

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

Translated and annotated with modern references
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101.

SVIPDAG IN SAXO'S ACCOUNT OF HOTHARUS.

From the parallel name Otharus, we may now turn to the parallel name Hotharus. It has already been pointed out that if the Svipdag synonym *Óður* occurs in Saxo, it must have been Latinized into Otharus or Hotharus. The latter name-form is also found there, but under circumstances that make a more detailed investigation necessary, for in what Saxo says concerning this Hotharus, he has, as best he could, united adventures from the life-stories of two different mythic persons, and so it is important to once again separate these elements, which were borrowed from different places, from one another. One of these mythic persons is *Höður* the Asa-god, and the other is *Óður-Svipdag*. For this reason, the investigation is simultaneously a contribution into the research of one of the documents concerning the Baldur myth.

Saxo's account of Hotharus (Book III, 63 ff. [*Hist.* 110 ff.]) contains the following:

Hotharus, son of Hothbrodus (*Höðbroddur*), was fostered by Nanna's father, King Gevarus (*Gevarr*; see nos. 90-92), and he grew up to be a stately youth, distinguished as a sportsman among his peers and contemporaries. He was a swimmer, archer, and boxer, and his skill on various musical instruments was such that he had the human passions in his hands, and at will could arouse gladness, sorrow, sympathy, or hate. Gevarus' daughter Nanna fell in love with the highly gifted youth and he with her.

Meanwhile, fate willed that the idol Odin's son Baldur also fell in love with Nanna. He had once seen her bathing, and had been dazzled by the splendor of her limbs'. In order to remove the most dangerous obstacle between himself and her, he resolved to kill Hotharus.

Hunting one foggy day in the woods, Hotharus got lost and came to a dwelling, where three wood-maidens sat. They greeted him by name, and in answer to his question they said they were the maids who administer the battlefield's events and more than others determine the fortunes of war. Invisible they come to the battlefield, and secretly help those whom they wish to favor. From them Hotharus learned that Baldur was in love with Nanna, but they advised him not to use weapons against him, for he was a demigod born of supernatural seed. When they had said this, they and the dwelling in which Hotharus had found them disappeared, and to his amazement found himself standing on a field under the open sky. [588]

When he arrived home, he told Gevarus what he had seen and heard, and immediately asked for the hand of his daughter. Gevarus answered that he would gladly see Hotharus and Nanna united; but Baldur had already made the same request, and he did not dare draw the wrath of the latter, since not even iron bit the demigod's blessed body.

But Gevarus said he knew a sword with which Baldur could be slain, but it lies locked up within the strongest enclosure, and the place where it is found is scarcely accessible to mortals. The way —if it can be spoken of as such, where no path is cleared —is filled with obstacles, and leads for the greater part

through an exceedingly cold land. But behind a span of swift yoke-harts¹ one should be able to come alive across the icy mountain ridges. He who keeps the sword is the forest-being Mimingus, who also has a wonderful wealth-producing arm-ring. When Hotharus comes to this place, he should place his tent so that its shadow does not fall into the mountain cave where Mimingus dwells, for at the sight of this strange eclipse the latter would withdraw deeper into the mountain. But observing these measures of caution, the sword and arm-ring could perhaps be received. The sword is of such that with it victory is secured, and its value is quite inestimable.

Hotharus, who carefully followed Gevarus' advice, succeeded in securing the sword and the ring, which Mimingus, surprised and bound by Hotharus, surrendered as a ransom for his life.

When Gelder, the Saxons' king, learned that Mimingus' treasure had been plundered, he resolved to make war against Hotharus. The soothsaying Gevarus foresaw this, and advised Hotharus in battle to patiently receive the rain of spears from the enemy's side and not to dispatch their own ballistic weapons before the enemy's supply of such weapons was exhausted. Gelder was overcome and had to ask for peace. Hotharus received him in the friendliest manner and he now conquered him with his gentle spirit as he had previously with his stratagem.

Hotharus also had a friend in Helgo, the king of Halogaland. The chieftain of the Finns and of the Bjarmians, Cuso (Gusi), was father to Thora, whose hand Helgo sought through messengers. But Helgo had so ugly a blemish on his mouth that he was ashamed to talk, not only with strangers, but even to his own household. Cuso had already refused his offer of marriage, but when he now addressed himself to Hotharus with an appeal for help, the latter was able to secure an audience with the Finnish chieftain, so that Helgo secured the wife he desired.

While this happened in Halogaland, Baldur had closed in on the territory of Gevarus with an armed force, to demand Nanna's hand. Gevarus referred him to his daughter, who was permitted to determine her own fate. Nanna responded that she was of too humble birth to be the wife of one of divine descent. Gevarus let Hotharus know what had happened, and the latter consulted with Helgo as to what should now be done. After deliberating various ways out, they resolved on war. [589]

And it was a war in which one could believe that men fought with gods. For Odin, Thor, and the gods' hallowed troops fought on Baldur's side. Thor had a heavy club, with which he crushed shields and armaments and beat down all before him. Hotharus would have seen his retreating host beaten had he not succeeded in checking Thor's progress. Clad in an impenetrable coat-of-mail, he went against Thor, and with a stroke of his sword severed the shaft making the latter's club unusable. Then the gods fled. Thereafter Hotharus' comrades stormed in on Baldur's fleet and destroyed it entirely. In the same war Gelder fell. On a pyre set up on Gelder's ship his body was burnt on a stack of fallen warriors, and Hotharus solemnly interned his ashes in a large, magnificent grave-mound. Thereafter Hotharus returned to Gevarus, celebrated his wedding with Nanna, and richly gifted Helgo and Thora.

But Baldur knew no peace. War arose anew, and now it was Baldur who conquered. The defeated Hotharus took refuge with Gevarus. In this war, it happened that a water-shortage arose in Baldur's army; but the latter dug deep and opened new wells for his thirsty men.

However, Baldur was persecuted in the night by ghosts that assumed Nanna's shape. His love-longing consumed him so that finally he could not use his feet, but had to employ a team or a wagon on his journeys.

Hotharus had fled to Sweden, where he retained royal authority; but Baldur took possession of Zealand, and soon acquired the Danes' devotion, for he was regarded as having martial merits and was a man of great dignity. Hotharus afflicted him with a new war, but was beaten on Jutland, and had to return to Sweden alone and abandoned. Despondent over his defeats, suffering life and the light of day, he went into the wilderness and traversed the most desolate forest districts that a mortal's feet seldom tread. So he came to a cave wherein three unknown women sat. From such, he had once received the impenetrable coat-of-mail, and he recognized them as the same. They asked him why he had come to these regions, and he told them how unsuccessful the war had been for him. He reproached them, saying that they had deceived him, for they had promised him victory, but that it had gone entirely differently. The women responded that he nevertheless had done his enemies great harm, and assured him that the victory would yet go to him if he should succeed in finding the unusually delectable, wonderful nourishment which was

¹ Swedish: *okhjortar*: "yoke-harts", modeled on Saxo's Latin phrase *cervis iugalibus*, "yoked stags" which Rydberg defines as reindeer (*renar*) in *Fädernas Gudasaga*, p. 149.

invented for the strengthening of Baldur's powers. With this they succeeded to egg him into a new war, although among his friends were found some who advised him against it. On both sides, armies were gathered, and it came to a bloody battle, which was not decided when night fell. Hotharus' anxiety hindered him from sleeping, and he went out into the darkness to investigate the enemy position. When he had reached [590] their camp he perceived that three dishes, who were accustomed to preparing Baldur's mysterious food had just left. He followed their footprints in the dewy grass and came to their abode. Asked by them who he was, he said he was a zither-player. One of them then handed him a zither,² and he played beautifully for them. They had three vipers with whose venom Baldur's food was mixed. With this, they were now engaged. One of them was friendly enough to offer Hotharus some of the preparation; but the eldest said: "It would be treason to Baldur to increase his foe's strength." The stranger then said that he was one of Hotharus' men, not Hotharus himself. He was then permitted to taste the food.³ The women also presented him with a magnificent victory-belt.⁴

On his return trip, Hotharus met his foe and stuck him in the side, so that he fell half-dead to the ground. There was jubilation over this in Hotharus' camp, but sorrow in the Danish camp. Baldur, who knew that he was going to die, but was unwilling to await death in his tent, renewed the conflict the following day, and let himself be carried on a stretcher into the thickest throng of battle. The following night Proserpina (the death goddess) came to him and announced that the next day he would be her guest. He died from his wound at the predicted time, and was buried in a mound with royal splendor. Hotharus took the monarchy in Denmark after Baldur.

Meanwhile it had happened that King Gevarus had been attacked and burned indoors by one of his jarls named Gunno. Hotharus avenged Gevarus'd death, and burned Gunno alive on a pyre as punishment for his crime.

With Rinda, Odin had a son by name Bous. The latter, in order to avenge the death of his brother Baldur, attacked Hotharus, who fell in the conflict. But Bous himself was severely wounded and died the following day from his wounds. Hotharus was followed on the Danish throne by his son Röricus.

In the critical examination of this story by Saxo, there is no hope of arriving at indisputably reliable results as long as the critic does not give up all the usual assumptions and, in fact, all presumptions concerning the origin and age of the Baldur-myth, concerning a special Danish myth in contrast to a special Norse-Icelandic myth, etc. If the latter conjecture based on Saxo is correct, this shall appear as a fruit of the investigation; but the conjecture is not to be used as a presupposition for it.

What immediately strikes the eye is that the story is not homogeneous. It is composed of elements that do not allow [591] themselves to be melded into a whole. It suffers from internal contradictions. The origin of these, first of all, requires explanation.

The most persistent contradiction is fixed on the sword of victory that Hotharus acquires.⁵ It is assured to be of immense value (*ingens præmium*) and is attended with the

² Saxo's Latin *citharoedum*: a lyre or zither player. The term "citre" is also used more broadly, to describe the entire family of stringed instruments in which the strings do not extend beyond the sounding box.

³ [Rydberg's footnote:] According to Gheysmer's synopsis. Saxo himself says nothing of the kind. The present reading of the passage in Saxo is distinctly mutilated. [Thomas Gheysmer was a fifteenth century monk, who made an abridgment of Saxo's work.]

⁴ *Ille se non Høtherum, sed Høtheri comitem dicebat, <---> Eaedem namque nymphae accurati nitoris cingulum potentemque victoriae zonam clementi benignitate ei largitae sunt.* "He said, not that he was Høther, but that he was one of his company. Now the same nymphs, in their gracious kindness, bestowed on him a belt of perfect sheen and a girdle which assured victory," [Elton tr.]; "Their caller claimed that he was not Høther, only one of his friends *Here there is a lacuna in the text*. With gracious liberality the same nymphs presented to him a carefully-wrought, glittering belt, which would guarantee victory," [Fisher tr.]

⁵ [Rydberg's footnote:] Bugge has also observed this, and correctly believes that the episode concerning the sword has been interpolated from some other source.

success of victory (*belli fortuna comitaretur*). With the aid of this sword, Hotharus can, in fact, accomplish a great exploit: drive Thor and other gods to flight. But thereafter Hotharus is conquered time and again by Baldur, and ultimately also defeated by Bous and slain, despite Gevarus' statement that victory always accompanied this weapon. Admittedly, Hotharus succeeds after several defeats in giving Baldur his death-wound with it, but this does not happen in battle, and can hardly be counted as a victory; and Hotharus is not even in position for this secret murder by possession of the sword alone, but must own a belt of victory and have eaten of the wonderful food which gives Baldur his strength, in order to accomplish it.

There must be a reason why Saxo fell into this striking contradiction, which is maintained throughout the narrative. If in the mythology Hotharus-Höður possessed a sword which always grants victory and was in a position to subdue the gods themselves, then the myths *cannot* have said anything about defeats that he suffered after he had this sword in hand, nor can he then have fallen in conflict with Odin's and Rind's son. The only possibility in which this could happen would be that Hotharus-Höður, after he took possession of the sword of victory and used it once, was robbed of it in some manner. But Saxo has read nothing of this in his sources—otherwise he would have mentioned it, if for no other reason than as a motive for the defeat his hero suffers—and it is without doubt his intention that the sword with which Baldur is mortally wounded is the same as the one Hotharus took from Mimingus. Consequently: either Höður has never suffered the defeats mentioned by Saxo nor fallen before the brother-avenging son of Odin and Rind, or [592] he has never owned the sword of victory mentioned here. It is not necessary to point out on which side of these alternatives, the mythological facts lie. Höður has never owned the irresistible sword.

But Saxo himself has not invented the episode about the sword of victory, nor has he introduced this episode in his story about Hotharus without thinking he had reason to do so.

It follows with certainty that the episode belongs to another hero's story, and that in the story were found circumstances which caused Saxo to confound him with Höður.

The question then arises who this hero was. The first guidance the investigation receives and has to follow is the name itself, Hotharus, whose Latin veneer can conceal Óður as well as Höður.

In the myths, Óður, like Höður, has been an inhabitant of Asgard, but nevertheless, like Höður, has stood in hostile relations to Asgard, and during that time fought with Thor (see no. 103). The similarity of names and the similarity of mythological situation are sufficient to explain the confusion on the part of Saxo. But in addition there are many reasons, of which I will give only one here. The weapon with which Höður, against his will, slew Baldur in the mythology was a young shoot, *mistilteinn*. The sword of victory made by Völund with hostile intentions against the gods could, just on the basis of its danger to Asgard, be compared by skalds with the mistletoe, and be so called in a poetic-rhetorical sense. The fact is, that already in *Skírnismál* and in *Fjölsvinnsmál* the Völund sword is designated as a *teinn*; that the mistletoe is included in the list of sword-names in the *Nafnapulur* [*Pros. Edda*]; and that in the later Icelandic saga-literature Mistilteinn is a sword which is owned in succession by Seming, Thrainn, and Hrómund Gripsson (*Hrómundar saga Gripssonar* ch. 5); and finally, that all that is said there about this sword Mistilteinn, although admittedly confused, is a faithful echo

of the myths' story of the sword of victory made by Völund. Thus for example, one finds that it is *Máni karl* who informs Hrómund where the sword is to be sought, while in Saxo it is the moon-god [593] Gevar, Nanna's father, who informs Hotharus where it is kept. That the god *Máni* and *Gevar* are identical has already been demonstrated (see nos. 90, 91, 92). Before Saxo's time, *mistilteinn* and the myths' sword of victory had already been confounded with one another; Höður's and Óður's weapons had received the same name. This was additionally a strong reason for Saxo to confound Höður and Óður and make them one in Hotharus. And when in some of his sources he found that a sword *Mistilteinn* was used by Óður, and in others that a sword *mistilteinn* was used by Höður, it was natural that he as a historian should prefer the sword to the fabulous mistletoe (see more below).

The circumstance that two mythical persons were made into one in Hotharus has given Saxo free choice of making his Hotharus the son of the father of the one or of the other. In the myth, Höður is the son of Odin; Óður-Svipdag is the son of Örvandil. Saxo has made him a son of Hödbrodd, who is identical with Örvandil. It has already been demonstrated (see no. 29) that Helgi Hundingsbani is a copy of the Teutonic patriarch Halfdan. The series of parallels by which this demonstration was illustrated at the same time establishes that Helgi's rival Hödbrodd is Halfdan's rival Örvandil. The same place that the latter occupies in the myth of Halfdan, Hödbrodd occupies in the songs about Helgi Hundingsbani. What one had reason to expect, namely, that Saxo, when he did not make Hotharus the son of Höður's father, should make him a son of Óður's, has actually occurred, thus there can be no doubt that Höður and Óður were compounded into one in Saxo's Hotharus.

With this certainty established, it is possible to analyze Saxo's narrative point by point, resolve it into its constituent parts, and refer each of them to one of the two myths concerning Höður and Óður.⁶ It has already been emphasized that Saxo was unable to organically unite the episode about the sword of victory taken from Mimingus with his presentation of Höður's adventure. [594] The introduction of this episode has turned the story of Hotharus into a chain of contradictions. However, the same episode naturally adapts itself to Svipdag-Óður's already known story. We have seen that Svipdag descends into the underworld and there comes into possession of the Völund sword. It is thus Svipdag-Óður, not Höður, who receives instruction from the moon-god Gevar where the sword is to be found. It is he who crosses the frost-mountains, penetrates into the "specus"⁷ guarded by Mimingus, and there takes possession of the Völund sword and the Völund ring. It is Svipdag, not Höður, who, thanks to this sword, is able as *pursar þjóðar sjóli*⁸ to conquer the otherwise indomitable Halfdan — nay, even more: compel Halfdan's co-father and protector, the Asa-god Thor, to yield.

Saxo's stories about Otharus and Hotharus thus fill two important gaps in the accounts that the Icelandic sources preserved into our time about the Svipdag-myth. In addition to this is added what Saxo tells us about Svipdag under this his very name (see

⁶ [Rydberg's footnote:] This analysis will be given in the second part of this work in the treatise on the Baldur-myth. [For an identification of the elements of the Höður myth in Saxo's tale of Hotharus, see Viktor Rydberg's *Investigations into Germanic Mythology*, Vol. II, Part 2: "The Story of Olaf Geirstadaalf and its Connection with the Poem about Helgi Hjörvardsson."]

⁷ Latin *specus*, "cave."

⁸ *Fjölsvinnsmál* 1: "leader of the thurs people," see no. 97.

nos. 24, 33): that he relentlessly fights Halfdan after the latter had first seized and then rejected Groa; that after shifting fortunes of war conquers him and becomes his bane; that he takes Halfdan's and Groa's son Gudhorm into his favor and gives him a kingdom, but that he pursues and wars against Halfdan's and Alveig-Signy's son Hadding, and finally falls before him.

Hotharus-Svipdag's life-threatening journey across the frosty mountains, told by Saxo, is predicted by Groa in her seventh song of protection over her son:

*Pann gel eg þér inn
sjöunda,
ef þig sækja kemur
frost á fjalli háu,
hræva kuldi
megit þínu holdi fara,
ok haldist æ lík að liðum.*

“Then I sing you the seventh,
If you should meet
frost on a high mountain:
then may corpse-cold not
harm your flesh,
and your body keep its limbs.”

[595]

102.

SVIPDAG'S SYNONYM EIREKUR. ERICUS DISERTUS IN SAXO.

Saxo's contribution to the Svipdag myth is not yet exhausted. In two additional passages in his *Gesta Danorum* [*Historia Danica*] Svipdag reappears, namely, in the stories of Frodi III's and of Halfdan Berggram's reigns, in both under the name Ericus, *Eirekur*, a name that Svipdag also bore in the myths (see no. 108).

The first reference showing that Svipdag and Erik are identical appears in the following analogies:

Halfdan (Gram), who kills a Swedish king, is warred on by Svipdag.
Halfdan (Berggram), who kills a Swedish king, is warred on by Erik.
Svipdag is the son of the slain Swedish king's daughter.
Erik is the son of the slain Swedish king's daughter.

Saxo's story about King Frodi is, in greater part, a historicizing of the myth of Frey. One can then expect to find that Svipdag, who becomes Frey's brother-in-law, should receive a role in Frodi's history under one name or another. The question then is whether a brother-in-law of Frodi plays some role therein. This is actually the case. Frodi's brother-in-law is a young hero who is his general and *factotum*,⁹ and is called Ericus, with the surname *disertus*, the eloquent. The Ericus who appears as Halfdan's enemy accordingly resembles Svipdag, Halfdan's enemy, in that he is a son of the daughter of the Swedish king slain by Halfdan. The Ericus who is Frodi-Frey's general,

⁹ Latin: *factotum*, “a servant employed to do many jobs.”

again, also resembles Svipdag in that he marries Frodi-Frey's sister. This is another indication that Erik and Svipdag were identical in Saxo's mythic sources.

Let us now follow these indications and see if they win support in the adventures Saxo attaches to Halfdan's enemy Erik and Frodi-Frey's brother-in-law, Erik the eloquent.

Saxo first brings us to the paternal home of Erik the eloquent. Erik's mother is already dead, when the story begins, and his father has married a second time (Book V, 109 [Hist. 192]). Compare with this the beginning of Svipdag's history, where his mother, according to *Gróugaldur*, is dead, and his father is married again.

[596] The stepmother has a son, who is called Rollerus, whose position in this very myth I come to later. Erik and Roller leave their parent's home to find Frodi-Frey and his sister Gunvara, a maiden of the most extraordinary beauty. Before they proceed on this adventurous journey, Erik's stepmother, Roller's mother, has allows them to eat a wisdom-inspiring preparation, in which the fat of three serpents constituted an element. Of this preparation the cunning Erik knew how to secure the better part, actually intended for Roller. The half-brothers were otherwise faithful friends.

From Saxo's story it is clear that Erik had no desire at all to make this journey. It was Roller who first made the promise to seek Frodi and his sister, and then, without doubt, it was Erik's stepmother who insisted that Erik should be of assistance to his brother in performing this task. Erik himself regarded the resolve taken by Roller as surpassing his strength. (Book V, 109 [Hist. 193])

This corresponds with what *Gróugaldur* tells us about Svipdag's aversion to perform the task that his stepmother imposed upon him. Moreover, here we receive the key to *Gróugaldur*'s words, that Svipdag was commanded to *koma móti menglöðum*, to seek not only "the one fond of ornaments" but "those fond of ornaments." The plural indicates that there is more than one "fond of ornaments" to be sought. It is necessary to not only return Freyja to Asgard, but also Frey her brother, the lord of harvests, for whom the primeval artists made ornaments, and who as a symbol of nature is the one under whose supremacy the forces of vegetation working in nature decorate the meadows with grass and the fields with ears of corn. Along with his sister, he too was in the power of the giant-world in the great fimbul-winter (see below).

