

# Hrafnagaldur Óðins – Rough Draft 2016

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*Óðinn's Ravens' Song*

*Hrafnagaldur Óðins*

An Old Norse Eddic Poem

Translation and Commentary

by

Samuel Zinner

*For Charles Boettger*

*~Words flowed and the sun rose . . .*

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Óðinn's Ravens' Song

*Hrafnagaldur Óðins*

## INTRODUCTION

### *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*

Past full-length commentaries on the Old Norse poem *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* include those by Hallgrímur Scheving (1837), Friedrich Wilhelm Bergmann (1875), and Annette Lassen (2011). In collections of the *Poetic Edda* there are a number of early and late editions of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*' text accompanied by short critical and exegetical notes beginning with *Edda Sæmundar hinns fróða* (1787). The most recent notable attention given to *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* was Eysteinn Björnsson's and William P. Reaves' 1998 online text, English translation and commentary (<http://notendur.hi.is/eybjorn/ugm/hrg/hrg.html>), Jónas Kristjánsson's text and short commentary in *Lesbók/Morgunblaðið* (2002), Kristján Árnason's 2002 critique of Kristjánsson's commentary, also published in *Lesbók/Morgunblaðið* (2002), and finally Annette Lassen's already mentioned 2011 full length study that includes a text, English translation, and critical and exegetical commentary.

The poem *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* is transmitted in five principal groups of paper manuscripts. Group A, generally considered the earliest version, descends from Stockholm papp. 8vo nr 15, which surfaced in 1681.<sup>1</sup> Group B descends from Lbs 1562 4to, the relevant portion dating to the 1670s.<sup>2</sup> Group C descends from Stockholm papp. fol. nr 57, from the mid to late 1600, most likely 1680 or

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<sup>1</sup> See Lassen, p. 29.

<sup>2</sup> See Lassen, p. 35.

thereafter.<sup>3</sup> Group D descends from Thott 1491 4to, created at some point in the 1700s.<sup>4</sup> Group E, which is independent of Groups A, B, C, and D,<sup>5</sup> descends from Lbs 1441 4to, dated o circa 1760.<sup>6</sup>

*Hrafnagaldur Óðins* consists of 208 lines divided into 26 strophes that exhibit *fornyrðislag* metre. The text is often quite enigmatic and perplexing, in my opinion usually intentionally so. The history of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins'* interpretation has fluctuated between the two conflicting opinions of medieval and Renaissance origins for the poem, with authorities such as Bergmann and Kristjánsson arguing for a medieval dating, while Scheving, Sophus Bugge, and Lassen conclude the poem is a Renaissance creation.

I reconstruct the plot of the poem *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* somewhat tentatively as follows:<sup>7</sup> The poem begins with an enigmatic yet clearly threatening dream oracle (strophe 1), which the Gods view as threatening (strophe 2, lines 1-2), since it seems to contradict an earlier and apparently more positive oracle cited in strophe 2 lines 5-8, according to which the Gods would be protected against the forces of death by

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<sup>3</sup> See Lassen, p. 64.

<sup>4</sup> See Lassen, p. 65.

<sup>5</sup> See Lassen, p. 69.

<sup>6</sup> See Lassen, p. 67.

<sup>7</sup> Since the poem is quite enigmatic, other reconstructions are naturally possible.

Justifications for my interpretation, including references to earlier exegetes' conjectures, are given later in the Introduction and in the main body of the commentary.



the mead Dwarf Óðhrærir, a personified version of the poetic mead of immortality stored in the vat Óðreyrir. The name Óðhrærir is derived from the neglected mead Dwarf Þjóðreyrir of the fifteenth song of power obtained by Óðinn as described in *Hávamál's Ljóðatal* (strophe 160), which we see as an integral part of *Hávamál's Rune Song*.

As we show in our commentary, as has long been recognized (and long forgotten) alliteration requires that the name Þjóðreyrir be emended to Fjóðreyrir, the fj- probably denoting possession. Thus Fjóðreyrir likely denotes one who possesses the mead called Óðreyrir, and is to be divided into the components Fj-óð-reyrir rather than Fjóð-reyrir (the latter might possibly have basically the same meaning as the incorrect non-emended form Þjóðreyrir if divided into Þjóð-reyrir, namely, Great-Rearer/Stirrer/Inspirer). The context of the *Rune Song* moreover requires us to see the mead name Óðreyrir in the Dwarf name Fjóðreyrir, a figure who probably coincides with Fjalar, one of the two Dwarves who made the mead from the blood of Kvasir. Thus even the unemended form of the name is to be divided into the components Þj-óð-reyrir, which might mean “server of Óðreyrir.”

Óðhrærir is said to be in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 2 a powerful protector of Urður, in the genitive Urðar. Urður as Norn really makes no sense contextually here, and the lengths to which exegetes have gone over the last few centuries to justify her presence in strophe 2 have been both impressive and entertaining, not only with regard to creative fantasy, but also to philological legerdemain. The latter trajectory began with the emendations Óðhræris (the manuscripts' nominative form emended to the genitive) and Urður (genitive changed to nominative), thus almost

magically switching the grammatical cases of both names, which really amounts to little more than simply wishing away a rather large exegetical problem. The difficulty being that in Norse tradition Dwarves do not guard Norns. The solution is to recognize that strophe 2's Urdar is not derived from *Völuspá* strophe 19's Urðar brunni, "well of Urður," but from *Hávamál* strophe 111's Urðar brunni, where, however, alliteration requires the first word to begin with a "b," not with a "u." As we show in the commentary, the most natural emendation would be brúðar, "bride," who in the context is none other than Gunnlǫð, who as possessor of the mead is said to have a well in *Hávamál* strophe 111, filled with the same mead called Óðrerir in the nearby strophe 107. Dwarves do not guard Norns, but Dwarves and Gunnlǫð do guard the sacred mead of poetry and immortality that the Dwarves themselves have made.

Thus in strophe 2, the mead Dwarf Óðhrærir (=the Dwarf Fjóðreyrir of *Hávamál* strophe 160) protects Gunnlǫð's well of mead (incorrectly called in Codex Regius' *Hávamál* strophe 111 Urðar brunni, rather than the correct brúðar brunni, as we explain in the commentary below). The genitive Urdar in strophe 2 is meant to indicate that which Urður (=Gunnlǫð) possesses, namely, the sacred mead. As we show in the commentary, the poet of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* recognized from the larger context (especially from *Hávamál* strophe 105) that *Hávamál* strophe 111's Urðar must refer to Gunnlǫð, and not to the Norn Urður. Perhaps the poet of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* saw in the incorrect reading of Urðar in *Hávamál* strophe 111 a sort of kenning for Gunnlǫð; after all Gunnlǫð is a traditional kenning for Jǫrð, who appears at the end of *Hávamál* strophe 107 in connection to Gunnlǫð's mead.

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In *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 3 lines 1-2 Óðinn's mind is personified as a bird-like entity named Mind, Hugi in Old Norse, who soars to the sky, fearing if he delays taking flight. Although the figure of Hugi is influenced by traditions of Óðinn's raven Huginn, Hugi cannot be reduced to Huginn exclusively. Hugi is chiefly an echo of Óðinn who, according to *Skáldskaparmál*, flew away in the form of an eagle with the mead of Óðreyrir inside him. He had to take flight immediately and could not delay because the owner of the mead, the Giant Suttungr, would soon be in hot pursuit, also in the form of an eagle. Next, the Dwarves Þráinn (Decay) and Dáinn (Death) interpret the dream oracles of strophes 1 and 2 as disturbing and threatening (strophe 3 lines 5-8). Some of Þráinn's and Dáinn's dwarfish kinsfolk, four of whom support the cosmos (according to *Gylfaginning* 8), are being weakened, as is the solar steed Alsviðr, and so the worlds are sinking back into the primal chaotic abyss of Nothingness (strophe 4).

Foul weather then appears, probably a premature winter understood as an ominous prelude to Ragnarøk. The images of cosmic dissolution and threatening weather are followed by a reference to the well of Mímir, in which dwells all wisdom and Óðinn's pledge or eye sacrifice (strophe 5). We next experience a transition to Iðunn in strophe 6, where she falls from Yggdrasill, the cosmic tree that embodies and holds together the nine worlds of Norse cosmology. This falling is the fulfilment of the evil dream oracles interpreted by the Dwarves in the earlier strophe 3. Iðunn's fall from the world tree is likely patterned after Óðinn's own fall from Yggdrasill as described in the *Rune Song of Hávamál*. Iðunn is the symbol of spring and youth, who according to Norse lore guards the apples of immortality that keep

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the Gods from growing old, and her falling from the world tree accordingly implies the danger of cosmic winter as a symbol of old age and death for the Gods and the entire cosmic order. Iðunn does not bear her fall well, because after dwelling so long in the light, she is now cast into Jötunheim's (Giant-Land) darkness of Night, or expressed poetically, "Nǫrvi's son" (strophe 7).

The Gods send a wolf skin to Iðunn, in part to protect her from the frigid climate of the frozen land of wintry darkness, but mainly as a shamanic dress of disguise and power to shield her from the demonic threats that may assail her in Jötunheim (strophe 8). Óðinn then dispatches Heimdallr, Loki and Bragi to Jötunheim in order to visit Iðunn and obtain from her sorely needed information about the dire events then transpiring (strophe 9). The group consisting of Heimdallr, Loki and Bragi rides on flying wolves<sup>8</sup> while chanting sorcery spells to Jötunheim on their mission to seek vital information from Iðunn. Óðinn keeps watch and listens in from his high throne Hliðskjálf (strophe 10).

Since the words Røgnir and Regin are to be understood as "the God and Gods" rather than as personal names, Røgnir naturally refers to the expedition's leader Heimdallr, and Regin collectively means both Bragi and Loki. Because the latter two are mentioned as a pair they could be envisaged here as riding on a single

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<sup>8</sup> We agree with Heide's conclusion in "Spinning" and *Gand* that a *gandr* is a mind emissary dispatched by means of a *seiðr* ritual, but we interpret *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 10's *gandum* as such mind emissaries dispatched in the specific form of wolves. If we want to preserve something of Heide's notion of a projectile, we could even think of magic staffs carved with the heads of wolves.

wolf, which although speculative might account for such a noteworthy pairing. If such is the case, the two wolves could have been inspired by the story of Óðinn's wolves Geri and Freki. The riders of the wolves likely assume through magic chants the form of the beasts they are riding, probably in order to disguise themselves as Jötunheim wolves. Having arrived, Heimdallr enquires of Iðunn in strophe 11 concerning the origin, history, and fate of the universe, that is, the past, present and future of the three worlds of earth, Hel, and the upper heavens. But Iðunn is so crushed by her foresight of Ragnarøk and the coming death of the Gods that she is not able (nor does she seem even willing) to relay to Heimdallr, Loki or Bragi any information to Óðinn (strophe 12). This agrees with the trope of the reluctant, sorrowing silent oracle, prophet or prophetess that one encounters in both Greek and Oriental traditions of ancient times. Night then falls and during the darkness, the Dwarf Dáinn perpetrates an apocalyptic mass killing in Middle Earth's wintry night (strophe 13), and an Ogress stupefies consciousness, perhaps even that of the Gods (strophe 14). Strophe 13 specifies that Dáinn "drops," that is, "kills," "all the people nightly in Middle Earth." He slays, "drops" with his thorn, that is, his stag horn; he does not "prick" as with a needle, as some interpreters misrepresent the Old Norse verb *drepur* (see the commentary on strophe 13), the very same verb the *Poetic Edda* uses repeatedly to describe Thor's killing of Giants with his mighty hammer.

In strophe 15 the Gods question Iðunn, seemingly on the next day, and for a second time (however, strophes 13-14 may be out of place, which would do away with the chronological and plot-related oddities in strophe 15), but as in strophe 12

she is once again sorrowful and silent. The expedition having thus failed, Heimdallr and Loki return to Óðinn, leaving Bragi behind to guard his wife Iðunn and to face Ragnarøk together with her (strophe 16). Heimdallr, a symbol of the world's primeval history, and Loki, a symbol of the world's ending (however, we are not to think of Loki as evil here; the poet of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* never disparages Loki, in stark contrast to the *Poetic Edda* and Snorri), return to Óðinn's hall where a feast of mead is underway. They wish Óðinn long gladness and rule, for these are precisely what stand in greatest danger of being lost by him in the threatening onset of Ragnarøk (strophes 17-18).

Strophe 19 describes the mead feast where the Gods are drinking and the Einherjar are sating themselves on Sæhrimnir of Valhalla, the self-replicating ambrosia-like congealed sea foam<sup>9</sup> traditionally misrepresented already in Snorri Sturluson's time as a boar.<sup>10</sup> The Gods and Einherjar drink nectar-like mead from memorial horns, alluding back to the image of mead embedded in strophes 2 and 11. At the feast, Heimdallr and Loki are probed until nightfall about their expedition to acquire information from Iðunn (strophe 20). The two relate the details of their fruitless journey (strophe 21). Óðinn arises and exhorts the assembly participants to take or spend the night meditating in order to find advice for the Gods on which action to take next (strophe 22).

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<sup>9</sup> Compare the Jewish dew-like manna, considered the bread of angels in tradition beginning in Psalm 78:25.

<sup>10</sup> See Bergmann 1871, pp. 274-275.

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The Gods bid farewell to Óðinn and Frigg as night falls (strophe 23). Without further ado (we would, however, insert strophes 13-14 at this point, so that Dáinn and the Ogress now carry out their nocturnal apocalyptic attacks against humans and Gods who are keeping vigil in the night, seeking plans to avert the destruction of Middle Earth and the realm of the Gods), Dawn breaks (strophe 24), after which such malicious beings as Giants, Ghosts, and Dwarves retire to rest at Yggdrasil's remotest northern root, perhaps in part to avoid being turned to stone by the sunlight (strophe 25), even though admittedly sunlight has no ill effects on such beings in Old Norse sources.<sup>11</sup> Strophe 25 also mentions human corpses or ghosts in its list of infernal entities. These are likely the recent victims of Dáinn's killing spree narrated in strophe 13. In the final strophe, 26, the Gods rise with Dawn (having just been stupefied and lulled to sleep by the Ogress' activity described in strophe 14) while Night's darkness recedes. Heimdallr, who like the other Gods had been sleeping, awakes and opens the magic gate that leads to the fortress of the Gods. Norse tradition preserved by Snorri Sturluson stresses that Heimdallr needs hardly any sleep at all, and especially in this situation he should not have been sleeping. Congruent with Heimdallr's role in Norse myth of awakening the Gods and summoning them from the magic bridge Bifröst to Ragnarök, the poem ends on an ominous note, despite the deceptively cheerful description of Dawn breaking through the celestial gate named Argiöll which Heimdallr is lifting.

As already noted, we suspect strophes 13 and 14 have been displaced from elsewhere in the poem, since strophes 12 and 15, both of which feature Iðunn (she

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<sup>11</sup> We thank Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir for reminding us of this particular point.

appears under the name Jórunn, which, however, must be emended, in strophe 15) could be joined together quite elegantly, as follows:

12. She did not speak,  
to the greedy she failed  
to wield words,  
chose not to join their their joyful chatter;  
tears shot from out  
her head's target shields,  
hidden was her energy,  
once again she broke down.

15. Sunny Jormunn was revealed  
to the rulers  
as sunk in sorrow that  
stole her words away.  
The more they pressed,  
the more she pained;  
and withal were  
their words worthless.

Strophes 13 and 14 could similarly be made to fit quite artfully between strophes 23 and 24. At the beginning of strophe 23 Moon sinks, and the strophe ends with the celestial horse Hrímfaxi bringing on Night. This would tie in with



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strophe's 13's description of the night in Middle Earth, as well as strophe 14's sleep trope. Then strophe 24 would bring the night to an end by announcing the coming of glorious Dawn led by Dellingur's celestial steed, which would hark back contrastively to strophe 23's horse Hrímfaxi. Additionally, strophe 24's Dwarf Dvalinn would then be brought into close proximity with strophe 13's Dwarf Dáinn, whose name poetically alliterates with Dvalinn:

23. Riding along the paths

of Rind more weary,

Moon sank slow,

fodder-fated to Terror Wielder.

The Gods forsook

the feast,

hailed Hroptur and Frigg,

as Hrímfaxi arrived.

13. Just so out of the east,

from Élivágar, came

the poison thorn

of the ice Giant;

Dáinn slays therewith

every single soul

in glorious Miðgarðr,

misses never a night.

14. Deeds there diminish,  
arms droop down.

The white God's sword  
staggers from giddiness.

The Ogress's glee,  
stupefying, runs over,  
completely appeasing  
the assault's swingings.

24. Richly adorned  
with the Arkenstones,  
Dellingur's son his steed  
onward drove;  
wide over Man-Home  
the mane glistens.  
Dvalinn's plaything's pulled  
in the charger's chariot.

This rearrangement of strophes was adopted by Theophil Rupp,<sup>12</sup> Hans von Wolzogen,<sup>13</sup> and Karl Simrock.<sup>14</sup> The alternative numbering scheme goes back ultimately to Simrock. As Benjamin Thorpe writes: "This and the preceding strophe

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<sup>12</sup> Rupp, pp. 318-319.

<sup>13</sup> von Wolzogen, pp. 123-125.

<sup>14</sup> Simrock, pp. 31-33.

appear to be out of their place, and have by Simrock, not without reason, been inserted after the 21<sup>st</sup> [= 23<sup>rd</sup>].”<sup>15</sup> Based on an evaluation of the evidence, we may safely conclude that it is more probable that Simrock was correct than incorrect in his rearrangement of the poem’s strophes. Therefore, although above we summarized the plot line of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* according to the sequence of strophes as attested in the various manuscripts of the poem, nevertheless, in our translation below we follow Simrock’s displacement theory. However, in order to avoid confusion, in our strophe-by-strophe commentary we follow the numbering and sequence found in the *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* manuscripts, none of which exhibit any significant variations in these regards.

Although *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* can stand on its own as an enjoyable and intriguing poem, the question of its age deserves to be addressed. The most important recent study of the poem is that of Annette Lassen, published in 2011. Based on several factors which include two words in the poem that are attested in Christian literature, namely, *artid* (*ártíð*), strophe 11, and *sokn* (*sókn*), strophe 14, and on the basis of strophe 22’s “Nott skal nema nyrępa” (“night shall be used for new counsels” in Lassen’s rendering),<sup>16</sup> a parallel to an ancient Greco-Roman proverb, *in nocte consilium* (“in the night [comes] counsel”), re-popularized by Erasmus beginning with his 1599 Frankfurt publication of *Adagiorvm chiliades ivxta*

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<sup>15</sup> Thorpe, p. 30.

<sup>16</sup> Lassen, p. 92.

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*locos commvnes digestæ*, Lassen dates *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* to sometime late in the first half of the 1600s at the earliest.<sup>17</sup>

As we clarify in our own commentary, strophe 11's *artid* (*ártíð*) does not match the meaning of the Christian use of the word, namely, "death anniversary" or "saint's day," for in strophe 11 what is clearly meant is the beginning, length of life-span and the time of the death of the worlds, and not any anniversary or feast to commemorate the worlds' demise (see the commentary on strophe 11 for a discussion). As we show in our commentary, the word *ártíð* actually means the very opposite of Lassen's "date of death." Neither is strophe 14's *sókn* to be rendered by the Christian term "parish," because here, as we argue in our commentary, it is used with the alternate dictionary meaning of "fight" or "struggle," which fits in with the accompanying *sveiflum*, which here means "sweepings," "swingings," rather than Lassen's rendering of "waves," although that is a perfectly fine translation. Strophe 14's phrase *sefa sveiflum sokn giðrvallri* means, "appeases the swingings (of) the full fight," or alternatively, "fully appeases the swingings (of) the fight."<sup>18</sup> Since *sokn* is not in the genitive, more literally the meaning is, "appeases the swingings, the assault," that is, "appeases the swingings (which constitute the assault)." What is

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<sup>17</sup> See Lassen, pp. 18-21; 100.

<sup>18</sup> Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir offered the following comments to us in a private communication: "I read *sefa sveiflum* as mood swings, which only shows how difficult it is to interpret this poem, as there are so many ways of understanding the words. My first impression would be to connect the word *sokn* to the verb *sækja* . . . which does not have to be the correct understanding, however. . . ."

being described here is not the “calm[ing]” of “the whole parish,” as Lassen would have it, but the calming of the whole “mind” (that has just been attacked by strophe 13’s ice thorn) referred to by the kenning “sword of Heimdallr.” The “swingings” and “fight” against the mind are the deadly nocturnal attacks by Dáinn’s Ice Giant’s thorn narrated in strophe 13 carried out in the midst of the struggles of humans (and Gods) during the present threatening conditions narrated throughout *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*. These attacks and the attacked minds are calmed by the Ogress’ stupefaction.

As Kvilhaug explains in her comments on Sigrún’s dwelling-place Sefafjöll, sefa can mean either “to calm down,” or it can be the genitive form of sefi, “thought,” a synonym of hugur.<sup>19</sup> There thus remains the possibility of understanding *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 14’s sefa sveiflum as “swingings of the mind,” and we could render the passage literally either as

rennir or viti	runs over, stupefying,
rygar glyia,	the Giantess’ glee
sefa sveiflom	calms the swingings,
sokn giqrvallri	the assault, completely.

or

rennir or viti	runs over, stupefying,
rygar glyia,	the Giantess’ glee,
sefa sveiflom	the swings of the mind,

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<sup>19</sup> Kvilhaug, p. 104.

sokn giðrvallri            the assault, completely.

The Giantess either stupefies or calms the assault, which mean basically the same thing in the end.

As for strophe 22's "Nott skal nema nyreþa," we are not convinced that this of *necessity* indicates knowledge of Erasmus' 1599 work. Such of course remains an open *possibility*, but we do not find it *probable* for two reasons. First, "Nott skal nema nyreþa" diverges somewhat from the standard form of the Greco-Roman proverb in question, not to mention that it is followed by "hugsi til myrgins," which, as we posit in our commentary, taken together with "Nott skal nema nyreþa" seems more suggestive of Oriental than Greco-Roman parallels, although both likely play a role here. As we show in our commentary, Statius' *Thebaid* has influenced the undisputably medieval poem *Völuspá*. Consequently, the presence of a classical proverb in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* tells us nothing definitive about its dating. Secondly, there are a sufficient number of archaic mythic elements present in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* that are explicable with reference mainly (though not exclusively) to ancient near eastern or Oriental literary remains (especially *Gilgamesh*-related traditions) that it seems unlikely that a fully Christianized Icelandic poet of the 1600s created the story solely by combining Norse and Greco-Roman components. Thus while we conclude that the poem was consigned to writing ca. 1500-1600 (we would not place the composition too far into the 1600s on account of the extensive corruption of the manuscripts already in the mid 1600s when the poem became known), we are not inclined to think that the poet created the story embedded in *Hrafnagaldur*

*Óðins* purely out of his own individual and learned imagination, though the latter naturally would have played a role.

Lassen argues that strophe 11's *artid* (*ártíð*), and strophe 14's *sokn* (*sókn*) constitute "evidence that the poem does not belong to the thought world of heathendom,"<sup>20</sup> so that it should be excluded from future editions of the *Poetic Edda*. But does not a similar situation exist for many (some would say all) of the poems of the *Poetic Edda*, such as *Völuspá*, in which several scholars detect Christian influences? We now know that in Scandinavian lands the transition from Odinism to Christianity took about two centuries. For nearly two hundred years both Christians and pagans would have been influencing each other in thought and word. In such conditions it would be easy to imagine that a pagan poet could use Christian words such as *ártíð* and *sókn* with primarily heathen valences. The reverse scenario would also be natural to presuppose; Christians could have used pagan terms with Christian nuances.

If we compare *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* to Gunnar Pálsson's attempt to imitate a genuinely medieval Eddic style in his poem *Gunnarsslagur* composed in the first half of the 1700s (a short time before 1745), and which was actually widely included in collections of the *Poetic Edda* at one time, a few major differences between the two compositions become immediately evident, and quite forcefully so. In *Gunnarsslagur* there are virtually no perplexing exegetical questions as there are in abundance throughout *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*, and no apparent mythological contradictions to the

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<sup>20</sup> Lassen, p. 100.

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*Poetic Edda* or to Snorri's corpus surface in *Gunnarsslagur* such as we do encounter by contrast in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*:

1. Ár var þat Gunnarr	It of old befell that Gunnar,
gørðisk at deyja,	Giuki's son,
Gjúka sonr,	was doomed to die
at Grábaks solum.	in Grábak's halls.
Fœtr váru lausir	The feet were free
á fylkis nið	of the king's son,
en hendr heptar	but his hands were bound
hørðum fjøtri.	with hard bonds.
2. Fengin var harpa	A harp he seized,
fólkjörfum gram,	the warrior king
íþrótt sýndi,	his skill displayed,
ilkvistu um hrærði,	his foot-branches moved,
steig hagliga	the harp-strings
hørpustrengi,	sweetly touched:
vara sú list leikin	that art had not been practised
nema lofðungs kundi.	save by the king's son.
3. Söng þá Gunnarr	Then sang Gunnar,
svá mælandi,	in these strains:



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fekk mál harpa                    the harp got voice,  
sem maðr væri,                    as it had been a man;  
en eigi sœtara                    yet not a sweeter sound,  
þó svanr væri,                    had it been a swan;  
glumði orma salr                    the hall of serpents echoed  
við gullnum strengjum.            to the golden strings:

4. “Mína veit ek systur            “I my sister know  
manni verst gefna                wedded to the worst of men,  
ok Niflunga                        and to the Niflungs’  
níðingi festa.                    base foe espoused.  
Heim bauð Atli                    To his home bade Atli  
Hogna ok Gunnari,                Hogni and Gunnar,  
mágum sínum                    his relations,  
en myrði báða.                    but murdered both.

5. Víg lét þá                        Slaughter he made them  
fyrir veizlu taka                take for festivity,  
ok orrostu                        and conflict for  
fyrir ǫlteiti.                    convivial potations.  
Þat mun æ uppi                    Ever will that survive  
meðan ǫld lifir,                while men shall live:  
léka svá við mága                so did relations never

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mangi forðum.	any one delude.
6. Hví þú svá, Atli, heiptir rækir? Sjálfi olli Brynhildr sínnum dauða ok Sigurðar sárum bana. Hví vildir Guðrúnu grætta láta?	Why, Atli! dost thou so wreak thy anger? Herself did Brynhild cause to die, and Sigurd's cruel death. Why wouldst thou Guðrún cause to weep?
7. Sagði Huginn forðum af hámm meiddi ossar ófarir at mög dauðan. Sagði mér Brynhildr, Buðla dóttir, hvé Atli mundi oss um véla.	Long since the raven told, from the high tree, our calamities, at our relation's death; Brynhild told me, Budli's daughter, how Atli would deceive us both.
8. Gat þess ok Glaumvǫr er við gístum bæði hinna sinni	This also Glaumvǫr said, when we both reposed, for the last time,

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í hvílu einni,                      in the same bed,  
minni váru málu                      - my consort had  
megnir draumar:                      portentous dreams -  
'Farattu Gunnarr!                      'Go not Gunnar!  
Flár er þér nú Atli.                      Atli is now false to thee.

9. Døð sá ek þínum                      A lance I saw  
dreyra roðinn,                      red with thy blood,  
gálga gørvan                      a gallows ready  
Gjúka syni.                      for Giuki's son:  
Hugða ek þér dísir                      I thought for thee the Dísir  
heimboð gøra.                      prepared a feast;  
Munu ykkur bræðrum                      I ween that for you brothers  
búin vélræði.'                      treachery is at work.'

10. Kvað ok Kostbera,                      Said also Kostbera -  
kvæn var hon Høgna,                      she was Høgni's wife -  
rúnar vilt ristnar                      the runes were falsely graved,  
ok ráðna drauma.                      and the dreams interpreted.  
Snotrt var hjarta                      But the heart beat high  
í siklinga brjósti,                      In the princes' breast,  
hvárgi knátti hræðask                      neither knew fear  
harðan dauða.                      of a cruel death.

11. Oss hafa nornir	The Norns have for us,
aldr um lagit,	Giuki's heirs,
orfum Gjúka	a life-time appointed,
at Óðins vild.	at Odin's will;
Má við orlogum	no one may
engi sjá	against fate provide,
né heillum horfinn	nor, of luck bereft,
hugum treysta.	in his valour trust.

12. Hlær mik þat, Atli,	Atli! I laugh
at þú hefir eigi	that thou hast not
hringa rauða	the red-gold rings
sem Hreiðmarr átti.	that Hreidmar owned;
Einn veit ek hvar fé þat	I alone know where that treasure
fólgit liggr,	hidden lies,
síðan þér Høgna	since that Høgni
til hjarta skáru.	to the heart ye cut.

13. Hlær mik þat, Atli,	Atli! I laugh,
at þér Húna kinder	that ye Huns
hlæjanda Høgna	the laughing Høgni
til hjarta skáruð.	to the heart cut.

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Hnipnaðit Hniflungi	The Hniflung shrank not
við holundu,	from the scooping wound,
ne sér við brá	nor flinched he from
sáran dauða.	a painful death.

14. Hlær mik þat, Atli,	Atli! I laugh,
at þú hefir látna	that thou hast lost
menn þína marga	many of thy men
er mæztir váru	that choicest were,
fyr ossum sverðum	beneath our swords,
áðr svelta fengir.	before thy own death.
Hefir ór mær systir	Our noble sister has
meiddan þinn bróður.	thy brother maimed.

15. Skalat enn Gunnarr	Yet shall not Gunnar,
æðru mæla,	Giuki's son,
Gjúka sonr,	fear express
at Grafvitnis bóli,	in Grafvitnir's dwelling;
ne hryggr koma	nor dejected go
til Herjafóður:	to the sire of hosts:
hefir fyrr buðlungr	Already is the prince
þóðvi vanizk.	inured to suffering.

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16. Fyrr skal mér Góinn      Sooner shall Góin  
grafa til hjarta              pierce me to the heart,  
ok Níðhoggr                  and Nidhogg  
nýru sjúga,                  suck my reins,  
Linnr ok Langbakr          Linn and Lángbak  
lifrar slíta,                  my liver tear,  
en ek minni hafni          than I will abandon  
hugarprýði.                  my steadfastness of heart.

17. Þess mun Guðrún        Gudrún it will  
grálega reka,                grimly avenge,  
er okkr lét                    that Atli us  
Atli svikna.                  has both deceived;  
Hon mun þér konungi      she to thee, king! will  
hjórtu gefa                  give the hearts  
húna þinna                  of thy cubs,  
heit at kveldverði,        hot at the evening meal;

18. ok blandinn mjöð        And blended mead  
blóði þeira                  with their blood  
drekk þú ór skálum        thou from cups shalt drink  
skararfjalla.                formed of their skulls.  
Sú mun þik hugraun        That mental anguish shall

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harðast bíta,                      bite thee most cruelly,  
er þér Guðrún bregðr            when Guðrún sets  
gløpum slíkum.                    such crimes before thee.

19. Skömm mun þín ævi          Short will be thy life  
at skjöldunga liðna.            after the princes' death;  
Fær þú illan enda                an ill end thou wilt have,  
af órum sifspellum.              for breach of our affinity:  
Er þér slík maklig                such is befitting thee,  
af umsýslan várrar              through the deed  
systur sárneyddrar            of our sister sorely impelled  
svik þér at gjalda.              thy treachery to requite.

20. Mun þik Guðrún              Guðrún will thee  
geiri leggja                        with a lance lay low,  
ok Niflungr                        and the Niflung  
nærri standa.                    stand hard by;  
Leika mun þín holl                in thy palace  
í loga rauðum,                  will the red flame play;  
síðan muntu á Náströndum    then in Náströnd thou shalt  
Níðhoggvi gefinn.                be to Nidhogg given.

21. Sofinn er nú Grábakr        Now is Grábak lulled,

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ok Grafvitnir,	and Grafvitnir,
Góinn ok Móinn	Góin and Móin,
ok Grafvølluðr,	and Grafvøllud,
Ófnir ok Sváfnir,	Ofnir and Svafnir,
eitr fáanir,	with venom glistening,
Naðr ok Niðhoggr,	Nad and Nidhogg,
ok nøðrur allar,	and the serpents all,
Hringr, Høggvarðr,	Hring, Høggvard,
fyrir hørpuslætti.	by the harp's sound.

22. Ein vakir uppi	Alone wakeful remains
Atla móðir,	Atli's mother,
hefir sú mik holgrafit	she has pierced me
at hjartarótum,	to the heart's roots,
lifr um sýgr	my liver sucks,
ok lungu slítr.	and my lungs tears.
Erat lengr lift	A longer life-space is not
lofðungs kundi.	for the king's son.

23. Hættu nú, harpa,	Cease now, my harp!
heðan mun ek líða	hence I will depart,
ok Valhøllu	and in the vast
víða byggja,	Valhall abide,



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drekka með ásum                      with the Æsir drink  
dýrar veigar,                              of costly cups,  
seðjask Sæhrímni                      be with Sæhrimnir sated  
at sumblum Óðins.                      at Odin's feast.

24. Nú er Gunnars slagr                Now is Gunnar's melody  
gǫrva kveðinn,                          all sung out;  
hef ek hǫldum skemt                I have men delighted  
hinsta sinni.                              for the last time.  
Fár mun enn síðan                      Henceforth few princes will  
fylkir ilkvistum                        with their foot-branches  
hljóðfagra sveigja                    the sweetly sounding  
hǫrpustrengi."<sup>21</sup>                      harp-strings strike."<sup>22</sup>

Lassen refers to *Gunnarsslagur* as a similar would-be Eddic poem like *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*, pointing out that both contain deliberately archaizing diction,<sup>23</sup> but she fails to note the more glaring divergences that characterize the two poems when compared with each other. *Hrafnagaldur Óðins'* archaizing diction might be

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<sup>21</sup> Rask, pp. 274-277; orthography modified.

<sup>22</sup> Thorpe 1866, pp. 146-149. Thorpe leaves out some words from the first two lines of strophe 18, which we have supplied.

<sup>23</sup> Lassen, pp. 24-25.

understood, for example, with reference to genuinely older medieval texts, both prose and poetic, which were at times later reworked into derivative pieces in *rímur* poetic form.<sup>24</sup> Although *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* is written in the Eddic style known as *fornyrðislag*, at the same time, as Lassen notes, “the syntax is reminiscent much more of skaldic poems or *rímur* than eddic poems.”<sup>25</sup>

Lassen further documents that strophe 20 contains a Middle Low German loanword, *máltíð*, which did not become common in Iceland until the 1500s. Additionally, the poem’s word *virt* “is not recorded in *Orðabók Háskólans* from before the sixteenth century, and ‘larður’ or ‘laraður’ . . . are not found earlier than the seventeenth century.”<sup>26</sup> However, since the author of the poem was obviously quite learned, the use of rare words could date to an earlier period than their first *documented* use. After all, words will be in circulation for some time before they are first written down and become documentable in dictionaries and lexicons for later historians.<sup>27</sup> However, the cumulative evidence indicates that several elements of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*’s diction are indeed to be assigned to the 1500s, perhaps even to the very early 1600s. But again, this does not mean that the late language cannot enframe a considerably earlier story. Nor does the late language exclude the

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<sup>24</sup> See Guðmundsdóttir 2012, p. 272.

<sup>25</sup> Lassen, p. 25.

<sup>26</sup> Lassen, p. 18.

<sup>27</sup> In a private communication, Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir commented on Lassen’s argumentation as follows: “*Orðabók háskólans* only reaches back to 1540, when the New Testament was printed. So this is probably not a strong argument.”

possibility that an earlier written or oral version of the story, different yet related to the one that has been preserved in the manuscripts, might have been in circulation in the medieval period.<sup>28</sup>

*Hrafnagaldur Óðins* has often been described as “hardly comprehensible,”<sup>29</sup> and Lassen writes that “[t]he metre generally seems to be a mistaken attempt to follow Old Norse patterns, analogously to the mistaken attempts at archaic word forms. The examples of prepositions in stressed position at the end of a line immediately followed by the word they govern at the beginning of the next line (stt. 5/5, 6/3, 7/3, 5) show a poor grasp of the rules of Old Norse prosody.”<sup>30</sup> Yet Lassen then speaks of “the poem’s antiquarian and learned character and the high incidence of kennings.”<sup>31</sup> Elsewhere Lassen refers to the poet in question as “a learned person who was proud of and interested in the Icelanders’ ancient poetic art.”<sup>32</sup> Which assessment are we to accept? Is the poem written by an inept author whose diction is so incomprehensible that we should think he barely had a grasp of Old Norse grammar, poetry forms and language, or that the poet was a highly learned Renaissance man? Naturally it is possible that the author “could have been proud of the language and very enthusiastic about the ancient poetic art, even if he didn’t

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<sup>28</sup> In response to our claim, Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir reacted thusly: “I agree. The material of the poem could be older than the present form.”

<sup>29</sup> Lassen, p. 10, referring to Bugge.

<sup>30</sup> Lassen, p.25.

<sup>31</sup> Lassen p. 26.

<sup>32</sup> Lassen, p. 26.

master it,” as Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir observed in a private communication. But the extent of the ineptitude on his part claimed by Lassen seems to stretch the evidence a bit.

When we take this conundrum into account, as well as the numerous errors in the manuscript tradition of the poem, the suspicion increasingly mounts that *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* may represent an inferior translation or reformulation of an originally prose story. We could in this scenario compare *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* to the Icelandic *sagnkvæði* poems, about which Guðmundsdóttir remarks: “Some of the scribes who recorded the poems during this time considered them to be old and degenerated . . . , ‘a poor version,’ ‘completely wrong and poorly translated,’ . . . ‘a made up, distorted, and useless poem. . . .”<sup>33</sup> These match precisely the sentiments of modern scholars with regard to *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*. Guðmundsdóttir goes on to ask:

But why have so many of the *sagnkvæði* been so badly preserved and degenerated, as they prove to be? It would be convenient to assume that the poems had been distorted in their oral form – Jon Helgason contended that the *sagnkvæði* had in fact travelled orally before they were recorded in a book – and that the tradition of these poems had likely been formed before the Reformation. It is certain that the great variation among manuscripts of

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<sup>33</sup> Guðmundsdóttir 2012, pp. 270-271.

these poems supports this position, in addition to the fact that common folktale motifs set their own mark on the poems.<sup>34</sup>

Lassen writes of the *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* manuscript tradition: “A has preserved a text with fewer errors than B, C, D and E, though in a few cases these have superior readings. There are some erroneous spellings that appear in all five, which might suggest that the archetype was at least at one remove from the original, though they do not amount to much.”<sup>35</sup> In contrast to Lassen’s findings, we have identified significantly more errors in the manuscript tradition, which indicates that the archetype of our manuscript trajectory was already extensively corrupt. This in turn indicates that the poem itself is probably significantly earlier in origin than around the period approaching the mid 1600s when it first began to be circulate. For this reason we leave open the possibility of an origin sometime in the 1500s, although we suspect that the general outlines of the underlying story embedded in the poem may date back to the medieval period. However, we also have to reckon with the possibility that two strophes have been displaced at some point, as Simrock suspected. (Guðmundur Magnússon felt that strophe 8 had been displaced). Whether this took place when the poem was first possibly translated from prose to verse (if that is what actually transpired), or when an earlier version of the poem was consigned to writing (which could have changed many of the earlier poem’s

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<sup>34</sup> Guðmundsdóttir 2012, p. 271.

<sup>35</sup> Lassen, p. 70.

contents significantly), thus beginning the present manuscript tradition, we shall probably never be in a position to know.

The possibility that *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* might represent a Renaissance period translation or same-language reformulation of an earlier text, prose or verse as the case might have been, opens up the possibility that behind the Norse poem there may lurk at least traces of an earlier myth. We thus read the following remark from Lassen with reserve and caution: “But a search for an ‘original’ myth is unlikely ever to be fruitful, for the poet had scarcely any greater knowledge of Norse mythology than he was able to get out of reading Snorri’s *Edda*.”<sup>36</sup> While there can be no doubt that the poet of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* knew Snorri’s works, we are not at all convinced that all later Icelandic poets derived their knowledge of Norse mythology and kennings from his pages, even though we can agree in principle that “Snorri ‘saved’ old knowledge, already rare, and that later authors built on his ideas,” as Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir phrased it in a private communication to the author. The paradigm we suggest would explain why in so many instances the kennings we find in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* usually occur in forms that are similar to kennings in Snorri, but rarely identical with them.

As for an “original myth” embedded within *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*, *pace* Lassen we do not in fact need to go in search of it, for it has already long been identified. Julius Braun capably categorized the type of myth we find in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* in an 1865 German article on Iðunn which we have translated into English and included in Appendix VI. As Braun noted, the Old Norse poem clearly falls under the

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<sup>36</sup> Lassen, p. 26.

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well-known archetype represented by Persephone in Hades, that is, the spring or summer Goddess has been carried away to the underworld. What is more, Braun quite deftly recognized that the myth of Iðunn's fall from Yggdrasill is nothing other than another mythic variant of the story of her abduction by the Giant Þjazi.<sup>37</sup>

The underlying myth of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* is actually therefore both quite an old one and a rather well-known at that: The Goddess of spring is exiled and trapped in the winter netherworld as the annual climate advances. We recall not only Persephone being carried off by Hades, but Ishtar's descent to the underworld, and the cognate story of Ariadne hanging on a tree as well. We think also of the delegation sent by the Gods to rescue Inanna from the world of the dead. When Inanna's husband Dumuzi arrives, he is forced to stay behind in the underworld, which reminds us, *mutatis mutandis*, of Iðunn's husband Bragi who in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 16 stays behind with his wife in the underworld while the rest of the messengers, Heimdallr and Loki, return to the ruler of the Gods, Óðinn.

We believe we have documented sufficiently in our commentary that *Hrafnagaldur Óðins'* portrait of Iðunn as a Goddess who has fallen from Yggdrasill to the underworld is cognate with the *Hávamál Rune Song's* myth of Óðinn falling off the very same world tree. This opens up the possibility that Iðunn may have fulfilled the role of a sacrificial Goddess of some sort. The idea may have been that the ending of spring is envisaged as a sacrificial death of the spring Goddess. The only difference in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* being that this time around spring will not return; the Great Winter is upon us now, and Ragnarøk surely comes.

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<sup>37</sup> See Braun, pp. 387-389.

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*Hrafnagaldur Óðins* presents us with a story that combines elements paralleled in Snorri's *Skáldskaparmál*'s stories of Iðunn's abduction by Þjazi and Óðinn's theft of the mead. Although the poet of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* knew these stories from *Skáldskaparmál*, and although they have shaped the diction of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*, this does not necessarily mean that the poet created his story solely on the basis of Snorri's work, and that he was not in possession of a pre-existing story. In *Skáldskaparmál* Iðunn vanishes because of Loki, but he is forced into his role by the Giant Þjazi. Snorri then has Loki go to rescue Iðunn in the land of the Giants. Loki is not sent as a sort of punishment, but because he is the one most able to get the job done, although Snorri does speak negatively of Loki, reflecting medieval Norse mythology in general. Loki's expedition to Jötunheim to rescue Iðunn is clearly paralleled in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*'s story of Heimdallr leading Loki and Bragi to Jötunheim to obtain information from Iðunn, who has fallen from Yggdrasill, the mythic equivalent of her abduction and the Gods' loss of her apples of immortality in *Skáldskaparmál*. *Skáldskaparmál*'s Þjazi becomes the Giant Grímnir in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*. This explains strophe 16's kenning for Iðunn, namely, Grímnis grund, "Grímnir's ground," which means Grímnir's woman. As Þjazi stole Iðunn to make her his own, so in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* Grímnir has stolen Iðunn and abducted her to Jötunheim. It may very well be that in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* the name Grímnir is simply an epithet for Þjazi the Giant.



The story of Iðunn's abduction has interesting parallels in Blackfoot stories of the conflict between the Thunder Bird and the Raven.<sup>38</sup> Wissler gives the story as follows:

Once the Thunder-Bird and the Raven tried their respective powers. The Thunder-Bird carried off the wife of the Raven and refused to release her upon the Raven's demand. Then the Raven made medicine. He caused winter with a great snowfall. It was so cold that the only way in which the Thunder-Bird could keep from freezing was by constantly flashing his lightning. Yet the power of the Raven was so great that the Thunder-Bird could barely keep a hole melted out large enough for his body to rest in. At last he was forced to give up the Raven's wife. Now, when there is much snow or a cold wave, the people go out and call to the Raven to take pity on the people.<sup>39</sup>

The form of the pity shown to the people referred to in the story is not only the arrival of warmer weather, but thunder means rain, and therefore fertile growth in nature, and so food for all. For the Blackfoot the thunder is a symbol of spring,<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> We are aware of no special study of this Blackfoot myth, but because it possesses widespread parallels (indigenous and otherwise) it must be far, far older in origin than the time that Snorri Sturluson flourished.

<sup>39</sup> Wissler, p. 134.

<sup>40</sup> See McClintock, pp. 213-214; 254. "[T]he Thunder-Bird . . . comes forth in the spring at the same time that the bear leaves his winter den." *Ibid.*, p. 265.

and the Thunder Bird actually is inseparable from the lightning. In the words of the Blackfoot informant Brings-down-the-sun: “We call the thunder Isis-a-kummi (Thunder-bird). We believe that it is a supernatural person. When he leaves his lodge to go through the heavens with the storm-clouds, he takes the form of a great bird with many colours, like the rainbow, and with long green claws. The lightning is the trail of the Thunder-bird.”<sup>41</sup>

The function of the raven in Blackfoot thought is described by the same informant as follows:

The Raven is very wise. He knows more than any of the birds. We have found that he always tells the truth, so we watch his actions very closely, that we may be able to look into the future. If we see a raven circling high in the air over camp, we know that a messenger will soon come from a distance bearing news. In former days, when we were on a buffalo hunt and found no game, if we saw ravens playing together on a ridge, we took our course in that direction, knowing we should soon secure meat. If we were on a war expedition, and saw ravens light in the trail ahead of us and two of them had their heads close together, as if whispering, we hurried to get into ambush, because the ravens knew an enemy was approaching, and were giving us warning.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> See McClintock, pp. 425-426.

<sup>42</sup> McClintock, p. 483.

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Grinnell gives the following variant version of the Blackfoot story of the conflict between the Thunder Bird and the Raven. Here the Thunder Bird appears simply as the Thunder, and he has stolen a human's wife, whose husband rescues her with magic obtained from the Raven. These variations remind us that myths by their very nature and function are dynamic and ever changing in their details while at the same time conveying a basic overall message, at least to a certain degree.<sup>43</sup>

Long ago, almost in the beginning, a man and his wife were sitting in their lodge, when Thunder came and struck them. The man was not killed. At first he was as if dead, but after a while he lived again, and rising looked about him. His wife was not there. "Oh, well," he thought, "she has gone to get some water or wood," and he sat a while; but when the sun had under-disappeared,<sup>44</sup> he went out and inquired about her of the people. No one had seen her. He searched throughout the camp, but did not find her. Then he knew that Thunder had stolen her, and he went out on the hills alone and mourned.

When morning came, he rose and wandered far away, and he asked all the animals he met if they knew where Thunder lived. They laughed, and would not answer. The Wolf said: "Do you think we would seek the home of the only one we fear? He is our only danger. From all others we can run

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<sup>43</sup> On these aspects of myth, see Claude Lévi-Strauss 2001.

<sup>44</sup> Note by Samuel Zinner: The reading "under-disappeared" appears in the original and must mean, "and when the sun had gone down and vanished from sight."

away; but from him there is no running. He strikes, and there we lie. Turn back! go home! Do not look for the dwelling-place of that dreadful one.” But the man kept on, and travelled far away. Now he came to a lodge,—a queer lodge, for it was made of stone; just like any other lodge, only it was made of stone. Here lived the Raven chief. The man entered.

“Welcome, my friend,” said the chief of Ravens. “Sit down, sit down.”

And food was placed before him.

Then, when he had finished eating, the Raven said, “Why have you come?”

“Thunder has stolen my wife,” replied the man. “I seek his dwelling-place that I may find her.”

“Would you dare enter the lodge of that dreadful person?” asked the Raven.” He lives close by here. His lodge is of stone, like this; and hanging there, within, are eyes,— the eyes of those he has killed or stolen. He has taken out their eyes and hung them in his lodge. Now, then, dare you enter there?”

“No,” replied the man. “I am afraid. What man could look at such dreadful things and live?”

“No person can,” said the Raven. “There is but one old Thunder fears. There is but one he cannot kill. It is I, it is the Raven. Now I will give you medicine, and he shall not harm you. You shall enter there, and seek among those eyes your wife’s; and if you find them, tell that Thunder why you came, and make him give them to you. Here, now, is a raven’s wing. Just point it at

him, and he will start back quick; but if that fail, take this. It is an arrow, and the shaft is made of elk-horn. Take this, I say, and shoot it through the lodge.”

“Why make a fool of me?” the poor man asked. “My heart is sad. I am crying.” And he covered his head with his robe, and wept.

“Oh,” said the Raven, “you do not believe me. Come out, come out, and I will make you believe.” When they stood outside, the Raven asked, “Is the home of your people far?”

“A great distance,” said the man.

“Can you tell how many days you have travelled?”

“No,” he replied, “my heart is sad. I did not count the days. The berries have grown and ripened since I left.”

“Can you see your camp from here?” asked the Raven.

The man did not speak. Then the Raven rubbed some medicine on his eyes and said, “Look !” The man looked, and saw the camp. It was close. He saw the people. He saw the smoke rising from the lodges.

“Now you will believe,” said the Raven. “Take now the arrow and the wing, and go and get your wife.”

So the man took these things, and went to the Thunder’s lodge. He entered and sat down by the door-way. The Thunder sat within and looked at him with awful eyes. But the man looked above, and saw those many pairs of eyes. Among them were those of his wife.

“Why have you come?” said the Thunder in a fearful voice.

“I seek my wife,” the man replied, “whom you have stolen. There hang her eyes.”

“No man can enter my lodge and live,” said the Thunder; and he rose to strike him. Then the man pointed the raven wing at the Thunder, and he fell back on his couch and shivered. But he soon recovered, and rose again. Then the man fitted the elk-horn arrow to his bow, and shot it through the lodge of rock; right through that lodge of rock it pierced a jagged hole, and let the sunlight in.

“Hold,” said the Thunder. “Stop; you are the stronger. Yours the great medicine. You shall have your wife. Take down her eyes.” Then the man cut the string that held them, and immediately his wife stood beside him.

“Now,” said the Thunder, “you know me. I am of great power. I live here in summer, but when winter comes, I go far south. I go south with the birds. Here is my pipe. It is medicine. Take it, and keep it. Now, when I first come in the spring, you shall fill and light this pipe, and you shall pray to me, you and the people. For I bring the rain which makes the berries large and ripe. I bring the rain which makes all things grow, and for this you shall pray to me, you and all the people.”

Thus the people got the first medicine pipe. It was long ago. <sup>45</sup>

There are a number of implications in the Blackfoot story for our own purposes. First, a comparison of the story with that of *Skáldskaparmál*'s tale of

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<sup>45</sup> Grinnell, pp. 113-116.

Iðunn's abduction by Þjazi indicates the latter's indigenous and temporally archaic texture. Certainly the Indo-European people did not borrow a myth like Þjazi's abduction of Iðunn from the ancestors of the Blackfoot people, and neither is the reverse the case either. Rather, both *Skáldskaparmál's* story and the Blackfoot narrative of the Thunder Bird and the Raven represent independent modulations of an extremely old tale that involved issues of climate and seasons (but not restricted to such concerns).<sup>46</sup>

A corresponding detail as specific as the removal of two eyes, which appears in both stories (Óðinn throws Þjazi's eyes up into the heavens and turns them into stars)<sup>47</sup> indicates that the two stories are cognate and did not arise simply spontaneously and independently of each other. This suggests that the basic underlying story is to be traced back ultimately to a time when the ancestors of both the Blackfoot people and of the Indo-Europeans were still in contact with each other. Whether we are to assign the origin of the story to Witzel's earlier "Out of

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<sup>46</sup> In her comments on this passage Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir notes the similarity between the Blackfoot story and the Orpheus myth, with the difference that Orpheus had "enchanted music" rather than "medicines." However, Guðmundsdóttir's comparison is still well-founded, because there is definitely often an overlap between music and indigenous medicine since the latter commonly takes on the form of musical incantations.

<sup>47</sup> In the Blackfoot story, it may be that the purpose of the hanging eyes is for use in seeing enemies or for spotting food. In the Blackfoot story "The Eyes of A-pe'-si" in Fraser, pp. 25-27, detached eyes are magically commanded to fly to the tops of trees.

Africa” Godwana era (ca. 65,000 years ago) or to his later Laurasian period when the earlier Godwana myths were more elaborately developed (ca. 40,000 years ago)<sup>48</sup> need not be decided here. Many readers will find Witzel’s time periods too immense to be acceptable. However, at present Witzel’s basic paradigm is arguably perhaps the most preferable explanation of which we are aware for the uncanny parallels between Greek and North American indigenous narrations. In this particular case coincidence is out of the question. Similarly, recent historical influence either way can be ruled out, for even though some biblical influence on North American indigenous stories is likely (although we believe the extent of this was at times grossly exaggerated by scholarship in the past), any claim of recent influence of Greek mythology on the part of European settlers on Blackfoot and other indigenous groups would be far more incredible than any other hypothesis currently circulating. For its part, Jungian theory avoids confronting the central historical and scientific questions that arise in light of the evidence at hand.

Another implication of the Blackfoot story for *Skáldskaparmál*’s account of Iðunn’s abduction by Þjazi is that in both we are dealing with a seasonal myth that is concerned with the struggle between winter and spring. This sheds light on *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*’ images of threatening weather (see strophes 5, 13; strophe 11’s hlýrnis etymologically refers to lightning, which of course is inseparable from thunder). Towards the end of *Skáldskaparmál*’s story, Loki turns Iðunn into a nut,

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<sup>48</sup> See Witzel. For an indepth review of Witzel, see Smith, Frederick M. Witzel’s book is not without problems; e.g., his claim about a wide scholarly acceptance of Nostratic hypothesis (p. 193).



whereas in the Blackfoot story's ending we read of berries. This indicates that both berry and nut function as symbols of spring's bounty of food. Note as well the themes of reconciliation on the one hand in the *Skáldskaparmál* stories of Iðunn's abduction and Óðinn's theft of the mead and on the other hand in the Blackfoot story, where peace is made between humans (represented by what we might call a Raven Man, a later development of the Raven as bird), the token of which is the peace pipe associated with spring. Functionally the Blackfoot peace pipe corresponds to the Norse mead. The peace pipe's component of immortality is its connection to the spring, the time of life and resurrection. In yet another variant of the Blackfoot story of Thunder who takes away a woman, the peace pipe is said to guarantee long life.<sup>49</sup>

There are a number of further comparisons we can make between *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* and the Blackfoot story. The mourning husband encounters a *wolf* in his *long journey* seeking his abducted wife. This brings to mind *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 10's magic *gandar*, which could be wolves, that Bragi and the other two Gods ride on their "long way" to see Bragi's wife. The Raven gives the mourning husband "medicine," that is, magic, in the form of a raven wing, which obviously is meant to convince Thunder that the man is the feared Raven chief himself. This may be compared to the disguise of the wolf hide given to Iðunn in strophe 8. Though admittedly somewhat tenuous (because of their divergent functions), we could also compare the Norse poem's horn of Heimdallr with the elk horn-tipped arrow in the Blackfoot story. Although the narrational correspondence is not exact, nevertheless

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<sup>49</sup> See Wissler, pp. 89-90.

the Thunder of the Blackfoot story naturally calls to mind the Norse thunder God, Thor. The ravens in the very title *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* might reflect a quite archaic aspect of the myth of spring's abduction by winter, both represented in bird form.

Viewing the stories in a very general way, the Blackfoot Raven and the mourning man with the raven wing (who are ultimately the same entity) correspond to the Norse Bragi whose wife has been abducted by Grímnir and taken down to dark Jötunheim. In Blackfoot experience ravens have been known to teach songs,<sup>50</sup> so perhaps we might detect some kind of correlation, however tenuous this might be, between the Blackfoot story's raven and Bragi as the God of poetry. One important structural difference between the Norse stories and the Blackfoot narratives is that the latter's Thunder Bird embodies within himself both spring and winter, for he flies away during winter, and then returns with rain in spring. He is thus a spring divinity who creates winter by his departure. His own disappearance is mirrored in the vanishing of the Raven's wife whom Thunder Bird abducts. The Raven and his wife function as symbols of spring in that in Blackfoot thought ravens are associated with food availability, for ravens are the wisest of creatures, since they never go hungry, always being able to find food.

There is a very similar story to the Blackfoot one that we have just examined, one which is found among the Tewa tribe, which indicates that both the Blackfoot and Tewa stories reflect a common, older myth. The Tewa story in some respects is even more similar to the tale of Iðunn's abduction than is the Blackfoot story cited above. This Tewa story is called "The Stolen Wife" by Erdoes and Ortiz, and it was

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<sup>50</sup> See e.g., McClintock, p. 146.

recorded in New Mexico in the early 1960s. The story begins when “the cold weather was coming on.”<sup>51</sup> The husband Tiny Flower is out hunting, preparing for winter. At a lake, his wife White Corn finds a magic stick that belongs to the leader of the Yellow Kachina people. This leader tricks White Corn into visiting his house, to which they fly sitting on the magic stick, which “in moments” brings them to Flint-Covered Mountain where the Yellow Kachina leader lives.<sup>52</sup>

Tiny Flower grieves over his loss, but is told to visit Grandmother Spider, whose medicine (magic) can help him win back his wife. Grandmother Spider gives Tiny Flower a pipe, a bag of tobacco and a medicine stick (a magic wand).<sup>53</sup> In the Tewa myth, when the husband of the stolen wife arrives to rescue her, her abductor is not at home because “[h]e has gone to the south to make thunder and rain, but he comes home for dinner at noon.”<sup>54</sup> This might give us a mythemic clue as to why Pjazi was not at home when Loki arrived to retrieve Iðunn. At the home of the Yellow Kachina leader, after he returns home to eat, he finds Tiny Flower and they have a contest to see which has the more powerful medicine. The Yellow Kachina leader tries to kill Tiny Flower with lightning, but to no avail.<sup>55</sup> Tiny Flower manages to kill the Yellow Kachina leader, whose body he rips “into four pieces.”<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Erdoes and Ortiz, p. 285.

<sup>52</sup> Erdoes and Ortiz, p. 285.

<sup>53</sup> Erdoes and Ortiz, p. 286.

<sup>54</sup> Erdoes and Ortiz, p. 287.

<sup>55</sup> Erdoes and Ortiz, p. 288.

<sup>56</sup> Erdoes and Ortiz, p. 289.

The reunited couple hurry to Grandmother Spider, for Tiny Flower must return the magic items to her. But Grandmother Spider urges them to rush home, “because she knew that” the Yellow Kachina leader “was coming back to life.”<sup>57</sup> As they flee home, the Yellow Kachina leader assaults them with cloud, rain and hail, but all manner of birds come to their assistance: “crows, eagles, hawks, owls, sparrows, and more—swooped down and protected the man and woman with their spread wings. The birds that were on top of this great canopy were stuck by hail and became spotted, while the ones underneath, like the crows, kept their solid colours.”<sup>58</sup>

Thus the myth of “The Stolen Wife” functions as an origins story for solid and spotted coloured birds, indicating that the tale pertains to primordial, mythic times, just as does the Iðunn-Þjazi legend. This is confirmed yet again by the conclusion to the Tewa story, for according to this, because of White Corn’s return to her home, “white corn still grows in the village of San Juan.”<sup>59</sup>

A further version of the basic pattern conforming to the Blackfoot and Tewa stories is attested among the Yukots of south-central California in a narrative called “Condor Steals Falcon’s Wife,”<sup>60</sup> further confirming what must be the underlying myth’s extraordinarily remote age, since there is no reason to assume the basic story was spread in recent millennia by contact among the Blackfoot, Tewa, and

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<sup>57</sup> Erdoes and Ortiz, p. 289.

<sup>58</sup> Erdoes and Ortiz, p. 290.

<sup>59</sup> Erdoes and Ortiz, p. 290.

<sup>60</sup> For versions, see Gayton and Newman, pp. 1-3, 44, 78-80; Luthin, pp. 356-362.

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Yokuts. As Geoffrey Gamble writes, the story “was known not only among the Yokuts people but also by other tribes throughout the region.”<sup>61</sup> These “other tribes” include the Western Mono, Tübatulabal, Miwok, and Pomo.<sup>62</sup> In some variants the condor is replaced with a bald eagle,<sup>63</sup> and in light of the Norse parallels to the basic story this may be the result of more than just the decline of the condor in California, *pace* Gayton and Newman. Besides the main characters of the Yokuts version, the Thunder,<sup>64</sup> a sparrow hawk, a wolf, a crow, and other creatures play roles. Gamble summarizes the narrative as follows:

The story takes place in mythic times, when people and animal were one and the same. There is a gathering of the people to share food.<sup>65</sup> While

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<sup>61</sup> In Luthin, p. 349.

<sup>62</sup> Gayton and Newman, p. 14.

<sup>63</sup> See Gayton and Newman, pp. 79-80.

<sup>64</sup> “Eagle called an assembly. Thunder came with Wind’s help”; Gayton and Newman, p. 78. Cf. *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 17. In the version on p. 2 of Gayton and Newman, when Falcon and his wife descend on the musical bow, we read, “At their arrival, the people are happy.” This reminds us of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 17’s merry mead feast. If *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* has merged two originally separate myths, one of a successful rescue and one of a failed rescue of an abducted wife, this could explain the seeming incongruence between the poem’s sharply contrasting moods of impending disaster and merriment.

<sup>65</sup> Note by Samuel Zinner: With the story’s seeds, compare Iðunn’s apples.

Falcon is away, Condor steals his wife. Falcon goes to the leader, Eagle, and asks for help in finding his wife. Eagle sends out a series of people to look for her (Bottlefly is the one who finally finds her), and eventually, after great daring and suspense, Falcon succeeds in rescuing his wife from the malevolent Condor.

[...]

Here, Condor is little more than a monster, a brute who willfully kidnaps his kinsman's spouse and forces her to be his wife, keeping her in a house hidden so high among the crags that it takes magic for Falcon to reach it. Condor is so tough he can't be killed, not even cremated: though his body finally burns up, his head slips away during the night "by itself" and resumes its pursuit. Falcon, fleeing with his rescued wife, repeatedly smashes the head with a rock, but the head just keeps on coming.<sup>66</sup>

The story contains the motif of a failed mission (at least initially), which reminds us of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*, even though eventually the abducted wife is successfully rescued in the Yokuts story. The Yokuts story relates the burning of Condor, which matches the eagle catching fire in the *Skáldskaparmál* story of Iðunn's abduction. Even though Condor's severed head lives on in the Yokuts legend (this portion, however, is absent in some versions), still the abducted wife remains safe in the end, just as does Iðunn in Snorri's tale. In the Yokuts story Falcon descends to safety on his musical bow, which reminds us somewhat of Iðunn's

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<sup>66</sup> In Luthin, pp. 349, 351.

husband Bragi, god of poetry. The same tale has Condor tied down twice, bringing to mind the stories of Loki's binding. Once again, we thus see that elements of both *Skáldskaparmál* and *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* are exhibited by a Native American tradition attested among several indigenous tribes, which can be interpreted as evidence that *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* is the product not only of the imagination of the poem's author, but of much older traditions as well.

There is yet another indigenous story that exhibits some striking parallels to *Skáldskaparmál's* story of Iðunn's abduction, but before we examine it we must explore the Snorri text a bit further. According to *Skáldskaparmál*, Loki rescues Iðunn from the Giant Þjazi by turning her into a nut, but according to a variant reading, he transforms her, as Bergmann writes, "into a summer- or sun-bird, that is, a swallow [German *Schwalbe*] (cf. Slavic *svalava*, from *sval*, 'sun')." <sup>67</sup> The reading *svala*, "swallow," reflects a variant reading documented in Resen's 1665 edition of the *Younger Edda*. There is no pagination in Resen, but the relevant passage is titled "Mythologia LII: De raptu Idunnæ." The standard reading of *Skáldskaparmál* has *brá* Loki henni í hnotarlíki, "Loki transformed her into the likeness of a nut"; *hnotarlíki* reads in Resen's Norwegian translation, "Fugels lignelse," "a bird's likeness," and the accompanying Latin version renders this as *in formam . . . hirundinis*, "in the form of a swallow." The Old Norse *er valrinn flaug með hnotina*, "the falcon flew with the nut," is then rendered in Resen's Latin as, *falconem viderent cum hirundine ad volantem*, "they saw the falcon flying with the swallow." In volume 3 of Árni Magnússon's *Edda Sæmundar hinns Fróða* (1828), Magnússon writes on page 471

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<sup>67</sup> See Bergmann 1872, p. 139.

that the alternative reading comes from a codex of Magnús Ólafsson (1573-1636): *E variante lectiono, qvam reservasse videtur codex ille, qvi Magna Olavio, latinum suam versionem adumbranti, ad manus fuerat.* Magnússon adds to this: *Hirundo certe borealibus suo adventu vernam & æstivam annuntiat beatitudinem, qvam Idunnæ ab atavis nostris adscriptam fuisse putamus*, that is, “Certainly in the north the swallow’s arrival home portends beatitude, which is how our ancestors thought of Iðunn.”

The Latin *hirundo*, “swallow,” bears some similarity to the Old Norse genitive form *hnotar*, especially since *d* and *t* were easily enough interchangeable at the time in question, and the *-o-* of *hnotar* matches the terminal *-o* of *hirundo*, whose *-u-* is quite close phonetically to the *-o-* of *hnotar* as well. If *hirundo* had been derived from *hnotar*, then further two transpositions would have been necessary, both the *-n-* and *-r* and the *-o-* and *-a-* of *hnotar*, resulting in the form *hranto*. All of this seems quite involved, and although possible, it does not seem probable that *hirundo* was derived from *hnotar*. The more likely explanation of the alternative reading would have been either a genuine variant in the Snorri *Edda* tradition, or the influence of a still-living oral tradition of Iðunn having been transformed by Loki into the form of a sparrow, *svala* in Old Norse. Both images, that of a nut and of a sparrow, make eminent sense mythically and symbolically.

As Wachter writes: “A type of falcon, namely, the tree falcon (*falco subbuteo*), actually frequently intercepts swallows in the autumn when they accompany swallows, and carry them away in a hostile fashion, and return in spring with the



swallows. Iðunn in swallow form in the claws of Loki in falcon form therefore makes good sense and contains an image that is derived entirely from nature.”<sup>68</sup>

In *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 8 the Gods send Iðunn a wolf hide; since strophe 9 names the delegation that is to be sent to Iðunn, we can probably safely posit that strophe 8’s Gods are Óðinn, Heimdallr, Bragi and Loki. This would relate Loki directly to Iðunn’s transformation into a wolf form, that is, a werewolf, in strophe 8. We can now see that *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophes 8-9 are a mythic variant of the *Skáldskaparmál* account of Loki transforming the shape or likeness of Iðunn. In strophe 12 of the *Haustlǫng* poem on Iðunn we read that Loki leiku, “tricked” when he flew in the form of a hawk to retrieve Iðunn. This reminds us of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 8’s lek (lék), “played,” which is used to describe Iðunn’s shape-shifting into the form of a werewolf by means of the wolf hide supplied to her by the Gods, most likely also including Loki. We should perhaps resist the engrained temptation to read *Haustlǫng* through the prism of Snorri’s tale of Iðunn’s abduction. Thus in *Haustlǫng* strophe 12, it might be possible to interpret Loki’s use of trickery to regain Iðunn by means of hawk wings as meaning that Loki supplied Iðunn with a magic falcon skin, and that both he and she escaped in bird form. The hawk’s “offspring,” *barni*, might just as well be Iðunn as Loki. This might seem a stretch, but we should explore all possibilities when trying to read a long-familiar text with fresh eyes. Incidentally the strophe uses the term *leik* with reference to Þjazi as well, namely, leikblaðs . . . fjaðrar, play of blades . . . of feathers (that is, his flapping/beating of wings).

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<sup>68</sup> Wachter 1838, p. 152.

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Now we are ready to move on to the additional indigenous parallel to the Iðunn-Þjazi tale. The story, called “The Daughter of the Sun,” comes from the Cherokee tribe, but there are a number of close variants found among several other tribes. The story is about the Sun’s daughter (cf. the alternative reading in *Skáldskaparmál*’s story of Iðunn being transformed into a swallow, that is, a sun-bird, as we lately saw Bergmann explain) who grieves for her dead daughter who is now in the underworld. The story begins with the Sun wanting to kill all the people of earth. The Little Men, who are the beneficent Thunder Boys,<sup>69</sup> come up with a plan to kill the Sun by turning two men into snakes (cf. *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 8’s transformation of Iðunn into a wolf) who will inject the Sun with their venom. The plan does not work, so the Little Men then turn two men into the horned beast Uktena and a rattlesnake. They accidentally kill the Sun’s daughter instead of the Sun herself. The Sun sorrows and shuts herself up on her house, bringing a wintry darkness to the world. To end the darkness, a delegation of seven is sent to rescue the Sun’s daughter from the underworld (cf. *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*’ delegation to Iðunn in the underworld). They are dispatched bearing magic rods (cf. *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 10’s *göndum*, which can mean magic poles, wolves or serpents, on which the three Norse Gods that constitute the delegation ride to visit Iðunn in the underworld) that will put the Sun’s daughter to sleep so that she can be stored in a magic box and transported back to the land of the living. The Sun’s daughter, however, tricks the delegation and escapes from the box by transforming herself into the form of a bird and flies away (cf. the alternative reading in *Skáldskaparmál*’s

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<sup>69</sup> See Mooney, p. 438.

story of Iðunn being transformed into a swallow). Because of this, humans are not immortal and must die. Thus the Sun's daughter obviously embodies eternal life, just as does Iðunn with her ashen-box, *eski* (*Gylfaginning* 26) containing her golden apples of immortality. We are reminded also of the serpent who steals the plant of life from Gilgamesh, and escapes from the hero with its prize. Because the delegation is unsuccessful (cf. *Hrafnagaldur Óðins'* unsuccessful delegation to Iðunn), the Sun weeps so much that the tears become an immense deluge that threatens to drown all beings upon earth. A council is held and it is determined that the best looking men and women will entertain the sun and try to make her laugh, to stop her from crying. They are successful and the deluge is aborted. This reminds us of *Skáldskaparmál's* story of Loki making the grieving Skaði laugh after her father Þjazi's death.

We supply here James Mooney's English rendering of the Cherokee version of The Daughter of the Sun:

The Sun lived on the other side of the sky vault, but her daughter lived in the middle of the sky, directly above the earth, and every day as the Sun was climbing along the sky arch to the west she used to stop at her daughter's house for dinner.

Now, the Sun hated the people on the earth, because they could never look straight at her without screwing up their faces. She said to her brother, the Moon, "My grandchildren are ugly; they grin all over their faces when they look at me." But the Moon said, "I like my younger brothers; I think they

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are very handsome”—because they always smiled pleasantly when they saw him in the sky at night, for his rays were milder.

The Sun was jealous and planned to kill all the people, so every day when she got near her daughter’s house she sent down such sultry rays that there was a great fever and the people died by hundreds, until everyone had lost some friend and there was fear that no one would be left. They went for help to the Little Men, who said the only way to save themselves was to kill the Sun.

The Little Men made medicine and changed two men to snakes, the Spreading-adder and the Copperhead, and sent them to watch near the door of the daughter of the Sun to bite the old Sun when she came next day. They went together and hid near the house until the Sun came, but when the Spreading-adder was about to spring, the bright light blinded him and he could only spit out yellow slime, as he does to this day when he tries to bite. She called him a nasty thing and went by into the house, and the Copperhead crawled off without trying to do anything.

So the people still died from the heat, and they went to the Little Men a second time for help. The Little Men made medicine again and changed one man into the great Uktena and another into the Rattlesnake and sent them to watch near the house and kill the old Sun when she came for dinner. They made the Uktena very large, with horns on his head, and everyone thought he would be sure to do the work, but the Rattlesnake was so quick and eager that he got ahead and coiled up just outside the house, and when the Sun’s

daughter opened the door to look out for her mother, he sprang up and bit her and she fell dead in the doorway. He forgot to wait for the old Sun, but went back to the people, and the Uktena was so very angry that he went back, too. Since then we pray to the rattlesnake and do not kill him, because he is kind and never tries to bite if we do not disturb him. The Uktena grew angrier all the time and very dangerous, so that if he even looked at a man, that man's family would die. After a long time the people held a council and decided that he was too dangerous to be with them, so they sent him up to Gălûñ'łătĭ, and he is there now. The Spreading-adder, the Copperhead, the Rattlesnake, and the Uktena were all men.

When the Sun found her daughter dead, she went into the house and grieved, and the people did not die any more, but now the world was dark all the time, because the Sun would not come out. They went again to the Little Men, and these told them that if they wanted the Sun to come out again they must bring back her daughter from Tsûsginâ'ĩ, the Ghost country, in Usûñhi'yĭ, the Darkening land in the west. They chose seven men to go, and gave each a sourwood rod a hand-breadth long. The Little Men told them they must take a box with them, and when they got to Tsûsginâ'ĩ they would find all the ghosts at a dance. They must stand outside the circle, and when the young woman passed in the dance they must strike her with the rods and she would fall to the ground. Then they must put her into the box and bring her back to her mother, but they must be very sure not to open the box, even a little way, until they were home again.

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They took the rods and a box and travelled seven days to the west until they came to the Darkening land. There were a great many people there, and they were having a dance just as if they were at home in the settlements. The young woman was in the outside circle, and as she swung around to where the seven men were standing, one struck her with his rod and she turned her head and saw him. As she came around the second time another touched her with his rod, and then another and another, until at the seventh round she fell out of the ring, and they put her into the box and closed the lid fast. The other ghosts seemed never to notice what had happened.

They took up the box and started home toward the east. In a little while the girl came to life again and begged to be let out of the box, but they made no answer and went on. Soon she called again and said she was hungry, but still they made no answer and went on. After another while she spoke again and called for a drink and pleaded so that it was very hard to listen to her, but the men who carried the box said nothing and still went on. When at last they were very near home, she called again and begged them to raise the lid just a little, because she was smothering. They were afraid she was really dying now, so they lifted the lid a little to give her air, but as they did so there was a fluttering sound inside and something flew past them into the thicket and they heard a redbird cry, "*kwish! kwish! kwish!*" in the bushes. They shut down the lid and went on again to the settlements, but when they got there and opened the box it was empty.

So we know the Redbird is the daughter of the Sun, and if the men had kept the box closed, as the Little Men told them to do, they would have brought her home safely, and we could bring back our other friends also from the Ghost country, but now when they die we can never bring them back.

The Sun had been glad when they started to the Ghost country, but when they came back without her daughter she grieved and cried, “My daughter, my daughter,” and wept until her tears made a flood upon the earth, and the people were afraid the world would be drowned. They held another council, and sent their handsomest young men and women to amuse her so that she would stop crying. They danced before the Sun and sang their best songs, but for a long time she kept her face covered and paid no attention, until at last the drummer suddenly changed the song, when she lifted up her face, and was so pleased at the sight that she forgot her grief and smiled.<sup>70</sup>

Mooney summarizes a Shawnee version of the same story as follows:

In a Shawanee myth a girl dies, and, after grieving long for her, her brother sets out to bring her back from the land of shadows. He travels west until he reaches the place where the earth and sky meet; then he goes through and climbs up on the other side until he comes to the house of a great beneficent spirit, who is designated, according to the Indian system of

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<sup>70</sup> Mooney, pp. 252-254.

respect, as grandfather. On learning his errand this helper gives him “medicine” by which he will be able to enter the spirit world, and instructs him how and in what direction to proceed to find his sister. “He said she would be at a dance, and when she rose to join in the movement he must seize and ensconce her in the hollow of a reed with which he was furnished, and cover the orifice with the end of his finger.” He does as directed, secures his sister, and returns to the house of his instructor, who transforms both into material beings again, and, after giving them sacred rituals to take back to their tribe, dismisses them by a shorter route through a trapdoor in the sky.<sup>71</sup>

Intriguingly, in an Algonquian variant of the myth, the spirit of the dead appears in the form of a nut that escapes from a pouch and flies away:

In an Algonquian myth of New Brunswick a bereaved father seeks his son’s soul in the spirit domain of Papkootpawnt, the Indian Pluto, who gives it to him in the shape of a nut, which he is told to insert in his son’s body, when the boy will come to life. He puts it into a pouch, and returns with the friends who had accompanied him. Preparations are made for a dance of rejoicing. “The father, wishing to take part in it, gave his son’s soul to the keeping of a squaw who stood by. Being curious to see it, she opened the bag,

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<sup>71</sup> Mooney, p. 437.



on which it escaped at once and took its flight for the realms of Papkootpawnt.”<sup>72</sup>

In yet another variation, two brothers go the world of the dead to bring back their mother. A sentinel tells them that only the dead can enter. One brother chooses to become dead and enter the realm to be with his mother. Only one brother returns from the trip, without his mother of course,<sup>73</sup> which reminds us of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*' story of Bragi staying behind in the underworld with Iðunn as Heimdallr and Loki return from their unsuccessful mission to the residence of the Gods.

In light of the parallels between *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* and *Skáldskaparmál*'s story of Iðunn's abduction on the one hand and the indigenous myth of the Daughter of the Sun on the other hand, it should be apparent that *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* basic narrative was not simply created ex nihilo from the Old Norse poet's imagination. The Old Norse poem contains some quite archaic, even indigenous, elements. There is always a possibility that some of these indigenous components may have found their way into Norse lore via the indigenous Finno-Ugric Sami, the source of the Norse practice of seiðr, and perhaps some of the more shamanic-like Norse traditions. Sami traditions often resemble those of shamanic-practicing groups of Siberia and the Americas as well, despite the fact that the Sami are a European people as to origin. Rooth's research has uncovered the Norse God Loki's origins as a trickster figure in spider form, which is paralleled in the beliefs of several

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<sup>72</sup> Mooney, p. 437.

<sup>73</sup> See Mooney, p. 437.

indigenous tribes of North America.<sup>74</sup> In fact the Sami do have extensive traditions about the daughter of the Sun, and the Sami folklorist Anders Fjellner (1795-1876) preserved a poem called *Beaivvi nieidda jápmin*, “The Death of the Sun’s Daughter,” whose name is Njávésheatne. Njávésheatne is weary of life, wishing to die and go see her father the Sun and the Thunder God.<sup>75</sup> Knud Rasmussen rendered the poem into Danish in 1907:

Soldatterens Død	The Sun Daughter’s Death
Laa ved hellig Dør i Kaate	Next to the sacred door of the grass hut
Beijen Nejta-Njavvis-ene,	Njávésheatne, daughter of the Sun,
Træt af Livets tunge Byrder;	Was weary of life’s oppressive burdens;
Vilde bort til andre Egne,	She wanted to flee to a different place,
Skue Jubmel, Verdens Hersker,	To see Jubmel, World-Ruler,
Skue Tjermes, Jætters Fjende,	To see Tiermes, Enemy of Giants,
Skue Solen selv, sin Fader.	To see even the Sun, her Father.
Ventende paa Dødens Aande	She waits for the Spirit of Death
Laa ved hellig Dør i Kaate.	Next to the sacred door of the grass hut.

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<sup>74</sup> See Rooth, pp. 246-247.

<sup>75</sup> Text in Lindholm, pp. 27-30. An English translation by Harald Gaski is available online at <http://www.utexas.edu/courses/sami/diehtu/giella/folk/daughter.htm> Retrieved on 27 March 2014. There is a related poem, *Päiva neita*, in Donner, pp. 103-104; German translation, *Die Sonnenjungfrau*, on pp. 105-106.

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Beijen Nejta, Solens Datter.	Njávesheatne, daughter of the Sun.
Hun, som ved at tæmme Renen	She, who had tamed the wild reindeer,
Solskænk gav til Solens Sønner,	Gave it to the children of the Sun,
Skal nu paa sin sidste Færd.	She shall fare forth on her final journey.
Stod ved Hovedgærde Sønnen,	Her son stood by the bed's headboard,
Onde Attjis-enes Bane;	The bane of baleful Áhchesheane;
Stod ved Foden Fosterdatter,	There stood at the foot of the bed a girl,
Attjis-enes unge Datter.	Young daughter of Áhchesheane.
Taler Solens fagre Datter,	Then speaks the Sun's beautiful daughter,
Taler mat med burden Stemme.	Speaks with a weak, low burdened voice.
Lytter nøje! Gem i Minde!	Listen carefully! Keep them in mind!
Bejve's fagre Datter taler:	Thus speaks the Sun's beautiful daughter:
Solen daler. Natten kommer.	The Sun sets. The Night comes.
Mørke falder over Jorden,	Murky covers spread over Earth,
Over fagre Sameland—	Over beautiful Sápmi—
Ingen ved, naar Morgen kommer.	No one knows when Morning comes.
Solen daler. Ulven kommer.	The Sun sets. The Wolf comes.
Smyger gerne om i Natten,	Slithering as in the Night,
Skjuler sig i mørke Baghold—	Slyly hidden in the murky ambush—
Ingen ved, naar Morgen kommer.	No one knows when Morning comes.

Solen daler. Hjorden mindskes.	The Sun sets. The herd dwindles.
Pest skal døde. Brems skal stikke.	The pest assails. The insects sting.
Lysets Børn i Mørke fare—	Bright children move in the murk—
Ingen ved, naar Morgen kommer.	No one knows when Morning comes.
Solen daler. Beijen Nejta	The Sun sets. Its light is lost;
Flyver atter op mod Lyset.	She flies again up to her luminous Father,
Før til Solen hende hjem—	With his children, to her home, the Sun—
Ingen ved, naar Morgen kommer. <sup>76</sup>	No one knows when Morning comes.

It is striking that in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* Loki is never demonized as he is in *Skáldskaparmál*, which may be interpreted as evidence for the preservation in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* of mythic elements related to Loki that may be more archaic than some of those we encounter in Snorri. While the literature on *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* has been preoccupied with the question of whether the poem preserves an otherwise lost myth or has been created solely out of the poet's imagination, exegetes have failed to notice that the overall narrative of the poem is more or less a variant version of the stories of Iðunn's abduction, the loss of her apples of immortality, and of Óðinn's theft of the mead Oðreyrir, although some of the older exegetes did notice at least some of these correspondences.

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<sup>76</sup> Rasmussen, pp. 89-90. English translation from the Danish by Samuel Zinner, modified with reference to the text in Lindholm.

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In *Skáldskaparmál* the story of Iðunn's abduction begins with a travelling band of three Gods, Óðinn, Þórr and Loki. In *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* we find the triad Heimdallr, Loki and Bragi. However, Heimdallr clearly stands in the place of Óðinn, since the latter appoints the former. Þórr is replaced by Bragi for obvious reasons, for not only is he Iðunn's husband, but as the God of poetry he symbolizes the mead under its aspect of poetry, while Iðunn represents the mead's component of immortality. Her apples of immortality are a mythic equivalent to the mead's immortality, an aspect of the sacred drink that was eventually eclipsed in the Norse tradition in favour of the poetic powers of the mead. However, the notion of the mead's original power of immortality is preserved by implication in *Skáldskaparmál's* act of introducing the story of the mead of poetry with the story of Iðunn's apples of immortality. Also, we must not forget that in his *Skáldskaparmál* Snorri has the God of poetry Bragi tell the stories of Iðunn's abduction and of Óðinn's theft of the mead. So Bragi was an obvious choice for inclusion in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*.

The author of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* seems to have had an authentic lingering pagan nostalgia and an acquaintance with classical literature, but at a time when older Norse mythemes not attested in the *Poetic Edda* may still have been circulating in oral tradition, such as were the non-*Poetic Edda* materials that Snorri came to write down and preserve for future generations. Although the author seems to have been acquainted with Greek (and/or Latin) literature, we must bear in mind that much of the Greco-Roman heritage had been shaped fundamentally by ancient

near eastern and Oriental sources.<sup>77</sup> We must therefore be rather careful when we detect supposed classical influences, for they may instead be Oriental, or a mixture of ancient near eastern and Greek or Latin trajectories. As we endeavour to document in our commentary, there does seem to be at least a few specifically Oriental influences hovering here and there beneath the surface in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*.

Based on all relevant evidence we would hazard to guess that a date of composition by a Christian author with some cultural-based vestigial traces of pagan wistfulness sometime through the 1500s would be more likely than sometime near the mid 1600s. Naturally we leave open the possibility of a slightly earlier or later date for the composition, but neither too much before the early 1500s, nor too much later than the earliest decades of the 1600s. The earlier estimate is probably more likely than the later one. Lastly, we suspect that the poem is either a translation or a verse reworking of an earlier prose text (less likely, of a poetic composition, but that remains a perfectly plausible scenario), and this reputed *Vorlage* could have been not only medieval, but may have preserved indirect traces of genuinely ancient Oriental and Greco-Roman mythemes, just as the older *Edda* poems often have.

Kristjánsson, who argues for a medieval origin of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* (a position we find untenable if left unqualified), emphasizes that this poem's notional ambiguities and textual perplexities constitute its very strengths as a piece of literature, since engagement with the unknown yields pleasure and may even help

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<sup>77</sup> See West 2003.

to both deepen and enlighten some of the obscurities and profundities of the mysteries of life.<sup>78</sup> Kristjánsson's medieval dating of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* was quickly assailed, and justly so, by Árnason, who insisted it cannot have originated before the 1600s, yet he also raised the possibility that the various strophes might have been composed in different time periods, some earlier than later.<sup>79</sup> However, rather than assigning different strophes to different eras, a more economical approach might be to differentiate the ages of various underlying traditions in the poem's strophes.

Þorgeirsson situates *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* into the context of the 17<sup>th</sup> century revival of interest in witchcraft, magic and paganism,<sup>80</sup> and summarizes his conclusions as follows: "Linguistic and metrical arguments place *Hrafnagaldur* after the Reformation. The mystical tone of the poem, its interest in magic and its serious perspective on the Norse gods fit well with 17th-century Iceland when occult and antiquarian interests led to certain neo-pagan tendencies."<sup>81</sup> The same author

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<sup>78</sup> See Kristjánsson, p. 5.

<sup>79</sup> Árnason, p. 11. See also the discussion in Lassen, p. 16.

<sup>80</sup> Þorgeirsson 2010, p. 327: "Í síðasta undirkafla var bent á að á 17. öld höfðu landsmenn mikinn áhuga á göldrum og heiðni og tóku þessa hluta tilverunnar alvarlegar en áður. Í þessu samhengi ber að skoða *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*. Í því kvæði ríkir dulúð, goðsagnaáhugi og virðing fyrir heiðnum goðum. Þar er einnig áhugi á göldrum en það sést bæði af nafni kvæðisins og innihaldi. Þar er til dæmis lýst umbreytingu í úlfslíki og gandreidd."

<sup>81</sup> Þorgeirsson 2010, p. 334.

specifies that the poem’s origin is post-Reformation and “perhaps of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.”<sup>82</sup>

Porgeirsson continues by observing the following: “If the poet wrote the poem from their own intuition or if they relied on some older mythological sources, we cannot know. I believe the first possibility is the more likely of the two, but we should note that there are a number of testimonies about older manuscripts in the 17<sup>th</sup> century that are no longer extant.”<sup>83</sup> As we show in our commentary, *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*’ portrait of Iðunn in strophes 6 and 8 shows a clear direct dependence upon the Latin text of Statius’ *Thebaid*, a work we know from Rooth’s research has influenced *Völuspá* strophes 23ff.,<sup>84</sup> but as we show in the commentary, strophe 22 as well. *Völuspá* strophe 22’s description of Heiðr thus exhibits points of contact with the same Latin text of *Thebaid* that surface in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*’ description of Iðunn. As we demonstrate in the commentary, it is not possible that *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* derived its portrait of Iðunn entirely from *Völuspá* strophe 22, but must have had access to *Thebaid* as well. Thus both *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* and *Völuspá* have been independently influenced by the Latin text of *Thebaid*. The most natural assessment in this case would be that both the oral story embedded in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* (not its later *written* version) and the written text of *Völuspá* were influenced independently of each other by the *Thebaid* at the same general time period in the medieval era when the latter epic was circulating among

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<sup>82</sup> Þorgeirsson 2010, p. 328.

<sup>83</sup> Þorgeirsson 2010, p. 328; our translation.

<sup>84</sup> Rooth, p. 241.



Scandinavian poets. By the time the medieval story of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* was consigned to writing in the post-Reformation era, its language had changed in some fundamental ways, and this would be natural to expect with oral poetry, which is always dynamic and changing in traditional cultures.

Porgeirsson concludes his comments concerning *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* on the following note: “As I see it, that *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* comes from the 17<sup>th</sup> century instead of the middle ages does not detract from its literary quality. On the contrary, I believe that understanding its temporal and conceptual context will enable us to better appreciate this elusive lay.”<sup>85</sup>

The quality of elusiveness in literature can have at least two possible explanations. The Qurʾān is elusive and allusive, and its elliptical style is explicable by noting that the audience for which it was intended had access to the full forms of the stories or ideas that are only partially alluded to in Islam’s canonical text. Often sentences are even strikingly incomplete in the Qurʾān, but its original hearers could supply the hermeneutical flesh and bones to cover the grammatical skeleton, so to speak. A second reason for literary elusiveness may be explained with reference to a text such as the Gospel of Thomas, which is intentionally obscure, the motivation being to inspire readers to set out on an exegetical journey, to crack the code of the text, so to speak. Thomas’ elusiveness is strengthened by brevity of language and profound obscurity, again being employed to foster a sense of wonder that might lead to the odyssey of interpretative discovery. *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* seems to have been inspired by both motivations of the elliptical and the obscure.

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<sup>85</sup> Porgeirsson 2010, p. 328; our translation.

We cannot escape the impression that the poet of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* expected his listeners to be able to understand the general plot of his poem, as well as several of its key details as well. He has created his poem as a sort of challenge to his readers to find parallels to its brief individual lines in the *Poetic Edda*, in Snorri's tales, but also in the remnants of what still might have remained of a living oral Norse mythological heritage. Many of what formerly seemed intentional obscurities turn out upon closer inspection to have been textual corruptions. On the other hand, the poet of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* seems to have paralleled the sometimes startling loose usage of language that characterized Latin Silver Age poets, such as Statius, author of the *Thebaid*, which in its Latin and Irish versions has influenced not only *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*, but *Baldurs draumar* and *Völuspá* as well. Here we think of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 17's Viðar(s), in which, as we show in the commentary, the author wanted his listeners to see not only other similar sounding names of Óðinn, but the words Viðr, Tree, as an Óðinn epithet, and veðr, "wind" (as synonymn to the same strophe's kenning for winds, Forniozt sefum) as well. In this regard it would be helpful to quote Mozley on Statius, and apply some of the insights gained, *mutatis mutandis*, to the Old Norse context of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*:

Statius takes great liberties with the Latin language. There are phrases which it is impossible to make sense of, if taken grammatically and literally. Legras is reduced to despair by some, as by v. 115 "vel iustos cuius pulsantia menses vota tument?" he says "c'est, si on l'ose dire, un pur charabia"; so too

“raptus ab omni sole dies” (v. 364), where the scholiast is compelled to exclaim “nove dictum!” and, perhaps the most untranslatable of all, “viderat Inachias rapidum glomerare cohortes Bacchus iter” (vii. 45). It is impossible, in translating, to do more than give the general sense; the poet is here a pure “impressionist.” Postgate has made a similar comment on the style of Propertius (*Select Elegies*, Introduction, p. lx), “The outhnes of his pictures lack sharpness and precision, and the colours and even forms on his canvas tend to blend imperceptibly with each other. Thus it is the general impression that fascinates us in his poems, not the proportion and perfection of the details.” Again, speaking of Propertius’ excessive subtlety of construction, he says “sometimes the sentence must be read as a whole, as it is almost impossible to give it a detailed construction. . . . Cf. i. 20. 24, where I have compared the tendency of the Greek tragedians to spread the meaning through a sentence rather than apportion it among the words.”<sup>86</sup>

However, we should not overlook the fact that poets everywhere have always taken great liberties with language, and this includes even the immortal Homer. As Reece documents, among Homer’s quite artificial terms are Ἄβιοι instead of Γάβιοι; Σελλοί instead of Ἐλλοί; φορκός instead of (ἐφ)ὀλκός; ἀσφοδελός instead of σφοδελός; σῶκος instead of ὠκύς.<sup>87</sup> Many of these were formulated on the basis of metanalysis, that is, linguistic resegmentation. As Reece points out, the people

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<sup>86</sup> Mozley vol. 1, p. xx.

<sup>87</sup> See Reece, pp. 195-334.

Homer calls the Abioi were actually the Gabioi, the latter form being attested in Aeschylus long after Homer's time. Because for his poetic purposes Homer needed this people's name to mean "without violence," he simply dropped the initial gamma and thus created a new word via what can be called a *schema etymologicum*.<sup>88</sup> As Reece concludes: "In short, we appear to have had it backwards all along, having been led astray, as we often are, by our tendency to give priority to readings in those texts that happen to survive from an earlier period. But Aeschylus, though later, is not dependent on Homer here. Rather, Homer and Aeschylus are dependent on a common source. And it is Aeschylus who has retained the earlier and original form, while Homer has modified it to suit his purposes."<sup>89</sup>

Reece tells us that Homer's "adjective φολκός is an absolute *hapax legomenon* in the Greek language: it occurs only here and in some ancient scholia, lexica, and commentaries on this very passage."<sup>90</sup> As Reece concludes, φολκός is an innovation, a metanalytic resegmentation or reformulation of "ὄλκος/ὄλκαϊος 'dragging, trailing' and a compound form ἐφολκός 'lagging.'"<sup>91</sup> Particularly interesting is Homer's ἀσφοδελὸν λειμῶνα, "asphodel meadow," whose context clearly indicates that it is intended to mean "gloomy meadow," and not "flowery meadow" as later exegetes mistakenly thought. As Reece suggests, "ἀσφοδελός is a metanalysis of σφοδελός, or rather σποδελός, an adjectival form, with the common

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<sup>88</sup> Reece, p. 196.

<sup>89</sup> Reece, p. 199.

<sup>90</sup> Reece, p. 231.

<sup>91</sup> Reece, p. 233.

Greek suffix -ελος, of the root σποδ- found also in the Homeric noun σποδός ‘ashes.’ The Homeric formula κατ’ άσφοδελόν λειμῶνα in its original form meant ‘throughout the ash-filled meadow.’”<sup>92</sup> Reece concludes: “In short, the theological ambiguity about the afterlife, complemented by the phonetic ambiguity of the two formulas [κατὰ σποδελόν λειμῶνα and κατ’ άσφοδελόν λειμῶνα], led to the resegmentation of κατά σποδελόν λειμῶνα, an epic formula used to describe Hades, as κατ’ άσφοδελόν λειμῶνα, an epic formula used to describe Elysium. Henceforth, κατ’ άσφοδελόν λειμῶνα was used to describe both, even in contextual situations where it was somewhat inappropriate, even awkward, as in the three passages of the *Odyssey*. . . .”<sup>93</sup>

We can also refer to the evolution of Hebrew from the Tanakh, to Qumran and to the *piyyuṭim*. Mizrahi quotes Newsom who refers to the *piyyuṭim*’s “masculine by-forms, neologisms, word-play, and complex syntax,” all of which are indicative “of a mannered and artificial characteristic style. . . .”<sup>94</sup> Mizrahi examines the following masculine by-forms attested in the Qumran *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*: בין “Understanding”; בךב “Blessing”; מרז “Song”; רבקו “Approach”; נקר “Jubilation”; ומתר “Offering.”<sup>95</sup> As Mizrahi remarks, all of these nouns usually appear as feminine in Biblical Hebrew.

Mizrahi supplies the following encapsulation:

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<sup>92</sup> Reece, p. 264.

<sup>93</sup> Reece, pp. 270-271.

<sup>94</sup> Mizrahi, p. 150.

<sup>95</sup> See Mizrahi, pp. 151-159.

From a diachronic perspective, the language of *piyyuṭ* represents a phase in the history of Hebrew that is subsequent to Mishnaic (or Rabbinic) Hebrew. The *piyyuṭ* preserves some traits of the living language spoken by the sages, and in some respects its language can be perceived as a direct continuation and further development of Mishnaic Hebrew. But on the whole, the *piyyuṭim* are highly stylized literary products of skillful poets of the Byzantine period, an era when Hebrew was no longer spoken and the vernaculars were local varieties of Greek and Late Western Aramaic. The language of the *piyyuṭim*, with its mix of seemingly contradictory elements, is best described as a “living literary language”; and this mix is reflected in the variety of components and influences discernable in its lexicon and grammar.<sup>96</sup>

Thus the “artificiality” of certain aspects of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins’s* language ironically turns out to be “natural” in view of the poetic proclivity for innovation attested among a wide variety of ancient peoples.

The various individual oracle-like sayings of the Gospel of Thomas were never intended by their author to be given only one single correct interpretation by the text’s readers. On the contrary, the logia are purposely designed to be obscure enough to fit almost any interpretation any reader might bring to the text, within the parameters of tradition’s controls of course. In this way the reader constructs herself, her self-understanding, as she constructs the meaning of the text. That is,

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<sup>96</sup> Mizrahi, pp. 148-149.

the text has little or no meaning in itself (almost calling to mind Derrida's radical world as text trope), but is designed to help readers construct themselves and their own self-identities by using it as a springboard and motivation. This is not so much the case with *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*, but given the latter's plasticity of language and imagery, it may very well be that the author did not have in mind one single meaning that could be attached to each and every single detail of the poem.

*Hrafnagaldur Óðins* is a densely learned poem, replete with minute allusions to the tiniest of details buried throughout the *Poetic Edda* and other cognate sources. The author may not even have been consciously aware of all the influences and origins of various turns of phrase in the poem. The poet has used words in a way that is plastic enough so that they retain their validity, solidity and edifying or entertainment value, regardless of whether one sees in, for example, strophe 17's Viðar(s) the name Viðarr (Wide Exalted One),<sup>97</sup> Viðr (Tree), Veðr (Wind) or an allusion to strophe 9's Viðrir.

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<sup>97</sup> Viðarr may have been intended to make the listeners pose the question to themselves of how could Óðinn be called by the name of one of his own sons? Of course, calling one human or god by the name of another is a staple feature of Old Norse poetry, and we find it in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* as well, as in strophe 8's Nanna, the name of Baldr's wife, but which here is used of Iðunn (*nanna* being a poetical heiti for "woman," as Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir reminds us in her remarks on our manuscript's passage here).

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When Lüning speaks of the poem *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* “wunderlichkeiten der sprache,”<sup>98</sup> this can be understood and reacted to in more than one way. First, the German noun *Wunderlichkeit* can mean “oddity,” “strangeness,” “fantasticity.” We could consequently speak disparagingly of the poet’s individual fantasy running amok almost solipsistically in the field of language. On the other hand we might just as well positively react to these *wunderlichkeiten der sprache* by viewing them as tradition-influenced linguistic innovations that constitute one the most endearing aspects of the poem. For instance, the fantastical linguistic acrobatics indulged in by the authors of the Zohar, that pinnacle of Jewish mysticism, represent one of the most fascinating and productive aspects of the work as a whole. In Genesis 1:1, the Zohar turns the grammatical subject, “God,” into an object, reading the Hebrew order of words, “In the Beginning created God,” as meaning that the entity known as Beginning (Wisdom) created God. This type of hyper-literalism and grammatical mysticism were the source of much of the Zohar’s unique theosophical content, without which the text perhaps would have never emerged from its limited veil of secrecy and earned a wide public readership within Judaism and beyond. There is no reason not to view the unusual linguistic features of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* in this way, and as having generated in the poem many of its more noticeable and impressive components in the domains of poetic idiom and plot development.

Simrock writes of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*: “Our lay is considered the darkest and most mysterious of the entire *Edda*. Erik Halson, an Icelandic scholar of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, occupied himself with the same for ten long years without learning to

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<sup>98</sup> Lüning, p. 521.



understand it. . . . The difficulty lies in the learned mythological language, the keys to which we no longer possess. . . .”<sup>99</sup> Simrock cites Uhland’s sentiments, who although assigning to *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* “a relatively late date of composition, nevertheless still judges it positively, inasmuch as he finds the interior understanding of the mythological symbolism still fully predominating.”<sup>100</sup> We personally share Uhland’s assessment. Wachter wrote similarly some decades before Simrock:

*Hrafnagaldur Óðins*, one of the most meaningful of the *Edda* lays, and which was written by one of the greatest of poets, has garnered the attention of researchers on account of its high degree of obscurity. . . . The poem, however, does not consist, as do skaldic lays, in artificial word order, for it is simple and natural, like the other *Edda* lays. Neither does it consist of the accumulation of symbolic language, because its language is with only a few exceptions just as easy to understand as the other *Edda* lays, and only in a few instances is it comparable with the hermetically symbolic-laden language of the skaldic poets. The difficulty in understanding the lay consists in the poet’s progression of thoughts and ideas and in the intellectual level of the same.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Simrock, pp. 407-408.

<sup>100</sup> Simrock, p. 408.

<sup>101</sup> Wachter 1834, p. 292.

Wachter continues by noting that the composer was “one of the intellectually richest of poets, whose greatness, however, has not been sufficiently recognized because his intellectual level or strategy was not known.”<sup>102</sup> That is, exegetes were not capable enough to recognize the function of elements such as strophe 11 serving as a key to the entire poem, thus missing the foreboding note of the deceptively cheerful description of dawn and day in strophes 24 and 26, which “the poet paints most beautifully, and which in itself makes *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* worthy of our deepest attention.”<sup>103</sup> Wachter concludes by noting that despite its later date of composition, “In any case, the lay breathes the spirit of heathen antiquity. . . . Presumably the lay had a religious purpose and was recited at sacrificial feasts.”<sup>104</sup> This last suspicion is of course not possible for the poem *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*, since it was composed after the end of paganism in Scandinavian lands, but it could apply to the underlying mythic narrative enframed in the poem.

We would agree wholeheartedly that regardless of its age, *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* is a poem of substantial literary merit, despite its flaws. However, our own assessment of available parallels to *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* suggests that its main inspiration was not the poet’s private or individual intuition or fancy, although such always plays a role in the production of poetry in any age, but vestiges of an earlier Norse mythology, especially an application to Iðunn of the myth of Óðinn’s hanging upon and falling from Yggdrasill, as well as a conceptualization of Iðunn along the

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<sup>102</sup> Wachter 1834, p. 297.

<sup>103</sup> Wachter 1834, p. 295.

<sup>104</sup> Wachter 1834, p. 297.

lines of the *Völva* in *Völuspá*, *Hyndluljóð* (*Völuspá hin skamma*) and *Baldrs draumar*, all being points we seek to elucidate in the commentary below. We continue to suspect that *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* was probably redacted ca. 1500s-1600s on the basis of the neo-pagan interests Þorgeirsson refers to. However, as we have already remarked, the redaction may have involved a reworking of earlier mythic materials whose creation preceded the post-Reformation revival of interest in things pagan.<sup>105</sup>

Among critical biblical scholars it has become the norm to criticize an older outdated “canonical bias.” The field has witnessed a veritable explosion in studies of extracanonical literature, especially of so-called apocryphal gospels and pseudepigraphical apocalypses, both of Jewish and Christian provenances. Scholars now realize that even post-biblical non-canonical works that are temporally later in origin than most (but perhaps not all) biblical books can nevertheless contain traditions, at least in part, that are as old as if not sometimes even older than materials in the canon. For instance, the already mentioned Gospel of Thomas, which arguably shows signs of knowledge of the canonical synoptic gospels, nevertheless contains versions of various sayings of Jesus that many scholars accept as older than their parallels that are preserved in the biblical gospels.<sup>106</sup> It was

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<sup>105</sup> Here Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir reminds us of the following: “In my article ‘The Werewolf in Medieval Icelandic Literature,’ I group medieval werewolf stories into two groups/variants, old germanic, and more recent celtic. There, I maintain that the variant in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* belongs to the older variant.” See Guðmundsdóttir 2007.

<sup>106</sup> See DeConick.

apparently the case that a later author had inherited authentic early traditions and was motivated by a reading of canonical sources to preserve the earlier traditions still known from floating oral sources, which then became mixed with some of the canonical parallels' diction, making it somewhat meaningless to disparage a later text solely because it was consigned to writing some time after an earlier text. The earlier and later texts might each contain differing mixtures of early and late traditions.

We would suggest that a similar dynamic may have been at work with the author of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* in relation to the earlier poem *Völuspá*. Although the poet has crafted the poem on the basis of several *Poetic Edda* and Snorri elements, she/he nevertheless may have done so motivated by the desire to preserve authentic oral traditions she/he had inherited, at least to a limited degree. In the spirit of Claude Lévi-Strauss, we would observe in the words of Guy Stroumsa's summary of the French anthropologist's position that "the search for the 'authentic' version of myths has been an impediment to the development of a real science of mythology. . . . Lévi-Strauss, therefore, proposes 'to define each myth as a set (ensemble) of all its versions.'"<sup>107</sup> Moreover, myths "can be understood and reconstructed only through the careful interplay of all their versions."<sup>108</sup> We would suggest that this paradigm of a dual synchronic-diachronic approach be applied to the myth/s embedded in both *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* and *Völuspá* (as well as the many other *Poetic Edda* lays that inspired *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*). Lastly, we would

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<sup>107</sup> Stroumsa, p. 1.

<sup>108</sup> Stroumsa, p. 1.

recommend that Eddic scholars integrate into their own field the basic findings and resultant attitudes derived from the last century of critical biblical scholarship that enabled experts in that particular field to abandon canonical bias. Rather than repeating Bugge’s own rather obviously antiquated canonical bias, Eddic scholars would benefit more by strengthening current trends that emphasize a natural continuity between the older Eddic poems and later Scandinavian poetry of the post-medieval periods.<sup>109</sup>

Lassen sums up her research results as follows: “Here *Hrafnagaldur* is regarded as an inauthentic eddic poem, with a reference to Bugge’s arguments that it ought in future to be omitted from collections of eddic poems.”<sup>110</sup> Aside from the question of what “inauthentic” might precisely mean in this context, we wonder what ideological and cultural burdens could lie behind so many scholars’ very notion of a “collection” of Eddic poems, which unavoidably brings to mind Christian debates about the canon of scripture and related theological notions such as inspiration and inerrancy. We do not think Eddic scholars in general consciously entertain such notions, but we do suspect such ideas exert powerful influences upon many scholars on lower levels of awareness, just where cultural biases are usually rooted. We are all influenced by our biases, but the objective of scholars is to at least become aware of what our prejudices might be and how they might unconsciously shape our conclusions so that we might come to exercise at least a modicum of control over said presuppositions.

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<sup>109</sup> E.g., Guðmundsdóttir 2010; Þorgeirsson 2010.

<sup>110</sup> Lassen, p. 81.

## EXCURSUS I

### *The Epic of Gilgamesh and Hrafnagaldur Óðins*

Here we will work our way through the *Epic of Gilgamesh* in order to identify some possible parallels to *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*. The parallels in *Gilgamesh* to the Old Norse poem will at first appear rather distant, tenuous and largely only structural in nature, and that is in fact virtually all they are, at least as regards most of the first nine *Gilgamesh* Tablets. But as we proceed, this situation will change in surprising ways once we arrive at *Gilgamesh* Tablet 10.

In Tablet 1 Gilgamesh is depicted as demigod of wisdom, indeed, he found all wisdom. In this respect he is like Iðunn, the “wise Goddess” (*Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 6, line 2). In line 47 the poet announces “Gilgameš was his name,”<sup>111</sup> with which we may compare the delay in naming Iðunn first in strophe 6 of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*. Such delays were perhaps standard literary devices devised to create a certain amount of tension and thus drama. Gilgamesh has two dreams, which disturb him, but which his mother interprets as positive in line 273: “[*Favourable and precious*] was your dream,”<sup>112</sup> which is comparable to *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 3’s Dwarves who deliver negative pronouncements on the two oracle dreams embodied in strophes 1:1-8 and 2:5-8. This shows us the traditional aspects

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<sup>111</sup> George vol. 1, p. 541.

<sup>112</sup> George vol. 1, p. 555.

of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*' language on dreams, oracles and their interpretation, largely coinciding among ancient near eastern and Indo-European peoples.

In Tablet 2:51 ale is interestingly called the “destiny of the land,” complementing line 50's bread, “the staff of the people.”<sup>113</sup> This shows us just how ancient is the Norse mythemic linkage between wells, mead and fate. In Tablet 4 Gilgamesh performs an elaborate dream oracle ceremony several times on a mountain. He draws a circle, sits within it, and placing his chin on his knees,<sup>114</sup> which reminds one of an age-old and widespread technique for inducing visionary or altered states of consciousness by decreasing oxygen levels to the brain. Line 22 describes the resulting dream that is experienced by Gilgamesh as “completely confused,”<sup>115</sup> traditional language for an inauspicious dream or oracle. Enkidu, however, interprets the dream as “favourable,”<sup>116</sup> once again contrastively matching the scenario of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 3's Dwarves who deliver negative pronouncements on the two oracle dreams embodied in strophes 1:1-8 and 2:5-8 (the latter perhaps reaching into the first lines of strophe 3 as well).

Early on in the story we are introduced to the wild man Enkidu, who lives among the wild animals. As part of a divine plot the sacred prostitute Šamḥat is sent into the wild to seduce him, in effect to civilize, that is, citify, him. After having sex with him, which alienates him from his former animal friends, she clothes Enkidu,

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<sup>113</sup> George vol. 1, p. 561.

<sup>114</sup> See George vol. 1, pp. 589ff.

<sup>115</sup> George vol. 1, p. 589.

<sup>116</sup> George vol. 1, p. 589.

leads him to the city and feeds him on beer and bread, all the quintessential signs of city life. After this process, Enkidu is described as being “just like a god” (Tablet 1:207), “he had reason” (1:202), and “his heart (now) wise” (1:214).<sup>117</sup> In Tablet 2:34-35 Šamḥat clothes Enkidu with a garment, and the text says that he is “like a god.”<sup>118</sup> All of this language forms part of the larger ancient near eastern background to Genesis’ story of Adam and Eve. In Genesis 3:5 the serpent (who shows up in *Gilgamesh* Tablet 11) tells Eve that if she and Adam eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which on one level means the tree of the knowledge of civilization and technology, then “you shall be as gods.” The underlying idea is that city life makes humans god-like. Thus the story of Enkidu and Šamḥat were probably originally the first man and woman. In *Gilgamesh* part of their literary function is to re-emphasize the fundamental trope and importance of wisdom (with all its civilizational implications and presuppositions), which begins with the figure of the wise Gilgamesh himself, the city-founder, in the very opening of Tablet 1.

By the time we reach Tablet 7:118 Enkidu curses his lover Šamḥat (he later relents and blesses her): “May thorn and briar skin your feet!” This shows us just how very ancient is the type of curse we find in *Skírnismál* strophe 31’s curse against Gerðr:

ver þú sem þistill

you will be like a thistle

sá er var þrunginn

that was thrust/thrown

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<sup>117</sup> George vol. 1, p. 551.

<sup>118</sup> George vol. 1, p. 561.



í qnn ofanverða.

at the end of harvest.

That Enkidu curses Šamḥat's feet with symbols of infertility, thorns and briar, makes eminent sense, because in the ancient near east feet often functioned as a symbol of the penis or vagina.<sup>119</sup> Steinsland correctly sees in *Skírnismál's* thistle an allusion to infertility.<sup>120</sup>

*Gilgamesh* Tablet 7:147 depicts the wearing of a lion skin as a sign of mourning. 7:254 tells of an evil dream that *exhausts strength*.<sup>121</sup> This calls to mind *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 4's strength that is driven from Dwarves, so that worlds sink down. Tablet 8 opens with a long exhortation for all entities of nature to mourn for the passing of Enkidu, one of the many, many ancient parallels to stories such as Hel's requirement that all entities of creation mourn for the dead Baldr in order for him to be released from the netherworld.

Moving on to Tablet 9, line 54 refers to Gilgamesh's "far road"<sup>122</sup> that he takes on his way to see Ūt-napišti who has the secret of life and death (see line 77). After encountering the Scorpion Men who guard the mountain where is found the gate to the sun and to the netherworld, Gilgamesh takes "the path of the sun."<sup>123</sup> In line 172 he passes the long darkness and arrives at "the trees of the gods," which have

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<sup>119</sup> See Kripal, pp. 33, 46, 186.

<sup>120</sup> Steinsland 1990, pp. 317-318.

<sup>121</sup> See George vol. 1, p. 647.

<sup>122</sup> George vol. 1, p. 669.

<sup>123</sup> George vol. 1, p. 671.

various precious stones as their fruit.<sup>124</sup> Line 188 explains that these beautiful trees and bushes grow jewels “instead of thorn and briar,”<sup>125</sup> which indicates that the jewels are symbols of fertility, in contrast to Enkidu’s infertility curse of “thorn and briar” against his lover Šamḥat in Tablet 7:118.

At the end of Tablet 9 Gilgamesh meets the alewife Šiduri, whom Albright has documented is a Goddess of Life and Wisdom.<sup>126</sup> As George writes: “According to *Šurpu* the field of this goddess is wisdom, This ties in with the ale-wife’s function in the Gilgameš epic, in which she gives the hero sage advice.”<sup>127</sup> Šiduri thus forms another link in the chain of wisdom figures in the epic, beginning with Gilgamesh and continuing secondly with Šamḥat. Indeed, Šiduri as the third wisdom figure of the epic is ultimately another reflection of the same mythic idea that Šamḥat embodies, that is, an Eve-like first woman and Goddess of life, wisdom and fertility. Šiduri dwells at the sea-shore at the place of the trees of the Gods, where the rivers originate, which agrees with Genesis’ imagery of Eden. As Albright has shown, these trees of Šiduri are in fact representative of the tree of life, whom Šiduri herself symbolizes and embodies.

Tablet 10 gives the full story of Gilgamesh and Šiduri. Here the parallels to *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* become surprisingly numerous. First, Šiduri is an ale-wife, which matches the kenning for Iðunn in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 11, line 2, veiga

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<sup>124</sup> George vol. 1, pp. 673, 675.

<sup>125</sup> George vol. 1, p. 675.

<sup>126</sup> See Albright 1920 Goddess.

<sup>127</sup> George vol. 1, p. 149.

selio, “drinks-server.” The name Šiduri is interpreted by Lambert as “She is my wall (i.e. protection),” but in ancient times was also understood to mean “young woman,”<sup>128</sup> the latter probably being the meaning, more or less, of the name Nanna in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 8. In strophe 11, the wise Heimdallr asks Iðunn for information about the origin, life, and death of the worlds, just as Gilgamesh asks Šiduri for directions to Ūt-napišti who has the secret to life and death. In Tablet 10:4 Šiduri is covered with a shawl; cf. *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 8’s wolf hide that covers Iðunn. Similarly, in Tablet 10:6 Gilgamesh is clothed in a (lion) pelt, which gives us a closer parallel to Iðunn’s wolf hide. Tablet 10:8-9 describe Gilgamesh’s sorrow, which may be compared to Iðunn’s sorrows. Tablet 10:10 refers to Šiduri watching Gilgamesh “in the distance,”<sup>129</sup> which matches *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 10’s langa vegu, “long path,” that Óðinn views from a distance.

In Tablet 10:14-15 Šiduri bars her “gate,” and bolts her “door,” fearing the stranger Gilgamesh’s approach. This reminds us of the kenning for Iðunn in strophe 9, gátt (=gátt), “doorpost,” which Bergmann emends to gætta, “guarded one.”<sup>130</sup> Either reading would fit well with the scene in Tablet 10:14-15, but tradition suggests another possibility, namely gæta, keeper, guard. *Skáldskaparmál* gives the kenning gætandi eplanna for Iðunn. These forms are by no coincidence cognate with the verb gæzlu, used in *Skáldskaparmál* of Gunnlōð who “guarded” the sacred mead. More fully in strophe 9 we read of the Giallar sunnu / gátt, the doorpost of the sun of

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<sup>128</sup> George vol. 1, p. 149.

<sup>129</sup> George vol. 1, p. 679.

<sup>130</sup> Bergmann 1875, p.103.

Gjöll, Bergmann emending *sunnu* to *svanna*, “swan.”<sup>131</sup> Gjöll is an infernal river that bridges Jötunheim and Hel. According to Bergmann strophe 9 refers to Iðunn as the guarded swan of Gjöll, that is, the guarded or protected lady at the river Gjöll. This would make sense contextually for *Gilgamesh* Tablet 10, in which Gilgamesh asks the ale-wife Šiduri for instructions on how to cross “the Waters of Death,” to which she responds that only Šamaš, the Sun, crosses the Waters of Death (lines 72-82).<sup>132</sup> Thus the reading *sunnu* in strophe 9 might be preferable to Bergmann’s proposed emendation *svanna*. Consequently we emend only the word *gátt* in strophe 9, and read it as *Gjallar sunnu / gæta*, “guard of the sun of Gjöll.”

Lassen renders the passage as “the doorpost / of the sun of Gjöll (=woman).”<sup>133</sup> In her commentary she notes that “sun of a river is a kenning for gold” and “gold’s support (or doorpost . . .) is a kenning for a woman. *Gátt* is often used in *rímur* in kennings for women.”<sup>134</sup> Thus Lassen understands both “doorpost” and “sun of (the river) Gjöll” as kennings for “woman.” However, this would mean that Heimdallr is to pose his question to “the woman of the woman,” that is, to the doorpost = woman, of the sun of (the river) Gjöll = woman. We find it more natural to understand the passage as “the (female) guard of Gjöll’s Sun,” that is, guardian of the waters of death, over which only the Sun may pass. However, the notion of a woman of a woman is known in Gnostic speculations on Sophia; e.g., Irenaeus tells

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<sup>131</sup> Bergmann 1875, p.103.

<sup>132</sup> George vol. 1, p. 683.

<sup>133</sup> Lassen, p. 86.

<sup>134</sup> Lassen, p. 99.

us in *Against the Heresies* I 30:3 that the Ophites called the restored Sophia “Woman from Woman.”<sup>135</sup> The Gnostic *Book of Baruch* teaches that the female principle has two bodies. Thus Lassen’s implied understanding of “the woman of the woman” could be correct after all, although I find it less likely than “the (female) guard of Gjöll’s Sun.”

We should mention that in *Fjolsvinnsmál* the maiden Menglǫð, who is primarily constructed out of the figure of Iðunn, and to a lesser extent out of Freyja, has a magic gate called Thrymgiöll, Thunder Yell. Also, in *Sólarljóð* strophe 42 we find the sun coordinated with infernal streams:

Sól ek sá,	The sun I saw,
svá hon geislaði,	and she beamed forth so
at ek þóttumk vætki vita;	that I seemed nothing to know;
en Gjallar straumar	but Giöll’s streams
grenjuðu á annan veg,	roared from the other side
blandnir mjök við blóð.	mingled much with blood.

