

ACTA
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UPSALIENSIS

VOL. LIV



Uppsala-Edda

The textbook

DG 11 4to

Heimir Pálsson

English translation by Kelsey Paige Hopkins

*Without a doubt oral storytelling was a mature art form,
cultivated by Norse peoples long before they began
to dream of parchment.*

Halldór Kiljan Laxness 1946



UPPSALA
UNIVERSITET

2022

Printed with contributions from
Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis
Stiftelsen Barbro och Sune Örtendahls fond
Vilhelm Ekmans universitetsfond

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Cover illustration: A page from a manuscript in The Royal Library, Copenhagen:
Ólafur Brynjúlfsson, *Sæmundar og Snorra Edda*, 1760, fol. 111v (NKS 1867 4^o).
About the relation to DG 11 4to see p. 44.

Production: Graphic Services, Uppsala University

Distribution:

Uppsala University Library
Box 510, SE-751 20 Uppsala, Sweden
www.ub.uu.se, acta@ub.uu.se

ISSN 0346-7465

ISBN 978-91-513-1395-5

<http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:uu:diva-466241>

Printed in Sweden by DanagårdLiTHO AB, Ödeshög 2022

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Foreword

Sweden's undeniably greatest book treasure is housed in the Uppsala University Library. I am, of course, referring to *Codex Argenteus* commonly called *The Silver Bible*, partly because it is written in silver (and gold) ink on purple parchment but mostly because of its magnificent book binding in silver which was commissioned by Count Magnus Gabriel De la Gardie who bought and later donated the book to Uppsala University in 1669. The bible contains a great part of what remains of the long-extinct Gothic language.

The second greatest book treasure is less certain. Many books, manuscripts, maps, and pictures at the Uppsala University Library could vie for this position, and so too could also objects from other libraries in Sweden, such as *Codex Gigas* in the National Library, this so-called *Devil's Bible* being the largest medieval illuminated manuscript in the world.

Yet I would nominate another very much smaller manuscript which was donated together with *The Silver Bible*, viz. the *Codex Upsaliensis DG II 4to*, commonly called *Uppsala-Edda*. The title's *Edda* refers to the mythological and poetic handbook by the Icelander Snorri Sturluson (1179–1241), the famous author and lawspeaker who in 1219 paid a visit to his Swedish colleague Eskil Magnusson in Skara.

Uppsala-Edda may not look like a precious treasure today, consisting of a bunch of brown, unbound and somewhat shrivelled parchment leaves with holes and miscolouring. The state of the parchment is partly due to the lack of top-quality vellum in medieval Iceland, but this is in fact a high-status manuscript written by a professional scribe using red and even green ink to highlight in his text. In addition, the small format may simply depend on the book's intended use as an aid in teaching where a convenient size would be practical. In any case, *Uppsala-Edda* must once have looked very impressive.

The Uppsala manuscript is in fact the only one of the medieval copies that bears the name *Edda*, but this is somewhat misleading as it contains more than Snorri's own work. Interspersed between Edda's three major parts are lists of poets, a genealogy, a list of lawspeakers, and some other matters

including a grammatical treatise. None of these latter texts was written by Snorri, yet they are valuable and integral parts of *Codex Upsaliensis*. Here, however, our attention will be devoted solely to Snorri's *Edda*.

Edda consists of four parts: a prologue; *Gylfaginning*, a mythological work; *Skáldskaparmál*, a manual of poetics; and *Háttatal*, a list of poems in different metres. Without Snorri we would know much less about Old Norse mythology and poetry, as he incorporates matters preserved nowhere else and also provides necessary explanations of matters known from elsewhere.

Few or perhaps no living scholar knows Edda more intimately than does Heimir Pálsson, the author of the present book. He has twice held the position of *lektor* in Icelandic at the Department of Scandinavian Languages, Uppsala University. He has long been interested in Edda and his first edition of the work appeared in 1984. Two decades later, he took the initiative to start the project "The original version of Edda Snorra Sturlusonar? Studies in *Codex Upsaliensis*", which received funding from the Swedish Research Council between 2008 and 2012 and is still ongoing. Apart from him and myself, the project participants were Lasse Mårtensson, Jonatan Pettersson and Daniel Sävborg, as well as doctoral student Maja Bäckvall. Scholars in Sweden and Iceland were associated.

Mårtensson and Sävborg have both published the result of their work, both during and after (still forthcoming) the end of the project. In 2013, Bäckvall published her dissertation on eddic poetry in *Uppsala-Edda* from the perspective of sender and recipient. The project resulted in many other publications in journals and anthologies, as well as conference contributions and presentations to scholarly and popular audiences.

The most prolific production, however, stems from Heimir Pálsson with his editions in London and Reykjavík and other major studies (see the bibliography). As a short background to his current book, I will sketch the history of the project in which we cooperated, of which I was the official leader but he the driving force.

The uniqueness of *Uppsala-Edda* derives primarily from the fact that it is shorter by almost a third and rather different from the *Codex Regius* manuscript of the same work. This is the reason why it has been considered inferior to other versions. The project mentioned above set out to answer the following questions:

1. Is *Uppsala-Edda* really a radical abbreviation as has been claimed and if so, what is the purpose of such an abbreviation? Or is *Uppsala-Edda* perhaps close to the original version of Edda: who then expanded and improved this text and for what purpose?

2. How should the textual examples used to prove both abbreviation and expansion really be interpreted?
3. What can the preserved manuscript of *Uppsala-Edda* tell us about its predecessor and its age, and how does this affect our understanding of *Uppsala-Edda* text?
4. How did *Uppsala-Edda* treat incorporated writing from other sources, specifically quotes from the eddic poems?
5. Edda is a handbook, primarily of poetics and prosody but also of mythology. How does the handbook genre and the special demands such a teaching media must fulfil affect the composition and thus the analysis of the text?
6. How should *Uppsala-Edda* be edited and translated so as to be best presented to scholarly and popular readers?

The project did not find unanimous answers to these questions. *Uppsala-Edda* is not consistently shorter than the other texts and “brief” vs. “long” textual passages occur in segments. Different textual origins could explain the difference in length. Various transpositions of passages show that *Uppsala-Edda* is not identical to the original version of Edda. There are some uniquely original features and other traits not taken over from a common root.

Snorri may have expanded originally brief passages himself. Divergent scientific results have been reached on the methodology of how to prove abbreviation or expansion.

Uppsala-Edda shows a few early 13th century features; it is likely copied, directly or indirectly, from a manuscript at least half a century older. The copying must partly have been done from different sources. Names and poems have aberrant orthography, proving the latter to be ultimately derived from a tradition divergent from that in the main text of *Edda*.

Uppsala-Edda in some cases evidences a tradition of eddic poems different to other Edda manuscripts. A more pronounced tendency is the existence of peculiar variants, some interesting in their own right, some obviously deviant but still necessary for the reader to comprehend.

To find texts comparable to *Uppsala-Edda* has not proven possible, and limited conclusions have been drawn concerning the origin of its text using genre arguments. Nevertheless, the composition of *Uppsala-Edda* text itself can be explained as consisting of two parts, a teacher’s handbook and a student’s primer.

In order to allow possible research on palaeography and orthography within the project and to facilitate future studies on *Uppsala-Edda*, an electronic edition of the manuscript has been produced and will soon be

made available. For much other research and popular readers a traditional, normalised text and English translation is more useful. Such a work has also been published (*Edda* 2012, see bibliography).

The project showed *Uppsala-Edda* version to be of intrinsic interest and value, in contrast to received opinion. A major research topic to be explored further is the style of the text and the character of its singular variants. Much of the philological work remains to be done now that the project has shown that it is worthwhile. Problems relating to mythology, metrics and poetics have been put in a completely new light, as are questions concerning late medieval reader response. Onomastically, the *Uppsala-Edda* also offers a rich field to be tilled.

The project has shown the unreliability of previous research on the relationship between long and short versions of the same text. There is almost no single text where there is consensus on which version is the original, and where such consensus now exists opinions have sometimes shifted 180 degrees. The field of Old Norse studies would be revolutionised if textual relationships of this kind could be determined.

This was the state of research at the conclusion of the project. Since then Heimir Pálsson has been working on solving some of the remaining problems. I shall not prematurely divulge the results he has reached, as accounted for in the present book, but two questions that we have been seeking for answers to are:

1. What information can *Uppsala-Edda* provide about itself, its origin and its peculiar composition?
2. What may we learn from *Uppsala* version about *Edda* as a text in general?

Research on *Edda* in general and on the *Uppsala-Edda* in particular will never come to an end, but I sincerely believe that the present book will advance it in no small measure. If *Uppsala* is to prove itself worthy of safeguarding a manuscript of this importance, contributions such as Heimir Pálsson's are the best way of doing so.

Henrik Williams

Professor of Runology, formerly of Scandinavian Languages,
at Uppsala University

Introduction

The university library in Uppsala houses a manuscript that is believed to have been written in Iceland during the first quarter of the 14th century, perhaps even as early as the year 1300. According to the rubric on f. 2r (p. 1), it contains the work *Edda* as put together by Snorri Sturluson.

The manuscript found its way to Sweden when Magnus Gabriel De la Gardie arranged for the purchase of a chest of books from the estate of Danish rector Stephan Stephanus of Sorø, Zealand, in 1650. Stephanus had received the book as a gift from his friend Brynjólfur Sveinsson, later Bishop of Skálholt, in 1639.

Little else is known of the history of this manuscript, which has since often been referred to as *Uppsala-Edda*.¹

The text in the Uppsala manuscript is, in so far as it can be compared to other *Edda* manuscripts, approximately 30% shorter on average. As a result, nearly three centuries' worth of energy have been poured into the debate over whether the shorter version (U) is derived from the longer (RTW) or vice versa, and at the same time which version is closer to how the author may have originally imagined the work.

An important watershed in the research was reached when Elias Wessén presented an elegant hypothesis regarding the origins of *Edda* in his introduction to a facsimile edition of the manuscript GKS 2367 4to (Wessén 1940). In brief, he proposed that *Háttatal* had been composed first, *Skáldskaparmál* then written in order to explain the poem's complicated *kennings*, *Gylfaginning* to supply the mythological background necessary to grasp the *kennings* explained in *Skáldskaparmál*, and finally, *Prologus* in order to – as has long been thought – excuse all of the heathenism that the book commits to writing. After Jón Helgason's and Anne Holtsmark's edition was published in the series *Nordisk Filologi* (1950), Wessén's theory became the prevailing one in any discussion of the various versions of *Edda*. The present author has summarised arguments

¹ For the history of the manuscript see Anders Grape 1962 cf. Heimir Pálsson 2012:xxx–xxxiv and the hypothesis here about the exemplar, pp. 25–27.

against Wessén's theory.² The conclusion is, in short, that each section – *Gylfaginning*, *Skáldskaparmál*, and *Háttatal* – should be researched as an independent work, and that any connection between their creation is difficult to find. This book adheres to this principle.

The research in which I participated began in 2005 and received a major grant from the Swedish Research Council in 2007.³ My involvement in this research soon convinced me that it was questionable to compare the full texts of the versions in order to arrive at a single conclusion regarding their relationship, as some chapters are nearly identical while others are in no way alike. Although different conclusions have been drawn from comparisons of a different nature, it was abundantly clear to me that a more nuanced multifaceted textual study was necessary.⁴

In short, my hypothesis is that the material assembled in *Gylfaginning* on the one hand and *Skáldskaparmál* on the other is based on the education that Snorri Sturluson received during his boyhood at Oddi – an education that encompassed the tales and poems of the old gods, heathen but harmless, told perhaps first and foremost for entertainment and out of respect for past generations, as well as instructional material for aspiring *skalds* (Snorri himself of course being one of them). It was Snorri's editorial efforts that united these two separate works along with his own court poem *Háttatal*. This editorial work as we know it wasn't done until after 1220, but there is no reason to believe that *Gylfaginning* and *Skáldskaparmál* had not been committed to writing independently at some earlier time.

The one thing that seems to have bedevilled researchers the most is this: both *Gylfaginning* and *Skáldskaparmál* appear to be revisions of a prototype, each revised in its own way. The version of *Gylfaginning* that we find in DG 11 4to seems rather closer to the original than the same text in the RTW-version. On the other hand, both versions of *Skáldskaparmál* have been rewritten, each in its own way and for its own purpose. The structure of the RTW-version of the text appears to be more or less the same as in the archetype, while the wording in some parts seems more original in DG 11 4to.

The manuscripts of *Edda*, *Codex Upsaliensis*, *Codex Regius*, *Codex Wormianus*, and *Codex Trajectinus* begin with a prologue, *Prologus* (so named even when the manuscript contains no chapter headings), con-

² Heimir Pálsson (2017b).

³ See Henrik Williams 2007. Besides him this work owes many thanks to Lasse Mårtensson and Veturliði Óskarsson in Uppsala. Many Icelandic friends have helped and as representatives I mention Vésteinn Ólason, Gunnar Karlsson and Helgi Skúli Kjartansson and the staff of Stofnun Árna Magnússonar in Iceland. My collaboration with Anthony Faulkes on the 2012 edition was immensely valuable.

⁴ Cf Heimir Pálsson 2010a, 2012 and 2013.

cluding with different numbers of stanzas from the court poem *Háttatal*, accompanied by substantial commentary on stylistics. These parts of *Edda* are discussed to a lesser degree in this book than *Gylfaginning* and *Skáldskaparmál* – not for any dearth of noteworthy content, but because we can deduce less from them about the manuscript DG 11 4to than we can from the other texts. I believe it is most likely that both *Prologus* and the commentary on *Háttatal* can be traced back to Snorri, and the relationship between the *Codex Regius* and *Codex Upsaliensis* versions of *Prologus* are comparable to what seems likely for *Gylfaginning*. If so, we must regard the *Codex Wormianus* text of *Prologus* as a considerable expansion of the original. The commentary is very similar in both versions of *Edda*, but more research is needed into those remarks that disagree with the text of *Skáldskaparmál*.

If the arguments that I put forth in this book should be accepted, it is obvious that the derivation of the manuscripts requires some scrutiny, and that statements claiming that “Snorri says this or that in *Edda*” may be subject to criticism and revision.

Although new avenues are being sought here, it is prudent to acknowledge the fact that very few things within humanistic studies can be proven incontrovertibly. Rather, the issue revolves around finding the most useful possible reasoning for hypotheses and explaining them so that they can be tested. When this book points to answers to questions other than the usual ones, it is not that the author believes himself to have found the one “true” truth, but is merely considering arguments that should not be overlooked, and that might serve as an impetus for further research.

The version of Snorri’s *Edda* most discussed here is only preserved in one single manuscript, in which the work is internally divided with unrelated yet thematically connected material from other sources. Moving forward, we will especially discuss the parts of the work most often referred to as Uppsala *Edda*, while paying close attention to the fact that the DG 11 4to manuscript is itself an independent textbook that deserves to be understood and explained as such.

When the manuscript DG 11 4to is examined as it is here, it is no secret that it must have been written for the express purpose of being used as a textbook, although we don’t know who the student was. Nevertheless, being able to show off the oldest original Icelandic textbook designed for purposeful teaching is certainly something to write home about!

Uppsala 2022
Heimir Pálsson

Two *Eddas*

From the seventeenth century onwards, two works – related in content and yet entirely different – have been referred to as *Edda*. On the one hand is the collection of eddic poems most often called *Poetic Edda* in English, so named because they appear together in a manuscript that, due to a misunderstanding, was erroneously called *Edda Sæmundar fróða* ('Edda of Sæmundr the Learned').⁵ This collection contains a good many *goðakvæði*, poems about the heathen gods and events from their lives, as well as *hetjukvæði*, poems about heroes who lived in Europe during the Migration Period and after, who are for the most part forgotten except in these heroic poems from the Nordic world. Research on the main manuscript of *Poetic Edda* indicates that these poems may not have been gathered in one place until around 1275, an undertaking perhaps inspired by the earlier *Edda*. Certainly, some poems had been recorded considerably earlier, though likely not until late in the twelfth century or early in the thirteenth. Some, however, may have been compiled prior to the Christianisation of Iceland in the year 1000, and yet others long before that, in Norway.

The other *Edda*, often called Snorri's or Snorri Sturluson's *Edda* or *Prose Edda* in English, is likely the only one to have borne the name from the beginning.⁶ It is usually considered to have been written no later than the third decade of the thirteenth century, and is divided into four parts: the [*Prologuu*],⁷ which presents a theory of the origin of the heathen gods – Óðinn, Þórr and many others – who the text supposes were chieftains who migrated north to Scandinavia from Asia (hence the name *Æsir*) and later

⁵ It was a copy of the manuscript that now has the catalogue shelfmark GKS 2365 4to in the Árni Magnússon Institute in Iceland that was referred to as *Edda Sæmundi Multiscii*, though it may have been a widespread notion among 17th-century scholars that Sæmundur was the author of many ancient poems.

⁶ If the hypothesis p. 25 is accepted it is possible that the name *Edda* was given to the work by Snorri himself around 1240!

⁷ This introduction has no rubric of its own in DG 11 4to but in the studies it is conventionally called the *Prologue* or *Prologus*.

were deified.⁸ After this prologue comes the story of the creation of the world and the lives of these gods, all the way to *Ragnarøkkr* – the twilight of the gods at the end of the world. The title of this section, *Gylfaginning*, named for the deception of the Swedish king Gylfi, underscores the fact that this story is pure fiction.

A new section follows *Gylfaginning*, beginning among the heathen gods and calling upon them to impart their knowledge of poetry and the language of poetics. This section is called *Skáldskaparmál*, and is primarily a systematic collection of information pertaining to *kennings* and *heiti* that were considered suitable for use in court poetry. As we will later discuss, the beginning of *Skáldskaparmál* as it appears in most manuscripts is brought in closer connection to *Gylfaginning* in DG 11 4to.

The final section of *Prose Edda* consists of a poem, which Snorri composed in honour of the Norwegian king Hákon Hákonarson and his earl Skúli Bárðarson. This is a unique poem in excess of one hundred and two stanzas, written for the express purpose of – apart from heaping praise upon the rulers – exemplifying most varieties of poetic metre. The poem is called *Háttatal*, and it is not preserved anywhere else except here in *Prose Edda*. In DG 11 4to we only get 56 of the 102 stanzas. See pp. 143–144.

As will be discussed later, it is this work, consisting of *Prologus*, *Gylfaginning*, *Skáldskaparmál* and *Háttatal*, that was originally given the name *Edda*, no later than around 1300 and perhaps considerably earlier. There are, however, no sources that prove that Snorri himself ever used the title *Edda*.⁹ The collection of eddic poems, on the other hand, was given the name *Sæmundar-Edda* in the seventeenth century owing to a misunderstanding, whereby the poems were – by an even graver misunderstanding – erroneously attributed to Sæmundur Sigfússon the Wise, of Oddi. This name stuck and persists today, even in such sophisticated, high-quality editions as Sophus Bugge's from 1867. Snorri's *Edda* is the sole focus of our present discussion, though *Poetic Edda* is nevertheless mentioned frequently.¹⁰

⁸ The theory of the human origin of the gods is often associated with Euhemerus, a Greek philosopher around A.D. 300. That theory, called Euhemerism, was obviously well known in Iceland in Snorri's days. The etymological connection that *Edda* sees between Asia and the *Æsir* is pure fantasy, though not long ago the idea was proposed that the *Æsir* are named not for Asia but in fact Azerbaijan!

⁹ See hypothesis on p. 36.

¹⁰ This book refers to the eddic poems as they appear in *Íslensk fornrit Eddukvæði I–II* 2014, edited by Jónas Kristjánsson and Vésteinn Ólason.

Preserving Snorri's *Edda*

Snorri Sturluson's *Edda* is preserved either in part or in whole in several medieval manuscripts and their copies.¹¹ The list below provides an overview of the most significant of such manuscripts, ordered according to the letter designations used in the various editions and publications. Shelfmarks are given as well:

- **A** AM 748 I b 4to. Written ca. 1300. Facsimile in *Corpus Codicum Islandicorum Medii Ævi* 17 (Elias Wessén 1945). Text in *Edda* II 1852:397–500. For a description of the manuscript, see Finnur Jónsson, “Inledning” *Edda* 1931:xiv–xvi and xxxiii–xxxv.
- **B** AM 757 a 4to. Written ca. 1400. Text in *Edda* II 1852:501–572. For a description of the manuscript, see Finnur Jónsson, “Inledning”, *Edda* 1931:xvi–xvii and xxxv–xxxvi.
- **K** AM 755 4to. Paper manuscript in Ketill Jörundsson's hand (17c.). Cf. Faulkes 1979.
- **R** GKS 2367 4to. *Codex Regius (Konungsbók)*. Written 1300–1325. Facsimile in *Corpus Codicum Islandicorum Medii Ævi* 14 (Elias Wessén 1940). Text in *Edda* 1998, 1999 and 2005. For a description of the manuscript, see Finnur Jónsson, “Inledning”, *Edda* 1931:iv–v and xviii–xxv.
- **T** Utrecht 1374. *Codex Trajectinus*. Written ca. 1600. Paper copy of the medieval manuscript containing roughly the same text as R. Text in van Eeden *De Codex Trajectinus van de Snorra Edda* 1913 and *Edda* 1975. Facsimile in *Early Icelandic Manuscripts in Facsimile* XV (Anthony Faulkes 1985).
- **U** DG 11 4to. Written ca. 1300–1325. *Codex Upsaliensis*. Facsimile in *Snorre Sturlasons Edda* (Anders Grape 1962). Text in *Edda* II

¹¹ In Icelandic history, the Middle Ages are considered to last all the way until the year 1550, or the beginning of the Reformation. The majority of the most important parchment manuscripts are thought to be from the 13th and 14th centuries. There exist – or evidently existed – unusually many early manuscripts of Snorri's *Edda*, which goes to show just how widely used the work was.

1852:250–396 and *Edda* 1977. Normalised text in *Edda* 2012 and *Edda* 2013. – Paper copies of this manuscript are Marshall 14 and partly AM 157 8vo.

- W AM 242 f. *Codex Wormianus*. Written ca. 1350. Facsimile in *Corpus Codicum Islandicorum Medii Ævi* II (Sigurður Nordal 1931). Text in *Edda* 1924.

Three of these manuscripts, R, T, and W, contain such a similar main text of *Gylfaginning* and *Skáldskaparmál* that it is safe to consider all three manuscripts witnesses of the version of *Prose Edda* that this book calls SnK, and the manuscript itself GKS 2367 4to, designated K (*Konungsbók*, cf. *Codex Regius*) in order to distinguish it from GKS 2365 4to, the *Codex Regius* version of *Poetic Edda*, which the scholarship most often refers to as R (*Regius*). All references hereafter to manuscripts or their texts are made according to shelfmark.

The manuscripts AM 748 I b 4to and AM 757 a 4to preserve parts of *Skáldskaparmál* that prove to be of great utility in text editions and are important witnesses to how *Edda* was used for instructional purposes. Nevertheless, they do not seem to offer any specific information about how *Edda* as a whole is constructed.

The manuscript DG 11 4to, the Uppsala manuscript of *Edda*, is entirely unique insofar as it is the only old textual witness of an independent *Edda* version, which we will call SnU (the *Codex Upsaliensis* version).¹² That manuscript also stands out for the fact that it preserves independent material that certainly was not a part of the work as Snorri had written or imagined it, but had been inserted later.¹³ These insertions are an important source of information about how the manuscript was intended to be used at the time of writing, around the year 1300. Our discussion of each section follows the order in which the material is presented in the manuscript (inserted chapters are italicised):

¹² Paper copies and quotations in other publications show that this version was widely known, at least in western Iceland. Cf. e.g. Grape 1962:16.

¹³ Both R and W contain insertions or additions that certainly were not there from the beginning, but there these insertions (e.g. the Grammatical Treatises, the poem *Grottasöngur*, *Pulur*) are added into the text or after it with little or no introduction. In DG 11 4to, the insertions are clearly separated from the main text.

Prologus
 Gylfaginning 1
 Gylfaginning 2
 Skáldatal
 Genealogy of the Sturlungar
 List of lawspeakers
 Skáldskaparmál 1
 Skáldskaparmál 2
 Skáldskaparmál 3
 Appellations for women – Verses in courtly metre
 Háttalykill (Second Grammatical Treatise)
 List of verses in Háttatal
 Háttatal

Although all of the major manuscripts contain the same main sections of *Edda* and there is little difference among the texts themselves, the length of the *Prologue* varies considerably between Codices *Regius*, *Upsaliensis*, and *Wormianus*; *Háttatal* is partially missing from *Upsaliensis* and *Wormianus* has only stanzas 7–86.

We will refer to many editions of *Edda* in the chapters to come. As would have been done in medieval writings, we will save space here by referring to the most used editions by their year of publication:

Edda 1746 Göransson's edition
Edda 1818 Rasmus Kr. Rask's edition
Edda 1852 Volume two of the Árni Magnússon Committee's three-volume edition
Edda 1880–87 Volume three of the Árni Magnússon Committee's three-volume edition
Edda 1924 Finnur Jónsson's edition of *Codex Wormianus*
Edda 1931 Finnur Jónsson's edition for the Árni Magnússon Committee
Edda 1962 Grape's facsimile edition of DG 11 4to
Edda 1975 Árni Björnsson's school edition of *Codex Trajectinus*
Edda 1977 Grape *et al.*'s diplomatic edition of DG 11 4to
Edda 1998 Faulkes's edition of *Skáldskaparmál*
Edda 1999 Faulkes's edition of *Háttatal*
Edda 2005 Faulkes's edition of *Prologue* and *Gylfaginning*
Edda 2012 Heimir Pálsson's edition, with English translation by Anthony Faulkes
Edda 2013 Heimir Pálsson's Reykjavík edition.

DG 11 4to

Many thorough descriptions have been made of the DG 11 4to manuscript, and these will not be repeated here – only a few words are in order to honour our text. DG 11 4to is written on vellum, and consists of 56 leaves altogether. In recent times it was foliated wrongly, so that f. 1 is unnumbered and f. 2 is numbered f. 1. The pagination follows this mistaken foliation, and here we will refer to both page numbers and folio numbers.¹⁴

Fourteen calves sacrificed their lives to give us these 56 leaves, and an abundance of blank space in the manuscript suggests that the scriptorium did not want for resources. Like most manuscripts, DG 11 4to is constructed from bifolia gathered together into quires (also called gatherings), but the division of these gatherings is unusual; the first has ten leaves, the next five have eight, and the last one has six. As one scholar writes:

I have no good explanation to hand of why the first gathering has ten leaves, but it has occurred to me that originally the scribe had intended to bind this Edda of his ... up with some other book already written. But when he had got started on the first gathering, he reconsidered and decided that he was dealing with a separate book. But if this was so, he needed a flyleaf, since he had already begun to write on the leaf which would otherwise have to be f. 1r. How was he to find a solution? OK, he gets a new sheet and folds it round the quarto gathering that he has begun to write on, and then, when he has filled eight leaves, he continues writing on the second half of the new sheet and fills that and thus ends up with a ten-folio gathering in which the first leaf is completely blank and the text begins on f. 2r ... The outermost folios of this gathering are perhaps slightly smaller than the others as a result.¹⁵

¹⁴ When citing a manuscript, it is customary to refer to their leaves as *folia*, (f.), and the pages to the right and left of the spine as *recto* (r) and *verso* (v) respectively. F. 21 therefore means leaf 21, 21r the individual page on the right, and 21v the individual page on the left. This system has clearly caused librarians and readers some trouble, and individual page numbers are often written into the manuscripts. This is done in DG 11 4to, but the pagination only begins on f. 2r and the first leaf is not numbered. The final leaf in the book is therefore f. 56r and 56v, while the pages themselves are numbered 109 and 110. When referring to the manuscript, this book uses both folio and page number.

¹⁵ Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson 2009:343–344.

There is nothing to suggest that the last gathering was ever intended to be any longer than six leaves. The text ends on line 10 on f. 56r, and it does not appear that the scribe had any plans to write any more than the 56 stanzas. We will discuss various explanations for this later. Whatever the case may be, it seems clear that the scribe considered his job to be finished.

The dating of DG 11 4to to the early 14th century is based on both the handwriting and the orthography and word forms. The script is Gothic and the letter forms point to around 1300. The scribe was clearly acquainted with the *svarabhakti* vowel /u/, but only reveals this in inverse spellings such as *dótrr* and *móðr* instead of *dóttur* and *móður*. The long *i*-umlauted vowels /œ/ and /æ/ have merged, not to mention the short /ö/ sounds, /q/ and /ø/. All evidence points to the first part of the 14th century, particularly around the turn of the century. This places it among the earliest manuscripts of *Snorri's Edda*, i.e. GKS 2367 4to and AM 748 I b 4to.

The rubrics – two hypotheses

The Uppsala manuscript, DG 11 4to, is the only *Edda* manuscript to feature systematic coloured rubrics – mostly red – to introduce sections and chapters. Scholars seem to accept Rasmus K. Rask's argument (1818:9) that these rubrics are novel to DG 11 4to's exemplar; if the rubrics had been present in the archetype they most certainly would be found in more manuscripts than just this one. Most of the rubrics are short phrases of the type *Frá því er synir Burs drápu Ymi* ('About how Burr's sons killed Ymir') or in *Skáldskaparmál: Kenndr maðrinn* ('The man referred to'). Exceptions can be found in the very beginning and when the text turns to theoretical descriptions. Here we shall only examine the first and most important rubric, which introduces the manuscript itself.

In his study of the exemplar and its scribe, Lasse Mårtensson argues that traces of one exemplar from the early thirteenth century and another from nearer to the middle of the century can be found in DG 11 4to. My first hypothesis considers whether DG 11 4to could perhaps provide a more precise date for the later exemplar. The rubric in DG 11 4to, f. 2r (p. 1) reads:

Bók þessi heitir Edda. Hana hefir saman setta Snorri Sturluson eptir þeim hætti sem hér er skipat. Er fyrst frá ásum ok Ymi, þar næst skáldskapar mál ok heiti margra hluta, síðast Háttatal er Snorri hefir ort um Hákon konung ok Skúla hertuga.

This book is called Edda. Snorri Sturluson has compiled it in the manner in which it is arranged here. First it is about the Æsir and Ymir, next Skáldskaparmál ('Poetic Diction') and (poetical) names of many things.

Finally, Háttatal ('Enumeration of Verse Forms') which Snorri has composed about King Hákon and Duke Skúli.

It is nearly unknown among medieval manuscripts for the title of the book and the name of its compiler to appear at the very beginning. Of particular linguistic interest is the use of the present perfect instead of the simple past in the sentences *Hana hefir saman setta* and *Háttatal er Snorri hefir ort*. In modern Icelandic this would unambiguously indicate that the compiler and the other men mentioned were alive when the rubric was written. The case is not so clear cut in medieval Icelandic, though renowned specialist on the subject Marius Nygaard wrote in his *Norrøn syntax*: "Perfektum betegner en tilstand eller et forhold i nutiden som resultat af en forudgaaende virksomhed" ('The perfect tense describes a condition or situation in the present as a result of an action in the past') (1905:184). This holds true as a general rule, but the perfect can in fact play the role of the imperfect, as is the case in DG 11 4to: *Eptir þessi sögu hefir ort Þjóðólfr enn Hvinverski in Haustlǫng* ('Þjóðólfr of Hvinir has composed a passage based on this story in *Haustlǫng*') (*Edda* 2012: 94, 95) and *Eptir þessi sögu hefir ort Eilífr Guðrúnarson í Þórsdrápu* ('Eilífr Guðrúnarson has composed a passage based on this story in *Þórsdrápa*') (*Edda* 2012:96 & 97). At the time of writing, both poets were long dead. These are the only instances of the perfect used to refer to dead poets in the DG 11 4to text of *Skáldskaparmál*, and because both refer to a poem quoted at length in SnK but not at all in SnU, it is tempting to assume this to be the wording of a different manuscript, one which possibly contained both *Haustlǫng* and *Þórsdrápa*.

If the wording in DG 11 4to is to be interpreted as I suggest here, it would mean that the only possible time period for the writing of the exemplar is from 1238 to 1241. Skúli was promoted from earl to duke in 1237 and was executed in 1240. If the news of his death did not reach Iceland that year, the manuscript's *terminus ante quem* would be 1241, when Snorri was killed. Since Snorri had returned to Iceland from Norway as late as the summer of 1239 (*Sturlunga saga* I 1946:444), the most probable years of writing are 1239–1240.

Again, this hypothesis would mean that we have a good reason to believe that Snorri himself was at least an advisor in the creation of the rubric, and the name *Edda* could be his own appellation. Furthermore, he did not object to being mentioned not only as a poet, but as an initiative-taker in the work. And this leads me to the second hypothesis, regarding the reason why.

Snorri went to Norway in the summer of 1237, most likely in the hope of convincing the King that he himself was the best candidate for the position

of Earl of Iceland.¹⁶ He remained in Norway from the autumn of 1237 to the summer of 1239, mainly with Duke Skúli. The conflict between Skúli and his son-in-law King Hákon escalated rapidly during this time, and it seems as though Snorri placed his bet on the wrong horse. Duke Skúli gave Snorri the title of earl and Snorri then left for Iceland, against the explicit advice of the King.¹⁷

When Snorri thus returned home in the autumn of 1239, it was important for him to convince the King and Duke that he would make a reliable representative in Iceland. It is tempting to think that he hoped that *Háttatal*, together with works on Nordic poetry and religion, could possibly serve as weapons in this campaign, but there was a catch: The original plan had been to divide the 100 strophes of *Háttatal* equally between the king and his earl, but when all was said and done, closer to three fourths of the poem had been dedicated to Skúli and only slightly over one quarter to the King.¹⁸ The proportions were evened out, however, by stopping after the fifty sixth strophe.¹⁹

Therefore, the hypothesis is that Snorri himself decided to include 56 strophes from *Háttatal* with the commentary written by himself or his scribes.

On fol. 48v (p. 94) in DG 11 4to we find a new rubric: *Háttatal, er Snorri Sturluson orti um Hákon konung ok Skúla hertuga* ('*Háttatal* which Snorri Sturluson composed about King Hákon and Duke Skúli'). The past tense, *ort*, is used here, either because it was written this way in the manuscript containing the poem or because the scribe of the present exemplar (or the scribe of DG 11 4to) was so accustomed to the past tense in that connection that he used it automatically.

Those are merely hypotheses, but if they should prove correct, this means that the SnU-version of *Edda* is Snorri Sturluson's own in a significant way, and that he intended it as a political weapon. His goal, however, was never achieved.

¹⁶ The topic of Snorri's suitability as a representative of royal power in Iceland has been widely discussed, but this does not matter in the present connection.

¹⁷ This is the context of Snorri's most famous quotation: *Út vil ek!*

¹⁸ See Anthony Faulkes 1999:ix and Heimir Pálsson 2014a:189–192.

¹⁹ Guðrún Nordal (2001:124) points out that in the first 56 verses, Snorri provides examples of the most important variants of *dróttkvætt*, itself the most popular poetic metre.

The work and the author

The first leaf of the manuscript DG 11 4to in Carolina Rediviva is left blank. A talented hand – perhaps a monk – has sketched the likeness of a bishop on the reverse side. Someone, presumably later, captioned this image with the name Priamus, the blatantly pagan ancestral father of the Norse gods.²⁰ The text of the *Prologue* begins immediately following the red rubric discussed in the last chapter, on the front page of the second folio, or page 1 according to the more commonly accepted system of pagination. But the rubric gives us occasion to pause and mention a few points.

First of all, the title of the book itself, *Edda*, is worth some discussion. Various hypotheses have been put forward regarding the meaning of this name. Some have attempted to connect it with poetry, *óðr*, others with Oddi in Rangárvellir, where Snorri Sturluson grew up. One of the oldest hypotheses is that the name derives from the Latin verb *edo* – ‘I edit’ – in the same way that *kredda* (‘dogma, superstition’) derives from *credo* in Þrándr of Gata’s account of early Faroese Christianity in *Færeyingasaga*.²¹ We will not attempt to settle the matter of the name’s true meaning here, but it is worth pointing out that this last hypothesis coincides nicely with what was said of Snorri’s role; namely, that he “put the book together”. This phrase is not necessarily fully synonymous with the Icelandic verb *semja* (‘to compose’, in the sense of a literary, theatrical, or musical work), but rather a description of the process of creating a whole out of miscellaneous fragments that happen across one’s path. There exist unambiguous examples in Latin of the verbs *componare* or *compilare* (‘put together’) used to describe the task of the author. For this reason, we encounter little difficulty in considering this the correct interpretation of the name in the manuscript, and in later times Snorri is referred to as the author of *Edda* without hesitation. It makes no difference that *setja saman* could well have meant “to create from something”, just as *creator* does not necessarily

²⁰ Thorell 1997:xviii believes the picture to be from the 15th century, and the naming somewhat younger.

²¹ Regarding the name *Edda*, see Anthony Faulkes 1977:32–39 and the references to other interpretations.

mean *creator ex nihilo* ('creator from nothing'), but instead 'the one who brings order [to chaos]'.

The rubric makes a distinction between the act of compiling or putting together (*að setja saman*) and composing (*að yrkja*). Snorri composed ('orti') *Háttatal*, and that agrees with the words of his nephew Sturla, who describes in *Íslendinga saga* how Sturla Sighvatsson "[spent] long periods of time in Reykjaholt and put great thought into having books written according to those that Snorri put together" (*setti saman*) (*Sturlunga* I 1946:342). Similarly, *Hákonar saga* states: "svá kvað Snorri Sturluson í Háttatali" ('so composed Snorri Sturluson in *Háttatal*') (*Íslenzk fornrit* 31 2013:244). Ólafur Þórðarson also writes that Snorri composed ('kvað') (*Edda* 1852:412 and 422). The manuscript AM 748 4to says otherwise about *Skáldskaparmál*: the material used there was "found before in the poems of the major *skalds*, and Snorri had them compiled later" (*hefir síðan samanfæra látit*) (*Edda* 1852:428). Much later, in the 16th century, the *Oddaverjaannáll*²² also says that Snorri "put together *Edda*".²³

When two fourteenth-century *skalds*, Eysteinn Ásgrímsson and Arngrímur Brandsson, speak of "the rules of *Edda*", it is obvious that they are referring to the title of the work *Edda*. Moreover, by "the rules of *Edda*"²⁴ they seem to mean style and the usage of *kennings*, in which case they likely have in mind *Skáldskaparmál* specifically, and perhaps also the commentary on *Háttatal*. When Jón Guðmundsson the Learned in the seventeenth century speaks of *Edda* or *Eddas* in his manuscripts, however, he seems to be referring to *Gylfaginning*;²⁵ these two parts of the work are by no means always lumped together in the paper manuscripts from the 17th century. *Háttatal* is not attested in any independent manuscripts, neither on vellum nor on paper. There is nevertheless no question that the name *Edda* applies at least to *Gylfaginning*, *Skáldskaparmál* and *Háttatal* in DG 11 4to.²⁶

Many books and articles have been written about the "author" Snorri Sturluson (1148/49 – 1241), all of which have their basis in the same funda-

²² *Oddaannáll* and *Oddaverjaannáll* 2003:146.

²³ As the main subject of the present study is the manuscript DG 11 4to and not Snorri Sturluson's work as a whole, I have chosen to keep the chapter on the author very short (for a longer text see Heimir Pálsson 2014). Further biographical information about Snorri can be found in concise works on medieval Norse literature, e.g. Turville-Petre 1976, Foote and Wilson 1970, and the many monographs that have been written about him and his work.

²⁴ Eysteinn Ásgrímsson 2007:672; Arngrímur Brandsson 1915:334.

²⁵ Cf. Einar G. Pétursson 1998.

²⁶ The rubric says nothing about the *Prologue*. It is difficult to see whether the *Prologue* had accompanied one part of the text rather than another from the very beginning, and when SnK refers to what is said about mankind in the beginning of the book, it need not refer to any point further in the text than the introduction to *Gylfaginning*.

mental work, *Sturlunga*, in particular Sturla Þórðarson's *Íslendinga saga*. Sturla (d. 1284) was Snorri's nephew and wrote about him in *Íslendinga saga* and briefly in *Hákonar saga*, two to four decades after Snorri's death. All of Snorri's biographers have drawn conclusions about the man from his works. Here we will make no additions to the biography bookshelf, and instead only mention what seems to be of significant importance in connection to *Edda*.²⁷

Fosterage on the manor

It is more reminiscent of fiction than fact when *Sturlu saga*, a story in the *Sturlunga*-collection, describes an altercation between Sturla Þórðarson the elder (Hvamm-Sturla, d. 1183) and the reverend Páll Sölvason (d. 1185) in Reykjaholt. Páll's wife, Þorbjörg Bjarnadóttir, had grown sick and tired of the quarrelling:

Hon hljóp fram milli manna ok hafði kníf í hendi ok lagði til Sturlu ok stefndi í augat ok mælti þetta við: „Hví skal ek eigi gera þik þeim líkastan, er þú vill líkastr vera, – en þat er Óðinn?“ (*Sturlunga saga* I 1946:109).

She ran out among the men with a knife in her hand and thrust at Sturla's eye, saying, "Why shouldn't I treat you most like the figure you want to be – and that is Óðinn?"

Jón Loftsson (d. 1197), chieftain of the Oddaverjar family clan, subsequently became involved in the matter, ultimately forcing Sturla to reconcile with the reverend. The chieftain sealed the agreement with an offer to foster Sturla's son Snorri. Snorri was three years old when he moved into the central home at Oddi in Rangárvellir; he would never see his father again.²⁸

Snorri's foster-father Jón was not only the paternal grandson of Sæmundr Sigfússon the Wise (d. 1133); he was also the maternal grandson of the Norwegian king Magnús Barefoot. And the priest's wife, who in the year 1180 could describe Óðinn's appearance down to the last detail (by this point, Icelanders had been Christian for 180 years at the very least), had in

²⁷ For earlier discussion of the two versions of *Edda* see e.g., Müller 1941, Zetterholm 1949:5–11, Beck 2007, Sävborg 2012. Krömmelbein 1992 gives a concise comparison of the manuscripts.

²⁸ The fostering of a child was likely a very old Nordic practice whose purpose was to establish connections between powerful clans and thereby create some semblance of peace, a sort of balance of terror. Fostering the child of another was sometimes if not always considered a sign of submission. As an adult, Snorri indeed did end up in conflict with some of the Oddaverjar, though more often than not he benefitted from his connections.

a way become a significant determiner of fate in the life of the man who would later go on to amass the greatest source of knowledge of Óðinn and his lineage, to the delight of people across the Nordic world and beyond for generations to come.