The preparation to which serpents contributed reappears in Saxo's account of Hotharus (Book III, 68 [Hist. 123], no. 101), and is there described with about the same words. In both passages three serpents are required for this purpose. That Baldur should be nourished with such food is highly improbable. [597] It is from the myth of Svipdag that the serpent preparation entered into the histories of Hotharus and Ericus.

The land in which Frodi and his beautiful sister live is hardly accessible and magic powers have previously thwarted attempts to come there. The attendants of the brother and sister there are described as the roughest, the most brazen, and the most atrocious that can be conceived. They are beings of the most disgusting kind, whose manners are as unrestrained as their words. To get to this country one must travel across a sea, where storms, conjured forth by witchcraft, threaten every sailor with ruin.

Groa has also predicted this journey, and has sung protective *galdur* over her son against the dangers which await him on the magic sea:

*Pann gel eg þér inn séttu
ef þú á sjó kemur*

*meira en menn viti:
logn ok lögur*

*gangi þér í lúður saman
ok ljái þér æ friðrjúgrar farar.*

greater than men have known:
may calm and wave
go together in the quern [*lúður*],
and grant you a peaceful journey.

Then I sing you the sixth,
if you come to a sea,

Once Erik and Roller, defying the storms, had crossed over this sea and conquered the magic power which hindered reaching the country, they entered into a harbor, in whose proximity Frodi and Gunvara are to be sought. On the strand they meet inhabitants who belong to the attendants of the brother and sister. Among them are three brothers, all named Grep, and of whom one is Gunvara's pressing and persistent suitor. This Grep, who is a poet and orator of the sort found in that land, at once enters into a battle of words with Erik. The battle of words ends such that Grepp, defeated and indignant, withdraws from the game. Thereafter, Erik and Roller proceed up to the abode where they shall find those they sought. Frodi and Gunvara are met amid attendants who treat them as princely persons, and look upon themselves as their court. But the royal household is of a very strange kind, and receives the visitors with hideous shrieks, barking, and shameless pranks. [598] Frodi occupies the high-seat in the hall, where a great fire burns as a protection against the bitter cold. It is clear from Saxo's description that Frodi and Gunvara, possibly through the giant's sorcery, are in a spiritual condition in which they are almost oblivious to their past, but, nevertheless, not enjoying their present. Frodi feels unhappy and degraded. Gunvara loathes her suitor Grep. The days Erik and Roller spend here, before they get an opportunity to escape with Gunvara, form a series of drinking-bouts, vulgar songs, assaults, fights, and murders. The jealous Grep tries to assassinate Erik, but in this attempt he is slain by Roller. Frodi cannot be persuaded to accompany Erik, Roller, and Gunvara on their flight. He feels that his life has an unremovable spot, with which he is unwilling to appear among others. The myths leave it to Njörd himself to liberate his son. In another passage (Book VI, 147, 148 [*Hist.* 266, 267]) Saxo says that King Fridlevus (Njörd) liberated a princely youth who had been kidnapped by a giant. In the myths, this youth can hardly be anyone other than the young Frey, the liberator's son. Afterwards, Erik takes Gunvara as his wife.

Among the paraphrases in poems from heathen times occur some that refer to Frey's and Freyja's stay among the giants. In a song by the skald Kormákur the mead of poetry is called *jast-rín fentanna Sýrar Greppa*, "sea-teeth's (skerries') Syr's (Freyja's) Greppar's rising flood."¹ This paraphrase obviously has an idea-association based on the same myth which Saxo has told in his way to thank for its existence. *Sýr*, as we know, is one of Freyja's bynames, and as to its meaning, one which she must have acquired during her stay in Jötunheim, for it is scarcely applicable to her except in giant-talk. Greppur, the poet in the place, as we have already seen, is Freyja's suitor. He has brothers also called *Greppur*, thus the plural expression *Sýrar Greppa* ("Syr's Greps"), in which Freyja's

¹ The kenning is recorded in *Skáldskaparmál* 53. Anthony Faulkes, who also defines it as "mead of poetry," derives the meaning as: "fen-teeth [rock-] Syr's [giantess's] men's [giants'] yeast-Rhine." (*Edda* p. 131). In his *Skáldskaparmál* II, p.294, Faulkes defines *greppur* as a "poetical name for a poet", "the poet", or "man in general"; as "in a kenning for giants, *Sýrar fentanna greppa* v292/3 (gen. pl. with *jast-Rín*)." Snorri defines *greppur* in *Skáldskaparmál* 65: "Poets are called *greppur*, and it is normal in poetry to refer thus to any man if desired." This, however does not rule out Rydberg's interpretation as Snorri also says "It is normal to refer to a man using all of the names of Æsir. Names of giants are also used. [*Skáldskaparmál* 39]. As noted, Saxo states that Grep is known as a poet among the men of his country.

byname joined with more than one Grep, receives its mythological explanation. The giant estate where Frodi and Gunvara dwell, is according to Saxo, situated not far from the harbor where Erik and Roller entered [599] (*portum a quo Frotho non longe deversabatur*,² Book V, 112 [*Hist.* 198]). The expression "skerries' Syr's Greps" thus corresponds with Saxo.

A northern land uninhabited by man is called *útröst Belja dólgs*, "the most remotely situated abode of Beli's enemy (Frey)" by Eyvind skáldaspillir.³ This paraphrase also has its explanation in the myth about Frey's and Freyja's stay in Jötunheim. *Beli* is a giant-name, and means "the shrieker." According to Saxo, Erik and Roller are received by the giants who attend Frey with hideous shrieks: "They uttered terrifying sounds in the manner of howling creatures" (*ululantium more horrisonas dedere voces*).⁴ To the myth of how Frey fell into the power of the giants I shall come later (see no. 109, no. 111, 112).

In Saxo, Erik bears the surname *Disertus*, the eloquent. Svipdag's epithet *Óður* originally had a meaning quite close to this. The impersonal *óður* means partly the thinking element in man, partly the shaping of poems and poetry, the ability of expressing one's self skillfully and of joining the words in an agreeable and persuasive manner (cp. the Gothic *weit-wodan*, to convince). Erik demonstrates the reason for his name: Saxo allows him to speak in proverbs and sentences, certainly for the reason that his Northern source has laid such on the lips of the young hero. The same quality characterizes Svipdag. In *Gróugaldur* his mother sings over him: "Eloquence and social graces be abundantly given you";⁵ and the description of him in *Fjölsvinnsmál* puts before our eyes a quick and spirited youth who well understands the watchman's veiled words, and on whose lips speech forms proverbs which imprint themselves on the memory. Compare *augna gamans*, etc. (str. 5),⁶ and the often quoted *Urðar orði kveður engi maður* (str. 47).⁷

Toward Gunvara Erik observes the same chaste and chivalrous conduct as Otharus toward Syritha (*intacta illi pudicitia manet*,⁸ Saxo, Book V, 121: [p. 216]). As to birth, he occupies the same subordinate position to her as Óðr to Freyja, Otharus to Syritha, Svipdag to Menglad.

The adventures that the myths related concerning Svipdag's journey, when [600] he went in search of Freyja-Menglad, are divided by Saxo between Ericus Disertus and Otharus that of the former is told the most of what happened to Svipdag during his visit in the giant abode, of the latter the most of what happened to him on his way home from there.

Of Erik's family relations, Saxo gives facts which, from a mythological viewpoint, are of great value. It has already been mentioned that Erik's mother, like

² "a harbor not far from where Frothi was staying," [Fisher tr.].

³ This occurs in *Skáldskaparmál* 14 [Jónsson ed]. Faulkes translates the passage as "Beli's enemy's outlying land," [*Edda, Skáldskaparmál* 7, p. 75].

⁴ "uttered gruesome sounds like things howling," [Elton tr.]; "emitted blood-curdling cries like howling wolves," [Fisher tr.].

⁵ *Grougaldur* 14.

⁶ *Augna gamans fýsir-a aftur fán hvars hann getur svást að sjá*, "Once the eye has beheld a delightful spectacle, it ever years to return," [Eysteinn Björnsson tr.]

⁷ "No one may oppose Urð's degree, even though it incurs blame." [Eysteinn Björnsson tr.]

⁸ "for her chastity remains inviolate," [Elton tr.]; "she is still a virgin," [Fisher tr.].

Svipdag's, is dead, and that his father, like Svipdag's, is remarried at the beginning of his story. With his second wife, the father begets a son, whom Saxo calls Rollerus. After Erik's father also dies, Roller's mother, according to Saxo, marries again, and this time a powerful champion called Brak (Book V, 122 [*Hist.* 217]), who in the continuation of the story proves to be *Ása-bragur*, the god Thor (cp. no. 105), to whom she then brings her son Roller. From our mythological sources, we learn that Thor's wife was the vegetation goddess Sif; that Sif had been married and had a son by the name Ullur, before she had yet become the Asa-god's wife, and that she brought this son, who was adopted into the gods' circle, to Asgard. Thus the mythic sources and Saxo correspond in these points, and thereby it follows that Rollerus is the same as Ullur, whom Saxo in another passage (Book III, 72-73 [*Hist.* 130, 131]; cp. no. 36) speaks of as Ollerus. The name-forms Ollerus and Rollerus stand in relationship to one other as *Ólfur* to *Hrólfur*. *Hrólfur* is a contraction of *Hróð-úlfur*; Rollerus suggests a contraction of *Hróð-Ullur*, *Hríð-Ullur*. The latter name-form occurs in the paraphrase *Hríðullr hrotta*, "the sword's storm-Ull,"⁹ a designation of a warrior (*Grettis saga* 18 [20, 1]).¹⁰ It has already been pointed out that in the great war between Odin's clan and the Vanir, Ull, although he is Thor's stepson, takes the Vanir's side and made common cause with Frey and Svipdag. Saxo also describes the half-brothers as faithfully united, and, on account of Roller's dependable fraternity, allows Erik to utter a saying which closely corresponds to the Danish: "*End svige de Sorne og ikke de Baarne*"¹¹ (Book 5, 116 [*Hist.* 207]: *optima est affinium opera opis indigo*).¹² Saxo's account [601] of Erik and Roller thus gives us the key to the otherwise unintelligible mythological statements that Ull, although in Thor he has a friendly stepfather (cp. the expression *gulli Ullar - Þórsdrápa* 17 [*Pros.* I, 302]),¹³ and in Odin a clan-chief who distinguishes him (cp. *Ullar hylli*, etc. - *Grímnismál* 42),¹⁴ nevertheless, he appears in this feud on the same side as Erik-Svipdag, with whom he once set out to rescue Frey from the giants' power. The myth has not wanted to sever the bonds of fidelity which common youthful adventures had knitted between Frey, Ull, and Svipdag. For this reason, the latter two join with the former when the conflict between the Aesir and Vans breaks out.

It follows that Sif was Örvandil the brave's second wife before she became Thor's, and that Ull is Örvandil's son. The close relation between Örvandil on the one side and Thor on the other has already been pointed out above. When Örvandil was out on adventures in Jötunheim, his first wife Groa lived as a guest in Thor's hall, where the vegetation-dis could have a safe place of refuge during her husband's absence. This

⁹ Although Rydberg's translation here is accurate, Ull is simply the referent, indicating a human warrior, i.e. "the god [Ull] of the sword-storm." More recent English translators simply render the kenning as "warriors," Fox and Pálsson, 1974; "makers of snow-blizzards," i.e. "warriors," Scudder, 1997.

¹⁰ This reference likely originated in Egilsson's *Lexicon Poeticum*, 1860, which defines the term *hriðullr* as "*deus procellæ*" and the phrase "*h. hrotta*" from "*Grett.* 20,1" as "præliator." The 1931 edition defines the term *hrið-Ullr* as "storm-Ull" and the phrase "*hrotta h.*" from "*Grettis* 15" as "kriger" (warrior).

¹¹ "To betray the sworn ones (i.e. oath-based relationships) rather than the born ones (i.e. blood relationships)," [Tore Lund tr.].

¹² "The service of kin is best for the helpless," [Elton tr.]; "Kinsmen's service is very valuable when you need help," [Fisher tr.].

¹³ *gulli Ullar* "stepfather of Ullr," cp. *mágr Ullar*, "father-in-law of Ullr", in *Haustlög* 15, and *Ulls mágr*, in a verse by Eysteinn Valdason (c. 1000 AD, Skj. B I, 131, 3), cited from Richard North's *Haustlög*, p. 64.

¹⁴ "May he have Ull's protection and that of all the gods," [C. Larrington tr.]

feature preserved in the *Prose Edda* is of great mythological interest, and, as I shall show later on, of Proto-Indo-European origin. Örvandil, the great archer and star-hero, is found again in *Rigveda* and even in Greek mythology—in the latter under the name Orion, as Vigfusson has already assumed.¹⁵ The assumption's correctness is corroborated by reasons, which shall be presented later.

103.

THE SVIPDAG SYNONYM EIREKUR (continued).

We now pass to the Erik that Saxo mentions in his history of Halfdan-Berggram, who, like Svipdag, is the maternal grandson of a Swedish king, who had fallen before Halfdan. Just as Svipdag enters into an irreconcilable war of revenge with Halfdan-Gram, Erik does with Halfdan-Berggram. In one of their encounters Halfdan, despite his [602] superhuman strength, and habit of victory, fled. And more: he has by his side the "champion Thoro," and Saxo himself informs us that the latter is no one less than the Asa-god Thor, but he too must yield to Erik. Thor's Mjölnir and Halfdan's club availed nothing against Erik. In conflict with him, their weapons seemed edgeless (Book VII, 184 [*Hist.* 323, 324]).

That not only Halfdan, but Thor himself, Odin's mighty son, he who alone in strength outweighs all the other descendants and clansmen of Odin, was obliged to retreat before a mythical hero; and that his otherwise irresistible lightning hammer, Sindri's wonderful smithery, is powerless in this conflict, must in the mythology have had quite specific reasons. It is unlikely that the mythology would have permitted its favorite, "Hlóðyn's celebrated son," to be subjected to such a humiliation more than once, and this must have been motivated so that the event could be regarded as an exceptional case, standing alone. It may then be remembered that in his tale of Hotharus, Saxo states, that after the latter had acquired the sword of victory guarded by Mimingus, he meets the Asa-god Thor in conflict and forces him to yield, after severing the hammer from its shaft with a sword stroke (Book III, 66 [*Hist.* 118]; see no. 101). It has already been shown that Óður-Svipdag, not Höður, is the Hotharus who obtained the sword of victory and accomplished this feat (see no. 101). Erik accordingly has, in common with Svipdag, not only those features that he is the maternal grandson of a Swedish king whom Halfdan had slain, and that he relentlessly makes war on the latter, but also that he accomplished the singular exploit of putting Thor to flight.

The hammer Mjölnir has thus shown itself to have been a weapon which, in spite of its extraordinary qualities, is inferior to the sword of victory forged by Völund (see nos. 87, 98). Thus, the mythology has reported two famous judgments on the primeval artists' smithery. The first judgment is passed by the Aesir in solemn consultation, and precisely for the sake of the hammer Mjölnir, declares that Sindri's smithery is superior to that of Ivaldi's sons. The other judgment is passed on the battlefield, and challenges the former judgment of the gods. Mjölnir proves itself useless in battle against the sword of victory. Now, if [603] the Völund of the heroic sagas was one of the overruled Ivaldi sons in the godsaga, then an epic connection could be shown between the former judgment and the latter: the offended Ivaldi son has then avenged himself on the gods and re-

¹⁵ *Corpus Poeticum Boreale* II, p. 13: "Orwandil's toe [Orion's toe, the star Rigel in Orion?]"

established his reputation dishonored by them. I shall return later to the question whether Völund in the myth was a son of Ivaldi or not.

The conflicts between Erik and Halfdan, according to Saxo, were conducted with shifting fortunes. In one of these conflicts, which must have occurred before Erik obtained the irresistible sword, Halfdan is victorious and captures Erik; but the victor's heart changes to reconciliation toward its implacable foe, and he offers Erik life and friendship if the latter will serve his cause. But when Erik refuses the offered conciliation, Halfdan binds him to a tree in order to become prey for the forest's wild animals and leaves him to his fate. Halfdan's desire to become reconciled with Erik, and also that he binds him, is predicted, in *Gróugaldur* (str. 9, 10), by Svipdag's mother among the fortunes that await her son:

*Þann gel eg þér inn fjórða,
ef þig fjándur standa
görvir á gálgvegi:
hugur þeim hverfi
til handa þér mætti,
og snúist þeim til sátta sefi.*

9. I sing you the fourth,
if foes stand ready
on the gallow-way,
may their minds change,
their might in your hands,
and turn to offer peace.

*Þann gel eg þér inn fimmta,
ef þér fjötur verður
borinn að boglimum:
Leifnis elda
læt eg þér fyr legg of
kveðinn,
og stökkur þá lás af limum,
en af fótum fjötur.*

10. I sing you the fifth
if fetters are
bound around your limbs :
Leifnir's flames¹
Will I let be sung over your legs,
and the lock shall start from your
limbs
and the fether from your feet.]

The Svipdag synonyms previously encountered are: Óður (Hotharus), Óttarr (Otharus), and Eirekr (Ericus).

It is remarkable, but, as we shall find later, easy to explain, [604] that this saga-hero, whom the myths made Freyja's husband, and whose career was adorned with such wonderful adventures, was not accorded the same rank as the Aesir and those Vanir

¹ *Leifnis eldar* apparently is a spell to loosen bonds, cp. *Hávamál* 143: *ef mér fyrðar bera / bönd að boglimum / svo eg gel / að eg ganga má / sprettur mér af fótum fjötur / en af höndum haft*; "I know a fourth if bonds are bent around my limbs, so I sing that which enables me to walk, freeing fetters from my feet, and cuffs from my hands." Leifnir is the name of a sea-king in the *pular*. It is tempting to read this as a name of Frey, cp. *Lokasenna* 37 which says that Frey can loosen any fether, *og leysir úr höftum hvern*.

adopted by Odin, before the ninth century and in Sweden, although he was taken up into Asgard, and although his half-brother Ull was clothed with the same dignity as the Aesir possessed. No trace indicates that he who is Freyja's husband and Frey's brother-in-law was commonly honored with a divine title, a temple, and sacrifices. He remained to the believers of myth what he was: a brilliant hero, but nothing more; and while the story of the Teutons' primeval era made him a ruler of North Germanic tribes, whose leader he is in the war against Halfdan and Hadding (see no. 33, no 38), he was honored as one of the oldest kings of the Scandinavian peoples, but was not worshipped as a god. As an primeval king he has received his place in the middle-age chronicles and royal genealogies now under the name Svipdag, now under the name Erik. But, at the same time, his position in the epic was such that, if ever the question arose to increase the Germanic Olympus with a divinity of Asa-rank, no one would have a greater right than he to be clothed with this dignity. From this point of view light falls on a passage in ch. 26 of *Vita Ansgarii*.² It is told there, that before Ansgar arrived in Birka, where his impending arrival was not unknown, there came a man (presumably a heathen priest or skald) who insisted that he had a mission from the gods to the king and the people. According to the man's statement, the gods had held a meeting, which he himself had witnessed, in which they unanimously resolved to adopt into their council that King Erik who in antiquity had ruled over the Swedes, so that hereafter he should be one of the gods (*Ericum, quondam regem vestrum, nos unanimes in collegiam nostrum ascisimus, ut sit unus de numero deorum*),³ this because they had perceived that the Swedes wanted to increase the number of their present gods by adopting a stranger (Christ) whose doctrine could not be reconciled with theirs, and who therefore should not be worshipped. [605] If the Swedes wished to add another god to the old ones, under whose protection the country had so long enjoyed happiness, peace, and plenty, they ought to award Erik, and not the foreign god, that honor which belongs to the country's protective divinities. What the man who came to Birka with this revelation said was made public, and aroused much agitation in their minds. When Ansgar landed, a temple to Erik had already been built, in which they devoted vows and sacrifices to him. The event that took place here, happened during a time, that foreboded a crisis for the ancient Odinic religion. Its last bulwarks on the Germanic continent had fallen, not long before, through Charlemagne's victory over the Saxons. The report of the cruelties employed by the doctrine's advocates, penetrating from the south and the west, for the purpose of breaking the faith of the Saxon Odin worshippers towards their religion, had certainly spread across Scandinavia, and, to a degree, should have contributed to the mighty effort that the northern peoples in the ninth century made to invade and conquer the kindred Germanic people who had been converted to Christianity in their own territory. It is of no slight mythological interest to learn that zealous men among the Swedes could hope to infuse the old doctrine with new life by adopting among the gods Freyja's husband, the most brilliant of the mythic heroes and the one most celebrated by the skalds. I do not deem it impossible that this very attempt made Erik's name hated among a portion of the Christians, and caused "Old Erik"

² *The Life of St. Ansgar* by Rimbart, Arch-Bishop of Hamburg-Bremen, c. 865-876 AD.

³ ["In any case, if you want to have more gods, if we are not adequate to your purposes, we are ready to admit to our society,] Eric, once your king, so that he may take his place among the gods." Raymond Ian Page tr., *Chronicles of the Vikings*, 1995, University of Toronto Press, p. 228.

to become a name of the devil. *Vita Ansgarii* says that it was the devil's own work that Erik was adopted among the gods.

The Svipdag synonym Erik reappears in the Christian story about Erik *viðförli*⁴ (the far-traveled), who succeeded in finding and entering *Óðáins-akur* (see no. 44). This is a reminiscence of Svipdag's stay in Mimir's realm. The nickname *viðförli* has become connected with two of Svipdag's names: we have *Eírikur hinn viðförli* and *Óður (Oddur) hinn viðförli* in the later Icelandic sagas. [606]

104.