The above is Thorpe’s translation, and the Old Norse text above is from Bugge, but we have changed his Gylfar to Gjallar (the reading of MS M),<sup>136</sup> because there can be little doubt that the latter is the correct reading, which is supported by the parallel in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 9. This *Sólarljóð* strophe coordinates the

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<sup>135</sup> Grant, p. 100.

<sup>136</sup> Bugge 1867, p. 364.

imagery of the sun (as a feminine divinity) and the streams of the infernal river Gjöll, just as we find in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 9. Earlier in strophe 39 of *Sólarljóð* the sun is mentioned together with Hel's gates, *grind*, a synonym of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 9's gátt. This evidence suggests that the poet of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* either knew *Sólarljóð* or that he was acquainted with similar traditions as are enframed in *Sólarljóð*.

To make better sense of all the above, we must backtrack to *Gilgamesh* Tablet 9. In 9:37 Gilgamesh arrives at Mount Māšu, a name that means "Twin,"<sup>137</sup> "which daily guards the rising [of the sun]."<sup>138</sup> The mountain's heights reach the sky, while its base stretches down to the netherworld (lines 40-41). This link between the netherworld and the sun is precisely mirrored in the combination of the netherworld river Gjöll and the Sun in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 9.

The solar mountain's "gate" in *Gilgamesh* Tablet 9 is guarded by scorpion men (line 42): "at both sunrise and sunset they guard the sun."<sup>139</sup> Since both the mountain and the scorpion men are called guardians of the sun, because the scorpion men are described as both male and female, it may be that they symbolically mirror the mountain, whose name Twin might allude to some type of androgyny or perhaps a divine masculine and feminine pair.

As we have already seen, in 9:138 Gilgamesh takes the path of the sun on his journey to Ūt-napišti. After "eleven double hours" of travelling through a "darkness"

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<sup>137</sup> George vol. 1, p. 669

<sup>138</sup> George vol. 1, p. 669.

<sup>139</sup> George vol. 1, p. 669.

described as “dense” (lines 139-168), “he came out before the sun” (line 170).<sup>140</sup> He then meets Šiduri, who later in Tablet 10 informs the hero that only the Sun passes over the Waters of Death which would have to be traversed in order to find the immortal sage Ūt-napišti. In 10:86ff. Šiduri tells Gilgamesh that before crossing the Waters of Death one would have to deal with Ur-šanabi, Ūt-napišti’s boatman, who is accompanied by a company of frightening “Stone Ones,” without whose assistance there is no crossing possible.<sup>141</sup> Gilgamesh quickly kills off the Stone Ones and subdues Ur-šanabi, who then asks Gilgamesh why he looks so sorrowful, to which the hero responds by telling his tale of loss and describing himself as “one who has travelled a distant road,”<sup>142</sup> again reminding us of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 10’s *langa vegu*, “long path.”

After listening to Gilgamesh’s epic tale of woe, Ur-šanabi is agreeable to the idea of transporting the hero to Ūt-napišti, but in Tablet 10:157ff. Ur-šanabi explains that by killing off the Stone Ones, who strip cedar to be used as poles for the crossing of the Waters of Death, Gilgamesh has made it impossible for himself to reach Ūt-napišti. However, the problem is solved by Gilgamesh himself stripping cedar and making three hundred punting poles (10:160), after which the two set out on their watery journey. In 10:170-171 Ur-šanabi and Gilgamesh finally approach the Waters of Death, where Ur-šanabi instructs Gilgamesh to use the poles, apparently as a sort of elevating walking sticks, to cross the Waters of Death. The

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<sup>140</sup> George vol. 1, p. 673.

<sup>141</sup> George vol. 1, p. 683.

<sup>142</sup> George vol. 1, p. 685.

idea seems to be that the waters must not touch Gilgamesh; perhaps they would kill him. Gilgamesh obeys and in line 206 or 207 (the lines are incomplete) he meets Ūt-napišti and speaks to him face to face.

Looking back now to Mount Māšu and the scorpion men, they are the guardians of the gate of the Sun. In between the gate of the Sun and the Waters of Death are Šiduri and Ur-šanabi, and while the latter might be called a guardian of the gate of the Waters of Death, since Gilgamesh cannot find Ur-šanabi except through Šiduri, both her and Ur-šanabi might be thought of as guardians in some sense of the Waters of Death.

In strophe 10 of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* the Gods travel to Iðunn upon *gǫndum*, that is, *gǫndum*. The term *gandr* usually means a wolf, sometimes a serpent, which a witch or sorcerer enchants for the purpose of maig, usually to transport the magician. Eldar Heide argues that a *gandr* can be “a mind-in-shape emissary” dispatched during a *seiðr* session, which could be spun forth like a sort of projectile.<sup>143</sup> For Lassen *gandr* is more likely here to refer to a “witch’s broomstick” than to a wolf,<sup>144</sup> and she renders it in strophe 10 as “magic poles,” which the Gods ride to see Iðunn. Because a wolf hide appears in strophe 8, it is more likely that in strophe 10 *gǫndum* means enchanted wolves. However, the possibility that the term might mean “magic poles” immediately brings to mind the poles that Gilgamesh uses to cross the perilous waters of death to reach Ūt-napišti. The term

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<sup>143</sup> See Heide, “Spinning,” pp. 164, 167. We thank Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir for bringing our attention to Heide, *Gand*.

<sup>144</sup> Lassen, p. 99.



*gandr* in strophe 10 might additionally be meant to make the listener think of both pole and wolf simultaneously, and perhaps we can think here of a pole with a carved wolf head and tail, for instance. A parallel would be Moses' staff that turned into a serpent; *gandr* is used not only of magic staffs and wolves, but enchanted serpents as well. There is even a further relevant parallel between strophe 10 and *Gilgamesh* here. Compare Tablet 10:184, where Ur-šanabi watches Gilgamesh crossing the waters on the poles, "Ur-šanabi was watching [him] in the distance,"<sup>145</sup> with *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 10's ending where Óðinn listens (which basically implies "keeps watch," "pays attention to"; "listens" is used primarily because Óðinn wants to *hear* if Iðunn will *say* anything) from his throne, from where he watches the delegation travel over "long paths."

Up to this point it is significant to notice that the parallels between the *Gilgamesh* epic and *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* cluster around *Gilgamesh* Tablet 10 and the Old Norse poem's strophes 8-12, but especially strophes 9 and 10.

Once in the company of *Ūt-napišti* another series of parallels with another portion of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* begins. Past the middle point of Tablet 10, beginning in line 271 we find the following relevant passages that we can correlate with *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophes 20, 22-23, that is, the narrative of the conclusion to Óðinn's banquet. In Tablet 10:271 *Ūt-napišti* recalls how in the past a "throne" had been erected for Gilgamesh "in the assembly."<sup>146</sup> *Ūt-napišti* asks why Gilgamesh would have forsaken such shonours as the throne, the best food and drink, with

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<sup>145</sup> George vol. 1, p. 689.

<sup>146</sup> George vol. 1, p. 695.

which we may compare Óðinn's lofty ale seat of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 18 and the mead and food *Sæhrímnir* of strophe 19. *Ūt-napišti* says that he, i.e., Gilgamesh, was formerly not like the one "who has no words of counsel" (10:277), which brings to mind *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 22's "new counsels." 10:281 refers to "the moon and the gods [*of the night*],"<sup>147</sup> line 282 reads, "[At] night the moon travels," and line 282, "the gods stay awake."<sup>148</sup> These lines may be correlated with *Hrafnagaldur Óðins'* Gods of strophes 18ff., the moon who travels wearily in strophe 23, and strophe 22's implied need to stay awake during the night to find counsels and plans for the salvation of the Gods.

Tablet 10 lines 288-289 refer respectively to "the temples of the gods" and "the temples of the goddesses."<sup>149</sup> This brings to mind *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 20's *ha goṭ hǫrgar*. The passage has given rise to a lot of discussion and confusion, most of which can be cleared up by recognizing with Bergmann that a word, *ok*, has dropped out of the text immediately before the name "Loki." Lassen renders the first lines of strophe 20 as follows: "The high gods asked *Heimdallur*, the holy ones asked *Loki*."<sup>150</sup> Lassen comments, "'*Hǫrgar*' (m. pl.) means 'sanctuaries, holy places,' but the context requires a word meaning 'gods' (it is difficult to see that *hǫrgar* were particularly associated with goddesses, cf. *LP*)."<sup>151</sup> The problem is that the term

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<sup>147</sup> George vol. 1, p. 695.

<sup>148</sup> George vol. 1, p. 695.

<sup>149</sup> George vol. 1, p. 695.

<sup>150</sup> Lassen, p. 91.

<sup>151</sup> Lassen, p. 104.

*hǫrgr* is a masculine noun of the first declension, thus with the endings -s, -ar for the genitive singular and nominative plural forms respectively. However, in strophe 20 *hǫrgr* has been treated by the poet as a masculine noun of the second declension, with singular genitive ending -ar, thus *ha goð hǫrgar* means “the high gods of the sanctuary,” that is, of strophe 17’s shrine Vingólf, as Bergmann naturally deduced contextually.<sup>152</sup> Thus the strophe’s first half is to be rendered as follows:

Margs of fragu	A lot of questions were asked,
maltid yfir	the meal time over,
Heimdall ha goð	by the high Gods of the sanctuary
hǫrgar ok Loka.	of Heimdallr and of Loki.

*Hrafnagaldur Óðins*’ combination of the Gods and their sanctuary or temple may be compared with *Gilgamesh* Tablet 10:288-289’s “temples of the gods” and “temples of the goddesses.”

In Tablet 11:209ff. *Gilgamesh* must stay awake for six days and seven nights in order to be granted the secret of immortality by *Īt-napišti*. Of course, *Gilgamesh* almost instantly falls asleep. In 11:211, sleep wafts over the hero,<sup>153</sup> with which we might compare the hovering of sleep induced by the night Ogress in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 14. Out of pity and at the suggestion of his wife, *Īt-napišti* gives *Gilgamesh* another chance, telling him that there is a plant of immortality at the

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<sup>152</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 109.

<sup>153</sup> George vol. 1, p. 717.

waters' bottom, and if he can retrieve it, he can gain immortality. Ūt-napišti instructs Gilgamesh to return home with Ur-šanabi, who is to be given a new royal robe (perhaps as a sign of rebirth of some sort?).

Gilgamesh and Ur-šanabi begin their long journey back, during which Gilgamesh obtains the plant of immortality, which has a thorn that will prick the hand (line 284). Since the thorn is a symbol of infertility, perhaps there is an understanding here that immortality brings not only life (which overlaps with the trope of fertility), but a loss of fertility in some sense as well. Perhaps this is somehow cognate with the ancient ascetic notions that physical birth means eventual mortality, whereas eternal life is gained through celibacy, a trope we find in the *Dialogue of the Saviour* from the Nag Hammadi codices. In any case, the plant in *Gilgamesh* Tablet 11 renews youth, turning the elderly into young people again (line 296), just like Iðunn's apples.

Later, as Gilgamesh takes a bath, a snake smells the plant of immortality and steals it, becoming immortal thereby. Gilgamesh breaks down in tears, like Iðunn in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 12. This is of course cognate with the Genesis story of the serpent who in effect steals away from Adam and Eve the benefits of the tree of life, that is, of eternal life or immortality, bringing them both many sorrows.

The story of Gilgamesh was known in many forms in many countries throughout several millennia, impacting literature from Homer to the Arabian Nights.<sup>154</sup> It is likely that the parallels to Gilgamesh that we find in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* can be explained best by assigning the influence to the medieval period when

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<sup>154</sup> See Dalley, pp. 47-49.

other ancient classics, such as Statius' *Thebaid*, were impacting poems such as *Völuspá*<sup>155</sup> and *Baldurs draumar*. This does not require that *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* existed in written form in the medieval period, only that the basic plot of its story along with some of its distinctive phraseology (especially in strophes 8, which directly borrows from *Thebaid* 10, and elements of strophes 9-11 as well, with their *Gilgamesh* parallels) had been in oral circulation. When it was finally consigned to writing in the post-Reformation era (assuming the validity of this scenario, which is not the only possible one), sometime in the 1500s to the early decades of the 1600s, it had evolved linguistically, integrating a number of words that had only more recently been circulating in Iceland, a completely natural phenomenon of oral poetry in traditional cultures.<sup>156</sup>

Earlier in the same medieval era when stories of Gilgamesh and Thebes were informing Old Norse poets modulated stories of Gilgamesh were shaping the tales later assembled as the *Arabian Nights*, especially the legend of Buluqiya, as we have lately noted with reference to the Mesopotamian scholar Dalley, who suspects that the name Buluqiya might be a “hypocoristic form of Sumerian or Hurrian Bilgamesh.”<sup>157</sup> It may prove of interest to see how the story of Gilgamesh may have

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<sup>155</sup> See Rooth, p. 241.

<sup>156</sup> In her comments here Aðalheiður Guðmundsdóttir concurs: “Yes, this possibility cannot be ruled out.”

<sup>157</sup> Dalley, p. 48. With Gilgamesh < Bilgamesh, cf. Gillingr < Billingr in *Hávamál* strophe 97.

mutually influenced both the Buluqiya and *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* and other cognate Old Norse myths. Dalley summarizes the legend of the “young king Buluqiya” who

sets out with a bosom friend to search for immortality, to obtain Solomon’s ring (which replaces the Humbaba episode).<sup>158</sup> His friend dies an untimely death [like Enkidu] at the moment when success is within their reach.

Buluqiya’s subsequent travels lead him through a subterranean passage (cf. *Gilgamesh*, IX. v.), reaching a kingdom where the trees have emerald leaves and ruby fruit (cf. IX. v.), and meeting a far-distant king Sakhr who has obtained immortality in a way that is impossible now for Buluqiya, by drinking from the Fountain of Life which is guarded by Al-Khiḍr (the Islamic sage for whom Atrahasis has long been recognized as forerunner). King Sakhr expounds to Buluqiya the early history of the world (cf. XI. 10-197), and then Buluqiya is spirited back home.<sup>159</sup>

Buluqiya’s return journey is magically accomplished in an instant, and he returns home alone, just as he had arrived alone at Al-Khiḍr’s dwelling. In *Gilgamesh* the hero travels with the ferryman Ur-šanabi to meet Ūt-napišti, who in the end instructs Gilgamesh to return home with Ur-šanabi. Tablet 11 does not describe

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<sup>158</sup> Note by Samuel Zinner: Buluqiya and his bosom friend setting out together mirrors Gilgamesh and Enkidu setting out together to slay Humbaba, but the ring of Solomon and immortality mirror Gilgamesh’s plant of youth.

<sup>159</sup> Dalley, p. 48.

their return home as magically rapid. In contrast to this, *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* portrays Heimdallr's and Loki's return trip as magically fast, for they are borne by the winds, which reminds us of Buluqiya's journey to Al-Khiḍr, during which he basically flies over the seven seas by means of the power of the herb of flight. Whereas Buluqiya is alone arriving to and departing from Al-Khiḍr, Gilgamesh comes and goes with Ur-šanabi. In *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* three travel to Iðunn, namely, Heimdallr, Loki and Bragi, and two make the journey back, Heimdallr and Loki. Perhaps Heimdallr's connection to Ægir, the Sea God (the poet of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* believed that Heimdallr was Ægir's son), can be correlated with Ur-šanabi the ferryman. As we shall see, immediately before being ushered into Al-Khiḍr's presence, Buluqiya eats at a magic banquet of incorruptible food that is renewed weekly. This reminds us of the divine banquet in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe<sup>19</sup> at which the Einherjar eat the magical self-replicating Sæhrímnir, the ambrosial like frosty sea foam misinterpreted in later tradition as a boar.

The story of Buluqiya in the *Arabian Nights*, despite its Islamic enframing, is nevertheless clearly of Jewish provenance. In the *Arabian Nights* the Buluqiya story is told by the Serpent Queen to a man named Hasib, the son of a Greek Jewish sage who is called the prophet of God, Daniel, and so he is obviously the Daniel of the Tanakh and of Islamic tradition as well. Shortly after the Buluqiya story begins, a parallel to Šiduri appears in the form of a seraph-like serpent, indeed, as the queen of the righteous serpents (= seraphim, angels in the form of flying fiery serpents) who worshipfully chant the names of God. Further, Šiduri's gem-studded tree has become in the *Arabian Nights* a golden gem-encrusted throne (in Jewish tradition

the tree of life was thought of as God's throne where he rested in Eden). The Serpnet Queen knows where there is an herb that can enable one's feet to fly over the seven seas without getting wet, and only with the serpent queen by their side could anyone obtain said herb. This harks back ultimately not so much to Gilgamesh's plant of youth, but to the punting poles that enable Gilgamesh to traverse the Waters of Death, so the Serpnet Queen also has absorbed a central function of Ūt-napišti's boatman Ur-šanabi. With the Serpnet Queen's herb one can cross the seven seas and arrive at the Fountain of Life; thus it is the latter that mirrors Gilgamesh's plant of youth. The Buluqiya story does, however, mention another herb of immortality, and this of course ultimately originates in Gligamesh's plant of youth as well. Unfortunately, Buluqiya and his companion Affan (= *Enkidu* in *Gilgamesh*), chose the herb of sea-flight, ignorantly passing over the herb of immortality.

In *Gilgamesh*, Ūt-napišti dwells at the mouth of the two rivers; in Buluqiya, we hear of "the gate of the Meeting-place of the Two Seas" (Burton version, here and below). When Buluqiya first arrives where Al-Khiḍr (=Ūt-napišti/Atrahasis) lives, he meets a giant bird on the branches of what is obviously the tree of life. The bird's "body was of pearls and leek-green emeralds, its feet of silver, its beak of red carnelian and its plumery of precious metals." After eating at a miraculous banquet, Buluqiya is ushered into Al-Khiḍr's presence, who, however, immediately magically transports Buluqiya back to his home, where he is joyfully reunited with his family. Thus the Serpnet Queen ends her telling of the story of Buluqiya to Hasib.



The tale then continues and concludes with the account of Hasib, who eventually obtains a marvellous drink from the Serpent Queen which “made the waters of wisdom to well up in his heart and opened to him the fountains of knowledge.” Hasib is shown all the knowledge of heaven and earth, and thus is comparable in the end to the all-wise Gilgamesh. The Serpent Queen, having been slain earlier, instructed Hasib to have the sick king eat of her cooked flesh, which will cure him, and thus bring royal favour to Hasib. The Serpent Queen is thus the source of wisdom and healing, and is easily comparable both to the serpent (and Eve) of the Genesis Eden story and to the Šiduri of *Gilgamesh*. Because of royal patronage, Hasib’s wisdom increased even more, so that he became “an adept in every science and versed in all manner of knowledge, so that the fame of his learning was blazed abroad over the land and he became renowned as an ocean of lore and skill in medicine and astronomy and geometry and astrology and alchemy and natural magic and the Cabbala and Spiritualism and all other arts and sciences.”

Hasib’s mother then reveals to her son that his father had left him five leaves of a book, to which Hasib responds by asking where the rest of the book is. The mother relates to Hasib that the five leaves are all that remained of Daniel’s library after a shipwreck, but that he wanted the five remaining leaves to be bequeathed to his son. We are then told: “And Hasib, now the most learned of his age, abode in all pleasure and solace, and delight of life, till there came to him the Destroyer of delights and the Severer of societies.” Thus ends the story, perhaps on a note hinting at not only the inevitability of death, but of the limitations of even the

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greatest human knowledge as well. The immortality of Al-Khiḍr (=Ūt-napišti /Atrahasis) evades the wise Gilgamesh, Buluqiya and Hasib.

The five leaves that Daniel left to his son Hasib might allude to the five books of the Torah. Even though the story mentions five leaves rather than five books, nevertheless the fivefold Torah was traditionally written consecutively on a single scroll, and in the Buluqiya story the five leaves are said to belong to not only a “book,” but also to a “scroll,” which is rather odd if taken literally. The description of Hasib becoming wise upon drinking the Serpent Queen’s drink is suspiciously similar to the depiction of Ezra, restorer of the Torah, in 4 Ezra 14:40: “And on the next day a voice called me, saying, ‘Ezra, open your mouth and drink what I give you to drink.’ So I opened my mouth, and a full cup was offered to me; it was full of something like water, but its colour was like fire. I took it and drank; and when I had drunk it, my heart poured forth understanding, and wisdom increased in my breast.” In verse 47 we read concerning the esoteric books transmitted by God through Ezra: “For in them is the spring of understanding, the fountain of wisdom, and the river of knowledge.”

Jewish tradition understands the Torah as a living personified celestial book who coincides with the tree of life and Lady Wisdom, and so in this way we are brought back to the Goddess of Wisdom Šiduri. Baruch 4:1 says of Lady Wisdom: “Afterward she appeared upon earth and lived among humans. She is the book of the commandments of God, and the Torah that endures for ever,” which brings us to Statius’ *Thebaid* 10 where the Goddess Virtue descends from heaven and treads upon earth. This all brings us back to the Lady Wisdom of Sirach 24, where she

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appears as fruitful trees and vines and refreshing waters of life. Which returns us to *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 5's well of Mímir's wisdom which introduces the Goddess of Wisdom, Iðunn, who at the opening of strophe 6 has already fallen, like the fallen Sophia of Gnostic lore, from the world tree, Yggdrasill, and who now finds herself already at the gate of the Waters of Death, the Norse netherworld river Gøll.

As Dalley explains, there is no need to see direct literary influence of *Gilgamesh* on the story of Buluqiya:

It is traditional in the Near East for desert people who travel with trading caravans to nurture the skills of the musician-poet, and we know that such people travelled with trading caravans from at least the Middle Bronze Age up until modern times. It is also traditional for ships' captains to acquire and treasure the services of musician-poets for the long voyage from Basra to India, Ceylon, and Indonesia. Under such conditions of transmission, it is no surprise to find that different versions of a favourite story contain a variety of details that cannot and should not be reconciled on the theory of a single ancestry. Instead, we may interpret different versions as displaying an endless variety due to the inventive imagination and embroidery of three or four millennia's worth of travelling raconteurs who were highly prized professionals. So extensive in duration and distance were those journeys in both ancient and medieval times, that a long story in which old folk-tales

were given a new and compelling setting, skilfully recombined to create a coherent whole, was wonderful entertainment.<sup>160</sup>

Similarly we now know that the Vikings were world travellers in the medieval periods, and that they even brought back with them Middle Easterners as servants. Thus there is no reason in the least to doubt that Vikings could have encountered the versions of the Gilgamesh story. The oral story-telling process as described by Dalley can be applied in general to the Vikings as well. Thus there is no need to see in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* any direct *literary* influence from the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, but rather the impact/s of countless ages of oral retellings of the Gilgamesh legend. An important point generally overlooked by scholars who analyze *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* is that the latter's bold inventiveness with regard to the Old Norse mythic tradition may have implications for the dating of its underlying (oral) story. This is because it is in still living oral cultures that the inherited myths are still subject to quite creative recastings, keeping within the parameters of tradition of course, which starkly contrasts with the later European Romantic praxis and proclivity for *ex nihilo* creativity, but also starkly contrasting with the later Renaissance period when Old Norse poetry had become a purely literary phenomenon, the oral tradition now being frozen in writings so to speak, and now unalterable, given that the Eddic "canon" had been decided upon.

When we look at the known post-canonical "apocryphal" attempts at Eddic poetry, such as *Gunnarsslagur*, what we see is that nothing starkly clashes with the

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<sup>160</sup> Dalley, pp. 48-49.

contents of the canon, everything is quite tame and readily subject to exegesis, both philologically and exegetically. When we turn to *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* we see the basic signs of a still living oral culture, which does not fear to boldly modulate the tradition, whose canon has still not at this stage killed off precisely “the interior understanding of the mythological symbolism” that Uhland found “still fully predominating” in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*, despite its relatively late date.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Simrock, p. 408.

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## *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*

### Óðinn's Ravens' Song

#### Literary Translation

Our literary translation of the poem is not as literal as the interlinear version that follows. The literary version is intended to inform but also to entertain both a general audience, and, it is hoped, scholars as well. We have added some words in parentheses for the sake of alliteration, and taken some other liberties (such as the use of a passive instead of the text's active voice in a few instances) that are for the most part explained in the commentary. For a more literal, yet unentertaining translation, one may consult our wooden and admittedly hyper-literal interlinear rendition.

1. All-Father suffers,

Elves skilfully see,

Vanir know,

Norns show forth,

Forest Ogresses rear,

Humans bear,

Giants look forward,

Valkyries desire.

2. The Æsir feared

a fell fate,

for a Wight's oracle

contradicted the runes, and read:

“Óðhrærir should

conceal Urðr's (ale),

guard mightily

the greater part thereof.

3. Swiftly hurried Hugi,  
striving to the skies;  
harm is to be feared  
should he delay (taking flight).”

Práinn thought:

“Dense dreams”;

Dáinn declared:

“Deceptive dreams.”

4. From Dwarves is driven  
the strength of the worlds,  
to Ginnungur’s gloomy offspring  
they sink down.

Alsviður above oft’ fates

them to fall;

yet often fetches up

what’s fallen.

5. Not forever stand strong  
seashore and sun,  
storm wind and lightning  
cease not in the stormy stream.

In famed Mímir's  
clear well concealed,  
wisdom for all beings—  
would you know yet more?

6. She dwells in (deep) dales,  
the wise Goddess,  
fallen from the ash  
Yggdrasil.

Iðunn was she named  
by the Elven race,  
the youngest of Ívaldur's  
more ancient children.

7. She ill endured  
the (dark) descent  
from the tall tree,  
bound beneath the wood.  
Not pleased with  
Nǫrvi's son (the night),  
she who so long had abode  
in better of the worlds' dwellings.

8. Battle Gods behold  
the woman's anguish  
at the (Night) horse's stable;  
they gave a wolf skin,  
she wore it well;  
with deception played,  
made new her nature,  
varied her visage.

9. Viðrir chose the valiant

Bifrøst guard,

go to the guard

of Gjöll's sun,

ask what of the worlds

would she know.

Bragi and Loftur

would bear witness.

10. Sorcery songs they sung,

on wolf-back borne,

the God and the Gods go

to the world of the Giants.

Óðinn held guard

from high Hliðskjálf,

watched the witnesses

on distant ways.

11. From the mead server (Iðunn)

the wise one of the Gods' offspring

and of the travelling companions

would ask what she knew

of Earth's lightning-seared sky, of Hel and the Heavens,

of their beginning,

of their life span,

of their end.

12. She did not speak,

to the greedy she failed

to wield words,

chose not to join their their joyful chatter;

tears shot from out

her head's target shields,

hidden was her energy,

once again she broke down.

15. Sunny Jormunn was revealed

to the rulers

as sunk in sorrow that

stole her words away.

The more they pressed,

the more she pained;

and withal were

their words worthless.

16. Then the leader

of the enquiring questers,

guardian of Herjan's

Gjallarhorn,

Nál's son (Loki)

he took as traveller;

but Bragi stayed behind

to guard the woman, Grímnir's ground.



17. To Vingólf ventured

Wind-Tree's witnesses;

Fornjótur's friends, the winds,

bore both.

Now entering,

Æsir greeting,

Yggur's friends arrive

at the merry feast of mead.

18. Hail Hangatýr,

gladdest of the Gods!

Be ever master of the mead,

and thrive upon the throne;

may the rulers ever recline,

satisfied at sumbl,

with Yggjungur

owning bliss.

19. Sit at the benches,  
bade Bǫlverkur;  
sated with Sæhrimnir,  
sat the host (of Einherjar)  
busy at the tables.  
Hnikar's (magic) vat  
measured out mead  
in memorial horns.

20. Many questions  
burdened the banquet;  
the high Gods of the sanctuary  
asked Heimdallr and Loki  
if vision and oracle  
the maiden did give—  
till twilight came  
and darkness descended.

21. “Ill it is,”

they spoke,

“the venture vain,

little glory (from knowledge) gained.”

Even with cunning

it would be hard

to have an answer

from the swan.

22. Ómi answered,

all hearkened:

“In the night

come new counsels;

muse till morning,

whoever labours

to find advice

for saving the Æsir.”

23. Riding along the paths

of Rind more weary,

Moon sank slow,

fodder-fated to Terror Wielder.

The Gods forsook

the feast,

hailed Hroptur and Frigg,

as Hrímfaxi arrived.

13. Just so out of the east,

from Élivágar, came

the poison thorn

of the ice Giant;

Dáinn slays therewith

every single soul

in glorious Miðgarðr,

misses never a night.

14. Deeds there diminish,  
arms droop down.

The white God's sword  
staggers from giddiness.

The Ogress's glee,  
stupefying, runs over,  
completely appeasing  
the assault's swingings.

24. Richly adorned  
with the Arkenstones,  
Dellingur's son his steed  
onward drove;  
wide over Man-Home  
the mane glistens.

Dvalinn's plaything's pulled  
in the charger's chariot.

25. Nearby the northern boundary

of the Sun's Earth,

beneath the noble tree's

remotest root,

retired to rest

Wights and Giants,

Ghosts, Dwarves,

and Dark Elves.

26. The rulers arose,

Elf-light fared forth;

Night neared

Niflheimr in the north.

Wolf Runner's son

opened the Argiql Gate,

the horn-blast wielder of

heaven's high hills.

## *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*

### Transcription of MS A with Suggested Emendations

We employ no capitals and no punctuation (except in the poem's title), in order to cause the least distraction possible, since some words interpreted by scribes as personal names may not necessarily have been intended as such by the poet.

As in Lassen, superscript characters in the manuscripts are considered to represent abbreviations.

<sup>7</sup> is represented with *-ir*; <sup>2</sup> is represented with *-ur*.

We use italics to indicate where we have filled out the abbreviated words.

Material inside < > are emendations to the text.

The strophes are numbered in MS A, and the individual 8 lines in each strophe are identified in MS A with the use of forward slashes, /, which, however, may have been added by a later hand.

We refer to variant readings in MSS B, C, D or E only when relevant to our proposed emendations to MS A.

# Hrafnagaldur Óðins – Rough Draft 2016

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Title in MS A, with initial uppercase H in flourish:

Hrafnaga Galdr

dur

Óðins

Forðr

spjall

Líod

1. alfoþr orrkar

alfar skilia

vanir vitu

visa nornir

elur iviþia                      Perhaps plural iviþiur

aldir bera

þreya þussar

<þra> valkyriur                      þra: C, D, E; A, þia



## Hrafnagaldur Óðins – Rough Draft 2016

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### 2. ætlun æsir

<i>lla gátu                      Cf. strophe 7:1, eyrde illa; strophe 21:1, illa letu. A, alla

verpir viltu

vęttar rúnum

oðhrærer skylde

Urdar gejma

mattik<>at veria              mattikat, E. A, mattkat

mest-um þora

3. hverfur þur hug<i>              þur: B. A, þvi. A, hugur

hi<m>na leytar              A, hina, usually understood as hinna.

grunar guma

granda ef dvelur

þotti er <þraens>              A, þranis; E, þraens

þunga dræm<a>r              A, dræmur

daens dulu

dræm<a>r þotti.              A, dræmur

### 4. *dugir meþ dvergum*

*dvina heima*

*niþur at ginnungs*

*niþi*<r> *sækva*                      *niþir*: B, D, A, *niþi*

*optar alsviþur*

*ofann fellir*

*opt of follnum*

*aptur safnar*                      *aptar* is also possible

### 5. *stendur ęva* <fast>

*strind ne raþull*

*lopte meþ levi*

*lunnir ei stræmi*

*męrum dylst i*

*mimis brunne*

*vissa vera*

*vitip enn ępa hvaþ*

6. dvelur i dolum

dys forvitinn

yggdrasils fra

aski hniginn

alfa ęttar

iþune hetu

ivaldz ellri

yngsta barna

7. eyrde illa

ofann komu

<harbaþms> undir            A, hardbaþms: delete d; cf. harbadms, E

haldin meiþi

kunne sist at

kundar nqrva

vqn at vęri

vistum heima

8. sia sigtivar

syrgia nænnu

viggjar at veom

vargsbelg seldu

let i<>ferazk                      Insert space between i and f

lyndi breytti

lek at levisi

litum skipte

9. valde viðrir

værd bifrastar

giallar sunnu                      Cf. strophe 21:7 svanna. A, sunnu

<gæta> at fretta                  A, gátt

heims hvivetna

hvört er vissi

bragi <ok> loptur

báru kvipu

## Hrafnagaldur Óðins – Rough Draft 2016

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10. gald<ra> golu                    A, galdur

gǫndum riðu

rognir ok reiginn

at ranni <grimnis>                    E, ranni; <grimnis>, or perhaps hrimnis; A, heimis

hlustar oþinn

hlidskialfi i

let bræt <vara>                    A, vera

langa vegu

11. frá enn vitri

veiga selio

banda burða

ok bræta sinna

hlyrnis heliar

heimz, ef vissi

artid efi

aldurtila

12. ne mun męlti,

ne mál knatti

giv<r>om greiþa            A, givom

ne glǫm hialde;

tar af tindust

tǫrgum hiarnar

eliun feldin

end<i>r <riþþa>            A, endur riþa

13. eins kiemur *astann*

ur elivagum

þorn af <eitri>            A, atri; E, atre

þurs hrimkalda

hveim drepur dröttir      Cf. drottir, C. A, drött-e[r], r over an indecipherable

letter

daen allar

męran of miþgard

męþ natt hvǫri

### 14. dofna þa dǫþir

detta hend<i>r                    A, hendur

svifur of svimi

sverþ ass hvita

rennir <or viti>                A, qrvit

rygar <glyia>                    A, glygiu

sefa sveiflum

sokn giqrvallri

### 15. jamt þotti <iormunn>    E, iorun; A, Jormi

jolnum kominn

sollinn sutum,

svars er ei gátu

sokt<u> þvi meir                A, sokte; B, E, soku

at <syn var> fyrir                syn var, from B, C, D, E. A, þeckia, in margin

muni þo miþur

męlgi dygþi

16. for <þa> frumqvæðull

fregnar bræta

hirdir at herians

horni giallar

nalar nefa

nam til fylgiss

greppur <en> grimnis

grund vardveitti

17. vingolf toko

<viþar> þegnar                      viþar, cf. viþrir in strophe 9. A, viþars

forniotz sefum

fluttir báþir

jþar ganga

æsi kveþia

yggjar þegar

viþ aulteite



18. heilan hangaty

hepnastann ása

virt ǫndveigis

vallda baðu

sęla at sumbli

sitia dia

ę meþ yggiongi

yndi halda

19. beckjar sett

<at> bałverks raði                      at: A has er; B, C, D, E, at

<sęhrimni siot>                      A, siot sęhrimni

saddist rakna

<skolug> at skutlum                      E, skolug; A, skavgul

<skaptker> hnikars                      C, E, skaptker; A, skapt ker

mat af miþi

minnis *hornum*

20. margs of fragu

maltid yfir

heimdall ha goþ

hærgar <ok> loka

spar eþa spakmal

sprund ef kiende

undorn <of framm>            A, ofram

unz nam huma

21. illa letu

ordid hafa

erindis leysu

<ok lital> fręga            MS A, oflital

vant at vęla

verþa mynde

svo af svanna

svars of<>geþi            Insert space between f and g

22. ansar omi

allir hlyddu

nott *skal* nema

nyrępa til

hugsi til myrgins

*hver* sem orkar

raþ til leggja

ræsna<sup>r</sup> asum

23. rann meþ ræstum

rindar moþ<ri>                    A, moþir; D, moþr

<foþur> <lagiþr>                A, faþur lardur

<firins> <valda>                A, vallda, bracketed in manuscript

gengo fra gilde

goþinn kvoddu

hropt ok frygg

sem Hrimfafa for

24. *dyrum settann*

delling<a> *mǫgur*                    A, Dellings

jo *framkeyrþi*

<jarkna> *steinum*                    A, rokna, with jokna in margin; E, iarkna; B, C, D, jarkna

*mars of manheim*

*mǫn af gloar*

*dro leik dvalins*

*drǫsull i reiþ*

25. *iormungrundar*

i <iadar> *nyrdra*                    A, jadyr

*und rǫt ytstu*

*adalpollar*

*gengo til reckio*

*gygiur <ok> þursar*

*nair, dvergar*

<ok> *dockalfar*

26. risu racknar

rann alfrapull

nordur ad nif<l>heim      A, nifheim; in margin niflheim

niola sokte

upp nam argioll

ulfrunar niþur

hornþyt valld<i>      A, valldur

himin biarga

## *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*

### Interlinear Version

In the interlinear version we use our emended transcription of MS A, but without specifying the emendations as we do by contrast in the non-interlinear transcription. In the interlinear version we employ capitals and punctuation, again in contrast to the previously given transcription of MS A. The English translation given in the interlinear version is as literal and succinct as possible, in contrast to the more literary translation already given.

## Hrafnagaldur Óðins – Rough Draft 2016

<p>1 Alföþr orrkar, alfar skilia, vanir vitu, visa nornir, All-father labours, Elves understand, Vanir know, show forth Norns</p>
<p>elr iviþia [iviþiur] aldir bera, þreya þussar, þra valkyriur. rear/s Ogress/es humans bear, look forward Giants, desire Valkyries</p>
<p>2 Ætlun æsir illa gátu, verpir viltu vęttar rúnum; Suspected Æsir an ill oracle, (oracular)-castings contradicted a wight's runes:</p>
<p>Óðhrærir skylde Urðar gejma, mattik at veria mest-um þora. Óðhrærir should Urður hide, powerful to protect the most part.</p>
<p>3 Hverfur þur Hugi himna leyttar, grunar guma granda ef dvelur; Swiftly hurries Hugi to the skies striving, fears the man harm if he delays</p>
<p>þotti er Þraens: þunga draumar, Daens dula draumar þotti. thought of Þráinn: heavy dreams; Dáinn, deceptive dreams, thought</p>
<p>4 Dugir með dvergum dvina, heima niþur at Ginnungs niþir sækva; Strength from the Dwarves dwindles, of worlds down to Ginnungr's offspring sink;</p>
<p>optar Alsviþur ofann fellir, opt of follnum aptur safnar. often Alsviður from above fells, often of the fallen again gathers up</p>
<p>5 Stendur eða fast strind ne raþull, lopte með levi linnir ei stræmi; Stands ever firm strand nor ruddy sun, wind with poison ceases not in streams;</p>
<p>męrum dylst i Mimir brunne vissa vera; vitþ enn eða hvaþ? famous hidden in Mimir's well the wisdom of/for men; know you yet or what?</p>
<p>6 Dvelur i dolum dys forvitinn, Yggdrasils fráa aski hniginn; Delays in dales, Goddess fore-sight-full, Yggdrasill from the ash fallen;</p>
<p>alfa ęttar Iþune hetu, Ivaldz ellri yngsta barna. of Elven race Iðunn named, Ívald's elder youngest children.</p>
<p>7 Eyrde illa ofann komu, harbaþms undir haldin meiþi; Endured ill of the off coming, high tree under held branch;</p>
<p>kunne sist at kundanar Nörva, von at veri vistum heima. liked her stay not, child of Nörvi, used to pleasanter dwellings at home</p>
<p>8 Sia sigtivar syrgia nænnu Viggiar at veom, vargsbelg seldu; See victory Gods sorrowing Nanna horse's at dwelling, wolf's hide they gave her</p>
<p>let i fęrazk, lyndi breytti, lek at levisi, litum skipte. let therein be clothed, nature changed, played at deception, shape shifted.</p>
<p>9 Valde Viþrir værd Bifrastar Giallar sunnu gæta at fretta, Chose Viðrir ward of Bifröst, Giöll's sun guard to ask,</p>
<p>heims hvivetna hvęrt er vissi; Bragi ok Loptur báro kviþu. of the world of everything whatever she knew; Bragi and Loptr would bare the message</p>

## Hrafnagaldur Óðins – Rough Draft 2016

10 Galdra gólu, gændum riðu Rognir ok reginn at ranni Grimnis;  
Incantations they sang, magic wolves they rode, God and the Gods to the home of Grimnis;

hlustar Óþinn Hliðskjálf i, let bræt vara langa vegu.  
listens Óðinn Hliðskjálf in, he let the route be watched, the long paths.

11 Frá enn vitri veiga selio, banda burða ok bræta sinna,  
Asked the wise one of the mead server, offspring of the Gods and journey companions

hlyrnis, heliar, heimz ef vissi artid, efi, aldurtila.  
of sky, of Hel, of the world, if she knew yore season, lifespan, end.

12 Ne mun mælti, ne mál knatti givrom greiða, ne glæm hialde;  
Not her mind spoke, nor words could she to the greedy give, nor merriment chat;

tar af tindust tærgum hiarnar, eliun feldin, endir riþa.  
tears from dripped target shields of her skull, energy hidden, again she breaks down.

13 Eins kiemur æstan or Elivagum þorn af eitri þurs hrimkalda,  
In the same way comes east out of Élivágar thorn of poison of the Giant rime-cold,

hveim drepur dröttir Daen allar meþan of Miþgarþ, meþ natt hvøri.  
which slays all people, Dáinn of all glorious of Miðgarð, with night every.

14 Dofna þa dáþir, detta hendir, svifur of svimi sverþ ass hvita;  
Diminish there deeds, droop arms, veers from giddiness sword of the God white;

rennir or viti rygar glyia, sefa sveiflom sokn giðrvallri.  
runs over, stupefying, Giantess' glee, calms swingings, the assault, all/completely

15 Jamt þotti Iormunn iolnom kominn, sollinn sutum, svars er ei gátu;  
Thus thought Iormunn the Gods became, swollen with sorrow, reply when no they got;

soktu því meir at syn var fyrir,

they sought therefore the more, at refusal was before them,

muni þo miþur mælgí dygþi.  
as they wished even less much talking helped

16 For þa frumqvæðull fregnar bræta, hirdir at Herians horni Gjallar;  
Left then the leader of enquiry expedition, keeper of Herjan's horn Gjallar;

Nalar nefa nam til fylgiss, greppur enn Grimnis grund vardveitti.  
Nál's kinsman took as companion, the poet but Grímnir's ground guarded

17 Vingólf toko Viþar þegnar Forniotz sefum fluttir báþir;  
Vingólf attaining, Tree's thanes by Fornjótur's kinsman borne both;

þar ganga, æsi kveþia Yggjar þegar við aulteiti.  
there entered, Æsir greeted Yggur's at once at merry ale feast



## Hrafnagaldur Óðins – Rough Draft 2016

<p>18 Heilan Hangaty, heppnastan asa, virt ǫndvegis vallda baþu;  Hail Hángatýr, most blessed of the Æsir, of mead high-seat wield they bade</p> <p>sęla at sumbli sitia dia, ę meþ Yggiongí yndi halda.  blessings at sumbl seated Gods, ever with Yggjungur delight to hold</p>
<p>19 Beckjar sett at Bálverks raþi Sęhrímni siot saddist rakna;  On benches seated at Bólverkr's orders, with Sęhrímnr host sated (divine) councillors;</p> <p>skolug at skutlum, skaptker Hnikars mat af miþi minnis hornum.  busy at tables, the dipping-vessel of Hnikar meted out of mead memorial horns.</p>
<p>20 Margs of fragu maltid yfir, Heimdall ha goþ havgar ok Loka,  A lot of questions the feast over, of Heimdallr, high Gods' sanctuary, and of Loki,</p> <p>spar eþa spakmal sprund ef kiendi, undorn of framm, unz nam huma.  prophecy or wise words the woman if gave, mid-afternoon of after, until grew dark</p>
<p>21 Illa letu ordid hafa, eirindis leysu, ok litil fręga;  Ill they suspected it transpired had, errand-less, and least glory;</p> <p>vant at vęla verþa mynde, svo af svanna svars of gęti.  difficult to wile it would prove, thus from the swan an answer to get.</p>
<p>22 Ansar Omi, allir hlyddu: "Nott skal nema nyreþa til,  Answers Ómi, all listened: "Night shall be taken/used new-counsels for,</p> <p>hugsi til myrgins, hver sem orkar, raþ til leggja ravsnaar asum."  ponder till morning, each as labours, advice to propose for the rescue of the Æsir</p>
<p>23 Rann meþ ræstum Rindar mofri foþur lagifir firins valda;  Ran along paths of Rindr more wearily the fodder-fated of terror wielder;</p> <p>gengo fra gilde goþinn; kvoddu Hropt ok Frygg, sem Hrimfaxa for.  departed from drinking-feast the Gods; they greeted Hroptr and Frigg, as Hrímfax arrived</p>
<p>24 Dyrum settan Dellinga mægur jo framkeyrþi jarkna steinum;  Costly set, Dellingr's son his steed forward drove, with the Arkenstones;</p> <p>mars of manheim męn af gloar, dro leik Dvalins dræsull i reip.  horse's, over Man-Home, mane of glow, drug the plaything of Dvalinn charger in chariot.</p>
<p>25 Iormungrundar i iadar nyrdra und rót ytstu adalþollar  The sunlit earth in border northern under root furthest of the noble tree</p> <p>gengo til reckio gygiur ok þursar, nair, dvergar ok dockalfar.  went to their recliners Giantesses and Giants, the human dead, Dwarves and Dark Elves.</p>
<p>26 Risu racknar, rann alfræþull, nordur ad niflheim Niola sokte;  Arose the (divine) councillors, advanced Elf-Light, north to Niflheimr Njóla striving;</p> <p>upp nam Argioll Ulfrunar niþur, hornþyt valdi Himin biarga.  up lifted Árgioll Úlfrún's son, horn-blast wielder of Himinbjörg.</p>



## COMMENTARY

### *HRAFNAGALDUR ÓÐINS*

### *ÓÐINN'S RAVENS' SONG*

#### Introductory Remarks on Strophe Numbering

In agreement with Simrock, in our translation offered above we have inserted strophes 13 and 14 between strophes 23 and 24, as explained in the Introduction. To avoid any confusion, in the Commentary below we have retained the strophe numbering reflected in the general manuscript trajectory of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*.

## COMMENTARY

### *HRAFNAGALDUR ÓÐINS*

### *ÓÐINN'S RAVENS' SONG*

#### Title

Uhland suggests that the title *hrafna-galdur*, “raven magic,” may refer to the actual magic formula used to consecrate the ravens for their mission, just as in strophe 10 wolves are consecrated for their journey by the deployment of magic chants.<sup>162</sup> Lassen keeps open the possibility that *Ragnagaldur* instead of *Hrafnagaldur* may have been the original title.<sup>163</sup> Simrock argues that *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* was written as a “prelude” to *Baldrs draumar*, and finds support for this in the former’s variant title of *Forspjallsljóð*.<sup>164</sup> Theophil Rupp concurs with Simrock on this point.<sup>165</sup> Their shared contention, however, is baseless. Hermann Lüning understood the title *Forspjallsljóð* as meaning “Prelude to Ragnarøk.”<sup>166</sup>

There are a number of parallels in the poem to passages in classical Greek tragedy, as the commentary on the various strophes below seeks to document. One

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<sup>162</sup> Uhland, p. 74.

<sup>163</sup> Lassen, p. 99.

<sup>164</sup> Simrock, p. 371.

<sup>165</sup> Rupp, p. 311.

<sup>166</sup> See Rupp, p. 316.

of these sources includes Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, whose silent prophetess Cassandra reminds us in various respects to Iðunn's silence throughout *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*. In *Agamemnon* line 829 the king as he returns to Argos with Cassandra addresses the Gods before he speaks to his subjects, and calls his speech to the Gods a προίμιον "prelude." Maslov explains concerning the Greek term προίμιον (= Latin *prooemium*), which frequently appears in verse in the shortened form προίμιον: "the meaning 'that which comes in the beginning, including an address to the gods' develops into the meaning 'a poem that is addressed to a god.'"<sup>167</sup> As Maslov notes, these "poems" are usually *songs*, that is, hymns to the Gods. According to Maslov, προίμιον can also "refer to something that precedes an action or an undertaking (rather than stands at the beginning of a speech)."<sup>168</sup>

Quite pertinent to *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* is Euripides' *Ion* 752, which concerns an "oracular response obtained by Xanthos. . . : 'the *phroimion* of what you have to say is inauspicious.'"<sup>169</sup> "To sum up, it appears that προίμιον (φροίμιον) most often refers to an opening whose execution determines the success of the following speech or undertaking."<sup>170</sup> Etymologically, it is more likely that προίμιον is derived from the Greek word for "path, way"<sup>171</sup> than "song," and this is supported by the fact

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<sup>167</sup> Maslov, pp. 192, 194.

<sup>168</sup> Maslov, p. 195.

<sup>169</sup> Maslov, p. 195.

<sup>170</sup> Maslov, p. 196.

<sup>171</sup> Cf. *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 10, *langa vegu*, "long way, path."

that Greek sources frequently liken speech to a road.<sup>172</sup> However, some sources closely link the two, as in the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, “the shining path of song” and Pindar *Olympian* 9.47, “path of words.”<sup>173</sup> As Maslov concludes: “The proper meaning of the compound *pro-oimion* would be ‘what one says before setting out on one’s way,’ with the extended meaning ‘proper speech act preceding any undertaking.’ . . . [W]hat one said in the beginning was thought to have an influence on the success on the undertaking as a whole.”<sup>174</sup>

In light of Maslov we can interpret *Forspjallsljóð* with the paraphrase “Song for Setting Out on a Journey” (alluding to the Gods’ being dispatched to Iðunn), or “Song for Beginning an Undertaking,” or more succinctly and literally in classical imitation, “*Prooimion* Song.” This indicates that the sub-title *Forspjallsljóð* arose in the time of the classical revival in Scandinavia, as Lassen correctly concludes. Lassen is incorrect, however, to see behind *forspjall* the Latin *prologus* with the strict sense of “preface.”<sup>175</sup> Even more unfounded are the notions that *Forspjallsljóð* refers to only the poem’s first strophe and the possibility that the poem was “written as a preface to one of the many collections of eddic poems that were made after 1643.”<sup>176</sup> The poem is a completely independent and integral whole unto and within itself. *Forspjallsljóð* might be a later interpretation of an earlier title, namely,

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<sup>172</sup> Maslov, p. 198.

<sup>173</sup> Maslov, p. 200.

<sup>174</sup> Maslov, p. 202.

<sup>175</sup> Lassen, p. 22.

<sup>176</sup> Lassen, p. 23.

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*Hrafnagaldur Óðins*, which sought to reinterpret the indigenous term *galdr*, literally, “magic song, charm,” seen as crude and backwards by a classicist, in the more classical and “enlightened” sense of *prooimion*.

Although the title *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* arguably arose on the basis of a mistaken identification of strophe 3’s *Hugi* as the raven *Huginn*, nevertheless the possibility remains open that the title could have originated with the author of the poem, who may have included subtle indirect allusions to Óðinn’s ravens, although strophe 3’s *Hugi* is not one of them. In the title, *hrafna-* is generally understood as plural, “ravens,” which makes it unlikely that the title arose on the basis of strophe 3’s single figure of *Hugi*, since that gives us only one supposed raven. There is nothing in the poem that could be interpreted as a clear reference to *Muninn*, and so consequently we would expect the title to be singular rather than plural, that is, *Óðinn’s Raven’s Song*, that is, the *Song of Óðinn’s Raven Huginn*.

Bergmann understands the term *Forspjallsljóð* to mean *Vorschaden-Lied*, thus interpreting *-spjall* as “damage.”<sup>177</sup>

Wachter explains that because traditionally ravens were thought of as harbingers of the imminent outbreak of battle, the use of the term *Hrafnagaldur* in the poem’s title serves to indicate to the audience that the whole narrative presupposes the imminent doom of the Gods. Thus the ravens of Óðinn do not need to appear explicitly anywhere in the poem in order to justify their presence in the

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<sup>177</sup> Bergmann 1875, pp. 85-86.

poem's title.<sup>178</sup> In this context we should recall the title of the poem *Hrafnsmál*, Raven Talk, in which a battle-bloody raven talks with a Valkyrie. Since Óðinn's ravens do not need to appear explicitly in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*, but only allusively in the title, accordingly Wachter does not see Huginn in the poem's word *hugur*, but interprets strophe 3's *hverfur því hugur* as "vanishes therefore mind," that is, "it/they become/s doubtful,"<sup>179</sup> which is similar to Lassen's "therefore his courage fails."<sup>180</sup>

Although Wachter is correct not to read strophe 3's *hugur* as Huginn, his interpretation of *hverfur því hugur* is incorrect (see our commentary on strophe 3). However, Wachter's observations regarding the question of how to understand the two titles of the poem are quite helpful. In short, Óðinn's ravens do not appear in any particular strophe of the poem, but rather all of the poem's strophes are spoken by the two ravens:

Consequently the best assumption is that the [entire] lay is placed in the mouths of Óðinn's ravens, namely, just as in *Völuspá* the *Vala* (Seeress) announces the fate of the Gods, so here Óðinn's ravens prophetically speak of the Gods' anxieties, and of how the Gods in vain consult the oracle. To the title *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* is added the explanatory title *Forspialls-Lióð*, *Forspialls-Mál*, which the Latin translator in its profounder significance renders, entirely correctly, as *oraculi sive vaticinii melos*, Oracle Lay, literally,

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<sup>178</sup> Wachter 1834, p. 296.

<sup>179</sup> Wachter 1834, p. 294.

<sup>180</sup> Lassen, p. 83.



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Prophecy Lay, Prophecy Poem, namely, with reference to the questioning of the oracle; the Latin translator does not render it, as could have been the case, as *introductionis carmen*, Prelude Poem, Introductory Poem, for it is not, as has been thought, an introductory poem to some other poem, but is rather an independent lay, which, because it is placed in the mouths of Óðinn's ravens, is called Oracle Lay of Óðinn's Ravens, and its second title is derived from the poem's contents, namely, the anxious Gods consultation of the oracle.<sup>181</sup>

Wachter points out that Isidor uses the word *foraspel* for “prophecy,” and the Gothic *-spillon* is used in the same sense.<sup>182</sup> Furthermore, *Godspell* did not originally mean God's proclamation, but divine oracle.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> Wachter 1834, p. 294.

<sup>182</sup> Wachter 1833, p. 337.

<sup>183</sup> Wachter 1833, p. 337.

## *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*

### Strophes Commentary

#### Part I

#### Strophes 1-6

#### Strophe 1.

We can attempt to fill in the various actions or objects implied by each of the beings listed in the eight lines of strophe 1 as below. All the materials we supply in parentheses are speculative, but we do base our conjectures on the general tradition and the contextual contents of the poem as a whole:

All-Father suffers (in search of knowledge),

Elves skilfully see (the future),

Vanir know (what nears),

Norns show forth (fates),

Forest Ogresses rear (the Völva),

Humans bear (their burden),

Giants look forward (to freedom),

Valkyries desire (the dead).

Wachter makes explicate strophe 1's implications as follows: All-Father wields; Elves understand the future; Vanir know in the higher meaning of foresight

or prophecy, since this type of knowledge is the Vanir’s field of expertise; the Norns know, or show, fate or destiny; the Ogress bears the monsters that threaten the Æsir; mortals carry; the Giants wait for the accomplishment of the doom of the Æsir; Valkyries yearn for battle.<sup>184</sup>

Alfǫðr: Óðinn. That this is the very first word of the poem reminds us of what M. L. West calls “Calling the God”: “If one wishes to communicate with a distant person by telephone or e-mail, it is first necessary to enter the number or address that will direct the message to the recipient and catch his or her attention. So in a polytheist’s hymn or prayer it is important at the outset to identify the deity being addressed. Often the name appears as the first word. . . .”<sup>185</sup> Although this applies to invocatory compositions, whereas our Norse text is a poem, the coincidence is nevertheless worth noting. West also writes of the ancient narrative or poetic device he calls “How to start things moving,”<sup>186</sup> which means to start off a story with a bad or threatening situation in order to win the audience’s interest right away. This is precisely what strophe 1 of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* does.

Bergmann argues that strophe 1 is actually an oracle sung by Óðinn’s ravens, hence the poem’s standard title, and that the lines are sung alternately by Huginn and Muninn.<sup>187</sup> This is much too speculative to be taken seriously, although strophe 1 is rather naturally to be seen as the oracle (*gǫtu*) of which strophe 2 speaks, and it

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<sup>184</sup> Wachter 1834, p. 294.

<sup>185</sup> West 2007, p. 305.

<sup>186</sup> West 2003, p. 173.

<sup>187</sup> Bergmann 1875, pp. 86, 97.

may indeed be thought of as an oracle of Óðinn's ravens, as a sort of report back to the father of the Gods concerning all they have seen in the worlds after being sent out by him for the purpose of gathering information. *Heimskringla* 7 informs us that Óðinn taught his two ravens how to speak the language of humans, and so with regard to that aspect at least, strophe 1 could at least possibly represent the speech of Óðinn's two ravens.

With regard to *Alföðr*, Bergmann clarifies that originally *al-födr* meant “strong father,” in contrast to *all-födr*, which denotes the source and protector of the cosmos.<sup>188</sup> We find Lassen's claim that strophe 1's *Alföðr* is “perhaps to be understood as the Christian God” entirely baseless.<sup>189</sup>

On the verb *orkar* (*orrkar*) Bergmann reminds us that first it means “to work (magic),” and secondarily “to labour,” here with a nuance of “to endure, to have to suffer,”<sup>190</sup> so that Bergmann renders this with “Allvater beklagt es,”<sup>191</sup> “All-father laments/complains.”<sup>192</sup> Unduly influenced by the general Norse tradition, the 1787 published Latin version unsatisfactorily translates *orkar* with *pollet*, “prevails,” by extension, “rules,” “reigns.” Contextually, however, we can understand *orkar* perhaps almost as a lament over the impending fate of the world and the Gods, which is symbolized by the arrival of winter. This may supply us with an important

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<sup>188</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 97.

<sup>189</sup> Lassen, p. 95.

<sup>190</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 97.

<sup>191</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 117.

<sup>192</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 117.

clue as to just what Óðinn labours on or laments about, namely, Óðinn likely is troubled over the loss of the warm weather that has been ended by the premature arrival of winter. However, there is a clue in strophe 22, where we find the same verb, *orkar*, correlated with the pursuit of wisdom in relation to saving the Gods from the threat of destruction (see the commentary on strophe 22). Consequently it is safest to see strophe 1's "All-father labours" as a prediction of the very activity that the main body of the poem portrays Óðinn engaging in, namely, labouring in pursuit of knowledge concerning the future from Iðunn. The 1787 Latin version renders strophe 22's *orkar* with *promere*, "strive," "strain," "labour," and the Latin version should have recognised this contextual clue and used the verb *promere* rather than *pollere* to render *orkar* in strophe 1 as well.

Another clue to the nuance of *orkar* in strophe 1 comes from a work we know influenced at least strophes 6 and 8 of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*, namely, the Latin text of Statius' *Thebaid*, where in Book 3:27-29 we read of Jupiter's toils, or more literally, labours (*labores*) related to the Sarmatian war:

hunc ubi Sarmaticos etiamnum efflare labores  
Iuppiter et tota perfusum pectora belli  
tempestate videt. . . .

When Jupiter saw that he yet panted with his  
Sarmatic toils, and that all the tempest of war yet

swayed his breast. . . .<sup>193</sup>

We can understand Óðinn's labour in strophe 1 as his labouring in the context of war, as he suffers in search of battle-related knowledge. Somewhat comparable is Jordan's rendering of strophe 1's *orrkar* as *rüstet*, "prepares."<sup>194</sup>

In *Völuspá* strophe 9 we read that the divine powers, *regin*, went to their chairs of decision or "fate," *røk*. To this is related strophe 43's construction *ragna røk*, "doom/fate of the powers," *ragna* being the genitive of *regin*. In *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 26 the divine councils or ruling powers are called *raknar*; as Bergmann notes, in early times the difference between *k* and *g* was not always strictly maintained in speech.<sup>195</sup> But there may be more to it than just the similarity between *g* and *k*. To catch a fuller flavour of strophe 1's *Alfoþr orrkar* we must compare it with line 1 of the poem's final strophe, 26, namely, *risu racknar*, "the rulers arose," which, as we show in our commentary on strophe 26, ironically alludes to the *fall* of the Gods at *Ragnarøk*, and indeed the word *racknar* is intentionally used to bring to mind the very term *Ragnarøk*. Additionally, the poet intends the listener/reader to associate the the various phonetic components of the verb *orrkar* with the similar elements in the noun *racknar*. The Gods are the rulers (cf. strophe 19, *rakna* = *ragna*, strophe 26 *racknar* = *ragnar*) who rule (cf. *orrkar*, strophe 1), but their rule has presently become a strenuous labour (see *orkar*,

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<sup>193</sup> Mozley vol. 1, pp. 466-467.

<sup>194</sup> Jordan, p. 195.

<sup>195</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 198.

strophe 22, “labour,” “strive”) to find new counsel and knowledge to avoid Ragnarøk.

Lassen writes on the unusual forms of rakna and racknar: “‘racknar’ must be for ‘ragnar,’ cf. st. 19/4 ‘rakna’ for ‘ragna.’ It may be that the poet took *rōgn* (n. pl.) as f. nom. sg. (or *regin* as *reginn*, m. nom. sg.) of the word for ‘god’; both would have nom. pl. *ragnar*, rather than the usual n. pl. ‘regin’ or ‘rōgn.’”<sup>196</sup> Similarly Lassen writes on strophe 19, line 4’s rakna: “It must be a spelling for *ragna*, gen. of *regin* ‘gods.’”<sup>197</sup> But the reason for using k/ck instead of g was to ensure a clearer connection between rakna/racknar and strophe 1’s orrkar, in order to hint at the verb’s gloomier contextual nuances. Not only that, but there is a semantic and phonetic connection underlying strophe 26 line 1’s racknar and line 2’s rann, “advanced,” “neared,” “moved closer,” as well as with line 6’s Ulfrunar, Wolf-Runner. As Bergmann clarifies: “*Raknar* (“persistent ones” [councils, presiders, judges, rulers]), plural of *rakinn* (*rænn*, “persistent,” derived from *rak*, “direction” [course, flow]); this means the Gods energetically *pursue* their desired goals and decisions.”<sup>198</sup>

On the basis of a similar phonology, this terminology might be associated with bodies of water. Streatfeild, writing of bodies of water, notes that the word rack is often used “in connection with the Trent,” apparently in the sense of “reach,” which seems to be cognate to Old Icelandic *rekja* . . ., to unwind, which is the exact

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<sup>196</sup> Lassen, p. 106.

<sup>197</sup> Lassen, p. 104.

<sup>198</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 108.

meaning of the word *reach* when applied to a river.”<sup>199</sup> Streatfeild adds the following note: “*rekja*, pret. *rakði*, p. part. *rakinn*. Also cf. Old Norse *rakna*, to unwind itself.”<sup>200</sup> Streatfeild then immediately begins a discussion of the placename Beckering, which calls to mind Old Icelandic “*bekkjar-eng*, the meadow lands among the becks.”<sup>201</sup> Now, curiously *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 19, where we find the word *rakna*, begins with the word *beckjar*, that is, *bekkjar*, from *bekkr*, an Old Icelandic word used not only in the sense of “bench” (as here in strophe 19), but also with the meaning of “beck,” “brook,” which would be appropriate on an implicit level in strophe 19, given that it describes a *drinking* feast. A learned poet may well have been able to make such a chain of associations between the volitional course of Gods and the course or direction of waters.

In this context we recall Grimm’s observation that “in an OS document of 1006 *Burnacker* occurs as the name of a place. . . . Now Bragi and his wife Iðunn dwelt in *Brunnakr*, Sn. 121, and she is called ‘Brunnakrs bekkjar gerðr,’ *Brunnakerinae sedis ornatrix*, as Sk. Thorlacius interprets it. A well or spring, for more than one reason, suits a god of poetry; at the same time a name like ‘springfield’ is so natural that it might arise without any reference to gods.”<sup>202</sup> It is no coincidence that this gives us one of the basic meanings of the word on Iðavöll, whose first part is cognate with Iðunn’s own name. Curtius points out with regard to

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<sup>199</sup> Streatfeild, p. 201.

<sup>200</sup> Streatfeild, p. 201.

<sup>201</sup> Streatfeild, pp. 201-202.

<sup>202</sup> Grimm vol. 1, p. 236.



Greek Ἀθήνη (Athena), Old High German *itis*, Old Norse Iða and Iðunn, that they all have as their basis the notion of roots and germination, which easily leads to the idea of virgin, woman.<sup>203</sup> Through phonetic similarity one could easily associate Greek *a-thanatos*, “immortal,” and this in fact semantically overlaps with standard definitions of the name Iðunn, such as “ever young.”<sup>204</sup> A relationship between Athena and Iðunn springs immediately to mind, for Athena is not the Goddess of war as such (Ares is the deity of war strictly speaking, but even he has a sexual fling with the Goddess of love, Aphrodite), but of strategy, ingenuity and wisdom in war (and other domains as well), hence the relationship in the *Odyssey* between her and the wise Odysseus.<sup>205</sup> The commonality between Athena and Iðunn is therefore wisdom, curiosity and insight (as well as foresight), for in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* Iðunn is *forvitinn* (strophe 6), which is a play on strophe 5’s *vissa*, “wise,” and she is a shape-shifter as well (strophe 8), which is reminiscent of Athena in the *Odyssey*.

The Norns (nornir) *visa*; Lassen renders this as “norns show,”<sup>206</sup> but what or how do they show? As Bergmann explains, the Norns here “portend” or “betoken” what is determined with regard to the world’s destruction.<sup>207</sup> The show, show forth, and “portend” or “betoken” are all more or less equivalent and satisfactory renderings.

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<sup>203</sup> Curtius, pp. 153-154.

<sup>204</sup> Lindow, p. 199.

<sup>205</sup> See Burkert 2011, p. 220.

<sup>206</sup> Lassen, p. 82.

<sup>207</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 127.

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Of Iviþia the text says elur, which Lassen renders as “strives,”<sup>208</sup> but here the poet uses elur in the sense of *Völuspá* strophe 2’s *fædda*, “reared,” “nurtured,” and in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 1 the forest Ogresses rear the *Völva*, just as in *Völuspá* strophe 2.

Next it is said of the þussar that they þreya, which Lassen renders as “endure,”<sup>209</sup> but which is better understood as “crave,” “demand,”<sup>210</sup> or as we word it, “look forward,” that is, they crave to be loosed at Ragnarøk.

Lastly we read of the valkyriur that they þia, but the correct reading is þra, “desire,” which is used more or less synonymously with the previous line’s þreya, “crave.” The Valkyries desire the dead, the slain in the coming battle of Ragnarøk. Thus in lines 5-8 we have two sets of synonymous verbs, namely, “rear/nurture,” “bear/bring forth,” “crave” and “desire.” By contrast, the verbs of lines 2-4 pertain to or presuppose the operations of knowledge in various ways, namely, “understand,” “know” and “portend.” If line 1’s orrkar is understood as Óðinn labouring under strain for knowledge (which is supported by the evidence of strophe 22), then all four verbs of lines 1-4 pertain to knowledge. The idea behind all of this is that the higher beings, Gods, Elves, Vanir and Norns, are ruled mostly by knowledge, whereas the lower beings, the forest Ogresses, humans, Giants and Valkyries, are dominated more by their passions and desires.

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<sup>208</sup> Lassen, p. 82.

<sup>209</sup> Lassen, p. 82.

<sup>210</sup> See Bergmann 1875, p. 128.

Uhland suggests that the Elves of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* are the industrious and artistic Dwarves, and that Iðunn's father Ívaldi (Íviðja) is probably the same Dwarf Ívaldi whose sons forged Sif's golden hair.<sup>211</sup>

Lassen understands Íviðja as “a troll wife” known from the *thulur*.<sup>212</sup> Bergmann identifies her as Angrboða.<sup>213</sup> Simrock reads this as a plural and compares the Wights to the Dryads of ancient Greek myths.<sup>214</sup> In favour of a plural reading would be that with the exception of the opening *Alfǫðr*, the rest of the strophe's nouns are plural. Additionally, *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 1's *Alfǫðr* is most naturally seen as being derived from *Vǫluspá* strophe 1's *Valfǫðr*, whose initial *v* was dropped in order to create a greater isomorphism with line 2's *alfar*. Although the *f* of *Alfǫðr* in line 1 fits well with the *f* of *alfar* in line 2, if we keep in mind *Valfǫðr*, then the initial *v* would tie in with the initial *v* of both lines 3, *vanir*, and 4, *visa*, as well as with the *v* of line 5's *iviþia* and line 8's *valkyriur*. Once *Alfǫðr*'s origin in *Vǫluspá* strophe 1's *Valfǫðr* is recognised, then the source of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 1's *Iviþia* becomes apparent, namely, *Vǫluspá* strophe 2, where we find the word *íviðir* in *Codex Regius*, and *íviðjur* in *Hauksbók*. Bergmann writes that the word *íviðjur* is formed of the two elements *viðjr*, “wood/forest” and *y-r*, “yew tree.”<sup>215</sup> Lassen writes that “*íviðir* . . . perhaps means ‘inner timbers’, referring to the roots of

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<sup>211</sup> Uhland, p. 72.

<sup>212</sup> Lassen, pp. 82, 95.

<sup>213</sup> See Bergmann 1875, pp. 127, 129.

<sup>214</sup> Simrock, p. 372.

<sup>215</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 193.

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Yggdrasill, the World Ash.”<sup>216</sup> Most translators understand the term in strophe 2 as Ogresses or Giantesses of the forest, but Lassen’s and Bergmann’s suggestions make better sense contextually, since then lines 1-4 pertain to *who* reared the Seeress (i.e., nine Giants), while lines 5-8 identify *where* she was reared, namely, in nine homes constituted of nine forests near Yggdrasill. The author of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* understood *íviðir/ íviðjur* in *Völuspá* strophe 2 as “forest Ogresses.”

Although we do not find it likely, it is always possible that just as line 1’s *Alfoþr* is thought of as the head of all the higher beings encountered in lines 2-4, so line 5’s singular *Iviþia* might be thought of as the head of all the lower beings thereafter listed in lines 6-8. It is surely the case that strophe 1’s *Alfoþr*, who is Óðinn, chief of the *Æsir*, is followed in line 2 by the *alfar* under the influence of *Völuspá* strophe 49’s *ásom* and *álfom*.

*Völuspá* strophe 2’s and 8’s *iqtna* and *þursa*, “Giants,” is the source of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 1’s *þussar*. *Völuspá* strophe 1’s *forn spiql* can now even be coordinated with the alternate title of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*, namely *forspjall*, which may give us an indication that this title is not meant in the sense of Latin *prologus*.<sup>217</sup> *Völuspá* strophe 1 is directed to humans, and this may be correlated with *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 1’s *aldir*, who are said “to bear” or “bring forth,” *bera*, which has been inspired by *Völuspá* strophe 2’s *borna*. *Völuspá* strophe 20’s *alda bqrnom*, however, gives us the main inspiration for *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 1’s *aldir bera*. *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 1’s remaining *Elves*, *Vanir*, *Norns* and

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<sup>216</sup> Lassen, p. 95.

<sup>217</sup> Pace Lassen, p. 22.

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Valkyries all have their places in *Völuspá* (see strophe 24 for Vanir, strophe 20 for the Norns, strophe 30 for Valkyries). Thus *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* *iviþia* should be emended to *iviþiur*, and the accompanying verb *elur* is to be understood as a synonym of *Völuspá* strophe 2's *fædda*, and this supplies us with a clue as to what the *íviður* rear (*elur*), namely, a Seeress, as in *Völuspá* strophe 2. In *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* this Seeress would be understood to be *Iðunn*.

We would suggest that strophe 1 actually constitutes none other than the ominous and threatening Wight oracle mentioned in strophe 2, which in the latter strophe is said to contradict an earlier more positive rune reading that had promised the Gods that the Norn *Urðr* (who controls the past) would securely stand guard over the mead of immortality, *Óðrerir*, who appears here as a personified entity named *Óðhrærir*, thus guaranteeing the Gods' immortality. From the Wight oracle that comprises strophe 1 the Gods deduce that a plot is underway to deprive them of *Iðunn*'s golden apples that maintain the Gods' immortality. It is possible that *Óðinn*'s ravens conveyed the Wight's oracle to him in *Valhalla*, and this may be the original motivation behind the poem's title, although other possibilities remain viable.

Bergmann reminds us that “[t]he Elves are personifications of the shining stars. . . .”<sup>218</sup> Additionally, the Light Elves and the Dark Elves can be correlated respectively with the brighter and darker phases of the moon.<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 126.

<sup>219</sup> Bergmann 1875, pp. 208-209.

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In general, the situation presupposed in the opening strophes is that Iðunn, the quintessential symbol of spring, its weather and its life, has fallen from the tree of life, Yggdrasill, which has brought on extraordinarily premature late autumn weather, bypassing summer altogether, in accord with the tradition that Ragnarøk will be preceded by three terrible periods of winter, with no summer in between them, known as Fimbul-Winter, or “Great Winter” (see *Gylfaginning* 51). As Simrock concluded, the Gods saw in this an omen of Ragnarøk’s approach.<sup>220</sup>

The string of two individuals (Alfoþr, Iviþia, although the latter must be emended to a plural) and six races (alfar, Vanir, nornir, aldir, þussar, valkyriur) listed in rapid succession in strophe 1 reminds us of the recurring lists of six races at a time throughout *Alvíssmál*, where the talk there is of *monnum* (men), *ásur* (Gods), *vanir*, *jotnar* (Giants), *alfar* (Elves), *uppregin* (celestial Gods),<sup>221</sup> and *dvergar* (Dwarves), many of the types of beings enumerated in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 1.

Strophe 1 of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* is somewhat structurally reminiscent of ancient incantations; consider, for example, the opening to the following ancient Akkadian incantation, even though it is phrased in the imperative:

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<sup>220</sup> Simrock, p. 370.

<sup>221</sup> The curious distinction *Alvíssmál* makes between Gods and celestial Gods may to some degree perhaps be compared, *mutatis mutandis*, with the ancient Greek distinction between Zeus of heaven and Zeus of earth. See West 2003, pp. 262-263. An ever closer parallel would be the Hindu distinction between the Asuras and the Devas, since both classes are celestial and divine.

Wind blow,  
orchard shake,  
Clouds gather,  
droplets fall!<sup>222</sup>

Closer to home, though, *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 1's structure reminds us somewhat of the first lines of *Völuspá* strophe 49, which might even have partly inspired strophe 1:

What befalls the Æsir?  
What befalls the Elves?  
All of Giant-Home heaves,  
at council stand the Æsir.  
The Dwarves howl . . .

But much more important is the witch Busla's *galdr* curse from *Buslubœn* strophe 3:

Villisk vættir,            Wights be confounded,  
verði ódæmi,<sup>223</sup>        evil (ones) come,

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<sup>222</sup> Foster, vol. 2, p. 869.

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hristisk hamrar,	crag split,
heimar sturlisk,	the world disturbed,
vesni veðrátta,	worsen weather
verði ódæmi <sup>224</sup>	evil (ones) come!

This strophe is especially important because its first line is in fact a parallel to *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 2's *viltu /vęttar rúnum*. As the dictionaries tell us, the verb *villa*, “to lead astray,” is often associated with runes, “villtar rúnar, dark, obscure runes; rísta (rúnar) villt, to mis-write, write wrong. . .” (Zoëga). Busla’s *galdur* curse is even followed by the following mysterious runes, which are commented upon by Hollander:

R•F•Þ•P•Ŋ• : IIIII : 𐌚𐌚𐌚𐌚 : 11111 : IIIII : 𐌚𐌚𐌚𐌚

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<sup>223</sup> Hollander 1936, p. 77 renders *ódæmi* as “wonders,” but the noun is used to render the word “evil” in the Old Norse translation of 2 Kings 21:12, *þessi ódæmi sem ǫllum mǫnnum gnestr í eyrum*, “such evil that the ears of every one who hears of it will tingle.” See *Gnesta* entry in Zoëga. The word *ódæmi*, literally “without judgement/justice,” therefore, “injustice,” might conceivably be rendered “monster,” “abomination.” The context of *Buslubæn* strophe 3 suggests the sense of “demons,” “monsters.”

<sup>224</sup> MS *b* reads *órói*, see Jiriczek, p. 16. Contextually this might be intended to mean either an abstract “ravings” or a personified “raveners.”



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Hollander refers to Uhland's interpretation of these runes as *ristill* (plowshare), *aistill* (testicle), *thistill* (thistle), *kistill* (box), *mistill* (mistletoe) and *vistill* (?), and comments, "'words whose sense in *malam partem* is still partly discernible."<sup>225</sup>

What is more, *Buslubœn's* *heimar sturlisk*, "the world (be) disturbed!" reminds us of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 4's *dvina heima*, "[the strength of the] worlds dwindles." In *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 5 the weather certainly worsens, and this ties in with *Buslubœn's* *vesni veðrátta*. The last two lines of strophe 7 of *Buslubœn* also can be coordinated with our poem:

villist þú þá vegarins,	you will then be confounded on the path,
eða viltu þulu lengri?	or do you want to hear more?

Here we have the same verb *villa*, in the form *villist*, that we mentioned lately. The last line is particularly interesting because it is patterned after the well-known *Völva* question attested in so many Eddic poems, and also in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 5's *vitip enn eþa hvaþ?* *Buslubœn's* element of *lengri* shows the influence of the *Völva's* statement in *Völuspá* strophe 43, *fram sé ek lengra*, "I see further ahead," but also the *Völva* formula *Viltu enn lengra?* "Do you want to know more," from the *Lesser Völuspá*.

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<sup>225</sup> Hollander 1936, p. 79. There is nothing ancient about the runes in *Buslubœn*; see Leslie, pp. 148-161.

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*Buslubœn* strophe 8 then mentions the following entities, some of which appear in the same or similar forms in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 1, including Elves, Norns, Dwarves and Giants:

Tröll ok álfar	Trolls and Elves,
ok tǫfranornir,	and deceptive Norns
búar, bergrisar	Dwarves, Mountain Giants
brenni þínar hallir,	burn down your hall
hati þik hrímþursar. . .	Rime Giants hate you.

The poem *Buslubœn* ends in strophe 9 with what is called “the greatest *galdr*,” *mestr galdr*, *galdr* reminding us of the poem title *Hrafnagaldur*, and *mestr* calling to mind *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 2’s *mest-um/mestum*. The final lines of strophe 9 read as follows:

í hel gnaga,	gnaw you in Hel,
en sál þín	your soul
sökkvi í víti.	sink into Punishment.

The context shows us that *víti*, literally, “punishment,” is used here as a title for Hel. The verb *sökkvi*, sink, reminds us of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 4’s *niþur at Ginnungs / niþi sækva*, that is, *niður að Ginnungs niði sökkva*, “down to Ginnungr’s offspring sink.”

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The *Buslubæn* poem cited above is the version found in the older versions of the *Bósa Saga*. The more recent manuscripts contain a divergent form of the older poem. The first four lines of the second section read as follows:

Tröll taki þig           og tǫfrannornir,  
álfar og risar           efli þjer mæðu  
hamra hetjur           og hellirs gýgjur,  
dvergar og draugar þig dárlega hristi<sup>226</sup>

Intriguingly the older version parallels *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 1 to a much greater extent than does the more recent manuscripts' poem. The older version's *veða viltu þulu lengri?* reads in the more recent manuscripts as, *eður viltu eg þyli meira?*<sup>227</sup> Parallel to the older version's *sökkvi í víti*, we find in the newer manuscripts, *sökkvir í æginn*.<sup>228</sup>

Beyond even the newer manuscripts there is what Jiriczek labels “an apocryphal *Buslubæn*,” whatever that might have meant to the scholar. The text can be viewed in a variety of ways, including forgery or imitation, but in older times often even these could contain vestigial traces of pre-existent oral or written traditions. The document in question should therefore be investigated in a more dispassionate manner than was perhaps the case before the modern critical

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<sup>226</sup> Jiriczek, p. 102.

<sup>227</sup> Jiriczek, pp. 102-103.

<sup>228</sup> Jiriczek, p. 101.

rediscovery of “canonical bias,” which has resulted in an explosion of interest in so-called apocryphal texts, especially of Jewish and Christian provenance, and which has taught scholars not to judge extracanonical works by the standard of the canonical, but to treat them as integral compositions in their own right.

Jiriczek’s so-called “apocryphal *Buslubæn*” consists of two versions, A and B, the first preserving the text in a more complete form than the second, although again, each should be examined on its own terms. For our purposes, version A is more important; Jiriczek suspects the poem may reach back to the 1700s.<sup>229</sup> Paper manuscript A was written, not necessarily composed, ca. 1870, and was owned by Jón Þorkelsson (Copenhagen, 8<sup>o</sup>), and consists of 8 strophes with a concluding list of six mythological names, while paper manuscript B was written ca. 1850 (AM 247 8<sup>o</sup>) and contains no strophe structure, being just a list of 15 lines followed by a list of six mythological names.<sup>230</sup> The earlier MS B was already corrupted in a number of lines, indicating that the manuscript preserves a pre-existing composition.

What immediately strikes us about MS A (hereafter Þorkelsson *Buslubæn* A) is that it is centered around the interrelated subjects of the mead and the runes (the latter are integrated by virtue of their traditional connection to the sacred mead). Strophe 1 sets the tone by referring to “Óðinn’s wine,” a kenning for poetry:<sup>231</sup>

Nú skal til fornæla                      flest tram setja

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<sup>229</sup> Jiriczek, p. LXXVII.

<sup>230</sup> See Jiriczek, pp. 141-144.

<sup>231</sup> See Jiriczek, p. 141.

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og láta Óðins vín                      þér aldr um skapa,  
skal það hrífa                            sem eg hóf fyrra,  
og með syrpuversi                    þér sauma að hofði.<sup>232</sup>

Although it may not be apparent at first sight, strophe 2 builds on and expands the theme of strophe 1's "wine":

Hér bið eg Æsi                      þér alla að ganga  
og Ása bekki                            alla að skipa,  
svo þú með tryldum tǫtra þingum  
utan og innan                      allur hertakist.<sup>233</sup>

Here the poet in lines 1 and 2 declares, "I bid the Æsir and the Gods all to go, all to take to the benches." The purpose is so that the Gods will curse the person against whom the incantation is directed, but strophe 1's "Óðinn's wine" and later elements of the poem after strophe 2 suggest that the talk of the Gods taking to the benches was originally inspired by the imagery and vocabulary associated with celebrating a divine mead feast. Before supplying the text of strophe 4, we will skip to strophe 6:

Með eitri skulu þér helrúnir                      Hropts að fljúga,

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<sup>232</sup> Jiriczek, p. 141.

<sup>233</sup> Jiriczek, p. 141.

er Heiðrúnu vann	af Heiða legi
og úr hodddraupnis	horni skíra,
er bjargi á stóð	með Brímnis eggjar. <sup>234</sup>

This strophe's curse is clearly shaped by *Sigrdrífumál's* famous Rune Song,<sup>235</sup> which relates how Óðinn acquired the mead and the runes atop a mountain. The parallels are found in *Sigrdrífumál* strophes 12-14, which we give according to Bellows (modified):

12 Málrúnar skaltu kunna,	Speech-runes learn,
ef þú vilt, at manngi þér	that none may seek
heiftum gjaldi harm:	to answer harm with hate;
þær of vindr,	well he winds <sup>236</sup>
þær of vefr,	and weaves them,
þær of setr allar saman	and sets them all side by side,
á því þingi,	at the judgement-place,
er þjóðir skulu	when justice there
í fulla dóma fara.	the folk shall fairly win.

13 Hugrúnar skaltu kunna, Thought-runes learn,

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<sup>234</sup> Jiriczek, p. 142.

<sup>235</sup> See the notes in Jiriczek, p. 142.

<sup>236</sup> Note by Samuel Zinner, *þær of vindr* / *þær of vefr* more accurately means “wind thou, weave thou,” not “he winds,” “he weaves.”

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ef þú vilt hverjum vera	if all shall think
geðsvinnari guma;	thou art keenest minded of men;
þær of réð,	them he guessed,
þær of reist,	them he wrote,
þær of hugði Hroft	them in thought Hroft
af þeim legi,	placed them,
er lekit hafði	had laid them down,
ór hausi Heiðdraupnis	out of the draught that dripped from Heiðr's head,
ok ór horni Hoddrofnis.	and out of the horn of Hoddrofnir.
14 Á bjargi stóð	On the mountain he stood
með Brimis eggjar,	with Brimir's sword,
hafði sér á höfði hjalm;	on his head the helm he bore;
þá mælti Mímis höfuð	then the head of Mímir spoke forth
fróðligt it fyrsta orð	wisely its first word,
ok sagði sanna stafi.	and spoke the true staves.

From the above we can now identify *Sigrdrífumál* strophe 12's *þingi* as the source of Þorkelsson *Buslubæn* A strophe 2's *þingum*. Additionally, *Sigrdrífumál* strophe 12's *fulla* can be identified as a secondary source of Þorkelsson *Buslubæn* A strophe 4's verb *fylli* (we shall later identify the primary source):

Beri þér Bølverkur bráðar nauðir,

Svipall og Síðhøttur sútir auki,

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Hroptr og Hnikar heipt þér gjaldi,

Ými og Yggr ósk mina fylli.<sup>237</sup>

Here the incantation invokes Þölverkur, that he convey (*beri*) sudden severe (*nauðir*) distress or fetters (*bráðar*), Svipall and Síðhottur to add (*auki*) sicknesses (*sútir*), Hroptr and Hnikar to repay (*gjaldi*) with conflict or hate (*heipt*), and Ými and Yggr to fulfil (*fylli*) the desire (*ósk*) of the one chanting the curse (*ósk mina*, “my desire”). The seven names of strophe 4 are all Óðinn names, which means that Ými must be emended to the Óðinn name Ómi.

What immediately stands out to us in strophe 4 is that essentially all seven of these Óðinn names occur in *Grímnismál* strophes 47, 49 and 53-54. We say “essentially” because in fact the name Hroptr does not occur in that exact form in *Grímnismál* strophe 54, but rather it appears as Hroptatýr. As we document in our commentary on *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophes 17 and following, this very string of *Grímnismál* strophes is the source of five Óðinn names used in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* mead feast narrative (strophes 17-23). Interestingly, both Þorkelsson *Buslubæn A* strophe 4 and *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 23 use the form Hroptr instead of *Grímnismál*'s Hroptatýr. Since both Þorkelsson *Buslubæn A* strophe 4 and *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 23 build themselves upon the mead trope, their parallel use of the form Hroptr has most likely been inspired by two Eddic passages, first would be *Hávamál* strophe 142, where the God Hroptr gains the runes after

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<sup>237</sup> Jiriczek, p. 142.



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obtaining the mead in strophe 140, and second would be *Sigrdrífumál* strophe 13 where the same event is narrated.

Here we give a list of all three texts' Óðinn names:

Porkelsson *Buslubæin A*     *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*     *Grímnismál*

Strophe 4

Bolverkur	Bolverks (19:2)	Bolverkr (47:5)
Svipall		Svipall (47:1)
Síðhottur		Síðhotttr (48)
Hroptr	Hropt (23)	Hroftatýr (54:5)
Hnikar	Hnikars (19:6)	Hnikarr (47:3)
Ými/Ómi	Omi (22)	Ómi (49)
Yggr	Yggjar (17)	Yggr (53; 54:2)

It might also be helpful to list these same divine names again, this time in the specific order in which they occur in the three sources:

Bolverkur	Yggjar (17)	Svipall (47:1)
Svipall	Bolverks (19:2)	Hnikarr (47:3)
Síðhottur		Bolverkr (47:5)
Hroptr	Hnikars (19:6)	Síðhotttr (48)
Hnikar	Omi (22)	Ómi (49)

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Ými/Ómi      Hropt (23)      Yggr (53; 54:2)

Yggr      Hroftatýr (54:5)

We should add to the above the fact that in *Grímnismál* strophe 49, the divine name Óski is paired together with Ómi, and this is obviously the source of Þorkelsson *Buslubæn* A strophe 4's Ými/Ómi and ósk. Additionally, Þorkelsson *Buslubæn* A strophe 2's *bekki* may have been influenced in part by *Grímnismál* strophe 45's *bekki*, which in turn may have influenced *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 19's *beckjar*.

The first lines of Þorkelsson *Buslubæn* A strophe 5 are, as Jiriczek notes, based on *Guðrúnarkviða II* strophe 23, which is about indecipherable red runes in a drinking horn; then comes an allusion to *Skírnismál* strophe 36's three Þurs rune staves.<sup>238</sup> We then arrive at the already cited strophe 6 of Þorkelsson *Buslubæn* A. Strophe 6's *helrúnir*, "Hel runes," is manifestly patterned after *Sigrdrífumál*'s *bjargrúnar* (strophe 9), *brimrúnar* (strophe 10), *limrúnar* (strophe 11), *málrúnar* (strophe 12) and *hugrúnar* (strophe 13). We render *Sigrdrífumál* strophe 13's *ór hausu Heiðdraupnis*, as "out of the drops from Heiðr's head," rather than the more common, "out of the draught from Heiðdraupnir's head." Our rendering accords with Þorkelsson *Buslubæn* A strophe 6's *er Heiðrúnu vann / af Heiða legi*, in which Heið(r)- has been separated from *Sigrdrífumál*'s compound *Heiðdraupnis*.

We also notice that Þorkelsson *Buslubæn* A has transformed *Sigrdrífumál*'s *Heiðdraupnis* and *Hoddrofnis* into *Heiðrúnu* and *Hodddraupnis*, thus switching

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<sup>238</sup> Jiriczek, p. 142.

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Heið- and Hodd- on the one hand and –draupnis and –drofnis (Hodd-drofnis, three d’s!) on the other hand. Hoddrofnir means Hoard-Plunderer, in *Sigrdrífumál* probably as an allusion to the treasure of the mead. In *Vafþrúðnismál* Yggdrasill is called Hoddmímis, Mímir’s Hoard, and this suggests that Rofnir is Mímir, and that his treasure is the mead that ultimately stems from Yggdrasill’s foilage. Þorkelsson *Buslubæn A* adds an extra -d- into the mix, namely, Hodd-drofnis, which might conceivably suggest Hoard-Billows, “billows” being a kenning for poetry/mead. Similarly, *Fjölsvinnsmál* calls Yggdrasill Mímameiðr, Mímir’s Tree, which as the source of the sacred mead would overlap mythemically with the “Memory’s Ale,” that is, the mead of memory, *minnisöl*, of *Hyndluljóð* strophe 29.

It will be helpful to list the *Sigrdrífumál* sources for the various lines of Þorkelsson *Buslubæn A* strophe 6:

Þorkelsson <i>Buslubæn A</i>	<i>Sigrdrífumál</i>
Strophe 6	Strophes 13-14
Með eitri skulu þér helrúnir <sup>239</sup>	skaltu . . . þær . . . -rúnar
Hropts að fljúga,	Hrofttr
er Heiðrúnu vann	Heiðdraupnis
af Heiða legi	af þeim legi
og úr hoddraupnis	ok ór horni Hoddrofnis
horni skíra,	ok ór horni Hoddrofnis

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<sup>239</sup> Note by Samuel Zinner: *rúnir* is a modern form for the older *rúnar*.

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er bjargi á stóð

Á bjargi stóð

með Brímnis eggjar.

með Brimis eggjar

*Hyndluljóð* strophe 33 speaks of *bjór . . . eitri blandinn mjök*, “ale . . . blended mightily with poison,” and in strophes 30-31 none other than the mead goat Heiðrún is mentioned twice. *Grímnismál* strophe 25 tell us that Heiðrún “bites off Læraðr’s limbs,” *bítr af Læraðs limum*, Læraðr being Yggdrasill, and that she *skapker fylla*, “the vat she fills,” *hon skal ins skíra mjaðar*, “with clear mead,” *kná at sú veig vanask*, “which cannot be emptied.” Thus while *Hyndluljóð* strophe 33 is the source of Þorkelsson *Buslubæn A* strophe 6’s *eitri*, we can also now see that *Grímnismál* strophe 25’s *fylla* constitutes the primary inspiration behind Þorkelsson *Buslubæn A* strophe 4’s *fylli*. Moreover, we can also identify *Grímnismál* strophe 25’s *skíra*, “bright,” from the phrase *skíra mjaðar*, “bright mead,” as the transparent source of Þorkelsson *Buslubæn A* strophe 6’s *skíra*. Given this repeated influence from *Grímnismál* strophe 25, it would be natural to conclude that Þorkelsson *Buslubæn A* strophe 6’s *og úr hoddraupnis / horni skíra*, “and from the dripping of Hodd’s bright horn,” gives us an intentional allusion not only to *Sigrdrífumál* strophe 13’s *ok ór horni Hoddrofnis*, but also to *Grímnismál* strophe 26’s hart Eikþyrnir from whose *hornum*, “horns,” descend drops, *drýpr*, the ultimate source of all waters. This indicates that the poet of Þorkelsson *Buslubæn A* thought of Eikþyrnir’s “thorns,” þyrnir, as drinking horns, *hornum*, that drip mead, just like Heiðrún’s udders. The goat and the hart produce their mead from digesting Yggdrasill’s limbs, so that Yggdrasill is really the ultimate source of the mead. However, with Eikþyrnir it

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seems that his mead becomes cold poison drops, and there would seem to be a connection here with *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 13's poison, eitri, Frost-Cold Giant (þurs hrimkalda) whose thorn, þorn, becomes a lethal weapon, for it “drops,” that is, “slays,” *drepur* (cf. *Heiðrún's drýpr!*), when wielded by the Dwarf stag Dáinn, whose connection to Yggdrasill is narrated in *Grímnismál* strophe 33. We should not overlook strophe 31's *hrímþursar*, which ties in with *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 13's þurs hrimkalda. Þorkelsson *Buslubœn A* strophe 6's poison Hel runes are therefore drinking runes, as in *Guðrúnarkviða II* strophe 23. Thus there seem to be several common and interlinking threads that join together *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* and Þorkelsson *Buslubœn A*. What is intriguing is that a close examination of both of these poems suggests that they have not influenced each other on any literary level. It does not seem that the poet of Þorkelsson *Buslubœn A* has been influenced by *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*, although he may have known that text (we suspect that he did not).

We should supply a translation of Þorkelsson *Buslubœn A* strophe 6 before offering some further comments on it:

Með eitri skulu þér helrúnir	With poison shall fly to you
Hropts að fljúga,	the Hel runes of Hroptr,
er Heiðrúnu vann	he who won Heiðrún,
af Heiða legi	who placed Heiðr,
og úr hoddraupnis	even of the drops of Hodd's
horni skíra,	clear/bright horn,

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er bjargi á stóð	who stood upon the mountain
með Brímnis eggjar.	with Brímnir's sword.

Strophe 6 says of Hroptr that he won or gained Heiðrún, and he placed Heiðr. In light of the parallel material in *Sigrdrífumál*, *Hávamál* and *Grímnismál* it is clear that Heiðrún and Heiðr here denote the runes that Óðinn gained and placed, or laid down/arranged. However, these runes are inseparable from the sacred mead, for what the strophe basically says is that Hroptr won and placed the runes, that is, he gained possession of the runes, and this is in every way equivalent to his gaining the drops (-draupnis) of mead from Hodd's (that is, Mímir's) bright drinking horn, and Óðinn gained the rune-mead or the ale-runes (they mean the same thing in the end) while he stood upon the mountain holding the sword of Brímir. As we have seen, this is a modulation of *Sigrdrífumál*'s "from the drops from Heiðr's skull, / and from the plunder of Hodd's horn," which we would argue is a more adequate way to render *ór hausi Heiðdraupnis / ok ór horni Hoddrofnis* than the more usual "from Heiðdraupnir's skull, / and from Hoddrofnir's horn." Of course, *hausi*, "head," "skull," could mean the "mind" as the source of poetic inspiration, but since Heiðr had been slain thrice by Óðinn, as we read in *Völuspá* strophes 21-22 (assuming that Heiðr and Gullveig are the same person), *hausi* here might be meant quite literally, parallel to Mímir's decapitated head that still speaks, just as we read in *Völuspá* strophe 21 of Gullveig (=Heiðr), *þrisvar brenndu, þrisvar borna, oft, ósjaldan, þó hon enn lifir*: "Thrice burned, thrice born, often, not seldom, yet she still lives." If the name Heiðr (= Bright) alludes to the bright mead, just as Gullveig (Gold Drink) does, then there

is a definite mythemetic parallelism established between Heiðr and Mímir, and between her head and Mímir's head and horn.

We should offer a few brief comments on the lines *Með eitri skulu þér helrúnir / Hropts að fljúga*, “With poison shall fly to you / the Hel runes of Hroptr.” This can be understood with reference to the Anglo-Saxon text called “Lay of the Nine Twigs of Woden,” in which this God makes nine herbal darts or arrows, glorious magic twigs, out of a serpent that he smites. These nine arrows combat *nyzon attrum*, “nine poisons,” or “nine venoms.”<sup>240</sup> Þorkelsson *Buslubæn A*'s flying poisonous runes are therefore to be thought of as arrows with fell runes carved upon them. In Norse thought Hel is synonymous with death, and this recalls the fact that Óðinn obtained the runes as part of his nine-nights vision quest as he hung suspended upon Yggdrasill, where he died and was reborn (like Gullveig). Óðinn's runes may therefore accurately be described as Hel or Death runes. However, that the *helrúnir* are flying arrows is not incompatible with the same runes being referred to in liquid form (that is, the sacred mead) later in the same strophe 6.

That both Þorkelsson *Buslubæn A* strophe 4 and *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 23 use the non-*Grímnismál* form Hroptr indicates a common tradition underlying the first two texts. If we look elsewhere in Þorkelsson *Buslubæn A* we see some additional striking parallels to *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*, and this leads us to suspect that the so-called “apocryphal *Buslubæn*” has independently preserved traditions also contained in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*, another indication that the poet of the latter text composed his narrative on the basis of pre-existing tradition/s, and not exclusively

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<sup>240</sup> See Grattan and Singer, pp. 152, 154.

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out of his individual fantasy. We refer back to Þorkelsson *Buslubœn A* strophe 2, lines 1-4. The first thing that we notice is that the words *Æsi* and *Ása* occur in both texts, Þorkelsson *Buslubœn A* and *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*, in the same order; but there is more:

Þorkelsson <i>Buslubœn A</i>	<i>Hrafnagaldur Óðins</i>
Strophe 2	Strophes 17-19
Hér <u>bið</u> eg <u>Æsi</u>	baðu (strophe 18); <i>Æsi</i> (strophe 17)
þér alla að <u>ganga</u>	ganga (strophe 17)
og <u>Ása bekki</u>	<i>Ása</i> (strophe 18); bekkjar (strophe 19)
alla að <u>skipa</u> ,	cf. sitia (strophe 18); sett (strophe 19)

Þorkelsson *Buslubœn A* in strophe 7 refers to *hrimþursar* and *jǫtnar*, and the concluding lines of stophe 8 read as follows:

þá skulu hundar	þig í hel rífa,
en sál þín	sökkva í Niflheim. <sup>241</sup>
then shall dogs	rip you apart in Hel,
and your soul	shall sink into Niflheimr.

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<sup>241</sup> Jiriczek, p. 143.



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We cannot help but notice the isomorphism here between Þorkelsson *Buslubæn A* strophe 7's *hrímþursar* and *jǫtnar*, "Rime Giants" and "Giants" (strophe 7 is the penultimate strophe) and *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* penultimate strophe's *gygiur ok þursar*, "Ogresses and Giants" (strophe 25). And then in the final strophe of Þorkelsson *Buslubæn A* we find *søkkva í Niflheim*, "sink down into Niflheimr," which accords well with *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 26's note that Darkness, Niola (the Night), pursued, *sokte*, Niflheimr to the north:

nordur ad Niflheim

Niola sokte

In fact, Lüning emends strophe 26's text from *sokte* to be *søkðisk*: "Three manuscripts read *søkti*, on which grounds I hold the original reading to be *søkðisk* (she sank down)." <sup>242</sup>

Despite all the intriguing parallels laid out above that link together so many of the components of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* and Þorkelsson *Buslubæn A*, cumulatively they do not indicate or demonstrate any direct literary relationship subsisting between the two poems. Instead, the evidence seems to suggest that each poem represents an independent modulation of various pre-existing traditions based partly on a rich and variegated pool of *Poetic Edda* passages.

Because the literary structure of the *Buslubæn* curse in the older saga version is so similar to *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*, especially to strophe 1, and because it parallels

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<sup>242</sup> Lüning, p. 524.

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such important elements such as the same poem's strophe 2, we are left with two possibilities, either *Buslubæn* (or its underlying traditions) has influenced *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* (or its underlying traditions), or vice versa. It might be helpful to decide the question (at least tentatively, since a definitive answer may be out of anyone's grasp; literary scholars can deal only in probabilities) by searching for relevant clues in the prose parts of *Bósa Saga ok Herraúðs* in which the *galdr* curse of Busla is enframed.

We learn that after the *galdr* curse the King Hringr sends Herraúðr and Bósi on a mission, a *forsending*, literally, "dangerous mission." The mission is to retrieve a golden vulture egg at a temple of the God Jómala where the King Goðmundr's sister Hleiðr has been abducted is being held in bonds. King Goðmundr and his sister dwell *austr á Glæsivöllum*, "east, at Glæsir Plain." The temple is in the possession of King Harek of Bjarmaland, and his wicked wife, Queen Kolfrosta (Coal-Black Awful-Frost!), turned herself into the shape of an animal in order to abduct Hleiðr. Eventually After Herraúðr and Bósi kill a cow, Bósi battles a monstrous vulture at the temple. After he slays the vulture, they find its golden egg and more gold than they can carry away. From the God Jómala they take treasures, including a silver goblet full of red gold, *fullr af rauðagulli*.

Herraúðr then takes Hleiðr to marry her, to which she does not object. However, the forces of King Harek at one point manage to take back Hleiðr, whom King Goðmundr has in the meantime promised as bride to Siggeir, and a grand royal wedding feast begins. Bósi shows up in disguise as a harper-singer (in the later manuscripts as a Chaldaean harpist!) at the wedding mead feast. (Jiriczek justly

wonders if this is inspired by the traditions behind the *Kalevala*'s Orpheus-like harpist Väinämöinen;<sup>243</sup> we suspect this was the case, but the Norse Bragi has also contributed to the figure of the harpist-singer Bósi). Memorial cups are brought in one by one, first in honour of Þórr (Ok sem inn kom þat minni, sem signat var Þór), then to all the Gods (Því næst kom þat minni inn, er helgat var ǫllum Ásum), next to Óðinn (Því næst kom inn Óðins minni), and lastly to Freyja (En er þetta minni var af gengit, kom inn þat minni, er signat var Freyju). Among the songs Bósi sings are *Gýgjarslag ok Drömbuð*, “Tune of the Gýgr,” “Dream Booth” and lastly *Rammaslag*, “Powerful Slug.” In the more recent manuscripts King Harek is stung with a sleep thorn (stingur hann því svefnþorni í hárið).<sup>244</sup> Hleiðr is taken away and put on Bósi's and Herrauðr's ship.

Later, Bósi pays a peasant's daughter three gold walnuts for assistance in gaining access to King Harek's daughter Edda. The peasant's daughter is to show the gold nuts to Edda and tell her she knows a place in the forest where they are abundant. In this way Bósi abducts Edda to marry her. Later King Harek attacks Herrauðr and Bósi and company on their ship. An unusually powerful blow turns the king into a dragon, and then into the form of a ferocious boar. The boar and Busla fight against each other and both perish in the sea. Herrauðr and Bósi settle down back home with their respective wives Hleiðr and Edda. Herrauðr gives the gold vulture egg to his daughter Þóra, but a gold serpent emerges from it which grows so big that it imprisons the daughter in her proverbial bower. The serpent

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<sup>243</sup> Jiriczek, p. L.

<sup>244</sup> Jiriczek, p. 128.

eats an ox at each and every meal. Herrauðr basically lets his daughter live imprisoned by the serpent, declaring that only the man who could slay the serpent would be allowed to marry Þóra.

Now, to unpack all of these prose meanderings we must correlate them with their parallels in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* and related traditions. To begin with, King Hringr's sending of Herrauðr and Bósi on a perilous mission (*forsending*) can be compared to Óðinn's dispatch of Heimdallr, Loki and Bragi to Iðunn in the netherworld. The mission of Herrauðr and Bósi is to retrieve a golden vulture egg; this is comparable to Iðunn's gold apples. The vulture egg is at a temple of the God Jómala where the King Goðmundr's sister Hleiðr has been abducted is being held in bonds. This is inspired by the story of the abducted Iðunn. Queen Kolfrosta, who turns herself into the shape of an animal in order to abduct Hleiðr, is another reverberation of Þjazi in the form of an eagle abducting Iðunn. Herrauðr's and Bósi's killing of a cow recalls the ox killed by Óðinn, Þórr and Loki just before Þjazi arrives. Bósi's battle with a monstrous vulture at the temple corresponds to Loki's struggle with Þjazi. After the vulture is slain (=Þjazi's death), they find its golden egg and an abundance of gold. They find that the God Jómala's silver goblet is full of red gold, *fullr af rauðagulli*. Gold, especially red gold, is a trope associated with the sacred mead and Iðunn's apples.

The grand royal wedding feast reminds us of the mead feast in strophes 17ff. in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*. At the wedding mead feast, memorial cups are raised in honour of Þórr (Ok sem inn kom þat minni, sem signat var Þór), of all the Gods (Því næst kom þat minni inn, er helgat var ǫllum Ásum), of Óðinn (Því næst kom inn

Óðins minni), and lastly of Freyja (En er þetta minni var af gengit, kom inn þat minni, er signat var Freyju). This reminds us of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 19's *minnis hornum*, *minnis* appearing in MS B as *Mimis*, *Mímir's horn/s*. Could this now be understood as lifting memorial horns in honour of *Mímir*? Among the songs *Bósi* sings at the wedding feast are *Gýgjarslag* and *Drömbuð*, "Tune of the *Gýgr*," "Dream Booth" and lastly *Rammaslag*, "Powerful Slug." The trope of dreams of course makes us think of the dreams in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 3, while the *Gýgr* reminds us of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 14's *Rýgr*. *Rammaslag*, "Powerful Slug" could be compared to strophe 13's mortal blows of *Dáinn's* thorn. At the same wedding feast, King *Harek* is struck with a sleep thorn (although *Dáinn's* thorn is not a sleep thorn, but a death thorn, nevertheless it is a thorn and it is nocturnal).

The incident with *Bósi* and the peasant's daughter involving the three gold walnuts for assistance in gaining access to King *Harek's* daughter *Edda*,<sup>245</sup> this is clearly patterned after *Loki's* luring of *Iðunn* out into the forest to see jewel-like apples. *Edda* falls for the bait and gets abducted. The dragon at the battle between King *Harek* and *Herrauðr* and *Bósi* reminds us not only of *Þjazi*, but of the giant dragon-like eagle of *Kalevala* Rune 19, which contains a clear parallel to the story of *Iðunn's* abduction (see our commentary on strophe 13 of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*). Now is the point to mention that the Old Norse saga's *Jómala* is none other than the chief God of the Finnish pantheon, invoked throughout the *Kalevala*. Lastly, *Herrauðr's* daughter being imprisoned in her bower is a last reflection of *Iðunn* and *Iðunn-*

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<sup>245</sup> On the name *Edda* in *Bósa Saga ok Herrauðs*, see Frog 2011 *RMN*, pp. 55-56 and Frog 2011 *Mirator*, pp. 25-27.

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related traditions in which the fair maid is either held bondage beneath a tree (as in the *Exeter Book's* “The Wife’s Complaint” and *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*) or in a castle (Menglóð in *Fjolsvinnsmál*, Solomon’s daughter in a tower, Rapunzel, etc.; see commentary on *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 6 for analysis of these and further examples).

Given that *Bósa Saga ok Herraúðs* (ca. 1350-1400?) contains so many parallels to not only the *Skáldskaparmál* story of Þjazi-Iðunn, but also to *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*, the question arises as to which is earlier, the saga or the poem (or the latter’s underlying trajectory/trajectories). The question deserves a separate study, but what we can say at this point is that the poet of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* did not create his basic narrative out of his individual fancy, but on the basis of pre-existing traditions which are preserved in a variety of known ballads, poems and myths. Our tentative suspicion is that *Bósa Saga ok Herraúðs* might constitute evidence suggesting that before *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* was committed to manuscript the poem’s basic narrational contents had already been joined together, more or less, in a variety of previous sources. The striking similarity between the poem’s first strophe and the saga incline us to suspect that the saga is dependent on an earlier oral version of the story contained in the poem. This makes more sense than arguing that a fairy tale of enormously humorous proportions (we refer not only to the dragons and boars, but to the explicitly risqué-comedic encounters as well) inspired a serious story such as we find in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*.

We should note for the purpose of documentation that our search for parallels to *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* in the *Bósa saga* and in Finnish sources began with a

casual reading of Hollander 1936. When we came upon his translation of strophe 3 of *Buslubæn* we immediately recognized its importance as a parallel to *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*. After carrying out our search of the entire *Bósa saga*, whose reference to the Finnish deity Jomala spurred us to read through the *Kalevala*, we learned of Frog's recognition of parallels to the abduction/rape of Iðunn in the *Bósa saga* and in Finnish sources in Frog 2010 and Frog 2012. Beyond those references we are not acquainted with Frog's research in this area.

Frog refers especially to Greimas' discussion of a Lithuanian story called "The Sun and the Mother of the Winds,"<sup>246</sup> in which Frog detects a "remarkable correspondence" to the Þjazi-Iðunn story:

The narrative culminates in the murder of the male hero and the kidnapping of the female figure (identified with the sun) who is associated with the tree/fruit of life. The apples of the tree wither (as the gods in the absence of Iðunn). Figures travel from the tree of life and retrieve the hero's entrails from the sea, much as Lemminkäinen's corpse is also recovered from water. He is made whole again, just as Lemminkäinen is resurrected. The hero recovers the maiden from the chthonic world and the slaying of bulls brings about the disappearance of seas and the re-emergence of land as in the rebirth of the world after the creation.<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>246</sup> Unfortunately, we do not have access to this source.

<sup>247</sup> Frog 2010, pp. 359-360.

Frog adds in an intriguing footnote the following details concerning the nature and extent of the parallels between Iðunn and the Lithuanian tale:

The maiden of this tale is identified with a sun rather than a fruit. The hero seeks her, and rather than being one of three gods for whom an eagle divides the ox, he divides an ox for three animals, who each give him the power to take their shapes. The only shape which is significant is the shape of the hawk (Loki's bird-form in *Haustlöng*), with which he flies to the mother of winds. Rather than the deception of the tree . . ., he is placed to guard the tree of magic fruit from the three giants who come to take it. He is given three apples and told how to find the maiden in return. He marries the maiden, which makes him her servant. . . . On finding one of her hairs caught on a thorn, he places it inside a nut (like Iðunn) and throws it into the sea. This leads to her theft by a chthonic figure who also murders him, at which point the Death/Resurrection motif-complex becomes relevant.<sup>248</sup>

### Strophe 2.

The Æsir feared / a fell fate: *Ætlun Æsir / alla gátu*, literally “Estimate-Meaning the Gods / all the riddle.” Here we have the first indication that already with MS. A the poem has suffered corruption, which is evidence for a prehistory of the poem prior to the creation of its manuscript tradition/s in the 1600s or slightly earlier. Already the first published version of 1787 correctly emended *alla*, “all,” to

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<sup>248</sup> Frog 2010, p. 360.



*illa*, “ill.” This agrees with strophe 21’s first line as well, *illa letu*, which confirms the correctness of the emendation in strophe 1. Already the figure of Iðunn is hovering in the background here, for in *Ætlun Æsir / illa* we have an allusion to *Skáldskaparmál*’s story of Þjazi’s abduction of Iðunn: En æsir urðu illa við hvarf Iðunnar, “But the Æsir were troubled (*illa*) with the disappearance of Iðunn.” The reason they were troubled was ok gerðust þeir brátt hárir ok gamlir, “and they were suddenly grey-haired and old.”

What we have in *Ætlun Æsir / illa gátu* is an elliptical manner of saying that the Gods saw or divined in the oracle a “bad meaning” (cf. Bergmann’s *böse Ahnung*),<sup>249</sup> which we express as the Gods fearing that the oracle meant a fell (sinister, deadly) fate awaited them; in traditional terms, the oracle was viewed as inauspicious. The term *gátu* refers to the foreboding oracle that starts off the poem’s narrative action. The 1787 Latin version appropriately renders *gátu* with *decretum*. An oracle is a riddle-like or enigmatically worded decree or fate, and here the oracle alluded to would most naturally, that is contextually, be the contents of strophe 1.

The reaction of fear following a threatening dream or oracle is natural, and can be traced back all the way to the vocabulary of ancient Mesopotamian dream interpretation, as a text cited by Butler will illustrate: “As a result of dream(s) . . . I am afraid, I am worried. . . .”<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>249</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 117.

<sup>250</sup> Butler, p. 37.

Contradicted the runes: Lassen translates this passage as, “caused muddle with the . . . runes.”<sup>251</sup> Wolzogen rendered it as, “denn wirrend fielen die Würfe der Runen,”<sup>252</sup> “for confusing fell the castings of the runes.” Bergmann writes that the word *verpir* refers to something that has been cast about or around, and accords with French *ballottés*, and explains further that it is

the plural of *verp-r* (“throw,” “thrown,” “raised/posed”) and belongs in its root to the abstract theme designated as *V-R I Pa* (“to hasten,” “to shoot,” “to throw/cast”); originally, therefore, it had no connection with Lithuanian *virba-s* (“rod”), Old Slavic *vrba* (“willow rod”), Latin *virga* (“rod”), which belong to a word group that means “to bend,” “to curve,” even though both word groups in common but incorrect feeling for language may have been mixed with each other, like the Gothic *vairpa* (“to throw”) with the Gothic *hvairba* (“to bend,” “to curve,” Latin *curvare*). *Verpr* appears originally to have meant a stave (*stafr, teinn*), which was cast as lots or in oracular enquiry. The diminutive *verpill* (“small cast/throw”) later came to mean “die/dice.”<sup>253</sup>

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<sup>251</sup> Lassen, p. 82.

<sup>252</sup> von Wolzogen, p. 122.

<sup>253</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 98.

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Jordan understands strophe 2 lines 1-2 as meaning that the anxious Gods “threw confusedly inauspicious runes,” *warfēn verwirrt Wehspruchrunen*.<sup>254</sup>

The term *verpir* has a parallel in *Baldrs draumar* strophe 12’s *verpa*, as well as in strophe 158 of *Hávamál* (in the latter case with the sense of “sprinkle”). This language is quite traditional and indeed archaic. In Latin we could refer to Thebaid 1:176-177, *partiti versant populorum fata manuque / fortunam fecere levem*: “From hand to hand they toss the / destinies of peoples and of their own accord make / Fortune fickle.”<sup>255</sup> Already in an ancient Akkadian source we read:

Evil [portents?] were continually set again[st me ]  
My omens were obscure, they became like [       ]  
the diviner could not reach a ruling concerning me,  
the Judge would give no sign.  
The omens were confused, the oracles mixed up.<sup>256</sup>

In another Akkadian text we read similarly:

My omens were confused,  
they were contradictory every day,  
(even) with diviner and dream interpreter

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<sup>254</sup> Jordan, p. 195.

<sup>255</sup> Mozley vol. 1, pp. 352-355.

<sup>256</sup> Foster, vol. 1, p. 324.

my course was undecided.

What was said in the street portended ill for me,  
when I lay down at night, my dream was terrifying.<sup>257</sup>

After this distressing declaration the ancient poet lists a number of entities who had been causing such woe, beginning with “the king,” who is divine, then seven courtiers who are likened to “fiends” and “demons.”<sup>258</sup> With this list we can compare *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 1’s own list that begins with the All-Father and then proceeds to enumerate a series of mostly demonic-like entities. In the Akkadian text, next comes the poet’s period of lamentation:

My eyes endure (?) constant crying,  
My cheeks scald from tears, as if eroded (?).  
My face is darkened from the apprehensions of my heart.<sup>259</sup>

This may perhaps be compared to *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 12’s description of Iðunn’s sorrow and weeping: “Tears shot from out / The shields of her skull.”

We are thus to understand strophe 2 lines 3-4 as follows:

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<sup>257</sup> Foster, vol. 1, p. 310.

<sup>258</sup> Foster, vol. 1, p. 310.

<sup>259</sup> Foster, vol. 1, p. 311.

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verpír viltu	the oracular castings contradicted
vęttar rúnum	the rune oracle of the wight/s

The verpír constitute strophe 1's oracle that the Æsir viewed as threatening, which contradicts a separate and apparently more positive oracle, made by a wight (or wights, if plural), which is then more or less quoted in strophe 2 lines 5-8.

Oðhrærer skylde / Urdar gejma: This is usually understood literally as, "Oðhrærer should / Urður guard/take care of." In Norse tradition Óðrerir is either the name of the sacred mead or the name of its container or vat, while Urður is one of the three Norns or Fates who is said to have a well. Based on this, most exegetes expect to read of the reverse, that Urður should guard Oðhrærer. Consequently Bergmann thought that the statement was a misleading and useless piece of advice given to the Gods.<sup>260</sup> We are not so sure we can dismiss the problem so easily, since the text makes sense grammatically as it stands, even if not clearly so mythologically, at least not at first, since it seems to reverse the expected two roles involved. The issue has resulted in the proposed emendations Oðhræris and Urður. The problem is that the name Urður appears in the genitive case, Urdar, which is normal grammatically, given that gejma usually requires the genitive case. The verb gejma in its second dictionary sense means "to watch," "to keep." In its first sense, the meaning is to heed, mind, watch, but also "to take care of," and in the last sense the genitive is naturally presupposed. However, gejma also means "to store," and from the Old Icelandic gejma is derived Norwegian gøyme, "to store," "to hide," "to

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<sup>260</sup> See Bergmann 1875, p. 129.

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cover,” which is synonymous with the verb *fela*, “to hide,” “to place,” a verb associated with Mímir’s well in *Völuspá* strophes 27-28, which is also mentioned in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 5 (Mimis brunne) where the verb *dylja* (“to hide”) is used (*dylst*), which is a synonym of *gejma*.

The above tells us two things, first that the author of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* understood *Völuspá*’s verb *fela* in the sense of “to hide,” rather than just “to place.” Second, this indicates that *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 2’s *gejma* should be understood with its nuance of “hide” rather than “guard,” “keep.” This has an important implication for how we are to interpret the next line’s verb *veria*, usually translated here as “protect.” But in light of the above evidence, it now becomes clear that *veria* may not be the verb *verja*, “to defend,” but the semantically different yet orthographically identical verb *verja* (*ver*; *varða*; *variðr*, *varðr*), “to wrap,” “to enclose,” “to shroud,” which of course can be ways of protecting (cf. strophe 16 where *hirþir*, most literally “hider,” means “keeper”), but the distinctive nuance is important to note here.

Given the pervasive influence wielded by *Völuspá* upon *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*, we can easily detect in the latter’s strophe 2 an inspiration from *Völuspá* strophes 19-20. Strophe 19’s *Urðar brunni*, “Urðr’s well,” supplies us with *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*’ genitive form “*Urdar*,” and *brunni* agrees with *Oðhrærer*’s nominative case. But soon we shall learn the situation is more complex than this. *Hávamál* strophe 111 also mentions *Urðarbrunni*, together with *rúnar*, and this has surely contributed to *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 2’s *Oðhrærer Urdar* and *rúnum*.