It is often remarked that Snorri's upbringing in Oddi was a great stroke of luck for the field of Norse studies, and scholars have discussed at length the formal education that Snorri received there.²⁹ We will not dilate up on it here but instead merely underscore the fact that Snorri's work shows no signs of a classical education, i.e. in Greco-Roman theory or language. On the other hand, there is no question that it was at Oddi that he acquired most of the knowledge of the Norse tradition that appears in *Edda*.³⁰ There is a substantial difference between the Latin stylistics and metrics that Snorri's nephew Ólafr hvítaskáld Þórðarson (d. 1259) attempted to Icelandicise with his treatise on *málskrúðsfræði*, or rhetoric³¹, and that which Snorri systematizes in *Edda*. Even for *Háttatal*, no direct Latin model has been found.³²

²⁹ From sources on the education and upbringing of three men in Oddi, the bishops Þorlákur Þórhallsson (St. Þorlákur, b. 1133), Páll Jónsson (b. 1155), and Snorri Sturluson (b. 1179), scholars have envisioned a school: "The private school in Oddi at the end of the 12th century and other Icelandic schools at the beginning of the 13th are in no way different from educational centers on the European mainland. The same academic subjects were taught, the same texts and similar materials used, although Iceland's distance from the epicenter of European culture prevented Icelandic scholars from keeping up with the latest trends. But it is worth noting that they expressed their gratitude for what was handed down to them of the Latin tradition by thoroughly obscuring this relation" (Sverrir Tómasson 1996:12). It is interesting to compare this view with what Óskar Guðmundsson wrote about Snorri's schooling in Oddi, where he must have studied the seven liberal arts, both the trivium and quadrivium; he notes as well that "boys like Snorri" must have learned about poetics (2009:41–46). Sveinbjörn Rafnsson's 2016 book is one of the most recent on the topic.

³⁰ Halldór Halldórsson (1975) gave an account of the similarities between Latin linguistic concepts and the theoretical terminology of metrics in *Edda* (*Skáldskaparmál* and the commentary on *Háttatal*). He believes that various aspects can be traced back to Snorri's classical studies. Anthony Faulkes discusses Halldór's argument, wording his response strongly: "It seems that Snorri knew what classical treatises on language and rhetoric were like, but there is no indication that he ever actually read one. He argues his classification like them, but his categories are different. Both in his treatment of metrics and that of rhetoric he seems to have made no close use of Latin writers, though echoes of them can be discerned here and there (it is interesting that Snorri uses so many terms taken from elementary grammar and applies them to rhetoric and metre)." (1993:68). (Pp. 9–10 online: <http://www.vsnrweb-publications.org.uk/Sources-of-Skaldskaparmal.pdf>). – In the same article, Faulkes points to a possible connection between Aristotle's poetics and *Edda*, cf. Table 19, List of *kennings* for Óðinn, and the discussion there.

³¹ This term for rhetoric, *málskrúðsfræði*, is used in the Third Grammatical Treatise in the *Codex Wormianus* version of *Edda*, which is the work of Ólafr Þórðarson hvítaskáld.

³² Faulkes says about this: "While *Háttatal* more than any other of the writings attributed to Snorri is reminiscent in manner and style and approach of the learned Latin treatises (particularly in its opening), the influence of any specific work cannot be demonstrated

Sigurður Nordal's considerations of Snorri's education are formulated carefully and sensibly:

Mörgum getum hefur verið að því leitt, hve mikla menntun Snorri hafi hlotið í Odda, einkum hvort hann hafi lært þar latínu og aðra klerklega bókvísi. Þykir mér sennilegt að svo hafi verið, og Jón Loftsson hafi látið Snorra njóta líkrar fræðslu og hann hafði sjálfur hlotið, þó að þess sé hvergi getið, að Snorri hafi tekið neina vígslu, eins og sagt er um Jón ... og jafnvel Gissur Þorvaldsson ... Hitt er víst, að Snorri hefur numið þar íslensk lög til hlítar, þar sem hann er kjörinn lögsögumaður óvenjulega ungur að aldri, og ræturnar að ritstörfum hans má rekja beint að Odda, eins og oft hefur verið bent á. Það er ekki hætt við, að íslensk bókmenntasaga gleymi nokkurn tíma nafni Þorbjargar í Reykjaholti. (1973:50).

Many conjectures have been made about how much education Snorri received at Oddi, in particular whether he studied Latin and other ecclesiastical subjects. I believe that this was likely the case, and that Jón Loftsson gave Snorri instruction similar to what he himself had received, although nowhere is it mentioned that Snorri was ever initiated into the priesthood, as is said about Jón ... and even Gissur Þorvaldsson ... On the other hand it is certain that Snorri studied Icelandic law to the letter, as he was elected lawspeaker at an unusually young age, and the roots of his written work can be traced directly to Oddi, as has often been mentioned. There is no chance that Icelandic literary history will ever forget the name of Þorbjörg in Reykjaholt. (1973:50).

This book more or less accepts the premises put forth by Nordal. And as with Þorbjörg's role in shaping Snorri's legacy, nor should we forget the significance of Oddi's geographical location; the manor house there was located on the main thoroughfare, so that all sorts of people on all sorts of errands inevitably found themselves there for longer or shorter periods of time, where they sat about and shared news from home and abroad. Anyone who knew how to listen had a great deal to learn; after all, it isn't as if twelfth-century folk learned nothing at all unless they were able to read it!

Rising star

When Jón Loftsson died in 1197, Snorri stood to inherit nothing, as his foster-father had plenty of biological sons who were his legal heirs. In 1199, however, with his foster-brothers' support, Snorri married Herdís Bersadóttir, a priest's daughter from Borg in Borgarfjörður. When Bersi the Rich, as her father was called, eventually died, Snorri was finally positioned to

either on its form or its actual scheme of categorization and vocabulary" (*Edda* 1999:xiv–xv).

inherit his wealth. This served him well indeed, as Snorri's birth mother had squandered his share of his father's (i.e. Sturla's) inheritance. While any effort to estimate the present-day value of an estate that at the time was measured in *jarðarhundrað* would be complicated and imprecise at best, it is safe to say that Snorri and Herdís enjoyed fabulous wealth. But Borg was simply not enough for Snorri to realise his dreams of domination and power, and as his nephew, the contemporary historian Sturla Þórðarson, stated, Snorri had "fallen in love with the place" at Reykjaholt. When circumstances were finally such that Snorri gained control of Reykjaholt, he moved there while Herdís remained at Borg.³³ They never divorced, presumably because Snorri had no interest in sharing his inheritance from Bersi, and so Snorri was responsible for two large tracts of land in Borgarfjörður, to which Stafaholt and Svignaskarð were later added.

This was at least sufficient to cover his journey to Norway and lasted until his work on *Edda* was mostly finished, at which point he made an arrangement with a spectacularly wealthy widow, whereby Snorri would own half of her estate. Sturla the historian worded it thus: "Snorri then had more wealth than anyone else in Iceland" (*Sturlunga saga* I 1946:304). In other words, we are not talking about an impoverished writer, but indeed the richest man in all of Iceland.

The court poet hones his craft

The *skald* who, in the third decade of the thirteenth century, composed *Háttatal* in honour of King Hákon and his earl Skúli was by no means a newcomer to the skaldic poetry scene. If we are to believe *Skáldatal*,³⁴ Snorri wrote his first court poem about King Sverrir Sigurðarson of Norway. Sverrir died in the year 1202, which means that if this poem was indeed composed during the King's lifetime, Snorri must have been around the age of twenty. Nothing is preserved of this poem, and it could of course have been intended as a sort of elegy. Whatever the case may be, it is clear that whoever compiled *Skáldatal* believed that Snorri began his study of the art of court poetry at an early age. The next piece was written for Earl Hákon Fólkviðarson, known as Hákon *galinn* (d. 1216).³⁵ He was the half-brother of King Ingi Bárðarson, who was in turn Earl Skúli

³³ Out of respect for the people of the Middle Ages, this book preserves the old name Reykjaholt for the place that is now known only as Reykholt.

³⁴ This source will be discussed later. It is only preserved in one manuscript of *Heimskringla* and in the Uppsala manuscript of *Prose Edda*.

³⁵ In Modern Icelandic and Norwegian this epithet would mean 'crazy', but when used to refer to such a respected chieftain as Hákon, the meaning is closer to the original, i.e. 'enchanted' (from the verb *gala*, 'to chant, sing').

Bárðarson's half-brother. That is to say, it is not as if Snorri wrote for just any ruler. He singled out the richest and most powerful men to be the recipients of his praise poems, and was one of few poets who also wrote in praise of a powerful woman. It is known with certainty that Snorri wrote about Hákon, who, according to a verse in *Íslendinga saga* by Skáld-Máni (*Sturlunga saga* I 1946:269),³⁶ rewarded him handsomely for his efforts. Hákon wrote Snorri a letter, encouraging him to travel to Norway and promising him a good reception. It later emerges in Sturla's account that Hákon commissioned Snorri to compose a poem in honour of his wife, Kristín Nikulásdóttir.³⁷ Snorri had already showed an interest in travelling to Norway, but Hákon died before that plan could come to fruition. His voyage was thus postponed until 1218, when the young *skald* flew the nest for Norway, seemingly making a bee-line for Earl Skúli, who by then had become – along with the King Hákon Hákonarson (1204–1263), his later son-in-law and ultimately the orchestrator of the deaths of both Skúli and Snorri – the greatest chieftain in Norway.³⁸

In addition to delivering the poem *Andvaka* to Kristín Nikulásdóttir (and receiving a healthy reward for it!), Snorri also wrote two poems for Earl Skúli during his visit to Norway. Of these first five court poems, all

³⁶ Máni says: *fekk skald, með skildi ... sverð ok brynju* ('to the poet came sword, shield, and armour'). This would have been good compensation for a poet, as the items Máni names were considered treasures.

³⁷ Snorri delivered this poem to Kristín when she was married to her second husband, Eskil Magnússon, the Lawspeaker of West Gotland, which then belonged under the dominion of the Norwegian crown. The poem had the curious title *Andvaka* ('Lying awake'), which would indeed make a splendid title for a romantic poem; in Snorri's day, however, it was by all accounts forbidden by law to compose *mansöngskvæði* ('love poems') about women. It is therefore rather unlikely that Hákon *galinn* would have commissioned such a work. It should also be pointed out that *Andvaka* was the name of King Sverrir's bugle, and that Sverrir was married to a relative of Kristín's. The genealogies of Norwegian kings are not always completely reliable, but most likely this is what they took for granted in Oddi when Snorri was growing up: King Magnus the Barefoot was the illegitimate father of Þóra, mother of Jón Loftsson, Snorri's foster-father, but King Magnus was also the illegitimate father of Haraldr gilli who in his turn was the illegitimate father of Sigurðr munnr, the illegitimate father of King **Sverrir Sigurðarson**, who was grandfather of **Hákon the old Hákonarson**, son-in-law of the Earl **Skúli Bárðarson**, who was brother to the King **Ingi Bárðarson** and half-brother to the Earl **Hákon galinn**. The mother of those three brothers was Cecilia, half-sister to King Sverrir, who in his turn was married to Margrét Eiríksdóttir, the sister of **Kristín Nikulásdóttir's** mother. Kristín was first married to Hákon galinn and then to the Swedish lagman (judge) Eskil. According to the sources Snorri wrote poems to the names in bold! According to this the Oddaverjar believed Jón Loftsson and King Sverrir to be second cousins, and all the chieftains that Snorri praised in poetry were related or related through marriage to the Oddaverjar. – "Elementary, my dear Watson!"

³⁸ Hákon was crowned King of Norway in 1217, at the age of thirteen. He was the grandson of King Sverrir, and Skúli was an important advisor and later father-in-law to the young King. Skúli also appears to have been Snorri's main host during the latter's stay in Norway between 1218 and 1220, as the two were more or less the same age.

that has been preserved is a single refrain, i.e., a *klofastef* ('cleft refrain') from one of the poems about Skúli. This means that the poem would have been a *drápa* and a true test of Snorri's skill; in terms of metrics, it was indeed tricky to fit in a refrain consisting of three lines of verse where no two lines could fit together, as they all alliterated with the preceding measure.³⁹ Snorri received generous compensation for the poems about Skúli, perhaps even *too* generous; it is uncertain what exactly Snorri had done to have earned a ship as a reward from the king (and perhaps Skúli too?). It is entirely likely that this was done in the interests of binding Snorri to the king's aspirations for power.⁴⁰

By this account it is clear that Snorri already had considerable practice in court poetry by the time he returned home in 1220 and completed⁴¹ *Háttatal* in honour of his Norwegian hosts, though the surviving examples of these works provide no reliable evidence of their length. However, in order to be considered *kvæði*, each poem must have consisted of several stanzas (presumably at least 5–6, though perhaps many more) – and with a respectable amount of rhyme if properly done.

It goes without saying that in order to compose a court poem worthy of the title in the early 13th century, a comprehensive knowledge of poetic metrics and stylistics was required. For this, nothing less would suffice than the material that Snorri later compiled in *Edda*. The conclusion in this case is a simple one: Snorri would already have been quite proficient in the art and science of poetry by the time his education at Oddi came to a close, though doubtless he would have expanded upon this knowledge and enjoyed a great deal more practice in his craft after moving to Borgarfjörður.

It is entirely conceivable that some of what *Skáldskaparmál* has to say about *kennings* and *heiti* had been recorded on wax tablets or scraps of parchment during the twelfth century at Oddi. These writings may have

³⁹ It is an entirely different matter that the cleft refrain is rather unwieldy and an inferior piece of poetry, and later served as the basis for a libel suit after his return home from Norway (see *Sturlunga saga* I 1946:278–279 and the afterword of the same publication, pp. 279–286).

⁴⁰ For the reader familiar with this it is difficult to not think of the Gunnlaugr Serpent-Tongue from Borgarfjörður reciting a poem for King Sigtryggr Silkebeard, for which the King wished to reward Gunnlaugr with a prize of two ships. The royal treasurer, however, offers the King some sound financial advice: *Of mikit er þat, herra, aðrir konungar gefa at bragarlaunum gripi góða, sverð góð eða gullhringa góða* ('This is too much, lord; other kings give in reward of songs good keepsakes, fair swords, or fine golden rings') (*Íslenzk fornrit* 3 1938:76). This parallel elicited many a smirk when Snorri returned to Iceland with the ship and fifteen other great gifts in reward for his poetic efforts. – It is obvious that the locals at Oddi and even elsewhere in the general region now suspected Snorri of high treason.

⁴¹ I have chosen my wording here with the intent to remind us that there is nothing precluding the possibility that Snorri had begun writing *Háttatal* while still in Norway; the sources are simply silent on the matter.

comprised lists of various sorts, though it goes without saying that before that, this information would have been learned by rote. A great number of court poets/*skalds* – Norwegian and, later, Icelandic – predate the literary age, and the tradition would have been passed down orally in both poetry and informative passages.⁴² Alliteration and rhythm were especially likely to have been taught through examples from poetry. Anyone who had learned hundreds of examples of *dróttkvætt* verse would presumably have been able to automatically acquire rules that may seem rather complicated to us in the 21st century. We will touch upon this again in our discussion of *Skáldskaparmál*, but it is enough to mention here that poetic pursuits were without a doubt an important aspect of Snorri’s studies in Oddi.

Myth and theory

It is customary to regard *Gylfaginning* as the source of numerous *kennings* in court poetry. It is nonetheless prudent to take this approach with a grain of salt. Only a handful of *stories* from *Gylfaginning* appear in *kennings*, as we will discuss later in greater detail. On the other hand, it was necessary to know the names of myriads of gods, goddesses and other deities (valkyries in particular) in order to create or understand a great many *kennings* for men and women. No specific stories of Freyr or Njörðr are needed in order to understand the *kennings skjald-Freyr* (‘shield-Freyr’) and *Hildar veggs hregg-Njörðr*; it is enough to know that when a *kenning* associates a god with a weapon or stormy weather, and that weapon or weather has already been associated with a valkyrie, then that god’s name in the *kenning* refers to a warrior. Thus, *Hildir* can either refer to a valkyrie or simply to battle, *Hildar veggr* (‘Hildir’s wall’) is a shield, the *hregg* (‘rain/snowstorm’) of the shield is battle, and the god *Njörðr* in a *kenning* is a warrior. By a similar token, no specific stories are needed to know that *gullmens Friðr* (‘Friðr of the golden necklace’) refers to a woman; a goddess becomes a mere mortal when associated in a *kenning* with an item of jewellery. Later we will examine some examples of *kennings* that are based on myths we know from *Gylfaginning* and *Skáldskaparmál*, as well as *kennings* evidently based on some unknown tale. But such examples are few, and it seems far-fetched to think that *Gylfaginning* was compiled in order to explain the language of poetry. It seems much more likely that the stories and lore in

⁴² In comparison with what is said here about notes, it is worth mentioning Gunnar Karlsson’s and Helgi Skúli Kjartansson’s hypothesis regarding lists that were worked from in *Grágás* (see Helgi Skúli Kjartansson 2009), and Peter Foote’s hypothesis about the collection of miracle tales for the *Alþingi* in 1200: “It is most likely that these testimonies were delivered on individual papers (letters), as was typical” (2003:clxxiii).

Gylfaginning that pertain to the lives of the pagan gods were retained out of respect for the forefathers' cosmology and belief system.

If Snorri did learn tales of the heathen gods at Oddi, that would have been in part and not least because both children and adults were told these tales to pass the time, like any other fairy tale or heroic epic, but there is also evidence that imagery from the world of the gods was quite useful as a device in poetry. When the praise poem *Noregs konunga tal* was compiled in honour of Jón Loftsson during Snorri's youth in Oddi, it was evident that people were unabashedly aware that Jorð was a bedfellow of Óðinn and mother to Þórr. Norway might therefore be called *Þundar beðja* ('wife/mistress of Þundur', i.e., Óðinn) or *Hárs víf* ('High's wife'), just as the winter might be called *Fáfnis galli* ('damage of Fáfnir') or *snáka stríð* ('snakes' struggle'), the warrior *fólk-Baldr* ('battle god') and battle itself *fleina flaug* ('flight of spears'); the *kenning* tradition was, after all, alive and well. On the other hand, it is conceivable that Snorri took the initiative of arranging the stories and lore about the lives of the heathen gods according to some sort of story line, which could be achieved with the help of *Völuspá*, and making it a part of the collection of lore that already existed in poems like *Grímnismál* and *Vafþrúðnismál*. As expected, the stories were widely passed around in the telling of various storytellers but varied little after they had been committed to writing, as we know from studies of folkloristics in later centuries.

Prologus to Edda

In DG 11 4to, the Uppsala manuscript of Snorri's Edda, every chapter begins with an individual rubric, and the main sections are also mentioned in the major rubric on f. 2r, which introduces the work as a whole. The one exception is the first chapter, *Prologus*, which has no rubric of its own and is not mentioned in the introductory one.

All of the main manuscripts of *Edda* contain some introduction, but the very beginning is missing from GKS 2367 4to and Utrecht 1374, and *Prologus* is much longer in AM 242 fol. – scholars believe that important elements have been added there.

The question of whether Snorri himself actually composed *Prologus* has long been an apple of discord. However, the authorship question is not an important issue as far as we are concerned. There is nothing in *Prologus* in DG 11 4to that conflicts with the other parts of *Edda*, but on the other hand there is nothing in the other chapters that suggests any connection with *Prologus*. It is quite probable that the very earliest version of *Edda* included some introduction, but the theory that Snorri first offered the euhemeristic explanation of the heathen gods as a way to escape criticism from the church is not convincing.⁴³

Prologus begins with the creation of the world, presented very much in the same way as in the Book of Genesis, and then separates into three short chapters: *Hversu greind er veröldin í þrjú staði* ('How the world is divided into three areas'), *Frá því er Óðinn kom á norðrlönd* ('About how Óðinn came to northern lands') and *Frá því er Óðinn kom í Svíþjóð ok gaf sonum sínum ríki* ('About how Óðinn came to Sweden and gave his sons rule').

Prologus in SnU is around 1,000 words long, and 2,700 words in SnK. This indicates a significant quantitative difference, but the following example reveals how similar the texts in some cases are, leaving little doubt of a common archetype.

⁴³ Cf. Viðar Pálsson 2008. – Anthony Faulkes (1977) argued very convincingly for using the paper copy of GKS 2367 4to, AM 755 4to to fill in the missing part of that version. That text shows, as does the rest of *Prologus*, that there is a close connection between SnU and SnK, which of course supports the theory that *Prologus* was to some extent Snorri's work.

Table 1. The nature of Earth

DG 11 4to <i>Edda</i> 2012:6 & 7	GKS 2367 4to <i>Edda</i> 2005:3
<p>Þat undruðust þeir er jorðin ok dýr höfðu saman náttúru í sumum hlutum, svá ólíkt sem þat var.</p> <p>Þat er eitt er jorðin er grafin⁴⁴ í háum fjalltindum ok spretr þar upp vatn ok þurfti þar eigi lengra at grafa en í djúpum dal. Svá er ok dýr eða fuglar, at jamlangt er til blóðs í höfði sem í fótum.</p> <p>Qnnur náttúra er sú jarðarinnar at á hverju ári vex á henni gras ok blóm ok á sama ári fellr þat. Svá ok dýr eða fuglar at því vex hár eða fjaðrar ok fellr á hverju ári.</p> <p>Þat er en þriðja náttúra jarðarinnar at hon er opnuð þá grœr gras á þeiri moldu er efst er á jorðunni. Þeir þýddu björg ok steina móti tönnum ok beinum.</p> <p>Svá skilðu þeir af þessu at jorðin væri kvik ok hefði líf með nokkurum hætti, er hon fœddi ǫll kvikvendi ok eignaðist allt þat er dó. Þangat til hennar tölðu þeir ættir sínar.</p> <p>They were amazed that the earth and animals had common characteristics in some things, being so different.</p> <p>This is one that the earth is (green) dug on high mountain peaks and water springs up there and there was no need to dig further there than in a deep valley. So it is too with animals and birds, that it is just as far to blood in the head as in the feet.</p> <p>It is a second property of the earth that each year vegetation and flowers grow on it and it falls each year. So it is too with animals and birds, that hair or feathers grow on them and fall each year.</p> <p>It is the third property of the earth that [when] it is opened, then grass grows on the soil that is uppermost on the earth. They interpreted rocks and stones as the equivalent of teeth and bones.</p> <p>They understood from this that the earth was alive and had life after a certain fashion, since it fed (gave birth to?) all creatures and took possession of everything that died. To it they traced their ancestry.</p>	<p>Þat hugsuðu þeir ok undruðusk hverju þat mundi gegna at jorðin ok dýrin ok fuglarnir höfðu saman eðli í sumum hlutum ok var þó ólíkt at hætti. Þat var eitt eðli at jorðin var grafin í háum fjalltindum ok spratt þar vatn upp ok þurfti þar eigi lengra at grafa til vaz en í djúpum dolum. Svá eru ok dýr ok fuglar, at jafnlangt er til blóðs í höfði ok fótum.</p> <p>Qnnur náttúra er sú jarðar at á hverju ári vex á jorðuni gras ok blóm ok á sama ári fellr þat allt ok fólmar. Svá eru ok dýr ok fuglar, at þeim vex hár ok fjaðrar ok fellr af á hverju ári. Þat er hin þriðja náttúra jarðar þá er hon er opnuð ok grafin þá grœr gras á þeiri moldu er efst er jorðunni. Björg ok steina þýddu þeir á móti tönnum ok beinum kvikvenda. Af þessu skilðu þeir svá at jorðin væri kyk ok hefði líf með nokkurum hætti, ok þat vissu þeir at hon var furðuliga gomul at aldartali ok máttug í eðli. Hon fœddi ǫll kvikvendi ok hon eignaðisk allt þat er dó. Fyrir þá sök gáfu þeir henni nafn ok tölðu ættir sínar til hennar.</p>

⁴⁴ *Græn* ('green') is miswritten here in the manuscript for *grafin* ('dug'), presumably due to a misreading.

It is interesting that between *Prologus* and *Gylfaginning*, SnK tells the tale of a Swedish king Gylfi and a certain vagrant woman, Gefjun. The tale of Gefjun is in fact the same one that we find in *Ynglinga saga* in *Heimskringla*, where she is depicted as a woman sent by Óðinn in search of territory. Both works describe how Gefjun, along with four oxen that she begot with a giant, ploughed a swathe of land away from Sweden and formed from it the Danish island of Zealand.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ It seems that the narrator in SnK takes this Gylfi and Gefjun to be the King Gylfi and goddess Gefjun who appear in *Edda*, and thus uses the tale with the source, a stanza by Bragi the Old. Remarkably, Bragi's text mentions the oxen's *ennitungl* ('the forehead's moon, eye'), a formidable *kenning* that never turns up in *Skáldskaparmál*. The tale is most likely a later addition to the text in SnK. – (See *Edda* 2005:7; *Edda* 1995:7; *Íslensk fornrit* 26 1941:14–15).

Gylfaginning 1

When Gylfi's visit to Ásgarðr comes to a close in DG 11 4to, a new story begins suddenly and without introduction. Some publishers and editors, among them Rasmus Kristian Rask, have removed some of that material from the SnK version of *Skáldskaparmál* and called it *Bragaræður* ('Speeches of Bragi'). As will later be seen, however, it is obvious that an editor of SnU at some point wished to closely connect the tales of Gylfi with the chapters that he removed from *Skáldskaparmál* (chiefly those chapters that deal with Óðinn and Þórr). In this way and others, the editor successfully emphasises that the part of *Edda* that deals with traditional lore and the part that deals with the language of poetry are two independent works. Hereafter I shall refer to *Gylfaginning* 1 and 2 (abbreviated Gylf 1 and Gylf 2).⁴⁶ What we shall now call Gylf 1 is the entirety of *Gylfaginning* as it appears in SnK: the story of how three Æsir deceive the Swedish King Gylfi⁴⁷ into believing their version of the story of the earth, the gods, and mankind, from creation to *Ragnarøkkr*.⁴⁸ The three Æsir – High, Just-As-High, and Third – are frequently interpreted as a triune version of Óðinn, but are described in *Gylfaginning* as kings in the palace Hávahöll.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ I have previously used the terms Scene 1 and Scene 2 of *Gylfaginning*, as have Maja Bäckvall and Lasse Mårtensson.

⁴⁷ He is referred to as Gylfi in SnK, and said to be a king. But given the internal time frame, Snorri could hardly have meant the same Gylfi who bestowed Óðinn with land in Sweden, as is told in the *Prologus*; several generations appear to elapse on Earth during an Æsir lifetime. Of course, it must also be mentioned that time is not quite linear in the realm of the fantastic. – Gylfi in fact introduces himself as Gangleri when he arrives in Ásgarðr, thus clearly intending to trick the Æsir. In SnU this character is referred to as Gylfir, which of course is a variant of the same name, but in a different inflectional category, and is said to be a man and not a king. The pseudonym Gangleri ('the Wayweary') is the same in both versions.

⁴⁸ In the normalised spelling, the end of the world is called either *Ragnarøk* or *Ragnarøkkr*. *Ragnarøk* occurs frequently in *Poetic Edda*, while *Prose Edda* more commonly uses *Ragnarøkkr*. The former is usually understood to mean the *downfall* of the gods, whereas the latter is understood as the *twilight* of the gods (cf. Wagner's *Götterdämmerung*). Haraldur Bernharðsson (2007) makes a strong case for *Ragnarøkkr*, the variant we encounter here, as the older and more original form.

⁴⁹ The palace's name is possibly a play on words: *sá hann háva höll* ('he saw a high palace') becomes *sá hann Hávahöll* ('he saw Hávahöll') (*Edda* 2005:7–8, cf. *Edda* 2012:10; the



Gangleri and the gods

Perhaps the most often copied Icelandic drawing and used in a number of Edda-publications and in histories of literature, but the original is in DG 11 4to. It is supposed to have been created shortly after 1300. The copy we have on the front page was made by Ólafur Brynjólfsson some 460 years later and shows that the original had been reflected as in a mirror!

In the manuscript the picture is situated on folio 26v. which was obviously for some time the last page of a book containing mainly *Gylfaginning*.

Much has been written about *Gylfaginning* over the past century which we will not discuss here. A widely accepted opinion regarding Snorri's *modus operandi* can be found worded thus in Finnur Jónsson's 1931 edition:

[...] Snorri's primary sources were, as was to be expected, the three Eddic poems *Völuspá*, *Vafþrúðnismál* and *Grímnismál*, along with *Skírnismál*, to a lesser degree *Hymiskviða* [...] But [...] he (has) far from always indicated the verse that he has used. The indication is very arbitrary, much as is the case with the skaldic verses in *Heimskringla* (Finnur Jónsson 1931:liv).⁵⁰

This description's main strength is that it does not presuppose any sources other than those that we know today. Scholars of medieval Icelandic literature often seem to operate under the assumption that the corpus is a closed system from which nothing has been lost and to which nothing has been added, consisting largely of those texts that we currently know.

This description is however not without its weaknesses. In some cases, there are no possible sources in *Poetic Edda* for some of the stories that appear in either version of *Prose Edda* (e.g., the story of the cow *Auðhumla*). In other cases, Snorri's accounts of events and characters are entirely at odds with the versions in *Poetic Edda* (e.g., *Völuspá* and *Prose Edda*'s portrayal of *Viðar's* revenge). Finnur Jónsson's remark about the fortification builder and the birth of *Sleipnir* is enlightening in this regard: “[...] Snorri has probably had an oral tradition here, and understood that the contents hung together with *Vsp.* 23ff. and therefore quoted *Vsp.* 25–26” (Finnur Jónsson 1931:liii).⁵¹

The tale about the fortification-builder will be discussed later, but the expositors of *Eddukvæði I* 2014:297 cautiously summarise the explanations: “Here two myths seem to have been combined: the war with the *Vanir* (cf. *Gylf*, ch. 23, and *Yngl*, ch. 4) and a story of a builder who built a fortification for the *Æsir* (cf. *Gylf*, ch. 42 [...])”. This hardly seems a matter of any uncertainty, and Snorri sometimes spun long yarns for which we cannot cite a single poem as a possible source. Take for example the story

name of the palace does not appear in SnU). The palace is also referred to by name in *Hávamál* (stanza 164): *Nú eru Hávamál kveðin | Háva hǫllu í* (“Now the words of the High One are recited in the Hall of the High One”) (*Eddukvæði I*, 2014:355).

⁵⁰ “[...] Snorres hovedsagelige kilder har, som vænteligt var, været de 3 eddadigte *Völuspá*, *Vafþrúðnismál* og *Grímnismál*, samt *Skírnismál*, i mindre grad *Hymiskviða* [...] Men [...] han (har) langtfra altid anført de vers, han har benyttet. Anførselen er meget vilkårlig, ganske som tilfældet er i *Heimskringla* med skjaldevers” (Finnur Jónsson 1931:liv).

⁵¹ “[...] Snorre har vel her haft en mundtlig overlevering, og han har vel forstået, at indholdet hang sammen med *Vsp.* 23ff., og derfor deraf citeret *Vsp.* 25–26” (Finnur Jónsson 1931:liii).

of Þórr's journey to Útgarða-Loki, one of the best-known in *Gylfaginning*. To this effect, Finnur Jónsson writes that the source was likely "the oral tradition, delivered in Snorri's brilliant style" (*Edda* 1931:liii).⁵²

This touches upon an extremely interesting but difficult matter: What exactly was Snorri's role in connection with *Gylfaginning*? During his boyhood in Oddi, Snorri had doubtless listened to tales of the old gods, told in vivid colour by seasoned storytellers. He would have been similarly well acquainted with many eddic poems via oral tradition and the written word, though not necessarily as we know them today. For example, he never mentions *Vafþrúðnismál* by name in SnU, and in SnK the *jötunn*⁵³ Vafþrúðnir is mentioned only once. Many of the verses in *Gylfaginning* are nevertheless from the didactic collection that we know as *Vafþrúðnismál*.

It does not require much imagination to guess that Snorri's first project was an editorial job. His intention as an editor was likely to arrange the myths that he had access to in a natural chronological order, creating a coherent narrative where events proceed more or less logically from one another. Furthermore, he had to stage this narrative in the form of dialogues, in a setting where we could expect such conversations to have taken place. This was no simple task. As elsewhere in the realm of the fantastic, time in the world of the gods is not linear; we cannot say with any certainty when events occur in relation to each other. A good example of this quandary that Snorri presumably had to contend with is the aforementioned tale of the fortification builder and the war between the Æsir and the Vanir. Let us imagine that Snorri did indeed have more than one version of the story to work with. According to one, the fortification builder requested a lovely lady in exchange for his services – perhaps Freyja herself, the goddess of fertility. This in itself poses no problem, but then we hit a snag: According to what is described of the Vanir war in *Ynglinga saga*, Freyja, her brother Freyr, and their father Njörðr were all taken hostage by the Æsir in order to secure peace after the war. The fortification builder could therefore not have demanded Freyja as payment as she was not yet among the Æsir. Considerable concessions must obviously be made to the requirement for historical accuracy, and so we will allow a vague reference to *Völuspá*'s version of events to suffice here. After all, *Gylfaginning* is not and never was a history text.

Though not a historic, it nevertheless is a story that requires the teller to bring coherence to myths and legends that otherwise have precious little to do with each other. Let us refer to the previous example: The dialogue

⁵² “[D]en muntlige overlevering i Snorres overlegne stilkunst” (1931:liii).

⁵³ As there is no good translation to use for the *jötunn*-family (being now giants, but then lovers of the gods) we in most cases choose to use the Icelandic word.

between Gylfi and the three-headed god deals for some time with people and places of note in the world of the gods. That part of *Gylfaginning* closes with an overview of the best of the best, summarised in a verse from *Grimnismál* that proclaims Skíðblaðnir the best among ships, and Sleipnir the best among horses. An astute narrator could take advantage of this in order to advance his story, and that is exactly what we see here. Indeed, Gangleri's next question asks about all that possibly can be told of Sleipnir. The god-trio answers with the tale of the fortification builder. But Gangleri does not allow this digression to derail his train of thought, and he then asks about all that can be told of the good ship Skíðblaðnir.

And so the stories proceed, as the author/editor artfully crafts a context that manages to explain away any contradictions that might emerge and disrupt the sense of coherence.⁵⁴

The best-known examples of medieval learned treatises call to mind precisely such images of an unversed pupil (*discipulus*) asking questions of a learned master (*magister*).⁵⁵ There is hardly any doubt that it is the original author or editor of *Edda* who creates the dialogue and assembles the great stage in the high palace. And he is ingenious enough to create a dialogue involving four men, not merely two. In the beginning of *Gylfaginning*, High, Just-As-High, and Third are all similarly active. As the story progresses, High seems to gain ground and drown out his brothers, the other two heads of the three-headed god. At this exact point it is interesting to compare the SnU and SnK versions.

Gangleri's questions and remarks are usually introduced very succinctly: "Gangleri asks", for example, though occasionally they are more explicit: *Petta eru mikil tíðindi er nú heyri ek. Furðu mikil smíð er þat ok hagliga gert* (*Edda* 2005:12). ('This is important information that I have just heard. That is an amazingly large construction and skilfully made' *Edda* 1995:12). In a similar way "High answers" or "then says Third" most often seems to suffice to introduce the Æsir's response, though they occasionally follow up with informative passages pertaining to the traditional lore. One example of such is the explanation of the names for Óðinn, as told by High to Gangleri in Table 2.

⁵⁴ These stories can be found in *Edda* 2012:60 and 62 (in English on 61 and 63); *Edda* 2005:34–36; *Edda* 1991:34–37.

⁵⁵ See e.g. Anne Holtsmark 1958a and 1958b "Dialog" and "Didaktisk litteratur".

Table 2. High explains various names of Óðinn

<i>Edda</i> 2012:36 & 38	<i>Edda</i> 2012:37 & 39
Hár segir: Mikil skynsemi er at rifja þat vandliga upp, en þó er þat skjótast at segja at flest heiti hafa verit gefin af þeim atburðum at svá margar eru greinir tungna í veröldinni, þá þikkjast allir þjóðir þurfa at breyta nafni hans til sinnar tungu til bænaferlis sjálfum sér. En sumir atburðir til þessa heita hafa gerzt í ferðum hans ok er þat fært í frásagnir, ok muntu eigi mega fróðr maðr heita ef þú skalt eigi kunna at segja frá þessum stórtíðindum.	High says: It is very instructive to go closely into all this, but to put it most briefly, most names have been given him as a result of the fact that with all the branches of languages in the world all nations find it necessary to adapt his name to their language for praying for themselves. But some events giving rise to these names have taken place in his travels and have been made the subject of stories, and you cannot claim to be a learned person if you are unable to tell of these important happenings.

When we examine these editorial inserts in SnU and SnK, it comes to light that the total number of words in SnU is just above 1400, and just below 2290 in SnK. However, the content and wording of the texts are so alike that they must have one and the same origin.

This gives occasion to examine once more the content and word count in the two versions.⁵⁶ One method of comparison is based on the component sections of *Gylf* 1, as seen in Table 3.

Table 3. Component sections of *Gylf* 1

Chapters in SnU	Contents	Word count in DG 11 4to	Word count in GKS 2367 4to
Episode 1, ch. 7–16	The creation of the world and its organisation. The golden age of the Æsir. The creation of men and dwarfs. Major places in the world of the gods.	1,927	2,694
Episode 2, ch. 17–24	Presentation of the Æsir and Vanir. Dwellings of the gods. Loki and his children. The goddesses. Freyr and Gerðr.	4,502	5,169
Episode 3, ch. 25	Nourishment and entertainment in Ásgaðr.	629	796
Episode 4, ch. 26–29	Building the fortification and its consequences. Þórr's adventures.	3,033	4,889
Episode 5, ch. 30	Baldr's death. Loki's punishment.	943	1,808
Episode 6, ch. 31	<i>Fimbulvetr</i> and <i>Ragnarøkkr</i> . New earth.	799	1,403

⁵⁶ I first presented a similar count of words in the online essay *Tertium vero datur* 2010, and later in *Edda* 2012:xliv–xlvi. There I made the mistake, however, of attempting to employ the same method for the text as a whole. This did not seem to provide me with a reliable picture, as I believe there to be another explanation for the difference in the length of the texts in *Gylf* 2 from in *Gylf* 1.

If we first look only at the total word count, we see that SnK is approximately 40% longer than SnU (16,759 words versus 11,833). But this does not tell the whole story. If we take the former three episodes together, SnK is merely 20% longer. The latter three taken together are on the other hand a full 70% longer in SnK. Episodes one through three consist primarily of introductions of people and places, while episodes four through six are generally characterised by tales of events.

This disparity fits nicely with the theory that there were at least two editors of DG 11 4to.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, we still lack any explanation for why such significant material as *Gylfaginning* is shortened so crassly.

Let us now look at some examples from each of the six episodes of *Gylf* 1.

Episode one

High, Just-As-High, and Third begin their tale with the creation of Earth: Disorder is brought into order, the *cosmos* is born from *chaos*. This account of the creation story differs from *Völuspá*, where the earth is said to either rise up from the sea or be lifted up out of it. In *Edda* the earth is instead created from the remains of the *Ur-giant* Ymir.⁵⁸ Although the wording is slightly different, there is no doubt that both versions of *Edda* are based on the same source, as can be seen in the examples in Table 4.

⁵⁷ See in particular Sävborg 2012.

⁵⁸ This agrees closely with the very few *kennings* we know that refer to the sky as *Ymis haus* ('Ymir's skull'), the earth as *Ymis hold* ('Ymir's flesh'), and the sea as *Ymis blóð* ('Ymir's blood'). Of the new world that arises after *Ragnarøkkr*, High says: *Upp skýtr jörðunni ór sænum ok er hon græn ok ósánir akrar* (*Edda* 2012:84; *Edda* 2005:53) ('The earth will shoot up out of the sea and it will be green and crops unsown') cf. *Völuspá*, *Sér hon upp koma | þóru sinni | jörð ór ægi | iðjagræna* (*Eddukvæði* I 2014:306). This is in similar accord with Snorri's own description of the new world in *Háttatal*: *Skaut jörð ór geima* (stanza 13) – that is to say, if he isn't instead describing the experience of a voyager sailing between Iceland and Norway, seeing land rise up from the sea!

Table 4. The cow Auðhumla

SnU <i>Edda</i> 2012: 16 & 18, 111 words; <i>Edda</i> 2012 17 & 19	SnK <i>Edda</i> 2005:11, 163 words
<p>Þá mælti Gangleri: Hvar bygði Ymir, eða við hvat lifði hann?</p> <p>Hár svarar: Næst var þat er hrím draup at þar varð af kýrin Auðumla. Fjórar mjólkár runnu ór spenum hennar, ok fœddi hon Ymi.</p> <p>En kýrin fœddist er hon sleikti hrímsteina er saltir váru. Ok hinn fyrsta dag er hon sleikti, kom ór manns hár, annan dag höfuð, hinn þriðja allr maðr, er Búri hét, fōðr Bors, er átti Beyzlu, dóttur Þoǫlþorns jōtuns. Þau áttu þrjá sonu: Óðin, Vili, Vé. Ok þat ætlum vér, segir Hár, at sá Óðinn ok hans brœðr munu vera stýrandi heims ok jarðar. Ok þar er sá eptir herrann er vér vitum nú mestan vera.</p> <p>Then spoke Gangleri: Where did Ymir live and what did he live on?</p> <p>High replies: The next thing was, when the rime dripped, that from it came into being the cow Auðumla. Four rivers of milk flowed from its udder, and it fed Ymir. But the cow fed as it licked the rime-stones, which were salty. And the first day as it licked, there came out a man's hair, the second day a head, the third a complete man, who was called Buri, father of Borr, who was married to Beyzla, daughter of the giant Þoǫlþorn. They had three sons, Óðinn, Vili, Vé, and it is our opinion, says High, that this Óðinn and his brothers must be rulers of the world and the earth, and he remains the lord there, whom we now know to be greatest.</p>	<p>Þá mælti Gangleri: Hvar bygði Ymir, eða við hvat lifði hann?</p> <p>Næst var þat þá er hrímit draup at þar varð af kýr sú er Auðhumla hét, en fjórar mjólkár runnu ór spenum hennar, ok fœddi hon Ymi.</p> <p>Þá mælti Gangleri: Við hvat fœddisk kýrin?</p> <p>Hár segir: Hon sleikti hrímsteinana er saltir váru. Ok hinn fyrsta dag er hon sleikti steina, kom ór steinimum at kveldi manns hár, annan dag manns höfuð, þriðja dag var þar allr maðr. Sá er nefndr Búri. Hann var fagr álitum, mikill ok máttugr. Hann gat son þann er Borr hét. Hann fekk þeirar konu er Besla hét, dóttir Þoǫlþorns jōtuns, ok fengu þau þrjá sonu. Hét einn Óðinn, annarr Vili, þriði Vé. Ok þat er mín trúa at sá Óðinn ok hans brœðr munu vera stýrandi himins ok jarðar; þat ætlum vér at hann muni svá heita, svá heitir sá maðr er vér vitum mestan ok ágæztan, ok vel megu þér hann láta svá heita. (Cf. <i>Edda</i> 1995:11).</p>

If we are to assume that the SnU text is an abridgement of SnK, we are hard pressed to explain the omission of the description of Búri, or the flattery of Borr's sons. Upon Gangleri's further inquiry, Hár confirms this version of the creation story with an informative passage:

Table 5. Unexpected abbreviations

SnU <i>Edda</i> 2012:18 & 20, <i>Edda</i> 2012:19	SnK <i>Edda</i> 2005:12
<p>Hár svarar: Kringlótt er jörð, ok liggir um enn djúpi sær, ok með þeim ströndum gáfu þeir byggð jötnum. En fyrir innan á jörðina gerðu þeir borg fyrir ófriði jötna umhverfis jörðina, ok höfðu þar til brár Ymis ok kölluðu borgina Miðgarð. Þeir koptuðu heilanum í loptið ok gerðu af skýin. Svá sem hér segir:</p> <p>Ór Ymis holdi var jörð um sköpuð en ór sveita sjór b. ór b. b. ór. h. en ór h.h.</p> <p>High replies: The earth is circular, and round it lies the deep sea, and along the shores they gave giants dwellings. But on the earth on the inner side they built a fortification round the world against the hostilities of giants, and for it they used Ymir's eyelashes, and they called the fortification Miðgarðr. They threw his brains into the sky and of them made the clouds. As it says here:</p>	<p>Þá svarar Hár: Hon er kringlótt útan, ok þar útan um liggir hinn djúpi sjár, ok með þeiri sjávar ströndu gáfu þeir lönd til byggðar jötna ættum. En fyrir innan á jörðunni gerðu þeir borg umhverfis heim fyrir ófriði jötna, en til þeirar borgar höfðu þeir brár Ymis jötuns, ok kölluðu þá borg Miðgarð. Þeir tóku ok heila hans ok koptuðu í lopt ok gerðu af skýin, svá sem hér segir:</p> <p>Ór Ymis holdi var jörð of sköpuð, en ór sveita sjár, björg ór beinum, baðmr ór hári, en ór hausi himinn.</p> <p>From Ymir's flesh was earth created, and from blood, sea; rocks of bones, trees of hair, and from his skull. the sky. (<i>Edda</i> 1995, 13).</p>

It is surprising to see these abbreviations in *Grímnismál* in DG 11 4to.⁵⁹ In medieval Icelandic manuscripts, we mostly encounter two methods of reducing the total length of a text (and thus saving parchment): standard abbreviation and sporadic contraction. The most frequently-encountered form of abbreviation is the replacement of a word or name with a single letter, e.g., *M* for *maðr* ('man') or *Magnús* in a text that frequently mentions a person of that name. In these cases, the same letter was used for the same name more or less consistently throughout the manuscript. There are some exceptions, such as when a manuscript says *s hann* or *hún s* ('s he' or 'she s'), where it cannot be known whether *s* stands for *segir* ('says') or *sagði* ('said') (or *m* for *mæli*, 'speaks' or *mælti*, 'spoke').

