

Viktor Rydberg's **Investigations into Germanic Mythology Volume II**

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AN OVERVIEW of the GERMANIC MYTHOLOGY'S EPIC ORDER¹

The investigations I have presented for my readers, in their details and overall, provide evidence that the Germanic myths formed an epic, whose core, already organized into an epic, originated in Proto-Indo-European times. For this reason, it is useless to ask when the individual Germanic myths were first brought into epic connection with one another. When the proto-Germanic language began to diverge from its western Indo-European stem as a branch flourishing in its own right, the epic state of the extant myths was already an age-old fact, which extended to the very roots of Proto-Indo-European life.

I have already shown that the Germanic myths are of much different ages, and a separate treatise is devoted to those that demonstrably originate from the Proto-Indo-European era.² Others belong, as we have seen, to later ages: some to the so-called European Indo-European era,³ some to the European Bronze Age, and still others to the Iron Age, and it may be taken for granted that all of these inherited sagas, so different in age, were influenced by the times that they passed through right up to the end of heathendom. But whatever their origin and whatever their transformations may have been since they arose and became universally accepted, they have been joined as new links to an already existing epic chain of myths, created by degrees.

But when did this begin? From a psychological standpoint, I imagine one could answer: the need for organization and order in the mythic ideas, and thus the need for an epic connection between them, arises and asserts itself to the same degree as a race's or a people's mythology develops from animism and polydemonism into a polytheism with concrete and characteristic divine personalities.⁴ These must proceed in relationship to one another and develop an activity

¹ [Rydberg's footnote] It is only the outlines of the epic, in the greatest possible brevity, that have been recorded here. The material is handled in detail in "*Fädernas Gudasaga, berättad för Ungdomen*" (Stockholm, Albert Bonniers, 1887). [Translated as "*Our Fathers' Godsaga Retold for the Young*" by William P. Reaves, iUniverse, 2003.]

² *Investigations in Germanic Mythology*, Vol. 2, Part 1.

³ Rydberg held that a branch of Indo-Europeans entered Europe before dividing into a southern (Greco-Roman) and a northern (Germanic-Norse) branch, based on archeological and linguistic evidence, and supported by the scholars of his time. See *Investigations into Germanic Mythology*, Vol. 1, no. 5.

⁴ [Rydberg's footnote] Concerning animism and polydemonism see C. P. Tiele's excellent *History of Religion* translated into Swedish by P. E. M. Fischier. *Allmän religionshistoria*, Fahlcrantz & K., 1887.

in accordance with the character they gradually receive. With that, an epic connection becomes necessary. It appears with the power of a natural mental process. It is a product of the union of the association of ideas and causality. The material which animism and polydemonism create and which arises through the impression that the phenomena of nature make on mankind cannot remain in a scattered and chaotic condition forever. To the degree of the development of mental life, the power of order enters and works in this chaos to unite these elements into a coherent picture in time and space.

As such, this natural process cannot be limited solely to the Indo-European race. Humanity in its entirety has been and is its area of activity, so long as the people progress out of the animistic and polydemonic period. The Semites as well as the Indo-Europeans have their great mythic epic, whose scattered links Oriental research is now on the verge of uniting. Already in the period before the pyramids, the Egyptians, like the Semites and the Indo-Europeans, had their mythic epic in a largely finished form as Maspero shows.⁵ It does not require a developed civilization for the epic-building instinct to appear: the need for order and coherence in the world of ideas asserts itself in all of polytheism's earliest phases. Among the Finns and the Bulgarians, as well as among the Egyptians, the Semites, and the Indo-Europeans, the inherited sagas have been linked together into an epic chain; so too among the Indians and the Mincopies.

Every little story that the study of folklore brings to light is a fabric of associated ideas and causality; each is a miniature epic with cause, action, and the consequence of the action, along with the characteristics of the acting personage or natural object, and sometimes with ethical or religious motives as well. Were all religions and mythologies swept out of mankind's consciousness at this moment and the field thus opened for the existing "folklore" to grow freely and acquire all the nourishing juices that are now being used by the former, undoubtedly the isolated existing pieces of this folklore would, in degree of their kinship and under the influence of the association of ideas, grow together with one another into a bigger complex and this again would join itself to an even greater one, which, transformed by religious and moral requirements, would finally assume the shape of a new mythology. Stories, legends and adventures, whether they originated from collapsed mythic structures and banished religions or whether they never had any mythic or religious significance, during the historic centuries and under pressure from officially recognized religious legends, still show their extraordinary power of growth as well as their tendency to unite with the latter to form an epic whole.

In order to strengthen this, do I need mention the wealth of Jewish folklore that appeared in order to remedy this need wherever a gap existed in the coherence of the events of the Old Testament and wherever these events required livelier color and apparent exposition, and thus gave us stories about Adam and Eve, about angelic relations with mankind's daughters, about Enoch, about Abraham and the other patriarchs, about Solomon, etc, which in fact, with the Biblical stories as chronological support, united with them through centuries into an all-attracting folklore-epic?

Need I mention the number of dethroned myths and the many non-mythic creations of the folk imagination, which in the form of legends on Christian soil attempted to unite with Biblical history or historic Church data and with them receive a fixed place in an epic chain of events continuing through centuries? Or the Indo-European mythology, which the Greek forebears traveled with to Europe's southern peninsula and which, crushed to bits there during the collision with other myth-cycles, in memory of its lost unity looked back and formed a new continuity, so

⁵ Sir Gaston Camille Charles Maspero (1846-1916), French Egyptologist.

that one could speak of events in a Golden Age during Chronos' rule, about those in a Silver Age following thereon after the scepter was passed to Zeus, and about those in a Copper and an Iron Age, and further, within the latter, of events in Cadmos' and Jason's time and about those, which dormant *in ovo* in Leda's womb⁶ developed into a connecting chain of events up to and after the Trojan war with the Iliad's battles and the Odyssey's adventures as just episodes in a vast whole, still mastered by those well-versed in mythology? Thus when Ovid decided to celebrate all of the metamorphoses that the ancient mythology contained, he could do so in a long established epic-chronological order, which begins with Chaos and progresses through the entire legendary times.

If we now move to the Germanic arena and to the centuries which saw one Germanic tribe after another converted to Christianity and the great Germanic mythic structure at last completely brought down in ruins, what do we find? The epic-synthesizing instinct again in full activity, since from the rubble, new epics joined together and were built up into one great whole. The ancient heathen heroic epic about Mannus and his descendants was sentenced to oblivion and dissolution; but the scattered pieces had life and with newly historic and quasi-historic support were tied in anew with legends about the Gothic King Hermanrich, about Odoacer, King Theoderich, and King Attila. Sigurd Fafnirsbane's epic sprouted out of the soil of decaying myths, and an epic-synthetic need hastened to further nourish it with what could still be found close at hand of the remains of decomposing sagas, and which, more or less organically, became incorporated with the Dieterich epic. One ought to have realized a long time ago that the epic-building urge did not come with the baptism of the Teutons, but has its basis in human psychology and was active through the millennia. A contrary opinion is puerile.

That this insight has taken so long to manifest itself finds its explanation in the state in which the mythological research formerly found itself, and in which it appeared hopelessly imprisoned for several years within the so called ethnographic school before Andrew Lang⁷ took the lead and pointed the way out.

The meteorological school of mythology for a long time, and even now, has been as good as the absolute authority over the entire area of research discussed here. In regard to methodology, the most severe mistake that it makes is that it lacks an eye for the distinction between mythogony and mythology, for the difference between the science of the creation of myths and the science of their present contents, epic connection, and historical development. Mythogony, which is a human psychological and ethnographic branch of research, has been regarded as the actual mythology by this school. In closest connection with this methodological mistake stands the untenable assumption upon which this school rests, that the myths as they exist today, without further analysis, are suitable material for its endeavor to explain their genesis out of natural phenomena: from the storm, the lightning, dawn and dusk, etc. And this mistake has been compounded by the influence of linguists, who imagine that when a mythic person's name is interpreted and found to mean "rumbling," "shining" etc, that all myths concerning him can therefore be explained by the meaning of his name. Arising in this way, the meteorological-etymological school has intentionally made itself blind since, whatever their origin [and among them, that natural phenomena had an effect on the power of imagination is more probable than likely] --the myths in their current state were created in a course of evolution that progressed

⁶ In Greek Mythology, Leda is the mother of Helen of Troy, whose abduction caused the Trojan War. The god Zeus in the shape of a swan seduced Leda, thus Helen was said to have been born from an egg (*ovo*). Although not mentioned in Homer's Iliad, Helen's birth from an egg was well-known, and the subject of art, in antiquity.

⁷ Andrew Lang (1844-1912), Scottish poet, novelist, and scholar whose books include *Custom and Myth* (1884), *Myth, Literature, and Religion* (1887).

through an indeterminable number of millennia, during which entirely different factors than celestial and weather phenomena worked, creating new myths and remodeling old nature-myths. One can say with certainty that ever since the time when they were in the phenomenon-stage, the acting superhuman forces began to be formed into more or less concrete personalities by the imagination each with a fairly definite character and a fairly prescribed area of activity, united with elements of another origin and character altogether, thus weakening or remolding the purely natural elements in the mythology. And this remolding process must have been further reinforced-- the pure nature-myths further transformed-- when, after the time superhuman forces became distinct acting personalities, the need for order within these mythic concepts immediately set to work and placed the stories under causal and chronological laws in order to satisfy the epic-synthetic demands of the imagination.

For this reason, it is a given that the meteorological school of mythology would absolutely ignore any research into the epic connection of the myths. Mere presentation of such connections would undermine the course they have pursued thus far. Almost exclusively, their efforts concern mythogony. But in order to accomplish this school's goal, one has to regard the myths as they have come to us as material, which only with utmost critical prudence can be used for this purpose, and only as a small part of the material available to gather and investigate. It is from the new *folklore*-movement and its human psychological investigations that one can hope for a mythogony that is in a position to accomplish this goal.

After this account of my position, I pass to the subject of this treatise, adding only the observation that all mythologies in which narratives about the progenitors of man are included, of necessity must already place many if not all of its myths in a chronological order, since of necessity such a chronology exists in legends concerning progenitors following after one another, who are always put in the closest connection with the gods. The holy powers of the heavens and the underworld protect creation and mankind, their protégés, and, in relations with mankind's patriarchs, guide the course of events. Thus, the stories about the gods and the stories about the progenitors, as far as research can penetrate, have been interlaced within or fused with one another. To put the mythology in one box and the heroic sagas in another, as the meteorological school of mythology has, is a psychological absurdity and can only produce incorrect results.

I. THE CREATION OF THE WORLD.

1. *Chaos. The World-Tree. Ginnungagap.* This world had a beginning. There was a time when none of its elements existed. However in the empty abyss, three forces were at work: Cold, Heat, and Creative Power. These rose up out of three springs of unknown origin which, after Creation, took their place in the world and are called: Hvergelmir, Urd's well, and Mimir's well. To the north of Ginnungagap, Hvergelmir enveloped the rime in an icy mist; to the south of the void, warmth rose up from its well. Where cold and warmth met in Ginnungagap, the primal elements were formed by their clashing and blending. In the middle of Ginnungagap was the well of Creative Power, and beneath it, the seed of Yggdrasil, the world-tree.

2. *Primal Beings. The Primal Cow Audhumla.* The first living creature that quickened out of chaos was the primal cow. From the congealed elements, she licked the progenitor of the gods, Buri. With four streams of milk, she nourished the primal giant Ymir, who was formed from the precipitation of the icy waves. Different giant clans grew from Ymir's different limbs: from under his left arm came the clan that is friendly to the gods, to which Mimir, his sister Bestla, and the dises of Fate belong. Together, Ymir's feet begot with one another the Hrimthursar (frost-giants), a monstrous and misshapen clan.

3. *The Underworld. The Sons of Bor.* The underworld or Jörmungrund was the first world that the growing Yggdrasil bore. There, the original smith, Mimir, guards the well of Creative Power. The dises of fate guard the well of Heat. Buri's son, Bor, took Bestla, Mimir's sister, as his wife. Their sons, Odin, Hoenir and Lodur are the progenitors of all the gods.

4. *The First Condition of the World.* Yggdrasil grew very high, watered and watched over by Mimir and the dises of Fate. From it grew the branches upon which the Earth plane rests. These were occupied for a long time by Ymir and the offspring of his feet, the frost-giants.

5. *Odin's Self-Sacrifice.* Determined to rule the earth but still young and inexperienced, Odin realized that alone he did not have enough power to get rid of the offspring of chaos. Therefore, he climbed up into Yggdrasil, remained there for nine nights without food or drink, pierced with a spear, sacrificed to himself, and prayed for the power he needed. He received it from Mimir, who gave him a drink from the well of Creation and taught him powerful songs.

6. *The Frost-Giants Defeated.* Odin and his brothers slew Ymir. Most of the frost-giants drowned in his blood, and their souls migrated down into the northernmost, fog-enshrouded part of the underworld, Niflhel. However, a few of the youngest frost-giants saved themselves on the coasts of the northernmost part of the Earth, which is called Jotunheim.

7. *The World-Mill.* Mimir's craftsmen built an enormous mill in the underworld over the well, Hvergelmir. It regulates the ebb and flow of the seas, turns the vault of heaven, and grinds the flesh of Ymir and his kinsmen into fertile soil.

8. *Creation Continues.* The meal into which Ymir's flesh was ground covers Midgard, whose foundation Bor's sons raised out of the ocean of blood. Mimir and Durin created the smiths who built the mill in accordance with a decree of the council of gods. They created the heavens out of Ymir's skull, mountains from his bones, etc. and forged the artwork and ornamentation that beautify all Creation. Mimir's daughter, Night, and all her kinsmen were taken up into the circle of gods. The roads traveled by Day and Night, Sun and Moon were laid out. The Aesir and the Vanir defined their separate roles: the Vanir preside over the regulation of the world's fixed processes and the Aesir watch over and guard all of creation. Thus, the Aesir built the marvelous Asgard high in Yggdrasil for themselves. The bridge Bifröst extends between Asgard and the underworld.