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*Völuspá* strophe 20's allusion to the runes carved by the Norns is also to be seen in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 2's *rúnum*, but the principle influence is from *Hávamál* strophe 111. There is more, though; strophe 20's Norn Skuld makes one think of strophe 2's cognate "skyldē." Additionally, a subtle or learned reader might detect in the verb *verja* (*varða*; *variðr*, *varðr*) an allusion to the Norn *Verðandi*. We will see that these connections do not in fact tie into the story underlying *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 2, but that the similarities mentioned may have contributed to the poem's wording. This is not to say that *Völuspá* has not directly influenced elements of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*. Indeed, strophe 2's *gátu* corresponds quite well with *Völuspá* strophe 20's laws and destinies determined by the Norns.

However, although *Völuspá* strophe 19's statement about the forever-green *Yggdrasill* who stands over *Urðr*'s well structurally accords with *Oðhrærer* standing guard over *Urdar*, again the principle influence behind strophe 2's trope of guarding comes from *Hávamál* and, as we shall presently see, from *Skáldskaparmál*. Later exegetes, misled into seeing in strophe 2's *Urdar* a reference to *Völuspá* strophe 19, have thought that the poet of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* more or less not only equated the sacred mead *Óðrerir* with the liquid contents of *Urðr*'s well. Perhaps some have thought that the poet also likely saw *Urðar brunni* as more less identical with *Mímis brunni* of *Völuspá* strophe 28, the latter appearing in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 5, a strophe that begins with *stendur ęva*, obviously patterned after *Völuspá* strophe 19's *stendr æ*, referring to *Yggdrasill*. But as we shall see, these are all incorrect suppositions on the part of exegetes.

Lassen thinks strophe 2's Óðhrærir is likely a person, a divine Dwarf, rather than the poetic mead Óðrerir known from *Hávamál* strophes 107 and 140.<sup>261</sup> Simrock mentions the mead of immortality,<sup>262</sup> and Óðrerir as the name for Urðr's well, which keeps Yggdrasill youthful.<sup>263</sup> Yet there is no evidence that Óðrerir is the name for Urðr's well. Bergmann denies that strophe 2's Urðr refers to Iðunn.<sup>264</sup> However, it is not impossible to view Iðunn as intimately linked at least functionally or otherwise with Urðr. The manuscripts' Urdar in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 2 is in any case inspired only quite secondarily by *Völuspá* strophe 19's Norn Urður, just as strophe 2's runes, rúnum, are not inspired directly by *Völuspá* strophe 20's skáro á skíði, "they carved the wood (rune/s)," but by *Hávamál* strophe 111's rúnar.

As we suggested in the commentary to strophe 1, here in strophe 2 the mead of immortality, Óðrerir, appears as a personified entity named Óðhrærir. One reason why Óðrerir would be ordered to stand guard over Urðr might conceivably be that the latter Norn represents the past, when better times prevailed, in contrast to the present (controlled by the Norn Verðandi, Present, literally, "Becoming") threatening situation, and to the future (overseen by the Norn Skuld, Future, literally, "Debt"), the latter being, as Bergmann reminds us, a Goddess of death.<sup>265</sup>

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<sup>261</sup> Lassen, p. 96.

<sup>262</sup> Simrock, p. 372.

<sup>263</sup> Simrock, p. 373.

<sup>264</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 99.

<sup>265</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 263.



However, there is a simpler explanation, and one that has textual support in the *Poetic Edda*, as we shall document presently.

Bugge makes a good case for *Óðrerir* meaning “preservative against growing old or decrepit,”<sup>266</sup> which would then make the mead functionally equivalent to Iðunn’s golden apples. But as for the *personhood* of Óðhrærir, we can confirm this on the basis of *Hávamál*’s strophes that relate the story of Óðinn and the mead. In strophe 160 Óðinn mentions the Dwarf Þjóðrerir in his fifteenth magical rune song obtained at the conclusion of his nine nights of hanging upon Yggdrasill. As it stands, the name Þjóðrerir would be composed of the components Þjóð-reyrir and would mean “great rearer/inspirer,” and even in this form the name is obviously connected to the word Óðreyrir, which itself breaks down into óð-reyrir, “mind/spirit-rearer/inspirer.” Alternatively, the prefix Þj- might mean “server,” so that Þjóðreyrir could mean “server of Óðreyrir.” However as Bergmann remarks with regard to strophe 160, alliteration with fimmtánda requires that in Þjóðrerir we emend Þ to F,<sup>267</sup> thus Fjóðrerir, whose fj/fi- in all likelihood denotes possession, that is, the mead Óðrerir belongs to this Dwarf in some way. For the shift from f to Þ, cf. fjós to modern Þjós, “whale carcass.” Although we would interpret the fj/fi of Fjóðrerir as denoting possession, it is worth referring to “Anglo Saxon *iv*, Old High German *iw*, ‘eternal’; Sanskrit *ibha*, Greek *ifi*-, ‘strong,’” which Bergmann mentions in his notes on the Old Norse term *Iviðia*; he also lists French *if*, “yew.”<sup>268</sup> Only the Greek *ifi*-

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<sup>266</sup> Bugge 1889, p. 563.

<sup>267</sup> See Bergmann 1877, p. 91.

<sup>268</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 97.

would have any relevance in the case of Fjóðrerir, which interestingly would take us back to the meaning of Old Norse Þjóð-reyrir, “great rearer/inspirer.”

There is an orthographic feature that has not been commented upon earlier, namely, why is it that in strophe 2 of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* MS A, Óðhrærir written with ð rather than d, as is the case with the Urdar (for Urðar) that follows? Secondly, in Óðhrærir, why is the ð followed by h? There is no other incidence of the letter sequence ðh in the rest of the poem. Could ðh here represent the remaining traces of the displaced Þ of Þjóðrerir? The name can also be rendered ÓÞhrærir, since in the period under discussion the ð and Þ were to a large extent still interchangeable; but again the Þ would be followed by h in this instance. Regardless of that particular orthographic question we can safely conclude that Lassen is correct to identify Óðhrærir as a Dwarf, but *pace* Lassen he is not a deceptive entity. Furthermore, we can confirm, as we show in our commentary on strophe 3, that *Hávamál*'s Dwarf Þjóðrerir/Fjóðrerir is indeed the source of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*' Óðhrærir. This means that Þjóðrerir was read by the author of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* as consisting of the components Þ/Fj-óð-rerir, “of mind/spirit rearer/stirrer/inspirer,” rather than Þjóð-rerir, “great rearer/stirrer/inspirer.”

*Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 2 lines 5-8 are inspired extensively by *Hávamál* and by *Skáldskaparmál*'s related story of the mead Óðrerir. We read there: Flytr Suttungr mjóðinn heim ok hirðir, þar sem heita Hnitbjörg, setr þar til gæzlu dóttur sína, Gunnlōðu: Suttungr fled home and hid the mead there in the place called Hnitbjörg, and set there his daughter Gunnlōð to guard (the mead).” *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 2's verbs *gejma* and *veria* were crafted as modulations of

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*Skáldskaparmál*'s hirðir, "hid," and gæzlu, "guard." Under the influence of *Skáldskaparmál*'s two Dwarves who created the mead Óðrerir, Fjalar and Gallar, and under the influence of *Hávamál*'s Dwarf Þjóðrerir/Fjóðrerir, Óðrerir was transformed in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 2 into the Dwarf Óðhrærir. The first loss of the mead Óðrerir was when Suttungr obtained it from the two Dwarves. The he appointed his daughter Gunnlǫð to guard the mead against a second loss, but she is not able to keep the mead. As the next *Skáldskaparmál* story relates, Gunnlǫð is not able to keep Óðinn from stealing the mead. *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe two combines elements of the episodes involving first the two Dwarves and then Suttungr and Gunnlǫð, so that the Dwarf Óðhrærir hides and guards something or someone, Urdar in the manuscript tradition, which still needs explanation.

The first point we can observe is that whatever or whomever the Dwarf Óðhrærir hides and guards will be equivalent to the mead. One might suspect therefore that already with MS A a reference in some form to the mead has been corrupted to Urdar, so that in the pre-existing story that underlies *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* never mentioned Urðr at all. Urðr would have been introduced into the manuscript tradition by a scribe under the influence of *Vǫluspá*'s Urðr and her well. This of course complicates an exegete's task, for she/he must then reconstruct the ideas of the earlier poet and the later scribe/s. We ourselves proposed replacing Urdar with the genitive ǫldr (or ǫldr; the ð here is inflexive), from ǫldr/ǫldr, "ale," which according to *Alvíssmál* strophe 34 is a synonym of "mead." The term occurs twice (ǫldrom; ǫldr) in *Hávamál* strophe 13-14's account of Óðinn and Gunnlǫð, about which we will have more to say in the commentary to strophe 3. In strophe 2 ǫldr

would not only keep the alliteration with Óðhrærir, but would complement the components -yld- and s- in skylde as well:

Oðhrærer skylde ǫldrs gejma

There is a second possibility for emending strophe 2's Urdar, and one that is more probable, since it has a known parallel in the *Poetic Edda*, even though it is ultimately mythemically equivalent to the mead. We refer to the genitive form jarðar, "of the earth," which is alliterated with the word Óðrerir in the Codex Regius version of *Hávamál* strophe 107 (Codex Regius is the only witness we have for *Hávamál*). We give Bergmann's transcription which identifies the alliterations in italics:

Vil-keypts litar      hefi'k vel notið,  
    *fás er fróðum vant,*  
þvíat Óðreyrir er      nú upp kominn  
    á alda vés *jarðar*.

The statement þvíat Óðreyrir er nú upp kominn offers no difficulties, and can be rendered as "for Óðreyrir has now come up," that is, "ascended." The final statement, á alda vés jarðar, has generated an immense amount of discussion. The confusion has been caused by the belief that vés is the genitive form of the Old Norse neuter noun vé, "house," "shrine." This supposed genitive form does not agree with

the preposition á, which must be followed by an accusative. The solution was given long ago by Bergmann, who identified vés here as an otherwise unattested Old Norse form of the cognate Gothic *veihs*, “house,” “shrine.”<sup>269</sup> In *Hávamál* 107 vés occurs as a feminine noun in the accusative case, whose form coincides with the nominative form, vés. The noun vés has the same meaning as *vist*, feminine, pl. *vistir*, which occurs in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 7, where we read of the former better dwellings, *vistum*, of Iðunn. We have not been able to find the word *vist* in any of the mythological poems of the *Poetic Edda*, and our suspicion is that it was inspired by *Hávamál* 107 vés, but changed to a form that was in more common use in Old Norse, namely, *vist*. In light of what we discuss in the next paragraph, the implication of this might be that *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* is portraying Iðunn as a Mother Earth Goddess, or as a specialization thereof.

The problem now remaining in the rest of the phrase is *alda*. The first possible emendation of á *alda vés jarðar* that occurs to us, namely á *aðal-vés jarðar*, “to the noble shine of Earth.” In this scenario the *d* of *alda* stood for *ð*, which is entirely unproblematic. Then the *d* and *l* would have been transposed, a not uncommon scribal error, changing *adal*, “noble,” to *alda*, a much more common construction in Old Norse, which would help explain, along with the even more rare vés, the transposition under consideration.

Interestingly, in *Skáldskaparmál* there is a stophe from Einarr that refers to a billow or swelling wave of Óðrerir, Óðreris *alda*. *Hávamál* 107’s *alda* has been understood as a noun, but although two nouns may occur together, it is much more

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<sup>269</sup> Bergmann 1877, p. 68.

natural to expect an adjective in this position, especially since *vés* as a feminine accusative would have a definite adjective with the accusative ending *-a*. The only emendation to the text we need is a restoration, and not a correction at all, namely, *aldna*, “ancient,” “old”; an *n* has dropped out of *aldna* due to later ignorance of the rare word *vés*. The *-n-* was deleted to make the adjective look like the noun *alda*, which in poetry can mean “people,”<sup>270</sup> producing an apparent double genitive *vés jarðar*, thus, “to the people of the dwelling of the earth.” The original reading, “to the ancient shrine of Earth” meant, to the ancient shrine of *Gunnlǫð*, but it is an ancient shrine because *Gunnlǫð* is the ancient Earth Goddess who has had her shrine from primordial times. *Gunnlǫð*, like *Gerðr*, is a Giantess who is nevertheless thought of as Mother Earth.

The adjective *aldna* would be quite relevant and fitting in the *Hávamál* mead narrative in question. In *Hávamál* 104 we find *aldna jǫtun*, i.e., *Suttungr* the “ancient Giant.” Cf. *Völuspá* 45, *ymlr it aldna tré, en jǫtunn losnar*, “the ancient tree (*Yggdrasill*) groans and the Giant/s break/s free,” and *Völuspá* 28 where Óðinn is called the ancient one, *aldni*, when he comes to the *Völva* and she mentions *Mímisbrunni*, the well of *Mimir*, and *Mimir* who drinks mead, *drekkr mjǫð Mímir*. Cf. the synonymous forms *mjaðar*, ancient mead, in *Skírnismál* strophe 37.

There is another piece of evidence in favour of *alda* meaning “old,” “ancient,” one that would require no emendation at all. Since in *Hávamál* strophe 107 *vés*

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<sup>270</sup> Curiously, “ages,” *saecula*, is already used in the sense of “the people” in Statius’ *Thebaid* 11:592: “and all along the banks the ages await him.” See Mozley vol. 2, pp. 432-433.

appears under the influence of a Gothic form, *veihs*, then would it not be helpful to see if *alda* might be explained in a similar manner? Although in Gothic *veihs* was a neuter noun, the poet of *Hávamál* has treated it as a feminine noun on account of its similarity to the cognate Old Norse feminine noun *vist*. The poet then adjusted the case of the Gothic neuter adjective to the feminine accusative form of the adjective *alþeis*, “old,” namely, *alþja*, which has been rendered into Old Norse in a normalized and more natural form in strophe 107 as *alda*, with the meaning of Old Norse *aldna*. Since in this scenario no emendations at all are needed to the Old Norse text in question, we understand *á alda vés jarðar* as “to the ancient shrine of (the Goddess) Jörð.”

The *Hávamál* mead narrative is a *hieros gamos* story, Father Sky (Óðinn) and Mother Earth (Gunnlǫð) are married, and the mead is brought *up* from Mother Earth’s well *to* the marriage throne, which is also a royal throne, in her shrine.<sup>271</sup> What is more, this *hieros gamos* story in *Hávamál* begins with Óðinn hanging for nine nights on Yggdrasil, dying thereupon and then rising from death. His shamanic rebirth is portrayed as his sacred union with Gunnlǫð, who gives him the sacred mead. But inseparable from his reception of the sacred mead are his gaining of the runes and the eighteen rune songs of power from his maternal uncle, who might be Mímir (whom Kvilhaug suggests may be the same as Suttungr)<sup>272</sup> or perhaps even Loddáfñir.<sup>273</sup> Given the ever-changing and dynamic nature of living

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<sup>271</sup> See Jakobsdóttir, pp. 39-41.

<sup>272</sup> Kvilhaug, p. 51.

<sup>273</sup> Bergmann 1877 identifies the uncle with Loddáfñir.

orality, it might be unwise to narrow down and restrict our options for identifying the uncle with any one figure exclusively. In any case, *Hávamál's Rúnatal* (*Rúnatáls-þáttur-Óðins*) and *Ljóðatal* are to be viewed as relating the same story in varied terms and mythic imageries, and neither Óðinn's death and rebirth nor his reception of the mead and the runes are separable from Óðinn's and Gunnlōð's marriage.

We do not view the *Rúnatal* and *Ljóðatal* as two separate compositions, but merely as two sections of a single original text, both of which formed an integral part of the story of Óðinn's and Gunnlōð's sacred marriage. The only author we have found who shares our integrated view of these *Hávamál* traditions is Kvilhaug, who writes: "Apparently, most scholars consider the trials of Óðinn on the world tree as something completely separate from his sacred marriage to Gunnlōð," and adds in a footnote, "I have not been able to find anyone else who makes this connection."<sup>274</sup> Apart from Kvilhaug, neither have we found anywhere in the literature where this important connection is made.

We would propose that it is the guardian of the mead who brings up the mead to the shrine, and that this guardian is none other than the mead Dwarf Oðhrærer of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 2 who is the Fj-óð-rerir of *Hávamál* strophe 160. Thus in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 2 the mead Dwarf Oðhrærer conceals and guards the mead well of Mother Earth, Jǫrð (genitive Jarðar), who here is Gunnlōð. This is in line with *Skáldskaparmál's* periphrase of Jǫrð as Gunnlōð.

Jakobsdóttir refers to *Hávamál* strophe 137, *hvars þú ǫl drekkir, kjós þér jarðar megin*, "When drinking ale invoke the strength of Earth," and then correlates

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<sup>274</sup> Kvilhaug p. 43.



with this scene the Old Norse statement aukinn iarðar megni, which she renders as “empowered with the strength of earth.”<sup>275</sup> We are not aware of this phrase being applied to Óðinn, but it does occur with reference to Heimdallr (at least according to the standard interpretation) in the *Lesser Völuspá* strophes 10 and 15.

We can even identify the *Poetic Edda* passage that was the main source of the reading Urdar in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 2, and it is none other than *Hávamál* strophe 111’s Urðarbrunni, “well of Urður,” which ironically is a corruption. Strophe 111 did not originally speak of Urður’s well. First, the alliteration involved here requires that the word begin with the letter b, and the context shows that the word would be brúðar, “bride,” “wife,” “virgin.”<sup>276</sup> Gunnlōð is called brúðar in the kenning brúðar vind, “troll wife’s wind,” a kenning played upon in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 14. Here we supply Bergmann’s emended text with his italics identifying the alliterated words:

Mál ær’r at þylja      þular stóli á  
   *brúðar brunni* at,  
sat ek ok þagða’k,      sá ek ok hugða’k,  
   hlydda’k á *manna mál*;  
of rúnar heyrða’k dæma      né um ráðum þogðu;  
   heyrða’k *segia svá*.<sup>277</sup>

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<sup>275</sup> Jakobsdóttir, p. 39.

<sup>276</sup> See Bergmann 1877, p. 30.

<sup>277</sup> Bergmann 1877, p. 30.

Strophe 111 says there is a throne, stóli, at the well of the bride, who here is of course Gunnlǫð. A comparison with strophe 105 proves that 111's well is that of the bride Gunnlǫð, for there we read that Gunnlǫð gave the mead to Óðinn as he sat on her golden throne, gullnum stóli:

Gunnloth gave | on a golden stool  
A drink of the marvelous mead;  
A harsh reward | did I let her have  
For her heroic heart,  
And her spirit troubled sore (Bellows).

Gunnlǫð mér um gaf gullnum stóli á  
drykk ins dýra mjaðar;  
ill iðgjǫld lét ek hana eftir hafa  
síns ins heila hugar,  
síns ins svára sefa.

The well of mead therefore belongs to Gunnlǫð, not to Urður. The text's brúðar brunni was corrupted to Urðarbrunni under the influence of *Vǫluspá* 19. However, the author of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* recognized from the larger context of *Hávamál* that Urður's well in strophe 111 really meant Gunnlǫð's well. This becomes clear when one correlates strophes 105 and 111. Perhaps the author of *Hrafnagaldur*

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Óðins understood *Hávamál* strophe 111's Urðar as some sort of kenning for Gunnlōð, and in any case this is how he used Urdar in strophe 2, as an allusion to Gunnlōð. Thus in the end, there is no need to emend the reading of Urdar in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 2.

*Hávamál* strophe 111 calls the seat at Gunnlōð's well a seat of the wise, because the mead imparts wisdom, just as Mímir's well does. Neither should we forget that Kvasir and Mímir seem to form a pair embodying the consummate wisdom of the Gods, both of whom are slain and become associated with the sacred mead.

The *hieros gamos* depicted in *Hávamál* strophe 111 has another interesting aspect: *sá ek ok þagðak / sá ek ok hugðak*: "I watched and was silent, I watched and thought." This reminds us of the Jewish rule of secrecy governing the mystical teaching of the union of God and the Shekhinah: "This may be revealed only to the discreet. . . . Let the enlightened keep silent."<sup>278</sup>

In Snorri's *Skáldskaparmál*, the story of Iðunn as the Immortality Goddess comes first, and then the story of the mead of poetry follows, and immediately so. Immortality and poetry are thus subtly presented as two modes of the same thing, and this is expressed in Norse mythology by the wedding of Iðunn and Bragi, the divinities of immortality and poetry respectively. Bergmann sees Gunnlōð as the implied mother of Bragi,<sup>279</sup> and that would make perfect sense because his mother would then have been the guardian of the poetic mead. As Gunnlōð lost the mead, so

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<sup>278</sup> Quoted in Weinfeld, p. 526.

<sup>279</sup> Bergmann 1877, p 157.

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Iðunn loses the apples; this is the implication hovering in the background of the poem *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*. Both Gunnlǫð and Iðunn are Mother Earth Goddesses, and the grief (*grætta*) that Óðinn brought to Gunnlǫð in *Hávamál* strophe 110 has coloured *Hrafnagaldur Óðins'* portrait of the sorrowing Iðunn.

The royal enthronement as *hieros gamos* in *Hávamál* has reverberations that reach all the way back to quite archaic ancient near eastern precedents. In Psalm 110 we have a song that likens the king's enthronement to his being born as a son named Dew (Hebrew, Tal) from the divine womb of the Goddess Dawn (Shahar), the wife of the male God YHVH.<sup>280</sup> The psalm concludes in verse 7 with the note that the king "will drink from the brook by the way; therefore he will lift up his head." Drinking from a brook requires the lowering of one's body and head, a sort of descent, which complements the lifting up or ascent that then follows. The Hebrew king's brook is the equivalent of the Norse Gunnlǫð's well. Verse 3 states that the king's birth as a military leader will take place "upon the holy mountains," no doubt because the interior of the mountains is thought of as a womb, the womb of the Goddess Dawn specifically; the mountains may likely also at the same time be thought of as Shahar's breasts, since in Semitic thought mountains were pictured as breasts. We can correlate this with the *Hávamál Rune Song's* depiction of Óðinn dying and being reborn, becoming "fruitful," after falling from Yggdrasill and gaining the runes. What is more, the (heavily textually corrupted) parallel to this in *Sigrdrífumál* has Óðinn gaining the runes *upon a mountain* as he bears a sword. We read of these runes as follows (Bellows version):

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<sup>280</sup> See von Nordheim for this interpretation.

13. Them Hropt arranged, | and them he wrote,  
And them in thought he made,  
Out of the draught | that down had dropped  
From the head of Heithdraupnir (ór hausi Heiðdraupnis),  
And the horn of Hoddrofnir (ok ór horni Hoddrofnis).

14. On the mountain he stood (Á bjargi stóð)|  
with Brimir's sword (með Brimis eggjar),<sup>281</sup>  
On his head the helm he bore;  
Then first the head | of Mim spoke forth (þá mælti Mímis höfuð),  
And words of truth it told.

15. He bade write on the shield | before the shining goddess (skínandi/  
skínanda goði),<sup>282</sup>  
On Arvak's ear, | and on Alsvith's hoof,<sup>283</sup>  
On the wheel of the car | of Hrungrnir's killer,

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<sup>281</sup> In light of *Grímnismál* strophe 40 we wonder if the sword is named after the Giant it slew, namely, Brimir, which is a name for Ymir.

<sup>282</sup> The shield and the shining Goddess are mentioned together in *Grímnismál* strophe 38.

<sup>283</sup> The Giant's name Ásviðr in *Hávamál* strophe 143, based on the requirement of alliteration must be emended to Dásviðr. The initial d probably dropped out under the influence of the name of the solar steed Alsviðr of *Grímnismál* strophe 37.

On Sleipnir's teeth, | and the straps of the sledge.

16. On the paws of the bear,<sup>284</sup> | and on Bragi's tongue,<sup>285</sup>

On the wolf's claws bared,<sup>286</sup> | and the eagle's beak,

On bloody<sup>287</sup> wings,<sup>288</sup> | and bridge's end,<sup>289</sup>

On freeing hands | and helping foot-prints.

17. On glass and on gold, | and on goodly charms,

In wine and in beer, | and on well-loved seats,

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<sup>284</sup> Bergmann 1877, pp. 243-244 emends á biarnar hrami to á Biarnar hamri, “on the Bear's Hammer,” Bear being a name for Thor.

<sup>285</sup> Bergmann 1877, p. 244 emends á Braga tungu to á Brimis tunga, on Brimir's blade, which makes better sense contextually.

<sup>286</sup> A reference to Fenrir according to Bergmann 1877, pp. 244-245. However, cf. the wolf Sköll who follows the glittering God to the Forest of Protection, Varna, in *Grímnismál* strophe 39. This could tie in with Bergmann's emendation mentioned in the previous footnote. Interpreters are divided on whether to understand the forest as one of Iron or of Protection. Of course, it could be both. In any case, a citation from *Thebaid* 4:220-221 comes to mind, hinc atque inde morae iaculis, et ferrea curru / silva tremit: “On either / side there is a shelter from darts, and an iron forest / trembles on his chariot.” Mozley vol. 1, pp. 522-523.

<sup>287</sup> Bergmann 1877, p. 245 emends á bloðgum vengium to á Bloðgóma vængium, “on Bloody Claws.”

<sup>288</sup> This refers to Huginn and Muninn; see Bergmann 1877, p. 257.

<sup>289</sup> This refers to the bridge Bifröst; see Bergmann 1877, pp. 257-258.

On Gungnir's point, | and on Grani's breast,

On the nails of Norns,<sup>290</sup> | and the night-owl's beak.<sup>291</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

18. Shaved off were the runes | that of old were written,

And mixed with the holy mead (helga mjǫð),

And sent on ways so wide;

So the gods had them, | so the elves got them,

And some for the Wanæs so wise,

And some for mortal men.

Strophe 15's *skínandi* (or *skínanda*) *goði*, "shining Goddess" might be the Sun, but it would be so only if correlated with the description of Gunnlǫð as *sólhvíta*, "sun-white," in *Hávamál* strophe 97. Gunnlǫð is a solar Goddess. Hollander renders *skínandi/skínanda goði* as "the shining God,"<sup>292</sup> but the Sun was a feminine Goddess for the Vikings. In *Sólarljóð* strophes 39ff. speak of the sun as a "she," and then in

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<sup>290</sup> Bergmann 1877, p. 246 emends *á nornar nagli* to *á Varnar nagli*, "on Varnar's nail," Varnr being a protective nymph, *dís*, whose symbol was the hangnail.

Agreements were concluded by saying, *slá Varnar nagli*, to pound Varnr's spike. The general idea is that of a spike (pillars were also used) that symbolized protection or stability of agreements.

<sup>291</sup> Bergmann 1877, pp. 246-247 emends *á nefi uglo* to *á vagla nefi*, "on house beam tops."

<sup>292</sup> Hollander 2001, p. 236.

strophe 41 she is called *gøfgan guð*. The noun *guð* can be either masculine or neuter in Old Norse, but here, because it refers to the feminine sun, *guð* must be rendered “divinity” in a general sense without reference to specific gender. Thus Hollander’s rendering of *gøfgan guð* as “God Almighty”<sup>293</sup> is erroneous. Clearly, *gøfgan guð* means “glorious divinity”:

Sól ek sá,	Sun saw I,
svá þótti mér,	and it was as if
sem ek sæja gøfgan guð;	I saw a glorious divinity;
henni ek laut	to her I bowed
hinnta sinni	for the last time
aldaheimi í.	in the world of mortals. <sup>294</sup>

The *Sigrdrífumál* poem is clearly a variation on the story embedded in *Hávamál* of Óðinn and Gunnlōð, with these two now being represented as the hero Sigurðr and the Valkyrie Brynhildr. Since *Sigrdrífumál* relates the story of Óðinn gaining the runes, the poem’s two main characters can be understood as intentional specializations or reflections of Óðinn and Gunnlōð. However, *Sigrdrífumál* features an interesting twist to the story. Whereas the male Óðinn tells the story of the gaining of the runes and offers a list of 20 wisdom counsels (see strophes 112-137) and 18 rune songs for (his uncle?) Loddfáfnir, here it is the female Brynhildr who

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<sup>293</sup> Hollander 1936, p. 109.

<sup>294</sup> Our translation from the Old Norse of Bugge.



tells the tale of Hroprtr's winning of the runes, and it is she who offers a series of counsels (eleven) to the male Sigurðr. In *Hávamál* Óðinn wins the runes as part of a vision quest that takes place on the world tree, where he dies by hanging and is then reborn. During the actual vision quest, he descends to the underworld and conquers (outwits) the Giant Suttungr and in a *hieros gamos* marries his daughter Gunnlōð, who grants him the sacred mead over which she is guardian. In *Sigrdrífumál* the vision quest is described as involving Óðinn atop a mountain clad in battle armour, bearing the sword of Brímir, which is a name for Ymir, so that the poem depicts the winning of the runes as equivalent to slaying the primordial chaos Giant. Because the text mentions Heiðr's skull (*hausi*) and Mímir's talking decapitated head, it seems implied that both Heiðr and Mímir are somehow cognate to Ymir, and that perhaps Óðinn has, in vision, decapitated both of these entities and thus taken the runes and mead from them. Lastly, the union between Sigurðr and the Valkyrie Brynhildr repeats the pattern of Óðinn's and Gunnlōð's *hieros gamos*.

*Hávamál* strophe 97 calls Gunnlōð the daughter of Billingr. But in fact, she was the daughter of Suttung, son of Gilligr, not Billingr. As strophe 97 presently stands, Billingr alliterates with the word beðjum, "bed," which soon follows. Bergmann emends Billings to Gillings and adds the word burar before mey, so that burar now alliterates with beðjum.<sup>295</sup> Bergmann justifies this insertion quite convincingly as follows: "The three-syllable Gillings mey must be made more complete with a word that has fallen out; this fallen-away word can only be burar

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<sup>295</sup> Bergmann 1877, p. 27.

(of the son of). The daughter of the son of Gillingr is Gunnlǫð.”<sup>296</sup> Bergmann shows the strophe’s restored alliteration as follows:

Gillings *burar* mey    ek fann *beðium* á

*sólhvita sofa*:

iarls yndi þótti mer    ekki vera

nema vid þat *lik* at *lifa*.<sup>297</sup>

The question remains whether a variant form of Gillingr circulated orally as Billingr, which may have led to the deletion of *burar* in strophe 97. We are reminded of the ancient variant form Bilgamesh for Gilgamesh (let us not forget Gilgamesh was of giant proportions, a demigod like the Giants of Genesis 6:1-4). The form Bilgamesh had a history of influence on its own, leading to the *Arabian Nights*’ royal name Buluqiya, which Dalley posits “may be a hypocoristic form of Sumerian or Hurrian Bilgamesh.”<sup>298</sup> This calls to mind a structural correspondence between the Norse tradition’s sacred mead and Gilgamesh’s plant of youth or immortality (*Epic of Gilgamesh* Tablet 11).

Psalm 110:7’s royal marriage brook was likely thought of as flowing from the tree of life upon the mountain of the Garden of Eden, which accords well with *Vǫluspá* 19-20’s image of the dews (cf. Psalm 110’s king named Dew) that flow from

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<sup>296</sup> Bergmann 1877, p. 65.

<sup>297</sup> Bergmann 1877, p. 27.

<sup>298</sup> Dalley, p. 48.

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Yggdrasil. In Genesis 3:24 there are cherubim, angelic entities in ox-like form, who are set as guardians at the tree of life. There is a sort of personified flaming sword that guards the tree as well (it is not clear in the Hebrew if or how a plurality of cherubim would hold one sword), and the sword turns or revolves in all directions, no doubt to deny access from any direction. It is our suspicion that Gunnlóð's well of mead has for its guardian the mead Dwarf Fjóðrerir of *Hávamál* 160. There he sings magic incantations that bring strength, afl, to the Gods, frama to the Elves, and hyggju, mind to Óðinn. The word frama can mean "courage," "luck" or "fame." A comparison with *Hárbarðsljóð* 26 suggests in *Hávamál* 160 frama means courage, for "heart," hjarta, with which it is contrasted, means in this particular instance "courage"; it can be no coincidence that Fjalar is mentioned here, even if comically:

Þórr á afl oerit, en ekki hjarta;  
af hræzlu ok hugbleyði þér var í hanzka troðit  
ok þóttiska þú þá Þórr vera;  
hvárki þú þá þorðir fyr hræzlu þinni  
hnjósa né físa, svá at Fjalarr heyrði.

Þórr has might enough, | but never a heart;  
For cowardly fear | in a glove wast thou fain to crawl,  
And there forgot thou wast Thor;  
Afraid there thou wast, | thy fear was such,  
To fart or sneeze | lest Fjalar should hear."

In lines 1-2 *afl*, *hjarta*, and the *hug-* of *hugbleyði* (mind-cowardly) correspond to *Hávamál* 160's *afl*, *frama* and *hyggju*. With regard to *afl*, this word in *Rígsþula* 45 (43) is preceded and followed by strophes about Kon's knowledge of the runes. *Völuspá* 7's *afla lögðu* means "founded (literally laid) forges." Old Norse *afl* as a masculine noun means the hearth of a forge; as a neuter noun it signifies strength. However, *Völuspá* 7's *afla lögðu* may contain a subtle allusion to *Völuspá* 8's playing with tablets, *tefl-du* (cf. *afl* with *tafl*, "table"), which we see as golden rune tablets of fate. In *Rígsþula* 44 Kon contended/played in runes, *rúnar deilði*, which refers to a contest or game of rune knowledge. *Völuspá* 20 says of the Norns, "there laws they laid," *Þær lög lögðu*. In *Rígsþula* 12 we read "they laid/built fences," *lögðu garða* (obviously *Völuspá* strophe 7 patterns its *afla lögðu* on *Rígsþula* 12 or vice versa, depending on which poem is earlier). In *Völuspá* 7 and 20 the verb *lögðu* in that form occurs in *Hávamál* 108, *lögðumk*, the verb being *leggja* (*legg*; *lagða*; *lagiðr*; *lagðr*; *laginn*).

The mead Dwarf *Fjóðrerir* of *Hávamál* 160 sings *afl*, strength, to the Gods as he stands in front of *Dellingr*'s door or gate, which is the gate of the day, specifically early dawn, which is precisely when the dews fall down from *Yggdrasill* to form or replenish *Gunnlóð*'s mead well. Moreover, strength is a trope that forms part of the ancient near eastern enthronement ritual described in Psalm 110, for there the king is given a rod of *strength*. *Fjóðrerir* is likely the guardian of the dawn gate insofar as it functions as an allusion to the well of mead formed by the dawn's dews. Although *frama* in *Hávamál* 160 primarily means courage, it will still bring to the reader's or

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listener's mind fame, and this in turn calls to mind the trope of Mímir's *famed* well. Lastly, Fjóðrerir sings mind to Óðinn, and this is consistent with the mead imparting wisdom.

To sum up, *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophes 5-6 can be most likely reconstructed as referring to the Dwarf Oðhrærer guarding the well of mead that belongs to Gunnlǫð as an Earth (Jǫrð) Goddess:

Oðhrærer skylde

Urdar gejma

However, *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* being an exceptionally learned poem, its built-in allusions are simultaneously thickly and multi-layered. Not only does strophe 2's Oðhrærer who guards Urdar refer to the mead Dwarf Fjóðrerir of *Hávamál* 160 who guards Gunnlǫð and her mead, but strophe 2's Oðhrærer who guards Urdar artfully anticipates strophe 16's greppur, "the poet," that is, Bragi, who guards, vardveitti, Iðunn, referred to by the kenning Grimnis grund, that is, the Giant Grímnir's ground, which may in effect really mean Þjazi's woman. Bragi is the God of poetry, usually called óð, literally, "inspiration," "mind," "spirit," which also happens to form the first component of the name of the sacred mead, Óðrerir. This makes an allusion at least on one level not only possible but even probable to the óð God Bragi in strophe 2's Oðhrærer. The mythic equivalence between strophe 2's Urður as a sort of kenning for Gunnlǫð and Iðunn is given to us in the similarity between

*Skáldskaparmál's* stories of Gunnlōð as the guardian of the sacred mead and Iðunn as the guardian of the apples of youth.

Simrock recognized that strophe 2's Urdar could easily refer to Iðunn, given the Old Norse poetic convention of calling one divinity by the name of another. However, the subject of strophe 2's Oðhrærer guarding Urdar calls for closer scrutiny. This suggests on one level that the author of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* considered the mead of Mímir's well to be equivalent, more or less with the contents of Urður's well. In thinking this way, the poet knew something that modern scholars only began recovering in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, namely Ström's 1954 deduction that, in the words of Kvilhaug, "the well of Mimir, the well of Urdr . . ., and the well of Hel (Gunnlöd's realm)—are really one and the same well, or aspects of each other."<sup>299</sup> Thus the usually perplexing Oðhrærer skylde / Urdar gejma of strophe 2 actually speaks in favour of the poem's preservation of knowledge already lost in Snorri's overly systematic presentation of Norse topography, according to which heaven and hell never meet. What is more, a presupposed equivalency in strophe 2 between Urður and Iðunn also indicates that the poet also realized another deduction but recently recovered by modern exegetes, namely, that all the Goddesses are but variations on the archetypal Great Goddess, so that Urður, Iðunn and Gunnlōð (and other Goddess, Giantess and Völva instantiations) are largely functionally equivalent entities.

In *Hyndluljóð* strophe 46 the sacred mead is called "memory-ale," minnis aul. In *Fjolsvinnsámál* strophe 20 Yggdrasil is called Mímameiðr, "Memory-Tree," since it

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<sup>299</sup> Kvilhaug, p. 110; see also p. 55.

is the source of the ale of memory. This can also be rendered Mímir's Tree, the name Mím or Mímir being usually understood as meaning "memory." *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 5's Mimis brunne, that is Mím's or Mímir's well, immediately introduces the figure of Iðunn in strophe 6. In strophe 19, mead is served out of minnis hornum, "memorial horns," according to MS A. However, MS B contains the interesting variant Mimis, Mím's or Mímir's horns. As Kvilhaug has stressed, the mead of Valhalla served by the Valkyries is ultimately the same as the sacred mead of Mímir. Thus even the majority reading minnis hornum in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* brings to mind the figure of Mímir and his drinking of the sacred mead from a horn. There is always a possibility that MS B's Mimis may be correct, and even as an error it would make eminent sense in a Norse mythic context. In any case, the poet of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* realized that strophe 5's Mimis brunne is mythically equivalent to strophe 6's Yggdrasill, which is called Mímameiðr, Mímir's tree, in *Fjolsvinnsmál* strophe 20, as we just documented.

In *Völuspá* strophes 21-22 we encounter Heiðr and Gullveig, the latter probably meaning Gold Drink or Gold Brew, which calls to mind *Grímnismál* strophe 25's mead goat, Heiðrún. *Grímnismál* strophe 25 states that the mead goat Heiðrún, literally, Bright Rune (cf. *Völuspá* strophe 20's allusion to the Norns' runes), stands in the halls, stendr hǫllu, of Óðinn, with which we may compare *Völuspá* strophe 22's hǫll Hárs, "Hárr's hall." In *Hávamál*'s narrative of the mead in strophes 109, 111 and 164 we hear of Háva hǫllu, Hávi being none other than the weak form of the adjective Hár; it does not seem coincidence to us that the name Hárr is used in

skaldic verse in kennings for “ale.”<sup>300</sup> Gunnlōð has a golden throne, gullnum stóli (cf. *Gull-veig*), near her mead well in *Hávamál* strophe 106, and she is described as sólhvíta, “sun-white,” in strophe 97, the brightness of which ties into the name Heiðr. *Grímnismál* strophe 25 speaks of skíra mjaðar, “clear/bright mead,” which is called by the word veig, “drink” (cf. *Gull-veig*).

In *Hyndluljóð* the Vǫlva Hyndla compares Freyja to the goat Heiðrún, which would be consistent with the theory that Freyja is none other than Gullveig-Heiðr. The same *Hyndluljóð* strophe apparently refers to Óðr, the name we find in *Vǫluspá* strophe 25. Óðr was the husband of Freyja, and according to *Gylfaginning* she wept tears of *gold* while she travelled about in search of Óðr. The name Óðr is the same term that forms the first component of the name of the mead, Óðrerir. We find none of this coincidental. Dronke writes of Freyja and Óðr: “For the traditional grief of the goddess of love for her lost lover/husband see the funeral ode for Adonis attributed to Bion . . . : Aphrodite, her hair unbound, no belt, no sandals, torn by thorns, crying aloud, runs through deep valleys calling his name. There must have been an equivalent Norse tradition.”<sup>301</sup> To a certain extent, we have reverberations of this myth preserved in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*. Ultimately figures such as Gunnlōð, Freyja and Iðunn all represent examples of the Great Goddess in her various metamorphoses.

*Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 2 line 7 reads in MS A mattkat; in the often superior MS E this reads mattikat. Lassen understands this as the first person

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<sup>300</sup> See Dronke, p. 130.

<sup>301</sup> Dronke, p. 134.



*máttigat*, “I was not able,” and concludes that it is an ignorant blunder on the part of the poet who meant to use the third person form *máttit*:<sup>302</sup> “The suffixed negative *-a*, *-at* or *-t*, like the suffixed 1st pers. sg. pron. *-k*, was obsolete by the seventeenth century, and here must be a deliberate archaism by the poet, who has through his ignorance used the 1st pers. form instead of the 3rd pers.”<sup>303</sup> However, there are other alternatives. Bergmann understands the word adjectivally as *máttig at veria*, “powerful to protect.”<sup>304</sup> This is the simplest solution (*g* is frequently interchangeable with *k*, and *máttig* in the accusative becomes *máttkan*, which could facilitate the interchange even more). Now, when we turn to *Hávamál* strophe 160 we see that the Dwarf Þjóðrerir/Fjóðrerir is indeed the source of power, for he sings afl, “strength,” “power,” to the Æsir, that is, he imparts power to the very Gods by means of his singing.

However, Lassen’s conjecture attributing such gross ignorance to the poet is easily overturned. Lassen has brought forth sufficient evidence to show that the poet knew *Skáldskaparmál*, and our own independent research has confirmed this beyond reasonable doubt. The poet therefore would have known from *Skáldskaparmál* the correct grammatical usage in question; in 54 we have the third person form *mátti eigi*, “he was not able.” Similar constructions are used in *Gylfaginning* as well. MS A’s *mattkat* and E’s *mattikat* could conceivably be some sort of odd abbreviation for *mátti eigi/eiki*, but there is evidence available that indicates

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<sup>302</sup> Lassen, p. 96.

<sup>303</sup> Lassen, p. 96.

<sup>304</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 89.

the poet did not mean to say either *máttit* or *mátti eigi*, neither in a correct or an incorrect form. We shall presently see that evidence supports at least the basic sense of Bergmann's *máttig at veria*.

First we will show that strophe 2:7's *mattkat/mattikat* and 2:8's *mestum/mestum* were inspired chiefly by *Völuspá* strophe 8. The poet has understood the three Norns of *Völuspá* strophe 20 as essentially reflective of the three Giantesses of strophe 8, a not unnatural deduction. One of these three Norns, who appears in strophe 19 (as well as in *Hávamál* strophe 111, which is the main inspiration for *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 2's *Urdar*), of course surfaces in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 2 by name, that is, *Udrar*. *Völuspá* strophe 8 describes the three Giantesses who enter into the realm of the Gods as *ámáttkar mjök*. The word *ámáttkar*, "great in strength," is composed of *á-*, an intensifier, and *-máttkar*, "might," "strength." The term *ámáttkar* is rare enough on its own in the mythological poems of the *Poetic Edda*, and is always used to describe a Giant. Outside *Völuspá* strophe 8 it occurs in the Eddic mythological poems only in *Grímnismál* strophe 11 with reference to *Þjazi*, and in *Skírnismál* strophe 10.

The term *máttigr*, "powerful," "mighty," in the specific form *máttkan*, without the intensifying prefix *á-*, is also rarely used in the mythological poems of the *Poetic Edda*, namely, in *Völuspá* strophe 57 (*moldþinur máttkan*, "mighty earth-fir tree"; for this rendering, see our commentary on *Völuspá*), *Hávamál* strophe 94 (*máttki munr*, "mighty love"), in the *Lesser Völuspá*'s final strophe (*máttkari*, "a mightier one"), which parallels the penultimate strophe of *Völuspá* in the *Hauksbók* version. With exception of the *Hávamál* attestation, the other instances are either all from *Völuspá*

or related to *Völuspá*'s penultimate strophe in in the *Hauksbók* version. When we return to *Völuspá* strophe 8's *ámáttkar mjök*, we can now recognize the this as the source of not only *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 2's *mattkat/mattikat*, but of its *mest-um/mestum* as well, for *mest*, "most," "greatest," is simply the superlative form of the positive *mjök*, "much," the comparative form being *meirr*, "more." Interestingly, in the final strophe of the *Lesser Völuspá* we find the words *máttkari / þó þori* in the statement, *Þá kemr annarr / enn máttkari, þó þori ek eigi / þann at nefna*: "The comes another, mightier, though I dare not name him." The sequence *máttkari . . . þori* stands out when we bear in mind *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 2's *mattkat . . . þorra*.

Additionally, the adjective *mjök* is accentuated in *Hávamál*'s narrative of the runes in strophe 142: *Rúnar . . . / mjök stóra stafi / mjök stinna stafi / er fáði fimbulþulr*: "Runes . . . / very strong staves / very powerful staves / dyed by Fimbulþulr." Strophe 140 mentions *Óðrerir* by name, as well as *fimbulljóð*, "mighty magic lays." This combination of *rúnar*, *mjök* and *Óðrerir* has certainly contributed to *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 2's *rúnum*, *mest-um/mestum* and *Oðhrærer*, which have in turn been reinforced on a secondary level by the runes alluded to in *Völuspá* strophe 20.

The term *fimbul* is of relevance to our investigation because we find it used in connection with Óðinn's runes in both *Völuspá* strophe 57 and, as we have just seen, in the *Hávamál* mead-rune narrative. In *Völuspá* strophe 57 we read that in the new earth the Gods will discuss legal decisions, *dæma*, based on the precedents established by the ancient runes of Óðinn, under the name Fimbul-God, Fimbultýr.

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These official discussions will take place at the moldþinur máttkan, “mighty earth fir-tree.” Here we have yet another quite rare Eddic word in the mythological poems, mold, “earth,” which apart from *Grógaldur* strophe 2 (a poem which we shall see later in this commentary is actually related to Iðunn traditions preserved in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*) occurs only in two strophes in *Völuspá*, namely, 57, as we have just seen, but also in strophe 2, which is significant in the present discussion, because there the word *mold* is used in the context of the world tree, just as it is in strophe 57. We have already seen that strophe 2’s íviðjur is the source of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 1’s Iviþia, a term found elsewhere in the Eddic mythological poems only in *Hyndluljóð* strophe 32, in the context of comments about sacred mead. *Völuspá* strophe 2 speaks of *mjǫtvið mæran fyrir mold neðan*, which can be understood in two ways, either temporally, “the famed tree of destiny before the earth descends,” or spatially, “the famed tree of destiny beneath the ground” (for a justification of the temporal understanding, see our *Völuspá* commentary). In *Völuspá* strophe 54 the earth, called by the term *fold* (a rhyme with strophe 2’s and strophe 57’s *mold*), does actually descend, into the sea, after which she arises renewed in strophe 56, called by the name Jǫrð. In *Hávamál* strophe 137 (one strophe before the beginning of the famous *Rune Song*) we read of runes, *rúnar*, and earth, *fold*.

In the strophe just before *Völuspá* 8’s important *ámáttkar mjǫk* we hear in strophe 7 of *Iðavöllr*, the Gods’ Field of Iða, whose first component is cognate with the name Iðunn. Now when we turn to strophe 57, we find that the Gods have gathered again on the Field of Iða at the world fir-tree *moldþinur* which is called

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*máttkan*. This is preceded in strophe 56 with an image of the earth rising again, *iðja*-, green. Once more we have a term, *iðja*-, that is cognate with the name *Iðunn*. When we put all of the above together, we can detect subtle hints to *Iðunn* already in strophe 2 of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*.

In the heroic lays of the *Poetic Edda* we encounter relevant forms of *máttkan/ máttigr* in poems featuring the figure of *Guðrún*. In *Guðrúnarkviða in forna* strophe 22, a passage concerning runes, which already creates a parallel with *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 2's runes, and indeed the name *Guðrún* means Divine Rune, *Guðrún* says of runes inscribed in a drinking horn, *ráða né máttak*, "I was not able to read them." In strophe 23, she says that "much," *mǫrg*, "evil" (from *magr*, "many") had been mixed in the drinking horn, which is semantically comparable to *mjǫk*. That *Guðrún* finds these ale runes not subject to interpretation parallels *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 2's confused runes and stophe 3's dreams which the Dwarves cannot interpret adequately (*Práinn*) or at all (*Dáinn*). Second, in the *Atlamál in grænlenzku* strophe 17 *Kostbera*, relating her dream of a bear, says, *munn oss mǫrg hefði, / svá at vér mættim ekki*: "he seized many with his mouth, / so that we were without strength." We should also mention *Oddrúnarkviða*, which contains the lament of *Oddrún*, whose name means Sharp-Pointed Rune, where in strophe 32 *Oddrún* says of the famed prince *Atli* that she could not protect or save him, *sva at ec mattigac* (*Bugge's* rendering), or in *Guðni Jónsson's* standardized orthography, *svá at ek máttig-a-k*. *Gering* gives the reading *svāt mättigak*.

Especially relevant for the interpretation of some of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins'* strophes and the poem's background in a more general sense is the already cited

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Guðrún-related heroic lay *Atlamál in grænlenzku*. In strophe 8 famed maidens serve mead in drinking horns in Høgni's and Kostbera's dwelling (cf. *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophes 17-22). At the end of the evening, in strophe 9 the husband and wife make their departure to retire (cf. *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 23). Before sleeping, however, Kostbera, skilled in runecraft, consulted runes by the light of the fire, and strophe 9 tells us, *váru svá villtar / at var vant at ráða*: "(the runes) were so confused / that she did not understand them." The runes were *villtar*; this is the same term we find in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 2's *viltu . . . rúnum*. When the couple awake in the morning, Kostbera tells Høgni in strophe 11, *hyggðu at ráðum*, "ponder my counsel" (cf. *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 22's *nyrępa, hugsí, raþ*). As in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 22, Kostbera had pondered and formed counsel in the night by means of runes. Kostbera warns her husband in strophe 12 against leaving for a planned journey, because she wonders why the runes she has read "should have been so confusedly written," *er skyldi villt rísta*, with which we may compare not only *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 2's *viltu . . . rúnum*, but its verb *skyldi* as well. In *Atlamál in grænlenzku* strophe 13 we then find the word *illúð*-, "bode ill," with which we may compare *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 2's *illa*, emended from *alla*, which incidentally occurs just before *illúð* -: *Allar ro illúðgar*. We have already noted how in strophe 17 Kostbera uses the terminology *męrg* and *męttim ekki*.

Later in the poem *Atlamál in grænlenzku* Høgni has arrived at his journey's destination, the home of Guðrún, where a battle breaks out between Guðrún's and Atli's thanes. Strophe 54 informs us that only eleven men of Atli's men are left, *lifa ellifu*, "left (are) eleven." That this is intended as a demonic inversion of Iðunn's

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golden apples of immortality as “old-age cure,” *ellilyf* (*elli-*, “old-age”; *-lyf* “medicine”), is confirmed in strophe 78 where Guðrún says that her murder of her own two young children will be for them a “cure” for their “old age,” *lyfja . . . elli*. Before this was done, a temporary truce had been called in order to hold a mead feast in honour of the fallen thanes of both sides. Therefore the context of the demonic inversions of Iðunn’s apples as old-age cure (or, medicine) is a mead feast, with which we may compare the mead feast of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophes 17-23, although the feast there is not a funeral feast, even if the death of the Gods will take place the very next day. Finally, we should mention that at the mead feast, Guðrún says in strophe 82, *nú er ok aftann / átt þú slíkt at fréttu*: “and now it is evening, / there is a question for you to ask,” which reminds us of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 20’s Gods who question, *fragu*, Heimdallr and Loki until “late afternoon,” *undorn oframm*.

*mest-um þora*: Lassen restores a second *r* in *þora*; in older times it probably contained a single *r*, the modern double *rr* in *þorri* being less accurate (cf. the single *r* of *þyria*, and the comments thereon in Cleasby-Vigfússon). However, the text is speaking straightforwardly of the Dwarf Óðhrærir powerfully protecting the mead. He, like Gunnloðr, guards the mead powerfully (*máttig*). However, *mest-um þora* implies a limitation to his power, and this makes sense because in *Skáldskaparmál*’s mead stories both the Dwarves and Gunnloðr lose the mead. Therefore lines 5-8 mean basically the following:

Óðhrærer skylde Jarðar gejma      Óðhrærir should hide (the ale) of Jǫrð,

máttig at veria / mest-um þora      he who, for the most part, was able to guard it.

Although in strophe 2 *mest-um þora* means “greatest part,” “majority,” there may be an intended subtle allusion to the word *þorri*, the first month after midwinter, and *mestum þorri* would then mean “the most severe part of winter,” that is, the apocalyptic winter. As Bergmann remarks, “The worst (winter’s woe)” refers to death.<sup>305</sup> Uhland suggests that the onset of winter is a sign of the world’s ending.<sup>306</sup> Simrock argues that in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*, the approach of the winter season reminds the Gods of the threat of Ragnarøk.<sup>307</sup> In agreement with this, winter is conceived of as a symbolic prelude to Ragnarøk.<sup>308</sup>

Lüning understands *mest-um þora* as “great assault” (*grossen andrange*).<sup>309</sup>

We have compared strophe 2 line 7-8’s *matkat veria / mest-um þorra* with Óðinn’s loss of a few drops of the mead as he was flying in the form of an eagle, as related in *Skáldskaparmál*. Lassen glosses the lines as “he could not protect [her] from the greater part [of the plan].”<sup>310</sup> However, just why such language was chosen by the poet remains obscure. The phrase *mest-um þorra* does not strike one as being very poetical at all, and neither does it sound beautiful as prose, even when

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<sup>305</sup> Cf. Bergmann 1875, p. 99.

<sup>306</sup> Uhland, p. 73.

<sup>307</sup> Simrock, p. 370.

<sup>308</sup> Simrock, p. 371.

<sup>309</sup> Lüning, p. 517.

<sup>310</sup> Lassen, p. 82.



integrated within a poem as a sort of proem. A clue to the unusual use of this construction in strophe 3 might be gained when we take into account a nearby influence, in strophe 4 in fact, from the Gnostic text known as *Pistis Sophia*, an influence we document in Excursus II. The passage from *Pistis Sophia* that has influenced *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 4 (and *Völuspá*<sup>311</sup> strophes 46 and following) comes from near the conclusion of the rather lengthy Gnostic work. Earlier in the same text, however, we do find a repeated trope about the demon Authades (“Arrogant One”) and his minions wanting to take away most or all of the fallen Sophia’s light.

Sophia’s male consort says of her in Book 1 chapter 43: “They wanted to take away all her light, and the ordinance was not yet completed to bring her forth from the *Chaos*, and the *command* had not yet come to me through the *First Mystery* to save her from the *Chaos*.”<sup>312</sup> The “ordinance” and “command” can be correlated not only with *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 2’s *gátu*, but also with its *skylde*, and *Pistis Sophia*’s “to save her” agrees with strophe 2’s *Urdar gejma*. The chaos image can be correlated with strophe 4’s *Ginunngur*. In Book 1 chapter 50 Sophia prays as follows:

3. May a great darkness cover over those that oppress me; say to my power: It is I who will save thee.

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<sup>311</sup> See Rooth, pp. 87, 239.

<sup>312</sup> Schmidt-MacDermot, p. 137.

4. All those who want to take my light from me completely: may their power fail; those who want to take my light from me completely: may they turn to *Chaos* and become powerless.

7. . . . they have oppressed the power within me, which they will not be able to take away.

10. And all the *parts* of my power will say: there is now no saviour except thee. . . .<sup>313</sup>

Here we see talk of “all the parts of my power,” but also of “power,” both of the one who will save Sophia and of her oppressors, which call to mind strophe 2’s *mattik*, “powerful,” and *mest-um þorra*, “for the most part,” and also strophe 2 line 2’s unemended *alla*, “all.” In Book 1 chapter 58 Sophia prays similarly:

6. And their plan which they thought of, to take away my power, let it not happen for them. And *according* to how they spoke against me to take away my light from me, take theirs rather instead of mine.

7. And they have spoken to take away all my light. And they were not able to take it, for thy light-power was with me.<sup>314</sup>

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<sup>313</sup> Schmidt-MacDermot, p. 183.

<sup>314</sup> Schmidt-MacDermot, p. 227.

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The word “plan” accords with the Old Norse *gátu* of strophe 2 line 2. *Pistis Sophia*’s “they were not able to take it, for thy light-power” accords well with strophe 2’s *mattkat veria /mest-um þorra*.

In the above passages we have what is one of the probable sources (but certainly not the only source) of the particular language of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 2 lines 5-8, especially the oddly unpoetic *mattkat veria /mest-um þorra*. In *Pistis Sophia* Book 2 we begin encountering language that makes us think of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 4’s apocalyptic felling and regathering of worlds. In Book 2 chapter 36 we read, “The outpouring of light gathered all things. . . .”<sup>315</sup> In Book 2 chapter 71 we read, “He who brought me down from the high places which are above has brought me up from the places in the depth below,”<sup>316</sup> which matches *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 4 lines 5-8, which declares of *Alsviður* the steed of the sun:

opt <i>Alsviður</i>	Often <i>Alsviður</i>
ofann fellir,	fells (the worlds) from above,
opt of <i>follnum</i>	often what is fallen
aptur safnar.	he again gathers (up).

In light of the influence of *Pistis Sophia* upon the Old Norse poem in question, it is possible that strophe 4 lines 5-8 may on one level allude to the notion of

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<sup>315</sup> Schmidt-MacDermot, p. 273.

<sup>316</sup> Schmidt-MacDermot, p. 315.

transmigration, a topic discussed in *Pistis Sophia* Book 3, where souls at death descend to the Chaos (= Old Norse *Ginunnur*), and may be punished “in part”; cf. strophe 2’s *mest-um þorra*. In Book 3 chapter 103 we find the following: “And the fires of the *Chaos(es)* do not *trouble* it greatly, *but they trouble it in part* for a short time. And *with speed* they quickly have mercy on it and bring it up from the *Chaos(es)*. . . . And the fires of its *punishments* trouble it *in part*. And again quickly they have mercy on it and bring it up from their *places* there. . . . [T]hey take it away upon the way of the light of the sun. . . .”<sup>317</sup> In between incarnations, souls drink the cup of the water of forgetfulness (Book 4 chapter 144), which suggests that *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 5’s well of memory, that is, of Mímir (Mimis brunne; assuming an association was made between memory and the name Mímir, which could also be thought of etymologically as “gusher,” “sprinkler”), may be compared with *Hyndluljóð* strophe 46’s “memory-ale,” *minnis aul*, which may be related to Viking-era notions of transmigration.<sup>318</sup> In *Pistis Sophia* Book 4 chapter 147, the antidote to the cup of forgetfulness is described:

Afterwards a *paralempetes* [receiver] of the Little [= Lesser] Sabaoth, the *Good*, he of the *Midst*,<sup>319</sup> also brings a cup which is filled with *understanding* and wisdom, and there is *soberness* in it. And he gives it to the *soul*, and it is

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<sup>317</sup> Schmidt-MacDermot, p. 527.

<sup>318</sup> See Kvilhaug, pp. 93ff.

<sup>319</sup> Note by Samuel Zinner: The *Midst* is the traditional dwelling-place of Sophia in Gnostic theology.

cast into a *body* which is not able to sleep *nor* is it able to forget, because of the cup of *soberness* which was given to it. *But* it will be a goad to its heart continually, to seek for the *mysteries* of the light until it finds them, through the ordinance of the *Virgin* of the Light, and *inherits* the eternal light.<sup>320</sup>

In *Pistis Sophia* Book 2 chapter 72 we find the following: “Thou hast brought thy aeon to destruction, that all things should be dissolved and made new,”<sup>321</sup> which reminds us of the dissolution and rebirth of the universe in *Völuspá* strophes 47 and following, which we know was influenced by a passage from Book 4 of *Pistis Sophia*.

Returning to Old Norse sources, we can account for some additional elements of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 2. This strophe’s verb *geyma* is not attested in the *Poetic Edda*, apart from a late hypothetical reconstruction of the missing first part of *Hávamál* strophe 65, namely, *gætenn ok geymenn / skyle gumna hverr / ok varr at vintrauste*.<sup>322</sup> This would not have been known to the poet of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*. However, he did know *Skáldskaparmál*, and lo and behold, the latter contains the verb *geyman* once, and only once, and in a strophe concerning the sacred mead, which confirms it as the source of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 2’s *gejma*. In section

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<sup>320</sup> Schmidt-MacDermot, p. 767. Materials in brackets from Samuel Zinner. The trope of soberness is paralleled in *On the Origin of the World*, where eating the fruit of the tree of Gnosis brings soberness: “For he knows that when you eat from it, your intellect will become sober and you will come to be like gods.” See Robinson, p. 184.

<sup>321</sup> Schmidt-MacDermot, p. 323.

<sup>322</sup> See Sijmons/Gering 1888, p. 35.

10's discussion of poetry/mead kennings a strophe is cited from Einarr Skálaglamm who calls the poetic mead "the Dwarves' liquid guarded/kept by the mountain," *bergs geymi-lá dverga*. This in part will have helped generate the presence of Dwarves in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 3. In the same section the poetic mead is called by the kenning "guardian/keeper of earth," *foldar vǫrð*, using the term *fold* for earth as in *Vǫluspá* strophe 54. In the same section another strophe from Einarr Skálaglamm is cited that explicitly mentions Óðrerir by name.

With regard to *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 2's *mest-um/mestum*, we can note that not only do we read in the story of Þjazi's abduction of Iðunn that Loki "flew his utmost," *ok flýgr sem mest*, but in the story of Hreiðmarr, which bears many striking similarities to the Þjazi-Iðunn tale, he fills the otter skin with as much gold as he could, *sem mest mátti hann*. The gold in the story is *rauðu gulli*, red gold, a trope often used in stories that somehow allude to the sacred mead.

To sum up at this point, strophe 1's oracle, which the Æsir viewed as threatening, contradicts the separate and apparently more positive oracle from a wight, reproduced in strophe 2 lines 5-8, about the mighty Dwarf Óðhrærer who can protect the mead of immortality from theft. However, this oracle is only apparently positive, since Óðhrærer's power is limited, which is indicated by line 8's *mest-um þora*. The relevance of this oracle for the poem *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* in general as a poem about Iðunn's fall from Yggdrasil can be discovered as follows. The two mead stories in *Skáldskaparmál*, which actually constitute a single story in two chronological parts, correspond extensively with the story of Iðunn's abduction by the Giant Þjazi, which is the first story featured in *Skáldskaparmál*. Without detailing

all the correspondences, we will note that the pervasive extent of them indicates that the Oðreyrir mead story and the tale of Iðunn and Þjazi are more or less variations on a single mytheme. The mead bestows not only poetry but immortal life, just as Iðunn's golden apples ensure immortality to the Gods. Loki in the form of a hawk carries Iðunn back to the Gods; Óðinn in the form of an eagle carries (within himself) the mead Oðreyrir back to the Gods. There is thus a sense in which Iðunn is functionally equivalent to the mead of eternal life. The interconnection between the first three stories in *Skáldskaparmál* explains why *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* relates Óðhrærer, in a preparatory way, with Iðunn.

We have already cited the following *Skáldskaparmál* passage: Flytr Suttungr mjóðinn heim ok hirðir, þar sem heita Hnitbjörg, setr þar til gæzlu dóttur sína, Gunnlōðu. "Suttungr carried the mead home and concealed it in the place called Hnitbjörg, placing his daughter Gunnlōd there to watch over it." The *Hávamál* mead passages, especially strophe 14 where Fjalar hovers as a bird over Gunnlōd's mead well, guarding it, and strophe 160's mead Dwarf Fjóðrerir, whose name calls to mind the Old Norse word for feather (which in fact we find in *Hávamál* strophe 13), and who becomes Óðhrærer in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 2, these suggest the existence of a myth wherein after Suttungr appoints Gunnlōd as guardian of the mead, Gunnlōd then fulfills that role by means of appointing a Dwarf to guard over the ale, indeed, one of the Dwarves who first made the ale, Fjalar, and perhaps a second Dwarf, Fjóðrerir-Oðhrærer, who if not an alternate name for Fjalar might then correspond to the other Dwarf who originally made the mead, namely, Galar.

### Strophe 3.

MS B has the correct reading, þur, in contrast to the corrupt þvi, “therefore.” Here þur (þurr) means “rushes” (cf. Bergmann: “*þurr* stands for *þyrr* [he hurries himself] from the verb *þyria*”),<sup>323</sup> and functions as a stark contrast to line 4’s *dvelur*, “lingers,” “tarries,” “remains.” The word *þurr* also connects the line phonetically with the previous strophe’s final line’s *þora* (with one r). *Hverfur* here can mean “swiftly” (Bergmann understands it as “nimble,”<sup>324</sup> which may be compared with *Thebaid* 2:55’s “nimble god,” *volucer deus*<sup>325</sup>) or alternatively, “change,” “turn.” We will discuss *hug* momentarily. *Hverfur* in the sense of “turn” is attested in *Hávamál* strophe 161: *hugi ek hverfi hvítarmri konu*: “The mind I turned of the white-armed woman to me.” This is significant because in the previous strophe 160 we encounter the Dwarf name *Þj/Fjóðrerir*, whose component *-óðrerir* coincides with *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 2’s *Oðhrærer*. That this Dwarf is named *Þj-óðrerir* connects him to strophe 2; that he is a Dwarf connects him to the two *Dwrves* of strophe 3. Additionally *Hávamál* strophe 160 contains the names *Delling* (“Delling’s door,” *Dellings durum*) and *Hroptr* (*hyggju Hroftatý*, “mind . . . the God Hroptr”), who appear in close proximity in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophes 24 and 23 respectively. As previously noted, alliteration requires that in *Þjóðrerir* we emend Þ

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<sup>323</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 99.

<sup>324</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 99.

<sup>325</sup> See Mozley vol. 1, pp. 398-399.



to F,<sup>326</sup> thus Fj-óðrerir, and the restored name Fjóðrerir then alliterates with the Dwarf name Fjalar of *Hávamál* strophe 14; we should supply strophes 13-14:

13 Ómínnishegri heitir  
sá er yfir ǫlðrom þrumir;  
hann stelr geði guma;  
þess fugls fjøðrum  
ek fjøtraðr vark  
í garði Gunnlaðar.

14 Ǫlr ek varð,  
varð ofrǫlvi  
at ins fróða Fjalars;  
því er ǫlðr bazt,  
at aftr um heimtir  
hverr sitt geð gumi.

If Fjóðrerir is not identical to Fjalar, the two most likely mirror each other and form a pair, like Fjalar and Galar (Yeller) who made the mead from Kvasir's blood in what Snorri says was the kettle called Óðrerir, which if correct would mean that the kettle is named after its contents. In all likelihood, Fjóðrerir is another name for the mead Dwarf Fjalar known from *Skáldskaparmál*. We interpret *Hávamál*

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<sup>326</sup> Bergmann 1877, p. 91.

strophe 13's Fjalar not only as one of the Dwarves who made the mead, but it appears that Fjalar here is used as a name for the mead which he has made, for Óðinn says that he was inebriated with Fjalar, which we take to mean not only "at" Fjalar's residence, or together with him, but his consumption of the entity Fjalar intoxicated him. Strophe 13 is referring to the incident involving the theft of the mead from Gunnlǫð, yet it says that he became inebriated with Fjalar. The solution is that he is calling Gunnlǫð's mead after the name of one of the Dwarves who had made it. Thus although Óðinn obtained the mead from Gunnlǫð, he can also be connected poetically directly to the Dwarves who made the mead, as if he stole it from them directly. This is how, as we shall see, *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 2's Dwarf Óðhrerir's (who, again, is probably Fjalar) guarding of the mead can be so quickly followed in strophe 3 line 1 by an allusion to the story of Óðinn flying away from Gunnlǫð with the mead.

*Hávamál* strophe 160 reads as follows:

Þat kann ek it fimmtánda	I know a fifteenth,
er gól Þjóðrerir	he is named Þjóðrerir,
dvergr fyr Dellings durum	the Dwarf who sang in front of Delling's door
afl gól hann ásum	He sang strength to the Æsir,
en alfum frama	skill/courage to the Elves
hyggju Hroftatý.	And mind (understanding/wisdom) to Hroftatýr.

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The last three lines remind us of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 1. Cf. *alfum frama* with *Hávamál* strophe 159, *alfa / ek kann allra skil* (cf. *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 1's *alfar skilia*).

The combined evidence of *Hávamál* strophes 160 and 161 confirm that *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 3's *hugi* means “mind,” and that this is the mind of Óðinn. Bergmann remarks: “Instead of the one-syllable *hugr*, the two-syllable *hugi* is to be placed as a personal name. . . .”<sup>327</sup> Lassen reads *hugur*, and translates, “his courage fails.”<sup>328</sup> But the evidence of *Hávamál* indicates that in this strophe it is not courage that fails, but Óðinn's mind (*hugi*) that turns in ascent. In Old Norse there is the expression *hverfr hugr*, “shifty mind,” but the nuance here is more like Bergmann's “nimble,” and strophe 1 is referring to a swift movement or turning of the mind. The word *hverfa* can mean not only to turn, but to vanish, as well as to enclose, which ties in the word semantically with strophe 2's *gejma* and *veria*.

Bergmann writes that “instead of the completely senseless *hinna*, we should read *himna* (heaven/sky).”<sup>329</sup> Strophe 3 lines 1-2 are to be reconstructed and rendered as follows:

<i>hverfr þurr hugi</i>	Swiftly Hugi rushes,
<i>himna leitar</i>	striving to the skies.

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<sup>327</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 99.

<sup>328</sup> Lassen, p. 83.

<sup>329</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 99.

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Turville-Petre documents that the word *hugr* sometimes denotes a person's "fetch, appearing in the guise of an animal. . . ." <sup>330</sup> The evidence of *Hávamál* indicates that *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 3's *hugi* refers to Óðinn's mind, but in a hypostatic sense, that is, *Hugi* here is the personified embodiment of Óðinn's own mind, a fetch in the form of a bird. Strophe 3 line 2's *himna* consequently makes sense in light of *Gylfaginning* 48's note that Óðinn's ravens fly around *heim allan*, "all the world," which we would suggest has actually inspired strophe 3's *himna*.

We should also cite *Heimskringla* 7: Óðinn hafði með sér hofuð Mímis, ok sagði þat honum mǫrg tíðindi or ǫðrum heimum. . . . Hann átti hrafna tvá, er hann hafði tamit við mál; flugu þeir víða um lǫnd ok sǫlgðu honum mǫrg tíðindi: "Óðinn carried Mímir's head with him, and it told him tidings out of other worlds/countries. . . . He had two ravens, and he taught them human speech; they flew far and wide through the earth (lǫnd, 'land') and reported the tidings to him." Here we see an interesting functional correspondence between Mímir's head and Óðinn's two ravens. The same *Heimskringla* passage then informs us that Óðinn was an expert in *galdrasmíðir*, the art of *galdr*, that is, of incantation songs, which bearing in mind the title *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* is highly suggestive to read just after a notice of Óðinn's two ravens.

Line 3's *guma* is to be understood as "a person fears" in the sense of "it is feared." The verb *grunar* is a synonymous variation of the two verbs *óumk* and *sjámk* of *Grímnismál* strophe 20:

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<sup>330</sup> Turville-Petre, p. 58.

Huginn ok Muninn  
fljúga hverjan dag  
Jormungrund yfir;  
óumk ek um Hugin  
at hann aftr né komit,  
þó sjámk meir um Munin.

Here Óðinn himself is speaking under disguise as Grímr, and so we should understand *Hrafnagaldur Óðins guma*, “a man,” as a reference to Óðinn in the guise of a human. The word *guma* is also used in order to stress that the bird-like *Hugi* of line 1 represents the personification of a normally *anthropomorphic* divinity. Thus we are to understand *grunar guma / grand*,<sup>331</sup> *ef dvelur*, as: “A man (Óðinn, the one to whom line 1’s *hugi* belongs) fears / harm if he delays,” precisely as we read in *Grímnismál* strophe 20. Thus *ef dvelur* corresponds to *aftr né komit*, I fear if Huginn “comes not back.” Note as well that in *Hávamál* strophes 13-14 the word *guma* occurs twice, and Óðinn there is obviously applying the term to himself. In *Hávamál* strophe 145, same phraseology describes Óðinn’s return from death:

Svá Þundr um reist	Þundr carved
fyr þjóða røk,	doom for humans;

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<sup>331</sup> Here *grand* must be expanded to “*granda* (the genitive of *grandi*) 1) on account of the meaning, because *grunar* requires a genitive, 2) so that the half-verse contains the minimum requirement of four syllables.” Bergmann 1875, p. 99.

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þar hann upp um reis,        there he rose up  
er hann aftr of kom.        and came back.

At this point we can ask if strophe 3 lines 1-2 refer to Óðinn's raven Huginn. The answer is yes and no; yes, insofar as the Huginn traditions are made use of here, but no in the sense that in this instance *Hugi* cannot be limited exclusively to Huginn. As we saw in the commentary on strophe 2, there *Skáldskaparmál's* story of Óðinn and Óðreyrir has shaped lines 5-8 of that strophe. Now here in strophe 3 Óðinn's *mind* takes flight into the *skies* and he fears if he *delays*. This is based on *Skáldskaparmál's* story of Óðinn who as an eagle has consumed the mead from Óðreyrir, and who must not delay flying away back to Ásgarð, for Suttungr will soon be in hot pursuit. Strophe 3 line 1's *hugi*, "mind," is but a synonym of the word *óð*, "mind/spirit," that forms the first part of the word Óð-reyrir, "mind/spirit stirrer." *Hugi* therefore denotes Óðinn as an embodiment of Óð-reyrir, Mind-Inspirer, because as the eagle in flight he has consumed the mead of Óð-reyrir. He has become Óð as such.

Strophe 3 line 1-2's bird *Hugi* brings us back to *Hávamál* strophe 160's Dwarf Þ/Fjóðrerir. It makes sense that soon after *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 2 mentions Óðhrærir that we then read of Óðinn's *hugi*, "mind," in strophe 3 line 1, for *Hávamál* strophe 160's Dwarf Þ/Fjóðrerir gives to Óðinn *hyggju*. As we have noted, Bergmann demonstrated the necessity of emending the Þ to F, but he then unnecessarily emends to the vowel *ó* as well, in order to arrive at Fjaðreyrir,

“Golden Feather.”<sup>332</sup> However, although Bergmann erred in emending the ó to a, we have every reason to suspect that the name Fjóðrerir, which is meant to make the reader/listener recall the sacred mead Óðrerir, was simultaneously designed to allude back to *Hávamál* strophe 13’s hegri, “heron,” fugl, “bird,” and fjøðrum, “feathers,” which describe Gunnlōð during Óðinn’s three-night stay with her, which resulted in his gaining the mead Óðrerir, which explains strophe 14’s mention of the Dwarf Fjalar, which in turn suggests a connection with strophe 160’s Dwarf Fjóðrerir. Note that strophe 161 Óðinn speaks of turning the mind of a white-armed woman to himself in order to sleep with her, an obvious allusion to the incident with Gunnlōð. Thus the ale mentioned in strophe 13, ølðrom (ales, plural), and 14, ølðr, refer to the mead Óðrerir mentioned in strophe 140, and then again in strophe 107, where it is introduced in strophe 106 with another reference to Gunnlōð. Interestingly, strophe 111 refers to Urðarbrunni, and this, together with *Völuspá* strophe 19, may have influenced the scribal transmission of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins’* reading of Urðar. Strophe 143’s Dáinn, Dvalinn and Ásviðr call to mind *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 3’s Dáinn and Alsviður.

Of Fjóðrerir / Fjaðreyrir, Bergmann writes that his singing refers to magic *galdr*.<sup>333</sup> The undertones of Fjóðrerir’s mead name with “feathers” leads us to agree with Bergmann that Fjóðrerir is here thought of in the form of a bird, even if we disagree with his emendation of ó to a. For Bergmann the bird thought of here is a rooster, which makes sense in light of *Hávamál* strophe 13’s Fjalar, who appears as a

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<sup>332</sup> Bergmann 1877, p. 91.

<sup>333</sup> Bergmann 1877, p. 91.

rooster in *Völuspá* strophe 41, together with the rooster Gullinkambi, Golden Comb in strophe 42. In the name Fjaðreyrir Bergmann interprets –eyrir as “glistening,” which he takes as an allusion to the shiny aspect of gold, and thus connects Fjóðrerir / Fjaðreyrir with *Völuspá*’s rooster Golden Comb. According to Bergmann the bird-like spirit (*genius*) Fjóðrerir as a specialization of the Norns bestows fates upon Gods and humans by means of *gladr*, magic songs of incantation (Latin *incantatio*). Óðinn in *Hávamál* strophe 160 is claiming that he has learned this powerful incantation of Fjóðrerir, and he can use it to refresh the strength of the Gods should the need arise.<sup>334</sup>

Bergmann explains that Fjóðrerir is called a Dwarf rather than a Light Elf because

as a primordial spirit born of Night he belongs to the incoming Day while it is still dark, so that he belongs partly to the Dark Elves and partly to the Light Elves. He is originally the evening and morning star, who announces Evening and Morning, and who accordingly is identical with the spirit (*genius*) Dvalinn (Drowsy), who bears this name as a spirit of Evening. During evenings Dvalinn gives himself to the subterranean dwellings of the Dark Elves, where he receives the Sun, and plays with her to pass the time, on account of which the sun is called Dvalinn’s plaything (Dvalins leika). In the mornings he leads the sun out of the dark dwellings up to the sky. He is himself the spirit of the red dawn sky, and as Golden Feather bears golden

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<sup>334</sup> See Bergmann 1877, pp. 181-182.



plumage in the form of a golden-feathered rooster that announces the dawn. As a golden-feathered rooster he is, like the spirit (*genius*) and rooster Golden Comb (Gullinkambi), the morning guardian, the early messenger, and light-bringer of the Gods. As light-bringer (Greek *phòsphoros*; Latin *Lucifer*) he is the most qualified to bring the Gods the greetings of morning (Sanskrit *kalyam*), and, as bound to them by nature, to bestow up them their spiritual strengths and talents by means of his magic morning song (*albada*; *tageweise*). Therefore it is said here that Golden Feather by means of a magic song in the early morning in front of the the gate of the offspring of the early day (Dellingr) gave strength to the Æsir, fame to the Elves and forethought to Óðinn (Ripping/Howling Wind-God).<sup>335</sup>

Bergmann concludes his comments by referring to *Helgakviða Hundingsbana* I strophe 1, where we read that Helgi “was born of Borghildr in the early morning (ár var alda) when the guardians and morning messengers (árar) sang their sang their magical morning songs, and from the heights of the sky (himin-fjöllum, that is, out of the heights into which the upper branches of the sacred ash Yggdrasill), the blessed dew drops (heilög vötn) fell down.”<sup>336</sup>

According to Uhland, who thought that the raven Huginn appears in strophe 3, since the poem does not relate Huginn’s return, implying the silence of Óðinn’s “divine thought,” he dwells “in a region of oppressive, dream-like presentiment, and

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<sup>335</sup> Bergmann 1877, pp. 182-183.

<sup>336</sup> Bergmann 1877, p. 183.

only at the end does hope dawn.”<sup>337</sup> Simrock thought “that Huginn had been sent to the Dwarves Dáinn and Práinn.”<sup>338</sup> Wolzogen makes the same claim.<sup>339</sup>

The transition in strophe 3 from lines 1-4 on the one hand and lines 5-8 on the other can be explained as follows. First, the two attestations of þotti, “thought” (lines 5, 8) overlap semantically with line 1’s hugi, “mind.” The two Dwarves Práinn and Dáinn appear to interpret the wight’s oracle, which probably actually extends from strophe 2 line 5 to strophe 3 line 4 inclusive. The two Dwarves find the oracle just as threatening as the Æsir found the oracle embodied in strophe 1, for the wight’s oracle alludes to the story of the loss of the mead; just as the mead’s previous owners lost the drink of immortality, so Óðinn and the rest of the Gods are in the process of losing it, for Iðunn will soon fall from the tree of life (strophe 6), which means the loss of her golden apples, the symbolic equivalent of the mead of immortality. Thus even now the Dwarves’ strength to uphold the world is falling away from them (strophe 4). Admittedly, the sun often falls, but it also regularly returns to rise (strophe 4), but now the threat is coming that the sun will not rise again, for Iðunn, the symbol of immortality for the Gods and life for the world of humans, is falling from Yggdrasill (strophe 6).

Bergmann interprets strophe 3’s hugi as a reference to Útgarða-Loki’s servant Hugi (both known from *Gylfaginning*), whose name means Thought or Mind, but who in strophe appears as an evil winter wind that rushes up into the stormy

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<sup>337</sup> Uhland, p. 74.

<sup>338</sup> Simrock, p. 370.

<sup>339</sup> von Wolzogen, p. 120.

skies.<sup>340</sup> As much as this seems to conflict with the interpretation/s we have presented above, it can nevertheless be admitted as a possibility, but one which does not have to exclude the reference to Óðinn's mind that ascends in bird form. *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* is a deftly and densely learned poem whose individual textures are quite capable of alluding to components of several myths in the tradition simultaneously. *Skáldskaparmál's* mead story tells not only of Óðinn flying in the form of a bird, an eagle, in the context of the sacred mead, but also Suttungr flies in the form of an eagle. Furthermore, Loki flies as a falcon and Þjazi as an eagle in the story of Iðunn's abduction.<sup>341</sup> Since *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophes 2 and 3 blends allusions to both of *Skáldskaparmál's* stories of Iðunn and her apples and Óðinn and the mead, there would be no reason to exclude from strophe 3's *hugi* a twofold allusion both to Óðinn and to Loki (and perhaps even to Suttungr and Þjazi as well), though on different levels, that of Óðinn being primary, while that of Loki would be more secondary, hovering in the background so to speak.

Práinn thought: "Dense (*bunga*) dreams"; Dáinn declared: "Deceptive (*dulu*) dreams": As Bergmann notes, in both cases *draumr* is to be read as plural *draumar*, so that the necessary number of syllables is met.<sup>342</sup> Therefore, the two Dwarves are giving their judgement on both oracles, that of strophe 1, and the one that begins in

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<sup>340</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 99.

<sup>341</sup> This brings to mind Quintus of Smyrna's *Fall of Troy (Posthomerica)*, where in Book 3 the Trojans flee to "the god-built burg of Illium" like the eagle, "king of birds," and like the "death-dealing hawk." See Way 1913, p. 141.

<sup>342</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 99.

strophe 2 line 5. These are interpretative dream assessments on the part of the two Dwarves, and not references to their own dreams, as Lassen would have it by means of adding glosses: “Þráinn’s thought is [filled with] a weighty dream, Dáinn’s thought [with] a deceitful dream.”<sup>343</sup> The the two oracles of strophe 1 and strophe 2:5-3:4 represent oracular *dreams*. The basic formulaic paradigm in strophe 3 is widespread and goes back to hoary antiquity, as an ancient Mesopotamian text cited by Butler indicates: “my dreams are very obscure (and) my omens are very unfavourable. . . .”<sup>344</sup> Old Icelandic *þunga* has the basic meaning of “heaviness,” while *dulu* can mean “deceptive,” “concealing,” “misleading.” Both terms are standard descriptions of types of dreams experienced by all humans. Comparable terms from ancient Mesopotamian dream assessment and interpretation would be *dalāhu*, “confused,” *ekēlu*, “dark,” “obscure,” and *sarāru*, “false,” “misleading.”<sup>345</sup>

Ovid, *Metamorphoses* Book X line 8, *exitus auspicio gravior*, “graver/heavier than the foreboding was the outcome.” This reflects traditional omen/oracle terminology in Latin. Note the correspondences with strophe 3’s Old Norse vocabulary. As we will see in the commentary to subsequent strophes, *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*’s tale of Bragi and Iðunn corresponds in several ways with features underlying the story of Orpheus and Eurydice in Book X of *Metamorphoses*.

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<sup>343</sup> Lassen, p. 83.

<sup>344</sup> Butler, p. 24.

<sup>345</sup> Butler, pp. 28-29.

Dáinn = *mortuus*, “Dead,” Þráinn = *contumax* or *rancidus*.<sup>346</sup> That the Dwarves appear here makes sense not only because of their race’s cosmic functions, but also because Iðunn also belongs to the race of Dwarves. Strophe 6’s statement that she is of the race of the Elves is no contradiction because in Eddic mythology the Dwarves are also known as Dark Elves. Bergmann identifies Þráinn as a Light Elf and Dáinn as a Dark Elf.<sup>347</sup>

The Dark Elves are by no means purely demonic. On the contrary, they fulfil a role similar to that of Mother Earth in indigenous traditions. As Simrock notes, referring to Umland, the growth of plants from the earth in the spring is the result of “the miraculous subterranean activity of the (Dark) Dwarves.”<sup>348</sup>

Strophe 3’s appearance of Þráinn and Dáinn is prepared already in strophe 2’s Dwarf Óðhrærir. Dáinn’s interpretation of dreams, which occur in the night, in turn prepares the way for Dáinn’s deadly *nocturnal* thorn in strophe 13. To a certain extent the two Dwarves Þráinn and Dáinn in strophe 3 are inspired by the two Dwarves Fjalar and Galarr of the *Skáldskaparmál* mead story. There is yet another reason behind Dáinn’s appearance. According to *Hávamál* strophe 143 Dáinn is the quintessential rune expert among Elves, and this connects him with *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 2’s rúnum.<sup>349</sup>

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<sup>346</sup> See Simrock, p. 373.

<sup>347</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 99.

<sup>348</sup> Simrock, p. 370.

<sup>349</sup> See Jordan, p. 201.

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It is worth documenting that the relative proximity of þunga in strophe 3, of fellir in strophe 4, and of lęvi and straumi in strophe 5, calls to mind *Völuspá* strophe 35's fellr and eitr- (as a synonym of lęvi), and strophe 38's þunga strauma. The reason we note these correspondences is because *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 5 ends with vitip enn eþa hvaþ?, which parallels the end of *Völuspá* strophe 38, vitoð ér enn, eða hvat? This same refrain is attested at the end of *Völuspá* strophe 28, after a mention of Mímir's famous spring, which is paralleled in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 5 as well. This strengthens Bergmann's thesis that strophe 5's *vissa vera* is semantically equivalent to *Völuspá* strophe 28's veði Valföðrs (see the commentary on strophe 5 below).

Above we have offered some diverse reasons that might explain the presence in strophe 3's of the Dwarves Þráinn and Dáinn. The case of Dáinn is easier to explain, given that he appears again in strophe 13, and there is much information in the *Poetic Edda* about the Dwarf-Stage Dáinn. By contrast, all we know of the Eddic Þráinn is his name, which is found in the *Völuspá* Dwarf lists. Surprisingly, exegetes of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* have overlooked the relevance of the draugr Þráinn from the *Hrómundar Saga Gripssonar* and its older poetic version preserved under the title *Gríplur*. As N. Kershaw documented, the *Hrómundar Saga Gripssonar* is a heavily mythological saga, in contrast to several of the Icelandic sagas that contain at least a modicum of an historical basis. Bild and Voli are none other than Baldr and Váli, and Þráinn's sword named Mistletoe is none other than the Mistletoe that kills Baldr in the Norse myth preserved in *Gylfaginning*, *Völuspá* and *Baldrs draumar*.<sup>350</sup> The hero

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<sup>350</sup> Kershaw, p. 59.

Hrómundr wins the sword Mistletoe from the zombie Þráinn and in the end slays Voli-Váli. Hrómundr has Blindr, “The Blind,” who is also called Bavis (*Gríplur* VI 51:1 reads Bǫlvís, from *Helgakviða Hundingsbana* II strophe 2, Blindr enn bǫlvísi),<sup>351</sup> executed. Blindr can be none other than an echo of the blind Hǫðr. The name Bavis would seem to be an echo, at least on one level, of Saxo’s version of Váli’s name, that is, Bous. Astonishingly, in Liberman’s recent Baldr essay, he never mentions *Hrómundar Saga Gripssonar* or *Gríplur*.

Hrómundr’s mother is named Gunnlǫð, and in light of the heavy mythological background of his saga, there is no reason not to see the mead-guardian and Giantess Gunnlǫð behind the hero’s mother. In the saga, Þráinn is a beserk who is full of galdr, fullr galdra, that is, an expert sorcerer, who shuts himself in a barrow with his treasures and magic sword and becomes a draugr, basically a zombie, neither really alive nor dead. There Þráinn sits on a throne clad in gold, þar sat á stóli . . . allr gulli klæddr, and he has a cauldron (ketil) for cooking, which must be an echo of the mead cauldron (ketil) named Óðrerir from the mead story of Fjalar and Galarr in *Skáldskaparmál*. Þráinn cooks goat meat in his cauldron, which is probably a symbolic reverberation of the mead goat Heiðrún. We read also that “Thrain was wearing a gold-wrought mantle. Both his hands were crooked and his finger nails were like talons,”<sup>352</sup> Hann var í stakki gullfáguðum. Báðar hendr hans váru brenglaðar, ok beygðust negl fyrir góma. Towards the end of the saga, Blindr has a series of threatening dreams, and we find in that context the dream interpretation

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<sup>351</sup> See Jónsson 1896, p. 42; Kershaw, p. 233.

<sup>352</sup> Kershaw, p.67.

terminology þótti and mér þótti, “it seemed,” “it seemed to me,” which fits well with *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 3’s þótti er Þrains / þunga dræmur, “Þráinn thought: ‘heavy dreams.’” The adjective þunga is incidentally used in *Hrómundar Saga Gripssonar* to describe the “heavy” sword of Þráinn, Mistletoe. Blindr’s fourth dream is of interest: “I thought I saw a terrible giant come hither from the east; he gave you a great wound with his teeth,” “Mér þótti einn ógurligr hriki koma austan at. Hann beit yðr stóra und.” This reminds us of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 13’s the Giant’s thorn from the east that slays human beings in the night.

We have seen that in *Hrómundar Saga Gripssonar* Þráinn is associated with galdr. What about ravens? We read nothing of them in *Hrómundar Saga Gripssonar*. However, the word hrafni is present in the poetic version, *Gríplur*, namely, in I 40:2 (bráðir fenguz hrafni);<sup>353</sup> II 9:1 (Garpinn snarpur Grippson, spyrr, er gæddi hrafni);<sup>354</sup> II 18:1 (Seggur leggr Svíþjóð austur sunda Hrafni);<sup>355</sup> and II 47:1 (Dýrir stýra dægur sex á dælu Hrafni).<sup>356</sup>

There are definitely some connections between the mythological draugr Þráinn of *Hrómundar Saga Gripssonar* and the very human Þráinn Sigfússon of *Njáls saga*. Þráinn Sigfússon has a brother named Ketil, that is, Kettle, reminiscent of the draugr’s cauldron, ketil; both Þráinns are killed with a blow to the head (a beheading and a hewing respectively). Other correlations could be made as well, but

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<sup>353</sup> Jónsson 1896, p. 19.

<sup>354</sup> Jónsson 1896, p. 22.

<sup>355</sup> Jónsson 1896, p. 22.

<sup>356</sup> Jónsson 1896, p. 25.



they are not directly germane to our investigation. We will note, however, that when Práinn Sigfússon is slain, a song is offered up by his slayers that refers to his flesh as food for the ravens. Additionally we should mention that the Ketil and Kari of *Hrómundar Saga Gripssonar* are mentioned in *Hyndluljóð* as ancestors of Freyja's devotee Óttar, whom Freyja transforms into a golden boar by means of a boar hide made by the Dwarves Dáinn and Nabbi.<sup>357</sup> The two Dwarves appear in strophe 7, which curiously opens with the words Dulin ertu, Hyndla, draums ætlak, "Dull/deceptive are you, Hyndla, dreams I suspect," which may be compared to *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 2's ætlun and stophe 3's Daens dulu / dræmur þotti, "Dáinn's thought: a deceptive dream." The word dulu/dulin is etymologically cognate with the Dwarf name Dvalinn, who appears in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 24. Also curious is the appearance together of the two Dwarves Dvalinn and Dulinn who are commanded to make a sword for King Sigrlami in *Saga Heiðreks konungs ens vitra*.

The above constitutes good evidence that *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* has been influenced by *Hyndluljóð*. Lastly, *Hyndluljóð* calls the Vǫlva Hyndla an íviðju, a term

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<sup>357</sup> Bergmann explains that the name "Nabbi (f. Hnabbi, 'knobbed') denotes a Dwarf who has a large knob (head) or a large nose (Anglo-Saxon, *nebb*; Old Norse, *nebbi*)." Bergmann 1876, p. 140. However, nabbi also means "beak," opening up the possibility of a Dwarf in bird form, like the mead Dwarf Fjalar who appears as a heron in *Hávamál* strophes 13-14. Additionally, nabbi can mean "club," which would tie into Dáinn's famous sword (made together with the Dwarf Dulinn) and his thorn in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 13.

found elsewhere in the *Poetic Edda*'s mythological lays only in *Völuspá* strophe 2, where the narrating Völva uses it either in the sense of Ogress or of yew forest.

### Strophe 4.

We expand line 5's opt *alsviþur* to *optar alsviþur* so that the line meets the minimum required four syllables.

Alsviður is a solar horse in *Grímnismál* 37, but Lassen suspects it refers here to Óðinn as “all-wise,” although this usage is not attested elsewhere.<sup>358</sup> Lassen concludes that Alsviður as a solar horse “does not fit the context here,”<sup>359</sup> but as Bergmann explains, “The solar horse Alsviður (for Al-svinðr) stands here for the sun itself, or for the late-year sunshine.”<sup>360</sup> Moreover, strophe 4's felling and gathering up are inspired by *Grímnismál* strophe 37's upp and strophe 38's fellr; additionally strophe 4's dwindling, *dvina*, agrees with *Grímnismál* strophe 37's depiction of Árvakr and Alsviður “wearily,” *svangir*, dragging the sun.

Lassen renders *Dugir með dvergum* as “That's enough of the dwarves,” likening this to *Völuspá* 12's trope: “Nú hefi ek dverga . . . rétt um talða' (‘Now I have correctly enumerated the dwarves).”<sup>361</sup> But surely what the poet refers to here is the story attested in *Gylfaginning* 8 of the four cosmic dwarves who hold up the

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<sup>358</sup> Lassen, p. 97.

<sup>359</sup> Lassen, p. 97.

<sup>360</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 100.

<sup>361</sup> Lassen, p. 97.

world, and we can deduce that should they weaken, the world would pass away.<sup>362</sup>

Simultaneously there is a reference to the idea of the solar steed losing strength, with which we may compare the description of racing horses whose “vigour flags” in *Thebaid* 6:472-473, *nec iam integer illis impetus*.<sup>363</sup>

This explains the subsequent talk of the worlds (the genitive plural *heima* is required)<sup>364</sup> sinking down to the underworld, personified here as Ginnungur, who as Bergmann remarks is “as a ghost . . . the representative of the magically deceiving Dark Elves, or the subterranean Dwarves.”<sup>365</sup> *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 4’s *ginnungs* is inspired by *Völuspá* strophe 3’s *ginnunga*. Bergmann links the word *niðir*, *niði*, to the Dwarves, asserting that it “refers to the *sons* (cf. Gothic *niþjis*) of the Dwarves or the Dwarf race in general.”<sup>366</sup> However, in strophe 4, the word *niði* is linked to Ginnungur, “Ginnungs niði,” hence Lassen’s translation “darkness of Ginnungur.” Still, Bergmann is correct to connect the Dark Elves and their deceptive magic with Ginnungur, whose Old Norse etymology does overlap with the idea of magic and deception, even though this occurs on a purely secondary level, as Dronke

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<sup>362</sup> This makes better sense than Simrock’s claim that the Dwarves have lost strength because Iðunn, who belongs to their race, has lost her own strength; see Simrock, p. 373. However, there may be an element of truth in Simrock’s notion.

<sup>363</sup> Mozley vol. 2, pp. 94-95.

<sup>364</sup> See Bergmann 1875, p. 100.

<sup>365</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 100

<sup>366</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 100.

documents.<sup>367</sup> We might see the Dark Elves as the offspring or children of Ginnungur. So instead of Ginnungur representing the subterranean Dwarves, the latter actually represent the former. And as such it may indeed be the case that the *nífi* of Ginnungur may indeed mean “sons” rather than just “darkness” or “gloom.”

Thus the worlds sink down to the *offspring* of Ginnungur. But what this likely means is that Ginnungur is personified Chaos, yet personified simultaneously in a variety of modes that form a sort of collective singular. Collectively these personified modes represent or constitute hypostatic Darkness. In brief, *nífi* probably implies darkness and offspring at the same time. Consequently we render “Ginnungs nífi” as “Ginnungur’s gloomy offspring.” In Hesiod, Chaos is the source of Erebus, Darkness, and Nyx, Night: “From Chaos Erebus and dark Night were born.”<sup>368</sup> Ginnungur’s gloomy offspring are therefore likely Darkness and Night, which in Norse lore are naturally linked inseparably with entities such as the Dark Elves. Consequently, in strophe 4 the worlds slip from the four cosmic Dwarves’ grasp and sink down into the clutches of personified Darkness and unending Night.

In *Völuspá* strophe 3 we hear of a *gap . . . ginnunga*, “gulf/gap . . . of chaos.” As West documents Ginnunga Gap linguistically matches the Greek Chaos and the variant Chasm, especially Aristophanes’ χάος ἦν.<sup>369</sup> As we saw from Hesiod, Chaos *gave birth* to Darkness and Night. Chaos is thus a divine *person*, even if an amorphous one. Wyatt has shown that on the basis of the laws of Hebrew poetic

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<sup>367</sup> See Dronke, p. 113.

<sup>368</sup> Quoted in West 2007, p. 354.

<sup>369</sup> West 2007, pp. 355-356.

parallelism we can conclude that in Genesis 1:2 Darkness is used as a title for the divine spirit:

<i>(w)h'r ş hyth thw wbhw</i>	(Now) the earth was chaotic and empty,
<i>wḥšk 'l-pny thwm</i>	and darkness (was) over the face of the deep,
<i>wrwḥ 'lhym mrḥpt</i>	and the spirit of God was brooding
<i>'l-pny hmym</i>	over the surface of the waters. <sup>370</sup>

In this verse, “darkness” over the depths corresponds to “the spirit of God” over the waters. Thus “darkness” and “spirit of God” are merely two ways of describing the same entity, just as is the case with the further pairs of “face” and “surface” on the one hand and then “deep” and “waters” on the other hand.<sup>371</sup> The “deep” and “the waters” correspond to the earlier-mentioned terms “chaotic” and “empty,” respectively.<sup>372</sup> This “spirit of God” is a title of the divine personified watery Chaos or Emptiness, a maternal womb that brings forth all of creation. Furthermore, according to Psalm 18:12, God’s covering and shelter are “Darkness.”<sup>373</sup> On the basis of this, Wyatt detects in Genesis 1:2 an allusion to God’s marriage with watery Chaos-Darkness.<sup>374</sup>

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<sup>370</sup> Wyatt 2005, p. 94.

<sup>371</sup> See Wyatt 2005, p. 95.

<sup>372</sup> Cf. Wyatt 2005, p. 97.

<sup>373</sup> Wyatt 2005, p. 95.

<sup>374</sup> Wyatt 2005, p. 99.

Chaos, Tōhu, as the personified Waters or Sea, Yāmîm,<sup>375</sup> who is none other than the ancient near eastern Chaos God Yam in a feminine mode, is portrayed as the foundation place of creation in Psalm 104:3: “who laid the beams of your chambers on Waters.”<sup>376</sup> This Chaos, Tōhu, is the Ti’amat<sup>377</sup> who is slain in the Babylonian *Epic of Creation*, from whose corpse the universe is constructed by Marduk, just as is the case with Ymir in the *Eddas*. This slaying of Ti’amat happens in what scholars call the primeval *Chaoskampf*,<sup>378</sup> and this topos resurfaces in the Norse myth of Ymir’s slaying, whose name, like that of the cognate Sanskrit Yama, reminds us of forms of Semitic words for water and seas (although the terms are not cognate), which in fact emanate from the slain Ymir’s corpse according to *Gylfaginning*.

All of the above should help clarify the second part of strophe 4 of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*. The poet is comparing the descent of the worlds to the setting of the sun, the idea being that the world is vanquished and threatened by primordial Chaos each time it is deprived of the sun at night. The solar horse Alsviður “often,” *opt*, “from above,” *ofann* (where of course the sun dwells, embodied here as Alsviður), fells, and often gathers up again what he has caused to fall. It should now be transparent what Alsviður fells and gathers up again, namely, the worlds spoken

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<sup>375</sup> See Wyatt 2005, p. 113.

<sup>376</sup> Cf. Wyatt 2005, p. 114.

<sup>377</sup> See Wyatt 2005, p. 204.

<sup>378</sup> See Wyatt 2005, p. 249.

of in the first part of strophe 4; however, here the worlds are inseparable from the sun, since both are bound to each other in an integral relationship.

Why strophe 4's distinct form *niþur* at Ginnungs / *niþi*, rather than *Völuspá* strophe 3's gap . . . *ginnunga*? This can be explained by the influence of a later *Völuspá* passage. In the *Hauksbók* Dwarf list we find grouped together in close proximity in the same strophe the Dwarf names *Niði*, *Norðri*, *Suðri*, / *Austri*, *Vestri*, after which four more names are listed, after which follow the names *Nípingr* and *Dáinn*. In the next strophe the names *Nípingr* and *Dáinn* are repeated, again together. This first of all confirms that *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 4 lines 1-2 do indeed allude to the four cosmic Dwarves *Norðri*, *Suðri*, *Austri* and *Vestri*. Second, the Dwarf name *Niði* has generated strophe 4's *niþi*, and if we read *Nípingr* as *Níþingr*, then this could be compared to strophe 4's *niþur*. In the next strophe in the *Hauksbók* Dwarf list we find the Dwarf name *Þráinn*, and then again in the next strophe the name *Dáinn* is repeated, so that we have the *Þráinn* and *Dáinn* of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 3, and in the same precise order as well. The name *Þráinn* does not appear in the *Codex Regius* Dwarf list.

The word *opt* supplies us with a necessary key to understand what is being imagined here, which is none other than the *regular* and *repeating* or *daily* (hence “often”) descent and rising of the sun. As Bergmann documents, *opt* (a later form for *upat*) means “over and over,” “repeatedly.”<sup>379</sup> At sunset the world is plunged into darkness, and the poet experiences this quite literally as the world's descent into the primordial darkness. Rupp concluded correctly, or at least half so (we're not quite

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<sup>379</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 217.

sure of why he speaks of “clouds”): “Alsviður, the solar steed, lets the clouds often sink, and the same steed often raises it (namely, the sun) up again.”<sup>380</sup> If Rupp had mentioned the worlds together with the sun, then he would have gained a more comprehensive exegesis of the strophe.

Already in 1797 Cottle saw an allusion to the four cosmic Dwarves in strophe 4: “Duergi, the Dwarfs who sustained the heavens. Their names were North, East, West, and South. They are represented as scarce able to sustain the weight of the falling Heavens.”<sup>381</sup> Cottle immediately quotes Ovid: “*Atlas en ipse laborat! Vixque suis humeris candentem sustinet axem.*”<sup>382</sup> That *Atlas laborat*, “labours,” “works,” reminds us of strophe 1’s *Alfǫður orkar*. Is Óðinn therefore sustaining the world in great labour against the onslaught of a premature winter?

If strophe 4 alludes to the four cosmic Dwarves of *Gylfaginning* 8 who hold up the four corners of the world, then could this somehow be correlated with Óðinn’s ravens Huginn and Muninn who according to *Gylfaginning* 38 each day are sent out to the same four corners of the world? As Rupp expresses it, these two ravens are the “embodiment” of “Óðinn’s thoughts.”<sup>383</sup> We suspect Rupp is correct in his comment on *Gylfaginning* 38’s “I fear for Huginn if he does not return,” where he suggests that Huginn’s delay might be seen by the Gods as “a sign of the impending

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<sup>380</sup> Rupp, 315.

<sup>381</sup> Cottle, p. 197; pp. 195-211.

<sup>382</sup> In Cottle there is a typographical error in his Ovid quotation, namely, *er ipse* instead of the correct *en ipse*.

<sup>383</sup> Rupp, p. 314.



downfall of the world.”<sup>384</sup> Perhaps, therefore, ravens are hovering somewhere in strophe 4’s background in of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*.

The four cosmic Dwarves who hold up the world grow in significance in light of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*’ concentration on Iðunn, who is a descendant of Dwarves, *alfa ęttar*, according to strophe 6,<sup>385</sup> and because of the story of Iðunn as guardian of the golden apples of immortality. We recall that in Greek sources Atlas once abandoned his task of holding up the world so that he (or Herakles according to some variant versions of the tale) could steal some of the golden apples of immortality guarded by the Hesperides, who are often considered to be Atlas’ daughters. Now if we compare the four Norse cosmic Dwarves to Atlas, then this opens up the possibility that strophe 4 may presuppose that the Dwarves are weakening in their task because someone has stolen or is about to steal the apples of immortality guarded by Iðunn, a *descendant* (compare the Hesperides as *daughters* of the cosmic support Atlas) of the same race of the Dwarves who hold up the world. We may therefore have here independent parallel Greek and Norse treatments of an ancient story regarding the cosmic supporter/s and the apples of divine immortality, a mytheme cognate to the mead of immortality also accentuated in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*.

With the four Norse cosmic Dwarves we may also compare the four supra-angelic “living creatures” who support the divine throne-chariot in Jewish sources, a configuration that goes back to Ezekiel 1, where in verse 10 we find the following

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<sup>384</sup> Rupp, p. 314.

<sup>385</sup> The word *alfa*, Elves, must be understood as Dark Elves, that is, Dwarves; see Lassen, p. 98.

description of the four cherubim: “As for the likeness of their faces, each had the face of a man in front; the four had the face of a lion on the right side, the four had the face of an ox on the left side, and the four had the face of an eagle at the back.” The divine throne-chariot, *merkabah*, functions here as a symbol for the heavens, the upper world. By contrast, it would seem that the lower world is supported by two Leviathins, a male and a female, as a recent study by Orlov details.<sup>386</sup> Quite intriguingly in later Arabic sources informed by Jewish lore the divine *merkabah* becomes transformed into the world tree. For instance, we read the following in the tales of Bulukiua in the *1001 Arabian Nights*:

[H]e came to a vast meadow over which he walked observing that it was traversed by seven streams and abounded in trees. He was struck by its beauty and in one corner thereof he saw a great tree and under it four Angels. So he drew near to them and found the first in the likeness of a man, the second in the likeness of a wild beast, the third in the likeness of a bird and the fourth in the likeness of a bull, engaged in glorifying Almighty Allah. . .<sup>387</sup>

These four angels are undeniably the four cherubim of Ezekiel 1, and this confirms that the tree here is a transformation of the celestial throne-chariot. This implies that the divine chariot and the world tree are more or less symbolically

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<sup>386</sup> Orlov, pp. 314-315.

<sup>387</sup> Burton, p. 323.

interchangeable and thus equivalent. Ibn al-‘Arabī describes the world tree as inhabited by four celestial angelic-like birds,<sup>388</sup> and this is to be interpreted as another Arabian transformation of Ezekiel’s *merkabah* and its four cherubim. The idea that a chariot, which is usually drawn by a *horse* or horses, could be thought of as a tree makes sense not only in light of a chariot’s wooden construction, but also in light of the Hindu (see *Bhagavad-Gita* Book 15:1: “Exalted the root, lowly the branch, Where dwells the steed [*ashvattha*], the tree said to be eternal”)<sup>389</sup> and Norse traditions that associate the world tree with a celestial steed. The four Norse Dwarves who hold up the world can be thought of as supporting Yggdrasill, since the latter symbolizes the world.

In the commentary to strophe 2 and in Excursus II we have documented an influence upon *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* from the Gnostic work known as *Pistis Sophia*, a text that has, according to Rooth, influenced the apocalyptic battle scene in *Völuspá*.<sup>390</sup> In the commentary on strophe 2 we suggested that strophe 4 may allude on one level to the idea of transmigration as envisaged and formulated in *Pistis Sophia*. The activity of the solar steed *Alsviður*, “All-Swift,” in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* 4, where he often fells and re-gathers worlds deserves closer scrutiny:

opt Alsviður	Often Alsviður
ofann fellir,	fells (the worlds) from above,

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<sup>388</sup> See Jaffray.

<sup>389</sup> Translation from the Sanskrit by Samuel Zinner.

<sup>390</sup> See Rooth, pp. 87, 239.

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opt of *follnum*            often what is fallen

aptur safnar.            he again gathers (up).

The idiom composed of *aptur*, that is, again or back, and *safnar*, “gathers,” therefore, “re-gathers,” in strophe 4 means by implication “re-gathers *up*,” since it complements the contrastive *fellir*, “fells,” and *follnum*, “what is fallen.” In *Grímnismál* strophe we read that *Árvakr ok Alsviðr / þeir skulu upp héðan / svangir sól draga*, “Árvakr and Alsviðr / shall draw up, / hungry, the sun.” The trope of descent and ascent is natural for both the sun and a solar steed. The myth of the sun and its two steeds is given in *Gylfaginning* 11 and 12:

11 Then said Gangleri: “How does he govern the course of the sun or of the moon?” Hárr answered: “A certain man was named Mundilfari, who had two children; they were so fair and comely that he called his son Moon, and his daughter Sun, and wedded her to the man called Glenr. But the gods were incensed at that insolence, and took the brother and sister, and set them up in the heavens; they caused Sun to drive those horses that drew the chariot of the sun, which the gods had fashioned, for the world’s illumination, from that glowing stuff which flew out of Múspellheim. Those horses are called thus: Early-Wake and All-Strong;<sup>391</sup> and under the shoulders of the horses the gods set two wind-bags to cool them, but in some records

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<sup>391</sup> Note by Samuel Zinner: “All-Swift” is a better explanation of the name.

that is called ‘iron-coolness.’ Moon steers the course of the moon, and determines its waxing and waning. He took from the earth-two children, called Bil and Hjúki, they that went from the well called Byrgir, bearing on their shoulders the cask called Sægr, and the pole Simul. Their father is named Vidfinnr. These children follow Moon, as may be seen from the earth.”

12 Then said Gangleri: “The sun fares swiftly, and almost as if she were afraid: she could not hasten her course any the more if she feared her destruction.” Then Hárr made answer: “It is no marvel that she hastens furiously: close cometh he that seeks her, and she has no escape save to run away.” Then said Gangleri: “Who is he that causes her this disquiet?” Hárr replied: “It is two wolves; and he that runs after her is called Skoll; she fears him, and he shall take her. But he that leaps before her is called Hati Hródvitnisson. He is eager to seize the moon; and so it must be.”

Thus the solar steed *Alsviðr* of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 4 is associated with the chariot of the sun. The combination of the themes of descent (*fellir*, “fells,” and *follnum*, “what is fallen”) and implied ascent (*aptur safnar*, “re-gathers,” that is, gathers *up* again) together with an implied chariot may give us echoes of the mytheme of the ascent, usually perplexingly called a descent, to the divine chariot, the *merkabah*, in Jewish mysticism. This tradition had been integrated directly from

Judaism into Gnostic theology, and finds reverberations not only in *Pistis Sophia*, but in several other Gnostic texts as well.<sup>392</sup> The ascent to the divine chariot usually involved an ascent in reaction to a threat, which is followed by an act of enthronement for the one who has ascended, during which a new name is given, and sometimes the building of a temple is involved as well. Of course by itself the thematic constellation of a solar steed's chariot and the descent-ascent contrast is not sufficient to suggest any allusion to the *merkabah* ascent. However, in Gnostic tradition the merkabah ascent has been integrated into a framework related to the figure of Sophia, whose own fall is relevant to the imagery of the fallen Iðunn in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*. Fallon has brought attention to a shared tradition in the two Nag Hammadi texts known as *The Nature of the Archons* and *On the Origin of the World*. In both of these texts a Sophia-related figure assists the fallen God Sabaoth after his repentance to be enthroned. In this scene, both of the texts have clearly applied the *merkabah* ascent-enthronement paradigm to the figure of Sabaoth.

In the *Nature of the Archons*, we read that Sophia and Zoe (Wisdom and Life) “caught up” Sabaoth from the primordial waters of Chaos to the seventh heaven “and gave him charge” of the seventh heaven and the forces of Chaos.<sup>393</sup> Thus the proximity of Ginunngur, *chaos*, and Alsviðr, the steed of the sun's *chariot*, who causes worlds to *descend* and *ascend* in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophes 3 and 4 becomes more meaningful. Additionally, the trope of giving charge is paralleled

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<sup>392</sup> For documentation that Jewish merkabah traditions entered Gnosticism directly from Judaism rather than via the New Testament, see Fallon, throughout.

<sup>393</sup> See Fallon, p. 38.

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earlier in strophe 2's skylde gejma and mattkat veria. Strophe 5's well of Mímir may perhaps be compared to the paradise streams often seen during merkabah ascents, and strophe 6's mention of the fallen wise Goddess being called by the name Iðunn may perhaps give us some distant echo of the bestowal of the new name in the *merkabah* ascent/descent traditions. Additionally, the emphasis on Iðunn's former luminous dwellings and present nocturnal dwellings may tie into the *merkabah* traditions of the building of a temple or shrine.

In the Gnostic texts explored by Fallon, Sabaoth is the son of the abyss, that is, Chaos. This agrees with *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 4's Ginnungs niþi, "offspring of Chaos," which although in a plural form reminds us of what is usually an alternative name for Sabaoth, namely, Yaldabaoth, which means "Offspring of Chaos."<sup>394</sup> In *On the Origin of the World*, we read that Sabaoth is the son of Yaldabaoth, and that after Sabaoth received authority or charge in the seventh heaven, the forces of Chaos became jealous, enraged and "troubled" and wage war against Sabaoth. Perhaps we might see something of this turbulence in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 5's instability of earth and sun, and the unending poison streams of air.

With regard to Sabaoth being "caught up," Fallon writes: "First of all, we note that the term 'to catch up' or 'to snatch up' (ΤΩΡΠ ΕΖΡΔΙ ἀρπάζειν) is used in apocalyptic contexts for the translation to heaven. . . . or for the mystic rapture of the

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<sup>394</sup> See Fallon, p. 31.

visionary. . . .”<sup>395</sup> With regard to Sabaoth’s being given charge over the seventh heaven, Fallon writes that “underlying the Coptic usage ΚΑΘΙCΤΗΜΙ ΕΧΝ is the Greek idiom καθίστημι ἐπί ‘to place in charge of.’”<sup>396</sup>

Gnostic idiom might also shed light on why in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 10 Iðunn’s dwelling-place, home or shrine is called “world,” for the Gnostics upon occasion used the word κόσμος in the sense of “dwelling-place,” as in the Gnostic textual statement from *On the Origin of the World*, “they all received a world (κόσμος) of the church (ἐκκλησία) of righteousness and unrighteousness, since it stands over creation.”<sup>397</sup> Here the term “world” is clearly used in the sense of “dwelling-place” such as a shrine, temple, synagogue or church building. Here the shrine-like structure is connected to the merkabah enthronement process, and may be compared to the references to Iðunn’s dwelling-place/s in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*. As Fallon explains, in merkabah texts the divine throne can be replaced with the chariot.<sup>398</sup> But because the tree of life was thought of as the divine throne (especially in 1 and 2 Enoch), a tree may replace the throne or chariot as well, and we think immediately not only of Alsviðr’s implied chariot, but of the world tree of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 6 as well.

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<sup>395</sup> Fallon, p. 38.

<sup>396</sup> Fallon, p. 41.

<sup>397</sup> Cited in Fallon, p. 112.

<sup>398</sup> Fallon, p. 54.



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However, the world tree in strophe 6 does not appear out of nowhere. The poet has been preparing the way for its appearance already in strophe 2 by means of the allusion to Urðr's well beneath Yggdrasill, but especially in strophe 4's ascent-descent topos. Although we will explore the passage in more detail later in this commentary, we will offer a few observations here on *Hávamál* strophe 139, to which *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 4 deliberately and artfully alludes. In the comparison below we split *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 4 line 6 into two lines in order to facilitate the comparison with the *Hávamál* material.

*Hrafnagaldur Óðins* 6

*Hávamál* 139

Dugir með dvergum.

Dvina heima,

niður at Ginnungs

nýsta ek niðr

niði sækva;

opt Alsviður

ofann

nam ek upp rúnar / æpandi nam

fellir,

fell ek

opt of follnum

aptur safnar.

aftr þaðan.

First we will observe that strophe 4's heim should be expanded to heima, not to heimar. As Bergmann explains, “Instead of *heimar* (which was deduced, by

incorrect interpretation, from the preceding *dvína*), we are to read the genitive plural *heima* (dependent on *dugir*).<sup>399</sup> We are thus to divide the two lines as follows: *Dugir, meþ dvergum, dvina heima*, “the strength of the worlds dwindles/wanes among the Dwarves.”

It makes eminent sense that the poet of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* has here changed a tradition concerning the world tree into one about “worlds,” *heima*, because the world tree is after all a symbol of the Norse cosmos collectively. Here the “worlds” denote especially the upper regions where the sun dwells. This same usage of *heim* is found in strophe 11’s contrast between *Heliar* and *heimz*, “of Hel” and “of the world.” This agrees with the same contrast we find in strophe 6 of *Baldurs draumar* between *Hel*, *hæliv*, and *hæimi*, which must mean “upper world,” the world above Hel.<sup>400</sup> In the very next *Hávamál* strophe, 140, *Óðrerir* is mentioned, which tells us that 140 has contributed to *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 2’s *Oðhrærer*, not to mention the same strophe’s *rúnum*. We should also mention that strophe 2’s *dvina*, “dwindle,” “wane,” contrasts well with the nearby *Hávamál* strophe 141’s *vaxa*, “waxed,” a synonym of the same strophe’s *frævask*, which means “was made fruitful,” even “was pollinated.”

The basic background of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 4 is the story of Óðinn looking *down* from the tree and lifting *up* the runes, after which he *falls down, fell aftr*, that is, from the tree. (He falls to the ground where he is then pollinated and begins to wax strong and grow, which is another upward image). To confirm the

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<sup>399</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 100.