THE VÖLUND SWORD'S LATER FORTUNES

I have now given an overview of the ways in which I have found the fragments of the myth about Svipdag until the time when he obtains Freyja as his wife. The fragments suitably complete one other and form a coherent whole. Now, some words on the role that the Völund sword, obtained by Svipdag in the underworld, later played in the myths and sagas. The sword, as we have seen, is the prize for which Asgard opens its gate and receives Svipdag as Freyja's husband. Thereafter, we find it in Frey's possession. Once more the sword becomes a bride-price and passes into the hands of the giant Gymir and his wife. It has already been shown that Gymir's wife is the same Angurboda who, in historical times and until Ragnarok, dwells in the Ironwood (see no. 35). Her shepherd, who in the woods watches her monster herds, also guards the sword until the fire-giant Fjalar, in the guise of the red cock, shall appear to him and bring it to his own father Surt, in whose hand it shall be Frey's bane, and lead to the divine world's ruin.

A historian, Priscus, who was Attila's contemporary, tells that the Hunnish king came into possession of a divine sword that a shepherd had dug out of the ground and presented to him as a gift. The king of the Huns, it is added, rejoiced at the find; for, as the possessor of the sword that had belonged to the god "Mars," he considered himself as authorized to undertake and successfully carry on any war he pleased (see Jordanes, who quotes Priscus).⁵

The report of this alleged event must have made a mighty impression on the Germanic people and perhaps it was intended to; for their myths spoke of a sword of victory which was owned by that god who, since Baldur died and Tyr became one-handed, was considered, along with Thor, to be one of the bravest of the warlike gods, whose sword had been carried away from Asgard to the unknown wild districts of the East, and buried there, [607] in order to be brought anew into the light of day and delivered by a shepherd to a foe of mankind at the approach of the world's destruction. Prior to that, the Teutons had already placed the appearance of the Huns in connection with this myth. According to Jordanes, they believed that evil witches, whom the Gothic king Filimer had driven away from his people, had taken refuge in the eastern wastelands,

⁴ *Eireks saga viðförli*.

⁵ Jordanes, *Getica* 35, 183: "His assurance was increased by finding the sword of Mars, always esteemed sacred among the kings of the Scythians. The historian Priscus says it was discovered under the following circumstances: 'When a certain shepherd beheld one heifer of his flock limping and could find no cause for this wound, he anxiously followed the trail of blood and at length came to a sword it had unwittingly trampled while nibbling the grass. He dug it up and took it straight to Attila. He rejoiced at this gift and, being ambitious, thought he had been appointed ruler of the whole world, and that through the sword of Mars supremacy in all wars was assured to him.'" [Mierow tr.]

and there with forest giants ("satyrs")⁶ had given birth to children, who became the forefathers of the Huns.⁷ This is to say, in other words, that they believed the Huns originated from Angurboda's brood in the Ironwood, which, in the fullness of time, would break into Midgard with the monster Hati in the lead. The sword which the god Frey had possessed, and which was concealed in the Ironwood, becomes in Jordanes a sword which the god "Mars" had owned, and which, thereafter, had been concealed in the earth. Angurboda's shepherd, who brings the sword anew into the light of day and delivers it to the world-hostile Fjalar, becomes a shepherd who digs up the sword and gives it to Attila, the foe of the Germanic people.

The memory of the sword survived Christianity's victory and was preserved in many variations through the centuries. That Surt would possess the sword at the destruction of the world naturally fell away, and instead one could designate now one and then another hero to find and take it; that it was guarded by a woman and a man (in the myth Angurboda and Eggther); and that the woman was an even more dreadful being than the man, were features that the story retained both on the continent and in England.

The Beowulf poem allows a monster with the name Grendel ("the destroyer"), to dwell with his mother below a marsh in a forest, which, although place in Denmark and in the vicinity of a Danish king's splendid stronghold, is described in a manner which makes it highly probable that the model that the Christian poet used was a heathen skald's description of the Ironwood. There, he says, is the mysterious land in which the wolf hides itself, with deep valleys, precipices, and chasms, with dreary forest depths, with fog-enveloped marshes, tree-shadowed waters, storm-tossed nesses, mountain torrents and bogs, which [608] in the night are lit as by fire, and house demoniac beings and dragons in their murky waves. Hunted game allows itself to be torn to pieces by hounds rather than seeking refuge on this unholy ground, from which raging storms rouse black clouds until the heavens darken and the torrential rains pour down.⁸ The English poet in good faith may have localized the mythic Ironwood to Denmark. The same old borderland, which to this very day is called "Dänische wold,"⁹ was still called Jarnwith, the Ironwood, by the Danes in the thirteenth century.¹⁰ From his haunt in this wilderness Grendel makes nightly excursions to the Danish royal stronghold, breaks in there, slays sleeping champions with his iron fists, sucks out their blood, and bears their corpses to the enchanted marsh in order to eat them there. The hero, Beowulf, who has heard of this, proceeds to Denmark, penetrates into the horrible forest, dives, armed with Denmark's

⁶ The beings who father the Huns are called *spiritus immundi*, "unclean spirits," by Jordanes.

⁷ Jordanes, *Getica*, 24, 121-122: "We learn from old traditions that their origin was as follows: Filimer, king of the Goths, son of Gadaric the Great, who was the fifth in succession to hold the rule of the Getae after their departure from the island of Scandza,--and who, as we have said, entered the land of Scythia with his tribe,--found among his people certain witches, whom he called in his native tongue Haliurunnae. Suspecting these women, he expelled them from the midst of his race and compelled them to wander in solitary exile afar from his army. (122) There the unclean spirits, who beheld them as they wandered through the wilderness, bestowed their embraces upon them and begat this savage race, which dwelt at first in the swamps,--a stunted, foul and puny tribe, scarcely human, and having no language save one which bore but slight resemblance to human speech. Such was the descent of the Huns who came to the country of the Goths." [Mierow tr.]

⁸ *Beowulf* 1355-1377.

⁹ Located in the northern German state of Schleswig-Holstein bordering Denmark.

¹⁰ *Waldemars Erdbuch*, p. 45, 105, 126; Nielsen, *Schleswig-Holstein urkundenbüch.* 1, 125 nr. 110, a. 1284 [Karl Müllenhoff, *Deutsches Altertumskunde*, 1908, p. 122]

best sword, down into the enchanted marsh to Grendel's and his mother's hall, and kills them after a conflict in which the sword proves itself useless. But down there he finds another which Grendel and his mother concealed, seizes it, and triumphs with its aid.

Of this wonderful sword it is said that it was "rich in victory,"¹¹ that it dated from antiquity, that "it was the good and excellent smithery of giants,"¹² and that the golden hilt was the "wonder-smith's" work.¹³ On the blade was engraved "that ancient conflict"¹⁴ when "the raging sea's billows washed over the giant race,"¹⁵ and on a plate made of the purest gold was written in runic letters "the name of him for whom this weapon was first made."¹⁶ The Christian poet has found it most convenient not to name this name for his readers or hearers. But all that is said here, however, applies to the mythic sword of victory. The "wonder-smith" in the Old English hereditary tale is Völund (Weland). The coat of mail that Beowulf bears is "*Welandes geweorc*."¹⁷ *Deor the Scald's Complaint*¹⁸ sings of Weland, and King Alfred in his translation of Boethius speaks of "the wise Weland, the goldsmith, who, in ancient times, was the most celebrated."¹⁹ That the Weland sword was "the smithery of a giant" corresponds with the Völund myth (see below) [609] and here, when one receives knowledge that the blade was engraved with images that depicted the primeval giants' ruin in the sea-waves (the original giant Ymir's blood), then this illuminates a passage in *Skírnismál*, where it is similarly stated that the sword was engraved with images and that "it fights of itself against the giant race" (*Skírnismál* 8, 23, 25; see no. 60). This expression is intentionally ambiguous. One meaning is emphasized by Frey's words in *Skírnismál* 9, that it fights of itself "if it is a wise man who possesses it" (*ef sá er horskur er hefír*). The expression's second meaning is clear from the Beowulf poem. The sword itself fights against the giant race in the sense that the "wonder-smith" (Weland) allows the sword itself to illustrate, via engravings on its blade, the battle that Odin and his brothers conducted against the original giants, when they drowned them in their progenitor Ymir's blood.

Grendel is the son of the witch living in the marsh, just as Hati is Angurboda's. The author identifies Grendel with Cain, banished from the Creator's sight, and makes giants, thurses, and "elves" originate from the banished one. Grendel's mother is a "she-wolf of the deep" and a mermaid (*merewif*).²⁰ Angurboda is the mother of the wolf-brood in the Ironwood and "drives the ships into Ægir's jaws."²¹ What *Beowulf* says about Grendel in certain details so strongly resembles *Völuspá's* statement about Hati that one can question whether the English author did not have in mind a strophe such as the one in *Völuspá* that deals with him. *Völuspá's* *Hati fyllisk fjörvi feigra manna*, "satiates himself with the vital force of men selected for death"; *Beowulf's* Grendel sucks his chosen

¹¹ Beowulf 1557: *sige-ēadig bil*

¹² Beowulf 1562 *gōd ond geatolic, gīganta geweorc*, cp. 1679: *enta ær-geweorc*.

¹³ Beowulf 1681: *wundor-smiþa geweorc*.

¹⁴ Beowulf 1689: *fyrn-gewinnes*

¹⁵ Beowulf 1689-1690: *syðþan flōd ofslōh/gifen gēotende, gīganta cyn*.

¹⁶ Beowulf 1694-1696.

¹⁷ Beowulf 455.

¹⁸ The English title provided by Rydberg is that of Benjamin Thorpe's translation, published in *Codex Exoniensis. A Collection of Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, 1842, pp. 377-379.

¹⁹ King Alfred's 9th century Anglo-Saxon translation of Boethius' *De consolazione philosophiae*, ch. 19.

²⁰ Beowulf 1506, *brimwylf*, and 1519.

²¹ See no. 35.

victim's blood, until the life ebbs out of them. *Völuspá's* Hati *rýður ragna sjöt rauðum dreyra*, "colors the ruler's abode with the red blood of wounds"; Grendel slips into the royal stronghold and stains it with blood. The expression reappears here as good as word-for-word. *Völuspá's* *ragna sjöt* and *dreyri* correspond perfectly to *Beowulf's* *driht-sele* and *dreor*.

Piðreks Saga af Bern, ch. 16 [*Wilkinasaga*] says that Nagelring, the best sword in existence, was concealed in a forest, and watched there by a woman [610] and a man.²² The man had the strength of twelve men, but the woman was even stronger. King Thidrek and his friend Hildebrand succeeded after a dreadful swordfight in slaying the monster. The woman had to be slain three times, so that she would not come to life again.²³ This feature is also borrowed from the myth about Angurboda, the thrice slain.

Historia Pontificum (from the middle of the twelfth century) informs us that Duke Wilhelm of Angoulême (second half of the tenth century) possessed an extraordinary sword made by Völund.²⁴ However, this was not the actual sword of victory. From Jordanes' history it was known in the middle ages that this sword had come into Attila's hands, and one naturally asked where it went afterwards. Sagas gave answer to the question.²⁵ The sword remained among the Huns' descendants, the Hungarians. The mother of the Hungarian king Salomon presented it to Otto of Bavaria. He loaned it out to the margrave of Lausitz, Dedi the younger. After Dedi was murdered, it came to Emperor Heinrich IV, who presented it to his favorite, Leopold of Merseburg. In a fall from his horse, Leopold was wounded by the point of the sword and died from the wound. Even in more recent times, some believed in the sword's existence, and there were those who wanted to believe that the Duke of Alba bore it at his side.

105.

THE SVIPDAG EPITHET SKIRNIR. THE VÖLUND SWORD'S NAME GAMBANTEINN.

After Svipdag's marriage with Freyja, the story of his life can be divided into two parts: the time of his stay in Asgard as Freyja's happy husband and Frey's closest friend, and the time of his absence from Asgard and his transformation and downfall.

To the former of these divisions belongs his celebrated journey to the estate of the giant Gymir, where he proceeds, on Frey's behalf, to propose to Gerd, Gymir's and Aurboda's beautiful daughter. It has already been pointed out that Erik-Svipdag, after his [611] marriage to Gunvara-Freyja, appears in Saxo as Frotho-Frey's right hand, ready to

²² "Two people own this treasure. One of them is a woman named Hild and the other is her husband Grim." [Haymes tr.]

²³ Ch. 17: "He struck Hild in two pieces. But because she was skilled at magic and had much troll in her nature, the two parts jumped together as if she were whole. This seemed a great wonder to Thidrek, and he struck a second time at her torso. Everything happened as before. And then Hildebrand spoke: 'Put your feet between the head part and the foot part, and you will be able to destroy this troll.' And then Thidrek struck her a third time into two pieces and placed his feet between the two parts. The lower part was dead, but the head part spoke: 'If Grim had been able to defeat Thidrek as I was able to deal with Hildebrand, then we would have won.' Now each part fell its way." [Haymes tr.]

²⁴ Rydberg's source here is Wilhelm Grimm's *Die Deutsche Heldensage*, 1829, no. 28, pp.41-42, which quotes and interprets *Historia Pontificum et comitum Engolismensium*, c. 19, p. 253.

²⁵ All of the following references are from *Die Deutsche Heldensage*, 1829, no. 150, pp. 312, which cites its source as "Lambert von Aschaffenburg (p. 348. Pistor.)."

help and a trusted man in all things. Among other things, he also receives the assignment to propose on Frotho's behalf to a young maiden whose father in the mythology undoubtedly was a giant: he is described as a deceitful, treacherous, god-hostile being, who had laid a plan with his daughter as bait to deceive Frotho and acquire Gunvara for himself. The plan is frustrated by Svipdag (Ericus), Ull (Rollerus), and Thor (Bracus), the last of whom here appears in his usual role as the conqueror of giants. Just when Frotho's intended father-in-law believes he has won the game, Thor storms into his halls, and the schemer is compelled to save himself by flight (Book V, 122 ff., etc. [*Hist.* 221 ff.]). In the excellent poem *Skírnismál*, the Icelandic mythic remains have preserved the memory of Frey's proposal to a giant-maid, daughter of the giant-chief Gymir Aurboda's terrible husband. Here, as in Saxo, the Vana-god does not himself go to propose, but sends a messenger, who in the poem is designated by the epithet Skirnir. All that is there told about this Skirnir finds its explanation in Svipdag's story. The epithet itself, Skirnir, "the shining," is justified by the fact that Sólbjart-Örvandil, the star-hero, is his father. Skirnir dwells in Asgard, but is not one of the ruling divine powers. Among the gods, the one with whom he is most intimately united is Frey. His position in Asgard, therefore, is the same as Svipdag's. Skirnir's influence on Freyja's brother is so great that when neither Njörd nor Skadi can persuade their son to reveal the cause of the sorrow which consumes him, they hope that Skirnir shall be able to do so. Who, if not Svipdag, who sought to rescue Frey from the power of the giants, and who is his brother-in-law, and in Saxo his all in all, would be able to possess such influence over him? Skirnir also refers to the fact that in days past he and Frey had adventures together of such a kind that they ought to be able to have faith in each other, and that Frey should not consider himself to have any secret which he may not safely confide to so faithful a friend (*Skírnismál* 5). Skirnir is wise and literary, and has proverbs on his lips like Svipdag-Erik [612] (cp. *Skírnismál* 13 with *Fjölsvinnsmál* 47). But what settles the matter of their identity is the fact that Skirnir, like Svipdag, had made a journey to the underworld, had been in Mimir's realm at the root of the world-tree, and there had fetched a sword called Gambantein, which is the same sword as the one Frey lays in his hand when he is to go on his errand of courtship - the same sword that Frey afterwards relinquishes as a bride-price to Gymir and Aurboda. When Gerd refuses to accept the courtship-presents that Skirnir conveys, he draws his sword, shows its blade to Gerd, and with its edge threatens to send her to Niflhel, the region below the *ná*-gates, the Hades-dwelling of Hrimnir, Hrimgrinnir, and other primeval giants, the haunt of the furies of physical sicknesses (see no. 60), and tells her how this terrible weapon originally came into his possession:

Til holts eg gekk
og til hrás viðar
gambantein að geta,
gambantein eg gat.

"I went to Holt
And to the sappy tree
Gambantein to get,
Gambantein I got."²⁶

The word *teinn*, “branch,” “twig,” has the meaning sword in all compounds where it occurs: *benteinn*, *bifteinn*, *eggteinar*, *hævateinn* (*homateinn*), *hjørteinn*, *hræteinn*, *sárteinn*, *valteinn*. *Mistilteinn* has also become a sword-name (*Nafnabulur* [Pr. Edd. I. 564]; *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks konungs*,²⁷ *Hrómundar saga Gripssonar* [*Fornald. I*, 416, 515, II, 371]; cp. no. 101), and in *Fjölsvinnsmál* 26, the same weapon that is called *gambanteinn* here is called *hævateinn*, *homateinn*²⁸ (see further no. 116).

In the mythology there is only one place that is called *Holt*.²⁹ It is *Mímis holt*, *Hoddmímis holt*, the subterranean grove, where the children who are to be the parents of

²⁶ The most common reading of this verse interprets *holt* as a common wood, and *gambanteinn* as a branch, used as a magic wand, employed by Skirnir to threaten Gerd, as in Carolyne Larrington’s translation: “I went to the forest to the living wood, to get a potent branch [*gambanteinn*]; a potent branch I got.” This reading is dependent on the only other occurrence of the word in *Hárbarðljóð* 20, where the ferryman Harbard says of the giant Hlebard: *gaf hann mér gambanteinn, en ek vélta hann ór viti*, “he gave me a magic staff [*gambanteinn*] and I bewitched him out of his wits,” [Larrington tr.]. In this reading, Skirnir moves from cursing Gerd with the sword he obtained from Frey (v. 8) to cursing her with a green stick. Rydberg suggests instead that Skirnir continues to curse Gerd with the sword (v. 8, *sverð*; v. 23, 25: *mæki*; v. 25: *eggjom*), called both *Tamsvendi*, “taming stick” (v. 26), and *gambanteinn* (v. 32). Noting that the prefix *gamban-* only occurs in two other compounds, [*gambanreiði*, *Skirnismál* 33/6; *gambansumbl*, *Lokasenna* 8/6] Ursula Dronke notes: “The etymology of *gamban-* has not been determined; no doubt it relates to the concept of magnitude, which readily takes on associations of magic.” [*Poetic Edda*, Vol. II, p. 411].

²⁷ The text of this saga varies considerably among the manuscripts. It is found in two vellum copies *Hauksbók* (A.M. 544), dating from c.1325, which ends with Gestumblindi’s second riddle, and the 15th century MS. 28451 in the Royal Library at Copenhagen, which breaks off near the end of ch. 12. Beyond this point, we are entirely dependent on paper mss, dating from the 17th century. The text in question reads: “*Angantýr hafði Tyrfing, en Sæmingr Mistiltein [þann sótti Þráinn, síðan í haug hans]...*”. Although not found in modern editions, which rely solely on the vellum mss. until the end of ch. 12, the passage appears in Rydberg’s source: C.C. Rafn’s 1829 edition, *Fornaldarsögur* I, 416 and 515, as well as other 19th century editions such as *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks konungs* by Niels Matthias Petersen and Gísli Thorarensen (1847), based on a longer version of the saga in a paper manuscript of 1694, known as A.M. 345.

²⁸ The manuscripts variously read *Hævateinn*, *Homateinn*, *Heviateinn*, which Sophus Bugge emended to *Lævateinn*, for metrical and palaeographic reasons; H for L is a common mistake in old manuscripts. As it stands, *Hævateinn* is meaningless, while *Lævateinn* means “twig of destruction,” curiously echoing *Völuspá* 52, where Surt proceeding from the south with the sword of a *váltivi*, a god of the slain, is accompanied by *sviga lēvi* “the destruction of branches”, a simple paraphrase for fire.

²⁹ According to the Cleasby/Vigfusson Dictionary, *holt* properly means “wood, copsewood, or coppice,” although in this sense it is almost obsolete; in modern Icelandic, it means “any rough stony hill or ridge.” In the mythological poems of the *Poetic Edda*, the word occurs only three times: *Skirnismál* 32, *Vafþrúðnismál* 45, and *Völundarkviða* 16, where it seems to refer exclusively to Mimir’s realm. In a single occurrence in the heroic poem, *Hamðismál* 4, it may indicate a stony hill [LaFarge/ Tucker *Glossary to the Poetic Edda*].

the future race of man have their secure abode until the [613] time of the world's renewal (see nos. 52, 53), living off the morning-dew which falls from the world-tree, *hrár viður*, "the sap-rich tree" (see no. 89). Mimir-Nidhad also comes from Holt when he imprisons Völund (*Völundarkviða* 16). It has already been shown above that, on his journey in the underworld, Svipdag also came to *Mimis holt*, and saw the stronghold within which the *ásmegir* have their sanctuary.

Saxo has known either the above-cited strophe or another resembling it, and, allows his Erik-Svipdag, when speaks of his travels in ambiguous words (*obscura umbage*),³⁰ to say: *Ad trunca sylvarum robora penetravi . . . ibi cuspis a robore regis excussa est* (Book V, 116 [*Hist.* 206]).³¹ With the expression *ad robora sylvarum penetravi* one must compare *til holts eg gekk*. The expression *robur regis* refers to the tree of the underworld king, Mimir, *Mímameiður*, the world-tree. Erik-Svipdag's aim with the journey to this tree is to obtain a weapon. Saxo calls this weapon *cuspis*. *Fjölsvinnsmál* calls it by a paraphrase, *broddur*. *Cuspis* is a translation of *broddur*.

Thus Skirnir's identity with Svipdag is undoubted.

