

Viktor Rydberg's *Investigations into Germanic Mythology, Volume I*

Translated and annotated with modern references
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III. THE IVALDI FAMILY

[561]

96.

SVIPDAG AND GROA

Groa's son Svipdag is mentioned by this name in two Old Norse songs: *Grógaldur* and *Fjölsvinnsmál*, which, as Bugge has already pointed out, are mutually connected and describe episodes from the same chain of events.¹

Grógaldur's contents are the following:

Groa is dead when the event that the song describes occurs. Svipdag is then still quite young. Before her death she has told him that he should go to her grave and call on her if he needs her help. The grave is a "cairn-cromlech,"² a grave-chamber built of great slabs over an "earth-fast stone," furnished with a door (str. 1, 15).

Svipdag's father has married again. The stepmother commands her young stepson to go away in order to seek *Menglöðum*, "those fond of ornaments." From *Fjölsvinnsmál* we learn that one of them called thus is a maiden who becomes Svipdag's wife. Her proper name is not given. She is continually designated only as *Menglöð*, *Menglad*, one of "those fond of ornaments," whom Svipdag receives as his task to find.

¹ These poems, both written in *ljóðaháttur*, an eddic meter, are preserved in seven paper manuscripts all dated from the 17th century. In three of these, the two poems appear together in sequence. In the remaining four, the two sections are reversed with the eddic poem *Hyndluljóð* standing between them. [Einar Ólafur Sveinsson, "Svipdag's Long Journey. Some Observations on *Grógaldur* and *Fjölsvinnsmál*." *Hereditas*, (1975) edited by Bo Almquist, Breandán Mac Aodha and Gearóid Mac Eoin, Folklore Society of Ireland, Dublin, p. 303]. As *Grógaldur* does not name Groa's son, it was only gradually that the relationship between these poems was recognized, chiefly through comparisons with later Danish and Swedish folk-ballads, containing the tale of *Ungen Sveidal*. Svend Grundtvig first pointed out the relationship between these ballads and *Grógaldur*, illuminating the first part of the tale. Thereafter, Bugge showed the correspondence between these ballads and *Fjölsvinnsmál*. [*Danmarks gamle folkeviser* II, pp. 238, 667 ff.] Both scholars developed this idea further in subsequent works, establishing that the Scandinavian ballads in question preserved the original unity of a narrative familiar in Iceland as two separate poems. Sophus Bugge first presented these poems under the rubric *Svipdagsmál* and thereafter was generally credited with being the first to discover their unity. [Gudbrand Vigfusson, *Corpus Poeticum Boreale*, Vol. I, p. 92-3].

² Swedish: *kummeldös*. [Old Norse: *kumbldysjar*]; *Kummel* is a cairn, (a pile of stones intended as a memorial) and *dös* is a cromlech, a circle of monoliths enclosing a dolmen or the dolmen itself. A dolmen is a prehistoric monument made of two or more upright stones, supporting a horizontal slab, as in Stonehenge.

For Svipdag, this duty seems to exceed his powers. It must have been of an especially adventurous type and involve great dangers, because he now considers the time ripe to ask his deceased mother for help. He has become suspicious of his stepmother's intentions; he considers her *lævis*, cunning, and her proposal "an ugly game which she has put before him" (str. 3).³

He goes to Groa's grave-chamber, probably at night (*verða öflugari allir á nóttum dauðir, Helgakviða Hundingsbana II 51*),⁴ bids [562] her wake, and reminds her of the promise. That of Groa which had become dust (*er til moldar er komin*), and that of her which had left this human-world and went down to the underworld (*úr ljóðheimum liðin*), unites itself anew under the influence of the power of maternal love and her son's prayer, and, from the grave-chamber, Svipdag hears his mother's voice which asks why he has come. He relates the errand that his stepmother has imposed on him (str. 3, 4).

The voice from the grave confirms that long roads lay before Svipdag, if he is to reach the goal set out for him. It, however, does not advise him to disobey the command of his stepmother, but lets him know that if he awaits a happy ending to the matter, the norms will probably guide the events in their proper course (str. 4).

The son then requests his mother to sing protective *galdur* over him. She has been celebrated in mythology as powerful with good *galdur* songs. It was Groa that sang healing *galdur* over Thor when he returned with a wounded forehead from the fight with the giant Hrungrnir (*Skáldskaparmál 25 [Gylfaginning]*).

Groa fulfils his prayer, and sings from the grave protective *galdur* against the dangers which her second sight has discovered on those paths that now lie before Svipdag: first, the *galdur* that can infuse the despondent youth, doubting himself, with courage and confidence in his own powers. It is, as Groa gives to understand, the same *galdur* that another mother previously sang over a son whose powers were yet unproven and likewise had a terrible task to fulfill. It is the *galdur*, says Groa, that *Rindr*, Vali's mother, sang over *Ránnr*. This synonym of Vali is of saga-historical interest. Saxo calls Vali Bous, the Latinized form of Beowulf, and according to the Old English poem which bears his name, Beowulf's grave-mound is situated on *Hrones næss*, *Ránnr's ness*. Here too a connection is revealed between Vali and the name *Ránnr*.

Groa's second *galdur* contains a prayer that when her son, joyless, travels his paths and sees scorn and evil before his [563] eyes, he may always be protected by Urd's *lokur* (a double entendre, which on one side can refer to the *dis* of fate's bonds and locks, and on the other to Groa's own fate-foreknowing magic song: *lokur* means both songs of a certain kind and locks and fences).

In his wandering, Svipdag shall have to wade through rivers, which threaten his life with swelling floods; but Groa's third *galdur* bids these rivers flow down to Hel and lower themselves for her son. The rivers which have their course to Hel (*falla til Heljar*

³ The literal meaning of *skjóta ljótu leikborði fyrir* is "to place a difficult board game in front of." Gísli Sigurðsson has pointed out that the Celtic story of Art, the Son of Conn, exhibits many parallels to the Svipdag saga. There, the hero plays a game of *fidchell* (a chess-like board-game) with his stepmother, loses, and as a result has to undertake the quest of winning the hand of an unapproachable maiden. In the *Ballad of Young Svejdal*, the youngster inadvertently throws his ball into the ladies' chambers, where his stepmother, in anger, curses him. In *Hjálmtés saga*, the hero Hjalmtér punches his stepmother in the face, making her nose bleed, when she tries to seduce him after telling him that his father is impotent. She lays a curse upon him: He will never rest, until he finds Hervor, daughter of Hunding.

⁴ "they all become more powerful at night, the dead"

héðan, *Grímnismál* 28) are subterranean rivers rising on the Hvergelmir mountain (nos. 59, 93).

Groa's fourth and fifth *galdur* allows it to be foreseen that Svipdag is to encounter enemies and be slapped in chains. Her songs shall then work so that the enemy's disposition tunes to accord,⁵ and that the chains fall from her son's limbs. For this purpose she gives him the power that is called "Leifnir's fires" (see no. 38), which loosens fetters from *galdur*-sung limbs (str. 9, 10).

Groa's sixth *galdur* is to rescue Svipdag from drowning in a storm at sea. In the great world-mill (*lúður*) which causes the maelstrom, ocean currents, ebb and flood (see nos. 79-82), calm weather and wave shall "go together"⁶ in harmony, be at Svipdag's service and prepare him a safe journey.

The seventh *galdur* that comes from the grave-chamber speaks of a journey which Svipdag shall make over a mountain where terrible cold reigns. The song shall protect him from falling victim to the frost there.

The last two *galdur*, the eighth and the ninth, show what the third has already suggested, that Svipdag's adventurous journeys shall be crowned with a visit in the underworld. He shall meet Night *á Niflvegi*, "on the *Nifl*-way," "in *Nifl*-land". The word *nifl* does not occur in the Old Norse literature except to designate the northern part of the Germanic Hades, the forecourt to the worlds of torture under there. *Niflhel* and *Niflheim* are, as we know, the names of this forecourt. As previously mentioned, *Niflfarinn* is called a death, whose soul [564] has descended to Niflhel;⁷ *Niflgóður* is a nothing, worthy of being sentenced to the anguish of the underworld.⁸ Groa's eighth *galdur* shall protect the son against the perilous consequences of encountering a "dead woman" (*dauð kona*) during his walk through Niflhel. The ninth *galdur* shows that Svipdag, once he has covered the paths through the northern part of the underworld, crosses over the Hvergelmir mountain and comes to Mimir's realm, because he shall meet and talk with the "the weapon-honored giant,"⁹ Mimir himself, under circumstances which demand "tongue and human-wit"¹⁰ on the part of Groa's son:

⁵ *Att fiendens sinnelag stämmes til förlikning*: that the enemy's disposition "tunes to accord" or "agrees to mediation." The word *stämmes* means "to agree, to correspond, to tally"; also "to tune a piano." The word *förlikning* translates as "conciliation, mediation"; and "accord."