<sup>400</sup> See Bergmann 1875, p. 100.

connection between the two texts even further, we can now identify the source of strophe 6's *með dvergum* as *Hávamál* strophe 143's Óðinn með ásum / en fyr alfum Dáinn / Dvalinn ok dvergum fyrir, "Óðinn among the Gods, Dáinn for the Elves, Dvalinn also for the Dwarves." These are all the quintessential experts of the runes among their respective groups. What is more, strophe 143 then continues by listing the rune expert par excellence among the Giants, Ásviðr, a name almost identical to strophe 4's *Alsviþur*, that is, *Alsviðr*, All-Swift. Throughout *Vafþrúðnismál* the Giant *Vafþrúðnir* is repeatedly called *alsviðr*, "all-wise." Of course the solar steed name *Alsviðr*, All-Swift, and the adjective *alsviðr*, "all-wise," are actually the same word. The wiser one is, the swifter they will be in their thinking. Thus in French *alerte* means both "alert" and "swift." We need only mention now that the name *Dáinn* surfaces in the preceding strophe 3 of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*. Regarding the name *Asviðr*, Bergmann points out that the line's alliteration requires the form *Dásviðr*, "Most Highly Wise,"<sup>401</sup> which would then be basically the same in meaning as *Alsviðr*, All-Wise:

Óðinn með Ásum reist,      enn fyr Alfum Dáinn,  
Dvalinn ok Dvergura fyr,      Dásviðr lǫtnum fyr.<sup>402</sup>

Who is this enigmatic *Dásviðr*? He must be someone as famous in the tradition as his compatriots in runic expertise as Óðinn, Dáinn and Dvalinn. Given

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<sup>401</sup> Bergmann 1877, p. 240.

<sup>402</sup> Bergmann 1877, p. 235.

the connection here with the runes we do not see how Dásviðr could be anyone other than the Mímir whose famed well of wisdom is mentioned in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 5, and who to Óðinn speaks “wisely,” *fróðligt*, of runes, *stafi*, in *Sigrdrífumál* 14.

Thus *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 4 Óðinn’s looking *down* from the tree and lifting *up* the runes, and his subsequent *falling down*, *fell aftr*, that is, from the tree, has been applied to the sinking and rising of the sun and of the worlds. We have to reckon with the possibility that in strophe 4 *Alsviður* might simultaneously refer to the solar steed as well as somehow to Mímir, who, if he is a specialization of the chaos Giant Ymir, would then be connected to strophe 4’s offspring of Ginunngr, among whom may be Mímir, offspring of Ymir. Now, in the *Sigrdrífumál* Rune Song, Mímir actually refers to the solar steed *Alsviður* by name. Thus the linking of *Alsviður* and Mímir in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophes 4 and 5, shortly after strophe 2’s reference to runes, has a parallel in pre-existing traditions, both in *Hávamál*’s *Dásviður/Asviður* and in *Sigrdrífumál*’s *Alsviður*. At the very least, if one does not want to emend *Asviður* to *Dásviður*, the former should then be emended to the *Alsviður* we find in the parallel rune account in *Sigrdrífumál*.

In *Hávamál* strophe 139, *fell ek aftr þaðan* means “fell down,” not “fell back.” Finnur Jónsson in his *Lexicon Poeticum Antiquæ Linguæ Septentrionalis* renders *fell . . . aftr* into Danish as *falde . . . ned*, “fell down.” Similarly in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 4 *aptur safnar*, literally, “back/again gathers,” is an idiom that means “gathers up,” which then becomes parallel to *Hávamál* strophe 139’s *nam . . . upp*, “took up,” that is, Óðinn picked/lifted up the runes, just as *Alsviður* lifts up the

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worlds. *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 4's background in the story of Óðinn falling from the world tree explains why then in strophe 5 Mímir and his well "suddenly" appear. And lastly, this background indicates clearly that strophe 6's image of Iðunn falling off from Yggdrasill is patterned after Óðinn's fall from the windswept world tree in *Hávamál*. Indeed, the windy weather associated with death on Yggdrasill in *Hávamál* strophe 139 has probably contributed to *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 5's stream of poison air.

### Strophe 5.

Strong stand not / seashore and sun: *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 5's *stendur æva*, "stands ever," is obviously inspired by *Völuspá* strophe 19's *stendr æ*, and strophe 5's *strind ne raþull* are patterned after *Völuspá* strophe 3's *sandr né sær*. *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 5's *stendur æva* "stands ever." However, as Bergmann writes: "The manuscripts give only *stendr æva strind*; but the three-syllable *stendr æva* does not form a full half-verse, which requires at least four syllables. For *stendr æva* I therefore set, for completeness, *stendr æva fast*. The word *fast* fell out because during listening or writing *fa* (in *fast*) with *va* (in *æva*), and *st* (in *fast*) with *st* (in *strind*) have been collapsed into each other, so that out of *æva fast* only *æva strind* incorrectly remained."<sup>403</sup> The seashore symbolizes the earth, the sun stands for the heavens. This immediately gives us a clue as to the meaning of what precedes strophe 5 at the end of strophe 4. There what is felled and gathered up again will be the earthly and heavenly worlds supported by the four cosmic Dwarves, but as

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<sup>403</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 100.

symbolized by the seashore and the sun. Strophe 4 mentions what is “felled,” *fellir*, but since this verb most naturally is used to describe the felling of trees, we may see in it an allusion to Yggdrasill, another symbol of the cosmos.

Storm wind and lightning / cease not in the stormy stream: *lopte meþ lævi / linnir ei straumi*. The term *lopte* should be emended to *lopti*, the instrumental of *loptr*.<sup>404</sup> There may be an allusion here to *Völuspá* 25: “Who in sky spread evil suffering?” *hverjir hefði loft allt lævi blandit*. Already in ancient Mesopotamia we find bad dreams likened to bad weather or smoke, as a text from Butler illustrates, wherein “unpleasant sleep” is “like smoke with which the heavens get filled.”<sup>405</sup>

Bergmann interprets *strind* as the sea or seashore (cf. German *Strand*) and *raþull* as the golden red sun, both representing “poetic expressions.”<sup>406</sup> He continues: “*Lopti* is the instrumental of *loptr* (the air . . .), and denotes the air-driven wind, and here the storm wind.”<sup>407</sup> In *meþ lævi*, “*lę* denotes poetically the dangerous fire, and here specifically the destructive lightning.”<sup>408</sup> With *lęvi* cf. *Thebaid* 1:646 *nubibus atris*, “poison cloud.”<sup>409</sup>

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<sup>404</sup> See Bergmann 1875, p. 101.

<sup>405</sup> Butler, p. 44.

<sup>406</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 100.

<sup>407</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 101.

<sup>408</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 101.

<sup>409</sup> Mozley vol. 1, pp. 388-389.

According to Bergmann, “*veri* is the weak form of *verr* (protector/guard), and denotes here . . . Óðinn as *Vera-týr*. . .”<sup>410</sup> Bergmann then proffers the following mythemic reconstructions:

The *confidence* [*pledge, surety*] (*vissa*) of Óðinn (*Vera*) is his insight and foresight, which are symbolized by his two eyes (the sunlight and moonlight), which symbolize both eyes of the sky (Týr). . . . However, according to the myth, Óðinn has pawned his right eye (the sunlight) to Mímir (who symbolizes the *northern* sky and the *northern* sea), and hid it in his famous great *well* (the sea). Therefore here the confidence/pledge of Óðinn denotes the sun which is hidden in the northern sea, or which descends into it.<sup>411</sup>

Bergman’s argumentation could be strengthened in the following manner. We know that *Grímnismál* has influenced *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* in other strophes. Here as well, *vissa vera* might be correlated with *Grímnismál* strophe 3’s *Veratýr vera*. What is more, we can now see a similarity between *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 18’s *Heilan Hangaty* and the following underlined elements of *Grímnismál* strophe 3:

Heill skaltu, Agnarr

allz þik heilan biðr

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<sup>410</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 101.

<sup>411</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 101.

### Veratýr vera

Additionally, strophe 18's drinking is paralleled in *Grímnismál* strophe 3's drykkjar, not to mention the same strophe's biðr, which we can correlate with strophe 18's baðu, all of which would arguably strengthen the argumentation presented above.

However, there is a much more helpful passage, namely, the final statement of *Vafþrúðnismál*, strophe 55, where the Giant Vafþrúðnir says to Óðinn: þú ert æ vísastr vera, "you are of all the wisest of beings." Here *vera* is a form of the plural *verar*, "men," but here with the sense of "persons," "beings," "entities." The chief difference between *Vafþrúðnismál*'s *vísastr vera* and *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*'s *vissa vera* is that the former is in the superlative, "wisest," while the latter is in the positive, "wise." *Vafþrúðnismál* strophe 55's *vísastr vera* is doubtless the source of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*'s *vissa vera*, but the latter has modulated its source by changing the underlying adjective *víss*, "certain," "sure," "wise," to the feminine substantive *vissa*, "certain knowledge," "certainty," "surety," a good synonym for "wisdom." Surety and certainty clearly overlap somewhat with the idea of "pledge," as in the pledge of Óðinn's eye. The meaning of *vissa vera* is therefore something like "the solid wisdom of mortals," "the certitude of men." The wisest of beings has been transformed to the wisdom of beings, but *vissa vera* involves an objective genitive, that is, in the well is reliable wisdom for beings. Naturally there is an element of subjective genitive as well, since this wisdom for beings is the wisdom of Óðinn, derived from his insightful and wise detached eye.



On *vissa vera* Lassen writes: “So the meaning of ‘vissa vera’ here could possibly be ‘the wise being,’ ‘certain existence’ or perhaps ‘secure existence.’ The idea is maybe that secure existence is hidden in Mímir’s spring, or in other words humanity’s knowledge of the future life is concealed.”<sup>412</sup> Lassen wonders if the wise person alluded to here might be Iðunn.<sup>413</sup> However, as we have just shown, *viss vera* means knowledge/wisdom of (= for) beings, or in outdated parlance, sure wisdom for men. In short, here *vissa* is the noun *vissa*, not the adjective *víss*.

We are to understand *vissa vera* as the wisdom for beings that subsists in the form of Óðinn’s eye. If one wishes to understand it as “wise being,” then one could argue on the basis of strophe 2’s personification of Óðrerir, that *vissa vera* is a similar personification of Óðinn’s eye abiding in Mímir’s well, an eye which of course becomes wise and insightful bestowed by the mead of wisdom.

In the Qumran text *4Q417* we read of “the mystery of existence,” which is closely associated with the topos of “wisdom,” since according to this text wisdom comes from examining “the mystery of existence.”<sup>414</sup> We maintain that “the mystery of existence” is a title for the Torah, since *4Q417* exhorts “[day and night meditate on the mystery of ex]istence,”<sup>415</sup> which is an allusion to Psalm 1:2, “and in his Torah does he meditate day and night.” Significantly, verse 3 continues, “And he shall be like a tree planted by streams of water,” which shows us just how traditional is the

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<sup>412</sup> Lassen, p. 98.

<sup>413</sup> Lassen, p. 97.

<sup>414</sup> See Martínez, p. 869.

<sup>415</sup> Martínez, p. 859.

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association of trees with water, which is paralleled also in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 5's well and strophe 6's tree Yggdarasill. In the same section of 4Q417 we read, "And this is the vision of meditation and a book of remembrance."<sup>416</sup> Thus we also have a parallel to *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 5's well of memory or remembrance, if we see in Mim an allusion to memory. 1QS X speaks of "source/fountain of understanding," מקור דעת. In 1QS XI we learn that from the divine fountain come hidden wisdom and a light that enables one to see "the mystery of existence." Thus it may be that the mystery of existence is itself hidden in the luminous fountain or spring of knowledge, which would give us a striking parallel to *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 5's "certain/secure existence" (accepting that interpretation), which is hidden (or hides itself) in Mímir's well. *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 5's combination of negative weather, namely, poison air currents in streams, and the positive well of Mímir, matches 1QH<sup>a</sup> XVI's account where God "hides" the "concealed mystery" of the "sacred branch" and "protect[s] its fruit," "so that the flame of the searing fire [will] not [reach] the spring of life, nor with the everlasting trees will it drink the waters of holiness. . . ."<sup>417</sup> We then read of "clouds," but the text is fragmentary, so that we do not know if they are beneficial or threatening.

Strophe 5's evil *straumi*, "stream," forms a connective link that generates the word *brunne*, "spring," but the two words are deliberately used; it is not as if the second word arose only by accident of suggestion. On the contrary, the poet from

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<sup>416</sup> Martínez, p. 859.

<sup>417</sup> Martínez, p. 181.

the beginning had a story to tell, and not merely to create out of whole cloth *ex nihilo*. The mythic link between the two words and their respective lines is the idea that the poison streams of air are now threatening to pollute Mímir's spring. The poison streams of air can also be understood with reference to weather omens. One thinks of Assyro-Babylonian omens involving thunder, lightning, rain, fog and wind.<sup>418</sup>

Bergmann informs us that the trope “*vitip enn eða hvað?*” is used “when after the narration of important events, one wishes to transition to even more important matters, or to the main point.”<sup>419</sup> However, this formula has an even more profound function in strophe 5, for if we read it as a connective link with strophe 6, then we can detect in it the first major evidence in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* that in this poem Iðunn is being portrayed as a *Völva*, like the one who speaks a similar refrain throughout *Völuspá*. Strophes 5 and 6 are also linked by means of Mímir and Yggdrasill, since elsewhere the world tree is called Mímir's Tree (*Fjölsvinnsmál* 20).

### Strophe 6.

*Dvelur i dolum*; literally, “dwelling in the depths,” or deep dales/valleys. The dwelling in lower depths connects the line thematically with the later sinking down from Yggdrasill.

Line 2's *dys forvitinn* is significant for a variety of reasons. Etymologically a *dys* (*dís*) is a Goddess, but also an insightful person, the classic example of the latter

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<sup>418</sup> See Gehlken.

<sup>419</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 101.

being an oracle, a Prophet or Prophetess. The term *forvitinn* means, according to the standard dictionary definition, “curious,” which in a prophetic context would basically refer to the idea of one who enquires into the unknown, often with regard to the future, but into hidden information pertaining to the past and present as well. Lassen thus renders *dys forvitinn* straightforwardly as “enquiring goddess.” Insight of course also has nuances of wisdom, and *forvitinn* brings to mind *forvitri*, “very wise.” Indeed, she is called *vitri* in strophe 11, “wise offspring of the Gods,” which basically restates in synonymous terms strophe 6’s *dys forvitinn*.

Now, the term *forvitinn* immediately leaps out at us because shortly the Gods will begin their own enquiry into Iðunn’s own wisdom and foresight into the future. Now we can appreciate the link between strophe 6’s *dys forvitinn* and strophe 5’s concluding “*vititþ enn eþa hvaþ?*” which is the refrain used by a *Völva*. When we keep this in mind, then the implication of strophe 5’s conclusion and strophe 6’s opening is that even before the Gods begin their enquiry of the *Völva* or *Völva*-like Iðunn, she has spoken her last, already with strophe 5’s “*vititþ enn eþa hvaþ?*” Lines 5-8 of strophe 5 (and likely lines 1-4 as well) are thus to be read as a statement made by the *Völva* Iðunn, who being insightful must have foreseen her fall from *Yggdrasill* on the basis of the clues supplied by the events narrated in strophes 1-4.

However, to arrive at a more fundamental grasp of the Old Norse word *forvitinn* in strophe 6, we must not stick slavishly to the dictionary definition. As we show in the commentary to strophe 8, strophe 6’s *forvitinn* is actually derived from the Latin adjective *provida* found in *Thebaid* 10:639. The Latin verb *providere* is composed of the elements *pro-* and *videre*, literally “fore-see.” The adjective *provida*

means literally, fore-seeing, and generally, “wise,” “prudent,” “sagacious.” In *Thebaid* 10 the adjective *provida* describes the Goddess, *diva*, named Virtus, which may be rendered Virtue, Valour, Power. The Latin word *diva*, Goddess, is of course mirrored in the Old Norse *dís* (*dys*), Goddess, of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 6 line 2. In *Thebaid* 10 the Goddess Virtue descends to earth and assumes the appearance of the oracle Manto, daughter of the blind seer Tiresias, and as such she is described in the phrase *provida Manto*, “foresightful Manto,” “wise/sagacious Manto” (*Thebaid* 10:639). Thus in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*’ *forvitinn* we are to see the Latin *pro-* (= for-) and *vid-* (= vit-).

This opens up a whole new line of exegesis, for now we can recognize in the wise Iðunn’s fall from the world tree possible traces of the ancient Gnostic mytheme of the fall of Sophia, a tale that was formed on the basis of combining a number of ancient near eastern traditions as old as the *Gilgamesh* epic with later Greco-Roman tropes.<sup>420</sup> We explore the possible influences of the Gnostic mytheme of the fallen Sophia upon *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* in Excursus II.

In *Thebaid* 10, the Goddess Virtue descends to earth and assumes the appearance of the oracle Manto, and she exercises *fraude* (line 640), that is, guile, deception or fraud in order to gain credence among humans. In an insightful comment on strophe 8, Bergmann recognized that just as the God Óðr (Wind) became a Giant after being hauled off to Jötunheim, so Iðunn in the land of the Thurses is transformed into a Jötun-like seeress.<sup>421</sup> Similarly, in the Book of

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<sup>420</sup> See Albright 1920 Goddess.

<sup>421</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 135.

Proverbs, the holy Lady Wisdom, the equivalent of the Greek Sophia, is essentially just another side of the same book's whorish Lady Folly. The bright celestial Earth Goddess, Lady of the spring, Iðunn, is just another aspect of the same Goddess as the winter Giant trapped in Jötunheim.

As we document in the commentary on strophe 8, Iðunn's tragic fall from the celestial heights of Yggdrasill's upper branches was created by a deliberate and stark modulation of the glad descent of the Goddess Virtue to earth in *Thebaid* 10:632ff. There Virtue descends with a sword from Jupiter's presence, implying his throne, in order to inspire a human self-sacrifice in the context of war. We will cite a portion of the text in translation at this point (in the commentary on strophe 8 we supply the complete passage along with the Latin original):

The goddess Virtue, close companion of the throne  
of Jove, whence rarely she is wont to be vouchsafed  
to the world and to bless the earth, whether the  
almighty Father hath sent her, or she herself hath  
chosen to dwell in men worthy of her—how gladly  
then did she leap down from the heavenly places !  
The shining stars gave way before her, and those  
fires that she herself had fixed in heaven; already  
she treads the earth, nor is her countenance far  
distant from the sky. . . . the sword was laid aside, and

she took instead the prophet's wand. . . .<sup>422</sup>

This is quite similar to Wisdom 18:14-16, a text we also explore at length in the commentary to strophe 13:

14 For while gentle silence enveloped all things,  
and night in its swift course was now half gone,  
15 thy all-powerful word leaped from heaven, from  
the royal throne,  
into the midst of the land that was doomed,  
a stern warrior  
16 carrying the sharp sword of thy authentic command, and stood and filled  
all things with death,  
and touched heaven while standing on the earth. (RSV)

Significantly, in the Book of Wisdom the masculine divine Logos, Word, who comes from God's throne, is purely synonymous with the feminine divine Sophia (see Wisdom 9:1-3, 10, 12). Therefore Wisdom 18's sword-bearing Word can be substituted with the sword-bearing Sophia who leaps down from heaven to bring death, just as does the sword-bearing Goddess Virtue or Valour in *Thebaid* 10. The similarities between the Wisdom 18 and *Thebaid* 10 passages are striking. Part of the reason for this may be a mutual influence upon these two texts from Homer's

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<sup>422</sup> Mozley vol. 2, pp. 365, 367.

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*Iliad* 4:443ff,<sup>423</sup> where we read of Strife, “indeed, she was small; first she raised her head, but after this she placed her head in the sky while treading on earth. . . .Then she plunged into the midst of the fray. . . .”<sup>424</sup>

One of the classic texts of personified Lady Wisdom’s descent is from 1 Enoch 42, where she is contrasted with (we would argue, her alter ego) Lady Iniquity:

1 Wisdom found no place where she might dwell;

Then a dwelling-place was assigned her in the heavens.

2 Wisdom went forth to make her dwelling among the children of men,

And found no dwelling-place:

Wisdom returned to her place,

And took her seat among the angels.

3 And unrighteousness went forth from her chambers:

Whom she sought not she found,

And dwelt with them,

As rain in a desert

And dew on a thirsty land. (R. H. Charles version)

Interestingly, the very first thing we read of after this in 1 Enoch 43:1 are sentient, personified “lightnings and the stars of heaven,” identified as the righteous,

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<sup>423</sup> See the note in Mozley vol. 2, p. 366, where he suggests this Homer passage as the inspiration behind Thebaid’s descent of the Goddess Virtue.

<sup>424</sup> Our translation, as literal as possible, from the Greek.



which bring to mind *Thebaid* 10's "The shining stars gave way before her, and those / fires that she herself had fixed in heaven," which are mentioned during Virtue's descent, and which according to Mozley are "the spirits who for their virtue had been made divine. The stars were supposed to be the abode of such, or even the spirits themselves."<sup>425</sup>

1 Enoch 42 is patterned after the earlier 1 Enoch 39:4-5:

4 And there I saw another vision, the dwelling-places of the holy,  
And the resting-places of the righteous.

5 Here mine eyes saw their dwellings with His righteous angels,  
And their resting-places with the holy.

And they petitioned and interceded and prayed for the children of men,  
And righteousness flowed before them as water,

And mercy like dew upon the earth:

Thus it is amongst them for ever and ever.

Just as Lady Iniquity is associated with rain and dew in 1 Enoch 42:3, so in 1 Enoch 39:5 it is personified Righteousness or Justice (quite close semantically to Statius' *Virtus*, *Virtue*), another title of Lady Wisdom in 1 Enoch, who is linked to water and dew, suggesting that Lady Wisdom and Lady Iniquity are really just two aspects or perhaps phases of a single entity.

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<sup>425</sup> Mozley vol. 2, p. 366.

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Understanding Iðunn as the Goddess of Wisdom shows us now how strophe 5's image of Mímir's well of *wisdom* prepares the reader for strophe 6's *dys forvitinn*, "*wise Goddess*." As the Norse equivalent to Lady Wisdom, Iðunn may be intimately associated with fountains of wisdom, just as we read of Wisdom in 1 Enoch 48:1:

And in that place I saw the fountain of righteousness  
Which was inexhaustible:  
And around it were many fountains of wisdom:  
And all the thirsty drank of them,  
And were filled with wisdom,  
And their dwellings were with the righteous and holy and elect.  
(R. H. Charles version)

Notice the linkage in 1 Enoch 48:1 between fountains of wisdom and dwelling-places; this brings to mind *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* sequence of fountain of wisdom (strophe 5) and strophe 7's plural former better dwellings of Iðunn. 1 Enoch 48:2 goes on to refer to the celestial Son of Man being named before the sun and stars were made, which calls to mind *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 5's sun and strophe 6's naming of Iðunn by Ívaldur's descendants:

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2 And at that hour that Son of Man was named In the presence of the Lord of Spirits,

And his name before the Head of Days.

3 Yea, before the sun and the signs were created,

Before the stars of the heaven were made,

His name was named before the Lord of Spirits. (R. H. Charles version)

There is certainly no literary connection between 1 Enoch and *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*, but the similarities between the two texts do suggest that we can understand Iðunn against the background of ancient near eastern tropes of the Wisdom Goddess. In this context we should mention the ancient connection between not only wisdom and fountains or wells, but also between wisdom and trees. *Völuspá* strophe 19 mentioned the world tree, and then almost immediately after this strophe 20 mentions the deep wisdom of the Norns, derived from the water beneath the tree Yggdrasill. In 1 Enoch 32 Genesis' tree of the knowledge of good and evil is called "the tree of wisdom," whose fruit is eaten by the angels, but when Adam and Eve ate from it, "they learnt wisdom and their eyes were opened, and they knew that they were naked and they were driven out of the garden" (1 Enoch 32:6).

This raises the question as to whether in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins'* story of Iðunn's fall we might detect parallels to the tale of Eve being punished by God and driven from Eden because of her gaining of wisdom. According to the Gnostics, Eve's punishment was entirely unjust, and similarly in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* Iðunn's fall is not considered a punishment for any act of injustice on her part. First we note

strophe 5's trope of wisdom followed immediately in strophe 6 by Iðunn's fall from the world tree. Strophe 7 emphasizes that Iðunn's new dwelling-place does not please her. In strophe 8 the Gods supply Iðunn's with a wolf hide, which might be correlated with Genesis 3:21's God who supplies the fallen Adam and Eve, now cast out of Eden, with animal skins for clothing. God then curses the woman with sorrows (in child bearing), which perhaps might be compared to Iðunn's sorrow. It is here than any possible parallels to the Genesis story end, unless we want to invoke strophe 13's thorn, which is mentioned in Genesis 3:18.

Ívaldr appears as Ívaldi in *Grímnismál* 43. One of the possible meanings of the name may be Eternal Wielder.<sup>426</sup> In all likelihood Ívaldi is actually but a shortened form of Íðvaldi, so that the name of father and daughter would share the same initial component, Íð-. Íðvaldi would mean eternal, that is, repeating (in the sense of "continuing," "continual") wielder/ruler, as Íðunn means eternal (repeating/continual) love. Similarly, Iðavöllr does not mean a prosaic "Field of Activity," but denotes the Gods' Eternal Field, even Everlasting Field (it is not destroyed by Ragnarøk, since it is present even in the new earth). Old Norse *-völlr* corresponds rather precisely to the Greek πεδίον, "plain," and arguably *Iða-* could be semantically similar to a certain degree to Greek Ἠλύσιον, Elysian, among whose possible meanings is the notion of incorruptibility, which significantly overlaps with "recurring," "eternal." The main difference between the Elysium plain of Greek

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<sup>426</sup> See Bergmann 1875, p. 102. Other possibilities are "Yew Wielder" (*eibenwalter*; see *ibid*).

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mythology and the Norse mythic *Iðavöllr* is that the first is the dwelling of immortal humans, whereas the second is for the Gods.

Strophe 6's "Dvelur i dolum," "dwells in deep dales/valleys" and "Yggdrasils fra aski hniginn," "fallen from the ash Yggdrasill," as well as strophe 7's related

Eyrde illa	She ill endured her
ofann komu,	descent;
har baðm undir	beneath the tall tree,
haldin meiði	bound under the wood.

are in all likelihood patterned after the similar tradition in the *Hávamál Rune Song*:

139 I know that I hung (hekk) on the windy tree (vindgameiði),  
Hung there for nights full nine (á nætr allar níu);  
With the spear (geiri) I was wounded (undaðr), and offered (gefinn) I was  
To Óðinn, myself to myself (sjalfur sjalfum mér),  
On the tree (á þeim meiði) that none may ever know  
What root beneath it runs.

140 None made me happy (sældu) with loaf (hleifi) or horn (hornigi),  
And there below I looked (nýsta ek niðr);  
I took up (nam ek upp) the runes (rúnar), shrieking (æpandi) I took them  
(nam),  
And forthwith back I fell (fell ek aftr þaðan).

In the *Rune Song* Óðinn triumphantly declares “ok ek drykk of gat ins dýra mjaðar, ausin Óðreri,” “and I got a drink of the precious mead out of Óðrer,” which agrees with *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 2’s Oðhrærer and strophe 5’s “Mímir’s famous (męrum) well.” Note how the *Rune Song* refers to the “frægja syni Bølporns,” “the famous son of Bølporn,” who is likely Mímir, by using a synonym of *męrum*. Additionally, the *Rune Song*’s “ok fróðr vera,” “I got wisdom,” reminds us somewhat of strophe 5’s “wisdom,” “knowledge,” *vissa*. Continuing on, the *Rune Song*’s “ok gerðu ginnregin / ok reist Hrofr rogna” “and fashioned by the Gods/Powers, and carved by the God Hroptr,” parallels *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 10’s “Rognir ok reiginn,” “God and the Gods.” Moreover, the divine name Hroptr surfaces in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 23. Although *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 19’s divine name Bølverkur is not attested in the *Hávamál Rune Song*, nevertheless it does surface in the nearby *Hávamál* story (strophes 104-111) of Óðinn’s acquisition of the poetic mead in strophe 109. In Snorri’s retelling of this story in *Skáldskaparmál* 4-6 Bølverkur becomes a shape-shifter who turns himself into a snake in order to obtain the sacred mead. This may be compared with Iðunn’s shape-shifting skills in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 8 where she takes on the appearance of a wolf. As for *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 18’s divine name *Hangatýr*, “Gallows God,” this is implicit in the *Rune Song*’s story of Óðinn’s self-sacrifice on the gallows-tree Yggdrasill. The same strophe 18 contains the word *sumbli*, which also surfaces in *Hávamál* strophe 110. *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 15’s *mun þo miþur*, “a lot of words,” reminds us of *Hávamál* strophe 104, *męrgum orðum męlta*, “I spoke many

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words.” *Hávamál* strophe 111’s *Urðarbrunni* ties in the story with *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 2’s *Óðhrærir* and *Urðr* as well as strophe 5’s *Mimis brunne*. Lastly, the divine *rúnum*, runes, of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 2 also connect *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* with the *Hávamál Rune Song*. This combined evidence suggests that Iðunn’s fall from Yggdrasill in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* is based on the story of Óðinn’s self-sacrifice on Yggdrasill and his falling off from it.

In view of this situation, although thematically more distant, nevertheless we might detect in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 4 some remote influences from the *Rune Song* of a chiefly verbal category. In strophe 4, worlds “dwindle,” *dvina*, the worlds “sink down,” *niþur sakva*, “to Ginnungur Gloom,” and the celestial steed “ofann fellir,” “fells from above” and “aptur safnar,” “gathers up” the “follnum,” “fallen.” This paradigm involving falling and rising is comparable semantically to the *Rune Song*’s own emphasis on falling and rising. In passing it is worth remarking that “dwindle,” *dvina*, contrasts well with the *Rune Song*’s “Þá nam ek frævask ok fróðr vera ok vaxa ok vel hafask,” “Then I became fertile/fruitful, and got wisdom, I waxed/throve and was well.” What is more, *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 21’s errand is “futile,” *-leysa*, a semantic opposite to at least a limited degree of the *Rune Song*’s “fertile/fruitful,” *frævask*. Finally, strophe 26’s *risu*, “rose,” and *upp nam*, “lifted up” might be relevant as well.

The data we have presented above may help with the general understanding of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*’s mythemic background. It would seem to be the case that it contrasts Óðinn’s fruitful sacrificial quest for runic wisdom and foresight with Iðunn’s fruitless striving for words of prophecy and wisdom (see strophe 20).

The juxtaposition of *ellri yngsta*, “older,” “elder,” and “youngest,” represents a traditional trope concerning the Gods and humans especially in ancient near eastern sources.<sup>427</sup>

Uhland gives a “seasonal” or “climatic” interpretation of the myth of Iðunn and her golden apples known from the *Prose Edda*. Iðunn represents spring who is stolen by Thiaszi, who is none other than winter itself. Spring is banished from the forests, that is, the leaves fall from the trees in winter and rest on and in the ground, just as Iðunn falls from Yggdrasill to dwell in deep dales.<sup>428</sup> Loki the falcon transforms Iðunn into a nut, representing seeds in general, seeds from which new plant life will grow when spring returns.<sup>429</sup> Thiaszi’s eyes, thrown to the sky as stars by Thor, are a constellation that heralds the departure of winter.<sup>430</sup>

Uhland notes a few folkloric parallels to the Iðunn myth. Among these is a Swedish folksong known as the *Raven Rune*, which is similar to a Danish song. In this piece we hear of a clever raven who carries a message from a woman captive in a faraway land to her father. The woman is returned to her father by a supernatural horse that glides over the sea, which reminds Uhland of Óðinn’s flying horse Sleipnir.<sup>431</sup>

There is among what are called the Swedish-Danish *folkevisern*, a similar lay called *Om ungen Sveidal, Ungen Svjedal*, whose name also appears in variants such as

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<sup>427</sup> See West 2003, p. 294.

<sup>428</sup> Uhland, p. 70.

<sup>429</sup> Uhland, p. 71.

<sup>430</sup> Uhland, p. 71.

<sup>431</sup> Uhland, p. 76.



Svedal, Svendal, Svedendal, Svegder and Silferdal.<sup>432</sup> Beginning with Bugge, this lay is usually seen as cognate to the story contained in *Svipdagsmál*, that is, *Grógaldur* and *Fjølsvinnsmál*. However, *Om ungen Sveidal* undeniably accords in several striking ways with the basic archetype of the Blackfoot and Tewa stories, explored in the Introduction to our commentary on *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*, concerning the theft of a wife and her retrieval by means of magic implements supplied by a third party. These Blackfoot and Tewa stories offer impressive parallels to both *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* and to *Skáldskaparmál*'s story of Þjazi's abduction of Iðunn and of her retrieval by Loki.

The similarities between the ballads of *Young Svjedal* and the stories in *Grógaldur* and *Fjølsvinnsmál* show us that the latter were not invented ex nihilo. Similarly, the similarities between the ballads of *Young Svjedal* and *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* and *Skáldskaparmál* indicate that the basic story contained in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* did not emanate solely out of a late poet's imagination. We give here Smith-Dampier's translation of the lay from a Danish version:

1 It was he, young Sveidal,  
Was playing at the ball;  
The ball flew into the maiden's breast,  
And her cheeks grew white withal.  
Choose thy words well!

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<sup>432</sup> See Jordan, p. 519.

2 The ball flew into the maiden's bower,  
And after went the swain,  
And or ever he left the bower behind  
She dreed full bitter pain.

3 "Oh, never shouldst thou venture  
To throw thy ball to me!  
There sits a maid in a far-off land  
A-longing after thee.

4 "Oh, ne'er shalt thou seek slumber,  
And never rest shalt know,  
Until thou hast loosed the lovely maid  
That long hath lain in woe!"

5 It was he, young Svejdal,  
Wrapped him in cloak of vair,  
And to the hall betook him  
To seek the captains there.

6 "Now sit in peace, my captains,  
And pledge your healths in mead,

Whiles I fare forth to the grave-mound  
To seek my mother's rede!"

7 It was he, young Svejdal,  
That loud did cry and call,  
Till the marble-stone was rent and riven  
And the mound was nigh to fall.

8 "Oh, who is it that wakes me?  
Who calls with cry so bold?  
May I not lie and sleep in peace  
All under darksome mould?"

9 "It is I, young Svejdal,  
Only son o' thine !  
And all I ask is counsel good  
From thee, dear mother mine.

10 "My sister and my stepmother  
Have made me pale and pine,  
All for a lovely lady  
That ne'er I saw with eyne."

11 “I will give thee a palfrey  
Shall serve thy need, I ween!  
He can go as well o’er the salt sea-swell  
As over the land so green.

12 “A sword I will give thee also,  
Is tempered in dragon’s blood,  
And it will shine like a burning brand  
When thou ridest the darksome wood.”

13 It was he, young Svejdal,  
That spurred his steed so free ;  
Forth he rode thro’ darksome wood  
And over the wide sea.

14 It was he, young Svejdal,  
That rode ‘twixt sea and land;  
And he was ‘ware of a herdsman there  
That drove his flock to the strand.

15 “Lithe and list, good herdsman,  
And speak thou sooth to me!  
Who is it owns the flock so fair

Thou drivest down to the sea?"

16 "Oh, a maiden there is in this countrie

Lies spellbound in dule and pine,

All for a swain hight Svejdal

That never she saw with eyne."

17 "And knowest thou where the maiden dwells,

Then hide it not from me !

Whenas I am king of all this land

A knight I'll make of thee."

18 "Oh, yonder under the linden green

There stands my lady's hold;

The towers are all of the marble grey,

And the doors are decked with gold!

19 "The towers are all of the marble grey,

And the doors are decked with gold!

Full seven years are over and gone

Since she did sun behold.

20 "There stands a bear by my lady's bower,

And a lion so fell to see,  
But art thou Svejdal in very sooth  
Thou shalt pass by them free.”

21 Forth he fared, young Svejdal,  
And up to the hold he went;  
All the locks that held it  
Were riven asunder and rent.

22 The bear and the lordly lion  
They followed him from the door;  
The linden with all its silvery leaves  
Bowed down to earth before.

23 The linden bowed adown to earth  
With every silver leaf:  
And up she stood, the maiden proud,  
That long had lain in grief.

24 Up she waked, the maiden proud,  
When she heard the spurs a-ringing:  
“Now thanks be unto God in heaven  
Who help to me is bringing!”

25 In he went, Sir Svejdal,  
That was both young and fair;  
It was the haughty maiden  
That hailed his entrance there.

26 “Welcome to thee, young Svejdal,  
Thou noble lord of mine!  
Now praised be God in heaven  
Hath loosed us from pain and pine!”  
Choose thy words well!<sup>433</sup>

In this lay, the maiden is bound in sorrow inside a royal structure, but this is merely a mythic variation on the theme of the lady bound beneath a tree, as in *Hind Etin* and the *Exeter Book's* “The Wife’s Complaint.” The linden tree that bows to earth<sup>434</sup> is a vestige of the world tree still apparent in *Fjolsvinnsmál*, where it is

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<sup>433</sup> Smith-Dampier, pp. 98-102. Danish text in Olrik/Falbe-Hansen, pp. 48-51.

<sup>434</sup> In the version discussed by Grimm, the tree bows because it withers, together with its foliage and the grass underneath the tree, on account of the young hero’s powerful magic. This version also says that in front of the maiden’s gate were twelve “red gold” bears; see Jordan, p. 521. The trope of “red gold” is common in Old Norse sources relating to the world tree and the sacred mead. Of course, *Hrafnagaldur*

portayed as the tree of Menglǫð. Additionally, this descent of the world tree, bowing down to the ground in deference to the bound maiden, is ultimately a replacement for the trope of the maiden who has fallen from the tree onto and underneath the ground. We can also now deduce that the topos of the maiden fallen from the tree and imprisoned beneath it in the netherworld has also been displaced to the beginning of both the ballad version and to the introductory story in *Grógaldur*, where Svipdag raises his dead mother Gróa, like a Vǫlva, from her grave-mound. The name Gróa is quite fitting for an Iðunn-like figure, since it means Growing.

Gróa's husband was Aurvandill, one of whose frozen toes was cast to the sky and turned into a star by Þórr, which is but a variation on the story of Óðinn casting Þjazi's two eyes into the sky and turning them into stars, an act incorrectly ascribed to Þórr in the present reading of *Hárbarðsljóð* strophe 19, where Þjazi is referred to as Alvalda sonar, "the son of Alvaldi," that is, Ǫlvaldi, "Ale-Wielder" (on the name, see below), whose name sounds suspiciously like Aurvandill in certain respects. Iðunn's father's name, Ívaldr, "Eternal Wielder," mentioned in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 6, also sounds suspiciously like Ǫlvaldi. We should not overlook that we learn from *Skáldskaparmál* that the story of Gróa and Aurvandill apparently formed the first part of Þjóðólfr's *Haustlǫng* poem, the second section being none other than the story of Þjazi's abduction of Iðunn. Þjóðólfr's *Haustlǫng* calls Gróa the ǫl-Gefjun, "ale-Gefjun."

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*Óðins* strophe 6 presupposes that Yggdrasill is withering as the result of winter's arrival, as Simrock, p. 374 points out.



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The Danish ballad's linden world tree is that of a bound maiden, and this indicates that Menglǫð and Iðunn are but two variations of a single mytheme. Menglǫð is in a sense bound by the tree, where she sits in silence together with nine silent maidens, all as in a dream, within her courtyard awaiting her lover Svipdagr, like Iðunn beneath Yggdrasill awaiting Bragi. That Menglǫð is really Iðunn is indicated by *Fjolsvinnsmál*'s placing her upon Mount Medicine, where her two wolf hounds guard, according to an emended text, the old-age cure, which would be none other than Iðunn's apples (see our commentary on strophe 12 for details). What is more, according to the same strophe, those who are healed on Mount Medicine are those with *árs sótt*, "death-sickness," which fits well with the trope of "old-age cure."

Tales such as are preserved in "Young Svejdal," "The Wife's Complaint" and other cognate pieces can be categorized under the general heading of the enchanted maiden. A Danish ballad related to "Young Svejdal" is known as *Jomfru i Fugleham*, "Maiden in Bird Shape," and was translated by Smith-Dampier under the title "The Enchanted Maiden." In *Jomfru i Fugleham* the proverbial enchanted maiden has been hexed and turned into a hind of the forest. She is pursued by a man who is quite enamoured of her; the hind escapes by changing herself into a bird and flying onto a tree to escape her pursuer. This maiden previously had seven other maidens, who have all been hexed and turned into wolves that pursue their former lady. We cannot help but think of the more or less enchanted and banished Iðunn of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* who used to dwell high in a tree, but has fallen from it to a lower estate (strophes 6-7). She changes herself into a wolf (strophe 8) and then is visited by three Gods who ride upon wolves. Her transformation into a falcon makes us

think of Loki's form as a falcon when he rescued Iðunn in the form of a nut or swallow.

The maiden with seven other maidens of the Danish ballad remind us as well of *Fjolsvinnsmál's* Menglǫð and her nine maidens. In the Danish ballad, hind and hart dwell by the "fairest trees" of earth, recalling Yggdrasill and the four harts that gnaw at it according to Norse lore. The ballad's maiden, after she is loosed from her spell, is said to have lily-white arms, which call to mind Gunnlǫð as the "lady of white arms," *hvítarmri konu*, in *Hávamál* strophe 161. A yeoman tells the young man that only with the bait of fresh flesh of a tamed being will he be able to make the falcon fly down from the tree. The man therefore rips a piece of his own flesh off and uses it as bait. The ballad's maiden is then revealed in her golden hair, which reminds us of Sif, whose golden hair, let us not forget, was made by the sons of Ívaldi, the father of Iðunn. Even after the maiden is transformed into a hind she has gold beneath her breast.

We now supply Smith-Dampier's translation of *Jomfru i Fugleham*:

### The Enchanted Maiden

Oh, well I wot where the greenwood grows

That standeth beside the firth,

And in it there grow the fairest trees

That a man may see on earth!

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Therein the willow and linden grow,  
The fairest a man may find,  
And under them play the lordly beasts  
That men call hart and hind.

There they play, both hind and hart,  
And the beasts of the fair forest,  
And there she plays, the lily-white hind,  
With gold beneath her breast.

1 It was Nilus Erlandsson  
Rode forth the deer to take;  
There he saw the lily-white hind  
That ran thro' bush and brake.  
—So the knight hath won his lady.

2 After went Nilus Erlandsson  
That longed for her so sore;  
But never might he reach the hind  
For three days' space and more.

3 Snares he set on every path  
Where'er the hind might go,

But all so cunning was she

He might not take her so.

4 Sir Nilus thro' the greenwood

Rode after her in vain;

His hounds he loosed by two, by three,

To run her down amain.

5 So hot the hounds went on her trail

That never might she 'scape ;

She changed her all by grammarye

And fled in a falcon's shape.

6 She shaped her as a falcon fleet.

And perched in the linden green;

Under the tree Sir Nilus stood

And sighed for toil and tene.

7 Sir Nilus took an axe in hand

To fell the linden-tree,

When out there sprang a yeoman fierce

That smote the shaft in three.

8 “And wilt thou fell my father’s wood

And all by wrongful power,

I swear to thee, Nilus Erlandsson,

Thou shalt abyè it sore !”

9 “Now let me fell this single tree,

This tree alone of thine,

For, but I take the falcon fair,

I die of dule and pine !”

10 “Now lithe and listen, thou fair young knight,

To the counsel that I bring;

Ne’er shalt thou take her until she taste

The flesh of a tamèd thing!”

11 A gobbet he hewed from out his breast,

(And that was, mickle pain!)

She spread her wings and down she flew

And fell on the bait amain.

12 She spread her wings and down she flew

And on the bait she fell;

She changed her shape to the fairest maid

That ever tongue might tell.

13 She stood in a sark of silk so red

Where the linden-tree did blow;

The knight he took her in his arms.

And there she wept her woe.

14 “Oh, I sat and broidered lily and rose,

I guided my father’s gear,

When in she came, my false stepdame.

That never held me dear.

15 “She shaped me all as a lily-white hind

To run in fair greenwood,

And my seven maidens as seven wolves.

And bade them have my blood.”

16 The maid stood under the linden-tree.

And loosed her golden hair.

And thither they came that erst were wolves,

Her seven maidens fair.

17 “Now thanks to thee, Nilus Erlandsson,

Hast loosed me from sore alarms!

Never shalt thou seek slumber

But in my lily-white arms.

18 “Now thanks to thee, Nilus Erlandsson,

Hast saved me from pain and pest!

Never shalt thou seek slumber

But on my lily-white breast.”

—So the knight hath won his lady.<sup>435</sup>

Looking at the ballad *Jomfru i Fugleham* through the prism of its parallels such as “The Wife’s Complaint,” “Young Svejdal,” *Exeter Book* Riddles 88 and 93 (discussed in our Excursus III) *Fjølsvinnsmál* and *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*, we can see in the hind of *Jomfru i Fugleham* possible traces of an archaic indigenous conception of the ancient deer Goddess associated with the world tree, a topic explored in Excursus III. This brings to mind a variant version of the Yokuts myth of Condor Steals Falcon’s Wife examined earlier in this study. In the variant, “Deer-Hoarder/Condor Steals Woman and Boys,” a female hawk “kept deer impounded in a hill.”<sup>436</sup> Condor is then shot and burned (like Þjazi in *Skáldskaparmál*), and “his

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<sup>435</sup> Smith-Dampier, pp. 128-131. Danish text in Olrik/Falbe-Hansen, pp. 45-48.

<sup>436</sup> Gayton and Newman, p. 78.

eyes flew out and became condors"<sup>437</sup> (cf. Þjazi's eyes becoming stars in *Skáldskaparmál*).

Some important elements in *Jomfru i Fugleham* find parallels in the *Kalevala*. We have already seen how Rune 19's story of the giant eagle abducting the fair maiden of the castle corresponds to the story of Þjazi's abduction of Iðunn. However, already in Rune 10 we find reverberations of the Þjazi-Iðunn legend.<sup>438</sup> Here Louhi, the hag of Pohjola (Northland) fulfils the role of Þjazi who blackmails Väinämöinen, who parallels Loki, to lure the eternal smith Ilmarinen, who equals Iðunn, to a spot in the forest to see a wondrous tree, which is a fitting symbol for the supposed jewel-like apples that Loki lied about to Iðunn. The background of the story is that Väinämöinen had found himself trapped in Pohjola, and his only way back home was to promise Louhi that he would send Ilmarinen to Pohjola to forge the Sampo for her. After being sent back home for this purpose Väinämöinen urges Ilmarinen to go to Pohjola to gaze upon the beautiful fair maiden, the daughter of Louhi, and to marry her. Ilmarinen refuses to ever go to the dismal, murderous north. Väinämöinen expected such an answer, and so had previously created, by means of magic singing, a wondrous tree nearby, described in Rune 10:31-42 in terms worthy of the Norse Yggdrasil upon which dwelt Iðunn in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*:

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<sup>437</sup> Gayton and Newman, p. 78.

<sup>438</sup> Frog 2010, pp. 122-126 examines various interconnections between the Þjazi-Iðunn tale and *Kalevala* Rune 10.



Then the aged Väinämöinen,  
Spoke aloud his songs of magic,  
And a flower-crowned birch grew upward,  
Crowned with flowers, and leaves all golden,  
And its summit reached to heaven,  
To the very clouds uprising.  
In the air the boughs extended,  
And they spread themselves to heaven.  
Then he sang his songs of magic,  
And he sang a moon all shining,  
On the pine-tree's golden summit;  
And the Great Bear in the branches.<sup>439</sup>

Given the connection between Iðunn and Yggdrasill, we are not surprised when Väinämöinen describes Louhi's daughter to Ilmarinen in terms reminiscent of the world tree-like pine he had fashioned through magic (Rune 10:89-92):

From her temples shines the moonlight,  
From her breasts the sun is shining,  
And the Great Bear from her shoulders,  
From her back the starry Seven.<sup>440</sup>

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<sup>439</sup> Kirby vol. 1, p. 94.

<sup>440</sup> Kirby vol. 1, pp. 95-96.

Later comes the fateful moment when Väinämöinen lures Ilmarinen out to see the tree (Rune 10:113-150):

Then the aged Väinämöinen  
Answered in the words which follow:  
“There is wonder after wonder;  
There’s a pine with flowery summit,  
Flowery summit, leaves all golden,  
Near where Osmo’s field is bordered.  
On the crown the moon is shining,  
In the boughs the Bear is resting.”  
Said the smith, e’en Ilmarinen,  
“This I never can believe in,  
If I do not go to see it,  
And my own eyes have not seen it.”  
Said the aged Väinämöinen,  
“If you cannot then believe it,  
We will go ourselves, and witness  
Whether true or false the story.”  
Then they both went forth to see it,  
View the pine with flowery summit,  
First walked aged Väinämöinen,  
And smith Ilmarinen second.

When they reached the spot they sought for,

On the edge of Osmo's cornfield,

Then the smith his steps arrested,

In amazement at the pine-tree,

With the Great Bear in the branches,

And the moon upon its summit.

Then the aged Väinämöinen,

Spoke the very words which follow:

""Now thou smith, my dearest brother,

Climb and fetch the moon above us,

Bring thou, too, the Great Bear shining

On the pine-tree's golden summit."

Then the smith, e'en Ilmarinen,

Climbed aloft into the pine-tree,

Up he climbed into the daylight,

Climbed to fetch the moon above him,

And the Great Bear, shining brightly,

On the pine-tree's golden summit.<sup>441</sup>

Next Väinämöinen magically summons the winds to carry off Ilmarinen (=Iðunn) to Pohjola to Louhi (=Bjazi). Väinämöinen has saved his own head, like Loki. The image of Ilmarinen =Iðunn at the treetop reminds us of the bird maiden at

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<sup>441</sup> Kirby vol. 1, pp. 96-97.

the treetop in *Jomfru i Fugleham*, and even that ballad's young lover who wants to fell the tree to capture the bird reminds us of the *Kalevala*'s Väinämöinen as a feller of trees.

Once in Pohjola, Ilmarinen forges the Sampo, to the great pleasure of Louhi (Rune 10:423-432):

Now rejoiced the Crone of Pohja,  
And conveyed the bulky Sampo,  
To the rocky hills of Pohja,  
And within the Mount of Copper,  
And behind nine locks secured it.  
There it struck its roots around it,  
Fathoms nine in depth that measured,  
One in Mother Earth deep-rooted,  
In the strand the next was planted,  
In the nearest mount the third one.<sup>442</sup>

This brings to mind *Fjolsvinnsmál*, where we read of the rooster Viðófnir (which is actually Óðinn in bird form) who dwells atop of the world tree. We are told in strophe 26 that there is only one weapon, called Lævatein, fashioned by Loki (Lopt), that could drive Viðófnir to Hel:

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<sup>442</sup> Kirby vol. 1, p. 104.

Lævatein is it called, | that Lopt with runes  
Once made by the doors of death;  
In Lægjarn's iron chest | by Sinmora lies it,  
And nine locks fasten it firm. (Bellows, modified)

To return now to Uhland, the second source he discusses as a parallel to *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* is the Scottish tale of May Margaret and Hind Etin. Uhland interprets Margaret as spring and the Giant as winter. The story's parallels to the Iðunn myth are indeed striking. While sitting in her tower combing her golden hair, Margaret is lured out to a forest to pick nuts. She is abducted by a Giant (literally, "Hind Etin") who binds her to a tree with her locks of hair and threatens her with a miserable death. He rips a tree out of the ground, creating a hole where he imprisons Margaret until she is willing to go away with him. In sorrow she lies on her back on the cold earth. She eventually agrees to live with the Giant, and over several years bears him seven sons. The eldest son frees Margaret from her captivity, returning her to her father and even achieves a reconciliation between the father and the Giant.<sup>443</sup>

We fail to see any meaningful similarity between *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 6 and following and Vergil's *Aeneid* VI:390ff., as Lassen avers:<sup>444</sup>

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<sup>443</sup> Uhland, 75.

<sup>444</sup> Lassen, p. 24.

quisquis es, armatus qui nostra ad flumina tendis,  
fare age, quid venias, iam istinc et comprime gressum.  
umbrarum hic locus est, somni noctisque soporae:  
corpora viva nefas Stygia vectare carina.  
nec vero Alciden me sum laetatus euntem  
accepisse lacu, nec Thesea Pirithoumque,  
dis quamquam geniti atque invicti viribus essent.  
Tartareum ille manu custodem in vincla petivit  
ipsius a solio regis traxitque trementem;  
hi dominam Ditis thalamo deducere adorti.

Whoso thou art that comest to our river in arms, O tell me, even from there, why thou comest, and check thy step. This is the land of Shadows, of Sleep and drowsy Night; living bodies I may not carry in the Stygian boat. And in truth it brought me no joy that I took Alcides in his journey o'er the lake, or Theseus and Pirithoüs, though sons of gods and invincible in valour. The one by force sought to drag into chains, even from the monarch's throne, the warder of Tartarus, and tore him off trembling; these essayed to carry off our queen from the chamber of Dis.<sup>445</sup>

As far as *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 6's components that are derived from the *Völuspá* poem, we can compare the two as follows:

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<sup>445</sup> Fairclough, pp. 532-533.

<i>Hrafnagaldur Óðins 6</i>	<i>Völuspá</i>
dvelur i dolum	dala (19)
dys forvitinn	vitandi (20)
yggdrasils fra	yggdrasill (19)
aski hniginn	ask, falla (19)
alfa ęttar	
iþune hetu	héto (20, 22, applied to Urð and Heiði respectively)
ivaldz ellri	
yngsta barna	børnom (20)

*Völuspá* strophe 19's statement that Yggdrasill standr æ . . . grœnn, "stands ever . . . green," strikes one as being in tension with *Völuspá* strophe 45's description of Yggdrasill as aldna tré, "the old tree," to which is applied the term standandi, "standing." This juxtaposition of youth and antiquity reminds us somewhat of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 6's ellri and yngsta. We can add to this that *Völuspá* strophe 57 paints a picture of the Gods in the new earth discussing Yggdrasill (for moldþinur mátkan as the world tree rather than the world serpent, see our commentary on *Völuspá* strophe 57) á lðavelli, on lðavøll, whose lða- component is cognate with the name lðunn.

*Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 6's depiction of lðunn falling from Yggdrasill and dwelling in the dales or valleys is obviously patterned after *Völuspá* strophe 19's account of Yggdrasill from which drop down the dews in the dales. This suggests

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that *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 6 is portraying Iðunn as a Goddess who personifies dew. She is thus like the ancient near eastern Goddess Talaya, Dew (or Dewy). In other variants the dew was personified as a male offspring of the chief God and the Goddess Dawn, remnants of which we can still clearly detect in Psalm 110:3-4.<sup>446</sup> That she is being thought of as the Goddess Dew who is born of two more ancient divinities explains why strophe 6 then goes on to relate Iðunn's birth or ancestry. It may be that here Yggdrasill functions as her father, and perhaps strophe 5's Mímir's well performs the role of her mother (or alternatively, the well of Urðr who appears earlier in strophe 2, though this is the less likely choice).

There is yet another traditional correlation we can draw between *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 7's *harþápm*s, "tall tree," from which Iðunn falls (like dew) into the dales, *dolum*, of strophe 6. In paper manuscripts of *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks konungs* we read:

hrafn byggir há fjöll,	a raven dwells in the high fells,
ðogg fellr í djúpa dali. <sup>447</sup>	the dew falls in a deep dale.

Earlier in the same saga we encounter the following:

Hrafn flýgr austan	A raven flies east
af hám meiði	from a tall tree.

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<sup>446</sup> See von Nordheim.

<sup>447</sup> Petersen, p. 41.



An informed listener from the time of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* would thus conceivably have thought of ravens when hearing of Iðunn falling from a tall tree into dales.

The trope of “deep dale” is found in *Hárbarðsljóð* as well. In strophe 18 Hárbarðr, who is Óðinn in disguise, boasts of having known seven wise sisters who dug out earth out of dales deep, *ór dali djúpum*. In the very next strophe Þórr responds to this by boasting that he killed the Giant Þjazi, who of course is known from the story of Iðunn’s abduction. Þórr then boasts

upp ek varp augum	up I threw the eyes
Alvalda sonar	of Alvalda’s son
á þann inn heiða	into the bright
himin	sky.

MS S reads not Alvalda but Qlvalda, and the latter in *Skáldskaparmál* is said to be the father of Þjazi.<sup>448</sup> Bergmann points out that line 6, *himin*, is obviously incomplete. A word has therefore fallen out and must be restored. Because according to tradition it was Óðinn, not Þórr, who threw Þjazi’s eyes to the sky, Bergmann suggests the restoration *Allföðr*, therefore *Allföðr himin*. Additionally, Bergmann emends *ek*, “I,” to *ok*, “and,” so that the lines would read:

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<sup>448</sup> Bergmann 1872, p. 88.

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Ek drap Þjaza,	I slew Þjazi,
inn þrúðmóðga jötun	that fiercely intent Jötun,
upp ok varp augum	and up threw the eyes
Qlvalda sonar	of Qlvaldi's son
á þann inn heiða,	into the sky,
Allföðr, himin.	Allföðr, bright.

In any case, the reading Alvalda sonar, following the notice about seven sisters in dali djúpum, “dales deep,” and Iðunn’s abductor Þjazi reminds us of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 6’s Iðunn who dvelur i dolum, “dwells in dales,” she who is one of Ivaldz . . . barna, “Ívaldr’s children.” The suffix –vald in the names Qlvaldi, Alvadi and Ívaldr all mean the same thing, “powerful one,” “wielder.” Alvadi means “All-Powerful,” and Ívaldr signifies the “Eternally Powerful.” Although some scholars might understand Qlvaldi as meaning “All-Powerful,” surely Bergmann is correct to interpret the first component, Ql-, as “ale.”<sup>449</sup> Thus both Þjazi and his father Qlvaldi may be connected to the trope of the sacred mead; Þjazi because he abducts the wife of the God of mead and poetry, Bragi, and Qlvaldi who is the Ale-Wielder.

However, there is more. According to *Skáldskaparmál*, Qlvaldi was mjök gullauðigr, “very rich in gold.” When Qlvaldi died, his three sons Þjazi, Iði and Gangr strangely divided their gold inheritance by letting each one take as much gold as their individual mouths could hold. Bergmann rightly sees in this “gold” none other

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<sup>449</sup> Bergmann 1872, pp. 137-138.

than the sacred mead, since gold was a word used for mead, in part because both had a similar colour.<sup>450</sup> As Bergmann also points out, the name Gullveig means simultaneously both Gold-Power (cf. Gold Stout) and Gold-Ale or Gold-Beer.<sup>451</sup> Not only does Þjazi have a biographical connection to Iðunn, but the Giant's brother Iði's name is actually etymologically related to the first component of Iðunn's name, Ið-. The threefold division of the gold (= mead) among the tree Giant brothers after their father's death is but another version of the threefold division of the sacred mead into the three containers of Fjalar and Galarr that takes place after Kvasir's death.

With regard to strophe 18, Larrington suggests, in light of the sand and digging imagery, that the seven sisters may be waves, daughters of the sea-Goddess Ran.<sup>452</sup> But Larrington is unaware of what Bergmann points out concerning this passage, namely, that strophe 18's *þær ór sandi síma undu* and *ór dali djúpum grundum grófu* matches two known idioms for "to try to do something impossible," that is, it was impossible for the seven sisters to escape from Óðinn, although they did try to flee.<sup>453</sup> Therefore the imagery of sand and digging is not to be taken literally.

However, Bergmann does not ignore the imagery completely and ends up suggesting the seven sisters might be seven rock reefs.<sup>454</sup> We interpret the seven sisters as having some relation to a star constellation, perhaps the Pleiades, just as

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<sup>450</sup> Bergmann 1872, p. 138.

<sup>451</sup> Bergmann 1872, p. 138.

<sup>452</sup> Larrington, p. 272.

<sup>453</sup> Bergmann 1872, pp. 136-137.

<sup>454</sup> Bergmann 1872, p. 137.

the two eyes of Þjazi refer to stars (one of the summer constellations)<sup>455</sup> in the very next strophe.

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<sup>455</sup> See Bergmann 1872, p. 139.

## EXCURSUS II

### POSSIBLE TRACES OF THE Gnostic MYTHEME OF THE FALLEN SOPHIA IN *HRAFNAGALDUR ÓÐINS*

As we noted in the commentary to strophe 6, *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*' portrayal of Iðunn as a "wise Goddess" who falls from the world tree Yggdrasill to the dark depths of the netherworld reminds one of the classical Gnostic myth of the fall of Sophia from her dwelling-place of light to the darkness of the material world. A few Gnostic influences on Old Norse poetry is not out of the question. Steinsland has argued that *Skírnismál* exhibits features reminiscent of the classical Gnostic exegesis of Genesis' Adam and Eve story. These traditions would have been transmitted to Scandinavia via the Paulicians, whom Steinsland identifies as the *ermskir* mentioned in Norse sources.<sup>456</sup> Rooth has argued for an influence upon *Völuspá* from *Pistis Sophia*,<sup>457</sup> which probably contains the most extensive account of Sophia's fall in all of ancient Gnostic literature.

Sophia is an exalted figure in Gnosticism. As we read in the text *On the Origin of the World*, "Sophia received the universe. . . she made the sun and the moon. . ."<sup>458</sup> The text *Eugnostos* calls Sophia "the Mother of the Universe."<sup>459</sup> A text cognate with *Eugnostos* calls Sophia "the Mother of the Holy Angels."<sup>460</sup>

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<sup>456</sup> Steinsland 1990, p. 325.

<sup>457</sup> Rooth, pp. 87, 239.

<sup>458</sup> Robinson, p. 186.

In the classical version of Sophia's myth, the chief evil archon wanted to seize and sexually defile Sophia,<sup>461</sup> which calls to mind the evil Giant Þjazi who abducts Iðunn to make her his own. *Eugnostos* informs us that some call Sophia "Love," which may agree with one possible etymology of the name Iðunn, as Grambo explains:

We meet with the name Idun in a skaldic poem from about 800, *Haustlöng*. Etymologically one may explain the name on the basis of *id*, again, repeated, and on this basis arrive at the meaning, "she who renews." The last part *unnr* or *uðr* may be formed on the basis of the verb *unna*, "love," and certain scholars have therefore thought of Idun as a goddess of fertility. Apples as a means of fertility and longevity may be detected in various genres of folk poetry, as e.g. in folktales and ballads. Maybe . . . this particular idea originated in the Near East, the area from which the cultivated apple-tree came. One has wondered whether the motif of Idun's magical apples may have its origin in Ireland and perhaps been influenced by Jewish-Christian and classical sources there. Steinsland observes that the Celtic sources are very much younger than e.g., *Haustlöng*. She arrives at the conclusion that the myth of Idun's apples is an independent, indigenous product. The myth is an invariant. The myth explains why the gods possess eternal youth, and it is thus didactic and etiological. Categorically, Idun

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<sup>459</sup> Robinson, p. 231.

<sup>460</sup> See Robinson, p. 242.

<sup>461</sup> Robinson, pp. 120-121.

belongs to the same class as Freyja and Frigg, being related to Jörð. Perhaps she may be conceived of as the guardian goddess of the life-giving fruit of the other world. In a greater perspective she belongs to the class of the Eurasian mother goddess. Her being abducted by the trickster Loki<sup>462</sup> may well refer to her seasonal disappearance. This is in accordance with a well known pattern marked out by divinities disappearing in winter time.<sup>463</sup>

Sophia's fall was interpreted differently by various groups, but two main assessments emerged. One, influenced by Platonism, saw her fall as a punishment; the other saw her as innocent in her fall. The latter comes to expression in the *Apocryphon of John*:

And our sister Sophia (is) she who came down in innocence in order to rectify her deficiency. Therefore she was called Life, which is the mother of the living, by the foreknowledge of the sovereignty of heaven. . . . And through her they have tasted the perfect Knowledge. I appeared in the form of an eagle on the tree of knowledge, which is the Epinoia from the foreknowledge of the pure light, that I might teach them and awaken them out of the depth of sleep. For they were both in a fallen state and they

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<sup>462</sup> Note by Samuel Zinner: Actually Iðunn is abducted by Þjazi and rescued by Loki. Prejudices run deep when it comes to Loki.

<sup>463</sup> Grambo, p. 300.

recognized their nakedness. The Epinoia appeared to them as a light (and) she awakened their thinking.<sup>464</sup>

The Greek word *epinoia*, “thought” (roughly synonymous with Greek *ennoia*) is a rather precise equivalent of the Old Norse *hugur* and *hugi*. The trope of foreknowledge is semantically synonymous with the Latin *provida* and its Old Norse equivalent in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 6 line 2, *forvitinn*. In the *Apocryphon of John* Sophia’s fall is more of a salvific descent for the sake of others, as she works in concert with her male counterpart to restore fallen entities to their own former dwellings of light. The text *Trimorphic Protennoia* speaks of “the innocent Sophia.” The text refers to the chief archon, “that is, ‘Samael,’ ‘Yaltabaoth,’ he who had taken power; who had snatched it away from the innocent one (Sophia); who had earlier overpowered her who is the Light’s Epinoia (Sophia) who had descended, her from whom he (Yaltabaoth) had come forth originally.”<sup>465</sup> Later in the same work, Sophia’s male consort proclaims, “for behold I am coming down to the world of mortals for the sake of my portion that was in that place from the time when the innocent Sophia was conquered, she who descended. . . .”<sup>466</sup> The text contains another reference to Sophia’s innocence: “[I] am the Light that illumines the All. I am the Light that rejoices [in my] brethren, for I came down to the world [of] mortals on

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<sup>464</sup> Robinson, p. 118.

<sup>465</sup> Robinson, p. 515.

<sup>466</sup> Robinson, p. 516.



account of the Spirit that remains [in] that which [descended] (and) came forth [from] the innocent Sophia.”<sup>467</sup> This is spoken by the feminine (really, androgynous) figure called Protennoia, First-Thought, who is essentially a specialized version of Sophia, although the two are not to be simplistically identified with each other exhaustively.

According to a basic paradigm, Sophia was linked to the primordial waters of chaos in a variety of ways, depending on the text in question. In one version when she gazed into the waters, a shadow appeared that became the demiurge.<sup>468</sup> In a variant, in the text *On the Origin of the World*, we read the following scenario:

Sophia let fall a droplet of light, it flowed onto the water, and immediately a human being appeared, being androgynous. That droplet she molded first as a female body. Afterwards, using the body she molded it in the likeness of the mother which had appeared. . . . An androgynous human being was produced, whom the Greeks call Hermaphrodites; and whose mother the Hebrews call Eve of Life (Eve of Zoe), namely, the female instructor of life. Her offspring is the creature that is lord. Afterwards, the authorities called it “Beast,” so that it might lead astray their modelled creatures. The interpretation of “the beast” is “the instructor.” For it was found to be the wisest of all beings.<sup>469</sup>

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<sup>467</sup> Robinson, p. 520.

<sup>468</sup> See Robinson, p. 173.

<sup>469</sup> Robinson, pp. 180-181.

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This text is quite interesting, for here Sophia, who is the Eve of Life (Zoe), has as offspring (from the water most likely, just as the androgyne emerges from the water earlier) “the lord,” the typical title for the demiurge, usually with negative valence in Gnostic texts, since the demiurge is usually portrayed as the opponent of the Eden serpent, the latter being the enlightener of Eve. Here, however, the demiurgic lord is identified as the serpent, the “beast” who was “the wisest of all beings,” a quotation from Genesis 3:1’s description of the serpent. At the very least this shows us the rich variety of opinion in early Gnosticism, calling into question any notion of a monolithic belief.

The Sophia-like Protennoia says of herself and of her descent in *Trimorphic Protennoia*:

I am the first one who descended on account of my portion which remains, that is, the Spirit that (now) dwells in the soul, (but) which originated from the Water of Life and out of the immersion of the mysteries, and I spoke, I together with the Archons and Authorities. For I had gone down below their language and I spoke my mysteries to my own – a hidden mystery – and the bonds and eternal oblivion were nullified. And I bore fruit in them, that is, the Thought of the unchanging Aeon, and my house, and their [Father]. And I went down [to those who were mine] from the first and I [reached them and broke] the first strands that [enslaved them. Then] everyone [of those] within me shone, and I prepared [a pattern] for those ineffable Lights that are within me. . . . It is in me that knowledge dwells, the knowledge of

<things> everlasting. It is I [who] speak within every creature and I was known by the All. It is I who lift up the Speech of the Voice to the ears of those who have known me, that is, the Sons of the Light.<sup>470</sup>

Here we begin to see Sophia's connection not only with the primordial waters of chaos, but with the wisdom-endowed water of life as well. Protennoia declares in *Trimorphic Protennoia*: "I [descended to the] midst of the underworld and I shone [down upon the] darkness. It is I who poured forth the [water]. It is I who am hidden within [radiant] waters."<sup>471</sup> She continues elsewhere in the following manner: "And I cast into them the eternally holy Spirit and I ascended and entered my Light. [I went up] upon my branch and sat [there among the] Sons of the [holy] Light. And [I withdrew] to their dwelling place which [. . .] become [glorious . . .] . . . It (the Word) is a hidden Light, bearing a Fruit of Life, pouring forth a Living Water from the invisible, unpolluted, immeasurable Spring. . . ."<sup>472</sup> The opposite of such light and wisdom is "the ignorance of Chaos."<sup>473</sup>

In the Gnostic *Book of Baruch* we find the promise that the enlightened one will

see what eye has not seen nor ear heard

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<sup>470</sup> Robinson, pp.516-517.

<sup>471</sup> Robinson, p. 513.

<sup>472</sup> Robinson, p. 519.

<sup>473</sup> Robinson, p. 521.

and what has not arisen in the human heart.

You drink from the living water,

the washing, the spring of living water bubbling up.<sup>474</sup>

In our commentary on *Völuspá*, we correlated the Norse Mímir with both the Hittite “god of Mind,” <sup>D</sup>Ištanzaššaš, and “god of the Forehead,” <sup>D</sup>Ḫantaššaš, while Óðinn and Heimdallr parallel respectively the god of Eyes, <sup>D</sup>Šakuwaššaš, and the god of Ears, <sup>D</sup>Ištamanaššaš. Concerning these Hittite divinities, Gamkrelidze and Ivanov write: “This is obviously a deification of the forehead as the location of reason, and eyes and ears as the means of connection with the outside world.”<sup>475</sup> Interestingly, in the *Gospel of Thomas*’ parallel to the passage cited above from *Baruch*, we read not only of a promise to see what eye has not seen, what ear has not heard, and what has not entered the human mind (which is what “heart” means here), but also “what hand has not touched” (*Gospel of Thomas* logion 17). Just as Óðinn sacrificed an eye, Heimdallr an ear, and Mímir his head, so the Norse God Týr sacrificed his hand. The hand is also a “means of connection with the outside world,” to invoke Gamkrelidze’s and Ivanov’s language. The chief difference between Týr’s hand sacrifice and the other three Norse Gods’ sacrifices is that it by contrast to theirs has no connection with the well of Mímir.

Now that we have worked our way to the well of Mímir, which is a well wherein is hidden wisdom, and which contains and preserves the various Gods’

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<sup>474</sup> Barnstone-Meyer, p. 124.

<sup>475</sup> See Gamkrelidze and Ivanov, p. 394.

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body parts that have been given in sacrifice for the well's wisdom, we can begin to correlate the above-cited texts with the myth of Iðunn as instantiated in

*Hrafnagaldur Óðins.*

Strophe 3 of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* introduces the trope of the hypostatic Hugi, Thought, who corresponds to the Greek *epinoia*, a central epithet of Sophia. In strophe 4 Ginnungr appears, that is, the primordial Chaos, into whose waters Sophia looked according to Gnostic lore, she who made the sun and moon, and whose offspring the demiurge made the earth and sky, which are paralleled in strophe 5's *strind* and *raþull*, "strand" and "ruddy sun," which poetically function as titles for "earth" and "sky." Ginnungr's darkness and ignorance are the opposite of Iðunn's brightness and wisdom. According to the first part of strophe 5, earth and heaven are not standing firm, and poison winds are flowing in unceasing streams, *stræmi*. These poison streams of strophe 5:1-4 contrast sharply with strophe 5:5-8's waters of the famous well of Mímir in which Óðinn's wisdom is hidden, that is, his sacrificed eye, which functions here as a symbol of the wisdom he gained from Mímir's waters of wisdom.

In the *Apocryphon of John* Sophia's male consort explains, "I appeared in the form of an eagle on the tree of knowledge, which is the Epinoia from the foreknowledge of the pure light," that is, he appeared as an eagle upon the tree which is Sophia who as Epinoia (= Old Norse Hugi) has foreknowledge of the light. We are reminded of strophe 3's Hugi who takes to the skies like a bird, and of the eagle associated with the stories of Iðunn's abduction and of Óðinn's theft of the mead. The "light" of which the *Apocryphon of John* speaks can be correlated with *On*

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*the Origin of the World's* account wherein “Sophia let fall a droplet of light, it flowed onto the water,” which results in the primordial androgyne and the demiurge. Thus, in the *Apocryphon of John* the light associated with the tree of knowledge is a liquid light, and consequently we arrive at a combination of water and tree that we see in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 5's well of Mímir and strophe 6's tree from which Iðunn falls, the world tree Yggdrasill. Strophe 6 specifies that Iðunn is the youngest of the descendants of Ívald, which happens to correspond to Sophia's status as *the last* of the aeons that came forth to construct the divine pleroma, or fullness.

We have seen from the text *Trimorphic Protennoia* that Sophia in her guise of Protennoia, First-Thought, who descended to the underworld, is “hidden within [radiant] waters,”<sup>476</sup> and how the same text has her ascend upon a tree that is associated with a spring of water: “[I went up] upon my branch and sat [there among the] Sons of the [holy] Light. . . . It (the Word) is a hidden Light, bearing a Fruit of Life, pouring forth a Living Water from the invisible, unpolluted, immeasurable Spring. . . .”<sup>477</sup> Similarly, in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophes 5 and 6 we have the tropes of the wise Goddess' descent to the underworld and of a well of wisdom.

We saw above how *Gospel of Thomas* logion 17 parallels *Baruch's* promise of unimagined esoteric wisdom, which is coordinated with water: “You drink from the living water, / the washing, the spring of living water bubbling up.”<sup>478</sup> Interestingly,

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<sup>476</sup> Robinson, p. 513.

<sup>477</sup> Robinson, p. 519.

<sup>478</sup> Barnstone-Meyer, p. 124.

soon after *Thomas* logion 17, we read of the five trees of immortality of paradise in logion 19. Earlier in logion 13 Jesus says, “because you drank you were intoxicated from the bubbling spring I have measured out.” The combination of a tree of life and the water of life and/or of wisdom is thus widespread and quite ancient. It surfaces in the Genesis Eden account, in its earlier ancient near eastern antecedents, in later Jewish and Indo-European traditions, as well as in Gnosticism. And we find it in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophes 5 and 6 as well. In strophe 7, Iðunn is “held down” where she has fallen, which reminds us of the Gnostic Sophia being held captive in her fall. Strophe 7 refers to Iðunn’s dwelling-place, which recalls the important trope of Sophia’s dwelling-place in Gnostic mythology. Strophe 7 tells us that Iðunn has fallen to the dwelling-place of Night, which implies by contrast that her former dwelling-place was one of light, which agrees with the language of the Gnostic myths that repeatedly emphasize Sophia’s origin in a dwelling-place of light, from which she falls into the dwellings of darkness (i.e., the material world).

Gnostic mythology also portrays Sophia as the divine spirit who hovered over Genesis 1:2’s primordial waters of creation. This may give us another reason for *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 5’s well of Mímir serving as the immediate introduction to strophe 6’s presentation of the figure of Iðunn. Moreover, Sophia fell as she was gazing into the waters, which makes strophe 6’s narrative of Iðunn’s *fall* just after the mention of Mímir’s well all the more intriguing. Sophia was overwhelmed and overcome by the moisture of light of the Logos’ waters, and this caused her fall, at least in some versions mentioned by Irenaeus.<sup>479</sup> Moreover, the

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<sup>479</sup> See Grant, p. 99.

fall of Sophia causes even the divine pleroma to be invaded by darkness and suffering (which is nothing other than Sophia's own grief that reaches into the divine realm), which would parallel the threat felt even by the Gods in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* as Iðunn falls from the world tree. According to Valentinian theology, the material universe arose from Sophia's suffering, which caused an *ousia amorphos*, an amorphous or inchoate state, to form in the waters into which she gazed. This again may shed light on *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 5's unstable earth, sky and well of Mímir which introduce strophe 6's fall of Iðunn.

In *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 8 the Gods give Iðunn a new garment, a wolf hide. One reason for this is to protect her in the underworld, most likely as a disguise that makes her look like the wolveren inhabitants of Jötunheim. This trope can be found already in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* Tablet 12, where Enkidu is warned that after death he must dress just like the other inhabitants of the netherworld, or otherwise the shades will recognize him and devour him. But the same trope is also quite prominent in the Gnostic stories of the descents of the Logos and of Sophia. The Sophia-like Protennoia says of her descent: "And I wore everyone's garment and I hid myself within them, and [they] did not know the one who empowers me."<sup>480</sup>

In the *Haustlög* poem, ironically and interestingly, Loki is the saviour of Iðunn. In Gnostic mythology Sophia is saved by her male consort, the divine Logos, literally Discourse.<sup>481</sup> In *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* Bragi is the wise Iðunn's male consort,

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<sup>480</sup> Robinson, p. 520.

<sup>481</sup> The Greek term *logos* actually refers to a discourse, not to a single word. Thus the Vulgate's rendering of Greek *logos* with Latin *verbum* is an error.



who like the Gnostic Logos descends to restore the fallen Sophia. The magical power of the Logos in Gnostic lore (and in Jewish-Christian thought in general) may be compared to the importance of poetry in Old Norse culture, the God of which is none other than Bragi, husband of Iðunn. In Gnosticism, the Logos' rescue of Sophia will be finalized at the end of the world, when all the scattered droplets of light are gathered back together. The fulfilment of this redemption of Sophia and all souls of light is described in Gnosticism with the trope of the celestial banquet associated with the *hieros gamos*. This may have something to do with the apocalyptic and eschatological framework of the tale of Iðunn's fall in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*, a tale that lacks all eschatological tones in the *Haustlǫng* poem, where it is purely seasonal and cyclical. This also may have something to do with *Hrafnagaldur Óðins'* divine banquet scene towards the poem's conclusion. The Norse myth of the sacred mead might be comparable to the re-gathered droplets or moisture of light that had been dispersed during Sophia's fall.

In conclusion we will cite and examine a passage from *Pistis Sophia* 4:136 where the four solar horses appear in an apocalyptic scene in which the world and the seas depart. This recalls *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 4's worlds sinking down to chaos as the solar steed Alsviður carries out his activity. The *Pistis Sophia* passage is introduced with a reference to the invisible God and to Barbelo, the latter being one of Sophia's many instantiations in ancient Gnostic literature; in 4:137 Sophia is called the daughter of Barbelo:

In that moment *however* all the heavens came to the west, with all the *aeons* and the *sphere* and their *archons* and all their *powers*. They all ran to the west to the left of the *disc* of the sun and the *disc* of the moon. *But* the *disc* of the sun was a great *dragon* whose tail was in its mouth, and it carried seven *powers* of the left. And four *powers* having the likeness of white horses drew it. *But* the *base* of the moon was of the *type* of a boat, and a male *dragon* and a female *dragon* steered it, while two white bulls drew it. And the likeness of a child was at the back of the moon, and guided the *dragons* as they stole the light of the *archons* from them, while a cat-face was in front of it. And the whole *world* and the mountains and the *seas* all fled to the left to the west.<sup>482</sup>

This passage has influenced the apocalyptic battle scene in *Völuspá*,<sup>483</sup> especially strophe 47's world serpent Jormungandr, the boat of death Naglfar, strophe 48's boat that is steered by Flame (traditionally misunderstood as a reference to Loki, who later in the strophe does not steer the boat, but merely is on board it with its other occupants), and strophe 54's dissolution of sun, earth, sea and sky. Missing from the apocalyptic battle scene in *Völuspá* is any direct mention of the solar steeds. However, *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 4's solar steed Alsviður is said to often fell the worlds, but also he often gathers them up again. This is an allusion to

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<sup>482</sup> Schmidt-MacDermot, pp. 709, 711,

<sup>483</sup> See Rooth, pp. 87, 239.

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*Völuspá* strophe 56's rebirth of the world, as she emerges new and green out of the ocean, as described in lines 1-4:

Sér hón upp koma	Sees she coming up
qðru sinni	a second time
jqrð ór ægi	the earth out of the sea
iðia-græna.	again green.

We may see in this a subtle allusion that links an aspect of Iðunn with the Earth Goddess, that is, Jqrð, for the earth is said to arise iðia-græna, that is, iðia-, “again,” and -græna, “green.” The component iðia-, “again,” is the same term that constitutes the first component of Iðunn's own name, that is, ið, as we learned from Grambo at the beginning of this Excursus. Whereas the poem *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* tells us of Iðunn's fall, but not of her rising again, nevertheless, there may be a subtle hint at her resurrection in strophe 4's artful allusion to *Völuspá* strophe 56's jqrð . . . iðia-græna. The implication of this for *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* is that Iðunn will remain trapped in the netherworld until after Ragnarøk. Like the Gnostic Sophia, Iðunn's full restoration will occur in the eschaton, not before.

We cannot agree with Rooth when on the basis of *Pistis Sophia's* influence upon *Völuspá* she doubts that the latter is a reliable “source for authentic Old Norse heathen concepts.”<sup>484</sup> Unlike many modern heathen revivalists (and apparently

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<sup>484</sup> Rooth, p. 239.

some scholars as well), ancient heathens and Christians had no problem with syncretism. Syncretistic parallels do not necessarily mean that the myths in which we find them were created wholly out of the foreign stories the borrowed elements originated from or reflect. Such borrowings often served the purpose of the embroidery and modulation of already existing indigenous traditions.

James John Garth Wilkinson's 1897 theosophical commentary on *Völuspá* represents sheer fantasy.<sup>485</sup> Certainly there is no systematic doctrine of the Gnostic Sophia in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*, and to think so would be as preposterous as Wilkinson's 1897 mentally misguided meanderings. The Gnostic Sophia parallels in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* are quite limited and mostly of a rather subtle texture, and mostly appear to have been integrated into the language rather than the theological or mythic thought world of the Old Norse poem. Nevertheless, the similarities in thought and diction are sufficient enough to conclude that a genuine influence is at work, the same situation we find in the apocalyptic battle scene in *Völuspá* with regard to the Gnostic text *Pistis Sophia*.

The most natural theory to select in order to explain the mutual influence of *Pistis Sophia* upon both *Völuspá* and *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* would be to assign the time of impact to the same general medieval period. Certainly when *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* was consigned to writing sometime in the 1500s-1600s, *Pistis Sophia* was not available to the scribe who (presumably) would have reformulated much of the language of the (again presumably) medieval oral story about Óðinn's ravens' oracle incantation. Again the evidence leads us to suspect that literarily *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*

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<sup>485</sup> Wilkinson.

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is a post-Reformation poem that transmits and transforms an earlier medieval oral story that was composed when sources like *Pistis Sophia* and Statius' *Thebaid* were informing and shaping Old Norse mythological and heroic poems which later were collected and became known as the *Poetic Edda*.

## EXCURSUS III

DOCUMENTING THE PRE-EXISTENCE OF THE UNDERLYING MYTH OF

*HRAFNAGALDUR ÓÐINS:*

WITH SOME NOTES ON THE RELEVANCE OF ANIMAL MYTHS

FOR MODERN HUMANS

*Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 6 narrates Iðunn's fall from the heights of the world tree to the deep and dark dales. Strophe 7 continues the tale by portraying the sorrowing Iðunn as dwelling beneath the tree from which she has fallen. Here she laments the loss of her former better abode. These two strophes hold the key to demonstrating the pre-existence of the basic "myth" that the poem enframes as a whole. That there was a pre-existent myth that is preserved in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* has long been doubted by sceptical exegetes. To begin our demonstration of this contested pre-existence, we will note that strophe 7's imagery can be made more concrete with reference to the Anglo-Saxon poem known as "The Wife's Complaint," a story that structurally also matches *Gylfaginning's* story of the sorrowing Freyja who travels in search of her missing husband Óðr:

To begin with, my lord went away from his people here over the restless waves. In the morning twilight I have wondered anxiously in what part of the world my lord could be. Then I set out on my way, friendless and homeless. . . .

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I have been ordered to make my dwelling in a forest grove in this cavern beneath an oak-tree. This is an underground dwelling made long ago, and I am altogether heart-broken. Gloomy are its depths, and the heights tower up above. Cruel are the barriers of my citadel, overgrown with thorns. It is a joyless dwelling. Many are the times that the thought of my lord's departure has taken cruel hold of me while I have been here. Lovers there are on earth living in affection and resting in their beds, while all alone before the dawn I pace the round of these caverns beneath the oak-tree. Here I shall have to sit through the long summer day; here I shall have to weep over my misfortunes and my many hardships. Assuredly I shall never be able to get any rest from my distress nor from all the heart-ache which has come upon me in my life here. . . .

Great misery of heart is that dear one of mine suffering; very often he remembers a happier abode.<sup>486</sup>

Strophe 30:1-2 is especially interesting, "Gloomy are its depths, and the heights tower up above," since it may contain an allusion to a dell or dale. We may render the two lines more literally as follows:

sindon dena dimme	are its depths dim,
duna uphea	(its) heights up-high

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<sup>486</sup> Kershaw, pp. 33-34.

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Kershaw offers the following comments on these two lines: “Can *dun* here possibly refer to the steep sides of the cavern? The meaning may however be “This is a gloomy dell surrounded by lofty hills.”<sup>487</sup> Thorpe translates the two lines as, “dim are *the* dells, *the* downs high.”<sup>488</sup> We now give the two lines together with next three as rendered by Thorpe:

sindon dena dimme	dim are <i>the</i> dells,
duna uphea	<i>the</i> downs high,
bitre burgtunas,	unpleasant <i>the</i> town-dwellings,
brerum beweaxne,	with briars o’ergrown,
wic wynna leas.	<i>the</i> house joyless. <sup>489</sup>

This gives us an interesting parallel to *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 6’s image of Iðunn dwelling in dales, and strophe 7’s report on Iðunn’s missing her former more pleasant dwellings.

Kershaw supplies the reflections below on the poem’s depiction of the wife dwelling beneath the oak tree:

The nearest parallel that I know is in the text of the *Helreið Brynhildar* contained in the *Flateyjarbók*, Vol. i, p. 356:

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<sup>487</sup> Kershaw p. 174.

<sup>488</sup> Thorpe 1842, p. 443.

<sup>489</sup> Thorpe 1842, p. 443.



Lét mig af harmi hugfullr konungr

Atla systur undir æik búa.

(‘In sorrow the courageous king made me, the sister of Atli, to dwell beneath an oak.’)

There is nothing in the context or elsewhere to explain this passage, and all editors, I think, adopt the reading of the *Codex Regius* which (as in several other places in the poem) gives quite a different sense from the *Flateyjarbók*:

Lét hami vára hugfuUr konimgr

átta systra und eik borit.

(‘The courageous king had my (swan) garb and those of my eight sisters carried beneath an oak.’) The readings of the *Flateyjarbók* however are not mere scribal errors. In sagas we hear occasionally of sanctuaries serving as *griðastaðir*, i.e. places where fugitives could seek refuge (as in churches in later times). . . . These sanctuaries very frequently contained—and indeed perhaps originally consisted of—sacred trees or groves. . . . Our passage

could also be interpreted as pointing to a prison ; but I do not know any parallels to the use of such a place in this way.<sup>490</sup>

However, despite Kershaw’s reservations, the dwelling under the oak tree is to be understood precisely as a prison, and the parallel to support this would be not only *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* but also the various permutations in folktale and folk ballad of May Margaret and Hind Etin, which already Uhland recognized as relevant for the exegesis of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*.<sup>491</sup>

Kershaw notes that the poem “The Wife’s Complaint” is similar “in many respects” to the “First Riddle” of the *Exeter Book*,<sup>492</sup> a poem also known under the title *Wulf and Eadwacer*. We give the original text of the latter from Wyatt:

Lēodum is mīnum swylce him mon lāc gife:

willað h̄ hīne āþecgan, gif hē on þrēat cymēð.

Ungelīc is ūs.

Wulf is on īege, ic on oþerre;

5 fæst is þæt ēglond, fenne biworpen;

sindon wælrēowe weras þær on īge;

willað h̄ hīne āþecgan, gif hē on þrēat cymeð.

Ungelīce is ūs.

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<sup>490</sup> Kershaw, p. 174.

<sup>491</sup> Uhland, 75.

<sup>492</sup> Kershaw, p. 29.

Wulfes ic mīnes wīdlāstum wēnum dogode;  
10 þonne hit wæs rēnig weder ond ic rēotugu sæt,  
þonne mec se beaducāfa bōgum bilegde:  
wæs mē wyn tō þon, wæs mē hwæþre ēac lāð.  
Wulf, mīn Wulf, wēna mē þīne  
sēoce gedydon, þīne seldcymas,  
15 murnende mōd, nales meteliste.  
Gehyrest þū, Ēadwacer? Uncerne earne hwelp  
bireð Wulf tō wuda.  
þæt mon ēaþe tōslīteð þætte næfre gesomnad wæs,  
uncer giedd geador.<sup>493</sup>

Wyatt writes that “[t]he meaning of *āþecgan* and *dogode* is unknown, *earne* may be from *earu* = quick, active, or from *earh* = cowardly. Wulf may be the name of some particular person, or perhaps means wolf. *Prēat* sometimes means a throng, sometimes a calamity. *Bōgum* may mean with boughs, or with arms, and *wīdlāstum* may be either noun or adjective.”<sup>494</sup> Wyatt then offers a “tentative” translation:

To my people it is as if one should give them a gift;

They will oppress him (? or give him food) if he comes into the throng (or

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<sup>493</sup> Wyatt 1912, p. xxi.

<sup>494</sup> Wyatt 1912, p. xxi.

into calamity)

It is otherwise with us.

Wolf is on an island, I on another;

The island is firm, encompassed by marsh;

There are fierce men there on the island;

They will (*etc.* as l. 2 above).

It is otherwise with us.

I waited (?) for my Wolf with far-wandering longings;

Then it was rainy weather and I sat tearful,

When the man bold in war surrounded me with boughs (*or* arms):

It was joy for me so far, yet it was also pain.

Wolf, my Wolf, thy hopes

Have made me sick, thy rare visits

A grieving spirit, not at all want of food.

Dost thou hear, Eadwacer? Brisk (*or* cowardly) cub of us two

Wolf bears to the wood.

Easily one tears asunder what was never united,

Our song together.<sup>495</sup>

From the parallels it is clear that the woman is surrounded with boughs, not with arms. In “The First Riddle” we see the same combination of being bound beneath a tree and separation of a woman from her lover that we encounter in “The

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<sup>495</sup> Wyatt 1912, pp. xxi-xxii.

Wife’s Complaint,” and it is clear the two poems are related to each other genetically.

Also relevant in this discussion is Riddle 93 of the *Exeter Book*, whose beginning and ending are unfortunately quite fragmentary. The text, known as “The Lost Lord,” begins with a reference, according to Thorpe, to *frea min*, “my lord/master” (*frea* is cognate with Old Norse Freyja) who is “wise in number of days,”<sup>496</sup> although “wise” is not a certain translation. Shortly after this we read of this same *frea*, that he

hwilum stealc hliþo	sometimes <i>the</i> steep heights
stigan sceolde	should mount,
up in eþel	up in <i>the</i> country;
hwilum eft gewat	sometimes again retir’d
in deop dalu	into <i>the</i> deep dells <sup>497</sup>

Not only do these lines’ contrast between heights followed by depths remind us of Iðunn’s fall to the dells from the heights of Yggdrasill, but structurally they accord with *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 4 lines 5-8, which concern the solar steed Alsviður, All-Swift:

opt Alsviþur	often Alsviður
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<sup>496</sup> Thorpe 1842, p. 498.

<sup>497</sup> Thorpe 1842, p. 498.

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<i>ofann fellir,</i>	from above fells,
opt of <i>follnum</i>	often of the fallen
aptur safnar	again gathers (up).

The Old Norse text is paralleled by the following elements from the Anglo-Saxon lines:

opt <i>Alsviþur</i>	hwilum / <i>frea</i>
<i>ofann fellir,</i>	up / <i>deop</i>
opt of <i>follnum</i>	hwilum / in <i>deop</i>
aptur safnar	eft <i>gewaft</i>

Intriguingly, later in the poem we in fact read of someone riding on a stag that is called *fūsum*, “the swift one.”

We offer here a modified form of Thorpe’s translation beginning with the lately quoted *hwilum stealc hliþo*:

<i>hwilum stealc hliþo</i>	sometimes the steep heights
<i>stigan sceolde</i>	should mount
<i>ūp in ēþel</i>	up into his home country;
<i>hwilum eft gewāt</i>	sometimes again retired
<i>In dēop dalu</i>	into the deep dales

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duguþe sēcan	seeking a host,
strong on stæpe	strong in step,
stānwongas grōf	the stony plains he cut up,
hrimighearde	rime-frozen;
hwilum hāra scōc	sometimes he shook the hoar-
forst of feax	frost from his hair.
Ic on fūsum rād	I upon the swift one rode,
oþþæt him þone glēawstōl	till to the throne of wisdom
gingra brōþor	my younger
mīn āgnade	brother laid claim,
ond mec of earde ādrāf	and me from home drove.
Sipþan mec īsern	Later, when me iron
innanweardne	inward,
brūn bennade	brown, wounded,
blōd ūt ne cōm	blood came not out,
heolfor of hreþre	nor gore from my breast,
þēah mec heard bite	though me hard bit
stīðecg stýle	the stiff-edge steel.
Nō ic þā stunde bemearn	I bemoan'd not the time,
nē for wunde wēop	nor for the wound wept,
nē wrecan meahte	nor was I able to avenge
on wigan fēore	on the warrior's life,

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wonnsceaft mīne	my misfortune;
ac ic āglǣca	but I bear
ealle þolige	all the miseries
þætte bord biton	that bit the board.
Nū ic blace swelge	Now I swallow black
wuda ond wætre	wood and water,
womb[e] befæðme	womb/stomach encompasses
þæt mec on fealleð	what falls on me
ufan þær ic stonde	from above where I stand,
eorp[e]s nāthwæt	something that is dark to me.
hæbbe āne fōt	I have one foot,
Nū mīn hord warað	now a thieving foe
hīþende fēond	guards my treasure,
sē þe ær wīde bær	who ere bore afar
wulfes gehlēpan	the wolf's companion,
oft mē of wombe	often out of my womb/stomach
bewaden fēreð	he fares forth drenched,
steppeð on stið bord	stepping onto the stiff board
.... de[apes] ....	.... of de[ath] ....
þonne dægcondel	as Day's candle,
sunne ....	Sun ....



[w]eorc ēagum wlīteð      [w]ork with eyes  
ond sp[a...]⁴⁹⁸              and espy . . . .

When considering this riddle poem we have to keep in mind that it consists of two layers, namely, its form as a poem designed to function as a riddle, and the traditional mythic images and tropes inherited from earlier tradition that are integrated, no doubt in modulated form, into the final poetic product. The poem is narrated by a personified deer stag horn that has been hollowed out with a knife or sword (“the stiff-edge steel”). This horn, or antler, now serves as an ink horn for a scribe, who writes with a feather of a raven, referred to by the kenning “the wolf’s companion.” With regard to the narrator’s *frea*, “lord,” this might just be the rest of the stag’s body from which the horn-narrator has been separated, so that the stag who ascends the heights and travels into deep valleys is really none other than the narrator. The narrating horn rode upon the swift one, that is, his own former corpus carried him about. Then he was driven from home by his “younger brother,” that is, he shed his horn (antlers), and in their place a new horn/antlers grew.<sup>499</sup> The narrating horn therefore had not been severed from his body violently with a sword, but had fallen off naturally in the process of shedding, and a scribe then found the horn and hollowed it out with a steel blade. This is why the blade does not bring forth blood or gore.

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<sup>498</sup> Anglo-Saxon text from Tupper, pp. 65-66.

<sup>499</sup> See Tripp, p. 244.

The narrating horn rode upon the swift one until his younger brother (the horn that replaced him) drove him from home, that is, drove him from his head, where all horns are of course located. This is described as the new horn laying claim “to the throne of wisdom,” *glēawstōl*, which is obviously the head to which the horn is attached.<sup>500</sup> As Bitterli remarks, *glēawstōl* is a hapax legomenon.<sup>501</sup> Later the poem speaks of the raven quill that the scribe dips into the narrating horn’s womb or stomach, which is filled with black ink. The narrator calls this raven quill a *hīpende fēond*, “thieving foe,” who guards *warað*, “guards,” the treasure, *hord*. As Bitterli correctly observes, this *hord* is the ink with which the horn is filled.<sup>502</sup> Bitterli rightly identifies *hord warað*, “treasure guard[s],” as traditional language reflective of dragons.<sup>503</sup>

It is a frustrating affair that the poem’s conclusion is so fragmentary. The raven quill, which has been dipped into the horn’s ink, is now placed by the scribe on his desk, *stið bord*, literally, “stiff board.” The ink is dark, indeed, black; contrasted with this is bright “Day’s candle,” *dægcondel*, that is, the *sunne*, “Sun.” The light of the sun, like the light of a candle, allows a scribe to work with his raven quill. This is really all we can make out from the poem’s conclusion.

At this point we can attempt to coordinate the poem’s underlying mythic traditions with *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* and related Old Norse topoi. First of all, the stag

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<sup>500</sup> See Bitterli, p. 158.

<sup>501</sup> Bitterli, p. 158.

<sup>502</sup> Bitterli, p. 161.

<sup>503</sup> Bitterli, p. 162.

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calls to mind the Dwarf stag Dáinn of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 13, whose þorn, “thorn,” is really the horn of Eikþyrnir, that is, Jökþyrnir,<sup>504</sup> the glacial ice Giant of Élivágar, described as þurs hrimkalda, “the rime-cold Giant” in strophe 13. This matches the imagery and language of *Exeter Book* Riddle 93, namely, *hrimighearde*, “rime-frozen;” also the stag shakes off from his hair the “hoar-frost,” *hāra . . . frost*. As we point out in the commentary to strophe 13 of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* Dáinn’s thorn is really a horn filled with poison melting ice, which nightly slays, that is, kills, the people of Middle Earth. Dáinn’s thorn/horn is thus pictured as a drinking horn, a demonic counterpart to Heimdallr’s and Mímir’s drinking horns which are used to drink the sacred mead. Just as the sacred mead in Old Norse texts is guarded, so Riddle 93’s stag horn filled with liquid ink is guarded, *warað* (cognate with Old Norse *varða*), by a personified raven quill. This reminds us of the Dwarf heron who hovers over and guards Gunnlōð’s mead well in *Hávamál* (see strophes 13-14; 106, 111). Fjalar is probably the same as the mead Dwarf Þjóðrerir of *Hávamál* strophe 160, whose name must be emended to Fjóðrerir, as is evident from the required alliteration that would otherwise be absent from the text. Although the name Fjóðrerir means something like, Server of the mead Óðrerir, the name also creates associations with “feathers.” Furthermore, “Riddle 93” calls the raven quill a *hīþende fēond*, “thieving foe,” of the horn’s ink; this reminds us of Óðinn’s *theft* of the sacred mead in *Skáldskaparmál* and *Hávamál*.

With regard to Riddle 93’s *glēaw-stōl*, “throne of wisdom,” this immediately calls to mind the *þular stóli*, “throne of the wise one,” located at Gunnlōð’s mead well

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<sup>504</sup> See our commentary on strophe 13 for this etymology.

in *Hávamál* strophe 111, where, as we have already seen, alliteration requires emending *Urðarbrunni* to *bruðarbrunni*, “well of the bride,” that is, Gunnlōð).

Although most exegetes translate the Old Norse word *stóli* in strophe 111 as “seat” (cf. English “stool”), it is the same word used of the Gods when they seat themselves on their thrones for council, as in *Völuspá* strophes 9, 23 and 25, *røk-stōla*, that is, “fate/decision thrones.” The Old Norse *stōll*, manifestly cognate with Anglo-Saxon *stōl*, is used of ordinary chairs and stools, but when applied to higher functionaries and royalty it must be rendered “throne.” As for the Anglo-Saxon adjective *glēaw*, “wise,” “sage,” it corresponds semantically rather precisely with Old Norse noun *þulr*, “wise man,” “sage,” although *þulr* can also be used in the sense of “poet,” cf. *þula*, “rhapsody,” “rigamarole.” This makes sense contextually as well in strophe 111, since on this throne of wisdom Óðinn received the sacred mead of poetry.

Strophe 111’s noun *þulr* is preceded by the verb *þulja*, which has been difficult for translators to narrow down semantically. It has been understood as “to declaim”<sup>505</sup> (whatever that might mean in the context is not at all clear), but also “to sing” or “to chant.” (Bellows; Hollander renders the passage “’Tis time to chant (*þulja*) / on the sage’s (*þulr*) chair.”<sup>506</sup> Bellows is at least more consistent, “It is time to chant / from the chanter’s stool.” However, since according to the dictionaries *þular stóli* in English means basically “chair of the wise man,” to be consistent we would suggest rendering the two lines as, “It is time to display wisdom (*þulja*) / upon the throne of wisdom (*þulr*).” That this is basically correct is demonstrated by

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<sup>505</sup> See Larrington, p. 29.

<sup>506</sup> Hollander 2001, p. 30.

the very next strophe, as well as those which follow, for in them Óðinn begins giving a series of wise counsels to the Giant Loddfáfnir,<sup>507</sup> who is likely an uncle to Óðinn, as Bergmann suggests.<sup>508</sup> Almost all of these stanzas begin with Ráðumk þér, Loddfáfnir, “I counsel you, Loddfáfnir.” Bergmann rendered strophe 111’s *þulja* as “speak proverbs” and *þulr* as “of the speaker.”<sup>509</sup>

We find a clue as to the meaning of *þulr* in *Bósa Saga ok Herraúðs*, where the text calls the witch Busla’s *galdr* curse-poem a *þula*, en er sú þula var úti, “when her *þula* was finished. . . .” Thus *þula* can be roughly synonymous with *galdr*, *ljóð*, even rune. Bergmann points out that in strophe 111, er is to be understood in the sense of áðr, “before.”<sup>510</sup> Based on all the above data we would render the strophe’s first part as, “Before I declared magic wisdom lays upon the throne of magic wisdom at the bride’s well, I saw and remained silent, I watched and contemplated.” Only after this silence did he speak to Loddfáfnir.

Although according to the dictionaries *þular stóli* is defined in English as “wise man’s chair,” in *Hávamál* strophe 111 it pertains to the king of the *king* of the Gods, Óðinn, and so it is a royal seat, that is, a throne, which is confirmed, among

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<sup>507</sup> Although the name Loddfáfnir means “Fire-Play,” (see Bergmann 1877, p. 71) the component Lodd- (cf. Latin *ludus*), nevertheless, the phonetic similarity with the second component of the name Gunnloð is probably intentional on the part of the poet.

<sup>508</sup> See Bergmann 1877, pp. 172-173.

<sup>509</sup> Bergmann 1877, p. 112.

<sup>510</sup> Bergmann 1877, p. 72.

other things, by the fact that strophe 111's *þular stóli* is made of gold according to strophe 106, *gullnum stóli*, "gold throne." Because of this mythological background and related parallels in Riddle 93, we render the latter's *glēaw-stōl* as "throne of wisdom" or "wise throne," rather than "seat of wisdom," the latter being Bitterli's translation.<sup>511</sup>

It may be that traditions of the horn displaced from its former home in the high places of nature to the hard surface of a scribe's desk, which we see in both Riddle 88 and Riddle 93, may have contributed to the reading *hardbaþm*-, "hard tree-branch," instead of the more correct reading *harbaþm*-, "high tree-branch" (preserved in MS D), in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 7. Bitterli writes of Riddle 88, "just as the horn previously 'stood upright' (*uplong stod*, 9) in its lofty 'place' (*staðol*, 5) on the stag's head, it now must 'stand fast' (*stondan fæste*, 22) and hold its solitary 'place' (*staþol*) on the bleak board of the writing desk."<sup>512</sup> This makes us think of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 7's *Iðunn* who is held down at the bottom of the hard tree-branch (*hardbaþm*) from which she has fallen.

As we have seen, several elements bind together the poems "The Wife's Complaint," "May Margaret and Hind Etin," the Exeter Book's "First Riddle" (= "Wulf and Eadwacer") and "Riddle 93." The parallels between *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* and especially "The Wife's Complaint" and "Wulf and Eadwacer" demonstrate that the poet of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* did not create his story *ex nihilo* or *ex imaginatio*.

Cognate to these two Anglo-Saxon poems is as Kershaw points out, *Helreið*

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<sup>511</sup> See Bitterli, p. 158.

<sup>512</sup> Bitterli, pp. 154-155.

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*Brynhildar of Flateyjarbók*: Lét mig af harmi hugfullr konungr/ Atla systur undir æik búa, “In sorrow the courageous king made me, the sister of Atli, to dwell beneath an oak.”<sup>513</sup> The basic story of a woman being imprisoned beneath an oak tree, or some other kind of tree, is therefore not a Scandinavian innovation, but must possess a more ancient provenance.

We notice as well that both ravens and wolves inhabit these stories, particularly “Wulf and Eadwacer,” “Riddle 93” and *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*. In turn, within the Exeter Book, “Wulf and Eadwacer” and “Riddle 93” are bound together by their shared contrastive topos of the heights and the deep dells, that is, dales. We do not find it a coincidence that not only “Wulf and Eadwacer,” but “Riddle 93” exhibits several features that find parallels in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*, not only with regard to Iðunn’s descent from the heights of Yggdrasill, but also with regard to the Dwarf stag Dáinn. The parallels that connect “Riddle 93” with Old Norse sacred mead traditions indicate that the Exeter Book poem has utilized pre-existing mead traditions of Germanic provenance. We should not forget that the story of the scribe wielding the raven guard quill of the ink-filled horn is a *poem*, and that in itself makes one think of the mead as inspirer *of poetry*.

Lastly, especially “The Wife’s Complaint” indicates that the Old Norse story known from *Gylfaginning* of the travelling and weeping Freyja in search of her mate Óðr, and the story of Iðunn’s fall from Yggdrasill where she languishes in the underworld where her husband Bragi visits her, are two parts of a single, more ancient myth. That underlying myth parallels both Aphrodite’s sorrowful search for

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<sup>513</sup> Kershaw, p. 174.

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Adonis and the poet/bard Orpheus' descent to Hades in search of his mate Eurydice. Anglo-Saxon poetry on the sorrowing wife under a tree, separated from her husband ("The Wife's Complaint"), is related to poetry about stags (*Exeter Book* "Riddle 93"). That we find both of these trajectories in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* would again seem to suggest that the Old Norse poem has reformulated and collected older traditions, and that the poet has not created the narrative solely *ex imaginatio*.

We should comment on the personification of the stag horn in the *Exeter Book* Riddles 88 and 93. We would argue that this personification exhibits vestigial traces of an indigenous experience of all entities as sentient, not only horns, but rocks, trees, water, air, and so on ad infinitum. The centrality of the animal in the poems also brings to mind the indigenous mentality which does not create any significant ontological separation between the animal called the human and other animals from the ant to the elephant or whale. We see abundant traces of this archaic mentality in Old Norse texts, especially in the notion of the language of the birds that various human and divine figures are able to understand. Bitterli insightfully explains the personified horns and their sorrowful existence on a desk: "The story of the horn's abduction from its natural habitat in the woods to the ascetic confinements of the scriptorium evokes the transformation from the tribal culture of the Dark Ages to the scribal culture of early medieval England."<sup>514</sup>

The recent work of both Kovárová and Bourns stresses the importance and relevance of this indigenous-like attitude toward nature and animals in Old Norse traditions for the formulation of new ways of thinking about the environment and

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<sup>514</sup> Bitterli, p. 168.



animals, and about our own self-identity as a species interconnected with all other life forms that inhabit Mother Earth. Kovárová highlights some of the important differences between traditional western and indigenous views regarding the relationship between humans and other animals:

Unlike in Christianity, in which man is seen as having been created as the ruler of animals, in natural religions it seems clear that animals are/ were seen as being equal to human beings. In many non-Christian societies, they were also seen as possessing certain qualities that people do not have.<sup>6</sup> People thus sometimes tried to possess these powers by the use of magic, sometimes even trying to become animals by means of masks, dressing in skins and/ or making imitations of animal behaviour. . . . The relationship to animals expressed in the myths and rituals of these peoples shows a great deal about their thoughts and beliefs, and not only about the way they saw animals but also the way in which they saw themselves as humans.<sup>515</sup>

Bourns writes in a similar tone: “Application of ecocritical theory challenges the existence of a human-animal dichotomy: the language of birds is one of the many moments in medieval Icelandic sources where the distinction between the ‘human’ and the ‘animal’ is blurred with mythical or folkloric fancy. It is a process that can be

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<sup>515</sup> Kovárová, p. 14.

named ‘becoming-animal.’”<sup>516</sup> In his insightful “Afterword: Conclusions for the Modern World,” Bourns offers the following penetrating analysis:

Lévi-Strauss further argues that Structuralism can teach us to better “love and respect nature and the living beings who people it, by understanding that vegetables and animals, however humble they may be, did not supply man with sustenance only but were, from the very beginning, the source of his most intense esthetic feelings and, in the intellectual and moral order, of his first and even then profound speculations.” Furthermore, if the human and the animal were not defined as opposites but rather as similar or the same, then we would pursue greater efforts and make greater sacrifices in the name of environmental conservation and the prevention of species extinction.<sup>517</sup>

Bourns concludes with some rather pertinent observations and a biting question for us all:

Animals become part of the cultural system of humanity; humanity becomes part of the natural system of nature. Returning to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, this process can be termed “Becoming-Animal.” Becoming-animal is not a matter of

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<sup>516</sup> Bourns, p. 3.

<sup>517</sup> Bourns, p. 72.

falsehood or fancy; Deleuze and Guattari demonstrate that “becoming does not occur in the imagination, even when the imagination reaches the highest cosmic or dynamic level. . . . Becomings-animal are neither dreams nor phantasies. They are perfectly real. But which reality is at issue here?”<sup>518</sup>

Bourns goes on to cite David Abram’s observation on how exposure to a plethora of technological gadgets can make us forget “our carnal inherence in a more-than-human matrix of sensations and sensibilities. . . . We are human only in contact, and conviviality, with what is not human.”<sup>519</sup> Surely Bourns deserves our deepest attention when he remarks: “We require myths of the planet through which the earth and its biodiversity is respected and sustained. But these myths cannot be kept as literary constructions or figments of the imagination; they must be the global ethos of a multispecies society.”<sup>520</sup>

Not only can the other animals of Mother Earth help us to understand ourselves better, they can assist us in the interpretation of the myths we have examined in this Excursus as well. For stories such as those of Aphrodite mourning in search of Adonis and of Iðunn’s separation from Bragi reflect not only the patterns of climate and seasonal changes, but also of animal behaviour, especially in reaction to the perennial march of the seasons. Bitterli’s comments on *Exeter Book*

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<sup>518</sup> Bourns, p. 73.

<sup>519</sup> Bourns, p. 75.

<sup>520</sup> Bourns, p. 76.

Riddle 93, “The Lost Lord,” can be applied to a certain extent to also Riddle 88, also known as “The Missing Brother,” that is, Stag-Brother:

The enigmatic “seat of wisdom” . . . is a periphrastic expression for the head of the stag, whose habitat and behaviour the author describes with amazing accuracy. It is a well-known fact that male and female red deer separate for most of the year. Whereas the hinds remain in a herd with their young, stags form their own, less stable, groups, or sometimes live alone, and seek out the hinds only during the rut. Hence the “host” (*duguþe*, 11) that the “lord” seeks with his “strong step” (12) denotes the herd of the hinds; the stag joins them in the autumn, defending his harem against rival stags, but leaves the herd again before the winter months.<sup>521</sup>

Thus Óðr’s frequent departures from Freyja and Iðunn’s sorrow while separated from Bragi agree not just with sunny weather’s departure and its replacement by winter’s woes, but these divinities’ behaviours may reflect that of deers as well. Indeed, as we have seen, Iðunn’s fall from the heights into dark and deep dales accords with the stag in Riddle 93, which in turn reflects the experience of the wife in “The Wife’s Complaint.” It would appear that some of the Norse Gods had originally been thought of as animal divinities, just as we find the case still to be among Siberian, North American and other indigenous peoples. Once we think of Iðunn having been a deer at some stage of her myth, then the deer Goddess of

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<sup>521</sup> Bitterli, p. 158.

Siberian shamanism immediately springs to mind, a figure that has been deftly investigated by Esther Jacobson. Jacobson has demonstrated that among early Siberian groups, the deer Goddess was the centre of their symbolic universe, and that she represented the “Animal Mother, the source of life and death.”<sup>522</sup>

This Animal Mother, who in some of her manifestations was also a bird woman and a cow,<sup>523</sup> dwelt at the shamanic world tree, known by the term *туру*, a tree that grew from and over the deer herself, so that the “tree is joined to the body of the Animal Mother.”<sup>524</sup> Jacobson’s following comments are quite illuminating:

In search of the wandering soul and as psychopomp, the shaman’s human form was ineffective. Through the ordeal of selection, the shaman lost his human body and learned the language of animals; through the donning of a special robe and headdress, the shaman was at once enveloped by the body of the Animal Mother and transformed into that body. In the course of the journey, the shaman would require the aid of animal helpers: to see, hear, and combat evil forces. Thus, shamanic empowerment was predicated upon a theory of potential physical change, as well as upon a conception of the universe which placed extraordinary powers in the being of animals.<sup>525</sup>

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<sup>522</sup> Jacobson, p. 27.

<sup>523</sup> See Jacobson, p. 214.

<sup>524</sup> Jacobson, p. 193.

<sup>525</sup> Jacobson, p. 210.

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The metamorphic basis of existence is of course a foundational aspect of North American indigenous experience as well.<sup>526</sup> In the light of such ethnographic parallels, Iðunn's association with the world tree as well as the mytheme of her animal transformation, both of which are narrated within three short strophes (6, 7 and 8) in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*, we can begin to appreciate some of the archaic and quite traditional character of this Old Norse poem, which despite its late date of being committed to writing, nevertheless contains what arguably appear as substantially earlier mythemes and traditions.

The thought of Iðunn as an animal, especially a deer, linked to the world tree brings up the subject of the various Old Norse myths of Yggdrasill. In *Fjolsvinnsmál* the world tree is the tree of the Goddess/Völva-like figure Menglǫð, who is really just a hypostasis or specialization of Iðunn and Freyja. Both Iðunn and Freyja are ultimately various manifestations of the Great Mother Earth. Each of the two has shape-shifting powers, relating on the one hand to wolf, nut and/or swallow and on the other hand to the boar. In *Fjolsvinnsmál* the two wolf hounds Gífr and Geri guard, according to an emended text (see our commentary on *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 12), the golden apples at the world tree, which thus connects the world tree to Iðunn, yet another indication that the myth we find in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* was not created ex nihilo by the poet. In *Fjolsvinnsmál* strophe 18 Viðófnir is used as a name for Yggdrasill, but then curiously in strophe 24 the same name Viðófnir is used again of the rooster perched upon the world tree. More curious still is that Viðófnir means, as Heide has documented, Tree of Ófnir, the latter being one of Óðinn's names, so

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<sup>526</sup> See the study of Irwin on the vision quest.

that Viðófnir really means Tree of Óðinn.<sup>527</sup> What this indicates is that Óðinn was thought of as a bird, a rooster, perched upon the world tree, where Iðunn's apples were guarded by two wolf hounds, who are really none other than Óðinn's wolves Geri and Freki. If Óðinn was once an animal of the world tree, why not Iðunn as well?

Earlier in this study we supplied the text of the Danish ballad *Jomfru i Fugleham*, in which we detected possible traces of traditions that may have thought of Iðunn as a hind dwelling at the world tree. When we coordinate *Jomfru i Fugleham* with the other poetic and folkloric sources we have explored in this Excursus, the suspicion only grows that the hind of *Jomfru i Fugleham* may indeed be related to an animal manifestation of Iðunn.

*Grímnismál* strophe 25 links the mead goat Heiðrún (a name that recalls the Völva name Heiðr, who is actually Freyja) to Yggdrasill, and strophe 26 does the same for the hart Eikþyrnir. In strophe 33 the four harts or stags Dáinn, Dvalinn, Duneyrr and Duraþrór “gnaw” at Yggdrasill, and in strophe 34 countless serpents (really these are dragons, like the Niðhoggr whom they represent and embody) do the same. According to strophe 35 an anonymous hart bites Yggdrasill from above while Niðhoggr gnaws at its roots from below. Curiously, according to a Cheyenne story, a beaver gnaws at the bottom of the world pole, the archetype of the sun dance pole: “Once he has gnawed all the way through, the pole will topple, and the earth will crash into a bottomless nothing. That will be the end of the people, of

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<sup>527</sup> Heide 1997, p. 203.

everything. The end of all ends.”<sup>528</sup> As we show in the commentary to *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 13, the name Eikþyrnir was originally Jökþyrnir, “Glacial Horn.” The question arises, why the change from Jök, “Glacier,” “Ice,” to Eik, “Oak”? Could this have something to do with a tradition that thought of the world tree as an oak (the hart Eikþyrnir after all is placed at the world tree), the tree mentioned in “The Wife’s Complaint,” where the grieving wife is imprisoned beneath an oak tree, like Iðunn held down beneath the ash tree Yggdrasill in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*?

We must not forget that the hind of *Jomfru i Fugleham* transforms herself into a bird that perches atop a tree, hence the ballad’s title, “Maiden in Bird Form.” Now, in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophes 6 and 7 we learn that Iðunn has fallen from her former dwelling-places in the luminous upper branches of the world tree Yggdarsill. An anthropomorphic Goddess, however, does not live on a tree, but a Goddess in bird form would dwell there quite naturally. Why exegetes have failed to notice that strophes 6 and 7 presuppose that Iðunn is a Goddess in bird form can only be explained as the result of modern humanity’s interior (mental) and exterior (corporeal) separation from trees and the other animals of Mother Earth.

In Excursus II we explored possible traces of the Gnostic mytheme of the fallen Sophia in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*, mainly with respect to strophes 6 and 7. In such a context we should mention the Mandaean Gnostic *Book of John* (also called the *Book of Kings*) as well, which likens Miriai (a figure ultimately based on the Virgin Mary) to the tree of life, from which strong winds toss off many of the birds seeking refuge in its (her) branches:

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<sup>528</sup> See Erdoes and Ortiz, pp. 484-485.



Miriai am I, a vine, a tree, who stands at the mouth of Euphrates. The tree's leaves are precious stones, the tree's fruits pearls. The vine-tree's foliage is glory, its shoots precious light. Among the trees its scent it diffuses, and it spreads over all the worlds. The birds of the air scented it; a flock settled down on the tree. A flock on it down-settled, and they would build their nest there. They flutter about in it and settle not down in it firmly. Of its foliage they eat . . . from its inner part they drink wine. They eat what is not to be cast away, and drink what was not wine.

