors to listen for, contact, spirits', an occupation of wizards and witches—and *vǫlur*—condemned by the Church. Norwegian laws (*NGL* I. 19, 182) prohibit 'sitting out to wake up a troll to perform heathenism by means of it' (*útisetu at vekia trǫll upp, at fremia heiðni með því*); cf. OHG *hlīodarsazzo*, 'sitting to listen'; Meissner (*a*), 102–10; Wesche; *AR* § 236.

28/3 *Yggiungr*: Óðinn calls himself *Yggr*, 'Terrible One', at the frightening close of *Grím* (53/2, 54/2), when he claims the life of his tormentor, Geirrøðr, but I do not know how to determine the significance of *-ungr* in this unique derivative.

28/5–6 *fregnið . . . freistið*: I take the pl. vb. to be a reference to a situation similar to that in *BDr* 1 – 2, where the deities are in dismay because of Baldr's evil dreams, and Óðinn, on behalf of them all, seeks a *vǫlva* to find out the cause. The poet of *Vsp* has, no doubt, known a traditional poem (or poems) of Óðinn's visit to a *vǫlva*, with its own narrative interests—the thunderous horse-ride, perhaps, as in *BDr*, and a yapping whelp bloody with corpse eating, and a *vǫlva*'s corpse rearing up from the grave. *BDr* is a dialogue poem, but the *Vsp* poet never lets Óðinn speak: as far as we know, he uses only his formidable eye and his trinkets. Only after the *vǫlva*'s foresight of Baldr's death and the mistletoe, does the *Vsp* poet introduce the traditional paraphernalia of Hǫðr's deed and the vengeance for it, omitting any unnecessary informative matter (such as Rindr, and Váli's name, cf. *BDr* 11). Though the genre of *BDr* must predate *Vsp*, the extant version of *BDr* has borrowings from the text of *Vsp* (e.g. in stanzas 9, 11). *BDr* gives us invaluable insights into the *Vsp* poet's distinctive narrative tastes. For a recent appreciation of *BDr*, with bibliography, see Pároli 137–61.

28/10 *Mímis brunni*: Snorri (*SnE* 22) cites *Vsp* 28/7–14, explaining that under one of Yggdrasill's roots, which leads to the frost-giants, stands *Mímis brunnr*; it contains wisdom, and Mímir is its owner. Mímir is very wise, because he drinks from the *brunnr*, using the Gjallarhorn (cf. *Vsp* 45) as his drinking horn. Óðinn asked for a drink from the *brunnr*, but was not granted it until he gave his eye as a pledge in return. According to *Vsp* 27/5–7, 28/9–10, this eye is in the well itself, *í enom . . . brunni*. This situation is reminiscent of folk-riddles that 'explain' natural phenomena—such as the sun's reflection in water. Why has Óðinn—the sun—only one eye? Because he pledged the other to the well for a drink from it. Mímir here becomes a conventional folklore figure, the jealous possessor of a precious thing for which he exacts an exorbitant price. In *Vsp* this legend is entirely contained in the *vǫlva*'s mockery of Óðinn and serves only to emphasize that those old wishing-wells of wisdom are now useless. Her authority is higher.

But Óðinn is by old tradition attached to a variant form of Mímir, namely his head (always referred to as *Míms hǫfuð*; the nom. **Mímr* does not occur). He consults it—again, uselessly—as Ragnarǫk begins (45/7–8). Egill calls Óðinn *Míms vinr* (*Sonat* 23/5). In *Sigrdr* 14 *Míms hǫfuð* utters 'wisely the first word' and declares 'true (rune-)staves', and the magic rivers of runic mead-wisdom begin to flow (*Sigrdr* 15 – 20). Before *Míms hǫfuð* begins to speak, there are three lines stating that '[he] stood on a rock with a drawn sword (*með Brimis eggiar*), had a helmet on his head'. We assume that [he] is the *Hroptr*—Óðinn—of the preceding stanza 13: has he severed the *Míms hǫfuð*, a sacrifice at the inauguration of the words of truth and the runes that recorded them? The evidence is too fragile for any certain answer. Snorri accounts for Mímir's decapitated head as one outcome of the Æsir–Vanir war: in anger at the incompetence of the hostage Hœnir whom the Æsir had sent them, the Vanir decapitated the other hostage, Mímir, who was clever, and sent that head back to the Æsir to spite them (their logic is not clear). Óðinn embalmed Mímir's head and consulted it for wisdom (*Yng* ch. 4). This rather poor story may well be a fabrication of Snorri's own.

In IE tradition, especially Indian and Celtic, a severed head is an object of great potency, associated with the honey-drink of wisdom (Indian) and wells of wisdom (Celtic). Severed human heads with powers of prophecy are frequent in Celtic legend, and 'in sacred wells and pools of the Roman-British period' skulls are found, dedicated, it would seem, to strengthen the occult powers of the water (see Simpson for valuable discussion, with further reference, 44–5 and n. 12, to works of Anne Ross). The Indian myths of sacrificial beheading attribute to the severed head a supernal knowledge: 'The head is associated with, contains a treasure or a secret that is the essence of the universe' (Heesterman 25). Restoration of life to a severed head, so that it can speak, belongs to the healing skills of the Aśvins; it is the severed head of a great sage that teaches the Aśvins themselves the honey secret of Soma (*madhu-vidya*, 'mead-wisdom'). See also UD (*f*), 235–6. As far as I know, only Indian and Norse sources associate the severed head with mead.

Mímir/Mímr must be a very old mythological figure. His name might fitly be related to Lat *memor*, 'remembering', *memoria*, 'memory': particularly apt for a being who is only a head. The scarcity of Gmc cognates (*AEW* s.v.) no doubt reflects Mímir's archaic origins. His long existence would account for the unreconcilable diversity of the roles he plays in ON tradition: he is an 'old giant' *søkk-Mímir* tricked by Óðinn in an adventure not otherwise known (*Grím* 50); he has other hostile giant associations in the giantess kenning in *Þórsdr* 9/6: *hrekk-Mímis ekkjur*, 'widows of crafty Mímir', and the enemy warrior kenning for Hundingr in *HH* I 14/8, *geir-Mímir*. His name is attached also to two of the nine heavens as if he were an elemental being: *hregg* ('storm')-*Mímir*, *vet* (?)-*Mímir* (*SnE* 212; *LP* s.vv.).

The name Mímir is also associated with the mythology of the world tree. In *Vafþ* 45/3 *holt hodd-Mímis*, 'Hoard-Mímir's Wood' is the shelter for the last human couple who will live on into the new world after the 'Giant Winter'. In the late thirteenth-century romantic adventure of *Svipdagsmál*, the world tree appears as *Mimameiðr*, 'Mimi's Tree', imported into the poem to stand by the heroine's palace and enhance the poem's grandeur (Robinson 382–6). Associations with mankind, its health and fortunes, cling to Mimameiðr like an inheritance from the paternal Heimdallr: a power to heal certain ailments of women (and perhaps aid in childbirth: the text is difficult) and be *með mǫnnum mjǫtuðr*, 'destiny among men' (*Fjǫlsvinnsmál* 22). See commentary to 1/3–4 for references on Heimdallr and man.

Was Mímir's name given to the world tree because it grew out of the prophetic well at its roots, *Mímis brunnr*? Only once in ON sources is Heimdallr accredited with a prophetic sense (*Þrym* 15). If Mímir/Mímr/Mimi were thought of as names for the world tree, and so for Heimdallr, may we interpret *Míms synir*, 45/1, as 'mankind', sons of Heimdallr, rather than sons of a giant (cf. *synir Suttunga*, *Skm* 34/3)?

A final problem is the direct association of Heimdallr with a severed head. In *SnE* 98–9, apparently on the authority of the *Heimdallargaldr*, Snorri recounts the saying that Heimdallr was struck through by a man's head, and after that a head is called *mjǫtuðr Heimdallar*, 'Heimdallr's fate'. Then, since a sword is called *manns mjǫtuðr*, 'man's fate', a sword can be called 'Heimdallr's head'. The legend, or riddle, behind this is not known. Young 103–5 notes that an Irish tale in the *Rennes Dinnsenchas* has some remarkable motifs that recall motifs associated in ON with

Heimdallr: (*a*) an Irish king's grandson is captured by nine submarine women and sleeps one night with each; (*b*) one woman is with child by him; (*c*) he leaves, promising to return, and when he does not, the nine women, with his son, pursue him in vain over the sea; the mother then cuts off the child's head and flings it after the father. We can hear the echoes of Heimdallr's nine mothers, his precisely timed sleeping with different women, a decapitated head hurled as a weapon. The story traditions seem to have been tossed too far from their original patterns for them to reveal any of their old meaning. More precise research might bring better results, nevertheless. It may be worth noting that in Indian myth a head might be a formidable weapon, like the horse head of the sage Dadhyañc with which Indra slew the demons (O'Flaherty 58–9). A legendary sword was named 'Brahma's Head' (Coomaraswamy (*b*) contains much that is illuminating on the cutting off and restoration of heads).

29 – 32 See *Vsp Introd* II ad loc.

29/3 *Fékk spiǫll*: MS. 'fe spioll'. It is possible that after *hringa ok men, fé* did originally follow (as more 'wealth' offered, or as part of a description of the *vǫlva* as *fégiǫrn*, etc.), and that this caused haplography of two lines before *fé*[*kk*] *spiǫll*. The simplicity of the emended text *fékk*—he gave and he [got]—is not unattractive.

spaklig: on the close link between 'wise' and 'far-sighted' in the semantics of *spakligr* (*spakr, spakmæli*) see Fritzner s.v. *spakr* § 3 (e.g. *Bisk* I. 264: *Þat er spát, er spakir mæla*, 'It is foretold if wise men say it'). See commentary on 1/7 *forn spiǫll fira*.

29/6 *verǫld*: I take this to be here synonymous with *heimr*, '(any) world'. In 44/10 *verǫld* would seem to relate most to the 'world of men'.

30 Because three of the valkyrie names here are found in *Hákonarmál*, Gǫndul, Skǫgul, and Geirskǫgul (in *Hákonarmál* a variant name for Skǫgul), we are led to see other signs of the poet's possible use of that poem in *Vsp*. The riding valkyries open the action, coming to choose the king who must die (we might say this of both poems). In *Hákonarmál* they are explicitly sent by Óðinn. There appears to be no statement in any of the verses extant about Hákon's last battle which tells how it happened that Hákon, though victorious, met his death. In *Fagrsk* (93) he is wounded in the right arm by an arrow as he pursues the fleeing enemy, i.e. by natural hazard of war. But in some other sources it is reported differently: the unexpected arrow (a long, spear-like arrow in *Hkr* I. 190–1) was either malevolently guided by the witch-queen Gunnhildr or thrown, on her instructions, by her little page (see also *HN* 107). In *Hákonarmál* there is emphasis on the valkyries' pleasure at Hákon's death and the warmth of Óðinn's welcome. But it was an 'unfair' death—like Baldr's. Has legend begun to make Hákon's death conform to the mythic pattern of an Odinic sacrifice? If so, and if the legend sprang up soon after Hákon's death (960), this may have led the *Vsp* poet to allude to it—as I think he does—immediately before his stanzas (31, 32) on Baldr's death. Hákon, a good prince, a Christian who chooses to be buried as a heathen, prefigures the ideal

Prince, Baldr, killed by abstract war, Hǫðr. It fits the religious brinkmanship of his poem well.

til goðþióðar: FJ is surely right in taking this to mean 'to the gods' land, realm' (*LP* s.v.): a play perhaps on the more usual *Gotþióð*, 'people, land of the Goths' of heroic verse. The valkyries accompany the gods at Baldr's funeral in *Húsdr*.

Geirskǫgul: it may seem surprising that a poet who knew *Hákonarmál* should cite this as a separate valkyrie name, when Hákon addresses it to Skǫgul (perhaps simply to honour her war prowess). All six valkyrie names in the stanza appear in the *þula* of the *heiti* of the valkyries of Viðrir (Óðinn), *Skjald* B I. 678; Skǫgul, Gunnr, Hildr, Gǫndul are widely used valkyrie names, but Geirskǫgul is only in *Hákonarmál* and in *Vsp*. Skuld is not used as a valkyrie name in prose or verse, except in the *þula* and in *Vsp*. Has the poet deliberately given Skuld, 'Future Destiny', a valkyrie part to play in this killing, though other poets have not thought of it as one of her roles? See commentary to 20/5–8.

31/1 *Baldri*: for full discussion of the name see Green 3–55; *AR* §§ 476–90.

31/2 *tívor*: hap. leg. in ON; most probably borrowed from OE *tīber, tīfer* (though possibly native to ON as a word of Gmc origin; cf. Gothic *tibr* (MS. 'aibr'), OHG *zebar*). The related ON *tafn*, 'beast for sacrifice', 'sacrificial feast' (cf. Lat *daps*) is used of Baldr's corpse in *Húsdr* 9/3. In OE *tīfer* occurs in biblical verse of Isaac: *Exodus* 415–16: *Ne wolde him beorht fæder / bearn ætniman, / hālig tīber*, 'The radiant Father would not take the child from him, a hallowed sacrifice'; and of Christ: *Christ and Satan* 573–5: . . . *Iūdas . . . / se ðe ær on tīfre / torhtne gesalde, / drihten hælend*, 'Judas who before gave in sacrifice the glorious Lord and Saviour'. For a lucid exposition of OE *tīfer* see Jente 42–4. The variant suffix *-orr* in *tívorr* (cf. *jǫðorr/jaðarr*; Jóhannesson (*b*) § 290; (*c*) §§ 21, 128) may also be recorded in the OHG gloss *ceburhaftiu*, 'holocaustomata' (*sic*; Graff v. 580). The medial *-v-* spelling instead of customary *-f-* is found twelve times in R; Lindblad 217. The alternative interpretation of *tívor*, 31/2, as a secondary formation from *tívar*, pl. of *týr*, 'god', has no sound analogies.

32/2 *mær*: for the parallel forms *mær/miór* see Noreen § 106.

32/5–8 *Baldrs bróðir — vega*: only Saxo tells the story of this brother (III. iv). Óðinn heard a prophecy that Baldr could only be avenged by a son he would beget on a princess Rindr. In a disreputable adventure into a distant land (mocked by Loki, see commentary to *Lks* 24), Óðinn achieves his seduction with the help of *seiðr*. In Saxo the vengeance does not take place when the son is one night old, but at a normal age; it is without *éclat*, and the avenger himself dies shortly afterwards of his wounds. As de Vries suggests ((*f*), 46–7), in *Vsp* 32 the night-old warrior symbolizes rebirth after death. In initiation ritual the young man undergoes death in appearance, and when he is born again as a mature warrior, often he may imitate an infant, drinking milk, ignorant of speech; that indicates his state of rebirth, when

he can fight like a man after one night of new life (de Vries compares with Váli the three-night-old Magni who releases his father Þórr from Hrungnir's great foot, *SnE* 103). With initiation come the vows of deprivation before a great deed—no civilized washing of hands or combing of hair till the act is done. *AR* §§ 336–8 (also Index s.v. *Initiation*) offers a valuable introduction to this wide subject in Germanic.

33/6 *Fensǫlom*: no doubt a subterranean water-palace like the submarine *Søkkvabekkr* (*Grím* 7). *Fen*, 'quagmire', might imply great pools leading deep down into the marshes, such as those into which Egill cast his treasure and his slaughtered slaves as an offering to Óðinn (*Egil* 297–8). On the association of the goddesses with prophetic water-realms see commentary to *Vsp* 20/3, *Lks* 21/4–6. Sága, who drinks with Óðinn in *Søkkvabekkr*, personifies Frigg's aspect as 'prophetess' (*AR* § 554).

34/1–4 *Hapt . . . lægiarns líki / Loka áþekkian*: I construe *hapt áþekkian* acc., *líki* dat., *lægiarns Loka* gen. For other misreadings associated with confusion of long 'f' and 'l' in *Vsp* see 9/8: *Blám leggiom* for *Bláins leggiom*; 59/7: *vés* (MS. 'vel').

34/2 *Hveralundi*: a variant aspect of the well beneath the world tree: here the natural 'cauldrons' of hot volcanic springs form a suitably infernal environment for the punishment of Loki. In *Grím* 26 the pool beneath the tree, from which the earth's rivers flow, is *Hvergelmir*, 'Roaring Ocean of the Cauldron/Hot spring', and in *Grím* 29 two hot springs—*Kerlaugar*—must be waded before the tree is reached. While hot springs most immediately bring Iceland to mind, their proximity to the tree can only relate to a mythological, not a natural landscape (at least as far as Iceland is concerned). For the punishment of Loki and Sigyn's role see *Lks* prose epilogue; *SnE* 69–70. The link of hostile water from 34 to 35 to 38 seems designed. On *hverr* in place-names see Kuhn (*a*).

35/2 *eitrdala*: valleys freezing from their deadly cold rivers. A deep, powerful river, so cold that it causes instant mortification if any flesh is splashed (*vatnit var svá kalt, at þegar hljóp drep í, ef nokkut vöknaði*) is described in *Þorsteins Þáttr bæjarmagns* 404 (the hero's toe falls victim). Such murderous cold is conceived of as vitriolic: the mighty currents Þórr crosses, *Þórsdr* 5/7–8, are snorting poison—*eitri . . . þjóðáar fnæstu*—while pelted by hail—*af hagli oltnar* (5/3).

35/3 *sǫxom ok sverðom*: so too the otherworld river that Hadingus is taken over: 'a river of blue-black water . . . spinning in its swift eddies weapons of various kinds' (*liventis aquæ fluvium diversi generis tela rapido volumine detorquentem*, Saxo I. viii. 14; *History* I. 31). Cf. also the river *Geirvimul*, 'Spear-Swarming', *Grím* 27/7.

36/2 *Niðavǫllom*: for the tradition of plains in the underworld see Carey 14–15.

36/3, 7 *salr . . . biórsalr*: the variety of halls in the otherworlds of *Vsp* (cf. 37/1, 42/8, 61/1, and the *-tóptir* of 59/6) is difficult to parallel in vision literature, where the jewelled walls of heaven and the torment house of hell—*mānhūs . . . fæst under foldan, / þær bið fȳr and wyrm, / open ēce scræf / yfela gehwylces*, 'house of evil, fast beneath the earth,where fire and serpent are, open eternal cave of every evil', *Exodus* 535–7—seem to suffice. Are the many halls a characteristic of a popular shamanic genre in Norse? When Óðinn begins his vision in *Grím*, it is the *salir* and the *salkynni* of the gods that he sees. This focus upon halls most probably reflects the central role of the grander farms in thinly populated countrysides, as in Norway, Iceland, Ireland, where every traveller hopes for shelter. A shaman would no doubt build upon familiar images to set in relief the significant differences of his vision world.

36/4 *Sindri* is assumed to be a dwarf, since such a race would be most likely to possess a hall of gold gleaming in the moonless dark. It is conceivable that some reference was made to Sindri's race in the lost lines after stanza 9 (cf. *dverga dróttir*, 9/5–6). The textual authority for him as a dwarf is late (*SnE* 122, notes to line 15), but etymologically he must be related to *sindr*, 'sinders, glowing sparks from hammered red-hot iron' (*AEW* s.v.), and so be a personification of the smith's craft. With the name *Sindri* we may compare the names *Brísingr*, *Brísingar*, 'Fiery, Flaming One(s)', with which Freyja's girdle/necklace is linked (*Haustl* 9, *Prym* 13, 15, 19). In the *Þulur brísingr* is a *heiti* for fire, see *LP*; it may well be etymologically related to *brasa*, 'to bake, roast', see commentary to *Am* 60/1 *bras* (on the ablaut relationship see Noreen § 172. 2, *gnípa*: *gnapa*). According to *Sǫrla Þáttr* ch. 1, Freyja's necklace was fashioned for her by four dwarfs who were goldsmiths. I suggest that the *Brísingar* are to be identified with *Sindra ætt*, as *Brimir* is with *Ægir*. Snorri, who paraphrases this stanza (*SnE* 74), makes Sindri the name of the golden hall.

36/6 *Ókólnir* is not mentioned elsewhere and may well be the poet's own invention, to contrast most plainly with the bitter cold valleys (35) and sun-deserted beach (37).

36/8 *Brimir*, alias *Ægir* (see commentary to 9/7), brews in the ocean depths the beer of the gods, that is, the mead/*soma* of immortality (mythologically speaking; see *Lks Introd* 1). In the prose prologue to *Lks* it is stated that in Ægir's hall *lýsigull*, 'lucent gold' (see Fritzner s.v.), was used instead of candles. Therefore it is significant that Brimir has textual neighbours—he and *Sindra ætt* inhabit the same stanza—with gold enough to build a *salr* for themselves and—no doubt—to give him lighting. It would seem that the two mythological statements in stanza 36 are deliberately placed between stanzas of menace and despair to convey a secret optimism: (*a*) that the dwarfs' gold, the 'light, fire, of the ocean' in so many kennings, is still there, so that the *aurr* of earth, the blazing gold of Freyja's *Brísinga men*, and of Gefjun's *djúprǫðull*, can rise into daylight again, and (*b*) that the elixir of immortal life is still being brewed. The stanza is a hint of fundamental continuance. See commentary to *Lks* 20. For gold kennings see Meissner (*b*), 229–37. On the motif of the descent of fire (represented by the Brísinga men) into the ocean, and the connection with rebirth, see Tolley (*e*), esp. 91–3.

38/1–6 On possible borrowing here from Christian stereotypes see *Vsp Introd* IV; UD (*j*), 10, 14, 16; (*k*), 121. Stanzas 38 and 44 stand out from the rest of the poem (*a*) because they are wholly concerned with mankind, and (*b*) because they show the punishments for mankind's sins. We have little to compare these stanzas with in ON texts that we can be sure are free from Christian influence. The punishment for men who exchange libellous words (*Reg* 4) is to wade in a raging river, *Vaðgelmir*, 'Ford Roarer'. The poet of *Vsp* may well be drawing upon native matter of such a kind when he shows the perjurers and murderers laboriously wading; it is a punishment not much favoured in Christian visions of hell, unless the river is one of fiery pitch (as in the vision of a monk of Wenlock, related by Boniface, *Briefe* 10, 11/12, AD 716), but it is meaningful to those who know the torrents of Norway and Iceland that only one as strong as Þórr could cross (cf. *Þórsdr*).

menn meinsvara / ok morðvarga: the pairing of these weighty legal words recalls Wulfstan's alliterative denunciatory style: *hēr syndan mānsworan and morþorwyrhtan*, 'here are perjurors and plotters of murder' (Wulfstan (*a*), 273). The association of the words *meinsvara/mānsworan* with *morð-/morþor-* occurs nowhere else in ON or OE. For a valuable critique of scholarly opinion on these verbal parallels and their implications, see Lindow (*a*), 313–23.

þannz annars glepr / eyrarúno: I am not convinced that these lines are part of the original poem. The intimate, domestic treachery is out of key with the broad evils of oath-breaking and murder, and better fitted to the niceties of *Hávamál* (cf. *Háv* 115, where the only other instance of *eyrarúna*, 'a woman who whispers secrets in your ear', occurs).

38/7 *Níðhǫggr*: I have preferred *Níð-*, 'Malice', to *Nið-*, '(Moonless) Dark' (SN), because *níð* is associated with the other *naðr* of the poem (53/11–12, cf. 62/3), though 'Striker in the Dark' would not be without meaning.

39/2 *Iárnviði*: *in aldna* is identified as a giantess by this location, since *járnviðja* (cf. *íviðiur*, *Vsp* 2/6) is the term applied to Skaði, the giant's daughter, in *Hál* 3/4. Skaði, like *in aldna*, had ample progeny, bearing 'many sons' to Óðinn (*Hál* 4; see Davidson 87–95).

39/4 *Fenris*: see *SnE* 34–8 for the wolf Fenrir's history.

39/7–8 *tungls tiúgari / í trollz hami*: that a wolf in the guise of a troll, or giant, should snatch the moon, suggests that the poet is confronting us with a synthesis of two versions of a moon-snatching legend, (*a*) that in which a wolf swallows the moon (as in the Indian myth cited in *Lks Introd* I. 1), and (*b*) that in which a giant takes—or tries to take—the moon (as in the tale of the giant builder, 25 – 6, or a variant of it). *Tungl* could mean any heavenly body, but here it must mean 'moon' since three allusions to the sun follow in *Vsp* (40, 50, 54), none of them to its swallowing by a wolf, or stealing by a troll. In *Grím* 39 the sun is both preceded and pursued by a wolf. Snorri asserts that the preceding wolf will seize the moon, and the pursuing wolf will seize the sun (but this is not in *Grím*). Then in his explication of *Vsp* 39

(*SnE* 18–19), he presents another giant-monster in the shape of a wolf, *Mánagarmr*, 'Moon Hound', who will swallow the moon. The name *Mánagarmr*, not found in verse, suggests that Snorri knew a folk-tradition. In *Vafþ* 46, 47 it is explicitly said that Fenrir will destroy the sun. In *Þórsdr* 4 a giant is described in a kenning as the 'war wolf (*gunnvargr*), predator' of the 'fair shield of heaven' (*himintǫrgu fríðrar*), i.e. thief or destroyer of the sun. Giants and wolves were evidently closely associated, even interchangeable, from the earliest poetic sources (see Davidson, 581).

tiúgari, hap. leg. would seem to be an agental noun based on the Gmc vb. **teuhan*, OE *tēon*, 'to pull'; *AEW* s.v. *tog*.

40/3–5 *rýðr — sólskin*: for the falling of blood-rain and darkening of the sky, heralding death, cf. *Eyrb* 140.

41/4 *Eggþér*: nothing is known of this pastoral giant, guarding his sheep and playing his harp. Some legend of him may have caused Saxo to use him as a Finnish/Lappish enemy of the Swedes (v. xiii. 1, VII. ii. 12). Certainly Väinämöinen made and played the zither-like *kantele*. And giants and Lapps are expert in magic. Eggþér's name, however, is Gmc (though rare; cf. Ecgþeow, father of Beowulf; for his history, see *Beowulf* 459–72).

41/6 *Gálgviði*: trees and woods were a natural gallows for vanquished enemies, criminals, dedicated human sacrifices (cf. Tacitus, *Annales* I. lxi, where Arminius had impaled Roman heads on trees—*truncis arborum antefixa ora*—in the *maestos locos*, 'sorrowful places', of the Teutoburgian Wood; also *Germ* xii: *proditores et transfugas arboribus suspendunt*, 'they hang traitors and deserters on trees'; also Adam of Bremen IV. xxvi–xxvii on the sacrificial grove at Uppsala, and Ström (*a*), 115–61). I read H *gálgviði* in the text because it is the more direct reference to a place of sorrow and gloom (where a happy harpist is a bad omen) than R *gaglviði*, 'Gosling Wood', even if it is interpreted 'Raven Wood' (cf. commentary to *Akv* 40/2). The variant readings *gálgvegr* and *gaglvegr* occur in *Gróug* 9, of a path where enemies stand ready to kill; influence from MSS. of *Vsp* would seem to be evident: see Robinson 94–5, 308, for pointed comment; he also notes (92) other instances of apparent metathesis or scribal inversion of letters in *Gróug* and in R. On *gl* > *lg* see Noreen § 313. 3.

41/8 *Fialarr*: seemingly also a generic name for 'giant' (cf. *Háv* 14, for Suttungr; *Hárb* 26, for Skrýmir), and a dwarf-name (*Vsp* 16). It is difficult to see a common element in these uses which might give a meaning to the name.

For the cockcrow as a waking to war, see *Hkr* II. 361–2, where Þormóðr recites *Bjarkamál in fornu* before the battle of Stiklastaðir: *Dagr es upp kominn, / dynja hana fjaðrar, / mál es vílmǫgum / at vinna erfiði*, 'The day has risen, the cock's wings are beating, it is time for toil's sons to fulfil their hard task'. For another named cock, waking (dead) warriors, see *HH* II 49.

42/4 *Heriafǫðrs*: lit. 'Father of Armies'.

43/1 *Garmr*: the Hell Hound, named probably from the sound of his deep howling bark; cf. OE gloss to Psalm 37: 9: *Ic gyrmde* rugiebam [a gemitu cordis mei], 'I bellowed, howled from the grieving of my heart', BT s.v. *gyrman* (probably derived from **gierman* < **garmjan*; see *EDD* s.v. *Yirm*).

43/2 *Gnipahelli*: a descriptive name found only in *Vsp*. We should probably imagine a cavernous opening—*hellir*—in a towering, overhanging—*Gnipa*-—rock-face. Though *Gnipa*- is rare, *gnapa* vb., 'to jut out, loom over', is common, and used of dominating mountains (see Vigfússon s.v.).

43/4 *freki*, 'greedy one', is a traditional 'name' for wolf (cf. *Grím* 19).

43/5–6 *Fiǫlð — lengra*: see *Vsp Introd* I. C.

43/8 *rǫmm*, 'strong', 'supernaturally potent, intractable', 'bitter (to the taste)'.

44/3 *Bræðr muno beriaz*: such brief minatory prophecies recall biblical, sibylline, and homiletic texts (Matthew 10: 21: *Tradet autem frater fratrem in mortem, et pater filium* . . .). Though fraternal killings are recorded in Norse lands not infrequently (cf. *Hkr* I. 139; *Íslb* 8), statistics from *Sturlunga Saga* suggest that most brothers fought together in cases of feud (Nordal 63–5).

44/4 *sifiom spilla*: i.e. marry or have sexual relationship within the forbidden categories of kinship (*NGL* V s.v. *sifjaspjall, -spell*; see also the valuable note in DH). To read the phrase as 'violate kinship' by killing (cf. *SnE* 70) would only make it a variant of 44/1–2. Fratricide is one violation of human laws, incest is another, bringing blight and cosmic disharmony (see Bächtold-Stäubli s.v. *Blutschande*). *Spilla* is commonly used of having sexual intercourse with a woman to her detriment (Fritzner s.v. *spilla* § 2; *óspillt mær*, 'undefiled virgin').

44/6 *hórdómr*, 'adultery', 'fornication', 'prostitution', synonymous with *hór* neut., *hóran* fem.; see Fritzner s.vv. The stem *hōr*- is common Gmc, related to Lat *cārus* adj., 'beloved'.

45/1–2 *Leika Míms synir*: the problem of Mímir/Mímr is presented in the commentary to 28/10. I have chosen to interpret *Míms* here as 'Heimdallr's' and his sons as 'mankind'. *Leika*, 'play', is then ironically used of the unbridled behaviour of men, exposed in the preceding stanza, and in 45/2 *en* is adversative: 'but (as they play) their fate is lit, burning to its end'. If we take *Míms synir* as giants, then *leika* implies that they are rejoicing as mankind's, and the gods', fate approaches.

miǫtuðr kyndiz: on the interpretation 'fate's measure' see *Vsp Introd* II on stanza 2 (*miǫtviðr*). *Kyndiz* may be passive, 'is lit, kindled', or reflexive, 'kindles (itself)'. The only instrument of light whose measurement is equated with human life, of which I know, is the candle of Norna-Gestr in his *Þáttr* (*Fas* I. 186–7). Two candles were burning beside Gestr's cradle when he was a baby; norns were prophesying a

fine life for him, except for the smallest norn, who had been pushed about by some rowdies and decided to prophesy otherwise: 'I declare he will live no longer than that candle burning beside him'. But an older norn blew out the candle and gave it to Gestr's mother to keep, saying not to light it before the last day of his life. Gestr, after three hundred years of life, is about to be christened and agrees with King Óláfr Tryggvason that he has lived long enough. Óláfr suggests that now he should light the candle his mother gave him. He does. It burns quickly. It burned to its end the same moment that Gestr died. The significant parallel with *Vsp* is that the lighting of the candle takes place just before the moment of death, as if indeed Norna-Gestr's fate were being kindled. In early Christian Iceland candles were made to the measurements of an ailing person—for an aching head, the size of the head's circumference, for a dangerous pregnancy, the length of a girdle, and often, for other trouble, the whole height of the patient (*Bisk* I. 178, 190, 252; *Bysk* II. 130–1). The candle was lit and dedicated to the saint (Jón, Þorlákr). The patient's life was always saved in these miracles (see Graham 162–7). Behind this religious practice probably lies the everyday economy of reckoning the *mjǫt* of candle required for different needs (e.g. an ell-long candle was reckoned for fleecing at night the ten skins of the gelding rams killed on average per day; *Íslenzkir þjóðhættir* 6, 92). The measured candle becomes an image of time passing for an allotted span, and the act of lighting becomes the beginning of the end, whether of labour, or of illness, or of life. For (rare) parallels see Bächtold-Stäubli s.v. *Lebenslicht*. It would seem that the Anglo-Saxons also placed a certain faith in the efficacy of a well-measured, lighted candle. In the 13 c. Abingdon Chronicle, for the years 941–6, it is told that monks of the Monastery proved their right to some land by floating down the Thames a shield with a handful of corn on it, and on top of that a candle *circumspectae quantitatis et grossitudinis*, 'of carefully planned length and thickness', which the monks had lit. When the shield reached the disputed land, a water-surrounded meadow, 'the candle, miraculously abandoning the main stream of the Thames, changed its course and circled round the meadow'. As the writer says that it was the candle that controlled these movements not the shield or the corn, it must have been in the candle that the monks most placed their hopes. Was it measured so carefully to ensure calculation of their *mjǫt*? The sense 'destiny, fate', 'measured end' for OE *meotod* (ON *mjǫtuðr*) survives in compounds (e.g. *meotodsceaft*, 'fate', 'death'; Grein s.v.), though it has early been converted into a term for God. (On the Abingdon Chronicle account, and its relevance to (other) OE and ON traditions, see further Tolley (*f*).)

45/3–4 *at — Giallarhorni*: I am not happy to take *at* as instrumental (DH), since the horn does not cause the kindling of fate, but marks its happening.

galla: a rare variant of *giallr*, 'resounding' (cf. *Þrymgǫll*, 'Mighty Sounding', a church bell; SN).

Giallar-, gen. of *Giǫll*, 'Noisy One' (like the hell-bent river *Giǫll*, *Grím* 28), presumably a name for the horn (cf. *Fenrisúlfr*).

45/8 *Míms hǫfuð*: see commentary to 28/10.

45/12 *iǫtunn*: this must be Loki, changed into an agent of the world's destruction. Only he and the wolf are in bonds, which both will break. For a fearful picture of Útgarða-Loki (Utgarthilocus) in chains see Saxo VIII. xv. 8; also OE (*Later*) *Genesis* 371–85 for Satan in chains. For the loosing of Satan's bonds *post mille annos*, see Wulfstan (*a*), 133–7: *nū syndon Satanases bendas swȳðe tōslopene*, 'now are Satan's bonds greatly slackened'. For Loki as causer of earthquakes, see *Lks* prose epilogue.

47/1 *Hrymr*: not otherwise known. His name must be related to *hruma*, *hryma*, 'to grow weak with age', adj. *hrumr*, though his approach, as the first attacker, is far from feeble. Great age is a characteristic of the giants, first inhabitants of the world.

47/3 *Iǫrmungandr*: *Iǫrmun-* is a very archaic Gmc term probably going back to an IE term for 'Aryan people' (*AEW* s.v. *Jǫrmunr*, an Óðinn name). Tacitus, *Germ* ii, records the Herminones as one of the three first Gmc tribes founded by the sons of Mannus, himself the grandson of Earth. In its extant uses, many centuries later, *Iǫrmun-* can only be interpreted as 'powerful', 'vast' (cf. OS *Irminsūl*, 'Huge (World-bearing) Pillar'; OE *eormengrund*, 'spacious earth').

For *-gandr*, 'spirit', see commentary to 22/4. While *gandr* is used of wolves, as the helping spirits of witches, it is only used of the world serpent in *Ragndr* 16 and *Vsp*, when attacking Þórr. The implication (if any) is presumably that it has a magically hostile force in its mission to kill the god. The poet of *Vsp* has no doubt deliberately cited Bragi's name for the serpent to bring into contrast the two encounters, victory and death. In the translation I have adopted the Scottish term 'wraith', meaning 'water spirit', to give the monster a touch of the uncanny.

47/7 *neffǫlr*: some kinds of eagle have beaks lighter than their plumage; this could be intended then as a naturalistic description. There may be allusion to this image of birds of prey in the gibe that pale-nosed people ate corpses at night (*Alv* 2/2–3; cf. *HH* I 36/3–4, 9–10). The H, SnE reading *niðfǫlr*, 'pale as (*or* in) the moonless dark', is difficult to relate to the context; as also is *níðfǫlr*, 'malice pale', used of an eagle.

47/8 *Naglfar*, 'Nail Ship', is made of the uncut nails of corpses; it is therefore wise to cut the nails of the dead, so that this death ship should not be too quickly built (*SnE* 71).

48/2–3 *Muspellz . . . lýðir*: the ancient German term for the dissolution of the earth on Judgement Day, OHG *Muspilli*, OS *Mudspilli*, *Mutspilli* (only recorded these three times), has been translated into a demonic personality in ON, a being with 'sons' in *Lks* 42/4 and with sea-borne troops in *Vsp*. The literal sense of the two elements of the name is disputed, but the first could be a term for 'earth' (cf. OHG *mu-werf*, 'earth-thrower', i.e. 'mole'), the second for destruction (from Gmc **spelþian*, 'to destroy'; *AEW* s.v. *spilla*; Braune 158–60). ON *spell*, 'destruction', is not uncommon (cf. *Guð* I 24: Brynhildr is *vinspell / vífa mest*, 'of all women the greatest in bringing destruction to lovers'). For Snorri's geographical concept of *Muspellsheimr* as a southern region of heat and fire, source of sun, moon, and stars, see *SnE* 11, 12, 15, 18. For a succinct account in English of the great OHG poem *Muspilli*, see Bostock 120–34.

48/5 *fífls megir*: i.e. giants; cf. OE *fifelcyn* (*Beowulf* 104). Probably here *fífls* = *Muspellz*.

48/7–8 *bróðir Býleipz*: well identified as Loki by the kenning for Hel as 'daughter of the brother of Býleistr' (*Ytal* 31; cf. also *Hyndl* 40). I have kept the R form *Býleipz* (supported only by U) because *-leiptr*, 'lightning', is a meaningful word in the context of Loki/Loptr ('air', 'sky'), and *-leistr*, 'foot of a sock' (cf. *leistabrœkr*, 'breeches fitted with socks') has few native cognates (Gothic *laistjan*, 'to follow'; OE *lāst*, 'footprint, -step', etc.). The sense suggested for *Býleistr* is 'one who makes his way over homesteads', i.e. the air, i.e. Loptr: so, just another name for Loki (*LP*, SN). The 'lightning of homes' could conventionally signify 'fire', an element that pairs well with Loptr (Logi, 'Flame', is Loki's rival in *SnE* 54: an *alter ego* who out-eats him). If this is the correct reading of *Býleiptr*, then it is of poetic contextual significance that Loki should here be linked with all-consuming fire. *Býleiptr* as a kenning can be double-edged: fire will make homes bright; it is also one of the commonest and swiftest ways of destroying them—like lightning. If *Býleipz* has some such meaning then the mention of Loki twice in the stanza is not necessarily otiose.

49/1–2 *ásom . . . álfom*: the antiquity of this formula is suggested by the echo of it in an OE charm (Storms 142) against the 'shots' of malign beings: *Gif hit wǣre ēsa gescot, oððe hit wǣre ylfa gescot . . .* 'Were it shot of *Ese, or shot of elves . . .'. We can only conjecture that the *álfar* and *æsir* became associated, dwelling together in divine halls (*Lks* 2, 30), because both terms were popularly used of the spirits of victorious, prosperous kings or ancestors of a tribe or region. The heathen in Norway came to worship their great men as *álfar* much, perhaps, as the Goths came to worship their leaders as *Ansis* (see commentary to 7/1; *AR* § 184; *Flat* II. 6–9 for the *Þáttr Óláfs Geirstaðaálfs*; *Vkv Introd* II. C for the link between *álfar*, the supernatural smiths, and *Álfheimr*).

49/7 *veggbergs vísir*, 'knowing well the mountain rock (*berg*) that formed the wall (*vegg-*) of their home', i.e. knowing well that a terrible change in it was happening.

50/1 *Surtr*: a folk-legendary fire-demon and giant who will cause the final conflagration of the earth (*Surtalogi*, 'Surti's flame', *Vafþ* 50, 51, with a by-form of his name). *Surtr* probably signifies 'black', as an ablaut variant of *Svartr*.

50/3–4 *skínn — valtíva*: *af sverði*, i.e. from Freyr's sword, which fought 'of itself against the giants' race' (*Skm* 8). The sword is the symbol of Freyr's power to defeat the giant forces of death when every night, as the sun, he descends into the underworld (*Skm Introd* III). That this sword is now wielded by Surtr implies that the *heill* of the gods has left them, they are vulnerable to death. That *sól valtíva* shines from

this sword identifies it as Freyr's sword, since his sword was the symbol of his conquering sun. That his sun should be identified as that of the 'gods of the slain' refers, I suggest, to the power of the gods' sun to ensure the life after death of the slain, as its daily rising showed that it could do. Only twice is *valtívar* used in *Vsp*, the second time in 59/7, where Baldr and Hǫðr are called *vés valtívar*, 'the sanctuary's gods of the slain': here the implication that the 'gods of the slain' are the gods who will restore the life of the slain would be particularly fitting.

The problem remains: how did Surtr get possession of Freyr's sword? Loki (*Lks* 42) mockingly says that Freyr gave it to the giants as the price of Gerðr, but neither *Skm* nor any other ON source (*SnE* 41 depends on *Lks*) corroborates this. The nearest analogue to Loki's version of the story is Irish, and it does concern the conflict between two sun-gods, the one superseding the other (as one might say that Surtr superseded Freyr), and a girl—the earth-bride—is the prize. The old sun-god (Curoi) has abducted the girl (Blathnat, 'Little Flower'). She loves the young sun-god (Cuchulainn), and, learning that Curoi's life depends upon his sword, she steals it and gives to Cuchulainn, who kills him (I am dependent here upon the only work I know which attempts to document variants of the seasonal combat in medieval sources, that of Loomis, esp. chs. 2, 4, and 5; a fresh study by a Celticist would be valuable to Norse scholars). The only motif in the Irish story that is relevant to *Vsp* is that of the passing of the solar sword out of the hands of the dying sun-god into the hands of the rising sun-god. This a poet could use, reversing the optimism of the seasonal combat so that it is death who wins, not life, at Ragnarǫk. No romantic element, as in the seasonal combat, survives in traditions of Freyr's fight with Beli (see commentary to 51/5), but the romantic element does survive in the tradition of his sacred marriage (*Skm*). When Loki accuses Freyr of giving his sword for Gerðr (*Lks* 42), he diverts a seasonal combat motif—change of owner of the solar sword, so that the new owner can win the bride—into the area of the sacred marriage, where the sword has no traditional role. In *Lks* we are dealing with a synthetic fiction imposing the exchange of sword-ownership from the seasonal combat of suns upon the sun's sacred marriage, a fiction elaborated for the sake of satire against the gods, and we need look for no other source for it than *Lks* or its antecedents.

50/6 *en gífr rata*: I would interpret this in the light of the vision of Þorhallr spámaðr, just before the missionary voyage of Þangbrandr. Þorhallr wakes one morning and smiles. Síðu-Hallr asks: '*Hví brosir þú nú?*' Þorhallr answers: '*At því brosi ek, at margr hóll opnaz ok hvert kvikvendi býr sinn bagga bæði smá ok stór ok gera fardaga*'. Þorhallr has seen that 'many a hill is opening and every living thing is preparing its luggage and both little and large are moving house'; *Óláfs Saga Tryggvasonar in mesta* II. 150; *Flat* I. 421. The heathen beings inside the hills, dwarfs and trolls, are moving out before Christianity comes, as they would before an earthquake (see Holtsmark (*a*), 62). The moving-out of the trollwives parallels that of the warriors in the next line. This is preferable to reading *hrata* (i.e. trollwives topple from the crags).

51 This stanza is discussed in *Vsp Introd* III. C. *Problem III* (i) (*c*).

51/1 *Hlínar*: a name for Frigg found only here in poetic texts, but frequent in kennings for 'woman'. In *SnE* 39 Hlín is presented as a minor goddess who is appointed by Frigg to watch over men she wishes to guard from danger (this relies upon an etymological link between *Hlín* and *hlein*, 'peaceful refuge', vb. *hleina*, 'to have peace and security'; Fritzner s.vv. *hlein*, *hleina*; *AEW* s.vv. *hlein*, *Hlín*). There is probably a tragic irony implied in the use here of *Hlín* for Frigg, in that she was unable to protect either son or husband.

51/5 *bani Belia*: in *Haustl* 18 Þórr is called the *fjǫrspillir . . . bǫlverðungar Belja*, 'life-destroyer of the evil troop of Beli [i.e. of giants]'. So Beli is used as a giant-*heiti*. Freyr is called *Belja dolgr*, 'Beli's foe', in *Hál* 10 in a kenning (probably) for Hálogaland as the *útrǫst*, 'out-lying territory', of Freyr. The name Beli would seem to be the masc. of *belja*, 'cow' (commonest in ModIcel; cf. *belja*, 'to bellow'). I suggest that Freyr's fight with Beli was archaically conceived as a ritual symbolic combat, fitting for a fertility 'lord', enacting a beast fight for sovereignty of the tribe, or herd. In *SnE* 41 Freyr is said to have killed Beli with a stag's horn. Stags too have their seasonal combats ('playing the little stag'—*cervulum facere*—was condemned as a sacrilege in very early Church decrees; *AR* § 257). The simplicity of the 'natural' combat of bull v. bull and stag v. stag would seem to have been diversified by interloan from one traditional pageant to another. The age-old motif of divine killing by horn or tusk shows great variety (see *AR* § 462). Freyr's *alter ego* Frotho was, according to Saxo, killed by the horns of a sea-cow; according to *Skjǫldunga Saga*, by the antlers of a stag. That Freyr's ancient ritual adversary was a bull (rather than a straightforward giant) may have come corroboration from a Norwegian folktale (cited by Davidson 127–8 from Christensen xxxi, 55–6), in which a 'blessed isle', *Útrǫst*, located off Lofoten, Hálogaland, (cf. *Hál* 10 cited above) is visited by a farmer from the mainland to pursue a strange bull who is luring away his cows (a modern variant of the combat for the herd). Freyr's stag's horn relates to a beast-battle of great deadliness. Dr Gad Rausing tells me 'it is not too rare to find elk and red deer killed in such duels . . . I have found the remains both of red deer and of elk, stabbed through the lungs by their fellows' (see Brehm 80, 92, 105, 139, 140).

51/8 *angan*: see commentary to 22/7.

52 This stanza is discussed in *Vsp Introd* III. C. *Problem III* (i) (*c*). In *Vafþ* 53 Víðarr 'will cleave' the wolf's jaws, i.e. cut or tear them apart. In *Vsp* it would seem that he is driving his sword either down the throat of the wolf through the gaping jaws, or, more realistically, into the entry at the base of the throat beneath the jaws, as in boar-hunting. So in *Sir Gawain* 1592–4, Bertilak takes good aim as the boar crashes upon him and steadily places his blade in the 'slot' in the direct line to the heart—*Hit hym vp to þe hult* [hilt], *þat þe hert* [heart] *schyndered* [burst asunder]. Víðarr is always silent; *AR* § 514 relates this characteristic to an initiation custom of silence before an act of vengeance. The same social isolation is suggested by Víðarr's overgrown land (*Grím* 17), untrodden by the visits of friends (cf. *Háv* 119). At Ægir's feast Víðarr plays his silent role, *Lks* 10. The avenging half-brothers, Víðarr and

Váli (*Vsp* 32 – 3) will live again to inhabit the holy places of the gods when Surtr's fire has burned itself out (*Vafþ* 51). See also *SnE* 72–3.

52/5 *Hveðrungs*: a name for Loki (*Hveðrungs mær* is Hel, *Ytal* 32); in *þulur* a name for 'giant' and for Óðinn, *LP*; probably related etymologically to OE terms for the violence and noise of wind and sea, *hwaðerian*, *hwoðerian*, 'to be tumultuous', *hwoðerung*, 'harsh grinding noise' (see BT *Suppl.* s.vv., replacing the older cited forms *hweoðrian*, *hweoðrung* in BT and Grein, who, s.v. *hweoðu*, 'aura', adduces relationship with Gothic *hwaþjan*, 'to foam'; note also *EDD* s.v. *whither* vb., the variants *w(h)ether*, *w(h)uther*, 'to bluster, rage' (of wind), 'to bellow' (of cattle), 'to rush', etc.). Though de Vries, *AEW* s.v. *hviða*, 'gust of wind' (cf. *hviðuðr*, the name for wind in *Hel*, *Alv* 20/6) rejects any connection of *hviðr* with *Hveðrungr* (without giving good reasons), there was a family of Gmc words describing the roaring wildness of wind and sea to which *Hveðrungr* could well belong. Most probably it was another elemental name for Loki/Loptr.

53 This stanza and its variant readings are discussed in *Vsp Introd* III. C. *Problem III* (i) (*c*).

53/2, 10 *mǫgr Hlǫðyniar . . . Fiǫrgyniar burr*: the emphasis upon Þórr's mother, the earth, is deliberate here, as men and Þórr are leaving that *heimstǫð* for ever. *Hlǫðyn* (*LP* s.v.) is probably to be identified with Hludana, a Gmc (?earth-)goddess of the Lower Rhine, named in five inscriptions from the second and third centuries AD (*AR* § 546; the etymology of the name is hard to determine). *Fiǫrgyn*'s name is a (rare) *heiti* for 'earth' (*LP* s.v.); the forms of her name in Gothic, OHG, OE signify 'mountain' (*AEW* s.v. for valuable discussion).

53/6 *véorr*: as a Þórr-name in *Hym* 11, 17 (possibly taken from *Vsp*). Þórr is defender of Miðgarðr against the giants (cf. *Hárb* 23). Miðgarðr is called *alda vé*, 'holy shrine, sanctuary, of mankind' in *Háv* 107. I take *véorr* (cf. *Véuðr* in *þulur* for Þórr, *LP*) to mean 'one who is linked to the *vé* of Miðgarðr as defender, guardian' (DH, SN), though the formation is obscure.

53/11 *neppr frá naðri*: it is possible that only R reads *frá*; H is here illegible; of the SnE MSS. SR reads *at*, T [*nepr*]*ar* (*ar* being probably an error for *at*), U does not have the stanza, W reads *af* (I suspect because the scribe of W knew the text of H before it was damaged). The idiom 'to go from—*ganga af*—a slain foe' is elsewhere recorded from the 10 C. poet Goþþormr sindri's *Hákonardrápa*: *Þar gekk Njǫrðr af Niríði . . . váp̄nunduðum*, 'There the warrior—Njǫrðr of the shield's uproar (battle)—strode from the weapon-wounded (dead) adversary—the Njǫrðr of the broad shields' stream (blood)'; *Hkr* I. 174, *Skjald* B I. 56; *LP* s.vv. *af* 4, 2. *ganga* 5. I have not found *ganga frá* with the same usage in verse. See *Vsp Introd* III. C. *Problem V* (ii) (*c*).

neppr: a rare word, probably also in *Reg* 8: *niðia stríð ónept* [MS. 'v̄ nept'], 'kinsmen's strife unfailing, unceasing' (see UD (*a*)). *Fjǫrneppr*, 'life-failing', 'short-lived', occurs in a *lausavísa* attributed to Þormóðr (*Fóst* 234–5, *Skjald* B I. 261; the interpretations differ).

53/12 *níðs ókvíðnom*: for me the most difficult line in the poem. *Níð* implies a deliberate act of hatred, envy, slander, denigration; does the fact that it is directed against a god, *miðgarz véorr*, also make it a 'sacrilege' (at least in the eyes of Þórr's people)? *Níðask á trú sinni* is to dishonour, deny one's faith (Fritzner s.v. *níða*). It is also possible that the term *níð* bears an allusion to the spewing of poison upon Þórr, which Snorri describes: *Þá fellr hann dauðr til jarðar fyrir eitri því er ormrinn blæss á hann*, 'Then he falls to earth dead because of the poison the serpent breathes at him' (*SnE* 72; see JH I. 46). Beowulf dies of the dragon's poison—*him on brēostum . . . wēoll . . . attor on innan*, 'in his breast the poison seethed within'. For him the dragon was a *niðgæst*, 'malicious visitant' (*Beowulf* 2699, 2714–15). Bragi reminds us that the writhing Jǫrmungandr is poisonous when Þórr hooks him, *Ragndr* 18. Poison and enmity are ancient associates (see Fritzner s.vv. *eitr* § 2, *eitra* vb., *eitrblandinn* § 2). I have kept the translation of *níðs* general—'vile act'—to cover all possibilities (Almqvist (*a*) I. 39, 46–7 does not venture a more definite rendering. On the concept of *níð* see his ch. 1).

ókvíðnom: dat. sg. of *ókvíðinn*, 'unshrinking', 'unlamenting'; there may be a hint of litotes here, that the serpent had approached the killing with positive pleasure (like Grendel: *nō mearn fore, / fǣhðe ond fyrene*, *Beowulf* 134–5) as well as reckless hatred.

54/5–6 *eimi við aldrnara*: *eimi*, 'fumes from fire and hot ashes' (in Faroese 'hot ashes'), suggests volcanic eruption: choking vapours and ash killing the flames, or gushing out upon the flames, would seem to be a fine natural description. I take *aldrnara* as a backward look at fire as a primary need of man (*Eldr er beztr / með ýta sonom / ok sólar syn*, 'Fire is the best of things among the sons of men, and the sight of the sun', *Háv* 68), about to be overwhelmed by fire as a monster of destruction (as Freyr by Surtr, 50–1). It seems improbable that *aldrnari* should refer to the world tree, whose role in the poem as a measurer, a time-keeper, ends with its groan of age in 45.

aldrnara occurs only here and, with *eimr*, as a *heiti* for 'fire' in *Þulur* IV pp (*Skjald* B I. 674–5). *Ealdorneru*, *feorhneru*, *līfneru*, 'saving of life' are not uncommon in OE verse (see Grein s.vv.).

54/7 *hiti*: the use of 'heat' (rather than 'flame', cf. *Háv* 152: *hávan loga*; *Am* 15: *hryti hár logi*; *Vǫls* 49, st. 22: *nam . . . hár logi / við himni gnæfa*) brings the volcanic reality closer: one can see flame from a distance.

57, 58 The textual comparisons in *Vsp Introd* III. C. *Problem III* (ii) (*b*) are also of stylistic interest.

57/7 *Fimbultýs*: the name occurs only here, but Óðinn is called *Fimbulþulr*, 'Mighty Sage', in *Háv* 80, 142 (when he designed runes), and the magically potent songs he learnt from his maternal uncle were *fimbullióð*, *Háv* 140. The great winter at the end of the world is the *Fimbulvetr*. The term *fimbul* conveys size, power, and the sense of the supernatural that may accompany these (though not in *fimbulfambi*, 'great

blockhead', *Háv* 103). *Fífl*, 'giant' and *Fimbull* are variants of the same stem (*AEW* s.v. *fífl*).

60/1 *Hœnir*: etymologically *Hœnir* is most readily connected with *hani*, 'cock', *hœna*, 'hen', *hœns*, 'poultry', and so with Latin *cano*, 'I sing'. In Indian ritual texts one of the officiating priests at a sacrifice is the 'Singer of the Most High', *Udgātṛ*. Coomaraswamy notes ((*a*) 49–52, esp. 49, n. 12): '*udgātṛ* could be rendered, not inaptly, by "chanticleer". The Buddha's teaching is actually likened to the crowing of a cock.' The cock is 'the awakener', the bird of the sun. The Udgātṛ, the singing priest, acts as 'godfather', first, at a man's natural birth; secondly, at his 'second birth', when, as a sacrificer, after the compulsory initiation, he rises from the initiatory death; and thirdly, when he 'dies and is laid on the pyre, to be reborn thence for the third and last time. In all three of these dangerous transitions from death to life it is the Udgātṛ ... that "carries him over death" and effects his rebirth.' In the third instance he effects his rebirth in the world beyond, "'making him thrive in those (states of being) to which he is born"'. In *Vsp* 60 it would seem that Hœnir is placed as a priest presiding over the 'dangerous transitions from death to life' with the return of the Æsir to Iðavǫllr. He finds out by lot where the home of the two gods' sons should be in the new world, just as he was in attendance at the transitional 'birth' of Askr and Embla (18) into Miðgarðr. On Hœnir as a cock, see Holtsmark (*b*), 51–3.

60/2 *hlautvið kiósa*: Hœnir is picking out the piece of wood, the lot, whose marking he will interpret and which will determine his guidance of the gods. De Vries notes (*AR* § 288) that *hlaut* primarily means the 'lot' (deriving from *hljóta*, 'to cast lots') and only secondarily the sprinkled sacrificial blood alternatively used for divination, for which *hlautteinar* were the sprinkling implements (*Eyrb* 9, ch. 4; *Hym* 1/5–6).

60/3–5 *ok burir — víðan*: because we are told that the sons of two brothers (I assume Baldr and Hǫðr) will now *byggia*, 'inhabit', the sky, I assume that Hœnir's lot-casting was to determine their dwelling-site. That there were superstitions about the choice of ground for a dwelling is suggested by Ǫgmundr's difficulty (*Korm* 205, ch. 2); the measuring rod for the ground shrivelled three times when it was tried. This was a sign that the man's circumstances would not prosper should he build there. The suggestion that Hœnir is choosing a new world tree to plant in the divine brothers' new *tún* (Steinsland (*a*), 146–7) ignores the conventional use of *hlaut* and *kjósa* in sortilege and can hardly be accepted.

61/4 *Gimlé*, 'Fire-Lee *or* -Shelter', not found elsewhere, was a name probably devised by the poet or his circle to express the safety of this blessed hall from both Surtalogi and the flames of the Christian hell. See *Vsp Introd* IV *Excursus* (iv).

62 H I reject the stanza basically on the grounds that it is saying in overt Christian terms what the poet has already subtly expressed in 61, 62. Von See offers even stronger arguments on the grounds that 'der Gedanke des eschatologischen

Richters der nordischen Mythologie fremd ist. Die berühmte Vǫluspá-Str. 65 [i.e. my *62 H*], die diesen Gedanken zuerst ausspricht, ist wohl nicht einmal ein spätheidnisches oder synkretistisches, sondern ein rein christliches Produkt' ((*c*), 122, with further reference in n. 77). Steinsland's spirited attempt to retain *62 H* as a pre-Christian part of *Vsp* is not supported by extant pre-Christian evidence ((*d*), 335–48). See *Vsp Introd* III. C. *Problem VI* (v).

62 On the last stanza of the poem see *Vsp Introd* II ad loc.; also UD (*j*) 14–15.

62/4 *Niðafiǫllom*: cf. *Niðavǫllǫm*, 36/2. There may be some significance in these interlunar landscapes which I have not understood. I have treated them simply as a deep underworld *niðri*, never visited by the moon (*AEW* s.v. *niðr*; OE *niðð*, 'abyss', seems to occur once, *Christ and Satan* 631–2: *scūfað tō grunde / in þæt nearwe niðð* (see *ASPR* 1 n.); in *Genesis* 775 read *helle-nīð*).

62/5 *Berr sér í fiǫðrom*: this is a very rare image. The late Otto Pächt assured me that he knew of no representation of a dragon bearing bodies in its wings.

62/8 *søkkvaz*: cf. *Helr* 14/8: *søkstu, gýgiarkyn!* 'Sink down, you giantess seed!'

BALDRS DRAUMAR

1 Senn vóru æsir
allir á þingi
ok ásyniur
allar á máli,
ok um þat réðu
ríkir tívar,
hví væri Baldri
ballir draumar.

At once the Æsir
were all in council
and the Ásynior
all talking,
and they gave their opinions,
powerful deities,
as to why Baldr
had obdurate dreams.

2 Upp reis Óðinn,
ald*inn* gautr,
ok hann á Sleipni
sǫðul um lagði.
Reið hann niðr þaðan
Niflheliar til,
mœtti hann hvelpi,
þeim er ór Heliu kom.

Up rose Óðinn,
aged god of sacrifice,
and on Sleipnir
he placed the saddle.
He rode down from there
to Deep Hel's mist,
he met a hound-whelp
that came out of Hel.

3 Sá var blóðugr
um bríost framan,
ok galdrs fǫður
gó *um* lengi.
Fram reið Óðinn,
foldvegr dunði,
hann kom at hávu
Heliar ranni.

It was bloody
down the front of its breast,
and round wizardry's father
went barking long.
Ahead rode Óðinn,
the earthen path echoed,
he came to the high
hall of Hel.

4 Þá reið Óðinn
fyr austan dyrr,
þar er hann vissi
vǫlu leiði.
Nam hann vittugri

Then Óðinn rode
east of the door,
to where he knew
was the *vǫlva*'s grave.
He began over the wise witch

For a brief note on the relationship of Baldrs Draumar and Vǫluspá and bibliographical reference see the commentary to Vsp 28/5–6.

Baldrs Draumar is preserved only in AM 748 I 4to (A) *fol. 1–2. I supply MS. readings where the text requires obvious emendation.*

2/2 aldinn] *as 13/4;* allda A 3/4 gó um] golv A

valgaldr kveða,
unz nauðig reis,
nás orð um kvað:

to speak spells for the dead,
until grudging she rose,
gave a corpse's words utterance:

5 'Hvat er manna þat,
mér ókunnra,
er mér hefir aukit
erfit[t] sinni?
Var ek snivin snióvi
ok slegin regni
ok drifin dǫggu.
Dauð var ek lengi.'

'What man is that,
unknown to me,
who has overburdened me
with an arduous journey?
I was snowed on with snow
and smitten by rain
and drenched with dew.
I have long been dead.'

6 'Vegtamr ek heiti,
sonr em ek Valtams.
Segðu mér ór Heliu
—ek man ór heimi;
hveim eru bekkir
baugum sánir,
flet fagrliga
fló[u]ð gulli?'

'Way Tamed I am called,
I am son of Slaughter Tamed.
Tell me news from Hel
—I remember that from the world:
for whom are the benches
draped with ring-mail,
and the dais resplendently
rippling with gold?'

7 'Hér stendr Baldri
of brugginn miǫðr,
skírar veigar,
liggr skiǫldr yfir—
. . . .
. . . .
en ásmegir
í ofvæni.
Nauðug sagðak,
nú mun ek þegia.'

'Here stays for Baldr
the mead brewed,
gleaming goblets,
a shield covers the mead—
. . . .
. . . .
but the Æsir's sons [are]
in great apprehension.
Unwilling I have spoken,
now I shall keep silent.'

8 'Þegiattu, vǫlva,
þik vil ek fregna,
unz alkunna—
vil ek enn vita:
hverr man Baldri
at bana verða
ok Óðins son
aldri ræna?'

'Do not be silent, *vǫlva*,
I wish to seek answers from you,
until all is known—
I want to know still:
who will become
Baldr's slayer
and rob the life
from Óðinn's son?'

5/4 erfitt] æ'fit A 6/8 flóuð] floþ *with a curl over* þ (*i.e.* flóðr, *without meaning*) A

9 'Hǫðr berr hávan
hróðrbarm þinig,
hann man Baldri
at bana verða
ok Óðins son
aldri ræna.
Nauðug sagðak,
nú mun ek þegia.'

'Hǫðr will bear a high[-growing]
glorious tree[-frond] to the place,
he will become
Baldr's slayer
and rob the life
from Óðinn's son.
Unwilling I have spoken,
now I shall be silent.'

10 'Þegiattu, vǫlva,
þik vil ek fregna,
unz alkunna,
vil ek enn vita:
hverr man heipt Heði
hefnt of vinna
eða Baldrs bana
á bál vega?'

'Do not be silent, *vǫlva*,
I wish to seek answers from you,
until all is known—
I want to know still:
who will wreak vengeance on Hǫðr
for this villainy
and carry Baldr's killer
on to the pyre?'

11 'Rindr berr [Vála]
í vestrsǫlum;
sá man Óðins sonr
einnættr vega,
hǫnd um þvær[a],
né hǫfuð kembir,
áðr á bál um berr
Baldrs andskota.
Nauðug sagðak,
nú mun ek þegia.'

'Rindr will bear Váli
in western halls;
that son of Óðinn
will kill when one night old—
he will not wash hand,
nor comb head,
before he bears to the pyre
Baldr's adversary.
Unwilling I have spoken,
now I shall be silent.'

12 'Þegiattu, vǫlva,
þik vil ek fregna,
unz alkunna,
vil ek enn vita:
hveriar ro þær meyiar
er at muni gráta
ok á himin verpa
hálsa skautum?'

'Do not be silent, *vǫlva*,
I wish to seek answers from you,
until all is known—
I want to know still:
who are those maidens
who weep for their pleasure,
and fling to the sky
the scarves on their necks?'

13 'Ertattu Vegtamr,
sem ek hugða,
heldr ertu Óðinn,
aldinn gautr!'

'You are not Way Tamed,
as I thought,
rather are you Óðinn,
aged god of sacrifice!'

'Ertattu vǫlva,
né vís kona,
heldr ertu þriggia
þursa móðir!'

'You are no *vǫlva*
nor wise woman,
rather are you the mother
of three monsters!'

14 'Heim ríð þú, Óðinn,
ok ver hróðigr!
Svá komit manna
meirr aptr á vit,
er lauss Loki
líðr ór bǫndum
ok ragnarǫk
riúfendr koma.'

'Ride home, Óðinn,
and exult!
No one will come
back again on such a visit,
when Loki, freed,
moves from his bonds
and Ragnarǫk
arrives with ruin.'

COMMENTARY ON THE TEXT

6/7 *flet* I have taken as pl.; see *LP* s.v.

7/3 *liggr skiǫldr yfir*: the mead is covered against any evil eye that might blight it (SG; cf. *Bysk* I. 79, line 8).

7/5–6 *en — ofvæni*: two preceding lines may have been lost here (cf. the ten-line stanza 11). SG suggest that the lost lines probably noted the happy anticipation of the inhabitants of Hel, in contrast to the Æsir's fearful anxiety, at the thought of Baldr's death.

9/1–2 *hávan hróðrbarm*: I suggest that the poet is attempting to render phrases in *Vsp* 31/6 and 32/1–2 that he has not correctly understood. From *vǫllom hæri*, 31/6, he takes the notion that the 'tree' (*meiði*, 32/1) is 'high', 'tall', interpreting *meiðr* as equivalent to a growing tree (*baðmr/barmr*), rather than a piece of a tree that could become a spear. He reads *mær*, 'slim', (32/2) as *mærr*, 'glorious', and forms a compound with *hróðr*, 'glory': *hróðrbarm*. I have doctored the translation slightly for the reader's sake. The description *hávan hróðrbarm*, 'high tree of glory', would be conventionally apt for the Cross, but no such thought seems to have been in the poet's mind.

þinig: that is, towards the assembly place where Baldr was killed by him in his blindness (*SnE* 64).

12/5–8 This riddle resembles others posed by Óðinn elsewhere, to which the answer is 'waves' (*Heiðr* 40–2). The waves are women (*snótir*, *meyjar*, *ekkjur*, *brúðir*), often in sorrow (*syrgjandi*, *sjaldan blíðar*), with white hair and white head-dresses. In *BDr* I take *hálsa skautum* to be a variation on the hair and head-dresses as the wave-tops, here being wildly tossed up to the heavens to salute a funeral ship—such as Baldr will have—welcoming the dead newcomer with both grief and delight (cf. *Hamð* 15/4). The curved 'necks' of waves, sometimes with intricate decorations, are portrayed on several of the gravestones on Gotland (see Lindqvist I Fig. 77, 81, 104, 107, 128). *Skautum* could refer to a square of cloth folded as a scarf round the neck (cf. *Rig* 16/7), or to a hood or cowl (see Vigfússon s.v. *skaut* 4). Why this riddle should serve to betray Óðinn's identity is not clear; it does not seem to require an anwer that only Óðinn could know (cf. *Vafþ* 54, 55).

13/7–8 *þriggia — móðir*: this must be the giantess Angrboða, 'Grief-bodér', who bore three monstrous children to Loki: the wolf Fenrir, the world serpent Jǫrmungandr, and Hel, 'Death' (*SnE* 34, *Hyndl* 40).

RÍGSÞULA

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RÍGSÞULA

Svá segia menn í fornum sǫgum at einhverr af ásum, sá er Heimdallr hét, fór ferðar sinnar ok fram með sióvarstrǫndu nøkkurri, kom at einum húsabœ ok nefndiz Rígr. Epter þeiri sǫgu er kvæði þetta.

So it is said in ancient stories, that one of the Æsir, who was called Heimdallr, was going on his way and, following along a seashore, he came to a homestead, and he gave his name as Rígr. This poem is based on that story.

1 Ár kváðu ganga
grœnar brauter
ǫflgan ok aldinn
ás kunnigan,
ramman ok rǫskvan
Ríg stíganda.

Long ago, they said, walked
on green ways
a strong and aged
sagacious god,
robust and ripe-grown
Rígr, striding.

2 Gekk hann meirr at þat
miðrar brautar.
Kom hann at húsi,
hurð var á gætti,
inn nam at ganga.
Eldr var á gólfi,
hión sátu þar,
hár at arni,
Ái ok Edda

aldinfalda.

On he walked more then
in the middle of the way.
He came to a house,
the door was in the side-niche,
in he stepped.
A fire was on the floor,
man and wife sat there,
white-haired by the hearth,
Greatgrandfather and Greatgrandmother
in her old woman's coif.

3 Rígr kunni þeim
ráð at segia.

Rígr was able
to offer advice to them.

On the MS. preservation of the text see Rig Introd II. A. *A few of the more common features of the orthography of* W, *as they affect Rígsþula, may be mentioned:* 'áá' (*or, less often,* 'aa') *represents* á; 'uu' *is sometimes used for* ú; 'ǫ' *is regularly used for* ǫ; *both* œ *and* æ *are written* 'æ', *except in* bœ (*prose prologue*), *written* 'bø'; 'æ' *is sometimes used for* e; 'giæ' *is common for* gæ; 'lld' *is usual for* ld; 'f' *is frequent for* v; *a macron is used for* n/m; 'n̄' *represents* nn; 'h̄' *represents* hann; 'r̄' *is used for* rr; 'h̄' *represents* hon, *and* 'v̄' voru; *superscript abbreviation signs are used for* -ar *and for* -er (*always written* -er *not* -ir *when not abbreviated; hence* -er *is used in the text here*). *Capitals often mark the beginnings of stanzas* (*they do not occur in 8, 12, 15, 19, 20, 22, 24, 25, 27, 28, 29, 31, 34, 44, 45, 46, 48*); *other occurrences are noted.*

Prose: line 3 Epter] *initial capital* W

1/1 Ár] At W 2/8 at arni] af árni W 2/9 Edda] Ellda W

Meirr settiz hann
miðra fletia,
en á hlið hvára
hión salkynna.

More, he seated himself
in the middle of the bench,
and at either side of him
the man and wife of the household.

4 Þá tók Edda
økkvinn [h]leif,
þungan ok þykkan,
þrunginn sáðum.
Bar hón meirr at þat
miðra skutla.
Soð var í bolla,
setti á bióð.

Then Greatgrandmother took
a gross loaf,
weighty and thick,
wedged with grains.
More, she brought it then
in the middle of the dishes.
Broth was in the bowl,
she set that on the table.

Reis hann upp þaðan,
réðz at sofna.

Up he rose from there,
made himself ready to sleep.

5 Rígr kunni þeim
ráð at segia.
Meirr lagðiz hann
miðrar rekkiu,
en á hlið hvára
hión salkynna.

Rígr was able
to offer advice to them.
More, he laid himself
in the middle of the bed,
and at either side of him
the man and wife of the household.

6 Þar var hann at þat
þriár nætr saman.
Gekk hann meirr at þat
miðrar brautar.
Liðu meirr at þat
mánuðr níu.

There he was then
three nights together.
On he walked more then
in the middle of the way.
Time moved on more then
nine months.

7 Ióð ól Edda,
iósu vatni.
Hǫrvi [vaði
hǫrund]svartan.
[Hǫfug vóru augu]—
hétu Þræl.

Greatgrandmother bore a child,
they sprinkled him with water.
In rough linen she [wrapped]
the black-[skinned] boy.
[Heavy were his eyes]—
they called him Thrall.

8 Hann nam at vaxa
ok vel dafna.

He began to grow
and gain strength well.

4/2 økkvinn hleif] ǫkviñleif W 4/8 bióð] *here follow in* W *the lines now transferred to 18/7–8:* var kálfr soðinn, / krása beztr. 6/6 níu] ix. W 7/3–5 Hǫrvi — augu] hǫrfi svartan W; vaði *cf.* 35/2

Var þar á hǫndum
hrokkit skinn,
kropner knúar,
[kartnegl,]
fingr digrer—
fúlligt andlit,
lotr hryggr,
langer hælar.

There was on his hands
wrinkled skin,
gnarled knuckles,
[scabbed nails,]
fingers thick—
face unlovely,
bent back,
long heels.

9 Nam hann meirr at þat
magns um kosta
bast at binda
byrðar gørva.
Bar hann heim at þat
hrís gerstan dag.

He began more then
to test his might
plaiting bast,
packing burdens.
He carried home then
kindling through the cruel day.

10 Þar kom at garði
gengilbeina.
Aurr var á ilium,
armr sólbrunninn,
niðrbiúgt ° nef—
nefndiz Þír.

There came to the homestead
a gadabout girl.
Soil was on the soles of her feet,
her arm sunburnt,
down-curving her nose—
her name, she said, was Thrall-
woman.

11 Miðra fletia
meirr settiz hón—
sat hiá henni
sonr hús[s].
Rœddu ok rýndu,
rekkiu gørðu
Þræll ok Þír,
þrungin dœgr.

In the middle of the bench
more she seated herself—
he sat beside her,
the son of the house.
They talked and told secrets,
set up their bed,
Thrall and Thrallwoman,
days and nights close-packed.

12 Bǫrn ólu þau,
biuggu ok unðu.
Hygg ek at héti
Hreimr ok Fiósner,
Klúrr ok Kleggi,
Kefser, Fúlner,
Drumbr, Digraldi,

Children they bred,
had a home and were happy.
I think they were called
Bawler and Byreboy,
Clump and Clegg,
Bedmate, Stinker,
Stump, Stout,

8/6 kartnegl] *not in* W; *see commentary.*
10/5 nef] er nef W; *see commentary.*
10/3 Aurr] ǫr W (*see JH* II. *100; LP s.v.* ørr)
11/4 húss] huus W

Drǫttr ok Hǫsver,
Lútr ok Leggialdi.
Lǫgðu garða,
akra tǫddu,
unnu at svínum,
geita gættu,
grófu torf.

Sluggish and Grizzled,
Stooper and Longleg.
They fixed fences,
dunged fields,
worked at the pigs,
watched over the goats,
dug the peat.

13 Dœtr vóru þær
Drumba ok Kumba,
Økkvinkálfa
ok Arinnefia,
Ysia ok Ambátt,
Eikintiasna,
Tǫtrughypia
ok Trǫnubeina.
Þaðan eru komnar
þræla ætter.

The daughters were
Stumpy and Dumpy,
Bulgingcalves
and Eaglenose,
Shouter and Servingmaid,
Greatgossip,
Tatteredcoat
and Craneshanks.
From there have come
the generations of thralls.

14 Gekk Rígr at þat
réttar brauter.
Kom hann at hǫllu,
hurð var á skíði,
inn nam at ganga.
Eldr var á gólfi,
hión sátu þar,
heldu á sýslu.

Rígr walked then
by right ways.
He came to a hall,
the door was up, on the lintel,
in he stepped.
A fire was on the floor,
man and wife sat there,
pursued their tasks.

15 Maðr telgði þar
meið til rifiar.
Var skegg skapat,
skǫr var fyr enni,
skyrtu þrǫngva.
Skokkr var á gólfi.

The man was carving there
wood for a weaving-beam.
His beard was trimmed,
over his brow the hair was clipped.
He wore a tunic, close-fitting.
A treadway of timber was on the floor.

16 Sat þar kona,
sveigði rokk,
breiddi faðm,
bió til váðar.
Sveigr var á hǫfði,

There sat the wife,
swung her distaff,
stretched wide her arms,
prepared to make cloth.
A curving cap was on her head,

14/3 hǫllu] *supplied in the margin* W
16/5 Sveigr] *initial capital* W

smokkr var á bringu,
dúkr var á hálsi,
dvergar á ǫxlum.
Afi ok Amma
áttu hús.

a blouse on her bosom,
a kerchief at her neck,
dwarf-pins at her shoulders.
Grandfather and Grandmother
owned the buildings.

17 Rígr kunni þeim
ráð at segia.
[Meirr settiz hann
miðra fletia,
en á hlið hvára
hión salkynna.]

Rígr was able
to offer advice to them.
[More, he seated himself
in the middle of the bench,
and at either side of him
the man and wife of the household.]

18 [Þá tók Amma
iastarhleif,
brattan ok brúnan,
af byggmiǫlvi.]
[Bar hón meirr at þat
miðra skutla.]
†Var kálfr soðinn,
krása beztr.†

[Then Grandmother took
a yeasty loaf,
high-risen and brown,
of barley meal.]
[More, she brought it then
in the middle of the dishes.]
†Boiled veal there was,
best of dainties.†

Reis frá borði,
réð[z] at sofna.

He rose from the table,
made himself ready to sleep.

19 [Rígr kunni þeim
ráð at segia.]
Meirr lagðiz hann
miðrar rekkiu,
en á hlið hvára
hión salkynna.

[Rígr was able
to offer advice to them.]
More, he laid himself
in the middle of the bed,
and at either side of him
the man and wife of the household.

20 Þar var hann at þat
þriár nætr saman.
[Gekk hann meirr at þat
miðrar brautar.]
Liðu meirr at þat
mánuðr níu.

There he was then
three nights together.
[On he walked more then
in the middle of the way.]
Time moved on more then
nine months.

17/3 – 18/8 *not here in* W: 17/3–6 *is repeated from 3/3–6;* 18/1–4 *is an attempted reconstruction by the editor on the models of 4/1–4 and 31, to illustrate the difficulties involved;* 18/5–6 *is repeated from 4/5–6;* 18/7–8 *is transferred from 4/9–10 in* W 18/10 réðz] reð W; *see Rig Introd* II. A. 19/1–2 Rígr — segia] *not here in* W; *repeated from 5/1–2* 20]3–4 Gekk — brautar] *not here in* W; *repeated from 2/1–2, 6/3–4* 20/6 níu] ix W

21 Ióð ól Amma,
iósu vatni,
kǫlluðu Karl.
Kona sveip ripti
rauðan ok rióðan.
Riðuðu augu.

Grandmother bore a child,
they sprinkled him with water,
called him Carl.
The wife wrapped in fine linen
the red-haired, rosy boy.
His eyes rolled.

22 Hann nam at vaxa
ok vel dafna.
Øxn nam at temia,
arðr at gørva,
hús at timbra
ok hlǫður smíða,
karta at gørva
ok keyra plóg.

He began to grow
and gain strength well.
Began to train oxen,
make a timber plough,
put up buildings
and construct barns,
make carts,
and steer the coulter.

23 Heim óku þá
hanginluklu,
geitakyrtlu,
giptu Karli.
Snør heiter sú,
settiz under ripti.
Biuggu hión,
bauga deildu.
Breiddu blæiur
ok bú gorðu.

Home they drove then
a dangling-keyed girl,
goatskin-kirtled,
married her to Carl.
Daughter-in-law she is called,
took her place beneath the bridal veil.
They dwelt as man and wife,
dispensed rings.
They spread their counterpanes
and created a household.

24 Bǫrn ólu þau,
biuggu ok unðu.
Hét[u] Halr ok Drengr,

Hǫldr, Þegn ok Smiðr,
Breiðr, Bóndi,
Bundinskeggi,
Búi ok Boddi,
Brattskeggr ok Seggr.

Children they bred,
had a home and were happy.
They were called Goodman and Gallant,
Franklin, Liegeman and Craftsman,
Broad Fellow, Farmer,
Boundbeard,
Husbandman and Householder,
Steepbeard and Squire.

25 Enn hétu svá
ǫðrum nǫfnum
Snót, Brúðr, Svanni,

And also there were named,
with names of their own,
Lass, Bride, Finedame,

23/7–8 *See commentary.* 24/3 Hétu] het W

Svarri, Sprakki,
Flióð, Sprund ok Víf,
Feima, Ristill.
Þaðan eru komnar
karla ætter.

Damsel, Dainty,
Mistress, Madam and Matron,
Shymiss, Sharpmiss.
From there have come
the generations of carls.

26 Gekk Rígr *at þat*
réttar brauter.
Kom hann at sal,
suðr horfðu dyrr.
Var hurð hnigin.
Hringr var í gætti.

Rígr walked then
by right ways.
He came to a manor,
the entrance faced south.
The door was taken down.
The handle-ring was in the side-niche.

27 Gekk hann inn at þat.
Gólf var strát.
Sátu hión,
sáz í augu,
Faðer ok Móðer
fingrum at leika.

He walked in then.
The floor was strewn.
Man and wife sat there,
gazed in each other's eyes,
Father and Mother
at finger-play.

28 Sat húsgumi
ok sneri streng,
álm of bendi,
ǫrvar skepti,
en húskona
hugði at ǫrmum,
strauk of ripti,
sterti ermar.

The master of the house sat
and twined a bowstring,
arched a bow of elm,
set shafts to arrows,
while the mistress of the house
studied her arms,
stroked the fine linen,
tightened the sleeves.

29 Keisti fald,
kinga var á bringu—
síðar slœður,
serk bláfán—
brún biartari,
brióst liósara,
háls hvítari
hreinni miǫllu.

High curved her head-dress,
a coin-brooch was at her bosom,
a trailing robe she wore,
a bodice blue-dyed—
her eyebrow brighter,
breast fairer,
throat whiter
than pure driven snow.

30 Rígr kunni þeim
ráð at segia.

Rígr was able
to offer advice to them.

26/1 at þat] þaðan W stráat *for the metre.* 26/3 hann] `hann´ W 27/2 strát] straað W (aa = á) *? read*

Meirr settiz hann
miðra fletia,
en á hlið hvára
hión salkynna.

More, he seated himself
in the middle of the bench,
and at either side of him
the man and wife of the household.

31 Þá tók Móðer
merktan dúk,
hvítan af hǫrvi,
huldi bióð.
Hón tók at þat
hleifa þunna,
hvíta af hveiti,
ok huldi dúk.

Then Mother took
a patterned cloth,
white, of thick linen,
covered the table.
Then she took
slim loaves,
white, of wheat-flour,
and covered the cloth.

32 Fram *færði* hón
†fulla† skutla,
silfri varða,
[setti] á bi*óð*:
f*a*n[g] ok fleski
ok fugla steikta.
Vín var í kǫnnu,
varðer kálkar.
Drukku ok dœmðu,
dagr var á sinnum.

Out she brought
brimful dishes,
silver-mounted,
[set] them on the table:
fresh game and pig's flesh
and fowls roasted.
There was wine in a flagon,
ornamented goblets.
They drank and discoursed,
the day was passing.

†Reis Rígr at þat,
réðz at sofna.†

†Rígr rose then,
made himself ready to sleep.†

33 †Rígr kunni þeim
ráð at segia.†
[Meirr lagðiz hann
miðrar rekkiu,
en á hlið hvára
hión salkynna.]

†Rígr was able
to offer advice to them.†
[More, he laid himself
in the middle of the bed,
and at either side of him
the man and wife of the household.]

34 Þar var hann at þat
þriár nætr saman.

There he was then
three nights together.

31/3 hǫrvi] hǫrfi W 32/1 færði] setti W 32/2 fulla skutla] skutla fulla W 32/4 setti] *not in* W (*cf.* 32/1) bióð] biǫð W 32/5 fang] fáan W (*i.e.* fán); *see commentary.* ok] `7´ W 32/11 Reis] *initial capital* W 32/11–12 †Reis — sofna] Reis Rígr at þ^{at} rekkiu g^{er}ði W. *In* W *these two lines follow 33/1–2.* réðz at sofna] *repeated from 4/10; see Rig Introd* II. A. 33/1–2 †Rígr — segia] *In* W *these two lines precede 32/11–12.* 33/3–6 Meirr — salkynna] *not here in* W, *repeated from 5/3–6* 34/2 þriár] .iij. W

Gekk hann meirr at þat
miðrar brautar.
Liðu meirr at þat
mánuðr níu.

On he walked more then
in the middle of the way.
Time moved on more then
nine months.

35 Svein ól Móðer,
silki vafði.
Iósu vatni,
Iarl létu heita.
Bleikt var hár,
biarter vangar,
ǫtul vóru augu
sem yrmlingi.

Mother bore a boy,
wrapped him in silk.
They sprinkled him with water,
had him named Jarl.
Blond was his hair,
brilliant his cheeks,
baleful were his eyes
as a baby snake's.

36 Upp óx þar
Iarl á fletium—
lind nam at skelfa,
leggia strengi,
álm at beygia,
ǫrvar skepta,
flein[um] at fleygia,
frǫkkur dýia,
hestum ríða,
hundum verpa,
sverðum bregða,
sund at fremia.

There grew up
Jarl among the benches—
began to brandish a shield,
fit bowstrings,
bend a bow of elm,
put shafts to arrows,
send spears flying,
shake lances,
ride stallions,
fling hounds at their quarry,
swing swords,
practise swimming.

37 Kom þar ór runni
Rígr gangandi.
Rígr gangandi
rúnar kendi,
sitt gaf heiti—
son kveðz eiga.
Þann bað hann eignaz
óðalvǫllu—
óðalvǫllu,
aldnar byggðer.

There came from the woodland
Rígr walking.
Rígr walking
taught him runes,
gave him his own name—
declares he has a son.
That son he bade appropriate
ancestral plains—
ancestral plains,
long-dwelt-in countrysides.

38 Reið hann meirr þaðan
myrkan við,

He rode from there more
through murky forest,

36/7 fleinum] flein W; *cf.* Kólfi fleygði *47/3* 37/3 Rígr] *initial capital* W 37/9 óðal-] *initial capital* W

hélug fiǫll,
unz at hǫllu kom.
Skapt nam at dýia,
skelfði lind,
hesti hleypti
ok hiǫrvi brá.
Víg nam at vekia,
vǫll nam at rióða,
val nam at fella—
vá til landa.

frosty hills,
till he came to a hall.
Began to shake his spear-shaft,
brandished his shield,
spurred his stallion
and swung his sabre.
Began to wake war,
began to redden the plain,
began to strike down the slain—
got lands by fighting.

39 Réð hann einn at þat
átián búum.
Auð nam skipta,
ǫllum veita
meiðmar ok mǫsma,
mara svangrifia.
Hringum hreytti,
hió sundr baug.

Sole lord he was then
of eighteen estates.
Began to share out wealth,
grant to all
treasures and choice gifts,
slender-ribbed steeds.
Tossed away rings,
cleft a bracelet in two.

40 Ók*u* ærer
úrgar brauter,
kómu at hǫllu
þar er Herser bió.
Mætti hann
miófing*raðr*]i,
hvítri ok horskri—
hét [s]ú Erna.

Envoys drove
over dripping roads,
came to the hall
where Baron lived.
He met
a slim-fingered girl,
white-gleaming and wise—
she was called Erna.

41 Báðu hennar
ok heim óku,
giptu Iarli—
gekk hón und líni.
Saman biuggu þau
ok sér unðu,
ætter ióku
ok aldrs nutu.

They asked for her in marriage
and drove her home,
wedded her to Jarl—
she went beneath the bridal veil.
They made a home together
and were happy with their life,
increased their kindred
and enjoyed their days.

42 Burr var hinn elzti,
en Barn annat,

Boychild was the eldest
and Bairn the second,

39/2 búum] buū W (*i.e. either disyllabic* búum *or monosyllabic* búm; *see JH II. 78*) 40/1 Óku] Okū W 40/6 miófingraðri] -graðri *written* -g^{ar}ði W 40/8 hét sú] hetu W

Ióð ok Aðal,
Arfi, Mǫgr,
Niðr ok Niðiungr
—námu leika—
Sonr ok Sveinn
—sund ok tafl.
Kundr hét einn,
Konr var hinn yngzti.

Offspring and High Kind,
Heir, Scion,
Kin and Kinsman
—they learned sports—
Son and Stripling
—swimming and chequers.
Nearkin one was named,
Noblekin was the youngest.

43 Upp óxu þar
Iarli borner—
hesta tǫmðu,
hlífar bendu,
skeyti skófu,
skelfðu aska.

There grew up
the sons born to Jarl—
broke in horses,
arched bucklers,
smooth-planed arrow-shafts,
brandished spears of ash-wood.

44 En Konr ungr
kunni rúnar,
ævinrúnar
ok aldrrúnar.
Meirr kunni hann
mǫnnum biarga,
eggiar deyfa,
ægi lægia.

But young Noblekin
had knowledge of runes,
runes of eternity,
runes of life.
More, he knew
how to deliver the new-born,
blunt sword-edges,
allay the ocean.

45 Klǫk nam fugla,
kyrra elda,
sæva ok svefia,
sorger lægia.
. . . .
. . . .
afl ok eliun
átta manna.

He learned the birds' jargon,
how to curb blazing fires,
and make seas untroubled,
allay sorrows.
. . . .
. . . .
the strength and valour
of eight men.

46 Hann við Ríg Iarl
rúnar deildi,
brǫgðum beitti
ok betr kunni.
Þá ǫðlaðiz
ok þá eiga gat

With Rígr Jarl
he disputed runes,
teased him with tricks
and knew better than he.
Then he got his due
and gained the right then

45/2–4 kyrra elda — lægia] *See commentary.* 45/5–6 *no lacuna in* W 45/8 átta] viij W

Rígr at heita,
rúnar kunna.

to be called Rígr,
and have knowledge of runes.

47 Reið Konr ungr
kiǫrr ok skóga,
kólfi fleygði,
kyrði fugla.

Young Noblekin rode
through scrublands and forests,
let fly his bolt,
silenced the birds.

48 Þá kvað þat kráka,
sat kvisti ein:
'Hvat skaltu, Konr ungr,
kyrra fugla?
Heldr mætti þér
hestum ríða,
[hiǫrum bregða]
ok her fella.

Then said a crow—
she sat alone on a bough:
'Why must you, young Noblekin,
be silencing the birds?
Rather you men might be
riding on stallions,
[flourishing sabres]
and felling an army.

49 'Á Danr ok Danpr
dýrar haller,
œðra óðal
en *ér* hafið.
Þeir kunnu vel
kiól[i] at ríða,
egg at kenna,
under riúfa.'

'Danr and Danpr own
extravagant halls,
more excellent patrimony
than you possess.
They are well skilled
in coursing a ship,
making felt their sword's edge,
cleaving wounds!'

