

## IN PRAISE OF ÁSTRÍÐR ÓLÁFSDÓTTIR

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### I *Establishing a text*

OF THE saga accounts of Magnús inn góði's return from Russia to claim the throne of Norway, only *Heimskringla* mentions the part played by his stepmother Ástríðr. This account (*Hkr.*, III 4–6) is based on three *dróttkvætt* stanzas attributed to the poet Sigvatr, which are also preserved only in manuscripts of *Heimskringla* (*Skjd.*, A I 248, B I 231–32).<sup>1</sup> As none of the manuscripts provides an entirely satisfactory text of these stanzas, it is necessary to attempt a reconstruction. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson's version in *Hkr.*, III 5–6 may serve as the basis for discussion:

1. Hrein getum hóla launa  
hrossfjöld lofi ossu  
Óleifs dætr, es átti  
jöfurr sikhvatastr digri.  
Þings beið herr á Høngrum  
hundmargr Svía grundar  
austr, es Ástríðr lýsti  
Óleifs sonar mólum.

We will repay well with our praise Óláfr's daughter, wife of the stout and most victorious warrior, for her many bright presents. A substantial army of Swedes assembled east at Hangrar when Ástríðr announced the cause of the son of Óláfr.

<sup>1</sup> When referring to the manuscripts containing these verses, I use the sigla listed in *Hkr.*, III 2 rather than those of *Skjd.* It should be noted that *Skjd.* does not give variants from Jón Eggertsson's copy of *Kringla*, Stockh. Papp. 18 fol. (see Louis-Jensen 1977, 16–37, for the fullest discussion to date of the relationships of the *Hkr.* mss). Until there is a new critical edition of *Heimskringla*, it is thus necessary to check the *Skjd.* A-texts against the manuscript texts (which I was able to do at Det arnamagnæanske Institut, Copenhagen, in the autumn of 1993). I cite variants (especially those common to more than one ms) in normalised form, except where the orthography is significant. For skaldic stanzas that I discuss in detail, I give page references to both *Skjd.* and *Hkr.*; for those requiring briefer reference I give the skald's name in abbreviated form followed by the number of the poem and the number(s) of the stanza(s) as for instance in Fidjestøl 1982. Thus these stanzas of Sigvatr's are Sigv. IX 1–3.

2. Máttit hón við hættna,  
 heilrøð, Svía deila  
 meir, þótt Magnús væri  
 margnennin sonr hennar.  
 Olli hón því, at allri  
 áttleifð Haralds knátti,  
 mest með móttkum Kristi,  
 Magnús konungr fagna.

Good advice-giver, she could hardly have dealt better with the daring Swedes had bold Magnús been her own son. She, with the mighty Christ, was the main reason that King Magnús could take up all the inheritance of Haraldr.

3. Mildr á mennsku at gjalda  
 Magnús, en því fognum,  
 þat gerði vin virða  
 víðlendan, Ástríði.  
 Hón hefr svá komit sínum,  
 sonn, at fô mun onnur,  
 orð gerik drós til dýrðar,  
 djúprøð kona, stjúpi.

Generous Magnús owes Ástríðr a reward for her bold deed, we're glad for it, it gave a great realm to the friend of men. Woman of wise advice has helped her stepson as few others would, true words I make to honour the lady.

Although these stanzas present no very serious problems compared with some skaldic verse, there are points that need discussion. The principles for editing the Viking Age verse preserved in Old Icelandic prose texts of the thirteenth century or later have never been fully set out and the practice of editors has often been eclectic. This eclectic approach has never been explicitly justified, but it appears to be based on the assumption (cf. Bjarni Aðalbarnarson in *Hkr.*, III xcvi) that scribes were more likely to intervene in the verse passages of the text they were copying than in the prose, so that the manuscript stemma of the work as a whole cannot be used automatically to reconstruct the verses contained within it. Without the support of the prose stemma, editors turn to metrical, grammatical, lexical, stylistic or other criteria to reconstruct the verse texts. This practice implicitly acknowledges that skaldic stanzas operate at a different textual level from that of their prose surroundings, and suggests that medieval scribes felt free to add, rearrange or delete them, to 'correct' them from alternative versions available to them in either oral or written form, or to reinterpret them to their own satisfaction. Thus, in their approach to skaldic verse, medieval scribes often anticipated the efforts of modern editors and we must take their procedures into account when attempting to understand the poems

ourselves.<sup>2</sup> Medieval authors and scribes valued skaldic verse as evidence for the Viking Age, and so still do many modern scholars. The currently fashionable reaction against the earlier privileging of the ‘original’ text now encourages us to recognise the value of each stage in the development of a text as a record of its own time (Haugen 1990, 136, 180). While this is a welcome reminder that we have to work with the knowable, material texts that survive rather than their hypothetical archetypes, for students of the Viking Age (if not for critics of Icelandic literature) it is still more important to reconstruct than it is to deconstruct the verbal artefacts of that period. By reason of its restrictive metre and diction, skaldic verse is better suited to this project than, for instance, Eddic verse, of which it is more easily argued that the preserved texts are simply thirteenth-century manifestations of a ‘bagvedliggende betydningssuniver’ (Meulengracht Sørensen 1991, 224). The following comments on the interpretations of both medieval and modern editors of the three stanzas in praise of Ástriðr are thus intended as an approach to the poem that Sigvatr actually composed and the circumstances in which it was performed.

Most of the problems of reconstructing this poem occur in the first quatrain:

A) *Hrein getum hōla launa / hnossfjōð lofi ossu*. It would appear that we should take *ossu* as neut. dat. sg. agreeing with *lofi*, and *hrein* as neut. acc. pl. agreeing with *hnossfjōð*. However, the simplex *fjōð* is normally fem. sg. A simple way of dealing with this problem is, with Finnur Jónsson, to extrapolate a unique instance of a neut. pl. form in this compound (*LP* s. v. *fjōð* and *hnossfjōð*).<sup>3</sup> The scribes of J and E (or of their archetype), on the other hand, preferred to make the line grammatically ‘correct’ with two minor emendations: *Hveim [<Hrein] getum hōla launa hnossfjōð lofi ossa [<ossu]*. As *launa* takes the dative of the person being paid and the accusative of that which is being paid for, we can construe *ossa* with *hnossfjōð* (both fem. acc. sg.) and take the whole couplet as a question which is answered in the next couplet: ‘Whom do we fully repay for our many treasures with praise? Óláfr’s daughter . . .’ However, all modern editors choose the K/39/F version (as in the text above) over the J/E

<sup>2</sup> I owe this point (and the inspiration for the first section of this article) to David Parsons. The whole question of the editing of skaldic verse certainly needs much more extensive discussion.

<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that, according to Kuhn (1937, 56), the simplex *fjōð* does not appear in Old Norse poetry before the thirteenth century, but this involves him in explaining away a number of apparently earlier examples as later replacements for an original *fjōl* (neut.).

version. We can only guess at their reasons, which could be that they prefer to follow the main manuscript (K) unless there is good reason not to, or that it seems most natural for the possessive *ossu* to refer back to the immediately preceding noun, or that, although Sigvatr regularly uses rhetorical questions beginning with an interrogative pronoun in his verse (Sigv. XI 10, 11; XII 17; the first two of these begin a stanza), he is never so subtle as to answer them. We would probably agree that all these reasons together outweigh any objection to the otherwise unrecorded neut. pl. *-fjǫlð*, especially since the alternation between fem. sg. and neut. pl. in a collective noun is common (Beito 1954, 95, 180; Janzén 1965, 359).

B) *dætr, es átti*. Kock (*NN* §2775) suggested replacing *dætr, sú es* (K/39/F; in *Skjd.*, B I 231 *dætr, sú s*) with ‘det korrekta’ *dætr es*, as found in J and E. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson followed Kock rather than Finnur Jónsson, giving an example of how the reading of the main manuscript (both copies of K, supported by other mss in this class) can be rejected when grammatical criteria favour a variant reading.

C) *sighvatastr*. K/J/E all have *sigrhvatastr* while 39 and F have *sighvatastr*. Although *LP* lists compounds in both *sig-* neut., ‘battle’, and *sigr-* masc., ‘victory’, it is not clear that there was a real distinction between these two elements, especially in a compound (characteristically, Finnur Jónsson translates *sigrgjarn* as ‘kamp-begærlig’ in *LP* and ‘sejrbegærlig’ in *Skjd.*, B I 533). Yet both Finnur Jónsson and Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson reject the form *sigrhvatastr* that is suggested by the stemma, as it is found not only in both copies of K (63 and 18) but also in both the manuscripts of the y-class (J and E). One can only presume that they wished to improve the pun on the poet’s name (beloved of many scholars, see Paasche 1917, 80 and Fidjestøl 1982, 160). But Sigvatr made use of the rhyme between the simplex *sigr* and his favourite epithet for the king, *digri*, on a number of occasions (e. g. Sigv. XII 6, 8; XIII 15),<sup>4</sup> and in this context it seems preferable to keep K’s reading of *sighvatastr*. *Sigrhvatastr* also makes for a better rhyme.<sup>5</sup>

These three examples demonstrate that it is not possible to follow any one manuscript in reconstructing the first quatrain of Sigvatr’s first stanza

<sup>4</sup>The collocation was used by other poets, too, when referring to Óláfr in his own right or as the father of Magnús, e. g. Jök. 1, Arn. II 13 and ÞjóðA. I 15. It may have been this common collocation that influenced the scribes of J and E (or more likely their archetype) to write this adjective as two words, *sigr hvatastr*.

<sup>5</sup>According to Kuhn (1983, 77), when *r* followed another consonant (especially *b*, *d* or *g*), both consonants participated in the internal rhyme. Thus, *digri* would presuppose a rhyme in *sigr-*.

in praise of Ástríðr. Finnur Jónsson chose the readings of K in A and B, Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson only in A, and I would follow it in A and C. It could of course be argued that the text of J and E gives a complete version that has meaning, without the need for any eclectic adoption of variants, but reasons have been given above to suggest that although this version may have had meaning for the scribes of J and E (or their archetype), it is unlikely to represent Sigvatr's composition. Even if we were not necessarily interested in Sigvatr's text, but only in *a* text that makes sense, both J and E still turn out to be unsatisfactory witnesses as we move further into the poem. Thus, while the other manuscripts reproduce three stanzas, J has only one, which is a conglomeration of the first quatrains of stanzas 1 and 2 of the complete text. Whatever the reason for this peculiarity of J, it provides a less satisfactory text than the full three stanzas. E can only remain as a possible sole text for the poem if we are willing to accept its witness to the first word of 1/5 as *þing* rather than *þings*. *Bíða* + acc. is a possible construction, and although the meaning seems less appropriate, it can be made to make sense (the Swedish army 'suffered an assembly at Hangrar').<sup>6</sup> But when we consider two closely-related stanzas by Sigvatr (see III below), it will be seen that E is not a satisfactory sole witness there either.

It is unlikely that we will ever be able to reconstruct the text of these stanzas exactly as they were composed by Sigvatr, although we can be reasonably sure of the text known to Snorri which he incorporated into *Heimskringla*. Nevertheless, it has been possible to construct a 'working text' which fits in well with what we know of Sigvatr's other work. In the attempt at some kind of reconstruction, all the variant readings have to be considered, and evaluated against a number of criteria, of which the manuscript stemma of the prose texts is not always the most helpful.<sup>7</sup> In other words, the eclectic approach seems unavoidable.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> E also has an unsatisfactory form of the place-name in stanza 2: *haumgrom*.

<sup>7</sup> I have not felt it necessary to discuss in detail the following variants (not including mere spelling variants) which are confined to one or two mss, and which do not appear to have any authority: in stanza 1, F *liði* (for *loft*), 18 *bauð* (for *beið*), 39 + F *hvngrom* (for *Hongrum*); in stanza 2, J *margnenninn*.

<sup>8</sup> It should be noted that the copies of *Kringla* do generally have the best text, and that there are many instances where Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson keeps the *Kringla* text in his edition, but Finnur Jónsson was willing to admit variants from other branches of the tradition (both in *Skjd.* B and in his edition of *Heimskringla*).

II *Let us now praise famous (wo)men*

Sigvatr's three stanzas in praise of Ástriðr have received surprisingly little attention. Admittedly, Paasche (1917, 80) notes 'det paafaldende og sjeldne i, at Sigvat digter et kvad til ære for en kvinde' while Petersen (1946, 150–52) regrets that we have only three stanzas of what must have been a longer poem and praises it for its 'Simpelhed i Stilen'. So unusual was it that other scholars have not known how to deal with it. Hollander (1940) does not mention the poem at all while Fidjestøl (1982), although he mentions it in passing, does not include it in his 'korpus' of 'lovkvad om fyrstar'. He gives no explanation for this omission, but presumably it was because Ástriðr was not a 'fyrste', although it certainly is a 'lovkvad'. In discussing possible models for Snorri Sturluson's lost poem on frú Katrín, Bjarni Einarsson (1969) mentions Óttarr's lost (if it ever existed) *mansongsdrápa* for Ástriðr (see IV below), but not Sigvatr's poem which has survived.

A poem in praise of a woman is anomalous in a genre of poetry designed for the praise of warriors and chieftains, and this is the only example I know of (leaving aside the love poems which belong to a different genre and which may well be post-Viking Age). The closest parallels from this period are in some runic memorials for women which break into a few lines of *fornyrðislag* within the inscription, the Hassmyra stone in Västmanland (Jansson 1964, 69–76) with a full stanza, and the Dynna stone from Norway (Olsen 1941, 192–202) with only a couplet. And these parallels are not very close, for the runic inscriptions praise the dead women for typically female accomplishments: Ástriðr from Dynna was *mær hǫnnurst* in Hadeland, and no better *hǫfrøya* than Óðindis will ever run the farm at Hassmyra. Our Ástriðr, on the other hand, is praised not for her housewifely or craft skills, but for a successful political intervention which puts her stepson on the Norwegian throne. The type of action being praised is entirely suitable for skaldic treatment, even if it was unusual for women to act in this way, and even more unusual for this to be recorded in skaldic verse. There may of course have been other skaldic poems in praise of women that have not survived. We know from archaeological evidence such as the Oseberg burial, and from a number of Danish runic monuments (without verse) to highborn women that important women could achieve public commemoration. It is also a well-known pattern in history that queens could act in areas that were not normally open to other women. Thus, it is not inconceivable that there were *dróttkvætt* praise poems in honour of other highborn Scandinavian women that have simply not been

preserved in the selective and biased transmission of skaldic verse in the Kings' Sagas. Nevertheless, it is tempting to see Sigvatr as an innovator here, for two reasons.

Sigvatr showed more interest in women than most court poets, with females appearing in relatively many of his poems, from his daughter Tófa to the range of Swedish hags and ladies in the *Austrfararvísur*. Moreover, Sigvatr was a poetic innovator in extending the generic range of *dróttkvætt*, as demonstrated by his *Bersøglisvísur*. These two facets of Sigvatr's poetical personality suggest that he may have been the first poet to attempt a proper panegyric of a woman. The *dróttkvætt* genre was well developed for eulogising the brave in battle and the successful sea-captain, but had no vocabulary for praising a woman who could be neither of these things. Sigvatr's strategy was to extrapolate two aspects of Ástriðr's life and actions for which the genre did have a vocabulary, and concentrate on those. In particular, the poem explores Ástriðr's dynastic role as daughter, wife and stepmother, and engages in a complex paralleling of her public persuasion of the Swedes with Sigvatr's public praise of her for doing this.

While the three extant stanzas may or may not have been part of a longer poem originally, they form a well-rounded whole as they stand. The poem is neatly framed by two first-person references by the poet to his poem. He begins conventionally by stating that he can repay (*launa*) with his praise (*lofi ossu*) the many bright treasures (*hrein hnossfjöld*) Óláfr's daughter has given him and ends with a reference to the 'true words' he has made to the glory of the lady (*sonn orð gerik drós til dýrðar*). That this is not just a matter of cosy reciprocity between skald and patron is indicated in the third stanza, where the theme is extended to apply to Magnús, the beneficiary of the queen's actions. He ought to repay (*gjalda*) her for her *mennska*, and the hint is underlined by the use of the adjective *mildr* 'generous'. Thus, both Sigvatr and Magnús owe Ástriðr a debt.

