

Undersökningar i Germanisk Mytologi, första delen.  
**Investigations into Germanic Mythology, Volume 1**  
by **Viktor Rydberg**

**IV.**  
**THE MYTH IN REGARD TO THE LOWER WORLD.**

44.  
MIDDLE AGE SAGAS WITH ROOTS IN THE MYTH CONCERNING  
THE LOWER WORLD. ERIK VIDFORL'S SAGA.

Among the Scandinavians far down in Christian times, the idea prevailed that their heathen ancestors had believed in the existence of a place of joy, from which sorrow, pain, blemishes, age, sickness, and death were excluded. This place of joy was called *Ódainsakur*, the-acre-of-the-not-dead, *Jörð lifandi manna*, the earth of living men.<sup>1</sup> It was not situated in heaven but below, either on the surface of the earth or in the lower world, but it was separated from the lands inhabited by men in such a way that it was exceeding perilous, although not impossible, to come there.

A saga from the fourteenth century<sup>2</sup> incorporated in *Flateyjarbók*, and with a few textual modifications in *Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda*, tells the following:

Erik, the son of a petty Norse king, one Christmas Eve, made the vow to seek out Odainsakur, and the fame of it spread over all Norway. In company with a Danish prince, who also was named Erik, he proceeded first to Mikligard (Constantinople), where the king engaged the young men in his service, and was greatly benefited by their warlike skill. One day, the king talked with the Norwegian Erik about religion, and the result was that the latter surrendered the faith of his ancestors and accepted baptism. He told his royal teacher of the vow he had taken to find Odainsakur, - "*frá honum heyrði vér sagt á voru landi*," - and asked him if he knew where it was situated. The king believed that Odainsakur was identical with Paradise, and said it lies in the East beyond the farthest boundaries of India, but that no one was able to get there because it was enclosed by a wall of fire, which reaches up to heaven itself. Still Erik was bound by his vow, and with his Danish namesake he set out on his journey, after the king had instructed them as well as he was able in regard to the way, and had given them a letter of recommendation to the authorities and princes through whose territories they had to pass. They travelled through Syria and the immense and wonderful India, and came to a dark country where the stars are seen all day long. After having traversed its deep forests, they saw a river when it began to grow light, over which there was a vaulted stone bridge. On the other side of the river, there was a plain from which came sweet fragrance. Erik conjectured that the river was the one called Pison by the king in Mikligard, and which has its source in Paradise. On the stone bridge lay a dragon with his mouth agape. The Danish prince advised that they return, for he considered it impossible to conquer the dragon or to pass it. But the Norwegian Erik seized one of his men with one hand,

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<sup>1</sup> *er heiðnir menn kalla Ódainsakr, en kristnir menn jörð lifandi manna eða Paradísunum*, "that the heathen people call Odainsakur, but Christian people the land of living men or Paradise" *Eireks saga víðförla*.

<sup>2</sup> *Eireks saga Víðförla*

and rushed with his sword in the other against the dragon. They were seen to vanish between the jaws of the monster. With the other companions, the Danish prince then returned by the same route as he had come, and after many years he got back to his native land.

When Erik and his countryman had been swallowed by the dragon, they thought themselves enveloped in smoke; but it dissipated and they were unharmed, and saw before them a great plain, sunlit and covered with flowers. There flowed rivers of honey. The air was still, but just above the ground were perceived breezes that conveyed the fragrance of the flowers. It is never dark in this country, and objects cast no shadow. Both the adventurers went far into the country in order to find, if possible, inhabited parts. But the country seemed to be uninhabited. Nevertheless, they saw a tower in the distance. They continued to travel in that direction, and on coming nearer, they found that the tower was suspended in the air, without foundation or pillars. A ladder led up to it. Within the tower there was a room, carpeted with velvet, and there stood a beautiful table with delicious food in silver dishes and wine in golden goblets. There were also splendid beds. Both the men were now convinced that they had come to Odainsakur, and they thanked God that they had reached their destination. They refreshed themselves and laid themselves to sleep. While Erik slept, a beautiful boy, who called him by name, came to him and said that he was one of the angels who guarded the gates of Paradise, and also Erik's guardian angel, who had been at his side when he vowed to go in search of Odainsakur. He asked whether Erik wished to remain where he now was or to return home. Erik wished to return to report what he had seen. The angel informed him that Odainsakur, or *jörð lifandi manna*, where he now was, was not the same place as Paradise, for to the latter only spirits could come, and the land of the spirits, Paradise, was so glorious that, in comparison, Odainsakur seemed like a desert. Still, these two regions are on each other's borders, and the river which Erik had seen has its source in Paradise. The angel permitted the two travellers to remain in Odainsakur for six days to rest themselves. Then they returned by way of Mikligard to Norway, and there Erik was called *víðförli*, the far-travelled.

In regard to Erik's genealogy, the saga (*Hálfðanar Saga Eysteinnssonar*) states that his father's name was *Þrándr*, that his aunt (mother's sister) was a certain *Svanhvít* [Swan-white], and that he belonged to the race of Thjazi's daughter Skadi.<sup>3</sup> Further on in the domain of the real

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<sup>3</sup> This saga clearly identifies Eirekr (Erik) as the one who visited Odainsakur, however Skadi is not mentioned. Still, they may be related as *Ynglingasaga* 8 informs us that *Njörðr fékk konu þeirrar er Skaði hét. Hún vildi ekki við hann samfarar og giftist síðan Óðni. Attu þau marga sonu. Einn þeirra hét Sæmingur. ...Til Sæmings taldi Hákon jarl hinn ríki langfeðgakyn sitt.* "Njorth married a woman who was called Skathi. She would not have intercourse with him, and later married Othin. They had many sons. One of them was called Sæming. ...Earl Hákon, the Mighty reckoned his pedigree from Sæming." [L. Hollander tr.]; Two names in this genealogy also appear in the genealogy of the mythological Eirekr (Svipdag), although in different positions. In the mythology, Eirekr (Svipdag) is the son of Völund's brother, Egil. Svanhvít is one of the swan-maidens in *Völundarkvida*, and a half-sister of Völund (see no. 110). In this same genealogy, the name of Eirekr's grandmother (his mother's mother) is Nauma, which is an epithet of Idunn according to *Forspallsljod (Hrafna Galdur Odins)* 8. There Idunn is referred to as Nauma in most manuscripts of the poem, or Nanna in others. The verse reads:

<i>Sjá sigtívar</i>	The divinities see
<i>syrja Nauma (or Nönnu)</i>	Nauma grieving
<i>víggjar að véum;</i>	in the wolf's home;
<i>vargsbelg seldu</i>	given a wolfskin
<i>lét í færast,</i>	she clad herself therein,
<i>lyndi breytti,</i>	changed disposition,
<i>litum skipti.</i>	shifted her shape.

myth, we shall discover an Erik who belongs to Thjazi's family, and whose mother is a swan-maid (goddess of growth). This latter Erik also succeeded in seeing Odainsakur (see Nos. 102, 103).

45.

MIDDLE AGE SAGAS (continued). ICELANDIC SOURCES IN REGARD TO  
GUDMUND, KING ON THE GLITTERING PLAINS.

In the saga of Hervör,<sup>4</sup> Odainsakur is mentioned, and there without any visible addition of Christian elements. Gudmund (*Goðmundr*) was the name of a king in Jötunheim. His home was called *Grund*, but the district in which it was situated was called the Glittering Plains (*Glæsisvellir*). He was wise and mighty, and in a heathen sense pious, and he and his men became so old that they lived many generations. Therefore, the story continues, the heathens believed that Odainsakur was situated in his country. "That place (Odainsakur) is so healthy for everyone who comes there that sickness and age depart, and no one ever dies there."

According to the saga-author, Jötunheim is situated north from Halogaland, along the shores of Gandvik. The wise and mighty Gudmund died after he had lived half a thousand years. After his death, the people worshipped him as a god, and offered sacrifices to him.

The same Gudmund is mentioned in *Bósa saga ok Herrauðs*, as a ruler of the Glittering Plains, who was very skilful in the magic arts. Here, the Glittering Plains are said to be situated near Bjarmaland, just as in *Þorsteins þáttur Bæjarmagns*, in which king Gudmund's kingdom, Glittering Plains, is a country tributary to Jötunheim, whose ruler is *Geirröðr* (Geirrod).

In the history of Olaf Tryggvason, as it is given in *Flateyjarbók*,<sup>5</sup> the following episode is incorporated. The Northman *Helgi* Thorisson was sent on a commercial journey to the far North on the coast of Finmark, but he got lost in a great forest. There he met twelve red-clad young maidens on horseback, and the horses' trappings shone like gold. The chief one of the maidens was Ingibjörg, the daughter of Gudmund on the Glittering Plains. The young maidens raised a splendid tent and set a table with dishes of silver and gold. Helgi was invited to remain, and he stayed three days with Ingibjörg. Then Gudmund's daughters got ready to leave; but before they parted Helgi received two chests full of gold and silver from Ingibjörg. With these he returned to his father, but mentioned to nobody how he had obtained them. The next Yule night there came a great storm, during which two men carried Helgi away, no one knew where. His sorrowing father reported this to Olaf Tryggvason. The year passed. Then it happened at Yule that Helgi came in to the king in the hall, and with him two strangers, who handed Olaf two gold-plated horns. They said they were gifts from Gudmund on the Glittering Plains. Olaf filled the horns with good drink and handed them to the messengers. Meanwhile, he had commanded the bishop who was present to bless the drink. The result was that the heathen beings, who were Gudmund's

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In his *Lexicon Poeticum* (pg. 423), Sveinbjörn Egilsson examines the name Nauma in detail. He defines the word as giantess, yet notes that it is also used in kennings as an equivalent for "woman." Since it also appears in the *Nafnapulur* among "*kvenna heiti ókennd*," Egilsson concludes that Nauma must originally have been the name of a "now unknown" goddess. In light of Rydberg's investigations, it appears that Nauma was Idunn's name when she lived with her brothers in the Wolfdales.

<sup>4</sup> *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*, referred to hereafter as *Hervör's Saga*.

<sup>5</sup> This geneology occurs in *Helga þáttur Þórissonar*, referred to hereafter as *Helgi Thorisson's saga*. This saga as well as *Bósa saga ok Herrauðs* and *Þorsteins þáttur Bæjarmagns* (all three found in the *Fornaldarsagas*) appear in English translation in *Seven Viking Romances*, tr. by Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards, Penquin Books, 1985. Also see: <http://www.germanicmythology.com/FORNALDARSAGAS/FORNALDARSOGURMAIN.html>

messengers, cast the horns away, and at the same time there was great noise and confusion in the hall. The fire was extinguished, and Gudmund's men disappeared with Helgi, after having slain three of King Olaf's men. Another year passed. Then there came to the king two men, who brought Helgi with them, and disappeared again. At that time, Helgi was blind. The king asked him many questions, and Helgi explained that he had spent most happy days at Gudmund's; but King Olaf's prayers had at length made it difficult for Gudmund and his daughter to retain him, and before his departure Ingibjörg picked his eyes out, in order that Norway's daughters should not fall in love with them. With his gifts Gudmund had intended to deceive King Olaf; but upon the whole Helgi had nothing but good to report about this heathen.

46.

MIDDLE AGE SAGAS (continued). SAXO CONCERNING  
THIS SAME GUDMUND, RULER OF THE LOWER WORLD.

Saxo, the Danish historian, also knows Gudmund. He relates (*Hist.*, Book 8)<sup>6</sup> that King Gorm had resolved to find a mysterious country in regard to which there were many reports in the North. Incredible treasures were preserved in that land. A certain Geruthus (Geirrod), known in the traditions, dwelt there, but the way there was full of dangers and well-nigh inaccessible for mortals. They who had any knowledge of the situation of the land insisted that it was necessary to sail across the ocean surrounding the earth, leave sun and stars behind, and make a journey *sub Chao*,<sup>7</sup> before reaching the land which is deprived of the light of day, and over whose mountains and valleys darkness broods. First there was a perilous voyage to be made, and then a journey in the lower world. With the experienced sailor Thorkillus as his guide, King Gorm left Denmark with three ships and a numerous company, sailed past Halogaland, and, after strange adventures on his way, came to Bjarmaland, situated beyond the known land of the same name, and anchored near its coast. In this *Bjarmia ulterior*, it is always cold; to its snow-clad fields there comes no summer warmth, through its deep wild forests flow rapid foaming rivers which well forth from the rocky recesses, and the woods are full of wild beasts, the like of which are unknown elsewhere. The inhabitants are monsters with whom it is dangerous for strangers to enter into conversation, for from unconsidered words they get power to do harm. Therefore Thorkillus was to do the talking alone for all his companions. He had chosen the place for anchoring in such a manner that they had the shortest journey from there to Geruthus. In the evening twilight, the travellers saw a man of unusual size coming to meet them, and to their joy he greeted them by name. Thorkillus informed them that they should regard the coming of this man as a good omen, for he was Geruthus' brother Guthmundus (Gudmund), a friendly person and the most faithful protector in peril. When Thorkillus had explained the perpetual silence of his companions by saying that they were too bashful to enter into conversation with one whose language they did not understand, Guthmundus invited them to be his guests and led them by paths down along a river. Then they came to a place where a golden bridge was built across the river. The Danes felt a desire to cross the bridge and visit the land on the other side, but Guthmundus warned them that, with the bed of this stream, Nature has drawn a line between the human and superhuman and mysterious, and that the territory on the other side was proclaimed

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<sup>6</sup> Hereafter, this story will be referred to as *Gorm's saga*.

<sup>7</sup> "into chaos," Elton translation. "beneath the realm of night" Fisher translation.

by a sacred order unlawful for the feet of mortals.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, they continued the march on that side of the river on which they had gone before, and so came to the mysterious dwelling of Guthmundus, where a feast was spread before them, at which twelve of his sons, all of noble appearance, and as many daughters, most fair of face, waited upon them.

But the feast was a peculiar one. The Danes heeded the advice of Thorkillus not to come into too close contact with their strange table-companions or the servants, and instead of tasting the courses of food and drink presented, they ate and drank of the provisions they had brought with them from home. They did this because Thorkillus knew that mortals who accept the courtesies offered them here lose all memory of the past and remain forever among "these non-human and dismal beings." Danger threatened even those who were weak in reference to the enticing beauty of Guthmundus' daughters. He offered King Gorm a daughter in marriage. Gorm himself was prudent enough to decline the honor; but four of his men could not resist the temptation, and had to pay the penalty with the loss of their memory and with enfeebled minds.

One more trial awaited them. Guthmundus mentioned to the king that he had a villa, and invited Gorm to accompany him there and taste of the delicious fruits. Thorkillus, who had a talent for inventing excuses, now found one for the king's lips. The host, though displeased with the reserve of the guests, still continued to show them friendliness, and when they expressed their desire to see the domain of Geruthus, he accompanied them all to the river, conducted them across it, and promised to wait there until they returned.

The land which they now entered was the home of terrors. They had not gone very far before they discovered before them a city, which seemed to be built of dark mists. Human heads were raised on stakes which surrounded the bulwarks of the city. Wild dogs, whose rage Thorkillus, however, knew how to calm, kept watch outside of the gates. The gates were located high up in the bulwark, and it was necessary to climb up on ladders in order to get to them. Within the city was a crowd of beings horrible to look at and to hear, and filth and rottenness and a terrible stench were everywhere. Further in was a sort of mountain-fortress. When they had reached its entrance, the travellers were overpowered by its awful aspect, but Thorkillus inspired them with courage. At the same time, he warned them most strictly not to touch any of the treasures that might entice their eyes. All that sight and soul can conceive as terrible and loathsome was gathered within this rocky citadel. The door-frames were covered with the soot of centuries, the walls were draped with filth, the roofs were composed of sharp stings, the floors were made of serpents encased in foulness. At the thresholds, crowds of monsters acted as doorkeepers and were very noisy. On iron benches, surrounded by a hurdle-work of lead, there lay giant monsters which looked like lifeless images. Higher up in a rocky niche sat the aged Geruthus, with his body pierced and nailed to the rock, and there also lay three women with their backs broken. Thorkillus explained that it was this Geruthus whom the god Thor had pierced with a red-hot iron; the women had also received their punishment from the same god.

When the travellers left these places of punishment they came to a place where they saw cisterns of mead (*dolia*) in great numbers. These were plated with seven sheets of gold, and above them hung objects of silver, round in form, from which shot numerous braids down into the cisterns. Near by was found a gold-plated tooth of some strange animal, and near it, again, there lay an immense horn decorated with pictures and flashing with precious stones, and also an arm-ring of great size. Despite the warnings, three of Gorm's men laid greedy hands on these

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<sup>8</sup> *Cujus transeundi cupidos revocavit, docens, eo alveo humana a monstrosis rerum secrevisse naturam, nec mortalibus ultra fas esse vestigiis.* "By this channel nature had divided the world of men from the world of monsters, and that no mortal track might go further." Elton translation.

works of art. But the greed got its reward. The arm-ring changed into a venomous serpent; the horn into a dragon, which killed their robbers; the tooth became a sword, which pierced the heart of him who bore it. The others who witnessed the fate of their comrades expected that they too, although innocent, should meet with some misfortune. But their anxiety seemed unfounded, and when they looked about them again they found the entrance to another treasury, which contained a wealth of immense weapons, among which was kept a royal mantle, together with a splendid headdress and a belt, the finest work of art. Thorkillus himself could not govern his greed when he saw these robes. He took hold of the mantle, and thus gave the signal to the others to plunder. But then the building shook in its foundations; the voices of shrieking women were heard, who asked if these robbers were to be tolerated longer; beings which until now had been lying as if half-dead or lifeless started up and joined other spectres who attacked the Danes. The latter would all have lost their lives had their retreat not been covered by two excellent archers whom Gorm had with him. But of the men, nearly three hundred in number, with whom the king had ventured into this part of the lower world, there remained only twenty when they finally reached the river, where Guthmundus, true to his promise, was waiting for them, and carried them in a boat to his own domain. Here he proposed to them that they should remain, but as he could not persuade them, he gave them presents and let them return to their ships in safety the same way as they had come.

47.

MIDDLE AGE SAGAS (continued). FJALLERUS AND HADINGUS (HADDING)  
IN THE LOWER WORLD.

According to Saxo, two other Danish princes have been permitted to see a subterranean world, or Odainsakur. Saxo calls the one Fjallerus, and makes him a subregent in Scania. The question who this Fjallerus was in the mythology is discussed in another part of this work (see No. 92). According to Saxo, he was banished from the realm by King Amlethus, the son of Horvendillus, and so retired to Undensakre (Odainsakur), "a place which is unknown to our people" (*Hist.*, Book 4, 100).

The other of these two is King *Hadingus* (Book 1)<sup>9</sup>, the above-mentioned Hadding, son of Halfdan. One winter's day while Hadding sat at the hearth, there rose out of the ground the form of a woman, who had her lap full of cowbanes [hemlock], and showed them as if she was about to ask whether the king would like to see that part of the world where, in the midst of winter, so fresh flowers could bloom. Hadding desired this. Then she wrapped him in her mantle and carried him away down into the lower world. "The gods of the lower world," says Saxo, "must have determined that he should be transferred living to those places, which are not to be sought until after death." In the beginning, the journey was through a territory wrapped in darkness, fogs, and mists. Then Hadding perceived that they proceeded along a path "which is daily trod by the feet of walkers."<sup>10</sup> The path led to a river, in whose rapids spears and other weapons were tossed about, and over which there was a bridge. Before reaching this river, from the path he travelled, Hadding had seen a region in which "a few" or "certain" (*quidam*), but very noble beings (*proceres*) were walking, dressed in beautiful frocks and purple mantles. From

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<sup>9</sup> This story will hereafter be referred to as *Hadding's saga*.

<sup>10</sup> "a path that was worn away by long thoroughfaring," Elton translation; "a path worn away by long ages of travellers," Fisher translation.

there, the woman brought him to a plain which glittered as in sunshine<sup>11</sup> (*loca aprica*, translation of "the Glittering Plains"), and there grew the plants which she had shown him. This was one side of the river. On the other side, there was bustle and activity. There Hadding saw two armies engaged in battle. They were, his fair guide explained to him, the souls of warriors who had fallen in battle, and now imitated the sword-games they had played on earth. Continuing their journey, they reached a place surrounded by a wall, which was difficult to pass through or to surmount. Nor did the woman make any effort to enter there, either alone or with him: "It would not have been possible for the smallest or thinnest physical being." They therefore returned the way they had come. But before this, and while they stood near the wall, the woman demonstrated to Hadding by an experiment that the walled place had a strange nature. She jerked the head off a cock which she had taken with her, and threw it over the wall, but the head came back to the neck of the cock, and with a distinct crow it announced "that it had regained its life and breath."

48.

MIDDLE AGE SAGAS (continued).  
A FRISIAN SAGA IN ADAM OF BREMEN.

So far as the age of their recording in writing is concerned, the series of traditions narrated above in regard to Odainsakur, the Glittering Plains and their ruler Gudmund, and also in regard to the neighboring domains as habitations of the souls of the dead, extends through a period of considerable length. The latest cannot be referred to an earlier date than the fourteenth century; the oldest were put in writing toward the close of the twelfth. Saxo began working on his history between the years 1179 and 1186. Thus these literary evidences span about two centuries, and stop near the threshold of heathendom. The generation which Saxo's father belonged to witnessed the crusade which Sigurd the Crusader made in Eastern Smaland, in whose forests the Asa-doctrine until that time seems to have prevailed, and the Odinic religion is believed to have flourished in the more remote parts of Sweden even in Saxo's own time.

We must still add to this series of documents one which is to carry it back another century, and even more. This document is a saga told by Adam of Bremen<sup>12</sup> in *De situ Daniae*. Adam, or, perhaps, before him, his authority Adalbert (appointed archbishop in the year 1043), has turned the saga into history, and made it as credible as possible by excluding all distinctly mythical elements. And as it, doubtless for this reason, neither mentions a place which can be compared with Odainsakur or with the Glittering Plains, I have omitted it among the literary evidences above quoted. Nevertheless, it reminds us in its main features of Saxo's account of Gorm's journey of discovery, and its relation both to it and to the still older myth shall be shown later (see No. 94). In the form in which Adam heard the saga, its point of departure has been located in Friesland, not in Denmark. Frisian noblemen make a voyage past Norway up to the

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<sup>11</sup> "a sunny region," both the Elton and Fisher translations.

<sup>12</sup> Adam of Bremen; Adam Bremensis (c. 1044 - 1080) A German historian and geographer, author of "*Gesta Hammaburgensis Ecclesiae Pontificum*" consisting of four books. The fourth book is a geographical treatise titled "*Descriptio insularum Aquilonis*", describing Northern Europe and the islands in the Northern seas, many of which had only recently been explored. Adam's information is largely drawn from his conversations with the Danish king Svend Estridson. Apparently the last book is also known as "*Liber de Situ Daniae*," and is notable for a brief description of the island of Vinland (America) found there (IV, 38). Adam discusses heathenism in Sweden, and remains the only source of his time.

farthest limits of the Arctic Ocean, get into a darkness which the eyes scarcely can penetrate, are exposed to a maelstrom which threatens to drag them down *ad Chaos*, but finally come quite unexpectedly out of darkness and cold to an island which, surrounded as by a wall of high rocks, contains subterranean caverns, wherein giants lie concealed. At the entrances of the underground dwellings lay a great number of tubs and vessels of gold and other metals which "to mortals seem rare and valuable." As much as the adventurers could carry of these treasures, they took with them and hastened to their ships. But the giants, represented by great dogs, rushed after them. One of the Frisians was overtaken and torn into pieces before the eyes of the others. The others succeeded, thanks to our Lord and to Saint Willehad, in getting safely on board their ships.

49.

ANALYSIS OF THE SAGAS MENTIONED IN NOS. 44-48.

If we consider the position of the authors or recorders of these sagas in relation to the views they present in regard to Odainsakur and the Glittering Plains, then we find that they themselves, with or without reason, believe that these views are from a heathen time and of heathen origin. The saga of Erik Vidforli states that its hero had heard reports about Odainsakur, in his own native land, and in his heathen environment. The Mikligard king who instructs the prince in the doctrines of Christianity knows, on the other hand, nothing of such a country. He simply conjectures that the Odainsakur of the heathens must be the same as the Paradise of the Christians, and the saga later makes this conjecture turn out to be incorrect.

The author of Hervör's saga mentions Odainsakur as a heathen belief, and tries to give reasons why it was believed in heathen times that Odainsakur was situated within the limits of Gudmund's kingdom, the Glittering Plains. The reason is: "Gudmund and his men became so old that they lived through several generations (Gudmund lived five hundred years), and therefore the heathens believed that Odainsakur was situated in his domain."

The man who compiled the legend about Helgi Thorisson connects it with the history of King Olaf Tryggvason, and pits this first king of Norway, who labored for the introduction of Christianity, as a representative of the new and true doctrine against King Gudmund of the Glittering Plains as the representative of the heathen doctrine. The author would not have done this if he had not believed that the ruler of the Glittering Plains had his ancestors in heathendom.

The saga of Thorsteinn Bæjarmagn puts Gudmund and the Glittering Plains in a tributary relation to Jotunheim and to Geirrod, the giant, well known in the mythology.

Saxo makes Gudmund Geirrod's (Geruthus') brother, and he believes he is discussing ancient traditions when he relates Gorm's journey of discovery and Hadding's journey to Jotunheim. Saxo refers Gorm's reign to the period immediately following the reign of the mythical King Snö (Snow) and the emigration of the Longobardians. According to Saxo, Hadding's descent to the lower world occurred in an antiquity many centuries before King Snow. In Saxo, Hadding is one of the first kings of Denmark, the grandson of Skjold, progenitor of the Skjoldungs.

The saga of Erik Vidforli makes the way to Odainsakur pass through Syria, India, and an unknown land which wants the light of the sun, and where the stars are visible all day long. On the other side of Odainsakur, and bordering on it, lies the land of the happy spirits, Paradise.



That these last ideas have been influenced by Christianity would seem to be sufficiently clear. Nor do we find a trace of Syria, India, and Paradise as soon as we leave this saga and pass to the others, in the chain of which it forms one of the later links. All the rest agree in transferring to the uttermost North the land which must be reached before the journey can be continued to the Glittering Plains and Odainsakur. Hervör's saga says that the Glittering Plains and Odainsakur are situated north of Halogaland, in Jotunheim; Bosi's saga states that they are situated in the vicinity of Bjarmaland. The saga of Thorsteinn Bæjarmagn says that they are a kingdom subject to Geirrod in Jotunheim. Gorm's saga in Saxo says it is necessary to sail past Halogaland north to a *Bjarmia ulterior* in order to get to the kingdoms of Gudmund and Geirrod. The saga of Helgi Thorisson makes its hero meet the daughters of Gudmund, the ruler of the Glittering Plains, after a voyage to Finmarken. Hadding's saga in Saxo makes the Danish king pay a visit to the unknown but wintry cold land of the "Nitherians," when he is invited to make a journey to the lower world. Thus the older and common view was that he who made the attempt to visit the Glittering Plains and Odainsakur must first penetrate the regions of the uttermost North, known only by hearsay.

Those of the sagas which give us more definite local descriptions in addition to this geographical information all agree that the region which forms, as it were, a foreground to the Glittering Plains and Odainsakur is a land over which the darkness of night broods. As just indicated, Erik Vidforli's saga claims that the stars there are visible all day long. Gorm's saga in Saxo makes the Danish adventurers leave sun and stars behind to continue the journey *sub Chao*. Darkness, fogs, and mists envelop Hadding before he gets sight of the splendidly-clad *proceres* who dwell down there, and the shining meadows whose flowers are never visited by winter. The Frisian saga in Adam of Bremen also speaks of a gloom which must be penetrated before one reaches the land where rich giants dwell in subterranean caverns.

Through this darkness one comes, according to the saga of Erik Vidforli, to a plain full of flowers, delicious fragrances, rivers of honey (a Biblical idea, but see Nos. 89, 123), and perpetual light. A river separates this plain from the land of the spirits.

Through the same darkness, according to Gorm's saga, one comes to Gudmund's Glittering Plains, where there is a delightful garden<sup>13</sup> bearing delicious fruits, while eternal cold and winter reign in that Bjarmaland from where the Glittering Plains can be reached. A river separates the Glittering Plains from two or more other domains, of which at least one is the home of departed souls. There is a bridge of gold across the river to another region, "which separates that which is mortal from the superhuman," and on whose soil a mortal being must not set his foot. Further on one can pass in a boat across the river to a land which is the place of punishment for the damned and a resort of ghosts.

According to Hadding's saga, one comes through the same darkness to a subterranean land where flowers grow in spite of the winter which reigns on the surface of the earth. The land of flowers is separated from the Elysian fields of those fallen in battle by a river which hurls about spears and other weapons in its eddies.

These statements from different sources agree with each other in their main features. They agree that the lower world is separated into two primary divisions by a river, and that departed souls are found only on the farther side of the river.

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<sup>13</sup> Here the Swedish word is *lustgård*. Anderson translated it as "pleasure-farm." The word itself means paradise, and occurs in the phrase *Edens lustgård*, the Garden of Eden.

The other, more near, division of the underworld thus has another purpose than that of receiving the happy or damned souls of the dead. According to Gorm's saga, the giant Gudmund dwells there, with his sons and daughters. The Glittering Plains are also there, since these, according to Hervör's, Bosi's, Thorsteinn Bæjarmagn's, and Helgi Thorisson's sagas, are ruled by Gudmund.

Some of the accounts cited say that the Glittering Plains are situated in Jotunheim. This statement does not contradict the fact that they are situated in the lower world. The myths mention two Jotunheims, and thus the Eddas employ the plural form, *Jötunheimar*. One of the Jotunheims is located on the surface of the earth in the far North and East, separated from the Midgard inhabited by man by the uttermost sea or the *Élivágar* (*Gylfaginning* 8, cp. *Vafþrúdnismál* 16). The other Jotunheim is subterranean. According to *Grímnismál* 31, one of the roots of the world-tree extends down "to the frost-giants." Urd and her sisters, who guard one of the fountains of Yggdrasil's roots, are giantesses. Mimir, who guards another fountain in the lower world, is called a giant. That part of the world which is inhabited by the goddesses of fate and by Mimir is thus inhabited by giants, and is a subterranean Jotunheim. Both these Jotunheims are connected with each other. From the upper, there is a path leading to the lower. Therefore, those traditions recorded in a Christian age, which we are discussing here, have referred to the Arctic Ocean and the uttermost North as the route for those who have the desire and courage to visit the giants of the lower world.

In Hadding's saga, when it is said that he saw the shades of heroes fallen by the sword arrayed in line of battle on the other side of the subterranean river and contending with each other, then this is no contradiction of the myth, according to which the heroes chosen on the battle-field come to Asgard and play their warlike games on the plains of the world of the gods.

*Völuspá* 24 relates that when the first "folk"-war broke out in the world, the citadel of Odin and his clan was stormed by the Vanir, who broke through its bulwark and captured Asgard. In harmony with this, Saxo (Book 1) relates that at the time when King Hadding reigned Odin was banished from his power and lived for some time in exile (see Nos. 36-41).

It is evident that no great battles can have been fought, and that there could not have been any great number of sword-fallen men, before the first great "folk"-war broke out in the world. Otherwise, this war would not have been the first. Thus, before this war, Valhall has not had those hosts of einherjar who afterwards sit in Valfather's hall. But as Odin, after the breaking out of this war, is banished from Valhall and Asgard, and does not return before peace is made between the Aesir and Vanir, then none of the einherjar chosen by him could be received in Valhall *during* the war. Therefore, it follows that the heroes fallen in this war, though chosen by Odin, must have been referred to some other place than Asgard (excepting, of course, all those chosen by the Vanir, *in case* they chose einherjar, which is probable, for the reason that the Vanadís Freyja gets, after the reconciliation with Odin, the right to divide with him the choice of the slain). This other place can nowhere else be so appropriately looked for as in the lower world, which we know was destined to receive the souls of the dead. And as Hadding, who, according to Saxo, descended to the lower world, is, according to Saxo, the same Hadding during whose reign Odin was banished from Asgard, then it follows that the statement of the saga, making him see in the lower world those warlike games which otherwise are practiced on Asgard's plains, far from contradicting the myth, on the contrary is a consequence of the connection of the mythical events.

The river which is mentioned in Erik Vidforli's, Gorm's, and Hadding's sagas has its prototype in the mythic records. When Hermod rides to the lower world on Sleipnir (*Gylfaginning* 49), he first journeys through a dark country (compare above) and then comes to the river Gjöll, over which there is the golden bridge called the Gjöll-bridge [*Gjallarbrú*]. On the other side of Gjöll is the Hel-gate [*Helgrindur*], which leads to the realm of the dead. In Gorm's saga, the bridge across the river is also of gold, and mortals are forbidden to cross to the other side.

A subterranean river hurling weapons in its eddies is mentioned in *Völuspá* 36. In Hadding's saga we also read of a weapon-hurling river which forms the boundary of the Elyseum of those slain by the sword.

In *Vegtamskviða*<sup>14</sup> 2-3 is mentioned an underground dog, bloody about the breast, coming from Niflhel, the proper place of punishment. In Gorm's saga the bulwark around the city of the damned is guarded by great dogs. The word *nifl* (the German *Nebel*), which forms one part of the word Niflhel, means mist, fog. In Gorm's saga, the city in question is most like a cloud of vapor (*vaporanti maxime nubi simile*).<sup>15</sup>

Saxo's description of that house of torture, which is found within the city, is not unlike *Völuspá*'s description of that dwelling of torture on the *Náströnds* ["corpse-shores"]. In Saxo, the floor of the house consists of serpents wattled together, and the roof of sharp stings. In *Völuspá*, the hall is made of serpents braided together, whose heads from above spit venom down on those dwelling there. Saxo speaks of soot a century old on the door frames; *Völuspá* of *ljórar*, air- and smoke-openings in the roof (see further Nos. 77 and 78).

Saxo himself points out that the Geruthus (*Geirröðr*) mentioned by him, and his famous daughters, belong to the myth about the Asa-god Thor. That Geirroð after his death is transferred to the lower world is no contradiction to the heathen belief, according to which beautiful or terrible habitations await the dead, not only of men but also of other beings. Compare *Gylfaginning* 42, where Thor with one blow of his Mjöltnir sends a giant *niðr undir Niflhel* (see further, No. 60).

As Mimir's and Urd's fountains are found in the lower world (see Nos. 63, 93), and as Mimir is mentioned as the guardian of Heimdall's horn and other treasures, it might be expected that these circumstances would not be forgotten in those stories from Christian times which have been cited above and found to have roots in the myths.

When the Danish adventurers had left the horrible city of fog in Saxo's saga about Gorm, they came to another place in the lower world where the gold-plated mead-cisterns were found. The Latin word used by Saxo, which I translate with cisterns of mead, is *dolium*. In the classical Latin, this word is used in regard to wine-cisterns of so immense a size that they were counted among the immovables, and usually were sunk in the cellar floors. They were so large that a person could live in such a cistern, and this is also reported as having happened. That the word *dolium* still in Saxo's time had a similar meaning appears from a letter quoted by Du Cange,<sup>16</sup> written by Saxo's younger contemporary, Bishop Gebhard. The size is therefore no obstacle to Saxo's using this word for a wine-cistern to mean the mead-wells in the lower world of Germanic

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<sup>14</sup> This poem is also known as *Baldurs draumar*.

<sup>15</sup> "They went on; and saw, not far off, a gloomy, neglected town, *looking more like a cloud exhaling vapour*." Saxo, Book VIII; Elton translation.

<sup>16</sup> Charles Dufresne Du Cange (1610-1688), French historian and philologist. Author of "*Glossarium ad scriptores mediae et infimae latinitatis*" (Paris, 3 vols. fol. 1678; new edition with addenda by Dom Carpentier, Paris, 7 vols., 4to, 1840-1850; 10 vols., 1882-1887).

mythology. The question now is whether he actually did so, or whether the subterranean *dolia* in question are objects in regard to which our earliest mythic records have left us in ignorance.

In Saxo's time, and earlier, the epithets by which the mead-wells - Urd's and Mimir's - and their contents are mentioned in mythological songs had come to be applied also to those mead-vessels which Odin is said to have emptied in the halls of the giant Fjalar or Suttung. This application also lay near at hand, since these wells and these vessels contained the same liquor, and since it originally, as appears from the meaning of the words, was the liquor, and not the place where the liquor was kept, to which the epithets *Óðrærir*, *Boðn*, and *Són* applied. In *Hávamál* 107, Odin expresses his joy that *Óðrærir* has passed out of the possession of the giant Fjalar and can be of use to the beings of the upper world. But if we may trust *Skáldskaparmál* 6, it is the drink and not the empty vessels that Odin takes with him to Valhall. On this supposition, it is the drink and not one of the vessels which in *Hávamál* is called *Óðrærir*. In *Hávamál* 140, Odin relates how he, through self-sacrifice and suffering, succeeded in getting runic songs up from the deep, and also a drink dipped out of *Óðrærir*. He who gives him the songs and the drink, and accordingly is the ruler of the fountain of the drink, is a man, "Bölthorn's celebrated son." Here again *Óðrærir* is one of the subterranean fountains, and no doubt Mimir's, since the one who pours out the drink is a man. But in the second stanza of *Forspjallsljóð*,<sup>17</sup> Urd's fountain is also called *Óðrærir* (*Óðhrærir Urðar*).<sup>18</sup> Paraphrases for the liquor of poetry, such as "*Boðn's* growing billow" (Einar Skálaglamm) and "*Són's* reed-grown grass edge" (Eilífr Guðrúnarson, *Skáldskaparmál* 10, Jónsson edition), point to fountains or wells, not to vessels. Meanwhile, a satire was composed before the time of Saxo and Sturluson about Odin's adventure at Fjalar's, and the author of this song, the contents of which the *Prose Edda* has preserved, calls the vessels which Odin empties at the giant's *Óðhrærir*, *Boðn*, and *Són* (*Skáldskaparmál* 5-6, Jónsson ed.). Saxo, who reveals a familiarity with the genuine heathen, or supposed heathen, poems handed down to his time, may thus have seen the epithets *Óðrærir*, *Boðn*, and *Són* applied both to the subterranean mead-wells and to a giant's mead-vessels. The greater reason he would have for selecting the Latin *dolium* to express an idea that can be accommodated to both these objects.

Over these mead-reservoirs there hang, according to Saxo's description, round-shaped objects of silver, which in close braids drop down and are spread around the seven times gold-plated walls of the mead-cisterns.<sup>19</sup>

Over Mimir's and Urd's fountains hang the roots of the ash Yggdrasil, which sends its root-knots and root-threads down into their waters. But not only the rootlets sunk in the water, but also the roots from which they are suspended, partake of the waters of the fountains. The norns take daily from the water and sprinkle the stem of the tree therewith, "and the water is so holy," says *Gylfaginning* 16, "that everything that is put in the well (consequently, also, all that which the norns daily sprinkle with the water) becomes as white as the membrane between the

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<sup>17</sup> *Forspjallsljóð* is the subtitle of the poem properly called *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*, found in paper manuscripts of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Further references will be rendered as *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*.

<sup>18</sup> *Óðhrærir Urðar*: While these are the words of the manuscripts of the poem, this reading is grammatically impossible, since the object of the sentence is then missing. An emendation to *Óðhræris- Urður* as suggested by Gunnar Pálsson, in context, would render the meaning "Urd was appointed Óðrærir's keeper," thus allowing *Óðrærir* to retain its usual meaning of the liquid in Mimir's well.

<sup>19</sup> *Inde digressis dolia septem zonis aureis circumligata panduntur, quibus pensiles ex argento circuli erebros inseruerant nexus.*

"There were disclosed to them seven butts hooped round with belts of gold; and from these hung circlets of silver entwined with them in manifold links," Elton translation.; "They found lying before them seven wine jars circled with golden hoops, each treaded through many dangling silver rings," Fisher translation.

egg and the egg-shell." Also the root over Mimir's fountain is sprinkled with its water (*Völuspá* 27), and this water, so far as its color is concerned, seems to be of the same kind as that in Urd's fountain, for the latter is called *hvítr aurr* (*Völuspá* 19) and the former runs in *aurgum fossi* upon its root of the world-tree (*Völuspá* 27). The adjective *aurigr*, which describes a quality of the water in Mimir's fountain, is formed from the noun *aurr*, with which the liquid is described which waters the root over Urd's fountain. Yggdrasil's roots, as far up as the liquid of the wells can get to them, thus have a color like that of "the membrane between the egg and the egg-shell," and consequently recall both as to position, form, and color the round-shaped objects "of silver" which, according to Saxo, hang down and are intertwined in the mead-reservoirs of the lower world.

Mimir's fountain contains, as we know, the purest mead - the liquid of inspiration, of poetry, of wisdom, of understanding.

Near by Yggdrasil, according to *Völuspá* 27, Heimdall's horn<sup>20</sup> is concealed. The seeress in *Völuspá* knows that it is hid "beneath the hedge-o'-ershadowing<sup>21</sup> holy tree,"

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<sup>20</sup> The word used here, *hljóð* means "hearing." This phrase is generally understood to mean that Heimdall's horn is hidden beneath the Tree, but might better be understood as "Heimdall's hearing" i.e. one of his ears is hidden beneath the Tree, as one of Odin's eyes is also concealed there.

<sup>21</sup> The translation "hedge-o'-ershadowing" finds no support. The word in question is *heiðvönum*, accustomed to brightness. Ursula Dronke states that the word likely plays on two senses of the word *heið*, which means both "shining mead" and "shining heaven," since the roots of the Tree are in the mead, and its branches in heaven. *The Poetic Edda*, Vol. II, (1997) pg. 135.

*Veit hún Heimdallar  
hljóð um fólgið  
undir heiðvönum  
helgum baðmi.*

She knows Heimdall's  
hearing is hidden  
beneath the bright-accustomed  
holy tree.

Near one of the mead-cisterns in the lower world, Gorm's men see a horn ornamented with pictures and flashing with precious stones.

Among the treasures taken care of by Mimir is the world's foremost sword and a wonderful arm-ring, smithied by the same master as made the sword (see Nos. 87, 98, 101).<sup>1</sup>

Near the gorgeous horn, Gorm's men see a gold-plated tooth of an animal and an arm-ring. The animal tooth becomes a sword when it is taken into the hand.<sup>2</sup> Nearby is treasury filled with a large number of weapons and a royal robe. Mimir is known in mythology as a collector of treasures. He is therefore called *Hoddmímir*, *Hoddrofnir*, *Baugreginn*.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, on their journeys in the lower world, Gorm and his men have seen not only *Náströnd's* place of punishment in Niflhel, but also the holy land, where Mimir reigns.

When Gorm and his men desire to cross the golden bridge and see the wonders to which it leads, Gudmund prohibits it. When they desire to cross the river, in another place farther up, in order to see what is there beyond, he consents and has them taken over in a boat. He does not deem it proper to show them the unknown land at the golden bridge, but it is within the limits of his authority to let them see the places of punishment and those regions which contain the mead-cisterns and the treasure chambers. The sagas call him the king on the Glittering Plains, and as the Glittering Plains are situated in the lower world, he must be a lower world ruler.

Two of the sagas, Helgi Thorisson's and Gorm's, cast a shadow on Gudmund's character. In the former, this shadow does not produce confusion or contradiction. The saga is a legend which represents Christianity, with Olaf Tryggvason as its apostle, in conflict with heathenism, represented by Gudmund. It is therefore natural that the latter cannot be presented in the most favorable light. With his prayers, Olaf destroys the happiness of Gudmund's daughter. He compels her to abandon her lover, and Gudmund, who is unable to take revenge in any other manner, tries to do so, as is the case with so many of the characters in saga and history, by treachery. This is demanded by the fundamental idea and tendency of the legend. What the author of the legend has heard about Gudmund's character from older sagamen, or what he has read in records, he does not, however, conceal with silence, but admits that Gudmund, aside from his heathen religion and grudge toward Olaf Tryggvason, was a man in whose home one might fare well and be happy.

Saxo has preserved the shadow, but in his narrative it produces the greatest contradiction. Gudmund offers fruits, drinks, and embraces in order to induce his guests to remain with him forever, and he does it in a tempting manner and, as it seems, with

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<sup>1</sup> The master being Völund.

<sup>2</sup> The word *biti* = a tooth (cp. bite) becomes in the composition *leggbiti*, the name of a sword.

<sup>3</sup> *Hoddmímir*, *Hoddrofnir*, *Baugreginn*, names of Mimir found in *Vafþrúðnismál* 45, *Sigrdrífumál* 13, and *Sólarljóð* 56, respectively.

conscious cunning. Nevertheless, he shows unlimited patience when the guests insult him by accepting nothing of what he offers. When he comes down to the beach, where Gorm's ships are anchored, he is greeted by the leader of the discoverers with joy, because he is "the most pious being and man's protector in perils." He conducts them in safety to his castle. When a handful of them returns after the attempt to plunder the treasury of the lower world, he considers the crime sufficiently punished by the loss of life they have suffered, and takes them across the river to his own safe home; and when they, contrary to his wishes, desire to return to their native land, he loads them with gifts and sees to it that they get safely on board their ships. It follows that Saxo's sources have described Gudmund as a kind and benevolent person. Here, as in the legend about Helgi Thorisson, the shadow has been thrown by younger hands upon an older background painted in bright colors.

Hervör's saga says that Gudmund was wise, mighty, in a heathen sense pious ("a great sacrificer"), and so honored that sacrifices were offered to him, and he was worshipped as a god after death. Bosi's saga says that he was greatly skilled in magic arts, which is another expression for heathen wisdom, for *fimbul*-songs, runes, and incantations.

The change for the worse which Gudmund's character seems in part to have suffered is confirmed by a change, connected with and running parallel to it, in the conception of the forces in those things which belonged to the lower world of the Germanic heathendom and to Gudmund's domain. In Saxo, we find an idea related to the antique Lethe<sup>4</sup> myth, according to which the liquids and plants which belong to the lower world produce forgetfulness of the past. Therefore, Thorkil (Thorkillus) warns his companions not to eat or drink any of that which Gudmund offers them. In *Guðrúnarkviða in forna* 21, and elsewhere, we meet with the same idea. I shall return to this subject (see No. 72).

## 50.

### ANALYSIS OF THE SAGAS MENTIONED IN NOS. 44-48. THE QUESTION IN REGARD TO THE IDENTIFICATION OF ODAINSAKUR.

Is Gudmund an invention of Christian times, although he is placed in an environment which in general and in detail reflects the heathen mythology? Or is there to be found in the mythology a person who has precisely the same environment and is endowed with the same attributes and qualities?

These form an exceedingly strange ensemble, and can therefore easily be recognized: A ruler in the lower world, and at the same time a giant. Pious and still a giant. King in a domain to which winter cannot penetrate. Within that domain an enclosed place, whose bulwark neither sickness, nor age, nor death can surmount. It is left to his power and pleasure to give admittance to the mysterious meadows, where the mead-cisterns of the lower world are found, and where the most precious of all horns, a wonderful sword, and a splendid arm-ring are kept. Old as the hills, but yet subject to

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<sup>4</sup> Lethe, an underworld river in Greek mythology whose water causes forgetfulness of the pains and sorrows of earthly life.

death. Honored as if he were not a giant, but a divine being. These are the features which together characterize Gudmund, and should be found in his mythological prototype, if there is one. With these peculiar characteristics are united wisdom and wealth.

The answer to the question whether a mythical original of this picture is to be discovered will be given below. But, before that, we must call attention to some points in the Christian accounts cited in regard to Odainsakur.

Odainsakur is not made identical with the Glittering Plains, but is a separate place on them, or at all events within Gudmund's domain. Thus according to Hervör's saga. The correctness of the statement is confirmed by comparison with Gorm's and Hadding's sagas. The former mentions, as will be remembered, a place which Gudmund does not consider himself authorized to show his guests, although they are permitted to see other mysterious places in the lower world, even the mead-fountains and treasure-chambers. To the unknown place, as to Baldur's subterranean dwelling, leads a golden bridge, which doubtless is to indicate the splendor of the place. The subterranean goddess, who is Hadding's guide in Hades, shows him both the Glittering Fields (*loca aprica*) and the plains of the dead heroes, but stops with him near a wall, which is not opened for them. The domain surrounded by the wall receives nothing which has suffered death, and its very proximity seems to be enough to keep death at bay (see No. 47).

All the sagas are silent in regard to who those beings are for whom this wonderful enclosed place is intended. Its very name, Acre-of-the-not-dead (*Odainsakur*), and Field-of-living-men (*Jörð lifandi manna*), however, makes it clear that it is not intended for the souls of the dead. This Erik Vidforli's saga is also able to state, inasmuch as it makes a definite distinction between Odainsakur and the land of the spirits, between Odainsakur and Paradise. If human or other beings are found within the bulwark of the place, they must have come there as living beings in a physical sense; and when once there, they are protected from perishing, for diseases, age, and death are excluded.

During their journey on Odainsakur, Erik Vidforli and his companion find only a single dwelling, a splendid one with two beds. Who the couple are who own this house, and seem to have placed it at the disposal of the travellers, is not stated. But, in the night, there came a beautiful lad to Erik. The author of the saga has made him an angel, who is on duty on the borders between Odainsakur and Paradise.

The purpose of Odainsakur is not mentioned in Erik Vidforli's saga. There is no intelligible connection between it and the Christian environment given to it by the saga. The ecclesiastical belief knows an earthly Paradise, that which existed in the beginning and was the home of Adam and Eve, but that it is guarded by the angel with the flaming sword, or, as Erik's saga expresses it, it is encircled by a wall of fire. In the lower world, the Christian Church knows a Hades and a hell, but the path to them is through the gates of death; physically living persons, persons who have not paid tribute to death, are not found there. In the Christian group of ideas, there is no place for Odainsakur. An underground place for physically living people, who are there no longer exposed to aging and death, has nothing to do in the economy of the Church. Was there occasion for it among the ideas of the heathen eschatology? The above-quoted sagas say nothing about the purposes of Odainsakur. Therefore, here is a question of importance to our subject, and one that demands an answer.



## GUDMUND'S IDENTITY WITH MIMIR.

The most characteristic figure of all Germanic mythology perhaps is Mimir, the lord of the fountain which bears his name. The liquid contained in the fountain is the object of Odin's deepest desire. He has neither authority nor power over it. Nor does he or anyone else of the gods seek to get control of it by force. Instances are mentioned showing that Odin, to get a drink from it, must subject himself to great sufferings and sacrifices (*Völuspá* 27-28; *Hávamál* 138-140; *Gylfaginning* 15), and it is as a gift or a loan that he afterwards receives from Mimir the invigorating and soul-inspiring drink (*Hávamál* 140-141). Over the fountain and its territory Mimir, of course, exercises unlimited control, an authority which the gods never appear to have disputed. He has a sphere of power which the gods recognize as inviolable. The domain of his rule belongs to the lower world; it is situated under one of the roots of the world-tree (*Völuspá* 27-28; *Gylfaginning* 15), and when Odin, from the world-tree, asks for the precious mead of the fountain, he peers downward into the deep, and from there brings up the runes (*nýsta eg niður, nam eg up rúnar* - *Hávamál* 139).<sup>5</sup> Saxo's account of the adventure of Hotherus (*Hist.*, Book 3) shows that there was thought to be a descent to Mimir's land in the form of a mountain cave (*specus*), and that this descent was, like the one to Gudmund's domain, to be found in the uttermost North, where terrible cold reigns.

Though a giant, Mimir is the friend of the order of the world and of the gods. He, like Urd, guards the sacred ash, the world-tree (*Völuspá* 28), which accordingly also bears his name and is called Mimir's tree (*Mímameiður* - *Fjölsvinnsmál* 20; *meiður Míma* - *Fjölsvinnsmál* 24). The intercourse between the Asa-father and him has been of such a nature that the expression "Mimir's friend" (*Míms vinur* - *Sonatorrek* 23; *Skáldskaparmál* 3, 9, *Hattatal* 4)<sup>6</sup> - could be used by the skalds as an epithet of Odin. Of this friendship, *Ynglingasaga* 4 has preserved a record. It makes Mimir lose his life in his activity for the good of the gods, and makes Odin embalm his head, in order that he may always be able to get wise counsels from its lips. *Sigurdrífumál* 14 represents Odin as listening to the words of truth which come from Mimir's head. *Völuspá* 46 predicts that, when Ragnarok approaches, Odin shall converse with Mimir's head; and, according to *Gylfaginning* 51, he, immediately before the conflagration of the world, rides to Mimir's fountain to get advice from the deep thinker for himself and his friends. The firm friendship between All-Father and this strange giant of the lower world was formed in time's morning while Odin was still young and undeveloped (*Hávamál* 141), and continued until the end of the gods and the world.

Mimir is the collector of treasures. According to mythology, the same treasures that Gorm and his men found in the land which Gudmund let them visit are in the care of Mimir. The wonderful horn (*Völuspá* 27), the sword of victory, and the ring (Saxo, *Hist.*, Book 3; cp. Nos. 87, 97, 98, 101, 103).

In all these points, the Gudmund of the middle-age sagas and Mimir of the mythology are identical. There still remains an important point. In Gudmund's domain, there is a splendid grove, an enclosed place, from which weaknesses, age, and death are banished - a Paradise of the peculiar kind, that it is not intended for the souls of the dead,

<sup>5</sup> "I peered downwards, I took up the runes."

<sup>6</sup> *Hér er hann kallaður Míms vinur* - "here he is called Mím's friend," *Skáldskaparmál* 9.

but for certain *lifandi menn* (living men), yet inaccessible to people in general. In the myth concerning Mimir, we also find such a grove.

52.

MIMIR'S GROVE. LIF AND LEIFTHRASIR.

The grove is called after its ruler and guardian, Mimir's or Treasure-Mimir's grove (*Mímis holt* - Uppsala Codex of *Gylfaginning* 53; *Hoddmímis holt* - *Vafþrúðnismál* 45, *Gylfaginning* 53).

*Gylfaginning* describes the destruction of the world and its regeneration, and then relates how the earth, rising out of the sea, is furnished with human inhabitants. "During the conflagration (*í Surtarloga*) two persons are concealed in Treasure-Mimir's grove. Their names are Lif (*Líf*) and Leifthrasir (*Leifþrasir*), and they feed on the morning dews. From them come so great an offspring that all the world is peopled."

In support of its statement, *Gylfaginning* quotes *Vafþrúðnismál* 44, 45. This poem makes Odin and the giant Vafthrudnir (*Vafþrúðnir*) put questions to each other, and among others Odin asks this question:

*Fjöld eg fór,  
fjöld eg freistaðag,  
fjöld eg reynda regin:  
Hvað lifir manna,  
þá er inn mæra líður  
fimbulvetur með firum?*

Much I have travelled,  
much I have tried,  
much I have tested the powers.  
What living persons,  
shall still live when the famous  
*fimbul*-winter has been in the world?

Vafthrudnir answers:

*Líf og Leifþrasir,  
en þau leynast munu  
í holti Hoddmímis.  
Morgundöggar  
þau sér að mat hafa,  
en þaðan af aldir alast.*

Lif and Leifthrasir (are still living);  
they are concealed  
in Hodd-Mimir's grove.  
Morning dews  
they will have for nourishment,  
From them are born (new) races.

*Gylfaginning* says that the two human beings, Lif and Leifthrasir, who become the progenitors of the races that are to people the earth after Ragnarok, are concealed during the conflagration of the world in Hodd-Mimir's grove. This is, beyond doubt, in accordance with mythic views. But mythologists, who have not paid sufficient attention to what *Gylfaginning*'s source (*Vafþrúðnismál*) has to say on the subject, have from the above expression drawn a conclusion which implies a complete misunderstanding of the traditions in regard to Hodd-Mimir's grove and the human pair therein concealed. They have assumed that Lif and Leifthrasir are, like all other people living at that time, inhabitants of the surface of the earth at the time when the conflagration of the world

begins. They have explained Mimir's grove to mean the world-tree, and argued that, when Surt's flames destroy all other mortals, this one human pair have succeeded in climbing upon some particular branch of the world-tree, where they were protected from the destructive element. There they were supposed to live on morning dews until the end of Ragnarok, and until they could come down from their hiding-place in Yggdrasil upon the earth which has risen from the sea, and there become the progenitors of a more happy human race.

According to this interpretation, Yggdrasil was a tree whose trunk and branches could be grasped by human hands, and one or more mornings, with attendant morning dews, are assumed to have come and gone, while fire and flames enveloped all creation, and after the sun had been swallowed by the wolf and the stars had fallen from the heavens (*Gylfaginning* 51; *Völuspá* 58)! And with this terrible catastrophe before their eyes, Lif and Leifthrasir are supposed to sit in perfect unconcern, eating the morning dews!

For the scientific reputation of mythical inquiry, it were well if that sort of investigations were avoided when they are not made necessary by the sources themselves.

If sufficient attention had been paid to the above-cited evidence furnished by *Vafþrúðnismál* in this question, the misunderstanding might have been avoided, and the statement of *Gylfaginning* would not have been interpreted to mean that Lif and Leifthrasir inhabited Mimir's grove only during Ragnarok. For *Vafþrúðnismál* plainly states that this human pair are in perfect security in Mimir's grove, while a long and terrible winter, a *fimbul*-winter, visits the earth and destroys its inhabitants. Not until after the end of this winter do giants and gods collect their forces for a decisive conflict on Vigrid's plains; and when this conflict is ended, then comes the conflagration of the world, and after it the regeneration. Concerning the length of the *fimbul*-winter, *Gylfaginning* 51 claims that it continued for three years "without any intervening summer."

Consequently, Lif and Leifthrasir must have had their secure place of refuge in Mimir's grove during the *fimbul*-winter, which precedes Ragnarok. And, accordingly, the idea that they were there only during Ragnarok, and all the strange conjectures based thereon, are unfounded. They continue to remain there while the winter rages, and during all the episodes which characterize the progress of the world towards ruin, and, finally, also, as *Gylfaginning* reports, during the conflagration and regeneration of the world.

Thus it is explained why the myth finds it of importance to inform us how Lif and Leifthrasir support themselves during their stay in Mimir's grove. It would not have occurred to the myth to present and answer this question had not the sojourn of the human pair in the grove continued for some length of time. Their food is the morning dew. The morning dew from Yggdrasil was, according to the mythology, a sweet and wonderful nourishment, and in the popular traditions of the Germanic middle age, the dew of the morning retained its reputation for having strange, nourishing qualities. According to the myth, it evaporates from the world-tree, which stands, ever green and blooming, over Urd's and Mimir's sacred fountains, and drops from there "in dales" (*Völuspá* 19, 28; *Gylfaginning* 16). And as the world-tree is sprinkled and gets its life-giving sap from these fountains, then it follows that the liquid of its morning dew is

substantially the same as that of the subterranean fountains, which contain the elixir of life, wisdom, and poesy (cp. Nos. 72, 82, and elsewhere).

At what time, Mimir's grove was opened as an asylum for Lif and Leifthrasir, whether this happened during or shortly before the *fimbul*-winter, or perchance long before it, on this point there is not a word in the passages quoted from *Vafþrúðnismál*. But by the following investigation, the problem shall be solved.

The Germanic mythology has not looked upon the regeneration of the world as a new creation. The life which in time's morning developed out of chaos is not destroyed by Surt's flames, but rescues itself, purified, for the coming age of the world. The world-tree survives the conflagration, for it defies both edge and fire (*Fjölsvinnsmál*, 20, 21-*fellir-at hann eldur né járn*).<sup>1</sup> The Ida-plains are not annihilated. After Ragnarok, as in the beginning of time, they are the scene of the assemblings of the gods (*Völuspá* 7-*Hittust æsir á Iðavelli* ; *Völuspá* 61- *Finnast æsir á Iðavelli*). Vanaheim is not affected by the destruction, for Njörd shall in *aldar rök*<sup>2</sup> (*Vafþrúðnismál* 39) return there "to wise Vanir ." Odin's dwellings of victory remain, and are inhabited after the regeneration by Baldur and Hodur (*Völuspá* 63- *Búa þeir Baldur og Höður Hropts sigtóftir*). The new sun is the daughter of the old one, and was born before Ragnarok, which she passes through unscathed (*Vafþrúðnismál* 46-47). The ocean does not disappear in Ragnarok, for the present earth sinks beneath its surface (*Völuspá* 58- *sígur fold í mar*), and the new earth after regeneration rises from its deep (*Völuspá* 60 - *jörð úr ægi*). Gods survive (*Völuspá* 61, 63, 64 - *æsir, Höður og Baldur, Hænir*); *Vafþrúðnismál* 51 -*Víðar og Váli, Móði og Magni*; cp. *Gylfaginning* 53). Human beings survive, for Lif and Leifthrasir are destined to become the connecting link between the present human race and the better race which is to spring therefrom. Animals and plants survive - though the animals and plants on the surface of the earth perish; but the earth risen from the sea was decorated with green, and there is not the slightest reference to a new act of creation to produce the green vegetation. Its cascades contain living beings, and over them flies the eagle in search of his prey (*Völuspá* 60; see further, No. 55). A work of art from antiquity is also preserved in the new world. The game of *tafl*, with which the gods played in their youth while they were yet free from care, is found again amid the grass on the new earth (*Völuspá* 8 - *Tefldu í túni*; *Völuspá* 62 - *gullnar töflur í grasi finnast*; see further, No. 55).

If the regeneration had been conceived as a new creation, a wholly new beginning of life, then the human race of the new era would also have started from a new creation of a human pair. The myth about Lif and Leifthrasir would then have been unnecessary and superfluous. But the fundamental idea is that the life of the new era is to be a continuation of the present life purified and developed to perfection, and from the standpoint of this fundamental idea Lif and Leifthrasir are necessary.

The idea of improvement and perfection is most clearly held forth in regard to both the physical and spiritual condition of the future world. All that is weak and evil shall be redeemed (*böls mun alls batna* - *Völuspá* 63). In that perfection of nature, the fields unsown by men shall yield their harvests. To secure the restored world against

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<sup>1</sup> The following passages from Old Norse in this paragraph and similar references from here on out are not found in Rydberg's work, and were added by Eysteinn Björnsson on his website "*Viktor Rydberg's Teutonic Mythology*" at <http://www.hi.is/~eybjorn/ugm/ugm0.html> upon which the current version of the English text is based.

<sup>2</sup> "the doom of men," i.e. Ragnarok.

relapse into the faults of the former, the myth applies radical measures - so radical, that the Asa majesty himself, Valfather, must retire from the scene, in order that his son, the perfectly blameless Baldur, may be the center in the assembly of the chosen gods. But the mythology would fail in its purpose if it did not apply equally radical measures in the choice and care of the human beings who are to perpetuate our race after Ragnarok; for if the progenitors have within them the seed of corruption, it will be developed in their descendants.

Has the mythology forgotten to meet this logical claim? The demand is no greater than that which is made in reference to every product of the imagination of whatever age. I do not mean to say that a logical claim made on the mythology, or that a conclusion which may logically be drawn from the premises of the mythology, is to be considered as evidence that the claim has actually been met by the mythology, and that the mythology itself has been developed into its logical conclusion. I simply want to point out what the claim is, and in the next place I desire to investigate whether there is evidence that the claim has been honored.

From the standpoint that there must be a logical harmony in the mythological system, it is necessary:

1. That Lif and Leifthrasir when they enter their asylum, Mimir's grove, are physically and spiritually uncorrupted persons.

2. That during their stay in Mimir's grove they are protected against:

- (a) Spiritual degradation.
- (b) Physical degradation.
- (c) Against everything threatening their very existence.

So far as the last point (2c) is concerned, we know already from *Vafþrúðnismál* that the place of refuge they received in the vicinity of those fountains, which, with never-failing veins, nourish the life of the world-tree, is approached neither by the frost of the *fimbul*-winter nor by the flames of Ragnarok. This claim is, therefore, met completely.

In regard to the second point (2b), the above-cited mythic traditions have preserved from the days of heathendom the memory of a grove in the subterranean domain of Gudmund-Mimir, set aside for living men, not for the dead, and protected against sickness, aging, and death. Thus this claim is met also.

As to the third point (2a), all we know at present is that there, in the lower world, is found an enclosed place, the very one which death cannot enter, and from which even those mortals are banished by divine command who are admitted to the holy fountains and treasure chambers of the lower world, and who have been permitted to see the regions of bliss and places of punishment there. Therefore, it would appear that all contact between those who dwell there and those who take part in the events of our world is cut off. The realms of Mimir and the lower world have, according to the sagas - and, as we shall see later, according to the myths themselves - now and then been opened to bold adventurers, who have seen their wonders, looked at their remarkable fountains, their plains for the amusement of the shades of heroes, and their places of punishment of the

wicked. But there is one place which has been inaccessible to them, a field proclaimed inviolable by divine command (Gorm's saga, Saxo *Hist.*, Book 8), a place surrounded by a wall, which can be entered only by such beings as can pass through the smallest crevices (Hadding's saga).<sup>3</sup> But that this difficulty of entrance also was meant to exclude the moral evil, by which the mankind of our age is stained, is not expressly stated.

Thus we have yet to look and see whether the original documents from the heathen times contain any statements which can shed light on this subject. In regard to the point (1), the question it contains as to whether the mythology conceived Lif and Leifthrasir as physically and morally undefiled at the time when they entered Mimir's grove, can only be solved if we, in the old records, can find evidence that a wise, foreseeing power opened Mimir's grove as an asylum for them, at a time when mankind as a whole had not yet become the prey of physical and moral misery. But in that very primeval age in which time most of the events of mythology are supposed to have happened, creation had already become the victim of corruption. There was a time when the life of the gods was happiness and the joy of youthful activity; the condition of the world did not cause them anxiety, and, free from care, they amused themselves with the wonderful game of *tafl* (*Völuspá* 8 - *Tefldu í túni, teitir voru*). But the golden age ended in physical and moral catastrophes. The air was mixed with treacherous evil; Freyja, the goddess of fertility and fecundity, was treacherously delivered into the hands of the frost giants; on the earth the sorceress Heid (*Heiður*) strutted about teaching the secrets of black magic, which was hostile to the gods and hurtful to man (*Völuspá* 22). The first great war broke out in the world (*Völuspá* 21, 24, 26). The effects of this are felt down through the historical ages even to Ragnarok. The corruption of nature culminates in the *fimbul*-winter of the last days; the corruption of mankind has its climax in "the axe- and knife-ages." The separation of Lif and Leifthrasir from their race and confinement in Mimir's grove must have occurred before the above catastrophes in time's beginning, if there is to be a guarantee that the human race of the new world is not to inherit and develop the defects and weaknesses of the present historical generations.

### 53.

#### AT WHAT TIME DID LIF AND LEIFTHRASIR GET THEIR PLACE OF REFUGE IN MIMIR'S GROVE? THE ASMEGIR. MIMIR'S POSITION IN THE MYTHOLOGY. THE NUMINA OF THE LOWER WORLD.

It is necessary to begin this investigation by pointing out the fact that there are two versions of the last line of strophe 45 in *Vafþrúðnismál*. The version of this line quoted above was - *en þaðan af aldir alast*: "Thence (from Lif and Leifthrasir in Mimir's grove) are born races." The Uppsala Codex has instead - *og þar um aldur alast*: "And they (Lif and Leifthrasir) have there (in Mimir's grove) their abiding place through ages." Of course only one of these versions can, from a text-historical standpoint, be the original one. But this does not hinder both from being equally legitimate from a mythological standpoint, providing both date from a time when the main features of the myth about Lif

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<sup>3</sup> *Prodeuntibus murus aditu transcensuque difficilis obsistebat, quem femina nequiequam transilire conata cum ne corrugati quidem exilitate proficeret*; "The woman (the subterranean goddess who is Hadding's guide) tried to leap it, but in vain, being unable to do so even with her slender wrinkled body" Saxo, *Hist.*, Book 1. Elton translation.

and Leifthrasir were still remembered. Examples of versions equally justifiable from a mythological standpoint can be cited from other literatures than the Norse. If we pay regard only to the age of the manuscripts, in the choice between the two versions, then the one in *Codex Upsalensis*, which is copied about the year 1300,<sup>4</sup> has the preference. It would, however, hardly be prudent to put the chief emphasis on this fact. Without drawing any conclusions, I simply point out the fact that the oldest version we possess of the passage says that Lif and Leifthrasir live through ages in Mimir's grove. Nor is the other version much younger, so far as the manuscript in which it is found is concerned, and from a mythological standpoint that, too, is beyond doubt correct.

In two places in the Poetic Edda, *Vegtamskviða* 7 and *Fjölsvinnsmál* 33, occurs the word *ásmegir*. Both times, it is used in such a manner that we perceive that it is a mythological *terminus technicus*<sup>5</sup> having a definite, limited application. What this application was is not known. It is necessary to make a most thorough analysis of the passages in order to find the signification of this word again, since it is of importance to the subject which we are discussing. I shall begin with the passage in *Fjölsvinnsmál*.

The young Svipdag, the hero in *Gróugaldur* and in *Fjölsvinnsmál*, is represented in the latter poem as standing before the gate of a citadel which he never saw before, but within the walls of which the maid whom fate has destined to be his wife resides. Outside of the gate is a person who is or pretends to be the gatekeeper, and calls himself *Fjölsvith* (*Fjölsviðr*). He and Svipdag enter into conversation. The conversation turns chiefly upon the remarkable objects which Svipdag sees before his eyes. Svipdag asks questions about them, and *Fjölsvith* gives him information. But before Svipdag came to the castle, within which his chosen one awaits him, he has made a remarkable journey (alluded to in *Gróugaldur*), and he has seen strange things (thus *Fjölsvinnsmál* 9, 11, and 33) which he compares with those which he now sees, and in regard to which he also desires information from *Fjölsvith*. When the questions concern objects which are before him at the time of speaking, he employs, as the logic of language requires, the present tense of the verb (as in strophe 35 - *segðu mér hvað það bjarg heitir, er eg sé brúði á*).<sup>6</sup> When he speaks of what he has seen before and elsewhere, he employs the past tense of the verb. In strophe 33, he says:

*Segðu mér það, Fjölsviður,  
er eg þig fregna mun  
og eg vilja vita:  
Hver það gerði,  
er eg fyr garð sák  
innan ásmaga?*

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<sup>4</sup> Sophus Bugge, *Sæmundar Edda*, XXVI. Þorleifr Jónsson, *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar*, VIII.

Modern scholars indeed believe the Uppsala Codex to be written at the time stated here, but it must be mentioned that most of them agree that the *Codex Regius* predates the Uppsala Codex. (Eysteinn Björnsson).

<sup>5</sup> Technical term

<sup>6</sup> "What is the name of the mount, on which I see the renowned bride sitting?" Eysteinn Björnsson translation, and hereafter. For the full text, see Supplement 3.

"Now tell me, Fjolsvith, what I will ask you, and what I wish to know: Who has constructed that which I saw within the walls of the *ásmegir*?"<sup>7</sup>

Fjolsvith answers (*Fjölsvinnsmál* 34):

*Uni og Íri,  
Óri og Bári,  
Varr og Vegdrasill,  
Dóri og Úri;  
Dellingur og varðar,  
líðski álfr, loki.*

"Uni and Iri, Ori and Bari, Var and Vegdrasil, Dori and Uri; Delling, the cunning elf, is the watchman at the gate (lit. guardian of the tower's lock)."<sup>8</sup>

Thus Svipdag has seen a place where beings called *ásmegir* dwell. It is well enclosed and guarded by the elf Delling. The myth must have laid great stress on the fact that the citadel was well guarded, since Delling, whose cunning is especially emphasized, has been entrusted with this task. The citadel must also have been distinguished for its magnificence and for other qualities, since what Svipdag has seen within its gates has awakened his astonishment and admiration, and caused him to ask Fjolsvith about the name of its builder. Fjolsvith enumerates no less than eight architects. At least three of these are known by name in other sources - namely, the "dwarves" *Varr* (*Nafnapulur*), *Dori* and *Ori* (*Nafnapulur*, *Gylfaginning* 14). Both the last-named are also found in the list of dwarves incorporated in *Völuspá* [as quoted in Snorri's *Prose Edda*]. Both are said to be dwarves in Dvalin's group of attendants or servants (*í Dvalins liði - Völuspá* 14).

The problem to the solution of which I am struggling on - namely, to find the explanation of what beings those are which are called *ásmegir* - demands first of all that we should find out where the myth located their dwelling seen by Svipdag, a fact which is of mythological importance in other respects. This result can be gained, providing Dvalin's and Delling's real home and the scene of their activity can be determined. This is particularly important in respect to Delling, since his office as gate-keeper at the castle of

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<sup>7</sup> Looking simply at the form, the verse may also be translated in the following manner: "Now tell me, Fjolsvith, what I will ask you, and what I wish to know: Who of the *ásmegir* constructed what I saw within the wall?" Against this formal possibility there are, however, several objections. Svipdag would then be asking Fjolsvith who had made that which he had seen once in the past within a castle wall without informing Fjolsvith in regard to which particular castle wall he has reference. It also presupposes that Svipdag knew that the *ásmegir* had made the things in question which were within the castle wall, and that he only wished to complete his knowledge by finding out which one or ones of the *ásmegir* it was that had made them. And finally, it would follow from Fjolsvith's answer that the dwarves he enumerates are sons of Aesir. The formal possibility pointed out also has a formal probability against it. The genitive plural *ásmaga* has *garð* as its nearest neighbor, not *hver*, and therefore should be referred to *garð*, not to *hver*, even though both the translations gave an equally satisfactory meaning so far as the facts related are concerned; but that is not the case.

<sup>8</sup> [Rydberg's footnote] I follow the text in most of the manuscripts, of which Bugge has given various versions. One manuscript has in the text, another in the margin, *Lidscialfr*, written in one word (instead of *lipsci alfr*). Of this, Munch made *Lidskjálfr*. The dative *loki* from *lok*, a gate (cp. *lúka*, *loka*, to close, enclose), has been interpreted as Loki, and thus made the confusion complete.



the *ásmegir* demands that he must have his home where his duties are required. To some extent, this is also true of Dvalin, since the field of his operations cannot have been utterly foreign to the citadel on whose wonders his sub-artists labored.

The author of the dwarf-list in *Völuspá* makes all holy powers assemble to consult as to who shall create "the dwarves," the artist-clan of the mythology. The wording of strophe 10 indicates that on a being by name *Móðsognir*, *Mótsognir*, was bestowed the dignity of chief of the proposed artist-clan,<sup>9</sup> and that he, with the assistance of Durin (Durinn), carried out the resolution of the gods, and created dwarves resembling men. The author of the dwarf list must have assumed -

That Modsognir was one of the older beings of the world, for the assembly of gods here in question took place in the morning of time before the creation was completed.

That Modsognir possessed a promethean power of creating.

That he either belonged to the circle of holy powers himself, or stood in a close and friendly relation to them, since he carried out the resolve of the gods.

Accordingly, we should take Modsognir to be one of the more remarkable characters of the mythology. But either he is not mentioned anywhere else than in this place - we look in vain for the name Modsognir elsewhere - or this name is merely a skaldic epithet, which has taken the place of a more common name, and which by reference to a familiar *nota characteristic*<sup>10</sup> indicates a mythic person well known and mentioned elsewhere. It cannot be disputed that the word looks like an epithet. Egilsson (*Lexicon Poeticum*) defines it as the mead-drinker.<sup>11</sup> If the definition is correct, then the epithet were badly chosen if it did not refer to Mimir, who originally was the sole possessor of the mythic mead, and who daily drank of it (*Völuspá* 28 - *drekkur mjöð Mímir morgun hverjan*). Still nothing can be built simply on the definition of a name, even if it is correct beyond a doubt. All the indices which are calculated to shed light on a question should be collected and examined. Only when they all point in the same direction, and give evidence in favor of one and the same solution of the problem, the latter can be regarded as settled.

Several of the "dwarves" created by Modsognir are named in *Völuspá* 11-13. Among them is Dvalin. In the opinion of the author of the list of dwarves, Dvalin must have occupied a conspicuous place among the beings to whom he belongs, for he is the only one of them all who is mentioned as having a number of his own kind as subjects (*Völuspá* 14 - *dverga í Dvalins liði*). Therefore, the problem as to whether Modsognir is identical with Mimir should be decided by the answers to the following questions: Is that which is narrated about Modsognir also narrated of Mimir? Do the statements which we have about Dvalin show that he was particularly connected with Mimir and with the lower world, the realm of Mimir?

Of Modsognir, it is said (*Völuspá* 10) that he was *mæztr um orðinn dverga allra*: he became the chief of all dwarves, or, in other words, the foremost among all artists. Have we any similar report of Mimir?

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<sup>9</sup> *þar* (in the assembly of the gods) *var Móðsognir mæztr um orðinn dverga allra*

<sup>10</sup> distinguishing characteristic

<sup>11</sup> From Sveinbjörn Egilsson's *Lexicon Poeticum*, p. 413: *Móðsognir, m, dværnavn ('som suger mod i sig'? eller af moð 'høaffald'?)*. Egilsson is unsure of this name's meaning.

The German middle-age poem, "*Biterolf*," relates that its hero possessed a sword, made by Mimir the Old, *Mime der alte*, who was the most excellent smith in the world. Even Wieland (Völund, Wayland was not to be compared with him), still less anyone else, with the one exception of Hertrich, who was Mimir's co-laborer, and assisted him in making all the treasures he produced:

*Zuo siner (Mimir's) meisterschefte  
ich nieman kan gelichen  
in allen fürsten richen  
an einen, den ich nenne,  
daz man in dar bi erkenne:  
Der war Hertrich genant.*

.....  
*Durch ir sinne craft  
so hæten sie geselleschaft  
an werke und an allen dingen. (Biterolf,  
144 ff.)*

To his (Mimir's) mastery  
I can compare no one  
in all the princely realms  
except the one that I name,  
so that he is recognized thereby:  
He was named Hertrich.

.....  
Through the power of their  
understanding  
they were able to collaborate  
on works and on all things

*Pidreks Saga af Bern*, which is based on both German and Norse sources, states that Mimir was an artist, in whose workshop the sons of princes and the most famous smiths learned the trade of the smith. Among his apprentices are mentioned Velint (Völund), Sigurd-Sven, and Eckihard.

These echoes reverberating far down in Christian times of the myth about Mimir, as chief of smiths, we also perceive in Saxo. It should be remembered what he relates about the incomparable treasures which are preserved in Gudmund-Mimir's domain, among which in addition to those already named occur *arma humanorum corporum habitu grandiora* (*Hist.*, Book 8)<sup>1</sup> and about Mimingus, who possesses the sword of victory, and an arm-ring which produces wealth (*Hist.*, Book 3). If we consult the poetic Edda, we find Mimir mentioned as Hodd-Mimir, Treasure-Mimir (*Vafþrúðnismál* 45); as *naddgöfugr jötunn*, the giant celebrated for his weapons (*Gróugaldur* 14); as *Hoddrofnir*, or *Hodd-dropnir*, the treasure-dropping one (*Sigurdrífumál* 13); as *Baugreginn*, the king of the gold-rings (*Sólarljóð* 56). And as shall be shown hereafter, the chief smiths in the poetic Edda are put in connection with Mimir as the one on whose fields they dwell, or in whose smithy they work.

In the mythology, artistic and creative powers are closely related to each other. The great smiths of the *Rigveda* hymns, the Ribhus, make horses for Indra, create a cow and her calf, make from a single goblet three equally good, diffuse vegetation over the fields, and make brooks flow in the valleys (*Rigveda*, IV. 34:9; IV. 33:8; I. 20:6, 110:3, and elsewhere).<sup>2</sup> This they do although they are "mortals," who by their merits acquire

<sup>1</sup> "wherein arms were laid out too great for those of human stature." Elton translation.

<sup>2</sup> *Rigveda*, IV. 34:9 "Rbhus, who helped their parents and the Asvins, who formed the milch cow and the pair of horses, made armor, set the heaven and the earth asunder, --far-reaching Heroes, they have made good their offspring."; IV. 33:8 "May they who formed the swift car, bearing heroes, and the cow omniform and all-impelling, even they form wealth for us --the Rbhus, dextrous-handed, deft in work and gracious"; I. 20:6 "The sacrificial ladle, wrought newly by the god Tvastar's hand-- four ladles have ye (the Rbhus) made thereof."; I. 110:3 "Savitar therefore gave you (the Rbhus) immortality, because ye came

immortality. In the Germanic mythology, Sindri and Brokk forge from a pig skin Frey's steed, which looks like a boar, and the sons of Ivaldi forge from gold, locks that grow like other hair. The ring Draupnir, which the "dwarves" Sindri and Brokk made, itself possesses creative power and every ninth night produces eight gold rings of equal weight with itself (*Skáldskaparmál* 43). The "mead-drinker" is the chief and master of all these artists. And on a closer examination, it appears that Mimir's mead-well is the source of all these powers, which in the mythology are represented as creating, forming, and ordaining with wisdom.

In *Hávamál* (138-141) Odin relates that there was a time when he had not yet acquired strength and wisdom. But by self-sacrifice he was able to prevail on the celebrated Bolthorn's son, who dwells in the deep and has charge of the mead-fountain there and of the mighty runes, to give him (Odin) a drink from the precious mead, drawn from Odhrerir:

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proclaiming him whom naught can hide; and this the drinking chalice of the Asura, which 'til that time was one, ye made to be fourfold." From *The Hymns of the Rgveda*, translated with a popular commentary by Ralph T. H. Griffith, 1889.

*Pá nam eg frævast  
og fróður vera  
og vaxa og vel hafast,  
orð mér af orði  
orðs leitaði,  
verk mér af verkia  
verks leitaði.*

Then I began to bloom  
and to be wise,  
and to grow and thrive;  
word came to me  
from word,  
deed came to me  
from deed.

It is evident that Odin here means to say that the first drink which he received from Mimir's fountain was the turning-point in his life; that before that time he had not blossomed, had made no progress in wisdom, had possessed no eloquence nor ability to do great deeds, but that he acquired all this from the power of the mead. This is precisely the same idea that we constantly meet with in *Rigveda*, in regard to the soma-mead as the liquid from which the gods got creative power, wisdom, and desire to accomplish great deeds. Odin's greatest and most celebrated achievement was that he, with his brothers, created Midgard. Would it then be reasonable to suppose that he performed this greatest and wisest of his works before he began to develop fruit, and before he got wisdom and the power of activity? It must be evident to everybody that this would be unreasonable. It is equally manifest that among the works which he considered himself able to perform after the drink from Mimir's fountain had given him strength, we must place in the front rank those for which he is most celebrated: the slaying of the chaos-giant Ymir, the raising of the crust of the earth, and the creation of Midgard. This could not be said more clearly than it is stated in the above *Hávamál* strophe, unless Odin should have specifically mentioned the works he performed after receiving the drink. Therefore, from Mimir's fountain and from Mimir's hand, Odin has received his creative power and his wisdom. We are thus also able to understand why Odin regarded this first drink from Odhrerir so immensely important that he could resolve to subject himself to the sufferings which are mentioned in strophes 138 and 139. But when Odin, by a single drink from Mimir's fountain, is endowed with creative power and wisdom, how can the conclusion be evaded, that the myth regarded Mimir as endowed with Promethean power, since it makes him the possessor of the precious fountain, makes him drink therefrom every day, and places him nearer to the deepest source and oldest activity of these forces in the universe than Odin himself? The given and more instantaneous power, thanks to which Odin was made able to form the upper world, came from the lower world and from Mimir. The world-tree has also grown out of the lower world and is Mimir's tree, and receives its value from his hands. Thus the creative power with which the dwarf-list in *Völuspá* endowed the "mead-drinker" is rediscovered in Mimir. It is, therefore, perfectly logical when the mythology makes him its first smith and chief artist, and keeper of treasures and the ruler of a group of dwarves, underground artists, for originally these were and remained creative forces personified, just as *Rigveda*'s Ribhus, who smithied flowers, and grass, and animals, and opened the veins of the earth for fertilizing streams, while they at the same time made implements and weapons.

That Mimir was the profound counsellor and faithful friend of the Aesir has already been shown. Thus, in Mimir, we discover Modsognir's governing position among the artists, his creative activity, and his friendly relation to the gods.

In the Norse sagas of the Middle Ages, Dvalin, created by Modsognir, is remembered as an extraordinary artist. There he is said to have assisted in the fashioning of the sword Tyrfing (*Fornaldarsögur, Hervarar saga* ch. 4- *nema sverð seljið, það er sló Dvalinn*), of Freyja's splendid ornament Brisingamen, celebrated also in Anglo-Saxon poetry (*Fornald.*, *Sörla þáttur* ch. 1). In the Snöfrid song, which is attributed to Harald Fairhair, the *drapa* is likened unto a work of art, which rings forth from beneath the fingers of Dvalin (*hrynir fram úr Dvalin's greip* ; *Flateybók.*, I. 582).<sup>1</sup> This beautiful poetical figure is all the more appropriately applied, since Dvalin was not only the producer of the beautiful works of the smith, but also sage and skald. He was one of the few chosen ones in time's morning who were permitted to drink of Mimir's mead, which therefore is called his drink (*Dvalins drykkir* - *Skáldskaparmál* 10).<sup>2</sup>

But, in the earliest antiquity, no one partook of this drink who did not get it from Mimir himself.

Dvalin is one of the most ancient rune-masters, one of those who brought the knowledge of runes to those beings of creation who were endowed with reason (*Hávamál* 143). But all knowledge of runes came originally from Mimir. As skald and runic scholar, Dvalin, therefore, stood in the relation of disciple under the ruler of the lower world.

The myth in regard to the runes (cp. No. 26) mentioned three apprentices, who afterwards each spread the knowledge of runes among his own class of beings. Odin, who in the beginning was ignorant of the mighty and beneficent rune-songs (*Hávamál* 138-143), was Mimir's chief disciple by birth, and taught the knowledge of runes among his kinsmen, the Aesir (*Hávamál* 143), and among men, his protégés (*Sigurdrífumál* 18 - *sumar hafa mennskir menn*).<sup>3</sup> The other disciples were Dain (*Dáinn*) and Dvalin (*Dvalinn*). Dain, like Dvalin, is an artist created by Modsognir (*Völuspá* 11, *Hauksbók* and *Gylfaginning*). He is mentioned side by side with Dvalin, and like him he has tasted the mead of poesy (*munnvigg Dáins* - *Fornmanna Saga*, V. 209).<sup>4</sup> Dain and Dvalin taught the runes to their clans, that is, to elves and dwarves (*Hávamál* 143). Nor were the giants neglected. They learned the runes from *Ásviðr*. Since the other teachers of runes belong to the clans, to which they teach the knowledge of runes - "Odin among Aesir, Dain among elves, Dvalin among dwarves" - there can be no danger of making a mistake, if we assume that *Ásviðr* was a giant. And as Mimir himself is a giant, and as the name *Ásviðr* (= *Ásvinr*) means Asa-friend, and as no one - particularly no one among the giants - has so much right as Mimir to this epithet, which has its counterpart in Odin's epithet,

<sup>1</sup> This is one of two stanzas attributed to the legendary King Harald Hair-fair. It is found in *Flateyjarbók*, and is supposed to be the first stanza of a poem "*Snjófríðardrápa*." Because of its meter, this stanza is thought to have been composed by the Icelandic poet Ormr Steinþórsson. The meaning of *Dvalins greip*, "Dvalin's grip" is unclear.

<sup>2</sup> This is a normal kenning for poetry meaning "drink of dwarves" and not a specific reference to Dvalin.

<sup>3</sup> "some are with living men."

<sup>4</sup> *Fornmanna Sögur* volume 5, pages 155- 242 contain additions to *Ólaf's sögu helga*. Page 209 records a verse composed by the poet Sighvat, preserved in the *Flateybók*. The text of the stanza is unsound, and impossible to understand without emendation. The simplest emendation is possibly: *munvágs Dáins kunna* or *munnvágs Dáins kunna* meaning "soul-sea of *Dáinn*; passion-sea of *Dáinn*" or "mouth-sea of *Dáinn*", both being normal kennings for poetry meaning "drink of dwarves". The reading *munnvigg Dáins* ("mouth-horse of *Dáinn*") is meaningless.

*Míms vinr* (Mimir's friend), then caution dictates that we keep open the highly probable possibility that Mimir himself is meant by *Ásviðr*.

All that has here been stated about Dvalin shows that the mythology has referred him to a place within the domain of Mimir's activity. We have still to point out two statements in regard to him. Sol is said to have been his *leika* (*Alvíssmál* 16 - *kalla dvergar Dvalins leika*; cp. *Nafnapulur*). *Leika*, as a feminine word and referring to a personal object, means a young girl, a maiden, whom one keeps at his side, and in whose amusement one takes part at least as a spectator. The examples which we have of the use of the word indicate that the *leika* herself, and the person whose *leika* she is, are presupposed to have the same home. Sisters are called *leikur*, since they live together. Parents can call a foster-daughter their *leika*. In the neuter gender, *leika* means a plaything, a doll or toy, and even in this sense it can rhetorically be applied to a person.

In the same manner as Sol is called Dvalin's *leika*, so the son of Nat and Delling, Dag, is called *leikr Dvalins*, the lad or youth with whom Dvalin amused himself (*Hrafnagaldur Óðins* 24.)<sup>5</sup>

We have here found two points of contact between the mythic characters Dvalin and Delling. Dag, who is Dvalin's *leikr*, is Delling's son. Delling is the watchman of the castle of the *ásmegir*, which Dvalin's artists decorated.

Thus the whole group of persons among whom Dvalin is placed - Mimir, who is his teacher; Sol, who is his *leika*; Dag, who is his *leikr*; Nott, who is the mother of his *leikr*; Delling, who is the father of his *leikr* - have their dwellings in Mimir's domain, and belong to the subterranean class of the numina of Germanic mythology.

From regions situated below Midgard's horizon, Nott, Sol, and Dag draw their chariots upon the heavens. On the eastern border of the lower world is the point of departure for their regular journeys over the heavens of the upper world ("the upper heavens," *upphiminn* - *Völuspá* 3; *Vafþrúðnismál* 20, and elsewhere; *uppheimur* - *Alvíssmál* 12). Nott has her home and, as shall be shown hereafter, her birthplace in dales beneath the ash Yggdrasil. There she takes her rest after the circuit of her journey has been completed. In the lower world, Sol and Nott's son, Dag, also have their halls where they take their rest. But where Delling's wife and son have their dwellings there we should also look for Delling's own abode. As the husband of Nott and the father of Dag, Delling occupies the same place among the divinities of nature as the dawn and the glow of sunrise among the phenomena of nature. And outside the doors of Delling, the king of dawn, mythology has also located the dwarf *Þjóðrerir* ("he who moves the people"), who sings songs of awakening and blessing upon the world: "power to the Aesir, success to the elves, wisdom to Hroptatyr" (*afl gól hann ásum, en álfum frama, hyggju Hroptatý* - *Hávamál* 160).

Unlike his kinsmen, Nott, Dag, and Sol, Delling has no duty which requires him to be absent from home a part of the day. The dawn is merely a reflection on Midgard's eastern horizon from Delling's subterranean dwelling. It can be seen only when Nott leaves the upper heaven and before Dag and Sol have come forward, and it makes no

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<sup>5</sup> The passage reads: *dró leik Dvalins drösull í reið*, "in his chariot, the steed drew Dvalin's playmate."

