

Viktor Rydberg's Investigations into Germanic Mythology Volume II

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Hárbarðsljóð

Who is Harbard in this poem? Some say that he is Odin; others that he is Loki. It would be good for the advance of mythological research on logical grounds and in a sound direction, if a definitive investigation could put this question to rest.¹

The song takes the form of a dialog between Thor and Harbard. Before the dialog, there is a short introduction: “Thor traveled *or austrvegi* and came to a sound. On the other side of the sound was a ferryman with a boat. Thor called out (to him).”

The first question necessary for the investigation is where the scene between Thor and Harbard was located by the original author of the poem—where Thor finds himself when he meets this Harbard.

1) The introduction says that he *fór or austrvegi* (traveled from eastern-ways). Of the expression *fara i austrvegi*, Vigfusson correctly remarks that it is “a standing phrase for the expeditions of Thor against giants.”² Thus, in place of: *Þórr var farinn i austrveg at berja tröll.*³ Compare *Hárbarðsljóð* 23, where Thor says *ek var austr ok jötna barðak.*⁴ Further compare *Lokasenna* 60, where Loki says to Thor: *Austrförum þínom skaltu aldregi segja seggjum frá.*⁵ In *Völuspá*, it says “the old one” who fostered Fenrir’s kin, lives *austr* (east) in the Ironwood. In *Gylfaginning* 45, it says of Thor, once he left his goats behind (at Egil’s), that *hann byrjaði ferðina austur í Jötunheima.*⁶ On these grounds, one can already assume with absolute certainty that the author of *Hárbarðsljóð* wanted to describe Thor as walking in Jötunheim and on his way home from one of his excursions against the company of giants when he encounters Harbard.

¹ Although the identity of Harbard was discussed in Rydberg’s day, the issue has been long since settled in favor of Odin. This identification is based almost exclusively on *Grímnismál* 49, which lists Harbard as a name of Odin. Throughout the 20th and into the 21st century, no one has seriously questioned this identification. Despite some errors, Rydberg’s argument is sound. Other scholars who shared Rydberg’s view were Adolf Holtzmann (*Die ältere Edda, übersetzt u. erklärt.* 1875) and Friedrich Wilhelm Bergmann (*Das Graubartsleid [Hárbarðsljóð]: Lokis Spottreden auf Thor,* Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1872).

² *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*, Richard Cleasby and Gudbrand Vigfusson, 2nd edition, Oxford, 1957 s.v. *austrvegr*.

³ *Gylfaginning* 42: “Thor...was traveling in eastern-parts to thrash trolls.”

⁴ “I was in the east, and slew the Jötun.”

⁵ “Of your eastern travels, you should never speak.”

⁶ “He began his journey eastward toward Jötunheim.”

2) Thor is described in *Hárbarðsljóð* as traveling on foot, carrying his meal in a basket on his back (verse 3). This is in complete accordance with his custom on journeys in Jötunheim. On them, he is always described as a walker, since he leaves his team at Egil's (See Vol. 1, no. 108). He also carries his meal-basket on his back on the occasion when, returning from his battle with the giant Hrungnir, he finds his friend Örvandil-Egil freezing and bears him over the Elivogar in the basket (*Skáldskaparmál* 16).

On closer inspection one finds that in the adventure he describes, *Hárbarðsljóð*'s author presumes that Thor first rested at Egil's, as was his custom, in the lodge that is his second home south of the Elivogar before he set out in the morning and proceeded into Jötunheim, and that he then also had slaughtered one of his goats for a meal and as fare for his journey.⁷ This time, his journey was of short duration. The sun still had not set, when, on the way back, he is inhibited by the sound and enters into a contest of words with Harbard (verse 57); he is still satisfied with the breakfast he ate before he departed (verse 3). The breakfast consisted of herring and goat-meat, and he still has a good deal of this preparation left as fare for his journey in his basket. (verse 3). He ate his morning meal *í hvíld*, that is to say, in peace and quiet and in a safe place. The place must have been Egil's fortress. It is not Asgard, where such fare is not the custom, and from which, according to *Hymiskviða* 7, more than a full day's journey is required to reach Egil's fortress and the Elivogar, the boundary water of the land of the giants. The information that we have about Thor's trips to Jötunheim divide the journey in the following manner: 1) the first day is spent "entirely" driving behind the goat-team from Asgard to Egil's "chalet"; 2) the evening meal, a night's rest, and breakfast there; 3) the second day, departure to Jötunheim over the Elivogar. Thus, it is on the second day of the trip, during his walk back, that Thor chances to meet Harbard. And when, on the evening of the same day, he says that he ate his breakfast that morning in safety from the food he now carries, the breakfast, for which one of his goats was slaughtered, must have been eaten in the fortress by the Elivogar.

That *Hárbarðsljóð* lets Thor also have herring as food during his outing is an interesting mythological fact, because, as I shall show later,⁸ traces of a myth can still be found that speak of Örvandil-Egil and his elves pursuing herring in the Elivogar on Thor's behalf, without doubt to offer him the catch as the evening meal and the morning meal, when he stays in their fortress on his way from Asgard to Jötunheim. And when *Hárbarðsljóð* also speaks of goat-meat as Thor's fare for the journey, it undoubtedly means that this time too, one of Thor's goats was slaughtered in the lodging with Egil, as was customary, and that the meat that the god carries is the result of this slaughter.

3) In verse 56, *Hárbarðsljóð* says that the land where Thor finds himself when he encounters the sound and Harbard is not Verland, i.e. the land of human beings, Midgard, nor Odin's land, i.e. Asgard. (*haltu svá til vinstra vegrins, unz þú hittir Verland; þar mun Fiörgyn ...kenna hánom áttunga brautir til Óðins landa.*)⁹

From all this, it follows with certainty that it is in Jötunheim that Thor encounters the impeding sound and Harbard, appearing as a ferryman. Thor himself also says (verse 9) that he and his whole family, i.e. the Aesir, are outlawed (*sekr*) where he now stands. Nevertheless, he does not hesitate to tell Harbard who he is.

⁷ Here the word *hafra* can be interpreted as *hafri*, "oats," or *hafr*, "he-goat." Most English translations favor "oats," although both are valid. See *Kommentar zu den Liedern der Edda*, Vol. 2 (1997) pp. 175-176.

⁸ See in this volume: "Egil as Fisher."

⁹ "Then keep to the left, until you reach Verland; there will Fiörgyn ...show him his kinsmen's paths to Odin's land."

Harbard's task, as the song expressly points out, is to delay the world-protecting god on his way home, so that after his bout against giants, he shall be too late to perform the duties that await him afterwards. From a mythological standpoint, such a delay is an act hostile to the world. Nature's order and mankind's well being require that the gods, each and every one within his sphere, fulfill the duties that are required of them in the proper time. Harbard also predicts (verse 58) that some misfortune shall befall the world because Thor will not arrive before sunrise. Specifically, he predicts or expresses the hope that the rising sun shall *þána*. With Egilsson, Bugge, and Finnur Jónsson, I consider the word to be formed from *þeyja*, *þáinn*, which from the meaning thaw receives the meaning melt away, vanish, cease to exist.

In the dialog he has with Thor, Harbard mocks and abuses him on every convenient occasion, as I shall show below, even though a demonstration should be superfluous, since it is as plain as day. However, there is much in this song that, although plain as day, has gone unseen. To these disregarded elements belongs the fact that Harbard is not only characterized by the author of the poem as a young rascal who makes a fool of Thor on this occasion and delays him, but also directly designates Harbard as a person who on previous occasions has appeared as an enemy of the gods, in alliance with giants. This occurs in verses 40, 41, 42, and in others to which I shall come. The verses just named have the following wording:

*Hárbarðr kvað: Ek vark í hernom,
er hingat görðiz
gnæfa gunnfana,
geir at rióða.*

Harbard said: "I was in the army,
which was sent hither,
war-banners to raise,
spears to redden."

*Þórr kvað: Þess viltu nú geta,
er þú fórt oss ólubann at bjóða.*

Thor said: "Of that you will now speak,
as you went forth
to offer us hard terms."

*Hárbarðr kvað: Bæta skal þér þat þá munda baugi,
sem jafnendr unno,
þeir er okr vilja sætta.*

Harbard said: "That shall be redressed
with a hands-ring,
such as arbitrators got,
who wish to reconcile."¹⁰

¹⁰ Translation modified from that of Benjamin Thorpe, 1865.