⁵⁹ For further discussion of these abbreviations, see Lasse Mårtensson and Heimir Pálsson 2008 and Maja Bäckvall 2013:213–239.

It is however utterly impossible to let *b* stand indiscriminately for *björg* ('rocks'), *bein* ('bone'), or *baðmr* (poet. 'tree'), and *h* for *hár* ('hair'), *haus* ('skull'), or *himinn* ('sky'), as in this case, anyone unfamiliar with the verse would have no chance of cracking the code! What we have here might be a phrase or quotation that occurs more than once – usually a refrain – that is contracted in every reiteration. This is the case for some quotations from *Völuspá* in DG 11 4to. In DG 11 4to, however, in this case, it is not a refrain that is contracted, but a stanza from *Grímnismál*, the content of which appears only once in the entire poem. And therein lies the rub: It is almost inconceivable that any scribe would have considered contracting the measures as they appear in SnK, so that what remains are the letter abbreviations in DG 11 4to. On the other hand, the scribe in question may not have recognised the verse, but had at his disposal the text of a person familiar with it, and who had jotted down short notes with the intention of later writing the verse out in full. The possible transcription of these incomplete notes may account for the abbreviations found in DG 11 4to. We would understandably have our doubts if no other abbreviations appeared throughout the manuscript, but in this case, it is safe to maintain that the scribe of DG 11 4to could not have had in front of him the text as it appears in SnK. The contraction theory is thus rendered useless in this context, and we can say with certainty that the two versions of the *Edda* did not originate letter for letter from the same exemplar.

Episode two

Both versions of *Edda* present the people and places that populate the world of the gods in very similar ways, though some amusing variations certainly emerge. Such is the case with the story of Njǫrðr and Skaði. Skaði, the daughter of a giant and in the role of a goddess associated with skiing and the wilderness, marries the sea god Njǫrðr (*extrema se tangunt!*). As the SnU-version tells it, they had trouble agreeing on a place to settle, but ultimately decided to divide the year between locations. The arrangement was such that they would spend nine of the twelve intervals that compose the year – one version calls these intervals nights, the other winters – in the mountains, and the remaining three by the sea. But some other, possibly later scribe must have taken umbrage with this apparent inequity, and thus divided the time spent in their respective home regions equally (nine : nine). One explanatory hypothesis says that the original ratio of 9:3 corresponds nicely with the nine months of winter and three of summer in the Nordic region; eventually this origin story describing the division of

seasons was forgotten, and replaced by a new variant in which Njörðr and Skaði receive equal shares of the year.⁶⁰

There is otherwise little lexical variation in the second episode, except in the story of the marriage of Freyr and Gerðr. Compare as a case in point the beginning of this story in both versions of *Edda*, with the introduction to the eddic poem *Skírnismál*. The ritualistic curses that Freyr's minion Skírnir casts upon Gerðr to force her into marrying Freyr play a central role in the poem; however, there is simply no mention of any of this in the *Edda*. The story begins in the three aforementioned sources, as shown in Table 6.

To begin with the most obvious, the difference in length between the two *Eddas'* versions of this story is considerably greater than elsewhere in *Gylfaginning*: SnK's account is three times as long as SnU's. Although some of the same uncommon words (e.g., *mikillæti*, 'presumption') occur in both versions, there are nevertheless noticeable differences. For example, Freyr is captivated by Gerðr's hair in SnU, and by her hands in SnK. The marriage proposal itself, which is the very crux of the poem, does not even enter the picture in *Edda*. To make a long story short, the most straightforward assumption seems to be that SnK relies on a different version of the story to SnU: This is a case of two different accounts of the same story, written down by two different listeners or told by two different storytellers – perhaps of two different genders.⁶¹

⁶⁰ See SnU *Edda* 2012:40 (trans. p. 41), SnK *Edda* 2005:23–24 (trans. *Edda* 1995:23–24). *Edda* 1931:30 shows the emendation of 'winters' (*vetr*) to 'nights' (*naetr*), which is subsequently taken up in the 1995 and 2005 editions. – The explanatory hypothesis is borrowed from Dillmann 1992.

⁶¹ In fact it is extremely difficult to imagine that a female storyteller or editor would have devoted as much attention to Skírnir's curses upon Gerðr as the poem does. We might even be tempted to ask if it is a man's interpretation that we get in the poem, and a woman's in the prose. This would support the idea that it was quite likely a woman or women who recited tales of the old gods for young Snorri Sturluson during his childhood at Oddi.

Table 6. Freyr and Gerðr

<p>SnU Edda 2012:54 & 55</p> <p>Gymir hét maðr en kona hans Órboða, hann var berggrisa ættar. Dóttir þeira var Gerðr, allra kvenna vænst.</p> <p>Þat var einn dag at Freyr gekk í Hliðskjálf ok sá um heim allan, ok er hann leit í norðrætt, þá sá hann á einum bæ mikit hús, ok þar gekk kona út, ok lýsti af hári hennar bæði lopt ok lög, ok svá hefndi honum þat mikillæti er hann settist í þat it helga sæti at hann gekk brott fullr af harmi. Ok ekki svaf hann, er hann kom heim ok þeir Skírnir hittust. Þá fór Skírnir at hitta Gerði ok kom saman ástum þeira.</p> <p>Hann fekk Skírni í hendr sverð sitt.</p> <p>There was a man called Gymir and his wife Órboða; he was of the race of mountain giants. Their daughter was Gerðr, of all women the finest.</p> <p>It happened one day that Freyr went into Hliðskjálf and saw over all the world. And when he looked in a northerly direction, then he saw a large house on a certain homestead, and a woman went out there and from her hair light shone over both sky and sea. And his punishment for his presumption in having sat in that holy seat was that he went away full of</p>	<p>SnK Edda 2005 30–31</p> <p>Gymir hét maðr en kona hans Aurboða. Hon var berggrisa ættar. Dóttir þeira er Gerðr, er allra kvenna er fegrst. Þat var einn dag er Freyr hafði gengit í Hliðskjálf ok sá of heima alla, en er hann leit í norðrætt, þá sá hann á einum bæ mikit hús ok fagrt, ok til þess huss gekk kona, ok er hon tók upp höndum ok lauk hurð fyrir sér þá lýsti af höndum hennar bæði í lopt ok á lög, ok allir heimar birtusk af henni. Ok svá hefndi honum þat mikla mikillæti er hann hafði sezk í þat helga sæti at hann gekk í braut fullr af harmi. Ok er hann kom heim, mælti hann ekki, hvárki svaf hann né drakk; engi þorði ok krefja hann orða. Þá lét Njörðr kalla til sin Skírni, skósvein Freys, ok bað hann ganga til Freys ok beiða hann orða ok spyrgja hverjum hann væri svá reiðr at hann mælti ekki við menn. En Skírnir kvazk ganga mundu, ok eigi fúss, ok kvað illra svara vera ván af honum. En er hann kom til Freys, þá spurði hann hví Freyr var svá hnippinn ok mælti ekki við menn. Þá svarar Freyr ok sagði at hann hafði sét konu fagra, ok fyrir hennar sakar var hann svá harmsfullr at eigi mundi hann lengi lifa ef hann skyldi eigi ná henni.</p> <p>Ok nú skaltu fara ok biðja hennar mér til handa ok hafa hana heim hingat hvárt er faðir hennar vill eða eigi, ok skal ek þat vel launa þér.</p>	<p>Eddukvæði I 2014:380</p> <p>Freyr, sonr Njarðar, hafði einn dag setzk í Hliðskjálf og sá um heima alla. Hann sá í jötunheima ok sá þar mey fagra, þá er hon gekk frá skála fýður síns til skemmu. Þar af fekk hann hugsóttir miklar.</p> <p>Skírnir hét skósveinn Freys. Njörðr bað hann kveðja Frey máls. Þá mælti Skaði...</p>
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<p>grief, and he did not sleep when he got home and he and Skírnir met. Then Skírnir went to see Gerðr and united their loves. He handed over to Skírnir his sword.</p>	<p>Þá svarar Skírnir, sagði svá at hann skal fara sendiferð en Freyr skal fá honum sverð sitt. Þat var svá gott sverð at sjálft vásk. En Freyr lét eigi þat til skorta ok gaf honum sverðit. Þá fór Skírnir ok bað honum konunnar ok fekk heitit hennar.</p>	
<p>Translation of SnK: There was someone called Gymir, and his wife Aurboda. She was of the race of mountain-giants. Gerð is their daughter, the most beautiful of all women. It happened one day that Freyr had gone into Hlidskialf and was looking over all worlds, and when he looked to the north he saw on a certain homestead a large and beautiful building, and to this building went a woman, and when she lifted her arms and opened the door for herself, light was shed from her arms over both sky and sea, and all worlds were made bright by her. And his punishment for his great presumption in having sat in that holy seat was that he went away full of grief. And when he got home he said nothing, he neither slept nor drank; no one dared to try to speak with him. Then Niord sent for Freyr's servant Skírnir, and bade him to go to Freyr and try to get him to talk and ask who he was so angry with that he would not speak to anyone. Skírnir said he would go though he was not keen, and said unpleasant answers were to be expected from him. And when he got to Freyr he asked why Freyr was so downcast and would not speak to anyone. Then Freyr replied and said he had seen a beautiful woman and for her sake he was so full of grief that he would not live long if he were not to have her. And now you must go and ask for her hand on my behalf and bring her back here whether her father is willing or not, and I shall reward you well for it. Then Skírnir replied, saying that he would undertake the mission, but Freyr must give him his sword. This was such a good sword that it would fight on its own. But Freyr did not let the lack of that be an obstacle and gave him the sword. Then Skírnir went and asked for the woman's hand for him and received the promise from her. (<i>Edda</i> 1995:31–32).</p>		

Episode three

The third episode of *Gylf* 1 is short, and stands out from the others in that its contents are based almost exclusively on the two didactic poems *Grímnismál* and *Vafþrúðnismál*. The first episode in DG 11 4to (or its exemplar) passes over the descriptions of the wind, summer, and winter, likely by mistake; only now in the third episode do we find a description of the wind. Summer and winter are not discussed at all in SnU's *Gylfaginning*, but *heiti* associated with them appear there in *Skáldskaparmál*, and are clearly based on the same source as in SnK. The verses from *Poetic Edda* that are used here in *Prose Edda* can be considered identical and in general contain no surprises.

Episode four

There is no shortage of action in the fourth episode and so we are spoiled for choice when selecting examples for comparison. For our current purposes, two noteworthy events make the grade. The first is the story of the fortification-builder, an episode we mentioned earlier.

As SnK tells it, it was *snimma í ǫndverða bygd goðanna* (*Edda* 2005:34)⁶² that a builder of *jǫtunn* stock came to Ásgarðr and offered to build a fortification that would protect the gods' dwelling from mountain giants. There is no room to digress here about the fatal strategic misstep of employing your archenemy to see to the defence of the land, but all signs nevertheless pointed to the Æsir upholding their end of the deal and handing over Freyja, Sól and Máni to the builder. But the trickster Loki was compelled to interfere; assuming the likeness of a mare, he seduced the *jǫtunn*'s workhorse, thus preventing the contractor from completing his job at the agreed-upon time. It was only when he "flew into a giant rage" that the Æsir finally realised that the builder was indeed a giant (*jǫtunn*). Thereupon Þórr grabbed his hammer and thus resolved matters, with dramatic repercussions.

⁶² "It was right at the beginning of the gods' settlement, when the gods had established Midgard and built Valhall, there came there a certain builder and offered to build them a fortification in three seasons so good that it would be reliable and secure against mountain-giants and frost-giants even though they should come in over Midgard" (*Edda* 1995:35).

Table 7. Sleipnir is born

SnU <i>Edda</i> 2012:62 & 63	SnK <i>Edda</i> 2005:35–36
<p>En Loki hafði þá fõr til Svaðilfera at hann bar fyl. Þat var grátt at lit ok hafði átta fœtr. Sá hestr var beztr með guðum ok mǫnnum. Svá segir í <i>Vǫluspá</i>:</p> <p>þ. g' c. a. A. r. s. Gin h. gvþ, ok v. þat g. hverr hefði lopt lævi blandit eða ætt jǫtuns óskmey gefna.</p> <p>But Loki had such dealings with Svaðilferi that he gave birth to a foal. It was grey in colour and had eight legs. This horse was the best among gods and men. So it says in <i>Vǫluspá</i>:</p> <p>Then went [all the powers] to their judgment seats, most holy gods, and deliberated on this, who the sky had with darkness tainted and to the giant's family given the beloved maiden.</p>	<p>En Loki hafði þá ferð til Svaðilfœra at nokkvoru síðar bar hann fyl. Þat var grátt ok hafði átta fœtr ok er sá hestr beztr með goðum ok mǫnnum. Svá segir í <i>Vǫluspá</i>:</p> <p>Þá gengu regin ǫll á rǫkstóla, ginnheilug goð ok of þat gættusk hverr hefði lopt allt lævi blandit eða ætt jǫtuns Óðs mey gefna.</p>

The verses in *Vǫluspá* referred to here appear to deal with the war between the Æsir and the Vanir, and the events leading up to this. After a peace deal, Njǫrðr, Freyr, and Freyja presumably leave the Vanir to live among the Æsir. The catch to this is that if the breach of oath in *Vǫluspá* did indeed refer to the fortification builder, Freyja would not yet have been among the Æsir. It is therefore impossible that Loki or any other Æsir could have promised her to the fortification builder in recompense.⁶³

The omission of the word *allt* in the fifth measure of SnU's version can be attributed to scribal error, as can the substitution of *Óðs mey* ('Óð's maiden') with *óskmey* ('beloved maiden') in the eighth measure. Such things can happen. But unless the reader of SnU has previously encountered the refrain written out in full, and therefore knows what the contradictions stand for, the first four lines are wholly inscrutable. These contradictions occur on page 23 (f. 13r) in DG 11 4to. The same refrain appears earlier, namely on page 8 (f. 5v), abbreviated in a different way: *þa gengv v. þ. A. f. g. h. g. ok vm þat g.' h.'* That is the first time that this refrain

⁶³ See the Prologue, *Eddukvæði* I 2014:111–12.

appears in all of *Gylfaginning*, and for this reason the contradiction should not be allowed — even less so the second time on f. 13r, as the question of what exactly this contradiction means has not yet been answered. Unlike in *Gylfaginning*, this is not the first time that the refrain occurs in *Völuspá*, and therefore nothing prevents its contradiction in a manuscript that contains the poem in its entirety (this is in fact the case in GKS 2365 4to). We can easily imagine that the scribe of one exemplar of DG 11 4to had before him *Völuspá* in its entirety, but when he reached these stanzas, he unwittingly consulted the poem at the wrong place and transcribed the contradictions instead of writing the words in full. The scribe of DG 11 4to then copied this himself, and presumably had quite a hard time guessing the meaning of the abbreviations. For this reason, we see c. instead of v. (which was likely supposed to be r = *regin* [‘the powers’] initially).⁶⁴

We encounter the same kind of mistake in the second refrain in *Völuspá*, *Vituð ér enn eða hvat?* which as a matter of fact only occurs once in *Gylfaginning*. It is written “v. eiṅ ok h.” in DG 11 4to, and is probably quite opaque to a reader unacquainted with *Völuspá*.⁶⁵

Two contradictions in *Gylfaginning* remain unmentioned (*Skáldskaparmál* will be discussed later). Both refer to the eddic poem that we know as *Grímnismál*, though the poem is never named as such in *Prose Edda*. At the very most, it might say: *svá segir hér* (‘so says here’).⁶⁶ It is unclear

⁶⁴ In his commentary in *Edda* 1977, G.F. Kallstenius assumes the scribe merely took the liberty of “[contradicting] some of the words in a familiar part of a poem with the first letter of these words” (1977:125), while transcribing an already very familiar poem. — It should have been enough for Kallstenius to see that *regin* (‘powers’) is abbreviated either as c. or v., depending on the circumstances. This refrain occurs four times in *Völuspá* in GKS 2365 4to. It is written full the first time, but is abbreviated the subsequent three times (though never in exactly the same way, and never as it is abbreviated in DG 11 4to; see *Norraen fornkvæði* 1965 [1867], 12–14). — Bäckvall’s thorough discussion (2013) covers all of these examples, and deserves mention in addition to Mårtensson and Pálsson 2008.

⁶⁵ When this refrain appears for the first time in GKS 2365, it is written *uitoḅ er en e. hvat*, in which *e.* is a conventional abbreviation for *eða* (‘or’). The refrain is contracted on several occasions after this (*Norraen fornkvæði* 1965 [1867], 15–18).

⁶⁶ In DG 11 4to we have on the one hand the example shown in Table 5. On the other hand, we have the example of the hall *Glitnir*, where SnU says: *hann er g. s. ok silfri s. En þar Forseti byggvir f. d.* (*Edda* 2012:46), (“It is held up by golden pillars and by silver ones likewise. And there Forseti dwells most days”, *Edda* 2012:47), and SnK says: *hann er gulli studdr | ok silfri þakðr it sama, | en þar Forseti | byggvir flestan dag* (*Edda* 2005:26). However you look at it, DG 11 4to appears to have omitted the participial adjective *þaktr* (‘covered’) in the description of the hall’s silver interior. In all other respects, these contradictions likely have their basis in a text similar to what we see in SnK. Since neither version refers by name to *Grímnismál* (which otherwise is mentioned a few times in *Gylfaginning*), this may indicate that an editor (or scribe?) had obtained this knowledge from other sources. The stanza describing Earth’s creation is found in *Vafþrúðnismál* in one version (*Eddukvæði* I, 2014:359), and both that stanza and the next one (to which *Prose Edda* also refers) are found in AM 748 1 b (*Edda* 1852:431).

what conclusions, if any, may be drawn from these shortenings. Nonetheless, it seems safe to maintain that the respective archetypes of SnU and SnK could very well have been based on the same exemplar, though if this is indeed the case, all of these contradictions had been corrected (i.e., expanded) in the SnK archetype. Even if we assume that the SnU text had originated as a rewriting of the SnK text, we nevertheless must provide philological explanations for the abbreviations in DG 11 4to.

If it is indeed to be assumed that the contradictions of these verses in SnU originate in rewritings throughout its evolutionary process, we must imagine quite a surreal development whereby a scribe shortens a text that he presumably understands, but in a way that is incomprehensible. It is easier to imagine instead that the shortenings have their basis in errors made very early on in the process. Once again, we can refer to Lasse Mårtensson and Heimir Pálsson's (2008) conclusion that we can scarcely expect many generations of the manuscript to have existed between DG 11 4to and the version in which the abbreviated verses appear in their original context:

If it had been a matter of many generations, one might expect that someone would have noticed that these writings were insufficient and filled them out to make them understandable in their new context (whose corresponding verses exist in other manuscripts as well as *Prose Edda*) (p. 153).⁶⁷

The fourth episode of *Gylf* 1 boasts two of the best-known stories of the god Þórr: the tale of his journey to Útgarða-Loki, and the tale of his battle with the Midgard Serpent. These stories are splendidly recounted in both the SnU and SnK versions of the manuscript, though they are both much shorter in SnU.⁶⁸ This is interesting to compare with the stories of Þórr that had been removed from *Skáldskaparmál* to *Gylf* 2, which will be discussed later. There the difference in length is extremely small. The simplest (and perhaps most likely) explanation is presumably that which assumes that two storytellers were at work in the examples from *Gylf* 1, or perhaps the

There they only serve as an explanation of the *kennings* referring to Ymir's flesh, blood and skull: *þat er rétt at kalla jorð hold Ymis en sæ blóð hans, en heim [haus hans, en] Miðgarð brár hans, en ský heila hans*. – This may indicate that the verses lived quite an independent life, and possibly appeared in various other collections.

⁶⁷ ”Om det hade varit fråga om många led hade man väntat sig att någon hade noterat att dessa skrivningar var otillräckliga och fyllt ut dem för att göra dem begripliga i sitt nya sammanhang (som motsvarande strofer är i övriga handskrifter med SnE)”. – See also Lasse Mårtensson, *Skrivaren och förlagan* 2013:266.

⁶⁸ According to Heimir Pálsson's word count (2012:xlvi–xlvii), the journey to Útgarða-Loki is over one-third shorter in SnU than in SnK, while the battle with the Midgard Serpent is less than half the length in SnU as in SnK.

same narrator on different occasions.⁶⁹ At times it may have been appropriate to contract a text or a passage of text, while other occasions afforded more opportunity to allow the art of storytelling to flourish. This is how Þórr's battle with the Midgard Serpent begins and ends, as told by both versions (here the translations are allowed to suffice):

Table 8. Þórr battles Midgard Serpent

SnU <i>Edda</i> 2012:73 & 75	SnK <i>Edda</i> 1995:46–47
<p>After this episode Þórr turned to go home. He plans now to find the Miðgarðr serpent and arrived at a giant's that is called Eymir.</p> <p>...</p> <p>The giant changed colour when he saw the serpent, and the sea flowed in somewhat. But when Þórr grasped his hammer, the giant fumbled for his bait-knife and cut Þórr's line at the gunwale. And the serpent sank into the sea. But Þórr threw his hammer and struck at the giant's ear so that he was hurled against the gunwale and struck off his head by the rowlocks. But Þórr waded ashore.</p>	<p>It is no secret, even among those who are not scholars, that Thor achieved redress for this expedition that has just been recounted, and did not stay at home long before setting out on his journey so hastily that he had with him no chariot and no goats and no companionship. He went out across Midgard having assumed the appearance of a young boy, and arrived one evening at nightfall at a certain giant's; his name was Hymir.</p> <p>...</p> <p>It is said that then the giant Hymir changed colour, went pale, and panicked when he saw the serpent and how the sea flowed out and in over the boat. And just at the moment when Thor was grasping his hammer and lifting it in the air, the giant fumbled at his bait-knife and cut Thor's line from the gunwale, and the serpent sank into the sea. But Thor threw his hammer after it, and they say that he struck off its head by the sea-bed. But I think in fact the contrary is correct to report to you that the Midgard serpent lives still and lies in the encircling sea. But Thor swung his fist and struck Hymir's ear so that he plunged overboard and one could see the soles of his feet. But Thor waded ashore.</p>

Although Þórr's encounter with the Midgard Serpent itself is largely the same in SnU and SnK, the endings differ in significant ways. The speculations about the true fate of the Midgard Serpent are unique to SnK, while on the other hand only SnU insists upon relieving the *jötnunn* of his head. We can nevertheless say with a high degree of confidence that it is the same story in both versions. Hár certainly seems to question the serpent's

⁶⁹ D.O. Zetterholm's (1949) thorough examination of Þórr's journey to Útgarða-Loki tackles the question of possible contraction in SnU on the one hand and expansion in SnK on the other. He arrives at an intriguing conclusion: "My answer shall be: expansion in [SnK] and shortening in [SnU]." He had also previously reflected: "[SnU] represents the Icelandic aesthetic style and is linguistically terse. Is this not how the stories were recited and how Snorri had heard or read them?" (ibid. 48). Here Zetterholm compares narrative styles, as Müller (1941) had done before him in his doctoral thesis, concluding that DG 11 4to contained a more original text than GKS 2367 4to. The Second World War brought an end to Müller's promising academic career, which had only just begun, and he never had the opportunity to develop his ideas any further.

death after all, without the serpent encircling the sea, the earth would collapse on its side. The narrator of SnU on the other hand wanted Þórr to see his job through to the end, but had to make do with the simple bumping-off of a harmless *jötunn*.

Episode five

As far as the content of the fifth episode is concerned, there is hardly any discrepancy at all between SnU and SnK. Although both versions describe the tragedy of Baldr's death in nearly identical ways, the description in SnK is almost twice the length on average of that in SnU. At some places in the story this difference is even greater. On the other hand, the difference in style and narrative mode between the SnU and SnK versions is greater than we encounter anywhere else in *Gylf* 1. Indeed, this difference is so great that it is difficult to imagine that one version has its basis in the other. A single example will suffice and is shown in Table 9.

Compared to the examples shown earlier, the general mood of these texts is markedly different, and at any rate it seems very unlikely that whoever created the shorter text had in front of him the longer and more eloquent one. Much more likely is that the shorter text comprises brief notes that the scribe had jotted down after listening to a deft piece of storytelling. All of this is subjective reasoning, however, and it is certainly possible that a pupil who had been instructed to paraphrase the story ended up producing a much shorter account, such as the one we find in SnU. But now, as before, some important questions remain unanswered: For what reason would something like this have been done? Why is the subject matter all of a sudden treated so differently here, in the most dramatic episode, to before? Is it not easier to imagine that a seasoned literary craftsman developed the emotionally-laden story we find in SnK from the notes in SnU?

Table 9. Baldr's death

SnU <i>Edda</i> 2012:76 & 77. 79 words	SnK <i>Edda</i> 2005: 46. 206 words
<p>Höðr tók mistilteininn ok skaut í gegnum Baldr, ok var þat mest óhappskot með guðum ok mǫnnum. Nú sá hverr til annars ok allir með grimmmum hug til þess er gert hafði. En engi mátti þar hefna í gríðastaðnum.</p> <p>Allir báru illa harminn, en Óðinn verst. Var þar grátr fyrir mál. Þá spurði Frigg hverr sá væri með ásum er eignask vildi ástir hennar ok ríða á Helvega at ná Baldri meðr útlausn. Hermóðr, son Óðins, fór ok reið Sleipni.</p>	<p>Höðr tók mistiltein ok skaut at Baldri at tilvisun Loka. Flaug skoti í gøgnum hann ok fell hann dauðr til jarðar, ok hefir þat mest óhapp verit unnit með goðum ok mǫnnum. Þá er Baldr var fállinn, þá fellusk ǫllum ásum orðtök ok svá hendr at taka til hans, ok sá hverr til annars ok váru allir með einum hug til þess er unnit hafði verkit. En engi mátti hefna, þar var svá mikill gríðastaðr. En þá er Æsirnir freistuðu at mæla, þá var hitt þó fyrr at grátrinn kom upp, svá at engi mátti ǫðrum segja með orðnum frá sínum harmi. En Óðinn bar þeim mun verst þenna skaða sem hann kunnit mesta skyn hversu mikil aftaka ok missa Ásunum var í fráfalli Baldrs. En er goðin vitkuðusk, þá mælr Frigg ok spurði hverr sá væri með ásum er eignask vildi allar ástir hennar ok hylli, ok vili hann ríða á Helveg ok freista ef hann fái fundit Baldr ok bjóða Heju útlausn, ef hon vill láta fara Baldr heim í Ásgarð. En sá er nefndr Hermóðr inn hvati, sveinn Óðins, er til þeirrar farar varð. Þá var tekinn Sleipnir, hestr Óðins, ok leiddr fram, ok steig Hermóðr á þann hest ok hleypti braut.</p>
<p>Höðr took the mistletoe and shot it through Baldr, and that was the unluckiest shot among gods and men.</p> <p>They all bore their grief badly, but Óðinn worst. Then Frigg asked who there was among the Æsir that wished to earn all her love and ride the road to Hel to get Baldr back by ransom. Óðinn's son Hermóðr went and rode Sleipnir.</p>	<p>Hod took the mistletoe and shot at Baldr at Loki's direction, The missile flew through him and he fell dead to the ground, and this was the unluckiest deed ever done among gods and men. When Baldr had fallen, then all the Æsir's tongues failed them, as did their hands for lifting him up, and they looked at each other and were all of one mind towards the one who had done the deed. But no one could take vengeance, it was a place of such sanctuary. When the Æsir tried to speak then what happened first was that weeping came out, so that none could tell another in words of his grief. But it was Odin who took this injury the hardest in that he had the best idea what great deprivation and loss the death of Baldr would cause the Æsir. And when the gods came to themselves then Frigg spoke, and asked who there was among the Æsir who wished to earn all her love and favour and was willing to ride the road to Hel and try if he could find Baldr, and offer Hel a ransom if she would let Baldr go back to Asgard. Hermod the Bold, Odin's boy, is the name of the one who undertook this journey. Then Odin's horse Sleipnir was fetched and led forward and Hermod mounted this horse and galloped away. (<i>Edda</i> 1995:49).</p>

Episode six

The same can be said of the final tragedy, *Ragnarøkkr*, as of Baldr's death; namely, the content is identical but the difference in overall mood and atmosphere between the two versions is unlike anywhere else in *Gylf* 1.

It can be considered a general rule in *Edda* (as in *Heimskringla* and other kings' sagas, for that matter) that stories are told and wisdom imparted in prose, and then later "confirmed" with a simple quotation from a poem, usually only a stanza or two. The one notable exception to this in *Edda* in both SnU and SnK is *dvergatal*, or the catalogue of dwarfs, in which the names of the dwarfs are listed in the context of their creation. Significant room is dedicated to this census of sorts; 28 lines of verse in DG 11 4to, 31 in GKS 2367 4to, and even more in GKS 2365 4to. In both versions of *Edda*, the *dvergatal* is punctuated by remarks in prose (e.g. "These are dwarfs and live in rocks, whereas the previous ones [live] in soil") (*Edda* 2012:27) so that the longest parts of the name list are no longer than two stanzas in *fornyrðislag*. In this regard it is important to note that it is almost impossible to see the *dvergatal* strophes as poetry that "confirms" the prose narrative. This is done in SnK, however, with a completely unique quotation from *Völuspá* describing *Ragnarøkkr*. Both versions of *Edda* describe these events in prose form, but in SnK the chapters concerning *Ragnarøkkr* are nearly 60% longer than in SnU. As the table below shows, the chronology of events and their descriptions in both prose versions correspond perfectly, but the version in *Völuspá* is certainly worth a look as well. In SnU, the entire prose narrative is concluded with "confirmation" in two stanzas and one refrain from *Völuspá*, and by nine stanzas in SnK.

If the *Völuspá*-quotation in SnK is the original, we are witnessing an extreme contraction in SnU, although one perhaps not beyond the realm of possibility. This is the order of events in all three texts as shown in Table 10.

Table 10. Overview of Ragnarøkkr

úlfriinn gleyypir sólina the wolf will swallow the sun	úlfriinn gleyypir sólina	Loud blows Heimdall
Gleyypir annarr úlfriinn tunglit the other wolf will swallow the moon	þá tekr annarr úlfriinn tunglit	Odin speaks with Mim's head
stjörnur hverfa stars will disappear	stjörnur nar hverfa af himninum	The ash Yggdrasil shakes
jörðin skelfr the earth will shake	skelfr jörð ǫll ok björg	the giant gets free
björg ok viðir losna ór jörðu ok hrynja rocks and trees will become uprooted from the earth and will fall down	at viðir losna ór jörðu upp, en björgin hrynja	all Giantland shakes
fjöttrar ok bönd brotna fetters and bonds will break	fjöttrar allir ok björg brotna	Æsir are in council
þá verðr Fenrisúlfriinn lauss then the Fenriswolf will get free	þá verðr Fenrisúlfir lauss	dwarfs groan before rock doorways
þá geysisk hafit á landit then the sea will surge unto the land	þá geysisk hafit á löndin	Hrym drives from the east
því at Miðgarðsormrinn snýst í Jötunheima because the Miðgarðr serpent will make its way into the dwelling places of giants	þá snýsk Miðgarðsormr í jötunmóð	Jormungand writhes in a giant rage
þá losnar skipit Naglfari then the ship Naglfari will be loosed	þá verðr ok þat at Naglfar losnar	the serpent churns the waves
Hrymr stýrir honum Hrymr will be its captain	Hrymr ... stýrir Naglfara	the eagle will screech with joy

Fenrisúlfr ferr með gapanda muninn Fenriswolf will go with mouth agape	Fenrisúlfr ferr með gapanda munn	darkly pale it tears corpses
Miðgarðsormrinn blæss eitri the Miðgarðr serpent will spit poison	Miðgarðsormr blæss ... eitrinu	Naglfar is loosed
þá klofnar himininn the sky will then split open	í þessum gny klofnar himininn	a bank sails from the east
ríða Múspells megir Múspell's lads will ride	ríða ... Múspells synir	across the sea will come Muspell's troops
Surtr ríðr fyrst Surtr will ride in front	Surtr ríðr fyrst	with Loki at the helm
er þeir ríða brotnar Bifróst but when they ride, Bifróst will break	er þeir ríða Bifróst þá brotnar hon	all that monstrous brood are there with the wolf
Múspells megir ríða á völlinn Vígríðinn Múspell's lads will ride onto the field Vígríðinn	Múspells megir sækja fram á þann völl er Vígríðr heitir	in company with them is Byleist's brother
Fenrisúlfr, Miðgarðsormr, Loki, Hrymr Fenriswolf, Miðgarðr serpent, Loki, Hrymr	Fenrisúlfr, Miðgarðsormr, Loki, Hrymr	Surtr travels from the south
Múspells megir hafa einir sér fylking Múspell's lads have their own battle array	Múspells synir hafa einir sér fylking	
Vígríðinn er hundrað rasta víðr á hvernig Vígríðinn is a hundred leagues each way	Vígríðr er hundrað rasta víðr	
Heimdallr blæss í Gjallarhorn Heimdallr will blow on Gjallarhorn	Heimdallr blæss ákaflega í Gjallarhorn	
Óðinn ríðr til Mímisbrunn Óðinn will ride to Mimir's spring	þá ríðr Óðinn til Mímis brunns	
þá skelfr askr Yggdrasil the ash Yggdrasil will shake	þá skelfr askr Yggdrasil	

Despite the difference in length, the order of the stories corresponds closely in both versions of *Edda*, but is considerably different in the poem – enough so that we can safely reject the theory that *Völuspá* is the primary source. To this we might add that some plot details of the poem are entirely different from in the prose narrative. Here it is enough to point out the story of Viðarr’s revenge on the wolf Fenrir for killing his father:

Table 11. Viðarr’s revenge

SnU <i>Edda</i> 2012:80 ⁷⁰	SnU <i>Edda</i> 2012:81	SnK <i>Völuspá Edda</i> 2005:52
<p>Úlfrinn gleypir Óðin, ok er þat hans bani. Þá snýr Viðarr fram ok stígr qðrum fœti í neðra kept. Hann hefir þann skó er allan aldr hefir verit til samnat, þat eru bjórar er menn taka ór skóm sínum fyrir tám ok hæli. Því skaltu þeim bjórum á brott kasta sá maðr er at því vill hyggja at koma ásum at liði. Annarri hendi tekr hann inn efra kept hans ok rífr í sundr gin hans, ok verðr þat úlfsins bani.</p>	<p>The wolf will swallow Óðinn and that will be the cause of his death. Then Viðarr will come forward and step with one foot on the lower jaw. He has a shoe for which the material has been being collected throughout all time. It is the waste pieces that people take from their shoes at the toes and heel. Therefore you must throw those pieces away, anyone that is concerned to give assistance to the Æsir. With one hand he will grasp its upper jaw and tears apart its mouth, and this will be the cause of the death of the wolf.</p>	<p>Gengr Óðins son við úlf vega, Viðarr of veg at valdýri. Lætr hann megi Hveðrungs mund of standa hjör til hjarta. Þá er heftt fōður.</p> <p>Odin’s son goes to fight the wolf, Vidar in his way against the slaughterous beast. With his hand he lets his blade pierce Hvedrung’s son’s heart. So is his father avenged. (<i>Edda</i> 1995:55).</p>

This is not the same story. The prose narratives in *Edda* have their basis in an origin myth about Viðarr’s shoes, while on the other hand the *skald* who composed *Völuspá* envisages a rather more civilised revenge, with a sword driven through the wolf’s heart!

And now it is tempting to tie the threads together into a hypothesis regarding the process of compiling *Gylf* 1.

⁷⁰ SnK tells the story in exactly the same way as SnU, and there is next to no discrepancy between the two versions (*Edda* 2005:50–51).

Hypothesis of process

The original manuscript

This hypothesis presupposes that Snorri Sturluson (or someone else) compiled the original *Gylfaginning*, predominantly on the basis of stories and poems. It is unlikely that a collection of poetry such as *Poetic Edda* in *Codex Regius* (GKS 2365) existed as a written compendium when the first version of *Prose Edda* was compiled around 1220–30 or even earlier. However, the references to *Völuspá* and *Grímnismál*, as contracted and abbreviated in SnU, must have been made on the basis of an extant exemplar, while other material draws from the collective memory of learned men and women. In any case, all of these stories were doubtless committed to text in a way that reflected the oral tradition.

Snorri (or whoever it may have been who arranged this material) was not always afforded the luxury of the “best” versions of the stories, as we can see for example in DG 11 4to’s account of Skírnir’s errand to Jötunheimr. It is assumed that the variations in SnU and SnK can be traced back to different oral traditions.

One can easily imagine that the author worked from two sources; on the one hand a collection of lore that provided the basis of the first half of *Gylf* 1, and on the other hand a collection of legends as the basis of the second.⁷¹

The archetype of SnK

The original manuscript underwent considerable revision in the version that would eventually become the archetype of SnK. The author/editor, either the same one as before or someone else entirely, corrected such errors as the contractions and abbreviations of certain verses, breathed new life into the dialogues between Gangleri and the trio of inquisitive gods, and made improvements to the content (e.g., in the tale about Freyr and Gerðr) and style of some stories. This holds true whether an author in the common understanding of the word was at work here, or an editor who had access to more complete versions of the stories.

The long excerpt from *Völuspá* describing *Ragnarøkkr* is an interpolation in this revised version of the manuscript. From one perspective we

⁷¹ No extant sources allow us to guess at the working methods employed during the gargantuan task of collecting the material that forms the basis of *Gylfaginning* and later *Skáldskaparmál*. It is known that notes were often jotted down on wax tablets, and common knowledge has long assumed that the scraps left over from cutting manuscript skins to size were used to make *cartoteques*, or collections of such notes and scraps. No such collections or fragments thereof have been preserved, and so the use of wax tablets mentioned earlier is worth keeping in mind. (See above *The court poet hones his craft* p. 34ff.)

could regard this as a mistake, but from a perspective that values the preservation of ancient lore above all, *Völuspá*'s poetic depiction of the twilight of the gods was presumably occasion enough to break with the quotation tradition.

At this stage it is unnecessary to assume that the SnU-version had its own specific archetype; the original may just as well have served this purpose.⁷² This offers an explanation for why the contradictions of some verses persist all the way through to DG 11 4to, and for the preservation of shorter and sometimes more primitive versions of the stories. It nevertheless seems quite clear that at least one amended version must have existed between the original and DG 11 4to. Chapter headings would have been added to this intermediary manuscript and, presumably, further changes made. Had the headings been in the original, it is unlikely that someone would have removed them in the SnK-archetype.⁷³ Skúli's title *hertogi* ('duke') instead of *jarl* ('earl') on the very first page of text, for example, indicates that this version of the chapter heading cannot have been written until after 1237.⁷⁴

Preserving the original

It is of course natural to ask why this original version was held onto in the first place, despite being so obviously inferior in many places to the manuscript that would eventually become the archetype of SnK. From a distance, there seems to be no better explanation than that this version was for some reason included among Snorri's archives, and was therefore considered part of the material that would form the foundation of the collection of literature we know as DG 11 4to. Material evidently associated with Snorri and his kin (more so than anyone else) has been inserted here. It is not absurd to think that someone had decided to preserve the version of the manuscript that was thought to be closest to the one that Snorri himself edited. For as long as we can find no more plausible explanation, we must make do with a hypothesis such as this.

⁷² It must be noted that Lasse Mårtensson's careful studies of the writing in DG 11 4to suggest that some of the material (the poetic excerpts, for example) is copied from an old exemplar, while other material is based on an exemplar from around 1250 (*Skrivaren och förlagan*, 2013:263). For this reason and others, it is prudent and even necessary to assume at least one intermediate stage between the original manuscript and DG 11 4to, dating from around the middle of the 13th century.

⁷³ Rasmus Rask makes this observation in his edition (1818:9), and others seem to have accepted his argument.

⁷⁴ It is possible that this title had been changed in DG 11 4to around the year 1300. However, we see no evidence of changes having been made to other chapter headings, which appear to have been transcribed rather indiscriminately.

Gylfaginning 2

Once Hár's account of *Ragnarøkkr* and the birth of a new world comes to a close, the two versions of *Edda* take considerably different turns as shown in Table 12.

However we look at it, it is difficult to find much similarity between SnU and SnK's accounts of the end of Gylfi's (or Gylfir's) journey. We could easily think that the original ended with the same words as in SnK, *Ok eptir honum sagði hverr maður qðrum þessar sögur* ('And from this account these stories passed from one person to another'), after which – presumably in the archetype of SnK – an admirer of classical antiquity added the passage that follows. Perhaps whoever added the new ending in DG 11 4to knew of this, cf. the words about Qkuþórr, but it is just as likely that these words stem from the original.⁷⁵ It also seems clear that the editor thought it important to create a sort of *intermezzo* that serves as a segue between the tales of the gods and *skáldskapar mál* – the language – and other matters – of poetry.⁷⁶

The better part of the material on pages 35₁₂ to 42₂₀ in DG 11 4to (f. 19r–22v) has been transferred from *Skáldskaparmál*.⁷⁷ We shall discuss the reasons for this later, but it must be noted that there is more at play here than relocation of material alone.

⁷⁵ The (folk-etymological) play on the names Hektor – Ektor – Qkuþórr could easily inspire someone to add the tales about the Trojans.