Within this frame of praise and repayment, Sigvatr emphasises Ástriðr's actions at the assembly, at which she proclaimed Magnús's case (*lýsti mólum*). This last phrase uses the legal language appropriate to speeches at the assembly, but in this context it has further resonances, for in skaldic verse, both *lýsa* and especially *mól* commonly have a metatextual reference to the poetry itself, as is easily demonstrated by the examples listed in the entries for these two words in *LP* (for *mól* see also Kreutzer 1977, 86). Thus the reciprocity between skald and queen is not only in his composition of a poem repaying her for gifts given earlier, but in the parallel between their public speech acts on behalf of the Norwegian royal dynasty, Sigvatr's being his poetry, and Ástriðr's her speech at the assembly.

In the second stanza, Ástriðr's speech is translated into action, with verbs like *deila* and *valda* indicating how active her persuasion of the 'bold' Swedes was. Then comes the unexpected statement that in this Ástriðr acted *með mótikum Kristi*. I cannot see that there is any way of reading this other than as suggesting a parity in the influence of queen and Christ. Thus, Ástriðr's power is, if not exactly equal to, then certainly complementary to that of Christ. The second and third stanzas also contain two adjectives in *-ráðr* applied to the queen (*heilróð* and *djúpróð*). The giving of advice (both good and bad) is a proper female activity in Old Norse literature, and we may wish to translate these as praising her for her advice (as I have done above). Yet it is not clear whom Ástriðr is advising (her persuasion of the Swedes is more forceful than mere advice), and the root *-ráð-* can have a more active connotation. In *LP* Finnur Jónsson gives two translations for *heilráðr*, '1) som giver oprigtige, gode, råd' and '2) som tager gode, hele, fuldstændige, råd, bestemmelser, som tænker og handler derefter fuldtud'. He assigns this passage to the first of these interpretations, but there is no reason other than his (and our?) expectations of female behaviour why his second translation should not be equally appropriate. Certainly there is plenty of evidence that Sigvatr used the verb *ráða* in a highly active sense (Sigv. XI 12, XII 20, XIII 3, 6). This active sense would also accord better with the fact that Ástriðr is praised for her *mennska*, a word that I would argue has a connotation of 'manly behaviour' in this context.<sup>9</sup> The queen

<sup>9</sup> Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson (*Hkr.*, III 6n.) also translates *mennsku* as *mannþóm* (*dugnað*) rather than using the modern Icelandic *mennska* which has the implication of 'humanity'. Although the Christian context of Sigvatr's stanza may suggest that this meaning is also appropriate here, there is simply not enough contemporary evidence to establish the full semantic range of *mennska* at this early date. However, there is a useful parallel involving the adjective *mennskr* in *Hervararkviða* 19–20 (Heusler and Ranisch 1903, 18) which plays on both the possible contrasts of human/not human and male/female. According to her father, Hervor is not *mönnum lík* both because she is wandering around burial mounds at night and because she is kitted out in war gear. He repeatedly calls her *mær ung*, in contrast to the adult male status implied by her armour. Her reply is *Maðr þóttumk ek / menzkr til þessa, / áðr ek sali yðra / sækia réðak*, and she goes on to repeat her request for the sword Tyrfingr. In this context, *menzkr maðr* must refer to Hervor's male garb (note that the herdsman at the beginning of the poem assumes she is male) as well as to her crossing of the boundary between human and non-human. Both Hervor and Ástriðr are judged by a standard in which humanity and maleness intersect. It is Hervor's aspiration to be like a man that enables her to take on the supernatural (i. e. non-human) threat of the accursed sword. Similarly, Ástriðr's praiseworthy 'humanity' arises from her speaking out like a man.

qualifies for praise because she has acted like a man, in speaking successfully at a public assembly and thereby being primarily responsible (along with Christ) for putting Magnús on the throne of Norway.

Thus poet and queen act together in the service of Magnús, who represents the continuity of the Norwegian dynasty. This is of course women's traditional role in an hereditary monarchy. In the first stanza, Sigvatr emphasises Ástriðr's central position in the dynastic web: Ástriðr is a person in her own right (she is named), but she is also the daughter of the Swedish king Óláfr and the wife of the *jöfurr sigrhvatastr digri* (i. e. St Óláfr), while acting for the son of the latter. The second stanza elaborates these relationships. She could not have done more for Magnús were he her son (thus emphasising that he is not). His name appears twice in this stanza, culminating in his becoming *Magnús konungr* as a result of her considerable efforts. And his prize is *átteifð Haralds*. Despite the unanimous agreement of editors and translators that this refers to Haraldr hárfagri, I would like to suggest the possibility that it actually refers to Haraldr grenski, Magnús's paternal grandfather. Sigvatr's poem deals not in the longer reaches of Norwegian history, but in a narrower dynastic perspective: the immediate problem of restoring the son of Óláfr to his father's throne. Sigvatr regularly referred to Óláfr as the 'heir of Haraldr', meaning the father rather than the remote ancestor; the concept of Norway as the inheritance of Haraldr hárfagri was only just emerging at this time, and was not fully established until the time of Haraldr harðráði (Krag 1989). The dynastic relationships result, in the third stanza, in a personal relationship between the two main participants, Magnús and Ástriðr. Sigvatr explains to Magnús how he, the stepson, is to be grateful to Ástriðr, whose actions made him *víðlendr*. The very last word (*stjúpi*) puts Magnús in his proper place, at least in the context of this poem which stresses his stepmother's role in making it all possible. But even when praising the dowager, Sigvatr cannot desist from his role of advising the king.

### III *The contexts of the poem*

Sigvatr's fatherly tone may be explained by the fact that Magnús was only ten years old at this time (see Arn. III 1) and that Sigvatr had known him since birth and was his godfather. The *Bersöglisvísur* show that the poet always felt able to address Magnús in an older-and-wiser tone that was not entirely consonant with the respect due to crowned kings. Sigvatr's advice to the young king in the Ástriðr stanzas suggests a link with two stanzas that also are preserved only in *Hkr.* (III 18–19; see also *Skjd.*, A I 274, B I 253–54). The working text is once again supplied by Bjarni

Aðalbjarnarson (but I give the two stanzas their *lausavísa* numbering from *Skjd.*):

30. Heim sóttir þú hættinn  
 hönd, en vel mátt löndum,  
 þinn stoðak mótt, sem monnum,  
 Magnús konungr, fagna.  
 Færak víst, þvít vörum  
 varðr at þér, í Garða,  
 skrifnask skírinfna  
 skript, þjóðkonungr, niptar.

You boldly made your way home, King Magnús, and you'll be glad of both lands and men; I support your rule. I would certainly have gone to Russia, since I was responsible for you, king of the nation; (his) kinswoman's document was written for (my) godson.<sup>10</sup>

31. Minn hug segik monnum,  
 Magnús, at ek fagna,  
 guðs lán es þat, þínu  
 þingdrifu vel lífi.  
 Ætti drengja dróttinn  
 dýrðar son, ef yrði,  
 þjóð mætti fý fœðask,  
 feðr glíkr, konung slíkan.

I tell people what I think, Magnús, that I am glad of your royal performance [lit. 'your life attending assemblies'], that is a gift of God. The lord of men<sup>11</sup> [Óláfr] would have a splendid son if he turned out like (his) father; few nations could rear such a king.

Again, the text has to be reconstructed using the eclectic procedures outlined above, and no one manuscript has an entirely satisfactory text, with minor errors scattered across all the manuscripts. In these stanzas the errors suggest scribal inattention and minor misunderstandings rather than any major editorial activity. Thus, K is unsatisfactory because it has *varðat* instead of *varðr at* in 30/6, the meaningless *sán* instead of *lán* in 31/3,<sup>12</sup> *átti*

<sup>10</sup> In the most recent edition of *Heimskringla* (Bergljót S. Kristjánsdóttir *et al.* 1991, 567) there is a suggestion, though it can be no more, that this was a written confirmation by Ástriðr that her stepson was legally entitled to inherit the kingdom. Kock's interpretation of these lines (*NN* §1879) makes no sense in the context of the stanza.

<sup>11</sup> For Sigvatr's special use of the term *drengr* in his relationship with King Óláfr, see Jesch 1993, 166.

<sup>12</sup> This particular error should be ascribed to Ásgeir Jónsson's copying rather than to K, since 18 has the reading *lán*.

instead of *ætti* in 31/5 and *ferð* instead of *feðr* in 31/8. E, on the other hand, has *vorðr at* in 30/6, *dýrðan* instead of *dýrðar* and *er* instead of *ef* in 31/6, and *má til* instead of *mætti* in 31/7 (with J sharing the first and last of these). 39 and F are more consistent, but even they have at least one minor error each which would disqualify them as sole witnesses to the text.

If establishing a text causes no particular problems, understanding that text is not so simple: Finnur Jónsson was unable to translate the last two lines of 30. Since then, some progress has been made, and Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson's suggested interpretation (see the notes to *Hkr.*, III 18–19) at least accounts for everything in the two stanzas. I am unable to add to this interpretation and move on to considering the status of these two stanzas in their prose context. They are both presented as *lausavísur* in *Hkr.*, introduced with *Þá kvað Sigvatr* and *Sigvatr kvað*. Although the context is Magnús's return to Norway, these stanzas are separated from the earlier account of Ástriðr's intervention.

The saga of Magnús inn góði (*Hkr.*, III 3–67) begins with his journey from Russia to Sweden, supported by a couple of Arnórr's verses. In Sweden, Ástriðr was waiting for him, and Snorri describes her generous welcome and her immediate calling of an assembly. In a long speech at that assembly she tries to persuade the Swedes to help Magnús by emphasising her own support for him, which includes both men and money. Her clinching argument is that those who were wounded or lost relatives fighting for St Óláfr should travel to Norway to seek revenge. She persuades a large troop to accompany Magnús to Norway. At this point, Sigvatr's three stanzas for Ástriðr are adduced as evidence for this. The first chapter ends with a stanza by Þjóðólfr describing Magnús's sea journey. The second chapter continues the description of his journey, supported by two of Arnórr's verses. Chapters 3–6 describe Magnús's successful bid to become sole king of Norway, having seen off Sveinn Álfufuson and come to an agreement with Hǫrða-Knútr of Denmark. Chapter 7 returns to Ástriðr and describes her strained relationship with Magnús's mother Álfhildr; Magnús welcomes Álfhildr to the court and she wants to be properly honoured there. This ought to be the cue for Sigvatr's half-stanza (XII 32, see below) in which he favours Ástriðr over Álfhildr, but in fact that does not come until later, at the end of chapter 9. First Snorri has to introduce Sigvatr as a character rather than just as the author of poems cited as evidence. This leads to quite a lengthy digression explaining how Sigvatr was in Rome at the time of Stiklarstaðir, and about his return to Norway, interspersed with some of his best-known poetry about the death of Óláfr. At the end of chapter 8, Sigvatr, who is unhappy in Norway, goes

to Sweden to be with Ástriðr ('for a long time'), waiting for news of Magnús. Chapter 9 then returns to Magnús's arrival in Sweden and the joy of poet, queen and prince at being together. In this chapter, Sigvatr speaks the two *lausavísur* 30 and 31, and joins Ástriðr in accompanying Magnús to Norway. In Norway, Sigvatr recites the *lausavísa* in which he tells Álfhildr to give precedence to Ástriðr (*Hkr.*, III 20; *Skjd.*, A I 275, B I 254):

32.     Ástriði láttu æðri,  
           Álfhildr, an þik sjálfa,  
           þér þótt þinn hagr stórum,  
           þat vildi guð, batni.

Álfhildr, let Ástriðr take precedence over yourself, even though your status has greatly improved; God willed that.

Snorri is clearly combining two narratives here, in such a way that we can detect the two strands. One strand concerns Magnús's return from Russia via Sweden, roughly as described in other Kings' Sagas (with some of the same supporting verses).<sup>13</sup> Snorri combined this with a narrative which is not recorded in any other Kings' Saga and which concentrates on events in Sweden, particularly Ástriðr's role in assisting Magnús's return. Her actions in Sweden, and the supporting verses, are brought forward into the main thread of the narrative (chapter 1), but in fact they belong to a narrative centred on Sigvatr and his poetry which is picked up again in chapter 7. Even here, Snorri seems to have tampered with the narrative logic, for the account of the enmity between Ástriðr and Álfhildr should have come towards the end of this section, when everyone is safely in Norway, just as indeed the verse supporting this anecdote comes at the end of chapter 9. The logic of the story that Snorri has dismembered is as follows (with chapter numbers of *Magnúss saga* in *Hkr.* in brackets):

- A) Sigvatr in Rome at the time of Óláfr's death, and his poetic reactions to that death (7)
- B) his return to Norway and restlessness there (8)
- C) his journey to Sweden to join Ástriðr in awaiting Magnús (8)
- D) Ástriðr's persuasion of the Swedes to back Magnús's attempt on the throne of Norway and Sigvatr's poem in praise of her (1)
- E) Magnús's eventual arrival in Sweden and Sigvatr's two stanzas addressing him (9)
- F) the reunion in Norway with Álfhildr and Sigvatr's poem supporting Ástriðr against her (7, 9)

<sup>13</sup> This strand begins at the end of *Óláfs saga helga* (*Hkr.* II, 414–15), with the journey of Einarr þamarskelfir and Kálfr Árnason to Russia to fetch Magnús.

This narrative structure can easily be reconstructed from the somewhat clumsy way in which Snorri has incorporated these events into his basic account which is otherwise roughly the same as in other Kings' Sagas. All the events described by Snorri that are not found in other Kings' Sagas seem to depend on skaldic stanzas by Sigvatr. It is noteworthy that not one of the poems associated with these episodes is preserved outside Snorri's own writings. The two stanzas addressed to Magnús, the three in praise of Ástriðr and the half stanza addressed to Álfhildr are preserved only in manuscripts of *Hkr*. The *lausavísur* of chapters 7 and 8 (Sigv. XIII 21–27) are preserved in *Hkr*. and in part in *ÓSH*. The rather clumsy way in which Snorri integrated the events based on these stanzas into his account might suggest that he was following a prose source which had already linked these stanzas to one another. However, there is evidence that at least some of these stanzas belonged together from the beginning. In fact, I would like to suggest that Sigvatr composed the poem in praise of Ástriðr and the two stanzas addressing Magnús at the same time, for the same occasion, and with deliberate verbal echoes between them indicating the link.

A list of the verbal echoes between the two sets of stanzas demonstrates this link:

30/1: *hættinn*, applied to Magnús, recalls the *hættna Svía* of 2/1–2.

30/4: the line *Magnús konungr fagna* exactly repeats 2/8, and the echo is strengthened by the presence of the syllable *mött(-)* in the previous line (and alliterating with *Magnús*) in both cases.

31/2: the rhyme of *Magnús . . . fagna* is again repeated, and recalls the rhyme of a different form of the same verb with *Magnús* in 3/2, i. e. in the same position (second line) of the stanza. Again the effect is strengthened by the alliterating use of the same root (*menn-/mōnn-*) in the previous line. (And the same is true of 30/4.)

31/4–8: *þing-*, *dýrðar*, *son*, *fó* and *konung* repeat words that have appeared in 1/5, 3/7, 1/8 + 2/4, 3/6, and 2/8 respectively. Although not significant individually, the cumulative effect of these is to echo the stanzas in praise of Ástriðr.

I would argue that it is the two stanzas about Magnús that deliberately echo the three about Ástriðr rather than the other way round. There are indications of progression between the two sets of stanzas. Thus, the poet's indirect address to Magnús in 3/1–2 anticipates his more direct address in 30 and 31.<sup>14</sup> Three of the four couplets in 30 (lines 3–8) have the same alliterating sounds, in the same order, as the first three couplets of 3 (i. e. *m/v/s*), giving an auditory link between the end of the first poem (for

<sup>14</sup> In 3/1, the scribe of F in fact uses a second- (rather than third-) person form of the verb *átt*. This may suggest that he was influenced by the verses addressing Magnús.

Ástriðr) and the beginning of the second (to Magnús). There are also echoes within the two stanzas about Magnús (*monnum, Magnús . . . fagna, þjóðkonungr*) which contribute to the build-up to Sigvatr's climax in 31: his pronouncement that Magnús will be a good king if he is like his father.