Here Harbard says that he went along when a war-campaign came to the land where he and Thor find themselves now as they converse. The word *hingat* (*ad hunc locum*, to this place, to this land), uttered by Harbard, as he stands by the sound, does not leave the slightest doubt that the warlike expedition concerned Jötunheim, that it consequently consisted of enemies of the giants, and that the battle took place in the land of the giants. Harbard's words: "I was with the war-party that came here," further state that Harbard accompanied the giant-hostile host invading Jötunheim. From this, one can draw the conclusion that Harbard himself appeared hostile to the giants. But Thor's reply: "You will now bring up the occasion when you intended to offer us an evil (unpleasant) lot," shows that Harbard, even though he accompanied the giant-hostile host as an alleged friend, still had intended to do harm to and defeat it, and this is completely confirmed in Harbard's answer (verse 42), where he mockingly confesses that on that occasion he committed a crime against Thor and the army that followed him, which he also mockingly offers to repay with fines.

Consequently, this refers to a mythological event when Thor, not alone but leading a war-party, invaded Jötunheim and on that occasion was accompanied by a person, here concealed under the name Harbard, who secretly was the giants' ally and had planned it so that Thor and his comrades had an accident.

Among the mythological events known to us, there is a single episode that can be intended by *Hárbarðsljóð*. We know of only one occasion, when Thor led a war party into Jötunheim. It is his campaign against the giant Geirrod, celebrated in *Þórsdrápa*. With this campaign are associated the circumstances that *Hárbarðsljóð* points out, that an alleged friend of the gods, but secretly their enemy, comes along on a field-campaign against Jötunheim and leads Thor into an ambush where his warriors are close to being killed. (See the first volume of this work, no. 114). This secret enemy of the gods is Loki.¹¹

The Old Norse skalds loved double-entendres and wordplay. *Hárbarðsljóð* also seems to employ them to further point out what is already clear from the context, namely that Thor's campaign against Geirrod is meant here. The wordplay occurs when the war party's goal is said to have been *geir at rioða*, verse 40, which has the ring of the target of Thor's field-campaign, *Geirrauðr*, both in sound and meaning.

Now on to a closer examination of the dialog between Thor and Harbard. Does the character with which Harbard appears in the dialog confirm that the author of the song wants to depict an evil and mean being, and does this dialog further corroborate the result, that I have arrived at through an analysis of verses 40, 41, and 42, that this evil and mean being is Loki?

The disposition Thor displays in the dialog is truehearted and simply straightforward. At intervals, he is provoked to anger by Harbard's insolent words, but he quickly calms down again. When he thinks that Harbard sometimes speaks ingeniously, he is immediately ready to acknowledge it (see verse 45).

What he wants from Harbard is for him to come with the boat and ferry him over the sound. Since Thor is a famous wader and grows in degree of the water's depth, as he wades, the ferryman and the boat should be unnecessary for him, but this time Thor carries something that he calls *augur* which is in no condition to come into contact with the water.¹² In this manner, the

¹¹ Loki tells Thor that "green paths lie on the way to Geirrod's," yet Thor and his companion(s) encounter wild mountain streams and are almost drowned.

¹² The word *augur* itself has no known meaning in Old Icelandic. Many scholars interpret the word as "balls" meaning Thor did not want to get his genitals wet, even though such a concern has never hindered him before.

poem justifies that Thor is in need of Harbard's help, which he requests using friendly words, promising to Harbard in compensation for the trouble so large a portion of the food he carries that Harbard will have enough for the following day.

Harbard responds to the invitation with derisive words and adds a lie: "there is sorrow in your home, your mother is dead." Naturally, everyone is free to interpret this symbolically and imagine that Harbard, in a frank and friendly manner, informs Thor that while he was away from home his mother Jörd had fallen into the deathlike slumber of winter-lethargy; but compare verse 4 where the ferryman says that Fjörgyn is dead with verse 56, where he says that she lives. Thus, the entire message appears to be a simple untruth with which he wanted to make Thor's filial heart ache, and verse 5 describes Thor as distressed by this misfortune for the world and for himself. Harbard thus begins with a malicious lie; he continues through the entire poem with jests, abuse, cynical shamelessness, and he ends the discussion with a wish for evil wights to take Thor, hide and hair. How is it possible that one can think the person who speaks this way could be All-father, the ruler of the world revered by all Germanic people, Odin, whose own trusted son and assistant in the maintenance of world order Thor is!!!

While Thor is reeling from the news that his mother is dead, Harbard makes fun of his simple clothing, which he calls a peasant's, and his custom to go barelegged. The last remark is not without interest. It seems to mean that at the close of heathendom Thor and perhaps the other gods as well were imagined as wearing clothing that exposed their limbs more than was the custom among their believers. For Thor, who wades, such clothing is natural.

Thor now asks who owns the boat and what the "ferryman" is called.

To the first question, the "ferryman" replies that he who ordered him to tend the boat is named Hildolf, and he calls him:

*rekkr inn ráðsvinni,
er býr i Ráðseyiarsundi;*

"the quick-in-ráð *rekkr*, who lives in ráð island sound (or the Ráðsö sound)"

Since one assumes that the ferryman is either Odin or that he is Loki, it is clear that this information is not to be taken literally. If the ferryman is Odin, he appears here and plays a role that is not his own. Odin of course, in a mythological sense, is not a ferryman employed by some real Hildolf, living in a real place named Radsö sound. Thus the information either has no meaning at all, or it has a meaning that no one has figured out until now. The same observation applies if the ferryman is Loki. Thus, there is reason to examine his words more closely. The result, to which I thereby have come, is not polite to express in print, but the discomfort cannot be avoided.

With the exception of one of the *pulur* that was attached to *Skáldskaparmál* and is the product of a time whose memory of the old myths show an on-going confusion, the name *Hildólfr*¹³ only appears here. The composition of the name exhibits something unusual that ought to be noted. Compound names in which the suffix is *ólfr*, *ólfr*, or *úlfr*, rarely if ever have a feminine name as the prefix. I have made note of the names *Ásólf*, *Ísólf*, *Viðólf*, *Vígulfr* from the *Poetic Edda*; *Björgólfr*, *Guðólfr*, *Herjólf*, *Hrauðólfr*, *Hundólfr* (or *Hundálfr*), *Hjörólfr* from

Perhaps it is related to *auga*, eyeball, of which Thor has been known to make stars. To date, the mystery remains unsolved.

¹³ The name appears there as one of the Aesir, a son of Odin.

the *Prose Edda*—other mythological names of this type do not exist—and further *Auðólfr*, *Bótólfr*, *Brynjólfr*, *Eyjólfr*, *Grimólfr*, *Ingólfr*, *Pórólfr*, *Steinólfr*, *Rúnólfr*, *Ljótólfr*, *Örnólfr*, *Móðulfr*, *Hróðulfr*, *Hjodólfr*, *Kveldulfr*, *Leiðólfr*, *Stórólfr*. Not one of these names, with some certainty, can be said to have a feminine name as its prefix. The only one that might possibly have is *Auðólfr*, but it is not certain. *Hildólfr*, on the other hand, with certainty, has as its prefix *Hildir*, the name of a dis, the Bellona¹⁴ of the Norse heroic sagas.

In and of itself, no premeditation need be suspected in this seemingly unique, or in any case uncommon, choice of names. But when this Hildolf is distinguished as the *ráð*-quick *rekkr*, who remains in the *ráðs ey* sound, or in the “*Ráðsö* sound,” this name takes on another significance. Here, we have an intentional, or rather unconditionally forced, double-entendre, easily deciphered by the poem’s Old Norse listeners or readers.

That the poem’s author allows Harbard, in the same breath so to speak, to twice utter the word *ráð*, in a certain disquieting sense, unconditionally forces itself upon us: *inn ráðsvinni, er býr i ráðs eyjar sundi*. The word *ráð* has many meanings, and none of them ought to be overlooked in the interpretation of this line, including the meaning of a “match” between a man and a woman. Legal confirmation by means of a marriage is not required for *ráð* to refer to sexual intercourse between a man and a woman; it was enough with betrothal, usually accompanied by great freedom in relations between partners. *Renna ráði* means to annul such a relationship not yet definitively established by means of marriage (Fritzner). Here the meaning lies extremely close to that which the verbs *rá* “lie on a woman” and *rádd* “till,” “settle on” have in Swedish provincial language. That the word *ráð* already existed in ancient times in Norse-Icelandic with reference to such an act is clear from *Hávamál* 109 where, after Odin spends a night with Gunnlöd, the frost-giants come to inquire about the *Háva ráð*. (Compare Richert: *Försök till belysning af mörkare och oföstådda ställen in den. poet. eddan*, page 12)¹⁵. And it is further and completely substantiated by verse 18 in the poem treated here. There the meaning is obvious enough that there can be no doubt about how the author of *Hárbarðsljóð* intends to have the word *ráð*, as he uses it, understood by his readers.