⁶ "*gånga samman*": Here Rydberg is quoting the words of the poem itself, *gangi saman* [*Gróugaldur* 11]. Anderson takes this phrase, set off by Rydberg with quotation marks, as a foreign phrase, rendering it "gang thegither" [*TM*, p. 750] but it is simply Swedish for "to go together" and should be fully translated.

⁷ *Nifl-farinn* [*Atlakviða* 33] means "gone towards the dark, i.e. the dead" [Vigfusson/Cleasby, *Dict.* s.v.] or "gone into the darkness or to the shades: gone to Hel, dead" [LaFarge/Tucker, *Glossary*, s.v.].

⁸ See no. 75. The word *niflgóður* is only found in *Sonatorrek* 15, and its meaning is uncertain. The verse reads: *Mjök es torfyndr/ sás trúa knegum/of alþjóð/Elgjar galga,/ þvít niflgóður/ niðja steypir/ bróður hrør/ við baugum selr*; "It is very difficult to find one whom we can trust from people of gallows of Elgr (probably 'people of Yggdrasil') because a *niflgóður* (destroyer?, betrayer?) caster-off of kin sells corpse of brother for rings." [Translated by Edel Porter, "Skaldic Poetry: Making the World Fantastic" at www.dur.ac.uk/medieval.www/sagaconf/porter.htm].

⁹ *Grougaldur* 14 speaks of *inn naddgöfga jötun*, a giant who is "magnificent with (his) spears," [LaFarge/Tucker *Glossary*, p. 190].

¹⁰ "*mál och mannvett*" [lit. 'tongue and human wit']. Here Rydberg paraphrases the words of *Grougaldur* 14: *máls og manvits*, "eloquence and understanding (i.e. 'human-wit', common sense)" cp. *Sigurdrífumál* 4, *mál og manvit*, and *Hyndluljóð* 3: *mælsku og manvit*.

*ef þú við inn naddgöfga
orðum skiptir jötun:
máls ok mannvits
sé þér á Mímis hjarta
gnóga of getið.*

[“If you exchange words
with a spear-magnificent giant:
may you be given sufficient
eloquence and understanding
from Mimir’s heart.”]

The poem *Fjölsvinnsmál*, to which I now come, enlightens us further with reference to Svipdag's adventures in the underworld, that during his walking in Mimir's realm, he also gets the opportunity to see the *ásmegir's* citadel and the **glories** within its surrounding walls (str. 33; cp. no. 53).

97.

SVIPDAG OUTSIDE ASGARD'S GATE. MENGLÖÐ'S IDENTITY WITH FREYJA.

As *Fjölsvinnsmál* opens, one sees Svipdag walking up to a stronghold which is furnished with *forgörðum*, that is to say, ramparts before the gate in the wall that surrounds the place. On one of these ramparts stands a watchman who calls himself Fjölsviður, which is an epithet of Odin (*Grímnismál* 47).

The first strophe of the poem gives Svipdag the designation *þursa þjóðar sjólr* (*sjóli*), "the Thurs people's leader."¹¹ The reason why he could be called this has already been mentioned (see nos. 24, 33): during the conflicts between the forces of winter and Ivaldi's family allied with them, on the one side, and the Germanic patriarch Halfdan,

¹¹ To read *þursa þjóðar sjól*, as "the ruler of the thurs-people" requires an otherwise unattested word *sjólr*, meaning 'ruler.' One possible emendation is *þursa þjóðar sjöt* to *þurs á þjóðar sjöt*, "a giant to the seat of his [Odin's] tribe," a reading previously suggested by Koch and Petersen, but discarded by Bugge on the grounds that *hann* would then refer to Fjölsviður whom Bugge saw as a *þurs*, and that *þurs* would refer to Svipdag, which Bugge rejected. Yet nothing in the poem indicates that Fjölsviður or Menglöß are giants, but rather Odin and Freyja. The usual reading, which assumes that Svipdag is approaching a giant's hall, is: *hann sá upp um koma þursa þjóðar sjöt*, "he saw, coming up, the home of the thurses' nation," although this use of *upp um koma* is not adequately explained. To support this reading, the first four helmings are typically rearranged [as in Bugge, Bray, Bellows and Hollander]. If we accept that Fjölsviður is Odin standing outside of Asgard's wall, then we gather that he sees a visitor "coming up" the Bifröst bridge and either assumes or pretends that it is a giant (*thurs*), and therefore an enemy of the gods, who has escaped Heimdall's vigilance and made his way up Bifröst to Asgard. In this case, "moist paths" must refer to Bifröst's path through the atmosphere, cp. *Grímnismál* 21 which likens the bridge to a fish, swimming in the air-river *þrund*, providing the Einherjar a firm footing in the atmospheric sea, which is otherwise too broad to wade. This unique paraphrase is based on Icelandic usage in which a bridgehead is referred to as a *sporður*, 'fish-tail.' [*Sigurdrífumál* 16: *brúar sporði*]. See no. 93.

favoured by the Aesir, on the other side, [565] Svipdag has appeared against the latter and finally defeated him (see no. 93).

By the manner in which Fjölsviður receives the wanderer it is clear that a "Thurs people's leader" cannot count on a welcome greeting outside such a citadel as this. Fjölsviður calls him a *flagð*, a *vargur*, and advises him to go back by "moist ways," because within this wall that sort of thing never comes. However, the severe words spoken this time do not seem to be spoken in the strictest seriousness, for the watchman at the same time begins a conversation, in that he asks Svipdag about his errand. The latter rebukes the watchman for his harsh manner receiving him, and explains that he does not intend to turn back, because it is a beautiful sight he has before him, when he beholds this stronghold and there he would be able to live a happy life.

When the watchman now asks him about his parents and family he provides riddles in response. Himself "the leader of the Thurs people," the former ally of the powers of frost, he calls Windcold (*Vindkaldur*), his father he calls Springcold (*Váarkaldur*), and his grandfather Verycold (*Fjolkaldur*). This answer sets the tone in the entire conversation that follows, in which Svipdag is the questioner, whose inquiries the watchman answers so that he gives persons and things names which seldom are their usual ones, but refer to their qualities.

What stronghold is this, then, before which Svipdag stopped, and within whose walls he shall soon find Menglöð, whom he seeks?

A conclusive investigation of this question is of the greatest importance to a correct understanding of the mythology's events and the connection between them. One has previously assumed —surprisingly enough!— that the stronghold is a giant's estate a haunt for thurses, and that Menglöð is a giantess.

Svipdag has an image before him that enchants his gaze and fills him with a longing to remain there forever. It is a pleasure to the eyes, he says, from which no one who once has seen a thing so lovely willingly abstains. Several "halls," i.e. large residences or palaces with adjoining "estates" [566] are located on these grounds. The halls glitter with gold, which casts a reflection over the plains before them (*garðar glóa mér þykja of gullna sali*, str. 5).¹²

One of the palaces, an extraordinarily splendid one (an *auðrann*),¹³ is wound with "wise waverflame," and Fjölsviður says of it that from time immemorial there has been a rumor of this dwelling among the people. He calls it *Hýrr*, "the gladdening," "the smiling," "the soul-stirring."¹⁴ Within the walls of the stronghold there rises a hill or rock, which the song's author depicts as decorated with floral splendor or in some other manner gentle to the eye, for he calls it the *ljúft berg*:¹⁵ There the fair Menglöð is seen

¹² "these gleaming walls surround golden halls, I think" [Björnsson tr.].

¹³ "rich mansion," *Fjölsvinnsmál* 32.

¹⁴ The name is usually read as *Hyrr*, i.e. "fire," but can also be read as *Hýr*, "sweet, smiling, mild", and , if indeed this is Asgard, understood as a reference to Valhall, which stands on *Glaðsheimur*, "world of gladness, world of joy" according to *Grímnismál* 8. *Glaður* and *hýr* are synonyms. The qualifying statements also apply to Valhall, it too "trembles on the point of the sword" as those who die in battle arrive there over Bifröst, "the trembling way" (cp. *Eiríksmál* 3, *Fagrskinna* ch. 8); and it is a place which no mortal man can know, except by hearsay.

¹⁵ Old Icelandic: "'beloved' or 'gentle' rock", Anderson: "joyous rock"; the various mss. of 36/1 read *Hyfia/Hyfuija/Hyfwia berg*, *Hiunga horn*, *Hlyfvia ber*, *Hyfvia ber*, all of which are meaningless. Bugge

sitting like a statue (*þruma*),¹⁶ surrounded by charming dises. The world-tree, invisible on earth, is seen by Svipdag here spreading its branches loaded with fruits (*aldin*) over all lands. In the tree sits the cock Vidofnir, whose whole plumage glitters like gold (str.s 19, 22, 23, 31, 32, 35, 49).

All this is surrounded by a wall, "so solid that it shall stand as long as the world" (str. 12). It is built of Leirbrimir's (Ymir's) limbs, and is called *Gastrofnir*, "the one that rejects uninvited arrivals."¹⁷ In the wall is inserted the ingenious gate manufactured by Solblindi's sons, which I have already mentioned (no. 36). Svipdag, who was in the underworld and had seen there gods' halls and the *ásmegir*'s well-fortified stronghold (see no. 53), admires the wall and the gate, and remarks that among gods, one has not seen more dangerous preparations (for unbidden guests) than these (str. 9-12).