II. THE PRIMEVAL AGE OF PEACE.

9. *The Peace Covenant.* All creatures formed a covenant, and to seal it gave one another hostages. The Vanir's hostages to the Aesir were Njörd and his son Frey. Odin married Frigg, Njörd's sister. Odin and Mimir gave one another pledges. The giant children Gullveig and Loki were admitted into Asgard. The goddesses favored Gullveig; Odin and Loki entered into sworn brotherhood. Odin sent his son Tyr to be fostered by the giant Hymir, and his son Thor, he sent to the giant Vingnir and his wife Hlora.

10. *The Treasures of the Gods*. In Mimir's smithy, his own sons and Ivaldi's sons worked forging many precious treasures for the gods. Mimir's sons made Brisingamen for Freyja, and, for all the gods, a wonderful golden board game. Ivaldi's sons forged the spear Gungnir for Odin, the ship Skidbladnir for Frey, and, for Njörd, an ax that can break every lock. For all the gods, Ivaldi's sons prepared a "remedy against old-age," which is preserved by their sister Idun, who was accepted into Asgard. Njörd sent his young son Frey to be fostered by Ivaldi's sons.

11. *The Creation of Man*. The world was now in good order, but the beautifully decorated Midgard remained humanless. From two trees, Ask and Embla, which grew by the sea in Aurvangaland, Odin, Hoenir and Lodur created the first human beings.

12. *Heimdall, the Culture-Bearer*. The descendants of Ask and Embla lived in a cultureless condition. But one day, on their shores, a boat landed in which lay a boy sleeping on a sheaf of corn, surrounded by all manner of tools and forged items. The boy was Heimdall, sent by the gods. The people accepted him tenderly. He grew up among them and taught them to kindle the holy fire using the fire-auger. He taught them the runes of time and the runes of eternity. He introduced agriculture, handicrafts and smithwork. He ordered their society, and established the three castes.

13. *Heimdall, the first patriarch*. He lived a long time as a man among men, and his reign was the race's golden age. When he died, his boat returned to collect him. The sorrowing people surrounded him with treasures and weapons. The boat returned to Vanaheim, where Heimdall was stripped of his aged human shape, became a divine youth and was accepted into Asgard.

14. *Skjöld-Borgar, the second patriarch*, succeeded him as ruler and judge in Aurvangaland. During the Golden Age, Midgard was populated as far north as Svarin's Mound in Svithjod (Sweden) and beyond. Ivaldi (Svigrir) became the ruler in this northern region.

III. THE TRANSITION FROM PEACE TO WAR.

15. *Runes of Witchcraft. Gullveig's First Burning*.⁸ The forces of the giant-world, the descendants of Ymir's feet, who dwell in Niflhel and Jotunheim, hated the race of men that the gods had created and protected. They hated the holy songs Odin received from Mimir, and all the good learning that our race received from Heimdall. Their purpose is to destroy the world's order and bring back Chaos, from which they trace their origin. Gullveig and Loki were their secret allies in Asgard. Gullveig devised the evil sorcery and the runes of witchcraft, an antithesis to

⁸ The exact placement of Gullveig-Heid's three burnings is problematic. *Völuspá* informs us that she was "thrice burnt and thrice reborn, ...yet she still lives." Based on a passage in *Hyndluljóð* 40-41, Rydberg connects her to Angrboda, the mother of three monsters: the Midgard Serpent, the Fenris Wolf, and the half-livid giantess Leikn, who becomes queen of Niflhel (See Vol. 1, no. 63-67). Each time the witch is burned, Loki finds her heart, consumes it, and is impregnated by it. Rydberg makes the original suggestion that one monster was born after each of the three burnings. *Völuspá* appears to indicate that she was burnt once for spreading witchcraft across Midgard [22], once for betraying her mistress, Freyja, to the giants during the first fimbul-winter [25], and once in Odin's hall just before the war between the Aesir and the Vanir [110]. At the time of Gullveig-Heid's final burning, her daughter Gerd has become the wife of the Vanir god Frey, thus she is now a protected member of the Vanir clan.

Here, Rydberg seems to add an additional burning (no. 15, where Heid is punished for teaching Freyja witchcraft). In my opinion, no. 15 and no. 19 are best combined. This would constitute the first burning, followed by the birth of the Midgard serpent. The second burning (rather than the third) would then occur at no. 46, signaling the birth of Fenrir, and the third at no. 110, after which Leikn, the queen of disease is born (the same being whom Snorri Sturluson identifies as 'Hel').

Heimdall's teachings.⁹ She wanted to entice Freyja, whose handmaiden she was, to practice this art, but it was discovered and the gods sentenced Gullveig to burn. Then for the first time, flames learned to become blended with smoke and thus could only half-burn her heart.

16. *The Birth of the Midgard Serpent.* Loki found and swallowed the half-burnt heart. Thereby, he became pregnant and bore the Midgard serpent, which he threw into the sea. The Midgard serpent grows in direct proportion to the evil in the world.

17. *Thor's First Giant-slaying.* The giants Vingnir and Hlora treacherously wanted to take their foster son Thor's life when they noticed that he had grown enormously strong. But Thor, while still young, killed them both and traveled to Asgard with Vingnir's *vafur*-laden¹⁰ stone hammer. By that time, the giants had become numerous in Jotunheim and comprised many mighty clans.

18. *The Gods' Chalet at Elivogar.* When sworn oaths had thus been broken (a hostage from the giant-world burnt in Asgard, and the foster-parents' holy obligations betrayed in Jotunheim), the peace covenant consequently was no longer valid. The gods feared an attack on Midgard by the giants. Therefore, they established a citadel on the southern coast of Elivogar,¹¹ from which the activities of the giants could be watched. The citadel became Thor's property and he entrusted it to a company of elves, over which Ivaldi and his son Egil acted as rulers. Ivaldi, the ruler of Svithjod and Finland, was the best of all spear-champions. Egil was the finest of all archers and skiers. Völund, Egil's brother, a smith who had learned his art at Mimir's forge, was considered to be as good or better than Mimir's finest smiths. Ivaldi, his sons and warriors pledged an oath of allegiance to the gods.

19. *Gullveig's Second Appearance and Burning.* Gullveig was born anew in Jotunheim and proceeded from there to Midgard, where she wandered about under the name Heid, bearing her unholy runes of witchcraft from house to house, working against Heimdall's holy runic teachings and corrupting mankind. Soon she was discovered, but too late. She was brought

⁹ The Eddaic poems refer to this type of magic as "*seiðr*." From its known uses in the mythology, it seems to involve influencing the minds of others (see 87). In *Völuspá* 22, Heid "*seið hón leikinn*," deluded with *seiðr*; she is ever the delight of evil women. From the statement in *Heimskringla* that Freyja was the first in Asgard to practice *seiðr* comes the mistaken conclusion that Freyja is Gullveig. The thrice-born and thrice-burnt Gullveig is called Heid when she comes among men, and in *Hyndljod*, Heid is a daughter of the giant Hrimnir. In *Volusungasaga*, we find Hrimnir's daughter as a maidservant in Asgard under Frigg. She plays as important a role as Loki does in the corruption of order.

¹⁰ In *Þórsdrápa* 14 Thor's chariot is called *hreggs váfreiðar*, the "storm's hovering chariot" which Rydberg interprets as the "storm's *vafur*-chariot," leading him to conclude that the *vafroga* mentioned in the *Elder Edda* was lightning. Thus he depicts Thor's hammer as "*vafur*-laden." *Vafroga* or *vafreyði* literally means "waving fire." *Vafra* means "to hover about," "to wander to and fro" and is applied to the motion of flames and ghosts, which has led some to conclude that these fires in their natural state represent the Aurora Borealis. In *Fjölsvinnsmál* 31, Menglad-Freyja's hall is surrounded by "*vafur*-fire," as is Gerd's hall in *Skírnismál* 8, 9. The fire is said to be "wise" and can distinguish friend from foe. As seen in *Fjölsvinnsmál*, these fires surround and protect Asgard from intrusion. Thus in *Hauströng* 13 when the Aesir raise the "*skjót-brinni*," the quick-fire, against Thjazi as he approaches Asgard in eagle-guise in pursuit of Loki, they kindle the *vafur*-fire moat surrounding Asgard. To make this point clear, *Hárbarðsljóð* 19 tells us that Thor killed Thjazi with a blow from his hammer, which represents the thunderbolt (see 86).

¹¹ The Elivogar is usually referred to as a river, but it is actually a stretch of ocean separating Midgard (in the vicinity of Finland) from Jötunheim (i.e. the Arctic Circle) in the north. This parallels the underworld geography: Niflhel is separated from Hel by a mountain range called Nidafjöll, the Nida Mountains, atop which sits the fountain Hvergelmir, the source of all waters. Jotunheim contains the giants that survived the flood of Ymir's blood; Niflhel contains the souls of the giants that drowned in Ymir's blood. Thus we also find the designation Jotunheimar (plural), meaning Jotunheim (above) and Niflhel (below).

before the gods, who burned her a second time. As before, her half-burnt heart remained and was swallowed by Loki, who again became pregnant and gave birth to the Fenris-Wolf, which he convinced the Aesir to take in as a plaything and raise in Asgard.¹²

20. *The Giants Want to Test Thor's Strength.* The giants devised a plan with Loki by which they could ascertain whether Thor would become a dangerous opponent for them. Loki urged Thor to make a journey to the fire giant Fjalar, who was competent in magic, and even accompanied him there. Optical illusions surrounded them on the way to and inside of Fjalar's citadel. Athletic competitions were held in which Thor imagined himself defeated, when in truth he had displayed incredible strength.¹³

21. *Thjalfi and Svipdag.* Egil and his wife Groa adopted an orphan, Thjalfi, who grew up in Egil's citadel, showing a brave and clever disposition early on. Later Egil and Groa had a handsome son of their own named Svipdag (Od).

22. *Thor's Journey to Hymir.* The giant Hymir owned the bull, Himinhjotur; he also owned an enormous brewing-kettle, which the gods required in order to make use of what the sea-giant Aegir had obligated himself to brew for them. Thor, followed by Tyr, who had been fostered in Hymir's gard, proceeded there. He left his goatspan and wagon with Egil and crossed over the Elivogar with Tyr. Hymir had lightning-eyes and could kill with a glance. But his wife, Tyr's mother, knew how to divert the power in his eyes against a pillar in his mountain-hall. Hymir suggested a fishing trip on the Elivogar, where he had caught many whales. Thor tore off Himinhjotur's head for bait. During the fishing, the Midgard serpent bit Thor's hook, but Hymir cut the fishing-line and the Midgard serpent sank into the deep, after Thor had struck it in the head with his hammer. When they had returned home, Hymir wanted new proof of Thor's strength.¹⁴ Thor then snatched the enormous kettle and hurried on his way with it, followed by Tyr. They were pursued by Hymir's kinsmen, but defeated their foes and returned to the gods with the kettle.

23. *Loki and Thjalfi.* While Thor was on this adventure, Loki came to Egil's citadel, where one of Thor's goats had been slaughtered for the evening meal. Loki persuaded Thjalfi to break one of the goat's leg bones. As compensation for the damage, Thor took Thjalfi and made him his foster-son.

IV. THE AGE OF WAR

BEFORE THE FIMBUL-WINTER

24. *Thor's Campaign Against the Giant Geirrod.* The gods and the giants were now in open enmity. Egil had difficulty defending the Elivogar. Geirrod's daughters devised a plan with Loki to bring Egil, Thjalfi, and the host from their citadel to ruin. Loki urged Thor into a campaign against Geirrod. Thor traveled with Egil, Thjalfi and the host from their citadel into

¹² In *Fädernas Gudasaga*, Gullveig's second burning occurs at no.46.

¹³ Logically, 20 would fall after 23, if we accept Snorri's tale of Thor's adventure with Utgard-Loki. Thjalfi takes part in the competition described there, racing the lad Hugi, who is Utgard-Loki's own thought. Rydberg retells two alternate accounts of this myth in *Fädernas Gudasaga*, ch. 15.

¹⁴ As proof of Thor's strength, Hymir requests that he break a cup. Tyr's mother advises Thor to throw it against the giant's head, the only surface hard enough to shatter it.

Jotunheim. An ambush had been laid for them along the path, and as they waded over the river, Egil and his warriors were nearly drowned. A field battle with the giants ensued. Thereafter, another battle occurred within the giant's mountain stronghold. Geirrodd, along with his daughters and the members of his household, fell in the battle.¹⁵

25. *Thor's Vingnir-Hammer Stolen*. When Thor, on a journey in the company of Loki, lay down to sleep, his hammer was stolen from him and concealed by the giant Thrym deep down in the earth. Thrym would not return the hammer, except on the condition that he receive Freyja as his wife. Thor, dressed as a bride and ornamented with Brisingamen, proceeded to Thrym's gard, followed by Loki who was clad as a bridesmaid. When the hammer was laid in the "bride's" lap for the blessing of the marriage, Thor slew the hammer's thief and his house-folk.

26. *Asgard's City Wall*. Since the age of peace had ended, as a precaution, the gods fortified Asgard against the enemies of the world. A legend tells how this was accomplished. The master builder, a giant, who demanded Sol, Mani, and Freyja in payment, became incapacitated through one of Loki's tricks, at the time agreed upon to complete the work. When he then became violent with indignation over it, Thor slew him. Loki, in the form of a mare, enticed the master builder's draught-horse Svadilfari into the woods, where with it he produced the eight-footed horse Sleipnir, which became Odin's steed.

27. *Loki Cuts Off the Hair of Sif, the Dis of Vegetation*. Thereafter, Ivaldi's son Völund forged locks of gold for her, which took root and grew like natural hair.