With the word *ráð* here however, it is enough to retain the meaning of a “match” between a man and a woman. The “match” may or may not have been legal. Hildolf is said to be a *rekkr*. *Rekkr* originally meant “one with a stiff posture.” And this Hildolf, who is distinguished thus, is *ráðsvinnr* i.e. quick to engage in a certain kind of *ráð*, and he remains close to *ráð*’s island’s sound. In connection to the matter at hand, the last simile or paraphrase need not be explained any further. It is clear enough what is meant by the island to which *ráð* in this sense has reference (*mons Veneris*), and what is meant by that island’s sound. The whole is a consistent cynicism that explains the choice of the name Hildolf (maid-wolf) and distinguishes Harbard as a mythological personality, who appears as the servant of the Hildolf (*phallus*), which is designated here. The jest befits and is suitable to Loki, the representative of the impure fires of lust, who is the Germanic mythology’s lady-killer and androgyne (*cinædus*) at the same time.

The body of water that now restricts Thor’s path is consequently the *Ráðeyjarsund*. It is not the only time that such a flood has inhibited Thor on his journeys. It also meets him on his campaign against Geirrod, when *Gjálp, dóttir Geirröðar, stóð þar tveim megin árinna, ok gerði hon árvöxtinn* (*Skáldskaparmál* 26).¹⁶ One event refers to the other.

¹⁴ The Roman goddess of war who accompanied Mars into battle.

¹⁵ M. B. Richert “*An Attempt to illuminate the dark and misunderstood passages in the Poetic Edda*,” Publication of the Uppsala University Press, 1877.

¹⁶ “Gjálp, Geirrod’s daughter stood astride the river, and she caused it to rise.”

Statements that Harbard makes later in the poem further distinguish him as the representative of unbridled lust. I shall return to them. After the ferryman accounts for his position in this manner, he responds to Thor's second question, regarding his name. He says that I am called *Hárbarðr*, i.e. Graybeard. Harbard is one of fifty or so epithets that belong to Odin and one that can designate an old gray-bearded man in general. The response is a new jest. The ferryman is not grey-bearded. In Thor's eyes, he resembles a youth. The poem's author has been eager for his listeners or readers to know this, and thus to understand the jest that lies in the ferryman assuming such a name. For this purpose, the dialog opens with Thor calling out to him: "Who is the youth of youth's," *sveinn sveina*, that stands beyond the sound?" That the word *sveinn* here is meant as a designation of age is clear from the alleged "Greybeard's" response to Thor: "Who is that karl's karl that calls over the water?" The words *sveinn* and *karl* are both designations of age and both can also be designations of servants. But even in the latter case, *sveinn* designates a young servant, often a boy, and *karl* designates a person more advanced in years. That "Greybeard" has the appearance of a youth, probably without a single beard hair, is pointed out further in verse 13, where Thor calls him a trifling boy, *kögursveinn*.

One of the pretended Harbard's strongly emphasized features is his boasting about sexual exploits that he has had or claims to have had. Thus verses 16, 18, 20, and 30. In verse 18, it is no less than seven sisters among whom he says he has slept, enjoying their favor and sexual companionship. Here the word *ráð* is also used in its obvious cynical meaning, when he says of the seven sisters: *varð ek þeim einn öllom efri at ráðom*: I was on top of them all *at ráðom*. When *efni* is understood in a purely local sense, the meaning of these words becomes clear and thus it ought to be understood that Harbard says he has lain with them.

What type of beings these sisters are is clear from Harbard's words: "they twisted ropes of sand and dug out the ground into deep dales." In verse 16, one learns that Harbard had these relations with them during a war that a certain Fjölvar conducted "on the island called All-green," during which Harbard was Fjölvar's companion "five whole winters." Because *Fjölvarr* is the masculine form of the giantess name *Fjölvar* (*Prose Edda, Tröllkonur Nafnaþulur*) the war must refer to an attack made by Jötunheim's powers against "the island of All-green" i.e. Midgard. When Harbard's involvement in it is said to have lasted "five whole winters," this likely indicates the worst of all these attacks, namely the fimbul-winter that occurred after Freyja and Idun entered the giant-world. The myth has told that enormous natural disasters accompanied the fimbul-winter, and when Harbard says that while the war raged, his seven lovers "twisted ropes of sand and dug out the ground into deep dales," there is every reason to assume that with them is meant giantesses of the same kind as Gjalp and Greip, Stikla, and Rusila, personifications of the wild, overflowing, mountain rivers that surge through dales, digging river beds in their depths and leaving long, continuous sandbanks, "ropes of sand," along their paths to the sea. Hymir's daughters in the mythology have especially represented this natural phenomena; the seven sisters are either identical to these *Hymis meyjar* or their complete counterparts. Of Hymir's maids, Loki, in *Lokasenna* 34, says to Njörd, who is the god of coastal waters and as such must receive the rivers that spill out into the ocean: *Hymis meyjar höfðu þik at hlandtrogi ok þér i munn migo*.¹⁷ *Lokasenna* and *Hárbarðsljóð* refer to the same circumstances in these verses.

Harbard's statement: *Var ek með Fjölvari*, "I was in association with Fjölvar" or "I was Fjölvar's follower" during the war when the giants converged on "the island called Allgreen" is

¹⁷ "Hymir's maids have used you as a urine-trough and flowed into your mouth."

additional evidence that Harbard is an enemy of the gods and the world, and a friend to the forces of fimbul-winter.

Harbard boasts of another sexual encounter in verse 20. His previously reported lovers were giant-maids of the kind dangerous to Midgard. The lovers he now reports are *myrkriðor*: *miklar manvélar ek hafða við myrkriðor, þá er ek vélta þær frá verom*: “I used many wiles in women’s ways on the *myrk*-riders, that I lured from their husbands.” Myrk-riders, the heathen prototype of the magic pack riding on the witches’ sabbath, are evil beings that fare through the air in the dark. They are also called *gifr* and are the prey of the nightly hunt that Odin, followed by his hounds and Thor in his chariot, occasionally conducts to cleanse the air of them (see *Investigations into Germanic Mythology*, Vol. 1, no. 97 and Egilsson *Lexicon Poeticum*, sv. *myrkriða*). The gods are the *myrk*-riders enemies. Harbard is their lover.¹⁸

However, Harbard’s place in the mythology is such that he also can pretend to have had secret relations with some of Asgard’s maids. In verses 30, 32, he says:

*Ek var austr
ok við einhverja domðak,
lék ek við ena línhvíto
ok launþing háðak,
gladdak ena gullbjörto,
gamni mæri unði.*

*Liðs þíns væra ek þá þurfi, Þórr,
at ek helda þeiri enni línhvíto mey.*

“I was out east and had conversation with an *einherja*, I played with (or hovered beside) the linen-white one and held a secret meeting. I gladdened the gold-bright one, and the girl enjoyed the game. When I held the linen-white maid, then I was in need of your help, Thor.”

Einherja is the feminine form of *einheri* and thus must mean a dis belonging to Asgard.¹⁹ The *einherja* or dis of Valhall in question is described as linen-white and gold-bright. In Norse poetry, so to speak, linen is an attribute of goddesses, swan-maids, and high-ranking women. In *Völundarkviða*, the swan-maids spin *dýrt lín*.²⁰ *Lín-Gefn*, flax goddess, is an honored paraphrase

¹⁸ The word *Myrk-rider*, which only occurs here and in the *Tröllkonur Nafnaþulur* of *Skáldskaparmál*, is likely another double-entendre. In the second half of verse 20, Harbard says that he got *gambanteinn* (a wand of revenge) from the giant Hlebard and stole his wits. Rydberg has already identified Hlebard as Völund-Thjazi (see *Investigations into Germanic Mythology*, Vol. 1, no. 116). This makes it probable that besides the implied witches, an interpretation most scholars agree on, “*myrk*-riders” may also refer to Idun and her sisters, the swan-maids, who fly “from the south, through the *Myrk*-wood” to meet their brothers in the Wolfdales (*Völundarkviða* 1). After eight winters, they become homesick and leave. Once they depart, Völund’s brothers go in search of them, leaving Völund alone in the Wolfdales, where he is captured by Mimir-Nidhad. From this, it would appear that Loki is the cause of their longing; in other words, he “enticed them away from their husbands.” *Lokasenna* 23 may corroborate this view.

¹⁹ This line is preserved in two variants found in the existent manuscripts of the poem: *Codex Regius* (R) has *einhverja*, (someone), while *AM 748 I, 4to* (A) has *einherju*. (female *einherje*). Thus *einherju* is an equally valid reading even though *einhverja* is the version most widely accepted today. It can hardly be seen as a scribal error, since it is extremely unlikely that a scribe would take a common word like “*einhverja*” and emend it to a unique word like “*einherju*.” Since A is older than R, and because *einhverja* (someone) sounds awkward in context, i.e. “I was consorting with someone,” Rydberg’s point here is well taken.