The gate is guarded by two "garms," wolf-dogs. Fjölsviður informs us that they are named *Gifur* and *Geri*, that they are to live and perform their watch-duties until the ruin of the world (*unz rjúfast regin*), and that they are the watchers of watchers, who are eleven in number (*varðir ellefu, er þeir varða*, str. 14).¹⁸

Just as the mythic personality that Svipdag met outside of the stronghold is named by the Odin-epithet Fjölsviður, so we here find one of the stronghold's watchdogs called after one of Odin's two wolf-dogs, *Geri* (*Grímnismál* 19). Their watch duty, which does not cease before [567] Ragnarök, they perform in service of eleven mythic persons dwelling within the stronghold, who are themselves called *varðir*, an epithet for world-protecting divinities. Heimdall is *vörður goða*,¹⁹ Baldur is *vörður Hálfðanar jarða*.²⁰ The number of Aesir is eleven after Balder descended to the underworld. *Hyndluljóð* 29 says: *Voru ellefu æsir taldir, Baldur er hné við banaþúfu*.²¹

emends this to *Lyfjaberg* "hill of healing herbs," a reading supported by str. 38 where *Eir*, the physician of the gods, sits at Menglöd's feet.

¹⁶ Cleasby/Vigfusson *Dictionary*, s.v. *þruma*: "2. of a place or thing, to stand or sit fast; þar Valhöll við of þrumir, stands rooted, *Grímnismál* 8 ...þruma á bjargi, to sit unmoved on the rock, *Fsm.* 35."

¹⁷ Like the wall itself, the meaning of its name is impregnable. Egilsson notes that the meaning of this name is uncertain, suggesting *gast-* could be placed in connection with *gasta*, *gasteleg* meaning "big, strong, or heavy" and that *-rofnir*, could be read as *rofnir*, *rófnir*, or *rofnir* or *rófnir* (*hrofnir* or *hrófnir*, cp. *hrófa*, *hrófla*) "to build something high and shutterless?"

¹⁸ *Fjölsvinismál* 14/4-6: *varðir ellifu æ þeir varða, unz rjúfast regin*, "the 'varðir ellifu' they will ever keep safe until the gods perish."; Rydberg clearly interprets the word as: eleven *verðir* (pl. of *vörðr*) "wards, guardians" yet *varðir ellifu* the reading in all manuscripts can only mean "eleven women," *varðir* being the plural of the word *vörð*, "woman" [*Lokasenna* 33, *Guðrúnarkviða* III, 3] However, since the sentence does not make sense syntactically, most commentators have offered emendations. Among the most popular, Grundtvig suggested the emendation *varðir ellilyfs*, and conversely that the *epli ellefu*, the 'eleven apples' of *Skírnismál* 19-20 be emended to *epli ellilyf*. The word *ellilyf* occurs only in *Haustlög* 9/3 in the phrase *ása ellilyf*, "the Aesir's remedy against old age," i.e. Idun's apples. Björn M. Ólsen expanded upon this, suggesting that this line in *Fjölsvinismál* be read *varða ellilyf*, "the guardians' remedy against old age."

¹⁹ *Grímnismál* 13. The proper plural of *vörðr* is *verðir*, not *varðir*, as Rydberg states [*LaFarge/Tucker Glossary* sv. *vörðr*]

²⁰ "the warder of Halfdan's estate": This is the last line of a verse found in *Friðþjófs sögu frækna*, ch. 3. The final helming reads: *saman höfum brenda bauga/ í Baldrshaga lagða;/ var þá vilgi fjarri /vörðr Hálfðanar jarða* (or *garða*); "At Baldershage we laid/ bright rings together;/ nor far away was then/ the warder of Halfdan's land." [Rasmus Anderson tr., in *Viking Tales of the North*, 1877]. "Red rings we laid together/ Alright in Baldur's Meadow,/ When far off was the warder/ Of the wide land of Halfdan." [Eiríkr Magnússon and William Morris tr. 1901].

²¹ "There were eleven Æsir reckoned, when Baldr on the pile was laid," [Thorpe tr.] "Eleven were the Æsir all counted up, Baldr has slumped against a death-hummock." [Larrington tr.]

These wolf-dogs are foes of giants and trolls. If a *vættur* came to that place, nevertheless he would pass in front of them (str. 16: *og kemt þá vættur, ef þá kom*). The bewitching beings that are called *gífur*²² and *kveldriður*²³ (*Völuspá* 52; *Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar* 15), and that fly about in the air furnished with *lim*, bundles of switches, these dogs can cause to fall: “They have made *gífur-lim* into a land-wreck,” (*er gjörðu gífurlim reka fyrir löndin*, str. 13).²⁴ As one of the dogs is himself called *Gífur*, his ability, like that of those hunted by him, to travel in the air seems to be indicated. The old tradition about Odin, who hunts with his hounds high above the earth, has its root in the myth concerning the calling, which in his capacity as the lord of heaven, is incumbent upon the Asa-father to keep space free from *gífur*, *kveldriður*, *túnriður*, who “*leika a lopti*,” carry out their disturbances in the air (cp. *Hávamál* 155).²⁵

The hall in which Menglöd lives, and that part of the wall-surrounded domain which belongs to her, seems to be situated directly in front of the gate, for Svipdag, standing before it, asks who rules the regions which he sees before him, and Fjölsviður answers that it is Menglöd who there possesses the power, lands, and treasure-chambers.

The poem lets us know in the most unmistakable manner that Menglöd is an *asynje*, and of all one of the foremost. “What are the names,” asks Svipdag, “of the young women who sit so intimately together at Menglöd’s knee?” Fjölsviður answers by naming nine, among whom are the *asynje* of healing, Eir (*Gylfaginning* 35), and the dises Hlíf “the protectress,” Björt, “the shining,” Blíð, “the blithe,” and Fríð, “the beautiful.”²⁶ Their place at Menglöd’s knee indicates that they are subordinate to her and belong to her attendants. Notwithstanding, Fjölsviður assures us that [568] they are, powerful higher beings, who have sanctuaries with altars (str. 40), and possess both power and mind to quickly help men who sacrifice [*blot*] to them. Nay, “no evil so severe can happen to the

²² Cleasby/Vigfusson *Dict.* s.v. *gífur* “witches, fiends ... frequently in poetry, *al-gífri*, pandemonium, Bragi; *gífrs grand*, “witch-bane” = the god Thor, Eb. (in a verse); wolves are *gífrs hestar* and *hræ-gífr*, carrion beasts, Gkv. 2, 29”.

²³ *kveldriður*, ‘evening riders’, ‘witches.’

²⁴ In the manuscripts, these lines are hopelessly garbled. They read: *er gífr (gífur) reka (roka, rata, rekar) giorþu (giorþa, gorþa) fyrir (fyri) löndin lim (kuir, knyr, lini)*. See Eysteinn Björnsson’s commentary at <http://web.archive.org/web/20010420014924/www.hi.is/~eybjorn/ugm/fsm/fsm13.html>. Benjamin Thorpe reads this as “[those dogs] that chase away the giantesses, and safety to the fields restore,” numerous other emendations and readings have been suggested. In his translation, Hollander notes that “these lines have been supplied conjecturally.”

²⁵ Additional evidence that Fjölsviður is in fact Odin lies in *Fjölsvinnsmál* 45, when Menglöd (Freyja) says to him: *Horskir hrafnar/ skulu þér á háam gálga/ slíta sjónir úr,/ ef þú það lýgur,/ að hér sé langt kominn/ mögur til minna sala*; “Wise ravens shall tear out your eyes on the high gallows, if you are lying, that from afar has arrived the youth to my halls.” The poet could not have referred to Odin in a clearer manner for an audience already familiar with his myth. Odin is *Hrafnás*, *Hrafnagoð*, the Raven god, whose two ravens fly out every day gathering intelligence for him (*Grímnismál* 20). Their very names, *Huginn* (Mind) and *Muninn* (Memory), demonstrate that they represent his mental capacity, and thus naturally can be characterized as “wise.” Odin is also the god of the gallows. He is *Hangagoð*, *Hangatýr*, the Hanged god, who hung for nine nights on the “windswept tree” (*Hávamál* 138). He is also the one-eyed god, who exchanged his other eye for wisdom from Mímir’s well (*Gylfaginning* 15, *Völuspá* 28). The poet’s clever use of these allusions, all point to the unmistakable identity of Fjölsviður and Odin, a fact already confirmed by *Grímnismál* 47.