While the birds sat on the vine, winds and tempests broke loose. They shook the good birdlets awake, they smote 'gainst the tree; on all sides they scattered the leaves of the vine-tree and scared the birds out of their place. Many a bird there was who flew not away, but held on fast with claws and with wings, till the winds and the tempests were over. Many again held not on fast and were hurried away. . . . Woe unto those who did not hold fast, but were dashed from the tree and flew off. How fair is the tree of Life and fair the birds who dwell on it!

The winds and the tempests passed and rest came over the world.

As the birds sit there and chirp and would be a-building their nest, as the birds sit on the vine, an eagle wheeled and flew hither. A white eagle-bird came, looked down and caught sight of the birds. Round wheeled he, sped down on them with his wings, and came and sat on the tree. In converse with him joined the birds, and said to him:

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“By thy Life, Eagle! On this tree were we birds without number.—But there broke loose against them the winds, and on the tree came raging tempests. They shook them off from the tree, so that they tore their wings from them [nearly]. Many a one held fast, whom the winds and tempests could not tear away; but many a one flew off at top speed.—We speak to thee, therefore, O Eagle, we ask thee respecting the birds, because thou art sharp of sight and dost see all in this world: What have the winds and the tempests done with those birds, our brothers? What spyest thou out (?) over them?”

Then made he answer unto them: “You had better not to have known, my brothers, what has become of those birds. Slingshots drove them far from me; their wings broke; torn off were they, broken off; they went hence and relied on the bird-catchers. The harrier and hawk wheeled round them, tore pieces out of their flesh and fed on those who were fat. Woe to those who fell prey to the water, if there was no portion for them at the crossing. Well for you, ye birds, who hold fast to this vine [here]; you became a companionship of Miriai, the vine, who stands at the mouth of Euphrates. See and satisfy yourselves, ye birds, that I have come to you. I have come to my brothers to be a support for them in this world. I have come to heal Miriai, [come] to bring water to the good, beloved plants, to the vines, who stand at the mouth of Euphrates. In a white pail I draw water and bring it to my plants. I bear and I hold [it] on the arms of glory which are my own. I bear and I hold [it] and give [them] to drink. Well for him who has drunk of my water. He drinks, finds healing and confirmation, and grows to double [his stature]. The vines

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who drank water, brought forth good fruit. Their leaves turned on high and made a brave show. The branches which drank no water, brought forth bitter herbs and worm-wood (?). Woe to those who have not gone forward upon the Way; woe to those who have not passed on by the way-stone! They hated Life's Treasure-House, Miriai, the dear Truth.

“My brothers, hold fast, be a companionship of Miryai. I will look round in the world, let Life's call sound forth and rouse the sleeping and wake [them].”

The eagle flew off from the tree; he wheeled round and instructed his friends. He speaks to them: “Give ear to me, my brothers! Stay fast and endure persecution. Be a companionship to Miriai.”<sup>529</sup>

The winds that blow off the birds from the Miriai tree remind us of the poison air blowing in streams of wind in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 5, the stanza that immediately precedes strophe 6's account of Iðunn's fall from Yggdrasill. Strophe 5 also mentions Mímir's famed spring, which is paralleled by the eagle's white pail of water in the Mandaean text cited above. We should also remark the congruence between the imagery of the Mandaean eagle and the eagles we encounter in *Skáldskaparmál's* stories of Iðunn and Þjazi and of Óðinn and the winning of the sacred mead.

*Skáldskaparmál's* story of Iðunn and Þjazi has an ethnographic parallel among the Andamanese Islanders, as we read from Radcliffe-Brown:

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<sup>529</sup> Mead, pp. 65-67.

Maia Kolo (Sir Sea-eagle) lived at Čona in Tau-'ra-miku. He had a hut in the top of a *toroktato* tree. He was unmarried. When the men went fishing he used to steal their wives. He would only take good-looking girls. He would call out to a girl to come and catch hold of his foot, saying "I have a fish for you." If an old or ugly woman came, he would say "No! not you; go away." When a young woman came and caught hold of his foot he flew away with her to his hut in the tree.<sup>530</sup>

The Andamanese Islanders also have a story in which an antagonist murders to obtain honey, which reminds us of *Skáldskaparmál's* story of the Dwarves Fjalar and Galar who killed Kvasir in order to create the sacred honey mead:

Perjido was the first to eat honey. One day he went to shoot fish. He saw a nyuri (*Plotosus* sp.). The nyuri disappeared amongst the roots of the mangrove trees. Perjido was looking for the fish. There was a honeycomb in a mangrove tree. Perjido saw its reflection in the water. He took some fire and tried to get the honey out of the water. The water put out the fire. He could not get the honey. He went home and told his mother what he had been doing. She went with him and saw the honey. "What a fool you are" she said, "don't you see that it is in the trees." Perjido took some fire and smoked out the bees and took the honey. After that Perjido used to go and collect honey.

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<sup>530</sup> Brown, pp. 227-228.

He ate it all himself. He did not tell the others (the ancestors) about it. Maia Porubi (Sir Frog) found out that Perjido was getting honey and eating it. He went in to the forest to look for some. He found five or six combs. He ate them all and brought none home to his children. Beret (a smaller species of frog) was the child of Porubi. One day Beret said to his father “Bring us some honey.” The children went with their father and showed him the combs in the trees. Porubi went up the tree, and each time he ate the honey in the tree and did not bring any of it down for his children. Then Beret saw another honeycomb in a very tall tree. He pointed it out to his father. Porubi went up to get it. Beret cut the creeper up which his father had climbed. Porubi wrapped up the honeycomb to bring it down. Beret said “Father, this creeper is bad. How will you come down?” Porubi replied “How can it be bad, when I have just climbed up it?” Beret made some sharp stakes of čom (*Areca*) wood, and put them round the tree. Porubi jumped (or fell) from the tree on to the stakes and was killed. Beret took the honey and ran away home.<sup>531</sup>

Lastly, *Skáldskaparmál*'s story of Óðinn's winning of the honey mead, in part by transforming himself to a snake (after which he escapes in the form of an eagle), may be compared to the following Andamanese myths from Radcliffe-Brown:

The following was told me in Aka-Ĵeru.

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<sup>531</sup> Brown, pp. 221-222.

“At Dalamio, in the time of the ancestors, there used to be a big snake of the kind called *or-čubi*. He used to catch men and women when they were gathering honey, and kill them and eat them.”

An Akar-Bale version is a little fuller. “There was a man named Biča who went to look for honey in the jungle. He saw a big snake {wara-řobo) and from its neck was hanging a honeycomb. The snake was as big as a tree. ‘Why don’t you make your honey in the trees’ Biča said to the bees. He went home and called several of the men. They took their bows and arrows. They found the snake, and shot it with a great many arrows. They could not kill the snake, which ran away and was never seen again.”<sup>532</sup>

At this point we can understand why in *Bósa saga ok Herrauds* Iðunn’s gold apples have been transformed into a vulture’s gold egg, as we discussed in the commentary on *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 1. As we saw there, in the *Bósa saga* the God Jomala is the chief God of the Finnish pantheon, Jumala, and the saga’s image of Bósa the bard has likely been influenced by Finnish traditions of Väinämöinen the singer-poet, traditions that later were collected into the *Kalevala*. This Finnish influence can shed light on the underlying reasons why the Icelandic saga transforms Iðunn’s gold apples into a gold bird egg. The motivation for this seems to be that Iðunn was viewed as the Mother of the Waters, Ilmatar, of whom we read in *Kalevala* Rune 1. There (lines 210-212) she lays six gold eggs (and one of iron), from which earth and heaven are created, as lines 233-244 narrate:

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<sup>532</sup> Brown, p. 227.

From the cracked egg's lower fragment,  
Now the solid earth was fashioned,  
From the cracked egg's upper fragment,  
Rose the lofty arch of heaven,  
From the yolk, the upper portion,  
Now became the sun's bright lustre;  
From the white, the upper portion,  
Rose the moon that shines so brightly;  
Whatso in the egg was mottled,  
Now became the stars in heaven,  
Whatso in the egg was blackish,  
In the air as cloudlets floated.<sup>533</sup>

Iðunn was thus probably originally an Ilmatar-like creatrix bird figure, reminiscent of the *ruah elohim* ("spirit of the Gods") of Genesis 1:2 who hovered as a dove or eagle (even vulture) over the waters of chaos, incubating the forces of life which in the following verses emerge as the primordial light, and then as the earth and sky. The Genesis account leaves much unsaid, which, however, we can fill in from information preserved elsewhere in the Tanakh, and which is attested in other ancient near eastern sources. The *ruah elohim* incubated the primordial waters of chaos, and from the waters emerged the dragon of chaos variously known as

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<sup>533</sup> Kirby vol. 1, p. 7.

Leviathin and Tiamat, who is later slain, and from whose slain corpse the heavens and the earth are constructed. The parallel to this in Norse lore is the Giant Ymir who is slain by Óðinn and his two brothers.<sup>534</sup> In the Finnish *Kalevala* epic the slain chaos monster appears in the form of the cracked eggs of Ilmatar.<sup>535</sup>

As we learn later in Rune 1, the Mother of the Waters is also the mother of Väinämöinen, the archetypal bard-poet who therefore parallels the Norse God of poetry Bragi, husband of Iðunn. Already in Rune 1 we see that Väinämöinen is also equivalent to the indigenous archetype of the trickster as culture-fouder. In line 298 Väinämöinen grows tired of “a dwelling far too narrow,”<sup>536</sup> which matches the famous North American indigenous tales of the demiurge trickster (the Blackfoot “Old Man,” the Mojave and other tribes’ Coyote) who becomes tired of dwelling on so narrow a strip of land and so expands a little clump of mud into the expanse of earth.

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<sup>534</sup> See Kirby vol. 1, p. 319.

<sup>535</sup> See the following note from Kirby vol. 1, p. 319: “Ilmatar, the Daughter of the Air; *tar* is the usual feminine suffix in Finnish, and is generally to be understood to mean ‘daughter of.’ In the following passages we have the combined Finnish version of the widespread cosmogonical myths of the Divine Spirit brooding over the waters of Chaos; and the Mundane Egg. In the First Recension of the *Kalevala*, however, and in many Finnish ballads, an eagle is said to have built her nest on the knees of Väinämöinen after he was thrown into the sea by the Laplander, and the Creation-Myth is thus transferred to him.”

<sup>536</sup> Kirby vol. 1, p. 8.



In Rune 2 Väinämöinen causes growth to spring forth upon the earth, including trees, upon which birds sing. So many trees spring up that the sun becomes obscured, especially by a particularly mighty oak tree, that Väinämöinen fells all the trees except for a lone birch, which we can recognize as the world tree and as the equivalent of the tree of life and wisdom in the Genesis tale of the Garden of Eden. It is in Rune 2 that Väinämöinen first meets the giant eagle (who like all birds is ultimately a specialization of the bird Ilmatar) who will later save him from drowning in Rune 7 (out of gratitude to Väinämöinen for having left the lone birch tree standing that became the eagle's resting-place),<sup>537</sup> and help him arrive at Northland where he wishes to woo the Maiden of the North, who is yet another figure parallel to Iðunn. In Rune 19 this same Maiden of the North gets carried away by the giant eagle, reminiscent of Iðunn's abduction by the Giant Þjazi in eagle form. In Rune 19 this equivalent of Iðunn dwells in a castle, demonstrating that the various traditions of a maiden trapped beneath a tree and a maiden trapped in a castle are really but variations of a single mytheme.

Already in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* the trees of life, which belong to the Goddess of wisdom and life in the role of an ale-maiden,<sup>538</sup> bear fruit in the form of jewels. In *Skáldskaparmál* Loki calls apples "jewels" (*gripir*), which makes sense since Iðunn's

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<sup>537</sup> The trope of the eagle in the tree occurs countless times in ancient literature, including in the Nag Hammadi *Apocryphon of John* and in the Mandaean *Book of John*. We should not overlook the image of Þjazi in the tree at the beginning of the *Skáldskaparmál* story of Iðunn's abduction.

<sup>538</sup> See Albright 1920 Goddess.

apples are of gold. According to *Gylfaginning* Iðunn keeps her gold apples in a box made of ash wood, which is obviously a symbol for the world tree, the ash Yggdrasill. Her gold apples are therefore the fruit of Yggdrasill as the tree of life, a tree upon whose branches lives Iðunn as a bird Goddess, like the eagle upon Yggdrasill in *Grímnismál* strophe 32.

The great sea battle in the *Bósa saga* in which the hag Busla and King Harek perish in the sea seems to be cognate somehow with the traditions eventually enshrined in the *Kalevala* in which the hag Louhi transforms herself into an eagle, reminiscent of the primordial giant eagle of Runes 2, 7 and 19,<sup>539</sup> in order to recover the Sampo which had been taken away from Northland by Väinämöinen, Ilmarinen and Lemminkäinen. In the great battle that follows, Louhi the eagle-hag perishes together with the Sampo in the sea. We can easily detect in Louhi's transformation into an eagle the reverberations of the story of Iðunn's abduction by Þjazi in eagle form and her rescue by Loki in falcon/hawk form.<sup>540</sup> The Sampo that has been spirited away from Northland (Pohjala) thus corresponds in a certain way to the rescue of Iðunn and her apples from the northern land of Giants, Jötunheim. Thus

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<sup>539</sup> See Rune 43:161ff.: "Quick she spreads her mighty pinions, / Rises as a monster-eagle, / Flies on high, and soars, and circles / With one wing she sweeps the heavens, / While the other sweeps the waters." Crawford vol. 2, p. 633.

<sup>540</sup> Similarly Rune 28's account of Lemminkäinen's escape from Northland in the form of an eagle who is then followed by a hawk recalls the eagle Þjazi's pursuit of the hawk/falcon Loki who bears Iðunn as a nut or swallow.

there seems to be an equivalence between the Sampo and Iðunn's gold apples.<sup>541</sup> Since one of the functions of the Sampo (no one ancient or modern seems to know exactly what the Sampo really is) is to create great wealth, we may perhaps safely assume that it can produce gold, and perhaps even magic gold apples of immortality. The Sampo might then be an *axis mundi* that can be expressed variously as world tree and as world mill (the latter is the standard theory regarding Sampo). Either, world tree or world mill, can be the source of the gold apples of immortality.

Actually, the greatest similarity here is between the Sampo and Iðunn's ash-wood box that contains her gold apples, since we know that the Sampo had a lid. This brings to mind the Cherokee story of "The Daughter of the Sun," which we explored in the Introduction, where we saw that it is cognate to other indigenous stories about a bride's abduction by a Giant in some form, thus paralleling the legend of Iðunn's capture. There the Sun grieves over the the death of her daughter so much that she withdraws into her chamber, thus plunging the world into darkness. There is a parallel to this in Rune 2 of the *Kalevala* when the mighty oak tree chokes out the sunlight, plunging into darkness the land that has just been developed and put into order by Väinämöinen. The mighty oak is felled by a miniature man from the sea, reminding us of the Cherokee story's Little Men who try to bring back the sunlight. Their plan is to trap the spirit of the Sun's daughter in a box, but after this is accomplished the daughter escapes from it when the lid is unwisely lifted. And because of her escape mortality was introduced into the world. The Cherokke story's box therefore symbolizes immortality which steals away, and

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<sup>541</sup> Frog 2010, p. 124 recognizes this equivalency or at least similarity.

as such overlaps mythemically with the theft of Iðunn's box containing the apples of immortality. Strengthening the connections between these mythic trajectories is the fact that *Kalevala* Rune 2 also introduces the primordial giant eagle, benefactor of Väinämöinen, who corresponds to the eagle in the Iðunn story. Later, Väinämöinen is eventually responsible (indirectly) for the construction of the Sampo by the smith Ilmarinen, who ends up marrying the Maid of the North, yet another reverberation of Iðunn and her myth.

That in the end the Sampo is lost definitively in the sea may be correlated with the Gods' definitive loss of Iðunn (and by implication, of her apples) in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*. (We also think of the definitive loss of immortality in the Cherokee story lately discussed). In the Old Norse poem, Ragnarøk looms on the horizon in strophe 26. The Gods must all die, and even Iðunn must perish. But her return is hinted at in *Völuspá* strophe 56's previously destroyed Earth, that is, the Goddess Jǫrð (of whom Iðunn is a preeminent specialization or hypostasis), who rises "again," *iðia-* (cf. *Ið-unn*), out of the waters of death, and in strophe 57's "Eternal Field," *Iðavǫllr* (again, cf. *Ið-unn*). We are told in strophe 56 that in the reborn earth the eagle will fly. Perhaps that too is a hint that the bird Goddess Iðunn has returned in glory. Thus goes the end of the world story in the *Völuspá*.

In the end the Sampo is lost definitively in the sea. According to *Völuspá* the earth will sink into the sea and perish before being reborn, rising green from the waters. At the conclusion of *Kalevala*, in Rune 50, the divine minstrel Väinämöinen departs from what Scandinavian lore would call Middle Earth. He makes his departure upon the waters, sailing off in a copper boat. The reason? He is offended

by the new anonymous culture hero, born of the virgin Marjatta, who seems ready to replace the old bard. Väinämöinen parallels the indigenous culture hero who, when his work is done, withdraws from the world, promising one day to return (we have heard such a paradigm among the Blackfoot concerning Old Man; one thinks also of Aztec and Mayan legends). Kirby establishes a sort of parallelism between Ilmatar, who conceived her eggs as a virgin by virtue of the wind and water in Rune 1, and the virgin Marjatta of the final Rune, number 50, when he refers to “the beneficent powers, represented in the *Kalevala* under the twin aspects of Ilmatar and Marjatta.”<sup>542</sup> Of Marjatta herself Kirby explains: “The story in the present Runo seems to exhibit a veneer of Christianity over Shaman legends. Even the name Marjatta, notwithstanding its resemblance to Maria, seems to be really derived from the word marja, a berry. An old writer says that the favourite deities of the Finns in his time were Väinämöinen and the Virgin Mary.”<sup>543</sup>

There seems to be a Gnostic influence in the story of Marjatta’s son in Rune 50, who on one level is of course Christ. In Rune 50:351-352 Marjatta’s infant son on her knees simply vanishes into thin air, as if he has but a phantom body. In lines 417-420 we discover that the missing boy has sunk into the swamps, and yet he is not dead. This might constitute evidence for a Gnostic thread in the form of Christianity introduced among Finns, just as we have seen seems to have been the case in Scandinavia as well.

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<sup>542</sup> Kirby vol. 2, p. 279.

<sup>543</sup> Kirby vol. 2, p. 280.

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According to Kirby Rune 50:465-468 “apparently alludes to Väinämöinen having sent Ilmarinen to Pohjola by a trick.”<sup>544</sup> Thus just before his forsaking Middle Earth we are reminded of the bard’s connection with the underlying myth of Iðunn’s abduction. In Rune 50:487ff. Väinämöinen implies he will return at the end of the world, when the sun and moon have perished:

In the stern himself he seated,  
Sailing o’er the sparkling billows,  
Still he sang on his departure,  
And he sang as he was sailing:  
“May the time pass quickly o’er us,  
One day passes, comes another,  
And again shall I be needed.  
Men will look for me, and miss me,  
To construct another Sampo,  
And another harp to make me,  
Make another moon for gleaming,  
And another sun for shining.  
When the sun and moon are absent,  
In the air no joy remaineth.”<sup>545</sup>

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<sup>544</sup> Kirby vol. 2, p. 280.

<sup>545</sup> Kirby vol. 2, p. 271.

Kirby tells us that “There is a Finnish ballad relating how the sun and moon were stolen by German and Esthonian sorcerers, and recovered by the son of Jumala. (*Kanteletar*, III., 2 ; translated by Mr. C. J. Billson, *Folklore*, VI., 343, 344).”<sup>546</sup> Rune 50 implies that Väinämöinen is this son of Jumala, the chief God of the Finnish pantheon. When the sun and moon perish, as is foretold in *Völuspá*, then Väinämöinen will return and create, no doubt via magic singing, a new sun and moon. But Väinämöinen also promises to construct a new Sampo, and we may even find a clue as to the Sampo’s nature in the line that follows, namely, “And another harp to make me.” We know that the Sampo has a lid. In Rune 1:78 we hear of a *copper* box that contains songs wound up in the form of a ball. In Rune 50, Väinämöinen sails away *singing* in a *copper* boat.

When considering the *Kalevala*’s allusions to the Iðunn abduction story, we must not forget that the tale was associated by Snorri (and we would argue also in earlier oral tradition) with the legend of Óðinn’s theft (abduction) of the sacred mead of poetry. This hints to us that there is a complementary relationship between Iðunn’s apples of immortality and the sacred mead of poetry, so that there is a poetic aspect to Iðunn’s apples and an element of immortality in poetry and the mead. This awareness is partly revealed in *Hávamál*’s proverb that a person’s glory endures beyond their death. Of course in Norse culture such glory is remembered and preserved pre-eminently in verse and song. We would suggest that the Sampo is comparable to Rune 1’s box containing songs, and that this in turn is equivalent to a

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<sup>546</sup> Kirby vol. 2, p. 279.

significant degree to Iðunn's box that contains the apples of immortality, which have an element of the poetry embodied in her husband Bragi, the Norse Väinämöinen.

In Rune 19 we read that a little 14 day old girl who tells the story of the fairest maid who is abducted by a giant eagle, a tale that is clearly reflective of the Iðunn-Þjazi legend, is called "gold apple" by Louhi after the story is finished. This term of endearment confirms the influence of the Iðunn myth upon the Rune 19 fable. The title of endearment "gold apple" occurs in the *Kalevala* nowhere else as frequently as it does in Rune 50, where it is used repeatedly to refer to Marjatta's docetic-like infant, specifically in Rune 50 lines 343, 357, 380 and 418. Other than the attestation in Rune 19, the title of endearment occurs only twice elsewhere in the whole of the *Kalevala*, if our counting is correct. This suggests that Marjatta's son embodies immortality.

Väinämöinen is the son of the virgin Ilmatar, as well as of Jumala. Since there is a certain parallelism between Ilmatar and Marjatta, the latter's anonymous son would seem to present a certain degree of competition with his counterpart Väinämöinen. But although Väinämöinen leaves Middle Earth to let Marjatta's son have his way and sway, the old minstrel, like the Norse Völva, can see far ahead to the time when he will be desired and needed again. In the meantime he leaves mortals with his songs and tunes, which will ensure his own immortality in the earth. Poetry is the true gold that brings true riches, like the Sampo containing wealth beneath its lid, like the bird Goddess Iðunn's box with its cover protecting the gold apples of immortality and song.



## *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*

### Strophes Commentary

#### Part II

#### Strophes 7-26

#### Strophe 7.

Ill endured: The term *illa* harks back to strophe 2's *illa gátu*, “inauspicious oracle,” and looks forward to strophe 21's *illa letu*, “ill they suspected,” which in turn alludes back to strophe 2's *Ætlun æsir/illa*. In all three instances the term *illa* occurs in the first line of a strophe. This was all quite intentional on the part of the poet.

Tall tree: The majority reading *hardbaðms* is doubtless a textual corruption. The original was been inspired by *Völuspá* strophe 19's *hár baðmr*, “high tree,” and MS E preserves the best reading, *harbadms*. The manuscript tradition has been influenced by Codex Regius' reading of *hárbaðmr*,<sup>547</sup> in contrast to *hár baðmr*. We suspect that strophe 7 originally read *har baðm*.

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<sup>547</sup> Cf. the curious *hávan / hróðrbarm* of Baldrs draumar strophe 9, which Dronke sees as a misunderstanding of *Völuspá* 31/6 and 32/1-2; see Dronke, p. 158. We wonder if in this case as well there might be a connection with *Völuspá* 19. On the other hand, we find it difficult to believe that a simple transposition of the *h* and *b* of

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From the tall tree, / when bound beneath the wood: We have rendered *baðm* as “tree” and *meiði* as “wood.” The word *meiðr* means a “pole” or “a gallows,” and in poetic language “tree.” We use the word “wood” in this instance as a synonym of “tree,” although in strophe 7 it is quite possible indeed that *meiði* may mean a gallows.

Beneath the wood: *undir . . . meiði*. This is inspired by *Völuspá* strophe 20’s *und þolli*, “under the tree,” to which we should add strophe 27’s *undir . . . baðmi*, “under the tree.” We can now see just how extensively strophes 6 and 7 have been crafted after *Völuspá* strophe 20:

<i>Völuspá</i> 20	<i>Hrafnagaldur Óðins</i>
From there drew near maidens,	<i>dys</i>
knowing much,	<i>forvitinn</i>
three from the pool	
beneath the tree;	<i>undir . . . meiði</i>
one called <i>Urðr</i> ,	<i>Íþune hetu</i>

The Ice Giant *Nǫrvi* is the father of the night. Simrock interprets “*Nǫrvi*’s daughter” instead of “*Nǫrvi*’s son.”<sup>548</sup>

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*hróðrbarm*, as proposed by Bergmann 1875, p. 33, immediately yields a contextually meaningful sense; see our commentary on *Baldur’s draumar* strophe 9.

<sup>548</sup> Simrock, p. 374.

With Iðunn's descent from Yggdrasill's bright branches to the underworld, cf. *Thebaid* 8:1-3:

Ut subitus vates pallentibus incidit umbris  
letiferasque domos orbisque arcana sepulti  
rupit. . . .

When on a sudden the prophet fell among the pallid  
shades, and burst into the homes of death and the  
mysteries of the deep-sunken realm. . . .<sup>549</sup>

To this we could add line 16's *altera nox*, "a deeper night,"<sup>550</sup> which we may correlate with strophe 7's *kundar Nǫrva*, "Nǫrvi's child," that is, Night. In the underworld of *Thebaid* Book 8 dwell the *silentes*, "the silent folk" (line 35), which accords with the silent Iðunn as she dwells in dark abodes. Cf. as well *Thebaid* 2:438-439, *anne feret luxu consueta paterno / hunc regina larem?*: "Will thy queen, accustomed to her father's luxury, / endure this simple home?"<sup>551</sup> *Thebaid* 5:48's *dulce*, "pleasant," and 5:57's *dis visum turbare domos*, "It was the will of the gods to

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<sup>549</sup> Mozley vol. 2, pp. 194-195.

<sup>550</sup> Mozley vol. 2, pp. 194-195.

<sup>551</sup> Mozley vol. 2, pp. 426-427.

confound our homes,”<sup>552</sup> may be compared to strophe 7’s *vęri vistum heima*, “pleasanter dwellings (at) home” and strophe 6’s *dys*, “Goddess.”

Regarding Iðunn’s fall from the world tree, there are a few more relevant parallels that come to mind. We should not overlook the curious passage from the introduction to the Irish version of Statius’ *Thebaid*, namely, *Togail na Tebe*, where we learn that at a certain time every newborn was being threatened with death:

Then it chanced upon a time that Oedipus, son of Laius, was born of the witch Jocasta and after his birth he was carried to a very great wood near by, and his mother gave orders that he should not be lost or destroyed but lifted up into a very high and smooth treetrunk in the wood and Oedipus was left thus, and when he was left alone, he sang his childish little strain.

A certain king’s son, however, who was engaged in plunder and rapine, that lad’s name by which he was named was Polybus, heard that plaint of the infant bound in the tree. That man came forward towards the infant, and saw the infant in the plight in which it was. He conceived an exceeding great love for it, and carried it away with him to be nursed and reared as a son originally his own. . . .

And Oedipus took his father’s land, and on assuming sovereignty espoused his mother as a fitting consort, and knew nothing of that fact till the attention of Queen Jocasta fell upon Oedipus the king’s naked feet, for thus they were with a hole through each of them. The queen asked: “What has

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<sup>552</sup> Mozley vol. 1, pp. 6-7.

pierced thy feet ?” said she then. “Not hard,” said he. “Thus was I found in the middle of a wood in a very high tree in the forest, with a nail through each of my feet keeping me in the tree, and I do not know who had placed me there in that fashion.”<sup>553</sup>

With regard to Iðunn’s fall from Yggdrasill mirroring the Gnostic Sophia’s fall, the latter is in turn patterned to a certain extent on the Genesis story of Eve’s fall. We read in the Gnostic text *The Hypostasis of the Archons*, also called *The Nature of the Archons*, that when the archons wished to seize Eve to rape her, she turned into a tree.<sup>554</sup> The story is told at greater length in a parallel in *On the Origin of the World*:

Now come, let us lay hold of her and cast our seed into her, so that when she becomes soiled she may not be able to ascend into her light. . . . Then Eve, being a force, laughed at their decision. She put mist into their eyes and secretly left her likeness with Adam. She entered the tree of acquaintance and remained there. And they pursued her, and she revealed to them that she had gone into the tree and become a tree. Then, entering a great state of fear, the blind creatures fled.<sup>555</sup>

### Strophe 8.

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<sup>553</sup> Calder, pp. 7-8.

<sup>554</sup> See Robinon, p. 164.

<sup>555</sup> Robinson, pp. 182-183.

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Guðmundur Magnússon thought strophe 8 should follow strophes 9-10,<sup>556</sup>

which would give us the strophe sequence 7, 9, 10, 8, 11:

Guðmundur Magnússon Sequence	MSS Sequence
7. She ill endured the (dark) descent from the tall tree, bound beneath the wood. Not pleased with Nǫrvi's son (the night), she who so long had abode in better of the worlds' dwellings.	7. She ill endured the (dark) descent from the tall tree, bound beneath the wood. Not pleased with Nǫrvi's son (the night), she who so long had abode in better of the worlds' dwellings.
9. Viðrir chose the valiant Bifrøst guard, go to the guard of Gjöll's sun, ask what of the worlds would she know. Bragi and Loftur would bear witness.	8. Battle Gods behold the woman's anguish at the horse's stable; they gave a wolf skin, she wore it well; with deception played, made new her nature, varied her visage.

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<sup>556</sup> See Bugge 1965, p. 372.

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<p>10. Sorcery songs they sung, on wolf-back borne, the God and the Gods go to the world of the Giants. Óðinn held guard from high Hliðskjálf watched the witnesses on distant ways.</p> <p>8. Battle Gods behold the woman's anguish at the horse's stable; they gave a wolf skin, she wore it well; with deception played, made new her nature, varied her visage.</p> <p>11. From the mead server (Iðunn) the wise one of the Gods' offspring and of the travelling companions would ask what she knew of Earth's lightning-seared sky, of</p>	<p>9. Viðrir chose the valiant Bifrost guard, go to the guard of Gjöll's sun, ask what of the worlds would she know. Bragi and Loftur would bear witness.</p> <p>10. Sorcery songs they sung, on wolf-back borne, the God and the Gods go to the world of the Giants. Óðinn held guard from high Hliðskjálf watched the witnesses on distant ways.</p> <p>11. From the mead server (Iðunn) the wise one of the Gods' offspring and of the travelling companions would ask what she knew of Earth's lightning-seared sky, of</p>
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Hel and the Heavens, of their beginning, of their life span, of their end.	Hel and the Heavens, of their beginning, of their life span, of their end.
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Both arrangements, that of strophes 7, 9, 10, 8, 11, and that of the MSS' 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 seem to read well as far as logical plot development is concerned, and consequently it is probably safer to hold to the MSS tradition. This contrasts sharply with Simrock's proposed restructuring the poem's sequence by inserting strophes 13 and 14 between strophes 23 and 24, since this change actually has much to speak for it in terms of improving the overall plot development and in terms of improving the sense of the text, especially the introductory word in each of the first lines of strophes 13 and 14.

Lassen correctly argues that although Nanna is the name of Baldr's wife, here in strophe 8 it simply means "woman" and refers in this particular instance to Iðunn.<sup>557</sup>

Viggr, or Viggjar, refers to Yggr, in the sense of a horse and its dwelling-place, that is, its stable.<sup>558</sup> Bergmann writes: "Óðinn, as a wind God under the symbol of a horse also bore the epithet Yggr. . . . But here Viggr denotes the celestial horse

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<sup>557</sup> Lassen, pp. 98-99.

<sup>558</sup> See Bergmann 1875, p. 103.



Hrímfaxi, who pulls the wagon of the night and dwells in the dark north.”<sup>559</sup>

Consequently, Viggiar does not refer to Yggdrasill, but to Hrímfaxi’s dwelling place in the north. Bergmann’s deduction is surely correct, given the surrounding strophes’ preoccupation with the night and its mythological accoutrements.

Simrock remarks that Nanna, according to Uhland, represents the spring blossoms.<sup>560</sup> The wolf skin is interpreted by Simrock as winter’s blanket of ice and snow.<sup>561</sup> Rupp documents that “[s]till in the 1500s magicians were thought of as riding wolves: *Theatrum de venesicis. Ulr. Molitor Von Hexen vnd Vnholden*, p. 79, Frankfurt, 1586.”<sup>562</sup> Guðmundsdóttir has recently commented upon strophe 8 with reference to the folklore of werewolves in medieval Icelandic literature.<sup>563</sup> It is perhaps often overlooked that the word *vǫlva* is, as Bergmann documents, cognate with “the Slavic *valchava* or *volchava*, ‘the Wolven’ (feminine), and denotes a woman of magic, a Seeress, who as such could be viewed as the daughter of a werewolf, and who by Norse myth is named Víðolf, Forest-Wolf.”<sup>564</sup> Fittingly, the *Vǫlva Angrboða* is the mother of the Fenris wolf. Thus we might see an indication of a *Vǫlva* status implied by Iðunn’s wolfish imagery in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 8. If we keep in mind the wolven nature of the *Vǫlva*, then we might be able to discern more lines of

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<sup>559</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 103.

<sup>560</sup> Simrock, p. 372.

<sup>561</sup> See Simrock, p. 374.

<sup>562</sup> Rupp, p. 317.

<sup>563</sup> Guðmundsdóttir 2007, pp. 278, 279, 288, 289, 301

<sup>564</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 30.

wolfish continuity throughout the *Völuspá* poem, which would then link the wolvern Völva together with strophe 38's "wolf" (*vargr*), with strophe 39's Fenrir, with strophe 43's, 46's, 55's and 48's word "ravener," *freki* (which coincides with the name of one of Óðinn's wolves), with strophe 44's "wolf-age," and with strophe 51's wolf, the (in)famous Fenrir.

We can appreciate how a medieval reader of the *Völuspá* poem may have read into the text an identification of its Völva as Angrboða, which the author of *Baldrs draumar*, and perhaps of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* as well, may have done, although we have our doubts that the author of *Baldrs draumar* knew *Völuspá*. With respect to *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*, its author obviously thought of Iðunn as wolvern, and the author could have thus associated her in some way with the person of Angrboða, perhaps understood as the Völva of *Völuspá*.

Gamkrelidze and Ivanov have reconstructed several Indo-European traditions and notions of wolves, reaching back to Hittite sources, that may be of relevance to the present discussion:

Dressing in wolf skins (cf. Hitt. LÚ<sup>MEŠ</sup> UR.BAR.RA 'wolf people,' i.e. people dressed in wolf skins, KBo XVI 68 I 13; 78 IV 9 et al.) conveys magical power, evidently conferring omniscience on the wearer, and may have been symbolic of a special juridical status. The formula for people turning into wolves, attested in *zik-wa* UR.BAR.RA-*aš kištat* 'you have turned into a wolf' of the Hittite Laws, resembles Skt. *vřko hí śáh* 'he is a wolf,' referring to a special juridical status in the wedding ritual of kidnapping the bride. . . .

Ancient Slavic and Baltic traditions exhibit an especially clear correspondence with the Hittite and Germanic ones in a ritual transformation of a human into a wolf, which confers supernatural strength and the special status of vatic or all-knowing person. . . . A distinctive characteristic of ‘wolfskin people’ and werewolves was their omniscience. This must reflect an ancient tradition, going back to Proto-IndoEuropean, of omniscient humans in wolf form (cf. Ukr. *viščun*, OCz. *vêdi*, etc.), reflected in the evident link of \**weit*’-(n)- ‘wolf’ and \**weit*’- ‘know’ (Gk. *oîda*, Skt. *véda*, Russ. *vedat*’).<sup>565</sup>

West supplies instances from ancient near eastern and Greek literature of how the Gods are able to change their own and various humans’ appearances while on missions. This is a normal feature of divine dispatches.<sup>566</sup> West also gives several examples of the trope of messengers of the Gods.<sup>567</sup>

Strophe 8’s words *breytti* and *skipte* both accord with the central trope of transformation that gives Ovid’s mythological masterpiece its title, namely, *Metamorphoses*. In Book X of *Metamorphoses* we find the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, which immediately brings to mind *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*’ story of Bragi descending to the underworld to see his wife Iðunn. Orpheus’ silence, weeping and

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<sup>565</sup> Gamkrelidze and Ivanov, p. 414.

<sup>566</sup> See West 2003, pp. 182-183.

<sup>567</sup> West 2003, pp. 190ff.

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fasting, *septem tamen ille diebus squalidus in ripa Cereris sine munere sedit; / cura dolorque animi lacrimaeque alimenta fuere*, “Seven days he sat there on the bank in filthy rags and with no taste of food. Care, anguish of soul, and tears were his nourishment,” remind us of Iðunn as portrayed in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*, not to mention Eurydice’s own silence in the netherworld. Book X of *Metamorphoses* also contains the story of Atalanta and the three golden apples of Venus, which we may naturally coordinate with Iðunn as guardian of the apples of immortality. The death of Orpheus is related at the beginning of *Metamorphoses* Book XI, where we read of “the matrons of the Ciconians, having their raving breasts covered with the skins of wild beasts,” which reminds us of Iðunn’s wolf hide. We should not overlook the fact that Eurydice died of a snake bite and then descended to the underworld. Now in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 5 we find the Old Norse word for “venom,” *leþvi*, and in the immediately following strophe 6 Iðunn falls off the world tree into the netherworld. In strophe 5, the airy venom “ceases not in streams”; with this compare *Metamorphoses* Book X 23-24, *venenum / vipera diffudit*, “the venom of the viper spread.” Also, line 20’s *vera*, “truth,” reminds us of strophe 5’s *vissa vera*. Line 57 says of Eurydice, *illa relapsa est*, “she fell back”; cf. strophe 6’s *fra / aski hniginn* and strophe 7’s *ofann komu*. With line 67’s *natura prior*, “prior nature” of Orpheus, cf. strophe 8’s *lyndi breytti*.

Despite this evidence from *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*, we do not see that it reaches the level that would require literary dependence on Ovid. The stories are more likely to represent independent modulations of more ancient Oriental and Greco-Roman myths.

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The statement, *lek at levisi*, “with deception played,” or “delighted in mischief,” reminds us of *Völuspá* strophe 22’s description of Heiðr, who is likely the (or a) *Völva* of the *Völuspá* poem. Strophe 22 says of Heiðr, *seið hón leikin*, about which Dronke writes: “*leikin*: here the suffix is that of the past part. of verb *leika*, ‘to play,’ (cf. *Lks* 19/5 where *leikinn* has the adjectival suffix, ‘playful’).”<sup>568</sup> The phrase *lek at levisi* may give us another indication that in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* Iðunn may be thought of as a *Völva*, or at least as like a *Völva* in some ways. Given the heavy influence that *Völuspá* strophes 19-21 has exerted on previous strophes of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*, we posit that strophe 8 of the latter poem is hinting that Iðunn is perhaps none other than Heiðr, and that she is thought of as the *Völva* of *Völuspá*. This may explain why in some manuscripts *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* is placed immediately before *Völuspá*.

We find an interesting parallel to the language and thought of strophe 8 in *Thebaid* 10:639-641:

sed placuit mutare genas, fit provida Manto,  
responsis ut plena fides, et fraude priores  
exuitur voltus.

but it pleased her to change  
her aspect, and she becomes sagacious Manto, that  
her speech might have full credence, and by deceit

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<sup>568</sup> Dronke, p. 133.

puts off her former mien.<sup>569</sup>

With regard to “sagacious Manto,” the Latin word *provida* (pro-vida) gives us a close equivalent to strophe 6’s *forvitinn* (for-vitinn; cf. pro-vida) which should be rendered “wise” in foresight, “prescient,” not “curious” or “enquiring,”<sup>570</sup> as the standard Old Icelandic dictionaries would suggest.

The *Haustlǫng* poem calls Iðunn *goda dis*, which reminds us of Homer’s δία θεάων.<sup>571</sup> As Wachter explains, a *dis* is one who sets and determines fates and destinies, and *goda dis* means that Iðunn, because of her apples of immortality, can determine how long the Gods will continue to live. She is thus mythically equivalent to the Norns, with power over the very Gods themselves.<sup>572</sup> There must be an echo of this idea in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins’ dis forvitinn*.

The *Thebaid* 10 passage is all the more relevant for *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* in that the former describes the Goddess Virtue’s descent from heaven to earth, which parallels Iðunn’s own descent from the upper branches of Yggdrasil to the earth, the underworld in the north to be precise. There are important differences between the two texts, for instance Virtue descends here “gladly” to assist humans. Nevertheless the structural, semantic and linguistic parallels that the two texts share remain quite significant. Virtue is a Goddess, *diva*, and the latter word

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<sup>569</sup> Mozley vol. 2, pp. 366-367.

<sup>570</sup> *Pace* Lassen, p. 84.

<sup>571</sup> See Wachter 1838, p. 151.

<sup>572</sup> Wachter 1838, p. 151.

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parallels *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 6's *dís*; thus *Thebaid* 10's *diva* and *provida* give us precise equivalents of the Old Icelandic *dís* and *fortvitinn*. *Thebaid* 10:635-636 says of Virtue's descent, *caelestibus ut tunc desiluit gavisia plagis*, "how gladly then did she leap down from the heavenly places."<sup>573</sup> The plural "heavenly places," *caelestibus*, remind us of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 7's plural dwellings, *vistum*, from which Iðunn has fallen. Strophe 7 says that Iðunn did not like, *kunne . . . at*, her descent from *Yggddrasill*; this is an intentional stark contrast with the quite opposite glad descent of Virtue in *Thebaid* 10.

So that Virtue may have more credence in her earthly mission, she changes her appearance to that of Manto, the daughter of the blind seer Tiresias. Both Tiresias and Manto were oracles, which is the precise function Iðunn is expected to fulfill in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*. The final three lines of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* read literally as follows:

lyndi breytti nature changed  
lek at levisi, played at deception  
litum skipte shape shifted

These correspond to the Latin of *Thebaid* quite exactly, and in the same order:

lyndi breytti	nature changed	mutare genas	to change her aspect
lek at levisi,	played at deception	et fraude	and by fraud

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<sup>573</sup> Mozley vol. 2, pp. 364-367.

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litum skipte      shape shifted      priores exuitur voltus      puts off her former mien

Additionally we might compare strophe 8's lek, "played," with *Thebaid's* *placuit*, "pleased." What is more, Virtue also changes her clothing, which is matched by *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 8's wolf hide, vargsbelg, in which Iðunn lets herself be clothed, let i fęrazk. Of Virtue we read in 10:644-645:

descendant vestes, torvisque ligatur

vitta comis—nam laurus erat.

her robe falls

to her feet, and on her stem brow the wool is bound,

where before was laurel.<sup>574</sup>

This change of Virtue's clothing is then compared to the story of Omphale's "bristling hide," horrentia terga, in line 647.<sup>575</sup> Thus we even have a parallel to the Old Icelandic word belg, "hide." The reference is to the hide of the Nemean lion slain by Heracles, whose pelt magically protected one from weapons and weather. The relevance of this for Iðunn's wolf hide should be evident; it will protect her from the evil beings of the northern netherworld and its bitter cold as well. We recall here strophe 13:1-3 of *Hrafnsmál*, which seems to liken wolf-hides to shields:

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<sup>574</sup> Mozley vol. 2, pp. 366-367.

<sup>575</sup> Mozley vol. 2, pp. 366-367.



Ulfheðnar hæita,	Wolf-coats are they called
þær er í orrostu	who bear
blóðgar rander bera. <sup>576</sup>	bloody shields in battle.

After reviewing the evidence examined above we conclude that *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophes 6 and 8 are dependent on *Thebaid* 10. This, however, does not enable us to definitively date the Old Norse poem to the post-medieval period, because even the undisputedly medieval poem *Völuspá* was influenced by the Latin version of *Thebaid*.<sup>577</sup> Thus although *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* was first consigned to writing in the post-Reformation period, either in the 1500s or 1600s, nevertheless it may transmit an earlier story that had been influenced by *Thebaid* in the medieval period before the revival of Greco-Roman literature during the Renaissance.

The dependence of strophe 8 (in consort with strophe 6 line 2) upon the Latin *Thebaid* 10 may have some quite significant implication for the dating of at least the story that may underlie *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*. While various linguistic features preclude a dating before ca. 1500s-1600s for the consignment of the poem to writing, the underlying story may be significantly older. *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 8's lek, "played," is related to *Völuspá* strophe 22's leikinn, "played," in its

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<sup>576</sup> Kershaw, pp. 84-85.

<sup>577</sup> This is all the more reason to call into question Lassen's overconfidence in assigning to Erasmus' influence the proverb on counsel in the night in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 22. See Lassen, pp. 18-21.

description of Heiðr. However, a close examination of *Völuspá* strophe 22 does not reveal any convincing points of contact with the *Thebaid* 10 story of Virtue's descent and guile apart from the the term leikinn. Thus *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 8 could not have derived its full description of Iðunn from *Völuspá* strophe 22. The description of Iðunn must have come directly from the *Thebaid*.

As we show in our commentary on *Völuspá* strophe 23, the latter poem's story of Baldr begins at strophe 23, not strophe 31, an insight that stems from Rooth's research.<sup>578</sup> As Rooth documented, *Völuspá* strophe 23 has been shaped by the text of *Thebaid*.<sup>579</sup> Now, we find it extremely unlikely that the author of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* read *Völuspá* strophe 22 and saw in it an influence from *Thebaid*, and so got out his copy of the latter and used Book 10's story of Virtue's descent to shape his own description of Iðunn in strophe's 6 and 8. More likely, because more natural, would be the supposition that the underlying story of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* arose around the same time that *Völuspá* strophes 22ff. had been influenced by the Latin *Thebaid*. In other words, it is more natural to hold that an oral version of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* and the written *Völuspá* were influenced by the *Thebaid* during the same time period.

Since poetry is oral, it is dynamic and ever-changing; consequently, when the originally medieval story enframed in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* came to be written down in the post-Reformation period, it had both changed significantly (especially with regard to updated language) and conserved various archaic elements (such as

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<sup>578</sup> See Rooth, p. 241.

<sup>579</sup> Rooth, p. 241.

influence from *Thebaid* from the time when the latter had shaped *Völuspá* strophes 22ff.).

Strophe 8's *sigtivar* gives us a term we encounter in *Völuspá* strophe 43, and the latter is followed in strophe 44 by the word *vargold*, "wolf age." We may compare this *varg-* with *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 8's *vargsbelg*, and the same strophe's *skipte*, "shifted," in reference to the *vargsbelg* that the Gods give Iðunn at Yggdrasill may be compared with *Völuspá* strophe 45's statement about Yggdrasill which *skelfr*, "totters," "shivers." That we are on the correct trail will now be confirmed, for in the very next strophe, number 9, we meet with the following names of strophe 8's *sigtivar*, namely, Óðinn, Heimdallr, Bragi and Loftr, that is, Loki. Now, when we return to *Völuspá* strophe 45 and continue reading the apocalyptic account of Ragnarøk, we encounter Óðinn and Heimdallr in strophe 45, and in strophe 46 we find the word *freki*, "ravener," which coincides with the name of one of Óðinn's wolves, and then once more *sigtíva*. In strophe 47 it is no coincidence that we then meet with the term *gandr* in *lǫrmungandr*; *gandr*, "spirit," is used in *Völuspá* strophe 22's account of *Heiðr*, and it brings to mind *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 10's *galdur*. Dronke writes concerning strophe 47 that "... *gandr* is used of wolves, as the helping spirit of witches. . . ." <sup>580</sup> Moreover, we know from *Skáldskaparmál* that *lǫrmungandr* is a kenning for the world serpent that goes back to the most famous of all the skaldic poets, namely, Bragi Boddason, whom scholars now recognize as the source of the Norse God of poetry, Bragi, husband of Iðunn. In other words, Bragi Boddason was turned into a God in Norse religion after his death, and he retained

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<sup>580</sup> Dronke, p. 146.

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his earthly name.<sup>581</sup> Thus in *Völuspá* strophe 47 we see a trace, a poetical one at that, of even the God Bragi of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*.

We have here in these *Völuspá* strophes the ultimate inspiration behind *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophes 8, 9 and 10. This is further confirmed by strophe 48's repetition of "ravener," freka, and the standard reading "Loki." Strophe 9 refers to Loki in the form *Loptur*, concerning which we may cite from Dronke's commentary on *Völuspá* strophe 48: "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'). . . ."<sup>582</sup> As we argue in our commentary on strophe 48, "Loki" there actually refers to personified Flame, not to the God Loki. The latter appears in the kenning "Býleiptr's brother." *Pace* Dronke, it is a little much to accept two references to Loki in the same strophe.<sup>583</sup> At any rate, we can see how the author of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* has transformed *Völuspá* strophe 48:5-8:

A host of Giants journey  
with the wolf,  
Býleiptr's brother  
along with them.

In *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* a group of Gods, including Býleiptr's brother,

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<sup>581</sup> See Lindow, pp. 86-88; Ross, p. 105.

<sup>582</sup> Dronke, p. 147.

<sup>583</sup> See Dronke, p. 147.

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travels with wolves. The Gods have simply replaced *Völuspá's* Giants.

From where did *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* get the idea of including Bragi along with Heimdallr and Loki? Once the poet had decided to feature Iðunn in his work, the idea of bringing in her husband would have been entirely natural. We wonder though if the happy, harp-playing Eggþér seated upon a grave-mound in *Völuspá* strophe 41 may have made the author of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* think of Bragi visiting his wife Iðunn's grave-mound. Naturally that can only remain speculation. There may have been several influences upon the author of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* from *Grímnismál*, especially strophe 18's Sæhrímnir, strophe 19's Geri and Freki, strophe 20's Huginn and Muninn, strophe 22's Valhallla gate Valgrind, strophe 28's Gjoll and Leipt, strophe 31's three roots of Yggdrasil underneath of which þursar and humans dwell, strophe 33's Dáinn and Dvalinn, strophe 36's Skogul serving mead, strophe 43's sons of Ívaldi of the old days, and strophe 44's Bragi.

It would be helpful here to summarize the Mesopotamian myth of Inanna's descent to the underworld. Inanna is the Goddess of both war and fertility. She decided to descend to the underworld to obtain power over death. During her descent she lost her clothes; in the Akkadian versions Ishtar similarly loses her clothes when she descends to the netherworld.<sup>584</sup> In order to escape from the underworld, Inanna is forced to leave a substitute there, and she chooses her shepherd husband Dumuzi. Penglase explains why: "However, at the great apple tree in the plain of Kulab, Inanna found her husband Dumuzi sitting on a throne and 'clothed in a magnificent garment.' The enraged goddess gave Dumuzi to the

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<sup>584</sup> See Penglase, p. 20.

demons.”<sup>585</sup> Dumuzi was not in mourning over his dead wife, and so in rage she consigns him to the netherworld. The apple tree functions here as an erotic symbol, and of course this ties in at least indirectly with the idea of immortality through off spring. Dumuzi was spared his fate somewhat, for he was allowed to leave the underworld six months each year, an obvious seasonal mythic motif also present in Greek mythology.

In related myths, Damu, a variant of Dumuzi, descends to the underworld and is mourned. His mother mourns and searches for him: “the mother goddess prepares a meal and brews beer, calling the young god to come and eat and drink. The beer seems to have been considered to have magic reviving properties for the god.”<sup>586</sup> In a related text, Damu’s

mother sets out in search of him. She adorns her body, dresses in fine linen, puts on her splendid headdress, and then travels to the nurse, a tree, with whom she has left her child. The goddess asks for her child, saying that he sleeps in her core, or in her bark, but finds that he has descended to the netherworld. . . . The mother speaks again of her preparations of adornment for the arrival of Damu, and in these lines she identifies herself variously as a cypress tree, a cedar tree of the Hashur mountains, and the black wood of

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<sup>585</sup> Penglase, p. 15.

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Dilmun. . . She speaks of Damu's lying sleeping in the 'treacherous sleep.' He also lies asleep in the rushes, the grass, the poplar and the tamarisk.<sup>587</sup>

With this ensemble of stories we may compare *Hrafnagaldur Óðins'* following elements: Iðunn descends from the world tree into the underworld (strophes 6-7), and is given a wolf-skin by the Gods (strophe 8), as if she had lost her clothes in her descent; her husband Bragi remains in the underworld when he visits Iðunn (strophe 16); the theme of drinking and eating (strophes 11, 17-19); Dáinn's nocturnal thorn. Lastly we should mention the traditional account of Iðunn as keeper of the apples of divine immortality.

The stories of Inanna and Dumuzi are paralleled in the Greek story of Demeter, Goddess of swords and fertility, chiefly in connection with agriculture. The Homeric Hymn to Demeter is one of the most important sources for her myth, which pictures her as refusing all comforts (cf. *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 12) as she searches for her daughter Persephone who has been abducted by Hades. In bitter sorrow, Demeter causes earth to stop yielding harvests. Zeus dispatches Iris to Demeter to urge her to return to the company of the Gods at Olympus, but in her deep wrath and dejection she rejects the offers of divine comfort and pleasure. Zeus accordingly dispatches Hermes to Hades to fetch Persephone so that she may be reunited with her mother. Before letting her leave, Hades tricks Persephone into eating a pomegranate seed, for if one has eaten in the realm of Hades, one must return there, at least seasonally. Compared to the stories of Inanna and Dumuzi, the

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<sup>587</sup> Penglase, pp. 29-30.

Hymn to Demeter shows so few parallels to the story of Iðunn, which are all of a quite general nature, that we can confidently conclude that the Greek source has not contributed to the story of Iðunn in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*.

Compare *Hávamál* strophe 107's *litar* with *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 8 line 8's *litum skipte*, "shape-shifted."

### Strophe 9.

Lassen informs us that *Gjöll* is a river that leads to Hel, which is the valence we must apply here.<sup>588</sup> Lassen lists two related kennings, "sun of a river" and "gold's support," which mean "gold" and "woman" respectively.<sup>589</sup> Bergmann emends strophe 9's *sunnu* to *svanna*, "swan."<sup>590</sup> But the linking of the sun and an infernal river is paralleled already in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, where in Tablet 10 we read that only the Sun can cross the Waters of Death.<sup>591</sup> Thus the emendation *sunnu* to *svanna* is not necessary in this instance.

Bergmann emends *gátt at fretta* to *gætta at fretta*, "to ask the guarded one"; *gætta* is the accusative feminine of the passive participle of *gæta*, "to guard."<sup>592</sup> However, as we explain in the Excursus on the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, a better emendation would be *gæta*, "guardian."

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<sup>588</sup> Lassen, p. 99.

<sup>589</sup> Lassen, p. 99.

<sup>590</sup> See Bergmann 1875, p. 103.

<sup>591</sup> George vol. 1, p. 683.

<sup>592</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 103.



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Bragi, Óðinn's skald, naturally accompanies the expedition since he is Iðunn's husband. Uhland notes that the union between Iðunn and Bragi is itself congruent in that spring, symbolized by Iðunn, is also the time of singing, symbolized by Bragi.<sup>593</sup> Wolzogen correlates Loki with summer, Bragi with spring, and Heimdallr with autumn.<sup>594</sup>

Lines 7-8, *bragi ok loptur / báru kviðu*, are paralleled to an extent in *Baldrs draumar* strophe 7, *en ásmegir / í ofvæni*.

*Hávamál* strophe 109 has shaped elements of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 9:

The day that followed, | the frost-giants came,  
Some word of Hor to win,  
(And into the hall of Hor;)  
Of Bolverk they asked, | were he back midst the gods,  
Or had Suttung slain him there? (Bellows version)

Ins hindra dags gengu hrímþursar

Háva ráðs at fregna

Háva hǫllu í.

At Bolverki þeir spurðu, ef hann væri með þondum kominn

eða hefði hánnum Suttungr of sóit.

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<sup>593</sup> Uhland, p. 73.

<sup>594</sup> von Wolzogen, p. 121.

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Here fregna and spurðu has influenced *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* 9 where Heimdallr is sent to ask, at fretta. Similarly in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* 11, they ask, frá, and “offspring of the Gods,” banda burða, correspond to *Hávamál*’s þondum.

Strophe 9’s embassy of three Gods dispatched to the oracle Iðunn in the frigid north calls to mind *Thebaid* 3’s account of the high-king Adrastus sending a team of seers to seek knowledge of the future. We read in lines 451ff. that “Amphiaraus is given the charge,” and “with thee, Melampus . . . bears company (adsociat passus).”<sup>595</sup> At first their labours bear no results, so they then resolve to go the hoarfrost-covered sacred mount Aphasas. There they pray in lines 489-490:

nos Argolicae primordia pugnae  
venturumque sinas caele praenosse laborem.

Grant that we may have foreknowledge from the  
sky of the beginnings of the Argive struggle and the  
contest that is to come.<sup>596</sup>

To a certain extent this reminds us of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 11, where we read of the embassy team that they seek knowledge about the sky, Hlýrnis, of the beginning, ártíð, and of the end still to come, aldurtila. Also to be mentioned is *Thebaid* 3’s conclusion to the two seers’ mission, which in line 555 speaks of prima

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<sup>595</sup> Mozley vol. 1, pp. 484-485.

<sup>596</sup> Mozley vol. 1, pp. 486-487.

dies, ubi terminus aevi, “the day of our birth, and the scene of our life’s ending.”<sup>597</sup> In lines 570ff. the chief seer decides to remain silent about what he learned on Mount Aphenus, which may be compared to Iðunn’s silence:

Not sight of populace, nor trusted  
converse with the monarch, nor council of chieftains  
can he bear, but hidden in his dark chamber refuses  
to make known the doings of the gods; thee,  
Melampus, shame and thy own cares keep in thy  
country region. For twelve days he speaks not, and  
holds people and leaders in long-drawn suspense.<sup>598</sup>

### Strophe 10.

As Bergmann writes, the word *galdur* should be read as plural *galtra*, “1) so that the first half-verse contains the required minimum of four syllables, 2) because the three did not sing *one* magic song, but rather *three*, each one had their own individual song.”<sup>599</sup>

Bergmann sees Heimdallr in “Rognir” and Bragi and Loki in “reiginn.”<sup>600</sup> Lassen interprets Rognir as an allusion to Óðinn,<sup>601</sup> but this is not possible, since he

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<sup>597</sup> Mozley vol. 1, pp. 492-493.

<sup>598</sup> Mozley vol. 1, p. 493.

<sup>599</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 105.

<sup>600</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 104.

remains in Hliðskjálf while the others travel on wolf-back on their mission to Jötunheim,<sup>602</sup> which is what is meant by “rann heimis.” However, how can “dwelling of the world” denote the home of the Giants? Bergmann emends Heimis to Grímnis, since “Heimi is nowhere attested as a Giant name.”<sup>603</sup> Lassen sees here a descent to the earth by the Gods on their mission,<sup>604</sup> but this is unconvincing. One solution might be to recognize that even in a generic reference to the world there could be an implicit understanding that the intended destination in that world is precisely and specifically Jötunheim, the home or world of the Giants. More elegantly stated, on the basis of the first statement of the strophe the poet expects his audience to understand “dwelling of the world” to mean “dwelling of the world of the Giants.” Another solution would be to understand with Lassen strophe 7’s heima as the dark dwelling of Night<sup>605</sup> into which Iðunn has fallen, and then to see in strophe 10’s heimis an allusion back to strophe 7’s heima. In favour of this are the similar double constructions we find in strophe 7, *vistum heima*, “dwellings (at) home,” and strophe 10, *rann heimis*, “dwelling-place of home.”

Rather than Bergmann’s emendation of Heimis to Grímnis, another possibility would be Hrímnis, that is, Hrímnir, a generic name for the Giants in *Hyndluljóð* strophe 33 (usually assigned to the *Völuspá hin skamma*). Also to be

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<sup>601</sup> Lassen, p. 86.

<sup>602</sup> See Bergmann 1875, p. 105.

<sup>603</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 104.

<sup>604</sup> Lassen, p. 100.

<sup>605</sup> See Lassen, p. 85.

considered would be the Giant Hymir, and the form Hýmíss would indeed quite closely match strophe 10's heimiss. Cf. the genitive form Hýmíss in *Hrafnsmál* strophe 2 line 7, Hýmíss hausrœyti, “skull picker of Hýmír.”<sup>606</sup>

However, in favour of Bergmann's emendation is that the name Grímnir occurs in strophe 16, where Bergmann argues it is a Giant's name, and this would seem to be the case, for the poem *Skírnismál*, which we know has influenced *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*, in strophe 35 threatens that Gerðr will be consigned to the netherworld at the roots of trees to the Giant named Hrímgrímnir, whose second component is none other than Grímnir. As we show elsewhere, *Hrafnagaldur Óðins'* portrait of the sorrowing Iðunn fallen from Yggdrasill has in part been shaped by the figure of Gerðr in *Skírnismál*. In *Skírnismál* the name Hrímgrímnir is separable, for in strophe 28 we find “Hrímnir” by itself.

For Lassen *gandr* is more likely to refer to a “witch's broomstick” than to a wolf.<sup>607</sup> Lassen suggests that strophe 10 may contain a “variant of *rann himins*, referring to the sky as the roof over the world; the gods would then be flying across the sky on their magic poles.”<sup>608</sup> It is not impossible that here *gandr* serves simultaneously to bring to mind both pole and wolf. It is also possible that we might be dealing in this instance with poles that are somehow shaped like wolves, like a pole with a carved wolf head or tail.

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<sup>606</sup> Kershaw, pp. 82-83.

<sup>607</sup> Lassen, p. 99.

<sup>608</sup> Lassen, p. 100.

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In strophe 10's heimis / hlustar Opinn / Hlidskialfi i we have an influence from the prologue to *Grímnismál*: Óðin ok Frigg sátu í Hliðskiálfo ok sá um heim alla: "Óðinn and Frigg sat in Hliðskiálf and looked out at all the worlds." *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 8 and 9's magical elements are paralleled in the *Grímnismál* prologue's margir, "magician."

*Langa vegu*: Literally, "a long way," a distant journey, which is a fitting description for the perennial quest after immortality, whose oldest incarnation is that of Gilgamesh, founder of the greatest city, and therefore of civilization, who consequently resembles the later Prometheus, the trickster culture founder who in turn parallels the Norse Loki, whose name recalls the Old Icelandic word for fire, namely, *logi*. However, as Bergmann writes, instead of *langa vegu* we must read *vara langa*, because in Heimdallr's absence Óðinn has replaced the former in his role of guard of the celestial residence, "and accordingly lets watch/guard be kept (*vara*) on the long path (*langa vegu*)."<sup>609</sup>

That Heimdallr rides a wolf in strophe 10 accords with the name of one of his mothers mentioned in strophe 26, namely, Úlfrúnar, which probably means "Wolf-Runner." Loki naturally rides a wolf since he fathered the great wolf Fenrir. We are not aware of any special wolverine aspect of Bragi, but perhaps he qualifies for this by virtue of his connection with his wolverine wife Iðunn.

### Strophe 11.

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<sup>609</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 104. In his critical text, Bergmann reads *langa vegu*; *ibid.*, p. 91.

Surely Bergmann is correct in identifying the “wise one” as Heimdallr and the mead maiden as Iðunn.<sup>610</sup>

We render strophe 11’s “ok brata sinna” with “the travelling companions” (cf. Bergmann’s *Reisegenossen*),<sup>611</sup> which makes better contextual sense than Lassen’s “their own paths.”<sup>612</sup> The idea here is “those traveling together on the path,” namely Heimdallr, Bragi, and Loki. There is of course a possibility that “paths” is used here as metonymy to mean those who travel the paths.

As Bergmann notes, Hlýrnis is the sky poetically pictured as lightning-seared, on the etymological basis of *hlurinn*.<sup>613</sup> It functions in this instance as a symbol for the earth, which is joined to the lower sky where lightning flashes. Hlýrnis here is consequently not used in Snorri’s definition of the term as the name of the sixth of the nine heavens.<sup>614</sup>

According to Lassen strophe 11’s word *ártíð*, is a Christian term, like strophe 14’s *sókn*, “parish,” indicates that “the poem does not belong to the thought world of heathendom.”<sup>615</sup> Let us not forget that in a few of the indisputably older poems of the *Poetic Edda* we come across scattered remarks on non-indigenous customs such as burial in coffins and trial by ordeal. Additionally, medieval “pagans” were much

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<sup>610</sup> Bergmann 1875, pp. 137-138.

<sup>611</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 119.

<sup>612</sup> Lassen, p. 87.

<sup>613</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 105.

<sup>614</sup> See Lassen, p. 100.

<sup>615</sup> Lassen, p. 100.

more open than are many of today's "revivalist" Asatru devotees to assimilating foreign religious terms and thoughts into their own indigenous ambient. Thus a biblical or Christian theological echo or two in Eddic or Eddic-like poems need not be inconsistent with their integrally indigenous or "heathen" character. We are reminded of how in the past it was once all the fashion for scholars to see the story of Jesus' crucifixion behind Óðinn's *Rune Song* in *Hávamál*, and now hardly any scholar of repute would argue thusly. Referring to Bugge in this regard, Aranovsky counters his claims as follows:

An attempt to deduce Odin's self-sacrifice from the Bible seems to be both a violation of "Occam's razor" and a case of the logical fallacy *post hoc ergo propter hoc*. Actually, it was Christ who was assimilated to Odin in Germanic perception, and the cross which in Medieval popular mysticism was assimilated to the world-tree, or the tree of knowledge. The search for Biblical sources, therefore, leads one to the Old Testament. But then the question arises, where the world-tree motif came into the Bible, and so on. . . . Looking for the sources of "Hávamál" in Christian texts, whence should one derive the text of Aeschylean tragedy of Prometheus, where the Titan appears hanging on the windy height, pierced, suffering these pains deliberately (Aesch. Prom. Vinc. 102 sq.; 265), and uttering a loud cry before the compassionate female crowd,—a story composed a half-thousand years before Christ.<sup>616</sup>

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<sup>616</sup> Aranovsky, p. 249.



Consequently, we fail to see why reputedly Christian terms such as *ártíð* or *sókn* in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* can be any more decisive for determining a “heathen” or Christian background for the poem than would be the Christian-based word *Múspell*<sup>617</sup> for the poem *Völuspá*.<sup>618</sup>

Incidentally, we could add to Aranovsky’s list of Aeschylean Prometheus parallels to the crucifixion of Jesus story Io’s cry of despair at line 876 of *Prometheus Bound*, ἐλελεῦ, ἐλελεῦ, that is, *eleleu! eleleu!* “The sounds for lamentation in many languages resemble *eleleu: ai le nu* (Phoenician), *lulululu* (Egyptian), *ululare, lele* (Servian), *lelo* (Basque).”<sup>619</sup> Mark 5:38 records the lamentation *alala*. Despite the difference in meaning, may we nevertheless not compare the above articulations to Jesus’ cry from the cross, “Eli! Eli!”? Curiously, the same forms of lamentation just

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<sup>617</sup> On the Christian origin of *Múspell* see Bugge 1889, pp. 448-449.

<sup>618</sup> We were surprised to find a recent essay by McKinnell in the critical scholarly journal *Alvíssmál* which argues mostly on the basis of a string of quotations from the Book of Revelation, Christian dommsday homilies and the Book of Genesis that the poem *Völuspá* essentially mirrors Christian sources. The essay is basically an independent “re-discovery” of many of the same type of parallels Bugge presented already in his 2-volume 1881 *Studier over de nordiske gude- og heltesagns oprindelse*. McKinnell does not mention the name Bugge once, and so we can only conclude he was unaware of his 1881 work. As the saying goes, the more things change, the more the stay the same.

<sup>619</sup> Harry, p. 281. See also West 2003, p. 264.

listed and other similar ones are also used not only as battle cries among various peoples (Semitic, Indo-European, and Native American), but as shouts of joy as well. Long ago Ullendorf recognized that the biblical *hallelujah* is cognate with the Abyssinian mode of ululating, namely, *alləlləlləll*, and that Hebrew *hallēl* means literally, “to trill,” “to ululate,” so that *hallelujah* consequently is “to ululate/trill to the Lord.”<sup>620</sup>

Strophe 11 refers to Iðunn by means of *selja*, concerning which Lassen remarks that the term “is a common base word in kennings for woman, but it is uncertain whether originally it meant the tree (willow) or the verbal noun ‘giver, server.’”<sup>621</sup> Either meaning is appropriate for Iðunn as a Goddess of immortality, for the ancient Goddess of wisdom and life Siduri-Sâbîtu guarded the tree of immortality and was an ale-wife; as West explains, Siduri, from *šiduri*, in Hurrian means “maid,” an ale-wife.<sup>622</sup> Similarly, in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 8 *nanna* means “lady,” “woman,” with reference to Iðunn,<sup>623</sup> who thus parallels Siduri-Sâbîtu in her association with the tree of life, with her title “lady,” and her being described under the imagery of a mead or ale server.

Lüning correctly renders *veiga selio* as *des trankes hüterin*, “keeper of the drink,” and points out the similarity to the language of Iðunn as keeper of the apples

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<sup>620</sup> Ullendorf, p. 238. See also West 2003, p. 264.

<sup>621</sup> Lassen, p. 100.

<sup>622</sup> West 2003, p. 405.

<sup>623</sup> See Lassen, pp. 98-99.

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of youth.<sup>624</sup> Lüning remarks that by this the poet may imply that Iðunn’s apples are identified with the mead Óðrerir.<sup>625</sup>

Strophe 11 asks about Iðunn’s extent of knowledge, “of Earth’s lightning-seared sky, of Hel and the Heavens, / how long their past, / how long their present life, / how long till their future end?” Without suggesting any literary dependence, we may nevertheless compare this to the universal scope of the Seer Calchas’ oracular knowledge in Homer’s *Iliad* Book I 69ff. There we learn that Calchas was “far the best of diviners, who had knowledge of all things that were, and that were to be, and that had been before.”<sup>626</sup> In Greek tradition, diviners, or augurs, οἰωνοπόλων, traditionally means one who can interpret bird movements, hence Fitzgerald’s translation of Homer’s description concerning Calchas as “by far of all who scanned the flight of birds.”<sup>627</sup> We cannot help but think here of the “ravens” in the enigmatic title *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*. Shortly before the above description of Calchas, we read of the need for a diviner, some expert in dream interpretation, in line 60f. Again, we are reminded of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 3’s dreams interpreted by two Dwarves.

Strophe 11’s Hlyrnis, here denotes the lower level of the sky where lightning flashes, and as such stands poetically for the earth. Heliar is the underworld, and heimz is the upper world. The distinction between the earthly sky and the upper

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<sup>624</sup> Lüning, p. 520.

<sup>625</sup> Lüning, p. 520.

<sup>626</sup> Murray, vol. 1, p. 9.

<sup>627</sup> Fitzgerald, p. 13.

heaven might or might not roughly correspond to Ovid's "ethereal heavens" that are separate from "the dense atmosphere" (*Metamorphoses* Book I line 23).<sup>628</sup>

According to Bergmann, the term *artid* (*ártíð*) here alludes to the harvest season (cf. German *erndtezeit*, modern *Erntezeit*), the autumn, or the time of late year when the time of lightning in the sky ends.<sup>629</sup> We do not know the basis for Bergmann's claim, but in any case it is to be rejected, for it cannot be made to fit contextually. We struggled long to understand the word *ártíð* in this strophe. At one point we believed it to be composed of the elements *ár-*, "year" (cf. German *Jahr*) and *-tíð*, "time" (cf. German *Zeit*). We thought that *ártíð* should be read straightforwardly in the sense of the cognate German compound noun *Jahreszeit*, "season," which would be appropriate in a poem that gives us essentially a seasonal change or climate myth. However, in context *ártíð* seems to refer to the past, and not only to the past, but to the very beginning or birth of things. Bergmann's remark on the word *ęfi* (*ævi*) here is more convincing than are his comments on *ártíð*; *ęfi* denotes the duration of time until which the underworld, *Hel*, will endure.<sup>630</sup> Like its Indo-European cognates, the word basically denotes life-span. Third, contextually *aldurtila* clearly denotes the end or goal which fate determines for the life age of the races of the upper world.<sup>631</sup> In other words, *aldurtila* refers to the end and death of the worlds, in contrast to *ártíð*, which contextually demands a meaning of

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<sup>628</sup> Miller, p. 5.

<sup>629</sup> See Bergmann 1875, p. 105.

<sup>630</sup> See Bergmann 1875, p. 105.

<sup>631</sup> See Bergmann 1875, p. 105.

“beginning.” The meaning of ártíð in this strophe can be solved by recognizing that its ár- component is not, as we first thought, cognate with the English word “year” = German *Jahr*, Latin *annus*, but rather it is cognate with the English word “yore” = Latin *olim*.<sup>632</sup> Thus in our strophe the ár- of ártíð is used in the same sense we find in *Helgakviða Hundingsbana* I strophe 1, where we read that Helgi was born ár, “early.” Secondly, the -tíð component of ártíð is not used in the more general sense of “time,” but in the more specialized sense of “season,” so that in the strophe under consideration ártíð means “yore-season,” “early-season,” that is, the beginning of time, the time when the worlds were born. This interpretation is confirmed by the many ancient parallels in both Oriental and classical literature that refer to prophetic knowledge as spanning the most ancient past, the present, and the remotest future, that is, the beginning, middle and end of all things.

Strophe 11 accordingly gives us three spatial terms, Hlyrnis, Heliar, and heimz, which basically refer to earth, the underworld, and the upper world, and three temporal terms, artid (ártíð), efi (ævi), and aldurtila, which express the concepts of beginning, which pertains to “the past,” the life-span of the worlds, which stands for “the present,” and the destiny/destination of the worlds, that is, their death, alluding to “the future.” We are reminded in part here of Apuleius’ *Golden Ass* Book 11’s great Goddess who is matrem siderum, parentem temporum orbisque totius dominam, “the mother of the stars, the parent of times, and mistress of all the world.”<sup>633</sup>

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<sup>632</sup> See the entry on ár in Cleasby-Vigfusson, p. 44.

<sup>633</sup> Adlington, pp. 550-551.

Heimdallr asks Iðunn if she knows specifically three things about the earth, the underworld, and the upper world, namely, their past season (that is, when they began), the length of time they will presently continue to endure, and their future destiny/destination at death. Phrased slightly differently, that is, 1) is the past season of the worlds' endurance and flourishing coming to an end, 2) if so, how long will their time of decline last, and 3) what will happen to the three worlds when the period of their decline has reached its end or goal as ordained by fate.

Lüning correctly interprets the three temporal terms of strophe 11 as “urzeit (anfang), lebensdauer,” and “lebensende,” that is, “primordial time (beginning), life's length” and “life's end.”<sup>634</sup>

When we now read strophe 11, something important, indeed central to the basic underlying “original myth” of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* comes into clearer relief. Iðunn is being portrayed as a *Völva* such as the one Óðinn makes enquiry of in *Völuspá* and in *Baldrs draumar*. The *Völva* in *Völuspá* knows of the earliest times of the worlds (strophe 1), and she sees far past every world, which includes heaven, earth, and Hel (strophe 29), and her prophetic gaze reaches to the very ending of heaven and earth at Ragnarøk. Now, when we proceed to *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 12, Iðunn, unlike the *Völva* in *Völuspá* and in *Baldrs draumar*, does not respond to Heimdallr's questions about what is basically the looming threat of Ragnarøk. When we remember that Heimdallr is on a mission for Óðinn, who according to strophe 10 is watching and listening in on him from his high seat in Hliðskjálf, then simply put, Iðunn fails to respond to Óðinn's questions.

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<sup>634</sup> Lüning, p. 521.

Therefore, one central element of the “original myth” of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* is that the king of the Gods fails in his mission to obtain information from a *Völva* concerning Ragnarøk, in stark contrast to the scenario attested in both *Völuspá* and in *Baldrs draumar*. *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* portrays the incarnation of Spring, namely, *Iðunn*, as falling off the world tree into the wintery underworld, where she becomes virtually a *Völva* in a grave-mound, as in *Baldrs draumar*. The Goddess of youth has become basically a Hel hag, a winter witch. That in this respect *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* so blatantly contradicts both *Völuspá* and in *Baldrs draumar* suggests in our view that *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* preserves traces of an early myth independent of Snorri and the genuine *Edda* poems, which is not to deny that the author of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* had knowledge of Snorri’s works and of the *Poetic Edda*.

Schévíngr compares strophe 11 to a passage from *Breta sögur* 7.<sup>635</sup> This involves a scene on the island Leogetia where Brutus is accompanied by twelve men and the soothsayer Geiro. There they find an ancient shrine with statues of “Gefjon, Saturn and Jupiter,” after these Gods’ voices invite Brutus and company onto the island. At the temple they light fires dedicated to Óðinn, Þórr and Gefjon. The text then states that Brutus approached the altar of Gefjon, and addressed to her the following: “þú ert veizt [MS H, veitz] himnis tíðindi ok setning allrar veraldar, ok kannst helvítis deili! seg mér mín forlög. . .”<sup>636</sup>

This and the concluding portion of the passage are rendered by Patzukur-Russell as follows: “You who know the events of heaven and the order of the whole

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<sup>635</sup> Schévíngr, p. 42.

<sup>636</sup> Sigurðsson 1849, Part 1, p. 132.

world, and understand the distinctive features of hell: tell me my fate, and where I will [sic] settled, according to your plan, and where I shall command that you, divine maiden, be worshiped for eternity [*eilífu*].”<sup>637</sup>

This is derived from Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia regum britanniae* Book 1 Chapter 11. The pertinent context is given here according to Evans’ translation:

They came, moreover, to a certain deserted city, wherein they found a temple of Diana. Now in this temple was an image of the goddess, that gave responses, if haply it were asked of any votary that there did worship. At last they returned to their ships, laden with the venison they had found, and report to their comrades the lie of the land and the situation of the city, bearing the Duke on hand that he make repair unto the temple, and after making offerings of propitiation, inquire of the deity of the place what land she would grant them as a fixed abiding place. By the common consent of all, therefore, Brute took with him Gerion the augur, and twelve of the elders, and sought out the temple, bringing with them everything necessary for making sacrifice. When they arrived they surrounded their brows with garlands, and set up three altars according to immemorial wont, before the holy place, to the three Gods, Jove, to wit, and Mercury as well as to Diana, and made unto each his own special libation. Brute himself, holding in his right hand a vessel full of sacrificial wine and the blood of a white hind before

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<sup>637</sup> Patzuk-Russell, pp. 92-93.



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the altar of the goddess, with face upturned towards her image, broke silence in these words:—

“Goddess and forest Queen, the wild boar’s terror,  
Thou who the maze of heaven or nether mansions  
Walkest at will, vouchsafe thy rede to earthward!  
Tell me what lands thy will it is we dwell in?  
What sure abode? Lo, there to Thee for ever  
Temples I vow, and chant of holy maidens!”

After he had nine times repeated this, he walked four times round the altar, poured forth the wine he held upon the hearth of offering, laid him down upon the fell of a hind that he had stretched in front of the altar, and after invoking slumber fell on sleep. For as at that time it was the third hour of the night, wherein are mortals visited by the sweetest sleep. Then it seemed him the goddess stood there before him, and spake unto him on this wise:—

“Brute,—past the realms of Gaul, beneath the sunset  
Lieth an Island, girt about by ocean,  
Guarded by ocean—erst the haunt of giants,  
Desert of late, and meet for this thy people.  
Seek it! For there is thine abode for ever.  
There by thy sons again shall Troy be builded

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There of thy blood shall Kings be born, hereafter  
Sovran in every land the wide world over.”

On awakening from such a vision, the Duke remained in doubt whether it were a dream that he had seen, or whether it were the living goddess herself who had thus foretold the land whereunto he should go. At last he called his companions and related unto them from first to last all that had befallen him in his sleep. They thereupon were filled with exceeding great joy, and advise that they should at once turn back to their ships, and while the wind is still blowing fair, should get under way as quickly as possible full sail for the West in search of that land which the goddess had promised.<sup>638</sup>

We supply the original Latin of the most relevant portion of the above:

Goddess and forest Queen, the wild boar’s terror, Diva potens nemorum, terror silvestribus apris:  
Thou who the maze of heaven or nether mansions Cui licet amfractus ire per aethereos  
Walkest at will, vouchsafe thy rede to earthward! Infernasque domos: terresstria jura resolve  
Tell me what lands thy will it is we dwell in? Et dic, quas terras nos habitare velis?  
What sure abode? Lo, there to Thee for ever Dic certam sedem, qua te venerabar in ævum,  
Temples I vow, and chant of holy maidens! Qua tibi virgneis dedico temple choris?<sup>639</sup>

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<sup>638</sup> Evans 1904, pp. 22-23.

<sup>639</sup> Schultz, p 13.

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Some of the similarities exhibited between the two Norse texts in question are to various degrees semantic (marked as \*), while others are phonetic (#), sometimes with partial etymological overlapping (□):

*Hrafnagaldur Óðins 11:5-8 Breta sögur 7*

Hlyrnis (*)	himnis (*)
Heliar (*)	helvítis (*)
Heimz (*)	veraldar (*/□)
ef vissi (*)	veizt (*)/kannt (*)
artid (□)	tíðindi (□)
ęfi (□)	eilífu (□)
aldurtila (□)	forløg (*)

It remains to compare the two Old Norse texts with their Latin parallels in Monmouth's work:

*Hrafnagaldur Óðins 11:5-8 Breta sögur 7 Historia Regum Britanniae 1:11*

Hlyrnis,	himnis	aethereos
Heliar,	helvítis	infernisque
heimz,	veraldar	terresstria/terras
ef vissi	veizt/kannt	

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artid,	tíðindi	
ęfi,	eilífu	ævum
aldurtila	forløg	

*Breta sögur 7 Hrafnagaldur Óðins 11's* Hlyrnis, Heliar, heimz (heaven, hell, earth) agree precisely with the order of the Monmouth Latin text's aethereos, infernasque, terresstria (heaven, hell, earth), whereas the order in *Breta sögur 7* is himnis, veraldar, helvítis (heaven, earth, hell). *Breta sögur 7* talks of heaven's *tíðindi*, "events"; of the world's *setnín*g,"setting," "arrangement," "position," "placement"; and of hell's *deili*, "divisions," "parts" (cf. German *Teil*, "part"). By contrast *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 11 speaks of the beginning, present time, and end of heaven, Hel and earth. On the other hand, both *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* and *Breta sögur 7* agree in having the Goddess "know," *vissi*, *veizt* about the cosmos, whereas in Monmouth she "walks," *ire*, heaven and hell, and "speaks," *dic*, to earth. Yet again, though, there is nothing in *Breta sögur 7* that really corresponds to the other two texts' *ęfi*, "life," that is, the present, and *ævum*, "always," "forever" (also cognate with "life"). *Hrafnagaldur Óðins'* term *aldurtila*, "until the time," that is, "until death," is etymologically cognate with *Breta sögur 7's* *veraldar*. The word *tíðindi* deserves a few comments. It is cognate with English "tidings" and German *Zeitung*. Consequently, the *tíð-* of *tíðindi* is actually cognate with the *-tíð* of *artíð* (= *artid*). We suspect, however, that *Breta sögur 7's* *tíðindi* is intended to mean "timings," that is, not so much "events" as "epochs" "ages," "times." Yet we cannot be certain about this.

Assessing all of the evidence above, especially in view of the significant distinctives, it would seem that there is no direct literary relationship between *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 11:5-8 and *Breta sögur* 7. Rather, it would appear that both of these Old Norse texts have been independently influenced by Monmouth's Latin text.

Patzuk-Russell explains that the main reason the Norse saga names the Latin Diana as Gefjon is *Lokasenna* strophe 21,<sup>640</sup> in which Óðinn tells Loki that he is out of his wits, *ǫrvitiǫ* (cf. *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 14, *ǫrvit*), *því at aldar ǫrlǫg hygg ek, at hon ǫll um viti jafngǫrla sem ek*, "for I think that she knows all mortals' fates as equally well as do I." We should recall that the name Gefjon is applied to Iðunn in the *Haustlǫng* poem. When we consider *Lokasenna* strophe 21's Gefjon and *ǫrlǫg* together with *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 11's question directed to Iðunn as to whether she knows the worlds' fate (*aldurtila*) and *Breta sögur* 7's Gefjon who is asked about *forlǫg*, then we can deduce that at least one stream of Old Norse tradition identified Gefjon as Iðunn.

A further connection between Iðunn and the *Historia regum Britanniae* can be established. Geoffrey of Monmouth has incorporated within his history of British kings the story of Merlin the seer as told in more depth in the same author's *Vita Merlini*, which contains, among other elements, a collection of Merlin's prophecies. These were translated rather freely, even creatively, in the *Breta sögur* and are

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<sup>640</sup> Patzuk-Russell, p. 31.

known as *Merlínusspá*,<sup>641</sup> the *Prophecy* or *Vision of Merlin*, which actually consists of two separate (yet related) poems designated by a single title. A comparison of *Merlínusspá* with *Völuspá* indicates that the latter Norse text has influenced the translation of the former from the Latin. However, when we compare *Völuspá* with *Vita Merlini*, we can see that the two texts are somehow cognate.<sup>642</sup> We suspect that *Völuspá* has probably been shaped in part by traditions underlying *Vita Merlini*. What becomes exceptionally intriguing is that when we read through *Vita Merlini* we begin to notice parallels to the story enframed within the poem *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* as well. We will next summarize *Vita Merlini*, supplying relevant citations from Parry's translation.<sup>643</sup>

Merlin grieves over the tragedy of war and flees to live in the forest where he grieves continually. His former friends try to retrieve him from the forest, but “he would not be comforted nor put up with their beseeching words.” Merlin “lie[s] hidden under the ash trees . . ., buried in the woods.” We immediately think of Iðunn. This connection is then confirmed in a surprising way when we soon thereafter hear Merlin lamenting over the loss of *apples*: “Here once there stood nineteen apple trees bearing apples every year; now they are not standing. Who has

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<sup>641</sup> The only English translation we are aware of is that of Patzuk-Russell, pp. 129-153; poem 1 runs from pp. 129-139, and poem 2 from pp. 139-153. For the Old Norse text, see Sigurðsson 1849, Part 2, pp. 14-38 (poem 1) and pp. 39-74.

<sup>642</sup> On the question of the relationship between the two texts, see Rafnsson, pp. 377-419, and Würth, pp. 580-589.

<sup>643</sup> Parry, pp. 3-125.

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taken them away from me? Whither have they gone all of a sudden?" (*Tres quater et iuges septene poma ferentes / Hic steterant mali nunc non stant ergo quis illas / Quis michi surripuit quo deuenere repente*). Next he addresses his "dear companion," a wolf (cf. *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 8). (Towards the end of *Vita Merlini* we hear a story of a slighted lover who plans revenge by poisoning apples, intended for the death of her lost love. Others, however, find and eat the apples and turn into wolves).

A number of missions are sent out into the forest to find Merlin, but without success, again reminding us of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*. Eventually Merlin is ensnared with music and song, but when he is deprived of his freedom to keep him returning to the wild, we read that he still "want[s] to abide under the trees." To prevent this he is chained, and he "straightway fell to grieving and remained sad and silent, and took all joy from his face so that he did not utter a word or smile," which calls to mind *Hrafnagaldur Óðins'* image of the sorrowful Iðunn.

Merlin later manages to make his way back to the forest. From there he rides a stag to the wedding of his former would-be wife Guendoloena when he hears she is to be married to another. Merlin rips the horns off the stag and kills the husband designate (cf. Dáinn's lethal thorn-horn in strophe 14 of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*). He swiftly escapes to the forest on his stag, but is thrown off and plunges into the water and is captured (cf. Väinämöinen being shot by an arrow off his stag and falling into the waters on his way to woo the Maiden of the North in the *Kalevala*). Back among his former associates, his friends watch Merlin "drive all joy from him and refuse to taste of the banquets that had been prepared for him," with which we may compare

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*Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophes 12 and 15 (strophe 12's *glaum*, "merry-making," alludes to the merry mead feast of strophes 17-23).

We then begin encountering Merlin's prophecies, some of which are strikingly similar to the apocalyptic moral and cosmic decay in the later strophes of *Völuspá*: "and no law shall restrain them. . . shall compel brothers to fight and to condemn their own relatives to a wicked death. . . . Man shall betray man and no one shall be found a friend. The husband, despising his wife, shall draw near to harlots, and the wife, despising her husband, shall marry whom she desires." Next, again as in *Völuspá*, we hear of paradise-like conditions where food grows by itself, including *apples*: "produces flowers and fruits in an eternal spring, green throughout the seasons. . . . The island of apples which men call 'The Fortunate Isle' gets its name from the fact that it produces all things of itself; the fields there have no need of the ploughs of the farmers and all cultivation is lacking except what nature provides. Of its own accord it produces grain and grapes, and apple trees grow in its woods from the close-clipped grass." There Morgen is a shape-shifting lady who can transform herself into a flying bird. We also hear of wondrous eagles, again reminding us of *Völuspá*'s description of the new earth: "They remain on their wings over waters as high as the top of a mountain and they spy their prey in the lowest depths; straightway they descend rapidly through the void and seize the fish swimming as their inheritance demands."

We think of later Merlin traditions in which at the end of his career Merlin is enchanted and trapped in a forest, which he, however, experiences as a prison-castle. Much later, pre-modern and modern authors would transform this forest-



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castle into a tomb, a rock, and then a tree, which brings us full circle back to Iðunn being held down beneath the world tree, like the grieving woman in “The Wife’s Complaint.”

There is an early Welsh poem on Merlin and apple trees that would seem to lend weight to the suspicion that the Norse Iðunn apple and exile traditions have been shaped by Welsh and Celtic trajectories. We supply Edward William’s translation of a Welsh version of the poem in question:

1 Was ever given to man so acceptable a gift, as that bestowed on Myrddin ere age had overtaken him? a fair orchard, seven score and seven sweet apple trees, all equal in age, height, and magnitude: they possessed the slope of a majestic hill, branching high and wide, crowned with lovely foliage: a lovely nymph, whose hair flowed in beauteous ringlets, guarded them; her name Gloywedd, with the pearly teeth.

2 Sweet and excellent apple-tree! thy branches are loaded with delicious fruit; I am full of care and trouble for thy safety, lest the destructive woodman should dig thee up by the roots, or otherwise so injure thy prolific nature, that apples would no more grow on thy branches: for this I am wild with grief, torn with anxiety, anguish pierces me to the heart; I suffer no garment to cover my body. These trees were the inestimable gifts of Gwenddolau, he who is now, as if he was not.

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3 Sweet apple-tree, of tall, and stately growth! how admired thy shade and shelter, thy profit, and beauty! Often will mighty lords and princes form a thousand pretences for frequenting thy recess; nor less eager the false and luxurious monks; and equally intent are the idle talkative youths: all hankering after thy apples; they all pretend to prophesy the warlike exploits of their prince.

4 Sweet apple tree, vigorous in growth, verdant in foliage! large are thy branches, beautiful thy form. Ere the depredations of slaughtering war caused my thoughts to boil with grief; how beautiful was the sight of thy robe of vivid green! yet shall my prophetic song announce the day, when a mighty legion shall revenge my wrongs: the valorous armies of Pengwern fierce in battle, animated by mighty mead.

5 Sweet apple-tree, growing in the lonely glade! fervent valour shall still keep thee secure from the stern lords of Rhydderch. Bare is the ground about thee, trodden by mighty warriors; their heroic forms strike their foes with terror! Alas! Gwenddydd loves me not, she greets me not: I am hated by the chiefs of Rhydderch; I have ruined his son and his daughter. Death relieves all, why does he not visit me? for after Gwenddolau no prince honours me; I am not soothed with diversion, I am no longer visited by the fair: yet in the battle of Arderydd I wore the golden torques, though I am now despised by her who is fair as the snowy swan.

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6 Sweet apple-tree, covered with delicate bloom, growing unseen in the sequestered woods! early with the dawn have I heard that the high-commissioned chief of Meowydd was offended with me; twice, three times, alas! four times in the same day have I heard this; it rung in my ears ere the sun had marked the hour of noon, O Jesus! why was I not taken away by destruction, ere it was the sad fate of my hand to kill the son of Gwenddydd?

7 Sweet apple-tree, appearing to the eye a large and fair grove of stately trees! monarch of the surrounding woods; shading all, thyself unshaded! yet shall my song of prophecy announce the coming again of Medrod; and of Arthur, monarch of the warlike host: again shall they rush to the battle of Camlan; two days will the conflict last, and only seven escape from the slaughter. Then let Gwenthwyvar remember the crimes she has been guilty of, when Cadwalдар repossesses [...] when an ecclesiastical hero leads the warriors to battle. Alas! far more lamentable is my destiny, and hope affords no refuge. The son of Gwenddydd is dead, slain by my accursed hand!

8 Sweet apple-tree, loaded with the sweetest fruit, growing in the lonely wilds of the woods of Celyddon! all seek thee for the sake of thy produce, but in vain; until Cadwalдар comes to the conference of the ford of Rhëon; and Cynan advances to oppose the Saxons in their career. Then shall the Britains be again victorious, led by their graceful and majestic chief. Then shall be

restored to every one his own. Then shall the sounder of the horn of gladness proclaim the song of peace, the serene days of happiness.<sup>644</sup>

In William's version, Merlin's apple trees in strophe 1 are "guarded" by the nymph Gloywedd, who thus performs the role played by Iðunn the apple guard in Norse lore. In strophe 2 Merlin grieves over the threat of his apple trees being felled (cf. the ballad *Jomfru i Fugleham*); the sorrowing Merlin again reminds us of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins'* portrait of the grieving Iðunn, fallen from Yggdrasill, whose fruit would presumably include the apples of immortality. In strophes 4 and 5 the apple trees are admired and lonely, which reminds us of the wisdom that is *hidden* in Mimir's famed well of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 5.

We next give the *Black Book* version of this poem according to Skene's admittedly dated translation:

1 Sweet appletree of delightful branches,  
Budding luxuriantly, and shooting forth renowned scions,  
I will predict before the owner of Machreu,  
That in the valley of Machawy on Wednesday there will be blood,—  
Joy to Lloegyr of the blood-red blades.  
Hear, little pig! there will come on Thursday  
Joy to the Cymry of mighty battles,  
In their defence of Cymminawd, with their incessant sword-thrusts.

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<sup>644</sup> Jones 1794, pp. 24-25.

On the Saxons there will be a slaughter with ashen spears,  
And their heads will be used as balls to play with.

I prophesy truth without disguise,—

The elevation of a child in a secluded part of the South.

2 Sweet appletree, a green tree of luxurious growth,

How large are its branches, and beautiful its form!

And I will predict a battle that will make me shriek

At Pengwern, in the sovereign feast, mead is appropriate.

3 Sweet appletree, and a yellow tree,

Grow at Tal Ardd, without a garden surrounding it;

And I will predict a battle in Prydyn,

In defence of their frontier against the men of Dublin;

Seven ships will come over the wide lake,

And seven hundred over the sea to conquer.

Of those that come, none will go to Cennyn,

Except seven half-empty ones, according to the prediction.

4 Sweet appletree that luxuriantly grows!

Food I used to take at its base to please a fair maid,

When, with my shield on my shoulder, and my sword on my thigh,

I slept all alone in the woods of Celyddon.

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Hear, O little pig! now apply thyself to reason,  
And listen to birds whose notes are pleasant,  
Sovereigns across the sea will come on Monday;  
Blessed will the Cymry be, from that design.

5 Sweet appletree that grows in the glade!  
Their vehemence will conceal it from the lords of Rydderch,  
Trodden it is around its base, and men are about it.  
Terrible to them were heroic forms.  
Gwendydd loves me not, greets me not;  
I am hated by the firmest minister of Rydderch;  
I have ruined his son and his daughter.  
Death takes all away, why does he not visit me?  
For after Gwenddoleu no princes honour me;  
I am not soothed with diversion, I am not visited by the fair;  
Yet in the battle of Ardderyd golden was my torques.  
Though I am now despised by her who is of the colour of swans.

6 Sweet appletree of delicate bloom,  
That grows in concealment in the woods!  
At break of day the tale was told me.  
That the firmest minister is offended at my creed,  
Twice, thrice, four times, in one day.

Jesus! would that my end had come

Before the death of the son of Gwendydd happen on my hand!

7 Sweet appletree, which grows by the river-side!

With respect to it, the keeper will not thrive on its splendid fruit.

While my reason was not aberrant, I used to be around its stem

With a fair sportive maid, a paragon of slender form.

Ten years and forty, as the toy of lawless ones,

Have I been wandering in gloom and among sprites.

After wealth in abundance and entertaining minstrels,

I have been (here so long that) it is useless for gloom and sprites to lead me

astray.

I will not sleep, but tremble on account of my leader,

My lord Gwenddoleu, and those who are natives of my country.

After suffering disease and longing grief about the words of Celyddon,

May I become a blessed servant of the Sovereign of splendid retinues!

8 Sweet appletree of delicate blossoms,

Which grows in the soil amid the trees!

The Sibyl foretells a tale that will come to pass—

A golden rod of great value, will, for bravery,

Be given to glorious chiefs before the dragons;

The diffuser of grace will vanquish the profane man.

Before the child, bold as the sun in his courses,  
Saxons shall be eradicated, and bards shall flourish.

9 Sweet appletree, and a tree of crimson hue,  
Which grow in concealment in the wood of Celyddon;  
Though sought for their fruit, it will be in vain.  
Until Cadwaladyr comes from the conference of Cadvaon,  
To the Eagle of Tywi and Teiwi rivers;  
And until fierce anguish comes from Aranwynion,  
And the wild and long-haired ones are made tame:

10 Sweet appletree, and a tree of crimson hue.  
Which grow in concealment in the wood of Celyddon;  
Though sought for their fruit, it will be in vain,  
Until Cadwaladyr comes from the conference of Rhyd Rheon,  
And Cynan to meet him advances upon the Saxons;  
The Cymry will be victorious, glorious will be their leader.  
All shall have their rights, and the Brython will rejoice,  
Sounding the horns of gladness, and chanting the song of peace and  
happiness!<sup>645</sup>

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<sup>645</sup> Skene vol. 1, pp. 370-373



Two other Merlin poems deserve mention, the first being “A Dialogue between Myrdin and His Sister Gwendydd” (*Red Book of Hergest I*)<sup>646</sup> in which Gwendydd depicts herself as intending to speak with her brother in a way that reminds the reader of Óðinn’s manner of address to the Vǫlva in *Baldurs draumar*, a paradigm contained in several other Eddic poems as well. The poem is rather long, consisting of 131 strophes. The second poem, substantially briefer than the first, but no less interesting, is called “A Fugitive Poem of Myrdin in His Grave” (*Red Book of Hergest II*),<sup>647</sup> in which Myrdin speaks prophetically from his grave like an Eddic Vǫlva.

The Welsh Merlin, Myrddin, is cognate to the Irish Suibhne, or Sweeney, known mainly from the text *Buile Suibhne*, Frenzy of Sweeney. Suibhne is cursed (by a Christian saint no less) and is turned into a grieving bird who lives at times both inside and upon the branches of trees.<sup>648</sup> Also relevant here is the Irish Derg (Derc/Dercc) Corra, who has been seen as the archetypal Green Man or Wild Man of the Woods. In the story “Finn and the man in the tree” Derg Corra instantiates the world tree, as Sayers has recently argued so deftly.<sup>649</sup> The story is given here according to a 1904 source:

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<sup>646</sup> See Skene vol. 1, pp. 462-478.

<sup>647</sup> See Skene vol. 1, pp. 478-481

<sup>648</sup> See O’Keeffe 1913 and O’Keeffe 1931 for English and Irish versions of *Buile Suibhne*.

<sup>649</sup> Sayers, pp. 37-55.

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Then Derg Corra went into exile and took up his abode in a wood and used to go about on shanks of deer (*si uerum est*) for his lightness. One day as Finn was in the wood seeking him he saw a man in the top of a tree, a blackbird on his right shoulder and in his left hand a white vessel of bronze, filled with water, in which was a skittish trout, and a stag at the foot of the tree. And this was the practice of the man, cracking nuts; and he would give half the kernel of a nut to the blackbird that was on his right shoulder while he would himself eat the other half; and he would take an apple out of the bronze vessel that was in his left hand, divide it in two, throw one half to the stag that was at the foot of the tree, and then eat the other half himself. And on it he would drink a sip of *the water in* the bronze vessel that was in his hand, so that he and the trout and the stag and the blackbird drank together. Then his followers asked of Finn who he in the tree was, for they did not recognise him on account of the hood of disguise which he wore. Then Finn put his thumb into his mouth. When he took it out again, his imbas illumines him and he chanted an incantation and said: “Tis Derg Corra son of Ua Daigre,” said he, “that is in the tree.”<sup>650</sup>

As Sayers observes, the blackbird, stag and trout symbolize sky, earth, and the netherworld, thus the three worlds that constitute the tripartite cosmos as a

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<sup>650</sup> Meyer 1904, pp. 348-349.

whole.<sup>651</sup> The bird is a “hypostasis” of a woman from the “fairy mound,” and Sayers further refers to the bird’s “trifunctionality in its ability to fly in the air, walk on land, and stand or swim in water.”<sup>652</sup> If we think of Iðunn as a Goddess in bird form who in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophes 6-7 has fallen from Yggdrasill (see Excursus III), then we can better understand why she would have knowledge of all three worlds of sky, earth and Hel, as in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 11. Sayers stresses that Derg Corra hides or conceals himself in the tree surrounded by animals, and he compares this to

the female Swedish *huldra*, male *huldrekarl*, and *skogsrå*, Norwegian and Icelandic counterparts, Huld in continental Germanic tradition, and so on. The Scandinavian terminology is illuminating in that the names on the root *huld-* reference concealment (cf. Old Norse *hylja* “to hide”) and shape-shifting, while *skogsrå* and related may be etymologized as “keeper of the forest.” Both realizations are imminent in Derg Corra. But the deceit of which these Norse beings are thought capable is not present in the Irish figure, save in his possible act of self-concealment.<sup>653</sup>

We saw how in Welsh tradition Merlin is the guard of the apple trees, or he has a nymph who takes on this role. The idea of a keeper of the forest can easily be

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<sup>651</sup> Sayers, p. 39.

<sup>652</sup> Sayers, p. 40.

<sup>653</sup> Sayers, pp. 43-44.

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coordinated with such a trope, especially since Merlin’s apple trees are hidden in a forest. But the Irish tradition takes on added meaning when compared with *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 2’s trope of a Dwarf guarding and concealing the sacred mead, a Dwarf named after the cauldron in which it was brewed, namely, Óðrerir. Sayers fails to make the connection between Óðrerir and Derg Corra’s bronze vessel. Sayer gives a comparative list between the tree in the story “Finn and the man in the tree” and the Norse Yggdrasil. He compares the single Irish stag to the four stags of Yggdrasil,<sup>654</sup> but overlooks the Norse traditions of a single stag associated with the world tree. We should also recall *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II* strophe 38, which says of the hero Helgi, that he was

sem ítrskapaðr	Like the lofty ash
askr af þyrni	above lowly thorns,
eða sá dýrkalfr	Or the noble stag,
dögggu slunginn	with dew besprinkled,
er efri ferr	Bearing his head
öllum dýrum	above all beasts,
ok horn glóa	[And his horns gleam bright
við himin sjalfan	to heaven itself].” (Bellows version)

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<sup>654</sup> See Sayers, p. 44.

Moving back to Welsh sources, there is the following intriguing passage from the Taliesin poems, beginning at folio 34 line 8. We give here Morris-Jones' emended text and translation:

(Yś) kyweir vyng kadeir yng Kaer Siði;  
Nys plawδ heint (a) herieint a vo yndi,  
Ys gŵyr Manawyt a Phryderi;  
Teir oryan (y) Ha(m t)vgan a gân recði,  
Ac am ý banneu ffrydyeu gweilgi,  
A(r) ffynhawn ffrwythlawn ys (syδ) oδucht;  
Ys whe(ga)ch no(r) gwin gwyn y llyn yndi.

My chair is prepared in Caer Siði;  
The disease of old age afflicts none who is there,  
As Manawyt and Pryderi know;  
Havgan's three organs play before it,  
And about its peaks are the streams of ocean,  
And above it is a fruitful fountain;  
Sweeter than white wine is the liquor therein.<sup>655</sup>

As Morris-Jones writes, the Manawyt of Taliesin is an earlier version of the Manawyddan of the *Mabinogion*. What we have in the above poetic lines is a myth of

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<sup>655</sup> Morris-Jones, p. 236.

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the sacred mead in a watery netherworld fountain of youth. The reference to the poet's "chair," *kyweir*, in *Caer Siði* where the liquor fountain of life is located reminds us of the throne of wisdom, *þular stóli*, at Gunnlǫð's mead well in *Hávamál* strophe 111, where the poet sits and chants his magic songs of wisdom. Note as well that the liquor fountain prevents "the disease of old age," the same language used of Iðunn's apples, which are "old-age medicine," "old-age cure," *ellilyf* (*elli*, "old-age"; *-lyf*, "medicine," "cure"). Morris-Jones offers the following philological notes on the term *siði*, which may help us understand the Old Norse *Søkkvabekkr*, usually understood as *Sunken-Bench*, but which might just as well mean *Sunken-Beaker* (*Grímnismál* strophe 7), where Óðinn and Sága drink mead, *ór gullnum kerum*, from golden vessels:

*Siði* is the Welsh equivalent of the Irish *sīd* "fairy-land." Its location under the sea in our poem (as in the Irish tale of *Laegaire*, where also are the music and the liquor, Nutt, *Bran*, i, 182-4) and the synonym *Annwfn* in Welsh suggest that the name is derived from *\*sēd-*, the long *ē* grade of the root *\*sed-*, since *ē* becomes *ī* in Keltic. The root means not only "to sit" but "to sink," etc. (e.g. *sediment*, *subsidence*); and its long *ō* grade occurs in Welsh in *sawδ* "subsidence, submergence," *soði* "to sink," in which also initial *s-* remains unreduced in Welsh. *Siði* depends in the genitive on *Caer*, and would regularly represent a genitive *\*sīdīi* of a derivative in *-io-* of *\*sēd-*.<sup>656</sup>

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<sup>656</sup> Morris-Jones, p. 238.

Despite the flaws of Skene's version<sup>657</sup> of the Taliesin poems in general, his edition of 34:8ff. is actually quite close to Morris-Jones' reconstruction:

Complete is my chair in Caer Sidi,  
No one will be afflicted with disease or old age that may be in it.  
It is known to Manawyd and Pryderi.  
Three utterances, around the fire, will he sing before it,  
And around its borders are the streams of the ocean.  
And the fruitful fountain is above it,  
Is sweeter than white wine the liquor therein.<sup>658</sup>

Skene's edition of these particular lines is far superior to that put forth by John Gwenogvryn Evans:

Harmonious is my chair at the fort of the whirlpools:  
Disease shall not strike down the old therein.  
Manawyd and Pryderi know of the moaning  
that breaks out from a cave, in front of the fort;

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<sup>657</sup> Morris-Jones, p. 22, says of Skene's edition: "Some of Skene's identifications of places in the North are more than doubtful; and his philological chapters are of no value. But the work as a whole forms a most important contribution to the study of the poems."

<sup>658</sup> Skene 1868 vol. 1, p. 276.

and of the tossings of the sea around its heights.

There is also a plentiful spring close to it;

pleasanter than white wine is the drink therein.<sup>659</sup>

As we remarked above, these Taliesin lines are an older version of the story of Manawyddan and Pryderi and the fountain in the *Mabinogion*. There the fountain is enchanted and is situated in an enchanted castle. Manawyddan warns Pryderi against entering the castle, but to no avail. Pryderi finds a fountain in the castle, but becomes magically stuck near it. Later, using information from Manawyddan, the lady Rhiannon arrives seeking Pryderi:

When he came within the castle, neither man nor beast, nor boar nor dogs, nor house nor dwelling saw he within it. But in the centre of the castle floor he beheld a fountain with marble work around it, and on the margin of the fountain a golden bowl upon a marble slab, and chains hanging from the air, to which he saw no end.

And he was greatly pleased with the beauty of the gold, and with the rich workmanship of the bowl, and he went up to the bowl and laid hold of it. And when he had taken hold of it his hands stuck to the bowl, and his feet to the slab on which the bowl was placed, and all his joyousness forsook him, so that he could not utter a word. And thus he stood. . . .

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<sup>659</sup> Evans 1915, p. 55.



The gate of the castle [Rhiannon] found open. She was nothing daunted, and she went in. And as she went in, she perceived Pryderi laying hold of the bowl, and she went towards him. “Oh, my lord,” said she, “what dost thou do here?” And she took hold of the bowl with him; and as she did so her hands became fast to the bowl, and her feet to the slab, and she was not able to utter a word. And with that, as it became night, lo, there came thunder upon them, and a fall of mist, and thereupon the castle vanished, and they with it.<sup>660</sup>

Thus the mytheme of the sacred fountain of the mead of immortality has been merged in the *Mabinogion* with the trope of the enchanted maiden in the castle (cf. “Young Svejdal” and *Fjolsvinnsmál*), here applied to both a man and a woman. Elsewhere the *Mabinogion* tells the lengthy tale of the Lady of the Fountain, in which we find echoes of the archetype of the wandering griever (e.g., Orpheus, Aphrodite, Freyja) in the figure of the dejected knight Owain. The story also features a guardian of the magic fountain, who is the lord of the animals (like Myrddin and Derg Corra), which brings us back to the theme of guarding the sacred mead in Old Norse lore, including not only the mead legends *Skáldskaparmál*, but also *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 2’s Oðhrærer who guards the mead well of Urður- Gunnlǫð.

In the poems of Taliesin, the bard guards his poetic cauldron associated with mead. In the poem “The Chair of Taliesin” we find the imagery of a poet’s cauldron

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<sup>660</sup> Guest, pp. 53-54.

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set amongst five trees and a stream of mead. We begin with the most relevant lines as rendered by Skene and Evans:

William F. Skene	J. Gwenogvryn Evans
And deep still water, Its stream the gift of God. Or if it will be wood the purifier, Fruitful its increase. Let the brewer give a heat, Over a cauldron of five trees. And the river of Gwiawn, And the influence of fine weather, And honey and trefoil, And mead-horns intoxicating Pleasing to a sovereign, The gift of the Druids. <sup>661</sup>	And the sacred water of baptism, the flowing gift of the Lord. Heaven's tree, full of fruit will be; prosperously it spreads. The boilings of the cauldron of the five sciences will run over: (this overflow), Gwion's stream, will produce fine weather, white clover, and honey, and brimming mead-horns. The Dragon will pacify the vates with a gift. <sup>662</sup>

There are two earlier translations of these same lines that agree in substance with Skene. The first is that of Edward Davies, and the second is from D. W. Nash:

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<sup>661</sup> Skene vol. 1, p 535.

<sup>662</sup> Evans 1915, p 51.

Edward Davies	David William Nash
And deep standing water, a flood which has the gift of Dovydd, or the tree of pure gold, which becomes of a fructifying quality, when that Brewer gives it a boiling, who presided over the cauldron of the five plants. Hence the stream of Gwion, and the reign of serenity, and honey and trefoil, and horns flowing with mead— Meet for a sovereign is the lore of the Druids. <sup>663</sup>	And the deep still water, Its stream is the gift of God. Is there not a tree of pure gold, Fruitful its nature; Very hot is its boiling, In the sweet cauldron of the five trees, Of the water of Gwion. And what sends fine weather, And honey and trefoils, And the mead-horns of the mead- drinkers? Blessed to the chief, Is the gift of the Druids. <sup>664</sup>

The line we are particularly interested in is interpreted by Evans as *oð.uch* *peir pum-wÿð*, which he translates as “the cauldron of the five sciences will run

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<sup>663</sup> Davies, p. 279.

<sup>664</sup> Nash pp. 207-208.

over.”<sup>665</sup> In the compound *pum-wyð*, *pum*, “five,” presents no exegetical problems. However, the other translators understand the final term as *wyð*, “trees” (cf. Davies, “plants”), and not as *wyð*, “sciences,” “(forms/systems of) knowledge.” The facsimile shows *pumóyð*, that is, *pumwyð*. In our view, what is most decisive against the translation “sciences” is that nowhere else is such a plural form attested in Taliesin. The term *wyð* in the sense of tree usually occurs as a suffix, especially in various names of trees. The recent version by Haycock rightly rejects Evans’ odd formulation, and renders *peir pumwyð* as “a five-beamed cauldron,”<sup>666</sup> on which Haycock offers the following comments: “The rhyme in *-yð* suggests *pumwyð* < *pum* + *gwyð* ‘tree,’ here perhaps referring to five beams forming a frame from which the cauldron was suspended (cf. its use for a ship’s mast). But cf. possibly Irish *coire cóicduirn*.”<sup>667</sup> Haycock suggests understanding the lines as, “the timber of the bard will have a fruitful effect: it will boil up riches/booty fiercely above the five-legged cauldron.”<sup>668</sup> Timber might also be understood as “staff” or “tree.”<sup>669</sup>

Evans renders the following lines from Taliesin’s “The Festival” as:

Talhaiarn is the

greatest seer:

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<sup>665</sup> Evans 1915, p 50.

<sup>666</sup> Haycock, p. 263.

<sup>667</sup> Haycock, p. 271.

<sup>668</sup> Haycock, p. 271.

<sup>669</sup> Haycock, p. 271.

He comprehends the science of  
the approaching birth of day.

I know something of good and evil. . . .<sup>670</sup>

Evans gives the following transcription:

Talhaearn yssyð

mwyhav sywedyð:

Ev am-gyffrawd wyd

aches amod dyð.

Go-gwn ða a drwg—<sup>671</sup>

However, the actual manuscript reads *Pwy amgyffrawd gwyd / o aches amot dyd*. Therefore the text does not say “he comprehends,” but states, “what,” *pwy*. By magically deleting the initial *g-* of *gwyd*, “trees,” Evans creates *wyd*, and interprets it as “science,” but this manoeuvre is completely unwarranted. Haycock rightly translates *gwyd* as “the trees.”<sup>672</sup> The term *amgyffrawd* can mean either “tumult” or “imagination.” Haycock translates the line as “What tumult [will strike] the trees,”<sup>673</sup> but for this to make sense Haycock has to add the bracketed gloss. The context

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<sup>670</sup> Evans 1915, p. 21.

<sup>671</sup> Evans 1915, p. 20.

<sup>672</sup> Haycock, p. 118.

<sup>673</sup> Haycock, p. 118.

clearly suggests the meaning here is “imagination,” “thought,” “understanding,” precisely as Skene discerned:

Talhayarn is

The greatest astronomer.

What is the imagination of trees.

From the muse the agreement of a day.

I know good and evil.<sup>674</sup>

The context indicates that what is meant in this passage is that Talhaiarn alone knows what trees think. The line *o aches amot dyd*, which Skene renders as “From the muse the agreement of a day,” is rendered by Haycock as “As a result of the torrent on the appointed day,” which she understands as a reference to the eschatological day of judgement.<sup>675</sup> The term *aches* can mean “eloquence,” but Skene’s “the muse” is a bit too paraphrastic. In the line *aches* stands parallel to the preceding line’s “imagination,” “thought,” so that the latter applies to the silence of the mind, whereas “eloquence” pertains to the spoken word of the poet, which is likened to a flowing current (cf. Haycock’s “torrent”), which is fitting for a tree, since trees and water naturally go together. The term *amot* denotes something like “agreement,” “reconciliation,” “accord,” even “law.” Another shade of its meaning can be “activity.” The context deals with the tropes of knowledge and a tree, and so

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<sup>674</sup> Skene vol. 1, p. 530.

<sup>675</sup> Haycock, p. 118.

the line “I know good and evil” alludes apparently to the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” Talhaiarn is the greatest “sage,” as Haycock renders it.<sup>676</sup>

Evans renders the following lines from “The Youth of Taliesin” as:

Knowest thou where night  
awaits the day?  
Knowest thou, on a bush,  
how many leaves there be?<sup>677</sup>

A w̄ðost cwð vyð  
nos yn aros dyð?  
A w̄ðost ar wŷð  
pet deilen yssyð?<sup>678</sup>

Surely this does not speak of a “bush,” but as Haycock translates, “how many leaves there are on the trees.”<sup>679</sup> Here we clearly see that in Taliesin the term *wyð* can mean “tree,” “trees,” and this justifies the translation of *pumwyð* as “five trees.” The questions concerning where Night waits for Day and how many leaves are on the trees are directed to the poet, and thus remind us of “The Festival” poem wherein

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<sup>676</sup> Haycock, p. 118.

<sup>677</sup> Evans 1915, p. 45.

<sup>678</sup> Evans 1915, p. 44.

<sup>679</sup> Haycock, p. 244.

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the sage knows what trees think, an impressive piece of knowledge comparable to knowing the number of leaves on the trees, that is, of all the trees in the world. In both poems, whose relevant lines we translate below, the theme of trees is joined to that of the day:

[Talhaiarn knows]what is the imagination of trees.

From the flowing eloquence the day's movements

I know good and evil.

Do you know where Night

Waits for Day?

Do you know, on the trees,

How many leaves there are?

The relevance for Old Norse lore of the Taliesin passages examined above should be transparent. The poet, his cauldron, the intoxicating mead, the stream, the five trees, all of these can be correlated with the Eddic mead of poetry brewed in a cauldron, a mead which is also thought of as a stream, fountain or well at the base of the world tree, Yggdrasil.

*Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 11's question about Heliar ("of Hel") and heimz, "of the world," is paralleled partly in *Baldurs draumar* strophe 6,<sup>680</sup> where Óðinn

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<sup>680</sup> See Bergmann 1875, p. 100.



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instructs the Völva whom he has just raised from her grave, *segðu mér ór helju, ek man ór heimi*: “tell me of Hel, I know of the world,” that is, he, being from the upper world already knows what is going on there, so he wants to know from the Völva information about events in the underworld. The isomorphism between the two strophes indicates that we are dealing with a traditional trope of asking an underworld female entity for news about Hel in contrast to the upper world/s. This enables us to see in Iðunn a Hel-like Völva. There is another important parallel to these two texts, whose significance for *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* is generally overlooked in the literature. We refer to *Sigrdrífumál* strophe 4:

Hann segir ok biðr hann kenna sér speki, ef hon vissi tíðindi ór ǫllum heimum.

Sigurð responded and asked her to teach him wisdom, if she knew the events of all the worlds.