²⁰ “precious linen” or “precious bridal-veils.”

for woman. Thus there can be no doubt that the maid that Harbard himself says he has had secret relations with does not belong to his usual circle of female partners, giantesses and *myrk*-riders, but is to be sought among the goddesses or dises.

That this refers to a definite myth, well known to the poem's audience, in which a person of Harbard's disposition has gotten a hold of one of Valhall's beauties, is clear from the details that Harbard reports about the adventure, details which are sufficient to give us a complete understanding about which myth this is.

First and foremost, we must realize that Harbard *var austr* when the adventure began. In other words: it began in Jötunheim. The dis was there when he encountered her and engaged in conversation with her (*Ek var austr ok við einhveria domðak*).

It may seem odd, since we would expect to find an *einherja* in Asgard, not in the land of the giants, but this circumstance is one of the reliable indicators on the basis of which one can determine who the *einherja* is and which myth is being referred to here.

Next, Harbard's meeting with the *einherja* is distinguished as a *launþing*, a meeting in which someone or some people, who had a vested interest in it, knew nothing while the "private meeting" took place.

One learns further that at some moment in the development of events, that which was supposed to be a secret from the concerned party or parties was interrupted, and that Harbard found himself in a very dangerous situation in which he had need of help.

The verb with which Harbard's relationship to the *einherja* is designated in the moment that he requires help is *halda*: he then *held* the linen-white maid.

Finally, it should be pointed out that it was particularly Thor's help that Harbard was in need of, when the critical moment was at hand.

After this analysis of the contents of the quoted lines, I hardly need say what everyone can see. This refers to the myth of Idun's adventure with Loki, when he returned her to Asgard. Under duress, Loki promised the gods to seek the stolen Idun in Jötunheim (*sækja eftir Iðunni í Jötunheima, Skáldskaparmál* 3); he borrows Freyja's falcon-guise, finds Thjazi's dwelling, seizes the opportunity when he is out on the sea and Idun is alone, transforms her into a fruit and flies to Asgard, holding the fruit in his claw. Coming home, Thjazi misses Idun, assumes eagle-form, flies after the robber, enters Asgard directly behind him, and falls there under Thor's hammer. Here we have the explanation why Harbard was in Jötunheim when he found the gold-bright dis; we have the explanation why he can call his meeting with her a *launþing*, the explanation that why, when his secret doings were discovered as he "held" the linen-white one, he was in need of Thor's help. Thereby, light also falls on the ingenious wordplay that the author of *Hárbarðsljóð* has created. When he allows Loki to say that he "played with" (*lék við*) the linen-white one, one ought to remind himself that *leika við* "play with" also means "hover beside" (compare *Völuspá: leikur hár hiti við himin*)²¹ and that it is in falcon-form that he hovers beside the lonely Idun. And when the skald uses the expression *heyja þing*, "held a Thing" of Loki's meeting with her, one ought to remember that the verb *heyja* involves the idea "to fulfill an obligation" and that Loki when he seeks Idun does so on the basis of a commitment to the gods.

It may be doubted whether the myth gave Loki time to commit the crime against Idun of which he brags when she was in his power. In *Lokasenna* 17, the same boast recurs. "Shut up Idun!" says Loki there; "you are the most man-mad of all women, ever since you laid your finely

²¹ "soars high against heaven," Ursula Dronke translation (*Poetic Edda*, Vol. 2, 1997), referring to the flames of Ragnarök. The expression *lék við* also has a sexual connotation.

washed arms around your brother's bane," i.e. around Loki himself (see *Investigations into Germanic Mythology*, Vol. 1, no. 113, 9).²²

By what has already been cited, Harbard's identity with Loki both in disposition and adventures is sufficiently demonstrated. Another feature of his character pointed out in *Hárbarðsljóð* ought not be ignored. In verse 20, he boasts that he "stole the wits" of the giant Hlebard, after he had given him "the wand of revenge" (of Hlebard and the wand of revenge, see the first volume of this work, no. 116). To which Thor observes "you repaid good gifts with an evil mind," which criticism causes Harbard in the following verse to justify selfishness even when it is ungrateful and treacherous, as a common and natural thing. In verse 24, he says that he was in Valland and there took part in a war, and he praises himself for then "provoking princes against one another, but never working for their reconciliation." To the myth about his nithings' action and about the war, I shall return later.

His talk overflows with abuse against Thor. In verse 8, he pretends to assume that the man who wishes to be conducted across the sound is a robber or a horse-thief.²³ In verse 28, he accuses Thor of fear and as proof of this gives his own distorted version of the adventure that the god had on his way to Fjalar's.²⁴ In verse 48, he boasts that Thor's wife, Sif, has a lover at home while Thor is away, and he pretends that he means someone other than himself, even though as a rule such a *launþing* is known only to both the participants. The poem's author ought to have reckoned that his audience would make this reflection and assess Harbard's words accordingly. One should compare verses 54, 58, 60, and 62 of *Lokasenna* with this. The same accusations occur there. Loki says to Sif that she has committed adultery and that it was, he now says openly, with himself.²⁵ He says to Thor that he conducted himself cowardly on his way to Fjalar. Verse 26 in *Hárbarðsljóð* and verse 60 in *Lokasenna* run parallel to one another. This was understood in ancient times, and of this there can be little doubt, since the line in *Lokasenna* 60, *ok þóttiska þú þá Þórr vera* ("and hardly thought you were Thor"), recurs in *Hárbarðsljóð* 26.

As reported above, Harbard in verse 42 derisively offers to pay a fine for the treachery he committed when he followed Thor and his warriors on a field-campaign to Jötunheim against Geirrod. He says that he will repay the fine with *munda baugi sem jafnendr unno, þeir er okr vilja sætta*.²⁶ These words have defied previous attempts to explain them. One thing, however, ought to be clear to everyone: that here two hostile parties are alluded to, of which Thor belongs to one and Harbard the other, and that an arbitrator (*jafnendr*) made an attempt to mediate peace between these two parties (*þeir er okr vilja sætta*).²⁷ The words are thus still equivalent to a decisive piece of evidence regarding Harbard's hostile position to the world of the gods.

²² Idun's brother is Thjazi. *Hrafnagaldur Óðins* 6 calls Idun "the youngest of Ivaldi's elder children"; Thus she is kin to the famous smiths, the sons of Ivaldi (also Audvaldi, Ölvaldi), foremost of whom is Thjazi.

²³ This is ironic since Loki is a well-known thief himself; for example, he sneaks into Freyja's bower and steals Brisingamen. He can be called a horse-thief after he robs the master builder of Svadilfari preventing him from completing Asgard's wall. Of interest, *Hyndluljóð* names Hrossthjof, horse-thief, as a brother of Gullveig-Heid.

²⁴ Here, Harbard speaks of the adventure in which Thor hid in a giant's glove. In the *Prose Edda*, this incident is said to happen on the way to Utgard-Loki's. Thus Fjalar is an alternate name of Utgard-Loki, which identifies him with Surt's son, Suttung. See *Investigations into Germanic Mythology*, Vol. 1, no. 89.

²⁵ There may be some truth to Loki's words. According to *Skáldskaparmál*, Loki once cut off all of Sif's hair. Among the ancient Teutons, this was the punishment for adultery (*Germania* 19).

²⁶ This is commonly understood as: "That shall be indemnified by a hand-ring, such as arbitrators give, who wish to reconcile us." Benjamin Thorpe translation.

²⁷ [Rydberg's footnote] Finnur Jónsson has correctly observed that instead of the present-tense form *vilja* one would expect the preterit form after *unno*. This can only be explained if, according to the heathen author's view, it refers to

Has the myth about this attempt at reconciliation vanished without a trace? I believe I can answer this question with “no,” and as support for this refer my readers to the first volume of this work, no. 112. Since the matter is of importance for the connection of mythological events, I will repeat in a different form here what I presented there.

The verse discussed here makes it clear from the beginning that certain mythic personalities exist that can be recognized by the designation *jafnendr*, “mediators of disputes,” arbitrators. The expression has a synonym in the word *ljónar*, of which it says in the *Prose Edda*, *ljónar heita þeir menn, er ganga um sættir manna*: “those who settle disputes are called *ljónar*.”²⁸ That the word *ljónar*, like *jafnendr*, also was used of mythological beings who settled disputes is clear from the expression for the race of man inherited from heathendom and used long into the Christian time: *ljóna kindir*, “peacemakers’ children.” When the memory of the mythological meaning of *ljónar* vanished, the Biblical expression “the children of man” was replaced with *ljóna kindir*, although *ljónar* never meant mankind in general. According to our records, Balder, Forseti and Hödur worked as *jafnendr* or *ljónar*. Baldur is a judge and as such *líknsamastr*, “the most conciliatory” (*Gylfaginning* 22). Forseti *svæfer allar sakir*, “settles all cases” (*Grímnismál* 15). Hödur is described by Saxo as a judge, gifted with great powers of persuasion, which with kind words overcame the most resilient minds (Saxo, *Danish History*, Book 3).