²⁶ Here the text reads *fridsamma*, “the placid,” but is corrected to *den sköna*, “the beautiful,” on p. 756.

sons of men that these maids are not able to help them out of their distress."²⁷ It follows with certainty that their mistress Menglöd, "the one fond of ornaments," must be one of the mythology's highest and most worshipped goddesses. And to none of the *asynjes* is the epithet "fond of ornaments" better applied than to the owner of the finest of female ornaments, Brisíngamen —to Freyja, whose daughters *Hnoss* and *Gersemi* are called by names that mean "ornaments," and of whose fondness for beautiful smithery even Christian saga authors speak. To no other goddess' royal household are such dises as Björt, Blíð, and Fríð so well suited as to hers. And all that *Fjölsvinnsmál* tells about Menglöd agrees with this.

Freyja was the goddess of love, matrimony, and fertility, and for this reason she was regarded as the heavenly ruler and helper, to whom loving maids, wives who will give birth, and sick women had to turn to with prayer and offerings. Figuratively this is expressed in *Fjölsvinnsmál* so that every sick woman who walks up the mountain on which Menglöd sits regains her health. "That mountain has long been the joy of the sick and wounded"²⁸ (str. 36). The great tree whose foliage spreads over Menglöd's palace bears the fruits that help *kelisjúkar konur*,²⁹ so that *utar hverfa það þær innar skýli* (str. 22).³⁰ In the midst of the beautiful dises who surround Menglöd, the poem also mentions Aurboða, the giantess, who afterwards becomes the mother-in-law of Freyja's brother, and whose appearance in Asgard as Freyja's handmaiden, and as one of those that bring fruits from the world-tree to *kelisjúkar konur*, has already been mentioned in no. 35.³¹ If we now add that Menglöd, though a mighty goddess, is married to Svipdag, who does not belong to the number of the gods, and that Freyja, despite her high rank among the goddesses, does not have a god for her husband, but, as *Gylfaginning* 35 expresses it, *giftist þeim manni er Óður heitir*,³² and, finally, that Menglöd's father is designated by a name which refers to Freyja's father, Njörd,³³ then already these circumstances, even without the additional and decisive evidence which are presented in the continuation of this investigation are sufficient to provide a solid basis for the identity of Menglöd and Freyja, and as a necessary consequence of that, for the identity of Svipdag and Óður, also called Óttar.

²⁷ 40/4-6: *ei svo hátt forað kemur að hölda sonum, hvern þær úr nauðum nema*. The syntax here is problematic and a negative seems to be missing. A literal translation of these lines results in: "the sons of men will encounter no obstacle so high, that the maidens will rescue them from peril." The meaning, however, is apparent: "they will free the sons of men from any danger, however great the need," [Björnsson tr.].

²⁸ "det bärget har länge varit sjuka och såreades gamman", a paraphrase of the poem's words: *en það hefur lengi verið sjúkum [mss. svikum, svik, siuk, sink] og sári gaman*.

²⁹ *kelisjúkar konur*: Bugge reads the word *kelisjúkar* as *killisjúkar*, womb-sick, based on the Gothic word *kilþei*, womb. If correct, this could be a synonym of *jóðsjúkar* "child-sick", i.e. "in labor."

³⁰ "out then will come that which they carry inside" [Björnsson]

³¹ There Rydberg identifies her with Hljöd, Hrimnir's daughter, in *Völsungasaga*, ch. 2, who, acting as Frigg's messenger, brings an apple to an infertile queen so that she may become pregnant.

³² "married to the man named Óður."

³³ [Rydberg's footnote:] In strophe 8 *Fjölsviður* says of Menglöd: *Menglöd of heitir, / en hana móðir of gat/ við Svafurþorins syni*. Svafur alone, or as a part of a compound, designates a Vana-god. According to a historicized narrative in *Fornaldarsögur, Hervarar Saga* 1, U-redaction, [I, 415] a daughter of Thjazi was married to "king" Svafurlami. In the myths, it is Freyja's father, the Vana-god Njörd, who gets Thjazi's daughter for his wife. *Sólarljóð* (str. 79, 80) mentions Njörd's daughters together with *Svafur* and *Svafurlogi*. The daughters are nine, like Menglöd and her dises.

The glorious stronghold to which Svipdag walked "up" is therefore Asgard, as already clearly indicated by the description of it with its gold-glittering palaces, its wall standing until Ragnarok, its artistic gate, its eleven watchmen, its Fjölsviður-Odin, its Asynje *Eir*, its comforting and lovable discs worshipped by men, its two wolf-hounds who shall keep watch so long as the world stands and which cleanse the air of *túnriður*, its overshadowing canopy of the world-tree's branches, and its gold-feathered cock *Viðófnir*, *Völuspá's Gullinkambi*.

Svipdag comes as a stranger to the gate of Asgard, and what he beholds there he has never previously seen. His conversation with Fjölsviður is a series of inquisitive questions in regard to the wonderful things he now beholds for the first time. His designation as *þursa þjóðar sjólr*³⁴ indicates even more; he is not only a stranger in Asgard, but also that he has been the foe of the Aesir. That he, under such circumstances, could gain admittance to the only way that leads to Asgard, the bridge Bifröst; that he could walk unhindered up this bridge and approach its gate with impunity, [570] without encountering any other adversity than some words of rejection from Fjölsviður, who soon changes his tone and gives him information about what he asks—all this presupposes that the myths must have reported strong and satisfactory reasons for permitting something so unusual to happen. Several passages in *Gróugaldur* and in *Fjölsvinnsmál* suggest that the powers of fate had selected Svipdag to perform extraordinary things and reach a goal, whose attaining seemed to be impossible. That the norms have a special purpose with him and that Urd shall protect him and guide his course with unseen bonds, however erratic it may seem, his mother already lets us understand from the grave chamber. And when Svipdag finally sees Menglöð hasten to cast herself into his arms, he says himself that it is Urd's irresistible decree that has ordained it so: *Urðar orði kveður engi maður*.³⁵ But Urd's resolution alone cannot epically justify that Svipdag is adopted into Asgard, and although not of Asa-birth, wins the extraordinary honor and good luck of becoming the husband of the most beautiful of the *Asynjes* and of one of the highest goddesses. Urd must have arranged the chain of events so that Menglöð *wants* to possess him, that Svipdag made himself deserving of her love, and that the Aesir deem it best for themselves to secure this opponent of theirs with bonds of kinship.

³⁴ Rydberg interprets this to mean "the ruler of the thurs-people." However, if we accept Fjölsviður-Odin as the first speaker, *þurs* most likely refers to the approaching Svipdag and *þjóðar sjólr* to "the seat of his [Odin's] tribe." Thus: "He [Odin] saw come up, a *thurs* [Svipdag] to the seat of his [Odin's] tribe."

³⁵ This line is difficult to interpret and may be damaged. The word *kveður*, 3rd person, sing., pres. tense of either *kveða* or *kveðja* is ambiguous; neither occurs elsewhere with a dative (i.e. *Urðar orði*), to mean "oppose, resist, hinder," the apparent meaning here. Grundtvig first suggested an emendation to *viður*, i.e. *vinnur*, used with a dative in *Völundarkviða* 41 to mean "resist, oppose." Dronke [*PE II*, p. 326] notes that *vinna* in the sense 'hinder, prevent,' with dative, but without *við*, appears to be a poetic usage. The phrase *vinna sköpum* "resist, escape fate" occurs in *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II* 29, *Grípismál* 53, and *Atlamál* 48 lending weight to this. The word *löst* written as *laust*, can be read as the adjective *laus*, neuter, meaning "loosely, lightly." The common meaning of *löstur* is "(moral or physical) defect; vice, shame, blame." A similar usage occurs in *Grípismál* 23: *Er-a með löstum lögð ævi þér* "your life, as it is laid out for you, is blameless." Thus, the meaning of this line, appears to be: "No one can oppose Urd's decree, even if it forces him to do something shameful."

Source: <http://web.archive.org/web/20020627004517/http://www.hi.is/~eybjorn/ugm/fsm/fsm47.html>.

**SVIPDAG BRINGS TO ASGARD THE SWORD OF REVENGE FORGED
BY VÖLUND.**

The most important question Svipdag puts to Fjölsviður is, of course, whether a stranger can enter. Fjölsviður's response assumes that this is impossible and will remain so, unless the stranger brings a certain **weapon**. The wall repels the uninvited arrival; the gate imprisons him, if he ventures to lay hands on it; of the two wolf-hounds one is always awake while the other sleeps, and no one can pass them without permission.

[571] To this assurance by Fjölsviður are tied a series of questions and answers, which the author of the poem has planned with **truly** uncommon acumen. Svipdag asks if it still is not possible to get past the watching dogs. There must be something in the world delicious enough to satisfy their appetite and divert their attention. Fjölsviður concedes that there are two dainty morsels that might work, but they are pieces of meat that lie in the limbs of the cock Vidofnir (str. 17, 18). He who can obtain them can slip past the dogs. But the cock Vidofnir sits high up in the world-tree and seems to be inaccessible. Is there then, asks Svipdag, some weapon that can bring him down dead? Yes, answers Fjölsviður, such a weapon exists. It was forged below the *nágrindur*; the smith was one *Loftur*.³⁶ He was robbed (*rúinn*) of this smithery, so dangerous to the gold-glittering cock, and now it finds itself with Sinmara, who has laid it in a chest of tough iron beneath nine *njarð*-locks (str. 25, 26).