In this brief strophe there are several elements that show the tradition it contains is definitely cognate with those which the texts just investigated also contain:

*Hrafnagaldur Óðins* 11:1; 5-8

*Breta sögur* 7

*Sigrdrífumál* 4

Frá enn vitri . . .

biðr hann . . . speki

Hlyrnis,

himnis

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Heliar,	helvítis	
heimz,	allrar veraldar	øllum heimum
ef vissi	veizt/kannt	ef . . . vissi
artid,	tíðindi	tíþindi
ęfi,	eilífu	
aldurtila	forløg	

*Sigrdrífumál* strophe 4 is also related to *Baldrs draumar* strophe 6 through the shared preposition *ór* in the latter's *ór heimi*. Consequently, as is so often the case, *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 11 is firmly rooted in pre-existing tradition. We must not, however, confine ourselves to the above linguistic details when it comes to *Sigrdrífumál*, for it is vital to recognize the more general parallels the poem shares with the overall myth contained in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*. The enchanted, imprisoned Sigrdrífa immediately calls to mind the imprisoned Iðunn of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*, who is held down, that is, confined beneath the world tree. Sigrdrífa has been enchanted by a sleep-thorn, *svefnþorni*, which may be compared to *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 13's þorn and strophe 14's stupor of sleep. Her sleep and awakening may also be compared to the trope of the *Völva* in *Baldrs draumar* and elsewhere. From a horn Sigrdrífa gives Sigurðr a draught of *minnisveig*, memory drink, which is paralleled in *Hyndluljóð* strophe 29's *minnisöl*, "memory ale." In strophe 4 Sigrdrífa refers to the long griefs of life, and this may be correlated with the grieving Iðunn of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*. In strophe 19 Sigrdrífa states of her runes, *njóttu ef namt / unz of rjúfask regin*, "they shall ever aid one who takes them, until

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the ruin of the Gods,” which parallels *Gylfaginning* 26’s statement that Iðunn’s apples will keep the Gods young until Ragnarøk, ok svá mun vera allt til ragnarøkrs.

The cognate poem *Helreið Brynhildar*, has Brynhild in strophe 7 tell a Völva-like Giantess, Gýgr, that she had been imprisoned for twelve years under an oak, *und eik*. In conclusion, Brynhildr commands the Giantess, *søkksk, gýgjar kyn*, “sink down, kin of Giantesses.” The poems *Helreið Brynhildar* and *Sigrdrífumál* exhibit several isomorphic features with *Grógaldur-Fjolsvinnsmál*, poems built upon several Iðunn-related traditions. Especially noteworthy is *Fjolsvinnsmál* strophes 13-14’s account of the two wolves who at the tree of memory or Mímir, Mímameiðr, that is, Yggdrasill, guard the old-age cure (Iðunn’s apples) *unz rjúfask regin*, “until the ruin of the Gods.” The Giant guard of the realm of Menglǫð (= Iðunn) is called Fjolsviðr, Much-Knowing, and Svipdagr (= Bragi) commands him in language (*Segðu mér þat, Fjolsviðr! er ek þik fregna mun ok ek vilja vita*) that parallels Óðinn’s commanding words to the Völva of *Baldur’s darumar*, which demonstrates the rich interconnectedness between all of these texts. In strophe 31 flames hover around, *vafrloga*, Menglǫð’s hall, reminiscent of the wall of flames that encircled Sigrdrífa. *Fjolsvinnsmál*’s final strophe, 50, is clearly cognate to the tradition reflected in the final strophe, 14, of *Helreið Brynhildar*:

*Fjolsvinnsmál* strophe 50

Þrár hafþar

es ek hef til þíns gamans,

*Helreið Brynhildar* strophe 14

Munu við ofstríð

alls til lengi

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en þú til míns munar;	konur ok karlar
nú's þat satt,	kvikvir fœðask
es vit slíta skulum	við skulum okkrum
ævi ok aldri saman.”	aldri slíta
	Sigurþr saman.

Alike we yearned;	Ever with grief
I longed for thee,	and all too long
And thou for my love hast longed;	Are men and women
But now henceforth	born in the world;
together we know	But yet we shall live
Our lives to the end we shall live.	our lives together,
	Sigurð and I.

### Strophe 12.

Lassen writes: “Rask suggested that ‘givom’ should be emended to ‘tívom’ (dat. pl. of *týr* ‘god’). The adjective *gífr* ‘greedy’ is only deduced from a doubtful reading in *Fjolsvinnsmál* 13, and occurs nowhere else. It is supported by the adjective *gifre* ‘greedy’ (in Old English, and would fit the context here well (= greedy for answers, referring to the gods), but the ‘-r’ is radical, and the dat. would be *gífrum*. Perhaps the author mistook the inflection class in his reading of

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*Fjolsvinnsmál*.”<sup>681</sup> *Fjolsvinnsmál* strophe 13 is certainly relevant, but some of the strophes in the apocalyptic battle scene of *Völuspá* are equally, if not more, important. We find the noun *gífr* in *Völuspá* strophe 50; surrounding strophes refer to Garmr and freki, the “ravener,” which match *Fjolsvinnsmál* strophe 14’s Gífr and Geri, who must be the same as Freki and Geri, which in turn suggest that *Völuspá*’s Garmr and freki allude to Geri and Freki. The relationship of these pairs can be shown as follows:

Geri =Garmr  
    ↖↗  
    ↙↘  
Freki = Gífr

Thus *Fjolsvinnsmál* uses the pair Gífr and Geri while *Völuspá* has Garmr and Freki. In this way each poem omits one of the names of *Grímnismál* strophe 19’s Geri and Freki (in that order). In all three attestations the wolf or hound with the name that begins with G is listed first. *Fjolsvinnsmál* has replaced the name Freki with Gífr so as to create an alliteration with the name Geri. This was done either under the influence of *Völuspá* strophe 50’s *gífr*, or perhaps both poems record a similar tradition independently of each other. Of course, it is not impossible that *Völuspá* has been influenced by *Fjolsvinnsmál*. The fact that a transposition of the two elements of Gífr, namely, Fr-Gi, would bring us rather close phonetically to Fre-ki probably contributed to *Fjolsvinnsmál*’s choice of *Völuspá*’s *gífr* as an alternative name for Freki. That *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 12 would call the Gods *gífrum/gífrum* now makes sense in light of the fact that Heimdallr, Loki and Bragi have

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<sup>681</sup> Lassen, p. 100.

arrived riding enchanted wolves, therefore, as werewolves, ravenous in their appetite for knowledge of the future. As we pointed out lately, strophe 10 says that Rognir ok reiginn, “the God and the Gods,” that is, the God Heimdallr and the Gods Loki and Bragi, rode magic wolves to visit Iðunn, and the thought here may presuppose that Heimdallr rode Geri, while Loki and Bragi rode together on Freki.

Interestingly in the *Haustlǫng* poem, we read in strophe 8 we read of Loki as ulfs faðir, father of the wolf, and that Þjazi carried Loki “a long way off,” of veg langan, which is paralleled in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 10’s langa vegu. Moreover, in strophe 9 of *Haustlǫng* we read of Iðunn as the maid who guards the “age cure of the Æsir,” ellilyf ása, that is, the golden apples of youth. These are referred to in *Skírnismál* strophe 19 as epli ellifu, “eleven apples,” which is rightly emended generally as ellilyfs, “age curing,” as in *Haustlǫng*. Now it can hardly be coincidence that when we return to *Fjolsvinnsmál* strophe 14 we read of the place where Gífr and Geri dwell that varðir ellifu er þeir varða, unz rjúfask regin, “guards guard eleven there, until the doom of the Gods.” This agrees with *Gylfaginning* 26’s account of Iðunn’s apples: “she guards in her chest of ash those apples which the gods must taste whensoever they grow old; and then they all become young, and so it shall be even unto the Weird of the Gods,” hon varðveitir í eski sínu epli þau, er goðin skulu á bíta, þá er þau eldast, ok verða þá allir ungir, ok svá mun vera allt til ragnarǫkrs.

What *Fjolsvinnsmál* strophe 14 tells us is that Gífr and Geri guard “eleven” until the doom of the Gods. As Kvilhaug remarks, Bugge suggested that here *ellifu* should be emended to *eilifr*, “eternal”; Kvilhaug proposes reading it as *eilifu*, “eternal ones.”<sup>682</sup>

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<sup>682</sup> Kvilhaug, p. 84.

However, there can be little doubt that the two wolves guard the “age-cure,” *ellilyf* (*elli* = “old-age”; *lyf* = “medicine”), the golden apples of *Iðunn*. This explains why the surrounding strophes in *Fjolsvinnsmál* all deal with the world tree. It also explains why the mountain *Menglóð* inhabits in strophe 36 is called *Lyfjaberg*, Mount Medicine.<sup>683</sup>

*Fjolsvinnsmál* strophe 13’s conclusion is quite difficult to unpack. Of the two hounds it is said, *er gífrari hefik ǫnga fyrr í lǫndum lítit*. This seems hopelessly corrupt, but there is some help in variant readings. Bergmann reconstructs the passage as follows: *er gífr-rekar / varða fyrri lǫnd ok lím*,<sup>684</sup> “who, driving away Ogresses, / guard before land and border.” Bergmann offers the following comments:

Instead of *gífur reka* (the drive away the violent/fierce), the composite *gífurreka* (wildly-driving away) is a better reading, like *sokn-diarfir* (assault-brave). *Gífr-rekar* here denotes, as epithet, the guard dogs who, with fury, chase away strangers.

Instead of the reading *gorda*, MS C has *varda*, and instead of *fyrri lǫnd* in *lím*, *fyrri lǫnd ok lím*. *Lím* is the accusative singular, whereas strophe 19, *lǫnd ǫll ok límar*, stands in the nominative plural. *Límr* (branch) denotes the branch by which one marked the border (cf. Greek *limen*, “port,” “haven,” as *end* of the journey; Latin *limen*, “gatepost”); (cf. *stockr*, “stick,” “stem,” “root,”

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<sup>683</sup> On *Lyfjaberg* see *Kvilhaug*, p. 87.

<sup>684</sup> Bergmann 1874, p. 40.

as border, and *stone*, rock-piece as border marking); then *limr* denotes also the cut-off branches that are used to make the border fence (cf. Latin *limes*). With this sense agrees the expression *korr* (bushwork as warning sign); for this reason also MS E has here instead of *lim*, *kiur*, which is obviously intended as an explanation (epexegetis) of the word *lim*, which then entered into MS E.<sup>685</sup>

For *fyrir í lǫndum lítit* Bugge records the variant *fyrir lǫndin lim*.<sup>686</sup> Other variant readings have various forms of *gǫrða*, *giorþa*, *gorþa* before the word *fyrir*; we would interpret this as “guard,” “keep,” “keep fenced in” (cf. strophe 33’s *gǫrði*). The reading *lǫnd ok lim* is to be favoured, since it agrees with strophe 19’s world tree’s limbs that spread over all the land, *lǫnd ǫll limar*. Bugge interprets *gífrari* with reference to the Old English *gifre*.<sup>687</sup> Thus it may be that the two hounds are said to guard the age-cure greedily. The word *ǫnga* could mean “narrowly,” “straitly,” that is, closely, but it is to be rejected.

Bergmann writes of the two guard hounds: “As wolf hounds they are so fierce that they frighten and drive away even the dreaded giant Ogresses/Trolls (*gífr*), and for this that are called Ogress-ousters (*gífr-rekar*). This is why one is called *Gífr* (Ogress), the other *Ger* (Greedy, Ravener), whose name is also one of Óðinn’s two

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<sup>685</sup> Bergmann 1874, pp. 51-52.

<sup>686</sup> Bugge 1867, p. 345.

<sup>687</sup> Bugge 1867, p. 345.



wolves (hunting hounds).”<sup>688</sup> The reading *gífr* is certainly correct, since it is attested elsewhere in the *Poetic Edda*’s mythological poems, and only once, and such rare words were favoured by the poet of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*.

In light of *Fjolsvinnsmál* strophe 19’s *lond ǫll ok limar*, strophe 13’s *lond ok lim* is to be understood as “earth and branches,” *lim* being intended as a collective singular. Thus Bergmann’s “border” interpretation is not mythologically rich enough. The word *lond*, “land,” is to be interpreted with reference to usages such as we find in *Völuspá* strophe 57’s *moldþinur*, “earth-fir,” a kenning for the world tree (not the world serpent).<sup>689</sup> *Fjolsvinnsmál* strophe 13’s *lond ok lim* mean “earth and branch(es),” that is, the branches of the tree that cover all the earth, in short, the world tree.

The two hounds thus keep guard of the age-cure apples in front of the branches of the world-encompassing tree, driving away any Ogresses or Troll women that might want to steal the apples. The two hounds consequently parallel the cherubim (plural, probably two) who were placed as guards at the tree of life in Genesis 3. As Steinsland has documented, in medieval Scandinavia the common belief was that the tree of wisdom in Eden was an apple tree.<sup>690</sup> We cannot be sure of this reconstruction, but it does fit in well with the surrounding context.

*Fjolsvinnsmál* strophe 15 calls the two guard hounds *sóknjarfir*, which is composed of *sókn-* an *-jarfir*, that is, “flight/offense/assault” and “bold,” and as a

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<sup>688</sup> Bergmann 1874, p. 104.

<sup>689</sup> For documentation, consult our commentary on *Völuspá* strophe 57.

<sup>690</sup> See Steinsland 1990, pp. 319-320.

compound sókndjarfir means “valiant,” and perhaps even “ferocious.” Now, this strophe is extremely important because it is the source of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 14 line 8’s sókn, which Lassen incorrectly views as the Christian word for “parish.”<sup>691</sup> What confirms *Fjolsvinnsmál* strophe 15’s sókn-djarfir as the source of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 14’s sókn is that sókn-djarfir is followed by the word sofa, “sleep,” which overlaps with *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 14 line 7’s sefa, “calms down.” The word sókn- occurs nowhere else in the mythological poems of the *Poetic Edda*. It may therefore be that strophe 13’s ferocious Dwarf-stag Dáinn and strophe 14’s frenzied Giantess Rýgr might have been to a degree inspired by Gífr and Geri. Significantly, in *Fjolsvinnsmál* the maiden Menglǫð (who is to identified as Freyja,<sup>692</sup> but also and principally as Iðunn) sits continually in silence, in a dream-like state, at the foot of the world tree surrounded by nine maidens. Her grandfather Svafnþorin, Sleep-Brave, is emended by Simek to Svefnþorn, Sleeping-Thorn.<sup>693</sup> (Bergmann interprets Svafnþorin as Sun-Brave).<sup>694</sup> Additionally, Menglǫð’s hall is guarded by the woman “Sinmara, the ‘pale mare’ (as in nightmare),” as Kvilhaug remarks.<sup>695</sup> Strophe 29 calls her a Gýgr, a synonym of Rýgr. Both Svefnþorn and Sinmara make us think of Dáinn’s thorn and the nocturnal stupor-bringing Rýgr. In strophe 42, Menglǫð is called sólbjarta brúðr, “sun-bright

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<sup>691</sup> See Lassen, p. 100.

<sup>692</sup> See Bergmann 1874, pp. 11ff.

<sup>693</sup> See Kvilhaug, p. 84.

<sup>694</sup> Bergmann 1874, p. 14.

<sup>695</sup> Kvilhaug, p. 85.

bride,” terms which make her comparable to Gunnlǫð in *Hávamál* strophes 97 and 111. In strophe 97 we read of Gunnlǫð who is sólhvíta sofa, “sun-white sleeping.”

As we explain in our commentary on *Völuspá*, the maiden Menglǫð in *Fjolsvinnsmál* is on one level Freyja, whose name Menglǫð has the appearance of meaning Jewelry-Glad, an allusion to Freyja’s necklace Brísingamen,<sup>696</sup> but at the same time actually means “Mixed [Mead] Inviter,”<sup>697</sup> and alludes as such to Iðunn. In the same poem, Svípdagr, Swift-Day, is none other than Óðr,<sup>698</sup> (but also Bragi) who appears throughout the poem in disguise under the name Fjolsviðr, Much-Wise.<sup>699</sup> Freyja is the spring Goddess who marries the summer God Óðr, and much the same can be said of Iðunn and Bragi. But in the high north summer ends quite soon, which is expressed mythically in the trope of Óðr’s departure.<sup>700</sup> This brevity is alluded to in the name Svípdagr, Swift-Day, that is, the summer daylight that ends so quickly in the north. The underlying current of the topos of the sacred mead in the story and figures of Freyja and Óðr of *Völuspá* strophes 21-26 prepares for strophes 27-28’s picture of the sacred spings and wells beneath Yggdrasill, which mythically function as equivalents of the mead of immortality.

In *Fjolsvinnsmál* strophe 37 we read of nine meyjar, “maidens,” er fyr Menglaðar knjám sitja sáttar saman, “who sit peacefully before the knees of

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<sup>696</sup> See Bergmann 1874, p. 14.

<sup>697</sup> See Kvilhaug, p. 31.

<sup>698</sup> See Bergmann 1874, pp. 15ff.

<sup>699</sup> See Kvilhaug, p. 80.

<sup>700</sup> Bergmann 1874, pp. 15-23.

Mengloð.” Strophe 38 tells us that these maidens number nine, among them one is called Aurboða, who must be none other than the infamous Angrboða.<sup>701</sup> To us this suggests that these nine maidens correspond mythically to the *nú íviðjur*, nine Ogresses or nine yew forests, of *Völuspá* strophe 2, ancestors (or ancestral lands) of the *Völva* who narrates that particular poem. The nine maidens sit together, saman, in peace, *sáttar*, before the knees of Mengloð. This means that Mengloð is seated on the ground in a meditation-like posture, with her knees pointing outwards. The nine maids are sitting at her knees in peace. Bergmann compares this to the Sankrit word उपनिषत्, that is, *upaniṣad*, literally, “to be seated nearby/beneath.”<sup>702</sup> This is certainly a rather unique picture in Old Norse literature, but an knowledge of Hindu teaching positions would not have been impossible for the world travellers that Vikings were.

Immediately after this extraordinary image, the rest of the poem describes the joyful arrival and return of Svípdagr, who is united with Mengloð in the *hieros gamos*. Svava Jakobsdóttir interpreted the name Mengloð not as Jewelry-Glad, but as Mixing-Invitation, that is, she mixes the mead.<sup>703</sup> We see no reason both meanings could not be intentionally present in the name Mengloð. In any case, that Mengloð would be a mixer of the mead would help explain her many similarities to Gunnloð, not to mention the similarities of their names. The present text of *Hávamál* strophe 111 calls Gunnloð’s well the Urðarbrunni, well of Urður. A connection between

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<sup>701</sup> Bergmann 1874, p. 130.

<sup>702</sup> See Bergmann 1874, p. 137.

<sup>703</sup> See Kvilhaug, p. 31.

Mengloð and Gunnloð would help explain *Fjolsvinnsmál* strophe 47's reference to Urðar orði, "the word of Urður," as Mengloð and Svípdagr are reunited in love. *Grógaldur* strophe 7's Urðar lokur, "the locks of Urður," the definitive closures, that is, the fixed (locked) and irreversible decisions of Urður, has the same basic meaning as Urðar orði. Yet Urður pronounces these words and decisions at her well, as is clear from *Völuspá* strophes 19-20. Therefore, both Urðar orði and Urðar lokur presuppose Urðar brunni, and thus at the *hieros gamos* of Mengloð and Svípdagr presupposes a well of mead like Gunnloð's.

Before leaving *Fjolsvinnsmál* we will note that the name of Fjolsviðr, Much-Wise, actually finds a parallel in both of its components in the *Völuspá* strophe that mentions Garmr and freki, namely, strophe 46 line 5's description of the Völva: fjolð veit hón fræða, "Much (fjolð) knows (veit) she of wisdom." Lastly, as Eldar Heide argues, *Fjolsvinnsmál* "in all probability is as old as most other Eddic poems. . . . The widespread idea that *Grógaldur* and *Fjolsvinnsmál* are merely corrupted fragments of a lost *\*Svipdagsmál* corresponding to the later ballad must be rejected, however; they clearly are independent poems functioning on their own premises But it is possible that they formed part of a longer, immanent story. . . ."704

In light of all the above data, *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 12's givom is to be emended to givrom (= gifrum); the -r- has simply dropped out, another indication of the corrupt state of our earliest manuscripts of the poem. The the -r- may have dropped out under the oral-recited influence of the -r- in the word that follows, namely, greiða. Similarly, under the influence of the word Loki, the conjunctive ok

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<sup>704</sup> Heide 2011 Islands, p. 63.

has dropped out of strophe 20 line 4. This explanation makes much more sense than Lassen's suspicion that "the author mistook the inflection class in his reading of *Fjölsvinnsmál*."<sup>705</sup>

Strophe 12 line 3's topos of greed may be explained as follows. Line 3's *gívom* must be coordinated with line 4's *glæm*, "merriment," "merry noise," which on one level alludes to the merry banquet depicted in strophes 17-23. (It is certainly significant that the word *glæum* is not used elsewhere in the mythological poems of *Poetic Edda* with the sole exception of the threatened denial of *glæum*, "merry noise," to Gerðr in *Skírnismál* strophe 34, a poem that has influenced *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* in several instances, especially its image of the sorrowing Gerðr has shaped the portrait of the grieving Iðunn in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*). In many languages one is said to greedily devour food. "Greed" here therefore must be understood as hunger or thirst, and what the Gods are greedy/hungry-thirsty for is Iðunn's knowledge and wisdom. Again, the language of being thirsty or hungry for knowledge is widespread across many cultures. The nuance here should be placed upon thirst rather than hunger, for at the banquet the Gods do not eat, they only drink (mead). The Einherjar are the ones who eat the ambrosial *Sæhrímnir*. It is not a coincidence that in strophe 12 Heimdallr asks the questions. He is described as "the wise one," *vitri*, in strophe 11, and in strophe 16 he is said to be the *hirdir* at Herians / horni *Gjallar*, "the keeper of Herjan's / Gjallarhorn." The vern *hirdir* is synonymous with strophe 5's *dylst*, "hidden/hides." Thus strophe 12's and 16's depiction of Heimdallr as the wise one who hides/keeps Gjallarhorn can be viewed as allusions back to strophe

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<sup>705</sup> Lassen, p. 100.

5's "wise one" who/which is hidden in Mímir's well. According to *Völuspá* strophe 27 Heimdallr's ear (*hlióð*) is hidden in the steam beneath Yggdrasill. Thus there would seem to be an allusion to Heimdallr's ear and/or horn in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 5.

The God who is most greedy for knowledge here is Óðinn, for he is the one who organized and dispatched the delegation to Iðunn. Since according to the *Interpretatio Germanica* Óðinn corresponds to Mercury-Hermes, we can now better understand *Hrafnagaldur Óðins'* divine greed as thirst or hunger, for the trope of Hermes' hunger in classical sources is quite famous.<sup>706</sup> Perhaps we can think of Óðinn's banquet as an invitation to Iðunn to come and share her wisdom in the form of the sacred mead, which would then remind us of Proverbs 9's Lady Wisdom and her banquet. But our text tells us that Iðunn does not grant, *greiða*, the greedy ones any words. This indicates not so much that Iðunn *cannot* speak, but that she *willingly chooses* not to do so. This reminds us of the negative relationship that obtains between Óðinn and the *Völva* in *Völuspá*, especially in strophe 28 where she confronts him with, *Hvers fregnið mik? Hví freistið mín? "Why do you question me? Why do you test me?"* With gifts Óðinn compels her to speak her knowledge of the future, and at the end of the poem, she sinks down, and has nothing more to say. In *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* the *Völva* Iðunn has already said everything she has to say when she *sinks down* from Yggdrasill in strophe 6. At the end of strophe 5 she has already rhetorically asked (Óðinn), *vitip enn eða hvað?*, just as the *Völva* asks Óðinn in *Völuspá* strophe 28, *Vituð ér enn, eða hvat?*

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<sup>706</sup> See Versnel, pp. 309-376.

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Among the Volga Germans we find a folksong that is in all likelihood of medieval origin, namely, “Es träumte unsrer Frau,” also known as “Es träumet einer Frau.” Although the song in its present form identifies the world tree as the cross, this and its other Christian elements are easily identifiable as later additions to an earlier pagan myth of the world tree. The song’s first three strophes are the most relevant for our purposes:

1 Es träumte unsrer Frau	A dream came to our Lady,
Ein wunderschöner Traum:	A wondrously beautiful dream:
Es wuchs unter ihrem Herzen	Beneath her heart grew
Ein wunderschöner Baum.	A wondrously beautiful tree.
2 Der Baum wuchs in die Höh,	The tree grew into the height,
Wohl in die Weit und Breit;	Even into the width and breadth;
Er bedeckt mit seinen Ästen	With its branches it covered
Die ganze Christenheit.	All of Christendom.
3 Die Äste waren rot,	The branches were red,
Sie glänzten wie das Gold. <sup>707</sup>	They shone like gold.
Das macht, weil Jesus Christus	That happened because Jesus Christ
Gehangen war an dem Holz. <sup>708</sup>	Had hung on the wood.

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<sup>707</sup> Note by Samuel Zinner: We have personally heard the variant *Mond*, “moon,” instead of *Gold*, “gold.” This is likely a more recent innovation. Given the traditional trope of red gold, *Gold* is the preferable reading.

<sup>708</sup> Erbes-Sinner, p. 8.



The obvious Christian additions are the substitution of Christendom for the world (cosmos) or land (we have personally heard this line sung as “Die ganze Erde weit,” “the whole wide earth,” without any mention of Christendom), the presumed Virgin Mary (“our Lady,” which is probably a later form of the likely earlier variant “a lady”) for a Germanic Goddess, and Jesus’ blood as the explanation of the tree’s gold red branches. Once we remove these, we are left with a standard Indo-European world tree myth similar to the Norse Yggdrasill. Because all the other rhymes in the poem are rather exact with the exception of strophe 3’s *Gold* and *Holz* (admittedly these do assonate), it is probable that lines 3 and 4 have been substantially altered during the process of their Christianization, which no doubt created the explicit reference to Jesus Christ. The process continues, for we have personally heard the recent innovation among Volga Germans that has replaced the older *Holz* of strophe 3 line 4 with *Kreuz*, “cross.” We suspect the rhyme originally involved *Gold* and *Holt*, an older dialectical form of *Holz*. Another possibility is the dialectal form of Wodan, *Wôld*, but this is far less probable than *Holt*.

We should note that in the second Merseburg charm, Wodan rides into the woods, *holza*. Additionally, Norse lore speaks of Óðinn hanging on the wood (*meið*) or gallows of the world tree. In the *Rune Song* of *Hávamál* Óðinn dies on Yggdrasill, falls off the world tree and is then reborn, literally “pollinated,” *frævask*. A pre-Christian version of “Es träumte unsrer Frau” could conceivably have referred to Wodan or Woden instead of Jesus Christ. Waltraud Hunke interprets the etymology of Óðinn’s mother’s name Bestla as “tree-bark,” and Hunke thus “sees Bestla as the

bark of the world tree, on which Odin was perhaps born (or reborn in an initiation?) according to *Hávamál* stanza 141 ('then I started to grow fruitful').<sup>709</sup> The alternative Bestla etymology, "wife," would also fit with the Volga-German folksong's *Frau*, which of course means both "woman" and "wife."

The notion that Bestla was the bark of the world tree and that Óðinn was born from this maternal bark, Bestla, would accord nicely with "Es träumte unsrer Frau." Perhaps this paradigm could also shed some light on the curious Eddic genitival construction *ask Yggdrasils*, "the ash-tree of Yggdrasill," which strictly understood means that the world tree is not actually named Yggdrasill. The ash tree is the world tree, and this ash-tree belongs to or is derived from Yggdrasill, literally "Shy-One's Steed," Óðinn being Shy-One. The world tree is thus the ash tree of Óðinn's horse. The world tree's bark, on the other hand, could be called Bestla, Óðinn's Giant mother. Thus, we can make a distinction between the world ash tree and its bark. Perhaps the tree is also hermaphroditic. According to "Es träumte unsrer Frau," the woman gives birth to the world tree, which emerges from below her heart, or as we have personally heard, *aus ihrem Herzen*, "out of her heart," the latter variant strengthening the suspicion that what is referred to is not a "womb," but literally a heart. This then recalls Snorri's account of the strange modes of Ymir's generating and giving birth to the first Giants by means of his hands and feet mating with each other's pair. If Bestla had indeed given birth to Óðinn from her heart, then we would not be too surprised.

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<sup>709</sup> See Lindow, p. 77.

The spatial words *die Höh*, *die Weit* and *Breit*, “height,” “width” and “breadth,” are all part of a well-known ancient terminological constellation used for discussions of cosmology, cosmogony (cf. *Ḥagigah* 13: “Whoever speculates on four matters, woe to him; it would be better if he had never been born, namely, on what is in the height and what is in the depth, on what is before [spatially, east; temporally, before the beginning of time] and on what is after [spatially, west; temporally, after the end of time]”; Ephesians 3:18: “the breadth and length and height and depth”) of the Primordial Cosmic Human (Adam Qadmon, Purusha, the Cosmic Christ etc.), and of the world tree.

The remaining stanzas of “Es träumte unsrer Frau” lament that the youth of the folksong’s contemporaries perhaps no longer remember how to pray the ten commandments, resulting in a general decline of morality in the world at large. This raises the possibility that the underlying myth upon which the song is based might have portrayed the world tree as bleeding and in decline, which would cause a worsening in the fabric of the moral and other realms of the world, similar to what we find in *Völuspá* strophe 44’s wolvern age of merciless violence and breakdown of family and tribal ties.

We should not overlook that if the world tree was thought of as bleeding, then it was thought of as sentient and to a certain extent as anthropomorphic. A good parallel would be the talking and bleeding tree named Polydorus in *Aeneid* Book 3:42-43: “It is Trojan blood that drips from the branch.” According to both 4 Ezra and the Epistle of Barnabas, the end of the world will come when blood drips from wood. Barnabas is a bit fuller and says: “And when shall all these things take

place?’ spoke the Lord. ‘When the tree falls and rises and when blood drips from the tree.’” We think of Yggdrasill’s fall in *Völuspá* strophe 45. According to *Grímnismál* strophe 35 Yggdrasill suffers, *drýgir, meira en menn viti*, “more than men know,” just as no one knows the nature of Yggdrasill’s roots: *Fjölsvinnsmál* strophe 20, *Mímameiðr hann heitir, en þat manngi veit, af hverjum rótum renn*, “Mímir’s Tree it is called, the source of whose roots no one knows”; *Hávamál* strophe 138, á þeim meiði er manngi veit hvers af rótum renn, “upon the tree, the source of whose roots no one knows.” Both of the latter two strophes are related to suffering, the first refers to the eventual fall (*fellr*) of Yggdrasill, and the second to Óðinn’s sufferings upon Yggdrasill.

There is a second relevant Volga-German folksong, “Es ging ein Knab spazieren”:

1 Es ging ein Knab spazieren,	A lad went walking,
Spazieren in den Wald.	Walking into the forest.
Was begegnet ihm auf der Reise?	What met him on his journey?
Ein Mädchen von schöner Gestalt,	A maid of beautiful form,
War achtzehn Jahre alt.	She was eighteen years old.
2“Wohin, wonaus, schönes Mädels?	“Where to, where from, beautiful maid?
Wohin steht der [= dir] dein Sinn?”	What do you mean to do?”
– Ich will zu meinem Vater	I want to go to my father,
Wohl in das Tannenholz. –	Even into the fir wood.
3 “Was willst du dorten sehen?”	“What do you want to see there?”

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– Ein' wunderschönen Baum.	A wondrously beautiful tree.
Der Baum, der hat zwei Zweige,	The tree that has two branches,
Die Zweige waren rot,	The branches were red,
Sie glänzen wie das Gold. <sup>–710</sup>	They shone like gold.

Both of these folksongs speak of a tree with gold-like red branches.

According to *Gylfaginning*, Freyja weeps red gold tears while she searches for her husband Óðr, whose name forms the first component of the name of the sacred mead, that is, Óðrerir. In *Skáldskaparmál* the world tree is called “Glasir [Gleaming], and all of its foliage is gold red.” Iðunn’s gold apples are presumably red, and although we cannot be certain of this, it seems probable enough. In *Fjolsvinnsmál* strophe 19, the world tree’s *barr*, whose limbs broaden or spread over all the land, *er breiðask um lond ǫll limar*. (With *breiðask* and *ǫll* cf. the words *Breit* and *ganze* in “Es träumte unsrer Frau”). In Old Norse the word *barr* means the leaves or needles of a fir or pine tree. This matches the Tannenholz, fir wood, of the Volga-German folksong, as well as the world tree of the new earth, called *mold-pinur*, world fir-tree, in *Völuspá* strophe 57.

*Fjolsvinnsmál* strophe 21 calls the world tree, *mæra viðar*, “glorious tree.”

Similarly, in strophe 35 *Mengloð* the *brúði*, “bride,” stands “gloriously,” *þjóðmæra þruma*, upon Mount Medicine, Lyfjaberg. The verb *þruma*, which we rendered “stands,” is an unusual term to apply to a human. It is used of structures such as Valhalla, which according to *Grímnismál* strophe 8 *þrumir*, “stands,” in the realm of

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<sup>710</sup> Erbes-Sinner, pp. 51-52.

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Glaðsheimr, Glad-Home. Strophe 8 specifies that Valhalla stands “wide,” *víð*. (With *víð* cf. the word *Weit*, “width,” in “Es träumte unsrer Frau”). In the immediately preceding strophe 7, we read that Óðinn and Sága drink the sacred mead all the day, *gløð ór gullnum kerum*, “gladly out of gold vessels.” What strikes us at once in *Grímnismál* strophes 7 and 8 are the terms *Glað-* and *gløð*, which make one think of the name *Mengløð*, even though the latter’s components are probably composed of *meng* and *løð*, and not *men* and *gløð*.

Additionally, both *Grímnismál* strophe 8 and *Fjolsvinnsmál* strophe 35 share the verb *þruma/ þrumir*. *Mengløð* stands upon the mountain; she stands like Valhalla, or like the world tree. The implication is that *Mengløð* stands fast and permanently in a fixed position. Some interpreters understand *þruma* as implying that *Mengløð* is depicted in a frozen state of sleep,<sup>711</sup> which is a legitimate guess, and would then call to mind the Volga-German folksong in which the Goddess *dreams* that the world tree emerges from her own heart. Intriguingly the verb *þruma* also occurs in *Hávamál* strophe 13 where we find that the bird *Fjalar*, one of the two Dwarves who made originally the sacred mead, “hovers,” *þrumir*, over *Gunnløð*’s well of mead. The idea in *Fjolsvinnsmál* strophe 35 may be that *Mengløð* (whose second component of *-løð* is the same as in *Gunn-løð*) stands (or sits, or reclines—in fact strophe 49 has *Mengløð* state that she has long “sat” on Mount Medicine waiting for her lover’s return) fixed like a guard, reminiscent of *Iðunn* who in front of the world tree guards the gold apples of immortality, the fruit of *Yggdrasill*. These textual interconnections might add weight to the suspicion that *Sága* and *Mengløð* are

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<sup>711</sup> See Kvilhaug, p. 87.

manifestations of Iðunn, whose gold apples mythematically correspond to the sacred mead.

*Fjolsvinnsmál* strophes 37-38 list nine meýjar, “maidens,” who surround Menglǫð, which reminds us of *Völuspá* strophe 2’s *níu íviðjur*, which possible means “nine yew-wood Ogresses,” who bore and reared the Völva. We think also of *níu . . . jǫtna meýjar*, “nine . . . Giant maidens” who give birth to Heimdallr according to *Völuspá hin skamma*. One of Menglǫð’s nine maidens is named Aurboða, whom we hold to be the same Giantess as Angrboða. These nine maidens sing at Menglǫð’s knees.

The coordination of the ten commandments and the world tree in “Es träumte unsrer Frau” suggests that at one stage of the ballad’s history the tree was envisaged as Lady Torah, that is, Lady Wisdom who is the personified or hypostatic tree of life. Of course, the kabbalistic tree of life consists of ten sefirot, at times symbolized by the ten commandments. The silence of Iðunn in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* during the season when she is separated from her husband Bragi, and the silence of Menglǫð in *Fjolsvinnsmál* as she sits longingly upon Mount Medicine (which in effect is Mount Life Eternal) waiting for her distant lover’s return, this wordless state beneath the branches of the world tree anticipates the union of the divine coordinates of the masculine and feminine, just as we find in kabbalah with respect to the tree of the sefirot. This trope of the tree of life as locus of the *hieros gamos* must therefore have existed among both Indo-European and ancient Semitic peoples.

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Incidentally, Menglǫð sits surrounded by nine Giantesses, like the supreme sefirah Keter, Crown, from which emanates the other nine sefirot. Her silence corresponds to the divine silence of Keter, who on one level as Lady Torah stands in need of completion by the divine voice of the nine sefirot that emanate from her and which make possible the *hieros gamos*. Silence is Lady Torah, Voice is the divine masculine. Edmond Jabès writes in *The Book of Resemblances*: “‘O Law, I have given you a word as husband, knowing that this word was me,’ Reb Chitrit had written.”<sup>712</sup> The Law is the Torah, that is, the personified Lady Torah, the divine silent feminine who unites with the masculine word, which is the human devotee of Lady Torah. Yet Jabès immediately adds that “God is the the word.” This because, as Jabès writes in the same work:

Facing man, there is man.

Facing God, nothing.<sup>713</sup>

God is the unrecognized reflection of humans as they gaze into the mirror which is the universe. Jewish mysticism consequently is a sort of precursor to Jewish a/theism, which accepts the radical implications of traditional monotheistic apophatic mysticisms that stress the sheer Nothingness of God.<sup>714</sup>

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<sup>712</sup> Jabès, p. 11.

<sup>713</sup> Jabès, p. 25.

<sup>714</sup> See Wolfson 2014, whose title itself is quite illuminating: *Giving Beyond the Gift: Apophasis and Overcoming Theomania*.



Wolzogen explains Iðunn's silence by the fact that spring, which she instantiates, sleeps during winter, and is therefore silent.<sup>715</sup> Another complementary interpretative layer regarding Iðunn's silence can be added by comparing it to examples of prophetic silence in classical Greek tragedy. Raeburn and Thomas write concerning the silence of Cassandra in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*: "Clytemnestra refers to the idea that a swan only breaks into song just before its death, and perhaps harks back to the prophetess' earlier silence during 1035-70. This is the last in a long series of animal-comparisons for Cassandra; see 1050-52."<sup>716</sup> Incidentally, strophe 21 calls Iðunn a *svanna*, "swan." In Sophocles' *Oedipus*, although the blind prophet Teiresias is not strictly speaking silent, he is depicted as such on account of his refusal to speak the truth about what his prophetic powers have revealed to him concerning the cause of the death and decay afflicting the city. In his own words, "Though I be silent, what will come, will come."<sup>717</sup>

West documents several instances of the ancient near eastern and Greek trope of a question that goes unanswered,<sup>718</sup> as well as giving a number of references to weeping.<sup>719</sup>

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<sup>715</sup> von Wolzogen, p. 121.

<sup>716</sup> Raeburn and Thomas, p. 221.

<sup>717</sup> Our translation from the Greek in Storr, p. 32.

<sup>718</sup> West 2003, pp. 197-198.

<sup>719</sup> West 2003, pp. 231-232.

The Greek sources we cite above are far more relevant with regard to strophe 12 than is Virgil's *Aeneid* VI:469-473, as Lassen posits,<sup>720</sup> since Dido is not a prophetess, but a spurned lover in the underworld:

talibus Aeneas ardentem et torva tuentem  
lenibat dictis animum lacrimasque ciebat.  
illa solo fixos oculos aversa tenebat  
nec magis incepto vultum sermone movetur  
quam si dura silex aut stet Marpesia cautes.  
tandem corripuit sese atque inimica refugit  
in nemus umbriferum . . .

With such speech amid springing tears Aeneas would soothe the wrath of the fiery, fierce-eyed queen. She, turning away, kept her looks fixed on the ground and no more changes her countenance as he essays to speak than if she were set in hard flint or Marpesian rock. At length she flung herself away and, still his foe, fled back to the shady grove. . . .<sup>721</sup>

Strophe 12 recalls to us *Baldrs draumar* strophe 14:

Ride home, Óðinn,

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<sup>720</sup> Lassen, p. 24.

<sup>721</sup> Fairclough, p. 539.

though worshiped with worthy words!

No man will hasten here

to seek secret tidings

before Loki is loosed,

breaks his bonds,

and ruinous Ragnarøk,

crushing, comes.

In *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 12, Iðunn, unlike the Völva in *Völuspá* refuses to answer Óðinn's questions. In *Baldurs draumar*, the Völva at first answers Óðinn's questions, but in strophe 14 she implies that she will answer no more questions until she has been roused from her grave-mound to witness Ragnarøk, which then of course will be too late for asking any questions. *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* may consequently be implying with its silent Völva or Völva-like Iðunn that time has run out for asking questions, and Ragnarøk's first stages have commenced. The situation in *Baldurs draumar*, where a Völva answers all relevant questions but then grows silent at the end, is also paralleled in *Hyndluljóð*, in the so-called *Lesser Völuspá* (*Völuspá hin skamma*), where a Völva (although she is not called such) repeats a refrain rendered by Bellows as, "Much have I told thee, | and further will tell; There is much that I know; | wilt thou hear yet more?" The Völva continues giving out information up to strophe 44, but then in strophe 45 (and following) refuses to give vital data directly relating to Óðinn, namely, "never I dare | his name to speak."

Bellows renders the two strophes as follows:

44. The sea, storm-driven, | seeks heaven itself,  
O'er the earth it flows, | the air grows sterile;  
Then follow the snows | and the furious winds,  
For the gods are doomed, | and the end is death.

45. Then comes another, | a greater than all,  
Though never I dare | his name to speak;  
Few are they now | that farther can see  
Than the moment when Óðinn | shall meet the wolf.<sup>722</sup>

Quinn writes concerning this passage: “The circumstances under which a *vǫlva* is willing to tell all appear to be met in *Vǫluspá* but not in *Hyndluljóð*, for reasons that are not spelled out in either poem, but which presumably have to do with the mythological and discursive play of power between the actors in each of the poems.”<sup>723</sup> In any case, *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* represents the only instance where a *Vǫlva* or *Vǫlva*-like figure remains completely silent, from beginning to end of the questioning process. Like the *Greater* and *Lesser Vǫluspá*, as well as *Baldurs draumar*, *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* is also centrally concerned with the death of Óðinn and the Gods at Ragnarøk.

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<sup>722</sup> Bellows, p. 231. Cf. *Fjǫlsvinnsmál* on the tree Yggdrasill: við þat hann fellr, er fæstan varir, “few there are that know what will fell it”; flærat hann eldr né járn, “it is destroyed by neither iron nor fire.” Yet according to *Vǫluspá* 45 Yggdrasill will go down in flames.

<sup>723</sup> Cited in Horst, p. 290.

Angrboða is the *Völva* of *Baldrs draumar*, whose author likely would have believed that the *Völva* of the *Völuspá* poem was none other than Angrboða, had he known that poem, which we doubt, since the similarities between the two poems can be accounted for by the simultaneous similarities and variations generated by oral tradition. Rydberg held that Angrboða was Gullveig-Heiðr,<sup>724</sup> whom the *Völuspá* poem possibly portrays as its own *Völva*. Certainly a medieval audience could have detected similarities between Gullveig-Heiðr and Angrboða, aside from the question of accuracy. As we point out in our commentary on *Baldrs draumar*, since Gullveig-Heiðr had been murdered in Óðinn's residence, probably by none other than Óðinn and Thor, it is likely that this is why Óðinn visits her in disguise according to *Baldrs draumar*.

As we point out in our commentary on *Völuspá*, many scholars identify Gullveig-Heiðr with Freyja. Rydberg thought Angrboða had been a maid-servant to Freyja.<sup>725</sup> As Goddess of fertility and sex, certainly Freyja could be open to charges of witchery and whoredom, and not only in the Christian period. Now, interestingly even Iðunn has been accused of sexual misbehaviour, famously in *Lokessena* strophes 16-17, where Loki reveals that Iðunn had once even had sex with the murderer of her own brother. As Goddess of spring and immortality, obviously Iðunn also has some connection with sex and fertility. Thus while we cannot simply identify as one such disparate characters as Angrboða, Gullveig-Heiðr, Freyja and Iðunn, nevertheless there are sufficient overlapping aspects they share that could

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<sup>724</sup> See Rydberg, pp. 145ff.

<sup>725</sup> Rydberg, p. 157.

enable medieval poets to think of them in a category such as a Vǫlva. Now, if Óðinn visited the Vǫlva Angrboða in disguise in *Baldrs draumar* because he had unjustly slain her in his own halls, could there be a similar dynamic at work behind the scenes in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*, whose text curiously has Óðinn remain behind in his hall, watching only from a safe distance as his messengers Heimdallr, Loki and Bragi journey to the underworld to visit Iðunn there in order to obtain information about the then current threat to the Gods, a paradigm strikingly isomorphic with contents of *Baldrs draumar*?

Strophe 12's "chose not to join their their joyful chatter," *ne glaum hialde*, more literally, "did not (ne) talk/chat (hialde) of noisy merriment (glaum)," anticipates strophe 17's *aulteite*, "merry feast." Strophe 12 may consequently presuppose that Heimdallr and company invited Iðunn to Óðinn's feast.

*tǫrgum hiarnar*: Literally, "target shields of the skull." Lassen explains this as a kenning for eyes, and refers to *Skáldskaparmál* 108/11–12.<sup>726</sup> According to *Skáldskaparmál*, the head, *hǫfuð*, is called Heimdallr's sword, *Heimdallar sverð*, and skull, *hjarni*, and the eaves are called shields, *skjöldu*. The kenning *hjarnar stjörnur* to which Lassen refers<sup>727</sup> is not relevant, since we are looking for a kenning involving shields. A target shield or *targa* (targa) and a shield (*skjöldu*) are of course virtually the same object. Bergmann thought that in strophe 12 an earlier reading of *tregum* (*trǫgum*), "griefs" was changed to *tǫrgum*, "target shields," also "targes" in

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<sup>726</sup> Lassen, p. 101.

<sup>727</sup> Lassen, p. 101.

English, and *hiarta*, “heart,” to *hiarnar*, “skull,”<sup>728</sup> but there is no justification for emending the text, since it is obviously a variation of an attested kenning. However, Bergmann’s suspicion may after all lead to a fruitful observation, for why did the author of strophe 12 change the established kenning of *skjöldu* to *torgum*? In order to create a subtle allusion to *Iðunn*’s griefs, *trogum*, by means of the word *torgum*. Not only that, but the image of a target shield, at which arrows and the like would be thrown, ties in well with strophe 13’s thorn of *Dáinn* that slays the inhabitants of Middle Earth. As we shall show in the commentary on strophe 13, strophe 12’s tears, tar, of *Iðunn*, has been influenced by *Skírnismál* strophe 30’s *tárum trega*, “tears, grief,” so that *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 12’s “target shields” may actually have been inspired by the word “grief.”

Although “target shields of the skull” is a kenning for the eyes, the context of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* drives us to take seriously the military imagery. In other words, there is a reason a military-worded kenning is used here. The poem tells an epic story of the conflict between the forces of light and darkness, and of the ambiguity between the two categories. Ancient military epics are replete with descriptions of tears falling through, from or upon the armour and shields of warriors, male and female. Cf. *Thebaid* 12:527-528, “targes stained with the blood / of the warrior-

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<sup>728</sup> See Bergmann 1875, p. 105. We should note that *Skáldskaparmál* cites Einarr Skúlason’s phraseology of *hjarta hlýrskildir*, so that a heart and a shield can be mentioned together.

maids.”<sup>729</sup> A few more examples from *Thebaid* 4:18-20 and 9:40-43, the latter concerning the warrior Oenides, will suffice:

nec modus est lacrimis: rorant clipeique iubaeque  
triste salutantum, et cunctis dependet ab armis  
suspiranda domus. . . .

No stint is there of tears: bedewed are the  
shields and helmet-crests of those who make their  
sad farewell, and the household, the object of their  
sighs, clings to every weapon. . . .<sup>730</sup>

tum sanguine fixo  
membra simul, simul arma ruunt: madet ardua fletu  
iam galea atque ocreae clipeum excepere cadentem.  
it maestus genua aegra trahens hastamque sequentem. . . .

his blood stands still, together his arms, together his limbs

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<sup>729</sup> Mozley vol. 2, p. 484-485: corytique leves portantur et ignea gemmis /  
cingula et informes dominarmn sanguine peltae. In *Thebaid* 12:761-762 the  
Amazons are called “targe-bearing girls”: “non cum peltiferis,” ait, “haec tibi pugna  
puellis, / virgineas ne crede manus.”

<sup>730</sup> Mozley vol. 1, pp. 506-507.



sink down, his lofty helm is already moist with tears,  
and his greaves caught the shield as it fell. Sadly  
he goes, dragging faint knees and trailing spear. . . .<sup>731</sup>

eliun faldin: energy hidden. The term eliun harks back to the synonymous máttig, “powerful,” of strophe 2, and faldin similarly alludes back to strophe 2’s synonymous geyma, “to hide.” In strophe 2 the hiding of the mead means its preservation (cf. strophe 16 where hirpir, “hider,” means “keeper”); by contrast in strophe 12, Iðunn’s energy is hidden in the sense of being lost. The word eljun occurs in the mythological poems of the *Poetic Edda* only at *Rígsþula* strophe 45 (43), and concerns Kon, the descendant of Heimdallr, which of course has relevance for *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 12, and throughout. The strophe reads as follows in Bellows:

Bird-chatter learned he, | flames could he lessen.,  
Minds could quiet, | and sorrows calm;  
.....  
The might and strength | of twice four men.

Klök nam fugla, kyrra elda,  
sefa of svefja, sorgir lægja  
afl ok eljun átta manna.

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<sup>731</sup> Mozley vol. 2, pp. 254-255.

That this *Rígsþula* strophe is the source of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins'* eljun is confirmed by the same *Rígsþula* strophe's sefa of svefja, which can mean either "calm seas" or "calm minds" (since the previous strophe already speaks of calming the sea, ægi lægja, here sefa more likely means "mind") has influenced *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 14's sefa sveiflum. Moreover, *Rígsþula's* sorgir lægja, "soothe sorrows," brings to mind *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 12's image of the sorrowful Iðunn. The *Rígsþula* strophe that immediately precedes the one cited above speaks of runes that can dull the edges of swords, eggjar deyfa, and this can be correlated with Heimdallr's sword in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 14. Thus we can confirm that the poet of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* knew the *Rígsþula* poem.

endr rióþa: This has been read as a single word or as two. As Bergmann notes, "riðða stands for hrióða (they break through)."<sup>732</sup>

### Strophe 13.

In agreement with Simrock, we have moved strophes 13 and 14 and situated them between strophes 23 and 24. Lüning writes only what is already obvious concerning this matter: "Neither of these strophes (13-14), containing a description of the approach of night, makes any sense at all in their present position; Simrock places them after strophe 23."<sup>733</sup> Jordan tried in vain to force strophe 13 to read as a

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<sup>732</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 105.

<sup>733</sup> Lüning, p. 521.

continuation of strophe 12 by placing the latter's line 5's "little teardrops," *Thränentröpfchen*, as the final word of line 8. Iðunn's flowing tears in strophe 12 are then made to flow like strophe 13's Ice Stream, that is, *Élivágar*: *Wie, wenn man oster vom Eisstrom herkommt*.<sup>734</sup> Lüning also notes that strophe 14's *Rýgr* denotes the night,<sup>735</sup> which makes strophe 14 thematically closer to strophes 22-26, where we indeed hear more than once of the night. Lüning makes the additional observation that strophe 15's *jamt komin* does not make sense following strophes 13-14.<sup>736</sup>

Schévíngr held that an *ok*, "and," should be inserted after *eins* in line 1.<sup>737</sup>

*Élivágar* refers to the primordial waters at the time of creation, *Vafþrúðnismál* 31. Bergmann interprets *Élivágar* as "storm billows," which fits the previous strophes' storm imagery.

*þorn af eitri*: The manuscripts read *atri*, which Schévíngr emended to *acri*, but this surely has no sound justification. The word *atri* should be emended to *eitri*, "poison"<sup>738</sup> (the *ei-* was probably earlier written as *æ*, and subsequently the *-e* element dropped out), and confirmation for this comes from *Vafþrúðnismál* strophe 31: *Ór Élivagum stukku eitrdropar*. In *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 13 the poison (*eitri*) drops (*dropar*) of *Élivágar* appear in the form of a thorn (*þorn*, suggested in part by *þurs*) that strikes, *drepur*, a word which was generated in part by

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<sup>734</sup> Jordan, p. 197.

<sup>735</sup> Lüning, p. 521.

<sup>736</sup> Lüning, p. 522.

<sup>737</sup> See Bugge 1965, p. 373.

<sup>738</sup> See Bergmann 1875, p. 105.

*Vafþrúðnismál* strophe 31's dropar. The only other instance of the word *Élivágar* in the mythological poems of the *Poetic Edda* is in *Hymiskviða* strophe 5 where the Giant Hymr lives austan *Élivága*, "east of *Élivágar*," which is modulated in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 13 as *astann* ur *Elivagum*. Strophe 13's *drepur* was generated not only by *Vafþrúðnismál* strophe 31's dropar, but also by *Hymiskviða* strophe 30's imperative *drep*, "strike" (the Giant in the skull). In the mythological poems of the *Poetic Edda* the verb *drep* does not mean "prick," but has to do with a violent strike, a violent assault. In *Völuspá* 53 Thorr *drepr*, strikes, the world-serpent; in *Skírnismál* 25 Skírnir threatens to strike, *drep*, Gerðr with a magic taming wand (Dronke's rendering here of *drep* with "touch"<sup>739</sup> is lamentably inadequate and almost completely glosses over the violence of the act threatened by a male against a female); in *Hárbarðsljóð* strophe Þórr threatens to *drep*, strike, Hárbarðr down to Hel; in *Lokasenna* strophes 57 and 61 Þórr threatens to *drep*, strike, Loki with his magic hammer. Thus the thorn of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 13 is the Giants' answer to Thor's mighty hammer, but there is a connection to the magic taming wand of *Skírnismál* 25 as well.

Dáinn's thorn or club reminds Simrock of Óðinn's sleeping thorn (*svefnþorni*) with which in *Sigrdrífumál* strophe 4 he sticks or pricks (*stakk*) Brynhilde,<sup>740</sup> but this is not a brutally fatal act, so it does not help much in the interpretation of Dáinn's thorn, especially since this thorn pricks (*stakk*), it does not drop or slay (*drepur*). Not to mention that strophe 13 never calls Dáinn's thorn a sleeping thorn;

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<sup>739</sup> Dronke, p. 382.

<sup>740</sup> Simrock, p. 375.

it is only depicted as a nocturnal thorn. Scholars have read into the text the notion of a sleeping thorn. Dáinn's thorn does not bring sleep, it brings death. As Rupp stresses, the thorn that appears in strophe 13 is specifically a *winter* phenomenon, namely, the violently "biting cold."<sup>741</sup> Consequently, we should not apply strophe 13's "each night" to the entire year, but should restrict it to winter only, which argues against Lassen's idea that the thorn is a metaphor for sleep.<sup>742</sup> The thorn may allude to the beams of the winter moon, since the thorn is a traditional image applied to moon beams.<sup>743</sup>

Bergmann offers the follow comments on strophe 13 that deserve to be cited *in extenso*, since they can put exegetes on a more fruitful trail of evidence.

Just as the physical appearances of the upper light world are personified as Light Elves, so atmospheric phenomena that constitute the transition to the demonic night are symbolized as Dark Elves. In this way the cold winds of evening and of spring, which occasionally carry out their destructive operations in nature, are represented by the four harts that gnaw away the foliage at the tree of life Yggdrasill. The incoming brisk coolness of the evening is attributed to the blowing, biting wind from the east and symbolized through the half-destructive, half-demonic Dark Elf Dáinn (Dying/Whithering), who before each night in Middle Earth strikes magically

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<sup>741</sup> Rupp, p. 319.

<sup>742</sup> See Lassen, p. 101.

<sup>743</sup> Rupp, p. 319.

with a wizard-thorn. This image of Dáinn striking with the rod was formed linguistically, because the notion of heat and cold was originally designated by the notion of collision/clashing, striking (cf. *kald, kalt*, from *kilan*, “strike”; Latin *calor*, “warmth,” from *cellere*, “strike”), so that the cool (imagined as striking) wind (pictured as a hart) developed symbolically as the striking harts and Dark Elves. . . .

Dáinn strikes humans with a thorn, just as the night with its sleep-thorn (svefn-thorn) strikes. This cold-thorn and sleep-thorn is a withered-away branch, by means of which, symbolically, cooling and sleep, like a aspergill, are thrown out or blown out like drops over humans.

Dáinn’s cold-thorn sprays out drops of poison, because the brisk chill or cold is compared to a biting poison, so that the expression “poison cold” designates a strong, biting cold; in Norwegian, for example, an exceptional cold, albeit healthy, mountain water is called *eitr á* (“poison water”).

This cold poison of Dáinn’s cold-thorn comes, according to myth, from the poison-cold water of the rime-cold Giants. This Giant is called Ice-Thorn, *Eikþyrnir* (for *Jøk-þyrnir*, ice-thorn) because originally he was thought of as a horn-bearing jagged iceberg, who was depicted as hart with horns or thorns or as a reindeer, from whose horns cold drops of poison fell into the sea spring named *Hvergelmir*, from which the storm billows (*Élivágar*) streamed out in all directions. The storm billows, which flow in the east of Middle Earth, so it was believed, bring the evening chill to humans, on account of which the poet says that Dáinn’s ice-thorn, drenched with poison water,

comes out of the east, from the storm billows (Élivágar). By means of sleep chill bestows cold death, whereas heat and warmth count as the mothers of life and liveliness.<sup>744</sup>

Bergmann's etymology of Eikþyrnir as being derived from jök-þyrnir, ice-thorn, rather than Oak-Thorn, is quite insightful, and just as helpful, because it leads us back to the time of the primordial world's poison yeast-like rime drops and Giants, to which we will return after an investigation of *Skírnismál*, a poem that has influenced *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* elsewhere (see our commentary on strophe 16). *Skírnismál* tells the story of the fertility God Freyr who dispatches his emissary Skírnir to Jötunheim in order to win for him the beautiful Giant Gerðr as a bride. As Dronke explains, in this story Freyr is basically both Father Sky and Father Sun, Gerðr is Mother Earth, and Skírnir is the Sun God's ray/s of light.<sup>745</sup> Gerðr at first does not want to marry Freyr, which is a common trope of seasons myths, as Dronke recognizes,<sup>746</sup> as she explains: "Skírnir . . . is the awakening shaft of light and warmth that puts an end to the infertile winter."<sup>747</sup>

In strophe 26 Skírnir threatens to strike (drep) Gerðr with a magic taming wand, which would banish her to a place that would make her long for Hel itself; in Bellows' translation:

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<sup>744</sup> Bergmann 1875, pp. 141-142.

<sup>745</sup> Dronke, pp. 396-397, 404.

<sup>746</sup> Dronke, pp. 397-398.

<sup>747</sup> Dronke, pp. 399-400.

26. “I strike thee, maid, | with my magic staff,

To tame thee to work my will;

There shalt thou go | where never again

The sons of men shall see thee.

27. On the eagle’s hill | shalt thou ever sit,

And gaze on the gates of Hel;

More loathsome to thee | than the light-hued snake

To men, shall thy meat become.”

Dronke’s commentary on this is unfortunately nothing short of absurd in that it whitewashes Skírnir’s violence: “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.”<sup>748</sup> Dronke’s exposition is ludicrous; plainly Skírnir threatens to club Gerðr to death with his formidable magic staff, not any tiny little stick. In short, under pain of death he threatens to beat her into submission. There is nothing magical (in a positive valence of the term) or romantic here.

Working our way through the poem, we can identify the following likely points of contact with *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*:

*Skírnismál*

*Hrafnagaldur Óðins*

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<sup>748</sup> Dronke, p. 392.



1, 2 fregna . . . fróði	11 frá enn vitri
(ask . . . the wise one)	(the wise one asked)
4 álfrøðull	26 alfrøþull
10 Gymis-garða	16 MS A Grymis grund
17, 18 álfa . . . víssa vana	1 alfar skilia / vanir vitu
29 sváran sútbreka <sup>749</sup>	15 sollinn sutum / svars
(great waves of grief)	(swollen with sorrow / reply)
ok tvennan trega	
(and double sorrow)	
30 ok leiða með tárur trega	12 tar
(and have tears and grief)	(tears)
31 þursi . . . þistill	13 þurs . . . þorn
(Giants . . . thistle)	(Giant . . . thorn)
34 hrímþursar	13 þurs hrim-
(frost Giants)	
34 glaum	12 glæm
(cheer, joy)	
36 þurs	13 þurs
37 hrímkálki	13 hrimkalda
(rime chalice)	(rime cold)

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<sup>749</sup> For the emendation sút-, see Dronke, p. 410.

Before commenting on additional significant implications of the above evidence, we will note that the list indicates that the motif of Gerðr's gloom has contributed to *Hrafnagaldur Óðins'* portrait of Iðunn's sorrow, which in turn implies the author apparently thought of Iðunn as a Mother Earth figure like Gerðr.

*Skírnismál* strophe 19's epli ellilyfs, golden apples for life-healing (accepting the standard emendation away from ellifu, "eleven"), immediately brings Iðunn into the background of the poem. She is hovering behind the poem as well on account of the *Lesser Völuspá's* associating the story of Freyr and Gerðr with the Giant Thjazi, who according to the celebrated myth abducted Iðunn:

Freyr's wife was Gerðr, the daughter of Gýmir,  
Of the giants' brood, and A[ng]urboða bore her;  
To these as well was Thjazi kin,  
The dark-loving giant; his daughter was Skaði.  
(Bellows' rendering).

*Skírnismál* strophe 28 refers to Heimdallr, en vǫrðr með goðum, / gapi þú grindum frá, "the guard of the Gods gaping from the bars of the gates." Dronke incorrectly misses the reference to the celestial gate that Heimdallr lifts up (cf. *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 26) every morning, and translates the last line as a threat to Gerðr: "Gape from the bars of the gates!" which makes no contextual sense.

Here we will revisit some of the remaining elements from the comparative list presented above. *Skírnismál* strophe 31's þursi . . . þistill suggests that

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*Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 13's þurs . . . þorn is derived from the former source.

Thorns and thistles traditionally are mentioned together, as in the Old Norse þornar ok þistlar. Strophe 31 reads in its entirety as follows:

Með þursi þríhöfðuðum	With a three-headed þurs
þú skalt æ nara	you will have to eke out an existence
eða verlaus vera	or stay without a husband;
þitt geð grípi	dark thoughts will grip you,
þik morn morni	your mourning will lay you waste,
ver þú sem þistill	you will be like a thistle
sá er var þrunginn	that was thrust/thrown
í ǫnn ofanverða.	at the end of harvest.

This can be correlated with *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 13's þurs, with its overall portrait of the sorrowing Iðunn, and þistill calls to mind strophe 13's þorn; additionally, strophe 13's *drepur* is to an extent comparable with þrunginn. In *Skírnismál* the thistle is, in the words of Gro Steinsland, a symbol of a “sexually depraved woman,” which contrasts with Genesis 3:18's “fertile earth” that “is cursed to bring forth *thistles*.”<sup>750</sup> Steinsland sees *Skírnismál* as a Gnostic-influenced (via the Paulicians, known as *ermskir* in the Norse sources) response to the Genesis Adam and Eve story.<sup>751</sup> Since the multifaceted background of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe

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<sup>750</sup> Steinsland 1990, pp. 317-318; italics in original.

<sup>751</sup> Steinsland 1990, p. 325.

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13's thorn includes *Skírnismál*'s thistle, perhaps in the back of the poet's mind there hovered the symbolism of the thorn for Iðunn as the spring Goddess who has fallen into wintry death and infertility. Steinsland writes: "The motif of the *thistle* in st. 31 stands out as the quintessence of whatever *Gerðr* is threatened by. The weed symbolizes the opposite of mature womanhood; the thistle is a symbol of dryness and death in contrast to fertility and life. . . ."752

From the list given previously, it is immediately apparent that the majority of the correspondences between *Skírnismál* and *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* cluster around the latter's strophes 12 and 13, with the *Skírnismál* parallels all concentrated together in strophes 30-37. Besides *Skírnismál* 30's *tárum* and 34's *glaum* corresponding to *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* 12's *tar* and *glæm*, the remaining correlations pertain to Giants, the thistle/thorn, and the rime trope, and pertain now solely to strophe 13:

<i>Skírnismál</i>	<i>Hrafnagaldur Óðins</i>
31 þursi . . . þistill	13 þurs . . . þorn
34 hrímþursar	13 þurs hrim-
36 þurs	13 þurs
37 hrímkálki	13 hrimkalda

Interesting here is that the evidence suggests *Skírnismál*'s *hrímkálki*, rime-chalice/goblet (*kálkr* in the nominative), has inspired strophe 13's *hrimkalda*. The relevant lines from strophe 37 read as follows:

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<sup>752</sup> Steinsland 1990, p. 321; italics in original.

ok tak við hrímkálki	and take the rime-chalice
fullum forns mjaðar	full of ancient mead

This raises the possibility that strophe 13's *hrimkalda* may be a corruption of an earlier *hrímkálk*. Once we entertain this possibility, then strophe 13's *drep* immediately calls to mind *Gylfaginning* 5's account of the poison (*eitr*) drops (*dropum*) of *Élivágar* that congealed and formed rime (*hrími*), and then melted and dripped (*draup*), forming the man-shaped rime Giant *Ymir*. So did strophe 13, or a pre-existing story underlying it, originally speak of *Dáinn* *dripping* poison drops from a *chalice* over all people every night? The main obstacle in the way of such a proposal would be what to do with strophe 13's *þorn*; the easiest solution is to accept MS D's reading of *þarn*, in the sense that the poison is coming from *there* (*þarn*) in *Élivágar*. Intriguingly we do find a *-þorn* in *Gylfaginning*'s account of the origin of the Giants, namely, in chapter 6's Giant *Bǫlþorn*, *Bale/Evil-Thorn*, who becomes *Óðinn*'s grandfather. The sole mention of *Bǫlþorn* in the mythological poems of the *Poetic Edda* is in the *Hávamál Rúnatal*, where he is mentioned together with the mead drawn from *Óðrerir*, which of course ties in with *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 2's *Oðhrærer*, who is mentioned in the context of runes, which confirms a connection with the *Rúnatal* strophe just discussed.

At the conclusion of *Hyndluljóð*, which we supply below in Bellow's version, we find an exchange between *Freyja* and the *Vólva Hyndla* about the sacred mead. The passage is introduced with the famous prophecy of the coming of the enigmatic one mightier than *Óðinn*. According to *Kvilhaug*, with reference to *Steinsland*, this

forms the summit of the mystic-spiritual teaching delivered by Hyndla.<sup>753</sup> In response to this, Freyja demands the mead of memory for her devotee Óttar, who had been changed into boar form by Freyja in order to ride swiftly to Hyndla and then further on to Valhalla so that the Goddess could obtain the secret teachings of Hyndla that would benefit Óttar. Having received from Hyndla the teachings containing information on Óttar's human, demigod and divine ancestry and identity, it is at this point that Freyja demands the sacred ale of memory for Óttar, so that he will not forget what he has learned, for surely without the mead he will forget it within three days. The Vólva becomes combative (after all, the quest for wisdom is always a challenge that must test and prove the hero)<sup>754</sup> and compares Freyja to the mead goat Heiðrún, whom we have identified in our *Völuspá* commentary as none other than a goat form of the Vólva Heiðr, who in turn is identified by many scholars as Freyja. Freyja then calls Hyndla an Iviðja, a yew forest Ogress.

Hyndla then threatens to do in Óttar with magic fire and poison mead: *eitri blandinn mjök; illu heilli*: “poison blended powerfully; ill health be to you!” The lay then ends with Freyja declaring that Hyndla is a *brúðr jötuns*, “Giant's bride,” who speaks incantations of evil, *bólvi heitir*, which, however, she will not allow to harm her devotee Óttar. The term *bólvi* reminds us of the name *Bólverkr* that Óðinn used when winning the mead from his Giantess bride Gunnlǫð. *Hyndluljóð* concludes with the following declaration from Freyja, *hann skal drekka dýrar veigar; bið ek Óttari*

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<sup>753</sup> See Kvilhaug, p. 73.

<sup>754</sup> See Kvilhaug, p. 75.

oll goð duga: “he shall drink a blessed drink; I invoke all the Gods to grant favour to Óttar.”

45. Then comes another, | a greater than all,  
Though never I dare | his name to speak;  
Few are they now | that farther can see  
Than the moment when Othin | shall meet the wolf.

*Freyja spake:*

46. “To my boar now bring | the memory-beer,  
So that all thy words, | that well thou hast spoken,  
The third morn hence | he may hold in mind,  
When their races Ottar | and Angantyr tell.”

*Hyndla spake:*

47. “Hence shalt thou fare, | for fain would I sleep,  
From me thou gettest | few favours good;  
My noble one, out | in the night thou leapest  
As Heithrun goes | the goats among.

48. “To Oth didst thou run, | who loved thee ever,  
And many under | thy apron have crawled;  
My noble one, out | in the night thou leapest,  
As Heithrun goes | the goats among.”

*Freyja spake:*

49. “Around the giantess | flames shall I raise,  
So that forth unburned | thou mayst not fare.”

*Hyndla spake:*

50. “Flames I see burning, | the earth is on fire,  
And each for his life | the price must lose;  
Bring then to Ottar | the draught of beer,  
Of venom full | for an evil fate.”

*Freyja spake:*

51. “Thine evil words | shall work no ill,  
Though, giantess, bitter | thy baleful threats;  
A drink full fair | shall Ottar find,  
If of all the gods | the favour I get.”

With regard to *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* 13’s poison drops dripping out of Dáinn’s drinking horn-like thorn, this may be compared to what we might call the anti-mead or evil poison (*eitri*) mead of which Hyndla speaks.

It might also be possible to view *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 13’s þorn as a thorn that is actually implicitly a horn, the ice-horn of the Giant Eikþyrnir, Ice-Thorn. *Grímnismál* strophe 26 narrates the following of Eikþyrnir:

Eikþyrnir heitir hjörtr

Eikþyrnir he is called, the hart



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er stendr á hǫllu Heriafǫðrs	who stands in/upon Father of Hosts hall
ok bítr af Læraðs limum	and who bites af Lærað's branches,
en af hans hornum	and from his horns
drýpr í Hvergelmi	(it) drips into Hvergelmir,
þaðan eiga vötn ǫll vega	from which all waters rise.

As we have seen, Bergmann sees in Eikþyrnir, Oak Thorn, a secondary form of an earlier Jök-þyrnir, Ice or Icy Thorn. Bergmann observes that Eikþyrnir makes no sense as a hart at a tree whose dripping horn is the source of all waters.<sup>755</sup> Only after the first component of his name was changed from Jök to Eik, oak, did he come to be associated with the tree Yggdrasill. As Bergmann notes the original myth is still detectable in Eikþyrnir's dripping horn that is the source of all waters, for this refers to the dripping that comes from melting glacial *ice*. The ancient Scandinavians of course noticed that rivers usually flowed from the foot of glaciers (Finnish *iöki*, Old Norse *iǫkull*), and these glaciers were thought of as Giants in the form of ice.<sup>756</sup> The primordial glacial Giant, whose name quite fittingly would have been Jökþyrnir, originated from Niflheim, and was the source of all waters. At a later point the primordial glacial Giant was probably thought of as a reindeer, and even later as a hart.<sup>757</sup>

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<sup>755</sup> See Bergmann 1871, p. 282.

<sup>756</sup> Bergmann 1871, p. 282.

<sup>757</sup> See further Bergmann 1861, pp. 311-312.

Animals and water are naturally associated with trees, and when Jök-þyrnir became associated with the world tree via the transformation of his name to Eik-þyrnir, he at one point became identified as the single anonymous hart of Yggdrasill. Thus the anonymous hart was assigned a name, and it may have been that later he was multiplied into the four Dwarf harts of Yggdrasill, whose names suggest that they represent sleepy or light winds that assail Yggdrasill, causing damage slowly but surely.<sup>758</sup> Alternatively, it may be that the four harts constituted the earlier myth, which was later simplified down to a single hart who is either their symbol, representative or perhaps even leader. There is an interesting passage in Statius' *Thebaid* 10:84-95 that brings to mind Yggdrasill's four Dwarf harts Dáinn (Death), Dvalinn (Drowsy),<sup>759</sup> Duneyr (Down Ear; Ear of Down)<sup>760</sup> and Durathrór (Nap Thriver; Strong/Deep Napper)<sup>761</sup>:

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<sup>758</sup> See Bergmann 1861, pp. 236-237.

<sup>759</sup> Lindow, p. 98 interprets the name as Delayed, and Dronke, p. 10. as Dawdler.

Dvalinn is a lagger, but he lags behind because he is sleepy. We might call him Sleepy Slow Poke. As Bergmann 1875, pp. 159-160 notes, Dvalinn is derived from *dvöl*, "repose," "rest," and means approximately the same as the Swiss Tell, in English, "dull," and in the Elssäs German dialect, *dollen*, "dumb."

<sup>760</sup> The reference is to the down, *dún*, *dúnn*, of a pillow. We could paraphrase the name as Pillow Head, that is, someone who has their head reclining on a pillow. Sleepy Head comes to mind as well. The other possibility is to see in *dun-* the Old Norse word for a roaring or booming noise, *duna*, suggestive of thunder. However,

Stat super occiduae nebulosa cubilia noctis  
Aethiopasque alios, nulli penetrabilis astro,  
lucus iners, subterque cavis grave rupibus antrum  
it vacuum in montem, qua desidis atria Somni  
securumque larem segnis Natura locavit.  
limen opaca Quies et pigra Oblivio servant  
et numquam vigili torpens Ignavia voltu.  
Otia vestibulo pressisque Silentia pinnis  
muta sedent abiguntque truces a culmine ventos  
et ramos errare vetant et murmura demunt  
alitibus.

Beyond the cloud-wrapt chambers of western  
gloom and Aethiopia's other realm there stands a

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this does not seem to fit the other three Dwarf names, all of which suggest drowsiness, torpor and the like.

<sup>761</sup> Cf. *dúrr*, “nap,” “slumber,” *dúr*, “to take a nap.” A nap thriver would perhaps denote a heavy sleeper or someone who longs for sleep. Alternatively, *dura* might be the genitive of *dyrr*, “doorway,” reminiscent of a Dwarf name such as *Durinn*, “Doorward” (see Dronke, p. 9). *Durathró*r then might mean something like Door Reacher, but the notion of napping or sleeping would fit the context better. Of course the trope of a door or gateway to sleep is not unknown.

motionless grove, impenetrable by any star; beneath  
it the hollow recesses of a deep and rocky cave  
run far into a mountain, where the slow hand of  
Nature has set the halls of lazy Sleep and his untroubled  
dwelling. The threshold is guarded by  
shady Quiet and dull Forgetfulness and torpid Sloth  
with ever drowsy countenance. Ease, and Silence  
with folded wings sit mute in the forecourt and drive  
the blustering winds from the roof-top, and forbid  
the branches to sway, and take away their warblings  
from the birds.<sup>762</sup>

The Latin quartet of of lazy Sleep (desidis . . . Somni), shady Quiet (opaca Quies), dull Forgetfulness (pigra Oblivio) and torpid Sloth (torpens Ignavia) are quite comparable to the four Norse Dwarf harts in the following specific order: Death (Dáinn; death is the proverbial sibling of Sleep), Down Pillow Ear (Duneyr; ear and quiet are easily associated with each other), Nap Thriver (Durathró; forgetfulness and napping might be thought of as cognate company) and Drowsy (Dvalinn; a drowsy person is characterized by sloth).

Some of the earlier components of the myth of Jökþyrnir surface in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophes 13-14. First, Dáinn's þorn reflects the -þyrnir of Jökþyrnir. In strophe 13 Dáinn appears as an instantiation or emissary of the ice

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<sup>762</sup> Mozley vol. 2, pp. 326-327.

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Giant Jøkþyrnir, and here Dáinn comes, not from Yggdrasill as one of its four Dwarf harts (as in the later, reformulated myths of Dáinn and Eikþyrnir), but from Élivágar, the land of the ice Giants, the primordial home of Ymir and Bøljörn, bearing an ice thorn from Jøkþyrnir. This thorn is a poison cold glacial spike that *drips* its icy venom. The spike drips because it is melting; it came loose and separated from the glacier Jøkþyrnir as the latter was melting. The spike or thorn, which is not a needle that pricks but a huge ice spear that slays definitively, may be likened to Poseidon's or Neptune's trident.

We need not explicitly emend *Hrafnagaldur Óðins'* þörn to horn, but if we did this would create a new alliteration with hrimkalda (and with the next line's initial hveim as well, although this is of lesser significance than an alliteration with hrimkalda). We could understand the strophe then as follows:

eins kiemur aʋstann	Thus comes from the east
ur elivagum	out of Élivágar
þorn af eitri	a thorn of poison,
þurs hrim<kalkr>	the Giant's rime-chalice
hveim <drýpr> drött-e<r>	with which Dáinn drips
daen allar	all people
męran of miþgard	of glorious Miðgarð
męþ natt hvǫria	every night.

On the other hand, perhaps we should not be too rash in emending *hrimkalda*, for the term is attested in the *Poetic Edda* at *Vafþrúðnismál* strophe 21 where Ymir is called the “rime-cold Jötun,” *hrimkalda jötuns*, which actually structurally reminds us of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins’ þurs hrimkalda. Lokasenna* strophes 49 and 50 both refer to Loki’s son’s guts, which are described as *hrimkalda*. These are the only instances of the term in the mythological poems of the *Poetic Edda* we have been able to locate.

We could retain the reading *dreppur*, and the sense would be that every night everywhere *Dáinn* strikes people with *Élivágar’s* thorny ice-horn which is the Giant’s frosty drinking horn, from which drips poison. The image is that of the hart *Dáinn* bashing people to death with a horn of a Giant who subsists in animal form, and as *Dáinn* slams the horn down on his victims, the poison drops of *Élivágar’s* stream splashes out. Bergmann compares this to the Book of Revelation image of the lamb of God who slaughters in war.<sup>763</sup> *Dáinn* is essentially a specialization or extended personification of the *þurs* mentioned in the same strophe, which makes sense given that both *Dáinn* and *Eikþyrnir* are Giants in the form of horned harts.

There is only one unresolved issue that remains in strophe 13. If we retain the reading *dreppur*, this becomes problematic, because as we saw lately, in the *Poetic Edda* the verb is generally used in a mortal or fatal sense, that is a strike or blow that results in death, and thus we could render the verb “slay.” But the text says that *Dáinn dreppur*, slays, *drött-e<r> . . . allar*, “all the people” of Middle Earth (*Miðgarð*) each night (*natt hvǫria*). It may be that what is implied (rather

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<sup>763</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 141.

inelegantly or unclearly) is not that Dáinn kills everyone, but that everyone who happens to die on any given night of the year in Middle Earth in their sleep has been killed by Dáinn. Alternatively, but less convincing, would be the ancient and medieval belief (attested in sources such as the Qurʾān, the Zohar and widely disseminated in the folklore of many peoples) that nightly sleep was a nightly temporary death.

The solution to the question of the apparent universality of Dáinn's deadly nocturnal assault can be answered more decisively by identifying some of the background to the myth at hand, which is usually thought to have been created out of the individual fantasy of the poet of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*, but as we will attempt to show, this was not the case at all. We start with Bergmann's observation that in strophe 13 Dáinn is thought of as a hart or stag whose horn is portrayed as a thorn, and we keep in mind Bergmann's proposal to associate Dáinn with the morning star. A parallel immediately comes to mind, namely, the *Sólarljóð* strophe 55:

Sólar hjört	The sun's hart I saw
leit ek sunnan fara,	from the south coming,
hann teymðu tveir saman;	he was by two together led;
fœtr hans	his feet
stóðu foldu á,	stood on the earth,
en tóku horn til himins.	but his horns reached up to heaven. (Thorpe)

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In strophe 51, the word sun is used as a kenning for the moon; similarly here in strophe 55 the sun is not to be understood literally, but as the morning star,<sup>764</sup> or perhaps even as the moon, since this could then tie in with the idea of the winter moon's beams thought of as thorns. The hart of the morning star or of the moon is the Dwarf stag Dáinn. Strophe 55:4-6, fœtr hans / stóðu foldu á, / en tóku horn til himins, "his feet / stood on the earth, / but his horns reached up to heaven," incorporates an actual citation from the Book of Wisdom 18:16, "and touched heaven while standing on the earth," which is a description of God's Logos who descends with a sword during the Egyptian plague of the death of all the firstborn sons of the Egyptians. The Septuagint reads here, καὶ οὐρανοῦ μὲν ἤπτετο βεβήκει δ' ἐπὶ γῆς; the Vulgate has, et usque ad cælum attingebat stans in terra. The larger passage reads as follows (RSV):

14 For while gentle silence enveloped all things,  
and night in its swift course was now half gone,  
15 thy all-powerful word leaped from heaven, from  
the royal throne,  
into the midst of the land that was doomed,  
a stern warrior  
16 carrying the sharp sword of thy authentic command,

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<sup>764</sup> See Bergmann 1858, pp. 110-114.



and stood and filled all things with death,  
and touched heaven while standing on the earth.

The author of the *Sólarljóð* has unknowingly used a Jewish textual passage about God's destroying angel, which has always been understood by Christians as a prophecy concerning Jesus the Logos of God, and applied it to what he considers the demonic hart Dáinn. By no means is the solar hart imagined as Jesus, for the entire section of the *Sólarljóð* in which he appears is a list of the demonic entities of hell, understood according to Christian theology. The hart of strophe 55 thus belongs to the same type of evil beings as do the Giants who appear in the next strophe (Thorpe modified):

Norðan sá ek ríða	From the north riding I saw
Niðja sonu,	the sons of Nidi,
ok váru sjau saman;	they were seven in all:
hornum fullum	from full horns,
drukku þeir hinn hreina mjöð	the pure mead they drank
ór brunni Baugregins.	From the well of Baugi's rain.

The compound Baugregins was rendered by Thorpe as “the heaven god’s well.” He thus understood regin as “a God,” and he viewed Baug as denoting the sky, in older English “heaven” in lower case. Bergmann understands regin here as regn, Old Norse for “rain,” and renders Baugregins as *Pluie de Tresors*, “Rain of Treasure,”

explaining that Baug is a poetic designation for the sky. “In effect, regin, rain, is a synonym of Mímir (Streaming) or of Draupnir (Dripping), and Baug, Bauge, designates in general any species of wealth or of treasure; this Rain of Treasure designates the sky.”<sup>765</sup> However, we interpret Baug as an allusion to the Giant Baugi, brother of Suttung. A. G. van Hamel proposed that Óðinn had obtained the mead directly from Baugi,<sup>766</sup> and *Sólarljóð* strophe 56 may offer evidence for this belief. We thus interpret Baugregins as a kenning for the sacred mead (cf. *Thebaid* 4:453 where honey is called “Attic rain,” Actaeos imbres).<sup>767</sup> What is of importance and relevance for *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophes 13-14 in *Sólarljóð* strophes 13 and 14 is that in strophe 55 the hart has horns, and then strophe 56 immediately goes on to speak of drinking horns, which may offer support for the suspicion that Dáinn’s thorn in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 13 presupposes his stag horn, which not only drops (slays), but drips (poison drops, a sort of evil mead) as well.

Whereas the *Sólarljóð* contains a direct citation from the Book of Wisdom (although from oral tradition, not directly from the written text) in its portrayal of the lunar (or stellar) hart, who is Dáinn, *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 13 cannot be shown to cite from the Book of Wisdom. However, the latter source can shed light on the myth in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 13. This will become immediately apparent by examining Wisdom 18:14 and 16 again:

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<sup>765</sup> Bergmann 1858, p. 116.

<sup>766</sup> See Lindow, p. 72.

<sup>767</sup> Mozley vol. 1, pp. 540-541.

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14 For while gentle silence enveloped all things,  
and night in its swift course was now half gone,  
16 carrying the sharp sword of thy authentic command,  
and stood and filled all things with death,  
and touched heaven while standing on the earth.

Not only is Dáinn's thorn comparable to the Logos' sharp sword, but that his thorn drops, that is, *slays* (drepur) *all* (allar) the people every *night* (nótt) all over Middle Earth (Miðgarð), these details are matched in Wisdom 18:14's "night" (νυκτός; nox), and 18:16's "filled *all things* (τὰ πάντα; omnia) with *death* (θανάτου; morte)" and "the earth" (γῆς; terra). And let us not forget that the very name Dáinn means Dead, or Dying. The universality of Dáinn's slaying can now be understood as indicative of a final apocalyptic assault that is comparable to and anticipates the Ragnarøk alluded to especially in strophe 26, but that is directed against the inhabitants of Middle Earth rather than against the Gods. And this is not all, for when we then turn to Wisdom 18:17-19 we find additional features that are relevant to *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*:

17 Then at once apparitions in dreadful dreams  
greatly troubled them, and unexpected fears assailed them;  
18 and one here and another there, hurled down half dead,  
made known why they were dying;  
19 for the dreams which disturbed them forewarned them of this,

so that they might not perish without knowing why they suffered.

These verses' contents may be compared to *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 2's Gods who are troubled by oracles, which in strophe 3 are pronounced by the Dwarves, one of whom is none other than Dáinn, to be troubling. None of the above proves that *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* is dependent on the Wisdom version of the story of the slaying of the firstborn sons of the Egyptians. However, the parallels may suggest that both the Wisdom narrative (which is a retelling of an earlier Torah story in Exodus) and *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 13 reflect an ancient near eastern trope of the divinely sent but demonic-like destroying messenger of God or the Gods. The Exodus story was to have many later reverberations, including not only Wisdom 18, but Revelation 19 as well, where the "Word of God" has a sword in his mouth with which he fights the final apocalyptic battle. However, *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 13 shows no signs of similarity to Revelation 19, only to Wisdom 18. It is possible that the myth attested in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 13 was influenced by the Book of Wisdom, but if so, it has been turned on its head, thus effectively demonizing the Jewish Logos and the Christian Jesus, although it might still be possible to see Dáinn as merely carrying out his destined role in the greater scheme of things, and thus he might be no more evil than the demonic-like angel of the Lord of Exodus and Wisdom 18.

That both *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 13 and *Sólarljóð* strophe 55 exhibit some sort of contact with Wisdom 18 calls for some further comments. *Sólarljóð* cites Wisdom 18, probably indirectly from oral tradition, since the author was a

Christian and would not have knowingly demonized either the Jewish Logos or the Christian Jesus. *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 13 has a series of detailed parallels to Wisdom 18, but not in any form that enables us to argue for direct literary dependence. In the ancient near east horns were symbols of divine, royal and military might. Visionary literature depicted human battles under the imagery of horned animals fighting with each other, and pictured demonic horned animals as persecutors of the righteous, and celestial horned animals as defenders of the righteous (e.g., Daniel 7-8; 1 Enoch's Animal Apocalypse; see also Revelation's Jesus as a horned lamb). Dáinn may be somewhere in a middle category, neither good nor evil, but fulfilling his role in the cosmic scheme of things. He comes with his thorn from the place of the Giants' origins, and the primeval Giants, like Ymir, were not evil, rather they symbolized the primordial chaos that had to be overcome in order to establish cosmic order. Out of Ymir's sacrificial death came the life and system of the world.

We saw in the commentary to strophe 8 that *Thebaid* 10's account of the descent of the Goddess Virtue has influenced *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*. The passage is quite similar in some respects to the descent of the divine Logos in Wisdom 18. The pertinent passage in *Thebaid* 10:632ff. reads as follows:

Diva lovis solio iuxta comes, unde per orbem  
rara dari terrisque solet contingere. Virtus,  
seu pater omnipotens tribuit, sive ipsa capacis  
elegit penetrare viros, caelestibus ut tunc

desiluit gavisā plagis! dant clara meanti  
astra locum quosque ipsa polis adfixerat ignes.  
iamque premit terras, nec vultus ab aethere longe;  
sed placuit mutare genas, fit provida Manto,  
responsis ut plena fides, et fraude priores  
exiit vultus. abiit horrorque vigorque  
ex oculis, paulum decoris permansit honosque  
mollior, et posito vatum gestamina ferro  
subdita; descendunt vestes, torvisque ligatur  
vitta comis—nam laurus erat—tamen aspera produnt  
ora deam nimique gradus.

The goddess Virtue, close companion of the throne  
of Jove, whence rarely she is wont to be vouchsafed  
to the world and to bless the earth, whether the  
almighty Father hath sent her, or she herself hath  
chosen to dwell in men worthy of her—how gladly  
then did she leap down from the heavenly places!  
The shining stars gave way before her, and those  
fires that she herself had fixed in heaven;  
already she treads the earth, nor is her countenance far  
distant from the sky; but it pleased her to change  
her aspect, and she becomes sagacious Manto, that

her speech might have full credence, and by deceit  
puts off her former mien. The look of awe, the  
austerity were gone, something of charm remained,  
and a softer beauty; the sword was laid aside, and  
she took instead the prophet's wand; her robe falls  
to her feet, and on her stem brow the wool is bound,  
where before was laurel; yet her grave aspect and  
more than mortal strides betray the goddess.<sup>768</sup>

That *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* may have been influenced by Wisdom 18 would not be incompatible with its being a poem that transmits a fundamentally pagan myth. The same may be said of the possible Christian influences upon *Völuspá*, which nevertheless remains an essentially and deeply pagan poem. Neither does an influence (which would have been indirect) of Wisdom on *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 13 mean that the myth there was created under the influence of Wisdom. Rather, aspects of the vocabulary a pre-existing myth would have been reformulated under the impact the similar myth in Wisdom 18. The fact that Homer was influenced by the Semitic *Epic of Gilgamesh* does not make the Homeric epics any less Greek culturally. Similarly, that Semitic traditions (such as Genesis 6:1-4's Giants) may have been influenced by Indo-European sources does not make them any less Semitic. From the most ancient times diverse cultures have been syncretistically and mutually influencing and inspiring each other. This is part of a

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<sup>768</sup> Mozley vol. 2, pp. 364-367.

living and dynamic process of human thought and praxis in all areas geographically and intellectually, and to exclude Viking poets from this universal phenomenon would be absurd.

We can approach the issue of the relationship between *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 13 and *Sólarljóð* strophe 55 in another possible way. The *Sólarljóð* probably dates to the 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> centuries, and so is substantially earlier than *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*. The author of the latter poem knew the *Poetic Edda* intimately, and it is therefore probable that he may have known the *Sólarljóð* as well. Thus we may detect in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 13 the direct influence of *Sólarljóð* strophe 55. However, this does not have to mean that the poet of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* did not know a myth of the destructive lunar or stellar stag Dáinn that circulated independently of the *Sólarljóð*, and of which the latter is another witness. It is possible that *Sólarljóð* strophe 55 inspired the author of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* to relate some of his knowledge of the myth of the destructive stag Dáinn, and it is furthermore possible that the poet of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* recognized the citation from the Book of Wisdom in *Sólarljóð* strophe 55, and that this inspired him to incorporate into his Dáinn strophe some additional features of the destructive Logos in Wisdom 18.

There is a further parallel to the traditions we have been exploring above, one of which we are not aware if it has been discussed previously in this context. We refer to the *Kalevala* story of Ilmarinen's pursuit of Louhi's daughter, the "Maiden of the North" of Pohjola, "Northland." After finishing three Herakles-like labours or tasks imposed by Louhi upon Ilmarinen in order for him to qualify to marry the



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Maiden of the North, there is a sudden change in the story. Out of nowhere in Rune 19 line 355 a little child sitting on the floor (we later are told she is 14 days old) begins telling a story about a giant eagle who stole away the fairest maiden of a castle. We immediately think of the eagle Þjazi and Iðunn.

*Kalevala* Rune 19, line 2 calls Ilmarinen the “eternal smith,” *takoja iän-ikuinon*. That he is a smith, *takoja*, connects him to Iðunn’s father Ívaldi (Ívaldr), the father of the Dwarfs who are famously crafty as smiths. That Ilmarinen is as a smith “eternal,” *iän-ikuinon* (*iän* = “age,” *ikuinon* = “eternal”), connects him to Ívaldi again, for Iðunn’s father’s name means Eternal Wielder, likely being a shortened form of Íðvaldi, *Íð* = “continual,” “repeating” (cf. Latin *iterum*),<sup>769</sup> and *-valdi/-valdr* = “wielder,” “ruler.”

We now supply the Finnish text of *Kalevala* Rune 19:355-406 together with Kirby’s rather literal English translation:

Olipa lapsi lattialla,	On the floor a child was sitting,
Lauloi lapsi lattialta:	On the floor a child was singing:
“Jo tuli luville näille,	“To our room there came already,
Liika lintu linnallamme,	Came a bird into our castle;
Lenti kokko koillisesta,	From the north-east flew an eagle,
360. Halki taivahan havukka,	Through the sky a hawk came flying,
Siipi iski ilman äärtä,	In the air one wing was flapping,
Toinen lainetta lakasi,	On the sea the other rested,

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<sup>769</sup> See Bergmann 1875, p. 102.

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Pursto merta pyyhätteli,	With his tail he swept the ocean,
Päähyt taivoa tapasi;	And to heaven his head he lifted;
Katseleikse, käänteleikse,	And he gazed around, and turned him,
Liiteleikse, laateleikse,	Back and forth the eagle hovered,
Liiti miesten linnan päälle,	Perched upon the heroes' castle,
Nokalla kolistelevi;	And his beak he whetted on it,
Miesten linna rauta-katto,	But the roof was formed of iron,
370. Ei siihen sisälle pääsnyt.”	And he could not pierce within it.
“Katseleikse, käänteleikse,	“So he gazed around and turned him,
Liiteleikse, laateleikse,	Back and forth the eagle hovered,
Liiti naisten linnan päälle,	Perched upon the women's castle,
Nokalla kolistelevi;	And his beak he whetted on it,
Naisten linna vaski-katto,	But the roof was formed of copper,
Ei siihen sisälle pääsnyt.”	And he could not pierce within it.
“Katseleikse, käänteleikse,	“So he gazed around and turned him,
Liiteleikse, laateleikse,	Back and forth the eagle hovered,
Liiti neitten linnan päälle,	Perched upon the maidens' castle,
380. Nokalla kolistelevi;	And his beak he whetted on it,
Neitten linna liina-katto,	And the roof was formed of linen,
Jo siihen sisälle pääsi.”	And he forced his way within it.
“Liiti linnan patsahalle,	“Then he perched upon the chimney,
Siitä laskihe laelle,	Then upon the floor descended,
Liikahutti linnan lauan,	Pushed aside the castle's shutter,

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Istui linnan ikkunalle,	Sat him at the castle window,
Seinälle selinä-sulka,	Near the wall, all green his feathers,
Sata-sulka salvoimelle.”	In the room, his plumes a hundred.
“Katsesevi kassa-päitä,	“Then he scanned the braidless maidens,
390- Tukka-päitä tunnusteli,	Gazing on the long-haired maiden,
Neiti-parvesta parasta,	On the best of all the maidens,
Kassa-päistä kaunihinta,	Fairest maid with hair unbraided,
Heleintä helmi-päistä,	And her head with beads was shining,
Kukka-päislä kuuluisinta.”	And her head with beautiful blossoms.
“Siitä kokko kouraisevi,	“In his claws the eagle seized her,
Havu-lintu haivertavi,	And the hawk with talons grasped her,
Iski parvesta parahan,	Seized the best of all the party,
Sorsajoukosta somimman,	Of the flock of ducks the fairest,
Heleimmän, hempeimmän,	She the sweetest-voiced and tenderest,
400. Verevimmän, vaikeimman,	She the rosiest and the whitest,
Senpä iski ilman lintu,	She the bird of air selected,
Kynsi pitkä piirrällytti,	In his talons far he bore her,
Ku oli pysty pään piolta,	She who held her head the highest,
Sekä varrelta valittu,	And her form of all the shapeliest,
Sulkasiltahan sulavin,	And her feathers of the finest,
Hienokaisin höyheniltä.” <sup>770</sup>	And her plumage of the softest.” <sup>771</sup>

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<sup>770</sup> Lönnrot, p. 131.

<sup>771</sup> Kirby vol. 1, pp. 220-221.

Crawford renders the passage as follows:

On the floor a child was sitting,  
And the babe this tale related.  
“There appeared within this dwelling,  
Came a bird within the castle,  
From the East came flying hither,  
From the East, a monstrous eagle,  
One wing touched the vault of heaven,  
While the other swept the ocean;  
With his tail upon the waters,  
Reached his beak beyond the cloudlets,  
Looked about, and eager watching,  
Flew around, and sailing, soaring,  
Flew away to hero-castle,  
Knocked three times with beak of copper  
On the castle-roof of iron;  
But the eagle could not enter.  
“Then the eagle, looking round him,  
Flew again, and sailed, and circled,  
Flew then to the mothers' castle,  
Loudly rapped with heavy knocking

On the mothers' roof of copper;  
But the eagle could not enter.  
"Then the eagle, looking round him,  
Flew a third time, sailing, soaring,  
Flew then to the virgins' castle,  
Knocked again with beak of copper,  
On the virgins' roof of linen,  
Easy for him there to enter;  
Flew upon the castle-chimney,  
Quick descending to the chamber,  
Pulled the clapboards from the studding,  
Tore the linen from the rafters,  
Perched upon the chamber-window,  
Near the walls of many colours,  
On the cross-bars gaily-feathered,  
Looked upon the curly-beaded,  
Looked upon their golden ringlets,  
Looked upon the snow-white virgins,  
On the purest of the maidens,  
On the fairest of the daughters,  
On the maid with pearly necklace,  
On the maiden wreathed in flowers;  
Perched awhile, and looked, admiring,

Swooped upon the Maid of Beauty,  
On the purest of the virgins,  
On the whitest, on the fairest,  
On the stateliest and grandest,  
Swooped upon the rainbow-daughter  
Of the dismal Sariola;  
Grasped her in his mighty talons,  
Bore away the Maid of Beauty,  
Maid of fairest form and feature,  
Maid adorned with pearly necklace,  
Decked in feathers iridescent,  
Fragrant flowers upon her bosom,  
Scarlet band around her forehead,  
Golden rings upon her fingers,  
Fairest maiden of the Northland.”<sup>772</sup>

That this pericope is indeed cognate to the story (stories) of Iðunn is confirmed in a way that could not be made clearer, namely, after the child ends her story in line 406, Louhi immediately confronts her and asks her where she learned the story, and in doing so Louhi in line 410 calls the child a “golden apple,” *kultainen omena* (*kultainen* = “gold”; *omena* = “apple”).<sup>773</sup> Granted, “gold apple” is a term of

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<sup>772</sup> Crawford, pp. 292-294.

<sup>773</sup> Lönnrot, p. 131.

endearment, but it is used nowhere else in all of Rune 19, and actually quite sparsely throughout the large text of the *Kalevala* as a whole (seven times in all if our counting is correct). Not only this, but in Rune 20 a gigantic ox is slain to be eaten at the wedding feast, which recalls the slain ox in the Iðunn-Þjazi story. Barley-honey ale is also invented for the first time ever and is served at the feast as well (cf. the mead feast in strophes 17ff. in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*). It is possible that Norse traditions have influenced this Finnish story, but we would leave open the possibility that the reverse could have been the case as well, or that both are independent versions of an older myth inherited commonly by the Finns and Scandinavians.

Like the evil Giant emissary Dáinn, the Dwarf stag of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 13 who “comes from the east,” *kiemur avstann*, so the monstrous Giant eagle of *Kalevala* comes from the east, *koillisesta*, literally, “northeast,” but which in the poem’s context means “from the east flying to the north,” that is, to Pohja, “Northland,” the location where all the action of Rune 19 takes place. Therefore Kirby’s “north-east” is hyperliteral, whereas Crawford’s simple “east” is preferable, as is Schiefner’s rendering of 19:358-359: *Kam in unser Schloss ein Vogel / Flog von Osten her ein Adler*.<sup>774</sup>

*Kalevala* Rune 19 lines 361ff. are especially interesting, because they are highly reminiscent of Wisdom 18:16’s “and touched heaven while standing on the earth,” which is cited in the *Sólarljóð*’s description of the solar/lunar stag that parallels *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 13’s narrative of the Dwarf stag Dáinn:

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<sup>774</sup> Schiefner, p. 109.

Rune 19:361-364	Kirby	Crawford
Siipi iski ilman äärtä,	In the air one wing was flapping,	One wing touched the vault of heaven,
Toinen lainetta lakasi,	On the sea the other rested,	While the other swept the ocean;
Pursto merta pyyhätteli,	With his tail he swept the ocean,	With his tail upon the waters,
Päähyt taivoa tapasi;	And to heaven his head he lifted;	Reached his beak beyond the cloudlets,

In the *Kalevala* pericope of Rune 19, the giant eagle steals the fair maiden from a castle, which parallels to a certain extent the many tales of the maiden enchanted within a castle (rather than beneath a tree, as in “The Wife’s Complaint” and *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*), such as in *Young Svejdal* and *Fjølsvinnsmál*, the latter’s maiden Menglǫð really being a cipher for Iðunn. In Rune 19 the fairest maiden is surrounded by other maidens, just as is the case in *Fjølsvinnsmál* and in *Jomfru i Fugleham*. Quite interesting is the fact that the fairest maid whom the giant eagle snatches away in Rune 19 is said to be “decked in feathers iridescent” (Crawford), or as Kirby renders lines 405-406:

Sulkasiltahan sulavin,	And her feathers of the finest,
Hienokaisin höyheniltä.	And her plumage of the softest.

This fairest maid is therefore herself a bird or at least bird-like, just as is Iðunn the swallow in the variant reading of *Skáldskaparmál*’s tale of her abduction by the Giant Þjazi and her rescue by Loki in the form of a falcon or hawk.



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Looking as a whole at *Kalevala* Rune 19's child's story of the giant eagle who snatches the fairest bird maiden, we can discern a rather clear parallel to the story of Þjazi's abduction of Iðunn, yet at the same time we discover that it also contains a parallel to an Old Norse tradition of Dáinn the solar/lunar stag that is related to *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 13's account of the Dwarf stag Dáinn. This arguably supplies us with a further hint that the poet of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* built his poem in part out of a previously existing tradition which had already linked Iðunn and Dáinn, a tradition in which Dáinn appeared to some degree assimilated to the role of the Giant Þjazi in the form of an eagle. Additionally, the fact that the *Kalevala* parallel occurs within the context of a preparation for a *hieros gamos* strengthens the thesis that in the mead feast of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophes 17ff. we have traces of an underlying hint at a *hieros gamos*. Lastly, the story of Lemminkäinen's death in Rune 14 and his retrieval therefrom by his mother in Rune 15 remind us somewhat of the Baldr story,<sup>775</sup> although the successful retrieval from death does not match the Baldr story's conclusion, but instead reminds one more of the successful retrieval of Iðunn (by Loki) from the land of the Giants, which of course can be understood to a certain extent as a symbol for the realm of death.

In *Hymiskviða* strophe 5 we learn that east of Élivágar, *austan Élivága*, dwells the Giant Hymir, the father of the God Týr. Hymir is said to be "most wise," *hundvíss Hymir*, and he lives *at himins enda*, "at the end of heaven," where he has an enormous *ketil*, a cauldron, that the Gods want in order to use for the brewing of beer. In our judgement, it seems that Hymir is really none other than Ymir, and his

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<sup>775</sup> The two traditions are explored at length in Frog 2010.

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*ketil* is the cauldron Óðrerir that contains the sacred mead. It is for this reason that Hymir-Ymir is “most wise,” for wisdom comes from Mímir’s well of mead, and Mímir is probably just another variation on the myth and name of Ymir. That Hymir dwells *at himins enda*, may have something to do with *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 10’s odd construction, *at rann heimis*. The poison ice Giant of Élivágar in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 13 who sends out Dáinn to Middle Earth may be ultimately inspired by Ymir, of whom Eikþyrnir is a further specialization or hypostasis.

The topos of the divine mead or beer is in fact relevant for *Kalevala* Rune 19, which begins as follows:

Ilmarinen, hero-blacksmith,  
The eternal metal-worker,  
Hastens forward to the court-room  
Of the hostess of Pohyola,  
Of the master of the Northland,  
Hastens through the open portals  
Into Louhi’s home and presence.  
Servants come with silver pitchers,  
Filled with Northland’s richest brewing;  
Honey-drink is brought and offered  
To the blacksmith of Wainola,  
Ilmarinen thus replying:  
“I shall not in all my life-time

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Taste the drink that thou hast brought me,  
Till I see the Maid of Beauty,  
Fairy Maiden of the Rainbow.”  
I will drink with her in gladness,  
For whose hand I journey hither.”<sup>776</sup>

As Rune 20 confirms, the mead of Rune 19 is the mead of marriage, and therefore a symbol of the *hieros gamos*. Thus we have another possible indication of vestigial traces of a *hieros gamos* tradition hovering in the background of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* mead banquet in strophes 17ff.

Because Ilmarinen had earlier in Rune 19 actually made with his blacksmith powers a giant eagle, the eagle of the child’s story must function as a symbol of Ilmarinen, and the fairest maiden the giant eagle carries away must refer to the Maiden of the North, Louhi’s daughter. However, Ilmarinen had used the giant eagle to kill the giant fish Mana, a Finnish equivalent of the Norse Middle Earth serpent. So the slaying of Mana is somehow comparable to Ilmarinen’s winning of Louhi’s daughter. This is so of course because by slaying the fish the hero thus qualifies to marry the fair maiden; yet there may be something more ambiguous morally in the symbolism. If Ilmarinen contains echoes of the Norse Ívaldi, father of Iðunn, if we translate this into Norse mythic terms, then the father Ívaldi carries off his own daughter Iðunn. According to *Skáldskaparmál* Þjazi’s father was named Qlvaldi, “Ale-Wielder,” and this name is suspiciously similar to Ívaldi.

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<sup>776</sup> Crawford, p. 281.

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In a fascinating twist, the 14 day old child counters as follows Louhi's desire to keep maidens hidden (lines 487-490):

Hard it is to hide a maiden,  
And to keep her long locks hidden.  
Though you build of stone a castle,  
And amid the sea shall rear it. . . .<sup>777</sup>

This immediately calls to mind the famous haggadah, often called "The Tower of the Sea," concerning King Solomon who locks up his daughter in a castle in the middle of the ocean so that she will not marry. A giant bird (the mythic Ziz or a hoopoe, depending on the version) carries an ox (or a horse) with a man inside of it to the castle, and he and Solomon's daughter fall in love and marry.<sup>778</sup>

Before we leave the *Kalevala* we should note that a parallel to Rune 19:591-364 occurs earlier in Rune 7:43-50:

Rune 7:43-50

Lertti lintunen Lapista,

Kokko lintu koillisesta;

Ei ole kokko suuren suuri,

Eikä kokko pienen pieni,

Rune 19:359-364

Lenti kokko koillisesta,

Halki taivahan havukka,

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<sup>777</sup> Kirby vol. 1, p. 223.

<sup>778</sup> For references to several versions of the story, see Elswit, pp. 142-143.

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Yksi siipi vettä viisti,	Siipi iski ilman äärtä,
Toinen taivasta lakasi,	Toinen lainetta lakasi,
Pursto merta pyyhätteli,	Pursto merta pyyhätteli,
Nokka luotoja lotasi. <sup>779</sup>	Päähyt taivoa tapasi;

Here are Kirby's and Crawford's renderings of Rune 7:43-50:

Kirby	Crawford
Came a bird from Lapland flying,	Comes a bird from far Pohyola
From the north-east came an eagle,	From the Occident, an eagle,
Not the largest of the eagles,	Is not classed among the largest,
Nor was he among the smallest,	Nor belongs he to the smallest;
With one wing he swept the water,	One wing touches on the waters,
To the sky was swung the other;	While the other sweeps the heavens;
On the sea his tail he rested,	O'er the waves he wings his body
On the cliffs his beak he rattled. <sup>780</sup>	Strikes his beak upon the sea-cliffs, <sup>781</sup>

The context in which this giant eagle appears in Rune 7 is noteworthy. We give here Kirby's summary of Rune 7 to supply the specific context:

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<sup>779</sup> Schiefner, p. 41.

<sup>780</sup> Kirby vol. 1, p.62.

<sup>781</sup> Crawford, p. 85.

Väinämöinen swims for several days on the open sea (1-88). The eagle, grateful to him for having spared the birch-tree for him to rest on, when he was felling the trees, takes Väinämöinen on his wings, and carries him to the borders of Pohjola, where the Mistress of Pohjola takes him to her abode, and receives him hospitably (89-274). Väinämöinen desires to return to his own country, and the Mistress of Pohjola permits him to depart, and promises him her daughter in marriage if he will forge the Sampo in Pohjola (275-322). Väinämöinen promises that when he returns home he will send the smith Ilmarinen to forge the Sampo, and the Mistress of Pohjola gives him a horse and a sledge to convey him home (323-368).

Väinämöinen swims on the open sea because he had been wounded wounded previously and fallen into the waters at the end of Rune 6. It is while he is languishing upon the sea that the giant eagle appears to rescue him, as narrated in Rune 7:43ff. In lines 61-62 Väinämöinen tells the eagle of his romantic interest in Louhi's daughter:

I would seek the maid of Pohja,  
Woo the maiden of Pimentola.<sup>782</sup>

This is of course Louhi's daughter, the same fair maid who, like Iðunn, in Rune 19 is carried off by a giant eagle (like Þjazi the Giant in the form of an eagle), apparently

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<sup>782</sup> Kirby vol. 1, p. 63.

the same eagle as Rune 7's, given the isomorphism of the parallel texts in question. Given that Väinämöinen is the archetypal singer-poet, he thus parallels the Norse God of poetry, Bragi, husband of Iðunn, and here in Rune 7 the giant eagle takes Väinämöinen to Pohjola so that he may woo the Maiden of the North, who is Iðunn's equivalent.

One should also note the importance of the tree trope in Rune 7 as well. First, Väinämöinen himself is compared to a floating tree in Rune 7:3-4: "Drifting like a fallen pine-tree, / Like a rotten branch of fir-tree."<sup>783</sup> Second, the giant eagle rescues Väinämöinen out of gratitude for his having left a single birch-tree standing for him to rest upon (a story told in Rune 2). This unique birch-tree seems to represent the world tree. Thus the greater context involved in Rune 7 includes the elements of a world tree-like birch, a giant eagle, and the Maiden of the North, which correspond to features of the Iðunn myth as given both in *Skáldskaparmál* and in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*, another piece of evidence suggesting that the combination of mythemes in the latter poem was inherited from tradition, and not fabricated by the poet solely *ex phantasia*.

We should also observe that Väinämöinen also parallels the Norse Kvasir. Väinämöinen is described in Rune 3:7-21 as follows:

Day by day he sang unwearied,  
Night by night discoursed unceasing,  
Sang the songs of by-gone ages,

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<sup>783</sup> Kirby vol. 1, p. 61.

Hidden words of ancient wisdom,  
Songs which all the children sing not,  
All beyond men's comprehension,  
In these ages of misfortune,  
When the race is near its ending.  
Far away the news was carried,  
Far abroad was spread the tidings  
Of the songs of Väinämöinen,  
Of the wisdom of the hero ;  
In the south was spread the rumour;  
Reached to Pohjola the tidings.<sup>784</sup>

This gives rise to jealousy within the heart of Joukahainen, who later tries to kill Väinämöinen in Rune 6, shooting the horse (which is elsewhere called an elk stag; cf. the Dwarf stag *Dáinn* of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 13) Väinämöinen is riding upon, plunging the greatest of poets into the waters, from which he is rescued in Rune 7 by the giant eagle. This attempted killing is comparable to Kvasir's slaying by the two Dwarves Fjalar and Galar. Of course Väinämöinen and of Joukahainen also parallel Baldr and Höðr to a certain extent.

Nor should we neglect to mention that it was Väinämöinen's mother who from her grave, like a *Völva*, was the one to first inspire her son to woo the Maiden of the North, as we learn in Rune 5:220ff.:

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<sup>784</sup> Kirby vol. 1, p. 20.



In her grave his mother wakened,  
Answered from beneath the billows:  
“Still thy mother lives and hears thee,  
And thy aged mother wakens,  
That she plainly may advise thee,  
How to best support thy trouble,  
That thy grief may not o’erwhelm thee,  
And thy sorrow may not crush thee,  
In these weary days of evil,  
In these days of deep depression.  
Seek thou out the maids of Pohja” . . .<sup>785</sup>

The above reminds us of Svipdagr who conjures up his dead mother, the Völva Gróa, in *Grógaldr*, to obtain advice from her so that he may regain his beloved Menglǫð (= Iðunn), as narrated in *Fjolsvinnsmál* (as is well known, the two poems were originally a single text). Rune 7 opens as follows, lines 1-4:

Väinämöinen, old and steadfast,  
Now resolved upon a journey  
To the cold and dreary regions  
Of the gloomy land of Pohja.<sup>786</sup>

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<sup>785</sup> Kirby vol. 1, p. 54.

Väinämöinen thus is embarking on a journey to gain the equivalent of Iðunn, who is in “the cold and dreary regions / of the gloomy land of Pohja,” that is, Northland, which precisely matches the location where Iðunn finds herself in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophes 6ff. To woo the Maiden of the North Väinämöinen travels over the ocean on a magic stallion, just as Svejdal (= Svipdagr) in the ballad *Ungen Svejdal* rides over the ocean on a magic steed supplied by his dead mother in order to liberate the enchanted fair maiden.

There are a few passages in the heroic lays of the *Poetic Edda* that should be cited with regard to *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 13. *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II* strophe 38:

sem ítrskapaðr	Like the lofty ash
askr af þyrni	above lowly thorns,
eða sá dýrkalfr	Or the noble stag,
döggu slunginn	with dew besprinkled,
er efri ferr	Bearing his head
öllum dýrum	above all beasts,
ok horn glóa	[And his horns gleam bright
við himin sjalfan	to heaven itself].” (Bellows version)

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<sup>786</sup> Kirby vol. 1, p. 55.

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Here have the constellation of a lofty ash tree, a stag and the word “thorns,” calling to mind Yggdrasil and the –þyrnir of the stag name Eikþyrnir, the drops (drýpr) of whose horns (hornum) in *Grímnismál* strophe 26 are the source of all waters.

In *Sigurðarkviða in meiri* the final strophe mentions *eitrdropum*, “poison drops,” and then in the prose conclusion we have the verb *drepinn*, “killed.”

If we accept the manuscripts’ sequence of strophes for *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*, then we could correlate strophe 11’s question about the ancestry of the Gods’ genealogy, and about the world’s history and end, with strophe 13’s rime Giants, who are ultimately the ancestors of the Gods according to *Gylfaginning* and the *Poetic Edda*. But there remain strong reasons to resist accepting the manuscripts’ sequence of strophes as original. Strophe 13’s apocalyptic assault by Dáinn (and strophe 14’s assault by the Giantess) would make better sense with regard to plot development if it followed strophe 23’s arrival of night, during which the Gods are trying to formulate plans to save themselves from their own apocalyptic demise.

### Strophe 14.

In agreement with Simrock, we have moved strophes 13 and 14 and situated them between strophes 23 and 24.

According to Bergmann, *hendr* would better be read as *hendir*.<sup>787</sup> Additionally, “The Erichsen manuscript supplies the better two-syllable reading *rennir* instead of *rennr*.”<sup>788</sup>

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<sup>787</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 105.

The “Wight’s wind,” or as Lassen renders it, “troll wife’s wind,” is a kenning for the mind, as Lassen writes.<sup>789</sup> Lassen observes: “‘Rýgjar glyggvi’ (dative) ‘wind of the troll wife’ is a kenning for thought (*SnE* II 108/28–30), though its origin is unknown. Both this kenning and ‘Heimdallr’s sword’ as a kenning for head appear in the same passage in *Skáldskaparmál* (chs 69–70, *SnE* II 108) as the comparatively rare uses of ‘hjarn(i) and ‘eljun’ (st. 12). This suggests that the poet was using Snorri’s *Edda* as a textbook for poetic language while he wrote.”<sup>790</sup>

Strophe 14 speaks of sverþ Ass hvita, “the sword of the white God.” But *Skáldskaparmál* says not only that kallat hofuð mjötuðr Heimdallar, “a head is called the measure of Heimdallr,” a “measure” being identified as a sword, which is equivalent to a head, but also, Heimdallar hofuð heitir sverð: “the head of Heimdallr is called a sword.” So strophe 14 may possibly be referring to Heimdallr’s actual own head or mind as he is attacked by Dáinn (strophe 13) and the Troll (strophe 14).

Bergmann proposes the following emendations: “Instead of *qrvit* (‘unconsciousness’) we should read *ór viti* (‘out, stupefying’), and instead of *glyv*, the two-syllable *glyia* (joy) is to be read.”<sup>791</sup> Of A, B, C, D and E, E’s *glyu* has preserved the reading closest to the correct form. Lines 5-6 would then read, “The Giantess’ (rýgiar) joy (glyia), stupefying (viti), overflows (rennir ór).” As Bergmann explains:

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<sup>788</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 106.

<sup>789</sup> Lassen, p. 102.

<sup>790</sup> Lassen, p. 102.

<sup>791</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 106.

“The night, as the time when the Trolls (Gygiar) revive gleefully again, and when they even become cannibalistic, is described here poetically with the expression Giantess’ Glee (Rygiar glyia), because Rygr is one of these Trolls, and as such here represents the entire race.”<sup>792</sup>

The passage from *Skáldskaparmál* that contains the kenning “troll wife’s wind” reads as follows:

Bæði á ek til brúðar  
bergjarls ok skip dverga  
sollinn vind at senda  
seinfyrnd gøtu eina.

Here the precise idiom is vind brúðar, “wind of the bride,” but the reference is traditionally taken to be to the Giantess Gunnlǫð, none other than the one from whom Óðinn obtained the mead of poetry, and the strophe cited above deals with the mead of poetry (via the kenning skip dverga). Thus the kenning “troll wife’s wind” has associations with the sacred mead. In *Skáldskaparmál* the story of Iðunn as the source of the Gods’ youth and immortality is immediately followed by the story of the mead of poetry, indicating that the mead of poetry is also a mead of immortality. In *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 14, the Giantess’ glee, *glyia*, may conceivably function simultaneously to call to mind glygg, “wind,” but in any case the Giantess here may ultimately be an echo of the figure of Gunnlǫð as (former)

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<sup>792</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 143.

guardian of the intoxicating mead. That strophe 14's stupor is that of intoxication ties it in with strophe 13's thorn thought of as a drinking horn full of poison drops.<sup>793</sup>

According to Simrock, in this strophe, Heimdallr, who should not sleep, in that he is the guardian of the Gods, is overcome with slumber.<sup>794</sup> Although Simrock overlooked the kenning here for mind or head, nevertheless the fact that Heimdallr plays such a prominent role through the poem suggests that there may indeed be an allusion here to more than just human minds being stupefied, although that is a part of the equation. Simrock suggests that perhaps Bragi stays behind with his wife Iðunn to hint at the coming spring's multiplication of life.<sup>795</sup>

There are a few contextual observations we can make concerning strophe 14's *sókn*, which Lassen sees as a Christian term to be rendered as "parish," that may shed some further light on the issue. To put it in Lassen's terms, the "whole," *giðrvallri*, "parish," *sókn*, is calmed or appeased, *sefa*. Now strophe 14's *-allri* (from *giðrv-allri*) is patterned after strophe 13's *allar*, from the statement, *allar meðran of*

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<sup>793</sup> Let us not forget the importance of the tropes of intoxication, stupor and sleep as symbols of ignorance in Gnostic theology. In the Gnostic text *On the Origin of the world*, a fiery sword is said to cause intoxication; after this we read of an apocalyptic woman, who had originally created the Gods of chaos, who "will put away the wise fire of intelligence and clothe herself with witless wrath" and destroy the very Gods she created. See Robinson, p. 188.