28. *The World-Endangering Wager*. Loki devised a plan that seemed to be of great benefit for the gods, but actually was calculated to cause enmity between the gods and the Nature-smiths, as well as among them separately.¹⁶ He sought out Mimir's son Brokk, wanting to strike a bet that Sindri, Mimir's most artistic son, could not make three treasures as good as those created by the sons of Ivaldi, specifically Sif's golden hair, the spear Gungnir, and the ship Skidbladnir. Loki wagered his head. Brokk, who would happily have the head of the world-endangering deceiver, took the bet. Sindri forged the boar Slidrugtanni for Frey and Freyja, the ring Draupnir for Odin, and for Thor, an iron hammer that could not be stolen, but would return by itself to its owner's hand. Since the gods were the only ones who could compare the worth of these treasures, they agreed to pronounce a judgment in the matter after performing tests.

29. *The Giant Hrungrnir in Asgard*. Odin tested his horse Sleipnir, and on that occasion saw the giant Hrungrnir, who was the finest fighter and owned the best horse in Jotunheim. Hrungrnir mounted his horse and raced him into Asgard, where he, even though an enemy of the gods, was received according to the dictates of hospitality and entertained with mead. Over the drinking-horn, he boasted about his strength and threatened his hosts, until Thor came in. Then he lowered his tone and made reference to guests' rights in order to save his life. He declared that he was weaponless, but if Thor would agree to meet him on his own mark in Jotunheim, they could set a time for it. Thor accepted his challenge.

30. *The Iron Hammer Proven*. Thor went to meet Hrungrnir. Egil could not accompany him to the meeting, because when Thor came to his citadel, he was out on watch duty on the Elivogar. Therefore Thor took the young Thjalfi with him. In the battle with Hrungrnir, Thor fell to the ground wounded, but the iron-hammer, which he had already cast, crushed Hrungrnir's head and returned to Thor's hand. Thjalfi felled the clay-giant Mökkurkalfi.

¹⁵ This episode is based in part on a faulty interpretation of the skaldic poem *Pórsdrápa* (see Vol. 1, no. 114). Because the meaning of the poem is debatable, the exact number and identity of Thor's companions is unknown. The myth however was well-known, as there are several references to it.

¹⁶ i.e. between Mimir's sons and the elves, the sons of Ivaldi.

31. *Thor Rescues Egil.* It was cold and storming during Thor's return trip. He met an exhausted Egil and bore him in his basket over the Elivogar to his citadel.

32. *Egil's Star.* On this occasion, Egil's toe was stricken with frostbite. Thor broke it off and cast it into the heavens where it became Örvandil's (the arrow-handler's) star.

33. *Groa's Galder-chant.* When Thor came to his citadel in Asgard, Egil's wife, Groa, was there. She sang healing galder over Thor's wound, but from happiness forgot the end of the galder-chant when she learned that Egil was safe and had been so honored.

34. *The Mead and the Moon.* In Ivaldi's kingdom, a mead-well named Byrgir, whose waters granted poetic skill and happiness, came to light. Ivaldi kept the discovery secret and, one moonless night, dispatched his children Hjúki and Bil¹⁷ to drain the well and return home with the mead, whose capacity would not diminish. The moon-god Nep¹⁸ saw the children as they wandered back with the supply. He took them and the mead, and then presented the mead to the Aesir.

35. *Ivaldi, the Enemy of the Gods.* Enraged over this, Ivaldi lay in ambush for Nep as Nep made his way through the underworld, overcame him and took possession of the mead, which he regarded as his property. In order that the mead not be taken from him a second time, he entrusted it to the giant Fjalar to keep in the innermost recesses of his mountain-halls. He entered into a pact with Fjalar, which was to be secured by the marriage of Ivaldi and Fjalar's daughter, Gunnlöd.

36. *Odin at Fjalar's. Ivaldi's Death.* On the day appointed for the wedding, Odin came to Fjalar's place in the guise of the bridegroom. The marriage with Gunnlöd was celebrated. Odin revealed himself to her in the night and, with her assistance, succeeded in obtaining possession of the mead, which he in eagle-guise bore to Asgard. In the meantime, Ivaldi was slain in an ambush planned by Fjalar's doorkeeper, outside of the mountain hall.

37. *The Judgment of the Gods in the Wager Between Loki and Brokk.* The treasures had now been tested by the gods. Brokk and Loki appeared before them to hear the judgment. The excellent manner in which the iron hammer had endured the test of battle against Hrungrnir decided the suit in Brokk's favor; Sindri's works were preferred over Völund's. Furthermore, the gods supported Loki's objection that his neck should not be injured, when his head is taken. Thus Mimir's sons, as well as Ivaldi's sons, were angered by this judgment. Brokk pierced Loki's lips with Sindri's awl.

38. *Völund and Loki.* Odin and Hoenir made an excursion in the company of Loki, during which Loki was carried off by Völund (Thjazi) in eagle-guise. In order to save his own life, Loki was forced to swear an oath that could not be broken to convey Idun with her remedy against old age from Asgard. In revenge for his father Ivaldi's death and his own insulted honor, Völund resolved to ruin the gods and their creation.

39. *Idun Disappears from Asgard.* The dis who preserved the Aesir's remedy against old age was enticed out of Asgard by Loki. She and her means of rejuvenation came into the power of the enemies of the gods.

40. *Freyja Disappears from Asgard.* Völund and the newly reborn Gullveig, with Loki acting as the middleman, devised a plan to convey Freyja from Asgard. The plan succeeded and Völund delivered Freyja to the giants of Beli's clan.

¹⁷ Hjúki and Bil, who fetch the mead for their father, are the Jack and Jill of nursery rhyme. Bil is Idun. After her, Bifrost is once called *Bil-rösti*, Bil's way (*Fáfnismál* 15).

¹⁸ Nanna's father, Nep. Identical with Nokkvi, Gevar, and Mani, the Moon-god.

41. *Frey Delivered to the Giants.* Völund and Egil surrendered their foster son Frey to the same giant-clan.

42. *An Attempt at Reconciliation Rejected.* Njörd, followed by Hödur and another god (probably Baldur), made haste to locate Ivaldi's sons but found that they had abandoned their citadel. Egil no longer watched over the Elivogar. Njörd and his companions met Ivaldi's sons on their way to the world's northernmost wilderness. Njörd desired reconciliation, but his attempt failed. A duel with arrows between Hödur and Egil ensued. Egil proved himself the superior archer but did Hödur no harm.¹⁹

43. *Ivaldi's Sons in Exile.* Völund and Egil with a third Ivaldi son, Slagfin, continued on their path to the Wolfdales in the furthest north, a place inaccessible to the gods.

44. *Disir (Goddesses) of Vegetation* from Ivaldi's clan left the gods and flew in swan-guise to their kinsmen in the Wolfdales.

45. *The Age of Treasures Ends.* The angered sons of Mimir stopped forging treasures for the gods, but continued to be allies of the world-order, now threatened by the Ivaldi sons.

46. *Gullveig Burned Yet Again.* When it was discovered that a maid who served the goddesses was the one who had betrayed Freyja to the giants, and that traitor was Gullveig, Thor slew her with a hammer blow. Her body was burned anew, and her remains, which the flames could not consume, were removed to the underworld and buried in holy ground in order to render them harmless. But Loki found her heart this time as well and swallowed it.²⁰

47. *Brotherly Discord Among the Gods.* Hödur, who was an active hunter, got lost during a hunt in the Ironwood. When night fell, he took refuge in a cave, where he encountered a witch. She confused his senses with a magic potion and extracted a vow from him that he would acquire Baldur's betrothed, Nanna. The magic potion fanned Hödur's affection for Nanna into flames. In the morning, he was ashamed of the vow but was compelled to fulfill it, although doing so meant breaking with his family.

48. *Hödur Joins the Giants and Makes War on Baldur.* After Egil had abandoned his watch on the Elivogar, many giants crossed over the boundary waters. Hödur joined them and led them into battle, but was conquered. Baldur returned his remorseful brother to Asgard.

49. *Baldur's Consumption.* Baldur suffered bad dreams and attacks of despair. Many signs boded his death. Frightening losses, one after the other, had now befallen Asgard, and the life on Midgard had fallen into decline. Frey, the god of fertility; Freyja, the goddess of fecundity; and Idun, the dis of rejuvenation, were in the powers of the enemies of the world. Of the Nature-artists, one group had refused to serve them; the other one had sworn their destruction. The dises of growth had aligned themselves with Asgard's foes. But so long as Baldur, the establisher of peace and "the powerful promoter of the sun-disk," still lived, there was still hope that they could resist the forces of winter.

50. *All of Nature's Creatures* swore not to harm Baldur, and the gods requested such oaths. Not a single giant desired his demise with the exceptions of Gullveig, Loki, and Völund, who with his measureless desire for revenge, was now transformed into the most frightening of all the giant beings (*Thjazi*).

¹⁹ This episode is preserved in Saxo Grammaticus' *Danish History* Book 6. There the archer Ani (Egil), the companion of Anund (Völund), challenges Fridlief (Njörd) to a duel. Bjorno (Hödur) defends him but is proven an inferior archer to Ani. (see Vol. 1, no. 112)

²⁰ This is best considered Gullveig's second burning, and joined with no. 62, "*The Creation of Plagues.*"

51. *The Mistletoe*. In the Ironwood grew a tender sprig that, unlike its relatives, had not made an oath. The inquiring Loki found the mistletoe, and proceeded with it to the Wolfdales and to Völund, who made a deadly, infallible arrow of it.

52. *Baldur's Death*. After the obligatory oaths had been made, there arose a game among the Aesir in which they shot and threw weapons at Baldur on a sporting field, for nothing could harm him. With his bow, Hödur took part in the game. Loki slipped the mistletoe arrow into his quiver, because Hödur was the only one who could be mistaken to have wanted Baldur dead, on account of his previous desire for his brother's wife. Hödur shot the mistletoe shaft, which resembled his other arrows, and Baldur fell to the ground mortally wounded. In Asgard, inconsolable sorrow followed.²¹

53. *The Law of Blood-revenge* pertains even to the gods, but in Asgard no one could be found who did not regard Hödur as innocent or who would rob Odin of another son. A holy law thus appeared to have been frustrated by the gods themselves.

54. *Odin's Journey to the Underworld*. Odin saddled Sleipnir and rode down to the underworld from the north through Niflhel towards the realms of Mimir and Urd. In Niflhel, the shade of the frost-giant Hrossthjof, Gullveig's brother, informed Odin that he would rear a son with Rind in western halls, who would be his brother's slayer. A hound of Niflhel, bloody on the breast, met him and followed him, barking at the high horseman until he came to the border of Mimir's realm. Odin sought out Mimir, conjuring the wise ruler of the fields of bliss in the underworld to tell what he knew regarding whether the world would, after Baldur's death, go on to meet its fate.

55. *Odin's Eye in Mimir's Well*. Self-sacrifice was required to find the key to the riddle. The answer lay in the depths of the well of wisdom, at which Odin tore out an eye and cast it down therein. The eye peered into the future, but what it saw, Odin first had to confirm with Urd.

56. *Odin at the Snowy Grave*. Odin rode farther and came to the place where the remains of Gullveig had been laid to rest. Along the way, there was a splendid castle built by Mimir's sons. Odin saw a lovely hall, hung with tapestries and lavishly ornamented with golden treasure. The grave of the "primeval-cold" frost-giant's daughter was shrouded by snow. Otherwise, winter never found its way into Mimir's realm. With a chanted formula, Odin conjured her, and she repeated her brother Hrossthjof's words.

57. *The Asmegir and the Underworld Breidablik*.²² The palace Odin saw had a remarkably important destiny. Here, Mimir preserves untainted human beings for a coming age; for he knows the future and from the foreboding signs concluded that a frightful age was impending in which all of Ask and Embla's descendants would be spoiled by misfortune and sin. In Midgard, he sought two benevolent children, Lif and Lifthrasir. For them and for Baldur, whose fate he foresaw, he had his sons build a splendid hall surrounded by a grove in the land of the rosy dawn. Delling, the elf of the dawn's first blush, is its watchman. Sindri-Dvalin and his smiths made the artful gate. Sorrow and sin, old age and infirmity can never come inside. The children, nourished with the power-giving morning dew from Yggdrasil's crown, wait for Baldur. The drink that gives the dead renewed strength is already poured for him in their hall.

58. *Urd Prophecies for Odin Concerning Ragnarök*. Odin rode farther until he came to the well of the three Norns, where he bade Urd provide a solution to the riddle which weighed on

²¹ Baldur's death and the related events are better placed after Völund's death, since his daughter Skadi came to Asgard seeking Baldur as a husband. (See 86).

²² Rydberg identifies Baldur's residence Breidablik with the hall in the underworld that houses Lif and Lifthrasir. *Grímnismál* 12 informs us that Breidablik is where "*liggja veit fæsta feiknstaði*," the fewest evil runes lie.

him. Urd answered that she knew that he had hidden his eye in the well of wisdom and thus already knew what he needed to know. Odin laid the treasures of Valhall at her feet and bade her again to answer the question. Then she sang a frightful yet consoling song for him, regarding Ragnarök and the renewal of the world.²³

59. *Baldur's Funeral Pyre.* Baldur's pyre was built on his ship Hringhorni. Odin bore his son's body in his arms and laid him on the pyre. When Nanna saw this, she sank down with a broken heart and lay on the pyre beside her husband. Odin placed the ring Draupnir on Baldur's breast and whispered into his ear; what, the world may never know. Then the pyre was set ablaze, and the burning ship sailed out into the sea of air.

60. *Odin Uses the Witch-Runes.* The law of the world demanded revenge for Baldur, and it was predestined that the avenger would be born of Rind, the daughter of Billing, the elf of the sunset glow. But Rind rejected the Asa-father, and thus, forced by the greatest necessity, he resorted to the power of the runes of witchcraft.

61. *Baldur's Avenger.* With Rind, Odin fathered Vali, who left his mother's womb early. Only one night old and thus not responsible for his actions, nor feeling any remorse in his duty, he slew Hödur.

62. *The Origin of Plagues.* Loki, who had again become pregnant with Gullveig's heart, bore the queen of plagues, Leikn, into the world. Leikn soon had much to do, since the fimbul-winter with its horrors immediately followed Baldur's death.²⁴

THE FIMBUL-WINTER

63. *Ivaldi's Sons in the Wolfdales.* In one of the dark stretches of valley at the northernmost edge of the world, where one of the tunnels to Niflhel is found, Ivaldi's sons built a home and a forge. Egil and Slagfin went out on skis and hunted. Völund forged, and, when not at his forge, he chanted galder-songs and conjured with "gands," (*magic objects, wands*).