46/8 kunna] *corrected from* kunni W (*cf. 44/2*) 48/7 hiǫrum bregða] *not in* W
49/4 ér] þer W (*cf. 48/5; Noreen* § *465 n. 5*) 49/6 kióli] kiól W

INTRODUCTION

I. *The Genre, Provenance, and Date of the Poem*

A. **The genealogical poem**

To give honour to princely houses, Norwegian court poets traced the ancestry of their noble patrons back to a very remote past, a time when gods begot men. Þjóðólfr of Hvin, at the end of the ninth century, made a link between an illustrious *smákonungr*, Rǫgnvaldr of Vestfold, and the line of the Swedish kings, the Ynglingar, who were reputedly descended from the god Yngvi-Freyr.[1] A century later, Eyvindr the Plagiarist did the same service for his lord, Jarl Hákon of Hlaðir, tracing his origins back to a son of Óðinn and the giant's daughter Skaði (a mythological marriage not known outside this genealogy, and perhaps, indeed, devised for the occasion by the poet himself).[2] These poems, the *Ynglingatal* and the *Háleygjatal*, were genealogical fabrications with a political purpose, and, in that respect, comparable with the Christian chronicles of Europe that traced the kings of the Franks and the British back to Trojan Aeneas, himself the son of the goddess Aphrodite.[3]

To such a genre of political fiction, the poem *Rígsþula* adds new dimensions: above all, popular dimensions. Here not only kings, but serfs and solid farmers are descended from a god—the same god. And the act of begetting is not a distant allusion, but a lively comedy of immediate events. The king who emerges from this comedy is the first founder of a royal dynasty in Norse lands:[4] he represents the ultimate stage of the economic, social, political, cultural, and—I suggest—moral evolution of man.

[1] *Hkr* I. 26–83; *Skjald* B I. 7–14; *CPB* I. 244–51. See J. Turville-Petre. Rǫgnvaldr of Vestfold was cousin to Haraldr hárfagri. Baetke (*b*), 83–5 emphasizes the political purpose of *Ytal*: 'Stammbäume und genealogische Gedichte werden nicht zur Erbauung der Hofgesellschaft verfasst, sie dienen einem sehr realen Zweck, der meist politischer Natur ist. . . . Dass hinter dem Yt[al]. eine politische Tendenz steckt, scheint mir sicher, aber um sie zu bestimmen, müssten wir mehr über Rögnvald wissen.'

[2] *Hkr* I. 21, 22, 44, 108, 207, 208, 280; *Fagrsk* 121; *SnE* 91, 93, 94, 98, 149, 166; *Skjald* B I. 60–2; *CPB* I. 252–4. For the best modern edition, based on a fresh examination of all the MSS., with introduction, commentary and English translation, see Davidson 31–159.

[3] See Pseudo-Fredegarius, *Liber Historiae Francorum* I, II (340–3); Nennius, *Historia Britonum* X, XI; Faral 7 f. (anonymous *Historia Britonum*), 73 ff. (Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Historia Regum Britanniae*). These Christian authors are not concerned to mention Aeneas' divine mother.

[4] See commentary to 49/1.

B. **The king as crown of the three estates**

While, it would seem, the climax of the poem is a genealogical one, the poet of *Rígsþula* has made his genealogical theme the occasion to play with a multiplicity of mythological motifs in a way that Þjóðólfr and Eyvindr do not. In presenting the divine descent of kings as only one branch of the divine descent of all humanity, *Rígsþula* joins two ancient myths into one: a myth of Heimdallr and a myth of Óðinn. Heimdallr is progenitor of all mankind in its different estates—*meiri ok minni*, as the poet of *Vǫluspá* says (1). His teaching is of procreation, afforesting the earth with family trees.[5] Óðinn is ancestor and patron only of aristocratic houses, of earls and kings. His teaching is of power, by wisdom, magic, and war. From the interplay of these two myths, which pull in opposite directions—the one élitist, the other egalitarian—springs the humorous irony of the poem, a social wit that makes it perennially up to date.

The complex theme is presented with ingenious simplicity.[6] With an airy repetitiveness the poet describes the begetting of the prototypes of the three classes of Norse society: Þræll the serf, Karl the farmer, and Jarl the nobleman. He lets parallel episodes and identical narrative phrases revolve like a merry-go-round; when the merry-go-round stops, we notice change. Progressively we notice the development, out of a chronological situation, of a sociological one. In three different houses, as a guest sharing the marital bed, the god—adopting the pseudonym Rígr, whose significance will soon become apparent—assists in the begetting of three physically different sons upon three human mothers of different age, so that Þræll is an old crone's child, Karl a vigorous middle-aged woman's child, and Jarl the child of a young and dazzling lady, modern in fashion and sentiment.

All three boys thrive prodigiously in their different lives. But, one day, for Jarl, as he practises his noble sports, the merry-go-round changes tune. The god himself approaches him. He teaches him runes, names him with his own name—Rígr—and acknowledges him as his son: *son kveðz eiga* (37/6). Then he spurs him to win land for himself—other people's land—and this Jarl does, instinctively and necessarily, by war—single-handed.

[5] See Tolley (*a*), 232–43 ('The Tree and Man'); UD (*i*), 666–9. To Óðinn, too, arboreal features cling: his mother was *Bestla*, 'Tree-Bark', his uncle *Bǫlþorn*, 'Evil Thorn', and the *barnstokkr*, 'tree-trunk of children' in the Vǫlsungs' hall was in his power (Hunke 68–71; *AR* § 586). In popular belief the tree was a help in childbirth: Carl Nielsen's mother, when he was about to be born, in heavy birth-pains fastened her arms round a tree and beat her head against the trunk (Nielsen 11).

[6] This simplicity has sometimes been blamed as illogical or self-contradictory (cf. Meissner (*c*), 116–17): where does Þír have her origins (10), or Hersir and his daughter (40)? We could point out that the divine spirit of Rígr may have inspired life in many other little cells of humanity around the earth, on innumerable other journeys, but this would introduce a tediousness to the fable that the poet has deliberately avoided. He juxtaposes beginnings and their developments, confident that his audience will appreciate his sleight of hand. On the criticism that Þræll has no master see commentary to 16/10: he exists before his masters.

All three youths acquire a fitting wife. Þræll and Karl have many sons and daughters and so become the founders of the generations of *þrælar* and of *karlar*. But here, for Jarl, the merry-go-round changes tune again. By his lady wife he has twelve sons (there is no mention of daughters)[7] and the focus falls upon the youngest, Konr Ungr. Like a fairy-tale youngest son, he is different from his brothers: an eccentric, an intellectual, a mystic even, and a mischievous challenger of the establishment. The science that the god taught his father now blossoms marvellously in him, as if it were 'in his blood'. He has the strength of eight men, but he is a gentle giant, and the war-like sports of his brothers (43/3–6) evidently do not satisfy him. He knows runes that save life and help life (44) and has an ear for the wisdom of the natural world, understanding the chatter of birds—such well-informed and prescient creatures (45/1, 48 – 9). He is not awed by his father, but challenges him at runes, as if it were a chess game or a wrestling match, and proves that he knows better moves, better tricks, deeper secrets than he—the secrets of peace, perhaps, rather than the secrets of war? So he inherits already—an unusual case of ultimogeniture—from his god-begotten father the two gifts the god had given his son: his own name, Rígr, and his own knowledge of runes.

What can he turn to next? Feeling no pricks of further ambition—deaf to the merry-go-round of the world's progress—this genius roams through bushland and wood aiming bolts at birds. A crow on a branch reproves such aimless delinquency against her own kind, and, being an Odinic bird, and feminine, tries to awake manly shame and aspiration in him: how can he be content with striking birds, when he could be hewing down armies? Does he not know of the great Vikings Danr and Danpr, skilled in seafaring and slaughter, and of their costly residences and ancestral estates far superior to anything Jarl and his family have? (48, 49)

What precise challenge the crow was to utter we do not know, because the next page of the MS. is lost, taking the rest of the poem with it. No doubt, mindful of her own economic interests in war, she would have repeated the advice of the god Rígr to Rígr Jarl: 'Go and win these ancestral estates for yourself' (cf. 37/7–10). What might Rígr Konr Ungr have replied to this? It would be in character for him to say that he neither envied nor wished to fight these superior sea-rovers—he was perfectly happy as he was. But if the crow slyly added: 'Danpr has a wise and lovely daughter, his only heir. Would you not like to win her?' the young man might be moved to action. (One of the promises of Saul, that moved David to fight Goliath,

[7] I am assuming that the omission of daughters is deliberate and not a textual error. The poet may not have wished to close the *Earl* section with a list of girls' names followed by *Þaðan eru komnar / iarla ætter* (cf. 13, 25) just at the moment when he is moving on to suggest that the progeny of *iarlar* may become kings by exogamy.

was that the king would give his daughter to the conqueror—and David asked to hear the promise twice; 1 Samuel 17: 23–7.)

But what action might Rígr Konr Ungr take? He might make war on Danr and Danpr: had they had a champion—a *berserkr* perhaps—he might even have overcome him, much as David overcame Goliath, with a single cast of his bird-bolt. The princess might then be offered as a bride to him, bringing with her the land that was to be Denmark. We have other legends of young princes in Scandinavia throwing off their sluggish habits of leisure and taking easily to war, in Offa and in Beowulf.[8]

Yet it might be more in character for Konr Ungr to be quite unlike his father Jarl in this respect, and to scorn war and waste no time on its clumsy brutality, but concentrate more directly on winning the lady. He could repeat the peaceful pattern of his divine grandfather. Travelling like him along *grœnar brauter* and coming like him incognito to an alien hall—whose doors are standing wide open—he could win his princess by *ráð*—though of a less archaic nature, perhaps, than his grandfather's. So the heiress would be betrothed, by her own will, to the charismatic stranger with the brilliant mind, divinely dispatched to be the archetypal *konungr* of the Norse-speaking world.[9]

We can see now why the god in the poem assumed the name Rígr when he walked on earth. No other name would be so fitting for him or his purpose, for Rígr means 'king' (in Irish), a fact that would certainly be known to the Norse audience of the poem (see commentary to 1/6). Rígr gives his name to Jarl as his own son, and Konr Ungr wins it as an inheritance—*þá ǫðlaðiz / ok þá eiga gat* (46/5–6)—from his father Jarl. Konr Ungr now bears two royal names, one given by human baptism, the other given by the god. *Rígr* expresses the king's god-given right to rule, as the god's heir and deputy, while *Konr Ungr*, 'Noble Young Scion'—a name we are meant to believe will become the title *Konungr*—expresses the high worldly rank that his noble human ancestry entitles him to. By the device of the two names of different linguistic origin the humanity and the divinity of the

[8] See Saxo IV. iv–v (Uffo, i.e. Offa); *Beowulf* 2183–9. In *Stjórn* 464, the shepherd-boy David planned to fight Goliath with his sling, *þviat hann hafði vaniz at fleygja til fugla steinum, þá er hann gætti hjarðar*, 'because he had trained himself to aim at birds with stones, while he was watching over the flocks'. The possibility that Konr Ungr won the princess without fighting is accepted by Finnur Jónsson (FJ (*a*), 191) and by Neckel (*b*), 116, though Jónsson sees no reason why, in that case, Konr Ungr should have won the kingdom (as the genealogies insist he did; see commentary to 49/1). We can only suppose that Dana, like Þrýð in *Beowulf*, held the right to decide. Other critics are mostly agreed that Konr Ungr *must* have fought. The situation would then resemble that which the dwarf outlines to Ruodlieb (*Ruodlieb* 548: Fragment XVIII): two rich kings, father and son, must be killed by the hero in war before the daughter–heiress can be won. It would not be uncharacteristic if the poet of *Rígsþula* preferred to diverge from such a story type.

[9] For the epic theme of the founding of a dynasty through marriage to an heiress who brings a realm as her dowry, see Marchello-Nizia 251–66 (esp. 252–4: 'Femme = Règne').

king—his 'two bodies', as later political theology describes them—are very neatly distinguished.[10]

C. The age of the political themes in *Rígsþula*

I have called *Rígsþula* perennially up to date, and indeed it is difficult to confine it to some particular historical moment in the Old Norse period when it might have been composed.

Scholars are not agreed on where and when to place the making of the poem. Some say the tenth century, a heathen period in most Norse lands: so Axel Olrik (writing in 1907) is convinced that 'the poem reveals to us the view of life and kingship held at the climax of the Viking Age, the tenth century, a period when Scandinavian and Westerner were about to blend'.[11] Einar Ólafur Sveinsson and Jónas Kristjánsson seem inclined to this view. Others—Andreas Heusler, Jan de Vries, Klaus von See—place *Rígsþula* in the twelfth or thirteenth century, as learned antiquarian speculation on class origins, or contemporary comment on the conflict for the Norwegian throne.[12]

Few Germanic scholars today trust *Rígsþula* as good evidence for pre-Christian Germanic political thought. Although it embodies in a most distinct form the concept of divinely begotten and divinely guided kingship, it has been left out of account in most recent discussions of Germanic kingship. Höfler expressly dismisses the evidence of *Rígsþula*. Speaking of the Norse tradition that the god Yngvi-Freyr was ancestor of the Swedish kings, and relating that tradition to Tacitus' account of Mannus, the human progenitor, son of the god Tuisto,[13] he emphasizes (I paraphrase) that in the case of both Yngvi and Mannus we have clear traces

[10] See Kantorowicz, esp. ch. 3, 'Christ-centred Kingship'.

[11] Olrik (*c*), 115–16, English trans. of (*b*), 56–7. Olrik's account of *Rík* contains many inaccuracies. For a correction of his view that there was an Irish tradition of the begetting of the human estates by a god, see the fine note of Thurneysen in Meissner (*c*), 116 n. 1.

[12] Sveinsson 291; Kristjánsson 213; Heusler (*a*), 281; *AL*² II. 127; von See (*a*). Meissner (*c*), 129–30, deliberately suspends decision: 'Wir werden uns mit einer unbestimmten zeitlichen ansetzung der Rígsþula bescheiden müssen, wobei es nicht so sehr darauf ankommt, eine zahl zu nennen, als den kulturstand zu bezeichnen, dem das gedicht entstammt. . . . altes und neues verschmilzt in diesem einzigartigen gedichte.'

[13] See Höfler 675. His reference to Tacitus is to *Germ* ii. In the same chapter Tacitus notes that 'some, with the freedom allowed in dealing with antiquarian matters, assert that there were many sons of the god and many names of the race . . . and that these names are genuine and ancient'. The divine descent of men would seem to be a notion to be played with at all times: so Plato was constrained to say (*Timaeus* 40D): 'As concerning the other divinities [i.e. the anthropomorphic gods of traditional religion], to know and declare their generation is too high a task for us; we must trust those who have declared it in former times: being, as they said, descendants of gods, they must, no doubt, have had certain knowledge of their own ancestors' (see Cornford 138–9). Most valuable and judicious surveys of work in the field are given by McTurk (*a*) (to 1974) and (*c*) (to 1994). Also outstandingly helpful is Binchy.

of a tradition of divine descent going back more than a thousand years. So long a survival indicates how seriously such traditions were taken. Essentially, these traditions affirm that the kings, as well as their entire peoples, believed that they bore something of divine substance in themselves, and that they could pass this on to their descendants—a conception obviously fundamental to the way in which such cultures would judge and value themselves, to their 'anthropology' and intellectual climate. In a community sharing this bond with the god, the kings appear as *primi inter pares*—particularly near to the divine origin. Presumably, if people thought about it more closely, this primacy was imagined on analogy with primogeniture. Yet speculations of this kind are not extant—for the Eddic *Rígsþula* is rather to be regarded as a poetic confection (*Kunstdichtung*) than as a direct expression of belief.

Yet if we bear in mind that so much of our evidence for Germanic notions about the origins of the human tribes and their kings comes from poetic sources—Tacitus himself tells us that his story of Mannus was derived from ancient songs, 'for that is the only form of chronicle' the ancient Germans had—then it would seem to be illogical to value the testimony of Tacitus and dismiss that of *Rígsþula* on the grounds that it is only a poem. Precisely because it is a poem—extant, when Tacitus' sources are not—we may be able to use it to identify and understand the '"anthropology" and intellectual climate' of its composition. For so succinct and seemingly light a poem, the burden of themes that *Rígsþula* carries is quite astonishing. If we examine the analogues that we can find for these themes, and attempt to reconstitute, as it were, the poet's inherited material, then we may throw some light on his poem's historical origins.

D. Analogues to the political themes in *Rígsþula*

Theme I: The progress of man

Rígsþula offers a swift charade of social evolution. To underline the accelerating growth of his theme, the poet makes his key word *meirr*, 'more'. Each dwelling the god comes to is finer than the last, each pair of parents richer, each offspring more masterful.

In the first dwelling (*hús*) a white-haired couple sit by the hearth, doing nothing, in the manner of the very old. These are the ancestors, Great-grandfather and Greatgrandmother. Their bare life is sketched with a minimum of words—the hearth, the white hair, and the touch of decorum in the old woman's covered head. Their food is plain: broth and a coarse-ground loaf. The son the old woman bears has, even as a boy, all the features of age. The description that the poet, respectfully, did not give of

the parents is lavished on the son: the wrinkled hands, the knotted knuckles, the back bent with labour—as well as the unrefined features and fingers of early, unpolished man. But Þræll has Rígr's new-born life in him, and by his obsessive labour he keeps the family hearth warm—gathering brushwood all day. Þræll's own children—lumpish, gawky, and loud—are as vigorous as he, and, as there are more of them, their skills multiply the more they work—fencing, manuring, tending pigs and goats, digging peat—more fuel for their growing hearth.

In the second dwelling (*hǫll*) a neat, industrious couple are sitting, he carpenting, she cloth-making: Grandfather and Grandmother, in the prime of life. The red-haired, rosy boy that Grandmother bears leads a life of greater enterprise than Þræll and his kin—harnessing oxen, making ploughs, building wagons, to serve his harvests. His sons' names show the dignified and efficient society that they have created, broad-shouldered house-owners with impressive beards and capable hands. His daughters' names show pride in marital status and a certain independence of mind, a freedom to develop as they will—brisk, quick-tongued, modest, or vain—a lively range of middle-class girls.

In the third dwelling (*salr*) that the god enters, a leisurely couple sit gazing blissfully into each other's eyes. He perfects his weapons, she her dress—pulling tight the sleeves the better to display the lovely shape of her arms. Here are Father and Mother, young, rich, and contemporary. The boy that Mother bears is bright-skinned and blond, with fierce serpent's eyes. He becomes magnificent in war and conquest, as the god directs. His sons, presented in order of their birth, personify maleness, aristocracy, kinship, inheritance: 'Son','Heir', 'Kinsman', 'High Kind'.

So we see the god assisting at the begetting of progressively more and more sophisticated types of humanity. It is not, however, the god who causes this progressive 'refinement', but mankind itself, through its growth in numbers and experience and the increasing fruits of its own labour. The god planned the self-continuation of man when he arranged, in the remote age of the world, for Þræll to be born—the labouring foundation of human society. Time then establishes the generations of thralls—

Þaðan eru komnar
þræla ætter (13)

—and at once Rígr walks again (14), stepping precisely—*réttar brauter*—into the next thriving scene of human progress, just when the theatre is ready for him. In the 'generation' between the Greatgrandparents and the Grandparents, a second estate of society has begun to grow up, crowned by Afi and Amma. They, and Rígr, perpetuate it—

Þaðan eru komnar
karla ætter (25)

—and the god treads his right path again (26). The second estate has reached its point of evolutionary change by the time Mother holds her elegant dinner party *à trois* (31, 32).

The third estate reaches its point of evolutionary change—I suggest—at the crossroads of choice between war and wisdom, a choice that faces Rígr Konr Ungr. Since he has overcome his war-like parent by his greater command of wisdom, I surmise that it is he who, in the lost conclusion of the poem, determines the evolutionary choice of the highest estate and guides the Danes into peace, away from their archaic, predatory life of Vikings roving the seas and rejoicing in the wounds they inflict (48). A profound cultural change indeed.

I know of no near analogue to this analysis of human progress by the poet of *Rígsþula*. It is woven of many thoughts: some rising in the poet's mind from contemporary historical awareness, some from age-old speculations and modes of thinking, that he had grown up with.

(i) *Historical patterns*

There is a certain economic realism in the poet's picture of social wealth increasing with the increase of the human population: for wealth is based on labour. The early settlers of Iceland must have been particularly aware of this. They brought many *þrælar* with them. If you have no oxen for your plough, you can always yoke *þrælar* to it; alternatively, you can make your thralls the overseers of your estates, as the wealthy Geirmundr heljarskinn did.[14]

Rank follows wealth. In Anglo-Danish England in the early eleventh century laws provided that a *ceorl* could attain the rank of *þegn* if he possessed five hides of land, or a merchant if he made three profitable voyages.[15] Social mobility had 'accelerated steadily' in the three disturbed centuries preceding the Norman Conquest. To the contemporary world such upward mobility might be strikingly evident, as the power of the king and the Church grew, calling for more men in the higher social grades, and individuals rose from one class to another—from Ái's to Afi's to Faðir's estate.[16] Certainly the legalistic fragments attributed to Wulfstan on the thriving of thralls to thanehood and churls to earldoms seem haunted by

[14] See *Landn* 43, 154.
[15] See Liebermann I. 458; Stenton (*a*), 389.
[16] See Runciman 3–30. There is, of course, at the same time, downward mobility, but this is not relevant to the poet's theme. In an equally disturbed period, Langland, as a satirist, notes the labourers who demand *haute cuisine* and the knights' sons who become ploughmen (*Piers Plowman* B VI. 309–13, C VI. 73).

the ideal of social advancement.[17] In a more rigid society in which social mobility no longer occurred—as in England after the end of the eleventh century—it might not have occurred to any poet either to use an upward-spiralling pattern of social mobility for his fable of the origins of estates (see *Theme III* below).

(ii) *Mythological patterns*

One age-old speculation—a mythological concept—may have influenced the poet when he schematically linked human generations with progress. The descending scale from great-grandmother to grandmother to mother is used in the poem to represent the ages of the world, not in the familiar learned terms of the loss of a Golden Age, or the Fall of Man, but, on the contrary, in terms of man's ascending improvement. He grows better, not worse, materially and intellectually. This has, to my knowledge, its closest echo in the widespread cosmological notion that the earliest living beings in the world, the cosmic giants—such as Ymir—or the earth-born Titans—such as Cronos—or the primordial engendering water-demons—such as Tiamat—are superseded by their own descendants, who become gods. These descendants form a new 'estate', with higher powers, subtler minds, than the ancestors they outclass and kill. Such gods are Óðinn, Zeus, Marduk.[18]

In the human world of *Rígsþula* the theme of one generation outclassing another appears without antagonism: ancestry is a revered debt. There are, nevertheless, despite this great difference, certain shades of resemblance between the aged great-grandparents, as the poet portrays them, and the traditional Norse giants, that reinforce the thematic parallel. Ái and Edda belong to the most ancient age of the human world, as the giants belong to the most ancient age of the cosmos. They are the oldest ancestors of human life, as the giants are the oldest ancestors of the gods. In the stillness of their old age—*lítt megandi*, like Askr and Embla in *Vǫluspá* 17, who also must wait for the gods to rescue them from impotence—they seem on the brink of

[17] See Bethurum in Wulfstan (*a*), 69–87 ('Wulfstan as Archbishop'). The use of the past tense in these legalistic fragments (see Liebermann I. 456, in contrast to I. 458, II. 32 c) is remarkable, more conditioned to homily than to law; for example: *Hit wæs hwīlum on Engla lagum . . . gif ceorl geþeah, þæt hē hæfde fullīce fīf hīda āgenes landes, cirican 7 kycenan, bellhūs 7 burhgeat, setl 7 sundernote on cynges healle, þonne wæs hē þanon forð þegenrihtes weorðe* ('It was once the case according to the English laws, that, if a *ceorl* prospered so that he had fully five hides of his own land, a church and a kitchen, a bell-house and walled entrance gate, a seat and special office in the king's hall, then he was from then on entitled to the rights of a *þegn*'). On the nostalgic tone of the lines, see Stenton (*a*), 390 n. 2. Wulfstan, Archbishop of York 1002–23, contributed to the drafting of Cnut's laws after the Danish conquest of England in 1016 (see Jost ch. 4, 'Cnut und Wulfstan', and references; see also n. 59).

[18] A narrative statement of the killing of Ymir by Óðinn and his two brothers is given by Snorri (*SnE* 14); elsewhere we have only allusions to Ymir's corpse (see commentary to *Vsp* 3/2). Hesiod, *Theogony* 477–506, tells of the slaying of Cronos by Zeus. For Marduk's slaying of Tiamat, see Pritchard 66–7. On Óðinn's missing genealogical links with Ymir see commentary to *Vsp* 4/1.

inhabiting already—as the giants do—the chthonic realm of the dead. They sit symbolically by the hearth, the heart of the family, where, in the most archaic times of human society, they would be buried and venerated as benign spirits—*lares* guarding the fortunes of their descendants. The poet shows that this hearth is the focus of Þræll's devoted toil (9). In this the poet is probably not being simply imaginative and inventive, but prompted by archaic social tradition associated with the oldest class, the 'old house' of the serfs (see commentary to 16/10). In Roman times also it was the slave class who played the most prominent part in the festivals honouring the *lares*. These were the only festivals in which the slaves independently brought offerings and feasted without the presence of their master.[19] They were also in midwinter, when men would most need their fuel for their hearths.

Greatgrandmother has one other link with the giant world: she is fecund in old age, like *in aldna* in the Iron Forest, who gave birth to the numerous offspring of the cosmic wolf Fenrir (*Vǫluspá* 39). An aged mother is an unnatural thing and may well be expected to produce a monster, just as

> the foul witch Sycorax, who with age and envy
> was grown into a hoop,

produced a Caliban.[20] Very different is the biblical lore that an aged mother may, by God's will, produce a rare and beautiful son—an Isaac, or a John the Baptist.

Þræll, of course, is no monster, but he has the disfigurements endemic to old age and poverty and hard work that might make him and his unlovely children seem almost monstrous in the mocking eyes of those born later to better fortunes. Mocking names are another burden that Þræll's kin shares with the giants—'Thistlebeard', 'Sootface', 'Slowcoach'—and the giantesses—'Hangjaw', 'Hairyfingers', 'Grittingteeth'.[21]

[19] For the archaic connection between the hearth and the cult of the ancestors see *Der kleine Pauly* s.vv. *Lares*, *Compitalia*, *Herd*; *Reallexikon* s.v. *Herd*; Bächtold-Stäubli s.v. *Herd* § 4; Elton, ch. 8, esp. 206–13; *AR* §§ 135, 256, 287; Levy 6 ('. . . the remarkable fact is now long established that this creation of a home [i.e. in caves, where the ashes of fires indicate the domestic hearth] was not confined to the living family or group. The . . . bodies of Mousterian men . . . were buried in trenches laboriously excavated in the floors of their caves, under conditions which leave no doubt that the living believed in their continued existence'). In an early Anglo-Saxon hut the skeleton of a man is buried, with knife and ivory comb, under the living-room floor (Hodgkin I. 223–5). On the religious symbolism of fire and hearth see Dumézil (*e*) 27–40 (esp. 28, on the identification of Vesta with Terra, and the hearth-fire as 'la preuve, en quelque sorte, de la possession du sol'; 30, on the hearth as matrix; 36–7, on fire as an image of life renewed after death).

[20] Shakespeare, *The Tempest* I. ii. 258 f.

[21] Þistilbarði, Hrímnir, Ganglati; Hengikepta, Loðinfingra, Grottintanna, in *Þulur* (*Jǫtna heiti*, *Trǫllkvenna heiti*), *Skjald* B I. 658–60. See also commentary to 2/10.

(iii) *Patterns of class portraiture*

The progress of man in *Rígsþula*, rising from the lowest to the middle to the loftiest estate, is lit by details that identify the change of class. Prosperity changes style with its degree. The heavy loaf that Edda baked is discarded for the fine-milled wastel bread to please the delicate digestions of Móðir's guests. The well-swathed and -pinned shoulders of Amma are succeeded by Móðir's low and snowy neckline. The babies change complexion, from swarthy, to ruddy, to white, and their new-born eyes, heavy with sleep—I would conjecture—from the ancestry of toil, in the lowest estate, are wakeful and wavering in the middle estate—like those of ordinary babies at birth—but imperiously focused in the highest. All three are sprinkled with water in an identical baptismal rite, but then wrapped in different grades of cloth, from coarse linen to silk. Daughters-in-law show a particularly interesting development with prosperity: the serf-girl is by far the freest. She makes her own sunny way on foot through the mud to Þræll's home, and settles herself in the middle of his bench with the confident centrality of Rígr himself. She chooses her husband for herself—once they have talked together and told each other about themselves—and they make their bed together with decisive equality. Such liberty is not for the upper classes. An unspecified control—'they'—arranges the marriages of the brides of Karl and Jarl, and the girls are driven by wagon to their new homes to bow their heads modestly beneath the bridal veil. They have the freedoms that possessions give—Karl's betrothed comes with her keys dangling at her belt—but they do not dispose of themselves.[22] As differences proliferate, the common mankind of the three classes is steadily re-expressed through the identical human situations that bind them—the houses, doors, meals, beds, babies, baptism, swaddling bands, work, marriage, and children again.

If we look at these details of class distinction, we can see that most are based on the obvious differences between the life of the rich and the life of the poor, of the courtly and the burgherly, of the slave and the free-born. From other medieval estates literature we are familiar with the dirty-skinned peasant—*rusticus*—with scurfy hair, pushing his plough, and the smooth-shaven *clericus*, aping the manners of the court; familiar also with the sharp-eyed enumeration of those details of dress that signify rank, or pretension, especially in times when certain luxuries in material or style were restricted by law to the upper classes.[23] But this form of literature, often heavily weighted with satire, is commonly confined to the contemporary 'field full of folk' of the writer's own society, and more concerned with the social degeneration that has led to it than the social progress.

[22] On Christian limits on coercion see Noonan.

[23] On estates satire see the fine account of sources and secondary literature in J. Mann, esp. 295–322. On prohibited clothing see also *Jónsbók* 115–16, 'Um skrúðklæða burð' ('On the wearing of fine clothing').

The most minute analysis of class distinctions in Europe, tirelessly accumulating details of comparative wealth, is found in early Irish laws, especially the *Críth Gablach* ('Law of Status', *c.* 700). Jean Young was the first to relate Irish laws to *Rígsþula*, noting 'how great a fascination the division of society into various grades exercised over the Irish mind'.[24] The author of the *Críth Gablach*, concerning himself mainly with the free laity, meticulously defines the grades of men in relation to each other, in an attempt to establish systematically the basis upon which their status—and so their legal value—rested. A man of 'sevenfold property status' would have 'seven cows with their bull, seven pigs with a domestic boar, seven sheep . . . He has a fourth share of a plough, . . . a goad, a halter, a cooking pot . . .'. The size of his house appropriate to his status may be described in precise detail: 'It is larger than seventeen feet; it is of wicker-work to the lintel. . . . Between every two beds shall be an oaken plank . . .'. Another, richer, farmer has 'a house of twenty-seven feet and an outhouse of fifteen feet, . . . a share in a mill, so that he may grind for his family and guests'. Also the food that different grades of men eat is specified: one has milk and curds only, and no butter; another has 'butter with condiments'.[25] In *Rígsþula* we can, distantly but distinctly, hear the harmonics of these systematic, theoretical, legal constructions, presenting mounting social difference within identical categories of reference. By their pragmatic richness of material the Irish status-law provisions suggest—whether intentionally or not—the vigorous possibility, or at least the vigorous dream, of social advancement.

(iv) *Outmoded patterns of social theory*

In the acceleration of social rank in *Rígsþula* there is one sign of change that some scholars would not relate to the 'progress of man' but to an archaic form of Indo-European class symbolism; namely, the changing colour of the human complexion with the social class: Þræll is black

[24] Young 100. Young refers particularly to the laws of fosterage where the clothing colours of the different ranks of sons are elaborately itemized, and their food and their finery (*Senchus Mor* II. 147–51). The *Críth Gablach* is edited, with trans., in the *Brehon Law Tracts* 297–334; a later trans. is that of MacNeill, and a later edition that of Binchy. For a precisely documented and most illuminating discussion see Charles-Edwards. Vestigial itemization of property in relation to social class is found in Anglo-Saxon laws (see n. 17 above, references to Liebermann).

[25] In the Middle Irish text 'The Settling of the Manor of Tara', at the great feast of Diarmait son of Cerbal food of different kinds was served to different ranks: 'choice fruit and oxen and boars and flitches' to kings, ollaves, and free noble elders; 'red meat from spits of iron, and bragget and new ale' for warriors; 'heads-and-feet' to charioteers and jugglers and the common people; 'veal then and lamb and pork' for young men and maidens; see Best for full text and translation. I thank Máire Herbert for this reference. See also Reinhard ch. 5, esp. 93 n. 2.

(*svartr*), Karl is red (*rauðr*), and Jarl is a radiant blond (*bleikt . . . hár, biarter vangar*). Dimézil first noted the parallel between the colour hierarchy in *Rígsþula* and the colours that were used as symbols of the Indian caste system: white for the priestly brahmin caste, red for the warrior caste, black/blue for the cultivators of the land (a colour later given to the servile caste).[26] The Sanskrit term for caste, *varṇa*, itself signifies 'colour'. The archaic society to which this colour symbolism related was seen as static.

Clear traces of this colour-caste symbolism survive in other Indo-European sources. By the time of modern record it is found even in non-Indo-European. There is an African fabliau, told by Frobenius in his 'Black Decameron', which, in its use of the colour symbolism of status, reads like a parody of *Rígsþula*.[27] The comparison is illuminating: Simoa, trickster and sexual daredevil, needing money, stands in the market-place naked, his penis painted with three different colours, blue, red, and white. For pieces of gold, he offers to beget upon the ladies different classes of offspring: if only the blue tip is used (and the payment is small), a herdsman is begotten; if the red central section is used (for a greater fee), a village headman will result, and if the last section, white, is used, and royally paid for, the lady will be the mother of a regional overlord. The ladies are naturally anxious to pay the highest fee.

Here again we see, though in a less conventional form, the link between 'more' wealth and 'more' rank, and the mothers' husbands cuckolded in a good cause. But all the babies fathered by Simoa were no doubt expected to be more or less the same colour. In the tale of Simoa, the colour associated with the babies is only symbolic; it is not in the pigment of their skins. In *Rígsþula* the colour of the babies is made part of a conventional class portraiture: together with the eyes that show breeding and the fingers formed by work, coarse or fine (cf. 8, 40), we have the un-Nordic swarthiness of autochthonous populations, the rubicund strength of the ox-taming farmer, the golden hair of Viking heroes—all quite at home in the world of

[26] See Dumézil (*f*) 7 f. In many texts that Dumézil cites in his numerous articles on colour-class symbolism the situation is never as simple as in the single poem *Rígsþula*, since his texts reflect centuries of changing conditions (e.g. the development of a fourth class). Traces of the 'ancien système' of three colours and three classes in Indian tradition, he notes (n. 1), are to be found in the rules of Vedic domestic ceremonies from the 10 c. to the 6 c. BC: in the *Grihya-Sūtra* of Gobhila II. 120, in Kāṇḍikā 7, on the selection of a site for the building of a house, 'the earth should be white, if he is a Brâhmaṇa, red if he is a Kshatriya [warrior], black if he is a Vaiśya [tiller of the soil]'. The same prescriptions are found in the *Khādira-Grihya-Sūtra*, II. 428. Dumézil can hardly be right (*f*) 3) when he considers Þræll and his descendants as heterogeneous to the classes above him. The poet shows that Þræll is of the same *genus* by expressing his relationship to the other two classes in family terms: his class provides the great-grandparents of all.

[27] Leo Frobenius, *Das schwarze Dekameron*. I have only been able to obtain an English selection of this rare work, trans. P. and K. Ross. For this fabliau see p. 275, in the collection of Kabyle tales, *Ainichthem*. For reference to an Arabic legend of God's creation of the three races of man from white, black, and red material, see de Vries (*c*), 55 and n. 18.

other medieval Norse sources.[28] The complexions accord, with a certain naturalism, with the kind of life each class leads, the food it eats, the ancestry it inherits—with the mud and the pigswill and the sunburnt labour (cf. 10, 12), or with the clean leisure of swimming and chess (cf. 42). By the progress of man, and the refinement of human conditions that it brings, the dark will grow light. So the poem implies.

Since the complexion colours, black, red, white, form so unforced a part of the Norse character of the poem, why should we relate them to archaic Indo-European social traditions? Might not the colour parallelism be fortuitous? For two reasons it seems to me improbable that it should be so:

1. Evidence adduced by Dumézil suggests that in Indo-European a colour symbolism of classes originally served to express a functional analogy that was believed to exist between divine and human society: each estate had a particular function in society, linked to a particular type of deity. A colour identified this bond, displayed in street hangings or garments or hair-dye. A Hittite priestess prays to the gods of a hostile city to come to the friendly sacrifices she has prepared for them, along three roads she has strewn with coloured cloth, one with white, one with red, one with blue. The three kinds of deity form the pantheon, and each kind is enticed to peace along its own ritual path of colour.[29]

Less rare is the evidence of the symbolic colours in clothing. White, with its associations of light, of heaven, of sanctity, is used for the vestments of druids, for the official cap—*albogalerus*—of the flamen Dialis of Jupiter. Red, with its martial associations of blood and rage, is the colour of the short cloak—*paludamentum*—that Roman generals wore on the Capitol, before leaving for war.[30]

[28] I offer a few examples of popular 'colour' traditions to compare with *Ríg*: (*a*) for Þræll's dark complexion, see commentary to *Hamð* 12/3. Slaves (*wēalas*—also signifying the Britons) are described as 'black' (*swearte*), and a slave-woman (*wāle*) as 'dark-haired' (*wonfeax*) in OE *Riddle* 12/4, 8 (*ASPR* III. 186). Kormakr is despised by a servant girl for his dark complexion (*Ambáttin kvað Kormák vera svartan ok ljótan*, *Korm* 210); (*b*) For Karl's high colouring, compare that of Óláfr Haraldsson—*rjóðr í andliti*—who, like Karl, had great physical energy—*íþróttamaðr mikill*—and was a skilled and critical craftsman—*hagr ok sjónhannarr um smíðir allar*—just as Karl must have been (22/4–7); *Hkr* II. 4. We may note also the trusty vigour of Robert the Red, son of a Danish fisherman, in *Havelok* 1687, 1889; (*c*) For Jarl's fairness, compare that of the Jómsvíking Sveinn Búason, who refused to let any *þræll* hold back his long golden hair—*gult sem silki*—for his execution, but insisted that a *hirðmaðr* should do so (*Jómsvíkinga Saga* 41, ch. 37). A head of long silky fair hair was attributed to Haraldr hárfagri, founder of the Norwegian royal line, by the author of *Fagrsk* 58, ch. 2; and in the prophetic dream of his father, Hálfdan the Black, the longest lock of hair that grew from his head 'conquered all the rest' by its beauty and bright fairness (*með ljósleik*), symbolizing St Óláfr Haraldsson, holiest and most radiant of Norway's kings (*Fagrsk* 58, ch. 1). Though this saint had, according to *Ágrip* 26, brown hair and a reddish beard, his predecessor St Óláfr Tryggvason had hair white in its blondness (*hvítr á hárslit allan*, *Ágrip* 22).

[29] Dumézil (*b*), 54–7, and (*e*), 47, cites and discusses this Hittite *evocatio* (in French translation) from J. Friedrich 42 (a book I have not been able to see).

[30] See Pauly–Wissowa and *Der kleine Pauly* s.vv. *albogalerus*, *paludamentum*. Dumézil (*e*), 56–7,

The symbolic colour of the human–divine class relationship is also manifested in the hair. The Germanic general Civilis, before a campaign against the Romans, let his hair grow long and dyed it red, 'in accordance with a barbarian vow'. He cut it only after achieving the slaughter of the legions.[31] In *Rígsþula* farmer Karl is red-haired. Þórr was the war-god of the Vikings who fought, settled, and farmed in Ireland and Russia: he too was red-haired—familarly called *hit rauða skegg*, 'Red Beard'—and, according to Lappish record, nicknamed 'Karl'.[32] Jarl is born flaxen-haired. He is the only acknowledged son of the figure Heimdallr–Óðinn–Rígr, the only one to be given the divine name. Only he reflects the paternity of Heimdallr, *hvítastr ása*, 'the whitest, most shining of the Æsir', the most holy of gods.[33]

Once human society had travelled so far historically from its divine begetting, a man might well have to use hair-dye to affirm the link with his deity. But in the ancient days of Rígr—our poet assures us—the class colour was naturally there, in the begotten body itself.

That a Norse god might 'possess' a specific social class of human beings is asserted with unequivocal clarity in *Hárbarðslióð* 24:

emphasizes that the symbolic values attributed to these colours in this way are such as can be 're-invented' everywhere at any time. How could it be otherwise? 'Il faut bien qu'il y ait, dans tout objet ou qualité employé comme signe, de quoi justifier l'usage qui en est fait.' Nevertheless, he assures us, the association of the three colours, white, red, blue/black, in a symbolic system, with the functional values he has defined, is extremely rare and found only in connection with the fundamentally tripartite IE societies. It is of comparative value to note that in other societies the colour-system white, red, black, can have quite different symbolic significance, not directly relating to class. In Black Africa (see Zahan 365–96) white commonly represents the otherworld of heaven, from which life comes (new-born babies are pale-skinned) and to which the dead go. It is also the king's symbolic colour, as he is closest to heaven. Red represents (on the analogy of pottery) the 'cooking' period between childhood and maturity, while black represents the fullness and splendour of maturity and authority.

Dumézil cannot point to any symbolic use of blue/black clothing comparable to that of the *albogalerus* and *paludamentum* (though the variant green, representing Venus–Flora, appears in early Roman chariot races beside the red and white of Mars and Jupiter; (*e*) 55). I suggest that the blue/black garments traditionally worn by a man in ancient Iceland who intended to kill an enemy may represent the symbolic colour of the Vanir, deities of the fertility of the black earth, priests of sacrifice (cf. *Hrafnkels Saga* 104, n. 3). The terrible Eumenides, subterranean daughters of Night, are black-clad and avenge crimes against fundamental human laws (matricide, incest) by poisoning the earth as punishment (see, *inter alia*, Aeschylus, *The Eumenides* 52, 352, 370, 780–7).

[31] Tacitus, *Historiae* IV. lxi. Livy, describing the ferocity of the Gauls in war, notes their flowing and red-tinted hair (*rutilatae comae*, XXXVIII. xvii. 3).

[32] On Þórr in Ireland and Russia see *AR* §§ 278, 418 and references there cited. The name of the Lappish thunder-god, Horagalles, is commonly accepted as a version of *Þórr karl* (Olrik (*a*), 46–7; E. O. G. Turville-Petre 84, 98, 299 nn.; *AR* § 419. The convention of adding *karl*, 'old fellow', affectionately after a personal name was common; see Fritzner s.v. *karl*). For Þórr as 'Red Beard' see *Óláfs Saga Tryggvasonar* of Oddr Snorrason 173–4. That farmers should worship a defending warrior god, such as Þórr, is seen also in the cult of *Mars pater* as purifier of the earth, promoter of crops, protector of oxen (for the invocations see Cato, *De Agri Cultura* CXLI; Dumézil (*c*), 28–30).

[33] See *Þrym* 15/2, *SnE* 32, commentary to *Lks* 20/1–8.

Óðinn á iarla,	*Óðinn has the earls*
þá er í val falla,	*who fall in the slaughter,*
en Þórr á þræla kyn.	*while Þórr has the tribe of thralls.*

Óðinn, who is speaking, mockingly degrades Þórr from his *karla kyn*, using the alliterative opportunity to give him the lowest class of all (though he knowingly greets him at the outset of the poem as *karl karla*, *Hárbarðslióð* 2/1). I have not succeeded in finding elsewhere in Dumézil's documentation a text that states so clearly the connection between a deity and a human class. The sophisticated use of the colour-class symbolism in *Rígsþula* suggests that the underlying themes were domestically familiar from olden times in Norse society, and had frequently been drawn upon as a source of wit.

2. A second reason for supposing that the Indo-European colour-class symbolism lies behind that in *Rígsþula*, is that the colour schema—black, red, white—applied to the babies' complexions must be the primary structure on which the remainder of the tripartite descriptive schema is based. No other descriptive motif involved exists in Norse sources in tripartite form. The other motifs have had to be developed by the Norse poet(s) in tripartite form in order to substantiate the class complexions of Þræll, Karl, and Jarl. For example, the babies have distinctive eyes, but in Norse tradition the only positive description of eyes in relation to social rank is found in the legendary aristocratic clans of Viking heroes.[34] Helgi the Vǫlsung is betrayed by his eyes, when he tries to disguise himself as a farmer's bondmaid—

'Hvǫss ero augo	*'Piercing are the eyes*
í Hagals þýio—	*of Hagall's bondmaid—*
era þat karls ætt,	*that is no commoner's kin*
er á kvernom stendr . . .'	*who stands at the quern . . .'*

(*Helgakviða Hundingsbana* II 2)

The farmer explains that 'she' is a captive Viking princess. So, in *Rígsþula*, a positive description of the eyes of the two lower classes has to be invented to supplement the bare negative comparisons which are all that tradition affords. The structural priority of the tripartite colour-class symbolism in the composition of the poem suggests that it is a concept that pre-existed the composition of the poem, and—since we have Indo-Euroean analogues—was not purely the product of Norse poetic invention.

At the same time, we may note as a sign of modernity in *Rígsþula* that the association of one kind of deity with one human class, and another with another, is already becoming otiose in the poem, although it is present.

[34] See Kroesen; commentary to 35/8.

Karl is red-headed, yet there is no role for Þórr in the poem. That warrior role has been invaded by Óðinn and his earls (and Óðinn has no colour associations in Norse). By contrast, the royal–divine blondness of Rígr Jarl correctly reflects the ancient colour symbolism of his function, which is itself integral to the poem.

Pursuit of analogues for *Theme I* suggests that three models may here have contributed to the structure of the poem: (*a*) the cosmological concept of primordial giants as the ancestors of the gods; (*b*) the legal—and, no doubt, popularly widespread—evaluation of social status in comparative terms of property; (*c*) a historical situation of upward social mobility in the poet's own society. The poet's dynamic concept of one class growing out of another—just as, he implies, one generation of a family grows out of another—breaks away completely from any earlier hieratic tradition the Norsemen may have known of a human society *ab origine* tripartite in its class structure, corresponding to the tripartite society of its gods. Observation appears to have made any such notion old-fashioned.

Theme II: The peripatetic guest and partner of wives: king and god

Rígsþula is built upon two figures, the ladder and the circle. Man moves up and—though not in this poem—down on the ladder. God circles around. *Theme II* is the circle.

The relevance of an early medieval Latin text to the composition of *Rígsþula* was noted by Nora Chadwick in 1955.[35] As far as I know, it has not been greatly discussed since then. It is an interpolation, hardly later than the ninth century, and possibly much earlier, by an Irish writer, in the text of Solinus, supplementing the brief description of the many islands round Britain. If you sail for two days from Scotland north towards Thyle, you come upon the Hebrides: 'five islands all told, whose inhabitants know no crops, but live on fish and milk. There is one king over all the islands, for, though they are numerous, all are separated only by narrow straits. The king has nothing of his own, but rather all the possessions of all his subjects. He is constrained to conformity by definite laws, and, lest avarice

[35] Chadwick 56–115, esp. 58, 108 ff. See Solinus 234–5: *Ebudes insulae quinque numero, quarum incolae nesciunt fruges, piscibus tantum et lacte vivunt. rex unus est universis, nam quotquot sunt, omnes angusta interluvie dividuntur. rex nihil suum habet, omnia universorum. ad aequitatem* certis legibus stringitur ac ne avaritia devertat a vero, discit paupertate iustitiam, utpote cui nihil sit rei familiaris, verum alitur e publico. nulla illi femina datur propria, sed per vicissitudines, in quamcunque commotus sit, usurariam sumit. unde ei nec votum nec spes conceditur liberorum.* (* for the translation of *aequitatem* some prefer 'justice'.) On the 'Irish interpolator of Solinus' see Mommsen in Solinus lxv for suggested dating. On Solinus (*c.* AD 250) see *Der kleine Pauly* s.v.: 'Tadelte man frühe S. wegen der schweren Fehler u. Verfälschungen des Plin., so treten heute die oft erstaunlichen Zusätze des S. zu Plin. hervor. . . . z. T. kommen sie aus unbekannter Quelle.' This would seem to be valid also for the interpolations Solinus's own text invited.

turn him from the right course, he learns justice by poverty, as one who has no private property, but is maintained at public cost. No woman is given him as his own, but, with continual change, he takes on loan whatever woman he is stirred by. Therefore he is not allowed to pray or hope for children.'

The Hebridean king must have travelled as a guest among the islands, distributing the burden of his upkeep among different homes, being expected to sleep—if he wished—with the wives or other womenfolk of his various hosts. Like the kings of Norway when they travelled in their realm, he would, no doubt, sleep with women of different classes, bond and free.[36]

This archaic royal behaviour in the Hebrides bears certain resemblances to that of Rígr in *Rígsþula*: the travelling from host to host without possessions on the journey; the ready *entrée* and hospitality in homes of different rank; the right to use the marital bed of others; the absorption of any offspring into the family of the host. Even the repetitive formality of Rígr's progress, and the straight correctness of his paths—*réttar brauter*—suggest a certain kinship with the legal constraints upon the king.

The explanation that springs to mind, to account for these similarities, is that the Hebridean king lives a ritual life as a surrogate god, binding his people together by his visitations and ensuring the continuance of their offspring, upon which their prosperity—their future—depends. Rígr's visiting of human homes represents a version of the desired pattern of divine behaviour which the royal Hebridean ritual life—tightly bound by law—was designed to copy.

There are other versions of this divine travelling. Three Germanic deities and an early Irish saint are characteristically associated with the peripatetic visitation of human society. Nerthus, Freyr, and St Brigida go by wagon. Óðinn goes on foot. Once a year, when the growth of the earth is beginning, the goddess Nerthus—*id est Terra mater*, Tacitus tells us[37]—is

[36] See Roger of Howden III. 272: '. . . it is the custom of the kingdom of Norway down to the present day that everyone who is recognized to be the son of any King of Norway, even though he be a bastard and born of a serving wench, can claim for himself as great a right to the kingdom of Norway as the son of a wedded King and one born of a free woman' (I cite the translation of Gathorne-Hardy). Roger was contemporary with Sverrir (†1202); his Chronicle ends in 1201.

[37] Tacitus, *Germ* xl. The interjection, *id est Terra Mater*, may stem from Tacitus himself, rather than from his informant. Picard, 174–5, notes that Tacitus may have been influenced in his portrayal of the Nerthus cult by the popularity in his day of the Phrygian cult of the Magna Mater, sponsored in Rome by the Quindecimviri, of whose priestly college Tacitus was a member. In the ceremony of the *lavatio*, on 27 March, the symbol of the goddess was drawn in a wagon by heifers to be bathed in a small tributary of the Tiber. Nerthus has close Nordic analogues—the same name as Njǫrðr, Freyr-like perambulations among her worshippers, nuptial bathing like Iðunn—so that it seems very unlikely that Tacitus' account of her festival on a Baltic island should be wholly based on his Roman knowledge of the Magna Mater. For the wheeling of a cult image round the inhabited countryside, to be worshipped with sacrifice, see the account of Athanaric's persecution of the Christians in Gothia, *c.* 370 (Sozomenus VI. 37. 13 (p. 296); trans. Hartrauft II. 374. The

drawn by two heifers round the countryside in her covered sacred *vehiculum*. She accepts lodging and entertainment—*hospitium*—from the rejoicing people. Freyr, for his wheeled ceremonial progress, has only the late burlesque testimony of *Flateyjarbók*.[38] Nevertheless, the traditions are valuable. In Sweden, as winter takes its course, Freyr's idol is drawn arduously by mountain paths in a snowstorm from one district to another, to perform the ceremonies of blessing the land for a good season (*árbót*). People rejoice to see their snow-conquering god eat and drink with them—he is impersonated by an impish Icelander 'on the run'—and they are especially pleased with the good omen for their future, that he has made his priestess pregnant. St Brigida rode, in the manner of Celtic princes, in a horse-drawn chariot round the plains of Ireland—*per campum Tethbe, . . . per campum Liffi*—healing, helping, and making happy; 'always moving, she dwells everywhere and nowhere' resplendent with joy: '*quotidie lætitiam præstat mihi*'. Her feast day comes when winter is ending, on February 1.[39]

The deities who visit on wheels are of course meant to be recognized as gods and fêted. But Óðinn goes incognito, with secret purposes, *stígandi*, like Rígr. He is *Vegtamr*, *viator indefessus*, the god-*Gestr* who will step into any home: a wizard, bringing the fertility of his science—his *fræði*—into men's minds.[40]

All these peripatetic figures in their constant rounds of visitation parallel the circling image of the sun 'travelling', bringing beneficence to men with the physical conception of fresh life. Each figure is associated with one or more of the known symbols or mythological roles of the sun—the wheel, the car, the horse, the undying flame, the single eye, the engulfment by the wolf, the sovereignty of the world, marital union with the earth—as well as the perpetual motion of travel. Like Freyr and the Hebridean *rex*, Rígr bears a title of overlordship over men, and it is this aspect of his solar affinity that forms the climax of the poem, the creation of the first human king.[41]

With the solar theme of sovereignty, another traditional theme comes

passage is discussed by E. A. Thompson 31). Note also the *Indiculus* xxviii (*c.* 750), which has the chapter heading (only): *de simulacro quod per campos portant*.

[38] *Flat* I. 337–9. For Freyr's power to defy snow, cf. *Gísl* ch. 18.

[39] See *Acta Sanctorum* February I, 118–34. I am much indebted to the vivid introduction to the *Vitae S. Brigidae* of Berschin, 230–8, and to the article by McGrath. The motif of flame and fire continually recurs in Brigida's adventures, and she hangs her washing on a sunbeam. She even becomes one-eyed, like Óðinn, after praying to be disfigured, to avoid the imposition of a bridegroom (her eye is restored when she takes the veil).

[40] See UD (*i*), 663–4; *Vsp Introd* II on stanza 27.

[41] On Freyr's name, 'Lord', see Green 19–55. For illuminating references to Irish traditions of the sun see O'Rahilly 58–9, 286–307 ('The Traveller of the Heavens'), 520–1. The relationship between the sun and sovereignty is most explicit in Egyptian record, the sun-god Re being called the first king of Egypt: 'Kingship, in Egypt, was as old as the world. It dated from the day of creation', and the sun-god is the creator (see Frankfort (*a*), 16–17, 50–1). The kings addressed in historical texts are referred to as gods (see Pritchard 229b, 234b, 235a, 260a).

into play that is relevant to *Rígsþula*. If the sovereign sun weds the earth, then all that grows from her—including man—is of the sun's begetting.[42] To secure the perpetuation of this primordial begetting, the sun, the procreator, must continually be reintroduced in the world of time: as it is for the earth in summer, so for man and wife in the bed. The poet of *Rígsþula* clearly underlines this fact in his refrain stanzas. The keyword of time and progress in the poem, *meirr*, is linked obtrusively with a second keyword, *miðr*—'in the middle of the road . . . of the benches . . . of the dishes . . . of the bed' (3, 4, 5, 6, etc.). The crescendo of centrality leads to the centre of the bed, to the intervention of the god himself in human procreation. 'Man and the sun generate man'[43] within the home.

Divine intervention in the marriage bed is most clearly re-enacted in an Indian wedding ritual, when, for the first three nights after the wedding, a staff of wood, anointed and beribboned, is placed between the married couple. It represents the Gandharva—'the divine and solar Eros'[44]—and is made from sappy wood from fig or other fruitful trees among which the Gandharva spirits live. The Gandharva serves the married couple, for Buddhist texts say that it is by the coming together of three things that pregnancy occurs: the father, the mother, and the Gandharva, 'who stands ready'. Like Rígr–Óðinn, the Gandharva plays the role of *Þriði*, 'Third One', in the marital trio.[45] Like Rígr–Heimdallr, the Gandharva is embodied in the wood of a tree. By placing himself in the marital bed of every human class, Rígr becomes 'related by marriage to each and every home' (*Hyndluljóð* 43). When Loki derides Frigg (*Lokasenna* 26) for putting her arms round two husbands, I suggest that he is alluding to her ritual situation as wife-and-mother goddess, who must embrace both the 'Desire'

[42] For a finely documented demonstration of this theme see Coomaraswamy (*a*), 46–7, 50 n. 13.

[43] Coomaraswamy (*a*), 50 n. 13, cites this sentence from Aristotle, *The Physics* II. 2. The sentence stands out stylistically from its context (*ἄνθρωπος γὰρ ἄνθρωπον γεννᾷ καὶ ἥλιος*), and the editors suppose a hiatus following it in the text. But Aristotle was perhaps citing a popular saying (cf. *Hamlet* II. ii: 'Let her not walk i'th' sun' lest she conceive)?

[44] Coomaraswamy (*a*), 50 n. 13. On the Gandharva in the marital context, see Oldenberg 92 n. 1, 248–9. On the three nights of marital chastity ('Tobiasnächte') see *AR* § 140 and references in n. 2 (I.187). Meissner (*c*), 126, notes the modest reserve and 'fairy-tale-like' avoidance of explicit statement in the phrasing of the god's conduct in the bed (5, etc.). The poet knows that he is representing a religious 'mystery', but at the same time is enjoying the humour of the contrast between the mystery and the solidity of the setting.

[45] The aptness of the Óðinn-name *Þriði* in the earth kenning *biðkván Þriðja*, 'waiting wife of Þriði', *Hák* 6/4, is pointed out by Davidson 500–1. It is interesting to note a certain ambivalence in the husband's attitude to the Gandharva in Indian tradition: he is glad to see him gone after three nights. In a wedding prayer (cited by Oldenberg) he begs him to seek another lady: 'Move away from here—we give you our devotion—but let the wife unite with her husband'. In an old Swedish wedding custom the ambivalence expresses itself as a tug-of-war: a freshly uprooted tree was brought to the house of the wedding; the married folk pulled to bring it in, the unmarried pulled to keep it out (Hammarstedt 490–1). I would suggest that the sword that is placed in legend and romance between two lovers is the secular descendant of the tree-god in the bed.

of her human husband, *Vili*, and the sacred presence of the 'Hallowed One', *Véi*. This ritual situation is evidently an archaic one in Norse.

The custom of offering an honoured guest the host's wife to sleep with has been widespread, but, except in *Rígsþula* and *Lokasenna* 26, I have not found instances where the host remains in the bed as well. This alone would seem to point to the symbolic nature of *Þriði*'s presence.

Before Rígr comes to the three couples, they have no children.[46] His *ráð* brings them children, opens the doors of conception for them. Behind the poet's invention here, there would seem to be the analogue of a very ancient social tradition, that of the *droit de seigneur*, by which the superior man, the king, the surrogate god, took on himself the task of opening the doors of conception, destroying the menace of virginity.[47] So Gilgamesh demanded to be first with every bride: 'the king to be first and the husband to follow, for that was ordained by the gods from his birth, from the time the umbilical cord was cut'.[48] And Conchobar, High King of Ulster, slept with every nubile girl in his realm, before her marriage.[49]

Gilgamesh was resented for his seigneurial tyranny. For Rígr, by contrast, all the human homes stand open when he comes—*hurð var á gætti, . . . hurð var á skíði, . . . var hurð hnigin*. Had the doors been shut, he would not have entered, because he was not wanted. The goddess *Syn*, 'Refusal', would have kept him out: *hon gætir dura í hǫllinni ok lýkr fyrir þeim, er eigi skulu inn ganga*, 'she guards the door of the hall and shuts it against those who are not to enter'.[50] A woman could shut the door against the spirit of conception. If she wanted no more children, she should shut the door of her house with the feet of her new-born child[51]—otherwise the spirit might come walking through again—like Rígr—from outside. But in *Rígsþula* the god's visits are as welcome to the people as those of Nerthus and Freyr, and his terrestrial journey, like theirs, begins as winter ends, *grœnar brauter*, 'on green ways' (1/2).

[46] Their generational names relate to the world's ages: Edda is not 'literally' mother of Amma, only symbolically so.

[47] This theme is most clearly seen in Norse in the deflowering of Brynhildr by Sigurðr on behalf of Gunnarr, as told in *Piðrek* II. 308–10, ch. 228–9.

[48] *Gilgamesh*, trans. Sandars, 66.

[49] See Thurneysen (*a*), 525. As a sign of reverence the men of Ulster gave their wives to Conchobar, when he stayed the night with them. I am not bringing into the discussion, as it is not in the direct line of argument, the frequent theme in Irish legend of the begetting of heroes by gods upon the wives of kings or noblemen, and the common Celtic situation of the 'boy without a father'. Richly documented discussion is given by Chadwick.

[50] *SnE* 39. The sexual symbolism of doors and locks is widely found (cf. Song of Solomon 5: 2–6; Gottfried von Strassburg, *Tristan* 17001–5: '*wan swer zer Minnen tür în gât, / den man von innen niht în lât, / daz enist der minnen niht gezalt, / wan daz ist valsch oder gewalt. / Durch daz ist dâ der Minnen tor . . .*' ('when anyone enters at Love's door who has not been admitted from within, it cannot be accounted Love, since it is either Deceit or Force. Love's gate is there to prevent it . . .', trans. Hatto, 265).

[51] Bächtold–Stäubli s.v. *Tür* col. 1198.

Pursuit of the analogues of *Theme II* uncovers no Christian source material, but very many pre-Christian religious concepts and superstitions, which survive often as folklore, late into the Christian period. In *Rígsþula* they do not seem to be charged with any Christian religious significance.

Theme III: The three estates: their origins and their king

According to *Vafþrúðnismál* 33, the first progeny in the world sprang from the body of the cosmic giant: a girl and boy—*mey ok mǫg saman*—from his armpit, and a monstrous son, with six heads, begotten by his feet. In Indian myth a cosmic body, Puruṣa—a colossal personification of man—was cut up in sacrifice by the gods, and his different parts were made into the different estates of men—the feet, here too, giving birth to the least lovely progeny:[52]

> When they divided the Puruṣa, into how many parts did they arrange him? What was his mouth? What his two arms? What are his thighs and feet called?
>
> The brahmin was his mouth, his two arms were made the *rajanya* (warrior), his two thighs the *vaiśya* (trader and agriculturalist), from his feet the *śudra* (servile class) was born.

To account for slavery in human society, the Bible offers a more mundane and moral tale. According to Genesis 9: 19–27 the entire earth was populated after the Flood by the three sons of Noah; but one, Ham, had been punished by his father for witnessing and disclosing his father's drunken nakedness. Noah cursed the son of Ham to be the lowest of slaves—*servus servorum*—to Ham's more honourable brothers. This awkward text was interpreted in Christian tradition (no doubt quite in keeping with the intention of the original) to mean that slaves were a class condemned from the beginning by a sin—presumably a taboo-breaking—on the part of their first ancestor.

An Anglo-Saxon text (*c.* 1050) is one of the earliest records that assign specific classes, not only to Ham, but also to the other sons of Noah: to Ham the servile (*wælisc*), to Japhet the free commoner (*cyrlisc*), to Shem the noble (*gesȳðcund*).[53]

Rígsþula does not share this biblical theory of serf origins. The poet does not present slavery as a curse, or as a command of God,[54] but as the natural first condition of human life on earth: 'When Adam delved and Eve span,

[52] *A Sourcebook in Indian Philosophy* 19.

[53] For text, translation, bibliographical reference, see Hill 82–3. On the term *wælisc*, 'servile', see *Ríg Introd* n. 28.

[54] As Fuchs, with noble feeling, misunderstands the poem (150–1): 'Die Leibeigenschaft als ein Gebot Gottes hinzustellen, die Ketten der Sklaverei ewig und unzerreissbar zu machen, das ist der wahre Sinn dieses finsteren und grausamen Gedichtes'.

who was then the gentleman?' The poet avoids any concern with the subjection of one class to another. No dependence is mentioned, no envy, no complaint, no awareness of any way of life but their own. All three classes are happy—even the thralls—once they have their children and their homes:

Bǫrn ólu þau,	*Children they bred,*
biuggu ok unðu.	*had a home and were happy.*

(12, 24; cf. 41)

With excellent surgery the poet has cut away all that does not contribute to his theme of the moment, all that distracts from the god-driven surge of growing, self-contented humanity, digging itself into the world, energetically preparing the ladder for the god's next step. We can see from his many ironies that the poet is well aware of what he has left out.

As other scholars have pointed out, the three estates in *Rígsþula* correspond in general with the earliest continental Germanic laws: the non-free (*litus*, *servus*), the free commoner (*liberus*, *ingenuus*), the noble (*nobilis*, *obtimas*).[55] Anglo-Saxon laws use the vernacular terms *þēow* and *ceorl* for the two lower orders, and for the nobles, *gesīð*, *þegn* ('king's companion', 'minister'), or, in Kentish laws only, *eorl* (according to Stenton, 'a primitive conception of nobility' which 'had left little impression on the social order of the other English kingdoms'). Nevertheless, the comprehensive phrase *ge ceorl ge eorl*, i.e. free men of low rank and high, occurs in Anglo-Saxon laws other than Kentish, showing that a popular class distinction of 'churl' and 'earl' continued in common currency.[56] The Old Norwegian laws, much later recorded than the Anglo-Saxon, use the terms *þræll* and *jarl* to denote social rating, but not *karl* (for whom *bóndi*, 'farmer-householder', is commonly used). However, just as *eorl* survives as a class term in *ge ceorl ge eorl*, so *karl* survives as a class term in the phrase *karl ok konungr*, i.e. all free men, however high-ranking.[57] The class names in *Rígsþula* accord with old-rooted and popular customs of speech.

Early Germanic laws often include clerics in the provisions that cover the three secular estates, but with the increasing magnitude of the Church, the Germanic social triad is transformed to make churchmen the highest

[55] There is of course occasional variety in the terms used: the 6 c. *Pactus Legis Salicae* has *grafio* and *comes* for the noble order (*MGH. LNG.* IV. i) and the *Lex Burgundionum* offers several variants for the different estates: *obtimates / maiores personae / potentes / proceres*, and *vilior / humilior / mediocris persona*, as well as the equation, for the purpose of fines, of *servus vel originarius vel colonus* (*MGH. LNG.* II. ii). Somewhat later laws introduce the *homo ecclesiasticus*, e.g. the *Lex Ribuaria* (*MGH. LNG.* III. ii). On Gmc origins of the estates in *Rígs* see esp. Fuchs 145–6; Meissner (*c*), 115.

[56] For the legal texts see Liebermann (Kentish Laws I. 3–14, commentary III. 1–30); also Stenton (*b*), 304.

[57] See *NGL* V s.vv. *bóndi*, *jarl*, *karl*, *konungr*.

estate: first, the churchmen who pray, then the warriors who fight, then the toilers who maintain the economy—*oratores*, *bellatores*, *laboratores*. In King Alfred's words, *gebedmen*, *fyrdmen*, *weorcmen*.[58] These three orders Wulfstan conceives as the three pillars of the community on which the king's throne rests.[59] This image of Christian society exists in theory long before the old secular three-class system is outworn in practice—'l'idéologie . . . ne prend pas son départ dans l'observation sociale'.[60]

The records of the early Germanic legal systems indicate always the presence of a king above the three social classes, but with the reformed concept of Christian class structure, the Church brought sovereignty more insistently before men's eyes, in the symbolic image of the young, wise king, throned at the threshold of the worlds of God and man, 'reflecting towards earth what he receives from the World Beyond'. So one scholar has interpreted the presentation of the king in a poem composed by a contemporary of Wulfstan's, Adalbéron, Bishop of Laon: the *Carmen ad Rotbertum regem*.[61] In this dialogue between King and Bishop the glorious duties of a king—from whose blood all nobility takes its flow

Stemmata nobilium descendunt sanguine regum (v. 22)

—are set against a backcloth of the three classes. First there is *Ecclesia*, the *regnum caelorum* to which the king himself must bow; then the *bellatores*, protectors of the churches, guarding the people as themselves, and finally, the wretched *servi*, of whom Adalbéron writes most piteously, but admits that no free man can live without them—

Nam ualet ingenuus sine seruis uiuere nullus (v. 290).

Parallels between the *Carmen* and *Rígsþula* have been discovered,[62] notably in the emphasis in both on the bond of blood between the noble estate and kingship. The question has even been asked whether Adalbéron, who was a friend of the Norman chronicler Dudo of Saint-Quentin, could have become acquainted, through him, with Scandinavian conceptions of

[58] King Alfred's OE version of Boethius, 40: the three estates are the king's 'tools' without which he cannot show his skill and power (it is the King's own addition to the text of Boethius). For further insight into Alfred's concern with kingship and society, see Nelson 239–42.

[59] *Ælc riht cynestōl stent on þrym stapelum, þe fullīce āriht stent: ān is oratores, and ōðer is laboratores, and þrydde is bellatores . . . and āwācige heora ænig, sōna se stōl scylfð*, 'Every true kingdom, that stands wholly upright, stands on three columns . . . should any one of those weaken, at once the throne totters' (Wulfstan (*b*), no. 50, 267; for brief comment on this homily see Bethurum in Wulfstan (*a*), 39–40 and her references; also Ælfric, *Lives of Saints* no. 25 lines 812–32; Carozzi cxix–cxxvi; also Oexle, whose book was in press before he read Carozzi, and Duby, for many fresh insights).

[60] Carozzi cxxvii.

[61] Carozzi cxxxvi. The king addressed is Robert II of France (†1031), son of Hugh Capet.

[62] Carozzi cxxxiv f.: 'Ce qui nous interesse dans ce mythe [i.e. *Rígsþula*] . . . c'est surtout le fait que la royauté soit présentée comme issue du groupe des nobles. Adalbéron affirme . . . plusieurs fois, cette étroite solidarité de race' (*Rex* speaks of *regimen noster* 'our (noble) order' v. 416).

kingship.[63] In this wide and nebulous area of enquiry too much generality is involved, too little evidence that is specific and unique, for such suspicions ever to reach confirmation or disproof. Yet it is clearly a moment of time when new and old thoughts of kingship are echoing each other.

The relationship of kingship and nobility is neatly solved in *Rígsþula*. Konr Ungr is son of Jarl. Was this class relationship historically so simple? In Scandinavian runic writing before the ninth century no form of *konungr* is found—the first instance being in the Rök Stone inscription[64]—but there are five instances, in inscriptions dating from the fifth to the seventh century, of a word that may be, or be related to, an early form of *jarl*: **erilaR**.[65] In each instance a personal name stands in apposition to **erilaR**, as with a title or office; he is also the writer of the runes.[66] In Norway the *jarlar* of Hlaðir rivalled in power the line of kings established by Haraldr hárfagri, but even when Hákon Hlaðajarl became effectively Norway's king—

Hvar viti ǫld und einum	*Where else might men know*
jarðbyggvi svá liggja	*of a land of sixteen jarls*
(þat skyli herr of hugsa)	*lying so under one earth-dweller?*
hjarl sextían jarla?	*The warrior host should think on that!*

—after the Eiríkssons and the Danes had been defeated, he never changed his title of *jarl*. Hákon's poet Einarr expresses the Jarl's power in terms of a super-jarldom and is meticulously careful to reserve the term *konungr* for Hákon's opponents. Hákon is *ragna konr*, 'noble scion of gods', but not *konungr*.[67]

A legendary reason for the conservatism of *jarlar* is given in *Ágrip*

[63] Carozzi cxxxiv. Carozzi suggests that Adalbéron was attempting to bring together, 'dans un ensemble harmonieux, une pensée mythique traditionelle et une théologie sacerdotale chrétienne. . . . Aucun des deux ne représente une vision rationnelle du monde. Tous les deux reposent sur des fondements logiques que nous ne comprenons plus' (namely, the concept of the king as the point of intersection between the divine and human worlds).

[64] See Jansson 31–7. Twice heroic bands of 'twenty kings' are mentioned on the Rök Stone, which suggests a legendary Viking context of exaggerated *fornaldarsaga* dimensions. Though I have not yet found twenty kings specified in any text, seven are named in *HH* II, and more implied—*Kómo þar margir konungar* (prose after 18); Saxo v. vii. 4 reports six kings, each with a fleet of five thousand ships, as allies of the Huns against the Goths; three kings come to beg Guðrún to discard her sorrow, *Guð* II 24; cf. also *Sigsk* 35: *þrír á hestom, / þióðkonungar*. *Konungr* is clearly the proudest of honorific terms in heroic tradition.

[65] Two Swedish inscriptions (Järsberg, Lindholm) and one Danish (Kragehul) have the form **erilaR**, two Norwegian (By, Veblungsnæs) have the form **eirilaR**. Both forms show contamination (see Jóhannesson (*a*) § 23 n. 4). On the relationship of these forms with *jarl* and, possibly, with the Eruli, see de Vries (*e*), 461–9, where he sets out well the evidence requiring interpretation. He notes the formal parallel of the *-l-* suffix in *jarl* and *karl*, which may indicate a very old relationship between the terms.

[66] See Page (*c*), 29.

[67] Einarr Helgason skálaglamm, *Vell* 37 (*ragna konr* 32). Trans. after Davidson.

(*c.* 1190; the Norwegian author says that the story 'may be heard' in Eyvindr's *Háleygjatal*, *c.* 980):[68] Hersir, king of Naumudalr, wished to kill himself after his wife's death, if ever any king had done so before. No precedent for a king could be found, only for a *jarl*. Hersir then went to a grave-mound—by ancient custom the king's seat—and rolled himself down it, declaring that he had 'rolled himself out of the name of king'; then he hanged himself in the name of *jarl*. None of his descendants (who included the Hlaðajarlar) would, after that, take the name of king.

That one of Óðinn's *iarla kyn* (cf. *Hárbarðslióð* 24) should follow the self-sacrificial precedent of the god (cf. *Hávamál* 138) and hang himself, seems a fitting suicide. Were the *jarlar* particular associates of Óðinn in that they were, like him, rune-masters—as the extant runic inscriptions suggest? Runes were the first lesson that Rígr–Óðinn taught to Jarl (37). In what may be one of the oldest fictional sources relating to *jarlar*, the prose narrative setting of the verses of *Helgakviða Hiǫrvarðssonar*, the Jarl Fránmarr, high officer and adviser of the king, shape-changes into a large eagle and guards the king's daughter by his magic—*með fiǫlkyngi*. Shape-changing and wizardry—as well as the Jarl's inimical advice to refuse the princess to Hjǫrvarðr and so provoke war—have clear Odinic affinities.

These small straws of evidence may indeed support Ström's suggestion that the title of *jarl* was anciently associated with a chieftaincy 'in which magical-religious elements were involved as well as political'.[69] Certainly the Hlaðajarlar strongly opposed conversion, and Jarl Hákon's fame was based on his restoration of heathenism. On this he himself based his right to the sovereignty of Norway.

Pursuit of analogues for Theme III shows the continuance of certain early Germanic and Norse traditions, namely: (*a*) the three secular estates, unfree, free, and noble; (*b*) the taking of kings from the noble estate (cf. *Germ* vii: *Reges ex nobilitate . . . sumunt*); (*c*) the Odinic associations of the title *jarl*; (*d*) the lower rank of *jarl* to that of *konungr* in legend and in history. By influence or imitation of ancient Irish political tradition the noble estate is given the title *Rígr* to indicate its chieftaincy (see commentary to 39/2).

The poet has not been influenced by the Christian-biblical theory of class origins. Only in the structuring of the poem, in the development of *Rígr Konungr* out of *Rígr Iarl*, in the supplanting of the Viking ideal by the

[68] *Ágrip* 18, ch. 15. The legend is told after the chronicle of Jarl Hákon's reign. Snorri tells a variant tale of a king of Naumudalr who rolls down similarly into *jarl*'s estate, in order to offer his vassalship to King Haraldr hárfagri. Snorri's version of the theme is clearly secondary (*Hkr* I. 99–100). Compare the variation in *Flat* I. 294, where Erlingr Skjálgsson declines to be made *jarl* by Óláfr Tryggvason because his kinsmen have always been *hersir* and he does not wish to bear a higher name than theirs: behaviour fabricated for Erlingr, no doubt, on the model of that of the Hlaðajarlar.

[69] Ström (*b*), 442; further documented in Ström (*c*), esp. 72–9; cf. also de Vries (*e*), 465.

peaceful ideal of rulership (I would conjecture), can we identify traces of the poet's interest in the Christian ideal of the king as defender of the lives and souls of his people. The poet employs heathen terms of runic magic and gnomic counsel to convey the gentler ethos of Konr Ungr (44), perhaps in order to emphasize that peaceful kingship was also a deep-rooted heathen ideal. While we cannot use these heathen terms as Christian evidence, we may well suspect that they cover Christian implications—especially the unparalleled terms *ævinrúnar* and *aldrrúnar*, 'runes of eternity' and 'runes of life'.

Etymologically, *jarl* appears to be an older formation than *konungr*, based on a root no longer meaningful in the language,[70] while *konungr* has etymological links with current terms for 'kin', 'race'. Some scholars are therefore inclined to regard the title *konungr* as an importation to Norse lands from southern Germanic kingdoms, a comparatively late imposition over the estate of *jarl*, dating from the Viking Age.[71] Yet the title *konungr* is linked with Norse heathen traditions hardly less ancient in their nature than those linked with *jarl*: by legend, the king's seat was on the grave-mound of his royal ancestors, where their spirits would bring him guidance and luck—*konungsgæfa*. If the *jarl*'s chieftaincy was linked with his command of Odinic mysteries, the *konungr*'s was linked with the mystique of blood—and birth-ties that gave him innate right to sovereignty. These heathen traditions of blood- and birth-ties as a basis of kingship gained approval in the Christian world,[72] while any *jarl*'s confidence in his occult powers placed him in the devil's camp. *Rígsþula* shows the archaic Jarl being overtaken by the modern Konungr, as, historically, with the

[70] Cf. de Vries (*e*), 467.

[71] The fact that Gothic does not have a form of *konungr* (though it has *kuni*, 'race', and other related words) has sometimes influenced this view (see de Vries (*g*) for a rich collection of relevant material). In several Danish districts there were kings *c.* 500, and a central kingship after 800 (according to *KLNM* s.v. *Konge* col. 4). Perhaps the most striking evidence for old-established kingship in Scandinavia is Procopius' account (VI. xiv. 42, xv. 27–36) of the Eruli, who having killed their king (ῥῆγα: Procopius uses here what seems to be a nonce word in Greek), sent envoys back to their Scandinavian homeland, from their settlement on the Danube, to obtain a new king of the royal blood. Though the Eruli had been driven from Scandinavia by the Danes in the third century, one group of Eruli, with a royal family, returned to 'Thyle' after a defeat in 512. It was to this group that the regicides sent for a new king some years later. The royal return to the ancient homeland after so many years may suggest a very ancient link between king and territory (cf. *Der kleine Pauly* s.v. *Heruli*).

[72] As Nelson, 235, notes, in elective kingship the rivalries of the many good candidates could lead to mutual ruin: 'Hence a heavy reinvestment by churchmen in the rights of heirship and blood when royal authority seemed to offer the only defence against the privatisation of ecclesiastical resources'. King, 151, also points out that 'barbarian kings ... [were] the readier to lead their peoples to Christianity precisely because its teaching on government accorded so satisfyingly with their own monarchical yearnings'. On the handing down of *konungsgæfa* see commentary to 37/5; also *AR* § 246 and references on the relationship between royal grave sites and the political organization of districts.

encroaching of Christendom, was the case. The poet, however, is primarily representing an *Urzeit*, not a historical situation. Konr Ungr does not depose his father Jarl; he only demonstrates his superior runic scholarship and moves away to gain *Jǫrð*, 'Earth', by peaceful marriage (I have conjectured), not, like Jarl, by Odinic war (38). At the same time, though his fable of estates and kingship may have ended with a myth, the poet evidently intended it to have contemporary, historical echoes. Why else would he bring in the Danes?

Rígsþula has been called a 'learned' work by some of the greatest Norse scholars. Meissner—as so often—has the sharpest analysis: 'The content of *Rígsþula* is not a myth, but rather a learned fiction made with the help of mythological material'.[73] It is a learned creation in two respects, I suggest: (*a*) it is rooted in immense heathen 'erudition', in the long inheritance of Norse and Celtic oral traditions of kingship and divinity and society, and (*b*) it was—in the last days before the deluge of literacy—delicately shaped to reflect, wittily, but not ignobly, certain Christian learned doctrines—most flourishing in the tenth and eleventh centuries—of the double nature of the king, royal by birth, divine by grace—by the gift and acknowledgement of God himself: Rígr Konr Ungr.[74] In heathen Odinic tradition a descendant of Óðinn—Sigurðr the dragon-slayer—was given the secrets of the god's divine runic magic that would help not only himself in need, but enable him to help other men—as if he had been designated by the god to guide them in life, like a king (see *Sigrdrífumál*). But that ending to Sigurðr's story—if it ever existed—is lost. Konr Ungr completes it for him, under Christian stimulus.

All the themes that moved kaleidoscopically in the minds of the poets who contributed to the formation of *Rígsþula* are skilfully shaken into a final simple pattern of sacral kingship, but of a sacral kingship presented with such humanity and lack of pretension that it seems like the ideal of a people who seek for a ruler rather than—as it more commonly does—like the assertion of a religious right by the rulers themselves.

[73] Meissner (*c*), 115: 'Die Rígsþula enthält keinen mythus, sondern eine gelehrte erfindung mit hilfe mythologischer mittel.'

[74] See Kantorowicz and the study of Williams (esp. Part IV, '*Regnum* and *Sacerdotium*') that he cites as his main authority on the 'Norman Anonymous' (whose tractates, for me, throw some light on *Ríg*). Both Williams and Kantorowicz emphasize that the tractates do not represent 'ideas valid in [the author's] time'. Rather, 'the pattern of Christ-centred kingship for which he fought belonged to the past. He is the champion of ideals of the Ottonian and early Salian period as well as of Anglo-Saxon England, and in his tractates he actually sums up the political ideas of the tenth and eleventh centuries. But like every bard who glorifies a bygone age, he overlabours and overstresses past ideals' (Kantorowicz 60–1; cf. Williams 199–203). The tractates are a reminder that the problem of relating highly cultivated—though popular—oral poetry to the clerically learned sources that deal with the same subject is not yet solved.

E. Where and when was *Rígsþula* composed?

'Old and new blend in this singular poem.'[75] What is old in the poem is very old, as the analogues show. Obsolete social practices of the most archaic kind contribute to the poem's political parable. The society in which the poem originated must have had ancestral roots old enough at least to retain knowledge of such practices. Some of these practices are primarily attested in Norse traditions, some in Celtic. The use of such Norse and Celtic traditions in the poem is not by collage, but by seamless integration. This easy integration of Norse and Celtic traditions from the remote past points to the existence of an integrated Norse–Celtic community for the poem's origins, a community in which the oldest traditions of both societies had already—perhaps for several generations—made common ground both for thought and for poetry.

The Norse mythological traditions that appear in *Rígsþula* are more sharply in focus than the Celtic.[76] Rígr combines very precisely aspects of Heimdallr and aspects of Óðinn: the structure of the poem depends on the well-timed movement out of the traditional sphere of one deity into that of the other. The poet practises 'mythological engineering' for his own ends—a narrative advancement in the manipulation of divinities similar to that attained by Hallfreðr vandræðaskáld in his *Hákonardrápa* (*c.* 986), when he presents his patron Jarl as an Óðinn, winning by steely rape the Earth of Norway as his bride, and, after his conquests, as a Heimdallr, standing, a tree of defence for his people, with branches of budding progeny for hair. Óðinn and Heimdallr here provide a surrealist epitome of Hákon's power: they are a poetic device in the service of eulogy. The poet of *Rígsþula* shows the same two gods at work in the service of man—for his salvaging, if not, indeed, for his salvation. Heimdallr–Rígr rescues him at the edge of the hearth from the annihilation of sterility; Óðinn–Rígr–Konungr rescues him in his pride of strength from the annihilation of autocratic war. Had the poet not been aware of the ancient traditions of promoting, protecting, and renewing human life associated with these two heathen gods, he could not have created his poem out of them. He would not, I think, have 'believed' in the two gods, but he would have revered the aspirations they had embodied for those who once did. In other words, I suggest, he has been familiar with the most refined heathen religious concepts of the tenth century—those that had been formed in defence of the dignity of the old gods, in the face of Christian mockery and challenge.[77]

[75] Meissner (*c*), 130 (see n. 12).

[76] This is not surprising, since the Irish were converted in the 5 c. and the Norsemen in the 10 c. In any case, the two mythologies probably differed greatly in their modes of delineating ideas even in far earlier times.

[77] See de Boor; Schier (*b*), 80–97; *Vsp Introd* IV.

The Celtic mythological traditions that appear in *Rígsþula* do so in the form of narrative. The god visits his people, sleeps with the married couple, ensures their fertility. The divine behaviour is timeless and repetitive and operates within a fixed society. In the Norse poem this timeless religious repetition has become a mounting spiral of secular progress, speeding on the growth of mankind to higher and higher estates. While this pattern of social advancement may owe some debt to the ancient Irish pyramidal structures of classes and kingdoms,[78] the social dynamism that inspires the Norse poem cannot have come from those ancient structures alone. Lively movements in society and politics in circles that the Norse poets knew well are more likely to have given the poem its pace and urbane wit. What evidence there is points to the Anglo-Norse circles of northern England, which—perhaps—achieved their greatest social self-confidence when a Dane was King and an Anglo-Saxon Archbishop of York compiled his laws for him: that is, in the early decades of the eleventh century.

Anglo-Saxon influence may be noted in the vocabulary of *Rígsþula*,[79] yet none of the fundamental themes of the poem have extant Anglo-Saxon analogues, other than—it may be—the historical situation of social mobility itself. While the thesis of the poem—the thriving progress of man—may have been perfected in the context of early eleventh century England, the material marshalled to demonstrate it is derived from much older Norse and Celtic traditions. This offers no historical problem, since Norse–Celtic communities existed in the north of England from the end of the ninth century; for some years a Norse King of Dublin was also King of York.[80] But it does offer a problem of poetic composition. How could such archaic material reappear so elegantly absorbed in an early eleventh century *Rígsþula*, unless that poem were a fresh version of earlier poetic formulations: old, mythico-political 'ballads' set to a new intellectual pace?

[78] See commentary to 39/2.

[79] See commentary to 16/6, 22/7, 8, 36/8, 42/3 (*Aðal*).

[80] Óláfr Sigtryggsson was King of Dublin 938–80 and, more precariously, of York 941–4 and 949–52. He had links with other kings: his father married a sister of Æðelstan, and his own sister married Óláfr Tryggvason, who frequently stayed with him in Dublin. He was called *rí* in Irish annals and given an Irish nickname that survives in Norse records: *kváran* (signifying a style of Celtic leather shoe, wrapped round the foot: presumably favoured by Óláfr). It is by this nickname that Óláfr kváran can be traced as the original of the hero Havelok, who, in the ME romance of that name, became King of Denmark and England, and whose disguise-name in the OF 'Breton' *Lai d'Haveloc*, when he was a cook's boy in England, was *Cuaran* (Bell 176). The fusing of legends of Óláfr kváran (who had Irish and English kingdoms) with later traditions of the uniting of England and Denmark under Knútr, provides a valuable precedent when we are considering the even more deeply concealed fusion of accumulated political themes in *Rígr*: a fusion that demonstrates the same alliance of Irish, Norse, and Anglo-Saxon traditions. Traditions of *Aveloc Cuaran* also show the involvement of Wales (*Aveloc* is the Welsh form of Irish *Amlaibh*, from an early form of ON *Óláfr*, **Anulaiƀaʀ*): Óláfr kváran's daughter, Ragnhildr, married Cynan of Gwynned; their son was the renowned Gruffud; Bartrum 1. 41; Heyman 69–70.

In any case, the tight network of ideas behind the many scenes of the poem must have begun to be woven before the latest poet caught hold of its threads and perfected it as he wished. A poem such as *Rígsþula*, and its antecedents, would have been a social possession, frequently adapted and augmented to fit prevailing politics—and fashions—by the spontaneous genius of the oral poets and their critical, participating, audiences.

There are some pieces of poetic evidence that suggest that an early form of *Rígsþula* may have been in existence in the last decade of the tenth century. In Iceland Úlfr Uggason, in his *Húsdrápa* (*c.* 985), calls Heimdallr *ráðgegninn*, 'helpful, profitable, in his advice / in his marital alliances' (*Húsdrápa* 2/1). The context is the god's winning of the talisman of fertility out of Loki's grasp; an allusion to Heimdallr's fertile function in another myth would therefore be particularly apt in Úlfr's poem. Indeed it is only by reference to *Rígsþula* that *ráðgegninn* in *Húsdrápa* takes on significance. Úlfr may have known a *Rígsþula* in which the keyword *ráð* appeared in refrain, as in the extant poem: he could then be confident that his succinct allusion in *ráðgegninn* would be grasped.[81]

In the year of Óláfr Tryggvason's death, 1000, the Icelandic poet Stefnir Þorgilsson cites a line from *Rígsþula* that describes the hooked nose of Thrallwoman: he inserts a verb in the present tense and applies the description—'Hooked is the nose . . .'—to the treacherous Danish jarl who had betrayed Óláfr to his death. Stefnir is killed for this: for implicitly satirizing the jarl as both a serf and a woman (see commentary to 10/5), while he names him a traitor.

As other scholars have noted, the theme of the relative status of Jarl and Konungr is one that exercised the minds of men particularly in Norway. The growth of Konungr out of Jarl in *Rígsþula* solves a Norwegian political problem that first became acute (in recorded Norwegian history) towards the end of the tenth century, when Jarl Hákon *inn ríki*, 'the powerful', briefly restored the heathen glory of his country—only to be hounded to death by the Christian King Óláfr Tryggvason in 995, as tradition would have it, in a pigsty.[82]

Jarl Hákon's poets extol him as the restorer of the fecundity and independence of Norway: his divine reward for restoring the temples of the heathen gods. But historians gave him the disrepute of being in his old age a tyrannical womanizer, who ordered the wives and daughters even of men of high standing to be brought to him. Was he restoring in his own fashion the cult practices of Rígr, which may never, in heathen areas, wholly have

[81] Úlfr Uggason's verses may be dated to the end of the 10 c.; the one *lausavísa* attributed to him relates to Þangbrandr's missionary visit to Iceland 997–9 (*Kristni Saga* ch. 9).

[82] Cf. *Ágrip* 17, *Hkr* 1. 295–6; also Hamer for an excellent, fully documented discussion.

died out?[83] May there have been a contemporary, burlesque version of *Rígsþula* in which Rígr had an unmistakable resemblance to Jarl Hákon? He is the only ruler of Norway who is represented by eulogizing poets—both Icelanders—not only as a conquering Óðinn and guarding Heimdallr, but also as a giant-defeating Þórr.[84] Might a fertilizing Rígr have been added to his repertoire? Such a *Rígsþula* could have been a boisterous mark of appreciation from a grateful people—grateful for his victories over foreign enemies—including the Danes—and proud to have their ancestral religious customs restored. But such a poem could also have been used as a hostile record of senile lechery—*aldinn Rígr*—by later Christian historians to point the contrast between the heathen Jarl and the Christian Konungr and Saint who succeeded him.