106.

SVIPDAG'S LATER FATE. HIS TRANSFORMATION AND DEATH. FREYJA SEARCHES FOR HIM. THE FREYJA EPITHET MARDÖLL. "THE SEA-KIDNEY," BRÍSINGAMEN. THE SVIPDAG EPITHET HERMÓÐUR.

When the war between the Aesir and the Vans breaks out, Svipdag, as we have learned, takes the side of the Vans (see no. 33, no. 38), where he naturally has his place as the Vanadis Freyja's husband and Frey's most trusted friend. The successful outcome of the war for the Vans gives Svipdag free hands toward Halfdan's hated son Hadding, the son of the woman for whose sake Svipdag's mother Groa was rejected. Still, Svipdag offers Hadding reconciliation, peace, and a kingdom among the Teutons (see no. 38). When Hadding refuses to accept gifts of mercy from his father's slayer, Svipdag persecutes him with implacable hate. This hatred finally produces a turning-point in Svipdag's fortunes and darkens the brilliant hero's [614] career. After the Aesir and Vans had become reconciled again, one of their first thoughts must have been to put an end to the feud between the Germanic tribes, since a continuation of the latter was not in harmony with the peace restored among the gods (see no. 41). Nevertheless the war continues in Midgard (see no. 41), and it is Svipdag who is the cause of it. He has become a rebel against both Aesir and Vanir, and herein we must look for the reason why, as the Prose Edda reports, he disappears from Asgard (*Gylfaginning* 35 [*Pr. Edda* 114]). But he disappears not only from the world of the gods, but finally also from the terrestrial scene of war, and that god or those gods who caused this, conceal his unhappy and humiliating fate from Freyja. It is then that the faithful and devoted Vanadis goes forth to seek her lover in all worlds *með ókunnum þjóðum*.³²

³⁰ "very dark riddling," [Elton tr.]; "dark riddles," [Fisher tr.].

³¹ "I made my way to the lopped timbers of the woods; . . . There a lance-head was shaken from the shaft of the king," [Elton tr.] "I was always getting to the trunks of the forest oaks; . . . there the tip of the king's spear was shaken off." [Fisher tr.] The lance-head is identified as Fridlief's grandson.

³² "among unknown peoples," [Byock tr.]

Saxo gives us two accounts of Svipdag's death, the one duly historicized, the other faithfully corresponding with the myth. The former says that Hadding conquered and killed Svipdag in a naval battle (Book I, 24 [*Hist.* 42]). The latter tells the following (Book I, 29 [*Hist.* 48]):

While Hadding lived in exile in a northern wilderness, after his great defeat in battle with the Swedes, it happened on a sun-warm day that he went to the sea to bathe. While he washed himself in the cold water, he saw an animal there of a most peculiar kind (*bellua inauditi generis*),³³ and fell into combat with it. Hadding slew it with tight strokes and drug it up on land. But while he rejoiced in this feat a woman placed herself in his path and sang a song, in which she let him know that the deed he had just committed would draw fearful consequences over him until he reconciled the divine wrath which this murder had called down upon his head. All nature's forces, wind and wave, heaven and earth, shall be his enemies, if he did not appease the offended gods, for the being that he killed was a celestial being concealed in animal-guise, one of the super-terrestrial: [615]

*Quippe unum e superis alieno corpore tectum
Sacrilegæ necuere manus: sic numinis almi
Interfector ades.*³⁴

It appears, however, from the narrative's continuation, that Hadding did not want to repent what he did, although he found out that the one he had slain was a supernatural being, and that he long refused to appease those gods whose sorrow and wrath were aroused by the murder. Not until the predictions of the woman were confirmed by severe inflictions does Hadding make up his mind to reconcile the powers in question. And this he does by instituting the sacrificial feast, which is called Fröblot, and ever after was celebrated in the god Frey's honor (*Fro deo rem divinam furvis hostiis fecit*).³⁵

Hadding's refusal to make up for what he had done, and the defiance he showed for a time to the divine powers, whom he had insulted by the murder committed, has its only explanation in that these powers were the Vana-gods who long supported his enemies (see no. 39), and that the supernatural being itself, who, concealed in the shape of an animal, was slain by him, was some one whose vanquishing was a comfort to him pleasure, and whose death he considered himself justified and obliged to cause. This explanation is fully corroborated in that when he learns that Odin and the Aesir, whose favorite he was, no longer hold protecting hands over him, and that the atonement advised by the prophetess becomes a necessity to him, he then institutes the great annual offering to Frey, Svipdag's brother-in-law. That this god especially must be propitiated can, in the order of things, have no other reason than that Frey was a closer kinsman than any of the Aesir to the supernatural being, from whose slayer he (Frey) demanded ransom and reconciliation. And when Saxo has already informed us that Svipdag perished in a "naval battle" with Hadding, everything subsequently refers to the conclusion that in the

³³ "a beast of unknown kind," [Elton tr.]; "a peculiar monster," [Fisher tr.].

³⁴ "thy sacrilegious hands have slain one of the dweller's above, disguised in a shape that was not his," [Elton tr.]; "For you have killed with sacrilegious hands, a sky-dweller wrapped in another body," [Fisher].

³⁵ "For, in order to appease the deities, he sacrificed dusky victims to the god Frey," [Elton tr.]; "In order to mollify the divinities, he did indeed make a holy sacrifice of dark-coloured victims to Frey," [Fisher].

inhabitant of heaven who was concealed in the animal-guise and slain in the water, we must recognize Svipdag, Freyja's husband.

Saxo does not tell us what animal guise it was. [616] Certainly, it must have been a purely fabulous guise, since Saxo designates it as *bellua inauditi generis*. An Anglo-Saxon source, which shall be cited below, designates it as *wyrm* and *draca*. That Svipdag, sentenced to wear this guise, kept himself in the water near the shore of a sea, follows from the fact that Hadding encounters and kills him during a bath in the sea. Freyja, who sought her lost lover everywhere, also searched for him Ægir's and Rán's kingdom. Evidence exists that she found him there again, and, in spite of his transformation and now repulsive exterior, she stayed with him and sought to soothe his misery with her faithful love. One of Freyja's bynames shows that at one time she dwelt in the lap of the sea. The byname is *Mardöll*. Another testament of this is the fragment preserved to our time of the myth concerning the conflict between Heimdall and Loki in regard to *Brisingamen*. Celebrated both among the Germanic tribes of England and those of Scandinavia, this neck- and breast-ornament, one of the most splendid works of the primeval artists, was Freyja's property (*Prymskviða* 13, *Gylfaginning* 35, *Skáldskaparmál* 28 [*Prose Edda*]). She took it with her when she sought Svipdag and found him beneath the sea-waves; and the brilliance from the deep that her *Brisingamen* then diffused over the surface of the ocean is the epic interpretation of the name *Mardöll*, from *mar*, "sea," and *döll*, feminine of *dallur* (Old English *deall*)³⁶ "shimmering" (compare the names *Heimdallur* and *Dellingur*). *Mardöll* thus means "the one diffusing a shimmer in the sea." The *Brisingamen*, together with its possessor, actually was for a time in Ægir's realm as demonstrated by its epithet *fagurt hafnýra*, "the fair kidney of the sea," which occurs in a strophe of Ulf Uggason (*Skáldskaparmál* 23 [*Pr. Edd.* 268]). It was also on a skerry, *Vágasker*, *Singasteinn*, that *Brisingamen* lay and glittered, when Loki, clad in the form of a seal, tried to steal it. But before he managed to fulfill his purpose, another seal in whose eyes the evil and cunning descendant of *Farbauti* must have immediately recognized his old adversary *Heimdall*—persons in disguise cannot change their eyes—crept upon the skerry. A conflict arose in regard to the possession of the [617] ornament, and the brave son of the nine mothers became the victor and preserved the treasure for *Asgard*.

To the *Svipdag* synonyms *Óður* (*Hotharus*), *Óttar* (*Otharus*), *Eirekur* (*Ericus*), and *Skírnir*, we must finally add one more, which is, perhaps, of Anglo-Saxon origin: *Hermóður*, *Hermod*.

From the Norse mythic mementos one learns the following about *Hermod*:

(a) He dwelt in *Asgard*, but did not belong to the number of ruling gods. He is called *Odin's sveinn* (*Gylfaginning* 49, *Codex Regius* [*Pr. Edd.* 174]),³⁷ and he was a favorite of the *Asa*-father, who presented him with helmet and cuirass (*Hyndluljóð* 2).

(b) He is called *inn hvati* (*Gylfaginning* 49 [*Pr. Edd.* 174]), the rapid. When *Frigg* asks if anyone desires to earn her favor and gratitude by riding to the realm of death and offering *Hel* a ransom for *Baldur*, *Hermod* himself offers to perform this task. He receives *Odin's* horse *Sleipnir* to ride, proceeds on the *Hel*-way, comes safely to that stronghold in the underworld, where *Baldur* and *Nanna* await the world's regeneration, spurs *Sleipnir* over the stronghold wall, and returns to *Asgard* with *Hel's* answer, and

³⁶ The Old English word *deall* is an adjective meaning "proud, exulting, eminent, bold, renowned."

³⁷ The W and U manuscripts have "son" instead. He is also listed among the sons of *Odin* in the *Nafnabular*.

with the ring Draupnir, and with presents from Nanna to Frigg and Fulla (*Gylfaginning* 49 [*Pr. Edd.* 180]).

From this it appears that Hermod has a position in Asgard that resembles Skirnir's; that he, like the latter, is employed by the gods as a messenger when it pertains to onerous or adventurous errands, and that he, like Skirnir, then gets that steed to ride, which is able to leap over waver-flames and stronghold-defenses. One should also bear in mind that Skirnir-Svipdag had made famous journeys in the same world to which Hermod is now sent to find Baldur. Before his arrival in Asgard, Svipdag, of course, had roamed throughout the underworld, and there had fetched the sword of victory. After his adoption into Asgard, he is sent to the underworld by the gods to fetch the chain Gleipnir (*Gylfaginning* 34).³⁸

(c) In historical times Hermod dwells in Valhall, and is one of the foremost einherjar.³⁹ When Hakon the Good was [618] on the way to the Asa-father's hall, the latter sent Bragi and Hermod to meet him (*Hákonarmál* 14):

*Hermóður og Bragi,
kvað Hroptatýr,
gangið í gegn grami,
því að konungur fer
sá er kappi þykir
til hallar hinig.*⁴⁰

This is all there is in the Norse sources about Hermod.

One receives more detailed information of him in the *Beowulf* poem, which in two passages (ll. 871 ff.⁴¹ [str. 1747 ff.],⁴² etc., and ll. 1707 ff. [3419 ff.]) compares him with its own unselfish and blameless hero, Beowulf, in order to make it clear that the latter was in moral respects superior to the famous hero of antiquity.⁴³ Beowulf was related by marriage to the reigning royal dynasty in his land, and grew up in the king's halls as an older brother of his sons. The comparisons make these circumstances, common to Beowulf and Hermod, the starting-point, and show that while Beowulf became the most faithful guardian of his young foster-brothers, and in all upheld their rights, Hermod conducted himself in a wholly different manner. Of Hermod the poem lets us know:

(a) He grew up at the court of a Danish king (ll. 907 ff. [str. 1818, ff.], ll. 1709 ff. [3422, ff.]).

³⁸ Gleipnir is used to bind the Fenris wolf.

³⁹ Anthony Faulkes observes that Hermod appears as a prominent inhabitant of Valhöll in *Hyndluljóð* 2, *Hákonarmál* 14, *Málsháttakvæði* 9, *Sögubrot af fornkongungun* 11. [*Edda: Prologue and Gylfaginning*, p. 168].

⁴⁰ “‘Hermod and Bragi,’ said Hropta-Tyr [Odin], ‘go to meet the prince, for a king is coming who is to be considered a hero, here to this hall.’ [Faulkes tr.] The verse is preserved in *Skáldskaparmál*.

⁴¹ *Hermod* is named at lines 901 and 1709.

⁴² Rydberg refers to *Beowulf* in Benjamin Thorpe's *The Anglo-Saxon Poems of Beowulf, the Scôp or Gleeman's Tale, and the Fight at Finnesburg*, 1855.

⁴³ Anthony Faulkes remarks: “He is perhaps identifiable with the Hermod of *Beowulf*, 901, 1709, and Old English genealogies.” [*Edda: Prologue and Gylfaginning*, p. 168]

(b) He set out on long journeys, and became the most celebrated traveler that mankind had ever heard of (*se wæs wreccena wide mærost ofer wer-peóde*, ll. 898-899 [str. 1800-1802]).⁴⁴

(c) He performed great exploits (*l. 900* [str. 1804]).

(d) He was endowed with powers beyond all other men (*l. 1717* [str. 3438-39]).

(e) God promoted him to a higher position of power than that accorded to mortals (*l. 1716* [str. 3436, ff.]).

(f) But although he grew up at the court of the Danish king, this did not turn out to be a boon but was a detriment for the Skjöldungs [619] (*ll. 1709 ff.* [str. 3422, ff.]), because a bloodthirsty heart grew in his breast.

(g) When the Danish king died (the poem does not say how) he left young sons.

(h) Hermod, enticed by the evil passions that got the better of him, was the cause of the Skjöldungs' ruin, and of a deadly plague among the Danish people, whose fallen warriors for his sake covered the battlefields. His table-companions at the Danish court he consigned to death in a fit of anger (*ll. 1711 ff.* [str. 3426, ff.]).

(i) The war continues a very long time (*ll. 905 ff.* [str. 1815, ff.], *l. 1721* [str. 3447]).

(k) At last there came a change, which was unfavorable to Hermod, whose superiority in martial power decreased (*ll. 901 ff.* [str. 1806 ff.]).

(l) Then quite unexpectedly he vanished (*l. 1714* [str. 3432]) from the sight of men.

(m) This happened against his will. He had suddenly been banished and delivered to the world of giants, where "waves of sorrow" long oppressed him (*ll. 902 ff.* [str. 1809, ff.]).⁴⁵

(n) He had become transformed into a dragon (*wyrm, draca*).⁴⁶

(o) He remained near an island in the sea *under harne stan* (beneath a grey rock).⁴⁷

(p) There he killed a hero of the Volsung race (in the Beowulf poem Sigemund, 871 ff. [str. 1747, ff.]).⁴⁸

All these points stand in complete agreement with Svipdag's saga, as we have discovered it in other sources. Svipdag is Halfdan the Skjöldung's stepson, and has grown up in his halls, and dwells there until his mother Groa is turned out and returns to Örvandil. He sets out like Hermod on long journeys, and is doubtless the most famous traveler that the mythology mentions; one is reminded of his journey over the Elivogar, and his expedition into Jötunheim while searching for Frey and Freyja; his journey over the frosty mountains, and descent into the underworld, where he traverses Niflheim, sees the Eyluður mill, comes into Mimir's realm, procures the sword of victory, and beholds the *ásmegir's* glorious stronghold; one is reminded [620] of his journey up Bifröst to Asgard, and his expedition of war to the remote East (see also *Gylfaginning* 34 [Pr. Edd. I, 108], where Skirnir is sent to *Svartálfaheim* to fetch the chain Gleipnir). He is, like

⁴⁴ "He of wanderers was by far the greatest throughout the human race," [Thorpe tr.].

⁴⁵ "him *sorrow's boilings* had too long afflicted," [Thorpe tr.]. The word here is *sorh-wylmas*, which is identical to *sorgwylm*, "waves of sorrow," [*A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, J.R. Clark Hall], noting "*sorh*= *sorg*."

⁴⁶ The hero Sigemund slays a *dragon, draca*, *l. 892*, also called *worm*, "*wyrm*," in *ll. 886, 891, 897*.

⁴⁷ *l. 887*. "under a hoar stone," [Thorpe tr.].

⁴⁸ The name Sigemund occurs at lines 875 and 884.

Hermod, endowed with extraordinary strength, partly through his own character, partly through the *galdur* Groa sung over him, through the wisdom-food he received from his stepmother, and finally through the possession of the irresistible sword of victory. Due to his adoption in Asgard as Freyja's husband, he, like Hermod, is elevated to a position of power greater than that which mortals may expect. But all this does not turn out to be a blessing to the Skjöldungs,⁴⁹ but is a detriment to them. The hatred he harbored toward the Skjöldung Halfdan is transferred to the latter's son, Hadding, and he persecutes him and all those who are faithful to Hadding, makes war against him, and is unwilling to end the long war, although the gods demand it. Then he disappears suddenly, the divine wrath having clothed him with the guise of a strange animal, and relegated him to the world of water-giants, where he is slain by Hadding (who in the Norse heroic saga also becomes a Volsung, after Halfdan, under the name Helgi Hundingsbani, was made a son of the Volsung Sigmund).⁵⁰

Hermod is killed on a rocky island *under harne stan*. Svipdag is killed in the water, probably in the vicinity of the *Vágasker* and the *Singasteinn*, where his faithful Mardöll's ornament Brisingamen is discovered by Loki and Heimdall.

In the myths, Freyja's love and sorrow may have caused the gods to look upon Svipdag's last sad fate and death as a tribute of atonement for his faults. The tears which the Vanadis wept over her lover were transformed, tell the myths, into gold, and this gold, the gold of a woman's faithfulness, may have been regarded as a sufficient compensation for the sins of her dear one, and doubtless opened to Svipdag the same Asgard-gate which he had seen opened to him during his life. This explains that Hermod is in Asgard in the historical time, and that the ancient King Erik, according to a revelation to the Swedes in the ninth century, was unanimously elevated by the gods as a member of their council. [621]

Finally, it should be pointed out that the Svipdag synonym *Óður* has the same meaning as *môd* in Heremôd, and as *ferhð* in *Svidferhð*, the epithet with which Hermod is designated in *Beowulf* l. 908, [str. 1820].⁵¹ *Óður* means "the one endowed with spirit," *Heremôd* "the one endowed with martial spirit," *Svidferhd* "the one endowed with mighty spirit."

Heimdall's and Loki's conflict concerning Brisingamen has most probably formed an episode in the mythic account of Svipdag's final fortunes and Freyja's stay with him in the sea. There are many reasons to assume this. We should remember that Svipdag's final fate constituted a part in the great epic of the "first world war," and that both Heimdall and Loki take part in this war, the former on Hadding's, the latter on Guðhorm-Jörmunrek's and Svipdag's side (see nos. 38, 39, 40). One should further recall that, according to Saxo, Hadding is wandering about as an exile in the wildernesses at the time when he slays the monster, and that it is about this time that Odin gives him a companion and protector in Liserus-Heimdal (see no. 40). The unnamed woman, who after the murder had occurred, places herself in Hadding's way, informs him whom he has slain,

⁴⁹ Rydberg uses the term Skilding (*skildungarne*) here and below, rather than Skjöldung (*sköldungarne*), as above.

⁵⁰ *Helgakviða Hundingsbani* I, 6 and 11; II, 12, 15 and 50.

⁵¹ The word *swiðferhð* is not a proper name, but an adjective meaning "bold, brave, rash." It occurs throughout the poem, see ll. 173, 493, 826, and 908. The word *swið* means "strong, mighty, powerful, active," and *ferhð* means "mind, intellect, soul, spirit, life."

and calls down the wrath of the gods and the elements upon him, must be Freyja herself, since she witnessed the event and knew whom it was that was concealed in the dragon's form. So long as the latter lived, Brisingamen surely had a faithful guardian, for in the sagas it is the dragon's nature to brood over the treasures he finds. After being slain and dragged on shore by Hadding, his "bed," the gold, lies exposed to view on Vagasker, and the glimmer of Brisingamen reaches Loki's eyes. At the moment the woman, in despair over Svipdag's death, stands before Hadding and speaks to him, the ornament has no guardian, and Loki finds the occasion convenient to steal it. But Heimdall, Hadding's protector, who in the mythology always watches the actions of Loki and on his kinsmen hostile to the gods, is also present, and has also seen Brisingamen. Loki has clad himself in a seal's shape, while the ornament lies on a rock in the sea, *Vágasker*, where it can arouse no suspicion that a [622] seal seeks a place there. Heimdall clothes himself in the same guise, the seals fight on the skerry, and Loki must retreat with his errand unperformed. The rock is also called Singasteinn (*Skáldskaparmál* 15, 23 [*Pr. Edd.* I, 264, 268]), a name in which I see the Anglo-Saxon *Sincastân*, "the ornament rock."⁵² An echo of the conflict concerning Brisingamen reappears in the *Beowulf* poem, where Heimdall (not Hamdir) appears under the name Hâma, and where it is said that "Hâma carried away to the weapon-glittering citadel (Asgard) *Brosinga mene*," which was "the best ornament under heaven"; after which it is said that Hâma fell "into Eormenric's snares,"⁵³ with which one should compare Saxo's account of the snares laid by Loki, Jörmenrek's adviser, for Liserus-Heimdal and Hadding.⁵⁴

107.

MEMORIES OF THE SVIPDAG-MYTH.

The mythic story about Svipdag and Freyja has been handed down in folktales and songs, even to our time, naturally in a varying and distorted manner. To the folktales belongs one about Mærthöll, recorded by Konrad Maurer and published in "Modern Icelandic Popular Tales."⁵⁵

The wondrously beautiful heroine in this tale bears Freyja's well-known byname, *Mardöll*, but little changed. And as she, like Freyja, weeps tears that turn into gold, it is plain that she is originally identical with the Vanadis, which Maurer also points out.⁵⁶

Like Freyja, she is destined by the norms to be the wife of a princely youth. But when he proposed, difficulties arose which remind us of what Saxo relates about Otharus and Syritha.

⁵² Old English *sinc*, "treasure, riches, gold, valuables, jewel"; *stan*, "stone, rock."