These links do not necessarily mean that these five stanzas were part of one poem. The internal evidence shows that 1–3 are in praise of Ástriðr, without direct address. On the other hand, 30–31 show Sigvatr in god-fatherly mood, advising the young king (with probably a reference to Ástriðr in *níptar*), welcoming him home, promising to support him (*þinn stoðak mótt*) and telling him how to be a good king by imitating his father. The repetition of the forms of the verb *fagna* are the clue to the relationship between these verses. Although they are not all one poem, the stanzas were probably composed for one occasion, a ceremonial one in Norway to welcome Magnús and celebrate his accession to the throne. At this ceremonial occasion, one might speculate, the court poet declaimed a panegyric on the dowager queen, gave a wise old man's welcome to the young king, and possibly even put the concubine Álfhildr in her place. This half-stanza is too short to establish any verbal links with the other five stanzas, but Sigvatr does refer to God's will in it, echoing the emphasis he put on divine intervention in 2/7 and 31/3. The whole occasion no doubt reflected the new ideology of the Christian, divinely-appointed king.

#### IV Remembering Ástriðr

Although Sigvatr's poems on the return of Magnús to Norway are not recorded in any texts other than *Hkr.*, they appear to have been known to later poets. A half stanza attributed to Kali Sæbjarnarson (*Skjd.*, A I 434, B I 404) echoes the first stanza of the Ástriðr poem (with the verbal parallels italicised):<sup>15</sup>

Hvé *launa* þér þínir  
*þingríkir* höfðingjar;  
 vestr bifask røng í røstum  
 (reyn *oss jøfurr*) *hmossir*?

<sup>15</sup> The text in *Skjd.* B quoted here is a good example of the eclectic reconstruction of a skaldic stanza from a number of not entirely satisfactory manuscripts. However, I have decided to keep the B-text here, as all the words significant to a comparison with Sigvatr's stanza appear in all manuscripts, with the exception of *jøfurr*, which is replaced by *konungr* both in the *Orkneyinga saga* tradition and in *Bergsbók*. In the latter, the half-stanza appears in the lower margin of fol. 195v, and is attributed to Þormóðr kolbrúnarskáld (*ÓSH*, 1014–15).

Einarr Skúlason specifically refers to his predecessor Sigvatr in st. 12 of his poem on St Óláfr, *Geisli* (*Skjd.*, A I 459–73, B I 427–45), and he has many faint echoes of the older poet’s work that are not worth detailing. But two stanzas of *Geisli* are more closely modelled on Sigvatr’s work.<sup>16</sup> The first stanza of the Ástríðr poem is echoed in:

69. *Óláfs höfum jofra*  
 orðhags kyni sagðar  
 (fylgði hugr) ens helga  
 happsdáðir (því ráði);  
*laun* fóm holl, ef *hreinum*  
 hræsíks þrimu líkar,  
 gøfugs óðar létt, gæði,  
 goðs blessun, *lof*, þessa.

In the stanza just before the reference to Sigvatr, Einarr comes close to plagiarising the last couplet of the second of the Magnús stanzas, with the parallel words in the same positions as in Sigvatr’s stanza:

11. Þreklynds skulu Þrændir  
 þegnprýðis brag hlýða  
 (Kristis lífir hann í hæstri  
 holl) ok Norðmenn allir;  
*dýrð* es ágæt orðin  
 eljunhress (í þessu)  
*þjóð*- (né þengill *faðisk*  
*þvílíkr*) -*konungs* ríki.

It may be too speculative to see Sigvatr’s continuing influence in the mid-twelfth century in an echo of the third stanza of his Ástríðr poem in Ívarr Ingimundarson’s *Sigurðarbólkr* (*Skjd.*, A I 495–502, B I 467–75):

14. Risu við vísa  
 vestan komnum  
 Þrændr ok Mærir,  
 þeirs þrifum níttu;  
 brugðusk hólðar  
 í huga sínum  
*mensku mildum*  
*Magnús* syni.

<sup>16</sup> Again, it should be noted that the parallels depend to some extent on Finnur’s reconstructed text in *Skjd.* B, and two of the words which demonstrate the parallel with Sigvatr appear in only one of the two manuscripts of the poem (both in st. 69: *hrein* and *lof*).

The name Magnús (here, as in Kali's verse, referring to Magnús berfœttr) would naturally attract alliterating words, and it is likely that *mennska . . . mildr* was a formula used in a conventional way here, but unconventionally by Sigvatr. Fidjestøl (1982, 160) has also suggested an echo of *sig(r)hvatastr* in a stanza by Ívarr's contemporary, Þoðvarr balti, but this quatrain is too short to provide any verbal echoes other than the adjectival phrase *þoðvar hvatr* applied to the king (*Skjd.*, A I 505, B I 478).

If Sigvatr's verses were remembered, then the occasion for them must also have been remembered. The verses celebrate Ástriðr's eloquence, and there are other indications in prose texts that she was remembered for her rhetorical gifts and her powers of persuasion. Thus, a number of the versions of the saga of St Óláfr preserve an account of how Ástriðr came to be married to Óláfr. Óláfr had intended to marry Ástriðr's half-sister Ingigerðr, a legitimate daughter of the Swedish king, but this never came about and she married the Russian king Jaroslav instead. Both the *Legendary saga* of St Óláfr, on the one hand, and, on the other, a number of texts ultimately deriving from a lost saga of St Óláfr by Styrmir fróði Kárason, tell roughly the same story (*LegS*, 102–04; *ÓSH*, 769–71): Ástriðr takes the initiative and visits the king, ostensibly with messages and gifts to him from her sister Ingigerðr. Twice, she visits him, makes a little speech, only to get silence from him in return. On the third occasion, her speech includes a proposal of marriage. As she is getting up to go, the king finally agrees to speak to her and, indeed, to marry her. *LegS* concludes with the statement *Gladdezt nu konongrenn oc giætte nu rikis sins*. By getting the king to cheer up and marry her, Ástriðr uses her persuasiveness to the benefit of the kingdom of Norway, as in her intervention in favour of Magnús. Even if the account of Ástriðr's proposal is apocryphal, it confirms the message of Sigvatr's verses, that here was a woman who was not afraid to speak out in an unwomanly fashion at significant moments, and suggests that she was remembered for this.

Snorri did not include this anecdote in his saga of St Óláfr, however. According to Sigurður Nordal (1914, 65), this was because it was too naive and improbable a tale for either Snorri or the author of *Fagrskinna* to include. However, scholars seem to agree that Snorri knew the anecdote, but rewrote the account of Óláfr's courtship for his own purposes (e. g. Bagge 1991, 103). In Snorri's version of how Óláfr got married (*Hkr.*, II 144–46), Sigvatr acts as intermediary. He is the one who has long conversations with Ástriðr, and he reports back to the king on her *fríðleikr ok málsnilld*. But it is the eloquence of the poet, not of the princess, that persuades the king to marry her.

Although Sigvatr's three stanzas are the only ones preserved that celebrate Ástríðr Óláfsdóttir, at least some Icelandic writers believed that there once had been others. Again, an account deriving from the work of Styrmir Kárason is preserved in *LegS* (p. 132) and *ÓSH* (pp. 688–89, 702–06), telling how the Icelandic poet and nephew of Sigvatr, Óttarr inn svartí, displeased King Óláfr because he had once composed a *mansongsdrápa* for Ástríðr while he was at the Swedish court. This poem was apparently full of improper suggestions and Óttarr had to compose his *Hofuðlausn* to save his life. Unfortunately, the anecdote does not preserve Óttarr's suggestive poem, and we may doubt whether it ever existed. But it is interesting to note that such an anecdote should attach itself to the one queen about whom we know that a more proper praise poem was composed. And several of the versions of the anecdote demonstrate the *málsnilld* that Ástríðr was famous for. Thus, Óláfr gives Óttarr, as a reward for his head-ransom poem, not only his life but a large gold arm-ring. The queen then takes a small gold ring off her finger to give to the poet, saying *Taktu, skáld, gneista þann ok eig*. When the king protests at this show of friendship, she replies *Eigi megu þér kunna mik um þat, herra, þó ek vilja launa mitt lof sem þér yðvart*.

As neither of these anecdotes is supported by any verses about Ástríðr, we do not need to make any great claims for their historicity. Probably Snorri did not believe in them either, though his reference to Ástríðr's *fríðleikr* and *málsnilld* may be based on knowledge of similar traditions. Snorri was more impressed by Sigvatr's three stanzas in praise of Queen Ástríðr and the two advising King Magnús, and these give us an idea of the role played by all three of them in putting the Norwegian royal house on a firm footing. We have Snorri to thank for broadening our understanding of the possibilities of skaldic panegyric. Not only could it celebrate the bloody deeds of men in battle, or the salty joys of sailing, but a consummate poet like Sigvatr could also adapt the genre to acknowledge the political achievement of a clever and resourceful woman.

**Bibliography and abbreviations**

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- ÞjóðA. See note 1 on p. 1 above.

## SCANDINAVIAN SACRAL KINGSHIP REVISITED

By RORY McTURK

**I**N A REVIEW article published in 1975–76 (p. 156), I defined sacral kingship as follows: ‘a sacral king is one who is marked off from his fellow men by an aura of specialness which may or may not have its origin in more or less direct associations with the supernatural.’ Since this definition was presented as a general definition of sacral kingship, it should be emphasised that it arose for the most part out of a discussion of specifically Scandinavian kingship, ancient and medieval, as indeed did Ström’s definition of 1967 (p. 55), on which mine was largely based.

While my own definition has in general been kindly received by subsequent writers on early Scandinavian kingship (cf. Lindow 1988, 273–74; Martin 1990, 378), some of these (notably Mazo 1985, 754; Steinsland 1991, 312, n.7) have found it too broad to be helpful. Even my critics, however, seem to acknowledge that the uncertain nature of the evidence for early Germanic kingship, whether in Scandinavia or elsewhere, makes precise definition difficult; one of them, indeed (Steinsland 1991, 312), implies that the definition of sacral kingship will vary according to the nature or range of evidence examined. This may be illustrated by a comparison of two recently published lists of defining characteristics of sacral kingship, in a Germanic and a Scandinavian context respectively: in Eve Picard’s book *Germanisches Sakralkönigtum?* (1991, 33), and in an encyclopedia article by myself on medieval Scandinavian kingship, published in 1993 (p. 353). The two lists were prepared quite independently of each other; although my article appeared well after Picard’s book, it had been submitted finally for publication in 1989. Picard (whose own position on Germanic sacral kingship is highly sceptical, as will emerge below) is careful to emphasise that writers on sacral kingship seldom define it as decisively as might appear from her list, and that by no means all writers on the subject would accept all items on the list as part of their definition.

Picard’s list, which it should be noted covers Germanic kingship in general, rather than specifically Scandinavian kingship, is as follows: (1) the king is believed to be of divine descent; (2) an essential element of the godhead is believed to be vitally present in the king; (3) the king is regarded as the representative of the deity on earth, either in perpetuity or on occasions when worship is conducted; (4) the king is a priest; (5) the king’s

‘luck’ or ‘sanctity’ (*Königsheil[igheit]*) is believed to form the basis of his power; and (6) the society to which the king belongs has a fundamentally religious orientation, of which the sanctification of his rule is just one aspect. Related considerations are that (7) early Germanic law also has its basis in religion, inasmuch as it punishes crimes because they offend against the divine order rather than against the interests of individuals or of the community; and that (8) early Germanic communities define themselves in religious terms, each political group expressing its basis in religion either by the public conduct of worship or through traditions of divine descent. Finally, (9) Germanic kingship shows a continuity from pre-Christian to Christian times in respect of the foregoing notions.

The question of whether Scandinavian kingship shows a continuity of the kind referred to in Picard’s item (9) is one that I raise at the beginning of my encyclopedia article in introducing my own list. Pre-Christian Scandinavian sacral kingship, I suggest there, if it existed at all, involved one or more of the following: (1) the belief that kings were descended from gods; (2) the dedication of princes for purposes of vengeance to gods or semi-deified kings; (3) the ritual education of kings in numinous knowledge; (4) the ritual marriage of the king to a bride who personifies the well-being of his realm; (5) the priestly function of kings; (6) the attribution to kings of a *mana*-like quality of luck, and also of supernatural powers; and (7) the sacrificial slaying of kings in order to bring fertility.

While my list consists of only seven items as opposed to Picard’s nine, it may be said that I take account of Picard’s item (9) in the remarks with which I introduce my list, which in any case refers solely to pre-Christian kingship, as do items (1)–(8) of Picard’s list. If we concentrate on the pre-Christian period and compare Picard’s (1)–(8) with McTurk’s (1)–(7), we find that Picard’s list has only three items that correspond at all closely to any of mine, namely Picard’s (1), (4), and (5), corresponding respectively to McTurk’s (1), (5), and (6). If Picard’s book and my encyclopedia article may be taken as reasonably comprehensive treatments of their respective subjects, the differences between her list and mine surely indicate that the problem of definition is no easier to solve now than it was at the time of my earlier article, published in the mid-seventies.

It will not be the business of this paper to discuss all the aspects of sacral kingship covered by these two lists, which I reproduce here simply to give an idea of the extent and complexity of the subject. My main purpose here is to discuss three important recent books on the subject, all published in 1991: Eve Picard’s *Germanisches Sakralkönigtum?*, Claus Krag’s *Ynglingatal og Ynglingesaga: en studie i historiske kilder*, and Gro

Steinsland's *Det hellige bryllup og norrøn kongeideologi*. (The second and third of these, both in Norwegian, are provided with English summaries.) First, however, it will be necessary to give some space to a discussion of Walter Baetke's *Yngvi und die Ynglinger: eine quellenkritische Untersuchung über das nordische 'Sakralkönigtum'* (1964), which has influenced these three books in different ways, as it also influenced my own definition of sacral kingship in 1975–76, quoted above.

Baetke's book is mainly taken up with a critical examination of one of the most important of the supposed sources for pre-Christian Scandinavian sacral kingship, the scaldic poem *Ynglingatal* ('list of the Ynglingar'), ascribed by the Icelander Snorri Sturluson (1178–1241) in his *Ynglinga saga* (on which see further below) to the late ninth-century Norwegian poet Þjóðólfr of Hvinir, an ascription which Baetke accepts, though with some reserve. This poem gives an account in chronological order of the lineage of the kings of Vestfold in eastern Norway, presenting them as direct descendants of the ancient kings of the Swedes, who ruled at Uppsala. *Ynglingatal* has been preserved as a result of being systematically quoted by Snorri Sturluson in the course of his prose *Ynglinga saga*, which forms the first major section of his encyclopedic history of the kings of Norway (known as *Heimskringla*), and consists largely of an exposition of the information given in *Ynglingatal*. In its present form the poem begins by recounting the death of a certain Fjǫlnir, who according to Snorri's prose account, but not according to *Ynglingatal*, was a son of *Yngvi-Freyr*. Although the latter name does not occur in *Ynglingatal*, it does occur, as Baetke himself shows (p. 108), in two other scaldic poems from before Snorri's time, in the *Haustrǫng* also attributed to Þjóðólfr of Hvinir, and the tenth-century *Háleygjatal* by Eyvindr skáldaspillir, in both of which it is applied to the god Freyr. In the prose of Snorri's *Ynglinga saga*, the name *Yngvi-Freyr* is explained by the statement that Freyr, an early ruler of the Swedes who was worshipped as a god, was also known by a second name, *Yngvi*, as a result of which his descendants were called the Ynglingar. Many prior to Baetke's time of writing had supposed that a number of lines at the beginning of *Ynglingatal* had been lost, in which the ancestry of the kings was traced 'all the way back to Ingunar-Freyr, whom heathen people called their god', as Snorri himself seems to confirm in the Prologue to another of his major prose works, the separate *Saga of St Óláfr* (see however Baetke 1964, 93–96). The precise significance of the name *Ingunar-Freyr*, which is applied to the god Freyr in the eddic poem *Lokasenna*, dating very likely from c.1000, is uncertain, but Baetke (p. 109), at any rate, has no difficulty in seeing it as a variant of the form *Yngvi-*

*Freyr* as used in scaldic poetry, and in taking it, consequently, as an alternative name of the god Freyr. He does not however believe that the beginning of *Ynglingatal* has perished, or that the poem provides any evidence of a pre-Christian belief in the descent of kings from gods. (Norway, it may be noted, effectively became Christian in the first third of the eleventh century; *Ynglingatal*, if it was indeed composed in the late ninth century, would thus date from well within the pagan period.) In Baetke's view, the poem begins, in its original as in its preserved form, with its account of the death of Fjölfnir, a purely human ancestor of the Ynglingar, and Snorri's idea that the latter were descended from Yngvi-Freyr, whom the heathens saw as a god, has arisen under the influence of the Icelandic historian Ari Þorgilsson (1067–1148), who in an appendix to his *Íslendingabók* (*Libellus Islandorum*), written in the first half of the twelfth century, heads his own genealogy with the following figures: Yngvi, King of the Turks; Njörðr, King of the Swedes; Freyr; and Fjölfnir. In thus presenting Freyr as Fjölfnir's father, Ari might seem to lend support to the view that the opening lines of *Ynglingatal* have been lost; but this view, according to Baetke, is unnecessary. Baetke sees the name *Yngvi* as ultimately related to that of the Ingaevones, a group of Germanic tribes whose eponymous ancestor is referred to, though not actually named, in ch. 2 of Tacitus's *Germania* (see further below), as one of the three sons of Mannus, himself the son of the earth-born god Tuisto. This grandson of Tuisto, whose name from other sources as well as Tacitus would seem to emerge as *\*Ing*, was never regarded, according to Baetke, as more than a human ancestor of the Ingaevones, and was never revered as a god, any more, indeed, than was Yngvi, who as Baetke notes is not included among the gods described in the part of Snorri's prose *Edda* known as *Gylfaginning*, a major albeit late source for pre-Christian Scandinavian mythology and religion. In making Yngvi King of the Turks, Baetke argues, Ari betrays the influence of a notion deriving from the seventh-century Frankish Latin chronicle attributed to Fredegar: that the ancestors of the Franks hailed from Asia Minor. This idea has led Ari to present Njörðr, a god of the Old Norse pantheon, as King of the Swedes, a euhemeristic move in the sense that Ari, from his perspective as a writer within the Christian period, is treating Njörðr as a historical personage, whom the heathens in their ignorance worshipped as a god; his inclusion of Freyr in the genealogy may be explained in the same way. Snorri has then borrowed the name of Yngvi from Ari, and for similarly euhemeristic reasons has combined it with that of Freyr to give *Yngvi-Freyr* as the name of the founding father of the Ynglingar.