Here, *leikr Dvalins* might simply refer to Sol. In that case, Dag would be imagined as riding the horse which pulls Sol's chariot. Drösul may be read as a proper name for Dag's horse. See Supplement I, for the full text.

journey around the world. From a mythological standpoint, it would therefore be possible to entrust the keeping of the castle of the *ásmegir* to the elf of dawn. The sunset-glow has another genius, Billing, and he, too, is a creation of Modsognir, if the dwarf-list is correct (*Völuspá*, *Hauksbók*). Sol, who on her way is pursued by two giant monsters in wolf-guise, is secure when she comes to her forest of the Varns<sup>6</sup> behind the western horizon (*til varna viðar* - *Grímnismál* 39). There "in western halls" (*Vegtamskviða* 11) dwells Billing, the chief of the Varns (*Billing veold Vernum*<sup>7</sup> - *Widsith*, *Exeter Book* 320). There rests his daughter Rind bright as the sun on her bed, and his body-guard keeps watch with kindled lights and burning torches (*Hávamál* 97; cp. 100). Thus Billing is the watchman of the western boundary of Mimir's domain, Delling of the eastern.

From this it follows:

that the citadel of the *ásmegir* is situated in Mimir's lower world, and there in the regions of the elf of dawn.

that Svipdag, who has seen the citadel of the *ásmegir*, has made a journey in the lower world before he found Menglad and secured her as his wife.

The conclusion at which we have arrived in regard to the subterranean situation of the citadel is entirely confirmed by the other passage in the *Poetic Edda*, where the *ásmegir* are mentioned by this name. Here we have an opportunity of taking a look within their castle, and of seeing the hall decorated with lavish splendor for the reception of an expected guest.

*Vegtamskviða* 6-7 tells us that Odin, being alarmed in regard to the fate of his son Baldur, made a journey to the lower world for the purpose of learning from a vala what foreboded his favorite son. When Odin had rode through Niflhel and come to green pastures (*foldvegr*), he found there below a hall decorated for festivity, and he asks the prophetess:

*Hveim eru bekkir  
baugum sánir,  
flet fagurleg  
flóuð gulli?"*

"For whom are the benches strewn with rings and the gold beautifully scattered through the rooms?"

And the vala answers:

*Hér stendur Baldri  
um brugginn mjöður,  
skírar veigar,  
liggur skjöldur yfir,  
en ásmegir  
í ofvæni.*

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<sup>6</sup> *Varna viðr* can also be translated "the protecting woods." If the Varns are the name of a people, nowhere else are they named in Old Norse literature.

<sup>7</sup> "Billing ruled the Verns" (written in Old English)

"Here stands for Baldur mead prepared, pure drink; shields are overspread, and the *ásmegir* are waiting impatiently."<sup>8</sup>

Thus there stands in the lower world a hall splendidly decorated awaiting Baldur's arrival. As at other great feasts, the benches are strewn (cp. *breiða bekki*, *strá bekki*, *búa bekki*) with costly things, and the pure wonderful mead of the lower world is already served as an offering to the god. Only the shields which cover the mead-vessels need to be lifted off and all is ready for the feast. Who or what persons have, in so good season, made these preparations? The vala explains when she mentions the *ásmegir* and speaks of their longing for Baldur. It is this longing which has found utterance in the preparations already completed for his reception. Thus, when Baldur gets to the lower world, he is to enter the citadel of the *ásmegir* and there be welcomed by a sacrifice, consisting of the noblest liquid of creation, the strength-giving *soma-madhu* of Germanic mythology. In the old Norse heathen literature, there is only one more place where we find the word *ásmegir*, and that is in *Olaf Tryggvason's saga*, Ch. 16 (*Heimskringla*, st. 119). For the sake of completeness, this passage should also be considered, and when analyzed it, too, sheds much and important light on the subject.

We read in this saga that Jarl Hakon proclaimed throughout his kingdom that the inhabitants should look after their temples and sacrifices, and so was done. Jarl Hakon's house-skald, named Einar Skálaglamm, who in the poem "*Vellekla*" celebrated his deeds and exploits, mentions his interest in the heathen worship, and the good results this was supposed to have produced for the jarl himself and for the welfare of his land. Einar says:

*Og herþarfir hverfa,  
Hlakkar móts, til blóta,  
rauðbríkar fremst rækir  
ríkur, ásmegir, slíku.  
Nú grær jörð sem áðan, etc.*

Put in prose: *Og herþarfir ásmegir hverfa til blóta; ríkur Hlakkar móts rauðbríkar rækir fremst slíku. Nú grær jörð sem áðan.*<sup>9</sup>

Translation: "And the *ásmegir* required in war, turn themselves to the sacrificial feasts. The mighty promoter<sup>10</sup> of the red disk<sup>11</sup> of the meeting of the goddess of war has honor and advantage thereof. Now the earth grows green as before."

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<sup>8</sup> These lines are problematic, as understood by mainstream scholars. Scholars such as B. Sijmons and H. Gering in *Die Lieder der Edda. Kommentar* (1927), who interpret the *ásmegir* as "sons of the Aesir," (i.e. the Aesir themselves) suggest that two lines are missing directly before the statement that the *ásmegir* are "waiting impatiently" (or "in great apprehension"). These hypothetical lines are thought to have described the happy anticipation of the inhabitants of Hel who await Baldur's arrival. *The Poetic Edda Vol. II*, Ursula Dronke, pg. 156.

<sup>9</sup> The common translation of this takes the *ásmegir* to be the Aesir themselves, and reads: "And the Aesir, needed by men, turn to the sacrificial feast; the mighty shield-bearer ("the attender of the red shield of Hlökk's meeting") thereby gains honor. Now the earth grows as of old." Hlökk is a valkyrie, her meeting is a battle.

<sup>10</sup> The noun *rækir* is formed from the verb *rækja* which means "to regard, to take care of, to attend to." The English translation "promoter" only captures a limited sense of this word, and therefore may be somewhat



There can be no doubt that "the *ásmegir* required in war" refer to the men in the territory ruled by Hakon, and that "the mighty promoter of the red disk of the meeting of the goddess of war" refers to the warlike Hakon himself, and thus the meaning of the passage in its plain prose form is simply this: "Hakon's men again devote themselves to the divine sacrifices. This is both an honor and an advantage to Hakon, and the earth again yields bountiful harvests."

To these thoughts the skald has given a garb common in poetry of art, by adapting them to a mythological background. The persons in this background are the *ásmegir* and a mythical being called "the promoter of the red disk," *rauðbríkar rækir*. The persons in the foreground are the men in Hakon's realm and Hakon himself. The persons in the foreground are permitted to borrow the names of the corresponding persons in the background, but on the condition that the borrowed names are furnished with adjectives which emphasize the specific difference between the original mythic lenders and the real borrowers. Thus Hakon's subjects are allowed to borrow the appellation *ásmegir*, but this is then furnished with the adjective *herþarfir* (required in war), whereby they are specifically distinguished from the *ásmegir* of the mythical background, and Hakon on his part is allowed to borrow the appellation *rauðbríkar rækir* (the promoter of the red disk), but this appellation is then furnished with the adjective phrase *Hlakkar móts* (of the meeting of the goddess of war), whereby Hakon is specifically distinguished from the *rauðbríkar rækir* of the mythical background.

The rule also requires that, at least on that point of which the skald happens to be treating, the persons in the mythological background should hold a relation to each other which resembles, and can be compared with, the relation between the persons in the foreground. Hakon's men stand in a subordinate relation to Hakon himself; and so must the *ásmegir* stand in a subordinate relation to that being which is called *rauðbríkar rækir*, providing the skald in this strophe as in the others has produced a tenable parallel. Hakon is, for his subjects, one who exhorts them to piety and fear of the gods. *Rauðbríkar rækir*, his counterpart in the mythological background, must have been the same for his *ásmegir*. Hakon's subjects offer sacrifices, and this is an advantage and an honor to Hakon, and the earth grows green again. In the mythology, the *ásmegir* must have held some sacrificial feast, and must have had advantage and honor, and the earth must have regained its fertility. Only on these conditions is the figure of comparison to the point, and of such a character that it could be presented unchallenged to heathen ears familiar with the myths. It should be added that Einar's greatness as a skald is not least shown by his ability to carry out logically such figures of comparison. We shall give other examples of this later on.

Who then is this *rauðbríkar rækir*, "the promoter of the red disk"?

In the mythological language, *rauðbrík* (red disk) can mean no other object than the sun. Compare *röðull*, which is frequently used to designate the sun. If this needed

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misleading. It can also be translated as "tender" or "attendant." Rydberg translated *rækir* with the Swedish word *främjare*, which means "promoter, supporter." While he is not a sun-god, there is no question that Baldur has solar associations.

<sup>11</sup> Anderson translates this word as "target," however Rydberg used the word "*skifvas*," which means flat piece, disk, slab, or square, which corresponds closely with the ON *brík*." Since the word refers both to a shield and to the sun, I have chosen the word "disk" for the sake of clarity. *Rauðbrík*, red disk, undoubtedly means "shield" and *rauðbríkar rækir*, the attendant of the shield, is understood as a kenning for "warrior." Rydberg postulates a secondary meaning of *rauðbrík*, as the sun.

confirmation, then we have it immediately at hand in the manner in which the word is applied in the continuation of the paraphrase adapted to Hakon. A common paraphrase for the shield is the sun with suitable adjectives, and thus *rauðbrík* is applied here. The adjective phrase is here *Hlakkar móts*, "of the meeting of the war-goddess" (that is, qualifying the red disk), whereby the red disk (= sun), which is an attribute of the mythic *rækir* of the background, is changed to a shield, which becomes an attribute of the historical *rækir* of the foreground, namely Hakon jarl, the mighty warrior. Accordingly, *rauðbríkar rækir* of the mythology must be a masculine divinity standing in some relation to the sun.

This sun-god must also have been upon the whole a god of peace. Had he not been so, but like Hakon a war-loving shield-bearer, then the paraphrase *hlakkar móts rauðbríkar rækir* would equally well designate him as Hakon, and thus it could not be used to designate Hakon alone, as it then would contain neither a *nota characteristica*<sup>12</sup> for him nor a *differentia specifica*<sup>13</sup> to distinguish him from the mythic person, whose epithet *rauðbríkar rækir* he has been allowed to borrow.

This peaceful sun-god must have descended to the lower world and there stood in the most intimate relation with the *ásmegir* referred to the domain of Mimir, for he is represented here as their chief and leader in the path of piety and the fear of the gods. The myth must have mentioned a sacrificial feast or sacrificial feasts celebrated by the *ásmegir*. From this or these sacrificial feasts, the peaceful sun-god must have derived advantage and honor, and thereupon the earth must have regained a fertility, which before had been more or less denied it.

From all this, it follows with certainty that *rauðbríkar rækir* of the mythology is Baldur. The fact suggested by the *Vellekla* strophe analyzed above, namely, that Baldur, physically interpreted, is a solar divinity, the mythological scholars are almost a unit in assuming to be the case on account of the general character of the Baldur myth. Though Baldur was celebrated for heroic deeds, he is substantially a god of peace and, after his descent to the lower world, he is no longer connected with the feuds and dissensions of the upper world. We have already seen that he was received in the lower world with great pomp by the *ásmegir*, who impatiently awaited his arrival, and that they sacrifice to him that bright mead of the lower world, whose wonderfully beneficial and bracing influence shall be discussed below. Soon afterwards, he is visited by Hermod. Already before Baldur's funeral pyre, Hermod upon the fastest of all steeds hastened to find him in the lower world (*Gylfaginning* 49), and Hermod returns from him and Nanna with the ring Draupnir for Odin, and with a veil for the goddess of earth, Fjörgyn-Frigg. The ring from which other rings drop, and the veil which is to beautify the goddess of earth, are symbols of fertility. Baldur, the sun-god, had for a long time before his death been languishing. Now, in the lower world, he is strengthened with the bracing mead of Mimir's domain by the *ásmegir* who gladly give offerings, and the earth regains her green fields.

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<sup>12</sup> a disinquishing characteristic.

<sup>13</sup> a specific difference.

Hakon's men are designated in the strophe as *herþarfir ásmegir*. When they are permitted to borrow the name of the *ásmegir*, then the adjective *herþarfir*, if chosen with the proper care, is to contain a specific distinction between them and the mythological beings whose name they have borrowed. In other words, if the real *ásmegir* were of such a nature that they could be called *herþarfir*, then that adjective would not serve to distinguish Hakon's men from them. The word *herþarfir* means "those who are needed in war," "those who are to be used in war."<sup>14</sup> Consequently, the *ásmegir* are beings who are not to be used in war, beings whose dwelling, environment, and purpose suggest a realm of peace, from which the use of weapons is banished.

Accordingly, the parallel presented in Einar's strophe, which we have now discussed, is as follows:

#### MYTHOLOGY:

Peaceful beings of the lower world  
(*ásmegir*),

at the instigation of their chief,

the sun-god Baldur (*rauðbríkar rækir*)

go to offer sacrifices

The peaceful Baldur is thereby benefited.

The earth grows green again.

#### HISTORY:

Warlike inhabitants of the earth (*herþarfir ásmegir*),

at the instigation of their chief,

the shield's Baldur, Hakon (*Hlakkar móts rauðbríkar rækir*),

go to offer sacrifices.

The shield's Baldur (Hakon) is thereby benefited.

The earth grows green again

In the background which Einar has given to his poetical paraphrase, we thus have the myth telling how the sun-god Baldur, on his descent to the lower world, was strengthened by the soma-sacrifice brought him by the *ásmegir*, and how he sent back with Hermod the treasures of fertility which had gone with him and Nanna to the lower world, and which restored the fertility of the earth.

<sup>14</sup> Because of the context of this verse, *herþarfir* is commonly taken to mean "required by men" even though compound words with the prefix *her-* most frequently refer to war and battle (cp. *Her-fjöturr*, war fetter; *her-maðr*, a warrior; *her-skip*, warship. Vigfusson-Cleasby Dictionary, p. 259) *Herr* can mean a "host" but also a "people" in general.

To what category of beings do the *ásmegir* then belong? We have seen the word applied as a technical term in a restricted sense. With reference to its definition, the possibilities of application which the word supplies are:

(1) The word may be used in the purely physical sense of Asa-sons, Asa-descendants. In this case, the subterranean *ásmegir* by their very descent would be members of that god-clan that resides in Asgard, and whose father and clan-patriarch is Odin.

(2) The word can be applied to men. They are the children of the Asa-father in a double sense: the first human pair was created by Odin and his brothers (*Völuspá* 17-18; *Gylfaginning* 9), and their offspring are also in a moral sense Odin's children, as they are subject to his guidance and care. He is Allfather, and the father of succeeding generations (*alföðr*, *aldaföðr*). A word resembling *ásmegir* in character is *ásasynir*, and this is used in *Alvíssmál* 16, in a manner which shows that it does not refer to any of those categories of beings that are called gods (see further, No. 62).<sup>15</sup> The conception of human beings as sons of the gods is also implied in the phrase that embraces all mankind, *megir Heimdallar* (*Völuspá* 1), with which the account of Rig-Heimdall's journeys on the earth and visits to the patriarchs of the various classes is connected.<sup>16</sup>

The true meaning of the word in this case is determined by the fact that the *ásmegir* already belong to the dwellers in the lower world before the death of Baldur, and that Baldur is the first one of the Aesir and sons of Odin who becomes a dweller in the lower world. To this must be added, that if *ásmegir* meant the Aesir, Einar would never have called the inhabitants of Norway, the subjects of jarl Hakon, *herþarfir ásmegir*, for the Aesir are *herþarfir* themselves, and that in the highest degree. They constitute a body of more or less warlike persons, who all have been "needed in conflict" in the wars around Asgard and Midgard, and they all, Baldur included, are gods of war and victory. It would also have been *malapropos*<sup>17</sup> to compare men with Aesir on an occasion when the former were represented as bringing sacrifices to the gods; that is, as persons subordinate to them and in need of their assistance.

Therefore the *ásmegir* are human beings excluded from the surface of the earth, from the mankind which dwell in Midgard, and are inhabitants of the lower world, where they reside in a splendid castle kept by the elf of dawn, Delling, and enjoy the society of Baldur, who descended to Hades. To subterranean human beings refers also *Grímnismál* 31, which says that men (*mennskir menn*) dwell under the roots of Yggdrasil; and *Alvíssmál* 16 (to be compared with 18, 20 *í helju*, and other passages), and *Skírnismál* 34,

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<sup>15</sup> *Sól heitir með mönnum,*      It is called Sol among the men  
*en sunna með goðum,*      but Sunna among the gods,  
*kalla dvergar Dvalins leika,*      the dwarves call it Dvalin's *leika*  
*eygló jötnar,*      the giants ever-glow,  
*álfar fagrahvel,*      the elves fair-wheel,  
*alskír ásasynir.*      the Asa-sons all-bright.

<sup>16</sup> Cp. also *Gylfaginning* 9, in regard to Odin: "*Og fyrir því má hann heita Alföður, að hann er faðir allra goðanna og manna og alls þess, er af honum ok hans krafti var fullgjört.*" And thus he may be called Allfather, because he is the father of all the gods and of man, and of all that was created by him and his power.

<sup>17</sup> inappropriate

which calls them *ásliðar*, a word which Gudbrand Vigfusson has rightly assumed to be identical with *ásmegir*.

Thus it is also demonstrated that the *ásmegir* are identical with the subterranean human persons Lif and Leifthrasir and their descendants in Mimir's grove. The care with which the mythology represents the citadel of the *ásmegir* kept, shown by the fact that the elf Delling, the counterpart of Heimdall in the lower world, has been entrusted with its keeping, is intelligible and proper when we know that it is of the greatest importance to shield Lif and Leifthrasir's dwelling from all ills, sickness, age, and moral evil (see above). It is also a beautiful poetic thought that it is the elf of the morning dawn - he outside of whose door the song of awakening and bliss is sung to the world - who has been appointed to watch those who in the dawn of a new world shall people the earth with virtuous and happy races. That the *ásmegir* in the lower world are permitted to enjoy the society of Baldur is explained by the fact that after Ragnarok Lif and Leifthrasir and their offspring are to accompany Baldur to dwell under his sceptre, and live a blameless life corresponding to his wishes. They are to be his disciples, knowing their master's commandments and having them written in their hearts.

We have now seen that the *ásmegir* already before Baldur's death dwell in Mimir's grove. We have also seen that Svipdag on his journey in the lower world had observed a castle, which he knew belonged to the *ásmegir*. The mythology knows two *fimbul*-winters: the former raged in time's morning, the other is to precede Ragnarok. The former occurred when Freyja, the goddess of fertility, was treacherously delivered into the power of the frost-giants and all the air was blended with corruption (*Völuspá* 25); when there came from the Elivogs stinging, ice-cold arrows of frost, which put men to death and destroyed the greenness of the earth (*Hrafnagaldur Óðins* 13)<sup>18</sup>; when King Snow ruled, and there came a famine in the northern lands which compelled the people to emigrate to the South (Saxo, *Hist.*, Book 8). Svipdag made his journey in the lower world during the time preceding the first *fimbul*-winter.<sup>19</sup> This follows from the fact that it was he who liberated Freyja, the sister of the god of the harvests, from the power of the frost-giants (see Nos. 96-102). Lif and Leifthrasir were accordingly already at that time transferred to Mimir's grove. This ought to have occurred before the earth and her inhabitants were afflicted by physical and moral evil, while there still could be found undefiled men to be saved for the world to come; and we here find that the mythology, so far as the records make it possible for us to investigate the matter, has logically met this claim of poetic justice.

#### 54.

#### THE IRANIAN MYTH CONCERNING MIMIR'S GROVE.

In connection with the efforts to determine the age of the Germanic myths, and their kinship with the other Indo-European (Indo-European) mythologies, the fact deserves attention that the myth in regard to a subterranean grove and the human beings

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<sup>18</sup> See Supplement I for the full text.

<sup>19</sup> This statement is incorrect. Svipdag made his journey to the underworld near the end of the first *fimbul*-winter. The purpose of his journey is to retrieve the sword made by Völund, which Mimir obtained when he captured Völund. As Völund's magic was the prime cause of the *fimbul*-winter, his capture marked the beginning of the end of the terrible cold.

there preserved for a future regenerated world is also found among the Iranians, an Asiatic race akin to the Teutons. The similarity between the Germanic and Iranian traditions is so conspicuous that the question is irresistible - Whether it is not originally, from the standpoint of historical descent, one and the same myth, which, but little affected by time, has been preserved by the Germanic Indo-Europeans around the Baltic, and by the Iranian Indo-Europeans in Bactria<sup>20</sup> and Persia? But the answer to the question requires the greatest caution. The psychological similarity of races may, on account of the limitations of the human fancy, and in the midst of similar conditions and environments, create myths which resemble each other, although they were produced spontaneously by different races in different parts of the earth. This may happen in the same manner as primitive implements, tools, and dwellings which resemble each other may have been invented and used by races far separated from each other, not by the one learning from the other how these things were to be made, nor on account of a common descent in antiquity. The similarity is the result of similar circumstances. It was the same want which was to be satisfied; the same human logic found the manner of satisfying the want; the same materials offered themselves for the accomplishment of the end, and the same universal conceptions of form were active in the development of the problems. Comparative mythology will never become a science in the strict sense of this word before it ceases to build hypotheses on a solitary similarity, or even on several or many resemblances between mythological systems geographically separated, unless these resemblances unite themselves and form a whole, a mythical unity, and unless it appears that this mythical unity in turn enters as an element into a greater complexity, which is similar in fundamental structure and similar in its characteristic details. Especially should this rule be strictly observed when we compare the myths of peoples who neither by race nor language can be traced back to a prehistoric unity. But it is best not to relax the severity of the rules even when we compare the myths of peoples who, like the Teutons, the Iranians, and the *Rigveda*-Indo-Europeans, have the same origin and same language; who through centuries, and even long after their separation, have handed down from generation to generation similar mythological conceptions and mythical traditions. I trust that, as this work of mine gradually progresses, a sufficient material of evidence for the solution of the above problem will be placed in the hands of my readers. I now make a beginning of this by presenting the Iranian myth concerning Yima's grove and the subterranean human beings transferred to it.

In the ancient Iranian religious documents, Yima<sup>21</sup> is a holy and mighty ancient being, who, however, does not belong to the number of celestial divinities which surround the highest god, Ahura Mazda, but must be counted among "the mortals," to the oldest seers and prophets of antiquity. A hymn of sacrifice, dedicated to the sacred mead, the liquid of inspiration (*homa*, the *soma* and *soma-madhu* of the *Rigveda*-Indo-Europeans, the last word being the same as our word *mead*), relates that Yima and his father were the first to prepare the mead of inspiration for the material world; that he, Yima, was the richest in honor of all who had been born, and that he of all mortals most resembled the sun. In his kingdom, there was neither cold nor heat, neither frost nor drought, neither aging nor death. A father by the side of his son resembled, like the son, a

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<sup>20</sup> An ancient country in southwest Asia between the Hindu Kush mountain range and the Oxus river.

<sup>21</sup> Rydberg renders this *Jima*, I have chosen Yima following the rendering in English translations.

youth of fifteen years. The evil created by the demons did not cross the boundaries of Yima's world (*The Younger Yasna*, ch. 9).<sup>22</sup>

Yima was the favorite of Ahura Mazda, the highest god. Still he had a will of his own. The first mortal with whom Ahura Mazda talked was Yima, and he taught him the true faith, and desired that Yima should spread it among the mortals. But Yima answered: "I was not born, I was not taught to be the preacher and the bearer of thy law" (*Vendidad, Fargard 2, I, 3*).<sup>23</sup> [In this manner, it is explained why the true doctrine did not become known among men before the reformer Zarathustra came, and why Yima, the possessor of the mead of inspiration, nevertheless, was in possession of the true wisdom.]

It is mentioned (in *Gôsh Yahst* and *Râm Yasht*)<sup>24</sup> that Yima held two beings in honor, which did not belong to Ahura Mazda's celestial circle, but were regarded as worthy of worship. These two were:

1. The cow (Gosh), that lived in the beginning of time, and whose blood, when she was slain, fertilized the earth with the seed of life.

2. Vajush, the heavenly breeze. He is identical with the ruler of the air and wind in *Rigveda*, the mighty god *Vâyu-Vâta*.

In regard to the origin and purpose of the kingdom ruled by Yima, in which neither frost nor drought, nor aging nor death, nor moral evil, can enter, *Vendidad* relates the following:<sup>25</sup>

*Zend-Avesta.*  
*Fargard 2, I*

21. The Maker Ahura Mazda, of high renown in the *Airyana Vaejo*, by the good river *Daitya*; called together a meeting of the celestial gods...

To that meeting came the fair Yima, the good shepherd of high renown in the *Airyana Vaejo*, by the good river *Daitya*; he came together with the best of the mortals.

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<sup>22</sup> Yasna, ch. 9, verse 5. "In the reign of Yima, swift of motion, was there neither cold nor heat, there was neither age nor death, nor envy demon-made. Like fifteen yearlings walked the two forth, son and father, in their stature and their form, so long as Yima, son of Vivanghvant ruled, he of the many herds!" L.H. Mills translation.

<sup>23</sup> I have chosen to follow a direct translation of the passage rather than a passage translated from Zend into English, into Swedish, and back into English. This passage, and those hereafter are from *The Sacred Books of the East*, edited by F. Max Müller, *The Zend-Avesta* in 3 volumes, translated by James Darmesteter and L.H. Mills; vol. 4 *The Zend-Avesta* part 1, the *Vendidad* Oxford University Press, 1887.

The *Zend-Avesta* consists of the *Avesta* and its later commentary, known as the *Zend*, written in a different language. Together, they form the basis of the Zoroastrian religion, whose chief deity is Ahura Mazda. The *Avesta* proper, written in the Zend language, is a collection of fragments of an older Iranian religious document, largely lost during a war with Alexander the Great. It contains the *Vendidad*, the *Viserad*, and the *Yasna*, each generally accompanied by its later Pahlavi translation.

<sup>24</sup> The Yashts are found in the *Khorda Avesta*, The Book of Common Prayer.

<sup>25</sup> Rydberg only provided the outlines of the contents here from the interpretation found in Haug-West's *Essays on the Sacred Language of the Parsis* (London, 1878). I have supplemented the text with passages from Darmesteter's translation to give a more vivid description of Yima's garden, which springs from the same soil as Mimir's grove in our mythology. Where the translations deviate, I have followed the sense of the Haug-West translation.

22. And Ahura Mazda spake unto Yima, saying: 'O fair Yima, Upon the material world the fatal winters are about to fall, that shall bring the fierce, foul frost; upon the material world the fatal winters are going to fall, that shall make snow-flakes fall thick, even an *aredvi* deep on the highest tops of mountains.'<sup>26</sup>

23. From three places, beasts should be driven to well-enclosed shelters; those that live in the wilderness, and those that live on the tops of the mountains, and those that live in the bosom of the dale, under the shelter of stables.

24. Before the winter, this land had meadows. Before that time the water (the rain) was wont to flow over it, and the snow to melt; and there was found, in the material world, water-soaked places, in which were visible the footprints of the cattle and their offspring.

25. Therefore make thee an enclosure, long as a riding-ground on every side of the square,<sup>27</sup> and thither bring the seeds of sheep and oxen, of men, of dogs, of birds, and of blazing red fires. Therefore, make thee an enclosure, long as a riding-ground on every side of the square, to be an abode for man; an enclosure, long as a riding-ground on every side of the square, for oxen and sheep.

26. There thou shalt make waters flow in a bed a *hathra* long; there thou shalt settle birds, on the green that never fades, with food that never fails. There thou shalt establish dwelling-places, consisting of a house with a balcony, a courtyard, and as gallery.<sup>28</sup>

27. Thither thou shalt bring the seeds of men and women, of the greatest, best, and finest on this earth; thither thou shalt bring the seeds of every kind of cattle, of the greatest, best, and finest on this earth.

28. Thither thou shalt bring the seed of every kind of Tree, of the greatest, best, and most fragrant on this earth. Thither thou shalt bring the seed of every kind of fruit, the best tasting and the most fragrant on this earth. All those seeds shalt thou bring, two of every kind, to be kept inexhaustible there, so long as those men shall stay in the enclosure.

29. There shall be no humpbacked, none bulged forward there; no impotent, no lunatic; no poverty, no lying; no meanness, no jealousy; no one with decayed tooth, no leprous to be confined, nor any of the brands wherewith Angra Mainyu stamps the bodies of mortals.

30. In the largest part of the place thou shalt make nine streets, six in the middle part, three in the smallest. To the streets of the largest part thou shalt bring a thousand seeds of men and women; to the streets of the middle part, six hundred; to the streets of the smallest part, three hundred. That enclosure thou shalt seal up with the golden ring, and thou shalt make a door, and a window self-shining within.

33. And Yima made an enclosure, long as a riding-ground on every side of the square. There he brought the seeds of sheep and oxen, of men, of dogs, of birds, and of red blazing fires. He made an enclosure, long as a riding-ground on every side of the

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<sup>26</sup> The Zend commentary reads: "Even where it (the snow) is least, it will be one *Vitasti*, two fingers deep" (i.e. fourteen fingers deep).

<sup>27</sup> The Zend commentary reads: "Two *hathras* long on every side." (A *hathra* roughly corresponds to an English mile).

<sup>28</sup> The meaning of this passage is uncertain. Here I have followed Darmesteter. Haug-West reads: "Gather water there in a canal, the length of one *hathra*. Place the landmarks there on a gold-colored spot, furnished with imperishable nourishment. Put up a house there of mats and poles, with roof and walls."



square, to be an abode for men; an enclosure, long as a riding-ground on every side of the square, to be a fold for flocks.

39. O Maker of the material world, thou Holy One! What are the lights that give light in the enclosure which Yima made?

40. Ahura Mazda answered: There are uncreated lights and created lights.<sup>29</sup> The one thing missed there is the sight of the stars, the moon, and the sun, and a year seems only as a day.

41. Every fortieth year, to every couple two are born, a male and a female. And thus it is for every sort of beast. And the men in the enclosure which Yima made live the happiest life.<sup>30</sup>

42. O Maker of the material world, thou Holy One! Who is he who brought the Religion of Mazda into the enclosure which Yima made? Ahura Mazda answered: 'It was the bird Karshipta, O holy Zarathushtra!'

Yima's garden has accordingly been formed in connection with a terrible winter, which visited the earth in the first period of time, and it was planned to preserve that which is noblest and fairest and most useful within the kingdoms of organic beings. That the garden is situated in the lower world is not expressly stated in the above-quoted passages from *Vendidad*; though this seems to be presupposed by what is stated; for the stars, sun, and moon do not show themselves in Yima's garden excepting after long, defined intervals - at their rising and setting; and as the surface of the earth is devastated by the unparalleled frost, and as the valleys are no more protected therefrom than the mountains, we cannot without grave doubts conceive the garden as situated in the upper world. That it is subterranean is, however, expressly stated in *Bundahishn*, ch. 29, 14,<sup>31</sup> where it is located under the mountain Yimakan; and that it, in the oldest period of the myth, was looked upon as subterranean follows from the fact that the Yima of the ancient Iranian records is identical with *Rigveda*'s Yama, whose domain and the scene of whose activities is the lower world, the kingdom of death.

As Yima's enclosed garden was established on account of the *fimbul*-winter, which occurred in time's morning, it continues to exist after the close of the winter, and preserves through all the historical ages those treasures of uncorrupted men, animals, and plants which in the beginning of time were collected there. The purpose of this is mentioned in *Menog-i khard*, a sort of catechism of the legends and morals of the Avesta religion (Chap. 27, 24-31). There it is said that after the conflagration of the world, and in the beginning of the regeneration, the garden which Yima made shall open its gate, and from there men, animals, and plants shall once more fill the devastated earth:

24. The advantage from the well-flocked Yim, son of Vivanghat, was this,

25. That an immortality of six hundred years, six months, and sixteen days is provided by him for the creatures and creation, of every kind, of the creator Ohrmazd (Ahura Mazda);

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<sup>29</sup> The commentary reads: "The uncreated light shines from above; all the created lights shine from below."

<sup>30</sup> The commentary reads: "They live there for 150 years; some say, they never die."

<sup>31</sup> "The enclosure formed by Yim is in the middle of Pars, in Sruva; thus, they say, that what Yim formed is below Mount Yimakan." E. W. West translation, *Sacred Books of the East*, Volume 5, Oxford University Press (1897).

26. And they are made unsuffering, undecaying, and undisturbed.
27. Secondly, this, that the enclosure formed by Yim [Jamshed] was made by him;
28. And when that rain of Malkos occurs -- since it is declared in revelation that mankind and the other creatures and creations of Ohrmazd, the Lord, are mostly those which shall perish.
29. One shall afterwards open the gate of that enclosure formed by Yim,
30. And the people and cattle, and other creatures and creations of the creator Ohrmazd, shall come out from that enclosure,
31. And arrange the world again.<sup>32</sup>

The lower world, where Yima, according to the ancient Iranian records, founded this remarkable citadel, is Yama's kingdom, according to *Rigveda*, and also the kingdom of death, of which Yama is king (*Rigv.*, X. 16, 9; cp. I. 35, 6, and other passages). It is a glorious country, with inexhaustible fountains, and there is the home of the imperishable light (*Rigv.*, IX. 7, 8; IX. 113, 8). Yama dwells under a tree "with broad leaves." There he gathers around the goblet of mead the ancient fathers, and there he drinks with the gods (*Rigv.*, X. 135,1).

Roth,<sup>33</sup> and after him Abel Bergaigne (*Religion Ved.*, I. 88 ff.),<sup>34</sup> regard Yama and Manu, mentioned in *Rigveda*, as identical. There are strong reasons for the assumption, so far as certain passages of *Rigveda* are concerned; while other passages, particularly those which mention Manu by the side of Bhriga, refer to an ancient patriarch of human descent. If the derivation of the word *Mimir*, *Mimi*, pointed out by several linguists, last by Müllenhoff (*Deutsche Alt.*, Vol. V. 105, 106),<sup>35</sup> is correct, then it is originally the same name as Manu, and like it is to be referred to the idea of thinking, remembering.

What the Indo-European-Asiatic myth here given has in common with the Germanic one concerning the subterranean persons in Mimir's grove can be summarized in the following words:

The lower world has a ruler, who does not belong to the group of immortal celestial beings, but enjoys the most friendly relations with the godhead, and is the possessor of great wisdom. In his kingdom flow inexhaustible fountains, and a tree grown out of its soil spreads its foliage over his dwelling, where he serves the mead of inspiration, which the gods are fond of and which he was the first to prepare. A terrible winter threatened to destroy everything on the surface of the earth. Then, on his domain, the ruler of the lower world built a well-fortified citadel, within which neither destructive storms, nor physical ills, nor moral evil, nor sickness, nor aging, nor death can come. There he transferred the best and fairest human beings to be found on earth, and decorated the enclosed garden with the most beautiful and useful trees and plants. The purpose of this garden is not simply to protect the beings collected there during the great winter; they are to remain there through all historical ages. When these come to an end,

<sup>32</sup> E. W. West translation, *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. 24, Oxford University Press. (1880)

<sup>33</sup> Rudolf von Roth, 1821-1895.

<sup>34</sup> Abel Bergaigne, 1838-1888. *La religion védique d'après les hymnes du Rig-Vêda*. Paris, F. Vieweg, 1878-97.

<sup>35</sup> Karl Victor Müllenhoff, 1818-1884. *Zeitschrift für deutsches altertum und deutsche litteratur*. Leipzig, Weidmann, 1841-53; *Deutsche Altertumskunde*. 5. 1883-1891

there comes a great conflagration and then a regeneration of the world. The renewed earth is to be filled with the beings who have been protected by the subterranean citadel. The people who live there have an instructor in the pure worship of the gods and in the precepts of morality, and in accordance with these precepts they are to live a just and happy life forever.

It should be added that the two beings whom the Iranian ruler of the lower world is said to have honored are found or have equivalents in the Germanic mythology. Both are there put in theogonic connection with Mimir. The one is the celestial lord of the wind, *Vayush*, Rigveda's *Vāyu-Vāta*. *Vāta* is thought to be the same name as *Wodan*, *Odinn* (Zimmer, Haupt's *Zeitschr.*, 1875; cp. Mannhardt and Kaegi)<sup>36</sup>. At all events, *Vāta*'s tasks are the same as Odin's. The other is the primeval cow, whose Norse name or epithet, Audhumla is preserved in *Gylfaginning* 6. Audhumla liberates from the frost-stones in Chaos Buri, the progenitor of the Aesir race, and his son Bor is married to Mimir's sister Bestla, and with her becomes the father of Odin (*Hávamál* 140; *Gylfaginning* 6).

## 55.

### THE PURPOSE OF MIMIR'S GROVE IN THE REGENERATION OF THE WORLD.

We now know the purpose of *Ódáinsakur*, Mimir's land and Mimir's grove in the world-plan of our mythology. We know who the inhabitants of the grove are, and why they, though dwellers in the lower world, must be living persons, who did not come there through the gate of death. They must be living persons of flesh and blood, since the human race of the regenerated earth must be the same.

Still the purpose of Mimir's land is not limited to being a protection for the fathers of the future world against moral and physical corruption, through this epoch of the world, and a seminary where Baldur educates them in virtue and piety. The grove protects, as we have seen, the *ásmegir* during Ragnarok, whose flames do not penetrate therein. Thus the grove, and the land in which it is situated, exist after the flames of Ragnarok are extinguished. Was it thought that the grove after the regeneration was to continue in the lower world and there stand uninhabited, abandoned, desolate, and without a purpose in the future existence of gods, men, and things?

The last moments of the existence of the crust of the old earth are described as a chaotic condition in which all elements are confused with each other. The sea rises, overflows the earth sinking beneath its billows, and the crests of its waves aspire to heaven itself (cp. *Völuspá* 58:2 - *sígur fold í mar*, with *Völuspá in skamma* 14:1-3 - *Haf gengur hríðum við himin sjálfan, líður lönd yfir*). The atmosphere, usurped by the sea, disappears, as it were (*loft bilar* - *Völuspá in skamma* 14:4). Its snow and winds (*Völuspá in skamma* 14:5-6 - *snjóar og snarir vindar*) are blended with water and fire, and form

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<sup>36</sup> Heinrich Zimmer, 1851-1910. The reference appears to be to a journal published by Haupt. Wilhelm Mannhardt, 1831-1880 *Germanische Mythen Forschungen*, 1858; *Zeitschr. f. deutsch. Myth Wald- und Feldkulte*, 1875. Adolf Kaegi, 1849-1923. *Der Rigveda, die älteste Literatur der Inder*. Leipzig, O. Schulze, 1881. (*The Rigveda: the oldest literature of the Indians*: Authorized translation with additions to the notes by R. Arrowsmith. Published Boston 1902.)

with them heated vapors, which "play" against the vault of heaven (*Völuspá* 58:7-8 - *leikur hár hiti við himin sjálfan*). One of the reasons why the fancy has made all the forces and elements of nature thus contend and blend was doubtless to furnish a sufficiently good cause for the dissolution and disappearance of the burnt crust of the earth. At all events, the earth is gone when the rage of the elements is subdued, and thus it is not impediment to the act of regeneration which takes its beginning beneath the waves.

This act of regeneration consists in the rising from the depths of the sea of a new earth, which on its very rising possesses living beings and is clothed in green. The fact that it, while yet below the sea, could be a home for beings which need air in order to breathe and exist, is not necessarily to be regarded as a miracle in mythology. Our ancestors only needed to have seen an air-bubble rise to the surface of the water in order to draw the conclusion that air can be found under the water without mixing with it, but with the power of pushing water away while it rises to the surface. Like the old earth, the earth rising from the sea has the necessary atmosphere around it. Under all circumstances, the seeress in *Völuspá* 60 sees after Ragnarok -

... upp koma  
öðru sinni  
jörð úr ægi  
iðja græna.

...come up  
a second time  
earth out of the sea  
iðja green.

The earth risen from the deep has mountains and cascades, which, from their fountains in the fells, hasten to the sea. The waterfalls contain fishes, and above them soars the eagle seeking its prey (*Völuspá* 60:5-8). The eagle cannot be a survivor of the beings of the old earth. It cannot have endured in an atmosphere full of fire and steam, nor is there any reason why the mythology should spare the eagle among all the creatures of the old earth. It is, therefore, of the same origin as the mountains, the cascades, and the imperishable vegetation which suddenly came to the surface.

The earth risen from the sea also contains human beings, namely, Lif and Leifthrasir, and their offspring. Mythology did not need to have recourse to any hocus-pocus to get them there. The earth risen from the sea had been the lower world before it came out of the deep, and a paradise-region in the lower world had for centuries been the abode of Lif and Leifthrasir. It is more than unnecessary to imagine that the lower world with this Paradise was duplicated by another with a similar Paradise, and that the living creatures on the former were by some magic manipulation transferred to the latter. Mythology has its miracles, but it also has its logic. As its object is to be trusted, it tries to be as probable and consistent with its premises as possible. It resorts to miracles and magic only when it is necessary, not otherwise.

Among the mountains which rise on the new earth are found those which are called *Niða fjöll* (*Völuspá* 67), Nidi's mountains. The very name *Niði* suggests the lower world. It means the "lower one." Among the abodes of Hades, mentioned in *Völuspá*, there is also a hall of gold on Nidi's plains (*á Niða völlum* - *Völuspá* 37), and from *Sólarljóð* (56) we learn - a statement confirmed by much older records - that Nidi is identical with Mimir (see No. 87). Thus, Nidi's mountains are situated on Mimir's fields. *Völuspá's* seeress discovers on the rejuvenated earth Nidhogg, the corpse-eating demon of the lower world, flying, with dead bodies under his wings, away from the rocks, where he from time immemorial had had his abode, and from which he

carried his prey to Nastrond (*Völuspá* 38-39). There are no more dead bodies to be had for him, and his task is done. Whether the last line of *Völuspá* has reference to Nidhogg or not, when it speaks of some one "who must sink," cannot be determined. Müllenhoff (*Deutsche Alt.*) assumes this to be the case, and he is probably right; but as the text has *hún* (she) not *hann* (he) [*nú mun hún sökkvast*], and as I, in this work, do not base anything even on the most probable text emendation, this question is set aside, and the more so, since *Völuspá*'s description of the regenerated earth under all circumstances shows that Nidhogg has nothing there to do but to fly thence and disappear. The existence of Níð's mountains on the new earth confirms the fact that it is identical with Mimir's former lower world, and that Lif and Leifþrasir did not need to move from one world to another in order to get to the daylight of their final destination.

*Völuspá* gives one more proof of this.

In their youth, free from care, the Aesir played with a wonderful *tafl* game.<sup>1</sup> But they had it only *í árdaga*, in the earliest time (*Völuspá* 8, 61). Afterwards, they must in some way or other have lost it. The Icelandic sagas of the Middle Ages have remembered this *tafl* game, and there we learn, partly that its wonderful character consisted in the fact that it could itself take part in the game and move the pieces, and partly that it was preserved in the lower world, and that Gudmund-Mimir was in the habit of playing *tafl* (*Fornaldarsögur: Saga Heiðreks konungs ins vitra* ch. 6; *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks konungs* ch. 5; *Sörla saga sterka* ch. 4; *Egils saga einhenda ok Ásmundar berserjabana* chs. 12, 13, 15; In the last passages, the game is mentioned in connection with another subterranean treasure, the horn.<sup>2</sup>) If, now, the mythology had no special reason for bringing the *tafl* game from the lower world before Ragnarok, then they naturally should be found on the risen earth, if the latter was Mimir's domain before. *Völuspá* 61 also relates that they were found in its grass:

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<sup>1</sup> An ancient Northern European board game, dated before 400 AD, usually played by two players on a checkered board of various size. The game pieces consisted of the tablemen or pawns, generally 24 in number, and a single king. The player with the king had half the number of men as his opponent. The king was placed in the center, surrounded by his men. These were surrounded by the men of the opposing side. All pieces moved in solid straight lines (like the rook in chess) and pieces were captured by surrounding them on two sides. The king could not participate in captures. The game was won when either the king was surrounded by the enemy or reached the edge of the board.

<sup>2</sup> Ch. 12 " In order to save my life, I should go to the underworld and retrieve three precious things: a cloak that will not burn in fire, a horn that can never be emptied by drinking from it, and a *tafl* game that plays by itself, when someone challenges it."

*Par munu eftir  
undursamlegar  
gullnar töflur  
í grasi finnast.*

There, once again, will  
the wonderous  
golden tablemen  
be found in the grass.

Thus: the *tafl* game was refound in the grass, in the meadows of the renewed earth, having from the earliest time been preserved in Mimir's realm. Lif and Leifthrasir are found after Ragnarok on the earth of the regenerated world, having had their abode there in Mimir's domain for a long time. Níði's mountains, and Nidhogg with them, have been raised out of the sea, together with the rejuvenated earth, since these mountains are located in Mimir's realm. The earth of the new era -- the era of virtue and bliss -- although concealed, has existed through thousands of years below the sin-stained earth, as the kernel within the shell.

Remark: *Völuspá* 60 calls the earth rising from the sea *iðja græna*:

*Sér hún upp koma  
öðru sinni  
jörð úr ægi  
iðja græna.*

She sees come up  
A second time  
Earth out of the sea  
*iðja* green.

The common interpretation is *iðjagræna*, "the ever green" or "very green," and this harmonizes well with the idea preserved in the sagas mentioned above, where it was stated that the winter was not able to devastate Guðmund-Mimir's domain. Thus the idea contained in the expression *óskorið ax Haddingja lands*<sup>1</sup> (see Nos. 72, 73) recurs in *Völuspá*'s statement that the fields unsown yield harvests in the new earth. Meanwhile the composition *iðja-græna* has a perfectly abnormal appearance, and awakens suspicion. Müllenhoff (*Deutsche Alt.*) reads *iðja, græna*, and translates "the fresh, the green." As a conjecture, and without basing anything on the assumption, I may be permitted to present the possibility that *iðja* is an old genitive plural of *iða*, an eddying body of water. *Iða* has originally had a *j* in the stem (it is related to *ið* and *iði*), and this *j* must also have been heard in the inflections. From various metaphors in the old skalds, we learn that they conceived the fountains of the lower world as roaring and in commotion (e.g., *Óðrerir alda þýtr* in Einar Skálaglam and *Boðnar bára tér vaxa* in the same skald).<sup>2</sup> If the conjecture is as correct as it seems probable, then the new earth is characterized as "the green earth of the eddying fountains," and the fountains are those famous three which water the roots of the world-tree.<sup>3</sup>

## 56.

### THE COSMOGRAPHY. CRITICISM ON GYLFAGINNING'S COSMOGRAPHY.

<sup>1</sup> "uncut corn ear of the Hadding land." *Guðrúnakviða* II, 22

<sup>2</sup> "Óðrerir's wave roars," "Boðn's wave begins to swell," *Skáldskaparmál* 3, Faulkes edition; 10 Jónsson, ed.

<sup>3</sup> Ursula Dronke also translates *Idavellir* as the "Eddying plains", but failing to see the *Ida*-plains as a part of the present underworld, relates *iða* fem. "eddy" "to the cyclical ebb and flow of the world (and its gods), a perpetually returning cosmos." *Poetic Edda Vol. II*, pg. 118 commentary to *Völuspá* 7/2.

In regard to the position of Yggdrasil and its roots in the universe, there are statements both in *Gylfaginning* and in the ancient heathen records. To get a clear idea, freed from conjectures and based in all respects on evidence of how the mythology conceived the world-tree and its roots, is of interest not only in regard to the cosmography of the mythology, to which Yggdrasil supplies the trunk and the main outlines, but especially in regard to the mythic conception of the lower world and the whole eschatology; for it appears that each one of the Yggdrasil roots stands not only above its particular fountain in the lower world, but also above its peculiar lower-world domain, which again has its peculiar cosmological character and its peculiar eschatological purpose.

The first condition, however, for a fruitful investigation is that we consider the heathen or heathen-appearing records by themselves without mixing their statements with those of *Gylfaginning*. We must bear in mind that the author of *Gylfaginning* lived and wrote in the 13th century, more than 200 years after the introduction of Christianity in Iceland,<sup>4</sup> and that his statements accordingly are a link in that chain of documents which exist for the scholar, who tries to follow the fate of the myths during a Christian period and to study their gradual corruption and confusion.

This caution is the more important since an examination of *Gylfaginning* very soon shows that the whole cosmographical and eschatological structure which it has built out of fragmentary mythic traditions is based on the idea that the Teutons were descended from the Trojans, and that their gods were originally Trojan chiefs and magicians, a conception framed by scholars in Frankish cloisters, and then handed down from chronicle to chronicle. This "learned" conception, wholly foreign to Germanic mythology, found its way to the North, and finally developed its most luxurious and abundant blossoms in the preface of the *Prose Edda* and in certain other parts of that work.

Permit me to present in brief a sketch of how the cosmography and eschatology of *Gylfaginning* developed themselves out of this assumption: The Aesir were originally men, and dwelt in the Troy which was situated on the center of the earth, and which was identical with Asgard (*Þar næst gjörðu þeir sér borg í miðjum heimi, er kallað er Ásgarður; það köllum vér Trója. Þar byggðu guðin og ættir þeirra og gjörðust þaðan af mörg tíðindi og greinir bæði á jörðu og á lofti* - *Gylfaginning* 9).<sup>5</sup>

The Bifröst bridge is the first mythic tradition which supplies material for the structure which *Gylfaginning* builds on this foundation. The myth had said that this bridge united the celestial abodes with a part of the universe lying somewhere below. *Gylfaginning*, which allows the Aesir to dwell in Troy, therefore has the gods undertake an enterprise of the greatest boldness, that of building a bridge from Troy to the heavens. But they are extraordinary architects and succeed (*guðin gjörðu brú til himins af jörðu* - *Gylfaginning* 13).<sup>6</sup>

The second mythic tradition employed is Urd's fountain. The myth had stated that the gods rode on the Bifröst bridge from their celestial abodes to Urd's (subterranean)

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<sup>4</sup> In the year 1000 AD.

<sup>5</sup> "Next they made a city for themselves in the center of the world that they called Asgard; we call it Troy. There dwelt the gods and their descendants, and many tidings and reports of it were made both on earth and in the air."

<sup>6</sup> "The gods built a bridge to the heavens from the earth."

fountain daily. Therefore *Gylfaginning* draws the correct conclusion that Asgard was supposed to be situated at one end of the bridge and Urd's fountain near the other. But from *Gylfaginning*'s premises, it follows that if Asgard-Troy is situated on the surface of the earth, Urd's fountain must be situated in the heavens, and that the Aesir accordingly must ride upward, not downward when they ride to Urd's fountain. The conclusion is drawn with absolute consistency (*Hvern dag ríða æsir þangað upp um Bifröst - Gylfaginning* 15).<sup>7</sup>

The third mythic tradition used as material is the world-tree, whose roots extended (down in the lower world) to Urd's fountain. According to *Völuspá* 19, this fountain is situated beneath the ash Yggdrasil. The conclusion drawn by *Gylfaginning* by the aid of its Trojan premises is that since Urd's fountain is situated in the heavens, and still under one of Yggdrasil's roots, this root must be located still further up in the heavens. The placing of the root is also done with consistency, so that we get the following series of wrong localizations: Down on the earth, Asgard-Troy; therefore extending up to the heavens, the bridge Bifröst; above Bifröst, Urd's fountain; high above Urd's fountain, one of Yggdrasil's three roots (which in the mythology are all in the lower world).

Since one of Yggdrasil's roots thus had received its place far up in the heavens, it became necessary to place a second root on a level with the earth and the third one was allowed to retain its position in the lower world. Thus was produced a just distribution of the roots among the three regions which constituted the universe in the imagination of the Middle Ages, namely: the heavens, the earth, and hell.

In this manner, two myths were made to do service in regard to one of the remaining Yggdrasil roots. The one myth was taken from *Völuspá*, where it was learned that Mimir's well is situated below the sacred world-tree; the other was *Grímnismál* 31, where we are told that frost-giants dwell under one of the three roots. At the time when *Gylfaginning* was written, and still later, popular traditions told that Gudmund-Mimir was of giant descent (see the Middle-Age sagas narrated above, Nos. 45 & 46). From this, *Gylfaginning* draws the conclusion that Mimir was a frost-giant, and it identifies the root which extends to the frost-giants with the root that extends to Mimir's well. Thus this well of creative power, of world-preservation, of wisdom, and of poetry receives from *Gylfaginning* its place in the abode of the powers of frost, hostile to gods and to men, in the land of the frost-giants, which *Gylfaginning* regards as being Jotunheim, bordering on the earth.

In this way *Gylfaginning*, with the Trojan hypothesis as its starting-point, has advanced so far that it has separated Urd's realm and fountain, from the lower world with its three realms and three fountains, they being transferred to the heavens, and Mimir's realm and fountain, they being transferred to Jotunheim. In the mythology, these two realms were the subterranean regions of bliss, and the third, Niflhel, with the regions subject to it, was the abode of the damned. After these separations were made, *Gylfaginning*, to be logical, had to assume that the lower world of the heathens was exclusively a realm of misery and torture, a sort of counterpart of the hell of the Church. This conclusion is also drawn with due consistency, and Yggdrasil's third root, which in the mythology descended to the fountain Hvergelmir and to the lower world of the frost-

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<sup>7</sup> "Every day the Aesir ride there up over Bifröst."

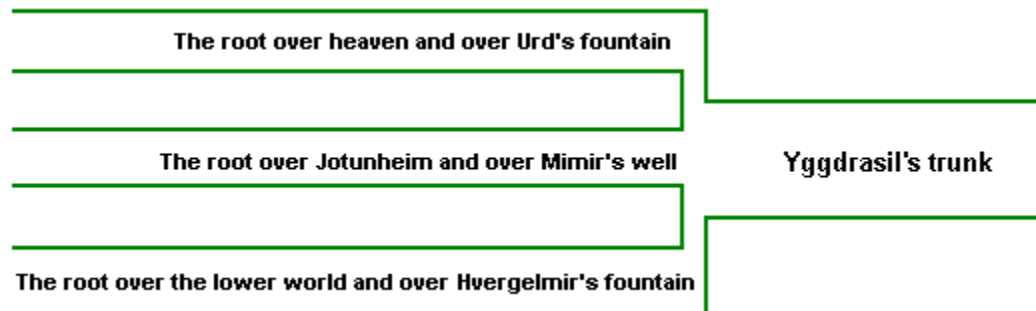


giants, *Niflhel*, *Niflheim*, extends over the whole lower world, the latter being regarded as identical with *Niflheim* and the places of punishment connected with it.

This result carries with it another. The goddess of the lower world, and particularly of its domain of bliss, was in the mythology, as shall be shown below, the goddess of fate and death, *Urd*, also called *Hel*, when named after the country over which she ruled. In a local sense, the name *Hel* could be applied partly to the whole lower world, which rarely happened, partly to *Urd*'s and *Mimir*'s realms of bliss, which was more common. *Hel* was then the opposite of *Niflhel*, which was solely the home of misery and torture. Evidence of this shall be given below. But when the lower world had been changed to a sort of hell, the name *Hel*, both in its local and in its personal sense, must undergo a similar change, and since *Urd* (the real *Hel*) was transferred to the heavens, there was nothing to hinder *Gylfaginning* from substituting *Loki*'s daughter, cast down into *Niflhel*, for the queen of the lower world and giving her the name *Hel* and the scepter over the whole lower world.

This method is also pursued by *Gylfaginning*'s author without hesitation, although he had the best of reasons for suspecting its correctness. A certain hesitancy might have been in order here. According to the mythology, the pure and pious *Asa*-god *Baldur* comes to *Hel*, that is to say, to the lower world, and to one of its realms of bliss. But after the transformation to which the lower world had been subjected in *Gylfaginning*'s system, the descent of *Baldur* to *Hel* had to mean a descent to and a remaining in the world of misery and torture, and a relation of subject to the daughter of *Loki*. This should have awakened doubts in the mind of the author of *Gylfaginning*. But even here he had the courage to be true to his premises, and without even thinking of the absurdity in which he involves himself, he goes on and endows the sister of the *Midgard*-serpent and of the *Fenris*-wolf with that perfect power which before belonged to *Destiny* personified, so that the same gods who before had cast the horrible child of *Loki* down into the ninth region of *Niflhel* are now compelled to send a minister-plenipotentiary to her majesty to negotiate with her and pray for *Baldur*'s liberation.

But finally, there comes a point where the courage of consistency fails *Gylfaginning*. The manner in which it has placed the roots of the world-tree makes us first of all conceive *Yggdrasil* as lying horizontal in space. An attempt to make this matter intelligible can produce no other picture of *Yggdrasil*, in accord with the statements of *Gylfaginning*, than the following:



But *Gylfaginning* is not disposed to draw this conclusion. On the contrary, it insists that Yggdrasil stands erect on its three roots. How we, then, are to conceive its roots as united one with the other and with the trunk of this it very prudently leaves us in ignorance, for this is beyond the range of human imagination.

The contrast between the mythological doctrine in regard to the three Yggdrasil roots, and Gylfaginning's view of the subject may easily be demonstrated by the following parallels:

#### The Mythology

1. Yggdrasil has three roots.
2. All three roots are subterranean.
2. One is in the lower world; a second stands over Jotunheim on a level with
3. A fountain and a realm in the lower world correspond to each root. The lower world consists of three realms, each with its fountain and each with its root.
4. Under one of the subterranean roots dwells the goddess of death and fate, Urd, who is also called Hel, and in her realm is Urd's fountain.
5. Under the second (subterranean) root dwells Mimir. In his realm is Mimir's fountain and Mimir's grove, where a subterranean race of men are preserved for the future world. This root may, therefore, be said to stand over *mennskir menn* (*Grímnismál*).

#### Gylfaginning.

1. Yggdrasil has three roots.  
  
the earth; a third stands over the heavens.
3. A fountain and a realm corresponds to each root; the realms are the heavens, Jotunheim, and the lower world, which are located each under its root.
4. Under one of the roots, that is the one which stands over heaven, dwells Urd the goddess of fate, and Urd's fountain is there.
5. Under the second root, the one that extends to Jotunheim, dwells Mimir, and Mimir's well is there.

It is said that one of the roots stands over *mennskir menn*, human men (*Grímnismál* 31). By this is meant, according to *Gylfaginning*, not the root over Mimir's fountain, but the root over Urd's fountain, near which the Aesir hold their assemblies, for the Aesir are in reality men who dwelt on earth in the city of Troy.

6. Under the third (subterranean) root dwell frost-giants. Under this root is the fountain Hvergelmir, and the realm of the frost-giants is Niflhel (Niflheim). Under Niflhel are nine regions of torture.

7. The sister of the Midgard-serpent and of the Fenris-wolf was cast by the gods into the regions of torture under Niflhel, and received the rule over the places where the damned are punished.

8. The name Hel can be applied to the whole lower world, but particularly means that region of bliss where Urd's fountain is situated, since Urd is the personal Hel. The Loki-daughter in Niflhel is her slave and must obey her commands.

6. Under the third (and only subterranean) root dwell the souls of sinners and those who have died from sickness and age. Under this root is the fountain Hvergelmir and the whole lower world. The lower world is called Niflhel or Niflheim, and contains nine places of torture.

7. The sister of the Midgard-serpent and of the Fenris-wolf was cast by the gods into the regions of torture under Niflhel, and received the rule over the whole lower world, which consists of Niflhel with the nine regions of torture.

8. As Hel means the lower world, and as the sister of the Midgard-serpent governs the whole lower world, she is meant by the personal Hel.

*Gylfaginning* does not stop with the above results. It continues the chain of its conclusions. After Hvergelmir has been selected by *Gylfaginning* as the only fountain in the lower world, it should, since the lower world has been made into a sort of hell, be a fountain of hell, and in this respect easily recognized by the Christian conception of the Middle Ages. In this new character, Hvergelmir becomes the center and the worst place in *Gylfaginning*'s description of the heathen Gehenna. No doubt because the old dragon, which is hurled down into the abyss (*Revelation*, chap. 20),<sup>1</sup> is to be found in the hell-fountain of the Middle Ages, *Gylfaginning* 52 throws Nidhogg down into Hvergelmir, which it also fills with serpents and dead bodies found in *Grímnismál* (34, 35), where they have no connection with Hvergelmir. According to *Völuspá* 38, 39 it is in Nastrond that Nidhogg sucks and the wolf tears the dead bodies (*náir*). *Gylfaginning* follows *Völuspá* in speaking of the other terrors in Nastrond, but rejects *Völuspá*'s statements about Nidhogg and the wolf, and casts both these beasts down into the Hvergelmir fountain. As shall be shown below, the Hvergelmir of the mythology is the mother-fountain of all waters, and is situated on a high plain in the lower world. From there its waters flow partly northward to Niflheim, partly south to the Elysian fields of heathendom, and the waves sent in the latter direction are shining, clear, and holy.

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<sup>1</sup> *Rev.* 20: 2-3 "And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit." King James Version.

It was an old custom, at least in Iceland, that booths for the accommodation of the visitors were built around a remote thing-stead, or place for holding the parliament. *Gylfaginning* 17 makes its Trojan Aesir follow the example of the Icelanders, and put up houses around the thing-stead, which they selected near Urd's fountain, after they had succeeded in securing by Bifröst a connection between Troy and heaven. This done, *Gylfaginning* distributes as best it can the divine halls and abodes of bliss mentioned in the mythology between Troy on the earth and the thingstead in heaven.<sup>2</sup>

This may be sufficient to show that *Gylfaginning's* pretended account of the old mythological cosmography is, on account of its making Troy the starting-point, and doubtless also to some extent as a result of the Christian methods of thought with which the author interpreted the heathen myths accessible to him, is simply a monstrous caricature of the mythology, a caricature which is continued, not with complacency and assurance, but in a confused and contradictory manner, in the eschatology of *Gylfaginning*.

My chief task will now be to review and examine all the passages in the *Poetic Edda's* mythological songs, wherein the words Hel and Niflhel occur, in order to find out in which sense or senses these words are employed there, and at the same time to take into account all the passages of importance concerning the lower world, which we encounter on this particular course.

## 57.

### THE WORD HEL IN LINGUISTIC USAGE.

The Norse *Hel* is the same word as the Gothic *Halja*, the Old High German *Hella*, the Anglo-Saxon *Hellia*, and the English *Hell*. On account of its occurrence with similar signification in different Germanic tongues in their oldest linguistic monuments, scholars have been able to draw the conclusion that the word points to a primitive Germanic *Halja*, meaning lower world, lower world divinity. It is believed to be related to the Latin *occulere* (*past part. occultus*, occult), *celare*, clam, and to mean the one who "hides," "conceals," "preserves."<sup>3</sup>

When the books of the *New Testament* were translated for the first time into a Germanic tongue, into a Gothic dialect, the translator, Ulfilas,<sup>4</sup> had to find some way of distinguishing with suitable words between the two realms of the lower world mentioned in the New Testament, Hades and Gehenna (Greek *geenna*).

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<sup>2</sup> Compare *Gylfaginning* 14 and 17. In 14, the Aesir establish the earthly Asgard-Troy on the Ida-plains. There they build the halls Vingolf and Gladsheim, the latter being "the best and the biggest that is built on earth." In 17, the gods establish the halls Himinbjorg, Valaskjalf, and Gimli in heaven near Urd's well. However, in *Gylfaginning* 53, Snorri contradicts this by saying that after Ragnarok Vidar and Vali will again inhabit Gimli, "on Idavoll, where Asgard has previously been," even though the earth at this point has been destroyed. Compare these statements to Voluspa 60-64, which states that the surviving gods returning to the Ida-plains will inhabit a hall "at Gimli" (á Gimléi).

<sup>3</sup> According to the *American Heritage Dictionary of Indo-European Roots*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1985, this etymology remains accepted a century after Rydberg wrote these words. (See page 28, *kel*-second entry.)

<sup>4</sup> Ulfilas also Ulphilas, c. 311-381 AD.

Hades, the middle condition, and the locality corresponding to this condition, which contains both fields of bliss and regions of torture, he translated with *Halja*, doubtless because the signification of this word corresponded most faithfully with the meaning of the word *Hades*. For *Gehenna*, hell, he used the borrowed word *gaiainna*.

The Old High German translation also reproduces *Hades* with the word *Hella*. For *Gehenna* it uses two expressions compounded with *Hella*. One of these, *Hellawisi*, belongs to the form which afterwards predominated in Scandinavia. Both the compounds bear testimony that the place of punishment in the lower world could not be expressed with *Hella*, but it was necessary to add a word, which showed that a subterranean place of punishment was meant. The same word for *Gehenna* is found among the Christian Teutons in England, namely, *Hellewite*; that is to say the *Hellia*, that part of the lower world, where it is necessary to do penance (*víti*) for one's sins. From England the expression doubtless came to Scandinavia, where we find in the Icelandic *Hel-víti*, in the Swedish *Hälvete*, and in the Danish *Helvede*. In the Icelandic literature it is found for the first time in Hallfred,<sup>5</sup> the same skald who with great hesitation permitted himself to be persuaded by Olaf Tryggvason to abandon the faith of his fathers.

Many centuries before Scandinavia was converted to Christianity, the Roman Church had very nearly obliterated the boundary line between the subterranean Hades and Gehenna of the New Testament. The lower world had, as a whole, become a realm of torture, though with various gradations. Regions of bliss were no longer to be found there, and for Hel in the sense in which Ulfilas used *Halja*, and the Old High German translation *Hella*, there was no longer room in the Christian conception. In the North, Hel was therefore permitted to remain a heathen word, and to retain its heathen signification as long as the Christian generations were able or cared to preserve it. It is natural that the memory of this signification should gradually fade, and that the idea of the Christian hell should gradually be transferred to the heathen Hel. This change can be pretty accurately traced in the Old Norse literature. It came slowly, for the doctrine in regard to the lower world in the Germanic religion addressed itself powerfully to the imagination, and, as appears from a careful examination, far from being indefinite in its outlines, it was, on the contrary, described with the clearest lines and most vivid colors, even down to the minutest details. Not until the thirteenth century could such a description of the heathen Hel as *Gylfaginning's* be possible and find readers who would accept it. But not even then were the memories (preserved in fragments from the heathen days) in regard to the lower world doctrine so confused, but that it was possible to present a far more faithful (or rather not so utterly false) description thereof. *Gylfaginning's* representation of the heathen Hades is based less on the then existing confusion of the traditions than on the conclusions drawn from the author's own false premises.

In determining the question, how far *Hel* among the heathen Scandinavians has had a meaning identical with or similar to that which *Halja* and *Hella* had among their Gothic and German kinsmen - that is to say, the signification of a death-kingdom of such a nature that it could not with linguistic propriety be used in translating *Gehenna* - we must first consult that which really is the oldest source, the usage of the spoken language in expressions where *Hel* is found. Such expressions show by the very presence of *Hel* that they have been handed down from heathendom, or have been formed in analogy with old heathen phrases. One of these modes of speech still exists: *ihjäl* (*slå ihjäl*, *svälta*

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<sup>5</sup> Hallfreðr Óttarsson, died c. 1007 AD

*ihjäl, frysa ihjäl*, etc.),<sup>6</sup> which is the Old Norse *í Hel*. We do not use this expression in the sense that a person killed by a weapon, famine, or frost is relegated to the abyss of torture. Still less could the heathens have used it in that sense. The phrase would never have been created if the word Hel had especially conveyed the notion of a place of punishment. Already in a very remote age *í Hel* had acquired the abstract meaning "to death," but in such a manner that the phrase easily suggested the concrete idea - the realm of death (an example of this will be given below). What there is to be said about *í Hel* also applies to such phrases as *bíða Heljar*, to await Hel (death); *búast til Heljar*, to become equipped for the journey to Hel (to be shrouded); *liggja milli heims og Heljar*, to lie between this world and Hel (between life and death); *liggja á Heljar þremi*, to lie on Hel's threshold. A funeral could be called a *Helför* (a Hel-journey); fatal illness *Helsótt* (Hel-sickness); the deceased could be called *Helgengnir* (those gone to Hel). Of friends, it is said that Hel (death) alone could separate them (*Heimskringla, Inga saga Haraldssonar* 18).<sup>7</sup>

Thus it is evident that Hel, in the more general local sense of the word, referred to a place common for all the dead, and that the word was used without any additional suggestion of damnation amid torture in the minds of those employing it.

## 58.

### THE WORD HEL IN *VEGTAMSKVIÐA* AND IN *VAFÞRÚÐNISMÁL*.

When Odin, according to *Vegtamskviða*, resolved to get reliable information in the lower world in regard to the fate which threatened Baldur, he saddled Sleipnir and rode there. On the way he took, he first came to Niflhel. While he was still in Niflhel, on his way he met a dog bloody about the breast, which came from the direction where that division of the lower world called Hel is situated. Thus the rider and the dog came from opposite directions, and the rider continued his course in the direction from where the dog came. The dog turned, and long pursued Odin with his barking. Then the rider reached a *foldvegr*, that is to say, a road along grass-grown plains. The way resounded under the hoofs of the steed. Then Odin finally came to a high dwelling, which is called *Heljar rann*. The name of the dwelling shows that it was situated in Hel, not in Niflhel. This latter realm of the lower world Odin now had behind him ever since he reached the green fields, and since the dog, evidently a watch of the borders between Niflhel and Hel, had left him in peace. The high dwelling was decorated as for a feast, and mead was served. It was, Odin learned, the abode where the *ásmegir* longingly waited for the arrival of Baldur. Thus *Vegtamskviða*:

<sup>6</sup> In Swedish *ihjäl* means death; *slå ihjäl*, strike dead; *svälta ihjäl*, starve to death; *frysa ihjäl*, freeze to death.

<sup>7</sup> "Anund and Andrew, the sons of Simon and Gunhild were also raised there. They and Hakon thought so much of one another that nothing but Hel could separate them."

2. *Reið hann niður þaðan  
Niflheljar til,  
mætti hann hvelpi  
þeim er úr helju kom.*

3. *Sá var blóðugur  
um brjóst framan,  
og galdurs föður  
gól um lengi.  
Fram reið Óðinn,  
foldvegur dundi,  
hann kom að hávu  
Heljar ranni.*

7. *Hér stendur Baldri  
of brugginn mjöður...  
En ásmegir  
í ofvæni.*

2. He rode down from there  
to Niflhel,  
he met a whelp  
that came out of Hel

3. It was bloody  
on the front of its breast,  
and about Galdur's father (Odin)  
it long howled.  
Odin rode on,  
the field-ways resounded,  
he came to the high  
hall of Hel.

7. Here, for Baldur, stands  
the brewed mead ...  
and the Asmegir  
in great expectation.

*Vegtamskviða* distinctly distinguishes between Niflhel and Hel. In Hel is the dwelling which awaits the son of the gods, the noblest and most pious of all the Aesir. The dwelling, which reveals a lavish splendor, is described as the very antithesis of that awful abode which, according to *Gylfaginning* 34, belongs to the queen of the lower world.<sup>1</sup> In *Vafþrúðnismál* 43, the old giant says:

Frá jötna rúnum  
og allra goða  
eg kann segja satt,  
því að hvern hefí eg  
heim um komið:  
nú kom eg heima  
fyr Niflhel neðan;  
hinig deyja úr Helju halir.

Of the runes of giants  
and all the gods  
I can speak truly,  
for I have been  
in every world:  
nine worlds I visited  
below Niflhel;  
thither die *halir* from Hel.

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<sup>1</sup> "Her hall is named *Éljúðnir*, her plate Hunger, her knife Famine, the thrall Ganglati (slow-moving), the handmaid Ganglöt (slow-moving), her threshold Stumbling-block, where you enter, sickness her bed, her hangings Gleaming-misfortune."

Like *Vegtamskviða*, *Vafþrúðnismál* also distinguishes distinctly between Hel and Niflhel, particularly in those most remarkable words that thither, i.e., to Niflhel and the regions subject to it, *die* "halir" from Hel. *Halir* means men, human beings; applied to beings in the lower world halir means dead men, the spirits of deceased human beings (cp. *Allvíssmál* 18:6; 20:6; 26:6; 32:6; 34:5 - *í helju*, with 28:3 - *halir*). Accordingly, nothing less is said here than that deceased persons who have come to the realm called Hel, there may be subject to a second death, and that through this second death they come to Niflhel. Thus the same sharp distinction is made here between life in Hel and in Niflhel as between life on earth and that in Hel. These two subterranean realms must therefore represent very different conditions. What these different conditions are, *Vafþrúðnismál* does not inform us, nor will I anticipate the investigation on this point; still less will I appeal to *Gylfaginning's* assurance that the realms of torture lie under Niflhel, and that it is wicked men (*vándir menn*) who are obliged to cross the border from Hel to Niflhel.<sup>1</sup> So far it must be borne in mind that it was in Niflhel Odin met the bloody dog-demon, who barked at the Asa-majesty, though he could not hinder the father of the mighty and protecting galdr from continuing his journey; while it was in Hel, on the other hand, that Odin saw the splendid abode where the *ásmegir* had already served the precious subterranean mead for his son, the just Baldur. This suggests that they who cross the border from Hel to Niflhel by means of a second death, do not get a better fate by this transfer than those which Hel invites who have died for the first time. Baldur in the one realm, the blood-stained kinsman of Cerberus in the other -- for the time being, this is the only, but not insignificant weight in the balance which will determine the question whether the border-line, which a second death draws between Hel and Niflhel, is the boundary between a realm of bliss and a realm of suffering, and if this is the case, whether Hel or Niflhel is the realm of bliss.

This expression *hinig deyja úr Helju halir* (thither *die halir* from Hel) in *Vafþrúðnismál*, also forces another question to the front, which, as long as it remains unanswered, makes the former question more complicated. If Hel is a realm of bliss, and if Niflhel with the regions subject to it is a realm of unhappiness, then why do the souls of the damned not go at once to their final destination, but are taken to the realm of bliss first, and then to the realm of anguish and pain, that is, after they have died the second death on the boundary-line between the two? And on the contrary, if Hel were the realm of unhappiness and Niflhel offered a better lot, then why should they who are destined for a better fate, first be brought to it through the world of torture, and then be separated from the latter by a second death before they could gain the more happy goal? These questions cannot be answered until later on.

## 59.

### THE WORD HEL IN *GRÍMNISMÁL*. HVERGELMIR'S FOUNTAIN AND ITS DEFENDERS. THE BORDER MOUNTAIN BETWEEN HEL AND NIFLHEL. THE WORD *HELBLÓTINN* IN *ÞÓRSDRÁPA*.

<sup>1</sup> *Gylfaginning* 3: "but wicked men travel to Hel and from there to Niflhel."



In *Grímnismál*, the word Hel occurs twice (28, 31), and this poem (together with *Gylfaginning*) is the only ancient record which gives us any information about the fountain Hvergelmir under this name (26 ff.).

From what is related, it appears that the mythology conceived Hvergelmir as a vast reservoir, the mother-fountain of all the waters of the world (*þaðan eigu vötn öll vega*).<sup>2</sup> In the front rank are mentioned a number of subterranean rivers which rise in Hvergelmir, and seek their courses from there in various directions. But the waters of earth and heaven also come from this immense fountain, and after completing their circuits they return there. The liquids or saps which rise in the world-tree's stem to its branches and leaves around Herfather's hall (Valhall) return in the form of rain to Hvergelmir (*Grímnismál* 26).

Forty rivers rising there are named. (Whether they were all found in the original text may be a subject of doubt. Interpolators may have added from their own knowledge.) Three of them are mentioned in other records - namely, *Slíður* in *Völuspá* 36, *Gjöll* in the account of Hermod's journey to Hel's realm, which in its main outlines was rescued by the author of *Gylfaginning* (chapter 49), and *Leiftur* in *Helg. Hund. II*, 31 - and all three are referred to in such a way as to prove that they are subterranean rivers. *Slíður* flows to the realms of torture, and whirls weapons in its eddies, presumably to hinder or frighten anybody from attempting to cross. Over *Gjöll* there is a bridge of gold to Baldur's subterranean abode. *Leiftur* (which name means "the shining one") has clear waters, which are holy, and by which solemn oaths are sworn, as by Styx.<sup>3</sup> Of these last two rivers flowing out of Hvergelmir, it is said that they flow down to Hel (*falla til Heljar*, *Grímnismál* 28). Thus these are all subterranean. The next strophe (29) adds four rivers - *Körmt* and *Örmt*, and the two *Kerlaugar*, these Thor must wade over every day when he has to go to the judgment-seats of the gods near the ash Yggdrasil. For he does not ride like the other gods when they journey down over Bifröst to the thingstead near Urd's fountain. The horses which they use are named in strophe 30, and are ten in number, like the Aesir, when we subtract Thor who walks, and Baldur and Hodur who dwell in Hel. Nor must Thor on these journeys, in case he wished to take the route by way of Bifröst, use the thunder-chariot, for the flames issuing from it might set fire to the Asa-bridge and make the holy waters glow (29). That the thunder-chariot also is dangerous for higher regions when it is set in motion, thereof Thjodolf gives us a brilliant description in the poem *Haustlög*. Since Thor for that reason was obliged to wade across four rivers before he gets to Urd's fountain, the beds of these rivers must have been conceived of as crossing the paths travelled by the god journeying to the thingstead. Accordingly, they must have their courses somewhere in Urd's realm, or on the way to it, and consequently they too belong to the lower world.

Other rivers coming from Hvergelmir are said to turn their course around a place called *Hodd-goða* (27 - *þær hverfa um hodd goða*). This girdle of rivers, which the mythology unites around a single place, seems to indicate that this is a realm from which it is important to shut out everything that does not belong there. The name itself, *Hodd-*

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<sup>2</sup> "from there all waters rise"

<sup>3</sup> In Greek mythology, the river over which the ferryman Charon conveyed souls to the underworld. Its aspect was so terrible that even the gods swore oaths on it.

*goða*,<sup>4</sup> points in the same direction. The word *hodd* means that which is concealed (the treasure), and at the same time a protected sacred place. In the German poem *Heliand*,<sup>5</sup> the word *hord*, corresponding to *hodd*, is used of the holiest of holies in the Jerusalem temple. As we already know, there is a place in the lower world to which these references apply, namely, the citadel guarded by Delling, the elf of dawn, and decorated by the famous artists of the lower world - a citadel in which the *ásmegir* and Baldur - and probably Hodur too, since he is transferred to the lower world, and with Baldur is to return thence -- await the end of the historical time and the regeneration. The word *goða* in *hodd goða* shows that the place is possessed by, or entrusted to, beings of divine rank.

From what has here been stated in regard to Hvergelmir, it follows that the mighty fountain was conceived as situated on a high watershed, far up in a subterranean mountain range, from where those rivers of which it is the source flow down in different directions to different realms of Hades. Of several of these rivers, it is said that they in their upper courses, before they reach Hel, flow in the vicinity of mankind (*gumnum nær* -- 28:11), which naturally can have no other meaning than that the high land through which they flow after leaving Hvergelmir has been conceived as lying not very deep below the crust of Midgard (the earth). Hvergelmir and this high land are not to be referred to that division of the lower world which in *Grímnismál* is called Hel, for not until after the rivers have flowed through the mountain landscape, where their source is, are they said *to falla til Heljar*.

Thus: (1) In the lower world there is a mountain ridge, a high land, where Hvergelmir, the source of all waters, is found; (2) This mountain, which for now we may call Mount Hvergelmir, is the watershed of the lower world, from which rivers flow in different directions; and (3) that division of the lower world which is called Hel lies below one side of Mount Hvergelmir, and receives many rivers from there. What that division of the lower world which lies below the other side of Mount Hvergelmir is called is not stated in *Grímnismál*. But from *Vafþrúðnismál* and *Vegtamskviða*, we already know that Hel is bounded by Niflhel. In *Vegtamskviða*, Odin rides through Niflhel to Hel; in *Vafþrúðnismál*, *halir* die from Hel to Niflhel. Hel and Niflhel thus appear to be each other's opposites, and to complement each other, and combined they form the whole lower world. Therefore it follows that the land on the other side of the Hvergelmir mountain is Niflhel.

It also seems necessary that both these Hades realms should in the mythology be separated from each other not only by an abstract boundary line, but also by a natural boundary -- a mountain or a body of water -- which would prohibit the crossing of the boundary by persons who neither had a right nor were obliged to cross. The tradition on which Saxo's account of Gorm's journey to the lower world is based makes Gorm and his men, when they wish to visit the abodes of the damned from Gudmund-Mimir's realm,

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<sup>4</sup> Rydberg takes the descriptive phrase *hodd goða*, which he renders *Hodd-goða*, as a proper placename. If this were the case, it would have to be written as *hoddgoðu*. The meaning "treasure of the gods" however is correct.

<sup>5</sup> An anonymous Old Saxon poem composed in the first half of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, after the forced conversion of the Saxons to Christianity by Charlemagne. The poem retells the life and works of Christ in a Germanic context, creating a unique synthesis between the Christian and Germanic cultures. The poem is divided into 71 Fitts (songs), and was likely meant to be sung in a mead-hall or monastery over a series of successive nights. For an excellent translation and commentary see *The Heliand, The Saxon Gospel* by G. Ronald Murphy, S.J., Oxford University Press, 1992.

first cross a river and then come to a boundary which cannot be crossed, excepting by *scalæ*, steps on the mountain wall, or ladders, above which the gates are placed, that open to a city "most resembling a cloud of vapor" (*vaporanti maxime nubi simile* - Book 8). This is Saxo's way of translating the name Niflhel, just as he in the story about Hadding's journey to the lower world translated *Glæsisvellir* (the Glittering Fields) with *loca aprica*.

In regard to the topography and eschatology of the Germanic lower world, it is now of importance to find out on which sides of the Hvergelmir mountain Hel and Niflhel were conceived to be situated.

*Nifl*, an ancient word, related to Lat. *nebula* and Gr. *nefele*, means fog, mist, cloud, darkness. Niflhel means that Hel which is enveloped in fog and twilight. The name Hel alone has evidently had partly a more general application to a territory embracing the whole kingdom of death -- or else it could not be used as a part of the compound word Niflhel -- partly a more limited meaning, in which Hel, as in *Vafþrúðnismál* and *Vegtamskviða*, forms a sharp contrast to Niflhel, and from the latter point of view it is that division of the lower world which is not enveloped in mist and fog.

According to the cosmography of the mythology, before the time when "Ymir lived," there was Niflheim, a world of fog, darkness, and cold, north of Ginnungagap, and an opposite world, that of fire and heat, south of the empty abyss. Unfortunately it is only *Gylfaginning* that has preserved for our time these cosmographical outlines, but there is no suspicion that the author of *Gylfaginning* invented them. The fact that his cosmographic description also mentions the ancient cow Audhumla, which is nowhere else named in our mythic records, but is not utterly forgotten in our popular traditions, and which is a genuine Indo-European conception, this is the strongest argument in favor of his having had genuine authorities for his theo-cosmogony at hand, though he used them in an arbitrary manner. The Teutons may also be said to have been compelled to construct a cosmogony in harmony with their conception of that world with which they were best acquainted, their own home between the cold North and the warmer South.

Niflhel in the lower world has its counterpart in Niflheim in chaos. *Gylfaginning* identifies the two (ch. 5 and 34). *Forspjallsljóð* does the same, and locates Niflheim far to the north in the lower world (*norður að Niflheim* - 26), behind Yggdrasil's farthest root, under which the poem makes the goddess of night, after completing her journey around the heavens, rest for a new journey. When Night has completed such a journey and come to the lower world, she goes northward in the direction towards Niflheim, to remain in her hall, until Dag with his chariot gets down to the western horizon and in his turn rides through the "horse doors" of Hades into the lower world.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> In this passage, Rydberg clearly follows *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*, thus I have added it to the text here. In the closing verses of this poem, mythological concepts are employed to describe the dawn. Note that the lower world is referred to as Jormungrund, the same word in *Grímnismál* 20. Also note that Heimdall plays the part of the cock, announcing daybreak.

24. *Dýrum settan*  
*Dellings mögur*  
*jó fram keyrði*  
*jarknasteinum;*  
*mars of Manheim*  
*mön af glóar,*  
*dró leik Dvalins*  
*drösull í reið.*

24. Delling's son  
urged on his horse,  
well adorned  
with precious stones;  
The horse's mane glows  
above Man-world (Midgard).  
In his chariot, the steed draws  
Dvalin's playmate (the sun).

25. *Jörmungrundar*  
*í jódyr nyrðra*  
*und rót yztu*  
*aðalpollar*  
*gengu til rekkju*  
*gýgjur og þursar,*  
*náir, dvergar*  
*og dökkálfar.*

25. At Jormungrund's  
northern horse-door  
under the outermost root  
of the noble Tree,  
to their couches went  
giantesses and giants  
dead men and dwarves  
and dark-elves.

26. *Risu raknar,*  
*rann álfröðull*  
*norður að Niflheim*  
*njóla sótti;*  
*upp nam Árgjöll*  
*Úlfrúnar niður*  
*hornþytvaldur*  
*Himinbjarga.*

26. The gods arose,  
Alfrodull (the sun) ran.  
Night advanced north  
toward Niflheim  
Ulfrun's son (Heimdall)  
lifted up Argjoll (his horn),  
the mighty hornblower  
in Himinbjorg.

From this it follows that Niflhel is to be referred to the north of the mountain Hvergelmir, Hel to the south of it. Thus this mountain is the wall separating Hel from Niflhel. On that mountain is the gate, or gates, which in the Gorm story separates Gudmund-Mimir's abode from those dwellings which resemble a "cloud of vapor," and up there is the boundary, at which *halir* die for the second time, when they are transferred from Hel to Niflhel.

The immense water-reservoir on the brow of the mountain, which stands under Yggdrasil's northern root, as already stated, sends rivers down to both sides - to Niflhel in the North and to Hel in the South. Of the majority of these rivers we now know only the names. But those of which we do know more are characterized in such a manner that we find that it is a sacred land to which those flowing to the South towards Hel hasten their course, and that it is an unholy land which is sought by those which send their streams to the north down into Niflhel. The rivers Gjöll and Leiftur fall down into Hel, and Gjöll is, as already indicated, characterized by a bridge of gold, Leiftur by a shining, clear, and most holy water. Down there in the South is found the mystic *hodd goda*, surrounded by other Hel-rivers; Baldur's and the *ásmegir*'s citadel (perhaps identical with *hodd goda*); Mimir's fountain, seven times overlaid with gold, the fountain of inspiration and of the

creative force, over which the "overshadowing holy tree" spreads its branches (*Völuspá*), and around whose reed-wreathed edge the seed of poetry grows (Eilífr Guðrúnarson, *Skáldskaparmál* 10, Jónsson edition); the Glittering Fields, with flowers which never fade and with harvests which never are gathered; Urd's fountain, over which Yggdrasil stands for ever green (*Völuspá*), and in whose silver-white waters swans swim; and the sacred thing-stead of the Aesir, to which they daily ride down over Bifröst. North of the mountain roars the weapon-hurling *Slíður*, and doubtless is the same river as that in whose "heavy streams" the souls of nithings must wade. In the North, *sólu fjarri*<sup>1</sup> stands, also at Nastrond, that hall, the walls of which are braided of serpents (*Völuspá*). Thus Hel is described as an Elysium, Niflhel with its subject regions as a realm of unhappiness.

Yet a few words about Hvergelmir, from and to which "all waters find their way." This statement in *Grímnismál* is of course true of the greatest of all waters, the ocean. The myth about Hvergelmir and its subterranean connection with the ocean gave our ancestors the explanation of ebb- and flood-tide. High up in the northern channels the bottom of the ocean opened itself in a hollow tunnel, which led down to the "kettle-roarer," "the one roaring in his basin" (this seems to be the meaning of Hvergelmir: *hverr* = kettle; *galm* = Anglo-Saxon *gealm*, a roaring). When the waters of the ocean poured through this tunnel down into the Hades-fountain there was ebb-tide; when it returned water from its superabundance, there was flood-tide (see Nos. 79, 80, 81).

Adam of Bremen had heard this tunnel mentioned in connection with the story about the Frisian noblemen who went by sea to the furthest north, came to the land of subterranean giants, and plundered their treasures (see No. 48). On the way up some of the ships of the Frisians got into the eddy caused by the tunnel, and were sucked with terrible violence down into the lower world.<sup>2</sup>

Charlemagne's contemporary, Paul Diaconus, relates in his history of the Longobardians that he had talked with men who had been in Scandinavia. Among remarkable reports which they gave him of the regions of the far north was also that of a maelstrom, which swallows ships, and sometimes even casts them up again (see Nos. 15, 79, 80, 81).

Between the death-kingdom and the ocean there was, therefore, one connecting link, perhaps several. Most of the people who drowned did not remain with Ran. Ægir's wife received them hospitably, according to the Icelandic sagas of the Middle Age. She had a hall in the bottom of the sea, where they were welcomed and offered *sess ok rekkju* (seat and bed).<sup>3</sup> Her realm was only an ante-chamber to the realms of death (*Kormákr, Sonatorrek*).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "far from the sun"

<sup>2</sup> "Et ecce instabilis Oceani Euripus, ad initia quædam fontis sui arcana recurrens, infelices nautas jam desperatos, immo de morte sola cogitantes, vehementissimo impetu traxit ad Chaos. Hanc dicunt esse voraginem abyssi, illud profundum, in quo fama est omnes maris recursus, qui decrescere videntur, absorberi et denuo remnovi, quod fluctuatio dici solet" (*De situ Daniæ*, ed. Mad., p. 159).

<sup>3</sup> *Fornaldarsagas, Friðþjófs saga ins frækna* ch. 3, "til Ránar skal fara," shall fare to Ran, "þeim er lifa skyldu, / en Rán gætir/ röskum drengjum,/ siðlaus kona,/ sess ok rekkju," but Rán, immoral woman, gives seat and bed to valiant men; "sitja at Ránar" to sit at Ran's, *Fornmanna Sagas VI, Haralds Hardrada Saga*, ch. 105.

<sup>4</sup> *Sonatorrek* is by Egil Skallagrímsson, thus this is two references, one by Egil and one by Kormak. Thus far, I am unable to find a reference to Rán in the numerous loose verses of Kormak.

The demon Nidhogg, which *Gylfaginning* throws into Hvergelmir, is, according to the ancient records, a winged dragon flying about, one of several similar monsters which have their abode in Niflhel and those lower regions, and which seek to injure that root of the world-tree which is nearest to them, that is the northern one, which stands over Niflhel and stretches its rootlets southward over Mount Hvergelmir and down into its great water-reservoir (*Grímnismál* 34, 35). Like all the Indo-European mythologies, the Germanic also knew this sort of monster, and did so long before the word "dragon" (*drake*) was borrowed from southern kinsmen as a name for them. Nidhogg abides now on Nastrond, where, by the side of a wolf-demon, it tortures *náir* (corpses), now on the Nida Mountains, where the vala in *Völuspá* sees him flying away with *náir* under his wings. Nowhere (except in *Gylfaginning*) is it said that he lives in the fountain Hvergelmir, though it is possible that he, in spite of his wings, was conceived as an amphibious being which also could subsist in the water. Tradition tells of dragons who dwell in marshes and swamps.

The other two subterranean fountains, Urd's and Mimir's, and the roots of Yggdrasil standing over them, are well protected against the influence of the foes of creation, and have their separate guardians. Mimir, with his sons and the beings subject to him, protects and guards his root of the tree, Urd and her sisters hers, and to the latter all the victorious gods of Asgard come every day to hold counsel. Was the northern root of Yggdrasil, which spreads over the realms of the frost-giants, of the demons, and of the damned, and was Hvergelmir, which waters this root and received so important a position in the economy of the world-tree, left in the mythology without protection and without a guardian? Hvergelmir we know is situated on the watershed, where we have the death-border between Hel and Niflhel fortified with abysses and gates, and is consequently situated in the immediate vicinity of beings hostile to gods and men. Here, if anywhere, there was need of valiant and vigilant watchers. Yggdrasil needs its northern root as well as the others, and if Hvergelmir was not allowed undisturbed to conduct the circuitous flow of all waters, the world would be either dried up or drowned.