<sup>794</sup> Simrock, p. 375.

<sup>795</sup> Simrock, p. 374.

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*Miþgarð*, “all people of Middle Earth.” Especially since the gathering of the Gods does not begin until strophe 17, the *sókn* would not seem to refer to the divine get-together as a “parish.” The parallelism between the second halves of strophes 13 and 14 suggests two possibilities, the first being that somehow *sókn giǫrvallri* means more or less the same as “*allar męran*,” all the people of the world. *Skáldskaparmál* documents that even before Snorri’s time the ca. 1100 poet Thorvaldr Blending Skald used the word *sókn* as a synonym for *hús*; Eilífr Guðrúnarson in his *Thórsdrápa* uses the term in a military sense, *arma sóknar*. We do not see how the meaning of *sókn* can be reduced to the Christian “parish.”

The second possibility is that strophe 14 doesn’t actually refer to the calming of a whole parish at all, but rather to the appeasing, *sefa*, of Dáinn’s *attack*, *sókn*, against *allar męran*. In that case, *sókn giǫrvallri* could refer to the universal scope of Dáinn’s assault and/or to its complete appeasement or cessation. The word *sveiflum* means “sweepings,” “swingings,” and this could fit the terminology of an assault or a fight rather well. This cessation of “swinging” would connect back with the strophe’s earlier mention of hands falling from stupor. Read in this way, strophe 13’s *allar męran*, “all the people,” and *natt hvǫria*, “every night,” structurally parallels strophe 14’s *sókn giǫrvallri*, “the whole fight.”

One could, however, retain Lassen’s rendering of “waves” and still connect it with a struggle or a fight. As West informs us:

The surge of battle or of an oncoming army is seen as a “wave” or a “flow” (ῥεῦμα) in several passages. In Akkadian the war-god Ninurta himself is

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given the title “flood-wave of battles,” *agê tuqmāti*, but the image of *successive* waves in the Homeric passage has a closer parallel in a prophecy of Ezekiel:

“Behold, I am against you, Tyre, and I will bring up against you many nations, like the sea bringing up its waves.”<sup>796</sup>

West also cites a number of relevant representative literary examples of being seized by terror and sleep from ancient near eastern and Greek myths.<sup>797</sup>

Emended, lines 5-8 can be understood as follows: “The Giantess’ (rýgiar) joy (glyia) overflows (rennir ór), stupefying (viti), / calming (sefa) the assault’s (sókn) swingings (sveiflom) completely (giörvallri).” Read this way, “overflows” (rennir ór) gives us an artful contrast to “calming” (sefa), and the calming is the direct result of the stupefication.

With regard to the theory that strophes 13-14 have been displaced, and were originally found between strophes 23 and 24, if this is correct, then strophe 14’s *örvit/ ór viti* could be correlated in closer proximity with strophe 17-23’s mead feast, since *örvit* is a term used for the state of inebriation, as we see from a statement made by none other than Heimdallr concerning Loki in *Lokasenna* strophe 47, *Ölr ertu, Loki, svá at þú ert örviti*. The Giantess’ glee is therefore comparable to a drunken person’s happiness. Additionally, in light of the fact that

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<sup>796</sup> West 2003, p. 245.

<sup>797</sup> West 2003, p 234.



Dáinn's thorn in strophe 13 is ultimately his horn as a stag, this allows us to correlate his horn/thorn with the drinking horns of strophe 19.

There are some further correlations we can make between strophes 13 and 14. Strophe 14's noun *sveifla*, "swinging," naturally calls to mind the noun for sleep, *svefn*, as well as the verb *svefja*, "to lull to sleep," whose reflexive form *svefjast* means "to be appeased," the same basic import of strophe 14's *sefa*, "to appease," "to calm." These phonetic resonances confirm that the Ogress is putting an end specifically to the strkings or swingings of Dáinn's thorn. Thus it becomes even more natural to see in the Ogress's glee running over the imagery of a chalice overflowing, which causes people to go to sleep before the sun rises (in strophe 24), in deliberate contrast to Dáinn's thorn being a drinking horn filled with poison drops that literally drops (slays) its victims. The Ogress's actions may be understood in at least two ways. She may be an opponent of Dáinn who combats his thorn strikings. Alternatively she may simply be act two in the nightly assault of the demonic forces against humans. In that case, her "appeasing" or "calming" simply means she brings to a conclusion act two of the nocturnal demonic drama.

*Hrafnagaldur Óðins* 14 line 3's *svifur* as "hovers,"<sup>798</sup> and understood in this way it reminds us of *Hávamál* strophes 13-14, where the Dwarf Fjalar (who is probably the same as the Dwarf Fjóðrerir) appears as a heron who hovers over Gunnlǫð's well of mead, which Óðinn has drunk, and has consequently become intoxicated:

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<sup>798</sup> Lassen, p. 88.

13. Ómínnishægri heitir sá er yfir ǫlðrom þrumir;  
hann stelr geði guma;  
þess fugls fjǫðrum ek fjǫtraðr vark  
í garði Gunnlaðar.

14. Ǫlr ek varð, varð ofrǫlvi  
at ins fróða Fjalars;  
því er ǫlðr bazt, at aftr um heimtí  
hverr sitt geð gumi.

13. Over ales (ǫlðrom) the bird | of forgetfulness broods,  
And steals the minds of men;  
With the heron's feathers | fettered I lay  
And in Gunnloth's house was held.

14. Drunk I was, | I was dead-drunk,  
When with Fjalar wise I was;  
‘Tis the best of ale (ǫlðr) | if back one brings  
His wisdom with him home. (Bellows, modified)

*Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 14's *svifur* can be more literally rendered as “veers,” “swinging round,” and as such can describe the movements of a ship. It can also be translated as “stagger,” “totter.” With regard to strophe 14's phrase *svifur* of

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svimi; svif is a swinging round, a veering, again, as of that of a ship; svimi literally means “giddiness,” “swimming,” that is, swimming in the head (cf. svima, “to swim”). This supports the interpretation of an allusion to the glee of drunkenness in strophe 14 lines 5-6. In *Hávamál* strophe 13 cf. ofrölví = “over-drunk,” with *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* 14’s *qrvit*.

*Hávamál* strophe 13’s heron (*hegrí*) of forgetfulness or oblivion (*ómínnis*, genitive of *ómínni*) who hovers or broods (*þrumir*) over (*yfir*) the ales (*qlðrom*) offers us a striking parallel to the Genesis spirit of God who hovers like a female bird over the primordial waters of chaos, which are thought of as the bird’s nest with its eggs:

<i>(w)h’r ş hyth thw wbhw</i>	(Now) the earth was chaotic and empty,
<i>whšk ‘l-pny thwm</i>	and darkness (was) over the face of the deep,
<i>wrwḥ ‘lhym mrḥpt</i>	and the spirit of God was brooding
<i>‘l-pny hmym</i>	over the surface of the waters. <sup>799</sup>

*Hávamál* strophe 13’s heron (*hegrí*) corresponds mythemically to the *rwḥ ‘lhym*, spirit of God; oblivion, *ómínnis*, corresponds to Genesis’ *thw wbhw*, “chaotic and empty”; hovers or broods, *þrumir*, matches Genesis’ *mrḥpt*; the preposition “over,” *yfir*, is the equivalent of the Hebrew *‘l*; and the ales, *qlðrom*, which some view as grammatically singular, but which must be a variant spelling of the dative plural, *qlðrum*, thus “ales,” accords with Genesis’ *hmym*, “the waters. Codex Regius reads

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<sup>799</sup> Wyatt 2005, p. 94.

qlðrom, but qlðr is a neuter noun of the eighth declension,<sup>800</sup> and so is declined as follows:

Singular	Plural
N qlðr	qlðr
G qlðr-s	qlðr-a
D qlðr-i	qlðr-um
A qlðr	qlðr

Thus *Hávamál* 13's qlðrom is a dialectical variant or pre-standardized form for qlðrum.

Whereas Genesis' divine spirit is thought of as a female bird, the heron of *Hávamál* is a male, Fjalar to be exact. However, it is the male heron who initiates the building of the nest, usually near or above the water, and who later he shares with the female the task of incubating the eggs. Thus an underlying notion in strophe 13 of incubation is not necessarily excluded by the male gender of the heron. There is no reason to suspect that the Old Norse poem is dependent on Genesis; rather both independently reflect ancient mythemic tropes that circulated (in a dynamic of mutual influence) among both ancient Semitic and Indo-European peoples. In *Hávamál* strophe 96 Óðinn says he waited to meet Gunnlǫð among the reeds, reyri, which of course is a natural place for strophe 13's heron to be found. However, the word reyri also functions at the same time as an allusion to strophe 107's mead Óð-

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<sup>800</sup> See Cleasby-Vigfusson, p. 763.

rerir which the heron broods over and guards. There is more, however, for reeds are a quite ancient symbol of a God's generative powers. In the Sumerian poem

“Disputation between Tree and Reed,” we read:

The holy Earth, the pure Earth, beautified herself

for holy Heaven,

Heaven, the noble god, inserted

his sex into the wide earth,

Let flow the semen of the heroes, Trees and Reed,

into her womb.

The Earthly Orb, the trusty cow,

was impregnated with the good semen of Heaven.<sup>801</sup>

*Hávamál* strophes 105 and 107 refer to Óðinn's transformation of himself into a serpent in order to gain access to Gunnlǫð's home to obtain the mead of wisdom and immortality from her. This can be compared with Genesis' serpent who embodies both wisdom and immortality.

*Hávamál* 13-14's *geð*, “mind,” is synonymous with Genesis' “spirit.” *Hávamál* strophe 14's talk of wisdom, *fróða*, “wise,” alludes to the wisdom that is bestowed by the consumption of the sacred mead *Óðrerir*, literally “spirit-stirrer,” whose first component, *óð*, is a rather precise equivalent of Genesis' Hebrew term *rwḥ* (*ruah*),

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<sup>801</sup> Quoted in Weinfeld, p. 524. As Weinfeld points out, here the rain is likened to semen.

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“spirit.” The other central term for “mind” associated with the mead in *Hávamál* is *hugr* (see strophes 15, *hugalt*; 95, *hugr*; 99, *hugða*; 106, *hugar*; 111, *hugðak*).

Especially interesting is strophe 95’s first half:

Hugr einn þat veit	The mind alone knows what
er býr hjarta nær,	dwells near the heart,
einn er hann sér um sefa.	only a person knows their own mind.

This parallels 1 Corinthians 2:11: “For what person knows a man’s thoughts except the spirit of the man which is in him?” Paul then coordinates this trope with God’s own self-knowledge: “So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the spirit of God.” Paul derives his thought here from Wisdom 9:17: “And who shall know your thought, except you give Wisdom, and send your holy spirit from above.” In Jewish sources (such the Book of Wisdom just cited) Genesis’ divine spirit becomes wisdom personified in the celestial figure known as Lady Wisdom, who is also called the holy spirit. The foundational sources on Lady Wisdom are Proverbs 1-9, especially chapter 8, Sirach 24, Wisdom 7, and Baruch 3-4. In these texts Lady Wisdom is depicted as the tree of life and as an embodiment of the Torah, which implies the notion of a living book, a book that is a person, which naturally overlaps with the Greek philosophical concept of the Logos. In Proverbs 9 Lady Wisdom offers wine at her banquet, and Sirach 24 she is compared to a grape vine and its fruit, which is of course the source of wine. This Lady Wisdom is a survival of the ancient near eastern notion of YHVH’s spouse Asherah.

In ancient near eastern sources the divine throne was at times depicted as resting upon the primordial waters, and this agrees with *Hávamál* strophe 111's picture of a throne of wisdom, literally, of the wise person, þular stóli, at Gunnlǫð's well of mead; this is called a "golden throne," gullnum stóli, in strophe 106. The imagery of Gunnlǫð's throne over or near her immortal waters of wisdom is paralleled in the *Epic of Gilgamesh's* wisdom Goddess Siduri-Sâbîtu, in Albright's phraseology, "the keeper of the fruit of life and the fountain of life,"<sup>802</sup> who is seated upon the throne of the sea (*kussû tâmtim*).<sup>803</sup>

These images accord with Lady Wisdom's throne in Sirach 24:4. *Hávamál* strophe 13's garði Gunnlaðar, literally "*garden* of Gunnlǫð," can be compared to Genesis' garden of Eden. Indeed, *Hávamál's* combination of gnomic or wisdom aphorisms with the mead and Earth Goddess Gunnlǫð matches the Book of Proverbs, which is composed of a similar mixture of wisdom aphorisms and the celestial Lady Wisdom who gives out wine. This suggests both that Lady Wisdom is comparable to the Earth Goddess and that Gunnlǫð corresponds mythemically to Lady Wisdom.

*Hávamál* strophe 111's throne of the wise person, þular stóli, ties in with strophe 142's runes dyed by fimbulþulr. As Bergmann explains, Fimbulþulr is a name for Kvasir.<sup>804</sup> Thus Gunnlǫð's throne near her mead well may be that of Kvasir.

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<sup>802</sup> Albright 1920 Goddess, p. 260.

<sup>803</sup> Albright 1920 Goddess, p. 259.

<sup>804</sup> Bergmann 1877, pp. 239-240.

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Óðinn's intoxication by means of liquid wisdom in *Hávamál* strophe 14 accords with a rather widespread trope of intoxication by wisdom. One typical example is found in the Gospel of Thomas logion 13: "Because you have drunk, you have become intoxicated from the bubbling spring that I have meted out." Here drinking is a symbol for receiving wisdom teaching from a teacher.

If we situate *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophes 13-14 immediately after strophe 23, then the latter's fodder-fated Moon, an allusion to Moon's destiny to be devoured by the demonic Fenrir wolf, can then be viewed as a preparation for, or an anticipation of, the demonic entities who are brought to action in strophes 13-14. Moon's *weariness* (cf. *mopri*) in strophe 23 anticipates the stupefaction brought on by the Ogress of strophe 14. Similarly, strophe 23's *gilde goþinn*, "drinking feast of the Gods," anticipates strophe 13's thorn-chalice as well as the Ogress's drunken glee that overflows as from a drkining horn in strophe 14. The larger function of strophes 13-14, when situated after strophe 23, is to depict the demonic resistance to strophe 22's divine exhortation to labour during the night to find a plan to avert the doom of the Gods. This would require an "all-nighter," but Dáinn comes to kill humans who in the night might be keeping vigil seeking to avert the apocalyptic disaster (notice that strophe 13 never associates Dáinn's thorn only with the night, not with sleep; scholars have read the latter into the text), and Rygr the Ogress comes to put even the most watchful of the Gods to sleep, namely, Heimdallr.<sup>805</sup>

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<sup>805</sup> Cf. Sibylline Oracles 2:177ff. on God spreading sleep upon all at a time when all should stay awake, namely, at the end of time.



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The following passages from Statius' *Thebaid* may be relevant for understanding some of the background of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophes 13-14. 1:51-52 describes Oedipus in the words, *adsiduis circumvolat alis / saeva dies animi, scelerumque in pectore Dirae*, "yet with / unwearied wings the fierce daylight of the mind hovers / around him, and the Avenging Furies of his crimes / assail his heart."<sup>806</sup> This calls to mind strophe 14's frenzied hag, hovering, mind and assault. The Statius imagery is inspired by Virgil *Aeneid* 6:866's *nox atra caput circumvolat*, "black night hovered over the head."<sup>807</sup> The phrase *nox atra*, "black night," calls to mind *Thebaid* 1:646's *nubibus atris*, "poison cloud,"<sup>808</sup> which in turn calls to mind strophe 13's *eitri*, "poison," which in A, B, C, D reads *atri*.<sup>809</sup>

*Thebaid* 1:305-311 describes Mercury's magic wand which can make sleep fall upon or depart from humans, and which can kill or bring back to life. He then "leaps" down, language which reminds us of Wisdom 18's swift Logos:

turn dextrae virgam inseruit, qua pelleve dulces  
aut suadere iterum somnos, qua nigra subire  
Tartara et exsanguis animare adsueverat umbras,  
desiluit, tenuique exceptus inhorruit aura,  
nec mora, sublimis raptim per inane volatus

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<sup>806</sup> Mozley vol. 1, pp.344-345.

<sup>807</sup> See the note in Mozley vol. 1, p. 344.

<sup>808</sup> Mozley vol. 1, pp. 388-389.

<sup>809</sup> See Lassen, p. 88.

carpit et ingenti designat nubila gyro.

Then he took in his right  
hand the wand wherewith he was wont to dispel or  
call again sweet slumber, wherewith to enter the  
gates of gloomy Tartarus or summon back dead souls  
to life. Then down he leapt, and shuddered as the  
frail air received him; delaying not, he wings his  
speedy flight through the void on high, and draws  
a mighty curve upon the clouds.<sup>810</sup>

The parallel in the Irish *Togail na Tebe* lacks the reference to sleeping and waking and reads as follows:

And he put his ornamented much-variegated helm upon  
his head, and took in his hand his beautiful-headed wand of  
power, caduceus was the name of that wand. And such was  
that wand that one end of it would wake the world's dead, the  
other would kill the world's men.<sup>811</sup>

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<sup>810</sup> Mozley vol. 1, pp. 363-365.

<sup>811</sup> Calder, p. 37.

Whereas strophe 14 links oblivion with the frenzied hag, *Thebaid* 1:339-341 associates oblivion with personified Sleep who “steals over” (cf. strophe 14’s “hover”):

iam Somnus avaris  
inrepsit curis pronusque ex aethere nutat,  
grata laboratae referens oblivia vitae.

and Sleep steals o’er  
the greedy cares of men, and stoops and beckons  
from the sky, shrouding a toilsome life once more  
in sweet oblivion.<sup>812</sup>

In Statius’ thought, Sleep is a masculine personified entity who in *Thebaid* 1:144-145 pours out sleep from his horn, cornu. Especially interesting is *Thebaid* 5:195-203, where Sleep arrives to mark out men for death with his “relentless horn”:

conticuere chori, dapibus ludoque licenti  
fit modus et primae decrescunt murmura noctis,  
cum consanguinei mixtus caligine Leti  
rore madens Stygio morituram amplectitur urbem  
Somnus et implacido fundit gravia otia cornu

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<sup>812</sup> Mozley vol. 1, pp. 366-367.

secernitque viros. vigilant nuptaeque nurusque  
in scelus, atque hilares acuunt fera tela Sorores.  
invasere nefas, cuncto sua regnat Erinys  
pectore.

The choirs fell silent, a term is set to banqueting  
and amorous sport, and as night deepens the noises  
die away, when Sleep, shrouded in the gloom of his  
brother Death and dripping with Stygian dew,  
enfolds the doomed city, and from his relentless  
horn pours heavy drowse, and marks out the men.  
Wives and daughters are awake for murder, and  
joyously do the Sisters sharpen their savage weapons.  
They fall to their horrid work: in the breast of each  
her Fury reigns.<sup>813</sup>

In *Thebaid* 6:27 both Night and Sleep empty their horn, cornu, and in 10:111 Sleep neglects his horn. In his poem to Sleep, Statius thinks of Sleep as having wings that shower sleep upon the eyes, and Sleep can carry out his task either with his wand (reminiscent of Mercury's wand), or by passing over a person with a hovering step:

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<sup>813</sup> Mozley vol. 2, pp. 16-17.

repellit,

inde veni nec te totas infundere pennas

luminibus compello meis—hoc turba precetur

laetior—: extremo me tange cacumine virgae,

sufficit, aut leviter suspense poplite transi.

nor do I bid thee shower

all the influence of thy wings upon my eyes—that

be the prayer of happier folk!—touch me but with

thy wand's extremest tip—'tis enough—or pass over

me with lightly hovering step.<sup>814</sup>

#### Strophe 15.

The introductory word *jamt*, “thus,” “in this way,” refers back to the description of *Iðunn*, and indicates that strophes 13 and 14 interrupt the sequence of the story and have been displaced from elsewhere at the earliest stage of the manuscript tradition. Strophe 13 itself begins with *eins*, “in the same way,” and would follow well after strophe 23, which ends with the arrival of *Hrímfaxi*, who represents the night, which is when the attack of *Dáinn* occurs in strophe 13. The mention of the Giantess in strophe 14 ties in well with the Giantesses mentioned in strophe 25, and the same strophe's Dwarves are said to retire as day arrives, and

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<sup>814</sup> Mozley vol. 1, pp. 328-329.

this would allude back to the Dwarf Dáinn of the displaced strophe 13. Strophe 25's náir, corpses or dead humans, who also retire as the day dawns, would probably be the victims of Dáinn's nocturnal thorn, which does not merely "prick," but slays. Strophe 14's mention of Heimdallr then would connect well with strophe 26's depiction of him. In strophe 14 the name Heimdallr occurs as part of a kenning that means the head or mind, which the Giantess causes to go unconscious, and this would then give us a stark contrast to the wakeful actions of Heimdallr in strophe 26 as he makes the Gods ready for the new day. Inserting strophes 13-14 after strophe 23 would also bring strophe 13's nocturnal Dwarf Dáinn into close proximity with the Dwarf Dvalinn who appears in strophe 24, who is named there on account of the sun being his "plaything." Just as Dáinn's nocturnal activity in strophe 13 covers all of Miðgarð, so in strophe 24 Dvallon's sun shines on Mannheim, the world of humans. In the final line of strophe 14, the Giantess brings an end to Dáinn's assault against humans, for the morning (of strophe 24) is approaching.

Strophe 14's and 15's language of stupor, sluggishness, and sorrow all reflect standard ancient vocabulary relating to sleep and dream interpretation, as can be illustrated from the following Mesopotamian text: "Stupor and depression will produce a (bad) dream."<sup>815</sup> A related Mesopotamian text speaks of such stupor and depression as demonic attacks, which recalls Dáinn's sleep born of strophe 13: "They (the demons) rush to the place of divine wrath, and they inflict stupor."<sup>816</sup> Butler comments on this traditional association of stupor and depression: "This

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<sup>815</sup> Butler, p. 44.

<sup>816</sup> Butler, p. 45.

passage suggests that *qūlu* and *kūru* were envisaged as serious conditions. . . . *qūlu* was one of the results when Anzû stole the Tablet of Destinies from Enlil, putting the divine order in abeyance. . . .”<sup>817</sup>

Jormi is unattested elsewhere, and Lassen notes that E reads Jórun, which Rask saw as possible references to Jórunn or Iðunn.<sup>818</sup> Lassen suspects the author used the name Jórunn to refer to Iðunn.<sup>819</sup> The name Jórunn means Steed Friend, which would go well with the rest of the poem’s allusions and references to steeds, and it also accords with Athena’s epithet ἵππία (*equestris*).<sup>820</sup> Certainly the name Jórunn is meant to refer to Iðunn, but it should be emended to Jormunn, in accord with strophe 25’s Iqrmun-grundar. As Bergmann observes, the point in strophe 15 is that the sunny, cheerful, majestic/mighty/honourable Iðunn (den Sonn’gen Irmin) has now grown gloomy.<sup>821</sup> A, B, C, D read jormi,<sup>822</sup> and this preserves the correct beginning, jorm-; E’s iorun preserves the correct form, except that the m has fallen out, ior<m>un. The roots of the name go back to the ancient solar God Irmun/Irmin; cf. the irminsul, “solar (tree) pillar,” of the Saxons.<sup>823</sup> Given Iðunn’s connection with the world tree in the poem, her name Jormunn is quite appropriate. Heimdallr also

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<sup>817</sup> Butler, p. 45.

<sup>818</sup> Lassen, p. 102.

<sup>819</sup> Lassen, p. 102.

<sup>820</sup> See Wachter 1838, p. 154.

<sup>821</sup> See Bergmann 1875, pp. 145-146.

<sup>822</sup> Cf. Lassen, p. 89.

<sup>823</sup> See Bergmann 1875, p. 146.

has a relation to the ancient solar God Irmun/Irmin as well.<sup>824</sup> As Bergmann writes:

“Here in our strophe the demigod Iǫrmun is still thought of as the personification of the sunlight.”<sup>825</sup>

Bergmann points out that MS E preserves the correct readings for kominn and sollinn, which were corrupted to komin and sollin on the basis of the feminine Iorunn, an incorrect form for the original reading, Iormunn.<sup>826</sup> In light of strophe 25’s Iǫrmun-grundar (which Bergmann renders as Sonnengrundes), it may be that strophe 15 understands Iðunn as a hypostasis or specialization of Mother Earth, especially since strophe 16 uses the kenning grund for “woman”<sup>827</sup> with reference to Iðunn. The only other instance of the compound Iǫrmun-grundar that we are aware of is in *Grímnismál* strophe 20:

Huginn ok Muninn  
fliúga hverian dag  
iǫrmungrund yfir  
óumk ek of Hugin  
at hann aptr ne komit  
þó síámk meirr um Munin

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<sup>824</sup> See Bergmann 1875, p. 191.

<sup>825</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 146.

<sup>826</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 106.

<sup>827</sup> See Lassen, p. 103.



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We cannot accept it as mere coincidence that this strophe concerns Óðinn's ravens, and the acquaintance of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins'* author with *Grímnismál* would seem to be confirmed by strophe 16's Grimnis grund, whether or not Grimnis refers to Óðinn as does Grímnir in the poem *Grímnismál*. The latter poem, strophe 11, mentions the Giant þjazi, who of course is the same Giant who abducted Iðunn in the famous myth. Strophe 18 mentions Sæhrímnir (cf. *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 19), while strophe 19 names the two wolves of Óðinn (cf. *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 10's depiction of the Gods riding on wolves). Strophe 31 speaks of the remotest branch of Yggdrasill where humans live, and strophe 44 says Yggdrasill is the best of trees (cf. *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 25). Strophe 48 lists Óðinn's name Alfǫðr, a name found frequently in *Gylfaginning*, but not attested elsewhere in the mythological poems of the *Poetic Edda*.

Lastly, in mun þo miþur, mun should read as a two-syllable muni, "according to wish,"<sup>828</sup> so that lines 7-8 are to be understood as follows:

They sought therefore all the more,  
faced with refusal,  
they wanted to multiply words,  
but that helped even less.

*Hávamál* strophe 104 has shaped *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* 15:

I found the old giant, | now back have I fared,

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<sup>828</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 106.

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Small gain from silence I got;

Full many a word, | my will to get,

I spoke in Suttung's hall (Bellows version).

Inn aldna jötun ek sótta, nú em ek aftr um kominn:

fátt gat ek þegjandi þar;

mörgum orðum mæltu ek í minn frama

í Suttungs sölum.

*Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 15's muni þo miþur męłgi dygþi, literally, "as they wished even less much talking helped," accords with *Hávamál* 104's fátt gat ek, "little got I," which corresponds to *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* 15's þo miþur, "even less." *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* 15's męłgi dygþi corresponds to *Hávamál* 104's męrgum orðum, "many words." Lastly, *Hávamál* 104's þegjandi can be correlated with *Hrafnagaldur Óðins'* image of the silent lðunn.

### Strophe 16.

Bergmann observes "that to separate the two alliterating syllables in the first half-verse, it is necessary to insert a syllable between *fór* and *frumkvødull*, probably þá ('then')." <sup>829</sup> With regard to greppr, "so that the half-verse preserves the necessary

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<sup>829</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 106.

number of syllables, after the one-syllable greppr another syllable must be added, perhaps enn, as demanded by the sense of the passage.”<sup>830</sup>

According to Lassen, Grímir is a scribal error for Grímnir or Grímr.<sup>831</sup> Lassen writes: “*Grund* (f.) ‘ground’ is a half-kenning for ‘woman,’ i.e. it is frequently found as the base word in kennings for woman such as ‘grund bauga,’ ‘grund gulls,’ and here the base word is used without a determinant. Half-kennings are not all that uncommon. . . .”<sup>832</sup> By contrast, Bergmann interprets *Grímnis grund* as the land of the Giants.<sup>833</sup> One could of course combine both possibilities, since Bragi guards his wife specifically in the land of the Giants. Bergmann writes:

Here Grímnir is not, as is sometimes the case, an epithet of Óðinn, but rather the name of a Giant, which, like Hymir, designates the entire race of Giants. Grímnis does not, as has been thought, pertain to Greppr (“poet”), as if the God Bragi were here presented as Óðinn’s poet, as for instance Skalds in the service of kings and potentates later did; Grímnis pertains to *grund*.<sup>834</sup>

Elsewhere, the same author argues as follows:

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<sup>830</sup> Bergmann 1875, pp. 106-107.

<sup>831</sup> Lassen, p. 102.

<sup>832</sup> Lassen, p. 103.

<sup>833</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 148.

<sup>834</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 107.

[T]he third messenger, Bragi, who is designated by the epithet Excited/Stirred, because as the God of poetry he was of a more excitable, excited and enthusiastic nature than the other Gods, remained upon Grímnis grund, that is, in Jötunheim, which is represented by the Giant Grímnir. Bragi remains there to protect his spouse Iðunn, and as spouses it is their lot to share in each other's fate. He never returned to the Æsir from Jötunheim before Ragnarøk; on account of this in no myth that mentions him is it ever said that he fights with the Æsir in the final battle, Ragnarøk.<sup>835</sup>

Whether we understand strophe 16's Grímnir as a Giant or as Óðinn, the meaning of grund is the same, namely, "woman," who here is certainly Iðunn. Given the extensive influence of the poem *Grímnismál* (which is titled after Óðinn's name Grímnir) on *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*, it is natural to conclude that strophe 16's Grímnir is Óðinn. Yet, there is always a possibility that strophe 16's Grímnir is a Giant, since the action there takes place in Jötunheim, and because Óðinn's name Grímnir is often incorporated into the names of Giants.<sup>836</sup> Strophe 13 speaks of þurs hrimkalda, rime/frost-cold Giant, and in *Skírnismál* strophe 34 we find the word *hrímþursar*, rime/frost Giants, and then in strophe 35 we come upon the Giant (þurs) name Hrímgrímnir; because the nearby strophes of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* exhibit signs of influence from *Skírnismál* (see our commentary on strophes 12-13), this

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<sup>835</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 148.

<sup>836</sup> See Dronke, pp. 408-409.

significantly tips the scales of evidence in the direction of strophe 16's Grímnir being a Giant rather than Óðinn.

As we saw above, Lassen interprets strophe 16 as referring to Bragi as "Grímnir's (Óðinn's) poet" who guards *grund*, that is, "the woman,"<sup>837</sup> so that *grund* here is used as a half-kenning for woman. However, Bergmann is surely correct when he argues that the strophe refers not to Grímnir's poet but to Grímnir's ground, and we thus have here a full kenning for a woman rather than just a half-kenning. Grímnis *grund*, which in MS A reads *Grymis grund*, corresponds rather closely with the parallel construction *Gymisgarða*, "Gymir's yard," in the prose comment on *Skírnismál* strophe 10. Gymir is the father of Gerðr.

What is especially important symbolically to note in strophe 15 is that *Iðunn* is called *Jǫrmun*, and here in strophe 16 *grund*, both of which prepare the reader/listener for strophe 25's *Iǫrmun-grundar*, which designates *Iðunn* as well, but in this final instance she is simultaneously a solar Goddess and Mother Earth. This is congruent with strophe 15 line 2's Gods who are designated as *jólnum*, for this term denotes their solar aspect, since the sun was called *hiól* ('wheel,' 'round').<sup>838</sup>

### Strophe 17.

Bergmann identifies *Vingólf* as "the sacred residence of Frigg."<sup>839</sup>

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<sup>837</sup> Lassen, p. 89,

<sup>838</sup> See Bergmann 1875, p. 106.

<sup>839</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 156.

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Viþars þegnar: The basic meaning is Óðinn's thanes. Cf. *Egils saga* 44, where in a mead poem the poet calls himself *regnbjóðr*, *Hárs þegna*, "rain-summoner, Hár's thane," "rain" being a kenning for the poetic mead, and Hár being the Óðinn name associated with the slaying of Gullveig, "Gold Drink." The word *bjóðr* can mean "to offer," "to bid," but also "to proclaim," and perhaps the latter is the main sense here, "rain speaker," that is, "poetry reciter."

Viðar or Viðarr seems to refer to Óðinn here, but it is attested elsewhere only as a name of a son of Óðinn.<sup>840</sup> Consequently Bergmann proposes the emendation *Veður*, which roughly means Opposer.<sup>841</sup> We are inclined to suspect textual corruption here rather than that the poet simply used *Viðar* "arbitrarily" for Óðinn, as Bugge asserted.<sup>842</sup> The name intended here is probably *Viðurr*, attested as a name of Óðinn in *Grímnismál* strophe 49. In strophe 47 Óðinn's names *Grímr* and *Grímnir*, and in strophe 49 itself his name *Grímni* appears, which also surfaces in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 16's final line, which all but confirms the accuracy of at least an allusion to *Viðurr* in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 17 line 1. Strophe 44 of *Grímnismál* refers to *Bifröst* (which implies *Heimdallr*) and *Bragi*, who both have a role to play in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 16. Strophe 53 includes the name *Yggr*, which we also see in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 17. In *Grímnismál* strophe 49 the name *Viðurr* is immediately preceded by a reference to Óðinn's name *þór*, which probably brought to a scribe's mind the name of the God *Þórr*, which led to the

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<sup>840</sup> See Lassen, p. 103.

<sup>841</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 107.

<sup>842</sup> See See Lassen, p. 103.

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incorrect reading of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 16's Viðarr, a God compared to Þórr in *Gylfaginning* 29.

The author of the poem *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* was intimately familiar with the *Poetic Edda* and with both parts of Snorri's *Prose Edda*, and thus strophe 17's reading Viðarr might be explained as the product of a less educated scribe or copyist who grossly misunderstood *Völuspá* strophe 52's mōgr Sigfōður, Víðarr, "son of Victory-Father, Víðarr" as meaning that Víðarr was a name of the Sigfōður Óðinn (!).

On the other hand, there is yet another possibility for explaining the form of strophe 17's "thanes of Víðar," Viþars þegnar, who are said to arrive by being transported by Fornjótr's relatives, that is, by the winds. Can they not then be considered thanes of the wind in some way? Now, the name Víðar looks suspiciously like veðr, "wind," "gale" (cf. viðri, viðra, viðrir/viðrar). What is more, in the Uppsalabók version of *Gylfaginning*, the name Vingólf appears as Vindglóð,<sup>843</sup> that is, Wind-Glow.

However, although the poet may have wanted the audience to think of wind when hearing the word Viþar/s, the principle meaning must have been different. We can gather several helpful clues from the section of *Skáldskaparmál* on kennings for the wind:

Hvernig skal kenna vind? Svá, at kalla hann son Fornjóts, bróður Ægis ok elds, brjót viðar, skaði ok bani eða hundr eð vargr viðar eða segls eða seglreiða. Svá sagði Sveinn í Norðrsetudrápu:

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<sup>843</sup> See Pálsson-Faulkes, pp. 24-25.

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Tóku fyrst til fjúka

Fornjóts synir ljótir.

Here we read, among other things, that the kennings for wind include son Fornjóts, “son of Fornjótr,” bróður Ægis ok elds, “brother of Sea and Fire,” brjót viðar, “destroyer of tree/wood,” and of wood, viðar, the wind is the scathe (skaði), bane (bani), hound (hundr) and wolf (vargr). Then two lines from the poet Sveinn’s Nordrsetu-drápa are cited:

Tóku fyrst til fjúka    Began first to fly

Fornjóts synir ljótir.    Fornjótr’s sons misshapen.

The first point to observe is the kenning for wind in the singular and plural “son of Fornjótr,” son Fornjóts, and “sons of Fornjótr,” Fornjóts synir. *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 17’s Forniotz sefum, “Fornjótr’s kinsmen,” is obviously intended as a kenning for “winds.” Next we read that another kenning for wind is bróður Ægis ok elds, “brother of Sea and Fire.” The poet of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* expected his audience to know this kenning, and to see in it none other than Heimdallr, who is associated in the tradition with the sea, Ægir, and Loki, whom tradition links to fire. These are the very two who are called thanes in strophe 17. Thus strophe 17 assumes and implies that Heimdallr and Loki are brothers of Fornjótr. Ægir is said to have nine daughters, usually thought of as waves, and the poet of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* identified these nine daughters as the nine mothers of Heimdallr (despite the



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conflict with the names of the nine mothers of the anonymous Heimdallr in the *Lesser Völuspá*),<sup>844</sup> so that Ægir functioned as an allusive kenning for Heimdallr in the thinking of the poet of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*. What is more, we must not forget that *Skáldskaparmál*'s kennings are portrayed as being narrated to Ægir by the God of poetry, none other than the same Bragi who appears in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*.

Then in the list of kennings for wind we twice encounter the word *viðar* “of tree” (immediately after the kennings for wind, we find two similar kennings for fire, *bana ok grand viðar*, the bane and destroyer of tree/wood), and this without a doubt must be the principle association the poet intended the audience to see in strophe 17's *Viþars*, which we would emend to *Viþar*, the –s probably being added later due to a lack of what *Viþar* specifically meant in the present context. That *Viþar* was intended as a name for Óðinn would have been clear to any scribe on the basis of the parallelism between the *second* line's *Viþars þegnar* and line 7's (the *second* to the last line) *Yggjar þegar*. The two lines are quite artful not only on account of the phonetic similarity between *þegnar* and *þegar*, but also on account of the connection between *Viþar*, “of Tree/Wood,” and *Yggjar*, that is, *Yggr*. Óðinn's name *Yggr* is the same component *Ygg-* in the name of the world tree *Yggdrasil*, which literally means “shy steed.” This suggests that line 2's *Viþar* is meant as a name or epithet of Óðinn. This should not be too surprising, not only account of the

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<sup>844</sup> Such conflicting details are typical features of the myths of still living traditional oral cultures, and so proved no insuperable difficulties for ancient and medieval poets.

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tree/wood association in the well-known Óðinn name Yggr, but also because “victory tree,” *sigrunni svinnum*, is a known kenning for Óðinn in *Skáldskaparmál*.

In the kennings for man in *Skáldskaparmál* we read that man is a *viðr víganna*, “winner of battles,” and that *viðr*, “tester,” (Brodeur’s renderings), *heitir tré*, “is called tree”: *Ok fyrir því at hann er reynir vápnanna ok viðr víganna, allt eitt ok vinnandi. Viðr heitir tré. Reynir heitir ok tré.*

In *Skáldskaparmál* we find a strophe from the poet Refr in which *viðr* and *drasill* are associated:

Barðristinn nemr brjósti	Beak-furrowed, takes to its breast
borðheim drasill skorðu,	the home of planks the steed’s constringer,
nauð þolir viðr, en víði	distress the wood suffers, and the wide one
verpr inn of þrøm stinnan.	casts him off the hard side.

Another strophe from the poet Gizurr that contains Óðinn’s name Yggr also includes the word *viðr*, which occurs in the phrase *viðr élum*, which Brodeur renders as “showers of battle.” Here *élum* is certainly used in the sense of hot fights, thus *viðr élum* means “hot fights of battle.” We are particularly interested in lines 3-4, which state that in Skogul’s hot flights of battle, Óláfr gladdens Óðinn’s geese, that is, his ravens:

Fylkir gleðr í folki  
flagðs blakk ok svan Hlakkar,

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Óláfr of viðr élum

Óláfr, hot flights of battle

Yggs gögl fegin Skoqlar.

Yggr's geese gladdens, in Skoql's.

Although line 3's viðr élum means "hot fights of battle," nevertheless the alternate meaning of élum, "showers," creates an image of a shower of wooden spears or arrows, so that it is possible that viðr could generate thoughts of wood. The words viðr élum makes us recall the earlier cited *Skáldskaparmál* statement, viðr heitir tré, "tester [or struggler, battler] is called tree."

Lastly, we recall *Hákonarmál* strophe 8's "gales of Skoql," Skoqlar veðr, and "in Óðinn's gale," í Óðins veðri.

The question arises why *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 17 would associate Viðar, of the Tree, with thanes, þegnar. The answer lies in the influence upon the poet of a statement made by Óðinn in *Hávamál* strophe 151. There Óðinn says he knows a sixth magic song that protects him against a thane, þegn, who would try to strike him with the root of a tree, viðar:

Þat kann ek it séttá:

ef mik særir þegn

á vrótum hrás viðar,

ok þann hal

er mik heifta kveðr,

þann eta mein heldr en mik.

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There is even a connection between the name Yggr and the word þegar in the *Poetic Edda*, namely, *Vafþrúðnismál* strophe 5:

at hǫllu hann kom,	at the hall he came,
ok átti Íms faðir;	and at the hall of the father of Ím;
inn gekk Yggr þegar.	in went Yggr straightway.

The poet of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* was extremely well read in the *Poetic Edda*. *Vafþrúðnismál* strophe 6 opens with Heill þú nú, Vafþrúðnir, “Hail now, Vafþrúðnir,” which structurally matches *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 18’s Heilan Hangaty. It can be no coincidence that the discussion between Óðinn and Vafþrúðnir in *Vafþrúðnismál* opens in strophes 11-14 with the topic of the steeds of day and night, which are paralleled in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophes 23-24. Lassen has noticed the following: “24.5–6: clearly based on Vafþrúðnismál 12/6 ‘ey lýsir mǫn af mari,’ which shows that ‘af’ means ‘from the horse.’”<sup>845</sup>

There is another piece of data from the tradition that is relevant here. In strophe 54 of *Grímnismál* we find the Óðinn name Ófnir. Curiously this same name is found earlier in strophe 34 where it is the name of one of the many worms/serpents who rip twigs off of Yggdrasill. In *Fjolsvinnsámál* strophe 18 we find the name Viðófnir for the world tree. As Heide shows, this means Ófnir’s tree, that is, Óðinn’s tree.<sup>846</sup>

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<sup>845</sup> Lassen, p. 105.

<sup>846</sup> Heide 1997, p. 203.

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Strophe 17's two Óðinn names Tree (Viðar) and Shy (Yggr) may have been generated in part by the last two lines of strophe 16, which refer to Iðunn, who earlier in strophes 6 and 7 falls from Yggdrasill, and who in strophe 8 grieves at the “shrine (veom = véum) of the horse (vggiar/viggjar).” Undoubtedly strophe 8's viggjar deliberately anticipates strophe 17's Yggjar, and the two terms have the same meaning and are merely variant spellings of a single word. Strophe 18's Yggiongi, “descendant of Yggr” strengthens the importance of the connection between Óðinn and the world tree in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*, as does strophe 19's divine name Hnikar, “High Neck,”<sup>847</sup> a title of the steed of Yggdrasill. However, it is important to note the difference in spelling between strophe 8's vggjar on the one hand and strophe 17's Yggjar and strophe 18's Yggiongi on the other hand. The difference is intentional and is intended to help the audience understand that the vggjar, steed or horse, of strophe 8 does not in fact refer to the horse of Yggdrasill, *pace* Lassen.<sup>848</sup> As Bergmann points out, the steed of strophe 8 is the steed of Night (“Nǫrvi's son”) referred to in the immediately preceding strophe 7; the steed is none other than the horse Hrímfaxi who appears as a symbol of night in strophe 23.<sup>849</sup>

Bergmann is doubtless correct, for according to strophe 6 Iðunn falls off from Yggdrasill, and strophe 7 tells us where she lands, and it is not at the shrine of Yggdrasill, which would blatantly contradict strophe 6, but the shrine of Night (in the far and frigid north), described as Nǫrvi's son. It is to there, to the realm and

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<sup>847</sup> See Bergmann 1875, p. 154.

<sup>848</sup> See Lassen, p. 85.

<sup>849</sup> See Bergmann 1875, p. 103.

shrine of Night and darkness, that Heimdallr, Loki and Bragi travel to see Iðunn, and not to the shrine of Yggdrasill, which would actually be quite absurd in view of strophes 6-7. Thus strophe 8's allusion to the nocturnal Hrímfaxi deliberately anticipates strophe 23's nocturnal Hrímfaxi. When day finally breaks in strophes 24 and 26, in view of the failure of Heimdallr's and Loki's mission to Iðunn in the land of darkness, a failure accentuated all the way up to strophe 22, we can only listen to or read of the daylight with a sense of sadness, knowing that Iðunn is still languishing in darkness, grieving yet.

The irony of strophe 26 is quite intentional, for there the word *Árgiöll* deliberately harks back to strophe 9's *Giöll*, the river that runs between Jötunheim and Hel, where strophe 9 specifies that Iðunn is dwelling, although she is protected (*gætta*) there. Strophe 26 piles on the irony even further when it notes that *Njóla*, the darkness of Night, returned north to Niflheim, for that is precisely where Iðunn continues to be confined and to grieve. Lastly, strophe 26 calls Heimdallr the son of Wolf Runner, *Úlfrún*, which harks back to the wolf hide given to Iðunn in the land of darkness in strophe 8 and the magic wolves upon which Heimdallr and company, including Iðunn's own husband Bragi, rode to Jötunheim.

Finally, it can be no coincidence that Sveinn's *Nordrsetu-drápa* lines cited in *Skáldskaparmál's* section for wind kennings begins with the word *tóku*, the very same word we find in line 1 of strophe 17 in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*: *Tóku fyrst til fjúka, Began first to fly / Fornjóts synir ljótir. / Fornjótr's sons misshapen.*

The word þegn, “thane,” comes from “stab,” “prick,” and is cognate to English “stag,” since a deer stabs with its horns.<sup>850</sup>

Bergmann defines Fornjótr etymologically as “the primeval owner,” and comments: “The first owner in the primeval world was the Frost Giant Orgelmir or Ymir, from whom all Giants descend.”<sup>851</sup> As Lassen explains, “Fornjótur’s kinsmen” are the “winds.”<sup>852</sup> Fornjótr’s friends, or sons, Hlex, Loki, and Kari, are interpreted by Simrock as personifications of water, fire, and air.<sup>853</sup>

West gives several examples from ancient near eastern and Greek literature wherein the Gods travel on the winds, especially from Hurrian myths that portray the winds as the shoes of the Gods.<sup>854</sup>

Strophe 17 might be seen as according with ancient near eastern and Greek literary mythological paradigms. West describes these as follows:

The assembled Olympians sit on seats. So do the Mesopotamian and Ugaritic deities. Sometimes they are represented as drinking and dining. In the Homeric poems it is particularly when one of the gods is described arriving from outside that the rest are found to be drinking. It is similar in the Baal epic, when Yammu sends his envoys to the assembly of the gods on

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<sup>850</sup> Bergman 1875, p, 107.

<sup>851</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 149.

<sup>852</sup> Lassen, p. 90.

<sup>853</sup> Cf. Simrock, p. 375.

<sup>854</sup> West 2003, p. 191.

Mount *Ll* to demand that Baal be handed over: “The gods had sat down to eat, the sons of the Holy one to a meal,” when they saw the envoys coming.

Descriptions of divine feasting appear repeatedly in Ugaritic and Akkadian epic, though in most cases it follows a specific invitation from the chief god.

They are generally very cheerful occasions.<sup>855</sup>

As West also remarks, even the Gods must eat before discussing serious matters.<sup>856</sup>

The anomalous character of what Lassen renders as strophe 17’s “merry drinking feast,”<sup>857</sup> should not be exaggerated. After all, the surrounding strophes abound in foreboding elements, both implicit and explicit. Moreover, the merry making might have been the result of the Gods’ expectation of a positive report from the arriving delegation, for as soon as the messengers announce that their mission had been useless, the tone immediately becomes reflective, even threatening. Lassen seems to overlook these features’ fuller significance when she writes: “Moreover, a further element in the poem that brings it still closer to Greco-Roman mythological narratives (e.g. the final scene of the *Iliad* Book I) than it is to Norse eddic poetry is the merry carousal that the gods indulge in, in spite of the awful events that are threatening.”<sup>858</sup>

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<sup>855</sup> West 2003, p. 179.

<sup>856</sup> West 2003, p. 202.

<sup>857</sup> Lassen, p. 90.

<sup>858</sup> Lassen, p. 25.



The strategy of the Old Norse poet was transparently to create as stark a contrast as possible between happiness and gloom among the Gods, a strategy which is really all about preparing for and accentuating the gloom. Óðinn surely expected success from Heimdallr, the vigilant guard of the Gods' very lives. Moreover, according to tradition it is not the Gods but the Einherjar who eat Sæhrímnir (see strophe 19), so that the feast may be viewed as the normal daily/nightly banquet of the Gods where they drink wine and the Einherjar eat Sæhrímnir. We must not forget that Óðinn does not eat Sæhrímnir, but survives solely on wine, cf. *Gylfaginning* 38, and this is probably the case with the Gods in general. According to strophe 17 what we have here is a “drinking feast” of the Gods. This implies that the “host” of the Gods in strophe 19 who eat Sæhrímnir are none other than the Einherjar,<sup>859</sup> and not the Gods themselves. Again, when we read the relevant strophes concerning the banquet, it would seem probable that the merry mood pertains more to the Einherjar than to the Gods, since as soon as Heimdallr and company arrive the Gods are immediately portrayed as apprehensive, as if they had already been so, at least on some level. In fact nowhere in the relevant strophes are the Gods themselves said to be merry.

Strophe 17 describes the feast as merry, but this may pertain chiefly to the Einherjar. The Gods wish Óðinn happiness, good luck, and lasting pleasure (he is not said to actually have any of these) in strophe 18, arguably precisely because these are wanting to the father of the Gods at present. Strophe 19 states that the Einherjar

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<sup>859</sup> See Lassen, p. 104: “‘Sjót ragna’ may mean the *einherjar*, to whom Óðinn assigns seats in Valhøll (*SnE* I 21/19).”

eat and drink at the feast, but their mood is not even specified at all. Strophe 20 portrays the Gods as apprehensive in the darkness, wondering about their fate. Strophe 21 laments the failure of the Gods' mission to Iðunn. Strophe 22 apparently refers to a sleepless night for the Gods, who must ponder till morning over a possible solution. Strophe 23 has the Gods leave the feast, and no one is said to be merry. Scholars have simply exaggerated the aspect of merriment at the divine banquet in question, grossly overlooking the foreboding tone present before, during and at the conclusion of the feast.

In any case, the highlighting of the merry activities, to whatever extent they were actually taken seriously by the composer, was intentionally and artfully crafted in order to create tension with what precedes and follows the feast scene. Another underlying purpose behind this narrational strategy is to imply that such merry making is specifically what the Gods are in most danger of losing.

In conclusion, we must not overlook an influence on strophe 17's banquet from the banquet scene that opens *Skáldskaparmál*, where the God Bragi tells the stories of Iðunn's abduction and of Óðins theft of the mead to the sea God Ægir, whom the author of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* considered to be Heimdallr's father. There the Æsir receive their guest Ægir with good cheer, but with deception as well, since they view him with suspicion: Hann var mjök fjölkunnigr. Hann gerði ferð sína til Ásgarðs, en æsir vissu fyrir ferð hans, ok var honum fagnat vel ok þó margir hlutir gervir með sjónhverfingum: "He was deeply versed in black magic. He took his way to Ásgard, but the Æsir had foreknowledge of his journey; he was received with good cheer, and yet many things were done by deceit, with eye-illusions" (Brodeur

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version). There seems to be a similar dark undertone to the banquet in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* as well, despite the real merriment, especially of the Einherjar.

As we have documented, Heimdallr and Loki in strophe 17 represent allusions to the kennings Ægir and Logi, Sea and Fire. Since Ægir is hovering the background of the Heimdallr of strophes 17ff., we would suggest that there may be an intentional connection between the implicate Ægir, Sea, and the Sæhrímnir of strophe 19, that is Sæ-hrímnir, Sea-Frosty Foam. Thus strophe 19 may preserve a subtle indication of a correct understanding of Sæhrímnir as a type of ambrosial foamy sea food rather than the later incorrect notion of a boar.

### Strophe 18.

Hangatýr: Óðinn as the God of the hanged, and who hanged himself, as he recounts of his own experience in the *Rune Song*. According to a strophe cited by Snorri Sturluson's nephew Óláfr Þórðarson in his *Third Grammatical Treatise*, Huginn flies from Hnikar's shoulders to the hanged, *hanga*, and Muninn to corpses, *hræ*, of the slain.<sup>860</sup> Thus Huginn may be correlated with Hangatýr. Curiously, the divine name Hnikar occurs in strophe 19 in relation to Sköggul, one of the Valkyries who gather the slain corpses of fallen warriors. Thus Huginn and Muninn may be hovering somehow, at least suggestively, in the background of strophes 18 and 19.

With regard to strophe 18's Hangatýr, Jordan remarks that of the many names of Óðinn in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*, Hangatýr is the one that contextually is the

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<sup>860</sup> See Wills, p. 1061.

most jarring or inappropriate (*mißtönigste*).<sup>861</sup> However, this overlooks the underlying mythic allusions in the context, as strophe 19 line 1's *Bólverkr* indicates. Both names, *Hangatýr* and *Bólverkr*, are allusions to the mead story involving Óðinn and *Gunnlōð* in *Hávamál*. Óðinn as *Hangatýr* refers to his hanging upon *Yggdrasill* for nine nights in *Hávamál* strophes 138-139, and *Bólverkr* is the name under which Óðinn won the mead from *Gunnlōð*, referred to then in strophe 140's reference to getting a drink out of *Óðrerir*. All of this indicates that the mead feast in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophes 18-19 (and following strophes as well) is a reverberation of the *hieros gamos* associated with the myth of the winning of the mead.

Lassen refers to the end of Homer's *Iliad* Book I as a parallel to strophes 18 and following.<sup>862</sup> We give the text here in Samuel Butler's version:

Thus through the livelong day to the going down of the sun they feasted, and every one had his full share, so that all were satisfied. Apollo struck his lyre, and the Muses lifted up their sweet voices, calling and answering one another. But when the sun's glorious light had faded, they went home to bed, each in his own abode, which lame Vulcan with his consummate skill had fashioned for them. So Jove, the Olympian Lord of Thunder, hied him to the

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<sup>861</sup> Jordan, p. 202.

<sup>862</sup> Lassen, p. 24.

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bed in which he always slept; and when he had got on to it he went to sleep,  
with Juno of the golden throne by his side.<sup>863</sup>

Next we will set side by side the relevant parallels shared between the *Iliad*  
and *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*:

### *Iliad*

Thus through the livelong day  
to the going down of the sun they feasted,  
and every one had his full share,  
so that all were satisfied.

Apollo struck his lyre,  
and the Muses lifted up their sweet voices,  
calling and answering one another.

But when the sun's glorious light had faded,  
they went home to bed, each in his own abode,  
which lame Vulcan with his consummate skill  
had fashioned for them.

So Jove, the Olympian Lord of Thunder,  
and when he had got on to it he went to sleep,  
with Juno of the golden throne by his side.

### *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*:

till twilight came (st. 20)  
sated with Sæhrímnir (st. 19)

as Hrímfaxi [Night] arrived (st. 23)

the Gods forsook / the feast, (st. 23)

Hroptur (st. 23)

Night shall be used for new counsels (st. 22)

Frigg (st. 23)

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<sup>863</sup> Samuel Butler, p. 16.

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We could mention as well that as in strophe 19 Skogul serves at the Gods' banquet, "holding Hnikar's vessels," so at the close of *Iliad* Book I Hephaestus (the Roman God Vulcan, whom we can coordinate with the Norse Loki to some extent) "serves," ποιπνύοντα, at the Olympian banquet. Additionally, at the opening of *Iliad* Book II we read a passage that calls to mind *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 22:

Now all the other gods and men, lords of chariots, slumbered the whole night through, but Zeus was not holden of sweet sleep, for he was pondering (μερμήριζε) in his heart (φρένα) how he might do honour to Achilles and lay many low beside the ships of the Achaeans. And this plan (βουλή) seemed to his mind (θυμὸν) the best, to send to Agamemnon, son of Atreus, a baneful (οὔλον) dream.<sup>864</sup>

These parallels are quite suggestive and border on being strong enough to argue for literary dependence. On the other hand the differences are sufficient to make one wonder whether we are instead dealing with two independently crafted modulations of an ancient mythemic paradigm earlier than Homer, perhaps reaching back to quite archaic Oriental impulses. One of the main differences of course is that the Norse Gods only drink at their banquet, while the Einherjar do all the eating. Moreover, although scholars tend to overlook the fact, the Norse banquet is plagued by a sense of foreboding that is entirely absent from the scene under discussion in the *Iliad*.

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<sup>864</sup> Murray, p. 51.

### Strophe 19

Beckjar: In the *Haustlǫng* poem Iðunn is called Brunnakrs beckjar gérður, the woman of the bench of Brunnakur. As Wachter notes:

*Beckr*, however, *beckjar* in the genitive, does not mean only “bench,” but also a goblet, *beckr*, which is cognate with German *Bach*, “stream,” and so it has been suspected that the celestial Hof called Saucquabeckr (Søkkvabekkr) of *Grímnismál* strophe 7, enumerated as the fourth of the celestial Hof, around which flow cold waves, and in which Óðinn and Sága joyfully drink each (or all through the) day out of golden vessels, has something in common with the Brunnakur-bekr of Iðunn, and that Sága, the Muse of Norse lore and the Lady of Saucquabeckr, is actually one and the same as the Goddess Iðunn.<sup>865</sup>

The name Sága means either “Seeress” or “Speaker,” and in either case would be synonymous with Vǫlva (a “prophet” is one who *speaks* for a God), and this is congruent with the name of Sága’s waters, namely, Søkkvabekkr, the first component of which recalls the “sinking” trope associated with the Vǫlva in the final line of the *Vǫluspá* poem. It may very well be that *Grímnismál* strophe 7 portrays Iðunn as Sága and therefore as a Vǫlva, and Óðinn as her divine consort. The waters of Søkkvabekkr would be equivalent to the sacred mead, and Óðinn and Iðunn-Sága would therefore thought of here as celebrating a perpetual *hieros gamos*,

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<sup>865</sup> Wachter 1838, pp. 151-152.

reminiscent of the *Havámál* story of the marriage of Óðinn and Gunnlǫð, the latter of whom supplies Óðinn with the sacred mead. Óðinn and Iðunn-Sága drink glǫð, in gladness, that is, in nuptial bliss. Their drinking vessels are golden, gullnum, like Gunnlǫð's golden throne, gullnum stóli, at her mead well in *Havámál* strophes 106 and 111. From this golden throne Gunnlǫð gives her husband Óðinn the sacred mead. The pleasure referred to at the mead feast in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 18 may contain a distant echo of the mytheme of the banquet associated with the *hieros gamos*. We suspect that the mythic function of the mead feast in strophes 17ff. represented the hope of Óðinn that the Gods' mission to Iðunn had been successful in the end, and that the banquet was originally designed as a marriage feast for Óðinn and Iðunn.

The sunkennes referred to in the name *Søkkvabekkr* may presuppose a tradition of Iðunn's fall or sinking down from Yggdrasill, precisely as attested in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*. In Excursus II we showed how Gnostic traditions of the fall of Sophia have shaped the trope of Iðunn's descent from the world tree. At the same time we saw that these Gnostic traditions' influences on *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* should not be exaggerated. In other words, they have contributed to the language and even to some of the thought of the Old Norse poem, but they do not necessarily affect the inner meaning of the myth of her fall from the tree. One principle reason Iðunn falls from the tree is the inevitability of winter's arrival. However, on another level, and one which is even more central in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*, the reason Iðunn falls from the tree is that her activity as Seeress there has ended, there is no more she has to see or to say. This is the same reason the *Vǫlva* of *Vǫluspá* sinks at the end of the



poem, she has told her complete prophecy, even to end and rebirth of the world, and there is nothing more to say to her audience, be they human or divine. Wachter quite insightfully recognized that the key to the entire *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* poem was strophe 11's question on the part of the Gods concerning how much time remained until the end of the world, when they would have to die. Iðunn remains silent and does not answer their question because their time has expired already, tomorrow is the end. By the next day's dawn the end will have come, and so what is the point of saying anything? Consequently in strophe 26 Heimdallr does not announce a new day as is his usual duty, but he consciously announces the final day.<sup>866</sup> Wachter makes the additional point that because traditionally ravens were considered harbingers of the imminent outbreak of battle, the mere use of the term *Hrafnagaldur* in the poem's title would indicate to the audience that the whole narrative presupposed the imminent doom of the Gods.<sup>867</sup>

According to Bergmann, "instead of the incorrectly conjectured skogul, in line with the manuscripts we are to read skolug. Skolugr (skolugr, skeligr) means 'busy,' 'brave.'"<sup>868</sup> The vat of Óðinn is a magical vessel that by itself causes the drinking horns of those in its presence to be filled magically.<sup>869</sup> Since *Grímnismál* has influenced *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*, we would do well to cite strophe 25 of the former work:

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<sup>866</sup> See Wachter 1834, p. 296.

<sup>867</sup> Wachter 1834, p. 296.

<sup>868</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 108.

<sup>869</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 155.

Heiðrún heitir geit	Heiðrún is that goat called
er stendr hǫllu á	who stands in the hall
ok bítr af Læraðs limum	and eats of Læraðr's limbs
skapker fylla	the vat she fills
hon skal ins skíra mjaðar	with clear mead
kná at sú veig vanask.	Which cannot be emptied.

The influence of *Grímnismál* on *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* suggests that the former poem's strophe 36, which mentions Skǫgul (together with ten others) as a server of ale to the Einherjar (þær bera Einherjum ǫl), and Hrist and Mist baring drinking horns, has inspired *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 19's skolug and hornum.

The word Sæhrimnir is composed of the elements sæ-, "sea," and -hrimnir, "rime-frost." The idea was that the wind God exhaled upon the sea, whipping up the waves, which then led to the formation of congealed foam.<sup>870</sup> Sæhrimnir is thus the frosty congealed foam of the sea, and is to be thought of along two principal mythological lines. First there is the Greek ambrosia, the Gods' food of immortality. Second are the Jewish traditions of the dew-like manna thought of as the bread of angels in Jewish tradition (cf. *Vafþrúðnismál* strophe 45, morgindǫggvar þau sér at mat hafa; en þaðan af aldir alask: "[in the new world] morning dews shall they have as their meat; in this way shall humans be nourished"),<sup>871</sup> and of the messianic feast

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<sup>870</sup> Bergmann 1871, pp. 274-275.

<sup>871</sup> Cf. *Thebaid* 12:137-140: "laves their decaying hmbes with mysterious dews and /

where the righteous will feast upon the slain Leviathan, the dreaded sea serpent, which is more or less equivalent to the Norse world serpent. The Ugaritic sea God, Yammu, was thought of as a sea serpent like Leviathan.<sup>872</sup> At some point these two streams of tradition of a celestial food in the form of an ambrosia-like sea foam, and of the angelic manna and a slain sea animal were merged and given a specifically Norse twist and imagined as a self-replicating boar. We should note that whereas in Norse tradition Valkyries serve mead in drinking horns, in Greek sources Nymphs mix ambrosia in golden chalices (e.g., Quintus of Smyrna, *Posthomerica* Book 4:138-139).

It is worth mentioning that strophe 18's name for Óðinn, Yggjungur, occurs in the context of drinking mead. Similarly in *Völuspá* strophe 28 Óðinn is called yggjungur ása, "the God, offspring of Yggr/Shy" (cf. Dronke's rendering, "Son of Dread")<sup>873</sup> in the context of a reference to Mímir's drinking of the sacred mead. Perhaps this helped influence the false reading Mimis in strophe 19 in MS B of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*. Strophe 19's divine name Bólverk may also have played a role in the false reading Mimis, since Bólverk is a name used in *Hávamál's* story of Óðinn's theft of the mead (strophe 109), and the name Bólverk is used heavily in *Skáldskaparmál's* story of the same event.

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ambrosial juices, that they may resist the longer and / await the pyre, nor perish before the flames have / seized them." Mozley vol. 2, p. 457.

<sup>872</sup> West 2003, pp. 86, 97, 302.

<sup>873</sup> Dronke, p. 14.

### Strophe 20.

According to Lassen, *hørgar*, “holy places,” must be either used as metonymy for “holy ones” or reflect ignorance on the poet’s part.<sup>874</sup> Metonymy or textual corruption would give us a much more likely explanation of the conundrum. From strophe 17 we know that in strophe 20 the Gods are gathered together in Vingólf, which in *Gylfaginning* is called the *høgr* of the Goddesses. Since Frigg is the head of all the Goddesses, Vingólf might be understood as “the sanctuary or sacred residence of Frigg.”<sup>875</sup> The philological question of *hørgar* in strophe 20 can be solved as follows: As Bergmann points out, the Gods must have asked both Heimddallr and Loki about their mission. Either in the course of writing or recitation an *ok*, “and,” has dropped out immediately before “Loka” due to the assonance of “Loka” with *ok*.<sup>876</sup> Bergmann leaves the problem of the plural form *hørgar* uncommented, treating it in his German translation as a singular.<sup>877</sup> We can explain the plural as follows: Once the *ok* had dropped out of the text, confusion entered in and an originally singular *høgr* was first misinterpreted as a case of metonymy with a meaning that must be synonymous, so it (incorrectly) thought, with *ha goþ*, “the high Gods.” Once this step was taken, then *høgr* was made to be

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<sup>874</sup> Lassen, p. 104.

<sup>875</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 156.

<sup>876</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 109.

<sup>877</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 120.

plural, hǫrgar, to make it accord with the plural ha goð.<sup>878</sup> The original meaning of the lines was: “Much they asked / after the meal / the high Gods of the sanctuary / of Heimdallr and Loki.” Alternatively, and perhaps more likely, is that the term hǫgrgr, which is a masculine noun of the first declension, thus with the endings -s, -ar for the genitive singular and nominative plural forms respectively, has been treated in strophe 20 by the poet as a masculine noun of the second declension, with singular genitive ending -ar.

In strophe 20 Iðunn is referred to as sprund, “woman.” The word sprund can be compared to Old Norse spretta, “to spring up” and sproti, “sprout,” “rod.” It agrees with the German Sprudel, “sparkle,” “fizz,” sprudeln, “fizzy,” “bubbling,” as well as Spross, “sprout,” “branch.”<sup>879</sup> This is of significance because the name Kvasir, whose blood was used to make the mead of poetry and immortality, may mean “bubbly” or “fizz,”<sup>880</sup> with reference to saliva, but also to mead of course. In strophe 20 Iðunn is called sprund, and in strophe 21 she is then referred to as svanna, swan. Both of these words occur in *Rígsþula* strophe 24 as names of daughters born ultimately as the result of Heimdallr’s sexual activity on earth. *Hrafnagaldur Óðins’* use of the two epithets sprund and svanna for Iðunn in strophes where Heimdallr is involved (strophes 9, 20-21) thus likely indicates the influence of *Rígsþula*.

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<sup>878</sup> It is perhaps worth pointing out that 2 Kings 23:7 in the Hebrew speaks of “the sanctuaries/shrines of the Holy Ones,” while the Greek version has changed the plural “sanctuaries/shrines” to the singular.

<sup>879</sup> See Bergmann 1875, p. 109.

<sup>880</sup> Bergmann 1877, p. 127 defines the name Kvasir in German as *Sprudel*.

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The Gods in their journeys in quest of the renewal of their immortality obtain no prophecy or oracle from Iðunn. This is quite reminiscent of the earliest known immortality quest, that of Gilgamesh. After arriving at a mythic paradise, he finds Siduri-Sâbîtu seated upon the throne of the sea (*kussû tâmtî<sup>m</sup>*), the direct forerunner of the later Greek Calypso, as Albright documented nearly a century ago.<sup>881</sup> Siduri-Sâbîtu answers the hero's question as to the whereabouts of the immortal sage Atrahasîs, but warns him of his quest's futility. As Albright explains, Siduri-Sâbîtu was "the keeper of the fruit of life and the fountain of life."<sup>882</sup> As such she gives us a fitting parallel of sorts to Iðunn, whose golden apples are the equivalent to the jewelled fruit of Siduri-Sâbîtu's trees:

*sâmtu našât inibša*

*içhunnatum ullulat ana dagâla tâbat*

*uknû naši haççalta*

*inba naši-ma ana amâri ça'âh*

Malachite grew as its fruit;

A grapevine hung down, fair to behold;

Lapis-lazuli grew as clusters of grapes;

Fruit grew, dazzling to see.<sup>883</sup>

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<sup>881</sup> Albright 1920 Goddess, p. 259.

<sup>882</sup> Albright 1920 Goddess, p. 260.

<sup>883</sup> Albright 1920 Goddess, p. 259.

This is of course ultimately the tree of life, forerunner of the Norse Yggdrasill. As Albright documents, in ancient near eastern sources the tree of life, which is also a grapevine, has at its bottom a serpent (snakes look like grapevines, as Albright remarks)<sup>884</sup> who symbolizes the Goddess of life and wisdom. This serpent is the archetype of all later good and evil dragons, including the Norse Níðhoggr, who originally may have been no different from the Norse World Serpent. The demonization that Níðhoggr and other serpent-dragons underwent in various traditions is explicable by the antiquity of the mytheme of the snake who steals the gift of immortality from the hero, as in the Gilgamesh epic.<sup>885</sup>

As guardian of the apples of immortality Iðunn is also related to the immortal liquor of life, the sacred mead of Mímir, whose well of mead-wisdom corresponds to Siduri-Sâbîtu's sea where she sits enthroned. In Norse terms, Óðinn's right eye in Mímir's well alludes to the sun that sets in the ocean—yet in the centre of that ocean is the Goddess of life and wisdom sitting enthroned. It may be that her throne and the tree of life coincide on one level. In various ancient traditions celestial Lady Wisdom falls or descends, after which she is elevated, usually by God or one of the Gods. Albright cites 1 Enoch 42 as well as the Gnostic story of the upper and lower (fallen) Sophia/s. We cannot help but think of Iðunn's *descent* from Yggdrasill in strophe 6 of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*. There she is called “the youngest,” a fitting epithet for the Goddess of life. Rooth has argued for an influence upon *Völuspá* from the

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<sup>884</sup> Albright 1920 Goddess, p. 279.

<sup>885</sup> See Albright 1920 Goddess, p. 278.

classical Gnostic text *Pistis Sophia*,<sup>886</sup> which deals extensively with the fall of Sophia myth.

As Albright explains, in ancient times Damascius, on the basis of an etymological error, interpreted the Sumerian-Babylonian God of Wisdom's name *Mummu* (in Damascius' Greek, *Moumis*) as νοητός κόσμος, the cosmic reason or mind, essentially the divine Logos.<sup>887</sup> Albright reports that Mummu "is slain by Ea in the first uprising of the powers of Chaos, as described in in the first tablet of the Babylonian Creation Epic,"<sup>888</sup> and as such is somewhat comparable to the Norse Ymir. Albright writes further, "it is sufficient to recall that the Sumerians and their Babylonian heirs saw the seat of a mysterious wisdom in the subterranean ocean, the *ab-zu*, 'abode of wisdom.'"<sup>889</sup> Mímir's well of wisdom as the ocean containing the sun is of a piece with such ancient near eastern tropes.

Albright notes that Gilgamesh "stands in close relation to the fire-gods (naturally in many respects solar)."<sup>890</sup> Since he obtained the plant of immortality, we wonder if Gilgamesh could also possess a dimension of the later Prometheus, thief of divine fire (indeed, in an ancient hymn "Gilgamesh is called *rabbu ša nîšê*, 'the torch (which illumines) the people'"),<sup>891</sup> and if by extension the fire of the Gods might be

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<sup>886</sup> Rooth, pp. 87, 239.

<sup>887</sup> Albright 1920 Logos, p. 144.

<sup>888</sup> Albright 1920 Logos, p. 146.

<sup>889</sup> Albright 1920 Logos, p. 146.

<sup>890</sup> Albright 1920 Gilgamesh, p. 311.

<sup>891</sup> Albright 1920 Gilgamesh, p. 318.



mythologically equivalent to the shining mead of immortality. Snorri in *Skáldskaparmál* 4-6 tells the story of how Óðinn as Bolverkur turned himself into a snake in order by trickery to steal the sacred mead, after which he escaped with it by turning himself into an eagle. This is in our view transparently cognate ultimately with the story of Lugalbanda, the patron God of Gilgamesh, who gains back the stolen tablet of destinies “by inviting the bird to a banquet, and intoxicating him with the aid of the goddess of conviviality.”<sup>892</sup> This refers to the Bird-God Anzû who had stolen and flown away with the tablet of destinies, just as Óðinn in *Skáldskaparmál* flies away with the sacred mead.

That Heimdallr and Loki appear together in strophe 20, both of whom had been sent previously to Iðunn, is explained by the fact that they form a polarity, the protological Heimdallr associated with the world’s beginning in contrast to the eschatological Loki associated with the world’s ending at Ragnarøk.<sup>893</sup>

### Strophe 21.

Line 1’s *illa letu* deliberately refers back to strophe 1’s *Ætlun Æsir illa* and to strophe 7’s *eyrde illa*.

Line 4’s *fræga* here means, little to talk about, little to brag about, little to vaunt, flaunt. The term *frægð*, fame, renown, is found in *Hávamál* 140 where it refers to the “famous son of Bólthorn” (*frægja syni Bólþorns*). The context suggests that this individual was famous because he had much wisdom of the runes. When

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<sup>892</sup> Albright 1920 Gilgamesh, p. 315.

<sup>893</sup> Uhland, p. 73.

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*Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 21 speaks of “little fame” gained during the expedition to Iðunn, it means that little *knowledge* (which is the basis of fame and glory) had been gained from Iðunn. *Hávamál* 140 has also influenced *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 15 (see our commentary there). Strophe 21’s little glory, which really means little information, anticipates strophe 22’s exhortation to seek in the night information, counsel or plans for the “glory” of the Gods, although in strophe 22 “glory” bears the nuance of “rescue,” “aid,” “salvation,” which is, after all, the purpose of the information-gathering expedition described in strophe 21 and throughout the earlier sections of the poem as well.

*Thebaid* 10:192-193 speaks of “glory-winning guile,” which is strikingly similar to strophe 21’s “little glory,” *litil fręga*, “difficult to wile,” *vant at vela*:

nox fecunda operum pulchraeque accommoda fraudi  
panditur augurio divom.

The divine augury  
reveals a night fruitful in achievement and well fitted  
for glory-winning guile.<sup>894</sup>

That this *Thebaid* passage is relevant for understanding *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* is strengthened by the fact that the words *fraudi / panditur augurio divom* are immediately followed in 193 by a reference to the Goddess *Virtus*, *Virtue* or *Valour*, the same Goddess whose descent to earth in *Thebaid* 10 has directly shaped the

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<sup>894</sup> Mozley vol. 2, pp. 334-335.

language of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophes 6 and 8, as we show in the commentary on strophe 8.

Bergmann emends *sunnu* to *svanna* in line 7, with the meaning “swan lady.”<sup>895</sup>

### Strophe 22.

Ómi: Óðinn. Bergmann posits that “Ymir is equivalent to Ómi, and denotes the tossing storm winds over the primordial ocean.”<sup>896</sup> The name Ómi therefore would literally mean “Whisperer,” that is, as Bergmann explains, one who speaks quietly, mysteriously, and may be compared to the Sanskrit meditative syllable *ôm*,<sup>897</sup> “which appears to be an invocation to the primordial spirit, with which all important endeavours should begin.”<sup>898</sup> The Sanskrit *ôm* and Old Icelandic Ómi (cf. *ómum*, “voice”) in this case would be etymologically cognate, literally meaning “to shout,” but with a nuance of “to sound forth,” which can be done in the form of a meditative whisper as well as a shout. Compare the Latin cognate *murmurare*, which can mean either a loud shout or a soft murmur, and the German verb *murmeln*, which involves a quiet murmur. Ómi would thus be the quiet (though not silent), reflective one. In this way, the strophe’s opening Ómi would rather artfully

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<sup>895</sup> Bergmann 1875, pp. 110-111.

<sup>896</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 194.

<sup>897</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 111. Bergmann also renders Ómi as “The Mysterious One,” in *ibid.*, p. 157.

<sup>898</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 194.

anticipate the same strophe's later *hugsi*, “ponder,” “meditate,” “think.” The Greek word for music, *mousikê*, is derived from “muse,” *mousa*, and as Maslov remarks, before his death, Socrates had a recurring dream that commanded him to “practice *mousikê*,” which for the philosopher meant both the musing involved in philosophy and poetic composition.<sup>899</sup>

According to majority opinion, Ymir is derived from a different root than the one posited by Bergmann. Most exegetes hold that Ymir means “twin,” or “dual,” in part denoting his androgynous character. It is of course possible that Ómi and Ymir derive from the same root, so that Ómi also might mean “twin,” but alternatively it may be the case that Ómi means “the Whisperer,” but nevertheless this name may have had associations with the concept of twin on the basis of phonetic similarity rather than etymology. Similarly, Ymir's name, “twin,” may also have been associated with the similar sounding roots which mean “whisper” and “hum.” Or it may be that Ymir's name from the very beginning contained both meanings of “murmur (of the sea)” and “dual (androgynous).”

Óðinn's two ravens are named Huginn and Muninn, meaning “thought” and “memory” or “mind” respectively. In *Grímnismál* 20 we read that “I am worried that Huginn will not return, but I worry even more about Muninn [not returning].” This of course expresses the danger of failing memory in old age, when one might still be able to think, but not to remember well anymore. In any case, these two ravens are personifications of Óðinn's own mind, which is congruent with the fact that Óðinn at

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<sup>899</sup> Maslov, pp. 196-197.

times takes on the shape of a raven.<sup>900</sup> We may have in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 22's *hugsi* a subtle allusion to the raven Huginn, Thought. If we accept Simrock's sequence of stanzas 22, 23, 13, 14, 24, then strophe 14's emphasis on loss of consciousness or mind, which naturally involves an absence of memory, would soon follow strophe 22 with its *hugsi*. We might also mention strophe 12's mention of Iðunn's *mun*, "mind," which she does "not," *ne*, "speak." Both strophes 12 and 14 thus parallel an underlying element found also in the fear that Muninn, Mind, will not return, as expressed in *Grímnismál* 20.

Bergmann remarks: "The night brings advice (French, *la nuit porte conseil*), says the proverb. . . ."<sup>901</sup> Lassen insists that "nott skal nema nyreþa til," "night shall be taken for new (*ny-*) counsels (*reþa*)" in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* comes from Erasmus's *Adagia* published in Frankfurt in 1599,<sup>902</sup> but we are far from convinced of this, for even if we were to find it not only *possible* but even *probable*, it has still not reached the level of a *necessary* conclusion. There are parallels to some of the proverb's elements in the Tanakh. Admittedly these are less exact than the Greco-Roman parallels, but the fact is that in strophe 24 the text continues on to speak of "pondering" and "morning," reminiscent to a degree of ancient near eastern poetic parallelism. In the RSV we read in Psalm 4:4: "commune with your own hearts on your beds, and be silent"; 16:7: "in the night also my heart instructs me"; 36:4: "He plots mischief while on his bed"; 63:6: "I think of thee upon my bed, and meditate on

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<sup>900</sup> See Turville-Petre, pp. 57-62.

<sup>901</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 157.

<sup>902</sup> Lassen, p. 20.

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thee in the watches of the night”; 77:6: “I commune with my heart in the night; I meditate and search my spirit.” Indeed, the talk of the glory (*rausnar*) or salvation (*lasunar*) of the Gods (*asum*) in strophe 22 of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* reminds one more of the tone of ancient near eastern theism, which is often paralleled independently in Indo-European traditions, than of the Greco-Roman proverbs cited by Lassen.

Before continuing we should refer to *Sigurðarkviða in skamma* strophe 48, which ends with, *hugði at ráðum*, “she pondered over her counsel.” Strophe 50 then mentions the winning of honour, *sæmð at vinna*.

Curiously, in the Ugaritic *Story of King Keret* we read an extended account of a banquet attended by Gods. There we find silent Gods who refuse to answer questions.<sup>903</sup> At 1.16 vi 25 we read that Yasib’s “inward parts instructed him.”<sup>904</sup> Here we have counsel associated with a feast described in similar terminology as Psalm 16:7’s “in the night also my heart instructs me.” There are also messengers who arrive at the feast, which of course is nothing unusual. What is intriguing, though, is that according to several scholars the Ugaritic word used here for “herald,” *ngr* (the phrase is “herald of the gods”), means first “raven,” and then secondarily, “messenger.”<sup>905</sup>

As Bergmann writes: “It was customary among Germanic peoples at the nightly guest meals, when head and heart had been aroused, to give advice; but for the resolution and implementation of such at Thing (assembly) and at the court, the

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<sup>903</sup> Wyatt 2006, p. 325.

<sup>904</sup> Wyatt 2006, p. 238.

<sup>905</sup> See Wyatt 2006, p. 232.

bright morning and the daylight were invariably required.”<sup>906</sup> Butler refers to the following ancient Mesopotamian formula, which would seem to be relevant in the present context: “May Night bring me (a favourable dream), and I will proclaim your glory!”<sup>907</sup>

It is important to note strophe 22’s form “new (*ny-*) counsels (*repa*),” for nothing corresponding to “new” (*ny-*) is found in the Greco-Roman proverbs cited by Lassen, which all basically agree with the Latin *in nocte consilium*. We do find an equivalent phrase in classical Greek literature, as in Aeschylus’ *Suppliants* 1016, which speaks of the Gods’ βεβούλευται νέον, “new counsels.” Neoboule is even attested as a personal name in Greek sources as a daughter of Lykambes. Sophocles’ *Ajax* 735-736 also speaks of νέας βουλάς, “new counsels.” In the midst of comments on Aeschylus, Aranovsky quotes the phrase “in the night seasons” from Psalm 16:7, which we lately supplied, but she refers to Psalm 19:2 as well, without citing it, though.<sup>908</sup> We would do well to supply not only verse 2 here, but several of the surrounding lines as well, from the RSV, and to list some thematic parallels in the Scandinavian poem:

Psalm 19

*Hrafnagaldur Óðins*

1 The heavens are telling the glory of God;  
and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.

strophe 22 the glory of the gods

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<sup>906</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 157.

<sup>907</sup> Butler, p. 21.

<sup>908</sup> See Aranovsky, p. 258.

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2 Day to day pours forth speech,	strophe 22, 26 morning
and night to night declares knowledge.	strophe 22, 23, 26 night
3 There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard;	
4 yet their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.	
In them he has set a tent for the sun,	strophe 23 sun
5 which comes forth like a bridegroom leaving his chamber,	strophe 24 drew the sun in a chariot strophe 23 the Gods leave the feast
and like a strong man runs its course with joy.	strophe 23 the sun ran
6 Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them; and there is nothing hid from its heat.	strophe 26 the sun rose
14 words of my mouth	strophe 22 counsels
and the meditation of my heart	strophe 22 plans

The columns above are not supplied in order to suggest any literary relationship between the two texts, but rather to indicate that the Scandinavian poem cannot be understood solely with reference to the classical tradition or the proverb *in nocte consilium*. We might cite Proverbs 15:22, “Plans fail for of lack of counsel” as a parallel to strophe 22’s “counsels” and “plans.” In any case, both Psalm 19 and *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophes 22-26 preserve traces of indigenous myths concerning the *hieros gamos* of the divinities of Sun and Night, or Father Heaven and Mother Earth.

As we mentioned in our commentary on strophe 20, at the opening of *Iliad* Book II we read a passage that calls to mind *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 22:



Now all the other gods and men, lords of chariots, slumbered the whole night through, but Zeus was not holden of sweet sleep, for he was pondering (μερμήριζε) in his heart (φρένα) how he might do honour to Achilles and lay many low beside the ships of the Achaeans. And this plan (βουλή) seemed to his mind (θυμὸν) the best, to send to Agamemnon, son of Atreus, a baneful (οὔλον) dream.<sup>909</sup>

The Greek word μερμήριζε means basically “deliberate,” whereas βουλή is most literally rendered “counsel.” (Indeed, already the first lines of the *Iliad* speak of Zeus’ βουλή) The phrase “baneful dream” recalls to us strophe 2’s “a fell fate” and strophe 3’s foreboding dreams. Additionally, might we not coordinate “how he might do *honour* to Achilles” with strophe 22, if we read *rausnar*, “glory”? However, the “honour” of Achilles contextually implies his rescue or salvation by Zeus.

When reading strophe 22, we should not speak of the night that brings counsel, but of Night who brings counsel. That is, Night is a personified entity, a divinity, or a Giant-like being, just as in Greek mythology. We read in *Thebaid* 1:501ff. that the Titan Night “dost reveal the ancient purposes of fate,” veterisque exordia fati detegis. That strophe 22’s Nott, Nótt, is a personified being is shown by strophe 26’s synonymous Niola, Njóla, Night, who is clearly personified in that strophe. Nótt is the daughter of the Nǫrvi mentioned in strophe 7, where we read that Iðunn is unhappy in her new abode, which is that of Nótt. This suggests to us

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<sup>909</sup> Murray, p. 51.

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that strophe 26's reference to Night is intended to remind us of the tragic plight and sadness still being endured by Iðunn.

“Take the night / for new counsels; / muse till morning, whoever labours/ to find advice / for saving the Æsir”: Here the Gods “labour,” *orkar*, to find advice or plans to save the Æsir. The verb *orkar* links strophe 22 back to the poem's first line, *Alfǫður orkar*. To restate it in broad terms, strophe 22 refers to the trope of labouring, that is, of suffering in the search for knowledge and wisdom. Bergmann writes that *orkar* primarily means “to work (magic),” yet secondarily “to labour,” with a nuance of “to endure, to have to suffer.”<sup>910</sup> In strophe 1 *Alfǫður* suffers, *orkar*, as he searches for knowledge of how to avert the downfall of the Gods, a knowledge which naturally pertains to the future. The trope of Óðinn suffering in pursuit of knowledge is attested in the famous *Rúnatal's Þáttr*, the *Rune Song of Hávamál*. The *Rune Song's* “nights” and its trope of Óðinn suffering to obtain wisdom remind us of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 22's Gods who at “night,” *nótt*, “suffer,” *orkar*, to obtain “counsels,” *rępa*, and *raþ*, “advice” or “plans.”

We should mention that strophe 22's “new” counsel means that the old counsel or plan to obtain information from the oracle Iðunn has failed, which is clear from the preceding strophe 21, so that a new plan to induce her to speak must be found. This reveals to us that the nuance of strophe 22's “counsels,” *rępa*, and *raþ*, “advice” or “plans” is not so much the classical *consilium*, as the Germanic oracle and *þing*.

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<sup>910</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 97.

Aranovsky has documented the trope of knowledge by suffering in classical Greek literature, which she correlates with *Rúnatala Þáttur*.<sup>911</sup> Aranovsky begins by citing from Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* 176-183: “[K]nowledge comes through suffering. And in sleep . . . comes wisdom—some violent favour of demons, who sit on the holy bench.”<sup>912</sup> Here, wisdom is a powerful gift of demons, in the positive sense of the Socratic daemon, which resides “on the holy bench,” that is, the head,<sup>913</sup> in the sense of “mind.” We are reminded of the Gods who are “seated” in strophe 19 of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*, and of strophe 14's two kennings for “the head” and “the mind,” that is, “the white God's sword” and “the Wight's wind” respectively.<sup>914</sup> (With “the white God's sword,” cf. Homer's *Iliad* Book I 94f.'s notice of the “white-armed Goddess Hera,” together with Achilles' “sword”). Aeschylus' *Eumenides* 105 is also pertinent for strophe 22: “Indeed, the sleeping mind is shining with eyes,—but during the day people's destiny is unforeseen.”<sup>915</sup> This immediately shows us how strophe 26's bright and sunny imagery can be understood with a negative rather than a positive valence. In Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* 250ff. we find the trope of knowledge by suffering repeated, and the future-oriented nature of such knowledge is made explicit: “Justice inclineth her scales so that so that wisdom cometh at the price of suffering. But what is yet to be, that thou shalt know when it befalleth; till

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<sup>911</sup> Aranovsky, pp. 248-249.

<sup>912</sup> Aranovsky, p. 243.

<sup>913</sup> See Aranovsky, 245.

<sup>914</sup> See Lassen, p. 88.

<sup>915</sup> Cited in Aranovsky, p. 245.

then, let it be,—’tis all one with sorrowing too soon. Clear it will come, together with the light of dawn.”<sup>916</sup>

Lassen renders *rausnar Asum* as “to the glory of the gods,”<sup>917</sup> but Bergmann’s “for/to the Gods’ salvation/rescue (*Rettung*),”<sup>918</sup> especially if this could imply the sense of “*defence* of the Gods,” would better fit the context and situation. This involves reading *rausnar* as *lausnar*. Compare Aeschylus’ *Prometheus Bound* 913f.: “Deliverance [for Zeus] from such ruin can no one of the gods show him clearly save only myself [Prometheus].”<sup>919</sup> Like the Eddic *Völva*, Prometheus foresees that the new upstart Gods, that is, Zeus and his allies who have dethroned the earlier generation of Gods, the Giants (Titans), will one day be dethroned themselves, which gives us a good parallel, at least in certain respects, to the doom that surely awaits the Norse pantheon headed by Óðinn, who assumed power as opponent of the Norse Giants. The downfall of the pantheon, both Greek and Norse, is inevitable, a decree of the Fates. We find the following exchange in Aeschylus’ *Prometheus Bound* 515ff.:

Chorus

Who then is the steersman of Necessity?

Prometheus

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<sup>916</sup> Smyth, pp. 23-25.

<sup>917</sup> Lassen, p. 92.

<sup>918</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 121.

<sup>919</sup> Smyth, p. 297.

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The tri-form Fates and mindful Furies.

Chorus

Can it be that Zeus hath lesser power than they?

Prometheus

Aye, and in that at least he cannot escape what is foredoomed.<sup>920</sup>

In lines 937ff. Prometheus' words take on a truly Gnostic complexion as he assails Zeus' usurpation of rule:

Worship, adore, and fawn upon whoever is thy lord. But I care for Zeus less than naught. Let him do his will, let him hold his power for his little day—since not for long shall he bear sway over the gods. . . . Have I not seen two sovereigns cast out from these heights. A third, the present lord, I shall live to see cast out in ruin most shameful and most swift. Dost think I quail, perchance and cower before these upstart gods? Far from it—nay, not at all.<sup>921</sup>

In such a spirit, God's declaration to Moses in Exodus 33:20, "no one may see me and live," would perhaps make Prometheus think of "the snake-haired Gorgons, loathed of mankind, whom no one of mortal kind shall look upon

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<sup>920</sup> Smyth, p. 261.

<sup>921</sup> Smyth, pp. 301, 303.

and still draw breath” (Aeschylus’ *Prometheus Bound* 778-779).<sup>922</sup> It remains for us to remind the reader of the isomorphism shared between Loki and Prometheus. Recent scientific research has indicated that the ability to cook food with fire led to a significant expansion of human brain size, since cooked food delivers far more energy than raw food does, and thus fire and cooked food made the modern brain of homo sapiens what it is, indeed, in a sense fire created homo sapiens. This is quite interesting in view of Prometheus’ claims (Aeschylus’ *Prometheus Bound* 436ff.) that it was he who bestowed reason and self-awareness upon humans: “mankind . . . they were witless erst and I made them to have sense and be endowed with reason.”<sup>923</sup>

*Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophes 22-26 recall the following comments on ancient Greek and Oriental narrative proffered by West: “Between one phase of action and another, the poet makes night fall. Sometimes there is activity or debate during the night, sometimes everyone just sleeps. The new day is announced by a formula such as ‘But when the early born-one appeared, rose-fingered Dawn,’ or ‘Dawn, the saffron-robed was spreading over all the earth.’”<sup>924</sup> This calls to mind both strophe 22 and 26, and naturally the action in between as well.

### Strophe 23.

In agreement with Simrock, we have inserted strophes 13 and 14 between strophes 23 and 24.

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<sup>922</sup> Smyth, p. 289.

<sup>923</sup> Smyth, p. 255.

<sup>924</sup> West 2003, p. 174.

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The close proximity of the word *rann*, “ran” (line 1) to *Rindar*, “of Rindur” (line 2), reminds us of *Grógaldur* strophe 6, which is usually emended to *Rindi Rani*, but which in the manuscripts reads *Rindur Ráni*.<sup>925</sup> As Bergmann points out, there is no justification for emending the text here.<sup>926</sup> Bergmann also notes that *Ráni* is the dative of *Ránn*, which calls to mind the Slavic *Vrán*, that is, Raven, so that *Ránn* would seem to be an Óðinn name.<sup>927</sup> As we know from *Baldur's draumar*, the name *Rindr* should there actually read *Vrindr*, in order to alliterate with her son's name, *Váli*. Perhaps, therefore, *Rindur Ráni* were earlier *Vrindr* and *Vránn*. The Seeress *Gróa* here teaches her son the magic song that *Rindr* sang to *Ránn*, which would seem to have something to do with Óðinn's seduction of *Rindr*. Bergmann translates *Ráni* as “to the raven,” which does make sense in the context of the strophe, which states that the magic song that *Rindr* sang to *Ránn* will help *Gróa's* son to throw his cares over his shoulders, or behind his back, and to plunge fearlessly into adventure, as Bergmann phrases it.<sup>928</sup>

*Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 23's *rann* is beyond all doubt the verb “to run,” in the past tense (but as is often the case, with pluperfect sense),<sup>929</sup> but given the poet's fondness for extremely rare words in the *Poetic Edda*, we would not be surprised if here he chose the verb *rann* rather than *reið* (*rann* in strophe 26 is a

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<sup>925</sup> See Bergmann 1874, pp. 163-164.

<sup>926</sup> Bergmann 1874, pp. 163-164.

<sup>927</sup> Bergmann 1874, p. 164.

<sup>928</sup> Bergmann 1874, p. 164.

<sup>929</sup> See Bergmann 1875, p. 111.

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reworking of *Vafþrúðnismál* strophe 47's *riða*, "shall ride") under the influence of *Grógaldur* strophe 6's *Rindur Ráni*. The divine names *Hangatýr* and *Bolverkr* in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophes 18 and 19 are used to make the listeners recall the marriage story of Óðinn and Gunnlōð as narrated in *Hávamál*, and perhaps similarly strophe 23's *rann* and *Rindr* served a similar function, but on a far more subtle and allusive level. The reception of magic songs was certainly a part of Óðinn's experiences surrounding Gunnlōð, and *Grógaldur* strophe 6's magic song that *Rindr* sang to *Ránn* seems mythically quite comparable.

In strophe 18 at the beginning of the mead feast the Gods greet Óðinn with names alluding to his marriage to the Giantess Gunnlōð, and at the conclusion of the feast in strophe 23 we have a reference to another Giantess lover of Óðinn's, namely, *Rindr*. The allusions to both Gunnlōð and *Rindr*, placed strategically (and quite intentionally) at the beginning and conclusion of the mead feast may be interpreted as evidence that the feast had been intended as a celebration of an intended *hieros gamos*. This exegesis may be strengthened by strophe 19's *beckjar*, a term associated not only with *Iðunn* (see *Iðunn* as "the woman of *Brunnakr*'s bench," *Brunnakrs beckjar gerðr*, from *Haustlög*), but which could also call to mind *Grímnismál*'s *Søkkbekkr* (which may be none other than *Iðunn*'s *Brunnakr*), where in (nuptial) bliss Óðinn and *Sága* (who may be none other than *Iðunn*) drink mead all the day.

We will briefly note that in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 23 the moon *ran* (*rann*), and in strophe 26 the sun (*Álfrøðull*) *ran* (*rann*). This is another example of



the poet's intentional proclivity for constructing artful parallels, contrasts and similar structures.

Lassen writes: “‘Fór *Hrímfaxa* (dat.)’ presumably means ‘went at the same time as the night, i.e. at dawn.’ Since the verb ‘fór’ is singular, it must refer only to Frigg, oddly enough; unless Loki is meant.”<sup>930</sup> Bergmann solved this enigma long ago by demonstrating that Loki is nowhere mentioned in the strophe (see our commentary below on this), and consequently, *pace* Lassen, it is not Loki who leaves the feast, but the Gods collectively, who as they depart offer Óðinn and Frigg their farewells just as *Hrímfaxi* is arriving. This is confirmed by the parallel at the end of Homer’s *Iliad* Book I: “But when the sun’s glorious light had faded, *they went home to bed*, each in his own abode, which lame Vulcan with his consummate skill had fashioned for them. So Jove, the Olympian Lord of Thunder, hied him to the bed in which he always slept; and when he had got on to it he went to sleep, with Juno of the golden throne by his side” (Butler version).

Thus strophe 23 closes with the arrival of *Hrímfaxi*, that is, with the coming of Night. This supports Simrock’s rearrangement of strophes, specifically placing strophe 13 immediately after strophe 23, because strophe 13 opens with the word *eins*, “in the same way,” which does not make sense when coordinated with the ending of strophe 12. In Simrock’s sequence, *eins* makes perfect sense, for as strophe 23 closes with the coming of the steed of Night, so strophe 13 opens with a similar or concordant coming/arrival, namely, “In the same way comes from the east / out of. . .” Next, in strophe 14 all the inhabitants of earth fall to sleep, then in

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<sup>930</sup> Lassen, p. 105.

the immediately following strophe 24 (according to Simrock's rearrangement) the sun rises, naturally from the same east mentioned in strophe 13.

Riding along the paths /of Rind: Rann með rǫstum /Rindar. The idea being conveyed here is that Moon, Máni (a personified entity), proceeds through his *heavenly* paths that run above parallel to those on Earth, Rindr. Here we see an archaic understanding of Rindr as the autumnal Mother Earth (=Nerthus), in contrast to the spring-time Mother Earth (=Iqrð).<sup>931</sup> Bergmann translates the passage as, *Bei den rasten der Rindur rannte schon, matter*,<sup>932</sup> and explains: "Der von dem wolfe verfolgte mond war bereits aufgegangen, und durchlief am himmel die den *landstrecken* der herbstlichen erde entsprechenden *himmelsräume*, was der dichter so ausdrückt: 'Máni lief entlang den landstrecken der Rindur.'"<sup>933</sup>

Lassen informs us that "*fǫður* is a rare form for the nominative *faðir*."<sup>934</sup> But if we are dealing here with "fodder" rather than "father," then the passage would make much more sense. The contrast would not be between Fenrir's "father," *faður*, and Rindr's "mother," *moðir*. After all, as even Lassen states of Rindr, "Nothing is known of her mother . . .";<sup>935</sup> so why should she be deployed in a poem? In fact, as we saw above, Rindr is the autumnal Mother Earth (=Nerthus), and as such it may be that she does not even have a mother, like the Gaia of Greek mythology.

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<sup>931</sup> Bergmann 1875, pp. 158-159.

<sup>932</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 121.

<sup>933</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 158.

<sup>934</sup> Lassen, p. 104.

<sup>935</sup> Lassen, p. 104.

Consequently, in view of the added fact that *fǫður* is so odd, it is more likely that the contrast here is between *mæðri*, “more weary,” and *fôður*, “fodder,” as Bergmann recognized: “Because the half-verse must contain at least four syllables, the reading *môðr* must instead be replaced with the comparative *mæðri*, (‘more weary’), which implies that he (the moon), had already been made somewhat weary or had been more weary than at the beginning of his course.”<sup>936</sup> The reason that Váli’s mother Rind is “more weary” can be explained by Rupp’s and Simrock’s shared observation that Rind is not just the earth, but the *winter* earth.<sup>937</sup> The trope of a weary path is traditional and widespread; cf. *Thebaid* 12:243-244, *iamque supinantur fessis lateque faticunt / Penthei devexa iugi, cum pectore anhelo*: “And now the slopes of / Pentheus’ ridge lie beside their weary path, and / broaden into plain.”<sup>938</sup>

Bergmann continues in a similar vein: “Instead of the senseless two-syllable *fôðrlarðr*, we should read *fôðurlagirðr* (‘presented as fodder’) or *fôðrilagirðr* (‘determined by fate to be fodder’).”<sup>939</sup> Cf. *Thebaid* 5:476’s “the destined sun,” *ut stata lux pelago venturumque aethera sensit*,<sup>940</sup> and 6:54-55’s “the flame-appointed fire,” *Tristibus interea raniis teneraque cupresso / damnatus flammae torus*.<sup>941</sup>

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<sup>936</sup> Bergmann 1875, pp. 111-112.

<sup>937</sup> Rupp, p. 318; Simrock, p. 375.

<sup>938</sup> Mozley vol. 2, pp. 462-463.

<sup>939</sup> Bergmann 1875, pp. 112.

<sup>940</sup> Mozley vol. 2, pp. 36-37.

<sup>941</sup> Mozley vol. 2, pp. 64-65.

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Bergmann also notes, “Instead of *finris valda*, we are to read *firins valda* (‘to the Terror Wielder, who wields or brings about terror’). . . . The half-strophe therefore states that the moon (Máni), destined as fodder for the Terror Wielder, is already in its half-completed course from east to west more weary than before. . . .”<sup>942</sup> Moreover, as Bergmann clarifies, we know from *Gylfaginning* 51 that it is the wolf Hati or Managarmr who eats at the moon as it proceeds through its various monthly phases, and who will at the end of the world finally eat it entirely.<sup>943</sup> Since the composer of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* seems to have known the *Prose Edda*, strophe 23’s wolf would more likely be Hati than Fenrir, although it is possible that at an earlier stage these two wolves had been virtually the same.

*Vafþrúðnismál* strophe 14 describes Hrímfaxi with imagery and language that accords with *Völuspá* strophe 19’s depiction of Yggdrasil:

*Vafþrúðnismál* strophe 14    *Völuspá* strophe 19

	Ask veit ek standa
Hrímfaxi heitir	heitir Yggdrasil
er hverja dregr	
nótt of nýt regin	
méldropa fellir	hár batmr, ausinn
hann morgin hvern	hvítaauri

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<sup>942</sup> Bergmann 1875, pp. 112.

<sup>943</sup> Bergmann 1875, pp. 158.

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þaðan kemr dǫgg	þaðan koma dǫggvar
um dala	þærs í dala falla
	stendur æ yfir grænn
	Urðarbrunni

Strophe 23 marks the end of the divine feast. Although it reads like a classical Valhalla banquet, it in fact takes place at strophe 17's Vingólf, which according to *Gylfaginning* is the “sanctuary of the Goddesses,” hǫrgr . . . gyðjurnar (in the Uppsala *Edda*, hǫrgr . . . gyðjur). Kvilhaug argues for an ancient Norse belief in the king who undergoes ritual trials, descends to the netherworld and is there reborn by being married to the Great Goddess who appears there in the form of the Giantess Hel or Death. As a part of this *hieros gamos* ceremony, the Goddess bestows the mead upon the thus initiated king.<sup>944</sup> We may have some distant echoes of this in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*. Iðunn has fallen to the netherworld, and she is a virtual wolvern Giantess now (see strophe 8). The three-Gods delegation sent to her may perhaps be compared to the single-man delegation sent to Gerðr in *Skírnismál*. In any case, the delegation in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* is unsuccessful. However, it may be that the banquet scene of strophes 17-23 may have been prepared under the (mistaken) divine assumption of a successful delegation, which would return Iðunn to the sanctuary of the Goddesses, Vingólf, the Goddesses' own version of Valhalla.

In *Hyndluljóð* the Goddess Freyja goes to Valhalla with Óttar to gain the wisdom that comes from what is in effect a *hieros gamos*, but this journey is

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<sup>944</sup> See Kvilhaug, pp. 40-89.

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described in terms reminiscent of a descent to Hel. In *Fjölsvinnsmál*, the three realms of Ásgarðr, Miðgarðr and Hel seem to interpenetrate each other. As Kvilhaug phrases it: “In the *Fjölsvinnsmál*, we are subtly presented to each of the three realms (with their attached roots and wells with different functions), only they are not separated from each other in the manner Snorri describes. They seem to be aspects of each other.”<sup>945</sup> Thus to view a journey to Valhalla as a descent to Hel makes sense. Similarly, according to Jewish tradition, in Daniel 7:9-10 the fiery rivers of hell flow at God’s throne of judgement.

If we place *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophes 13-14 between strophes 23 and 24, then between the feast’s conclusion (in strophe 23) and the coming of dawn (in strophe 24) we would have the nocturnal assault of Dáinn with this thorn from the Giant of Élivágar (strophe 13), which is really an Ice Giant’s horn full of poison drops, and the calming of the assault by the night hag Rýgr (24), whose frenzy is described in terms indicative of her possessing an intoxicating goblet. These would be demonic versions of Hel’s banquet, in answer to the feast of Vingólf in strophes 17-23. Dáinn and Rýgr basically make sure there will be no *hieros gamos* between Óðinn and Iðunn. However, it may be that Rýgr actually combats Dáinn to a certain extent, since she puts an end to his assaults, bringing the night to a close. Thus strophe 24’s day and luminous imagery, including the bright jewels of the solar steed, may perhaps reflect an echo of the light and the jewels traditionally

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<sup>945</sup> Kvilhaug, p. 86.

associated with the *hieros gamos*.<sup>946</sup> There may be a connection between strophe 14's Rýgr and Iðunn, for to quote from Kvilhaug: "As Hilda Ellis-Davidson has pointed out, it is not unusual for the Great Goddess to appear both as an old hag and a beautiful maiden. . . . The symbolism should be obvious; Hel is both life and death. . . . There is certainly no strict border between the ogress and the Maiden – the two faces of the goddess."<sup>947</sup>

### Strophe 24.

In agreement with Simrock, we have inserted strophes 13 and 14 between strophes 23 and 24.

The two-syllable genitive Dellings should be emended to a three-syllable weak genitive form, Dellinga.<sup>948</sup>

Bergmann supplies several important notes concerning the background of the phrase "jarkna steinum." He begins by observing that the Indo-European

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<sup>946</sup> See Gunnlōð described as sólhvíta, "sun-white," in *Hávamál* strophe 97; see *Sigrdrífumál* strophe 15's skínandi/skínanda goði, "shining Goddess"; in *Fjolsvinnsmál* strophe 42 Menglōð is said to be sólbjarta, "sun-bright"; *Hávamál* strophe 110's ring, which is obviously the marriage ring for Óðinn and Gunnlōð; and lastly, see *Völuspá* strophe 29 where Óðinn brings rings and necklaces to the Völva, which are traditional wedding gifts.

<sup>947</sup> Kvilhaug, pp. 126-127.

<sup>948</sup> See Bergmann 1875, p. 113.

thunder God among the Slavs was called *Perkunos*, among the Scandinavians *Fjörgynn* (*Friccon*), among the Greeks *Herkunos* (later replaced with *Herkles*, *Herakulos*), and among the Latins *Hercules*. . . . The Goths, led by the similarity in names, designated the Greek *Herkunos* and *Herakulos* with *Airknis* (venerable; cf. Sanskrit *artkanîyas*), the Anglo Saxons with *Eorcan* and *Eorclan*; and divine names like *Týr*, *Iormun*, *Regin*, etc., served to denote what is mighty, strong, good, and noble, thus the concrete *airknis* later meant on the other hand as an adjective, used abstractly, *holy*, *noble*, *true*. On these grounds, precious stones were called *Hercules-* or *thunder stones* (*iarknastein*) before they were later abstractly called jewels.<sup>949</sup>

As Bergmann documents further,

the name *Dvalinn* is derived from *dvǫll*, (“repose”), and means one of the resting, sleeping beings. . . . *Dvalinn* (the Sleepy) by nature stands between the *Elves* (friendly light beings) and the *Dark Elves* (treacherous night beings). He is a Dwarf who all the day long, in the form of a hart, eats away at the upper branch of the ash *Yggdrasill*; at evening he gives himself over to the subterranean dwellings of the *Dwarves*. . . . Because *Sól* played with *Dvalinn* to pass time, he is therefore called here *Dvalinn’s plaything*.<sup>950</sup>

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<sup>949</sup> Bergmann 1875, pp. 113-114.

<sup>950</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 160.



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Consequently, *leika* should not be rendered “deluder” or “deceiver,” but “plaything” or “toy,” as Lassen writes: “The endingless form *leik* in *Hrafnagaldur* may be an error, or it could be acc. of *leikr* ‘game, play’ meaning by metonymy ‘the one/thing played with.’”<sup>951</sup>

Given the influence of *Vafþrúðnismál* upon *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*, it may be that part of the source of the latter’s jewels on the steed of the day (named as Skinfaxi in *Vafþrúðnismál* strophe 12, but left anonymous in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 24) were the dew drops of the night horse Hrímfaxi, of whom *Vafþrúðnismál* strophe 14 says that each morning he supplies dew to the dales. It is possible that these shiny dew drops have been transferred to the day steed in the form of jewels in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 24. Quite artfully, just as the day steed Skinfaxi is referred to anonymously in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 24, so in the same poem’s strophe 8 the night steed Hrímfaxi is referred to anonymously. It may be that the reason the day steed Skinfaxi is never named explicitly in the poem *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* is the predominating theme of darkness throughout the composition.

However, strophe 4 does explicitly name the solar steed Alsviðr, and so a certain balance is arrived at in the poem in so far as a solar steed is once named (strophe 4) and a nocturnal steed is once named (strophe 23), just as a solar steed is elsewhere once referred to anonymously (strophe 24) and a nocturnal steed is referred to once anonymously (strophe 8). The sequence is explicit solar (strophe 4), anonymous nocturnal (strophe 8), explicit nocturnal (strophe 23), anonymous solar (strophe 24). This is actually a quite artful structure, involving both an a-b, a-b pattern

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<sup>951</sup> Lassen, p. 105.

(explicit-anonymous, explicit-anonymous) and a chiastic ab, ba paradigm (solar-nocturnal, nocturnal-solar).

Lassen refers to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* Book II:103 as a parallel to strophe 24:<sup>952</sup> "Chrysolites and gems placed along the yoke in order, gave a bright light from the reflected sun."<sup>953</sup>

The word *drasull*, "steed," "charger," artfully anticipates the allusion to Yggdrasill in strophe 25, where we read of the *adalpollar*, the noble tree, which really means the best or noblest of trees, even though *adalpollar* is not grammatically superlative. The compound *adalpollar* is based on *Völuspá* strophe 20's designation of Yggdrasill as *þolli*, which is the only instance in the *Poetic Edda* where the term *pollr* is used in the sense of "tree."

*Völuspá* strophe 20 mentions the tree Yggdrasill in the context of the three Norns who determine the fates of humans. These Norns include Urður, whose name is mentioned together with the tree Yggdrasill in both strophes 19 and 20 of *Völuspá*. Both of these strophes mention the water that runs beneath Yggdrasill as well; strophe 19 refers to Urður's well, and strophe 20 states that all three Norns originate from the water, *Þaðan koma meyjjar . . . þrjár ór þeim sæ, that "stands" beneath the tree, und þolli stendr*. Thus *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* by means of the word *adalpollar* subtly in part alludes in its penultimate strophe to Urður, the Norn explicitly named in the poem's second strophe. In this way the poem's second and second-to-last strophes are artfully joined together in symmetry. Strophe 25's

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<sup>952</sup> Lassen, p. 24.

<sup>953</sup> Riley, p. 61.

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adalpollar is an allusion to *Völuspá* strophe 20, and therefore adalpollar in strophe 25 is to be understood as the tree of fates, the tree of destiny. This is entirely appropriate given that in the next strophe, the poem's last, Heimdallr blows his horn to summon the Gods to their doom at Ragnarøk.

The symmetry between strophes 2 and 25 also has important implications for the figure of Iðunn. Strophe 2's Norn Urður on one level includes the Norn-like Goddess Iðunn, just as its Oðhrærer mythemically corresponds to Iðunn's apples. Similarly, strophe 25's adalpollar is the tree beneath which lies Urður's well, but this is also the same tree at whose nocturnal base Iðunn now dwells (strophes 6-7), in the abode of the steed of Night (strophe 8, viggjar at veom, abode of the steed). It is no coincidence that steeds appear towards the end of the poem as well (strophe 23, Hrímfaxi; strophe 24, jo/jó; dravsull/drqsull). Strophe 24's jo/jó, "steed," brings to mind strophe 15's Jórunn as an Iðunn name, although it was probably originally Jormun, which occurs also in strophe 25.

The *Haustlǫng* poem calls Iðunn *goða dís*, which Faulkes, an otherwise superlatively skilled translator, renders rather lamely as "the gods' lady."<sup>954</sup> As Wachter explains, Þjóðólfr

can call Iðunn a Goddess of the Gods (*goða dís*) because the Gods venerated her as a Deity, for she had in her power the means of curing old age.

Furthermore, *dís* has the specific meaning of "Goddess of Fate," and *dísir* was used to name especially the Norns and Valkyries. A main activity of the Norns

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<sup>954</sup> Faulkes 2001, p.87.

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was to determine or fix the lifespan of mortals. Þjóðólfr of Hvinr therefore poetically names Iðunn *dís* (i.e. here, Norn, Goddess of Fate) of the Gods because she has in her power the healing agent against the aging of the Gods, and can therefore, like a Norn, decide the lifespan of the Gods.<sup>955</sup>

Thus *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 6's *dis forvitinn*, "the prescient *dís*," on one level may imply a Goddess who foresees and even determines fates for the very Gods themselves. In this way, Iðunn is much more than just one God among the many Gods. She is instead in a position of power over all the Gods, even over Óðinn, the reputed father and king of the Gods. Iðunn thus parallels the Greek Fates, the *Morai*, to whom the Gods, even Zeus, are entirely subject. Because of Iðunn's status as a Norn-like Goddess of Fate, she knows the past, present and future of the cosmos, described in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 11 with the terms *ártíð* ("primordial time"), *ævi* (lifespan) and *aldurtila* (life's end), which correspond to the three Norns *Urður*, *Verðandi* and *Skuld*, loosely meaning "Was," "Becoming Presently" and "Shall Be Inexorably." Thus, although Iðunn is likened to *Urður* in strophe 2, in strophe 11 she seems to embody all three Norns.

Famously, the Romans called the first two Fates *Nona* and *Decima*, "Ninth" and "Tenth," and third was called *Morta*, "Death." Logically *Morta* might be expected to have the by-name *Eleventh*, but this is unattested, at least as far as we are aware. However, could this have something to do with the consistent, and apparently intentional, reading of *ellifu*, "eleven," instead of the correct *ellifyf*, that is, *elli-*, "old

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<sup>955</sup> Wachter 1838, p. 151.

age,” and *lyf*, “medicine,” for Iðunn’s apples of youth? We find this “mis-” reading in *Skírnismál* strophes 19-20 (strophe 19, *epli ellifu . . . algullin*, “apples eleven . . . all golden,” instead of the correct *epli ellilyfs*, “apples of old-age medicine,” and again in strophe 20, *epli ellifu* instead of the correct *epli ellilyfs*) and in *Fjølsvinnsmál* strophe 14, *ellifu*, “eleven,” instead of the correct *ellilyf*, “old-age medicine.” Even in *Fjølsvinnsmál* strophe 36 *Lyfiaberg*, Mount Medicine, is corrupted variously in the manuscripts, *Lyfia-* appearing as *Hyfia-*, *Hyfia-*, *Hyfwia-*, *Hlyfvia-*, *Hyfvia-*,<sup>956</sup> anything but *Lyfja*! Manuscript B $\beta$  even changes *-berg*, reading *Hvinga horn* (“Whistling horn”?)!<sup>957</sup> As if at all costs any clear allusion to Iðunn and her magically medicinal apples had to be concealed somehow.

But this obfuscation fits the general pattern of *Fjølsvinnsmál*, in which Iðunn appears only under the guise of the name Menglǫð, whose Mount Medicine, however, is ultimately none other than Iðunn’s mountain upon which stands Yggdrasill, the verdant and fecund source of her golden apples of immortality. From this mountain Iðunn controls, Norn-like, even the fates of the very Gods themselves, above whom she stands exalted in power in an almost altogether separate class and category. *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 25’s *adalpollar* thus alludes to Iðunn’s world tree of fate, over which she has power; she has determined that the Gods’ lifespan will end on the next day, whose dawning is depicted in deceptively charming language in strophe 26. She is sorrowful, but not powerless, for as an instantiation of the Mother Earth Goddess archetype, she knows that to be reborn one must first die,

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<sup>956</sup> See Bugge 1867, p. 349.

<sup>957</sup> Bugge 1867, p. 349.

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like the earth that perishes in the sea in *Völuspá*, only to soon thereafter arise fresh and green again. The absence of Iðunn in *Völuspá* is at first rather perplexing, but if we see subtle allusions to her in the *Iðavöllr* of the old and new earth (strophes 7 and 57) and in the earth herself, especially in the *Jörð* who appears “again,” *iðia-* in strophe 56, then the overall situation would appear to be somewhat clearer. With regard to the Field (*völlr*; the word originally had the sense of German *Wald*, “forest,” “woods”) of Ið(a), fields and dales go together proverbially, and dales, *dolum*, are where Iðunn dwells according to *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 6.

*Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophes 24 and 26 may contain influences from Quintus of Smyrna’s *Fall of Troy (Posthomerica)*. In Book 1 the Amazon Penthesileia is at a banquet, which she leaves as the sun dies away, and sleep descends upon her, during which she has a deceptive dream that gives her false hope for the battle that awaits her. When in the morning Dawn leaps up, Penthesileia rises up, and puts on her “rainbow-radiant corslet” and her luminous helmet with a mane of golden shining horse hair. This makes us think of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 23’s departure from the banquet as night arrives (and if we insert strophe 13 here, Dáinn’s nocturnal assault originating from the land of the Ice-Giant from whom all waters originate), strophe 24’s steed of Day with a shining mane, strophe 26’s rising sun, Gods rising up, and Heimdallr, who tradition sees as the guard of the Gods’ bridge envisaged as a rainbow:

1:117ff.:

Then in swift revolution sweeping round

Into the Ocean's deep stream sank the sun.  
And daylight died. So when the banqueters  
Ceased from the wine-cup and the goodly feast.  
Then did the handmaids spread in Priam's halls  
For Penthesileia dauntless-souled the couch  
Heart-cheering, and she laid her down to rest;  
And slumber mist-like overveiled her eyes  
Like sweet dew dropping round. From heavens' blue depths  
Slid down the might of a deceitful dream. . . .<sup>958</sup>

1:137ff.:

But when the Dawn, the rosy-ankled, leapt  
Up from her bed, then, clad in mighty strength  
Of spirit, suddenly from her couch uprose  
Penthesileia. . . .  
Her rainbow-radiant corslet clasped she then  
About her. . . .  
Then on her head  
She settled the bright helmet overstreamed  
With a wild mane of golden-glistening hairs.  
So stood she, lapped about with flaming mail.<sup>959</sup>

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<sup>958</sup> Way 1913, p. 11.

<sup>959</sup> Way 1913, p. 13.

### Strophe 25.

Iǫrmun-grundar: Bergmann writes of strophe 15's Iǫrmun (emended from *Jorun/Jormi*): "Here in our strophe the demigod Iǫrmun is still thought of as the personification of the sunlight."<sup>960</sup> This is an archaic feature that suggests that although the poem was committed to writing in the post-medieval period, it nevertheless contains elements indicative of the medieval period. Bergmann renders strophe 25's Iǫrmun-grundar as *Sonnengrundes*, and explains that here it describes in "epic" language "the northernmost boundary of the earth's surface, because the earth, *grund*, is what, after the whole day has passed, is no longer illuminated by the sun, which here means the ancient Sun God, which has now become more of a demigod, Irmin."<sup>961</sup> Since earlier in the poem Iðunn has been called both Iǫrmun (strophe 15) and *grund* (strophe 16), she is apparently thought of as a specialization of Mother Earth who as such is illuminated by Sun. And because poems of earlier ages often ended by repeating (in somewhat varied language) elements from earlier sections, here strophe 25's Iǫrmun-grundar and Yggdrasill present us with a recapitulation and final appearance of Iðunn, who in earlier strophes fell from the world tree.