If there had been a *Rígsþula*, lightly adapted for Jarl Hákon, where would it have ended? Would the poets have been allowed to prognosticate a Konr Ungr from Hákon's line? I think it possible that they would. In *Hákonardrápa* Hallfreðr draws his tree-image of Hákon as Heimdallr *brumaðr hári*, 'budded with hair'. Allusion here is to the dream of Hálfdan the Black, Haraldr Fairhair's father—a dream he had in a pigsty—that his hair grew in different lengths and colours, symbolizing his progeny, the longest, brightest lock being St Óláfr Haraldsson.[85] Hálfdan became the ancestor of kings. I suggest that Hallfreðr was prognosticating the same fortune for Jarl Hákon. And it is possible that he was doing so because he knew it flattered Hákon's own ambition to create a royal dynasty. The poetic notion that the youngest son of a Jarl should marry the ancestress-to-be of the royal Danish house, and himself become the first king and eponym of kingship in northern lands—actually fathering the traditional eponymous Dan of Danmark—could have been 'thought up' as a charming political *plaisanterie* at the expense of the Danes whom Hákon had diabolically defeated at Hjǫrungavágr *c.* 980.[86] Out of this witty structure the amiable Konr Ungr of the extant poem could well have emerged, through the imagination of a somewhat later poet, who no longer cared for the Viking world.

Of Jarl Hákon's great court poets, who give us the only deep insights we shall ever get into his politics and his propaganda, three are Icelanders—Einarr skálaglamm, Hallfreðr vandræðaskáld, and Eilífr Goðrúnarson.

[83] Compare the longevity of the horse-phallus cult in remote northern Norway, according to *Vǫlsa Þáttr*.

[84] In the *Þórsdrápa* of Eilífr Goðrúnarson. See Davidson 555–65.

[85] *Fagrsk* 58. It is ironic that Hálfdan should have a prophetic dream of his brilliant Christian progeny in a pigsty, while Jarl Hákon, also in a pigsty, should dream, just as accurately, not only of his own death, but of the death of his son. The similar scenarios suggest a deliberate parallelism designed by the Christian creators of early Norwegian history, in order to contrast the dynastic futures of the two dreamers. This again may suggest the existence of a tradition that Jarl Hákon had ambitions of a kingdom for his sons.

[86] The battle is most dramatically told in *Jómsvíkinga Saga* 35–8; cf. *Hkr* 1. 279–85.

And it is in Iceland that we have evidence that *Rígsþula* was known. I have already mentioned Úlfr Uggason's and Stefnir Þorgilsson's reliance upon it. In three family sagas there are references to it: (*a*) in a *lausavísa* in *Víga-Glúms Saga* there is an allusion to Jarl's conquest of land by fighting (38); (*b*) in a *lausavísa* in *Eyrbyggja Saga* Bjǫrn Breiðvíkingakappi notes the fierce Jarl-like eyes of his own bloodthirsty little son; (*c*) in *Njáls Saga* Hallgerðr mocks Bergþóra for her thrall-like *kartnegl* (8), and the travelling women make fun of Njáll 'working hard at sitting down', as aged and impotent as Ái by the hearth (2)—and as easily cuckolded—and give an exaggerated picture of the Njálssons getting ready their war-gear, like Jarl and his sons (36, 43; cf. 28). It would seem that *Rígsþula*—especially for its caricatures of Þræll and Jarl—must have been a most popular poem in Iceland in the thirteenth century.[87]

Because of this undoubted fact it is difficult to accept the suggestion (see von See (*a*), 12) that the poem might have been inspired by the consolidation of the Norwegian throne under King Hákon (1217–63), after the precautionary crowning of Hákon ungi (Jarl Skúli's grandson) and the defeat and death of the Jarl in the same year (1240). The circumstances—Jarl Skúli had proclaimed himself king—do not fit the poem, and the events themselves are sombre and painful, as Hákon's Icelandic biographer, Sturla Þórðarson, clearly shows. The Queen, the Jarl's daughter, deeply felt the tragic nature of her position and would not have forgiven a poet who treated so lightly the fate of her magnificent father. Nor would his many Icelandic friends.[88]

The poet's familiar use of Vǫlsung traditions[89] does not offer sound evidence for composition of the poem in the thirteenth century. Though the written form of *Vǫlsunga Saga* may be *c.* 1260, much of the Sigmundr–Sigurðr material was known in England far earlier than that, on the evidence of *Beowulf*,[90] and of the eleventh century stone carving at

[87] See UD (*e*), 62–3, 67–8; (*d*), 11; commentary to 8/6. By *kartnegl* Hallgerðr may, in her tortuous way, be suggesting several things at once: (*a*) that Bergþóra looks like a serf-woman (her status as mistress of the house is not immediately evident to visitors, cf. *Njál* 95–6); (*b*) that she has led a promiscuous life, having children by more manly men than Njáll; and (*c*) that she now suffers from venereally diseased nails (see commentary to 8/6); this seems excessive, but Hallgerðr enjoys fantastically scurrilous jokes. For a possible borrowing from *Ríg* in *Guð* II see commentary to 41/6–7; the date of *Guð* II is uncertain, but most scholars would probably place it (with its various accretions) well before 1200.

[88] See *Hákonar Saga Hákonarsonar*, especially chs. 189, 206–7, 225, 239–42. Snorri's last words, as he faces his killers (1241): *Eigi skal hǫggva*, 'You must not hack (my face)' (*Sturl* (*a*) I. 454) are thought to be a deliberate echo of Skúli's last words (1240): *Hǫggvit eigi í andlit mér, þvíat þat er eigi siðr at gǫra við hǫfðingja*, 'Do not hack at my face—it is not customary to do so to chieftains' (234). Snorri, like Skúli, was killed by Hákon's 'men'. For discussion of Hákon and Jarl Skúli see Blackall ch. 4 (esp. 286–306).

[89] See commentary to 35/8 and 44/3–8.

[90] See *Beowulf* 874–97 (allusions to Sigemund—*Wælses eafera*—and Fitela, and the vivid succinct

Winchester of Sigmundr and the honey-loving she-wolf.[91] *Ragnars Saga*, an extension of the Vǫlsung tradition, may also have been known in oral form to the poet: he could have borrowed Jarl's snake-like eyes (35) from Sigurðr Snake-in-the-Eye, Ragnarr's grandson, though the present text of the saga is clearly influenced by *Rígsþula* itself. The story of Ragnarr and his invading Viking sons has a historical base in ninth century northern England; its legendary elaborations could well have developed there, where the army of the Danish Vikings settled.[92]

I have suggested a long perspective of poetic history for *Rígsþula*, with two specific identification points, the ambitions, *c.* 986, of the heathen Jarl Hákon in Norway and the gentler ideals, *c.* 1020, of a Norse poet who knew the increasingly busy Anglo-Danish world of Christian England. I have used for these suggestions only what fragments of record there are, which I could interpret as evidence. Others may find better evidence for other suggestions.

I have said 'a Norse poet'. We have no evidence that he was *not* an Icelander. But Icelanders are the best documented vernacular poets of the period, continuing as the court *skáld* of the early Christian kings of Norway and Denmark long after the last recorded Norwegian court poet of genius, Eyvindr skáldaspillir—who composed the *Háleygjatal* for Jarl Hákon—passes out of record. Renowned Icelandic poets stayed at the courts of Anglo-Saxon kings—Egill with King Æðelstan, Gunnlaugr with King Æðelred. Gunnlaugr also presented a *drápa* to King Sigtryggr Óláfsson kvárans in Dublin.[93] At the end of the twelfth century it was still to Icelandic poets and their reciters that Saxo turned for ancient heroic-historical traditions.[94] Norse poets of other origins are less easy to find.

If I have suggested too long a poetic history for *Rígsþula*, being persuaded by the archaic nature of some of the Norse–Celtic material, what alternative should we envisage? Would we have had the same seamless integration of Norse–Celtic themes if, for example, the old Irish foster-mother of Melkorka had come to Hjarðarholt[95] while Úlfr was working on

dragon-fight). A date for the poem well before 1000 is indicated by the impressive evidence assembled by Lapidge and by Clemoes (xiii: 'In ch. 1 I set out my case, based on a range of diverse correspondences, for attributing the composition of *Beowulf* probably to Mercian royal circles in the second quarter of the eighth century—in Aethelbald's reign rather than Offa's.').

[91] See Biddle (*a*); *English Romanesque Art 1066–1200*, 150–1. It is hardly possible to doubt Biddle's identification of the subject of the sculpture.

[92] See *ASC* 876 (A): 'In that year Healfdene [in later legend Ragnarr's son] shared out Northumberland, and they were busy ploughing and providing for themselves' (*þȳ gēare Healfdene Norþanhymbra lond gedǣlde. 7 ergende wǣron 7 hiera tilgende*). See McTurk (*b*), 1–6, on the historical complexities behind the legend.

[93] See *Egil* 128–47, 194–5; *Gunnlaugs Saga* 70–6; Hofmann 21–148.

[94] See Saxo, Praefatio I § 4, *History* I. 5 (5).

[95] See *Laxd* 51, 58–9, 80. I assume that Óláfr pái would act as interpreter.

his *Húsdrápa*, and had discussed her Irish legends with him, and compared them with his Norse legends, and in the course of discussion had added some Irish suggestions to an Icelandic version of *Rígsþula*—including perhaps the name *Rígr* for the god?—which Úlfr—or a fellow poet who happened to be there—then incorporated into the oral Icelandic text . . . Would this *Rígsþula* have become the poem that we have? I do not think so.

II. *The Text and Metre of* Rígsþula

A. **The text**

The forty-nine surviving stanzas of *Rígsþula* are written on two sides of a vellum leaf, forming pages 155–6 of the Codex Wormianus (see *Vsp Introd* III. A). Before this leaf several leaves have been lost and replaced by blank paper leaves. After the *Rígsþula* leaf more vellum leaves have been lost and blank paper leaves inserted. *Rígsþula* has therefore no specific context surviving in the MS. It was perhaps chosen for inclusion in a MS. containing *Skáldskaparmál* because it contributed to the *heiti* of the human classes.[96] I would suggest that no more than twelve stanzas may have been lost, so succinct is the poet.

The surviving text can be seen to derive from a good copy. The principal scribal flaws occur in the repetition of refrain stanzas, but, as these stanzas are so well preserved in their first occurrence, the problem is not difficult to solve. I shall consider it first, because the solution of it clarifies the structure of the poem and gives a more assured context for the consideration of other textual flaws.

The three episodes of Rígr's visits (which I shall refer to as *Thrall*, *Carl*, and *Earl*) all have a similar programme and contain three refrain stanzas, first written out in *Thrall* 3, 5, 6. The third of these refrain stanzas (*Thrall* 6), in which Rígr stays three nights, leaves the homestead, and time then passes on for nine months, causes no problem (except for the slip in *Carl* 20, where the two lines noting Rígr's departure, 20/3–4, are omitted). But the first two of the refrain stanzas (cf. 3, 5) are closely similar and repetition has caused confusion. They begin with the same seven words: *Rígr kunni þeim / ráð at segia. / Meirr* . . . and end with the same six words: *en á hlið hvára / hión salkynna*. Only the tiny differences in the remaining four words, at the centre of the stanza, tell us whether Rígr is sitting down to eat or lying down to sleep.

[96] On a vellum fragment (called Wb by Bugge (*a*), 141 n.) bound into W, is written *þræla heiti standa i rigs þvlv*. This establishes the traditional name of the poem. For detailed contents of W see *AM Katalog* I. 213–15.

In *Carl* 17, after the expected introduction to the first refrain stanza, *Rígr kunni þeim / ráð at segia*, the expected sitting down between the couple is omitted, as well as the expected account of the meal itself, except for the expected last two lines (cf. 3/5–6), in which Rígr rises from the meal and prepares to sleep. The text of *Carl* then continues without the expected introduction to the second refrain stanza, *Rígr kunni þeim / ráð at segia*, but with the remaining lines of the second refrain stanza, in which Rígr lies down (cf. 5/3–6).

In *Earl* 30, the first refrain stanza is repeated, in its expected place: Rígr takes his seat before the meal (cf. 3). The meal then follows (31 – 2). Then, ineptly, the sequence of the MS. text of *Carl* 17 – 18 follows (i.e. 17/1–2 and 18/9–10 only), so that in *Earl* the two lines appropriate to the opening of the second refrain stanza, *Rígr kunni þeim / ráð at segia*, come before the two lines in which Rígr rises from the meal and prepares to sleep, not after (cf. 4/9–10 followed by 5/1–2). In *Earl* the four remaining lines of the second refrain stanza, in which Rígr actually lies down between the couple, are then omitted (cf. 5/3–6).

I would suppose that the confusion in the presentation of the first two refrain stanzas in *Carl* and *Earl* arises from inadequate signalling of the 'repeats' in *Carl* and *Earl* of the full text given in *Thrall*, at some stage of the poem's written transmission. To abbreviate only the first (two) line(s) of the first and second refrain stanzas would not be sufficient to distinguish them. In the MS. *Carl* and *Earl* have a complete text of only one of the first two refrain stanzas. In *Carl*, however, the two opening lines, which are common to both the first and the second refrain stanzas, are separated from lines 3–6 of the second refrain stanza not only by a lacuna (18/1–8 reconstructed), but by the last two lines of the otherwise lost stanza 18 (18/9–10). The error in *Carl* cannot therefore be a simple one, in which the scribe's eye has slipped from the two opening lines of the first refrain stanza to the last four of the second refrain stanza. It is conceivable that at some stage in the written transmission the two lines in which Rígr leaves the meal and prepares to sleep were taken to be the correct opening of the second refrain stanza, when Rígr places himself *miðrar rekkiu*, between the married couple.

It is noticeable that in *Earl* the line equivalent to MS. 4/10 and 18/10 (*réðz/réð at sofna*) is quite different from them in its wording: *rekkiu gerði* MS. 32/12. This is the phrase used of Þræll and Þír 'making a bed' together without the formalities of a higher class marriage (11/6). It seems unsuited to an honoured guest or to the formality of Rígr himself. I suggest that a scribe, supposing the last four lines of the second refrain not to be indicated in the copy before him (and, therefore, not putting them in his own copy: cf. 33 reconstructed), altered the phrase *réð(z) at sofna* to *rekkiu gerði* simply in order to supply the necessary information that Rígr here

actually went to bed—cf. *miðrar rekkiu*: information otherwise lost from the text at this point. Refrain stanza 34, which he writes immediately after *rekkiu gerði—Þar var hann at þat*, 'There (i.e. in bed) he was then'—follows now with better coherence than if *réð(z) at sofna* had preceded. No doubt it was in order to secure this coherence that he reversed the order of the last two lines of the meal stanza 32 and the first two lines of the second refrain, which I suppose were signalled in the text before him.

Taking MS. 32/12 *rekkiu gerði* to be a scribal alteration and not the original text, I have supplied 4/10 in its place. I have taken 4/10 to be intended as an unchanging refrain line and have accordingly emended *réð* to *réðz* in 18/10. The emendation is supported by the reflexive form of two of his other refrain-like actions: *settiz* 3/3, [17/3], 30/3; *lagðiz* 5/3, 19/3, [33/3].

It is noticeable that the line preceding *réðz at sofna* is in each of the three occurrences different. The differences are dependent upon the preceding context:

1. 4/9 reads *Reis hann upp þaðan*, where *þaðan*, 'from there', refers to *bióð*, 'table', 4/8 (this is added confirmation that the two lines in the MS. intervening between 4/8 and 4/9 are incorrectly placed; see commentary to 4/8).

2. 18/9 reads *Reis frá borði*, since (if the text transferred from MS. stanza 4 is correctly placed) there is no immediately preceding reference to a table from which Rígr might rise.

3. 32/11 reads *Reis Rígr at þat*, where *at þat*, 'then', is a time reference relating to the statement in 32/10 that 'the day was passing'. Evidently the line in which Rígr rises after each meal is not intended to be repeated as an identical refrain line. It is a contextually varying bridge line to the refrain line *réðz at sofna*, and requires no standardization.

Since the line in which Rígr rises from the meal is, in all three occurrences, linked by verbal reference to the preceding line of the meal stanza, it is unlikely that the MS. line order in *Carl* and *Earl* (in which the refrain lines *Rígr kunni þeim / ráð at segia* are placed *before* the line in which Rígr rises from the meal, see reconstructed text 17 – 19, 32 – 3) represents the intention of the poet.

Scribal misreading could account for the omissions in 7/3–5: first, the similarity of *hǫrvi* and *hǫrund* causing haplography from *hǫrvi* to *svartan*; then the continued alliteration from *hǫrvi* to *hétu* making another line alliterating on *h* unnecessary, and, therefore, perhaps unnoticed. In the sequence of four lines alliterating on *h* in 48/5–8, the third line also has been omitted.

In 8/4–10 the headlong pace of the brief paratactic lines could have caused the omission, in recital, or in writing, of one of the seven. That the rarest word, *kartnegl*, should be the one omitted, would be understandable.

The omission of Amma's meal must have been a scribal error. A reciter at any stage of transmission would not have forgotten it; for him it would be a key stanza in his entertainment. It might have been after the omission of Amma's meal that the distinctive lines, *Var kálfr soðinn, / krása beztr*, then found their way into Edda's meal, after 4/8, fortuitously recalled by a scribe.

Another regrettable lacuna occurs at 45/2–6, partly filled in, I suggest, with three unoriginal lines (45/2–4). Interpolation of unoriginal lines appears to occur also after 23/6. These questionable lines, as well as minor editorial corrections to the text, are considered in the commentary.

B. The metre

The handling of stanza-form in *Rígsþula* is a marvel of versatility. The length of the stanzas varies considerably, from four lines at one extreme (47) to fourteen (12) at the other. The eighteen six-line stanzas include the nine refrain stanzas and are most frequent in the first half of the poem, but when Rígr's visits, and the refrain stanzas that celebrate them, are over (that is, after 34), the eight-line stanza becomes noticeably predominant. Of the seventeen eight-line stanzas, eight occur between stanzas 35 and 49 (i.e. 35, 39, 40, 41, 44, 46, 48, 49; the defective stanza 45 may well have been an eight-line stanza also). It would seem that, as the ritualistic element faded, and the romantic story of Konr Ungr developed, the eight-line stanza was preferred. Was this because of its traditional ease in blending narrative and dialogue? The crow's words are the first directly spoken in the poem: were there more to come?[97]

The one four-line stanza, 47, may be regarded as a traditional variation within a series of eight-line stanzas (cf. *Atlakviða* 10, 18, 20, 22, 31; *Hamðismál* 16, 23).

The eleven longer stanzas throw light upon the poet's way of working. Of the seven ten-line stanzas (excluding 18), four are in effect eight-line stanzas with a refrain-like addition at beginning or end. So 2/1–2 is identical with lines 3–4 of the third refrain stanza (i.e. 6, 20, 34). Perhaps the poet wished to introduce the phrase *miðrar brautar* before Rígr's visits began (see commentary to 2/2). In 4, the last two lines provide a refrain link with the last two lines of 18 and 32. In 8, the first two lines are a refrain repeated in 22/1–2; 36/1–2 are a variant upon it. In 13, the last two lines are a refrain repeated in 25/7–8.

[97] This is a very difficult question to think of a satisfactory answer to. The speechless speed of the preceding action would be lost if the human dialogue developed. I am inclined to think it did not.

In the remaining three ten-line stanzas the use of the two additional lines is more individual. In 16, after a well-rounded description of an energetic housewife at work in eight lines, two closing lines abruptly divulge the identity and property value of Afi and Amma: a statement stylistically detached, but totally relevant.

In 37 and 42, eight-line stanzas are internally expanded, ostensibly for the sake of the alliteration, but other poetic benefits accrue. In 37 expansion is by repetition. 37/2 is repeated: *Rígr gangandi / Rígr gangandi*. This gives weight to the god's sudden appearance out of the trees and enables Jarl's education to be performed peripatetically: the god 'takes it in his stride', as it were, like a good solar deity always having his eye on the clock and the calendar. In 37/8–9 the repetition *óðalvǫllu / óðalvǫllu* gives a double significance to the word. The god appears at first to be telling Jarl to get himself some land that can become a patrimony for his descendants (*eignaz* meaning then simply 'acquire'); when *óðalvǫllu* is repeated as a parallel to *aldnar byggðir*, however, we see that *eignaz* really means 'expropriate (someone else's patrimony)'. It is unfortunate that the translation cannot convey this duplicity.

In 42, the names of Jarl's sons are interrupted by two interjections that raise an image of the twelve boys at their peaceful pastimes—games and swimming (the lonely Jarl did not play games, 36). While the interjections certainly aid the alliteration, they also, even more significantly, provide the necessary contrast with the war-like preoccupations of the boys when they are older (43)—growing mature, like their father—and these preoccupations, in turn, are contrasted with Konr Ungr's studious and idle tastes (44, 47). A comparison with the corresponding sequence in *Thrall* and *Carl* shows how little the poet is constrained by systematic parallelism. The poet gives no account of the activities of Karl's sons; their names alone (24) suffice to show that they carry on their father's interests (thoroughly listed in 22). In the case of Þræll's sons, however, after listing their expressive names, the poet itemizes their servile activities as a splendid climax to the longest stanza of the poem (12). This is not because their activities are like those of their father, but because they are not. The poet had purposively confined Þræll's activity to gathering firewood for the ancestral hearth (see *Rík Introd* n. 19). The broader labours of *þræla kyn* in the future world had still to be outlined (12/10–14).

The delight in observing the varying length of the stanzas is in the insight it gives into the poet's clarity of mind and swiftness of response to shifts in the detail of his material. So, in 2 and 14, both *hús* and *hǫll* can alliterate with *hurð* (an essential item in the narrative), but *salr* cannot. The happy device of making the wealthiest dwelling face south (26)—*suðr horfðu dyrr*—leads on to the elegance of the door-ring that will alliterate with the

open *hurð*. That the floor within is strewn with rushes is only to be expected. The expansion of description leads him to allow two stanzas to the entry into Father and Mother's manor, while one sufficed for the homes of the other couples (2, 14).

The poet is always ready to expatiate and diversify nimbly if the occasion inspires him. He has a six-line stanza for Þræll's birth and for Karl's: one line suffices for their colouring and one for their eyes. But Jarl has two lines for his colouring and two for his eyes (cf. 7, 21, 35). I suggest that the elaboration springs initially from the fact that, while Edda and Amma can both alliterate with their offspring, *ióð*, Móðir cannot. To have a stanza opening with

* Ióð ól Móðer
iósu vatni . . .

would be undistinguished after the swinging assonance of *Ióð ól Edda . . . Ióð ól Amma* . . . The poet therefore thinks afresh, changes the order of actions, placing the swaddling of the baby before its sprinkling with water, and giving Móðir a *sveinn*, who can alliterate with the silk she wraps him in.[98] Jarl's name then alliterates with his sprinkling: *iósu*. The neat arrangment in *Thrall* and *Carl*, whereby the colouring of the baby is conveyed by a masculine adjective (or two) standing as object of *vafði*, 'wrapped', is, however, lost in *Earl*, with the new first lines. While the blond hair might need only a single line, Jarl's eyes surely need two. *Ǫtul vóru augu* alone would make him a baby monster; the addition of 'like those of a baby snake' just shows him to be a hero in embryo. These last two lines of the stanza were no doubt conceived of from the start (see commentary to 35/8). Between them and the first five lines the need for an extra line gives Jarl his bright cheeks. It is not always, however, such a structural need that gives Jarl his touch of distinction. The poet *need* not have altered for Jarl the refrain-like opening that describes the growing-up of Þræll and Karl—*Hann nam at vaxa / ok vel dafna* (8, 22)—but he does. Jarl is given a more sheltered upbringing, within the walls of his parents' manor—*Upp óx þar / Iarl á fletium*. The poet is not constrained by a refrain unless he wants to be. And when he wants, he starts up a new echo: the sons grow up in the same phrasing as their father—*Upp óxu þar / Iarli borner* (43/1–2).

The three twelve-line stanzas are long through exuberance: details of rich food and drink and absorbing talk in 32 (which is in effect a ten-line stanza followed by two refrain-like lines); a relentless agenda of knightly accomplishments in 36; a bravura caricature of heroic war in 38.

When excellent poetic reasons can be seen behind the 'irregularity' of

[98] *Sveinn* also has the advantage of being a future Danish king's name. *Ióð* neut. does not relate only to sons.

stanza-length and refrain-continuity, we must hesitate to suggest that other irregularities in the metrical structure are not the work of the poet and therefore might be amended. Scattered among the regular *fornyrðislag* lines are several that have only three syllables (4/2, 7/6, 8/4, 7, 10/[5], 6, 11/7, 8, 12/14, 16/2, 3, 10, 18/8, 24/5, 27/3, 29/1, 31/2, 4, 36/1, 38/2, 3, 6, 39/8, 40/5, 42/4, 7, 8, 9, 44/1, 47/1), and three lines that have only two syllables (8/[6], 8/9, 11/4). The three-syllable line is an old variant in *fornyrðislag* and no doubt springs from oral habit (cf. *Atlakviða* 6/8, 7/2, 19/5; *Hamðismál* 2/2, 11/4, 14/3, 15/2, 25/1). By using two or three such lines in a single stanza the poet of *Rígsþula* gives a great impression of speed and fullness. The two-syllable line—the syllables are always long—is rare in Eddic verse. I have noted only two instances, in *ljóðaháttr* (*Hávamál* 76, 77: *Deyr fé*, and (possibly) *Hárbarðslióð* 32: *Liðs þíns*). Together with very frequent alliteration falling on verbs—an old Germanic oral characteristic[99]—the short-syllable lines would seem to show the poet's thorough involvement with—and mastery of—popular poetic styles.

[99] See Campbell (*b*), esp. 16–17.

COMMENTARY ON THE TEXT

1/1 *Ár*: cf. *Hym* 1/1, *Guð* I 1/1, *Sigsk* 1/1. *Ríg* 1 is a deliberate accumulation of traditional expressions leading to the wholly untraditional name *Rígr* in the final line.

kváðu ganga: for numerous syntactical parallels see *LP* s.v. *kveða* § 1.

1/2 *grœnar brauter*: see Nygaard § 96 (a) for acc. of place traversed. *Grœnar* implies 'joyously luxuriant', 'felicitous' (as also OE *grēne*, cf. Grein s.v.; also Wolf 52). 'Green ways' may be used in anticipation of sexual encounter (cf. *Fáf* 41, of Sigurðr's path to Guðrún, and the Danish ballad, *DgF* VII no. 180/2: *han véd grøn stie til jomfruens bur*, 'he knew green paths to the maiden's bower'). In *Þórsdr* 1 Loki uses the phrase with deceptive relish.

1/3 *ǫflgan*: used of the *æsir* in *Vsp* 17/3–4.

aldinn: used of Óðinn in *Vsp* 28/2.

1/4 *kunnigan*: nowhere else used of a god in poetic texts. It is conceivable that some play is intended, with allusion to Óðinn, on the rare term *reginkunnigr*; see commentary to *Hamð* 25/2.

1/5 *ramman*: magical as well as physical potency may be implied, cf. *rammaukinn*, *Hyndl* 35/3, used of Heimdallr.

røskvan, 'active', 'manly', 'physically mature'. Egill uses the vb. *røskvask* of his dead son: *ef . . . hann røskvask næði*, 'if he had reached his prime', *Sonat* 11/5–6. Though *røskr* is nowhere else used of a god, the closely comparable term *þroskr*, 'full-grown', 'ripe', is used of Freyr (*Skm* 38/5); in both contexts fecund virility is the point at issue.

1/6 *Rígr*: a borrowing of Irish *rí(g)*, 'king', for the purpose of the poem (see *Rígr Introd* I. B). That the Irish term was well known among Norsemen is evident from the anecdote, dated in the 11 c., of the Norseman who hailed an Irish king in unfortunately bad Irish: *Male diarik* ('May you be cursed, King!' instead of 'May you be blessed'), but at least he knew the word for 'king' (*Bisk* I. 227). See also Almqvist (*b*), esp. 85–6, on linguistic contacts. For Norsemen with a smattering of Irish there would be a pun on *rígr*, 'king', and the native *rígr*, 'stiffness' (relevant to Heimdallr–Rígr's tree-figure and his phallic role).

2/1 *meirr*, 'more', might often in the poem be idiomatically rendered 'futhermore' and 'next', but I have kept to the translation 'more' in every instance, as

comprehensible enough in either case, in order to maintain the refrain-like emphasis on the word (cf. Fritzner s.v. *meirr* § 3).

at þat: i.e. 'after that', 'thereupon' (cf. Fritzner s.v. *at* § 1).

2/2 *miðrar brautar*: locative gen. (Nygaard § 141); cf. 3/4, 4/6, 5/4. I am not able to determine whether there is a significance attached to *miðrar brautar* at this point in the poem, apart from its anticipation of Rígr's centrality when he enters human company (see *Rig Introd* I. D. *Theme II*). Is there any solar significance in the phrase: reference to the central position of the sun in the universe, or at the height of its course at midday, or, more theologically, to Rígr's treading of a course between god and men from which the human king would issue as the central mediator between the divine and human worlds? (see *Rig Introd* I. D. *Theme III*; also, for some philosophical associations (for an Irishman) of the centrality of the sun, Allard, esp. 98).

2/4 *hurð . . . gætti*: the movable door (*hurð*) has been lifted from the entrance-opening (*dyrr*) and put in the space (*gætti*) designed for it inside the house, by the side of the wooden framework of the entrance-opening (cf. *Privatbol* 234–5). The meticulous statement that the entrance has been made open (as in 14/4, 26/5–6) is of thematic significance (see *Rig Introd* I. D. *Theme II* and nn. 50, 51).

2/8 *at arni*: on the significance of the hearth in the poet's fable see *Rig Introd* I. D. *Theme I* (ii) and n. 19. On types of hearth see *Privatbol* 178. The MS. reading (*hár*) *af árni*, '(white-haired) from ? toil' (taking *árn* as an elsewhere unattested noun related to *árna*, 'to perform a task'), is unacceptable. For *at* miswritten *af* cf. *Skm* 35/9.

2/9 *Ái ok Edda*: neither name is found as a proper noun (unlike the names of the two other parental pairs). I suspect that the poet here pressed into service two traditional popular family terms for the older generations. *Ái* comes from the same root as *Afi*, 16/9 (with loss of intervocalic *-w-*; cf. Lat *avus*, 'ancestor', 'grandfather'; Noreen § 235 n. 4; *AEW* s.vv. *ái*, *afi*. While a term **awe*, 'grandfather', does not occur in Gothic records, *awo* meaning 'grandmother' does; Feist s.v.). *Ái* occurs outside *Rig* as a dwarf-name (*Vsp* 11/8, 15/6) and as a man-*heiti* (*Þulur* IV j 8/1 (*Skjald* B I. 662)), but *Edda* is not found elsewhere until the 14 c. (as a title for *SnE* and as a term for poetry in the ancient style; see *PE* I. xiii). It could have originated as a pet name for the oldest 'mother' of a family, deriving from the archaic ON *eiða*, 'mother' (with shortening of the diphthong and consonantal doubling; Noreen offers parallels for such a formation, §§ 128, 238. 1a; cf. Gothic *aiþei*, 'mother', Feist s.v.; OHG *fuotar eidi*, 'foster mother'; *SnE* 190, 216; *LP* s.v). I think it improbable that *Edda* in *Rig* has a learned origin (cf. Faulkes (*a*)). The terms *langafi*, *langamma* for the great-grandparents (cf. *langfeðrar*, 'ancestors') do not appear in medieval tradition.

2/10 *aldinfalda*: hap. leg.; *aldin-*, 'aged', is not elsewhere found in a compound, while *-falda*, an adjectival formation from *faldr*, 'head-dress', is found elsewhere

only in the giantess-name *Sveipinfalda*, 'Swooping-hood' (so Vigfússon s.v.; *Þulur* IV c 3/8 (*Skjald* B I. 659)). I have interpreted *aldinfalda* as 'wearing a *faldr* suitable for an old woman', and assumed it would be a simple swathed cap (rather than 'an old-fashioned *faldr*', as in Ljunggren 13, since this hardly fits the *Urzeit* context); cf. commentaries to 16/5, 29/1. (FJ's emendation of MSS. 'folk'- to *fald-* in *Vell* 37 is unacceptable; Davidson 413–14).

3/2 *ráð* has been made the refrain-like keyword for all Rígr's gifts to mankind; its range of usage evokes many meanings in little space: 'counsel', 'plan', 'decision', 'marriage' (in pl.), 'sexual union (without marriage)'. Even the meanings 'living conditions', 'household' would not be irrelevant, so comprehensive are the benefits of Rígr's visits. The range of meaning is well illustrated in both Vigfússon and Fritzner s.v.; only Fritzner § 13 distinguishes unmarried sexual union. Note the use of *ráð* of Hákon's relationship with the land of Norway, *Hák* 7, and excellent commentary by Davidson, 504–6 and discussion, 464–71. See *Rig Introd* I. E on *ráðgegninn* in *Húsdr* 2.

3/4 *fletia*: the raised flooring of wood round the earth floor (*gólf*), which served for seating and sleeping. I have used the translation 'bench' whenever it is a question of sitting (e.g. in the refrain stanzas), but 'benches' (36/2), when the whole accommodating hall is implied, where a child might be watched over; cf. *Privatbol* 212–17.

3/6 *salkynna* is used in Eddic poems (other than *Rig*) only of the homes of giants—Gymir and Gerðr, Vafþrúðnir—or of Óðinn (*Skm* 17, 18; *Vafþ* 3 (*salakynni*); *Grím* 9, 10). Except in *Rig*, *salkynni* is the object of inspection: visitors come to see the 'nature, quality' (*-kynni* as in *húsakynni*, i.e. *húsakostr*, cf. Fritzner s.v. *húsakynni*) of Óðinn's or of Vafþrúðnir's dwelling. The slight anomaly of usage in *Rig* suggests that the poet was taking an old poetic term out of its conventional context (and metre, i.e. alliteration on *siá* or *sé*, in a *ljóðaháttr* line) for the sake of its archaic associations with the unreal homes of myth. It is also possible that the poet, by his reuse of the term in the new context, was attempting to shift the conventional sense of *-kynni* in *salkynni* to that of 'family': so, *hión salkynna*, 'the man and wife (parents) of the family (to be) of the house' (cf. Fritzner s.v. *kynni* § 2).

4/2 *økkvinn*, 'swollen', 'bulging' (cf. *Økkvinkálfa*, 13/3), related to ModIcel *ökkur*, OHG *anguueiz(o)*, 'swelling', 'tumour', 'boil' (cf. Lat *inguen*). Whether 'auckast', used in *Thomas Saga* 359/3, of the agglomerating of wet mud on walkers' feet, should be etymologically linked with *økkvinn*, is uncertain (cf. Vigfússon s.v. *ökvast*; *Íslensk orðsifjabók* s.v. *ökkvast*). A verse in *Vǫlsa Þáttr* shows knowledge of *Rig* 4/2–3: the thrall of the farmer's household is speaking, taking hold of the swelling equine phallus with distaste: *Hleifr væri mér / hálfu sœmri, / þykkr ok økkvinn / . . . en Vǫlsi þessi*, 'A thick and bulging loaf would be to me twice as tasteful . . . as this *Vǫlsi*/phallus' (*Flat* II. 334). The analogy between rising bread and sexual tumescence is one of the few jokes that survive in OE (cf. *Riddle* 45 (*ASPR* III. 205); Williamson 282–3). On bread types in *Rig* see commentary to 18/1–4.

4/4 *sáðum*: I have interpreted *sáðir* here as 'coarsely ground grains from which the outer skin (the bran) had not been separated', rather than as 'bran' alone, (*a*) in order to convey the bumpy texture implied, and (*b*) to avoid the implication that Ái and Edda had more than one style of flour-grinding. Wealthier households might deliberately *blanda agnar eða sáðir við brauð . . . til þess at þá sé drjúgari fœzla en áðr*, 'mix chaff or bran with the bread . . . so that the food should then be more substantial than before' (*Konungs Skuggsjá* 51); but Ái and Edda would not, I suggest, have this choice. The emphasis on the primary significance of 'the loaf' of bread in the human household, here and 31/6 (and no doubt originally also in 18/2), is seen most conspicuously in the OE terms for the lord and lady of a house: *hlāford*, 'loaf-guardian', *hlǣfdige*, 'loaf-kneader'.

4/5–6 *Bar — skutla*: I have taken these enigmatic lines to mean that Edda brought in the loaf in three portions in the centre of three dishes. The broth would then be poured on the portions of bread. DH take it that Edda brought a bowl of broth in the middle of a serving dish (taking *skutla* as poetic pl. for sg.) and then set it on the table. SG assume that an object of *bar* must be supplied or understood: 'she brought further food . . .'.

4/7 *soð* is given to the pigs in heroic verse (*HH* II 39/7).

4/8 After 4/8 the MS. reads *var kálfr soðinn / krása beztr*. As many scholars think, these lines may well have belonged originally to the lost stanza 18, describing Amma's meal. I have placed it (18/7–8) in a reconstructed version of the stanza. The words *soð* (4/7) and *soðinn* (18/7) may have created a memory link that attracted the later lines into Edda's meal. Oxen—and their calves—go with *karlakyn* and their ploughs (22/3–4, 8), not with Þræll's parents.

4/9–10 To avoid abruptness in reading I have left a space before these lines (also before 18/9–10 and 32/11–12). I do not think any text is missing here.

6/2 *þriár nætr*: on the three wedding nights of marital chastity see *Ríg Introd* I. D. *Theme II* and n. 44; also *Skm* 42.

7/2 On pre-Christian customs of baptism by water see *AR* § 137; *Háv* 158; Maurer 6 ff.; *Lexikon für Theologie* s.v. *Wasser* I.

7/3–4 *Hǫrvi — svartan*: with other editors, I assume that by haplography *vaði hǫrund* has been omitted (cf. 35/2). *Rióðan*, 21/5, and *biarter vangar*, 35/6, refer to complexion; *hǫrundsvartan* would be stylistically parallel (cf. *hǫrundbjartr* (*-mjúkr*), 'radiant (soft) of flesh, body'). I cannot find any direct evidence (other than *Ríg* 7/3 itself) that *hǫrr* was a coarser type of linen than *ripti* (21/4, 23/6) or *lín* (41/4). *Hǫrr* is not recorded in the (prose of the) *Íslendinga Sǫgur*, *Heimskringla*, or *Sturlunga Sǫgur* (I thank Sverrir Tómasson for sending me this information from the lexical records of the Stofnun Árna Magnússonar); it may, therefore, have been out of fashion for clothing by the 13 c., perhaps because it was not as fine as modern taste required. The presumably contemptuous alliterative linking of *hǫr eðr hempi* (used of underclothes) in *Konungs Skuggssjá* 45 (*c.* 1260) suggests the same (as, indeed, does the use of *hǫrr* for a tablecloth by Móðir, 31/3). In skaldic and Eddic tradition (other than *Ríg*), however, *hǫrr* is used of admired women's clothing: young Brynhildr is *hǫrskrýdd*, 'gloriously dressed in *hǫrr*', *Sigsk* 51/2; see *LP* s.v. *hǫrr* § 1. The statement in *KLNM* s.v. *Lin* (col. 579) that *hǫrr* was not used of clothing ('Lín betegner både plante, råstoff og produkt, mens hǫrr bare ble brukt om uarbeidet råstoff, ikke om tøy') does not take account of this OIcel poetic tradition.

7/5 *Hǫfug vóru augu*: I have supplied for Þræll eyes that are the extreme opposite of Iarl's, namely, heavy, closing with sleep (cf. *hǫfgi*, 'sleepiness', 'dozing'). I have followed the alliterative precedent of 40/7–8. Sleep would seem to be the serf's one blessing for which a king will envy him (e.g. Shakespeare, *2 Henry IV*, III. i. 9–17, *Henry V*, IV. i. 280–301).

7/6 *hétu Þræl*: on the importance attached to name-giving see *AR* §§ 138, 158.

8/2 *dafna*, 'to thrive physically' (especially of babies, as Vigfússon s.v. notes; cf. ModIcel *döfnunarbarn*). The related OE *gedafenian* is only used in an abstract sense, 'to be fitting, decorous'. Whether ON *dafna* implies 'to grow up in *proper* form' is not possible to determine from the recorded instances, but it seems likely. If so, to apply the term to Þræll is sadly, but deliberately, ironic. The phrase *vaxa né vel dafna* (of a baby) in *Egils Saga einhenda* 176, ch. 12, is no doubt an echo of *Ríg*. In Egill Skalla-Grímsson's *lausavísa* 24 (*Egil* 149) the MSS. read *drafnar* not *dafnar* (as SG, following *Skjald* B I. 45).

8/6 *kartnegl*: I have adopted Grundtvig's suggestion, but without his addition of adj. *liótir*, 'ugly', since there are other two-syllable lines in the poem (see 8/9, 11/4; JH 100; Bugge (*a*), 403). Elsewhere in ON *kartnegl* is found only in *Njál* 91, where, I suggest, it is deliberately borrowed from *Ríg* by the saga author, to form part of Hallgerðr's mockery of Bergþóra. What precise ailment *kartnegl* designates is difficult to determine. Matthiesen notes the post-medieval use of *kartneglur* for deformed, brittle, or split nails, and nails afflicted by the ringworm fungus, which causes an itching popularly associated with sexual excess. *Kartnegl* on Þræll would arise from hard work and poverty: so the poet would imply (for references see *Ríg Introd* n. 87).

8/9 *lotr*: hap. leg., an ablaut variant of (if not a scribal error for) *lútr*, 'stooping'. As *Lútr* occurs as a personal name in 12/9, it seems to me unlikely that the poet would use exactly the same word in 8/9.

8/10 *langer hælar* were evidently regarded as a physical defect, or at least unattractive, if we judge by the exhortations at babies' christenings in the old days in Denmark, to encourage the guests to drink well: *Drik ud—ellers faar Barnet lange Hæle*, 'Drink up—or the child will get long heels' (cf. Hansen, who suggests that 'long heels' imply a slow, trailing gait. There could be racial reference also; cf. the

difference between the slender Romano-Celtic and the broader Anglo-Saxon feet as seen in skeletal remains from excavated graves in south-west England, discussed by P. Jackson.

9/6 *hrís*: branches cut from small trees and bushes; cf. Fritzner s.v. § 2; *Vkv* 8/7; *Ríg Introd* n. 19.

gerstan dag: so also *Skm* 30/2. The sense is determined by Sigvatr Þórðarson's description of the hostile eyes of the Gautland *bóndi* who drove him from his doors: *leit við mér. . . gerstr* (*Hkr* II. 138, *Skjald* B I. 222). Þræll labours in a wintry, unfriendly landscape to provide warmth (well illustrated in *Les Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry* for *Février*).

10/2–4 *gengilbeina*: hap. leg. I take the sense to be 'a girl whose legs are constantly walking' (cf. OE *Maxims* I 64 (*ASPR* III. 159): *wīdgongel wīf word gespringeð*, 'of a woman who goes walking far and wide, gossip will grow'). Þír is, as it were, a humble, pedestrian version of Nerthus or St Brigida (see *Ríg Introd* I. D. *Theme II*). To Þræll's winter scene of bare branches she brings fertile earth (*aurr*; see commentary to *Vsp* 19/4) from a sunny climate; her harvesting in the sun has turned her bare arms brown. For the enslaved giant-girls turning the golden mill in *Grott* (16/5–6) the *aurr* of their prison is an icy mud that eats into their feet—*aurr etr iliar*—while cold—*kulði*—falls from above upon them, not sunshine. Þír does not, like them, bring a destructive future, but a golden one. The poet, by his verbal touches, seems to have planned the poetic allusion and contrast.

10/5 *niðrbiúgt nef*: I adopt Ljunggren's excellent suggestion (13–17) that the vb. *er* should be omitted on the analogy of the preceding line (and 8/5–10, 29/3–8). A witch-like nose, curving down over the mouth, is a monstrous feature in *fornaldarsǫgur* (see Lehmann 20, n. 127, with the valuable citation from *Knýtlinga Saga* 127, ch. 20: *Knútr var . . . manna fríðastr, nema nef hans var þunnt ok eigi lágt ok nǫkkut bjúgt*, 'Knútr was the handsomest of men, except that his nose was thin and prominent and rather curved (*or* bent)'. The horn said to grow on the *Hornfinnar* was *niðrbjúgt í enni*, 'growing down over the forehead', *Hkb* 167/8; see Fritzner s.v. *niðrbjúgr*). The point of the satiric lines of Stefnir Þorgilsson—*Niðrbiúgt er nef / á níðingi*, 'Hooked is the nose of the traitor'—would seem to be the implication that this particular traitor—the Danish Jarl Sigvaldi, who plotted the death of Óláfr Tryggvason at Svolðr in 1000—was no Jarl, but the lowest class of man, a Thrall: if not, indeed—adding sexual scorn—a Thrall*woman*. Stefnir (I suggest) deliberately cites *Ríg* for his mockery, which was evidently poisonous enough for the jarl to have him killed (Oddr Snorrason, *Óláfs Saga* 194–5). I can see a point in Stefnir's citation of *Ríg*, but none in any poet's borrowing of Stefnir's line for Þír (as Heusler and others suggest; SG). If Jarl Sigvaldi did in fact have a hooked nose (which gave Stefnir his idea), the joke would be perfect. Familarity with Stefnir's *kviðlingr* may have led a scribe of *Ríg* to insert the vb. *er*.

11/4 *sonr húss*: see commentary to 16/10.

11/6 *rekkiu gørðu*: that Þræll and Þír have no marriage ceremony (cf. 23, 41) no doubt reflects Norse heathen customs of informal marital alliances between thralls, without legal force. *Grágás*, however, provides certain rights for married thralls (Ia. 191, II. 397, III. 710), which might derive from pre-Christian times.

11/8 *þrungin dœgr*: acc. of duration, 'through days and nights that followed thick and fast upon each other and were crammed with things to do'. I do not think the primary sense of the phrase is 'oppressed, sad, days and nights' (cf. *LP* s.v. *þryngva*), especially since the cheerful lines 12/1–2 follow immediately. Echoing his earlier use of *þrunginn* (4/4) to describe the primitive loaf packed with heavy nourishment—*drjúg fœðsla*, as the author of *Konungs Skuggsjá* calls it—the poet presents the thralls' life as 'action-packed', under heavy pressure, no doubt, but not miserable: begetting children at night and working hard at householding in the daytime. Coming so closely after the phrase *rekkiu gørðu* (11/6), *þrunginn* also raises associations of sexual embrace, *þrǫng* (cf. *hvíluþrǫng*, 'embrace in bed', *Gísl* 33; see commentary to *Lks* 30/4–6).

12/4–9 *Hreimr — Leggialdi*: I have invented a translation of the names according to the nearest meaningful Norse word; e.g. *hreimr*, 'noise'; *fjós*, 'cow-byre'; *klúrr*, 'ill-formed', 'coarse'; *klegg*, 'sticky lump', 'horse-fly'; *kefsir*, 'servile sleeping-partner'; *fúll*, 'putrid', 'ugly'; *drumbr*, 'stump' (cf. *trédrumbr*, 'tree-stump'; Fritzner s.v.); *digr*, 'fat'; *drǫttr*, 'sluggard' (cf. *dratta*, 'to drag (oneself) along'); *hǫss*, 'grey'; *lúta*, 'to stoop'; *leggjar*, 'limbs', 'legs' (cf. *á legg kominn*, '(newly) grown up'). To associte the name *Leggialdi* (which occurs also as a nickname, *Landn* 330) with *leggja* vb. and the fixing of fences in 12/10 (as *LP* s.v.) is unsatisfactory: the vb. is too general in application to provide a nickname. *Leggr* occurs as a personal name and as a nickname; Lind s.v. suggests that *Leggjaldi* probably implies 'with notable legs (admirable or otherwise)'. These yokel-names, though emphasizing uncouthness and premature signs of age—*Hǫsver*, *Lútr*— do not point to any lack of food.

12/14 *grófu torf*: the association of peat-digging with a thrall's life reappears in the (prose) traditions of the Orkney jarl, Torf-Einarr (*c.* 890), who was said to be the first to dig peat in the Orkneys. Torf-Einarr was the son of Jarl Rǫgnvaldr of Mœrr, who despised him because his mother came wholly of thrall ancestry (*í allar ættir þrælborin*, *Orkneyinga Saga* 11).

13/2–8 *Drumba — Trǫnubeina*: there is a greater element of raillery, directed against personal appearance, in the daughters' names. Not only their shapeless plumpness (*Drumba*, cf. 12/7, and *Kumba*, cf. *kumbi*, 'block of wood'), but their legs (*Økkvinkálfa* and *Trǫnubeina*) have caught attention, and the beak-like nose inherited from mother (*Arinnefia*; I take *Arin-* as a variant of *Arn-*, 'eagle', as in *Arinbjǫrn*, rather than as 'Hearth(-nose)', a possible variant of 'Cinderella'. On *Arin-/Arn-* see Beck 28–30; commentary to *Akv* 1/7 (3)). *Ysia* would rush noisily about her tasks (cf. *yss*, 'uproar', 'bluster'; *AEW* s.v.), while *Eikintiasna* was a mighty chatterbox (cf. *Skm* 17/5; Norw *tjasna*, 'to talk endlessly', cf. *AEW* s.v. *tjasna* § 2).

Ambátt and *Þrúghypia* (a wretched giant's daughter in *HH* I 43) represent the subservience and poverty of their class.

14/2 *réttar*: of the various shades of meaning of *réttar* involved here I have given priority to 'right' in the translation (see *Rígsthula* I. D. *Theme II*), though 'direct' and 'straight' are no doubt also implied, because, of course, Rígr knows exactly the way he is going.

14/4 *hurð — skíði*: here the door has been raised to rest on the lintel-beam (*skíð*; cf. Fritzner 1972 s.v. *dyraskíð*; *Privatbol* 234) by ropes or chains.

15/3–5 That Afi is given net clipped hair and slim-fitting garment strengthens the impression of precision and care made by the image of him carving. The scene looks ahead to the practical creative interests of his son and the conspicuous beards and respectable persons of his grandsons (22, 24). On early medieval attitudes to the cutting of beards see Constable 85–102 ('The Laity'); also *Konungs Skuggsjá* 46, trans. 182.

skyrtu þrǫngva: SG (supplementing Nygaard § 31) note the stylistic habit of omitting, in a descriptive sequence, the vb. 'to have on, be wearing', moving from a nom. with vb. 'to be' (*skǫr var fyr enni*) to an ungoverned acc. (*skyrtu*). The same device occurs in 29/3–4.

15/6 *Skokkr*: 'As a nautical term in ON, *skokkr* is confined to skaldic poetry, and in none of the six contexts in which it occurs is its precise reference clear. But, partly on the basis of etymology and partly by inference from the use of *skokk* in Swedish dialect, it has been established that *skokkr* is virtually synonymous with *þiljur*, designating the loose decking planks on the bottom of the ship' (Edwards 312, commentary to *Þorfinnsdrápa* 20/8: *skokkr var blóði stokkinn*; with references to Lindquist, Ljunggren 26–8). As Ljunggren points out, comparison is between the styles of *gólf* in *Rígsthula* 2, 15, 27; *skokkr* is then most aptly interpreted as the treadway of boards often placed on the earthen floor alongside the raised flooring (with its benches and beds) so that feet could be free from ash and mud (see *Privatbol* 181–2, 219). ModIcel *skokkr*, 'small box', is less fitting.

16/3 *breiddi faðm*: as *LP* notes, s.v. *breiða*, Axel Kock's interpretation is 'unnecessary'. He takes *faðm* as OHG *fadum*, 'thread' (not found in ON) and *breiddi* as from a vb. **be-raidjan*, 'to prepare' (not found in ON, unless in OSwed *bereiða*, 'to pay'); cf. Kock (*a*).

16/4 *bió til váðar*: Amma is making woollen cloth (*váð*), but it is noticeable that sheep are not mentioned in the poem.

16/5 *Sveigr*: a head-dress with a curved crown, bending forwards over the forehead (cf. *sveigja*, 'to bend'). The *faldr*, the general term for all cloth-swathed head-coverings, might also have a curved crown (cf. *krókfaldr*; also, it would seem, the

high, curving, swaying *faldr* of Móðir, 29/1). The elegant Guðrún wore a *sveigr mikill* on the day Bolli was killed, that is, a very tall curved crown (in effect, a *krókfaldr*; *Laxd* 168 n. 3). For a delightful range of Icelandic curved head-dresses, high and low, see *Íslenzkir þjóðhættir* 15, 20–5.

16/6–8 *smokkr . . . dvergar*: *smokkr* is hap. leg. in ON; probably borrowed from OE *smocc* (recorded in glosses for Latin terms for 'undergarment', 'shirt': *colobium*, *camisia*, *interula*). According to Guðmundsson and Kaalund 444, it was low-cut and sleeveless, held up over the shoulders by straps called *dvergar* (they do not cite their evidence for this description). More recent research on the remnants of women's clothing in Viking Age graves provides a more reliable picture (see Jesch 15, and her references): 'Normally, a woman would wear an outfit consisting of two or three layers. First, a shift or underdress was worn. This could be of linen or wool, had sleeves, and was sometimes pleated and gathered at the neck. The neck opening was usually held together by a small disc brooch. Over the shift, the woman wore a strapped gown, or overdress. This was basically a rectangular piece of material (usually wool) wrapped around the woman's body and reaching to her armpits. Holding the gown up were looped straps over the woman's shoulders which were sewn on at the back and which were joined to smaller loops sewn on to the front by means of the two oval brooches, the pins of which passed through the loops.' If we take *smokkr* to be the shift, or *serkr*, the *dvergar* could refer to the two straps and/or the oval brooches which held up the overdress. Falk 145 and Blindheim 154 are inclined to this view. *Dvergar* might then be a popular, jocular term, drawing an analogy between the dwarfs who uphold the sky and the devices that upheld the dress. For illustrations see Blindheim 148, Jesch 16.

16/9 *Afi*: see commentary to 2/9 and *Skm* 1/6.

Amma: a nursery word not often recorded in ON (cf. *Hym* 8), but no doubt of ancient origins (cf. *AEW* s.v.).

On the placing of the names Afi and Amma at the end of the description of them, and not at the beginning (cf. 2/9, 27/5), see *Rígsthula* II. B.

16/10 *áttu hús*: this would seem to be an assertion of ownership over the whole establishment, the *hǫll* and its subsidiary buildings. Afi and Amma anticipate in this 'ownership' the activities of their son (who sets himself *hús at timbra*, 22/5), just as they eat veal (18/7), while he will devote himself to training oxen (22/3). Is this assertion of their 'ownership' intended to distinguish them in this particular from Ái and Edda, who might not, as the ancestors of thralls, be supposed to 'own' their domicile? To press this point could be to break too realistically into the poet's fable. If Ái and Edda did not own their house, who did? We know of no other class in their world but that of Þír. It may, however, be relevant that the name given to the unfree class in Old Irish law was *senchleithe*, 'old house', for which the origin can only be surmised (Thurneysen (*b*), 82, relates it to an age-old association of the unfree with the land: 'Der senchleithe ist mit seinem Landstück so verwachsen, dass er mit ihm zugleich verschenkt wird'). Þræll is *sonr húss* (11/4), son, perhaps,

of the oldest house, the earth itself (cf. *Vsp* 17/4), which Rígr now approaches for the first time? Could the image of the oldest inhabitants of the earth as the ancestors of the unfree class, fixed to their plot of land, be an Irish inheritance in the poet's material? Though I think it irrelevant to the poet's fable, it should perhaps be noted that historically, at different periods and places, the unfree—in their various grades—often had their own homes (cf. *Germ* xxv: [*servus*] *suam quisque sedem, suos penates regit*).

17 – 20 On the lacunae in the text see *Rígs Introd* II. A.

18/1–4 *Þá tók — byggmiǫlvi*: in supplying the missing stanza describing the meal of the second estate I have been most concerned to provide a loaf that alliterated with Amma. *last(ar)*- and *ǫlger*- ('ale-yeast'; later attested) seemed the only options. Having supplied the yeast, I ventured to make the loaf 'steep' or well risen (cf. the transferred use of *brattr* in *Brattskeggr*, 24/8), baked in an oven, rather than in the ashes of the hearth. If we suppose that Edda's loaf might be of coarse rye, a barley-loaf (cf. Fritzner s.vv. *bygghleifr*, *-mjöl*) might be the next stage of refinement before white wheat-bread (31/7). *KLNM* s.v. *Bakning* (col. 307) invents a loaf for Amma's household (ett kornbröd i form av en tunn kaka bakat på sten- eller järnhäll, 'a cereal bread shaped in a thin cake, baked on stone or iron hearth'), without noting that no text supports this. As there were baking ovens in Denmark since the Roman Iron Age (*KLNM* loc. cit. col. 308), and also baking with yeast, the loaf I have attributed to Amma might have been possible. The original text may have included also a drink of ale, the stage of luxury before wine (32/7; cf. *Havelok* 1729–32: *Pyment to drinke and god clare, / Win hwit and red, ful god plente— / Was þer-inne no page so lite / Þat euere wolde ale bite*), but I offer only minimal suggestions, in the hope that a more skilled poet and antiquarian than myself will be moved to provide a better reconstruction.

18/5–8 Taken from 4/5–6 and MS. 4/9–10. See commentary to 4/8.

18/10 *réðz at*: MS. *réð at* would mean 'he resolved to' (see *LP* s.v. *ráða* § 12). On the decision to level 4/10 as a refrain line here and 32/12, see *Rígs Introd* II A.

21/4 *ripti*: evidently a finer linen cloth than *hǫrr*: it is used also for the wedding veil of Karl's bride (23/6), for Móðir's well-fitting sleeves (28/7), and for the courtly bed-linen of Sigurðr and Guðrún (*Sigsk* 8/8).

21/6 *Riðuðu*: lit. 'shook tremulously in little movements to and fro', i.e. with unfocused vision. No single word can render well the excellent original here (see *Rígs Introd* I. D. *Theme I* (iii)).

22/3 *Øxn*: the second estate was especially associated with the ownership of oxen and with ploughing in Anglo-Saxon and Old Irish records (see Stenton (*a*), 385; Charles-Edwards 67–71).

22/4 *arðr* (etymologically related to Lat *aratrum*), the oldest type of plough in Scandinavia; it cut a narrow furrow, without turning over the soil like the *plógr*. The first settlers of Iceland used it (cf. *Landn* 43: *lét hann þrælana draga arðrinn*), and it continued to be used long after the introduction of the *plógr* (as *Rígs* 22 implies). For illustration and discussion see *Reallexikon* s.v. *Ackergeräte* 50–2; Glob (with detailed English summary, 109–33).

22/7 *karta*: rare in ON; probably a loanword from OE, where *cræt* and *crætwæn* ('cart-wagon') frequently gloss Lat *currus*, 'chariot' (see BT s.vv.).

22/8 *plóg*: a heavier, wheeled, plough, of uncertain origin; probably introduced to the Norsemen in England. The first use of *plógr* in ON (outside *Rígs*) is in Þjóðólfr Arnórsson's *Sexstefja* (18/3) *c.* 1065 (*Skjald* B I. 343; *Hkr* III. 167).

23/2–3 *hanginluklu, / geitakyrtlu*: hap. leg., epithets designed for the context. For comparable descriptive formations cf. *Grottintanna*, *Tǫtrughypia*. In Nordic graves of the Viking period a housewife is recognized by her bunch of keys; Jesch 25.

23/5 *heiter*: perhaps an error for *hét*, since the present tense is rare in the narrative stanzas (cf. 37/6). In 12/3, 13/9, 25/7, the present is clearly correct. As it is conceivable that the poet may have wished to step out of the frame of the past in the statements in 23/5 and 37/6, I have left the MS. form.

23/6 *settiz under ripti*: there is a double implication here: Snør seats herself on the dais beneath her bridal veil; she has also placed herself under the obligations of a wife. So, too, Erna walks wearing her bridal veil (41/4), and enters upon its obligations. The pre-Christian veiling of the bride is thought to derive from archaic protective practices (cf. *AR* § 140).

23/7–8 *Biuggu — deildu*: these lines are suspect, since *biuggu* appears again in 24/2, and *bauga deildu* suggests lordly action in a heroic context (cf. 39/7–8). The reciter's, or scribe's, memory may have been influenced by the sequence of ideas in 41/4–5: *Gekk hón und líni. / Saman biuggu þau* . . . I have not treated 23/7–8 as an interpolation, rather as a patch over lost text.

23/9 *Breiddu blæiur*: an elegant equivalent of *rekkiu gørðu*, 11/6 (cf. *Oddr* 25/7–8: *þá er breiddo við / blæio eina*, 'when we spread a single bed-covering', i.e. were sleeping together).

Blæja, an old Gmc word (cf. OHG *blahun*), probably related to Lat *floccus*, was used in Scandinavia of a rough woven cloth made from coarse linen for household purposes.

24/3 *Hétu*: I have emended to the pl. (although the sg. would be possible at the head of a list of singular names) because of the parallel with 25/1: *Enn hétu svá* . . . (cf. 40/8).

24/3–8 *Halr — Seggr*: the sons' names are drawn from different conventional contexts. *Halr* (cf. *Vsp* 50/7, 53/7) and *Seggr* (cf. *Skm* 4/2) are old Gmc poetic terms for 'man', and carry a certain antique dignity with them. *Drengr* in its frequent usage implies a soldierly, brave, forthright man; in skaldic verse commonly used of a king's troops. Snorri gives a full range of meaning for the term in his own day, emphasizing the young bachelor of great social promise (*SnE* 186–7; cited *LP* s.v.). *Þegn*, in ON and OE legal usage, implies a man worthy to be the trusted officer of a lord or king (*NGL* s.v., BT s.v. *þegen* IV). *Hǫldr* implies a man of good family, with inherited land: a term borrowed in Anglo-Saxon for 'a class of noblemen intermediate between the thegn and the earldorman' (Stenton (*b*), 509; Sawyer 42–3). *Bóndi* is the owner of a farm and household, rich or poor. *Búi* is the inhabitant of a district, living in his own house, while *Smiðr* denotes a man with the much-prized skills of metal-working and wood-carving (such as Skalla-Grímr possessed, *Egil* 78–9, and Gísli, *Gísl* 28), while *Breiðr*, *Bundinskeggi*, and *Brattskeggr* are identified—in no unfriendly way—by a characteristic of personal appearance. In Norse popular idiom beards often personified men (as in Hallgerðr's *taðskegglingar*, 'dungbeards', *Njál* 113; or the unkempt islander, *eyjarskeggi*, see *LP* s.v.; or 'Red Beard' Þórr, see *Ríg Introd* I. D. *Theme I* (iv)). *Bundinskeggi* presumably refers to a tied or plaited beard (not elsewhere noted in ON; and not in Constable), such as medieval German and French clerics and gentlemen are said to have worn, often plaited with gold thread or ribbons, in the many instances cited by Schultz 288. Here the fashion is dated from the 12 c. In the citations the wearers are mainly grey-haired: indicating perhaps that it was an outmoded style. *Brattskeggr* suggests a long straight-falling beard. Of the sons' names only *Boddi* has no prose sense; it may be a diminutive of *Búi* (SG). It occurs once as a personal name, from the 9 c. (cf. Bragi Boddason), and once as a nickname *c.* 1200 for one of the Birkibeinar (Ívarr boddi).

25/3–6 *Snót — Ristill*: it is, no doubt, a reflection of the confined role of women in Norse society that only one of the ten names of the daughters of Karl represents a function, that of 'Bride'. The other names are found, more or less frequently, in verse as synonyms (*heiti*) for 'woman'. The distanced, poetic character of the names conveys the necessary element of respect towards Karl's daughters—legal, dowered brides—while the variety of *heiti*, so often conveying little individual distinctness in their original contexts, is in *Ríg* wittily used to suggest a great variety of girls. Snorri (who has known *Ríg*) gives his own interpretation of nine of the ten names (though the poet, of course, may have understood them differently): *víf*, *brúðr*, *fljóð*, Snorri says, are *heiti* for married women (yet the unmarried Sigrún is called *víf*, *HH* II 14); *sprund*, *svanni* are *heiti* for proud, ostentatious women, he asserts (no context enables us to check this, but *sprund*, like *sprakki*, is probably related to a stem meaning 'lively', 'vigorous', cf. *AEW* s.vv.; while *svanni* may be related to *svinnr*, 'wise', 'forceful', cf. *AEW* s.vv.; Snorri's reading would fit etymology well enough); *snót* Snorri interprets as a woman witty in words (influenced perhaps, as SG suggest, by adj. *snotr*, 'wise'; Norw *snōt*, 'brisk vigour', cf. H. Ross s.v., is formally closer); *feima* Snorri interprets as 'shy, timorous maiden', 'unassertive woman' (cf. ModIcel *feiminn*, 'shy', not attested in ON; also OE *fǣmne*, 'virgin', 'young bride'); *ristill* Snorri reads as a woman of imposing, dominant character (*skǫruglynd*), no doubt, I suggest, because *ristill* is also the term for a ploughshare, and the parallel stems *rist-*, 'cut', and *sker-*, *skǫr-*, 'cut', came together in his mind. For the interpretation of *rist-* as (*v*)*rist*, 'instep', see Vigfússon s.v. *ristill*. I have followed Snorri's lead.

26/1 *at þat*: cf. 2/1, 14/1 for similar context. I take MS. *þaðan* to be a reciter's or scribe's error (influenced perhaps by 4/9, 38/1), since it has no point of reference. Rígr's last appearance was in 20.

26/3 *sal*: it does not seem possible to draw a distinction between *salr* and *hǫll* (14/3) based on any text other than *Ríg*. I have distinguished the two in translation, but without great confidence in the terms chosen (see commentary to *Vsp* 4/6).

26/5 *Var — hnigin*: the door has been lifted down from its fastenings (cf. *hnigin er helgrind*, 'the gate of Hel is down': Hervǫr sees her father's grave-mound opening, *Heiðr* 16).

26/6 *Hringr*: for knocking, as well as for pulling open (cf. *KLNM* s.v. *Dørring*). Here there is no need to knock, as door and ring have been set to one side.

27/2 *strát*: strewn with straw to maintain the warmth and dryness of the earthen floor.

27/6 *fingrum at leika*: the poet seems to imply both a literal and a figurative sense in the phrase: that the couple fondly touch hands as they tinker with arrows or problems of *couture*, and that, at the same time, they are at the height of merry, idle, felicity together (cf. the proverbial expression *at leika við fingr sér*, 'to play with one's fingers', 'to be idyllically happy (doing very little)'; see Fritzner s.v. *fingr*). *LP* s.v. *fingr* expresses doubts as to the interpretation of 27/6, perhaps because the poet plays with a double sense.

28/6 *hugði at ǫrmum*: Móðir, like Mrs Merdle, the millionaire's wife, 'at home . . . in her nest of crimson and gold', is 'much engaged with the contemplation of her arms (beautiful-formed arms, and the very thing for bracelets)' (Dickens, *Little Dorrit*, ch. 33). But in Móðir's day only the lowest classes had—like Þír (10/4)—bare arms.

29/1 *Keisti fald*: *keisa* vb. is hap. leg. in ON; the nickname *keis* (in ModIcel 'protuberant paunch'; Blöndal s.v.) occurs in *Sturl* (*a*) II. 168, 208 (1256). In Norw dialects *keisa* vb. and related words are recorded by Aasen, H. Ross, and Torp, always with a sense that implies 'swinging motion', 'curving, bending', 'towering erect on high' (sometimes of proud behaviour). We could read *faldr*, or take *keisti* as impersonal, as I have done: the high, swathed frame made the arched head-dress tower up, swaying as the lady moved her head. See commentary to 16/5.

29/2 *kinga*: a coin- (or nummular) brooch, named from the *kengr*, 'hook', 'fastening' (hinged pin and catch) by which the coin was attached. For illustration of four such brooches, from late 9 c. to early 11 c., found at Winchester, see Biddle (*b*) II. 633–5, Plate XLVIII. In *Laxd* 224 a *kinga* is found in the grave of the heathen *vǫlva* whose ghost appeared to Guðrún's granddaughter; the implication is that the *kinga* was, even in Guðrún's day, an archaic ornament. On *kinga* as a translation of *drachma*, see Vigfússon s.v.

29/3–4 On the syntax see commentary to 15/5.

29/3 *slæður*: a long courtly garment sweeping the ground, with long wide-opening sleeves, fastening down the front with—sometimes golden—buttons, often of silk and gold- or fur-trimmed; worn by men and women (see *Egil* 213, 274); cf. *slæða*, 'to trail along the ground', *slóði*, 'a track, trail', 'dragged load'.

31/2 *merktan*: I assume the patterning was stitchwork (as, for example, on the Bayeux Tapestry). *Merktr* is not elsewhere used of decorated cloth.

31/4, 8 *hulði bióð . . . hulði dúk*: Móðir sets the table with the ease and gaiety of a high-spirited magician. SG distrust the repetition.

31/5–6 Alliteration on the personal pronoun occurs also in 41/1–2: *báðu hennar / ok heim óku* and 49/3–4: *æðra óðal / en ér hafið*. I have not therefore attempted to 'regularize' by reading *þunnar hleifar* to alliterate with preceding *þat* (cf. 6/1, 20/1, 34/1 for alliteration on *þat*).

32/1–4 As the text is clearly defective in line 4, and as there is alliterative potential in *Fram* and *fulla* in lines 1–2, I have (*a*) reversed MS. *skutla fulla*, (*b*) transferred *setti* from line 1 to the lacuna in line 4 (cf. *setti á bióð*, 4/8), and (*c*) introduced *færði* into line 1. (*a*) is adopted in some other editions and some paper MSS. (*b*) *setti* is repeated by some editors in line 4. I have not found (*c*) adopted elsewhere.

32/5 *fan*[*g*]: MS. 'fáán' is commonly interpreted (*LP* s.v.) as a form from hap. leg. adj. *fánn*, related to *-fár*, 'coloured', 'stained', 'bright' (see commentary to *Skm* 23/2). If MS. *ok* is omitted and *fleski* is interpreted as neut. pl. 'pieces of pork', we get 'glistening, *or* multicoloured, streaky, pieces of pork'. I offer a less complex, though not unobjectionable, suggestion, that we read *fang*, i.e. either 'sea-catch' (cf. the possible reading *sæfǫng*, *Guð* II 43/2) or 'game'; see *NGL* s.v. *fang* § 3. As a preferred menu I have translated 'fresh game', but 'fresh-caught fish' might suggest a grander meal of greater variety (cf. *Havelok* 1725–8: *Biforn hem com þe beste mete / Þat king or cayser wolde ete: / Kranes, swannes, ueneysun, / Lax, lampreys, and god sturgun . . .*).

32/7 *Vín*: see commentary to 18/1–4.

32/11–12 On the textual problems of these lines see *Rík Introd* II. A.

35/8 *sem yrmlingi*: the snake was well known to mesmerize and dominate smaller cratures by its gaze; from this fact the mythical basilisk ('little king') no doubt derived its death-dealing eyes (see Bächtold-Stäubli s.v. *Auge* 683 § 8, 684 § 9; s.v. *Basilisk*). For natural as well as legendary reasons a hero's menacing eyes might have been likened to a snake's (cf. Fáfnir's *ægishiálmr*, *Fáf* 16; Kroesen 51–2). In ON in four instances the eyes of heroes, to whom noble or royal birth is attributed, are associated with the (terrifying) glitter of the (eyes of the) snake: (*a*) *Vkv* 17/5–6 (see commentary ad loc.); (*b*) Sigvatr Þórðarson's funeral ode for Óláfr Haraldsson (*c.* 1040), *Erfidrápa* 13 (his enemies dared not look into the king's serpent-glittering—*ormfrǫn*—eyes); (*c*) *Rík* 35/7–8; and (*d*) *Ragnars Saga* 115 (where the grandson of Sigurðr Fáfnisbani is born with a birthmark that his mother—Sigurðr's daughter—prophetically described: *svá mun þykkja sem ormr liggi um auga sveininum*, 'it will seem as if a snake were lying round the boy's eye'; he becomes called Sigurðr 'with the snake in the eye' *ormr í auga*). Sigurðr's *Erfidrápa* provides the most firmly datable use of the royal snake-eye motif. *Ragnars Saga* 115 is clearly under the influence of *Rík* 35, in that Sigurðr is, like Jarl, a new-born baby when his eyes are noticed, and the elaborate fancy of the snake image actually *in* the eye appears secondary, when compared with the simple *sem yrmlingi*. Sigurðr's snake-eyes have no special significance in his Viking career, but they are genealogically valuable, in that he becomes an ancestor of Haraldr Gormsson, King of Denmark, and Haraldr hárfagri, King of Norway (according to the legends; *Þáttr af Ragnars Sonum* 159–63). He is the only Vǫlsung (before Óláfr Haraldsson) whose eyes are associated with the snake. Whether *Rík* 35/7–8 relates to a specific Vǫlsung tradition (older than that recorded in *Ragnars Saga* 115) or to a more general proverbial tradition, remains to be determined (see the valuable discussion of Kroesen; also von See (*a*), 8 n. 3).

36/2 *á fletium*: i.e. in the hall of his home; see commentary to 3/4.

36/3 *lind . . . skelfa*: *skelfa* is nowhere else used of 'shaking' a shield in combat; it is however used of threatening with sword and spear (see Fritzner s.v. § 1). To shake one's shield at an enemy might also be a mode of challenge and threat (cf. 38/6).

36/4–6 I take the identical interests of Faðir, Jarl, and Jarl's sons (cf. 28/1–3, 43/5), especially in bows and arrows, to be a considered part of the poet's characterization of a conservative aristocracy and in no need of emendation (SG).

36/7 *fleinum at fleygia*: cf. *kólfi fleygði*, 47/3. I have emended to dat. pl. because the poet appears to be accelerating Jarl's activities by placing all nouns in the plural from line 6 to line 11.

36/8 *frǫkkur*: etymologically 'Frankish spears'; in ON probably a loanword from OE *francas*, found only in *Rík* and in the compounds (*a*) *hræfrakki* ('corpse-spear', see *Gísl* 11 n. 4); (*b*) *ryðfrakka*, *-i* used of an ancient rusted sword (*Svarfdæla Saga* 145) and of rusted peat-cutting implements (*Hávarðar Saga* 318); (*c*) *Akkerisfrakki*, a disguise-name of Óláfr Tryggvason, in a fictional episode, probably meaning

'Anchor's Fluke' (*Hallfreðar Saga* 152–3). The poetic instances cited from Hallfreðr and from Þorkell Skallason by SG are incorrect readings (see Davidson 512; *Hkr* III. 195). The Franks in the 7 c. were said to favour barbed spears (Agathias II. 2); such spears are found in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon graves, but the term *franca* is not found in the oldest OE battle-texts (*Beowulf*, *Exodus*). For the *franca* in action, thrown and thrust, see *Maldon* 77, 140 (and Gordon's note, *Maldon* p. 48). *Frǫkkur* would probably imply longer and heavier spears (with a metal socket of three feet or more) than *fleinar*, less adapted to long shots. In OIcel prose usage *-frakka*, *-i* appears to survive as a term for any metal implement.

36/10 *hundum verpa*: a way of training and emboldening young hunting hounds. Neckel (*a*) argues that *verpa* here is not literally 'throw', but 'push', 'drive on', 'urge'.

37/2–3 *Rígr gangandi*: see *Ríg Introd* II. B.

37/4 *rúnar kendi*: Rígr's instruction may perhaps be compared with that of Sigrdrífa to Sigurðr, as a young and noble hero's initiation into supernatural wisdom: a motif inherited, it may be, from an archaic tradition that chieftaincy depended upon 'the greater possession of numinous knowledge' (Fleck 43). Clearly that is why, having proved his 'greater possession' of the wisdom of runes, Konr Ungr will become Rígr Konungr (see commentary to 49/1), of higher rank than his father (46). We are not told that Jarl put his runic knowledge to use. There were *sigrúnar*, 'victory runes', which a warrior might inscribe on his sword to ensure martial success (*Sigrdr* 6), but with the god's command to speed him Jarl—and the poet—need not pause for such precautions.

37/5 *sitt gaf heiti*: Rígr establishes the tradition of transmitting the *konungsgæfa*, 'king's good fortune', when he gives his royal name to Jarl, to be inherited by Konr Ungr (see Perkins 123–6, 189–90). As Perkins notes, the giving by a king of his own name usually takes place when the recipient is newly born, or when the giver is approaching death; so Haraldr hárfagri sprinkles with water his new-born grandson Haraldr Eiríksson and gives him his own name, declaring that he should be king after his father, *Hkr* I. 147. This is no doubt a fiction of Snorri's, but it underlines the tradition (compare the legend of the naming of the new-born Óláfr Haraldsson after the two Ólafir—Geirstaðaálfr and Tryggvason—who brought their people 'fortune', *Flat* II. 6–9; *AR* §§ 132, 138).

37/6 *son kveðz eiga*: see commentary to 23/5 on the tense of *kveðz*. Of the many sons begotten by gods on human mothers in Irish tradition, only one, Óengus Macc Óc, seeks out his father and demands to be acknowledged as his son. Since Macc Óc, 'Young Son', resembles the name Konr Ungr, connection between the two young heroes has been suggested; but the tales are very different (see Thurneysen (*a*), 598–600).

37/7–10 *eignaz — byggðer*: a double sense lies in these lines: Jarl is exhorted to get possession of plains (*a*) that are the inherited property (*óðal*) of others, and (*b*) that

will become the first *óðal* of his own race (of *iarlar*). In either case that will be land already occupied (see *Ríg Introd* II. B).

38 An epitomizing caricature of heroic conquest, in which all the clichés vividly crowd one upon another—the dangerous journey in a dark, alien, and icy landscape, the chivalric challenge on horseback, wielding three weapons at once, and the broad, abstract finale—war wakened, the field red with blood, the slain falling beneath the onslaught of Jarl's blows, as he fights his way to property.

38/2 *myrkan við*: see commentary to *Vkv* 1/2; Noreen § 430 n. 3 on *myrkan*.

38/3 *hélug fiǫll*: cf. *hélug* (MS. *heil-*) *fiǫll*, *Fáf* 26/3, describing the hazardous path of Sigurðr, when he went to slay Fáfnir.

38/9 *víg . . . vekia*: cf. *HH* II 7: *Hvar hefir þú, hilmir, / hildi vakða*, 'Where have you, warrior, awakened war?'; *LP* s.vv. *vekja* § 2, *víg* § 2.

38/10 *vǫll . . . rióða*: cf. Glúmr Geirason, *Gráfeldardrápa* 7: *Mælti, mætra hjalta / malm-Óðinn sá, blóði, / þróttar orð, es þorði / þjóðum vǫll at rjóða*, 'The Óðinn of steel of priceless swords—he who dared redden the plain with blood where nations fought—spoke words of power'. The *drápa* records Haraldr Greycloak's last battle (betrayed by Jarl Hákon; *Hkr* I. 238).

38/11 *val . . . fella*: cf. *Hárb* 16: *Vega vér þar knáttom / ok val fella*, 'We did fight there and cut down the slain' (*val* being proleptic).

38/12 *vá til*: I take the phrase to mean 'fought his way successfully to the possession of lands' (rather than 'fought in order to possess lands', as *LP* s.v. *vega* § 2); cf. Kormakr Ǫgmundarson, *Sigurðardrápa* 6: *vá Gramr til menja*, 'Gramr won treasure by fighting'; also Þórðr Kolbeinsson, *Belgskakadrápa* 2 for the phrase *til lands vegit hafði*, and *Eiríksdrápa* 11 for *vá til landa*.

39/2 *átián búum*: after the grandiloquence of *vá til landa* in the preceding stanza, 'eighteen estates' may seem meanly practical: an effect no doubt intended by the poet. Eighteen estates would be reckoned a princely patrimony in the bourgeois-heroic world of *Oddr*, where fifteen estates, *together with the Niflung treasure—hliðfarm Grana*, 'the burden of Grani's flank'—are offered for Oddrún's hand (21/5–8). The juxtaposition of the priceless ideal hoard and real estate makes Gunnarr's offer for Oddrún come from a wholly different world from that of Angantýr and Hlǫðr—where all of Myrkviðr and a third of the Gothic people are flung into the scales (cf. *Hlǫðskviða* 9, 13). The poet of *Ríg* has his eyes on both of these worlds (cf. *Danpr*, 49/1).

We may also see in Rígr Jarl's conquest of *átián bú* a reflection of the ancient Irish pyramid of territorial power, as Sveinsson, 290, suggests. There, the smallest territorial unit was the *túath* (etymologically related to ON *þjóð*, 'people'), a group of kindreds living in a particular area, subject to the same *rí*. A *rí* might become

lord over several other *túatha* as well: he was named *ruiri* 'superior king' if he was over three *túatha*, *rí ruirech* 'king of superior kings' if he acquired greater overlordship. Though the greater kingdoms might contend with each other, the process of accumulating *túatha* appears to have been in principle peaceful, a personal relationship between the over-king and his subordinates based on a ritual of fealty (Binchy 23, 31–3; Kelly 3–4, 17–18). If Hákon was *jarl* over sixteen jarldoms (*Vell* 37; *Rík Introd* I. D. *Theme III*), the system of power under Norse *jarlar* may have resembled that under the *rí ruirech*. Jarl may have been behaving in a violent Norse way when he absorbed *átián bú*. But that he should be called Rígr as well as Jarl shows a debt to Ireland.

39/3–8 *Auð — baug*: we return to heroic extravagance, with the lavish giving away of war-won wealth 'to all', with archaic terms for 'treasure', exquisite horses and a generous scattering of rings.

39/5 *mǫsma*: hap. leg.; presumably 'precious things' of some kind, but no related words have been found.

39/8 *hió — baug*: bracelets and torques might be severed into pieces to share out to followers. By his single-handed conquests Jarl appears to have acquired such followers. The poet shows us only the highlights of his progress. On *Hacksilber* see Shetelig and Falk 273.

40/4 *Herser*: a noble rank of overlordship in Norwegian society, lower than king or earl, traditionally existing at least from the 9 c. (cf. Fritzner s.v. and Vigfússon s.v. for a valuable range of references and comment). In *Ágrip* Hersir is the personal name of a legendary king (see *Rík Introd* I. D. *Theme III*; *AEW* s.v. *hersir*).

40/5 *Mætti hann*: here we must suppose that Jarl accompanied the envoys to make sure he approved of their choice (as did the Langobard prince Authari (†590): he visited the Bavarian court in disguise to see if his betrothed was beautiful; Paulus Diaconus I. 23–4). It is also possible that the line is defective, with its abrupt intrusion of the sg. *hann*. Or is it an echo from Konr Ungr's lost meeting with Dana?

40/6 *miófingraðri*: cf. *mæfingr*, *Hamð* 22/3.

40/7 *hvítri*: implies lucent fairness of skin and hair.

40/8 *hét sú Erna*: MS. *hétu Erna*. The choice is between reading *hét sú* instead of *hétu*, or *Ernu* instead of *Erna*. I have followed the precedent of 23/5 (*Snør heiter* [? read *hét*] *sú*). *Erna* occurs only here; see *AEW* s.v.; SG.

41/6–7 *sér unðu, / ætter ióku*: the phrasing is echoed in *Guð* II 27/5–8: *samir eigi mér, / við son Buðla / ætt at auka / né una lífi*, 'it does not befit me to increase my kin with Buðli's son or take joy in life'.

42/1–9 On the general significance of the boys' names see *Rík Introd* I. D. *Theme I*. Only Jarl's sons are presented in order of birth. *Burr*, besides being, like *Mǫgr*, a common poetic term for 'son', was a primordial giant's name, an 'early-born son' (see commentary to *Vsp* 4/1); no doubt that is why the poet places him first.

Aðal is categorically different from the other names: a neuter noun normally meaning 'innate nature', 'essential character' (cf. *Lks* 23/8, 24/6). As a prefix, however, *aðal-* implies 'excellent', 'chief' (perhaps under the influence of well-known Anglo-Saxon royal names, e.g. *Aðalsteinn*, *Aðalráðr*; cf. the assumed name, *Aðal-Grímr*, of Óláfr Tryggvason in *Vǫlsa Þáttr*).

42/10 *Konr*, 'scion' of a noble house, of noble blood. Though nowhere else used alone as a personal name, it is the basis of one of the oldest aristocratic names in Norway, *Hákon*, i.e. 'High-born nobleman'. Jarl Hákon Sigurðarson is extolled as *ragna konr*, 'noble scion of gods' (*Vell* 32), with a play upon his name. St Óláfr Haraldsson was called *bragna konr*, 'noble scion of princes', by his poets (Sigvatr Þórðarson, *Hkr* II. 318, and Óttarr svarti, *Hkr* II. 20), the heathen term of esteem for noble birth being allowed even by a king who prohibited other forms of heathen poetic usage.

44/1 *ungr* as a constant appellation is rare in the strong form (Lind s.v. gives a single instance, *Petrus unger*, Bergen 1450), though very common in the weak form *ungi* (usually distinguishing generations of the same name). *Konr ungr* is eccentrically designed to transform easily into *konungr*.

44/3–8 *ævinrúnar / ok aldrrúnar*: hap. leg. The terms are virtually tautological, since both *ævin-* and *aldr-* can signify 'life, time, without end', and are conventionally paired for emphasis in formal declarations (cf. *um aldr ok æfinsdagar*, 'for ever and always'; *aldrsáttr*, *-trygðir ok æfinsáttr*, *-trygðir*, 'everlasting terms of truce'; *DN* v. 533, *DN* I. 200, *Grágás* II. 406; cf. also *um aldr várn ok æfi*, 'for all our days and life'; *NGL* s.v. *æfi*). In these two unique compounds the *rúnar* could represent secret knowledge (invaluable to life), as well as literal spells (cf. Fritzner s.v. *rúnar* § 3). I suggest that the poet has coined the two compounds to convey Konr Ungr's vaster conception of 'saving' human life than that embodied in the heathen runic lore. Konr Ungr is, of course, familiar with that lore—*Meirr kunni hann* . . . (44/5)—and the poet's models can be seen: for *mǫnnum biarga* (44/6) in the valkyrie Sigrdrífa's advice to Sigurðr on *biargrúnar*: how to *biarga . . . ok leysa kind frá konom*, 'save . . . and deliver childbirths from women', *Sigrdr* 9/2–3; for *eggiar deyfa* (44/7) in *Háv* 148/4–5: *eggiar ek deyfi / minna andskota*, 'I blunt the blades of my enemies'; and for *ægi lægia* (44/8) in *Háv* 154/4–6: *vind ek kyrri / vági á / ok svæfik allan sæ*, 'I calm the wind upon the wave and put all the sea to sleep' (cf. also *Sigrdr* 10). It may be relevant to note that *ævin-* in Christian diction often refers to heavenly eternity (cf. *æfinsborg*, 'eternal city', *æfinsvist*, 'everlasting abode'; Fritzner s.vv.).

45/1 *Klǫk nam fugla*: as von See (*a*), 8, points out, the counsel of birds determines the destiny of Sigurðr and of Konr Ungr. Sigurðr understood birds' language by

magic revelation, when he accidentally tasted dragon's blood and nuthatches *klǫkoðo á hrísino* (cf. *Fáf* 32–9); Konr Ungr, however, appears to have applied himself to acquiring the language in scholarly fashion. On traditions of bird-language see Bächtold-Stäubli s.v. *Vogelsprache*; Lorenz (Preface and ch. 6). *Klak*, pl. *klǫk*, 'cluckings', 'twitterings', is only recorded here in ON, but is used in ModIcel (Blöndal s.v.). *Klaka* vb. occurs in *Lks* 44/6.

45/2–4 *kyrra — lægia*: the text here is suspect, since the helpful superhuman arts of Konr Ungr have been adequately noted in 44/5–8. Those arts he 'knew'—*kunni*—by his innate gifts. He would not 'learn' them (cf. *nam* 45/1) now. The repetition of *ægi lægia* (44/8) in the variant form *sæva ok svefia* (45/3) (cf. *Háv* 154/6, cited in the commentary to 44/3–8), and the recurrence of *lægia* in 45/4, suggest that a reciter, or a scribe writing down from memory, was led by remembered links of idea and phrase to fill in haphazardly a forgotten or lost passage in 45.

kyrra elda: in *Háv* 152 the magic power to save a burning house is claimed. In *Ríg* the sequence of words 45/1–2 . . . *fugla, / kyrra* . . . may have been evoked by the juxtaposition of the same words 47/4: *kyrði fugla*; 48/4: *kyrra fugla*.

sorger lægia: in *Háv* 146 the magic power to help in sorrows is claimed: *þér hiálpa mun / við . . . sorgom / ok sútom* . . .

There is no precedent in the text of the poem that can supply the lacuna 45/5–6. The motif of Konr Ungr's fairy-tale strength parallels that of the sturdy physical growth of Þræll and Karl (8/1–2, 22/1–2), but he outclasses them like a Havelok or a Grettir or a St Christopher. I do not know what comparable capabilities or exploits to suggest for him in the lacuna.

45/7–8 *afl . . . átta manna*: fabulous heroes, such as Beowulf, had the strength of for example thirty men (*Beowulf* 379–81). I have not as yet found a specific parallel for the strength of eight (S. Thompson has no parallels of 'eight' to offer). It is conceivable that the MS. here should read *xviij*, as in 39/2: *átián búum*, and that a parallel is intended between Jarl's conquests and Konr Ungr's natural strength, but I am not sure of the value of such a parallel.

46/2 *rúnar deildi*, 'contended for the mastery in runes', 'challenged at runes' (cf. *Vafþr* 55/7–8: *nú ek við Óðinn deildak / mína orðspeki*, 'now I have contended with Óðinn as to my wisdom in words'). *Rúnar*, like *orðspeki*, would seem to be acc. of respect. I know of no parallel for a contest in literal runes; here *rúnar* bring with them the implication of all arcane knowledge. In *Heiðr* 32–44 Óðinn poses riddles for Heiðrekr to answer, to determine a lawsuit in favour of a worshipper. In *Hyndl* Freyja elicits genealogical knowledge from a giantess to enable her worshipper to win his claim to his inheritance (*fǫðurleifð*, 9/7; Fleck 43–4). Konr Ungr wins his royal birthright of name and wisdom without the direct aid of any heathen deity.

46/5–8 *Þá ǫðlaðiz — kunna*: I take these lines to be a statement of an acknowledged, 'legal', bequest by Rígr Jarl to his youngest son—in accordance with the archaic practice of ultimogeniture—not of land or wealth, but of the god's paternal bequest to himself: the right to his name and to his secret of runes. So Konr Ungr—who already 'had knowledge of runes' (44/2)—is given a certificate of right, as it were, to have such knowledge. The poet plays with the two styles of inheritance—primogeniture: *Burr varr hinn elzti*, and ultimogeniture: *Konr var hinn yngsti*—to make Konr Ungr the heir to Jarl's divine patrimony, while Burr, no doubt, will inherit the *jarldómr*. On the very widespread custom of ultimogeniture, see Elton 181–215; Fleck 41, references n. 9. (Fleck mistakenly writes of the expectation that Konr Ungr should 'inherit the throne'. There is no throne to be inherited from Jarl; the throne is got by exogamy.)