⁷⁶ Many editions, including Rask's (1818), refer to a separate section of the work called *Braga-ræður* ('Speeches of Bragi'). SnU includes this material in the conclusion to *Gylfaginning*, while SnK includes it in the beginning of *Skáldskaparmál*. The appellation *Braga-ræður* predates Rask, and is perhaps first attested in a seventeenth-century paper manuscript called *Stokkhólms Edda* – There seems to be a distinct tendency among those who deal with it to find the beginning of the discourse on poetic study to be somewhat peculiar.

⁷⁷ I can find nothing to prove that the transfer of material could not have taken place in DG 11 4to's exemplar in the middle of the thirteenth century, rather than in DG 11 4to itself. Convention maintains that the chapter headings are so ill-suited to the content in DG 11 4to that they must have originated in a different context.

Ásino gultarþor er æsir. h. at. In þar z uali bycia ve gylpa þa er
Stoknar svartá lofi. Stöpi z magni stó mullur hana vinnasf þyur at
vignöpi. En i holdi minnis leynaz meynar i svartaloga. þu z luffar
Ser er þar leynaz meynar i minni holdi mögum döggum þor z þor
u allza alaz. Solin heu dötr geð. Þu opegru en sik z þer h leu þu
Eil dötr þer alþravull aþa heu þerur þar. su mun reña. e.
riþa regin þravur mar. Nu er gangleri heyrur þu þa verþa
gnir mikull z er þan a stecum vellr. z er æsirur heyrur þu þa sagt
þa þu þu Ser þessi noþn asaja. at þa er langar stundur þu epabiz
men ektu at allur in einur þu æsir er nu e þra sagt z þu æsir er
nu u. z u avko þor kallaz asa þor.

Fæffer æsir þa go heimboþ at ægi i Hlésey. Þu h. oþin þin heu
boþu. Un qilldr let oþin þa sverð i hollina slysti þar ap þem
logu biectv. þor u þar nicaþa. þreyr. þyr heimdallr. þragi. u
þar vali. vllr. hænur. þofseti. loki. Ásyrme. Slik. þu. þreþia. geþi
on þu in gerþur. Sigun. Scolla. nana. þragi sagi ægi e mögum
abindv. Oþin þu z heyrur. þor u u þall. þundo avra þlock. z
er navað z sava til seþ þiss. rura tollur seþ þu z uar e þu. þa
þa þu avn þu Ser z lez. h. valla. at egi var soþu. geþi me
þylli z mun soþu. þu þu þu. h. lacer sigaz a seþ þu. tok anar
vra lacer z boguna þa þa. loki þess. þu þu þu z lavst z þak enin.
en h þa Ser up vid hoct. z þu. þu. þu. u þu. u þu. u þu. u þu.
en hende loka vau þastar u a. in stangar enda. þu þu þu þu
at þar. loka nava mikri u þu þu z go. en hende hugsi h stena
mido æ ælar libu z þu þu þu þu. Avn þu lez h e. mido lavsan
þa þa þa þu þu þu þu. loki vid þu. z þu þu þu. þu þu þu. þu
h þu þu þa þu þu þu z þu þu þa þu þu. z þu þu. þu þu. þu
þu. þu þu þu þu þu þu þu þu þu þu þu þu þu þu þu þu þu þu

Even on this picture you can see in line 11 that a rubric has been there: *Frá heimboði Ása með Ægi* = About Æsir's invitation to Ægir. That is all that was needed in this manuscript to move from Valhöll to Hlésey, from the original Æsir to the ones that live now!

Table 12. Conclusion to *Gylfaginning* 1

SnU <i>Edda</i> 2012:86 & 87	SnK <i>Edda</i> 2005:54–55; <i>Edda</i> 1995:57–58
<p>Nú er Gangleri heyrir þetta, þá verðr gnýr mikill ok er hann á sléttum velli. Ok er æsirnir heyra þetta sagt, gáfu þeir sér þessi nōfn ásanna, at þá er langar stundir liði, efaðisk menn ekki at allir væri einir þeir æsir er nú er frá sagt ok þessir æsir er nú váru. Ok var Oku-Þórr kallaðr Ása-Þórr.</p> <p>Þessir æsir þágu heimboð at Ægi í Hlésey.</p> <p>Now when Gangleri hears this, then there comes a great noise and he is on open ground. And when the Æsir hear tell of this, they gave themselves these names of the Æsir, so that when long periods of time had passed people should not doubt that they were all the same, those Æsir that stories have just been about and these Æsir that existed now, and Oku-Þórr was called Ása-Þórr.</p> <p>These Æsir accepted an invitation to a feast with Ægir on Hlésey.</p>	<p>Því næst heyrði Gangleri dyni mikla hvern veg frá sér ok leit út á hlið sér, ok þá er hann sésk meir um þá stendr hann úti á sléttum velli, sé þá önga hōll ok önga borg. Gengr hann þá leið sína braut ok kemr heim í ríki sitt ok segir þau tíðindi er hann hefir sét ok heyrt. Ok eptir honum sagði hvern maðr öðrum þessar sōgur.</p> <p>En Æsir setjask þá á tal ok ráða ráðum sínum ok minnask á þessar frásagnir allar er honum váru sagðar, ok gefa nōfn þessi hin sōmu, er áðr eru nefnd, mōnnum ok stōðum þeim er þar váru, til þess at þá er langar stundir liði at menn skyldu ekki ifask í at allir væri einir, þeir æsir er nú var frá sagt ok þessir er þá váru þau sōmu nōfn gefin. Þar var þá Þórr kallaðr – ok er sá Ásaþórr hinn hinn gamli, sá er Okuþórr – ok honum eru kend þau stórvirki er Þórr (Ektor) gerði í Troju. En þat hyggja menn at Tyrkir hafi sagt frá Ulixes ok hafi þeir hann kallat Loka, þvíat Tyrkir váru hans hinir mestu óvinir.</p> <p>Next Gangleri heard great noises in every direction from him and he looked out to one side. And when he looked around further he found he was standing out on open ground, could see no hall and no castle. Then he went off on his way and came back to his kingdom and told of the events he had seen and heard about. And from his account these stories passed from one person to another.</p> <p>But the Æsir sat down to discuss and hold a conference and went over all these stories that had been told him, and assigned those same names that were mentioned above to the people and places that were there [in Sweden], so that when long periods of time had passed men should not doubt that they were all the same, those Æsir about whom stories were told above and those who were now given the same names. So someone there was given the name Thor – and this means the ancient Thor of the Æsir, that is Oku-Thor – and to him are attributed the exploits which Thor (Hec-tor) performed in Troy. And it is believed that the Turks told tales about Ulysses and that they gave him the name Loki, for the Turks were especially hostile to him.</p>

These are the chapter rubrics in *Gylf 2* in DG 11 4to:

Table 13. Chapter rubrics in *Gylf 2*

- | |
|--|
| 1) <i>Frá heimboði ása með Ægi</i> (Of the Æsir's invitation to a feast with Ægir) |
| 2) <i>Hér segir frá því at æsir sátu at heimboði at Ægis ok hann spurði Braga hvaðan afkom skáldskapurinn. Frá því er Kvasir var skapaðr. Hér hefr mjök setning skáldskapar</i> (Here it tells about how the Æsir sat at a feast at Ægir's and he asked Bragi where the poetry came from. Of how Kvasir was created. Here more or less begins the rule for poetry) |
| 3) <i>Hér segir hversu skilja skal skáldskap</i> (Here it tells about how one shall understand poetry) |
| 4) <i>Saga Þórs ok Hrungris</i> (The story of Þórr and Hrungrnis) |
| 5) <i>Frá Geirrøð jötni ok Þór</i> (Of the giant Geirrøðr and Þór) |

It is very interesting to compare the first three chapters with their counterparts in SnK; the latter two are on the other hand almost verbatim.

1) Invitation to a feast

The vast majority of the rubrics in DG 11 4to are short, a few words most often at the beginning or end of a line. The first rubric here is no exception. A comparison of Ægir's feast for the Æsir clearly reveals that the rubric was originally written to describe the events as they occur in SnU, and in no way pertains as can be seen in Table 14.

It is not enough that the two versions depict different hosts holding the feast in different locations; the arrangement is nearly three times the length in SnK as it is in SnU! Many scholars who have discussed this, among them Finnur Jónsson, are inclined to believe that the location of the feast was a mistake on the part of the scribe who copied DG 11 4to. Finnur phrases it bluntly:

The scribe is guilty of a misunderstanding already in chapter 1, as he lets the Æsir attend a feast at Ægir's. The opposite is the case (1931:xxvii).⁷⁸

Finnur later asserts in a discussion of GKS 2367 that the manuscript emulates the prose that prefaces *Lokasenna* in *Poetic Edda*, "where the scene [takes place] at Ægir's" (p. liv). Furthermore, Ægir is said to have badly needed a pot in which to heat up ale for the Æsir in the eddic poem *Hymiskviða*. Thus, it seems that Ægir and Óðinn are both free to assume the role of host, and the question of who holds which holds the feast and where causes no serious issue.

⁷⁸ "Skriveren gör sig allerede i kap. 1 skyldig i en misforståelse, idet han her lader aserne komme til gæstebud hos Ægir. Det modsatte er tilfældet" (1931:xxvii).

Table 14. The feast in Hlésey or Ásgarðr

SnU <i>Edda</i> 2012.86 & 87	SnK <i>Edda</i> 1998:1; <i>Edda</i> 1995:59
<p><i>Frá heimboði ása með Ægi</i> Þessir æsir þágu heimboð at Ægi í Hlésey. Áðr hafði Óðinn honum heim boðit. Um kveldit lét Óðinn bera sverð í höllina ok lýsti þar af sem logum björtum. Þórr var þar, Njorðr, Freyr, Týr, Heimdallr, Bragi, Viðarr, Váli, Ullr, Hœnir, Forseti, Loki. Ásynjur: Slík, Frigg, Freyja, Gefjun, Iðunn, Gerðr, Sigun, Skolla, Nanna. Bragi segir Ægi frá mörögum tíðindum.</p> <p>These Æsir accepted an invitation to a feast with Ægir on Hlésey. Previously Óðinn had invited him to a feast. In the evening Óðinn had swords brought into the hall and light shone from them like bright flames. Þórr was there, Njorðr, Freyr, Týr, Heimdallr, Bragi, Viðarr, Váli, Ullr, Hœnir, Forseti, Loki. Ásynjur: Slík, Frigg, Freyja, Gefjun, Iðunn, Gerðr, Sigyn, Skolla, Nanna. Bragi tells Ægir about many things that had happened.</p>	<p>Einn maðr er nefndr Ægir eða Hlér. Hann bjó í ey þeiri er nú er kǫlluð Hlésey. Hann var mjök fjǫlkunnigr. Hann gerði ferð sína til Ásgarðs, en er Æsir vissu ferð hans var honum fagnat vel ok þó margir hlutir með sjónhverfingum. Ok um kveldit er drekka skyldi, þá lét Óðinn bera inn í höllina sverð, ok váru svá björt at þar af lýsti, ok var ekki haft ljós annat meðan við drykkju var setit. Þá gengu Æsir at gildi sínu ok settusk í hásæti tólf Æsir, þeir er dómendr skyldu vera ok svá váru nefndir: Þórr, Njorðr, Freyr, Týr, Heimdallr, Bragi, Viðarr, Váli, Ullr, Hœnir, Forseti, Loki; slíkt sama Ásynjur: Frigg, Freyja, Gefjun, Iðunn, Gerðr, Sigyn, Fulla, Nanna. Ægi þótti gofugligt þar um at sjásk. Veggþili qll váru þar tǫlduð með fǫgrum skjöldum. Þar var ok áfenginn mjöðr ok mjök drukkit. Næsti maðr Ægi sat Bragi, ok áttusk þeir við drykkju ok orðaskipti. Sagði Bragi Ægi frá mörögum tíðindum þeim er Æsir höfðu átt.</p> <p>There was a person whose name was Ægir or Hler. He lived on an island which is now called Hlesey. He was very skilled in magic. He set out to visit Asgard, and when the Æsir became aware of his movements, he was given a great welcome, though many things had deceptive appearances. And in the evening when they were about to start the drinking, Odin had swords brought into the hall and they were so bright that light shone from them, and no other light was used while they sat drinking. Then the Æsir instituted their banquet and twelve Æsir who were to be judges took their places in their thrones and their names are as follows: Thor, Niord, Freyr, Tyr, Heimdall, Bragi, Vidar, Vali, Ull, Hænir, Forseti, Loki; similarly the Asyniur, Frigg, Freyja, Gefiun, Idunn, Gerd, Sigyn, Fulla, Nanna. Everything there seemed to Ægir magnificent to look at. The wall-panels were all hung with splendid shields. There was also strong mead there and great quantities were drunk. The person sitting next to Ægir was Bragi and they drank and conversed together. Bragi related to Ægir many events in which the Æsir had been involved.</p>

The claim that the feast first changes location from Ásgarðr to Hlésey in DG 11 4to is however not entirely unambiguous. If we are correct that the chapter rubrics originate in the *exemplar* of the Uppsala manuscript, then the change of location must have already occurred there.⁷⁹

Among those in attendance at Ægir's feast, two Æsir-women deserve special attention: *Slik* and *Skolla*. Neither of these *ásynjur* is named anywhere else, and their names are in fact quite improbable. It is possible that they come from a curious misreading of the words *slikt sama ásynjur* as *Slik*, and of the name *Fulla* as *Skolla* (perhaps due to confusion of f for í in the beginning of the name?).

There is more to blame than these unlikely names for the text's relative incomprehensibility in the beginning. A comparison of the tale of Iðunn's capture and rescue reveals further cause for confusion, indicating perhaps that the text was poorly legible in these places.⁸⁰

Table 15. The rescue of Iðunn

SnU Edda 2012:86 & 87, 117 words	SnK Edda 1998:2, 284 words
<p>Hann teygir hana eptir eplunum ok biðr hana hafa sín epli, ok hon fór. Þar kom Þjazi jötunn í arnarham ok flaug með hana í Þrúðheim. Æsir gerðust æfir mjök ok spurðu hvar Iðunn væri. En er þeir vissu var Loka heitit bana nema hann færi eptir henni meðr valsham Freyju. Hann kom til Þjaza jötuns er hann var róinn á sæ. Loki brá henni í hnotar líki ok flaug með hana. Þjazi tók arnar ham ok flaug eptir þeim. En er æsir sá hvar valrinn fló þá tóku þeir byrði af lokar spánum ok slógu eldi í. Örninn fékk eigi stöðvat sik at fluginum ok laust eldi í fiðrit, ok</p>	<p>En at ákveðinni stundu teygir Loki Iðunni út um Ásgarð í skóg nokkvorn ok segir at hann hefir fundit epli þau er henni munu gripir í þykkja, ok það at hon skal hafa með sér sín epli ok bera saman ok hin. Þá kemur þar Þjazi jötunn í arnarham ok tekr Iðunni ok flýgr braut með ok í Þrymheim til bús síns.</p> <p>En Æsir urðu illa við hvarf Iðunnar ok gerðusk þeir brátt hárir ok gamlir. Þá áttu þeir Æsir þing ok spyrr hvern annan hvat síðarst vissi til Iðunnar, en þat var sét síðarst at hon gekk ór Ásgarði með Loka. Þá var Loki tekinn ok færðr á þingit ok var honum heitit bana eða píslum. En er hann varð hræddr þá kvazk hann mundu sækja eptir Iðunni í Jötunheima ef Freyja vill ljá honum valshams er hon á. ok er hann fær valshaminn flýgr hann norðr í Jötunheima ok kemr einn dag til Þjaza jötuns. Var hann róinn á sæ, en Iðunn var ein heima. Brá Loki henni í hnotar líki ok hafði í klóm sér ok flýgr sem mest. En er Þjazi kom heim ok saknar Iðunnar, tekr hann arnarhaminn ok flýgr eptir Loka ok dró arnsúg í flugnum. En er Æsirinn sá er valrinn flaug með hnotina ok hvar örninn flaug, þá gengu þeir út undir</p>

⁷⁹ The present author has long been inclined to the idea of paradigm shifts having originated in DG 11 4to, but is now prepared to reexamine such ideas. Indeed, the assumption that these changes were made to the exemplar rather than to DG 11 4to might shed some light upon certain puzzling details. See also the chapter The rubrics – two hypotheses p. 25.

⁸⁰ As pointed out later, the explanation might equally well be that the text in the original manuscript was itself poorly legible.

drápu þeir jötuninn fyrir innan ásrindr.

He entices her after the apples and tells her to bring her apples, and she went. The giant Þjazi came there in eagle shape and flew with her into Prúðheimr.

The Æsir got absolutely furious and asked where Idunn was. And when they knew, Loki was threatened with death unless he went after her by means of Freyja's falcon shape. He came to the giant Þjazi's when he had gone to sea in a boat. Loki turned her into the form of a nut and flew with her. Þjazi took eagle's shape and flew after them. So when the Æsir saw where the falcon was flying, then they took loads of wood-shavings and set them on fire. The eagle could not stop in its flight and its feathers caught fire, and they killed the giant within the Áss-gates.

Ásgarð ok báru þannig byrðar af lokarspánum ok þá er valrinn flaug inn of borgina, lét hann fallask niðr við borgarvegginn. Þá slógu Æsirnir eldi í lokaraspánu en ornninn mátti eigi stöðva er hann missti valsins. Laust þá eldinum í fiðri arnarins ok tók þá af fluginn. Þá váru Æsirnir nær ok drápu Þjaza jötun fyrir innan Ásrindr ok er þat víg allfrægt.

But at the agreed time Loki lured Idunn out through Asgard into a certain forest, saying that he had found some apples that she would think worth having, and told her she should bring her apples with her and compare them with these. Then giant Thiassi arrived in eagle shape and snatched Idunn and flew away with her to his home in Thrymheim. But the Æsir were badly affected by Idunn's disappearance and soon became grey and old. Then the Æsir held a parliament and asked each other what was the last that was known about Idunn, and the last that had been seen was that she had gone outside Asgard with Loki. Then Loki was arrested and brought to the parliament and he was threatened with death or torture. Being filled with terror, he said that he would go in search of Idun in Giantland if Freyia would lend him a falcon shape of hers. And when he got the falcon shape, he flew north to Giantland and arrived one day at the giant Thiassi's; he was out at sea in a boat, but Idunn was at home alone. Loki turned her into the form of a nut and held her in the claws and flew as fast as he could. When Thiassi got home and found Idunn was not there he got his eagle shape and flew after Loki and he caused a storm-wind by his flying. And when the Æsir saw the falcon flying with the nut and where the eagle was flying, they went out under Asgard and brought there loads of wood-shavings, and when the falcon flew in over the fortification, it let itself drop down by the wall of the fortification. Then the Æsir set fire to the wood-shavings, and the eagle was unable to stop when it missed the falcon. Then the eagle's feathers caught fire and his flight was ended. Then the Æsir were close by and killed giant Thiassi within the As-gates, and this killing is greatly renowned. (*Edda* 1995:60).

The difference in word count between the two versions is still great, and although all of the main narrative details are represented in both, the style is so different that it is difficult to convince ourselves that the shorter text was created from the longer. Bizarre names like *Slik* and *Skolla* in SnU's staging suggest that the scribe encountered some difficulty in deciphering the text before him.

2) The mead of poetry

Three rubrics in DG 11 4to stand out on account of their length: the main rubric at the beginning of the manuscript (“Bók þessi heitir Edda...”), the rubric at the beginning of *Gylfaginning* (“Hér hefr Gylfa ginning frá því er Gylfi sótti heim Alföðr í Ásgarð með fjölkyngi ok frá villu ása og frá spurningu Gylfa”), and finally a rubric on f. 19v, p. 36:

Hér segir frá því at æsir sátu at heimboði at Ægis ok hann spurði Braga hvaðan af kom skáldskapurinn. Frá því er Kvasir var skapaðr. Hér hefr mjök setning skáldskapar (*Edda* 2012:88).

Here it tells how the Æsir sat at a feast at Ægir’s and he asked Bragi where the poetry came from. Of how Kvasir was created. Here more or less begins the rule for poetry (*Edda* 2012:89).

This rubric stands out not only for its length, but also in the sense that the material it describes is something of a hodgepodge, and remarkably vague. It is unclear what is meant by *setning skáldskapar* (‘rule for poetry’), and the body of the text offers no explanation. Indeed, the same can be said of the next rubric, “Hér segir hversu skilja skal skáldskap” (‘Here it tells how one should understand poetry’). This gives us occasion to pause and examine these passages further.

In SnU, Ægir simply asks Bragi where poetry comes from. In SnK on the other hand, he poses the question in this way: *Hvaðan af hefir hafizk sú íþrótt er þér kallið skáldskap* (‘How did this craft that you call poetry originate’). Table 16 shows the first answers, regarding the creation of the mead of poetry.

Table 16. Origins of the mead of poetry

SnU <i>Edda</i> 2012:88 & 89, 96 words	SnK <i>Edda</i> 1998:3, 171 words
<p>Bragi svarar: Guðin höfðu ósætt við vani ok gerðu friðstefnu ok gengu til kers eins ok spýttu í hráka sínum ok sköpuðu ór mann er heitir Kvasir.</p> <p>Hann leysti ór öllum hlutum, ok er hann kom til dverganna Falas ok Galas, kölluðu þeir hann á einmæli ok drápu hann. Létu renna blóð hans í tvau ker ok einn ketil er Óðrærir heitir, en kerin heita Són ok Boðn. Þeir blönduðu við hunangi við blóðit ok heitir þat þá mjöðr, ok sá er af drekkur verðr skáld ok fræðimaðr. Dvergarnir sögðu at þeir hefði tapast í manviti.</p> <p>Bragi replies: ‘The gods had a dispute with Vanir and they arranged a peace-conference and went to a vat and spat their spittle into it and from it made a man that is called Kvasir.</p> <p>He found solutions to everything, and when he came to the dwarfs Falas and Galas, they called him to a private discussion and killed him. They poured his blood into two vats and a pot that is called Óðrærir, and the vats are called Són and Boðn. They mixed honey with the blood and then it is called mead, and he that drinks of it becomes a poet and a scholar. The dwarfs said they had perished in intelligence.</p>	<p>Bragi svarar: Það váru upphöf til þess at guðin höfðu ósætt við þat fólk er Vanir heita, en þeir lögðu með sér friðstefnu ok settu grið á þá lund at þeir gengu hvárirtveggju til eins kers ok spýttu í hráka sínum. En at skilnaði tóku goðin ok vildu eigi láta tynask þat griðamark ok sköpuðu þar ór mann. Sá heitir Kvasir. Hann er svá vitr at engi spyrr hann þeira hluta er eigi kann hann órlausn. Hann fór víða um heim at kenna monnum fræði, ok þá er hann kom at heimboði til dverga nokkvorra, Fjalars ok Galars, þá kölluðu þeir hann með sér á einmæli ok drápu hann, látu renna blóð hans í tvau ker ok einn ketil, ok heitir sá Óðreyrir, en kerin heita Són ok Boðn. Þeir blöndu hugangi við blóðit ok varð þar af mjöðr sá er hverr er af drekkur verðr skáld eða fræðimaðr. Dvergarnir sögðu Ásum at Kvasir hefði kafnat í mannviti fyrir því at engi var þar svá fróðr at spyrja kynni hann fróðleiks.</p> <p>Bragi replied: The origin of it was that the gods had a dispute with the people called Vanir, and they appointed a peace conference and made a truce by this procedure, that both sides went up to a vat and spat their spittle into it. But when they dispersed, the gods kept this symbol of truce and decided not to let it be wasted, and out of it made a man. His name was Kvasir, he was so wise that no one could ask him any questions to which he did not know the answer. He travelled widely through the world teaching people knowledge, and when he arrived as a guest to some dwarfs, Fialar and Galar, they called him to a private discussion with them and killed him. They poured his blood into two vats and a pot, and the latter was called Odrerir, but the vats were called Son and Bodn. They mixed honey with the blood and it turned into the mead whoever drinks from which becomes a poet or scholar. The dwarfs told the Æsir that Kvasir had suffocated in intelligence because there was no one there educated enough to be able to ask him questions. (<i>Edda</i> 1995:61–62).</p>

It is clear from the use of unique words and phrases that these two texts are related, but it is difficult to prove that the scribe created the shorter text on the basis of the longer. Fjalarr and Galarr offer no explanation for the killing of Kvasir. The closing sentence in DG 11 4to's account of the tale retains the joke about Kvasir suffocating in intelligence, but is otherwise incomprehensible.

The story that follows, which tells of how the mead fell into the hands of the *jötnar*, is similar in both versions as far as content is concerned, but otherwise the two versions are far from identical. In fact, the difference is so great that SnU reminds us most of notes from which a seasoned storyteller could weave a seamless narrative.

The same applies later in the story when Óðinn, calling himself Bólverkr, comes to possess the mead and escape to Ásgarðr. The tale of his year-long stay with Suttungr's brother, and how he tunnels through the rocks to reach the mead, is quite fragmentary in SnU. For the sake of space, we shall look only at the conclusion in Table 17.

Here the word count ratio in the two versions is nearly 1 : 2. It warrants particular attention that among manuscripts of *Edda*, only DG 11 4to attests the word *arnarleir* ('eagle's clay'), referring to the poet's share of Óðinn's booty. Moreover, this reference appears to have enjoyed some popularity in colloquial usage, where it begat the pejorative term for an inferior poet: *leirskáld* ('clay poet').⁸¹

⁸¹ In the article "Fyrstu leirskáldin" (2010b), I draw attention to a stanza by Þórarinn stuttfeldur, likely from the early twelfth century, in which the word *arnarleir* appears. This is echoed in a libelous verse about Snorri dating from around his homecoming in 1220; both sources make references to the 'eagle's clay'. Thus, we can assume that the word *arnarleir* was found in Snorri's vocabulary.

Table 17. Óðinn seeks the mead

SnU <i>Edda</i> 2012:88 & 89, 88 words	SnK <i>Edda</i> 1998:4–5, 162 words
<p>Ok hvíldi hjá Gunnloðu þrjár nætr ok drakk þrjá drykki af miðinum, ok var hann þá uppi allr, sitt ... ór hverju kerinu. Hann brást þá í arnar ham ok flaug, en Suttungr í annan arnar ham ok flaug eptir honum.</p> <p>Æsir settu út í garðinn ker sín. Óðinn spýtti miðinum í kerin. En sumum reпти hann apr, er honum varð nær farit ok hafa þat skáldfífl ok heitir arnarleir, en Suttunga mjöðr þeir er yrkja kunna.</p> <p>Því heitir skáldskaprinn fengr Óðins ok fundr ok drykk ok gjöf.</p> <p>And slept with Gunnloð three nights and drank three draughts of the mead, and then it was all gone, one [draught] from each vat. He then turned himself into the shape of an eagle and flew, and Suttungr in another eagle shape and flew after him.</p> <p>The Æsir put their vats out in the courtyard. Óðin spat the mead into the vats. But some he farted backwards, since it was such a close thing for him, and poetasters have that and it is called eagle's shit, but Suttungi's mead those who can compose.</p> <p>Therefore the poetry is called Óðinn's booty and find and drink and gift.</p>	<p>Fór Bolverk þar til er Gunnloð var ok lá hjá henni þrjár nætr, ok þá lofaði hon honum at drekka af miðinum þrjá drykki. Í inum fyrsta drykk drakk hann alt ór Óðreri, en í qðrum ór Boðn, í inum þriðja ór Són, ok hafði hann þá allan mjöðinn. Þá brásk hann í arnarham ok flaug sem ákafast. En er Suttungr sá flug arnarins, tók hann sér arnarham ok flaug eptir honum. En er Æsir sá hvar Óðinn flaug þá settu þeir út í garðinn ker sín, en er Óðinn kom inn of Ásgarð þá spýtti hann upp miðinum í kerin, en honum var þá svá nær komit at Suttungr mundi ná honum at hann sendi apr suman mjöðinn, ok var þess ekki gætt. Hafði þat hverr er vildi, ok kollum vér þat skáldfífla hlut. En Suttunga mjöð gaf Óðinn Ásunum ok þeim mǫnnum er yrkja kunnu. Því kollum vér skáldskapinn feng Óðins ok fund ok drykk hans ok gjöf hans ok drykk Ásanna.</p> <p>Bolverk went to where Gunnlod was and lay with her for three nights and then she let him drink three draughts of the mead. In the first draught he drank everything out of Odrerir, and in the second out of Bodn, in the third out of Son, and then he had all the mead. Then he turned himself into the form of an eagle and flew as hard as he could. And when Suttung saw the eagle's flight he got his own eagle shape and flew after him. And when the Æsir saw Odin flying they put their containers out in the courtyard, and when Odin came in over Asgard he spat out the mead into the containers, but it was such a close thing for him that Suttung might have caught him that he sent some of the mead out backwards, and this was disregarded. Anyone took it that wanted it, and it is what we call the rhymester's share. But Odin gave Suttung's mead to the Æsir and to those people who are skilled at composing poetry. Thus we call poetry Odin's booty and find, and his drink and his gift and Æsir's drink. (<i>Edda</i> 1995:63–64).</p>

3) Understanding poetry

Little came of what was promised in the long chapter rubric about the “rule of poetry”, but here in Gylf 2 we find a short yet notable chapter under the rubric *Hér segir hversu skilja skal skáldskap* (‘Here it tells how one should understand poetry’). An analogous but nonetheless considerably different text appears in the beginning of *Skáldskaparmál* in SnK. As we have encountered elsewhere in these texts, this rubric promises perhaps a bit more than it can keep. For purposes of clarity the chapter has been divided into the following three tables: categories of poetry, *kennings* for Óðinn, and description of purpose.

Definitions

Categories of poetry

Table 18. Categories of poetry

SnU <i>Edda</i> 2012:90 & 91	SnK <i>Edda</i> 1998:5
<p>Þá mælti Ægir: Hvé mǫrg eru kyn skáldskaparins? Bragi segir: Tvenn: Mál ok hátrr. Ægir spyrr: Hvat heitir mál skáldskaparins? Bragi segir: Tvent kent ok ókent. Ægir segir: Hvat er kent? Bragi segir: At taka heiti af verkum manns eða annarra hluta eða af því er hann þolir ǫðrum eða af ætt nokkurri.</p> <p>Then spoke Ægir: How many categories are there in poetry? Bragi says: Two: language and verse form. Ægir asks: What is language of the poetry called? Bragi says Two things, using a <i>kenning</i> and not using a <i>kenning</i>. Ægir says: What is using a <i>kenning</i>? Bragi says Taking a term from a person’s deeds or other things or from what he suffers from another or from some relationship.</p>	<p>Þá mælir Ægir: Hversu á marga lund breytið þér orðtökum skáldskapar, eða hversu mǫrg eru kyn skáldskaparins? Þá mælir Bragi: Tvenn eru kyn þau er greina skáldskap allan. Ægir spyr: Hver tvenn? Bragi segir: Mál ok hættir. Hvert máltak er haft til skáldskapar? Þrenn er grein skáldskaparmáls.</p> <p>Then spoke Ægir: In how many ways do you vary the vocabulary of poetry, and how many categories are there in poetry? Then spoke Bragi: There are two categories into which all poetry is divided. Ægir asks: Which two? Bragi said: Language and verse-forms. What choice of language is used in poetry? There are three categories in the language of poetry. (<i>Edda</i> 1995:64).</p>

A dichotomous definition would hardly suffice to describe the nature of poetry in a twenty-first-century textbook, but certainly great emphasis is still placed on the language of poetry and its structure, as is done here. This is perhaps not far from what was often called *form* and *content* in popular discussions a century or so ago. SnU and SnK both begin by distinguishing between two overall categories of poetry, but SnK soon branches out into a tripartite classification of the language of poetry specifically. When it comes to illustrating the matter with examples, it becomes clear that our texts are in considerable disagreement with each other.

Kennings for Óðinn

Table 19. List of *kennings* for Óðinn

SnU <i>Edda</i> 2012:90 & 91	SnK <i>Edda</i> 1998: 5
<p>Ægir segir: Hver dæmi eru til þess? Bragi segir: At kalla Óðin fður Þórs, Baldrs eða Bezlu eða annarra barna sinna, eða ver Friggjar, Jarðar, Gunnlaðar, Rindar, eða eiganda Valhallar eða stýranda guðanna, Ásgarðs eða Hliðskjálfar, Sleipnis eða geirsins, óskmeyja, einherja, sigrs, valfalls. Gervandi himins ok jarðar, sólar. Kalla hann aldinn Gaut, hapta guð, hanga guð, farma guð, Sigtýr.</p> <p>Ægir says: What examples are there of this? Bragi says: Calling Óðinn father of Þórr, Baldr or Bezla or of others of his children, or the husband of Frigg, Jorð, Gunnloð, Rindr, or possessor of Valhöll or ruler of the gods, Ásgarðr or Hliðskjálf, Sleipnir or the spear, adoptive maids, Einherjar, victory, the fallen slain, maker of heaven and earth, the sun, calling him ancient Gautr, god of fetters, god of the hanged, god of cargoes, Sigtýr (Victory god).</p>	<p>Hver? Svá: at nefna hvern hlut sem heitir; önnur grein er sú er heitir fornöfn; in þriðja málsgrein er kǫlluð er <i>kenning</i>, ok er sú grein svá sett at vér kǫllum Óðin eða Þór eða Tý eða einhvern af Ásum eða álfum, at hverr þeira er ek nefni til, þá tek ek með heiti af eign annars Ássins eða get ek hans verka nokkvorra. Þá eignask hann nafnit en eigi hinn er nefndr var, svá sem vér kǫllum Sigtý eða Hangatý eða Farnatý, þat er þá Óðins heiti, ok kǫllum vér þat kent heiti. Svá ok at kalla Reiðartý.</p> <p>What are they? To call everything by its name; the second category is the one called substitution; and the third category of language is what is called <i>kenning</i> [description] and this category is constructed in this way that we speak of Odin or Thor or Tyr or one of the Æsir or elves, in such a way that with each of those that I mention, I add a term for the attribute of another As or make mention of one or other of his deeds. Then the latter becomes the one referred to, and not the one that was named; for instance we speak of Victory-Tyr or Hanged-Tyr or Cargo-Tyr, these are expressions for Odin, and these we call periphrastic terms; similarly if one speaks of Chariot-Tyr [i.e. Thor]. (<i>Edda</i> 1995:64).</p>

In an essay that first appeared in a conference publication in 1993, a mere 750 after Snorri's death, Anthony Faulkes made an intriguing observation regarding Snorri's intellectual background. This chapter in SnK is, as far as the subject matter and its logic are concerned, remarkably similar to articles 11–13 in chapter XXI of Aristotle's *Poetics* an early treatise on literary and dramatic theory (the excerpts from which appear here in English translation):

When, of four terms, the second bears the same relation to the first as the fourth to the third; in which case the fourth may be substituted for the second and the second for the fourth. And sometimes the proper term is also introduced besides its relative term. Thus a cup bears the same relation to Bacchus as a shield to Mars. A shield therefore may be called the cup of Mars and a cup the shield of Bacchus. Again evening being to day what old age is to life, the evening may be called the old age of the day and old age the evening of life. (Faulkes 1993:64).

The similarity between the subject matter is evident here, though Faulkes is not at all certain whether this indicates that Snorri himself had read *Poetics*, or was merely acquainted with the material from other sources.⁸²

Two things here warrant further consideration: On the one hand, the chapter in SnU is completely different from what appears in SnK. On the other hand, the description that SnK offers for *kennings* (*kennings* for the Æsir) by no means stands the test of experience. If this description were correct, we could expect to find such *kennings* as **Heimdallr Mjöllnis* for Þórr, **Þórr Gungnis* for Óðinn, or **Óðinn's hammer* for the spear *Gungnir*. But this is not the case according to the verses that have been preserved from the ninth century to the thirteenth. The only name of a god that is used as the base of an Æsir-*kenning* is Týr, as this is the only one mentioned in SnK's definition. This name also has the unique characteristic of existing in the plural, *tívar*, meaning 'gods'. Lexicon Poeticum says that *týr* is a common base in *kennings* for Óðinn, and offers the example *karms Týr*, which seems, however, to refer to Þórr in *Þórsdrápa*. *Sára reiði-Týr* appears as a *kenning* in *Haustlög* in apparent reference to Þórr. SnK's example *reiðartýr* is however unattested, and in Egill Skallagrímsson's *Sonatorrek*, *vagna rúni* ('friend of the chariots') refers to Óðinn and not Þórr. Some believe that this *kenning* could refer to the Big Dipper.

There appears to be some fishiness afoot here, and we would be wise to pay heed to the text in SnU. The list shown in Table 19 – the answer

⁸² For more typical discussion see e.g. Guðrún Nordal 2001:6 and Vésteinn Ólason 1992:59.

to the unasked question, how to refer to Óðinn, has many parallels in *Skáldskaparmál*, such as these *kennings* for Þórr:

Table 20. List of *kennings* for Þórr

<i>Edda</i> 2012:138	<i>Edda</i> 2012:139
Hvernig skal kenna Þór? Svá at kalla son Óðins ok Jarðar, fǫður Magna ok Móða ok Þrúðar, ver Sifjar, stjúpfǫður Ullar, stýranda ok eiganda Mjǫlnis ok megingjarða ok Bilskirnis, verjanda Ásgarðs ok Miðgarðs, dólg ok bana jǫtna ok tröllkvenna, veganda Hrunnis ok Geirraðar ok Þrivalda, dróttin Þjálfu ok Rǫsku, fǫstra Vingnis ok Lóru.	How shall Þórr be referred to? By calling him son of Óðinn and Jǫrð, father of Magni and Móði and Þrúðr, husband of Sif, stepfather of Ullr, controller and owner of Mjǫllnir and the girdle of might and of Bilskirnir, defender of Ásgarðr and Miðgarðr, enemy and slayer of giants and trollwives, killer of Hrungnir and Geirrǫðr and Þrivaldi, lord of Þjálfí and Roskva, foster-son of Vingnir and Lóra.

The formula is this: Ægir asks how to refer to this god or that, to which Bragi replies, ‘by calling [him/her] ...’ (*svá at kalla*) and providing an assortment of *kennings* that refer to familial relations, then characteristic traits and attributes, and finally deeds.

As is expected and customary for study materials, everything here is fixed and formulaic. What at first appears complicated and difficult to learn becomes simple and easy because we can apply a tried-and-true rule – one that had doubtless been used and honed to a fine science through centuries of oral instruction.

The explanation for the difference between SnU and SnK seems simple: The text in SnK is not the original, but rather has been extrapolated into the archetype of this version, perhaps by a teacher who had read his Aristotle and created a thoroughly-deliberated solution in the Aristotelian vein. The only fault is that the map drawn here does not correspond the country’s real geography.

Later we will attempt to summarise the information and possible explanations the texts of *Gylf2* may have to offer, but for now let us pause to consider the wording.

The definition of *kennings* proceeds directly into a description of the text’s purpose. This description is one-of-a-kind in medieval Icelandic writing because it informs us not only of the text’s target audience, but also of how this intended readership is meant to understand the material with which it is presented in Table 21.

Table 21. Description of purpose

SnU <i>Edda</i> 2012:90 & 91	SnK <i>Edda</i> 1998:5
<p>En þat er at segja ungum skáldum er girnast at nema skáldskapar mál ok heyja sér orðfjölða með fornum heitum eða skilja þat er hulit er ort, þá skili hann þessa bók til skemtunar. En ekki er at gleyma eða ósanna þessar frásagnir eða taka ór skáldskapnum fornar <i>kenningar</i> er höfuðskáldin hafa sér líka látið. En eigi skulu kristnir menn trúa né á sannast at svá hafi verit.</p> <p>But this must be said to young poets that desire to learn the language of poetry and furnish themselves with a wide vocabulary using traditional terms or understand what is composed obscurely, then let him take this book as entertainment. But these narratives are not to be consigned to oblivion or demonstrated to be false, nor are ancient <i>kennings</i> that major poets have been happy to use to be removed from the poetry. Yet Christian people are not to believe or be convinced that it has been thus.</p>	<p>En þetta er nú at segja ungum skáldum þeim er girnask at nema mál skáldskapar ok heyja sér orðfjölða með fornum heitum eða girnask þeir at kunna skilja þat er hulit er kveðit: þá skili hann þessa bók til fróðleiks ok skemtunar. En ekki er at gleyma eða ósanna svá þessar sögur at taka ór skáldskapinum fornar <i>kenningar</i> þær er höfuðskáld hafa sér líka látit. En eigi skulu kristnir menn trúa á heiðin goð ok eigi á sannyndi þessar sagnar annan veg en svá sem hér finnsk í upphafi bókar er sagt er frá atburðum þeim er mannfólkit viltisk frá rétttri trú, ok þá næst frá Tyrkjum, hvernig Asiamenn þeir er Æsir eru kallaðir fjölsuðu frásagnir þær frá þeim tíðindum er gerðusk í Troju til þess at landfólkit skyldi trúa þá guð vera.</p> <p>But these things have now to be told to young poets who desire to learn the language of poetry and to furnish themselves with a wide vocabulary using traditional terms; or else they desire to be able to understand what is expressed obscurely. Then let such a one take this book as scholarly inquiry and entertainment. But these stories are not to be consigned to oblivion or demonstrated to be false, so as to deprive poetry of ancient <i>kennings</i> which major poets have been happy to use. Yet Christian people must not believe in heathen gods, nor in the truth of this account in any other way than that in which it is presented at the beginning of this book, where it is told what happened when mankind went astray from the true faith, and after that about the Turks, how the people of Asia, known as Æsir, distorted the accounts of the events that took place in Troy so that the people of the country would believe that they were gods. (<i>Edda</i> 1995:64–65).</p>

So exceptional is this clause that some publishers and editors have followed Rask's example and assigned it the heading *Eptirmáli Eddu* ('Epilogue') (1818:88). These editions include a longer text about Priamus and the other Trojans than what is shown here (cf. *Edda* 1998:5–6).

Overall, there is no evidence of the Troy chapters – inspired by Homeric tales of adventure – in DG 11 4to, and because the material is extraneous in this context, it is natural and even generally agreed upon, to regard it as an addition in the archetype of RTW. The DG 11 4to text appears to satisfy all requirements for an original version, and could therefore indeed be the original.

Looking back

Here seems to be as appropriate a place as any to stop and look over what we have discussed thus far of *Gylf* 2. The first question we must address is, of course, what is actually happening in SnU?

Above all, this marks the beginning of a large-scale transfer of material from *Skáldskaparmál*. Undoubtedly, the editor's/scribe's chief task was to tidy up around the material most relevant to the language of poetry, i.e., *kennings* and *heiti*; such material would have been desirable for an aspiring *skald* to learn by rote. On the other hand, it is right to emphasise that the order of the text's individual chapters remains unchanged. In the original, the mead of poetry and the definitions of the *kennings* appear after the capture of Iðunn, which has nothing at all to do with poetics!

Peculiar names (e.g., the goddesses Slík and Skolla) and name variants (e.g., the dwarf Falarr instead of Fjalarr and the legendary drill Roði instead of Rati) among other minutiae suggest that some details in the exemplar were poorly legible, if they were legible at all.⁸³

Indeed, it is not until the stories of the mead of poetry and later in the definitions of the categories of poetry that the difference between the two versions becomes significantly apparent. The definitions shown in Table 18 bear no similarity to each other, and so cannot have originated from a common exemplar. The same can be said of the *kennings* for Óðinn in Table 19; the basis here is an entirely different exemplar as well, and it should be noted that a scribe who had learned *Skáldskaparmál* by heart probably could have composed the list in SnU from memory. This could perhaps apply to the definitions as well.