Saxo also confirms that in the mythic sagas he has available to him and that he historicizes, there existed a group of persons who were designated as *jafnendr* or *ljónar*, and he translates the word in singular form in a completely apt manner with *sequestris ordinis vir* (Saxo, Book 6). To find the corresponding Old Norse-mythological expression for which this Latin expression is a translation would be absolutely impossible if the words *jafnendr* and *ljónar* had been lost.

The *sequestris ordinis vir*, the *jafnendr*, of whom Saxo speaks, he calls Bjorno. Bjorno is one of twelve brothers, of whom Saxo names six: Asbjörn, Thorbjörn, Gunnbjörn, etc. In all of the names is included the Aesir-epithet Björn. The twelve brothers live in a fortress, in the description of which one recognizes Asgard (see the first volume of this work, no. 36). Björn himself is the owner of a horse famous for its size and speed and likewise of an unbelievably strong dog that previously guarded the giant Offotes’ herds. Thus no doubt this *jafnendr* is a mythological personality.

Saxo relates the following adventure in which Bjorno participates. King Fridlevus sends messengers in order to propose to the daughter of one Anund, but the messengers do not return: Anund had killed them. Afterward, Fridlevus himself proceeded on the way, followed among others by “the peacemaker” Bjorno. However, the meeting does not lead to accord, but battle. On Anund’s side stands Avo *sagittarius*, described as a wonderful, skilled archer. Avo the archer appears and challenges Fridlevus to a duel. Bjorno was provoked that such a lowborn man as this Avo dared to challenge one as highborn as Fridlevus, and he drew his bow against him. But Avo beat him to the draw and disarmed him with three arrows, of which the first severed Bjorno’s bowstring, the second one lodged between his wrist and crooked fingers, the third one shot away Bjorno’s arrow as he laid it on the repaired string.

a certain inhabitant of Asgard, who still acts and whose task as *jafnendr*, is to seek negotiation between the warring forces in the universe, if at all possible, despite the prior unsuccessful attempt.

²⁸ *Skáldskaparmál* 65.

Every researcher into Saxo will recognize the god Njörd in Fridlevus, Frotho-Frey's father. According to *Völundarkviða* 2, Anund is a byname of Völund.²⁹ And like Völund has Egil, the mythology's most famous archer, by his side, Anund has the wonderful archer Avo by his side. In another place, I have described in detail who the persons appearing here seem to be, if one uses the only method of argumentation that is feasible here: the circumstantial method of argumentation.³⁰ But, for the question now under discussion, it is enough to observe that a myth actually existed in which one or many *jafnendr* from the world of the gods appeared in order to settle a dispute, which arose over a rejected marriage proposal and the murder of the messengers, and that the party to which this or these *jafnendr* belonged got arrows in recompense for the deaths and as redress for the rejected proposal. We may now return to the place in *Hárbarðsljóð* in question. For his treachery, Harbard says he will compensate Thor with *munda baugr*, which certain *jafnendr* received when they attempted to reconcile between two warring parties, the one distinguished as that which Thor belongs to, and the other that to which Harbard belongs. Provided that the mythology does not speak of two meetings between these parties in which both told of hostility, an offense, an attempt at reconciliation, and fines paid in the form of weapons fired, we certainly have a reference in *Hárbarðsljóð* to the same myth that we rediscover historicized by Saxo.

Now what did the author of *Hárbarðsljóð*'s mean by *beta munda baugi*?³¹ *Bæta baugi* "pay a fine with rings" (i.e. with gold or the value of gold) also occurs in *Lokasenna* where Bragi ironically promises to pay a fine to Loki with a horse and sword (the stone-horse, that Loki must ride in his prison-grave shortly thereafter and the sword that is placed there with the point in his back). Here, it is Harbard who now promises *beta baugi* to Thor. The *baugr* with which he will pay the fine are *munda baugi*, "hands rings." That *mund* ("hand") is used on this occasion in its plural form is of importance for establishing the meaning of the paraphrase, because with *munda baugi* we have a comparable paraphrase for the sword, *mundar vöndr*, "hand wand" (*Kormak's Saga*, ch. 11, 4),³² where *mund* is used in the singular, no doubt because the sword as a rule is swung with a single hand. *Munda baugr* "hands ring" must thus be an object that is handled with two. That Harbard means a weapon of attack or another object which can inflict harm is undoubted. Thus, from this standpoint, there is already reason to assume that "hands ring" is a paraphrase for a weapon of attack that is handled with both hands. The only one of our forefathers' weapons of attack that unconditionally required both hands was the hornbow. The hornbow is also the only weapon of attack that can be likened to a ring or a circle. The word *baugi* not only means a smithied ring, but also in paraphrases can be used for that which has a circular figure as a whole (compare *eybaugr*, *vallbaugr*). When the bow is drawn, the left arm is outstretched, the hand wrapped around the wooden grip. Both limbs bend inwards, when the string is stretched toward the archer's ear by means of the right hand. Thus, the bow and the bowstring form a rounded space that more or less approaches circular form and from the

²⁹ In *Codex Regius*, line 2/10 of *Völundarkviða* contains the name "onondar" (Anund), which is usually emended to *Völundar* in modern editions.

³⁰ *Investigations into Germanic Mythology*, Vol. 1, no. 108.

³¹ Many scholars have wrestled with this passage, with little success. Carolyne Larrington (*The Poetic Edda*, 1997) observes: "this phrase must have some other meaning than its literal one, since Thor is so upset by it. One scholar has plausibly suggested that the ring may refer to the anus, and the offer could be an invitation to homosexual activity" (!) Others have suggested that a fetter is meant.

³² *Brast fyr mér hinn mæri/mundar vöndr í hendi*; "the famous fist-wand failed me when it broke in my hand" Translated by Rory McTurk, *The Complete Sagas of the Icelanders*, Vol. 1, 1997.

standpoint of poetic rhetoric can be called a *baugr*.³³ Saxo's account of the mythic event in which Anund by means of Avo *sagittarius*' tense bow pays fines to *jafnendr* for the slain messengers and the refused bride confirm that this interpretation of the expression is correct.

After Harbard promises such recompense for the deceit he perpetrated, Thor exclaims (verse 43): "Where did you learn such pointed words? I have never heard more pointed words." Harbard replies that he learned them among ancient men that live in Heimir's woods (*í Heimis skógum*).³⁴

Here we encounter another paraphrase that defies interpretation. The author of the poem himself realizes that he has offered a nut that would be tough to crack without help; thus he allows Thor to guess at the meaning and gives it to the readers. Quite pleased that he has heard a clever riddle that does not seem to imply any nastiness, Thor says: "You give a good name to cairns (primitive gravemounds), when you call them Heimir's woods." However again the question is raised how Harbard came upon the idea of giving cairns such a designation, and what he means when he says that he got his wounding words from the inhabitants of cairns.

From what the author himself tells us, we know that Harbard, when he speaks of ancient men that live in Heimir's woods, means ancient men that dwell in cairns. Thus we know that they, from whom he learned his pointed words, are doppelgangers, *draugar*, because it is they who dwell in gravechambers and gravemounds, according to mythology and folklore.

Besides its original meaning, the word *skógr* also has a derived meaning: a place of residence for those society has exiled, the haunt of outlaws. A *skógarmaðr* is a person that society has expelled and placed outside of the law. *Vega úr skógi* means to liberate from exile, return civil rights to; *kaupa sik úr skógi*, means to buy back the right to belong to a community. A *skógarmaðr* is one whom society has expelled whether he takes to the woods or not. Heimir is, as I have pointed out above, the name of a monster in serpent- or dragon-shape, thus a relative of Nidhögg, Goin, Moin, Grabak, Grafvöllud, Ofnir, Svafnir and all of those that the mythology describes as the representatives of decay and decomposition, gnawing on the world-tree and causing it to rot (*Grímnismál* 34, 35). We now learn that the word "woods" (*skóg*) in this derived sense of a place of exile or the residence of those cut off from society, with the addition of the name Heimir, is designated as a place where the demons of decay and decomposition rule the beings cut off from society who dwell there. "Heimir's woods" thus becomes a well chosen and completely understandable paraphrase for graves and the ancient men who dwell in Heimir's woods are the beings that have their haunt in ancient graves, i.e. doppelgangers or *draugar* that remain there. Since the monsters in serpent or dragon-shape are accounted among the evil beings, these doppelgangers also receive the character of the Heimir that rules over them i.e. the character of evil beings. It is thus from such beings that Harbard is said to receive his pointed, blasphemous words.