47/3–4 *kólfi — fugla*: the bolt, a short shaft with a blunt end, was commonly used to bring down birds without bloodshed, so that the feathers would not be spoiled and the birds might be revived and tamed, or killed and eaten. The young son of Cuchulainn, seeing a flock of white swans, asks his charioteer if they are 'tame, or just birds'. 'Just birds', says the charioteer. 'Which would be more wonderful, to bring them alive or dead?' the boy asks. 'More wonderful, indeed, to bring them in alive.' The boy brings them down with two stones, but sets them free again (*Táin* 170). Cuchulainn himself was a passionate bird-hunter: he would even abandon a serious fight to pursue a flock of birds, 'that they might not escape him, but might leave him that evening's meal' (*Táin* 185–6; cf. 32/6: *fugla steikta*). Konr Ungr is in good heroic company in his hunting tastes. The Celtic zeal in bird-hunting is noted by Strabo (*c.* 64 BC–AD 19: IV. ii. 3). The Gallic people, he writes, use particularly for bird-hunting, a wooden instrument, hurled by hand, not thong, which ranges even further than an arrow (see A. Ross, esp. 128–9). The Norsemen also shot the *kólfr* by bow (see Shetelig and Falk 306).

kyrði, 'made quiet, still, stunned', with a possible transferred sense 'killed' (cf. *Egil* 204, *lausavísa* 39: *kyrrum kappa errinn jǫrnum*, 'let us quieten this quarrelsome fellow with iron blades'). So, in 47/4 *kyrði* may have the gentler implication of bringing the birds down without killing them, while in 48/4 the indignant crow implies the crueller sense, of silencing by killing. That to be struck by a bolt might in either case be painful is evident from the bitter complaint of the mother of Landrés (*Karlamagnús Saga* 142) who, in bird shape, was hit by a bolt from her unwitting son. There would seem to be little connection between this ancient style of bird-hunting and the refinements of 13 c. falconry (richly illustrated in the *De Arte Venandi cum Avibus* of the Emperor Friedrich II). There is little evidence that *kyrra* in *Ríg* (or elsewhere) meant 'to tame, train', as in falconry (cf. 22/3: *Øxn nam at temia*; 43/3: *hesta tǫmðu*), nor does the interpretation 'to lure by food or by voice', as in modern German *kirren* (see DH, SG), fit well with *kólfi fleygði*, 47/3. The argument of von See (*d*) that reference to falconry in *Ríg* 47 (my 46) indicates a 13 c. date for *Ríg* cannot be accepted.

48/1 *kráka*: in *Vǫls* 2–3, ch. 1, Óðinn sends a valkyrie (*Hildr*, 'War') in the shape of a crow with an apple for the infertile queen, who then conceives Vǫlsungr—ancestor of a great heroic and royal line. Is it possible that Konr Ungr's crow has

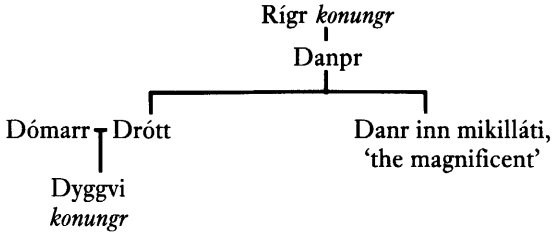
been dispatched with a comparable purpose: to provoke him not only to war, but to find a wife for himself and establish a royal line? The Irish war-goddesses often assume the form of a crow (cf. *Táin* 178). In Odinic tradition the crow is less prominent as the war-god's associate than the raven (see also von See (*a*), 9).

48/2 *kvisti*: Nygaard § 115 accepts this as locative without preposition (cf. the possible parallel in *Ghv* 16/9; also legal phrases in *Grágás*: *sitja strandsetrum*, *búsetru*, etc.). The crow has, as it were, 'settled' the bough.

48/7 *hiǫrum bregða*: the missing line is supplied by analogy with 38/8 *ok hiǫrvi brá*, and *HH* I 46/8 *hiǫrom at bregða*.

49/1 *Á*: on the sg. vb. when a pl. subject follows see Heusler (*c*), § 445 (b).

Danr ok Danpr: these two names are associated only here and in two genealogies, variant to each other, of the royal Danish house in its early days: (*a*) in Arngrímur Jónsson, *Rerum Danicarum Fragmenta* (1596), 336–8, and (*b*) in *Yng* 34–5. I would suggest that both of these sources derive the association of the two names (directly or indirectly) from *Ríg*, and that the poet of *Ríg* had himself concocted the Viking pair, for the purposes of his poem, out of an already traditional Danish eponym *Danr* (see below) and the exotic *Danpr*, lifted from the heroic-legendary *staðar Danpar* of *Hlǫðskviða* 9/6 and *Akv* 5/6 (see commentary ad loc.). I suggest that the poet invented a daughter *Dana* for (on the extant evidence) *Danpr*, who would marry Rígr, the archetypal *konungr*. Arngrímur tells us that *Rigus* married *Dana*, daughter of *Danpri cujusdam, domini in Danpsted*, and that *Rigus*, having acquired the title of king *in sua illa provincia*, 'in that province of his'—in other words having taken possession of *Danpsted* in the name of king—he left an heir, *Dan sive Danum*, by his wife *Dana*. When this *Danus* inherited his father's sovereignty (*paternam ditionem*), all his subjects were called *Dani* (*subditi omnes Dani dicebantur*). Arngrímur's text has two details that correspond to the extant text of *Ríg*; these details are not in *Yng*: (*a*) *Rigus* is explicitly placed in the estate of noblemen (sc. *iarlar*): *Rigus nomen fuit viro cuidam inter magnates sui temporis non infimo*; (*b*) there is a hint of word-play on the name *Rigus* and the genitive of *rex* (*Regis titulo . . . acqvisito*, 'having acquired the title of king'), which recalls the play implicit in *Rígr* on *Konr Ungr* and *konungr*. If this Latin word-play derives from Arngrímur himself (as seems most probable), then Arngrímur must have known the text of the poem, including the ending, which would presumably contain the word *konungr*. In *Yng* Snorri is dovetailing the genealogy of Dyggvi (*Ytal* 7) with that of Rígr. He is concerned, it would seem, to bring together the fact that Rígr was the first to be called king in the Danish—i.e. Norse—tongue (*fyrstr var konungr kallaðr á danska tungu*, *Hkr* I. 34), with the fact that Dyggvi, the *Ynglingr*, is called *konungmaðr* in Þjóðólfr's poem. Snorri therefore makes Dyggvi the first to be called king in his family (*sinna ættmanna*). Snorri also makes Dyggvi's mother, Drótt (almost certainly an invention—*skáldskapur Snorra*—as Guðnason says, 84) a granddaughter of Rígr, as if to suggest that the novel idea of a king's name came to him from Rígr's kin. Snorri omits Dana, places Rígr as father of Danpr, and Danpr as father of Danr (and Drótt):



Snorri has brushed aside the exogamic myth, and the semi-divine stranger prince wooing the land of Denmark. He has placed the eccentric Rígr at the head of the line, so that all the descendants can alliterate, including the incorporated Ynglingar. Though Snorri distorts the genealogy of *Rígr* for his own concerns, he may be reproducing the text of the poem more closely than Arngrímur when he states explicitly—as Arngrímur does not—that Rígr was the *first* to be called king, and that in the *Danish* tongue (i.e. *konungr*).

What role can Danr, companion of Danpr, have played in *Rígr*? Was he father, brother, or son of Danpr? Dana might have named her own son after any of those relatives, but if he were her brother, and still alive when she married Rígr, would she be her father's heir? Saxo gives Dan a brother as obviously legendary as Danpr: Angul, and adds that although these two brothers 'gained rule over the territory (of Denmark) by the willing consent of their countrymen . . . they yet lived without the name of king; for in that age no custom sanctioned its common use among our people' (Saxo I. i; *History* I. 14, cf. II. 25). This plainly reflects the theme of *Rígr*. One of Saxo's Icelandic informants no doubt retailed the relevant parts of the poem to Saxo. He may have changed a historically useless brother Danpr into Angul.

Did the poet make Danpr, and not Danr, the father of Dana because he wished to steer clear of existing traditions of the eponym Dan in order to create a totally fresh figure, Danr Rígsson, for his poem? The *Chronicon Lethrense* (*c.* 1170) makes Dan one of three sons of Ypri of Uppsala, who became ancestors of the Danes, the Norwegians, and the Swedes. Dan was chosen as king and lived at Hleiðra (Lejre) with his wife Dana (*SMHD* I. 43–5). Arngrímur Jónsson tells of a Danr II 'hinn Mikelati' (the Proud), descended from Danr I, the son of Rigus. Danr II conquered Sjælland and established a mighty kingdom, named after himself. Arngrímur is clearly trying to reconcile two sources very thoughtfully, even suggesting that Danr I's kingdom was Jutland, so that Danr II could start afresh in Sjælland (on Arngrímur's scholarly conscience see Guðnason 10). One of his sources must be *Rígr*, the other a genealogical tradition of the Danish house with the arrogant eponymous ancestor Dan. This tradition was known to Snorri and probably stood in *Skjǫldunga Saga* (cf. Dan *elatus* in Sven Aggesen, *SMHD* I. 106; Dan 'stained with pride' in Saxo IV. vi). Snorri, with a more ruthless scholarly conscience than Arngrímur, simplifies the two *Danir* into one, with the nickname *inn mikilláti*. The poet of *Rígr*, by creating his own legend of two *Danir*, associated with his invented figure of Rígr, has caused confusion for the later historians, who were still burdened with old traditions of Danr *inn mikilláti*—traditions which, in oral form, probably gave the poet of *Rígr* his idea for the ending of his poem in the

first place. So convincing is his poem, that he has established himself as a historical source for later centuries without any credentials whatsoever.

49/7 *kenna*, 'to teach' (the sword's edge), 'to teach (an enemy) to know, experience' (the sword's edge). *Kenna* is commonly used in battle idiom with cruel and ironic understatement (cf. *LP* s.v. *kenna* §§ 1, 3).

VQLUNDARKVIÐA

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VQLUNDARKVIÐA

Frá Vǫlundi

Níðuðr hét konungr í Svíðióð. Hann átti tvá sono ok eina dóttur; hón hét Bǫðvildr. Brœðr [vóro] þrír, synir Finna konungs. Hét einn Slagfiðr, annarr Egill, þriði Vǫlundr. Þeir skriðo ok veiddo dýr. Þeir kvómo í Úlfdali ok gerðo sér þar hús. Þar er vatn er heitir Úlfsiár. Snemma of morgin fundo þeir á vazstrǫndo konor þriár, ok spunno lín. Þar vóro hiá þeim álptarhamir þeira; þat vóro valkyrior. Þar vóro tvær dœtr [H]lǫðvés konungs, Hlaðguðr Svanhvít ok Hervǫr Alvítr; en þriðia var Ǫlrún Kiárs dóttir af Vallande. Þeir hǫfðo þær heim til skála með sér. Fekk Egill Ǫlrúnar, en Slagfiðr Svanhvít*ar*, en Vǫlund[r] Alvítrar. Þau biǫggo siau vetr. Þá flugo þær at vitia víga ok kvómo eigi aptr. Þá skreið Egill at leita Ǫlrúnar, en Slagfiðr leitaði Svanhvít*ar*, en Vǫlundr sat í Úlfdǫlom. Hann var hagastr maðr, svá at menn viti, í fornom sǫgom. Níðuðr konungr lét hann hǫndom taka, svá sem hér er um kveðit.

Of Vǫlundr

There was a king in Sweden called Níðuðr. He had two sons and a daughter; she was called Bǫðvildr. There were three brothers, sons of the king of the Lapps. One was called Slagfiðr, another Egill, the third Vǫlundr. They travelled on skis and hunted wild beasts. They came to Wolfdales and made themselves a house there. There is a lake there called Wolf Lake. In the early morning they found on the lake-shore three women, and they were spinning linen. There lay beside them their swan-garments; they were valkyries. There were two daughters of King Hlǫðvér, Hlaðguðr Svanhvít and Hervǫr Alvítr; the third was Ǫlrún, daughter of Caesar of Gaul. They took them to their house with them. Egill took Ǫlrún as his wife, and Slagfiðr Svanhvít, and Vǫlundr Alvítr. They lived together

The full text of the poem is only in R; A *contains the first six sentences of the prose prologue.*
Frá Vǫlundi] Frá Níðaði konungi A. *The title* Vǫlundarkviða *is from paper MSS. In the prose prologue capitals mark the beginnings of sentences as printed here;* en *is also capitalized in* en þriðia . . . en Slagfiðr . . . en Vǫlundr (*lines 7–9*). Hann (*line 11*) *has a marginal capital.* *Line* 1 Níðuðr] Níðaðr A; *cf.* R *41/1* Svíðióð] Svíþióð A tvá] ii. R, A sono] sunu A hón hét] ok hét hón A *line* 2 vóro] *so* A þrír] iii. R, A Slagfiðr] Slagfinnr A *line* 3 kvómo] kómu A *line* 4 gerðo] *The text of A ends here.* þriár] iii. R *line* 9 siau] .vii. R *lines* 9, 11 Svanhvítar] Svanhvít^{a}r R

for seven winters. Then the wives flew away to seek battles and did not come back. Then Egill sped on skis to seek Ǫlrún, and Slagfiðr sought Svanhvít, and Vǫlundr stayed in Wolfdales. He was the most skilful man known to men in the histories of the past. King Níðuðr had him taken prisoner, as it is recounted here.

Frá Vǫlundi ok Níðaði

1 Meyiar flugo sunnan
Myrkvið í gǫgnom,
alvítr unga[r],
ørlǫg drýgia.
Þær á sævar strǫnd
settuz at hvílaz,
drósir suðrœnar,
dýrt lín spunno.

2 Ein nam þeira
Egil at veria,
fǫgr mær fira,
faðmi liósom.
Ǫnnur u*m* S*lagfinn*
svanfiaðrar dró,
en in þriðia,
þeira systir,
varði hvítan
háls *Vǫlu*ndar.

3 Sáto síðan
siau vetr at þat,
en inn átta
allan þráðo,
en enn níunda
nauðr um skiliði.
Meyiar fýstoz
á myrkvan við,
alvítr unga[r],
ørlǫg drýgia.

Of Vǫlundr and Níðuðr

Maidens flew from the south
through Mirkwood,
foreign beings, young,
their fate to fulfil.
They by a lake's shore
settled to rest themselves,
southern damsels,
precious linen they spun.

One of them took
Egill to cherish,
lovely maid of the living,
on her shining breast.
The second over Slagfiðr
drew her swan's wings,
while the third,
sister of these,
enfolded the fair-white
neck of Vǫlundr.

Stayed then
seven winters after that,
but all the eighth
ached with longing,
and in the ninth
need divorced them.
Maidens sped
to murk-dark wood,
foreign beings, young,
their fate to fulfil.

2/5 um Slagfinn] v^{ar} svan hvít R; *see commentary.*
3/2, 3, 5 siau . . . átta . . . níunda] vii. . . . .viii. . . . ix. R
2/10 Vǫlundar] onondar R

4 Kom þar af veiði
veðreygr skyti.
Slagfiðr ok Egill
sali fundo auða,
gengo út ok inn
ok um sáz.

Came there from hunting
the storm-watching marksman.
Slagfiðr and Egill
found rooms empty,
walked out and in
and gazed about them.

5 Austr skreið Egill
at Ǫlrúno,
en suðr Slagfiðr
at Svanhvíto,
en einn Vǫlundr
sat í Úlfdǫlom.

East skimmed Egill
seeking Ǫlrún,
and southwards Slagfiðr
seeking Svanhvít,
but alone Vǫlundr
stayed in Wolfdales.

6 Hann sló gull rautt
við gim fastan,
lukði hann alla
lindbauga vel.
Svá beið hann sinnar liós[s]ar
kvánar,
ef hánom koma gerði.

He beat red gold
round the firm-set gem,
he closed all
rings well for the linden rope.
So he waited for his radiant wife,

if she should return to him.

7 Þat spyrr Níðuðr,
Niára dróttinn,
at einn Vǫlundr
sat í Úlfdǫlom.
Nóttom *fóro* seg[g]er,
negldar vóro brynior,
skildir bliko þeira
við enn skarða mána.

Níðuðr learns of it,
lord of the Niárar,
that Vǫlundr alone
stayed in Wolfdales.
At night the men went,
metal-studded were their mail-coats,
their shields glinted
in the shrunken moon.

8 Stigo ór sǫðlom
at salar gafli,
gengo inn þaðan
endlangan sal.
Sá þeir á bast
bauga dregna,

Got down from their saddles
at the hall gable,
strode in from there
down the length of the hall.
They saw on the rope of bast
rings threaded,

4/2 veðr-] vegr- R; *cf. 10/2*
5/1 skreið] screiþ^{r} R
6/2 gim fastan] gimfástaN R
8/3 gengo] o *corrected from* e R
4/6 sáz] *metrically* sáoz
5/3, 5 en] *initial capital* R
6/5 lióssar] liosár R
5/1 Austr] *no initial capital* R
6/1 Hann] *no initial capital* R
7/5 fóro] v^{oro} R (*cf. Vsp 26/8*)

siau hundroð allra,
er sá seggr átti.

seven hundred in all,
which that man owned.

9 Ok þeir af tóko,
ok þeir á léto,
fyr einn útan,
er þeir af léto.

And they took them off,
and they placed them on,
except for one,
which they kept off.

10 Kom þar af veiði
veðreygr skyti,
Vǫlundr líðandi
um langan veg.
Gekk brúnni bero
[biart] hold steikia.
Ár brann hrísi
allþur[r] fura,
viðr enn vin[d]þurri,
fyr Vǫlundi.

Came there from hunting
the storm-watching marksman,
Vǫlundr ranging
on a long road.
Went to roast [bright] flesh
from the brown she-bear.
Quick blazed with the kindling
the sear pine,
wind-dry wood,
before Vǫlundr.

11 Sat á berfialli,
bauga talði
—álfa lióði—
eins saknaði.
Hugði hann at hefði
Hlǫðvés dóttir
—alvítr unga—
væri hón aptr komin.

Sat on the bear-skin,
counted rings
—prince of elves—
one he missed.
He thought that she had it,
Hlǫðvér's daughter
—foreign being, young—
that she had come back.

12 Sat hann svá lengi
at hann sofnaði,
ok hann vaknaði
vilialauss.
Vissi sér á hǫndom
hǫfgar nauðir,
en á fótom
fiǫtur um spenntan.

He sat so long
that he fell asleep,
and he awoke
without joy.
Felt on his hands
heavy bonds,
and on his feet
a chain fastened.

13 'Hverir ro iǫfrar
þeir er á lǫgðo

'Who are these warriors
who have placed on

8/7 siau] vii. R 10/1 Kom] *no initial capital* R 10/5 Gekk] *initial capital* R 10/5 brúnni] b *corrected from* v R 10/7 Ár] hár R 10/9 vindþurri] Vín þvRi R (*cf. 16/4* enlangan)

‡besti byr síma‡
ok mik bundo?'

‡. . . .‡
and bound me?'

14 Kallaði nú Níðuðr,
Niára dróttinn:
'Hvar gaztu, Vǫlundr
—vísi álfa!—
vára aura
í Úlfdǫlom?
Gull var þar eigi
á Grana leiðo—
fiarri hugða ek várt land
fiǫllom Rínar!'

Now Níðuðr called out,
lord of the Niárar:
'Where, Vǫlundr, did you get
—you master of elves!—
wealth of ours
in Wolfdales?
There was no gold there
on Grani's path—
a long way I thought our land
from the hills of the Rhine!'

15 'Man ek at vér meiri
mæti áttom,
er vér heil hiú
heima vórom.
Hlaðguðr ok Hervǫr—
borin var Hlǫðvé—
kunn var Ǫlrún,
Kiárs dóttir.'

'I remember that we owned
a greater treasure
when we were a whole family
in our home.
Hlaðguðr and Hervǫr—
she was Hlǫðvér's child—
Ǫlrún was famous,
Caesar's daughter.'

16 [Úti stendr kunnig
kván Níðaðar.]
Hón inn um gekk
en[d]langan sal,
stóð á gólfi,
stilti rǫddo:
'Era sá nú hýrr,
er ór holti ferr'.

[Outside stands the wise
wife of Níðuðr.]
In she walked
down the length of the hall,
stood still on the floor,
kept her voice low:
'He is not well-disposed now,
this one who comes from the wood.'

Níðuðr konungr gaf dóttur sinni Bǫðvildi gull[h]ring þann er hann tók af bastino at Vǫlundar, en hann siálfr bar

King Níðuðr gave his daughter Bǫðvildr the gold ring that he took off the rope at Vǫlundr's house, while he

13/3 *See commentary.* 15/1 Man] *no initial capital* R 15/3 hiú] *metrically* híu 15/5 Hlaðguðr] *initial capital* R 15/5–8 *See Vkv Introd* IV. A. 15/6 borin van Hlǫðvé] *As the text stands, this would seem to refer only to Hervǫr.* 15/8 Kiárs] *metrically* Kíars 16/1–2 *Adopted from 30/1–2; see commentary.* 16/3 Hón] *no initial capital* R 16/4 endlangan] enlangan R 16/7–8 *Note that stanzas 16 and 17 should be read consecutively, presenting the queen's speech.* *Prose:* Níðuðr (*line 1*) *and* en (*line 4*) *have initial capitals.*

sverðit er Vǫlundr átti. En drótning kvað:

himself wore the sword that belonged to Vǫlundr. And the queen said:

17 'Tenn hánom teygiaz,
er hánom er tét sverð,

ok hann Bǫðvildar
baug um þekkir!
Ámon ero augo
ormi þeim enom frána.
Sníðið ér hann
sina magni
ok se*t*ið hann síðan
í Sævarstǫð.'

'His teeth are tempted
when the sword is displayed in his sight,
and he recognizes
Bǫðvildr's ring!
His eyes remind one
of the glittering serpent.
Cut from him
the strength of his sinews
and lodge him then
in Seabeaching.'

Svá var gǫrt, at skornar vóro sinar í knésfótom, ok settr í hólm einn er þar var fyrir lande, er hét Sævarstaðr. Þar smíðaði hann konungi allz kyns gørsimar. Engi maðr þorði at fara til hans nema konungr einn. Vǫlundr kvað:

So it was done: the sinews in the hollows of his knees were cut, and he was placed on an island off the coast there, which was called Seastead. There he fashioned for the king treasures of every kind. No man dared to go to him except only the king. Vǫlundr said:

18 'Skínn Níðaði
[skyggt] sverð á linda,
þat er ek hvesta
sem ek hagast kunna,
sem ek herðak
sem mér hœgst þótti.
Sá er mér frán[n] mækir
æ fiarri borinn—
sékka ek þann Vǫlundi
til smiðio borinn.
Nú berr Bǫðvildr
brúðar minnar—
bíðka ek þess bót—
bauga rauða.'

'There shines for Níðuðr
the [burnished] sword at his belt
that I made sharp
with all the skill I knew,
and I hardened
as seemed to me surest.
For me that bright blade is
borne far away for ever—
I do not see it brought
to Vǫlundr in his smithy.
Now Bǫðvildr is wearing—
I shall know no redress for this—
my bride's
red rings.'

17/1 Tenn] *marginal capital* R 17/2 tét] *metrically* téit 17/6 enom] *corrected from* erom R 17/8 sina] *metrically* sinva *?* 17/9 setið] settiþ R 17/10 -stǫð] *corrected from* stað R *Prose: capitals are used at the beginnings of sentences as printed here;* Þar (*line 4*) *has a marginal capital.* 18/2 skyggt] *see commentary.* 18/4 hagast] hagazt R 18/7 fránn] frā R

19 Sat hann, né hann svaf, ávalt,
ok hann sló hamri
—vél gørði hann heldr
hvatt Níðaði

He sat, he did not sleep, ceaselessly,
and he smote with his hammer
—devices he made rather
rapidly for Níðuðr.

20 Drifo ungir tveir
á dýr siá,
synir Níðaðar,
í Sævarstǫð.

Two boys raced
to gaze on the riches,
sons of Níðuðr,
in Seabeaching.

21 Kómo þeir til kisto,
krǫfðo lukla—
opin var illúð,
er þeir í sá.
Fiǫlð var þar menia,
er þeim mǫgom sýndiz
at væri gull rautt
ok gørsimar.

They came to the coffer,
called for the keys—
open lay evil,
as they looked in.
Stores of trinkets were there,
which, it seemed to the boys,
were red gold
and jewels.

22 'Komið einir tveir,
komið annars dags—
ykr læt ek þat gull
um gefit verða.
Segiða meyiom
né salþióðom,
manne øngom,
at it mik fyndið.'

'Come alone, just the two of you,
come tomorrow—
I will have the gold
given to both of you.
Do not tell the maids
nor men of the household,
not a soul,
that you came to see me.'

23 Snemma kallað[i]
seggr [á] annan,
bróðir á bróður:
'Gǫngom baug siá!'

Early one youth
called to the other,
brother to brother:
'Let's go and see the rings!'

24 Kómo til kisto,
krǫfðo lukla—
opin var illúð,
er þeir í lito.

Came to the coffer,
called for the keys—
open lay evil,
as they looked in.

19/3 gørði] *written twice, the second deleted* 20/2 siá] *metrically* séa 21/1 Kómo] *no initial capital* R 21/4 sá] *metrically* sáo 22/1 Komið] *no initial capital* R 22/5 Segiða] *initial capital* R 22/5 Segiða meyiom] Segit á meÿiō R (*i.e. 'Tell the maidens'*) 23/4 siá] *metrically* séa

25 Sneið af hǫfuð
húna þeira
ok undir fen fiǫturs
fœtr um l*a*gði.
En þær skálar,
er und skǫrom vóro,
sveip hann útan silfri,
seldi Níðaði.
En ór augom
iarknasteina
sendi hann kunnigri
kono Níðaðar.
En ór tǫnnom
tveggia þeira
sló hann brióstkringlor,
sendi Bǫðvildi.

Cut off the heads
of those young cubs,
and beneath the mud of the forge-well
laid their feet.
But those bowls,
that were beneath the bobbed hair,
he enclosed in silver,
gave them to Níðuðr.
And from the eyes
pure gems
he sent to the wise
wife of Níðuðr.
And from the teeth
of the two of them
he forged brooches,
sent them to Bǫðvildr.

. . . .

[*Bǫðvildr visits the smithy to mend her ring*]

26 Þá nam Bǫðvildr
baugi at hrósa,
. . . .
er brotit hafði:
'Þoriga ek at segia,
nema þér einom'.

Bǫðvildr began then
to praise the ring
. . . .
which she had broken:
'I dare not tell it,
save only to you.'

Vǫlundr kvað:

27 'Ek bœti svá
brest á gulli,
at feðr þínom
fegri þikkir,
ok mœðr þinni
miklo betri,
ok siálfri þér
at sama hófi.'

Vǫlundr said:

'I shall so mend
the break in the gold
that to your father
it will seem even fairer,
and to your mother
much better,
and to yourself
as fine as before.'

28 Bar hann hana bióri,
þvíat hann betr kunni,
svá at hón í sessi

He bemused her with beer,
for he was more knowing than she,
so that on the couch

25/1 Sneið] *no initial capital* R 25/4 lagði] log|þi R 25/9 En] *initial capital* R
26/1–3 *There is no sign of omission in the MS. See commentary.* *Before 27* Vǫlundr] *initial capital* R
28/1 hann] *corrected from* hon R

um sofnaði.
'Nú hefi ek hefnt
harma minna—
allra n*é* einna
íviðgi*rn*a!

she fell asleep.
'Now I have avenged
my injuries—
not one, but all
of the envious snares!

29 'Vél [á] ek', kvað Vǫlundr—
'Verða ek á fitiom,
þeim er mik Níðaðar
námo rekkar!'
Hlæiandi Vǫlundr
hófz at lopti.
Grátandi Bǫðvildr
gekk ór eyio,
tregði fǫr friðils
ok fǫður reiði.

'I have a trick', said Vǫlundr—
'May I be on those webbed feet
that Níðuðr's brave men
bereft me of!'
Laughing, Vǫlundr
lifted himself to the sky.
Weeping Bǫðvildr
went from the island,
grieved for her lover's going,
and her father's wrath.

30 Úti stendr kunnig
kván Níðaðar,
ok hón inn um gekk
endlangan sal,
en hann á salgarð
settiz at hvílaz.
'Vakir þú, Níðuðr,
Niára dróttinn?'

Outside stands the wise
wife of Níðuðr,
and in she walked
down the length of the hall,
while he by the hall garden
settled to rest himself.
'Are you awake, Níðuðr,
lord of the Niárar?'

31 'Vaki ek ávalt
vilialauss.
Sofna ek minnzt
sízt mína sono dauða.
Kell mik í hǫfuð
—kǫld ero mér ráð þín.
Vilnomk ek þess nú,
at ek við Vǫlund dœma.

'I lie awake ceaselessly,
without joy.
I sleep not at all
since my sons died.
My head is icy
—your counsels are cold to me.
I long now
To speak with Vǫlundr.

32 'Seg þú mér þat, Vǫlundr
—vísi álfa!—
af heilom hvat varð
*hú*nom mínom?'

'Tell me this, Vǫlundr,
—you master of elves!—
what became of my thriving
young cubs?'

28/7 né einna] nema|eiNa R; *see commentary.* 28/8 íviðgirna] iviþ giarira R; *see commentary.* 31/1 Vaki] *no initial capital* R 31/2–3 vilialauss, sofna ek] vilia ec la⁄s. sofna. ec R 31/5 Kell] *initial capital* R 32/4 húnom] sonō R

33 'Eiða skaltu mér áðr
alla vinna,
at skips borði
ok at skialdar rǫnd,
at mars bœgi
ok at mækis egg,
at þú kveliat
kván Vǫlundar,
né brúði minni
at bana verðir—
þótt vér kván e[i]gim,
þá er þér kunnið,
eð[a] ióð eigim
innan hallar.

'First you must swear to me
every oath,
by the side of the ship
and by the rim of the shield,
by the withers of the horse
and by the edge of the sword,
that you will not torture
the wife of Vǫlundr
nor my bride
will you put to death—
though we may have a wife
whom you know,
and may have a child
within your hall.

34 'Gakk þú til smiðio,
þeirar er þú gørðir,
þar fiðr þú belgi
blóði stokna:
sneið ek af hǫfuð
húna þinna,
ok undir fen fiǫturs
fœtr um lagðak.

'Go to the smithy,
the one that you built,
there you will find bellows
spattered with blood:
I cut off the heads
of your young cubs
and beneath the mud of the forge-well
I laid their feet.

35 'En þær skálar,
er und skǫrom vóro,
sveip ek útan silfri,
se*l*da ek Níðaði.
En ór augom
iarknasteina
senda ek kunnigri
kván Níðaðar.
En ór tǫnnom
tveggia þeira
sló ek brióstkringlor,
senda ek Bǫðvildi.

'But those bowls,
that were beneath the bobbed hair,
I enclosed in silver,
I gave them to Níðuðr.
And from the eyes
pure gems
I sent to the wise
wife of Níðuðr.
And from the teeth
of the two of them
I forged brooches,
I sent them to Bǫðvildr.

36 'Nú gengr Bǫðvildr
barni aukin,

'Now Bǫðvildr
goes with child,

33/13 eða] eþ R; *see Lindblad 44.* 35/4 selda] senda R; *see commentary.* 35/9 En] *initial capital* R 36/1 Nú] *no initial capital* R

einga dóttir
ykkor beggia.'

the only daughter
of you both.'

37 'Mæltira þú þat mál,
er mik meirr tregi,
né ek þik vilia, Vǫlundr,
verr um ni[ó]ta.
Erat svá maðr hár,
at þik af hesti taki,

né svá ǫflugr,
at þik neðan skióti—
þar er þú skollir
við ský uppi!'

'You will never speak words
that could grieve me more,
nor, Vǫlundr, would I wish you
to enjoy a worse fate.
There is no man so tall
that he may reach you from horse-
back,
nor so strong
that he can shoot you from below—
there where you hover
against the clouds on high!'

38 Hlæiandi Vǫlundr
hófz at lopti,
en ókátr Níðuðr
sat þá epter.

Laughing Vǫlundr
lifted himself to the sky,
while, mirthless, Níðuðr
stayed sitting below.

39 'Upp rístu, Þak[k]ráðr,
þræll minn inn bezti,
bið þú Bǫðvildi,
—meyna bráhvíto—
ganga—fagrvarið—
við fǫður rœða.

'Up, Þakkráðr, rise,
my best of thralls,
ask Bǫðvildr
—the girl of the gleaming eyelashes—
to go—bright-robed maid—
to speak with her father.

40 'Er þat satt, Bǫðvildr,
er sǫgðo mér:
sátuð it Vǫlundr
saman í hólmi?'

'Is it true, Bǫðvildr,
what they told me:
did you sit, you and Vǫlundr,
together on the island?'

41 'Satt er þat, Níðaðr,
er sagði þér:
sáto vit Vǫlundr
saman í hólmi
—eina ǫgurstund—
æva skyldi!

'It is true, Níðuðr,
what he told you:
Vǫlundr and I sat
together on the island
—only the time of the tide's turning—
it should never have happened!

37/5 svá maðr hár] sᵛᵃ ϒ hár R; *? read* maðr svá hár *for the metre* 38/1 Hlæiandi] *corrected from* Hlęindi R; *marginal capital* R 39/1 Upp] *marginal capital* R

Ek vætr hánom
[vinna] kunnak,
ek vætr hánom
vinna máttak.'

I did not at all know
how to prevent him,
I had no power
to prevent him at all.'

41/7 Ek] *initial capital* R

INTRODUCTION

1. *The Story according to the Poem*

In *Vǫlundarkviða* two tales, virtually independent of each other as narratives, confront each other like mirrors. Each reflects the same phenomenon: duality in human nature. One tale mirrors this in women, the other in men.

One of the dualities is articulated in the first line of the poem: *meyiar flugo* . . . These are human girls, with the flight of birds. They have come from the south to the north: they have crossed the boundary from their other world, but they are still 'foreign', 'different'—*alvítr*—to those they now meet. Like human beings, they have a 'fate' to bear, but they appear to act in complicity with it: they have flown from the south in order to fulfil it—*flugo sunnan . . . ørlǫg drýgia*. When they settle by a lake in repose, they are ladies—*drósir*—glamorous, emotional southerners, like the radiant *alvítr* Sigrún—*sólbiǫrt*, *suðrœn*—whom Helgi chides for her passionate weeping (*Helgakviða Hundingsbana* II 47, cf. 26). And, against all realistic probability, they seem to have brought their spinning wheel and finest flax with them: they knew they would need bridal veils. By this the poet shows that their anticipation of their 'fate' is an instinct of their physical nature, as girls, and as migratory birds, united by myth in the dual nature of the swan maiden. Stanza 1

They embrace their 'fate' with a wonderful outgoing tenderness. They themselves draw their chosen husbands to them. We have indeed the impression that the choice was not left to the men. Stanza 2

They stay 'settled'—*sáto*—seemingly without complaint for seven years. But then a longing, a dissatisfaction, a restlessness, consumes their minds—*bráðo*. What they sought before has become a bondage—*nauðr*—that forces them to go. Eagerly they follow their instinctual fate once more—*fýstoz*—over the boundary forest to their old home. They have never really changed: they return as they were when they came—*meyiar . . . alvítr ungar*. Stanza 3

These magical wives are still so 'foreign' to them that the men are totally bewildered by their disappearance: they can have noticed nothing of the melancholy, the restlessness, of that eighth year. Stanza 4

Two of the brothers go off to different ends of the earth to seek their wives, but the third, Vǫlundr, thinks more deeply and differently, and stays where he is. How would he find her?—his brothers are only guessing which way they went. And if she wanted to come back, and found him gone, she would be lost without him. Behind his decision to stay waiting alone—*einn Vǫlundr sat*—in what seems Stanza 5

the most desolate of places, Wolfdales—the poet leaves us to imagine a complex of feelings working in his mind: on the one hand, hurt pride that makes him obstinate and refuse to go wildly after her; on the other, the impossibility of disbelieving in her love for him. This in its turn leads to a mood of confident vanity, that she, who chose him—*varði hvítan / háls Vǫlundar*—will certainly come back. His art will lure her. He spends his life—when he is not hunting for his food—making jewels for her. Her return is his constant dream: so much so, indeed, that when the king's men have taken one ring out of the seven hundred on the cord, he is convinced at once that it is she who has taken it, that she has come back. He must think that she is playing a game with him: telling him she is back, but still hiding. (We might indeed be restoring a text closer to that of the poet, if we read for 11/6 *ok hylði sik*: 'he thought she had [the ring] and was hiding herself—foreign being, young [as she was]—that she had come back'.) When he awakens from his dream to disillusion, it is his turn to feel the bondage—*hǫfgar nauðir*—that his wife had felt in her life with him—*nauðr um skilði*.

Stanzas 6 – 13

Stanzas 14 – 15

This ironic mirroring of the two imprisonments is intended by the poet for us to see. It is never seen by Vǫlundr. To him, in his memory—and in his mind as a continuing ideal never destroyed by his wife's desertion—his married life was a domestic idyll, a golden age. When he is teased by the jocular king about his wealth in Wolfdales—'*Hvar gaztu . . . vára aura / í Úlfdǫlom?*'—he only sees all his treasure as poor compared with the priceless ness of his home when all three brothers and their wives were a 'whole fortunate family'—*heil hiú*—together.

Stanzas 16 – 25

The text of the poem gives us no reason to suppose that the brothers had bound their wives to them by any ties other than love. There is no mention of the hiding of swan-garments to prevent their escape,[1] no call of children to hold them back. They were free, to stay or go. Vǫlundr's captivity, by contrast, is deliberately vicious and irreversible—so his royal captors think, for they are not only covetous, but afraid of him. And with reason, because they know his true nature. He has a demon in him. This the poet now reveals. He has shown the human nature of Vǫlundr fully and unmistakably: as lover, and hunter, and roaster of bear-steaks, who will drowse in the fire's warmth and be fettered and maimed—just as he showed that the flying girls could be passionately human. The image of Vǫlundr sitting on his bear-skin by the fire, counting obsessively his seven hundred rings, might have warned us; but the miserly implications of his action are dismissed in our minds because of his overwhelming joy at finding one ring missing. Yet it is at this moment that we are first told of the duality in his nature. He is *álfa lióði*, 'prince of elves'. The poet epitomizes as

[1] As in most analogues; see *Vkv Introd* II. A.

'elvish' the demonic nature of the human smith—born in the same nest as the shaman.[2]

Ironically, the great smiths of legend who so prodigally produce great treasures have also a great vice, that of avarice: an intense possessiveness, an identification of the works of their art as part of themselves. A dwarf will curse with eleven deaths the thieving users of his gold—who have taken his last ring—*mun míns fiár / mangi nióta*, 'from my wealth not one man shall profit' (*Reginsmál* 5). In the later legend of Hindemith's *Cardillac*,[3] the master smith murders those who buy his works, and steals them back. So too Vǫlundr sees with hatred the precious things he has made in the hands of his captors—severed for ever from himself. He will murder to avenge them. The queen sees this in him when she orders his sinews to be cut.

Twice the king calls Vǫlundr *vísi álfa*, 'ruler of elves'. On the first occasion, when he cheerfully greets the captive smith and seems to congratulate him on finding so much gold in a part of his kingdom he could not believe would have it (14), the title *vísi álfa* seems almost jesting: 'You must be superhuman to have found gold here!' On the second occasion, however, as he grieves for his sons and he sees Vǫlundr flying free above him (32), he seems to acknowledge the truth of the title. Vǫlundr is more than human. Any attempt to imprison the superhuman brings the most savage retribution—as Pentheus also found.[4] Vǫlundr sends back to the royal family pieces of themselves—the skulls, the eyes, the teeth of their sons—disguised as treasures: had they not taken from him treasures that were pieces of himself?.

Once his vengeance is complete, his humanity comes back to him. He showed no cruelty to the ingratiating, childish little princess: he must, indeed, have behaved tenderly with her, as she weeps to see him go. And he exacts oaths for her protection before he answers her father's question: 'What became of my sons?' Though his laughter of vengeance is grim, he does not forget his obligations to *his* bride and *his* child. They are the last of his possessions that the king and queen will get.

Stanzas 26 – 37

Thematically the flight of Vǫlundr into freedom mirrors that of his swan maiden wife; he escapes, just as she does, on wings. This mirroring of the two flights underlines the difference between the two stories that have been bound together in the single poem. The escape flight of the swan wife is part of a perpetual cycle—flight, bondage, flight once more. The escape flight of Vǫlundr can never happen again: he will not let himself be caught a

Stanza 38

[2] See *Vkv Introd* II. F. For the Yakut proverbial saying, 'smiths and shamans come from the same nest', see Eliade (*b*), 83.

[3] This is the closest analogue for the behaviour of Vǫlundr the smith, but perhaps because it is ultimately based on *Vǫlundarkviða* itself. See *Excursus*.

[4] See Euripides, *Bacchae*.

second time. Indeed, will he ever return to a forge and his jewels? The poet leaves him laughing in the sky, freed by his art from his art—whose greatest achievement was to give him wings, just like his wife's.

The poet leaves us to pursue the future of his story with our thoughts. A happy marriage between Vǫlundr and the princess—as in *Velents Þáttr*—was clearly not his choice for an epilogue. He would have seen—I think—greater harmony with the poem that he had shaped in the epilogue that García Márquez provides: of a very old man with enormous wings—speaking in the 'tongue-twisters of ancient Norwegian', tossed by storm and sea and mud to live in a hen coop among the kindly poor, waiting with infinite patience until the quills on his bare wings grow again and he happily flies off on the sea-wind 'with the precarious flapping of a senile vulture'.[5] García Márquez could envisage Vǫlundr joining the perpetual cycle of a bird's life, once he had the choice.

Stanzas 39–41

Vǫlundr leaves behind him on the earth Níðuðr and Bǫðvildr seared by his vengeance and dazed by their own impotence—*ek vætr hánom / vinna máttak*.

II. *A Comparison of* Vǫlundarkviða *with its Analogues*

A. The swan maidens' marriage

There are ancient and widespread analogues to the story of swan maidens who mate with humans, but, as soon as they can, fly away for ever.[6]

In many tales three or more swan maidens alight by a lake, remove their swan-garments and bathe. A man (usually only one) takes one of the swan-garments and by refusing to return it forces the maiden to marry him, since she cannot now fly away. They live together, and often they have children: the husband has hidden the swan-garment. But one day she finds it, and off she flies. In most tales the husband pursues her, but rarely with success.

In *Vǫlundarkviða* some of these motifs differ significantly:

1. There is no suggestion in the poem that the swan maidens remove their swan-garments to bathe. The text indicates that they embrace their lovers as swan maidens, enfolding them with their wings (see commentary to 2/5–6): an evocation of a love-scene as dream-like as that of Caer and Óengus. Caer was 'in the form of a bird each day of one year and in human form each day of the following year', and Óengus Macc Óc went to the lakeside of Loch Bél Dracon and called to her. 'She went to him. He cast his arms about her. They slept in the form of two swans, and went round

[5] Gabriel García Márquez, 'Un señor muy viejo con alas enormes'.

[6] The analogues are most cogently analysed and documented by Hatto.

the lake three times, so that his promise [that she might return to the water] might not be broken.'[7] *Vǫlundarkviða* too begins as an idyll of unforced love, with no shadow of abduction upon it.

2. As no swan-garments are hidden from the three wives, it is not the finding of the swan-garments that enables them to fly away. When they are at peace with their married lives, they do not wish to fly (so the poem suggests). But, as Hatto notes,[8] the swan maiden story 'rests on the ways of birds of passage between spring (when they fly north to mate and rear their offspring) and autumn (when the urge to fly south comes over them)'. For, in the summer, when they are in moult, they cannot fly, and 'the change of mood when they can is dramatic'.

In *Vǫlundarkviða* the poet focuses upon this dramatic change of mood. He makes it an emotional reality in a human marital situation. The wives cannot speak of their anguish to their happy husbands; they yield to it mutely in severance and flight. By discarding the distracting symbolism of the swan-garments, the poet has created a prelude to the tale of Vǫlundr's imprisonment that is emotionally equal to it.

3. Only in *Vǫlundarkviða*, among the versions of the swan maiden tale that I know,[9] are there three brothers to wed the three swan maidens. This is a pivotal narrative change, which enables the attachment of the swan maiden tale to the smith tale. Since there are now more husbands than one, there can be more than one reaction to the sudden departure of the wives. Two brothers are conventional and immediately pursue their wives. The eccentric third, morose and nostalgic, remains behind, stubbornly waiting for the past to return. Without the image of the two seekers disappearing—east, south—fleeing over the snows in desperate hope, we might not have felt the force of Vǫlundr's decision to stay, the nature of his feelings. It is his memory of his swan wife that forms the link between the idyll of the opening and the savage drama of the close. The pride of the husband that is wounded when the loved wife abandons him, is the pride that avenges itself upon despicable enemies.

B. The lonely smith, feared by men

In an Old English charter of 955 a reference to *Wēlandes smiððe*, 'Wayland's Forge', places it in the remote Berkshire Downs, where there are the ruins of a megalithic grave.[10] This suggests ancient traditions of a lonely

[7] *Aislinge Óenguso* 43–64, esp. 62–3; trans. K. Jackson 93–7 and Gantz 107–12. In the second citation the Irish text has some uncertainties; I have followed Jackson.

[8] Hatto 274.

[9] I do not here count the perfunctory finale of *Friedrich von Schwaben* which must be a derivative of some version of *Vkv* (see *Vkv Introd* III. B).

[10] See Philippson 72–3 for valuable references; Nedoma (*a*), 42; (*b*), 133 (with full documentation

and fearsome place. When Níðuðr wishes to seize Vǫlundr he comes cautiously by night, when the moon is at its lowest brightness, with a strongly armed troop of horsemen. Even with this superior force he does not attack the lone Vǫlundr as he approaches his house—laden, presumably, with the body of a brown bear—but waits until heavy sleep has overcome him and the fetters can be slipped on without resistance. Saxo too describes the elaborate precautions that must be taken before Hotherus can bind and rob the *satyrus* Mimingus, who lived in a cave in a barely accessible, icy region and possessed the only sword that could kill Balderus and a miraculous bracelet that increased wealth.[11] The name Mimingus links this *satyrus* (a wild man of the woods?) with the smith's name Mímir and the sword Mimming, and I would suppose that Saxo implied that the *satyrus* was the maker of the treasures. (Saxo may well be indebted to traditions of Vǫlundr in this depiction.)

The art of the smith is a mystery that invests him with menace and awe. He is in command of the supernatural forces of fire and metal: a nature distinct from that of other men. Among some peoples he is respected, a brother of kings, among others hedged in by taboos and hated ('smith' and 'slave' are sometimes synonymous).[12] When Vǫlundr is first introduced in the poem, he has no social setting other than his home with his two brothers. He is not feared or lonely. He creates jewelled rings for love. When his wife and his brothers go, then he is lonely. Then we see him becoming the solitary figure feared and attacked by society. If *Vǫlundarkviða* had begun with the statement that . . . *einn Vǫlundr / sat í Úlfdǫlom* (5/5–6), like Wayland on the Berkshire Downs, and a curious reader asked 'Why should he be so alone, like an outlaw? What is the background to this situation?', could there be a better answer than the preceding lines of the poem provide (1/1 – 5/4)? He is alone and remote because the life he loved came to an end, and he prefers to live by himself with his memory of it and dream of its return. That is the poet's answer. The only other answer for which I have any evidence would derive from the findings of the social anthropologists to whose work I have briefly alluded in note 12. The poet has turned a deep-rooted tradition of the personal loneliness of the smith's profession to his own imaginative uses.

in nn. 48, 50). The reference to *Wēlandes smiððe* is found in *Codex Diplomaticus Aevi Saxonici* v. 322, line 23.

[11] Saxo III. ii. 5–6 (*History* 70). The 'devastating cold' of the region where Mimingus lived, and the need to travel by reindeer, suggests a context suited also to Vǫlundr, son of the king of the Lapps (*Vkv* prologue 2; *Introd* III. C).

[12] See Eliade (*b*), esp. chs. 1–10, and n. A, for an illuminating introduction to ancient traditions of the smith; also Cline, esp. ch. 13, 'The social and religious aspects of metalworking'; Forbes, esp. ch. 4, 'The evolution of the smith, his social and sacred status', with bibliography; and Rickard. The wide-ranging study of Motz (*d*) is rich in suggestion and reference on folk-traditions of the smith.

We have no evidence that any marital drama in the lone smith's earlier life (in *Vǫlundarkviða* he was married for nearly nine years) was known in Anglo-Saxon England, since both our Old English sources for the story depict only his time of imprisonment (*Deor* and the Franks Casket).

In contrast to Vǫlundr, Velent has never eschewed the company of men. He thrives in court life and is keen for promotion. In this he resembles Daedalus, the *entrepreneur* of works of subtlety—the wooden cow, the Labyrinth—for Pasiphaë the queen and great Minos. Velent and Daedalus are geniuses working within society, and prepared to be employed by it: their function is to demonstrate their inventive superiority over other men. Vǫlundr is outside society and works for himself.

C. **The prince of elves**

Vǫlundr's detachment from human society is accounted for in the poem (*a*) by his absorption in his past, and (*b*) by his belonging to a different society, not human, but supernatural. Three times he is called 'lord, *or* commander, of elves' (11/3, 14/4, 32/2). How are we to understand these phrases? The *álfar*, revered family spirits, who take their place with the *æsir* (see commentary to *Vǫluspá* 49/2), do not seem relevant here: how could Vǫlundr be their 'prince'? Vǫlundr's *álfar* must be spirits who practise the same skills of smith and craftsman, and whom, by his incomparable art, he excels and masters. There are only two pieces of evidence that support this interpretation of *álfar* in *Vǫlundarkviða*. In Snorri's telling of the myth of Sif's hair (*SnE* 122–4), there is a clear reference to *álfar* as smiths, making magical treasures of gold, iron, and wood: Sif's golden hair that grows to her shorn head; Óðinn's spear that never fails to kill; Freyr's boat that brings its breeze with it and folds like a cloth when not wanted. Vǫlundr's legendary creations rank with these: the translucent gems made from eyes, the sword so sharp and hard that nothing can resist it, the artful wings he can fly with.

The second piece of evidence, if it may be called so, is the historical linguistic identity of Old Norse *álfr* (Old English *ælf*) with the Sanskrit name *Ṛbhús*.[13] Three Ṛbhús brothers ('Eldest', 'Younger', and 'Youngest') had marvellous manual skill; they created the divine equipment of the gods (the steeds of Indra, the chariot of the Aśvins, the 'nectar-giving',

[13] See Macdonell 131 § 46 for a fine summary of the material on these brothers, sons of the 'Great Archer', *AR* § 184; *AEW* s.v. *alfr*. The etymology of *álfr* is disputed; the connection with Skr *Ṛbhús* being variously rejected or accepted. The coincidence in *function* between the Norse elves and the Indian *Ṛbhús* lends weight to the argument for a common origin of the words; an IE root $*H_3$elbh- + the suffix -os/es would yield the Gmc forms behind ON *álfr*, OE *ælf*, and the Skr *Ṛbhús* could derive from a zero-grade form of this IE root—which moreover could be the basis, with nasal infix, of the Skr *rábhate*, 'grasps' (< *lṃbh- according to S. Mann s.v.) (CT).

'all-stimulating', 'omniform' cow of Bṛhaspati—an aspect of Brahma. The three Ṛbhús brothers are frequently invoked to come to sacrifices and drink the *soma* juice. They follow chiefly Indra, and, after Indra, Tvaṣṭṛ the smith-god. Because of their incomparable skills they have acquired the rank of gods. They themselves are sun-like: their car bright, their helmets of shining metal; they wear fair necklaces. In Old Norse recorded tradition the *álfar* have significant resemblances to the Ṛbhús, in that (*a*) they make divine equipment for the gods, (*b*) they have joined the ranks of *æsir*, (*c*) they have an important winter sacrifice devoted to them, the *álfablót*, (*d*) they are associated with light: Yngvi-Freyr, god of the sun-chariot, was given *Álfheimr* when he cut his first tooth (*Grímnismál* 5/4–6); the sun is the elf's wheel, *álfrǫðull* (see commentary to *Skírnismál* 4/4); in Old English verse Sarah and Judith are both described as *ælfscīeno/ælfscīnu* 'shining, lovely, as an elf' (*Genesis* 1827; *Judith* 14).

I would suggest that the titles of Vǫlundr, *álfa lióði*, *vísi álfa*, relate to an old tradition in which *álfar* were subtle smiths, before the popularity of the dwarfs as underground metal workers made the elves' title forgotten.

Are we to suppose that Vǫlundr was called 'lord of elves' because he commanded such spirits to aid him in his craft—as a Prospero commands an Ariel? It is more in keeping (I suggest) with the treatment of fantasy in the poem—that of the swan maidens, for example—that he should be identified as an elvish being, an elf man, as his wife is a swan woman. He has the radiant complexion of the elves (cf. *hvítan háls*, 2/9–10) that betrays his affinities.[14] Belief in 'mixed beings', having a human and a non-human spirit within them, has been, and still is, widespread in many cultures.[15]

[14] We may note that in Saxo VI. vi. 4, 9, the smith who is seducing the little princess (no doubt a notion suggested to Saxo by *Vkv*) is not said to be shining of body: he is clothed in very filthy breeches—*sordidissimis femoralibus*—and his arms are sweating beneath the gold he wears—*auro sudantia brachia*; his fingers have been raking the ashes. Vǫlundr is never despised in such terms. Nor are we so invited to watch his approach to the girl (28).

[15] In *Óláfs Saga Tryggvasonar* ch. 76, *Hkr* I. 323, a leading Hálogalander, Eyvindr kinnrifa 'cleft-chin', declares, after torture, that he cannot accept baptism because 'I am a spirit conceived in a human body through the magic of the Lapps, for my father and mother did not manage to have a child before that' (*'Ek em einn andi, kviknaðr í mannslíkam með fjǫlkynngi Finna, en faðir minn ok móðir fengu áðr ekki barn átt'*). So Eyvindr dies a heathen; he had been a most skilled magician. Perhaps more widespread than the notion of magical conception as the source of a double spirit—human and non-human—in man, is that of conception through a spirit father: an incubus (such as begot Merlin; cf. Augustine, *The City of God* XV. xxiii, on the *incubi*, called *dusii* by the Gauls, who pestered Gaulish women constantly), or a deity (such as Zeus, begetter of Hercules), or Satan himself, in his many manifestations, who, according to Jewish legend, begot Cain (Ginzburg I. 105; see also *Rígsthula* I. D. *Theme II* and references there cited). Belief in werewolves also points to the superstition of a double spirit in man (cf. Kveld-Úlfr, *Egil* 4, and n. 5). For living record of such beliefs from the 1930s, in southern Italy, see the illuminating pages in Levi (1965) 132 ff. (trans. 125 ff.). These beliefs included the gentle conviction that one peasant woman was the daughter of a cow, who had followed her everywhere when she was a child, mooing to her and licking her with a rough tongue. She also had a known human mother, but no one saw any contradiction in this double

Vǫlundr's treasure is then to be accounted for as elves' treasure—such stores of gold as provided Sif's glorious hair? So Níðuðr seems to suggest (14). Were these stores the otherworld riches of *Álfheimr* and the graves of the immortal dead? Was the fire seen blazing over distant tombs and betraying the buried treasure within them—the fabulous *haugaeldr*—in fact the glare from the forges of elvish smiths, and the gleam of their molten gold? Was that why the Anglo-Saxons located *Wēlandes smiððe* in an old sepulchre?[16]

D. The smith's imprisonment and revenge

It is made very clear in *Vǫlundarkviða* why Níðuðr captures and immures Vǫlundr: he wants his gold, his sword, his rings. And he wants him to make new treasures for him. He is claiming Vǫlundr's gold-hoard as his own (14/3–10).

We are not told that Vǫlundr lived a slave's life—he had beer,[17] and a couch—only that he must not be allowed to escape: so, he is lamed and put on an island with his treasure, and a smithy is built for him (34/1–2). The thought of the treasure lures the king's young sons; the smithy brings the daughter for the mending of her ring; the isolation of the island enables Vǫlundr to murder the boys and rape the girl without discovery. The setting of the plot is neat.

In *Velents Þáttr* the action does not have this tightly woven irony. Velent is lamed because he tried to poison the king, who had exiled him for killing his steward. Velent repents his guilt and promises loyalty to the king, who builds him a smithy and gives all the gold and silver he asks for, to compensate for his laming. Every day Velent sits making treasures for the king. The two young sons visit him, but not to see the treasures. They want Velent to make them arrows for their bows. He refuses, except on one condition, that, when snow has newly fallen, they come to his smithy walking backwards. When they do this, he locks the door, kills them, and hides their bodies in a deep pit under the forge-bellows. When the search for the boys has died down—Velent says they visited him, but left, with their bows and arrows, probably for the forest—he takes their corpses and removes all the flesh. From the skulls he makes two goblets covered with gold and silver; from every bone he makes some utensil for the king's table. He

nature and double birth: 'Nessuno trovava, in questa doppia natura e in questa doppia nascita, nessuna contraddizione'.

[16] Over Egill's hidden wealth, cast into deep marshes together with two murdered slaves, *haugaeldr* was seen to burn, *Egil* 297–8; cf. also *Grettis Saga* 57, *Heiðr* 13, 16. Treasure needs the dead before the fire is seen (so the tale in *Egil* suggests. See Bächtold-Stäubli s.v. *Schatz* § 10).

[17] Or at least he might be brought it as a gift (as perhaps depicted on the Franks Casket, cf. *Vkv Introd* III. A. 1 (i)).

makes nothing that is magical, such as gems out of eyes. When the king's daughter breaks her ring, she first sends her maid with it to the smith. Velent insists that the princess herself come to authorize him. She does so, accompanied by the maid (*báðar þær . . . hitta Velent*). She enters the smithy (without her maid). Velent locks the door *sem fastast* and seduces her. No beer is mentioned. He then mends the ring. They both agree to keep this all secret.

The account of the mending of the ring in *Velents Þáttr* is specially valuable for comparison with *Vǫlundarkviða*, since the poem is defective at this point. Stanza 25 ends with Vǫlundr sending brooches to the girl—. . . *sendi Bǫðvildi*. Stanza 26 begins with Bǫðvildr conversing with Vǫlundr about her broken ring: *Þá nam Bǫðvildr / baugi at hrósa* . . . The repetition of her name may have caught the eye of the scribe and made him overlook some intervening lines.[18] These must have contained (*a*) at least a reference to the breaking of the ring, to which 26/4 refers back—the ring *er brotit hafði*, and (*b*) some statement that she went to Vǫlundr to have it mended. The breaking of the ring and her decision to visit Vǫlundr—'Out of doors Níðuðr's only daughter was playing, her fine ring broke on a stone. "I shan't tell the maids, or any man—Vǫlundr can quickly mend that break"'—could be swiftly told.[19] It is not necessary to have a maid to say (as in *Velents Þáttr* 109) '*Velent mun bœta þetta litla hríð*', and it would be disproportionate to the remaining structure of *Vǫlundarkviða* to have two visits to the smithy, as in *Velents Þáttr*. Her entry could form the first two lines of stanza 26 ('She entered the smithy—*Nú kemr konungsdóttir í smiðjuna* (*Velents Þáttr* 110)—and he offered her a seat'). In the extant text the opening *Þá nam* . . . (26/1) indicates some previous action. If she has been courteously invited to sit (cf. 28/3: *í sessi*), *then* she might feel that he was friendly, and flatter and confide in him to persuade him to mend the ring: 'I dare not tell anyone but you'). We may not have lost more than ten lines of the poem in this episode, if the poet has practised his customary economy.

The nonchalance of the princess in *Velents Þáttr* and the terrified weeping of *Bǫðvildr* belong to different narrative worlds: the world of *Bǫðvildr* has the greater subtlety (see commentary to 29/9).

The Old English elegy *Deor* can hardly be considered as an analogue for the theme of 'the smith's imprisonment and revenge', since the poet has brushed aside the outer circumstances of the story of Weland and Beadohild (though he has clearly known them well). We are not told that Weland was a smith, or that he plotted revenge for his captivity and his severed sinews, nor that 'her brothers' death' was *his* doing and the child she

[18] It is improbable that there was a prose link here; nowhere in the poem is understanding of events dependent upon prose.

[19] I offer suggestions based on the poet's habit of repetition (cf. *Vkv Introd* IV. D).

dreads *his*. For the Old English poet all that matters is the intensity of their wretchedness at this nadir of their lives, and the fact that—despite its intensity—that wretchedness did not last (cf. *Vǫlundarkviða Introduction* III. A. 3).

Daedalus of Athens has so rich a legendary history in Greek and Latin sources[20] that it is difficult to discern any single narrative theme of imprisonment and revenge. He has to flee from Athens because in jealousy he murdered his clever little nephew, who was inventing many useful things—the saw, the compass, the potter's wheel. Daedalus then works creatively in Crete, where Minos keeps him virtually as a prisoner. Longing to see his native land again (according to Ovid), he determines to escape:

> '*terras licet . . . et undas*
> *obstruat: at caelum certe patet; ibimus illac:*
> *omnia possideat, non possidet aera Minos.*'
>
> (*Metamorphoses* VIII. 185–7)

'Though he may block my way by land and sea, the sky is assuredly open. We shall go by that path. All things Minos may possess, but not the air.'

It is then that Daedalus designs his wings.

E. The escape-flight of Vǫlundr

In Vǫlundr's escape two styles of flight are reconciled in the poem. For each style there are distinct analogues.

1. *Mechanical wings created by the master smith*

Daedalus, when he has decided to escape, sends his thoughts exploring 'unknown arts' and 'creates nature afresh'. He carefully imitates real birds' wings, using feathers, twine, and wax (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* VIII. 188–95).

Velent proceeds in a similar way, despatching his brother Egill to bring him all the kinds of birds' feathers he can. He makes a winged suit so lifelike that it might have been stripped from the body of a vulture or 'that bird they call the ostrich'. He then flies like a bird, using birds' techniques (*Velents Þáttr* 112–13).

On the Franks Casket, by the side of the scene in the smithy, a male figure is carved catching long-necked birds, most like swans. This could represent Egill gathering feathers for his brother's wings (see *Vǫlundarkviða Introduction* III. A). But there is no mention of feather-gathering in *Vǫlundarkviða*. We are not even told that Vǫlundr made wings. We are told he made

[20] See *Der kleine Pauly* s.v. *Daidalos*. On the suggestion that Weland's legend is derived from that of Daedalus, see de Vries (*d*), 186–7.

vél, 'devices' (19/3), among which wings may well have been included, and to which allusion may be made in the difficult lines 29/1–2 (see commentary ad loc.). It is never expressly said in the poem that Vǫlundr *had* wings, or that he was like a bird (cf. *Velents Þáttr* 113: '*Ertu nú fugl, Velent?*'), or indeed that he 'flew' (cf. *hófz at lopti*, 29/6, 38/2; *skollir / viðský uppi*, 37/9–10). His wings are left to our imagination and knowledge of tradition.

2. *Magical flight*

Because of the ironic and allusive manner in which Vǫlundr—and the poet—treat the physical phenomenon of his flight, I have related it stylistically to the world of magicians' fictions (see commentary to 29/1–4). But behind the magician's flight, behind Vǫlundr's flight, lie archaic analogues of shamanic doctrine and legend. The magician's is a derivative, pseudo-shamanic profession, practised in the style of Simon magus in societies not—or no longer—shamanic. The Norsemen, however, could know shamanic legends and practices from the living shamanic society of their close neighbours, the Lapps, whose hospitality they had enjoyed for centuries in the course of their trading and tax-collecting. They heard the tales of shamans' spirit journeys, of sorcerers who travelled in whirlwinds, and had been present at their *séances*;[21] they had perhaps seen the wizard-like shamans of more distant regions in their costumes hung with birds' feathers and metal pieces. Their bird costumes were symbols, the flight of the shaman's free-soul was the reality. By rejecting all 'costume' detail for Vǫlundr in his escape the poet presents his mechanical achievement as—what it also is—a spirit flight:

Seg þú mér þat, Vǫlundr
—vísi álfa!— . . . (32/1–2)

Níðuðr, when he gazes up at Vǫlundr, does not see an imitation bird (as in *Velents Þáttr* 113), but a powerful spirit, a prince of darkness.

[21] The most detailed, scholarly, and up-to-date account of Norse–Lappish relations is that of Clive Tolley, *A Comparative Study of some Germanic and Finnic Myths*. For the purposes of this note, ch. 2 'Norse and Finnish–Lappish Contacts' and ch. 5 'Shamanism' (now being prepared for publication) are invaluable. Judging by the archaeological and linguistic evidence, the contacts between the Gmc peoples of Scandinavia and the Finns and Lapps go far back to prehistoric times, being virtually continuous from *c.* 2000 BC. Documentary evidence confirms that the Lapps lived close to Gmc peoples from at least the 1 c. AD; that they 'paid taxes in furs to the Norwegians at least from the ninth century: i.e. they were to some extent a subject and tyrannized people'; that they 'were associated strongly with sorcery'. Indeed, the account of a shamanic *séance* at which Norwegian merchants were present, in the 12 c., recorded in the *Historia Norvegiae*, 'indicates that quite detailed knowledge of actual Lappish shamanism existed among the Norse, from which the more fictional types of magic associated with them in literary sources are likely to be in part derived' (Tolley (*a*), 70–2; for sorcerers in whirlwinds 476; for bird costume 454; see also 533–57 and his separate studies (*b*) and (*d*); also Eliade (*a*) 415–19, for documentation from other sources; on the metal symbols on a shaman's costume see also Czaplicka 211–13.

If the Lappish relationships of *Vǫlundarkviða* were not evident in other respects, the suggestion that Vǫlundr's flight bore any resemblance to shaman flight might not be thought worth considering. But once the connection is recognized (see *Vǫlundarkviða Introduction* III. C), we may wonder if the characterization—perhaps already present in Old English tradition—of the Germanic hero Weland as, in part, a superhuman being—an *álfa lióði*—was not deliberately developed and emphasized—*vísi álfa* . . . *vísi álfa*—by the Norse poet so that he could, in perfect sequence, present the climax of Vǫlundr's flight as, virtually, a spirit flight. Like the shaman, he is transformed—not simply fitted with wings whose wax will melt in the sun.

F. The smith as remoulder of skeletons

The making of drinking bowls from skulls of enemies is by no means unique to Vǫlundr (see commentary to 25/5). The making of brooches out of human teeth is not unrealistic (though I have not found instances of it). The making of jewels out of eyes, however, must be a fantasy. While the interchangeability of eyes and jewels in human imaginings is a well-documented fantasy,[22] the manufacture of jewels from eyes is (I think) not. This complete reforging of the boys' heads recalls the shamanic tradition that a shaman novice is—in his initiatory dream or trance—taken bodily to pieces by a superhuman smith and reforged piece by piece: this is why some shamans hang iron bones as symbols on their dress. The head is given particular attention in initiation, that of the best shamans being forged on a special anvil. One testimony tells that the blacksmith 'changed the novice's eyes', so that he would see with mystical vision.[23] Once one has read these shamanic doctrinal visions it is impossible to dissociate Vǫlundr's reforging of the heads from them. The Norse poet appears to have used the shamanic spiritual metaphor as a gruesome realism in his master smith's revenge.

It is from such visionary accounts of shamanic initiation that the close link between smith and shaman becomes clear.

G. The corpse beneath the forge

Behind the motif of the burying of the boys' bodies beneath the forge there may lie an archaic practice. Associated with the cult of metalworking is the sacrifice to the forge. In some legends it is the first smith himself who

[22] John Ridd says that Lorna Doone's eyes are brown diamonds (Blackmore, *Lorna Doone* ch. 43); see also Shakespeare, *The Tempest* I. ii (Ariel sings of the drowned king that 'Those are pearls that were his eyes'), and *Richard III*, I. iv. 29–33.

[23] See Tolley (*a*), 424–6; Siikala 175–83, 184; Eliade (*b*), 86–7.

is cast into the forge. In early times Japanese metalworkers set up a corpse beside the forge and many Japanese legends tell of the burying of a corpse under the hearth of a smith. It was an African custom to bury a foetus beneath the forge. Such traditions are considered to be related to the notion that metal is a creature born in the earth and that if bodies, symbolizing the sources of ore, are placed under the smith's forge, riches will grow from them.[24] The story-motif of the burying of the boys' bodies 'under the mud of the forge-well' could be a legacy of legend from remote metalworking traditions once valid in Germanic, as well as Oriental and African, societies. Remarkable riches did in fact 'grow' from their corpses.

H. The lameness of the smith

The Greek smith-god Hephaestus is lame from birth. Daedalus is not lame: imprisonment alone makes him determined to fly. This could also be a sufficient motive for Vǫlundr, but it has not seemed sufficient to the creators of his story, they have made him lamed as well. They have done so, probably, not only to make his bitterness more acute and his revenge more savagely physical, but because old folk-tradition associated smiths with a physical deformity. The dwarfs of Germanic tradition, who forge inside the mountain, are stunted. The Cyclopes are one-eyed. Archaic origins are proposed for the deformities of legendary smiths,[25] but none are immediately relevant to Vǫlundr's case. Though tradition may have determined the fact that he was to be lame, the realistic manner of the laming, and the reasons for it, present a situation of simple slavery,[26] when the slave-owner

[24] See Eliade (*b*) ch. 6, 'Sacrifices humains aux fourneaux', 68–74; Matsumoto 149–57.

[25] The smith's disablement in myth may relate to the practice of initiatory mutilation in the closed societies of ancient metalworkers, the sacrifice of one power being thought to increase the strength of the other (cf. Eliade (*b*), 108; de Vries (*d*), 182–3).

[26] Cruelty to slave-smiths provides the moral of the tale of Queen Giso of the Rugii settled on the Danube in the 5 c., in the days of St Severinus. This woman *feralis et noxia* had Romans abducted over the Danube to serve as slaves; observing this the saint begged her to send them back. Raging she replied: 'Pray for yourself, servant of God, skulking in your little cell: let us arrange for our slaves as we wish'. The saint quietly tells her that he is confident that Christ will make her do of necessity what in her wickedness she refuses to do voluntarily. Now Giso had confined 'certain barbarian [i.e. heathen Germanic] goldsmiths in strict imprisonment, to make regal ornaments. On the very day that the queen had shown contempt for the servant of God, the king's son Fredericus, still very young, came in to the goldsmiths, on the spur of some childish purpose. The goldsmiths then placed a sword at the child's breast, saying that if anyone tried to enter there among them without the security of an oath, they would pierce first the royal child, then kill themselves, for they could give themselves no promise of hope, crushed as they were by endless days of labour.' When the queen hears of this, she tears her garments in grief—'For my contempt will you bring punishment on the fruit of my womb?'—and immediately sends back the captured Romans and gives freedom to the enslaved goldsmiths, once they have surrendered the child and received baptism. While this tale can hardly be a source for the Weland story, some early versions of that Gmc story might have been adapted for St Severinus—with the ruthless queen and the little inquisitive prince. The juxtaposition of the queen's despising of the saint and the impulse that

could lame his smith to bind him to his service—as Samson was blinded to work at the mill and as in later days a plantation owner might chain his African cook to the fireplace.

J. The ring

The ring Vǫlundr designed for his swan wife has significance both for him and for the poem. It associates the two wearers for him and for us. He takes Bǫðvildr much as Kjartan takes Hrefna—*faute de mieux*. Vǫlundr sees the girl, harmless and a little flirtatious, with the glorious ring meant for his wife; Kjartan sees young Hrefna, also a little flirtatious, wearing the glorious head-dress meant for *his* wife: 'It suits you well, Hrefna. I suppose it will be best if I have the girl as well as the head-dress'.[27] The scene in *Laxdœla Saga* illuminates the realism of the scene in *Vǫlundarkviða*. The ring and the head-dress have a comparable catalytic function (see also commentary to 29/9).

There is no evidence that the ring had any magical function affecting the course of the story (such as giving Vǫlundr the power to fly).[28] Yet it is possible that the poet would expect his audience to understand that in making the special ring for his wife Vǫlundr was making a magical device to draw her to him and make her stay. In Lappish rites rings were used to assert control over wild creatures (the bear, the eagle), to summon spirits to learn their will, or to stop the dead in their graves from wandering.[29] That Vǫlundr should use such entrapping magic would be a measure of his despair, and increase the irony of his own later imprisonment.

III. *The Origins of* Vǫlundarkviða

A. The legend of Vǫlundr the smith and Níðuðr the king

1. *Traces and versions of the legend*

(i) *Before 1000*

The names of the three main characters in the poem, Vǫlundr, Níðuðr, Bǫðvildr, are not found as personal names in Old Norse or Old English historical records. In German records, however, all three are found:

drives the boy to visit the smiths is particularly neat, and suggests adaptation (see Eugippius 11–12; Nedoma (*a*), 134–6 does not sufficiently consider the fact that the story would only be used for a *few* relevant features). It may be worth noting that the same pattern of the gentler king with a cruel queen is found in both Eugippius and *Vkv* (see *Vkv Introd* III. D).

[27] *Laxd* 133, ch. 44. I have paraphrased slightly in my rendering.

[28] See DH, SG, Hauck § 3.

[29] See Tolley (*a*), 454–5, § 3.

Weland and Baduhilt from the seventh century, Nidhad from the eighth. This points to a German version of the story at this period.[30]

The earliest testimony to the content of the legend does not come from Germany, but from Anglo-Saxon England, in the carvings on two panels of the whalebone casket from Northumbria, the Franks Casket, usually dated to the early decades of the eighth century.[31] On the front panel Weland is depicted in his smithy; a bent leg may signify his lameness; under his forge lies a headless body. In one hand he holds an object resembling a narrow cup, which is probably better identified as a signet-style ring seen in profile.[32] In the other hand he holds tongs which grip a (boy's) head. A woman—Beadohild—holds out her hand to him—it is empty—signifying that she has given him the ring. Behind her stands a woman carrying a flask in a basket: presumably the maid, with a gift of beer for the smith. To the right of this woman, in a separate scene, a man is grasping the long necks of large aquatic birds.[33] All of these details can be identified as relating to incidents in one or other version of the story. On the top panel of the Casket is a vivid scene of armed men attacking a bowman at the entrance to a house in which a woman is sitting. Above the bowman **ægili** is carved in runes. It would seem to record an incident in the career of the brother of Weland, Egill in Old Norse tradition, which is not elsewhere recorded.[34]

The Weland scene is the only scene carved on the Casket which has no inscription identifying it or its hero. It must have been better known than that of the Magi, who are identified.

From Germany, in the Latin Germanic epic *Waltharius* (probably early ninth century)[35] we have reference to a fine coat of mail of Weland's making, *Wielandia fabrica*, that shields Waltharius from the piercing points of his attackers (line 965).

From Anglo-Saxon England, in poetic sources that may reasonably be

[30] See *Index of Personal Names*. The fact that the names Níðuðr and Viðga are found outside the Vǫlundr story only in Jordanes, *Getica* (Nidada as great-grandfather of King Geberichus of the Goths, p. 87; Vidigoia as most famous warrior of the Goths, renowned by their poets, treacherously killed by the Sarmatians, pp. 64, 104), suggests that the Vǫlundr story may be of Gothic origin (see *AL*[1] § 31, de Vries (*d*), 187–8).

[31] Webster 30; Nedoma (*a*), 5.

[32] See the frontispiece plate. The suggestion that Weland and Titus on the Franks Casket are holding in their fingers signet rings of symbolic significance (seen in profile; Hauck §§ 2, 3) seems convincing; see *Vkv Introd* III. A. 4).

[33] He is, I suggest, gathering birds he has stunned, or perhaps killed (though that would not be necessary if he only wanted their plumes), with his bolts (see commentary to *Ríg* 47/3–4). I would certainly identify the bird-gatherer as Egill (see *Vkv Introd* III. A. 2), because of his proximity to Weland in the carving, and the symbolic significance of Weland's escape-flight in the Christian context (see *Vkv Introd* III. A. 4).

[34] See Bugge (*b*) for a stimulating attempt to interpret this scene; also *Vkv Introd* IV. A.

[35] On the problem of dating see P. Dronke (*d*), Appendix: 'The date and provenance of "Waltharius"'.

dated before 900, come other allusions to Weland: (*a*) to his marvellous works, namely, Beowulf's coat of mail (*Wēlandes geweorc* in *Beowulf* 455) and Waldere's sword Mimming (*Wēlandes worc* in *Waldere* I. 2),[36] and (*b*) to the legend of his imprisonment and revenge, with references to Niðhad and Widia, *Nīðhādes mæg, / Wēlandes bearn* (see *Deor* 1–13, *Waldere* II. 3–10).

Most remarkably, King Alfred (†899), without any evident reason, introduced lines upon 'the wise Weland' and the skill of the craftsman that can never be taken from him, into both his prose and—more fully—into his verse rendering of Metrum VII of Liber II of Boethius, *De Consolatione Philosophiae*. The verse rendering indeed suggests that Alfred had phrasing of *Deor* in mind (see *Vǫlundarkviða Introduction* III. A. 3, 4).

The last reference to Weland in OE written sources before 1000 is in the Berkshire place-name *Wēlandes smiððe* (dated 955; see *Vǫlundarkviða Introduction* II. B). Yet from the north of England in the tenth century there are two carved stone crosses (as well as lesser carved fragments) which may well portray Weland in flight, with wings and bird's tail elaborately bound to him. Below his feet (on the best preserved carving) smith's implements are discernible. These northern carvings add a motif not found in any extant written story of Weland. As he flies, the bird-man holds in front of him a woman outstretched, with her back to him, as if she were being pushed through the air. In the clearest carving he is grasping her hair with one hand and the train of her dress with the other.[37] This motif—if the female figure is the raped girl—contradicts *Vǫlundarkviða* and *Deor*: in these poems she has clearly not flown away with Vǫlundr/Weland. A comparable happy ending is, however, found in *Velents Páttr*: Velent, when he escapes, flies back to his patrimony in Sjælland; he returns later to wed the princess and bring her and her son home to Sjælland by normal means. Either all this has been simplified—for sculptural reasons, perhaps—into a single dramatic abduction by air, or the author of *Velents Páttr* (or his source) has introduced a more rational and humdrum journey for the princess than the original air-lift.

In Scandinavia, on the stone monument Ardre VIII in Gotland, the same motif of a woman propelled by a bird figure is found. There is here no indication that the bird figure is also human (unless the protuberances at either side of the bird-head represent folded arms which support the woman), but behind the bird figure is the clear depiction of a smithy with tongs and hammers and two headless male bodies under the floor, which undoubtedly identifies the escaping bird figure as Weland. If the accepted dating of Ardre VIII to the 'middle or later half of the eighth century' is

[36] The arguments noted in Schwab 235, 240–1 against identifying *Mimming* and *Welandes worc* in this fragmentary text do not take account of the norms of OE poetic idiom.

[37] See Lang 89–94; also Nedoma (*a*), 32–4.

correct, then the motif of the girl rescued by air in the Weland legend could be as old as the Franks Casket, and certainly older than the tenth century carvings of the motif in northern England. The motif could have come to Gotland with other elements of Anglo-Saxon artistic influence in the eighth century.[38]

From tenth century Scandinavia there is evidence in the skaldic poets that the legends of Vǫlundr's imprisonment and his brother Egill's bowmanship were well enough known for casual allusion. Níðuðr must have had notoriety as a villain, since Þjóðólfr of Hvin, in *Haustlǫng* 9, calls Þjazi, the covetous giant enemy of the gods, a 'Níðuðr among Stone Giants'—*Grjót-Níðuðr*—evidently the last word in insults to Þjazi. The source for his kenning can only have been the legend of Vǫlundr.

Þjóðólfr is listed in *Skáldatal* as a poet of Haraldr hárfagri (*c.* 848–931); his *Ynglingatal* was composed for Haraldr's cousin, Rǫgnvaldr. His *Haustlǫng* may be dated *c.* 900, in Norway. Some seventy years later, Eyvindr skáldaspillir, in the famine in Hálogaland under the Eiríkssons, sees the depth of his destitution epitomized in the fact that he had to sell his arrows to buy herrings—and he thinks of Egill, Vǫlundr's brother, who also—in a different way—owed his life to his arrows:

Mest selda ek mínar
við mævǫrum sævar . . .
hlaupsíldr Egils gaupna.

Above all I gave my own—
in exchange for the sea's slim arrows— . . .
leaping herrings of Egill's hand-hollows.[39]

Some years later the Icelander Hallfreðr vandræðaskáld, composing in Norway for Jarl Hákon Sigurðarson, makes Egill's arrows part of a magnificent rhetorical image of stubborn hostility:

Ólítit brestr úti . . .
hart á Hamðis skyrtum
hryngráp Egils vápna.

With no little crash sounds out at sea . . .
fierce against Hamðir's shirts,
the falling hail of Egill's weapons.

(*Hákonardrápa* 2)

Both allusions, to Hamðir and to Egill, show a precise use of their legends. Arrows that never miss their mark pour down on coats of mail that nothing can pierce.

(ii) *Traces and versions of the legend after 1000*

In the collection of rambling pseudo-historical, pseudo-heroic adventures of kings and warriors that constitutes *Þiðreks Saga*, there is the vivid, close-knit and remarkably urbane *ævisaga* of Velent. His father was

[38] See Lindqvist: for illustration, I. Fig. 139, 140; for analysis, with drawing, II. 22–4; for dating, I. 121; for Anglo-Saxon influence, I. 120. Also Nedoma (*a*), 27–31.

[39] *Hkr* I. 223–4, *Skjald* B I. 65.

Vaði, a giant in size, whose mother was a mermaid, encountered by Vaði's father, Vilkina, in a forest. Vilkina gave Vaði Sjælland as his inheritance. Vaði had a son Velent whom he apprenticed first to the smith Mímir (where he was insufferably bullied by young Sigurðr—later the dragon-slayer), then to two dwarfs in a mountain called *Kallava*. Velent is a brilliant pupil. When Vaði fails to come to take back his son—having been overwhelmed by a landslide—the dwarfs mean to take Velent's life and possessions. It is Velent who kills them, however, with a sword that Vaði left hidden for him in case of such emergencies, and Velent takes the dwarfs' tools and treasures, loads them on a horse, and travels north to Denmark. He encounters a wide river, and achieves his first masterpiece of craftsmanship: hollows out a huge tree, packs in his tools, treasure, food and drink, and finally locks himself in, watertightly, having fitted a window. The tree-trunk drifts out to sea and is discovered on the coast of Jutland by Niðungr's fishermen. When the king sees that Velent is not a monster but a good-looking man, he is gracious to him and grants him his freedom and his property. This Velent tries to hide secretly in the earth, but is seen by a knight (*riddari*) called Reginn. With the bad omen of this name, the plots of the courtiers against Velent begin. His murderous retaliations bring first his exile, then the severing of his sinews and confinement to the smithy. The killing of the king's sons follows, and the seduction of the princess, who becomes his willing lover. After his escape-flight home to Sjælland, Velent soon hears that King Niðungr has died and that the princess has given birth to a son, Viðga. Velent makes peace with the kindly new king, the princess's third brother, and takes his family to Sjælland.

In the prologue of *Þiðreks Saga* (p. 4) the compilation of tales is said to have been made by Norsemen from the narration of German men (*eftir sǫgu þýskra manna*), and from poems (*kvæðum*) designed for the entertainment of the nobility and recited flawlessly in every town in Saxony. *Þiðreks Saga* is therefore thought to have been written by a Norwegian in Norway, where trading links with Germany were strong.[40] Certainly the earliest extant text, in a defective vellum MS. from the second half of the thirteenth century, was organized by two Norwegian editors (from a single exemplar). Of the five scribes, three Norwegian and two Icelandic, the third Norwegian scribe shares certain better readings with the later Icelandic version of the saga, preserved in paper MSS. written in Iceland in the seventeenth century.[41] This would suggest that an Icelandic text of *Þiðreks Saga* was available in Norway in the thirteenth century. Whether in Norway or Iceland, the saga cannot have been written later than *c.* 1250, since some

[40] See the discussion of German literary links with *Atlamál* in *PE* I. 109–11.

[41] See the incisive analysis of the state of scholarship on the saga and its texts by Tómasson (*a*), 369–73.

Icelandic thirteenth century writers have used it. *Velents Þáttr* itself bears no identifiable traces of German literary origins; rather it shares the stylistic ease and undercurrent of witty burlesque of the finest *fornaldarsǫgur*.

Velents Þáttr incorporates some ancient Germanic material that may be drawn ultimately from England rather than from Germany. Velent's father, Vaði the giant, is the Wada of *Widsið* 22: *Wada* [*wēold*] *Hælsingum*. Legends of Wade the gigantic hero are alluded to in many medieval English sources, but rarely in German.[42] Again, only the Franks Casket and *Velents Þáttr* offer detailed scenes (though not entirely the same scenes) from the adventures of Velent's brother Egill. Has the author of *Velents Þáttr* known *Vǫlundarkviða*? If he has, then other versions of the story have influenced him more: he has no cruel queen, no weeping princess. One echo of the wording of the poem, however, may be audible in the *Þáttr*, perhaps too commonplace to mention. When the princess breaks her ring in the garden, *þorir hún eigi at segja sínum feðr eða mæðr* (109). In the poem Bǫðvildr confides to Vǫlundr: '*Poriga ek at segia, / nema þér einom*'. And he replies that he will mend the gold so that '*feðr þínom / fegri þikkir, / ok mæðr þinni / miklo betri*' (26/5–6, 27/3–6). The childish simplicity of phrase is strikingly similar (but could be fortuitous). However, on the possibility that *Vǫlundarkviða* was known to the author of the *Þáttr*, I have based the emendation of 18/2, borrowing *skyggt* from the prose text to rescue the alliteration of the line. In any case, *Velents Þáttr* throws more light on the development of *Vǫlundarkviða* than the poem does on that of the *Þáttr* (see *Vǫlundarkviða Introduction* III. A. 2).

2. *The forms of the legend*

The extant versions of the legend show that we must reckon with at least two forms of legendary tradition of Vǫlundr the smith, (*a*) the narrative drama of his imprisonment and revenge, developed with its own independent structure, and (*b*) the separate anecdotes of the skills of Wayland and his brother, elaborated—like those of Daedalus—within the frame of a court and a patron king. Verse might be found more apt for one form, as in *Vǫlundarkviða*, prose, as in *Velents Þáttr*, for the other, but the two forms exist together, are kept in mind together, and allusion can link them. The poet of *Vǫlundarkviða*, while creating in the first form, enriches his drama by allusion to anecdotes from the second, most explicitly (i) to his forging of the great sword; more cryptically (ii) to the fabricating of the escape wings,

[42] See Chambers' notes, *Wīdsīð* pp. 95, 192; R. M. Wilson 14–16, 19. We do not know who the *Hælsingas* are, but the fact that Vaði's patrimony was Sjælland inclines one to link the *Hælsingas* with Baltic ports (Helsingør, Hälsingborg, Helsingfors).

and (iii) to the clever shooting by Egill at his flying brother. We depend on *Velents Þáttr* for a demonstration of the full form such anecdotes could take.

(i) *The great sword Mimming*

Velent promises to make the sword (here *Mímungr*) for the king. He forges one sword, which is superb, but he is dissatisfied with it. He files it into a heap of filings, mixes them with meal, and feeds this mixture to the farmyard fowls whom he has previously starved for three days. He then collects their droppings and refines them in his forge: the iron is purified of all soft elements (*vellr nú ór járninu allt þat, er deigt var í*). The sword he now makes looks marvellous and is a little shorter than the first. He repeats the refining–shortening process, and the more-than-razor-sharp *Mímungr*, now of perfectly balanced length, emerges. Though he promised it to the king, Velent hides it under the bellows of his forge and makes another, more ordinary, sword for the king (who does not notice the difference). The real *Mímungr* he keeps for his son (*Velents Þáttr* 97–9).

It is known that certain chemical elements in bird-droppings are effective in the refining of steel; this fact may have been known to the makers of early Germanic swords.[43] The lively point of the anecdote of *Mímungr* must have been that Velent made the birds do his chemical experiment for him. It is probably to some form of this anecdote that the poet refers in 18/5–6. When Vǫlundr says that he hardened the sword *sem mér hægst þótti*, the term *hægst*, 'in the easiest, most convenient, readiest, most satisfactory way' is not easy to interpret precisely in the context. The change of idiom from the sharpening of the sword, *sem ek hagast kunna*, 'as I knew how to do most skilfully, with all my art', to the hardening of the metal—cleansing it of all its soft elements—*sem mér hægst þótti*, 'as seemed to me the best possible way', suggests a transition from long-trained skill to experiment, inventiveness: 'as it seemed to me . . .'. If this is so, then the poet of these lines in stanza 18 has the anecdote of Vǫlundr's brilliant new method of metal-hardening in his mind.

(ii) *The making of the wings*

An anecdote—an ancient one, to judge by the Franks Casket bird-catching scene—that must have been known to the poet of *Vǫlundarkviða*, but is barely used by him, is that of the making of Vǫlundr's wings. Vǫlundr alludes to them (I suggest) by the ambiguous term *vél* in stanzas 19 and 29 (see commentary). The poet has not wanted us to look closely at those wings, or think of the gathering of feathers, or the impish testing of the mechanism on Egill (*Velents Þáttr* 112–13). All the merry ingenuities and brotherly badinage of the anecdote may well have been known to him, but they are

[43] See Ellis Davidson (*a*), 159–61 for references; Nedoma (*a*), 235–9.

not for his poem. The only merriment in his story is the last laughter of Vǫlundr.

(iii) *Egill shoots at Vǫlundr*

A third anecdote probably known to the poet of *Vǫlundarkviða* is that of the fake shooting of Vǫlundr by Egill (*Velents Þáttr* 113–15). Because he fears that the king will order Egill to shoot him down as he flies away, Velent places a blood-filled bladder beneath his left armpit, and tells Egill to pierce that with his arrow, so that the fall of blood will convince the king that he has been killed. And that indeed is what happens.

In the poem Níðuðr longs to kill or capture Vǫlundr as he flies (37/5–8), and his lament—'No one is so strong that he can shoot you from below'—is, I suggest, a deliberately reversed variant of the anecdote of Egill's shooting. The poet wants the picture of an impotent king abandoned, not of a self-satisfied king who thinks he has killed his enemy.

The poet manipulates the anecdotes to serve his own turn.

3. *The relationship between* Deor *and* Vǫlundarkviða

The key problem, and the most difficult, in determining the provenance of *Vǫlundarkviða* is the relationship between the Norse poem and *Deor*. Was there an Old English 'Lay of Weland'—based on the German?—from which the maker of the Franks Casket carved crowded incidents and the poet of *Deor* took his references to Weland's imprisonment and revenge? If so, was a version of this lay known to—and a source for—the poet of *Vǫlundarkviða* (or of an early version of *Vǫlundarkviða*)?[44]

The remarkable correspondence of vocabulary between *Deor* and *Vǫlundarkviða* in two identical situations in each poem, (*a*) *nēde* and *nauðir* used of the bonds placed on Weland and on Vǫlundr, and (*b*) *ēacen* and *barni aukin* used of Beadohild's and Bǫðvildr's pregnancy (see commentaries to *Vǫlundarkviða* 12/6, 36/2), suggests a definite relationship between the two poems—but can we define it? I do not think it is possible to assign any priority in the use of *nēde/nauðir* to connote 'chains' to either Old English or Old Norse, since the recorded usage of such a sense is small in either language. However, as *ēacen*, 'pregnant', is common in Old

[44] This question has often been raised (cf. Schneider II. 2. iii. 89; Nedoma (*a*), 86 and references). It cannot be a question of close translation of an OE poem into ON (comparable to the translation of the OS *Genesis* into OE, which is a written work; McKinnell (*b*), 5–6). We must envisage an oral version by an ON poet, based on recitals of the OE poem (whether or not based on a written text), in which certain scenes and words from the recited poem were chosen and memorized in the ON poet's mind, others perhaps omitted, varied, reinterpreted, or misunderstood—as, it would seem, in the oral transmission of ballads.