Similarly, the description of purpose in Table 21 has its basis in the same exemplar at first. Once we arrive at the tales of the Trojans, however, it is rather more likely that the material was added into the archetype of SnK than that it was removed from SnU.

A plausible solution in this regard seems to be to assume that the same original manuscript is the exemplar of both the *archetype* of RTW and the *exemplar* of DG 11 4to. If this is indeed the case, the process here is very much the same as previously described for *Gylf* 1 – perhaps even exactly the same, in the sense that the archetype of SnK provides a basis for a re-imagining of the original text.

⁸³ It bears repeating that I see no fully reliable way to determine what might actually have occurred in the exemplar of DG 11 4to.

Þórr the hero

The tale of Iðunn's capture precedes any discussion of *kennings* and *heiti* in *Skáldskaparmál*. Gangleri hints at this impending tale in *Gylf* 1, when he remarks that “the gods are staking a great deal in [Iðunn's] care and trustworthiness” by entrusting her with the apples of eternal youth. In the context of the present conversation, however, the topic is now her husband Bragi, not Iðunn herself, as evinced by Hár's unusual response: “Then spoke High, laughing: ‘It nearly led to a disaster on one occasion. I shall be able to tell you about that. But you must now hear more names of the gods.’” (*Edda* 2012:45). Hár's catalogue of the *ásynjur* does not include Iðunn, and in *Skáldskaparmál* the tale of her capture is part of a larger story of an expedition undertaken by Óðinn, Loki, and Hœnir and not associated with the *kennings* for Iðunn. When the discussion of *kennings* eventually comes to be heard in RTW, however, reference is made to the poem *Haustlǫng*.

The story of the capture therefore occurs early in *Skáldskaparmál*, and in SnU is transferred along with other material from *Skáldskaparmál* into *Gylf* 2. It is not clear, however, why the two heroic tales of Þórr – his duel with Hrungrnir and his visit to Geirrøðr – did not accompany the other stories of Þórr in *Gylfaginning*, but instead appear in *Skáldskaparmál* in SnK. The introduction to the story in that version is rather awkward: *Nú skal enn segja dæmi af hverju þær kenningar eru er nú váru ritaðar, er áður váru eigi dæmi til sögð, svá sem Bragi sagði Ægi at Þórr var farinn í Austurvega at berja troll* (‘Now there shall be told more of the underlying stories from which those *kennings* just listed have originated, and of which the origins have not already been told, just as Bragi told Ægir how [Þórr] had gone to eastern parts to thrash trolls [...]’) (*Edda* 1998:20, *Edda* 1995:77). In SnU, however, the introduction reads: *Nú skal segja af hverju þær kenningar eru er áður eru dæmi sögð* (‘Now shall be told the origin of the *kennings* of which examples have earlier been given’) (*Edda* 2012:90,91).⁸⁴ Although the story appears in *Skáldskaparmál* after the *kennings* for Þórr, which are presumably the same *kennings* referred to in the introduction, those *kennings* that appear in the text that follows the Þórr-tales refer to entirely different Æsir.

⁸⁴ Both versions appear to refer to *kennings* that had existed in writing, and the reader can expect explanations for them. But the *kennings* – if they had indeed existed in writing in the first place – are gone, buried under other material, and each tale only explains one *kenning*; the first explains how *Iljablað Hrungrnis* describes a shield, the second how *Víðgenrir* (possibly a *jötunn*?) *Vimrar vaðs* describes Þórr. Because *Skáldskaparmál* offers an explanation for the latter *kenning*, we can (safely) assume that this text does not presuppose any prior knowledge of the story from which it originates (*Edda* 2012:142, cf. *Edda* 1998:17).

It arouses both attention and curiosity in comparison to other transferred material that the two Þórr-stories that are taken out of *Skáldskaparmál* and placed in *Gylf 2* are of equal length, and as good as verbatim.⁸⁵

When the tale of the duel with Hrungrnir comes to a close in DG 11 4to, the text simply reads: *Eptir þessi sögu hefir ort Þjóðólfr enn hvinverski í Haustlǫng* (‘Þjóðólfr of Hvinir has composed a passage based on this story in *Haustlǫng*’) and not a word further, not even so much as a quotation from the poem (*Edda* 2012:94, 95). In SnK, the same passage reads: *Eptir þessi sögu hefir ort Þjóðólfr hvinverski í Haustlǫng. Svá segir þar* (‘Þjóðólfr of Hvinir has composed a passage based on this story in *Haustlǫng*. So it says there’), followed by seven stanzas from the poem. For the most part these stanzas recount the same story as told in the prose, without making any additions or expansions.⁸⁶ As mentioned in connection to the long *Völuspá*-quotation in *Gylfaginning*, it is tantamount to a stylistic violation to repeat, albeit with some variation, a story that has already been told in prose.

After the story, Ægir interjects in praise of Þórr’s might, asking if “Þórr [did] achieve any greater exploit in his dealings with trolls” (*Edda* 2012:95). Bragi wastes no time in responding to Ægir’s request, and in both versions proceeds to the tale of Þórr’s journey to the courts of the *jǫtunn* Geirrǫðr. In this case as before, we can consider the two texts for all intents and purposes identical. Admittedly, SnU includes two verses composed by Óku-Þórr as opposed to only one in SnK, though this has no effect on the story’s development (see *Edda* 2012:xlvi regarding the length of the story).

And now history repeats itself: DG 11 4to concludes the tale with the attribution, “Eptir þessi sögu hefir ort Eilífr Guðrúnarson í Þórsdrápu” (‘Eilífr Guðrúnarson has composed a passage based on this story in

⁸⁵ According to the calculations in *Edda* 2012:xlvi, the story of Þórr and Hrungrnir in DG 11 4to is 95% the length of this same story in SnK, while the ratio slightly exceeds 100% in the story of Þórr’s visit to Geirrǫðr. The explanation for the latter proportion is that Þórr composes two verses in DG 11 4to as opposed to only one in SnK.

⁸⁶ In the prose, Þórr’s servant Þjálfí is assigned the task of fooling Hrungrnir into sliding his shield beneath his feet, claiming that Þórr’s attack upon the *jǫtunn* would come from below. *Haustlǫng* makes no mention of Þjálfí; instead, the shield is said to have shot underneath Hrungrnir at the will of the gods (the fates). The poem also fails to mention the clay *jǫtunn* Mǫkkurkálfí, a comic figure in the story. It could certainly be the case that the editor of DG 11 4to or its exemplar made the decision to leave out this long excerpt from *Haustlǫng* and other excerpts like it, but it is more likely that such material was interpolated into the archetype. Although DG 11 4to mentions *Haustlǫng* by name, this is done merely for informational purposes rather than to indicate that an excerpt from the poem is to follow.

Þórsdrápa) (*Edda* 2012:96,97).⁸⁷ The exact wording appears in SnK, but there the attribution is followed by nineteen stanzas from the poem.⁸⁸

The same applies here as to the quotation from *Haustlǫng* (and from *Vǫluspá* about *Ragnarøkkr* in *Gylfaginning*, for that matter); if the exemplar that is the basis of SnU had included this quotation, it would have been no great feat of astuteness on the part of the editor to see that it was unnecessary and a conspicuous stylistic deviation, and therefore to omit it from his manuscript.

A hypothesis for *Gylf 2*

It is apparent that the operation that begins with the creation of the latter scene of *Gylfaginning* in SnU heralds a radical change to the organisation of the textbook for poets in training. The objective appears to be to move – or maybe remove entirely – from *Skáldskaparmál* that material which was not considered necessary for the aspiring *skald* to learn by heart. The chapter in *Skáldskaparmál* concerning *heiti* has also been restructured, as we will discuss later; this restructuring resulted in significant work for the editor.

Only one version must necessarily have existed between the original and DG 11 4to.⁸⁹ This is the intermediary manuscript to which the chapter headings were added, and in which the text of *Gylfaginning* seems to have been closer to the first draft than to the archetype of SnK (RTW). When the RTW archetype was written it contained additional and modified chapters pertaining to theoretics (the Aristotelian definition applied to *kennings*), narrative content (revisions to fragmentary texts as well as entirely new stories, i.e., the Trojans and later the *Vǫlsungs*), and poetry (longer poems in particular).

⁸⁷ On the syntax see p. 26

⁸⁸ *Þórsdrápa* is among the most unusual *dróttkvætt* poems, and is enormously complex. The main details are all the same as in the prose version, with one very significant exception. A basic premise of the prose story is that Þórr leaves the hammer *Mjöllnir*, his iron gauntlets, and the girdle of might at home, so he must borrow replacements from the giantess *Gríðr*. The poem on the other hand describes how “a ruler with a bloody hammer” (*gramr með dreyrgum hamri*) utterly destroys the *jǫtunn*, and thereby comes to possess *Mjöllnir*. It is quite unlikely that anyone would have thought at *Edda*’s inception that the prose text should tell a different story than the poem. In an essay on the subject, Clunies-Ross (1981) not only assumes that the poem’s telling of the story applies, but that we can deduce from it a description of an initiatory rite for Þórr. – It also bears mentioning that the verses from *Þórsdrápa* in *Skáldskaparmál* alone appear to contain thirty *kennings* for Þórr – some of them in fact very abstruse – but none of them is included among those *kennings* described specifically in *Skáldskaparmál*.

⁸⁹ For the hypothesis concerning this exemplar see pp. 25–27.

The exemplar of DG 11 4to, which could be called *U1, was written on the basis of the original, from the fragmentary narratives back to the stories of Þórr. The theoretics as described in this manuscript are based in particular on a pedagogical tradition already established before the text-book was written.

This led to considerable differences between the two versions in the first part of *Skáldskaparmál* (*Gylf 2* in DG 11 4to and *Skáldskaparmál* in SnK), though the texts gradually fall into alignment with each other (the exception being the more abundant insertions and expansions).

Glomr geara. f.
 koemsker ogm
 dar. f.
 hallste vendras
 biarni gullb. s.
 Gizon gullbar
 Sighuacr. f.
 Sigher skald
 þenir mynr
 oran suara
 Bsi. f.
 þfe kolbenf. f.
 þornof kolb. s.
 þofga refr.
 þoðe kolb. f.
 skapa þoðe. f.
 Arnor. II. f.
 oðe keitar
 refr skald
 þioþolfr sk.
 Sigher skald
 þioþolf arnos
 þon skald
 þolþke þoþ f.
 ualþiof skald
 oðe kítana sk

scopr blindr
 þornor. II. skald.
 Illugi þayndela s.
 Grant skald.
 þonaylo hallr
 Valgarþe a vellr
 hallr þirka
 Steinn hðisar. f.
 Arnor. II. f.
 Steinn hðisar. f.
 achi trol.
 vilboeg. f.
 þeckell ham f.
 Arnokell ham f.
 þraz ingimdar. f.
 hallþok skald.
 þioen krepþendi
 þarþe suara
 Gils illuaa. f.
 Einax skula. f.
 þuar ingimdar. f.
 hallþokskualder.
 þarin stropella
 þarin stropella
 þualde blaunde f.
 þarm þiozo skeip
 þuar ingimdar. f.
 einax skula. f.

einax skula. f.
 hallþok sk. alder
 hallr munkr
 einax skald
 þuar. f.
 einax skula. f.
 þuarþe þioens. f.
 kollr skald
 hallþok skualder.
 einax skula. f.
 þokuar þialthi
 þorbren gaurf
 einax skula. f.
 Sigher skrauti
 þþioen skacka sk.
 sugandi skald.
 hallr þioera. f.
 markuþf þepanf. f.
 þoþke halts. f.
 skald manr.
 þorbren gaurf
 þragmr þyþoaf. f.

Skáldatal is a masterpiece of layout: On five pages with three columns on each page, the kings' or chieftains' names are written vertically the poets' names horizontally. This is f. 23v (p. 44).

The first intermezzo – An anthropological interlude

By the time Þórr's visit to Geirrøðr comes to an end and we are reminded that Eilífr Guðrúnarson had composed a poem about the story, we will have reached the twentieth line on f. 22v (p. 42) in DG 11 4to. The remainder of the page, around eight lines, is left blank, but much has been scribbled in the empty space by younger hands. This scribbling is mostly illegible. Blank pages and half pages abound in the manuscript, indicating unequivocally, as previously mentioned, that the place where the writing occurred did not want for resources, and thus it was not deemed necessary to be economical with parchment.⁹⁰

Following the tales of Þórr's adventures, in the third quire of the manuscript and the last one in the section dealing with mythology, are eight pages filled with totally different material that was nevertheless of enormous relevance to those students for whom it was intended. The distinction between the mythology in *Gylfaginning* and the instructional material in *Skáldskaparmál* is made very apparent, and for a while at least, the manuscript seems to have been divided into two separate books.

The sources of the first and second sections are completely different. *Gylfaginning* (*Gylf* 1 in SnU) is based almost exclusively on traditional tales and authorless mythological poems, the eddic poems, *eddukvæði*, while *Skáldskaparmál* as it is presented in DG 11 4to relies upon glossaries, lists of *kennings* and *heiti*, and examples from the works of known *skalds*.

It is certainly no coincidence that the separation between the mythology in *Gylfaginning* and the poetic theory in *Skáldskaparmál* is identified and underscored in three anthropological records: *Skáldatal*, the Genealogy

⁹⁰ Some expositors believe that the lacuna beginning on f. 22v₂₁ was intentionally left blank to accommodate the poem *Þórsdrápa*, which the scribe, however, did not have in his possession. In his edition of *Edda*, Rask even assumes that the scribe had earmarked the next eight pages for the poem (1818:87–88). Jón Sigurðsson echoes this idea in the first volume of *Íslenzkt fornbréfasafn* (1857–87 I:499). As we have already discussed, it is much more probable that the scribe of *U1 or DG 11 4to either had the poem in front of him and left it out of his manuscript, or that the poem was not recorded at all in the original.

of the Sturlungar, and the List of lawspeakers. We will discuss this briefly while also pointing out that at this place in the manuscript, this material was added in revisions of *Edda* and not originally part of Snorri's compilation. The same goes for the Second Grammatical Treatise, which has been added to the manuscript between *Skáldskaparmál* and *Háttatal*. We will cover this later.

Skáldatal

Skáldatal is obviously not the work of Snorri Sturluson, but the two versions of the work that have been preserved are each inextricably linked in their own way to those works that have been attributed to him with the most airtight reasoning.⁹¹ *Skáldatal* is in a sense two complementary name lists – a list of Norse kings and chieftains, and a record of the *skalds* who composed about them. This work was also preserved along with Snorri's kings' sagas, probably at the very end of the *Kringla* manuscript of *Heimskringla*, which was destroyed in the 1728 Copenhagen fire but had already been transcribed both in Denmark and Sweden. Árni Magnússon had already transcribed the manuscript, now preserved under the shelfmark AM 761 a-b 4to in the Árni Magnússon Institute in Reykjavík. Jón Eggertsson had also transcribed it in preparation for the edition of *Heimskringla* named after Peringskiöld in Stockholm (1697–1700). This copy is preserved in Kungliga Biblioteket, Stockholm's Royal Library, as Holm. papp no. 18 f. This version of *Skáldatal* was completed around the year 1260.⁹²

The version of *Skáldatal* in DG 11 4to contains a few more names, and covers the period up to and around the year 1300.

Although *Skáldatal* has been called a history of literature,⁹³ it is little more than a list of names. If we consider it all together, however, we may point to five passages that tell us a tiny bit about how poetry was evaluated. The preface to the list of chieftains is as follows:

⁹¹ Both versions of *Skáldatal*, separate and combined, are included in *Edda* III 1880–1887:251–286, along with material followed up with short biographies of the poets, written in Latin by Jón Sigurðsson and Finnur Jónsson (pp. 287–752). Guðrún Nordal's treatment of the text (2001:120–130) is very clear and detailed. It is interesting to examine the version of *Skáldatal* in *Heimskringla – Lykilbók* 1991, which shows just how strong the connection to *Heimskringla* actually seems to be. – *Skáldatal* appeared adapted to Danish circumstances in Ole Worm's 1636 literary history, and for a Swedish readership in *Nordlandz Chrönika*, 1670. By then the work had emerged from obscurity.

⁹² See Guðrún Nordal 2001:122.

⁹³ Bjarni Guðnason says that *Skáldatal* can be considered “the first literary history of the Icelanders” (*Íslenzk fornrit* 35 1982:xi).

Starkaðr inn gamli var skáld. Hans kvæði eru fornust þeira sem menn kunnu. Hann orti um Danakonunga. Ragnarr konungr loðbrók var skáld, Áslaug kona hans ok synir þeira. (*Edda* 2012:100).

Starkaðr the Old was a poet. His poems are the most ancient of those that people know. He composed about the kings of the Danes. King Ragnarr loðbrók was a poet, his wife Áslaug and their sons. (*Edda* 2012:101).

Nothing is known of Starkaðr's poems except for what is attributed to him in the legendary sagas that mention him. These are not considered to be reliable sources but we can say with certainty that stories about a person by this name did indeed circulate, and in the 13th century he was regarded by some as one of the oldest and best *skalds*.⁹⁴

A comment soon follows about Erpr lútandi (Erpr the Bowing), who was thought to have been one of King Eysteinn Beli's *skalds*. DG 11 4to provides the following account:

Erpr lútandi vá víg í véum ok var ætlaðr til dráps. Hann orti um Sor (Sqr? Saur?) konung at Haugi ok þá hǫfuð sitt. (*Edda* 2012:100).

Erpr lútandi committed homicide in holy places and was going to be killed. He composed about King Sor (Saurr?) at Haugr and received his head. (*Edda* 2012:101)

The main point here is of course that the text tells of a *skald* who was allowed to keep his head by composing a *höfuðlausn* ('head ransom'), a praise poem written in exchange for the poet's life. This would obviously have been considered a newsworthy event. The *Kringla* version of *Skáldatal* mentions this, and what it says about the poem's recipient is particularly interesting: "He composed a *drápa* about King Saur's dog and received his head for it" (*Hann orti drápu um Saur konungs hund ok þá hǫfuð sitt fyrir*) (*Edda* III, 1880–1887:252). It is not entirely clear how this is to be understood, but if the recipient of the *drápa* was in fact a dog, the overall value of the *skald's* head should drop significantly!

The topic of the third passage is known from other sources, though it seems to be of little relevance in this context:

Þjóðólfr hinn hvínverski orti um Rognvald heiðumhæra Ynglingatal, bræðrungr Haralds ins hárfagra, ok talði þrjá tigu langfeðga hans ok sagði frá hvers þeira dauða ok legstað. (*Edda* 2012:102).

⁹⁴ Most of the poems in *Gautreks saga* are attributed to Starkaðr, and the tall tales in that saga are indeed supported by Starkaðr's verses (see *Fornaldarsögur Norðurlanda* 3 1944:3–41).

Þjóðólfr of Hvinir composed *Ynglingatal* about Rognvaldr heiðumhæri (Nobly Gray), cousin of Haraldr the Finehaired and enumerated thirty of his forebears and told about each of their deaths and burial places. (*Edda* 2012:103).

It is only fitting that it was Snorri who best preserved *Ynglingatal* for future generations in *Heimskringla*. The poem was obviously considered noteworthy, since it was specifically mentioned here in *Skáldatal*. Indeed, it still seems to be on the top of the scribe's mind when he writes the next passage:

Eyvindr skáldaspillir orti um Hákon jarl inn ríka kvæði þat sem heitir Ynglingatal ok talði þar langfeðga hans til Óðins ok sagði frá dauða hvers þeira ok legstað. (*Edda* 2012:110).

Eyvindr skáldaspillir composed about Jarl Hákon the Great the poem that is called Ynglingatal and enumerated in it his ancestors to Óðinn and told about each of their deaths and burial places. (*Edda* 2012:111).

Nor does it hurt that the title of the poem appears wrongly here; Eyvindr's poem is believed to have been called *Háleygjatal*, and considered such an obvious imitation of *Ynglingatal* that it earned Eyvindr the nickname *skáldaspillir* – 'despoiler of poets'.⁹⁵

The four comments on the poems just enumerated also appear in the *Kringla*-version of *Skáldatal*. The fifth is unique to DG 11 4to, however, since the shorter *Kringla*-version does not mention this particular *skald* and ends before addressing any chieftains:

Úlfr inn óargi var hessir ágætr í Noregi í Naumudali, faðir Hallbjarnar hálftrölls, faðir Ketils hængs. Úlfr orti drápu á einni nótt ok sagði frá þrekvirkjum sínum. Hann var dauðr fyrir dag. (*Edda* 2012:114).

Úlfr inn óargi (the Fearless) was an excellent lord in Norway in Naumudalr, father of Hallbjorn Half-Troll, father of Ketill Salmon. Úlfr composed a drápa in one night and told of his great deeds. He was dead before dawn. (*Edda* 2012:115).

This will be familiar to those well-versed in genealogy: Úlfr inn óargi (Úlfr the Fearless) was the grandfather of Kveld-Úlfr, himself the grandfather of Egill Skallagrímsson. Indeed, according to most sources, Snorri Sturluson's earliest traceable lineage begins here.

⁹⁵ It is quite interesting that the poem *Noregs konunga tal*, composed in honor of Jón Loftsson at Oddi during Snorri's youth, should bear such obvious similarity to *Ynglingatal* and *Háleygjatal* (see Jón Helgason 1953:115–116).

Both versions of *Skáldatal* list *skalds* who have praised kings and other rulers in Norway, Denmark, and Sweden, but the longer version (DG 11 4to) extends to the British Isles and includes more Norwegian chieftains. In all, this *Skáldatal* counts 86 chieftains and upwards of 140 *skalds*.⁹⁶ Of these, I reckon that 35 are named in *Skáldskaparmál*, while more than sixty poets are identified by name there.⁹⁷ These numbers are too low for us to consider *Skáldatal* among the source material for *Skáldskaparmál*, nor can we consider *Skáldskaparmál* to have been a basis for *Skáldatal*. Guðrún Nordal words it thus:

Skáldatal is not only a catalogue of poets, but primarily a list of successive kings and earls in Scandinavia. The composition of the list belongs clearly to the writing of chronology and genealogy, and of compiling records of the past, that formed the basis for historical writing in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. (2001:121).

And later in the same vein:

I have noted that the ordering of the section within *Skáldatal* indicates that it is an offspring of the strong interest in the writing of kings' sagas in the thirteenth century. There is also an apparent textual relationship between the Prologue in *Heimskringla* and *Skáldatal*. [...] The central place of the genealogical poems, *Ynglingatal* and *Háleygjatal*, especially in the earliest writing of the kings, is emphasized in both versions of *Skáldatal* and the Prologue. (Ibid).⁹⁸

In this respect, it can be interesting to examine just how closely the assignment of *skalds* to kings in *Skáldatal* corresponds to that in *Heimskringla* and other kings' sagas.

Of course, the natural thing to do is to look to Snorri first. *Skáldatal* names six of Harald hárfagri's (Haraldr Fairhair's) *skalds*,⁹⁹ three of whom are also mentioned in *Haralds saga* in *Heimskringla*, there along with Jórunn skáldmær, the 'poet maiden'. Indeed, *Skáldskaparmál* refers to Jórunn skáldmær, though not in the same half-verse as in *Heimskringla*. Her enigmatic poem *Sendibítr*, noted in *Haralds saga*, also goes unmentioned in *Skáldskaparmál*.

⁹⁶ It is sometimes uncertain whether a poet listed first by his patronymic is the same poet referred to later simply by the title *skald*. By my estimation, the highest count is 144.

⁹⁷ See *Edda* 2013:94.

⁹⁸ The examples of textual relationships that Guðrún Nordal provides are entirely convincing.

⁹⁹ These *skalds* are: Auðunn illskælda, Guttormr sindri, Úlfr Sebbason, Þjóðólfr of Hvinir, Þorbjörn hornklofi, and Ólvir núfa.

The tally of *skalds* in *Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar* is not particularly sizeable either. *Skáldatal* names four, but only Hallfreðr vandræðaskáld appears in the saga of King Ólafr.¹⁰⁰

On the other hand, all seven *skalds* named in *Skáldatal* are accounted for in *Ólafs saga helga*. Þórðr Sjáreksson's *Erfidrápa* is also mentioned here.¹⁰¹

King Haraldr Sigurðarson harðráði was himself a *skald* of some distinction, and his saga in *Heimskringla* includes poetry of various sorts. *Skáldatal* mentions thirteen *skalds* who composed about him,¹⁰² nine of whom also appear in *Heimskringla*, along with Þórarinn Skeggjason. Those *skalds* whom the saga ignores but are included in *Skáldatal* nevertheless deserve a little bit of attention: Sighvatr skáld, Sneglu-Halli, Halli stirði ("the Stiff"), and Valþjófr skáld.

Sighvatr skáld is without a doubt Sighvatr Þórðarson, one of the most renowned and esteemed Icelandic *skalds* of the first half of the 11th century. He is attested five times in *Skáldatal* and in fact named twice as a court poet to the same chieftain. However, research suggests that it is rather unlikely that Sighvatr had a place in the court of all the chieftains connected to his name in *Skáldatal*. DG 11 4to does not list him among the *skalds* of Magnús góði – maybe *Bersoglisvísur*, one of Sighvatr's most famous and unusual poems, was not exactly considered to be in praise of the King. All in all, the conclusion from *Skáldatal* could be that Sighvatr skáld is attested more often than is deserved.

According to an episode about him in *Flateyjarbók*, Sneglu-Halli composed a praise poem for Haraldr, which is, however, not attested in *Haralds saga*. Halli (Grautar-Halli) otherwise seems to have been more of an entertainer than a *skald* specifically, and sometimes a bit brash.

Research suggests quite an interesting story behind Halli stirði ("the Stiff"). Nowhere is he attested by name except in *Skáldatal* and in Peringskiöld's edition of *Haralds saga*, where two verses are attributed to him (II s.a.:143). Concerning this, Bjarni Aðalbarnarson writes in his edition (*Íslensk fornrit* 28, 1951:160): "There is no basis for this text (it likely originates in wrongly-deciphered abbreviations)". But the verses under Halli stirði's name in Peringskiöld's edition appear in *Skjaldedigtningin*. Some

¹⁰⁰ *Skáldatal* mentions Bjarni Gullbráskáld, Gizurr Gullbráskáld, Sighvatr skáld, and Hallfreður vandræðaskáld.

¹⁰¹ The seven *skalds* who appear in both *Skáldatal* and *Ólafs saga helga* are: Sighvatr skáld, Óttarr svarti, Bersi Torfuson, Þormóðr Kolbrúnarskáld, Hofgarða-Refr, Þórðr Kolbeinsson, and Þorfinnr munnr.

¹⁰² These poets are: Arnórr jarlaskáld, Þolverkr Arnórsson, Grani skáld, Halli stirði, Illugi Bryndelaskáld, Oddr Kikinaskáld, Sighvatr skáld, Sneglu-Halli, Steinn Herdisarson, Stúfr blindi, Valgarðr á Velli, Valþjófr skáld, and Þjóðólfr Arnórsson.

attempts have been made to credit Þjóðólfr Arnórsson with these verses, but Finnur Jónsson arrived at the following conclusion in his 1920 literary historiography: “The entire tone is not exactly reminiscent of Þjóðólfr. I believe, therefore, that it is safest to attribute this *flokkr* to Halli stirði; the author seems to have been with the king at the time that the event described transpired.”¹⁰³ Thus, this nameless and otherwise entirely unknown *skald* found his way into literary history for no reason other than a misinterpretation of abbreviations in *Skáldatal*.

Nothing is known about Valþjófr skáld, and he is not mentioned anywhere except for *Skáldatal*.

From this example, it seems that *Skáldatal* should be taken with a grain of salt if we are to consider it a factual account of literary history.

It can also be informative to look at other authors of the kings’ sagas, not just Snorri. His nephew Sturla Þórðarson wrote *Hákonar saga gamla*, where the list of *skalds* is as follows:¹⁰⁴

Table 22. Edda and Hákonar saga

<i>Skáldatal Edda 2012:108</i>	<i>Hákonar saga Íslenzk fornrit 32</i>
Snorri Sturluson	Snorri Sturluson
Ólafr Þórðarson	Ólafr Þórðarson
Sturla Þórðarson	Sturla Þórðarson
Játgeirr Torfason	Játgeirr
Árni langi	Árni langi
Ólafr Leggsson	
Gizzur jarl	Gizzur Þorvaldsson
Guttormr kqrtr	

Looking beyond the kings’ sagas written by the Sturlungar, i.e. Snorri and Sturla Þórðarson, it is worth pointing out that *Skáldatal* assigns ten or eleven *skalds* to King Sverrir Sigurðarson, though none is mentioned as a source in Karl Jónsson’s *Sverris saga*.¹⁰⁵

The origins of *Skáldatal* could very well be quite old, but the youngest material in DG 11 4to points to around the turn of the 13th century.¹⁰⁶ In addition to what is written in *Kringla*, the material in DG 11 4to connects *Skáldatal* all the more closely to Snorri’s relatives; of course, this could just as well have been an addition made by someone in the vicinity of Reykjaholt, or elsewhere in the Sturlungar’s territory in general.

¹⁰³ https://heimskringla.no/wiki/FJ-Litteraturhist.Bd.1_-_Halle_stir%C3%B0e

¹⁰⁴ See also the publisher’s foreword to the 2013 *Íslenzk fornrit* edition of *Hákonar saga*, p. xlvii f.

¹⁰⁵ *Skáldatal* in *Kringla* names Snorri Sturluson as one of King Sverrir’s *skalds*, bringing the tally up to eleven, but his name has been omitted possibly by mistake in DG 11 4to.

¹⁰⁶ See e.g. Heimir Pálsson 2013:95.

By positioning *Skáldatal* at the beginning of *Skáldskaparmál*, students of poetics were also afforded a tool with which to locate the *skalds* who are mentioned in both places along a timeline. A reference of this kind would have been a valuable asset for the young generation.

Genealogy of the Sturlungar

From our 21st-century perspective, it is merely a frivolous pastime to create a genealogy that claims at least one ancestor in every generation of mankind all the way back to Adam. It does not even appear to be of any use in mapping duty-bound revenge, or to shed light on the chain of inheritance except for in a short, direct line. It is therefore not an enormously useful tool in determining an individual's position in society.¹⁰⁷ Tracing genealogy in this way provides precious little information about those ancestors that people had to know about in their own time.

Such a respectable lineage as the one that greets us on f. 25v in DG 11 4to, which traces back to Óðinn's son Skjöldr and from there through Noah and ultimately to Adam, shows with crystal clarity what distinguished people these must have been. In this way, the genealogy serves a purpose similar to the way in which great kings and emperors claimed to have come from the sun, and thus became sun kings. At the end of *Íslendingabók*, Ari Þorgilsson accounts for thirty-seven generations of his own forefathers, thereby tracing the line of Borgfirðingar and Swedish kings to Freyr, son of Njörðr, himself the son of Yngvi, King of Turkey.

According to the Sturlungar genealogy, there are about seventy generations (give or take one or two) between Snorri and Adam. Compare this with Óðinn's pedigree in the *Prologue*: there are forty generations between Óðinn and Menon alone, though the Sturlungar genealogy only seems to show forty-seven between Menon and Snorri. The precise number of generations presumably did not matter much, as long as they were suitably many and boasted enough names that were not only well-known, but powerful as well. In this respect, a genealogy was not unlike a magical incantation and status symbol.

Also, of doubtless great importance is that a list of forefathers that proceeds from one individual to the next acted as a sort of timeline, an at-

¹⁰⁷ In the First Grammatical Treatise in AM 242 fol, *áttvísí* ('genealogy') is included among the most important material that was customary to write about. In his article "Genealogier" (1960) Guðni Jónsson stresses the role of lineage in medieval Icelandic society, and how kinship could decide an individual's standing in contemporary disputes. He also points out the natural interest in finding out which distinguished figures or even gods one might be descended from. – Guðvarður Már Gunnlaugsson (2010) points out that such genealogies may have proven useful to Snorri's blood sister Helga and her husband Sölmundur in resolving matters of inheritance after Snorri's death.

tempt to give a story some dimensionality into times past. In this sense the genealogy served a purpose parallel to *Skáldatal*.¹⁰⁸

List of lawspeakers

The list of lawspeakers that follows the genealogy of the Sturlungar on f. 25v-26r in DG 11 4to coincides for the most part with Ari Þorgilsson's *Íslendingabók* and younger annals.¹⁰⁹ This particular census, i.e. the list of lawspeakers, is inextricably tied to Snorri Sturluson, as he occupied the position – the only salaried office in the Icelandic commonwealth – twice; first from 1215 to 1218 and then from 1221–1231. The list of lawspeakers ends with the words *Snorri Sturluson í annat sinn* ('Snorri Sturluson for a second time'). Nothing precludes us from regarding this version of the list as having been compiled during Snorri's second term as lawspeaker. A record of the years from 930 to 1220 is found along with the list of lawspeakers, a register of the historical period of which students of poetics were expected to have at least a basic understanding.

The practical purpose of all three lists – *Skáldatal*, the genealogy, and the list of lawspeakers – thus seems apparent before the work moves on to the language of poetry and the many examples thereof. We have both the *skalds'* names and the relevant chronology. Despite the connection between the genealogies of the Sturlungar and the Norse pantheon found in the *Prologue*, these lists had nothing at all to do with the mythological content in *Gylfaginning*; along with the narratives in *Gylf* 2, they were much closer to being a foreword to *Skáldskaparmál* than an afterword to *Gylfaginning*. In either case, they form a distinct interlude between the two major sections.

¹⁰⁸ We are tempted to recall Walter J. Ong's (*Orality and Literacy* 1982) theory of the time axis that first became a practical reality with the advent of writing. Prior to this, past time was regarded as accumulative. The past was imagined in a way that we might call vertical – the past was simply the past, regardless of how far from the present day (this explains why figures in heroic poems could marry each other despite, for example, a 300-year disparity between the bride and groom). Lists of ancestors and descendants were therefore an attempt to create a horizontal dimension, a straight line stretching into the past. This gives "censuses" like this a practical purpose. Ong describes the difference between vertical and horizontal time axes in this way: "Starting in the 'middle of things' is not a consciously contrived ploy but the original, natural, inevitable way to proceed for an oral poet approaching a lengthy narrative (very short accounts are perhaps another thing). If we take the climatic linear plot as the paradigm of plot, the epic has no plot. Strict plot for lengthy narrative comes with writing." (1982:144). – When *Skáldatal* first appeared in *Krönika* in 1670, the next step had been taken by adding dates to the reigns of kings and chieftains.

¹⁰⁹ I summarise this in my foreword to *Edda* 2012:xxvii–lxxx.

55
opins. 3 sem h'er q'far e'oen emar. hugstoe'ar b'p ek he'ra.
he'r i'arll kvass' d'eyra. goll'ar vo'p z' p'yr'pa. f'ar'ple'ciar be'm
de'arar. ok e'ij. q. em'ar. v'lar ge'ar v' alla. a'sk' song' f' er hoc mag
nar b'rk'f' b'ar'p'uar ser'k'ar b'as' g'ry'm'la d'uga. S. q. o'm'r f'f. f.
f'at v' b'ur'f' b'ro'f. b'ek'ar z' m'it' l'ik. re'ck'ar ne'm' d'au'p'f' d'ek
d'ual'nf' i' em' sal. z' sem repr. q. G'ri'ot all'dar tel ek gill'di ge'p
re'm'ar f'f'e'm'r. b'ez' g'eyra g'ly'm'e' b'ara. b'ip ek t'ypa k'yn h'ly'pa.
Sua. q. egill. b'up'v' h'inn'ar la'v'p' n'v a ek h'ro'f'as' v'm' kv'of'. ber
ek op'ins' m'io'f' a' en'ga b'io'p'. Sua. q. G'lum'r g'era. f. h'ly'p'i hap
20 ta b'ep'f'f' he'r' m'ill'd'inga g'ill'd'. f' b'ip'v' v' h'au'gnar h'egna
e'ion at f're'gn'v'. Sua. q. e'p'v'nd'e'. v'ltra ek h'lio'p' at h'ar'f' l'ip'i.
m'ep'an' g'ull'ng'ar g'ill'd'v' y'p'r'. m'ep'an' h' x'et' i' h'ole'gi. g'al'ga g'ra'f'
tel go'fa' tel'v'. Sua. q. em'ar s'e' t'. l'is'ar va'rar f' v'is'a. verk
ro'gn'f' m' h'egna. b'yt' o'd'e'r'nf' all'da. all'de' h'ap'f' v' p'les' g'all'd'ea.
30 Sua. q. em'ar. t. f. v'er'p'i f' en' r'ar'p'ar. at' g'e' v'm' kon' m'aran.
a' s'ep're'm'io' f'on'ar. f'as' u'ng'io'p'v' b'ap'ur'. S. q. v'ol'f'f'et'm'. he'r'
m'inn'f' v'inn' m'inar. m'er' z' f'unde' g'ep'in' f'v'nd'ar. v' g'oma' s'ker
g'h'ima. g'lau'm'b'et'f' egill' f'era'va. f'f' f' q. o'm'r' f'emp'a'f'f'. f. f'ec'ar
f'f'ot' ala' v'o'. en'go' f'ny' ek' i' m'p'ur'f' p'eng. h'ap'i' k'um'v' h'ro'f' f'm'p'.
40 h'aga v' m'inn' b'rag'. Sua. q. v'her' v'o'r'. l' h'all'd'e' g'eg'n'f' tel ek
h'ill'd'ar. k're'p'v' o'le'p'r'. h' v'it' ek at' g'io'p' v' m'ul'. g'ep'p'ar'f' l'i' q'p'ia.
s' k'all'd's'k'apa' er k'all'd'e' f'iar. q'pa' la'uar o'p'r'e'r'nf' a'p'e' m'io'f'z'm'
v' g'io'r'. z' p'ar' g'p'is' h' i' k'ael'm'v'. z' er' h' p'yr' f'ui' k'all'ap'e' h'ver'
la'uar op'ins'. Sua. q. e'p'v'nd'e'. m'ep'an' h' x'et' i' h'v' leg'r'. g'al'ga
25 g'ra'f' tel go'fa' tel'v'. En' z' k'all'd'e' f'k'all'd's'k'ap'inn' p'ar. e. h'p' d'uga'na
h'p' h'et'ar' a'v'l'. l'id' h'et'ar' s'k'ip'et' a' tek' tel' d'om'ana' at' f'k'all'd's'k'ap'inn'
z' n'v' k'all' f' f'ui' s'k'op' d'uga'na. Sua' f'om' h' s. b'ap'f' er' tel' b'ro'p'e' b'erg'
i'ar'f' z' s'k'ip' d'uga' solar' u'nd' at' f'enda' f'e'nf'y'r'nd' g'au'v'o' e'ina' i'

DG 11 4to is a textbook and some of the margins bear marks that are supposedly meant for the student, here a “v” perhaps meaning: This is a strophe! Learn it by heart! The page shown is f. 28r (p. 56).

The language of poetry

The title *Skáldskaparmál* traditionally refers to the part of *Prose Edda* that treats poetics – its nature and discourse and how it is to be composed – with numerous examples from the works of earlier *skalds*. The name has its basis in the very first rubric in DG 11 4to, where “*skáldskapar mál* [‘poetic diction’] and the names [*heiti*] of many things” (Edda 2012:7) follow the tales of the Æsir and the creation of the world. It must be pointed out that the term *heiti* does not mean the same here as it does in modern Icelandic and in the common translations, i.e., ‘rare and unusual words (nouns) that are used chiefly in poetry’, but is instead closer to a synonym for ‘name’. The phrase *heiti margra hluta* therefore means something along the lines of ‘what many things are called’. *Skáldskaparmál* distinguishes between *kent* and *ókent heiti*, whereby the former are what modern poetics refers to as *kennings* and the latter are noncomposite poetical names, or simply *heiti* as they later came to be known and are known today. The phrasing in the rubric thus fully conforms to the description of the language of poetry that Bragi provides in *Gylf 2*, namely that it consists of “two things: using a *kenning* and not using a *kenning*” (*tvent, kent og ókent*) (Edda 2012:90, 91). The corresponding phrasing in SnK, however, attempts another, more comprehensive formula that distinguishes between three branches of poetics (i.e., language performance): “to call everything by its name; the second category is the one called substitution; and the third category of language is what is called *kenning* [...]” (*at nefna hvern hlut sem heitir, önnur grein er sú er heitir fornöfn; in þriðja málsgrein er kölluð kenning*) (Edda 1995,64) (see Table 19). What Bragi refers to as ‘substitution’ (*fornöfn*) is in fact *heiti*. A teacher in the present day might illustrate the relation between ‘name’ and ‘substitution’ (i.e. *heiti*) with the example *kona* (‘woman’) for a *name* and *fljóð* (poet. ‘maiden, damsel’) for a corresponding substitution or *heiti*. By the same token, a *kenning* used to refer to a woman might be *hringa Hlín* (‘goddess (Hlín) of rings’). As might be expected, it turns out that only *kennings* and *heiti* warrant any discussion, and the two versions of *Skáldskaparmál* are in complete agreement and harmony with each

other in this regard (although the organization of the material differs ever so slightly between the two *Eddas*).

In his book about DG 11 4to Lasse Mårtensson divides *Skáldskaparmál* into three sections that he labels *Skáldskaparmál* 1, 2 and 3.¹¹⁰ In essence, *Skáld* 1 consists of the *kenning* chapter and *Skáld* 2 of the *heiti* chapter. *Skáld* 3 comprises a collection of stories that make up the final chapter of *Skáldskaparmál*, as these stories had been removed from the previous sections. Our discussion will follow Mårtensson's division of the text almost to the letter.

Although *kennings* and *heiti* both play important roles in the language of poetry, they are separate and distinct phenomena. A *kenning* consists of two parts, at the very least, in which something (the referent) is called by another name (the base word), and associated with – or *kennt við* – a third thing (the determinant) that modifies the base word. For example, a foot is called *hestur* ('horse'), and modified by (*kennt við*) *postula* (gen. pl., *postuli*, Eng. 'apostle'). The complete *kenning* for feet is therefore *hestar postulanna*, or 'the apostles' horses'. A woman (*kona*), to name another example, may be called *eik* ('oak'), and in turn modified by *aura* (gen. pl. *eyrir*, Eng. 'gold, wealth; riches') and thus *aura eik*, or 'oak of riches', refers to a woman. The construction of *kennings* as *Edda* teaches it is a poetic **technique**, whereas *heiti* are the specialised poetic **vocabulary**. The poet or listener must know that *fákr* is a poetic term for *hestur* ('horse'), as *víf* is for *kona* ('woman') and *negg* for *hjarta* ('heart'). The *kenning* chapter (*Skáld* 1) thus focuses on applying the technique, while the *heiti* chapter (*Skáld* 2) aims first and foremost at expanding the student-*skald's* poetic lexicon.

Two trends in textbook-making

Textbook-making has long been characterised by two distinct philosophies. One philosophy emphasizss introducing students to as much as possible that relates to the topic of study, thereby producing textbooks as comprehensive as circumstances allow. The other philosophy is primarily concerned with presenting only what is considered vitally necessary, while the teacher is tasked with supplementing the text with other relevant material.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Lasse Mårtensson 2013:45–51. – The abbreviations *Skáld* 1, 2 og 3 will be used in this book.