While Baetke thus gives the impression that Snorri was the first to create the form *Yngvi-Freyr* out of two proper names, he seems to leave unexplained the forms *Yngvi-Freyr* and *Ingunar-Freyr* that survive (as Baetke is well aware, see the preceding paragraph) from *before* Snorri's time, in scaldic and eddic poetry respectively. As far as *Yngvi-Freyr* is concerned, Picard (1991, 209–19) suggests that *Yngvi* was originally a common noun which, like the Latin word *pater*, could be variously applied to a god, to a social leader, or to a member of a class, and could indeed be used in conjunction with a proper name, with some such meaning as, for example, 'our lord Freyr', or 'Freyr the father'; only in the hands of Icelandic historians such as Ari and Snorri, according to Picard, did it come to be used as a proper name. She adduces for comparison the application by Roman authors of the term *Silvius* to the kings of Alba Longa, and the use in Latin of the term *Cæsar*, suggesting that Snorri was influenced by ideas derived from Latin sources in his use of the term *Yngvi*. Like Baetke, however, she seems to leave *Ingunar-Freyr* unexplained.

The Roman orientation of Picard's remarks in this context is typical of her book as a whole, which deals more with Tacitus's *Germania* than with Old Norse literature as a supposed source of evidence for pre-Christian sacral kingship. Picard argues that Tacitus (c.55–c.120), a Roman author writing for a Roman public, was deeply influenced by Roman preoccupations in his ambivalent portrayal of early Germanic social and political life, of which he gives a predominantly 'Republican' impression in the aristocratic, Roman sense of the term, while at the same time presenting it as 'barbarian' in its untamed closeness to nature. Tacitus does not seem to have had a unified view of Germanic kingship, or to have regarded it as a theme of the *Germania*, where he refers to it only incidentally and sometimes contradictorily. His presentation of the North and East Germanic tribes known collectively as the Suebi as exceptional in having different grades of monarchical authority (chs 44–45) is probably stimulated by a view of the primitive, pre-Republican stages in the history of Rome as marked by different stages in the development of Roman kingship. Tacitus gives Germanic names (*Tuisto* and *Nerthus*) for only two Germanic deities, referring to others by the names of Roman deities, which raises questions about the identification, and even the existence, of the deities so referred to. His use of the word *nobilitas* in connection with kings in his famous distinction between kings and commanders in ch. 7 (*reges ex nobilitate, duces ex virtute sumunt*) need not in the context have anything to do with descent from the gods, and even if that were its implication, it could still be a Roman rather than a Germanic view of kingship that Tacitus

is here conveying, as is suggested by a comparable distinction in Cicero's *De re publica* II, 12 (23) in which divine descent is clearly presented as the Spartan criterion for entitlement to kingly rule, and is disparagingly contrasted with the Roman criterion of election on merit. It is true that Tacitus presents the Germanic peoples as collectively descended from a god, Tuisto (through the latter's son Mannus, whose name seems to identify him as human rather than divine), but he says no such thing about the descent of individual tribes or other groups, and makes no association of divine descent with kingship. His presentation of Tuisto as an earth-born god (*terra editus*), which underlines the indigenous character of the Germanic peoples, may indeed be intended to contrast them with the Romans, who saw themselves as of mixed origin (*gens mixta*).

Picard further discusses Tacitus's account in *Germania*, ch. 39, of the sacrificial slaying of a human victim by members of the Suebian tribe known as the Semnones in a grove which no one may enter unless bound by a chain (*vinculo ligatus*). Höfler (1952, *passim*; 1959, 674–76) has related this to the three eddic poems known as the Helgi poems (*Helgakviða Hundingsbana* I and II, and *Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar*), dating variously from the ninth to the eleventh century, preserved in the Codex Regius of the second half of the thirteenth, and dealing with two heroic kings, both named Helgi, one of whom (Helgi Hjörvarðsson) is betrothed to a certain *Sváva*, a name reminiscent of that of the Suebian tribes, while the other (Helgi Sigmundsson Hundingsbani) dies near a place called *Fjöturlundr* ('Fetter-grove'). Picard argues against Höfler on these points, and also against his view that Tacitus's account and the Old Norse poems reflect ritual practices in which a king or prince was first wedded to, and later sacrificed by, a priestess representing his tribe, the marriage signifying his dedication as a sacred person (*Helgi* = 'holy'), originally, perhaps, to a fertility deity, but by Tacitus's time to the god of war and the dead known later in Old Norse as Óðinn; according to Tacitus the grove of the Semnones was the dwelling-place of the supreme god (*regnator omnium deus*), to whom all things are subject and obedient (*cetera subiecta atque parentia*). In Picard's view this account of Tacitus's is strongly influenced by Roman memories of the Latin cult of Jupiter Latiaris, and his reference to a chain is probably intended to emphasise the relatively primitive character of the Semnones by recalling the disciplining of the Romans by religion in the pre-Republican days of Numa Pompilius's kingship.

Kings are mentioned neither in Tacitus's account of the Semnones nor in his account in ch. 40 of the cult of the goddess Nerthus, or Terra Mater, which is thus relevant to the discussion of sacral kingship only insofar as

the name *Nerthus* is clearly related to that of the Old Norse god Njörðr, which appears, as we have seen, just after that of Yngvi in Ari Þorgilsson's genealogy written in the twelfth century. Picard defends Tacitus against those who, in seeking to claim that the connection between Njörðr and Yngvi is ancient and pagan (rather than antiquarian and euhemeristic, as Baetke claims) have argued that Tacitus was mistaken in placing the cult of Nerthus among a group of Suebian tribes, rather than among the Ingaevones. She also suggests that in presenting Nerthus as a goddess who inspires both joy and terror and is apparently ritually washed, Tacitus has been influenced by different aspects of the Roman cult of Cybele or Magna Mater, a Phrygian goddess whose cult was adopted in Rome in c.200 BC. Nowhere in Tacitus's *Germania*, Picard repeatedly emphasises, are kings said to have priestly functions.

It is clear, then, that Picard, with her sceptical view of pre-Christian Germanic sacral kingship, is writing very much in the same tradition as Baetke, even if the focus of her attention is rather different from Baetke's, and even though she disagrees with him on a number of points. As far as sacral kingship is concerned, Claus Krag is clearly also writing in the same sceptical tradition, even though the focus of his attention is not sacral kingship in the first instance, but rather *Ynglingatal* itself.

Krag finds traces of euhemerism (in the sense explained above) actually in *Ynglingatal*, not just in the prose surrounding it; he notes that the names of the first two kings mentioned in the poem, *Fjölfnir* and *Sveigðir*, occur elsewhere in Old Norse poetry as names for Óðinn, and argues that the names of the third and fourth kings, *Vanlandi* and *Visburr*, may similarly be taken as alternative names for Freyr and Óðinn respectively. *Ynglingatal*, then, as Krag sees it, is presenting these kings as historical figures whom gullible pagans came to regard as gods. Another noteworthy feature of these four kings, for Krag, is that each of their deaths as described in the poem seems to involve one of the four elements: Fjölfnir drowns, Sveigðir disappears into a rock, Vanlandi is suffocated and Visburr is burnt. Knowledge of the doctrine of the four elements (which can hardly have reached Scandinavia until the late eleventh century) also seems to lie behind two of the poetic circumlocutions (or 'kennings') used in *Ynglingatal* for 'fire', namely *Fornjóts sonr* ('son of Fornjótr') and *sævar niðr* ('kinsman of the sea'); one version of the doctrine was that the element 'earth' contained the other three elements within itself at the first stage of the creation of the world, and could thus be seen as their father—an idea apparently reflected in the short prose narrative *Hversu Nóregr byggðisk*, preserved in the fourteenth-century part of *Flateyjarbók*, in which Fornjótr,

a king in Finland, is said to have had three sons, governing fire, the winds, and the sea respectively (see Krag 1991, 47–58, 255–56). For these and other reasons, including the fact that the poem sometimes seems to present paganism in a demonic light, Krag concludes that it was composed not in pre-Christian ninth-century Norway, but in a learned environment in Iceland c.1200, some two hundred years after the conversion. Only the final stanza of the poem, the one dealing with the Norwegian king Rognvaldr heiðumhæri, who lived in the ninth century, *may*, according to Krag, have been composed by the ninth-century Norwegian poet Þjóðólfr of Hvinir (about whom little is known in any case), and its preservation together with the remainder of the poem may have led Snorri to ascribe the poem as a whole to Þjóðólfr, which he seems to have done in good faith. Krag does not in fact believe (any more than Baetke, see above) that any lines from the beginning of the poem have been lost, but his view of when and how the poem was conceived makes the question of whether he does so or not almost irrelevant to the present discussion.

Krag's examination of *Ynglingatal*, *Ynglinga saga*, and related texts leads him to the conclusion that the original stimulus for traditions of the Ynglingar came from two works by Ari Þorgilsson: the genealogy appended to his *Íslendingabók*, already referred to, and a work no longer extant to which he refers in *Íslendingabók*, his *Konunga ævi*, or 'Lives of Kings'. From this combined source Krag (p. 165) traces three lines of descent: firstly, a line leading directly to the anonymous *Historia Norvegiæ* of the late twelfth or early thirteenth century; secondly, one leading to a group of interrelated texts of which the youngest is *Ynglingatal* (c.1200) and the others are prose sagas, with the anonymous twelfth-century *Af Upplendingakonungum* (preserved in *Hauksbók* of the early fourteenth century) as their one extant representative; and thirdly, one leading directly to Snorri's *Ynglinga saga*, written in the thirteenth century before 1241, the date of Snorri's death. Of these three lines the first, leading to the *Historia Norvegiæ*, is quite independent of the others. *Ynglinga saga*, on the other hand, to which the third line leads, has clearly been influenced by the group of texts to which the second line leads, as is especially evident from *Ynglingatal*, but also from *Af Upplendingakonungum*; and *Ynglingatal* itself was composed on the basis of one or more of the sagas within that group, perhaps indeed as a poetic embellishment to a saga text.

Krag's discussion of the term *ynglingr* (the singular form of the plural *Ynglingar*) may be interestingly compared with Picard's discussion of *Yngvi*, referred to above. The occurrence of *ynglingr* in scaldic poetry from the ninth century onwards obviously needs to be explained if, as Krag

maintains, it was not used specifically in connection with a dynasty of kings until after the time of Ari. He notes that in scaldic poetry the term is never used in the plural, is not applied exclusively to members of the family that came to be called the Ynglingar, and seems to have been a standard expression for 'ruler'. Furthermore, the Uppsala kings, from whom the Norwegian Ynglingar came to be seen as descended, were originally called not 'Ynglingar' but 'Skilfingar', as the term *Scylfingas*, applied to the Swedish kings in the Old English poem *Beowulf*, seems to confirm. Only in the course of the twelfth century, when the genealogy of the Swedish–Norwegian dynasty described in *Ynglingatal* came to be constructed on the basis of Ari's genealogy, did the term *Ynglingar* come to be applied to members of that dynasty, and act as a stimulus to the joining together of the proper names *Yngvi* and *Freyr* that had been used in Ari's genealogy, a conjunction which Krag seems to suggest took place before Snorri's time of writing (see Krag 1991, 208–11, 264).

Krag's removal of *Ynglingatal* from the ninth to the twelfth century, and his placing of it in a learned, antiquarian tradition, obviously imply that it cannot safely be used as a source for any kind of pre-Christian sacral kingship, whether this is defined in terms of a belief in the descent of kings from gods or in terms of certain religious practices involving kings for which the poem has been thought to provide evidence, notably in its account of the slaying of King Dómaldi, which Ström (1967) saw as a sacrificial act performed because Dómaldi's 'luck' as a king was believed to have failed him. Those who are reluctant to abandon the idea of pre-Christian Scandinavian sacral kingship, even after reading Baetke, Picard, and Krag, may, however, turn for encouragement to the work of Gro Steinsland, who in a helpful article published in 1992 has reasserted the major arguments of her book published in the previous year.

Since Picard's and Krag's books appeared in the same year as Steinsland's, she naturally does not take their views into account (nor does she in her article of 1992, which is essentially a summary of her book's conclusions). She is nonetheless well aware of Baetke's arguments, and of the nature of euhemerism as discussed above. She keeps *Ynglingatal* firmly in the ninth century, and like Baetke does not believe that any part of it has perished. She has more respect than Baetke, however, for the thirteenth-century prose of *Ynglinga saga* as a repository of information dating from pre-Christian times; she does not look everywhere for euhemerism, as seems to be the tendency of Baetke and Krag. She draws particular attention to Snorri's information in *Ynglinga saga* that Fjölfnir was the son of Freyr and his wife Gerðr, and relates it to the eddic poem *Skírnismál*, preserved in

the Codex Regius and (in part) in the early fourteenth-century AM 748 I 4to.

This poem describes how the god Freyr sends his messenger Skírnir to the giantess Gerðr to sue for her hand in marriage on his behalf, lending him for the purpose his horse and sword. Skírnir communicates Freyr's wishes to Gerðr, offering as inducements eleven apples and a ring. When Gerðr refuses these and Freyr's offer of marriage, Skírnir threatens her with Freyr's sword and a magic staff, and proceeds to curse her so vehemently that she at last agrees to meet Freyr in nine nights' time in a grove. A brief prose introduction to the poem describes Freyr as having sat down in Hliðskjálf—described elsewhere as the throne of the god Óðinn—and first seeing Gerðr from there. Although Steinsland does not date *Skírnismál* precisely, she regards it as a poem embodying mainly pagan ideas while at the same time showing an awareness of Christian ones, and indeed tending to oppose the former to the latter; ending as it does with a planned meeting of a male and a female in a grove, the poem may be seen as an inversion of the Eden story. It would thus have been composed in the eleventh century or later.

According to Steinsland, *Skírnismál* is essentially about kingship. The throne, the ring, the apples and the staff are all symbols of royalty, the last two symbolising the orb and sceptre respectively. Freyr's projected marriage to Gerðr symbolises a holy marriage, the king's marriage to his realm, and the difficulty he has in obtaining her consent symbolises the king's difficulty in subduing the land to his control. Snorri shows relatively little interest in this aspect of *Skírnismál* in his prose *Edda*, even though the latter shows clearly that he knew the poem. In *Ynglinga saga*, however, he seems in presenting Fjölfnir as the son of Freyr and Gerðr to be aware of a pre-Christian tradition according to which their marriage took place and bore fruit, a tradition which, according to Steinsland, underlies *Ynglingatal*, even though it is not made explicit in the poem itself. Behind this tradition, Steinsland argues, lies the conception that the prototypical king or ruler was the offspring of a god and a giantess, a conception which, though no more than latent in *Ynglingatal*, is manifest in the tenth-century *Háleygjatal*, which seems to have been modelled on *Ynglingatal* and clearly presents the first in the line of the Norwegian jarls of Hlaðir as the son of the god Óðinn and the giantess Skaði.