⁵³ *Beowulf* ll. 1198-1201. For a fuller analysis see *Investigations into Germanic Mythology*, Vol. II, Part 2 "The Brisingamen Smiths."

⁵⁴ [Rydberg's footnote:] As Jordanes confounded the mythological Guðhorm-Jörmunrek with the historical Ermanarek, and connected the latter's history with the heroic saga of Ammius-Hamdir, it lay close at hand to confound Hamðir with Heimdal, who, like Hamdir, is the foe of the mythical Jörmunrek.

⁵⁵ *Isländische Volkssagen der Gegenwart*, 1860, pp. 284-287.

⁵⁶ p.287 Es kann keinem Zweifel unterliegen, dass der Name Mærþöll nur eine Corruption ist für *Mardöll* oder *Marþöll*, welches ein unzweifelhafter Beiname der Freyja ist [*Gylfaginning* c. 35]. Der Freyja wird das Weinen goldener Thränen beigelegt, ... ["There can be no doubt that the name Mærþöll is only a corruption for *Mardöll* or *Marþöll*, which unquestionably is a byname of Freyja (*Gylfaginning* 35). Freyja is attributed with crying golden tears," etc.]

As Saxo represents her, Syritha is bound [623] as it were by an enchantment, not daring to look up at her lover or to answer his declarations of love. She flies over the mountains *more pristino*, "in a manner that happened in antiquity," thus most probably in bird-guise. In the Icelandic folktale Mærþöll fears the approaching wedding night, since she is doomed to be changed into a sparrow during it. She desires to forsake her lover's embrace, so that he may know nothing of the curse which is placed on her.

In Saxo, the enchantment resting on Syritha is released when the candle burns her hand during the wedding night. In the folktale Mærþöll shall wear the sparrow guise forever, if it is not burnt during the wedding night or on one of the two following nights.

In Saxo as well as the folktale, another maiden takes Mardöll's place in the bridal bed for a portion of the wedding night. But the enchantment is broken by fire, after which both the lovers actually get each other.

The original identity of the mythological Freyja-Mardöll, Saxo's Syritha, and the Icelandic folktale's *Mærthöll* is therefore evident.

In Danish and Swedish variants of a folk ballad (in Syv, Nyerup, Arwidsson, Geijer and Afzelius, Grundtvig, Dybeck, Hofberg,⁵⁷ compare Bugge's *Edda*, p. 352, ff.)⁵⁸ a young Sveidal (Svedal, Svendal, Svedendal, Silfverdal) is celebrated, who is none other than Svipdag of the mythology. Svend Grundtvig and Bugge have called attention to the conspicuous similarity between this ballad on the one hand, and *Gróugaldur* and *Fjölsvinnsímál* on the other.⁵⁹ From the various versions of the ballad, I impart here those

⁵⁷ Peder Syv, *Et Hundrede Udvalde Danske Viser*, no. 24, 1787; R. Nyerup, *Anmeldelse af Svenske Viser fra Middelalderen*, 1815; *Unge Herr Svedendal*, in Adolf Iwar Arwidsson, *Svenske Fornsånger* 2:143; *Ungen Svendal*, in Svend Grundtvig, *Danmarks Gamle Folkeviser* II, 70, 1855; *Hertig Silfverdal* in Richard Dybeck, a concert program of 1861 and in *Runa*, 1865, p. 16 ff. as well as in Herman Hofberg, *Nerikes gamla minnen*, p. 249 ff., 1868 [Source: Arvid August Geijer and Erik Gustaf Afzelius, *Svenska Folkvisor* II, p. 54, 433 ff., 1880, which also cites *Ungen Svejdal* in Evald Tang Kristensen, *Jydske Folkviser og Toner*, 17, 1871]

⁵⁸ Bugge remarks: "The two poems *Gróugaldur* and *Fjölsvinnsímál* are parts of one and the same poem, whose protagonist is Svipdag, Groa's son. I have therefore combined these under the name of *Svipdagsímál*; Svend Grundtvig (*Danmarks gamle folkeviser* II, 668a) has suggested "*Svipdagsfór*." The poem is available to us still undivided, in late form, as a Danish-Swedish folksong about young Sveidal (Svedal, Svendal, Svedendal, Silfverdal): many (old and new) Danish examples are printed by Svend Grundtvig, *Danmarks gamle folkeviser* No. 70 (II, pp.239-254. III, pp. 841-843); two Swedish versions: Geijer and Afzelius, *Svenska Folkvisor* No. 10 (I, pp. 57-59) and Arwidsson *Svenska Fornsånger* No. 143 (II, pp. 284-288) provide the ballad in a less-than-original form. Svend Grundtvig first pointed out (*Danmarks gamle folkeviser* II, 238) the traditional relationship between the ballad's first part and *Gróugaldur*; thereafter, I found thereafter (*Danmarks gamle folkeviser* II, 667 ff.), that the last part of the ballad corresponded to *Fjölsvinnsímál*, and established that the Danish-Swedish ballad preserved the original unity of the ballad, which is familiar in Iceland as two separate poems. This has been further developed by Svend Grundtvig (*Danmarks gamle folkeviser* II, pp.668-673) and by me in my treatise on the connection between *Gróugaldur* and *Fjölsvinnsímál* (*Forhandlingar i Videnskabs-Selskabet i Christiania*, 1860, p. 123-140)." In addition, Bugge provides abridged texts of two of the oldest known versions of the ballad from the 16th and 17th centuries.

⁵⁹ As noted in no. 96, the connection between the two poems was not immediately recognized. Einar Ól Sveinsson observes: "There is nothing to be found in the manuscripts indicating that the copyists were aware of any connection between the two poems. ...What is more, investigators were long in discovering the fact. In the year 1854, Svend Grundtvig ...points here to a relationship between Svejdal and Grógaldr, and also one of the *fornaldarsögur*, Hjalmpérs saga and the old Cymric story of the Culhwch and Olwen. Grógaldr and Ungen Svejdal have a great deal in common, while all these narratives tell of a spell or enchantment that is 'laid upon' a young man, compelling him to seek a maiden far away. Then Sophus Bugge noticed the last part of the Ungen Svejdal corresponded to Fjölsvinnsímál. This important

features which best preserve the resemblance to its mythic prototype. Sveidal is commanded by his stepmother to find a maiden "whose sorrowful heart had long been yearning." He then goes first to his deceased mother's grave to get advice from her. The mother speaks to him from the grave and promises to give him a horse, which can bear him over water and land, and a sword, resembling fire, hardened in dragonblood. The narrow frame of the ballad has forbidden telling in what manner Sveidal came into possession of the [624] treasures his mother promised him or giving an account of the exploits he performs with the sword. This plays no part in the ballad; it is only intimated that events not recorded took place before Sveidal finds the yearning maid. Riding through forests and over seas, he comes to the country where she has her stronghold. Outside of this he meets a shepherd, with whom he enters into conversation. The shepherd informs him that within is found a maiden who has long been yearning for a young man by name Sveidal, and that no one other than him can enter there, for the stronghold's planks are of iron, its gilt gate of steel, and within the gate a lion and a white bear keep watch. Sveidal approaches the gate; then the locks fall away by themselves; and when he enters the courtyard the wild beasts fall at his feet, a linden-tree with golden leaves bends to the ground before him, and the sought after maiden welcomes him as her husband.⁶⁰

One of the variants lets him spur his horse over the stronghold wall. Another speaks of seven shepherd boys guarding the wall, who show him the way to the stronghold, and who actually are "god's angels under the heaven, the blue."

The horse who bears its rider "over the salt fjörd" is a reminiscence of Sleipnir, which Svipdag rode on more than one occasion; and when it says that Sveidal on this horse dashed over the stronghold wall, this reminds us of Skirnir-Svipdag when he leaps over the fence around Gymir's abode, and of Hermod-Svipdag when he spurs Sleipnir over the wall to Baldur's subterranean stronghold. The shepherds, who are "god's angels," refer to the watchmen mentioned in *Fjölsvinnsmál*, who are gods; the wild beasts in the stronghold's court to the two wolf-dogs who guard Asgard's gate; the shepherd whom Sveidal meets outside of the wall to *Fjölsviður* [*Fjölsvinn*]; the linden-tree with the golden leaves to *Mímameiður* and to the golden grove that grows in Asgard. One of the variants allows two years to pass while Sveidal seeks the chosen one.

In Germany, too, we have preserved remnants of the myth about Svipdag and Freyja. These remnants are, admittedly, parts of a structure built, so to speak, in the style of the monks, [625] but they nevertheless show in the most unequivocal manner that they are collected from the collapsed arches of heathen mythology. We rediscover them in the old medieval poem about "Christ's unsewn grey coat."⁶¹

observation is discussed in the same volume (1856) with a number of additional comments by Svend Grundtvig," ["Svipdag's Long Journey," in *Hereditas*, The Folklore of Ireland Society, 1975].

⁶⁰ Several versions of the ballad can be found at:

<http://home.netcom.com/~kyamazak/myth/edda/bugge/bugge-svipdags-excurs-e.htm>

⁶¹ *Orendel*, a Middle High German poem, known as a *Spielmannsdichtung*, dating to the end of the 12th century. The authority for the text is late: a manuscript of 1477, later burnt in Strassburg, and a printed book of 1512. For this edition, I have used the English translation of Heidi Graw, 2009 [forthcoming], who utilizes the German text *Spielmannsepen II: Sankt Oswald, Orendel, Salman und Morolf*, 1976, by Walter Johannes Schröder. Based on internal references, Rydberg likely used a German verse translation of the poem such as *Der ungenähte graue Rock Christi* ["The Unsewn Grey Coat of Christ"] by Friedrich Heinrich von der Hagen (1844), which spells the names as he does in his text: Orendel, Breyde, Eigel, etc.

The hero in the poem is Svipdag, here called by his father's name Orendel, Orentel i.e. Örvandil. The father himself, who is said to be a king in Trier, has received another name, which already in the most ancient heathen times was a synonym of Örvandil, and to which I shall come below.⁶² This in connection with the circumstance that the younger Orentel's (Svipdag's) patron saint is called "the holy Wieland,"⁶³ and thus bears the name of a person who, in the mythology, as shall be shown below, was Svipdag's paternal uncle and helper, and whose sword is Svipdag's protection and pledge of victory, demonstrates that at least in rare cases not only the events of the myth but also its names and family relations have been preserved in a surprisingly faithful manner through centuries in the German peoples' memory.

It lies in the very nature of things that in the monkish poem, it can no longer be the task of the young Svipdag-Orendel to go in search of the heathen goddess Freyja and rescue her from giants' hands. In her stead appears a *Lady Breyde*,⁶⁴ who is the most beautiful of all women, and the only one worthy to be the young Orendel's wife. In the heathen poem it is the dis of fate Urd, in the German medieval poem God himself, who resolves that Orendel is to have the most beautiful woman as his bride. In the heathen poem Freyja is in the power of giants, and concealed somewhere in Jötunheim at the time when Svipdag receives the order to find her, and it is of the greatest importance for the existence of the world that the goddess of love and fertility should be freed from the hands of the powers of frost. In the German poem, written during the press of the Christian world's efforts to reconquer the Holy Land, Lady Bride is a princess who dwells in Jerusalem, surrounded and guarded by giants, heathens, and knights templar, the last of whom, at the time when the poem received its present form, were looked upon as worshippers of the devil, and objects of the faithful's disgust. Svipdag's task [626] of liberating the goddess of love corresponds, in the monkish poem, to Orendel's task of liberating Lady Briede from her surrounding of giants, heathens, and knights templar, and restoring to Christendom the holy grave in Jerusalem. Orendel proceeds by sea there with a fleet. But although the journey accordingly is southward, the mythic saga, which makes Svipdag journey across the frost-cold Elivogar, asserts itself; and as his fleet could not well be hindered by pieces of ice on the coast of the Holy Land, it is made to stick fast in

Several other German versions of the poem were published in the 19th century, most notably: *Der ungenähte Rock oder König Orendel, wie er den grauen Rock gen Trier brachte* ["The Unsewn Coat or King Orendel, How the Grey Coat was Brought to Trier"] by Karl J. Simrock.(1845).

⁶² See no. 109. In *Orendel*, l. 163, his father is named *Ougel*. Hagen, Simrock and others render the name Eigel, along with Rydberg.

⁶³ *Untersuchungen über das Spielmannsgedicht Orendel* by Heinrich Harkensee (1879) quotes lines 481-482 as: *Den reiffer an zware/ Sandt Wieland Von Bare*, "Then in truth he called upon/ Saint Wieland von Bare," corresponding to a lacuna between lines 486-487 in Schröder's edition. They also appear in Hagen's edition (pg. 15). Simrock who notes these lines were written into the manuscript, does not include them within the text of his contemporary translation, where they would occur on page 22, between lines 17-18, but does discuss them in his remarks on page 166, remarking that Wieland was not one of the known saints. In the introduction, Simrock, following Wilhelm Grimm, associates Orendel and Eigel with the Eddic Örvandil, Saxo's Horvandil, Angl-Saxon Earendel, as well as Völund's brother Egil in *Völundarkviða*, Velent's brother Eigel in *Piðreks Saga af Bern*, and the legend of Wilhelm Tell, even as Rydberg does, affirming the great age of the narrative elements of Orendel.

⁶⁴ The spelling of her name varies among editions. Rydberg renders her name "fru Breyde", perhaps after Hagen's "fraw Breyde" which is similar to Simrock's *Frau Breide* [*der leuchtenden*], "Lady Breide [the bright]." In Schröder's edition, she is *fraww Bride*.

"dense water," and remain there for three years, until, by the prayers of the Virgin Mary, it is liberated from there by a storm.⁶⁵ In the Christian poem, the Virgin Mary's prayers have taken the place of Groa's *galdur* in the heathen poem. The fleet, made free from the "dense water," sails to a land which is governed by one Belian, who is conquered by Orentel in a naval engagement.⁶⁶ This Belian is the mythological Beli, one of those "howlers" who surrounded Frey and Freyja during their stay in Jötunheim and threatened Svipdag's life. In the Christian poem Beli was made a king in Great Babylon, presumably because his name suggested the biblical "Bel in Babel." Saxo also speaks of a naval battle in which Svipdag-Ericus conquers the mythic figure, doubtless a storm-giant, who by means of witchcraft prepares the ruin of sailors approaching the land where Frotho and Gunvara are concealed. After various other adventures Orentel arrives in the Holy Land, and the angel Gabriel shows him the way to Lady Breyde,⁶⁷ just as "the seven angels of God" in one of the Scandinavian ballads guide Sveidal to the stronghold where his chosen bride awaits. Lady Breyde is found to be surrounded by nothing but foes of Christianity: knights templar, heathens, and giants, who, like Gunvara's giant surrounding in Saxo, spend their time in fighting, but still treat the beautiful damsel as their princess. The giants and knights templar strive to take Orentel's life, and, like Svipdag, he must constantly be prepared to defend it. One of the giants Orentel fells is a "banner-bearer." One of the giants, who in the mythology tries to take Svipdag's life, is Grepp, who, according to Saxo, meets him [627] in derision with a banner, on whose pole a horse head is fixed.

Meanwhile Lady Breyde is attentive to Orentel. As Menglad receives Svipdag, so Lady Breyde bids welcome to and kisses Orentel, whom she knows to be her destined husband.

When Orentel has conquered the giants he celebrates a sort of wedding with Lady Breyde, but between them lies a two-edged sword, and they sleep as brother and sister by each other's side.⁶⁸ A wedding of a similar kind was mentioned in the mythology in regard to Svipdag and Menglad before they met in Asgard and were finally united. The chaste chivalry with which Freyja is met in the mythology by her rescuer is emphasized by Saxo both in his account of Ericus-Svipdag and Gunvara and in his story about Otharus and Syritha. He allows Ericus to say of Gunvara to Frotho: *Intacta illi pudicitia manet* (Book V, 118 [Hist. 126]).⁶⁹ And of Otharus he declares: *Neque puellam stupro violare sustinuit, nec splendido loco natam obscuro concubitus genere macularet* (Book VII, 188 [Hist. 331]).⁷⁰ The first wedding between Orentel and Breyde is therefore as if it had not been, and the German narrative lets Orentel, after completing new warlike

⁶⁵ ll. 367-372: "Then came a strong windstorm and threw the miserable ones, the very wonderful lords, up onto the wild Klebermere [Sticky Sea]. There they remained with all for three long years"; ll. 389-394: "Then our Lord gave a sign by His mother's [Sainte] Marie's honour, he sent a windstorm, he threw the miserable ones, those very wonderful lords off the Klebermere [Sticky Sea]." [Heidi Graw tr.]

⁶⁶ ll. 415-436.

⁶⁷ ll. 820-827.

⁶⁸ *Orendel* ll. 1845-1862.

⁶⁹ "with us freedom of maidens is ever held inviolate." [Elton tr.]; "among us a maiden's freedom is regarded as inviolable," [Fisher tr.]

⁷⁰ "But he could not bring himself to violate the girl, loth to defile with ignoble intercourse one of illustrious birth." [Elton tr.]; "He could not bring himself to use the girl lustfully, for he was unwilling to stain with disreputable intercourse a daughter of noble parentage," [Fisher tr.]

adventures, propose to Breyde for the second time. In the myths, the second and real wedding between Svipdag and Freyja certainly took place, after he was reunited with her in Asgard.

The sword which plays such a conspicuous role in Svipdag's fortunes has not been forgotten in the German medieval poem. It is mentioned as being kept deep down in the earth, and as always attended by victory.⁷¹

On one occasion Lady Breyde appears, weapon in hand, and fights by the Orentel's side,⁷² under circumstances which remind us of the above-cited story from Saxo (see no. 102), when Ericus-Svipdag, Gunvara-Freyja, and Rollerus-Ull find themselves with a treacherous giant, who tries to persuade Svipdag to deliver Gunvara to him, and when Bracus-Thor breaks into the giant estate, and strikes down the inhabitants or puts them to flight. Gunvara then fights by the side of Ericus-Svipdag, [628] *muliebri corpore virilem animum æquans* (Book V, 125 [Hist. 222]).⁷³

In the German Orentel story a "fisherman" appears who is called master Yse.⁷⁴ Orentel has at one time *suffered a shipwreck*, and comes floating on a plank to his island, where Yse takes him in. Yse is not a common fisherman. He has a stronghold with seven towers, and eight hundred fishermen serve under him.⁷⁵ There is reason to assume that this mighty chieftain of fishermen originally was the Asa-god Thor, who up in the North Sea once had the Midgard-serpent on his hook, and that the episode of the shipwrecked Orentel's adoption by him has as its kernel the memory of the mythic adventure, when the real Örvandil, Svipdag's father, unconscious and frostbitten, was discovered by Thor and carried by him across the Elivogar. In the mythology, as shall be shown hereafter, Örvandil the brave was Thor's "oath-sworn" man, and fought with him against giants before the breach between Ivaldi's sons and the Aesir arose. In the Orentel story, Yse also regards Orentel as his "thrall." The latter ransoms himself from thralldom with gold. Perhaps this ransom is a reference to the gold which Freyja's tears serve as ransom for Svipdag.

Orentel's father is called Eigel, king in Trier. In *Þiðreks Saga af Bern*⁷⁶ [*Wilkinasaga*] the archer Egil, Völund's brother, is mentioned by the name-variant Egill. The German Orentel's patron saint is Wieland, that is, Völund. Thus in the Orentel story as in the *Völundarkviða* and in *Þiðreks Saga af Bern* [*Wilkinasaga*] we find both these names Egil and Völund combined, and we have all the more reason to regard King Eigel in Trier as the mythological Egil, since the latter, like Örvandil, is a famous archer. Below, I shall demonstrate that the archer Örvandil and the archer Egil actually were identical in the mythology.

But first the following circumstances should probably be pointed out. Tacitus tells us in his *Germania* (3): "However, some people believe that Ulysses, too, on his long storied journeys was carried into this ocean (the North Sea), and visited the countries of Germany, and that he founded and gave name to Asciburgium, which is [629] situated on the banks of the Rhine, and is still an inhabited city; even an altar consecrated to Ulysses,

⁷¹ ll. 1650-1665.

⁷² ll. 3880-3889.

⁷³ "she had the body of a woman, but the spirit of a man.," [Elton tr.]; "matching a man's spirit though he body was a woman's," [Fisher tr.]

⁷⁴ Master Yse (Ise) first appears at l. 561.

⁷⁵ ll. 595-604.

⁷⁶ chs. 75-76.

with his father Laertes' name attached, is said to have been found in the same place." To precisely determine the location of this Asciburgium is not possible. Ptolemy⁷⁷ (II, 11, 28) and after him Marcianus Heracleota⁷⁸ (*Periplus* 2, 36) inform us that an Askibourgion was situated on the Rhine, south of and above the delta of the river.⁷⁹ *Tabula Peutingeriana*⁸⁰ locates Asciburgia between Gelduba (Gelb) and Vetera (Xanten). But from the history of Tacitus it appears (IV, 33, 1) that Asciburgium was situated between Neuss and Mainz. (See the passage: *aliis a Novæσιο, aliis a Mogontiaco universas copias advenisse credentibus*.⁸¹ The passage refers to the Roman troops sent to Asciburgium and attacked there, which expect to receive relief from the nearest Roman quarters in the north or south.) Its location should accordingly be looked for either on or not far from that part of the Rhine's course, which on the east bordered the old archbishopric Trier.