64. *Völund's Witchcraft.* When Völund chanted and conjured, dark winds carrying frosty mist and clouds emanated from him, blowing southward, unloading snowstorms and hail over Midgard. Hardly a day passed over many years that he did not send primeval-cold winds toward the world of man. The air was filled with ruin. Odin listened from Hlidskjalf and became aware that the galder-songs came from the uncharted regions beyond Jotunheim. He sent his wise ravens to spy, but their wings weakened and their blood stiffened. They returned with nothing to say.²⁵

65. *Völund's Work.* Völund called the weapon he crafted "the sword of revenge" (*gambanteinn*). He applied all of his artistry, all of his secret knowledge, to its preparation. He tempered the blade in the poisonous waves of rivers in Niflhel and etched the runes of certain victory into the invincible steel.

66. *The Upheaval of Nature.* Every year, Midgard yielded fewer crops. Bad harvest followed on bad harvest. Spirits of hunger and disease came with blizzards and laid waste to man

²³ The song she sang is *Völuspá*.

²⁴ This episode is better placed at no. 110. Leikn, Loki's daughter, is identical with Snorri Sturluson's Hel, the queen of dead. As Snorri describes her, she is half-living, half-black. As a personal name, Hel actually refers to Urd. As a place name, it refers to the realms of bliss in the underworld (see Vol. 1, no 53-57).

²⁵ As told in the events of the poem *Hrafnagaldur Óðins*. There, Odin sends the gods Heimdall, Loki, and Bragi to Urd for an answer to whether these events signal Ragnarök. Tears are her reply.

and beast. The gods seemed powerless, and offerings to them without hope. Two powerful thurs-maidens, Fenja and Menja, grasped the world-mill's handle and set it in so fast a motion that the earth trembled from its depths. From the mill-stones leapt fragments of rock, which were cast high up out of the sea; the mountains spewed fire, the millworks went awry, and the vault of heaven was wrenched into the oblique position it has had ever since.²⁶

67. *Swan-maidens in the Wolfdales*. Ivaldi's sons had not dwelt there long, when three swan-maids came to share their fate. Two were Ivaldi's daughters: Idun, who laid her arms around Völund's white neck, and Auda, who loved Slagfin. The third was Sif, their relation, who carried a message to Egil from Groa that she could not come.

68. *The Migration from the North*. Giant troops moved over the Elivogar into northern Midgard. The nature-smiths, who formerly had blessed the land with fertility, now forsook it and migrated from Svarin's Mound (in the far north) into the Aurvangaland (the southernmost parts of the Scandinavian peninsula). Sindri-Dvalin led the procession. Many Germanic clans lived in Svithjod. All suffered from the change in climate, most of all the Swedes, the northernmost Germanic people, who resolved to go south. So one tribe came to push another south. Behind them, the glacial ice and the snowfields expanded. Before them lay deliverance from death by starvation.

69. *Skjöld-Borgar Immigrates. The Germanic Empire South of the Baltic Sea is Founded*. The forces against Aurvangaland were so strong that the aged Skjöld-Borgar (Berich) decided to take his people and move southward. There, he and his son Halfdan (Mannus) established an expansive kingdom which stretched out along the Rhine and down toward the highest mountains in Midgard. The Swedes occupied the Aurvangaland and stopped there.

70. *Halfdan, the Third Patriarch and First King*. When Skjöld-Borgar, who had seen the Golden and the Copper Ages of the world, died, all tribes declared Halfdan king of new Germania. He was the first Germanic ruler with this distinction. His father, Skjöld-Borgar, had been designated judge.

71. *About Halfdan's Birth*. Halfdan was born one tempestuous night as holy waters fell from the "heavenly mountains" (*clouds*), and a thunderstorm raged. Thor overshadowed the house, thus he was regarded as the child's co-father. Urd and her sisters came and fastened the threads of his fate under the hall of the moon, strong ones towards the east and the west, but towards the north, they could merely cast a single thread and pray that it hold forever. Two ravens that saw the newborn in the morning, said to one another that they and the wolves were now in for a good time. Halfdan's parents, whom Heimdall had taught bird-speech, heard the prediction and lamented over it.²⁷

72. *Halfdan and the Progenitor of the Hamalians*. Skjöld-Borgar entrusted his friend, Hagal, to foster Halfdan. Hagal had a son Hamal, who became the progenitor of the Amalians. Halfdan and Hamal were the handsomest men in Midgard, and much like one another in appearance. They were faithful friends.

²⁶This explains why the Pole Star is not directly over head and why the heavens seem to rotate in a sloping position in reference to the horizon. This vandalism to the world-mill is felt both in the heavens and on earth. The whole order of Nature is disturbed. This geological disaster is quickly followed by a devastating winter, the fimbul-winter. As part of the epic cycle, this myth is intended to relate historical events. Thus it is tantalizing to think that this myth may be a folk-memory of an actual ancient worldwide catastrophe, followed by an ice age. On this point, see Georgio de Santillana's *Hamlet's Mill* (1969).

²⁷ All of this occurs in the opening verses of the Eddaic poem *Helgakviða Hundingsbana I*, in which Rydberg recognizes the birth of the patriarch Halfdan. (see Vol. 1, nos. 29-30).

73. *Halfdan's Character.* Halfdan united tremendous strength and superior intellect with beauty. He became the Teutons greatest skald and composed songs sung by generation after generation. He was popular and generous, but also desirous of adventure and intent on war.

74. *Halfdan and Groa.* Halfdan and Hamal followed Thor, when he appeared in Svithjod to do battle with the giant-clans that now lived there. As the foster-brothers rode through a forest, they met Groa and her companions who were on their way to a forest-lake to bathe. Halfdan forced Groa to follow him and took her as his wife. Groa's father fell in battle with Halfdan.²⁸

75. *Groa's Sons: Svipdag-Od and Gudhorm.* With Halfdan, Groa bore a son that was not his, but Egil's. The son was called Svipdag-Od. Afterwards, by Halfdan, she bore a son, who received the name Gudhorm.

76. *Groa Sent Away. Her Death.* Groa could never come to terms with the thought that she was the wife of her father's murderer, and that her son by Egil was growing up under the care of Halfdan, upon whom Svipdag must eventually extract blood-revenge for the death of a kinsman. In time, Halfdan sent Groa and Svipdag away. They returned to Svithjod. Groa waited there for Egil's return, languishing unto death. Dying, she said to Svipdag concerning his difficult destiny that he should come to her grave and call on her.

77. *The Swan-maidens and Völund's Brothers Leave the Wolfdales.* The swan maids had spent seven winters there. During the eighth winter, they were sad and languid. Thus they took their swan-dresses and flew away. Egil and Slagfin left the Wolfdales to search for them.

78. *Ull.*²⁹ Egil was accompanied on his way by a boy, his and Sif's son, born in the Wolfdales. Named Ull, the boy was raised by his father to be an archer and a skier.

79. *Völund Imprisoned and Bereft of his Sword.* Mimir, the guardian of the world-tree, had previously not intervened in the Aesir's call to defend the order of the world. But now that Völund's sword of revenge was completed, there was no hope that they could accomplish this. With his wife, the mother of the night-dises, and with armed Njars (the folk of Mimir's clan; singular Njarr), Mimir proceeded out of the underworld to the Wolfdales, surprised Völund in his sleep, bound him with his own magic-rope, took possession of the sword of revenge, and transported Völund to an island, on which a smithy became his prison. Mimir's queen had Völund's hamstrings cut, since she feared most that he would escape.

80. *The Hiding Place of the Sword of Revenge.* Mimir gave the sword to the mother of the night-dises for preservation. She concealed it in the trunk of the world-tree within the nine locks of its annual rings.

81. *Völund and Bödvild.* Völund secretly murdered two young sons of Mimir, who had rowed out to the island to see his treasures. Of their skulls and eyeballs, he made jewelry, which he presented to their parents and their sister Bödvild. Later, she secretly came to the island, where he gave her a sleeping potion and embraced her.

82. *Völund Ensures Himself a Blood-avenger and Escapes.* Völund had secretly been preparing an eagle-guise. When it was ready, he flew from the island to Mimir's castle, speaking to him, out of the reach of arrows. With the promise of great sorrow, he said that he would tell him the fate of his vanished young sons, if Mimir would swear a holy oath to do "Völund's wife" no harm, even before he revealed who she was, and that she would soon have a baby in Mimir's

²⁸ This should properly occur before section 67, since this is the reason that Egil's second wife, Sif, rather than his first wife, Groa, accompanies him to the Wolfdales.

²⁹ [Rydberg's footnote] The older Nordic name forms are *Vullr* and *Vollr*. It is related to the Gothic *Vulthus* and means "distinguished," "of great reputation," "honored."

hall. Mimir made the oath. Völund revealed the cruel crime he had committed and flew away. Bödvild bore a son, who received the name Vidga.

83. *The Anguish of the Mother of the Night-Dises.* Protected by Mimir's oath, Vidga, the son of Völund the enemy of the gods and of the world, grew up in the castle of the mother of the night-dises, in the care of the family that protects the world-tree and is united by family and friendship to the gods. Vidga was heir to the sword of revenge and obligated, if Völund fell in his battle with the gods, to avenge his father's death. Thus was his destiny, if he ever found the sword of revenge in his power.

84. *Völund and Idun in Thrymheim.* Völund sought out Idun, his swan-maid, and sequestered himself with her in a mountain in the Thrymheim range. Lame and robbed of the sword of revenge, and thus in no position to attack the gods; he could still ravage Midgard with galder and gander.³⁰ Furthermore, since Idun possessed "the Aesir's remedy against old-age," the gods sooner or later would fall victim to the power of time, if they were not brought down by the sword of revenge wielded by Völund's son.

THE DECLINE AND END OF THE FIMBUL-WINTER.

85. *Idun Returned to Asgard.* In order to ingratiate himself with the gods and avenge the mistreatment he had suffered at the hands of Völund, Loki offered to return Idun to Asgard, since he had discovered Völund's hideout. He flew in Freyja's falcon-guise towards the Thrymheim mountains. Taking the chance that Völund would be fishing in a nearby lake, Loki sneaked into the mountain and flew away clutching Idun, whom he had transformed into a fruit,³¹ in his claw.

86. *Völund's Death.* Loki remained in the vicinity until Völund had discovered his loss and had seen the culprit, Loki himself. He did this to entice Völund to pursue. Völund clad himself in his own feather-guise and stalked the falcon, which flew on to Asgard where the gods, upon seeing the birds, made ready to receive them. Once the falcon had come safely within the castle-walls, they ignited Asgard's *vafur*-fire moat. Völund, wounded by spears and arrows, plunged headlong into the flames, his wings burning, and he was killed by a blow of Thor's hammer.

87. *Freyja Rescued by Svipdag and Returned to Asgard.* Egil found Sif again, and his sons Svipdag and Ull lived with them. One day, Sif said to her stepson Svipdag, who was a handsome, lively, and quick youth, that he was now grown and ought to do something praiseworthy. She insisted that he find Freyja. Svipdag had no desire to do so, but Sif, who could foresee the future and had been inspired by Urd, demanded it as a pledge. Svipdag, who suspected that his stepmother wished him harm, went at night to his mother Groa's grave-mound, bade her awaken, reminded her of her promise, and told her what Sif had demanded of him. Groa, from within the grave, encouraged him and sang protecting chants ("galder") over him. Ull, who was devoted to his half-brother Svipdag, asked for and received his mother's blessing to

³⁰ Literally, "chants and magic implements"; the skalds envisioned Völund "shaking hail from the sails" (small pieces of cloth) and using a magic rope (a "gand") to bind or let loose the wind, while singing songs that "blend the air with evil."

³¹ Even though the source of this, *Skáldskaparmál* 56, says that Loki transforms her into a nut (*hnót*), here and in *Our Fathers' Godsaga*, Rydberg maintains that Loki transformed her into a fruit (*frukt*).

follow him. Egil outfitted them in the finest manner with weapons and means of transportation for their journey, and they proceeded on their way.

They were well received in Jotunheim, since they were Völund's nephews and thus regarded as allies of the giants. After a long and difficult journey, they reached Beli's clan, one of the most appalling, ugly, violent, vicious, and treacherous families in Jotunheim. There they found Frey and Freyja, who, according to Völund's orders, were regarded and treated as if they were the best of the clan, except that they were under the influence of witchcraft and as such were both in a dream state. Thus, Freyja hardly noticed that one of the giants, Grepp, wanted her for himself. The half-brothers spent frightful days in Beli's hall and would not have come away from there alive, if they had not been so alert and so intelligent, and not so faithfully aided one another, nor possessed such fine weapons.

In time, a moment came when they could converse with Frey in private. They confided to him that they had come to rescue Freyja and him. For his own part, Frey refused to follow them; he felt so degraded by his stay among the giants and by his powerlessness as a protector of Midgard that he would not return to Asgard. But he would see his sister saved, so he helped the brothers find an opportunity to flee undetected with Freyja out of the giant-court. Frey remained behind until their escape was discovered, and, being superb skiers, they fled the persecution of the Beli-giants and the next night rested, concealed in a wood. Svipdag was in love with the beautiful maid and begged, in vain, for a single glance, but her mental-slumber³² continued, her eyes were always lowered. During the night she disappeared. The half-brothers long looked for her and ultimately found her serving as a goat-maid for a giantess who lived alone. Svipdag and Ull requested lodging for the night from the giantess. Svipdag found favor in her eyes when he let it be known that he was not unwilling, if asked, to marry her. The giantess went out to invite her family and friends to her bridal feast. During her absence, Svipdag and Ull escaped with Freyja. A violent hurricane approached them during their journey and churned up the Elivogar as they crossed over it, but they reached Egil's chalet safely with the Vana-maid. Sif rejoiced at the outcome of their quest, but Svipdag was sorrowful, acknowledging his love and complaining that he had not even received a glance from the girl he had rescued. To discover Freyja's true feelings, Sif pretended to arrange a marriage between Svipdag and a maid of the house. Then Freyja could not conceal her sorrow, and the wedding became hers and Svipdag's. Sif's will and, moreover, Svipdag's intention was to return Freyja to Asgard unviolated, since the Aesir were their family's enemies, and he hated them too. He laid a naked sword in the conjugal bed

³² Rydberg uses the Swedish word, "*själsdvala*" to indicate Freyja's condition. "*Själ*-" which means "soul, mind, spirit" when used as a prefix, refers to mental or spiritual matters, and "*-dvala*" means sleep. Freyja has been placed under a spell, likely by her maidservant Gullveig, who "gave" her to the giants (*Völuspá* 25). Among them, Freyja is conscious, but listless and wasting away for love. She longs for Svipdag, but cannot raise her eyes to meet his. She is returned to Asgard in this condition, and in time, the spell is broken by true love's kiss. Gullveig is burnt a third time for this misdeed (see no. 110).