English, but not so recorded elsewhere in Old Norse, the Norse poet may well be the borrower here.

In lines 10–11 the poet of *Deor* betrays the fact that he is manipulating a fuller source, a source resembling *Vǫlundarkviða* in the sequence of some of its events. In the Norse poem the imposition of the *hǫfgar nauðir* (12/6) and the cutting of the sinews (17/7–8) are distinct events set well apart, alternative modes of imprisonment. In *Deor* the terms originally alluding to the two modes of imprisonment are brought into immediate proximity and their meaning synthesized: the cut sinews cannot stand as a verse parallel to the chains, but the sense of 'chains' in *nēde* has been transferred to the useless sinews, making them now, metaphorically, the 'bonds'—*seonobende*—that imprison him. This would seem to indicate that in *Deor*'s source the king placed *nēde*, 'fetters', on Weland (assuming the source was Old English). The poet of *Deor*'s clever synthesis, however, obliges us to translate his term *nēde* abstractly (as I have done, *Appendix*). While *Deor* could have been the source for the Norse poet's use of *aukin*, 'pregnant', it could not have been for his use of *nauðir*, 'bonds'. Even if the poet of *Deor* had known *Vǫlundarkviða* and based his lines 8–12 upon it (which I think unlikely), he must have had some other source for his description of Beadohild's brooding on her pregnancy, which has no part in *Vǫlundarkviða* (at least in its extant form). That the two poems drew upon a common Old English poetic source—or sources—seems most probable.

Three other words in the Níðuðr story in *Vǫlundarkviða* appear to be loanwords from Old English, namely, *gim*, 'jewel', 6/2; *lióði*, 'lord', 11/3; and *iarknasteina*, 'gems', 25/10 (see commentaries ad loc.).[45] This strengthens the likelihood that the poets of *Vǫlundarkviða* and *Deor* knew an Old English version of Weland's story which (*a*) contained the terms *nēde* and *ēacen*, central to the two situations of anguish common to the two extant poems, and (*b*) may also have contained the terms *gim*, *lēod*, *eorcnanstānas*, that have been used by the poet of *Vǫlundarkviða* in scenes that are not in *Deor*—the making of the jewelled ring (6), the scene of the ring-counting lord of elves (11), the fabrication of gems from eyes (25).

If the identification of *lióði* as a loanword from Old English is correct (see commentary to 11/3), this could mean that the representation of Vǫlundr as 'lord of elves' in *Vǫlundarkviða* was borrowed by the Old Norse poet from Old English[46] (though the precise development of the elvish theme in the poem might be that of the Old Norse poet). The parallels of

[45] I do not include my emendation *íviðgirna*, 28/8, nor *gørsimar*, 21/8 (since this is originally a Norse word, though earliest recorded in England; see commentary ad loc.).

[46] In Laȝamon, *Brut* (*c.* 1200) line 21,131: *on aluisc smið*, 'an elvish smith' (called Wygar) made Arthur's coat of mail *mid aðelen his crafte*, 'with his noble skill'. This suggests that traditions of a Weland-like elvish smith, held in high regard, continued long in England.

the terms *nēde/nauðir*, *ēacen/barni aukin* in (virtually) identical contexts in *Deor* and *Vǫlundarkviða* warn us that other parallels with Old English vocabulary in the Norse poem could also relate to (virtually) identical contexts in a now lost Old English poem of Weland. The fact that *ēacen* occurs in a scene where Beadohild is alone, and *barni aukinn* in a speech of Vǫlundr to Níðuðr, shows the kind of telescoping adaptation a Norse poet might have made. When Bǫðvildr sees her father, she cannot *gearolīce* have known she was pregnant.

Deor presents the story of Weland cryptically, *in medias res*. How are we to imagine an Old English narrative 'Lay of Weland' would begin? At what moment in Weland's story? If it began with the capture of the lonely smith by Niðhad, with the same motive of greed as in *Vǫlundarkviða*, there can have been no opening allusions to Weland's honourable career at the king's court and his fall from favour because of the jealousy of another man (as the story is told in *Velents Þáttr*). If the story began when Weland was already an honoured courtier, maligned by envy—a theme that might endear it to the poet of *Deor*—then any capture of him by night, as in *Vǫlundarkviða*, would simply be a police arrest. No savagery or serpent-looks would have been expected of the prisoner. There is nothing in the wording of *Deor* to suggest that Weland was anything but a noble human being—*ānhȳdig eorl*, 'resolute gentleman', *syllan monn*, 'a better man' than the king. He does not seem elvish in any way. So too in *Waldere* (II. 4–10) the ancestry of Widia—*Nīðhādes mǣg, / Wēlandes bearn*, 'kinsman of Niðhad and child of Weland'—has no slur of rape or revenge upon it: it is proclaimed in a context of honour, when the great Ðeodric intends to reward 'Weland's child' richly for rescuing him from giants' bondage.[47] In the extant poetic traditions of Weland the Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde of his nature are kept quite separate—at least on the surface. After the heavy sympathy for Weland in the first scene of *Deor*, we have immediately in the second scene the grievous reminder of Beadohild's brothers' deaths—but we are not told that it was Weland who cut off their heads.

The Old English evidence brings us round in a circle: direct allusions to Weland in *Deor*, *Waldere*, Alfred's *Boethius* suggest for him a sympathetic, even exemplary, persona in a courtly setting, while the Old English loan-words in *Vǫlundarkviða—gim*, (*álfa*) *lióði*, *iarknasteina*—together with the facts of his crimes carved on the Franks Casket, point to the cruelly inhuman persona of the elvish smith, trapped in his forge, making gems out of his enemies' eyes. It would, I think, be beyond the power of one—even hypothetical—Old English poem to reconcile in a single narrative structure the two themes to which Weland is traditionally central—that of the misused courtier and that of the despoiled prince of elves—quite simply because the circumstantial facts necessary to each theme clash. The only poetic mode that can reconcile them—by omission—is elegy. So the misery of Weland can be elaborated without any context other than allusions to Niðhad, to imprisonment, and to the disabling sinews.

[47] See Dickins 60, nn. to Fragment B 7–10, for succinct reference to MHG texts confirming Widia's aid to Ðeodric.

We may note that both the poet of *Deor* and King Alfred refer to Weland as a man in exile—he 'explores, has his first experience of, exile' in *Deor*; King Alfred thinks of him as *ænne wræccan*.[48] This relates Weland directly to Old English elegiac tradition—to the *wræclāstas* of the Wanderer and the Seafarer and the Lamenting Wife (*ASPR* III. 134 line 55, 143 line 15, 210 line 5). Within the narrative of *Vǫlundarkviða* the elegiac stature of Vǫlundr also emerges vividly, from the first moment of his loneliness (5/5–6), to the lament for his sword (18; cf. 6, 12, 15). After this, his melancholy turns to an energy of hatred (19).

Elegy should perhaps rank as a third traditional form in which the Weland legend was transmitted.

Appendix: Deor *lines 1–13*

	Wēlund him ‡be wurman‡	Welund for himself ‡. . .‡
	wræces cunnade,	learned to know exile,
	ānhȳdig eorl,	resolute noble,
	earfoþa drēag,	endured adversities,
	hæfde him tō gesīþþe	had for companion
	sorge 7 longaþ,	grief and heartache,
	wintercalde wræce.	wintercold woe.
	Wēan oft onfond,	Misery many times he probed
5	siþþan hine Nīðhād on	after Niðhad upon him
	nēde legde,	imposed constraints,
	swoncre seonobende,	slack sinew-chains,
	on sȳllan monn.	on a superior man.
	Þæs oferēode,	Time passed from that moment,
	þisses swā mæg.	so it may from this.
	Beadohilde ne wæs	For Beadohild not even
	hyre brōþra dēaþ	her brothers' death
	on sefan swā sār	was so sore to her heart
	swā hyre sylfre þing,	as her own case,
10	þæt hēo gearolīce	when she clearly
	ongietan hæfde	had become aware
	þæt hēo ēacen wæs.	that she was with child.
	Ǣfre ne meahte	Never could she try

[48] Exile was the first punishment imposed upon Velent by Niðungr (for killing his steward; *Velent* 104).

þrīste geþencan	to think without trembling
hū ymb þæt sceolde.	how that event would turn.
Þæs oferēode,	Time passed from that moment,
þisses swā mæg	so it may from this.

In line 1 *be wurman* has never been satisfactorily explained.[49] If the phrase is a miswriting of, for example, *be wifmen, wifmyne* 'through a woman, love of a woman',[50] we should have to reckon with some prologue about a first wife. I see little evidence for that in Old English tradition.

For lines 5–6 see *Vǫlundarkviða Introduction* III. A. 3.

In lines 11–12 *Æfre . . . sceolde* recalls the *æva skyldi* of Bǫðvildr's last speech (*Vǫlundarkviða* 41/6), though the precise context of her thought is different. This too could be an echo from a common source.

4. *Weland as Christian* figura

Could the development of an elegiac character for Weland—as we see it in *Deor* and Alfred's *Boethius*—be connected with early attempts to interpret his story in Christian symbolic terms, as a heathen prefiguration of the Christian truth? If so, it might help to explain how, at a later date, the poet of *Deor* and King Alfred came to overlook—or see beyond—the brutal actions of their hero and praise him morally. Like Samson, with all his flaws, Weland too might stand as a *figura* of Christ. In the science of *figura*, facts irrelevant to the analogy are not significant.[51]

The legend of Weland could have come to England from Germany at the time of the vigorous Anglo-Saxon missions in the early eighth century. Boniface made his see at Mainz in 747, not far from the site of the seventh century gravestone at Ebersheim bearing the earliest record of the name *Veland* upon it: LINDIS FILIA VELANDU ET THUDELINDI.[52] On the Franks Casket the scene in Weland's smithy has been placed in a Christian context, juxtaposed with the visitation of the Magi on the same panel. What might this signify? Weland's holding of the ring has been interpreted as a symbolic dedication of riches to God, comparable to the Magi's offering of their treasures to Christ.[53] Others see the prospective begetting of the hero Widia as an image of the coming of the Christ child[54]

[49] As Nedoma (*a*), 80–3, well notes.

[50] Cf. Grein s.v. *wifman*, though this use of *be* is rare.

[51] On the figural tradition of Samson, and the explications of St Caesarius of Arles, see P. Dronke (*c*), 128–32. Had Milton only known the biblical story of Samson, he would not have written *Samson Agonistes*.

[52] See Nedoma (*a*), 58.

[53] Hauck § 7. A still earlier occurrence of Vǫlundr's name may possibly be found on the runic solidus from Schweindorf (on which see Page (*a*)), dated to the late 6 c. by Nedoma (*a*), 35–8, on which is inscribed **weladu**.

[54] The suggestion is not infrequent, but I have not met well-based argument in support of it: see

(though I see nothing in the records of Widia to make him worthy of this distinction).

I would suggest that the carvings of Weland on the Gotland stone and on the tenth century English crosses (see *Vǫlundarkviða Introduction* III. A. 1 (i)) point to a simpler and more profound Christian interpretation of Weland. He is portrayed escaping from the smithy on wings, bearing with him a girl. This is a rescue, a saving of the girl from the prison of the smithy, from the despair of her mortal life. It is also a swiftly comprehensible image of redemption, of the deliverance of a soul.[55]

The scene of the smithy on the Casket shows the same girl, in wholly realistic action, giving the broken ring, the bond of her faith, to her rescuer-from-paternal-punishment, her saviour, to be repaired. This too can be an image of redemption, the sealing of the bond of salvation between Christ and his new bride, the Christian people, Ecclesia:[56] a bond

Webster 29 (in n. 52 to this passage the statement that in *Deor* 'Widia's birth is also [i.e. like Christ's] presented as the triumph of good over evil' is hardly correct: there is no moral reference in the refrain lines of *Deor*; Ellis Davidson (*b*), 218–19, attempts to identify the role of Váli and that of Widia to force an identification with that of Christ, but the parallels are imperfect; the likenesses between Saxo's tale of the begetting of Váli upon Rindr and the begetting of Widia on Beadohild no doubt spring from the fact that Saxo knew *Vkv* and drew from it ideas for the begetting of Váli (see n. 14 above and commentary to *Vsp* 32/5–8); Wood 6, n. 40, relies on Ellis Davidson (though he emphasizes that 'Germanic tradition is . . . present not just because the story was a popular one, but also because it had some iconographic significance within the design of the casket as a whole').

[55] I have so far not found this image used of a living soul in early Christian iconography (apart from the Assumption of the Virgin, who is taken to heaven by two angels; Réau II. ii. 614–19 gives the earliest instance as 8 c.). The interpretation of mythological rapes, or abductions, such as the rape of Helen, Ganymede, the daughters of Leucippe, as symbols of the passage from the earthly world to a divine world, is lavishly exemplified in the bas-reliefs in the Pythagorean basilica beneath the Porta Maggiore in Rome. These abductions portray initiations, the beginning of a new understanding (Carcopino 337: 'l'enlevement d'Hélène est une initiation': the epics of Homer have become the Bible of the neo-Pythagorean religion, 336. For his discussion of Ganymede and the daughter of Leucippe see 110–11; the figure of Zeus in the rape of Ganymede is clearly identifiable by the well-shod and trousered legs straddling the air, while head and wings denote his eagle trappings, Plate IX). This beautiful basilica, built about AD 50, was pillaged and closed shortly after its construction, not to be rediscovered (perhaps) until 1917 (Carcopino 51–2, 22–4), but images comparable to the abductions in the basilica decorate the vaults of contemporary tombs (Bendinelli 104, Strong (*b*), 76), and are common (notably the rape of Ganymede by the eagle) especially in Gallo-Roman sepulchral sculpture, e.g. at Igel near Trier (see also Strong (*a*), 220: 'A figure, or group symbolic of the rape of the soul, invariably occupies the centre of tomb ceilings; various impersonations of the soul are borne upwards on an eagle, griffin, or divinised being'). If such funerary depictions are so common, might they have been known to, and reused by, Anglo-Saxon missionaries? Would they not have met the eye of Benedict Biscop on one of his five journeys to Rome in the 7 c., to buy pictures to adorn Monkwearmouth Church (as well, perhaps, as the image of Romulus and Remus being fed by the she-wolf, which the carver of the Franks Casket knows)?

[56] Cf. Ephesians 5: 25: *Christus dilexit ecclesiam*. 'The early Christian marriage rings, therefore, displayed on the bezel the marriage of Christ to the Church' (Kantorowicz 215, n. 61). It is notable that in the Weland scene, while one hammer is hanging perpendicularly, presumably on the wall of the forge, a second hammer is poised slanting in mid-air above the anvil, held by no hand. This could represent the marriage-blessing Germanic hammer acting as a cross performing the same

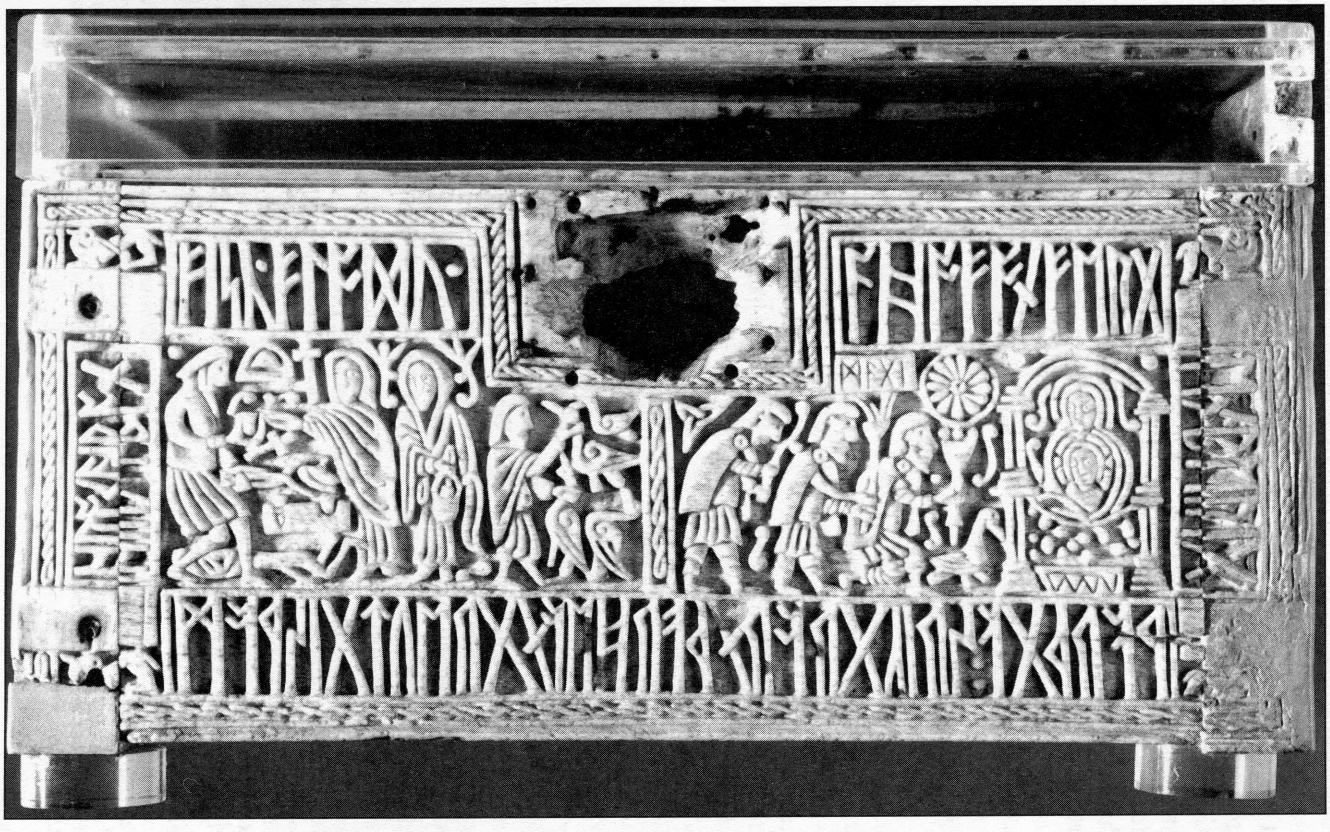
made possible by the incarnation—which is represented on the other half of the same panel. Even more, the divine mender of the ring—who helps humanity to make reparation for error, *redde quod debes*—can be seen destroying the flesh of worldly avarice—the corpse is under the forge—by transforming it into the immortal gold and gems of everlasting life-after-death, now opened to man by the incarnation—to which the Magi bear witness—and by his death—which they predict in their gift of myrrh. The scene in the smithy, so richly endowed with figural potential relating to the incarnation and the redemption (my suggestions do not exhaust the possibilities) might well seem fit to place beside the epiphany of Christ.[57]

We may also wonder whether the runic micropoem surrounding the front panel is wholly irrelevant to the scenes of Weland and the Magi within it. Two words, **hronæs ban**, 'whale's bone', are outside the metrical structure: 'High tide heaved the fish / [up] on to the headland. / The sea [?] grew troubled, / where he floundered on the sand.'[58] The Casket is made of whalebone: from the death of the whale the precious Casket and the message carved upon it have come. Weland too made treasures from the bones—the skulls and the teeth—of the dead. The whale's belly, that harboured Jonah for three days and three nights, signifies, traditionally, the infernal regions of death where Christ likewise would stay *in corde terrae* for three days and three nights (Matthew 12: 38–40). When the whale dies, when Leviathan is caught on the hook, swallowing the bait of the deity incarnate who can harrow hell—*agn svelgjandi á króki*—then death itself is

function; cf. *AR* §§ 78 (with illustration of a rock-carving of a hammer raised to bless a mating couple), 88, 425.

[57] If the image of Weland flying off with Beadohild had religious significance at the time of the carving of the Franks Casket, then the scene of Egill catching birds for their feathers could be a way of alluding to this to complete the religious cycle of the legend on the Casket with the taking of the soul to heaven. In the figural context it may be relevant to note the identification of wounds and jewels in Christian symbolism. In the OE *Dream of the Rood* the vision of gold and gems on the Cross alternates with streams of blood (6–10); the five jewels on the crossbeam are the five wounds of Christ (on early Christian imagery springing from the double use of *sphragis* for 'wound'/'gem' see P. Dronke (*c*), 154–6 and references there cited). Weland's association with the Magi would seem to have continued into the modern period: it was a custom in German-speaking lands that smiths should hammer on their anvils ceremonially on the feast of the Epiphany, to fasten more firmly the fetters of the Devil (Bächtold-Stäubli s.vv. *Hammer* § 5 b, *Schmied* B § 1 f., also B § 2 (a), (b)).

[58] I suggest reading (following mainly Napier (*b*), 8) *Fiscflōd u[þ] āhōf / onfergenberig. / Warþ gā:sric grorn / þær hē on grēut giswom*. As **flōdu* would be virtually impossible, I suggest that *þ* has been omitted at the end of the division (as perhaps *mæ* has been similarly omitted in *su[mæ]* on the back panel; Napier (*b*), 11). The puzzling *gā:sric* I would prefer to take as a (?metathesized or miscarved) form of *gārsecg*, 'ocean' (of still undetermined etymology), rather than a nonce name for the whale, 'Raging mighty one' (cf. the early Gmc *Gaisericus* as a personal name). *Grorn* is only recorded (rarely) with the sense 'miserable', but might have had the same range of sense as *gedrēfed*, from 'emotionally wretched' to 'materially wretched' to 'materially disturbed' (e.g. of water). However, if *Gāsric* was intended as a name for *Leviathan*, then we may translate *grorn* as 'wretched' and feel a touch of pity for him as the poet of *Beowulf* did for the dead dragon (2832–5).



The Franks Casket, front panel. Weland and the Magi. Reproduced by courtesy of the British Museum.

dead.[59] The image of the dying whale, stranded, thrashing the shallows in despair, can hardly be a fortuitous frame for the two scenes it presents.

King Alfred does not seem to have been greatly interested in *figura*. Orpheus is an ancient *figura* of Christ, but Alfred makes only a very platitudinous moral lesson out of his myth.[60] In Weland too he focuses on the moral value of the individual, not merely setting Weland's name in place of that of Fabricius, the ancient Roman consul proverbially famous for his moral probity, but even adapting for the goldsmith's dedication to his art the legendary praise of the Roman: that it was harder for Fabricius to be turned from honesty than for the sun to be turned from its course:[61]

Hwǣr sint nū þæs wīsan	Where are now the wise
Wēlandes bān,	Weland's bones—
þæs goldsmiðes,	that goldsmith
þe wæs geō mǣrost?	who was long ago greatest in fame?
Forþȳ ic cwæð þæs wīsan	This was the reason I said wise
Wēlandes bān,	Weland's bones,
forðȳ ængum ne mæg	that in no man may
eorðbūendra	among the dwellers on earth
se cræft losian	the talent be lost
þe him Crīst onlǣnð.	that Christ lends him.
Ne mæg mon ǣfre þȳ ēð	One can never any the more easily
ǣnne wræccan	from an outcast wretch
his cræftes beniman,	take away his talent
þe mon oncerran mæg	than one can divert
sunnan onswīfan	the sun to swerve aside
7 ðisne swiftan rōdor	and this swift sky
of his rihtryne	from its right course
rinca ǣnig.	—not any man can.
Hwā wāt nū þæs wīsan	Who knows now of the wise
Wēlandes bān,	Weland's bones,
on hwelcum hī hlǣwa	in which of the grave-mounds
hrūsan þeccan?	they may cover the earth?

[59] Cf. Job 41: 1 (Vulgate 40: 20): 'Canst thou draw out Leviathan with an book?' Christ as fisher of souls is portrayed in 2 c. catacombs in Rome (Réau II. 21). Later the Cross, symbol of his human death, becomes the hook on which the whale is caught: Christ is the bait (the citation is from *Lilja* 60 (*Skjald* B II. 406), by Eysteinn Ásgrímsson, †1361); cf. Rabanus Maurus, for whom the divinity of Christ was the fish-hook (*De Universo* VIII. v ('De piscibus'), col. 240D: *hamus divinitas Filii Dei, quae carne induta latuit hamus in esca*). On the Franks Casket (I am aware) there is no fish-hook, as the whale is stranded; but for a fish, the fish-hook is a metaphor of death.

[60] For Alfred, *Boethius* 103, Orpheus' fatal backward glance at Eurydice teaches the moral that a man who seeks God's true light should never turn back to his old sins.

[61] Eutropius, writing in the 4 c., records how Pyrrhus, King of Epirus (*c.* 282 BC), declared *Ille est Fabricius, qui difficilius ab honestate quam sol a cursu suo averti potest* (*Breviarium* II. xiiii. 2). It is a remarkably forceful statement to apply to Weland, and we must suppose it reflects Alfred's interpretation of the hero. I thank Jane Beverley for identifying the author of Alfred's citation (for which see *ASPR* V. 166).

This remarkable exaltation of Weland would not, I think, have occurred to King Alfred if he had known only a savage tale of imprisonment and revenge. He has been taught to see a moral aspect to the story, and he expresses it in terms of lament. Is Alfred recalling *Deor* when he adorns his praise of Weland with a refrain and pities him as *ǣnne wræccan*?

B. The swan maiden sequence

'The homeland of the Swan Maiden story, the regions within which it would arise ever-new and be nourished by annual observation, must be sought in the far north of the Eurasian and American continents . . . The nature of the Swan Maiden story and its distribution in Eurasia and North America suggest that it is an archaic story. It is the sort of story that might be many thousands of years old. The earliest date that has emerged during this discussion, however, is *c.* 300 (?) in China'.[62]

In *Vǫlundarkviða* the traditional pattern of the swan maiden legend has been altered in several respects (see *Vǫlundarkviða Introduction* II. A), in order to adapt it to the succeeding story of Vǫlundr the smith. The traditional pattern must have been familiar to the writer of the prose prologue, however, since he notes that, while the women were spinning, their swan skins—*álptarhamir*—lay beside them. He does *not* say that the brothers took these away from them, no doubt because this would too grossly contradict the poem.

Despite the divergence of the swan maiden sequence in *Vǫlundarkviða* from the traditional pattern of the swan maiden legend, that legend, with its theme of migratory change, must still be the source of the story in *Vǫlundarkviða* 1 – 3. The *Dream of Óengus* could be regarded as yet another variant of the swan maiden legend, in which the migratory change of mood in the swan maiden has been 'rationalized' as a fairy power to change from a swan one year to a girl the next, a wilful power completely under the control of the girl herself. While the *Dream* is composed of several well-known Irish saga-motifs, the annually alternating swan–girl nature of the heroine does not seem to be one of them. The accepted dating to the eighth century precludes Norse influence.

In *Vǫlundarkviða* one term that is used of the swan maidens would seem to have been borrowed from Old English: *alvítr* (see commentary to 1/3). In the case of other Old English loanwords in the poem, I have suggested that they might have been borrowed from scenes in a lost Old English poem comparable to those in *Vǫlundarkviða* where the loanwords occur (see *Vǫlundarkviða Introduction* III. A. 3). To suggest this of *alvítr* would imply that the swan maiden sequence, or a variant of it, formed the opening of the

[62] Hatto 283, 287.

hypothetical Old English narrative lay known to the poet of *Vǫlundarkviða*. But I see no evidence for this in Old English Weland tradition. More probably the poet was using a general term already assimilated into Norse from Old English for supernatural beings.

The motif of taking away a transforming garment, of bird or beast, in order to restore human form is not uncommon in folk-tale. A remarkable instance in a fourteenth century south German romance, *Friedrich von Schwaben*, shows links with *Vǫlundarkviða*. Friedrich's beloved, Angelburg, is cursed with shape-changes by a cruel stepmother: first she is a stag, then a dove. As a dove, she bathes—with two court maidens also transformed into doves—every day in a well on a mountain. Their dove-garments lie beside them while they bathe. If Friedrich can find the well, steal the feather garments, and if one of the girls will choose him as her husband, the girls will be released from the malignant spell. After much dangerous adventure, Friedrich succeeds. The lovers are united; his two brothers marry the two court maidens; the stepmother is burned. After nine years of marriage, Angelburg dies.

The parallels with *Vǫlundarkviða* and its prose prologue are striking. The taking of the bird-garments while the girls are bathing recalls the traditional pattern of the swan maiden legend (see *Vǫlundarkviða Introduction* II. A). The marriage of the three maidens to three brothers recalls *Vǫlundarkviða*, as does the loss of the wife after nine years. Most remarkable, perhaps, is that in the earliest MSS. Friedrich, on his quest for Angelburg, calls himself *Wieland*. Some scholars regard this association of Wieland with bird maidens and the stealing of their enchanted garments, in a German romance, as evidence that the swan maiden legend was not a Norse addition to the Germanic story of Weland.[63] However, the fact that only the Norse poem has the triple marriage and the departure of the wives after nine years, suggests very strongly that *Friedrich* has (ultimately) a Norse version of the Vǫlundr story behind it. German merchant communities in Norway could well have heard *Vǫlundarkviða* in return for their stories of Velent (see *Vǫlundarkviða Introduction* III. A. 1 (ii)). For us, *Friedrich* is most valuable in that it shares with the prose prologue to *Vǫlundarkviða* the motif of the stealing of the bird-garments, which is an integral part of the traditional swan maiden legend. This motif has been discarded by the *Vǫlundarkviða* poet, but I would suppose it was in his source. This 'older' version could continue to be current in Norwegian tradition alongside the *Vǫlundarkviða* text that we now have, to be used by the writer of the prose prologue and by the poet of *Friedrich*.

[63] Cf. JH *Vkv* 42.

C. The Lappish connection

The author of the prose prologue identifies Níðuðr as a king in Sweden and Vǫlundr and his two brothers as sons of the king of the Lapps. These young royal Lapps, wide-ranging hunters, settle in Nordic-named Úlfdalir, which is claimed by Níðuðr as his land (so it would seem, 14/9; DH). It is this that brings Vǫlundr within his power. *Vǫlundarkviða* now presents a racial confrontation between Lapps and Swedes, in which the Nordic authorities assume their accustomed sovereignty and the Lapps repay them with treacherous and insidious magic. This narrative formula is familiar to the Norse thirteenth century historians.[64]

Why should Vǫlundr have been identified as a Lapp in the prose prologue? The poem tells us nothing about his human background. *Widsið* and *Velents Þáttr* place his ancestors in the Baltic (see n. 42). I can only suppose that in a north Norwegian community in frequent contact with the Lapps, Norsemen might have recognized similarities between motifs in Vǫlundr's story and some Lappish legends and traditions. He was a fantastic smith, remaking human heads (like the Siberian, and in earlier tradition perhaps also the Lappish, divine smith who forged shamans), and he escaped by flight, like shamans of legend and living shamans who claimed to go on trance journeys through air and water. Vǫlundr certainly does not resemble any other Germanic hero whose story is extant.

Two Norwegians from northern Norway give good testimony to their familiarity with the Lapps. Both also have some link with the story of Vǫlundr. Eyvindr Finnsson skáldaspillir was of a noble Hálogaland family (according to *Landnámabók* 348–9, *Egils Saga* 56–7). During the terrible snowy summers under the Eiríkssons he notes ironically how they have to imitate the Lapps and bring their birch-nibbling flocks indoors (*Heimskringla* I. 221, *Skjald* B I. 65). He is the first skald to allude to Egill, Vǫlundr's brother (see *Vǫlundarkviða Introduction* III. A. 1 (i)). That Egill should have been identified as a Lapp fits well with the high—indeed magical—reputation of Lappish bowmen in Norwegian tradition ('whatever they aim at, they hit').[65]

The second Norwegian who, we know, knew the Lapps, and who could have known legends of Weland/Vǫlundr also, is the merchant Ohthere, who visited King Alfred. He too was from Hálogaland, and the most

[64] For instance, the hanging of Agni by his Lappish wife, whose father he has killed in battle (*Hkr* I. 37–8); the deadly infatuation of Haraldr hárfagri for the magically preserved corpse of his Lappish wife (*Hkr* I. 126–7); the compliance of the Lapps in tax-paying, based on fear, though they pretend friendship (*Egil* 27).

[65] Cf. *Hkr* I. 135, 362; Tolley (*a*), 67. The second skald to allude to Egill's arrows, Hallfreðr, was said to be the son of a Hálogalander, Óttarr, whose name is the same as that of the explorer Ohthere; could Hallfreðr have been a descendant of Ohthere's family?

northerly inhabitant of Norway (he told the King), in the narrowest strip of that land where it could be cultivated. It was only three miles there from the coast to the mountains, and in those mountains lived the Lapps. He had explored the northern ocean to the White Sea. There the *Beormas* (probably itinerant Karelian Finns) 'told him many tales both about their own land and about the surrounding lands'. These tales may well have been somewhat 'tall', for Ohthere adds (perhaps in response to a stern question from the truth-loving King Alfred) that 'he did not know whether it was all true, as he had not seen it himself'. From his remark that 'it seemed to him that the *Beormas* and the Lapps spoke almost the same language', I would infer that he was keenly interested in the tongues of the people he sailed among and perhaps had a knowledge of some Lappish.[66]

It could be from Ohthere's visit to the English court that the poem of Weland came to Norway. The King had a warm interest in Weland; probably both the *Orosius*, in which he inserts the account of Ohthere's visit, and the *Boethius*, in which he praises Weland, were composed in the last five years of Alfred's life. Everything we know about the elements that make up *Vǫlundarkviða* suggests that Ohthere's visit was significant, if we make certain assumptions: (*a*) that at the English court Ohthere and his men were entertained with stories and lays, one or more on the theme of Weland; (*b*) that Ohthere returned home to Hálogaland via the court of King Haraldr hárfagri, giving him news of the English court and his entertainment, from which Haraldr's poet Þjóðólfr might have learnt of the tale of Vǫlundr, that inspired his giant kenning *Grjót-Níðuðr*; (*c*) that on Ohthere's return to Hálogaland the tale of Weland/Vǫlundr became known among his circle and in his district, attracting particular interest because of the 'Lappish' motifs of reforging human bodies and escape by flight through the air: attracting too, perhaps, the addition of a Lappish-style shamanic love-story to give a radiant opening to the dark tale and motivate more clearly the traditional melancholy of the hero, inherited from his elegiac Anglo-Saxon past.[67]

[66] For the text and discussion of 'Ohthere's Voyage' see A. S. C. Ross; Lund; Tolley (*a*), 56–8.

[67] I am aware that we must be cautious in attributing the swan maiden legend and motifs related to shamanic cultures (as presented in general studies of shamanism) specifically to Lappish tradition. Hatto emphasizes the vastness of the homeland of the swan maiden 'in the far north of the Eurasian and American continents', which 'coincides largely with the region in which the classic forms of shamanism occur'. Recorded Lappish traditions do not emphasize any sexual relationship between the shaman and his female helping spirit, though other shamanic traditions do. Hatto cites Waley, *The Nine Songs* (13–16, and the songs themselves) as evidence that the shaman's spirit—which is always of the opposite sex—may be conceived of as his lover, enamoured of him: when he emerges from his trance he 'feels as though abandoned by his . . . spirit lover, who ascends to heaven'. The Norse Vǫlundr shares this intensity of feeling in a comparable, magical, mystical, situation (5, 10). See also Sternberg 472–511 for fuller documentation of shaman and spirit wife in Siberian shamanism (recorded from the early 20 c.). The Finno-Ugrian traditions neighbouring Ohthere's lands may have been richer in his day than modern record suggests (see the analogues in Ugric mythology adduced by Motz (*e*), 57; these are difficult to evaluate without citation of the sources, at least in translation).

This is a rough sketch of the possible development of the poem of Vǫlundr in Norway, drawn simply by linking one fortuitous dot of record with another. Other dots that I have not yet found might change its outline, but (I am inclined to think) perhaps not radically.

D. The Icelandic connection

Ásgeir Blöndal Magnússon closes his fine analysis of *ögurstund* by pointing out that not only *ögurstund*, but also *húnn*, 'bear cub', used affectionately for 'child', and *veðreygr*, 'weather-eyed' (see commentary to 4/2), are terms found in Icelandic but not in Norwegian. And all three are in *Vǫlundarkviða*. Ásgeir asks, could not the poem have been composed in Iceland just as well as in Norway? If for 'composed' we substitute 'given its final form', I would agree with Ásgeir. The three Icelandic words match the characteristic idiom of the poem. When Vǫlundr cuts off the heads 'of those young cubs', *húna þeira*, he is treating them like the bears he hunts and eats. But when Níðuðr begs to know what has become of 'my thriving young cubs', *heilom . . . húnom mínom*, *húnn* is the term a kindly father uses. Níðuðr, from his first utterance, has a genial, jocular quality about him (cf. 14; so too, most often, in *Velents Þáttr*). He is designed by the poet to be a man who will mourn deeply for his lost boys and be overwhelmed by the rape of his doted-on little daughter—such pretty eyelashes, so bright in her dresses. These are the insights of characterization through dialogue and detail that we have learned to look for in Icelandic saga tradition:

> Hǫskuldr átti sér dóttur, er Hallgerðr hét. Hon lék sér á gólfinu við aðrar meyjar; hon var fríð sýnum ok mikil vexti ok hárit svá fagrt sem silki ok svá mikit, at þat tók ofan á belti. Hǫskuldr kallar á hana: 'Far þú hingat til mín,' sagði hann. Hon gekk þegar til hans. Hann tók undir kverkina ok kyssti hana; síðan gekk hon í braut. Þá rœddi Hǫskuldr til Hrúts: 'Hversu lízk þér á mey þessa? þykki þér eigi fǫgr vera?'
>
> Hǫskuldr had a daughter, called Hallgerðr. She was playing with other girls on the floor; she was lovely to look at and very tall and her hair was as glossy as silk and so long that it reached down to her belt. Hǫskuldr calls to her: 'Come here to me,' he said. She went to him straightaway. He took her by the chin and kissed her; then she went away. Hǫskuldr then said to Hrútr: 'How does this girl strike you? Don't you think she's beautiful?'
>
> (*Njáls Saga* 6–7, ch. 1)

Scholars have seen an Icelandic element in the cruel, clever queen: she recalls in her persecution of the hero the malevolent queens of the *fornaldarsǫgur*, with their folk-tale spitefulness.[68] The queen has a function in the poem: because she is there to order the mutilation of Vǫlundr, Níðuðr can consistently maintain his gentler character and deserve the pathos of his last scene.[69] If the poet has drawn upon popular Icelandic traditions here, he may have done so to perfect the structure of the poem where it was weakest, namely, perhaps, in a crude representation of a tyrant Níðuðr (cruel enough to inspire a new kenning for giants in Norway).

Icelanders have given its ultimate home to this wandering poem in their manuscripts, and in the course of its oral transmission through earlier generations reciters may well have touched it with insights into scenes and situations and tones of colloquial speech which we now wish to associate with Icelandic tradition, because nothing quite comparable survives from Norway. In the tenth century, however, when poets with the genius of Eyvindr composed in Norway at the same royal courts as the Icelandic skalds, it would be difficult to assert that an Icelander rather than a Norwegian created *Vǫlundarkviða*. I would have supposed that the poem based on Old English traditions was given a form, close to that we know, in Hálogaland; then carried by Icelanders—great admirers of Norwegian poets, as we know—to Iceland, where it survived as the inheritor of common Norse traditions of narrative and idiom, the cultivation of which continued to develop in Iceland rather than in Norway.

I would see a more tangible mark of the poem's later career in Iceland in the one serious flaw in the extant text, the attribution of royal historical fathers to the flying swan maidens (15). Where else would heroic valkyrie traditions be as familiar and well cultivated as in Iceland—the land of the *Rímur*, where indeed we find the only swan maiden who flies eagerly to battle (see commentary to *Vǫlundarkviða* 1/1).

IV. *The Text of* Vǫlundarkviða

A. **Discrepancies**

At some time a reciter has made alterations to the text and has not co-ordinated the new details with the old. From this arises one serious discrepancy of fact in the poem.

There are four names for the three wives: Egill has Ǫlrún (named in 5/2, 15/7), Vǫlundr has a 'daughter of Hlǫðvér' (11/6: i.e. either the Hlaðguðr

[68] Notoriously Hvít and Skuld in *Hrólf* chs. 25–30, 47–52.
[69] See n. 26 above.

or the Hervǫr of 15/5), and Slagfiðr has Svanhvít (5/4), whose name is not included with those of the other wives in 15/5–8. The author of the prose prologue has cleverly combined Hlaðguðr–Svanhvít and Hervǫr–Alvítr (taking *alvítr*, 11/7, as a proper noun),[70] so that Slagfiðr can marry Svanhvít (5/4) and Vǫlundr Alvítr (11/7) and still have a king as father-in-law. But this must be ingenuity, not tradition.

In no source other than *Vǫlundarkviða* is Vǫlundr given a wife (other than Bǫðvildr). Egill, however, is associated with Ǫlrún in *Velents Þáttr*: after his feat of cleaving the apple on his little son's head he became 'most famous of all men, and people call him *Ǫlrúnar-Egill*' (*Velents Þáttr* 111). His association with Ǫlrún must be based on wider tradition than *Vǫlundarkviða* alone. How could she be relevant to the story of the apple-shooting—apart from being, perhaps, the boy's mother? Is part of Ǫlrún's tradition recorded on the Franks Casket, in the scene where Egill is directing his arrows against armed attackers—is she the woman sitting in the house behind him, and did she gain her fame by giving—or not giving—Egill a strand of her hair when his bowstring broke? There must have been some legend (though not necessarily this one!), and the poet of *Vǫlundarkviða* 5/1–2 would have known it.

Before the swan maidens were made part of the story, there existed the legends of Egill and his wife Ǫlrún and his brother Vǫlundr. But now Ǫlrún is made a swan maiden, and the two brothers become three, as in so many archaic folk-tales, to form an idyllic marital trio. The pre-existing legendary material on Egill, Ǫlrún, and Vǫlundr, which is fundamentally pragmatic, has been lightly fitted into a formal pattern of folk-myth, which is fundamentally unreal. This 'fitting' is simply achieved by omitting any information about Egill and Ǫlrún, and inventing a third brother, whose wife is given what seems a perfect archetypal name for a swan maiden, Svanhvít. We only know the two wives' names in the swan maiden sequence because Egill and Slagfiðr go to seek them. Here the citing of their names cleverly implies the process of human domestication in their years of marriage: they are not named when they first embrace their lovers and they are not named when they fly away as swans. Their names are left behind as human trappings.

We might suppose that Vǫlundr's swan wife also had a human name, but it is not identified precisely in the poem. When she is first mentioned after her departure, as Vǫlundr awaits her return, she is only referred to as 'his radiant wife' (6/5). When the ring has gone from the cord, he thinks 'Hlǫðvér's daughter' has taken it. This identification is borrowed from 15/5–6, for the reason, I suspect, that the poet's text never gave a name to Vǫlundr's wife. Had there been a name for the third swan wife, would it not

[70] In the MS. personal names are not given an initial capital (unless they begin a sentence).

have alliterated with Vǫlundr, to match Egill and Ǫlrún, Slagfiðr and Svanhvít? As there would be no tradition of Vǫlundr as a swan maiden's husband before the creation of *Vǫlundarkviða*, his wife's name would have to be invented for him, like Slagfiðr's Svanhvít. If lines 15/5–8 were inserted to provide a royal origin for noble valkyrie wives, as seems probable (see commentary to 1/1, 1/4, 15/5–8), then we cannot allow much authority to *Hlǫðvés dóttir* in 11/6. I would suggest that the poet intended Vǫlundr's swan wife to remain a nameless figure in the poem, a haunting *draumbrúðr* from the past. Structurally and emotionally there is no moment in the text when a specific name for Vǫlundr's wife would serve any purpose. By contrast, in the scene of the pursuit of the other two wives, it is through the citing of their names that the emotional situation is so swiftly and intimately conveyed (5/1–4).

Though *Hlǫðvés dóttir*, is not, I think, original to the poem, but based on the name-list in 15/5–8, which also, I think, is not original to the poem, it is delicately inserted into the text and provides a variation on 6/5–6. But 6/5–6 probably represents a shortened and defective text. It would seem that we do not have an undisturbed text of any of the stanzas in which Vǫlundr thinks of his married life (6, 11, 15). The royal pedigrees proper to valkyrie wives have been imposed upon the swan wives in the only place where they could possibly be fitted in, in Vǫlundr's dreams and memories. Perhaps that is why those stanzas are disturbed.

The two other textual discrepancies in the poem are slight and possibly not unintentional: *Myrkvið*, 1/2 . . . *á myrkvan við*, 3/8, and *sǫgðo*, 40/2 . . . *sagði*, 41/2 (see commentaries ad loc.).

B. Lacunae in the text

Though the pace of the poem is rapid and often curt, there is only one gap in narrative continuity. Between stanzas 25 and 26 we need a statement that Bǫðvildr broke her ring and, because of that, went to visit Vǫlundr; see *Vǫlundarkviða Introduction* II. D.

In the MS. stanza 16 begins abruptly: *Hón inn um gekk* . . . There is no antecedent for *Hón*. As 16/1–2 are virtually identical with 30/3–4, I would suppose that the poet intended the two appearances of the queen to be linked by a repetition of the same opening lines, namely 30/1–4. In writing stanza 16 a scribe has inadvertently omitted the first two lines of the refrain-like opening. It is possible that this error was caused in some way by the insertion of the unoriginal lines 15/5–8.

In two stanzas the metre lacks an alliterating word in the b-line. In 10/6 I have supplied *biart*, in 18/2 *skyggt*. These metrically defective lines may well need greater surgery than this, but I would not venture upon it. That

the scribe might accidentally omit a necessary alliterating word is evident from his omission of *vinna*, 41/8.

The MS. misspelling 'onondar' for *Vǫlundar*, 2/10, shows that there have been corrupt or illegible letters in the scribe's exemplar. Comparable illegibility may have caused lines to be blurred and lost in stanzas 6 and 13 (see commentaries ad loc.). Here however the narrative continuity is not lost, as it is between stanzas 25 and 26.

We may also count as lacunae in the text the lines that have been replaced by 11/6 and 15/6–8.

C. Redundancies in the text

In this succinct poem the repetitive thought and vocabulary of 18/7–8, 9–10 stands out (see commentary to 18/1–10). In oral tradition an elegiac soliloquy might breed more otiose variants than would stanzas of direct narrative import. Repetition elsewhere in the text is poetically integrated.

D. Stanza length, repetition, and verbal play

There is great variety of length in the stanzas of the poem, but even within the longer stanzas, the favoured unit is of four lines. Of the poem's forty-one stanzas only fourteen have the eight-line structure most usual in *fornyrðislag*; of these fourteen stanzas, twelve have a full stop at the fourth line. There are ten independent stanzas of four lines only. Of the eight ten-line stanzas all contain one or two sense-units of four lines; in four of these stanzas, a sequence of two lines at the centre expresses a turning point, a moment of insight, of achievement, between the four lines that precede and the four that follow: so in stanza 10, lines 5–6 explain how the first four-line unit, of the swift returning hunter, relates to the second, of the roasting fire blazing up before Vǫlundr—he has brought home a slain bear; and in stanza 17, lines 5–6 show us the sudden insight of the queen, who has been watching Vǫlundr (lines 1–4), an insight that makes her command the cutting of his sinews (lines 7–10). A comparable significance could be argued for the central lines 5–6 in stanzas 29 and 41. The twelve-line stanza 35 and the sixteen-line stanza 25 are built entirely of four-line units. The fourteen-line stanzas 18 and 33 each have a unit of six lines, followed by two four-line units (in 33 this arrangement is particularly elegant and syntactically neat). Of the five six-line stanzas, two are defective (6 and 26), but the remaining three (4, 5, 39) are a perfect demonstration of how expressively such a brief metrical form can be diversified to serve different subject-matter (note the remarkable way in which the repeated assonance in 4—*auða* . . . *út* . . . *inn* . . . *um*—gives the impression that the men are

open-mouthed as they gaze at the emptiness; and in 39, how the father's words falter as his command to the thrall is broken by images of his daughter).

The regular recurrence of the four-line unit, within the varying structures of the majority of the stanzas, as well as independently (ten times), gives a steady harmony and pace to the poem. This harmony is strengthened by the many repetitions and reminiscences that bind the poem with echoes. For example, the visit of the swan maidens opens with the maidens flying steadily towards their northern lake—*Meyiar flugo*—and ends with them obsessed with anxiety to get away—*Meyiar fýstoz*—as winter was sending its first snows for the skiers. The simple change of word reflects the changed heart of the swan maidens, and the repetition of *alvítr ungar / ørlǫg drýgia* closes the incident for them. These repetitions in stanzas 1 and 3 establish a technique of repetition for the rest of the poem. In almost all the phrases repeated or echoed one can see—by hindsight—an element of warning: the swan maidens are alien creatures, fate-bound, they cannot stay in a human life; the hunter speeds home with a tempest at his heels, to find—worse than a tempest—desolation and capture (4/1–2, 10/1–2). In this charged atmosphere even simple statements repeated—'In they walked down the length of the hall'—seem haunted by what is to happen next (8/3–4, 16/3–4, 30/3–4). The repetition *vaknaði / vilialauss . . . Vaki ek ávalt / vilialauss* (12/3–4, 31/1–2)—Vǫlundr waking in fetters, Níðuðr kept awake by terror—could be said to express a simple irony of reversal. But between those two points of repeated phrasing lies another kernel of irony (19/1): when Vǫlundr is captive he does not sleep—*né hann svaf*—ever—*ávalt*, just like Níðuðr. Vǫlundr's wakefulness is Níðuðr's undoing. This is a delicate net of verbal echoes. A more blatant, Grand Guignol mode of haunting repetition presages the two boys' murders (21/1–4, 24/1–4). They approach the treasure chest, demand the keys—arrogant little king's sons—and malignancy incarnate stands behind them as they look in. On their first visit Vǫlundr is welcoming, talkative (22). On their second visit, the same four lines of their approach to the treasure are repeated—*Kómo til kisto* . . . (24). This time Vǫlundr does not use words—that might make them turn their heads—but silently severs their craning necks. The poet's audience are well warned by repetition here.

The summit of repetition in the poem is Vǫlundr's last speech to Níðuðr. He recites the actions he performed when he killed the boys, just as the poet had narrated them (34, 35, cf. 24). The literal, factual recitation expresses more chillingly than any other way could, the detachment of the killer towards his killings. We may compare the remote calm of Apollo as he skins Marsyas in Titian's painting.

Often linked with the repetition is verbal play with double meanings:

nauðr/nauðir, inner compulsion and external constraint; *vilialauss*, ineffectual will, lack of joy; *opin*, literally opened, figuratively revealed; *vél*; treachery, clever contraption. Other instances of verbal play are not linked with repetition, but lie discreetly within their context: *teygiaz*, stretch out, be tempted (17/1), *sýndiz*, seemed, displayed themselves (21/6), *ǫgurstund*, grievous time, time of the turn of the tide (41/5). For the most part these subtleties spring up within a poetic language of simple style, in which the poet can express a girl's self-betraying *naïveté—Þoriga ek at segia, / nema þér einom* (26/5–6)—and vary the dramatic tones for Vǫlundr when he authoritatively organizes the boys' second visit—*ykr læt ek þat gull / um gefit verða*—and its secrecy—*Segiða meyiom / né salþióðom, / manne øngom* . . .—and when he unctuously soothes Bǫðvildr's fears—'father will think the ring far fairer, and mother will think it much better'—as if talking to a very little girl (22, 27). While the poet will make a rare, exotic word stand out in context—*En ór augom / iarknasteina*—he seems to have little use for traditional poetic diction. *Drósir* and *fira* (1/7, 2/3) are probably used with specific intent (see commentary ad loc.). That Níðuðr's men should be dignified with the heroic appellations *iǫfrar* and *rekkar* (13/1, 29/4), may well be an ironic comment on their valour, which requires a multitude to chain and maim one man.

E. Metrical notes

As in *Rígsþula*, the ancient popular oral tradition of alliterating on finite verbs is well developed, occurring more than thirty times in forty-one stanzas:

> Þær á sævar strǫnd
> settuz at hvílaz . . .
> Kell mik í hǫfuð
> —kǫld ero mér ráð þín.

Frequently too the verb contributes to the alliteration quite freely:

> Bar hann hana bióri,
> þvíat hann betr kunni . . .
> sló hann brióstkringlor,
> sendi Bǫðvildi.

More rarely, the convention that the first stressed syllable in the b-line should bear the alliteration is neglected, and the last stressed syllable alliterates:

þótt vér kván eigim,
þá er þér kunnið . . .
Gakk þú til smiðio,
þeirar er þu gørðir.

Here the forceful rhythms of colloquial argument seem to take over. Compare the excellent use of this divergent metrical pattern (where an adverb bears the allliteration) in 38/3–4:

en ókátr Níðuðr
sat þá epter.

The delayed alliterating stress makes him seem even more abandoned. The distinction between a- and b-lines is not strictly observed if instinctive expression suggests otherwise (or so it would seem).

Some lines in the poem are metrically short in their MS. form, because in the language of the thirteenth century MS. (*a*) contraction of vowels in hiatus has already occurred, e.g. *sáoz*, 'they saw', *téit* 'shown', have become *sáz*, *tét*, and (*b*) where two vowels remain in hiatus, e.g. *híu*, 'household', *Kíarr*, the first becomes consonantal and the second is lengthened—*hiú*, *Kiárr*—so conforming to the pattern of development of original diphthongs. So words in the poem originally disyllabic are now written as monosyllables.[71] If we allow for this change, there remain few lines in the poem technically short.[72]

Excursus: Vǫlundr and Cardillac

In seeking analogues for the legend of Vǫlundr, I remembered that of the goldsmith Cardillac in Hindemith's opera. The source of the opera's two libretti was Hoffmann's long tale, *Das Fräulein von Scuderi*, set in the Paris of Louis XIV. Readers of *Vǫlundarkviða*, who also read *Das Fräulein von Scuderi*, may be struck by certain echoes of the poem in the prose tale. Hoffmann finished the first sketch of his tale in 1818; it first appeared in print in 1820.[73] The first German translation of *Vǫlundarkviða* (by Prof. Gräter) was published in 1812.[74]

In no earlier version of *Das Fräulein von Scuderi* is the nocturnal terror on

[71] See Norreen §§ 130, 133 b2.

[72] Cf. 12/4, 31/2: *vilialauss*; perhaps 17/9: *sina magni*, see textual note; 21/7: *at væri gull rautt*.

[73] I am indebted for the information on the libretti of *Cardillac* and their known sources to Schilling esp. 16–24. My references to the text of *Das Fräulein von Scuderi* are to *E. T. A. Hoffmanns sämtliche Werke*. Musicologists may well be aware of *Cardillac*'s debt to *Vkv*, but I have not yet found any statement about it.

[74] There are some obvious mistakes in this early translation (e.g. of 17/1, 6, 19/3–4, 24/3), but I do not think they affect the issue.

the streets of Paris caused by a goldsmith, but by a cutpurse and his gang (thieves, but not murderers). In an analogue which is thought to have influenced Hoffmann, a shoemaker of Venice murders and steals by night to gather money for his patron saint.

Critics acknowledge that the character of Cardillac must be Hoffmann's own invention. He was well read in psychology, deeply interested in pathological conditions of the mind, especially the mind of the creative artist. It is no slur upon Hoffmann's originality to suggest that he was inspired by the elvish smith of *Das Lied von dem finnischen Königssohn Wölunder* to make his murderer a genius goldsmith: that he found in the Nordic hero the demonic creativity, possessive obsession, 'Brutalität und Empfindlichkeit' (Schneider's phrase[75]), which he studied in human nature in his own writings.

I note briefly the main moments in Hoffmann's tale which recall lines of *Vǫlundarkviða*.

Cardillac, highly revered as a supreme genius in his craft and as an honest citizen, was by night a thief and murderer, stealing back the masterpieces he had just made and stabbing their new owner. Had people taken note of the strange glance of his 'small, deep-set, green-glinting eyes', they might have suspected in him 'secret spite and malignity' (154–5). We may compare *Vǫlundarkviða* 17, when the queen sees from his snake-like eyes Vǫlundr's evil will. The German text of the stanza reads:

'Ihm nässen gewiss	*'His teeth truly*
Die Zähne drob,	*salivate at the sight,*
Sieht er das Schwert	*if he sees the sword*
An deinen Lenden	*at your side*
Und an Bodwilden	*and on Bǫðvildr*
Den rothen Ring!'	*the red ring!'*
Da ward ihm ein Auge	*Then his eye became that*
Der hässlichsten Schlange:	*of the most hateful snake:*
'Reisst ihm entzwei	*'Tear asunder*
Die starken Sehnen . . .	*his strong sinews . . .'*

Every commission that came to him Cardillac began with burning zeal and delight: 'The work gave him no rest, day and night people heard him hammering in his workshop' (155). Three stanzas, *Vǫlundarkviða* 6, 11, 19, show Vǫlundr intent upon his work or counting the rings, always in an

[75] Schneider II. ii. 75. Schneider's discussion of *Vkv* has many fine insights. Hoffmann characteristically invents a gruseome physical–psychological cause for the murderous avarice of Cardillac. When his mother is pregnant, she is fascinated by the jewelled chain worn by a man she once loved. As she reaches to feel the jewels, the man falls dead. This prenatal experience marks Cardillac for life.

atmosphere of suspense, either waiting for his wife's return, or working out his vengeance. Stanza 19 reads in the German text:

Er sass und schlief nicht viel,	*He sat and slept little,*
Doch schlug er mit seinem	*but smote with his*
Hammer gut,	*hammer well,*
Und machte, was seinem	*and made what pleased*
Herrn gefiel.	*his master.*

But as soon as the work was done—and with great reluctance yielded up—Cardillac could not suppress the 'most profound sense of resentment, an inner fury seething in him' (155). He became inconsolable, haunted, as he confesses: 'Day and night the person for whom I laboured stood like a ghost before my eyes, adorned with my handiwork, and a voice whispered in my ears—"It is yours, yours—take it then—what have diamonds to do with the dead!"' (183). For Cardillac's fury of resentment, we have the parallel of *Vǫlundarkviða* 18, very simply rendered:

'An Niduders Gürtel	*'At Níðuðr's belt*
Glänzt ein Schwert,	*gleams a sword,*
Das hatt' ich aufs beste	*that I had in the finest way*
Gewetzet mir,	*whetted for myself,*
Das hatt' ich aufs beste	*that I had in the finest way*
Gehärtet mir!	*hardened for myself!*
Und nun ists nimmer,	*And now it is never,*
Nimmer mehr hier!	*nevermore here!*
Und meines Weibes	*And my wife's*
Rothen Ring	*red ring*
Trägt nun Niduders	*Níðuðr's daughter*
Tochter vor mir!	*now wears before my eyes!*
Mir aber, aber	*But for me, but for me*
Wird nichts dafür!'	*there is nothing in return!'*

And for the ghostly figure that stands beside Cardillac, could we be indebted to Vǫlundr's haunting conviction that his wife will return—has returned—for her ring (stanzas 6, 11)? The German text here reads:

Schmelzt rothes Gold,	*Smelts red gold,*
Und schmiedet drunter	*and sets within it*
Edelgestein,	*precious gems,*
Und nimmt die Ringe	*and takes the rings,*
Und schliesst sie ein.	*and closes them.*
So harrt' er seines	*So he waited for his*
Weibes hier!	*wife here!*
O käm die Schöne	*O might the lovely one come*
Zurück zu mir!...	*back to me!...*

Nimmt seine Ringe,	*Takes his rings,*
Und zählet sie,	*and counts them,*
Doch Einen darunter	*yet one from among them*
Trifft er nie!	*he never finds!*
Wär' Chlodwers Tochter	*Could Hlǫðver's daughter*
(So fällt ihm ein!)	*(so the thought strikes him!)*
Alwitra, die junge,	*Alvítr, the young one,*
Wieder daheim?	*be home again?*

The smith's delighted image of his wife's return and her (to him symbolic) retaking of the ring he made for her, has been transformed for Cardillac into the hated image of the one who has bereaved him of his precious handiwork.

Now for Cardillac it is not enough to steal back his masterpieces: he must also kill: 'I projected an unspeakable hatred on to the persons for whom I had made the jewellery. In the depths of my being a desire to murder stirred against them, before which I myself shuddered' (183). Here Cardillac is human, in a way that Vǫlundr is not. But Vǫlundr's swift instinct to murder the two boys who covet his treasure (*Vǫlundarkviða* 24 – 25/4) has its reflection in the hatred that rises in Cardillac:

Sie kamen zu Kiste,	*They came to the coffer,*
Fordern den Schlüssel	*demanded the key,*
Flugs stand sie offen,	*straightway it stood open,*
Da sah'n sie 'rein.	*they saw then inside.*
Und beiden schlug er	*And he struck from both of them*
Das Haupt vom Rumpfe;	*the head from the body;*
Den aber grub er	*but the body he buried*
Zu seinen Füssen ein.	*in at his feet.*

When Cardillac had stabbed his victim and recovered his jewels—*der Schmuck ist mein!*—he feels 'a peace, a satisfaction in [his] soul, as at no other time' (184). Such is the peace in Vǫlundr's soul, when he has perfected his revenge and calmly recites his deeds to the writhing king.

Though many subtleties in the Norse text could not be rendered in translations, the force of the original poem has still been felt, and emulated, by Hoffmann and García Márquez,[76] in different ways: the one using its violence, the other its gentleness.

There is perhaps more to be discovered about the relationship of Vǫlundr and Cardillac, which a close examination of the many literary versions of the story after Hoffmann's would reveal. I can here only point to certain motifs that appear in *Vǫlundarkviða* and in Hindemith's first libretto, by Ferdinand Lion,[77] but do not appear in Hoffmann. No

[76] See *Vkv Introd* 1 and n. 5 [77] Paul Hindemith, *Cardillac*.

audience watching the opera will ever forget the image of murderous flight as Cardillac—*eine schwarze, maskierte Gestalt*—enters the window of the lovers' room to snatch his jewelled treasure and stab the Kavalier to death, and then, his black cloak spreading like wings—*Mantel gespreizt wie Flügel*—storms back through the window like a bird of prey—*Raubvogelhafte Flucht des Mörders*—at the end of Act I. This image of menace from the air dominates the first chorus—'A murderer—hidden—Where?—In the air, with a miraculous mantle—flying, flying in the wind', and becomes even more explicit in the Lady's report (Scene 3) of the murdering thief's procedure: 'He steals the jewel and—like a vulture vanishing into the sky—*wie ein Geier, verschwindend in die Höhe*—makes off with it'. Hoffmann does not introduce the image of flight for his murderer, though *Vǫlundarkviða* does. When the King visits Cardillac's smithy, in the opera (Scene 11), the goldsmith is in anguish, fearing to lose his treasures, pacing to and fro like a beast of prey—*geht wie ein Raubtier auf und ab*. We are reminded of the snarling chained creature of *Vǫlundarkviða* 16 – 17; there is no comparable scene in the King's presence in Hoffmann. Among the treasures shown to the King are a ring set with a jewel and a deep-curved bowl: treasures that can be matched in *Vǫlundarkviða* (6, 25), but not in Hoffmann. All these touches of likeness, taken together, suggest that the parallels between *Vǫlundarkviða* and Hoffmann's tale of Cardillac had been noted by another German writer, or writers, and that those perceptions were used to increase the tension of Hindemith's drama.

COMMENTARY ON THE TEXT

1/1 *Meyiar flugo*: only here in the Poetic Edda are maidens expressly said to fly (I exclude the flying troll women, *gífr fliúgandi*, of *Vsp* H 44, and the fence-riding witches, *túnriðor*, of *Háv* 155, who hover in the air, *leika lopti á*). The reference to *svanfiaðrar*, 2/6, is the only indication that they are swan maidens (on *alvítr*, 1/3, 3/9, as a possible replacement for a form of *álptir*, 'swans', in an older text, see commentary to 1/3 5). It is important to note that the swan maidens of *Vkv* are not valkyries, although the prose prologue calls them so with great confidence. This misconstruction has led to textual interference in 15/5–8 (see commentary ad loc.) and unfounded interpretations of the poem (see Hauck § 6). That the swan maidens of *Vkv* should have been identified as valkyries is not surprising, (*a*) because they are, like the valkyrie heroines Sigrún and Sváva (*HH* I and II and *HHv*), lovers who choose their own men (I would suspect that it was indeed on the model of Sigrún and Sváva, or their prototypes, that the poet designed his swan maidens' untraditional behaviour in this respect: see *Vkv Introd* II. A. 1), and (*b*) because, like valkyries, they are airborne. Valkyries in their human shape are never said to fly. In the Helgi lays the proud baroque image of the sky-trotting horsewomen is paramount: they are the daughters of kings, riding in armour above land and sea, to defend their heroes and their ships from the air (*HH* I 15, 30; in *HHv* 26 – 8 a cavalcade of twenty-seven *meyiar* passes above valleys and high forests), but neither they nor their horses are winged (in *HH* I 54/6 *sárvítr flugo*, 'wound-creatures flew', refers not to Sigrún and her helmed girls, *hiálmvítr*, descending from the sky, but to the birds of prey alighting on the wounds of the slain, *HH* I 54/7–8; *sár* is a common element in raven kennings, but never used for valkyries; Meissner (*b*), 119–21, 396–8).

As well as the aristocratic mounted valkyrie there is the more sinister winged crow valkyrie, the clone of Freyja in her *fiaðrhamr*, 'feather body-garment' (which she lent to Loki to take him to the chthonic realm of the giants, *Prym* 5, 9), who is usually supernatural in origin (see commentary to *Ríg* 48/1). In one of the oldest OE poems, *Exodus* 164, the bird of prey is called *wonn wælcēasega*, 'dark slaughter-picking one', a play on the traditional term *wælcyrige* (earliest found in OE glossing Bellona, the Furies, etc.; see BT s.v., and Meaney (*b*), 34–5, nn. 43–7). The two valkyrie images, of horsewoman and carrion bird, meet in the portrayal of Sigrún in *HH* I and II: she rides through the air to haunt Helgi's battles, but when she embraces his corpse, still living to her, she identifies with the carrion birds, rejoicing 'like Óðinn's hawks' when they scent warm slaughter (*HH* II 43). Such a character bears little relationship to the swan maidens.

I know of only one instance when a valkyrie also appears as a swan. In a post-Eddic text the valkyrie Kára, sweetheart of one Helgi *inn frækni*, 'the bold', hovers in swan's guise over Helgi in battle, uttering magical cries that sap the resistance of his enemies (see the 14 c. *rímur*, *Griplur* IV, stanzas 24, 43, 58). In tragic burlesque

Helgi wields his sword so high that he severs her leg: she falls to the ground and dies—*kraup hun niðr að velli og dó*. A lay of Kára Hálfdanardóttir, reincarnation of Sigrún, loved by Helgi Haddingjaskati, reincarnation of Helgi Hundingsbani, is referred to in the prose epilogue to *HH* II, but she is not there said to be a swan maiden (see U. Brown 65–71). In the *Griplur* the swan motif has been imposed upon traditions of Kára Hálfdanardóttir, just as in the course of transmission of *Vkv* the motif of royal valkyrie fathers has been imposed upon the swan maidens (in 11/6, 15/5–8).

If we need a final argument against the identification of the swan maidens in *Vkv* as valkyries, it must be that valkyries do *not* leave their lover-husbands. They would regard the behaviour of the swan maidens as quite improper.

1/2 *Myrkvið*: the place-name of the great barrier forest of ancient Europe is appropriate here (cf. 3/8), as the girls in their migratory flight are crossing the boundary of the southern world—*drósir suðrœnar*—to reach the north (cf. *Akv* 3/4 and commentary, *Lks* 42/5).

1/3 *alvítr*: a rare term, difficult to place philologically. It occurs only (*a*) in *Vkv* (as pl. 1/3, 3/9, as sg. 11/7, prologue 7, 9), always of the swan maidens, and (*b*) in *HH* II 26/2 of the valkyrie Sigrún. It is commonly identified with the even rarer OE gen. pl. *ælwihta* in *Beowulf* 1500: *ælwihta eard*, 'homeland of otherworld creatures' (referring to Grendel's monster-filled mere). It reappears in late ME (*The Towneley Plays* 13/202 (I. 132)): *two all-wyghtys*, 'two unearthly beings' (in a comical spooky scene). This reappearance in a popular context suggests that OE *ælwiht*, though rare in written texts, had a long colloquial career. Indeed, it seems to me possible that OE *ælwiht* may have been so rooted in OE superstition that it was 'converted' in early Christian times into a Christian cliché, frequently found in verse, *eallwihta*, 'of all creatures' (always in gen. pl. after a name for God, 'Lord of all beings', and not restricted to angels and spirits, as Hofmann § 180 suggests; see Grein s.v. *ealwihte* for varying forms of the prefix). OE *eallwihta* is the only OE compound in *eall-*, 'all', where 'all' functions adjectivally rather than adverbially, except (I think) *ealneg*, 'always', and *ealmægen*, which is influenced by *omnipotentia*. There is no Latin word similarly underlying *eallwihta*. If ON *alvítr* is a borrowing of OE *ælwiht*, it may have been the borrowing of a common, not a rare, heathen term. There is no analogous term in OHG or OS records from which *alvítr* might derive.

The relationship of ON *alvítr* and OE *ælwiht* is not linguistically straightforward:

1. The prefix *alja-*, 'other' (Norw runic **aljamarkiʀ**, 'one from another region', cf. *AEW* s.v.; Gothic *aljakuns*, 'of foreign ancestry'), commonly shows *i/j*-mutation (ON *elligar*, 'otherwise', OE *elþīod*, 'foreign people'). Were the ON *alvítr* a native formation, rather than a borrowing from OE, the lack of *j*-mutation would be attributable to shortening of **alja-* to **ali-* and regular lack of *i*-mutation in a short syllable (cf. **Harjawaldaʀ* > **Hariwaldaʀ* > *Haraldr*; Noreen § 69, 66. 2). In OE, forms both with and without *i*-mutation occur: *elþīod* beside *ælþēod*, *ælwihta* etc.: *i*-mutation sometimes failed to take place owing to early syncopation in compound words (Campbell (*a*) § 204 (1)). The ON *alvítr* is readily explicable as a borrowing of an OE form which lacks *i*-mutation (as do both occurrences of the English word, *ælwihta* and *all-wyghtys*).

2. The regular ON equivalent of OE *wiht* (an *i*-stem fluctuating between fem. and neut. forms; Campbell (*a*) § 609) is *véttr*, *vættr* (with assimilation of *ht* to *tt*, lengthening and lowering of *i*). According to Noreen § 110. 3, lowering of *í* to *é/æ* would be prevented when *i* or *u* followed: a stem *vítt-* might therefore arise in the nom., acc. sg. and pl. in the paradigm of the fem. *i*-stems to which *véttr/vættr* commonly conforms (cf. OHG *uuihtir*, 'animalia'), before levelling of the stem-vowel from unmutated cases occurred (Noreen §§ 67, 392). The forms Noreen frequently cites, *vít(t)r*, *víttir*, do not, however, occur as such, but can be traced in compounds (*a*) as *-vítr* in *alvítr*, *fólkvítr*, *hjálmvítr*, *sárvítr* (see below), and (*b*) as *-vitna* gen. pl. in *hvatvitna*, 'anything whatever', *hvarvitna*, 'everywhere' (with short vowel because of position; Noreen § 65; Seip 153; Vigfússon s.v. *hvat-vetna*, *-vitna*. The adv. *eyvit*, 'not at all', might here be included, Vigfússon s.v.). On the simplification of *tt* to *t* before a consonant see Noreen §§ 267, 284.

3. Two of the forms in *-vítr* occur as sg.: *alvítr*, *Vkv* 10/7, *HH* II 26/2; *fólkvítr*, *Fáf* 43/2. Three occur as pl.: *alvítr*, *Vkv* 1/3, 3/9; *hiálmvítr*, *sárvítr*, *HH* I 54/2, 6. To what declension can *-vítr* belong? The nom. sg. form in *-r* relates *-vítr* to the fem. *i*-declension. Because of levelling with the fem. *ō*-stems only a few fem. nom. sg. forms in *-r* remain (e.g. *brúðr*, *nauðr*, *vættr*; Noreen § 390. 1). The nom. pl. form in *-r* relates *-vítr* to the consonant-stem declension (cf. pl. *merkr*, *nætr* < **nættr*; Noreen notes that the link of *-vítr* with the consonant-stems is exceptional, §§ 390. 1, 416). This declension originally also had nom. fem. sg. in *-r* (as in masc. *fótr*), but, because of levelling, only a few instances remain: (*a*) where the stem ends in a vowel (e.g. *kýr*, *sýr*, *ær*, showing *ʀ*-mutation), and (*b*) ONorw *elptr*, 'swan' (OIcel *ǫlpt*), showing i-mutation in nom. sg. not characteristic of consonant-stems, which Noreen § 416. 1 relates to *jō*-stem influence; no nom. pl. **elptr* is recorded.

4. It is unlikely that the stem-vowel of *-vítr* is short, or has been shortened (as represented in many editions). All consonant-stems have a long root syllable; *-vítr* would only have been associated with that declension if *í* were long. In the Eddic compounds *-vítr* appears to have been a significant formative element, always referring to a feminine being with a supernatural side to her. *-vítr* must, therefore, have been recognized as a variant of *véttr/vættr*, 'being (of supernatural or unnatural powers)'; cf. *HHv* 27/4–5: *Var sú* (sc. the valkyrie Sváva) *ein vætr, / er barg ǫðlings skipom?* 'Was it a single (mysterious) being, who saved the prince's ships?'; also pl. *vættir*, 'supernatural beings (kindly or hostile)', *landvættir*, 'land-guarding spirits', *óvættir*, 'evil spirits'; *AR* § 181; *LP* s.vv. I would suppose that the oldest use of *-vítr* in ON (in our extant texts) is in *alvítr* and that this was the basis of the three coinages *hiálm-*, *sár-*, *fólkvítr*.

It is unlikely, as Hofmann § 163 suggests, that the connection between *véttr/vættr* and *-vitr* (*sic*) was no longer recognized because *-vitr* took its short vowel from OE *wiht*. Norse loanwords in OE show that the relationship between ON (**-ht-* >) *-tt-* and OE *-ht-* was perfectly well understood, as well as the different length of the preceding vowel (e.g. *áttr*, OE *saht*, Orm *sahht*, etc.; Noreen § 267). In the close understanding between the two languages there is no reason to think that OE *wiht* might have been misconstrued and given a form in ON that did not render the OE sense.

5. Attempts have been made to relate *alvítr* to the Gmc term for 'swan', e.g. OE *ælbitu*, *yfletu*, OHG *albiz*, *elpiz*, ON *elptr*, *ǫlpt* (based on the root **alƀ-*, 'white'; see *AEW* s.v. *alvitr*; Wadstein 157, 175). It is conceivable that at some stage in this widely travelled poem's history, there may have been confusion of the two terms in Gmc dialects where derivatives of both **alwiht* and **alƀiz* occurred. Formally they can never have been identical, though possibly close enough to give rise to verbal play on the senses 'otherworld being' and 'swan' (especially given the unique declensional similarity between *alvítr* and *elptr*). There is no evidence that such verbal play existed for the poet of the extant *Vkv*.

The linguistic complexities that arise in any attempt to identify the origins of *alvítr* suggest that in *Vkv* it derives from an adaptation of a well-understood OE term for 'otherworld being', and that it was assimilated into Norse before the workings of analogy had removed such forms as *al-*, 'other-', and *vítt-*, 'being', from the ON oral vocabulary,. Neither *al-* nor *vítt-* had any future in the later Norse language, though it has occurred to me that the prefix *al-*, 'alien', 'otherworld', is perhaps to be seen in the 9 c. skaldic *algífris*, *Ragndr* 9/8 (? 'otherworld troll', of the wolf Fenrir, brother of Hel).

ungar: so also 3/9. MS. *unga* is unacceptable as fem. pl. nom., weak or strong; see commentary to 11/5–8.

1/4 *ørlǫg drýgia*: also 3/10; in ON texts *ørlǫg* always signifies 'fate', 'fated acts' (cf. *Lks* 25); *drýgia*, 'to carry out, sustain, live through, endure' is widely used in relation to action, manner of life, obligation, hardship, but never, except in *Vkv*, is it recorded in relation to 'fate'. In OE texts, however, *drēogan* is twice found in association with *orleg*, where the sense of 'fate' is implied: (*a*) in *The Judgement Day* I 29 the sinner *ā to ealdre / orleg drēogeð*, 'will forever endure his fate, destined tribulation (in hell)', and (*b*) in *Solomon and Saturn* 375–6 a mother identifies with the sufferings of her son, *drēogeð / his earfoðu / orlegstunde*, 'lives through his hardships in the fated time' (for the syntax cf. *Christ* 1410). That there was also in OE an idiom similar to *orleg drēogan*, namely **wyrd drēogan*, is suggested by the emergence of ME *to dreȝe* (one's) *wyrdes* (a single instance) and the later, more frequently recorded English and Scottish proverbial phrase *to dree one's weird* (see *OED* s.v. *dree* v. 2 (c); *EDD* s.v. *dree* v. 2 (2); *MED* s.v. *drīen* v. (2) 3 (a), *c.* 1400). Unassociated with *drēogan*, OE *orleg* with the sense 'fate' occurs only once, in *Daniel* 745: the prophet tells Belshazzar *ic . . . orlæg secge, / worda gerȳnu, / þā þū wendan ne miht*, 'I tell your fate, the hidden meaning of the words (on the wall), which you cannot alter'. *Vkv ørlǫg drýgia* and OE *orleg drēogan* no doubt go back to a common Gmc idiom, though preserved in these rare instances with a startling difference of imagination: the OE idiom bears the weight of Christian moralizing, 'fate' being the result of sin, or a synonym for life's wretchedness; in *Vkv* the phrase also has a moral implication, since the swan maidens are bound to obey the law of their nature, their *ørlǫg*, yet they rejoice in the freedom that their *ørlǫg* compels them to: *meyiar fýstoz* (3/7). The 'need'—*nauðr*—to go, when their migratory nature asserts its power over them, and the 'constraint'—*nauðr*—of domestic confinement that makes them rejoice to leave it, are perfectly covered by the single word as the cause of their departure—*nauðr um skilði* (3/6).

In stanza 15, after Vǫlundr's praise of the precious household of brothers, there follow four lines (which I think are interpolated) citing the names of the three wives as daughters of a king and an emperor, whose names belong to the Gmc heroic-historical world. To this world the great valkyries belong—Brynhildr and the brides of Helgi—and for this reason the interpolator has given the three swan wives noble paternity: to give them at least one valkyrie characteristic within the text of the poem (see *Vkv Introd* IV. A). The author of the prologue has emphasized this royal blood, interpreted *ørlǫg drýgia* as if *ørlǫg* implied 'battle', and called the swan maidens valkyries: their escape-flight is their response to the lure of slaughter (*Þá flugo þær at vitia víga*). But nowhere in ON does *ørlǫg* signify 'battle', and *drýgja* is never used of carrying on battle (the instance cited in *LP* s.v. § 2 *d*[*rýgja*] *eggja dolg*, 'pursue the conflict of blades' is an emended text; see *Svarfdœla Saga* 177).

In OE *orlæg*, *orleg*, 'fate', and *orlege*, 'battle', could be confused (see Crozier 8), especially in compounds (e.g. *orleghwīl*, *Beowulf* 2427). But *drēogan* is only once recorded of pursuing combat, and there the term for combat is not *orleg*, but *gewinn* (the wrestling with Grendel, *Beowulf* 789). There would seem to be no instance in OE or ON of an idiom 'to pursue battle' using *drýgja/drēogan* with *ørlǫg* or *ørlygi / orleg* or *orlege*. Neckel proposed an archaic connection between *drýgja* and *ørlygi* on the basis of the warrior kenning *ørlygis draugr* (*Ragndr* 8/8 only), where *draugr*, if etymologically related to *drýgja*, might signify 'sustainer, wager (of battle)' (Neckel (*c*), 189–90; cf. JH *Vkv* 55–6). The uncertainty of the meaning and etymology of *draugr* undermines the usefulness of this suggestion (see the valuable critique of Neckel by Crozier 1–12).

Whatever valkyrie motifs other Norse poets may have attached to tales of swan maidens, it is clear that the poet of *Vkv* did not wish to associate them with battles. The fated compulsions of his swan maidens are rooted in domestic, not martial instincts.

1/5 *á sævar strǫnd*: in analogues the water on which the swan maidens alight is commonly a lake or pond, rather than a sea-shore, and I have translated accordingly; see commentary to 17/10 and Hatto 269–74.

1/7 *drósir*: 'fine gentlewomen', an old poetic *heiti* (ironically used by Eilífr Goðrúnarson for 'giantess': *Hrímnis drós*, *Þórsdr* 17), that is found in later ON prose (e.g. *Alexanders Saga* 70, 152, for imposing allegorical figures: *Ambitio*, *Avaritia*, *Superbia*) and survives in Nynorsk for 'stately (or portly) ladies' (Torp s.v. *drôs*, Hellevik s.v. *drós*). *SnE* 189, *drósir heita þær, er kyrrlátar eru*, 'women of peaceful temperament are called *drósir*', accords well with the etymology commonly proposed for *drós*, relating it to terms implying slowness, leisureliness, heaviness (see *Íslensk orðsifjabók* s.v. for valuable exemplification; also *AEW* s.v., which adds ModE *drowsy*). If *drósir* in *Vkv* belongs to this semantic field, the term is well chosen for the leisured stateliness of swans. It is the only *heiti* for 'woman' in *Vkv*.

1/8 *dýrt lín spunno*: I interpret *lín* as a pointed reference to the bridal veil (cf. *Ríg* 41/4) rather than to linen clothing in general. The three women spinning,

fulfilling their fate, form a tableau of fate at work (by the poet's design; cf. *AR* § 191).

2/2, 5, 10 *Egil . . . Slagfinn . . . Vǫlundar*: see *Vkv Introd* IV. A; *Index of Personal Names*.

2/2 *veria*: cf. *varði*, 2/9. It is noticeable that the poet does not mention the embracing arms of the swan maidens (cf. *Háv* 163/8: *mik armi verr*, '(she who) enfolds me in her arm'); that would have confused the swan image.

2/3 *fira*: on *firar* and its shifting range of reference see commentary to *Vsp* 1/7. The poet is holding in suspense the changing image of swan maiden–amorous girl. Therefore I have not translated *mær fira* as 'maiden of mankind', but attempted to render the wider sense of *firar*: of the living beings in the world, she is one that is young and beautiful, whether swan or girl.

2/5–6 *Ǫnnur — dró*: these two sentences in the MS., 'the second was Svanhvít, / she plied/wore swan's wings', break the system of the rest of the stanza. In the case of the first and the third swan maidens, the man's name is given, not the girl's, and each girl is depicted embracing her chosen man. I suggest that there are two scribal errors in line 5, which, when rectified, restore the system: (*a*) MS. 'v^{ar}' is a corruption of MS. 'v̄', by confusion or blurring of the superscript sign; (*b*) MS. 'svan hvít' is a scribal substitute (drawn from 5/4) for an illegible *Slagfinn*. In 2/10 the name *Vǫlundar* is miswritten 'onondar' in the MS. An exemplar has probably been worn or blotted where these two names occurred. As the extant MS. shows (fol. 35, lines 22–4), in the scribe's exemplar the two names could have been nearly one above the other.

The reading *um Slagfinn / svanfiaðrar dró*, 'drew round Slagfiðr her swan's wings', is supported by the figurative phrase *draga fjǫðr um*, 'to conceal' (literally 'to draw a wing over'; cf. *Morkinskinna* 309: *Sigurðr . . . hafði áðr tekit tal við lenda menn, at ekki mundi þurfa lengr at draga fjǫðr um skǫruligt konungs erindi. . . . 'þarf nú ekki lengr yfir þessu at hylma'*, 'Sigurðr had already argued with the landed men, that there was no need to draw a wing any longer over the king's noble purpose. . . . "there is no need any longer to conceal it"'; Fritzner s.v. *fjöðr* § 1. For *fjǫðr* sg., 'wing', cf. *Haustl* 12: *leikblaðs reginn fjaðrar*, 'lord of the wing's soaring leaf' (my rendering) i.e. 'eagle'). In the *Dream of Óengus*, Óengus embraces his betrothed in her swan form (112; see *Vkv Introd* II. A. 1).

It should be noted that the MS. reading *Svanhvít . . . svanfiaðrar dró* is idiomatically unsatisfactory. *Draga* is not elsewhere used of 'plying' wings (cf. *draga árar*, 'to ply oars'), and a sense 'wore' would be borrowed from German usage (see Fritzner s.v. *draga* § 17). *Draga yfir/um* is however idiomatically used in Norse for drawing on clothing or making a covering (cf. *Egil* (1856) 134: *hann hafði dregit hǫtt síðan yfir hjálm*, 'he had drawn a long hood over his helmet').

2/8 *þeira systir*: according to 15/5–8 only two of the wives were born sisters. In 2/8 *systir* might refer to the 'sorority' of friendship of the three (cf. *Hyndl* 1/2–3: *mín vina, / Hyndla systir*, 'my friend, Hyndla my sister', in exaggerated cordiality; *HH* II 7/3–4: *gǫgl . . . Gunnar systra*, 'the goslings of Guðr's sisters', i.e. the ravens of the

valkyries; in *Helr* 6/3 the 'eight sisters' are no doubt valkyrie sworn-sisters, but the context is too obscure for us to be certain). In *Vkv*, however, I think it more probable that the three swan sisters were designed to be real sisters by the poet of this stanza, to match the three real brothers, and make the family net more tightly knit. On the discrepancy with 15/5–8 see *Vkv Introd* IV. A.

2/9 *hvítan*: on the elvish brightness of Vǫlundr see *Vkv Introd* II. C.

2/10 *háls*: two OE conventional terms for 'wife', 'consort' refer to the (embracing of the) neck: *healsgebedda*, 'neck-embracing companion of the bed', *Beowulf* 63; *healsmægeð*, 'neck-embracing girl', *Genesis* 2155.

3/2 *siau vetr*: DH note the similar time scheme in the MHG *Kudrun*: the heroine is enslaved in exile for seven years (*siben jâr bevollen / leit si in vremeden rîchen / die grôzen arbeite*, 1021, dusting the benches with her hair, 1019), until the ninth year when Hartmuot returns to wed her (1022; though this is not what she wants).

3/6 *nauðr*, 'oppressive, unavoidable necessity', 'coercion', 'lack of freedom', 'slavery' see Fritzner s.v. *nauð* eller *nauðr* §§ 2, 3; *Norwegian and Icelandic Runic Poems* 8 (Dickins 26, 30, *Skjald* B II. 249); also commentary to 1/4, 12/6).

3/8 *á myrkvan við*: while reference back to *Myrkvið*, 1/2, is clearly intended here, the shift from the place-name to the descriptive phrase is contextually fine: the girls see in the dark edge of forest round them (cf. *ór holti*, 16/8) the sign of the boundary they long to cross. *Myrkvið* 1/2 is geographical, *á myrkvan við* is scenic. Though the variation may be an oral 'accident', this is no good reason for levelling the two terms (as SG suggest). For other narrative adaptations of *Myrkviðr* see *Ríg* 38/2 and commentary, and *Oddr* 25/3 (with echoes of *Akv* 1, 3).

4/2 *veðreygr*: in ON only in *Vkv*. Magnússon, 28–9, notes three senses of *veðreygr* in ModIcel, (*a*) 'with a discerning eye for weather or wind', (*b*) 'with eyes wind-bitten, smarting from the weather', (*c*) 'with eyes glancing warily from side to side' (as in nervous horses; *veðr* here being figurative). All three senses could be relevant in *Vkv*. Cf. the ModE idiom 'keeping a weather-eye open', i.e. watching which way the wind blows (figuratively), bringing opportunity or danger; OED s.v. *weather* sb. 8; Fritzner s.v. *veðr* § 1.

skyti: here the quasi-gnomic singular is designed for refrain-like repetition in 10/1–2. It might well be, also, that brothers in real life would go as lone hunters, to increase their range of luck. Now each comes homing back as the clouds gather. To insert into the text here lines 3–4 of stanza 10, so that *skyti* now refers only to Vǫlundr's return (as SG, JH *Vkv* suggest), would destroy the poet's construction. He has not mentioned Vǫlundr in this stanza because his reaction to the wife-deserted house is different from that of his brothers: his 'difference' is seen with full force at the end of the next stanza (5/5–6), in the wake of their departure.

5/1 *skreið*, 'glided' on snowshoes or skis; *skríða* is idiomatic for the motion of snakes, skis, ships. In the prologue the three brothers are said to be Lapps (see *Vkv Introd* III. C): the Lapps were proverbial for the vast distances they rapidly covered on skis (cf. 10/3–4: *líðandi / um langan veg*; also the comprehensive gnomic terms of outlawry in the *Trygðamál*, *Grágás* I. 206: 'outlawed as far as . . . earth grows, . . . Lapp skis (*Fiðr skríðr*), . . . falcon flies'. Procopius VI. XV. 16 names the Lapps as *Σκριθίφινοι*).

That the two brothers leave on skis, suggests that the girls have flown as winter comes.

5/2, 4 *Ǫlrún, . . . Svanhvít*: on these names see *Vkv Introd* IV. A; *Index of Personal Names*.

5/6 *Úlfdǫlom*: as JH *Vkv* notes, *Vǫlundr* would alliterate with *Úlfdǫlom* before assimilation of initial *v-*, as the names would also in OE. The place-name is designed to fit his personality in this legend (cf. 16, 17) and emphasize his characteristic, outlaw-like isolation (see *Vkv Introd* II. B). For *Ulvedalen* as a farm name in Norway see Rygh I. 312, XII. 280.

6/1–6 Here there are three substantial uncertainties: (*a*) 6/2 *fastan*, (*b*) 6/4 *lindbauga*, (*c*) 6/6 *hánom koma gerði*. The narrative facts, however, seem clear: (*a*) Vǫlundr is forging jewellery, in which gold is hammered round a precious stone, (*b*) he is making closed rings, which could be strung upon a bast cord, as in 8/5–6, (*c*) he is doing this while he waits for his wife to return.

The first uncertainty I would determine as simply as possible, taking *fastan* as masc. acc. adj. qualifying *gim*, 'jewel', (a nonce loanword from OE *gim* masc.; see *Vkv Introd* III. A. 3). The gem could be described as *fastr* (i) because it was tightly held by the gold hammered round it (cf. *Elene* 264–5: *sincgim locen . . . hlāfordes gifu*, 'treasure-gem closed in (with gold) . . . a lord's gift'), and/or (ii) because it was made firm by resin or cement (as are garnets in cloisonné work, cf. Arrhenius ch. 6). There is no evidence to support a reading *fástan* as superlative of *-fár* (OE *fāh*, OHG *fēh*) 'brightly coloured', 'stained'. There is no certain instance of the uncompounded positive adj. *fár* in ON (cf. *Skm* 23/2), and no recorded instance of the superlative in any Gmc language (cf. Gothic *filu-faihs* 'very variegated', Feist s.v.). The accent in MS. 'fástan' is not necessarily significant, cf. 'liosár', 6/5. A reading *fastan* adv., 'hard', 'energetically', would have no parallel, and would be unfitting for the making of a delicate ring.