¹¹¹ Heimir Pálsson briefly touches on this 2019:56. We can find an exquisite example of the shorter and concise style of textbook in the manuscript fragment often referred to as *Litla Skálda* (*Edda* 1852:511–514).

By their very nature, textbooks are a work in progress. The state of scholarship within a field is ever-changing, and this of course calls for regular revision to instructional texts. We often see a tendency to deepen and expand a textbook's content upon each revision, as there is no shortage of related material that would doubtless be of benefit to students.

If we examine the two versions of *Skáldskaparmál* through this lens, it is obvious that the one we encounter in SnK adheres to the philosophy of comprehensiveness, while SnU on the other hand streamlines the theory – most likely those aspects that tradition dictates should be learned by rote and recited verbatim. SnU isolates this theoretical material – and thereby emphasizes its importance – by removing the stories from *Skáldskaparmál* and placing them in *Gylf 2* and *Skáld 3*.

Skáldskaparmál 1

The *kenning* section (*Skáld 1*) follows the same order in both *Edda* versions, as shown in Table 23. What has happened in SnU is that the stories of the gods have been transferred to either *Gylf 2* or to the final section of *Skáldskaparmál*, *Skáld 3*. The reason for this was doubtlessly to prevent the material intended for rote learning from getting bogged down in narrative, which would not have been considered essential according to the textbook philosophy to which SnU appears to adhere. The stories that have been transferred out of *Skáld 1* into *Gylf 2* all deal with the main figures in myth and legend, while those stories that find themselves in *Skáld 3* all offer in one way or another some explanation for *kennings* for gold. (The one exception to this is the tale of the battle of the Hjaðnings; however, it is apparent that the authors of some *kennings* considered the Hjaðnings' stones to be jewellery of some sort, if not gold.) If the exemplar of DG 11 4to did indeed include the long excerpts from the *dróttkvæði* (two from *Haustlǫng*, two from *Ragnarsdrápa*, and both *Pórsdrápa* and *Grottasǫngr*, presumably in their entirety), they have been excised so thoroughly that no traces of them remain in SnU; it is quite improbable that this is the case.¹¹²

¹¹² There is of course no way to prove that this material was largely interpolated into the RTW-archetype, but it bears mentioning that *Grottasǫngr* is only included in R and T; this requires particular explanation. – When DG 11 4to says, “Eilífr Guðrúnarson has composed a passage based on this story in *Pórsdrápa*” (*Eptir þessi sögu hefir ort Eilífr Guðrúnarson í Pórsdrápu*) (*Edda* 2012:96 & 97), it does not necessarily mean anything other than that the narrator was familiar with Eilífr's poem. We can compare this to SnK, which says, “Úlfr Uggason composed a long passage on the story of Baldr in *Húsdrápa*” (*Úlfr Uggason hefir kveðit eptir sögu Baldrs langt skeið í Húsdrápu*) (*Edda* 2012:144 & 145) without citing a single line from the poem itself.

Organization of the *kenning* section

Table 23 offers an overview of the contents of *Skáld* 1 and at the same time indicates the material that SnK includes in *Skáld* 1, but is either not found at all in SnU (designated by 00 on Table 23) and has this perhaps been omitted entirely or moved into either *Gylf* 2 or *Skáld* 3.

As far as the essential details are concerned, the order in which they are presented is simple and probably self-explanatory from the instructor's perspective. We begin with the heathen gods and goddesses and the art of poetry itself. From there we proceed to the act of creation – from the heavens to mankind – and then to the dearest element of all: gold. Next, we turn to mankind's own creations: weapons, ships, and warfare. Last but not least is the new god who works all things according to his will – that is to say, the Christian God.

The nature of *kennings*

When we look at the *kennings* for gods and men, it quickly becomes clear that only a small portion of them have anything at all to do with the myths or even the individual tales of the gods. Gods and goddesses are often named in *kennings*, but without any specific reference to the tales in which these figures appear.¹¹³ For this reason we might regard the following assertion as being somewhat overconfident:¹¹⁴

[...] there are two factors responsible for the opacity that characterizes many *kennings*. In the first place, a large proportion of them are references to myths and ideas that are foreign to the modern reader, and therefore incomprehensible unless the reader possesses prior knowledge of what is being referred to. Snorri comes to our aid here with *Edda*, which appears to have been written explicitly as a textbook, first and foremost to instruct in the composition of *kennings*, but also in metrics. Secondly, it is possible to re-write each part of the *kenning* individually, though it is especially common for a new *kenning* to replace the determinant in the one being rewritten.¹¹⁵

¹¹³ I deal with this exhaustively in my article 2017b, especially pages 196–204, and therefore will not repeat the discussion here.

¹¹⁴ The third factor, which is not mentioned here and perhaps presents the greatest difficulty to foreign readers, is the flexible word order of *dróttkvætt* poetry which sometimes results in significant distance between the base word and the determinant, so that the determinant can be applied to more than one base. This also produces interpretations which are occasionally very ambiguous.

¹¹⁵ “[...] tvennt gerir það að verkum að oft eru *kenningar* torskildar. Í fyrsta lagi er mikill hluti þeirra tilvísanir til goðsagna eða hugmynda sem eru nútímamönnum framandi svo að þær eru óskiljanlegar nema maður viti til hvers vísað er. Hér kemur Snorri til hjálpar með *Eddu*, en hún virðist beinlínis samin sem handbók handa skáldum, fyrst og fremst við gerð *kenninga* en einnig í bragfræði. Í öðru lagi er hægt að umrita liðina hvorn um sig, en einkum er algengt að ný *kenning* komi í staðinn fyrir kenniliðinn.” (Vésteinn Ólason, *Íslensk bókmenntasaga* I 1992:59).

Table 23. Order of contents in the *kenning* section (*Skáld 1*)

SnK, <i>Edda</i> 1998:6–78	SnU <i>Edda</i> 2012:124–202
Feast and introduction to the study of poetics	Moved to Gylf 2
Óðinn, the Mead of Poetry, Þórr, and other <i>æsir</i>	Unchanged
Þórr's Duel with Hrungrnir (story)	Moved to Gylf 2
<i>Haustlǫng</i> , 7 stanzas	00
Þórr and Geirroðr (story)	Moved to Gylf 2
<i>Þórsdrápa</i> , 19 stanzas	00
Goddesses	Unchanged
<i>Haustlǫng</i> , 13 stanzas (4 about Iðunn)	00
Sky, earth, sea, sun, wind, fire, winter, summer, man, woman	Unchanged
Gold 1	Gold 1 and 2
Dvergasmíð (story) The dwarves' handiwork	Moved to Skáld 3
Oturgjöld (story) Otter-payment	Moved to Skáld 3
Vǫlsungar, Gjúkungar The Volsungs and the Gjúkungs	00
<i>Ragnarsdrápa</i> 4 ½ stanzas	00
Fróðamjöl (story)	Moved to Skáld 3
<i>Grottasǫngur</i> , 24 stanzas	00
Hrólfr kraki (story)	Moved to Skáld 3
Gold 2	
Man referred to in terms of gold, woman referred to in terms of gold and trees, man referred to in terms of trees; battle, weapons, and armor	Unchanged
Battle of the Hjaðnings (story)	Moved to Skáld 3
<i>Ragnarsdrápa</i> 4 ½ stanzas	00
Ships, Christ, kings, and other men	Unchanged

Although a number of *kennings* use the names of gods or of objects associated with them, only very few refer directly to a *story*. Among those for which we find explanations in *Edda* are *kennings* such as *Ymis haus* ('Ymir's skull') for the sky, *ellilyfása* ('the Æsir's old-age cure') for Iðunn's apples, and *þilja Hrungrnis ilja* ('Hrungrnir's sole-plank') for a shield. On the other hand, it remains a mystery why *Þrúðar þjófr* ('Þrúðr's thief') refers to Hrungrnir and *bani Belja* ('slayer of Beli') to Freyr, or why a head is referred to as *hjálm's fylli Vindhlés* ('Vindhlé's helmet-filler'). In order to understand that *fagrregn Marþallar hvarma* ('rain of Marþoll's eyelids') means gold, we must know that Marþoll is another name for Freyja, who weeps tears (*regn hvarma*) of red gold. The tale itself of the goddess's sorrow over her estranged husband, however, is of no immediate relevance.

Three myths in particular have proven to be the most prolific sources of *kennings*: the tale of Earth's creation from Ymir's flesh,¹¹⁶ the tale of the mead of poetry (particularly as concerns dwarfs and *jötnar*),¹¹⁷ and Þórr's battle with the Midgard Serpent (the serpent itself is often depicted as a fish, *endiseiðr allra landa*, or the 'boundary-saithe of all lands'). Other stories support only a single *kenning*: Þórr's entire journey to Útgarda-Loki appears only to have produced *þungfangvina Þórs* ('Þórr's heavy [female] wrestling partner') for old age, and his duel with Hrungrnir offers an explanation for a shield, *Hrungrnis fóta stallr* ('Hrungrnir's foot-platform').¹¹⁸ *The epilogue to the stories of Skaði's revenge explains why munntal jötna* ('mouth-tale of giants') can mean gold.¹¹⁹

In fact, most of the knowledge necessary to fumble one's way towards an understanding of *dróttkvætt* verse can be found in the *lists* in *Skáld 1* and *Skáld 2*, which tell us how to refer to this and that, and the other names by which gods, goddesses, and things are known. The close correspondence in *Edda* between *Gylfaginning* and *Skáldskaparmál* and the exceptional skill with which these memorable stories are told have led many scholars to conclude that the stories and *kennings* are perhaps more closely intertwined than is the case.

Because *kennings* are such a critical feature of poetic language, it is necessary that we pay them some attention. Here we will look at four categories of *kennings*: those that refer to people, naturally-occurring objects and phenomena, man-made objects and phenomena, and finally, *kennings* for gold and other treasures. The use of *heiti* occasionally enters into the discussion as well.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ A search for Ymir in *Lexicon Poeticum* reveals that he is certainly mentioned a few times in eddic poetry, but Arnórr Þórðarson is the only known skald to have used the *kenning* *Ymis haus* ('Ymir's skull') for the sky, and Ormr Barreyjarskáld the only one to have called the sea *Ymis blóð* ('Ymir's blood').

¹¹⁷ This was a matter of great necessity to the skalds, as it was important to draw the audience's attention to the fact that he or she was about to recite a poem. It appears to have become customary quite early on to let the mead of poetry represent the poem itself, as we see in such *kennings* as, for example, *mjoðr Sónar* ('mead of [the vat] Són').

¹¹⁸ In *Kenningar der Skalden* (p. 166), Meissner takes account of the following attested variations of this *kenning*: *Þrúðar þjófs iljablað*, *fjalla Finns ilja brú*, *mellu kindar brú*, *Hrungrnis ilja þilja*, *Aurnis spjalla ilfet* ('the thief of Þrúður's sole-blade', 'Fell-Finn's footsole-bridge', 'trollwife's offspring's bridge', 'Aurnir's friend's foot-sole'. These are all one and the same *kenning*; according to *Edda*, *fjalla Finn* ('Fell-Finn') means *jötunn* and therefore can be Hrungrnir, *mellu kind* refers to the offspring of a giantess, and therefore Hrungrnir, and *Aurnis spjalli*, 'friend of Aurnir', is also a *jötunn* and therefore, of course, also Hrungrnir.

¹¹⁹ This *kenning* is a word-play, since *tal* means both 'speech' and 'counting' (e.g., money).

¹²⁰ The textbook part of *Skáldskaparmál*, i.e., that which remained in DG 11 4to after the other material had been transferred out of it, has long been considered difficult reading. The first edition of *Uppsala Edda* (Göransson 1746) contained only *Gylfaginning* but

Persons

This is a very large category of *kennings*, and its pedagogical significance is most evident in the restructuring of the text that occurs when we arrive at the discussion of *heiti* in *Skáld 2*, DG 11 4to. In regard to the ancient gods and goddesses, the system is clear: the person (i.e., god or goddess) is referred to in terms of familial ties, possessions (attributes), and deeds, respectively. *Kennings* for men follow the same pattern, though the lack of a clear distinction between *kenning* and *heiti* creates considerable ambiguity in some cases. Thus, we can see in the *heiti* chapter of DG 11 4to that *fornofn* ('substitutions'), which appear to be none other than *heiti* (*for-nafn*, lit. 'for-name', a name that stands *for* something else), are categorised into negative and positive *heiti* for the sake of expediency (*Edda* 2012:214–216, cf. *Edda* 1998:106). However, this same chapter features a clause about *viðrkenningar* ('circumlocutions'), which are given by referring to a person in terms of possessions or kin (*Edda* 2012:216–218). This clause fails to distinguish between *viðrkenningar* and what *Skáld 2* (as well as a note on *Háttatal*) calls *sannkenning* ('true description'). Indeed, *sannkenning* seems to describe compound adjectives intended to support and strengthen the *heiti*. This all becomes quite murky and messy. SnK explains the same concepts in a slightly clearer way (*Edda* 1998:107).

It is clear that neither *Edda* version makes any attempt to incorporate foreign theory into the Icelandic poetic tradition. On the contrary, it is obvious that both versions are working with and developing techniques characteristic of oral instruction. It therefore comes as no surprise that the terminology and methodology appear difficult and unwieldy; education was not centralised and did not yet adhere to any standardised curriculum.

Natural objects and phenomena

This is most particularly a matter of the act of creation and the world as a whole.

The main characteristic of *kennings* and *heiti* for natural phenomena is that they attempt to reify or personify the intangible. No clear distinction is made between *kenning* and *heiti*, and the *kennings* are even repeated in

was nevertheless called *Edda*. Anne Holtsmark and Jón Helgason's 1950 edition, appearing in that year's issue of the series *Nordisk filologi*, it has been enormously influential; it presents *Gylfaginning* and the stories from *Skáldskaparmál* as a reader intended for students of Nordic philology, and has enjoyed widespread use ever since. Despite the exquisiteness of the texts and the sophistication of this edition in other respects, it nevertheless paints a questionable picture of *Edda* in its entirety, and little to none at all of *Skáldskaparmál*. Guðrún Nordal takes the same approach in *Guðirnir okkar gömlu ásamt Snorra-Eddu* (2011), and several other editions abridged in the same way can be found in the libraries of Icelandic schools.

the corresponding list of *heiti*. An illuminating example can be found in the various *kennings* (Table 24) and *heiti* (Table 25) for the sky:

Table 24. *Kennings* for the sky

SnU <i>Edda</i> 2012:150 & 151	SnK <i>Edda</i> 1998:33
<p>Hversu skal kenna himininn? Svá at kalla hann Ymis haus ok þar af jötuns haus ok erfiði eða byrði dverganna eða hjálm Vestra ok Austra, Suðra, Norðra; land sólar ok tungls ok himintungla, vápna¹²¹ ok veðra; hjálm eða hús lopts ok jarðar ok sólar.</p> <p>How shall the sky be referred to? By calling it Ymir's skull and hence giant's skull and toil or burden of the dwarfs or helmet of Vestri and Austri, Suðri, Norðri; land of sun and moon and stars, weapons and winds, helmet or house of air and earth and sun.</p>	<p>Hvernig skal kenna himin? Svá at kalla hann Ymis haus ok þar af jötuns haus ok erfiði eða byrði dverganna eða hjálm Vestra ok Austra, Suðra, Norðra, land sólar ok tungls ok himintungla, vagna ok veðra, hjálmr eða hús lopts ok jarðar ok sólar.</p>

Table 25. *Heiti* for the sky

SnU <i>Edda</i> 2012:206 & 207	SnK <i>Edda</i> 1998:85
<p>Þessi nöfn heims¹²² eru rituð en eigi höfum vér funnit í kvæðum öll þessi. En þessi heiti þikki mér óskylt at hafa nema kveðit¹²³ sé til. Hann heitir himinn, hlýrnir, heiðþyrnir, leiptr, hrjóðr, víðbláinn.</p> <p>Hverninn skal kenna himininn? Kalla hann Ymis haus ok erfiði ok byrði dverga, hjálm Austra, Vestra, Norðra, Suðra; land sólar ok tungls ok himintungla, vápna eða veðra; hjálm eða hús lopts ok jarðar.</p> <p>These names for world are written down, but we have not found all these in poems. So it seems to me unnecessary to use these terms unless the poem is extant. It is called heaven, twin-lit, bright-drier, lightning, coverer, wide-blue.</p> <p>How shall the sky be referred to? By calling it Ymir's skull and toil and burden of dwarfs, helmet of Austri, Vestri, Norðri, Suðri; land of sun and moon and stars, of weapons or winds, helmet or house of air and earth.</p>	<p>Þessi nöfn himins eru rituð, en eigi höfum vér fundit í kvæðum öll þessi heiti. En þessi skáldskaparheiti sem önnur þykki mér óskylt at hafa í skáldskap nema áðr finni hann í verka höfuðskálda því lík heiti: Himinn, hlýrnir, heiðþornir, hregg-Mímir, Andlangr, ljósfari, drífandi, skatyrnir, víðfeðmir, vet-Mímir, leiptr, hrjóðr, víðbláinn.</p>

¹²¹ This is probably a miswriting of *vagna* (gen. pl. 'chariot').

¹²² This is probably a miswriting of *himin*, given what immediately follows.

¹²³ It is possible that this is supposed to say *kvæðit* ('the poem').

This list calls for further discussion for various reasons. Both versions begin with the peculiar yet practical remark that it is not necessary to learn those *kennings* and *heiti* that have not been employed in the works of major skalds. At the same time, the rare first person singular (as well as the *pluralis majestatis* form, *vér*) lets us know that the author/editor is working from written material, and that his or her opinions (cf. “so it seems to me unnecessary”) carry some weight!¹²⁴

We can easily imagine that the author/editor was working with a ‘scrap collection’, various notes and jottings easily consolidated into a single volume. This could offer a possible explanation for why the same list of *kennings* appears twice in SnU, albeit with minor changes: We find the same error, i.e., *vápn* instead of *vagn*, probably because it was written this way in the exemplar, but on the other hand the *kenning jötuns haus* is left out and the names of the dwarfs appear in a different order (see Tables 24 and 26). None of this is enough to support any conclusions other than that the text in *Edda* is not the first to have been written on the topic.

The first *kennings* for the sky, earth, and sea are respectively *Ymis haus*, *Ymis hold*, and *Ymis blóð*. As pointed out earlier, however, *kennings* of this sort are nearly unknown in *dróttkvætt* poetry; we find one about *Ymis haus* (*Edda* 2012:150) and another about *Ymis blóð* (*Edda* 2012:154), both examples from *Skáldskaparmál*. Systematic organization makes the material easier to remember.

¹²⁴ The clause about *heiti*, as written in SnK, also appears in AM 748 (*Edda* 1852:592) where it uses both *vér* and *ek*.

Man-made objects and phenomena

Arms and defence, ships and sailing and trade in weapons are all intrinsic parts of the picture commonly painted of Viking life. These are typical themes in *dróttkvætt* poetry, and the poems and the *kennings* they contain doubtless play a substantial role in creating the imagery that persists to this day. From this perspective, it seems only natural that the *kennings* for battle would be fairly mundane and nearly identical in both versions:

Table 26. *Kennings* for battle

<i>Edda</i> 2012:176, <i>Edda</i> 1998:66	<i>Edda</i> 2012:177
Hvernveg skal kenna orrostu? Svá at kalla veðr vápna eða hlífa eða Óðins eða [vápna, repeated, SnU] eða valkyrju eða herkonunga eða gný eða glym.	How shall battle be referred to? By calling it weather of weapons or shields or of Óðinn or valkyrie or war-kings or [their] clash or noise.

Descriptions of battle typically employ words relating to noise and storms; throwing-weapons for example become hail or rain, shields become tents or screens, etc. To further enliven the imagery, axes are given the names of giantesses, and swords and spears are referred to as serpents or fish.

Great battles bring great bloodshed, and so it is natural to expect scavengers arriving by land and air to feast on the aftermath.

This all makes for some very lively visuals at times, but in the long run it can grow awfully tiresome. It must have provided a certain degree of relief, however, for weary warriors straining to make sense of the intricate and often arcane language of poetry: When the performing poet utters a weather word or begins to talk of birds and beasts, he or she signals a change of topic so that the listener knows that battle and bloodshed are on the horizon. That is to say, it is simply easier to follow along when we know in advance what is to come!

Inevitably the battle draws to a close, with the warrior having earned his wages. Gold is not the only element that warrants its own poetic vocabulary; silver and iron enter the picture as well, but gold of course outshines them all.

Gold and other precious metals

Viking life seems to have created an economy based on an unusual ideology: A generous man is the enemy of gold and treasure, for he is not concerned with hoarding his riches, and this places him above other men.¹²⁵

Gold, silver, and other precious metals all put certain demands upon the poetic discourse.

Table 27. Kennings for gold

<i>Edda</i> 2012:162 (cf. <i>Edda</i> 1998:40)	<i>Edda</i> 2012:163
Hvernig skal kenna gull? Svá at kalla þat eld Ægis ok barr Glasis; haddr Sifjar, höfuðþond Fullu, grátr Freyju, skúr Draupnis ok dropa ok regn augna Freyju, Otrgjöld, sáð Fýrisvallar, haugþak Hólga, eldr Ægis ok Ránar ok allra vatna ok handar ok grjót ok sker [by a mistake <i>sær</i>] handar, Fróða mjöl.	How shall gold be referred to? By calling it Ægir's fire and Glasir's foliage, Sif's hair, Fulla's snoods, Freyja's weeping, Draupnir's shower and dripping, and rain of Freyja's eyes, otter-payment, seed of Fyri plain, Holgi's mound-roof, fire of Ægir and Rán and all kinds of wa- ters and of the arm and stones and sea of the arm, Fróði's meal.

This is the first list of *kennings* for gold but it is far from the last. Some *kennings* even beget an entire subdivision of still more *kennings* specific to the theme:

Table 28. Gold – Freyja's tears

<i>Edda</i> 2012:164; (cf. <i>Edda</i> 1998:44)	<i>Edda</i> 2012:165
Hér er hon [Freyja] kǫlluð Gefn ok vanabrúðr, ok til allra heita Freyju er rétt at kenna grátinn ok kalla svá gullit. Marga lund er þeim <i>kenninum</i> breytt, kallat hagl ok regn eða él ok dropar eða skúrir ok forsar augna hennar eða knjá eða hlýra ok brá eða hvarma. Orð eða ráð jötna, sem fyrir var sagt.	Here she is called Gefn and Vanr-bride, and it is normal to qualify weeping by any of the names for Freyja and to call gold that. These <i>kennings</i> are varied in many ways, calling it hail or rain or storm or drops or showers and cascades of her eyes or knees or cheeks and eyelashes or eyelids. Words or counsel of giants, as was said above.

¹²⁵ Snorri himself is responsible for one of the most ostentatious examples, appearing in the cleft refrain about Earl Skúli (*Sturlunga saga* I 1946:278). The earl's generosity is described in such a way that the man himself is referred to as *harðmúlaðr gnaphjarls rambliks*. Expositors have determined that *gnaphjarl*, which most likely means 'towering cliffs', is a substitution for 'churning waves', whose *ramblik* ('mighty brightness') is gold. The man who is 'hard-toothed against gold', therefore, is generous.

Freyja's weeping and the language – or 'mouthful' (*munfylli*) – of the *jötnar* prove to be fertile soil for *kennings*. The proper names of the *jötnar* suffice as determinants in many gold *kennings*, but in addition we also find references to familiar and noteworthy tales:

Table 29. Gold – Otter-payment

<i>Edda</i> 2012:164	<i>Edda</i> 2012:165
Gull er kallat otragjöld eða nauðgjöld ásanna eða rógmálmr, ból eða byggð Fáfnis eða málmr Gnitaeiðar eða byrðr Grana ok arfr Fáfnis, Niflunga skattr eða arfr, Kraka sáð. ¹²⁶	Gold is called otter-payment or Æsir's forced payment or strife-metal, lair or abode of Fáfmir or metal of Gnitaeiðr or burden of Grani and Fáfmir's inheritance, Niflungs' treasure or inheritance, Kraki's seed.

And there's more where that came from:

Table 30. More gold

<i>Edda</i> 2012:168 (cf. <i>Edda</i> 1998:61)	<i>Edda</i> 2012:169
Gull er kallat eldr handar eða liðs eða leggjjar, því at þat er rautt, en silfr snjór, svell eða héla, því at þat er hvítt. Með sama hætti skal kenna gull eða silfr til sjóðs eða diguls, en hvártveggja gull eða silfr má vera grjót handa ok hálsgrjörð þess er títt var at hafa men. Hringar eru bæði gull ok silfr ef eigi er annan veg breytt. ¹²⁷	Gold is called fire of arm or joint or limb, since it is red, and silver snow, ice and frost, since it is white. In the same way gold or silver should be referred to in terms of purse or crucible, and either gold and silver may be meant by rocks of the arms and neck-ring of some person whose custom it was to wear a necklace. Rings mean both gold and silver if it is not varied in some other way.

From this brief overview alone, it is abundantly clear that the science of the *kenning* was far from fully formed when *Skáldskaparmál* was compiled. What we have here is the work of more than one author or editor, all of whom are making the best of the material at hand. Snorri of course plays the most important role in the editorial process, but teachers of prospective *skalds* have gathered this material and taken great pains to formalise it, generation after generation. As *Egils saga* tells us of Egill Skallagrímsson and Einarr Helgason skálaglamm, one *skald* learns from the other, and so on.

¹²⁶ The stories that explain these *kennings* immediately follow this list in SnK. In SnU they have been moved to the very end, i.e., *Skáld* 3.

¹²⁷ In spite of the explicitly-stated association of snow with silver, a remark on a verse by Einarr Skúlason immediately follows this passage in the text: *Hér er gull kallat snær skálanna* ('Here gold is called snow of the scales'). In SnK they are apparently one and the same.

Lists

Although we can be fairly certain that *Skáldskaparmál* is the first textbook to be written on the study of poetics in Icelandic, this is not to say that the author developed the theories himself. There is no reason to disregard the many accounts of young men who assembled at kings' courts abroad, with poetry on their mind or in their pocket, having composed a series of verses or even a *drápa* about the heroic deeds of kings and warriors upon whom they had never laid eyes. This they achieved by virtue of having learned to compose praise poetry even long before Snorri's day. As early as the tenth century, Icelandic *skalds* seemed to enjoy considerable respect in the Norwegian court, and this respect had not diminished in the eleventh century, by which point the Norwegian *skalds* had mostly disappeared from the limelight. It is clear that Snorri himself had learned the craft of composition from his forerunners at Oddi, who had imparted their knowledge to him from an early age. And there is no doubt that Snorri's instruction had taken the form of questions such as *hversu skal kenna* ('how shall X be referred to?') and *hversu skal nefna* ('how shall X be called?'), which called upon answers in the form of lists of *kennings* supported by examples from the works of older poets. The structure of this back-and-forth, interrogative style of instruction was highly uniform, as the *kennings* for Þórr and Óðinn in Tables 19 and 20 illustrate; there we find 23 *kennings* for Óðinn taken from the half-strophes in DG 11 4to, and 14 for Þórr.

On average, the lists are fairly consistent between the two *Edda* versions. The differences are few, and trifling enough to attribute to a scribe perhaps having added an example here or there that he recalled from memory. Let us take a look at two examples in Table 31 and Table 32.

Table 31. Kennings for Heimdallr

SnU <i>Edda</i> 2012:146 & 147	SnK <i>Edda</i> 1998:19
<p>Hvernveg skal kenna Heimdall?</p> <p>Svá at kalla hann son níu mæðra eða vörð goða, sem fyrr er sagt, eða hvíta ás; mensæki Freyju; um þat er kveðit í Heimdallargaldri, ok er síðan kallat höfuð mjötuðr Heimdallar. Sverðit heitir manns mjötuðr. Heimdallr er eigandi Gulltopps, hann er tilsökir Vágaskers ok Singasteins, þá er hann deildi til Brisingamens við Loka. Hann heitir og Vindgler.¹²⁸ Úlfr Uggason kvað í Húsdrápu langa stund eptir þessi frásögn ok er þess getit at þeir vóru í sela líki. Hann er ok son Óðins.</p> <p>How shall Heimdallr be referred to?</p> <p>By calling him son of nine mothers or guardian of the gods, as was said above, or the white Áss, recoverer of Freyja's necklace; a passage in <i>Heimdallargaldr</i> is devoted to this story, and since then the head has been called Heimdallr's doom. The sword is called man's doom. Heimdallr is owner of Gulltoppr, he is the visitor to Vágasker and Singasteinn, when he contended with Loki for the Brisingamen. He is also called Vindgler. Úlfr Uggason composed a long passage in <i>Húsdrápa</i> based on this story, and it is mentioned there that they were in the form of seals. He is also son of Óðinn.</p>	<p>Hvernig skal Heimdall kenna? Svá at kalla hann son níu mæðra, vörð guða, svá sem fyrr er ritat, eða hvíta Ás, Loka dólgr, mensækir Freyju. Heimdalar höfuð heitir sverð; svá er sagt at hann var lostinn manns höfði í gögnum. Um hann er kveðit í Heimdallargaldri, ok er síðan kallat höfuð mjötuðr Heimdalar; sverð heitir manns mjötuðr. Heimdallr er eigandi Gulltopps. Hann er ok tilsökir Vágaskers ok Singasteins; þá deildi hann við Loka um Brisingamen. Hann heitir ok Vindlér. Úlfr Uggason kvað í Húsdrápu langa stund eptir þeiri frásögu; er þess þar getit er þeir váru í sela líkjum; ok sonr Óðins.</p>

Despite being in agreement that Úlfr Uggason had composed a lengthy passage based on the story of the battle at Singasteinn, neither SnK nor SnU mentions a single *kennning* for Heimdallr from this poem. In fact, SnK includes one such verse from that part of the poem in its list of *kennings* for the villain Loki:

¹²⁸ Neither the name *Vindgler* nor *Vindlér* seems to appear in *kennings* or as *heiti*. Most scholars nevertheless consider the version found in SnK, *Vindlér*, to be the most plausible.

Table 32. Kennings for Loki

DG 11 <i>Edda</i> 2012:148 & 149	SnK (<i>Edda</i> 1989:19–20)
<p>Hversu skal kenna Loka?</p> <p>Kalla hann son Fárabauta ok Laufeyjar ok Nálar, bróður Býleifts ok Helblinda; faðir Vánargands, þat er Fenrisúlfr, ok Jǫrmungands, þat er Miðgarðsormr, ok Heljar ok Nara ok Ála; ok frænda ok fõðrbróður, vársinna¹²⁹ ok sessa Óðins ok ása ok kistuskrúð Geirraðar; þjófr jǫtna, hafrs ok Brisingamens ok Iðunnar epla; Sleipnis frænda, ver Sigunar, goða dólg, hárskaða Sifjar, þolva smið; hinn slægi áss, rægjandi ok vélandi guðanna, ráðbani Baldrs, hinn búni [= bundni?] áss, þrætudólgr Heimdallar ok Skaða.</p> <p>How shall Loki be referred to?</p> <p>By calling him son of Fárabauti and Laufey and Nál, brother of Býleifstr and Helblindi, father of Vánargandr, that is Fenriswolf, and of Jǫrmungandr, that is the Miðgarðr serpent, and of Hel and Nari and Áli, and relative and uncle, foster-brother and table-companion of Óðinn and the Æsir and Geirrøðr's casket-ornament, thief from giants, of goat and Brisingamen and Iðunn's apples, relative of Sleipnir, husband of Sigun, enemy of gods, contriver of Baldr's death, the prepared Áss, wrangler with Heimdallr and Skaði.</p>	<p>Hvernig skal kenna Loka?</p> <p>Svá at kalla son Fárabauta ok Laufeyjar, Nálar, bróður Býleists ok Helblinda, fõður Vánargands (þat er Fenrisúlfr) ok Jǫrmungands (þat er Miðgarðsormr) ok Heljar ok Nara, ok Ála frænda ok fõðurbróður, sinna ok sessa Óðins ok Ása, heimsæki ok kistuskrúð Geirraðar, þjófr jǫtna, hafrs ok Brisingamens ok Iðunnar epla, Sleipnis frænda. verr Sigynjar, goða dólg, hárskaði Sifjar, þolva smiðr, hinn slægi Áss, rægjanda ok vélandi guðanna, ráðbani Baldrs, hinn bundni, þrætudólgr Heimdalar ok Skaða.</p>

Although they lack the support of specific examples from poetry, we have no reason to assume that these two texts have their basis in separate exemplars; they are nearly identical.

These texts were therefore selected precisely *because* they list *kennings* for gods about whom comparatively little poetry had been composed. After all, we would hardly expect *kennings* for Loki to adorn poems in praise of chieftains.

In the interests of equality, it must also be mentioned that both versions agree on the importance of *kennings* for the goddesses Frigg, Freyja, and Iðunn – SnK takes Sif into account as well. The lists are quite short, however, such as this one concerning Óðinn's wife Frigg:

¹²⁹ On this word, see Heimir Pálsson 2012b:142.

Table 33. Kennings for Frigg

SnU <i>Edda</i> 2012:148 & 149	SnK <i>Edda</i> 1998:30
<p>Hverneg skal kenna Frigg? Svá at kalla hana dóttur Fjörguns, ömmu¹³⁰ Óðins, móður Baldrs, elju Jarðar ok Rindar ok Gunnlaðar ok Gerðar.</p> <p>How shall Frigg be referred to? By calling her daughter of Fjorgunn, grandmother of Óðinn, mother of Baldr, rival of Jorð and Rindr and Gunnlōð and Gerðr.</p>	<p>Hvernig skal kenna Frigg? Svá at kalla hana dóttur Fjörgyns, konu Óðins, móður Baldrs, elju Jarðar ok Rindar ok Gunnlaðar ok Gerðar, sværa Nõnnu, drottning Ása ok Ásynja, Fullu ok valshams ok Fensala.</p>

SnK's version of *Gylfaginning* tallies a total of fourteen *ásynjur*, so it is not overindulgent to mention three or four of them here. When SnK includes Sif among the other fourteen, it says that she may be called *kona Þórs, móðir Ullar, it hárfagra goð, elja Járnsöxu, móðir Þrúðar* ('wife of Þórr, mother of Ullr, the fair-haired deity, rival of Járnsaxa, mother of Þrúðr', *Edda* 1998:30). Despite its short length, this excerpt is intriguing. Nowhere does the text explicitly mention Sif's hair except for in the story of the sons of Ívaldi, although just before this we find a reference to Loki as *hárskaði Sifjar* ('Sif's hair-harmer'). Járnsaxa is the mother of Magni, according to the tale of Þórr's battle with Hrungrnir, and Magni's siblings – Þórr's other children Móði and Þrúðr – are considered to be of *jötunn* stock on their mother's side, as their names suggest. *Skáldskaparmál*, however, is the only source that names Sif as the mother of Þrúðr. On the other hand, Ullr is always considered Þórr's stepson, though his birth father is never mentioned.

Looking at medieval poetry, it is easy to see that the names of goddesses and valkyries feature most prominently in *kennings* for women. Indeed, as *Skáldskaparmál* states, *kona er kend við öll ásynja heiti eða valkyrkur, nornir eða dísir* ('a woman is also referred to using all the names of *ásynjur* or valkyries, norns or *dísir* (divine ladies)', *Edda* 2012:162 & 163).

We will soon turn to a closer discussion of *kennings* and *heiti*, but before we do so, it is only proper to follow up *Skáldskaparmál*'s lists of *kennings* with a glimpse into the fantastic assortment of examples gathered from the works of the master *skalds*.

¹³⁰ The word *amma* appears to mean the same thing in Old Icelandic as it does in the modern language; namely, 'father's or mother's mother'. It is not at all clear how it is possible for Frigg to be both Óðinn's grandmother and his wife.

The examples

In both the *kenning* chapter and the *heiti* chapter in *Skáldskaparmál*, the lists are often – though not always – accompanied by examples from specific poems. DG 11 4to contains upwards of 250 such examples, and SnK, with the exception of the long poetic excerpts, contains nearly another hundred on top of that. A considerable proportion of the verses or verse fragments are preserved only in *Edda* and nowhere else, and the same is in fact the case for the long poems referred to; neither *Bórsdrápa* nor *Grottasǫngr* are preserved anywhere else, for example, and nor are certain parts of *Ragnarsdrápa* or *Haustlǫng*. This is nevertheless paltry in comparison to other works by the same author. *Heimskringla* preserves around 600 verses or verse fragments. As far as I can tell, however, a mere 24 of these verses are the same as can be found in *Skáldskaparmál* in DG 11 4to (*Edda* 2013:75). There is little room for doubt: the collection of verses used for reference in *Skáldskaparmál* is an altogether different one to that which informs in *Heimskringla*. The study of poetics and the study of history each rely on separate textual corpora. As if to emphasise this point, Snorri does not refer to a single example from *Háttatal*, as that poem did not exist when he first grappled with the heady theories of poetics during his youth at Oddi (although some people would certainly have been familiar with most of the verses mentioned).

It seems most likely to me that it was intended that student poets would learn the examples from specific poems by rote. This would have provided not only mnemonic support for learning *kennings* and *heiti*, but also training in the treatment of metre as well. The benefit was therefore at least twofold.

Skáldskaparmál 2

The section that Lasse Mårtensson calls *Skáldskaparmál 2* begins in a very unusual way on f. 37v to 38r (pp. 72–73), DG 11 4to. In line 16, f. 37v, the scribe stops writing about *heiti* for the sun, leaves a half page blank, and then begins an account of King Hálfðan the Old and his sons – with a beautifully intricate initial capital – on f. 38r. There are however no chapter rubrics here. From this we can determine that the layout is the work of the scribe (or editor) of the manuscript himself, as he does not seem to create any new rubrics. This idea finds further support on line 24 of the same page, during an account of King Hálfðan’s nine later sons, where the chapter divisions are marked only with the word *capitvlvm* and no other heading.¹³¹

It bears mentioning that in both versions, the *kenning* chapter in *Skáldskaparmál* (Skáld 1 cf. Mårtensson) bleeds over into the lists of *heiti* to some extent (*Edda* 1998:78–83; *Edda* 2012:194–202). With the exception of the obvious rubric on line 4, f. 37r in DG 11 4to, *Hér segir hversu kend er setning skáldskapar* (‘Here it says what the rule is for poetry in *kennings*’), the division between discussions of *kennings* and *heiti* is never explicitly marked. This is clearly an instance of scribal error; the scribe wrote *kend* where he should have written *ókend*. Admittedly, the word *kend* is repeated in the first sentence after the rubric, but then comes the question *Hversu eru ókend nofn skáldskaparins?* (‘What terms are there for poetry without *kennings*?’). The reader thus suspects a reprise of the general rule encountered in Skáld 1: first the vocabulary for the gods and poetry, and then for other persons and phenomena.¹³² The next rubric *Um nofn guðanna* (‘Of names for the gods’) (*Edda* 2012:204) confirms our suspicions, and from there both versions continue with *heiti* for the sky, sun, moon and in SnK earth.¹³³ After this the versions diverge, with SnK taking up *heiti* for animals (wolf, bear, stag/hart, horse, etc. *Edda* 1998:87–101) and SnU introducing *heiti* for kings, skalds, men, women, parts of the

¹³¹ This Latin rubric appears only twice in the manuscript; here, and again where the scribe seems to feel that the latter tale of Hrólfr kraki would benefit from some sort of heading (*Edda* 2012:242). Indeed, it is intriguing that the heading *Frá því er Hrólfr seri gullinu* (‘Of how Hrólfr sowed the gold’) (*Edda* 2012:240 & 241) applies to this latter tale rather than the former.

¹³² This curious hesitation in the beginning of the *heiti* section possibly reflects the uncertainty of the scribe or editor in the face of the most important change to be made to the material.

¹³³ It is undoubtedly by mistake that the list of *heiti* for the earth is omitted from DG 11 4to, and *nofn stundanna* (‘names for times’) appears there somewhat earlier than in SnK (*Edda* 1998:99; this version also contains *heiti* for the months, which are not found at all in DG 11 4to).

body, speech and wisdom, before turning to the wild beasts which provide the greatest poetic inspiration.

It is clear what the text in SnU is telling us: Man is more important than the animals, and the class division (first kings, then officials and skalds) is almost self-evident.

In an article about the two versions of *Skáldskaparmál* (2018:91), I show the progression in the two versions in the following way:

SnK:

Poets and poetry → *gods* → *cosmology* (sky, sun, moon, earth) → *mammals* (wolf, bear, stag, horse, ox, (serpents), cattle, sheep, pig) → *sky and the weather* → *birds* (raven, eagle) → *heiti for the sea* → *heiti for fire* → *names for times* → *names for men* → *King Hálfðan's sons* (older and younger) → *poets* (and more *heiti* for men) → *heiti for men* (circumlocutions, true descriptions) → *heiti for women* → *parts of the body* (head, mouth, heart, (mind), hand, foot) → *speech* → *battle* → *wisdom* → *ofljóst* ('obvious', a form of word-play).

SnU:

Poets and poetry → *gods* → *sky* → *times* → *sun and moon* → *King Hálfðan's sons* (older and younger) → *poets* (and more *heiti* for men) → *substitutions* → *names for courteous men* → *circumlocutions* → *true description* → *names for women* → *the head* → *mouth* → *allegory* → *hand* → *foot* → *speech and wisdom* → *wolf* → *bear* → *stag and horse* → *serpents* → *raven and eagle* → *fire* → *battle*.

It needs only a teacher's common sense to understand that it sets a good example for students to place mankind above the beasts of the field. Man and beasts both make frequent appearances in poetry, but we should teach human students to hold their own species in a rather higher regard.

Thesaurus

Heiti are, in the simplest sense, synonyms: words that can take the place of others in the same context. Dictionary-making as such did not exist in the 12th and 13th centuries, though skalds of course compiled reliable lists of synonyms that they availed themselves of in their poetry. Many such lists of *heiti* are understandably quite short; Table 34 shows the limited vocabulary for the sun and moon according to SnU:

Table 34. *Heiti* for the moon and sun

SnU Edda 2012:206	Edda 2012:207
Tungl: narinn, múlinn, mýlinn, ný, hrið, ártali, fengari, klárr, skyndir, skjálgr, skrámr.	Moon: <i>narinn</i> , horned, pointed, waxing moon, <i>hrið</i> , year-counter, shiner, clear, hastener, squinter, pale one.
Sól: sunna, roðull, eyglóa, anskip, sýni, fagrahvel, línuskin, Dvalins leika, álfrøðull.	Sun: daystar, disc, ever-glow, <i>anskip</i> , sight, fair wheel, line-shine, Dvalinn's toy, elf-disc.

Other subjects may be treated at greater length, and in some instances the SnK version is rather more thorough.

Tables 35–37 show the synonyms and antonyms for men in different tasks, heroes, poets, chieftains and so on. When dealing with the poets and warriors the difference in length between the two versions is seldom greater than as shown in Table 35, demonstrating the most important vocabulary. It is much easier in the case of this example to imagine that the text in SnK is a reworking of comparable length to the text in SnU.

It is worth noting that the rubric *Hér segir for ñfn* (f. 39r, p. 75) writes for ñfn not *forñfn* ‘substitutes for names’ not ‘pronomina’. This might indicate that the loan-translation, *forñfn* for pronomen is an unfamiliar word for the scribe. He in fact writes both *for ñfn* (‘old names’ and for ñfn in the text.¹³⁴

¹³⁴ This will not be discussed further here, but it is worth mentioning that in the text shown in Table 19 SnK uses the term *forñfn* which does not occur in SnU, with the meaning ‘substitutions’ more likely than ‘pronomina’. The meaning ‘pronomina’ on the other hand is used in the commentary on *Háttatal* in both versions.