Already, long before the creation of the world, there flowed from Hvergelmir that broad river called *Elivágar*, which in its extreme north froze into that ice, which, when it melted, formed out of its dropping venom the primeval giant Ymir (*Vafþrúðnismál* 31; *Gylfaginning* 5). After creation this river, like Hvergelmir, from which it rises, and Niflhel, into which it empties, become integral parts of the northern regions of the lower world. *Elivágar*, also called *Hraunn*, *Hrönn*, sends in its upper course, where it runs near the crust of the earth, a portion of its waters up to it, and forms between Midgard and the upper Jotunheim proper, the river *Vimur*, which is also called *Elivágar* and *Hrönn*, like the parent stream (cp. *Hymiskviða* 5, 38; *Grímnismál* 28; *Skáldskaparmál*, ch. 3, 11, 25, 26; and *Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar* 25). *Elivágar* separates the realm of the giants and frost-giants from the other "worlds."

South of *Elivágar* the gods have an "outgard," a "*setur*" which is inhabited by valiant watchers - *snotrir víkingar* they are called in *Pórsdrápa* 8<sup>5</sup> - who are bound by

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<sup>5</sup> Because of the labyrinth nature of its *dróttkvætt* meter, notorious for its convoluted word order and fragmented sentences, and because the complex system of kennings found in *Thorsdrapa* (*Pórsdrápa*) had not been fully studied or understood in Rydberg's era, he terribly misunderstands this poem (see No. 114). Here, the text indeed speaks of "*Fríðir eiðsvara víkingar Gauta setrs, snotrir runnar gunnar*," glorious, battle-wise warriors, oath-sworn vikings of Gauti's (Odin's) dwelling, but likely only refers to Thor and

oaths to serve the gods. Their chief is Egil, the most famous archer in the mythology (*Pórsdrápa*, 2, 8; cp. *Hymiskviða* 7, 38; *Skáldskaparmál*, ch. 25). As such he is also called Orvandil (the one busy with the arrow). This Egil is the guardian entrusted with the care of Hvergelmir and Elivágar. Perhaps it is for this reason that he has a brother and fellow-warrior who is called Idi (*Iði* from *iða*, a fountain with eddying waters). The "setur" is called "*Iðja setur*" (*Pórsdrápa* 2).<sup>6</sup> The services which he as watcher on Mt. Hvergelmir and on the Elivágar renders to the regions of bliss in the lower world are so great that, although he does not belong to the race of the gods by birth or by adoption, he still enjoys among the inhabitants of Hel so great honor and gratitude that they confer divine honors on him. He is "the one worshipped in Hel who scatters the clouds which rise storm-threatening over the mountain of the lower world," *helblótinn hneitir undir-fjálfsurs bliku* (*Pórsdrápa* 19).<sup>7</sup> The storm-clouds which Ari, Hræsvelgur, and other storm-demons of Niflheim send to the Elysian fields of the death-kingdom, must, in order to get there, surmount Mt. Hvergelmir, but there they are scattered by the faithful watchman. Now in company with Thor, and now alone, Egil-Orvandil has made many remarkable journeys to Jotunheim. Next after Thor, he was the most formidable foe of the giants, and in connection with Heimdall he zealously watched their every movement. The myth in regard to him is fully discussed in the treatise on the Ivaldi-sons which forms a part of this work, and there the proofs will be presented for the identity of Orvandil and Egil.<sup>8</sup> I simply desire to point out here, in order to present complete evidence later, that Yggdrasil's northern root and the corresponding part of the lower world also had their defenders and watchmen, and I also wished to call attention to the manner in which the name Hel is employed in the word *helblótinn*. We find it to be in harmony with the use of the same word in those passages of the poetic Edda which we have previously examined.

## 60.

### THE WORD HEL IN *SKÍRNISMÁL*. DESCRIPTION OF NIFLHEL. THE MYTHIC MEANING OF *NÁR*, *NÁIR*. THE HADES-DIVISION OF THE FROST-GIANTS AND SPIRITS OF DISEASE.

In *Skírnismál* 27 occurs the expression *horfa ok snugga Heljar til*. It is of importance to our theme to investigate and explain the connection in which it is found.

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Thjalfi. For a full translation of this difficult poem, see Supplement II. For an excellent analysis of this poem see Eysteinn Björnsson's commentary on the world wide web at <http://www.hi.is/~eybjorn/ugm/thorsd00.html>

Rydberg makes a strong case for the elven "setur" on the border of Jotunheim in No. 108, independent of the evidence he presents from *Thorsdrapa*. Thus his conclusion regarding the guard of the Hvergelmir fountain is still likely mythologically correct, even though the proofs from *Thorsdrapa* are not.

<sup>6</sup> In prose, this verse would be: *pá er gjarðvenjuðr Gandvíkr, ríkri skotum Iðja setrs, gördisk endr frá Þriðja til Ymsa kindar*, i.e. "when the tamer of Gandvík's girdle [Þórr], mightier than the Scots of Iði's dwelling [giants], again set forth from Þriði's [Odin's] towards Ymsi's kindred [giants]."

<sup>7</sup> This passage refers to Thor as the "worshipped Hel-striker," one who strikes giants into Hel, i.e. dead.

<sup>8</sup> No. 96 and beyond.

The poem tells that Frey sat alone, silent and longing, ever since he had seen the giant Gymir's wonderfully beautiful daughter Gerd. He wasted with love for her; but he said nothing, since he was convinced in advance that neither Aesir nor Elves would ever consent to a union between him and her. But when the friend of his youth, who resided in Asgard, and in the poem is called Skirnir, succeeded in getting him to confess the cause of his longing, it was, in Asgard, found necessary to do something to relieve it, and so Skirnir was sent to the home of the giant to ask for the hand of Gerd on Frey's behalf. As bridal gifts he took with him eleven golden apples and the ring Draupnir. He received one of the best horses of Asgard to ride, and for his defense Frey's magnificent sword, "which fights of itself against the race of giants." In the poem this sword receives the epithets *Tamsvöndr* (26) and *Gambanteinn* (32).<sup>9</sup> *Tamsvöndr*, means the "staff that subdues"; *Gambanteinn* means the "rod of revenge" (see Nos. 105, 116). Both epithets are formed in accordance with the common poetic usage of describing swords by compound words of which the latter part is *vöndr* or *teinn*. We find, as names for swords, *benvöndr*, *blóðvöndr*, *hjaltevöndr*, *hríðvöndr*, *hvítvöndr*, *morðvöndr*, *sárvöndr*, *benteinn*, *eggteinn*, *hævateinn*, *hjöртеinn*, *hræteinn*, *sárteinn*, *valteinn*, *mistilteinn*.<sup>10</sup>

Skirnir rides over damp fells and the fields of giants, leaps, after a quarrel with the watchman of Gymir's citadel, over the fence, comes in to Gerd, is welcomed with ancient mead, and presents his errand of courtship, supported by the eleven golden apples. Gerd refuses both the apples and the object of the errand. Skirnir then offers her the most precious treasure, the ring Draupnir, but in vain. Then he resorts to threats. He exhibits the sword so dangerous to her kinsmen; with it he will cut off her head if she refuses her consent. Gerd answers that she is not to be frightened, and that she has a father who is not afraid to fight. Once more Skirnir shows her the sword, which also may fell her father (*sér þú þenna mæki, mey*, etc.), and he threatens to strike her with the "subduing staff," so that her heart shall soften, but too late for her happiness, for a blow from the staff will remove her thither, where sons of men never more shall see her (*Skírnismál* 26).

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<sup>9</sup> Generally, the sword referred to in verses 23 and 25 is not recognized by mainstream scholars as the *Tamsvöndr* or *Gambanteinn* named later. These names are interpreted to mean a magic wand, a "twig of power," used to cast a spell on Gerd, even though as Rydberg demonstrates, such constructions are typical of sword names. In effect, this removes the emphasis on the sword from the poem, and thereby the poem's dramatic intent as well as its place in the mythic cycle. This interpretation is best expressed by Ursula Dronke who notes in *The Poetic Edda, Volume II* (1997), "The legend that Freyr's sword fell into the hands of giants could have no place in *Skírnismál*." (pg. 336, commentary to *Lokasenna* 42/1-3) For a complete examination of its place in this poem, see No. 105

<sup>10</sup> For an examination of sword kennings, goto <http://www.hi.is/~eybjorn/ugm/kennings/wood.html>



*Tamsvendi eg þig drep,  
en eg þig temja mun,  
mær, að mínum munum;  
þar skaltu ganga,  
er þig gumna synir  
síðan æva sjá.*

With the taming wand will I  
strike (slay) you  
and I will tame you  
maid, to my wishes;  
There you shall go  
To where the sons of men  
Shall never see you again.

This is the former threat of death repeated in another form. The former did not frighten her. But that which now overwhelms her with dismay is the description Skirnir gives her of the lot that awaits her in the realm of death, to where she is destined - she, the giant maid, if she dies by the avenging wrath of the gods (*gambanreiði*). She shall then come to that region which is situated below the Na-gates (*fyr nágrindur neðan* - 35), and which is inhabited by frost-giants who, as we shall find, do not deserve the name *mannasynir*, even though the word *menn* be taken in its most common sense, and made to embrace giants of the masculine kind.

This phrase *fyr nágrindur neðan* must have been a stereotyped eschatological term applied to a particular division, a particular realm in the lower world. In *Lokasenna* 63, Thor says to Loki, after the latter has emptied his vials of rash insults upon the gods, that if he does not hold his tongue the hammer Mjólnir shall send him to Hel *fyr nágrindur neðan*. Hel is used here in its widest sense, and this is limited by the addition of the words "below the Na-gates," so as to refer to a particular division of the lower world. As we find by the application of the phrase to Loki, this division is of such a character that it is intended to receive the foes of the Aesir and the insulters of the gods.

The word *Nágrind*, which is always used in the plural, and accordingly refers to more than one gate of the kind, has as its first part *nár* (pl. *náir*), which means corpse, dead body. Thus Na-gates means Corpse-gates.<sup>1</sup>

The name must seem strange, for it is not dead bodies, but souls, released from their bodies left on earth, which descend to the kingdom of death and get their various abodes there. How far our heathen ancestors had a more or less material conception of the soul is a question which it is not necessary to discuss here (on this point, see No. 95). Howsoever they may have regarded it, the very existence of a Hades in their mythology demonstrates that they believed that a conscious and sentient element in man was separated in death from the body with which it had been united in life, and went down to the lower world. That the body from which this conscious, sentient element fled was not removed to Hades, but disintegrated in this upper earth, whether it was burnt or buried in a mound or sunk to the bottom of the sea, this our heathen ancestors knew just as well as we know it. The people of the stone-age already knew this.

The phrase Na-gates does not stand alone in our mythological eschatology. One of the abodes of torture lying within the Na-gates is called Nastrond (*Náströnd*), and is described in *Völuspá* as filled with terrors. And the victims, which Nidhogg, the winged

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<sup>1</sup> This phrase is commonly taken to mean "beneath the gate of the dead," and thus "in Hel." Dronke takes this a step further and interprets *nágrindr* to mean "a fenced graveyard" and renders the phrase as "below the corpse pens," implying "deep within the earth, (i.e. 'lower than the buried dead')... an ugly threat in itself." *PE II*, pg 412. This said, the concrete threat, becomes only a figurative one, and thereby the impact is lessened.

demon of the lower world, there sucks, are called *náir framgengnir*, "the corpses of those departed."

It is manifest that the word *nár* thus used cannot have its common meaning, but must be used in a special mythological sense, which had its justification and its explanation in the heathen doctrine in regard to the lower world.

It not unfrequently happens that law-books preserve ancient significations of words not found elsewhere in literature. The Icelandic law-book *Grágás* (ii. 185) enumerates four categories within which the word *nár* is applicable to a person yet living. Gallows-*nár* can be called, even while living, the person who is hung; grave-*nár*, the person placed in a grave; skerry-*nár* or rock-*nár* may, while yet alive, be called who has been exposed to die on a skerry or rock. Here the word *nár* is accordingly applied to persons who are conscious and capable of suffering, but on the supposition that they are such persons as have been condemned to a punishment which is not to cease so long as they are sensitive to it.

And this is the idea on the basis of which the word *náir* is mythologically applied to the damned and tortured beings in the lower world.

If we now take into account that our ancestors believed in a second death, in a slaying of souls in Hades, then we find that this same use of the word in question, which at first sight could not but seem strange, is a consistent development of the idea that those banished from Hel's realms of bliss die a second time, when they are transferred across the border to Niflhel and the world of torture. When they are overtaken by this second death they are for the second time *náir*. And, as this occurs at the gates of Niflhel, it was perfectly proper to call the gates *nágrindr*.

We may imagine that it is terror, despair, or rage which, at the sight of the Na-gates, severs the bond between the damned spirit and his Hades-body, and that the former is anxious to soar away from its terrible destination. But however this may be, the avenging powers have runes, which capture the fugitive, put chains on his Hades-body, and force him to feel with it. The Sun-song (*Sólarljóð*), a Christian song standing on the border of heathendom, scarcely crossed, speaks of damned ones whose breasts were carved with bloody runes, and *Hávamál* 157 of runes which restore consciousness to *náir*. Such runes are known by Odin. If he sees a gallows-*nár* (*virgil-nár*) in a tree, then he can carve runes so that the body comes down to him and talks with him (see No. 70):

*Ef eg sé á tré uppi  
váfa virgilná,  
svá eg rist  
og í rúnum fák,  
að sá gengur gumi  
og mælir við mig.*

If I see, up in a tree,  
A dangling gallows-*nár*  
I can so carve  
And color runes,  
That the man walks  
And talks with me.

Some of the subterranean *náir* have the power of motion, and are doomed to wade in "heavy streams." Among them are perjurers, murderers, and adulterers (*Völuspá* 39). Among these streams is *Vaðgelmir*, in which they who have slandered others find their far-reaching retribution (*Reginismál* 4). Other *náir* have the peculiarity which their

appellation suggests, and receive their punishment, quiet and immovable, stretched on iron benches, (see below). Saxo, who had more elaborate descriptions of the Hades of heathendom than those which have been handed down to our time, translated or reproduced in his accounts of Hadding's and Gorm's journeys in the lower world the word *náir* with *exsanguia simulacra*.<sup>1</sup>

That place after death with which Skirnir threatens the stubborn Gerd is also situated within the Na-gates, but still it has another character than Nastrond and the other abodes of torture, which are situated below Niflhel. It would also have been unreasonable to threaten a person who rejects a marriage proposal with those punishments which overtake criminals and nithings. The Hades division, which Skirnir describes as awaiting the giant-daughter, is a subterranean Jotunheim, inhabited by deceased ancestors and kinsmen of Gerd.

Mythology has given a life hereafter to the giants as well as to men. As a matter of fact, mythology never destroys life. The horse which was cremated with its master on his funeral pyre, and was buried with him in his grave-mound, afterwards brings the hero down to Hel. When the giant who built the Asgard wall got into conflict with the gods, Thor's hammer sent him "down below Niflhel" (*niður undir Niflhel* - *Gylfaginning* 42). King Gorm saw the giant Geirrod and both his daughters in the lower world. According to *Grímnismál* 31, frost-giants dwell under one of Yggdrasil's roots - consequently in the lower world; and *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* says that hags (giantesses) and thurses (giants), *náir*, dwarves, and swarthy elves go to sleep under the world-tree's farthest root on the north border of Jormungrund<sup>2</sup> (the lower world), when Dag on a chariot sparkling with precious stones leaves the lower world, and when Nat after her journey on the heavens has returned to her home (*Hrafnagaldur Óðins* 24, 25). It is therefore quite in order if, in Skirnir's description of the realm which after death awaits the giant-daughter who has offended the gods, we rediscover that part of the lower world to which the drowned primeval ancestors of the giant-maid were relegated when Bor's sons opened the veins of Ymir's throat (*Sonatorrek* 3) and then let the billows of the ocean wash clean the rocky ground of earth, before they raised the latter from the sea and there created the inhabitable Midgard.

The frost-giants are the primeval giants (*gigantes*) of the Germanic mythology, so called because they sprang from the frost-being Ymir, whose feet by contact with each other begat their progenitor, the "strange-headed" monster Thrudgelmir (*Vafþrúðnismál* 29, 33). Their original home in chaos was Niflheim. From the Hvergelmir fountain, the Elivágar rivers flowed there to the north and became hoar-frost and ice, which, melted by warmth from the south, were changed into drops of venom, which again became Ymir, called by the giants Aurgelmir (*Vafþrúðnismál* 30-31; *Gylfaginning* 5). Thrudgelmir begat Bergelmir countless winters before the earth was made (*Vafþrúðnismál* 29; *Gylfaginning* 7). Those members of the giant race living in Jotunheim on the surface of the earth, whose memory goes farthest back in time, can remember Bergelmir when he *var á lúðr um lagiðr*.<sup>3</sup> At least Vafþrúðnir is able to do this (*Vafþrúðnismál* 35).

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<sup>1</sup> From Gorm's saga in Saxo, *Hist.* Book 8: "lifeless phantoms" - Elton tr., "lifeless shades" - Fisher tr.

<sup>2</sup> With this name of the lower world compare Gudmund-Mimir's abode *á Grund* (see No. 45), and *Helligrund* (*Heliand.*, Fitt 17, line 1491), and *neowla grund* (*Caedmon*, 267, 1, 270, 16). Also *Grímnismál* 20, which speaks of Odin's ravens flying daily over Jormungrund (i.e the underworld).

<sup>3</sup> "was laid on the mill."

When the original giants had to abandon the fields populated by Bor's sons (*Völuspá* 4), they received an abode corresponding as nearly as possible to their first home, and, as it seems, identical with it, excepting that Niflheim now, instead of being a part of chaos, is an integral part of the cosmic universe, and the extreme north of its Hades. As a Hades-realm it is also called Niflhel.

In the subterranean land with which Skirnir threatens Gerd, and which he paints for her in appalling colours, he mentions three kinds of beings - (1) frost-giants, the ancient race of giants; (2) demons; (3) giants of the later race.

The frost-giants together occupy one abode, which, judging from its epithet, hall (*höll*), is the largest and most important there; while those members of the younger giant clan who are there, dwell in single scattered abodes, called gards.<sup>4</sup> Gerd is also to have a separate abode there (*Skírnismál* 28).

Two frost-giants are mentioned by name, which shows that they are representatives of their clan. One is named Hrimgrímnir (*Hrímgrímnir* - 35), the other Rímnir (*Hrímnir* - 28).

Grimnir is one of Odin's many surnames (*Grímnismál* 47, and several other places; cp. *Egilsson's Lex. Poet.*). Hrimgrímnir means the same as if Odin had said Hrim-Odin, for Odin's many epithets could without hesitation be used by the poets in paraphrases, even when these referred to a giant. But the name Odin was too sacred for such a purpose.<sup>5</sup> The above epithet places Hrimgrímnir in the same relation to the frost-giants as Odin-Grimnir sustains to the Aesir: it characterizes him as the race-chief and clan-head of the former, and in this respect gives him the same place as Thrudgelmir occupies in *Vafþrúðnismál*.<sup>6</sup> But they have other points of resemblance. Thrudgelmir is "strange-headed" in *Vafþrúðnismál*; Hrimgrímnir is "three-headed" in *Skírnismál* (31; cp. with 35). Thus we have in one poem a "strange-headed" Thrudgelmir as progenitor of the frost-giants; in the other poem a "three-headed" Hrimgrímnir as progenitor of the same frost-giants. The "strange-headed" giant of the former poem, which is a somewhat indefinite or obscure phrase, thus finds in "three-headed" of the latter poem its further definition. To this is to be added a power which is possessed both by Thrudgelmir and by Hrimgrímnir, and also a weakness for which both Thrudgelmir and Hrimgrímnir are blamed. Thrudgelmir's father begat children without possessing *gýgjar gaman*<sup>7</sup> (*Vafþrúðnismál* 32). That Thrudgelmir inherited this power from his strange origin and handed it down to the clan of frost-giants, and that he also inherited the inability to provide for the perpetuation of the race in any other way, is evident from *Alvíssmál* 2 (see below). If we make a careful examination, we find that *Skírnismál* presupposes this same positive and negative quality in Hrimgrímnir, and consequently Thrudgelmir and Hrimgrímnir must be identical.

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<sup>4</sup> Compare the phrase *jötna gördum í* (30:3) with *til hrímpursa hallar* (30:4).

<sup>5</sup> Upon the whole the skalds seem piously to have abstained from using that name in paraphrases, even when the latter referred to celebrated princes and heroes. Glum Geirason [*Gráfeldardrápa*] is the first known exception to the rule. He calls a king *málm-Óðinn*. (This is Rydberg's footnote, but was included in the text of Anderson's translation; as was the following footnote. I have followed Rydberg and removed them from the text in order to keep the ideas expressed above more concise.

<sup>6</sup> Ymir cannot be regarded as the special clan-chief of the frost-giants, since he is also the progenitor of other classes of beings. See *Vafþrúðnismál* 33, and *Völuspá* 9; cp. *Gylfaginning* 14.

<sup>7</sup> "the pleasure of a giantess."

Gerd, who tries to reject the love of the fair and blithe Vana-god, therefore will be punished in the lower world with the complete loss of all that is called love, tenderness, and sympathy, according to Skirnir's threats. Skirnir says that she either must live alone and without a husband in the lower world, or else vegetate in a useless cohabitation (*nara*) with the three-headed giant (31). The threat is gradually emphasized to the effect that she shall be possessed by Hrimgrímnir, and this threat is made immediately after the solemn conjuration (34) in which Skirnir invokes the inhabitants of Niflhel and also of the regions of bliss, as witnesses, that she shall never gladden or be gladdened by a man in the physical sense of this word:

*Heyri jötnar,  
heyri hrímþursar,  
synir Suttunga,  
sjálfir áslíðar,  
hve eg fyrirbýð,  
hve eg fyrirbanna  
manna glaum mani,  
manna nyt mani.*

*Hrimgrímnir heitir þurs,  
er þig hafa skal  
fyr nágrindur neðan.*

Hear ye giants,  
hear, frost-giants,  
sons of the Suttungs,  
the Asa-champions\* themselves,  
how I forbid,  
how I banish  
pleasure in men from the maid,  
enjoyment of men from the maid.

Hrimgrímnir is the giant,  
who shall possess you  
down below the corpse-gates.

\*With *áslíðar*, Asa-champions, there can hardly be meant others than the *ásmegir* gathered in the lower world around Baldur. This is the only place where the word *áslíðar* occurs.

Skirnir in speaking to Gerd could not have expressed the negative quality of Hrimgrímnir in question more plainly, it seems to me. Thor also expresses himself clearly on the same subject when he meets the dwarf Alvis carrying home a maid over whom Thor has the right of marriage. Thor says scornfully that he thinks he recognizes something in Alvis which reminds him of the nature of *thurses*, although Alvis is a dwarf and the *thurses* are giants, and he further defines of what this similarity consists: *þursa líki þyki mér á þér vera; erattu til brúðar borinn*: "Thurs' likeness you seem to me to have; you were not born to have a bride." So far as the positive quality is concerned, it is evident from the fact that Hrimgrímnir is the progenitor of the frost-giants.

Descended to Niflhel, Gerd must not count on a shadow of friendship and sympathy from her kinsmen there. It would be best for her to confine herself in the solitary abode which there awaits her, for if she but looks out of the gate, staring gazes shall meet her from Hrimnir and all the others down there; and there she shall be looked upon with more hatred than Heimdall, the watchman of the gods, who is the wise, always vigilant foe of the rime-thurses and giants. But whether she is at home or abroad, demons and tormenting spirits shall never leave her in peace. She shall be bowed to the earth by

*tramar* (evil witches). Morn (a Germanic Eumenides, the agony of the soul personified) shall fill her with his being. The spirits of sickness - such also dwell there; they once took an oath not to harm Baldur (*Gylfaginning* 49) - shall increase her woe and the flood of her tears. Topi (insanity), Opi (hysteria), Tjosul and Otholi (constant restlessness), shall not leave her in peace. These spirits are also counted as belonging to the race of thurses, and thus it is said in the rune-song that *purs veldr kvenna kvillu*, "thurs causes sickness of women." In this connection, it should be remembered that the daughter of Loki, the ruler of Niflhel, is also the queen of diseases. Gerd's food shall be more loathsome to her than the poisonous serpent is to man, and her drink shall be the most disgusting. Miserable she shall crawl among the homes of the Hades giants, and up to a mountain top, where Ari, a subterranean eagle-demon has his perch (doubtless the same Ari which, according to *Völuspá* 50, is to join with his screeches in Rymur's shield-song, when the Midgard-serpent writhes in giant-rage, and the ship of death, Naglfar, gets loose). Up there she shall sit early in the morning, and constantly turn her face in the same direction - in the direction where Hel is situated, that is, south over Mt. Hvergelmir, toward the subterranean regions of bliss. Toward Hel she shall long to come in vain:

*Ara þúfu á  
skaltu ár sitja,  
horfa og snugga Heljar til.  
On Ari's perch*

thou shalt early sit,  
turn toward and long to get to  
Hel.

By the phrase *snugga Heljar til*, the skald has meant something far more concrete than to "long for death." Gerd is here supposed to be dead, and within the Na-gates. To long for death, she does not need to crawl up to "Ari's perch." She must subject herself to these nightly exertions, so that when it dawns in the foggy Niflhel, she may get a glimpse of that land of bliss to which she may never come; she who rejected a higher happiness - that of being with the gods and possessing Frey's love.

I have been somewhat elaborate in the presentation of this description in *Skírnismál*, which has not previously been understood. I have done so, because it is the only evidence left to us of how life was conceived in the fore-court of the regions of torture, Niflhel, the land situated below Yggdrasil's northern root, beyond and below the mountain, where the root is watered by Hvergelmir. It is plain that the author of *Skírnismál*, like that of *Vafþrúðnismál*, *Grímnismál*, *Vegtamskviða*, and *Þórsdrápa* (as we have already seen), has used the word Hel in the sense of a place of bliss in the lower world. It is also evident that with the root under which the frost-giant dwells impossibly can be meant, as supposed by *Gylfaginning*, that one under which Mimir's glorious fountain, and Mimir's grove, and all his treasures stored for a future world, are situated.

## 61.

### THE WORD HEL IN *VÖLUSPÁ*. WHO THE INHABITANTS OF HEL ARE.

We now pass to *Völuspá* 40 (*Hauksbók*; more commonly quoted as *Völuspá* 47), where the word *Helvegir* occurs.

One of the signs that Ragnarok and the fall of the world are at hand, is that the mighty ash Yggdrasil trembles, and that a fettered giant-monster thereby gets loose from its chains. Which monster this is, whether it is Garm, bound above the Gnipa cave, or some other, we will not now discuss. The astonishment and confusion caused by these events among all the beings of the world, are described in the poem with but few words, but they are sufficient for the purpose, and well calculated to make a deep impression upon the hearers. Terror is the predominating feeling in those beings which are not chosen to take part in the impending conflict. They, on the other hand, for whom the quaking of Yggdrasil is the signal of battle for life or death, either arm themselves amid a terrible war-cry for the battle (the giants - *gnýr allur Jötunheimur*), or they assemble to hold the last council (the Aesir - *æsir eru á þingi*), and then rush to arms.

Two classes of beings are mentioned as seized by terror - the dwarves, who stood breathless outside of their stone-doors, and those beings which are *á Helvegum*. *Helvegir* may mean the paths or ways in Hel: there, are many paths, just as there are many gates and many rivers. *Helvegir* may also mean the regions, districts in Hel (cp. *Austrvegr*, *Suðrvegr*, *Norvegr*; and *Alvíssmál* 10, according to which the Vanir call the earth *vegir*, ways). The author may have used the word in either of these senses or in both, for in this case it amounts to the same. At all events it is stated that the inhabitants in Hel are terrified when Yggdrasil quakes and the unnamed giant-monster gets loose.

Skelfur Yggdrasils  
askur standandi,  
ymur ið aldna tré,  
en jötunn losnar;  
hræðast allir  
á Helvegum,  
áður Surtar þann  
sefi gleypir.  
Yggdrasil's ash  
standing shakes,  
the old tree trembles,  
and the giant gets loose;  
All are frightened  
on the Helways (in Hel's  
regions),  
before Surt's spirit (or kinsman)  
swallows him (i.e. the giant).

Surt's spirit, or kinsman (*sefi* may mean either), is the fire, as has also previously been supposed. The final episode in the conflict on Vigrid's plain is that the Muspel-flames destroy the last remnant of the contending giants. The terror which took possession of the inhabitants of Hel, when the world-tree quaked and the unnamed giant got loose, continues so long as the conflict is undecided. Valfather falls, Frey and Thor likewise; no one can know who is to be victorious. But the terror ceases when on the one hand the liberated giant-monster is destroyed, and on the other hand Vidar and Vali, Modi and Magni, survive the conflict and survive the flames, which do not penetrate to Baldur and Hodur amid their protégés in Hel. The word *þann* (him), which occurs in the seventh line of the strophe (in the last of the translation) can impossibly refer to any other than the giant mentioned in the fourth line (*jötunn*). In the strophe, there are only two masculine words to which the masculine *þann* can be referred - *jötunn* and *Yggdrasils askur*. *Jötunn*, which stands nearest to *þann*, thus has the preference; and as we have seen that the world-tree falls by neither fire nor edge (*Fjölsvinnsmál* 20), and as it, in fact, survives the conflagration of Surt, then *þann* must naturally be referred to the *jötunn*.

Here *Völuspá* has furnished us with evidence in regard to the position of Hel's inhabitants towards the contending parties in Ragnarok. They who are frightened when a giant-monster -- a most dangerous one, as it previously had been chained -- gets free from its fetters, and they whose fright is allayed when the monster is destroyed in the conflagration of the world, such beings could not possibly have followed this monster and its fellow warriors with their good wishes. Their hearts are on the side of the good powers, which are friendly to mankind. But they do not take an active part in their behalf; they take no part whatever in the conflict. This is manifest from the fact that their fright does not cease before the conflict is ended. Now we know that among the inhabitants in Hel are the *ásmegir* Lif and Leifthrasir and their offspring, and that they are not *herþarfir*; they are not to be employed in war, since their very destiny forbids their taking an active part in the events of this period of the world (see No. 53). But the text does not permit us to think of them alone when we are to determine who the beings *á Helvegum* are. For the text says that all, who are *á Helvegum*, are alarmed until the conflict is happily ended. What the interpreters of this much abused passage have failed to see, the seeress in *Völuspá* has not forgotten, that, namely, during the lapse of countless thousands of years, innumerable children and women, and men who never wielded the sword, have descended to the kingdom of death and received dwellings in Hel, and that Hel - -in the limited local sense which the word previously has appeared to have in the songs of the gods -- does not contain warlike inhabitants. Those who have fallen on the battle-field come, indeed, as shall be shown later, to Hel, but not to remain there; they continue their journey to Asgard, for Odin chooses one half of those slain on the battlefield for his dwelling, and Freyja the other half (*Grímnismál* 14). The chosen accordingly have Asgard as their place of destination, which they reach in case they are not found guilty by a sentence which neutralizes the force and effect of the previous choice (see below), and sends them to die the second death on crossing the boundary to Niflhel. Warriors who have not fallen on the battlefield are as much entitled to Asgard as those fallen by the sword, provided they have acquired fame and honor as heroes. It might, of course, happen to the greatest general and the most distinguished hero, the



conqueror in hundreds of battles, that he might die from sickness or an accident, while, on the other hand, it might be that a man who never wielded a sword in earnest might fall on the field of battle before he had given a blow. That the mythology should make the latter entitled to Asgard, but not the former, is an absurdity as void of support in the records -- on the contrary, these give the opposite testimony -- as it is of sound sense. The election contained no exclusive privilege for the chosen ones. It did not even imply additional favor to one who, independently of the election, could count on a place among the *einherjes*. The election made the person going to battle *feigr*,<sup>1</sup> which was not a favor, nor could it be considered the opposite. It might play a royal crown from the head of the chosen one to that of his enemy, and this could not well be regarded as a kindness.<sup>2</sup> But for the electing powers of Asgard themselves the election implied a privilege. The dispensation of life and death regularly belonged to the *norns*; but the election partly supplied the gods with an exception to this rule, and partly it left the right to determine the fortunes and issues of battles to Odin. The question of the relation between the power of the gods and that of fate -- a question which seemed to the Greeks and Romans dangerous to meddle with and nearly impossible to dispose of -- was partly solved by the Germanic mythology by the naive and simple means of dividing the dispensation of life and death between the divinity and fate, which, of course, did not hinder that fate always stood as the dark, inscrutable power in the background of all events. (On election see further, No. 66.)

It follows that in Hel's regions of bliss there remained none that were warriors by profession. Those among them who were not guilty of any of the sins, which the Asa-doctrine stamped as sins unto death, passed through Hel to Asgard, the others through Hel to Niflhel. All the inhabitants on Hel's Elysian fields accordingly are the *ásmegir*, and the women, children, and the agents of the peaceful arts who have died during countless centuries, and who, unused to the sword, have no place in the ranks of the *einherjes*, and therefore with the anxiety of those waiting abide the issue of the conflict. Such is the background and contents of the *Völuspá* strophe. This would long since have been understood, had not the doctrine constructed by *Gylfaginning* in regard to the lower world, with Troy as the starting-point, confused the judgment.

## 62.

### THE WORD HEL IN *ALVÍSSMÁL*. THE CLASSES OF BEING IN HEL.

In *Alvíssmál* occur the phrases: those *í helju* and *halir*. The premise of the poem is that such objects as earth, heaven, moon, sun, night, wind, fire, etc., are expressed in six different ways, and that each one of these ways of expression is, with the exclusion of the others, applicable within one or two of the classes of beings found in the world. For example, in *Alvíssmál* 12, Heaven is called:

*Himinn* among men,  
*Hlyrnir* among gods,

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<sup>1</sup> "doomed" to die.

<sup>2</sup> As in *Lokasenna* 22, where Loki accuses Odin of giving victory on the battlefield to the less valiant, presumably so that he may have the better man for Valhal.

*Vindofnir* among Vanir ,  
*Uppheim* among giants,  
*Fagraraefur* (fair-roof) among elves,  
*Drjúpur salur* (dripping-hall) among dwarves.

In this manner, thirteen objects are mentioned, each one with its six names. In all of the thirteen cases, man has his own manner of naming the objects. Likewise the giants. No other class of beings has any of the thirteen appellations in common with them. On the other hand, the Aesir and Vanir have the same name for two objects (moon and sun); elves and dwarves have names in common for no less than six objects (cloud, wind, fire, tree, seed, mead); the dwarves and the inhabitants of the lower world for three (heaven, sea, and calm). Nine times it is stated how those in the lower world express themselves. In six of these nine cases *Alvíssmál* refers to the inhabitants of the lower world by the general expression "those in Hel"; in three cases the poem lets "those in Hel" be represented by some one of those classes of beings that reside in Hel. These three are *uppregin* (10), *ásasynir* (16), and *halir* (28).

The name *uppregin* suggests that it refers to beings of a very certain divine rank (the Vanir are in *Alvíssmál* called *ginnregin*, 20, 30) that have their sphere of activity in the upper world. As they nevertheless dwell in the lower world, the appellation must have reference to beings which have their homes and abiding places in Hel when they are not occupied with their affairs in the world above. These beings are Nott, Dag, Mani, Sol.

*Ásasynir* has the same signification as *ásmegir*. As this is the case, and as the *ásmegir* dwell in the lower world and the *ásasynir* likewise, then they must be identical, unless we should be credulous enough to assume that there were two categories of beings in the lower world, both called sons of Aesir.

*Halir*, when the question is about the lower world, means the souls of the dead (*Vafþrúðnismál* 43; see above).

From this, we find that *Alvíssmál* employs the word Hel in such a manner that it embraces those regions where Nott and Dag, Mani and Sol, the living human inhabitants of Mimir's grove, and the souls of departed human beings dwell. Among the last-named are included also souls of the damned, which are found in the abodes of torture below Niflhel, and it is within the limits of possibility that the author of the poem also had them in mind, though there is not much probability that he should conceive them as having a nomenclature in common with gods, *ásmegir*, and the happy departed. At all events, he has particularly -- and probably exclusively -- had in his mind the regions of bliss when he used the word Hel, in which case he has conformed in the use of the word to *Völuspá*, *Vafþrúðnismál*, *Grímnismál*, *Skírnismál*, *Vegtamskviða*, and *Þórsdrápa*.

### 63.

THE WORD HEL IN OTHER PASSAGES. THE RESULT OF THE  
INVESTIGATION FOR THE COSMOGRAPHY AND FOR THE MEANING OF THE  
WORD HEL. HEL IN A LOCAL SENSE THE KINGDOM OF DEATH,  
PARTICULARLY ITS REALMS OF BLISS. HEL IN A PERSONAL SENSE  
IDENTICAL WITH THE GODDESS OF FATE AND DEATH, THAT IS, URD.

While a terrible winter is raging, the gods, according to *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*,<sup>3</sup> send messengers, with Heimdall as chief, down to a lower-world goddess (*dís*), who is designated as Gjöll's (the lower world river's) Sunna (Sol, sun) and as the distributor of the divine liquids<sup>4</sup> (*Hrafnagaldur Óðins* 9, 11) to beseech her to explain to them the mystery of creation, the beginning of heaven, of Hel, and of the world, life and death, if she is able (*hlýrnis, heljar, heims ef vissi, ártíð, æfi, aldurtila*).<sup>5</sup> The messengers get only tears as an answer. The poem divides the universe into three great divisions: heaven, Hel, and the part lying between Hel and heaven, the world inhabited by mortals. Thus Hel is here used in its general sense, and refers to the whole lower world. But here, as wherever Hel has this general signification, it appears that the idea of regions of punishment is not thought of, but is kept in the background by the definite antithesis in which the word Hel, used in its more common and special sense of the subterranean regions of bliss, stands to Niflhel and the regions subject to it. It must be admitted that what the anxious gods wish to learn from the wise goddess of the lower world must, so far as their desire to know and their fears concern the fate of Hel, refer particularly to the regions where Urd's and Mimir's holy fountains are situated, for if the latter, which water the world-tree, pass away, it would mean nothing less than the end of the world. That the author should make the gods anxious concerning Loki's daughter, whom they had hurled into the deep abysses of Niflhel, and that he should make the wise goddess by Gjöll weep bitter tears over the future of the sister of the Fenris-wolf, is possible in the sense that it cannot be refuted by any definite words of the old records; but we may be permitted to regard it as highly improbable.

Among the passages in which the word Hel occurs in the *Poetic Edda*'s mythological songs we have yet to mention *Hárbarðsljóð* 27, where the expression *drepa í Hel* is employed in the same abstract manner as the Swedes use the expression "*at slá ihjäl*," which means simply "to kill" (It is Thor who threatens to kill the insulting Harbard); and also *Völuspá* 43, *Fjölsvinnsmál* 25, and *Grímnismál* 31).

*Völuspá* 43 speaks of Goldcomb (*Gullinkambi*, the cock which, with its crowing, wakes those who sleep in Herfather's (Odin's) abode, and of a sooty-red cock which crows under the earth near Hel's halls. In *Fjölsvinnsmál* 25, Svipdag asks with what weapon one might be able to bring down to Hel's home (*á Heljar sjöt*) that golden cock Vidofnir, which sits in Mimir's tree (the world-tree), and doubtless is identical with Goldcomb. That Vidofnir has done nothing for which he deserves to be punished in the home of Loki's daughter may be regarded as probable. Hel is here used to designate the

<sup>3</sup> "Of the age and genuineness of *Forspjallsljóð* (*Hrafnagaldur Óðins*), I propose to publish a separate treatise." -- Viktor Rydberg. This treatise was never published and there is no trace of it in his papers. For the complete text of *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*, see Supplement I. When the lower world goddess who occurs after strophe 8 is recognized as Urd, the difficulties of interpretation are greatly lessened. Most interpreters see this goddess as Idunn herself, who was said to have fallen out of the world-tree.

<sup>4</sup> Rydberg incorrectly understands this goddess to be called "the Sunna of Gjöll," although he correctly establishes her identity with Urd. In strophe 9, she is correctly referred to as "*Gjallar sunnu gátt*," the bearer of Gjöll's sun. The fire of a river, in this case "Gjöll's sun," is a standard kenning for gold, as the bright metal was often found in rivers. The "bearer" or "tree" (here "doorpost") of gold, is a common kenning for a woman. Gjöll and sunna were likely chosen as they evoke connotations of their own associated with Urd. In Strophe 11, she is further described as "*veiga selju*," the server of mead (strengths). On this point, see No. 73.

<sup>5</sup> "if she knew the origin, duration, and end of heaven, of hel, of the world."

kingdom of death in general, and all that Svipdag seems to mean is that Vidofnir, in case such a weapon could be found, might be transferred to his kinsman, the sooty-red cock which crows below the earth. Saxo also speaks of a cock which is found in Hades, and is with the goddess who has the cowbane stalks when she shows Hadding the flower-meadows of the lower world, the Elysian fields of those fallen by the sword, and the citadel within which death does not seem able to enter (see No. 47). Thus there is at least one cock in the lower world's realm of bliss. That there should be one also in Niflhel and in the abode of Loki's daughter is nowhere mentioned, and is hardly credible, since the cock, according to an ancient and wide-spread Indo-European belief, is a sacred bird, which is the special foe of demons and the powers of darkness. According to Swedish popular belief, even of the present time, the crowing of the cock puts ghosts and spirits to flight; and a similar idea is found in Avesta (*Vendidad*, 18), where, in str. 15, Ahuramazda himself translates the morning song of the cock with the following words: "Rise, ye men, and praise the justice which is the most perfect! Behold the demons are put to flight!"<sup>6</sup> Avesta is naively out of patience with thoughtless persons who call this sacred bird (*Parodarsch*) by the so little respect-inspiring name "Cockadoodledoo" (*Kahrkatas*). The idea of the sacredness of the cock and its hostility to demons was also found among the Indo-Europeans of South Europe and survived the introduction of Christianity. Aurelius Prudentius<sup>7</sup> wrote a *Hymnus ad galli cantum*, and the cock has as a token of Christian vigilance received the same place on the church spires as formerly on the world-tree. Nor have the May-poles forgotten him. But in the North the poets and the popular language have made the red cock a symbol of fire.<sup>8</sup> Fire has two characters - it is sacred, purifying, and beneficent, when it is handled carefully and for lawful purposes. In the opposite case, it is destructive. With the exception of this special instance, nothing but good is reported of the cocks of mythology and poetry.

*Grímnismál* 31 is remarkable from two points of view. It contains information - brief and scant, it is true, but nevertheless valuable - in regard to Yggdrasil's three roots, and it speaks of Hel in an unmistakable, distinctly personal sense.

In regard to the roots of the world-tree and their position, our investigation so far, regardless of *Grímnismál* 31, has produced the following result:

Yggdrasil has a northern root. This stands over the vast reservoir Hvergelmir and spreads over Niflhel, situated north of Hvergelmir and inhabited by frost-giants. There nine regions of punishment are situated, among them Nastrond.

Yggdrasil's second root is watered by Mimir's fountain and spreads over the land where Mimir's fountain and grove are located. In Mimir's grove dwell those living (not

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<sup>6</sup> *Vendidad, Fargard* 18; 23. "And then the holy Sraosha wakes up the bird named Parodarsh, which ill-speaking people call Kahrkatas, and the bird lifts up his voice against the mighty dawn:

24. "Arise, O men! recite the *Ashem yad vahistem* that smites down the Daevas."

<sup>7</sup> Aurelius Prudentius Clemens born in 348 AD in Northern Spain. Died circa 413. He was thirteen when Julian, the last pagan emperor, came to the Roman throne and attempted to suppress Christianity. Two years later, Julian was succeeded by the Christian co-emperors, Valentinian and Valens, both Christians. Prudentius began writing poetry at age 57, and is critically regarded as the greatest of the Christian Latin poets.

<sup>8</sup> See Grimm *Deutsche Mythologie*, Vol. II, Ch. 20, section 2: Our people compare the element (fire) to a red cock flying from house to house: "I'll set a red cock on your roof" is a threat of the incendiary. Translated by James Steven Stallybrass, 1966.

dead) beings called *ásmegir* and *ásasynir*, Lif and Leifthrasir and their offspring, whose destiny it is to people the regenerated earth.

Yggdrasil's third root stands over Urd's fountain *and* the subterranean thingstead of the gods.

The lower world consists of two chief divisions: Niflhel (with the regions belonging to it) and Hel; Niflhel situated north of the Hvergelmir mountain, and Hel south of it. Accordingly both the land where Mimir's well and grove are situated and the land where Urd's fountain is found are within the domain Hel.

In regard to the zones or climates, in which the roots are located, they have been conceived as having a southern and northern. We have already shown that the root over Hvergelmir is the northern one. That the root over Urd's fountain has been conceived as the southern one is manifest from the following circumstances. Eilif Gudrunarson, who was converted to Christianity - the same skald who wrote the purely heathen *Pórsdrápa* - says in one of his poems, written after his conversion, that Christ sits *suðr at Urðarbrunni*, in the south near Urd's fountain,<sup>9</sup> an expression which he could not have used unless his hearers had retained from the faith of their childhood the idea that Urd's fountain was situated south of the other fountains. *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* 2 puts upon Urd's fountain the task of protecting the world-tree against the devastating cold during the terrible winter which the poem describes. *Óðhrærir skyldi Urðar geyma mættk at verja mestum þorra*. - "Urd's Odrerir (mead-fountain) proved not to retain strength enough to protect against the terrible cold."<sup>10</sup> This idea shows that the sap which Yggdrasil's southern root drew from Urd's fountain was thought to be warmer than the saps of the other wells. As, accordingly, the root over Urd's well was the southern, and that over Hvergelmir and the frost-giants the northern, it follows that Mimir's well was conceived as situated between those two. The memory of this fact *Gylfaginning* has in its fashion preserved, where in chapter 15 it says that Mimir's fountain is situated where Ginnungagap formerly was - that is, between the northern Niflheim and the southern warmer region (*Gylfaginning's* "Muspellsheim").

*Grímnismál* 31 says:

Þrjár rætur standa  
á þrjá vega  
undan aski Yggdrasils:  
Hel býr undir einni,  
annarri hrímpursar,  
þriðju mennskir menn.

Three roots grow  
in three directions  
below Yggdrasil's ash:  
Hel lives under one,  
frost-giants under the second,  
"human men" under the third.

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<sup>9</sup> Preserved in *Skáldskaparmál* 51, Faulkes edition; 65, Jónsson edition.

<sup>10</sup> As noted in No. 49, this passage is better understood to mean: "Urður was appointed *Óðhrærir's* keeper powerful to protect it against the mightiest winter." See Supplement I. Rydberg's apparent mistranslation in no way undermines his conclusion that Urd's well was conceived of as the southernmost, and therefore the warmest of the three wells.

The root under which the frost-giants dwell we already know as the root over Hvergelmir and the Niflhel inhabited by frost-giants.

The root under which human beings, living persons, *mennskir menn*, dwell we also know as the one over Mimir's well and Mimir's grove, where the human beings Lif and Leifthrasir and their offspring have their abode, where *jörð lifandi manna* is situated.

There remains one root: the one under which the goddess of fate, Urd, has her dwelling. Of this *Grímnismál* says that she who dwells there is named Hel.

Therefore it follows of necessity that the goddess of fate, Urd, is identical with the personal Hel, the queen of the realm of death, particularly of its regions of bliss. We have seen that Hel in its local sense has the general signification, the realm of death, and the special but most frequent signification, the Elysium of the kingdom of death. As a person, the meaning of the word Hel must be analogous to its signification as a place. It is the same idea having a personal as well as a local form.

The conclusion that Urd is Hel is inevitable, unless we assume that Urd, though queen of her fountain, is not the regent of the land where her fountain is situated. One might then assume Hel to be one of Urd's sisters, but these have no prominence as compared with herself. One of them, Skuld, who is the more known of the two, at the same time is one of Urd's maid-servants and a valkyrie, who on the battlefield does her errands, a feminine psycho-messenger who shows the fallen the way to Hel, the realm of her sisters, where they are to report themselves before they get to their destination. Of Verdandi the records tell us nothing but the name, which seems to preclude the idea that she should be the personal Hel.

This result, that Urd is identical with Hel; that she who dispenses life also dispenses death; that she who with her serving sisters is the ruler of the past, the present, and the future, also governs and gathers in her kingdom all generations of the past, present, and future - this result may seem unexpected to those who, on the authority of *Gylfaginning*, have assumed that the daughter of Loki cast into the abyss of Niflhel is the queen of the kingdom of death; that she whose threshold is called Precipice (*Gylfaginning* 34) was the one who conducted Baldur over the threshold to the subterranean citadel glittering with gold; that she whose table is called Hunger and whose knife is called Famine was the one who ordered the clear, invigorating mead to be placed before him; that the sister of those foes of the gods and of the world, the Midgard-serpent and the Fenris-wolf was entrusted with the care of at least one of Yggdrasil's roots; and that she whose bed is called Sickness, jointly with Urd and Mimir, has the task of caring for the world-tree and seeing that it is kept green and gets the liquids from their fountains.

Colossal as this absurdity is, it has been believed for centuries. And in dealing with an absurdity which is centuries old, we must consider that it is a force which does not yield to objections simply stated, but must be conquered by clear and convincing arguments. Without the necessity of travelling the path by which I have reached the result indicated, scholars would long since have come to the conviction that Urd and the personal Hel are identical, if *Gylfaginning* and the text-books based thereon had not confounded the judgment, and that for the following reasons:

The name *Urðr* corresponds to the Old English *Vurd*, *Vyrd*, *Vird*,<sup>11</sup> to the Old Low German *Wurth*, and to the Old High German *Wurt*. The fact that the word is found

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<sup>11</sup> In *Bright's Anglo-Saxon Glossary* (1912), and elsewhere the form *Vyrd*, is written as *Wyrð*. I cannot confirm the forms *Vurd*, *Vird*.

in the dialects of several Germanic branches indicates, or is thought by the linguists to indicate, that it belongs to the most ancient Germanic times, when it probably had the form *Vorthi*.<sup>12</sup>

There can be no doubt that Urd also has had the meaning of goddess of fate among other Germanic branches than the Scandinavian. Expressions handed down from the heathen time and preserved in Old English documents characterize *Vyrd* as tying the threads or weaving the web of fate (*The Riming Poem*, lines 70-74, *Exeter Book.*, 355; *Beowulf*, 1205), and as the one who writes that which is to happen (*Beowulf*, 2526).<sup>13</sup> Here the plural form is also employed, *Vyrde*, the urds, the norms, which demonstrates that she in England, as in the North, was conceived as having sisters or assistants.<sup>14</sup> In the Old Low German poem "*Heliand*," Wurth's<sup>15</sup> personality is equally plain.

But at the same time as *Vyrd*, *Wurth* (*Uurd*), was the goddess of fate, she was also that of death. In *Beowulf* 2420 and 2725, we find the parallel expressions:

*him was Vyrd ungemete neah*: Urd was exceedingly near to him;  
*was deád ungemete neah*: death was exceedingly near.

And in *Heliand*, Fitt 55, line 4619 (and Fitt 57, line 4778); Fitt 36, line 2989:

*Thiu uurd is at handun*: Urd is at hand;  
*Nu is iro dôd at hendi*: death is at hand.

And there are also other expressions, as *Thiu uurd nâhida thuo*: Urd (death) then approached; *uurd ina benam*: Urd (death) took him away (cp. J. Grimm, *Deutsche Myth.*, Vol. I. ch. 12, 3).<sup>16</sup>

Thus among the Germanic branches in Germany and England, Urd, the goddess of fate, was identical with death, conceived as a queen. So too in the North. The norms made laws and chose life and *örlög* (fate) for the children of time (*Völuspá*). The word

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<sup>12</sup> *The American Heritage Dictionary of Indo-European Roots* gives the reconstructed Germanic form as \**Wurth*. See *wer-3*, page 76.

<sup>13</sup> The examples regarding Urd from here to the end of this chapter seem to be derived from Grimm's *Deutsche Mythology*, Vol. I, chapter 16, section 3; and the supplement to that chapter in Vol. IV. As Grimm indicates, *wyrd gewæf* refers to Urd weaving (Latin *texere*), and *wyrd ne gescraf*, to Urd writing (Latin *ordinare*). *Beowulf* 697 speaks of *wigspeda gewiofu*, "weaving war-luck" (Howell D. Chickering, Jr. translation). The full text of these lines is provided below.

*The Riming Poem*, lines 70-74 *Me þæt **wyrd gewæf**, ond gewyrht forgeaf, þæt ic grofe græf, ond þæt grimme græf flean flæsce ne mæg, þonne flanhred dæg nydgrapum nimeþ, þonne seo neaht becymeð seo me eðles ofonn ond mec her eardes onconn.*

*Beowulf* 697 *Ac him dryhten forgeaf **wigspeda gewiofu**, Wedera leodum, frofor ond fultum, þæt hie feond heora ðurh anes cræft ealle ofercomon, selfes mihtum.* (In regard to *wigspeda*, cp. *vígspá*, *Völuspá* 24)

*Beowulf* 2570-2574: *Scyld wel gebearg life ond lice læssan hwile mærum þeodne þonne his myne sohte, ðær he þy fyrste, forman dogore wealdan moste swa him **wyrd ne gescraf** hreð æt hilde.*

<sup>14</sup> *wyrde* occurs at line 1337.

<sup>15</sup> The manuscript of *Heliand* renders this *uurd*, which I have followed in the quotes. Jakob Grimm uses the spelling *Wurth* (presumably *uurd*).

<sup>16</sup> *Thiu uurd nâhida thuo* appears in *Heliand*, Fitt 64, line 5394; The phrase *uurd ina benam* occurs in Fitt 26, line 2189.

*örlög* (nom. pl.; the original meaning seems to be *ur*-laws, that is, the original laws)<sup>17</sup> frequently has a decided leaning to the idea of death (cp. *Völuspá* 31: *Eg sá Baldri örlög fólgin*).<sup>18</sup> Hakon Jarl's *örlög* was that Kark cut his throat (*Njal's Saga*, ch. 100).<sup>19</sup> Among the Germanic branches in Germany and England to receive the "judgment of the norms" was identical with being doomed to die (*Heimskringla*, *Ynglingasaga* 47, *Ynglingatal* 32 - *norna dóms notið hafði*).<sup>20</sup> Fate and death were in the idea and in usage so closely related, that they were blended into one personality in the mythology. The ruler of death was that one who could resolve death; but the one who could determine the length of life, and so also could resolve death, and the kind of death, was, of course, the goddess of fate. They must blend into one.

In the ancient Norse documents, we also find the name Urd used to designate death, just as in *Heliand* and *Beowulf*, and this, too, in such a manner that Urd's personal character is not emphasized. *Ynglingatal* 28 calls Ingjald's manner of death his *Urðr*, and to determine death for anyone was to *draga Urðr* at him [Egilsson's, *Lex. Poet.* - *draga urð at e-m*: cause someone's death].

Far down in the Christian centuries the memory survived that Urd was the goddess of the realm of death and of death. When a bright spot, which was called Urd's moon, appeared on the wall, it meant the breaking out of an epidemic (*Eyrbyggja Saga*, chapter 52). Even as late as the year 1237, Urd is supposed to have revealed herself, the night before Christmas, to Snaebjorn to predict a bloody conflict, and she then sang a song in which she said that she went mournfully to the contest to choose a man for death.<sup>21</sup> Saxo translates *Urðr* or *Hel* with "*Proserpina*" (*Hist.*, Book 3 - "the goddess of death" - Fisher).

#### 64.

URD'S MAID-SERVANTS: (1) MAID-SERVANTS OF LIFE: NORNS, DISES OF BIRTH, *HAMINGJUR*, *GIPTUR*, *FYLGJUR*; (2) MAID-SERVANTS OF DEATH: VALKYRIES, THE PSYCHOPOMPS OF DISEASES AND ACCIDENTS.

Since the beings for whom Urd determines birth, position in life, and death, are countless, so too her servants, who perform the tasks commanded by her as queen, must also be innumerable. They belong to two large classes: the one class is active in her service in regard to life, the other in regard to death.

Most intimately associated with her are her two sisters. With her they have the authority of judges. Compare *Völuspá* 20, and the expressions *norna dómur*, *norna kviður*. And they dwell with her under the world-tree, which stands for ever green over her gold-clad fountain.

<sup>17</sup> "From *legan* (to lay down, *constituere*) like the AS *lage*, ON *lög* (*lex*); therefore *urlac*, fundamental laws." Grimm, *DM* Vol. I, 16, 3. (Stallybrass tr.)

<sup>18</sup> "I saw Baldur's fate concealed."

<sup>19</sup> "That was the *örlog* of Earl Hakon, that Kark the thrall cut his throat." A full description of Jarl Hakon's death at the hands of Tormod Kark is recounted in *Heimskringla*, *Saga Ólafs Tryggvasonar*, chapter 51.

<sup>20</sup> "had to suffer the judgement (the doom) of the Norns."

<sup>21</sup> This reference is most likely from the *Íslendingasögur* or the *Konungasögur*. Rydberg has not provided information to adequately trace it, nor do I find it in Grimm.



As maid-servants under Urd, there are countless *hamingjur* (*fylgjur*) and *giptur* (also called *gáfur*, *auðnur*, *heillir*). The *hamingjur* are fostered among beings of giant-race (who hardly can be others than the norns and Mimir). Three mighty rivers fall down into the world, in which they have their origin, and they come wise in their hearts, soaring over the waters to our upper world (*Vafþrúðnismál* 48, 49). There every child of man is to have a *hamingja* as a companion and guardian spirit. The testimony of the Icelandic sagas of the Middle Ages are confirmed in this regard by phrases and forms of speech which have their root in heathendom. The *hamingjur* belong to that large circle of feminine beings which are called *dísir* (*dísir*), and they seem to have been especially so styled. What Urd is on a grand scale as the guardian of the mighty Yggdrasil, this the *hamingja* is on a smaller scale when she protects the separate fruit produced on the world-tree and placed in her care. She does not appear to her favorite excepting perhaps in dreams or shortly before his death (the latter according to *Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar*, the prose (35); *Njal's saga*, 62; *Hallfreðar Saga Vandræðskálds* ch. 11; proofs from purely heathen records are wanting).<sup>22</sup> In strophes which occur in *Gísla saga Súrssonar* ch. 22, and which are attributed (though on doubtful grounds) to this heathen skald, the hero of the saga, but the origin of which (from a time when the details of the myth were still remembered) is fully confirmed by a careful criticism, it is mentioned how he stood between good and evil inspirations, and how the *draumkona* (dream-woman) of the good inspirations said to him in sleep: "Be not the first cause of a murder! excite not peaceful men against yourself! - promise me this, thou charitable man! Aid the blind, scorn not the lame, and insult not a Tyr robbed of his hand!"<sup>23</sup> These are noble counsels, and that the *hamingjur* were noble beings was a belief preserved through the Christian centuries in Iceland, where, according to Vigfusson, the word *hamingja* is still used in the sense of Providence. They did not usually leave their favorite before death.<sup>24</sup> But there are certain phrases preserved in the spoken language which show that they could leave him before death. He who was abandoned by his *hamingja* and *gipta*, was a lost man. If the favorite became a hideous and bad man, then his *hamingja* and *gipta* might even turn her benevolence into wrath, and cause his well-deserved ruin. *Úfar eru dísir*, angry at you are the *dísir*! cries Odin to the royal nothing Geirrod (*Grímnismál* 53), and immediately

<sup>22</sup> These same references may be found under the entry "*fylgja*" in Vigfusson's *Dictionary*.

*Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar*, the prose (35): *Þat kvað Helgi, því at hann grunaði um feigð sína ok þat, at fylgjur hans höfðu vitjat Heðins, þá er hann sá konuna ríða varginum*; Then Helgi said that he suspected that he was 'fey' (doomed to die) and that his *fylgja* had visited Hedin, when he saw the woman riding the wolf.

No *fylgja* or *hamingja* appears in *Njal's Saga* ch. 62, however, *fylgjur* ("fetches") do appear in chapters 12, 23, and 69. Since chapter numbers vary by edition, the reference may be to chapter 69.

*Hallfreðar Saga*, ch. 11: *Hallfreður leit til og sá að þar var fylgjukona hans*; Hallfred took a look, and saw that there was his *fylgjukona* (lit. "woman of *fylgja*," no doubt an example of the "fetch" as a woman.)

<sup>23</sup> *Vald eigi þú vígi, ves þú ótyrrinn, fyrri, morðs við mæti-Njörðu, mér heitið því, sleitu, baugsmyndir, hjalp blindum, Baldr, hygg at því, skjaldar, illt kveða háð ok höltum, handlausum tý, granda*. The final line simply reads "Help the handless." Here *tý* is a verb, and undoubtedly a pun on the god-name Tyr, as he lost his hand. Probably for this reason, Rydberg has chosen to insert the name Tyr in the translation.

<sup>24</sup> This is not entirely true. Under the entry for *hamingja*, Vigfusson notes that the *hamingja* could be lent to another, thereby imparting one's good luck to that person, *sögðusk mundu leggja til með honum hamingju sína*, *Laxadæla Saga*, ch. 21. He adds that the *hamingja* left the dying at the hour of death and was passed to a dear son, daughter, or beloved kinsmen, *Hallfreðar Saga*, ch. 11; *Viga-Glums Saga*, Ch. 9.

thereafter the latter stumbles and falls pierced by his own sword. That the invisible *hamingja* could cause one to stumble and fall is shown in *Fornmannasögur*, III.<sup>25</sup>

The *giptur* seem to have carried out such of Urd's resolves, on account of which the favorite received an unexpected, as it were accidental, good fortune.

Not only for separate individuals, but also for families and clans, there were guardian spirits (*kynfylgjur*, *ættarfylgjur*).<sup>26</sup>

Another division of this class of maid-servants under Urd are those who attend the entrance of the child into the world, and who have to weave the threads of the new-born babe into the web of the families and events. Like Urd and her sisters, they too are called *norns*. If it is a child who is to be a great and famous man, Urd herself and her sisters may be present for the above purpose (see No. 30 in regard to Halfdan's birth).

A few strophes incorporated in *Fáfnismál* from a heathen didactic poem, now lost (*Fáfnismál* 12-13), speak of *norns* whose task it is to determine and assist the arrival of the child into this world - *nornir, er nauðgönglar eru, og kjósa mæður frá mögum*. The expression *kjósa mæður frá mögum*, "to choose mothers from descendants," seems obscure, and in any case cannot mean simply "to deliver mothers of children." The word *kjósa* is never used in any other sense than to choose, elect, select. Here then it must mean to choose, elect as mothers; and the expression "from descendants" is incomprehensible, if we do not on the one hand conceive a crowd of eventual descendants, who at the threshold of life are waiting for mothers in order to become born into this world, and on the other hand women who are to be mothers, but in reference to whom it has not yet been determined which descendant each one is to call hers among the great waiting crowd, until those *norns* which we are here discussing resolve on that point, and from the indefinite crowd of waiting *megir* (descendants) choose mothers for those children which are especially destined for them.

These *norns* are, according to *Fáfnismál* 13, of different birth. Some are Asa-kinswomen, others of elf-race, and again others are daughters of Dvalin. In regard to the last-named it should be remembered that Dvalin, their father, through artists of his circle, decorated the citadel, within which a future generation of men await the regeneration of the world, and that the mythology has associated him intimately with the elf of the morning dawn, Delling, who guards the citadel of the race of regeneration against all that is evil and all that ought not to enter (see No. 53). There are reasons (see No. 95) for assuming that these *dís* of birth were Hoenir's maid-servants at the same time as they were Urd's, just as the *valkyries* are Urd's and Odin's maid-servants at the same time (see below).

To the other class of Urd's maid-servants belong those lower-world beings which execute her resolves of death, and conduct the souls of the dead to the lower world.

Foremost among the *psychopomps*, the conductors of the dead, we note that group of shield-maids called *valkyries*. As Odin and Freyja got the right of choosing on the battlefield, the *valkyries* have received Asgard as their abode. There they bring the mead-horns to the Aesir and einherjes, when they do not ride on Valfather's errands (*Völuspá*

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<sup>25</sup> Without a page number this reference remains elusive. The *Fornmanna Sagas* is a 12 volume set published in 1823, containing several of the Sagas of Norse and Danish Kings. It contained large parts of Snorri's *Heimskringla*, as well as *Knytlinga Saga*, more commonly known as *Ævi Danakonunga* or *Sögur Danakonunga*, a collection of histories of Danish Kings, ca. 900-1200. Volume 3 contains *Ólafs konungs Tyggvasson*, chs. 256-286, *Saga skálda Haralds konungs hárfagra* and several short *Þáttir*.

<sup>26</sup> *kynfylgjur*, *Volsunga Saga*, ch. 4 and elsewhere; *ættarfylgjur*, *Þórðar Saga herðu*, ch. 7

30; *Grímnismál* 36; *Skáldskaparmál* 9, Jónsson ed.; *Skáldska.* 2, Faulkes ed.). But the third of the norns, Skuld, is the chief one in this group (*Völuspá* 31), and, as shall be shown below, they for ever remain in the most intimate association with Urd and the lower world.

65.

ON THE COSMOGRAPHY. THE WAY OF THOSE FALLEN BY THE SWORD TO VALHALL IS THROUGH THE LOWER WORLD.

The modern conception of the removal of those fallen by the sword to Asgard is that the valkyries carried them immediately through blue space to the halls above. The heathens did not conceive the matter in this manner.

It is true that the mythological horses might carry their riders through the air without pressing a firm foundation with their hoofs. But such a mode of travel was not the rule, even among the gods, and, when it did happen, it attracted attention even among them. Compare *Gylfaginning*, 35, which quotes strophes from a heathen source.<sup>27</sup> The bridge Bifröst would not have been built or established for the daily connection between Asgard and Urd's subterranean realm if it had been unnecessary in the mythological world of fancy. Mani's way in space would not have been regarded as a road in the concrete sense, that quakes and rattles when Thor's thunder-chariot passes over it (*mána vegur dundi* - *Haustlög* 1, *Skáldskaparmál* 25), had it not been thought that Mani was safer on a firm road than without one of that sort. To every child that grew up in the homes of our heathen fathers the question must have lain near at hand, what such roads and bridges were for, if the gods had no advantage from them. The mythology had to be prepared for such questions, and in this, as in other cases, it had answers with which to satisfy that claim on causality and consistency which even the most naive view of the world presents. The answer was: If the Bifröst bridge breaks under its riders, as is to happen in course of time, then their horses would have to swim in the sea of air (*Bilröst brotnar, er þeir á brú fara, og svima i móðu marir* -- *Fáfnismál* 15<sup>28</sup>; compare a strophe of Kormak, *Kormak's Saga*, p. 259, where the atmosphere is called the bay of the gods, *Día fjörðr*).<sup>29</sup> A horse does not swim as fast and easily as it runs. The different possibilities of travel are associated with different kinds of exertion and swiftness. One method is more practical than the other. The solid connections which were used by the gods and which the mythology built in space are, accordingly, useful and convenient. The

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<sup>27</sup> "Né eg flýg,  
þó eg fer  
og að lofti líðk  
á Hófvarpni  
þeim er Hamskerpir  
gat við Garðrofu." I am not flying  
although I fare  
and pass through the air  
on Hofvarpnir  
whom Hamskerpir  
begat with Gardrofa."

<sup>28</sup> "Bifröst will break, when they journey across the bridge, and the horses will swim in the river." Vigfusson notes that the word *móða* means "a large river" but also "the condensed vapor on a glass and the like caused by breathing on it," as well as "mist, haziness."

<sup>29</sup> Also quoted in *Skáldskaparmál* 9, Jónsson ed.; 2, Faulkes, ed. The word *fjörðr* is properly defined as a bay, a firth, an estuary. Anderson has incorrectly rendered the Swedish word *fjärd*, used by Rydberg, as *fjord*. *Día fjörðr*, the bay of gods, refers to the poetic mead, rather than to the atmosphere.

valkyries, riding at the head of their chosen heroes, as well as the gods, have found solid roads advantageous, and the course they took with their favorites was not the one presented in our mythological textbooks. *Grímnismál* (str. 21; see No. 93) informs us that the breadth of the atmospheric sea is too great and its currents too strong for those riding on their horses from the battlefield to wade across (*árglaumur þykir ofmikill valglaumi að vaða*).<sup>30</sup>

In the 45th chapter of *Egil Skallagrimson's Saga* we read how Egil saved himself from men, whom King Erik Blood-axe sent in pursuit of him to Saud Isle. While they were searching for him there, he had stolen to the vicinity of the place where the boat lay in which those in pursuit had rowed across. Three warriors guarded the boat. Egil succeeded in surprising them, and in giving one of them his death-wound before the latter was able to defend himself. The second fell in a duel on the beach. The third, who sprang into the boat to loose it, fell there after an exchange of blows. The saga has preserved a strophe in which Egil mentions this exploit to his brother Thorolf and his friend Arinbjorn, whom he met after his flight from Saud Isle. There he says:

*at þrymreynis þjónar  
þrír nökkurir Hlakkar,  
til hásalar Heljar  
helgengnir, för dvelja.*

"Three of those who serve the tester of the valkyrie-din (the warlike Erik Blood-axe) will late return; they have gone to the lower world, to Hel's high hall."

The fallen ones were king's men and warriors. They were slain by weapons and fell at their posts of duty, one from a sudden, unexpected wound, the others in open conflict. According to the conception of the mythological textbooks, these sword-slain men should have been conducted by valkyries through the air to Valhal. But the skald Egil, who as a heathen born about the year 904, and who as a contemporary of the sons of Harald Fairhair must have known the mythological views of his fellow-heathen believers better than the people of our time, assures us positively that these men from King Erik's body-guard, instead of going immediately to Valhal, went to the lower world and to Hel's high hall there. He certainly would not have said anything of the sort if those for whom he composed the strophe had not regarded this idea as both possible and correct.

The question now is: Does this Egil's statement stand alone and is it in conflict with those other statements touching the same point which the ancient heathen records have preserved for us? The answer is, that in these ancient records there is not found a single passage in conflict with Egil's idea, but that they all, on the contrary, fully agree with his words, and that this harmony continues in the reports of the first Christian centuries in regard to this subject.

All the dead and also those fallen by the sword come first to Hel. From there the sword-slain come to Asgard, if they have deserved this destiny.

In *Gisli Surson's saga* (ch. 24) is mentioned the custom of binding Hel-shoes on the feet of the dead. Warriors in regard to whom there was no doubt that Valhall was their

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<sup>30</sup> "The river current seems too great for the noisy crowd of the slain to wade."

final destiny received Hel-shoes like all others, *það er tíðska að binda mönnum helskó, sem menn skulu á ganga til Valhallar*.<sup>31</sup> It would be impossible to explain this custom if it had not been believed that those who were chosen for the joys of Valhall were obliged, like all others, to travel *á Helvegum*.<sup>32</sup> Wherever this custom prevailed, Egil's view in regard to the fate which immediately awaited sword-fallen men was general.

When Hermod proceeded to the lower world to find Baldur he came, as we know, to the golden bridge across the river Gjöll. Urd's maid-servant, who watches the bridge, mentioned to him that the day before five *fylki* of dead men had ridden across the same bridge. Consequently all these dead are on horseback and they do not come separately or a few at a time, but in large troops called *fylki*, an expression which, in the Icelandic literature, denotes larger or smaller divisions of an army - legions, cohorts, maniples or companies in battle array; and with *fylki* the verb *fylkja*, to form an army or a division of an army in line of battle, is most intimately connected. This indicates with sufficient clearness that the dead here in question are men who have fallen on the field of battle and are on their way to Hel, each one riding, in company with his fallen brothers in arms, with those who belonged to his own *fylki*. The account presupposes that men fallen by the sword, whose final destination is Asgard, first have to ride down to the lower world. Otherwise we would not find these *fylki* on a Hel-way galloping across a subterranean bridge, into the same realm as had received Baldur and Nanna after death.

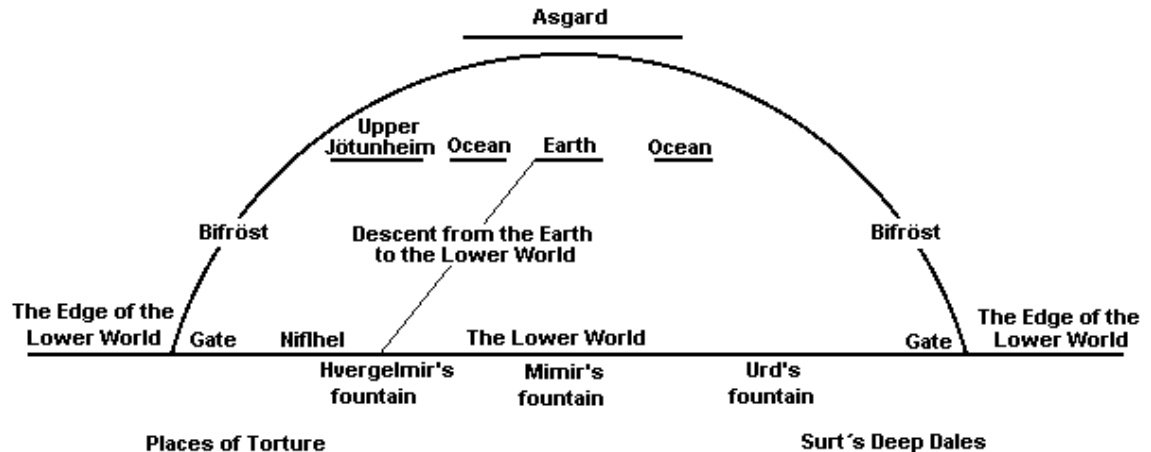
It has already been pointed out that Bifröst is the only connecting link between Asgard and the lower regions of the universe. The air was regarded as an ether sea which the bridge spanned, and although the horses of mythology were able to swim in this sea, the solid connection was of the greatest importance. The gods used the bridge every day (*Grímnismál* 29, 30, *Gylfaginning* 15). Frost-giants and mountain-giants are anxious to get possession of it, for it is the key to Asgard. It therefore has its special watchman in the keen-eyed and vigilant Heimdall. During Ragnarok, when the gods ride to the last conflict they pass over Bifröst (*Fáfnismál* 15).<sup>33</sup> The bridge does not lead to Midgard. Its lower ends were not conceived as situated among mortal men. It stood outside and below the edge of the earth's crust both in the north and in the south. In the south, it descended to Urd's fountain and to the thingstead of the gods in the lower world (see the accompanying drawing, intended to make these facts intelligible). From this mythological topographical arrangement it follows of necessity that the valkyries at the head of the chosen slain must take their course through the lower world, by the way of Urd's fountain and the thingstead of the gods, if they are to ride on Bifröst bridge to Asgard, and not be obliged to proceed there on swimming horses.

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<sup>31</sup> "It is custom to bind hel-shoes to men, so that they shall walk on to Valhall."

<sup>32</sup> On the Hel-ways

<sup>33</sup> The text of the poem says that the bridge will break as the gods cross over it on their way to the final battle, but in *Gylfaginning* 51, Snorri indicates that the bridge will break under the weight of Surt and his riders.



There are still two poems extant from the heathen time, which describe the reception of sword-fallen kings in Valhall. One describes the reception of Erik Blood-axe, the other that of Hakon the Good.<sup>34</sup>

When King Erik, with five other kings and their attendants of fallen warriors, come riding up there, the gods hear on their approach a mighty din, as if the foundations of Asgard trembled. All the benches of Valhall quake and tremble. What single probability can we now conceive as to what the skald presupposed? Did he suppose that the chosen heroes came on horses that swim in the air, and that the movements of the horses in this element produced a noise that made Valhall tremble? Or that it is Bifröst which thunders under the hoofs of hundreds of horses, and quakes beneath their weight? There is scarcely need of an answer to this alternative. Meanwhile the skald himself gives the answer. For the skald makes Bragi say that from the din and quaking it might be presumed that it was Baldur who was returning to the halls of the gods. Baldur dwells in the lower world; the connection between Asgard and the lower world is Bifröst: this connection is of such a nature that it quakes and trembles beneath the weight of horses and riders, and in regard to Bifröst it is predicted that during Ragnarok it shall break under the weight of the host of riders. Thus Bragi's words show that it is Bifröst from which the noise is heard when Erik and his men ride up to Valhall. But to get to the southern end of Bifröst, Erik and his riders must have journeyed in Hel, across Gjoll, and past the thingstead of the gods near Urd's well. Thus it is by this road that the psychopomps of the heroes conduct their favorites to their final destination.

In his grand poem *Hákonarmál*, Eyvind Skaldaspillir makes Odin send the valkyries Göndul and Skögul "to choose among the kings of Yngvi's race some who are to come to Odin and abide in Valhall." It is not said by which road the two valkyries proceed to Midgard, but when they have arrived there they find that a battle is imminent between the Yngvi descendants, Hakon the Good, and the sons of Erik. Hakon is just putting on his coat-of-mail, and immediately thereupon begins the brilliantly-described battle. The sons of Erik are put to flight, but the victor Hakon is wounded by an arrow, and after the end of the battle he sits on the battlefield, surrounded by his heroes, "with shields cut by swords and with byrnies pierced by arrows ." Göndul and Skögul, "maids

<sup>34</sup> *Eiríkirmál* and *Hákonarmál*

on horseback, with wisdom in their countenances, with helmets on their heads, and with shields before them," are near the king. The latter hears that Göndul, "leaning on her spear," says to Skögun that the wound is to cause the king's death, and now a conversation begins between Hakon and Skögun, who confirms what Göndul has said, and does so with the following words:

*Ríða við nú skulum,  
kvað hin ríka Skögun,  
græna heima goða  
Óðni að segja,  
að nú mun alvaldr koma  
á hann sjálfan að sjá.*

"Now we two (Göndul and Skögun) shall ride, said the mighty Skögun, over green realms (or worlds) of the gods in order to say to Odin that now a great king is coming to see him."

Here we get definite information in regard to which way the valkyries journey between Asgard and Midgard. The fields through which the road goes, and which are beaten by the hoofs of their horses, are green realms of the gods (worlds, *heimar*).

With these green realms, Eyvind has not meant the blue ether. He distinguishes between blue and green. The sea he calls blue (*blámær* - see *Heimskringla, Hákonar Saga Apalsteinsfóstra*, ch. 28).<sup>35</sup> What he expressly states, and to which we must confine ourselves, is that, according to his cosmological conception and that of his heathen fellow-believers, there were realms clothed in green and inhabited by divinities on the route the valkyries had to take when they proceeded from a battlefield in Midgard back to Valhall and Asgard. But as valkyries and the elect ride on Bifröst up to Valhal, Bifröst, which goes down to Urd's well, must be the connecting link between the realms decked with green and Asgard. The *grænir heimar* through which the valkyries have to pass are therefore the realms of the lower world.

Among the realms or "worlds" which constituted the mythological universe, the realms of bliss in the lower world were those which might particularly be characterized as the green. Their groves and blooming meadows and fields of waving grain were never touched by decay or frost, and as such they were cherished by the popular fancy for centuries after the introduction of Christianity. The Low German language has also rescued the memory thereof in the expression *grôni godes wang* (*Heliand*, Fitt 37, line 3082).<sup>36</sup> That the green realms of the lower world are called realms of the gods is also

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<sup>35</sup> At least two versions of this stanza are known, one in *Heimskringla* and one in *Landnámabók* 54 where it is attributed to a different poet; the latter according to Vigfusson's Dictionary (see *blá-mær*). In one ms. the word in question reads *blámær* ("blue-moor"), and in the other *borðmærar* ("plank-moor"). Both are used as part of a kenning for ship, referred to as a *skær* ("steed") of the *b. mær*. Of the two, *borðmærar* ("plank-moor" i.e. "shipland") makes the best sense. Thus a ship is "the steed of the shipland," a kenning which has many parallels. As there are no similar kennings meaning "the steed of the blue-land," this reading may be based on the faulty transcription or a damaged manuscript.

<sup>36</sup> Lines 3080-3082: *themu is himilríki, antloken liohto mēst endi lif ēuuig, grôni godes uuang*, "for him heaven stands unlocked --eternal life in the greatest of worlds on God's green meadow." (G. Ronald Murphy, translation). Throughout the work, Hel is presented as a fiery pit, after the Christian teachings.

proper, for they have contained and do contain many beings of a higher or lower divine rank. There dwells the divine mother Nott, worshipped by the Teutons; there Thor's mother and her brother and sister Njörd and Fulla are fostered; there Baldur, Nanna, and Hodur are to dwell until Ragnarok; there Delling, Billing, Rind, Dag, Mani, and Sol, and all the clan of artists gathered around Mimir, they who in their smithy create living beings, vegetation, and ornaments, have their halls; there was born Odin's son Vali. Of the mythological divinities, only a small number were fostered in Asgard. When Göndul and Skölgul at the head of sword-fallen men ride "over the green worlds of the gods," this agrees with the statement in the myth about Hermod's journey to Hel, that *fylki* of dead riders gallop over the subterranean gold-bridge, on the other side of which glorious regions are situated, and with the statement in *Vegtamskviða* that Odin, when he had left Niflhel behind him, came to a *foldvegr*, a way over green plains, by which he reaches the hall that awaits Baldur.

In the heroic songs of the Elder Edda, and in other poems from the centuries immediately succeeding the introduction of Christianity, the memory survives that the heroes journey to the lower world. Sigurd Fafnisbani comes to Hel. Of one of Atli's brothers who fell by Gudrun's sword it is said, *í Helju hún þann hafði*<sup>37</sup> (*Atlamál* 51). In the same poem, strophe 43, one of the Niflungs says of a sword-fallen foe that they had him *lamdan til Heljar*.<sup>38</sup>

The mythic tradition is supported by linguistic usage, which, in such phrases as *berja í Hel*, *drepa í Hel*, *drepa til Heljar*, *færa til Heljar*, indicated that those fallen by the sword also had to descend to the realm of death.

The memory of valkyries, subordinate to the goddess of fate and death, and belonging with her to the class of norns, continued to flourish in Christian times both among Anglo-Saxons and Scandinavians. Among the former, *wælcyrge*, *wælcyrre* (valkyrie) could be used to express the Latin *parca*,<sup>39</sup> and in *Beowulf* occur phrases in which Hild and Gud (the valkyries Hildr and Gunnr) perform the tasks of Vyrð.<sup>40</sup> In *Atlamál* 28, the valkyries are changed into "dead women," inhabitants of the lower world, who came to choose the hero and invite him to their halls. The basis of the transformation is the recollection that the valkyries were not only in Odin's service, but also in that of the lower world goddess Urd (compare *Atlakviða* 16, where they are called norns), and that they as psychopomps conducted the chosen Heroes to Hel on their way to Asgard.

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While, under the influence of heathen thought, the Christian heaven is envisioned as a beautiful green meadow; for example in the quote above, as well as in Fitt 11, line 948's "high meadow of heaven," and elsewhere.

<sup>37</sup> "she sent him to Hel"

<sup>38</sup> "beaten to Hel"

<sup>39</sup> *parca*, fate; For a fuller survey of the references in this paragraph see Grimm, *DM* Vol I, 16, section 4, the probable source of Rydberg's evidence here.

<sup>40</sup> *Beowulf* line 452 and 1481 *gif mec hild nime*, if Hild take me (if battle takes me); line 2536 *oððe guð nimeð*, or Gud take me (or battle take me); cp. line 446 *gif mec deað nimeð* if death takes me.

*Beowulf* line 1123 *þær guð fornam* whom Gud had taken (whom battle had taken); cp. line 488, 2236 *deað fornam*, death had taken.



## THE CHOOSING. THE MIDDLE-AGE FABLE ABOUT "MARKING WITH THE SPEAR-POINT."

If death on the battlefield, or as the result of wounds received on the field of battle, had been regarded as an inevitable condition for the admittance of the dead into Asgard, and for the honor of sitting at Odin's table, then the choosing would under all circumstances have been regarded as a favor from Odin. But this was by no means the case, nor could it be so when regarded from a psychological point of view (see above, No. 61). The poems mentioned above, "*Eiríksmál*" and "*Hákonarmál*," give us examples of choosing from a standpoint quite different from that of favor. When one of the einherjes, Sigmund, learns from Odin that Erik Blood-axe has fallen and is expected in Valhal, he asks why Odin robbed Erik of victory and life, although he, Erik, possessed Odin's friendship. From Odin's answer to the question we learn that the skald did not wish to make Sigmund express any surprise that a king, whom Odin loves above other kings and heroes, has died in a lost, rather than a won, battle. What Sigmund emphasizes is, that Odin would rather not take a less loved king unto himself than the so highly appreciated Erik, and permit the latter to conquer and live. Odin's answer is that he is hourly expecting Ragnarok, and that he therefore made haste to secure as soon as possible so valiant a hero as Erik among his einherjes. But Odin does not say that he feared that he might have to relinquish the hero forever, in case the latter, not being chosen on this battlefield, should be snatched away by some other death than that by the sword.

*Hákonarmál* gives us an example of a king who is chosen in a battle in which he is the victor. As conqueror the wounded Hakon remained on the battlefield; still he looks upon the choosing as a disfavor. When he had learned from Göndul's words to Skögun that the number of the einherjes is to be increased with him, he blames the valkyries for dispensing to him this fate, and says he had deserved a better lot from the gods (*várum þó verðir gagns frá goðum*).<sup>41</sup> When he enters Valhall he has a keener reproach on his lips to the welcoming Odin: *illúðigr mjög þykir oss Óðinn vera, sjáum vér hans of hugi*.<sup>42</sup>

Undoubtedly for our ancestors, it was a glorious prospect to be permitted to come to Odin after death, and a person who saw inevitable death before his eyes might comfort himself with the thought of soon seeing "the benches of Baldur's father decked for the feast" (*Krákumál* 25: *Baldrs föður bekki búna veit at sumblum*). But it is no less certain from all the evidences we have from the heathen time, that honorable life was preferred to honorable death, although between the wars there was a chance of death from sickness. Under these circumstances, the mythical eschatology could not have made death from disease an insurmountable obstacle for warriors and heroes on their way to Valhal. In the ancient records, there is not the faintest allusion to such an idea. It is too absurd to have existed. It would have robbed Valhall of many of Midgard's most brilliant heroes, and it would have demanded from faithful believers that they should prefer death even with defeat to victory and life, since the latter lot was coupled with the possibility of death from disease. With such a view, no army goes to battle, and no warlike race endowed

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<sup>41</sup> *Hákonarmál* 12 : "(We) were worthy of victory from the gods"

<sup>42</sup> *Hákonarmál* 15: "Odin seems angry, I can see (i.e. fear) his mood"

with normal instincts has even entertained it and given it expression in their doctrine in regard to future life.

The absurdity of the theory is so manifest that the mythologists who have entertained it have found it necessary to find some way of making it less inadmissible than it really is. They have suggested that Odin did not necessarily fail to get those heroes whom sickness and age threatened with a straw-death, nor did they need to relinquish the joys of Valhall, for there remained to them an expedient to which they under such circumstances resorted: they cut themselves with the spear-point (*marka sig geirs oddi*).

If there was such a custom, we may conceive it as springing from a sacredness attending a voluntary death as a sacrifice - a sacredness which in all ages has been more or less alluring to religious minds. But all the descriptions we have from Latin records in regard to Germanic customs, all our own ancient records from heathen times, all Northern and German heroic songs, are unanimously and stubbornly silent about the existence of the supposed custom of "marking with the spear-point," although, if it ever existed, it would have been just such a thing as would be noticed by strangers on one hand, and on the other hand be remembered, at least for a time, by the generations converted to Christianity. But the well-informed persons interviewed by Tacitus, they who presented so many characteristic traits of the Teutons, knew nothing of such a practice; otherwise they certainly would have mentioned it as something very remarkable and peculiar to the Teutons. None of the later classical Latin or middle age Latin records which have contributed to our knowledge of the Teutons have a single word to say about it; nor the heroic poems. The Scandinavian records, and the more or less historical sagas, tell of many heathen kings, chiefs, and warriors who have died on a bed of straw, but not of a single one who "marked himself with the spear-point." The fable about this "marking with the spear-point" has its origin in *Ynglingasaga* 9, where Odin, changed to a king in Svithiod, is said, when death was approaching, to have *lét marka sig geirsoddi*. Out of this statement has been constructed a custom among kings and heroes of anticipating a straw-death by "marking with the spearpoint," and this for the purpose of getting admittance to Valhall. Vigfusson (*Dictionary*) has already pointed out the fact that the author of *Ynglingasaga* had no other authority for his statement than the passage in *Hávamál*,<sup>43</sup> where Odin relates that he wounded with a spear, hungering and thirsting, voluntarily inflicted on himself pain, which moved Bestla's brother to give him runes and a drink from the fountain of wisdom. The fable about the spear-point marking, and its purpose, is therefore quite unlike the source from which, through ignorance and random writing, it sprang.

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<sup>43</sup> Under the entry "geirr": *marka sik geir-oddi*, to mark oneself in the breast with a spear's point, so as to make blood flow, was a heathen rite whereby warriors on their death-bed devoted themselves to Odin; it was the common belief that a man who died a natural death was not admitted into Valhalla after death; this rite is only mentioned in mythical sagas such as *Yngl. S.* chap. 10; cp. *Gautr. S.* ch. 7 --*Pá stakk Starkaðr sprotanum á konungi ok mælti, nú gef ek þik Óðni*. The origin of this rite is in *Hm.*, where Odin himself is represented as hanging himself in Yggdrassil 'wounded with a spear and given to Odin, myself to myself'; some trace it to a Christian origin, which is not very likely.

THE PSYCHOPOMPS OF THOSE NOT FALLEN BY THE SWORD. LOKI'S DAUGHTER (THE PSEUDO-HEL OF *GYLFAGINNING*) IDENTICAL WITH LEIKIN.

The psychopomps of those fallen by the sword are, as we have seen, stately dises, sitting high in the saddle, with helmet, shield, and spear. To those not destined to fall by the sword, Urd sends other maid-servants, who, like the former, may come on horseback, and who, by all indications, are of very different appearance, varying in accordance with the manner of death of those persons whose departure they attend. She who comes to those who sink beneath the weight of years has been conceived as a very benevolent dis, to judge from the solitary passage where she is characterized, that is in *Ynglingatal* 30 (*Ynglingasaga* 44), where it is said of the aged and just king Halfdan Whiteleg, that he was taken hence by the woman, who is helpful to those bowed and stooping (*hallvarps hlífinauma*).<sup>44</sup> The burden which Elli (age), Utgard-Loki's foster-mother (*Gylfaginning* 47), puts on men, and which gradually gets too heavy for them to bear, is removed by this kind-hearted dis.