It must have been extremely difficult and dangerous to proceed to the place where *Sinmara* lives and to seek to acquire the weapon so carefully stored. Svipdag asks if anyone who is willing to attempt it has any hope of returning. Fjölsviður responds that in Vidofnir's joint-bones (*völum*) lies a shiny scythe (a hook-shaped bone?). If one can procure it, bring it to *Lúður* (the place of the underworld mill), and surrender it to *Sinmara*, then she can be persuaded to give up the weapon in question (str. 27-30).

From this, it is clear that the condition upon which Svipdag can enter into the stronghold where Menglöð lives is that he shall be in possession of a weapon which was smithied by an enemy of the gods, here called *Loftur*, and thus to be compared with Loki, who actually bears this epithet. If he does not possess this weapon, undoubtedly dangerous to the gods, [as it is] the only one that can kill the world-tree's gold-glittering cock, then the stronghold's gate will not open for him, and the watching wolfhounds will not let him pass through it.

But Fjölsviður also indicates that under ordinary circumstances, and for one who is not specially chosen for this by Fate, [572] it is utterly impossible to get the sword in question into his possession. Before one can lend it from Sinmara, he must have brought Vidofnir dead down from the world-tree's branches. But to kill him demands the very weapon that Sinmara will not surrender otherwise.

However, the continuation of the poem shows that what was impossible for everybody else has already been accomplished by Svipdag. When he stands before the stronghold's gate conversing with Fjölsviður he has the sword by his side, and knows

³⁶ Rydberg makes no distinction between the names *Loptur* and *Loftur*. However, the mss. read *Loftur* ("the Airy"), which *Lexicon Poeticum* acknowledges may be a form of the Loki-epithet *Loptr*. Both Loki and Völund took bird-form on occasion, justifying the names. As *Loftur* here is most likely Völund, the poet no doubt intended to invoke Loki, as Rydberg suggests, by using a close variant of his name.

perfectly well that the gate shall open, as soon as it pleases him to put an end to the verbal exchange with Fjölsviður and say his name. The very moment he does this, the gate swings on its hinges, the mighty wolfhounds welcome (*fagna*) him, and Menglöð, informed by Fjölsviður of his arrival, hastens yearning to meet him (str. 42 ff.). *Fjölsvinnsmál*, as far as acumen in design and execution is concerned, is the finest ancient poem that has come down to our time, but it would be reduced to thorough nonsense if the sword were not in Svipdag's possession, as the gate shall never open for anyone other than him who brings the weapon in question to Menglöð's stronghold.

So far as the sword is concerned, we have learned from the above:

- that it was forged by an artist who must have been a foe of the gods, for Fjölsviður designates him by the Loki-epithet *Loptur*;
- that the place where the artist dwelt when he made the weapon was situated *fyr nágrindur neðan*;
- that while he dwelt there, and after he had finished the sword, he was robbed of it (*Loftur rúinn fyr nágrindur neðan*);
- that he or they who robbed him of it must have stood in close connection to Night and the night dises, because thereafter the sword is in the night-being Sinmara's keeping;
- that she regarded it as exceedingly precious, and also dangerous if it came into the wrong hands, because she keeps it in a "tough iron chest" within nine magical locks;
- that the eleven guards that dwell in the same stronghold as [573] Menglöð regard it as of the utmost importance to get the sword within their stronghold wall;
- that it has qualities like no other weapon in the world. It and only it can kill the golden cock on the world-tree—a quality which seems to indicate that it threatens the existence of the world and the divine powers.

It is evident that the artist who forged this incomparable and terrible weapon was one of the myths' most celebrated smiths. The question now is, whether the information *Fjölsvinnsmál* gives us concerning him places us in a position to determine with certainty who he is.

The poem does not name him by any of his names, but calls him by the Loki-epithet *Loptur*, "the Airy." Among the primeval smiths that our mythic fragments report, one is found who designates himself with the similar epithet *Byrr*, "Wind." This is Völund. After he had been captured in his sleep by Mimir-Niðaður and his Njars (see no. 87), he says upon waking:

*Hverir eru jöfrar
þeir er á lögðu
besti Byr síma
og mig bundu?*

"Who are the mighty, who with bast (*besti*, dative of *böstr*) laid bonds on the wind (*lögðu síma á Byr*) and bound me?"³⁷

The expression implies that one could as easily believe himself able to hold the wind as to capture Völund, who of course, also understood how to free himself despite all precautionary measures.

According to the Norse variant of the Völund story, one of these precautionary measures is that his knee-sinews were cut (str. 17 and the prose). It is Niðaður's queen who causes him this cruel treatment. In *Fjölsvinnsmál* the unnamed mythic personality who robbed "the Airy" of his weapon has delivered it to be kept by a female being, *Sinmara*. The name is composed of *sin*, which means "sinew," and *mara*, which means "the maiming." (*Mara* is related [574] to the verb *merja*, "to maim"³⁸ —see Vigfusson's *Dictionary*).³⁹ Thus *Sinmara* means "she who maims by doing violence to the sinews." The one designated by this epithet in *Fjölsvinnsmál* has therefore played the same role as Mimir-Niðaður's queen in *Völundarkviða*.

Mimir-Niðaður, who imprisons Völund and takes the sword and the excellent arm-ring from him, is the father of Night and her sisters (see no. 85). He who robs "the Airy" of his smithery must also have stood in the closest connection to the dises of night, otherwise he would not have appointed as the weapon's watchwoman *Sinmara*, whose quality as a night-being is proven by the meaning *incubus nocturnes* which the name *Mara* acquired. In *Fjölsvinnsmál* 29, *Sinmara* is called *hin fölva gýgur*, "the ash-colored giantess" — a designation pointing in the same direction.

She is also called *Eir aurglasis* (str. 28), an expression which, as I believe, has been correctly interpreted as "the dis of the shining arm-ring" (compare Bugge *Edda*, p. 348).⁴⁰ In *Völundarkviða* the daughter of Mimir-Niðaður receives Völund's incomparable arm-ring to wear.

According to *Fjölsvinnsmál* "the Airy" forges his weapon *fyr nágrindur* neðan. The meaning of this expression has already been discussed in no. 60. The smith finds himself in the frost-cold and nebulous Niflheim, while he works on his weapon.

³⁷ *Völundarkviða* 13: Dronke notes that 13/3 "remains unintelligible" and that "the problem here seems insoluble. Our first impression is that Völundr is asking who has placed rope (*síma*) on him and bound him, and that we must try to fit the incomprehensible *besti byr* into this framework." She questions whether "*besti* and *síma* (a) conceal a reference to the bast rope with its rings, or (b) [could] be a corruption of (a form of) **bezta gørsimi*, '(my) best treasure,' with reference to the theft of the jeweled ring." [PE II, p. 312].

³⁸ Swedish *lemlästa*: "mutilate, maim, cripple, disable"; *lemlästad*, "shattered in limb", *Svensk-Engelsk Ordbok Skolupplaga* by O. Edmund Wenström and Walter E. Harlock, 5th edition, 1943.

³⁹ "*merja*: —to bruise, crush", p. 424; "*mara*, u. f. [Engl. *night-mare*; akin to *merja* = to crush]", p. 412.

⁴⁰ Bugge, who bases this on the name of the golden ring *Glæsir* in *Þorsteins Saga Vikingssonar*, ch. 3 [Rafn's *Fornaldar Sögur Nordlanda* II, p. 390], writes: "6. *eiri*, *saa Hskrr.* (*dog anfører K. eyrv af S*) og *Udgg.* —örglasir, *saa Eg.*; *jvfr.* *Ringen Glæsir (rettere Glasir)* i Fas. II, 390; *aurglasir Udgg.*; *a/rglasir Hskrr.* eller *a/rglassir (saa CL, de stockh. Hskrr og Eddubrott Rasks)*. Eysteinn Björnsson suggests that a more likely interpretation of the kenning *Eiri aurglasis* is "Eir of Aurglasir", where *Eir*, the name of the physician of the gods, is used as a generic term for woman and *Aurglasir* signifies the lower half of the world-tree, Yggdrassil, which is hidden by mud (*aur-*). Compare *Veðurglasir*, 'weather-Glasir' which signifies the upper half of the tree, exposed to the wind, where the golden cock Vidofnir (cp. *Vóluspá*'s Gullinkambi) is perched [*Fjölsvinnsmál* 24]. In *Skáldskaparmál* 34, Snorri says that *Glasir* is the name of the tree with golden leaves outside of Valhalla, and thus probably is another name for Yggdrassil. Source: <http://web.archive.org/web/20010420012249/www.hi.is/~eybjorn/ugm/fsm/fsm28.html>

Niflheim, the land *fyr nágrindur neðan*, as we already know, is the northern subterranean neighboring realm to Mimir's land. The two territories are separated by the Hvergelmir mountain, on which the *ná*-gates are built and where the great world-mill, called *Eylúður* and *Lúður* has its foundation (see nos. 59, 60, nos. 79, 80). In its vicinity, under the Hvergelmir mountain's southern slope, Night has her hall (nos. 84, 93). According to *Fjölsvinnsmál*, Sinmara also dwells here. Namely, Fjölsviður says that if Svipdag is to obtain the sword which she keeps, he must carry the above-mentioned scythe "to Lúður and give it to Sinmara" (*ljósan ljá skaltu í Lúður bera, Sinmöru að selja* - str. 30).⁴¹ *Lúður*, the subterranean world-mill, [575] which stands on Níði's mountains above Night's hall, has given its name to the region where she stays. In *Völundarkviða* Mimir-Niðaður suddenly turns up with his wife and daughter and armed Njars in the remotely situated frosty Wolfdales, where Völund thinks himself secure, without anyone knowing from where his enemies have come. This has its explanation therein that the "Wolfdales" of the heroic story were in the mythology situated in Niflheim, the border-land to Mimir's realm. Völund, like "the Airy", has forged his sword *fyr nágrindur neðan*; the latter, like the former, was robbed of his weapon, when it was finished, by a subterranean ruler, whose kinswomen are night dises; and in one story, as in the other, one of these night dises has caused a crippling by injuring sinews.