For *lindbauga* hap. leg. I choose an interpretation that again relates to the smith's procedure: he now closes the ring's metal circle to hang on the cord. So *lindbauga* would mean 'linden-rings', 'rings for the linden(-bast) cord' (cf. 8/5–6). *Lind* for 'linden-bast' is, however, not elsewhere recorded in ON, though *lindi*, 'belt', is thought to be so called from the plaited linden-bast of which it was made (*AEW* s.v. *lindi* I; note also English dialect *linder*, 'to tie up', *linderins*, 'ropes', *EDD* s.vv.). Emendation to *linnbauga*, 'snake-rings', (otherwise unattested) is no improvement on retaining *lindbauga*: *linnr* is not elsewhere used descriptively in a ring kenning (e.g. 'ring with a snake depicted on it' or 'ring like a snake'), but only as a substitute

for *baugr* itself (so *armlinnr* is 'snake of the arm', i.e. 'bracelet'). DH (284) effectively (I think) dismiss the interpretation of 6/3–4 by which *lukði* would refer to the enclosing of the rings on or by the bast cord (see SG), pointing out that *lykia* in this sense does not occur elsewhere, to their knowledge, and that only the interpretation 'to close the circle of the ring itself' is valid (see Fritzner s.v. *lykja*).

In 6/6 the wording of the MS. is unidiomatic. JH *Vkv* suggests reading *hón um* for MS. 'h^{an}ō' (which only adds another pleonasm to the line, cf. *koma gerði*). One might supply *fyr* (MS. 'f^{yr}') before *hanom*, as possible haplography after *ef*: 'if, for his sake, she might come'. In some of the swan maiden tales the wife comes back, though for her children rather than her husband (Hatto 270, 272). I have read 6/5–6 as two extended lines, expressing the *longeur* of Vǫlundr's waiting (cf. the sleepless length of 19/1). They cannot be read as four lines as they stand, but they might be a patchwork based on four badly remembered, or barely legible, lines.

7/1 *spyrr*: in the narrative stanzas the present tense occurs only here and in [16/1], 30/1.

Níðuðr: see *Index of Personal Names*.

7/2 *Niára*: the name and location of this people have not been identified. The author of the prose prologue places Níðuðr in Sweden. JH *Vkv* suggests that he may have identified the name *Niarar* (*Niárar* is metrically preferable) with a district in Sweden, ON *Næríki* (modern *Närke*), but etymologically there can be no connection (see the excellent note in SG).

7/6 *Negldar vóro brynior*: 'nailed corslets', i.e. most probably chain mail corslets with rivets or 'nails' fastening together all or some of the chain-rings; Shetelig and Falk note (403–4) of one mailcoat from a Danish bog that 'all the rings were riveted with bronze, which must have given the corslet a handsome appearance' (prominent, perhaps, in moonlight). Alternatively *negldar* might refer to nailed-on metal plaques or 'scales' upon leathern corslets: a style characteristic of nomadic warriors of the steppes, such as the Sarmatians (used in Europe as Roman troops until the 5 c.; see *Entre Asie et Europe*, esp. 118–24 and illustrations 3, 26, 34, 35, 36, 37. DH have a valuable note).

7/7–8 *skildir — mána*: compare the baleful implications of the moon shining upon armed enemies in *Finnesburg* 7–10.

skarða, 'cut away', 'diminished', i.e. waning, not (as Vigfússon says) crescent.

8/2–4 *at salar gafli — endlangan sal*: I take this to mean that the horsemen dismounted and entered by the door in the gable end of the house and from there—*þaðan*—walked in down the length of the building. The alternatives of DH, SG hardly seem justified.

8/7 *allra*: though sg. adverbial gen. *alls*, 'in all', is common, pl. *allra* in the same sense is not (cf. *LP* s.v. *allr* § 3); perhaps the construction is to be read: 'rings on the

rope, the seven hundred—i.e. the total number—of all that the man owned' (see SG).

9/3 *einn*: I assume that they chose to steal the loveliest ring, meant for his wife, perhaps the only one set with a jewel (cf. 6/1–2; *Vkv Introd* II.J).

10/5–6 *Gekk — steikia*: the MS. presents a clumsy text which barely makes sense. It is improved if we supply a word before *hold*, so that *brúnni* and *bero* belong to the same metrical phrase, having an adverbial, rather than possessive sense: 'flesh on, from, the brown she-bear' (cf. *Sigsk* 32/5–6: *sæir bræðr þínom / blóðugt sár*, 'should see on your brother a bleeding wound'; DH). To give alliteration and suggest the freshness of newly killed meat I supply *biart*, 'bright', 'shining'; cf. *Fáf* 32/7–8, where the newly excised heart of Fáfnir is called *fiǫrsega fránan*, 'gleaming life-clot'. The bleeding track of wounds is described in terms of 'brightness' by Sigvatr (*Erfidrápa* 8: *í bjarta blóðrǫst*, 'in the bright [implying also 'holy'] course of blood'), and by Bragi (*Ragndr* 6, *bláserkjar birkis . . . fagrgǫtu*, 'shining track of the sword, the corselet's birch').

10/7 *Ár*: MS. *hár* does not alliterate or provide the required adverb. For *ár*, 'promptly' (a sense developed perhaps from *ár*, 'early in the day', cf. *Skm* 27/2) there are few parallels, cf. *Gísl* 105 v. 32/3–4: *ár þótt eigi værak / andaðr*, 'though I did not die at once, as soon as I might have' (the interpretation of *ár* as 'swiftly' in Hofgarða-Refr 2: 1/8, *Skjald* B I. 295, is not accepted in *Hkr* II. 382 v. 153).

10/10 *fyr Vǫlundi*: both 'for' him and 'before' him, as he tends it and cooks. As a smith he is master of fire.

11/1 *Sat á berfialli*: I take this to be a picturesque insight into a Lappish huntsman's life, as he sits on the warm fur-skin of one of the bears he has killed. That there might be behind the image some reminiscence or allusion relating to the shamanic practice of sitting on a hide or cloth before shamanizing, is not unlikely (see Tolley (*a*), 455), but the poet does not seem to imply any shamanic element in Vǫlundr's behaviour here. The counting of the rings has no divinatory purpose—it simply shows that one ring is missing. This makes Vǫlundr dream and sleep, waiting for his wife to come to him. I think we could say that the poet may have had in mind images of shamanic practices, which he deliberately used for his own naturalistic purposes in the portrayal of a deserted husband: the intense willing for the return of the loved wife, in the fingering and counting of her rings, the sharp—though mistaken—intuition of her presence, the heavy, trance-like sleep and the grievous awakening (shamanic analogies that Tolley notes, (*a*), 455–6).

11/3 *álfa lióði*: see *Vkv Introd* II.C. *Lióði* occurs nowhere else in ON. There are two possible interpretations:

1. 'Man belonging to a certain people', a regular formation based on ON *ljóðr*, 'people' (as ON *landi*, 'fellow countryman', is based on *land*, and as OE *lēoda*, 'compatriot', is based on *lēod* fem., 'people'). If *lióði* were a Norse equivalent, or borrowing, of OE *lēoda*, Vǫlundr would be 'compatriot of elves' (cf. JH *Vkv* 62).

I am not very happy with this interpretation, because *ljóðr* is a quite rare poetic word found only in the *heiti* following *Skáldskaparmál*: *Lýðr heitir landfólk eða ljóðr* (*SnE* 188), and in the phrase *ljóða læ*, 'peoples' treachery', in a verse of Þórðr Kolbeinsson (*Skjald* B I. 202; *Hkr* I. 300, *vísa* 144), and in three poetic compounds (*a*) *ljóðfrǫmuðr*, 'advancer of his people' (Eiríkr blóðøx) *Arinbjarnarkviða* 4, (*b*) *ljóðmegir*, 'men of his people' (Hákon's soldiers), *Hákonarmál* 4, (*c*) *ljóðheimar*, 'realms of men', *Gróug* 2. (In prose *ljóðbiskup* is a borrowing from OE *lēodbisceop*; Fritzner s.v.). Nor are elves in any record I know associated with the term 'people' (*ljóðr*, *lēod*) in ON or OE, but rather with 'kin' (cf. *Fáf* 13: *nornir . . . álfkungar*, 'norns of elvish race'; OE *Leechdoms* II. 344. 7: *Wyrc sealfe wið ælfcynne*, 'make an ointment to protect from the elf-race').

2. 'Foremost man', 'leader', 'prince', an adaptation in ON philological terms of the OE poetic usage of *lēod* masc., 'compatriot', to signify 'prince' when followed by the name of a people in gen. pl. (Grein s.v. *lēod*; Klaeber, 129, would reject the sense 'prince' here). While in prose OE *lēod* masc. and its variants *lēoda*, *gelēod* are rare in the sg. (occurring mainly in laws and compounds, e.g. *landlēod*; cf. BT and *Suppl.* s.vv.), in poetry OE *lēod* masc. sg. with a defining gen. pl. is quite frequent and is carried on from pre-Christian idiom into Christian texts. *Lēod* is nine times used of Beowulf as leader of Geats, and once directly equated with 'king': *Hiorogār cyning, / lēod Scyldinga* (*Beowulf* 2158–9). In *Genesis* 2163–4 Abraham is *se hālga . . . / Ebrēa lēod*, 'holy chief of the Hebrews'. If OE verses on Weland were known to a Norse poet (see *Vkv Introd* III.A. 3) they *could* have contained a phrase **ælfa lēod*.

That a term *lióði* 'compatriot' should have been specially formed from a rare Norse stem or borrowed (in the form *lēoda*) from an OE legal term simply in order to define Vǫlundr as an elf, seems less probable than that a term *lióði*, 'prince', should have been borrowed from OE as a traditional title for the foremost member of a *gens*, a way of marking Vǫlundr's uncanny distinction (later emphasized in *vísi álfa* 14/4, 32/2).

11/5–8 *Hugði — komin*: on *Hlǫðvés dóttir* see *Vkv Introd* IV.A. Are we to suppose that Vǫlundr thinks that his wife is affectionately teasing him, taking the ring to tell him she is there, and then hiding (see *Vkv Introd* I ad loc.), until he seeks her? Yet—as when she first left—he makes no move to seek her.

alvítr unga: a repetition of *alvítr unga* (MS.) 1/3, 3/9, in which *unga* can be accepted as weak fem. nom. sg. (though *ung* would be expected with a common noun).

12/4 *vilialauss*: cf. 31/2 and *Vkv Introd* IV.D. Translation cannot capture the double sense of *vilia-*, 'joy', 'will'.

12/6 *hǫfgar nauðir*: the abstract term *nauðr*, 'necessity', 'oppression' (cf. 3/6 and commentary), is twice recorded in the pl. of physical constraints, accompanied by adjectives that have physical connotations: here, and in *Sigrdr* 1/4: *fǫlvar nauðir*, 'pale [i.e. colourless iron; cf. *fǫlvir oddar*, 'pale spear-points', *HH* I 53/3] bonds', where the reference must be primarily to the chain-mail—*brynio* 1/1—that Sigurðr has cut away—*feldi af* 1/3—from Sigrdrífa. Symbolically the chain-mail represents

the warrior life which is now oppressive to her (and not the sleep of oblivion—*svefni*, 1/2—as Stephens, 372, suggests), because her body now wishes to be wedded: the fearless man has come (it is a Viking adaptation of the 'Loathly Bride' folk-tale). But the chain-mail is still real. We must reckon with the poets' chosen use of *nauðir* in a concrete sense—'chains'—precisely because the abstract connotations of the term accompany it and give it wider echoes. In both ON and OE the pl. forms *nauðir*, *nēde* (*nīede*, *nȳde*) are used with abstract sense ('difficult straits', 'tyranny', 'servitude'; cf. OE poetic compounds e.g. *þēownȳdum*, *þrēanȳdum*; see Grein s.vv.). Like *nauðir*, OE pl. *nēde* is also clearly used of chains in *Andreas* 1377–8, when Satan is reminded that God bound him *in nīedum iū / gefæstnode, / fyrnum clommum*, 'in fetters fastened long ago, in ancient chains' (cf. also *Andreas* 102: *on nearonēdum*, 'in cramping constraints', which (however abstractly we translate them) must refer to physical bonds, because *nearonēdum* is parallel with *leoðobendum*, 'bonds upon the limbs', two lines above, and several times it is emphasized that Matthew and his followers have been tied up, e.g. 48, 130, 184; cf. Stephens 372). Nedoma (*b*), 137–8, does not press his analysis fully home. See *Appendix* and *Vkv Introd* III. A. 3.

13/2–3 *þeir — síma*: the problem here seems insoluble. Our first impression is that Vǫlundr is asking who has placed rope (*síma*) on him and bound him, and that we must try to fit the incomprehensible *besti byr* into this framework. Vǫlundr, however, has not been bound by rope, but by iron (*binda* can be used of fetters, cf. *Heilagra Manna Søgur* I. 227/8: *Martinus . . . batt . . . iárnfesti of fót sér*, 'Martinus bound an iron chain round his foot'; *síma* (neut.) and *símí* (masc.) are only used of rope, twine, cf. *Hárb* 18: *konor . . . ór sandi / síma undo*, 'women twisted rope out of sand'). Could *besti* and *síma* (*a*) conceal a reference to the bast rope with its rings, or (*b*) be a corruption of (a form of) **bezta gørsimi*, '(my) best treasure', with reference to the theft of his jewelled ring (see commentary to 26/3)? Yet how can any reference to the ring fit the phrase *á lǫgðo*, 'placed on', when 'took off' would be expected? Were a reference to bast-bound rings the solution to 13/3 we would need more lines to complete it. In *Deor* the phrase *on legde* has Weland's chains, *nēde*, as its object. The Norse poet refers to this chaining in 12/5–8 and 13/4; would he do so also in 13/2–3? Alternatively, could *á lǫgðo* refer to the placing of a spell of drowsiness upon Vǫlundr (or could it be haplography for *álǫg lǫgðo*, 'placed spells (upon me)'? cf. Fritzner s.v. *álag* § 6, Vigfússon s.v. *álag* II; also in *Hrólf* 42). Though Vǫlundr's falling asleep is depicted as wholly natural—with weariness, warmth, food, and daydreams—it might have seemed malevolent magic to him when he awoke. Even so, 13/3 remains unintelligible.

SG would emend 13/3 to *besting síma*, '(who put) rope on the bear' (i.e. 'bast-bound one'), a metaphorical expression of Vǫlundr's capture, picturing him as a tied bear. *Bestingr* occurs (*a*) in a *þula* of *bjarnar heiti*, *Skjald* B I. 670; (*b*) as part of a snake kenning *gljúfrs bestingr* in a *lausavísa* of 1232, in which the sense 'bear' for *bestingr* is not accepted by modern editors, *Sturl* (*a*) I. 358, 598, (*b*) I. 344; cf. Meissner (*b*), 113 d.

14/3–6 Níðaðr does not answer Vǫlundr's question directly, but gaily counters with one of his own, revealing himself with pointed irony in 'our wealth', 'our land', 14/5, 9.

14/7–10 *Gull — Rínar*: I take Níðuðr's tone to be jocular, as he draws extravagant comparisons between Vǫlundr's gold—so miraculously discovered in his own kingdom—and the legendary hoards that Sigurðr the dragon-slayer rode away with on Grani's back and the Niflung brothers sank in the Rhine (see *Fáf*, with its narrative prose setting, and *Akv* 17, 27).

15/1–4 *Man ek — vórom*: Vǫlundr would seem to be talking aside, to himself, comparing Níðuðr's mercenary concept of riches with his own. Note his other soliloquies, 18, 28/5–8 – 29/1–4.

mæti: Vǫlundr must surely be speaking metaphorically here, referring to the rich contentment of the three couples in their enclosed life (cf. Gísli's nostalgic clinging to the hermetic family: *Saman er brœðra eign bezt at líta*, 'Brothers' lands look best together', *Gísl* 34). Other interpretations suggested for *mæti* (DH, SG, JH *Vkv*) divert attention from the theme of the poem.

15/5–8 *Hlaðguðr — dóttir*: I have taken these lines to be intrusive, as I do not see any evidence that the poet of stanzas 1 to 3 wished his swan maidens to have human connections, such as valkyries have in ON heroic verse (see commentary to 1/3 *alvítr*; *Vkv Introd* IV. A; *Index of Personal Names*. For an attempt to parallel the awkward singular *borin var* see DH).

kunn: I interpret this to fit the context of high birth, and therefore of fame. If allusion is to Ǫlrún's great (? magical) knowledge, the reference might be to the legend of her association with Egill, of which we no longer know the details.

16/1–2 *Úti — Níðaðar*: I have inserted lines 30/1–2 to supply stage directions for the next scene. It is not necessary to suppose that some narrative stanza has been lost before the queen's appearance. Stanza 16 implies that the scene has moved to the king's house, with the queen standing at the entrance, then pacing down the long hall to look more closely at the prisoner brought in from the wilds (see *Vkv Introd* IV. B).

16/6 *stilti*, 'controlled'; she speaks under her breath, so that he shall not hear.

16/7 *hýrr*, 'sociable', 'pleasant', used of docile beasts and obliging prayer-granting saints; etymologically related to *hjú*, 'household', *hjón*, 'wedded pair', and Lat *civis* (see *AEW* s.vv.). In OE *unhēore*, 'not pleasant', is used of monstrous, hostile beings (such as Grendel's mother, *wīf unhȳre*, *Beowulf* 2120).

16/8 *ór holti*: a smith needed to live near a wood to make charcoal for his furnace (cf. *Þiðrek* I. 232, ch. 164).

Prose 16 – 17 The prose is not needed, since it only anticipates the queen's statements in 17/1–4. Stanzas 16 and 17 should be read consecutively.

17/1 *teygiaz*: two senses of *teygja* (Fritzner s.v. §§ 1, 2) are used here: (*a*) literal, 'to stretch out' (limbs, neck, dough: *teygja brauð*), reflexive here 'stretch themselves'; (*b*) figurative, 'to lure out', 'to tempt' (cf. *Sigrdr* 32/4: *mey þú teygiat*, 'do not entice a girl'), passive here 'are tempted'. The queen sarcastically notes that he is so tantalized by the sight of his treasures in others' hands that his teeth—the only part of his body free to attack—are straining forward to snap and bite to get his own precious work back. His snarling teeth confirm for her his beast-like savagery, the impossibility of making him 'domesticated'—*hýrr* (see also JH *Vkv*). There is no reason to suppose a distinct verb *teygja*, 'to display' (his teeth), which occurs nowhere else in ON (SG).

17/2 *er hánom er tét sverð*: lit. 'when before him, in his sight, presence, the sword is displayed'. As DH note, the sword is not being expressly shown to him, rather 'wenn er zufällig das Schwert sieht' is intended.

17/3 *Bǫðvildar*: see *Index of Personal Names*.

17/5–6 *Ámon — frána*: the rare adj. *ámonr/ámunr* (see Noreen § 61. 1) is probably to be related to vb. *muna*, 'to remember, call to mind' (as *áþekkr*, 'recognizable as', 'similar to', is related to vb. *þekkja*, 'to recognize'; cf. *Vsp* 34/4). A sense 'reminding by similarity' fits also the only other ON poetic instance, in *HH* II 11/5–8, when Helgi cross-questions Sigrún on her confident identification of himself and his men: *margir ro hvassir / hildings synir / ok ámunir / ossom niðiom*, 'there are many brave prince's sons who could be mistaken for our kin' (cf. *AEW* s.v. *ámunr* and the articles of Bugge and Falk there cited).

The queen's comparison of Vǫlundr's eyes to 'the glittering serpent' is commonly understood as a comparison of his eyes to the *eyes* of the serpent (DH, SG, JH *Vkv*). Yet her words, by not being a straightforward simile (as in *Rígsmál* 35/7–8), convey much more than that. She sees in his eyes the snake-like spirit of the man: the venomous hate, treacherous subtlety, pitiless hostility. Because she sees this, she orders his maiming: let him crawl like a snake. Egill too evokes the total threat of the serpent's power when he describes the eye of Eiríkr blóðøx as 'the snake-glittering moon of his forehead', *ormfráan ennimáni*, which balefully casts 'rays of terror', *ægigeislum*, down upon Egill: 'the sight of that moonlight was not to be trusted'—*Vasa tunglskin / tryggt at líta* (*Arinbjarnarkviða* 5). Egill knew he was looking on a mortal enemy, against whom he could never relax his guard. While, within her dramatic context, the queen thinks only of the menace of the snake-like eyes, for an audience of the poem those eyes might also assert the uncanny sovereignty of a prince of elves (cf. commentary to *Rígsmál* 35/8).

17/7–8 *Sniðið — magni*: lit. 'cut him from the strength of his sinews', *magni* being dat. of deprivation. The construction is usual with verbs of depriving (*nema*, *sneyða*, *stela*), but is not recorded elsewhere of *sníða* (DH).

sina: a form **sinva* (OE *sinwa*) is not recorded, but would be quite regular (cf. gen. pl. of other *wō*-stem nouns, *stǫðva*, *ǫrva*; Noreen § 380), as well as metrically desirable; see SG and *Vkv Introd* IV. E.

17/10 *Sævarstǫð*: *-stǫð*, 'landing place by water', is replaced by the commoner place-name element *-staðr*, 'place of settlement', in the prose narrative. Translation of *Sævarstǫð* as a place-name (rather than 'at the sea landing, the beach where boats are drawn up'; cf. JH *Vkv*), is required by the context here and in 20/4, and is so understood in the prose. I have translated *Sævar-* as 'sea' rather than 'lake' (as in 1/5) because of the hint in 41/4–5 that *Sævarstǫð* is a tidal island.

Prose í knésfótom: i.e. *knésbótom*, *-bót-* from **boht-*, 'curved hollow'.

18/1–10 *Skínn — borinn*: on this remarkable lament for a sword that has no role in the poem see *Vkv Introd* III. A. 2, IV. C. The stanza has two flaws, (*a*) in lines 1–2 *skínn* does not alliterate with *sverð*, and (*b*) the repetition of *borinn* in lines 8 and 10 and the repetitive sense of 7–8 and 9–10 suggest that one pair of lines is redundant. Variant versions of the stanza have probably been awkwardly assembled. In line 2 I have introduced the term *skyggt* from the description of the sword Mímungr in *Velent* 98 (*sverð skyggt ok merkt gulli, ok hjaltat fagrt*, 'a sword finely polished and patterned with gold and set with a handsome hilt'). That *skyggt* is an old word is evident from the phrase *svartskyggð sverð*, 'black-honed swords' in Þorbjǫrn hornklofi's *Glymdrápa* 7 (*c.* 900). On the etymology of *skyggja*, 'to polish', see *AEW* s.v., *Íslensk orðsifjabók* s.v. I would suppose that *skyggt* implied 'polished to a mirror-like quality, catching light and shade' (cf. *skuggsjá*, 'mirror'), and that *svartskyggt* meant 'polished so free of rust and stain that the darkness of the metal shone out'.

18/14 *bauga rauða*: the general pl. (for excellent parallels see SG) gives a finer extravagance to Vǫlundr's despair than itemization of the single ring that Bǫðvildr had been given. The other 699 rings would also have been taken, with the rest of his treasure.

19/1 *Sat — ávalt*: for the hypermetrical line cf. 6/5.

19/3 *vél . . . heldr*: the poet plays with the double senses in both words. *Vél* is 'trickery', 'deception' and also 'subtle (material) device'. Vǫlundr works on his schemes of revenge all the time that he is fashioning his ingenious treasures (and, I suggest, his wings; see commentary to 29/1–4). *Heldr* is to be interpreted both as 'rather', 'somewhat', i.e. an ironic understatement for 'very (rapidly)', and as 'rather', 'in preference to', referring back to 19/1: *né hann svaf* (*vél gørði hann heldr*).

Vél, in the sense 'device made with skill', is later recorded than *vél*, 'deceit', and may often seem to carry an element of deceit with it (e.g. the net Loki invented was recognized as a *vél . . . til at taka fiska*, 'a device to catch fish with', *SnE* 68; cf. also *veiðivél*, *vígvél*, 'instruments of hunting, of war', Fritzner s.vv.), but the vb. *véla* is recorded in *Grím* 6/5 of the making of the divine hall *Valaskiálf* (*er vélti sér / áss í árdaga*, 'which Óðinn(?) crafted for himself in ancient days'), where the notion of craftsmanship predominates over any sense of trickery. Whether or not the two senses of *vél* relate to two words of distinct etymological origins (see *AEW* s.v.), it is likely that play upon the two senses arose early in the language.

20/1 *Drifo*: DH argue that this vb. shows that Vǫlundr's smithy cannot have been on an island (despite *ór eyio*, 29/8; *í hólmi*, 40/4). The term *ǫgurstund*, 41/5, and the fact that Bǫðvildr 'walked' from the island 29/9, would seem to imply a tidal island, or (in addition) one that might be reached in winter over the ice.

20/2 *dýr*: commonly taken as a nonce substantival use of the neut. pl. of adj. *dýrr*, 'precious (things)'. Kock (*b*), 109–10, notes the parallel of OSwed neut. pl. *góð*, 'property', 'wealth' in laws (*Sigsk* 52/5 *Meniu góð* is uncertain). It is just conceivable that a pun on *dýr*, 'beasts', is intended, an allusion to the reason the boys gave for going off on an expedition, namely, 'to survey the game' (cf. *Velent* 106–7, where the boys are said to be hunting when they visit Vǫlundr). An ambiguity in *dýr* might be intended to indicate their impish deceit. Despite these possibilities, *dýr* remains somewhat suspect: would it be possible to read *dýrð*, 'splendour (of wealth)'? There are no uses of *dýrð* in ON that cannot be related to Christian 'divine splendour', 'glory', but the formation of *dýrð* must be pre-Christian (it is not borrowed from OE, which has no parallel form), and there is a secular parallel in OHG *tiurida*, 'riches' (Graff v. 454). (Cf. the OHG gloss *freisige tiurida*, 'dangerous riches', for *pretiosa pericula*, 'precious perils (i.e. of wealth)' of Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, Metre v. 30; in Alfred, *ASPR* v. 163, line 58: *frēcnu gestrēon*, 'perilous treasure'. For other OHG secular uses cf. *Stank-tiurida*, 'richness of perfume', *Wat-tiurida*, 'richness of clothing'.)

21/3 *opin var illúð*: when the coffer was open, two other things became 'open', patent, at the same time: (*a*) the inherent malignity of the jewels, which were provoking covetousness and murder (on this significance of *illúð* in the context, the meaning of the last four lines of the stanza depends); (*b*) the malevolence visible on the face of Vǫlundr as he stands behind the craning necks of the boys; it is then that the way to kill them becomes obvious to him: *sneið af hǫfuð*, 25/1 (SG).

illúð, 'evil mind, intent', 'hatred', from *ill-*hugð* (cf. *ástúð*, 'loving mind', 'love'; **hugð* is recorded only in the gen. sg. *hugðar-*, implying 'after one's own heart', 'dear'; Fritzner s.vv. *hugð*, *hugðarmaðr*).

21/5–8 *Fiǫlð — gørsimar*: the rich treasure showed itself—*sýndiz*—to the boys in its material substance of gold and jewels. They did not see it as an image of their death, when they too will 'show themselves' as jewelled treasures (25/5–16). There is no reason to alter *menia* to *meina* (SG). For this explicit sense of *sýndiz* cf. *Post* 189, lines 21–2: *En Simon sýndiz Neroni á hinum þriðja degi, ok sagðiz upp hafa risit af dauða*, 'Simon showed himself to Nero on the third day and said he had risen from death'.

menia, 'necklaces', used generally of hoarded wealth (cf. *Fáf* 16/3 . . . *meðan ek um meniom lág*, i.e. 'while I lay on the dragon-hoard'; also *Akv* 26/3).

at væri gull rautt: though alteration to *gull rautt vera* would normalize the metre (SG), the finite vb. *væri* is a more telling contrast to *sýndiz* in the preceding line.

gørsimar: probably originally a legal term for 'adjudicated, full, payment' in Old Danish law, earliest found in OE from the late 10 and 11 c. (see *ASC* glossary s.v. *gærsum*; *OED* s.v. *gersum*). No legal sense is clearly attested in ON or OE; the general sense 'costly things' is evident from the *ASC* annal for 1070 (MS. E, I. 205): *hī nāmen þære swā mycele gold 7 seolfre 7 swā manega gersumas on sceat 7 on scrūd 7 on bōkes swā nān man ne mæi ōðer tællen*, 'they seized there so much gold and silver and so many valuables in the form of money, garments, and books that no man could give another the account of it'. For further references see Björkman 152.

22/1–8 *Komið — fyndið*: see *Vkv Introd* II. D.

23/4 *baug*: there is no certain parallel for the use of sg. *baugr* with the pl. sense 'rings', or as a general term for treasure.

25/1 *Sneið af hǫfuð*: SG suggest that Vǫlundr beheaded the boys by bringing down the heavy lid of the treasure chest upon their necks, a motif in folk-tale and ballad. The occurrence of the motif in Gregory of Tours' *Historia Francorum* (IX. 34, cited by SG), shows, however, that this was not as swift and neat a method of execution as the verb *sneið* suggests: Fredegunde, tired of her arrogant daughter's vituperations, offers to make peace with her and opens a treasure chest filled with necklaces and precious ornaments, giving her daughter many gifts with her own hand. Saying that now she is weary, and telling her daughter to look in and choose for herself, she slams the coffer lid down on her daughter's neck, strangling her. However, a maid shrieks for help, and the daughter is preserved, to pursue the feud with even greater bitterness. The physical details in Gregory's account seem authentic enough. See Newbold for the wider context.

25/2 *húna*: properly 'bear cubs' (cf. *hvítabjarnarhúnn*, *Flat* I. 253), once recorded of fawns (in the Icelandic MS. AM 178 fol. of *Saga Þiðriks* 165, n. 6); used familiarly of children in *Vkv* here and 32/4, and (no doubt borrowed from *Vkv*) in *Ghv* 12/1 (in the context also of the beheading of children—Atli's). Magnússon, 28, notes that this colloquial use of *húnn* is still current in the Vestfirðir and Breiðafjörður (relationship with Norw *hyn*, 'bearcub', 'child', is not philologically agreed). See *Vkv Introd* III. D.

25/3 *fen fiǫturs*: also 34/7. A literal translation has no meaning for us: 'wet ground, swamp, of the fetter'. *Fiǫturs* is either based on a scribal error (so firmly embedded that it is repeated, as if meaningful), or it has a technical sense relating to the equipment of a forge which we do not know from ON or OE records. It could indeed be a scribe's substitution of a familiar ON word for one he did not understand. The conjectural translation is based (*a*) on the context: wet earth where bodies might be buried in a smithy (cf. 34/1; also the prone figure behind the anvil on the Franks Casket) would be found where the water used for tempering steel would flow away, into a sump or pit; (*b*) on the statement in *Velent* 107 that Velent hid the boys' bodies under the bellows in a deep pit (*í grǫf eina djúpa*; though, as Velent has already (99) hidden his best sword under the bellows, this pit is not the same as the wet *fen* of *Vkv*); (*c*) on the possibility that *fiǫturs* can be connected with a term *Fesselgruebn* used in Salzburg for the hollowed-out pit in the hearth which

hoards the warm embers, *Fessel-* possibly being related to terms for 'vessel', 'vat' (see DH; Schmeller I. 777 s.v. *Festlgrueben*), which may well be etymologically linked with terms for 'fetter' (*AEW* s.vv. *fat*, *fjöturr*, and *DW* s.vv. *Fass*, *Fessel*), the significances 'holding', 'enclosing' being common to vessels and fetters; both stems have the same ablaut grade (cf. OE *fæt*, *fætelse*, *feter*). So *fiǫturr* might be a constructed cistern, an open-ended, well-like 'vat', for draining away the forge's water through discarded ashes; these would silt up in the 'container' and provide a fine burial place. But the problem of the reading *fiǫturs* is far from solved (cf. JH *Vkv* 70). Further research into Gmc forge-vocabulary might bring a better reading to light: to meet *fiǫturr* in the same poem with the distinct senses 'fetter' (12/8) and 'forge-well' is disconcerting.

25/5 *skálar*: the term 'bowls' here is cruelly anticipatory (cf. the more explicit use of the motif in *Am* 79/3–4: *Hausa . . . þeira / hafða at ǫlskálom*, 'their skulls used as ale-bowls'; see commentary to *Am* ad loc., DH, SG, JH *Vkv*. A most detailed description of the conversion of enemy skulls into drinking vessels is Herodotus' account of Scythian practice (IV. 65; see de Vries (*d*), 184). On the shamanistic analogues to the 'remaking' of the boys' heads see *Vkv Introd* II. F.

25/8 *seldi*: in the prose after stanza 17 we are told that only Níðuðr dared to visit Vǫlundr. If this was a tradition known to the poet, then *seldi* would imply that Vǫlundr gave the bowls to Níðuðr on one of his visits; the other gifts were 'sent'. I have emended *senda* to *selda* in 35/4, because correspondence in stanzas 25 and 35 should be exact in this respect (though the prose may have little value for guiding correction of the verse here).

25/10 *iarknasteina*: in ON only in *Vkv* (also 35/6), *Guð* I 18/7, *Guð* III 9/4. OE *eorcnanstān* (variants *eorcan-*, *eorclan-*, *e(a)rcnan-*) is more frequent, occurring (*a*) five times in poetry (e.g. for the jewels on the great necklace that is compared with the *Brōsinga mene*, *Beowulf* 1208; Grein (*a*) s.v. *eorcanstān*), (*b*) several times for *margarita*, 'pearl', in glosses to the Gospel and homiletic texts (e.g. *Ne weorpað ercnanstānas ēowre beforan swīnum*, Rushworth *Matthew* 7: 6), (*c*) once glossing *topazion*, Psalm 118: 127, *Cambridge Psalter* of Eadwine 316 (see BT *Suppl.* s.v. *eorcnanstān*). No other Gmc records have the equivalent of *iarknasteinn/eorcnanstān*, and it seems likely that the rare ON word is borrowed from OE (perhaps in the context of the Weland legend, see *Vkv Introd* III. A. 3) and later adopted by the *Guð* I, III poets. Yet it is certain that the stem **erkn-* is common Gmc, connoting 'clarity', 'purity', 'trueness', cf. Gothic *airkniþa*, 'purity'; OHG *erchan*, 'pure', *erchanpruoder*, 'true (blood) brother', deriving from an IE root **erĝ-*, 'upright, proper' (see S. Mann s.v.). In West Gmc **erkn-* is a common element in personal names (cf. St Earconuald, Bishop of the East Saxons 675–93; Bede IV. vi) and must have been an ancient part of OE vocabulary. A Semitic origin for OE *eorcnanstān*, ON *jarknasteinn* has however been postulated in the Jewish-Aramaic term *yarqan*, itself rare, found only in the Aramaic interpretations of Hebrew texts (Targums) in the context of the high priest's breast-plate in Exodus 27: 17, 39: 10 and Ezekiel 28: 13 (based on Exodus), where it is rendered *topazius* (in Vetus Latina, Septuagint, and

Vulgate). If *yarqan* reached OE, it would presumably be through glosses on these three passages (or some learned note by Jerome). Where influence of Targum *yarqan* (from the common root *yrq*, 'be green/yellow') is seen in the continental lists of the breast-plate jewels, it is not in any *borrowing* of the word *yarqan*, but in the translation of it into a term for a green/yellow stone (such as 'emerald' or '*prasius*'; see Blondheim lxxvii § 9, lxxviii § 13; I owe this reference and all the information on *yarqan* to the generous and illuminating advice of Sebastian Brock, Oxford. The perfunctory identification of the source of ON *jarknasteinn* as 'chaldäisch *jarkān*' was first made by Bouterwek in 1859, followed by Sievers and de Vries, *AEW* s.v., where bibliographical references are given).

In the lapidaries known to the Anglo-Saxons and learned Norsemen (see Foote 146–52) no form of Aramaic *yarqan* is found. A surprising coincidence may, however, be noted in the efficacy of the *iarknasteinar* that Guðrún picks from the boiling cauldron (*Guð* III 9/1–4) and of the *Thophasion* (i.e. the Aramaic *yarqan*) in the *Ashmole Lapidary*: *Thys stoune ys yleke to golde, and yff he be pvt yn eny water bovllyent thou mayste pvt thynne hande* [sic] *and svffre the hete of the water thrugh the vertu of thys stoune* (*English Medieval Lapidaries* 58; see also Marbode of Rennes (1035–1123), *De Lapidibus* 50–1 where the topaz is said to calm boiling water: *Ferventes etiam compescere dicitur undas*; this property is usually that of the stone *hephaestites*, but it appears to have clung to the topaz in later tradition).

The rareness of Aramaic *yarkan* and the barely visible traces of later traditions relating to the term in Europe, make it hardly possible to accept Nerman's suggestion, 48–50, that the Goths brought the gem-name *jarkān* from the Orient *c.* AD 200–700. Nerman's work takes no account of the OE glosses for *eorcnanstān*.

25/11 *sendi*: a subtle ellipsis. We are not told *how* he fabricated these surreal jewels (cf. *sveip . . . silfri*, 25/7; *sló*, 25/15). McKinnell (*b*), 20, notes the ironic aptness of sending eyes to the watchful queen.

25/15 *brióstkringlor*: hap. leg.; *kringla*, 'circle', is not elsewhere recorded of jewellery; here presumably a 'circular ornament for the bodice of a garment'.

26/1 On the missing lines before this stanza see *Vkv Introd* II. D.

26/3 The missing line may well have contained a phrase elaborating upon *baugi* (e.g. *bezta gørsimi*). For omission of one line in a sequence of four alliterating on the same letter cf. *Rig* 7/5, 48/7).

26/5 *Þoriga ek*: i.e. **Þori-ek-a ek* (pron. repeated because of ellision).

27/8 *at sama hófi*: 'of the same appropriate standard (as before)'; cf. *hæfa*, 'to be fitting, appropriate, of the right measure', Fritzner s.v. *hóf*[2] § 1.

28/1 *Bar — bióri*, 'overbore her with beer'; for *bera e-n e-u*, 'to bear a person down by some means' see Vigfússon s.v. *bera* A. II. 2 (e.g. *bera e-n ofríki*, 'to overcome by superior power', *bera e-n ráðum*, 'to force one's own decision upon another'); also Fritzner s.v. *bera* § 11. The poet's use of *bióri* rather than, for example, *afli*, *magni*,

suggests a wry play on the usual idiom: how pathetically easy it was (cf. Chaucer, *Wife of Bath's Prologue* 647–8).

28/5–6 *hefnt harma minna*: because (in the MS. text) Vǫlundr says that he has avenged all his harms 'except one' (see commentary to 28/7–8), editors are led into itemizing those harms to determine which has been omitted. DH consider the first *harmr* to be the taking of the ring, for which the boys are killed; the second to be the taking of the sword, for which Bǫðvildr is raped (these are the two grievances Vǫlundr laments in 18/7–14). The third would then be the cutting of his sinews, which he 'avenges' when he flies off and discloses his crimes to Níðuðr (see also SG). A broader concept of his 'harms' may be preferable: e.g. that the whole theft of his wealth is avenged by the murder of the gold-greedy boys; that his physical maiming is avenged by the physical conquest of the girl; that his imprisonment is flouted by his undreamed-of escape. If we adopt emendation of *nema* to *né* in 28/7 (see commentary to 28/7–8), these equations are not necessary.

28/7–8 *allra — íviðgirna*: there are three main ways of interpreting these lines. In 28/8 the meaningless 'giarira' of the MS. requires emendation. Most commonly it is emended to a form of adj. *giarn*, 'eager', to give the compound *íviðgiarn*, 'zealous in animosity', and refer to Vǫlundr's persecutors on whom he avenges his harms. Dat. pl. *íviðgiǫrnom* (FJ (*b*)) would fittingly relate to both king and queen as persecutors; dat. sg. fem. *íviðgiarnri* (SG; a slighter palaeographical change) would relate to the queen only. While Gmc *inwid*, 'deceitful malice', is common in OE, OS, OHG, it is not with certainty found in ON except in *Vkv* 28/8 (see commentary to *Vsp* 2/6). The formation *íviðgiarn* would however, be regular in ON (cf. *lægiarn*, *Vsp* 34/3). It does not occur in OE or OHG, but OS has the phrase *inuuideas gern*, used of Judas, 'eager for malice', going to betray Christ, *Heliand* 4628.

I have adopted an alternative emendation of 'giarira' to *girna* (fem. gen. pl.) to give *íviðgirna*, a loanword (I suggest) from OE *inwidgirn*, 'treacherous trap or snare' (recorded in the pl. form *inwitgyrene*, translating *laqueos* in the OE metrical version of the *Paris Psalter*, Psalm 139: 5: *forhȳdden oferhygde mē / inwitgyrene*, 'the proud have hidden snares for me'; *ASPR* v. 136). Though *inwidgirn* occurs only here in OE, similar compounds are favoured in OE verse, e.g. *inwitnet*, 'net of guile', *Beowulf* 2167 (of political treachery), *inwitwrāsn*, 'fetter of spite', *Andreas* 63, 946 (of heathen captivity; see Grein s.vv. *inwid-*, *inwit-* for the numerous compounds); the metaphorical use of 'snare' is echoed in the OE homilists (see *syngrin*, 'snare of sin', BT s.v.). OE *girn* (in various forms: *gyrn*, *grin*, *gryn*) is common and continues into modern usage in Scotland and northern England; see *EDD* s.v. *Grin* sb. It is possible that the erroneous 'giarira' derives from an attempt to convert a form *girna*, unfamiliar in ON, into a fitting form of adj. *giarn*, or that an OE *-girn* was adapted into the broken form *-gjarn* by this analogy.

We have now two main alternative interpretations of 28/7–8: *Nú hefi ek hefnt / harma minna* . . . 'Now I have avenged my harms . . .'

1. *allra nema einna* (pl. for sg.) *íviðgiǫrnom / íviðgiarnri*, 'all—save one—upon the malevolent one(s)'
2. *allra nema einna* (pl. for sg.) *íviðgirna*, 'all—save one—of the envious snares'. 'Snares' here would embrace all the cruel plots against him (trapping him at his home, disabling him to keep him imprisoned, handling him like a wild creature, 16 – 17).

In 2. some minor variants might be preferred: (*a*) reading sg. *einna*[*r*]; or (*b*) sg. *einna*[*r*] and *íviðgirnar*, i.e. 'except for *one* envious snare', with specific reference to the 'snaring' of Vǫlundr by the cutting of his sinews: the *girn* caught especially the feet of the victim; cf. Psalm 56: 7: *Fōtum hēo mīnum / fǣcne grine / grame gearwodon*, 'For my feet treacherous traps cruel foes prepared'; *ASPR* v. 9. For an emendation *einna*[*r*] cf. *unga*[*r*], 1/3, 3/9.

To accept either of these two alternatives we need to feel satisfied that Vǫlundr's escape, together with the crushing *níð* of his disclosures, could constitute a form of *hefnd*, 'revenge'. It is certainly mockery, but, as revenge, it is not in the same category as the deeds his *níð* refers to: murder and rape. On that account I have turned to a third alternative reading. In 28/7 the MS. reads 'nema | eiNa'. Elsewhere in R *nema* is written 'nēa' without exception (I note 46 instances of 'nēa' conj., 2 of 'nēa' vb.—*fyrnema*, *Lks* 57; *nema*, *Alv* 1—but no 'nema' spellings). *Vkv* has two 'nēa' spellings, prose before 18 and 26/6; could 'nema', 28/7, be a scribal error for *né*, a dittography anticipating the three minims in 'eiNa'? A reading *allra né einna / íviðgirna*, if it could be interpreted 'all—not (just) some / not (only) one—of the vicious snares', would be Vǫlundr's declaration that his vengeance is now complete and that he is free to fly off: as he could have done, of course, long before, had he not deliberately stayed to get his vengeance.

As contextually preferable, I have adopted in the text *allra né einna*, although I have not found an exact parallel for it. In *Guð* III 5/3–4: *lifa þeir né einir / þriggia tøga manna*, 'there lives not one of those thirty men', *né einir*, 'no single ones', 'not one individual', would provide a parallel for a singular significance in the pl. *einna* (DH). Gen. pl. *einna* with the sense 'of single ones', dependent upon a superlative, is a common idiom (cf. *Háv* 64/4–6: *hann þat finnr, / er með frøknom kømr, / at engi er einna hvatastr*, 'a man finds, when he comes among the brave, that no one is the boldest of each of those'; see Vigfússon s.v. *einn* A. V), but in usage *einna* with superlative has virtually become synonymous with *allra*, 'of all' (see Fritzner s.v. *einn* § 4). Distributive contrast phrases, 'one and all', 'all and some', identifying the individual who comprises the totality, are proverbially current in early English (see *OED* s.v. *all* adj. 12; *MED* s.v. *on* pron. 3 (c)). In ON the rhetorical contrast of *allr* and *einn* is much liked by some poets (cf. *Brot* 2/7–8: *allra eiða / einn fulltrúi*, also 8/5–6, 10/3–4, 12/7–8), but I have not found in ON a phrase **allir ok einir* (as against, e.g., *allir / ok þó ýmsir*, 'all and yet severally', i.e. 'all and every', *Sigsk* 42/5–6).

If the reading *allra né einna* is preferred for 28/7, *íviðgiǫrnom/íviðgiarnri* could still be read for 28/8, though I do not think such a reading would be as forceful as *íviðgirna*.

29/1–4 *Vél — rekkar*: perhaps the most difficult lines in the poem. The determining factors for interpretation seem to me to be: (*a*) MS. *Vel ek* cannot be rendered 'Fortunate, in happy case, [am] I', as there is no parallel for such an idiom, with adv. 'well' and nom. 'I', in Gmc; (*b*) *Verða* must in the context be either (i) present optative, 'May I become/be . . .', a syntax difficult to parallel in ON (discussed

below), or (ii) present/future indicative *verð* with negative suffix *-a*; (*c*) *á fitiom* is ambiguous, in that it could refer literally to the webbed feet of a bird, or figuratively—jocularly, sardonically—to the feet or legs of a man; (*d*) it is the moment when Vǫlundr is to experiment in flying. I offer a tentative interpretation of these lines, requiring one emendation.

Vél: we might expect Vǫlundr's means of escape to be mentioned here, if anywhere (see *Vkv Introd* II. E). I suggest, therefore, reading *vél*, with the two senses (*a*) 'subtle trick' (played on Níðuðr), and (*b*) 'device', 'machine' (for flying) to provide the expected allusion to the traditional artefact (already anticipated no doubt in *vél*, 19/3). In the context of *fitiom* it may be notable that a third meaning for *vél* could be relevant, namely, 'bird's tail' (variously *vél* and *véli*, cf. *vélifiðrit*, 'tail feather', *Heiðr* 44). On one of the Leeds Crosses Vǫlundr's flying device has a distinct tail (Nedoma (*a*), 325). The reading *vél* requires the addition of a vb. *á*, '(I) have' (cf. omission of prep. *á*, 23/2).

fitiom: (*a*) must refer to Vǫlundr's feet/legs (incapacitated by Níðuðr's men) and (*b*) identifies his feet as those of a bird. We cannot disregard the narrative reference in the term *fitiom*. Vǫlundr is now taking on the accoutrements of a bird. When he is ready to fly off—like his swan wife—he jocularly calls his lower limbs 'webbed feet', identifying with her. The joke comes to him with the joy of freedom. The use of *fitiar* of human legs/feet is only found here, a usage no doubt created by the context (though Snorri's use of *fit* for the hand or arm enriched with gold by a brave prince, *Háttatal* 42/5–8, suggests that transference to a human situation might not have been uncommon). While *fit* might be used, in verse, of the membranous claw-foot of eagle or of wolf (see *LP* s.v., *Háttatal* 56/7–8), it is most commonly associated with the webbed feet of swimming birds, *fitfuglar*, and the hind flipper of a seal.

Verða (*a*) optative expressing a wish or act of will, 'May I be / I now will be on my webbed feet' seems strangely followed by 'those that Níðuðr's men took from me'. But this may be part of the joke. How can Vǫlundr rise to his feet, when they have been taken from him? Níðuðr's men deprived him of his human *fitiar*, when he needed to walk like a man, but now he can rise on his bird's *fitiar*, because he has wings to lift him. It is an ironic conundrum: what moves better lame than not lame? *Vǫlundr á fitiom*—i.e. when he has wings.

To me the only difficulty in this interpretation is the lack of parallels for the use of the 1st person sg. of the pres. optative in an independent clause. Nygaard § 182 ('1ste pers. findes kun enkeltvis') and Heusler (*c*) § 418, give no examples. B. Mitchell, § 884, has found none in OE. Grimm IV. 80–2, however, offers a few examples from MHG which seem to me to show that this optative usage was not alien to Gmc (as Behre 18, n. 1, asserts; cited by Mitchell): e.g. *ich sî der bote*, 'May I be the messenger!'; *ich sei gestigen!* 'May I be raised up/mounted!' (the context is allusive and uncertain here, the implication probably sexual; *Ring* 867). Grimm notes the survival of this optative usage in the self-cursing of later times: *ich sei des teufels!* 'May I belong to the devil!' If the poet of *Vkv* meant to represent Vǫlundr as revealing his trick—*vél*—he might employ the patter of magicians and illusionists

who practised for money: 'Let me now show you how I fly! May I now rise in the air!' So Simon Magus tells the people of Rome, who refuse to desert Peter for him, that he will abandon them and fly to God; 'For I ascend and will show myself to this people what kind of being I am'. And all saw him lifted on high above all Rome, its temples and its mountains (*Acts of Peter* ch. 32; cf. *Post* 102–3, 194–5). The illusionist often announces beforehand what he means to do, so that his audience will see what they expect. Lucifer's aspiration to mount higher than God is couched in just such terms: *In caelum conscendam . . . Ascendam super altitudinem nubium, Similis ero Altissimo*, 'I will ascend into heaven . . . I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the most High' (Isaiah 14: 13, 14. We may note that in Latin the 1st person sg. pres. optative and future in verbs of the third conjugation are formally identical).

Verða (*b*) present indicative with enclitic negative, 'I shall *not* be on the legs/feet that Níðuðr's men took from me' (because I have a *vél*—I shall be on wings and need no bird's feet). I see less wit, or subtlety, in the use of *fitiom* here than in (*a*). Elsewhere in the poem the enclitic negative with the first person sg. pres. indic. is accompanied by two forms of the pronoun: *sékka ek*, 18/9; *bíðka ek*, 18/13; *Þoriga ek*, 26/5. I therefore think it unlikely that the poet intended a negative here.

Renderings with other emendations have been suggested, e.g. *Véli ek*, 'I am playing a trick', or *Véla ek*, 'May I play a trick', a parallel to *Verða ek*, but I have no evidence that *véla* might be used absolutely, without an object. In the midst of these difficulties the easy way out—*Vil ek . . . verða á fitiom*, 'I mean to take to those webbed feet'—looks attractive. But I think it likely, at this point in the action, that more verbal play than *fitiom* is intended (see *Vkv Introd* IV. D).

29/9 *tregði fǫr friðils*: I would suppose that the poet knew a version of the tale extant in *Velent*, in which the princess and Velent want to marry each other, and are presumably in love (*Velent* 110, 111). He does not reproduce this stereotyped situation, but shows the girl and the man affected with feeling for each other in different ways, she with a sense of loss when he goes, he with a possessive protectiveness (cf. 33). For a parallel to her reaction, see Chaucer, *Reeve's Tale* 314–28.

30/1–6 *Úti — hvílaz*: if we assume that the *salgarðr* is approached through the *salr*, the action is clear. The queen, who was (I suggest) outside the royal house when Vǫlundr first came, in chains (16), is again depicted outside when he returns flying. She enters, presumably to find out whether Níðuðr has seen him. The *salgarðr* where he rests I interpret as a paved or grassy precinct private to the royal *salr*, though the term is nowhere else found (in *Velent* 109 the king's daughter is in her *grasgarðr* when she breaks her ring). From this open air hall-garden or court the king sees and speaks to Vǫlundr. It is improbable that *salgarðr* refers to the house wall or a high window in it (DH, SG).

en hann — hvílaz: it has been suggested (JH *Vkv*) that *hann* here is Vǫlundr, but it would be ridiculous if the hero had to rest at the beginning of his exultant flight. Exhaustion is fitting for Níðuðr in his sleepless grief, and for the swan maidens after their long migration (for whom the same phrasing is used, 1/6), but not for

Vǫlundr now. We are to imagine him hanging in the air (cf. 37/9–10) above Níðuðr, as birds of prey do, almost stationary, watching his victim. The author of *Velent* 113 (whose imagination is more commonplace) gives him a more solid speaking position on a turret.

31/4 *sízt — dauða*: lit. 'after my dead sons', i.e. 'after my sons were dead': a rare use of *sízt* as prep. with acc.; see Fritzner s.v. *sízt*, adv. § 2; *LP* s.v. *síz* § 3.

31/5 *Kell mik*: for examples of impersonal vb. *kala* see esp. Vigfússon s.v.

31/6 *kǫld . . . ráð*, 'hostile', 'evil-bringing' counsel, cf. *Lks* 51/6. For the deadly implications of *kaldr*, 'cold', see commentary to *Akv* 2/6. That it is 'coldly fatal' to follow women's advice is a proverbial piece of anti-feminism common to ON and ME, earliest recorded—after the allusion in *Vkv*—in the *Proverbs of Alfred* (*c.* 1150) 122 line 336: *cold red is quene red*, 'women's counsel is cold counsel' (for later instances see DH 157, on *Vafþ* 10; I have not yet located the phrase *kǫldum snótarráðum*, but it does not occur in *Þórsdr*, as DH state). The poet of *Vkv* uses the proverb with a subtlety unparalleled in other texts, making the chill fear that wracks the king's head an anticipation of the metaphorical coldness of the fatal truth.

31/7 *Vilnomk*: the reflexive form of *vilia* strengthens the personal intensity of reference: 'to desire for one's own sake'; see Fritzner s.v. *vilja* § 1.

32/3 *heilom*: to the senses 'physically well' and 'blessed by good fortune', the sense 'undivided' takes precedence in 15/3 (*heil hiú*) and also, more gruesomely, here. The boys' bodies are literally 'taken to pieces' by Vǫlundr, and this becomes the answer to the king's question. The translation cannot convey all the senses here.

33/1 *Eiða*: the oaths here have no religious reference, as do the oaths of kinship that Guðrún declares Atli swore to Gunnarr (*Akv* 30). They resemble rather (SG) the curses of Sigrún against her brother Dagr, when he tells her that he has killed Helgi: curses on his ship, his horse, his sword (*HH* II 31–2; Vǫlundr includes also the shield). Sigrún's curses may be intended to reflect the oaths that—in Viking poetic tradition—would have been sworn by Dagr to Helgi as a pledge of truce (*HH* II prose before 25). These warrior oaths dictate the curses to be laid on the oath-breaker: if Níðuðr breaks his oaths he will be ineffectual as a warrior and a king, dogged by failure in every enterprise.

33/11–13 *vér . . . eigim, . . . þér kunnið, . . . eigim*: I interpret the change from *ek* and *þú* to the formal pl. *vér* and *þér* in the final clause of Vǫlundr's conditions as an indication that Vǫlundr instinctively speaks of himself and Níðuðr as royal equals. The formal 'we' gives dignity to, and commands respect for, the wife and child he is leaving with Níðuðr. DH note the frequency with which 'I' and 'we' are interchanged casually in ON verse usage, but here in *Vkv* the shift of personal form seems deliberately significant.

35/4 *selda*: see commentary to 25/8.

36/2 *barni aukinn*: *aukinn* (past part. of *auka*, 'to increase', cf. *Ríg* 41/7: *ætter ióku*) is nowhere else recorded in ON used literally of pregnancy, with or without the addition of *barni*. In OE, however, *ēacen* (past part. of *ēacen*, 'to be increased') is regularly used of pregnancy (as well as related terms, *ēacnian*, 'to become pregnant'; *ēacniende wīf*, 'pregnant woman'; *ēacnung*, *bearnēacnung*, 'conception'; BT s.vv. *ēacan*, etc.). In a number of instances a phrase 'with child' accompanies *ēacen* (e.g. *Genesis* 2237: *Hire mōd āstāh / þā hēo wæs magotimbre / be Abrahame / ēacen worden*,'Her pride mounted, when she had become pregnant with a child by Abraham'), but in *Deor* 11, [*Beadohild*] *ēacen wæs* (see *Vkv Introd* III. A. 3), and in OE *Riddle* 33 (*ASPR* III. 197), *dohtor mīn / ēacen* (where the play is on ice being pregnant water), *ēacen* alone suffices to express pregnancy. While we do not have such early domestic vocabulary in ON as we do in OE, it would be surprising if *aukinn* had once been a common term for 'pregnant' and yet left so little trace in later ON idiom.

37/4 *verr um nióta*: B. M. Ólsen's emendation (*b*) 152–3) of MS. *níta* ('to deny, refuse') is obviously right. *Njóta verr* is not elsewhere recorded, but would seem to be the ironic obverse of the kindly wish of *njóta betr* (recorded Blöndal s.v. *njóta* I. 1. a). The notion of enjoying good fortune is implied in the congratulation: *Njót þú heill handa*, 'enjoy, fortunate, (the work of) your hands' (*Njál* 104, *Gísl* 25, Y-text; cf. also *HH* I 55/1–4, 56/5–6). The deliberate reversal of the benediction expresses Níðuðr's bitterness.

37/5–8 *Erat — skióti*: in *Velent* the only pursuit of Vǫlundr that the king orders is that Egill should shoot him down (see *Vkv Introd* III. A. 2). It is possible however that in *Vkv* 37/5–6 there is reference to an incident, now lost from traditions, in which Vǫlundr/Velent was pursued by a horseman (cf. Velent's own legendary horse that was as fast as a bird: *svá skjótr sem fugl fljúgandi*, *Velent* 103, cf. 38).

37/9 *skollir*, 'sway to and fro', 'flutter', 'hover' (used of ships, pennants, hides hung up to dry, seemingly of movement within a fixed space: see *LP*, Vigfússon s.v. *skolla* for illustration). Níðuðr sees Vǫlundr circling above him, before soaring up and away.

39/1 *Þakkráðr*: see *Index of Personal Names*.

39/5 *fagrvarið*: like other editors, I keep the nom. form, although acc. *fagrvarða* would be expected. Two constructions overlap here, 'ask her to go' and 'ask that she go' (*at hón gangi fagrvarið*). The grammatical independence of the nom. in the oral text gives it an anguished, vocative quality (cf. *grætr þú, gullvarið, / grimmom tárom*, 'You weep, gold-adorned one, cruel tears', *HH* II 45/5–6). DH give other instances of such elliptical constructions (cf. *Hamð* 23/4, 24/9).

40/2 *er sǫgðo mér*, 'what people told me'. Níðuðr uses the dignified impersonality of the plural *sǫgðo* (equivalent to 'what I was told'). Bǫðvildr has no doubt that Vǫlundr told him (*er sagði þér*, 41/2), though, in realistic terms, her coming and

going might well have been noted by the house-folk. If it were only the house-folk's gossip, she might have denied it, but Vǫlundr's betrayal she cannot. In view of the great speed of the action from 29 onwards, it is unlikely that Bǫðvildr already knows she is pregnant (McKinnell (*b*), 22).

40/3–4 *sátuð — saman*: a euphemism for intercourse. JH *Vkv* notes that the same phrase is attributed to the daughter of Jarl Sigvaldi, when she tries to lure Stefnir Þorgilsson indoors so that the Jarl can have him killed: *Far hingat, norðmaðr, ok sitjum bæði saman*, 'Come over here, Norseman, and let us both sit together'. In the verse with which he (traditionally) replies, he declares he would rather be drenched out on the ocean than warm in her arms (*varmr á þínum armum*; *Óláfs Saga Tryggvasonar* of Oddr Snorrason 195; see commentary to *Ríg* 10/5).

41/5 *ǫgurstund*: here there is a play upon two meanings, (*a*) the brief space of time when the tide holds its highest level and begins to turn (a sense still remembered in Breiðafjǫrðr and Breiðdalr, Austfirðir, especially; see Magnússon 20–3); and (*b*) a time of anguish, heaviness of spirit. Sense (*a*) relates to *ǫgur*[1] neut. found (i) in the phrase *að bíða eftir ögrinu*, 'to wait for the turning point of the high tide', and (ii) in the compound *ǫgurstund* (in ON recorded only in *Vkv*; not noted by Blöndal). Sense (*b*) relates to *ǫgur*[2] neut. for which the meaning is first determined by a riddle attributed to Björn Guðnason (†1517) of Ögur in Ísafjarðardjúp, in which place-names are referred to by the meaning of their homonym: so Ögur is referred to as *Þungur Móður*, 'Heavy Heart' (cf. ModIcel vb. *ögra*, 'to annoy, threaten'. For full references and discussion see Elmevik 56; Magnússon 24–6; JH *Vkv*). The place-name *Ögur* (in *Landn* and *Fóst*: see Elmevik 54; he notes that forms *Qgr*, *Qgrs* sometimes printed in these texts are incorrect, since the MSS. have dissyllabic forms) is presumably to be identified with ModIcel *ögur*[3] neut., 'small fjord, inlet, creek' (of which *ǫgurr*, *Hárb* 13/3, is a masc. variant, see Einarsson 142–4; Elmevik 49). I would have supposed that *ǫgur*[1] and *ǫgur*[3] were cognate terms (though Magnússon, 27, does not think so), a possible idiomatic association being that *ǫgur*[3] is an inlet reached by *ǫgur*[1], the tide at its height. Thus the name *Qgursvík* (*Fóst* 163) is not necessarily tautological.

An *ǫgurstund*, for a sailor, might be an anxious time because he did not wish to be stranded. For Beadohild it expresses her memory of entrapment, and her excuse: she was cut off by the tide, could do nothing—*vætr* . . . *vætr*. The poet has chosen *ǫgurstund* for all its connotations.

On the contextual adaptability of *stund* see Vigfússon s.v.

41/7 *vætr*: for the common use of *vætr*, 'anything', as an emphatic negative, but without a negative element expressed (as, e.g., in *vétki*, 'nothing') see *LP* s.v. *véttr* § 2, JH *Vkv* 179–80.

41/8, 10 *vinna*: the sense 'to hinder, prevent', with dat. but without *við*, appears to be a poetic usage (*LP* s.v. § 8, Fritzner s.v. § 13).

INDEX OF PERSONAL NAMES

Bǫðvildr: in Norse only recorded in *Vkv* and a 15 c. document (*DN* IV. 702. 17 from Jæderen: *Bodwildha Andorsd.*); in OE found only in *Deor*. In the Frankish areas of north Germany, however, the name, *Baduhilt*, is more common: from the 7 c. to the 10 c. twelve women are recorded with this name, the earliest being the wife of Chlodowich II, 639–57. [WAR-HILDA]

Egill: an ancient common Gmc name (Visigothic, OHG, OE, ON). [FEAR-INSPIRING MAN; originally a warrior-name, I assume, based on *agi*-, 'terror']

Hervǫr: an old Norw (Sogn) name, recorded in *Landn* 46, *Njál* 284 of the great-grandmother of Ketill flatnefr, Egill Skalla-Grímsson's grandfather. The legendary warrior women who bore this name, Hervǫr Angantýr's daughter and Hervǫr Heiðrekr's daughter (*Heiðr* 10–22, 52–3), may have influenced the *Vkv* interpolator in his naming of the noble swan maiden. [ARMY-DEFENDER: cf. *AEW* s.v. *varr* 2]

Hlaðguðr: not found elsewhere. *Hlað*, 'embroidered band of silk for forehead or garment', is only found in fictitious names (so *AEW* s.v. *hlað*). [FILLET-ADORNED-WAR-MAIDEN]

Hlǫðvér: ON form of Frankish *Chlodowich* (OHG *Hludwig*, OE *Hloðwig*). Though the first element is uncertain (see *AEW* s.v. *Hloðvér*, *Hlǫðvér*), the spelling of R indicates an *ǫ* vowel. [? originally FAMED-FIGHTER]

Kiárr: for the derivation from *Caesar* see commentary to *Akv* 7/10.

Níðuðr: in ON only in *Vkv*, in OE only in *Deor*, where the form has a variant second element, *Nīðhād*. *Níðuðr* (OHG *Nithad*), has *hǫðr*, 'warrior' (cf. OE *heaþu*, 'battle') as its second element. *Nithad* is common in Alemannic and Frankish documents from the 8 c. to the 10 c.; it was evidently an ancient name among the Goths, *Nidada* being the great-grandfather of King Geberich, 318–50, predecessor of Ermanaric (see *Vkv Introd* n. 30). As JH *Vkv* 29 points out, *Níð-* was not used in personal names for men in ON (cf. *Níðhǫggr* the dragon) and was rare in England (one occurrence of *Nīðmund* in 854). [HOSTILE WARRIOR]

Slagfiðr: only in *Vkv*. Two ways of interpreting this name are considered possible; both would seem to be appropriate for Vǫlundr himself: (*a*) relating *Slag-*, 'stroke', to the striking of a hammer and *-fiðr* to the term for a Lapp, we have 'Hammer-smiting Lapp'; (*b*) relating *Slagfiðr* to OHG *slegifedera*, a gloss for *penna*, 'pinion' ('the feather that strikes the air'), we could (see JH *Vkv* 28) take *-fiðr* as adjectival, from *fjǫðr*, 'feather', so, 'having feathers, wings' (cf. *veðreygr* from *-auga*). Either

name *could* have been a nickname for Vǫlundr, the flying smith, in some version of his story, and *could* have been pressed into service as a personal name for the third brother in *Vkv*, when that trio developed (see *Vkv Introd* IV. A). *Slag* is not a personal-name component elsewhere in Norse; this may suggest a somewhat irregular origin for *Slagfiðr* as a name.

Svanhvít: a folktale-style name epitomizing the white radiance of the swan maidens. Historical personal names in *svan-* are rare in Norse, but not uncommon in West Gmc (see *AEW* s.v. *svanr*). [SWAN-WHITE]

Vǫlundr: the long and widespread popularity of the story appears to have resulted in at least two main variants of the hero's name: (*a*) with long stem *Wēl-* metrically identifiable in *Waltharius* and (most probably) in the OE texts (and possibly in the ON *Velent*); (*b*) with short stem *Wal-* in French chronicle traditions and, as *Gal-* (*Galant*), in *chansons de geste*. A chronicle form *Walander* (12 c.) has been associated with Norse tradition because of the apparent nom. ending. A mixed form **Walundr* (cf. the suffix in *Wēlund*, *Deor*) would normally give the *Vǫlundr* of the R text. Heusler (*b*), 98, emphasizes that many Gmc variants of heroic names are philologically unreconcilable (e.g. OE *Hliðe* / ON *Hlǫðr*, OE *Heorrenda* / MHG *Horant*), and supposes that the double form *Wēland/*Walund* represents 'eine spaltung, eine entgleisung . . . die nicht unter die paragraphen der germanischen lautgeschichte fällt'. Clive Tolley has pointed out to me, however, that a Gothic stem in *ē* (IE *ē*) might have been borrowed as *ē* in other Gmc dialects (where *ǣ* from IE *ē* would be expected), if, as many scholars think, the Weland story was indeed of Gothic origin. In Gothic the forms **Wēl-* and **Wal-* could represent an IE ablaut variation between lengthened *ē*-grade and *o*-grade, IE *o* becoming *a* in all Gmc dialects. It is, however, difficult to find a Gmc root which shows this ablaut variation and has also significance in the context of the Vǫlundr story. As for the name *Velent*, I would suppose that it was a story-teller's adaptation of a heard form of *Wēland* (cf. *Niðungr/Níðungr* for *Níðuðr*), influenced perhaps by such romance names as *Flóvent*, *Flórent*, *Ívent*, *Valvent*, *Úrient*. For fuller presentation of *Vǫlundr* variants see Nedoma (*a*), 40–70.

Þakkráðr: not an ON name, but found in OHG (*Dankrat*) and occasionally in OE (*Þancrēd*), probably borrowed from Germany. The introduction of a German name for this minor character suggests that the poet who introduced it knew, and wished to allude to, a German connection of the story. It is not a name found in *Þiðreks Saga*. The fact that assimilation of *nk* to *kk* has occurred (compare *c.* 990 *Þangbrandr*) might indicate that the name *Þakkráðr* was a very old element in the poem; but the equivalence of German *nk* and ON *kk* would also have been well known at later dates. [GRATEFUL COUNSEL]

Ǫlrun: not found elsewhere in ON as a personal name, nor in OE. OHG *Alarun* occurs in a Bavarian document (Förstemann I. 40). *Ǫlrún* occurs as a common noun 'ale-rune' in *Sigrdr* 7, 19. [GOOD FORTUNE/ALE RUNE]

LOKASENNA

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LOKASENNA

Frá Ægi ok goðum

Ægir, er ǫðro naf[n]i hét Gymir, hann hafði búit ásom ǫl, þá er hann hafði fengit ketil inn mikla, sem nú er sagt. Til þeirar veizlo kom Óðinn ok Frigg kona hans. Þórr kom eigi, þvíat hann var í austrvegi. Sif var þar, kona Þórs, Bragi ok Iðunn kona hans. Týr var þar, hann var einhendr: Fenrisúlfr sleit hǫnd af hánom þá er hann var bundinn. Þar var Niǫrðr ok kona hans Skaði, Freyr ok Freyia, Víðarr son Óðins. Loki var þar ok þiónustomenn Freys, Byggvir ok Beyla. Mart var þar ása ok álfa. Ægir átti tvá þiónustomenn, Fimafengr ok Elder. Þar var lýsigull haft fyrir eldzliós; siálft barsk þar ǫl; þar var griðastaðr mikill. Menn lofoðo miǫk hverso góðir þiónustomenn Ægis vóro. Loki mátti eigi heyra þat, ok drap hann Fimafeng. Þá skóko æsir skiǫldo sína ok œpðo at Loka, ok elto hann braut til skógar, en þeir fóro at drekka.

Loki hvarf aptr ok hitti úti Eldi. Loki kvaddi hann:

Of Ægir and the gods

Ægir, whose other name was Gymir, had prepared ale for the Æsir, as soon as he had received the great cauldron, as has just been told. To that feast

Lokasenna is preserved only in R. *In the MS. the title appears before stanza 1.*

Prose line 7 Byggvir] beyGv^{ir}; *so also 45/1;* by Gv^{ir} *preceding 43/1 (MS. p. 31 line 32) and 46/1;* byGvis *56/2. In the MS.* ey *is not a variant for* y *elsewhere.* Beyla *has perhaps influenced this spelling.*

Indication of speakers: as in Skírnismál, some speakers are signalled in the preceding prose: Loki (stanzas 1, 11, 54), Sif (53), Þórr (57). Byggvir (stanza 43) is signalled as speaker (ByGv^{ir} *without following* q.) *within the stanza sequence itself. Otherwise the speakers are noted in the outer margins. Six initials, four of which are followed by* q., *survive for stanzas 2 – 8* (e. l.q. e.q l.q. l.q. b^{ra}). *Twelve traces of* q (*with or without dot*) *survive for stanzas 12 – 20, 22 – 24. For stanza 21 a sign* .þ. (*with a curl over the upper stroke of* þ) *is written in the margin* (*aligned vertically with the traces of* q); *presumably, from the context, signifying* oþiN (*'men hvorledes tegnet kan få denne betydning, ser vi oss ikke i stand til at forklare', FJ Facs 127, line 20*). *Twelve initials (with or without dot) survive for stanzas 32 – 42, 44* (l n l n. l. t. l. t. l. f^{re} l. l.). *In the printed text the speakers are stated without palaeographic notation. For further discussion of the indication of speakers in the Eddic poems, see Gunnell (b), 206–12.*

The use of capitals: in the prose prologue, capitals mark the beginnings of sentences as printed here (except that Þar *line 8, and* Þá *line 10 do not have capitals); in addition, the following have capitals:* Bragi (*line 4*), Freyr (*line 6*), Víðarr (*line 6*), siálft (*line 8*). *The following have marginal capitals:* ok (*in* ok þiónustomenn *line 6*), Ægir (*line 7*), Loki (*line 10*). *In the prose epilogue, initial capitals correspond to the beginnings of sentences as printed here, except that* Þar (*line 1*) *does not have a capital, and* en (en meðan, *line 5*) *does; the epilogue opens with a marginal capital. The beginnings of sentences, as printed here, in the prose passages interspersed in the poem, are marked in the MS. with capitals;* Þá (*before 53*) *has a marginal capital. In the poem, marginal capitals are used to introduce stanzas 11, 15, 29, 36, 43, 44, 50, 51, 57, 63, 65; other stanzas begin with the usual initial capital.*

came Óðinn and Frigg his wife. Þórr did not come, because he was in eastern lands. Sif was there, Þórr's wife, Bragi and Iðunn his wife. Týr was there; he had only one hand: the Wolf Fenrir tore his hand off when the bonds were put on him. Niǫrðr was there and his wife Skaði, Freyr and Freyia, Víðarr Óðinn's son. Loki was there and Freyr's servants, Byggvir and Beyla. There was a great company of Æsir and elves. Ægir had two serving-men, Fimafengr and Eldir. Gleaming gold was used there instead of candlelight. The ale served itself there. It was a place of strict sanctuary. People praised the excellence of Ægir's serving-men highly. Loki could not bear to hear that and he killed Fimafengr. Then the Æsir brandished their shields and yelled at Loki and chased him away to the forest, and themselves went to drink.

Loki turned back and met Eldir outside. Loki greeted him:

Loki kvað:	*Loki said:*
1 Segðu þat, Eldir,	Tell me, Turnspit,
svá at þú einugi	before you take
feti gangir framarr,	one footstep further,
hvat hér inni	what here indoors
hafa at ǫlmálom	do they have as ale-talk,
sigtíva synir?	the sons of the conquering gods?
Eldir kvað:	*Eldir said:*
2 Of vápn sín dœma	Their weapons they speak of
ok um vígrisni sína	and their war prowess,
sigtíva synir.	the sons of the conquering gods.
Ása ok álfa,	Among the Æsir and elves
er hér inni ero,	who are here indoors
mangi er þér í orði vinr.	not one is friend to you in his words.
Loki kvað:	*Loki said:*
3 Inn skal ganga	One must go in
Ægis hallir í,	to Ægir's halls
á þat sumbl at siá.	to behold that banquet.
Oll ok áfo	Bitterness and backbiting

3/4 Oll ok áfo] ioll 7 áfo R. *Before* oll *the scribe has written* hropi, *confusing his text with that of the following stanza 4/4. He has then deleted* hrop *with subscript dots, leaving the reading* ioll. *A later hand has erased the deleted* hrop, *but the MS. reading is clear from the ultraviolet photograph. In 4/4 the space in the MS. occupied by* hropi *is the same as in 3/4 and it is possible that the scribe omitted to delete with a dot the final* i (*as Stefán Karlsson noted in his most helpful correspondence with me in 1983: 'Það getur því meira en verið að skrifara hafi láðst að setja depil undir* i *og* ioll *sé villa fyrir* oll'). *Stefán has more recently presented a very attractive alternative reading for 3/4, namely* í ǫllok áfo. *See commentary ad loc.*

fœri ek ása sonom,
ok blend ek þeim svá meini
miǫð.

I'll bring to the Æsir's sons
and so mix their mead with mischief.

Eldir kvað:

4 Veiztu—ef þú inn gengr
Ægis hallir í
á þat sumbl at siá—
hrópi ok rógi
ef þú eyss á holl regin,
á þér muno þau þerra þat.

Eldir said:

You know—if you enter
Ægir's halls
to behold that banquet—
if with slander and spite
you smear the gracious gods,
they will wipe it away on you.

Loki kvað:

5 Veiztu þat, Eldir,
ef vit einir skolom
sáryrðom sakaz,
auðigr verða
mun ek í andsvǫrom—
ef þú mælir til mart!

Loki said:

You know, Turnspit,
if just the two of us are to
rail at each other with rending words,
I shall prove rich
in my responses—
if you talk too much!

Síðan gekk Loki inn í hǫllina. En er þeir sá, er fyrir vóro, hverr inn var kominn, þǫgnoðo þeir allir.

Then Loki went into the hall. But when those who were present saw who had come in, they all fell silent.

Loki kvað:

6 Þyrstr ek kom
þessar hallar til,
Loptr, um langan veg,
áso at biðia
at mér einn gefi
mæran drykk miaðar.

Loki said:

Thirsty I have come
to this very hall,
I, Loptr—a long way—
to ask the Æsir
to offer me one
magnificent drink of mead.

7 Hví þegið ér svá,
þrungin goð,
at þér mæla né megoð?
Sessa ok staði
velið mér sumbli at,
eða heitið mik heðan!

Why so tongue-tied,
tight-lipped gods,
that you cannot converse?
Seat and seating
select for me at the banquet,
or order me off from here!

Bragi kvað:

8 Sessa ok staði

Bragi said:

Seat and seating

velia þér sumbli at
æsir aldregi!
Þvíat æsir vito,
hveim þeir alda skolo
gambansumbl um geta.

select for you at the banquet
the Æsir never shall!
For the Æsir are aware
for what persons they ought
to provide that potent feast.

Loki kvað:

9 Mantu þat, Óðinn,
er vit í árdaga
blendom blóði saman?
Ǫlvi bergia
létztu eigi mundo,
nema okr væri báðom borit.

Loki said:

Do you recall, Óðinn,
when we two in the old days
blended our blood together?
Taste ale
you told me you would not,
unless it was brought to us both.

Óðinn kvað:

10 Rístu þá, Víðarr,
ok lát úlfs fǫður
sitia sumbli at,
síðr oss Loki
kveði lastastǫfom
Ægis hǫllo í.

Óðinn said:

Up, then, Víðarr,
and allow the Wolf's father
to sit at the banquet,
lest Loki against us
utter words of opprobrium
inside Ægir's hall.

Þá stóð Víðarr upp ok skenkti Loka, en áðr hann drykki, kvaddi hann ásona:

Then Víðarr stood up and poured ale for Loki, but before he drank, he toasted the Æsir:

Loki kvað:

11 Heilir æsir,
heilar ásynior
ok ǫll ginnheilog goð!
—nema sá einn áss,
er innar sitr,
Bragi, bekkiom á.

Loki said:

Blest be the Æsir,
blest the Ásynior
and all the sacrosanct gods!
—save for that one of the Æsir
who sits further in,
Bragi, on the benches.

Bragi kvað:

12 Mar ok mæki
gef ek þér míns fiár
ok bœtir þér svá baugi Bragi,

síðr þú ásom
ǫfund um gialdir.
Gremðu eigi goð at þér!

Bragi said:

Steed and sword
from my own store I'll give you
—and Bragi will recompense you as well with a ring—
lest on the Æsir you take
toll for your envy.
Do not anger the gods against you!

8/6 sumbl] sumb`l´ R

Loki kvað:

13 Iós ok armbauga
mundu æ vera
beggia vanr, Bragi.
Ása ok álfa,
er hér inni ero,
þú ert við víg varastr
ok skiarrastr við skot!

Bragi kvað:

14 Veit ek, ef *f*yr útan værak
—svá sem fyr innan emk—
Ægis hǫll um kominn,
hǫfuð þitt
bæra ek í hendi mér
—lítt e*r* þér þat fyr lygi!

Loki kvað:

15 Sniallr ertu í sessi—

skalatu svá gøra,
Bragi bekkskrautuðr!
Vega þú gakk,
ef þú [v]reiðr sér.
Hyggz vætr hvatr fyrir!

Iðunn kvað:

16 Bið ek, Bragi,
barna sifiar duga
ok allra óskmaga—
at þú Loka
kveðira lastastǫfom
Ægis hǫllo í.

Loki kvað:

17 Þegi þú, Iðunn,
þik kveð ek allra kvenna

Loki said:

Bayard and bracelets—
you will always be
destitute, Bragi, of both!
Of the Æsir and elves
who are here indoors
you are the most wary of war
and shy of shots!

Bragi said:

I know, were I outside
—as surely as I've entered in
to Ægir's hall—
your head
I would be carrying in my hand
—that's little for you to pay for your lie!

Loki said:

You're courageous on your cushions—
you shan't achieve that,
Bragi Bench-Ornament!
You go and fight
if you feel furious.
A mettlesome man thinks nothing stands in his way!

Iðunn said:

I pray, Bragi,
for the bonds of kin to prove strong,
that bind born sons and all adopted—
so that you may not against Loki
utter words of opprobrium
inside Ægir's hall.

Loki said:

Hold your tongue, Iðunn,
you I attest of all women

13/5 *after* ero *follows* ma *deleted* (*cf. 2/5–6*). 14/6 er] ec R *corrected* R 17/1 Þegi þú] *written here as one word, subsequently in the poem as two* R

vergiarnasta vera,
sítztu arma þína
lagðir ítrþvegna
um þinn bróðurbana.

Iðunn kvað:

18 Loka ek kveðka
lastastǫfom
Ægis hǫllo í.
Braga ek kyrri
biórreifan,
vilkat ek at it [v]reiðir vegiz.

Gefion kvað:

19 Hví it æsir tveir
skoloð inni hér
sáryrðom sakaz?
Lopzki þat veit,

at hann leikinn er,
ok hann fiǫrg ǫll fría?

Loki kvað:

20 Þegi þú, Gefion,
þess mun ek nú geta,
er þik glapði at geði—
sveinn inn hvíti,
er þér sigli gaf
ok þú lagðir lær yfir.

Óðinn kvað:

21 Œrr ertu, Loki,
ok ørviti,
er þú fær þér Gefion at gremi,
þvíat aldar ørlǫg
hygg ek at hón ǫll um viti
iafngǫrla sem ek.

to be most man-eager,
since you put your arms,
illustriously washed,
around your brother's slayer.

Iðunn said:

Against Loki I shall not utter
words of opprobrium
inside Ægir's hall.
Bragi I'll calm,
beer-gladdened as he is,
I do not wish you two in your fury to fight.

Gefion said:

Why, you two Æsir,
must you here indoors
rail at each other with rending words?
Of Loptr is it not a characteristic well known
that he is whimsical
and all the deities dote on him?

Loki said:

Hold your tongue, Gefion,
now I will tell
of the one who seduced your senses—
that blond boy
who gave you a trinket
and you put your thigh over.

Óðinn said:

You are lunatic, Loki,
and have lost your wits,
to get Gefion in rage against you,
for all the fate of the world

I think she is aware of
as accurately as I.

19/6 fiǫrg ǫll] fiorgvall; va *is presumably a miscopying of* av/au (*i.e.* ǫ) R 21/1–2 *also in SnE 27; see discussion following the text of Lokasenna.*

Loki kvað:

22 Þegi þú, Óðinn,
þú kunnir aldregi
deila víg með verom.

Opt þú gaft,
þeim er þú gefa skyldira
—enom slævorom!—sigr.

Óðinn kvað:

23 Veiztu, ef ek gaf
þeim er ek gefa né skylda,
enom slævorom, sigr,
átta vetr
vartu fyr iǫrð neðan
kýr mólkandi ok kona,
ok hefir þú þar [bǫrn of]
borit,
ok hugða ek þat args aðal.

Loki kvað:

24 En þik síða kóðo
Sámseyio í,
ok draptu á vétt sem vǫlor.

Vitka líki
fórtu verþióð yfir,
ok hugða ek þat args aðal.

Frigg kvað:

25 Ørlǫgom ykrom
skylið aldregi
segia seggiom frá—
hvat it æsir tveir
drýgðuð í árdaga—
firriz æ forn rǫk firar.

Loki kvað:

26 Þegi þú, Frigg,
þú ert Fiǫrgyns mær

Loki said:

Hold your tongue, Óðinn,
you were never able
to share out the slaughters among
men.
Often you gave
whom you should not have given
—the less valiant!—the victory.

Óðinn said:

You know, if I gave
whom I should not have given
—the less valiant—the victory,
eight winters
you were under the earth
a milker-of-cows and a matron,
and there you've borne babies—

and that I thought an unmanly nature.

Loki said:

But you, they said, did sorcery
on Sámsey
and tapped on a tub-lid like the
shamanesses.
In wizard's guise
you went over the world of men—
and that I thought an unmanly nature.

Frigg said:

The fates you two met with
you never must
speak about to men—
what you two Æsir
acted out in the old days—
one should keep always away from
one's past.

Loki said:

Hold your tongue, Frigg,
you are Fiǫrgynn's daughter

23/7 bǫrn of borit] *so* 33/6 R 24/1 síða] síga R 25/4 tveir] .ii. R

ok hefir æ vergiǫrn verit,
er þá Véa ok Vilia
léztu þér—Viðris kvæn—
báða í baðm um tekit.

Frigg kvað:

27 Veiztu, ef ek inni ættak
Ægis hǫllom í
Baldri líkan bur,
út þú né kvæmir
frá ása sonom,
ok væri þá at þér [v]reiðom
vegit!

Loki kvað:

28 Enn vill þú, Frigg,
at ek fleiri telia
mína meinstafi?
Ek því réð,
er þú ríða sérat
síðan Baldr at sǫlom.

Freyia kvað:

29 Œrr ertu, Loki,
er þú yðra telr
lióta leiðstafi.
Ørlǫg Frigg
hygg ek at ǫll viti,
þótt hon siálfgi segi.

Loki kvað:

30 Þegi þú, Freyia,
þik kann ek fullgerva—
era þér vamma vant.
Ása ok álfa,
er hér inni ero,
hverr hefir þinn hór verit.

and have always been eager for men,
for Véi and Vili
you—Viðrir's wife—had
both embraced in your bosom.

Frigg said:

You know, if I'd had indoors
in Ægir's halls
a boy like Baldr,
you would not have got out
from the Æsir's sons—
and there'd have been fighting then
with fury against you!

Loki said:

Still you intend, Frigg,
I should itemize more
of my malignancies?
I arranged it
that you will never see riding
Baldr again to his halls.

Freyia said:

You are lunatic, Loki,
to relate your likes'
hideous hatefulnesses.
Of all fates Frigg has,
I think, full knowledge,
though she herself may keep silent.

Loki said:

Hold your tongue, Freyia,
I'm fully familiar with you—
in you there's no shortage of sins.
Of the Æsir and elves
who are here indoors
each one has been your bed-fellow.

28/4 réð] rǫþ, *which could also be interpreted as present tense* ræþ R. *See commentary.* 29/4–6 *also in SnE 27; see discussion following the text of Lokasenna.*

Freyia kvað:

31 Flá er þér tunga!
Hygg ek at þér fremr my[ni]
ógott um gala.
Reiðir ro þér æsir
ok ásynior—
hryggr muntu heim fara.

Freyia said:

Treacherous is your tongue!
I think for you too in time
it will chant mischance!
Enraged are the Æsir
and Ásynior against you—
ruing you'll return home.

Loki kvað:

32 Þegi þú, Freyia,
þú ert fordæða
ok meini blandin miǫk,
sítzt*ik* at brœðr þínom
s*tóð*o blíð regin,
ok mundir þú þá, Freyia,
frata!

Loki said:

Hold your tongue, Freyia,
you are a baleful witch
and much mixed with evil—
for beside your brother
the blithe powers surprised you
and then, Freyia, you must have
farted!

Niǫrðr kvað:

33 Þat er válítit,
þótt sér varðer vers fái,
hós eða hvárs.
Hitt er undr, er áss ragr

er hér inn of kominn,
ok hefir sá bǫrn of borit!

Niǫrðr said:

There's little harm
though ladies get themselves a man,
a boy on the side, or both.
But this is an outrage, that an
emasculate god
has got entry here,
and this fellow's borne babies!

Loki kvað:

34 Þegi þú, Niǫrðr,
þú vart austr heðan
gils um sendr at goðom.
Hymis meyiar
hǫfðo þik at hlandtrogi
ok þér í munn migo.

Loki said:

Hold your tongue, Niǫrðr,
you were east from here
as a hostage sent to the gods.
Hymir's daughters
had you as a piss-trough
and made water into your mouth.

Niǫrðr kvað:

35 Sú eromk líkn:
er ek vark langt heðan
gísl um sendr at goðom,
þá ek mǫg gat,

Niǫrðr said:

This is my solace:
when I was far from here
a hostage sent to the gods,
I begot then a son

31/2 hygg] hvg R (*?for* hyg); *see Lindblad 28–33.* myni] mý R 32/4 sítztik] sitztv R
32/5 stóðo] siþo R 32/6 mundir] m̄dir R

þann er mangi fiár,
ok þikkir sá ása iaðarr.

whom not a soul hates,
and a wall of strength he seems for
the Æsir.

Loki kvað:

36 Hættu nú, Niǫrðr,
haf þú á hófi þik!
Munka ek því leyna lengr:
við systor þinni
gaztu slíkan mǫg—
ok era þó [v]óno verr!

Loki said:

Stop now, Niǫrðr,
keep your proper sense of proportion!
I shall not let this longer be secret:
on your sister
you begot such a son—
and yet that is no worse than
expected!

Týr kvað:

37 Freyr er beztr
allra ballriða
ása gǫrðom í.
Mey hann né grœtir
né mannz kono,
ok leysir ór hǫptom hvern.

Týr said:

Freyr is the best
of all brave knights
within the Æsir's walls.
No girl he makes weep
nor any man's wife,
and frees every man from his fetters.

Loki kvað:

38 Þegi þú, Týr,
þú kunnir aldregi
bera tilt með tveim.
Handar ennar hœgri
mun ek hinnar geta,
er þér sleit Fenrir frá!

Loki said:

Hold your tongue, Týr,
you never had the talent
for settling two factions fairly.
That right hand
I will recall
that Fenrir tore from you!

Týr kvað:

39 Handar em ek vanr,
en þú Hróðrsvitnis:
bǫl er beggia þrá.
Úlfgi hefir ok vel,
er í ǫngom skal
bíða ragnarøkrs.

Týr said:

A hand I am deprived of,
and you of Hróðrsvitnir:
the harm is heartache for both.
And the wolf too is not pleased
when he must wait in tight straits
for the day of the gods to darken.

Loki kvað:

40 Þegi þú, Týr,
þat varð þinni kono,

Loki said:

Hold your tongue, Týr,
it turned out for your wife

36/6 era] þera R (þ *deleted with subscript dot*) 39/5 ǫngom] bondō R *does not alliterate; it anticipates 41/6.*

at hón átti mǫg við mér.
Ǫln né penning
hafðir þú þess aldregi
vanréttis, vesall!

that she had a boy by me.
Neither cloth nor coin
did you ever acquire
for that infringement of your rights,
poor fellow!

Freyr kvað:

41 Úlf sé ek liggia
árósi fyrir,
unz riúfaz regin:
því mundu næst,
nema þú nú þegir,
bundinn, bǫlvasmiðr!

Freyr said:

The Wolf I see recumbent
at the river mouth,
until the powers are rent:
next to him you shall be tied,
unless you hold your tongue now,
mischief-maker!

Loki kvað:

42 Gulli keypta
léztu Gymis dóttur
ok seldir þitt svá sverð
—en er Muspellz synir
ríða Myrkvið yfir,
veizta þú þá, vesall, hvé þú
vegr.