Thus the German Orentel story locates King Eigel's realm and Orentel's native country in the same regions, where, according to Tacitus' reporter, Ulysses was said to have settled for some time and to have founded a stronghold. As is well known, the Romans believed they found traces of the wandering Ulysses in almost all lands, and it only required one to hear a strange people mention a widely-travelled mythic hero, for one to identify him with Ulysses or Hercules. The Germanic mythology had a hero of Ulysses' type in the younger Orentel, Óður-Svipdag-Heremod, whom the Beowulf poem calls "incomparably the most celebrated traveler among mankind" (*wreccena wide mærost ofer wer-peóde*).⁸² Mannhardt⁸³ has already pointed out an episode (Orentel's shipwreck and arrival in Yse's land) which remind some of Odysseus' shipwreck and arrival in the kingdom of the Phæacians. Within the limits which the Svipdag-myth, according to my own investigations demonstrate itself to have had, other and more conspicuous features, common but certainly not borrowed, can be discovered, such as Svipdag's and Odysseus' descent to the lower world, and the [630] conflict fought in seal-

⁷⁷ Claudius Ptolemy (c. 2nd century AD), Greek astronomer and geographer who produced some of the first maps of Europe. *Geographike Hyphegesis* Books 1-4 edited by Karl Müller (1883); last complete edition, *Geography of Claudius Ptolemy*, translated into English and edited by Edward Luther Stevenson (1932).

⁷⁸ Marcianus of Heraclea (c. A.D. 400), minor Greek geographer, author of *Periplus maris exteri*, "The Periplus of the Outer Sea."

⁷⁹ J.B. Rives identifies the Askibourgion mountains (*Geography* 2, 11 5 and 10) with the modern Jeseníky mountains in the north-eastern Czech Republic, suggesting that the ancient Germanic name, probably based on the Old High German words *asc*, 'ash,' and *berg*, 'mountain,,' was translated with the Slavic *jesen*, 'ash.' [Clarendon Ancient History Series, Tacitus, *Germania*, 1999, p. 125].

⁸⁰ The Peutinger Table or Map (aka *Codex Vindobonensis* 324, now in the National Bibliothek, Vienna), a 12th or early 13th century cartogram copied from a late Roman road map, dating perhaps to the first century AD, covering southeast England to present day Sri-Lanka. Purportedly made in 1265 by a monk at Colmar, the copy was found by the German poet and scholar Konrad Celtes (1459-1508) and later given to Konrad Peutinger (1465-1547), hence its name. The map locates this town on the Rhine between Novaesium (Neuss) and Vetera (near Xanten), opposite the confluence of the Ruhr, the site of the present-day village of Asberg. [ibid, p. 125].

⁸¹ In context, this passage reads: "On their march they plundered the winter camp of a body of horse stationed at Ascibergium, "...Some Vascon infantry, levied by Galba, which had by this time been sent for, heard the noise of the combatants as they approached the camp, attacked the rear of the preoccupied enemy, and spread a panic more than proportionate to their numbers, some believing *that all the troops from Novesium, others that all from Mogontiacum, had come up*." [Church and Brodrigg tr.].

⁸² l. 898, "He of wanderers was by far the greatest throughout the human race." Thorpe tr.

⁸³ Wilhelm Mannhardt, *Die Götterwelt der deutschen und nordischen Völker* (1860), p. 261.

guises between Heimdall and Loki, which remind us of the sealskin clad Menelaos' fight with the seal-guardian Proteus (*Odyssey*, Book 4, lines 404 ff.). Just as there are words in the Indo-European languages that in their very form point to a common origin, but not to a borrowing, so there are also stories within the Indo-European mythic cycles which in their very form reveal their origin from an ancient common root, but produce no suspicion of having been borrowed. Among them belong those features of the myths about Odysseus and Svipdag, which resemble one another.

It has already been demonstrated above, that *Germania's* Mannus is identical with Halfdan of the Norse sources, and that Yngvi-Svipdag has his counterpart in Ingævo (see No. 24). That informant of Tacitus who was able to relate Germanic songs about Mannus and his sons, the Teutons' three original tribal heroes, must also have heard Örvandil's and Svipdag's exploits and adventures discussed in those very songs, since Örvandil and Svipdag intervene in the most decisive manner in the fate of Mannus-Halfdan. Had the myth about Svipdag been composed in a later time, then Mannus-Halfdan's saga must have undergone a change that was equivalent to a complete transformation after Tacitus' day, and not the slightest reason is found for such an assumption. Örvandil is not a mythic character fashioned in a later time. As already pointed out, and as shall be demonstrated further along, he has ancient Indo-European ancestry. The centuries between Tacitus and Paulus Diaconus are unfortunately almost wholly lacking in evidence concerning the condition of the Germanic myths and stories; but where, as in Jordanes, testimony still emerges from the surrounding silence, we find mention of *Arpantala*, *Amala*, *Fridigernus*, *Vidigoia* (Jordanes, Book V, 43)⁸⁴ who were celebrated by the fathers from ancient times and described by them as heroes who scarcely had their equals (*quales vix heroas fuisse miranda jactat antiquitas*).⁸⁵ In *Arpantala*, previous investigators have already recognized Örvandil, in *Amala Hamal*, in *Vidigoia Wittiche*, Wieland's son (*Vidga Völundson*), who in the mythology is the nephew of Svipdag (see No. 108). *Fridigernus*, *Fridgjarn*, means "he who [631] strives for the beautiful one," an epithet-name to which Svipdag has the first claim among ancient Germanic heroes, just as Freyja herself has the first claim to the name *Frið*.⁸⁶ In *Fjölsvinnsmál* 38 it belongs to a dis, who sits at Freyja's feet, and belongs to her royal household. This is in analogy with the fact that the name *Hlín* belongs at the same time to Frigg herself (*Völuspá* 53), and to a goddess belonging to her royal household (*Gylfaginning* 35 [*Pros. Edda* I, 196]).

⁸⁴ The source here is unclear. Wilhelm Grimm (1829) lists the names and their manuscript variants as: *Ethespamaræ* (*Eterpamaræ* Cod. Ambros. und Cod. Paris. 5766, *Etherpamaræ* Cod. Paris 5873, *Erpantanæ* Cod. Paris 1890); *Hanalæ* (*Hanalæ* Cod. P. 1890); *Fridigerni*; *Vidiculæ* (*Vidicojæ* C.A., *Vuidigojæ* C.P. 1890), [*Deutsche Heldensage*, p. 1]; Theodor Mommsen (1882) lists the heroes' names as *Erpamaræ*, *Analæ*, *Frithigerni*, *Widigojæ* and their manuscript variants as: *eterpamara hanale*] HPLA *eterbamara hanale V*, *et spamare* (om. *hanale*) O, *ethespamæ* (om. *hanale*) B, *et herpamara hanale X*, *et herpamara halane Y*; *uidigojæ*] HVX, *uidicotæ* PA, *uidigogæ* L, *uidigothæ* Y, *uoidicule* {-lae B}, *uidigitus*, Z. [*Jordanis Romana et Getica*, p. 65].

⁸⁵ *Ante quos etiam cantu majorum facto modulationibus citharisque canebant, et Erpamaræ, Analæ, Frithigerni, Widigojæ et aliorum, quorum in hac gente magna opinio est, quales vix heroas fuisse miranda jactat antiquitas* [Theodor Mommsen, 1882]; "In earliest times they sang of the deeds of their ancestors in strains of song accompanied by the cithara; chanting of Eterpamara, Hanala, Fritigerni, Vidigoia and others whose fame among them is great; such heroes as admiring antiquity scarce proclaims its own to be., [Charles Mierow tr.]

⁸⁶ "beautiful, fair."

What Tacitus tells about the stone found at Asciburgium, with the names of Ulysses and Laertes inscribed thereon, can of course be nothing but a conjecture, based on the idea that the famous Germanic traveler was the same as Odysseus. Perhaps one supported this idea with the similarity between the names *Óður*, Goth. *Vods*, and Odysseus, and by the fact that the name Laertes (acc. *Laerten*) has sounds in common with the name of Svipdag's father. If Asciburgium, as Tacitus seems to indicate, was named after its founder, in *Asc-* one would have an epithet-name of Örvandil's son, common in the first century after Christ and previously prevalent. In that case it lies closet to think of *aiska* (Fick, III. 5),⁸⁷ the English "ask," the Anglo-Saxon *ascian*, the Swedish *äska*, "to seek," "search for," "to try to secure," which was well-suited for Svipdag, who seeks Freyja and the sword of victory during lengthy and perilous journeys. I point out these possibilities because they appear to suggest an ancient connection, but not for the purpose of building hypotheses on them. Under all circumstances it is of interest that the Christian medieval Orentel story locates the Germanic migration hero's home to the same district of Germany where one already in Tacitus' time assumed that he had founded a stronghold. The tradition, as heard by Tacitus, did not however make the regions about the Rhine the native land of the celebrated traveler. He came there, it is said in *Germania*, from the North after having navigated in the North Sea. And this corresponds with the myth, which makes Svipdag an *Inguæon*, and *Svion*, a member of the Skilfing-Yngling tribe; which, in the beginning, [632] makes him fight on the side of the powers of frost against Halfdan, and afterwards lead not only the North Germanic tribes (*Inguæonian*), but also the West Germanic tribes (the *Hermiones*) against Hadding's East Germanic war forces (see Nos. 38-40).

Further memories of the Svipdag-myth have also been preserved in the story about Hamlet,⁸⁸ Saxo's Amlethus (Snæbjorn's *Amlóði*),⁸⁹ son of Horvendillus (Örvandil). In the medieval story Hamlet's father, like Svipdag's father in the myth, was slain by the same man who marries the wife of the slain man, and, like Svipdag in the myth, Hamlet of the medieval saga becomes his father Horvendillus' avenger and his stepfather's slayer. On more than one occasion the idea occurs in the Norse sagas that a boy whose stepfather had slain his father broods over his duty to avenge the latter, and then plays the fool or half-idiot to avoid the suspicion that he may become dangerous to the murderer. Svipdag, Örvandil's son, is raised in his stepfather's house amid all the circumstances that can justify and explain such a hypocrisy; he has, on the basis thereof, received to bear as a boy the epithet *Amlóði*, whose meaning is "the fool," and when the myth has simultaneously described him as highly-gifted, quick, and astute, one has in the words which the mythology has laid on the boy's lips, the model for the double-sided expressions, which under a surface of imbecility, allow the veiled subtlety to gleam forth. These features from the mythic account of Svipdag were transferred to the medieval story about Hamlet, whose tale had already been developed into an independent narrative in

⁸⁷ August Fick, *Vergleichendes Wörterbuch der Indogermanischen Sprachen: Dritter Teil: Wortschatz der Germanischen Spracheinheit* (Dictionary of the Indo-European Languages: Third Part: Vocabulary of the Germanic Language Unity) by August Fick with contributions by Hjalmar Falk. The work was revised by Alf Torp in 1909.

⁸⁸ William Shakespeare's play about the Danish prince *Hamlet*, whose father is murdered, is widely acknowledged to be based on Saxo's story of Amleth in Book 3, either directly or indirectly (typically via an earlier play script known as the ur-Hamlet).

⁸⁹ *Skáldskaparmál* 33 (Faulkes, 25).

Saxo's time. I shall return to this theme in a treatise on the heroic sagas.⁹⁰ —Other reminiscences of Svipdag's myth reappear in Danish, Swedish, and Norwegian folksongs. The Danish ballads, which, with surprising fidelity, have preserved certain fundamental traits and details of the Svipdag-myth into recent times, I have already discussed above. Of particular interest for research into mythological synonymies and the connection of the preserved mythic fragments are the Norwegian ballad about "*Hermod the Young*" (*Landstad, Norske Folkeviser*, p. 28),⁹¹ and its Swedish version, "*Bergtrollet*," a variant still more faithful to the myth (Arvidson, I. 123),⁹² [633] since Svipdag appears in the first, as in the *Beowulf* poem and in the *Prose Edda*, under the name Hermod, and both variants have for their theme an adventure, which Saxo tells about his Otharus when he describes the latter's flight through Jötunheim with the rediscovered Syritha. It has already been stated above (No. 100) that after Otharus had found Syritha and slain a giant in whose power she was, he was separated from her on the return trip, but found her again and freed her from the captivity into which she had fallen with a giantess. It is this episode which forms the theme of the ballad about "*Hermod the Young*," and its Swedish variant. Compared to one another, the two ballads give us the following picture of the course of events:

The young Hermod got as wife a beautiful maiden whom he liberated from a giantess' hands. She had fallen into giant-power when a "*gigjare*" (originally *gýgur*, a witch, Aurboda), in a great throng of people, had stolen her away from a church (the divine stronghold Asgard is transformed into a "house of God"). Hermod hastens on skis "through woods and caverns and narrow recesses," comes to "the wild sea-strand" (Elivogar) and to "the mountain the blue," where the giantess, who conceals the young maiden with her, has her abode. It is Yule Eve. Hermod requests shelter for the night in the giantess' mountain dwelling and receives it. With cunning he persuades the giantess to visit her neighbors the following morning, liberates the beautiful maiden during her absence, and flies on his skis with her "over the high mountains and down over the low ones." When the old giantess on her return home finds that they have run away she hastens (according to the Norwegian variant accompanied by eighteen giants) after those who have fled through dark forests with a speed which bends every tree to the ground. When Hermod with his young maiden had come to "the salt fjörd" (Elivogar) the giantess is very close to them, but in the decisive moment she is transformed to stone, according to the Norwegian variant, by the influence of the sun, which had just then risen; [634] according to the Swedish variant, by the influence of a cross which stood near the fjörd and its "long bridge."

The Swedish variant still knows that Hermod had a brother; in the mythology, Ull the skillful skier. In both ballads, Hermod himself is a skillful skier. The refrains in both of them say: "He could glide so well on skis." Below, I shall demonstrate that Örvandil, Svipdag's and Ull's father, is identical to Egil, the foremost skier of all in the mythology, and that Svipdag is a cousin of Skadi, "the dis of the skis."⁹³ Svipdag-Hermod belongs to

⁹⁰ Rydberg touches on the Svipdag myth again in *UGM 2 "Additions to the Investigations of the Myths concerning Egil-Örvandil and Svipdag."*

⁹¹ *Norske Folkeviser*, samlede og udgivne af M.B.Landstad. (*Norwegian Popular Ballads*, collected and published by M. B. Landstad), Christiania 1853. [Available at www.Googlebooks.com]

⁹² Adolf Iwar Arwidsson, *Svenske Fornsånger* I, p. 123. [<http://runeberg.org/fornsang/1/0147.html>]

⁹³ *öndurgoð eða öndurdís*, "ski-deity or ski-lady", *Gylfaginning* 23.

the myths' famous skier-family, and even on this point, these folksongs have preserved a genuine mythic trait.

In their fashion, these ballads, therefore, testify concerning Svipdag's identity with Hermod, and of the latter's identity with Saxo's Otharus.

In closing, a few words about Svipdag's synonyms: Of these, *Óður* and *Hermóður* (and in the *Beowulf* poem *Sviðferhð*)⁹⁴ form a group, which, as has already been pointed out above, refer to the qualities of his spirit. Svipdag ("the shimmering day") and Skirnir ("the shining") form another, which refers to his birth as the son of the star-hero Örvandil, who is "the brightest of stars," and "a true beam from the sun" (see above). Again, concerning the synonym *Eirekur*, one should be reminded that Svipdag's half-brother Gudhorm bears the epithet *Jörmunrekur*, and the latter's half-brother, Hadding, the epithet *Þjóðrekur*. They are the three half-brothers who, after the patriarch *Mannus-Halfdan*, assume power over the Teutons; and as they each hold large domains and rule over many Germanic tribes, they are great kings, in contrast to the princes of individual tribes. It is the dignity of a great king which is indicated, each in its own way, by all these parallel names — *Eirekur*, *Jörmunrekur*, and *Þjóðrekur*.

108.

SVIPDAG'S FATHER ÖRVANDIL. EVIDENCE THAT HE IS IDENTICAL TO
VÖLUND'S BROTHER EGIL. THE ÖRVANDIL SYNONYM EBBO
(EBUR, IBOR).

Svipdag's father, Örvandil, must have been a mortal enemy of Halfdan, who abducted his wife Groa. Previously, however, it is his son Svipdag whom we have seen carry out the feud of revenge against Halfdan. Still, it must seem incredible that the brave archer himself should remain inactive and leave it to his young, and in the beginning unproven, son to fight against Thor's favorite, the mighty son of Borgar. The epic connection demands that Örvandil should also take part in this war and it is necessary to investigate whether our mythic fragments have preserved traces that this demand was satisfied in the mythic epic.

As his name shows, Örvandil was a famous archer. That the *Ör-* in Örvandil was understood as the word *ör*, "arrow" in heathen times—although this meaning need not be the most original one — is made certain by Saxo, according to whom Örvandill's father was named Geirvandill (*Gerwendillus*, Book 3, 76 [*Hist* 135]). Thus the father is the one "busy with the spear," the son "the one busy with the arrow."

Proceeding from this point, we must at the very beginning of the investigation pose the question: Is there anyone among Halfdan's enemies mentioned by Saxo who bears a well-known archer-name?

There is, as a matter of fact. Halfdan Berggram has to contend with two mythic persons, Toko and Anundus, who with united forces appear against him (Book 7, 185 [*Hist*. 325]). Toko, *Tóki*, is the well-known archer-name. In another passage in Saxo

⁹⁴ As an epithet *Sviðferhð* was shown to be erroneous, see above.

(Book 6, 149 ff. [*Hist.* 265 ff.]) one Anundus, with the help of Avo (or Ano) *sagittarius*,⁹⁵ fights against one Halfdan. Thus, we have the parallels:

The archer Örvandil is an enemy of Halfdan.

The bearer of the archer's name Toko and Anundus are enemies of Halfdan.

The archer Avo [Ano] and Anundus [Amundus] are enemies of Halfdan.

[636] What immediately strikes the eye is the fact that the bearer of an archer-name, Toko, as well as the archer Avo have as comrade one Anundus in the war against Halfdan. From where did Saxo get this Anundus? We now move in the domain of historicized divine and heroic myths, and the name Anund must have been borrowed from there. Does any other source inform us about a mythic personality by this name?

There actually was an Anund who held a conspicuous place in mythology, and he is none other than Völund. *Völundarkviða* 2 informs us that Völund was also called Anund.⁹⁶ When the three swan-maids came to the Wolfdales, where the brothers, Völund, Egil, and Slagfin, dwelt, one of them presses Egil "in her white embrace," the other is Slagfin's beloved, and the third "lays her arms around Anund's white neck."

⁹⁵ The actual names are *Amundus* and *Ano Sagittarius*, in the original and in the version of the text Rydberg cites, Peter Erasmus Müller and Hans Mattias Velschow, *Saxonis Grammatici Historia Danica*, Volume 1, 1858 [p. 269].

⁹⁶ While the text in *Codex Regius* actually reads *onondar*, this is almost always emended to Völund without explanation. Ursula Dronke, PE II, p. 306: "In 2/10 the name *Völundar* is miswritten 'onondar' in the MS."

*en in þriðja
þeirra systir
varði hvítan
háls Önundar.*

while the third,
their sister,
embraced the white
neck of Önund

Völund is the only person with the name Anund (*Önund*) that occurs in our mythic sources. If we now eliminate —naturally only for the present and with the expectation of additional evidence —the name Anund and substitute Völund, we get the following parallels:

Völund and the bearer of the archer-name Toko are enemies of Halfdan.
Völund and the archer Avo are enemies of Halfdan.
The archer Örvandil is an enemy of Halfdan.

From this it would seem that Völund in a very close relation to one of the mythology's archers, and that they both had some reason for enmity against Halfdan. Can this be confirmed from another direction?

Völund's brothers in *Völundarkviða* are called *Egill* and *Slagfiður* (*Slagfinnur*). The Icelandic-Norse poems from heathen times contain paraphrases that demonstrate that Egil in the myths was famous as an archer and skier. The bow is "Egil's weapon," the arrows are "Egil's weapon-hail"¹²¹ (*Skáldskaparmál* 61 [*Pr. Edd.* 422]), [637] and "the swift herring of Egil's hands"¹²² (*Heimskringla, Haralds Saga Gráfeldar*, ch. 16 [*Har. Gr.* s. 18]). A ship is called Egil's skis,¹²³ originally because he could use his skis also on the water. In *Völundarkviða* he makes hunting expeditions with his brothers on skis. *Þidreks Saga af Bern* ch. 75 [*Wilkinasaga* (29-30)] also knows Egil as Völund's brother, and speaks of him as a wonderfully skillful archer.¹²⁴

The same Völund, who in Saxo under the name Anund has the bearer of the archer-name Toko or the archer Avo by his side in the conflict with Halfdan, also has the archer Egil as a brother in other sources.

Of an archer Toko, who is mentioned in Book 10 [*Hist.* 487-490], Saxo tells the same exploit as *Þidreks Saga af Bern* ch. 75 [*Wilkinasaga*] attributes to Völund's brother Egil. In Saxo it is Toko who performs the famous mastershot which was afterwards attributed to William Tell. In *Þidreks Saga af Bern* [*Wilkinasaga*] it is Egil. One like the other, amid similar secondary circumstances, shoots an apple from his son's head. Egil's skill as a skier and the serviceableness of his skis on the water have not been forgotten in Saxo's account of Toko. He races on skis down the mountain Kullen in Scania, sloping precipitously toward the sea, and is said to have saved himself on board a ship. Saxo's Toko was therefore without doubt identical to Völund's brother Egil, and Saxo's Anund is the same Völund of whom the *Völundarkviða* testifies that he also bore this name in the myths.

¹²¹ *hryngráp Egils vápna*, "the falling hail of Egill's weapons," [Dronke, *PE II*, p. 272].

¹²² *hlaupsíldr Egils gaupna*, "leaping herrings of Egill's hand-hollows" [ibid].

¹²³ *Egils andrar, Krákumál* 5, emended by Finnur Jónsson and most modern editors to "ægis öndrum."