Table 35. *Heiti* for poets and othe supermen

SnU <i>Edda</i> 2012:214, 177 words; <i>Edda</i> 2012:215	SnK <i>Edda</i> 1998:105–106, 258 words
<p>Skáld heita greppar ok er rétt í skáldskap at kenna svá hvern mann er vill. Rekkar voru kallaðir þeir menn er fylgðu Hálfri konungi. Af þeirra nafni eru rekkar kallaðir hermenn, ok er rétt at kenna svá alla menn. Lofðar heita þeir menn í skáldskap. Skatnar heita þeir menn er fylgðu Skata konungi ok af hans nafni er hvern skati kallaðr er mildr er. Bragnar hétu þeir menn er fylgðu Braga konungi inum gamla. Virðar heita þeir menn er meta mál manna, fyrðar ok firar. Verar heita landvarnarmenn. Víkingar ok flotnar, þat eru skipaherr. Beimar hétu þeir menn er fylgðu Beima konungi. Gumnar ok gumar heita fólkstjórar, sem gumi heitir í brúðfór. Gotnar hétu þeir menn er fylgðu Gota konungi, er Gotland er við kent. Hann heitir af nafni Óðins ok dregit af Gauts nafni. Þeir heita drengir er millum landa fara, þeir konungsdrengir er þeim þjóna eða ríkum mǫnnum. Þeir heita vaskir menn er batnandi eru. Seggir heita ok kníar. Liðar, þat eru fylgdarmenn. Þegnar hǫlða, svá heita bændr. Ljónar heita þeir er um sættir ganga.</p> <p>Poets are called <i>greppar</i>, and it is normal in poetry to refer thus to any man one desires. The men in King Hálfri's following were known as <i>rekkar</i> (heroes). From their name warriors are known as <i>rekkar</i>, and it is normal to refer to all men thus. Those men are called <i>lofðar</i> in poetry. The men that were in the following of King Skati are called <i>skatnar</i>, and from his name everyone that is generous is known as <i>skati</i>. The men that were in the following of King Bragi the Old were called <i>bragnar</i>. Men who assess people's cases are called <i>virðar</i>, <i>fyrðar</i> and <i>firar</i>. Defenders of the land are called <i>verar</i>. Vikings and sailors, these are a naval host. The men that were in the following of King Beimi are called <i>beimar</i>. Leaders of a host are called <i>gumnar</i> and <i>gumar</i>, just as there is a <i>gumi</i> (groom) in a bridal party. The men that were in the following of King Goti, whom Gotland is named after, are called <i>gotnar</i>. He is called after one of Óðinn's names, and it was derived from the name Gautr. They are called <i>drengir</i> that travel from land to land, king's <i>drengir</i> those that serve them or powerful men. They are called valiant men that are ambitious. Warriors are also called <i>kníar</i>, <i>liðar</i>, these are followers, <i>þegnar</i>, <i>hǫlða</i> this is what landowners are called. Those that negotiate settlement of disputes are called <i>ljónar</i>.</p>	<p>Skáld heita greppar ok rétt er í skáldskap at kenna svá hvern mann ef vill. Rekkar váru kallaðir þeim menn er fylgðu Hálfri konungi ok af þeira nafni eru rekkar kallaðir hermenn ok er rétt at kenna svá alla menn. Lofðar heita ok menn í skáldskap sem fyrr er ritat. Skatnar váru þeir menn kallaðir er fylgðu þeim konungi er Skati mildi var kallaðr. Af hans nafni er skati kallaðr hvern er mildr er. Bragnar heita þeir er fylgðu Braga konungi inum gamla. Virðar heita þeir menn er meta mál manna. Fyrðar ok firar ok verar heita landvarnarmenn. Víkingar ok flotnar, þat er skipaherr. Beimar: svá hétu þeir er fylgðu Beimuna konungi. Gumnar eða gumar heita flokkstjórar, svá sem gumi er kallaðr í brúðfór. Gotnar eru kallaðir af heiti konungs þess er Goti er nefndr er Gotland er við kennt. Hann var kalladr af nafni Óðins ok dregit af Gauts nafni, þvíat Gautland eða Gotland var kallat af nafni Óðins, en Svíþjóð af nafni Sviðurs – þat er ok heiti Óðins. Í þann tíma var kallat alt meginland þat er hann átti Reiðgotaland, en eyjar allar Eygotland. Þat er nú kallat Danaveldi ok Svíaveldi. Drengir heita ungir menn búlausir meðan þeir afla sér fjár eða orðstír, þeir fardengir er milli landa fara, þeir konungs drengir er hǫfðingjum þjóna, þeir ok drengir er þjóna ríkum mǫnnum eða bændum. Drengir heita vaskir menn ok batnandi.</p> <p>Seggir eru kallaðir ok kníar ok liðar, þat eru fylgdarmenn. Þegnar ok hǫlðar, svá eru búendr kallaðir. Ljónar heita þeir menn er ganga um sættir manna.</p>

Table 36. Synonyms and antonyms

SnU <i>Edda</i> 2012:214 & 215	SnK <i>Edda</i> 1998:106
<p>Kappar heita ok kempur, garpar, snillingar, hreystimenn, afarmenn, harðmenni, hetjur. Þessi standa þar í móti: At kalla mann blauðan, þirfing, blotamann, skauð eða skræfu, vák, vámenn, ljóska, sleyma, dási, drokr, dusilmenni.</p> <p>Heroes are also called champions, fighting cocks, valiant ones, braves, tough ones, braves. These are contrary to them in meaning, calling a man effeminate, milksop, weakling, coward or craven, wretch, men of woe, cunt, dastard, useless one, sluggard, good-for-nothing.</p>	<p>Þeir menn er svá eru kallaðir: kappar, kenpur, garpar, snillingar, hreystimenn, harðmenni, afarmenni, hetjur.</p> <p>Þessi heiti standa hér í mót at kalla mann blauðan, veykan, þjarfan, þirfing, blotamann, skaup, skreyju, skrjáð, vák, vám, leyra, sleyma, teyða, dugga, dási, dirokkr, dusilmenni, qlmusa, auvirð, vílmogr.</p>

There are an equal number of synonyms for ‘hero’ (*kappi*) in the two versions, but nearly twice as many antonyms in SnK as in SnU. It is of course dubious to assume that it would have been considered necessary for student-skalds to acquire a command of especially unflattering vocabulary, but SnK flies a flag high for the scoundrels as shown in Table 37.

Table 37. Sages and fools

SnU <i>Edda</i> 2012:216 & 217	SnK <i>Edda</i> 1998:106
<p>Spekingr ráðvaldr, snyrtimaðr, ofláti, glæsimaðr. Raumi, skrapr, skrokkr, skeiðklofi, flangi, slinni, fjósni, ljóðir. Heitir þræll kefsir, þræll, þjónn, onnungr, þírr. Lýðr heitir landsfólk.</p> <p>Sage, decision-maker, elegant man, show-off, dandy.</p> <p>Rough, blatherer, scrag, hewer of wood, clown, good-for-nothing, yokel, common person. A slave is called captive, slave, servant, labourer, serf. The folk of a country are called the people.</p>	<p>... spekingr ráðvaldr, heitir ok óvittr maðr fifl, afglapi, gassi, ginningr, gaurr, glópr, snápr, föli, ærr, óðr, galinn. Snyrtimaðr: ofláti, drengr, glæsimaðr, stertimaðr, prýðimaðr. Heitir hraumi, skrápr, skrokkr, skeiðklofi, flangi, slinnir, fjósnir, slápr, drøttr.</p> <p>Lýðr heitir landfólk eða ljóðr. Heitir ok þræll kefsir, þjónn, onnungr, þírr.</p>

Sometimes the text provides a closer semantic analysis, as in the list of *heiti* for women.

The difference in length here is once again considerable, though the important details are verbatim in both versions. The greatest difference is that SnK contains more verbose explanations than SnU, and features some examples that SnU does not.

Table 38. *Heiti* for women

SnU <i>Edda</i> 2012:218 & 219	SnK <i>Edda</i> 1998:107–108
<p><i>Frá kvenna nofnum úkendum</i> Þessi eru kvenna nofn úkend: víf, brúðr. Fljóð heita þær konur er mjök fara með dramb eða skart. Snótir heita þær er orðnæfrar eru. Drósir heita þær konur er kyrrlátar eru. Svarri ok svarkr þær er mikillátar eru. Ristill heitir sú kona er sköruglynd er. Rýgr heitir sú er rikust er. Feima heitir sú er ófröm er sem ungar meygjar ok þær konur er ódjarfar eru. Sæta heitir sú kona er bóndi hennar er af landi farinn. Hæll heitir sú kona er bóndi hennar er veginn utanlands. Ekkja heitir sú kona er bóndi hennar er andaðr. Þær konur eljur er einn mann eigu. Kona er kölluð beðja eða mála ok rúna bónda síns, ok er þat viðkenning.</p> <p>Of non-periphrastic terms for women The following are non-periphrastic terms for women: wife, bride. The women that always go around with pomp and finery are called <i>fljóð</i>. Those that are clever in speech are called <i>snótir</i>. Those that are gentle in behaviour are called <i>drósir</i>. Those that are arrogant are called <i>svarri</i> and <i>svarkr</i>. A woman that is of independent character is called <i>ristill</i>. One that is very rich is called <i>rýgr</i>. One that is retiring like young girls and those women that are timid is called <i>feima</i>. The woman whose husband has left the country is called <i>sæta</i>. The woman whose husband has been slain abroad is called <i>hæll</i>. The woman whose husband is dead is called a widow, those women that are married to the same man <i>eljur</i>. A woman is known as the bedfellow or gossip and confidante of her husband, and that is circumlocution.</p>	<p>Þessi eru kvenna heiti ókend í skáldskap. Víf ok brúðr ok fljóð heita þær konur er manni eru gefnar. Sprund ok svanni heita þær konur er mjök fara með dramb ok skart. Snótir heita þær er orðnæfrar eru. Drósir heita þær er kyrrlátar eru. Svarri ok svarkr, þær eru mikillátar. Ristill er kölluð sú kona er sköruglynd er. Rýgr heitir sú kona er rikust er. Feima er sú kölluð er ófröm er svá sem ungar meyjja, eða þær konur er ódjarfar eru. Sæta heitir sú kona er búandi hennar er af landi farinn, hæll er sú kona kölluð er búandi hennar er veginn. Ekkja heitir sú er búandi hennar varð sótt dauðr. Mær heitir fyrst hver, en kerlingar er gamlar eru. Enn eru þau kvenna heiti er til lastmælis eru ok má finna þau í kvæðum þótt þat sé eigi ritat. Þær konur heita eljur er einn mann eigu. Snor heitir sonar kván. Sværa heitir vers móðir. Heitir ok móðir, amma, þriðja edda. Eiða heitir móðir. Heitir ok dóttir ok barn, jóð. Heitir ok systir dís, jóðdís. Kona er ok kölluð beðja, mála, rúna búanda síns ok er þat viðkenning.</p>

Skáldskaparmál 3

As the overview of the organization of *Skáld* 1 (Table 23) shows, the stories that belong to *Skáld* 1 in SnK and are moved to *Skáld* 3 in SnU include one tale of battle, and two in which gold plays the central role. They are joined in that section by the explanatory accounts of three *kennings*, all of which refer to gold.

The material that has been moved into *Gylf* 2 relates closely to the main *æsir*, Óðinn and Þórr, and to the beginning of *Skáldskaparmál*, i.e., instructional material for the study of poetics. The editor/scribe likely considered these connections stronger or more important than the connection between these tales and both the *kenning* explanations (which have been moved into *Skáld* 3) and the mythology in *Gylf* 1. The stories of Andvari's gold and Sif's hair offer more substantial explanation for *kennings* than we typically find in myths, though the same could be said of the story of the mead of poetry, which has been transferred to *Gylf* 2.

First we will look at descriptions of battle, then the explanations for the gold *kennings*, and finally we turn our attention to the tales of gold themselves. Our overview of *Skáldskaparmál* concludes with an examination of some strikingly succinct accounts of major events.

Battle of the Hjaðnings

Both versions of *Edda* explain that “Battle is called the Hjaðnings’ weather or storm, and weapons the Hjaðnings’ fire or rods” (*Edda* 2012:235; *Edda* 1998:72) before recounting the tale of King Hogni and his daughter Hildir, who has been kidnapped by Héðinn Hjarrandason. This leads to a conflict between father and son-in-law, a battle which would endure until *Ragnarøkkr*; every evening the slain warriors are raised from the dead by Hildir, only to begin their battle anew the following morning. The narrative is more or less the same in both versions, though SnK includes four and a half stanzas from Bragi the Old’s *Ragnarsdrápa*. The poem paints a considerably more hair-raising picture of Hildir than the prose alone.

This story’s legacy lives on in Modern Icelandic, where the word *hjaðningavíg* means ‘ceaseless warfare between those who should stand together’. It is obvious that the *kennings* *Hjaðnings’ weather* or *Hjaðnings’ storm* cannot be adequately understood without the full context of the story, and for this reason they serve as examples of arcane or unclear *kennings* that originate not in myths but in heroic tales. It is nonetheless suspicious that Hallar-Steinn uses the *kenning* *tróða grjóts Hjaðnings* (‘pole of the Hjaðnings’ stone’), which from the context obviously refers to a woman,

and then *Hjaðninga grjót* refers to gold or jewellery (*Edda* 2012:172, *Edda* 1998:63–64).¹³⁵

Three gold *kennings*

The explanations of the *kennings* *Glasis lauf* (‘Glasis’s leaves’), *fallsól* (or *fjallsól*) *brávallar Fullu* (‘falling sun of Fulla’s eyelash-plain’) and *haugþak Hølga* (‘Hølgi’s mound-roof’), all of which relate to proper names, are not accompanied by any stories. According to *Edda*, Glasir is a tree or a grove with golden foliage that stands before Valhøll (*Edda* 2012:234, *Edda* 1998:41). Fulla is Freyja’s handmaid who is said to wear a headband of gold (*Edda* 2012:238, *Edda* 1998:43). Hølgi is the father of Þorgerðr Hølgabrúðr, over both of whom SnU says a burial mound is raised. In SnK, the mound is raised over Hølgi only, and covered with silver, gold, earth and stone in layers (*flóar*). This explains the *kenning* *haugþak Hølga*. These explanations are so short that they could easily have been incorporated into the main text and so it is not at all obvious why they were moved in DG 11 4to, unless simply for the sake of allowing the narrative to flow without interruption or digression.

Four tales of gold

Of the legendary sagas of Norse kings, SnU includes two of Hrólfr kraki by way of explanation for particularly far-fetched *kennings*. Examples are given from Eyvindr Skáldaspillir (*fræ Frýrisvalla*, ‘seed of Fýris plains’) and Þjóðólfr Arnórsson (*grð Yrsu burðar* and *Kraka barr*, ‘grain of the offspring of Yrsa’ and ‘Kraki’s barley’), all of which refer to gold. *Lexicon Poeticum* additionally mentions the *kenning* *Kraka drífa* (‘Kraki’s sleet’), used by King Haraldr Harðráði’s skald, Grani. The saga must even have impressed Snorri himself; in the 93rd stanza of *Háttatal* he writes *gulli søri Kraki framr* (‘the outstanding Kraki sowed gold’) (*Edda* 1999:37). All of these *kennings* are tremendously difficult to decipher without the context of the stories.

The stories of Sif’s hair and the otter-payments have in common one important figure who also finds himself in hot water in the two stories that are transferred to *Gylf 2* – namely, the capture of Iðunn, and Þórr’s visit

¹³⁵ Expositors in *Lexicon Poeticum* are inclined to believe that the tale of the Battle of the Hjaðnings is missing something that could explain the gold *kennings*, though it is worth noting that Bragi (*Edda* 1998:72) calls Hildir *hristi-Sif hálshringa* (‘the goddess of the shaking necklace’). This suggests that Hildir perhaps possessed great or even supernatural power; she is also called *þols of fyl*d (‘[the one] filled with malice’) and *fordæða* (‘evildoer’) in the verses from *Ragnarsdrápa*; likewise, *dreyrug men* (‘bloody necklaces’) are also mentioned in connection with Hildir.

to Geirrøðr. This figure is, of course, none other than the trickster Loki Laufeyjarson.

As previously mentioned, Loki is among those mythical figures for whom *Skáldskaparmál* boasts the most generous assortment of *kennings* (see Table 32). While the *kennings* found in these lists are indeed interesting, SnU does not mention a single one with a basis in poetry; and SnK only mentions one, which appears to have originated in Úlfr Uggason's *Húsdrápa*.

Tricksters of a similar ilk as Loki appear in most polytheistic religions; suffering is perhaps best understood as the work of such tricksters, through whose agency even the gods cannot live free of worry. Loki is an active player in the eddic poems *Völuspá*, *Hymiskviða*, *Lokasenna*, *Drymskviða*, *Baldr's dreams* and *Hyndluljóð*. There he is typically depicted as a troublemaker except in *Drymskviða*, where his support for Heimdallr's suggestions saves the day (and many find it quite likely that Loki was originally to blame for the hammer having been stolen). The prose text of *Gylfaginning* also depicts Loki almost exclusively as a villain, the one exception being his role in the tale of the fortification-builder and the birth of Sleipnir.

Loki figures more prominently in the stories in *Skáldskaparmál*. In these stories, he either gets the gods into trouble and is responsible for getting them out of it (e.g., the capture of Iðunn), or his clumsiness and mischief are the catalyst of significant events (e.g., Þórr and Geirrøðr, Sif's hair). The story that best succeeds in connecting mythology and heroic tales is that of Andvari's gold, which later becomes the notorious Rheingold. There, Loki is held captive along with Óðinn and Hœnir, and it falls on the trickster's shoulder to free them all.

All of these tales of the gods appear in the *kenning* chapter in SnK, and so it is worthwhile to investigate exactly how much of the lexicon of *kenning* we can possibly trace back to them.

The story of Iðunn's capture, as mentioned earlier, does not appear to beget any *kennings* until the epilogue, where we find the explanation for *munntal* or *orð jötna* ('the *jötunns*' mouth-tale' or 'words'), and *þingskil Þjaza* ('Þjazi's assembly-agenda') – all of which mean 'gold'. It cannot be said, however, that the story itself explains the *kennings* in any way.

The story of Þórr's visit to the courts of Geirrøðr provides good evidence of Eilífr Goðrúnarson's formidable talent with *kenning* while composing *Þórsdrápa*, though even the SnK version – which contains *Þórsdrápa* in its entirety – does not include these *kennings*.¹³⁶ When all

¹³⁶ It is interesting to note that the *nýgerving* (extended metaphor) most often mentioned as proof of Eilífr's extravagant *kennings*: *Preyngvir kunnleggs kveldrúnninna kvenna gein við þungum þangs rauðbita alinmúni tangar* ('the oppressor [Þórr] of the kinfolk

is said and done, the only *kenning* that finds any possible explanation in the narrative is *Viðgymnir* (or *Viðgenrir* in DG 11 4to) *Vimrar vaðs*. But when this *kenning* appears in Úlfr Uggason's verse in *Skáldskaparmál*, SnU explains: "Vimur is the name of a river that Þórr waded when he was on his way to Geirröðr's courts" (*Edda* 2012:143). The same text in SnK reads: "Here he is called giant of Vimur's ford. Vimur is the name of a river that [Þórr] waded when he was on the way to [Geirröðr's] courts" (*Edda* 1998:17). Both texts obviously follow the same exemplar, which does not assume that the reader knows the story of Þórr's visit to Geirröðr or even has any access to it.

Of the stories that were transferred to *Gylf* 2 in DG 11 4to, those that feature the mead of poetry especially stand out. The skaldic tradition of introducing a poem or broaching the topic of one's poetic efforts ("now I will compose a poem") required a vast vocabulary of *kennings*, if the *skald* was to avoid mindless repetition. Whether the focus of a *kenning* is the ship of the dwarfs or that legendary drink of Óðinn, the fact remains that without the context of these tales, these *kennings* are all incomprehensible.

But when it comes to the stories that are transferred to *Skáld* 3 in DG 11 4to, the connection to the mythology becomes somewhat stronger, and the stories therefore of greater utility in the creation of *kennings*.

Both versions of *Prose Edda* ask the question *Hví er gull kallat haddr Sifjar?* ('Why is gold called Sif's hair?'), though according to *Lexicon Poeticum* this *kenning* does not appear anywhere among the extant poetry. The only comparable *kenning* is found in *Bjarkamál*, which mentions *svarðfestar Sifjar* ('Sif's scalp-strings'), and explains that it refers to gold (*Edda* 2012:166, *Edda* 1998:60).

The rubric *Frá vélum dvergsins við Loka* ('Of the dwarf's trick against Loki') prefaces the story of Sif's hair in DG 11 4to, telling of a blacksmithing competition between two dwarfs, the sons of Ívaldi. Loki pits the dwarf brothers against one another, and in fact places his own life on the line when he wagers his head as reward to the victor. This contest is the provenance of the *Æsir*'s most significant attributes: the spear Gungnir, the hammer Mjǫlnir, the boar Gullinbursti, the ship Skíðblaðnir, the ring Draupnir, and Sif's golden hair. *Gylfaginning* mentions all of these objects except for Sif's hair, though the only one for which that text provides any explanation is Skíðblaðnir; it is briefly noted that the ship was forged by dwarfs (i.e. Ívaldi's sons). SnK includes detail that the ship belongs to

[relatives] of evening-faring women [troll-wives] yawned with his arm's mouth [fist] over the heavy red lump of tong-weed [iron]') does not appear in the quoted verses from *Þórsdrápa*, but rather in the half-verse cited specifically to show *kennings* for Þórr (*Edda* 2012:142 & 143, *Edda* 1998:16).

Freyr, while SnU says that the dwarfs gave it to Freyja, not Freyr (*Edda* 2012:62, *Edda* 2005:36). Gungnir, Óðinn's spear, is in fact not named at all until Óðinn wields it at Ragnarøkkr, and although Mjólnir is said to be an object of immense value, no mention is made of either its origin or its remarkable boomerang-like qualities.

This indicates beyond all doubt that the whole story, although known, was not deemed relevant or important for *Gylfaginning*, but was considered fitting material for the study of poetics instead.

In spite of this apparent suitability to poetic language, the above-mentioned items appear extremely infrequently in the *kennings* of the skalds. Draupnir outperforms the others, though, as the determinant of the most *kennings*, e.g. *dogg Draupnis* ('Draupnir's dew') and *dýrsveiti Draupnis* ('Draupnir's precious sweat'). Egill Skallagrímsson refers to his friend Arinbjörn by the *kenning* *dolg Draupnis niðja* ('threat of Draupnir's descendants'), referring to his generosity. We have already touched upon Sif's hair, and in stanza 52 of *Háttatal* Snorri uses the *kenning* *hlymr Gungnis* ('Gungnir's din'), a clear reference to the roar of battle.

Making a long story short

The tale of the otter-payments receives an almost identical commentary in both *Edda* versions:

Table 39. Otter-payment

SnU <i>Edda</i> 2012:240 & 241	SnK <i>Edda</i> 1998:46
Nú er sagt hví gullit heitir otrgjöld eða nauðgjöld ásanna eða rógmálmr. Now it has been told why the gold is called otter-payment or the Æsir's forced payment or strife-metal.	Nú er þat sagt af hverju gull er otrgjöld kallat eða nauðgjald Ásanna eða rógmálmr.

A few words follow in the SnU version:

Nú tók Hreiðmarr gullit at sonargjöldum, en Fáfñir ok Reginn beiddust af nokkurs í bróðurgjöld þeir drápu föður sinn. Fáfñir lagðist á féit ok varð at ormi, en Reginn fór á brott.

Now Hreiðmarr took the gold as atonement for his son, but Fáfñir and Reginn demanded some of the atonement for their brother. They slew their father. Fáfñir lay down on the treasure and turned into a serpent, but Reginn went away. (*Edda* 2012:240 & 241).

SnK on the other hand begins with a long narrative (nearly six pages in Faulkes's edition) that answers the question *Hvat er fleira at segja frá gullinu?* ('What more is there to tell about the gold?'). Quite a bit more, as it turns out; what follows is the tale of the brothers' dramatic fate after Regin's foster-son, Sigurðr Sigmundsson (perhaps better known as Sigurðr Fáfnisbani, 'the Dragonslayer'), takes matters into his own hands. The story continues much in the same way as it does in the heroic poems, recounting the tragedy of Sigurðr, the Niflungs, and the Gjúkungs, and closing with the brothers Sqrli and Hamðir attempting to avenge their sister Svanhildr by defeating King Jormunrekkr. Their attempt is a failure, and the tale comes full-circle with Bragi's *Ragnarsdrápa*; as we read in *Skáldatal*, Ragnarr loðbrók, for whom *Ragnarsdrápa* was composed, weds Sigurðr Sigmundsson Fáfnisbani's daughter Áslaug.

Finnur Jónsson argued that this story originates in a lost Saga of Sigurðr Fáfnisbani (cf. *Edda* 1931:lv-lvi). Whatever the case may be, there is hardly any doubt that the entire story was appended to the original version of *Skáldskaparmál*. Perhaps someone thought the story too sparse, and happily expanded upon it to include the continuation about Hreiðmarr, Otr, Fáfñir, and Reginn for no other reason than that it was a compelling story and it made for good reading or listening.

This is not the only instance in *Skáld 3* where a few words suffice in SnU versus a much longer text in SnK. The latter asks the question *Hví er gull kallat mjöl Fróða?* (‘Why is gold called Fróði’s meal?’, *Edda* 1998:51), and answers by way of nearly a full page of prose and 24 stanzas from the eddic poem *Grottasöngur*. The text in GKS 2367 and Codex Trajectinus is similar in this regard, whereas *Wormianus* passes over this story altogether. There is in fact considerable indication that the longer telling of the tale and the stanzas from the poem are an addition to the exemplars of both R and T.¹³⁷ The text in DG 11 4to on the other hand shows signs of shortening or omission. This is the penultimate story in *Skáld 3*, followed only by a few words about ‘Hǫlgi’s mound-roof’ (cf. the gold *kenning* discussed earlier) and Table 40 shows the story of Grotti as told in SnU.

Table 40. The story of Grotti in DG 11 4to

SnU <i>Edda</i> 2012:244	<i>Edda</i> 2012:245
Gull er kallat mjöl Fróða því at Fróði konungr keypti ambáttirnar Fenju ok Menju, ok þá fannst kvernsteinn einn svá mikill í Danmörku at engi fekk dregit, en sú náttúra fylgði at allt mjöl, þat er undir var malit, varð at gulli. Ambáttirnar fengu dregit steininn. Konungr lét þær mala gull um hríð. Þá gaf hann þeim eigi meira svefn en kveða mátti ljóð eitt. Síðan mólu þær her á hendr hánum. Sá var höfðingi fyrir er Mýsingi hét, spekingr mikill. ¹³⁸	Gold is called Fróði’s meal because King Fróði bought the slave-girls Fenja and Menja, and then there was found a millstone in Denmark so huge that no one was able to move it, but it had this property, that all meal that was ground under it turned to gold. The slave-girls were able to move the stone. The king made them grind gold for a while. Then he allowed them no more sleep than for the time it takes to sing one song. After that they ground out an army against him. He was the leader of it that was called Mýsingr, a great sage.

Whoever told this short story must have had some inkling of how it is told in GKS 2367 and *Trajectinus*, as evidenced by the names Fróði, Fenja, Menja, and Mýsingi (*Mýsingr* in the other texts), as well as the exclusive use of the verb *draga* (‘to drag, draw’) to describe the turning of the millstone. In addition, we find the peculiar unit of time – “the time it takes to sing one song” – which has a parallel in GKS 2367 4to: Fróði does not allow his slave girls “any longer rest or sleep than while the cuckoo is silent or a song might be sung” (*Edda* 1998:52). It is certainly far from unprece-

¹³⁷ In this regard it is enough to refer to the latest edition of *Grottasöngur* in *Eddukvæði* II 2014.

¹³⁸ It is interesting to compare this concise story with *Grottasöngur* in AM 748 II (*Edda* 1852:577–578). Scholars consider that manuscript to be around a century younger than DG 11 4to and GKS 2367 and its text closely related to SnK, though only with regard to the first stanza of the poem.

dedented for a scribe to write *hljóð* instead of *ljóð* and vice versa, but in this instance neither makes much sense.¹³⁹

A verse from *Sexstefja*

Research on the poetic texts in *Gylfaginning* has shown that written exemplars obviously provide the basis in some instances, though the text in these exemplars differs to some degree from the eddic poems as we know them best, i.e. in *Codex Regius*.¹⁴⁰ A comparison of the quotations from poems in *Skáldskaparmál*, on the other hand, reveals to me that the vast majority of the minor details, standalone verses, and verse fragments were likely recorded straight from oral memory. We can nevertheless make no assertions about quotations from the longer skaldic poems (*Húsdrápa*, *Ynglingatal*, etc.), nor the poems of skalds who likely wrote down their own works (e.g. Einarr Skúlason). The long quotations in SnK are just as likely to have been recorded on the basis of written sources. Committing *Þórsdrápa* to memory would prove quite a challenge for almost anyone, and it seems implausible that the poem endured across multiple generations in oral memory alone.

In general, we can attribute the textual variation in the verse examples in the two *Edda* versions to either a misreading, or an attempt by the scribe to make a bewildering text more comprehensible. Considerable ‘correction’ of meaning and tone in both versions has been deemed necessary in younger editions, though in these it is difficult to distinguish between oral and written memory.

One example from *Skáldskaparmál* in DG 11 4to stands somewhat apart from the others. After the *heiti* for serpents (*Edda* 2012:228, *Edda* 1998:90–91), GKS 2367 and Codex Trajectinus¹⁴¹ (and AM 748 II, *Edda* 1852:596) provide an account of the *heiti* for domesticated animals (cattle, sheep, swine), and then for the sky and the weather. A verse from *Alvíssmál* (called *Alsvinnsmál* in GKS 2367 4to) concludes this section. In DG 11 4to, the *heiti* chapters are omitted, and the short chapter that follows in that manuscript has no heading. A comparison between the two versions is nevertheless informative (see Table 41).

¹³⁹ *Lexicon Poeticum* attempts to understand *ljóð* (‘poem’) as ‘stanza’, though as a unit of time it remains quite unusual!

¹⁴⁰ This is widely recognised and acknowledged as it applies to *Völuspá*-quotations, as scholars generally speak of a particular version of *Völuspá* in *Prose Edda* (cf. *Norræn fornkvæði – Sæmundar Edda hins fróða* 1867, *Eddukvæði I* 1914), but Maja Bäckvall and Lasse Mårtensson have found more arguments (see Maja Bäckvall 2013; Lasse Mårtensson and Heimir Pálsson 2008).

¹⁴¹ Codex Wormianus is not comparable to the others versions on this point; *Skáldskaparmál* in Wormianus has already come to a close by this point in the text.

Table 41. A verse from *Sexstefja*

SnU <i>Edda</i> 2012:228 & 229	SnK <i>Edda</i> 1998:90–91
<p>Tveir eru fuglar þeir er eigi þarf annan veg at kenna en kalla blóð eða hræ <drykk> þeira. Þat er hrafn eða orn. Alla aðra fugla karlkenda má kenna við blóð. Sem Þjóðólfr kvað:</p> <p>Blóðorra lætr barri. bragningr ara fagna. Gauts berr sík á sveita svans verð konungr Hǫrða. Geirsoddum lætr græðir g. h. st' h. þ. h'. s. v. hrægamms ara s.</p> <p>There are two birds that there is no need to refer to in any other way than by calling blood or corpses their drink. These are the raven or eagle. All other masculine birds can be referred to in terms of blood. As Þjóðólfr said:</p> <p>The ruler lets blood-grouse (ravens) delight in eagle's barley; the king of people of Horðaland (Haraldr harðráði) brings Gautr's ditch (mead of poetry) to the blood-swan's (raven's) food (the fallen slain, i.e. he composes about them); the one (king) who benefits (feeds) the corpse-vulture (raven) of the eagle's sea (blood) lets his followers fence every shallow that he has to defend with spear-points.</p>	<p>Tveir eru fuglar þeir er eigi þarf at kenna annan veg en kalla blóð eða hræ drykk þeira eða verð, þat er hrafn ok orn. Alla aðra fugla karlkenda má kenna við blóð eða hræ ok er þat þá nafn orn eða hrafn, sem Þjóðólfr kvað:</p> <p>Blóð-orra lætr barri bragningr ara fagna, Gauts berr sigð á sveita svans orð konungr Hǫrða. Geirs oddum lætr greddir grunn hvert stika sunnar hirð þat er hann skal varða hrægamms ara sævar.</p>

I have discussed this verse before and so shall not repeat my argument presently.¹⁴² The conclusion is a simple one: The contraction that we encounter in the verse text is of the same nature as the contraction of the eddic poems in *Gylfaginning* previously discussed. Even a reader extremely familiar with the texts would have trouble with these abbreviations. This verse is said to originate in Þjóðólfr Arnórsson's poem *Sexstefja*, and the abbreviated words are unquestionably a refrain (*stef*), repeated at other places in the poem. It would therefore have been entirely permissible to abbreviate this text on its second and subsequent iterations. In other words, the scribe of *U1 must have copied a contraction that presumably appeared in the original but was later written out in full in the RTW archetype.¹⁴³

¹⁴² See *Scripta Islandica* 2008:149–152 and *Gripla* 2018:98–100.

¹⁴³ The second half of the verse is omitted in the reproduction of AM 157 8vo because the contraction would have made the text incomprehensible to the scribe. (*Edda* 2013:51).

Looking back at *Skáldskaparmál*

After my investigations of both versions of *Gylfaginning* I concluded that they can in no way be traced directly back to a common exemplar. Instead, I posit that the archetype of the RTW version is based on a thorough revision of the original, with both corrections and additions, whereas SnU follows the original text in all of the most critical respects.

A similar examination of *Skáldskaparmál* reveals many interesting things. First and foremost, there is no reliable evidence to suggest anything other than that both versions have a common original, most evident in the lists of *kennings* and *heiti*, and then the examples from the scaldic poetry. This original then became the exemplar (archetype) of the SnU version of *Skáldskaparmál*, while at the same time the RTW archetype came into being, with substantial expansions made to both the examples from poetry and to the body of the material itself – poetry as well as prose.

It is easily conceivable that the original text of *Skáldskaparmál* included, in addition to the lists and the collection of examples, a few rather extensive stories; i.e., those stories that are transferred to either *Gylf 2* or *Skáld 3* in DG 11 4to, according to Table 23.¹⁴⁴

If the *kenning* section of *Skáldskaparmál* indeed began, as expected, with the list of *kennings* for Óðinn, the archetype of RTW's *Skáldskaparmál* must have pushed aside this older tradition (i.e. of listing *kennings*) with a new and different theoretical framework, regardless of whether that theoretical framework was the result of Aristotelian influence. To this were added long examples from poetry, excerpts as well as entire poems (*Þórsdrápa*, *Haustlög*, *Ragnarsdrápa*, and perhaps *Grottasöngur*, though it is possible that this poem was added later to the exemplar of R and T), the tales of the Trojans, and especially the tales of the Völsungs, the Niflungs, and the Gjúkungs.

Lasse Mårtensson's research on DG 11 4to's exemplars points strongly to the existence of two exemplars, one dating to the early 13th century, and the other to the middle of the same century. Following this theory, it is enough to assume only one intermediary version of the manuscript between the original and DG 11 4to. This manuscript, which we call *U1,

¹⁴⁴ Every beginning is difficult, as the saying goes, and though the list of Óðinn *kennings* in *Gylf 2* can be traced to the original version of *Skáldskaparmál*, the awkward beginning – with the story of Iðunn and the rather tentative poetic science – seems to have been a part of the text all along. The idea was clearly to create a framework similar to *Gylfaginning*, but the instructional material for the study of metrics had already taken shape in the oral tradition such that a framework of this type was not feasible for *Skáldskaparmál*.

would not have been written until after 1237, when Skúli became duke.¹⁴⁵ This is also the manuscript to which the chapter rubrics were added, though I see no irrefutable argument against the beginning of *Skáldskaparmál* being recreated in *U1, nor against it being recreated in DG 11 4to itself. It seems that a case can be made for both possibilities, and it was perhaps decided at the time to make do with 56 stanzas from *Háttatal* as argued in the discussion about the two hypotheses (see p. 27).

After this the text underwent two main changes to become DG 11 4to. The stories were transferred into either *Gylf* 2 or *Skáld* 3 for the purpose of separating the narrative content from the most important instructional material. Further the order in which the *heiti* were presented and discussed in this part of the work was changed in order to elevate the status of mankind in relation to the rest of creation, in a clear reflection of the cultural and scholarly attitudes of the time.¹⁴⁶

In neither version does *Skáldskaparmál* come to a final conclusion so much as to fade out. The Grammatical Treatises appear unannounced but for a very short preface in *Codex Wormianus*.¹⁴⁷ *Codex Regius* and *Codex Trajectinus* feature a series of name lists (*þulur*), a sort of continuation of the *heiti* lists, although of an entirely different structure, and presumably of an older origin than *Edda*,¹⁴⁸ while an intermezzo precedes the final section of *Edda* in DG 11 4to.

Our discussion now draws to a close, as we have considered those parts of *Edda* that – by all appearances and reason – must have existed before Snorri set to work on them, and which served the same function as they did after he compiled them into the work we know today. The myths were already there, as were the eddic poems, the lists of *kennings* and *heiti*, and of course the examples from skaldic poetry. Snorri’s task was to compile the smaller components into greater wholes – a task accomplished with such distinction and unsurpassed acumen that even today, in the year 2022, *Gylfaginning* remains the preeminent source of our knowledge of Norse mythology, and *Skáldskaparmál* remains our key to *dróttkvætt* style.

Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson in his introduction to *Heimskringla* observed that we may well imagine that Snorri composed the parts of *Edda* other

¹⁴⁵ The wording “hana *hefir saman sett* Snorri Sturluson” (“Snorri Sturluson *has compiled it*”) in the main rubric of DG 11 4to was discussed p. 26.

¹⁴⁶ The order of the *heiti* in DG 11 4to places humans conspicuously close to the divine, and far from “irrational creatures”, i.e. other animals considered less sentient.

¹⁴⁷ The Grammatical Treatises begin in *Codex Wormianus*, where SnU and SnK instead take up an explanatory account of *heiti* (*Edda* 2012:202, *Edda* 1998:83).

¹⁴⁸ The manuscripts that publishers designate A, B, and C also include name lists. There we find considerable variation in the collections of *heiti*, which undoubtedly existed fairly independently.

than *Háttatal* during his first years at Reykjaholt.¹⁴⁹ As soon as we accept this sensible remark from such a careful and attentive scholar, we must also ask: Why not before? Is it not obvious that Snorri's schooling at Oddi must have covered the mythology as well as the lists of *kennings* and *heiti*? If he had written about Sverrir Sigurðarson, he would have done so before he moved to Borgarfjörður, and would therefore have possessed the skills necessary for such an undertaking.

Although we may claim that Snorri did not finish *Háttatal* until he had returned home from Norway in 1220 – likely not until the middle of the third decade of the thirteenth century – there is no reason whatsoever to use that date as a point of reference for *Gylfaginning* and *Skáldskaparmál*.

¹⁴⁹ 1941:xxiv.

The second intermezzo

We have seen that the scribe who wrote DG 11 4to inserted material between *Gylfaginning* and *Skáldskaparmál* that, strictly speaking, had very little to do with Edda, but could be of use for the student.

Similarly, in the transitions from *Skáldskaparmál* to the poem *Háttatal*, we encounter material of three different origins on the folios 45r to 48r, pp. 87–93.

Some *heiti* for women

This interlude begins with what looks more or less like filling in an empty space on p. 87 (f. 45r). Line 16 of *Skáldskaparmál* ends with the words: *Hafa hér eftir skáldin kveðið, sem fyrr er ritað* (‘The poets have used this (or ‘these things’) in poems, as was written above’). This leaves nearly half a page vacant and the space was filled, probably by the same scribe, with two *dróttkvætt* strophes containing some 30 *heiti* for women. These strophes are also found in the manuscript AM 748 I b 4to (*Edda* 1852:490–491). Most of the terms are included in the lists in SnU and SnK, but unlike *pulur*, the *heiti* here are written in context, as we see in the following half-strophe:

Table 42. Terms for women

<i>Edda</i> 2012:246	<i>Edda</i> 2012:247
Blíð er mæi við móður, mála drekkir á ekkju, kviðir kerling eiðu, kveðr dóttir vel beðju.	A maiden is agreeable to her mother, her female friend drinks to the widow, an old lady is apprehensive about her ma, her daughter welcomes her (female) bedfellow.

The metre and the presentation of the terms in whole sentences are what distinguishes these verses from the traditional *pulur*. This is particularly true of the third stanza, which resembles or perhaps imitates a conventional *mansöngsvísa* (‘love poem’).

Table 43. A love poem

<i>Edda</i> 2012:246	<i>Edda</i> 2012:247
Stendr þat er stórum grandar sterkviðri mér Herkju, í hneggveröld hyggju; hef ek stríð borit víða. Þar kemr enn ef unkona ítr vildi Bil skáldi at blíðr grœr Gríðar glaumvindr í sal þindar.	This trollwife's storm (passionate emotion) that greatly disturbs thought resides in my heart-world (breast); I have born strife (anxiety) far and wide. It may reach the point yet if the beautiful goddess (lady) would love the poet that the giantess's merry wind (joyful thoughts) will grow happily in my diaphragm's hall (breast; [abdomen?]).

The strange *kennings* for thought or emotion are variations on the unexplained *kenning* in *Skáldskaparmál* that refers to human thought as the 'wind of giantesses' (*Edda* 2012:220). The audience might well be amused at the giantess's merry wind in the poet's diaphragm's hall, and wonder whether this hall was located above or below the diaphragm. The poet is saying that he has been lovesick for a long time, but that he could be happy if the lady were to return his affection.

Phonology

Having filled the empty space on f. 45r, the scribe wrote a strange rubric in the very bottom line of the page: *Hér segir af setningu Háttalykilsins* (in Faulkes's translation: 'Here it tells of the arrangement of the key to forms', *Edda* 2012:251).¹⁵⁰ This is strange for several reasons. Firstly, it is almost unique in this manuscript to place a rubric for a text that begins on the verso folio on the bottom of a recto folio. Secondly, the noun *háttalykill* seems to be a translation of *clavis poetica*, thus pertaining more to poetics than phonology. This is most likely the only rubric written by our scribe, who seems to have based it on the phrase in the text:

Muðrinn ok tungan er leikvöllr orðanna. Á þeim velli eru reistir stafir þeir er mál allt gera ok hendir málit ýmsa, svá til at jafna sem hörpu strengir eða eru læstir lykklar í simphóníi (*Edda* 2012:250).

The mouth and the tongue are the playing field of the words. On this field the letters are erected which form all speech and the speech reaches many, as for example the strings of a harp or when the keys of a symphonia (a kind of hurdy-gurdy) are released. (*Edda* 2012:251).