Remotest root: *yztu rót*. According to *Grímnismál* 31 Yggdrasill has three roots, and human beings, *mennskir menn*, live beneath the third root. *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 25's *yztu rót*, last or remotest root, is *Grímnismál* 31's third root.

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<sup>960</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 146.

<sup>961</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 161.



*Grímnismál* 44 calls Yggdrasill *æðstr*, “the best” of trees, and this agrees with *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 25’s description of Yggdrasill as *aðalpollar*, “foremost.” The *Prose Edda* locates the third root either in heaven or in Niflheim (*Gylfaginning* 15-16). *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 25’s edge of earth is the far north where strophe 26’s *Niflheim* is situated. In some ancient near eastern sources, such as in the Babylonian Epic of Creation, *Enūma eliš*, “remote” (*rūqu*) can bear the sense of “profound,” “deep.”<sup>962</sup> Similarly, distance and depth are more or less equivalent in Qohelet 7:24: “That which is, is far off (*rāḥôq*), and deep (*‘āmôq*), very deep; who can find it out?” According to 2 Enoch 8:4-6, the roots of the tree of life are “at the world’s end,” and one its two streams is of honey,<sup>963</sup> both images having significance in Norse sources. Wyatt writes: “In 2 Enoch then apparently descend to water an earthly Eden before flowing out into the world,”<sup>964</sup> which is comparable to *Völuspá* strophe 19. That the tree has two streams (which later branch off into four) may be correlated with the two streams beneath Yggdrasill, namely, that of Urðr and Mímir.

*Fjolsvinnsmál* 20 speaks of the unknowable nature of Yggdrasill’s roots:

Mímameiðr hann heitir,	Mímir’s tree it is called,
en þat manngi veit,	and no one knows
af hverjum rótum renn.	from where the roots run.

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<sup>962</sup> See West 2003, p. 559.

<sup>963</sup> See Wyatt 1990, p. 28.

<sup>964</sup> Wyatt 1990, p. 28.

We find the same statement in *Hávamál's Rune Song*:

á þeim meiði er manngi veit      upon that tree that no one knows  
hvers af rótum renn.                      from where the roots run.

There is a possibility, however, that this unknowability is not necessarily absolute in nature. In the ancient world there was a concept that some pieces of knowledge were unknown to the masses of humanity, but were revealed to the king, since the latter was especially close to the Gods. Wyatt, discussing ancient near eastern methods of tree oracle interpretation, writes: “Secrets are revealed in this technique to which even many of the gods are not privy! There is a hierarchical dimension here, which is ultimately to be identified as royal.”<sup>965</sup> The text Wyatt is commenting upon comes from the Baal cycle and deserves to be cited here:

For a message I have, and I will tell you,  
A word, and I will recount to you,  
Word of tree and whisper of stone,  
The word people do not know,  
And earth's masses do not understand,  
Converse of Heaven with Earth,  
Of Deeps with Stars.<sup>966</sup>

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<sup>965</sup> Wyatt 2007, p. 189.

<sup>966</sup> Smith and Pitard, p. 56.

Lassen remarks insightfully of strophe 25: “The mentioning of the different beings is reminiscent of st. 1, indicating that a closure of the poem is approaching.”<sup>967</sup>

As Simrock mentions, the Giants, Dwarves, and other demonic nocturnal entities go to rest when the sun rises because direct exposure to sunlight would turn them to stone.<sup>968</sup>

Human ghosts or corpses do not usually get listed along with Giants, Elves and Dwarves. Consequently the human corpse-ghosts of strophe 25 are most naturally to be understood contextually as the recent victims (compare with *Thebaid* 8:105-106’s “new-slain ghosts,” *recentum umbrarum*)<sup>969</sup> of Dáinn’s assault narrated in strophe 13, which if placed along with strophe 14 just after strophe 23, would occur in much closer proximity to each other.

Lastly we should not overlook that even as strophe 25 unfolds Iðunn is still confined in the netherworld grieving in the dark and frigid north.

### Strophe 26.

Álfroðull is the sun rising from the east, literally “Elves’ Ruddy-Light.” This kenning is found in the *Poetic Edda* in *Vafþrúðnismál* strophe 47 and *Skírnismál* strophe 4. Of these two attestations, the one in *Vafþrúðnismál* is relevant for

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<sup>967</sup> Lassen, p. 105.

<sup>968</sup> Simrock, p. 375.

<sup>969</sup> See Mozley vol. 2, pp. 202-203.

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*Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 26. This is because in *Vafþrúðnismál* strophe 47 the term *Álfrøðull* is used in an eschatological context, for it is said there that Fenrir will kill *Álfrøðull* when the Gods, the regin, die. The first part of strophe 47 says that *Álfrøðull* will have a daughter (let us not forget *Álfrøðull* is a Goddess) before being killed by Fenrir. The second part of strophe 47 calls her daughter a *mær*, “maiden,” and says that when the Gods die, this maiden, *sú skal ríða*, “she shall ride,” *móður brautir*, “the paths of her mother.” We can see now how *Vafþrúðnismál* strophe 47 has shaped elements of both strophe 23 and 26 of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*. Strophe 23’s Fenrir (or *firins*, if we accept Bergmann’s emendation) has been inspired by *Vafþrúðnismál* strophe 47’s Fenrir, and the same *Vafþrúðnismál* strophe’s *móður*, “mother,” has been modified into the comparative *mæðri*, “more weary,” “more exhausted,” in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 23 (see the commentary on strophe 23 for the reading *mæðri*). However, it is not impossible to understand even *Vafþrúðnismál*’s *móður* as *móðr*, “weary,” that is, “weary she shall ride the paths, the maiden.” *Vafþrúðnismál* strophe 47’s *brautir*, “paths,” has become *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 23’s *ræstum*, that is, *røstum*, “paths,” but not the paths of *Álfrøðull* the sun, but of the earth Goddess-Giantess Rindr. Furthermore, in *Vafþrúðnismál* it is the sun who is killed, whereas the poet of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* has changed the gender to a masculine, so that the moon is called the fodder of the wolf. In brief, *Vafþrúðnismál*’s *Álfrøðull* functions as a cipher for the death of the Gods. Consequently, although *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 26 seems cheery and bright enough, ironically the appearance of the word *Álfrøðull* actually signifies that the sun and the Gods are about to die.

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nordur ad Niflheim /Niola sokte: Here we are told that personified Njóla, the Night, sokte, that is, sótti, to Niflheimr in the north. The word Njóla, literally “Darkness,” occurs only once in all the *Poetic Edda*, namely, in *Alvíssmál* strophe 30, where it is said to be the word the Gods (goðum) use for Nótt, who in strophe 29 is said to have been born of Nǫrvi. We can now see in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 25’s list of entities a partial influence from *Alvíssmál*’s frequent list of celestial, earthly and subterranean entities. In light of the above, *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 26’s Njóla can now be seen as serving to remind the listener of strophe 7’s statement that Iðunn grieved to be found in Nǫrvi’s child’s abode, that is, the house of Nótt. Thus strophe 26’s Njóla functions in part to make sure the listener does not forget that Iðunn is still languishing in the demonic north lands.

*Alvíssmál* strophe 30 also tells us that among *dvergar*, Dwarves, Nótt is called draumnjǫrun, that is, *draum-*, “dream” and *-njǫrun*, “weaver.” This calls to mind *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 3’s coordination of Dwarves and dreams. However, there seems to be as well a possible allusive connection with strophe 15 line 1’s reading in MS E, þotti Iorun, which in turn reminds us of strophe 3’s dream interpretation language among the Dwarves, namely, þotti . . . Brains and Daens . . . þotti. We have already commented on the name Iorun, and here we will only note the structural similarity to the name Iðunn, composed of *ið-*, “repeat,” and *unn*, “to love.” Iorun, that is, Jórunn, would be composed of *jór*, “steed,” and *-unn*, “love,” that is, a lover or friend of the steed, which are abundant enough throughout the poem, from nearly the beginning to the end, both explicitly and by allusion.

We read that Niola sokte, that is, sótti. We must not overlook that sokte is cognate with strophe 14's word sókn, "assault," "fight." The word can also mean "to seek" (cf. German *suchen*). The word occurs in strophe 15 line 5 as well, where the Gods seek (the manuscripts fluctuate between the forms sokte and sokto, which in standardized form would be soktu; o and u were commonly interchangeable in earlier times) an answer from Iðunn. The Gods *sought* an answer, that is, they were literally *prosecuting* her, one of the meanings of the noun sókn and its verbal forms. In strophe 26, one of the better ways to render sokte would be "pursued," that is, Night pursued/chased the north. It may be that in strophe 26 the poet wishes to allude by means of sokte to the notion of descent, *søkkva*. Indeed, Lüning would emend the text to reflect this: "Three manuscripts read *søkti*, on which grounds I hold the original reading to be *søkðisk* (she sank down)."<sup>970</sup> This would contrast well with line 1's risu, "rose," as well as line 5's upp, "up." Then in line 6 we find niþur, "offspring," which implies literally a descent; the word niþur links the final strophe back to strophe 4's niþur at Ginnungs / niþi sækva, "down to Ginnungr's descendants sunk." Thus the descendants of Ginnungr and the topos of sinking in strophe 4 stand in contrast to Heimdallr the descendant of Úlfrún and the topos of lifting up in strophe 26. Lüning reminds us that *nið* can also mean darkness,<sup>971</sup> so that the darkness of Ginnungr may be understood as a synonym for strophe 26's Njóla, Darkness.

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<sup>970</sup> Lüning, p. 524.

<sup>971</sup> Lüning, p. 518.

Argiǫl is the gate of Himinbjörg, not Heimdallr's horn. Bergmann clarifies that *upp nam* means "took," "lifted up" (cf. German, *aufnahm, aufhob*), and draws the following congruent conclusions: "The door/gate (*grind*) is at the same time precisely a cover that is taken up or lifted up (*hefr frá hlíði*) when opening the door/gate. Consequently here it is said that Heimdallr lifted up, that is, opened, the celestial gate named Argiǫll (Early Sounding)."<sup>972</sup>

In his commentary on *Fjolsvinnsmál* strophes 9-10, Bergmann explains that when a person opened a trellised gate, "a loud clang (*giǫll, gelle, geller, scream/screech*) sounded, which like today's rattling gates prevents anyone from secretly sneaking past the gate."<sup>973</sup> Similarly, the chain used to subdue Fenrir were also called *giǫll*, because it would magically sound off an alarm to warn the Gods when Fenrir would have broken through the chains.<sup>974</sup> Bergmann continues:

The magic trellised gate at the celestial dwelling of Himinbjörg (celestial mountain) which belongs to Heimdallr is named Early Sounding (*ârgiǫll*) because every morning it would emit a *geller* ("loud shout") out of joy at the light of day breaking in at dawn; just like the rooster called Early Caller (*ârgali*) crows merrily in the morning; just like the pillars of Memnon at the sight of Aurora, Memnon's mother, sends out tones of longing. . . . Finally, the horn of Heimdallr, guard of the castle of the Gods, that blows out an alarm at

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<sup>972</sup> Bergmann 1875, pp. 115-116.

<sup>973</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 148.

<sup>974</sup> Bergmann, 1874, pp. 99-100.

the approach of the enemies of the Gods, is called Giallarhorn (Yeller Horn). In this way one can also understand the magic trellised gate at the castle of the maiden Freyja, which bore the name Thryngiql (Thunder Yell), namely, because as soon as any uninvited guest or enemy at the entrance tried to lift the cover or cap, that is, to undertake to open the gate, a thunder-like sound would be ready to ring out.<sup>975</sup>

This topos agrees with a quite widespread imagery called variously “the gates” or “doors of heaven,” attested in both Semitic and Indo-European sources.<sup>976</sup> As M. L. West writes: “The Vedic Dawn is said to open the doors of heaven (*dvárau diváh*) with her brilliance (RV 1. 48. 15; cf. 113. 4).”<sup>977</sup> West informs us concerning another relevant report: “Tacitus knew the rumour of a Baltic region where the sun did not sink far enough beneath the semi-frozen sea to allow the stars to shine (*Germ.* 45. 1). When it rose, the sound was audible, so people believed, and the outlines of horses (*equorum*: v.l. *deorum, eorum*) and the rays emanating from the god’s head could be discerned.”<sup>978</sup>

We know that *Grímnismál* has influenced *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* in earlier strophes. Here behind strophe 26’s þyt is to be seen the inspiration of *Grímnismál* strophe 21’s Þýtr þund, and this is strengthened by the fact that the *Grímnismál*

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<sup>975</sup> Bergmann 1874, p. 100.

<sup>976</sup> See West 2007, p. 170.

<sup>977</sup> West 2007, p. 170.

<sup>978</sup> West 2007, p. 206.



strophe that immediately follows speaks of the grinding noise made by the sacred gate Valgrind. Strophe 26's *valldur* Himin biarga is derived as well from *Grímnismál* strophe 13's *Himinbiörg* ero en áttu / en þar Heimdall / kveða *valda* véom. Though of less significance, the latter strophe's *ranni* may also be compared with *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 26's *rann*.

Úlfrún is one of Heimdallr's nine mothers, usually understood as nine waves of the sea. The name probably means "Wolf-Runner," which is fitting since in an earlier strophe Heimdallr rides a wolf. The name Úlfrún in strophe 26 may be intended by the poet to make the listener think simultaneously of both Wolf-Runner and Wolf-Friend/Lover, with the second component in the latter corresponding to the *-unn* of the name Iðunn.

As Bergmann writes, "instead of the strong form, horn-þyt-valdr, we should read the weak form horn-þyt-valdi, because the half-verse should contain at least four syllables."<sup>979</sup>

Bugge wondered if instead of hornþyt valldr, "horn-blast wielder," we should read horn þytvalldr, "horn blast-wielder."<sup>980</sup>

Uhland argues that the poem's ending with Heimdallr's ascent, who is associated with the world's beginning and life, implies a sign of a new beginning, of the return of Iðunn with spring weather. Thus the winter passes into spring again.<sup>981</sup> While this is possible, we are not at all certain that the poem presupposes

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<sup>979</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 116.

<sup>980</sup> See Bugge 1965, p. 376.

<sup>981</sup> Uhland, p. 73.

such a cheerful ending. Bergmann seems to catch the dark underlying texture here: “Yet the poet knew that the encroaching fate cannot be avoided.”<sup>982</sup> We might cite the words of the chorus in Sophocles’ *Oedipus Rex*, “For what night leaves undone, / Smit by morrow’s sun / Perisheth.”<sup>983</sup> Or more literally, “What Night (νύξ) leaves unspared, Day (ἥμαρ) will besiege.” Similarly, strophe 26’s light and sunny imagery does not possess a positive nuance but constitutes a harbinger of destruction just around the corner, so to speak. A citation from Aeschylus’ *Eumenides* 104 will be fitting at this point: “[D]uring the day people’s destiny is unforeseen.”<sup>984</sup>

Especially clear should be the ominous first noun of strophe 26, namely, line 1’s raknar, which is certainly meant as an allusion to Ragnarøk. Not only that, but line 1’s risu racknar, “the Gods *rose*,” can even be seen as an ironic contrastive allusion to the imminent *fall* of the Gods at Ragnarøk. This makes the same strophe’s account of Heimdallr blowing his horn strike one as the actual call to the final battle. In strophe 26 the Gods rise only to fall.

Bergmann writes that “the poem, in the manner of all Eddic rhapsodies, breaks off *suddenly*. . . . His rhapsody is herewith, in accord with his purpose, ended, and fully finished.”<sup>985</sup> There are consequently no grounds for suspecting on the basis of the abrupt conclusion that the poem’s original ending has been lost.

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<sup>982</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 152.

<sup>983</sup> Storr, p. 21.

<sup>984</sup> Cited in Aranovsky, p. 245.

<sup>985</sup> Bergmann 1875, p. 152.



## EXCURSUS IV

Heinrich Wilhelm von Gerstenberg's Poem *Iduna* of 1767

As Evidence for the Pre-existence of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins'* Underlying "Myth"

Heinrich Wilhelm von Gerstenberg's poem *Iduna* was composed in 1767. We supply the German text from the version published in Joh. Wilhelm von Gerstenberg, *Sämmtliche poetische Schriften*. III. Theil (Wien: F. A. Schrämbel, 1794), pp. 179-181.

We give a literal English translation to the right of the German text:

### *Iduna*

Meiner Reisen die letzte bin ich gewalt:	I am swung to the last of my journeys;
O Göttin Freia! Göttin goldner Thränen!	O Goddess Freyja! Goddess of golden tears!
Sie war glücklich!	It/She was blissful.
Odin hat am Baum des Äthers hinauf	On the tree of ether Odin upwards
Mich schweben gelehrt und herab.	Taught me to hang and downwards.
Neun Tage lang, neun Nächte lang	Nine days long, nine nights long
Schwebt' ich, und fühlte den Gott:	I hung, and felt the God:
An meiner Stirne lispelte Laub	On my forehead murmured leaves
Vom Aste Glasur.	From Glasir's gleaming branches.
Ich sang! ich sang! Dem Tritt des Wallenden	I sang! I sang! From the step of the whirling one

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Entfiel die sterbliche Fessel:	Fell the mortal bonds.
So glitt ich auf Dünsten dahin!	Thus I floated there upon vapours!
Alle Ströme Valholls umrauschten, Fürchterlich umbrauste mich und erhaben Des Himmels Ozean.	All the streams of Valhalla whirled about, Terrifyingly roared around me and the lofty Ocean of the sky.
Meines Hauptes Scheitel tönte Hoch auf an der Scheitel Jotuns: Da träufte Wolkenschweifs	The crown of my head sounded High upon the Giant's skull: Then trails from clouds trickled
Von Ymers Gehirn in der Erde Kelch. Ich habe den Schlaf der Alfen gesehn Am Busen des Windes;	From Ymir's forehead in Earth's chalice. I have seen the sleep of Elves On the bosom of the wind;
Gehört des Raben Kriegsgesang, Und den Hammer Thors, und den Waffenregen Um die Wagenburg Valholls;	Heard the ravens' war song, And Thor's hammer, and the din of weapons Around Valhalla's chariot circle.
Und mich gebadet in der Alfen Röthe. Aber, o mein Gesang, du Most Odins, Ruf es laut!	And I bathed in the Elves' ruddy light. But, O my song, O must of Odin, Shout it aloud!
Dass vom Eise Wynilands es halle Bis an der schwarzen Woge Strand! Ruf es laut!	That the ice of Vinland would resound To the dark waves of the shore! Shout it aloud!
Vom goldnen Apfel Iduns hab' ich gekostet!	Of Idun's golden apples I have tasted!

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Jugendlicher blüht nicht auf	Youth blossoms forth not
Vom goldnen Apfel Iduns	From Idun's golden apples
Der mit dem grauen Bart! Mehr Brage war ich!	For the one with the grey beard! More was I Bragi!
Mir gab's sein Weib zu kosten! und Heil mir! o wie	His wife gave to me to taste, and health! O how
Hab' ich gekostet!	I have tasted!
Nicht jugendliche scherzt an der Brust	Not youthfully plays on the breast
Des Mädchens mit den weissen Armen	Of the maiden with the white arms
Asa der Graue!	The grey God!
Nicht jugendlicher spottet der Dämmerung,	Not youthfully scoffs at twilight,
Und ihrer sieben Donnerwagen,	Nor at its seven thunder chariots,
Und Fenris des Wolfs,	Nor at the wolf Fenris,
Und Loks, und aller Schlangen Midgaards	Nor at Loki, nor at all the serpents of Middle Earth
Die Schar der alten Götter, verjüngt	The host of the ancient Gods, made youthful
Vom goldnen Apfel Iduns!	By the golden apples of Idun!

The only substantial recent treatment of Gerstenberg's *Iduna* of which we are aware appears in Anne-Bitt Gerecke, *Transkulturalität als literarisches Programm: Heinrich Wilhelm von Gerstenbergs Poetik und Poesie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002), pp. 208-257.<sup>986</sup> However, we conducted our research and exegesis of Gerstennberg's poem before becoming aware of Gerecke's work.

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<sup>986</sup> Gerecke 2001, pp. 73-74 briefly discusses Gerstenberg's poem *Iduna* as well.

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We will give our English translation once more, but now with some of the lines' sequences rearranged in order to make the English flow more naturally. We also divide the poem's strophes into various blocks as explained in the comments that will follow below:

### I: The Trial

1 I am swung to the last of my journeys;  
O Goddess Freyja! Goddess of golden tears!  
It/She was blissful.

2 On the tree of ether Odin upwards  
Taught me to hang and downwards.  
Nine days long, nine nights long

3 I hung, and felt the God:  
On my forehead murmured leaves  
From Glasir's gleaming branches.

The poem, which is really all about Iðunn, begins with a reference to the poet's journeys and to the Goddess Freyja. The poet has made his own Freyja's journeys mentioned in *Gylfaginning*, where we read she would travel weeping red gold tears in search of her husband Óðr. Since the poet is on his way to search for and gain the mead, which functions for Gerstenberg as a mythemic equivalent to Iðunn's apples, we can deduce that Gerstenberg likely recognized in the name Óðr the first component of the mead's name, Óðrerir. But Gerstenberg begins his Iðunn

poem with Freyja because as an expert symbolist he also recognized the functional equivalence between Freyja and Iðunn. They are both manifestations of the same Goddess archetype. Strophe 1:3's *Sie* is ambiguous, for it can refer back to either Freyja or to the poet's final *Reise*, "journey," a feminine noun in German. We suspect *Sie* refers to both at once, in order to create the impression of a sort of ecstatic layer to Freyja's weeping, and to anticipate the ensuing narrative of the poet's blessed vision quest.

In strophe 2 we find ourselves immediately at Yggdrasill where Óðinn is hanging in search of the mead and the runes. The poet is essentially identified with Óðinn, for just as *Hávamál* portrays Óðinn being lifted up and looking down, so the poet here learns from Óðinn how to hang suspended on high and to descend. The heavy emphasis of the narrational "I" in the poem *Iduna* can be explained by the influence of the *Hávamál Rune Song* which begins with Óðinn proclaiming that "I know that I . . ." Thus *Hávamál's* accentuation upon the I, or self-identity, of Óðinn, has been intentionally transferred to the narrating "I" of the poem *Iduna*.

In strophe 3 the poet ascends and feels the God, that is, Óðinn. This "feeling" expresses the quasi-identity of the poet with Óðinn. The identity makes eminent sense, because both the poet and Óðinn are on a quest for the mead, which is the same as Iðunn's apples, functionally speaking of course. On the poet's forehead murmurs the golden branches of Glasir, mythically equivalent to Yggdrasill, upon which Óðinn and the poet have been hanging for nine days and nights. This murmuring alludes to the first stages of poetic inspiration, that is, the speaking of poetry by means of the sacred mead.



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In *Skáldskaparmál* Glasir is called *lundr* and *með*. The word *með* clearly means “tree,” which requires us to understand *lundr* here in this word’s rarer sense of “tree,” and not as “grove,” as is often done mistakenly: Í Ásgarði fyrir durum Valhallar stendr lundr, sá er Glasir er kallaðr, en lauf hans allt er gull rautt. . . . Sá er viðr fegrstr með goðum ok mǫnnum. “In Ásgarðr, in front of Valhalla’s gates, there stands a tree (*lundr*), and it is called Glasir (Gleaming), and all of its foliage is gold red. . . . Far and wide it is the most beautiful tree among both Gods and mortals.” Now it is unimaginable that any tree could be more beautiful or fairer than Yggdrasill, the world tree. There can consequently be no doubt that Glasir is Yggdrasill. Gerstenberg knew *Skáldskaparmál*’s description of Glasir as the universally superlative tree and his poem *Iduna* shows us he understood it as Yggdrasill. Additionally, Glasir’s foliage is *gull rautt*, “gold red,” just as *Gylfaginning* 35 says Freyja’s tears are *gull rautt*, “gold red.” Thus we have another reason why Gerstenberg’s *Iduna* begins with a reference to Freyja’s journeys and tears (strophe 1), followed immediately by the appearance of Yggdrasill (strophe 2). Both the foliage of Glasir and Freyja’s tears are symbols of the sacred mead.

### II: The Vision

4 I sang! I sang! From the step of the whirling one

Fell the mortal bonds.

Thus I floated there upon vapours!

5 All the streams of Valhalla whirled about,

Terrifyingly roared around me and the lofty

Ocean of the sky.

6 The crown of my head sounded

High upon the Giant's skull:

Then trails from clouds trickled

7 From Ymir's forehead in Earth's chalice.

I have seen the sleep of Elves

On the bosom of the wind;

8 Heard the ravens' war song,

And Thor's hammer, and the din of weapons

Around Valhalla's chariot circle.

Strophe 3's quiet murmuring now becomes a full-fledged singing of poetry, which results in the poet's release from mortality. He is now immortal, having drunk from the mead, which is the same as having eaten of Iðunn's apples. This immortality is described as a rebirth following death, and this explains the reference to the slaying of the Giant Ymir, whose blood flows into Earth's chalice, which must function as a sort of equivalent to the mead being stored in the vessel known as Óðrerir.

Strophe 6 indicates that the poet experiences the death of Ymir as somehow his own. In strophe 3 the poet's head softly murmured, but in strophe 6 his head becomes inseparable from the head of Ymir, which is cloven, its blood flowing into Earth's chalice, all a quite boisterous affair. Strophe 5's ocean and sky and strophe 7's earth all refer to elements of the cosmos that the Gods constructed out of the

slain Ymir's corpse. The poet undergoes a mystical death of sorts together with Ymir, from which a new mode of existence will soon emerge in the various strophes that follow. This mystical death may be understood as a fall or descent (see strophe 2's *herab*) from Yggdrasill. Strophe 7's sleep of Elves might suggest silence, but they sleep upon the wind, which is a noisy ambient. The noise continues with a ravens' war song, Thor's hammer and Vahalla's weapons and carriages of war. The reference to Valhalla may imply a visionary arrival at Valhalla where the poet drinks the mead of the Gods.

### III: Attainment of the Sacred Mead

9 And I bathed in the Elves' ruddy light.

But, O my song, O must of Odin,

Shout it aloud!

10 That the ice of Vinland would resound

To the dark waves of the shore!

Shout it aloud!

In strophe 9 the poet bathes in the sun, referred to by the traditional kenning of the Elves' ruddy or red light, a kenning attested in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 26, namely, *Álfrøðull*. However, that the poet *bathes* in the sun indicates that here the sun's light is the brightness of the sacred mead, and thus the sun's light is equivalent to the mead referred to as Óðinn's must, that is, young wine, in the next line.

Accordingly, strophe 10's waves will function as a symbol of the sacred liquid mead

as well, Wyniland (Vinland) probably being used as an allusion to the trope of Land of the Vine, that is, Wine-Land, essentially a Mead-Realm. In both strophes “Shout it aloud!” refers to the act of ecstatic poetic speech acquired through the mead of poetry. The desire for ice to resound or clang to the waves of the shore of Mead-Land expresses the desire for poetic fluidity and ease.

### IV: Tasting Idunn’s Apples: The Poet’s Attainment of Immortality

11 Of Idun’s golden apples I have tasted!

Youth does not blossom forth

From Idun’s golden apples

12 For the one with the grey beard! More was I Bragi!

His wife gave to me to taste, and health! O how

I have tasted!

Strophe 11 clearly shows that for Gerstenberg the poetic mead is mythemically the same as Iðunn’s apples of immortality. This agrees with Klopstock’s idea, which we will encounter below, that like the mead, the apples of Iðunn are the source of poetic inspiration. The poet has become immortal, whereas the Gods have become decrepit with old age, having lost Iðunn’s apples. This indicates that in strophe 11 line 2 Iðunn has now been abducted by Þjazi. We can deduce from strophe 13 that the one with the grey beard in strophe 12 is Óðinn. In strophe 12 the poet identifies himself with the God of poetry, Bragi, Iðunn’s

husband, more than with Óðinn. After all, the narrator is, like Bragi, a poet, and not a warrior like Óðinn.

### V: The Gods' Youth Lost and Restored; Ragnarøk Looms

13 On the breast of the maiden

With the white arms the grey God

Plays not youthfully!

14 The host of the ancient Gods, made youthful

By the golden apples of Idun, at twilight

Scoffs not youthfully,

15 Nor at its seven thunder chariots, nor at the wolf Fenris,

Nor at Loki, nor at all the serpents

Of Middle Earth.

Strophe 13 alludes to Gunnlǫð, for in *Hávamál* strophe 108 Óðinn speaks of “Gunnlǫð, in whose arms I lay,” and strophe 97 describes her as *sólhvíta*, “sun-white.” Then in strophe 161 Gunnlǫð is described as *hvítarmri konu*, “white-armed woman.”<sup>987</sup> However, just as *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 2 refers on various levels to both Gunnlǫð and Iðunn as *Urður*, so in Gerstenberg’s *Iduna* strophe 13, the white-armed maiden is ultimately Iðunn. In strophe 15 the Gods have had their youth restored by the retrieval of Iðunn’s apples, but they are careful not to scoff in overconfidence, for their twilight, their doom, is assured eventually.

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<sup>987</sup> Gerecke 2002, p. 232 made this same correlation independently of us.

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As we have seen, Gerstenberg's *Iduna* seems to be divided into several main blocks. Strophes 1-3 can be called the "trial" stage of the poet's vision quest. Strophes 4-8 contain the "cosmic vision" stage of the quest. Strophes 9 and 10 each ends with *Rufes laut!* "Shout it aloud!" In this way the two strophes form their own small yet significant block, for both directly relate to the sacred mead under its aspect of poetry. Finally, strophes 11-15, a block that constitutes a third of the entire poem, concerns the apples of Iðunn and the effects of their loss and restoration upon the Gods.

Within the last block, we can further group together strophes 11 and 12, since each contains the phrase *hab' ich gekostet!* "I have tasted!" This statement occurs in strophe 11's first line and in strophe 12's final line, an intentional and consequently quite artful distribution. Strophes 11-13 pertain to the loss of Iðunn's apples and the aging of the Gods. In strophe 15 the apples have been restored, and consequently the Gods' youth as well. However, even though they have had their youthfulness restored to them, the host of the Gods does not scoff, as youth are wont to do, at their enemies, who are listed in strophes 14:2-3 to 15:1. They do not scoff because the list of enemies in strophes 14-15 contains the known foes of the Gods who will bring about Ragnarøk. This interpretation is confirmed not only by strophe 14's word *Dämmerung*, "twilight" (a loose German way of rendering the -røk in the Old Norse word Ragnarøk, "doom of the Gods"), but also by the seven thunder chariots that form a part of the visual architecture of Ragnarøk in line 4 of Gerstenberg's 1766 poem *Gedicht eines Skalden: Fünfter Gesang* ("Poem of a Skald:

Fifth Song”). The image of seven chariots of thunder is unknown in Norse lore, but one cannot help but think of the seven thunders of Revelation 10:1-4:

1 Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven, wrapped in a cloud, with a rainbow over his head, and his face was like the sun, and his legs like pillars of fire.

2 He had a little scroll open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea, and his left foot on the land,

3 and called out with a loud voice, like a lion roaring; when he called out, the seven thunders sounded.

4 And when the seven thunders had sounded, I was about to write, but I heard a voice from heaven saying, “Seal up what the seven thunders have said, and do not write it down.” (RSV)

With regard to Gerstenberg’s *Iduna*, we should remark that the Old Norse poem *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* was first published in 1787, as Lassen documents: “*Edda Sæmundar hinns fróða. Edda Rhytmica seu antiqvior, vulgo Sæmundina dicta* I, København 1787, 199–232, is the first printed edition of *Hrafnagaldur*. There it is edited by Guðmundur Magnússon (1741–1798) from MS Icel. 47 (47), a manuscript edition made by Jón Eiríksson (1728–1787).”<sup>988</sup> There is thus no doubt regarding the fact that the Old Norse poem could not have influenced Gerstenberg’s *Iduna*, composed in 1767, twenty years before *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*’ first publication in 1787. Gerstenberg knew Snorri’s *Prose Edda* and the *Poetic Edda* poems *Völuspá* and

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<sup>988</sup> Lassen, p. 8.

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*Hávamál* from Resenius' 1665 *Edda Islandorum*.<sup>989</sup> *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* was translated into English for the first time by Cottle, in 1797, and appeared in 1816 in German for the first time, translated by Friedrich David Gräter: "Hrafna Galldur Oþins d. i. Odins Rabenbezauberung. Ein Eddisches Lied. zum ersten Mal ins Teutsche (Ein Versuch)," *Idunna und Hermode IV* (1816), strophes 1-7 in No. 34, pp. 133-134; strophes 8-15 in No. 35, pp. 137-138; strophes 16-20 in No. 36, pp. 141-142; strophes 21-26 in No. 39, pp. 153-154.

When we step back and look at the general outline and overall contents of Gerstenberg's *Iduna*, we see a poem about Iðunn (indeed, it is named after her) that begins with weeping (strophe 1) and an upward (*hinauf*) and downward (*herab*) movement upon and off from the world tree (strophe 2). Óðinn and the poet die a mystical death together in a vision quest for the sacred mead, a mystical death depicted in strophes 5-7 as the slaying of the Giant Ymir, implying a sort of new creation of the poet and of earth, sky and ocean. We can read between the lines and deduce that just as in primordial times, so now, too, it is Óðinn who slays Ymir. The slaying of the Giant is finished and then in strophe 7:1-2 the Elves sleep on the bosom of the wind. After this sleep, scenes and sounds of war and conflict break out and prevail throughout strophes 5-8. Among these is a war *song* of *ravens* (strophe 8). Strophe 9 transitions from war to the attainment of the sacred mead symbolized by the ruddy light of the Elves, that is, the sun. This means that we have an artful contrast between the Elves' (nocturnal) sleep upon the bosom of the wind in strophe 7, and the Elves' daytime sun in strophe 9.

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<sup>989</sup> See Gerecke 2001, p. 70; Gerecke 2002, p 127.



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Strophes 11-12 allude to the story of Óðinn's gaining of the mead from Gunnlōð known to Gerstenberg from *Skáldskaparmál* and *Hávamál*. Thus Gerstenberg sees Óðinn's winning of the mead from Gunnlōð as the culmination of his vision quest which began during his nine nights of hanging upon Yggdrasil. Strophes 13-15 refer to the story known from *Skáldskaparmál* concerning Þjazi's abduction of Iðunn and her golden apples, the subsequent greying and aging of the Gods, and their rejuvenation upon the return to them of Iðunn and her apples. Lastly, strophes 14-15 depict the Gods nervously and guardedly anticipating the outbreak of Ragnarøk.

The agreement of so much of the above with *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*, to varying degrees both as to larger outline and as to specific detail, is actually quite startling, from beginning to end. Early on in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*, Iðunn is on the world tree, from which she falls. The story then becomes one of darkness as Iðunn lingers in the netherworld. Then war breaks out between Middle Earth and a poison Giant from Élivágar who sends Dáinn with his deadly thorn, and the frenzied Ogress Rýgr (strophes 13-14). After this we read of merriment and mead as the Gods arrive at Vingólf, carried by the wind. Álfröðull, the Elves' ruddy light, the sun, breaks forth gloriously, but the Gods await Ragnarøk (strophe 26).

Just as interesting is the fact that Gerstenberg's 1767 poem *Iduna* could not have been influenced by the *Poetic Edda* poem *Sigrdrífumál*. That particular poem depicts Óðinn attaining the mead on a mountain top dressed for conflict in a helm as he bears what is called Brimir's sword. Since Brimir is one of Ymir's epithets in *Völuspá* strophe 9, we interpret the sword of Brimir as meaning the sword that

Óðinn used to slay Ymir. As the mead dropped down for Óðinn, Mímir's decapitated head (perhaps ultimately Ymir and Mímir are the same entity) spoke words of truth (strophe 14), which bade Óðinn to engrave runes before *skínanda goði*, "the shining Goddess," who must be none other than Gunnlǫð, and not, *pace* Hollander, a masculine "shining god," which he mistakenly sees as the sun.<sup>990</sup> Bellows, by contrast, gives the correct translation, namely, "before the shining goddess."

How are we to explain the puzzling parallels between *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* and Gerstenberg's *Iduna*, seeing that he had not read the Eddic poem beforehand? The answer most likely lies in his exposure to Danish and other folk ballads and folklore.<sup>991</sup> That Klopstock's poetry contains various parallels to *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* as well perhaps might strengthen our suggestion. We therefore now turn to an examination of some of Klopstock's Nordic verses. Klopstock's *Wingolf* dates to 1747, but its Norse texture dates to a later 1766 revision. The *Erstes Lied* begins as follows:

Wie Gna im Fluge, jugendlich ungestüm	As Gna impetuous, on a youthful wing,
Und stolz, als reichten mir aus Idunas Gold	And proud as if to me Iduna's gold
Die Götter, sing' ich meine Freunde	The Gods had reached, the friendly band I sing,
Feiernd in kühnerem Bardenliede.	And greet with bardic harp-tones bold. <sup>992</sup>

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<sup>990</sup> Hollander 2001, p. 237.

<sup>991</sup> On this exposure, see Gerecke 2001 and Gerecke 2002.

<sup>992</sup> English from Nind, p. 4.

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This strophe is quite interesting, for first we note that Gná is a travelling messenger of Frigg, and here Klopstock correlates Gná with Iðunn. This parallels Gerstenberg's coordination of the travelling Freyja with Iðunn in his poem *Iduna*. Secondly, from Iðunn's golden apples the Gods "reached," *reichten*, that is, "gave," to the poet. It is interesting that we find in strophe 1 of a poem called *Wingolf* the trope of "reaching," the Gods, and Iðunn, for in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 17 it is the Gods (Heimdallr and Loki), who have just come from Iðunn, who reach (*tóku*) Vingólf.

In the *Second Lay* of *Wingolf*, Iðunn appears soon before a mention of Glasir, identified in *Skáldskaparmál* as the fairest tree in existence, and which stands before the gates of Valhalla. Glasir literally means "Gleaming," because of the tree's gold branches and foilage. For all we know, Glasir might conceivably be located on none other than Iðunn's and Bragi's Brunnakr grove:

1 Sie kommen. Kramern gehet in Rhythmustanz	They come! Iduna in the rhythmic dance
Mit hochgehobner Leier Iduna vor.	Goes before Cramer with the lyre upborne;
Sie geht und sieht auf ihn zurücke,	Before him goes, but throws a backward glance,
Wie auf die Wipfel des Hains der Tag sieht.	As on the wood-top looks the Morn.

2 Sing noch Beredtsamkeiten! die erste weckt	Sing yet those strains of Eloquence, that wake
Den Schwan in Glasor schon zur Entzückung auf.	The swan in Glasor as he floats along;
Sein Fittig steigt, und sanft gebogen	His wing he sets, and his slow-bending neck
Schwebet sein Hals mit des Liedes Tönen.	Curbs to the music of the song. <sup>993</sup>

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<sup>993</sup> Nind, p.8.

In the *Fifth Lay* strophe 6 we read:

Wie aus der hohen Drüden Versammlungen,	Or when, to Braga's harp, on yonder height,
Nach Braga's Telyn, nieder vom Opferfels	From the rock-altar of the Druid throng,
In's lange tiefe Tal der Waldschlucht	Down the deep valley of the forest-fight
Satzungenlos sich der Barden Lied stürzt.	Is hurled the wild and lawless song. <sup>994</sup>

Here we see a traditional contrast between heights and deep dales applied to Bragi, a contrast associated with the wife in the *Exeter Book's* "The Wife's Complaint," with the stag in the same *Exeter Book's* "Riddle 93," and with Iðunn in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*.

Klopstock's 1766 poem *Braga* is also of interest in this context, for in strophe 2 there is talk of a wolf hide, of Mímir's well in strophe 6, while strophe 8 speaks of Glasir's wreath (here it is frost rather than gold that glimmers), and in strophe 13 we hear of Orpheus and Eurydice, Greek parallels to Bragi and Iðunn:

2 Lachend erblick' ich dich am Feuer, in des Wolfes Pelz,	I mock to see thee crouch'd in the wolf's
	[hide
Blutig noch vom Pfeil, welcher dem entscheidenden Blick,	Before the fire, yet bloody from the
wound,	
In die Seite des Eroberers schnell	Where the keen arrow pierced the
	[conqueror's side,
Folgte, dass nieder in den Strauch er sank.	When he sank helpless to the ground.

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<sup>994</sup> Nind, p. 16.

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6 Aber nun wandelt' an dem Himmel der erhabne Mond sky.	But now the cloudless moon ascends the sky.
Wolkenlos herauf, nahte die Begeistrung mit ihm, O wie trunken von den Mimer! Ich sah Fern in den Schatten an dem Dichterhain [Braga]	Her inspiration all my soul pervades As drunk at Mimer's fountain! I descry, Far off beneath the bardic shades, [Braga]
8 Sing, es umkränzete die Schläfen ihm der Eiche Laub! Sings, o Bardenlied, schimmernder bereifet war ihm dew, Der beschattende glasorische Kranz! rime: Golden sein Haar, und wie der Kranz bereift!	Sing how the oak-leaves bound his brow [sublime. Sing, Bardic song, how, as with pearly The wreath of Glasor glitter'd with the His golden locks were rimy too.
13 Diese Beflüglungen des Stahles, so den Sturm ereilt, Thrazens Orpheus nicht! eilete damit auf dem Strom Zu Euridize nicht, hin! des Walhalls Sänger, umdränget von Enherion,	These wings of steel that can the storm [o'ertake, Did Thracian Orpheus find, nor down the [flood Sped to Eurydice; but I, singer of Valhalla, thronged by Einherjar, <sup>995</sup>

An additional poem by Klopstock from 1766 will be of interest for our comparative purposes, namely, *Skulda*, that is, the Norn of the future. As Vetterlein explains in his commentary to *Skulda*, strophe 1's "inmost grove" can be identified with reference to strophe 8. The imagery is that of "an oak forest upon a mountain

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<sup>995</sup> Nind, pp.202-204; strophe 13, lines 3-4 modified.

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where Mímir's well trickles, becoming a stream that flows down into the dale. In this forest Bragi lingers happily and here our poet was witness to the judicial process" of the Norns described in strophe 2.<sup>996</sup> This reminds us of the apparent association between Iðunn and a Norn (Urður) in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 2. According to Vetterlein, in the poem *Skulda* Bragi functions as a judge of poems brought to him for assessment by the Norns.<sup>997</sup> We supply the entire poem, since it is especially rich in several respects:

1 Ich lernt' es im innersten Hain, Welche Lieder der Barden ah! In die Nacht deines Thals sinken, Untergang Welch' auf den Höhen der Tag bleibend umstrahlt.	In th' inmost grove I learnt, What loud poetic lays Sink into dark oblivion's vale, Or greet upon the hills the morning rays.
2 Ich sahe, noch beb' ich vor ihr! Sah der richtenden Norne Wink! Ich vernahm, hör' ihn noch! ihres Fluges Schlag, Dass bis hinauf in des Hains Wipfel es scholl!	I saw—and tremble still— The Norna's judging eyes: I heard, and hear, her lofty wings Sonorous to the oak-wood's summit rise.
3 Gekühlt von dem wehenden Quell, Sass und hatt' auf die Telyn sanft Sich gelehnt Braga. Jetzt brachte Geister ihm, Die sie, in Nächten des Monds, Liedern entlockt,	Cooled by the wavy spring Sat Braga, leaning light Upon his lyre. And spirits now Werandi brought, whom in the moonlit night

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<sup>996</sup> Klopstock Oden Zweiter Band, p. 131.

<sup>997</sup> Klopstock Oden Zweiter Band, p. 132.

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4 Die Norne Werandi, und sie Hatt' in Leiber gehüllt, die ganz Für den Geist waren, ganz jeden leisen Zug Sprachen, Gebilder, als wärs wahre Gestalt;	Hither she lur'd from songs, And sheath'd in bodies meet Each for its spirit; every trait Rendering in form and counterpart complete.
5 Zehn neue. Sie nahten. Nur Eins Hatte Minen der Ewigkeit! Vom Gefühl seines Werths schön erröthend! Voll Reize des Jünglings, und voll Stärke des Manns!	Ten were they, that drew near. One only seem'd to scan Far fame; and blush'd with conscious worth, Full of the charm of youth and strength of man.
6 Mit Furchtsamkeit trat es herzu, Als es stehen die Norne sah, Die allein nach des Tags fernen Hügeln führt, Oder hinab, wo die Nacht ewig bewölkt.	With rev'rence he advanced, When he the Norna saw, Who leads to the far hills of dawn, Or down to night which endless clouds o'erdraw.
7 Nachdenkender breitete schon Skulda schattende Flügel aus; Doch es sank nieder noch ihr der Eichenstab, Dessen entscheidender Wink Thoren nicht warnt.	Reflective Skulda spread Her broad o'ershadowing wings, Though still her oaken wand sank down, Whose signal-stroke to fools no warning brings.
8 Die Neune betraten den Hain Stolz, und horchten mit trunknem Ohr Dem Geschwätz, welches laut Stimmenschwärme [schrien, Und von dem wankenden Stuhl Richter am Thal.	The Nine tread proud the grove: With ravish'd ear they hail The chattering of the noisy throng, And of uncertain judges in the vale.
9 Sie schreckte das Lächeln im Blick Skulda's nicht, und sie schlummerten	The smile in Skulda's eyes Them scared not. They were laid,

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Noch getäuscht, ahndungsfrey auf den Kränzen ein, Sweetly deceived, on wreaths asleep,  
Welche jetzt grünen ihr Traum, welken nicht sah. Which they saw bloom in dreams, but saw not  
fade.

10 Ah Norne! . . . Sie hub sich im Flug, Ah! Norna rose in flight,  
Schwebt', und wies mit dem ernsten Stab' And motion'd with her wand  
In das Thal! Taumellos endlich, schlichen sie Valewards. They glided without noise,  
Kürzeren, längeren Weg, aber hinab! By short or longer way, into that vale profound.

11 Dem Einen nur wandte sie sich But with that one she turn'd  
Nach den schimmernden Hügeln hin! Towards the hills of day.  
Es entfloss Lautenklang ihrer Flügel Schwung, Her wings resounded, like the lute,  
Da sie sich wandt', und der Stab Ewigkeit wies! And her staff pointed the immortal way.<sup>998</sup>

Klopstock's 1767 poem *Unsre Sprache* develops some of the same basic themes as in *Skulda*, but adds *Wurdi*, that is, *Urður*, into the mix. In strophes 1 and 2 *Wurdi* descends to the well of the bards, that is, to *Mímir's* well, which again reminds us of the coordination of *Urður* and the sacred mead, as well as *Mímir's* well, in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophes 2 and 5. *Unsre Sprache* ends in the final strophe with the figure of *Bragi*.

For Herder, *Iðunn* functioned as a symbol for Norse mythology in all its parts, and her apples of rejuvenation functioned as a symbol of the need for the rediscovery of "Germanic" mythology on the part of Germanic peoples, in contrast to the dominance of Greek mythology. These two symbolic functions are clear from

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<sup>998</sup> Nind, pp. 212-214.



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Herder's 1796 *Iduna, oder der Apfel der Verjüngung*, first published in *Die Horen* (Tübingen: In der J. G. Cottaischen Buchhandlung, 1796):

Alfred.

Hast Du die Fabel von der Iduna gelesen, Frey?

Frey.

Sie ist eine der besten. „Braga, der Gott der Dichtkunst, hat eine Gemahlinn, der die Götter die Äpfel der Unsterblichkeit anvertraut haben. Altern die Götter; so verjüngen sie sich durch den Genuß derselben.“ Ich fürchte aber, daß diese Götter ganz todt sind, und sich nie mehr verjüngen werden. Die nordische Morgenröthe leuchtet ohne zu erwärmen.

Alfred.

Hast Du noch Lust zu Einer Unterredung?

Dritte Unterredung.

Alfred.

Idunens Apfel ist heut unsre Losung. Ich verliere also kein Wort darüber, daß wir weder aus dieser noch aus irgend einer andern Mythologie rohe Begriffe, sie betreffen Natur oder Sitten, roh auftragen müssen. Auch die Griechen hatten ihre Titanen- und Giganten-Geschichten; ihre älteste war eine sehr rohe Kosmogonie. Jene aber wußten sie schicklich unterzuordnen, und aus dieser eine bessere, zuletzt bis zur feinsten Spekulation hervorzurufen.

Glaubst Du nicht, daß aus Ymers Gebeinen, aus Bure's Söhnen, die Midgard erbauten, aus der Esche des Weltbaums über dem Brunnen der Urzeit und aus den drei Jungfrauen unter ihren Zweigen, der Vergangenheit, Gegenwart,

und Zukunft Dichtungen gebildet werden mögen, die dieses Quells der Urzeit werth sind? Hast Du Heimdalls Lied gehört, des schönen Gottes, der an des Himmels heiligem Blau die Welt bewacht und ihrem Untergange zuvorkommt? Hast Du vom Brunnen der Weisheit geschöpft, in dem des höchsten Gottes Auge glänzet? und die feine Bildung der nordischen Schutzgöttinnen bemerkt, in allem was sie verrichten auf der Erde? Hast Du die Geschichte von des guten Balders frühem Tode vernommen, und was für Trauren daraus erwuchs? ja die ganze Zusammenordnung der Dinge zwischen dem Guten und Bösen, dem Himmel und der Hela, endlich den Ausgang der Dinge, jene schreckliche Abenddämmerung, auf welche eine verjüngte Welt ein fröhlicher Morgen folget? Lassen sich daraus nicht Dichtungen schöpfen, die unsterblich sind, sobald sie Idunens Apfel berührt?

The evidence of Gerstenberg's *Iduna*, and to a lesser extent of various poems by Klopstock, indicates once again that the poet of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* created his "myth" not *ex nihilo* but *ex traditione*. Lüning expressed the situation as follows:

Even though it is entirely certain that the poem, as presently preserved, is not ancient, this does not mean that older lays of the same content did not once exist, or in other words, *that we do not have an authentic myth in the poem*. A hint that the content once circulated among the people is

shown by Uhland who supplies parallels from Scandinavian folk songs that are closely related to Scottish ballads, especially the ballad of Hind Etin.<sup>999</sup>

Lüning adds to this that *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* gives us a myth of the loss of Iðunn which is ultimately and mythically equivalent to the story of her abduction by Þjazi. As Lüning insightfully observes, the main difference between the two stories is that in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* Iðunn does not return, but this is necessary, for as the tradition explains, the Gods will be kept young by her apples until Ragnarøk comes:

But because the Æsir must eventually perish, so Iðunn must perish before they do; she must sink down and return again. And in our poem she does not return, rather—*Heimdallr consigns himself to his post. . . .* Then the fallen Iðunn will never return to the Æsir, ematiated and unconscious at the foot of the world ash tree; in vain do the Æsir seek to revive her and to obtain information from her concerning whether their time has come. Then they realize that the twilight of the Gods is beginning, and *Heimdallr consigns himself to his post*, in order to give the sign at the right time with his loud calling horn, when the chained monsters stride out for battle.

That is what I think the original mythic content of the poem is, which it admittedly portrays in incomplete, partially frilled images. If we had this myth in its original poetic version, then the sub-title *Forspjallsljóð* would

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<sup>999</sup> Lüning, p. 525.

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have an entirely new meaning; the the poem contains—a *prelude to the twilight of the Gods*.<sup>1000</sup>

Snorri does indeed tell us in *Gylfaginning* 26 that Iðunn will keep the Gods young with her apples until Ragnarøk comes: “Iðunn guards in her chest of ash those apples which the gods must taste whensoever they grow old; and then they all become young, and so it shall be even unto the doom of the Gods.” Hon varðveitir í eski sínu epli þau, er goðin skulu á bíta, þá er þau eldast, ok verða þá allir ungir, ok svá mun vera allt til ragnarøkrs. Since one day Ragnarøk must come, then there must have existed a myth about a definitive departure of Iðunn and irreversible loss of her apples. Where is that myth preserved? As far as we are aware, nowhere except in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*. Notice that Snorri says Iðunn keeps her apples in a chest made of ash wood, *eski*. This perforce must allude to the world ash tree, Yggdrasill, which would bring Iðunn into direct proximity to Yggdrasill, just as we find her in *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*.

Iðunn’s proximity to Yggdrasill makes eminent sense mythemically, for just as her apples keep the Gods young, so Yggdrasill is kept young by Urður’s well. This is precisely why we at least on one level we can discern the outlines of Iðunn behind *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* strophe 2’s figure of Urður. Both Iðunn and Urður are guardians and preservers of Yggdrasill. The sacred mead of Óðrerir, Iðunn apples and Urður’s well are in the end all functionally equivalent.

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<sup>1000</sup> Lüning, p. 526.

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With regard to the possible origins of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*, Lassen writes: “If the author of *Hrafnagaldur* found himself in the milieu of Brynjólfur Sveinsson in Skálholt, it is by no means improbable that he knew the Codex Regius of the eddic poems, which came into Brynjólfur’s possession in 1643.”<sup>1001</sup> Lassen then refers to Resen’s 1665 publication of *Völuspá* and *Hávamál*. Lassen writes with the same specificity that, “*Hrafnagaldur* may have been composed around the middle of the seventeenth century, and would then have been connected with the Renaissance in Iceland, the rediscovery of the Codex Regius in 1643 and the learned circle around Brynjólfur Sveinsson. . . .”<sup>1002</sup> Guðmundur Ólafsson carried the earliest known manuscript of the poem to Sweden in 1681.<sup>1003</sup>

*Hrafnagaldur Óðins*’ author betrays extensive and intimate knowledge of the *Elder Edda*’s the poems to a degree which would likely have required decades of close study of those poems. In light of the poem’s influences from sources such as the Latin of Statius’ *Thebaid* and the *Pistis Sophia*, both of which influenced *Völuspá*, and considering the parallels in the poem to quite archaic storytelling techniques and mythemes attested in sources reaching back even to *Gilgamesh*, arguably we should not a priori discount the possibility that a later author such as the poet who first wrote down *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* may have inherited oral traditions that had informed not only the generation of such scholars as Snorri, but some of the eddic poems themselves.

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<sup>1001</sup> Lassen, p. 15.

<sup>1002</sup> Lassen, p. 21.

<sup>1003</sup> Lassen, p. 29.

APPENDIX I

*Hrafnagaldur Óðins*

Old Norse text edited by G. Pálsson and R. Rask (Arv. Aug. Afzelius) (1818)

Old Norse text edited by Hallgrímur Schéving (1837)

Pálsson and Rask	Schévíngr
1. Alföþr orkar,	1. Alföþr orkar
Alfar skilja,	Alfar skilia
Vanir vita,	Vanir vita
vísa nornir:	Vísa nornir
elr íviþja,	elr iviþia
aldir bera,	aldir bera
þreyja þursar,	þreyá þursar
þrá Valkyrjur.	þrá Valkyrinr.
2. Ætlun Æsir	2. Ætlun Æsir
illa gátu,	ílla gátu
verpir viltu	Verpir viltu
vættar rúnom	vættar rúnum
Óþhræiris skyldi	óþhræis skyldi;
Urþur geyma,	Urþur geýma
máttk at verja	máttk at veria
mestum þorra.	mestum þorra.
3. Hverfr því Hugin	3. Hverfr því hugr
himna leitar,	hennar leita
grunar guma	grunar guma

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grand, ef dvelr:	grand er dvelr
þótti er Þráins	þotta Þráins
þúnga draumr,	þúnga draumr
Dáins dulo	Dáins dulo
draumr þótti.	draumur þotta.
4. Dugir með dvergum	4. Dugir með dvergum
dvína, heimar	dvína heimar
niþr á Ginnúngs	niþr á ginnungs
niþi savckva:	niþi søkkva
opt Alsviþr	opt Alsviþr
ofan fellir,	ofanfellir
opt of-favllnum	opt of fœllnum
aptr safnar.	aptr safnar.
5. Stendr æva	5. Stendr æva
strind nè ravþull,	strind ne ravþull
lopte með lævi	lopti með lævi
linnir ei straumi;	linnir ei straumi
mærum dylst	mærum dylst
í Mímis brunni	í Mímis brunni
vissa vera;	vissa vera
vitip enn, eþa hvat?	vitip enn eþa hvat?



## Hrafnagaldur Óðins – Rough Draft 2016

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6. Dvelr í davlum	6. Dvelr í davlum
dís fortvitin,	dís fortvitin
Yggdrasils frá	yggdrasils
aski hnigin:	frá aski hnígin
Alfa ættar	Alfa ættar
Ípunni hèto,	Ípunni heto
Ivallds ellri	Ivalds ellri
ýngsta barna.	ýngsta barna.
7. Eirþi illa	7. Eirþi ílla
ofankomo	ofankomu
hár-baðms undir	harbaðms undir
haldin meiþi:	haldin meiþi
kunni sízt	kunni sízt
at kundar Nörva,	at kundar Niørva
vön at væri	vøn at værri
vistom heima.	vistum heima.
8. Sjá sigtývar	8. Siá Sigtyvar
syrgja Navnno	syrgja Nønno
viggjar at veom,	viggjar at veom
vargs-belg seldo;	vargs-belg seldo
lét ífæraz,	lét ífærast

## Hrafnagaldur Óðins – Rough Draft 2016

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lyndi breytti,	lyndi breytti
lék at lævísi,	lék at lævísi
litom skipti.	litom skipti.
9. Valdi Viþrir	9. Valdi viðrir
vavrþ Bif-rastar	vavrþ bifrastar
gjallar-sunnu-	gjallarsunno
gátt at frètta,	gat at fretta
heims hvívetna	heims hvívetna
hvört er vissi?	hvort er visi
Bragi ok Loptr	Bragi ok Loptr
báro kvíðu.	baro kvíðu.
10. Galdr gólo	10. Galdr golo
gavndom riðu	gavndom riðu
Rögnir oc regin	Rögnir ok Reginn
at rann heimis;	at ranni Heimis
hlustar Opinn	hlustar Opin
Hliþskjálfo í	hliþskialfo í
lèt braut vera	letz braut vera
lánga vego.	láuga vega.
11. Frá enn vitri	11. Frá enn vitri
veiga-seljo	veiga-selio

## Hrafnagaldur Óðins – Rough Draft 2016

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banda-burða	banda vörþr
oc brauta-sinna:	ok brauta sinnar
hlýrnis, heljar,	hlyrnis heliar
heims ef vissi	heims ef vissi
ártíþ, æfi,	ártíþ, æfi
aldurtila.	aldrtila.
12. Nè mun mælti,	12. Ne mun mælti
nè mál knátti	ne mál knatti
gívom greiða,	givom greiða
nè glaum hjaldi:	ne glaum hialdi
tár af tînduz	tár af týnduz
tavrgom hjarnar,	taurgum hiarnar
eljun feldin,	eliun faldin
endur-rjóða.	endr rióða.
13. Eins kemr austan	13. Eins ok kemr austan
ôr Elivâgom	or Elivagum
þorn af atri	þorn af akri
þurs hrimkalda,	þurs hrimkalda
hveim drepr dróttir	hveimdrepr drottir
dáen allar	dáinn allar
mæran of Miþgarþ,	mæran of Miþgarþ

## Hrafnagaldur Óðins – Rough Draft 2016

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með nátt hvör.	með nátt hvor.
14. Dofna þá dáþir,	14. Dofna þá dáþir
detta hendr,	detta hendr
svífr of svimi	svífr ofsvimi
Sverþ-ás hvíta:	sverþ áss hvíta:
rennir örvit	rennir ørvit
rýgjar glýju,	rygiar glyin
sefa-sveiflom	sefa sveiflum
sókn gjörvallri.	sókn gjørvallri.
15. Jamt þótti Jórun	15. Jamt þótti jórun
jólnom komin,	jólnum komin
sollin sútum;	sollin sútum
svars er ei gátu:	svars ei gátu
sóttu því meir	sóttu því meir
at syn var fyrir	at syn var fyrir
mun þó miþr	mun þó miþr
mælgj dugþi.	mælgj dugþi.
16. Fór frumqvavpull	16. Fór frumkvøpull
fregnar brauta	Fregnar branta
hirþir at Herjans	hirþir at Herjans
horni gjallar:	horni giallar

## Hrafnagaldur Óðins – Rough Draft 2016

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Nálar nefa	Nalar nepa
nam til fylgis,	nam til fylgis
greppr Grímnis	greppr Grímnis
grund varþveitti.	grund varþveitti.
17. Vingólf tóko	17. Vingolf toko
Viþars þegnar	viþars þegnar
Fornjóts sefum	Forniots sefum
fluttir báþir:	fluttir báþir
iþar gánga,	iþar gánga
Æsir kvedja	Asi kveþia
Yggjar þegar	yggjar þegar
viþ avlteiti.	viþ avlteiti.
18. Heilan Hángatý	18. Heílan Hánganty
hapnaztan ása	heppnaztan Asa
virt avdvegis	virt aundvegis
valda báþo;	valda báþo
sæla at sumbli	sæla at sumbli
sitia día,	sitia día
æ med Yggjongi	æ meþ yggiongi
yndi halda.	yndi halda.
19. Beckjar-sett	19. Bekkiarsett

## Hrafnagaldur Óðins – Rough Draft 2016

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at Bavlverks ráði	at Bavlverks ráði
sjót Sæhrímni	siót sæhrimni
saddiz rakna:	saddist rakna
Skavgul at skutlom	skaugol at skutlom
skaptker Hnikars	skaptker Hnikars
mat af miði	mat af miði
minnis hornum.	minnis hornum.
20. Margs of-frágo	20. Margs of frago
máltíp yfir	máltíp yfir
Heimdall há goð,	Heimdall há goð
havrgar Loka:	havrgar Loka
spár eða spakmál	spár eða spakmál
sprund ef kendi	sprund ef kendi
undorn ófravm,	undorn áfram
unz nam húma.	unz nam hymia.
21. Illa lèto	21. Illa leto
orþit hafa	orþit hafa
erindisleyso	erindisleyso
of lítil-fræga:	ok lítilfræga
vant at væla	vant at væla
verða myndi,	verða myndi

## Hrafnagaldur Óðins – Rough Draft 2016

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svâ at svanna	sva at svanna
svars of-gæti.	svars ofgiæti.
22. Ansar Omi,	22. Ansar omi
allir hlýddo:	allir hlyddo
Nótt skal nema	nótt skal nema
nýræþa til;	nýræþa til
hugsi til myrgins,	hugsi til myrgins
hver sem orkar	hver sem orkar
ráp til-leggja	ráp tilleggja
rausnar-ásom!	rausnar Asom.
23. Rann með ravstom	23. Rann með ravstum
Rindar móþir	Rindar móþr
favþur Jarþar	fódrlarþr
Fenris valla;	Fenrisvalla
gengo frá gildi,	gengo frá gildi
goþin, kvöddo	goþin kvøddo
Hrópt ok Frigg	Hropt ok Frigg
sem Hrímfaxa fór.	sem Hrimfaxa fór.
24. Dýrum settan	24. Dýrum settan
Dellíngs mavgr	Dellings mavgr
jó framkeyrþi	ió framkeyrþi

## Hrafnagaldur Óðins – Rough Draft 2016

jorkna-steinom:	iárna steinum
mars of Mannheim	mars of Manheim
mavn af glóar,	mavn ofglóar
dró leik Dvalins	dró leiku Dvalins
drösull í reiþ.	drøsull í reiþ.
25. Jórmungrundar	25. Jormungrundar
í jaþar nyrþra	í iaþar nyrþra
und rót yzto	undir rót yztu
aþal-þollar:	aþal-þollar
gèngu til reckjo	gengo til rekkio
gýgjur ok þursar,	gygiur ok þursar,
náir, dvergar	náir, dvergar
ok döck-álfar.	ok dokk-álfar.
26. Riso racknar,	26. Riso rakknar
rann álfravþull,	rann álfranþull
norþr at Niflheim	norþr at Niflheim
njóla sótti:	nióla sótti:
upp rann árgjöll	up nam árgiøl
Úlfrúnar niþr,	Ulfrúnar niþr
hornþyt-valldr	hornþyt-valdr
Himinbjarga.	Himinbiarga.





## APPENDIX II

### *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*

Old Norse text edited by Sophus Bugge (1867)

Old Norse text edited by F. W. Bergmann (1875)

## Hrafnagaldur Óðins – Rough Draft 2016

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Bugge	Bergmann
<p>1 Alföþr orkar,  álfar skilia,  vanir vitu,  vísa nornir,  5 elr íviþia,  aldir bera,  þreyia þursar,  þrá valkyrior.</p>	<p>1 Allföðr orkar;  Álfar skilia;  Vanir vitu;  vísa Nornir;  Iviðia elr;  Aldir bera;  þreyia þursar;  þrá Valkyriur.</p>
<p>2 Ætlun æsir  illa gátu,  verpir villtu  vættar rúnom;</p>	<p>2 Ætlun Æsir  illa gátu;  verpir villtu  Vættar rúnum:</p>
<p>5 Óþhrærir skyldi  Urþr geyma,  máttk at veria  mestum þorra.</p>	<p>Oðhræis skylði  Urður geyma,  “máttk at veria  mestum þorra.”</p>
<p>3 Hverfr því hugr  hinna leitar,  grunar guma  grand, ef dvelr;</p>	<p>3 Hverfr því Hugr;  himna leitar;  grunar Guma  granda ef dvelr;</p>

## Hrafnagaldur Óðins – Rough Draft 2016

<p>5 Þótti er Þráins þunga draumr, Dáins dulo draumr þótti.</p>	<p>þótti er þráins “þunga draumar;” Dáins “dulu draumar” þótti.</p>
<p>4 Dugir með dvergum dvína, heimar niþr á Ginnungs niþi sauckva;</p>	<p>4 Dugir, með Dvergum, dvîna, heima; niðr at Ginnungs nîði sökka;</p>
<p>5 opt Alsviþr ofan fellir, opt of föllnum aptr safnar.</p>	<p>opt Alsvîðr ofan fellir; opt of föllnum aptar safnar.</p>
<p>5 Stendr æva strind né rauþull, lopti með lævi linnir ei straumi;</p>	<p>5 Stendr æva fast Strind nê Röðull; lopti með lævi linnir ei straumi;</p>
<p>5 mærum dylsc í Mímis brunni vissa vera; vitid enn eþa hvat?</p>	<p>mærum dylsk î Mîmis brunni vissa Vera; vitið enn eðr hvat?</p>
<p>6 Dvelr í daulom</p>	<p>6 Dvelr î dölum</p>

## Hrafnagaldur Óðins – Rough Draft 2016

dís forvitiñ,	Dís fortvitiñ,
Yggdrasils frá	Yggðrasils frá
aski hñigin;	aski hñigin;
5 álfa ættar	Alfa ættar
Iþunni héto,	Iðunni hêtu,
Ívallds ellri	Ivalðs ellri
ýngsta barna.	yngsta barna.
7 Eirdi illa	7 Eirði illa
ofankomo,	ofan-komu,
hárbapms undir	Hârbaðms undir
haldin meiþi;	haldin meiði;
5 kunni sízt	Kunni síðst at
at kundar Nörva,	kundar Nörva,
vön at væri	vön at værri
vistom heima.	vístom heima.
8 Siá sigtívar	8 Siâ Sigtívar
sýrgia naunno	sýrgia nönnu,
Viggjar at veom,	Viggjar at vêum.
vargsbelg seldo;	Vargsbelg seldu;
5 let í færarz,	lêt î færask;
lyndi breytti,	lyndi breytti;
lek at lævísi,	lêk at lævísi;

## Hrafnagaldur Óðins – Rough Draft 2016

litom skipti.	litum skipti.
9 Valdi Víprir	9 Valdi Viðrir
vaurþ Bifrastar	vörð Bifrastar,
giallar sunnu	Giallar Svannu
gátt at fretta,	gætt at frétta,
5 heims hvívetna	“heims hvívetna
hvert er vissi;	hvert er vissi;”
Bragi og Loptr	Bragi ok Loptr
báro kviþo.	bâru kviðu.
10 Galdr gólo,	10 Galðra gôlo
gaundom riþo	göndum riðu
Rögnir ok regin	Rögnir ok Regin
at ranni heimis;	at ranni Grimnis;
5 hlustar Óþinn	hlustar Oðinn
Hliþskiálfo í,	Hliðskiâlfu î,
let braut vera	lêt braut vara
lânga vego.	langa vegu.
11 Frá enn vitri	11 Frâ enn vitri
veiga selio	Veiga-seliu
banda burþa	Banda burða
ok brauta sinna,	ok brauta sinna,

5	hlýrnis, heliar, heims ef vissi ártíþ, æfi, aldrtila.	"Hlýrnis, Heliar, Heims ef vissi "ártíð, æfi, aldartila."
12	Ne mun mælti, ne mál knátti gívróm greiþa, ne glaum hialdi;	12 Nê muni mælti, nê mál knâtti gîvróm greiða, nê glaum hialði;
5	tár af týndoz taurgum hiarnar, eliun faldin, endrrióþa.	târ af tîndusk tregum hiarta; eliun faldin endr riðða.
13	Eins kemr austan ór Elivágom þorn af acri þurs hrímkalda,	13 Eins kemr austan, or Elivâgum, þorn af eitri þurs hrímkalda,
5	hveim drepr dróttir Dáinn allar mæran of Miþgarþ, meþ nátt hver.	hveim dróttir drepr Dâinn allar, mæran of Miðgarð, með nátt hverri.

<p>14 Dofna þá dáþir,          detta hendr,          svífr of svimi          sverþ áss hvíta;</p> <p>5 rennir örvit          rýgiar glyggvi,          sefa sveiflom          sókn giörvallri.</p> <p>15 Iamt þótti Íorunn          iólnom komin,          sollin sútom,          svars er ei gátu;</p> <p>5 sóttu því meir          at syn var fyrir,          mun þó miþr          mælgí dugþi.</p> <p>16 Fór frumqvaþull          fregnar brauta          hirþir at Herians          horni Giallar;</p> <p>5 Nálar nepa          nam til fylgis,</p>	<p>14 Dofna þá dâðir,          detta hendr;          svífr of svimi          sverð Ass hvíta;</p> <p>rennir ôr viti          Rygiar glyia,          sefa sveiflom,          sôkn giörvallri.</p> <p>15 Iamt þôtti Iormunn          Iólnum kominn          sollinn sûtum,          svars er ei gátu;</p> <p>sôttu því meir          at syn var fyrir;          muni þô miðr          mælgí dugði.</p> <p>16 Fôr þá frumkvöðull          fregnar braut â,          hirðir at Herians          horni Giallar;</p> <p>Nálar nepa          nam til fylgis,</p>
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## Hrafnagaldur Óðins – Rough Draft 2016

<p>greppr Grímnis</p> <p>grund varþveitti.</p> <p>17 Vingólf tóko</p> <p>Víþars þegnar</p> <p>Fornióts sefum</p> <p>fluttir báþir;</p> <p>5 íþar gánga,</p> <p>æsi kvedia</p> <p>Yggiar þegar</p> <p>viþ aulteiti.</p> <p>18 Heilan Hángatý,</p> <p>heppnaztan ása,</p> <p>virt öndvegis</p> <p>vallda bádo;</p> <p>5 sæla at sumbli</p> <p>sitia díá,</p> <p>æ með Yggiungi</p> <p>yndi halda.</p> <p>19 Beckiarsett</p> <p>at Baulverks ráþi</p> <p>siöt Sæhrímni</p>	<p>Greppr en Grimnis</p> <p>grund varðveitti.</p> <p>17 Vingólf tóku</p> <p>Veðars þegnar,</p> <p>Forniôts sefum</p> <p>fluttir bâðir;</p> <p>íðar ganga,</p> <p>Âsu kveðia,</p> <p>Yggiar þegar,</p> <p>við ölteiti.</p> <p>18 “Heilan Hanga-Tý,</p> <p>heppnastan Âsa,</p> <p>virt öndvegis</p> <p>valda” bâðu,</p> <p>“sæla at sumbli</p> <p>sitia Dîa,</p> <p>æ með Yggiungi</p> <p>yndi halda.”</p> <p>19 Bekkiarsett, at</p> <p>Bölverks râði,</p> <p>Sæhrímni siöt</p>
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## Hrafnagaldur Óðins – Rough Draft 2016

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saddiz rakna;	saddisk Rakna,
5 Skaugul at skutlum	skolug at skutlum;
skaptker Hnikars	skaptker Hnikars
mat af miði	mat af mîði
minnis hornum.	minnis hornum.
20 Margs of frâgu	20 Margs of frâgu
máltíp yfir	mâltíð yfir
Heimdall há goð,	Heimdall Hâ-goð,
haugar Loka,	hörgar ok Loka,
5 spâr eða spakmâl	“spâr eða spakmâl
sprund ef kendi,	Sprund ef kendi,
undorn of fram,	undorn of fram
unz nam húma.	unds nam húma.”
21 Illa letu	21 Illa lētu
ordit hafa	orðit hafa
eyrindisleysu,	erindis-leysu
oflítilfræga;	ok lítil fræga;
5 vant at væla	vant at væla
verða myndi,	verða myndi,
svá af svanna	svâ af Svanna
svars of gæti.	svars of gæti.

<p>22 Ansar Ómi, allir hlýddo: «Nótt skal nema nýræða til, 5 hugsí til myrgins, hverr sem orkar ráð til leggja rausnar ásom!»</p> <p>23 Rann með raustum Rindar móþr fóþrlarþr Fenris valla; 5 gengu frá gildi goþin, qvöddo Hropt ok Frigg, sem Hrímfaxa fór.</p> <p>24 Dýrum settan Dellings maugr ió fram keyrði iarknasteinom; 5 mars of manheim maun af glóar,</p>	<p>22 Ansar Ômi, allir hlyddu, “nôtt skal nema ný-ræða til; hugsí til myrgins hverr sem orkar ráð til leggja rausnar Âsum.”</p> <p>23 Rann með röstum Rindar, mæðri, fôður lagiðr firins Valda: gêngu fra Gildi Goðin, kvöddu Hropuð ok Frigg, sem Hrímfaxa för.</p> <p>24 Dýrum settan Dellinga mögr Iô fram keyrði iarknasteinum; Mârs of Manheim mön af glóar;</p>
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## Hrafnagaldur Óðins – Rough Draft 2016

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dró leik Dvalins	drô leik Dvalins
drösull í reid.	Ðrösull î reið.
25 Iormungrundar	25 Iörmun-grundar
í iodyr nyrðra	î iaðar nyrðra
und rót yztu	und rôt ytstu
adalpollar	Aðalpollar,
5 gengu til reckio	gêngu, til rekkiu,
gýgiur ok þursar,	Gygiar, ok þursar,
náir, dvergar	Nâir, Dvergar,
ok döckálfar.	ok Dökk-Alfar.
26 Riso raknar,	26 Risu Raknar;
rann álfradull,	rann Alf-Röðull;
nordr at niflheim	norðr at Niflheim
nióla sótti;	Niôla sótti;
5 upp nam ár Giöll	upp nam Ar-Giöll
Úlfrúnar nidr,	Ulfrûnar nîðr,
hornþytvalldr	hornþyt-Valdi
Himinbiarga.	Himin-biarga.

## APPENDIX III

### *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*

Latin Translation of 1787

From Árni Magnússon, *Edda Sæmundar hinns Fróða. Pars I: Odas Mythologicas* (Hafniæ: Sumtibus Legati Magnæani et Glydendalii, 1787), pp. 205-232.

## *Hrafna-Gald Óþins*

1. Omnipater pollet:

Semones intelligunt:

Vani sapiunt:

Monstrant Parcae.

Auget Dryas:

Mortales patiuntur:

Exspectant Thursi (Geloni):

Desiderant strogium nymphae.

2. Decretum Asi

Malum (esse) suspicabantur.

Versipelles (eos) confundebant

Potestates sermonibus.

Odhrærem jussa erat

Urda custodire,

Potens (inde) arcere

Pleramque multitudinem.

### 3. Conversus igitur animus

Alios quaerit;

Metuunt Servatores

Cladem, si cessetur.

Sententia est Thraini

Grave somnium;

Daini occultum

Somnium sententia.

### 4. Vires inter Dvergos

Desiciunt . Coeli

Deorsum in Ginunngi

Propinquos sidunt;

Saepe Perustus

Nutare (Delabi) finit (eos);

Saepe decidus (caducos)

Rursum colligit (attollit).

5. Consistit nusquam

Tellus neque jubar:

Aëre cum clade

Non cesset flumen.

Limpido delitescit

Mimeris in fonte

Notitia virorum,

Nostis adhuc? et quid?

6. Diversatur in vallibus

Dea praesaga

Rorifera ab

Aesculo decidua,

Semonum progenies (stirpis);

Idunnam vocabant,

Ivaldi majorum

Minimam liberorum.



7. Tulit moleste

Descensinum

Comatae subter arboris

Detenta stipite;

Adquievit minime (mansioni)

Apud cognatum Niövii,

Adsueta commodioribus (quae esset)

Mansionibus mundanis.

8. Vident Dii bellicosi

Moerere Nannam

Telluris (Helae) in habitaculis,

Lupinam pellem dederunt ;

Hac se fecit indui,

Ingenium vertit

Fallaciis callidis lusit,

Colorem (vultum) mutavit.

9. Delegit Sagax

Bifrastae praefectum

Ab Giallae jubaris

Anta (muliere) exquirere,

Mudi res singulas,

Quickquid (earum) scirit:

Bragius et Loptus

Testes agebant.

10. Carmina canebant,

Lupis vecti sunt

Rex et Magistratus

Ad domum coelestem:

Auscultat Odinus

In (Ex) Hlidskialfa,

Removit arbitros

Longo intervallo.

11. Scitatus ille sapiens est

Potionum promam,

Deorum complicum sobolis,

Atque (hujus) sociorum,

In coelo (tegmine) inferne

Orbis, num sciret

Diem emortuaem, actatem,

Vitae exitum.

12. Neque optata eloquebatur,

Neque sermonem (quidem) potuit

Avidis expromere,

Neque tinvula (confusa) verba fabulata est:

Lacrymae stillabant

E clypeis capitis,

Studio celatae

(Et) manus rigabunt.

13. Similiter atque accredit ab oriente

Ex Elivagis

Spinea virgula impulse (jactu)

Gigantis frigidi;

Quo ferit poulos

Soporifer omnes,

Splendidam super Tellurem,

Cum nocte qualibet:

14. Torpescunt tum vigores,

Dejiciuntur manus;

Vacillat à vertigine

(Ipse) Ensiger Deus albus:

Pellit torrentem

Gigantidis aurae,

Mentis circumactionibus (vertiginibus)

Cuetui omni.

15. Haud aliter Jorunna

Visa est Diis adjecta,

Turgens moeroribus

Response cum nihil potirentur.

Tendebant (instabant) eo acrius,

Quod (quo magis) repulsa dabatur,

Voto tamen minus

Loquela eorum valuit.

16. Abiit primipilus (princeps)

Interrogatorii itineris,

Custos Odiniani

Cornu vocalissimi;

Nalae puerum

Adscivit in comitatum:

Poëta Larvati

Nympham adservavit.

17. Vingólfum tetigerunt (pervenerunt)

Vidaris ministry,

Fornioti cognatis

Vecti ambo:

Intro eunt,

Asos salutant,

Yggi clients (statim)

Ad conviviam festivitatem.

18. Salvum Suspensorum Deum,

Beatissimum Deorum,

Nectaris, in solio,

Regna possidere optabant:

Felices in symposio

Accumbere Divos

Semper cum Augusto (venerando)

Voluptate perfrui.

19. Per sedilia dispositus,

Ex Baulverki imperiò,

Coetus, Sue Fuligineo

Saturabatur, Numinum:

Skögula ad mensas

Craterem Victoris,

Metiebatur ex medo

Mimeris cornibus.

20. Multa rogitabant

Coenam super

Heimdallum celsii Dii,

Divae Lokium:

Vaticinia et sagaces sermons

Num Virgo (eos) docuisset;

Tenebræ circulum marginalem

Donec occuparent coelorum.

21. Male perhibuerunt

Evenisse,

Negotium frustraneum,

Nimis inglorium (responsi expers):

Ita rationes instituere (ita consulere)

Arduum futurum,

Ut ex nympa

Responsum obtinerent (obtineretur).

22. Respondet (profatur) Omnis,

Omnes ansultabant:

Nox adhibenda est

Novis consiliis:

Cogitet usque in crastinum,

Quisquis valet

Consilium promere

Asis hospitale.



23. Properabat secundum longos aggeres (juga longa)

Rindae matris Vallidii (Valentis),

Alma (nutritiva) vis

Funesti Lupi.

Discesserunt e convivio,

Diis vale dixerunt,

Hropto (nempe) et Friggae,

Prout incessit Gelucomus.

24. Charis distinctum,

Dellingi natus

Equum propulit (incitavit)

Praestantissimus gemmis:

Manni per Mannheimum

Micat juba:

Traxit Dvalini Ludificatricem

Jugalis in rheda.

25. In almae telluris

Equestre ostium boreale.

Sub radice extrema

Arboris primariae

Ibant ad lectos

Oreades et Thursi,

Propinqui Nani,

Et Atri Daemones (genii).

26. Surrexere Dynastae:

Exortus est Semonum (regionum) rutilator:

Boream versus ad Nubilum Orbem

Acupotens contendit:

Sursum cucurrit per Mansionam

Ulfrunae gnatus

Buccinator potens

Coelestium rupium.



APPENDIX IV

Haustlǫng

by

Þjóðolfr hvinverski

The Abduction of Iðunn by Þjazi

Brodeur and Anderson Translations<sup>1004</sup>

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<sup>1004</sup> Brodeur, pp. 130-133; Anderson, pp. 184-187.

## Hrafnagaldur Óðins – Rough Draft 2016

Old Norse	Brodeur	Anderson
<p>1. Hvé skalk góðs at gjöldum gunnveggjar brú leggja? [Line missing?] naddkleif at Þorleifi. Týframra sék tíva trygglaust of far þriggja á hreingöru hlýri Hildar vetts ok þjaza.</p>	<p>1 How shall I make voice-payment Meetly for the shield-bridge .... Of the war-wall Thórleifr gave me? I survey the truceless faring Of the three gods strife-foremost, And Thjatsi's, on the shining Cheek of the shield of battle.</p>	<p>1 How shall the tongue Pay an ample reward For the sonorous shield Which I received from Thorleif, Foremost 'mong soldiers? On the splendidly made shield I see the unsafe journey Of three gods and Thjasse.</p>
<p>2. Segjǫndum fló sagna snótar ulfr at móti í gemlis ham gömlum glamma ó- fyr -skömmu; settisk örn, þars æsir ár-Gefnar mar bóru (vasa byrgi-Týr þjarga bleyði vændr) á seyði.</p>	<p>2 The Spoiler of the Lady Swiftly flew with tumult To meet the high god-rulers Long hence in eagle-plumage; The erne in old days lighted Where the Æsir meat were bearing To the fire-pit; the Giant Of the rocks was called no faint- heart.</p>	<p>2 Idun's robber flew long ago The asas to meet In the giant's old eagle-guise. The eagle perched Where the asas bore Their food to be cooked. Ye women! The mountain-giant Was not wont to be timid.</p>
<p>3. Tormiðlaðr vas tívum ta[ð]lhreinn meðal beina, hvat, kvað hapta snytrir hjalmfaldinn, því valda. Margspakr of nam mæla  mór valkastar bóru (vasat Hœnis vinr hónum hollr) af fornum þolli.</p>	<p>3 The skilful god-deceiver To the gods proved a stern sharer Of bones: the high Instructor Of Æsir, helmet-hooded, Saw some power checked the seething; The sea-mew, very crafty, Spake from the ancient tree-trunk; Loki was ill-willed toward him.</p>	<p>3 Suspected of malice Was the giant toward the gods. Who causes this? Said the chief of the gods. The wise-worded giant-eagle  From the old tree began to speak. The friend of Honer Was not friendly to him.</p>

## Hrafnagaldur Óðins – Rough Draft 2016

<p>4. Fjallgylðir það fyllar fet-Meila sér deila (hlaut) af helgum skutli (hrafnásar vinr blása); ving-røgnir lét -vøgna vígfrekr ofan sígask, þars vélsparir vóru varnendr goða farnir.</p>	<p>4 The wolfish monster ordered Meili's Sire to deal him Food from the holy trencher: The friend of Him of Ravens To blow the fire was chosen; The Giant-King, flesh-greedy, Sank down, where the guileless Craft-sparing gods were gathered.</p>	<p>4 The mountain-wolf from Honer Asked for his fill From the holy table: It fell to Honer to blow the fire. The giant, eager to kill, Glided down Where the unsuspecting gods, Odin, Loke and Honer, were sitting.</p>
<p>5. Fljótt það foldar dróttinn Fárbauta mæg vára þekkiligr með þegnum  þrymseilar hval deila, en af breiðu þjóði bragðvís at þat lagði ósvífrandi ása upp þjórhloti fjóra.</p>	<p>5 The comely Lord of All Things Commanded Loki swiftly To part the bull's-meat, slaughtered By Skadi's ringing bow-string, Among the folk, but straightway The cunning food-defiler Of the Æsir filched-the quarters, All four, from the broad table.</p>	<p>5 The fair lord of the earth Bade Farbaute's son Quickly to share  The ox with the giant; But the cunning foe of the asas Thereupon laid The four parts of the ox Upon the broad table.</p>
<p>6. Ok slíðruga síðan svangr (vas þat fyr lǫngu) át af eikirótum  okbjörn faðir Morna[r], áðr djúphugaðr dræpi dolg ballastan vallar hirði-Týr meðal herða herfangs ofan stǫngu.</p>	<p>6 And the hungry Sire of Giants Savagely ate the yoke-beast From the oak-tree's sheltering branches,— That was in ancient ages,— Ere the wise-minded Loki, Warder of war-spoil, smote him, Boldest of foes of Earth-Folk, With a pole betwixt the shoulders.</p>	<p>6 And the huge father of Morn * Afterward greedily ate The ox at the tree-root.  That was long ago, Until the profound Loke the hard rod laid 'Twixt the shoulders Of the giant Thjasse.</p>

## Hrafnagaldur Óðins – Rough Draft 2016

<p>7. Þá varð fastr við fóstra farmr Sigynjar arma, sás ǫll regin eygja, ǫndurgoðs, í bǫndum; loddi ró við ramman reimuð Jötunheima, en holls vinar Hœnis</p> <p>hendr við stangar enda.</p>	<p>7 The Arm-Burden then of Sigyn, Whom all the gods in bonds see, Firmly forthwith was fastened To the Fosterer of Skadi; To Jötunheim's Strong Dweller The pole stuck, and the fingers Of Loki too, companion</p> <p>Of Hœnir, clung to the pole's end.</p>	<p>7 Then clung with his hands The husband of Sigyn To Skade's foster-son, In the presence of all the gods. The pole stuck fast To Jotunheim 's strong fascinator, But the hands of Honer's dear friend Stuck to the other end.</p>
<p>8. Fló með fróðgum tívi fangsæll of veg langan sveita nagr, svát slitna sundr ulfs faðir mundi; þá varð Þórs of rúni (þungr vas Loptr of sprunginn) mólunaut, hvat's mátti, miðjungs friðar biðja.</p>	<p>8 The Bird of Blood flew upward (Blithesome in his quarry) A long way off with Loki, The lithier God, that almost Wolf's Sire was rent asunder; Thor's friend must sue for mercy, Such peace as he might purchase To pray: nigh slain was Loptr.</p>	<p>8 Flew then with the wise god The voracious bird of prey Far away; so the wolf's father To pieces must be torn. Odin's friend got exhausted. Heavy grew Loptr. Odin's companion Must sue for peace.</p>
<p>9. Sér bað sagna hræri sorgœra[n] mey fœra, þás ellilyf ása, áttrunnr Hymis, kunni; brunnakrs of kom bekkjar Brísings goða dísi girðipjófri í garða grjót-Níðaðar síðan.</p>	<p>9 Then Hymir's Kinsman ordered The crafty god, pain-maddened, To wile to him the Maiden Who warded the Æsir's age-cure; Ere long the necklace-robber, Brísinga's thief, lured slyly The Dame of Brunnakr's brooklet Into the Base One's dwelling.</p>	<p>9 Hymer's kinsman demanded That the leader of hosts The sorrow-healing maid, Who the asas' youth-preserving apples keeps, Should bring to him. Brisingamen's thief Afterward brought Idun To the gard of the giant.</p>
<p>10. Urðut bjartra borða</p>	<p>10 At that the steep slope-dwellers</p>	<p>10 Sorry were not the giants</p>

## Hrafnagaldur Óðins – Rough Draft 2016

<p>byggvendr at þat hryggvir; þá vas lð- með jötnum -unnr nýkomin sunnan; gættusk allar áttir Ing[v]i-freys at þingi (vóru heldr) ok hárar (hamljót regin) gamlar,</p>	<p>No sorrow felt; then Idunn Was from the south, by giants New-stolen, come among them. All Ingvi-Freyr's high kindred, Hoary and old, to council Hasted; grewsome of fashion And ugly all the gods were.</p>	<p>After this had taken place. Since from the south Idun had come to the giants. All the race Of Yngve-Frey, at the Thing, Grew old and gray,— Ugly-looking were the gods.</p>
<p>11. unz hrynsævar hræva  hund ǫl-Gefnar fundu leiðþír ok læva lundar geiri bundu; 'Þú skalt véltr nema vélum,' [v]reiðr mælti svá, 'leiðir munstærandi mæra mey aptr, Loki, [hapta].</p>	<p>11 Omitted by Brodeur</p>	<p>11 Until the gods found the blood- dog, Idun's decaying thrall. And bound the maid's deceiver, You shall, cunning Loke, Spake Thor, die; Unless back you lead. With your tricks, that Good joy-increasing maid.</p>
<p>12. Heyrðak svá, þat síðan  sveik ept ósa leiku hugreynandi Hœnis hauks flugbjalfa aukinn,  ok lómhugaðr lagði, leikblaðs reginn fjaðrar, ern at ǫglis barni arnsúg faðir Mǫrnar.</p>	<p>12 This heard I, that the Staunch Friend Of Hœnir—oft thereafter With wiles he tricked the Æsir— Flew, in hawk-wings hidden;  And the vile Sire of Giants, Vigorous Wing-Plume-Wielder, Hurtled on eagle-pinion After the hawk-shaped Loki.</p>	<p>12 Heard have I that thereupon  The friend of Honer flew In the guise of a falcon (He often deceived the asas with his cunning); And the strong fraudulent giant. The father of Morn, With the wings of the eagle Sped after the hawk's child.</p>
<p>13. Hófu skjótt en skófu</p>	<p>13 Swiftly the gods have kindled</p>	<p>13 The holy gods soon built a fire—</p>



## Hrafnagaldur Óðins – Rough Draft 2016

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<p>skopt ginnregin brinna,  en sonr biðils sviðnar  (sveipr varð í fqr) Greipar.  Þats of fátt á fjalla  Finns ilja brú minni:  baugs þá bifum fáða    bifkleif at Þorleifi.</p>	<p>A fire; and the sovereign rulers  Sustained the flame with shavings:  Scorched was the flying giant,—  He plunged down in mid-soaring:  ‘Tis pictured on the giant’s    Sole-bridge, the shield which,  painted  With stories, Thórleifr gave me.]</p>	<p>They shaved off kindlings—  And the giant was scorched.    This is said in memory  Of the dwarf’s heel-bridge.  A shield adorned with splendid  lines  From Thorleif I received.    6 * [a troll-woman]  13 * [shield]</p>
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APPENDIX V

*Skáldskaparmál*

Prose Stories of Iðunn's Abduction by Þjazi and Óðinn's Theft of the Mead

Old Norse Text (Guðni Jónsson)

and

Anderson Translation

## *Skáldskaparmál*

### 2. Þjazi jötunn rænti Iðunni.

Hann hóf þar frásögn, at þrír æsir fóru heiman, Óðinn ok Loki ok Hæmir, ok fóru um fjöll ok eyðimerkr, ok var illt til matar. En er þeir koma ofan í dal nakkvarn, sjá þeir öxnaflokk ok taka einn uxann ok snúa til seyðis. En er þeir hyggja, at soðit mun vera, raufa þeir seyðinn, ok var ekki soðit. Ok í annat sinn, er þeir raufa seyðinn, þá er stund var liðin, ok var ekki soðit. Mæla þeir þá sín á milli, hverju þetta mun gegna.

Þá heyra þeir mál í eikina upp yfir sik, at sá, er þar sat, kvaðst ráða því, er eigi soðnaði á seyðinum. Þeir litu til, ok sat þar örn ok eigi lítill.

Þá mælti örninn: “Vilið þér gefa mér fylli mína af uxanum, þá mun soðna á seyðinum.”

Þeir játa því. Þá lætr hann sígast ór trénu ok sezt á seyðinn ok leggr upp þegar it fyrsta lær uxans tvau ok báða bóguna.

Þá varð Loki reiðr ok greip upp mikla stöng ok reiðir af öllu afli ok rekr á kroppinn erninum. Örninn bregzt við höggit ok flýgr upp. Þá var föst stöngin við bak arnarins, en hendr Loka við annan enda stangarinnar. Örninn flýgr hátt svá, at fætr Loka taka niðr grjót ok urðir ok viðu, en hendr hans, hyggr hann, at slitna munu ór öxlum. Hann kallar ok biðr allþarfliga örninn friðar. En hann segir, at Loki skal aldri lauss verða, nema hann veiti honum svardaga at koma Iðunni út of Ásgarð með epli

sín, en Loki vill þat. Verðr hann þá lauss ok ferr til lagsmanna sinna, ok er eigi at sinni sögð fleiri tíðendi um þeira ferð, áðr þeir koma heim.

En at ákveðinni stundu teygir Loki Iðunni út um Ásgarð í skóg nökkurn ok segir, at hann hefir fundit epli þau, er henni munu gripir í þykkja, ok bað, at hon skal hafa með sér sín epli ok bera saman ok hin. Þá kemr þar Þjazi jötunn í arnarham ok tekr Iðunni ok flýgr braut með ok í Þrymheim til bús síns.

### 3. Loki náði Iðunni ok dráp Þjaza.

En æsir urðu illa við hvarf Iðunnar, ok gerðust þeir brátt hárir ok gamlir. Þá áttu þeir æsir þing, ok spyrir hverr annan, hvat síðast vissi til Iðunnar, en þat var sét síðast, at hon gekk út ór Ásgarði með Loka. Þá var Loki tekinn ok færðr á þingit, ok var honum heitit bana eða píslum. En er hann varð hræddr, þá kvaðst hann mundu sækja eftir Iðunni í Jötunheima, ef Freyja vill ljá honum valshams, er hon á.

Ok er hann fær valshaminn, flýgr hann norðr í Jötunheima ok kemr einn dag til Þjaza jötuns. Var hann róinn á sæ, en Iðunn var ein heima. Brá Loki henni í hnotarlíki ok hafði í klóm sér ok flýgr sem mest. En er Þjazi kom heim ok saknar Iðunnar, tekr hann arnarharminn ok flýgr eftir Loka, ok dró arnsúg í flugnum. En er æsirnir sá, er valrinn flaug með hnotina ok hvar örninn flaug, þá gengu þeir út undir Ásgarð ok báru þannig byrðar af lokarspánum. Ok þá er valrinn flaug inn of borgina, lét hann fallast niðr við borgarvegginn. Þá slógu æsirnir eldi í lokarspánuna, en örninn mátti eigi stöðva sik, er hann missti valsins. Laust þá eldinum í fiðri arnarins,

ok tók þá af fluginn. Þá váru æsirnir nær ok drápu Þjaza jötun fyrir innan ásgrindr, ok er þat víg allfrægt.

En Skaði dóttir Þjaza jötuns, tók hjálm ok brynju ok öll hervápn ok ferr til Ásgarðs at hefna föður síns. En æsir buðu henni sætt ok yfirbætr ok it fyrsta, at hon skal kjósa sér mann af ásum ok kjósa at fótum ok sjá ekki fleira af.

Þá sá hon eins manns fætr forkunnarfagra ok mælti: “Þenna kýs ek. Fátt mun ljótt á Baldri.”

En þat var Njörðr ór Nóatúnum.

Þat hafði hon ok í sættargerð sinni, at æsir skyldu þat gera, er hon hugði, at þeir skyldu eigi mega, at hlægja hana. Þá gerði Loki þat, at hann batt um skegg geitar nökkurrar ok öðrum enda um hreðjar sér, ok létu þau ýmsi eftir ok skrækði hvárt tveggja hátt. Þá lét Loki fallast í kné Skaða, ok þá hló hon. Var þá ger sætt af ásanna hendi við hana.

#### 4. Af ætt Þjaza.

Svá er sagt, at Óðinn gerði þat til yfirbóta við Skaða, at hann tók augu Þjaza ok kastaði upp á himin ok gerði af stjörnur tvær.

Þá mælti Ægir: “Mikill þykkir mér Þjazi fyrir sér hafa verit, eða hvers kyns var hann?”

Bragi svarar: “Ölvaldi hét faðir hans, ok merki munu þér at þykkja, ef ek segi þér frá honum. Hann var mjök gullauðigr. En er hann dó ok synir hans skyldu skipta arfi, þá höfðu þeir mæling á gullinu, er þeir skiptu, at hverr skyldi taka munnfylli

sína ok allir jafnmargar. Einn þeira var Þjazi annarr Iði, þriði Gangr. En þat höfum vér orðtak nú með oss at kalla gullit munntal þessa jötna, en vér felum í rúnum eða í skáldskap svá, at vér köllum þat mál eða orð eða tal þessa jötna.”

Þá mælti Ægir: “Þat þykkir mér vel fólgt í rúnum.”

### 5. Upphaf Suttungamjaðar.

Ok enn mælti Ægir: “Hvaðan af hefir hafizt sú íþrótt, er þér kallið skáldskap?”

Bragi svarar: “Þat váru upphöf til þess, at goðin höfðu ósætt við þat fólk, er Vanir heita. En þeir lögðu með sér friðstefnu ok settu grið á þá lund, at þeir gengu hváirtveggju til eins kers ok spýttu í hráka sínum. En at skilnaði þá tóku goðin ok vildu eigi láta týnast þat griðamark ok sköpuðu þar ór mann. Sá heitir Kvasir. Hann er svá vitr, at engi spyr hann þeira hluta, er eigi kann hann órlausn.

Hann fór víða um heim at kenna mönnum fræði, ok þá er hann kom at heimboði til dverga nökkurra, Fjalars ok Galars, þá kölluðu þeir hann með sér á einmæli ok drápu hann, létu renna blóð hans í tvau ker ok einn ketil, ok heitir sá Óðrerir, en kerin heita Són ok Boðn. Þeir blendu hunangi við blóðit, ok varð þar af mjöðr sá, er hvern, er af drekkur, verðr skáld eða fræðamaðr. Dvergarnir sögðu ásum, at Kvasir hefði kafnat í mannviti, fyrir því at engi var þar svá fróðr, at spyrja kynni hann fróðleiks.

Þá buðu þessir dvergar til sín jötni þeim, er Gillingr heitir, ok konu hans. Þá buðu dvergarnir Gillingi at róa á sæ með sér. En er þeir fóru fyrir land fram, reru dvergarnir á boða ok hvelfðu skipinu. Gillingr var ósyndr, ok týndist hann, en

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dvergarnir réttu skip sitt ok reru til lands. Þeir sögðu konu hans þenna atburð, en hon kunni illa ok grét hátt. Þá spurði Fjalarr hana, ef henni myndi hugléttara, ef hon sæi út á sæinn, þar er hann hafði týnzt, en hon vildi þat. Þá mælti hann við Galar, bróður sinn, at hann skal fara upp yfir dyrrnar, er hon gengi út, ok láta kvernstein falla í höfuð henni, ok talði sér leiðast óp hennar. Ok svá gerði hann.

Þá er þetta spurði Suttungr jötunn, sonr Gillings, ferr hann til ok tók dvergana ok flytr á sæ út ok setr þá í flæðarsker. Þeir biðja Suttung sér lífsgriða ok bjóða honum til sættar í fódurgjald mjöðinn dýra, ok þat verðr at sætt með þeim. Flytr Suttungr mjöðinn heim ok hirðir, þar sem heita Hnitbjörg, setr þar til gæzlu dóttur sína, Gunnlöðu. Af þessu köllum vér skáldskap Kvasis blóð eða dvergadrekku eða fylli eða nökkurs konar lög Óðreris eða Boðnar eða Sónar eða farskost dverga, fyrir því at sá mjöðr flutti þeim fjörlausn ór skerinu, eða Suttungamiöð eða Hnitbjargalögr.”

Þá mælti Ægir: “Myrkt þykkir mér þat mælt at kalla skáldskap með þessum heitum. En hvernig kómuzt þér æsir at Suttungamiði?”

### 6. Hversu Óðinn komst at miðinum.

Bragi svarar: “Sjá saga er til þess, at Óðinn fór heiman ok kom þar, er þrælar nú slógu hey. Hann spyrr, ef þeir vili, at hann brýni ljá þeira. Þeir játa því. Þá tekr hann hein af belti sér ok brýndi ljána, en þeim þótti bíta ljárnir miklu betr ok föluðu heinina, en hann mat svá, at sá, er kaupa vildi, skyldi gefa við hóf. En allir kváðust



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vilja ok báðu hann sér selja, en hann kastaði heininni í loft upp. En er allir vildu henda, þá skiptust þeir svá við, at hverr brá ljánum á háls öðrum.

Óðinn sótti til náttstaðar til jötuns þess, er Baugi hét, bróðir Suttungs. Baugi kallaði illt fjárhald sitt ok sagði, at þrælar hans nýu höfðu drepizt, en talðist eigi vita sér ván verkmanna. En Óðinn nefndist fyrir honum Bölverkr. Hann bauð at taka upp nýu manna verk fyrir Bauga, en mælti sér til kaups einn drykk af Suttungamiði. Baugi kvaðst einskis ráð eiga at miðinum, sagði, at Suttungr vildi einn hafa, en fara kveðst hann mundu með Bölverki, ok freista, ef þeir fengi mjöðinn.

Bölverkr vann um sumarit nýu manna verk fyrir Bauga, en at vetri beiddi hann Bauga leigu sínna. Þá fara þeir báðir til Suttungs. Baugi segir Suttungi, bróður sínum, kaup þeira Bölverks, en Suttungr synjar þverliga hvers dropa af miðinum. Þá mælti Bölverkr til Bauga, at þeir skyldu freista véla nökkurra, ef þeir megi ná miðinum, en Baugi lætr þat vel vera. Þá dregr Bölverkr fram nafar þann, er Rati heitir, ok mælti, at Baugi skal bora bjargit, ef nafarrinn bítr. Hann gerir svá. Þá segir Baugi, at gegnum er borat bjargit, en Bölverkr blæss í nafarsraufina, ok hrjóta spænirnar upp í móti honum. Þá fann hann, at Baugi vildi svíkja hann, ok bað bora gegnum bjargit. Baugi boraði enn, en er Bölverkr blés annat sinn, þá fuku inn spænirnar. Þá brást Bölverkr í ormslíki ok skreið inn í nafarsraufina, en Baugi stakk eftir honum nafrinum ok missti hans.

Fór Bölverkr þar til, sem Gunnlöð var, ok lá hjá henni þrjár nætr, ok þá lofaði hon honum at drekka af miðinum þrjá drykki. Í inum fyrsta drykk drakk hann allt ór Óðreri, en í öðrum ór Boðn, í inum þriðja ór Són, ok hafði hann þá allan mjöðinn. Þá brást hann í arnarham ok flaug sem ákafast.

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En er Suttungr sá flug arnarins, tók hann sér arnarham ok flaug eftir honum. En er æsir sá, hvar Óðinn flaug, þá settu þeir út í garðinn ker sín, en er Óðinn kom inn of Ásgarð, þá spýtti hann upp miðinum í kerin, en honum var þá svá nær komit, at Suttungr myndi ná honum, at hann sendi aftr suman mjöðinn, ok var þess ekki gætt. Hafði þat hverr, er vildi, ok köllum vér þat skáldfífla hlut. En Suttungamjöð gaf Óðinn ásunum ok þeim mönnum, er yrkja kunnu. Því köllum vér skáldskapinn feng Óðins ok fund ok drykk hans ok gjöf hans ok drykk ásanna.”

*Skáldskaparmál*

Prose Stories of Iðunn's Abduction by Þjazi and Óðinn's Theft of the Mead

Anderson Translation<sup>1005</sup>

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<sup>1005</sup> Anderson, pp. 155-165.

### IDUN AND HER APPLES.

2. Brage began his tale by telling how three asas, Odin, Loke and Honer, went on a journey over mountains and heaths, where they could get nothing to eat. But when they came down into a valley they saw a herd of cattle. From this herd they took an ox and went to work to boil it. When they deemed that it must be boiled enough they uncovered the broth, but it was not yet done. After a little while they lifted the cover off again, but it was not yet boiled. They talked among themselves about how this could happen. Then they heard a voice in the oak above them, and he who sat there said that he was the cause that the broth did not get boiled. They looked up and saw an eagle, and it was not a small one. Then said the eagle: If you will give me my fill of the ox, then the broth will be boiled. They agreed to this. So he flew down from the tree, seated himself beside the boiling broth, and immediately snatched up first the two thighs of the ox and then both the shoulders. This made Loke wroth: he grasped a large pole, raised it with all his might and dashed it at the body of the eagle. The eagle shook himself after the blow and flew up. One end of the pole fastened itself to the body of the eagle, and the other end stuck to Loke's hands. The eagle flew just high enough so that Loke's feet were dragged over stones and rocks and trees, and it seemed to him that his arms would be torn from his shoulder-blades. He calls and prays the eagle most earnestly for peace, but the latter declares that Loke shall never get free unless he will pledge himself to bring Idun and her apples out of Asgard. When Loke had promised this, he was set free and went to his companions again; and no more is related of this journey, except that

they returned home. But at the time agreed upon, Loke coaxed Idun out of Asgard into a forest, saying that he had found apples that she would think very nice, and he requested her to take with her her own apples in order to compare them. Then came the giant Thjasse in the guise of an eagle, seized Idun and flew away with her to his home in Thrymheim. The asas were ill at ease on account of the disappearance of Idun,— they became grayhaired and old. They met in council and asked each other who last had seen Idun. The last that had been seen of her was that she had gone out of Asgard in company with Loke. Then Loke was seized and brought into the council, and he was threatened with death or torture. But he became frightened, and promised to bring Idun back from Jotunheim if Freyja would lend him the falcon-guise that she had. He got the falcon-guise, flew north into Jotunheim, and came one day to the giant Thjasse. The giant had rowed out to sea, and Idun was at home alone. Loke turned her into the likeness of a nut, held her in his claws and flew with all his might. But when Thjasse returned home and missed Idun, he took on his eagle-guise, flew after Loke, gaining on the latter with his eagle wings. When the asas saw the falcon coming flying with the nut, and how the eagle flew, they went to the walls of Asgard and brought with them bundles of plane-shavings. When the falcon flew within the burg, he let himself drop down beside the burg-wall. Then the asas kindled a fire in the shavings; and the eagle, being unable to stop himself when he missed the falcon, caught fire in his feathers, so that he could not fly any farther. The asas were on hand and slew the giant Thjasse within the gates of Asgard, and that slaughter is most famous.

### HOW NJORD GOT SKADE TO WIFE.

Skade, the daughter of the giant Thjasse, donned her helmet, and byrnie, and all her wargear, and betook herself to Asgard to avenge her father's death. The asas offered her ransom and atonement; and it was agreed to, in the first place, that she should choose herself a husband among the asas, but she was to make her choice by the feet, which was all she was to see of their persons. She saw one man's feet that were wonderfully beautiful, and exclaimed: This one I choose! On Balder there are few blemishes. But it was Njord, from Noatun. In the second place, it was stipulated that the asas were to do what she did not deem them capable of, and that was to make her laugh. Then Loke tied one end of a string fast to the beard of a goat and the other around his own body, and one pulled this way and the other that, and both of them shrieked out loud. Then Loke let himself fall on Skade's knees, and this made her laugh. It is said that Odin did even more than was asked, in that he took Thjasse's eyes and cast them up into heaven, and made two stars of them. Then said Æger: This Thjasse seems to me to have been considerable of a man ; of what kin was he? Brage answered: His father's name was Olvalde, and if I told you of him, you would deem it very remarkable. He was very rich in gold, and when he died and his sons were to divide their heritage, they had this way of measuring the gold, that each should take his mouthful of gold, and they should all take the same number of mouthfuls. One of them was Thjasse, another Ide, and the third Gang. But we now have it as a saw among us, that we call gold the mouth-number of these giants. In

runes and songs we wrap the gold up by calling it the measure, or word, or tale, of these giants. Then said Æger : It seems to me that it will be well hidden in the runes.

### THE ORIGIN OF POETRY.

3. And again said Æger; Whence originated the art that is called skaldship?

Made answer Brage: The beginning of this was, that the gods had a war with the people that are called vans. They agreed to hold a meeting for the purpose of making peace, and settled their dispute in this wise, that they both went to a jar and spit into it. But at parting the gods, being unwilling to let this mark of peace perish, shaped it into a man whose name was Kvaser, and who was so wise that no one could ask him any question that he could not answer. He traveled much about in the world to teach men wisdom. Once he came to the home of the dwarfs Fjalar and Galar. They called him aside, saying they wished to speak with him alone, slew him and let his blood run into two jars called Son and Bodn, and into a kettle called Odrarer. They mixed honey with the blood, and thus was produced such mead that whoever drinks from it becomes a skald and sage. The dwarfs told the asas that Kvaser had choked in his wisdom, because no one was so wise that he could ask him enough about learning.

4. Then the dwarfs invited to themselves the giant whose name is Gilling, and his wife; and when he came they asked him to row out to sea with them. When they had gotten a short distance from shore, the dwarfs rowed onto a blind rock and capsized the boat. Gilling, who was unable to swim, was drowned, but the dwarfs righted the boat again and rowed ashore. When they told of this mishap to his wife

she took it much to heart, and began to cry aloud. Then Fjalar asked her whether it would not lighten her sorrow if she could look out upon the sea where her husband had perished, and she said it would. He then said to his brother Galar that he should go up over the doorway, and as she passed out he should let a mill-stone drop onto her head, for he said he was tired of her bawling, Galar did so. When the giant Suttung, the son of Gilling, found this out he came and seized the dwarfs, took them out to sea and left them on a rocky island, which was flooded at high tide. They prayed Suttung to spare their lives, and offered him in atonement for their father's blood the precious mead, which he accepted. Suttung brought the mead home with him, and hid it in a place called Hnitbjorg. He set his daughter Gunlad to guard it. For these reasons we call songship Kvaser's blood; the drink of the dwarfs; the dwarfs' fill; some kind of liquor of Odrarer, or Bodn or Son ; the ship of the dwarfs (because this mead ransomed their lives from the rocky isle); the mead of Suttung, or the liquor of Hnitbjorg.

5. Then remarked Æger : It seems dark to me to call songship by these names; but how came the asas by Suttung's mead? Answered Brage: The saga about this is, that Odin set out from home and came to a place where nine thralls were mowing hay. He asked them whether they would like to have him whet their scythes. To this they said yes. Then he took a whet-stone from his belt and whetted the scythes. They thought their scythes were much improved, and asked whether the whet-stone was for sale. He answered that he who would buy it must pay a fair price for it. All said they were willing to give the sum demanded, and each wanted Odin to sell it to him. But he threw the whetstone up in the air, and when all wished



to catch it they scrambled about it in such a manner that each brought his scythe onto the other's neck. Odin sought lodgings for the night at the house of the giant Bauge, who was a brother of Suttung. Bauge complained of what had happened to his household, saying that his nine thralls had slain each other, and that he did not know where he should get other workmen. Odin called himself Bolverk. He offered to undertake the work of the nine men for Bauge, but asked in payment therefor a drink of Suttungas mead. Bauge answered that he had no control over the mead, saying that Suttung was bound to keep that for himself alone. But he agreed to go with Bolverk and try whether they could get the mead. During the summer Bolverk did the work of the nine men for Bauge, but when winter came he asked for his pay. Then they both went to Suttung. Bauge explained to Suttung his bargain with Bolverk, but Suttung stoutly refused to give even a drop of the mead. Bolverk then proposed to Bauge that they should try whether they could not get at the mead by the aid of some trick, and Bauge agreed to this. Then Bolverk drew forth the auger which is called Rate, and requested Bauge to bore a hole through the rock, if the auger was sharp enough. He did so. Then said Bauge that there was a hole through the rock; but Bolverk bowed into the hole that the auger had made, and the chips flew back into his face. Thus he saw that Bauge intended to deceive him, and commanded him to bore through. Bauge bored again, and when Bolverk blew a second time the chips flew inward. Now Bolverk changed himself into the likeness of a serpent and crept into the auger-hole. Bauge thrust after him with the auger, but missed him. Bolverk went to where Gunlad was, and shared her couch for three nights. She then promised to give him three draughts from the mead. With the first

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draught he emptied Odrarer, in the second Bodn, and in the third Son, and thus he had all the mead. Then he took on the guise of an eagle, and flew off as fast as he could. When Suttung saw the flight of the eagle, he also took on the shape of an eagle and flew after him. When the asas saw Odin coming, they set their jars out in the yard. When Odin reached Asgard, he spewed the mead up into the jars. He was, however, so near being caught by Suttung, that he sent some of the mead after him backward, and as no care was taken of this, anybody that wished might have it. This we call the share of poetasters. But Suttung's mead Odin gave to the asas and to those men who are able to make verses. Hence we call songship Odin's prey, Odin's find, Odin's drink, Odin's gift, and the drink of the asas.

## APPENDIX VI

Julius Braun

1865 German Article on Iðunn

Translated into English by Samuel Zinner

From Julius Braun, *Naturgeschichte der Sage*. Zweiter Band.

(München: Friedrich Bruckmann's Verlag, 1865), pp. 387-389.

Julius Braun

Iðunn

The same alternation between cosmic context and historical-epical experience from Egyptian antiquity repeats itself in Iðunn, Bragi's spouse. Like Persephone she dwells grimly in the underworld. According to the half-lost and dark memories of the *Edda (Hrafnagaldur)* Iðunn has fallen from the cosmic ash tree and abides beneath its branches. But she does not like it by Nǫrvi's daughter (the Night), because she had been accustomed to more pleasant dwellings. The Gods sent her a wolf-hide; clothed in it she changes her disposition, varies her colour. The wolf-hide is the hieroglyph of the Goddess of the underworld. Thus enters Iðunn into her role as the fallen or exiled one (like elsewhere the historical-epical Isis-Persephone assumes the place of the cosmic Hathor-Echidna), and it appears that this significance comforts her. In fact she is called Urðr and made equivalent to Urðr, the oldest of the Norns, therefore Iðunn is made equivalent to the underworld itself. Urðr has a well in the underworld, with whose water the world tree is sprinkled so that it stays green. Another expression for this is the cauldron is Óðrerir, which contains the mead of poetry and wisdom, which likewise is in Urðr's guard (*Hraf. 2*), and yet another expression of this are Iðunn's apples of youth, which if the Gods do not consume they grow old. Made anxious by a multitude of foreboding dreams

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(apparently the signs of Baldr's approaching death),<sup>1006</sup> Gods are dispatched to her to see if she knows anything of how much longer the Æsir will live. The messengers are Heimdallr, accompanied by Loki and Bragi. But the Goddess remains silent and weeps, and all their pressing her for information is fruitless. While the other two return, Bragi, her husband, stays behind with her in the underworld. This Bragi is famous for his eloquence and skaldic art, which is named *Bragur* after him (*Gylf*. 26). A portion of the *Younger Edda* (*Bragi's Talk*) consists of Bragi's reports to Ægir, who has been invited to feast with the Æsir in Ásgarðr, and who sits beside Bragi. We have seen how all representatives of poetry (Orpheus, Marsyas, Amphion, Høðr etc.) are forms of Typhon. Therefore we may well presuppose the same with regard to Bragi, whose relationship with Iðunn resembles that of Óðr with Freyja, of Freyr with Gerðr, which is that of Typhon with Persephone, who overlaps with Rhea. Even Freyr-Typhon is lyrically determined (*Skírnismál*), and Bragi resembles him even more inasmuch as Loki accuses Iðunn of having laid her lusting arms around her brother's murderer (*Lokasenna* 17). But Freyr was the murderer of Gerðr's brother Beli. With his wondrously sweet playing Høðr-Typhon won Nanna, who later became Baldr's wife. Iðunn is also called by the name Nanna (*Hraf*. 8). Consequently, all of Iðunn's traits lead back to Rhea, and Bragi's to the Typhon archetype.

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<sup>1006</sup> Note by Samuel Zinner: The dreams actually do not pertain to Baldr's death, since the latter is a protological or primordial event, whereas the dreams of strophes 2 and 3 are eschatological, and thus pertain to the world's ending, not to the history of its dawn.

That Iðunn is Rhea-Persephone can be seen from her being carried away by the Giant Þjazi, which is just another expression for her descent from the cosmic ash tree. Into the power of this Þjazi fell Loki, who forced the latter to swear to lure Iðunn to bring her apples out of Ásgarðr. He tricked her into this deed by claiming that he had found a forest with apples that would seem like jewels to her, and counselled her to bring her own apples with her for comparison. Then came the Giant Þjazi and carried away Iðunn. The Æsir, however, found themselves in a bad situation with Iðunn's disappearance; they quickly grew grey hairs and became old, because they no longer had the apples. This is obviously the apples of the Hesperides, which strengthens immortality in the underworld, and which we find in the possession of Goddesses of the underworld (Hera, Aphrodite). Only through consuming nectar and ambrosia, that is, the juice and fruit of the celestial tree of life, do even the Hellenic Gods preserve their immortal youth. For this Iðunn with her apples was sorely missed. Loki, threatened by the Æsir, volunteered to enter Giant-Land to seek her if Freyja would lend him her falcon garment. This was granted him, and in Þjazi's absence Loki succeeded in transforming Iðunn into the form of a swallow in order to carry her off in his talons. According to another reading, she was transformed into a nut. We cannot decide on linguistic grounds alone (here just as little as in countless other cases) which reading is the correct one. Decisive, however, is the context of the facts. Isis-Persephone was never transformed into a nut, but certainly she did become a swallow. In the form of a swallow she flew lamenting around the pillars of Byblos, where she knew the casket of Osiris had been hidden. The falcon Loki with the swallow was pursued by the Giant in the form

of an eagle. The Æsir let the flying Giant enter Ásgarðr and slew him there. Loki boasts of this deed (*Lokasenna* 50), but also Þórr (*Hárbarðsljóð* 19). Þjazi, the arrogant Giant, his name immediately recalls Thuisto, Thyestes, Thestios and others, and therefore parallels Kronos, who carried away Rhea, and who was punished for this by Typhon or Zeus. All that remains to be mentioned here is that the carrying away of Rhea by Kronos is matched by the carrying away of Persephone by Hades.