Other psychopomps are of a terrible kind. Most of them belong to the spirits of disease dwelling in Niflhel (see No. 60). King Vanlandi is tortured to death by a being whose epithet, *vitta vættur* and *tröllkund*, shows that she belongs to the same group as *Heiðr*, the prototype of witches, and who is contrasted with the valkyrie *Hild* by the appellation *ljóna liðs bága Grímhildr* (*Ynglingasaga* 13, *Ynglingatal* 3).<sup>45</sup> The same *vitta vættur* came to King Adils when his horse fell and he himself struck his head against a stone (*Ynglingasaga* 29). Two kings, who die on a bed of straw, are mentioned in *Ynglingasaga*'s Thjodolf-strophes (ch. 17 and 47) as visited by a being called in the one instance Loki's kinswoman (*Loka mær*), and in the other Hvedrung's kinswoman (*Hveðrungs mær*).<sup>46</sup> That this kinswoman of Loki has no authority to determine life and death, but only carries out the dispensations of the norns, is definitely stated in the Thjodolf-strophe (*norna dóms* - ch. 47), and also that her activity, as one who brings the invitation to the realm of death, does not imply that the person invited is to be counted among the damned, although she herself, the kinswoman of Loki, the daughter of Loki, surely does not belong to the regions of bliss.

<sup>44</sup> Here Rydberg reads "*hallvarps*" as the genitive of "*hallvarpur*," and takes it to mean "he who is bowed and stooping." Since "*varpur*" is never used as a noun, an adjective, or an adjectival suffix, the most obvious way to understand the word is to take it as the genitive of a neutral noun "*hallvarp*." "*Hallr*" means stone, "*varp*" usually means "a casting, an act of throwing", but it can also mean "hill, mound." Here, it must mean "stone-mound," i.e. a *haugur*, burial-mound. Thus the phrase "*hallvarps hlífi-nauma*" means "protecting-goddess of the burial mound" or Urd.

<sup>45</sup> The entire strophe reads: *En á vit / Vilja bróður / vitta véttir / Vanlanda kom / Þá tröllkund / um troða skyldi / liðs grím-Hildr / ljóna bága, / og sá brann / á beði Skútu, / menglötudr, / er mara kvaldi.*

The phrase *bági liðs ljóna* refers to the king; *tröllkund grím-Hildr* to the female monster, called a *mara* a nightmare in the final line; and *véttir vitta* to the witch. No contrast between the witch and any valkyrie is implied here, *-hildur* is a common element in women's names. The strophe reads: "But the wight of sorcery made Vanlandi visit Vili's brother, when the troll-born night-Hildr trampled the foe of the troop of men. And he was burned on the bed of river Skúta, the generous one, whom the nightmare tortured."

<sup>46</sup> *Hveðrung* is a byname of Loki; cp. *Völuspá* 55, where Vidar plunges his sword into the heart of *megi Hveðrungs*, Loki's son, Fenrir.

*Og til þings  
Þriðja jöfri  
Hveðrungs mæð,  
úr heimi bauð,  
þá er Hálfðan,  
sá er á Holti bjó  
norna dóms  
um notið hafði.*

Hvethrung's maid  
Invited the ("third") king  
away from this world  
to (or "Þriði-Odin's") Thing  
when Hálfðan  
who dwelt at Holt,  
had to suffer  
the Norn's judgement.

Since all the dead, whether they are destined for Valhall or for Hel (in the sense of the subterranean realms of bliss), or for Niflhel, must first report themselves in Hel, their psychopomps, whether they dwell in Valhall, Hel, or Niflhel, must do the same. This arrangement is necessary also from the point of view that the unhappy who "die from Hel into Niflhel" (*Vafþrúðnismál*) must have attendants who conduct them from the realms of bliss to the Na-gates, and from there to the realms of torture. Those dead from disease, who have the subterranean kinswoman of Loki as a guide, may be destined for the realms of bliss -- then she delivers them there; or be destined for Niflhel -- then they die under her care and are brought by her through the Na-gates to the worlds of torture in Niflhel.

Far down in Christian times, the participle *leikinn* was used in a manner which points to something mythical as the original reason for its application. In *Biskupasögur* (I. 464)<sup>1</sup> it is said of a man that he was *leikinn* by some magic being (*flagð*). Of another person who sought solitude and talked with himself, it is said in *Eyrbyggja Saga*, chap. 53 that he was believed to be *leikinn*.<sup>2</sup> *Ynglingatal* gives us the mythical explanation of this word.<sup>3</sup>

In its strophe about King Dyggvi, who died from disease, this poem says (*Ynglingingasaga* 17) that, as the lower world dis had chosen him, Loki's kinswoman came and made him *leikinn* (*alvald Yngva þjóðar Loka mæð um leikinn hefir*).<sup>4</sup> The person who became *leikinn* is accordingly visited by Loki's kinswoman, or, if others have had the same task to perform, by some being who resembled her, and who brought mental or physical disease.

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<sup>1</sup> *Biskupasögur* (The Sagas of the Bishops), a semi historic account of the lives of bishops circa the 11th through the 14th centuries. Under the entry "*leikr*," the Vigfusson dictionary quotes: *Maðr sá er Snorri hét var leikinn af flagði einu*. "A man named Snorri was bewitched by a hag."

<sup>2</sup> *Sýndist mönnum þann veg helst sem hann mundi leikinn því að hann fór hjá sér og talaði við sjálfan sig og fór svo fram um hríð*. He remained shy of other people and everyone thought he must have been *leikinn*, because he kept talking to himself.

<sup>3</sup> *Leikinn*, a participle of the verb *leika*, can mean "bewitched," "affected by magic," but there is no need to presuppose something mythic behind it. These examples can be explained by the common usages of the word which are: 1) to play, play with; 2) to play at sports; 3) to treat, usually with a negative connotation: *leika einhvern illa* = "treat someone badly, harm." Related to this meaning is *leika á* = "to trick, delude, confound."; 4) to act, do, know how to do; 5) to pretend, imitate, act; 6) to move, to tremble, to move freely, revolve.

In the examples given above, these men may be conceived of as being treated badly, to be harmed by a *flagd* or similar creature, and thus *leikinn* (deluded). From this point on, Rydberg's attempt to associate the name *Leikin* (sic *Leikn*) with the word *leikinn* is seriously flawed.

<sup>4</sup> Here the Loki-daughter does delude (*leikinn*) King Dyngvi, but as the previous reference to the *flagd* demonstrates, she is not the only being capable of such action.

In our mythical records there is mention made of a giantess whose very name, Leikin, Leikn is immediately connected with that activity which Loki's kinswoman - and she too is a giantess - exercises when she makes a person *leikinn*. Of this personal Leikin,<sup>5</sup> we get the following information in our old records:

1. She is, as stated, of giant race (*Prose Edda*, *Nafnaþulur* 15).
2. She has once fared badly at Thor's hands. He broke her legs (*Leggi brauzt þú Leiknar* - *Skáldskaparmál* 11, after a song by Veturliði).<sup>6</sup>
3. She is *kveldriða*. The original and mythological meaning of *kveldriða* is a horsewoman of torture or death (from *kvelja*, to torture, to kill). The meaning, a horsewoman of the night, is a misunderstanding. Compare Vigfusson's *Dict.*, *sub voce* "*Kveld*."<sup>7</sup>
4. The horse which this woman of torture and death rides is black, untamed, difficult to manage (*styggr*), and ugly-grown (*ljótvaxinn*). It drinks human blood, and is accompanied by other horses belonging to Leikin, black and bloodthirsty like it. (All this is stated by Hallfreður Vandræðaskáld in *Heimskringla*, *Ólafs saga Tryggv.*, ch. 29.)

Tíðhöggvit lét tiggi,  
Tryggva sonr, fyr styggvan  
Leiknar hest á lesti,  
ljótvaxinn, hræ Saxa;  
vinhróðigr gaf víða  
vísi margra Frísa  
blökku brúnt at drekka  
blóð kveldriðu stóði.

"At last, Tryggvi's son placed  
the often-hewn corpses of Saxons  
in front of the peevish  
ugly-grown horse of Leikn (i.e. the wolf);  
the friend-famous one (i.e. the king)  
widely gave the brown blood  
of many Frisians to the black horse-pack  
of the evening-rider (i.e. the wolf-pack)."

Perhaps these loose horses are intended for those persons whom the horsewoman of torture causes to die from disease, and whom she is to conduct to the lower world.<sup>8</sup>

Popular traditions have preserved for our times the remembrance of the "ugly-grown" horse, that is, of a three-legged horse, which on its appearance brings sickness, epidemics, and plagues. The Danish popular belief (*Thiele*, I. 137, 138) knows this monster, and the word Hel-horse has been preserved in the vocabulary of the Danish language. The diseases brought by the Hel-horse are extremely dangerous, but not always fatal. When they are not fatal, the convalescent is regarded as having ransomed his life with that tribute of loss of strength and of torture which the disease caused him, and in a symbolic sense he has then "given death a bushel of oats" (that is, to its horse). According

<sup>5</sup> Only *Leikn* is attested to in the sources as the name of a giantess. *Leikin* is found nowhere.

<sup>6</sup> This is the only passage where the name Leikn is attributed to a specific giantess, the other instance given below designates a giantess in general.

<sup>7</sup> The connection between these two words is superficial at best. Vigfusson notes only that *kveld* is "akin to *kvelja* (to torment), for evening is the *quelling* or *killing* of the daylight," and then provides examples where it only means "evening" with no connotations of death; he defines *kveldriða* as an "evening-rider, a nighthag, a witch"

<sup>8</sup> Rydberg presented this strophe in a footnote without translation. The horse of a giantess (here *Leikn*, and *kveldriða*) is simply a kenning for wolf. Such kennings cannot be taken as mythological evidence.

to popular belief in Schleswig (*Arnkiel*, I. 55; cp. J. Grimm, *Deutsche Myth.*, Vol. II, Ch. 27),<sup>9</sup> Hel rides on a three-legged horse during the time of plague and kills people. Thus the ugly-grown horse is not forgotten in traditions from the heathen time.

*Völuspá* informs us that in the primal age of man, the sorceress Heid went from house to house and was a welcome guest with evil women, since she *seið Leikin* (*síða* means to practice sorcery). Now, as Leikin is the "horsewoman of torture and death," and rides the Hel-horse, then the expression *síða Leikin* can mean nothing else than by sorcery to send Leikin, the messenger of disease and death, to those persons who are the victims of the evil wishes of "evil women"; or, more abstractly, to bring by sorcery dangerous diseases to men.<sup>10</sup>

*Völuspá* 22 (Cod. Reg.) says of Heiðr:

*seið hon kuni,*  
*seið hon Leikin.*

In this manuscript, the letter u is used for both u and y (compare Bugge, *Sæmundar Edda*, Preface x., xi.), and therefore *kuni* may be read both *kuni* and *kyni*. The latter reading makes logical sense.<sup>11</sup> *Kyni* is dative of *kyn*, a neuter noun, meaning something sorcerous, supernatural, a monster. *Kynjamein* and *kynjasótt* mean diseases brought on by sorcery.<sup>12</sup> *Seið* in both the above lines is past tense of the verb *síða*, and not in either one of them the noun *seiðr*.

There was a sacred sorcery and an unholy one, according to the purpose for which it was practiced, and according to the attending ceremonies. The object of the holy sorcery was to bring about something good either for the sorcerer or for others, or to find out the will of the gods and future things. The sorcery practiced by Heiðr is the unholy one, hated by the gods, and again and again forbidden in the laws, and this kind of

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<sup>9</sup> Grimm, *DM* Vol. II, Ch. 27: In Denmark, one who blunders about clumsily is said to "*gaaer som en helhest*," go about like a hel-horse. According to folklore, this hel-horse walks around the churchyard on three legs, fetching the dead. *Theile*, 137: A custom is mentioned in which a live horse is buried in a churchyard before the first human body is buried, so that it may become the walking dead horse. *Theile*, 138: One who has survived a serious illness will say "*Jeg gav Døden en skiæppe havre*," I gave Death a bushel of oats (for his horse). Ankeil quotes I, 55, that according to superstition in times of plague "the Hell rides about on a three-legged horse destroying men," and when the plague is over it is said "Hell is driven away." As compelling as this evidence is, there is nothing solid to tie it to an earlier mythic belief.

<sup>10</sup> This is incorrect. The capital letter in *leikin* is spurious, and as yet no personal name *leikin* has been established (cp. *Leikn*). The meaning of the lines in question is "sorcery she knew, sorcery she was clever at" (or "played at"). This analysis of *Völuspá* 22 was originally presented in a footnote; I have added it to the text in order to comment on it.

<sup>11</sup> This is an oversimplification. Bugge clearly states that u and v are interchangeable in the mss., and that sometimes v is seemingly used for y, probably because the tail of the y, being short, had faded away. Considering this possibility, the alternate reading *seið hon kyni* would mean "she practiced sorcery upon the race."

<sup>12</sup> *Kyn* can mean "a wonder, a wondrous thing; something unbelievable, strange," but is never used in the negative, especially in the oldest sources, and thus cannot be related to sorcery. Furthermore, the meaning of "*kyn*" as "strange" calls for the plural for example *kynjasótt* or *kynjamein*, "strange illness." *Kynsótt*, *kynmein* would mean a "sexually transmitted disease."

sorcery is designated in *Völuspá* 22 by the term *síða kyni*. Of a thing practiced with improper means it is said that it is not *kynja-lauss*, "kyn" -free<sup>13</sup>

The reading in *Hauksbók*, *seið hon hvars hon kunni*, *seið hon hugleikin*, evidently has some "emendator" to thank for its existence who did not understand the passage and wished to substitute something easily understood for the obscure lines he thought he had found.<sup>14</sup>

From all this follows that Leikin is either a side-figure to the daughter of Loki, and like her in all respects, or she and the Loki-daughter are one and the same person. To determine the question whether they are identical, we must observe (1) the definitely representative manner in which *Völuspá*, by the use of the name Leikin, makes the possessor of this name a mythic person, who visits men with diseases and death; (2) the manner in which *Ynglingatal* characterizes the activity of Loki's daughter with a person doomed to die from disease; she makes him *leikinn*, an expression which, without doubt, is in its sense connected with the feminine name Leikn, and which was preserved in the vernacular far down in Christian times, and there designated a supernatural visitation bringing the symptoms of mental or physical illness; (3) the Christian popular tradition in which the deformed and disease-bringing horse, which Leikin rides in the myth, is represented as the steed of "death" or "Hel"; (4) that change of meaning by which the name Hel, which in the mythical poems of the Elder Edda designates the whole heathen realm of death, and especially its regions of bliss, or their queen, got to mean the abode of torture and misery and its ruler - a transmutation by which the name Hel, as in *Gylfaginning* and in the Schleswig traditions, was transferred from Urd to Loki's daughter.

Finally, it should be observed that it is told of Leikin, as of Loki's daughter, that she once fared badly at the hands of the gods, who did not, however, take her life. Loki's daughter is not slain, but is cast into Niflhel (*Gylfaginning* 34). From that time, she is *gnúpleit* -- that is to say, she has a stooping form, as if her bones had been broken and were unable to keep her in an upright position. Leikin is not slain, but gets her legs broken.<sup>15</sup>

All that we learn of Leikin thus points to the Loki-maid, the Hel, not of the myth, but of Christian tradition.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> All these examples may be found in Vigfusson's dictionary under the first definition of "kyn."

<sup>14</sup> This reading offers various other possibilities: "she bewitched the mind, and made it *leikinn*"; "she cleverly bewitched the mind"; "she practiced sorcery, which was precious to her."

<sup>15</sup> *Hún er blá hálf en hálf með hörundar lit. Því er hún auðkennd og heldur gnúpleit og grimmlæg*. She is half blue, and half flesh-colored. Thus she is easily recognizable and rather stooped and fierce-looking.

<sup>16</sup> While there is no doubt that the Loki-daughter is a distinct personality separate from Hel-Urd, Rydberg's argument in regard to her proper name being Leikn is weak. His most compelling evidence for this conclusion is the statement that Thor broke Leikn's legs, and the statement that Odin cast her into Niflheim, *Hel kastaði hann í Niflheim*. (For a similar statement in regard to Thjazi's eyes cp. *Skáldskaparmál* 4, and *Harbardsljód* 19). For want of a better name, I can accept Leikn as a name of Loki's daughter, but each reader must decide how valid this conclusion is.

For a discussion of the strophe in *Heimskringla*, *Ynglingasaga* 17 which seems to call Loki's daughter "the sister of the wolf and Narvi," see No. 85.

## THE WAY TO HADES COMMON TO THE DEAD.

It has already been demonstrated that all the dead must go to Hel -- not only they whose destination is the realm of bliss, but also those who are to dwell in Asgard or in the regions of torture in Niflheim. Thus the dead tread the same road at the outset. One and the same route is prescribed to them all, and the same Helgate opens daily for the host of souls destined for different lots. Women and children, men and the aged, they who have practiced the arts of peace and they who have stained weapons with blood, those who have lived in accordance with the sacred commandments of the norms and gods and they who have broken them-- all have to journey the same way as Baldur went before them, down to the fields of the world-fountains. They come on foot and on horseback -- nay, even in chariots, if we may believe *Helreið Brynhildar*, a very unreliable source -- guided by various psychopomps: the beautifully equipped valkyries, the blue-white daughter of Loki, the somber spirits of disease, and the gentle maid-servant of old age. Possibly the souls of children had their special psychopomps. Traditions of mythic origin seem to suggest this; but the fragments of the myths themselves preserved to our time give us no information on this subject.

The Hel-gate here in question was situated below the eastern horizon of the earth. When Thor threatens to kill Loki he says that he will send him *á austurvega* (*Lokasenna* 59).<sup>17</sup> When the author of the Sun-song sees the sun set for the last time, he hears in the opposite direction -- that is, in the east -- the Hel-gate grating dismally on its hinges (*Sólarljóð* 39 - *en Heljar grind heyrðag á annan veg þjóta þunglega*). The gate has a watchman and a key. The key is called *gillingr*, *gyllingr* (*Nafnaþulur*)<sup>18</sup>; and therefore a skald who celebrates his ancestors in his songs, and thus recalls to those living the shades of those in Hades, may say that he brings to the light of day the tribute paid to Gilling (*yppa Gillings gjöldum*. See Eyvind's strophe, *Skáldskaparmál* 10. Previously the paraphrase has been misunderstood, on account of the pseudo-myth in *Skáldskaparmál* about the mead.)<sup>19</sup> From this gate, the highway of the dead went below the earth in a westerly direction through deep and dark dales (*dökkva dala og djúpa* - *Gylfaginning* 49), and it required several days -- for Hermod nine days and nights - before they came to light regions and to the golden bridge across the river Gjöll, flowing from north to south (see No. 59). On the other side of the river, the roads forked. One road went directly north. This led to Baldur's abode (*Gylfaginning* 49); in other words, to Mimir's realm, to Mimir's grove, and to the sacred citadel of the *ásmegir*, where death and decay cannot enter (see No. 53). This northern road was not, therefore, the road common to all the

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<sup>17</sup> Along eastern-ways.

<sup>18</sup> Here *Gilling* appears as the name of a river.

<sup>19</sup> I cannot account for the reasoning behind this conclusion. This is the only place in the whole of the text that Rydberg discusses Gilling. It seems to be based on the river name Gilling found in *Nafnaþulur*, which would not apply here because *Gilling* is a feminine name, the genitive of which would be *Gillingar* or *Gillingjar*. In the *Skáldskaparmál* stanza in which it appears, the form is *Gillings*, the genitive of *Gillingr*, a masculine giant name (and Suttung's father, according to Snorri). If Gilling were an authentic name of Suttung's father Surt, the phrase "Gilling's tribute" could properly refer to the poetic mead, as it seems to in the stanza cited.



dead. Another road went to the south. As Urd's realm is situated south of Mimir's (see Nos. 59, 63), this second road must have led to Urd's fountain and to the thingstead of the gods there. From the Sun-song we learn that the departed had to continue their journey by that road. The deceased skald of the Sun-song came to the norns, that is to say, to Urd and her sisters, after he had left this road behind him, and he sat for nine days and nights *á norna stóli*<sup>20</sup> before he was permitted to continue his journey (*Sólarljóð* 51). Here, then, is the end of the road common to all, and right here, at Urd's fountain and at the thingstead of the gods something must happen, on which account the dead are divided into different groups, some destined for Asgard, others for the subterranean regions of bliss, and a third lot for Niflhel's regions of torture. We shall now see whether the mythic fragments preserved to our time contain any suggestions as to what occurs in this connection. It must be admitted that this dividing must take place somewhere in the lower world, that it was done on the basis of the laws which in mythological ethics distinguish between right and wrong, innocence and guilt, that which is pardonable and that which is unpardonable, and that the happiness and unhappiness of the dead is determined by this division.

## 69.

### THE TWO THINGSTEADS OF THE AESIR. THE EXTENT OF THE AUTHORITY OF THE AESIR AND OF THE DIS OF FATE. THE DOOM OF THE DEAD.

The Aesirs have two thingsteads: one in Asgard, the other in the lower world.

In the former, a council is held and resolutions passed in such matters as pertain more particularly to the clan of the Aesir and to their relation to other divine clans and other powers. When Baldur is visited by ugly dreams, Valfather assembles the gods to hold counsel, and all the Aesir assemble *á þingi*, and all the asynjes *á máli* (*Vegtamskviða* 1; *Baldur's Draumar* 4).<sup>21</sup> In assemblies here the gods resolved to exact an oath from all things for Baldur's safety, and to send a messenger to the lower world to get knowledge partly about Baldur, partly about future events. On this thingstead efforts are made of reconciliation between the Aesir and the Vanir, after Gullveig had been slain in Odin's hall (*Völuspá* 23, 24). There (*á þing goða*) comes Thor with the kettle captured from Hymir, and intended for the feasts of the gods (*Hymiskviða* 39); and here the Aesir hold their last deliberations, when Ragnarok is at hand (*Völuspá* 48: *Æsir eru á þingi*). No matters are mentioned as discussed in this thingstead in which any person is interested who does not dwell in Asgard, or which are not of such a nature that they have reference to how the gods themselves are to act under particular circumstances. That the thingstead where such questions are discussed must be situated in Asgard itself is a matter of convenience, and is suggested by the very nature of the case.

<sup>20</sup> "on the norn's seats"

<sup>21</sup> *á þingi*, in counsel; *á máli*, in conference; In reality *Vegtamskviða* and *Baldur's Draumar* are the same poem. This reference refers to a paper manuscript of the poem *Baldur's Dreams* which contains 4 additional introductory stanzas and several additional lines, which are now generally regarded as spurious, but may in fact be authentic. Sophus Bugge includes these additions as footnotes in his *Sæmundar Edda*; They are also included as part of the poem in Benjamin Thorpe's translation of the Elder Edda (1865).

It follows that the gods assemble in the Asgard thingstead more for the purpose of discussing their own interests than for that of judging in the affairs of others. They also gather there to amuse themselves and to exercise themselves in arms (*Gylfaginning* 49).

Of the other thingstead of the Aesir, of the one in the lower world, it is on the other hand expressly stated that they go there to sit in judgment, to act as judges; and there is no reason for taking this word *dæma*, when as here it means activity at a thingstead, in any other than its judicial and common sense.

What matters are settled there? We might take this to be the proper place for exercising Odin's privilege of choosing heroes to be slain by the sword, since this right is co-ordinate with that of the norns to determine life and dispense fate, from where it might seem that the domain of the authority of the gods and that of the norns here approached each other sufficiently to require deliberations and decisions in common. Still it is not on the thingstead at Urd's fountain that Odin elects persons for death by the sword. It is expressly stated that it is in his own home in Valhall that Odin exercises his right of electing (*Grímnismál* 8), and this right he holds so independently and so absolutely that he does not need to ask for the opinion of the norns. On the other hand, the gods have no authority to determine the life and death of the other mortals. This belongs exclusively to the norns. The norns elect for every other death but that by weapons, and their decision in this domain is never called a decision by the gods, but *norna dómr*, *norna kviðr*, *feigðar orð*, *dauða orð*.<sup>22</sup>

If the Aesir and norns did have a common voice in deciding certain questions which could be settled in Asgard, then it would not be in accordance with the high rank given to the Aesir in mythology to have them go to the norns for the decision of such questions. On the contrary, the norns would have to come to them. Urd and her sisters are beings of high rank, but nevertheless they are of giant descent, like Mimir. The power they have is immense; and on a closer investigation we find how the mythology in more than one way has sought to maintain in the imagination of its believers the independence (at least apparent and well defined, within certain limits) of the gods -- an independence united with the high rank which they have. It may have been for this very reason that the youngest of the dises of fate, Skuld, was selected as a valkyrie, and as a maid-servant both of Odin and of her sister Urd.

The questions in which the Aesir are judges near Urd's fountain must be such as cannot be settled in Asgard, as the lower world is their proper forum, where both the parties concerned and the witnesses are to be found. The questions are of great importance. This is evident already from the fact that the journey to the thingstead is a troublesome one for the gods, at least for Thor, who, to get there, must wade across four rivers. Moreover, the questions are of such a character that they occur every day (*Grímnismál*, 29, 30).

At this point of the investigation the results previously gained from the various premises unite themselves in the following manner:

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<sup>22</sup> *norna dómr*, judgement of the norns, *Fáfnismál* 11, *Ynglingasaga* ch. 47, *Ynglingatal* 24; *norna kviðr*, verdict of the norns; *feigðar orð*, "fey-word," verdict for death, *Ynglingasaga* 11, *Ynglingatal* 1; *dauða orð*, death verdict, actually *dauða yrði*, "death-words", *Ynglingasaga*, *Ynglingatal* 8.

The Aesir go to the thingstead near Urd's fountain daily. At the thingstead near Urd's fountain hosts of the dead arrive there daily.

The task of the Aesir near Urd's fountain is to judge in questions of which the lower world is the proper forum. When the dead arrive at Urd's fountain their final doom is not yet sealed. They have not yet been separated into the groups which are to be divided between Asgard, Hel, and Niflhel.

This question now is, Can we conceive that the daily journey of the Aesir to Urd's fountain and the daily arrival there of the dead have no connection with each other? -- That the judgments pronounced daily by the Aesir at this thingstead, and that the daily event, in accordance with which the dead at this thingstead are divided between the realms of bliss and those of torture, have nothing in common?

That these mythological facts should have no connection with each other is hard to conceive for anyone who, in doubtful questions, clings to that which is probable rather than to the opposite. The probability becomes a certainty by the following circumstances:

Of the kings Vanlandi and Halfdan, Ynglingatal says that after death they met Odin. According to the common view presented in our mythological text-books, this should not have happened to either of them, since both of them died from disease. One of them was visited and fetched by that choking spirit of disease called *vitta vættr*, and in this way he was permitted "to meet Odin" (*kom á vit Vilja bróður*). The other was visited by *Hveðrungs mæð*, the daughter of Loki, who "called him from this world to Odin's Thing."

*Og til þings  
þriðja jöfri  
Hveðrungs mæð  
úr heimi bauð.*

Hvethrung's maid  
called the king  
away from this world  
to *Þriði's* Thing

*Þing-boð* means a legal summons to appear at a Thing, at the seat of judgment. *Bjóða til þings* is to perform this legal summons. Here it is Hvedrung's kinswoman who comes with sickness and death and *þing-boð* to King Halfdan, and summons him to appear before the judgment-seat of Odin.<sup>1</sup> Since, according to mythology, all the dead, and since, according to the mythological textbooks, at least all those who have died from disease must go to Hel, then certainly King Halfdan, who died from disease, must descend to the lower world; and as there is a Thing at which Odin and the Aesir daily sit in judgment, it must have been this to which Halfdan was summoned. Otherwise we would be obliged to assume that Hvedrung's kinswoman, Loki's daughter, is a messenger, not from the lower world and Urd, but from Asgard, although the strophe further on expressly states that she comes to Halfdan on account of "the judgement of the norms"; and furthermore we would be obliged to assume that the king, who had died from sickness, after arriving in the lower world, did not present himself at Odin's court there,

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<sup>1</sup> *Þriðja* is commonly taken as a qualifier of *jöfri*, king and taken to mean "the third king." This translation is possible. However, another possibility usually overlooked is *Þriði* as one of Odin's names (see *Grímnismál* 46), thus the king is summoned to "Odin's Thing." Also see No. 67.

but continued his journey to Asgard, to appear at some of the occasional deliberations which are held at the thingstead there. The passage proves that at least those who have died from sickness have to appear at the court which is held by Odin in the lower world.

70.

THE DOOM OF THE DEAD (continued).  
SPEECH-RUNES. *ORÐS TÍRR. NÁMÆLI.*

In *Sigurdrífumál* 12 we read:

*Málrúnar skaltu kunna,  
ef þú vilt-at magni þér  
heiptum gjaldi harm;  
þær um vindur,  
þær um vefur,  
þær um setur allar saman  
á því þingi,  
er þjóðir skulu  
í fulla dóma fara.*

"Speech-runes you must know, if you do not wish the strong one to requite the harm you have caused with consuming woe (*heiptir*).<sup>2</sup> All those runes you must wind, weave, and place together in that Thing where the host of people go into the full judgments."

In order to make the significance of this passage clear, it is necessary to explain the meaning of speech-runes.

Several kinds of runes are mentioned in *Sigurdrífumál*, all of a magic and wonderful kind. Among them are speech-runes (*mál-runar*). They get their name from the fact that they are able to restore the power to *mæla* (speak) to a tongue mute or silenced in death. Odin employs speech-runes when he carves *í rúnum*, so that a corpse from the gallows comes and *mælir* with him (*Hávamál* 157). According to Saxo (Book 1), Hadding places a piece of wood carved with runes under the tongue of a dead man. The latter then recovers consciousness and the power of speech, and sings a terrible song. This is a reference to speech-runes. In *Guðrúnarkviða in fyrsta* it is mentioned how Gudrun, mute and almost lifeless (*gerðist að deyja*), sat near Sigurd's dead body. One of the kinswomen present lifts the napkin off from Sigurd's head. By the sight of the features of the loved one Gudrun awakens again to life, bursts into tears, and is able to speak. The evil Brynhild then curses the being (*vættur*) which "gave speech-runes to Gudrun," (23) that is to say, freed her tongue, until then sealed as in death.

Those who are able to apply these mighty runes are very few. Odin boasts that he knows them. Sigurdrifa, who also is skilled in them, is a dis, not a daughter of man. The

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<sup>2</sup> These lines are usually interpreted to mean "Speech-runes you must know, if you want no one to requite injury with enmity (*heiptir*)."

runes which Hadding applied were carved by Hardgreip, a giantess who protected him. But within the court here in question men come in great numbers (*þjóðir*), and among them there must be but a small number who have penetrated so deeply into the secret knowledge of runes. For those who have done so it is of importance and advantage. For by them they are able to defend themselves against complaints, the purpose of which is "to requite the harm they have caused with consuming woe." In the court they are able to *mæla* (speak) in their own defense.

Thus it follows that those hosts of people who enter this thingstead stand there with speechless tongues. They are and remain mute before their judges unless they know the speech-runes which are able to loosen the fetters of their tongues. Of the dead man's tongue, it is said in *Sólarljóð* 44 that it is *til trés metin og kólnað allt fyrir utan*.<sup>3</sup>

The sorrow or harm one has caused is requited in this Thing by *heiptir*, unless the accused is able - thanks to the speech-runes - to speak and give reasons in his defense. In *Hávamál* 151, the word *heiptir* has the meaning of something supernatural and magical. It has a similar meaning here, as Vigfusson has already pointed out.<sup>4</sup> The magical speech-runes, wound, woven, and placed together, form as it were a garb of protection around the defendant against the magic *heiptir*. In the *Hávamál* strophe mentioned, the skald makes Odin paraphrase, or at least partly explain, the word *heiptir* with *mein*, which "eat" their victims.<sup>5</sup> It is in the nature of the myth to regard such forces as personal beings. We have already seen the spirits of disease appear in this manner (see No. 60). The *heiptir* were also personified. They were the Erinys of the Germanic mythology, armed with scourges of thorns (see below).<sup>6</sup>

He who at the Thing particularly dispenses the law of requital is called *magni*. The word has a double meaning, which appears in the verb *magna*, which means both to make strong and to operate with supernatural means.<sup>7</sup>

From all this it must be sufficiently plain that the Thing here referred to is not the Althing in Iceland or the Gulathing in Norway, or any other Thing held on the surface of the earth. The thingstead here discussed must be situated in one of the mythical realms, between which the earth was established. And it must be superhuman beings of higher or lower rank who occupy the judgment-seats there and requite the sins of men with *heiptir*. But in Asgard, men do not enter with their tongues sealed in death. For the einherjes who are invited to the joys of Valhall there are no *heiptir* prepared. Inasmuch as the mythology gives us information about only two thingsteads where superhuman beings

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<sup>3</sup> "became like wood and all was cold without"

<sup>4</sup> Vigfusson's *Dictionary* (pg. 252) "*Heiptir*: In the old poems, *Hávamál* and *Sigurdrífumál*, *heiptir* seems to be used in a particular sense viz., an imprecation (a curse), spell. *Hávamál* 137, 151; *Sigurdrífumál* 12, 36."

<sup>5</sup> *ok þann hal, er mik heifta kveðr, þann eta mein heldr en mik*, "and that man declares *heiptir* against me, *mein* shall consume him sooner than me. *Mein* means harm or injury, and also can refer to disease.

<sup>6</sup> The *Erinys* or *Furies*, attendants of Hades in Greek mythology, who live at the entrance to the underworld. Their duty is to punish the guilty who have not sought atonement before the gods while alive. They sometimes appear on earth pursuing murders and the perpetrators of other base crimes. They fall fast and furiously upon the criminal, permitting him no rest.

<sup>7</sup> It is difficult to accept this reading, since the word *magni* only occurs in the masculine singular as the name for Thor's son, Magni. The passage itself however is problematic. *Codex Regius* reads *magni* here, but the *Völsungasaga* has *magi*. This is usually emended to *mangi*, in agreement with the reading in all the later paper manuscripts. Without this emendation, the line makes little sense. The words *vilt at*, want that, are clearly separate in the mss. and cannot be read as *vilt-at*, want-not, because *at*, that, would be missing, and the sentence incomplete.

deliberate and judge -- namely, the Thing in Asgard and the Thing near Urd's fountain -- and inasmuch as it is, in fact, only in the latter that the gods act as judges, we are driven by all the evidences to the conclusion that *Sigurdrífumál* has described to us that very thingstead at which Hvedrung's kinswoman summoned King Halfdan to appear after death.

*Sigurdrífumál*, using the expression *á því*, sharply distinguished this thingstead or court from all others. The poem declares that it means that Thing where hosts of people go into full judgments. "Full" are those judgments against which no formal or real protests can be made -- decisions which are irrevocably valid. The only kind of judgments of which the mythology speaks in this manner, that is, characterizes as judgments that "never die," are those "over each one dead."

This brings us to the well-known and frequently-quoted strophes in *Hávamál* 76-77:

*Deyr fé,  
deyja frændur,  
deyr sjálfur ið sama;  
en orðstírr  
deyr aldregi,  
hveim er sér góðan getur.*

*Deyr fé,  
deyja frændur,  
deyr sjálfur ið sama.  
Eg veit einn,  
að aldrei deyr,  
dómur um dauðan hvern.*

(76) "Your cattle shall die; your kindred shall die; you yourself shall die; but an *orðs*-reputation of him who has earned a good one (*orðs*-reputation) never dies."<sup>1</sup>

(77) "Your cattle shall die; your kindred shall die; you yourself shall die; one thing I know which never dies: the judgment on each one dead."

Previously these passages have been interpreted as if Odin or *Hávamál*'s skald meant to say - What you have of earthly possessions is perishable; your kindred and yourself shall die. But I know one thing that never dies: the reputation you acquired among men, the posthumous fame pronounced on your character and on your deeds: that reputation is immortal, that fame is imperishable.

But can this have been the meaning intended to be conveyed by the skald? And could these strophes, which, as it seems, were widely known in the heathendom of the North, have been thus understood by their hearers and readers? Did not *Hávamál*'s author, and the many who listened to and treasured in their memories these words of his, know as well as all other persons who have some age and experience, that in the great

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<sup>1</sup> This is the actual meaning of Rydberg's rendition of the lines: *en orðstírr deyr aldregi, hveim er sér góðan getur* and closely follows the wording of the strophe. Anderson, probably following an English translation of *Hávamál*, misquotes Rydberg here as "but the fair fame of him who has earned it never dies," thus confusing the argument which follows. Most translations of *Hávamál* 76 follow suit, ignoring the presense of *góðan* in the last line. The poet specifically refers to a "good" *orðstírr*. If *orðstírr* meant a "good reputation" as it is commonly contended then there would be no need for the poet to speak of it as being "good."

majority of cases the fame acquired by a person scarcely survives a generation, and passes away together with the very memory of the deceased?

Could it have escaped the attention of the *Hávamál* skald and his hearers that the number of mortals is so large and increases so immensely with the lapse of centuries that the capacity of the survivors to remember them is utterly insufficient?

Was it not a well-established fact, especially among the Germans, before they got a written literature, that the skaldic art waged, so to speak, a desperate conflict with the power of oblivion, in order to rescue at least the names of the most distinguished heroes and kings, but that nevertheless thousands of chiefs and warriors were after the lapse of a few generations entirely forgotten?

Did not *Hávamál's* author know that millions of men have, in the course of thousands of years, left this world without leaving so deep footprints in the sands of time that they could last even through one generation?

Every person of some age and experience has known this, and *Hávamál's* author too. The lofty strains above quoted do not seem to be written by a person wholly destitute of worldly experience.

The assumption that *Hávamál* with that judgment on each one dead, which is said to be imperishable, had reference to the opinion of the survivors in regard to the deceased attains its climax of absurdity when we consider that the poem expressly states that it means the judgment on every dead person - "*dómur um dauðan hvern*." In the cottage lying far, far in the deep forest dies a child, hardly known by others than by its parents, who, too, are soon to be harvested by death. But the judgment of the survivors in regard to this child's character and deeds is to be imperishable, and the good fame it acquired during its brief life is to live for ever on the lips of posterity! Perhaps it is the sense of the absurdity to which the current assumption leads on this point that has induced some of the translators to conceal the word *hvern* (every) and led them to translate the words *dómur um dauðan hvern* in an arbitrary manner with "judgment on the dead man."<sup>2</sup>

If we now add that the judgment of posterity on one deceased, particularly if he was a person of great influence, very seldom is so unanimous, reliable, well-considered, and free from prejudice that in these respects it ought to be entitled to permanent validity, then we find that the words of the *Hávamál* strophes attributed to Odin's lips, when interpreted as heretofore, are not words of wisdom, but the most stupid twaddle ever heard declaimed in a solemn manner.

There are two reasons for the misunderstanding - the one is formal, and is found in the word *orðs-tírr* (str. 76); the other reason is that *Gylfaginning*, which too long has had the reputation of being a reliable and exhaustive codification of the scattered statements of the mythic sources, has nothing to say about a court for the dead. It knows that, according to the doctrine of the heathen fathers, good people come to regions of bliss, the wicked to Niflhel; but who he or they were who determined how far a dead person was worthy of the one fate or the other, on this point *Gylfaginning* has not a word to say. From the silence of this authority, the conclusion has been drawn that a court summoning the dead within its forum was not to be found in Germanic mythology, although other Indo-European and non-Indo-European mythologies have presented such

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<sup>2</sup> As in Vigfusson's *Corpus Poeticum Boreale* (1883), "I know one thing that never dies, a dead man's name."

a judgment-seat, and that the Germanic imagination, though always much occupied with the affairs of the lower world and with the condition of the dead in the various realms of death, never felt the necessity of conceiving for itself clear and concrete ideas of how and through whom the deceased were determined for bliss or misery. The ecclesiastical conception, which postpones the judgment to the last day of time, and permits the souls of the dead to be transferred, without any special act of judgment, to heaven, to purgatory, or to hell, has to some extent contributed to making us familiar with this idea which was foreign to the heathens.<sup>3</sup> From this it followed that scholars have been blind to the passages in our mythical records which speak of a court in the lower world, and they have either read them without sufficient attention (as, for instance, the above-quoted statements of *Ynglingatal*, which it is impossible to harmonize with the current conception), or interpreted them in an utterly absurd manner (which is the case with *Sigurdþrífumál* 12), or they have interpolated assumptions, which, on a closer inspection, are reduced to nonsense (as is the case with the *Hávamál* strophes), or given them a possible, but improbable, interpretation (thus *Sonatorrek* 20). The compound *orðstírr* is composed of *orð*, gen. *orðs*, and *tírr*. The composition is of so loose a character that the two parts are not blended into a new word. The sign of the gen. -s is retained, and shows that *orðstírr*, like *lofstírr*, is not in its sense and in its origin a compound, but is written as one word, probably on account of the laws of accentuation. The more original meaning of *orðstírr* is, therefore, to be found in the sense of *orðs tírr*.<sup>4</sup>

*Tírr* means reputation in a good sense, but still not in a sense so decidedly good but that a qualifying word, which makes the good meaning absolute, is sometimes added. Thus in *lofs-tírr*, laudatory reputation; *góður tírr*, good reputation. In the *Hávamál* strophe 76, above-quoted, the possibility of an *orðs tírr* which is not good is presupposed. See the last line of the strophe (*hveim er sér góðan getur*).

So far as the meaning of *orð* is concerned, we must leave its relatively more modern and grammatical sense (word) entirely out of the question. Its older signification is an utterance (one which may consist of many "words" in a grammatical sense), a command, a result, a judgment; and these older significations have long had a conscious existence in the language. Compare *Fornmannasögur*, II. 237: "The first word: All shall be Christians; the second word: All heathen temples and idols shall be unholy," etc.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Although this concept may not be familiar to many Christians, the belief is stated directly in the *Bible*. *Jude* 14-15 "Behold the Lord came with his holy myriads to execute judgement on all"; *Revelation* 20: 12-13 "I saw the dead great and small standing before the throne, and books were opened. Also another book was opened which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, by what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead in them, and all were judged by what they had done ....and if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."

Thus the heathen doctrine teaches that each individual soul will be judged upon its mortal death, while Christianity teaches that all souls will be judged individually, but only after the Apokolips.

<sup>4</sup> The -s may have been retained simply because of the difficulty pronouncing *ð* followed by *t*.

<sup>5</sup> This occurs in chapter 228 of the *Saga of King Olaf Tryggvason*. The version in *Heimskringla* however contains only 113 chapters. The passage reads: *Það var hið fyrsta orð: að allir menn skyldu kristnir vera á Íslandi og skírn taka, þeir er áður voru óskírðir; það var annað: að óheilög skyldu vera hof öll og skurðgodð; það var hið þriðja orð: að fjörbaugsgarð skyldi varða blót öll, ef vátt næmd yrði.*

"The first word: that all men in Iceland shall be Christian, and that all shall be baptized, who were not baptized already; the second word: that all heathen temples and idols shall be unholy; the third word: that all heathen worship, corroborated by a witness, shall be punished by an exile of three years." (Eysteinn Björnsson translation).



In *Völuspá* 26 *orð* is employed in the sense of an established law or judgment among the divine powers, *á gengust eiðar, orð og særi*, where the treaties between the Aesir and gods, solemnized by oaths, were broken.

When *orð* occurs in purely mythical sources, it is most frequently connected with judgments pronounced in the lower world, and sent from Urd's fountain to their destination. *Urðar orð* is Urd's judgment, which must come to pass (*Fjölsvinnsmál* 47), no matter whether it concerns life or death. *Feigðar orð*, a judgment determining death, comes to Fjolnir, and is fulfilled "where Frodi dwelt" (*Ynglingatal* 1). *Dauða orð*, the judgment of death, awaited Dag the Wise, when he came to Vorvi (*Ynglingatal* 8). To a subterranean judgment refers also the expression *bana-orð*, which frequently occurs.

Vigfusson (*Dictionary*, p. 467) points out the possibility of an etymological connection between *orð* and *Urður*.<sup>6</sup> He compares word (*orð*) and *wurdr* (*urðr*), word and weird (fate, goddess of fate). Doubtless there was, in the most ancient time, a mythical idea-association between them.

These circumstances are to be remembered in connection with the interpretation of *orðstírr*, *orðs-tírr* in *Hávamál* 76. The real meaning of the phrase proves to be: reputation based on a decision, on an utterance of authority.

When *orðstírr* had blended into a compound word, there arose by the side of its literal meaning another, in which the accent fell so heavily on *tírr* that *orð* is superfluous and gives no additional meaning of a judgment on which this *tírr* is based. Already in *Höfuðlausn* (str. 26) *orðstírr* is used as a compound, meaning simply honorable reputation, honor. There is mention of a victory which Erik Blood-axe won, and it is said that he thereby gained *orðstírr* (renown).

In interpreting *Hávamál* 76 it would therefore seem that we must choose between the proper and figurative sense of *orðstírr*. The age of the *Hávamál* strophe is not known. If it was from it Eyvind Skaldaspillir drew his *deyr fé, deyja frændur*, which he incorporated in his *drápa* on Hakon the Good, who died in 960, then the *Hávamál* strophe could not be composed later than the middle of the tenth century. *Höfuðlausn* was composed by Egil Skallagrímsson in the year 936 or thereabout. From a chronological point of view, there is therefore nothing to hinder our applying the less strict sense, "honorable reputation, honor," to the passage in question.

But there are other hindrances. If with *orðs-tírr* the *Hávamál* skald meant "honorable reputation, honor," he could not, as he has done, have added the condition which he makes in the last line of the strophe: *hveim er sér góðan getur* ("of him who has earned a good one"), for the idea "good" would then already be contained in *orðstírr*. If in spite of this we would take the less strict sense, we must subtract from *orðstírr* the meaning of honorable reputation, honor, and conceive the expression to mean simply reputation in general, a meaning which the word never had.<sup>7</sup>

We are therefore forced to the conclusion that the meaning of court-decision, judgment, which *orð* has not only in *Ynglingatal* and *Fjölsvinnsmál*, but also in linguistic

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<sup>6</sup> "May there not be some etymological connection between 'word' and 'weird', Icelandic *orð* and *urðr* qs. word, *wurdr*? The notion of weird, doom prevails in compounds."

<sup>7</sup> To further complicate matters, the phrase "*góðan orðtírr*" appears in the *Droplaugarsona Saga* ch. 15 (late 13<sup>th</sup> century), meaning "good reputation."

usage, was clear to the author of the *Hávamál* strophe, and that he applied *orðs tírr* in its original sense and was speaking of imperishable judgments.

It should also have been regarded as a matter of course that the judgment which, according to the *Hávamál* 77, is passed on everyone dead, and which itself never dies, must have been prepared by a court whose decision could not be questioned or set aside, and that the judgment must have been one whose influence is eternal, for the infinity of the judgment itself can only depend on the infinity of its operation. That the more or less vague opinions sooner or later committed to oblivion in regard to a deceased person should be supposed to contain such a judgment, and to have been meant by the immortal doom over the dead, I venture to include among the most extraordinary interpretations ever produced.

Both the strophes are, as is evident from the first glance, most intimately connected with each other. Both begin: *deyr fé, deyja frændur*. *Orð* in the one strophe corresponds to *dómur* in the other. The latter strophe declares that the judgment on every dead person is imperishable, and thus completes the more limited statement of the foregoing strophe, that the judgment which gives a good renown is everlasting. The former strophe speaks of only one category of men who have been subjected to an ever-valid judgment, namely, of that category to whose honor the eternal judgment is pronounced. The second strophe speaks of both categories, and assures us that the judgment on one as on the other category is everlasting.

The strophes are attributed by the skald to Odin's lips. Odin pronounces judgment every day near Urd's fountain at the court to which King Halfdan was summoned, and where hosts of people with fettered tongues await their final destiny (see above). The assurances in regard to the validity of the judgment on everyone dead are thus given by a being who really may be said to know what he talks about (*eg veit*, etc.), namely, by the judge himself.

In the poem *Sonatorrek*, the old Egil Skallagrimsson laments the loss of sons and kindred, and his thoughts are occupied with the fate of his children after death. When he speaks of his son Gunnar, who in his tender years was snatched away by a sickness, he says (str. 20):

...son minn  
sóttar brími  
heiptulegr  
úr heimi nam,  
þann eg veit  
að varnaði  
vamma varr  
við námæli.

"A fatal fire of disease (fever?) snatched from this world a son of mine, of whom I know that he, careful as he was in regard to sinful deeds, took care of himself for *námæli*."

To understand this strophe correctly, we must know that the skald in the preceding 19th, as in the succeeding 21st, strophe, speaks of Gunnar's fate in the lower world.<sup>8</sup>

The word *námæli* occurs nowhere else, and its meaning is not known. It is of importance to our subject to find it out.

In those compounds of which the first part is *ná-*, *ná* may be the adverbial prefix, which means near by, by the side of, or it may be the substantive *nár*, which means a corpse, dead body, and in a mythical sense one damned, one who dies for the second time and comes to Niflhel (see No. 60). The question is now, to begin with, whether it is the adverbial prefix or the substantive *ná-* which we have in *námæli*.

Compounds which have the adverbial *ná* as the first part of the word are very common. In all of them, the prefix *ná-* implies nearness in space or in kinship, or it has the signification of something correct or exact.

(1) In regard to space: *nábúð*, *nábúi*, *nábýli*, *nágranna*, *nágranni*, *nágrennd*, *nágrenni*, *nákominn*, *nákvæma*, *nákvæmd*, *nákvæmr*, *náleið*, *nálægð*, *nálægjast*, *nálægr*, *námunda*, *násessi*, *náseta*, *násettr*, *násæti*, *návera*, *náverukona*, *náverandi*, *návist*, *návistarkona*, *návistarmaðr*, *návistarvitni*.

(2) In regard to friendship: *náborinn*, *náfrændi*, *náfrændkona*, *námágr*, *náskyldr*, *nástædr*, *náungr*.

(3) In regard to correctness, exactness: *nákvæmi*, *nákvæmlega*, *nákvæmr*.

The idea of correctness comes from the combination of *ná-* and *kvæmi*, *kvæmlega*, *kvæmr*. The exact meaning is - that which comes near to, and which in that sense is precise, exact, to the point.

These three cases exhaust the meanings of the adverbial prefix *ná-*. I should consider it perilous, and as the abandoning of solid ground underfoot, if we, without evidence from the language, tried, as has been done, to give it another previously unknown signification.

But none of these meanings can be applied to *námæli*. In analogy with the words under (1) it can indeed mean "An oration held near by"; but this signification produces no sense in the above passage, the only place where it is found.<sup>9</sup>

In another group of words the prefix *ná-* is the noun *nár*. Here belong *nábjargir*, *nábleikr*, *nágrindur*, *nágöll*, *náreið*, *nástrandir*, and other words.

*Mæli* means a declamation, an oration, an utterance, a reading, or the proclamation of a law. *Mæla*, *mælandi*, *formælandi*, *formæli*, *nýmæli*, are used in legal language. *Formælandi* is a defendant in court. *Formæli* is his speech or plea. *Nýmæli* is a law read or published for the first time.

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<sup>8</sup> In modern editions, the word *námæli* is emended to *vámæli* and the passage taken to mean "whom I knew to be blameless and forbearing from wicked speech" (Gudbrand Vigfusson translation, *Corpus Poeticum Boreale*, pg. 280)

<sup>9</sup> Rydberg's definition makes the most sense logically. However, in Icelandic, the words "*ná*" and its relatives "*nær*, *nærri*" through the meaning of closeness, also carry the connotation "intimate, personal", as in "*náinn vinur*", "close friend, intimate friend." Thus *námæli* could mean "a judgement that effects one closely" although in the context of the sentence, it would still refer to a judgement after death.

*Mæli* can take either a substantive or adjective as prefix. Examples: *Guðmæli*, *fullmæli*. *Ná* from *nár* can be used as a prefix both to a noun and to an adjective. Examples: *nágrindr*, *nábleikr*.

*Námæli* should accordingly be an oration, a declaration, a proclamation, in regard to *nár*. From the context, we find that *námæli* is something dangerous, something to look out for. Gunnar is dead and is gone to the lower world, which contains not only happiness but also terrors; but his aged father, who in another strophe of the poem gives us to understand that he had adhered faithfully to the religious doctrines of his fathers, is convinced that his son has avoided the dangers implied in *námæli*, since he had no sinful deed to blame himself for. In the following strophe (21), he expressed his confidence that the deceased had been adopted by *Gauta spjalli*, a friend of Odin in the lower world, and had landed in the realm of happiness. (In regard to *Gauta spjalli*, see further on. The expression is applicable both to Mimir and Hoenir.)

*Námæli* must, therefore, mean a declaration (1) that is dangerous; (2) which does not affect a person who has lived a blameless life; (3) which refers to the dead and affects those who have not been *vamma varir*, on the look-out against blameworthy and criminal deeds.

The passage furnishes additional evidence that the dead in the lower world make their appearance in order to be judged, and it enriches our knowledge of the mythological eschatology with a technical term (*námæli*) for that judgment which sends sinners to travel through the Na-gates to Niflhel. The opposite of *námæli* is *orðs tírr*, that judgment which gives the dead fair renown, and both kinds of judgments are embraced in the phrase *dómur um dauðan*. *Námæli* is a proclamation for *náir*, just as *nágrindur* are gates, and *nástrandir* are strands for *náir*.

## 71.

THE DOOM OF THE DEAD (continued). THE LOOKS OF THE THINGSTEAD.  
THE DUTY OF TAKING CARE OF THE ASHES OF THE DEAD. THE *HAMINGJA*  
AT THE JUDGEMENT. SINS OF WEAKNESS. SINS UNTO DEATH.

Those hosts which are conducted by their psychopomps to the Thing near Urd's fountain proceed noiselessly. It is a silent journey. The bridge over Gjöll scarcely resounds under the feet of the death-horses and of the dead (*Gylfaginning* 49). The tongues of the shades are sealed (see No. 70).

This thingstead has, like all others, had its judgment-seats. Here are seats (in *Völuspá* called *rökstólar*) for the holy powers acting as judges. There is also a rostrum (*þularstóli á, Urðar brunni að - Hávamál* 111) and benches or chairs for the dead (compare the phrase *falla á helpalla - Sörla þáttur*, Chapter 4, and the sitting of the dead one, *á norna stóli - Sólarljóð* 51). Silent they must receive their doom unless they possess *mál*-runes (see No. 70).

The dead should come well clad and ornamented. Warriors bring their weapons of attack and defense. The women and children bring ornaments that they were fond of in

life. Hades-images of those things which kinsmen and friends placed in the grave-mounds accompany the dead (*Hákonarmál* 13; *Gylfaginning* 49 )<sup>10</sup> as evidence to the judge that they enjoyed the devotion and respect of their survivors. The appearance presented by the shades assembled in the Thing indicates to what extent the survivors heed the law, which commands respect for the dead and care for the ashes of the departed.

Many die under circumstances which make it impossible for their kinsmen to observe these duties. Then strangers should take the place of kindred. The condition in which these shades come to the Thing shows best whether piety prevails in Midgard; for noble minds take to heart the advices found as follows in *Sigurdrífumál* 33-34: "Render the last service to the corpses you find on the ground, whether from sickness they have died, or are drowned, or are from weapons dead. Make a bath for those who are dead, wash their hands and their head, comb them and wipe them dry, before you lay them in the coffin, and pray for their happy sleep."

It was, however, not necessary to wipe the blood from off the byrnie and sword of one fallen by weapons. It was not improper for the elect to make their entrance in Valhall in bloody armor. Eyvind Skaldaspillir makes King Hakon come all stained with blood (*allur í dreyra drifinn*) into the presence of Odin.

When the gods have arrived from Asgard, dismounted from their horses (*Gylfaginning*) and taken their judges' seats, the proceedings begin, for the dead are then in their places, and we may be sure that their psychopomps have not been slow on their Thing-journey. Somewhere on the way the Hel-shoes must have been tried; those who ride to Valhall must then have been obliged to dismount. The popular tradition first pointed out by Walter Scott and J. Grimm about the need of such shoes for the dead and about a thorn-grown heath, which they have to cross, is not of Christian but of heathen origin. Those who have shown mercy to fellow-men that in this life, in a figurative sense, had to travel thorny paths, do not need to fear torn shoes and bloody feet (W. Scott, *Minstrely*, II.); and when they are seated on Urd's benches, their very shoes are, by their condition, a conspicuous proof in the eyes of the court that they who have exercised mercy are worthy of mercy.<sup>11</sup>

The Norse tradition preserved in *Gisla saga Surssonar* in regard to the importance for the dead to be provided with shoes reappears as a popular tradition, first in England, and then several places (Müllenhoff, *Deutsche Altertumskunde*. 5. 1, 114; J. Grimm., *Deutsche Myth.*, III. Ch. 26 and the Supplement in volume IV; Karl Weinhold, *Altnordisches leben* 494; Mannhardt in *Zeitschrift für deutsch. Myth.*, IV. 420; Karl Simrock, *Myth.*, v. 127). Visio Godeschalci<sup>12</sup> describes a journey which the pious

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<sup>10</sup> The reference in *Gylfaginning* is to the objects Baldur and Nanna give to Hermod to bring back to Asgard for Odin and Frigg. In *Hákonarmál*, upon his arrival in Valhall, Hakon speaks of keeping his armor, his helmet and coat of mail.

<sup>11</sup> Sir Walter Scott *Minstrely* II, 357 "They are of belief, that once in their lives it is good to give a pair of new shoes to a poor man, forasmuch as after this life they are to pass barefoot through a great land of thorns and furzen, except by the merit of the alms aforesaid they have redeemed the forfeit; for at the edge of the land an old man shall meet them with the same shoes that were given by the party when he was living and after he has shod them, dismisses them to go through thick and thin without scratch or scathe."

<sup>12</sup> The most recent edition of this work, published in German is *Godeschalcus und Visio Godeschalci. Mit deutscher Übersetzung* hrsg. von Erwin Assmann. Neumünster: Wachholtz Verl. 1979. (*Quellen und Forschungen zur Geschichte Schleswig-Holsteins*. Vol. 74) ISBN 3-529-02174-1

Holstein peasant Godeskalk, belonging to the generation immediately preceding that which by Vicelin was converted to Christianity, believed he had made in the lower world.<sup>13</sup> There is mentioned an immensely large and beautiful linden-tree hanging full of shoes, which were handed down to such dead travellers as had exercised mercy during their lives. When the dead had passed this tree they had to cross a heath two miles wide, thickly grown with thorns, and then they came to a river full of irons with sharp edges. The unjust had to wade through this river, and suffered immensely. They were cut and mangled in every limb; but when they reached the other strand, their bodies were the same as they had been when they began crossing the river. Compare with this statement *Sólarljóð* 42, where the dying skald hears the roaring of subterranean streams mixed with much blood - *Gylfar straumar grenjuðu ... blandnir mjög við blóð*. The just are able to cross the river by putting their feet on boards a foot wide and fourteen feet long, which floated on the water. This is the first day's journey. On the second day, they come to a point where the road forked in three ways -- one to heaven, one to hell, and one between these realms (compare Müllenhoff, *Deutsche Alt.*, 5. 113, 114). These are all mythic traditions, but little corrupted by time and change of religion. That in the lower world itself Hel-shoes were to be had for those who were not supplied with them, but still deserved them, is probably a genuine mythological idea.<sup>14</sup>

Proofs and witnesses are necessary before the above-named tribunal, for Odin is far from omniscient. He is not even the one who knows the most among the beings of mythology. Urd and Mimir know more than he. With judges on the one hand who, in spite of all their loftiness, and with all their superhuman keenness, nevertheless are not infallible, and with defendants on the other hand whose tongues refuse to serve them, it might happen, if there were no proofs and witnesses, that a judgment, everlasting in its operations, not founded on exhaustive knowledge and on well-considered premises, might be proclaimed. But the judgment on human souls proclaimed by their final irrevocable fate could not in the sight of the pious and believing bear the stamp of uncertain justice. There must be no doubt that the judicial proceedings in the court of death were so managed that the wisdom and justice of the decision were raised high above every suspicion of being mistaken.

The heathen fancy shrank from the idea of a knowledge able of itself to embrace all, the greatest and the least, that which has been, is doing, and shall be in the world of thoughts, purposes, and deeds. It hesitated at all events to endow its gods made in the image of man with omniscience. It was easier to conceive a divine insight which was secured by a net of messengers and spies stretched throughout the world. Such a net was cast over the human race by Urd, and it is doubtless for this reason that the subterranean Thing of the gods was located near her fountain and not near Mimir's. Urd has given to every human soul, already before the hour of birth, a maid-servant, a *hamingja*, a norn of lower rank, to watch over and protect its earthly life. And so there was a wide-spread organization of watching and protecting spirits, each one of whom knew the motives and deeds of a special individual. As such an organization was at the service of the court, there was no danger that the judgment over each one dead would not be as just as it was unappealable and everlasting.

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<sup>13</sup> The vision of Gottschalk was written down in Latin in 1189 by two local monks separately and independant from each other.

<sup>14</sup> This entire paragraph was originally presented as a footnote to the paragraph above it in Rydberg's text.

The *hamingja* hears of it before anyone else when her mistress has announced *daudā orð* - the doom of death, against her favorite. She (and the *gipta*, *heill*, see No. 64) leaves him then. She is *horfin*, gone, which can be perceived in dreams (*Baldurs Draumar* 4)<sup>15</sup> or by revelations in other ways, and this is an unmistakable sign of death. But if the death-doomed person is not a nothing, whom she in sorrow and wrath has left, then she by no means abandons him. They are like members of the same body, which can only be separated by mortal sins (see below). The *hamingja* goes to the lower world, the home of her nativity (see No. 64), to prepare an abode there for her favorite, which also is to belong to her (*Gisla saga Súrssona*, ch. 30).<sup>16</sup> It is as if a spiritual marriage was entered into between her and the human soul.

But on the dictum of the court of death it depends where the dead person is to find his haven. The judgment, although not pronounced on the *hamingja*, touches her most closely. When the most important of all questions, that of eternal happiness or unhappiness, is to be determined in regard to her favorite, she must be there, where her duty and inclination bid her be - with him whose guardian-spirit she is. The great question for her is whether she is to continue to share his fate or not. During his earthly life she has always defended him. It is of paramount importance that she should do so now. His lips are sealed, but she is able to speak, and is his other ego. And she is not only a witness friendly to him, but, from the standpoint of the court, she is a more reliable one than he would be himself.

In *Atlamál* 28 there occurs a phrase which has its origin in heathendom, where it has been employed in a clearer and more limited sense than in the Christian poem. The phrase is *eg kveð aflima orðnar þér dísir*, and it means, as *Atlamál* uses it, that he to whom the dises (the *hamingja* and *gipt*) have become *aflima* is destined, in spite of all warnings, to go to his ruin. In its very nature the phrase suggests that there can occur between the *hamingja* and the human soul another separation than the accidental and transient one which is expressed by saying that the *hamingja* is *horfin*.<sup>17</sup> *Aflima* means "amputated," separated by a sharp instrument from the body of which one has been a member.<sup>18</sup> The person from whom his dises have been cut off has no longer any close relation with them. He is forever separated from them, and his fate is no longer theirs. Therefore there are persons doomed to die and persons dead who do not have *hamingjur* by them. They are those whom the *hamingjur* in sorrow and wrath have abandoned, and with whom they are unable to dwell in the lower world, as they are nithings and are awaited in Niflhel.

<sup>15</sup> This is from the additional stanzas included in the paper manuscripts of *Vegtamskviða*. The stanza reads *Mjök var hapti/ höfugr blundr,/ heillir í svefni/ horfnar sýndust;/ spurðu jólnar/ spár framvísar,/ ef þat myndi/ angrs vita*. "The god's sleep was most heavy, in his sleep his *heillir* (i.e. *hamingjur*) seemed to have departed; the gods consulted the wise oracles, if this might forebode sorrow."

<sup>16</sup> In that saga, *Gisli* is visited in his sleep by two "dream-women," one bloody and one fair. In chapter 30, he dreams of the fair one. She comes to him riding a grey horse, and invites him to her home. When they arrive at her palace, she suggests that he stay for a while, and says: "you will return here when you die, and enjoy wealth and happiness."

<sup>17</sup> Vigfusson's *Dictionary* (pg. 248), "*Heill*: 2. esp. (also in plural) with the personal notion of good spirit or angel cp. *hamingja* ... *heillum horfinn*, forsaken by luck, *Grettis Saga* 150."

<sup>18</sup> Vigfusson confirms *aflima* means "to be cut off, separated from (literally "to off-limb")." Today this passage is commonly interpreted "the disir are powerless to help you" as in Larrington's *Poetic Edda*. Larrington's reference, LaFarge-Tucker's *Glossary to the Poetic Edda* however clearly indicates this interpretation is dubious.

The fact that a dead man sat *á nornastóli* or *á Helpalli*<sup>19</sup> without having a *hamingja* to defend him doubtless was regarded by the gods as a conclusive proof that he had been a criminal.

If we may judge from a heathen expression preserved in strophe 16 of *Atlakviða*, and there used in an arbitrary manner, then the *hamingjur* who were "cut off" from their unworthy favorites continue to feel sorrow and sympathy for them to the last. The expression is *nornir gráta nái*, "the norns (*hamingjur*) bewail the *náir*." If the *námæli*, the *ná*-dictum, the sentence to Niflhel which turns dead criminals into *náir*, in the eschatological sense of the word, has been announced, the judgment is attended with tears on the part of the former guardian-spirits of the convicts. This corresponds, at all events, with the character of the *hamingjur*.

Those fallen on the battlefield are not brought to the fountain of Urd while the Thing is in session. This follows from the fact that Odin is in Valhall when they ride across Bifröst, and sends Aesir or einherjes to meet them with a goblet of mead at Asgard's gate (*Eiríksmál*, *Hákonarmál*). But on the way there has been a separation of the good and bad elements among them. Those who have no *hamingjur* must wait, *á nornastóli*,<sup>20</sup> for the next Thing-day and their judgment. The Christian age well remembered that brave warriors who had committed nothing acts did not come to Valhall (see Hakon Jarl's words in *Njáls Saga*, ch. 88).<sup>21</sup> The heathen records confirm that men slain by the sword who had lived a wicked life were sent to the world of torture (see *Harald Harfagri's saga*, ch. 27 - the verses about the viking Thorir Wood-beard, who fell in a naval battle with Einar Rognvaldson, and who had been a scourge to the Orkneyings).<sup>22</sup>

The high court must have judged very leniently in regard to certain human faults and frailties. Sitting long by and looking diligently into the drinking-horn certainly did not lead to any punishment worth mentioning. The same was the case with fondness for female beauty, if care was taken not to meddle with the sacred ties of matrimony. With a pleasing frankness, and with much humor, the Asa-father has told to the children of men adventures which he himself has had in that line. He warns against too much drinking, but admits without reservation and hypocrisy that he himself once was drunk, nay, very drunk, at Fjalar's, and what he had to suffer, on account of his uncontrollable longing for Billing's maid, should be a hint to men not to judge each other too severely in such matters (see *Hávamál*). All the less he will do so as judge. Those who are summoned to the Thing, and against whom there are no other charges, may surely count on a good *orðs tírr*, if in other respects they have conducted themselves in accordance with the wishes of Odin and his associate judges: if they have lived lives free from deceit, honorable, helpful, and without fear of death. This, in connection with respect for the gods, for the temples, for their duties to kindred and to the dead, is the alpha and the omega of the heathen Germanic moral code, and the sure way to Hel's regions of bliss and to Valhall.

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<sup>19</sup> Egilsson, *Lexicon Poeticum*: "*hellpallr*, Hel's bench, *falla á helpalla*, to die. *Sörlap*."

<sup>20</sup> "on the Norn's seats."

<sup>21</sup> In regard to Hrapp, who had burnt a heathen temple and stripped the idols of their riches, Hakon says: "The gods are in no haste to seek vengeance, the man who did this shall be driven out of Valhalla forever." (Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Pálsson translation)

<sup>22</sup> *Þá gaf hann Tréskegg tröllum*, "he gave Tree-beard to the Trolls."



He who has observed these virtues may, as the old skald sings of himself, "glad, with good will and without dejection, await Hel" (*Sonatorrek* 25):

*Skal eg þó glaður  
með góðan vilja  
og óhryggur  
Heljar bíða.*

If the judgment on the dead is lenient in these respects, it is inexorably severe in other matters. Lies uttered to injure others, perjury, murder (secret murder, assassination, not justified as blood-revenge), adultery, the profaning of temples, the opening of grave-mounds, treason, cannot escape their awful punishment. Ineffable terrors await those who are guilty of these sins. Those psychopomps that belong to Niflhel await the adjournment of the Thing in order to take them to the world of torture, and Urd has bonds (*Heljar reip* - *Sólarljóð* 37; *Des Todes Seil* - J. Grimm, *Deutsche Mythology*, ch. 27), which make every escape impossible.

## 72.

### THE HADES-DRINK.

Before the dead leave the thingstead near Urd's fountain, something which obliterated the marks of earthly death has happened to those who are judged happy. Pale, cold, mute, and with the marks of the spirits of disease, they left Midgard and started on the Hel-way. They leave the death-Thing full of the warmth of life, with health, with speech, and more robust than they were on earth. The shades have become corporal. When those slain by the sword ride over Gjöll to Urd's fountain, scarcely a sound is heard under the hoofs of their horses; when they ride away from the fountain over Bifröst, the bridge resounds under the trampling horses. The sagas of the Middle Ages have preserved, but at the same time demonized, the memory of how Hel's inhabitants were endowed with more than human strength (*Grettis Saga*, ch. 35, and several other passages).

The life of bliss presupposes health, but also forgetfulness of the earthly sorrows and cares. The heroic poems and the sagas of the Middle Ages have known that there was a Hades-potion which brings freedom from sorrow and care, without obliterating dear memories or making one forget that which can be remembered without longing or anxiety. In the mythology this drink was, as shall be shown, one that simultaneously produces vitality and the forgetfulness of sorrows.

In Saxo, and in the heroic poems of the Elder Edda which belong to the Gjukung group of songs, there reappear many mythical details, though they are sometimes taken out of their true connection and put in a light which does not originally belong to them. Among the mythical reminiscences is the Hades-potion.

In his account of King Gorm's and Thorkil's journey to the lower world, Saxo (see No. 46) makes Thorkil warn his travelling companions from tasting the drinks offered them by the prince of the lower world, for the reason that they produce forgetfulness, and

make one desire to remain in Gudmund's realm (Book 8 - *amissa memoria . . . pocalis abstinendum edocuit*).<sup>23</sup>

*Guðrúnarkviða in forna* 21 places the drinking-horn of the lower world in Grimhild's hands. In connection with later additions, the description of this horn and its contents contains purely mythical and very instructive details in regard to the *pharmakon nepenthes*<sup>24</sup> of the Germanic lower world.

*Færði mér Grímhildur  
full að drekka  
svalt og sárlegt,  
né eg sakar mundag;  
það var um aukið  
Urðar magni,  
svalköldum sæ  
og Sónar dreyra.*

*Voru í horni  
hverskyns stafir  
ristnir og roðnir,  
ráða eg né máttag,  
lyngfiskur langur  
lands Haddingja,  
ax óskorið,  
innleið dýra.*

"Grimhild handed me in a filled horn to drink a cool, bitter drink, in order that I might forget my past afflictions. This drink was prepared from Urd's strength, cool-cold sea, and the liquor of Son."

"On the horn were all kinds of staves engraved and painted, which I could not interpret: the Hadding-land's long heath-fish, unharvested ears of grain, and animals' entrances."

The Hadding-land is, as Sveinbjörn Egilsson has already pointed out, a paraphrase of the lower world. The paraphrase is based on the mythic account known and mentioned by Saxo in regard to Hadding's journey in Hel's realm (see No. 47).

Heath-fish is a paraphrase of the usual sort for serpent, dragon. Thus a lower-world dragon was engraved on the horn. More than one of the kind has been mentioned already: Nidhogg, who has his abode in Niflhel, and the dragon, which, according to Erik Vidforli's saga, obstructs the way to Odain's-acre. The dragon engraved on the horn is that of the Hadding-land. Hadding-land, on the other hand, does not mean the whole lower world, but the regions of bliss visited by Hadding. Thus the dragon is of the type that Erik Vidförli's saga had in mind. That the author did not himself invent his dragon, but found it in mythic records extant at the time, is demonstrated by *Sólarljóð* 54, where

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<sup>23</sup> "For if they partook of that food they would lose recollection of all things, and must live forever in filthy intercourse amongst ghastly hordes of monsters." Elton tr.

<sup>24</sup> "potion of forgetfulness"

it is said that an immense subterranean dragon comes flying from the west (*Vestan sá eg fljúga Vánar dreka*)<sup>25</sup> - the opposite direction of that the shades have to take when they descend into the lower world - and obstruct "the street of the prince of splendor" (*glævalds götu*). The ruler of splendor is Mimir, the prince of the Glittering Fields (see Nos. 45-51).<sup>26</sup>

The Hadding-land's "unharvested ears of grain" belong to the flora inaccessible to the devastations of frost, the flowers seen by Hadding in the blooming meadows of the world below (see No. 47). The expression refers to the fact that the Hadding-land has not only imperishable flowers and fruits, but also fields of grain which do not require harvesting. Compare this with what *Völuspá* 63 says about the *Odain's-acre*<sup>27</sup> which in the regeneration of the earth rises from the lap of the sea: "unsown shall the fields yield the grain" (*munu ósánir akrar vaxa*).

Beside the heath-fish and the unharvested ears of grain, there were also seen on the Hadding-land horn *innleið dýra*. Some interpreters assume that "animal entrails" are meant by this expression; others have translated it with "animal gaps."<sup>28</sup> There is no authority that *innleið* ever meant entrails, nor could it be so used in a rhetorical-poetical sense, except by a very poor poet. Where we meet with the word it means a way, a way in, in contrast with *útleið*, a way out. As both Gorm's saga and that of Erik Vidfórli use it in regard to animals watching entrances in the lower world this gives the expression its natural interpretation.

So much for the staves carved on the horn. They all refer to the lower world. Now as to the drink which is mixed in this Hades-horn. It consists of three liquids:

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<sup>25</sup> "From the west I saw Ván's dragon's fly" Thorpe translation. According to *Gylfaginning* 34, Ván is the river pouring from Fenrir's open mouth.

<sup>26</sup> Referring to Rydberg's identification of Mimir with Gudmund of Glasirvellir.

<sup>27</sup> "The field of the not-dead," the home of Líf and Lífthrasir in the lower world.

<sup>28</sup> The dictionaries do not agree on the meaning of *innleið*. The La Farge-Tucker *Glossary of the Poetic Edda* (1992) defines *inn-leið* as entrance, and *innleið dýra* as "the jaws of animals," after Hugo Gering (1927-31), or "the intestines of animals," after Hugo Gering (1903); Ferdinand Detter and Richard Heinzel (1903) noting both as uncertain.

*Urðar magn,  
svalkaldur sær,  
Sónar dreyri.*

Urd's strength,  
cool-cold sea,  
Son's blood.

*Són* has already been mentioned above (No. 21) as one of the names of Mimir's fountain, the well of creative power and of poetry. Of *Són*, Eilif Guðrunarson sings that it is enwreathed by bulrushes and is surrounded by a border of meadow on which grows the seed of poetry.<sup>1</sup>

As Urd's strength is a liquid mixed in the horn, nothing else can be meant thereby than the liquid in Urd's fountain, which gives the warmth of life to the world-tree, and gives it strength to resist the cold (see No. 63).

From this it is certain that at least two of the three subterranean fountains made their contributions to the drink. There remains the well Hvergelmir, and the question now is, whether it and the liquid it contains can be recognized as the cool-cold sea. Hvergelmir is, as we know, the mother-fountain of all waters, even of the ocean (see No. 59). That this immense cistern is called a sea is not strange, since also Urd's fountain is so styled (in *Völuspá* 20 - *þeim sæ er und þolli stendur*). Hvergelmir is situated under the northern root of the world-tree near the borders of the subterranean realm of the rime-thurses - that is, the powers of frost; and the Elivogar rivers flowing thence formed the ice in Niflheim. Cool (*Svöl*) is the name of one of the rivers which have their source in Hvergelmir (*Grímnismál* 27). Cool-cold sea is therefore the most suitable designation for Hvergelmir when its own name is not to be used.

All those fountains whose liquids are sucked up by the roots of the world-tree, and in its stem blend into the sap which gives the tree imperishable strength of life, are accordingly mixed in the lower-world horn (cp. No. 21).

That Grimhild, a human being dwelling on earth, should have access to and free control of these fountains is, of course, from a mythological standpoint, an absurdity. From the standpoint of the Christian time the absurdity becomes probable. The sacred things and forces of the lower world are then changed into devilry and arts of magic, which are at the service of witches. So the author of *Guðrúnarkviða in forna* has regarded the matter. But in his time there was still extant a tradition, or a heathen song, which spoke of the elements of the drink which gave to the dead who had descended to Hel, and were destined for happiness, a higher and more enduring power of life, and also soothed the longing and sorrow which accompanied the recollection of life on earth, and this tradition was used in the description of Grimhild's drink of forgetfulness.

*Magn* is the name of the liquid from Urd's fountain, since it *magnar*, gives strength. The word *magna* has preserved from the days of heathendom the sense of strengthening in a supernatural manner by magical or superhuman means. Vigfusson (*Dict.*, 408) gives a number of examples of this meaning. In *Ynglingasaga* 4 Odin "*magns*" Mimir's head, which was decapitated, in such a manner that it recovers the power of speech. In *Sigurdrífumál* 12 Odin himself is, as we have seen, called *magni*, "the one *magning*," as the highest judge of the lower world, who gives *magn* to the dead from the Hades-horn.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In an analogy with *sónar-blót*, "atonement sacrifice", and *sónar-göltr*, an atonement boar, the phrase *Sónar dreyri* is commonly interpreted to mean "the blood of a sacrificial boar."

<sup>2</sup> See the footnotes to Chapter 70 regarding the word *magni* in *Sigurdríf*. 12.

The author of the second song about Helgi Hundingsbani has known of *dýrar veigar*, precious liquids, of which those who have gone to Hel partake. The dead Helgi says that when his beloved Sigrun is to share them with him, then it is of no consequence that they have lost earthly joy and kingdoms, and that no one must lament that his breast was tortured with wounds (*Helg. Hund.*, II. 46). The touching finale of this song, though preserved only in fragments, and no doubt borrowed from a heathen source, shows that the power of the subterranean potion to allay longing and sorrow had its limits. The survivors should mourn over departed loved ones with moderation, and not forget that they are to meet again, for too bitter tears of sorrow fall as a cold dew on the breast of the dead one and penetrate it with pain (str. 45).

73.

THE HADES-DRINK (continued).

THE HADES-HORN EMBELLISHED WITH SERPENTS.

In *Sonatorrek* 19, the skald (Egill Skalla-Grímsson) conceives himself with the claims of a father to keep his children opposed to a stronger power which has also made a claim on them. This power is firm in its resolutions against Egil (*stendr í föstum þokk á hendi mér*); but, at the same time, it is lenient toward his children, and bestows on them the lot of happiness. The mythic person who possesses this power is by the skald called *Fáns hrosta hilmir*, "the lord of Fánn's brewing."

*Fánn* is a mythical serpent and dragon-name (*Nafnapulur*, *Orma heiti* 2). The serpent or dragon which possessed this name in the myths or sagas must have been one which was engraved or painted somewhere. This is evident from the word itself, which is a contraction of *fáinn*, engraved, painted (cp. Egilsson's *Lex. Poet.*, and Vigfusson's *Dict.*, *sub voce*<sup>3</sup>). Its character as such does not hinder it from being endowed with a magic life (see below). The object on which it was engraved or painted must have been a drinking-horn, whose contents (brewing) is called by Egil *Fánn's* either because the serpent encircled the horn which contained the drink, or because the horn, on which it was engraved, was named after it. In no other way can the expression, *Fánn's brewing*, be explained, for an artificial serpent or dragon is neither the one who brews the drink nor the malt from which it is brewed.<sup>4</sup>

The possessor of the horn, embellished with *Fánn's* image, is the mythical person who, to Egil's vexation, has insisted on the claim of the lower world to his sons. If the skald has paraphrased correctly, that is to say, if he has produced a paraphrase which refers to the character here in question of the person indicated by the paraphrase, then it

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<sup>3</sup> *sub voce*, under this word.

<sup>4</sup> This passage can be explained in a number of ways. The fact that it refers to Odin, however, is not in question. The manuscript reads *fanst* which requires an emendation to make sense. Today the text is typically emended to *fáns*, and *fáns hrosta* interpreted as the genitive of *fánn hrosti*, meaning "pale brew", "glistening brew." This is Vigfusson's definition of the phrase in his dictionary, with the explanation that it refers to the mead brewed for the gods by Aegir. In *Corpus Poeticum Boreale*, however, Vigfusson translates the same words in *Sonatorrek* 18 as "the lord of the ancient mead," emending *fanst* to *forns*. Egilsson's definition of the adjective *fánn* is "glistening," although he also notes that *Fánn* is the name of a mythic serpent. Rydberg has combined the two ideas, as noted, but failed to note the required emendation.

follows that "*Fánn's* brewing" and *Fánn* himself, like their possessor, must have been in some way connected with the lower world.

From the mythic tradition in *Guðrúnarkviða in forna*, we already know that a serpent, "a long heath-fish," is engraved and painted on the subterranean horn, whose sorrow-allaying mead is composed of the liquids of the three Hades-fountains.

When King Gorm (Saxo, Book 8; cp. No. 46) made his journey of discovery in the lower world, he saw a vast ox-horn (*ingens bubali cornu*) there. It lay near the gold-clad mead-cisterns, the fountains of the lower world. Its purpose of being filled with their liquids is sufficiently clear from its location. We are also told that it was carved with figures (*nec cælaturæ artificio vacuum*),<sup>5</sup> like the subterranean horn in *Guðrúnarkviða*. One of Gorm's men is anxious to secure the treasure. Then the horn lengthens into a dragon who kills the would-be robber (*cornu in draconem extractum sui spiritum latoris eripuit*).<sup>6</sup> Like Slidrúgtanni and other subterranean treasures, the serpent or dragon on the drinking-horn of the lower world is endowed with life when necessary, or the horn itself acquires life in the form of a dragon, and punishes with death him who has no right to touch it. The horn itself is accordingly a *Fánn*, an artificial serpent or dragon, and its contents is *Fánn's hrosti* (*Fánn's* brewing).

The Icelandic middle-age sagas have handed down the memory of an aurochs-horn (*úrarnhorn*), which was found in the lower world, and was there used to drink from (*Fornaldarsögur, Sturlaugs saga*).

Thus it follows that the *hilmir Fáns hrosta*, "the lord of *Fán's* brewing," mentioned by Egil, is the master of the Hades-horn, he who determines to whom it is to be handed, in order that they may imbibe vigor and forgetfulness of sorrow from "Urd's strength, cool sea, and Son's liquid." And thus the meaning of the strophe here discussed (*Sonatorrek* 19) is made perfectly clear. Egil's deceased sons have drunk from this horn, and thus they have been initiated as dwellers for ever in the lower world. Thus the skald can say that *Hilmir Fáns hrosta* was inexorably firm against him, their father, who desired to keep his sons with him.

The interpretation of the passage, which has previously prevailed, begins with a text emendation.<sup>7</sup> *Fánn* is changed to Finn. Finn is the name of a dwarf. *Finns hrosti* is "the dwarf's drink," and "the dwarf's drink" is, on the authority of the *Prose Edda*, synonymous with poetry. The possessor of *Finns hrosti* is Odin, the lord of poetry. With text emendations of this sort (they are numerous, are based on false notions in regard to the adaptability of the Icelandic Christian poetics to the heathen poetry, and usually quote *Gylfaginning* as authority) we can produce anything we like from the statements of the ancient records. Odin's character as the lord of poetry has not the faintest idea in common with the contents of the strophe. His character as judge at the court near Urd's fountain, and as the one who, as the judge of the dead, has authority over the liquor in the subterranean horn, is on the other hand closely connected with the contents of the strophe, and is alone able to make it consistent and intelligible. Further on in the poem, Egil speaks of Odin as the lord of poetry. Odin, he says, has not only been severe against

<sup>5</sup> "A huge aurochs's horn, set with attractively gleaming jewels and dextrously carved." Fisher tr.

<sup>6</sup> "The horn lengthened out into a serpent, and took the life of the man who bore it." Elton tr.

<sup>7</sup> This paragraph, which appears as a footnote in the original text, seems to indicate that Rydberg himself was not aware of the actual reading "*fanst*," found in the *Sonatorrek* manuscript, *Egil's Saga* chapter 78. He likely was working from a copy of the manuscript which did not note the emendation, as no critical editions of these works were published in his day.

him (in the capacity of *hilmir Fáns hrosta*), but he has also been kind in bestowing the gift of poetry, and thereby consolation in sorrow (*bölva bætur*). The paraphrase used here by Egil for Odin's name is *Míms vinur* (Mimir's friend). From Mimir Odin received the drink of inspiration, and thus the paraphrase is in harmony with the sense. As *hilmir Fáns hrosta* Odin has wounded Egil's heart; as *Míms vinur* (Mimir's friend) he has given him balsam for the wounds inflicted. This two-sided conception of Odin's relation to the poet permeates the whole poem

From *Völuspá* 27, 28, and from *Gylfaginning* 15, it appears that the mythology knew of a drinking-horn which belonged at the same time, so to speak, both to Asgard and to the lower world. Odin is its possessor, Mimir its keeper. A compact is made between the Aesir dwelling in heaven and the powers dwelling in the lower world, and a security (*veð*) is given for the keeping of the agreement. On the part of the Aesir and their clan patriarch Odin, the security given is a drinking-horn. From this "Valfather's pledge" Mimir every morning drinks mead from his fountain of wisdom (*Völuspá* 28), and from the same horn he waters the root of the world-tree (*Völuspá* 27). As Müllenhoff has already pointed out (*Deutsche Altertumskunde* 5, 100 ff.), this drinking-horn is not to be confounded with Heimdal's war-trumpet, the Gjallarhorn, though *Gylfaginning* is also guilty of this mistake.

Thus the drinking-horn given to Mimir by Valfather represents a treaty between the powers of heaven and of the lower world. Can it be any other than the Hades-horn, which, at the thingstead near Urd's fountain, is employed in the service both of the Aesir and of the lower world? The Aesir determine the happiness or unhappiness of the dead, and consequently decide what persons are to taste the strength-giving mead of the horn. But the horn has its place in the lower world, is kept there -- there performs a task of the greatest importance, and gets its liquor from the fountains of the lower world.

What Mimir gave Odin in exchange is that drink of wisdom, without which he would not have been able to act as judge in matters concerning eternity, but after receiving was able to find and proclaim the right decisions (*orð*) (*orð mér af orði orðs leitaði* - *Hávamál* 141). Both the things exchanged are, therefore, used at the Thing near Urd's fountain. The treaty concerned the lower world, and secured to the Aesir the power necessary, in connection with their control of mankind and with their claim to be worshipped, to dispense happiness and unhappiness in accordance with the laws of religion and morality. Without this power the Aesir would have been of little significance. Urd and Mimir would have been supreme.

With the *dýrar veigar* (precious liquids), of which the dead Helgi speaks, we must compare the *skírar veigar* (clear liquids), which, according to *Vegtamskviða* 7, awaited the dead Baldur in the lower world. After tasting of it, the god who had descended to Hades regained his broken strength, and the earth again grew green (see No. 53).

In *dýrar veigar*, *skírar veigar*, the plural form must not be passed over without notice. The contents of one and the same drink are referred to by the plural *veigar* --

*Hér stendur Baldri  
of brugginn mjöður,  
skírar veigar*

Here stands for Baldur  
mead brewed,  
clear "veigar"

which can only be explained as referring to a drink prepared by a mixing of several liquids, each one of which is a *veig*. Originally *veigar* seems always to have designated a drink of the dead, allaying their sorrows and giving them new life. In *Hyndluljóð* 34, *dýrar veigar* has the meaning of a potion of bliss which Ottar, beloved by Freyja, is to drink. In strophe 32, Freyja threatens the sorceress Hyndla with a fire, which is to take her hence for ever. In strophe 33, Hyndla answers the threat with a similar and worse one. She says she already sees the conflagration of the world; there shall nearly all beings "suffer the loss of life" (*verða flestir fjörlausn þola*), Freyja and her Ottar of course included, and their final destiny, according to Hyndla's wish, is indicated by Freyja's handing Ottar a pain-foreboding, venomous drink. Hyndla invokes on Freyja and Ottar the flames of Ragnarok and damnation. Freyja answers by including Ottar in the protection of the gods, and foretelling that he is to drink *dýrar veigar*.

Besides in these passages, *veigar* occurs in a strophe composed by Ref Gestson, quoted in *Skáldskaparmál*, ch. 9. Only half of the strophe is quoted, so that it is impossible to determine definitely the meaning of the *veigar* referred to by the skald. We only see that they are given by Odin, and that "we" must be grateful to him for them. The half strophe is possibly a part of a death-song which Ref Gestson is known to have composed on his foster-father, Gissur.<sup>1</sup>

*Veig* in the singular means not only drink, but also power, strength. Perhaps Bugge is right in claiming that this was the original meaning of the word. The plural *veigar* accordingly means strengths. That this expression "strengths" should come to designate in a rational manner a special drink must be explained by the fact that "the strengths" was the current expression for the liquids of which the invigorating mythical drink was composed. The three fountains of the lower world are the strength-givers of the universe, and, as we have already seen, it is the liquids of these wells that are mixed into the wonderful brewing in the subterranean horn.

When Eilif Gudrunarson, the skald converted to Christianity, makes Christ, who gives the water of eternal life, sit near Urd's fountain, then this is a Christianized heathen idea, and refers to the power of this fountain's water to give, through the judge of the world, to the pious a less troublesome life than that on earth. The water which gives warmth to the world-tree and heals its wounds is to be found in the immediate vicinity of the thingstead, and has also served to strengthen and heal the souls of the dead.

To judge from *Hyndluljóð* 33, those doomed to unhappiness must also partake of some drink. It is "much mixed with venom (*eiðri blandinn mjög*), and forebodes them evil (*illu heilli*). They must, therefore, be compelled to drink it before they enter the world of misery, and accordingly, no doubt, while they sit *á nornastóli* on the very thingstead. The Icelandic sagas of the Middle Ages know the venom drink as a potion of misery.

It appears that this potion of unhappiness did not loosen the speechless tongues of the damned. *Eitr* means the lowest degree of cold and poison at the same time, and would not, therefore, be serviceable for that purpose, since the tongues were made speechless with cold. In Saxo's descriptions of the regions of misery in the lower world, it is only the torturing demons that speak. The dead are speechless, and suffer their agonies without

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<sup>1</sup> *Þér eigu vér veigar, /Valgautr, salar brautar, /Fals, hrannvala fannar, /framr, valdi tamr, gjalda.* "To you we owe Fal's cup (the mead of poetry), noble Slaughter-Gaut (Odin)..." Faulkes tr.



uttering a sound; but, when the spirits of torture so desire, and force and egg them on, they can produce a howl (*mugitus*). There broods a sort of muteness over the forecourt of the domain of torture, the Niflheim inhabited by the frost-giants, according to *Skírnismál's* description thereof (see No. 60). Skirnir threatens Gerd that she, among her kindred there, shall be more widely hated than Heimdall himself; but the manner in which they express this hate is with staring eyes, not with words (*á þig Hrímnir hari, á þig hotvetna stari* - str. 28).

74.

AFTER THE JUDGEMENT. THE LOT OF THE BLESSED.

When a deceased person who has received a good *orðs tírr* leaves the Thing, he is awaited in a home which his *hamingja* has arranged for her favorite somewhere in "the green worlds of the gods." But what he first has to do is to *leita kynnis*, that is, visit kinsmen and friends who have gone before him to their final destination (*Sonatorrek* 18). Here he finds not only those with whom he became personally acquainted on earth, but he may also visit and converse with ancestors from the beginning of time, and he may hear the history of his race, nay, the history of all past generations, told by persons who were eyewitnesses. The ways he travels are *munvegar* (*Sonatorrek* 10), paths of pleasure, where the wonderful regions of Urd's and Mimir's realms lie open before his eyes.