¹⁵⁰ What is said here of the Second Grammatical Treatise is more or less exactly the same as in my introduction to *Edda* 2012. For more on the Treatise see Raschellà 1982. According to his research, the text of DG 11 4to is closer to the original than the text in *Wormianus*.

It is clear that the editor of DG 11 4to considered it prudent to introduce a little phonology. To this end, he chose an essay that would later become known as the Second Grammatical Treatise and is one of four so-called grammatical treatises in *Codex Wormianus*. Understandably, this is not the title given to the treatise in DG 11 4to, where this is the only treatise (*Codex Wormianus* does not assign it any title at all). The comparison of language to music is repeated later in the text when explaining the diagram on f. 47r of the manuscript (*Edda* 2012:256). A kind of hurdy-gurdy was known in the Middle Ages (at least from the eleventh century), and it is clearly this kind of instrument that the word *simphonia* describes here. It is probably a correct assumption that the grammatical treatises were intended to explain how rhyme works.¹⁵¹ On the other hand, it is uncertain whether this *Háttalykill* would be of any benefit in understanding the kind of rhyme that Snorri calls *hending*. It nevertheless contains an important discussion of the length of sounds, which was of course crucial to *dróttkvætt* poetry and indeed very significant in other kinds of verse as well. The Second Grammatical Treatise is short (though it is longer in *Codex Wormianus*, the latter part of whose version is replaced by diagrams in DG 11 4to), filling scarcely five pages in the manuscript, of which the diagrams take up one complete page. The age of the exemplar has proven difficult to ascertain, but Lasse Mårtensson's observations suggest that the letter forms are earlier rather than later, and there are indications that the scribe of the original may have followed the precedent set by the First Grammatical Treatise in the use of small capitals to represent geminate consonants. It has not been possible to identify any model at all for this treatise, but the imagery used points unequivocally to foreign textbooks that may have been used in Iceland for the classification of Icelandic speech sounds, and the scholarly tone is unmistakable.

¹⁵¹ See Sverrir Tómasson 1996:5–6.

The list of verses, cursing the foxes, and the mysterious Gunnarr

The grammatical treatise ends at line 19 on page 92, f. 47v. The rest of this page was originally left blank, and completely different material begins on the next leaf. There is no rubric, but a coloured initial: *Fyrst er dróttkvæðr háttr* ('First is the form for court poetry'). Thus begins a strange list of stanzas, giving the first lines only of thirty-five stanzas of *Háttatal*.¹⁵² The list itself can hardly be anything but a memory sheet for a performer of the poem, a student or a teacher (cf. Faulkes 2007:xxii). As it is rather obvious that DG 11 4to is a textbook, this most likely suggests that even *Háttatal* or at least a part of the poem should be learned by heart.

The list on page 93 does not fill more than 22 lines, and a space of some lines on both pages 92 and 93 (f. 47v and 48r) was left blank. This space was used somewhat later for coded text (maybe our scribe was teaching some other scribe to use the code?), where we find interesting curses meant to drive foxes away from sheep.¹⁵³ But the most widely discussed and fascinating coded meanings are these two:

Gunnarr á mik, vel má þú sjá mik, ekki mátt þú taka mik, ekki mun þat saka þik.

Gunnarr owns me, you may well see me, you may not take me, that will not hurt you.¹⁵⁴

Dextera scriptoris benedicta sit omnibus horis.

Blessed be the right hand of the scribe at all times.

The first line is obviously an ownership-formula and the name Gunnarr has been a matter of discussion more than once, in the hope that he was maybe not only the owner of the manuscript DG 11 4to but perhaps even the scribe himself.¹⁵⁵ Grape very convincingly points out that the ownership-formula was most likely copied from another manuscript and

¹⁵² Finnur Jónsson (1931:xxx) was so convinced that the strophe-text and the names of metre in the list was built upon the text of *Háttatal* that follows that he had no problem in stating that "The scribe just wants to make an abstract. He starts with the beginning of the stanza and the name of the verse form. When he had done about a third of the poem, he reconsiders (because he now has more time?), and writes down the whole poem with commentary", but palaeographical research has shown that the list of stanzas was not made from the same exemplar as was used for the poem itself in DG 11 4to (Mårtensson 2010; Heimir Pálsson 2012:lxxxiv–lxxxvi).

¹⁵³ See *Edda* 2012:xcviii for the curse.

¹⁵⁴ Most scholars believe the *ekki* to be a miswriting for *ella* and thus the last words should be translated "or else you will be hurt". (cf. Einar Ól. Sveinsson 1974).

¹⁵⁵ For discussion see Grape 1962:12–15.

that the name referred to the owner of that book, not this one. But Grape did not draw any conclusion from the Latin meaning concerning the scribe's hand. This is, by the way, the only Latin phrase in the whole manuscript and is surely worth noting. This is a colophon, the sigh of a tired scribe at the very end of a piece of work, on the last page of the manuscript and not in the middle.¹⁵⁶ It is most likely that these two sentences were written at the end of the Second Grammatical Treatise, which may have been the property of Mr. Gunnarr or even his own work – in which case Gunnarr is that tired scribe in need of a blessing upon his weary right hand.

¹⁵⁶ See *Colophons*, 1982.

Háttatal

The recipients

Beginning on f. 48v (p. 94) of DG 11 4to is a poem, introduced by this rubric in red: *Háttatal er Snorri Sturluson orti um Hákon konung ok Skúla hertuga* (*Háttatal* which Snorri Sturluson composed about King Hákon and Duke Skúli). This is almost the same as in the main rubric on f. 2r (p. 1), except that there it says *hefir ort* instead of *orti*.¹⁵⁷ It is important to note that in both cases Skúli is called *hertogi*, a title he did not receive until 1237, which presumably establishes a *terminus post quem* for the rubrics.¹⁵⁸ It is clear from *Skáldatal* that this title was thought to be of some significance, for there Snorri is listed first as one of Earl Skúli's poets, and then as one of Duke Skúli's poets (DG 11 4to, folio 24v, p. 46). Historians believe that, as *Hákonar saga* claims, Skúli was the first person to hold this title in Norway. In GkS 2367 4to it says: *Hertogi heitir jarl ok er konungr svá kallaðr ok fyrir því er hann leiðir her til orrostu.* (*Edda* 1998:100).¹⁵⁹ This sentence is not found in DG 11 4to, and nor is the example from Þjóðólfr Arnórsson that follows it in GKS 2367 4to.

The term *hertogi* in the sense of a 'war-leader, army leader, general' is older than Skúli's time, and it is in this older sense that it is used in *Háttatal* 40/5 and 66/2 (though here in reference to Skúli too), as well as, of course, in many other skaldic poems. The new meaning (which derives from Middle Low German) is found in prose from the first half of the thirteenth century, but in verse for the first time in Sturla Þórðarson's *Hákonarkviða* 26/8 (again in reference to Skúli). It therefore seems certain that while the rubrics in *Háttatal* and DG 11 4to's version of *Edda* as a whole must have been added after 1237, the poem itself as well as *Skáldskaparmál* (at any

¹⁵⁷ On the syntax see p. 26. – Most of what is said here about *Háttatal* corresponds with what I have written previously on the topic (2012:lxxxvi–xc1 and 2017b:196–199) and sometimes even verbatim.

¹⁵⁸ *Íslenzk fornrit* 32, 2013:37, cf. Lars Hamre 1961:316–317.

¹⁵⁹ In his translation, Faulkes says: "An earl can be called duke [*hertogi*, lit. army-leader], and a king can also be referred to thus since he leads his army to battle." (*Edda* 1995:145).

rate in the *Codex Regius* version) are older, as they only contain the word *hertogi* in its older meaning, which predates its use as a title.

Háttatal, Snorri's sole extant court poem, is preserved in its full length only in GKS 2367 4to, 102 strophes, most of them fully legible. In DG 11 4to we only find 56 strophes with almost verbatim the same text as in GKS 2367 4to.¹⁶⁰

The plan seemingly was to compose at least 100 verses that could be split into four *kvæði* ('poems'), two about King Hákon and his escapades and two about Earl Skúli. But the balance was difficult. Faulkes wrote (*Edda* 1999:ix):

The first section [of *Háttatal*], stt. 1–30, is about Hákon, the second, stt. 31–67, is about Skúli, except for st. 67, which is about both rulers; in the third, stt. 68–95 are also mainly about Skúli, stt. 96–102 again seem to relate to both rulers.

In and of itself this also means that a roughly equal amount of space is devoted to each ruler in the part of the poem that appears in DG 11 4to. It is in the third section that the balance becomes skewed. Snorri and Skúli were closer in age than Snorri and Hákon; when Snorri first came to Norway in 1218, he was about forty and Skúli about thirty, while Hákon was only fourteen. This is one explanation that has often been offered for why Hákon's role in *Háttatal* is so sligh. There is a limit to what can be said in praise of the military achievements of a teenage boy. Another possible factor is that Skúli was much closer to Snorri's concept of the ideal ruler in *Heimskringla* than Hákon.

Faulkes described Snorri's problem very well:

Most of his comments are designed simply to glorify the position and qualities of Earl Skúli – sometimes to the implied detriment of the king himself. The over-prominence Snorri gives to Skúli, however, ironically foreshadows his adherence to the earl's side in the ensuing struggle for supremacy which the king eventually won, an adherence which was one of the factors leading to Snorri's death in Iceland at the hands of an emissary of the king in 1241. Snorri seems already in *Háttatal* to undervalue King Hákon, his praise often seeming even more perfunctory in his case than usual in skaldic verse; the king was after all too young at the same time to have achieved the martial prominence that Snorri's verse attributes to him (he was borne in 1204), and the eulogy comes dangerously close to being *háð en eigi lof* ('scorn rather than praise', *Hkr* i. 5). (*Edda* 1999: xiii).

¹⁶⁰ For discussion of the text and the commentary see Möbius 1881 and Faulkes 1999.

The close friendship with Skúli and his family seems to have endured as long as both lived, and even when Skúli and Hákon are on rather peaceful terms, Sturla Þórðarson describes the visit of Snorri and some of his kinsmen to Norway:

Snorri Sturluson fór útan á Eyrum um sumarit ok Þórðr kakali, Þorleifr ok Ólafr, ok kómu þeir norðarlíga við Nóreg ok váru í Niðarósi um vetrinn.

Var Snorri með Pétri, syni Skúla hertoga, en hertoginn sat í Ósló um vetrinn ok þeir Hákon konungr báðir. Var þá skipulega með þeim mágum báðum.

Órækja var þá með hertoganum. (*Sturlunga saga* I 1946;408–409).

Snorri Sturluson went abroad from Eyra in the summer, and Þórðr kakali, Þorleifr and Ólafr, and they came to land in the northern part of Norway and stayed that winter in Niðaróss.

Snorri stayed with Duke Skúli's son Pétr, but the Duke stayed in Oslo for the winter. Both he and the King Hákon too. Relations between father- and son-in-law were good.

Órækja was now staying with the Duke. (*Edda* 2012:lxxxviii).

We see here that even when the Duke and the King are on amicable terms, Snorri prefers to stay in Niðaróss. This perhaps underscores the idea that the chieftain he sees in the duke is closer to his ideal chieftain in *Heimskringla*. Two years later King Hákon had Skúli, his father-in-law, executed and a year after that his poet, Snorri Sturluson.¹⁶¹

Háttatal in DG 11 4to is oddly truncated, containing only 56 stanzas. We can believe that this was also the case in the scribe's exemplar, as the writing stops in the middle of a recto page, the last but one in the manuscript, and the scribe had chosen a quire of six leaves as the final one in the book. In other words, he had never intended to write any more of the poem. There might be various reasons for this.

The most conventional and least dramatic explanation is that the rest of the poem was missing in the scribe's exemplar, which may have contained leaves at the end that had gone missing at some point. This is a common problem in Icelandic manuscripts, and it is often blamed on the poor conditions in which they were kept.

A second possible explanation is of course that the redactor of the Uppsala *Edda* determined that it was sensible to stop at this point. Most variants of the *dróttkvætt* form are represented, and as Guðrún Nordal (2001:124) points out, the last verse form in this manuscript is *Egils hátt* and it would be quite fitting to close the poem with a reference to the

¹⁶¹ As far as is known, *Háttatal* is the only court poem composed for two people! This must have been a risky endeavour indeed from the very beginning!

poet's noble ancestor. The catch is that the name of the verse form does not appear in this manuscript and must be sought in the SnK version. Furthermore, it is stanza 66 and not 56 that can be regarded as the last example of *dróttkvætt* in *Háttatal*.

A third possibility is that a copy had been made of *Háttatal* before it was completed, and this had only been composed up to this point. It is entirely plausible that Snorri put his work on hold for an indeterminate period of time. We have no reliable evidence that *Háttatal* was the first part of the *Edda* to have been written, and in fact there is very little that helps us date it apart from the usual (modern) assumption that it is polite to express thanks for hospitality before too many winters have passed from the time of the visit. This has long been accepted as the case, but of course it is not entirely outside the realm of possibility that Snorri did not finish the poem until he had decided to make his second trip to Norway in 1237.

The fourth possibility was presented in my hypothesis at the beginning of this book (see pp. 25–27), that it was Snorri himself who by this wanted to make the portions for the King and the Duke as equal as possible. As pointed out there this is a hypothesis built on another hypothesis.

The commentary

Every manuscript that contains *Háttatal* either in part or in full (DG 11 4to, GKS 2367 4to, AM 242 f. and Utrecht 1374) has an accompanying commentary. The commentaries vary individually in level of detail, but all are closely related. Faulkes (*Edda* 1999:x) lists and discusses at least ten places where the commentary in the *Codex Regius* version deviates from the text of the poem.¹⁶² Nevertheless most scholars seem to be of the same opinion, as we see in Vésteinn Ólason's 2001 article:

Lausu máli verksins má [...] skipta í þrjár bókmenntagreinir eftir rithætti: 1) fræðandi (didaktískan) texta í formála, hluta Skáldskaparmála og skýringum við Háttatal, 2) sögur og önnur forn fræði lögð ásum í munn, og 3) skáldaðar kynjasögur (fantastíska frásögn), sem Snorri hefur samið sjálfur, þ.e. rammafrásagnir Gylfaginningar og Skáldskaparmála. (Vésteinn Ólason 2001: 53).

The prose sections of the work can [...] be divided into different literary genres on the basis of style: 1) the informative (didactic) text of the *Prologue*, part of *Skáldskaparmál* and the Commentary on *Háttatal*, 2) stories and

¹⁶² For discussion of the discrepancies between the poem and the commentary see Faulkes (1999: x–xi), who lists at least ten examples found in GKS 2367 4to. DG 11 4to contains six such discrepancies. – Probably writing the commentary was Snorri's idea carried out by his scribes. That would explain the discrepancies.

other ancient knowledge which is placed in the mouths of the *æsir*, and 3) fictive fantasies (fantastic narratives), which Snorri has written himself, that is the frame narratives of *Gylfaginning* and *Skáldskaparmál*. (Translated by Terry Gunnell).

Both the *Prologue* and especially the commentary are likely to have been revised and augmented, but it is most unlikely that the commentary was intended to follow the poem to its two royal recipients; understanding the poem itself would most likely have posed enough of a challenge!

As a matter of fact, no sources mention Snorri delivering the poem to the Earl and King. Even if we assume that Snorri either wrote the text himself or dictated it to a scribe, we never hear of a messenger reciting *Háttatal* at the Norwegian court, and Snorri himself did not travel abroad until much later, in 1237.¹⁶³ Perhaps Snorri realised that he was betting on the wrong horse, believing that Skúli would ultimately prevail as king?

The present author has more than once pointed out that DG 11 4to very clearly reveals the textbook nature of *Edda*. Two examples from the commentary will suffice to illustrate this.

Along with the first verse of *Háttatal* we are given what may be the best and most pedagogical definition of *dróttkvætt* alliteration and in this respect the two versions are very similar.

We are told that the stanza should contain eight lines of six syllables each, but neither here nor later are we taught anything about syllable length, even though the rules concerning this seem to be very important. The terms used in *Edda* for long and short syllables, *skjótr* ('quick'), *seinn* ('slow'), or *harðr* ('hard?' 'accented?') and *linr* ('weak?' 'unaccented?') do not indicate that it was considered important to emphasise the distinction between a long syllable and an accented short one. The explanation could be quite simple: The student who had learned all of the examples in *Skáldskaparmál* by heart had acquired an implicit understanding of and *feeling* for the metre.¹⁶⁴

In Table 44 we get the commentaries' perfect description of the alliteration.

¹⁶³ In his *Hákonar saga*, Snorri's nephew Sturla Þórðarson only quotes stanzas from the part of the poem about Skúli. However, in *Íslendinga saga* (in *Sturlunga saga*), Sturla is indirectly quoting stanza 95 of *Háttatal*, where Snorri himself mentions the *fimmtán stórgjafir* ('fifteen great gifts') that Skúli gave to Snorri before he returned from Norway in 1220.

¹⁶⁴ In "Að læra til skálds – tilraun um nám" (2014b), the present author argues for the theory that learning the examples was seen as an important aspect of training for poets.

Table 44. Alliteration

SnU <i>Edda</i> 2012:262–264 & 263	SnK <i>Edda</i> 1999:4
<p>Hér er stafasetning sú er hætti ræðr ok kveðandi gerir, þat eru tolf stafir í erindi ok eru þrír settir í hvern fjórðung. Í hverjum fjórðungi eru tvau vísuorð. Hverju vísuorði fylgja sex samstofur. Í ǫðru vísuorði er settr sá stafr fyrir í vísuorðinu er vér kǫllum hǫfuðstaf. Sá stafr ræðr kveðandi. En í fyrsta vísuorði mun sá stafr finnast tysvar standa fyrir samstofur. Þá stafi kǫllum vér stuðla. Ef hǫfuðstafr er samhljóðandi þá skulu stuðlar vera inn sami stafr, sem hér er:</p> <p>Lætr sá er H.[ákon] h.[eitir], h.[ann] r.[ækir] l.[ið], b.[annat]¹⁶⁵</p>	<p>Hér er stafasetning sú er hætti ræðr ok kveðandi gerir, þat eru tólf stafir í eyrindi, ok eru þrír settir í hvern fjórðung. Í hverjum fjórðungi eru tvau vísuorð. Hverju vísuorði fylgja sex samstofur. Í ǫðru vísuorði er settr sá stafr fyrst í vísuorðinu er vér kǫllum hǫfuðstaf. Sá stafr ræðr kveðandi. En í fyrsta vísuorði mun sá stafr finnast tysvar standa fyrir samstofun. Þá stafi kǫllum vér stuðla. Ef hǫfuðstafr er samhljóðandi, þá skulu stuðlar vera enn inn sami stafr, svá sem hér er:</p> <p>Lætr sá er Hákun heitir hann rekkir lið bannat.</p>
<p>Here there is one aspect of spelling that determines the verse form and creates the poetical effect, that there are twelve staves (alliterating sounds) in the stanza, and three are put in each quarter-stanza. In each quarter-stanza there are two lines. Each line comprises six syllables. In the second line there is put at the head in the line the stave that we call the chief stave. This stave determines the alliteration. But in the first line this stave will be found twice at the beginning of syllables. These staves we call props. If the chief stave is a consonant, then the props must be the same letter, as here.</p>	

Sometimes the difference in quantity between the two versions is quite substantial, as we see in the following example, where the shorter version expects the student to identify the rule without being guided line by line through the stanza, as shown in Table 45.

¹⁶⁵ This strophe is normally abbreviated in the manuscript as h.h.h.r.l.b., since it is written out in full on the same page.

Table 45. Different pedagogy

SnU <i>Edda</i> 2012:268 & 269 – 75 words	SnK <i>Edda</i> 1999:6 – 134 words
<p>Þat er sannkenning at styðja svá orðit með réttu efni at kalla stinn sár því at höfug eru stór sár, en rétt er mælt at þróist. Önnur sannkenning er sú at sárin þróast stórum. Nú er eitt vísuorð ok tvær sannkenningar.</p> <p>Nú ferr svá með sama hætti unz öll er uppi vísan, ok eru hér sextán sannkenningar sýndar í átta vísuorðum. En þó feugar þat mjök í kveðandi at eigi sé jammjök eptir þeim farit.</p> <p>It is a true description to support the word with correct material so as to call wounds severe, for great wounds are heavy, and it is normal to say that it increases. Another true description is this [to say] that severe wounds increase greatly. So there is one line and two true descriptions.</p> <p>Now it goes on thus in the same manner until the whole verse is finished, and there are here sixteen true descriptions to be found in eight lines. And yet it adds great beauty to the poetical effect even if they are not imitated so precisely. (<i>Edda</i> 2012:269).</p>	<p>Þat er sannkenning at styðja svá orðit með sonnu efni, svá at kalla stinn sárin, þvíat höfug eru sár stór; en rétt er mælt at þróask. Önnur sannkenning er sú at sárin þróask stórum. Nú er eitt vísuorð ok tvær sannkenningar. Í öðru vísuorði er kölluð sterk egg, en framir seggir. Í inu þriðja er svá, at hvast skerr, hlífin er traust; ok í fjórða orði at kalla konunginn mikinn, en líf hans framligt, þar næst at kalla hreint sverð ok harðliga roðit, en einnhverr liðsmanna, ok væri rétt mál þótt maðr væri nefndr. Göfugr er konungrinn kallaðr, røndin var kostig ok furaðisk undarlíga skjótt; konungrinn unði glaðr fræknu hjarta. Nú eru hér sýndar sextán sannkenningar í átta vísuorðum, en þó feuga þær mjök í kveðandi at eigi sé svá vandlíga eptir þeim farit.</p> <p>It is a literal description when the word is supported with a literal epithet like this, for instance to call wounds severe, because great wounds are heavy; and it is normal to say that they increase. A second literal description is when the wounds increase greatly. Here we have one line and two literal descriptions. In the second line the edge is said to be strong and the men bold, In the third we have cuts sharply, and the shield is trusty, and in the fourth line the description of the king as great, and his life as honourable, and then the description of the sword and clean and mightily reddened, and a certain one of the troops, and it would be normal language if the man were named. The king is said to be noble, the shield was splendid and was furrowed wonderfully quickly, the king rejoiced, happy with valiant heart. Now there are here exemplified sixteen literal descriptions in eight lines, but they add greatly to the poetical effect even if this scheme is not imitated precisely. (<i>Edda</i> 1995:169).</p>

As usual it is very difficult to determine which is the original version but, as is often the case, it is tempting to quote Anthony Faulkes, who wrote of the commentary in DG 11 4to:

The commentary seems in some places to have been shortened and is frequently incoherent, but also often contains words, phrases, and headings lacking in the other manuscripts. Although the text is often inaccurate, it may well be derived from Snorri's original independently of the hyparchetype of R, T and W, or may even derive from an early draft made by Snorri. (*Edda* 1999, Introduction xxv).

Thus, the first draft of the commentary may well have been written by Snorri himself, as a reminder to himself and the first Icelandic readers of the point in each strophe. But even if the poem was unique in that it was composed for two royal recipients, it is unlikely that they were meant to listen to hours of explanations regarding the form.

Poetry and stylistics

Seen through the looking-glass of modern aesthetics, *Háttatal* is of rather poor quality: formally correct but as a praise poem very conventional, and pointing out very few episodes that adequately tie the stanzas to the individual recipients, King Hákon and Earl Skúli. The undertaking that Snorri had intended for his poem, i.e., to illustrate 100 different metres (or, perhaps more correctly, stylistic variants) was so unpoetic that it automatically serves more to showcase the poet's linguistic training than his (possible) poetic brilliance.

On the other hand, when solving more or less unpoetic riddles, Snorri stands out as one of the best when it comes to playing with the language. Two examples illustrate this.

Composing a stanza of sixteen main clauses can scarcely be considered a poetic undertaking but is instead a stylistic one, following all of the strict rules of rhyme and alliteration in *dróttkvætt*:

Table 46. Sixteen clauses

<i>Edda</i> 2012:274	<i>Edda</i> 2012:275
Vex iðn. Vellir roðna. Verpr lind. Þrimu snerpir. Felsk gagn. Fylkir eignast. Falr hitnar. Seðst vitnir. Skekr rønd. Skildir bendast. Skelfr askr. Griðum raskar. Brandr gellr. Brynjur sundrast. Braka spjót. Litast orvar.	Labour grows. Fields go red. Lime-spear is thrown. Battle grows harsh. Victory is concealed. The ruler gains possessions. Dart grows hot. Wolf is sated. Targe is shaken. Bucklers are bent. Ash(-spear) quivers. Peace is disturbed. Brand resounds. Mail-coats are split apart. Spears crack. Arrows are dyed.

If this metre is called *sextánmælt* ('said in sixteen clauses'), then it obviously follows that the metre with one main clause in each line is called *áttmælt* ('said in eight clauses'). We can therefore easily conclude that this is not a matter of poetics, but rather one of syntax.

But it may be worth taking a closer look at this seemingly conventional description of battle. Every clause paints a picture of its own, beginning with the increase in activity in the morning when the sun casts its first reddish light over the field, then commenting on the weaponry and battle, and closing with bloodstained arrows. Together the sixteen pictures pres-

ent a horrifying and gruesome description of battle, a veritable thirteenth-century *Guernica*!

The last example is more of a demonstration of skill in word formation:

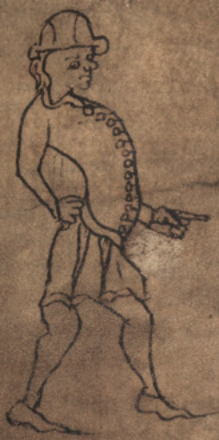
Table 47. Long words

<i>Edda</i> 2012:292	<i>Edda</i> 2012:293
Flaust bjó fólka treystir fagrskjölduðustum öldum, leið skar bragninga bróðir bjartveggjuðustu reggi; hest rak hilmir rasta harðsveipaðastan reipum; sjár hlaut við þróm þjóta þunghúfuðustu lungi.	The tester of armies provided a craft with the most beautifully shielded men; the king's brother cut the sea with the most brightly sailed cruiser; the prince drove the current-horse with the most tightly twisted ropes; the sea had to resound against the side of the most heavily planked longship.

It is no small feat of linguistic gymnastics to include in the same strophe four compound adjectives of four syllables in the superlative and with an oblique case ending. In the superlative and an oblique case (either dative or accusative), the adjectives *fagrskjaldaðr*, *bjartveggjaðr*, *harðsveipaðr* and *þunghúfaðr* appear as *fagrskjölduðustum*, *bjartveggjuðustu*, *harðsveipaðastan* og *þunghúfuðustum* and are true hapax legomena; they do not occur in any other West Nordic text apart from *Háttatal*, and are most likely Snorri's own inventions. But he nevertheless succeeds in placing them in an acceptable context. One need not be a poetic genius to accomplish this, but a thorough knowledge of the language and an affinity for playing with it are certainly necessary.

This is by no means an attempt to convince my reader of Snorri Sturluson's poetic excellence; I am simply pointing out that *Háttatal* is worth studying as an interesting exercise in language play and poetics.

okio sem decti vort. hven sei iof xari jarli
 þættur u snæla. e. gjarva at graþa gvin harþvellðan sk
 lla fende af stala skvrat stva olmall gauri þa e þolkstapau
 polðer. þer sigmoðu vauþa. þ er i eþta z þaupia vifo ceþr
 hæleyfa. En iopzo z eno þiaþa skoþent z riphent.
 h vax ali bloþi hysta þen rauþlygiu vlarar neri s at givr
 af silði þ þ dog nigan vge. geþr oddurti undir co nyþrenu
 vinni þ er þennil þriar þram klo þobnar ropna. þ er i
 þirfta vifo ceþr z þaupia hæleyfa. En iopzo z eno þiaþa al
 hendingar z riphent.



þud

The last page in the manuscript. Obviously, there was no intention of writing all the 102 verses of Háttatal: this is showing nr 56. The dancers are a little younger than the text.

Summary and conclusion

This has been a rather long and complex journey through the manuscript DG 11 4to, and the complexity calls for a dual summary and conclusion; one for the manuscript itself and one for Snorri Sturluson's *Edda*.

DG 11 4to

In the rubric on the first page of text in the manuscript DG 11 4to we read *Þessi bók heitir Edda* ('this book is called Edda'). However, if *book* in this case means 'this particular volume', the rubric is wrong, because the manuscript contains material that most certainly did *not* belong to the work that Snorri Sturluson compiled and which was given the name *Edda* (either by Snorri himself or someone else). The rubric was most likely copied from the exemplar, which was presumably written around the middle of the thirteenth century and was itself a copy of an old manuscript or perhaps even the archetype itself, into the traditional parts of the *Edda*, *Gylfaginning* and *Skáldskaparmál*. The thorough revision of *Skáldskaparmál* that we encounter in DG 11 4to probably originates in that manuscript itself, although it is possible that it was made in the exemplar.

Apart from the *Edda* material, DG 11 4to contains the historical material in *Skáldatal* (a list of poets and chieftains), *Lögsögumannatal* (a list of lawspeakers from the beginning of Iceland's settlement to Snorri's second term in that office), and the *Ættartala* (a genealogy of the Sturlung family). All of this historical material forms an intermezzo between *Gylfaginning* and *Skáldskaparmál*, thus underlining the different roles of the two main parts of *Edda*.

Between *Skáldskaparmál* and *Háttatal* we find some trivia, strophes, and *aides-mémoires*, but also (and most importantly), the Second Grammatical Treatise, so named because it is the second of such treatises in *Wormianus*. The exemplar for the treatise as it appears in DG 11 4to is a different one, however, perhaps with the title *Háttalykillinn* 'The Clavis Poetica'. This phonetic description of language may not be especially

helpful for the student of poetry, but obviously belongs to the same field as Ólafr hvítaskáld's studies of poetic rhetoric in *Málskrúðsfræði*.

All of this extra material, together with certain graphic peculiarities, makes DG 11 4to a unique example of a carefully prepared textbook.¹⁶⁶ The close connection between some of this extra material and Snorri Sturluson and his family strongly supports the theory that the manuscript was written at a location linked to his own legacy.

Whatever the truth of the matter may be, the manuscript DG 11 4to deserves respect as a unique copy of the oldest Icelandic textbook written in the vernacular prosody.

The manuscript DG 11 4to in Uppsala is a unique representative of the version of *Edda* that we might call the Uppsala version. Not only is the Uppsala manuscript a version of the text of Snorri Sturluson's *Edda*, it presumably preserves an almost exact copy of the archetype of *Gylfaginning* and contains additional material that would be of benefit to someone studying poetic metre – especially a student belonging to the Sturlung family.

Edda

Even if it seems that we have good reason to accept the claim in DG 11 4to that Snorri Sturluson compiled the work as a whole, there is little to no evidence to suggest that it was *composed* as a whole, and my earlier research casts doubt upon the theory that *Háttatal* was composed first and served as an inspiration for the other sections (Heimir Pálsson 2017b). On the contrary, it is natural to treat the different parts of the work (*Prologus*, *Gylfaginning*, *Skáldskaparmál*, and the Commentary on *Háttatal*) as independent of each other. The first and last sections, *Prologus* and the commentary, are not necessarily entirely the work of Snorri himself, but it is very likely that Snorri at least started the work in both cases, even if the idea of him believing that he needed an euhemeristic excuse for writing about the heathen gods does not seem very convincing (cf. Viðar Pálsson 2008).

Gylfaginning

The tales of the creation and the life of the gods until Ragnarøkkr are mainly built on two sources: folktales and orally preserved poems of the *Eddic* variety. It is very likely that Snorri heard and learned both the tales and the poems in Oddi, and perhaps later in Borg. The subject matter may have had its roots in ancient myths, but in Snorri's day they were presumably told to entertain and at the same time educate the listener about

¹⁶⁶ Apart from the red rubrics, the most significant graphic peculiarities include beautifully drawn initials (*Anfangs*) and markings in the margins of some of the pages that seem to mark the half-strophes that students of poetry were meant to learn by heart.

the past. Snorri's great literary achievement were arranging and creating the conversation between Gangleri and the gods, and putting the tales in a convincing order.¹⁶⁷ Despite the occasionally considerable quantitative differences between the two versions of *Gylfaginning* (SnU and SnK), both can convincingly be traced to a common archetype that had much of the same character as SnU, and which was thoroughly revised and augmented in SnK.

Skáldskaparmál

The instructive section about the construction of *kennings* and the thesaurus in the section on *heiti* is most likely a reflection of what Snorri was taught as a young boy in Oddi, during his training in court poetry. This traditional knowledge, which had been preserved orally for centuries, was now committed to writing for perhaps the first time in Snorri's redaction. An investigation of the *kennings* in *Háttatal* reveals that nearly all of them were entirely traditional (Heimir Pálsson 1917b:227–229). The great difference in structure between the SnK and SnU versions of *Skáldskaparmál* seems to be easily explainable by thorough revisions being made to the latter so that it could serve an educational purpose, while it seems SnK in most ways reflects the archetype, apart from some tales and poems that were added later. Thus, the development from the common original is easily explained.¹⁶⁸

Háttatal

Snorri Sturluson's only preserved poem about kings and chieftains is a unique poem indeed.

First of all, *Háttatal* is the only extant court poem by Snorri, and was composed in praise of two recipients – King Hákon and Earl Skúli. Secondly, the poem was meant not only to be in praise of the chieftains as per tradition, but also as an unusual show of poetic variants and forms; 100 stylistic variants are demonstrated within the same number of stanzas.

¹⁶⁷ Snorri's phenomenal success in this regard is blatantly obvious in the numerous books written on Nordic heathendom, which build mainly on *Gylfaginning*.

¹⁶⁸ It is worth noting that when the two fourteenth-century poets Eysteinn Ásgrímsson and Arngrímur Brandsson talk about the 'rules of Edda' they obviously are referring to *Skáldskaparmál* and maybe the commentary, not *Gylfaginning*, and that when we find parts of *Edda* in the manuscripts AM 748 Ib 4to, AM 757 4to and AM 748 II (*Edda* 1852:397,501,573), in all cases in all cases these comprise material from *Skáldskaparmál*. Even if we find parts of the full text *Gylfaginning* in paper copies like Jón lærði's copy Marsh 114 and some fragments of his own works, the material from *Skáldskaparmál* is the most common (and supposedly the most practical). This shows that even in the centuries that used paper rather than parchment the poetic rules of *Edda* were used for training poets (see e.g. AM 157 8vo, cf. Heimir Pálsson 2012:xxxivxli).

Those two unusual purposes of course meant that idealistic poetic objectives were surrendered, and as a matter of fact we have no evidence of how the poet delivered his poem to the recipients. The only authors to quote *Háttatal* were Snorri's nephews, the brothers Sturla and Ólafr Þórðarson (hvítaskáld), in *Hákonar saga* and *Málskrúðsfræði* (the Third Grammatical Treatise in *Wormianus*). In *Hákonar saga* Sturla quotes three stanzas from *Háttatal*, all of which boast of Skúli's bravado (cf. Heimir Pálsson 2014a:159–161), and in *Málskrúðsfræði* Ólafr quotes some six strophes from the poem (cf. *ibid.* 150–151).¹⁶⁹

Háttatal itself is only preserved in its entirety in GKS 2367 4to; some strophes are missing from both AM 242 fol and Utrecht 1374, DG 11 4to contains only roughly the first half, 56 stanzas. As discussed earlier, this seems to have been the same in the exemplar, although a single compelling explanation eludes us.

Reading *Háttatal* through a modern literary lens is unfair to the poem. Some of the stanzas are quite interesting from other points of view, and demonstrate skills of the poet apart from those that pertain to poetical aesthetics.

¹⁶⁹ In *Íslendinga saga* Sturla quotes four *lausavísur* (quatrains) by Snorri, and in *Málskrúðsfræði* Ólafr quotes one (cf. Heimir Pálsson 2014a:152–159)

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Abstracts

English

The Uppsala University Library, Carolina Rediviva, houses an Icelandic manuscript written around the year 1300. This is the so-called Uppsala manuscript of Snorri Sturluson's *Edda*, also known by its shelfmark, DG 11 4to. Brynjólfur Sveinsson, who would later become Bishop of Skálholt, brought the manuscript to Copenhagen in the 1630s and gave it to his friend Stephan Stephanius, headmaster of Sorø college. Upon Stephanius's death in 1650, the manuscript was purchased by the Swedish count Magnus Gabriel De la Gardie, who donated it to Carolina Rediviva in 1669, along with many other priceless medieval manuscripts.

The traditional scholarship treats Snorri Sturluson's *Edda* as a single work unto itself, and the brainchild of one brilliant author. Each section follows sequentially from the one before it like links on a chain: *Prologus*, *Gylfaginning* ('The Deluding of Gylfi'), *Skáldskaparmál* ('The Language of Poetry'), and *Háttatal* ('Tally of Meters'). The order is more or less reversed after Elias Wessén's 1940 edition: *Háttatal*, *Skáldskaparmál*, *Gylfaginning*, and *Prologus*. In his study "Reflections on the Creation of Snorri Sturluson's *Prose Edda*" (2017), Heimir Pálsson rejects Wessén's theory and argues instead for the treatment of at least *Gylfaginning*, *Skáldskaparmál*, and *Háttatal* as independent works.

The present study of DG 11 4to has its basis in this idea, and the author posits it as an explanation for the two different main versions of *Gylfaginning* and *Skáldskaparmál*. For *Gylfaginning*, the main idea is that the author/editor gathered myths on the one hand, and descriptions of the geography, history and *dramatis personae* in the world of gods and giants on the other. It is assumed that the author/editor's primary sources were poems, stories, and myths. Snorri most likely gathered this material during his years in Oddi, perhaps adding to it later in Borgarfjörður.

At the heart of *Skáldskaparmál*, however, are the traditional techniques and vocabulary that aspiring students of poetry would have learned by heart during the centuries of oral culture and memory; in other words,

what Snorri would have learned as a boy in Oddi in preparation for his role as a court poet. He now organizes this material, first by explaining and illustrating with examples the method of *kenning*-building in all major domains, beginning with the gods and gradually moving through the universe. The second part of *Skáldskaparmál* is what we would today call a thesaurus, a dictionary containing mostly semantically-organized substantives. These are the *heiti*, or names used first and foremost in poetry. Some of the tales of the lives of the gods that we find here are better considered as seasoning than essential metrical nourishment. The original *Skáldskaparmál* was later revised according to two very different pedagogies, again resulting in two different versions of the text.

A crucial feature of *Skáldskaparmál* are the hundreds of half-strophes used to demonstrate both *kennings* and *heiti*. Only around thirty of the nearly one thousand strophes that Snorri quotes in *Edda* and *Skáldskaparmál* appear in both works, which suggests that we are dealing with two separate collections; one for historical studies and the other for poetics.

We can claim with reasonable certainty that *Skáldskaparmál* is the oldest Icelandic textbook, and DG 11 4to most probably contains the oldest preserved copy intended for use by the student.

Icelandic

Handritið DG 11 4to Uppsala-Edda, er íslenskt, skrifað um 1300. Það fór til Danmerkur á 17. öld, þegar Brynjólfur Sveinsson gaf vini sínum Stephaniusi rektor í Sorø bókina. Þaðan keypti sænski greifinn Magnus Gabriel De la Gardie handritið 1650 og gaf það ásamt mörgum öðrum handritum háskólasafninu, Carolina Rediviva, árið 1669. Handritið var ljósprentað og eitt eintak prentað á skinn sem gjöf Sænska þjóðþingsins til Alþingis Íslendinga árið 1930. Stafrétt útgáfa textans var prentuð í Uppsölum 1977 í tilefni af 500 ára afmæli Uppsalaháskóla.

Flestallar rannsóknir sem gerðar hafa verið á Eddu Snorra Sturlusonar hafa meðhöndlað hana sem eitt höfundarverk, þar sem eitt hafi leitt af öðru, Prólóg, Gylfaginningu, Skáldskaparmál, Háttatal og eftir útgáfu Eliasar Wesséns 1940 á handriti Konungsbókar í öfugri röð, Háttatal, Skáldskaparmál, Gylfaginning. *Kenningu* Wesséns var hafnað í ritgerð Heimis Pálssonar 2017b og leidd að því rök að skynsamlegt væri að líta á verkið sem fjóra sjálfstæða hluta, ekki einn.

Í þeirri athugun sem hér er gerð grein fyrir og snýst í meginatriðum um innihald og samsetningu handritsins DG 11 4to er þessari hugmynd fylgt eftir og sýnt að með því móti verði unnt að skýra mismunandi gerðir Gylfaginningar og Skáldskaparmála. Eru því gerðir skórnir að

í Gylfaginningu hafi verið safnað saman því sem til náðist í sögum og kvæðum 12. aldar, einkum í Odda og nágrenni, en síðan líklega aukið eftir að Snorri fluttist í Borgarfjörð. Í Skáldskaparmálum sé hins vegar að finna efni sem verðandi skáldum hafi verið kennt fyrir ritöld og Snorri því lært á uppvaxtarárum en ritstýrt í frumgerð Skáldskaparmála, sem síðan hafi verið endurskoðuð eftir tveimur ólíkum hugmyndum í kennslubókagerð. Þar skiptir miklu að það sem segir í Uppsalaabókargerð um *kenningar* er greinilega í samræmi við *kenningahefðina* eins og hún birtist í dæmum og listum í því verki, en alls ekki eins og í þeirri lýsingu sem fram kemur í Konungsbókargerðinni og kann að vera sótt til skáldskaparfræða Aristótelesar.

Sú gáta DG 11 4to sem birtist í því að einungis eru skrifuð þar 56 fyrstu erindi Háttatals er ekki ráðin í þessu verki, aðeins minnt á nokkrar hugsanlegar skýringar. Ekki er heldur ráðið til lykta tengslum bragfræðiathugagreininga um Háttatalsvísurnar við skilgreiningar í Skáldskaparmálum og ekki heldur fundin svör við spurningunni hver hlutur Snorra kunni að vera í þeirri bragfræði.

Sé horft á hluta Eddu sem sjálfstæð verk verður auðvelt að taka bókstaflega það sem segir í fyrirsögn handritsins DG 11 4to um Eddu: „hana hefur saman sett Snorri Sturluson“. Þar með eru sem sagt tekin af öll tvímæli: Það var Snorri sem raðaði saman þessum hlutum, ákvað að þeir gætu staðið saman í bók.

En nálægt upphafi þessarar bókar hér er varpað fram þeirri tilgátu að reyndar hafi Snorri sjálfur átt hlut að því að skapa þessa fyrirsögn og að hún og þar með forrit DG 11 4to hafi fyrst verið ritað á árunum 1237 til 1241, kannski þó frekast 1239 til 1240, meðan þeir lifðu allir, Snorri Sturluson, Skúli Bárðarson og Hákon Hákonarson.

Í þessari fyrirsögn er hins vegar ekki minnst á ýmislegt sjálfstætt efni sem fellt hefur verið í handritið DG 11 4to svo að úr verður safnrit. Mikilvægust eru þar Skáldatal og málfræðiritgerðin sem kölluð var Önnur í Ormsbók, þar sem ritgerðirnar eru fjórar. Bæði þær viðbætur og aðrar smærri eru samkvæmt niðurstöðum höfundar til þess ætlaðar að auka gildi handritsins sem námsbókar, sem þá verður til þess að leggja áherslu á að Skáldskaparmál Eddu eru líklega fyrsta frumsamda kennslubókin á íslensku og handritið DG 11 4to sennilega elsta varðveitta nemendabókin íslenska.

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