In the opening lines of *Skírnismál*, Frey too is found to be under the same sort of spell. He is listless and wasting away for love. The cause of Frey's condition is likewise his future mother-in-law, Aurboda, who is Gullveig. Since Gullveig is associated with the magic art known as "*seiðr*," and said to be its originator, it is likely a means of mind control. This is confirmed by a third mythic example, that of Odin and Rind. According to Saxo Grammaticus, Rind rebuffed Odin three times, and on the third he touched her with a piece of bark upon which he had carved spells. She immediately fell sick, and; dressed as her nursemaid; Odin had his way with her in order to father his fated son and the avenger of Baldur, Vali (Saxo's *Bous*). A passage in *Skáldskaparmál* 9 by the skald Kormak informs us that "*seið Yggr til Rindar*," Yggr-Odin worked *seið* on Rind. *Lokasenna* 24 refers to the same event. Thus while the type of magic called galder can be used to help or harm, *seiðr* seems always to carry a stigma with it because of its nature.

between himself and his bride. The following day, Freyja, again deep in dreams, was led to Asgard by Sif.³³

88. *Frey Returned to Asgard.* The gods now knew where Frey could be found, and Njörd, who long had looked for him in vain, traveled on Skidbladnir to the fog-shrouded skerries of Beli's giant-clan. There, Njörd surprised the thurses, put them to flight, and, after a fortunate struggle, liberated his son. Frey himself slew Beli.

89. *Halfdan's Campaign into the North.* In his Germanic kingdom south along the Baltic Sea, Halfdan gathered a powerful army to reclaim his father's sacred land, the Scandinavian peninsula, from the forces of winter. He equipped a fleet, and the army landed in Aurvangaland. The Swedes, who now lived there, would not affiliate themselves with the campaign. They wanted to keep the fertile fields they possessed there. They found support from the giant clans living in the north, who opposed the advancing procession. On his side, Halfdan received the support of the gods and of Mimir's sons, so that the gods, the nature-smiths, the giants, and human heroes fought beside one another in a bloody battle, in which Halfdan opened a path all the way to the north. With astonishment, the Swedes noticed that their retreat was followed by Spring and flowers, and flocks of migratory birds. Above Halfdan's *fylkings* (troops), Valkyries with golden spears appeared. From their horses' manes and bridles dropped nourishing dew over the fields, which for years had borne only frost-flowers. And the same Sindri-Dvalin, under whose leadership the nature-smiths had previously withdrawn from the far north, now traveled back in that direction and took part in the battle under Halfdan's banner.

90. *The Battle on the Ice* was the name of one of the celebrated battles. Frey, Delling, Dag, Sindri and another son of Mimir, Bjarr, took part in this battle, and so too the ruler of the settlers, Vifill. Another bloody battle occurred on Moin's Heath.

91. *Hildiger.* In one of these battles, Hildiger, Halfdan's half-brother, fell while he fought on the side of the Swedes. In a previous marriage with the progenitor of the Hildings, Drott had borne Hildiger in Svithjod. She then had had Halfdan with Skjöld-Borgar in Denmark. Hildiger fell in battle with Halfdan, whose life he had wanted to spare. Dying, he revealed to Halfdan who he was, and asked to be wrapped in his brother's cloak.

92. *Battles on the Western Sea and the Baltic.* In connection with Halfdan's advance by land, there were advances by water on the Western Sea and on the Baltic against the powers of winter. Sindri's brothers, Brokk and Bjarr, cleansed the Western sea of thurs-monsters. Thor and Thjalfi freed the Danish and Swedish islands from magic and giants. On Hlessey (Lässa), Thjalfi came close to being killed by furious giantesses, but was rescued by Thor.

93. *The Scandinavian Islands Resettled.* Among those who then rebuilt the Scandinavian isles were Thjalfi, Vifill and Veseti. Thjalfi repopulated Gotland, which, before his arrival, had sunk at sunrise and emerged again at sundown. Thjalfi bore friction-fire around the island, thereby making it stable. Vifill repopulated Oland. Veseti repopulated Bornholm.

94. *The Battle at Svarin's Mound. Egil's Death. Svipdag, a Prisoner.* Halfdan finally forced his way to Svarin's Mound, the same point from which the migration at the beginning of the fimbul-winter had had its origin. There the final battle occurred. Egil and Svipdag reached

³³ In Saxo Grammaticus' *Danish History* Book 7, the source of this tale, Svipdag (Otharus) leaves Freyja (Syritha) alone wandering in the realm of the giants after rescuing her from the goatherd. She then descends the rocky terrain "in the manner common in antiquity" (probably in her falcon-guise) and comes to Egil's house ahead of Svipdag. The events that follow are perhaps better placed after section 98, where Svipdag obtains the sword of revenge. Thus, the sword laid between him and Freyja on their wedding night would be Völund's sword. Afterwards, Sif returns Freyja to Asgard. Rydberg suggests elsewhere that Njörd spirited Freyja away from Egil's house.

the army of the Swedes, but the night before the battle, Egil was surprised in his night-lodging by Halfdan, who killed him with a blow from his club. Svipdag was captured on the battlefield.

95. *Halfdan, King of All Germania.* After this battle, even the Swedes, who returned to the land that they had possessed before the fimbul-winter began, recognized Halfdan as king.

Hereby, the power of the great winter seemed to break, but not without consequences.

SVIPDAG AND THE SWORD OF REVENGE.

96. *Halfdan and Svipdag.* Halfdan showed his captured stepson mercy and offered him a king's title and a kingdom, but Svipdag replied that he would not allow himself to be bribed by him who had affronted his mother and killed his father. If Halfdan did not kill him now, he would kill Halfdan later. With this, Halfdan bound him to a tree in the forest and left him to his fate.

97. *Mani and Svipdag.* With the aid of the galder that Groa had sung over him, Svipdag burst his fetters. Heavy with hopelessness, he went by night along a moonlit path. Mani (the Moon) spoke to him, saying that he should not despair, for his uncle's invincible sword was kept in the underworld by "Sinew-maimer," who had hidden it in the "water-requiring vessel" (the world-tree).³⁴ If he could acquire the sword, a great fate awaited him. The Sinew-maimer (Sinmara) was in distress, and if Svipdag could relieve her anguish, she would give the sword to him. She would only be relieved if Svipdag gave her the sickle with which one of the threads twisted by Urd could be cut. Mani informed Svipdag where he could find a passage to the underworld and how he should get there. And when he had finished his talk, a shining silver sickle fell from the sky at the youth's feet. Svipdag took it, thanked him, and proceeded on.

98. *Svipdag Obtains the Sword of Revenge.* After a life-threatening journey behind "harnessed reindeer"³⁵ over high mountains and through terrible cold, and after a fortunate duel with the Njar who guarded the entrance to the underworld, Svipdag descended, making his way bravely through Niflhel's horrors. He climbed over the Hvergelmir mountain, saw the world-mill, and came down into Mimir's kingdom and to the castle of Night and the night-dises. There he was greeted by Mimir's sad queen (Sinmara) and by Bödvild, and met his uncle Völund's son, the little Vidga. He offered the queen the shining sickle with which her daughter Night, on her journey across the sky, could sever the thread of blood-revenge that Urd had stretched for Vidga beneath the hall of the moon. Svipdag also offered to take up Vidga's destiny in the legacy of blood-revenge left by Völund. To that legacy belonged Völund's sword of victory, thus Mimir's queen took the sword from its hiding place and happily exchanged it for the moon's sickle. Afterwards, Svipdag saw the wonders of Mimir's kingdom, among them the closed castle of Baldur and the Asmegir (Lif and Lifthrasir), before returning safely to the upper world.

99. *Svipdag Leads a Giant Host.* Svipdag summoned Jotunheim's troops for a new battle and let them know that he was in possession of Völund's invincible sword. One of the giant-rulers, Gymir, mobilized numerous giant armies to move with Svipdag as their leader against the

³⁴ Sinmara, "the sinew-maimer; *segjárnskeri* "the water requiring vessel." This sentence is a paraphrase of *Fjölsvinnsmál* 26.

³⁵ The source of this episode is Gevar and Hotherus' conversation in Saxo Grammaticus' *Danish History* Book 3. Rydberg demonstrates that the story of Hotherus and Baldur found there is a combination of the myth of Hödur and Baldur, and of certain events from the myth of Svipdag (Od) and the sword (see Vol. 1, no. 101). *Gróugaldr* 12 provides Svipdag with a charm to keep him safe on this leg of the adventure.

south. That the sword of revenge was in the hands of Völund's nephew quickly became known in Asgard. Odin himself and his heroic sons, along with the Vanir gods Heimdall, Njörd, and Frey hastened to Midgard's defense and to aid Halfdan.

100. *Svipdag Victorious*. In the tremendous battle that followed, the Aesir maintained the upper hand and Gymir's troops retreated in the end; but the victory nevertheless was Svipdag's. His sword, burning like the sun, felled as many of Midgard's warriors as Thor's hammer felled giants. Svipdag pushed toward Halfdan, whose raised club flew asunder as if struck by lightning, his mailcoat split, and he fell wounded. Thor cast his hammer toward Egil's son. Sindri's best work, Mjöllnir, met with Völund's best and returned to Thor's hand, in unusable pieces. Thor himself had to retreat. He carried the wounded Halfdan upon a mountain and from there threw boulders down upon Svipdag's army.³⁶ Against Njörd, Freyja's father, and Frey, her brother, Svipdag did not want to use his weapon. For this reason, he held back.

101. *Halfdan's Death. His Sons, Gudhorm and Hadding*. Halfdan died from his wounds, leaving two sons: Svipdag's half-brother Gudhorm, the son of Groa, and an infant son, Hadding, whose mother was named Alveig.

102. *Fear in Asgard*. It is said that after this battle, Asgard trembled on the point of Svipdag's sword, but this enemy had rescued Freyja and chivalrously sent her back intact to the gods. She loved and yearned for him. Had he forgotten her?

103. *Svipdag Comes to Asgard*. One spring morning, a youth with a sword, glittering like the sun, made his way across Bifröst up to Asgard's gate. He was fascinated by the *vafur*-encircled castle's plains, shimmering with gold within the huge surrounding wall. On a flower-strewn hill, Freyja sat, lost in dreams and surrounded by the goddess Eir and other dises. Svipdag exchanged riddles a while with the gatekeeper, but when he spoke his own name, the wonderful gate sprang open by itself, and the gatekeeper's wolfhounds, which otherwise allowed no one entry, bounded toward him and licked his hands. The gatekeeper informed Freyja that a youth had come who certainly was Svipdag. Thus roused from her trance, she hurried out and, recognizing him, her greeting "was followed by her kiss."³⁷

104. *The Gods' Reconciliation with the Ivaldi Family*. Svipdag celebrated his legal wedding with Freyja in Asgard. Ivaldi's daughter, Idun, married Odin's son, the skald god, Bragi. Thor married Sif. Njörd married Völund's daughter Skadi, who, like Svipdag, came fully armed

³⁶ This story is told in Saxo Grammaticus' *Danish History*, Book 3, where Hotherus (Svipdag) wields the sword he obtained from Miming (Mimir) against Brak-Thor's "club," and lops off the handle of the mighty weapon, rendering it useless. This is reminiscent of the tale in the *Younger Edda*, which tells how Loki interfered with the forging of Thor's hammer, Mjöllnir, causing it to have a short handle. Perhaps this event, told by Saxo, is the actual reason for the shortness of the handle. The original form of the myth is uncertain, but Saxo's version draws support from the poetic sources. *Haustlaug* 8 designates, Thjazi, who is Völund, "*þórs of runni*," or his "*of rúni*" depending on the manuscript. The latter means that Thjazi was at one time Thor's "confidential friend," which we know to be true since Thor and the sons of Ivaldi were once allies, but the former, "*þórs of runni*," means he who made Thor run. If this is a correct interpretation, both meanings hold true, as it was Völund's sword that caused Thor to retreat. In *Vafbrúðnismál* 51, Thor's sons, Magni and Modi inherit "Vingnir's Mjöllnir," presumably the stone hammer first given to Thor by the giant Vingnir before he acquired Sindri's masterpiece Mjöllnir. See *Investigations into Germanic Mythology*, Vol. 1, no. 113, section 19.

³⁷ In nos. 102-104, Rydberg describes the events of *Fjölvinismál*. The goddess in the castle is called Menglad, "Necklace-lover." The gatekeeper is named Fjölsvidr, a name of Odin, according to *Grímnismál* 47. His wolfhounds are Geri and Gifr, while Odin's are named Geri and Freki (*Grímnismál* 19). In verse 45, the poet playfully allows Menglad to say that if Fjölsvidr is lying, "wise ravens will tear out [his] eyes on the high gallows." Odin, of course, is the one-eyed god of ravens and the gallows. Thus, the poet makes it clear that this is Odin himself who meets Svipdag at Asgard's gate.

to Asgard, where she was received kindly. Yet, she demanded compensation for her slain father and received divine dignity, joining the family of the Vanir through marriage.³⁸ Völund's eyes were attached to the heavens and became two stars. Thus, like his brother Egil, Völund was honored among the stars.