Those who have died in their tender years are received by a being friendly to children, which Egil Skallagrimson (*Sonatorrek* 21) calls *Gauta spjalli*. The expression means "the one with whom Odin counsels," "Odin's friend." As the same poem (str. 23) calls Odin Mimir's friend, and as in the next place *Gauta spjalli* is characterized as a ruler in Godheim (compare *grænir heimar goða* - *Hákonarmál* 12), he must either be Mimir, who is Odin's friend and adviser from his youth until his death, or he must be Hoenir, who also is styled Odin's friend, his *sessi* and *máli*. That Mimir was regarded as the friend of dead children corresponds with his vocation as the keeper in his grove of immortality, *Mimisholt*, of the Asa-children, the *ásmegir*, who are to be the mankind of the regenerated world. But Hoenir too has an important calling in regard to children (see No. 95), and it must therefore be left undecided which one of the two is here meant.<sup>2</sup>

Egil is convinced that his drowned son Bodvar found a harbor in the subterranean regions of bliss. (Likewise the warlike skald Kormak is certain that he would have come to Valhall in case he had been drowned under circumstances described in his saga, a work which is, however, very unreliable.) The land to which Bodvar comes is called by Egil "the home of the bee-ship" (*býskips bær*).<sup>3</sup> The poetical figure is taken from the

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<sup>2</sup> *Gauta spjalli* likely refers to Odin. As a clear indication of this, the stanza states: "I still remember, when '*Gauta spjalli*' took my son 'up into the god-world'". The poet is surely referring to his son as being in heaven. The Odin-name *Gautatýr*, god of the *Gautar*, also supports such a reading. *Gautar* were the inhabitants of Götland in Sweden and, like many similar proper names, can be used in skaldic poetry as a synonym for men. As *leita kynnis* occurs in the same strophe, this invalidates it as proof for Rydberg's conclusion above regarding the dead visiting relatives in the lower world.

<sup>3</sup> Rydberg's explanation is as imaginative as it is unlikely, however the strophe is untranslatable without emendation. The line actually reads *bir er býskips*. *Bir* is meaningless, and "ship of bee" is very irregular for

experience of seamen, that birds who have grown tired on their way across the sea alight on ships to recuperate their strength. In Egil's paraphrase the bee corresponds to the bird, and the honey-blossom where the bee alights corresponds to the ship. The fields of bliss are the haven of the ship laden with honey. The figure may be criticized on the point of poetic logic, but is of a charming kind on the lips of the hardy old viking, and it is at the same time very appropriate in regard to a characteristic quality ascribed to the fields of bliss. For they are the proper home of the honey-dew which falls early in the morning from the world-tree into the dales near Urd's fountain (*Völuspá*). Lif and Leifthrasir live through ages on this dew (see Nos. 52, 53), and doubtless this same Germanic ambrosia is the food of the happy dead. The dales of the earth also unquestionably get their share of the honey-dew, which was regarded as the fertilizing and nourishing element of the ground. But the earth gets her share directly from Hrimfaxi, the steed of the Hades-goddess Nott. This steed, satiated with the grass of the subterranean meadows, produces a froth from his mouth which is honey-dew, and from his bridle the dew drops "in the dales" in the morning (*Vafþrúðnismál* 14). The same is true of the horses of the valkyries coming from the lower world. From their manes, when they shake them, falls dew "in deep dales," and thence come harvests among the peoples (*Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar* 28).

75.

AFTER THE JUDGEMENT (continued). THE FATE OF THE DAMNED. THEIR PATH. ARRIVAL AT THE NA-GATES.

When the na-dictum (the judgment of those who have committed sins unto death) has been proclaimed, they must take their departure for their terrible destination. They cannot take flight. The locks and fetters of the norns (*Urðar lokur*, *Heljar reip*) hold them prisoners, and amid the tears of their former *hamingjur* (*nornir gráta nái*) they are driven along their path by *heiptir*, armed with rods of thorns, who without mercy beat their lazy heels. The technical term for these instruments of torture is *limar*,<sup>4</sup> which seems to have become a word for eschatological punishment in general. In *Sigurdrífumál* 23 it is said that horrible *limar* shall fall heavy on those who have broken oaths and promises, or betrayed confidence. In *Reginismál* 4 it is stated that everyone who has lied about another shall long be tortured with *limar*. Both the expressions *tröll brutu hrís í hæla þeim* and *tröll vísi yður til búrs*<sup>5</sup> have their root in the recollection of the myth concerning the march of the damned under the rod of the Furies to Niflhel (see further on this point Nos. 91 and 123).

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a sky-kenning. The text has been emended in various ways. Finnur Jónsson suggested *býskeiðs*, "road of the bee"; others have suggested *Bileygs*, i.e. Odin's.

<sup>4</sup> literally "limbs, branches"

<sup>5</sup> These phrases are quoted by Vigfusson in his dictionary under "troll": *tröll brutu hrís í hæla þeim*, "trolls break brushwood on their heels", *Sighvat*; the second phrase *tröll vísi yður til búrs* occurs in the late source *Biskupa sögur* I, 601, and means "may trolls take you to the pantry" (perhaps meaning "may you become food for the trolls"). What Rydberg saw in this unclear from the context.

Their way from Urd's well goes to the north (see No. 63) through Mimir's domain. It is ordained that before their arrival at the home of torture they are to see the regions of bliss. Thus they know what they have forfeited. Then their course is past Mimir's fountain, the splendid dwellings of Baldur and the *ásmegir*, the golden hall of Sindri's race (see Nos. 93, 94), and to those regions where mother Nott rests in a hall built on the southern spur of the Nida-mountains (*Hrafnagaldur Óðins*). The procession proceeds up this mountain region through valleys and gorges in which the rivers flowing from Hvergelmir find their way to the south. The damned leave Hvergelmir in their rear and cross the border rivers *Hrönn* (the subterranean Elivagar rivers, see No. 59), on the other side of which rise Niflhel's black, perpendicular mountain-walls (Saxo, Book 8; see No. 46). Ladders or stairways lead across giddy precipices to the Na-gates. Howls and barking from the monstrous Niflheim dogs watching the gates (see Nos. 46, 58) announce the arrival of the damned. Then hasten, in compact winged flocks, monsters, Niflheim's birds of prey, Nidhogg, Ari, Hraevelgur, and their like to the south, and alight on the rocks around the Na-gates (see below). When the latter are opened on creaking hinges, the damned have died their second death. To that event, which is called "the second death," and to what this consists of, I shall return below (see No. 95).

Those who have thus marched to a terrible fate are sinners of various classes. Below Niflheim there are nine regions of punishment. That these correspond to nine kinds of unpardonable sins is in itself probable, and is to some extent confirmed by *Sólarljóð*, if this poem, standing almost on the border-line between heathendom and Christianity, may be taken as a witness. *Sólarljóð* enumerates nine or ten kinds of punishments for as many different kinds of sins. From the purely heathen records we know that enemies of the gods (Loki), perjurers, murderers, adulterers (see *Völuspá*), those who have violated faith and the laws, and those who have lied about others, are doomed to Niflhel for ever, or at least for a very long time (*oflengi* - *Reginismál* 4). Of the unmerciful, we know that they have already suffered great agony on their way to Urd's fountain. Both in reference to them and to others, it doubtless depended on the inquiry at the Thing whether they could be ransomed or not.

The sacredness of the bond of kinship was strongly emphasized in the eschatological conceptions. *Niflgóðr*, "good for the realm of damnation," is he who slays kinsmen and sells the dead body of his brother for rings (*Sonatorrek* 15); but he who in all respects has conducted himself in a blameless manner toward his kinsmen, and is slow to take revenge if they have wronged him, shall reap advantage therefrom after death (*það kveða dauðum duga* - *Sigurdrífumál* 22).

When the damned come within the Na-gates, the winged demons rush at the victims designated for them, press them under their wings, and fly with them through Niflheim's foggy space to the departments of torture appointed for them. The seeress in *Völuspá* 66 sees Nidhogg, loaded with *náir* under his wings, soar away from the Nida mountains. Where he was accustomed to fly with them appears from strophe 39, where he in Nastrond is sucking his prey. When King Gorm, beyond the above-mentioned boundary river, and by the Nida mountains' ladders, had reached the Na-gates opened for him, he sees dismal monsters (*larvæ atræ*; cp. *Völuspá's inn dimmi dreki*) in dense crowds, and hears the air filled with their horrible screeches (cp. *Völuspá's Ari hlakkar, slítur náí neffölur*, 47). When *Sólarljóð's* skald enters the realm of torture he sees "scorched" birds, which are not birds but souls (*sálir*), flying "numerous as gnats."

## THE PLACES OF PUNISHMENT.

The regions over which the flock of demons fly are the same as those which the author of *Skírnismál* has in view when Skirnir threatens Gerd with sending her to the realms of death. It is the home of the frost-giants, of the subterranean giants, and of the spirits of disease. Here live the offspring of Ymir's feet, the primeval giants strangely born and strangely bearing, who are waiting for the quaking of Yggdrasil and for the liberation of their chained leader, in order that they may take revenge on the gods in Ragnarok, and who in the meantime contrive futile plans of attack on Hvergelmir's fountain or on the north end of the Bifröst bridge. Here the demons of restless uneasiness, of mental agony, of convulsive weeping, and of insanity (*Ópoli, Morn, Ópi, and Tópi*) have their home; and here dwells also their queen, Loki's daughter, Leikin, whose threshold is precipice and whose bed is disease. According to the authority used by Saxo in the description of Gorm's journey, the country is thickly populated. Saxo calls it *urbs, oppidum* (cp. *Skírnismál's* words about the giant-homes, among which Gerd is to drag herself hopeless from house to house). The ground is a marsh with putrid water (*putidum cœnum*), which diffuses a horrible stench. The river Slid flowing north out of Hvergelmir there seeks its way in a muddy stream to the abyss which leads down to the nine places of punishment. Over all hovers Niflheim's dismal sky.

The mortals who, like Gorm and his men, have been permitted to see these regions, and who have conceived the idea of descending into those worlds which lie below Niflheim, have shrunk back when they have reached the abyss in question and have cast a glance down into it. The place is narrow, but there is enough daylight for its bottom to be seen, and the sight of it is terrible. Still, there must have been a path down to it, for when Gorm and his men had recovered from the first impression, they continued their journey to their destination (Geirrod's place of punishment), although the most terrible vapor (*teterrimus vapor*) blew into their faces. The rest that Saxo relates is unfortunately wanting both in sufficient clearness and in completeness. Without the risk of making a mistake, we may, however, consider it as mythically correct that some of the nine worlds of punishment below Niflheim, or the most of them, are vast mountain caves, mutually united by openings broken through the mountain walls and closed with gates, which do not, however, obstruct the course of Slid to the Nastrands and to the sea outside. Saxo speaks of a *perfractam scopuli partem*, "a pierced part of the mountain," through which travellers come from one of the subterranean caves to another, and between the caves stand gatekeepers (*janitores*). Thus there must be gates. At least two of these "homes" have been named after the most notorious sinner found within them. Saxo speaks of one called the giant Geirrod's, and an Icelandic document of one called the giant Geitir's.<sup>6</sup> The technical term for such a cave of torture was *gnýskúti* (clamor-grotto). Saxo translates *skúti* with *conclave saxæum*. "To thrust anyone before Geitir's clamor-

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<sup>6</sup> This is found in a verse by the skald *Þórvaldr inn veili*, in *Njal's Saga* ch. 102. The phrase has several variations, this being the one quoted in Egilsson's *Lexicon Poeticum*.

grotto" - *reka einn fyrir Geitis gnýskúta* - was a phrase synonymous with damning a person to death and hell.<sup>7</sup>

The gates between the clamor-grottos are watched by various kinds of demons. Before each gate stand several who in looks and conduct seem to symbolize the sins over whose perpetrators they keep guard. Outside of one of the caves of torture Gorm's men saw club-bearers who tried their weapons on one another. Outside of another gate the keepers amused themselves with "a monstrous game" in which they "mutually gave their ram-backs a curved motion."<sup>8</sup> It is to be presumed that some sort of perpetrators of violence were tortured within the threshold, which was guarded by the club-bearers, and that the ram-shaped demons amused themselves outside of the torture-cave of debauchees. It is also probable that the latter is identical with the one called Geitir's. The name Geitir comes from *geit*, goat. Saxo, who Latinized *Geitir* into *Götharus*, tells adventures of his which show that this giant had tried to get possession of Freyja, and that he is identical with Gymir, Gerd's father.<sup>9</sup> According to *Skírnismál* 35, there are found in Niflhel goats, that is to say, trolls in goat-guise, probably of the same kind as those above-mentioned, and it may be with an allusion to the fate which awaits Gymir in the lower world, or with a reference to his epithet Geitir, that Skirnir threatens Gerd with the disgusting drink (*geita hland*)<sup>10</sup> which will there be given her by "the sons of misery" (*vílmegir*). One of the lower-world demons, who, as his name indicates, was closely connected with Geitir, is called "Geitir's Howl-foot" (*Geitis gnýfeti*); and the expression "to thrust anyone before Geitir's Howl-foot" thus has the same meaning as to send him to damnation.<sup>11</sup>

Continuing their journey, Gorm and his men came to Geirrodd's *skúti* (see No. 46).

We learn from Saxo's description that in the worlds of torture there are seen not only terrors, but also delusions which tempt the eyes of the greedy. Gorm's prudent captain Thorkil (see No. 46) earnestly warns his companions not to touch these things, for hands that come in contact with them are fastened and are held as by invisible bonds. The illusions are characterized by Saxo as *ædis supellectilis*, an expression which is ambiguous, but may be an allusion that they represented things pertaining to temples. The statement deserves to be compared with *Sólarljóð*'s strophe 65, where the skald sees in the lower world persons damned, whose hands are riveted together with burning stones. They are the mockers at religious rites (they who *minnst vildu halda helga daga*)<sup>12</sup> who are thus punished. In the mythology, it was probably profaners of temples who suffered this punishment.

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<sup>7</sup> Here Rydberg is taking a skaldic kenning too literally. *Geitis gnýskúti* simply means a "giant's echoing cave." Egilsson states that "*reka fyrir Geitis gnýskúta* must be equivalent to *reka fyrir björg* to 'chase someone off a cliff' (to his death)."

<sup>8</sup> Elton and Fisher agree in translating this passage as a gruesome game played by tossing a goathide back and forth. A similar scene occurs in *Þorsteins Saga Bæjarmagns* (The saga of "Thorstein Mansion-might" *Seven Viking Romances*, Penguin, 1985).

<sup>9</sup> This refers to the events of Gerd and Frey's marriage. To my knowledge, Rydberg never fully discusses this episode in the whole of his work on the mythology. A summary appears in the synopsis of the mythic epic in Volume 2 of this work, number 109. The source of this tale is found in Book 5 of Saxo's *History*. There King Frodi (Frey) weds Alvid, the daughter of Gotharus.

<sup>10</sup> goat urine

<sup>11</sup> *gnýfeti* is simply a variant of *gnýskúti* in the verse by *Þórvaldr inn veili* above.

<sup>12</sup> They who "would not mind the holy days."

The Nastrands and the hall there are thus described in *Völuspá* 38, 39:

*Sal sá hún standa  
sólu fjarri  
Náströndu á,  
norður horfa dyr.  
Féllu eiturdropar  
inn um ljóra,  
sá er undinn salur  
orma hryggjum.*

*Sá hún þar vaða  
þunga strauma  
menn meinsvara  
og morðvarga  
og þanns annars glepur  
eyrarúnu.  
Þar saug Niðhöggur  
náir framgengna,  
sleit vargur vera.*

"A hall she saw standing far from the sun on the Nastrands; the doors opened to the north. Venom-drops fell through the roof-holes. Braided is that hall of serpent-backs."

"There she saw perjurers, murderers, and they who seduce the wife of another (adulterers) wade through heavy streams. There Nidhogg sucked the *náir* of the dead. And the wolf tore men into pieces."

*Gylfaginning* 52 assumes that the serpents, whose backs, wattled together, form the hall, turn their heads into the hall, and that they, especially through the openings in the roof (according to *Codex Ups.* and *Codex Hynones.*), vomit forth their floods of venom. The latter assumption is well founded. Doubtful seems, on the other hand, *Gylfaginning's* assumption that "the heavy streams," which the damned in Nastrands have to wade through, flow out over the floor of the hall. As the very name Nastrands indicates that the hall is situated near a water, then this water, whether it be the river Slid with its eddies filled with weapons or some other river, may send breakers on shore and thus produce the heavy streams which *Völuspá* mentions. Nevertheless *Gylfaginning's* view may be correct. The hall of Nastrands, like its counterpart Valhall, has certainly been regarded as immensely large. The serpent-venom raining down must have fallen on the floor of the hall, and there is nothing to hinder the venom-rain from being thought sufficiently abundant to form "heavy streams" thereon (see below).

Saxo's description of the hall in Nastrands -- by him adapted to the realm of torture in general -- is as follows: "The doors are covered with the soot of ages; the walls are bespattered with filth; the roof is closely covered with barbs; the floor is strewn with serpents and bespawled with all kinds of uncleanness." (Book 8) The last statement confirms *Gylfaginning's* view. As this bespattering continues without ceasing through ages, the matter thus produced must grow into abundance and have an outlet. Remarkable

is also Saxo's statement, that the doors are covered with the soot of ages. Thus fires must be kindled near these doors. Of this, more below.

77.

THE PLACES OF PUNISHMENT (continued). THE HALL IN NASTROND.

Without allowing myself to propose any change of text in the *Völuspá* strophes above quoted, and in pursuance of the principle which I have adopted in this work, not to base any conclusions on so-called text-emendations, which invariably are text-debasings, I have applied these strophes as they are found in the texts we have. Like Müllenhoff (*Deutsche Altertumskunde* 5, 121) and other scholars, I am, however, convinced that the strophe which begins *sá hún þar vaða*, etc., has been corrupted. Several reasons, which I shall present elsewhere in a special treatise on *Völuspá*, make this probable; but simply the circumstance that the strophe has ten lines is sufficient to awaken suspicions in anyone's mind who holds the view that *Völuspá* originally consisted of exclusively eight-lined strophes - a view which cannot seriously be doubted. As we now have the poem, it consists of forty-seven strophes of eight lines each, one of four lines, two of six lines each, five of ten lines each, four of twelve lines each, and two of fourteen lines each -- in all fourteen non-eight lined strophes against forty-seven eight-lined ones; and, while all the eight-lined ones are intrinsically and logically well constructed, it may be said of the others that have more than eight lines each, partly that we can cancel the superfluous lines without injury to the sense, and partly that they look like loosely-joined conglomerations of scattered fragments of strophes and of interpolations. The most recent effort to perfectly restore the poem to its eight-lined strophes has been made by Müllenhoff (*Deutsche Altertumskunde* 5.); and although this effort may need revision in some special points, it has upon the whole given the poem a clearness, a logical sequence and symmetry, which of themselves make it evident that Müllenhoff's premises are correct.<sup>13</sup>

In the treatise on *Völuspá* which I shall publish later, this subject will be thoroughly discussed.<sup>14</sup> Here I may be permitted to say, that in my own efforts to restore *Völuspá* to eight-lined strophes, I came to a point where I had got the most of the materials arranged on this principle, but there remained the following fragment:

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<sup>13</sup> Of Karl Müllenhöff, Sigurður Nordal says: "He edited *Völuspá* with a translation and a detailed commentary and maintained that the poem was totally heathen in spirit and matter, that it was composed in Norway but that it's essence was common to all Germanic poetry. ...But there is no point in writing at length about his essay, for it is, in spite of all differences of opinion, the basis of my commentary, as of most others of his successors." *Saga Book of the Viking Society*, vol. 18, 1970-1973. Translated by B.S. Benedikz and J.S. McKinnell. Nordal himself argues for an Icelandic author of *Völuspá*.

<sup>14</sup> To my knowledge, this treatise never appeared. As Rydberg himself emphasizes that nothing can be built on emendations, this chapter is beyond much commentary. Each reader can decide for him or herself the value of the conclusions arrived at in this manner.

(1) *Á fellur austan  
um eiturdala  
söxum og sverðum,  
Slíður heitir sú.*

(1) A river falls from the east  
through venom dales  
with daggers and swords,  
Slid it is called.

(2) *Sá hún þar vaða  
þunga strauma  
menn meinsvara  
og morðvarga  
og þanns annars glepur  
eyrarínu.*

(2) There she saw wading  
through heavy streams  
perjurers,  
and murderers,  
and him who seduces  
another's wife.

These fragments united make ten lines. The fourth line of the fragment (1) *Slíður heitir sú* has the appearance of being a mythographic addition by the transcriber of the poem. Several similar interpolations which contain information of mythological interest, but which neither have the slightest connection with the context, nor are of the least importance in reference to the subject treated in *Völuspá*, occur in our present text-editions of this poem. The dwarf-list is a colossal interpolation of this kind. If we hypothetically omit this line for the present, and also the one immediately preceding (*söxum ok sverðum*), then there remains as many lines as are required in a regular eight-line strophe.

It is further to be remarked that among all the eight-lined *Völuspá* strophes there is not one so badly constructed that a verb in the first half-strophe has a direct object in the first line of the second half-strophe, as is the case in that of the present text:

*Sá hún þar vaða  
þunga strauma  
menn meinsvara  
og morðvarga  
og þanns annars glepur  
eyrarínu.*

and, upon the whole, such a construction can hardly ever have occurred in a tolerably passable poem. If these eight lines actually belonged to one and the same strophe, the latter would have to be restored according to the following scheme:

(1) *Sá hún þar vaða*  
(2) *þunga strauma*  
(3) *menn meinsvara*  
(4) *og morðvarga;*  
(5) .....  
(6) .....  
(7) *og þanns annars glepur*  
(8) *eyrarínu.*



and in one of the dotted lines the verb must have been found which governed the accusative object *þann*. The lines which should take the place of the dots have, in their present form, the following appearance:

*Á fellur austan  
um eiturdala.*

The verb which governed *þann* must then be *áfellur*, that is to say, the verb *fellur* united with the preposition *á*. But in that case *á* is not the substantive *á*, a river, a running water, and thus the river which falls from the east around venom dales has its source in an error.

Thus we have, under this supposition, found that there is something that *fellur á*, falls on, streams down upon, him who seduces the wife of another. This something must be expressed by a substantive, which is now concealed behind the adverb *austan*, and must have resembled it sufficiently in sound to be transformed into it.

Such a substantive, and the only one of the kind, is *austur*. This means something that can *falla á*, stream down upon; for *austur* is bail-water (from *ausa*, to bail), waste-water, water flowing out of a gutter or shoot.

A test as to whether there originally stood *austur* or not is to be found in the following substantive, which now has the appearance of *eiturdala*. For if there was written *austur*, then there must, in the original text, have followed a substantive (1) which explained the kind of waste-water meant, (2) which had sufficient resemblance to *eitrdala* to become corrupted into it.

The sea-faring Norseman distinguished between two kinds of *austur*: *byttu-austr* and *dælu-austr*. The bail-water in a ship could be removed either by bailing it out with scoops directly over the railing, or it could be scooped into a *dæla*, a shoot or trough laid over the railing. The latter was the more convenient method. The difference between these two kinds of *austur* became a popular phrase; compare the expression *þá var byttu-austur, eigi dælu-austur*. The word *dæla* was also used figuratively; compare *láta dæluna ganga*, to let the troughs run (*Grettla*, 98), a proverb by which men in animated conversation are likened unto *dælur*, troughs, which are opened for flowing conversation.<sup>1</sup>

Under such circumstances we might here expect after the word *austur* the word *dæla*, and, as venom here is in question, *eitur-dæla*.

*Eitur-dæla* satisfies both the demands above made. It explains what sort of waste-water is meant, and it resembles *eitur-dala* sufficiently to be corrupted into it.

Thus we get *á fellur austur eitrdæla*: "On (him who seduces another man's wife) falls the waste-water of the venom-troughs." Which these venom-troughs are, the strophe in its entirety ought to define. This constitutes the second test of the correctness of the reading.

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<sup>1</sup> Although I cannot find this phrase in the modern edition of the saga itself, Vigfusson quotes it and the reference under the entry "*dæla*" in his dictionary, making it likely Vigfusson's *Dictionary* was Rydberg's source for this. Another reference there to *Grettis Saga* 95, actually appears in chapter 17. Regardless, the conversion of *austr-dæla* into *eitur-dæla* is extremely unlikely.

It must be admitted that if *á fellur austur eitrdæla* is the original reading, then a corruption into *á fellur austan eiturdala* had almost of necessity to follow, since the preposition *á* was taken to be the substantive *á*, a river, a running stream. How near at hand such a confounding of these words lies is demonstrated by another *Völuspá* strophe, where the preposition *á* in *á sér hún ausast aurgum fossi* was long interpreted as the substantive *á*.

We shall now see whether the expression *á fellur austr eitrdæla* makes sense, when it is introduced in lieu of the dotted lines above:

*Sá hún þar vaða  
þunga strauma  
menn meinsvara  
og morðvarga;  
(en) á fellur austur  
eiturdæla  
þanns annars glepur  
eyrarínu.*

"There saw she heavy streams (of venom) flow upon (or through) perjurers and murderers. The waste-water of the venom-troughs (that is, the waste-water of the perjurers and murderers after the venom-streams had rushed over them) falls upon him who seduces the wife of another man."

Thus we not only get a connected idea, but a very remarkable and instructive passage.<sup>2</sup>

The verb *vaða* is not used only about persons who wade through a water. The water itself is also able to *vaða* (cp. *eisandi uðr veður* - Rafns s. Sveinb.), to say nothing of arrows that wade *í fólki* (*Hávamál* 150), and of banners which wade in the throng of warriors. Here the venom wades through the crowds of perjurers and murderers. The verb *vaða* has so often been used in this sense, that it has also acquired the meaning of rushing, running, rushing through. Heavy venom-streams run through the perjurers and murderers before they fall on the adulterers. The former are the venom-troughs, which pour their waste-water upon the latter.

We now return to Saxo's description of the hall of Nastrands, to see whether the *Völuspá* strophe thus hypothetically restored corresponds with, or is contradicted by, it. Disagreeable as the pictures are which we meet with in this comparison, we are nevertheless compelled to take them into consideration.

Saxo says that the wall of the hall is bespattered with liquid filth (*paries obductus illuvie*). The Latin word, and the one used by Saxo for venom, is *venenum*, not *illuvies*, which means filth that has been poured or bespattered on something. Hence Saxo does not mean venom-streams of the kind which, according to *Völuspá*, are vomited by the serpents down through the roof-openings, but the reference is to something else, which still must have an upper source, since it is bespattered on the wall of the hall.

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<sup>2</sup> On the whole, Rydberg's reconstruction of these verses is radical and extremely difficult to accept, thus we must take the poem as it stands, a view he himself advocates at the beginning of this section.

Saxo further says that the floor is besprawled with all sorts of impurity: *pavimentum omni sordium genere respersum*. The expression confirms the idea that unmixed venom is not meant here, but everything else of the most disgusting kind.<sup>3</sup>

Furthermore, Saxo relates that groups of damned are found there within, which groups he calls *consessus*. *Consessus* means "a sitting together," and, in a secondary sense, persons sitting together. The word "sit" may here be taken in a more or less literal sense. *Consessor*, "the one who sits together with," might be applied to every participator in a Roman dinner, though the Romans did not actually sit, but reclined at the table.

As stated, several such *consessus*, persons sitting or lying together, are found in the hall. The benches upon which they sit or lie are of iron. Every *consessus* has a *locus* in the hall; and as both these terms, *consessus* and *locus*, in Saxo united in the expression *consessuum loca*, together mean rows of benches in a theatre or in a public place, where the seats rise in rows one above the other, we must assume that these rows of the damned sitting or lying together are found in different elevations between the floor and ceiling. This assumption is corroborated by what Saxo tells, viz., that their *loca* are separated by leaden hurdles (*plumbeæ crates*).<sup>4</sup> That they are separated by hurdles must have some practical reason, and this can be none other than that something flowing down may have an unobstructed passage from one *consessus* to the other. That which flows down finally reaches the floor, and is then *omne sordium genus*, all kinds of impurity. It must finally be added that, according to Saxo, the stench in this room of torture is well-nigh intolerable (*super omnia perpetui fætoris asperitas tristes lacessebat olfactus*).<sup>5</sup>

Who is not able to see that *Völuspá's* and Saxo's descriptions of the hall in Nastrands confirm, explain, and complement each other? From *Völuspá's* words, we conclude that the venom-streams come from the openings in the roof, not from the walls. The wall consists, in its entirety, of the backs of serpents wattled together (*sá er undinn salur orma hryggjum*). The heads belonging to these serpents are above the roof, and vomit their venom down through the roof-openings - "the *ljors*" (*féllu eiturdropar inn um ljóra*). Below these, and between them and the floor, there are, as we have seen in Saxo, rows of iron seats, the one row below the other, all furnished with leaden hurdles, and on the iron seats sit or lie perjurers and murderers, forced to drink the venom raining down in "heavy streams." Every such row of sinners becomes "a trough of venom" for the row immediately below it, until the disgusting liquid thus produced falls on those who have seduced the dearest and most confidential friends of others. These seducers either constitute the lowest row of the seated delinquents, or they wade on the floor in that filth and venom which there flows. Over the hall broods eternal night (it is *sólu fjarri*).<sup>6</sup> What there is of light, illuminating the terrors, comes from fires (see below) kindled at the doors which open to the north (*norður horfa dyr*). The smoke from the fires comes into the hall and covers the door-posts with the "soot of ages" (*postes longæva fuligine illitæ*).

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<sup>3</sup> "The hall, completely ruinous within and thick with a vile, powerful odour, they saw crammed with everything which could disgust the eye or mind. The doorposts smeared with age-old soot, the walls plastered with grime, the ceiling composed of spikes, the floor crawling with snakes and spattered with every kind of filth." Fisher tr.

<sup>4</sup> "leaden trellises" Fisher tr.

<sup>5</sup> "Everything was foul, so that the rotting filth assailed the visitors' noses with an unbearable stench" Fisher tr.

<sup>6</sup> "far from the sun", *Völuspá* 38.

With this must be compared what Tacitus relates concerning the views and customs of the Germans in regard to crime and punishment. He says:

"The nature of the crime determines the punishment. Traitors and deserters they hang on trees. Cowards and those given to disgraceful debauchery they smother in filthy pools and marshes, casting a hurdle (crates) over them. The dissimilarity in these punishments indicates a belief that crime should be punished in such a way that the penalty is visible, while scandalous conduct should be punished in such a way that the debauchee is removed from the light of day" (*Germania*, ch. 12.).

This passage in *Germania* is a commentary on Saxo's descriptions, and on the *Völuspá* strophe in the form resulting from my investigation. What might naturally seem probable is corroborated by *Germania's* words: that the same view of justice and morality, which obtained in the camp of the Teutons, found its expression, but in gigantic exaggeration, in their doctrines concerning eschatological rewards and punishments. It should, perhaps, also be remarked that a similar particularism prevailed through centuries. The hurdle (*crates*) which Saxo mentions as being placed over the venom and filth-drinking criminals in the hall of Nastrands has its earthly counterpart in the hurdle (also called *crates*), which, according to the custom of the age of Tacitus, was thrown over victims smothered in the cesspools and marshes (*ignavos et imbelles et corpore infames cæno ac palude injecta insuper crate mergunt*). Those who were sentenced to this death were, according to Tacitus, cowards and debauchees. Among those who received a similar punishment in the Germanic Gehenna were partly those who in a secret manner had committed murder and tried to conceal their crime (such were called *morðvargar*), partly debauchees who had violated the sacredness of matrimony. The descriptions in the *Völuspá* strophe and in Saxo show that also in the hall of the Nastrands the punishment is in accordance with the nature of the crime. All are punished terribly; but there is a distinction between those who had to drink the serpent venom unmixed and those who receive the mixed potion, and finally those who get the awful liquid over themselves and doubtless within themselves.

In closing this chapter, I will quote a number of *Völuspá* strophes, which refer to Germanic eschatology. In parallel columns I print the strophes as they appear in Codex Regius, and in the form they have assumed as the result of an investigation of which I shall give a full account in the future. I trust it will be found that the restoration of *á fellur austan um eitrdala* into *á fellur austr eitrdæla*, and the introducing of these words before *þanns annars glepur eyrarúnu* not only restores to the strophe in which these words occur a regular structure and a sense which is corroborated by Saxo's eschatological sources and by the *Germania* of Tacitus, but also supplies the basis and conditions on which other strophes may get a regular structure and intelligible contents.

*Codex Regius*

(36) *A fellr austan  
vm eitr dala  
sauxom oc sverþom  
Slipur heitir sv.  
stod fyr norðan  
aniþa vollom  
salr or gvlli  
sindra ettar.  
enn annar stoð  
a okolni  
bior salr iotvns  
en sa brimir heitir.*

(37) *Sal sa hon standa  
solo fjárri  
na strondo a  
norþr horfa dyrr.  
fello eitr dropar  
inn vm lióra  
sa er undinn salr  
orma hryggjom.*

(38) *Sa hon þar vaða  
þvnga stravma  
menn meinsvara  
oc morð vargar.  
oc þann annars glepr  
eyra rúno  
þar svg niþhauggr  
nái fram gegna  
sleit vargr vera  
vitop er en eþa hvat.*

(35) *Hapt sa hon liggja  
undir hvera lundi  
legiarn lici  
loca aþeckian.  
þar sitr sigyn  
þeygi vm sínom  
ver velglyioð  
vitop er en eþa hvat*

*Revised Text*

*Stóð fyr norðan  
á Niða völlum  
salur úr gulli  
Sindra ættar;  
en annar stóð  
á Ókólni,  
þjórsalur jötuns,  
en sá Brimir heitir.*

*Sal sá hún standa  
sólu fjárri  
Náströndu á,  
norður horfa dyr;  
féllu eiturdropar  
inn um ljóra,  
sá er undinn salur  
orma hryggjum.*

*Sá hún þar vaða  
þunga strauma  
menn meinsvara  
og morðvarga;  
en á fellur austur  
eiturdæla  
þanns annars glepur  
eyrarúnu.*

*Hapt sá hún liggja  
undir hveralundi  
lægjarnlíki  
Loka áþekkjan;  
þar saug Niðhöggur  
nái framgengna,  
sleit vargur vera.  
Vituð ér enn eða hvað?*

*Þar kná Vála  
vígbönd snúa,  
heldur voru harðör  
höpt úr þörmum;  
þar situr Sigyn  
þeygi um sínum  
ver vel glýjuð.  
Vituð ér enn eða hvað?*

THE PLACES OF PUNISHMENT (continued). LOKI'S CAVE OF PUNISHMENT.  
GYLFAGINNING'S CONFOUNDING OF MUSPELL'S SONS WITH THE SONS OF  
SUTTUNG.

Saxo (Book 8, pp. 243-247) relates that the experienced Captain Thorkil made, at the command of King Gorm, a second journey to the uttermost North, in order to complete the knowledge which was gained on the first journey. That part of the lower world where Loki (by Saxo called *Ugartilocus*)<sup>1</sup> dwells had not yet been seen. This now remained to be done. Like the first time, Thorkil sailed into that sea on which sun and stars never shine, and he kept cruising so long in its darkness that his supply of fuel gave out. The expedition was, as a consequence, on the point of failing, when a fire was suddenly seen in the distance. Thorkil then entered a boat with a few of his men and rowed there. In order to find his way back to his ship in the darkness, he had placed in the mast-top a self-luminous precious stone, which he had taken with him on the journey. Guided by the light, Thorkil came to a strand-rock, in which there were narrow "gaps" (*fauces*), out of which the light came. There was also a door, and Thorkil entered, after requesting his men to remain outside.

Thorkil found a grotto. At the fire which was kindled stood two uncommonly tall men, who kept tending the fire. The grotto had an inner door or gate, and that which was seen inside that gate is described by Saxo in almost the same words as those of his former description of the hall at the Nastrands (*obsoleti postes, ater situ paries, sordidum tectum, frequens anguibus pavementum*).<sup>2</sup> Thorkil in reality sees the same hall again; he had simply come to it from another side, from the north, where the hall has its door opening toward the strand (*norður horfa dyr - Völuspá*), the pillars of which, according to Saxo's previous description, are covered with the soot of ages. The soot is now explained by the fire which is kindled in the grotto outside the hall, the grotto forming as it were a vestibule. The two gigantic persons who mend the fire are called by Saxo *aquili*.

In *Martianus Capella*,<sup>3</sup> who is Saxo's model in regard to style and vocabulary, persons of semi-divine rank (*hemithei*) are mentioned who are called *aquili*, and who inhabit the same regions as the souls of the dead (*lares* and *larvæ* - *Mart. Cap.*, I, II. Compare P. E. Müller, not., *Hist. Dan.*, pp. 68, 69). *Aquilus* also has the signification, dark, swarthy, Icel. *dökkur*.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Utgard-Loki, the name of the giant that Thor encounters in *Gylfaginning*, here applied to Loki himself.

<sup>2</sup> "The cave mouth was unsightly, the doorposts in disrepair, the walls black with filth, the ceiling dingy, and the floor infested with snakes, everywhere offensive to the eye and mind." Fisher tr.

<sup>3</sup> Martianus (sic *Marcianus*) Capella, an African Roman author, whose work "*De nuptiis philologiae et Mercurii*" (*The Marriage of Philology and Mercury*), composed c. 410-429, purports to be an encyclopedia of liberal culture in prose and verse, and remained influential throughout the Middle Ages.

<sup>4</sup> Rydberg's explanation is plausible. Based on the commentary to *Martianus Capella* by Remingius of Auxerre (late 8<sup>th</sup> century), Peter Fisher translates *aquili* as "eagle-headed demons", a definition most likely based on the similarity of the word to the Latin *aquila*, eagle. If this is the case, these demons would be akin to the winged serpents found in Niflhel, but as Fisher remarks "such eagle-headed demons have not been identified in any Icelandic source."

In the northern mythology a particular kind of elves are mentioned - black or swarthy elves, *dökkálfar*. They dwell under the farthest root of the world-tree, near the northern gate of the lower world (*jörmungrundar í jódyr nyrðra*), and have as their neighbors the Thurses and the unhappy dead (*náir* - *Hrafnagalður Óðins* 25). *Gylfaginning* also (ch. 17) knows of the swarthy elves, at least, that they "dwell down in the earth" (*búa niðri í jörðu*). As to mythic rank, color, and abode, they therefore correspond with the Roman *aquili*, and Saxo has forcibly and very correctly employed this Latin word in order to characterize them in an intelligible manner.

The two swarthy elves keeping watch outside of the hall of Nastrands ought naturally to have been astonished at seeing a living human being entering their grotto. Saxo makes them receive the unexpected guest in a friendly manner. They greet him, and, when they have learned the purpose of his visit, one of them reproaches him for the rash boldness of his undertaking, but gives him information in regard to the way to Loki, and gives him fire and fuel after he had tested Thorkil's understanding, and found him to be a wise man. The journey, says the swarthy elf, can be performed in four days' fast sailing. As appears from the context, the journey is to the east. The traveller then comes to a place where not a blade of grass grows, and over which an even denser darkness broods. The place includes several terrible rocky halls, and in one of them Loki dwells.

On the fourth day Thorkil, favored by a good wind, comes to the goal of his journey. Through the darkness a mass of rock rising from the sea (*scopulum inusitatae molis*) is discerned with difficulty, and Thorkil lays to by this rocky island. He and his men put on clothes of skin of a kind that protects against venom, and then walk along the beach at the foot of the rock until they find an entrance. Then they kindle a fire with flint stones, this being an excellent protection against demons; they light torches and crawl in through the narrow opening. Unfortunately Saxo gives but a scanty account of what they saw there. First they came to a cave of torture, which resembled the hall on the Nastrands, at least, in this particular, that there were many serpents and many iron seats or iron benches of the kind described above. A brook of sluggish water is crossed by wading. Another grotto which is not described was passed through, whereupon they entered Loki's awful prison. He lay there bound hands and feet with immense chains. His hair and beard resembled spears of horn, and had a terrible odor. Thorkil jerked out a hair of his beard to take with him as evidence of what he had seen. As he did this, there was a pestilential stench diffused in the cave; and after Thorkil's arrival home, it appeared that the beard-hair he had taken home was dangerous to life on account of its odor. When Thorkil and his men had passed out of the interior jurisdiction of the rock, they were discovered by flying serpents which had their home on the island (cp. *Völuspá* - *þar saug Niðhöggur*, etc., No. 77). The skin clothes protected them against the venom vomited forth. But one of the men who bared his eyes became blind. Another, whose hand came outside of the protecting garments, got it cut off; and a third, who ventured to uncover his head, got the latter separated from his neck by the poison as by a sharp steel instrument.

The poem or saga which was Saxo's authority for this story must have described the rocky island where Loki was put in chains as inhabited by many condemned beings.



There are at least three caves of torture, and in one of them there are many iron benches. This is confirmed, as we shall see, by *Völuspá*.

Saxo also says that there was a harbor. From *Völuspá* we learn that when Yggdrasil trembles at the approach of Ragnarok, the ship of the dead, *Naglfar*, lies so that the liberated Loki can go aboard it. That it has long lain moored in its harbor is evident from the fact that, according to *Völuspá*, it then "becomes loose." Unknown hands are its builders. The material out of which it is constructed is the nail-parings of dead men (*Gylfaginning* 51 - probably according to some popular tradition). The less regard for religion, the less respect for the dead. But from each person who is left unburied, or is put into his grave without being, when possible, washed, combed, cleaned as to hands and feet, and so cared for that his appearance may be a favorable evidence to the judges at the Thing of the dead in regard to his survivors -- from each such person comes building material for the death-ship, which is to carry the hosts of world-destroyers to the great conflict. Much building material is accumulated in the last days -- in the "dagger-and-axe age," when "men no longer respect each other" (*Völuspá*).

Naglfar is the largest of all ships, larger than *Skíðblaðnir* (*Skíðblaðnir er beztur skipanna . . . en Naglfari er mest skip* - *Gylfaginning* 43). This very fact shows that it is to have a large number of persons on board when it departs from Loki's rocky island. *Völuspá* 47:8-48 says:

*Naglfar losnar.  
Kjóll fer austan,  
koma munu Múspells  
um lög lýðir,  
en Loki stýrir.  
Fara Fífls megir  
með Freka allir,  
þeim er bróðir  
Byleipts í för.*

Naglfar becomes loose.  
A ship comes from the east,  
the hosts of Muspell  
come over the ocean,  
Loki is pilot.  
All of Fífl's sons  
come with Freki,  
Byleipt's brother  
travels with them.

Here it is expressly stated that "the hosts of Muspell" are on board the ship, Naglfar, guided by Loki, after it had "become loose" and had set sail from the island where Loki and other damned ones were imprisoned.

How can this be harmonized with the doctrine based on the authority of *Gylfaginning*, that the sons of Muspell are inhabitants of the southernmost region of light and warmth, *Gylfaginning*'s so-called Muspellsheim? or with the doctrine that Surt is the protector of the borders of this realm? or that Muspell's sons proceed under his command to the Ragnarok conflict, and that they consequently must come from the South, which *Völuspá* also seems to corroborate with the words *Surtur fer sunnan með sviga lævi*?<sup>1</sup>

The answer is that the one statement cannot be harmonized with the other, and the question then arises as to which of the two authorities is the authentic one, the heathen poem *Völuspá* or *Gylfaginning*, produced in the thirteenth century by a man who had a

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<sup>1</sup> "Surt fares from the south with the destroyer of twigs"

vague conception of the mythology of our ancestors. Even the most uncritical partisan of *Gylfaginning* would certainly unhesitatingly decide in favor of *Völuspá*, provided we had this poem handed down in its pure form from the heathen days. But this is clearly not the case. We therefore need a third witness to decide between the two. Such an one is also actually to be found.

In the Norse heathen records the word *múspell* occurs only twice, viz., in the above-mentioned *Völuspá* strophe and in *Lokasenna* 42, where Frey, who has surrendered his sword of victory, is threatened by Loki with the prospect of defeat and death - *er Múspells synir ríða Myrkvið yfir*, "when Muspell's sons ride over Mirkwood." The Mirkwood is mentioned in *Völundarkviða* 1 as a forest, through which the swan-maids coming from the South flew into the wintry Wolfdales, where one chases bears on skis<sup>2</sup> to get food. This is evidently not a forest situated near the primeval fountains of heat and fire. The very arbitrary manner in which the names of the mythical geography is used in the heroic poems, where Mirkwood comes to the surface,<sup>3</sup> does not indicate that this forest was conceived as situated south of Midgard, and there is, as shall be shown below, reason for assuming that Mirkwood is another name for the Ironwood famous in mythology; the wood which, according to *Völuspá*, is situated in the East, and in which Angurboda fosters the children of Loki and Fenrir.

One of these, and one of the worst, is the monster Hati, the enemy of the moon mentioned in *Völuspá* as *tungls tjúgari*,<sup>4</sup> that makes excursions from the Ironwood and "stains the citadels of rulers with blood." In the Ragnarok conflict Hati takes part and contends with Tyr (*Gylfaginning*), and, doubtless, not only he, but also the whole offspring of the Fenris-wolf fostered in the Ironwood, are on the battlefield in that division which is commanded by Loki their clan-chief. This is also, doubtless, the meaning of the following words in the *Völuspá* strophe quoted above: "Fifl's descendants all come with Freki (the wolf), and in company with them is Byleipt's (or Byleist's) brother." As Loki, Byleipt, and Helblindi are mentioned as brothers (*Gylfaginning* 33), no one else can be meant with "Byleipt's brother" than Loki himself or Helblindi, and more probably the latter, since it has already been stated, that Loki is there as the commander of the forces. Thus it is Muspell's sons and Loki's kinsmen in the Ironwood who are gathered around him when the great conflict is at hand. Muspell's sons accompany the liberated Loki from his rocky isle, and are with him on board Naglfar. Loki's first destination is the Ironwood, whither he goes to fetch Angurboda's children, and thence the journey proceeds "over Mirkwood" to the plain of Vigrid. The statements of *Völuspá* and *Lokasenna* illustrate and corroborate each other, and it follows that *Völuspá*'s statement, claiming that Muspell's sons come from the East, is original and correct.

*Gylfaginning* treats Muspell as a place, a realm, the original home of fire and heat (*Gylfaginning* 4). Still, there is a lack of positiveness, for the land in question is in the same work called *Múspellsheimur* (ch. 5) and *Múspells heimur* (ch. 8), whence we may presume that the author regarded *Múspell* as meaning both the land of the fire and the fire

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<sup>2</sup> Here and elsewhere, Anderson confuses the Swedish word *skidor*, skis, with snow-shoes. The image here is of elven beings gliding effortlessly over snowcovered dales. Compare Orvandill's shoes which run on land as well as on water, and Ull's skate which becomes a shield.

<sup>3</sup> *Myrkviðr* also occurs in *Atlakviða* 3.

<sup>4</sup> "the moon's pitchfork", i.e. the devourer of the Moon.

itself.<sup>5</sup> The true etymology of *Múspell* was probably as little known in the thirteenth century, when *Gylfaginning* was written, as it is now. I shall not speak of the several attempts made at conjecturing the definition of the word. They may all be regarded as abortive, mainly, doubtless, for the reason that *Gylfaginning's* statements have credulously been assumed as the basis of the investigation. As a word inherited from heathen times, it occurs under the forms *mutspell* and *muspill* in the Old Saxon poem *Heliand* and in an Old High German poem on the final judgment,<sup>6</sup> and there it has the meaning of the Lord's day, the doom of condemnation, or the condemnation. Concerning the meaning which the word had among the heathens of the North, before the time of the authors of *Völuspá* and *Lokasenna*, all that can be said with certainty is, that the word in the expression "Muspell's sons" has had a special reference to mythical beings who are to appear in Ragnarok fighting there as Loki's allies, that is, on the side of the evil against the good; that these beings were Loki's fellow-prisoners on the rocky isle where he was chained; and that they accompanied him from there on board Naglfar to war against the gods. As *Gylfaginning* makes them accompany Surt coming from the South, this must be the result of a confounding of "Muspell's sons" with "Surt's (Suttung's) sons."

A closer examination ought to have shown that *Gylfaginning's* conception of "Muspell's sons" is immensely at variance with the mythical. Under the influence of Christian ideas they are transformed into a sort of angels of light, who appear in Ragnarok to contend under the command of Surt "to conquer all the idols" (*sigra öll goðin* - *Gylfaginning* 4) and carry out the punishment of the world. While *Völuspá* makes them come with Loki in the ship Naglfar, that is, from the terrible rocky isle in the sea over which eternal darkness broods, and while *Lokasenna* makes them come across the Mirkwood, whose name does not suggest any region in the realm of light, *Gylfaginning* tells us that they are celestial beings. Idols and giants contend with each other on Vigrid's plains; then the heavens suddenly open up, and out of this ride in shining squadrons "Muspell's sons" and Surt, with his flaming sword, at the head of the *fylkings*. *Gylfaginning* is careful to keep these noble riders far away from every contact with that mob which Loki leads to the field of battle. It therefore expressly states that they form a *fylking* by themselves (*Í þessum gny klofnar himinninn, og ríða þaðan Múspells synir; Surtur ríður fyrstur, etc. . . . en Múspells synir hafa einir sér fylking, og er sú björt mjög* - ch. 51).<sup>7</sup> Thus they do not come to assist Loki, but to put an end to both the idols and the mob of giants. The old giant, Surt, who, according to a heathen skald, Eyvind Skaldaspillir, dwells in *sökkdalir*, in mountain grottoes deep under the earth (about him, see No. 89), is in *Gylfaginning* first made the keeper of the borders of "*Muspellsheim*," and then the chief of celestial hosts. But this is not the end of his promotion. In the text

<sup>5</sup> Based on the statement in *Gylfaginning* 43 that Naglfari "belonged to Muspell" (*Pat á Muspell*), a theory has arisen that Muspell was the name of a giant, probably identical to Surt himself (see Rudolf Simek's *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*.) This theory does not take into account all uses of Muspell in Snorri's *Edda*, which always indicate a place, nor the fact that Snorri fails to include Muspell in his lists of giant names. Thus demonstrating that Snorri meant only that the ship Naglfari belongs to the world of Muspell, which is further evidence that he confounded Muspell's sons with Surt's kin, as Rydberg argues.

<sup>6</sup> *Heliand* Fitt 31, line 2591: *múdspeles megin* in a phrase meaning "Muspell's men fares over men" and Fitt 52, line 4358: *MútsPELLi* "Muspell comes in the dark of night, like a thief "; In the Old High German poem *Muspilli*, line 57: *muspile* in a phrase meaning "no man can help another against the Muspell."

<sup>7</sup> "Amid this turmoil the sky will open and from it will ride the Sons of Muspell. Surt will ride in front, etc. ...But Muspell's sons will have their own battle array; it will be very bright." Faulkes tr.

found in the *Upsala Codex*, *Gylfaginning* makes him lord in Gimli, and likewise the king of eternal bliss. After Ragnarok it is said, "there are many good abodes and many bad"; best it is to be in Gimli with Surt (*margar eru vistar góðar og margar illar, bezt er að vera á Gimli með Surti*). The name Surt means black. We find that his dark looks did not prevent his promotion, and this has been carried to such a point that a mythologist who honestly believed in *Gylfaginning* saw in him the Almighty who is to come after the regeneration to equalize and harmonize all discord, and to found holy laws to prevail forever.

Under such circumstances, it may be suggested as a rule of critical caution not to accept unconditionally *Gylfaginning's* statement that the world of light and heat which existed before the creation of the world was called *Muspell* or *Muspellsheim*. In all probability, this is a result of the author's own reflections. At all events, it is certain that no other record has any knowledge of that name. But that the mythology presumed the existence of such a world follows already from the fact that Urd's fountain, which gives the warmth of life to the world-tree, must have had its deepest fountain there, just as Hvergelmir has its in the world of primeval cold, and Mimir has his fountain in that wisdom which unites the opposites and makes them work together in an ordered world.

Accordingly, we must distinguish between *Múspells megir*, *Múspells synir*, from Surt's clan-men, who are called *Surts ætt*, *synir Suttunga*, *Suttungs synir* (*Skírnismál* 34; *Alvíssmál* 34). We should also remember that Muspell in connection with the words *synir* and *megir* hardly can mean a land, a realm, a region. The figure by which the inhabitants of a country are called its sons or descendants never occurs, so far as I know, in the oldest Norse literature.

In regard to the names of the points of the compass in the *Poetic Edda*, *norðan* and *austan*, it must not be forgotten that the same northern regions in the mythical geography to which various events are referred must have been regarded by the Icelanders as lying to the east from their own northern isle. The *Bjarmia ulterior*, in whose night-shrouded waters mythical adventurers sought the gates to the lower world, lay in the uttermost North, and might still, from an Icelandic and also from a Norwegian standpoint, be designated as a land in the East. According to the sagas preserved by Saxo, these adventurers sailed into the Arctic Ocean, past the Norwegian coast, and eastward to a mythical *Bjarmia*, more distant than the real *Bjarmaland*. They could thus come to the coast where a gate to the lower world was to be found, and to the Nastrands, and if they continued this same course to the East, they could finally get to the rocky isle where Loki lay chained.

We have seen that Loki is not alone with Sigyn on that isle where in chains he abides Ragnarok. There were unhappy beings in large numbers with him. As already stated, Saxo speaks of three connected caves of torture there, and the innermost one is Loki's. Of the one nearest to it, Saxo tells nothing else than that one has to wade across a brook or river in order to get there. Of the bound Fenrir, Loki's son, it is said that from his mouth runs froth which forms the river *Ván* (*Gylfaginning* 34). In *Lokasenna* 41 Frey says to the abusive Loki: "A wolf (that is, Fenrir) I see lying at the mouth of the river until the forces of the world come in conflict; if you do not hold your tongue, you, villain, will be chained next to him" (*því næst* - an expression which here should be taken in a local sense, as a definite place is mentioned in the preceding sentence). And as we learn from *Völuspá*, that Freki (the wolf) is with Loki on board Naglfar, then these evidences

go to show that Loki and his son are chained in the same place. The isle where Fenrir was chained is called *Lyngvi* in *Gylfaginning*, and the body of water in which the isle is situated is called *Ámsvartnir*, a suitable name of the sea, over which eternal darkness broods. On the isle, the probably Icelandic author of *Völuspá* (or its translator or compiler) has imagined a "grove," whose trees consist of jets of water springing from hot fountains (*hveru lundur*). The isle is guarded by *Garmur*, a giant-dog, who is to bark with all its might when the chains of Loki and Fenrir threaten to burst asunder:

*Geyr Garmur mjög  
fyr Gniphelli,  
festur mun slitna,  
en Freki renna.*

According to *Grímnismál*, Garm is the foremost of all dogs. The dogs which guard the beautiful Menglod's citadel are also called Garms (*Fjölsvinnsmál*). In *Gylfaginning*, the word is also used in regard to a wolf, Hati Managarm. *Gniphellir* means the cave of the precipitous rock. The adventures which Thorkil and his men encountered with the flying serpents, in connection with the watching Hel-dog, show that *Lyngvi* is the scene of demons of the same kind as those which are found around the N-gates of Niflheim.

Bound hand and foot with the entrails of a "frost-cold son" (*hrímkalda magar* - *Lokasenna* 49), which, after being placed on his limbs, are transformed into iron chains (*Gylfaginning* 50), Loki lies on a weapon (*á hjörvi* - *Lokasenna* 49), and under him are three flat stones placed on edge, one under his shoulders, one under his loins, and one under his hams (*Gylfaginning* 50). Over him Skadi, who is to take revenge for the murder of her father, suspends a serpent in such a manner that the venom drops in the face of the nothing. Sigyn, faithful to her wicked husband, sits sorrowing by his side (*Völuspá*) and protects him as well as she is able against the venom of the serpent (Postscript to *Lokasenna*, *Gylfaginning* 50). Fenrir is fettered by the soft, silk-like chain *Gleipnir*, made by the subterranean artist, and brought from the lower world by Hermod. It is the only chain that can hold him, and that cannot be broken before Ragnarok. His jaws are kept wide open with a sword (*Gylfaginning* 34).

## 79.

### THE GREAT WORLD-MILL. ITS MISTAKEN IDENTITY WITH THE FRODI-MILL.

We have yet to mention a place in the lower world which is of importance to the naive but, at the same time, perspicuous and imaginative cosmology of Germanic heathendom. The myth in regard to the place in question is lost, but it has left scattered traces and marks, with the aid of which it is possible to restore its chief outlines.

Poems, from the heathen time, speak of two wonderful mills, a larger and a smaller "Grotti"-mill.

The larger one is simply immense. The storms and showers which lash the sides of the mountains and cause their disintegration; the breakers of the sea which attack the

rocks on the strands, make them hollow, and cast the substance thus scooped out along the coast in the form of sand-banks; the whirlpools and currents of the ocean, and the still more powerful forces that were fancied by antiquity, and which smouldered the more brittle layers of the earth's solid crust, and scattered them as sand and mould over "the stones of the hall," in order that the ground might "be overgrown with green herbs" - all this was symbolized by the larger Grotti-mill. And as all symbols, in the same manner as the lightning which becomes Thor's hammer, in the mythology become epic-pragmatic realities, so this symbol becomes to the imagination a real mill, which operates deep down in the sea and causes the phenomena which it symbolizes.

This greater mill was also called *Græðir*, since its grist is the mould in which vegetation grows. This name was gradually transferred by the poets of the Christian age from the mill, which was grinding beneath the sea, to the sea itself.

The lesser Grotti-mill is like the greater one of heathen origin -- Egil Skalla-Grímsson mentions it-- but it plays a more accidental part, and really belongs to the heroic poems connected with the mythology. Meanwhile, it is akin to the greater. Its stones come from the lower world, and were cast up thence for amusement by young giant-maids to the surface of the earth. A being called *Hengikjöptur* (the feminine *Hengikepta* is the name of a giantess - *Skáldskaparmál* 52; *Nafnaþulur*) makes mill-stones out of these subterranean rocks, and presents the mill to King Frodi Fridleifsson. Fate brings about that the same young giantesses, having gone to Svithiod to help the king warring there, Guthorm (see Nos. 38, 39), are taken prisoners and sold as slaves to King Frodi, who makes them turn his Grotti-mill, the stones of which they recognize from their childhood. The giantesses, whose names are Fenja and Menja, grind gold and safety for King Frodi on the mill, peace and good-will among men for his kingdom. But when Frodi, hardened by greed for gold, refuses them the necessary rest from their toils, they grind fire and death upon him, and give the mill so great speed that the mill-stone breaks into pieces, and the foundation is crushed under its weight.<sup>8</sup>

After the introduction of Christianity, the details of the myth concerning the greater, the cosmological mill, were forgotten, and there remained only the memory of the existence of such a mill on the bottom of the sea. The recollection of the lesser Grotti-mill was, on the other hand, at least in part preserved as to its details in a song which continued to flourish, and which was recorded in *Skáldskaparmál*.

Both mills were now regarded as identical, and there sprang up a tradition which explained how they could be so.

Contrary to the statements of the song, the tradition narrates that the mill did not break into pieces, but stood whole and perfect, when the curse of the giant-maids on Frodi was fulfilled. The night following the day when they had begun to grind misfortune on Frodi, there came a sea-king, Mysing, and slew Frodi, and took, among other booty, also the Grotti-mill and both the female slaves, and carried them on board his ship. Mysing commanded them to grind salt, and this they continued to do until the following midnight. Then they asked if he had not got enough, but he commanded them to continue grinding, and so they did until the ship shortly afterwards sank. In this manner the

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<sup>8</sup> This story appears in *Skáldskaparmál* 43 in the Faulkes translation, "Why is gold called Frodi's meal?"

tradition explained how the mill came to stand on the bottom of the sea, and there the mill that had belonged to Frodi acquired the qualities which originally had belonged to the vast Grotti-mill of the mythology. *Skáldskaparmál*, which relates this tradition as well as the song, without taking any notice of the discrepancies between them, adds that after Frodi's mill had sunk, "there was produced a whirlpool in the sea, caused by the waters running through the hole in the mill-stone, and from that time the sea is salt."

80.

THE WORLD-MILL (continued).

With distinct consciousness of its symbolic signification, the greater mill is mentioned in a strophe by the skald Snæbjörn (*Skáldskaparmál* 33). The strophe appears to have belonged to a poem describing a voyage. "It is said," we read in this strophe, "that *Eylúður's* nine women violently turn the Grotti of the skerry dangerous to man out near the edge of the earth, and that these women long ground Amlodi's *lið-grist*."

*Hvatt kveða hræra Gróttu  
hergrimmastan skerja  
út fyrir jarðar skauti  
Eylúður's níu brúðir,  
þær er . . . . fyrir löngu  
liðmeldr . . . . .  
. . . . .  
. . . Amlóða mólu.*

To the epithet *Eylúður*, and to the meaning of *lið-* in *lið-grist*, I shall return below. The strophe says that the mill is in motion out on the edge of the earth, that nine giant-maids turn it (for the lesser Grotti-mill two were more than sufficient), that they had long ground with it, that it belongs to a skerry very dangerous to seafaring men, and that it produces a peculiar grist.

The same mill is suggested by an episode in Saxo, where he relates the saga about the Danish prince, Amlethus,<sup>9</sup> who on account of circumstances in his home was compelled to pretend to be insane. Young courtiers, who accompanied him on a walk along the sea-strand, showed him a sandbank and said that it was meal. The prince said he knew this to be true: he said it was "meal from the mill of the storms" (*Hist. Dan.*, Book 3, p. 85).

The myth concerning the cosmic Grotti-mill was intimately connected partly with the myth concerning the fate of Ymir and the other primeval giants, and partly with that concerning Hvergelmir's fountain. *Vafþrúðnismál* 21 and *Grimnismál* 40 tell us that the earth was made out of Ymir's flesh, the rocks out of his bones, and the sea from his

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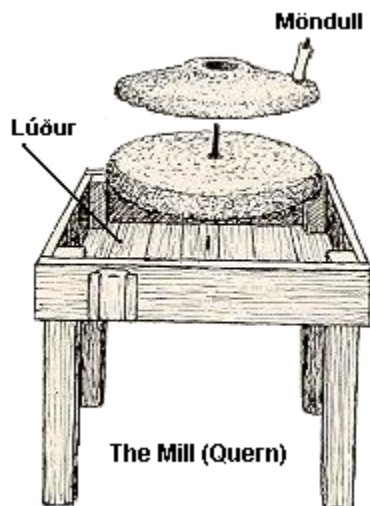
<sup>9</sup> This tale in Saxo is the source of William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, thus Amlodi is often rendered Hamlet in translation, as in Faulkes' *Edda*.

blood. With earth is here meant, as distinguished from rocks, the mould, the sand, which cover the solid ground. *Vafþrúðnismál* calls Ymir *Aurgelmir*, Clay-gelmir or Mould-gelmir; and *Fjölsvinnsmál* gives him the epithet *Leirbrimir*, Clay-brimir, which suggests that his "flesh" was changed into the loose earth, while his bones became rocks. Ymir's descendants, the primeval giants, *Þrúðgelmir* and *Bergelmir* perished with him, and the "flesh" of their bodies cast into the primeval sea also became mould. Of this we are assured, so far as Bergelmir is concerned, by strophe 35 in *Vafþrúðnismál*, which also informs us that Bergelmir was laid under the mill-stone. The mill which ground his "flesh" into mould can be none other than the one grinding under the sea, that is, the cosmic Grotti-mill.

When Odin asks the wise giant *Vafþrúðnir* how far back he can remember, and which is the oldest event of which he has any knowledge from personal experience, the giant answers: "Countless ages before the earth was created Bergelmir was born. The first thing I remember is when he *var á lúður um lagður*."

This expression was misunderstood by the author of *Gylfaginning* himself, and the misunderstanding has continued to develop into the theory that Bergelmir was changed into a sort of Noah, who with his household saved himself in an ark when Bur's sons drowned the primeval giants in the blood of their progenitor. Of such a counterpart to the Biblical account of Noah and his ark our Germanic mythical fragments have no knowledge whatever.

The word *lúður* (with radical r) has two meanings: (1) a wind-instrument, a loor, a war-trumpet; (2) the tier of beams, the underlying timbers of a mill, and, in a wider sense, the mill itself.



The first meaning, that of war-trumpet, is not found in the songs of the *Poetic Edda*, and upon the whole does not occur in the Old Norse poetry. Heimdall's war-trumpet is not called *lúður*, but *horn* or *hljóð*. *Lúður* in this sense makes its first appearance in the sagas of Christian times, but is never used by the skalds. In spite of this fact, the signification may date back to heathen times. But however this may be, *lúður* in



*Vafþrúðnismál* does not mean a war-trumpet. The poem can never have meant that Bergelmir was laid on a musical instrument.

The other meaning remains to be discussed. *Lúður*, partly in its more limited sense of the timbers or beams under the mill, partly in the sense of the subterranean mill in its entirety, and the place where it is found, occurs several times in the poems: in the *Grotti-song*, in *Helgakviða Hundingsbana* II, 2, and in the above-quoted strophe by Snæbjörn, and also in *Gróugaldur* and in *Fjölsvinnsmál*. If this signification is applied to the passage in *Vafþrúðnismál*: *var á lúður um lagður*, we get the meaning that Bergelmir was "laid on a mill," and in fact no other meaning of the passage is possible, unless an entirely new signification is to be arbitrarily invented.<sup>10</sup>

But however conspicuous this signification is, and however clear it is that it is the only one applicable in this poem, still it has been overlooked or thrust aside by the mythologists, and for this *Gylfaginning* is to blame. So far as I know, Vigfusson is the only one who (in his *Dictionary*, p. 399) makes the passage *á lúður lagður* mean what it actually means, and he remarks that the words must "refer to some ancient lost myth."

The confusion begins, as stated, in *Gylfaginning*. Its author has had no other authority for his statement than the *Vafþrúðnismál* strophe in question, which he also cites to corroborate his own words; and we have here one of the many examples found in *Gylfaginning* showing that its author has neglected to pay much attention to what the passages quoted contain. When *Gylfaginning* 7 has stated that the frost-giants were drowned in Ymir's blood, then comes its interpretation of the *Vafþrúðnismál* strophe, which is as follows: "One escaped with his household: him the giants call Bergelmir. He with his wife took himself upon his *lúður* and remained there, and from them the races of giants are descended" (*nema einn komst undan með sínu hyski: þann kalla jötnar Bergelmi; hann fór upp á lúður sinn og kona hans, og hélzt þar, og eru af þeim komnar*), etc.

What *Gylfaginning*'s author has conceived by the *lúður* which he mentions it is difficult to say. That he did not have a boat in mind is in the meantime evident from the expression: *hann fór upp á lúður sinn*. It is more reasonable to suppose that his idea was, that Bergelmir himself owned an immense mill, upon whose high timbers he and his household climbed to save themselves from the flood. That the original text says that Bergelmir was laid on the timbers of the mill *Gylfaginning* pays no attention to. To go upon something and to be laid on something are, however, very different notions.

An argument in favor of the wrong interpretation was furnished by the *Resenian edition of the Prose Edda* (Copenhagen, 1665). There we find the expression *fór upp á lúður sinn* "amended" to *fór á bát sinn*. Thus Bergelmir had secured a boat to sail in; and although more reliable editions of the *Prose Edda* have been published since from which

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<sup>10</sup> A survey of the scholarship from the late 1700s to the present demonstrates that *lúður* is understood as 'ark' in this passage, even to the extent that ON dictionaries now give this as a tentative definition, citing *Vafþrúðnismál* 35 as its source. For example, see LaFarge/Tucker's *Glossary to the Poetic Edda*.

the boat disappeared, still the mythologists have not had the heart to take the boat away from Bergelmir. On the contrary, they have allowed the boat to grow into a ship, an ark.

As already pointed out, *Vafþrúðnismál* tells us expressly that Bergelmir, Aurgelmir's grandson, was "laid on a mill" or "on the supporting timbers of a mill." We may be sure that the myth would not have laid Bergelmir on "a mill" if the intention was not that he was to be ground. The kind of meal thus produced has already been explained. It is the mould and sand which the sea since time's earliest dawn has cast upon the shores of Midgard, and with which the bays and strands have been filled, to become sooner or later green fields. From Ymir's flesh the gods created the oldest layer of soil, that which covered the earth the first time the sun shone thereon, and in which the first herbs grew. Ever since the same activity which then took place still continues. After the great mill of the gods transformed the oldest frost-giant into the dust of earth, it has continued to grind the bodies of his descendants between the same stones into the same kind of mould. This is the meaning of *Vafþrúðnir*'s words when he says that his memory reaches back to the time when Bergelmir was laid on the mill to be ground. Ymir he does not remember, nor *Þrúðgelmir*, nor the days when these were changed to earth. Of them he knows only by hearsay. But he remembers when the turn came for Bergelmir's limbs to be subjected to the same fate.

"The glorious Midgard" could not be created before its foundations raised by the gods out of the sea were changed to *bjóð* (*Völuspá*). This is the word (originally *bjóðr*) with which the author of *Völuspá* chose to express the quality of the fields and the fields themselves, which were raised out of the sea by Bor's sons, when the great mill had changed the "flesh" of Ymir into mould. *Bjóð* does not mean a bare field or ground, but one that can supply food. Thus it is used in *Haustlög* 5 (*af breiðu bjóði*, the place for a spread feast), and its other meanings (perhaps the more original ones) are that of a board and of a table for food to lie on. When the fields were raised out of Ymir's blood they were covered with mould, so that, when they got light and warmth from the sun, then the *grund* became *gróin grænum lauki*. The very word mould comes from the Germanic word *mala*, to grind (cp. Eng. *meal*, Latin *molere*). The development of language and the development of mythology have here, as in so many other instances, gone hand in hand.<sup>11</sup>

That the "flesh" of the primeval giants could be ground into fertile mould refers us to the primeval cow *Auðhumbla* by whose milk Ymir was nourished and his flesh formed (*Gylfaginning*). Thus the cow in the Germanic mythology is the same as she is in the Iranian, the primeval source of fertility. The mould, out of which the harvests grow, has by transformations developed out of her nourishing liquids.

Here, then, we have the explanation of the *liðmeldur* which the great mill grinds, according to Snæbjörn. *Liðmeldur* means limb-grist. It is the limbs and joints of the primeval giants, which on Amlodi's mill are transformed into meal.

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<sup>11</sup> Here Rydberg makes an unnecessary digression, confusing two etymologically unrelated words, "bjóð" (singular, "table") and "bjöð" (plural, "lands, earth").

In its character as an institution for the promotion of fertility, and for rendering the fields fit for habitation, the mill is under the care and protection of the Vanir. After Njörd's son, Frey, had been fostered in Asgard and had acquired the dignity of lord of the harvests, he was the one who became the master of the great Grotti. It is attended on his behalf by one of his servants, who in the mythology is called *Byggvir*, a name related both to *byggja*, settle, cultivate, and to *bygg*, barley, a kind of grain, and by his kinswoman and helpmate *Beyla*. So important is the calling of *Byggvir* and *Beyla* that they are permitted to attend the feasts of the gods with their master (Frey). Consequently they are present at the banquet to which Ægir, according to *Lokasenna*, invited the gods. When Loki uninvited made his appearance there to mix harm in the mead of the gods, and to embitter their pleasure, and when he there taunts Frey, *Byggvir* becomes wroth on his master's behalf and says:

(43) *Byggvir kvað:*

*Veiztu, ef eg eðli ættag  
sem Ingunar-Freyr  
og svo sællegt setur,  
mergi smærra  
mylda eg þá meinkráku  
og lemdu alla í liðu.*

*Byggvir spoke:*

Had I the ancestry  
of Ingunar-Frey  
and so honored a seat,  
know I would grind you  
finer than marrow, you evil crow,  
and crush you limb by limb.

(44) *Loki kvað:*

*Hvað er það ið litla  
er eg það lögggra sék  
og snapvíst snapir?  
Að eyrum Freys  
muntu æ vera  
og und kvernum klaka.*

*Loki spoke:*

What little boy is that  
whom I see wagging his tail  
and eat like a parasite?  
Near Frey's ears  
you will ever be  
clattering 'neath the mill-stones.

(45) *Byggvir kvað:*

*Byggvir eg heiti,  
en mig bráðan kveða  
goð öll og gumar;  
því em eg hér hróðugur,  
að drekka Hropts megir  
allir öl saman.*

*Byggvir spoke:*

*Byggvir* is my name,  
all gods and men  
call me nimble;  
and here it is my pride  
that Odin's sons drink  
ale all together.  
*Loki spoke:*

(46) *Loki kvað:*

*Þegi þú, Byggvir!  
þú kunnir aldregi  
deila með mönnum mat.*

Be silent, *Byggvir*!  
never were you able  
to divide food among men.

Beyla, too, gets her share of Loki's abuse. The least disgraceful thing he says of her is that she is a *deigja* (a slave, who has to work at the mill and in the kitchen), and that she is covered with traces of her occupation in dust and dirt.

As we see, Loki characterizes Byggvir as a servant taking charge of the mill under Frey, and Byggvir characterizes himself as one who grinds, and is able to crush an "evil crow" limb by limb with his mill-stones. As the one who with his mill makes vegetation, and so also bread and malt, possible, he boasts of it as his honor that the gods are able to drink ale at a banquet. Loki blames him because he is not able to divide the food among men. The reproach implies that the distribution of food is in his hands. The mould which comes from the great mill gives different degrees of fertility to different fields, and rewards abundantly or niggardly the toil of the farmer. Loki doubtless alludes to this unequal distribution, else it would be impossible to find any sense in his words.

In the Poetic Edda we still have another reminiscence of the great mill which is located under the sea, and at the same time in the lower world (see below), and which "grinds mould into food." It is in a poem, whose skald says that he has seen it on his journey in the lower world. In his description of the "home of torture" in Hades, *Sólarljóð*'s Christian author has taken all his materials from the heathen mythological conceptions of the worlds of punishment, though the author treats these materials in accordance with the Christian purpose of his song. When the skald dies, he enters the Hades gate, crosses bloody streams, sits for nine days *á norna stóli*, is thereupon seated on a horse, and is permitted to make a journey through Mimir's domain, first to the regions of the happy and then to those of the damned. In Mimir's realm he sees the "stag of the sun" and Níð's (Mimir's) sons, who "drink the pure mead from Baugregin's well." When he approached the borders of the world of the damned, he heard a terrible din, which silenced the winds and stopped the flow of the waters. The mighty din came from a mill. Its stones were wet with blood, but the grist produced was mould, which was to be food. Fickle-wise (*svipvísar*, heathen) women of dark complexion turned the mill. Their bloody and tortured hearts hung outside of their breasts. The mould which they ground was to feed their husbands (*Sólarljóð* 57-58).<sup>1</sup>

This mill, situated at the entrance of hell, is here represented as one of the agents of torture in the lower world. To a certain extent this is correct even from a heathen standpoint. It was the lot of slave-women to turn the hand-mill. In the heroic poem the giant-maids Fenja and Menja, taken prisoners and made slaves, have to turn Frodi's Grotti. In the mythology "*Eyluður*'s nine women," thurs-maids, were compelled to keep this vast mechanism in motion, and that this was regarded as a heavy and compulsory task may be assumed without the risk of being mistaken.

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<sup>1</sup> 57. "The wind was silent, the waters stopped their course; then I heard a doleful sound: for their husbands false-faced women ground earth for food"

58. "Gory stones those dark women turned sorrowfully; bleeding hearts hung out of their breasts, faint with much affliction." Thorpe tr.

According to *Sólarljóð*, the mill-stones are stained with blood. In the mythology, they crush the bodies of the first giants and revolve in Ymir's blood. It is also in perfect harmony with the mythology that the meal becomes mould, and that the mould serves as food. But the cosmic signification is obliterated in *Sólarljóð*, and it seems to be the author's idea that men who have died in their heathen belief are to eat the mould which women who have died in heathendom industriously grind as food for them.

The myth about the greater Grotti, as already indicated, has also been connected with the Hvergelmir myth. *Sólarljóð* has correctly stated the location of the mill on the border of the realm of torture. The mythology has located Hvergelmir's fountain there (see No. 59); and as this vast fountain is the mother of the ocean and of all waters, and the ever open connection between the waters of heaven, of the earth, and of the lower world, then this furnishes the explanation of the apparently conflicting statements, that the mill is situated both in the lower world and at the same time on the bottom of the sea. Of the mill it is said that it is dangerous to men, dangerous to fleets and to crews, and that it causes the maelstrom (*svelgr*) when the water of the ocean rushes down through the eye of the mill-stone. The same was said of Hvergelmir, that causes ebb and flood and maelstrom, when the water of the world alternately flows into and out of this great source. To judge from all this, the mill has been conceived as so made that its foundation timbers stood on solid ground in the lower world, and thence rose up into the sea, in which the stones resting on this substructure were located. The revolving "eye" of the mill-stone was directly above Hvergelmir, and served as the channel through which the water flowed to and from the great fountain of the world's waters.

## 81.

### THE WORLD-MILL (continued). THE WORLD-MILL MAKES THE CONSTELLATIONS REVOLVE. MUNDILFARI.

But the colossal mill in the ocean has also served other purposes than that of grinding the nourishing mould from the limbs of the primeval giants.

The Teutons, like all people of antiquity, and like most men of the present time, regarded the earth as stationary. And so, too, the lower world (*jörmungrund* - *Hrafnagalður Óðins* 25) on which the foundations of the earth rested. Stationary was also that heaven in which the Aesir had their citadels, surrounded by a common wall, for the Asgard-bridge, Bifröst, had a solid bridge-head on the southern and another on the northern edge of the lower world, and could not change position in its relation to them. All this part of creation was held together by the immovable roots of the world-tree, or rested on its invisible branches. Sol and Mani had their fixed paths, the points of departure and arrival of which were the "horse-doors" (*jódyr*), which were hung on the eastern and western mountain-walls of the lower world. The god Mani and the goddess Sol were thought to traverse these paths in shining chariots, and their daily journeys across the heavens did not to our ancestors imply that any part of the world-structure

itself was in motion. Mani's course lay below Asgard. When Thor in his thunder-chariot descends to Jotunheim the path of Mani thunders under him (*en dundi Mána vegur und Meila bróður - Haustlöng* 14).<sup>2</sup> No definite statement in our mythical records informs us whether the way of the sun was over or under Asgard.

But high above Asgard is the starry vault of heaven, and to the Teutons as well as to other people that sky was not only an optical but a real vault, which daily revolved around a stationary point. Sol and Mani might be conceived as traversing their appointed courses independently, and not as coming in contact with vaults, which by their motions from east to west produced the progress of sun and moon. The very circumstance that they continually changed position in their relation to each other and to the stars seemed to prove that they proceeded independently in their own courses. With the countless stars the case was different. They always keep at the same distance and always present the same figures on the canopy of the nocturnal heavens. They looked like glistening heads of nails driven into a movable ceiling. Hence the starlit sky was thought to be in motion. The sailors and shepherds of the Teutons very well knew that this revolving was round a fixed point, the polar star, and it is probable that *veraldar nagli*, the world-nail, the world-spike, an expression preserved in *Eddu-brot* II, designates the northstar.<sup>3</sup>

Thus the starry sky was the movable part of the universe. And this motion is not of the same kind as that of the winds, whose coming and direction no man can predict or calculate. The motion of the starry firmament is defined, always the same, always in the same direction, and keeps equal step with the march of time itself. It does not, therefore, depend on the accidental pleasure of gods or other powers. On the other hand, it seems to be caused by a mechanism operating evenly and regularly.

The mill was for a long time the only kind of mechanism on a large scale known to the Teutons. Its motion was a rotating one. The movable mill-stone was turned by a handle or sweep which was called *möndull*. The mill-stones and the *möndull* might be conceived as large as you please. Fancy knew no other limits than those of the universe.

There was another natural phenomenon, which also was regular, and which was well known to the seamen of the North and to those Teutons who lived on the shores of the North Sea, namely, the rising and falling of the tide. Did one and the same force produce both these great phenomena? Did the same cause produce the motion of the starry vault and the ebb and flood of the sea? In regard to the latter phenomenon, we already know the naive explanation given in the myth concerning Hvergelmir and the Grotti-mill. And the same explanation sufficed for the former. There was no need of another mechanism to make the heavens revolve, as there was already one at hand, the influence of which could be traced throughout that ocean in which Midgard was simply

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<sup>2</sup> "The path of the moon clattered beneath Meili's brother" (i.e. Thor)

<sup>3</sup> *Eddu-brot* indicates Eddaic passages from "non-standard" manuscripts that have been excluded from the diplomatic editions. The term *veraldar nagli* is found on the very last page of the paper *Edda* mss referred to as AM 748 I 4to, published in vol. II of the so-called Copenhagen edition of *Snorri's Edda*. (Facsimile edition: "*Fragments of the Elder and Younger Edda*", Copenhagen, 1945 --*Corpus Codicum Islandicorum Medii Aevi*, XVII). There, an old-icelandic poet wrote out lists of poetic synonyms; among them we find a list of synonyms for nails: "..... *regingaddi, farnagli, stagnagli, varnagli, veraldarnagli*."

an isle, and which around this island extends its surface even to the brink of heaven (*Gylfaginning* 8).

The mythology knew a person by name Mundilfari (*Vafþrúðnismál* 23, *Gylfaginning* 11). The word *mundill* is related to *möndull*, and is presumably only another form of the same word. The name or epithet Mundilfari refers to a being that has had something to do with a great mythical *möndull* and with the movements of the mechanism which this *möndull* kept in motion. Now the word *möndull* is never used in the old Norse literature about any other object than the sweep or handle with which the movable mill-stone is turned. (In this sense the word occurs in the *Grotti-song* and in *Helgakviða Hundingsbana* II, 3, 4). Thus Mundilfari has had some part to play in regard to the great giant-mill of the ocean and of the lower world.

Of Mundilfari we learn, on the other hand, that he is the father of the personal Sol and the personal Mani (*Vafþrúðnismál* 23). This, again, shows that the mythology conceived him as intimately associated with the heavens and with the heavenly bodies. Vigfusson (*Dict.*, 437) has, therefore, with good reason remarked that *mundill* in Mundilfari refers to "the veering round or revolution of the heavens." As the father of Sol and Mani, Mundilfari was a being of divine rank, and as such belonged to the powers of the lower world, where Sol and Mani have their abodes and resting-places. The latter part of the name, *föri*, refers to the verb *færa*, to conduct, to move. Thus he is that power who has to take charge of the revolutions of the starry vault of heaven, and these must be produced by the great *möndull*, the mill-handle or mill-sweep, since he is called Mundilfari.

The regular motion of the starry firmament and of the sea is, accordingly, produced by the same vast mechanism, the Grotti-mill, the *meginverk* of the heathen fancy (*Grotti-song* 11; cp. Egil Skallagrímson's way of using the word, *Arinbjarnardrápa* 25).<sup>4</sup> The handle extends to the edge of the world, and the nine giantesses, who are compelled to turn the mill, pushing the sweep before them, march along the outer edge of the universe. Thus we get an intelligible idea of what Snæbjörn means when he says that Eyludur's nine women turn the Grotti "along the edge of the earth" (*hræra Gróttu út fyrir jarðar skauti*).

Mundilfari and Byggvir thus each has his task to perform in connection with the same vast machinery. The one attends to the regular motion of the *möndull*, the other looks after the mill-stones and the grist.

In the name *Eylúður* the first part is *ey*, and the second part is *lúður*. The name means the "island-mill." Eyludur's nine women are the "nine women of the island-mill." The mill is in the same strophe called *skerja Grótti*, the Grotti of the skerries. These

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<sup>4</sup> Vigfusson defines ON *meginverk* as "great works, labour." In *Grotti-Song* it refers to the labor of the giantesses, and in *Arinbjarnardrápa* (*Egil's Saga* ch. 80) to that of the poet and the poem itself. In the latter, *Codex Wormianus'* *megin-verkom* appears with the variant *morgin-verkom*, morning labors (*Codex AM*, 748), this being the preferred reading. That Rydberg applies this term to the mill, presumably in the meaning "master work," indicates he may have misunderstood the word *málþjónn*, slave of speech, found there as *malþjónn*, servant of grinding.

expressions refer to each other and designate with different words the same idea - the mill that grinds islands and skerries.

The fate which, according to the Grotti-song, happened to King Frodi's mill has its origin in the myth concerning the greater mill. The stooping position of the starry heavens and the sloping path of the stars in relation to the horizontal line was a problem which in its way the mythology wanted to solve. The phenomenon was put in connection with the mythic traditions in regard to the terrible winter which visited the earth after the gods and the sons of Alvaldi (Ivaldi) had become enemies. Fenja and Menja were kinswomen of Alvaldi's sons. For they were brothers (half-brothers) of those mountain giants who were Fenja's and Menja's fathers (*Grotti-song* 9). Before the feud broke out between their kin and the gods, both the giant-maids had worked in the service of the latter and for the good of the world, grinding the blessings of the golden age on the world-mill. Their activity in connection with the great mechanism, *möndull*, which they pushed, amid the singing of bliss-bringing songs of sorcery, was a counterpart of the activity of the sons of Alvaldi, who made the treasures of vegetation for the gods. When the conflict broke out, the giant-maids joined the cause of their kinsmen. They gave the world-mill so rapid a motion that the foundations of the earth trembled, pieces of the mill-stones were broken loose and thrown up into space, and the sub-structure of the mill was damaged. This could not happen without harm to the starry canopy of heaven which rested thereon. The memory of this mythic event comes to the surface in *Rímbegla*,<sup>5</sup> which states that toward the close of King Frodi's reign there arose a terrible disorder in nature -- a storm with mighty thundering passed over the country, the earth quaked and cast up large stones. In the *Grotti-song* the same event is mentioned as a "game" played by Fenja and Menja, in which they cast up from the deep upon the earth those stones which afterwards became the mill-stones in the Grotti-mill. After that "game" the giant-maids proceeded to the earth and took part in the first world-war on the side hostile to Odin (see No. 39). It is worthy of notice that the mythology has connected the *fimbul*-winter and the great emigrations from the North with an earthquake and a damage to the world-mill which makes the starry heavens revolve.<sup>6</sup>

82.

THE WORLD-MILL (continued). THE ORIGIN OF THE SACRED FIRE  
THROUGH MUNDILFARI. HEIMDALL THE PERSONIFICATION OF THE  
SACRED FIRE. HIS IDENTITY WITH *RIGVEDA*'S AGNI. HIS ANTITHESIS, LOKI,  
ALSO A FIRE-BEING.

Among the tasks to be performed by the world-mill there is yet another of the greatest importance. According to a belief which originated in ancient Indo-European times, a fire is to be judged as to purity and holiness by its origin. There are different kinds of fire more or less pure and holy, and a fire which is holy in origin may become

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<sup>5</sup> A saga from the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>6</sup> For a fuller exploration of this theme, see Giorgio de Santilana's *Hamlet's Mill* (1969) in which he puts forth the idea that various mythologies preserve the memory of an ancient global catastrophe.



corrupted by contact with improper elements. The purest fire, that which was originally kindled by the gods and was afterwards given to man as an invaluable blessing, as a bond of union between the higher world and mankind, was a fire which was produced by rubbing two objects together (friction). In hundreds of passages this is corroborated in *Rigveda*, and the belief still exists among the common people of various Germanic peoples. The great mill which revolves the starry heavens was also the mighty rubbing machine (friction machine) from which the sacred fire naturally ought to proceed, and really was regarded as having proceeded, as shall be shown below.

The word *möndull*, with which the handle of the mill is designated, is found among our ancient Indo-European ancestors. It can be traced back to the ancient Germanic *manthula*, a swing-tree (Fick, *Wörterbuch der indogermanischen Grundsprache* III, 232)<sup>7</sup>, related to Sanskrit *Manthati*, to swing, twist, bore,<sup>8</sup> from the root *manth*, which occurs in numerous passages in *Rigveda*, and in its direct application always refers to the production of fire by friction (Bergaigne, *Rel. ved.*, III. 7).<sup>9</sup>

In *Rigveda*, the sacred fire is personified by the "pure," upright," "benevolent" god Agni, whose very name, related to the Latin *ignis*, designates the god of fire. According to *Rigveda*, there was a time when Agni lived concealed from both gods and men, as the element of light and warmth found in all beings and things. Then there was a time when he dwelt in person among the gods, but not yet among men; and, finally, there was a time when *Mâtaricvan*, a sacred being and Agni's father in a literal or symbolic sense, brought it about that Agni came to our fathers (*Rigv.*, 1: 60, 1).<sup>10</sup> The generation of men then living was the race of Bhriguans, so-called after an ancient patriarch Bhrigu. This Bhrigu, and with him Manu (Manus), was the first person who, in his sacrifices to the gods, used the fire obtained through Agni (*Rigv.*, 1: 31, 17, and other passages).<sup>11</sup>

When, at the instigation of *Mâtaricvan*, Agni arrived among mankind, he came from a far-off region (*Rigv.*, 1: 128, 2).<sup>12</sup> The Bhriguans who did not yet possess the fire,

<sup>7</sup> August Fick (1833-1916), *Wörterbuch der indogermanischen Grundsprache in ihrem Bestande vor der Völkertrennung* 3, 232, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1868

<sup>8</sup> Ursula Dronke confirms this (*PE II*, pg. 116): "*Völuspá* 5/1-4: *Möndull* (cf. *HH*, II 3, 4, *Grott.* 20) is thought to be related to Skr. *Manthati*, 'to stir, turn round', *manthá*, --'stirring spoon' (Jan DeVries' *Alternordisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Leiden, 1977), but there are no related verbs in Gmc, even though variants of *möndull* (and possibly *mundill*) are found in all the Scandinavian languages. If *Mundilfæri* did mean 'Carrier of the Mill-handle, he would be the upper millstone itself, which 'carries' the *möndull/ mundill* (fitted into a slot in the stone) and is turned by it. ...I would relate the statements in *Vsp* 5/1-4 and *Vafþ* 23 to the archaic concept of the cosmic mill, by which the heavens turn on the world pillar, regulating seasons and time, and I would suppose that the lost lines 5/5-8 had made this theme clearer. Since Vigfusson's wise insight, we now have an incisive analysis of comparative mythological material on the themes of the cosmic mill in ON, Finnic, and Indian by C. Tolley. *The Mill in Norse and Finnish Mythology* *SBVS* 24 (1994-95) 63-82.

<sup>9</sup> Brief Description: Abel Bergaigne (1838-1888) *La religion védique d'après les hymnes du Rig-Véda*. Paris, F. Vieweg, 1878-97.

<sup>10</sup> *Rigveda* 1: 60, 1 In a verse to Agni: "As 'twere some goodly treasure *Mâtaricvan* brought, as a gift, the glorious priest to Bhrigu" This quote and the following series translated by Ralph T. H. Griffith in *The Hymns of the Rigveda*. Erroneous references will be marked with an asterix (\*).

<sup>11</sup> *Rigv.* 1: 31, 17 "As erst to Manus, to Yayati, Angiras, so Angiras! Pure Agni come to our hall!"