Hereby it becomes comprehensible why Svipdag must traverse Niflheim, "meet Night on Nifl-way," visit the world-mill, wade across Hel-rivers, and encounter "the weapon honored" Mimir himself. If Svipdag wants the sword forged by "the Airy," he must risk such adventures, because the sword is kept in the underworld by a kinswoman of Mimir.

The heroic saga about Völund is therefore basically identical with the myth of the manufacturer of the sword which opens Asgard for Svipdag. The former is merely a newer version of the latter produced in Christian times. Völund is a foe of the gods, an elf-prince who was deeply offended by beings more powerful than himself (see no. 87). "The Airy" must likewise be a foe of the gods, since the weapon he forged is dangerous to the world-tree's golden cock, and is purchased by "the eleven watchers" with the opening of Asgard's gate and the giving of Menglöð as wife to Svipdag. An indication of its danger to Asgard must also lie in Fjölsviður's statement that the splendid hall, called *Hýrr*, "the gladdener," "the soul-stirring," which is situated within the stronghold wall, encircled by waverflames, and which from time immemorial has been mentioned among men—that this hall has long trembled *á brodds oddi*, "on the point of the weapon" (str. 32). No other weapon can here be meant than one which meant the greatest danger to the safety of the gods, [576] and which filled them with anxiety; and unless one wishes to deny the poem's meaning and connection, this weapon can be none other than that which Svipdag now carries, and which, since it was brought to Asgard, relieves the gods of their anxiety. And to repeat the points of similarity: Völund, like "*Loftur*" forges his weapon in a northern borderland of Mimir's realm; and when the smithery is finished he is surprised by subterranean powers. *Loftur*'s story, like Völund's, speaks of a magnificent arm-ring, and in both a night-dis receives this arm-ring to wear. *Loftur*'s story, like Völund's,

⁴¹ "The bright sickle which lies in Vidofnir's *völum* (knuckle-bones) you must carry to *lúður* (the mill) and give to Sinmara." [Eysteinn Björnsson tr.]

Source: <http://web.archive.org/web/20010420012616/www.hi.is/~eybjorn/ugm/fsm/fsm30.html>.

speaks of a night-dis who damages sinews. And Völund calls himself *Byrr*, "the wind," which is a synonym of *Loftur*.

Svipdag has thus proceeded to the underworld in order to come into possession of Völund's sword, and he has been successful.

99.

SVIPDAG'S FATHER ÖRVANDIL, THE STAR-HERO. EXPLANATION OF HIS EPITHET SÓLBJARTUR.

The conversation between Fjölsviður and Svipdag ends when the latter gives his name, and requests the former to ask Menglöð if she wishes to possess his love. Menglöð then rushes to him, but before she shows what she feels for him, he must confirm by stating his and his father's name that he is the one he appears to be: the one she has long been yearning for. The young hero then says: *Svipdagur eg heiti, Sólbjartur hét minn faðir* (str. 47).⁴²

To Fjölsviður's question regarding his father's name, he previously answered: *Várkaldur* (str. 6); and I have already indicated the reason why he could be called so.⁴³ Now he provides another name of his father, *Sólbjartur*, which also is merely an epithet, but nevertheless, as he must speak plainly here, must refer to his father in a recognizable and more definite manner.

Svipdag's mother, Groa, was married to *Örvandill hinn frækni* [577] (*Skáldskaparmál* 25 [Pr. Edd. 276-278]). The epithet *Sólbjartur*, "he who has a brilliance like the sun's," if it really refers to Örvandil, has its justification and its explanation in something that the myths reported about him. Of Örvandil, we know from the *Prose Edda* (*Skáldskaparmál* 17) that he and Groa, at least for a time, had been good friends of Thor; that the latter, on one of his expeditions in Jötunheim north of the Elivogar rivers, had met Örvandil and had carried him in his provision-basket across the water to his home; that while doing this Örvandil froze a toe; that Thor broke this off, and, to honor Örvandil, cast it up to the vault of heaven, where it became that star which is called *Aurvandilstá*, *Örvandil's toe*. Of ancient Germanic star-names very few have come down to our time, and it is natural that those that did must have been borne by constellations or individual stars, which drew attention to themselves through their appearance, or particularly through the strength of their light. One of them was "Örvandil's toe." Under the name Örvandil, *Earendel*, a star was also known among the Germanic tribes in Britain. After being converted to Christianity, they regarded the *Earendel* star as a symbol of Christ. The Church had already sanctified such a view by applying II Peter 1:19 to Christ: "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the *day-star* (φωσφόρος) arise in your hearts." The morning star became, as it says in a Latin hymn, "*typus Christi*."⁴⁴

However, it would be premature to draw the conclusion that Örvandil's star and the morning star were one and the same in heathen times. All that can be said with

⁴² "*Svipdagur* [Sudden-day] am I called, *Sólbjartur* [Sun-bright] is my father."

⁴³ See no. 97.

⁴⁴ "a symbol of Christ".

certainty is that the former must have been one of the most spectacular, for the very name *Earendel* in Old English gradually became an abstract word meaning "splendor."

*Codex Exoniensis*⁴⁵ has preserved a hymn to Christ, whose introductory strophes appear to be borrowed from the memory of a heathen hymn to Örvandil, and with slight change to have been adapted to Christ: [578]

<i>Eala Earendel</i>	O Örvandil,
<i>engla beorhtast,</i>	clearest shining of angels,
<i>ofer Middangeard</i>	you who over Midgard
<i>monnum sended,</i>	are sent to men,
<i>and soðfasta</i>	you true
<i>sunnan leoma,</i>	beam of the sun,
<i>tohrt ofer tunglas</i>	shining above the
<i>þu tida gehvane</i>	heavenly bodies,
<i>of sylfum þe</i>	ever of thyself
<i>symle inlihtes.</i>	giving light.

From this Old English song it appears as if the Örvandil epithet *Sólbjartur* was also in use among the Saxon tribes in England. We rediscover there, so to speak, an apparent interpretation of it in the phrases applied to *Earendel*, "brightest (*beorhtast*) of angels" and "true beam of the sun." That Svipdag's name was well known in England, and that a Saxon royal dynasty counted him among their mythical forefathers, is evident from the genealogy of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. That Svipdag could with sufficient clarity characterize his father as *Sólbjartur*, thus has its explanation in that Örvandil is a star-hero, and that the star bearing his name was one of the "brightest" in the heavens, and in brilliancy was like "a beam from the sun."

100.

SVIPDAG RESCUED FREYJA FROM GIANTS' HANDS. SAXO ON OTHARUS AND SYRITHA. SVIPDAG IDENTICAL WITH OTHARUS.

When Menglöð requests Svipdag to name his family and his name, she does so because she wants *jartegn* (legal testimony; compare the expression *með vitnum og jartegnum*)⁴⁶ that he is the one whose wife she became by the norms' decree (*ef eg var þér kván of kveðin* - str. 46),⁴⁷ and that her eyes had not deceived her. She also wishes to know something about his past life that can confirm that he is [579] the same. When Svipdag had given as *jartegn* his own name and an epithet-name of his father, he makes only a brief statement in regard to his past, but to Menglöð it is an entirely sufficient

⁴⁵ *Exeter Book* 7, 20. Rydberg's source here is undoubtedly Jacob Grimm's *Deutsche Mythologie* I, XV, 5. [Stalleybrass tr, p. 375]. Many of Rydberg's connections in the following chapters are clearly indebted to Grimm's work.

⁴⁶ *Gulapingslög* 60: *með skilríkum vitnum ok jartegnum*, "with conclusive testimony and token," cited in Cleasby/Vigfusson *Dictionary s.v. jartegn*, 'a word's token,' which a messenger had to produce in proof that his word was true.