The king's sacral nature thus consists in the fact that he is thought to be the product of an accommodation between two mythical extremes, the gods and the giants, representing respectively order and chaos, an idea reflected on a more realistic level in frequent accounts in the sagas of kings

and heroes being the offspring of marriages in which the partners are of markedly different extraction and social class.

A further aspect of the king's sacral nature is that he is particularly subject to fate, which often means that the deaths of kings are presented in literary sources not as heroic, but as accidental or the result of treachery, and sometimes even as slightly comic. The deaths of the first four kings in *Ynglingatal*, already mentioned, provide examples of this (a point since developed in Bakhtinian terms by Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir, 1994), but the archetypal example of such a death in Old Norse literature is the death of the god Baldr, which, as Snorri describes it in *Gylfaginning*, comes about as a result of the god Loki turning comedy into tragedy by subterfuge. Baldr is hardly a king, it is true, but his name means 'lord' or 'prince', as Steinsland (1991, 235) points out. *Skírnismál* makes an explicit link with the story of Baldr's death when Skírnir states that the ring offered to Gerðr is the one placed on the pyre of Óðinn's son (i. e. Baldr) and elsewhere called Draupnir; and Steinsland seeks to make another such link by comparing the eleven apples in *Skírnismál* with the eleven gods said to have been present at the slaying of Baldr in the eddic poem *Hyndluljóð* (preserved in *Flateyjarbók*), a poem traditionally regarded as late and composite, but considered by Steinsland to be a unity and a genuine source of pagan tradition, not least in the emphasis it lays on the importance of giants and giantesses in the past and future history of the universe.

Finally, Steinsland suggests in the light of her findings certain modifications to what she sees as the traditional view of pre-Christian Scandinavian sacral kingship. Up to now, sacral kingship has been defined in three main ways: firstly in terms of descent from the gods; secondly in terms of the king's luck; and thirdly as priest-kingship. Steinsland does not disagree with the first of these definitions, but believes that the role of the giantess as the king's mythical ancestor was just as important as that of the god, and should now be recognised as such. With regard to the second definition, Steinsland believes that it is not so much the king's luck as his lack of it that should be emphasised, since his exceptional origins were believed to make him particularly subject to fate, the workings of which could sometimes appear in almost as much of a comic as a tragic light. As for the third definition, Steinsland does not deny that kings could on occasion function as cult leaders, but does not regard this as a universal or defining characteristic of pre-Christian Scandinavian sacral kingship. Furthermore, the fact that the king was believed to be a new kind of being, the offspring of a pair of opposites but not identical with either of them, meant that he was not regarded as a god, and could not, therefore, be the object of a cult, or

sacrificed in the manner of a fertility god that is believed to die and rise again, a concept which, according to Steinsland, was unknown to Old Norse mythology.

Before concluding this paper I shall briefly refer to three recent articles relevant to the present discussion which I do not have space to treat here, and which are not taken into account in my encyclopedia article. Wormald (1986) argues that early Irish and Germanic kingship were not as different from one another as the sources make them appear, concentrating as they do on different aspects of kingship; Schjødt (1990) argues that pre-Christian Scandinavian kings became sacral by ritual initiation into the possession of hidden knowledge; and Drobin (1991) maintains that the euhemeristic presentation of figures such as Freyr and Fjölfnir as human kings depends in part on knowledge of genuine pagan traditions of sacral kingship.<sup>1</sup>

In the definition quoted at the beginning of this paper, I used the word 'supernatural' rather than 'divine' partly in order to allow for the possibility, not admitted by Baetke, that a king may become sacral through magical, rather than specifically religious, associations; and I used the phrase 'more or less direct associations with the supernatural' in order to make room for priest-kings as sacral kings, even if their priestly status is not thought to confer divine or superhuman status upon them, which Baetke seems to imply has to be the case if they are to qualify as sacral. So far, I would stand by the wording of my original definition. I would now suggest, however, that there is little point in talking about sacral kingship unless the supernatural is thought to be involved somewhere, even though it may be more in the foreground in some cases of sacral kingship than in others. The 'may or may not' in my statement that the king's 'aura of specialness' which marks him off as sacral 'may or may not have its origins in more or less direct associations with the supernatural' was intended to allow for the possibility that his sacrality might be thought to derive from a natural source, such as his family or his personality, rather than from a supernatural one, such as a god, or supposed magical powers. I would now

<sup>1</sup> Although it is less immediately relevant to the present discussion, being concerned specifically with Anglo-Saxon and Irish kingship, I would also refer to Clare E. Stancliffe's article of 1980, and to the attention it draws (p. 75, n. 97) to the relative neglect suffered by H. Munro Chadwick's article of 1900 on the ancient Germanic priesthood, a neglect of which, to my discredit, I am no less guilty than the two eminent scholars (Jan de Vries and Georges Dumézil) referred to by Stancliffe in this connection. I am indebted to Dr Peter Orton, of Queen Mary and Westfield College, London, for the reference to Stancliffe's article.

suggest correcting the phrase ‘may or may not have’ to ‘has’, since I have come to think that a king’s family connections (unless thought to be divine) and his personality (unless reminiscent of that of a god) are not enough, in themselves, to make him sacral. With this in mind, I would tentatively re-write my original definition as follows: ‘a sacral king is one who is marked off from his fellow men by an aura of specialness which has its origins in more or less direct associations with the supernatural.’

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A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE  
FINAL THREE SECTIONS OF *HÁVAMÁL* AND ON THE ROLE OF  
LODDFÁFNIR.<sup>1</sup>

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*HÁVAMÁL* has long been interpreted as a poem containing internal divisions. Scribes of early paper manuscripts, for instance, added the title *Loddfáfnismál* to the section beginning at strophe 111, and later editors followed suit. Müllenhoff (1891–1908, V 255–76) divided the poem into six sections which still command acceptance today, although the exact boundaries of the sections are not always agreed. Their presence, however, encouraged the belief that the poem was a collection of earlier material: of single separate strophes, of earlier collections of strophes, or of both (e. g. Sievers 1922, 187). Some critics argued for corruption of the text and proposed various excisions and rearrangements of the strophe order (e. g. Müllenhoff 1891–1908, V 260–61; Heusler 1969, 200–09, 216–20), often in an attempt to reconstruct what they believed to be the original text. Two major works on *Hávamál* written in the last forty years represent opposite views of the poem. Ivar Lindquist (1956) sees it as a mix of two poems, one early and one later, both with close connections to the ritual and moral philosophy of the old pagan religion, in fact as the initiation of a young man by Óðinn. Lindquist, however, also believes that a pious scribe scrambled the text in order to make the pagan religion less accessible to Christian readers, and he devotes much space to a very radical reconstruction of the text. Klaus von See (1972) sees the poem as a unified whole to be interpreted in its extant form, but he also sees it as a product of the assimilation of western and southern European influences after the Viking Age; that is, not as a relic of the old religion. Most modern readers reject Lindquist's extreme reconstruction of the text, but not all accept von See's argument for its underlying unity. David Evans, the poem's most recent editor (*Hávamál* 1986), cautiously keeps the question open and

<sup>1</sup> The first draft of this paper was read to the NEH Seminar 'Beowulf and the Reception of Germanic Antiquity', Harvard University, 1993, and I am grateful to the leaders of that seminar, Joseph Harris and T. D. Hill, for several valuable suggestions. My greatest debt of gratitude, however, is owed to Anthony Faulkes for his meticulous supervision of the doctoral thesis from which this paper was drawn, and for his subsequent advice and encouragement.

reiterates some of the earlier arguments for believing the strophe order to be confused (for instance in his discussion of strophes 111 and 162). Richard North (1991, 122–23), leaning towards Lindquist, stresses the origin of *Hávamál* in separate poems; Carlyne Larrington (1993, 65–67), leaning towards von See, argues for its thematic unity and overall coherence.

Strophes 111–64 encompass the most clearly differentiated of Müllenhoff's divisions of *Hávamál*, the last three: *Loddfáfnismál* (111–37), *Rúnatal* (138–45) and *Ljóðatal* (146–64). The common critical view of them, endorsed by Evans, has been: (1) that these three were brought together, like the rest of *Hávamál*, because of a general similarity of subject and the fact that all are spoken by Óðinn (Hávi); (2) that only the first was originally addressed to Loddfáfnir; and (3) that they are essentially independent poems. This paper will argue that, on the contrary, they are interdependent, were intended to be read together as one unit, and are to be interpreted as having all been addressed to Loddfáfnir on the same occasion. In other words, I propose that Hávi's speech to Loddfáfnir, spoken in his hall and overheard by the *þulr* who reports it to the poem's audience, extends from strophe 112 to strophe 163 and does not end, as convention has it, at strophe 137. This is not a new proposal: von See holds a similar view, although he believes that a *Redaktor* imposed this unity on originally independent texts, and Lindquist suggests that the whole of *Hávamál* is addressed to Loddfáfnir. However, it is not the generally accepted view. This paper will re-examine the evidence for it from within *Hávamál* itself, and then offer further evidence from comparison with other list poems in the *Edda*. In addition, although the following argument concerns only strophes 111–64, I hope that it will lend some support to Lindquist's perception of the roles of Óðinn and Loddfáfnir and his view of the poem's background, while at the same time endorsing von See's belief in a unifying concept underlying the poem and in the overall integrity of the Codex Regius text.

#### *The text*

The three final sections of *Hávamál* are all list poems, and each is clearly separate from the others both in its subject and in its structure. *Loddfáfnismál* is a list of counsels which has strong affinities with the wisdom Instruction as defined by scholars of Near Eastern wisdom literature. Its unity of subject is complemented by a structural unity achieved by the consistent use of personal address (*Ráðomc þér, Loddfáfnir, . . . þú . . .*), an admonitory tone backed up by verbs in the imperative mood (*farðu, hafðu*

etc.) and, especially, by the use of a refrain to introduce each new item. The boundary between *Loddfáfnismál* and the second, central section, *Rúnatal*, is clearly marked in the manuscript: strophe 138 starts on a new line with a large, inset, decorated capital letter.<sup>2</sup> *Rúnatal* is an account of Óðinn's ordeal on the tree, of how he acquired the runes and of how the runes were distributed. It is primarily concerned with information rather than advice and combines narrative with a series of lists contained in apparently fragmented strophes. The lists in *Rúnatal* use quite different techniques from those employed in *Loddfáfnismál*. In contrast with those in *Loddfáfnismál*, which each fill a strophe or more, the items in *Rúnatal* are brief, most occupying no more than a half-line each, and there is no refrain to provide unity. Instead the items are arranged in series with parallel grammatical structures. In addition, the text of *Rúnatal* moves from narrative related in the first person (*ec*), through direct address to a second person (*bú*), to report in the third person (*Svá Þundr um reist* etc.). This last change of voice marks the close of the section. There is no indication from the scribe of the Codex Regius that a new section begins at strophe 146, but the list which follows, *Ljóðatal*, is again clearly distinguished by its subject and structure. It comprises a catalogue of eighteen charms which the first-person speaker claims to know but does not reveal. Like those in *Loddfáfnismál*, the items are strophe length, more or less, and each begins with a repeated formula, this time incorporating explicit enumeration: *Þat kann ec annat (it þriðia, it fjórða* etc.), *er (ef)* . . . The catalogue is brought to a close in the eighteenth item (*þat fylgir líóða locom*, 163.6), and this is followed by a strophe (164) which provides the conclusion for the whole of *Hávamál*. In spite of this clear differentiation, it can be argued that the

<sup>2</sup> It is possible that the scribe of the Codex Regius also intended to mark the beginning of *Loddfáfnismál*, in strophe 111, as a new section. Evans (*Hávamál* 1986, 1) believes this to be so (see also Larrington 1993, 15) and Neckel-Kuhn prints the initial 'M' of 111 as a large capital. However, although this 'M' is large and distinct, it is hardly more so than some of the other capitals set off in the margin when the beginning of a strophe happens to coincide with the beginning of a new line on the page. This is especially true of the 'I' at the beginning of strophe 108, which occurs on the same manuscript page and which Neckel-Kuhn also prints as a large capital, but which is mentioned by neither Evans nor Larrington. North (1991, 126) regards the 'M' as of 'conventional capital size' but believes it to be different from the other marginal capitals because it is followed by a space the width of one letter. However, in contrast with strophe 138, strophe 111 follows no line break and its initial letter is neither decorated nor significantly inset into the text. For these reasons it is not clear that the scribe intended to indicate a new section beginning here.

three sections are carefully joined together into one unit; that is, that they have the same speaker and the same addressee, refer to the same fictional situation and are contained within a single narrative frame, and are provided with internal linking devices.

#### *The speaker and the addressee*

There is general critical agreement that the first-person speaker in the bulk of all three sections is Óðinn/Hávi, who dispenses advice in *Loddfáfnismál*, recounts his own experience in *Rúnatal*, and lists the charms he knows in *Ljóðatal*. There is, however, another speaker involved, the *ec* of strophes 111 and 164, whose function is to report the speeches of Óðinn which he has overheard. This speaker addresses the audience of *Hávamál* directly and his role will be discussed further below. In the reported speeches Óðinn indirectly addresses the wider audience, but directly addresses another character within the poem. In *Loddfáfnismál* the person so addressed is named repeatedly as Loddfáfnir, but no information is given about who Loddfáfnir may be or why he is being counselled. The first part of *Rúnatal* is a narrative addressed to no one in particular, but in strophe 142 and again in 144 direct address to *þú* returns; no name, however, is given. In the same way, *Ljóðatal* begins with no specific addressee, but in strophe 162 *þú* is again introduced and again explicitly identified as Loddfáfnir. If we read these three sections as separate poems, we will leave open the identity of *þú* in strophes 142 and 144, and we will agree with Evans that the recurrence of the name Loddfáfnir in 162 is ‘mysterious’ (*Hávamál* 1986, 27). But there is no mystery if we read them as one unit. Then, as there is no indication that a new addressee has entered at any point, it would seem reasonable to assume that Loddfáfnir is being addressed throughout and that *þú* in each of its occurrences refers to him. Once his identity has been firmly established by the repeated namings in strophes 112–37, *þú* is brought into both *Rúnatal* and *Ljóðatal* as a reminder to the audience that Loddfáfnir is still being addressed and as a link between the three parts of the text. In *Ljóðatal*, for good measure, his name is given again.

#### *The frame*

The frame opens the unit in strophe 111 and closes it again in strophe 164. Both strophes are spoken in the first person by a speaker who identifies himself as a *þulr*, or at least as someone who chants from the seat of the *þulr*. In strophe 111, at the beginning of *Loddfáfnismál*, this speaker sets

up the fictional situation within which the speeches he reports are to be understood:

Mál er at þyia þular stóli á,  
 Urðar brunni at;  
 sá ec oc þagðac, sá ec oc hugðac,  
 hlýdda ec á manna mál;  
 of rúnar heyrða ec dæma, né um ráðom þogðo,  
 Háva hóllo at, Háva hóllo í;  
 heyrða ec segia svá:

He states that he was present in person in Hávi's hall and that there, as a thoughtful observer remaining silent himself, he listened to the speech of men. In a line which leads straight into the list of counsels (*heyrða ec segia svá*), he claims to report what he had heard on that occasion. In strophe 164, at the end of *Ljóðatal*, he states that Hávi's words spoken in his hall have now been recounted and brings the whole poem to a conclusion, hailing the speaker, an individual (*sá* in 164. 6 and 7) who understands the words and who he hopes will make good use of them, and, finally, all his listeners:

Nú ero Háva mál qveðin, Háva hóllo í,  
 allþoríf ýta sonom,  
 óþoríf iqtna sonom;  
 heill, sá er qvað, heill, sá er kann!  
 nióti, sá er nam,  
 heilir, þeirs hlýddo!