105. *The Sword of Revenge Presented to Frey*. In exchange for his bride, Svipdag gave his uncle's sword to Freyja's family, and it was decided that Frey should keep it. The sword had been forged so that it would grant unconditional victory to Völund or one of his relatives who carried it, but ruin for anyone else who availed himself of it. However, with the newly tied bonds of marriage, Ivaldi's clan became incorporated with those in Asgard, and the sword thus became the greatest means of defense in the world of the gods.

106. *Svipdag Rides to Baldur*. The end of fimbul-winter, the defeat of the giant world, and the reconciliation with the Ivaldi clan filled Frigg with the hope that Asgard's happiness could be crowned with Baldur's return to Valhall. Perhaps his destiny in some way could be changed to allow that. Svipdag (*Hermod*) took it upon himself to bear her wish to the Norns, as well as her greetings to Baldur and Nanna. He received Sleipnir to ride and returned with greetings and gifts. Baldur gave the ring Draupnir to Odin; Nanna gave a veil to Frigg and a finger ring to Frigg's sister Fulla. From the Norns, Svipdag carried the reply that Baldur might return with Nanna, if no being were found that had not wept or would not weep for Baldur's death. But it quickly appeared that such a being could be found: a woman who called herself Thökk. From her mountain cave, where she sat, she replied: "Thökk weeps for Baldur's pyre with dry tears." She must have been either Gullveig or Loki.

THE WAR BETWEEN THE AESIR AND THE VANIR. THE GREAT WAR IN MIDGARD.

107. *Frey Proposes to Gerd*. One day, Frey sat in Hlidskjalf and saw within Gymir's gard, the giant's daughter Gerd, from whose white arms a glow spread over sky and sea. After this sight, Frey was increasingly distraught. He concealed the reason from the worried gods, but finally revealed it to Svipdag (Skirnir).³⁹ Among giant rulers, Gymir was now Asgard's most dangerous foe, well known to be treacherous, violent, and eager to fight. A union between the gods and Gymir's family must have seemed outrageous, because it would threaten the safety of the world. That notwithstanding, Frey felt he must have Gerd in order not to die. Svipdag was sent to Gerd as Frey's proxy, carrying Draupnir and eleven golden apples as gifts. He first received a "no," then a "yes," but on these conditions: the Völund sword must be delivered to

³⁸ In *Skáldskaparmál* 56, as atonement and compensation for her father's death, the gods allow Skadi to choose a husband from among them without seeing anything other than their feet. She chooses the god with the most beautiful feet, believing they belong to Baldur. However, she is mistaken, and Njörd becomes her husband. [This event strongly suggests that Baldur was still alive at this time, suggesting his death should not be placed until after the fimbul-winter.] As part of the settlement, Skadi also insists that the gods make her laugh, something she thinks is impossible. To accomplish this, Loki ties one end of a cord around the beard of a nanny goat and the other end around his own testicles. As they pull each other back and forth, both squeal in pain. When Loki falls into her lap, Skadi laughs. The latter episode is omitted here and in *Fädernas Gudasaga*, presumably because it would have offended the sensibilities of the Victorian age.

³⁹ Svipdag, "He with the shining looks" is also called Skirnir, the "shining one." The poem *Skírnismál* tells us that Frey and Skirnir shared youthful adventures. Frey was reared among Svipdag's family, the elves (*alfar*), and was also present when Svipdag liberated Freyja from Beli's court.

Gymir, and Gerd must be fetched by Svipdag and Freyja personally and taken into Asgard with the dignity of an Asynje.

108. *The Sword of Revenge in Gymir's Power.* Forced by necessity, the gods accepted the conditions, thus losing the promise of certain victory. This bargain was of great profit for the giant-world, although they could not use the sword without harming themselves. Gymir delivered it to his relative Eggthir, who buried it deep in the Ironwood.

109. *The Battle in the Hall of Gymir.* Svipdag proceeded with Freyja to Gymir's hall, but they suspected treachery. Therefore, Thor and Ull secretly traveled ahead of them to Gymir's mountain gard and concealed themselves in the vicinity. Gymir let Svipdag know that he intended to keep Freyja and proposed that Svipdag himself marry Gerd; then Svipdag could recover the sword of revenge and carry out the blood-revenge for Völund, which he had undertaken but so far had forgotten; he could thus overthrow the Aesir and himself be the world's ruler. Svipdag pretended to give way to temptation and a double wedding was immediately arranged. During the celebration, Thor and Ull burst into the hall. Svipdag joined them, while Freyja battled by her husband's side. Gymir and the members of his household fell after a hard battle, all except Gerd, who was transported to Asgard by the gods.⁴⁰

110. *Gullveig Killed and Burnt Again.* A giant maid called Aurboda had already belonged to Freyja's court before Svipdag came to Asgard. When Gerd arrived, she did not conceal that Aurboda was her mother and Gymir's wife. It also became apparent that Aurboda was the giantess Gullveig, who had been sentenced to die and repeatedly executed, but likewise repeatedly resurrected. When they made this discovery, the gods were gathered in Valhall and Aurboda was among them. In anger, Thor killed the witch with a hammer blow; the Aesir stuck their spears in her corpse and held it in the fire to be burnt.

111. *The Vanir Demand Compensation for a Murdered Relative.* To the Vanir, as to the Aesir, Gullveig was detestable and with good reason they suspected that Frey's love-sickness was caused by her witchcraft. But now she was Frey's mother-in-law and a relation of the Vanir, and it was their unconditional duty to demand compensation from the Aesir for her death.

112. *The Aesir and the Vanir Negotiate.* Odin replied that Gullveig had long since been condemned for her evil and that it was incumbent upon the gods to carry out her death sentence whenever she appeared anew. He considered it wrong for the Aesir to pay compensation, because they had legally executed the spreader of destructive witchcraft. Then one of the Vanir pointed out that Odin himself had profited from Gullveig's runes.

113. *The Break Between the Aesir and the Vanir.* Deeply embittered by this reminder, Odin cast his spear among the gathered Vanir, signaling that the case would be settled with weapons rather than by reason and argument. With that, the union of the Aesir and the Vanir established at the beginning of time was annulled and the Vanir left Asgard.

114. *The Vanir Declare Odin Removed.* The Vanir reached this resolution: since Odin and Gullveig were guilty of the same crime, and Gullveig had been justly punished with death, Odin ought to be removed from his office for his similar stain on the dignity of the godhead.

⁴⁰ The source of this episode is Book 5 of Saxo Grammaticus' *Danish History*, which contains the tantalizing remains of a lost myth. There Frodi (Frey) is wed to Alvild, the daughter of King Gotar. Erik, Roller, and Brak (Svipdag, Ull, and Thor, respectively) all take part in the action. In his usual fashion, Saxo changes the myth into a historical tale. From the Old Norse documents, we know little of the circumstances surrounding Frey and Gerd's marriage. In the poem *Skírnismál*, Gerd agrees to meet Frey nine nights hence in the wood Barri. What occurred there is unknown.

115. *Mimir's Death*. Mimir, who sought to restore the peace between the Aesir and Vanir, was murdered doing so by someone, presumably Loki, and his head was sent to Odin on whose behalf he had acted to attempt reconciliation. The responsibility for this crime was cast by its perpetrator onto the Vanir.

116. *Mimir's Head* was now in Odin's possession and through Odin's prayers was transformed into a head of gold,⁴¹ which spoke and always gave wise and noble advice. Ever since Odin has had the head of the advice-giver in his presence, his accomplishments have borne the mark of true wisdom.

117. *The Seven Sleepers*. Mimir's seven eldest sons, the great primeval artists, fell into the sleep of ages after their father's death. Tired of the world's events and determined not to take part in the imminent war, they were convinced that the world's redemption now lay only in the approaching Ragnarök. Night envelops the castle where they slumber. The din of the world-mill and Hvergelmir's torrents do not disturb their sleep. In this castle, many rooms are filled with weapons and other works that they made. In one room, their horses sleep, outfitted for war. Mortals, whose fate it is to step into their castle, must take care not to touch the sleepers, lest the intruders be stricken with consumption.⁴²

118. *The Division into Parties*. With Odin in Asgard remained, Thor, Tyr, Bragi, Vidar, Vali and Forseti, but among the goddesses only Skadi remained. Frigg sided with her family, the Vanir, and accompanied them, as did Freyja, Frey, Svipdag and Ull. So too did every other power in Vanaheim and Alfheim, except Hoenir, who for that reason, was unseated as ruler in Vanaheim and succeeded by Lodur.

119. *Asgard in the Hands of the Vanir*. After a long siege, Asgard was conquered by cunning strategy. Njörd's ax burst the lock on Asgard's gate and the Vanir's great war-troop streamed into the holy region. On Mimir's advice, the Aesir retreated, since none of the gods necessary for the order of the world could be allowed to fall in the civil war.

120. *Ull Proclaimed a New Odin*. The Vanir and the Elves decided that one among them must bear Odin's name and receive the sacrifices of the devoted. They had to choose a god that had no particular vocation in the world's government, and therefore elected Ull. This change in government brought no change in religion; however, new and more demanding views about sacrifice arose.

121. *Manheim* was the name of the land where the Aesir lived during their exile. They were not idle there, but always sought to benefit the world and protect their favorites.

122. *The Aesir Care for Halfdan's Sons*. Now that the Vanir were rulers in Asgard, the Aesir feared that Svipdag would use his power to strike at Halfdan's sons, Gudhorm and Hadding. Thus, Thor hid Gudhorm and Hadding in Greater Svithjod, one with the warrior Hafli, the other with the warrior Vagnhöfdi. But Gudhorm was never really in danger, because he and Svipdag shared the same mother, Groa. When Gudhorm received the news that Svipdag had offered him a large kingdom in western Germania near the Rhine, he accepted the offer and became king over all of the Germanic folk that belong to the Hermiones, the branch named after Gudhorm.

123. *Gudhorm's Name as a Great King* was Jörmunrekr.⁴³

⁴¹ In Snorri Sturluson's *Heimskringla*, Odin embalms Mimir's severed head, while in Saxo Grammaticus' *Danish History*, Odin causes a golden statue, given in tribute, to speak. It seems that Rydberg has taken the middle ground, and combined the two tales.

⁴² The adventurer Thorkill enters their cave in Book 8 of Saxo Grammaticus' *Danish History*.

⁴³ With the variations Eormenic, Ermenrich.

124. *Sifka*. Under this name, a man came to Jörmunrekr, claiming to be the ruler of a people called the Baningar. He won Jörmunrekr-Gudhorm's complete confidence and became his constant advisor. Sifka was Loki.

125. *Hadding's Youthful Adventures*. Svipdag decided, although reluctantly, to offer Hadding a kingdom also, as an inheritance from his father's estate, but the boy responded that he would not accept gifts from his father's killer. Sifka-Loki looked for Hadding in order to exile or to kill him, so Hadding was not safe long in Vagnhöfði's gard. One evening, a one-eyed man appeared riding on an eight-footed horse, he thanked Vagnhöfði for fulfilling his duties, set the boy in front of him on his horse, and rode away with Hadding through the air to Manheim. There he instructed the boy in the wisdom of runes and weaponry. Odin sang protecting-galder over Hadding and gave him a drink called Leifnir's flames, which gave him the ability to loosen bonds and fetters with his breath. Then Hadding, accompanied by a norn, descended into the underworld, where he saw the regions of bliss.

126. *Märingaborg*. When he grew up, Hadding was sent to a city in Midgard called Märingaborg. On the way there, he was ambushed by Loki and the Baningar and placed in fetters, but he freed himself that night and came to Märingaborg, where he found assembled many of his father's friends who had fled during Svipdag's reign. Among them was Hamal and Hildebrand. They prepared a revolt among the East Germanic tribes on behalf of Hadding.

127. *Vidga, Völund's Son*. In the midst of the preparations, a youthful hero, clad in magnificent armor, came riding into Märingaborg. On his shield were painted tongs and hammers. It was Vidga, Völund and Bödvild's son. He said he was a cousin of Svipdag's and that it was his duty to fight Halfdan's kin. He challenged Hadding to a duel and overpowered him, but rather than kill Hadding, Vidga held out his hand to him. Vidga stayed for some time in Märingaborg, where all found delight in him.

128. *Hadding Leads the East Teutons*. Now the East Germanic tribes were in danger of breaking up, but Hadding united them and was hailed as a great king. Vidga, Völund's son, then severed all friendly relations with him, because Vidga's place was on the side of Groa's sons, Svipdag and Jörmunrekr-Gudhorm.

129. *Hadding's Name as a Great King* was Thjodrek.⁴⁴

130. *The First Field Battle*. Svipdag descended from Asgard to the Germanic homeland, where he called the Swedes and Danes to arms against Hadding. Enormous ships were built to carry the Scandinavian warriors over the sea. Jörmunrekr-Gudhorm's army joined with them. Valkyries were seen riding through the air, coming in part from Vanaheim and Asgard, and in part from Manheim. To Gudhorm's army came his foster-father Hafli with the giantesses Fenja and Menja; to Thjodrek-Hadding's army came Vagnhöfði with his daughter Hardgrep. Svipdag, through his skalds, let it be known to his and to Jörmunrekr-Gudhorm's armies that anyone on their side who fell would be taken by Valkyries to Freyja's hall, Sessrumnir. Thjodrek-Hadding let it be known among the East Germanic warriors that anyone on his side who fell would come to Odin. The night before every battle, the armies saw supernatural forms who battled in the starlight-- the Vanir and the Aesir. When hail and storms came from the west and pounded Hadding's troops, Odin and Thor, with golden spear and lightning hammer, could be seen driving them back. Then came the deciding blow; both sides showed the same heroic courage, but Sifka-Loki, who held himself outside of the warring crowd, had directed the western troops so shrewdly that Thjodrek-Hadding's fylkings were dispersed, and he suffered a stunning defeat. With Hamal and Hildebrand, Hadding fled back to Manheim.

⁴⁴ Þjóðrekr, Theodeoric, Dietrich.