⁴⁷ *ef eg var þér kván of kveðin*, "if I was your wife by verdict", cp. *kviðr norma*, "the verdict of the norms," "fate."

proof of his identity with her chosen one. He says namely that the winds drove him on cold ways from his father's house to frosty regions of the world (str. 47). The word used by him, "drove" (*reka*), implies that he did not leave his home of his own volition, which we of course also learn in *Gróugaldur*: it is on his stepmother's orders, and against his will that he departs to find *Menglöðum*, "those fond of ornaments." His answer further demonstrates that after he had left his father's house he had made journeys in frost-cold regions of the world, such as Jötunheim and Niflheim, which was in fact regarded as a subterranean part of Jötunheim (see nos. 59, 63).

With languishing yearning, Menglöð has looked forward to the day when Svipdag would come. The mental state in which she finds herself when Svipdag sees her within the stronghold wall, sitting on "the delightful mound" surrounded by Asynjes and dises, is designated in the poem by the verb *þruma*, "to be sunk into a lethargic, dreamy condition."⁴⁸ When Fjölsviður comes and bids her "look at a stranger who may be Svipdag" (str. 43), she awakes in **heated passion**, and for a moment can scarcely contain herself. After she is persuaded that Fjölsviður's words and her own eyes have not deceived her, she at once seals the welcoming of the youth with a kiss. The words which the poem places on her lips testify, like her conduct, that it is not the first time she and Svipdag have seen one another, but that this meeting is a reunion, and that long before this, she knew that she had Svipdag's love. She speaks not only of her longing for him, but also of his longing and love for her (str. 48-50), and is happy that he has "again come to her halls" (*að þú ert aftur kominn, mögur, til minna sala* —str. 49). This "again" (*aftur*), which indicates a previous meeting between Menglöð and Svipdag, is found in all the manuscripts of *Fjölsvinnsmál*, [580] and that it has not been added by any meter-polishing text-"improver" is demonstrated in that the meter would be improved if the word was not found there.

Meanwhile, it is absolutely clear from *Fjölsvinnsmál* that Svipdag never before had seen the stronghold within whose walls Menglöð *riki, eign og auðsölum* (str. 7, 8).⁴⁹ He stands before its gate as an admiring newcomer, and poses question after question to Fjölsviður about the remarkable sights before his eyes. It follows that Menglöð did not have her halls within this stronghold, but dwelt in some other place, when, on a previous occasion, she had met Svipdag and became assured that he loved her.

In this other place she must have resided when Svipdag's stepmother commanded him to find *Menglöðum*, that is to say, Menglöð, but also someone else to whom the epithet "ornament-glad" might apply.⁵⁰ This is confirmed by the fact that this other person to whom *Gróugaldur* 3 refers is not mentioned at all in *Fjölsvinnsmál*. It is obvious that many events occurred and that Svipdag had many adventures between the episode described in *Gróugaldur*, when he had just received his stepmother's order to find "those fond of ornaments," and the episode in *Fjölsvinnsmál*, when he again seeks Menglöð in Asgard itself.

⁴⁸ In regard to a mental condition, Cleasby/Vigfusson defines *þruma* as "to mope, tarry, stay behind, loiter"; Egilsson as "become still and remain in one and the same place."

⁴⁹ "holds power over the lands and costly halls," [Björnsson tr.].

⁵⁰ The plural form *menglöðum* is found in all manuscripts of *Gróugaldur* 3, but is difficult to explain as it cannot be a plural form of the name Menglöð in the nominative [*Menglaðir* (masc.), *Menglaðar* (fem.), or *Menglöð* (neu.)], although *menglöðum* can be the dative of any of these. It could conceivably refer to Freyja and the *meyjar* who surround her (see *Fjölsvinnsmál* 37-38), or, as Rydberg thought, to Freyja and her brother Freyr.

Where could he have previously met her? Has there been a time when Freyja did not dwell in Asgard? *Völuspá* 25 answers this question, as we know, in the affirmative. An event once occurred, threatening to the gods and the existence of the world: the goddess of fertility and love had come into the giants' power. Then all the high-holy powers assembled to discover "who had mixed the air with corruption and given Óður's maid to the giants' race."⁵¹ Of our Icelandic mythic sources, however, none mention how and by whom Freyja was liberated from the captivity of the powers of frost. Under the name Svipdag, our hero is mentioned there only in *Gróugaldur* and *Fjölsvinnsmál*; under the names Óður and Óttar one does not learn more there than that he was Freyja's lover and husband (*Völuspá*, [581] *Hyndluljóð*); that he went far, far away; that Freyja then wept for him and that her tears became gold, and that she looked for him among unknown peoples and under many names: Mardöll, Hörn, Gefn, Sýr (*Gylfaginning* 35 [Pros. Edd. 114]). To get additional contributions to the myth about Svipdag we must turn to Saxo, where the name Svipdag should occur as Svipdagerus, Óttar as Otharus or Hotharus, and Óður as Otherus or Hotherus.⁵²

There cannot be the least doubt that Saxo's *Otharus* is a figure borrowed from the divine myths and from the heroic sagas connected with them, since in the first eight books of his history not a single personality can be pointed to that does not have his origin there. But the mythic records that have come down to our time know only one Óttarr, and he is the same one who wins Freyja's heart. This alone makes it the duty of the mythologist to follow the pointer that is given here and see whether that which Saxo relates about his Otharus confirms his identity with Svipdag-Ottar.

The Danish king Syvaldus had, says Saxo, an extraordinarily beautiful daughter, Syritha,⁵³ who came into a giant's power. This proceeded so that a woman who had a secret understanding with the giant succeeded in nestling herself in Syritha's confidence, in being adopted as her maidservant, and in enticing her to a place where the giant laid in wait. The latter hurried away with Syritha and concealed her in a wild mountain district. When Otharus learned this he started out in search of the kidnapped young maiden, ransacked the mountains' recesses, found the one he sought and slew the giant. Syritha was in a strange condition when Otharus liberated her. The giant had twisted and pressed her locks together so that on the top of her head they formed, so to speak, one very hard substance which hardly could be disentangled [582] without the assistance of an iron tool. Her eyes were indifferently staring, and she never lifted her gaze up toward her liberator. It was Otharus' decision to bring her back pure and virginal to her kinsmen. But the coldness and indifference she seemed to harbor for him was so difficult for him to bear, that he abandoned her along the way. While she now wandered alone through the wilderness she came to the abode of a giantess. The latter set her to watch her goats. Yet, Otharus must have regretted that he left Syritha on her own, because he sought and liberated her a second time. The mythic poem from which Saxo borrowed his story must

⁵¹ *hverr hefði lopt allt / lævi blandit / eða ætt jötuns / Óðs mey gefna.*

⁵² [Rydberg's footnote:] In Saxo, as in other sources of about the same time, aspirated names do not usually occur with aspiration. I have already referred to the examples Handuuanus Andvani, Helias Elias, Hersbernus Esbjörn, Hevindus Eyvindur, Horvendillus Örvandill, Hestia Estland, Holandia, Oland. (See no. 92)

⁵³ In the English translations, Oliver Elton renders her name as Sigrid, and Peter Fisher as Siritha. Saxo however spells the name Syritha. See *Saxonis Grammatici Gesta Danorum* herausgegeben von Alfred Holder, 1886, p. 225 ff.

have contained a song (reproduced by him in Latin paraphrases) in which Otharus explained his love to Syritha and bid her, whom he “with such severe toils sought and found,” to give him a glance from her eyes as a token that she was willing to be brought back to her father and mother under his protection. But her eyes continually stared toward the ground, and in appearance she remained as cold and indifferent as before. Otharus left her then for the second time. From the context of the narrative it is clear that they were then not far from that border which separates Jötunheim from the other realms of the world. Otharus crossed the water, in the document probably the Elivogar rivers, on whose other side his father’s residence was situated. Of Syritha, Saxo again says reservedly and obscurely that “she in a manner that happened in antiquity hurried far away down over the rocks” —*more pristino decursis late scopulis* (Book VII, 227 [*Hist.* 333])⁵⁴ —an expression which allows us to suppose that in the mythic account she had hurried away bird-shape. However, fate brought her to the home of Otharus’ parents. Here she represented herself to be a poor wanderer, born of parents who owned nothing. But her refined manners contradicted her statement, and Otharus’ mother received her as a noble guest. Otharus himself had already come home. She thought she could remain unknown to him by never raising the veil with which she covered her face. But Otharus well knew who she was. To find out whether she actually was as feelingless for him [583] as it would seem on the surface, a pretend wedding was arranged between Otharus and a young maiden, whose name and position Saxo does not mention. When Otharus went to the bridal bed, Syritha, probably as the bridesmaid, was in his vicinity and lit him. The light or torch burned down, so that the flame came in contact with her hand, but she felt no pain, for there was in her heart a still more burning pain. When Otharus then told her that she should take care of her hand, she finally raised her gaze from the ground, and their eyes met. Thereby the enchantment resting on Syritha was broken: it was plain that they loved one another and the pretended wedding was changed into a real one between Syritha and Otharus. When her father learned this, he became taken with wrath; but after his daughter explained everything to him, his indignation was turned into favor and graciousness, and thereafter he himself married a sister of Otharus.