That *Hárbarðsljóð* particularly allows cairns to be "Heimir's woods" is because, for the people in the later heathen centuries as they are to us, these types of graves were monuments from a time before all historic memory, and that this time was regarded as *ár alda*. i.e. the age of mythological events. One has evidence of this in *Grougaldr* 1 and 15, where Groa, Svipdag's mother, is said to have been buried in a dolmen on "earthfast stones" i.e. on a cliff. Many cairns that remain are built on cliffs. Thus, when the author of *Hárbarðsljóð* speaks about such graves,

³³ This is particularly true of the hornbow. Because of its greater flexibility, it takes on the form of a circle when drawn, more so than a traditional wooden bow.

³⁴ Most English translators do not interpret *heimis* as a proper name, and instead translate the phrase as "homes in the woods." Both translations are possible.

it is probable that he considers stone chambers for the dead as the only type of graves used in the time the adventure he describes took place, namely the age of mythological events, *ár alda*.

Harbard praises himself for having taken part in three field-campaigns. I have discussed two of them above: the giant Fjölvar's field-campaign on "Allgreen" and Thor's field-campaign against Geirroð in Jötunheim. The third is reported in verse 24, there Harbard says: *Var ek á Vallandi ok vígom fylgðag; atta ek iöfrom, en aldri sættak*: I was in Valland and conducted battles. I provoked princes against one another, but never reconciled them."

Here Harbard appears as a general in battles that took place in Valland. Both of the battles previously reported belong to purely mythological regions. The third, however, is obviously located in a certain part of Midgard, namely Valland. The name Valland is certainly ambiguous: it can mean the land of battlefields and it can have a more or less definite geographical meaning; but when the Norse skalds take advantage of words and names that can be interpreted in more than one manner—and they do it willingly—they are as aware of it as we, their readers, are and their art endures when every meaning that the word can have leads the way to a correct interpretation. Midgard is especially the land of battlefields, and Valland was for the Norse skalds in the 10th and 11th centuries an important part of Midgard, namely the great Frankish empire on both sides of the Rhine.³⁵ In a later time, the name was used of north and western France and was imagined to have received its name from the Asa-god Vali. The Norse heroic sagas, revised or newly composed in the Christian era, preserved an admittedly very fluid geographical conception of Valland, but nevertheless one which referred to the countries around the Rhine river. The great archer Egil's swan-maiden is a daughter of a king in Valland (the introduction to *Völundarkviða*). Brynhild, according to the poem about her Hel-ride is a princess from Valland (verse 2).³⁶ Fafnisbane's sword is a *völsku* sword (*Oddrúnargrátr* 18)³⁷ In the company of *velnesk* women, Gudrun rides to Atli (*Guðrúnarkviða in forna* 35).³⁸ During the Middle Ages in Germany, Walholant was used of Tyrol in Italy and southern France and King Ermenrich's empire was located there. Doubtless then in older songs where Walholand has a more original meaning, King Ermenrich was called a king in Valland.

A safe result follows from this: for those dwelling in the north, Valland was a land situated somewhere south of the Baltic Sea within which and within whose borders many of the ancient time's events spoken of in their heroic sagas occurred. And, among the Germans, Walholand was regarded as the ancient king Ermenrich's (Jörmunrekr's) empire.

It is in Valland that Harbard appears as field-commander. Previously, we have found that everything that Harbard says about himself is rediscovered in the myths about Loki. But is there any evidence that Loki ever appeared not only in the godsaga but in the heroic saga as well, and that he played a role not only among Asgard's gods and Jötunheim's giants, but also among Midgard's princes and warriors?

In the first volume of this work (no. 40), I have already shown that he did. And what *Hárbarðsljóð* particularly says, that the scene of action for Harbard's activity as field-commander was Valland, makes it appear that Loki's corresponding field of activity in Midgard was also Valland. It is well known that Heimdall and Loki are one another's standing

³⁵ Although it is translated variously, the word certainly holds all these meanings. *The Glossary to the Poetic Edda*, (Beatrice LaFarge and John Tucker, 1992) defines Valland as: 1) Welsh-land i.e. (a) southern land. 2) land of *valr*, i.e. of Battlefields.

³⁶ *af Vallandi*: "from Valland" (Thorpe), "from Valland" (Bellows), "welsh" (Hollander), "from the southern land" (Larrington)

³⁷ *völsku*: "Walish" (Thorpe); "foreign" (Bellows); "French" (Larrington)."

³⁸ *velnesk*: "Walish" (Thorpe); "foreign" (Bellows); "Southron" (Hollander) "southern" (Larrington).

adversaries. They battle one another for Freyja's necklace Brisingamen, left on Vagasker or Singastein, and Heimdall returns the precious jewel to Asgard. An echo of the battle for Brisingamen recurs in the Beowulf poem, where Heimdall appears under the name Hâma. There, it says that "Hâma carries off to the weapon-glittering citadel (Asgard), Brisingamen" that was "the best ornament under heaven." Even Bugge has recognized Heimdall in Hâma.

The Beowulf poem adds something to this message that is not insignificant. Namely, it says that afterwards Hâma must flee under Eormenric's enmity.³⁹

In *Thidrek's Saga*, Eormenric is rediscovered under the name Erminrik, and in King Erminrik's immediate company we find two men hostile to one another, Heimi and Sifka. Heimi is originally the same as Hâma. Heimi must likewise flee from Ermenrik. The flight is motivated by his once hitting Sifka, Erminrik's evil counselor, in the face, and because Sifka had Erminrik's total confidence, it would have cost Heimi his life had he not fled. Bugge has also recognized Hâma in Heimi.

The poem "*Dieterichs Flucht*" mentions that Ermenrich had a treasure of gold and precious stones that formerly belonged to the Harlungs. These in turn stand in close connection with the Brisingamen smiths, as Bugge has already seen and as I shall demonstrate in detail further along in this work (in the treatise on the *Brisingamen Smiths*.)

Thus: 1) the Norse myths unite Heimdall, Brisingamen, and Loki in one and the same adventure, and allow Heimdall to win Brisingamen; 2) the Anglo-Saxon saga derived from the mythology, unites Hâma, Brosingamene, and Eormenric and has Hâma flee under Eormenric's enmity, after he (Hâma) acquires Brisingamen; 3) The German saga unites Heimi and Ermenrich and allows Ermenrich to own a treasure that belonged to the Harlungs, friends of the Brisingamen smiths. It lets Ermenrich further possess a counselor Sifka, who is Heimi's worst adversary, as Loki is Heimdall's, and says that Heimi must flee from Ermenrich, as Hâma fled from Eormenric, because of Sifka.

The connection between the Norse myth and these heroic sagas is obvious. The opinion that Heimi corresponds to Heimdall in this manner and Sifka to Loki, stated in Bugge's "*Studien über das Beowulfepos*" pg. 73, is also obviously correct.

Bugge adds: "Sifka's personality as depicted corresponds to Loki's. Of Sifka it says: 'He was a shrewd and patient man, who long remembered past insults, was vengeful and very sly. He knew how to use beautiful sweet-sounding stock phrases. He was malicious and unfaithful.' (*Thidrek's Saga*, chapter 186); this suits Loki perfectly. Both were also handsome. It is thus probable that Loki in the Norse saga about Brisingamen corresponds to *Sifeca*, Sifka, as Heimdall corresponds to Hâma, Heimi."

To the description of character, it ought to be added that Sifka, like Loki, is cowardly. He participates as Ermenrich's general in the war with Dietrich, but carefully protects his own skin and is always ready to save himself from danger through flight. In the poem *Parcival*, Wolfram von Eschenbach says of him: *Sibeke nie swert erzôch ...nie swert er doch durch helm gesluoc*.⁴⁰

This description of character can be made complete by a short overview of Sifka's accomplishments. While he is Ermenrich's confidant, Sifka provides all his advice, acts to bring

³⁹ *Beowulf* lines 1197-1201: *Nænigne ic under swegle selran hyrde/ hordmaðmum hæleþa, syþðan Hama ætwæg/ to here-byrhtan byrig Brosinga mene./ sigle ond sincfæt; searoniðas fealh/ Eormenrices*; "Not any under heaven I/ more excellent have heard of/treasure-horde of men/ since Hama bore off/to the noble bright city/ the Brosings' necklace, the jewel and its casket; he into the guileful enmity fell/ of Eormenric." (Benjamin Thorpe, word-for-word translation).