The reference back to strophe 111 is unmistakable and is emphasised by repetition of the phrase *Háva hóllo í*. As the text stands in the Codex Regius, what the speaker had heard must include all the speeches between his remark in strophe 164.1–2 and the opening strophe 111: that is, he heard *Loddfáfnismál*, *Rúnatal* and *Ljóðatal*. This interpretation has not been accepted by critics who have read the three sections as independent poems. They have seen 111 as the introduction only to *Loddfáfnismál*, and they have pointed out that it is not altogether appropriate as an introduction to that section. In his discussion of strophe 111, for example, Evans (*Hávamál* 1986, 26) cites earlier objections that the elevated style of the strophe does not match what many have seen as the rather mundane, or even farcical, contents of *Loddfáfnismál*. In addition, he specifically notes 'the reference in line 7 to runes, which are not in fact dealt with in *Loddfáfnismál* (apart from a very cursory allusion in 137)'. He concludes: 'The strophe would in fact be more appropriately placed among the miscellaneous fragments of *Rúnatal*; it is even conceivable that it was at one time intended to

introduce *Ljóðatal*.' Some critics (e. g. Heusler 1969, 214; Boer 1922, II 45) recommend moving the strophe to a position before the beginning of *Rúnatal*. Others (e. g. de Vries 1964, 159), recognising that 111 is intended to open the section of text closed by 164, move it to the beginning of *Ljóðatal* (the section which ends at 164). Müllenhoff (1891–1908, V 253), for the same reason, believed 164 to belong to the end of *Loddfáfnismál* (the section which opens at 111). Most editors, including the most recent ones (Neckel–Kuhn 1983; Evans, *Hávamál* 1986), restore 164 to its manuscript position, no doubt because it provides such a strong conclusion for the whole of *Hávamál*. However, both the framing link with strophe 111, sought by Müllenhoff and de Vries, and the preferred conclusion for *Hávamál*, can be retained without any violence to the manuscript order of the strophes if we read all three sections as one unit.

As regards strophe 111, when it is read as introductory not just to *Loddfáfnismál* but to all three sections, its elevated style can be seen as appropriate to the tone of the whole unit. In fact, 111 fits this introductory position particularly well. The speaker tells us that, while he was listening and observing in Hávi's hall, he heard about two subjects: runes and counsel (*of rúnar heyrða ec dæma, né um ráðom þogðo*). He then goes on to recount what he heard (*heyrða ec segia svá*), reciting the list of counsels given to Loddfáfnir. If *Loddfáfnismál* were an independent poem, he would stop his reporting at strophe 137 and say nothing (as Evans pointed out in the above quotation) about runes. However, if we include *Rúnatal* as part of his speech, then his promise in strophe 111 is fulfilled: he will have recounted what he heard about runes and what he heard about counsel. The reversed order (he tells us first about the counsel, then about the runes) is natural if we regard the list which follows as 'triggered' by the last topic he has mentioned: *um ráðom* leads directly to *ráðomc*. Expanding first on the last point mentioned is, in any case, a common rhetorical technique. It is true that there is no mention in the introductory strophe of charms, the subject of *Ljóðatal*, but it does seem that the connection between runes and charms is very close (see Elliott 1959, 67–69). *Rúnatal* itself recounts that when Óðinn took up the runes at the culmination of his ordeal on the tree he also seized/learned *fimbulliód nío* (140.1), and one of the charms in *Ljóðatal* requires the carving and colouring of runes (157.4–7). Heusler's objection (1969, 214) to regarding 111 as introductory to all three sections, on the grounds that if *of rúnar heyrða ec dæma* points forward to *Rúnatal* then *á manna mál* must point to *Loddfáfnismál* and *um ráðom* to *Ljóðatal* and that this is manifestly not so, is a logical but, I believe, over-methodical reading of the text. Evans (*Hávamál* 1986, 26, quoted above) shows that

strophe 111 could plausibly be placed in any of the three sections. If it is read as introductory to them all, then it can be seen to prepare the audience for what they will hear in all of the latter part of *Hávamál*.

*The links between the sections*

Besides the unifying functions of the main speaker and the addressee and of the frame, the four component parts of the unit which ends *Hávamál* (the frame and the three sections of reported speech) are all joined by syntactical, stylistic or verbal links. The introductory strophe is joined to *Loddfáfnismál* syntactically by the use of *svá* ('thus') and verbally by the association of *um ráðom* (111.8) and *ráðomc* (112.1). The link between the first and second sections of the reported speech, that is between *Loddfáfnismál* and *Rúnatal*, is made by a transitional strophe (137). This strophe, while remaining firmly rooted in *Loddfáfnismál*, introduces a new topic and a new style signalling that the first admonitory list is ending and a new informative section is about to begin:

Ráðomc þér, Loddfáfnir, enn þú ráð nemir,  
 nióta mundo, ef þú nemr,  
 þér muno góð, ef þú getr :  
 hvars þú ǫl dreccir, kíós þú þér iarðar megin!  
 þvíat iorð tecr við ǫlðri, enn eldr við sóttom,  
 eic við abbindi, ax við fiolkyngi,  
 hǫll við hýrógi —heiptom scal mána qveðia—,  
 beiti við bitsóttom, enn við bǫlvi rúnar;  
 fold scal við flóði taca.

The hortatory formula (137.1–4) which begins the strophe clearly makes it a part of the list of counsels, which uses this refrain for twenty (including this one) of its twenty-seven strophes. In the second part of 137 (i. e. beginning at 137.7) the abrupt change from advice to information, specifically information of a magico-medical nature, prepares the way for *Rúnatal*. The allusion to runes (*enn við bǫlvi rúnar*) in the penultimate half-line, which Evans sees as 'very cursory' (*Hávamál* 1986, 26, quoted above), seems to be deliberately placed to introduce the topic of *Rúnatal*. It serves (as von See suggests, 1972, 60) to join these two sections together. A transitional passage like this one, linking two lists by looking back to one and then forward to the next, occurs earlier in *Hávamál* (strophe 84, see Jackson 1991, 131–32). A similar bridging technique, though on a smaller scale, is also used to link individual strophes in the poem (see de Vries 1964, 49). A further link between *Loddfáfnismál* and *Rúnatal* is made in strophes 142 and 144 when, as was pointed out above, the speaker returns

to the direct address and use of *þú* that were so prevalent in the list of counsels.

The transitional passage (145) between *Rúnatal* and *Ljóðatal* can be interpreted in a similar way:

Betra er óbeðit, enn sé ofblótið,  
 ey sér til gildis giof;  
 betra er ósent, enn sé ofsóit.  
 Svá Þundr um reist fyr þjóða roç;  
 þar hann upp um reis, er hann aprtr of kom.

The first part (145.1–5) belongs with the preceding strophe 144, being linked to it by the repetition of ideas in *biðia/óbeðit*, *blóta/ofblótið*, *senda/ósent*, *sóa/ofsóit*, and so anchors the strophe in *Rúnatal*. The last part (145.6–9) provides *Rúnatal* with a clear conclusion: in the summing-up comment *Svá Þundr um reist*, in the change of voice to the third person, and in the parallel structure of the last two half-lines which form a closing couplet. Structurally parallel couplets or triplets are used as closing devices elsewhere in the *Edda* (compare, for example, the item closure effected by similar means in *Hávamál* 134.10–12, 155.6–7, 156.6–8 and *Sigrdrífomál* 13.9–10). But the final lines of strophe 145 function not only as a closure for *Rúnatal*, they also make the transition to *Ljóðatal*. Sijmons–Gering (I 154) states that the events referred to in 145.6–9 are not to be ascertained and that the lines constitute an out-of-context fragment. On the other hand, Boer (1922, II 48; see also *Hávamál* 1986, 137 and Larrington 1993, 62) believes that the last long line of 145 refers back to the events in 139.6 (*fell ec aprtr þaðan*). If he is right (and a connection between *fell ec aprtr þaðan* and *þar hann upp um reis* does make good sense), we can interpret the line as a reminder to the poem’s audience of what happened on that occasion: Óðinn took up the runes, ‘fell back from there’, and received *fimbulliód nio* from the son of Bǫlþorr. At the end of 145 the audience, having heard more about runes, is reminded of the earlier narrative as a preparation for hearing more about the other reward of Óðinn’s ordeal, the *fimbulliód*, in *Ljóðatal*. There is, of course, a discrepancy between the nine charms Óðinn says he received (*fimbulliód nio*, 140.1) and the eighteen he lists in *Ljóðatal*. One explanation might be that *Ljóðatal* is an editorial conflation of two lists, but I have found no convincing evidence for this. A more likely explanation is that we are expected to understand that Óðinn learned the additional charms from other sources which he does not mention. Further, remembering the use of *um ráðom/ráðomc* to link strophe 111 to the list of counsels, and the introduction of *rúnar* in 137.14 to lead into *Rúnatal*, we can see the reference in 145.7 to mankind (*fyr þjóða roç*) as a deliberate verbal link

with the opening of *Ljóðatal* (*er kannat þjóðans kona*, 146.2). The words are not identical in meaning, but they do share the same root and sound. As it did between *Loddfáfnismál* and *Rúnatal*, the return to direct address and to the use of *þú* in strophe 162 completes the link between *Rúnatal* and *Ljóðatal*.

Strophe 162 is the poet's final strategy for linking the three sections. Because of its break with the established item pattern of the list, as well as because they have seen the name Loddfáfnir as out of place, some critics have dismissed this strophe as an interpolation (e. g. Sijmons–Gering, I 160; von See, 1972, 62, believes it was written by the *Redaktor*). However, it is not uncommon in early verse lists to introduce a break in an established pattern of list items to add emphasis, to mark the middle of the list, or to signal its approaching end. The latter type of pattern break may be relatively slight or quite dramatic and often occurs in the penultimate line or, as here, the penultimate item. This technique is employed elsewhere in *Hávamál* (for instance 81.5, 88.1–3, 137.12). It is also found in *Sigrdrífomál* 12, where the sequence *þær um . . . þær um . . . þær um* in the penultimate item of the rune catalogue replaces the *á . . . oc á* pattern of the preceding items. Examples of the more dramatic kind occur in *Völuspá* 20.5–8 and in the Old English *Maxims II* 4b. In the context of these other examples, especially the one in *Hávamál* 137, the pattern break introduced in strophe 162 is not exceptional, and there is no need to suppose the hand of an interpolator to explain it. The recurrence of the name Loddfáfnir and Evans's comment that it is 'mysterious' were discussed above. Evans suggests (and this accords with von See's explanation) that the name may have been inserted to provide a link with the earlier part of *Hávamál*. He is surely right about the link, but his use of the word 'inserted' indicates that he too is thinking of interpolation. He may, of course, be right about this as well, but there is no evidence that *Ljóðatal* had an existence prior to its association with *Loddfáfnismál*, and it is possible that the link was there all along. In any case, the link extends to more than just the recurrence of the name. There is the return to the personal address *þú* (noted by Lindquist 1956, 146) which reminds us that Loddfáfnir is still being addressed. In addition, there is a return to the admonitory tone of the list of counsels with a clear echo of the earlier refrain, especially in the repetition of the phrases *ef þú nemr* and *ef þú getr*. This reminds the audience of the whole instructional situation (see von See 1972, 62) and of the scene at Hávi's hall in the introductory strophe. The changes signal the approaching end of the list of charms (as Lindquist noted, though only in connection with the recurrence of *þú*, 1956, 146), which is concluded with the eighteenth item

in strophe 163. Reminding the audience of the narrative situation, they also prepare for the return of the voice of the *pulr* in the final strophe (164), where he says that now what had been said in the hall has been recounted.

There is no syntactical link between the end of *Ljóðatal* and the concluding strophe 164, as there was between the opening strophe 111 and *Loddfáfnismál*, but there is in 164.7 (*nióti, sá er nam*) an echo of 162.8 (*nýt, ef þú nemr*). Both phrases recall the repeated advice to Loddfáfnir in the initial list of counsels (*nióta mundo, ef þú nemr*). In addition, strophe 164 is joined to the rest of the unit by its association with 111.

The linking devices that have been detailed here do not, of course, prove that the final three sections of *Hávamál* form a discrete unit. Such links are found elsewhere in the poem, specifically for instance, between *Loddfáfnismál* and the Gunnlōð episode which immediately precedes it (see von See 1972, 59). They do show, at the very least, a careful hand joining the sections of the poem together in accordance with some concept of their underlying unity. The evidence of the frame is stronger and indicates that whoever put *Hávamál* into its present form intended the final three sections to be read as a unit. For von See this person was a *Redaktor* who worked with previously independent poems, joining them together and adding where necessary lines of his own (e. g. strophes 137 and 162, see von See 1972, 60; 62). For North it was ‘yet another poet’ (1991, 123) who was preceded, as far as the last three sections of the poem were concerned, by a series of earlier poets culminating in ‘a tidier mind’ who ‘added stanzas at the beginning and end to create a spurious unity’ (1991, 122). We might rather think of one poet who worked in a tradition which expected the re-use of older material, and who very probably incorporated such material into his own poem, but who composed the latter part of *Hávamál* with care and in accordance with a clear concept of the relevance of its different parts to one another. In any event, whether it was shaped by a *Redaktor* or a poet, the case for regarding *Hávamál* 111–64 as a unit (which, for convenience, I will call ‘the extended *Loddfáfnismál*’, referring to its first section as either ‘the *Hávamál* list of counsels’ or ‘the conventional *Loddfáfnismál*’) is supported by the close resemblance between this unit and another eddic list poem, *Sigrdrífomál*.

#### *The comparison with Sigrdrífomál*

One of the heroic lays recorded in the Codex Regius, *Sigrdrífomál*, also has the form of a wisdom Instruction and also comprises three separate lists, one admonitory (corresponding to the conventional *Loddfáfnismál*), one

concerned with the origin of runes (corresponding to *Rúnatal*) and one a catalogue of runes and their uses (corresponding to *Ljóðatal*). The text of the poem in the *Edda* begins with a prose section incorporating a few fragmented verses, which sets the scene for the following poem in much the same way as does the introduction to *Grímnismál*. In this case, however, the prose narrative links several poems together and *Sigrdrífomál* is part of a series concerning the story of Sigurðr. The introduction to *Sigrdrífomál* tells us that Sigurðr, having killed Fáfnir, comes upon a sleeping warrior surrounded by flames. He passes through the flames and awakens the sleeper, whom he discovers to be the *valkyria* Brynhildr (Sigrdrífa), cast by Óðinn into a magic sleep. Sigurðr asks her to teach him wisdom and she responds, first by offering him a magical drink, and then by reciting the three lists which make up the rest of the poem.

As with ‘the extended *Loddfáfnismál*’, the three sections of *Sigrdrífomál* are clearly distinct, not only in their content, but also in their structure. They employ different listing techniques. The first, the rune catalogue, has long items incorporating sub-lists and a repeated formula which begins each item but not each strophe (some items are extended with additional information). The second, the section concerned with the origin of the runes, employs short items arranged in grammatically parallel series. The third, the list of counsels, has long items and introduces explicit enumeration incorporated in another repeated formula. These techniques exactly parallel those employed by the first, second, and third sections respectively of ‘the extended *Loddfáfnismál*’. Further, just as the separate components of ‘the extended *Loddfáfnismál*’ are linked into one structural unit, so are the three sections of *Sigrdrífomál*, and in very similar ways. In ‘the extended *Loddfáfnismál*’ the first-person speaker of all three sections is Óðinn, in *Sigrdrífomál* it is Sigrdrífa. In ‘the extended *Loddfáfnismál*’ the speaker directly addresses a named individual, sometimes as *pú* and sometimes as Loddfáfnir. Similarly, in *Sigrdrífomál* one named person, Sigurðr, is addressed throughout. It is also possible to argue that in both texts a frame is provided by a narrator acting as a reporter of the action. In ‘the extended *Loddfáfnismál*’ this narrator is the *pulr* who sets the scene in the introductory strophe, reports the speeches he has heard, and completes the frame in his own voice in the concluding strophe. In *Sigrdrífomál* the frame is provided by the third-person narrator of the prose passages linking the poems in the Sigurðr series. The narrator’s report, *enn hon vacnaði, oc settiz hon up oc sá Sigurð oc mælti* (*Sigrdrífomál* prose 10–11), which leads straight into the poem’s first speech, is directly comparable with the statement of the *pulr* at the end of *Hávamál* 111

(*heyrdá ec segia svá*). The frame at the end of *Sigrdrífomál* is lost in the lacuna, but we can infer its existence on the model of the narrative frames around the other poems in the Sigurðr series, *Fáfnismál*, *Brot af Sigurðarquiðu*, *Guðrúnarquiða in fyrsta* and so on, the poems which immediately precede and follow *Sigrdrífomál* in the manuscript. This inference is supported by the occurrence of a narrative frame around the *Volsunga saga* version of the material covered in *Sigrdrífomál*. In *Volsunga saga* the admonitory list is replaced by a prose paraphrase (1906–08, 54–55) but it is still spoken by Brynhildr (Sigrdrífa) and, at the end of her speech, after a brief exchange between her and Sigurðr, the narrator’s voice returns to close the section. In addition to the frame, *Sigrdrífomál* is provided with internal links and transitions between its sections which are very similar to those in ‘the extended *Loddfáfnismál*’.