In regard to the person who enticed Syritha into the snare laid by the giant, Saxo is not entirely certain that it was a woman. Others think, he says, that it was a man in the shape of a woman.

It has long since attracted the attention of mythologists that in this narrative two names, Otharus and Syritha, occur which seem to refer to the myth of Freyja.⁵⁵ Otharus is undoubtedly a Latinization of Ottar, and, as is well known, the only one who had this name in the mythology is, as stated, Freyja’s lover and husband. Syritha, on the other

⁵⁴ “in her old fashion, ran far away over the rocks,” [Elton tr.]; “had ranged far and wide as before over the rocky landscape,” [Fisher tr.]

⁵⁵ For example, Wilhelm Müller in “Siegfried und Freyr,” *Zeitschrift für Deutsches Alterthum*, 3rd. bd. (1843), pp. 43-53: “Syritha läfst sich mit Syr, beinamen der Freyja zusammenstellen”; and more recently Britt-Mari Näsström, *Freyja—the Great Goddess of the North*. (1995), p. 157: “Victor Rydberg suggested that Siritha is Freyja herself and that Ottar is identical with [the] same as Svipdagr, who appears as Menglöd’s beloved in *Fjölsvinnsmál*. Rydberg’s intentions in his investigations of Germanic mythology were to co-ordinate the myths and mythical fragments into coherent short stories. Not for a moment did he hesitate to make subjective interpretations of the episodes, based more on his imagination and poetical skills than on facts. His explication of the Siritha-episode is an example of his approach, and yet he probably was right when he identified Siritha with Freyja.”

hand, may be a Latinization of Freyja's epithet *Sýr*, in which Saxo presumably believed he had found an abbreviated form of Syri (Siri, Sigrid). In Saxo's narrative Syritha is abducted by a giant (*gigas*), with the aid of an ally whom he had procured among Freyja's attendants. In the mythology Freyja is abducted by a giant, and, as is clear from *Völuspa*'s words, likewise with the assistance of someone in Freyja's vicinity acting as ally, for it is there said that the gods confer regarding whom it could have been who "gave," delivered, Freyja to the giant's race (*hver hefði ætt jötuns Óðs mey gefna*). In Saxo, Otharus is of lower birth than Syritha. [584] Saxo has not made him a son of a king, but compared to his bride a lowborn youth, whose courage to look up to Syritha, Saxo remarks, can only be explained by the great deeds he had performed or by his confidence in on his agreeable nature and his eloquence (*sive gestarum rerum magnitudine sive comitatis et facundiae fiducia accensus*).⁵⁶ In the mythology Óður was of lower birth than Freyja: he did not by birth belong to the number of higher gods; and Svipdag had, as we know, never seen Asgard before he came there under the circumstances described in *Fjölsvinnsmál*. That the most beautiful and next to Frigg the foremost of goddesses, she who is the desire of all powers, the sister of the harvest god Frey, the daughter of the god of wealth, Njörd, she who with Odin shares the privilege of choosing heroes on the battlefield—that she does not become the wife of an Asa-god, but "is married to the man called Óður," would long since have been rated a fact both interesting and worthy of investigation by mythologists, if, in addition to speculations on the signification of the myths as symbols of nature or on their ethical meaning, one had cared to devote any research to their epic connection and causal relationships. Then one certainly would have come to the conclusion that this Óður in the mythic epic must have performed exploits which compensated for his lower birth, and thus one would have been exhorted to primarily direct the investigation to the question whether Freyja, who we know was in the power of the giants for some time, but was rescued from there, did not find her liberator in this very Óður, who afterwards became her husband, and whether Óður did not through this very act gain her love and become entitled to receive her hand. The adventure which Saxo relates incorporates itself into the actual work and fills a gap in that series of events which results from the analysis of *Gróugaldur* and *Fjölsvinnsmál*. It becomes comprehensible that the young Svipdag is alarmed, and regards the task imposed on him by the stepmother to find Menglöð far too great for his strength, if it is necessary to seek Menglöð in Jötunheim and convey her from there. [585] It becomes comprehensible that on his arrival to Asgard he is so kindly received after he has fulfilled the formality of saying his name, if he arrives there not as the feared possessor of the Völund sword alone, but also as the one who restored the most loved and most beautiful Asynja to Asgard. One can then understand why the gate, which imprisons every uninvited guest, opens for him on its own accord so to speak, and why the savage wolf-hounds lick him. That his words: *þaðan* (from his father's home) *rákumk vindar kalda vegu*,⁵⁷ are a sufficient answer for Menglöð to her question about his previous journeys becomes comprehensible, if Svipdag, like Ottar, has ransacked the frost-cold Jötunheim's eastern mountain districts in order to find Menglöð; and one can then understand why

⁵⁶ "kindled with confidence in the greatness either of his own achievements, or of his courtesy and eloquent address," [Elton tr.]; "fired perhaps by his great achievements, or perhaps sure of his charm and eloquence," [Fisher tr.]

⁵⁷ *Fjölsvinnsmál* 47: "thence was I driven by winds on cold ways."

Menglöð in *Fjölsvinnsmál* can speak of her meeting with Svipdag at Asgard's gate as a reunion although he had never been in Asgard before. And that Menglöð receives him as her already wedded husband, who now gets "to live together forever" with her (*Fjölsvinnsmál* 50), likewise receives its explanation by the improvised wedding Otharus celebrated with Syrithia before she returns to her father.

Otharus' identity with the myths' Óttarr-Óður-Svipdagur further is clear from the fact that Saxo gives him as father an Ebbo, which a comparative investigation shows to be identical with Svipdag's father Örvandil. To the name Ebbo and the person who bears it, I shall come further down (see nos. 108 and 109). Here it may be observed that if Otharus is the same as Svipdag, then his father Ebbo, like Svipdag's father, should appear in the history of the mythic patriarch Halfdan as his enemy (see nos. 24, 33). This is also the case. Saxo places Ebbo on the scene as an enemy of Halfdan Berggram (Book VII, p. 207 [*Hist.* 329, 330]). A woman, Groa, is the cause of the enmity between Halfdan and Örvandil. A woman, Sygrutha, is the cause of the enmity between Halfdan and Ebbo. In the one passage Halfdan robs Örvandil of his betrothed Groa; in the other passage Halfdan robs Ebbo of his bride Sygrutha. Saxo has, in a third passage in his [586] History (Book III, p. 83 [p.138]), preserved the memory that Horvendillus (Örvandil) is slain by a rival, who takes his wife, there called Gerutha. Halfdan kills Ebbo. Thus it is clear that the same story is told about Svipdag's father Örvandil and about Otharus' father Ebbo, and that Groa, Sygrutha, and Gerutha are variant names of the same dis of vegetation.

According to Saxo, Syritha's father was afterwards married to a sister of Otharus. In the mythology Freyja's father Njörd marries Skadi, who is Ottar-Svipdag's foster-sister and *systrunga*⁵⁸ (see no. 108, nos. 113, 114, 115).

Freyja's byname Hörn (var. *Horn*) perhaps has its explanation in what Saxo tells of the giant's manner of treating her hair, which he pressed into one snarled, stiff, and hard mass. With the myth about Freyja's locks, we should compare the one about Sif's hair. The hair of both of these goddesses of fertility and fecundity is the object of violence by giant-hands, and it is likely that it is based on something symbolic of nature. Loki's injury to Sif's locks is made good through the skill and helpfulness of the primeval artists Sindri and Brokk (*Skáldskaparmál* 43 [*Pr. Edd.* I, 340]). In regard to Freyja's, the skill of a "dwarf" was probably required, since Saxo relates that an iron tool was necessary to separate and comb out the horn-hard braids. In *Völuspá*'s list of primeval artists appears a smith with the name Hornbori, which possibly stands in connection with this.⁵⁹

Reasons have already been given above (no. 35) that it was Gullveig-Heid who betrayed and delivered Freyja to the giants. When Saxo says that it was a woman who committed this treachery, but also points out the possibility that it was a man in the guise of a woman, then this too has its explanation in the myth, where Gullveig-Heid, like her accomplice Loki, is of androgynous nature. Loki becomes "pregnant by the evil woman" (*kviðugur af konu illri*).⁶⁰ In *Fjölsvinnsmál* 38, we again find the reborn Gullveig-Heid, under her name Aurboda, in Freyja's company, where she has ingratiated herself for a second time.

⁵⁸ Cleasby/Vigfusson *Dictionary*, sv. *.systrunga*: "one's mother's sister's daughter, a female cousin." i.e. first cousin on the mother's side.

⁵⁹ *Völuspá* 13: Codex Regius, *Hornbori*; Hauksbók, *Fornbogi*.

⁶⁰ *Hyndluljóð* 41.