<sup>12</sup> *Rigv.* 1: 128, 2 "The god whom *Mâtaricvan* brought from far away, to Manus from far away."

but were longing for it and were seeking for it (*Rigv.*, 10: 40, 2)\*, found the newly-arrived Agni "at the confluence of the waters." In a direct sense, "the confluence of the waters" cannot mean anything else than the ocean, into which all waters flow. Thus Agni came from the distance across a sea to the coast of the country where that people dwelt who were named after the patriarch Bhrigu. When they met this messenger of the gods (*Rigv.*, 8: 19, 21),<sup>13</sup> they adopted him and cared for him at "the place of the water" (*Rigv.*, 2: 4, 2).<sup>14</sup> *Mâtaricvan*, by whose directions Agni, "the one born on the other side of the atmosphere" (10: 187, 5)<sup>15</sup> was brought to mankind, becomes in the classical Sanskrit language a designation for the wind. Thus everything tends to show that Agni has traversed a wide ocean, and has been brought by the wind when he arrives at the coast where the Bhriguians dwell. He is very young, and hence bears the epithet *yavishtha*.

We are now to see why the gods sent him to men, and what he does among them. He remains among those who care for him, and dwells among them "an immortal among mortals" (*Rigv.*, 8: 60, 11; 3: 5, 3),<sup>16</sup> a guest among men, a companion of mortals (4: 1, 9). He who came with the inestimable gift of fire long remains personally among men, in order that "a wise one among the ignorant" may educate them. He who "knows all wisdom and all sciences" (*Rigv.*, 3: 1, 17; 10: 21, 5)<sup>17</sup> "came to be asked questions" (1: 60, 20)\* by men; he teaches them and "they listen to him as to a father" (1: 68, 9).\* He becomes their first patriarch (2: 10, 1)<sup>18</sup> and their first priest (5: 9, 4; 10: 80, 4).<sup>19</sup> Before that time they had lived a nomadic life, but he taught them to establish fixed homes around the hearths, on which the fire he had brought now was burning (3: 1, 17).<sup>20</sup> He visited them in these fixed dwellings (4: 1, 20),<sup>21</sup> where the Bhriguians now let the fire blaze (10: 122, 5)<sup>22</sup>; he became "the husband of wives" (1: 66, 4)<sup>23</sup> and the progenitor of human descendants (1: 96, 2),<sup>24</sup> through whom he is the founder of the classes or "races" of men (6: 48, 8).<sup>25</sup> He established order in all human affairs (4: 1, 2), taught religion,

<sup>13</sup> *Rigv.*, 8: 19, 21 "I praise with song the Friend of man whom gods sent down to be herald and messenger."

<sup>14</sup> *Rigv.*, 2: 4, 2 "Bhrigus who served him in the home of the waters set him of old in houses of the living. Over the worlds, let again be the Sovereign, the messenger of the gods with rapid coursers."

<sup>15</sup> 10: 187, 5 "Resplendent Agni, who was born in farthest region of the air"

<sup>16</sup> 8: 60, 11 "To Agni, Jatevedas, to the Son of Strength, that he may give us precious gifts. Immortal, from of old. Priest among mortal men."

3: 5, 3 "Amid men's homes hath Agni been established, fulfilling with the law."

<sup>17</sup> 3: 1, 17; "O Agni, joy-giver, knower of all secret wisdom."

10: 21, 5 "Skilled in all lore is Agni, he whom Arthavan (the first priest) set to life."

<sup>18</sup> 2: 10, 1 "Agni first, loudly calling, like a Father kindled by man on the seat of worship."

<sup>19</sup> 5: 9, 4\* Hymn 5: 9 regards Agni. Verse 3-4 reads: "In the man's home who offers gifts, where grass is trimmed, Agni is priest, .....skilled in well-ordered sacrifice."

10: 80, 4 "Agni hath made oblations rise to heaven: To every place art Agni's laws extended."

<sup>20</sup> 3: 1, 17 "...Friend of the homestead, though hast lightened mortals."

<sup>21</sup> 4: 1, 20 "The freest God of all, the guest who is received in all men's homes."

<sup>22</sup> 10: 122, 5 "...with lauds the Bhrigus gave thee light and glory."

<sup>23</sup> 1: 66, 4 "Master of present and of future life, the maidens' lover and matrons' Lord."

<sup>24</sup> 1: 96, 2 "At Ayu's ancient call (the invitation of living man), he by his wisdom gave all his progeny of men their being."

<sup>25</sup> 6: 48, 8 "Thou art the lord of the house and home of all tribes, O Agni, of all tribes of men."

instructed men in praying and sacrificing (4: 1, 1, and many other passages), initiated them in the art of poetry and gave them inspiration (3: 10, 5; 10: 11, 6).<sup>26</sup>

This is related of Agni when he came to the earth and dwelt among men. As to his divine nature, he is the pure, white god (4: 1, 7;<sup>27</sup> 3: 7, 1\*) young, strong, and shining with golden teeth (5: 2, 3),<sup>28</sup> and searching eyes (4: 2, 12)\* which can see far (7: 1, 1),<sup>29</sup> penetrate the darkness of night (1: 94, 7),<sup>30</sup> and watch the acts of demons (10: 87, 12).<sup>31</sup> He, the guard of order (1: 11, 8)\*, is always attentive (1: 31, 12),<sup>32</sup> and protects the world by day and by night from dangers (1: 98, 2).<sup>33</sup> On a circular path he observes all beings (7: 13, 3),<sup>34</sup> and sees and knows them all (10: 187, 4).<sup>35</sup> He perceives everything, being able to penetrate the herbs, and diffuse himself into plants and animals (7: 9, 3 ; 8: 43, 9; 10: 1, 2).<sup>36</sup> He hears all who pray to him, and can make himself heard as if he had the voice of thunder, so that both the halves of the world re-echo his voice (10: 8, 1).<sup>37</sup> His horses are like himself white (4: 6, 5).<sup>38</sup> His symbol among the animals is the bull (1: 31, 5; 1: 146, 2).<sup>39</sup>

In regard to Agni's birth, it is characteristic of him that he is said to have several mothers, although their number varies according to the point from which the process of birth is regarded. When it is only to be a figurative expression for the origin of the friction-fire, the singer of the hymn can say that Agni had ten mothers or two mothers. In the case of the former, it is the ten fingers of the person producing the friction-fire that are meant. Sometimes this is stated outright (*Rigveda*, 3: 23, 3);<sup>40</sup> then again the fingers are paraphrased by "the twice five sisters dwelling together" (4: 6, 8),<sup>41</sup> "the work-master's ten untiring maids" (1: 95, 2).<sup>42</sup> In the case of the latter - that is, when two

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<sup>26</sup> 3: 10, 5 "To Agni, the invoking priest, offer your best, your lofty speech; to him ordainer-like who brings the light of songs." etc.

<sup>27</sup> 4: 1, 7 "He came invested in the boundless region, pure, radiant, friendly, mightily resplendent" and elsewhere.

<sup>28</sup> 5: 2, 3 "I saw him from afar gold-toothed, bright-colored, hurling his weapons from his habitation."

<sup>29</sup> 7: 1, 1 "Far-seen, with pointed flame, Lord of the household."

<sup>30</sup> 1: 94, 7 "O God, thou seest though even the dark of night."

<sup>31</sup> 10: 87, 12 "Lend thou the worshipper that eye, O Agni, wherewith thou lookest upon the hoof-armed demon."

<sup>32</sup> 1: 31, 12 "incessantly protecting in thy holy way."

<sup>33</sup> 1: 98, 2 "May Agni ...with vigor, present, preserve us both day and night from enemies."

<sup>34</sup> This is not clear from the context. Griffith renders 7: 13, 3 "Agni, when born, though looked on all creatures, like a brisk herdsman moving round his cattle."

<sup>35</sup> 10: 187, 4 "Who looks on all existing things and comprehends them from his view so may he bear us past our foes."

<sup>36</sup> 7: 9, 3 "...the young plants hath he entered, Child of Waters."; 8: 43, 9 "...into the plants thou forcest way..."; 10: 1, 2 "...parted among the plants in beauty."

<sup>37</sup> 10: 8, 1 "Agni advances with his lofty banner; The bull is bellowing to the earth and heavens."

<sup>38</sup> 6: 6, 5 "Thy pure white horses from thy bonds are loosened." In regard to the above, 6: 6, 2 "White-hued and thundering, he dwells in splendor. Most Youthful, with the loud-voiced and eternal"

<sup>39</sup> 1: 31, 5; "Thou Agni art a bull..."; 1: 146, 2 "As a great steer, he grew to these his Parents..."

<sup>40</sup> 3: 23, 3 "Him nobly born of old the fingers ten produced, him whom his mothers counted dear."

<sup>41</sup> 4: 6, 8 "Hey, Agni, whom the twice-five sisters, dwelling together, in the homes of men engendered."

<sup>42</sup> 1, 95, 2: "Tvastar's ten daughters (the fingers) vigilant and youthful produced this infant borne to sundry quarters." Here and elsewhere Rydberg represents Tvastar with the "work-master".

mothers are mentioned - the two pieces of wood rubbed together are meant (8: 49, 15).<sup>43</sup> In a more real sense he is said to have three places of nativity: one in the atmospheric sea, one in heaven, and one in the waters (1: 95, 3),<sup>44</sup> and that his "great, wise, divine nature proceeded from the laps of many active mothers" (1: 95, 4),<sup>45</sup> such as the waters, the stones, the trees, the herbs (2: 1, 1).<sup>46</sup> In *Rigveda* (10: 45, 2) nine maternal wombs or births are indicated; his "triple powers were sown in triplets in heaven, among us, and in the waters." In *Rigveda* (1: 141, 2)\* three places of nativity and three births are ascribed to him, and in such a way that he had seven mothers in his second birth. In *Rigveda* (10: 20, 7)<sup>47</sup> he is called the son of the rock.

It scarcely needs to be pointed out that all that is here told about Agni corresponds point by point with the Germanic myth about Heimdall. Here, as in many other instances, we find a similarity between the Germanic and the Indo-European-Asiatic myths, which is surprising, when we consider that the difference between the *Rigveda* and *Zend* languages on the one hand, and the oldest Germanic linguistic monuments on the other, appear in connection with other circumstances to indicate that the old Indo-European unity of language and religion lies ages back in antiquity. Agni's birth "beyond the atmosphere," his journey across the sea to original man in the savage state, his vocation as the sower of the blessings of culture among men, his appearance as the teacher of wisdom and "the sciences," his visit to the farms established by him, where he becomes "the husband of wives," father of human sons, and the founder of "the races" (the classes among the Teutons), -- all this we rediscover completely in the Heimdall myth, as if it were a copy of the Indo-European-Asiatic saga concerning the divine founder of culture; a copy fresh from the master's brush without the effects of time, and without any retouchings. The very names of the ancient Indo-European patriarchs, Bhrigu and Manu are recognizable in the Germanic patriarch names Berchter and Mann (Mannus-Halfdan). In the case of Manu and Mann no explanation is necessary. Here the identity of sound agrees with the identity of origin. The descendants of Bhrigu and of his contemporary Bhriguians, are called Bhargavans, which corroborates the conclusion that Bhrigu is derived from *bharg* "to shine," whence is derived the ancient Germanic *berhta*, "bright," "clear," "light," the Old Saxon *berht*, the Anglo-Saxon *beorht*, which reoccurs in the Germanic patriarch *Berchter*, which again is actually (not linguistically) identical with the Norse Borgarr.<sup>48</sup> By Bhrigu's side stands Manu, just as Mann (Halfdan) is co-ordinate with Borgar.

<sup>43</sup> 8: 49, 15 "Thou liest in the wood, from both thy mothers' mortals kindle thee."

<sup>44</sup> 1: 95, 3 "Three several places of his birth they honor, in mid-air, in the heaven, and in the waters."

<sup>45</sup> 1: 95, 4 "Who of you knows this secret one? The infant by his own nature hath brought forth his mothers. The germ of many, from the waters' bosom he goes, wise and great, of Godlike nature."

<sup>46</sup> 2: 1,1 "Thou Agni, shining in thy glory through the days, art brought to life from out of the waters, from the stone; From out the forest trees and herbs that grow on ground, thou sovereign Lord of men art generated pure."

<sup>47</sup> Here Griffith translates "Son of Cloud"

<sup>48</sup> This etymology may no longer be sound. Watkin's lists the \*PIE *bhâ-* "to shine" with the Germanic cognates \**baukna-* beacon, signal OE *bêac(e)n*, beacon, OE denominative *bêcnan*, *bîcnan*, to make a sign, beckon. He also lists "*bheig-* to shine, an uncertain but plausible root." *American Heritage Dictionary of Indo-European Roots* (1985).

Point by point the descriptions of Agni and Heimdall also correspond in regard to their divine natures and attributes. Agni is the great holy white god; Heimdall is *mikill* and *heilagr*, and is called *hvíti áss* (*Prose Edda*) or "the whitest of the Aesir" (*Þrymskviða* 15). While Agni as the fire-god has golden teeth, Heimdall certainly for the same reason bears the epithet *gullintanni*, "the one with the golden teeth ." Agni has white horses. In Ulf Uggason's poem about the work of art in Hjarðarholt,<sup>49</sup> Heimdall rides his horse *Gulltoppur*, whose name reflects its splendor. While Agni's searching eyes can see in the distance and can penetrate the gloom of night, it is said of Heimdall that *hann sér jafnt nótt sem dag hundrað rasta frá sér*.<sup>50</sup> While Agni perceives everything, even the inaudible motions in the growing of herbs and animals; while he penetrates and diffuses himself in plants and animals, it is said of Heimdall that he *heyrir og það, er gras vex á jörðu eða ull á sauðum*.<sup>51</sup> While Agni - it is not stated by what means - is able to produce a noise like thunder which re-echoes through both the world-halves, Heimdall has the horn, whose sound all the world shall hear, when Ragnarok is at hand. On a "circular path," Agni observes the beings in the world. Heimdall looks out upon the world from Bifröst. Agni keeps his eye on the deeds of the demons, is perpetually on the look-out, and protects the world by day and by night from dangers; Heimdall is the watchman of the gods, *vörður goða* (*Grímnismál*), needs in his vocation as watchman less sleep than a bird, and faithfully guards the Asa-bridge against the giants. Agni is born of several mothers; Heimdall has mothers nine. Agni is "the fast traveller," who, in the human abodes he visits, opens a way for prayer and sacrifice (*Rígv.*, 7: 13, 3);<sup>52</sup> in *Rígsþula*, Heimdall has the same epithet, "the fast traveller," *röskr Stígandi*,<sup>53</sup> as he goes from house to house and teaches men the "runes of eternity" and "the runes of time."

The only discrepancy is in the animal symbols by which Agni and Heimdall are designated. The bull is Agni's symbol, the ram is Heimdall's. Both symbols are chosen from the domestic animals armed with horns, and the difference is linguistically of such a kind, that it to some extent may be said to corroborate the evidence in regard to Agni's and Heimdall's identity. In the old Norse poetry, *Veður* (wether, ram), *Heimdali* and the Heimdall epithet *Hallinskíði*, are synonymous. The word *veður*, according to Fick (*Wörterbuch* 3, 307), can be traced to an ancient Germanic *vethru*, the real meaning of which is "yearling," a young domestic animal in general, and it is related to the Latin *vitulus* and the Sanskrit *vatsala*, "calf."<sup>54</sup> If this is correct, then we also see the lines along which one originally common symbol of a domestic animal developed into two and among the *Rigveda* Indo-Europeans settled on the "yearling" of the cow, and among the Teutons on that of the sheep. It should here be remarked that according to *Ammianus Marcellinus* (XIX. 1) the tiara of the Persian kings was ornamented with a golden ram's-

<sup>49</sup> The *Húsdrápa* of which fragments survive in Snorri's *Edda*. The circumstances of its composition are recorded in *Laxadæla Saga*, ch. 29.

<sup>50</sup> "He sees as well as by day as night, 100 rasts about in every direction."

<sup>51</sup> "He can hear grass growing on the earth and on sheep."

<sup>52</sup> Griffith: "brisk herdsman" (?)

<sup>53</sup> It is unlikely this was seen as an epithet of Heimdall. Instead the poem says that "Rig strode, robust and mature" *ramman ok röstvan Ríg stíganda*.

<sup>54</sup> Watkin's *Dictionary of IE Roots*: "wet- suffixed *wet-ru* in Germanic \**weth-ruz* perhaps 'yearling' in OE *wether*, *wether*. ...Suffixed form \**wet-olo-* in Latin *vitulus*, calf, yearling."

head.<sup>55</sup> That Agni's span of horses were transformed into Heimdall's riding horse was also a result of time and circumstances. In *Rigveda*, riding and cavalry are unknown; there the horses of the gods draw the divine chariots. In the Germanic mythology, the draught horses are changed into riding horses, and chariots occur only exceptionally.

We have reason to be surprised at finding that the Indo-European-Asiatic myths and the Germanic have so broad surfaces of contact, on which not only the main outlines but even the details completely resemble each other. But the fact is not inexplicable. The hymns, the songs of the divine worship and of the sacrifices of the *Rigveda* Indo-Europeans, have been preserved, but the epic-mythological poems are lost, so that there remains the difficult task of reconstructing out of the former a clear and concise mythology, freed from the "dissolving views" in which their mythic characters now blend into each other. The Germanic mythology has had an opposite fate: here the genuine religious songs, the hymns of divine worship and of sacrifices, are lost, and there remain fragments of the mighty divine epic of the Teutons. But thus we have also been robbed of the opportunity of studying those very songs which in a higher degree than the epic are able to preserve through countless centuries ancient mythical traits; for the hymns belong to the divine worship, popular customs are long-lived, and the sacred customs are more conservative and more enduring than all others, if they are not disturbed by revolutions in the domain of faith. If an epithet of a god, e.g., "the fast traveller," has once become fixed by hymns and been repeated in the divine service year after year, then, in spite of the gradual transformation of the languages and the types of the race, it may be preserved through hundreds and thousands of years. Details of this kind may in this manner survive the ravages of time just as well as the great outlines of the mythology, and if there be a gradual change as to signification, then this is caused by the change of language, which may make an old expression unintelligible or give it another meaning based on the association of ideas.

From all this I am forced to draw the conclusion that Heimdall, like several other Germanic gods - for example, Odin (Wodan, *Rigveda*'s Vata)<sup>56</sup> -- belongs to the ancient Indo-European age, and retained, even to the decay of the Germanic heathendom his ancient character as the personal representative of the sacred fire, the fire produced by friction, and, in this connection, as the representative of the oldest culture connected with the introduction of fire.

This also explains Heimdall's epithet *Vindlér*, in *Codex Regius of the Prose Edda* (*Skáldskaparmál* 15).<sup>57</sup> The name is a subform of *vindill* and comes from *vinda*, to twist

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<sup>55</sup> Ammianus Marcellinus Roman Emperor who wrote a catalogue of Egyptian fauna in the 4th century A.D.

<sup>56</sup> Speaking of these comparisons in 1964, E. O. G. Turville-Petre said Rydberg's views were "extreme, and therefore, won less recognition than they deserved." Rydberg investigates the connections between the Indo-European mythologies of the Greeks and the Scandinavians with those of Asia more fully in volume 2 of *Investigations in Germanic Mythology* (1889), pps 1-202, and extending into his examination of the Baldur myth, pps. 203-295.

<sup>57</sup> The variant *Vindhlér* appears in *Háttatal* 7. For this Eysteinn Björnsson suggests *Vind(h)lér* might be read Wind-*Hlér*. *Hlér* is a known name of (Ægir). Thus *Vindhlér* might be interpreted as "wind-oceangod," i.e. "god of the ocean of winds" = "god of the atmosphere."

or turn, wind, to turn anything around rapidly. As the epithet "the turner" is given to that god who brought friction-fire (bore-fire) to man, and who is himself the personification of this fire, then it must be synonymous with "the borer."

A synonym of Heimdall's epithet *Stígandi*, "the traveller," is *Rati*, "the traveller," from *rata*, "to travel," "to move about." Very strangely, this verb (originally *vrata*, Goth. *vrâton*, to travel, make a journey) can be traced to an ancient Germanic word which meant to turn or twist, or something of the sort (Fick, *Wörterbuch*, 3, 294). And, so far as the noun *Rati* is concerned, this signification has continued to flourish in the domain of mythology after it long seems to have been extinct in the domain of language. *Hávamál* 106, *Grímnismál* 32, and *Skáldskaparmál* testify each in its own way that the mythical name *Rati* was connected with a boring activity. In *Hávamál* "Rati's mouth" gnaws the tunnel through which Odin, in the guise of an eagle, flies away with the mead-treasure concealed in the "deep dales" at Fjalar's under the roots of the world-tree. In the allegorical *Grímnismál* strophe it is "Rati's tooth" (*Ratatoskur*) who lets the mead-drinking foe of the gods near the root of the world-tree find out what the eagle in the top of the world-tree (Odin) resolves and carries out in regard to the same treasure. In *Skáldskaparmál*, the name is given to the gimlet itself which produced the connection between Odin's world and Fjalar's halls. The gimlet has here received the name of the boring "traveller," of him who is furnished with "golden teeth." Hence there are good reasons for assuming that in the epic of the myth it was Heimdall-*Gullintanni* (gold tooth) himself whose fire-gimlet helped Odin to fly away with his precious booty. In *Rigveda* Agni plays the same part. The "tongue of Agni" has the same task there as "Rati's mouth" in our Norse records. The sacred mead of the liquids of nourishment was concealed in the womb of the mountain with the Dasyus, hostile to the world; but Agni split the mountain open with his tongue, his ray of light penetrated into the darkness where the liquids of nourishment were preserved, and through him they were brought to the light of day, after Trita (in some passages of *Rigveda* identical with Vata) had slain a giant monster and found the "cows of the son of the work-master" (cp. *Rigveda*, 5: 14, 4; 8: 61, 4-8 ; 10: 8, 6-9).<sup>58</sup> "The cows of the son of the work-master" is a paraphrase for the saps of nourishment. In the Germanic mythology there is also "a son of the work-master," who is robbed of the mead. Fjalar is a son of Surt, whose character as an ancient artist is evident from what is stated in Nos. 53 and 89.

By friction *Mâtaricvan* brought Agni out of the maternal wombs in which he was concealed as an embryo of light and warmth. Heimdall was born to life in a similar manner. His very place of nativity indicates this. His mothers have their abodes *við jarðar þröm* (*Völuspá in skamma* 7) near the edge of the earth, on the outer rim of the earth, and that is where they gave him life (*báru þann mann*). His mothers are giantesses (*jötna meyjar*), and nine in number. We have already found giantesses, nine in number, mentioned as having their activity on the outer edge of the earth - namely, those who with the *möndull*, the handle, turn the vast friction-mechanism, the world-mill of Mundilfari.

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<sup>58</sup> Again Rydberg reads "work-master" for the artisan Tvastar. *Rigveda*, 5: 14, 4 "Agni shone bright when born with light killing the Dyaus and the dark; He found the cattle, the floods, the sun. 8: 61, 4-8 ; 10: 8, 9 "... Then Trita slew the seven-rayed, three-headed, and freed the cattle of the son of Tvastar." Interpreted by Griffith to mean "the showers obstructed by the fiend."

They are the *nú brúðir of Eylúður*, "the Isle-grinder," mentioned by Snæbjörn (see above). These nine giant-maids, who along the outer zone of the earth (*fyrir jarðar skauti*) push the mill's sweep before themselves and grind the coasts of the islands, are the same nine giant-maids who on the outer zone of the earth gave birth to Heimdall, the god of the friction-fire. Hence one of Heimdall's mothers is called *Angeyja*, "she who makes the islands closer,"<sup>59</sup> and another one is called *Eyrgjafa*, "she who gives sandbanks."<sup>60</sup> Mundilfari, who is the father of Sol and Mani, and has the care of the motions of the starry heavens is accordingly also, though in another sense, the father of Heimdall the pure, holy fire to whom the glittering objects in the skies must naturally be regarded as akin.<sup>61</sup>

In *Völuspá in skamma* 9, Heimdall's nine giant-mothers are named: *Gjálp*, *Greip*, *Eistla*, *Eyrgjafa*, *Úlfrún*, *Angeyja*, *Imdur*, *Atla*, *Járnsaxa*. The first two are daughters of the fire-giant Geirrod (*Skáldskaparmál* 26). To fire refers also *Imdur*, from *ím*, embers. Two of the names, *Angeyja* and *Eyrgjafa*, as already shown, indicate the occupation of these giantesses in connection with the world-mill. This is presumably also the case with *Járnsaxa*, "she who crushes the iron."<sup>62</sup> The iron which our heathen fathers worked was produced from the sea- and swamp-iron mixed with sand and clay, and could therefore properly be regarded as a grist of the world-mill.

Heimdall's antithesis in all respects, and therefore also his constant opponent in the mythological epic, is Loki, he too a fire-being, but representing another side of this element. Natural agents such as fire, water, wind, cold, heat, and thunder have a double aspect in the Germanic mythology. When they work in harmony, each within the limits which are fixed by the welfare of the world and the happiness of man, then they are sacred forces and are represented by the gods. But when these limits are transgressed, giants are at work, and the turbulent elements are represented by beings of giant-race. This is also true of thunder, although it is the common view among mythologists that it was regarded exclusively as a product of Thor's activity. The genuine mythical conception was, however, that the thunder which purifies the atmosphere and fertilizes the thirsty earth with showers of rain, or strikes down the foes of Midgard, came from Thor; while that which splinters the sacred trees, sets fire to the woods and houses, and kills men that have not offended the gods, came from the foes of the world. The *vafur-*

<sup>59</sup> Simek's *Dictionary of Northern Myth.*: "The meaning is uncertain; 'those of the narrow island' (to *ey* according to deVries, 1977) 'the harasser' (Gering, 1927) or perhaps to *geyja* 'bark' (Motz, 1981)?" pg. 18

<sup>60</sup> Simek's *Dictionary of Northern Myth.* "*Eyrgjafa* (ON 'Sand Donor?') ...As with the other names of these mothers *Eyrgafa* is probably no older than the lay itself," L. Motz, 1981.

<sup>61</sup> Thus the female Sun and the male Moon are children of Odin's brother Lodur, who gave mankind *lá* and *leti* and *lítur goða*. As these are Vanir, they marry among their kin. Based on a comparison of *Hyndluljóð* 11-12 with a passage in *Hversu Noregur byggðist* which reads "Finnálfr the Old married Svanhildur, known as Gullfjöðr. She was the daughter of Dag, son of Delling and Sól, daughter of Mundilfari. Their son was Svan the Red, father of Sæfari, who was the father of Úlfr, who was the father of Álfur, who was the father of Ingimundr and Eysteinn," Eysteinn Björnsson suggests the Sun and the Moon produce the beautiful daughters Sunna and Nanna who will survive Ragnarok and drive these cars in their parents stead, and that Heimdall married his sister, the sun, and producing the elf clan. Here Dag is taken for Heimdall, and Delling for Mundilfari. Rydberg made only the rudest outlines of the geneology of the Vanir and the Elves, and rightly so, as the evidence in this area is scant.

<sup>62</sup> Simek's *Dictionary of N. Myth: Járnsaxa*, ('The one with the iron knife').



element (see No. 35) was not only in the possession of the gods, but also in that of the giants (*Skírnismál*), and the lightning did not proceed alone from Mjólnir, but was also found in Hrungrnir's *hein* (hone) and in Geirrod's glowing missile. The conflicts between Thor and the giants were not only on solid ground, as when Thor made an expedition on foot to Jotunheim, but also in the air. There were giant-horses that were able to wade with force and speed through the atmosphere, as, for instance, Hrungrnir's Gullfaxi (*Skáldskaparmál* 24), and these giant-horses with their shining manes, doubtless, were expected to carry their riders to the lightning-conflict in space against the lightning-hurler, Thor. The thunderstorm was frequently a *víg primu*,<sup>63</sup> a conflict between thundering beings, in which the lightnings hurled by the ward of Midgard, the son of Hlodyn, crossed the lightnings hurled by the foes of Midgard.

Loki and his brothers *Helblindi* and *Byleistr* are the children of a giant of this kind, of a giant representing the hurricane and thunder. The rain-torrents and waterspouts of the hurricane, which directly or indirectly became wedded to the sea through the swollen streams, gave birth to Helblindi, who, accordingly, received *Rán* as his "maid" (*Ynglingasaga* 51)\*. The whirlwind in the hurricane received as his ward Byleistr, whose name is composed of *bylr*, "whirlwind," and *eistr*, "the one dwelling in the east" (the north), a paraphrase for "giant."<sup>64</sup> A thunderbolt from the hurricane gave birth to Loki. His father is called *Fárbauti*, "the one inflicting harm,"<sup>65</sup> and his mother is Laufey, "the leaf-isle," a paraphrase for the tree-crown (*Gylfaginning* 33, *Skáldskaparmál* 23). Thus Loki is the son of the burning and destructive lightning, the son of him who particularly inflicts damaging blows on the sacred oaks (see No. 36) and sets fire to the groves. But the violence of the father does not appear externally in the son's character. He long prepares the conflagration of the world in secret, and not until he is put in chains does he exhibit, by the earthquakes he produces, the wild passion of his giant nature. As a fire-being, he was conceived as handsome and youthful. From an ethical point of view, the impurity of the flame which he represents is manifested by his unrestrained sensuousness. After he had been for ever exiled from the society of the gods and had been fettered in his cave of torture, his exterior, which was in the beginning beautiful, became transformed into an expression of his intrinsic wickedness, and his hair grew out in the form of horny spears (see above). In this too he reveals himself as a counterpart of Heimdall, whose helmet is ornamented with a glittering ram's-horn.

### 83.

#### MUNDILFARI'S IDENTITY WITH LODUR.

The position which we have found Mundilfari to occupy indicates that, although not belonging to the powers dwelling in Asgard, he is one of the chief gods of the Germanic mythology. All natural phenomena, which appear to depend on a fixed mechanical law and not on the initiative of any mighty will momentarily influencing the

<sup>63</sup> *víg primu* presumably 'a tumultuous battle'; used of 'the tumult of battle' in *Helgi Hundingsbana I*, 7

<sup>64</sup> Simek, *DNM* pg 51: "The etymology of *Byleistr* has not been satisfactorily settled; the second element is probably related to *-leiptr* lightning and the first perhaps to *bylr*- wind."

<sup>65</sup> Simek, *DNM* pg. 78: *Fárbauti* "The name means the 'dangerous-hitter' which allows a natural-mythological interpretation in the sense of lightning (Kock, *Indogermanische Forschungen*, 1899) or 'storm' (Bugge, *Studien*, 1889).

events of the world, seem to have been referred to his care. The mythology of the Teutons, like that of the *Rigveda*-Indo-Europeans, has had gods of both kinds -- gods who particularly represent that order in the physical and moral world which became fixed in creation, and which, under normal conditions, remain entirely uniform, and gods who particularly represent the powerful temporary interference for the purpose of restoring this order when it has been disturbed, and for the purpose of giving protection and defense to their worshippers in times of trouble and danger. The latter are in their very nature war-gods always ready for battle, such as Vita and Indra in *Rigveda*, Odin and Thor-Indridi in the *Eddas*; and they have their proper abode in a group of fortified celestial citadels like Asgard, whence they have their outlook upon the world they have to protect -- the atmosphere and Midgard. The former, on the other hand, have their natural abode in Jormungrund's outer zone and in the lower world, whence the world-tree grew, and where the fountains are found whose liquids penetrate creation, and where that wisdom had its source of which Odin only, by self-sacrifice, secured a part. Down there dwell, accordingly, Urd and Mimir, Nott and Dag, Mundilfari with the discs of the sun and the moon, Delling, the genius of the rosy dawn, and Billing, the genius of the blushing sunset. There dwell the smiths of antiquity who made the chariots of the sun and moon and smithied the treasures of vegetation. There dwell the *nidjar* who represent the moon's waxing and waning; there the seven sons of Mimir who represent the changing seasons (see No. 87). Mundilfari is the lord of the regular revolutions of the starry firmament, and of the regular rising and sinking of the sea in its ebb and flood. He is the father of the discs of the sun and moon, who make their celestial journeys according to established laws; and, finally, he is the origin of the holy fire; he is father of Heimdall, who introduced among men a systematic life in homes fixed and governed by laws. As the father of Heimdall, the Vana-god, Mundilfari is himself a Vana-god, belonging to the oldest branch of this race, and in all probability one of those "wise rulers" (*vís regin*) who, according to *Vafþrúðnismál* 39, "created Njörd in Vanaheim and sent him as a hostage to the gods (the *Aesir*)."

From where did the clans of the Vanir and the Elves come? It should not have escaped the notice of the mythologists that the Germanic theogony, as far as it is known, mentions only two progenitors of the mythological races -- Ymir and Buri. From Ymir develop the two very different races of giants, the offspring of his arms and that of his feet (see No. 86) - in other words, the noble race to which the *norns*, Mimir and Bestla belong, and the ignoble, which begins with Thrudgelmir. *Buri* gives birth to *Burr* (*Bor*), and the latter has three sons - *Óðinn*, *Vei* (*Vé*), and *Vili* (*Vilir*). Unless Buri had more sons, the Vanir and Elf-clans have no other theogonic source than the same as the *Aesir*, namely, *Burr*. That the hierologists of the Germanic mythology did not leave the origin of these clans unexplained we are assured by the very existence of a Germanic theogony, together with the circumstance that the more thoroughly our mythology is studied the more clearly we see that this mythology has desired to answer every question which could reasonably be asked of it, and in the course of ages it developed into a systematic and epic whole with clear outlines sharply drawn in all details. To this must be added the important observation that *Vei* and *Vili*, though brothers of Odin, are never counted among the *Aesir* proper, and had no abode in Asgard. It is manifest that Odin himself with his sons founds the *Aesir*-race, that, in other words, he is a clan-founder in which

this race has its chieftain, and that his brothers, for this very reason, could not be included in his clan. There is every reason to assume that they, like him, were clan-founders; and as we find besides the Aesir two other races of gods, this of itself makes it probable that Odin's two brothers were their progenitors and clan-chieftains.

Odin's brothers, like himself, had many names. When *Völuspá* says that Odin, in the creation of man, was assisted by Hoenir and Lodur, and when the *Prose Edda* (*Gylfaginning* 9) says that, on this occasion, he was attended by his brothers, who just before (*Gylfaginning* 6) are called Ve and Vili, then these are only different names of the same powers. Hoenir and Lodur are Ve and Vili. It is a mistake to believe that Odin's brothers were mythical ghosts without characteristic qualities, and without prominent parts in the mythological events after the creation of the world and of man, in which we know they took an active part (*Völuspá* 4, 17, 18). The assumption that this was the case depends simply upon the fact that they have not been found mentioned among the Aesir, and that our records, when not investigated with proper thoroughness, and when the mythological synonymies have not been carefully examined, seem to have so little to say concerning them.

Danish genealogies, Saxo's included, which desire to go further back in the genealogy of the Skjoldungs than to Skjold, the eponym of the race, mention before him a King Lotherus. There is no doubt that Lotherus, like his descendants, Skjold, Halfdan, and Hadding, is taken from the mythology. But in our mythic records there is only one name of which Lotherus can be a Latinized form, and this name is, as Müller (*Notæ ulterior ad Saxonis Hist.*) has already pointed out, *Lóðurr*.

It has above been demonstrated (see Nos. 20, 21, 22) that the anthropomorphous Vana-god Heimdall was sent by Vanir as a child to the primeval Germanic country, to give to the descendants of Ask and Embla the holy fire, tools, and implements, the runes, the laws of society, and the rules for religious worship. It has been demonstrated that, as an anthropomorphous god and first patriarch, he is identical with Scef-Rig, the Scyld of the Beowulf poem, that he becomes the father of the other original patriarch Skjold, and the grandfather of Halfdan. It has likewise been demonstrated (No. 82) that Heimdall, the personified sacred fire, is the son of the fire-producer (by friction) Mundilfari, in the same manner as Agni is the son of *Mâtariçvan*. From all this it follows that when the authors of mythic genealogies related as history wish to get further back in the Skjoldung genealogy than to the Beowulf Skjold, that is to say, further back than to the original patriarch Heimdall, then they must go to that mythic person who is Heimdall's father, that is to say, to Mundilfari, the fire-producer. Mundilfari is the one who appears in the Latinized name Lotherus. In other words, Mundilfari, the fire-producer, is *Lóðurr*. For the name *Lóðurr* there is no other rational explanation than that which Jakob Grimm, without knowing his position in the epic of mythology, has given, comparing the name with the verb *lodern*, "to blaze."<sup>66</sup> *Lóðurr* is active in its signification, "he who causes or

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<sup>66</sup> The meaning of the name is uncertain. Many etymologies have been offered since. Some identify *Lóðurr* with *Loki*. The main evidence used to support this theory is the grouping of Lodur, Hoenir, and Odin for the creation of man in *Völuspá*; compared to the grouping of Odin, Hoenir, and Loki in *Haustlöng* and

produces the blaze," and thus refers to the origin of fire, particularly of the friction-fire and of the bore-fire.

Further on (Nos. 90, 91, 92, 121, 123) I shall give an account of the ward of the atmosphere, *Gevarr* (*Nökkvi*, *Næfr*), and demonstrate that he is identical with Mundilfari, the revolver of the starry firmament.<sup>67</sup> All that Saxo tells about Lotharus is explained by the character of the latter as the chieftain of a Vanir, and by his identity with Mundilfari-Gevarr. As a chieftain of the Vanir he was their leader when the war broke out between the Aesir on the one side, and the Vanir and Elves on the other. The banishment of Odin and the Aesir by the Vanir causes Saxo to say that Lotharus banished from the realm persons who were his equals in noble birth (*nobilitate pares*), and whom he regarded as competitors in regard to the government. It is also stated that he took the power from an elder brother, but spared his life, although he robbed him of the sceptre.<sup>68</sup> The brother here referred to is not, however, Odin, but Hoenir (*Véi*). The character of the one deposed is gentle and without any greed for rule like that by which Hoenir is known. Saxo says of him that he so patiently bore the injustice done him that he seemed to be pleased therewith as with a kindness received (*ceterum injuriæ tam patiens fuit, ut honoris damno tanquam beneficio gratulari crederetur*). The reason why Hoenir, at the outbreak of the war with the Aesir, is deposed from his dignity as the ruler of Vanaheim and is succeeded by Lodur, is explained by the fact that he, like Mimir, remained devoted to the cause of Odin. In spite of the confused manner in which the troubles between the Aesir and Vanir are presented in *Heimskringla*, it still appears that, before the war between the Aesir and Vanir, Hoenir was the chief of the Vanir on account of an old agreement between the two god-clans; that he then always submitted to the counsels of the wise Mimir, Odin's friend; that Mimir lost his life in the service of Odin, and that the Vanir sent his head to Odin; and, finally, that, at the outbreak of the feud with the Aesir and after the death of Mimir, they looked upon Hoenir as unqualified to be their judge and leader. Thus, after Hoenir, Lodur becomes the ruler of Vanaheim and the chieftain of the Vanir, while the Vanir Njörd, Frey, and the elf Ull, who had already been adopted in Asgard, administer the affairs of the rest of the world. The poem *Völuspá* also points to the mythical circumstance that Hoenir lost his throne and his power, restoring to the gentle and patient Vana-god after the regeneration, the rights of which he had been robbed, *þá kná Hæfir hlautvið kjósa* (str. 64). "Then Hoenir becomes able to choose the lot-wood," that is to say, he is permitted to determine and indicate the fortunes of those consulting the oracle; in other words, then he is again able to exercise the rights of a god. In the *Edda*, Hoenir appears as Odin's companion on excursions from Asgard. *Skáldskaparmál*, which does not seem to be aware that Hoenir was Odin's brother, still is conscious that he was intimately connected with him and calls him his *sessi*, *sinni*, and *máli* (*Skáldskaparmál*

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*Reginsmál*. Since no strong links can convincingly be drawn between Odin's brother Lodur, and Odin's blood-brother Loki, this grouping is likely no more than a poetic analogy.

<sup>67</sup> Many of Rydberg's ideas regarding mythic genealogy evolved over time. Rydberg does not clearly distinguish the three lunar generations: Mundilfari; Sol and Mani; Nanna and Sunna, although he has made great strides in this area since his first comprehensive writings on this subject in this field (c. 1882; reprinted as *Sagan om Svärdet*, Viktor Rydberg-skällskapet [The Viktor Rydberg Society], 1986). In most likelihood, Gevarr is equivalent to Mani, the moon (Nanna's father Nef), but distinct from his father Mundilfari. Lodur-Mundilfari is the father of Mani, the Moon (Gevarr, Nef, Hnæf), the Sun (Sol), and Day (Heimdall-Dag).

<sup>68</sup> Saxo, *Hist.*, Book 1.

22). During the war between the Aesir and Vanir, Frigg espoused the cause of the Vanir (see No. 36); thus Loki's insulting words to her (*Lokasenna* 26), and the tradition in *Heimskringla* (*Ynglingasaga* 3), that Vilir and Vei took Frigg to themselves once when Odin was far away from Asgard.

Saxo makes Lotharus fall at the hands of conspirators. The explanation of this statement is to be sought in *Mundilföri-Gevarr's* fate, of which, see Nos. 91, 123.

Mundilfari's character seems at least in one respect to be the opposite of Hoenir's. *Gylfaginning* 11 speaks of his *ofdramb*, his pride, founded, according to this record, on the beauty of his children. Saxo mentions the *insolentia*<sup>69</sup> of Lotharus, and one of his surnames was *Dulsi*, the proud. See No. 89, where a strophe is quoted, in which the founder of the Swedish Skilfing race (the Ynglings) is called *Dulsa konr*, Dulsi's descendant.<sup>70</sup> As was shown above in the account of the myth about Scefe, the Skjoldungs, too, are Skilfings. Both these branches of the race have a common origin; and as the genealogy of the Skjoldungs can be traced back to Heimdall, and beyond him to Mundilfari, it must be this personality who is mentioned for his *ofdramb*, that bears the surname *Dulsi*.

With Odin, *Vei-Hænir* and *Vili-Lóðurr-Mundilföri* have participated in the shaping of the world as well as in the creation of man. Of the part they took in the latter act, and of the importance they thereby acquired in the mythical anthropology, and especially in the conceptions concerning the continued creation of man by generation and birth, see No. 95.

#### 84.

#### NOTT, MOTHER OF THE GODS.

It has already been shown above that Nott, the mother of the gods, has her hall in the northern part of Mimir's realm, below the southern slopes of the Nida mountains.

There has been, and still is, an interpretation of the myths as symbols. Light is regarded as the symbol of moral goodness, and darkness as that of moral evil. That there is something psychologically correct in this cannot be denied; but in regard to the Indo-European religions the assumption would lead to a great error, if, as we might be tempted to do, we should make night identical with darkness, and should refer her to the world of evil. In the mythologies of the *Rigveda*-Indo-Europeans and of the Teutons, Nott is an awe-inspiring, adorable, noble, and beneficent being. Night is said in *Rigveda* "to have a fair face, to increase riches, and to be one of the mothers of order."<sup>71</sup> None of the phenomena of nature seemed to the Teutons evil *per se*; only when they transgressed what was thought to be their lawful limits, and thus produced injury and harm, were

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<sup>69</sup> Insolence, arrogance.

<sup>70</sup> Dulsi also appears with the variant readings Dusli and Dysli. Egilsson states that the name form is uncertain. Thus nothing can be inferred.

<sup>71</sup> I cannot identify this with any Rigvedic passage; nor do the various layers of translations help the cause. Rydberg may have had 10:127 in mind as some of these sentiments appear there.

giant-powers believed to be active therein. Although the Germanic gods are in a constant; more or less violent conflict with the powers of frost, still winter, when it observes its limits of time, is not an evil but a good divinity, and the cold liquids of Hvergelmir mixed with those of Urd's and Mimir's fountains are necessary to the world-tree. Still less could night be referred to the domain of demons. Mother Nott never transgresses the borders of her power; she never defies the sacred laws, which are established for the order of the universe. According to the seasons of the year, she divides in an unvarying manner the twenty-four hours between herself and day. Work and rest must alternate with each other. Rich in blessing, night comes with solace to the weary, and seeks if possible to sooth the sufferer with a potion of slumber. Though sombre in appearance (*svört og dökk - Gylfaginning* 10), still she is the friend of light. She decorates herself with lunar effulgence and with starry splendor, with winning twilight in midsummer, and with the light of snow and of northern aurora in the winter. The following lines in *Sigurdrífumál* 3-4 sound like a reverberation from the lost liturgic hymns of our heathendom.

*Heill Dagur,  
heilir Dags synir,  
heil Nótt og Nipt!  
Óreiðum augum  
lítið okkur þinir  
og gefið sitjöndum sigur!  
Heilir æsir,  
heilar ásynjur,  
heil sjá in fjölnýta fold!*

Hail Dag,  
Hail Dag's sons,  
Hail Nott and Nipt!  
Look down upon us  
With benevolent eyes  
and give us victory!  
Hail Aesir,  
Hail Asynjes,  
Hail thou bounteous earth!

Of the Germans in the first century after Christ, Tacitus writes (*Germania* 3): "They do not, as we, compute time by days but by nights, night seems to lead the day" (*nec dierum numerum, ut nos, sed noctium computant: nox ducere diem videtur*). This was applicable to the Scandinavians as far down as a thousand years later. Time was computed by nights not by days, and in the phrases from heathen times, *nótt ok dagr*, *nótt med degi*, *bæði um nætr ok um daga*, night is named before day. Linguistic usage and mythology are here intimately associated with each other. According to *Vafþrúðnismál* 25 and *Gylfaginning* 10, Nott bore with Delling the son Dag, with whom she divided the administration of the twenty-four hours. Delling is the elf of the morning redness (see No. 35). The symbolism of nature is here distinct as in all theogonies.

Through other divinities, *Naglfari* and *Ónarr* (*Anarr*, *Aunarr*), Nott is the mother with the former of *Unnr* (*Uðr*), also called *Auðr*, with the latter of the goddess Jord, Odin's wife. *Unnr* means water, *Auðr* means rich. It has above been shown that *Unnr-Auðr* is identical with *Njörd*, the lord of wealth and commerce, who in the latter capacity became the protectors of navigators, and to whom sacrifices were offered for a prosperous voyage. Gods of all clans -- Aesir, Vanir, and Elves -- are thus akin to Nott, and are descended from her.

NARFI, NOTT'S FATHER, IDENTICAL WITH MIMIR. A PSEUDO-NARFI IN THE  
*PROSE EDDA*.

Nott herself is the daughter of a being whose name has many forms.

<i>Naurr, Nörr</i>	(dative <i>Naurvi, Nörvi</i> ; <i>Nótt var Naurvi borin</i> - <i>Vafþrúðnismál</i> 25; <i>Nótt in Naurvi kennda</i> - <i>Alvíssmál</i> 29).
<i>Narfi, Narvi</i>	( <i>niðerfi Narfa</i> - <i>Egill Skallagr.</i> , 56, 2; <i>Gylfaginning</i> 10).
<i>Norvi, Nörvi</i>	( <i>Gylfaginning</i> 10; <i>kund Nörva</i> - <i>Hrafnagalður Óðins</i> 7).
<i>Njörfi, Njörvi</i>	( <i>Gylfaginning</i> 10; <i>Njörva nipt</i> - <i>Sonatorrek</i> ).
<i>Nori</i>	( <i>Gylfaginning</i> 10).
<i>Nari</i>	( <i>Höfuðlausn</i> 10).
<i>Neri</i>	( <i>Helgakviða Hundingsbana</i> I, 4).

All these variations are derived from the same original appellation, related to the Old Norse verb *njörva*, the Old English *nearwian*, meaning "the one that binds," "the one who puts on tight-fitting bonds."<sup>1</sup>

Simply the circumstance that Narvi is Nott's father proves that he must have occupied one of the most conspicuous positions in the Germanic cosmogony. In all cosmogonies and theogonies Night is one of the oldest beings, older than light, without which it cannot be conceived. Light is kindled in the darkness, thus foreboding an important epoch in the development of the world out of chaos. The being which is Night's

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<sup>1</sup> According to an Icelandic etymological dictionary, Ásgeir Blöndal Magnússon's *Íslensk orðsifjabók* (1989), these names are indeed related although the original meaning of the name Narvi is unclear and may have originally meant "thin one; hard-pressed one; one who occupies a narrow place" (Old English *nearo*, English *narrow*, "close, tight")

The oldest known example of the verb *njörva* meaning "to bind, tie, secure" dates from the 17<sup>th</sup> century and thus correctly cannot be considered Old Norse. A lost adjective *\*njörr*, with the meaning of "tie, bind tightly; nail down, sew tightly, stitch" etc, is thought to be the origin of these and related words. There are no certainties here. Simek suggests the name Narvi means "narrow" although he considers a derivation from *nár*, despite the vowel quantity, as conceivable if Narvi can be associated with the realm of the dead. (*DNM*, pg. 228).

father must therefore be counted among the oldest in the cosmogony. The personified representatives of water and earth, like the day, are the children of his daughter.

What *Gylfaginning* tells of Narvi is that he was of giant birth, and the first one who inhabited Jotunheim (*Nörvi eða Narfi hét jötunn, er byggði fyrst Jötunheima - Gylfaginning* 10). In regard to this we must remember that, in *Gylfaginning* and in the traditions of the Icelandic sagas, the lower world is embraced in the term Jotunheim, and this for mythical reasons, since Niflheim is inhabited by rime-thurses and giants (see No. 60), and since the regions of bliss are governed by Mimir and by the norns, who also are of giant descent. As the father of the lower-world dis, Nott, Narvi himself belongs to that group of powers, with which the mythology peopled the lower world. The upper Jotunheim did not exist before in a later epoch of the cosmogonic development. It was created simultaneously with Midgard by Odin and his brothers (*Gylfaginning*).

In a strophe by Egil Skallagrimson (*Egil's Saga*, ch. 56), poetry, or the source of poetry, is called *niðerfi Narfa*, "the inheritance left by Narvi to his descendants."<sup>2</sup> As is well known, Mimir's fountain is the source of poetry. The expression indicates that the first inhabitant of the lower world, Narvi, also presided over the precious fountain of wisdom and inspiration, and that he died and left it to his descendants as an inheritance.

Finally, we learn that Narvi was a near kinsman to Urd and her sisters. This appears from the following passages:

(a) *Helgakviða Hundingsbana* I, 4. When Helgi was born norns came in the night to the abode of his parents, twisted the threads of his fate, stretched them from east to west, and fastened them beneath the hall of the moon. One of the threads *nípt Nera* cast to the north and bade it hold for ever. It is manifest that by Neri's (Narvi's) kinswoman is meant one of the norns present.

(b) *Sonatorrek* 25. The skald Egil Skallagrimson, weary of life, closes his poem by saying that he sees the dis of death standing on the ness (Digraness) near the grave-mound which conceals the dust of his father and of his sons, and is soon to receive him:

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<sup>2</sup> This stanza is much disputed, and the text is extremely dubious. The kenning is either *niðerfi Narfa*, kin-drink of Narfi, or *niðerfi Narfa aurmýils*, kin-drink of Narfi of stone, which both mean the "drink of dwarves (or giants)" i.e. poetry. Here Narvi can be the name of any giant.

*Erfi* doesn't mean "inheritance," but rather "funeral drink." Either Rydberg or his source has confused the word with *erfð*, inheritance.



*Tveggja bága  
Njörva nipt  
á nesi stendur.  
Skal eg þó glaður  
með góðan vilja  
og óhryggur  
Heljar bíða.*

The kinswoman of Njorvi (the  
binder)  
of Odin's (Tveggi's) foes  
stands on the ness.  
But I shall gladly  
with good will  
and without remorse  
wait for Hel.

It goes without saying that the skald means a dis of death, Urd or one of her messengers, with the words, "the kinswoman of Njorvi (the binder) of Odin's foes," whom he with the eye of presentiment sees standing on the family grave-mound on Digraess. She is not to stop there, but she is to continue her way to his hall, to bring him to the gravemound. He awaits her coming with gladness, and as the last line shows, she whose arrival he awaits is Hel, the goddess of death or fate. It has already been demonstrated that Hel in the heathen records is always identical with Urd.<sup>1</sup>

Njorvi is here used both as a proper and a common noun. "The kinswoman of the Njorvi of Odin's foes" means "the kinswoman of the binder of Odin's foes." Odin's foe Fenrir was bound with an excellent chain smithied in the lower world (dwarfs in *Svartálfaheimr* -- *Gylfaginning* 34), and as shall be shown later, there are more than one of Odin's foes who are bound with Narvi's chains (see No. 87).<sup>2</sup>

(c) *Höfuðlausn* 10. Egil Skallagrimson celebrates in song a victory won by Erik Blood-axe, and says of the battle-field that there *trað nipt Nara náttverð ara* ("Nari's kinswoman trampled upon the supper of the eagles," that is to say, upon the dead bodies of the fallen).<sup>3</sup> The psychopomps of disease, of age, and of misfortunes have nothing to do on a battle-field. Thither come valkyries to fetch the elect. *Nipt Nara* must therefore be a valkyrie, whose horse tramples upon the heaps of dead bodies; and as Egil names only one shield-maid of that kind, he doubtless has had the most representative, the most important one in mind. That one is Skuld, Urd's sister, and thus a *nipt Nara* like Urd herself.

<sup>1</sup> Rydberg's translation here is very unlikely. Most editors assume *njörva-nipt*, to mean "close sister," i.e. *alsystir* whole sister as opposed to *hálf-systir* (half-sister), and interpret the line "the close sister of Odin's enemy stands on the ness." The close sister of Odin's enemy, Fenrir, is of course the terrible Loki-daughter. This finds support in verse 24 where Odin is called the "enemy of the wolf", *bági ulfs*.

Gudbrand Vigfusson in *Corpus Poeticum Boreale*, suggests: *Nús torrek kveðit tveggja bura Nörva nipt es nær stendr*, meaning "Now the loss of my two sons is sung through. Nörvi's daughter [Night] is at hand." Because *nipt* refers to a female relative, there is no obstacle to *Nörva nipt* referring to Urd rather than to Night (cp. *nera nipt* used of a Norn in *HH I.*)

<sup>2</sup> The other foe bound with Narvi's chains is Völund-Thjazi, however "Odin's foe" is an accepted paraphrase of the Fenris Wolf, making this reading improbable.

<sup>3</sup> From *Egil's Saga*, ch. 61. *Nipt nerja* is generally translated as the Loki-daughter, the sister of Loki's son Narvi. Upon examination of his argument, this verse is among the strongest pieces of evidence in support of Rydberg's theory here.

(d) *Ynglingatal* 7 (*Ynglingasaga*, ch. 17). Of King Dyggvi, who died from disease, it is said that *jódis Narva* chose him. The right to choose those who die from disease belongs to the norns alone (see No. 69). *Jódis*, a word doubtless produced by a vowel change from the Old Germanic *idis*, has already in olden times been interpreted partly as horse-dis (from *jór*, horse), partly as the dis of one's kin (from *jóð*, child, offspring). In this case the skald has taken advantage of both significations.<sup>4</sup> He calls the death-dis *jódis úlfs og Narva*, the wolf's horse-dis, Narvi's kin-dis. In regard to the former signification, it should be remembered that the wolf is horse for all giantesses, the honored norns not excepted. Cp. *grey norna* as a paraphrase for wolf.

Thus what our mythic records tell us about Narvi is:

(a) He is one of the oldest beings of theogony, older than the upper part of the world constructed by Bur's sons.

(b) He is of giant descent.

(c) He is father of Nott, father-in-law of Naglfari, Onar, and of Delling, the elf of the rosy dawn; and he is the father of Dag's mother, of Unnr, and of the goddess Jord, who becomes Odin's wife and Thor's mother. Bonds of kinship thus connect him with the Aesir and with gods of other ranks.

(d) He is near akin to the dis of fate and death, Urd and her sisters. The word *nípt*, with which Urd's relation to him is indicated, may mean sister, daughter, and sister's daughter, and consequently does not state which particular one of these it is.<sup>5</sup> It seems upon the whole to have been applied well-nigh exclusively in regard to mythic persons, and particularly in regard to Urd and her sisters (cp. above: *Njörva nípt*, *nípt Nara*, *nípt Nera*), so that it almost acquired the meaning of dis or norn. This is evident from *Nafnapulur* 26: *Nornir heita þær er nauð skapa; Nípt ok Dís nú eru taldar*, and from the expression *heil Nótt og Nípt* in the above-cited strophe from *Sigurdrífumál*. There is every reason for assuming that the *Nípt*, which is here used as a proper noun, in this sense means the dis of fate and as an appellation of kinship, a kinswoman of Nott. The common interpretation of *heil Nótt og Nípt* is "hail Nott and her daughter," and by her daughter is then meant the goddess Jord; but this interpretation is, as Bugge has shown, less probable, for the goddess Jord immediately below gets her special greeting in the words: *heil sjá in fjölnýta Fold!* ("Hail the bounteous earth!")

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<sup>4</sup> The etymology of the word *jódis* is obscure, and may be related to the Old Saxon *idisi*, used in *The First Merseburg Charm* of supernatural women who hinder armies. Elsewhere the word refers to well-respected women. In Old Norse, the meaning "sister" is attested to. The reading "horse-dis" is possible. However, as noted, this interpretation relies on a play of words which has no parallel. Thus, there is no way to effectively confirm it or rule it out.

<sup>5</sup> This narrows down the possibilities considerably. If Mimir is Narvi, then Urd can only be his sister, his daughter, or his sister's daughter. Thus Urd is either Mimir's sister Bestla, and identical with Mimir's wife and Odin's mother; or Urd is a daughter of Mimir, and either identical to or a sister of Night; or Urd is Bestla's daughter, and therefore Odin's sister (which may explain the reference to a sister of Odin in *Hávamál* 163). The available evidence does not settle on which, and reasonable arguments can be made for all three.

(e) As the father of Nott, living in Mimir's realm, and kinsman of Urd, who with Mimir divides the dominion over the lower world, Narvi is himself a being of the lower world, and the oldest subterranean being: the first one who inhabited Jotunheim.

(f) He presided over the subterranean fountain of wisdom and inspiration, that is to say, Mimir's fountain.

(g) He was Odin's friend and the binder of Odin's foes.

(h) He died and left his fountain as a heritage to his descendants.<sup>6</sup>

As our investigation progresses it will be found that all these facts concerning Narvi apply to Mimir, that "he who thinks" (Mimir) and "he who binds" (Narvi) are the same person. Already the circumstances that Narvi was an ancient being of giant descent, that he dwelt in the lower world and was the possessor of the fountain of wisdom there, that he was Odin's friend, and that he died and left his fountain as an inheritance (cp. *Mims synir*), point definitely to Narvi's and Mimir's identity. Thus the Germanic theogony has made Thought the older kinsman of Fate, who through Night bears Day to the world. The people of antiquity made their first steps toward a philosophical view of the world in their theogony.

The Old English language has preserved and transferred to the Christian Paradise a name which originally belonged to the subterranean region of bliss of heathendom - *Neorxenavang*. *Vang* means a meadow, plain, field. The mysterious *Neorxena* looks like a gentile plural. Grein,<sup>7</sup> in his *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, and before him Weinhold, refers *neorxena* to Narvi, Nari, and this without a suspicion that Narvi was an epithet of Mimir and referred to the king of the heathen regions of bliss. I consider this an evidence that Grein's assumption is as correct as it is necessary, if upon the whole we are to look for an etymological explanation of the word.<sup>8</sup> The plural genitive, then, means those who inhabit Narvi's regions of bliss, and receive their appellation from this circumstance. The opposite Old Norse appellation is *njarir*, a word which I shall discuss below.

To judge from certain passages in Christian writings of the thirteenth century, Mimir was not alone about the name Narvi, Nari. One or two of Loki's sons are supposed to have had the same name. The statements in this regard demand investigation, and, as I think, this will furnish another instructive contribution to the chapter on the confusion of the mythic traditions, and on the part that the *Prose Edda* plays in this respect. The passages are:

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<sup>6</sup> Statements (f) and (h) rely entirely on the evidence of the verse in *Egil's Saga*, ch. 56, and cannot correctly be included.

<sup>7</sup> Christian Grein, *Bibliothek der angelsächsischen Poesie*, vol. I. Göttingen, 1857. I am unable to conclusively identify Weinhold.

<sup>8</sup> Simek (*DNM* pg. 229) notes "the first part of the word remains obscure even today, although there have been a dozen different attempts to interpret it."

(a) The prosaic afterword to *Lokasenna*: "He (Loki) was bound with the entrails of his son Nari, but his son Narfi was turned into a wolf."

(b) *Gylfaginning* 33: 1) Most of the codices: "His (Loki's) wife is named Sigyn; their son is Nari or Narfi."

2) *Codex Hygnonesiensis*: "His (Loki's) wife is named Sigyn; his sons are named Nari or Narvi and Vali."

(c) *Gylfaginning* 50: 1) Most of the codices: "Then were taken Loki's sons Vali and Nari or Narfi. The Aesir changed Vali into a wolf, and the latter tore into pieces his brother Narfi. Then the Aesir took his entrails and therewith bound Loki."

2) *Codex Upsalensis*: "Then were taken Loki's sons Vali and Nari. The Aesir changed Vali into a wolf, and the latter tore into pieces his brother Nari."

(d) *Skáldskaparmál* 23: 1) "Loki is the father of the wolf Fenrir, the Midgard-serpent, and Hel, 'and also of Nari and Ali'."

2) *Codex Wormianus* and *Codex Hygnonesiensis*: Loki is father of the Fenris-wolf, of the Midgard-serpent, and of Hel, "and also of Nari and Vali."

The mythology has stated that Loki was bound with chains which were originally entrails, and that he who contributed the materials of these chains was his own son, who was torn into pieces by his brother in wolf guise. It is possible that there is something symbolic in this myth -- that it originated in the thought that the forces created by evil contend with each other and destroy their own parent. There is at least no reason for doubting that this account is a genuine myth, that is to say, that it comes from a heathen source and from some heathen poem.

But, in regard to the names of Loki's two sons here in question, we have a perfect right to doubt.

We discover at once the contradictions betrayed by the records in regard to them. The discrepancy of the statements can best be shown by the following comparisons. Besides Fenrir, the Midgard-serpent, and Hel, Loki has, according to:

*Gylfaginning* 33: the son Nari, also called Narfi. No other son is named.

Prose added to *Lokasenna*: the son Nari, and the son Narfi.

*Codex Hygnon*. (*Gylfaginning* 33): the son Nari, also called Narvi, and the son Vali.

*Gylfaginning* 50: the son Nari, also called Narfi, and the son Vali.

*Skáldskaparmál* 23: the son Nari, and the son Ali.

Prose added to *Lokasenna*: Nari is torn into pieces by Narfi.

*Gylfaginning*: Nari-Narfi is torn into pieces by Vali.

The discrepancy shows that the author of these statements did not have any mythic song or mythic tradition as the source of all these names of Loki's sons.

The matter becomes even more suspicious when we find:

That the variations Nari and Narvi, both of which belong to one of the foremost and noblest of mythic beings, namely, to Mimir, are here applied in such a manner that they either are given to two sons of Loki or are attributed to one and the same Loki-son, while in the latter case it happens,

That the names Vali and Ali, which both belong to the same Asa-god and son of Odin who avenged the death of his brother Baldur, are both attributed to the other son of Loki. Compare *Gylfaginning* 30: *Áli eða Váli heitir einn, sonur Óðins og Rindar.*<sup>9</sup>

How shall we explain this? Such an application of these names must necessarily produce the suspicion of some serious mistake; but we cannot assume that it was made wilfully. The cause must be found somewhere.

It has already been demonstrated that, in the mythology, Urd, the dis of fate, was also the dis of death and the ruler of the lower world, and that the functions belonging to her in this capacity were, in Christian times, transferred to Loki's daughter, who, together with her functions, usurped her name Hel. Loki's daughter and Hel became identical to the Christian mythographers.

An inevitable result was that such expressions as *nípt Nara*, *jódís Narfa*, *nípt Njörva*, had to change meaning. The *nípt Njörva*, whom the aged Egil saw standing near the grave-mound on Digraness, and whose arrival he awaited "with good-will and without remorse," was no longer the death-dis Urd, but became to the Christian interpreters the abominable daughter of Loki who came to fetch the old heathen. The *nípt Nara*, whose horse trampled on the battlefield where Erik Blood-axe defeated the Scots, was no longer Urd's sister, the valkyrie Skuld, but became Loki's daughter, although, even according to the Christian mythographers, the latter had nothing to do on a battlefield. The *jódís Narfa*, who chose King Dyggvi, was confounded with *Loka mæð*, who had him *leikinn* (see No. 67), but who, according to the heathen conception, was a maid-servant of fate, without the right of choosing. To the heathens *nípt Nara*, *nípt Njörva*, *jódís Narfa*, meant "Nari-Mimir's kinswoman Urd." To the mythographers of the thirteenth century it must, for the reason stated, have meant the Loki-daughter as sister of a certain Nari or Narvi. It follows that this Nari or Narvi ought to be a son of Loki, since his sister was Loki's daughter. It was known that Loki, besides Fenrir and the Midgard-serpent, had two other sons, of which the one in the guise of a wolf tore the other into pieces. In Nari, Narvi, the name of one or the names of both these Loki-sons were thought to have been found.

The latter assumption was made by the author of the prose in *Lokasenna*. He conceived Nari to be the one brother and Narvi the other. The author of *Gylfaginning*, on

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<sup>9</sup> "Ali or Vali is the name of one, the son of Odin and Rind."

the other hand, rightly regarded Nari and Narvi as simply variations of the same name, and accordingly let them designate the same son of Loki. When he wrote chapter 33, he did not know what name to give to the other, and consequently omitted him entirely. But when he got to the 50th chapter, a light had risen for him in regard to the name of the other. And the light doubtless came from the following half strophe in *Völuspá*:

*pá kná Vála  
vígbönd snúa,  
heldur voru harðgjör  
höft úr þörmum.*

This half strophe says that those were strong chains (for Loki) that were made of entrails, and these fetters were "twisted" from "Váli's *vígbönd*." *Víg* as a legal term means a murder, slaughter. *Vála víg* was interpreted as a murder committed by Vali; and *Vála vígbönd* as the bonds or fetters obtained by the slaughter committed by Vali.<sup>10</sup> It was known that Loki was chained with the entrails of his son, and here it was thought to appear that this son was slain by a certain Vali. And as he was slain by a brother according to the myth, then Vali must be the brother of the slain son of Loki. Accordingly chapter 50 of *Gylfaginning* could tell us what chapter 33 did not yet know, namely, that the two sons of Loki were named Vali and Nari or Narvi, and that Vali changed to a wolf, tore the brother "Nari or Narvi" into pieces.

The next step was taken by *Skáldskaparmál*, or more probably by one of the transcribers of *Skáldskaparmál*. As Vali and Ali in the mythology designated the same person (viz., Baldur's avenger, the son of Odin), the son of Loki, changed into a wolf, "Vali" received as a gift the name "Ali." It is by no means impossible that the transcriber regarded Baldur's avenger, Vali, and the son of Loki as identical. The oldest manuscript we have of *Skáldskaparmál* is the *Upsala Codex*, which is no older than the beginning of the fourteenth century. The mythic traditions were then in the continuation of that rapid decay which had begun in the eleventh century, and not long thereafter the Icelandic saga writings saw Valhall peopled by giants and all sorts of monsters, which were called *einherjes*, and Thor himself transferred to the places of torture where he drank venom from "the auroch's horn," presented to him by the daughter of Loki.

In the interpretation of the above-cited half strophe of *Völuspá*, we must therefore leave out the supposed son of Loki, Vali. The Germanic mythology, like the other Indo-European mythologies, applied many names and epithets to the same person, but it seldom gave two or more persons one and the same name, unless the latter was a

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<sup>10</sup> Ursula Dronke translates these lines as "Then did Váli slaughter bonds twist, made fairly grim were the fetters of guts." She takes Váli to be the son of Odin and observes "Nowhere, except in H (*Hauksbók*) is he said to have placed the bonds upon Loki, but as he was expressly begotten to avenge Baldr, it is logical enough that the binding of Loki should be attributed to him."

She continues "Snorri, ...has found these lines interesting. Out of them he has invented a new son for Loki, Váli Lokason. He appears to have interpreted the H text *Vála vígbönd* as 'bonds from Váli's act of slaughter' since he relates that Váli Lokason was changed into a wolf by the Æsir and straightaway tore apart his brother Narfi. ...The story is found in a variant form in the prose epilogue to *Lokasenna*, but without reference to Váli." (*PE II*, pg. 76)

patronymic or, in other respects, of a general character. There was not more than one Odin, one Thor, one Njörd, one Heimdall, one Loki, and there is no reason for assuming that there was more than one Vali, namely, the divine son of this name. Of Baldur's brother Vali we know that he was born to avenge the slaying of Baldur. His impatience to do that which he was called to perform is expressed in the mythology by the statement, that he liberated himself from the womb of his mother before the usual time (*Baldurs bróðir var um borinn snemma* - *Völuspá* 32), and only one night old he went to slay Hodur. The bonds which confine the impatient one in his mother's womb were his *vígbönd*, the bonds which hindered him from combat, and these bonds were in the most literal sense of the word *úr þörmum*.<sup>11</sup> As Loki's bonds are made of the same material and destined to hinder him from combat with the gods until Ragnarok, and as his prison is in the womb of the earth, as Vali's was in that of the earth-goddess Rind's, then *Vála vígbönd* as a designation of Loki's chains is both logically and poetically a satisfactory paraphrase, and the more in order as it occurs in connection with the description of the impending Ragnarok, when Loki by an earthquake is to sever his fetters and hasten to the conflict.

86.

THE TWO GIANT CLANS DESCENDED FROM YMIR.

In *Hávamál* (140, ff.), Odin says that he in his youth obtained nine fimbul-songs and a drink of the precious mead dipped out of Odrerir from Bestla's father, Bölthorn's famous son:

*Fimbulljóð nú  
nam eg af inum frægja syni  
Bölþorns, Bestlu föður,  
og eg drykk um gat  
ins dýra mjaðar,  
ausinn Óðreri.*

The mythologists have assumed, for reasons that cannot be doubted, that Bolthorn's famous son, Bestla's brother, is identical with Mimir. No one else than he presided at that time over the drink dipped out of Odrerir, the fountain which conceals "wisdom and man's sense," and *Sigurdrífumál* (13, 14) corroborates that it was from Mimir, and through a drink from "Hoddrofnir's horn," that Odin obtained wonderful runes and "true sayings."

Accordingly Mimir had a sister by name Bestla (variations: *Beistla*, *Besla*, *Bezla*). A strophe by Einar Skálaglam (Skáldskaparmál 9; cp. *Gylfaginning* 6) informs us that Bestla is Odin's mother. Mimir's disciple, the clan-chieftain of the gods, is accordingly

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<sup>11</sup> "made of guts"; *Pömb*, the womb, guts (Vigfusson, *Dict.* pg. 756)

his sister's son. Herein we have one more reason for the faithful friendship which Mimir always showed to Odin.

The Mimir epithet Narfi, Narvi, means, as shown above, "the one who binds." His daughter Nott is called *draumnjörun*, the dream-binder (*Alvíssmál* 30).<sup>12</sup> His kinswomen, the norns, spin and bind the threads and bonds, which, extended throughout the world, weave together the web of events. Such threads and bonds are called *örlögþættir* (*Helgakviða Hundingsbana* I. 3), and *Urðar lokur* (*Gróugaldur* 7). As the nearest kinswomen of Bestla all have epithets or tasks which refer to the idea of binding, and when we add to this that Bestla's sons and descendants as gods have the epithet *höpt* and *bönd*, her own name might most properly be referred to the old word *beizl*, *beisl* (cp. *betsel*, bridle), which has a similar meaning.<sup>13</sup>

As Mimir and Bestla are of giant descent, and in the theogony belong to the same stage of development as Bur (Burr), Odin's father, then, as the mythologists also have assumed, Böllthorn can be none else than Ymir.

Mimir, Bestla, the norns, and Nott thus form a group of kindred beings, which belong to the oldest giant race, but still they are most definitely separated from the other descendants of Ymir, as a higher race of giants from a lower, a noble giant race friendly to the gods and fostering the gods, from that race of deformed beings which bear children in the strangest manner, which are hostile to the gods and to the world, and which are represented by the frost-giants Thrudgelmir and Bergelmir and their offspring.

It now lies near at hand to inquire whether the mythology which attributed the same father to Mimir and Thrudgelmir was unable to conceive in this connection the idea of a nobler origin for the former than the latter. The remedy nearest at hand would have been to have given them mothers of different characters. But the mythology did not resort to this expedient. It is expressly stated that Ymir bore children without the pleasure of woman (*gýgjar gaman* - *Vafþrúðnismál* 32 ; cp. No. 60). Neither Mimir nor Thrudgelmir had a mother. Under such circumstances there is another expedient to which the sister of the Germanic mythology, the Rigveda mythology, has resorted, and which is explained in the 90th hymn of Book 10 of Rigveda. The hymn informs us in regard to a primeval giant Parusha, and this myth is so similar to the Germanic in regard to Ymir that it must here be considered.

The primeval being Parusha was a giant monster as large as the whole world, and even larger (verses 1-5). The gods resolved to sacrifice him, that is to say, to slay him for sacred purposes (v. 6), and from his limbs was created the present world. From his navel was made the atmosphere, from his head the canopy of heaven, from his two feet the earth, from his heart the moon, from his eye the sun, from his breath the wind, etc. His mouth became the *Brahmam* (the priest), his arms became the *Rajanya* (the warrior), his thighs became the *Vaisya* (the third free caste), and from his feet arose the *Sudra* (the thrall, verse 12).

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<sup>12</sup> Egilsson explains this name as the "goddess of dreams"; Lee Hollander translates it as "dream-weaver". No certain definition has been established.

<sup>13</sup> The name Bestla is ancient and its meaning uncertain. The most likely explanation is a derivation from "bast", *böstur*, dat. *besti* (cp. *Völundarkviða* 8, 13.) Bast is a membrane under the bark of a tree, used to make a resilient thread or cord.



The two fundamental ideas of the myth concerning Parusha are:

(1) There was a primeval being who was not divine. The gods slew him and created the material world out of his limbs.

(2) This primeval being gave rise to other beings of different ranks, and their rank corresponded with the position of the giant's limbs from which they were created.

Both these fundamental ideas reappear in the Germanic myth concerning Ymir. In regard to the former idea we need only to quote what *Vafþrúðnismál* says in strophe 21:

*Úr Ymis holdi  
var jörð um sköpuð,  
en úr beinum björg,  
himinn úr hausi  
ins hrímkalda jötuns,  
en úr sveita sjór.*

Of Ymir's flesh  
the earth was created,  
the rocks from his bones,  
the heavens from the head  
of the ice-cold giant,  
the sea from his blood.

In regard to the second fundamental idea, it is evident from the *Rigveda* account that it is not found there in its oldest form, but that, after the rise of four castes among the *Rigveda* Indo-Europeans, it was changed, in order to furnish an explanation of the origin of these castes and make them at least as old as the present material world.<sup>1</sup> Far more original, and perfectly free from the influence of social ideas, it appears in the Germanic mythology, where the 33rd strophe of *Vafþrúðnismál* testifies concerning its character:

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<sup>1</sup> The purity of this is impossible to establish. However, Griffith remarks that this is the only passage in the *Rigveda* where the four castes are enumerated. Also, two parts of the giant used in the creation of the castes in verse 12 are repeated as material for the world in verses 13, 14. Of his mouth, the Brahmins as well as the gods Agni and Indra were made; of his feet the Sudra and the earth were created. No other materials are repeated, suggesting the verses regarding the castes may have been interpolated.

*Undir hendi vaxa  
kváðu hrímþursi  
mey og mög saman;  
fótur við fæti  
gat ins fróða jötuns  
sérhöfðaðan son.*

A son and a daughter  
are said to have grown  
under the arm of the frost-giant;  
foot begat with foot  
the strange-headed son  
of the wise giant.

In perfect harmony with this *Gylfaginning* narrates: "Under Ymir's left arm grew forth a man and a woman, and his one foot begat with the other a son. Thence come (different) races."

The different races have this in common, that they are giant races, since they spring from Ymir; but these giant races must at the same time have been widely different intellectually and physically, since the mythology gives them different origins from different limbs of the progenitor. And here, as in *Rigveda*, it is clear that the lowest race was conceived as proceeding from the feet of the primeval giant. This is stated with sufficient distinctness in *Vafþrúðnismál*, where we read that a "strangely-headed" monster (Thrudgelmir - see No. 60) was born by them, while "man and maid" were born under the arm of the giant. "The man" and "the maid" must therefore represent a noble race sprung from Ymir, and they can only be Mimir and his sister, Odin's mother. Mimir and his clan constitute a group of ancient powers, who watch over the fountains of the life of the world and care for the perpetuation of the world-tree. From them proceeded the oldest, fairest, and most enduring parts of the creation. For the lower world was put in order and had its sacred fountains and guardians before Bur's sons created Midgard and Asgard. Among them the world-tree grew up from its roots, whose source no one knows (*Hávamál* 138). Among them those forces are active which make the starry firmament revolve on its axis, and from them come the seasons and the divisions of time, for Nott and *niðjar*, Mani and Sol, belong to Mimir's clan, and were in the morning of creation named by the oldest "high holy gods," and endowed with the vocation *árum að telja* (*Völuspá* 6).<sup>1</sup> From Mimir comes the first culture, for in his fountain inspiration, spiritual power, man's wit and wisdom, have their source, and around him as chief stand gathered the artists of antiquity by whose hands all things can be smithied into living and wonderful things. Such a giant clan demands another origin than that of the frost-giants and their offspring. As we learn from *Vafþrúðnismál* that two giant races proceeded from Ymir, the one from a part of his body which in a symbolic sense is more noble than that from which the other race sprang, and that the race born of his feet was the ignoble one hostile to the gods, then the conclusion follows of necessity that "the man and maid" who were born as twins under Ymir's arm became the founders of that noble group of giants who are friendly to the gods, and which confront us in the mythology of our fathers. It has already been shown above (see No. 54) that Jima (Yama) in the Asiatic-Indo-European mythology corresponds to Mimir in the Germanic. Jima is an epithet which means twin. The one with whom Jima was born together was a maid, Yami. The words in

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<sup>1</sup> "to reckon in years."

the quoted *Vafþrúðnismál* strophe, *undir hendi hrímbursi vaxa mey og mög saman*,<sup>2</sup> are evidence that the Germans also considered Mimir and his sister as twins.

87.

THE IDENTITY OF MIMIR AND NIDHAD OF THE VÖLUND SAGA.

The condition in which the traditions of the great Völund (Wayland) have come down to our time is one of the many examples illustrating how, under the influences of a change of faith, a myth disrobes itself of its purely mythical character and becomes a heroic saga. The nature of the mythic traditions and songs is not at once obliterated in the time of transition; there remain marks of their original nature in some or other of the details as proof of what they have been. Thus that fragment of a Völund saga, turned into an epic, which the Old Norse literature has preserved for us in *Völundarkviða*, shows us that the artist who is the hero of the song was originally conceived not as a son of man, but as a member of the mythic race of elves which in *Völuspá* is mentioned in connection with the Aesir (*hvað er með ásum, hvað er með álfum?* - str. 48).<sup>3</sup> Völund is an elf-prince (*álfa vísi, álfa ljóði* - *Völundarkviða* 11, 14), and, as shall be shown below, when we come to consider the Völund myth exhaustively, he and his brothers and their mistresses have played parts of the very greatest importance in the epic of Germanic mythology. Under such circumstances it follows that the other persons appearing in *Völundarkviða* also were originally mythical characters.

One of these is called *Niðaður* (*Niðuður*), king of Njarar, and I am now to investigate who this *Niðaður* was in the mythology.

When Völund for the first time appears by this name in the *Poetic Edda*, he is sojourning in a distant country, to which it is impossible to come without traversing the Mirkwood forest famous in the mythology (see No. 78). It is a snow-clad country, the home of bears and wolves. Völund gets his subsistence by hunting on skis. The Old English poem, "*Deor the Scald's Complaint*," confirms that this region was regarded as very cold (cp. *vintercealde vræce*).<sup>4</sup> In *Völundarkviða* it is called Wolfdales (*Úlfdalir*).

Völund stays here many years in company with his two brothers and with three swan-maids, their mistresses or wives, but finally alone. Völund passes the time in smithying, until he is suddenly attacked by *Niðaður* (*Niðuður*), "the Njara-king" (*Völundarkviða* 7), who puts him in chains and robs him of two extraordinary treasures -- a sword and an arm-ring. Seven hundred arm-rings hung in a string in Völund's hall; but this one alone seemed to be worth more than all the rest, and it alone was desired by *Niðaður* (str. 8, 9, 17).

Before Völund went to the Wolfdales, he had lived a happy life with his people in a land abounding in gold (str. 14). Not voluntarily, but from dire necessity he had exchanged his home for the distant wilderness of the Wolfdales. "*Deor the Scald's*

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<sup>2</sup> "under the frost-giant's arm grew a man and a maid together."

<sup>3</sup> The Aesir and the Elves are frequently named together: *Thrymskviða* 7; *Hávamál* 159, 160; *Grimnismál* 4; *Sigurdrífumál* 18; *Skírnismál* 7, 17, and 18; *Lokasenna* 2, 13, 30.

<sup>4</sup> lit. "wintercold exile."

*Complaint*" says he was an exile (*Veland him be vurman vrecas cannade*).<sup>5</sup> A German saga of the Middle Ages, *Anhang des Heldenbuchs*, confirms this statement. Wieland (Völund), it is there said, "was a duke who was banished by two giants, who took his land from him," whereupon "he was stricken with poverty," and "became a smith." The *Völundarkviða* does not have much to say about the reason for his sojourn in the Wolfdales, but strophe 28 informs us that, previous to his arrival there, he had suffered an injustice, of which he speaks as the worst and the most revenge-demanding which he, the unhappy and revengeful man, ever experienced. But he has had no opportunity of demanding satisfaction, when he finally succeeds in getting free from *Niðaður*'s chains.<sup>6</sup> Who those mythic persons are that have so cruelly insulted him and filled his heart with unquenchable thirst for revenge is not mentioned; but in the very nature of the case those persons from whose persecutions he has fled must have been mightier than he, and as he himself is a chief in the godlike clan of elves, his foes are naturally to be looked for among the more powerful races of gods.

And as *Völundarkviða* pictures him as boundlessly and recklessly revengeful, and makes him resort to his extraordinary skill as a smith -- a skill famous among all Germanic tribes -- in the satisfaction which he demands of *Niðaður*, there is no room for doubt that, during the many years he spent in Wolfdales, he brooded on plans of revenge against those who had most deeply insulted him, and that he made use of his art to secure instruments for the carrying out of these plans. Of the glittering sword of which *Niðaður* robbed him, Völund says (str. 18) that he had applied his greatest skill in making it hard and keen. The sword must, therefore, have been one of the most excellent ones mentioned in the songs of Germanic heathendom. Far down in the Middle Ages, the songs and sagas were fond of attributing the best and most famous swords wielded by their heroes to the skill of Völund.

In the myths turned by Saxo into history, there has been mentioned a sword of a most remarkable kind, of untold value (*ingens præmium*), and attended by success in battle (*belli fortuna comitaretur*). A hero whose name Saxo Latinized into Hotherus (*Hist. Dan.*, beginning of Book 3) got into enmity with the Aesir, and the only means with which he can hope to cope with them is the possession of this sword. He also knows where to secure it, and with its aid he succeeds in putting Thor himself and other gods to flight.

In order to get possession of this sword, Hotherus had to make a journey which reminds us of the adventurous expeditions already described to Gudmund-Mimir's domain, but with this difference, that he does not need to go by sea along the coast of Norway in order to get there, which circumstance is sufficiently explained by the fact that, according to Saxo, Hotherus has his home in Sweden. The regions which Hotherus has to traverse are pathless, full of obstacles, and for the greater part continually in the cold embrace of the severest frost. They are traversed by mountain-ridges on which the cold is terrible, and therefore they must be crossed as rapidly as possible with the aid of "yoke-stags." The sword is kept concealed in a *specus*, a subterranean cave, and

<sup>5</sup> "Welund for himself .... learned to know exile" Ursula Dronke, *PE II* pg. 279, with the note that the phrase *be wurman* is faulty. I have seen no less than 4 variant translations for this line.

<sup>6</sup> This problem has long vexed commentators. Lee Hollander conjectures this unfulfilled revenge is directed against Nidhad's queen (*Poetic Edda*, *Vkv.* 30). After discussing some of the previous attempts at solving the riddle, Dronke solves the problem in a unique manner, emending *allra nema einna* (all except one) to *allra né einna* (none but all) in *Vkv.* 28/7 (*PE II* pg. 251, and commentary pg. 230).

"mortals" can scarcely cross its threshold (*haud facile mortalibus patere posse*). The being which is the ward of the sword in this cave is by Saxo called Mimingus.

The question now is, whether the sword smithied by Völund and the one fetched by Hotherus are identical or not. The former is smithied in a winter-cold country beyond Mirkwood, where the mythic *Niðaður* (Nidhad) suddenly appears, takes possession of it, and the purpose for which it was made, judging from all circumstances, was that Völund with its aid was to conquer the hated powers, stronger than he, had compelled him, the chief of elves, to take refuge to the Wolfdales. If these powers were Aesir or Vanir, then it follows that Völund must have thought himself able to give to his sword qualities that could render it dangerous to the world of gods, although the latter had Thor's hammer and other subterranean weapons at their disposal. The sword captured by Hotherus is said to possess those very qualities which we might look for in the Völund weapon, and the regions he has to traverse in order to get possession of it refer, by their cold and remoteness, to a land similar to that where Nidhad surprises Völund, and takes from him the dangerous sword.

As already stated, Nidhad at the same time captured an armring of an extraordinary kind. If the saga about Völund and his sword was connected with the saga-fragment turned into history by Saxo concerning Hotherus and the sword, whose owner he becomes, then we might reasonably expect that the precious arm-ring, too, should appear in the latter saga. And we do find it there. Mimingus, who guards the sword of victory, also guards a wonderful armring, and through Saxo we learn what quality makes this particular armring so precious, that Nidhad does not seem to care about the other seven hundred which he finds in Völund's workshop. Saxo says: *Eidem (Mimingo) quoque armillam esse mira quadam arcanaque virtute possessoris opes augere solitam*. "In the arm-ring<sup>7</sup> there dwells a wonderful and mysterious power, which increases the wealth of its possessor." In other words, it is a smith's work, the rival of the ring Draupnir, from which eight similar rings drop every ninth night. This explains why Völund's smithy contains so many rings, that Nidhad expresses his suspicious wonderment (str. 14).

There are therefore strong reasons for assuming that the sword and the ring, which Hotherus takes from Mimingus, are the same sword and ring as Nidhad before took from Völund, and that the saga, having deprived Völund of the opportunity of testing the quality of the weapon himself in conflict with the gods, wanted to indicate what it really amounted to in a contest with Thor and his hammer by letting the sword come into the hands of Hotherus, another foe of the Aesir. As we now find such articles as those captured by Nidhad reappearing in the hands of a certain Mimingus, the question arises whether Mimingus is Nidhad himself or some one of Nidhad's subjects; for that they either are identical, or are in some way connected with each other, seems to follow from the fact that one is said to possess what the other is said to have captured. Mimingus is a Latinizing of *Mímingur*, *Mímungur*, son or descendant of Mimir.

*Niðaður*, *Niðuður* (both variations are found in *Völundarkviða*), has, on the other hand, his counterpart in the Anglo-Saxon *Nidhâd*. The king who in "*Deor the Scald's Complaint*" fetters Völund bears this name, and his daughter is called Beadohild, in *Völundarkviða* Bodvild. Previous investigators have already remarked that Beadohild is a

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<sup>7</sup> *Armilla* may properly be translated as bracelet or armlet (armring). Both Fisher and Elton chose to render this word, bracelet.

more original form than Bodvild, and Nidhad than *Niðuður*, *Niðaður*. The name Nidhad is composed of *nid* (neuter gender), the lower world, Hades, and *had*, a being, person, *forma*, *species*. Nidhad literally means the lower world being, the Hades being. Herewith we also have his mythical character determined. A mythical king, who is characterized as the being of the lower world, must be a subterranean king. The mythic records extant speak of the subterranean king Mimir (the Middle-Age saga's Gudmund, king of the Glittering Fields; see Nos. 45, 46), who rules over the realm of the well of wisdom and has the dis of fate as his kinswoman, the ruler of the realm of Urd's fountain and of the whole realm of death. While we thus find, on the one hand, that it is a subterranean king who captures Völund's sword and armring, we find, on the other hand, that when Hotherus is about to secure the irresistible sword and the wealth-producing ring, he has to travel to the same winter-cold country, where all the traditions here discussed (see Nos. 45-49) locate the descent to Mimir's realm, and that he, through an entrance "scarcely approachable for mortals," must proceed into the bosom of the earth after he has subdued a Mimingus, a son of Mimir. Mimir being the one who took possession of the treasure, it is perfectly natural that his son should be its keeper.

This also explains why *Niðaður* in *Völundarkviða* is called the king of the Njares. A people called Njares existed in the mythology, but not in reality. The only explanation of the word is to be found in the Mimir epithet, which we discovered in the variations Narvi, Njörvi, Nari, Neri, which means "he who binds." They are called Njares, because they belong to the clan of Njörvi-Nari.

*Völundarkviða* (str. 17, with the following prose addition) makes Nidad's queen command Völund's knee-sinews to be cut. Of such a cruelty the older poem, "*Deor the Scald's Complaint*," knows nothing.<sup>8</sup> This poem relates, on the other hand, that Nidad bound Völund with a fetter made from a strong sinew:

*sipþan hinne Nidhad on  
nede legde  
sveoncre seono-bende*

After Nidhad on him  
placed constraints  
slack bonds of sinew

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<sup>8</sup> The current Penguin Classics translation by Michael Alexander in *The Earliest English Poems* renders the lines below as "Nithhad put a knife to his hamstrings laid clever bonds (on the better man)." This error is likely caused by a familiarity with the Völund legend, and either a misunderstanding of or an attempt to explain the sinew bonds. I mention this only because the book is easily accessible, and well-worth reading.

Though Völund is in the highest degree skilful, he is not able to free himself from these bonds. They are of magic kind, and resemble those *örlögþættir* which are tied by Mimir's kinswoman Urd. Nidad accordingly here appears in Mimir-Njörvi's character as "binder." With this fetter of sinew we must compare the one with which Loki was bound, and that tough and elastic one which was made in the lower world and which holds Fenrir bound until Ragnarok. And as Völund -- a circumstance already made probable, and one that shall be fully proved below -- actually regards himself as insulted by the gods, and has planned a terrible revenge against them, then it is an enemy of Odin that Nidhad here binds, and the above-cited paraphrase for the death-dis, Urd, employed by Egil Skallagrimson, "the kinswoman of the binder (Njörvi) of Odin's foes" (see No. 85), also becomes applicable here.

The tradition concerning Nidhad's original identity with Mimir flourished for a long time in the German Middle-Age sagas, and passed from there into the *Pidreks Saga af Bern*, where the banished Völund became Mimir's smith. The author of *Pidreks Saga af Bern*, compiling both from German and from Norse sources, saw Völund in the German records as a smith in Mimir's employ, and in the Norse sagas he found him as Nidhad's smith, and from the two synonyms he made two persons.