First, like the initial list in ‘the extended *Loddfáfnismál*’, the first list in *Sigrdrífomál* is headed by an introductory strophe (5), although this one is spoken by the giver of instruction rather than by the narrator. In this strophe Sigrdrífa offers Sigurðr beer which is blended with powerful magic: charms, spells, and *gamanrúnar*. The precise meaning of the last word is debatable. In its two occurrences in *Hávamál* it seems to refer, not to runes as such, but to an intimate (120.6), or more particularly to a sexual (130.6), relationship. Fritzner (1883–96) glosses these occurrences as *morende Samtale*, and Faulkes (1987) as ‘pleasant private intercourse, relationship’. However, the association with *lióð*, *lícnstafir* and *galdrar* indicates that in *Sigrdrífomál* 5 *gamanrúnar* refers rather to runic letters used as a spell, perhaps a spell to secure for the user the affections or the sexual favours of another. The word *manrúnar* is used in just this sense in *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar* (1933, 238), indicating that runes were believed to have been used for such a purpose. Neckel–Kuhn glosses *gamanrúnar* as it occurs in *Sigrdrífomál* 5 as *freude bringende runen*. So it can be argued that in this instance, standing at the head of a catalogue of runes, the reference to *gamanrúnar* introduces the subject of that catalogue in the same way as the mention of runes in *Hávamál* 137 does for *Rúnatal*. Further, placed at the end of strophe 5 and immediately followed at the beginning of strophe 6 by *sigrúnar*, the word *gamanrúna* triggers the catalogue of runes in the same way as *um ráðom* triggers the *Hávamál* list of counsels.

Second, the concluding strophe (13) of the *Sigrdrífomál* rune catalogue provides a close parallel to the concluding strophe (137) of the first list in ‘the extended *Loddfáfnismál*’. That strophe, as we saw, acts as a transitional passage: it looks both back to the list of counsels which is ending by

repeating its refrain and forward to the list of rune lore that is beginning through a change from advice to information and a specific allusion to runes. *Sigrdrífomál* 13 begins in exactly the same way, repeating the formula which has acted as a refrain for the first list in this poem:

Hugrúnar scaltu kunna, ef þú vilt hveriom vera  
geðsvinnari guma.

This repetition anchors it firmly in the catalogue of runes. However, the strophe then makes a change of subject matter even more dramatic than that in *Hávamál* 137:

þær of réð, þær of reist,  
þær um hugði Hroptr,  
af þeim legi, er lekið hafði  
ór hausi Heiddraupnis  
oc ór horni Hoddrofnis.

Instead of providing information on the use of the runes as the preceding items have done, this passage introduces mythological lore concerning Hroptr/Óðinn, so beginning, in an obscure and allusive fashion, the narrative of the origin of the runes which corresponds to *Rúnatal*. Although the change of subject is so abrupt, the second part of the strophe is fully integrated with the first, both in sense and grammar: the repeated *þær* in 13.4, 5 and 6 refers directly to the *hugrúnar* with which the strophe opens and, more widely, to all the runes which have been listed in this catalogue. The *þær of* . . . *þær of* . . . *þær um* sequence, repeating the pattern introduced in the preceding strophe, is a further link with the rune catalogue that is ending. In the catalogue up to this point, Sigurðr has been the subject of the verbs in all the sub-lists detailing the use of the runes (*þú scalt kunna* . . . *oc rista* etc.). In strophe 13, however, although Sigurðr remains the subject of the first two verbs (*scalt kunna*, *vilt vera*) the subject of the next three verbs (*réð*, *reist*, *hugði*) is Hroptr, and the sub-list refers to the origin of the runes rather than their present use. The personal address, which was maintained in the first three half-lines as part of the link between this strophe and the rest of the catalogue, is dropped when the new subject is introduced, and the verbs are put into the third person and the past tense. All these changes look forward to the next section of the poem, which will deal in the third person, and in the past tense, with Hroptr/Óðinn and the origin of the runes. The strophe ends with a *galdragalag* couplet (13.9–10) which closes the rune catalogue in the same way as the couplet at the end of *Rúnatal* (145. 8–9) closes that section of ‘the extended *Loddfáfnismál*’. *Sigrdrífomál* 13, therefore, both closes the catalogue of runes and introduces the narrative

of Óðinn which is to follow. It is more complex than *Hávamál* 137 but, looking both backward and forward, it performs the same function.<sup>3</sup>

The central rune lore section of *Sigrdrífomál* ends in strophe 19, which gives advice (*nióttu, ef þú namt* 19.8) very similar to that in the refrain in the *Hávamál* list of counsels (*nióta mundo, ef þú nemr*). The introduction of an admonitory formula here prepares for the coming list of counsels, in the same way as the change from admonition to information and the mention of runes in *Hávamál* 137 prepared for the beginning of *Rúnatal*; and the return of direct address (*nióttu . . . þú*), reminding the audience that Sigurðr is still being spoken to, prepares both for the return of Sigrdrífa's own voice in strophe 20 and for Sigurðr's reply in strophe 21. Strophes 20–21 embody an exchange between the speaker and the recipient of her lore which introduces the poem's final, admonitory list:

‘Nú scaltu kíosa, allz þér er kostr um boðinn,  
 hvassa vápna hlynr;  
 soǵn eða þoǵn hafðu þér siálfr í hug!  
 ǵll ero mein of metin.’  
 ‘Munca ec flæia, þott mic feigan vitir,  
 emca ec með bleyði borinn;  
 ástráð þín ec vil ǵll hafa,  
 svá lengi sem ec lifi.’

This exchange returns us to the initial narrative situation in a way reminiscent of the reminder of the narrative situation in ‘the extended *Loddfáfnismál*’ strophe 162, when Loddfáfnir's name recurs with an echo of the refrain. Sigrdrífa offers Sigurðr a choice between speech or silence in lines which have been understood (Sijmons–Gering, II 217) to refer to their betrothal, and she warns him that she foresees misfortune. Despite the warning he replies that he will not flee, but rather *ástráð þín ec vil ǵll hafa / svá lengi sem ec lifi* (21.4–6), whereupon she begins the list of counsels. There has been some discussion about these two strophes of dialogue and about the *ástráð þín ǵll* which Sigurðr chooses to have as long as he lives. Gering proposes (Sijmons–Gering, II 205) that the strophes

<sup>3</sup> It may be objected that strophe 13, as it appears in Neckel–Kuhn, is not in fact a single strophe. Sijmons–Gering (II 213) regards it as two strophes, the first of which included the first three half-lines printed here, together with other lines which are now lost, and the second being the rest of strophe 13 as it stands in Neckel–Kuhn. The *Völsunga* saga version ends the strophe at the name Hropr. However, in defence of Neckel–Kuhn's reading of the Codex Regius version, it may be said that the strophe as it stands here does follow the pattern established by earlier items in this catalogue and its two halves are fully integrated grammatically.

belonged to an original *erweckungslied*, to which strophes 2–4 also belonged, and that the intervening strophes were lost. He also suggests (II 217) that the poem ended after this exchange with two strophes concerning the betrothal of Sigurðr and Brynhildr, strophes which are paraphrased in the *Völsunga saga* version. With this situation in mind he argues (following Müllenhoff, 1891–1908, V 162) that *ástráð þín öll* should be construed as *deine ganze liebe* and has nothing to do with counsel. He adds that an interpolator, misunderstanding the word *ástráð* here, and thinking it meant ‘counsel’ or ‘advice’, appended the admonitory list. Perhaps Müllenhoff and Gering felt that a lecture on behaviour was an inappropriate response for Sigdrífa to make to Sigurðr’s choice of marriage. However, it does seem likely that the primary meaning of *ástráð* here is ‘counsel’ or ‘advice’, and that the word was intended to lead into the list of counsels which follows. *Ástráð* clearly means ‘counsel’ or ‘advice’ in its other eddic occurrences (*Fáfnismál* 35.3; *Hymisqviða* 4.7 and 30.3), as it does in its prose uses (see Cleasby–Vigfusson). Fritzner (1883–96) glosses it as *venligt, kjærligt Raad* and Neckel–Kuhn as *liebvoller, wohlgemeinter rat* (see also Boer 1922, II 198). If we understand *ástráð* to mean ‘counsel’ here then, like *um ráðom* in *Hávamál* 111 and *gamanrúna* in *Sigrdrífomál* 5, it introduces the topic of, and triggers, the list which follows. The verbal association *ástráð/ræð* linking the second and third lists in *Sigrdrífomál* parallels that between the second and third lists of ‘the extended *Loddfáfnismál*’ (*þjóða/þjóðans, Hávamál* 145.7; 146.2).

As well as the structural similarities detailed here, there are similarities in the content and style of the corresponding sections of ‘the extended *Loddfáfnismál*’ and *Sigrdrífomál*.

First, both lists of counsels include advice against adultery (*Hávamál* 115; *Sigrdrífomál* 32), against exchanging words with a foolish man (*Hávamál* 122; *Sigrdrífomál* 24), about friendship (*Hávamál* 119–21; *Sigrdrífomál* 37) and about avoiding ill-luck in battle (*Hávamál* 129; *Sigrdrífomál* 26–27). In addition, both lists of counsels include, amongst all the advice, one sub-list which gives practical information. In ‘the extended *Loddfáfnismál*’ it is the list of remedies (strophe 137) and in *Sigrdrífomál* it is a list concerning the preparation of corpses for burial (strophes 33–34).

Second, the rune catalogue in *Sigrdrífomál* corresponds in content to *Ljóðatal* but in position to the conventional *Loddfáfnismál*, and it has some stylistic affinities with the latter. It is more overtly didactic than *Ljóðatal*, being couched in the imperative mood (*scaltu*) and being

emphatically addressed to Sigurðr (*þú*). This similarity probably results from the fact that both the *Hávamál* list of counsels and the *Sigrdrífomál* rune catalogue occupy the initial position in their respective texts and need to establish the instructional mode. It is the admonitory list in *Sigrdrífomál*, corresponding in content to the *Hávamál* list of counsels, which corresponds in position to *Ljóðatal*, and we may note that both of these concluding lists employ a numerical formula. In spite of their differences in style, the content of *Ljóðatal* does correspond quite closely to that of the *Sigrdrífomál* rune catalogue. The former lists charms and their uses, but the magic formulae themselves are not given. The latter lists runes which will be useful to the hero, specifies the words and/or actions which should be employed when the runes are used, but does not name the runes themselves. (Possible exceptions are items one and two, in strophes 6 and 7 respectively, in each of which one rune name, *Týr* and *Nauðr*, is given. This information is only partial, however, since in both items, as in all the others, the word that heads the item is plural.) In addition, as with the two admonitory lists, these two lists of magical lore show specific correspondences in content. For example, both have spells that affect weapons (*Hávamál* 148, 150; *Sigrdrífomál* 6) or the behaviour of a desired woman (*Hávamál* 161, 162; *Sigrdrífomál* 7), that ensure safety at sea (*Hávamál* 154; *Sigrdrífomál* 10), and that can be used to calm or avert hatred among men (*Hávamál* 153; *Sigrdrífomál* 12). In addition, both mention spells particularly for the use of doctors (*Hávamál* 147; *Sigrdrífomál* 9, 11).

Third, and most interesting, is the similarity of content, structure and style between the two central sections of rune lore. Both begin with a narrative concerning Óðinn's acquisition of the runes. In 'the extended *Loddfáfnismál*' this narrative (*Hávamál* 138–41) starts with an account of Óðinn's ordeal on the tree, hanging for nine nights, wounded with a spear, sacrificed to himself:

Veit ec, at ec hecc vindgameiði á  
nætr allar nío,  
geiri undaðr oc gefinn Óðni,  
siálfr siálfom mér,  
á þeim meiði, er mangi veit,  
hvers hann af rótom renn.

As a result of this ordeal Óðinn gained not only the runes and the nine powerful charms, but also a drink (*oc ec drycc of gat ins dýra miáðar, / ausinn Óðreri*, 140.4–6). In *Sigrdrífomál* 13–14 the narrative seems to refer to two stories, known from other sources, of how Óðinn acquired wisdom from Mímir:

Hugrúnar scaltu kunna, ef þú vilt hveriom vera  
geðsvinnari guma;  
þær of réð, þær of reist,  
þær um hugði Hroptr,  
af þeim legi, er lekið hafði  
ór hausi Heiddraupnis  
oc ór horni Hoddrofnis.

Á biargi stóð með Brimis eggjar,  
hafði sér á hofði hiálm.

Þá mælti Míms hofuð  
fróðlict í þ fyrsta orð,  
oc sagði sanna stafi.

As noted above (p. 45), *þær* in its three occurrences in strophe 13 refers grammatically to the *hugrúnar* with which the strophe opens, and it can also be interpreted as referring to all the runes listed in the preceding catalogue. In strophe 13 Óðinn gains control of them, carves and ponders them, as a result of drinking the liquid (*af þeim legi*, see Neckel–Kuhn II, under *af* IIb) which had dripped out of Heiddraupnir’s skull and out of Hoddrofnir’s horn. It is not certain, but seems likely, that Heiddraupnir and Hoddrofnir are names for Mímir (compare the reference to Hoddmímir in *Vafðrúðnismál* 45.3), who is named in strophe 14. According to the account in *Gylfaginning* (Snorri Sturluson 1982, 17), Mímir owned a well containing *spekð ok mannvit*, he drank its wisdom-giving waters from a horn (*hann drekkir ór brunninum af horninu Gjallarhorni*), and he gave Óðinn a drink from his well after the god had given his eye as a pledge (see also *Völuspá* 28). Elsewhere (Snorri Sturluson 1941–51, I 13) we are told that Mímir’s severed head was a source of wisdom consulted by Óðinn (see also *Völuspá* 46). The bringing together of a skull, a horn, a wisdom-giving liquid, and the acquisition of knowledge by Óðinn suggests that strophe 13 is alluding to these stories about Mímir (see Boer 1922, II 196). Strophe 14 refers more directly to the story of Óðinn’s acquisition of knowledge from Mímir’s head. Hroptr (Óðinn), introduced in the preceding strophe, would be the subject of *stóð* here (Boer 1922, II 196–97; Sijmons–Gering, II 213), and it would be to him that Mímir’s head spoke wisely, telling him true staves, namely the ‘rune-location list’ which follows in strophes 15–17. The list is grammatically linked to this strophe by the verb *qvað* (15.1), the subject of which must be *Míms hofuð* (Boer 1922, II 197).

In spite of their differences, there are some connections between the narratives of Óðinn in ‘the extended *Loddfáfnismál*’ and *Sigrdrífomál*. First, in ‘the extended *Loddfáfnismál*’ Óðinn hangs on a tree, usually

assumed (see, for instance, Fleck 1971a, 385–88; *Hávamál* 1986, 32–33) to be the world ash, Yggdrasill, and he searches downwards (*nýsta ec niðr*, 139.3) to take up the runes. In other words, he acquires the runes from the base of Yggdrasill. In his account in *Gylfaginning*, Snorri tells us that Mímir’s well was situated among the roots of Yggdrasill. If *Sigrdrífomál* 13 does refer to Mímir’s well, then Óðinn acquired his power over the runes from the same place in *Sigrdrífomál* as he did in ‘the extended *Loddfáfnismál*’. Second, in ‘the extended *Loddfáfnismál*’, Óðinn states that he received nine mighty charms *af inom frægia syni / Bólþors* (140.1–3). Sijmons–Gering (I 151) points out that a son of Bólþorr is mentioned nowhere else but that there is repeated evidence that Óðinn owed his wisdom to Mímir, and accepts the identification of Mímir with Bólþorr’s son. This identification remains unproved, but it is relevant that an agent, Mímir in *Sigrdrífomál* and Bólþorr’s son in ‘the extended *Loddfáfnismál*’, is involved in both stories of Óðinn’s acquisition of runic wisdom. Third, in the poem *Fjolsvinnsmál* (20.1–3) the world ash is called Mímir’s tree in words that otherwise seem to be directly parallel to the last three lines of *Hávamál* 138 quoted above:

Mímameiðr hann heitir,  
en þat mangi veit,  
af hverjum rótum renn.