Loki said:

With gold you had
Gymir's daughter purchased
and surrendered, too, your sword
—but when Muspell's sons
ride across Mirkwood
you won't know then, poor fellow,
how you'll fight.

Byggvir kvað:

43 Veiztu, ef ek øðli ættak
sem Ingunar-Freyr,
ok svá sæl[l]ikt setr,
mergi smæra
mølða ek þá meinkráko
ok lemða alla í liðo.

Byggvir said:

You know, if I'd had ancestry
like Ingunar-Freyr
and so blest an abode,
finer than marrow
I'd have crushed that malign crow
and belaboured every limb in it!

Loki kvað:

44 Hvat er þat it litla,
er ek lǫggra sék,
ok snapvíst snapir?
At eyrom Freys
mundu æ vera
ok und kvernom klaka.

Loki said:

What is that tiny thing
I see tail-bobbing
and skilfully snapping up scraps?
At Freyr's ears
you will always be
and under the corn-mill chattering.

44/2 ek] ek þ^{at} R *influenced by* er þat *in previous line*

Byggvir kvað:

45 Byggvir ek heiti,
en mik bráðan kveða
goð ǫll ok gumar.
Því em ek hér hróðugr,
at drekka Hroptz megir
allir ǫl saman.

Byggvir said:

Barley Boy is my name
and they say I'm a fiery fellow,
all the gods and men.
I'm in high pride here
because Hroptr's sons
are all drinking ale together.

Loki kvað:

46 Þegi þú, Byggvir,
þú kunnir aldregi
deila með mǫnnom mat—
ok þik í fletz strá
finna né máttu,
þá er vágo verar.

Loki said:

Hold your tongue, Barley Boy,
you never knew how
to mete out victuals among men—
and in the straw on the floorboards
they never could find you,
when fellows were fighting.

Heimdallr kvað:

47 Ǫlr ertu, Loki,
svá at þú er[t] ørviti—
hví né lezkaðu, Loki?
Þvíat ofdrykkia
veldr alda hveim,
er sína mælgi né manat!

Heimdallr said:

You're so drunk, Loki,
that you've lost your wits—
why not restrain yourself, Loki?
For overdrinking
dominates every man,
who forgets how garrulous he can be!

Loki kvað:

48 Þegi, þú, Heimdallr,
þér var í árdaga
it lióta líf um lagit:
aurgo baki
þú munt æ vera
ok vaka vǫrðr goða.

Loki said:

Hold your tongue, Heimdallr,
for you in ancient days
the ugly life was ordained:
with muck on your backside
you'll always be
and keep awake as watch for the gods.

Skaði kvað:

49 Létt er þér, Loki
—munattu lengi svá
leika lausom hala,
þvíat þik á hiǫrvi skolo
ins hrímkalda magar
gǫrnom binda goð.

Skaði said:

Light is your mood, Loki,
—you will not for long
toss so free a tail,
for on a sword
with your frost-cold son's
guts the gods will bind you.

45/1 Byggvir] Beygv^{ir} R. *See textual note to prologue line 7.* 47/3 hví — Loki] *also in SnE 27; see discussion following the text of Lokasenna.* 48/4 aurgo] arrgo R; *see commentary.*

Loki kvað:

50 Veiztu, ef mik á hiǫrvi skolo
ens hrímkalda magar
gǫrnom binda goð,
fyrstr ok øfstr
var ek at fiǫrlagi,
þars vér á Þiaza þrifom.

Loki said:

You know, if—on a sword
with my frost-cold son's
guts—the gods will bind me,
the first and the last
was I at the dying,
when we thrust our fingers on Þiazi.

Skaði kvað:

51 Veiztu, ef fyrstr ok øfstr
vartu at fiǫrlagi,
þá er ér á Þiaza þrifuð,
frá mínom véom
ok vǫngom skolo
þér æ kǫld ráð koma.

Skaði said:

You know, if the first and the last
you were at the dying,
when you thrust your fingers on Þiazi,
from my fanes
and fields shall come
cold counsel for you for ever.

Loki kvað:

52 Léttari í málom
vartu við Laufeyiar son,
þá er þú létz mér á beð þinn boðit
—getit verðr oss slíks,

ef vér gǫrva skolom
telia vǫmmin vár.

Loki said:

Lighter in your talk
you were with Laufey's son
when you had me beckoned to your bed
—such a matter must be mentioned by us
if we are completely
to count our blemishes.

Þá gekk [Sif] fram ok byrlaði Loka í hrímkálki miǫð ok mælti:

Then Sif came forward and poured for Loki mead in a crystal goblet and said:

Sif kvað:

53 Heill ver þú nú, Loki,
ok tak við hrímkálki
fullom forns miaðar
—heldr þú hana eina
látir með ása sonom

vammalaus*a* vera.

Sif said:

Be welcome now, Loki,
and receive the crystal cup
full of ancient mead
—that you may the sooner admit
this one woman among the Æsir's sons
to be without blemish.

Hann tók við horni ok drakk af:

He took the horn and drained it:

In the prose before stanza 53 Sif *has been omitted. The scribe has noticed this and put omission marks after* gecc. *He probably added the name in the margin, but it has been cut away.* 53/6 -lausa] lꝛsō R

Loki kvað:

54 Ein þú værir
—ef þú svá værir—
vǫr ok grǫm at veri.
Einn ek veit,
svá at ek vita þikkiomk,
hór ok af Hlórriða,
ok var þat sá inn lævísi Loki.

Loki said:

You'd be the only one
—if indeed you were so—
guarded and grudging towards a man.
One man I know
—and I think I do know—
was whoring—and in Hlórriði's bed—
and that was the calamitous Loki.

Beyla kvað:

55 Fiǫll ǫll skiálfa—
hygg ek á fǫr vera
heiman Hlórriða.
Hann ræðr ró
þeim er rœgir hér
goð ǫll ok guma.

Beyla said:

All the mountains are quaking—
here's coming, I think,
Hlórriði from home.
He'll impose peace on him,
who pillories here
every god and man.

Loki kvað:

56 Þegi þú, Beyla,
þú ert Byggvis kvæn
ok meini blandin miǫk.
Ókynian meira
koma með ása sonom
—ǫll ertu, deigia, dritin!

Loki said:

Hold your tongue, Cow Girl,
you are Barley Boy's wife
and much mixed with harm.
Greater monstrosity
never mingled with the Æsir's sons
—you, dairymaid, are all dung-spattered.

Þá kom Þórr at ok kvað:

Then Þórr strode up and said:

Þórr kvað:

57 Þegi þú, rǫg vættr!
Þér skal minn þrúðhamarr,
Miǫllnir, mál fyrnema!
Herða klett
drep ek þér hálsi af,
ok verðr þá þíno fiǫrvi um farit!

Þórr said:

Hold your tongue, unmanly imp!
From you my mighty hammer,
Miǫllnir, shall take your talk away!
That cliff-face on your shoulders
I shall strike off your neck
and that will be the last of your life!

Loki kvað:

58 Iarðar [burr]
er hér nú inn kominn

Loki said:

Here's Earth's offspring
made his entrance now

57/3 fyrnema] fʸʳ- R *could also be read* fyrir-, *see JH textual note ad loc. The shorter form seems more appropriate to the heavy Lokasenna line (cf. Skm 34/5, 6 where* fyrir- *seems preferable rhythmically).*

—hví þrasir þú svá, Þórr?
En þá þorir þú ekki,
er þú skalt við úlfinn vega,
ok svelgr hann allan Sigfǫður!

Þórr kvað:

59 Þegi þú, rǫg vættr!
Þér skal minn þrúðhamarr,
Miǫllnir, mál fyrnema!
Upp ek þér verp
ok á austrvega—
síðan þik mangi sér.

Loki kvað:

60 Austrfǫrum þínom
skaltu aldregi
segia seggiom frá,
sízt í hanska þumlungi
hnúkðir þú, einheri,
ok þóttiska þú þá Þórr vera!

Þórr kvað:

61 Þegi þú, rǫg vættr!
Þér skal minn þrúðhamarr,
Miǫllnir, mál fyrnema!
Hendi inni hœgri
drep ek þik Hrungnis bana,
svá at þér brotnar beina hvat!

Loki kvað:

62 Lifa ætla ek mér
langan aldr,
þóttu hœtir hamri mér.

Skarpar álar
þóttu þér Skrýmis vera,
ok máttira þú þá nesti ná,

ok svaltz þú þá hungri heill!

—why do you threaten so, Þórr?
But then you won't dare to
when you have to duel with the Wolf
and he's swallowing Victory Sire
whole!

Þórr said:

Hold your tongue, unmanly imp!
From you my mighty hammer,
Miǫllnir, shall take your talk away!
Up I shall fling you
and into the east—
and then not a soul will see you again.

Loki said:

Those eastern travels of yours
you must not ever
tell men the tale of,
because in a glove's thumb
you grovelled, great champion,
and then you did not think you were
Þórr!

Þórr said:

Hold your tongue, unmanly imp!
From you my mighty hammer,
Miǫllnir, shall take your talk away!
With my right hand
I'll smite you with Hrungnir's Bane,
so that every bone in you will break!

Loki said:

For myself, I mean to live
a long life,
even though you harass me with your
hammer.
Stubborn were the straps
of Skrýmir, it seemed to you,
and you could not then reach your
rations—
and so in perfect health you were
dying of hunger!

59/1 Þegi — fyrnema] *abbreviated* Þegi þ. r. v. þ: R 60/6 þóttiska] þotis | ca, ca *erased by a later hand* R 61/1–3 Þegi — fyrnema] *abbreviated* Þegi þ. r. v: R

Þórr kvað:

63 Þegi þú, rǫg vættr!
Þér skal minn þrúðhamarr,
Miǫllnir, mál fyrnema!
Hrungnis bani
mun þér í hel koma
fyr nágrindr neðan!

Loki kvað:

64 Kvað ek fyr ásom,
kvað ek fyr ása sonom,
þaz mik hvatti hugr—
en fyr þér einom
mun ek út ganga,
þvíat ek veit at þú vegr.

65 Ǫl gørðir þú, Ægir,
en þú aldri munt
síðan sumbl um gøra.
Eiga þín ǫll,
er hér inni er,
leiki yfir logi,
ok brenni þér á baki!

Þórr said:

Hold your tongue, unmanly imp!
From you my mighty hammer,
Miǫllnir, shall take your talk away!
Hrungnir's Bane
will bring you to Hel
down below the corpse pens!

Loki said:

I have uttered before the Æsir,
I have uttered before the Æsir's sons,
what my spirit spurred me to—
but only for you
will I go out,
because I know you kill.

You brewed ale, Ægir,
but you will never again
after this furnish a feast.
All your wealth
that's here within—
let flame flicker over it,
let it blaze on your back!

Frá Loka

En eptir þetta falz Loki í Frånangrs forsi í lax líki. Þar tóko æsir hann. Hann var bundinn með þǫrmom sonar [síns] Nara. En Narfi sonr hans varð at vargi. Skaði tók eitrorm ok festi upp yfir annlit Loka; draup þar ór eitr. Sigyn kona Loka sat þar ok helt munnlaug undir eitrit. En er munnlaugin var full, bar hón út eitrit; en meðan draup eitrit á Loka. Þá kiptiz hann svá hart við, at þaðan af skalf iǫrð ǫll; þat ero nú kallaðir landskiá[l]ptar.

Of Loki

After that Loki hid himself in Frånangr's Fall, in the shape of a salmon. The Æsir caught him there. He was tied with the entrails of his own son Nari. But his son Narfi became a wolf. Skaði took a poisonous serpent and

63/1–3 Þegi — fyrnema] *abbreviated* Þegi þv. r. v. þ^{er}. R

fastened it up above Loki's face, and there the poison dripped out of it. Sigyn, Loki's wife, sat there and held a basin under the poison. But when the basin was full, she carried the poison out, and in the meanwhile the poison dripped on Loki. Then he jerked so violently at it, that all the earth shook because of it. That is now called earthquakes.

Lokasenna and Gylfaginning (*SnE 27*)

To give poetic authority to his assertion of the prophetic gifts of Frigg, Snorri concocts a stanza from three stanzas of *Lokasenna*:

Œrr ertu, Loki,
ok ørviti—
hví né legskaðu, Loki?
Ørlǫg Frigg
hygg ek at ǫll viti,
þótt hón siálfgi segi.

Ostensibly Óðinn is here castigating Loki: *Œrr ertu, Loki, / ok ørviti* (*Lks* 21/1–2, cf. 47/1–2: *Œrr ertu, Loki, / svá at þú ert ørviti*), and trying to suppress him into silence: *hví ne legskaþu, Loki?* (*Lks* 47/3, with a variant probably of Snorri's making, *legsk*, 'lie down', 'desist'), because Loki in his rudeness and folly is undervaluing the wisdom of Frigg: *Ørlǫg Frigg / hygg ek at ǫll viti, / þótt hón siálfgi segi* (*Lks* 29/4–6). Snorri has cleverly chosen lines that avoid reference to the situation of Loki's *senna*. I would say that the stanza in *SnE* was 'fabricated' rather than 'muddled' (cf. Gunnell (*b*), 247).

The only SnE MS. variants of interest for the text of *Lokasenna* are (*a*) the addition of *nú* after *ertu* in line 1 (W, U), since this might be relevant to the situation in *Lokasenna*, but not to the context in SnE, and omitted by Snorri on that account; *nú* occurs only twice in the first line of a stanza in the full poem, however (36/1, 53/1); (*b*) the W reading *lezkattu* in line 3, as in the full poem. As often, W seems to have access to a better text than other SnE MSS.

INTRODUCTION

1. Lokasenna *and the Cycle of Ambrosia*

Dumézil has traced an Indo-European cycle of legends which has its clearest exemplification in Indian and Norse texts.[1] First, the gods wish to make a drink that will give them immortality: this is to be created in the ocean. In Indian texts it will be churned from the 'sea of milk', which is the ocean. In Norse (*Hymiskviða*) it will be brewed as ale by the lord of the ocean, Ægir (this ale is never stated to be a drink of immortality in Norse).[2] In both Indian and Norse the obtaining of the implements for churning or brewing cause elaborate problems: an uprooted mountain is required for churning the sea, a vast cauldron must be obtained from the formidable giant Hymir for brewing the ale. Then, when *amṛta/soma* and *ǫl* are ready to drink, both Indian and Norse traditions preserve two variant stories of attempts by the gods' enemies to get the drink for themselves. In Indian:

1. A demon, Rāhu, insinuates himself in disguise into the gods' feast and is in the act of swallowing a mouthful of *soma* when the sun and moon see him and cry out; Viṣṇu beheads Rāhu with his discus. The demonic head, already immortal by its drink, then begins a perpetual pursuit of sun and moon, but, being bodiless, can only cause them brief eclipses as it swallows them. This story is an antecedent of *Lokasenna*.

2. The demons succeed in stealing the *soma* and offer to barter it for the glorious goddess Lakṣmī. Viṣṇu himself assumes the form of Lakṣmī and goes to the demons. Filled with love, they give her the *soma*. Viṣṇu throws off his disguise and slaughters them with his discus. This story is an antecedent of *Þrymskviða*, though in the Norse poem the theme has broken away from the cycle of the drink of immortality, in that the salvation of gods and men from death is no longer linked with that drink, but with the defending hammer of Þórr.[3]

Of the three Norse parallels to incidents in this archaic cycle, *Lokasenna* appears to have been developed most profoundly. The intruder at the feast is not of an enemy rival race, demon or giant, but one of the Æsir themselves, blood-brother to Óðinn, the highest god. He insists on a place at the feast because that is where he belongs. Because he belongs, he can criticize

[1] Dumézil (*a*). For relevance to *Lks* see esp. 1–60.

[2] In the light of Dumézil's work it seems likely that *ǫl*, 'ale', and the runic *alu*, usually taken to signify 'good fortune', 'felicity', are indeed etymologically identical.

[3] See UD (*i*), 678–80.

from within. And so he does, with an inventive virulence that makes those around him think him mad or drunk. But what he has drunk does not make him celebrate immortality. He rejoices rather in malediction and the forecast of universal destruction, not out of moral conviction, but to relieve his furious brain in a brilliant exhibition of spleen. The cause of his first expulsion from the feast, though not told in the poem, is cleverly devised to convey his reckless disgust at the trivial courtesies of the divine life—praising the servants indeed—when the whole pantheon, as he will proceed to demonstrate, is rotten to the core.

II. *Loki's Satire*

A very early example of hostile satire of divine tradition is the invective of Gilgamesh against Ishtar, when he itemizes all her 'stinking deeds' (as she herself puts it; see commentary to *Lks* 30/4–6). We need not always suppose a breakdown of religious faith when we encounter satire of the gods. It will be older than any record of it: an ancient shout of revolt against conformity and reverence; a deeply impudent impulse recognized and ritualized in the saturnalia and satiric customs to be found in most societies, expressed at licensed moments, and—by recognition—intended to strengthen the religion, not to break it. When Loki mocks the gods, he does not mock their divinity, he mocks the human characteristics they have acquired through the millennia of being handled by human hands. He does not say to Óðinn: 'That mead you stole from Suttungr is totally ineffectual', or to Freyja: 'You can't really raise the dead to life by your *seiðr*', or to Freyr: 'Your fields are always blighted'. He jeers at them for transvestism, incest, cowardice, or just bad luck, and distorts their legends outrageously.

These distortions of 'truth' are not harmless fun. They are damaging slanders and the gods fear them: they infect their felicity, their *heill*. In Greek magical papyri slander of the gods is used as a source of magical power.[4] To attract to you a woman you desire, you must attribute to her slanderous statements about the gods. The gods are deeply offended by slander, and a love-spell betraying such slander will rouse 'an irrepressible *daimon* who acts in response to slander against various divine beings'. The *daimon* will avenge the maligned god by driving the woman to seek your house at once and offer you her love. The slander she is to be accused of may be sacrilege 'of a most impertinent and insulting nature. Iaō [creator of the cosmos] did not really create woman from man but from himself and as a result has become an Adamic monstrosity feminized to the point where

[4] Moke 127–34. The divine names in the spells indicate the blend of traditions—Greek, Jewish, Egyptian—that have gone to their making.

he has no ribs at all'. Or 'Adōnai [greatest of gods] did not really triumph over the man Jacob. What actually happened is that Jacob overturned Adōnai in the wrestling match in which God had to ask Jacob for release and consequently would not tell Jacob his name'.

These Greek spells illuminate the fear that transfixes the gods as they feel the fork of Loki's devilish tongue. It is not simply that Ægir's hall is hallowed and the feast sacral: it is the dread that elemental beings—*daimones*, *vættir*—are near who could be provoked by Loki's words to visit the gods' deeds upon them.[5] Accusations do not have to be true before the *daimones* are provoked: the spoken word, the calumny alone, is enough. As Frigg implores Óðinn and Loki: 'Do not tell to anyone what you did in the past, keep your old destiny far behind you' (25). And even if no words are spoken, the deeds are still there, known to the mind. 'Our deeds are like children that are born to us; they live and act apart from our own will. Nay, children may be strangled, but deeds never: they have an indestructible life both in and out of our consciousness.'[6] Do the gods fear their guilt? They do not deny the accusations.

If we examine their deeds, however, what really are they guilty of? They cannot be blamed, as the Greek gods are by Hesiod, for crushing mankind with poverty and slavery. They do not swallow their sons or assassinate their fathers. Loki hates them, not for any sins, but for his own pleasure, like a Thersites, or an Iago, and for the superiority hate gives him. He exposes the sexualities of the Vanir deities, but, as Njǫrðr says (33), does it *matter* if the ladies have a boy-friend or two? And the gods themselves laugh when they surprise Freyr and Freyja in bed (32). The deeds of Loki and Óðinn *í árdaga* that strike Frigg with such fear (25) show them as comic figures—Loki having babies could be as amusing as the accouchement of Zeus as told by Lucian; old Óðinn swaying with his drum like a *vǫlva* entranced would raise a laugh as Cadmus and Tiresias do in their elderly inebriated imitation of Dionysiac dance in the *Bacchae*. The unfair travesties of archaic religious concepts—brother and sister as married gods (32), ritual wedding nights with both god and husband in bed (26)—are turned to laughter. There are jokes about gods who are symbols of non-human things; so Njǫrðr, the ocean, is mocked as a urine-trough into which the rivers trickle as giantesses' piss, and Heimdallr, the world's guardian tree with the fertility of the earth flowing at its roots, becomes a wretched sentry with dirty breeches. So we get sexual jokes and scatological jokes, and also

[5] The role of slander in the love-spells and in *Lks* is of course not the same; for the purpose of the love-spells the *daimones* are avengers of the gods' good name, but I use the spells as a vivid illustration of the rousing of punitive spirits by calumny. I would suppose the role of slander in the love-spells to be a secondary use of a tradition of slander against divinities, but I have not yet been able to investigate this problem with expert guidance.

[6] George Eliot, *Romola* ch. 16.

another popular type of joke, the *schadenfreude* joke—'May I remind you of your right hand, Týr, the one the wolf bit off?' Such jokes may grow crueller on provocation: when Skaði foretells that Loki will be bound by the intestines of his own son, Loki swiftly assures her that he enjoyed every minute of her father's death when he and the gods tore him to pieces with their hands. And she hates him for it (49 – 51). When Frigg bitterly wishes Baldr back to fight him for his insults (27), Loki swaggers affectedly—does she really want to know more of the *frightful* things he has done? 'Well, it's *my* fault that Baldr isn't here, you know!' Frigg has no answer. There is folly to be denounced—to give your sword to get a girl (42)—and poor judgement, or bias—to let the weaker warrior win (22). Yet none of Loki's accusations relate to divine crimes that Prometheus would endure chains and torture to protest against.

There is no sincere moral fervour in the poem, no evidence that the poet was attempting 'to castigate the moral degeneration or lack of religious belief in his own time, or even to do the opposite, to compose a critique of the mythology of ancient times, packed with improper tales and immoral adventures'—possibilities that Dumézil tentatively envisages.[7] Is an audience meant, in all earnestness, to be outraged by the lechery of the goddesses that Loki so censoriously reveals, when he also salaciously boasts that he has slept with three of them himself (40, 52, 54)? Using and twisting well-known material, the poet is spinning satiric repartee at high speed, turning Loki now against this deity, now against that, like a swordsman beset on all sides: a bravura performance in which not a thrust or a phrase falters. He makes Loki terrifying by the force of his lewdness and his lies, and the gods his victims, tied by taboos, by the fear of sacrilege, and—above all—by the fatal oath of blood-brotherhood that Oðinn must have sworn. So Loki and his tongue are free to shatter the other, ever-present, taboos on calumny and evil speech. He is not afraid of the hidden future, or the goddesses who know it (21, 29); he is happy to curse the whole feast and its hall and its holder into the ultimate conflagration (65). Such is his strength that with every adversary he has the last word: all those he attacks seem to withdraw spinelessly before him. Only Þórr can make *him* withdraw, by physical force, not wit. Had the poet been tracing a grave moral theme, with Loki as its mouthpiece, would he have ended his poem with the delightful escapade of Loki darting from under the vast hammer as Þórr heavily trudges round in pursuit of him, repeating the same refrain each time he has missed the skipping figure and tries again? Þórr gives no great impression of intelligence here, as Loki vividly itemizes all Þórr's ludicrous discomfitures at the hands of his own giant namesake, Útgarða-Loki (59 – 62). It is Loki's last mockery of the gods to run rings round their

[7] Dumézil (*a*), 56–7.

great protector. The poet conspires with him by giving Þórr—'Earth's Boy' indeed—the most lumbering poetry in the poem.

Loki's curse (65), and indeed his whole verbal attack upon the gods, has grown no doubt from the tradition that he will become one of the giant enemies of the gods at Ragnarǫk (*Vǫluspá* 48). In *Lokasenna* we can see him, as it were, in transition, still claiming blood-brotherhood with Óðinn and his right to the *gambansumbl*, yet at the same time delivering himself of a divine 'misanthropy', baring before the gods and their sons just what his mind spurred him to (64): a radical desire for their destruction. The malevolent end makes real all the fear in the poem.

Dumézil noted that a variant of the second episode of the *Cycle of Ambrosia*, the stealing of the drink of immortality by the demons/giants, occurs in the tale of the giant Hrungnir's visit to Ásgarðr, preserved only in the prose of *Skáldskaparmál* (*SnE* 101).[8] In Þórr's absence the gods invite the giant to their table; he gets very drunk, wants to transport Valhǫll to Jǫtunheimar, destroy Ásgarðr, kill all the gods and goddesses, except Freyja and Sif, whom he will take home with him; and he will drink *all* their ale himself. The gods now decide it is time to summon Þórr, who comes at once, with hammer raised, and a duel is arranged (see *Haustlǫng* 14 – 18). Hrungnir, lording it at the gods' feast before Þórr comes, must have been a model for Loki in *Lokasenna*. The adoption of Loki in place of Hrungnir at once transforms the old burlesque menace of the giant 'from outside' into the 'last judgement' of a hostile accuser 'from within'. The comic intention of the old burlesque is not lost in the new satire, because Loki is a brilliant clown; but, traditionally, temperamentally, the clown can also be the outsider, who hates his role, and those he plays it for.

III. *The Popular Game of Satire and the Origins of* Lokasenna

Carlo Levi describes a game of satire and insult in Lucania, southern Italy, which illuminates *Lokasenna*.[9] It is called

> *Passatella* . . . a particular favourite among the peasants. On long winter evenings and holidays they play it for hours in the taverns. It often ends in violence. . . . *Passatella* is not so much a game as a peasant tournament of oratory, where interminable speeches reveal in veiled terms a vast amount of repressed rancour, hate, and rivalry. A brief session with the cards determines a winner, who is then the King of the *passatella*, and his assistant. The King holds sway over the wine, for which all the players have paid their share, and he fills the glasses or leaves them empty according to his fancy. His assistant holds the glasses out to be filled and has veto powers, that is, he can prevent the would-be drinker from downing his wine.

[8] Dumézil (*a*), 58. [9] Levi (1965) 190, trans. 177.

The King and his assistant alike must justify both their choices and their vetoes, and this they do in the form of a cross-examination carried out in long speeches, replete with irony and concealed passion. Sometimes the game has an innocent character and does not extend beyond the pleasantry of piling up all the drinks on one man who is notoriously unable to hold them, or denying them to the keenest drinker at the table. But more often the arguments proffered by the King and his assistant reflect the feuds and conflicting interests of the players, expressed with all the slowness, roundabout ways, astuteness, mistrust, and deep conviction characteristic of the peasants. Cards and bottles of wine alternate for hours on end, until tempers boil from the effect of drink and heat and the rekindling of smouldering passions, which are in turn sharpened by vindictive words and yet lulled by drunkenness. Even if a fight does not develop, all those present are aware of the bitterness latent in what has been said during the exchange of veiled insults.

In *Passatella* each man may have the chance to be Loki, to polish his insults in soaring style and relish the freedom to utter 'what his mind spurred him to'. And there would be wine to loosen his tongue fearlessly.

In early Iceland too mockery and hostile raillery was a way of enlivening the hard—or boring—monotony of life. At Krossavík in Vápnafjǫrðr in the early eleventh century (allegedly in the lifetime of Guðmundr inn ríki †1025)[10] a young trouble-maker—with an attractive and forthright side to him—Boisterous Brandr—growing bored with two weeks of respectable behaviour, dutifully accompanying his farmer host everywhere, begins to stay on in the living-room after the farmer has gone to bed, and to initiate *margs konar ertingar*, 'railleries of a wide variety'. *Erta* is 'to mock, tease, provoke into enmity (by your remarks)'. People came from far and wide from the farms in the district, and Brandr's 'entertainment' made a great stir. His farmer host was left to drink in the evening with only one man for company, while everyone else, household and visitors (presumably bringing some victuals and drink with them), watched or joined in the fun. The game of gibes and raillery seems to have been organized in the form of mock lawsuits, because the women began to complain that 'the verdicts were tyrannously arrived at, because no defence they offered was accepted as valid, and they were not allowed to control their own procedures'. They bring their complaint to the farmer host, who blames Brandr and his *sveitungar* ('gang of young lads from the district') for bullying the women. Brandr promises reform and stays in bed when, the next night and the next, the people gather for the ribald *þing*. They have to depart again as there is no *formaðr*, 'convener', to open the Assembly, *at heyja þing*. As in *Passatella*, the sport of *erting* has its formalities. The saga writer claims that Brandr was the first to invent the 'Laws of the *Syrpuþing*'. As *Syrpa* is a name signifying 'girl who cleans up the rubbish (*sorp*)', we could suppose the

[10] *Vǫðu-Brands Þáttr* 129–30, ch. 2.

Syrpuþing to be a somewhat scurrilous make-believe Assembly to which fictitious cases were brought, rousing laughter by their witty improvisations and no doubt indelicacies—like many of Loki's arraignments. That women took part in these mock lawsuits hardly reflects normal Icelandic legal practice. Could it be the influence of the vivacious repartee of the mixed company in such dramatic mythology as *Lokasenna* that made women necessary participants in the *Syrpuþing*, even if only as targets for teasing?

I have cited these two instances of popular satire as entertainment to show that quite sophisticated satire can develop as a social and psychological need in unlearned societies, especially if the mind has no other way of exerting its strength. Brandr's active mind was bored to extinction without the liveliness of other minds to kindle and be kindled by. I would suggest that there is no need to seek for the sources of *Lokasenna* in the Greek model of Lucian.[11] Temperamentally his satire and Loki's have little in common. The mocking dramas of the old gods—*Lokasenna*, *Hárbarðslióð*—must have grown up among the heathen Norse people, been cultivated at the great seasonal festivals at the nobler homes, where *jarlar* and *hersir* would gather vast supplies of grain to refresh their people with ale for several weeks.[12] What better setting for the birth of a *Lokasenna* with its *gambansumbl*? These popular dramas would no doubt be uncouth—like *Hymiskviða*—where their creators were rough amateurs, and fine-drawn—like *Lokasenna*—when expert skalds had control. Icelandic settlers would bring Norwegian festival customs with them, and during the centuries of transition to Christianity treasure and recreate their dramas as verbal heirlooms, polishing them and shaping them with familiarity long before they were written down. There is no evidence that *Lokasenna* could have been composed *ex nihilo* in the twelfth or thirteenth century in Iceland,[13] since we cannot find any poetry there, satiric or otherwise, which may be dated in this period, that approaches *Lokasenna* in maturity of thought, style, or structure. Satiric verse from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries is not devoted to the behaviour of the old gods but to that of political enemies and unpopular neighbours whose petty scurrilities have few mythological reverberations.[14]

[11] See Schröder.

[12] The early Christian kings strove to suppress these great gatherings, knowing that they maintained old heathen traditions (cf. *Hkr* II. 194–8; *Knýtlinga Saga* 154, 160).

[13] See Söderberg (*c*), 74–9.

[14] See UD (*h*), 97–108 for a fuller presentation of the dating of *Lks*, particularly considering the antiquity of its mythological motifs. Söderberg (*b*) offers a valuable critique of the dating of Eddic verse. Before we can advance further in this field of research, on surer footing, we need a complete corpus of newly edited verse texts, including the *lausavísur* in the sagas.

COMMENTARY ON THE TEXT

Prose Prologue

line 1 *Ægir*: personification of *ægir*, 'ocean', loosely, as an elemental being, regarded as a giant (cf. *Hym* 2, etc.); etymologically related to Lat *aqua*, 'water', OE *ēagor*, 'sea'; *IEW* 14; *Lks Introd* 1.

Gymir: an ancient ON equivalent name for *Ægir*, the giant sea, but of less clear origin: possibly related to *gómi*, 'gums', and the notion of gaping jaws (*AEW* s.vv.; note the predatory pleasure implied in *Ytal* 25: . . . *austmarr / jǫfri sænskum / Gymis ljóð / at gamni kveðr*, 'the eastern sea for the Swedish prince chants the Ocean Giant's song for joy' (after the Estonians have killed him); commentary to *Vsp* 3/7; in *Skm* 10/7–8 Gymir is a rapacious and fearsome giant.

line 2 *sem nú er sagt*: i.e. in the preceding poem in the MS., *Hymiskviða*. See *Lks Introd* 1.

line 7 *Mart — álfa*: the speakers Gefjun and Heimdallr have not been specified.

line 8 *Fimafengr ok Elder*, 'Nimble-provider/server' and 'Cook' (not a prose term; from *elda*, 'to heat, cook, with fire', *eldr*).

1/5 *ǫlmálom*: light talk over the ale (which can prove fatally serious, cf. *HHv* 33/2–4: '*sǫnn muno verða / ǫlmál, Heðinn, / okkor beggia*').

2/2 *vígrisni*: hap. leg.; *vígrisinn* adj., *Guð* II 29/3, *Gríp* 13/8, cannot be more precisely interpreted in the contexts than 'excellent in war', 'fine warrior'. The fem. abstract nouns *risna*, *risni* (indeclinable) are terms of high approbation implying 'dignity, magnanimity, generous standards of living', especially in hospitality (*gestrisni*); in verse mainly used of God and saints (*LP*). Etymological relationship with OE *risne*, *gerisene* (both adj. and noun), 'fitting', 'what is fitting, decorous' (also adv. *gerisenlīce*, vb. *gerisnian*) would seem probable; there seems too little evidence to trace to a known stem. Some interpreters would render *vígrisni* as 'eagerness, zeal, for war', because *risna* often implies 'keenness', 'assiduity'; I have kept to a less active term, as I do not think the poet implies more than the gods' self-confidence and vanity at this moment (though the thought of the 'last battle' at Ragnarǫk will be in the distance for them, as for the poet).

2/4 *Ása ok álfa*: see commentary to *Vsp* 49/1–2.

3/4 *Oll ok áfo*: I have kept this reading (see textual note; also SG) to maintain the parallel with the two nouns in 4/4, because I doubt whether the miswriting in the MS. would have occurred if there had not been a parallel. *Oll* does not occur elsewhere in ON texts; it occurs a few times in OE: *on oll and on edwīt*, 'in contempt and scorn' (Napier (*a*), no. 2000), *mid olle*, 'with mockery, sarcasm' (Wulfstan (*a*), 273; Ælfric, *Lives of the Saints* no. 9, line 72); cf. also *MED* s.v. *ollen* vb., 'to scorn, contemn'. *Oll* could be a colloquial term passing from one language to another without much record. No etymology has so far been determined. We may note that 38/3 *til*, 'good', is also OE, hap. leg. in ON.

Karlsson (*b*), 257–66, acutely, but differently, solves MS. 'ioll 7 afo' as *í ǫllok áfo*, 'at the ale-ending, when the ale-drinking has come to an end, accusations/disgrace [I'll bring upon the Æsir's sons]'. Stefán gives a valuable analysis of the occurrences of *áfa* and its various senses in Icelandic tradition. See also commentary to *Am* 1/1 on *ófo*.

6/1–3 *Þyrstr — veg*: a parodistic imitation of Óðinn's obsequious entry into Vafþrúðnir's hall (*Vafþ* 8).

7/2 *þrungin goð*: I picture the gods swelling with rage, but holding back their furious words with lips firmly pressed together, to keep the peace.

8/1–8 Bragi is pointedly chosen to refuse Loki a place at the feast, not only as spokesman for the gods, but because, in a famous poem, *Hákonarmál*, he so warmly welcomes Hákon to drink with the Æsir in amity: *Einherja grið / skalt þú allra hafa. / Þigg þú at ǫsum ǫl!* 'From all the champions you shall have a pledge of peace—accept from the Æsir their ale!' (stanza 16). In *Eiríksmál* 4 (the later poem, as von See (*b*) has clearly shown), Bragi is somewhat tartly reproved by Óðinn for speaking foolishly (*Heimsku mæla . . . skalat þú enn horski Bragi*, *Fagrsk* 78); perhaps Bragi's reputation in later tradition has suffered from his ignominious image in *Lks*. Bragi as the 'best of skalds' (*Grím* 44) may be among the gods as the chosen apotheosis of a great eulogist—such as Bragi Boddason—and court *þulr* (as the heathen King Eiríkr of Sweden was chosen to be *unus de numero deorum* according to Rimbert 62; *AR* §§ 312, 313, 513).

gambansumbl: hap. leg.; see commentary to *Skm* 32/3. *Sumbl* may be used of the drink itself as well as of the feast in general (*Alv* 34, *Háv* 110, *Hál* 15), its potency being sacral as well as realistic (cf. Doht).

9/3 *blendom blóði saman*: no other source tells us this; it is a clever way of expressing the link between the two gods and the identity of their eccentric behaviour (cf. Óðinn as Bǫlverkr, *SnE* 84–5, *Háv* 109). See *AR* Index s.v. *Blutsbrüderschaft*.

10/1 *Víðarr*: Óðinn's loathing of Loki, and of his own predicament, at this moment finds expression in his choice of Víðarr to serve Loki with ale. The scene of Víðarr's killing of the wolf (*Vsp* 52) is here imposed on the scene in Ægir's hall.

10/5 *lastastǫfom*: on the fear of calumny see *Lks Introd* II.

11/1–2 *Heilir — ásynior*: an unctuous citation of Sigrdrífa'a devout words (*Sigrdr* 4/1–2).

11/5–6 *sitr . . . bekkiom á*: perhaps because Bragi has refused him a seat, Loki harps on the theme of Bragi 'seated' (15/1, 3).

12/3 *baugi* could mean 'gift', 'money' in general (see *LP* s.v. *baugr* § 1), as well as a more lordly 'ring' (which perhaps accords better with *mar ok mæki*, 12/1, and *armbauga*, 13/1).

13/1 *Iós*: for alliteration I have used in the translation the popular ME term for 'horse' (*MED* s.v. *baiard*).

13/6–7 *við víg — við skot*: as we know so little of Bragi, we can only suppose that Loki implies that as a poet and orator Bragi composes about battles, but never himself enters them (cf. Hallfreðr vandræðaskáld's *Óláfsdrápa*, an *erfidrápa* for Óláfr Tryggvason, which is a detailed picture of the king's last battle, as participants related it to him, though he himself was far away—*ulfa sultar . . . þverri stóðk ferri*, 'I was placed far from the hero, diminisher of the wolf's hunger' (stanza 27); similarly Þórmóðr Bersason composed from report—*hefk . . . sann spurt*; *frák*—verses on his fosterbrother's fights (*Þórgeirsdrápa* 7, 13; cf. *Fóst* 207–10).

14/6 *lítt — lygi*: for *lítt* adjectivally used for *lítit* (*LP* s.v. *lítt*), cf. *lítt vas þat til þrætu*, 'small subject was that for dispute', *Fóst* 139, *vísa* 3/7.

15/1 *sessi*: I am assuming that the benches would be festively piled with cushions (as in *Njál* 290, ch. 116).

15/6 *Hyggz — fyrir*: in this compact remark Loki says in several ways that Bragi is a coward because he thinks of reasons for not acting, rather than acts (e.g. 'no brave man thinks ahead, takes anything into consideration, is cautious'), but the paramount sense must relate to the precise reason that Bragi has given for his inaction, namely, refusal to violate the sanctuary of Ægir's hall. So Loki is saying, 'If you were really valiant, you would not see *that* as an obstacle': in other words he is warmly encouraging a sacrilege. After all, has he not himself performed such a sacrilege in killing Fimafengr, and survived? For other poetic uses of *fyrir* with the sense 'as a hindrance to' see *LP* s.v. *fyr*, *fyrir* B § 4.

16/2–3 *barna sifiar — óskmaga*: I am not sure that I have understood the reference here. In the poem both Bragi and Loki are called *áss* (11/4, 19/1, 33/4). Iðunn cannot therefore be asking Bragi not to start a racist war between sons-of-the-blood and adopted sons by quarrelling with Loki. She is conjuring Bragi by the force of the two ties of kinship—*sifiar*—that hold the society of Ásgarðr together, its begotten children and its adopted children linked as one family, not to launch into calumnies against Loki. She emphasizes the children, *børn*, *megir*, because of the future that is at stake if Ásgarðr is torn with hatred. See the valuable notes of SG and Söderberg (*a*), 69–70. Iðunn's instinct for peace and the children's future is in keeping with her nature as goddess of renewal and prosperity, yet there is no supporting evidence in ON pre-Christian poetry for the implication in *Lks* 16/2–3 that the gods had a kinship class of adopted sons called *óskmegir*, 'beloved sons'.

Ósk-Rán in *Ragndr* 8 describes Hildr as a bloodthirsty 'goddess' who desires (*Ósk-*) the drying-out of veins. (The reading *óskkván* in Goþþormr sindri is dismissed in *Hkr* I. 180–1). In *Gylfaginning* (*SnE* 27) it is said that Óðinn's *óskasynir* are all those who fall in battle, and that in Valhǫll these are called Einherjar. This statement follows immediately after a composite citation from *Lks* 21, 29, 47 (see the note on *Lokasenna and Gylfaginning* after the text of the poem); Snorri could well have had *Lks* 16/3 *óskmaga* in mind when he turned the Einherjar into *óskasynir*. By Snorri's day the Christian use of *ósk-* to denote adopted sons or the beloved sons of God must have been common (see Fritzner s.vv. *óskasonr*, *ósk-barn*, *-berni*, *-mær*, *-mǫgr*). *Óski* is, however, an Óðinn-name listed in *Grím* 49/8, and we cannot rule out the possibility that it was a heathen tradition of heroes and valkyries, dear to *Óski* (perhaps indeed giving Óðinn this name), which stimulated Christian practice and later faded from record. See Kuhn (*b*), 1–4.

17/4–6 *sítztu — bróðurbani*: Loki is upbraiding Iðunn for a mythological situation in which she found herself. As goddess of the constantly renewed spring of life (see *Haustl* 9; commentary to *Skm* 19–20), Iðunn belongs to the same mythologem as the Vanir. They took as consort their brother or sister. If this marital custom applied to Iðunn, the husband who was killed in the seasonal contest for possession of her would be her brother, and the winner of her, her *bróðurbani*. Another Gmc goddess with close affinity to the Vanir, the Nerthus described by Tacitus, *Germ* xl, bathed ritually before she withdrew to her sanctuary. For the same ritual reason Iðunn would be beautifully bathed before embracing her new destined husband; cf. the ritual bathing of Inanna (Leick 101):

> 'My lady bathes (her) pure lap,
> She bathes for the lap of the king, . . .
> The pure Inanna washes with soap,
> She sprinkles cedar oil on the ground . . .'

(for fuller analysis see Dronke (*h*), 98–101, from which I have briefly quoted here).

The situation Loki castigates here in relation to Iðunn cannot be relevant to Bragi. He has just been mocked for martial cowardice; he cannot now be seen as the May-Queen-winning champion. The poet does not relate him to this mythologem, and we do not need to (even though *AR* §§ 313, 512 notes possible archaic links between Bragi and the hero- and fertility-cults). Pragmatic interpretation can do no more than say that Iðunn had an amorous dilemma—now best forgotten—before she married Bragi. Their alliance in *Lks* is likely to be one of dramatic convenience, bringing together actors without traditional partners, but with legends that the poet wished to satirize.

19/4 *Lopzki þat veit*: i.e. gen. of *Loptr* (Loki) elided with *eigi*, etc. DH have the neatest interpretation here: 'Deutet das nicht auf Loki?' i.e. 'is it not a sign, known characteristic, of Loki?' (cf. *LP* s.v. *vita* § 4 with gen.; Fritzner s.v. *vita* §§ 4, 5). I have not found parallels for the interrogative word-order of the text—I assume *veit þat ekki* would be normal—but parallels with enclitic negative might well be rare.

19/5 *leikinn*: adj. 'fond of amusements, jests' (*Flat* I. 368: *Óláfr konungr* [Tryggvason] *var allra manna glaðastr ok leikinn mjǫk*).

19/6 *hann — fría*: in some tales Loki is indeed a trusted and invaluable companion (in *Þrym*; in Þórr's journey to Útgarða-Loki; in his success in making the irate Skaði laugh; *SnE* 54, 81). In this stanza there is a hint of a Thersites role for Loki, as professional fool and licensed railer. As Ajax's fool, Thersites 'is a privileged man', but also a 'damnable box of envy' who curses his masters with his last words in the play: 'A burning devil take them!' (*Troilus and Cressida* II. iii. 61, V. i. 29, V. ii. 196).

fiǫrg: as a *heiti* for the gods found only here; cf. *fiarghús*, 'temple', *Akv* 40/8 and commentary.

20/1–8 *Gefion*, like Iðunn, will have been brought into Loki's *senna*, because there was a myth about her that could be travestied. Gefjun's myth has, I think, been correctly identified by North (*a*), 217–24. It is the story of the rescue of Freyja's necklace/girdle/jewel out of Loki's thieving hands by Heimdallr in an oceanic fight in which both contestants take the shape of seals. This is in outline the version in *Húsdr* and in Snorri's prose report of stanzas he does not cite (*SnE* 98–100). In *Haustl* 9 Loki is called 'thief of the girdle of Brísingr's gods'. Snorri lists among Heimdallr's kennings 'seeker of the necklace of Freyja' (*mensækir Freyju*), and refers always to her *Brísingamen*. In *Húsdr* the contested treasure is called 'gleaming kidney of the sea' (*hafnýra fǫgru*; see Meaney (*a*); UD (*i*), 669–70). Already we have three variants for the contested treasure: (*a*) the archetypal necklace of the mother goddess (early depicted on Megalithic images; Levy Fig. 67, 68), (*b*) the girdle, and (*c*) the kidney-shaped sea-bean, both (*b*) and (*c*) talismans of childbirth in ON. We may well expect variants in other aspects of the myth also.

Though in no ON text is the necklace of Freyja expressly said to be a symbol of the glorious fertility that she brings to the earth, the identification of Earth's greenery with Earth's jewellery is made explicitly in a Mesopotamian poem (Leick 18):

> The great Earth (*Ki*) made herself glorious, her body flourished with greenery.
> Wide Earth put on silver metal and lapis-lazuli ornaments,
> Adorned herself with diorite, calcedony, cornelian and diamonds.

It is not stated in any text that Heimdallr restored the stolen necklace to Freyja. That scene appears only in the story of Gefjun that Loki tells. The 'blond boy'—*sveinn inn hviti*—is readily identifiable with Heimdallr *hvítastr ása* (*Þrym* 15/2), *hviti áss* (*SnE* 32; cf. *Vsp* 19/3–4). And the *sigli* he gave Gefjun is the necklace saved from the sea, and from Loki. The placing of Gefjun in the role of Freyja could relate to an old identity of the two goddesses. Freyja has many names (*SnE* 38), including *Mardǫll*, 'Tree of the Sea', and *Gefn*, 'Giver', a name identical in form with OE *geofon*, 'ocean'. Gefjun also relates to the stem *gef-*, 'give'. The sea is a rich giver, and Njǫrðr, its god, is proverbially wealthy. For discussion and documentation see North, (*a*), 217–24; *AR* § 555.

sveinn inn hviti: Loki makes his allusion to Heimdallr's 'whiteness' derogatory, 'blond boy' suggesting effeminacy, cowardice (cf. *Bjarn* 140, *vísa* 3/1 (*b*); *Víga-Glúm* 62, n. 1).

sigli: in ON only here and in *Sigsk* 49 (also of an ornament for a woman), probably a borrowing from OE *sigle*, which occurs four times in *Beowulf* (once of the necklace *Brōsinga mene*) and is usually related to OE *sigel*, 'sun', the name of the S-rune (cf. also *Sigelhearwa*, 'sun-blackened one', i.e. Ethiopian, *sigeltorht*, 'sun-bright'). *Sigli/sigle* would probably signify a circular ornament, necklace, torque, or brooch (cf. Lat. *lunula*, 'round, Moon-like ornament', glossed in OHG as *sigilla*, *AEW* s.v. *sigli* 1). The circular *sigli*, representing the *Brísinga men*, representing the fertile earth, is the equivalent of the earth pulled by plough through the ocean by Gefjun to form Sjælland. Bragi calls that earth *djúpróðull*, 'roundel, wheel, sun (*róðull*) of the deep (*djúp*)' (*SnE* 8; UD (*g*), 37; commentary to *Skm* 4/4). The precious *djúpróðull* was also a gift to Gefjun for her sexual favours: *at launum skemtunar sinnar*.

lagðir lær yfir: a coarser variant of 17/4–5: *arma þína lagðir* (cf. *Háv* 108/6), designed to shock the hearers into laughter by its unexpected bluntness.

21/4–6 Gefjun will have powers of foresight (like Frigg, 29/4–6) because she too inhabits the underwater realm (see commentary to *Vsp* 20/3). We may note that Rán, wife of Ægir/Gymir, is called *Gymis vǫlva*, 'Ocean's sibyl', by Hofgarða-Refr, *Skjald* B I. 296.

22/4–6 Most notoriously Óðinn punished the valkyrie Sigrdrífa for killing the warrior to whom he had promised victory; by rights he should no doubt have given the victory to her (*Sigrdr* prose following stanza 4; cf. *Vǫls* ch. 21). Óðinn's intervention in Sigmundr's last battle (*Vǫls* ch. 11) might also come under Loki's criticism. In *Eiríksmál* 6 Óðinn is asked accusingly why he robbed Eiríkr of victory, though so valiant: the answer is, he will need him at Ragnarǫk (cf. *Vsp* 50/7). Hákon góði resents the injustice of his death at the moment of victory: 'We deserved better of the gods' (*Hákonarmál* 12).

23/4–8 Óðinn now introduces a variation in riposte and in metre: suppose I did do what you say, look how *you* have behaved! And he drags up from the past a fantastic sex-change of Loki's in the underworld—presumably among the giants—about which we have no other sources. The poet might be inventing freely here, but certain formal considerations suggest that he could be drawing on older traditions. The eight years of Loki's sojourn below is a traditional period of alienation (cf. *Vkv* 3) or of sacral interludes (as in the great sacrificial festivals at Uppsala, cf. commentary to *Vsp* 19/2). In other texts Loki is said to bear offspring: a foal by the giant builder's stallion Svaðilfari (*SnE* 46–7; *Hyndl* 41), and, from eating the half-roasted heart of an evil woman, he becomes pregnant with the mother of all witches (*Hyndl* 41). Should we interpret 23/6, as 'a milch-cow and a woman' or as 'milking cows and a woman'? Is Loki here re-enacting the primordial role of the cow Auðumla, who fed the first giant Ymir (*SnE* 13), but re-enacting it in the underworld, for some mythological parody? I have for the translation assumed that Óðinn is describing an ordinary woman's life—milking cows and bearing children—but in the underworld (though this may well not be the poet's intention). As a trickster figure Loki can cross all the conventional boundaries of society and sex (see de Vries (*b*) chs.

10, 12). It is prohibited in the Norwegian laws to say that a man is 'a woman every ninth night', or that he has borne children, been used as a woman, or is a mare, bitch (or any other female animal), or whore (*NGL* I. 57, 70; SG). Icelandic laws give a man the right to kill any man who calls him effeminate or a passive homosexual (the prohibited terms being *ragr/argr*, *stroðinn*, *sorðinn*; *Grágas* II. 392–3; Almqvist (*a*) I. 62–6).

24/1–6 Loki in return derides Óðinn as one of those *seiðmenn* who dress up as women and congregate to perform *seiðr* (especially, perhaps, at festival seasons at the homes of rich rulers; cf. *Hkr* I. 42–3, 138–9). Our knowledge of these *seiðmenn* is scanty. Tacitus, *Germ* xliii, records a priest in woman's costume (*muliebri ornatu*) officiating in a sacred grove among the East Gmc Nahanarvali (cf. *AR* § 498). We may suppose the *seiðmenn*'s cult to be not unlike that of the 'lower-class, itinerant eunuch priests of Cybele', who wore women's clothes, consorted with male prostitutes, and claimed mystic knowledge (see P. Dronke (*i*), 9–10, nn. 118–19, on the Greek *Iolaus* fragment, 2 c. AD, which gives valuable insights into this cult; see *Iolaus* in Bibliography for editions). On *seiðr* see commentary to *Vsp* 22/5. In placing Óðinn as a *vǫlva* on an island the poet may be imitating *HH* I 37.

Sámseyio í: presumably modern Samsø, north of Fyn, though why this island (famous for the battle in which Angantýr was killed, and where his haunted grave-mound was visited by his daughter; *Heiðr* ch. 3) should be the place of Óðinn's *seiðr*, I do not know. A connection with ON *sámskr*, 'Lappish' (Lappish *sabme*) would seem more appropriate (on Óðinn's paternity of *Sæmingr* and his links with the far north, see Davidson 57–62).

vétt: probably an older form of *vætt* neut., '(raised) lid on a coffer' (see Fritzner s.v.). I have followed Strömbäck 22–5, whose evidence that Lappish magicians used tub- or bucket-lids, with a handle, as well as drums, seems excellent. If the *vétt* was a poorer style of instrument, that would suit Loki's scornful tone well. For etymology see *AEW* s.v. *vætt* 2. *Vétt* may also be identical with *vítt* (see commentary to *Vsp* 22/4).

Vitka líki: Loki is, no doubt, alluding to Óðinn's journey to the Ruthenians (? in Russia; Saxo III. iv) to practise *seiðr* upon the princess Rindr, to beget a son who would avenge Baldr (Kormakr, *Sigurðardrápa* 3/4: *seið Yggr til Rindar*; *BDr* 11; cf. *Vsp* 32–3). Among the ruses to seduce her, in Saxo, Óðinn disguises himself as a medicine-woman, called *Wecha* (i.e. ON **Vekka* < **Vetka* < **Vitka*, 'sorceress', fem. forms of *vitki*, 'wizard', not elsewhere recorded in ON). As Strömbäck argues, 26, it is not necessary to emend to *vitku* in *Lks* since Óðinn is performing *seiðr* as a wizard by pretending to be female. When Óðinn sets out in his disguise, Saxo calls him a *viator indefessus*, seeking the Ruthenian king for the fourth time: this may relate to 24/5: *fórtu verþióð yfir*.

25/1–8 See *Lks Introd* II.

25/3 *seggiom*: the sense must here be 'people (such as ourselves)', cf. *Skm* 4/2, where Freyr calls Skírnir *seggr enn ungi*, and not literally '(human) men'.

26/2 *Fiǫrgyns*: nothing is told of Frigg's father, though his name is ancient (*AR* § 514). He may have been the partner of Fjǫrgyn, Þórr's mother (*Vsp* 53/10), who was Jǫrð, but that would have been in an older pantheon. It is not known as an Óðinn-name.

26/4 *Véa ok Vilia*: I suggest that this is another of Loki's travesties of an archaic religious ritual situation. Frigg has been in bed with her husband, *Vili*, 'Desire', together with the god *Véi*, 'Hallowed One', who brings conception (*Rík Introd* I. D. *Theme II*). At the same time, in a distinct context, she remains Viðrir's—Óðinn's—wife.

28/4 *réð*: I think the past tense fits the past act better than *ræð*, 'I am/shall be responsible for . . .'. There is no other reason here why Baldr should not be present in Ægir's hall than that he is dead. See commentary to 41/6; Ruggerini 60–1.

29/4–6 See commentary to 21/4–6.

30/4–6 *Ása — verit*: again a travesty of ancient characteristics of a goddess of love and fecundity. Freyja is the *blótgyðja* of the gods, priestess of sacrifices (*Yng* ch. 4). As priestess she would have the sacral role of prostitute, just as the 'sacred servants' and 'courtesans' of Aphrodite welcomed the embraces of worshippers (Pindar, *Encomia* 3, pp. 188–9; Clement of Alexandria, *Exhortation to the Greeks* 33, notes that the sacral fornication at Aphrodite's festivals is paid for by the initiated who 'bring their tribute of a coin to the goddess, as lovers do to a mistress (ἑταίρα)'; cf. *Post* 146: [*Clemens*] *kveðr Freyju portkonu verit hafa*; SG); for Babylonian custom, and the coin thrown 'in the name of the goddess' see Herodotus I. 199). One of Freyja's names is *Þrǫng*, 'Close Company' (cf. *hvíluþrǫng*, 'bed-embrace'), and it is presumably her sacral duty to sleep with all the Æsir; certainly Þórr is called *langvinr Þrǫngvar*, 'long-standing friend, lover, of Þrǫng' (*Þórsdr* 17), though his wife is Sif. Freyja, who chooses half of the slain with Óðinn (*Grím* 14), epitomizes the female *dísir* who seek the death of men to bring them lovers: thus, she embraces the ancestors, *álfar*, when they die, as Rán, her marine counterpart, catches men in her net (see commentary to *Hamð* 15/4; UD (*h*), 103). Like Loki, Gilgamesh turns upon the goddess of fecundity, Ishtar, and reviles her in a catalogue of her sensual myths. She complains to her father: 'Gilgamesh has recounted my stinking deeds, / my stench and my foulness'. She makes no denial (Pritchard 83–4). On harlot goddesses see also Motz (*f*), 104–8.

32/4–6 On this scene see UD (*h*), 101–3 ('The incestuous Vanir').

sítztik — stóðo: MS. 'sitztu — siþo'. I adopt the old-established emendations (see Bugge (*a*) ad loc.), because the meaning requires this. The main vb., whether *siðo* or *stóðo*, calls for a pl. subject (*regin*); the nom. sg. *-tu* of the MS (*sítztu*) cannot therefore be correct. Emendation to *-tic* would not be paleographically strained. *Siðo*, 'bewitched', 'practised *seiðr* upon', is an unlikely action for the gods to take to make Freyja sleep with her brother, as Loki's whole point is to expose her habitual

incest. The idiom *standa e-n*, 'to surprise, ambush someone', is well attested (*Gróug* 9/2–3, *Háv* 154/2; SG).

32/6 *frata*: hap. leg.; the ablaut variant *freta* is more common.

34/2–3 *þú vart — goðom*: the exchange of hostages after the Æsir–Vanir war (see commentary to *Vsp* 21 – 4) is told only in *Yng* ch. 4. In the telling of this very old myth of the uniting of gods, hostage-exchange after war might be a 'modernization' for a Viking society of an older story of departure and return of a fertility deity (cf. *Vafþ* 39) as seasons dictate. The Vanir's homeland and Ægir's domain are here located to the west of Útgarðr, where Þórr has his 'eastern travels' (cf. 60).

34/4–6 *Hymis — migo*: Hymir is the giant who lives east of Élivágar—the icy primordial waves—at heaven's end, against whom Þórr contends in fishing and from whom he steals the vast cauldron for brewing the gods' ale (*Hym*). In other words, an established enemy of the gods. In *Þórsdr* Þórr must wade through a raging mountain torrent: it proves to be caused by a giant's daughter urinating. Þórr, exerting his greatest might, grows as tall as the sky and surmounts the torrent (in *SnE* 106 he also throws a large stone—fatally—at the giantess: *at ósi skal á stemma*, 'one must stem a river at its estuary'). Loki, in his extravaganza, sees the great ocean as Njǫrðr's mouth and all the rivers flowing into it like giant girls—Hymir's daughters—pissing into a urine trough (see UD (*h*), 103–4). The urine of a household would often be pissed into a communal trough for cleansing and tanning leather; this may be the practical image behind Loki's joke.

35/4 *þá ek mǫg gat*: Freyr and Freyja are a Vanir sister–brother pair. Freyja, in one of her forms, was involved in the Æsir–Vanir war. It would seem awkward if her brother–husband were not born until after their father Njǫrðr came to Ásgarðr (*SnE* 31). Practical aspects of the 'myths' develop as dramatic circumstances require them, without regard to older tradition. So Njǫrðr and Skaði become the parents of Freyr in *Skm* (see *Skm* commentary to prose prologue lines 4–5), though Loki mocks Njǫrðr for begetting him on his own sister (*Lks* 36).

36/4 *systor þinni*: there is no ON tradition of a sister of Njǫrðr, other than Snorri's remark in *Yng* ch. 4, that 'when Njǫrðr was with the Vanir, he had his sister as wife, because that was lawful there. Their children were Freyr and Freyja'. Snorri no doubt bases this upon *Lks* 36.

37/1–6 Freyr is now praised as a chivalrous knight in almost Arthurian terms, bringing comfort to ladies and magnanimously freeing prisoners (cf. *Am* 97/5–8; *Skm Introd* I. B, stanza 7). A remarkable adaptation of *Lks* 37/4–6 is found in *Hálfs Saga ok Hálfsrekka* 192, *vísa* 59 (cf. *Skjald* A II. 266, B II. 288) as an exhortation by Hálfr to his army not to ill-treat women (presumably on their campaigns):

Bad ecki hann j her	[Hálfr] bade that in the army
hoptum [*read* hoptu] græta	no woman captive be made to weep,
ne mannz konu	nor to a man's wife
mein at uína	harm be done;

mey bad hann hueria	he bade every maid
mundi kaupa	be bought with a bride price
faugru gulli	in fair gold
at faudr Radi.	by her father's decision.

I suggest that the *Lks* line *ok leysir ór hǫptom hvern* has indicated a military situation to the poet of the *Hálfs Saga* stanza, and the neat change of *ór hǫptom hvern* into *hǫptu* (so too *EddMin*) fits the king's words well with the prose vows made in ch. 5 of the saga (178/30): *alldri hertoku þeir konur ne baurn*.

ballriða, 'brave rider', *ball-* from **balþ-* being a Verner's Law variant of *bald-* (*Akv* 21/4: *baldriða*; these are the only occurrences of the term; for etymology see *AEW* s.v. *ballr*). The suggestion (Söderberg (*a*), 81) that there might be in *ballriða* some verbal play on *bal*, 'vagina', or *bǫllr*, 'testicle', might be relevant if Loki were the speaker, but would be dramatically out of place for Týr. For the audience, of course, Týr's unawareness of his own pun could be part of the joke. On Freyr as a lover see *Skm Introd* I. That he might be imagined, and perhaps dramatically portrayed, as a very handsome ladies' man, keener on women than on war, is suggested by the nickname his enemies give Sturla Sighvatsson, *Dala-Freyr*, 'Freyr of the Dales' (i.e. the district of *Dalir*). On his penitential visit to Rome, 1233, report had it that people wept to see so beautiful a man—*svá fríðr maðr*—so pitifully castigated (*Sturl* (*a*) I. 364; cf. 326, 327, 353). Perhaps his beauty helped him to win the clever young heiress Solveig, whom his uncle Snorri had hoped to marry (299–300). That reluctance to fight went with the name *Dala-Freyr* is evident from his enemy's remark, when Sturla refuses to attack: *Ok ætla ek, at Dala-Freyr sanni nú nafn sitt ok standi eigi nær*, 'I think that Dala-Freyr may now justify his name and keep at a distance' (353).

38/3 *tilt*: hap. leg. OE adj. *til*, 'good', 'just', 'wholesome' is common (see BT for the range of usage). *Bera tilt með* would mean 'to bring about a fair, satisfactory situation between' two sides in a dispute. Týr takes his personality from his unquestioning heroism, when he places his hand in the wolf Fenrir's mouth as a pledge of the gods' good faith when they try to bind him for the safety of the world (*SnE* 32). His deed demonstrates the cost of oath-breaking, and the need, sometimes, to incur that cost. The scanty evidence of Týr links him with covenants and law. He loses his right hand, the hand that pledges faith. The marital embarrassment that Loki (probably) invents for him (40) concerns an illegitimate son and the legal compensation for it (a tale for which there is no other source). The legal element is seen also in the OE *Rune Poem* 48: *Tīw* [MS. *Tir*] . . . *healdeð trȳwa wēl / wið æþelingas*, 'Tīw keeps faith well with princes'.

39/2 *Hróðrsvitnis* i.e. 'Famę's Wolf', elsewhere in the form *Hróðvitnir*; *vitnir* ('one with acute wits, senses') is a *heiti* for wolf (*LP* s.v.).

39/4 *Úlfgi* i.e. *úlfr* elided with *eigi* (Noreen § 291. 10).

39/5 *ǫngom* dat. pl. of *ǫngr* adj., 'narrow', 'confining' (cf. OE *enge*, 'narrow'—*enge*

ānpaðas, 'narrow single-tracks'—'oppressive') used substantivally in dat. pl. for 'cramping difficulties' (see *LP* s.v. *ǫngr*; cf. OE *engu* fem., 'tight place', Grein s.v.).

39/6 *ragnarøkrs*: the word-play on *røk* and *røkr* may well have been an early Christian development, as the older philosophical term, *røk*, became less clearly understood (cf. *Hyndl* 1/5); see *LP* s.v. *røkr*. 'Destined end' becomes 'day's end'.

40/4 *Qln né penning*: Loki names the smallest quantities, 'ell of cloth' and 'penny coin' (a silver coin weighing less than a gram; SG); *penningr* is an early West Gmc word, of as yet undetermined origin, perhaps borrowed from OE into ON at quite an early date, since it occurs in Bragi Boddason's *Ragndr* 12 in a kenning for 'round shield': *Svǫlnis salpenningr*, 'Óðinn's hall-penny'. Valhǫll was roofed with shields, looking just like pennies.

41/2 *árósi*: the river mouth is in fact the jaws of the wolf, the river being the slaver that flows from his watering mouth, which is held open by a sword to stop him biting. The river is named *Ván*, 'Expectation', 'Hope' (*SnE* 37); is the name a reminder that the wolf's hope of freedom is indeed fulfilled (*Vsp* 43/3–4)?

41/6 *bundinn*: according to *Vsp* 34, *SnE* 68–9, Loki is bound after his refusal to weep for Baldr; he admits (28/4) that his *ráð* determined Baldr's death. Loki ought not, therefore, to be at large now. The poet improvises as he wishes.

42/1–3 *Gulli — sverð*: if it is the legend in *Skm* that Loki is travestying, his lies are blatant, since Gerðr refused the gold and the sword was a threat, not a gift. The legend that Freyr's sword fell into the hands of the giants could have no place in *Skm* (see *Skm Introd* III; commentary to *Vsp* 50/3–4).

42/4 *Muspellz synir*: see commentary to *Vsp* 48/2–3.

42/5 *Myrkvið*: see commentary to *Akv* 3/4, *Vkv* 1/2.

43/2 *Ingunar-Freyr*: hap. leg. in ON extant verse, but it is evident from references in the prologue to *Óláfs Saga helga* 3–4 (the 'Great Saga of St Óláfr', based on Snorri's version) that this form of Freyr's name must also have occurred in both *Ytal* and *Hál*, though the verses cited in *Hkr* do not contain it (DH). Byggvir extols Freyr for noble race (I suggest) because he appears at the head of poetically famous genealogies—those of Haraldr hárfagri and Jarl Hákon, for example.

Ingun-: a derivative of Gmc **Ingw-* with nasal suffix as in *Germ* ii, *Ingaevones*, i.e. *Ingvaeones*, and probably OE *Ingwina* (gen. pl., *Beowulf* 1044, 1319); cf. *AR* § 449. DH note that *Ingunar-* could be a woman's name, so 'Ingun's Freyr', comparing 'Qlrún's Egill' (*Qlrúnar-Egill*; *Vkv Introd* IV. A). Might this relate to an archaic brother–sister pair, **Ingwi* and **Ingun*? Byggvir would then be innocently confirming the incest of the Vanir pair (32, 36) by citing this old title instead of using the doublet Yngvi-Freyr (*Hál* 13; *Hkr* I. 24–5). Snorri appears to have been concerned by the form *Ingunar-*, since he offers a doublet *Ynguni* for *Yngvi* (*Hkr* I. 34), not

found elsewhere. If *Ingunar-* is not fem. the form is difficult to explain (see *AEW* s.v. *Ingunarfreyr* for further reference).

43/3 *sællikt setr*: i.e. Álfheimr (*Grím* 5), realm of the immortal dead (*Vkv Introd* II. C).

43/4 *mergi smæra*: the image behind Byggvir's words—of the limbs of a body being ground to pulp, bone into marrow—reflects the archaic myth of the inauguration of the corn-mill by sacrifice (see commentary to 45/1).

43/5 *mølða*: hap. leg. from **mølva*, a variant of *mylja*, 'to pound, smash, break into pieces' (see Feist s.v. *ga-malwjan*).

meinkráko: i.e. prophesying harm for Freyr.

44 The stanza is a riddle, difficult to translate until one knows the answer. What creature is being described? It is small, has a wagging tail, is sly in snapping up morsels of food, is continually 'at the ears' of Freyr (i.e. as his informer or confidant, *eyrarúni*?), and (while pecking up grains beside the corn-mill?) will keep up a chirruping gossip. I think it is a bird because I associate the vocabulary with birds: the wagtail, the eagle that *snapir* (*Háv* 62), the vb. *klaka* which is used primarily of bird-talk (cf. *Ríg* 35: *Klǫk nam fugla*) and secondarily of gossip. Óðinn has two ravens that inform him (*Grím* 20; *SnE* 42–3). Birds cleverly peck grains from the ears of corn. In *Gautreks Saga* 10 a sparrow is the corn-plunderer. So too in *Hkr* I. 35–6 (*Yng* ch. 18), and here the story throws light on *Lks* 44: Dagr, king of Denmark, understood birds' voices. He had a sparrow that flew into many lands and told him much news. Once the sparrow flew into a peasant's cornfield and fed there. The peasant threw a stone at the bird and killed it. Dagr sacrificed a boar to obtain news of the bird, and led an army to avenge it. As he was returning home after the slaughter, a labourer ran out of a wood and flung a pitchfork at the army: it struck Dagr and he was killed. A stanza here cited from *Ytal* records this legend succinctly. Details indicate that Dagr is a Freyr-figure: his name 'Day', his boar-sacrifice, his death by a two-pronged implement, reminiscent of horns and tusks (cf. *AR* § 464; I thank Alan Davey for the references to the corn-eating sparrows). The assiduity of a sparrow fits Byggvir well; I suggest that Loki (and the poet) have chosen the sparrow's image because the bird was already familiar in fables of the fertility god.

lǫggra: hap. leg. in ON, but in Danish *logre*, *loggre*, 'to wag the tail', 'to fawn, be flattering, sycophantic', is well recorded. An eagerly pecking bird seems to be bowing continually.

snapir: only here and *Háv* 62 (of an eagle hungrily scanning the sea for fish, opening and shutting its beak).

at eyrom Freys: what news would Freyr want? Perhaps of the progress of his corn—which a sparrow might test for him—or of his brewing, which his Barley Boy butler would know. Óðinn's ravens were no doubt principally war-reporters.

45/1 *Byggvir*: from *bygg*, 'barley' (cf. OE *Bēow* in the Anglo-Saxon genealogies). In *Lks* he appears as a popular servant-figure, drawing his character from generations of corn- and brewing-games and ceremonies. He appears, however, to have had once a more serious cult significance, as a divine figure, ground up like corn in the mill to provide the livelihood of his people (see the most detailed recent analysis of the sources by Tolley (*c*); on 74 note the reference to a 10 c. pagan feast preserved in a Muslim land, at which 'The women weep for [Tammūz] because his master slew him by grinding his bones under a millstone and winnowing them in the wind'. It is notable that Tammūz is ground up under the millstone *by his master*. Byggvir too has a master; the mythologem may always have had this folk-tale element.

45/2 *bráðan*: Byggvir appears to regard *bráðan* as a compliment, but it brings with it implications of the rashness, impatience, and violence of drunkenness.

46/3 *deila — mat*: I know of no specific happening to which this might refer and take the reference to be to the maladroitness in general of a drunken *Fimafengr*.

46/4–6 *okþik — verar*: here Byggvir is seen as the personification of all the ale spilt into the straw covering of the hall floor when men quarrel and fight at feasts. Such loss of ale is noted with particular vividness in *Ragndr* 4/5–6 ('the well of the ale-cups blended with blood'; cf. *Hamð* 23/2). The disappearance of the ale under the straw then becomes an image of Byggvir's cowardly self-concealment when fighting starts (see McKinnell (*a*), 250).

47/3 *lezkaðu*: i.e. *letr* (*letja*, 'to hinder') + *sk* (reflexive, with assimilation *lezk*) + *a* (negative) + *ðu*.

47/4 *ofdrykkia*: I do not know why the proverbial disapproval of drunkenness should be attributed to Heimdallr (cf. *Háv* 11). Could it be because he has the well of mead at his foot, and—*heiðvanr* (*Vsp* 27/3)—uses it with discretion *morgin hverian* (*Vsp* 28/12)?

48/4 *aurgo baki*: a derisory reference to the *aurogr fors* of *Vsp* 27 (see *Vsp Introd* II ad loc.) from the well at the tree's foot, which laves the tree (i.e. Heimdallr). See UD (*h*), 104–6; (*i*), 666–9 for further discussion and references. The MS. spelling 'ærgo' could also be interpreted as *ǫrgo*, 'cowardly', 'effeminate' (from *argr*), implying homosexual habits (cf. the *níð* in *Bjarn* 154–5), but this would only be useful as a pun on *aurgo/ǫrgo* (for which the vowel sounds might be too distinct).

49/4–6 *þviat — goð*: in *SnE* 69 Loki is bound on three sharp-edged stones with his son's intestines, which turn into iron. In the H variant of *Vsp* 34/5–8 Váli binds Loki with hard chains of guts.

ins hrímkalda magar: 'frost-cold' implies 'of (frost-)giant race'. As Loki begot Hel, the wolf, and the world serpent upon a giantess (*SnE* 34), tradition has assumed other offspring of his had similar origins.

50/4–6 The giant Þjazi (father of Skaði) abducted Iðunn, who was rescued by Loki flying off with her, disguised as a falcon with her as a nut in his claws. Þjazi pursues, as an eagle. The Æsir stack kindling within their walls and, after Loki has alighted, they set fire to the kindling so that the pursuing eagle's feathers are burned and the Æsir get their hands on Þjazi—as Loki says—and kill him (*SnE* 80).

51/6 *kǫld ráð*: see commentary to *Vkv* 31/6. Skaði's coldness to Loki reflects also the coldness of her supernatural character: she is the skiing goddess, *ǫndurdís*, the winter huntress (*AR* § 561).

52/1–6 There is no tradition elsewhere of Skaði inviting Loki to her bed, but he performs a strange sexual charade for her (to make her laugh again, after her father's death, as she has requested; *SnE* 81). He ties a cord to a she-goat's beard and the other end of the cord to his own testicles: both pull hard to get away, now one giving way, now the other, shrieking loud. Then Loki made himself fall on Skaði's lap, and she laughed, and agreed to a pact of peace with the gods. I know of no parallel for Loki's jest, but the ancient tradition that laughter-rousing obscenity can dispell the grief of mourning for the dead is seen also in the legend of Demeter, grieving for Persephone, who is only brought to laughter by the obscene erotic dance of an old woman (*AR* §§ 209, 502; Clunies Ross).

Laufeyiar son, 'Leaf-island's son' (also in *Þrym* 18, 20). Laufey was also called Nál, 'Pine needle' (*SnE* 34). She would be a fitting mother for Lóðurr, if he were a god of vegetation (see commentary to *Vsp* 18/7).

getit verðr oss slíks . . .: Loki adopts a prim self-righteous tone, caricaturing the notion of moral account-books.

53/1–3 *Heill — miaðar*: a deliberate borrowing from *Skm* 37.

53/4 *hana*: for the self-deprecating use of the third person by a goddess speaking of herself, cf. *Hyndl* 4/1–2.

54/6 *hór ok af Hlórriða*: lit. '[being] an adulterer, and to Hlórriði's detriment', *af* having the sense 'taking from' (so DH; rather than *LP* 'because of'). In *Hárb* 48 Óðinn tells Þórr that Sif *á hó heima*, 'has a lover at home', to make him go home more quickly. The poet of *Lks* may have borrowed the motif deliberately to herald Þórr's thunderous return. (*Hór*, acc. *hó*, would seem to be a colloquial variant of *hórr*; see Fritzner s.vv.). See also commentary to *Vsp* 44/6.

Hlórriða: an old name for Þórr (cf. *Vell* 15); the sense of the first element, *Hlór-*, is undetermined as yet.

56/1 *Beyla*: a nickname probably derived from *baula*, 'cow', rare in ON (cf. ModIcel *baula*, 'to low'; in *Bisk* I. 593 *kýr* . . . *drepnar*, 'slaughtered cows', are equated with *baulu-föll*, 'cow carcasses'. Dumézil (*d*), 98–105, argues for *Beyla* as a diminutive of *bíu*, 'bee', representing mead, beside Byggvir's beer. In this case we

should read *Býla*, taking *ey* as an erroneous spelling for *y*, as in 'beyGv^{ir}' (see the textual note to *Lks* prologue line 7).

56/3–4 *meini blandin . . . ókynian*: is Beyla so violently insulted not only because she is dirty (*dritin*), but because she makes her dairy-products dirty? (Compare the early English drinking song, 'Bryng vs in no butter, for therin are many herys . . .', in Greene 255. Butter churns have been excavated that still contain the long red hairs of the English dairymaids.)

ókynian is a strong word: would she be dressed up in horns?

56/6 *deigia*: originally, no doubt, 'kneader of dough', but developing more general significances (cf. OE *hlǽfdige*, 'lady'); here used of a maidservant on a farm occupied with pasturing and milking the cows (M. Olsen 36; Ruggerini commentary ad loc.). Dumézil (*d*), 103, notes that the descriptive name 'One who kneads' fits well the bee who kneads wax for the hive.

dritin: cf. the English milkmaids 'court-patched with cow-droppings' as they milk their cows in the meadows (Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* ch. 25). Dumézil (*d*), 103–4, notes ancient interpretations of the pollen on a worker bee's body as 'dirt'.

57/3 *Miǫllnir*: of uncertain etymology (? 'lightning', cf. Rusian *molnija*, or 'pulverizer', cf. *mala*, 'to grind', *mølva*, 'to crush'; *AEW* s.v.). See E. O. G. Turville-Petre 81–5 for a fine account.

57/4 *Herða klett*: *klettr*, 'cliff', 'crag', 'rock-face', that juts up from the *herðar*, 'shoulders' (see Meissner (*b*), 127 (§ 45 b)).

58/1–2 Loki ostentatiously tells the audience—aside—that 'this is Þórr'.

Iarðar burr: so *Þrym* 1/7; cf. *Vsp* 53/10.

58/3 *þrasir*: the vb. occurs only here (cf. derivatives *Lífþrasir*, *Vafþ* 45; *ǫrþrasir*, 'urgent desirer', used of a giant, *Þórsdr* 17); related to *drasill*, 'fierce-snorting horse', see commentary to *Vsp* 19/2; cf. ModIcel *þrasa*, 'to quarrel, wrangle'.

58/5 *þú skalt við úlfinn vega*: we can imagine a scenario in which Óðinn is dead—gulped down by the wolf—and Þórr is turning to engage the wolf, when Víðarr strides down upon the scene and pierces the wolf himself. The serpent then arrives, engaging Þórr's attention. But this cannot be the scenario originally of *Vsp*, where *úlf* in 53/4 must be an error for *orm* (see *Vsp Introd* III. C. *Problems I* (ii), *III* (i) (*c*). It can only be, therefore, a scenario dreamed up by the poet of *Lks* (or his source), conceivably suggested by ignorant oral versions that had *úlf* and not *orm* in the scene of Þórr's last fight. So outrageous are the travesties in the *senna*-tradition that an accusation that Þórr trembled to face the wolf might be regarded as normal.

59/4 *verp*: Þórr was a practised hurler: of his hammer (*SnE* 103), of red-hot iron (*SnE* 107), of a giant's eyes into heaven (*Hárb* 19).

59/5 *á austrvega*: i.e. into the realm of the giants.

60/1–3 *Austrfǫrum þínom*: Þórr's mention of 'eastern paths' leads Loki to Þórr's eastern humiliations, when he thought a giant's glove was a hall (60/4–5) and could not untie the giant's knots on his food-bag (62/4–7). These are incidents we know from *Gylfaginning* (*SnE* 50–1).

skaltu — frá: Loki in mock awe repeats Frigg's anxious phrases (25/2–3).

60/5 *hnúkðir*, 'sat crouching'; only here in ON, but in ModIcel not uncommon (see Blöndal s.vv. *hnúka* fem., 'a crooked, crumpled figure'; *hnúka* vb., 'to sit in a bent position'; *hnokkinn*, 'bent'; *AEW* s.v. *hnúka*).

einheri: the *einherjar* are Óðinn's warrior champions who live with him in Valhǫll, duelling every day, feasting in friendship (*Vafþ* 41, *Grím* 18, 23; *SnE* 42–4). Loki mocks Þórr as one of this picked band, huddled in a ludicrous hiding-place. Nowhere else is the sg. of *einherjar* used. M. Olsen, 40–3, suggests that *einheri* could be meant also as a pun on *-heri*, 'hare': to have the heart of a hare—*hera hjarta*—is to be a coward (Fritzner s.v. *heri*). The image of a frightened lone hare would fit well with *hnúkðir*.

61/5 *Hrungnis bana*: Þórr reminds Loki of his triumphant duel with the giant Hrungnir, when the great hammer splinters the giant's whetstone in mid-air and then the giant's skull (*Haustl* 18; *SnE* 102–5).

62/1–6 Prancing with the pertness of a schoolboy under the great hammer, Loki defies it to kill him and continues to harp on Þórr's discomfiture at the hands of the giant Skrýmir. 'You may be able to smash a giant's skull, but you cannot undo his knots!'

skarpar, 'hard to get the better of' (Fritzner s.v. *skarpr* § 6).

svaltz: on the 2nd person sg. pret. ending see Noreen § 543. 2b.

63/6 *fyr nágrindr neðan*: cf. *Skm* 35/3.

64/6 *ek veit at þú vegr*: I suggest that this is a reference to Þórr's killing of the giant builder (*Vsp* 26/1–2) despite the oaths sworn by the gods. Loki has Óðinn's safe-conduct—*lát úlfs fǫður / sitia sumbli at* (10)—but what is it worth when Þórr is *þrunginn móði*? (see UD (*c*), 85–6).

Prose This epilogue seems to be a severely abbreviated version of *SnE* 69–70. There is no reference to the place where Loki was bound, so the discrepancy between the threatened *hiǫrvi* of *Lks* 49 and the *eggsteinar* of *SnE* is not noticed. Happily, Snorri's invention of Váli Lokason (see *Vsp Introd* III. C. *Problem III* (iii) (*a*)) is not adopted. The writer is too cryptic when he does not explain the

connection between Nari's entrails and Narfi's change into a wolf. The epilogue is nevertheless valuable to readers of the Codex, in that it explains allusions in the poem to Loki's fate.

On the discrepancy between the pursuit and binding of Loki after Baldr's death and after his cursing of the gods see commentary to 41/6; Söderberg (*c*), 83–94.

SKÍRNISMÁL

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SKÍRNISMÁL

Freyr, sonr Niarðar, hafði setzk í Hliðskiálf ok sá um heima alla. Hann sá í Iǫtunheima, ok sá þar mey fagra, þá er hón gekk frá skála fǫður síns til skemmo. Þar af fekk hann hugsóttir miklar.
Skírnir hét skósveinn Freys. Niǫrðr bað hann kveðia Frey máls. Þá mælti Skaði:

Freyr, the son of Niǫrðr, had seated himself on Hliðskiálf, and was gazing into all the world's realms. He looked into Giant Realms and saw there a lovely girl, just as she was walking from her father's hall to her bower. From that sight he caught great sickness of heart.
Skírnir was the name of Freyr's servant. Niǫrðr asked him to get Freyr to talk. Then Skaði said:

1 Rístu nú, Skírnir, ok gakk at beiða okkarn mála mǫg ok þess at fregna: hveim enn fróði sé ofreiði afi?	Now Skírnir, get up and go and request some speech from our boy and ask him this: against whom in that fertile brain might father's heir be fuming?
Skírnir kvað:	*Skírnir said:*
2 Illra orða er mér [v]ón at ykrom syni,	Harsh words I can hope for from your son

Skírnismál] *so* A; Fǫr Skírnis R. *I have followed the current custom of using the* A *title. Prose line* 1 hafði] hafði æinn dag A

Indication of speakers: (a) in R *Skaði (stanza 1) and Freyr (stanza 40) are signalled as speakers in the preceding prose. Within the stanza sequence itself Skírnir is signalled as speaker before stanza 2* (Scirn^{ir} q.) *and before stanza 10* (Sc. mælti við hestiN), *the Ambátt is signalled before stanza 15* (Ambǫt q.). *Otherwise, the speakers have been noted in the outer margins of the MS. pages by their initial letter(s) followed by* q. (kvað). *The margins have been considerably cut away, so that few of these indications remain. Five initials survive for stanzas 3–8* (sc f. s. f. s.). *Seven traces of* q (*and three dots*) *survive for stanzas 12–23. (b) in* A *Skaði is signalled as in* R. *Ten indications of speaker are within the stanza sequence itself (stanzas 2, 3* Scirn^{ir}. q., *stanzas 4, 6, 9* F. q., *stanzas 5, 8* S. q., *stanza 10* Sc^{irnir} m^{æl}[t]i v^{ið} hæstiñ, *stanza 14* Gærðr. q., *stanza 15* Ambaŧ .q.). *Ten indications are in the margin (stanza 12* .h^{ir}. q., *stanzas 13, 19, 21, 23, 25* S. q., *stanzas 16, 17, 20* (G. *obliterated), 24* G. q.). *In the printed text the speakers are stated without palaeographic notation.*

Capitals (a) in R: *in the prose passages capitals mark the beginnings of sentences as printed here, except that the following do not have capitals:* Þar (*prologue, line 3*), Niǫrðr, Þá (*prologue, line 4*), Freyr (*prose before 40*). *When speakers' names are given in the continuous text, they have an initial capital. (b) in* A: *in prose prologue line 4* Skírnir *and* Niǫrðr *have capitals; in prose after 10, only initial* Skírnir *has a capital. Stanzas begin with a capital, except 4, 12, 13, 14. Marginal capitals are used in 11 and 17.*

1/1 Rístu] Ris þu A 1/6 ofrę`i´þi R 2/2 vón] *so* A; ón R at ykrom] af ýðrum A

ef ek geng at mæla við mǫg, ok þess at fregna: "hveim enn fróði sé ofreiði afi?"	if I go to speak to the boy and ask him this: "against whom in that fertile brain might father's heir be fuming?"
Skírnir kvað:	*Skírnir said:*
3 Segðu þat, Freyr, fólkvaldi goða —ok ek vilia vita— hví þú einn sitr en[d]langa sali —minn dróttinn—um daga.	Tell me, Freyr, field-marshal of gods —for I would like to learn— why you sit alone in the long stretching halls —my liegelord—day after day.
Freyr kvað:	*Freyr said:*
4 Hví um segiak þér, seggr enn ungi, mikinn móðtrega?— þvíat álfrǫðull lýsir um alla daga ok þeygi at mínom munom.	Why should I say to you, young sir, the great sorrow of my soul?— for the elf's orb shines through all the days and yet not to my needs.
Skírnir kvað:	*Skírnir said:*
5 Muni þína hykka ek svá mikla vera, at þú mér, seggr, né segir, þvíat ungir saman várom í árdaga— vel mættim tveir trúask.	Your needs I think are not so great that you cannot say them to me, sir, for we were young together in the old days— we two might well trust each other.
Freyr kvað:	*Freyr said:*
6 Í Gymis gǫrðom ek sá ganga mér tíða mey: armar lýsto en af þaðan alt lopt ok lǫgr.	In Gymir's courts I saw walking a girl to my liking: her arms shone and from them, from there— all the air and water.
7 Mær er mér tíðari en mann[i] hveim	The girl is more to my liking than to that of any man

2/5–6 hveim – afi] *so* A; *abbreviated* h. ē. f. s. o. a. R
3/5 endlanga] *so* A; eNlanga R (*not* eN langa *as FJ Facs 21/18, JH*)
5/6 tveir] *om.* A 6/2 ek sá] sa æk A; *see commentary.*
6/6 lǫgr] læg^{ir} A 7/2 manni] *so* A; maN R
3/1 Segðu] Sæg þv m^{er} A
5/2 svá mikla] mikla sva A
6/5 þaðan] þæim A

*u*ngom í árdaga.
Ása ok álfa
þat vill engi maðr
at vit sát[t] sém.

young in the old days.
Of Æsir and elves
there is not any who wants
us two to be at one.

Skírnir kvað:

8 Mar gefðu mér þá,
þann er mik um myrkvan beri
vísan vafrloga,
ok þat sverð
er siálft vegiz
við iǫtna ætt.

Skírnir said:
The horse give me then
that can get me over the dark
divining, darting flame,
and the sword
that can fight of itself
against the giants' race.

Freyr kvað:

9 Mar ek þér þann gef
er þik um myrkvan berr
vísan vafrloga,
ok þat sverð
er siálft mun vegaz
—ef sá er horskr er hefir!

Freyr said:
The horse I give you
that will get you over the dark
divining, darting flame,
and the sword
that will fight of itself
—if he has a brave wit who bears it!

Skírnir mælti við hestinn:

10 Myrkt er úti—
mál kveð ek okr fara
úrig fiǫll yfir,
þ*urs*a þióð yfir—
báðir vit komumk
—eða okr báða tekr!—
sá inn ámátki iǫtunn!

Skírnir talked with the horse:
It is dark outside—
time, I say, for us to travel
over mist-dank mountains,
over ogre-folk's land—
together we shall gain our goal
—or together he'll get us,—
that grisly great giant!

Skírnir reið í Iǫtunheima til Gymis garða. Þar vóro hundar ólmir, ok bundnir fyrir skíðgarð*s* hliði, þess er um sal Gerðar var. Hann reið at þar er féhirðir sat á haugi ok kvaddi hann:

Skírnir rode into Giant Realms to Gymir's courts. There were raging dogs there, tied in front of the gate in the wooden enclosure round Gerðr's hall. He rode to where a shepherd was sitting on a grave-mound and greeted him:

7/3 ungom] *so* A; *u*ngom R 7/6 sát[t]] sát R (*with omission of the dot above* t *signifying* tt; *see JH1 xiii § 6*); sāt A (*cf. 23/6*). *See commentary.* 8/1 gefðu] gæf þu A 8/1–2 þa, / þann] þaþ^{an} A 8/2 er] *om.* A um myrkvan] of mẏrkā A 9/2 um myrkvan] of mẏrkā A 10/4 þursa] *so* A; þyria R 10/5 komumk] komūz A 10/7 sá] *om.* A *Prose line* 4 skíðgarðs] *so* A; skíðgarði. R (*at the end of the MS. page*)

11 Segðu þat, hirðir
—er þú á haugi sitr
ok varðar alla vega—
hvé ek at an[d]spilli
komumk ens unga mans
fyr greyiom Gymis?

Say, you shepherd
—as you sit on the grave-mound
and watch all the ways—
how shall I have words
with the young wench
past Gymir's dogs?

[Hirðir] kvað:

12 Hvárt ertu feigr
eða ertu framgenginn
. . . .?
An[d]spillisvanr
þú skalt æ vera
góðrar meyiar Gymis.

The shepherd said:
Is death's doom upon you
or are you departed already
. . . .?
No hope of words
will you ever have
with the good daughter of Gymir.

Skírnir kvað:

13 Kostir ro betri
heldr en at kløkkva sé,
hveim er fúss er fara:
eino dœgri
mér var aldr um skapaðr
ok alt líf um lagit.

Skírnir said:
There are better options
than acting the coward
for any man keen to be going:
to only one day or night
my life's end was dated,
and all my existence ordained.