The Norse form of the name most nearly corresponding to the Old English *Nidhad* is *Niði*, "the subterranean," and that Mimir also among the Norsemen was known by this epithet is plain both from *Sólarljóð* and *Völuspá*. The skald of *Sólarljóð* sees in the lower world "Nidi's sons, seven together, drinking the clear mead from the well of ring-Regin." The well of the lower world with the "clear mead" is Mimir's fountain, and the paraphrase ring-Regin is well suited to Mimir, who possessed among other treasures the wonderful ring of Hotherus. *Völuspá* speaks of Nidi's mountain,<sup>1</sup> the Hvergelmir mountain, from which the subterranean dragon Nidhogg flies (see No. 75), and of Nidi's plains<sup>2</sup> where Sindri's race have their golden hall. Sindri is, as we know, one of the most celebrated primeval smiths of mythology, and he smithied Thor's lightning hammer, Frey's golden boar, and Odin's spear Gungnir (*Gylfaginning*).<sup>3</sup> Dwelling with his kinsmen in Mimir's realm, he is one of the artists whom the ruler of the lower world kept around him (cp. No. 53). Several of the wonderful things made by these artists, as for instance the harvest-god's Skidbladnir, and golden boar, and Sif's golden locks, are manifestly symbols of growth or vegetation. The same is therefore true of the original Germanic primeval smiths as of the Ribhus, the ancient smiths of *Rigveda*, that they make not only implements and weapons, but also grass and herbs. Out of the lower world grows the world-tree, and is kept continually fresh by the liquids of the sacred fountains. In the abyss of the lower world and in the sea is ground that mould which makes the fertility of Midgard possible (see No. 80); in the lower world are "smithied" those flowers and those harvests which grow out of this mould, and from the manes of the subterranean horses, and from their foaming bridles, falls on the fields and meadows that honey-dew "which gives harvests to men."

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<sup>1</sup> verse 66, *Niðaffjöll*

<sup>2</sup> verse 36, *Niðavöllum*

<sup>3</sup> The reference here is to the Contest of the Artists in *Skáldskaparmál* 35; the treasures Sindri creates for the Aesir are the hammer Mjöllnir for Thor, the boar Gullinbursti for Frey, and the ring Draupnir for Odin.

Finally, it must be pointed out that when Nidhad binds Völund, the foe of the gods, this is in harmony with Mimir's activity throughout the epic of the myths as the friend of the Aesir, and as the helper of Odin, his sister's son, in word and deed.

Further evidences of Mimir's identity with Nidhad are to be found in the Svipdag myth, which I shall discuss further on.

*Vafþrúðnismál* states in strophe 25 that "beneficent *regin* (creators) created *Ný* and *Nið* to count times for men," this being said in connection with what it states about Narvi, Nott, and Dag. In the *Völuspá* dwarf-list we find that the chief of these *regin* was Modsognir, whose identity with Mimir has been shown (see No. 53). Modsognir-Mimir created among other "dwarfs" also *Nýi* and *Niði* (*Völuspá* 11). These are, therefore, his sons at least in the sense that they are indebted to him for their origin. The expressions to create and to beget are very closely related in the mythology. Of Njörd, Vafthrudnir also says (str. 39) that "wise *regin* created him" in Vanaheim.

As sons of Nidi-Mimir the changes of the moon have been called after his name *Niði*, and collectively they have been called by the plural *Niðjar*, in a later time *Niðar*. And as Nott's brothers, they are enumerated along with her as a stereotyped alliteration. In *Vafþrúðnismál* Odin asks the wise giant whether he knows whence Nott and Nidjar (*Nótt með Niðum*) came, and *Völuspá* 6 relates that in the dawn of time the high holy gods (*regin*) seated themselves on their judgment-seats and gave names to Nott and Nidjar (*Nótt og Niðjum*). The giving of a name was in heathen times a sacred act, which implied an adoption in the name-giver's family or circle of friends.

*Niðjar* also appears to have had his signification of moon-changes in regard to the changes of months. According to Saxo (see No. 46), King Gorm saw in the lower world twelve sons of Gudmund-Mimir, all "of noble appearance." Again, *Sólarljóð*'s skald says that the sons of Nidi, whom he saw in the lower world, were "seven together." From the standpoint of a nature-symbol the difference in these statements is explained by the fact that the months of the year were counted as twelve, but in regard to seasons and occupations there were seven divisions: *gor-mánuðr*, *frer-m.*, *hrút-m.*, *ein-m.*, *sól-m.*, *sel-m.*, *kornskurðar-mánuðr*.<sup>4</sup> Seven is the epic-mythological number of these *Niðjar*. To the saga in regard to these I shall return in No. 94.

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<sup>4</sup> The reference to 7 "economical months" is unique to Rydberg (see also No. 94) and may be derived from Vigfusson who says "for the names of the economical months see *Edda* 103" (*Dictionary* 419). That passage, *Skáldskaparmál* 78 (Faulkes, *Skáldska.* 63) lists the names of 12 months, and variant names of three. Of these 15 names, Rydberg omits *Haustmánuður*, *Þorri*, *Gói*, *Gauk-m*, *Sáðtíð*, *Heyannir*, *Egg-tíð*, and *Stekktíð*. How Rydberg pared these down to seven and what he thought they represented remains a mystery. He never fully discusses it.

The Old Icelandic calendar divided the years into 12 lunar months of 30 days each. A 5 day period was added to make the lunar year coincide with the solar year. Coexisting side by side with this was a seasonal almanac which divided the year into two equal halves, summer and winter, each consisting of 26 seven day weeks. Although this is the system Rydberg likely refers to, the number 7 clearly corresponds to days of the week rather than months.



The names, epithets, and paraphrases with which the king of the lower world, the ward of the fountain of wisdom, was designated, according to the statements previously made, are the following:

- (1) *Mímir* (*Hodd-mímir*, *Mímr*, *Mími*, *Mime der alte*).
- (2) *Narfi* (*Narvi*, *Njörvi*, *Nörr*, *Nari*, *Neri*).
- (3) *Niði* (*Nidhad*, *Niðaðr*, *Niðuðr*, *Niðungr*).

These three names, which mean the Thinker, the Binder, the Subterranean, are presumably all ancient.

- (4) *Móðsognir*, "the mead-drinker."
- (5) *Hoddrofnir*, presumably "the one bounteous in treasures."
- (6) *Gauta spjalli*, "the one with whom Gauti (Odin) counsels."
- (7) *Baugreginn*, Ring-regin.

(8) *Goðmundr*, the name by which Mimir appears in Christian Middle-Age sagas of Norse origin. To these names may still be added:

(9) *Fimbulþulr*, "the great teacher" (the reciter). *Hávamál* (str. 142; cp. str. 80)<sup>5</sup> says that *Fimbulþulr* drew (*fáði*) the runes, that *ginnregin* "made" (*görðu*) them, that is to say, in the older sense of the word, prepared them for use, and that Odin (*hroptr rögn*) carved (*reist*) them. In the strophes immediately preceding, it is said that Odin, by self-sacrifice, begot runes out of the deep and fimbul-songs from Bestla's brother. These statements, joined with those which mention how the runes given by Mimir were spread over the world, and were taught by various clan-chiefs to different clans (see No. 53), make it evident that a perfect myth had been developed in regard to the origin of the runes and the spreading of runic knowledge. Mimir, as the possessor of the well of wisdom, was the inventor or source of the runes. When *Sigurdrífumál* (str. 13) says that they dropped out of Hoddrofnir's horn, this is, figuratively speaking, the same as *Hávamál* tells, when it states that Fimbulthul carved them.<sup>6</sup> The oldest powers (*ginnregin*) and Odin afterwards developed and spread them.

At the time of Tacitus, and probably one or two centuries earlier, the art of writing was known among the Teutons. The runic inscriptions that have come down to our time bear evidence of a Greek-Roman origin.

By this we do not mean to deny that there were runes -- at least, non-phonetic ones -- before them. The many kinds of magic runes of which our mythic records speak are perhaps reminiscences of them. At all events we must distinguish the latter from the common runes for writing, and also from the many kinds of cipher-runes, the keys of which are to be sought in the common phonetic rune-row.

(10) *Brimir*. By the side of the golden hall of Sindri, *Völuspá* 37 mentions the giant Brimir's "*bjór*" hall, which is in *Ókólnir*. *Bjórr* is a synonym for mead and ale (*Alvíssmál* 34). *Ókólnir* means "the place where cold is not found." The reference is to a

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<sup>5</sup> Even though the identity of *Fimbulþulr* is unclear from the strophe itself, this name is widely assumed to refer to Odin. On this view, see Simek *DNM* pg. 83 and David Evans' *Hávamál*, Viking Society for Northern Research, University College, London 1986.

<sup>6</sup> Today the meaning of this verse is considered obscure, and the names are found nowhere else.

giant dwelling in the lower world who presides over mead, and whose hall is situated in a domain to which cold cannot penetrate. The myth has put this giant in connection with Ymir, who in relative opposition to him is called *Leirbrimir*, clay-Brimir (*Fjölsvinnsmál* 12). These circumstances refer to Mimir. So also *Sigurdrífumál* 14, where it is said that "Odin stood on the mountain with Brimir's sword" (*Brimis eggjar*), when Mimir's head spoke with him for the first time. The expression "Brimir's sword" is ambiguous. As a head was once used as a weapon against Heimdall, a sword and a head can, according to *Skáldskaparmál*, be employed as paraphrases for each other, therefore "Brimir's sword" may be the same as "Mimir's head" (see *Skáldskaparmál* 85; cp. *Skáldskaparmál* 15, and *Gylfaginning* 27).<sup>7</sup> *Sigurdrífumál* certainly also employs the phrase in its literal sense of a famous mythological sword, for, in the case in question, it represents Odin as fully armed, with helmet on his head; and the most excellent mythological sword, according to an added line in strophe 44 of *Grímnismál* (Cod. A.), bore Brimir's name,<sup>8</sup> just as the same sword in the German saga has the name *Miminc* (*Biterolf*, v. 176, in *Pidreks Saga af Bern* changed to *Mimmung*), doubtless because it at one time was in Mimir-Nidhad's possession; for the German saga (*Biterolf*, 157; cp. *Pidreks Saga af Bern*, ch. 23) remembers that a sword called by Mimir's name was the same celebrated weapon as that made by Völund (Wieland in *Biterolf*; Velint in *Pidreks Saga af Bern*), and thus the same work of art as that which, according to *Pidreks Saga af Bern*, Nidhad captured from him during his stay in Wolfdales.

## 89.

### THE MEAD MYTH.

We have seen (Nos. 72, 73) that the mead which was brewed from the three subterranean liquids destroys the effects of death and gives new vitality to the departed, and that the same liquid is absorbed by the roots of the world-tree, and in its trunk is distilled into that sap which gives the tree eternal life. From the stem the mead rises into the foliage of the crown, whose leaves nourish the fair giver of "the sparkling drink," in *Grímnismál* symbolized as Heidrun, from the streams of whose teats the mead-horns in Asgard are filled for the einherjes. The morning dew which falls from Yggdrasil down into the dales of the lower world contains the same elements. From the bridle of Hrimfaxi and from the horses of the valkyries some of the same dew also falls in the valleys of Midgard (see No. 74). The flowers receive it in their chalices, where the bees extract it, and thus is produced the earthly honey which man uses, and from which he brews his mead (cp. *Gylfaginning* 16). Thus the latter too contains some of the strength of Mimir's and Urd's fountains (*veigar* - see Nos. 72, 73), and thus it happens that it is able to stimulate the mind and inspire poetry and song - nay, used with prudence, it may suggest excellent expedients in important emergencies (cp. Tacitus, *Germania*).

Thus the world-tree is among the Teutons, as it is among their kinsmen the Iranians (see below), a mead-tree. And so it was called by the latter, possibly also by the

<sup>7</sup> *Skáldskaparmál* 85 (Faulkes tr. *Skáldska.* 69) Head: "Heimdall's sword, it is normal to use any term for sword you like and qualify it with one of Heimdall's names"; cp. *Skáldskaparmál* 15 "A sword is called Heimdall's head; it is said he was struck through with a man's head. ...and ever since the head has been called Heimdall's doom; man's doom is an expression for sword."; *Gylfaginning* 27 "The head is referred to as Heimdall's sword".

<sup>8</sup> *ænn Brimir sverða*, "and of swords, Brimir" (Bugge's *Sæmundar Edda*, pg. 85)

former. The name *mjötviður*, with which the world-tree is mentioned in *Völuspá* 2 and whose origin and meaning have been so much discussed, is from a mythological standpoint satisfactorily explained if we assume that an older word, *mjöðviður*, the mead-tree, passed into the word similar in sound, *mjötviður*, the tree of fate (from *mjöt*, measure; cp. *mjötuður* in the sense of fate, the power which gives measure, and the Anglo-Saxon *metod*, Old Saxon *metod*, the giver of measure, fate, providence).<sup>9</sup>

The sap of the world-tree and the *veigar* of the horn of the lower world are not, however, precisely the same mead as the pure and undefiled liquid from Mimir's fountain, that which Odin in his youth, through self-sacrifice, was permitted to taste, nor is it precisely the same as that concerning the possession of which the powers of mythology long contended, before it finally, through Odin's adventures at Suttung's, came to Asgard. The episodes of this conflict concerning the mead will be given as my investigation progresses, so far as they can be discovered. Here we must first examine what the heathen records have preserved in regard to the closing episode in which the conflict was ended in favor of Asgard. What the *Prose Edda* tells about it (*Skáldskaparmál* 6, *Skáldska.* 58, Faulkes tr.), I must for the present leave entirely unnoticed, lest the investigation should go astray and become entirely abortive.

The chief sources are the *Hávamál* strophes 104-110, and strophes 13 and 14. Subordinate sources are *Grímnismál* 50 and *Ynglingatal* 2 (*Ynglingasaga* 12). To this must be added half a strophe by Eyvind Skaldaspillir (*Skáldskaparmál* 9).

The statements of the chief source have, strange to say, been almost wholly unobserved, while the mythologists have confined their attention to the later presentation in *Skáldskaparmál*, which cannot be reconciled with the earlier accounts, and which from a mythological standpoint is worse than worthless. In 1877 justice was done for the first time to *Hávamál* in the excellent analysis of the strophes in question made by Prof. M. B. Richert, in his "*Attempts at explaining the obscure passages not hitherto understood in the Poetic Edda.*" [*Försök til belysning af mörkare och oförstådda ställen den poetiska eddan*, Upsala Universitets Årsskrift, 1877]<sup>10</sup>

From *Hávamál* alone we get directly or indirectly the following: The giant Suttung, also called Fjalar, has acquired possession of the precious mead for which Odin longs. The Asa-father resolves to capture it by cunning.

There is a feast at Fjalar's. Guests belonging to the clan of frost-giants are gathered in his halls (*Hávamál* 110). Besides these we must imagine that Suttung-Fjalar's own nearest kith and kin are present. The mythology speaks of a separate clan entirely distinct from the frost-giants, known as *Suttungs synir* (*Alvíssmál*, *Skírnismál*; see No. 78), whose chief must be Suttung-Fjalar, as his very name indicates. The Suttung kin and the frost-giants are accordingly gathered at the banquet on the day in question.

An honored guest is expected, and a golden high-seat prepared for him awaits his arrival. From the continuation of the story we learn that the expected guest is the wooer

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<sup>9</sup> Rydberg is speculating here on the origin of the word, thus nothing can be established on this basis. His source (Vigfusson's *Dictionary* pg. 433) considers the word *mjötviður* to be a scribal error for *mjötuður* found in *Vsp* 47. Today *mjötviður* is defined as "measure-tree," well-proportioned tree or the tree that metes out fate, and *mjötuður* as "the one who metes out fate" or fate itself, and thus later used as a word to designate the Christian god among the Anglo-Saxons.

<sup>10</sup> Although Richert's interpretation differs from Rydberg in places, he suggests that *Hávamál* 104-110 "imply a version where Odin arrives at Suttung's halls as a seemingly respectable wooer and goes through a marriage ceremony with Gunnlod (Evans' *Hávamál*, 120).

or betrothed of Suttung-Fjalar's daughter, Gunnlod. On that night the wedding of the giant's daughter is to be celebrated.

Odin arrives, but in disguise. He is received as the guest of honor, and is conducted to the golden high-seat. It follows of necessity that the guise assumed by Odin, when he descends to the mortal foes of the gods and of himself, is that of the expected lover. Who the latter was *Hávamál* does not state, unless strophe 110:5, like so many other passages, is purposely ambiguous and contains his name, a question which I shall consider later.

After the adventure has ended happily, Odin looks back with pleasure upon the success with which he assumed the guise of the stranger and played his part (str. 107). *Vel keypts litar hefī eg vel notið*: "From the well changed exterior I reaped great advantage."<sup>11</sup> In regard to the mythological meaning of *litar*, see No. 95. The expression *keyptur litar*, which literally means "purchased appearance," may seem strange, but *kaupa* means not only to "buy," but also to "change," "exchange"; *kaupa klæðum við einn* means "to change clothes with some one."<sup>12</sup> Of a queen who exchanged her son with a slave woman, it is said that she *keypti um sonu við ambátt*.<sup>13</sup> But the cause of Odin's joy is not that he successfully carried out a cunning trick, but that he in this way accomplished a deed of inestimable value for Asgard and for man (str. 107:4-6), and he is sorry that poor Gunnlod's trust in him was betrayed (str. 105). This is a characterization of Odin's personality.

Nor does *Hávamál* tell us what hinders the real lover from putting in his appearance and thwarting Odin's plan, while the latter is acting his part; but of this we learn something from another source, which we shall consider below.

The adventure undertaken by Odin is extremely dangerous, and he ran the risk of losing his head (str. 106:6). For this reason he has, before entering Suttung-Fjalar's halls, secured an egress, through which he must be able to fly, and, if possible, with the skaldic mead as his booty. There is no admittance for everybody to the rocky abode where the mead-treasure so much desired by all powers is kept. The dwelling is, as Eyvind tells us, situated in an abyss, and the door is, as another record tells us, watched. But Odin has let Rati bore ("gnaw") a tunnel through the mountain large enough to give him room to retire secretly (str. 106). In regard to Rati, see No. 82.

When the pretended lover has seated himself in the golden high-seat, a conversation begins around the banquet table. It is necessary for Odin to guard well his words, for he represents another person, well known there, and if he is not cautious he may be discovered. It is also necessary to be eloquent and winning, so that he may charm Gunnlod and secure her devotion, for without her knowledge he cannot gain his end, that of carrying away the supply of inspiration-mead kept at Suttung's. Odin also boasts (str.

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<sup>11</sup> *Vel keypts litar hefī eg vel notið*, the meaning of this phrase is uncertain. Rydberg gives powerful reasons to interpret it as "exchanging appearance," i.e. donning a disguise, or using glamour. Over the years, several different interpretations have been offered. In his commentary to *Hávamál* (1986), David Evans notes that *litar* has never been satisfactorily explained. For a complete discussion, see Evans' pg. 121. He concludes "In all probability the line is corrupt without redemption." Rydberg's interpretation makes good sense here.

<sup>12</sup> *Fornmanna Sögur* II, pg. 156, *Ólafs konungs Tryggvassonar* ch. 201.

<sup>13</sup> *Fornaldasögur Norðurlanda, Hálf's Saga og Hálf'srekka* 17

103, 104) that on this occasion he proved himself *minnugr* and *málugur* and *margfróður*<sup>14</sup> and eloquent for the realization of his plan.

During the progress of the feast the guest had his glass filled to his honor with the precious mead he desired to obtain. "Gunnlod gave me on the golden seat the drink of the precious mead" (str. 105).

Then the marriage ceremony was performed, and on the holy ring Gunnlod took to Odin the oath of faithfulness (str. 110).

It would have been best for the Asa-father if the banquet had ended here, and the bridegroom and the bride had been permitted to betake themselves to the bridal chamber. But the jolly feast is continued and the horns are frequently filled and emptied. *Hávamál* does not state that the part played by Odin required him to be continually drinking; but we shall show that Gunnlod's wooer was the champion drinker of all mythology, and in the sagas he has many epithets referring to this quality. Odin became on his own confession "drunk, very drunk, at Fjalar's." "The hern of forgetfulness which steals one's wit and understanding hovers over his drink" (str. 13).<sup>15</sup>

In this condition he let drop words which were not those of caution-words which sowed the seed of suspicion in the minds of some of his hearers who were less drunk. He dropped words which were not spelt with letters of intelligence and good sense -- words which did not suit the part he was playing.

At last the banquet comes to an end, and the bridegroom is permitted to be alone with the bride in that rocky ball which is their bed-chamber. There is no doubt that Odin won Gunnlod's heart, "the heart of that good woman whom I took in my embrace" (str. 108). With her help he sees his purpose attained and the mead in his possession. But the suspicions which his reckless words had sown bear fruit in the night, and things happen which *Hávamál* does not give a full account of, but of a kind which would have prevented Odin from getting out of the giant-gard, had he not had Gunnlod's assistance (str. 108). Odin was obliged to fight and rob Gunnlod of a kinsman (str. 110 - *hann lét grætta Gunnlöðu*; see Richert., p. 17).<sup>16</sup> Taking the supply of mead with him, he takes flight by the way Rati had opened for him -- a dangerous way, for "above and below me were the paths of the giants" (str. 106).

It seems to have been the custom that the wedding guests on the morning of the next day went to the door of the bridal-chamber to hear how the newly-married man was getting on in his new capacity of husband. According to *Hávamál*, Suttung's guests, the frost-giants, observe this custom; but the events of the night change their inquiries into the question whether Odin had succeeded in escaping to the gods or had been slain by Suttung (str. 109, 110).

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<sup>14</sup> *minnugr*, mindful, having a good memory; *málugur*, eloquent; *margfróður*, knowledgeable; All found in *Hávamál* 103. Strophes 104-110 are usually taken as a unit, here Rydberg incorporates the previous stanza.

<sup>15</sup> Evans among others recognized the relationship between strophes 104-110 and strophes 13, 14. He compares the testimony of *Hávamál* to Snorri's account, saying "it is clearly a variant version, for nothing is told elsewhere of Odin's being drunk nor of his visiting Fjalar. St. 14 reads most naturally as though in this version Fjalar, not Suttung, was the name of Gunnlod's giant father." (Evans' *Hávamál* pg. 81)

<sup>16</sup> Richert says: "These lines compared to those just prior to them indicate that Odin seems guilty of what *Sigurdrífumál* 23 calls *trygðrof*, breach of troth, and that he thus appears as *eiðrofa*, an oath-breaker."

Thus far *Hávamál*. We must now examine *Grímnismál* 50 and *Ynglingatal* 2, whose connection with the myth concerning Odin's exploit in the home of Suttung-Fjalar has not previously been noticed.

Odin says in *Grímnismál* 50:

*Sviður og Sviðrir  
er eg hét að Sökkmímis,  
og duldag þann inn aldna jötun,  
þá er eg Miðvitnis vark  
ins mæra burar  
orðinn einbani.*

"Sviður and Sviðrir I was called at *Sökkmimir's*, and I presented myself to the ancient giant, at the time when I alone became the slayer of Midvitnir's famous son."

*Ynglingatal* 15 reads:

*En dagskjarr  
Durnis niðja  
salvörðuður  
Svegði vélti,  
þá er í stein  
inn stórgeði  
Dulsa konur  
eft dvergi hljóp  
og salur bjartur  
þeirra Sökkmímis  
jötunbyggður  
við jöfri gein.*

"The day-shy hall-guard of Durnir's descendants deceived *Svegðir* when he, the dauntless son of Dulsi, ran after the dwarf into the rock, and when the shining giant-inhabited hall of *Sökkmimir's* kinsmen yawned against the chief." (In regard to Dulsi, see No. 83.)

What attracts attention in a comparison of these two strophes is that the epithet *Sökkmimir* is common to both of them, while this name does not occur elsewhere in the whole Old Norse literature.

In both the strophes *Sökkmimir* is a giant. *Grímnismál* calls him *inn aldna jötun*, "the ancient giant," with which we may compare Odin's words in *Hávamál* 104: *inn aldna jötun eg sótta*, "the ancient giant I sought," when he visited that giant-chief, to whose clan Suttung-Fjalar, the possessor of the skald-mead, belonged.

In both the strophes the giant *Sökkmimir* is the lord and chief of those giants to whom, according to *Grímnismál*, Odin comes, and outside of whose hall-door, according to *Ynglingatal*, a certain *Svegðir* is deceived by the ward of the hall. This position of *Sökkmimir* in relation to his surroundings already appears, so far as *Grímnismál* is

concerned, from the expression *að Sökkmímis*, which means not only "with Sökkmimir," but also "at Sökkmimir's," that is to say, with that group of kinsmen and in that abode where Sökkmimir is chief and ruler. It is with this giant-chief, and in his rocky hall, that Miðvitnir and his son sojourns when Odin visits him, presents himself to him, and by the name Sviður (Sviðrir) acts the part of another person, and in this connection causes the death of Miðvitnir's son. The same quality of Sökkmimir as clan-chief and lord appears in the *Ynglingatal* strophe, in the form that the hall, outside of whose door Svegðir was deceived, is *þeirra Sökkmímis*, that is to say, is the abode of Sökkmimir's kinsmen and household, "is their giant-home." Thus all the giants who dwell there take their clan-name from Sökkmimir.

The appellation *Sökkmimir* is manifestly not a name in the strictest sense, but one of the epithets by which this ancient giant-chief could be recognized in connection with mythological circumstances. We shall point out these mythological circumstances further on.

The *Ynglingatal* strophe gives us, in fact, another epithet for the same mythic person. What the latter half of the strophe calls the hall of Sökkmimir's kinsmen and household, the former half of the same strophe calls the hall of Durnir's descendants. Thus Sökkmimir and Durnir are the same person.

*Durnir*, on the other hand, is a variation of *Durinn* (cp. the parallel variations *Dvalnir* and *Dvalinn*).<sup>17</sup> Of Durin we already know (see No. 53) that he is one of the ancient beings of mythology who in time's morning, together with Modsognir-Mimir and in accordance with the resolve of the high-holy powers, created clans of artists. One of the artists created by Durin, and whose father he in this sense became, is, according to *Völuspá* 11, *Mjödvitnir*. Rask and Egilsson have for philological reasons assumed that *Miðvitnir* and *Mjödvitnir* are variations of the same name, and designate the same person (*mjödur*, in the dative *miði*). It here appears that the facts confirm this assumption. *Durinn* and *Mjödvitnir* in *Völuspá* correspond to *Durnir* and *Miðvitnir* in the strophes concerning Sökkmimir.

*Mjödvitnir* means the mead-wolf, he who captured the mead celebrated in mythology. As Odin, having assumed the name of another, visits the abode of the descendants of Durnir-Sökkmimir, he accordingly visits that rocky home, where that giant dwells who has secured and possesses the mead desired by Odin.

*Ynglingatal* reports, as we have seen, that a certain Svegðir was deceived, when he was outside of the door of the hall of the kinsmen of Durnir-Sökkmimir. He who deceived him was the doorkeeper of the hall. The door appeared to be already open, and the "giant-inhabited" hall "yawned" festively illuminated (*bjartur*) toward Svegðir. If we may believe *Ynglingatal*'s commentary on the strophe, the hall-ward had called to him and said that Odin was inside. The strophe represents Svegðir as running after the hall-ward, that is to say, toward the door in the rock, eager to get in. What afterwards happened *Ynglingatal* does not state; but that Svegðir did not gain the point he desired, but fell into some snare laid by the doorkeeper, follows from the expression that he was deceived by him, and that this caused his death follows from the fact that the purpose of the strophe is to tell how his life ended. *Ynglingasaga* says that he got into the rock, but never out of it. The rest that this saga has to say of Svegðir -- that he was on a journey to

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<sup>17</sup> Compare the hart-names *Dáinn* and *Dvalinn* found in *Grímnismál* 33 with the hart-names *Dáinn* and *Dvalarr* in *Nafnaþular* IV (Faulkes' *Skáldskaparmál* 75)

the old Asgard in "Tyrkland," to find "Odin the old," *Gylfaginning's* King Priam -- has nothing to do with the mythology and with *Ynglingatal*, but is of course important in regard to the Euhemeristic hypothesis in regard to the descent of the Aesir from Tyrkland (Troy), on which the author of *Ynglingatal*, like that of *Gylfaginning*, bases his work.

The variations *Svegðir*, *Svigðir*, and *Sveigðir* are used interchangeably in regard to the same person (cp. *Ynglingasaga* 12, *Ynglingatal* 2; *Fornaldar SögurNordurlanda* , *Hversu Noregr byggðist* 4; *Fornmanna Sögur*, 1. 29, *Saga Ólafs Konungs Tryggvasonar* ch. 19; and Egilsson, 796, 801).<sup>18</sup> *Svigðir* seems to be the oldest of these forms. The words means 'the great drinker' (Egilsson, 801).<sup>19</sup> *Sveigðir* was one of the most popular heroes of mythology (see the treatise on the "Ivaldi race" beginning at No. 95), and was already in heathen times regarded as a race-hero<sup>20</sup> of the Swedes. In *Ynglingatal* 1 Svithiod is called *geiri Svigðis*, "Svigðir's domain."<sup>21</sup> At the same time, *Svegðir* is an epithet of Odin. But it should be borne in mind that several of the names by which Odin is designated belong to him only in a secondary and transferred sense, and he has assumed them on occasions when he did not want to be recognized, and wanted to represent some one else (cp. *Grímnismál* 49) whose name he then assumed.

When Odin visits the abode of Durinn-Sökkmimir, where the precious mead is preserved, he calls himself, according to *Grímnismál*, *Sviðurr*, *Sviðrir*. Now it is the case with this name as with *Svigðir*, that it was connected with Svithiod. *Skáldskaparmál* 81 says that *Svíþjóð var kallað af nafni Sviðurs*, "Svithiod was called after the name of Svidur."

Hence (1) the name *Sviðurr*, like *Svegðir-Sveigðir*, belongs to Odin, but only in a secondary sense, as one assumed or borrowed from another person; (2) *Sviðurr*, like *Svegðir-Sveigðir*, was originally a mythic person, whom tradition connected as a race hero with Svithiod.

From all this it appears that the names, facts, and the chain of events connect partly the strophes of *Grímnismál* and *Ynglingatal* with each other, and partly both of these with *Hávamál's* account of Odin's adventure to secure the mead, and this connection furnishes indubitable evidence that they concern the same episode in the mythological epic.

In the mythic fragments handed down to our time are found other epithets, which, like *Sveigðir*, refer to some mythical person who played the part of a champion drinker, and was connected with the myth concerning mead and brewing. These epithets are

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<sup>18</sup> *Lexicon Poeticum* (1860), p. 796: "Sveigðir, ...(*id. qu. Svigðir, cfr. formas sveigðir, sigðir, sigþær*)"; *ibid.* p. 811: "Aul est *id. qu. Sigðir*, inserto v, aul potator (*Angl. Swig, magnis haustibus bibere*)" **All of the literary sources named here refer to Sveigðir, the namesake of Svithiod. Egilsson identifies Sveigðir as a variant of Sveigðir, a name of Odin and a king of the Ynglings. Svigðir however is an ox heiti with no relation to Sveigðir. [The references to Egilsson occur on pages 550 & 553 of the 1966 edition.]**

<sup>19</sup> *aul potator*: This was the definition in the first edition of Egilsson's *Lexicon Poeticum*, the version used by Rydberg. The text was subsequently revised by Finnur Jónsson in 1931 and again in 1966. The latest edition defines *Svigðir* as a *heiti* for ox possibly meaning "the crooked horned" ("*den krumhornede*"), after *svig* "to bend or curve."

<sup>20</sup> "race-hero"; Swedish *stamheros*. There is no good way to render this term into English. *Stam-* (literally "stem") refers to the family, race, tribe, or stock of a person. Thus a *stamheros* is the hero of a particular family line or tribe of people in the mythology, rather than of a particular race of beings.

<sup>21</sup> The actual kenning here is *svigðis geira vogr*, meaning "the waves of the spear of the ox." The spear of the ox is a horn, and it's waves are the mead inside a drinking horn. Thus *svigðis geira vogr* is the mead itself. Rydberg repeats this mistake elsewhere in this chapter, and nos. 113 & 123.



*Ölvaldi*, *Ölmóður*, and *Sumblí finnakonungr*, *Sumblus phinnorum rex*<sup>22</sup> in Saxo. *Sumbl*, as a common noun, means ale, feast. In the Finn-king *Sumblí* these ideas are personified, just as the soma-drink in the Vedic songs is personified in King Soma. In my treatise on the Ivaldi race, I shall revert to the person who had these epithets, in order to make his mythological position clear. Here I shall simply point out the following: *Hávamál* 110 makes one of the frost-giants, Suttung's guests, say:

<i>Baugeið Óðinn</i>	111. A ring-oath Odin,
<i>hygg eg að unnið hafi;</i>	gave I believe..
<i>hvað skal hans tryggðum trúa?</i>	Who shall trust his good faith?
<i>Suttung svikinn</i>	Suttung swindled,
<i>hann lét sumblí frá</i>	of Sumbl bereft,
<i>og grætta Gunnlöðu.</i>	and Gunnlöd made to cry!

The strophe makes the one who says this blame Odin for breaking the oath he took on the ring, and thus showing himself unworthy of being trusted in the promises and oaths he might give in the future, whereupon it is stated that he left Suttung deceitfully robbed of *sumbl* (*Sumblí*), and Gunnlod in tears over a lost kinsman.

The expression that Suttung was deceitfully robbed of *sumbl*, to be intelligible, requires no other interpretation than the one which lies near at hand, that Suttung was treacherously deprived of the mead. But as the skald might have designated the drink Suttung lost in a more definite manner than with the word *sumbl*, and as he still chose this word, which to his hearers, familiar with the mythology, must have called to mind the personal *Sumblí* (*Ölvaldi-Sveigðir*), it is not only possible, but, as it seems to me, even probable, that he purposely chose an ambiguous word, and wanted thereby to refer at the same time to the deceitfully captured mead, and to the intended son-in-law deceitfully lost; and this seems to me to be corroborated by the juxtaposition of Suttung's and Gunnlod's loss. The common noun *sumbl*'s double meaning as mead and "drink-feast" has also led M. B. Richert (page 14 in his treatise mentioned above) to assume that "the expression was purposely chosen in such a manner that the meaning should not be entirely limited and definite," and he adds: "A similar indefiniteness of statement, which may give rise to ambiguity and play of words, is frequently found in the old songs." Meanwhile, I do not include this probability in my evidence, and do not present it as the basis of any conclusions.

The name Suttung shows in its very form that it is a patronymic, and although we can furnish no linguistic evidence that the original form was *Surtungr* and characterized its possessor as son of Surt, still there are other facts which prove that such was actually the case. The very circumstance that the skaldic drink which came into Suttung's possession is paraphrased with the expression *sylgur Surts ættar*, "the drink of Surt's race" (*Fornmanna Sögur*, III. 3),<sup>23</sup> points that way, and the question is settled completely by the half-strophe quoted in the *Prose Edda* (*Skáldskaparmál* 9), and composed by Eyvind Skáldaspillir, where the skaldic potion is called:

<sup>22</sup> *Sumblí finnakonungr*, *Sumblus phinnorum rex*; *Sumbl*, King of the Finns.

<sup>23</sup> This kenning, meaning "drink of the race of Surt" simply means "drink of giants" and is a normal kenning for poetry.

*hinn er Surts  
úr sökhdölum  
farmögnuður  
fljúgandi bar.*

("the drink, which Odin flying bore from Surt's deep dales").<sup>24</sup>

When Odin had come safely out of Fjalar-Suttung's deep rocky halls, and, on eagle-pinions, was flying with the precious mead to Asgard, it was accordingly that abyss, in which Surt dwells, which he left below him, and the giant race who had been drinking the mead before that time, while it was still in Suttung's possession, was Surt's race. From this it follows that "the ancient giant," whom Odin visited for the purpose of robbing his circle of kinsmen of the skaldic mead, is none other than that being so well known in the mythology, Surt, and that Surt is identical with Durinn (Durnir), and Sökkmimir.

This also explains the epithet *Sökkmimir*, "the Mimir of the deep." Sökk- in Sökk-Mimir refers to Sökk- in Sökhdalir, Surt's domain, and that Surt could be associated with Mimir is, from the standpoint of Old Norse poetics, perfectly justifiable from the fact that he appears in time's morning as a co-worker with Mimir, and operating with him as one of the forces of creation in the service of the oldest high-holy powers (see No. 53). Consequently Mimir and Sökkmimir (Surt-Durinn) created the clans of artists.

Surt, Durinn, Durnir, Sökkmimir, are, therefore, synonyms, and designate the same person. He has a son who is designated by the synonyms Suttungur, Fjalar, Mjödvitnir (Miðvitnir). Suttung has a son slain by Odin, when the latter robs him of the mead of inspiration, and a daughter, Gunnlod. The giant maid, deceived and deplored by Odin, is consequently the daughter of Surt's son.

Light is thus shed on the myth concerning the giant who reappears in Ragnarök, and there wields the sword which fells Frey and hurls the flames which consume the world. It is found to be connected with the myth concerning the oldest events of mythology. In time's morning we find the fire-being Surt -- the representative of subterranean fire -- as a creative force by the side of Mimir, who is a friend of the gods, and whose kinsman he must be as a descendant of Ymir. Both work together in peace for similar purposes and under the direction of the gods (*Völuspá* 9, 10). But then something occurs which interrupts the amicable relations. Mimir and Surt no longer work together. The fountain of creative force, the mead of wisdom and inspiration, is in the exclusive possession of Mimir, and he and Urd are together the ruling powers in the lower world. The fire-giant, the primeval artist, is then with his race relegated to the "deep dales," situated to the south (*Völuspá* 52), difficult of access, and dangerous for the gods to visit, and presumably conceived as located deeper down than the lower world governed by

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<sup>24</sup> It is impossible to determine whether *Surts sökhdölum*, "Surts deep vales" is a proper placename or simply a kenning for deep underground caverns.

The actual designation of Odin here is *farmögnuður*. Faulkes defines this word as "enhancer of the speed of travel, of Odin in the form of an eagle" (*Edda, Skáldskaparmál 2, Glossary and Index of Names*) and renders the phrase that "which the speedy one [Odin] flying bore from Surt's deep vales" (*Edda*, pg. 69). Arthur Gilchrist Brodeur renders this name "the Strong-through-spells" (*The Prose Edda*, American-Scandinavian Foundation 1960).

Mimir and Urd. That he tried to get possession of a part of "*Óðrærir*" follows from the position he afterwards occupies in the myth concerning the mead. When daylight again falls on him from the mythic fragments extant, his son has captured and is in possession of a supply of mead, which must originally have come from Mimir's fountain, and been chiefly composed of its liquid, for it is skaldic mead, it too, and can also be designated as *Óðrærir* (*Hávamál* 107), while the son is called "the mead-wolf," the one who has robbed and conceals the precious drink. Odin captures his mead by cunning, the grandson of the fire-giant is slain, the devoted love of the son's daughter is betrayed, and the husband selected for her is deceived and removed. All this, though done for purposes to benefit gods and men, demands and receives in the mythology its terrible retribution. It is a trait peculiar to the whole Germanic mythology that evil deeds, with a good purpose, even when the object is attained, produce evil results, which develop and finally smother the fruits of the good purpose. Thus Surt has a reason for appearing in Ragnarok as the annihilator of the world of the Aesir, when the latter is to make room for a realm of justice. The flames of revenge are hurled upon creation.

I have already above (No. 87) had occasion to speak of the choicest sword of mythology, the one which Völund smithied and Mimir captured, and which was fetched from the lower world by a hero whose name Saxo Latinized into Hotherus. In my treatise on the Ivaldi Race it shall be demonstrated who this Hotherus was in mythology, and that the sword was delivered by him to Frey. *Lokasenna* (42; cp. *Gylfaginning* 37), informs us that the lovesick Frey gave the sword to the giant Gymir for his bride. After coming into the hands of the giants it is preserved and watched over until Ragnarok by *Eggþér* (an epithet meaning sword-watcher), who in the Ironwood is the shepherd of the monster herd of Loki's progeny, which in the last days shall harry the world and fight in Ragnarok (*Völuspá* 40-42). When Ragnarok is at hand a giant comes to this sword-watcher in the guise of the red cock, the symbol of the destructive fire. This giant is Fjalar (*Völuspá* 42), and that the purpose of his visit is to secure the sword follows from the fact that the best sword of mythology is shortly afterwards in the hands of his father Surt (*Völuspá* 52) when the latter comes from the south with his band (the sons of Suttung, not of Muspell) to take part in the last conflict and destroy with fire that part of the world that can be destroyed. Frey is slain by the sword which was once his own.

In this manner the myth about the mead and that about the Völund sword are knit together.

Thor, too, ventured to visit Fjalar's abode. In regard to this visit we have a few words in strophe 26 of *Hárbarðsljóð*. Harbard accuses Thor, no doubt unjustly, of having exhibited fear. Of this matter we have no reliable details in the records from heathendom, but a comparison of the above strophe of *Hárbarðsljóð* with *Gylfaginning* shows that the account compiled in *Gylfaginning* from various mythic fragments concerning Thor's journey to Utgarda-Loki and his adventures there contains reminiscences of what the original myths have had to say about his experiences on his expedition to Fjalar's. The fire-giant natures of Surt and of his son Fjalar gleam forth in the narrative: the ruler of Utgard can produce earthquakes, and Logi (the flame) is his servant. It is also doubtlessly correct, from a mythical standpoint, that he is represented as exceedingly skilful in "deluding," in giving things the appearance of something else than they really are (see No. 39). When Odin assumed the guise of Fjalar's son-in-law, he defeated Surt's race with their own weapons.

Eyvind Skaldaspillir states, as we have seen, that Surt's abode is in dales down in the deep. From an expression in *Ynglingasaga*'s strophe we must draw the conclusion that its author, in harmony with this, conceived the abyss where Surt's race dwelt as regions to which the light of day never comes. Sökkmimir's doorkeeper, one of whose tasks it was to take notice of the wayfarers who approached, is a day-shy dwarf (*dagskjarr salvörðuður*; in regard to dwarfs that shun the light of day, see *Alvíssmál*). Darkness therefore broods over this region, but in the abode of the fire-giant it is light (the hall is *bjartur*).

I now return to the episodes in the mead-myth under discussion to recapitulate in brief the proofs and results. If we for a moment should assume that the main source, namely, the *Hávamál* strophes, together with Eyvind's half strophe, were lost, and that the only remaining evidences were *Grímnismál* 50 and *Ynglingatal* 2, together with the prose text in *Ynglingasaga*, then an analysis of these would lead to the following result:

(1) *Grímnismál* 50 and *Ynglingatal* 2 should be compared with each other. The reasons for assuming them to be intrinsically connected are the following:

- (a) Both contain the epithet Sökkmimir, which occurs nowhere else.
- (b) Both describe a primeval giant, who is designated by this epithet as chief and lord of a giant race gathered around him.
- (c) Both refer the events described to the same locality: the one tells what occurred in the halls of Sökkmimir; the other narrates an episode which occurred outside of the door of Sökkmimir's giant abode.
- (d) The one shows that Sökkmimir is identical with Durnir (Durinn); the other mentions Miðvitnir as one of Sökkmimir's subjects. Miðvitnir (Mjöðvitnir), according to *Völuspá*, was created by Durinn.
- (e) Both describe events occurring while Odin is inside at Sökkmimir's.
- (f) The one mentions Sviðurr, the other Svegðir. Mythologically, the two names refer to each other.

(2) To the giant group which Odin visits in the abode of Sökkmimir belongs the giant who captured the famous mead which Odin is anxious to secure. This appears from the epithet which the author of the *Grímnismál* strophe chose in order to designate him in such a manner that he could be recognized, namely, Miðvitnir, "the mead-wolf," an epithet which explains why the mead-thirsty Odin made his journey to this race hostile to the gods.

(3) That Odin did not venture, or did not think it desirable in connection with the purpose of his visit, to appear in his own name and in a guise easily recognized, is evident from the fact that he "disguised" himself, "acted the hypocrite" (*dulda*), in the presence of the giant, and appeared as another mythic person, Sviðurr.

This mythic person has been handed down in the traditions as the one who gave the name to Svithiod, and as a race-hero of the Swedes. *Svíþjóð var kallað af nafni Sviðurs*.

(4) While Odin, in the guise of this race-hero, plays his part in the mountain in the abode of Sökkmimir, a person arrives at the entrance of the halls of this giant. This person, Svegðir (Svigðir), is in the sagas called the race-hero of the Swedes, and after

him they have called Svithiod *geiri Sviðdis*. Odin, who acted Sviðurr's part, has also been called Sveigðir, Svegðir.

Sveigðir is an epithet, and means "the champion drinker" (Anglo-Saxon *swig*: to drink deep draughts).<sup>25</sup> "The champion drinker" is accordingly on his way to the "Mead-wolf," while Odin is in his abode. All goes to show that the event belongs to the domain of the mead-myth.

Accordingly, the situation is this: A pretended race-hero and namer of Svithiod is in the abode of Sökkmimir, while a person who, from a mythological standpoint, is the real race-hero and namer of Svithiod is on his way to Sökkmimir's abode and about to enter. The myth could not have conceived the matter in this way, unless the pretended race-hero was believed to act the part of the real one. The arrival of the real one makes Odin's position, which was already full of peril, still more dangerous, and threatens him with discovery and its consequences.

(5) If Odin appeared in the part of a "champion drinker," he was compelled to drink much in Sökkmimir's halls in order to maintain his part, and this, too, must have added to the danger of his position.

(6) Still the prudent Asa-father seems to have observed some degree of caution, in order that his plans might not be frustrated by the real Sveigðir. That which happens gives the strongest support to this supposition, which in itself is very probable. Sökkmimir's doorkeeper keeps watch in the darkness outside. When he discovers the approach of Sveigðir, he goes to meet him and informs him that Odin is inside. Consequently the doorkeeper knows that Sviðurr is Odin, who is unknown to all those within excepting to Odin himself. This and what follows seems to show positively that the wise Odin and the cunning dwarf act upon a settled plan. It may be delusion or reality, but Sveigðir sees the mountain door open to the illuminated giant-hall, and the information that Odin is within (the dwarf may or may not have added that Odin pretends to be Sveigðir) causes him, the "proud one," "of noble race," the kinsman of Dulsi (epithet of Mundilfari, see No. 83), to rush with all his might after the dwarf against the real or apparent door, and the result is that the dwarf succeeded in "deceiving" him (he *vélti* Sveigðir), so that he never more was seen.

This is what we learn from the strophes in *Grímnismál* and *Ynglingatal*, with the prose text of the latter. If we now compare this with what *Hávamál* and Eyvind relate, we get the following parallels:

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<sup>25</sup> This etymology is not sound. *Webster's 9<sup>th</sup> New Collegiate Dictionary* (1983) lists *swig* as first appearing in 1621, origin unknown. Interestingly for the variant Sviðrir, Simek notes the possibility of a derivation from the word *sviða*, spear, and applies this to Odin, "the spear-god." Later Rydberg demonstrates the true Sviðrir's (Ivaldi's) position as a mythic spear champion. On this point see Nos. 111 & 123.

*Hávamál and Eyvind:*

Odin visits *inn aldna jötun* (Surt and his race).

Odin's purpose is to deceive the old giant. In his abode is found a kinsman, who is in possession of the skaldic mead (Suttung-Fjalar).

Odin appears in the guise of Gunnlod's wooer, who, if he is named, is called Sumbli (*sumbl* = a drink, a feast).

Odin became drunk.

A catastrophe occurs causing Gunnlod to bewail the death of a kinsman.

To this is finally to be added that Eyvind's statement, that the event occurred in Surt's Sökkdalir, helps to throw light on Surt's epithet Sökkmimir, and particularly that Ynglingatal's account of the arrival and fate of the real Sveigðir fills a gap in *Hávamál*'s narrative, and shows how Odin, appearing in the guise of another person who was expected, could do so without fear of being surprised by the latter.

NOTE: The account in the *Prose Edda* about Odin's visit to Suttung seems to be based on some satire produced long after the introduction of Christianity. With a free use of the confused mythic traditions then extant, and without paying any heed to *Hávamál*'s statement, this satire was produced to show in a semi-allegorical way how good and bad poetry originated. The author of this satire either did not know or did not care about the fact that *Hávamál* identifies Suttung and Fjalar. To him they are different persons, of whom the one receives the skaldic mead as a ransom from the other. While in *Hávamál* the frost-giants give Odin the name *Bölverkur*, "the evil-doer," and this very properly from their standpoint, the *Prose Edda* makes Odin give himself this name when he is to appear incognito, though such a name was not calculated to inspire confidence. While in *Hávamál* Odin, in the guise of another, enters Suttung's halls, is conducted to a golden high-seat, and takes a lively part in the banquet and in the conversation, the *Prose Edda* makes him steal into the mountain through a small gimlet-hole and get down into Gunnlod's chamber in this manner, where he remains the whole time without seeing anyone else of the people living there, and where, with Gunnlod's consent, he empties to the bottom the giant's three mead-vessels, Óðrærir, Boðn, and Són. These three names belong, as we have seen, in the real mythology to the three subterranean fountains which

*The strophes about Sökkmimir:*

Odin visits *inn aldna jötun* (Sökkmimir and his race).

Odin's purpose is to deceive the old giant. In his abode is found a kinsman who is in possession of the skaldic mead (Midvitnir).

Odin appears as Sviðurr-Sveigðir. Sveigðir means "the champion drinker."

Odin must have drunk much, since he appears among the giants as one acting the part of a "champion drinker."

A catastrophe occurs causing Odin to slay Midvitnir's son.

nourish the roots of the world-tree. *Hávamál* contents itself with using a poetic-rhetorical phrase and calling the skaldic mead, captured by Odin, *Óðrærir*, "the giver of inspiration," "the inspiring nectar." The author of the satire avails himself of this reason for using the names of the two other fountains *Boðn* and *Són*, and for applying them to two other "vessels and kettles" in which Suttung is said to have kept the mead. That he called one of the vessels a kettle is explained by the fact that the third lower world fountain is *Hvergelmir*, "the roaring kettle." In order that Odin and Gunnlod may be able to discuss and resolve in perfect secrecy in regard to the mead, Odin must come secretly down into the mountain, therefore the satire makes him use the bored hole to get in. From the whole description in *Hávamál*, it appears, on the contrary, that Odin entered the giant's hall in the usual manner through the door, while he avails himself of the tunnel made by Rati to get out. *Hávamál* first states that Odin seeks the giant, and then tells how he enters into conversation and develops his eloquence in Suttung's halls, and how, while he sits in the golden high-seat (probably opposite the host, as Richter has assumed), Gunnlod hands him the precious mead. Then is mentioned for the first time the way made for him by Rati, and this on the one hand in connection with the "evil compensation" Gunnlod received from him, she the loving and devoted woman whom he had embraced, and on the other hand in connection with the fact that his flight from the mountain was successful, so that he could take the mead with him though his life was in danger, and there were giants' ways both above and below that secret path by which he escaped. That Odin took the oath of faithfulness on the holy ring, that there was a regular wedding feast with the questions on the next morning in regard to the well-being of the newly-married couple -- all this the satire does not mention, nor does its premises permit it to do so.

90.

THE MEAD-MYTH (continued). THE MOON AND THE MEAD.  
PROOFS THAT NANNA'S FATHER IS THE WARD OF  
THE ATMOSPHERE AND GOD OF THE MOON.

Before the skaldic mead came into the possession of Suttung-Fjalar, it had passed through various adventures. In one of these enters Máni, the god of the moon, who by the names Nökkvi (variation *Nökkver*),<sup>1</sup> Nefur (variation *Nepur*), and Gevarr (*Gævarr*) occupies a very conspicuous position in our mythology, not least in the capacity of Nanna's father.

I shall here present the proofs which lie near at hand, and can be furnished without entering into too elaborate investigations, that the moon-god and Nanna's father are identical, and this will give me an opportunity of referring to that episode of the mead-myth, in which he appears as one of the actors.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The name *Nökkver* is based on a dubious passage in *Sonatorrek* 3, and thus cannot properly be counted as a variant.

<sup>2</sup> Here Rydberg expresses the intent of this chapter. However as will quickly become apparent, he fails to prove this point. Nonetheless, Máni and Nanna's father, Nökkvi-Gevarr are probably identical. The strongest and most convincing evidence appears in the last three paragraphs of this chapter. Rydberg likely reached this conclusion during his investigation of the Baldur myth, which appears in Volume II of his *Investigations in Germanic Mythology* (pp 203-295; see especially pp 252-256 "*The Poem about Helgi Hjörvardsson*"). Not wanting to divert into "elaborate investigations" here, he draws on examples from

The identity of Nökkvi, Nefur, and Gevarr appears from the following passages:

(1) *Hyndluljóð* 20: "Nanna was, in the next place, Nökkvi's daughter" (*Nanna var næst þar, Nökkva dóttir*).

(2) *Gylfaginning* 32: "The son of Baldur and of Nanna, daughter of Nef, was called Forseti" (*Forseti heitir sonur Baldurs og Nönnu Nefsdóttur*). *Gylfaginning* 49: "His (Baldur's) wife Nanna, daughter of Nep" (*kona hans Nanna Nepsdóttir*).

(3) Saxo, *Hist. Dan.*, Book 3: "Gevarr's daughter Nanna" (*Gevari filia Nanna*). That Saxo means the mythological Nanna follows from the fact that Baldur appears in the story as her wooer. That the Norse form of the name, which Saxo Latinized into Gevarus, was Gevarr, not Gefr, as a prominent linguist has assumed, follows from the rules adopted by Saxo in Latinizing Norse names.

NOTE: Names of the class to which Gefr would belong, providing such a name existed, would be Latinized in the following manner:

(a) *Askr*, Ascerus; *Baldr*, Balderus; *Geldr*, Gelderus; *Glaumr*, Glomerus; *Höðr*, *Haðr*; *Óðr*, Hotherus, Hatherus, Hotherus; *Svipdagr*, Svipdagerus; *Ullr*, Ollerus; *Yggr*, Uggerus; *Vigr*, Vigerus.

(b) *Ásmundr*, Asmundus; *Ámundr*, Amundus; *Arngrímr*, Arngrimus; *Bíldr*, Bildus; *Knútr*, Canutus; *Friðleifr*, Fridlevus; *Gautrekr*, Gotricus; *Goðmundr*, Guthmundus; *Haddingr*, Hadingus; *Haraldr*, Haraldus.

Names ending in *-arr* are Latinized in the following manner:

(a) *Borgarr*, Borcarus; *Einarr*, Enarus; *Gunnarr*, Gunnarus; *Hjörvarr*, Hjartvarus; *Ingimarr*, Ingimarus; *Ingvarr*, Ingvarus; *Ísmarr*, Ismarus; *Ívarr*, Ivarus; *Óttarr*, Otharus; *Róstarr*, Rostarus; *Sigarr*, Sigarus; *Sívarr*, Sivarus; *Valdimarr*, Valdemarus.

(b) *Agnarr*, Agnerus; *Ragnarr*, Regnerus.

With the ending *-arus* occurs also in a single instance a Norse name in *-i*, namely *Eylimi*, Olimarus. Herewith we might perhaps include *Liotarus*, the Norse form of which Saxo may have had in *Ljóti* from *Ljótr*. Otherwise *Ljótr* is a single exception from the rules followed by Saxo, and methodology forbids our building anything on a single exception, which moreover is uncertain.

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Skaldic poetry which he seriously misinterprets. Rydberg himself may have realized the weakness of these examples, or perhaps was overly confident in them, as evidenced by his repeated expression of absolute certainty in their validity throughout this chapter.



Some monosyllabic names ending in *-r* are sometimes unlatinized, as *Alf*, *Ulf*, *Sten*, *Ring*, *Rolf*, and sometimes Latinized with *-o*, as *Alvo*, *Ulvo*, *Steno*, *Ringo*, *Rolvo*. *Álfr* is also found Latinized as *Alverus*.

From the above lists of names it follows that Saxo's rules for Latinizing Norse names ending with the nominative *-r* after a consonant were these:

(1) Monosyllabic names (seldom a dissyllabic one, as *Svipdagr*) are Latinized with the ending *-erus* or the ending *-o*.

(2) Names of two or more syllables which do not end in *-arr* (rarely a name of one syllable, as *Bíldr*) are Latinized with the ending *-us*.

(3) Names ending in *-arr* are Latinized with *-arus*; in a few cases (and then on account of the Danish pronunciation) with *-erus*.

From the above rules it follows (1) that *Gefr*, if such a name existed, would have been Latinized by Saxo either into *Geverus*, *Geferus*, or into *Gevo*, *Gefo*; (2) that *Gevarr* is the regular Norse for *Gevarus*.

The only possible meaning of the name *Gevarr*, considered as a common noun is "the ward of the atmosphere" from *ge* (*gæ*; see *Nafnapulur* (*veðra heiti*), and Egilsson, 227) and *-varr*. I cite this definition not for the purpose of drawing any conclusions therefrom, but simply because it agrees with the result reached in another way.<sup>3</sup>

The other name of Nanna's father is, as we have seen, *Nökkvi*, *Nökkver*. This word means the ship-owner, ship-captain.<sup>4</sup> If we compare these two names, *Gevarr* and *Nökkver*, with each other, then it follows from the comparison that Nanna's father was a mythic person who operated in the atmosphere or had some connection with certain phenomena in the air, and particularly in connection with a phenomenon there of such a kind that the mythic fancy could imagine a ship. The result of the comparison should be examined in connection with a strophe by Thorbjorn Hornklofi, which I shall now consider.

Thorbjorn was the court-skald of Harald Fairhair, and he described many of the king's deeds and adventures. Harald had at one time caused to be built for himself and his body-guard a large and stately ship, with a beautiful figure-head in the form of a serpent. On board this ship he was overtaken by a severe gale,<sup>5</sup> which Hornklofi (*Haralds saga Hárfagra*, ch. 9) describes in the following words:

... út á mar mætir  
mannskæðr lagar tanna

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<sup>3</sup> The word *gæ* occurs only in the very late *Nafnapulur* as a synonym for "wind" or "weather," rather than "atmosphere" (*luftkrets*) as Rydberg states. These *vedra heiti* are among the numerous *Pulur* found in late paper manuscripts, thought to be spurious and not included in the standard editions of the Snorri's *Edda*. In regard to *gæ*, Egilsson observes: "The word is probably identical to the Norwegian *gjö*, corresponding to the Icelandic *gói*, *góa*, the winter-month (February 20 - March 20)."

<sup>4</sup> *Nökkvi* means "a small boat." (Vigfusson's *Dictionary* pg. 461) The meaning of *Nökkver* is uncertain.

<sup>5</sup> Actually *Haralds saga Hárfagra* says nothing of the sort. Here Rydberg has overextended his poetic license.

*ræsinaðr til rausnar  
rak vébrautar Nökkva.*

In prose order: *Lagar tanna mannskæðr mætir út á mar rak rausnar ræsinaðr til Nökkva vébrautar.* ("The assailants of the skerry (the teeth of the sea), dangerous to man, flung out upon the sea the splendid serpent of the vessel's stem to the holy path of Nökkvi").<sup>6</sup>

All interpreters agree that by "the skerry's assailants, dangerous to man," is meant the waves which are produced by the storm and rush against the skerries in breakers dangerous to seamen. It is also evident that Hornklofi wanted to depict the violence of the sea when he says that the billows which rise to assail the skerry toss the ship, so that the figure-head of the stem reaches "the holy path of Nökkvi." Poems of different literatures resemble each other in their descriptions of a storm raging at sea. They make the billows rise to "the clouds," to "the stars," or to "the moon." *Quanti montes uoluuntur aquarum! iam iam tacturos sidera summa*, Ovid sings (*Tristia* Book I, 2) and Virgil has it: *Procella fluctus ad sidera tollit* (*Æneid*, I. 102-3).<sup>7</sup> One of their brother skalds in the North, quoted in *Skáldskaparmál* 76, depicts a storm with the following words:

*Hrauð í himin upp glóðum  
hafs, gekk sær af afli,  
börð hygg-k að ský skerðu,  
skaut Ránar veigr mána.*<sup>8</sup>

The skald makes the phosphorescence of the sea splash against heaven; he makes the ship split the clouds, and the way of Rán, the giantess of the sea, cut the path of the moon.

The question now is, whether Hornklofi by "Nökkvi's holy path" did not mean the path of the moon in space, and whether it is not to this path the figure-head of the ship seems to pitch when it is lifted on high by the towering billows. It is certain that this holy way toward which the heaven-high billows lift the ship is situated in the atmosphere above the sea, and that Nökkvi has been conceived as travelling this way in a ship, since Nökkvi means the ship-captain. From this it follows that Nökkvi's craft must have been a phenomenon in space resembling a ship which was supposed to have its course marked

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<sup>6</sup> This verse also appears in *Skáldskaparmál* 61. From the context of *Haralds saga Hárfagra*, we learn that Nökkvi is rival king, whom Harald conquers in battle. The most recent commentary suggests the following prose order: *áðr mannskæðr mætir Nökkva rak til rausnar út á mar ræsinaðr vébrautar tanna lagar*; meaning: "Before 'the man-harmful meeter of Nökkvi' [King Harald] magnificently drove 'the rushing dragon of the holy path of the teeth of the ocean' [the ship] out to sea." Here the "teeth of the sea" are skerries; the "holy path of the skerries" is the ocean; and it's "rushing dragon," a ship. Anthony Faulkes (*Edda* p. 139) in 1987 first rendered this same half-strophe: "When the man-harmful meeter of the sacred road [mountains] of the water's teeth [rocks] drove out on the mere the splendid fore-sheets-snake and boats," before accepting a similar interpretation to that given above in his *Skáldskaparmál* I, 1998. See the note to verse 345 which reads in part: "Snorri (in *Hkr* I 103) clearly took *Nökkvi* as the name of a king against whom Haraldr hárfagri fought." There Faulkes discusses the difficulties of this verse in detail.

<sup>7</sup> In the lines: *Talia iactanti stridens Aquilone procella velum adversa ferit, fluctusque ad sidera tollit*. In poetic translation (John Dryden): The raging billows rise, And mount the tossing vessels to the skies.

<sup>8</sup> A. Faulkes translation: "The main's embers were tossed up into the sky, the sea moved with force. I think the prows cut the clouds. Rán's way [the sea] hit the moon."

out there. We must therefore choose between the sun, the moon, and the stars; and as it is the moon which, when it is not full, has the form of a ship sailing in space, it is more probable that by Nökkvi's ship is meant the moon than that any other celestial body is referred to.

This probability becomes a certainty by the following proofs. In *Sonatorrek* (str. 2, 3) Egil Skallagrimsson sings that when heavy sorrow oppresses him (who has lost his favorite son) then the song does not easily well forth from his breast:

*Pagna fundur  
Priggja niðja<sup>9</sup>  
ár borinn  
úr Jötunheimum  
lastalauss  
er lifnaði  
á Nökkvers  
nökkva Bragi.*

The skaldic song is here compared with a fountain which does not easily gush forth from a sorrowful heart, and the liquid of the fountain is compared with the "Thriggi's kinsmen's find, the one kept secret, which in times past was carried from Jotunheim into Nökkvi's ship, where Bragi, unharmed, refreshed himself (secured the vigor of life)."<sup>10</sup>

It is plain that Egil here refers to a mythic event that formed an episode in the myth concerning the skaldic mead. Somewhere in Jotunheim a fountain containing the same precious liquid as that in Mimir's well has burst forth. The vein of the fountain was discovered by kinsmen of Thriggi,<sup>11</sup> but the precious find eagerly desired by all powers is kept secret, presumably in order that they who made the discovery might enjoy it undivided and in safety. But something happens which causes the treasure which the fountain gave its discoverers to be carried from Jotunheim to Nökkvi's ship, and there the drink is accessible to the gods. It is especially mentioned that Bragi, the god of poetry, is there permitted to partake of it and thus refresh his powers.

Thus the ship of Nanna's father here reappears, and we learn that on its holy way in space in bygone times it bore a supply of skaldic mead, of which Bragi in the days of his innocence drank the strength of life.

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<sup>9</sup> The actual text reads *fagna fundur*. To alliterate with *Priggja*, *fagna* has been emended to *Pagna*. In modern editions, *Priggja niðja* is emended to *Friggjar niðja* and interpreted as "Frigg's husband" [Odin] or "Frigg's progeny" [the gods].

<sup>10</sup> Rydberg's translation of this verse is not possible. The verse is extremely difficult and is thought to be corrupt. I have seen no less than five widely different translations of it ranging from the mid-1800s to present day. The most current translation reads: "the prize that Frigg's progeny found, borne of old from the world of giants, unflawed, which Bragi inspired with life on the craft of the watcher-dwarf." Bernard Scudder tr. *The Sagas of the Icelanders, Egil's Saga* ch.80, Viking Penguin, 2000

<sup>11</sup> Rydberg never identifies Thriggi. I assume he means Mundilföri-Lodur, as the progenitor of Sumbl-Ivaldi based on his argument regarding "*Dulsa knor*" in No. 85.

With this we must compare a mythic fragment preserved in *Gylfaginning* 11. There a fountain called Byrgir is mentioned. Two children, a lass by name Bil and a lad by name Hjuki, whose father was named Viðfinnur, had come with a pail to this fountain to fetch water.<sup>12</sup> The allegory in which the tradition is incorporated calls the pail *Sægur*, "the one seething over its brinks,"<sup>13</sup> and calls the pole on which the pail is carried *Simul* (according to one manuscript *Sumul*; cp. *Suml*, brewing ale, mead).<sup>14</sup> Bil, one of the two children is put in connection with the drink of poetry. The skalds pray that she may be gracious to them. *Ef unna ítr vildi Bil skáldi*, "if the noble Bil will favor the skald," is a wish expressed in a strophe in the *Prose Edda*, ii. 363.<sup>15</sup> Byrgir is manifestly a fountain of the same kind as the one referred to by Egil, and containing the skaldic mead. Byrgir's fountain must have been kept secret, it must have been a "concealed find," for it is in the night, while the moon is up, that Vidfinn's children are engaged in filling their pail from it. This is evident from the fact that Máni sees the children. When they have filled the pail, they are about to depart, presumably to their home, and to their father Vidfinn. But they do not get home. While they carry the pail with the pole on their shoulders Máni takes them unto himself, and they remain with him, together with their precious burden. From other mythic traditions which I shall consider later (see Nos. 121-123), we learn that the moon-god adopts them as his children, and Bil afterwards appears as an *ásynja* (*Gylfaginning* 35).

If we now compare Egil's statements with the mythic fragment about Bil and Hjuki, we find in both a fountain mentioned which contains the liquid of inspiration found in Mimir's fountain, without being Mimir's well-guarded or unapproachable "well."<sup>16</sup> In Egil the find is "kept secret." In *Gylfaginning* the children visit it in the night. Egil says the liquid was carried from Jotunheim; *Gylfaginning* says that Bil and Hjuki carried it in a pail. Egil makes the liquid transferred from Jotunheim to Nökkvi's ship; *Gylfaginning* makes the liquid and its bearer's be taken aloft by the moon-god to the moon, where we still, says *Gylfaginning*, can see Bil and Hjuki (in the moon-spots).

There can therefore be no doubt that Nökkvi's ship is the silvery craft of the moon, sailing in space over sea and land on a course marked out for it, and that Nökkvi is the moon-god. As in *Rigveda*, so in the Germanic mythology, the ship of the moon was for a time the place where the liquid of inspiration, the life- and strength-giving mead, was concealed. The myth has ancient Indo-European roots.

On the myth concerning the mead-carrying ship, to which the Aesir come to drink, rests the paraphrase for composing, for making a song, which Einar Skálaglamr once used (*Skáldskaparmál* 9). To make songs he calls "to dip liquid out of Her-Tyr's

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<sup>12</sup> Here Anderson, through his choice of words, clearly accepts the popular belief that Bil and Hjuki are the Jack and Jill of Nursery rhyme.

<sup>13</sup> *Sægur* is a name for the ocean (cp. AS *gar-secg*), meaning "sleet, wet, pouring," and can also mean "a swarm" (Vigfusson's *Dict.*)

<sup>14</sup> Eysteinn Björnsson suggests a possible reading of *sí-mul*, "the ever grinding one, the constant crusher", thus a name of the world-mill. In this case, *Sægur* might refer to Hvergelmir and *Simul*, the pole, to *möndull* in the name Mundilföri.

<sup>15</sup> This passage is not included in modern editions of the *Prose Edda* and its source is unknown. Bil frequently occurs in kennings for women.

<sup>16</sup> As Rydberg's translation of the *Sonatorrek* passage is faulty, the evidence of the tale of Hjuki and Bil must stand on its own, weakening the conclusion.

wind-ship" (*ausa Hertýs víngnóðar austur*; see further No. 121, about Odin's visit in Nökkvi's ship).<sup>17</sup>

The name Nefr (variation Nepr), the third name of Nanna's father mentioned above, occurs nowhere in the Norse sources excepting in the *Prose Edda*. It is, however, undoubtedly correct that Nökkvi-Gevar was also called Nef.

Among all the Germanic myths there is scarcely one other with which so many heroic songs composed in heathen times have been connected as with the myth concerning the moon-god and his descendants. As shall be shown further on, the Niflungs are descendants of Nef's adopted son Hjuki, and they are originally named after their adopted race-progenitor Nefr. A more correct and an older form is perhaps *Hnefr* and *Hniflungar*, and the latter form is also found in the Icelandic literature.<sup>18</sup> In Old English the moon-god appears changed into a prehistoric king, *Hnäf*, also called *Hoce* (see *Beowulf* 1076, and *Gleeman's Tale*).<sup>19</sup> *Hoce* is the same name as the Norse *Hjúki*.<sup>20</sup> Thus while *Hnäf* and *Hoce* are identical in the Old English poem *Beowulf*, we find in the Norse source that the lad taken aloft by Máni is called by one of the names of his foster-father. In the Norse account the moon-god (Nefr) captures, as we have seen, the children of one Viðfinnur, and at the same time he robs Viðfinnur of the priceless mead of inspiration found in the fountain Byrgir. In the Old English saga *Hnäf* has a son-in-law and vassal, whose name is Finn (Fin Folcvalding), who becomes his bitterest foe, contends with him, is conquered and pardoned, but attacks him again, and, in company with one Gudere (Gunnr), burns him. According to Saxo, Nanna's father Gevarr has the same fate. He is attacked by a vassal and burnt. The vassal is called Gunno (Gunnr, Gudere).<sup>21</sup> Thus we have in the Old English tradition the names *Hnäf*, *Hoce*, *Fin*, and *Gudere*; and in the Norse tradition the corresponding names *Nefr*, *Hjúki*, *Viðfinnur*, and *Gunnr* (Gunnar). The relation of the moon-god (Nefr) to Viðfinnur is the mythological basis of Finn's enmity to *Hnäf*. The burning is common to both the Old English and the Norse sources. Later in this work, I shall consider these circumstances more minutely. What I have stated is sufficient to show that the Old English tradition is in this point connected with the Norse in a manner, which confirms Nefr-Gevarr's identity with Máni, who takes aloft Hjuki and robs Viðfinnur of the skaldic mead.

The tradition of Gevarr-Nefr's identity with Máni reappears in Iceland once more as late as in *Hrómundar Saga Gripssonar*. There a person called Máni Karl shows the hero of the saga where to find the sword Mistilteinn. In Saxo, Nanna's father Gevarr shows the before-mentioned Hotherus where to find the weapon which is to slay Baldur. Thus Máni in Hromund's saga assumes the same position as Gevarr, Nanna's father, occupies in Saxo's narrative.

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<sup>17</sup> *Víngnóða* means "wine-ship" rather than "wind-ship." *Gnoð* is the name of a ship.

<sup>18</sup> *Helgakviða Hundingsbana* I, 48; *Guðrúnarhvöt* 12; *Atlamál in grænlenzku* 88.

<sup>19</sup> The reference to the "Gleeman's Tale" is found in the Old English poem *Widsith*, 29. Finn Folcwalding is found 2 lines earlier, again suggesting an association between these characters. The title, provided in English, is that of Benjamin Thorpe's translation of this poem found in *Beowulf, The Scôp or Gleeman's Tale, and The Fight at Finnesburg*, 1855.

<sup>20</sup> In *Widsith* *Hnäf* is called king of the Hocings, *Hnæf Hocingum*. In *A Catalogue of Persons Named in German Literature*, (Oxford 1973), George Gillespie writes: "This genealogical complex is reflected in an ON name list where *Hnefi* and *Hökingr* appear as sea-kings." Thus the names *Hjúki* and *Hoc* may indeed be related, although I cannot independently confirm this.

<sup>21</sup> *Hist.* Book 3: "News came meantime that Gevar had been slain by the guile of his satrap [jarl], Gunne. ...Gunne had himself treacherously waylaid Gevar and burnt him alive in the night." Elton tr.

All these circumstances form together a positive proof of the moon-god's identity with Nanna's father. Further on, when the investigation has progressed to the proper point, we shall give reasons for assuming that Viðfinnur of the *Edda*, the Fin of the English heroic poem, is the same person whom we have previously mentioned by the name Sumbli Finnakonungr and Sveigðir, and that the myth concerning the taking of the mead aloft to the moon accordingly has an epic connection with the myth concerning Odin's visit to the giant Fjalar, and concerning the fate which then befell Nökkvi's slayer.<sup>22</sup>

91.

THE MYTH CONCERNING THE MOON-GOD (continued).

The moon-god, like Nott, Dag, and Sol, is by birth and abode a lower-world divinity. As such, he too had his importance in the Germanic eschatology. The god who on his journeys on "Nökkvi's holy way"<sup>23</sup> serves *öldum að ártali* (*Vafþrúðnismál* 23) by measuring out to men time in phases of the moon, in months, and in years has, in the mythology also, received a certain influence in inflicting suffering and punishment on sinners. He is lord of the *heiptir*, the Germanic Erinnyes (see No. 75), and keeps those limar (bundles of thorns) with which the former are armed, and in this capacity he has borne the epithet Eyrimi, which reappears in the heroic songs in a manner which removes all doubt that Nanna's father was originally meant. (See in Saxo and in *Helgakviða Hjorvardsson*.<sup>24</sup> To the latter I shall return in the second part of this work, and I shall there present evidence that the saga is based on episodes taken from the Baldur myth, and that Helgi Hjorvardsson is himself an imitation of Baldur). In his capacity of lord of the *heiptir* the moon-god is the power to whom prayers are to be addressed by those who desire to be spared from those sufferings which the *heiptir* represent (*heiptum skal mána kveðja* - *Hávamál* 137).<sup>25</sup> His quality as the one who keeps the thorn-rods of the *heiptir* still survives in a great part of the Germanic world in the scattered traditions about "the man in the moon," who carries bundles of thorns on his back (J. Grimm, *D. Myth.*, Ch. 22; see No. 123).

92.

THE MOON-DIS NANNA. THE MERSEBURG FORMULA.  
BALDUR'S NAME FALUR.

Thus Nanna is the daughter of the ruler of the moon, of "the ward of the atmosphere." This alone indicates that she herself was mythologically connected with the phenomena which pertain to her father's domain of activity, and in all probability was a moon-dis (goddess). This assumption is fully confirmed by a contribution to Germanic

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<sup>22</sup> See Nos. 121-123.

<sup>23</sup> An erroneous translation based on a misunderstanding of the verse in *Haralds saga Hárfagra*, ch. 9. See last chapter.

<sup>24</sup> Eyrimi appears in Book 5 of Saxo as Olmar in the Elton translation and Olimar in the Fisher text. There Olimar allies himself with the King of the Huns against King Frodi. Olimar commands the fleet.

<sup>25</sup> "For *heiptir* (hatred) shall the moon be invoked."

mythology rescued in Germany, the so-called *Second Merseburg Charm*, which begins as follows:

*Phol ende Uodan  
vuoron zi holza  
dû vart demo Balderes  
volon sin vous birenkit.  
thû biguolon Sinhtgunt,  
Sunna era svister,  
thû biguolen Friia,  
Volla era svister,  
thû biguolen Uodan  
sô hê wola conda.*

Falr and Odin  
went to the wood,  
then was sprained the foot  
of Baldur's foal.  
Then sang over him Sinhtgunt,  
Sunna her sister,  
then sang over him Frigg,  
Fulla her sister,  
then sang over him Odin  
as best he could.

Of the names occurring in this strophe Uodan-Odin, Baldur, Sunna (synonym of Sol - *Alvíssmál* 16; *Prose Edda* - *Nafnþulur*), Friia-Frigg, and Volla-Fulla are well known in the Icelandic mythic records. Only Phol and Sinhtgunt are strangers to our mythologists, though Phol-Falr surely ought not to be so.

In regard to the German form Phol, we find that it has by its side the form Fal in German names of places connected with fountains. Jakob Grimm has pointed out a "Pholes" fountain in Thuringia, a "Fals" fountain in the Frankish Steigerwald, and in this connection a "Baldur" well in Reinphaltz.<sup>1</sup> In the Danish popular traditions Baldur's horse had the ability to produce fountains by tramping on the ground, and Baldur's fountain in Seeland is said to have originated in this manner (cp. P. E. Muller<sup>2</sup> on Saxo, Hist., 120). In Saxo, too, Baldur gives rise to wells (*Victor Balderus, ut afflictum siti militem opportuni liquoris beneficio recrearet, novos humi latices terram altius rimatus operuit* - Book 3)<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *DM*, Vol. I, Ch. 11, *Phol*. *Pholesbrunnen* in Thuringia, *Falsbrunn* in the Frankish Steigerwald, and *Baldersbrunnen* in Reinphaltz. See also the corresponding section in the Supplement, Vol. 4, which says in part: "Plenty of Ful-burns, -becks, -meres, -hams, etc in England."

<sup>2</sup> Peter Erasmus Müller, 1776-1834.

<sup>3</sup> "The conquering Balder, in order to slake his soldiers, who were parched with thirst, with the blessing of a timely draught, pierced the earth deep and disclosed a fresh spring." Elton tr.

This very circumstance seems to indicate that Phol, Fal, was a common epithet or surname of Baldur in Germany, and it must be admitted that this meaning must have appeared to the German mythologists to be confirmed by the *Second Merseburg Charm*; for in this way alone could it be explained in a simple and natural manner, that Baldur is not named in the first line as Odin's companion, although he actually attends Odin, and although the misfortune that befalls "Baldur's foal" is the chief subject of the narrative, while Phol on the other hand is not mentioned again in the whole formula, although he is named in the first line as Odin's companion.

This simple and incontrovertible conclusion, that Phol and Baldur in the *Second Merseburg Charm* are identical is put beyond all doubt by a more thorough examination of the Norse records. In these it is demonstrated that the name Falr was also known in the North as an epithet of Baldur.

The first books of Saxo are based exclusively on the myths concerning gods and heroes. There is not a single person, not a single name, which Saxo did not borrow from the mythic traditions. Among them is also a certain Fjallerus, who is mentioned in Book 4. In the question in regard to the Norse form which was Latinized into Fjallerus, we must remember that Saxo writes Hjallus (Book 7) for Hjali, and alternately Colo, Collo, and Collerus (*Hist.*, Books 1, 3, & 8), and that he uses the broken form Bjarbi for Barri (*Hist.*, Book 8). In accordance with this the Latin form Fjallerus must correspond to the Norse Falr, and there is, in fact, in the whole Old Norse literature, not a single name to be found corresponding to this excepting Falr, for the name Fjalarr, the only other one to be thought of in this connection, should, according to the rules followed by Saxo, be Latinized into Fjallarus or Fjalarus, but not into Fjallerus.

Of this Fjallerus Saxo relates that he was banished by an enemy, and the report says that Fjallerus betook himself to the place which is unknown to our populations, and which is called *Ódáins-akur* (*quem ad locum, cui Undensakre nomen est, nostris ignotum populis concessisse est fama* --*Hist.* Book 4).

The mythology mentions only a single person who by an enemy was transferred to *Ódáinsakur*, and that is Baldur. (Of *Ódáinsakur* and Baldur's abode there, see Nos. 44-53.).

The enemy who transfers Falr to the realm of immortality is, according to Saxo, a son of Horvendillus, that is to say, a son of the mythological Örvandil, Groa's husband and Svipdag's father (see Nos. 108, 109). Svipdag has already once before been mistaken by Saxo for Hotherus (see No. 101). Hotherus is, again, the Latin form for Höður. Thus it is Baldur's banishment by Höður to the subterranean realms of immortality of which we here read in Saxo where the latter speaks of Fal's banishment to *Ódáinsakur* by a son of Örvandil.

When Baldur dies by a flaug hurled by Höður he stands in the midst of a rain of javelins. He is the center of a *mannhringr*,<sup>4</sup> where all throw or shoot at him: *sumir skjóta á hann, sumir höggva til, sumir berja grjóti*<sup>5</sup> (*Gylfaginning* 49). In this lies the mythical explanation of the paraphrase Fal's rain, which occurs in the last strophe of a poem attributed to the skald Gisli Sursson. In Gisli's saga we read that he was banished on account of manslaughter, but by the aid of his faithful wife he was able for thirteen years to endure a life of persecutions and conflicts, until he finally was surprised and fell by the

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<sup>4</sup> "A human ring," a circle of people.

<sup>5</sup> "and all the others should either shoot at him, strike at him, or throw stones at him." Faulkes tr.



weapons of his foes. Surrounded by his assailants, he is said to have sung the strophe in question, in which he says that "the beloved, beautiful, brave Fulla of his hall," that is to say, his wife, "is to enquire for him, her friend," for whose sake "Fal's rain" now "falls thick and fast," while "keen edges bite him." In a foregoing strophe Gisli has been compared with a "Baldur of the shield," and this shield-Baldur now, as in the Baldur of the myth, is the focus of javelins and swords, while he, like Baldur, has a beautiful and faithful wife, who, like Nanna, is to take his death to heart. If the name Nanna, as has been assumed by Vigfusson and others, is connected with the verb *nenna*, and means "the brave one," then *rekilát Fulla*, "the brave Fulla of Gisli's hall," is an all the more appropriate reference to Nanna, since Fulla and she are intimately connected in the mythology, and are described as the warmest of friends (*Gylfaginning*). Briefly stated: in the poem Gisli is compared with Baldur, his wife with Nanna, his death with Baldur's death, and the rain of weapons by which he falls with Fal's rain.<sup>6</sup>

In a strophe composed by Refr (*Skáldskaparmál* 9) the skald offers thanks to Odin, the giver of the skaldic art. The Asa-father is here called *Fals hrannvala brautar fannar salar valdi* ("The ruler of the hall of the drift of the way of the billow-falcons of Fal").<sup>7</sup> This long paraphrase means, as has also been assumed by others, the ruler of heaven. Thus heaven is designated as "the hall of the drift of the way of the billow-falcons of Fal." The "drift" which belongs to heaven, and not to the earth, is the cloud. The heavens are "the hall of the cloud." But in order that the word "drift" might be applied in this manner it had to be united with an appropriate word, showing that the heavens were meant. This is done by the adjective phrase "of the way of the billow-falcons of Fal." Standing alone, "the drift of the way of the billow-falcons" could not possibly mean anything else than the billow white with foam, since "billow-falcons" is a paraphrase for ships, and the "way of the billow-falcons" is a paraphrase for the sea. By adding the name Falr the meaning is changed from "sea" to "sky." By Fal's "billow-falcons" must therefore be meant objects whose course is through the air, just as the course of the ships is on the sea, and which traverse the drift of the sky, the cloud, just as the ships plough through the drift of the sea, the white-crested billow. Such a paraphrase could not possibly avoid drawing the fancy of the hearers and readers to the atmosphere strewn with clouds and penetrated by sunbeams, that is, to Odin's hall. Baldur is a sun-god, as his myth, taken as a whole, plainly shows, and as is manifested by his epithet: *rauðbríkar ríkur rækir* (see No. 53). Thus Fal, like Baldur, is a divinity of the sun, a being which sends the sunbeams down through the drifts of the clouds. As he, furthermore, like Baldur, stood in a rain of weapons under circumstances sufficiently familiar for such a rain to be recognized when designated as Fal's, and as he, finally, like

<sup>6</sup> Again Rydberg misunderstands the meaning of the complex skaldic poetry. The first half of the strophe reads: *Fals hallar skal Fulla/ fagrleit, sú mik teitir,/ rekilát at rökkum,/ regns, sínum vin fregna*. Falr is not a personal name here, but a term for a part of the spear, i.e. the socket of the spear-head, and thus a *heiti* for the spear itself. "Rain of spear" is a normal kenning for battle. "A more likely reading however is: "The beautiful, brave Fulla of the 'rain of the hall of the spear,' [i.e. gold; "hall of the spear" =hand; "rain of the hand" = gold; Fulla of gold=woman] she who pleases me, shall receive news of her brave friend."

<sup>7</sup> The verse reads: *Þér eigu vér veigar/ Valgautar, salar brautar,/ Fals, hrannvala fannar,/ framr, valdi tamr, gjalda*. Faulkes renders this: "To you we owe Fal's cup [the mead of poetry], noble Slaughter-Gaut [Odin], practiced controller of the wave-horse's [ship's] snow-road's [sea's] hall [sky]." Faulkes takes *Fal* as the name of a dwarf after the *Nafnapular*. He notes *hrannvala* may also be rendered wave-falcon. *Fals veigar* would better be translated "Fal's drink" cp. the *skírar veigar* served to Baldur in *Vegtamskviða* 7.

Baldur, was sent by an opponent to the realm of immortality in the lower world, then Falr and Baldur must be identical.<sup>8</sup>

Their identity is furthermore confirmed by the fact that Baldur in early Christian times was made a historical king of Westphalia. The statement concerning this, taken from Anglo-Saxon or German sources, has entered into the foreword to *Gylfaginning*.<sup>9</sup> Nearly all lands and peoples have, according to the belief of that time, received their names from ancient chiefs. The Franks were said to be named after one Francio, the East Goth after Ostrogotha, the Angles after Angul, Denmark after Dan, etc. The name Phalia, Westphalia, was explained in the same manner, and as Baldur's name was Phol, Fal, this name of his gave rise to the name of the country in question. For the same reason the German poem Biterolf makes Baldur (Paltram) into king ze Pülle. (Compare the local name Pölde, which, according to J. Grimm, is found in old manuscripts written Polidi and Pholidi.) In the one source Baldur is made a king in Pholidi, since Phol is a name of Baldur, and in the other source he is for the same reason made a king in Westphalia, since Phal is a variation of Phol, and likewise designated Baldur. "Biterolf" has preserved the record of the fact that Baldur was not only the stateliest hero to be found, but also the most pure in morals, and a man much praised. Along with Baldur, *Gylfaginning* speaks of another son of Odin, Siggi, who is said to have become a king in Frankland. The same reason for which Fal-Baldur was made a king in Westphalia also made the apocryphal Siggi in question the progenitor of Frankian kings. The Frankian branch to which the Merovingian kings belonged bore the name Sigambrians, and to explain this name the son Siggi was given to Odin, and he was made the progenitor and eponym of the Sigambrians.

After this investigation, which is to be continued more elaborately in another volume, I now return to the *Second Merseburg Charm*:

"Falr and Odin  
Went to the wood,  
Then was sprained the foot  
Of Baldur's foal."

With what here is said about Baldur's steed, we must compare what Saxo relates about Baldur himself: *Adeo in adversam corporis valetudinem incidit, ut ni pedibus quidem, incedere posset* (Book 3).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Because of the faulty nature of the translations of these skaldic verses, this connection cannot be made firmly. In the North, Falr is generally accepted as the name of a dwarf, although the examples from the *Second Merseburg Charm* and the study of place-names, indicate that at least in Germany, the name Falr was associated with Baldur. Evidence of this identity is well documented in Grimm's *Deutsche Mythologie*, Vol. I, ch. 11, which Rydberg has clearly read, although Grimm concludes "Not only are we assured of a divine Baldur in Germany, but there emerges a long-forgotten mythus, and with it a new name unknown even to the North." (Stallybrass tr.)

<sup>9</sup> "Odin's second son was named Beldeg, whom we call Baldur; he possessed the country now called Westphalia (Vestfál)"

<sup>10</sup> "Balder was continually harassed by phantoms feigning the likeness of Nanna, and fell into such ill health that he could not so much as walk." Elton, tr.

The misfortune which happened first to Baldur and then to Baldur's horse must be counted among the warnings which foreboded the death of the son of Odin.<sup>11</sup> There are also other passages which indicate that Baldur's horse must have had a conspicuous signification in the mythology, and the tradition concerning Baldur as rider is preserved not only in northern sources (*Lokasenna* 28, *Gylfaginning*), and in the Second Merseburg Charm, but also in the German poetry of the Middle Ages. That there was some witchcraft connected with this misfortune which happened to Baldur's horse is evident from the fact that the *galdur* songs sung by the goddesses accompanying him availed nothing. According to the Norse ancient records, the women particularly exercise the healing art of *galdur* (compare Gróa and Sigurdrífa), but still Odin has the profoundest knowledge of the secrets of this art; he is *galdurs faðir* (*Vegtamskviða* 3). And so Odin comes in this instance, and is successful after the goddesses have tried in vain. We must fancy that the goddesses make haste to render assistance in the order in which they ride in relation to Baldur, for the event would lose its seriousness if we should conceive Odin as being very near to Baldur from the beginning, but postponing his activity in order to shine afterwards with all the greater magic power, which nobody disputed.

The goddesses constitute two pairs of sisters: Sinhtgunt and her sister Sunna, and Frigg and her sister Fulla. According to the Norse sources, Frigg is Baldur's mother. According to the same records, Fulla is always near Frigg, enjoys her whole confidence, and wears a diadem as a token of her high rank among the goddesses.<sup>12</sup> An explanation of this is furnished by the *Second Merseburg Charm*, which informs us that Fulla is Frigg's sister, and so a sister of Baldur's mother. And as Odin is Baldur's father, we find in the *Second Merseburg Charm* the Baldur of the Norse records, surrounded by the kindred assigned to him in these records.

Under such circumstances it would be strange, indeed, if Sinhtgunt and the sun-dis, Sunna, did not also belong to the kin of the sun-god, Baldur, as they not only take part in this excursion of the Baldur family, but are also described as those nearest to him, and as the first who give him assistance.

The Norse records have given to Baldur as wife Nanna, daughter of that divinity which under Odin's supremacy is the ward of the atmosphere and the owner of the moon-ship. If the continental Teutons in their mythological conceptions also gave Baldur a wife devoted and faithful as Nanna, then it would be in the highest degree improbable that the Second Merseburg Charm should not let her be one of those who, as a body-guard, attend Baldur on his expedition to the forest. Besides Frigg and Fulla, there are two goddesses who accompany Baldur. One of them is a sun-dis, as is evident from the name Sunna; the other, Sinhtgunt, is, according to Bugge's discriminating interpretation of this epithet, the dis "who night after night has to battle her way."<sup>13</sup> A goddess who is the sister of the sun-

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<sup>11</sup> Jakob Grimm notes: "The horse of Baldur lamed and checked on his journey, acquires a full meaning the moment we think of him as the god of light or day, whose stoppage and detention must give rise to serious mischief on the earth." (Stallybrass tr.)

<sup>12</sup> *Gylfaginning* 35: "The fifth is Fulla, she, too, is a virgin and wears her hair loose and a golden band round her head. She carries Frigg's little box and looks after her shoes, and knows secrets." Jean Young tr.