Fleck (1971a, 387–88) argues that both this Mímameiðr and the tree of Óðinn’s ordeal are identical with Hoddmimir’s wood mentioned in *Vafðrúðnismál* (*í holti Hoddmimis*, *Vafðrúðnismál* 45.3) and in *Gylfaginning* (Snorri Sturluson 1982, 54). Fourth, in both texts the acquisition of the runes is accompanied by a special drink, the precious mead of *Hávamál* 140.5 and the liquid which had dripped out of Heiddraupnir’s skull and Hoddrofnir’s horn in *Sigrdrífomál* 13.7–10.

The narrative of Óðinn in ‘the extended *Loddfáfnismál*’ is followed (142–43) by an account of the origin of the runes. They were carved by named individuals for (or among) the different races of rational beings: Æsir, elves, dwarves, and giants.

Óðinn með ásom, enn fyr álfom Dáinn,  
Dvalinn dvergum fyrir,  
Ásviðr iotnom fyrir,  
ec reist siálfr sumar.

The identity of the *ec* of the last half-line has caused some discussion. The speaker would seem to be Óðinn, who is certainly the speaker of strophes 138–41, but Óðinn has already been mentioned in this list. The problem is

compounded by the last two lines of strophe 145 where Óðinn (Þundr) is referred to in the third person. Who is the speaker of this part of *Rúnatal*? It could be Óðinn; he does at times regard himself objectively, as in strophe 138.5–6, and the final line of the list could be understood as a reflective, concluding comment. However, it is also possible that some lines in 142–45 are spoken by someone else. Larrington (1993, 61) states unequivocally that *ec* in 143.5 is ‘the poet, the *hroptr* for the race of men, who are otherwise the only class of creation<sup>4</sup> missing from the the verse’. Sijmons–Gering (II 152) suggests that the strophe is spoken by a wandering *þulr*, adding that the listed lore deals with the origin of rune knowledge for those gifted with reason and speech: that is gods, elves, dwarfs, giants and men. If the final line of strophe 143 does refer to the acquisition of runes by men, the awkward repetition in the list would be avoided. There seems no need, however, to introduce another character, a wandering *þulr*, as the narrating *þulr*, the *ec* of strophe 111, is already available. If he does interpose his voice here, between the narrative of Óðinn and *Ljóðatal*, this return of the narrator’s own voice would correspond to the return to the narrative situation in *Sigrdrífomál* 20. Whoever speaks them, strophes 142–45 are allusive and very mixed metrically. The same is true of the whole of the central section of *Sigrdrífomál*.

Just as in ‘the extended *Loddfáfnismál*’, the *Sigrdrífomál* narrative of Óðinn is followed by an account of the origin of the runes, this time a list of places where they were carved (15–17), and then of their distribution to the different races of rational beings (18). All those which were carved on (i. e. onto the objects listed in the preceding three strophes) were scraped off, mixed with the holy mead, and sent ‘on wide ways’:

Allar vóro af scafnar, þær er vóro á ristnar,  
oc hverfðar við inn helga mioð,  
oc sendar á víða vega.

In this way they were distributed to the Æsir, the elves, the Vanir and men:

Þær ro með ásom, þær ro með álfom,  
sumar með vísom vqnom,  
sumar hafa mennzcir menn.

The dwarfs and giants are notably absent from this list, but the presence of men lends some support to the interpretations of *ec* in *Hávamál* 143.5 favoured by Sijmons–Gering and Larrington. The holy mead (18.3), like the dripping liquid of *Sigrdrífomál* 13.7–10, may be compared with the

<sup>4</sup> She must surely mean ‘of rational beings’; the list does not attempt to include all classes of creation.

precious mead in *Hávamál* 140.4–5. Obscure and allusive as they are, the narratives of Óðinn and the accounts of the origin and distribution of the runes contained in these two poems seem to represent two versions of what was essentially the same story.

Finally, in addition to the similarities between *Sigrdrífomál* and ‘the extended *Loddfáfnismál*’ already described, there are specific verbal parallels between the two texts. For example, both Sigrdrífa and Óðinn tell the recipients of their instruction that they must have knowledge of runes, and Sijmons–Gering (II 213) and Evans (*Hávamál* 1986, 136) draw attention to the verbal parallels between their words in *Sigrdrífomál* 13 and *Hávamál* 142:

**Hugrúnar scaltu kunna,** ef þú vilt hveriom vera  
geðsvinnari guma;  
þær of réð, þær of **reist**,  
þær um hugði **Hroptr**,  
af þeim legi, er lekið hafði  
ór hausi Heiddraupnis  
oc ór horni Hoddrofnis. *Sigrdrífomál* 13

**Rúnar munt þú finna** oc ráðna stafi,  
miðc stóra stafi  
miðc stinna stafi,  
er fáði fimbulþulr  
oc gorðo ginregin  
oc **reist hroptr** royna. *Hávamál* 142

As well as a knowledge of runes in general, both Loddfáfnir and Sigurðr must have knowledge of the art of healing (*Hávamál* 120 and 137; *Sigrdrífomál* 4, 5, 9 and 11). In this connection too there are verbal parallels:

**góðan** mann teygðo þér at **gamanrúnom**  
oc nem **lícnargaldr, meðan þú lifir.** *Hávamál* 120.5–7  
fullr er hann lióða oc lícnstafa,  
**góðra galdra** oc **gamanrúna.** *Sigrdrífomál* 5.5–7  
mál oc manvít gefit ocr mærom tveim  
oc **læcnishendr, meðan lifom!** *Sigrdrífomál* 4.4–6

And the admonitory words both instructors use are very similar:

**Ráðome þér,** Loddfáfnir, **at þú . . .**  
**níota** mundo, **ef þú nemr.** *Hávamál* 112.1–3 etc.  
**Þat ræð ec þér** íþ fyrsta, **at þú . . .** *Sigrdrífomál* 22.1–2  
**nióttu, ef þú namt.** *Sigrdrífomál* 19.8.

One last correspondence demands to be noted, although there is no reason to think that it is anything but a tantalising coincidence, and that is the common element *fáfnir* in the names of the two recipients of instruction: Loddfáfnir and Sigurðr Fáfnisbani.

The similarities between *Sigrdrífomál* and ‘the extended *Loddfáfnismál*’ may be summarised as follows: a supernatural authority figure who dispenses instruction (Óðinn and Sigrdrífa); a named individual recipient of the instruction (Loddfáfnir and Sigurðr); a framed three-list format; a correspondence between the subject matter (counsel, lore concerning runes and charms) and between the purposes (admonitory, informative) of the lists in each case; correspondences between the content of individual list items; a rune origin and distribution narrative, allusive and obscure, in the central section of each text; exactly parallel listing techniques; closely similar linking and transitional techniques, in and between the corresponding sections of each text; and specific verbal parallels. It seems reasonable to conclude that in *Sigrdrífomál* and ‘the extended *Loddfáfnismál*’ we have two parallel texts.

#### *The comparison with Grímnismál*

There are no other three-list instructions in the *Edda*, but there is another instructional list poem. This is *Grímnismál*, and Haugen (1983, 14–16) has drawn attention to its close relationship with *Hávamál* and *Sigrdrífomál*. *Grímnismál* does not have an admonitory list and so lacks the affinities with the wisdom Instruction possessed by *Loddfáfnismál* and *Sigrdrífomál*, but it does combine a narrative about Óðinn, lists of mythological lore and the instruction of a young man. The narrative provides the framework for the lists which make up the bulk of the poem. The story is as follows: Óðinn visits his foster-son, King Geirrøðr, in disguise in order to test his hospitality. Geirrøðr has the stranger seized and, because he will not talk, tortured by being fastened between two fires and left without food or drink for eight days. On the eighth day Geirrøðr’s young son, Agnarr, takes pity on the stranger and offers him a horn full of drink. Óðinn responds by telling Agnarr that he will have good luck, called down upon him by Veratýr (that is, by Óðinn himself), and that he will never receive a better reward for a single drink. Óðinn then recites a series of lists of mythological lore, ending with a catalogue of his own names during which his identity is revealed. Geirrøðr jumps up to release him, stumbles on to his own sword and dies. Óðinn vanishes and Agnarr becomes king.

The similarities in the pattern of this narrative and the two poems discussed above are evident. As in ‘the extended *Loddfáfnismál*’, Óðinn is

the giver of instruction and an important place is given to an ordeal suffered by him. In *Grímnismál* his ordeal is by fire, and we may compare Sigrdrífa's situation at the beginning of *Sigrdrífomál* where, in her magic sleep, she is surrounded by flames through which Sigurðr has to pass to rescue her. In *Grímnismál* Óðinn is deprived of food and drink for eight days (2.1–3) and in 'the extended *Loddfáfnismál*' he hangs for nine days and is similarly deprived of food and drink (138.3, 139.1–2). In *Grímnismál*, as in *Sigrdrífomál*, the recipient of instruction is a young prince, and a horn of drink changes hands. The relief offered to Óðinn by Agnarr parallels the rescue of Sigrdrífa by Sigurðr, and in both cases the instruction follows immediately. In 'the extended *Loddfáfnismál*' Óðinn does not suffer the ordeal on the same occasion as he gives the instruction, rather he recounts his experience as part of his instructional speech, and Loddfáfnir plays no part in his rescue. However, there is a form of relief at the climax of the ordeal when Óðinn grasps the runes, falls from the tree and receives a magic drink (*oc ec drycc of gat ins dýra miaðar, / ausinn Óðreri*, 140.4–6). This drink, which causes him to prosper and become wise or fruitful (*Þá nam ec frævaz oc fróðr vera / oc vaxa oc vel hafaz*, 141.1–3) and which was compared above to the empowering liquid of *Sigrdrífomál* 13. 7–10 and the rune-filled mead of *Sigrdrífomál* 18, may also be compared to the magic-filled beer which Sigrdrífa offers Sigurðr when he asks her to teach him wisdom:

'Biór færi ec þér,    brynþings apaldr,  
magni blandinn    oc megintíri;  
fullr er hann lióða    oc lícnstafa,  
góðra galdra    oc gamanrúna.' *Sigrdrífomál* 5

The correspondences in the content of the three poems, despite their similarity, are inexact. Unlike *Grímnismál* and *Sigrdrífomál*, for example, 'the extended *Loddfáfnismál*' has no fire ordeal (although a hanging ordeal is substituted) and no rescue. Further, although Óðinn does receive a drink in 'the extended *Loddfáfnismál*', it is offered neither by the recipient of the instruction, as in *Grímnismál*, nor by the giver of instruction, as in *Sigrdrífomál*. The horn offered by Agnarr to Óðinn, although it produces an extraordinary response, is full of ordinary drink, unlike the magical, wisdom-giving potions of *Sigrdrífomál* and 'the extended *Loddfáfnismál*'. The setting for the instruction in *Sigrdrífomál* is the open fell, not the hall of a king, as it is in both 'the extended *Loddfáfnismál*' and *Grímnismál*. Nevertheless, the similarities do seem too persistent to be coincidental, and it is worth considering what the underlying pattern might mean.

*The comparison with Rígsþula and the role of Loddfáfnir*

One possibility is suggested in the work of Jere Fleck (1970, 1971b), Einar Haugen (1983) and Jens Peter Schjødt (1988) who believe that the poems in the *Edda*, or at least some of them, may have had a ritual function. Fleck, for instance, suggests that ‘a ritual education in numinous knowledge as a part of a younger/youngest son’s individual consecration to a godly figure formed the decisive factor in the succession to a Germanic sacred kingship’ (1970, 42). He bases this suggestion on the case of Konr ‘the young’ (*ungr*) in another eddic list poem, *Rígsþula*. Towards the end of this poem (43–44) we are told that Konr, who was to assume the title and position of his father Jarl, was distinguished from his older brothers because he had knowledge of runes and other special skills:

Enn Konr ungr kunnir rúnar,  
ævinrúnar oc aldrúnar;  
meirr kunnir hann mǫnnum biarga,  
eggjar deyfa, ægi lægia.

Klǫc nam fugla, kyrra elda,  
sæva of svefia, sorgir lægia,  
afl oc eliun átta manna.

If *biarga* here refers to help in childbirth (see Neckel–Kuhn II), then all of Konr’s special skills find parallels in the stories of Sigurðr and Loddfáfnir. Sigurðr must know *biargrúnar* and *brimrúnar* (*Sigrdrífomál* 9–10), he understands the speech of birds (*Fáfnismál*, prose section between strophes 31 and 32) and possesses great strength (*Frá dauða Sinfjötla*, lines 33–35). The catalogue of charms recited for Loddfáfnir includes charms to soothe sorrow, to dull a weapon’s edge and to quell fire (*Hávamál* 146, 148, 152). We are not told how Konr acquires his knowledge, only that he bests his father Jarl in a contest of runes (*Rígsþula* 45). However, Jarl himself had learned the runes directly from the god-like figure Rígr (36.1–4), who would seem to correspond to the givers of instruction in *Sigrdrífomál*, *Grímnismál* and ‘the extended *Loddfáfnismál*’.

In *Rígsþula* the instruction of Jarl and the special knowledge and skills of Konr are alluded to only briefly, but the king-making context is illuminating. Fleck (1970, 44–45) draws a parallel with the story of Geirrǫðr and his succession to the kingship as it is told in the prose introduction to *Grímnismál*. In a later paper (1971b, 58–61) he applies his theory to Agnarr, concluding that ‘in order to succeed to the throne, Agnarr must receive ritual instruction’ (1971b, 61). Schjødt criticises some details of Fleck’s overall idea but agrees with him in principle. Haugen also agrees

with Fleck's idea but, rather than restricting the ritual function of the eddic poems to the initiation of a king, he extends it to 'the whole ceremonial pattern of Germanic religion in which the king priest, or sacred magician, acts out the role of the gods he tells about' (1983, 20). He includes *Sigrdrifomál* in his discussion, saying (1983, 16):

I hesitate to say that Sigrdrifa . . . is another mask of Odin, this time in the shape of a woman, but she talks exactly like him, and I believe she is simply Odin's mouthpiece. Again a slender story has been grafted on to a recital of numinous knowledge, which serves the purpose of preparing Sigurd to become a king, just as it did Agnar in the *Lay of Grímnir*.

If Fleck and Haugen are right, it may be possible to discern behind the poems discussed in this paper some initiatory rite, and this would accord with Lindquist's view of *Hávamál*. The ritual would include some or all of the following: the recital of epic narrative concerning Óðinn or a surrogate, the listing of mythological lore and/or magical lore concerning runes or charms, and an admonitory list of advice addressed to the initiate. It might also include re-enactment of some ordeal involving hanging or fire and relief or rescue, and the offer or acceptance of a drink. The similarities between the texts might be explained if they all reflect variations of the same, or very similar, rites.

Loddfáfnir's name occurs only in *Hávamál*. The results of attempts to interpret its meaning, for example *spielmann*, *gaukler* (Sijmons-Gering, I 132) and *Laffe* (Lindquist 1956, 32), have been unflattering and seem inappropriate for a member of a group which includes Sigurðr and Agnarr. We know nothing about Loddfáfnir except what the conventional *Loddfáfnismál* tells us: that he was personally counselled by a speaker whom we can assume to be Óðinn. However, the extension of his instruction to include *Rúnatal* and *Ljóðatal*, and the parallels between his situation and those of Sigurðr and Agnarr, allow us to infer a little more: that Loddfáfnir was a young prince about to become a king, ready for instruction in numinous knowledge, and deemed worthy of the attention of the highest god—in fact, that he was a protégé of Óðinn's, as Agnarr was and Geirrðr had been, and as were also the Völsungs. If we accept Fleck's and Haugen's interpretation of the roles of Agnarr and Sigurðr, then we must conclude that Loddfáfnir too was a candidate for sacred kingship.

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