¹²⁴ *Þidreks Saga af Bern*, ch. 75, etc. The source for all of the examples in this paragraph appears to be *Lexicon Poeticum*, 1860, s.v. *Egils*.

Thus it is now demonstrated that Völund and Egil appeared in the Germanic patriarch Halfdan's story as the enemies of the latter, and that the famous archer Egil consequently occupied the place where one would expect to find the famous archer Örvandil, Svipdag's father. Therefore Örvandil is either identical to Egil, and then it is easy to understand why the latter is an enemy of Halfdan, who we know had kidnapped his wife Groa; or he is not identical to Egil, and then we know no motive for the appearance of the latter on the same side as Svipdag, and we, moreover, are confronted by the improbability that Örvandil does nothing to avenge the insult inflicted upon him.

[638] Örvandil's identity with Egil is completely confirmed by the following circumstances.

Örvandil has the Elivogar and the coasts of Jötunheim as the scene of his exploits during the time in which he is the gods' friend and the giants' opponent. To this time we must refer Horvendillus' victories over Collerus (Kollur) and his sister Sela (cp. the name of a monster Selkolla - *Biskupa Sögur*, I. 605)¹²⁵ mentioned by Saxo (Book 3, 76-77 [*Hist.* 135-138]). His surname *inn frækni*, the brave, alone testifies that the myth mentioned remarkable feats carried out by him, and that these were performed against the powers of frost foremost, thus in the gods' service and for the good of Midgard, is plain from the narrative in *Skáldskaparmál* 25 [*Pros. Edd.* 276, 277]. This demonstrates —as the epic connection also demands —that the Asa-god Thor and the archer Örvandil were at least for a time faithful friends, and that they had met each other on their expeditions for similar purposes in Jötunheim. When Thor, wounded in the forehead from his combat with the giant Hrungnir, returns to his home, *Þrúðvangur* (*Þrúðvangar*, *Þrúðheimur*), Örvandil's wife Groa was there and tried to help him with healing *galdur*, in which she would also have succeeded if Thor could have persuaded himself to keep silent a moment with information he conveyed concerning her husband, and which he expected would please her. And, as a matter of fact, Groa did become so glad that she forgot the rest of the *galdur*-song and could not complete the healing. The information was, as we know, that, on the expedition to Jötunheim from which he had just now come home, Thor had met Örvandil, carried him in his basket across the Elivogar, and thrown a toe which the brave adventurer had frozen up to heaven and made a star thereof. Thor added that it would not be long before Örvandil would come "home"; that is without doubt to say "home to Thor," to fetch his wife Groa. Thus, it follows that after he had carried Örvandil across the Elivogar, Thor had parted with him somewhere on the way, in all probability in Örvandil's own home, and that Groa, the dis of growth, while Örvandil roamed in [639] Jötunheim, had a safe place of refuge in the Asa-god's own stronghold. A close relationship between Thor and Örvandil also appears in that Thor afterwards marries Örvandil's second wife Sif, and adopts his son Ull, Svipdag's half-brother (see No. 102), in Asgard.

¹²⁵ *Selkolla*, "a monster ('seal-head')," [*Lexicon Poeticum*, 1931]; Hinu Íslenzka bókmentafélagi, *Biskupa sögur*, *Gudmundar Biskups Saga*, 1858, p. 605; The name appears several times in the text. See *Biskupa sögur* by Jón Sigurðsson, Guðbrandur Vigfússon, 1878, pp. 78-82, 85, 191. 215.

Consequently Örvandil's abode was situated south of the Elivogar (Thor carried him *norðan úr Jötunheimum -- Skáldskaparmál 25 [Pros. Edd. 276]*),¹²⁶ in the direction Thor had to travel to and from the land of the giants, and presumably quite near or on the strand of that mythic waterway over which Thor carried him on this occasion. When Thor proceeds from Asgard to visit the giants he drives the first part of the way in his chariot drawn by the goats *Tanngnjóstur* and *Tanngrislir*. In the poem *Haustlög* there is a particularly vivid description of his journey in his thunder-wagon through the sky when he proceeded to the meeting agreed upon with the giant Hrungrir, on the return from which he met and helped Örvandil across Elivogar (*Skáldskaparmál 25 [Pros. Edd. 276]*).¹²⁷ But across this water and through Jötunheim itself Thor never travels in his car. Wading, he walks through the Elivogar, on foot he wanders in the wildernesses of the giants, and meets his foes face to face, breast to breast, instead of striking him from above with lightning. In this, all accounts of Thor's journeys to Jötunheim agree. Thus south of the Elivogar and somewhere near them there must have been a place where Thor left his chariot and his goats in safety before he proceeded farther on his journey. And as we already know that the archer Örvandil, Thor's friend and like him a foe of the giants, lived south of the Elivogar, and on the road traveled by the Asa-god, it lies nearest at hand to assume that Örvandil's stronghold, of course, was the stopping-place on his way.

Now in *Hymiskviða* (7, 37, 38), as a matter of fact, it is told that Thor, when he traveled to Jötunheim, had a stopping-place on the way, where his precious chariot and team were housed and watched over by the host of the place, who accordingly had a very important commission of trust, and must have been a friend of Thor and the Aesir in the myths. The host bears the archer name Egil. From [639] Asgard to Egil's abode, says *Hymiskviða*, it is nearly a day's journey for Thor when he rides behind his goats on his way to Jötunheim. After this day's journey he leaves the horn-adorned draught-animals with Egil, who watches over of them, after which the god proceeds farther on foot. Thor and Tyr, when they intend to visit the giant Hymir:

*Fóru drjúgum
dag þann fram
Ásgarði frá,
unz til Egils komu;
hirði hann hafra
horngöfgasta,
hurfu að höllu,
er Hymir átti.*

¹²⁶ "from the north, out of Jötunheim" cp. *norðan yfir Élivága*, "from the north over Elivogar," in the same passage. Anthony Faulkes translates this as "he had waded south across Elivagar carrying Aurvandil in a basket on his back south from Giantland."

¹²⁷ *Haustlög* 14/ 3-4: "Earth's son drove to the play of iron and the Moon's path thundered beneath him. The wrath of Meili's kinsman [Thor] swelled."; 15: "All the sanctuaries of falcons did burn, because of Ull's step-father [Thor], and the ground below all beaten with hail. When the goats drew the temple-deity in the easy-chariot [Thor] forward to meet Hrungrir, Svolnir's widow [Odin's wife, Earth] split apart." *Haustlög* 14-15 depicts Thor driving toward the battle with Hrungrir. Without transition, he meets Hrungrir on foot (v. 16). The goat-car is left behind, but where the poem does not say. In the same manner, without transition, Groa attempts to charm the whetstone out of Thor's head (20).

"For almost the entire day they proceeded on their way from Asgard until they came to Egil's. He gave the horn-strong goats care. They (Thor and Tyr) continued to the great hall which Hymir owned."

Reckoned from Egil's abode, both gods accordingly went farther on foot. From what is afterwards told about the adventures on their way home, it appears that there is a long distance between Egil's abode and Hymir's (cp. 35 *fóru lengi, áður* etc.).¹²⁸ First one must travel across the Elivogar: *býr fyr austan Élivoga hundvís Hymir* (st. 5).¹²⁹ In the Elivogar Hymir has his fishing-hole and there he is wont to catch whales on hooks (cp. str. 17 - *á vog róa*);¹³⁰ but still he does not venture far out upon the water (see st. 20),¹³¹ presumably because he has enemies on the southern strand where Egil dwells. Between the Elivogar and Hymir's abode there is a considerable distance through wooded mountain clefts (*holtriði* - str. 27)¹³² and past rocks in whose caverns dwell monsters belonging to Hymir's giant-clan (str. 35).¹³³ Thor resorts to a stratagem for the safety of his retreat. After he was out and fished with the giant, instead of securing the boat in its place by the shore, as Hymir [641] requests of him, he carries the vessel and its belongings all the difficult way up to Hymir's hall. He is also attacked on his way home by Hymir and all his giant-clan, and, in order to be able to swing Mjölnir freely, he must put down the precious kettle which he has captured from the frost-giant and bore on his broad shoulders (str. 35, 36).¹³⁴ But his uninterrupted retreat across the Elivogar he has guaranteed by the above-mentioned strategy.

Egil is called *hraunbúi* (str. 38), an epithet the ambiguous meaning of which should not be unobserved. It is usually translated with rock-dweller, but it here means "he who lives near or at Hraunn" (*Hrönn*).¹³⁵ *Hraunn* is one of the names of the Elivogar (see Nos. 59, 93; cp. *Skáldskaparmál* 33 [*Pros. Edd.* 258] with *Grímnismál* 28 [38]).

After their return to Egil's, Thor and Tyr again seat themselves in the thunder-chariot and proceed to Asgard with the captured kettle. But they had not driven far before the strength of one of the horn-adorned draught animals failed, and it was found that he was lame (str. 37). A misfortune had happened to him while in Egil's keeping, and this had been caused by the cunning Loki (str. 37).¹³⁶ The poem does not state the kind of

¹²⁸ "They had traveled far, when..."; In stanza 35, the manuscripts have *fóru*, "went," and in stanza 37 *fórut*, "went not." Thus stanza 35 is commonly emended accordingly: "They had not traveled far, when..."

¹²⁹ "There dwells, eastward of the Elivogar, the *hund*-wise Hymir."

¹³⁰ "row out on the waves"

¹³¹ "...but the Jötun declared his slight desire to row further."

¹³² *Hol-trið*, "wooded mountain ridge."

¹³³ "They had traveled far, when Odin's son took a look backward once. From the east with Hymir, he saw a troop of warriors faring, many-headed."

¹³⁴ 36: "He lifted the kettle down from his shoulders, he swung Mjölnir, murder-loving, ahead and killed all of the rock-whales [i.e. the giants]"

¹³⁵ *Hraunbúi* means "rock-dweller" and is a common kenning for a giant. Egil is depicted as a giant here. *Hraun* (neuter) means "scree, expanse of rocks, lava-field". *Hrönn* (feminine) means "wave." The two words are not related, and decline differently (*hrönn* - *hrannar*; *hraun* - *hrauns*). Rydberg has confused the words, probably based on a misunderstanding. In the manuscripts "av" is regularly written for both "ö" and "au." However, for the word to mean "Hrönn-dweller" it would have to be "*hrannbúi*" or "*hrannarbúi*", to indicate that Egil lived in the river.

¹³⁶ "They had not traveled far when one of Hlórriði's goats lay half-dead before them; the 'horse of the trace' [i.e. the goat] was lame in the leg. Of this the mischief-wise Loki was responsible."

misfortune —of this we receive information from the *Prose Edda* —but if Loki's purpose was to cause enmity between Thor and his friend Egil he did not succeed this time. Thor, to be sure, demanded fines for what had happened, and the fines were, as *Hymiskviða* informs us, two children who were reared in Egil's house.¹³⁷ But Thor became their excellent foster-father and protector, and the punishment was therefore of such a kind that it was calculated to strengthen the bond of friendship instead of severing it.

Gylfaginning 44 ff. [*Pros. Edd.* I. 142 ff.] has also preserved the tradition that when Thor shall proceed from Asgard to Jötunheim, he has to make more than a day's journey, and for this reason, that after the first day's travel, he is taken into a house, where he eats his evening meal and spends the night. There he leaves his goats and travels the next day eastward (north), "across the deep sea" (*hafid það hið djúpa*),¹³⁸ on whose other side his giant foes have their homeland. The [642] sea in question is the Elivogar, and the tradition correctly states that the lodging for the night is situated on its southern (western) side.

But *Gylfaginning* has forgotten the name of the host in this inn. Instead of giving his name it simply calls him a *búandi* (peasant); but it knows and states on the other hand the names of the two children there reared, Thjalfi and Röskva; and it relates how it happened that Thor's one goats became lame, but without Loki receiving the blame for the misfortune. According to *Gylfaginning* the event occurred when Thor was on his way to Utgarda-Loki. In *Gylfaginning*, too, Thor takes the two children in payment, and makes Thjalfi (*Þjálfi*) a hero, who with honor takes part in the god's exploits.

As shall be shown below, this stopping-place on the journey from Asgard to Jötunheim is presupposed as well known in Eilífr Guðrúnarson's *Þórsdrápa*, which describes the adventures Thor met with on his journey to the giant Geirröd. *Þórsdrápa* provides information of great mythological importance concerning the inhabitants of the place. They are the "sworn" helpers of the Aesir, and when it is necessary Thor can secure brave warriors there, who accompany him across Elivogar into Jötunheim. Among them *an archer* plays the chief role in connection with Thjalfi (see No. 114).¹³⁹

On the north side of Elivogar dwell accordingly giants hostile to gods and men; on the south side, on the other hand, beings friendly to the gods and bound to the Aesir by oaths. The circumstance that they are bound by oaths to the gods (see *Þórsdrápa*) implies that they stand in a contractual and subservient relationship to them. The remotest northern outpost against the powers of frost is obviously entrusted to them.

Thus we also have an explanation of the position of the star-hero Örvandil, the great archer, in the mythic epic. We can understand why he is engaged to a dis of growth Groa, as it is his duty to defend Midgard against the devastation of frost; and why he fights on the Elivogar and in Jötunheim against the same enemies as Thor; and why the mythology has made him and the lord of thunder friends who visit each other. With the a father's tenderness, and a comrade's devotion, [643] the mighty son of Odin bears the exhausted and frost-bitten star-hero on his shoulders over the foggy Elivogar, filled with

¹³⁷*Hymiskviða* 38: "Now you have heard -- who of the god-wise knows more about this? -- what recompense he got from the rock-dweller, he paid for it with both of his children."

¹³⁸ *Gylfaginning* 45.

¹³⁹ In verse 8 of *Þórsdrápa*, the poet calls Thor and Thjalfi "the glorious, battle-wise warriors, oath-sworn vikings of Gauti's [Odin's] dwelling." Rydberg understood this to refer to the inhabitants of Thjalfi's native home. See no. 114 for a fuller account of Rydberg's treatment of this complex skaldic poem.

bewitching terrors, to place him safe by his own hearth south of these waters after he has honored him with a token which for all time shall shine in the heavens as a monument of Örvandil's exploits and Thor's friendship for him. In the meantime Groa, Örvandil's wife, stays in Thor's halls.

And we discover the same bond of hospitality between Thor and Egil. According to *Hymiskviða* it is in Egil's house, according to *Gylfaginning* in the house in which Thjalfi is fostered, where the accident involving one of Thor's goats occurs. In the one source, the youth whom Thor takes as a fine is called Egil's child; in the other he is called Thjalfi. Two different mythic sources indicate that in the myth Thjalfi was an orphan, adopted into Egil's house, and consequently not a brother by blood, but a foster-brother of Svipdag and Ull. One source is *Göngu-Hrólfs Saga* 2 [*Förnaldars*. III, 241], where it is stated that Groa found a baby boy in a *flæðarmál* and raised him with her own son.¹⁴⁰ *Flæðarmál* designates a waterpit, a place which is inundated with floodwaters, then lies dry.¹⁴¹ The other source is the *Longobard Saga*, in which the mythological Egil reappears as Agelmund, the first king of the Longobardians who emigrated from Scandinavia (*Origo Gentis Longobardorum*; Paulus Diaconius ch. 14, 15; cp. No. 112). Agelmund, it is said, had a foster-son, *Lamicho*¹⁴² (*Origo Gentis Longobardorum*) or *Lamissio* (Paulus Diaconius), whom he found in a dam and adopted out of pity.¹⁴³ Thus in the one place it is a woman who bears the name of the archer Örvandil's wife, in the other it is the archer Egil himself, who adopts as foster-son a child found in a dam or in a place filled with water. Paulus Diaconus says that the lad received the name *Lamissio* to commemorate this circumstance, "since he was fished up out of a dam or dyke," which in their (the Longobardian) language is called *lama* (cp. *lehm*, mud). The name Thjalfi (*Þjálfi*) refers to an entirely similar idea-association. As Vigfusson has already pointed out, it is connected with the English *delve*, a dyke, dam, [644] waterpit, mudpool; with the Anglo-Saxon *delfan*; the Dutch *delven*, to work the ground with a spade, to dig.¹⁴⁴ The circumstances under which the lad was found presaged his future. In the myths, he fells the clay-giant *Mökkukálfi* (*Skáldskaparmál* 24 [*Pros. Edd.* I. 272-274]). In the migration saga he is the discoverer of land and circumnavigates islands (*Kormák's Saga*, 19, 3;¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁰ "Grímr was his foster-brother, and he was called 'the terrible.' He was strong and evil-natured in all things. Nothing was known of his origin or clan, because the seeress Gróa (Þórðr's mother) had found him in a *flæðarmál* in Hlesey, and she raised him as a son, and taught him all the magic arts in such a manner that no one in the northern lands was his equal, because his nature was different to the nature of other men."

¹⁴¹ *flæðarmál*, "a flood-mark, i.e. the space between high and low water," (Cleasby/Vigfusson, *Dict.* 162)

¹⁴² Ch. 2: "They made for themselves a king, Agilmund by name, the son of Agio, of the race of Gucingus. And after him reigned Laiamicho of the race of Gucingus." [William Dudley Foulke tr, p. 317]

¹⁴³ Paul the Deacon, *History of the Lombards*, ch. 15: "At this time a certain prostitute had brought forth seven little boys at a birth, and the mother, more cruel than all wild beasts, threw them into a fishpond to be drowned ... It happened therefore that when King Agelmund stopped his horse and looked at the wretched infants, and had turned them hither and thither with the spear he carried in his hand, one of them put his hand on the royal spear and clutched it. The king moved by pity and marveling greatly at the act, pronounced that he would be a great man. And straightaway he ordered him to be lifted from the fishpond and commanded him to be brought to a nurse to be nourished with every care, and because he took him from a fishpond which in their language is called *lama*, he gave him the name *Lamissio*." [William Dudley Foulke tr.]

¹⁴⁴ "The word properly means a *delver*, *digger*; German *delber*, *delben*, = to delve, dig" (Vigfusson, *Dict.* 738.)

¹⁴⁵ Used here, the word *þjálfa* is probably not a personal name. Related to the verb *þjálfa*, "tame, subdue," it most likely means "band, girdle; something that surrounds." *Þjálfi eyja* "girdle of the islands", therefore,

Skáldskaparmál 76 [*Prose Edda*, I. 496])¹⁴⁶ and there, in order to make them inhabitable for immigrants, he conquers giants (*Hárbarðsljóð* 39).¹⁴⁷ In the addition to the Gotland Law¹⁴⁸ he appears as Thjelvar, who lands in Gotland, liberates the island from magic forces by carrying fire, colonizes it and becomes the progenitor of a host of emigrants, who settle in southern countries. In Paulus Diaconus he grows up to be the finest hero; in the myths he develops into the Asa-god Thor's brave helper, who participates in his and the great archer's adventures on the Elivogar and in Jötunheim. Paulus (ch. 15) says that once when Agelmund with his Longobardians came to a river, "amazons" wanted to hinder him from crossing it. Then Lamissio fought, swimming in the river, with the bravest one of the amazons, and killed her.¹⁴⁹ In the myths Egil himself fights with the giantess Sela, mentioned in Saxo as an amazon: *piraticis exercita rebus ac bellici perita muneris* (Book 3, 77 [*Hist.* 138]),¹⁵⁰ while Thjalfi fights with giantesses on Hlesey (*Hárbarðsljóð* 39), and at the side of Thor and the archer he fights his way through the river waves, in which giantesses try to drown him (*Þórsdrápa*). It is evident that Paulus Diaconus' accounts of Agelmund and Lamissio are nothing more than historicized echoes of the myths about Egil and Thjalfi, of which the Old Norse records fortunately have preserved valuable fragments.

Thus Thjalfi is the archer Egil's and Groa's foster-son, as is apparent from a compilation of the sources cited. From other sources we have found that Groa is the archer Örvandil's wife. Örvandil dwells near the Elivogar and Thor is his friend, and receives Groa as his guest. Egil lives near the Elivogar and Thor is his friend and stays with him on his way to and from Jötunheim. These are the certifications of Örvandil's and Egil's identity which lie nearest at hand.

appears to be a kenning for ocean. The verse reads: *Brim gnýr, brattir hamrar / blálands Haka strandar / Allt gjálfr eyja þjálfa út líðr í stað víðis*; "The surf roars, steep cliffs rise/ from the edge of Haki's [the sea-king's] blue realm; to the water's domain glides the din/ of the sea that encircles islands." [Rory McTurk tr.]

¹⁴⁶ This verse by Einarr is obscure and the word in question is actually written as *þjalma* or *þjálma*, which Faulkes defines as "*þjálmi*, m. noose, encircler, in a kenning for sea, *Manar þjálma*." The stanza reads: *Kaldr þvær marr und mildum/ margt dægr við svarta, grefr élsnúin jöfri,/ almsorg Manar þjalma*; "Cold mere washes over many a day the black timbers under the generous prince. Storm-twisted elm-trouble [wind] digs into Man's encircler [sea]." [A. Faulkes tr.]

¹⁴⁷ "*Vargynjur þat váru,/ en varla konur;/ skelldu skip mitt,/ er ek skorðat hafðak,/ ægðu mér járnurki en eltu Þjalfa*"; "She-wolves they were like, and women but little; My ship, which well I had trimmed, did they shake; with clubs of iron they threatened, and Thjalfi they drove off." [H. Bellows tr.]