⁴⁰ "Sibeki never drew his swordno sword, even though his helmet was beaten."

his master down in ruins, and destroys him and his whole family. Through a false accusation, he drives Ermenrich to murder his only son and his nephews, the Harlungs. Thereafter, Sifka provokes him to make war on his close relation, Dietrich, who must flee and seek refuge with Etzel, king of the east. Dietrich returns, loses a major battle against Ermenrich, in which many princes fall, and must flee again to the king of the east. After 30 years absence, he again comes into possession of a kingdom. Sifka provokes Ermenrich, by means of a false accusation, to allow the beautiful Svanhild to be trampled by horse's hooves. Svanhild's three brothers seek vengeance for their sister's death, attack Ermenrich, and themselves fall in the struggle. Thus, through Sifka's intrigue a large part of the Germanic hero saga's foremost family is exterminated.

Sifka commands a wing of Ermenrich's army and participates with his master in the battle against "Bolonje" and "Raben."

We may now remind ourselves that Ermenrich is king in Valland and call to mind Harbard's words: "I was in Valland and conducted battles, provoked princes against one another, but never reconciled them." In these few words, we thus now have an apt characterization of Sifka's accomplishments. In his role as Ermenrich's advisor, he provoked princes, who were close kin, against one another. Because he possessed his master's complete trust, he was in the position to use his influence in the service of mediation, but the German sagas never allow him to do so. His intent is to annihilate Mannus' clan through mutual war and death, and he realizes this goal, with demonic ruses and perseverance over a long period of time.

With this, I have presented *one* proof that Loki intervenes in the Germanic heroic sagas as a general and advisor to a Germanic sovereign king ruling in Valland. As such, he is called Sifeca, Sifka, Sibecki and Bikki. His activity in Midgard is parallel to his activity in Asgard, where he is a false friend of Odin and the Aesir, and an insidious advisor who plans the ruin of the gods and the world.

I now come to a second proof. In the first volume of this work (Nos. 38-43), I have presented evidence that the saga about Dietrich and Ermenrich is a later German-based variant of a Germanic hero-saga, of which Saxo knew an older variant that he used as the basis of his narrative about the kings Hadding and Gudhorm. Hadding is Dietrich; Gudhorm is Ermenrich. I am pleased that the evidence presented for this is beginning to be recognized in Germany, and I dare to hope that continuing research in this direction will push deeper into the Germanic heroic myth's proto-history and transformation through the centuries. Hadding's life story has all its basic features and important details in common with Dietrich's. On the side of Hadding's adversaries appears an insidious person, who moreover is a shrewd tactician. He is named Lokerus. While Hadding still is only a boy, Lokerus lays his snares for him (Saxo, Book 1). After Hadding grows into a youth and it comes to war between him and Gudhorm-Ermenrich, Lokerus leads his army into a great battle that Hadding loses, after which he must proceed to the forests of the east as an exile. The name Lokerus is a Latinization of Loki, and when Loki in this saga-variant occupies the same place as Sifka in the other, there can be no doubt that Sifka is Loki.

A third proof for the same relationship, I will leave for the treatise on *Brisingamen's Smiths*.

In the Norse sources, we find that in Thjóðólf's poem *Haustlög* and in Eilífr Goðrúnarson's *Thórsdrápa*, Loki is designated with the epithets *sagna hrærir*, *sagna sviptir*,

leader of the warrior's forward and back.⁴¹ These epithets would be unfounded and completely incomprehensible if those skalds and their audience had not known that Loki appeared as a tactician in the heroic myths. Alongside of this Old Norse evidence, I consider myself justified to place Harbard's words: "I was in Valland and conducted battles; I provoked princes against one another, but never reconciled them."

Finally, there is still one more contribution from Old Norse literature, most interesting and important from many standpoints, to the illumination of *Hárbarðsljóð* and Harbard!

Ulf Uggason, Thorvald the Sickly, and Vetrliði belonged to the last family-lines of heathen skalds in Iceland. Ulf and Thorvald were close friends. When the Christian missionary Thangbrand and Gudliuf Arison, the man of violence who accompanied him, appeared in the district where Ulf Uggason lived, Thorvald the Sickly wrote and sent to Ulf a verse in which he encouraged him to drive away the blasphemous Thangbrand. Ulf responded with a verse in which he refused this perilous request. It is also said that Ulf was requested to compose a nid-poem against Thangbrand. If this is true, Ulf's response is of great interest, because then it contains a formal refusal to compose such a nid, while at the same time concealing a veiled nid-verse against Thangbrand, although it has previously gone unrecognized.

The verse, which has been misunderstood by all of its previous interpreters, has the following wording:

*Tekkat ek, sunds þótt sendi
sannreynir boð, tanna
hvarfs við hleypiskarfí,
hárbarðs vélfjarðar;*⁴²

In prose order: *Tekkat ek við sunds hárbarðs tanna hvarfs vélfjarðar hleypiskarfí, þótt sannreynir sendi boð.*

The verse is so construed that if it comes into unauthorized hands, it would be difficult to guess whom the verse meant, while on the other hand Thorvald himself would immediately find Thangbrand's name in a paraphrase and know that the verse was a response from his skald friend concerning the missionary. Such caution from Ulf Uggason's side was not uncalled for because some time thereafter both Thorvald the sickly and Vetrliði were killed by Thangbrand's assistant Gudliuf Arison, after they had composed nid-verses about Thangbrand.

The verse's simple prose meaning is: "I will not compose anything on account of Thangbrand's blasphemy, even though a true friend sends a request to do so."

⁴¹ *Haustlög* 9,1: *sagna hrærir*. Anthony Faulkes and Richard North both accept this as a designation of Loki, but Faulkes renders it "crew-guider" (*Edda*, 1987), meaning "leader of the three Aesir" who travel to see Thjazi (*Edda, Skáldskaparmál* 2, 1998, p. 410, s.v. *sögn* [2]), while Richard North renders it as "rouser of tales." North acknowledges that *sagna* can also be interpreted as "a band of men," but adds, "Loki is not known as a leader of men, unlike Odin. ...'Rouser of tales', instead better conveys Loki's role as a liar." (*The Haustlög of Þjóðólf of Hvinir*, 1997, pg. 36).

Þórdrápa 3, 3-4: *sagna sviptir* This expression which means "swift mover of hosts," is typically taken to refer to Thor. Anthony Faulkes renders it as "company's leader," a reference to Thor.

⁴² The verse is preserved in *Njal's Saga*, Chapter 102. In modern editions, the 1st line reads: *Tekkat ek, sunds þótt sendi* ; and the 4th line reads: *Hárbarðs véa fjarðar*. Robert Cook translates this verse as "Though the dear friend of the drink of Odin's hall orders me, I am not accepting the offered bait." (*Complete Sagas of the Icelanders*, Vol. 3, 1997). Here, *Hárbarðs véa fjarðar* is understood as a reference to the poetic mead, i.e. "Odin's drink."

The later part of the answer: “although a true friend sends a request” is worded without poetic paraphrases and without ambiguity. The words are quite simple: *þótt* (although) *sannreynir* (a true friend) *sendi boð* (sends a request).

The beginning of the sentence is: *Tekkat ek* “I will not grapple with” or “I will not oppose.” Thereafter the skald expresses in a paraphrase who it is or what it is that he will not grapple with or oppose. The paraphrase is *sunds hárbard's tanna hvarfs vélfjarðar hleypiskarfi* and it is in this paraphrase that he manifests his poetic ingenuity and at the same time secretly inserts an allusion to Thangbrand's name.

The paraphrase speaks of a “sound's Harbard,” *sunds hárbardr*. As we know, the Harbard of *Hárbarðsljóð* stands by a sound whose ferryman he professes to be and it is over the sound that his mouth emits lies and abuse against Thor.

The paraphrase continues with this Harbard's “toothyard,” i.e. mouth: *tannahvarf*. His mouth is open and likened to the mouth of a bay: *sunds hárbard's tanna hvarfs fjörðar*. This mouth's bay flows with lies and mockery: it is a *vélfjarðar*. Over the bay of lies and mockery, the skald allows a cormorant, one known and named for its unpleasant shriek, a seafowl living in sounds and bays (*graculus carbo*), to fly swiftly toward the other side of the sound. It is a *sunds hárbard's tanna hvarfs vélfjarðar hleypiskarfi*. With this, the paraphrase is achieved. The cormorant that rushes out over the bay of lies and mockery that has its mouth in Harbard's toothyard is a symbol of the abuse that flies out of the mouth of *Hárbarðsljóð*'s ferryman toward Thor. It is the symbol of speech that mocks and blasphemes the gods.