131. *A Time of Peace Lasting Many Years*, now arose, during which Germania was governed by Svipdag's viceroys and earls. In happy wedded-life with Freyja, Svipdag fathered beautiful daughters and a son, Asmund, whom he appointed king of the North.

132. *Sifka-Loki's Treachery*. During these years, Sifka kept near Jörmunrekr-Gudhorm and inflamed the enmity between the Germanic rulers with slander and lies, so that they would mutually exterminate one another. Gudhorm had appointed Sifka and his own son, Randver, to propose for him to the Northern ruler's daughter, Svanhild, and he received her approval. When they returned with Svanhild, Sifka informed Gudhorm that Randver and Svanhild were deceiving him. Gudhorm then let his only son hang and caused Svanhild to be trampled by horses. Gudhorm also killed two other relatives, the Harlungs, when Sifka, with lying accusations, provoked him against them. Svanhild had two brothers, Sörli and Hamdir, who sought revenge on Gudhorm for their sister Svanhild's death. They failed in their attempt, but they inflicted a terrible wound on Gudhorm, from which he suffered thereafter.

133. *The Hun War*. The discord between the Aesir and the Vanir gave the giants courage to attack Midgard again. They proposed a treaty to the exiled Aesir, but Odin, who thought more of mankind's welfare than of his own, informed the Vanir of the imminent attack and offered them his aid, which was sorely needed because the number of giant-troops that were rolling into Midgard and that would storm Bifröst was enormous. The Aesir, the Vanir, and the Elves united forces to beat the giants back. The body count was so great that the Elivogar and its coasts were filled up with dead bodies; consequently, the giants were substantially reduced in number from that time on, and are no longer a threat until just before Ragnarök.

134. *Reconciliation Between the Aesir and the Vanir*. To thank Odin for his high-minded action, the Vanir called on him to return to Asgard, where they again placed him in Valhall's high seat. The peace was made steadfast with the agreement that 1) the Vanir were acquitted of all liability for Odin's acts that they disapproved of and that Njörd may return to Vanaheim at the end of time, 2) Gullveig, upon her rebirth, would not be burned, but banished to the Ironwood, and 3) the Aesir and the Vanir should each have half of those that fall on the battlefield.

135. *War Renewed Among the Germanic Tribes*. In East Germania, a new generation fit for military service now arose, and they moved again under Thjodrek-Hadding's banner. Followed by the aged Hamal and by Hildebrand, Hadding led the eastern tribes. The Aesir and the Vanir wanted peace restored, but Loki had now gotten power not only over Gudhorm, but also over Svipdag, and peacemaking appeared impossible. The gods commanded Svipdag to make peace and give Hadding his portion of his father's estate, but neither this command nor Freyja's tears persuaded him. He ordered his son Asmund to assemble the Swedes and get word to the Danes and to Gudhorm's tribes. The Germanic armies now were mobilized against one another again.

136. *Svipdag Disappears*. When the gods sent the defiant Svipdag a highly threatening order to submit to the will of the world controlling powers, he refused. But as his strongly manned fleet sailed over the Baltic Sea, he vanished. The gods' wrath had driven him to throw himself into the sea, where he was transformed into a beast. Humiliated and heartbroken, he dove down into the deep. The gods concealed his fate from Freyja. His son, Asmund, took over the leadership of the troops.

137. *Jalk by Asmund*. Gudhorm's armies united with those of Asmund. Sifka followed the troops even now. One night, a tall one-eyed man, who called himself Jalk⁴⁵, stepped into Asmund's tent and warned him against brotherly-war, but in vain, because Asmund remained

⁴⁵ Odin, *Grímnismál* 49: "They called me... Jalk at Asmund's."

under Sifka's influence. Thereafter, the one-eyed Jalk rode to Hadding's camp and spoke long with him and Hamal, Hadding's field-general.

138. *The Wedge-Shaped Battle Formation.* The one-eyed Jalk taught Hadding and Hamal a new battle formation, which has been sacred to the Teutons ever since.

139. *Vagnhöfði.* They expected a field battle the following day, but Vagnhöfði was missing from Hadding's army. A one-eyed rider who called himself Kjalar⁴⁶ had met Vagnhöfði on his way, set him on his horse and placed him in Hadding's phalanx when the battle was its hottest and his help needed most.

140. *Hadding's Victory.* Sifka-Loki arranged Asmund's and Gudhorm's warriors, but the wedge-shaped battle formation broke Sifka's art. Odin's wisdom overcame Loki's tricks. Asmund, with shield on his back and battle sword in hand, cleared a path to Hadding, but fell under his spear and Vagnhöfði's crooked sword. Vidga, Völund's son, fell in this battle. Some say he threw himself into the sea and was rescued by his kinfolk, Mimir's dises. He had killed many hundreds of men in this battle, but, against Hadding, at whose table he had been seated as a guest, he would not swing his sword.

141. *Peace.* After Asmund had fallen, a white shield was raised, and the Germanic princes held out their hands in peace. Sifka-Loki vanished after the battle. The Germanic empire was divided among Hadding, Gudhorm, and a son of Asmund.

142. *Thjodrek-Hadding* became a great-king, who was kind and governed successfully. Once Loki-Sifka had removed himself, it was not difficult for the princes to find bonds of friendship. In fact, so close a friendship arose between Hadding and Svipdag's grandson, the king of Sweden, that the latter took his own life upon hearing the unfounded news of Hadding's death. And when Hadding learned of it, he too came to Asgard through voluntary death.

143. *Freyja Searches For Svipdag.* In her falcon-guise, the sorrowing Freyja searched all the worlds for her beloved, Svipdag. She finally found him in the sea near the skerry, Singastein. By his eyes, she recognized him, despite his transformation, and remained beside him faithfully. From her Brisingamen, a delightful shimmer spread itself through the sea, thus she has been called Mardöll ("Sea-shimmering") ever since. The tears she shed for Svipdag's fate were transformed into gold and, with this gold, the purest in the world, she bought Svipdag freedom from the wrath of the gods.

144. *Svipdag's Death and Reentry into Asgard.* One day as Hadding bathed in the proximity of Singastein, he engaged an incredible sea-beast in battle and killed it. Shortly thereafter, a beautiful woman appeared, who informed him that a supernatural being, a relation of the Vanir, had been concealed in the beast's form and that he, in order to avert the Vanir's wrath, should give compensation to Frey for his smitten relative. When Hadding understood that the slain beast was Svipdag, he was happy to have exacted revenge from his father's slayer. Nevertheless, he finally gave compensation.⁴⁷ Thus bonds of friendship were possible between him and Svipdag's descendants.

145. *The Battle for Brisingamen.* While Freyja spoke with Hadding, Brisingamen lay exposed on Singastein. A seal climbed up onto the skerry. It was Loki, who wanted Brisingamen as a ransom for his life, since he was now being sought by the gods. But, before he could claim it, another seal crawled up onto the skerry and attacked him. When Loki recognized Heimdall in

⁴⁶ Odin, *Grímnismál* 49: "They called me...Kjalar when I drew the sledge (i.e. the wagon, Vagn-höfði)." See *Investigations into Germanic Mythology*, Vol. 1, no. 39.

⁴⁷ The woman, Freyja, curses him so badly he has no choice but to repent. See Saxo, Book 1.

its eyes, he fled, and Heimdall returned Brisingamen to Asgard. Now Svipdag sits alongside the Einherjar, and Freyja enjoys uninterrupted happiness with him.

146. *Loki was Finally Caught by the Gods* in Franangr's Falls, where he lived in the shape of a salmon. From there, the gods conveyed him to a cave on the islet of Lyngvi in the Amsvartnir sea. A giantess, Sigyn, who was Loki's lawful wife, although she was quite unlike him, asked to share in his unfortunate fate. In the cave, Loki now lies on stones set on edge, the point of a sword placed against his back. His shackles are forged from the intestines of a wolf, which was his son. A poisonous snake is fixed above his mouth. The hairs on his head grow hard and become plague-inducing spear-like horns.⁴⁸

147. *Fenrir*, Loki's son, was placed in bonds and likewise conveyed to Lyngvi. His imprisonment cost Tyr a hand.

148. *Gullveig*, reborn as Angrboda, was banished to the Ironwood and held fast there by strong galder until the approach of Ragnarök. Her own and Loki's wolf-children followed her there. She dwells there, together with Eggthir, the guardian of Völund's sword of revenge.

V. THE HISTORIC ERA.

149. *The Deterioration of the World*. Although the worst promoters of evil had been neutralized before the time was over, when the gods communicated directly with man, the evil seed that Loki and Gullveig had sown into the nature of man still flourished. The world-tree aged, robbed of the protection once provided by Mimir and his sons; and generations of men became increasingly immoral:

*"Brother will slay brother,
sister's sons will spoil kinship.
Hardship is in the world, fornication rampant,
an ax-age, a knife-age with cloven shields,
a wind-age, a wolf-age,
before the world plunges."*

VI. RAGNARÖK.

150. *The Foreboding Signs*. Summer after summer, the sun's light and warmth diminish. The restraining forces on the winds break and, through the moan of the storm, the howl of Fenrir can be heard from Gnipa-cavern. From the Ironwood, the wolf-giant Hati and his giant-clan make their incursion into Midgard. The land is filled with battles, and princes' castles are stained red with blood. The dead are too many to be buried. Wolves compete with Nidhögg (decomposition) to feed on the numberless bodies.

151. *The Ruin of the Current Race of Man*. A second fimbul-winter sets in. Hati, in wolf-guise, swallows the moon. All of the descendants of Ask and Embla are snatched away by weapon, disease, cold, or hunger.

⁴⁸ See Saxo, Book 8, the episode regarding the fettered giant Utgarda-Loki (see page 355 of the Oliver Elton translation). Notice, too, how Loki's three terrible children are all represented in this fate: the Wolf, the Serpent, and the plague-inducing ruler of Niflhel.

152. *The Final Battle.* In the Ironwood, Eggthir strikes his harp of storms and summons the fire-giant Fjalar, who comes in the guise of a red cock. Fjalar flies down into deep dales, where the world-destroying fire is set to erupt and Fjalar passes the sword to his father, Surt. Yggdrasil trembles and the Gjallar-horn, heretofore concealed in the holy shade of Yggdrasil's foliage, comes into Heimdall's hand. Its thundering tones penetrate the world, and Mimir's sons, awakened by the call of the horn, spring up out of the sleep of ages in order to take part in the final battle against evil. The dwarves, full of anxiety, stand near their rock wall.⁴⁹ Every forest and mountain harbors trollish beings faring wildly over the land. The peaceful inhabitants of the fields of bliss fear what will come. When Yggdrasil trembles, the chains of Lyngvi's prisoners loosen: Loki, Fenrir, and other world-destroying spawn climb aboard Naglfar. Loki steers to the Corpse-shores (the Nässtrand) and collects the condemned there, then sails on to the Ironwood. There are rumblings in Jotunheim, where troops gather under Hrym's leadership. The waves of the world's seas roll high, as the Midgard serpent wakens and wriggles in giant-wrath.

Odin speaks to Mimir's head for the last time. In Asgard's thingstead, the Aesir, Vanir, Elves, Valkyries, and Einherjar mount their horses. Odin, with his sons and Valhall's Einherjar, meets the attacking frost-giants; the Vanir, with Sessrumnir's Einherjar, meet Surt and Suttung's sons. Njörd sets out toward Vanaheim, but Frey remains in Asgard and chooses to do battle with Surt as recompense for the folly that brought the sword of revenge into the giant's power.

Bifröst's southern arc breaks under the weight of the mounted troops. Swimming in the sea of air, the Vanir descend to the Oskopnir plain. The battle remains along Jörmungrund's outer edges, where Oskopnir's and Vigrid's plains join into a single battlefield. The northern horizon is darkened by masses of frost-giants. From beneath their lifted shields, their battle-song roars. The east is blackened by the Ironwood's swarms. In the south, whence Surt with his descendants burst forth, the sky turns red. The sword of revenge in Surt's hand shines with the glare of the sun over the darkening world.

Clashes on all sides: The Einherjar and Valkyries engage the giants, monsters, and Suttung's sons. The leaders seek one another out: Tyr, the one-handed, fells Hati, but, himself mortally wounded, sinks from out of his saddle. Heimdall forces his way toward Loki and, with a sword, chops off his head, which, packed with plague-laden horns, bounces off the ground and penetrates Heimdall's breast. Then the god of pure fire falls, the sun goes out, and the stars drop from the heavens. Odin rides towards Fenrir; he dies in the poison of his mouth, and then disappears therein. Vidar, the silent, avenges his father. On one foot, he wears a shoe, to which all who donate shoe-leather to their needy fellows give unseen material. The shoe protects the foot that Vidar places in the monster's mouth, when he runs a sword through his heart. The Midgard-serpent extends his head over Vigrid's plain and seeks Thor, who crushes its head with a hammer-blow, but staggers nine steps backward, poisoned by its venom, before falling dead. Frey storms toward Surt and falls from a stroke of the sword of revenge. Then the vault of heaven splits asunder and the mountains which hold the deep fires burst. Flames envelop the battlefield, destroying the evil armies, and play against heaven itself. Through the fire and

⁴⁹ In *Völuspá* 46, "Mim's sons spring up ...at the sound of the ringing gjallar-horn." and in *Völuspá* 48, when the Aesir and the Elves are all in counsel, "the dwarves (Mimir's sons) groan at the stone-gate, knowing well the mountain rock." It is the job of the seven sons of Mimir, led by Sindri-Dvalin to protect the places of bliss in the underworld, and the untainted life preserved in Mimir's sacred grove. They went to sleep in full armor, ready to do battle upon awakening. They do not join the gods on the battlefield, but rather protect their age-old home, Mimir's grove and realm. (See Vol. 1, no. 55)

smoke, Vidar, Vali, Modi, and Magni ride down to Mimir's grove, where death and decay cannot reach.