Gerðr kvað:

14 Hvat er þat hlymia,
er ek heyri nú til
ossom rǫnnom í?
Iǫrð bifaz,
en allir fyrir
skiálfa garðar Gymis!

Gerðr said:
What noise is that
I am hearing now
within our houses?
The earth is trembling
and with it all
the courts of Gymir are quaking!

Ambátt kvað:

15 Maðr er hér úti
stiginn af mars baki:
ió lætr til iarðar taka.

The servant girl said:
There is a man here outside,
dismounted from horseback:
he is putting his palfrey to graze.

11/1 Segðu] Sæg þv A 11/4 and-] *so* A, an- R 11/5 komumk] kōumz A 12/3 *no lacuna indicated in either MS.* 12/4 and-] *so* A, an- R 13/1 Kostir] *marginal capital* R 13/2 heldr] *om.* A at] *om.* A 13/5 um] *om.* A 14/1 hlymia] hlym hlymia R; hlẏm | hlẏmia A 14/2 heyri] *so* A; hlymia heyri R nú] *om.* A 14/5 rǫnnom] hǫllū A 15/3 lætr] lætr h^{ann} A

Gerðr kvað:

16 Inn bið þú hann ganga
í okkarn sal
ok drekka inn mæra miǫð
—þó ek hitt óumk
at hér úti sé
minn bróðurbani.

17 Hvat er þat álfa
né ása sona
né vís[s]a vana?
Hví þú einn um komt
eikinn fúr yfir
ór salkynni at siá?

Skírnir kvað:

18 Emkat ek álfa
né ása sona
né víssa vana—
þó ek einn um komk
eikinn fúr yfir
yðor salkynni at siá:

19 Epli elli*lyfs*
hér hefi ek algullin—
þau mun ek þér, Gerðr, gefa,
frið at kaupa—
at þú þér Frey kveðir
óleiðastan at lifa.

Gerðr kvað:

20 Epli elli*lyfs*
ek þigg aldregi
at mannzkis munom,
né vit Frey[r],

Gerðr said:

Invite him to enter
into our chamber
and drink the famous mead
—although I dread
that here outside may be
my brother's killer.

What elves' son is that
or Æsir's son
or wise Vanir's?
Why have you come alone
across the fierce fire
to see our household?

Skírnir said:

I am not elves' son
nor Æsir's son
nor wise Vanir's—
though I have come alone
across the fierce fire
to see your household:

Apples for age-healing
I have here, all of gold—
these I shall give you, Gerðr,
to purchase peace—
that you may say for your part
Freyr is not the most loathsome man
living.

Gerðr said:

Apples for age-healing
I shall never accept
for any man's pleasure,
nor shall Freyr and I,

16/4 óumk] oumz A 17/1–2 álfa né ása] asa æ^{ða} alfa A 17/3 víssa] *so* A; vísa R 17/4 um] *om.* A 17/5 eikinn fúr yfir] æik inn fyr^{ir} A. *JH notes that the spelling of* R eikinn *here and 18/5 with single* -n *reflects a scribal equivalence of* n *and* N *found elsewhere in* R (*a*) *as the final letter in an unstressed syllable* (*as here*), *and* (*b*) *in other positions, e.g. 18/3* vana (*JH1 xiv* § *11, xiii* § *6*) 17/6 ór] var A 18 *not in* A 18/3 vana] vaNa R. *See note to 17/5.* 19/1 ellilyfs] ellifo R; xi. A. *See commentary.* 19/3 mun] man A 19/6 at] *om.* A 20/1 ellilyfs] .xi. R, A 20/3 mannzkis] m^{annz} ænkis A 20/4 Freyr] *so* A; Frey (*taken as acc. after* vit *spelt* viþ) R

meðan okkart fiǫr lifir,
byggiom bæði saman.

Skírnir kvað:

21 Baug ek þér þá gef,
þann er brendr var
með ungom Óðins syni.
Átta ero iafnhǫfgir,
er af driúpa
ena níundo hveri*a* nótt.

Gerðr kvað:

22 Baug ek þikkak—
þótt brendr sé
með ungom Óðins syni.
Era mér gullz vant
í gǫrðom Gymis,
at deila fé fǫður.

Skírnir kvað:

23 Sér þú þenna mæki, mær
—mióvan, málfán—
er ek hefi í hendi hér?
Hǫfuð hǫggva
ek mun þér hálsi af,
nema þú mér sætt segir!

Gerðr kvað:

24 Ánauð þola
ek vil aldregi
at mannzkis munom—
þó ek hins get,
ef it Gymir finniz,
vígs ótrauðir,
at ykr vega tíði.

Skírnir kvað:

25 Sér þú þenna mæki, mær
—mióvan, málfán—

as long as our two lives last,
both live together.

Skírnir said:

I give you the ring, then,
that was burnt
with Óðinn's young son.
There are eight, just as heavy,
that from off it drop
every ninth night.

Gerðr said:

The ring I will not accept—
even though it was burnt
with Óðinn's young son.
I've no lack of gold
in Gymir's courts,
dispensing my father's fortune.

Skírnir said:

Do you see, girl, this sword
—slim, sign-marked—
that I have in my hand here?
I shall hack your head
from off your neck,
if you do not declare accord with me!

Gerðr said:

Suffer coercion
I never shall
for any man's pleasure—
yet this I guess,
if you and Gymir meet,
keen for battle,
a killing will be the end for you both!

Skírnir said:

Do you see, girl, this sword
—slim, sign-marked—

20/5 okkart] okkat A 20/6 byggiom bæði] bẏġv̄ bæð (*i.e. 'share a bed'*) A 21/4–6 *not in* A 21/6 hveria] hverio R 22/1–3 *not in* A 23/5 ek mun] mun æk A (*cf. 6/2*) 23/6 sætt] sat (*i.e.* sátt *or* satt) A (*cf. 7/6*) 24/3 mannzkis] manz ænskis A 24/5 it] þit A 25/1–3 Sér — hér] *abbreviated* Ser þ. þ. m. m^{er}. e^{r}. e. h. h. h^{er} R; Ser þv þ^{æn}na meki. m. m. e. i. h^{ær} A

er ek hefi í hendi hér?
Fyr þessom eggiom
hnígr sá inn aldni iǫtunn—
verðr þinn feigr faðir.

that I have in my hand here?
By the edges of this blade
the old giant will sink—
your father will find his fate.

26 Tamsvendi ek þik drep,
en ek þik temia mun,
mær, at mínom munom.
Þar skaltu ganga
er þik gumna synir
síðan æva sé.

With taming stick I touch you,
for I will make you tame,
girl, to my wishes.
There you shall go
where sons of men
never see you again.

27 Ara þúfo á
skaltu ár sitia,
horfa heim[i] ór,
snugga heliar til.
Matr sé þér [meirr] leiðr
en manna hveim
enn fráni ormr með firom.

On the eagle's hillock
from early dawn you shall sit,
gaze out of the world,
hanker for hell.
May food be more repellent to you
than the shiny snake
to every man among the living.

28 At undrsiónom þú verðir,
er þú út kømr:
á þik Hrímnir hari!
á þik hotvetna stari!
Víðkunnari þú verðir
en vǫrðr með goðom!
Gapi þú grindom frá!

A monstrous sight may you be
when you move out of doors:
let Hrímnir speechless stare at you!
let every creature glare at you!
Wider fame may you get
than the watchman with the gods!
Gape from the bars of the gates!

29 Tópi ok ópi,
tiǫsull ok óþoli—
vaxi þér tár með trega!
Seztu niðr,
en ek mun segia þér
sváran sútbreka
ok tvennan trega.

Idiocy and howling,
plaguing pang and unbearable need—
may your tears grow with grief!
Sit down,
and I shall describe to you
a heavy sea of sorrow
and a double grief.

30 Tramar gneypa
þik skolo gerstan dag

Evil sprites will bow your neck
through the bitter day

26/6 sé] sia A 27/1–2 Ara — sitia] Ár skalltu sitia ara þufu á A 27/3 heimi ór] heī (*i.e.* heim *or* heimi) *followed by omission sign,* ór *supplied in the margin in* R. *In* A heimi *is omitted;* 7 *is supplied* (*instead of* ór) *to form a sequence* horfa ok snugga heliar til *from 27/3–4* 27/5 meirr] *so* A; *om.* R 27/7 firom] *The text of* A *ends here.* 29/1 Tópi] *marginal capital* R 29/6 sútbreka] súsbreka R. *See commentary.*

iǫtna gǫrðom í.
Til hrímþursa hallar
þú skalt hverian dag
kranga kostalaus,
kranga kostavǫn.
Grát at gamni
skaltu í gǫgn hafa
ok leiða með tárom trega.

in the giants' courts.
To the hall of the frost ogres
you shall every day
crawl, without choice,
crawl, without resource.
In place of pleasure
you shall have weeping
and take grief along with your tears.

31 Með þursi þríhǫfðuðom
þú skalt æ nara,
eð[a] verlaus vera!
Þik geð grípi,
þik morn morni!
Ver þú sem þistil[l],
sá er var þrunginn
í ǫnn ofanverða!

With a three-headed ogre
you must for ever eke out your life
or have no husband!
May passion seize you,
pining consume you!
Be like the thistle
that was crushed
at the end of the reaping!

32 Til holtz ek gekk
ok til hrás viðar,
gambantein at geta—
gambantein ek gat.

To a forest I went
and to a fresh-growing tree,
a twig of power to get:
a twig of power I got.

33 Reiðr er þér Óðinn,
reiðr er þér Ásabragr,
þik skal Freyr fíask
—en fyrinilla mær!—
en þú fengit hefir
gambanreiði goða!

Enraged with you is Óðinn,
enraged with you is Æsir's Prince,
Freyr shall turn his hate on you
—most vicious girl!—
for you have gained
the gods' powerful wrath!

34 Heyri iǫtnar,
heyri hrímþursar,
synir Suttunga,
siálfir ásliðar—
hvé ek fyrirbýð,
hvé ek fyrirbanna
manna glaum mani,
manna nyt mani!

Let the giants hear,
let the frost ogres hear,
the sons of the Suttungar,
the Æsir hosts themselves—
how I forbid,
how I deny
the joyous sound of men to this maid,
the joyous fruit of men to this maid!

35 Hrímgrímnir heitir þurs,
er þik hafa skal

Hrímgrímnir the ogre is called
who will have you

31/4 þik] þit R 34/5–6 fyrir- . . . fyrir-] fyrir-[1] *abbreviated* f^{yrir}, fyrir-[2] fyr^{ir}. *See textual note to Lokasenna 57/3.*

fyr nágrindr neðan:
þar þér vílmegir
á viðar rótom
geita hland gefi.
Œðri drykkio
fá þú aldregi,
mær—a*t* þínom munom,
mær—at mínom munom!

down below the corpse pens:
let serfs there
at the tree's roots
serve you goats' urine.
Grander drink
you will never get,
girl—to meet your wishes,
girl—to meet my wishes!

36 Þurs ríst ek þér
ok þriá stafi,
ergi ok œði
ok óþola
—svá ek þat af ríst,
sem ek þat á reist,
ef gøraz þarfar þess.

'Ogre' I carve for you
and three characters:
'Lust' and 'Burning'
and 'Unbearable Need'
—I shall carve it off
just as I have carved it on,
if reasons for that arise.

Gerðr kvað:

37 Heill ver þú nú heldr, sveinn,
ok tak við hrímkálki
fullom forns miaðar
—þó hafða ek þat ætlat,
at myndak aldregi
unna vaningia vel.

Gerðr said:

Rather be welcome now, boy,
and receive the crystal cup
full of ancient mead
—yet I had intended
that I would never in this life
like one of the Vaningiar well.

Skírnir kvað:

38 Ørindi mín
vil ek ǫll vita,
áðr ek ríða heim heðan:
nær þú á þingi
munt enom þroska
nenna Niarðar syni.

Skírnir said:

My message
complete I mean to know,
before I ride home from here:
when at a tryst
you intend to favour
Niǫrðr's thriving son.

Gerðr kvað:

39 Barri heitir,
er vit bæði vitom,
lundr lognfara.
En ept nætr nío
þar mun Niarða[r] syni
Gerðr unna gamans.

Gerðr said:

Barri it is called,
which we two both know,
a grove becalmed.
And after nine nights
to Niǫrðr's son there
Gerðr will grant his pleasure.

35/9 at] af R 36/1 Þurs] *no initial capital* R 36/6 r'e'ist R 39/4 En] en | en R nío] ix. R

Þá reið Skírnir heim. Freyr stóð úti ok kvaddi hann ok spurði tíðinda:

Skírnir then rode home. Freyr was standing out of doors and greeted him and asked for news:

40 Segðu mér þat, Skírnir—
áðr þú verpir sǫðli af mar
ok þú stígir feti framarr—
hvat þú árnaðir
í iǫtunheima
þíns eða míns munar.

Tell me, Skírnir—
before you toss saddle from steed
and step one stride further—
what you achieved
in Giant Realms
for your content and mine?

Skírnir kvað:

41 "Barri heitir,
er vit bæði vitom,
lundr lognfara.
En ept nætr nío
þar mun Niarðar syni
Gerðr unna gamans."

Skírnir said:

"Barri it is called,
which we two both know,
a grove becalmed.
And after nine nights
to Niǫrðr's son there
Gerðr will grant his pleasure."

Freyr kvað:

42 Lǫng er nótt—
langar ro tvær—
hvé um þreyiak þriár?
Opt mér mánaðr
minni þótti
en siá hálf hýnótt.

Freyr said:

Long is a night—
long are two—
how can I suffer through three?
Often a month to me
seemed shorter
than half of this nuptial night.

41/1–6 *abbreviated rather erratically:* Bari. h. l. (*i.e.* lundr) e' vi. l. l. e. e. n. n. þ. m. n. s. g. v. gamās.
R 42 *cited in SnE 41 with two variant lines:* Lǫng er nótt, / lǫng er ǫnnur, / hvé mega ek (megak T) þreyia þriár? / Opt mér mánaðr / minni þótti, / en siá hálf hýnótt. *See commentary to 42/3.*

INTRODUCTION

I. Skírnismál: *The Play and its Plot*

A. Programme notes and stage directions

The prose prologue outlines an initial situation for the story which is not needed for the plot. We do not need to be told that Freyr sat on *Hliðskiálf* and saw into Giant Realms: he tells us himself that he saw into 'Gymir's courts' (6/1–3). The sun's god can see everywhere, crossing the heaven every day and nightly passing through the underworld. He has no need of Óðinn's shamanic seat. The poet has already provided an excellent poetic opening for the action: doting parents, anxious about their son's eccentric behaviour, dispatch a trusted servant to discover the reason for it. Why did an inventive mind supply a prologue in which Freyr seats himself on Hliðskjálf and sees Gerðr in Giant Realms? Almost certainly, I suggest, because *Skírnismál* might often be performed with dramatic action. Two parents directing a servant are not as exciting as an opening dumb show which starts the audience guessing: Freyr enters the scene, creeps furtively up to Óðinn's seat, and mimes the sudden shock of love as his eyes light upon Gerðr. No doubt she will be represented too, a glorious blonde, perhaps, bearing a candle (note how elaborate Snorri makes this scene, as she lifts her hands to open the door of her splendid house and her luminous hands light up the world, *SnE* 40). Freyr will then stumble in despair to his own savourless hall, and the verse dialogue (1 – 3) will follow easily from the sight of his wretched figure in the background.[1] Snorri has also added a moral note, that the pain of Freyr's love was retribution for his presumption—*mikillæti*—in sitting upon Óðinn's 'holy' seat, but this notion does not enter the poem. The opening mime, with or without the mythological novelty of Freyr usurping Hliðskjálf, could have been a device as old as, or older than, the *Skírnismál* we know, but the poet, if he knew it, has declined to make any verbal use of it.

The two prose passages which mark the scene-changes after 10 and 39 are drawn from the poem itself to form 'stage directions'. They do not take the place of any stanzas now lost.

[1] On the dumb show in later drama see Mehl. See Gunnell (*a*) and (*b*) for valuable discussion of Norse pre-Christian drama; on the relation of the prose to the verse in *Skm*, see (*b*), 229–32. My work on Volume II was completed before I could obtain Gunnell's book.

B. Dramatic sequence of the stanzas

The first nine stanzas of the poem present the subtlest dialogue sequence in Norse comedy. The humour of *Lokasenna* and *Hárbarðslióð*, satiric or burlesque, is abrupt, antagonistic, depending upon the swift scoring of rival points, not on an evolving discourse. The humour of *Skírnismál* is one of persuasion, where the brain of the persuader must be continually studying his 'adversary' in order to gain his point.

1. *Freyr in love* (1 – 9)

Freyr's doting parents, when they send Skírnir to interrogate Freyr, Stanza 1
speak of their son in heightened language, using terms in an archaic sense that relates to his sacred nature—*fróði*, *afi*—as fructifier and progenitor. It is as if they were deliberately maintaining the dignity of their sulking boy in front of his servant.

Skírnir's words are not, I think, meant to be heard by the parents. He is Stanza 2
already turning away from them, muttering to himself, sarcastically echoing their stilted terms. He is careful *not* to ask their son and heir 'who has put him in such a foul temper'. He chooses quite a different approach: soft Stanza 3
as silk, tentative—'I should like to know'—and flattering. Freyr is not a 'boy' to him, but a divine commander in the field, a sovereign lord who has all his loving allegiance—*minn dróttinn*. His enquiry must seem inspired by gentle sympathy—with a touch of reproach that Freyr should avoid those who love him, by sitting alone in those interminable solar mansions.

This tender approach makes Freyr feel very sorry for himself indeed. His Stanza 4
reply is ponderous with self-pity—*mikinn móðtrega*—and he makes the pretence of not wishing to tell Skírnir at all. What use could that be? He is just a little page, with no adult experience (the martial reminder—*fólkvaldi goða*—has, perhaps, put Freyr on his dignity). The sorrow that has come upon him has killed even his joy in the sun—which is the sole cause of his being. For another sun has taken its place. Freyr hints at this by linking the ineffectual sun—the *álfrǫðull*—with the unfulfilment of his needs, his desires—*mínom munom*.

Skírnir evidently catches this hint, for he responds at once with the same Stanza 5
phrase—*Muni þína* . . ., 'Your needs . . .' (whatever *that* may imply) can surely be told to so old a friend as himself: were they not young men together when the world was young?

Freyr's heart now opens, and he speaks with great simplicity: he saw in Stanza 6
the home of the sea-giant a girl—he envisages the scene once more—and her arms gleamed so, that all the water and air were lit by them. She must have seemed like a new sun to him, moving in her oceanic world. We may

note that her arms do not illuminate land, but only sky and water, the visible oceanic elements.

Stanza 7 Freyr tries to express the depth of his feeling for this girl: it is a greater love than any young man ever felt in those old days, when the world was young. We see Freyr hovered over by doting parents, his every whim served ruthlessly by an assiduous servant: he is spoilt, cocooned, a baby. He is indeed the only Norse deity whose infancy is given human touches: he had a present when he got his first tooth:

Álfheim Frey gáfo	*They gave Elf Realm to Freyr*
í árdaga	*in the old days,*
tívar at tannfé.	*the gods, as a tooth-gift.*

(*Grímnismál* 5)

This is in the tradition of the joyous childhood of the little sun-god of the ancient Greek world, who laughs when he is born.[2]

When Freyr was a child, was he given, to be his servant, a boy born on the same 'day or night' as himself, as Jarl Hákon was given Karkr (*Heimskringla* I. 297: *'Vit várum fœddir á einni nótt,' segir jarl. 'Skammt mun ok verða milli dauða okkars'*, '"We two were born on one night," says the jarl, "and there will be little space between our deaths"')? Freyr and Skírnir also are fatally linked (see stanza 10). When Freyr and Skírnir were young men together 'in the old days', did Skírnir 'go a-wooing' with Freyr, assisting him in amorous escapades that earned him the reputation of kindness to all women?[3]

mey hann né grætir	*he makes no maiden weep*
né mannz kono . . .	*nor man's wife . . .*

(*Lokasenna* 37/4–5)

Is Skírnir alluding to this when he reminds Freyr of 'the old days'? He would be helpful again if he knew what was needed. He could well have guessed from past experience that it was not any 'man' (cf. *hveim*, 1/5) who had brought this gloom upon Freyr, but yet another girl. If Skírnir's words, *ungir saman / várom í árdaga*, have reminded Freyr of his earlier loves, is he now looking back at himself *ungom í árdaga* and recognizing that his present love is greater than any youthful fancy ever was? For now, in this poem, Freyr is in his prime, *þroskr* (38/5). There is no mention of those childish 'old days' again.

Under the melancholy of his *amor de lonh* Freyr complains of the indifference of the world around him: not one of his own people, god or elf, is willing to make the slightest attempt to win this girl for him. As far as we know he has not asked anyone to do so (indeed, at the beginning of the poem it seems to have been a closely guarded secret). I take his words (7/4–6) to be another petulant hint (cf. 4/4–6) to Skírnir to take an interest in his problem.

[2] See Norden 59–72.

[3] It may well be that there were no tales of Freyr's amorous adventures, and that his reputation as woman's friend arose simply because he was patron of marriages. The nickname *Dala-Freyr* for Sturla Sighvatsson perhaps suggests otherwise; see commentary to *Lks* 37/1–6.

Any approach to a girl with a father as formidable as Gymir would no doubt require diplomacy, but there is also a more particular reason—directly hinted at later in the poem—why Freyr may fear that the wooing will be difficult. In the old days, in a famous duel, he killed a giant (see commentary to *Vǫluspá* 51/5). Was this Gerðr's brother? Freyr uses the term *sátt*, 'reconciliation' (7/6), as the aim of his desire. This could be no more than a metaphorical term for the cessation of 'hostilities' in the 'war of love'. A woman's giving of her love is *frið*, 'peace' (19/4). But when Gerðr fears that 'her brother's slayer' has come (16/4–6), as Skírnir dismounts before her hall, and later declares (37/4–6), after she has been forced to yield, that she never thought she would ever feel kindly towards one of the Vanir, it becomes clear that in the text of this poem her hostility to Freyr has been realistically rooted in family feud. From an old piece of Freyr's mythology there comes the archaic *dramatis persona* of the bride-seeking *bróðurbani* to motivate Gerðr's angry dislike of the god and instantaneous refusal of his love.

The assumption of some scholars that in 7/4–6 Freyr implies that the gods and elves will stand in the way of any alliance with a giant's daughter, because the giants are their immutable enemies,[4] is not supported by the rest of the poem: not only does the vital objection come from Gerðr herself, but Skírnir calls upon both gods and giants to join in cursing Gerðr if she *refuses* Freyr (33, 34).

While stanza 7 can be made to seem complex with implications, dramatically its message is simple: Freyr has found his greatest love, feels tragically that he may never win her, and pins all his hopes on Skírnir.

Skírnir's response is immediate and unquestioning—he is, after all, Freyr's other self: he asks only for the necessary tools—the solar horse and the solar sword—with which he may penetrate and master the giants' underworld. Stanza 8

Freyr presents these divine tools with military precision, and, like the *fólkvaldi goða* that he is, reminds his emissary to use his brains, and not only the bravado that possession of the giant-slaying sword may give him. This advice Skírnir is indeed obliged to follow. Stanza 9

[4] For example, Lönnroth (*a*), S. A. Mitchell.

2. *Skírnir's journey* (*10 – 25*)

Stanza 10 Alone with the horse, out of doors in the dark, Skírnir is practical, prompt, and fatalistic. Embarking on the chill way ahead—*úrig fiǫll yfir*—at the due hour of nightfall, when the sun must go into the dark, he talks to the horse with cold comfort: 'We are in this together. If the giant gets us, he'll get us both'. And the sun will not rise again on its diurnal course. Gymir, the ocean of death, will have overwhelmed them. So much is at stake, and Skírnir knows it (on this mythologem see *Skírnismál Introduction* III).

Prose *A prose interlude now relates that Skírnir rode into Giant Realms to Gymir's courts, where the gate was guarded by savage dogs tied to it. He rode then to greet a shepherd sitting on a grave-mound (presumably near the gate). These facts are drawn from stanzas 10 – 12. What is not described, in prose or verse, is the vast jump of the solar horse over the* vafrlogi (*cf. 8, 9*) *and, presumably, over the savage dogs as well. Instead of a descriptive enactment of the jump, like that of Hermóðr, SnE 64–5, the poet has given us the preliminary to it, the apprehensions of Skírnir and the horse, and the consequence of it, the shuddering of Gymir's courts and the consternation of Gerðr, when the horse lands with thunderous hooves on the grassy* tún *outside her door* (*cf. 14, 15*). *These 'stage directions'—for Skírnir's riding, the yelping dogs, the flickering flame—would invite audience support with hoof-claps and barks and torches.*

Stanza 11 In stanza 10 we were shown Skírnir's anticipation of the deadly journey and the huge giant's hand waiting for them. In stanza 11 Skírnir has evidently arrived without trouble *þursa þióð yfir*, but now encounters an unexpected set-back, the raging guard-dogs of Gymir. They are not, however, in this drama, intended to *act* as a set-back (since the horse evidently can take them in its stride), but rather to motivate the conversation with the shepherd on the grave-mound, and, together with the grave-mound, contribute to the scenery of the entrance to the world of the dead with its perpetual tribe of Cerberus. Quite jauntily Skírnir asks how he can get in to talk to the girl.

Stanza 12 The shepherd is shocked at the outrageous arrogance, even indelicacy, of Skírnir's expectations and insists that he can never talk to Gymir's daughter (he changes Skírnir's less respectful *man* into *góð mær*). The shepherd is one of the ubiquitous warning figures of legend and romance who advise the hero to go back before it is too late (cf. *Hamðismál* 22, *PE* I. 172, n. 2), in order to give the audience some measure of the danger ahead.

Stanza 13 Skírnir abandons optimism but not courage. Reflecting that he can only die once, he vaults *eikinn fúr yfir* (cf. 17/4–6), off-stage.

Stanza 14 The scene changes to Gerðr's parlour, as she exclaims at the earthquake of Skírnir's landing.

Stanza 15 Her maid meanwhile is peeping outside, watching a man getting off his horse and the horse grazing on their grass. She reports this to her mistress.

Apparently there is nothing remarkable to her about either the man or the horse; it is just astonishing that they are there at all. (On the possible omission of the second *helmingr* see commentary ad loc.)

In common courtesy Gerðr bids the girl invite the visitor in and offer him Stanza 16 their mead, but—aside, secretly to herself—she murmurs her suspicion that this unexpected visitor could be no other than her brother's killer—the husband that destiny would force upon her. Gerðr is no simpleton.

When (presumably) Skírnir enters, she questions him graciously—des- Stanza 17 pite her suspicions—as to his origins and why he has, quite alone, crossed the flames to visit them.

Skírnir disclaims all the kindred she suggests for him—No, not of the Stanza 18 *álfar* or the *æsir* or the *vanir*—and yet he has crossed the flames to visit them. His formal repetition of Gerðr's words with a negative implies an apotropaic refusal to identify himself. Just so Sigurðr refuses to admit to any known origins—'I have gone about as a motherless son, no father have I'—when the dying Fáfnir asks his name (*Fáfnismál* 2). Sigurðr too emphasizes that he acts alone: *geng ek æ einn saman*. Skírnir does not wish Gerðr to have any identity to curse him by, if he must in the end coerce her. To cover this embarrassing fact, he speeds on without delay to his mission.

With the dexterity of a conjuror he produces from somewhere about his Stanza 19 person the golden apples of immortality (if there are eleven of them, then the feat is even more impressive): golden bribes to dazzle a girl indeed, but full of religious meaning, if the girl would see it. The eternity of the gods will be in Gerðr's hands if she accepts the apples and Freyr with them.

Gerðr roundly refuses. She sees nothing of this 'religious meaning', she Stanza 20 sees only that she is being manipulated. She notes the deprecating, almost simpering style of Skírnir's approach and the covered diction—*frið at kaupa . . . óleiðastan*—and decides to have nothing to do with it. However long her life and Freyr's could be, she would never cohabit with him for any of it.

Without any comment—unless it is the resigned *þá* of 21/1—Skírnir then Stanza 21 offers the magical ring of life-renewal that Baldr was given, that will ensure a perpetual, well-regulated reproduction of itself, continuing circles of fresh life for the world. It was burnt with Baldr, but burnt gold comes back to life—as Gullveig did, and Baldr will (*Vǫluspá* 22, 59). When, as Freyr's wife, she owns this ring, she has the source of the world's undying vitality.

But why should Gerðr want a ring that produces more and more gold? Stanza 22 Her father's inestimable stores of submarine gold—those that light up the ocean for his feasts (see commentary to *Vǫluspá* 36/8, *Lokasenna* prose line 1)—can well suffice her. Freyr's future plans are of no concern to her. She refuses to rise from the depths for him.

Stanza 23 Now Skírnir is obliged to turn to physical threats. He makes her look at the spells marked on his sword: with this he will behead her.

Stanza 24 Gerðr refuses to be tyrannized. If it is a fight Skírnir wants, her father will fight him.

Stanza 25 Skírnir forces her to look at the spellbound sword again. Against this sword—the word of the sun—the giant cannot fight and live . . .

But a fight is the last thing Skírnir wants: it would not advance Freyr's desires in the least. His temptations have failed, his coercion has failed: he will now try the power of insidious and loathsome fear—based upon home truths.

3. *Skírnir's curse (26 – 36)*

Stanza 26 Acting swiftly before this clever girl can think of another retort, Skírnir now moves closer to her, completely changing his techniques. He strikes her, not with a sword, but lightly with a stick, a magic stick 'of taming', he tells her. He unfolds gradually a curse directed against her sanity of mind, her body's growth, and all the social nurture that human life thrives on. There is no attempt, or wish, to distinguish her as a giant maiden from a human maiden, a part of the world of *gumna synir* (26/5). Her feelings are conceived of as human feelings, but in a mythological context. Skírnir's curse is a human nightmare.

He designs the progress of her destruction in stages:

1. First there is loneliness, banishment from the human world (26/4–6). We know from *Hávamál* what this deprivation would be, not only of gladness—

Ungr var ek forðom,	*Young I was once,*	
fór ek einn saman;	*I walked alone;*	
þá varð ek villr vega.	*then I lost my way.*	
Auðigr þóttumz	*Rich I thought myself*	
er ek annan fann:	*when I met another:*	
maðr er mannz gaman.	*man's delight is man.*	(47)

—but of cultivation of mind—

Maðr af manni	*Man from man*	
verðr at máli kuðr,	*grows skilled in speech,*	
en til dælskr af dul.	*and from self-seclusion*	
	too stultified.	(57)

These are two deprivations that Skírnir keeps constantly before Gerðr.

Stanza 27 2. From this loneliness and torpor will grow a manic hatred of life: she will crouch at the margin of the worlds, turning her back upon the world of

the living, morbidly attracted to the world of the dead. The sight of food—fuel of life—will make her shudder with loathing. An extreme anorexia.

3. Next there will be travesty, her identity will be mockingly trans- Stanza 28 formed. In the chthonic world she longed for she will be ostracized, a monstrosity that makes giants stare in amazement, a gargoyle guarding with shrieking jaws the barred gates of Hel (see commentary ad loc.). All eyes will be riveted upon her—she will become more famous guarding Hel than Heimdallr guarding the gods!

4. Then there will be dementia, neurasthenia, the collapse of all Stanza 29 emotional control. She will be like an idiot and howl, tortured by her feelings, overwhelmed by tears. Skírnir now makes her sit, to prepare her for her weakness, mesmerize her the more—as Hamlet mesmerizes his mother—

> 'Come, come, and sit you down. You shall not budge.
> You go not till I set you up a glass
> Where you may see the inmost part of you'
>
> (*Hamlet* III. iv. 18–20)

and proceeds to paint the despair of Gerðr's life to come, her twofold grief, *tvennan trega*.

5. Punishment and deprivation in her daily life will deform her body: she Stanza 30 will not grow properly. Bullying imps will force her neck down so that she cannot look up, only down to the ground. She will be a plant that never sees the sun. Through sunlessness her movement will be crippled, she will not walk straight. Nowhere to go but the frost-ogres' frozen hall, no choice of anything better—for the girl who had the freedom *at deila fé fǫður*! Tears will be her only comfort.

6. From the stunting of her bones Skírnir proceeds to her sexual dis- Stanza 31 integration. Underlying his chosen details there may well be a whole folklore of sex now lost to us. Nevertheless, one surviving piece of information does seem to me to be helpful. The Norwegian and Icelandic *Runic Poems* tell us that the *Purs* ('Ogre') rune causes women's sickness (*Purs vældr kvinna kvillu*, Norwegian), or is women's torment (*Þurs er kvenna kvǫl*, Icelandic).[5] All or any sickness or torment of women could be referred to here: so, in general any illness or pain a woman might feel could be attributed to the influence of a *þurs*. The one specific *kvilla* or *kvǫl* endured universally by women, however, is menstruation, regarded in innumerable societies past and present as dangerous to the people and their land. In the context of Freyr's wooing, with its fruitful prospects, marriage with a *þurs* implies a life of endless menstruation, endless prohibition of intercourse, endless

[5] Cited from Dickins 24, 28.

confinement hidden away from the light of sun and moon (which the menstruating woman would infect should they shine upon her), and shut away from all social life; above all, a life of total infertility. Throughout this nadir of existence Skírnir curses her to be racked with sexual feeling, until she shrivels with despair, a trampled thistle cast out of the world's harvest. That is the double grief, of sexual need and its denial, that he warned her of (29/7).

We should perhaps ask what was the marital function of the three-headed *þurs* who would be her *ver*? I suggest that he would be the traditional personification of all the menstrual prohibitions, and that 'intercourse' with him would be total frustration of the instincts of life (which the verb *nara*, 31/2, implies). To menstruate is to be married to a *þurs*, to fail to be fertile.

Stanza 32 Skírnir now makes sure that she knows he has power to perform all this. His taming stick, he warns her, he selected from a living, sappy tree in the forest: the magic in it is a vital force. The poet juxtaposes the thistle—dead weed—with the living twig. Having this power manifest in his hand in front of her, *Skírnir* moves to a new realm of anathema.

Stanza 33 Like an exorcizing priest he pronounces the anger of the gods against her. She is evil: she has brought divine wrath upon herself!

Stanza 34 Invoking giants and gods alike—her world and Freyr's world—to witness his words, he bans all happiness for the recalcitrant girl—in human terms of conviviality, sexual joy, children.

Stanza 35 He turns back then from what she shall *not* have to what she shall have, as if to settle the matter legally: naming the ogre mate and master destined for her and informing her of her marital conditions. The *þurs* will, naturally, keep her underground (away from the light), lower even than the corpses. Her drink will be goats' urine, handed to her by the household slaves, the untouchables who must serve the menstruating women. Skírnir adds viciously that he will see to it that she gets no better drink. (On the placing of stanza 35 see commentary ad loc.)

Stanza 36 On this deliberate note of animosity—he wants her to be really sure that he is serious: this is not like the abortive threat with the sword—he begins to carve runes to seal his curse. First is the *Þurs*-rune, then three more, which (he says) mean uncontrollable, savage, and quite intolerable sexual need—*æði* is used of sows in heat—all three terms designed to make Gerðr see herself totally stripped of all dignity. Having played this nasty trick, Skírnir quickly adds: 'I can carve it all off again, of course, should there be any reason to do so'.

4. *Gerðr's capitulation (37 – 39)*

Gerðr argues no more. Gently, a little wearily, ironically perhaps—a player playing her part would have a choice of attitudes—she welcomes Skírnir: 'Be welcome, rather . . .'. *Heldr*—instead of all this carving of curses, accept this drink, boy, after your great performance. She does not capitulate because he has frightened her, but because she sees some truth in what he says. Some day she must be wedded; he has painted the alternative very well. But she does not embrace the union with Freyr with any warmth (is there a sardonic touch in her choice of the word *gaman* when she names their tryst, 39/6? It does not suggest love or tender feeling). The Vanir are not the sort of people she had ever imagined caring for. Stanza 37

Businesslike and prompt, wasting no words or time, Skírnir demands definite details: when does she propose to meet Freyr? Stanza 38

She names a sheltered grove, nine nights from now. Stanza 39

5. *Skírnir's return (40 – 42)*

A brief prose link, or stage direction, shows Skírnir riding home and Freyr already standing outside, asking for news: facts neatly confirmed by the next speech. Prose

Urgently Freyr asks if Skírnir has achieved anything that either—or both—of them could want (as if there could be any difference in their wishes!). Stanza 40

Coolly, unhurriedly, with a touch of self-satisfaction, perhaps, Skírnir recites word for word Gerðr's message. What greater success *could* he have had? Stanza 41

With Gerðr's words, Skírnir has closed his role. Freyr has no thought of praising him. Self-absorbed as ever, he fastens upon the one flaw in the message that Gerðr has specially designed for him: *nine* nights to wait! In any marriage *three* is considered quite enough—how will he bear it? Stanza 42

C. Dramatic techniques

Skírnismal appears to deploy a greater range of dramatic techniques than other Eddic poems. Twice there are asides to the audience (2, 16); there are two soliloquies (13, 42; three if we consider Skírnir's address to the horse as virtually spoken to himself, 10); there are reported circumstances to accompany the action: the description of the shepherd on his mound (11), the noise and tremor of Skírnir's arrival as Gerðr claps her hands over her ears (14), his nonchalant grazing of the horse seen by the *ambátt* (15), Skírnir describing his actions as he does them (26/1, 36/1). Above all, perhaps, the great range of tones that Skírnir employs, rising to the viciousness

of his *galdrlag* curses, where his horrid repetitions are rich with double meaning, invites a stage performance. Unforgettable on the stage *could* also be Freyr's telling of his vision of Gerðr (6).

II. *Analogues of the Plot*

A. The mating of Sky and Earth

One of the oldest Indo-European myths is that of the mating of Sky and Earth at the beginning of time, from which terrestrial life springs—

Sól skein sunnan
á salar steina—
þá var grund gróin
grænom lauki

—as the poet of *Vǫluspá* 4 sees it.

In the fragments of Pherecydes (sixth century BC) the wedding of Zas (Zeus) and Chthonie (the Earth Spirit) is described; he makes her a wedding veil on which he has embroidered Land and Sea (Ge and Ogenos) to honour her as his bride.[6] Their union results in the creation of the universe: Zas 'changed himself into Eros when about to create'. But there are different ways in which a sky-god may approach his earth-mate. Zas is courteous and helps his underground bride to become attractive to look on. Ouranos, in Hesiod's *Theogony*, however, appears as a gross rapist, who hates his offspring and makes his consort, Gaia, hate him. The term 'sacred marriage' hardly fits their case, yet that is the way a different society and its poets have seen the mythologem.

By the time the old cosmic legend reaches us in Norse words it has become quite complex. The sky-god, Freyr, has, like Zas, a warm and reverential attitude to his desired Earth. But she has greatly changed. She is not the archaic Chthonie, a rough substructure to be beautified by her resplendent Lord, or a defenceless territory exposed to the will of his Divine Power, but a gleaming treasure already formed, defended by a rival power of wealth, shining back at the sky-god like a reflection of himself. Gerðr is the only partner I know in a 'sacred marriage' who represents an earth that still resides in the sea when the sky woos her. But we know that the emergence of earth from ocean was well established in Norse mythology by the time of *Vǫluspá*, and Ægir's submarine feastings were famous, lit as they were by gold. Life under the ocean for those rich beings who

[6] See Diels fragment 2; also Kirk and Raven 61–3; P. Dronke (*b*), 445–6. Illuminating studies of the sacred marriage are given in Herbert and in Leick (esp. ch. 1, 'The Cosmological Articulation of Sexuality').

lived there was much like life on *terra firma*, with grass for a horse to graze on, and frosted goblets of mead. Or so it amused the Norsemen to represent it in their dramatic re-enactments and their poems (cf. *Grímnismál* 7).

There is a poetic and political use of the more conventional version of the 'sacred marriage' theme in Hallfreðr's *Hákonardrápa*.[7] Óðinn is traditionally husband of *Jǫrð*, 'Earth', here taking the Viking conqueror's role. Hákon copies Óðinn, luring the land of Norway beneath him by the persuasions of war—the earth willingly submits herself under him—then turning the rape to legal marriage, when he weds her, the 'sister of Wealth' (*Auðs systur*). The 'broad-faced' bride here, with hair of pine-needles and braided corn, is the landscape of Norway (Chthonie wearing Zas' wedding gift). The poet of *Skírnismál* chose Gymir's daughter, not Jǫrð, as the god's bride, because she could embody the 'sun-from-the-sea's-depths', the gleaming golden underwater earth, Gefjun's *djúpróðull*, that truly complements the sun from the sky, Freyr's *álfróðull* (see commentary to 4/4). Only this choice that the poet made could have given him Freyr's luminous vision of the far-away girl (6) and supplied the vast funds of gold—'ocean's fire'—that give her her scornful independence (22). That independence motivates the curse.

It is no doubt the poet's representation of the god's destined bride as the rich girl from the sea that has prevented general acceptance of the 'sacred marriage' of Sky and Earth as the basic plot of *Skírnismál*.

B. A curse on fields and its remedy

Among the Anglo-Saxon charms is one to remedy two troubles that a farmer may encounter,[8] (*a*) that his fields refuse to grow well (*hī nellaþ wēl wexan*), and (*b*) that some injurious thing has been done to them by sorcery or witchcraft (*þær hwilc ungedēfe þing ongedōn biþ on drȳ oððe on lyblāce*). It could be said, I think, that Gerðr, representing the earth and its fields, is refusing to grow well, when she rejects Freyr and his golden gifts, and that the injurious curse that Skírnir places on her is revealing to her the ugly results that will follow her obstinacy; his magical runes are to make those results doubly sure. The only solution for the dilemma in *Skírnismál* is that Gerðr should accept the god Freyr and the fecundity he will give her. So too in the Anglo-Saxon charm:

Hāl wes þū, folde,	*Be blessed, earth,*
fira mōdor,	*mother of men,*
bēo þū grōwende	*may you be fecund*

[7] See the edition and discussion of the poem by Davidson; also Ström (*b*) and (*c*).
[8] Storms 172–7.

on Godes fæþme,	*in God's embrace,*
fōdre gefylled	*filled with food*
fīrum tō nytte.	*for the benefit of men.*

The farmer in the charm is haunted by the conviction that harmful magic *can* be used against his fields: he prays that God and his saints will protect the fruits of his land 'from every enemy and from every one of all the evils of those witchcrafts sown throughout the land' (*wið ealra fēonda gehwæne, / and . . . wið ealra bealwa gehwylc / þāra lyblāca geond land sāwen*). As further security he prays that there may be 'no woman so clever of speech, no man so powerful (in spells), who can distort the words thus spoken' (*ne sȳ nān tō þæs cwidol wīf, ne tō þæs cræftig man / þæt āwendan ne mæge word þūs gecwedene*). Skírnir's curse upon Gerðr would seem to fulfil the farmer's worst fears. Against such menacing, deliberately hostile sorcery the farmer, with God's grace, prepares a counter-sorcery of symbolic magic, singing of psalms, invocation of the Earth Mother—*Erce, Erce, Erce, eorþan mōdor*—which he calls a 'charm' (*gealdor*), 'to wake up these crops for our worldly good' (*āweccan þās wæstmas ūs tō woruldnytte*).

In both *Skírnismál* and the Anglo-Saxon charm, within the promise of the union of Earth and Heaven, there is the threat of its failure. In the traditions behind *Skírnismál* there will have been superstitious fears for the health of the land—and the *landvættir*—not unlike those of the Anglo-Saxon farmer (see commentary to 28/5–6; also *AR* § 228). For the drama of the poem the evil sorcery threatening the land has become a weapon wielded by the emissary of the god of fertility himself to force the stubborn female to see her own good.

C. The love-spell

In a type of love-spell from late Antiquity a lover places a spell upon the woman he desires, in which she is his victim, forced by his power to grow mad with love for him and to seek him out with insatiable passion: in Skírnir's words, with *ergi*, *æði*, and *óþoli* (36). Greek magical texts from the fourth and fifth century AD prescribe fierce spells by which *daimones* will be sent to seize the beloved:[9] 'If she is sitting, let her not sit . . . if she is sleeping, let her not sleep, but have me, only me, in her mind, long only for me . . . let her run away from every place and every dwelling, and abandon father, mother, brothers, sisters, till she comes to me, Theôn, kissing me, loving me, Theôn, in ceaseless longing and mad love'; or the spell-caster will burn myrrh and command it to go to the woman and disrupt her life, so that she has only love for him in her mind; the myrrh must enter her body

[9] See Wortmann; P. Dronke (*e*), 72–3, from which the following citations in English translation are taken; for the *Leiden Lorica* see the same article, 61–71 (citations from 62, 64–5).

'through her genitals, and remain in her heart, and burn her entrails, her breast, her liver, her breath, her bones, her marrow, till she comes to me . . .'

Closer to the Norse world, in a MS. of Welsh origin, in a hand of *c.* 900, is the Latin love-spell known as the *Leiden Lorica*, which has 'salient parallels in genre and tone . . . among the more sinister love-spells of Graeco-Roman magic' (see note 9). All the body's parts of the beloved are listed to be 'hunted out' for the lover's love, and adjurations call for her heart to be taken from her for his love's sake—*pro amore meo*.

The parallel between Skírnir's curse of lust and the Greek and Latin love-spells might not have become evident if it were not for the Bergen love-spell which occurs in a magical inscription of the late fourteenth century:[10]

ek sendi þér,	*I send you,*
ek síða þér	*I conjure for you*
ylgjar ergi ok úþola.	*she-wolf's lust and intolerable craving.*
Á þér renni úþoli	*May that craving catch hold of you,*
ok iotuns [MS. ioluns] *móð.*	*and monstrous rage.*
Sittu aldri,	*Never sit,*
sof þú aldri . . .	*never sleep . . .*
ant mér sem sjálfri þér.	*love me like yourself.*

The words *ergi ok úþola* appear here in the context of a fantasy dream of the total subjection of the loved woman to the spell-caster's love. Skírnir's intentions in using the same threats are harsher. Gerðr will be under the same compulsions as the spell-caster's woman, but there will be no one—not even the spell-caster—to want her desperate body. In planning Skírnir's curse did the poet borrow from love-spells in popular magical-erotic lore that he knew, to describe his love-frustrated earth? Some of the motifs in the Greek papyri appear again in Bergen. Beneath the learned erotic tradition of the *Leiden Lorica*, with its Celtic and Graeco-Roman literary links, there may also have been a current of unwritten practice.

D. Skírnir's mythological role

Skírnir can only be the sun's ray personified. It is he, not the sun himself, who penetrates deep down to provoke the self-satisfied earth to wedlock. He is the awakening shaft of light and warmth that puts an end to the

[10] See Liestøl 41–53. For remarkable testimony to the international mingling of magical texts see Burnett, illustrating the appearance of Norse runes in a 14 c. Italian MS. of a Latin translation of an Arabic treatise on astral magic.

infertile winter. The pattern of his role is familiar from the fairy-tale human versions of it—the Prince who wakens the sleeping Princess, the Sigurðr who rouses and releases his Sigrdrífa—but as a mythological role in Germanic it is unique to *Skírnismál*.[11]

III. *The Dating of* Skírnismál

The myths upon which *Skírnismál* depends for its story and structure are among the most ancient myths in the world: (*a*) the raising of earth out of water; (*b*) the sacred marriage of earth and sky; (*c*) the descent of the sun into the dangerous underworld of night and death, sinking into the sea to rise each day triumphant; (*d*) the awakening of the earth to life by the sun-ray's penetration of the barriers around her.

Outside *Skírnismál* interest in these old myths appears to be slight. Raising of earth out of water is employed as a motif in *Vǫluspá* 4 to anticipate the cyclic return after Ragnarǫk, but, for its fantasy, the formation of earth out of a giant body has proved more popular with poets. The theme of the sacred marriage of God and Earth occurs only in the political–allegorical play upon it in *Hákonardrápa* (*Skírnismál Introduction* II. A), and the God is no longer the god of sun and fertility current in Hallfreðr's time, namely Freyr, but the god of warrior kings, Óðinn. No Germanic source other than *Skírnismál* represents the sun's night descent as dangerous: there is no hint of ordeal about Ing's departure 'over the wave' in the Old English *Rune Poem*. Yet the sun's battle with night is one of the great religious themes in other religions (notably Egyptian[12]), and becomes a metaphor of death and resurrection in early Christianity.[13] It must be for this battle that Freyr, the sun-god, has his sword 'that fights of itself against the giant race', that is, against the giant world of death. In *Skírnismál* the sword is correctly present in the night invasion of giantland, as one of the traditional features, but it is not of any use.[14] In *Vǫluspá* that sword *is* of use, but in the hands of the giants (*Vǫluspá* 50/3–4, see commentary ad loc.): the gods will not be victorious on that night of death. In *Skírnismál* the sword's bride-winning function is brushed aside in favour of

[11] See *AR* § 323.

[12] See Frankfort (*b*), 154, 157; *The Book of the Dead* 411, 413.

[13] Fine instances of the use of this metaphor are to be found in Dölger; see esp. 336–63, § 20, 'Christus als Sonne im Totenreich'; 364–79, § 21, 'Jesus als Sonne der Auferstehung und *Sol Invictus*'. See also Carey 33.

[14] The sword is an ancient male sexual symbol (as S. A. Mitchell, 115, well notes), and thus perfectly appropriate in its place in the sexual drama as the aggressive will of the god. This Gerðr can defy when so rudely threatened, but the insidious image of her deadly life without him breaks her will.

the sun-ray's sexual realism. It is his penetrating, unsparing analysis that determines earth to defeat death by marriage and be no longer a woman 'without a shadow'. The solar horse of Freyr, Blóðughófi, 'Bloody Hoof', makes no appearance in his solar role except in *Skírnismál* (though the sacred dedication of horses to Freyr is well attested). In *Vafþrúðnismál* 11 – 14 Blóðughófi has become two pretty creatures, one with shining mane bringing dawn, the other with dew-dropping bit bringing night: neither encountering any danger. Blóðughófi was, however, a war-horse, ridden by *bani Belja*, *Atriði*—a duelling god, a 'mounted attacker' (*SnE* 170), and I suggest that his bloodstained hoofs came from the battlefield[15] and became the popular term for the last blood-red streak of sunset as the great horse of the sun plunges over the horizon into the night.

Skírnismál retains as stage properties the horse and the sword of once vital myths. Professionally out of date for court poets of the late tenth century, no doubt, the old myths survived in popular drama, conservative in its tastes, always expecting the solicitous parents, the moping, love-sick, ineffectual son, the sharp-witted ruthless page, the horse, the sword, the apples, the defiant girl, and the terrifying climax of the curse. It is, I suggest, popular demand that has kept the old 'sacred marriage' myth extant for us in mythological, not allegorical, terms. In a 'sacred marriage' there is (or ought to be) no drama: the earth of Norway is pleased to open her arms to Hákon–Óðinn. But when there is opposition, then the dialectic begins, and with it, dramatic life. The poet of *Skírnismál* is composing a drama with Gerðr and Skírnir at its centre, and the theme of life and non-life for the woman, the goddess Earth, is argued by the man. He is the emissary of the sun, the ray that has cut through all the barriers and is now actually striking the girl with his power—*ek þik drep*. For his arguments he chooses the grotesque and appalling images of the giant world, its ugliness and violence—as we can see it in *Þórsdrápa* and *Hymiskviða*—with deprivation of every dignified tradition of human behaviour—such as we may see in *Hávamál*. He uses above all the physical significance of *Þurs* to confirm the physical truth of what he is saying.

It is not possible, I think, that *Skírnismál* could have been composed for any royal marriage.[16] No royal bride would have endured the ill omen and ignominy of the curse—'Be like a crushed thistle'—or the portrait of the disintegrating, howling girl—herself, if she is not careful. Young Norwegian heiresses were quick to note unaristocratic manners (as Haraldr hárfagri found, when a rich girl scorned his arrogant and presumptuous sexual approaches, *Hkr* I. 96). Nor would a new king allow himself to

[15] The blood on the hoof is more appropriately that of the vanquished enemy than that of a foot injury to the horse (as in the Merseburg Charm; *AR* §§ 451–3).

[16] As Steinsland (*c*) argues, esp. 307–8.

be laughed at as Freyr in the final stanza, all but turned down by his consort. It is difficult indeed to see any reference to kingship in the poem.

Skírnismál must have developed before the imaginative vitality of pagan traditions had died away in Norway and Iceland: I say developed, because it is such a subtle amalgam of themes, the product, perhaps, of a century or more of popular and poetic dramatic cooperation. The Anglo-Saxon analogues suggest a time of origin when the Norse and the insular races were on familiar speaking terms and enjoyed enriching their stories of entertainment from each other. The final poem that we have, however, does not depend on collective labour, but on the swift imagination of a highly individual poet, who rejoices in his theme.

Whether *Skírnismál* might have been composed in its extant form as late as the twelfth or thirteenth century is difficult to determine with solid evidence. As in the case of *Lokasenna*, we can only say that among all the poetic material composed in those centuries in Iceland, there is nothing comparable to *Skírnismál*. The genius for composing in Eddic verse is no longer there. A case in point is *Svipdagsmál*. Thick with phrases and echoes of *Skírnismál*, it has nothing of its elegant colloquialism, lucidity, speed, wit, sureness of structure. As Robinson has shown, on manuscript evidence that poem is probably to be dated to the late thirteenth century.[17] Though the model of *Skírnismál* must have been ringing in the ears of the *Svipdagsmál* poet, his poem amply demonstrates that by the thirteenth century the art of composing Eddic verse was an antiquarian, not a living, exercise.

Although I cannot myself discern a motif of kingship in *Skírnismál*, it is in connection with Scandinavian kingship that the image of god/king as the embracing lover of his land survives into at least the thirteenth century in poetry. Havelok is the divinely protected Danish king's heir, who dreams—as he sleeps beside his royal wife, Goldborw, heiress of England—that, as he sits on a huge mound—no doubt the burial mound of Danish kings—he begins to possess Denmark and embrace it 'with his long bones'. And when he draws back his arms every living thing in the land clings fast to them:

Al þat euere in Denemark liueden
On mine armes faste clyueden

(*Havelok* 1300–1)

and the strong castles let their keys fall at his feet. Just as Hákon embraced Norway with the approval of the pagan gods, so Havelok embraces Denmark with that of the Christian God. If *Skírnismál* was fostered in kingless Iceland in the early Christian centuries, it is not surprising that no theme of political sovereignty is developed in the poem.

[17] See esp. 397–406.

IV. *The Texts of* Skírnismál

The complete text of the poem (under the title *Fǫr Skírnis*, 'Skírnir's journey') is preserved in R. The prose prologue and stanzas 1 – 27 are preserved in A. The final stanza (42) is cited in *SnE* 41, with a variant reading probably stemming from Snorri.

It is commonly agreed that the Eddic texts in R and A go back to the same base text, X.[18] In the case of the text of *Skírnismál*, however, it is hardly correct to regard R and A as of almost equal value,[19] even though both may have derived from X. The scribe of R is more perceptive of the meaning of the words he is copying than is the scribe of A. A leaves us with a meaningless text at 8/1–2, 17/5, and with a badly damaged, obviously unoriginal, text at 27/3–4. He has not noted the parallelism between *sátt*, 7/6, and *sætt*, 23/6. He omits two repetitions in the text which sustain the vitality of the dialogue structure, (*a*) cutting 18, Skírnir's response to Gerðr's question, returning her own words (17) to her, and (*b*) cutting out the echoes of question and answer in 21 and 22 by simply attaching the first three lines of 21 to the last three of 22. I do not think these omissions are simply careless, a slip of the eye from one line to another. A is not a careless scribe (he has at least ten correct readings where R has minor error or omission), but he is interfering, rather rigidly trained, and not very clever. He reverses phrases to make them conventional (e.g. placing *ása* before *álfa* in 17/1–2, as in *Vǫluspá* 49, *Þrymskviða* 7, *Lokasenna* 2, 30, and creating a new 27/1: *Ár skaltu sitia* out of 27/2: *skaltu ár sitia*, no doubt under the influence of famous stanza openings such as *Vǫluspá* 3/1, *Helgakviða Hundingsbana* I 1/1, *Guðrúnarkviða* I 1/1, *Sigurðarkviða in skamma* 1/1; on the poetic effect of these changes see commentary to 17/1, 27/1); he normalizes word-order (6/2, 23/5) and cuts out minor words that seem to him unnecessary (e.g. 13/2: *heldr en at kløkkva sé* becomes in A *en kløkkva sé*; some readers prefer this, but it is less likely to be the original reading). We are perhaps fortunate in having two scribes of such different temperaments to sharpen our approach to the text.

Two flaws common to R and A are probably an inheritance from X: (*a*) the omission of 12/3, which is not signalled in either text, (*b*) the reading *ellifo* for *ellilyfs* in 19/1, 20/1. See also commentary to 15 and 24/6–7.

[18] See JH II. vi § 2.

[19] JH: 'Hvad tekstens kvalitet angår, er de to håndskrifter omtrent jævnbyrdige'; *Skm-Modell* 37: 'Es gibt keine wesentlichen Unterschiede zwischen dem Wortlaut von R und A'.

COMMENTARY ON THE TEXT

Prose Prologue

line 1 *Hliðskiálf* does not occur in Eddic verse and only once in skaldic (in a fragment, *SnE* 91, of unidentified context or date). As a concept *Hliðskiálf*, 'Gate-(High)Shelf' is no doubt very old, combining the symbolism of the gate as entry into another world, and the high peak or platform as attainment of wider vision. See commentary to *Akv* 14/2: *liðskiálfar diúpar*; for invaluable analysis and discussion see Kiil, and especially Tolley (*a*), 335–42 (in relation to Norse evidence of shamanic practices). See *Skm Introd* I. A.

line 4 *Skírnir*, 'Clear-Shining One', is the ray of light and warmth that the sun-god sends out to the earth (see *Skm Introd* II. D). He has his master's radiance (*skírom Frey*, *Grím* 43/5). Skíringssalr, Oslofjord, is thought to be an ancient centre of Freyr worship (*AR* §§ 328).

lines 4–5 *Niǫrðr . . . Skaði*: only here are these named as Freyr's parents (Skaði is not named in the verse; *Niǫrðr* is, 39, 41). Well established is the comedy of the marriage and divorce of Niǫrðr and Skaði (*SnE* 30, 31, 80, 81). But Skaði is only recorded as having sons by Óðinn (in *Hál*). As Davidson, 56–62, lucidly presents this complex problem, Eyvindr has made Freyr a son of Óðinn and Skaði (cf. *Hál* 3 where their son is alluded to as *skattfœrir*, 'tribute bringer'; according to *Hkr* I. 24 for three years the people's *skatt* was poured into the windows of dead Freyr's *haugr*). In this way Eyvindr made Hákon's ancestry go back to both Óðinn and Yngvi-Freyr. Snorri preserves both fathers for Yngvi-Freyr: Óðinn in *SnE* 7, Njǫrðr in *Hkr* I. 13, *Óláfs Saga helga* 4, under the influence of his variant sources. For the purposes of *Skm* Freyr has been given a settled home background: traditions of Njǫrðr's paternity must have been too firmly rooted to be disturbed by Eyvindr's innovations, and the famous duet of Skaði and Njǫrðr, lamenting each other's residential tastes (*SnE* 30), must have established them firmly as a married pair in popular memory. The discrepancy in the prose prologue, that *Niǫrðr* tells Skírnir to approach Freyr and then *Skaði* utters the stanza giving the order in poetic detail, suggests the fitting-together of a summary of the poem in prose with a version of the poem, in which the first speakers differed. In an oral version either parent or both might utter the verse.

1/2 Alliteration is lacking; there seems no simple way of repairing it.

1/5 *fróði*: I am convinced by the small but sufficient evidence that a double sense is intended here, a play on (*a*) *fróðr*, 'wise', and (*b*) *fróðr*, 'fecund'. *Fróðr* (*b*) I see reflected in the name *Fróði* for Freyr's *alter ego*, the wealthy and peace-blessed king (*Hkr* I. 24–5; *AR* § 460–2), and in the pun on *fróðr* in *Háv* 141: *Þá nam ek frævaz / ok fróðr vera / ok vaxa ok vel hafaz*, 'Then I began to sprout and be fecund in knowledge

and grow and prosper'. To see only the meaning 'wise' in *fróðr* would be to weaken Óðinn's joke, that his peculiar form of fertility is wisdom: see all the generations of words and works that are producing themselves for him—*orð mér af orði / orðs leitaði* . . . King Fróði cannot have been named for his wisdom when he lost the Golden Mill through his folly (*Grott*). A stem *fróð-*, 'fertile', occurs also in Swedish *frodas*, 'to grow exuberantly', *frodighet*, 'abundance', with many figurative uses.

1/6 *ofreiði*: usually taken as a weak adj. (*LP*; DH list many instances under *Vsp* 18/4); *ofreiðr* would be awkward after *enn fróði* and before *afi*.

afi: in everyday language *afi* would be 'grandfather'. In legal phrases concerning inheritance, however, it is used of the succession of male heirs: *þat hefir fylgt afi eptir afa*, 'which male heir after male heir has had possession of' *DN* IV. 848; *sú er ein [jǫrð] er afi hefir afa leift*, 'that constitutes a single patrimony which male heir has bequeathed to male heir', *Gulaþingslǫg*, *NGL* I. 270. *Afi* may have been used of Freyr in religious contexts that have not survived, to emphasize his patronage of land and of male succession (note the emphasis in *Ytal* and *Hál* on the relationship of king or *jarl* to Freyr: *Freys áttungr*, *Freys afspringr*). In *Skm* I suggest *afi* is deliberately used in this domestic setting to imply 'the heir apparent', the favoured son.

2/5–6 I have attempted by punctuation to indicate a dramatic difference of tone from that of the same words in 1/5–6: Skírnir is wryly parodying the parents' inept approach.

3/2 *fólkvaldi*: elsewhere a human military title and an old Gmc name (cf. *Widsið* 27: *Fin Folcwalding / [wēold] Frēsna cynne* ('Fin son of Folcwalda ruled the Frisian race'). At Baldr's funeral (*Húsdr* 7) Freyr rides his golden boar and marshals his troops, *folkum stýrir* (presumably in funeral parade, as for Attila or Beowulf). Freyr's martial reputation may relate to his association with the boar from very ancient times. Tacitus, *Germ* xlv, records that the Aestii (East Baltic), who worshipped the mother of the gods (*matrem deum*), i.e. had a Vanir-type religion, wore images (*formas*) of wild boars in war, believing them to be a greater protection than weapons or armour (cf. the Swedish and English boar-helmets). See commentary to *Vsp* 51/5.

4/4 *álfrǫðull*: *rǫðull* alone is a *heiti* for 'sun' (probably related to Lat *rota*, 'wheel'). Freyr is lord of Álfheimr, realm of the living spirits of the glorious dead ancestors; his sun could well be named after the radiance and immortality of his elves, as it rises each day from the otherworld of the dead, Sol Invictus (see UD (*b*), 264). I suggest that the term may have been chosen here because the god has just fallen in love with the *djúprǫðull*, 'sun of the sea-depth', his golden reflection, Gerðr (see *Skm Introd* II. A). The famous verses of Bragi would have been as well known to the poet of *Skm* as they were to Snorri (*SnE* 8, 134, 155, etc.).

4/6 *munom*: there is an echoing play on the contextually varying sense of *munr*, 'love', 'desire', 'pleasure', 'satisfaction', 'need', throughout the poem, with the

switch of pronoun—*minn*, *þinn*—or Gerðr's emphatic *at mannzkis munom* repeated (see 4, 5, 20, 24, 26, 35, 40).

6/1 *Gymis*: see commentary to *Lks* prose prologue line 1, *Vsp* 36/8.

6/2 *ek sá*: other instances where there is no inversion of subject and verb, when that would be expected in prose, are numerous in *Skm*, suiting the emphasis the poet requires (cf. 20/2, as against 19/2; 21/1, 24/2, 26/1, 32/1, 4, etc.).

6/5–6 *af — lǫgr*: assuming *lýsto* implicit after *lǫgr*, 'air and water caught light off (*af*) her arms, light streaming from the place where she was (*þaðan*)'; a succinct picture of the source and movement of the radiance. Human Norse lovers also saw their beloved as a sun, or a lighted candle; cf. Guðrún Lundasól of Lundar in Norway, whom Jarl Hákon tried to abduct, *Hkr* I. 293–4, and Oddný Eykyndill of Hjǫrsey in Iceland, whom Bjǫrn Hítdœlakappi loved, *Bjarn* 174.

7/2 *en manni hveim*, 'than [any girl] to any man['s liking]', 'she pleases me more than any girl ever pleased any man': so I should understand the ellipsis. See *Skm Introd* I. B ad loc.

7/6 *sátt*: A reads *samt*, 'together'. I have chosen the R reading, which covers both the 'togetherness', 'reconciliation', of lovers and the abandonment of family feud between Freyr and Gerðr; see *Skm Introd* I. B ad loc.

8/1, 4: *Mar . . . sverð*: Skírnir asks for the two mythological trappings of the sun-god, the solar horse and the solar sword; see *Skm Introd* III; also commentary to *Vsp* 19/2, 50/3–4, *Lks* 42/1–3; UD (*b*), 265, nn. 4–6.

8/3 *vísan vafrloga*: I have taken *vísan* animistically: the flame 'knows' who is permitted to cross it, as the flame round Brynhildr's hall sinks down when Sigurðr approaches it (*Vǫls* 49 (23): *eldr sloknaði / fyrir ǫðlingi, / logi allr lægðisk / fyrir lofgjǫrnum*, 'the fire died out before the prince, the whole flame sank low before the hero ambitious for praise'). On traditions of the flame-wall see UD (*b*), 263–6.

vafrlogi is copied in *Fjǫlsvinnsmál* 31, where again it encircles a maiden's hall. ON *vafra*, 'to wander to and fro' is not frequent, used for example of ghosts; Fritzner s.v. OE adj. *wæfre* (possibly *wǣfre*) is common: used of the flames of the fiery furnace of the three children in *Daniel* 240 (*wylm þæs wæfran līges*, 'surge of the swaying flame'), also of the roving ghoul, Grendel, and of Beowulf's restless mind (*Beowulf* 1331, 2420).

10/2 *mál kveð ek okr fara*: the solar horse must keep to his timetable.

10/4 *þursa*: I take the mountains to represent the edge of the earth, already dewy with evening, behind which the sun-horse will sink and then travel in ogres' territory till Gymir's central palace is reached. To read *þyria þióð yfir* would imply that the sun had not yet set, but was lingering over the peoples of the earth.

13/1–2 *Kostir — sé*: 'The choices are better than that whimpering, being afraid, should be one of them'; *kløkkva*, 'to be soft, timid, querulous'.

13/4 *eino dœgri*: I have taken the emphasis to be 'just one *skapadœgr*, one fated moment of day or night, has been fixed for me: thank goodness there is only one!' One could read, more nobly, 'I am fated to die one day or night: if this is the moment, let me not be cowardly'. An actor could choose his tone.

14/1 *Hvat er þat hlymia*: MSS. *Hvat er þat hlym hlymia* is hardly possible, unless we assume a neuter *hlym*, 'noise', which is not attested; masc. *hlymr* is several times recorded (*LP*). There has clearly been some confusion in the MS. on which the two texts of *Skm* depend, since R has *hlymia* also in 14/2. For the phrase as emended cf. 17/1: *Hvat er þat álfa*. For fuller analysis see *Skm-Modell* 64–5.

15 The only three-line stanza in the poem. It is possible that a second *helmingr* has been lost, in which the servant girl makes some additional comment—such as, 'he has a shining sword in his hand'—which might make Gerðr's sudden intuition that it is her *bróðurbani* seem less abrupt. However, the girl's three lines are pleasing as they are.

16/2 *okkarn*: Gerðr refers to the presence of herself and her maid, not to herself and Gymir (as *Skm-Modell* 66).

16/6 *bróðurbani*: see commentary to *Lks* 17/4–6.

17/1 *álfa*: I suggest the poet has reversed the traditional order, *ása . . . álfa*, to exploit the 'elvish' associations of *álfr* that fit Skírnir's sudden, radiant appearance from nowhere. *Ása* does not convey such an image (see commentary to *Vsp* 49/1–2). For comparable interchange of question and negative answer, see the lines quoted by Snorri (*SnE* 39): '*Hvat þar flýgr? hvat þar ferr?* . . .' '*Né ek flýg, þó ek fer*. . . .'

17/3 *víssa vana*: the Vanir's wisdom is particularly their foreknowledge, through their command of *seiðr* and their links with the world of the dead as deities of fertility (cf. *Þrym* 15/3–4, though Heimdallr is not traditionally one of the Vanir; also *Sigrdr* 18/5–7).

19, 20 *ellilyfs*: Iðunn, who has the apples that keep the gods young, is alluded to as *mey . . . þás ellilyf ása . . . kunni*, 'the girl who had skill in the gods' medicine for age' (*Haustl* 9). While the MS. reading *ellifo*, 'eleven', could be explained as one for each of the gods (eleven in *Hyndl* 29), this is less apt than a promise of everlasting life for Gerðr, should she accept Freyr: for she is, mythologically, the earth. She seizes upon *lifa*—the last word in Skírnir's speech—and refuses any life with Freyr, long or short. If Freyr and Skírnir have wished to turn this scene into one of seduction (cf. *Skm-Modell* 69), Gerðr utterly routs their intentions. If the story of Eve has been of influence upon the poet, as Steinsland (*c*), 109–16, suggests, he has turned it to splendid effect. For further references to legendary apples see UD (*b*), 252, n. 8.

19/3 *Gerðr* is most probably a fem. formation based on *garðr*, 'enclosure', intended to anticipate the human dwelling-place of *Miðgarðr*, surrounded by the sea from which it emerged (cf. vb. *gerða*, 'to encircle, protect' land with ships, *LP*). See Motz (*b*), 124–6, for fuller discussion.

21/1–6 *Baug*: the story of the forging of this ring by the dwarf Eitri is told in *SnE* 122–3; Óðinn places it on Baldr's pyre, *SnE* 66; Baldr in Hel gives it to Hermóðr to return to Óðinn *til minja*, *SnE* 67.

driúpa: for the sense 'to drop from in birth, be born', cf. *vargdropi*, 'son of an outlaw/wolf', *Sigrdr* 35, *LP*.

22/4–6 *era — Gymis*: both MSS. have this reading, though the alliteration suggests that the lines should be reversed (and so give, I think, a more elegant text).

23/1 *mæki*: see *Skm Introd* n. 14.

23/2 *málfán*: i.e. marked with signs that had magic force (Skírnir would not be referring simply to decoration here; cf. *Sigsk* 4: *mæki málfán* of the separating sword in the bed which had such fatal consequences). For inscribed sword-blades see Ellis Davidson (*a*), 42–50.

24/6–7 *vígs — tíði*: stylistically poor, a pointless change of metre; a final sixth line has probably been lost and clumsily replaced in *fornyrðislag*.

26/1 *Tamsvendi*: for gen. of adj. in compounds cf. *feginslúðr*, 'mill-frame of joyfulness', *Grott* 5; *Glaðsheimr*, 'Realm of Content', *Grím* 8.

27 – 36 The *ljóðaháttr* metre becomes deliberately roughened here with interjections of the 'spell metre', *galdralag*. See *Skm Introd* I. c.

27/1–2 *Ara þúfo á*: this is not an ordinary eagle's outpost, his favoured mound for spying prey, but the mythical hillock that marks the sky's end, where the giant-eagle, *Hræsvelgr*, 'Corpse Swallower', starts the winds blowing by the beating of his wings (*Vafþ* 37). Gerðr will sit there savouring the breath from the dead, turning her eyes from the world.

27/4 *snugga*, 'to catch the scent of something', 'to catch the scent with pleasure, hanker after something' (see *Morkinskinna* 309: *Snæliga snuggir, sveinar, kváðu Finnar; áttu andra fala*, 'It smells like snow, lads, said the Lapps; you ought to buy snow-shoes'; *Gyðinga Saga* 81: *Iudei skyldu ekki þurfa til þess at snugga, at nǫkkuru tíma komi undir þá kongdómrinn*, 'The Jews should have no need to let this hope fill their nostrils that the kingdom will at some time fall into their hands'). These appear to be the few instances of *snugga* in ON.

28/1 *undrsiónom*: only here in ON; OE *wundorsēon*, 'wondrous spectacle', only in *Beowulf* 995; cf. OHG gloss 'spectaculum', *wuntar-siuni*. The sense in *Skm* is ironic, not laudatory as in *Beowulf*.

28/3 *Hrímnir*: a standard name for a giant (cf. *Hrímgrímnir* 35, and the giantess *Hrímgerðr*, *HHv* 21, etc.). *Hrím-* relates him to the aboriginal frost-ogres, *hrímþursar*, as well as to the rusty blackness of *hrím*, 'soot'. So his name evokes an icy and sordid presence.

hari: hap. leg. in ON, but frequent in Norw dialect, signifying 'stand silent and gazing vacantly'; H. Ross. As Larrington, 8, well notes: 'The spectator has power over the object; he chooses when to look and when to stop looking; the object lacks such choice ... Thus for Gerðr, to be stared at makes explicit her loss of autonomy.'

28/5–6 *Víðkunnari — goðom*: I take this as ironic (in the same tone as *undrsiónom*). Heimdallr, 'glorious' and 'hallowed' (*Vsp* 2/7, 27/4) guards Ásgarðr (*SnE* 32–3; Loki's travesty of Heimdallr, *Lks* 48, is not relevant here, as *Skm-Modell* 78 suggests; in Gmc tradition sentinels were highly valued men of rank, e.g. the Danish coastguard, *Beowulf* 333–55). Gerðr will 'guard' the corpse-gates—*nágrindr*, 35/3—with her gaping, shouting mouth, like a gaping dragon's head on a ship or the open-mouthed man's head guarding the side of the Oseberg wagon. The menace of 'gaping heads and yawning jaws' is clear from the old law that ships had to remove such figure-heads before approaching land lest the *landvættir*, guardians of the health of the land, should be terrified away (*Landn* 313). When Egill set up a horse-head as a *níð* against Eiríkr blóðøx he wedged the jaws wide open and turned it towards Eiríkr's land against the *landvættir* (*Egil* 171). Gerðr will be just such a menace to terrestrial life as those effigies. That Gerðr will gape from *grindr*, 'fences', 'barred gates', relates her to the *túnriður*, 'fence-riders', shape-changed witches, who would ride on the 'cattle-*grindr*, with their hair loose, in troll's shape', described in the West Götaland Laws (Wessén 29; Ljunggren; Strömbäck 168–9). That *gapa* could include also raucous and jeering shouts is suggested by the noun *gap*; *Þá var svá mikit háreysti ok gap, at engi maðr mátti þar málum sínum fram koma*, 'there was so much rowdiness and hooting [at the *þing*] that no one could get his case heard', *Sneglu-Halla Þáttr* 288.

29/1–3 *Tópi — trega*: as *tópi*, *ópi* do not occur elsewhere, their case is uncertain; but simplest is to assume that both are nominatives, loose subjects (with *tiqsull*, *óþoli*, and *tár*) of *vaxi*. Or we can suppose an unfinished syntax: that Skírnir is calling down four horrors upon her, each accompanied by a prod of his *tamsvǫndr*, each one a *tregi* that will cause her tears to grow. Either way his meaning will be clear.

Tópi is commonly assumed to be related to modern Scandinavian words meaning 'fool', 'dolt' (Norw *taape*, Dan *taabe*; see Hellquist s.v. *tåp*). The phonetic relationship is very hard to parallel.

ópi must be a variant of *óp*, 'shout', 'loud weeping' (cf. OE *wōp*, *wēpan*).

tiqsull occurs nowhere else but may well be related to OE *teosu* neut., 'plague', 'affliction', *teoswian*, 'to harm', 'to torment'; possibly both the ON and OE relate to **taisjan*, 'to pull apart' (cf. OE *tǣsan*, *tǣsel*, 'teasel'; OHG *zeisan*, *zeisal*). In Gerðr's context presumably an insistent sexual anguish tearing her.

óþoli: see commentary to 36/1–4.

29/6 *sútbreka*: I have emended MS. *sús-* to a known ON term for grief, *sút*, rather than to OE *sūsl*, 'torment', not found elsewhere in ON; *-breki* is 'wave', 'breaker'. I have translated *sváran-breka* as 'heavy sea', since in English that implies a sea with heavy swell or high waves. I think it unlikely that ON *brek*, 'importunate demand', 'wilful desire', is involved in *sús/sútbreka*, as the usual usages of *brek* imply a certain triviality not suited to the context in *Skm*.

29/7 *tvennan trega*: if this does not simply mean 'doubled, intensified grief', it refers to Gerðr's threatened dilemma, that she will feel sexual anguish—*tiqsull ok óþoli*—but will have no means of satisfying, exorcizing it (cf. 31/1–5 and commentary ad loc.).

30/1 *Tramar*: not recorded elsewhere in ON, but found in ModIcel and Norw for 'evil spirits', 'trolls'.

gneypa, 'to cause to be *gneypr*, jutting forward', especially of the head. When Egill is full of grief and wrath at his brother's death (*Egil* 143), he sits erect opposite the king, but with his neck bent over—*var gneyptr mjǫk*—presumably gazing at the ground, while his eyebrows move into a fixed menace, one up, one down. To be *gneyptr* is not a natural position, but forces the eyes to look downwards. For an account of an attempt to straighten a head *gneypt* from a wound in the neck see *Eyrb* 129–30. The suggestion that *gneypa* refers to rape (Bibire 32) has no parallel that I know. It would not fit well with the suggestion that she lacks sexual intercourse 31/4–5. I imagine little *tramar* jumping and thumping on her shoulders and neck making her carry them as riders, a childish sport *iǫtna gǫrðom í* (cf. the OE *dweorh*, thought to have caused illness by riding his victim as a horse—*cwæð þæt þū his hængest wære*; Storms 166, no. 7 (CT)).

30/6–7 *kranga*: hap. leg.; adj. *krangr* occurs once, of the new-born Brynhildr, *hón krǫng of komz / fyr kné móður*, 'she was born sickly [*or* by breach birth?] between her mother's knees', *Sigsk* 45. *Kranga* as a verb of movement associates itself with ModE 'cringe' (OE *cringan*, 'fall to the ground'); cf. ModIcel *krangalegur*, 'weak', *krangur*, 'long, narrow passage', *krungr*, 'humpback'. Implications are of abnormality, inhibited stature, crooked movement.

kostalaus . . . kostavǫn: the pl. *kostir* covers all the choices and benefits of existence, including lands, marriage, food (including Gerðr's daily meal, which she is never given? See Reichardt 490; Fritzner s.v. *kostr*).

30/10 *leiða með tárom trega*: *leiða* has here probably some of its physical sense, 'to escort', 'to bear along' (following from *kranga*), but it can also be used metaphorically, as in *HHv* 41/7–8: *iǫfur ungan / ástom leiðir*, '(that) you may lead the young prince with love', i.e. love him.

31/1–3 See *Skm Introd* I. B ad loc.

nara, 'to lead a savourless life, without vitality'. Rare in ON; cf. the Orkney poem of proverbs *c.* 1200, *Málsháttakvæði* 25: *sagt er frá, hvé neflauss narir*, 'it is told how impoverished a life a noseless man lives'. See also *Alexanders Saga* 100: *Þat er karlmannlegt at forðaz [dauðann]. en hataz eigi við livet. Úþrifnir menn oc eliunlausir leggia leiðinde á at liva. Oc eigi er þat undarlect. þviat enom nennolausa þeim er narir i heiminom er sem dauðe. þat er livet scal heita*, 'It is manly to avoid [death] and not to feel hatred for life. Underdeveloped men and those without physical strength take a loathing for living, and that is not surprising, for to the apathetic man who vegetates in the world, what should be called life is like death (. . . *Ignavo vivere mors est*, *Alexandreis* 417)'; cf. ModIcel of a candle about to go out: *þat narir á skari*, 'it is guttering at the candle's end'. Skírnir's vocabulary is excellent.

31/5 *morn morni*: *morna*, 'to pine away, wither in unhappiness', is not uncommon (Fritzner s.v. cites *þorna ok morna, þverra ok af angri deyja*, 'grow dry and wither, waste away and die of grief', *Barlaams ok Jósaphats Saga* 163). The noun *morn* is hap. leg. (cf. *AEW* s.v.). For a remarkable portrait of a woman mentally weakened by the shock of her lover's death, see *Bjarn* 205–6: *hon mornaði ǫll ok þornaði*.

31/6–8 *Ver — ofanverða*: I follow the most obvious interpretation of these lines (as in UD (*b*), 256 and n. 3, where some older references are given). For later work see especially Harris and, for a splendid survey of the problem and its scholarship, Heizmann (*b*), 304. My choice of the simple solution is guided by the simplicity of the poet's scheme, built upon direct contrasts (e.g. *þistill* versus corn).

þrunginn might imply the bursting of the full-blown thistle, but as this is healthy fertility in the thistle ('the seeded pride . . . to this maturity blown up . . . must . . . shedding breed a nursery', *Troilus and Cressida* I. iii. 310–13), it is unlikely that the poet would choose it as an image in this context; would he not prefer that of the useless weed churned into the ground by the threshers' feet after the flails had done their work and the grain had been gathered? (This is only an imagined reconstruction of an after-threshing scene.) For *þrunginn* (*-it*), 'pushed', 'crushed back', by an external force, see *Hamð* 4/1 and commentary.

32/2 *til hrás viðar*: in an OE charm a *grēne gyrde*, 'green rod, wand', is required to mark a magic circle round a sick man (Storms 299). In the OE *Exodus* 281 the rod of Moses is referred to as *grēne tāne*, 'green twig' (MS. 'tacne', but translating Lat *virga*). From *grēne*, 'fresh, living', the implication 'potent, magical' would seem to have developed.

32/3 *gambanteinn*, 'magic rod, wand'. In *Hárb* 20 Óðinn recounts the joke that the giant Hlébarðr once gave him a *gambanteinn, / en ek vélta hann ór viti*, 'I bewitched him out of his wits'. This is just what Skírnir is threatening. *Gamban-* occurs only in two other compounds, *gambanreiði*, *Skm* 33/6, *gambansumbl*, *Lks* 8/6; in all three terms the sense 'mighty with supernatural power' would be generally fitting. The etymology of *gamban-* has not been determined; no doubt it relates to a concept of magnitude, which readily takes on associations of magic (see commentary to *Vsp* 3/7). The feast in *Lks* is intended to be a high, sanctified ceremony of gods, their

drink the drink of immortality: Bragi might well, in his oratorical fashion, call it *gambansumbl*, 'the feast of divine power', from which the disgraced Loki should be excluded.

33/1–3 The poet may well be following traditional modes of cursing here, but we have few models to judge by. The cursing *lausavísa* 19 in *Egil* which has phrasing reminiscent of *Skm* 33—*reið sé rǫgn ok Óðinn*, 'may the divine powers and Óðinn be in anger'—is unlikely to be authentic.

Ásabragr, i.e. Þórr; see the valuable assessment of de Vries, *AR* §§ 441.

34/3 *Suttunga*: *Suttungr* is the giant from whom Óðinn stole the mead *Óðrerir* (*Háv* 104–10); in *Alv* 34/6, *Suttungs synir* call *ǫl* 'sumbl'. We must suppose that *Suttungr* had a variant name **Suttungi*, which gives gen. *Suttunga*, as *Surtr* had **Surti* (cf. *Surtalogi*, *Vafþ* 51), or that *Suttungar* has become a giant tribe name, seen here in gen. pl. But it is not clear why he, or they, should be distinguished from the *iǫtnar* of 34/1.

34/8 *nyt*: for the sexual reference of *nyt* see Fritzner s.v. § 1, p. 844 a, lines 11–14; also s.v. *njóta* § 2.

35 Reichardt 493 would place 35 after 31 in order to keep the references to Gerðr's life among giants and *þursar* together (30, 31, 35). This has not met with universal approval. I should be sorry to lose the momentary glimpse of human festivity in *manna glaum* (34/7)—with its hint of good ale circulating—followed by the rotten drink of goats' urine in 35/6, or to lose the climax of the crushed thistle in 31/6–8, heightened by the complete change of tone in 32/1. Because of the poet's many clever juxtapositions, it seems best to leave this high-spirited curse to its present heady sequence.

35/1 *Hrímgrímnir*: *Grímnir*, 'Visored, Helmeted One', is an Óðinn-name quite often used as the second element of giant-names (? here 'Frost-Óðinn').

35/3 *fyr nágrindr neðan*: see commentary to *Vsp* 2/5–8. It would seem that 'below the corpse-pens' implies deep in the earth (i.e. lower than the dead are buried) and below that is *Hel* (*Lks* 63/5), with the world tree's nine roots, which hold all the subterranean realms together (*Vafþ* 43). To be lower than the buried dead would be an ugly threat in itself. *LP* understands *nágrindr* as Hel's gates, but *fyr . . . neðan* would be better suited to an area, below which could be another area or realm. So I take *nágrindr* as a fenced graveyard, underground, the symbolic repository of all the dead.

35/6 *geita hland*: There is surely an allusion here to the drink of the gods, goat's mead (*Grím* 25), just as there was a comparison with Heimdallr in 28/6. It is a jest that Skírnir permits himself.

35/9 *at þínom munom*: I would reject MS. *af* because *af* is never used with *munr*, while *at* is idiomatic, implying compliance with a person's pleasure or will. The

contrast between *at þínom munom / at mínom munom* lies not only in the opposing *þínom* and *mínom*, but in the verbal play 'wishes', i.e. 'desires', *munom*[1], and 'wishes', i.e. 'will, determination', *munom*[2]; a further contrast is superfluous.

36/1–4 *Þurs*: see *Skm Introd* I. B on stanza 31; also UD (*b*), 258–60. What Skírnir is carving is not wholly clear. It might be the word *Þurs*, followed by three Þ-runes to which he attributes the implications of *ergi*, *æði*, and *óþoli*; or it might be the word *Þurs*, or the rune standing for it, followed by three runes we have no other record of, named as Skírnir says. Or Skírnir might be following a conventional *Þurs* in runes with invented characters to impress Gerðr (or the audience). For a spirited survey of the problems (including the dating of three possible initial runes for *ergi*, *æði*, *óþoli*) see *Skm-Modell* 90–1.

ergi: sometimes, incorrectly I think, translated 'perversion'. That would be a conventionally correct translation if *ergi* were used of a man, because *ergi* refers to feminine desire for a man, normal feminine lust driven to excess (the kind of suicidal love sent by Aphrodite which Greek girls prayed they might never experience). It is rarely used of women in ON (cf. *Bærings Saga* 110; *Egils Saga einhenda* 176), and then not without an element of bewitchment (see *Skm Introd* II. C).

æði ok óþola occur together also in the description of the torments of the lecherous in hell in *Duggals leiðsla* 50–1 (probably borrowed from *Skm*), where they are the pains that torture the genitals. One MS. replaces *óþǫli* with *óþolanligur bryne*, 'unbearable burning', to make the specific sense clearer: Cahill 442. The Latin text is less vivid: *Doloribus quoque verendorum locorum cruciabantur quam maximis*.

37/2 *hrímkálki*, 'frost-chalice' (Lat *calix*, OE *calic*), perhaps borrowed through OE. I imagine that 'frost' might come to mind when Norsemen saw the Roman uncoloured glass, perhaps already touched with a little white weathering and irridescence, against which the strokes of engraving look very like frost (see many examples in Harden; D. Wilson 23; Steenstrup, facing 216).

37/6 *vaningia*: not elsewhere a term used of the Vanir. *LP* s.v. notes that *vaningi* is a *heiti* for *gǫltr*, '(gelded) boar', probably so called because it was the sacrificial beast of the Vanir. Is Gerðr deliberately using an ambiguous term to mock the family of her future husband?

38/5 *þroska*, 'well-thriven', 'mature', 'virile', 'grown-up'; the adj. only here, but related forms, *þroski*, 'maturity', 'proven quality', *þroskask*, 'to grow ripe', 'to develop fully and well', are common. For alliteration on the second stress in the b-line cf. 6/2 (one might also read *enom þroska munt*; see, however, *Vkv Introd* IV. E).

38/6 *nenna*, 'to show interest, pleasure, in', 'to consent'.

39/1 *Barri*: probably a name made up for the occasion, to combine the fertile associations of *barr*, 'pine-needle', and *barr*, 'barley', much as Hallfreðr plays on both senses when he describes Norway as the *barrhaddaða biðkván Þriðja*, 'Óðinn's waiting wife, whose tresses are pine-needles and barley'. The image captures the

pine forests of Norway and the Norwegian girl's braided blond hair (Davidson 497–503, *Hák* 6; see *Skm Introd* II. A).

39/3 *lundr lognfara*: a grove connotes sacredness and exclusion of unholy elements (cf. the *castum nemus* of Nerthus, *Germ* xl; *AR* § 250). With her choice of *lundr* and her imposition of nine nights of waiting Gerðr would seem to be insisting on a certain dignity and decorum in her union with Freyr. There is no reason to assume that their union is not marriage, or a preliminary to marriage (in the *Hák* Hákon (Óðinn's counterpart) has sexual union with the land of Norway before formally 'wedding' her (see *Skm Introd* II. A)). We have no record of the nature of pagan Norse marriage laws, but some of the early Roman laws require only a statement of mutual consent. By his term *hýnótt* (42) Freyr, I would suggest, recognizes his marital obligations as a conventional, legal, bridegroom. He was, after all, the special patron of marriages (Adam of Bremen IV. xxvii).

lognfara is technically a puzzle (possibly a piece of poet's wit). If we take *-fara* as gen. sg. of *-fari*, 'one who goes, travels', and the formation of the compound as similar to that of *dynfari*, *gnýfari*, 'one who travels with noise, uproar', namely 'wind' (*Alv* 20/5, variant readings), then *lognfari* will be 'one who travels with *logn*', and *lundr lognfara* will be a 'grove of visiting, invading stillness' (the opposite of a grove of loud wind). The puzzle lies in presenting as a figure of movement, *-fari*, what is always perceived as motionless, *logn*.

40/6 *eða* may be 'and' or 'or' (or both, poetically; see commentary to *Vsp* 23/1–8).

42 There is a numerical puzzle that the poet has set us here. Gerðr has imposed nine nights of waiting upon Freyr. He wonders how he can endure *three* nights (not nine). The usual period of marital chastity after the formal wedding is three nights (see *Rig Introd* n. 44). Gerðr has tripled this number. Freyr, therefore, has to wait three (solar) nights in order to 'earn' only one nuptial night, one *hýnótt*. He is complaining, 'How can I endure an abstention of *þriár hýnætr* in which each *hýnótt* is reckoned as *þriár nætr*? I am only halfway through the first *hýnótt*—of *þriár nætr*—and it has seemed more than a month to me!'

42/3 *þreyiak*: cf. *Vkv* 3/3–4. Snorri has modernized the more succinct, more desperate poetic phrasing (see the textual variants).

42/6 *hýnótt*: hap. leg. I take *hý-* to be related to *hjón*, 'wedded couple', *hjú*, 'wedded couple', 'household', *hýbýli*, 'homestead', *hýróg*, 'quarrelling in the family' (*Háv* 137/11). The context of reference to 'three nights', and the situation itself, determines the sense of *hýnótt* as 'night of nuptial chastity'.

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