<sup>13</sup> In his *Dictionary* Simek states that the name has remained unexplained to this day. He notes the possibilities "the night walking one" (Brate, Ström) following the manuscript reading, and "the one moving into battle" (Hugo Gering, reading *Sinthgunt*), and Grimm's interpretation of "heavenly body, star." The interpretation of Sinhtgunt as a moon-dis is considered unlikely because the Moon is represented as masculine. However, as seen Sinhtgunt-Nanna is likely the daughter of Máni.

dis, but who not in the daytime but in the night has to battle on her journey across the sky, must be a goddess of the moon, a moon-dis. This moon-goddess is the one who is nearest at hand to bring assistance to Baldur. Thus she can be none else than Nanna, who we know is the daughter of the owner of the moon-ship. The fact that she has to battle her way across the sky is explained by the Norse mythic statement, according to which the wolf-giant Hati is greedy to capture the moon, and finally secures it as his prey (*Völuspá*, *Gylfaginning*). In the poem about Helgi Hjörvarðsson, which is merely a free reproduction of the materials in the Baldur-myth (which shall be demonstrated in the second part of this work), the giant Hati is conquered by the hero of the poem, a Baldur figure, whose wife is a dis, who, "white" herself, has a shining horse (str. 26, 28), controls weather and harvests (str. 28), and makes nightly journeys on her steed, and "inspects the harbors" (str. 26).

The name Nanna (from the verb *nenna*; cp. Vigfusson's *Dictionary, Lexicon Poeticum*)<sup>14</sup> means "the brave one."<sup>15</sup> With her husband she has fought the battles of light, and in the Norse, as in the Germanic, mythology, she was with all her tenderness a heroine.

The Second Merseburg Charm makes the sun-dis and the moon-dis sisters. The Norse variation of the Germanic myth has done the same. *Vafþrúðnismál* 23 and *Gylfaginning* 11 inform us that the divinities which govern the chariots of the sun and moon were brother and sister, but from the masculine form *Máni* *Gylfaginning* has drawn the false conclusion that the one who governed the car of the moon was not a sister but a brother of the sun. In the mythology a masculine divinity *Máni* was certainly known, but he was the father of the sun-dis and moon-dis, and identical with Gevarr-Nökkvi-Nefr, the owner of the moon-ship. The god *Máni* is the father of the sun-dis for the same reason as Nott is the mother of Dag.<sup>16</sup>

*Vafþrúðnismál* informs us that the father of the managers of the sun- and moon-cars was called Mundilföri. We are already familiar with this mythic personality (see Nos. 81-83) as the one who is appointed to superintend the mechanism of the world, by whose Möndull the starry firmament is revolved. It is not probable that the power governing the motion of the stars is any other than the one who under Odin's supremacy is ruler of the sun and moon, and ward of all the visible phenomena in space, among which are also the stars. As, by comparison of the old records, we have thus reached the conclusion that the managers of the sun and moon are daughters of the ward of the

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<sup>14</sup> Neither Vigfusson or Egilsson associate Nanna with *nenna* in the sources cited. Vigfusson defines *nenna* as "to strive, to travel" and Egilsson as *udøve med kraft og raskhed* "to exercise with force and speed." The connection between Nanna and *nenna* was first made by Grimm in *DM* Vol. I, Ch. 11: "On mythological grounds it is even probable: Baldur's wife *Nanna* is also the bold one from *nenna*, to dare." Jan De Vries relates it to the Germanic root *nanþ-*, giving the meaning "the daring one." (*Altergermanische Religionsgeschichte*, Berlin 1970).

<sup>15</sup> The word here is *behjærtade* meaning "the brave one" or "the compassionate one," which explains Rydberg's following statement.

<sup>16</sup> Rydberg accepts Sunna and Nanna as the present representations of the sun and moon. However, this conclusion is unnecessary since *Vafþrúðnismál* 47 clearly states that the Sun (*alfröðull*) will bear a daughter who shall "ride on her mother's paths when the powers (*regin*) die." Since Nanna resides in Hel with Baldur, who will return after Ragnarok, we might safely assume she returns with him. Therefore Sunna and Nanna are most likely the daughters of the present day *Sól* and *Máni*, whose father is Mundilföri.

atmosphere, and as we have also learned that they are daughters of him who superintends the motion of the constellations, we are unable to see anything but harmony in these statements. Mundilföri and Gevarr-Nökkvi-Nefr are the same person.<sup>17</sup>

It should be added that the moon-goddess, like her father, could be called Máni without there being any obstacle in the masculine form of the word. The name of the goddess Skaði is also masculine in form, and is inflected as a masculine noun (oblique case, *Skaða* - *Skáldskaparmál* 3, 23).<sup>18</sup>

### 93.

#### COSMOGRAPHIC REVIEW.

In the preceding pages various scattered contributions have been made to Germanic cosmography, and particularly to the topography of the lower world. It may not be out of the way to gather and complete these fragments.

The world-tree's three roots, which divide themselves in the lower world and penetrate through the three lower-world fountains into the foundations of the world-structure and hold it together, stand in a direction from north to south -- the northernmost over the Hvergelmir fountain, with its cold waters; the middle one over Mimir's well, which is the fountain of spiritual forces; and the third over Urd's well, whose liquids give warmth to Yggdrasil (see No. 63).

Likewise, in a north and south direction, stands the bridge Bifröst, also called *Bilröst*, *Ásbrú* (*Grímnismál* 29), and in a bold paraphrase, previously not understood, *þjóðvitnis fiskur*, "the fish of the folk-wolf." The paraphrase occurs in *Grímnismál* 21 in its description of Valhall and other abodes of the gods:

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<sup>17</sup> As seen above, Mundilföri and Gevarr-Nökkvi-Nefr are best interpreted as father and son.

<sup>18</sup> Rydberg's invention of a feminine form *Máni* is linguistically impossible. *Máni* is firmly a masculine name. *Skaði* is simply a feminine form ending in -i. This type of word is rare, but other forms do exist. That Snorri uses *Skaða* as the oblique case in *Skáldskaparmál* may indicate that he was at a loss as to how the name should be declined.

*Pýtur Pund,  
unir Þjóðvitnis  
fiskur flóði í;  
árstraumur þykir  
ofmikill  
valglaumi að vaða.*

"Thund (the air-river) roars. The 'fish of the folk-wolf' (*Þjóðvitnir*'s fish) rests in the flood. The river current seems too great for the noisy crowd of the slain to wade."

It has already been shown (No. 65) that those fallen by the sword ride with their psychopomps on Bifröst up to Valhal, and do not proceed there through space, but have a solid foundation for the hoofs of their steeds. Here, as in *Fáfnismál* 15, the air is compared with a river, in which the horses are compelled to wade or swim if the bridge leading to Asgard is not used, and the current in this roaring stream is said to be very strong; while, on the other hand, "the fish" stands safe and inviting therein. That the author of *Grímnismál* called the bridge a fish must seem strange, but has its natural explanation in Icelandic usage, which called every bridge-end or bridge-head a *sporður*, that is, a fish-tail. Compare *Sigurdrífumál* 16, which informs us that runes were risted on "the fish-tail" of the great mythic bridge (*á brúar sporði*), and the expression *brúarsporður* (bridge-head, bridge-"fish-tail") in *Njáls Saga* ch. 145 and *Biskupasögur* 1, 17. As a bridge-pier could be called a fish-tail, it was perfectly logical for the poem to make the bridge a fish. On the zenith of the bridge stands Valhall, that secures those fallen in battle, and whose entrance is decorated with images of the wolf and of the eagle (*Grímnismál* 10), animals that satisfy their hunger on the field of battle. This explains why the fish is called that of the folk-wolf or great wolf.<sup>1</sup> The meaning of the paraphrase is simply "the Valhall bridge." That the bow of Bifröst stands north and south follows from the fact that the gods pass over one end of the bridge on their way to Urd's fountain, situated in the south of the lower world, while the other end is outside of Niflhel, situated in the north. From the south the gods come to their judgment-seats in the realm of the dis of fate and death. From the north came, according to *Vegtamskviða*, Odin when he rode through Niflhel to that hall which awaited Baldur. Why the Asa-father on that occasion chose that route *Vegtamskviða* does not inform us. But from Saxo (Book 3), who knew an old heathen song<sup>2</sup> about Odin's visit in the lower world on account of Baldur's death, we

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<sup>1</sup> The phrase *Þjóðvitnis fiskur* is commonly thought to mean "the great wolf's fish" and taken as a reference to the World-serpent, Fenrir's brother. However, in the context of the poem, a reference to the ocean surrounding Midgard makes little sense. By suggesting the meaning "Valhal's bridge" (i.e. Bifröst) Rydberg was on the right track. However, Eysteinn Björnsson notes that *Þjóðvitnir* might mean "the one with greatly enhanced senses." In an article, which best explains this theory found at <http://www.hi.is/~eybjorn/ugm/grm21.html> Eysteinn notes: *Vitnir* can, indeed, mean wolf, but the etymology of the word shows it to be related to the word *vit*, sense, senses. In fact, Magnússon's *Etymological Dictionary* states that the original meaning of the word is 'one with sharp senses'." In this light, "the one with enhanced senses" must refer to Heimdall the guardian of the Bifröst bridge who "can see, by night as well as by day, 100 rasts about in every direction" and can hear grass growing on earth and wool on the backs of sheep.

<sup>2</sup> Possibly the same as that of which a few strophes are preserved in *Baldurs draumar*, an old poetic fragment whose gaps have been filled in a very unsatisfactory manner in recent times with strophes which now are current as *Vegtamskviða*. That Odin, when he is about to proceed to the abode which in the

get light on this point. According to this song it was Rostiophus Phinnicus who told Odin that a son of the latter and Rind was to avenge Baldur's death. Rostiophus is, as P. E. Müller has already remarked, the frost-giant Hrossþjófur mentioned in *Hyndluljóð* (i.e. *Völuspá* in *skamma* 4) as a son of Hrímnir and brother of the sorceress Heiður, the vala and witch well known from *Völuspá* and other sources. Niflhel is, as shown above (No. 60), the abode of the frost-giants transferred to the lower world. Where his father *Hrímnir* (Bergelmir) and his progenitor *Hrímgrímnir* (Thrudgelmir)<sup>3</sup> dwell in the thurs-hall mentioned in *Skírnismál*, there we also find *Hrossþjófur*, and Odin must there seek him. *Vegtamskviða* makes Odin seek his sister.

It is Bifröst's north bridge-head which particularly requires the vigilance of Heimdall, the ward of the gods, since the frost-giants and the damned are its neighbors. Heimdall is therefore "widely known" among the inhabitants of Niflhel (*Skírnismál* 28), and Loki reproaches Heimdall that his vocation as watchman always compels him to expose his back to the torrents of an unfavorable sky (*Lokasenna* 48). In the night which constantly broods over this northern zone shine the forms of the "white" god and of his gold-beaming horse *Gulltoppur*, when he makes spying expeditions there. His eye penetrates the darkness of a hundred rasts, and his ear catches the faintest sound (*Gylfaginning* 27). Near Bifröst, presumably at the very bridge-head, mythology has given him a fortified citadel, Himinbjörg, "the ward of heaven" with a comfortable hall well supplied with "the good mead" (*Grímnismál* 13; *Gylfaginning* 27).

The lower world is more extensive in all directions than the surface of the earth above it. Bifröst would not be able to pass outside and below the crust of the earth to rest with its bridge-heads on the domain of the three world-fountains if this were not the case. The lower world is therefore called *Jörmungrund*, "the great ground or foundation" (*Hrafnagaldur Óðins* 25), and its uttermost zone, *jaðarr Jörmungrundar*, "the domain of the great ground,"<sup>4</sup> is open to the celestial canopy, and the under side of the earth is not its roof. From *Hliðskjálf*, the outlook of the gods in Asgard (*Hrafnagaldur Óðins*, the prose texts in *Skírnismál* and in *Grímnismál*), the view is open to Midgard, to the sea, and to the giant-world situated beyond the Elivogar rivers (see the texts mentioned),<sup>5</sup> and should accordingly also be so to the broad zone of Jormungrund, excepting its

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subterranean realms of bliss is to receive Baldur, chooses the route through Niflhel is explained not by *Vegtamskviða*, where this fact is stated, but by the older poem mentioned by Saxo, which makes him seek the dweller in Niflhel, the frost-giant Hrossþjófur, son of Hrímnir. [This is Rydberg's footnote. These extra verses which are preserved in late paper manuscripts are quoted by Bugge in his *Sæmundar Edda*, as well as by Benjamin Thorpe in his translation of the poem.]

<sup>3</sup> This is the only place that Rydberg identifies Hrimnir and Bergelmir, his reasons for doing so are unknown. Rydberg identifies Hrimgrímnir as Thrudgelmir in No. 60. *Skírnismál* does not actually identify Hrimgrímnir and Hrimnir as father and son, thus there are no grounds to identify Hrimnir and Bergelmir.

<sup>4</sup> *Jaðarr* is a younger form of *jöðurr*, meaning "rim, edge." Rydberg bases the expression *jaðarr Jörmungrundar* on *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* 25 which reads *Jörmungrundar í jóðyr* (variants: *iaðyr*, *iaþir*) *nyrðra*. The word *jóðyr* also appears in the *Codex Regius* version of *Völuspá* 5, and is typically emended to *jöðurr* based on the *Hauksbók* reading *ioður*. Rydberg's use of the term here demonstrates that he accepts this emendation. The word *jóðyr* however can only mean "horse-door." If the meaning "horse-door" is accepted, it might refer to the portals through which the horses of the Sun, Day, and Night, as well as the Aesir enter and exit the lower world.

<sup>5</sup> In *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* 10, Odin watches the sons of Ivaldi (Rögnir and Regin) as they travel to the Wolfdales. In the prose introduction to *Skírnismál*, Frey observes Gerd in Jötunheim and in the prose introduction to *Grímnismál*, Odin and Frigg see into Jötunheim and Midgard. However, both *Skírnismál* and *Grímnismál* use the expression *sá um heima alla*, saw into all the worlds.

northernmost part, which always is shrouded in night. From *Hliðskjálf* the eye cannot discern what is done there. But Heimdall keeps watch there, and when anything unusual is perceived Odin sends the raven Huginn (*Hugur*) thither to spy it out (*Hrafnagaldur Óðins*, 10, 3, which strophes belong together).<sup>6</sup> But from Hliðskjálf as the point of observation the earth conceals all that part of Jormungrund below it; and as it is important to Odin that he should know all that happens there, Hugin and Munin fly daily over these subterranean regions: *Huginn og Muninn fljúga hverjan dag jörmungrund yfir* (*Grímnismál* 20).<sup>7</sup> The expeditions of the ravens over Niflhel in the north and over Surt's "deep dales" in the south expose them to dangers: Odin expresses his fear that some misfortune may befall them on these excursions (*Grímnismál* 20).

In the western and eastern parts of *jaðarr Jörmungrundar* dwell the two divine clans the Vans and Elves, and the former rule over the whole zone ever since "the gods in time's morning" gave Frey, Njörd's bounteous son, Alfheim as a tooth-gift (*Grímnismál* 5). Delling is to be regarded as clan-chief of the Elves (light-Elves), since in the very theogony he is ranked with the most ancient powers. With Mimir's daughter Nott he becomes the father of Dag and the progenitor of *Dags synir* (the light-Elves).<sup>8</sup> It has already been emphasized (see No. 53) that he is the lord of the rosy dawn, and that outside of his doors the song of awakening is sung every morning over the world: "Power to the Aesir, success to the Elves, and wisdom to Hroptatyr" (*Hávamál* 100). The glow of dawn blazes up from his domain beyond the eastern horizon. Where this clan-chieftain of the Elves dwells, there the mythology has referred the original home of his clan. *Álfheimur* occupies the eastern part of Jormungrund's zone. It is in the eastern part that Dag, Delling's son, and Sol, his kinswoman, mount their chariots to make their journey around the earth in the sky. Here is also the Hel-gate through which all the dead must pass in the lower world (No. 68).

There are many proofs that the giant settlement with the Ironwood or Mirkwood was conceived as extending from the north over large portions of the east (*Völuspá* 40, 50, etc.).<sup>9</sup> These regions of Alfheim constitute the southern coasts of the Elivogar, and are the scenes of important events in the epic of the mythology (see the treatise on the Ivaldi race).

Vanaheim is situated in the western half of the zone. At the banquet in Ægir's hall, described in *Lokasenna* 34, Loki says to Njörd:

*þú varst austur héðan  
gísl um sendur goðum -*

"From here you were sent east as a hostage to the gods."

<sup>6</sup> *HRG* 10 reads: Odin listens in Hliðskjálf watched the travellers' distant journey." *HRG* 3 reads: "Hugur then disappears seeking the heavens, men's ruin is suspected, if he's delayed." (Eysteinn Björnsson and William Reaves tr.)

<sup>7</sup> In this verse Jormungrund is commonly translated as "the spacious earth" and understood as Midgard.

<sup>8</sup> The term *Dags synir* is derived from *Sigurdrífumál* 3. In *Skáldskaparmál* 80 (Faulkes, 64) Snorri names Dag as one of Halfdan's nine sons. There his descendants are called *Daglingar*. This may be derived from an older source since we also find Nef and the Niflungs there.

<sup>9</sup> For passages in which the location of Mirkwood can be inferred, see also *Lokasenna* 42, *Völundarkviða* 1, *Atlakviða* 13.



Ægir's hall is far out in the depths of the sea. The ocean known by the Teutons was the North Sea. The author has manifestly conceived Ægir's hall as situated in the same direction from Asgard as Vanaheim, and not far from the native home of the Vanir. This lies in the word *héðan* (from here). According to *Vafþrúðnismál* 39, Njörd was "created in Vanaheim by wise regin." When he was sent as a hostage to the gods to Asgard he had to journey eastward (*austur*). The western location of Vanaheim is thereby demonstrated.

In the "western halls" of Vanaheim dwells Billing, Rind's father, the father of the Asa-god, Vali's mother (*Rindur ber Vála i vesturrsölum -- Vegtamskviða* 11).<sup>10</sup> His name has been preserved in both the German and the Anglo-Saxon mythic records. An Old German document mentions together *Billunc* and *Nidunc*,<sup>11</sup> that is, Billing and Mimir (see No. 87). In the mythology Mimir's domain is bounded on the west by Billing's realm, and on the east by Delling's. Delling is Mimir's son-in-law. According to *Völuspá* 13 (*Hauksbók*), Billing is a being which in time's morning, on the resolve of the gods, was created by Modsognir-Mimir and Durinn. Mimir's neighbors in the east and in the west were therefore intimately connected with him. An Anglo-Saxon record (*The Exeter Book, Widsith*, 25) makes Billing the race-hero of the kinsmen and neighbors of the Angles, the Varnians (*Billing veold Vernum*). This too has a mythological foundation, as appears in *Grímnismál* 39 and in *Helgakviða Hjörvarðsson*, which, as before stated, is composed of mythic fragments. When Sol and Mani leave Delling's domain and begin their march across the heavens, their journey is not without danger. From the Ironwood (cp. *Völuspá* 40) come the wolf-giants Skoll and Hati and pursue them. Skoll does not desist from the pursuit before the car of the bright-faced goddess has descended toward the western halls and reached *Varna viður* (*Skoll heitir úlfur, er fylgir inu skírleita goði til Varna viðar -- Grímnismál* 39). *Varna viður* is the forest of the mythic Varnians or Varinians. Varnians, Varinians, means "protectors," and the protection here referred to can be none other than that given to the journeying divinities of light when they have reached the western horizon. According to *Helgakviða Hjörvarðsson*, Hati, who pursues the moon, is slain near Varin's Bay (*vík Varins*, str. 22). *Varinn*, the "defender," "protector," is the singular form of the same word as reappears in the genitive plural *Varna*. These expressions -- *Billing veold Vernum*, *Varna viður*, and *Varins vík* -- are to be considered as belonging together. So also the local names borrowed from the mythology, *Varinsfjörður* and *Varinsey*, in *Helgakviða Hundingsbana I*,<sup>12</sup> where several names reappear, e.g., Svarinn, Móinn, Álfur, and Yngvi, which in connection with that of Billing occur in the list of the beings created by Mimir and Durinn. It is manifest that *Varna viður*, where the wolf Skoll is obliged to turn back from his pursuit of Sol, and that *Varins vík*, where the moon's pursuer Hati is conquered, were conceived in the mythology as situated in the western horizon, since the sun and the moon making their journey from east to west on the heavens are pursued and are not safe before they reach the western halls. And now as

<sup>10</sup> "Rind will bear Vali in western halls."

<sup>11</sup> The likely source of this is Grimm's *DM* I, 15, 4 which reads: "In OHG. we find a man's name *Billunc* (Ried nos. 14. 21-3, A.D. 808. 821-2). If we take into account, that a dwarf *Billigr* occurs in the *Edda*, Sæm. 2<sup>a</sup> 23<sup>a</sup>, a hero *Pillunc* in Rol. 175, 1, and *Billunc* and *Nidunc* coupled together in the *Renner* 14126-647, the name acquires a respectable degree of importance." (Stallybrass tr.) The nature of the *Renner* is unclear.

<sup>12</sup> Strs. 26 & 37 respectively.

Billing dwells in the western halls and is remembered in the Anglo-Saxon mythic fragments as the ruler of the Varnians or Varinians, and as, furthermore, *Varinsfjörður* and *Varinsey* are connected with adventures in which there occur several names of mythic persons belonging to Billing's clan, then this proves absolutely an original mythic connection between Billing and his western halls and those western halls in whose regions *Varna viður* and *Varinsvík* are situated, and where the divinities of light, their journey across the sky accomplished, find defenders and can take their rest. And when we add to this that Delling, Mimir's kinsman and eastern neighbor, is the lord of morning and the rosy dawn, and that Billing is Mimir's kinsman and western neighbor, then it follows that Billing, from the standpoint of a symbol of nature, represents the evening and the glow of twilight, and that in the epic he is ruler of those regions of the world where the divinities of light find rest and peace. The description which *Hávamál* strophes 97-101 give us of life in Billing's halls corresponds most perfectly with this view. Through the epic presentation there gleams, as it seems, a conscious symbolizing of nature, which paints to the fancy the play of colors in the west when the sun is set. When eventide comes Billing's lass, "the sun-glittering one," sleeps on her bed (*Billings mey eg fann beðjum á sólhvíta sofa* -- str. 97). In his halls Billing has a body-guard of warriors, his *saldrótt*, *vígdrótt*<sup>13</sup> (str. 100, 101), in whom we must recognize those Varnians who protect the divinities of light that come to his dwelling, and these warriors watch far into the night, "with burning lights and with torches in their hands," over the slumbering "*sólhvíta*" maiden. But when day breaks their services are no longer necessary. Then they in their turn go to sleep (*og nær morgni . . . þá var saldrótt um sofín* -- str. 101).<sup>14</sup>

When the Aesir -- all on horseback with the exception of Thor -- on their daily journey to the thingstead near Urd's fountain, have reached the southern rune-carved bridgehead of Bifröst, they turn to the north and ride through a southern Hel-gate into the lower world proper. Here, in the south, and far below Jormungrund's southern zone, we must conceive those "deep dales" where the fire-giant Surt dwells with his race, Suttung's sons (not Muspel's sons). The idea presented in *Gylfaginning*'s cosmogony, according to which there was a realm of fire in the south and a realm of cold in the north of that Ginnungagap in which the world was formed, is certainly a genuine myth, resting on a view of nature which the very geographical position forced upon the Teutons. Both these border realms afterwards find their representatives in the organized world: the realm of fire in Surt's *Sökkdalir*, and the realm of frost in the Niflhel incorporated with the eschatological places; and as the latter constitutes the northern part of the realm of death, we may in analogy herewith refer the dales of Surt and Suttung's sons to the south, and we may do this without fear of error, for *Völuspá* 52 states positively that Surt and his descendants come from the south to the Ragnarok conflict (*Surtur fer sunnan með sviga lævi*). While the northern bridge-head of Bifröst is threatened by the frost-giants, the southern is exposed to attacks from Suttung's sons. In Ragnarok the gods have to meet storms from both quarters, and we must conceive the conflict as extending along Jormungrund's outer zone and especially near both ends of the Bifröst bridge. The plain around the south end of Bifröst where the gods are to "mix the liquor of the sword with Surt" is called *Óskópnir* in a part of a heathen poem incorporated with *Fáfnismál*. Here Frey with his hosts of einherjes meets Surt and Suttung's sons, and falls by the sword

<sup>13</sup> *saldrótt*, "hall-host," household; *vígdrótt*, "battle-host," company of warriors.

<sup>14</sup> "But at the approach of morn, . . . the household all was sleeping." Thorpe tr.

which once was his, after the arch of Bifröst on this side is already broken under the weight of the hosts of riders (*Fáfnismál* 14, 15; *Völuspá* 53). *Óskópnir's* plain must therefore be referred to the south end of Bifröst and outside of the southern Hel-gate of the lower world. The plain is also called *Vígríður* (*Vafþrúðnismál* 18), and is said to be one hundred rasts long each way. As the gods who appear here in the conflict are called *in svásu goð* "the sweet," and as Frey falls in the battle, those who go here to meet Surt and his people seem to be particularly Vana-gods and Vanir, while those who contend with the giants and with Loki's progeny are chiefly Aesir.

When the gods have ridden through the southern Hel-gate, there lie before them magnificent regions over which Urd in particular rules, and which together with Mimir's domain constitute the realms of bliss in the lower world with abodes for departed children and women, and for men who were not chosen on the field of battle. Rivers flowing from Hvergelmir flow through Urd's domain after they have traversed Mimir's realm. The way leads the gods to the fountain of the norns, which waters the southern root of the world-tree, and over which Yggdrasil's lower branches spread their ever-green leaves, shading the gold-clad fountain, where swans swim and whose waters give the whitest color to everything that comes in contact with them. In the vicinity of this fountain are the thingstead with judgment-seats, a rostrum, and benches for the hosts of people who daily arrive to be blessed or damned.

These hosts enter through the Hel-gate of the east. They traverse deep and dark valleys, and come to a thorn-grown plain against whose pricks Hel-shoes protect those who were merciful in their life on earth, and from there to the river mixed with blood, which in its eddies whirls weapons and must be waded over by the wicked, but by the good can be crossed on the driftwood which floats on the river. When this river is crossed the way of the dead leads southward to the thingstead of the gods.

Further up there is a golden bridge across the river to the glorious realm where *Mimis holt* and the glittering halls are situated, in which Baldur and the *ásmegir* await the regeneration. Many streams come from Hvergelmir, among them *Leiptur*, on whose waters holy oaths are taken, and cast their coils around these protected places, from which sorrow, aging, and death are banished. The halls are situated in the eastern part of Mimir's realm in the domain of the elf of the rosy dawn, for he is their watchman.

Further down in Mimir's land and under the middle root of the world-tree is the well of creative force and of inspiration, and near it are Mimir's own golden halls.

Through this middle part of the lower world the road which Nott, Dag, Sol, and Mani travel from Billing's domain to Delling's runs from west to east. When the mother Nott whose car is drawn by *Hrímfaxi* makes her entrance through the western Hel-gate, darkness is diffused along her course over the regions of bliss and accompanies her chariot to the north, where the hall of Sindri, the great artist, is located, and toward Níði's mountains, at whose southern foot Nott takes her rest in her own home. Then those who dwell in the northern regions of Jormungrund retire to rest (*Hrafnagaldur Óðins* 25); but on the outer rim of Midgard there is life and activity, for there Dag's and Sol's cars then diffuse light and splendor on land and sea. The hall of Sindri's race has a special peculiarity. It is, as shall be shown below, the prototype of "the sleeping castle" mentioned in the sagas of the Middle Ages.

Over Níði's mountains and the lands beyond them we find Yggdrasil's third root, watered by the Hvergelmir fountain, the mother of all waters. The Níða mountains constitute Jormungrund's great watershed, from which rivers rush down to the south and to the north. In Hvergelmir's fountain and above it the world-mill is built through whose mill-stone eye water rushes up and down, causing the maelstrom and ebb and flood tide, and scattering the meal of the mill over the bottom of the sea. Nine giantesses march along the outer edge of the world pushing the mill-handle before them, while the mill and the starry heavens at the same time are revolved.

Where the Elivogar rivers rise out of Hvergelmir, and on the southern strand of the mythic Gandvik, is found a region which, after one of its inhabitants, is called *Iði's pasture* (*Idja setur* - *Þórsdrápa* 2).<sup>15</sup> Here dwell warriors of mixed elf and giant blood (see the treatise on the Ivaldi race), who received from the gods the task of being a guard of protection against the neighboring giant-world.

Farther toward the north rise the Níða mountains and form the steep wall which constitutes Niflhel's southern boundary. In this wall are the Na-gates, through which the damned when they have died their second death are brought into the realm of torture, whose ruler is Leikin. Niflheim is inhabited by the spirits of the primeval giants, by the spirits of disease, and by giants who have fallen in conflict with the gods. Under Niflhel extend the enormous caves in which the various kinds of criminals are tortured. In one of these caves is the torture hall of the Nastrands. Outside of its northern door is a grotto guarded by swarthy elves. The door opens to Amsvartnir's sea, over which eternal darkness broods. In this sea lies the Lyngvi-holm, within whose jurisdiction Loki, Fenrir, and "Muspel's sons" are fettered. Somewhere in the same region Bifröst descends to its well-fortified northern bridgehead. The citadel is called *Himinbjörg*, "the defense or rampart of heaven." Its chieftain is Heimdall.

While Bifröst's arch stands in a direction from north to south, the way on which Mani and Sol travel across the heavens goes from east to west. Mani's way is below Asgard.

The movable starry heaven is not the only, nor is it the highest, canopy stretched over all that has been mentioned above. One can go so far to the north that even the horizon of the starry heavens is left in the rear. Outside, the heavens *Andlangur* and *Víðbláinn* support their edges against Jormungrund (*Gylfaginning* 17). All this creation is supported by the world-tree, on whose topmost bough the cock Vidofnir glitters.

#### 94.

#### THE SEVEN SLEEPERS.

*Völuspá* gives an account of the events which forebode and lead up to Ragnarok. Among these we also find that *leika Míms synir*, that is, that the sons of Mimir "spring up," "fly up," "get into lively motion." But the meaning of this has previously been an unsolved problem.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> "Iði is here used as a generic giant name, his *setur* ("seat, residence") being equivalent to Jötunheim." Eysteinn Björnsson, *Þórsdrápa* 2:8 website.

<sup>16</sup> The meaning of this passage is still uncertain today. Of this passage, Carolyn Larrington says: "The sons of Mim are unknown. Mim in l. 4 seems to be identical with Mimir." (*Poetic Edda*, p. 265) Ursula Dronke

In the strophe immediately preceding (the 45th) *Völuspá* describes how it looks on the surface of Midgard when the end of the world is at hand. Brothers and near kinsmen slay each other. The sacred bonds of morality are broken. It is the storm-age and the wolf-age. Men no longer spare or pity one another. Knives and axes rage. Völund's world-destroying sword of revenge has already been fetched by Fjalar in the guise of the red cock (str. 42), and from the Ironwood, where it previously had been concealed by Angurboda and guarded by Eggther; the wolf-giant Hati with his companions have invaded the world, which it was the duty of the gods to protect. The storms are attended by eclipses of the sun (str. 41).

Then suddenly the Gjallar-horn sounds, announcing that the destruction of the world is now to be fulfilled, and just as the first notes of this trumpet penetrate the world, Mimir's sons spring up. "The old tree," the world-tree, groans and trembles. When Mimir's sons "spring up" Odin is engaged in conversation with the head of their father, his faithful adviser, in regard to the impending conflict, which is the last one in which the gods are to take a hand.

I shall here give reasons for the assumption that the blast from the Gjallar-horn wakes Mimir's sons from a sleep that has lasted through centuries, and that the Christian legend concerning the seven sleepers has its chief, if not its only, root in a Germanic myth which in the second half of the fifth or in the first half of the sixth century was changed into a legend. At that time large portions of the Germanic race had already been converted to Christianity: the Goths, Vandals, Gepidians, Rugians, Burgundians, and Swabians were Christians. Considerable parts of the Roman empire were settled by the Teutons or governed by their swords. The Franks were on the point of entering the Christian Church, and behind them the Alamannians and Longobardians. Their myths and sagas were reconstructed so far as they could be adapted to the new forms and ideas, and if they, more or less transformed, assumed the garb of a Christian legend, then this guise enabled them to travel to the utmost limits of Christendom; and if they also contained, as in the case here in question, ideas that were not entirely foreign to the Greek-Roman world, then they might the more easily acquire the right of Roman nativity.

In its oldest form the legend of "the seven sleepers" has the following outlines (*Miraculorum Liber*, VII., I. 92)<sup>17</sup>:

Seven brothers<sup>18</sup> have their place of rest near the city of Ephesus, and the story of them is as follows: In the time of the Emperor Decius, while the persecution of the Christians took place, seven men were captured and brought before the ruler. Their names were Maximianus, Malchus, Martinianus, Constantius, Dionysius, Joannes, and Serapion. All sorts of persuasion was attempted, but they would not yield. The emperor,

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writes: "I have chosen to interpret *Míms* here as 'Heimdallr's' and his sons as 'mankind'. ...If we take *Míms synir* as giants, then *leika* implies that they are rejoicing as mankind's, and the gods', fate approaches." (*PE II*, p. 144)

<sup>17</sup> Later Rydberg refers to this simply as *Miraculorum Liber*, I. 92. Gregorius Turonensis (Gregory of Tours; c.539-594 AD), best known for his *Historia Francorum* ("The History of the Franks"), also wrote seven books of "Miracles," among them his *Liber in gloria martyrum* ("Book of the Glories of the Martyrs") in 587. Modern references list the source of the legend of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus as Gregorius' *De Gloria Martyrum* ("The Glory of the Martyrs") I, 92.

<sup>18</sup> For "brothers" the text, perhaps purposely, used the ambiguous word *germani*. This would, then, not be the only instance where the word is used in both senses at the same time. Cp. Quintil., 8, 3, 29. [Rydberg]

who was pleased with their courteous manners, gave them time for reflection, so that they should not at once fall under the sentence of death. But they concealed themselves in a cave and remained there many days. Still, one of them went out to get provisions and attend to other necessary matters. But when the emperor returned to the same city, these men prayed to God, asking Him in His mercy to save them out of this danger, and when, lying on the ground, they had finished their prayers, they fell asleep. When the emperor learned that they were in the above-mentioned cave, he, under divine influence, commanded that the entrance of the cave should be closed with large stones, "for," said he, "as they are unwilling to offer sacrifices to our gods, they must perish there." While this transpired a Christian man had engraved the names of the seven men on a leaden tablet, and also their testimony in regard to their belief, and he had secretly laid the tablet in the entrance of the cave before the latter was closed. After many years, the congregations having secured peace and the Christian Theodosius having gained the imperial dignity, the false doctrine of the Sadducees, who denied resurrection, was spread among the people. At this time it happens that a citizen of Ephesus is about to make an enclosure for his sheep on the mountain in question, and for this purpose he loosens the stones at the entrance of the cave, so that the cave was opened, but without his becoming aware of what was concealed within. But the Lord sent a breath of life into the seven men and they arose. Thinking they had slept only one night, they sent one of their number, a youth, to buy food. When he came to the city gate he was astonished, for he saw the glorious sign of the Cross, and he heard people aver by the name of Christ. But when he produced his money, which was from the time of Decius, he was seized by the vendor, who insisted that he must have found secreted treasures from former times, and who, as the youth made a stout denial, brought him before the bishop and the judge. Pressed by them, he was forced to reveal his secret, and he conducted them to the cave where the men were. At the entrance the bishop then finds the leaden tablet, on which all that concerned their case was noted down, and when he had talked with the men a messenger was despatched to the Emperor Theodosius. He came and kneeled on the ground and worshipped them, and they said to the ruler: "Most august Augustus! There has sprung up a false doctrine which tries to turn the Christian people from the promises of God, claiming that there is no resurrection of the dead. In order that you may know that we are all to appear before the judgment-seat of Christ according to the words of the Apostle Paul, the Lord God has raised us from the dead and commanded us to make this statement to you. See to it that you are not deceived and excluded from the kingdom of God." When the Emperor Theodosius heard this he praised the Lord for not permitting His people to perish. But the men again lay down on the ground and fell asleep. The Emperor Theodosius wanted to make graves of gold for them, but in a vision he was prohibited from doing this. And until this very day these men rest in the same place, wrapped in fine linen mantles.

At the first glance there is nothing which betrays the Germanic origin of this legend. It may seemingly have had an independent origin anywhere in the Christian world, and particularly in the vicinity of Ephesus.

However the historian of the Franks, Bishop Gregory of Tours (born 538 or 539), is the first one who presented in writing the legend regarding the seven sleepers.<sup>19</sup> In the

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<sup>19</sup> Apparently unknown to Rydberg, Gregory of Tours' story is a faithful translation of a tale found less than a century earlier in the homilies of Saint James of Sarugh (452-521 AD), a bishop in Syria, a region also

form given above it appears through him for the first time within the borders of the christianized western Europe (see Gregorius' *Miraculorum Liber*, I., ch. 92). After him it reappears in Greek records, and thence it travels on and finally gets to Arabia and Abyssinia.<sup>20</sup> His account is not written before the year 571 or 572. As the legend itself claims in its preserved form not to be older than the first years of the reign of Theodosius, it must have originated between the year's 379-572.

The next time we learn anything about the seven sleepers in occidental literature is in the Longobardian historian Paulus Diaconus (born about 723).<sup>21</sup> What he relates has greatly surprised investigators; for although he certainly was acquainted with the Christian version in regard to the seven men who sleep for generations in a cave, and although he entertained no doubt as to its truth, he nevertheless relates another - and that a Germanic - seven sleepers' legend, the scene of which is the remotest part of Germania. He narrates (I. 4):

"As my pen is still occupied with Germany, I deem it proper, in connection with some other miracles, to mention one which there is on the lips of everybody. In the remotest western boundaries of Germany is to be seen near the sea-strand under a high rock a cave where seven men have been sleeping no one knows how long. They are in the deepest sleep and uninfluenced by time, not only as to their bodies but also as to their garments, so that they are held in great honor by the savage and ignorant people, since time for so many years has left no trace either on their bodies or on their clothes. To judge from their dress they must be Romans. When a man from curiosity tried to undress one of them, it is said that his arm at once withered, and this punishment spread such a terror that nobody has since then dared to touch them. Doubtless it will some day be apparent why Divine Providence has so long preserved them. Perhaps by their preaching - for they are believed to be none other than Christians -- this people shall once more be called to salvation. In the vicinity of this place dwell the race of the Skritobinians ('the Skridfinns')."<sup>22</sup>

In chapter 6 Paulus makes the following additions, which will be found to be of importance to our theme: "Not far from that sea-strand which I mentioned as lying far to the west (in the most remote Germany), where the boundless ocean extends, is found the unfathomably deep eddy which we traditionally call the navel of the sea. Twice a day it swallows the waves, and twice it vomits them forth again. Often, we are assured, ships are drawn into this eddy so violently that they look like arrows flying through the air, and

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well acquainted with Germanic tribes. One of the orthodox fathers of the Syrian church, James began writing sermons circa 474 AD; he was made bishop of Batnae, in the district of Sarugh, and province of Mesopotamia, in 519 AD, two years before his death.

<sup>20</sup> The story likely made its way east via the narrative of James of Sarugh rather than Gregory of Tours. According to Edward Gibbons' *Of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, ch. 33, the names of the seven sleepers are inscribed in the Roman, the Abyssinian, and the Russian calendar. A similar story appears in the *Koran* (*Sura* 18) as a divine revelation of Mohammed.

<sup>21</sup> Paul the Deacon (c. 723-799).

<sup>22</sup> The term Skrid-finns used here indicates the Finn's as skiers, elsewhere used in this work as "Ski-Finns." In his translation of Paul the Deacon's *History of the Lombards*, William Foulke (1974) notes: "What is said about the Scritobini (or Scridefinni) can be traced to one and the same source as the account of Thule given in Procopius' *Gothic War*, II, 15 or of Scandza in Jordanes' *Gothic History*, 3."

frequently they perish in this abyss. But sometimes, when they are on the point of being swallowed up, they are driven back with the same terrible swiftness."

From what Paulus Diaconus here relates we learn that in the eighth century the common belief prevailed among the heathen Teutons that in the neighborhood of that ocean-maelstrom, caused by Hvergelmir ("the roaring kettle"), seven men slept from time immemorial under a rock. How far the heathen Teutons believed that these men were Romans and Christians, or whether this feature is to be attributed to a conjecture by Christian Teutons, and came through influence from the Christian version of the legend of the seven sleepers, is a question which it is not necessary to discuss at present. That they are some day to awake to preach Christianity to "the stubborn," still heathen Germanic tribes is manifestly a supposition on the part of Paulus himself, and he does not present it as anything else. It has nothing to do with the saga in its heathen form.

The first question now is: Has the heathen tradition in regard to the seven sleepers, which, according to the testimony of the Longobardian historian, was common among the heathen Teutons of the eighth century, since then disappeared without leaving any traces in our mythic records?

The answer is: Traces of it reappear in Saxo, in Adam of Bremen, in Norse and German popular belief, and in *Völuspá*. When compared with one another these traces are sufficient to determine the character and original place of the tradition in the epic of the Germanic mythology.

I have already given above (No. 46) the main features of Saxo's account of King Gorm's and Thorkil's journey to and in the lower world. With their companions they are permitted to visit the abodes of torture of the damned and the fields of bliss, together with the gold-clad world-fountains, and to see the treasures preserved in their vicinity. In the same realm where these fountains are found there is, says Saxo, a *tabernaculum* within which still more precious treasures are preserved. It is an *uberius thesauri secretarium*.<sup>23</sup> The Danish adventurers also entered here. The treasury was also an armory, and contained weapons suited to be borne by warriors of superhuman size. The owners and makers of these arms were also there, but they were perfectly quiet and as immovable as lifeless figures. Still they were not dead, but made the impression of being half-dead (*semineces*). By the enticing beauty and value of the treasures, and partly, too, by the dormant condition of the owners, the Danes were betrayed into an attempt to secure some of these precious things. Even the usually cautious Thorkil set a bad example and put his hand on a garment (*amiculo manum inserens*). We are not told by Saxo whether the garment covered anyone of those sleeping in the treasury, nor is it directly stated that the touching with the hand produced any disagreeable consequences for Thorkil. But further on Saxo relates that Thorkil became unrecognizable, because a withering or emaciation (*marcor*) had changed his body and the features of his face. With this account in Saxo we must compare what we read in Adam of Bremen<sup>24</sup> about the Frisian adventurers who tried to plunder treasures belonging to giants who in the middle of the day lay concealed in subterranean caves (*meridiano tempore latitantes antris subterraneis*). This account must also have conceived the owners of the treasures as sleeping while the plundering took place, for not before they were on their way back were

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<sup>23</sup> "a privy chamber with a yet richer treasure" Elton tr.

<sup>24</sup> Adam Bremenis, *Gesta Hammaburgensis Ecclesiae Pontificum*. "A History of the Arch-Bishops of Bremen (Hamburg)" c. 1068. Book 4 contains a treatise on geography.



the Frisians pursued by the plundered party or by other lower-world beings. Still, all but one succeeded in getting back to their ships. Adam asserts that they were such beings *quos nostri cyclopes appellant* ("which among us are called cyclops"), that they, in other words, were gigantic smiths, who accordingly themselves had made the untold amount of golden treasures which the Frisians saw there. These northern cyclops, he says, dwelt within solid walls, surrounded by a water, to which, according to Adam of Bremen, one first comes after traversing the land of frost (*provincia frigoris*), and after passing that Euripus, "in which the water of the ocean flows back to its mysterious fountain" (*ad initia quaedam fontis sui arcani recurrens*), "this deep subterranean abyss wherein the ebbing streams of the sea, according to report, were swallowed up to return," and which "with most violent force drew the unfortunate seamen down into the lower world" (*infelices nautos vehementissimo impetu traxit ad Chaos*).

It is evident that what Paulus Diaconus, Adam of Bremen, and Saxo here relate must be referred to the same tradition. All three refer the scene of these strange things and events to the "most remote part of Germany" (cp. Nos. 45, 46, 48, 49). According to all three reports, the boundless ocean washes the shores of this saga-land which has to be traversed in order to get to "the sleepers," to "the men half-dead and resembling lifeless images," to "those concealed in the middle of the day in subterranean caves." Paulus assures us that they are in a cave under a rock in the neighborhood of the famous maelstrom which sucks the billows of the sea into itself and spews them out again. Adam makes his Frisian adventurers come near being swallowed up by this maelstrom before they reach the caves of treasures where the cyclops in question dwell; and Saxo locates their tabernacle, filled with weapons and treasures, to a region which we have already recognized (see Nos. 45-51) as belonging to Mimir's lower-world realm, and situated in the neighborhood of the sacred subterranean fountains.

In the northern part of Mimir's domain, consequently in the vicinity of the Hvergelmir fountain (see Nos. 59, 93), from and to which all waters find their way, and which is the source of the famous maelstrom (see Nos. 79, 80, 81), there stands, according to *Völuspá*, a golden hall in which Sindri's kinsmen have their home. Sindri is, as we know, like his brother Brokk and others of his kinsmen, an artist of antiquity, a *cyclops*, to use the language of Adam of Bremen. The Northern records and the Latin chronicles thus correspond in the statement that in the neighborhood of the maelstrom or of its subterranean fountain, beneath a rock and in a golden hall, or in subterranean caves filled with gold, certain men who are subterranean artisans dwell. Paulus Diaconus makes a "curious" person who had penetrated into this abode disrobe one of the sleepers clad in "Roman" clothes, and for this he is punished with a withered arm. Saxo makes Thorkil put his hand on a splendid garment which he sees there, and Thorkil returns from his journey with an emaciated body, and is so lean and lank as not to be recognized.

There are reasons for assuming that the ancient artisan Sindri is identical with *Dvalinn*, the ancient artisan created by Mimir. I base this assumption on the following circumstances:

*Dvalinn* is mentioned by the side of *Dáinn* both in *Hávamál* 143 and in *Grímnismál* 33; also in the sagas, where they make treasures in company. Both the names are clearly epithets which point to the mythic destiny of the ancient artists in question. *Dáinn* means "the dead one," and in analogy with this we must interpret *Dvalinn* as "the

dormant one," "the one slumbering" (cp. the Old Swedish *dvale*, sleep, unconscious condition). Their fates have made them the representatives of death and sleep, a sort of equivalent of Thanatos and Hypnos. As such they appear in the allegorical strophes incorporated in *Grímnismál*, which, describing how the world-tree suffers and grows old, make *Dáinn* and *Dvalinn*, "death" and "slumber," get their food from its branches, while Nidhogg and other serpents wound its roots.

In *Hyndluljóð* 7 the artists who made Frey's golden boar are called *Dáinn* and *Nabbi*. In the *Prose Edda* (*Skáldskaparmál* 43) they are called *Brokkur* and *Sindri*. Strange to say, on account of mythological circumstances not known to us, the skalds have been able to use *Dáinn* as a paraphrase for a grazing four-footed animal, and *Brokkur* too has a similar signification (cp. the *Prose Edda*, *Nafnþulur*,<sup>25</sup> and Vigfusson, *Dictionary*, under *Brokkr*<sup>26</sup>). This points to an original identity of these epithets. Thus we arrive at the following parallels:

*Dáinn* (-*Brokkur*) and *Dvalinn* made treasures together;  
*(Dáinn-)* *Brokkur* and *Sindri* made Frey's golden boar;  
*Dáinn* and *Nabbi* made Frey's golden boar;

and the conclusion we draw from this is that in our mythology, in which there is such a plurality of names, *Dvalinn*, *Sindri*, and *Nabbi* are the same person, and that *Dáinn* and *Brokkur* are identical. I may have an opportunity later to present further evidence of this identity.

The primeval artist *Sindri*, who with his kinsmen inhabits a golden hall in Mimir's realm under the Hvergelmir mountains, near the subterranean fountain of the maelstrom, has therefore borne the epithet *Dvalinn*, "the one wrapped in slumber." "The slumberer" thus rests with his kinsmen, where Paulus Diaconus has heard that seven men sleep from time immemorial, and where Adam of Bremen makes smithy giants, rich in treasures, keep themselves concealed in lower-world caves within walls surrounded by water.

It has already been demonstrated that *Dvalinn* is a son of Mimir (see No. 53). *Sindri*-*Dvalin* and his kinsmen are therefore Mimir's offspring (*Míms synir*). The golden citadel situated near the fountain of the maelstrom is therefore inhabited by the sons of Mimir.

It has also been shown that, according to *Sólarljóð*, the sons of *Mímir-Niði* come from this region (from the north in Mimir's domain), and that they are seven altogether:

*Norðan sá eg ríða*  
*Niðja sonu,*  
*og voru sjö saman;*

From the North I saw ride  
 Nidi's sons,  
 They were seven together;

<sup>25</sup> In the *Nafnþulur*, *Dáinn* is found among the list of Stags (*Hjörtr*) along with the other 3 harts named in *Grímnismál* 33.

<sup>26</sup> In Vigfusson's *Dictionary*, *Brokkr* is defined as a dwarf, and as a "trotter" i.e. a horse from the verb *brokka*, to trot, a word of foreign origin.

that is to say, that they are the same number as the "economical months," or the changes of the year (see No. 87).

In the same region Mimir's daughter Nott has her hall, where she takes her rest after her journey across the heavens is accomplished (see No. 93). The "chateau dormant"<sup>1</sup> of Germanic mythology is therefore situated in Nott's native land, and Dvalin, "the slumberer," is Nat's brother. Perhaps her citadel is identical with the one in which Dvalin and his brothers sleep. According to Saxo, voices of women are heard in the *tabernaculum* belonging to the sleeping men, and glittering with weapons and treasures, when Thorkil and his men come to plunder the treasures there. Nott has her court and her attendant sisters in the Germanic mythology, as in *Rigveda* (Ushas). Sinmara (see Nos. 97, 98) is one of the dises of the night. According to the Middle-Age sagas, these dises and daughters of Mimir are said to be twelve in number (see Nos. 45, 46).

Mimir, as we know, was the ward of the middle root of the world-tree. His seven sons, representing the changes experienced by the world-tree and nature annually, have with him guarded and tended the holy tree and watered its root with *aurgum forsi* from the subterranean horn, "Valfather's pledge."<sup>2</sup> When the god-clans became foes, and the Vanir seized weapons against the Aesir, Mimir was slain, and the world-tree, losing its wise guardian, became subject to the influence of time. It suffers in crown and root (*Grímnismál*), and as it is ideally identical with creation itself, both the natural and the moral, so toward the close of the period of this world it will betray the same dilapidated condition as nature and the moral world then are to reveal.

Logic demanded that when the world-tree lost its chief ward, the lord of the well of wisdom, it should also lose that care which under his direction was bestowed upon it by his seven sons. These, voluntarily or involuntarily, retired, and the story of the seven men who sleep in the citadel full of treasures informs us how they thenceforth spend their time until Ragnarok. The details of the myth telling how they entered into this condition cannot now be found; but it may be in order to point out, as a possible connection with this matter, that one of the older Vanir, Njörd's father, and possibly the same as Mundilfari, had the epithet *Svafur*, *Svafurþorinn* (*Fjölsvinnsmál* 8). *Svafur* means *sopitor*, the sleeper, and *Svafurþorinn* seems to refer to *svefnþorn*, "sleep-thorn." According to the traditions, a person could be put to sleep by laying a "sleep-thorn" in his ear, and he then slept until it was taken out or fell out.<sup>3</sup>

Popular traditions scattered over Sweden, Denmark, and Germany have to this very day been preserved, on the lips of the common people, of the men sleeping among weapons and treasures in underground chambers or in rocky halls. A Swedish tradition makes them equipped not only with weapons, but also with horses which in their stalls abide the day when their masters are to awake and sally forth. Common to the most of these traditions, both the Northern and the German, is the feature that this is to happen when the greatest distress is at hand, or when the end of the world approaches and the day of judgment comes. With regard to the German sagas on this point I refer to Jakob Grimm's *Mythology*.<sup>4</sup> I simply wish to point out here certain features which are of special

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<sup>1</sup> "the sleeping castle"

<sup>2</sup> *Völuspá* 27 & 28.

<sup>3</sup> Sleep-thorns appear in *Hrólfs saga kraka ok kappá hans* ch. 7 and in *Fáfnismál* 43.

<sup>4</sup> Grimm fully discusses the various legends of heroes sleeping in hills in *DM*, chapter 32. Several of these tales involve the regeneration of a tree.

importance to the subject under discussion, and which the popular memory in certain parts of Germany has preserved from the heathen myths. When the heroes who have slept through centuries sally forth, the trumpets of the last day sound, a great battle with the powers of evil (Antichrist) is to be fought, an immensely old tree, which has withered, is to grow green again, and a happier age is to begin.

This immensely old tree, which is withered at the close of the present period of the world, and which is to become green again in a happier age after a decisive conflict between the good and evil, can be no other than the world-tree of Germanic mythology, the Yggdrasil of our Eddas. The angel trumpets, at whose blasts the men who sleep within the mountains sally forth, have their prototype in Heimdall's horn, which proclaims the destruction of the world; and the battle to be fought with Antichrist is the Ragnarok conflict, clad in Christian robes, between the gods and the destroyers of the world. Here Mimir's seven sons also have their task to perform. The last great struggle also concerns the lower world, whose regions of bliss demand protection against the thurs-clans of Niflhel, the more so since these very regions of bliss constitute the new earth, which after Ragnarok rises from the sea to become the abode of a better race of men (see No. 55). The "wall rock" of the Hvergelmir mountain and its "stone gates" (*Völuspá* 48 - *veggberg, steindyr*; cp. Nos. 46, 75) require defenders able to wield those immensely large swords which are kept in the sleeping castle on Nott's native land, and Sindri-Dvalin is remembered not only as the artist of antiquity, spreader of Mimir's runic wisdom, enemy of Loki, and father of the man-loving dises (see No. 53), but also as a hero. The name of the horse he rode, and probably is to ride in the Ragnarok conflict, is, according to a strophe cited in *Skáldskaparmál* 72, *Móðinn*; the Middle-Age Sagas have connected his name to a certain viking, Sindri, and to Sintram of the German heroic poetry.<sup>5</sup>

I now come back to the *Völuspá* strophe, which was the starting-point in the investigation contained in this chapter:

*Leika Míms synir,  
en mjötuður kyndist  
að inu gamla  
Gjallarhorni;  
hátt blæs Heimdallur,  
horn er á lofti.*

"Mimir's sons spring up, for the fate of the world is proclaimed by the old Gjallarhorn. Loud blows Heimdall -- the horn is raised."

In regard to *leika*, it is to be remembered that its old meaning, "to jump," "to leap," "to fly up," reappears not only in Ulfilas, who translates *skirtan* of the New Testament with *laikan*. (Luke I. 41, 44, and VI. 23; in the former passage in reference to the child slumbering in Elizabeth's womb; the child "leaps" at her meeting with Mary), but also in another passage in *Völuspá*, where it is said in regard to Ragnarok, *leikur hár*

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<sup>5</sup> Rydberg fully discusses the correspondences between the dwarf Sindri and hero Sintram in Volume 2 of this work "*Brisingamen's Smiths*."

*hiti við himin sjálfan* -- "high leaps" (plays) "the fire against heaven itself." Further, we must point out the preterit form *kyndisk* (from *kynna*, to make known) by the side of the present form *leika*. This juxtaposition indicates that the sons of Mimir "rush up," while the fate of the world, the final destiny of creation in advance and immediately beforehand, was proclaimed "by the old Gjallarhorn." The bounding up of Mimir's sons is the effect of the first powerful blast. One or more of these follow: "Loud blows Heimdall -- the horn is raised; and Odin speaks with Mimir's head." Thus we have found the meaning of *leika Míms synir*. Their waking and appearance is one of the signs best remembered in the chronicles in popular traditions of Ragnarok's approach and the return of the dead, and in this strophe *Völuspá* has preserved the memory of the "*chateau dormant*" of Germanic mythology.

Thus a comparison of the mythic fragments extant with the popular traditions gives us the following outline of the Germanic myth concerning the seven sleepers:

The world-tree -- the representative of the physical and moral laws of the world -- grew in time's morning gloriously out of the fields of the three world-fountains, and during the first epochs of the mythological events (*ár alda*) it stood fresh and green, cared for by the subterranean guardians of these fountains. But the times became worse. The feminine counterpart of Loki, Gullveig-Heid, spreads evil runes in Asgard and Midgard, and he and she cause disputes and war between those god-clans whose task it is to watch over and sustain the order of the world in harmony. In the feud between the Aesir and Vanir, the middle and most important world-fountain -- the fountain of wisdom, the one from which the good runes were fetched -- became robbed of its watchman. Mimir was slain, and his seven sons, the superintendents of the seven seasons, who saw to it that these season-changes followed each other within the limits prescribed by the world-laws, were put to sleep, and fell into a stupor, which continues throughout the historical time until Ragnarok. Consequently the world-tree cannot help withering and growing old during the historical age. Still it is not to perish. Neither fire nor sword can harm it; and when evil has reached its climax, and when the present world is ended in the Ragnarok conflict and in Surt's flames, then it is to regain that freshness and splendor which it had in time's morning.

Until that time Sindri-Dvalin and Mimir's six other sons slumber in that golden hall which stands toward the north in the lower world, on Mimir's fields. Nott, their sister, dwells in the same region, and shrouds the chambers of those slumbering in darkness. Standing toward the north beneath the Nida mountains, the hall is near Hvergelmir's fountain, which causes the famous maelstrom. As sons of Mimir, the great smith of antiquity, the seven brothers were themselves great smiths of antiquity, who, during the first happy epoch, gave to the gods and to nature the most beautiful treasures (Mjolnir, Brisingamen, Slidrugianni,<sup>6</sup> Draupnir). The hall where they now rest is also a treasure-chamber, which preserves a number of splendid products of their skill as smiths, and among these are weapons, too large to be wielded by human hands, but intended to be employed by the brothers themselves when Ragnarok is at hand and the great decisive conflict comes between the powers of good and of evil. The seven sleepers are there clad in splendid mantles of another cut than those common among men. Certain mortals have

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<sup>6</sup> An alternate name of Frey's boar Gullinbursti.

had the privilege of seeing the realms of the lower world and of inspecting the hall where the seven brothers have their abode. But whoever ventured to touch their treasures, or was allured by the splendor of their mantles to attempt to secure any of them, was punished by the drooping and withering of his limbs.

When Ragnarok is at hand, the aged and abused world-tree trembles, and Heimdall's trumpet, until then kept in the deepest shade of the tree, is once more in the hand of the god, and at a world-piercing blast from this trumpet Mimir's seven sons start up from their sleep and arm themselves to take part in the last conflict. This is to end with the victory of the good; the world-tree will grow green again and flourish under the care of its former keepers; "all evil shall then cease, and Baldur shall come back." The Germanic myth in regard to the seven sleepers is thus most intimately connected with the myth concerning the return of the dead Baldur and of the other dead men from the lower world, with the idea of resurrection and the regeneration of the world. It forms an integral part of the great epic of Germanic mythology, and could not be spared. If the world-tree is to age during the historical epoch, and if the present period of time is to progress toward ruin, then this must have its epic cause in the fact that the keepers of the chief root of the tree were severed by the course of events from their important occupation. Therefore Mimir dies; therefore his sons sink into the sleep of ages. But it is necessary that they should wake and resume their occupation, for there is to be a regeneration, and the world-tree is to bloom with new freshness.

Both in Germany and in Sweden there still prevails a popular belief which puts "the seven sleepers" in connection with the weather. If it rains on the day of the seven sleepers, then, according to this popular belief, it is to rain for seven weeks thereafter. People have wondered how a weather prophecy could be connected with the sleeping saints, and the matter would also, in reality, be utterly incomprehensible if the legend were of Christian origin; but it is satisfactorily explained by the heathen-Germanic mythology, where the seven sleepers represent those very seven so-called economic months - the seven changes of the weather - which gave rise to the division of the year into the months - *gormánuðr*, *frerm.*, *hrútm.*, *einm.*, *sólm.*, *selm.*, and *kornskurðarmánuðr*. Navigation was also believed to be under the protection of the seven sleepers, and this we can understand when we remember that the hall of Mimir's sons was thought to stand near the Hvergelmir fountain and the Grotti of the skerry, "dangerous to seamen," and that they, like their father, were lovers of men. Thorkil, the great navigator of the saga, therefore praises Gudmund-Mimir as a protector in dangers.<sup>7</sup>

The legend has preserved the connection found in the myth between the above meaning and the idea of a resurrection of the dead. But in the myth concerning Mimir's seven sons this idea is most intimately connected with the myth itself, and is, with epic logic, united with the whole mythological system. In the legend, on the other hand, the resurrection idea is put on as a trade-mark. The seven men in Ephesus are lulled into their long sleep, and are waked again to appear before Theodosius, the emperor, to preach a sermon illustrated by their own fate against the false doctrine which tries to deny the resurrection of the dead.

Gregorius says that he is the first who recorded in the Latin language this miracle, not before known to the Church of Western Europe. As his authority he quotes "a certain

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<sup>7</sup> Saxo Book 8: "Thorkill told them to greet his arrival cheerfully, telling them that this was Gudmund, the brother of Geirroð, and the most faithful guardian in perils of all men who landed in that spot." Elton tr.

Syrian" who had interpreted the story for him. There was also need of a man from the Orient as an authority when a previously unknown miracle was to be presented -- a miracle that had transpired in a cave near Ephesus. But there is no absolute reason for assuming that Gregorius presents a story of his own invention. The reference of the legend to Ephesus is explained by the antique saga-variation concerning Endymion,<sup>8</sup> according to which the latter was sentenced to confinement and eternal sleep in a cave in the mountain Latmos. Latmos is south of Ephesus, and not very far from there. This saga is the antique root-thread of the legend, out of which rose its localization, but not its contents and its details. The contents are borrowed from the Germanic mythology. That Syria or Asia Minor was the scene of its transformation into a Christian legend is possible, and is not surprising. During and immediately after the time to which the legend itself refers the resurrection of the seven sleepers, the time of Theodosius, the Roman Orient, Asia Minor, Syria, and Egypt were full of Germanic warriors who had permanent quarters there. A *Notitia dignitatum*<sup>9</sup> from this age speaks of hosts of Goths, Alamannians, Franks, Chamavians, and Vandals, who there had fixed military quarters. There then stood an *ala Francorum*, a *cohors Alamannorum*, a *cohors Chamavorum*, an *ala Vandilorum*, a *cohors Gothorum*,<sup>10</sup> and no doubt there, as elsewhere in the Roman Empire, great provinces were colonized by Germanic veterans and other immigrants. Nor must we neglect to remark that the legend refers the falling asleep of the seven men to the time of Decius. Decius fell in battle against the Goths, who, a few years later, invaded Asia Minor and captured among other places also Ephesus.<sup>11</sup>

## 95.

### ON THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF THE MYTHOLOGY.

The account now given of the myths concerning the lower world shows that the hierologists and skalds of our heathendom had developed the doctrine in a clear manner even down to the minutest details. The lower world and its kingdom of death were the chief subjects with which their fancy was occupied. The many sagas and traditions which flowed from heathen sources and which described Svipdag's, Hadding's, Gorm's, Thorkil's, and other journeys down there are proof of this, and the complete agreement of statements from totally different sources in regard to the topography of the lower world and the life there below shows that the ideas were systematized into a clear and perspicuous whole. Svipdag's and Hadding's journeys in the lower world have been incorporated as episodes in the great epic concerning the Germanic patriarchs, the chief outlines of which I have presented in the preceding pages. This is done in the same manner as the visits of Ulysses and Æneas in the lower world have become a part of the great Greek and Roman epic poems.

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<sup>8</sup> In Greek Mythology, Endymion is a mortal loved by the moon-goddess Selene who bears him fifty daughters. Because she could not bear to see him die, she lulled him to sleep in a cave where he would remain youthful and beautiful eternally. In another version of the tale, Zeus grants his wish to remain beautiful forever by putting him to sleep in a cave.

<sup>9</sup> Register of Dignitaries

<sup>10</sup> *ala*, squadron; *cohors*, retinue

<sup>11</sup> The influence of the Germanic tribes in this region is confirmed by Gibbons in his *Of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.

Under such circumstances it may seem surprising that Icelandic records from the Middle Ages concerning the heathen belief in regard to the abodes after death should give us statements which seem utterly irreconcilable with one another. For there are many proofs that the dead were believed to live in hills and rocks, or in grave-mounds where their bodies were buried. How can this be reconciled with the doctrine that the dead descended to the lower world, and were there judged either to receive abodes in Asgard or in the realms of bliss in Hades, or in the world of torture?

The question has been answered too hastily to the effect that the statements cannot be harmonized, and that consequently the heathen-Germanic views in regard to the day of judgment were in this most important part of the religious doctrine unsupported.

The reason for the obscurity is not, however, in the matter itself, which has never been thoroughly studied, but in the false premises from which the conclusions have been drawn. Mythologists have simply assumed that the popular view of the Christian Church in regard to terrestrial man, conceiving him to consist of two factors, the perishable body and the imperishable soul, was the necessary condition for every belief in a life hereafter, and that the heathen Teutons accordingly also cherished this idea.

But this duality did not enter into the belief of our heathen fathers. Nor is it of such a kind that a man, having conceived a life hereafter, in this connection necessarily must conceive the soul as the simple, indissoluble spiritual factor of human nature. The division into two parts, *líf og sála*, *líkami og sála*, body and soul, came with Christianity, and there is every reason for assuming, so far as the Scandinavian peoples are concerned, that the very word soul, *sála*, *sál*, is, like the idea it represents, an imported word. In Old Norse literature the word occurs for the first time in Olaf Tryggvason's contemporary Hallfred, after he had been converted to Christianity. Still the word is of Germanic root. Ulfilas translates the New Testament psyche with *saiwala*, but this he does with his mind on the Platonic New Testament view of man as consisting of three factors: spirit (*pneuma*), soul (*psyche*), and body (*soma*). Spirit (*pneuma*) Ulfilas translates with *ahma*.

Another assumption, likewise incorrect in estimating the anthropological-eschatological belief of the Teutons, is that they are supposed to have distinguished between matter and mind, which is a result reached by the philosophers of the Occident in their abstract studies. It is, on the contrary, certain that such a distinction never entered the system of heathen Germanic views. In it all things were of a material, an *efni*<sup>12</sup> of a rough or fine grain, tangible or intangible, visible or invisible. The imperishable factors of man were, like the perishable, material, and a force could not be conceived which was not bound to matter, or expressed itself in matter, or was matter.

The Germanic heathen conception of human nature, and of the factors composing it, is most like the Indo-European-Asiatic as we find the latter preserved in the traditions of Buddhism, which assume more than three factors in a human being, and deny the existence of a soul, if this is to mean that all that is not corporal in man consists of a single simple, and therefore indissoluble, element, the soul.

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<sup>12</sup> "Efni n. [Swedish *ämne*=stuff, *materia* and Danish *ævne*=achievement]: -a stuff, originally like Latin *materia*, *timber*; and so the stuff or material out of which a thing is wrought." Vigfusson's *Dictionary*, p. 116.



The anthropological conception presented in *Völuspá* is as follows: Man consists of six elements, namely, to begin with the lower and coarser and to end with the highest and noblest:

- (1) The earthly matter of which the body is formed.
- (2) A formative vegetative force.
- (3) and (4) Lodur's gifts.
- (5) Hoenir's gifts.
- (6) Odin's gifts.

*Völuspá*'s words are these: The gods -

<i>fundu á landi</i>	found on the land
<i>lítt megandi</i>	the powerless
<i>Ask og Emblu</i>	Ask and Embla
<i>örlöglausa.</i>	without destiny.
<i>Önd þau né áttu,</i>	Spirit they had not,
<i>óð þau né höfðu,</i>	óður they had not,
<i>lá né læti,</i>	neither lá nor læti
<i>né litu goða.</i>	nor the litu goða.
<i>Önd gaf Óðinn,</i>	Spirit gave Odin,
<i>óð gaf Hænir,</i>	óður gave Hoenir,
<i>lá gaf Lóður</i>	lá gave Lodur
<i>og litu goða.</i>	and the litu goða.

The two lowest factors, the earthly matter and the vegetative force, were already united in Ask and Embla when the three gods found them "growing as trees." These elements were able to unite themselves simply by the course of nature without any divine interference. When the sun for the first time shone from the south on "the stones of the hall," the vegetative force united with the matter of the primeval giant Ymir, who was filled with the seed of life from Audhumla's milk, and then the "ground was overgrown with green herbs."<sup>1</sup>

Thus man was not created directly from the crude earthly matter, but had already been organized and formed when the gods came and from the trees made persons with blood, motion, and spiritual qualities. The vegetative force must not be conceived in accordance with modern ideas, as an activity separated from the matter by abstraction and at the same time inseparably joined with it, but as an active matter joined with the earthly matter.

Lodur's first gift *lá* with *læti* makes Ask and Embla animal beings. Egilsson's view that *lá* means blood is confirmed by the connection in which we find the word used.<sup>2</sup> The *læti* united with *lá* (compare the related Swedish word *later*)<sup>3</sup> means the way

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<sup>1</sup> *Völuspá* 4

<sup>2</sup> Unlike *læti*, there is no universally accepted definition of the word *lá* today. The LaFarge-Tucker *Glossary* defines *lá* uncertainly as "blood, ruddiness or vital warmth (?)" Ursula Dronke, following

in which a conscious being moves and acts. The blood and the power of a motion which is voluntary were to the Teutons, as to all other people, the marks distinguishing animal from vegetable life. And thus we are already within the domain of psychic elements. The inherited features, growth, gait, and pose, which were observed as forming race- and family-types, were regarded as having the blood as *efni* and as being concealed therein. The blood which produced the family-type also produced the family-tie, even though it was not acquired by the natural process of generation. A person not at all related to the family of another man could become his *blóði*, his blood-kinsman, if they resolved *að blanda blóði saman*. They thereby entered into the same relations to each other as if they had the same mother and father.

Lodur also gave at the same time another gift, *litur goða*.<sup>4</sup> To understand this expression (previously translated with "good complexion"), we must bear in mind that the Teutons, like the Greeks and Romans, conceived the gods in human form, and that the image which characterizes man was borne by the gods alone before man's creation, and originally belonged to the gods. To the hierologists and the skalds of the Teutons, as to those of the Greeks and Romans, man was created *in effigiem deorum*<sup>5</sup> and had in his nature a divine image in the real sense of this word, a *litur goða*. Nor was this *litur goða* a mere abstraction to the Teutons, or an empty form, but a created *efni* dwelling in man and giving shape and character to the earthly body which is visible to the eye. The common meaning of the word *litur* is something presenting itself to the eye without being actually tangible to the hands. The Gothic form of the word is *wlits*, which Ulfilas uses in translating the Greek *prosopon* -- look, appearance, expression. Certain persons were regarded as able to separate their *litur* from its union with the other factors of their being, and to lend it, at least for a short time, to some other person in exchange for his. This was called to *skipta litum*, *víxla litum*. It was done by Sigurd and Gunnar in the song of Sigurd Fafnisbani (*Grípisspá* 37-42). That factor in Gunnar's being which causes his earthly body to present itself in a peculiar individual manner to the eyes of others is transmitted to Sigurd, whose exterior, affected by Gunnar's *litur*, accommodates itself to the latter, while the spiritual kernel in Sigurd's personality suffers no change (str. 39):

*Lit hefir þú Gunnars  
og læti hans,*

You'll have Gunnar's *litur*  
and his *læti*,

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Vigfusson, states that *lá* literally refers to 'the line of shoal water along the shore, edged by the surf' and is used generally in skaldic verse for 'liquid', of poetry and of blood. She concludes "*lá* might similarly refer to the covering or mantle of flesh with which Lóðurr clothes the wooden bodies of *Askur* and *Embla*. Compared with the wood it would be a moist covering, pulsing with the stream of blood." (*PE II*, p. 124). Snorri includes *lá* among the *heiti* for hair, but does not support this definition in his paraphrase of the same passage in *Gylfaginning* 9. The paraphrase reads: "The first gave breath (*önd*) and life (*líf*), the second consciousness (*vit*) and movement (*hræring*), the third a face (*ásjónu*), speech (*mál*), and hearing (*heyrrn*) and sight (*sjón*)."<sup>3</sup> (Faulkes' tr.)

<sup>3</sup> "bearing, airs"

<sup>4</sup> Here the manuscripts have *litu góða*, good *litur*, rather than *litur goða*, *litur* of the gods as Rydberg maintains, although some scholars still discuss the possibility. While the phrase literally means "a good *litur*" this does not prevent that *litur*, appearance, from originally belonging to the gods, since the gods are consistently represented in human form throughout the mythology. Rydberg's point here is that since the gods changed Askur and Embla from the form of trees into human form, the *litu goða* is identical to the *litu góða*.

<sup>5</sup> in the image of the gods

*mælsku þína  
og meginhyggjur.*

your own eloquence  
and powerful understanding

Thus man has within him an inner body made in the image of the gods and consisting of a finer material, a body which is his *litur*, by virtue of which his coarser tabernacle, formed from the earth, receives that form by which it impresses itself on the minds of others. The recollection of the belief in this inner body has been preserved in a more or less distorted form in traditions handed down even to our days (see for example, Hyltén-Cavallius, *Värend och Virdarne*, i. 343-360; Rääf i Småland, *Beskr. öfver Ydre*, p. 84).<sup>469</sup>

The appearance of the outer body therefore depends on the condition of the *litur*, that is, of the inner being. Beautiful women have a "joyous fair *litur*" (*Hávamál* 93). An emotion has influence upon the *litur*, and through it on the blood and the appearance of the outward body. A sudden blushing, a sudden paleness, are among the results thereof and can give rise to the question, *Hefir þú lit brugðið?* -- "Have you changed your *litur*?" (*Hervarar Saga ok Heidreks Konúngs*, ch. 3). To translate this with, "Have you changed color?" is absurd. The questioner sees the change of color, and does not need to ask the other one, who cannot see it.

On account of its mythological signification and application, it is very natural that the word *litur* should in every-day life acquire on the one hand the meaning of complexion in general, and on the other hand the signification of *hamur*, guise, an earthly garb which persons skilled in magic could put on and off. *Skipta litum*, *víxla litum*, have in Christian times been used as synonymous with *skipta hömum*, *víxla hömum*.<sup>470</sup>

In physical death the coarser elements of an earthly person's nature are separated from the other constituent parts. The tabernacle formed of earth and the vegetative material united with it are eliminated, as is the animal element, and remain on earth. But this does not imply that the deceased descend without form to Hades. The form in which they travel in "deep dales," traverse the thorn-fields, wade across the subterranean rivers, or ride over the gold-clad Gjallar-bridge, is not a new creation, but was worn by them in their earthly career. It can be none other than their *litur*, their *umbra et imago*.<sup>471</sup> It also shows distinctly what the dead man has been in his earthly life, and what care has been bestowed on his dust. The washing, combing, dressing, ornamenting, and supplying with Hel-shoes of the dead body has influence upon one's looks in Hades, on one's looks when he is to appear before his judge.

Separated from the earthly element, from the vegetative material, and from the blood, the *litur* is almost imponderable, and does not possess the qualities for an intensive life, either in bliss or in torture. Five fylkes of dead men who rode over the Gjallar-bridge produced no greater din than Hermod alone riding on Sleipnir; and the woman watching the bridge saw that Hermod's exterior was not that of one separated from the earthly element. It was not *litur dauðra manna* (*Gylfaginning* 49)<sup>472</sup>. But the *litur* of the dead is compensated for what it has lost. Those who in the judgment on *dauðan hvern*<sup>473</sup> are pronounced worthy of bliss are permitted to drink from the horn decorated with the

<sup>469</sup> Gunnar Olof Hyltén-Cavallius (1818-1889), *Värend och Wirdarne*, Stockholm, 1864-68. Leonhard Fredrik Rääf i Småland (1786-1872) "*Description of Ydre* (a district in Sweden)".

<sup>470</sup> In *Ynglingasaga* 7, Odin is said to *skipti hömum*, changed shape. The same phrasing occurs in *Völsungasaga* chs. 7 and elsewhere [see Vigfusson's *Dictionary*, *hamr*].

<sup>471</sup> "shadow and likeness" i.e. their ghost

<sup>472</sup> "the *litur* of dead men"

<sup>473</sup> "everyone dead", *Hávamál* 77.

serpent-symbol of eternity, the liquids of the three world-fountains which give life to all the world, and thereby their *litur* gets a higher grade of body and nobler blood (see Nos. 72, 73). Those sentenced to torture must also drink, but it is a drink *eitri blandinn mjög*, "much mixed with venom," and it is *illu heilli*, that is, a warning of evil. This drink also restores their bodies, but only to make them feel the burden of torture. The liquid of life which they imbibe in this drink is the same as that which was thought to flow in the veins of the demons of torture. When Hadding with his sword wounds the demon-hand which grasps after Hardgreip and tears her into pieces (see No. 41), there flows from the wound "more venom than blood" (*plus tabi quam cruoris* - Saxo, Book 1).

When Lodur had given Ask and Embla *litur goða*, an inner body formed in the image of the gods, a body which gives to their earthly tabernacle a human-divine type, they received from Hoenir the gift which is called *óður*.<sup>474</sup> In signification this word corresponds most closely to the Latin *mens*,<sup>475</sup> the Greek *noûs* (cp. Vigfusson's *Dictionary*), and means that material which forms the kernel of a human personality, its ego, and whose manifestations are understanding, memory, fancy, and will.

Vigfusson has called attention to the fact that the epithet *langifótur* and *aurkonungr*, "Long-leg" and "Mire-king" applied to Hoenir, is applicable to the stork, and that this cannot be an accident, as the very name Hænir suggests a bird, and is related to the Greek *kuknos* and the Sanscrit *sakunas* (*Corpus Poet. Bor.*, I. p. cii.).<sup>476</sup> It should be borne in mind in this connection that the stork even to this day is regarded as a sacred and protected bird, and that among Scandinavians and Germans there still exists a nursery tale telling how the stork takes from some saga-pond the little fruits of man and brings them to their mothers. The tale which now belongs to the nursery has its root in the myth, where Hoenir gives our first parents that very gift which in a spiritual sense makes them human beings and contains the personal ego. It is both possible and probable that the conditions essential to the existence of every person were conceived as being analogous with the conditions attending the creation of the first human pair, and that the gifts which were then given by the gods to Ask and Embla were thought to be repeated in the case of each one of their descendants -- that Hoenir consequently was believed to be continually active in the same manner as when the first human pair was created, giving to the mother-fruit the ego that is to be. The fruit itself out of which the child is developed was conceived as grown on the world-tree, which therefore is called *manna mjötuður*<sup>477</sup> (*Fjölsvinnsmál* 22). Every fruit of this kind (*aldin*) that matured (and fell from the branches of the world-tree into the mythic pond ?) is fetched by the winged servants of

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<sup>474</sup> Vigfusson defines the word as "mind, wit, soul, sense." LaFarge-Tucker define the word as "mental faculties or voice." It is significant to note that this is one of the bynames of Freyja's husband Svipdag, the subject of the poem *Fjölsvinnsmál* discussed more fully in the next section.

<sup>475</sup> "mind, intellect, attitude, understanding, reason"

<sup>476</sup> "In the Eddaic legend one of these gods is called *Hænir*; he is the speech-giver of *Völuspá*, and is described in praises taken from lost poems as "the long-legged one" [*langifótr*], "the lord of the ooze" [*aurkonungr*]. Strange epithets, but easily explainable when one gets at the etymology of *Hæni* = *hohni* = Sansc. *sakunas* = Gr. *kuknos* = the white bird, swan, or stork, that stalks along in the mud, lord of the marsh; and it is now easy to see that this bird is the Creator walking in chaos." Vigfusson, *Corpus Poeticum Boreale*, vol. I., Introduction, p. cii.

<sup>477</sup> "The one who metes out fate among men." *Mjötuður* is related to OE *metod*. Yggdrasil is designated *mjötviður* in *Völuspá* 2.

the gods, and is born *á eld*<sup>478</sup> into the maternal lap, after being mentally fructified *with óðr* by Hoenir.

*Út af hans (Mímameiðs) aldni  
skal á eld bera  
fyr kelisjúkar konur;  
utar hverfa  
þess þær innar skýli,  
sá er hann með mönnum mjötuður.*<sup>479</sup>

Above, in No. 83, it has been shown that *Lóðurr* is identical with Mundilföri, the one producing fire by friction, and that *Hænir* and *Lóðurr* are Odin's brothers, also called *Véi* and *Vili*. With regard to the last name it should be remarked that its meaning of "will" developed out of the meaning "desire," "longing," and that the word preserved this older meaning also in the secondary sense of *cupido*, *libido*, sexual desire. This epithet of *Lóðurr* corresponds both with the nature of the gifts he bestows on the human child which is to be -- that is, the blood and the human, originally divine, form -- and also with his quality of fire-producer, if, as is probable, the friction-fire had the same symbolic meaning in the Germanic mythology as in the *Rigveda*.<sup>480</sup> Like Hoener, Lodur causes the knitting together of the human generations. While the former fructifies the embryo developing on the world-tree with *óður*, it receives from Lodur the warmth of the blood and human organism. The expression *Vilja byrðr*, "Vili's burden," "that which Vili has produced," is from this point of view a well-chosen and at the same time an ambiguous paraphrase for a human body. The paraphrase occurs in *Ynglingatal* (*Ynglingasaga* 14). When Visbur loses his life in the flames it is there said of him that the fire consumed his *Vilja byrði*, his corporal life.

To Lodur's and Hoenir's gifts the highest Asa-god adds the best element in human nature, *önd*, spirit,<sup>481</sup> that by which a human being becomes participator in the divine also in an inner sense, and not only as to form. The divine must here, of course, be understood in the sense (far different from the ecclesiastical) in which it was used by our heathen ancestors, to whom the divine, as it can reveal itself in men, chiefly consisted in power of thought, courage, honesty, veracity, and mercy, but who knew no other humility than that of patiently bearing such misfortunes as cannot be averted by human ingenuity.

These six elements, united into one in human nature, were of course constantly in reciprocal activity. The personal kernel *óður* is on the one hand influenced by *önd*, the

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<sup>478</sup> The text of this verse is difficult and its meaning uncertain. Rydberg likely took *á eld* to mean "in warmth."

<sup>479</sup> "Its fruit is taken and laid upon a fire; for women in labour; out then will come; that which they carry inside; thus it metes out fate among men." Eysteinn Björnsson tr.

<sup>480</sup> When we consider that Rig-Heimdall, as the representative of the holy friction-fire, is said to sleep between the man and the wife of each of three households, and that a child was born to them nine months later, it is probable that friction fire had the symbolic significance of sexual union. In regard to Askur and Embla, Ursula Dronke (*PE II*, p. 123) says: "...a second mythologem, that of a god as kindler of life between a male and a female, made of wood. In archaic fire-making rituals fire is sparked by boring with a hard spike of wood into a softer wooden block: a simulation of sexual action, in which the spark of life is given by the god."

<sup>481</sup> *Önd* is usually translated as "breath" or "life." Rydberg translates *önd* with the Swedish *ande* meaning "breath" or "spirit."

spirit, and on the other hand by the animal, vegetative, and corporal elements, and the personality being endowed with will, it is responsible for the result of this reciprocal activity. If the spirit becomes superior to the other elements then it penetrates and sanctifies not only the personal kernel, but also the animal, vegetative, and corporal elements. Then human nature becomes a being that may be called divine, and deserves divine honor. When such a person dies the lower elements which are abandoned and consigned to the grave have been permeated by, and have become participators in, the personality which they have served, and may thereafter in a wonderful manner diffuse happiness and blessings around them. When Halfdan the Black died different places competed for the keeping of his remains, and the dispute was settled by dividing the corpse between Hadaland, Hringariki, and Vestfold (*Fagurskinna, Heimskringla*).<sup>482</sup> The vegetative force in the remains of certain persons might also manifest itself in a strange manner. Thorgrim's grave-mound in *Gisli's Saga* was always green on one side, and Laugarbrekku-Einar's grave-mound was entirely green both winter and summer (*Landnámabók* II. 7).

The elements of the dead buried in the grave continued for more or less time their reciprocal activity, and formed a sort of unity which, if permeated by his *óður* and *önd*, preserved some of his personality and qualities. The grave-mound might in this manner contain an alter ego of him who had descended to the realm of death. This alter ego, called after his dwelling *haugbúi*, mound-dweller, was characterized by his nature as a *draugur*, a branch which, though cut off from its life-root, still maintains its consistency, but gradually, though slowly, pays tribute to corruption and progresses toward its dissolution. In Christian times the word *draugur*<sup>483</sup> acquired a bad, demoniacal meaning, which did not belong to it exclusively in heathen times, to judge from the compounds in which it is found: *éldraugur*, *herdraugur*, *hirðidraugur*, which were used in paraphrases for "warriors"; *óðaldraugur*, "rightful owner," etc. The alter ego of the deceased, his representative dwelling in the grave, retained his character: was good and kind if the deceased had been so in life; in the opposite case, evil and dangerous. As a rule he was believed to sleep in his grave, especially in the daytime, but might wake up in the night, or could be waked by the influence of prayer or the powers of conjuration. Ghosts of the good kind were *hollar vættir*, of the evil kind *óvættir*.<sup>484</sup> Respect for the fathers and the idea that the men of the past were more pious and more noble than those of the present time caused the alter egos of the fathers to be regarded as beneficent and working for the good of the race, and for this reason family grave-mounds where the bones of the ancestors rested were generally near the home. If there was no grave-mound in the vicinity, but a rock or hill, the alter egos in question were believed to congregate there when something of importance to the family was impending. It might also happen that the lower elements, when abandoned by *óður* and *önd*, became an alter ego in whom the

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<sup>482</sup> *Hálfðanar Saga Svarta* "The great men of Raumarik and Vestfold and Hedemark went there and all demanded his body for themselves to lay it in a howe in their own district, for they expected good seasons if they had the body. Finally it was agreed that they should divide the body into four parts and the head was laid in a howe at Stein in Ringerik" Erling Monsen tr.

<sup>483</sup> Literally "a dry log"; in the following compounds listed above it carries the meaning of "tree" i.e. the body of man. The sources of these words can be found listed in Vigfusson's *Dictionary* and Egilsson's *Lexicon Poeticum*.

<sup>484</sup> *hollar vættir*, "kind wights" *Oddrúnar-grátr* 9; *óvættir*, "evil wights" *Grettissaga* 42, *Guðmundardrápa* by Árni Jónsson 59.

vegetative and animal elements exclusively asserted themselves. Such an one was always tormented by animal desire of food, and did not seem to have any feeling for or memory of bonds tied in life. Saxo (Book 5 ) gives a horrible account of one of this sort. Two foster-brothers, Asmund and Asvid, had agreed that if the one died before the other the survivor should confine himself in the foster-brother's grave-chamber and remain there. Asvid died and was buried with horse and dog. Asmund kept his agreement, and ordered himself to be confined in the large, roomy grave, but discovered to his horror that his foster-brother had become a *haugbúi* of the last-named kind, who, after eating horse and dog, attacked Asmund to make him a victim of his hunger. Asmund conquered the *haugbúi*, cut off his head, and pierced his heart with a pole to prevent his coming to life again. Swedish adventurers who opened the grave to plunder it freed Asmund from his prison. In such instances as this it must have been assumed that the lower elements of the deceased consigned to the grave were never in his lifetime sufficiently permeated by his *óður* and *önd* to enable these qualities to give the corpse an impression of the rational personality and human character of the deceased. The same idea is the basis of belief of the Slavic people in the vampire. In one of this sort the vegetative element united with his dust still asserts itself, so that hair and nails continue to grow as on a living being, and the animal element, which likewise continued to operate in the one buried, visits him with hunger and drives him in the night out of the grave to suck the blood of surviving kinsmen.

The real personality of the dead, the one endowed with *litur*, *óður*, and *önd*, was and remained in the death kingdom, although circumstances might take place that would call him back for a short time. The drink which the happy dead person received in Hades was intended not only to strengthen his *litur*, but also to soothe that longing which the earthly life and its memories might cause him to feel. If a dearly-beloved kinsman or friend mourned the deceased too violently, this sorrow disturbed his happiness in the death kingdom, and was able to bring him back to earth. Then he would visit his grave-mound, and he and his alter ego, the *haugbúi*, would become one. This was the case with Helgi Hundingsbani (*Helgakviða Hundingsbana* II, 40, etc.). The sorrow of Sigrun, his beloved, caused him to return from Valhall to earth and to ride to his grave, where Sigrun came to him and wanted to rest in his arms during the night. But when Helgi had told her that her tears pierced his breast with pain, and had assured her that she was exceedingly dear to him, and had predicted that they together should drink the sorrow-allaying liquids of the lower world, he rode his way again, in order that, before the crowing of the cock, he might be back among the departed heroes. Prayer was another means of calling the dead back. At the entrance of his deceased mother's grave-chamber Svipdag beseeches her to awake. Her ashes kept in the grave-chamber (*er til moldar er komin*) and her real personality from the realm of death (*er úr ljóðheimum er liðin*) then unite, and Groa speaks out of the grave to her son (*Gróugaldur* 1, 2). A third means of revoking the dead to earth lay in conjuration. But such a use of conjuration was a great sin, which relegated the sinner to the demons. (Cp. Saxo's account of Hardgreip; Book 1.)

Thus we understand why the dead descended to Hades and still inhabited the grave-mounds. One died "to Hel" and "to the grave" at the same time. That of which earthly man consisted, in addition to his corporal garb, was not the simple being, "the soul," which cannot be divided, but there was a combination of factors, which in death could be separated, and of which those remaining on earth, while they had long been the



covering of a personal kernel (*óður*), could themselves in a new combination form another ego of the person who had descended to Hades.

But that too consisted of several factors, *litur*, *óður*, and *önd*, and they were not inseparably united. We have already seen that the sinner, sentenced to torture, dies a second death in the lower world before he passes through the Na-gates, the death from Hel to Niflhel, so that he becomes a *nár*, a corpse in a still deeper sense than that which *nár* has in a physical sense. The second death, like the first (physical), must consist in the separation of one or more of the factors from the being that dies. And in the second death, that which separates itself from the damned one and changes his remains into a lower-world *nár*, must be those factors that have no blame in connection with his sins, and consequently should not suffer his punishment, and which in their origin are too noble to become the objects of the practice of demons in the art of torturing. The venom drink which the damned person has to empty deprives him of that image of the gods in which he was made, and of the spirit which was the noble gift of the Asa-father. Changed into a monster, he goes to his destiny fraught with misfortunes.<sup>485</sup>

The idea of reincarnation was not foreign to the faith of the Germanic heathens. To judge from the very few statements we have on this point, it would seem that it was only the very best and the very worst who were thought to be born anew in the present world. Gullveig was born again several times by the force of her own evil will. But it is only ideal persons of whom it is said that they are born again -- e.g., Helgi Hjorvardsson, Helgi Hundingsbani, and Olaf Geirstadaralf, of whom the last was believed to have risen again in Saint Olaf. With the exception of Gullveig, the statements in regard to the others from Christian times are an echo from the Germanic heathen doctrine which it would be most interesting to become better acquainted with -- also from the standpoint of comparative Indo-European mythology, since this same doctrine appears in a highly-developed form in the Asiatic-Indo-European group of myths.

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<sup>485</sup> In *Sólarljóð* 53, the poet sees "scorched birds, flying numerous as gnats. They were souls." Thus souls damned to Niflhel were stripped of their *litur* and left formless to suffer there. I am reminded of modern images of ghosts depicted as a sort of floating bed-sheet with the vague outlines of a head and arms often seen at Halloween time. But rather than white, the *Sólarljóð* poet describes them as "scorched birds."