VII. THE WORLD'S RENEWAL.

153. *The New Earth.* The sin-stained earth sinks into the sea and dissolves into ash. The fires die out and in the pure air, beneath a higher heaven, another earth rises from the sea with luscious greenery. It is Mimir and Urd's realms of bliss, the land of the three world-fountains, the location of Mimir's grove and Breidablik, the dwelling of Baldur, Nanna, Hödur, as well as of Lif and Lifthrasir, who would become the forebears of the new world-age's race of man. A waterfall gushes from the Nida Mountains, and over it, hunting for fish, flies the eagle, which was preserved during the destruction, along with many other species of animals. Unsown fields yield crops and virtuous generations gather in eternal bliss beneath Gimli's gold-thatched roof, which shines more gloriously than the sun.

154. *The Gods* find one another again on the Ida-plains, where Hoenir, Vidar, Vali, Modi and Magni gather around Baldur, Nanna, and Hödur. In harmony, Hödur and Baldur rebuild their father's halls. In the imperishable grass of the Ida-plains, the wonderful board game with which the gods played in time's morning is rediscovered.

That is the Germanic or, if you prefer, the Norse account of the Germanic mythic epic, whose essential features already appear in *Völuspá*. The events drawn in quick outlines and inferences follow one another there like they are developed and described in more detail here.

Two important links of the epic chain do not need to be discovered. They were immediately evident. One is the story of Creation with its connecting links: Chaos and the seed of the world-tree, the original beings, the theogony, the ruin of the frost-giants, the origin of the artisans of Nature and their activity during the creation of the world, the peace accord of the primeval age, and the Golden Age before whose close mankind is created. *Völuspá* relates or makes reference to all of these in epic order.

The other element that does not require discovery, but is immediately evident, are the final links in the great epic: The mythic age's conclusion partially with the imprisonment, partially with the exile, of the instigator's of evil (*Völuspá* 35); the historical age, whose evil inhabitants populate the underworld's world of misery (*Völuspá* 36-38, compare 44); The signs that herald Ragnarök: the sword of revenge delivered to Fjalar, Hati and his wolf-clan's breaking into Midgard, another fimbul-winter, earthquakes that sunder the bonds of Loki and the chains of his brood; the blasts from Heimdall's horn, the awakening of Mimir's sons, etc.; preparations for the final battle, the course of the battle and its conclusion, the incineration of the world, the reappearance of Mimir's realm from the sea, the dawn of a new and blissful age.

It is between these well-preserved parts of the chain that the other links unite and with them form a connected whole. With consideration of their original position to one another, *Völuspá* also gives guidance in some referencing features. The Golden Age ends when the "three dangerous thurs-maidens," born three times to different parents, Gullveig-Heid-Aurboda, begins her activities. She spreads witchcraft among evil women and thus lays the foundations of

mankind's ethical degeneration. Thereby, the fimbul-winter of the primeval age is prepared. Something happens that causes the artisans of Nature no longer to make golden treasures for the gods and consequently, man can no longer say regarding them: *var þeim vettergis vant ór gulli* (*Völuspá* 8).⁵⁰ Freyja is stolen away and comes into the power of the giants. And the air is mixed with ruin, in other words: a fimbul-winter breaks out (*Völuspá* 22, *Hauksbók*). Between the outbreak of the fimbul-winter and Loki's imprisonment, *Völuspá* locates feuds in heaven and on earth, and Baldur's death caused by Loki. To the previously peaceful Midgard ride Valkyries, equipped for battle. The Aesir kill and burn Gullveig three times. When she is burnt the last time, a dispute caused because of it breaks out between the Aesir and the Vanir, and the latter occupy Asgard. And this discord has its counterpart on earth, which, like the heavens, becomes the scene of a "great war," a *folkvig*. After the end of the great war Loki is chained. All this from *Völuspá*.

Through Saxo we learn what this great war was: a war among Svipdag, Gudhorm, and Hadding. What he says about this feud between these half-brothers leaves no doubt that it was concurrent with the Vanir's conquest of Asgard and Odin's exile. And he also informs us regarding Odin (the old exiled Yggr-Uggerus) that it was he, who while banished from heaven prepared the gods' victory in the so-called "Hun war," in which the giants made their last attempt to conquer the world. By this means, Odin reacquires his dignity as the highest of the gods.

Through Saxo we are likewise informed that Gudhorm and Hadding were sons of Gram-Halfdan, and the myths about this Halfdan's birth, his youthful adventures, his royal power, and his struggle to repel the fimbul-winter can still be recovered in Saxo's work. So too Halfdan's relationship to Svipdag, Groa's son, who acquires Völund's sword of revenge, and with it slays Halfdan. Also completely proven is that Svipdag is the son of Egil-Örvandil, Völund's brother. The adventures in which Thor and Egil appear as close friends and the latter as watchman on the Elivogar must consequently be placed before the enmity between the gods and the treasure-smiths, among whom Egil and his brother Völund are among the foremost. Demonstrably, and shown in the first volume of this work, is that Halfdan, the first king, is the son of Skjöld-Borgar, the first judge; that the fimbul-winter began while they still lived, and caused the great migrations from the North, and that Skjöld-Borgar is the son of Heimdall-Rig, the bringer of culture. Thereby, the old Germanic hero-saga in its essential outline is recovered; and the multitude of links which bind the episodes of the mythology and the heroic sagas together bring the details to light and inform us how the events, merely summarized by *Völuspá* in a quick overview, develop into an epic chain of cause and effect.

I don't expect that the followers of the meteorological school shall have patience enough to carefully go through the evidence. That is too much to ask of them. Because they have no interest in the only type of research -- circumstantial research -- and in the only type of evidence --circumstantial evidence-- that can produce sure results in this field. But I also expect objections from another direction: from the pseudo-Darwinist, who under the influence of the Theory of Evolution is inclined to accept that the Teutons of a couple of thousand years ago did not have enough intellect to create such an epic, and who therefore assumes even less among the forefathers of the Teutons during the Proto-Indo-European era.

I have purposely avoided any kind of appraisal of the value of the Germanic epic-myth, which would place it either high or low. Everyone is free to find deep ideas in it or to place it on a level with a children's story. For my own part, all I can say about it is that the epic itself indicates that the race that created it is a spiritually gifted part of the human family, which does not prevent their creation from bearing many marks that its creation took place in their spiritual

⁵⁰ "For them there was no lack of gold."

childhood. But the talented child will also have orderliness in his concepts; thus, every children's tale is a small epic. The inheritance of the Germanic tribes from Proto-Indo-European antiquity is also a great children's story. That this tale is a world-epic as well, which tells of the origin of the world, the end of the world, and naturally of the legendary progress of events between them, admittedly gives it a majestic character; but I have known children, who have already begun to ponder Creation and the world in the nursery. People of all races and from much more primitive cultural viewpoints have asked themselves the same questions and sought to answer them.

I point this out, because since the Darwinistic theory began to assert itself, one unscientific attempt after another has been made to apply it to the human race's historic era and show an enormous expanse of physiological and psychological results of evolution within this relatively short space of time. Thus for example, since Homer's time, it has been purposed that the retinas of the eye first became sensitive enough to different lightwaves for humans to see the primary colors of the spectrum; after the introduction of Christianity, the ears first became sensitive to musical harmonies and the vocal cords so developed that one could pass from a shriek into song. Thus, beside the solid scientific structure that was raised on Darwinism's foundation, a quasi-scientific imaginary-castle has risen, which distinguishes itself from other structures of the imagination only in that it lacks that which gives fantasy-making value, and possesses that which fantasy-making ought to forego in order to not lose the value it has. Had the ancient Egyptian monuments not shown that the human racial types that still exist were already found with their current facial types nearly 2000 years before Christ, the same kind of Darwinist could also place the origin of all present racial types in historic times. In full agreement with this pseudo-Darwinism stands the theory, repeated often during the last 20 years⁵¹ and with the blithest certainty, that our ancestors who lived 2000 years before Christ must have been pitifully uncreative and stupid, because since this time the brain, according to noted authorities, has of course developed at least as much as the retinas and the eardrums have been refined. How were such idiots able to create an epic? All that they were in a state to ruminate in their cloudy minds must have been unconnected free-standing myths of such character that one at will can easily recognize in them thunder, lightning, storm, light, darkness, dawn and dusk, acting on their consciousness in its embryonic phase. I take for granted that the pseudo-Darwinist shall raise this objection.

On my part, I believe that the time that separates us from the year 2000 BC is an entirely short period in relationship to mankind's whole state of evolution, and constitutes just another step, so to speak, to the point where we now find ourselves. The Indo-European man Aristotle was born 2,273 years ago; the Indo-European Archimedes⁵² 2,176 years ago. If our quasi-Darwinists were to believe their own premise, they must regard their own brains as a product of a considerably higher physiological evolution than the Greeks named. They have certainly not shown this-- on the contrary, the evidence seems to point in the opposite direction -- but in any case it must have some meaning even for them, that while 2,273 years separate them from Aristotle, only 1,616 years separate Aristotle from his Indo-European forebears who lived 2000 years before Christ and presumably belong to the last era of the Stone Age. If these 1,616 years were a sufficient length of time to create such brains as Aristotle's and those of his fairly intelligent contemporaries from out of such primitively organized material that their Stone Age ancestors' brains would have afforded according to the hypothesis, so the time between the year

⁵¹ i.e. between 1869 and 1889.

⁵² Aristotle (384 - 322 BC) Greek philosopher of Athens, student of Plato; Archimedes (287- 212 BC), Greek Mathematician of Syracuse, student of Euclid.

200 and 384 BC must have been a period of an enormously fast physiological development, absolutely worthy of amazement, in comparison with which the time between Aristotle and the year 1889 AD must be considered a complete standing still, if not a setback. However -- I have wasted too much ink on the unnecessary work of rejecting an objection which starts from our ancestors assumed simple-mindedness, in order to admire *wie wir's dann zuletzt so herrlich weit gebracht*.⁵³

With the ideas concerning our heathen ancestors' simple-mindedness are coupled those about their indescribable barbarism. One thinks of himself as a proper scientifically educated person in full possession of the benefits of progress, when he speaks about the barbarity of the ancient Teutons. This idea is as naive as the opposite view previously held about our forefather's deep wisdom. It seems to me that if one speaks of the past centuries' barbarism he ought to keep in mind the saying that warns against speaking of rope in a hanged man's house. The European people in the nineteenth century are considerably more barbaric in a purely cultural respect than the Romans of Caesar's time⁵⁴ and the Athenians of Pericles' time.⁵⁵ They are more barbaric than the latter as far as poetry and art are concerned. They are more barbaric than them as far as the training of the individual into a healthy and harmonious personality is concerned. The great mass of European people is more barbaric in the nineteenth century than the Teutons were at the time of Christ's birth, as far as our opinion of woman is concerned. In this consideration, I refer to Tacitus' narrative and to the feminine character that the Germanic myths describe. The great mass of European people in the nineteenth century is more barbaric than the heathen Teutons as far as the treatment of strangers and uninvited guests is concerned: *Quemcunque mortalium arce tecto nefas habetur*,⁵⁶ says Tacitus about the Teutons of his time and his statement is substantiated by *Hávamál*. One might object that hospitality has always been the barbarian's virtue. This is not true, but if it were, the opposite of hospitality is not proof of civilization, but a worrisome condition of the civilization that places its morality on this point lower than the "barbarian." I have not seen how a troop of Klodvig's Franks⁵⁷ or a band of Vikings looked, but I have reason to believe that their appearance provided evidence of a better corporeal culture than that of the Silesian weavers and the Moravian factory-workers.⁵⁸ What I can say with certainty is that the Teutons in Tacitus' time were a cleaner people than all of the European people in the nineteenth century, assuming that the Roman historian's reporter did not lie when he assured him that the Teutons bathed every morning, in cold water during the summer and in warm water in the winter. In filth, the European masses today are probably almost unsurpassable. Of the heathen-Germanic skalds and singers, he was assured that they were capable of deeply influencing the feelings of their audience. It is lucky if one can say this occasionally about more modern poets. There are no statistics regarding sex-crimes committed among the heathen Teutons, but when contemporary and impartial witnesses assure us that they held chastity in honor, one might assume that the barbarity of the nineteenth century is probably greater in this

⁵³ "how magnificently far we have brought it at last," i.e. How far we have come. This is a quote, likely meant ironically, from Goethe's *Faust, Part I*, which Rydberg translated into Swedish.

⁵⁴ Julius Caesar (100-44 BC), Roman Emperor.

⁵⁵ Pericles (495-429 BC), Athenian statesman.

⁵⁶ "It is accounted a sin to turn any man away from your door." *Germania* 21, H. Mattingly translation.

⁵⁷ Klodvig I (died 511) was founder of the Frankish empire who converted to Christianity c. 496. The most famous of the Merovingian Kings, he ruled between 481-511 AD.

⁵⁸ Schlesien (Silesia) is a region in central Europe in the upper valley of the Oder river, located in modern Germany, Poland, and Czech Republic. Mähren (Moravia) is a region in the modern Czech Republic. No doubt, Rydberg is referring to sweatshop workers at the dawn of the industrial age.

area too. Thanks to individual sciences and their progress, we have certain definite advantages over heathen antiquity, and progress is not an empty word. At this time, however, the blessings of progress are hardly noticeable in the physical and moral conditions of the modern masses of people, which in some respects may be much better, but in others seem to be much worse than those of the Germanic heathen age. Hence, we would be wiser to speak more modestly about ourselves and with less disdain about deceased generations.

At the beginning of my investigations into Germanic mythology, I did not presuppose an epic connection among the myths, although *Völuspá* already refers to one. It was the slow advancing observation that individual fragments of the divine- and heroic sagas whose fractured edges suited one another came to us in a broken and isolated state, that urged me to gather and compare all the remaining fragments. It was this, their character, not some prerequisite on my part, that gradually dictated the form in which they appear here as a reunited whole upon which generations have worked from the Proto-Indo-European era up until the last age of Germanic heathendom. So unpleasant now must be this discovery of a pervading epic connection among the myths for the meteorological-etymological school, which holds as its prerequisite the isolated condition of the myths and which has been prevalent in the subject of mythology up until now that I naturally think that not one of its adherents will abandon his way of thinking. At the same time, I am convinced that the results acquired through methodical research without preconditions will increasingly win the recognition they deserve.