¹⁴⁸ *Gudasagan*, an early 13th century text containing an account of the history of the Baltic island Gotland, which survives in *Codex Holm*. B 64 (Royal Library at Stockholm) along with the Gotland legal code, or *Gutalag*. It is written in Old Gutnish, the Norse dialect of the island. It reads: "Gotland was first discovered by a man whose name was Thialvar (Thjelvar). In those days Gotland's nature was that it sank below in the daytime, but stayed above during the night. But this man was the first to carry fire onto the land, and henceforth it never sank again." [Peter Tunstall tr.] For the original see: <http://www.lysator.liu.se/runeberg/gutasaga/>

¹⁴⁹ "When he had grown up he became such a vigorous youth that he was also very fond of fighting, and after the death of Agelmund he directed the government of the kingdom. They say that when the Longobards, pursuing their way with their king, came to a certain river and were forbidden by the Amazons to cross to the other side, this man fought with the strongest of them, swimming in the river, and killed her and won for himself the glory of great praise and a passage also for the Langobards." [Foulke tr.]

¹⁵⁰ "Then he pursued and slew Koller's sister Sela, who was a skilled warrior and experienced in roving." [Elton tr.]; "After this he hounded down and slew Koller's sister Sela a warrior Amazon and accomplished pirate herself." [Fisher]

[645] It has already been pointed out that Svipdag's father Örvandil appears in Saxo by the name Ebbo (see no. 23, no. 100). It is Otharus-Svipdag's father whom he calls this (Book 7, p. 187-189 [*Hist.* 329-333]). Halfdan slays Örvandil-Ebbo, while the latter celebrates his wedding with a princess Sygrutha (see No. 23). In the mythology Egil had the same fate: an enemy and rival kills him for the sake of a woman. The "*Franks Casket*," an old work of sculpture now preserved in England, and reproduced in George Stephens' great work on the runes,¹⁵¹ represents Egil defending his house against a host of assailants who storm it. Inside the house, one sees a woman, the possession of whom causes the conflict. Like Saxo's Halfdan, one of the assailants carries a tree or a branched club as his weapon. Egil has hurried out, bow in hand, and his three famous arrows have been shot. Above him, his name is written in runes, so that there can be no doubt about his identity. The attack, according to Saxo, took place, in the night (*noctaque nuptiis superveniens* - Book 7, p. 187 [*Hist.* 330]).¹⁵²

In a similar manner, Paulus Diaconus relates the story concerning Egil-Agelmund's death (ch. 16). He is attacked, so it is stated, in the night time by Bulgarians, who slew him and carried away his only daughter.¹⁵³ During a part of their history the Longobardians had the Bulgarians as neighbors, with whom they were at war. In the mythic saga, it was "*Borgarians*," i.e. Borgar's son Halfdan and his men, who slew Örvandil. In historicized tale, the "*Borgarians*" have been changed into Bulgarians for the natural reason that accounts of wars fought with Bulgarians were preserved in the traditions of the Longobardians.

The very name Ebbo reappears also in the Longobardian saga. The brothers, under whose leadership the Longobardians are said to have emigrated from Scandinavia, are called Aggo and Ebbo in Saxo (Book 8, p. 237 [*Hist.* 418]); in *Origo Gentis Longobardorum*, Ajo and Ybor; in Paulus (ch. 7), Ajo and Ibor. Thus the name Ebbo is variant of the name *Ibor*, the German *Ebur*, the Norse *Jöfurr*, "a wild boar." The Ibor of the Longobard's saga, the emigration leader, and Agelmund, the emigrants' first king, in the myths and also in Saxo's sources, are one and the same person. The Longobards' [646] historicized emigration story, thus has its root in the pan-Germanic emigration myth, which was connected with the enmity caused by Loki between the gods and the primeval artists—an enmity in which the latter allied themselves with the powers of frost, and, at the head of the Skilfing-Yngling tribes, directed the migration southward, which resulted in the populating of the Germanic continent with tribes from South Scandia and Denmark (see no. 28, no. 32).

Nor is the mythic hero Ibor forgotten in the German sagas. He is mentioned in *Notker* (about the year 1000)¹⁵⁴ and in *Pidreks Saga af Bern* [*Wilkinasaga*]. *Notker* simply mentions him in passing as a saga-hero well known at that time. He distinguishes

¹⁵¹ George Stephens, *The Old-Northern Runic Monuments of Scandinavia and England*. 3 vols. London 1866-1884.

¹⁵² "coming by night on the wedding feast" [Elton tr.]; "coming upon the wedding at night," [Fisher tr.]

¹⁵³ "At night, in short, when all were resting, relaxed by negligence, suddenly the Bulgarians, rushing upon them, slew many, wounded many more, and so raged through the camp that they killed Agelmund, the king himself, and carried away his only daughter." [Foulke tr.]

¹⁵⁴ Notker Labeo ["the thick-lipped"] later Notker Teutonicus ["the German"] c.950-1022, German Benedictine monk and one of the founders of German vernacular literature, translating into Old High German Boethius' *Consolations of Philosophy*, Capella's *Marriage of Mercury and Philology*, Pope Gregory I's *Morals*, and Aristotle's *Categories*.

between the real wild boar (*Eber*) roaming in the woods, and the Eber (*Ebur*) who "bears the swan-ring." This is all he has to say of him.¹⁵⁵ But, according to *Völundarkviða*, the *Ebur*-Egil of the myths is married to a swanmaid, and, like his brother Völund, has worn a ring.¹⁵⁶ The swan-rings' significance was originally the same as the ring Draupnir's: they were fertility symbols, and were made and owned for this reason by the myths' primeval artists, who, as we have seen, were the personified crop-creating powers in nature, and by their beloved or wives, the swan-maids, who were the saps of vegetation, the providers of the mythic "mead" or "ale." The swan-maid who loves Egil is, therefore, in *Völundarkviða* called *Ölrún*, a parallel name to *Ölgeffun*, as Groa, Örvandil's wife, is called in *Haustlög* 20 (*Skáldskaparmál* 30 [*Pros. Edd.* I, 282]). Saxo, too, has heard of the swan-rings, and says that from three swans singing in the air a *cingulum*¹⁵⁷ inscribed with runes, fell down to King Fridlevus (Njörd), which informed him where he was to find a youth who had been stolen by a giant, and whose liberation weighed on Fridlevus' mind.¹⁵⁸ The context shows that the unnamed youth in the myth was Fridlevus-Njörd's own son Frey, the lord of harvests, stolen by the powers of frost. Accordingly, a swan-ring has co-operated in the mythology in restoring the fertility of the earth.

In *Bidreks Saga af Bern* [*Wilkinasaga*] appears Villifer.¹⁵⁹ The author of the saga [647] says himself that this name is identical with Wild-Ebur, wild boar.¹⁶⁰ Villifer, a remarkable and noble-minded youth, wears a gold ring around his arm and is Vidga Völundson's elder friend, protector, and savior from mortal danger. Of his family relations *Bidreks Saga af Bern* [*Wilkinasaga*] gives us no information, but the role it gives him has its explanation in the myth, where Ebur is Völund's brother Egil, and thus his ward Vidga's uncle.

If we now remind ourselves that in the German Orentel story, which is based on the Svipdag-myth, the father of the hero is called Eigel (Egil), and his patron saint Wieland (Völund), and that in the archer, who in Saxo fights by the side of Anund-Völund against Halfdan, we have re-discovered Egil where we expected Örvandil; then here we find a whole chain of evidence that Ebur, Egil, and Örvandil are identical, and at the same time the links in this chain of evidence, taken as they are from the Icelandic poetry, and from Saxo, from England, Germany, and Italy, demonstrated just how widely spread the myth about Örvandil-Egil, his famous brother Völund, and his no less celebrated son Svipdag, was among the Germanic peoples. The result gained by the

¹⁵⁵ The source of this is Grimm's *Deutsche Heldensage* (1829), no. 16, p. 30.

¹⁵⁶ In *Völundarkviða* Egil marries a swan-maid; in Notker, Eber wears a "swan-ring." Egil is not associated with a ring in *Völundarkviða*.

¹⁵⁷ "girdle, sword-belt."

¹⁵⁸ Saxo, Book 6, 147: "Here Fridleif left the camp at night to reconnoiter; and, hearing an unusual kind of sound close to him as of brass being beaten, he stood still and looked up, and heard the following song of three swans, who were crying above him, ...after the birds had sung, a belt (*cingulum*) fell from on high, which showed writing to interpret the song." [Elton tr.]; In the night Fridlef had left the camp to reconnoitre when he caught an unusual sound of the air being beaten; stopping in his tracks and looking up, he heard this song from three swans crying above him. ...as the birds' voices ceased, a belt fell from the sky inscribed with letters, which interpreted the song," [Fisher tr.]

¹⁵⁹ Vildifer first appears in chapter 132, where he befriends Vidga. He is described as "the handsomest and most courteous of men", who wears "a thick gold ring around the arm." [Haymes tr.] In the following chapters, he slays a bear, sews himself into its skin, and, acting like the bear, slays King Osatrix "along with two of his giants, whom he had trusted for his protection," in order to free Vidga [ch. 144].

¹⁶⁰ Ch. 115: "The sign of his armor was the wild boar. This is called Villifer in German."

investigation is of the greatest interest for the restoration of the myths' epic connection. Previously the *Völundarkviða* with its hero has stood in the gallery of myths as an isolated torso with no trace of connection with the other myths and mythic sagas. Now it appears again, and as the investigation progresses it shall become increasingly evident, that the Völund-myth belongs to the central parts of the Germanic mythology's great epic and sends its ramifications through it in all directions.

In regard to Svipdag's saga, what is most evident from this is that the myths were not inclined to allow Völund's sword, concealed in the underworld, to come into the hands of a hero who was a stranger to the great artist and his plans. If Völund forged it with intent hostile to the gods, in order to avenge a wrong done him, or to elevate himself and his circle of kinsmen among the elves at the expense of the ruling gods, then he has not done so in vain. If Völund and his brothers are those Ivaldi sons who, after having given the gods [648] beautiful treasures, became offended by the judgment which placed Sindri's work, particularly Mjöllnir, higher than their own, then the myths have also given them redress for the inflicted insult. Mjöllnir is broken by the sword of victory wielded by Völund's nephew; Asgard trembles before the young elf, after he had received his uncle's incomparable weapon; its gate opens itself for him and other kinsmen of Völund, and the divine world's most beautiful woman becomes his wife.

109.

FREY FOSTERED BY ÖRVANDIL-EGIL AND VÖLUND. ÖRVANDIL'S EPITHET ISOLFUR. VÖLUND'S EPITHET AGGO.

The mythology has preserved for us several names of the coastal region by the Elivogar, where Örvandil-Egil and his kinsmen dwelt, while they still were the friends of the gods, and formed an outpost active in their service against the powers of frost. That this coast region constituted a part of Alfheim, and the most northern part of this mythic land, is already evident from the fact that Völund and his brothers are in *Völundarkviða* elf-princes, sons of a mythic "king." The empire of the elf-princes must be located to Alfheim for the same reason that we locate that of the Vanir powers to Vanaheim, and that of the Aesir to Asgard. The part of Alfheim here in question, where Örvandil-Egil's stronghold was situated, was in the mythology called *Ýdalir*, *Ýsetur* (*Grímnismál* 5; *Olaf Tryggvason's Saga*, ch. 21).¹⁶¹ It has already been suggested that Ullur, elevated to the dignity of an Asa-god, who is the son of Örvandil-Egil, and Svipdag's brother (see no. 102), has his halls, according to *Grímnismál*, built in Ýdalir. Divine beings who did not originally belong to Asgard, but were adopted in Odin's clan, and thus received native-rights within the bulwarks of the Asa-stronghold, nonetheless retained possession of the

¹⁶¹ *Lexicon Poeticum* (1860), s.v. *ýsetr*, defines *ýsetrs eldr* as a kenning for "gold," ["*ignis manús, aurum,*"] attributing it to a verse in *Olaf Tryggvason's Saga*, ch. 21. Carl Rikard Unger's 1868 edition of *Heimskringla eller Norges kongesagaer af Snorre Sturlasson* places the verse after the second sentence in that chapter, prefacing it with the statement: "Svá segir Hallarsteinn" (p. 140). In LP (1931) the same kenning is attributed to Hallfreðr Óttarson vandræðaskáld. The verse in question, sometimes considered the opening verse of the poem *Oláfsdrápa in fyrri*, reads: *Tolf var elds at aldri/ ýsetrs hati vetra, / hraustr þá er herskip glæsti/ Hörða vinr ór Görðum;/ hlóðu Hamðis klæðum /hjörva gnýs ok skýjum /hilmis menn sem hjölmum/ hlýrvigg, en mól stýri.*

land, realm, and halls, which are their *odal*¹⁶² and where they were reared. After he became a citizen of Asgard, Njörd continued to own and to reside occasionally in the Van-stronghold Noatun beyond the western ocean (see no. 20, no. 93). Skadi, as an Asynje, continues to inhabit her father Thjazi's halls in Thrymheim (*Grímnismál* 11). Vidar's grass- and brush-grown [649] realm is not a part of Asgard, but consists of the large plain on which, in Ragnarök, Odin is shall succumb in combat with Fenrir (*Grímnismál* 17; see no. 39). When Ull is said to have his halls in Ýdalir, this must be based on a similar reason, and Ýdalir must be the land where he was raised and which he inherited after his father, the great archer. When *Grímnismál* enumerates the homes of the gods, the series of them begins with Thrudheim, Thor's realm, and closest thereafter, and in connection with Alfheim, is mentioned Ýdalir, presumably because Thor's land and Örvandil-Egil's stood, as we have seen, in the closest mythic connection to one another.

¹⁶² A legal term, among early and medieval Germanic peoples, especially Scandinavians, designating the heritable land held by a family or kindred of freeborn tribesmen, restricting its transfer to members of the family or kindred. Survivals of the early *odal* estates exist in Orkney and Shetland, where it is called by the variant form *udal*.

*Land er heilagt,
er eg liggja sé
ásum og álfum nær;
en í Þrúðheimi
skal Þórr vera,
unz um rjúfast regin.*

The land is holy
that I see lying
near the Aesir and the elves;
but in Thrudheim
shall Thor remain
until the regin are ruined.

*Ýdalir heita,
þar er Ullur hefir
sér um görva sali;
Álfheim Frey
gáfu í árdaga
tívar að tannfjé.*

Ýdalir hight
where Ull has
made himself a hall;
Alfheim Frey
was given in early-days
by gods as a tooth-gift.

Ýdalir means the "dales of the bow" or "of the bows." Ýsetr is "the chalet of the bow" or "of the bows." That the first compound part in this name is *ýr*, "a bow," is demonstrated by the way in which the local name Ýsetur can be used in poetical paraphrases, where the bow-holding hand is called *ýsetur*. The names refer to the region's mythical rulers, the archer Ull and his father the archer Örvandil-Egil. The place has also been called *Geirvaðils setur*, *Geirvandils setur*, which is explained in that Örvandil's father bore the epithet Geirvandil (Saxo, Book 3, p. 76 [*Hist.* 135]). Hakon Jarl, the ruler of northern Norway, is called (*Fagrskinna*, 37, 4)¹⁶³ *Geirvaðils seturs Ullur*, "the Ull of Geirvandil's chalet,"¹⁶⁴ a paraphrase in which we rediscover [650] the mythological association of ideas between Ull and the chalet which was owned by his father Örvandil and his grandfather Geirvandil. The Ydales were described as rich in gold. *Ýseturs eldur* is a paraphrase for gold.¹⁶⁵ One may compare this with what Völund says (*Völundarkviða* 14) of the wealth of gold in his and his kinsmen's home. (See further, concerning the same passage, nos. 114 and 115.)

In connection with its mention of the Ydales, *Grímnismál* states that the gods gave Frey Alfheim as a tooth-gift. *Tannfjé*, "tooth-gift," was the name of a gift which was given (and in Iceland is still given) to a child when it cuts its first tooth. The tender Frey is thus appointed by the gods as king over Alfheim, and chief of the elf-princes there, among whom Völund and Örvandil-Egil, judging from the mythic events themselves, must have been the foremost and most famous. It is also consistent, as symbols of nature, that the god of growth and harvests receives the government of elves and primeval artists,

¹⁶³ The actual kenning here is *geirvaðills Ullr* meaning "warrior." Rydberg's source may have been *Lexicon Poeticum* (1860) where the expression *Ullr geirvaðils setrs* is defined as "*deus clipei, ut ante.*" The reference is to the 1847 edition *Fagrskinna, Kortfattat Norsk Konge-Saga*, by Peter Andreas Munch and Carl Rikard Unger, p. 37, verse 4, which appears as verse 73, page 87, of *Fagrskinna, A Catalogue of the Kings of Norway* by Alison Finlay (2004) where the phrase in question is translated "Best of all lords, the battle-bold Ullr of spears' causeway now in the seat is settled of the stalwart princes," noting that the kenning *geirvaðills Ullr* means "Ullr (god) of the spear-ford, god of the land of the spear (shield), warrior."

¹⁶⁴ Anderson translates the word as "chalet." Rydberg uses the word *säter*, which indicates an "outlying stock-farm," (also called a *fäbod*), no doubt for its similarity to the Old Norse *setur*, "seat, residence." *Lokasenna* 43 refers to Frey's realm as *sælikt setur*, the "blessed abode," which Ursula Dronke identifies with "Álfheim (*Grímnismál* 5)" [*Poetic Edda vol. II*, pp. 342, 367].

¹⁶⁵ According to Sveinbjörn Egilsson in *Lexicon Poeticum* (1860).

the personified crop-creating powers. Through this measure by the gods, Völund and Örvandil become vassals under Njörd and his son.

In two passages of his history Saxo relates historicized mythic facts, from which it is clear that Njörd appointed a foster-father for his son, or allowed him to grow up in a home under the care of two fosterers. In the one passage (Book 6, p. 150 [*Hist.* 272]) it is Fridlevus-Njörd who selects Avo the archer as his son's foster-father;¹⁶⁶ in the other passage (Book 5, p. 105) it is the tender Frotho, son of Fridlevus and future brother-in-law of Ericus-Svipdag, who receives Isulfus and Aggo as guardians.¹⁶⁷

So far as the archer Avo is concerned, we have already met him above (see no. 108) in combat by the side of Anundus-Völund against one Halfdan. He is a parallel figure to the archer Toko, who likewise fights by the side of Anundus-Völund against Halfdan, and, as already shown, he is identical with the archer Örvandil-Egil.

In regard to the name Aggo, it is borne by one of the leaders of the Longobard migration, brother of Ebbo-Ibor, in whom we have already discovered Örvandil-Egil.

[651] Concerning the name Ísólfr, in the Old Norse poetic language, it designates the bear (*Nafnapulur* 95, [*Pr. Edd.* I, 589, II, 484]). *Pidreks Saga af Bern* ch. 144 [*Wilkinasaga*] makes Ebbo (Wild-Ebur) appear in the guise of a bear when he is about to rescue Völund's son Vidga from the captivity into which he had fallen. In his shield Ebbo has images of a wild boar and of a bear.¹⁶⁸ As the wild boar refers to one of his names (Ebur), the image of the bear should refer to another (Ísólfr).

Under such circumstances I consider it beyond doubt that Örvandil-Egil and one of his brothers, the one designated by the name Aggo (Ajo), be this Völund or Slagfin, in the myths were entrusted with the duty of fostering the young Frey. Örvandil also assumes, as vassal under Njörd, the place which foster-fathers held in relation to the their proteges' fathers by blood.

Frey, accordingly, grows up in Alfheim, and in the Ydales is fostered by elf-princes belonging to a circle of brothers, among whom one, namely Völund, is the myths' most famous artist, whose wonderful work, the sword of victory, in time proves to be superior to Sindri's finest smithery, the hammer Mjöllnir. And because among Örvandil-Egil's brothers, it is always Völund whom Saxo mentions by his side (see no. 108), it is most probably Völund, not Slagfin, who also appears here under the name Aggo along

¹⁶⁶ The foster parents here are Bjorn and Ano, rather than Avo: "When the year had come to an end, he took great pains to reconcile Biorn and Ane, who had often challenged and fought one another, and made them exchange their hatred for friendship; and even entrusted to them his three-year-old son, Olaf, to rear" [Elton tr.]; "After a year had tolled by he took utmost pains to reconcile Biorn and Ani, who had frequently met in combat, and made them exchange hatred for a mutual regard; to these two as well he entrusted his three-year-old son, Olaf, to be reared." [Fisher tr.]

¹⁶⁷ "For one and all paid such respect to the name and memory of Fridleif, that the royalty was bestowed on his son despite his tender years. So a selection was made, and the brothers Westmar and Koll were summoned to the charge of bringing up the king. Isulf, also, and Agg and eight other men of mark were not only entrusted with the guardianship of the king, but also granted authority to administer the realm under him." [Elton tr.]; "After holding an assembly they also decided that the king's minority should be supervised by guardians in case the monarchy should collapse owing to their ruler's tender age. A choice was made and the brothers Vestmar and Koll were summoned to take charge of the royal upbringing. Besides these, Isulf and Aggi together with eight other eminent men were entrusted with the protection of the king and given authority to govern the realm under him." [Fisher tr.]

¹⁶⁸ Ch. 181: "Vildifer the bold marked his armor in this way; on his shield was painted a boar and a bear in dark red. The shield was colored yellow and the outer border was dark red."

with the great archer, and, like him, is entrusted with the care of Frey. It follows from this that Svipdag and Ull were Frey's foster-brothers. Thus it is the duty of a foster-brother they perform when they go to rescue Frey from the power of giants, and when they, later, in the war between the Aesir and Vanir, take Frey's side. This also throws additional light on Svipdag-Skirnir's words to Frey in *Skirnismál* 5:

*Því að ungir saman
vorum á árdaga,
vel mættum tveir trúast.*

"For young together
we were in early days,
we two might well trust one another."