Ulf Uggason thus likens Thangbrand to the ferryman Harbard in *Hárbarðsljóð*. Ulf likens Thangbrand, the abnegator of the Aesir, to Loki the mocker and enemy of the gods, a likeness that is entirely natural from a true heathen's point of view. And one that informs us that he will not engage this *hleypi-skarfi*.⁴³, although it is a friend who requests him to.

This is the verse's content and meaning, and if one does not know against whom it is directed, one can scarcely guess whom the intended blasphemer was. But Ulf Uggason's ingenuity, in other respects not unusual among the artistic poetry's skalds, has chosen to arrange the now analyzed paraphrase so that Thangbrand's name occurs in it.

He probably got the idea from *brandr*, which among other things means an object protruding from a ship's bow, and *barð* having the same meaning. In a paraphrase, one word could be used for the other. The prefix of the missionaries name *þang* means kelp, seaweed. The prefix in *Hárbarðr* is *hár*, “gray.” Here a paraphrase would have been impossible, if a substantive *hár*, “hair,” did not also exist. Hair and seaweed can be used for one another in paraphrases. *Skáldskaparmál* says: *hár er svá kent at kalla skóg eða viðar heiti nokkvoru* etc.⁴⁴ Woods that grow on a hillside slope can be called *hliðþang*, “slope-seaweed”; the sea can be called *þangs lað* “seaweed's earth”; grass can be called *haddr jarðar* “earth's hair” and, in

⁴³ literally “rushing cormorant”;

An Icelandic-English Dictionary, Cleasby and Vigfusson, 2nd edition, Oxford, 1957 s.v. *skarfr* m. [Shetl. *scarf*; Scot. *scart*]—properly *the green cormorant, pelicanus graculus*.

Sveinbjörn Egilsson's *Lexicon Poeticum* s.v. **hleypiskarfr**, m. ‘*skarv (ålekrage) som man han sætte i beværgelse, tanna hvarfs h., skarv som kan sendes ind i ens mund, svarer til pros, fluga (koma flugu í munn, få en lokket til noget), tekka við tanna hvarfs h-i, jeg lader mig ikke lokke, Úlfr. Lv.*

[‘**hleypiskarfr**’ m. a *skarv* (cormorant) that one has set in motion, *tanna hvarfs h.*, “a cormorant that can be sent into one's mouth, equivalent to prosaic “fly” (come flying into one's mouth, entice someone to something), *tekka við tanna hvarfs h-i*, I do not allow myself to be tempted. Úlfr Uggason, *Lausavísa*.]

⁴⁴ *Skáldskaparmál* 69: “Hair is referred to by calling it a forest or by some other tree-name.” Anthony Faulkes translation.

analogy with this, seaweed can be called the hair of the seashore, bay, inlet, or sound. Of the many words that could be chosen to designate the waterway—i.e. sea, bay, inlet, sound – the one that the poet of *Hárbarðsljóð* took advantage of suits this piece best, if he wanted to liken Thangbrand to Harbard, namely *sund* (sound) on the shore of which Harbard stands: *hverr er sa sveinn sveina, er stendr fyr sundit handan?*

Sunds hár (“hair of the sound”) is thus a paraphrase for *þang* (“seaweed”). The genitive *barðs* is a paraphrase for the genitive *brands*. *Sunds-hárbarðs* thereby becomes a regular paraphrase for *þangbrands*. Thorvald the Sickly, if no one else, could thus read Ulf Uggason’s verse in the following manner: “I will not concern myself with the unpleasant shrieking seafoal that flies over, gushing from Thangbrand’s (*sunds-hárbarðs*) toothyard, the bay of lies and mockery, even though a friend bids me to do it.” This paraphrase, which no previous translator has discovered, settles in an irrefutable manner the verse’s prose order and thereby also its content of thought.

Whether Thangbrand, thus likened with Loki, found out about it and prepared the same fate for Ulf Uggason that befell his brother skalds, Thorvald the Sickly and Vetrliði, Sumarliði’s son, who fell by Guðleif Arison’s “death-hammer,” is unknown since he is not mentioned further. By Ulf’s verse, one finds that *Hárbarðsljóð* was known to him and his friends and that in “the sound’s Harbard,” they saw an enemy of the Aesir and a mocker of the gods. Perhaps the poem originated from the skaldic circle to which they belonged. It is commonly assumed that it was written in Iceland during heathendom’s final days. Finnur Jónsson has recently subjected its metrical oddities to a thorough, meritorious critique.⁴⁵ To me, *Hárbarðsljóð* does not appear to be a poem with its formal smoothness, but the draft of a poem, an admittedly complete draft with all elements a poem ought to have, which managed to get written down, but whose metrical form was not yet finally determined and whose verses had not completely received their intended form, when something happened and left the poem unfinished in this regard forever. That the draft, as it survives, was saved for posterity is fortunate.⁴⁶ It contains mythological material of importance for research and is also significant from a poetic standpoint. In plan and construction, it closely resembles *Lokasenna*. The main figure in both is Loki. *Lokasenna* places him in the midst of a gathering of gods and goddesses and thus gets the opportunity to give his desire for abuse a multi-faceted workout. But the multitude of figures there prevents a more thorough characterization of them. The whole legacy of objectionable incidents, which the ethically perfected mythology inherited from a time when the gods were more forces of nature than personalities, is exposed, made worse, garnished with lies by an enemy of the gods, and cast in their face. *Hárbarðsljóð* with just its two figures has an incomparably better opportunity to characterize them and do so in a lively manner.

⁴⁵ Finnur Jónsson, *Hárbarðsljóð: En undersøgelse* (Copenhagen, Thieles Bogtrykkeri, 1888).

⁴⁶ The metrical oddities of this poem, which Carol Clover characterizes as its “radical formal disharmony,” have presented a problem for scholars over the years. Clover observes, “it has never been fully accepted into the Eddaic peagee.” But rather than a weed among the flowers, she believes “that certain of its formal irregularities are not entirely random, but are schematically linked with the joke, and that the joke, in turn, is not a comedy on the character of *Þórr* or a political allegory, in the Hellenic spirit, on the confrontation between landowner and military aristocrat, but a parody on the tradition of the *senna-mannjafnaðr* itself. ...It may be argued that *Hbl* is in fact hypertypical—[leaving] no doubt as to the author’s mastery of the tradition.” (“*Hárbarðsljóð as Generic Farce*,” 1979, reprinted in *The Poetic Edda, Essays on Old Norse Mythology*, edited by Paul Acker and Carolyne Larrington; Routledge, 2001).

The portrayal of Thor is excellent and, in a psychological respect, *Hárbarðsljóð* reaches much deeper than *Lokasenna* into the disposition of Loki, the thoroughly evil being who is the Germanic mythology's Mephistopheles.

That this poem has been misunderstood for so long has been a real detriment to mythological research. It is the poet Uhland⁴⁷ that contributed most to this. He viewed our mythology through romantic glasses, seeing in Odin a soldier from the 15th century jesting with a simple and honest peasant of Asgard, in serfdom, who was named Thor. The misunderstanding received further nourishment from the uncritical belief that Icelandic tales from the twelve and thirteen hundreds give us reliable pictures of the characters of the Aesir. Today, however, one still disregards the fact that the Icelanders were subject to the same psychological laws that pertain to all other people who undergo the crisis of a change in religion, and that for them, as well as the Iranians, Greeks, Romans, and Semites, dethroned gods became demons when they are not euhemerized into sinful kings that fooled the people into worshiping them. Thus, in a number of Icelandic tales, their Christian authors have given Odin the character he was thought to have as a demonic being. Thus, in one of these tales, he assumes the role that belongs to the nothing Loki: "to provoke princes against one another, but never reconcile them."⁴⁸ But if one wants to accept this as real mythology and on that basis equate Odin with the mocker of the gods in *Hárbarðsljóð*, then one can easily believe what another of these tales tells: that Thor had his haunt in the underworld hell and there drank poison out of an aurochs-horn. Then also one can as easily believe the understanding of Diana in the Middle Ages that she rode on a broom leading witches to Blocksberg. I say this without a desire to reduce the judgment of those who believed or still believe that it is Odin who appears in *Hárbarðsljóð* and there describes his noble son and his empire's most powerful defense as a cowardly wretch and a cuckold. I know the power of tradition and know how often it holds fast in otherwise sensible human beings, even against sound reason and decisive proof.

⁴⁷ Ludwig Uhland (1787-1862). *Der Mythos von Thor nach nordischen Quellen* ("The myth of Thor from Northern Sources"), 1836.

⁴⁸ Undoubtedly a reference to *Sörla Þáttur*.