



# THE POETIC EDDA

A Dual-Language Edition

EDWARD PETTIT



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Edward Pettit, *The Poetic Edda: A Dual-Language Edition*. Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0308>

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ISBN Paperback: 978-1-80064-772-5

ISBN Hardback: 978-1-80064-773-2

ISBN Digital (PDF): 978-1-80064-774-9

ISBN Digital ebook (EPUB): 978-1-80064-775-6

ISBN Digital ebook (AZW3): 978-1-80064-776-3

ISBN XML: 978-1-80064-777-0

ISBN HTML: 978-1-80064-778-7

DOI: 10.11647/OBP.0308

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# Hárbarðsljóð

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*Hárbarðsljóð* (*Hrbl.*) ‘The Song of Hárbarðr’ survives in **R** (fol. 12r–13v). Stt. 19 (partially) to 60 also occur at the start of **A** (fol. 1r–v), where they precede *BDr*. The acephalous nature of the **A** version aside, the two texts of *Hrbl.* are substantially the same. Both manuscripts indicate the speakers from st. 20 onwards; **R** also does so in stt. 1, 2, 11 and 19. Orthographical and palaeographical similarities to *FSk.*, the preceding poem in **R**, suggest that these two poems were originally transcribed together and separate from the rest of **R**.

As usual for poems in this collection, *Hrbl.*’s date of composition is uncertain. Snorri Sturluson neither names nor quotes from *Hrbl.* in his *Prose Edda*, though *SnEGylf* might contain an echo of st. 13. If it does, the poem probably existed in some form before about 1225.

What might be a comic inversion of the events of *Hrbl.* appears in chapter 59 of an Old Norse translation of a lost, late-twelfth-century Latin account, by an Icelandic monk called Oddr Snorrason, of the life of Óláfr Tryggvason, king of Norway in the late tenth century.<sup>1</sup> In it a man—obviously the god Þórr, though his name is not given—calls out for passage on Óláfr’s ship. He gets this immediately, boards the ship, and proceeds to address the king’s men with *mörg hæðilig orð* ‘many scornful/ludicrous words’ and to provide fine entertainment. He laughs at them, and they at him, and utters many boasts. In particular, he claims to know a lot and that they will be unable to ask him anything he does not know. He then reveals that he once made the land safe for people by killing the last-remaining giantesses—all two of them, the other giants having died suddenly. After that he dives into the sea and disappears.

Additionally, a clue that might push the compositional date of a version of *Hrbl.* back hundreds of years to heathen times appears in chapter 102 of the thirteenth-century *Brennu-Njáls saga* ‘Saga of Burnt-Njáll’. It contains a skaldic verse, attributed to the Icelander Úlfr Uggason, concerning events in Iceland around 998, which seems to allude to a testing confrontation between Hárbarðr and Þórr across the strait of a fjord.<sup>2</sup> If Úlfr did compose this verse, it indicates that a tradition dealing with the same subject matter treated in *Hrbl.* existed in the late tenth century.

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1 Óláfs saga Trygvassonar, in Guðni Jónsson, ed., *Konunga sögur I* (Reykjavík, 1957), [https://heimskringla.no/wiki/%C3%93l%C3%A1fs\\_saga\\_Tryggvasonar](https://heimskringla.no/wiki/%C3%93l%C3%A1fs_saga_Tryggvasonar); T. M. Andersson, trans., *The Saga of Olaf Tryggvason. Oddr Snorrason* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003).

2 Einar Ól. Sveinsson, ed., *Brennu-Njáls Saga*, Íslenzk fornrit 12 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag, 1954), p. 263.

*Hrbl.* displays a variety of metres (*málaháttr/fornyrðislag*, *ljóðaháttr* and *galdralag*), which, together with considerable alliterative irregularity and prose passages, prompted some early scholars to suspect substantial textual corruption and interpolation. Modern scholarship, however, rejects their attempts to reconstruct a supposed 'original' form of the poem.

The surviving text could well be a two-person dialogue intended for dramatic performance. If so, the initial prose was perhaps not to be spoken, but read by the 'actors' in preparation for a performance.

*Hrbl.*'s position within **R** appears significant. By focusing on both Óðinn and Þórr, it forms a thematic bridge between a series of four poems that feature Óðinn prominently (*Vsp.*, *Háv.*, *Vm.* and *Grm.*) and a series of three poems that feature Þórr prominently (*Hym.*, *Ls.* and *Þrk.*), the intervening *FSk.* notwithstanding.

Among these poems, *Hrbl.*'s closest thematic similarities are with *Ls.*<sup>3</sup> The latter poem is a disputation between the trickster-god Loki and the other gods, including a similarly dim-witted Þórr. In both poems, Þórr is mocked for having hidden in a giant's glove (*Hrbl.* 26, *Ls.* 60), using some identical wording. In both, too, it is alleged that Þórr's wife has a lover (*Hrbl.* 48, *Ls.* 54). These similarities might indicate a direct relationship between the two poems. Most of their formal similarities, however, stem from a shared generic heritage. Both belong to a genre of poetic invective, known in English as a 'flyting', in which two men—rarely more, and seldom women—exchange insults, boasts, accusations and challenges to each other's honour. The most recognizable instances, by virtue of their titles, are by sixteenth-century Scots poets, notably William Dunbar's 'The Flyting of Dunbar and Kennedie' and Alexander Montgomerie's 'Polwart and Montgomerie Flyting'.

The art of stylized provocation in verse, however, dates back thousands of years in serious works of heroic literature. It is evident, for example, in the Homeric epics of ancient Greece and in Old English verse. Old English poetry preserves, for instance, a flyting between the Dane Unferð and the hero of *Beowulf* (ll. 499–606); there are also the verbal exchanges between ealdorman Byrhtnoð and a viking messenger in the *Battle of Maldon*; and a suggestive description of a drunkard's boasting and sniping in *Vainglory*. Middle High German verse provides, in *Âventiure* 25 of the *Nibelungenlied*, an exchange between the travelling hero Hagen and a haughty ferryman who refuses to transport strangers.

Most numerous and important for *Hrbl.*, though, are the other Old Norse instances. They include, in addition to *Ls.*, passages in the three Helgi-poems in **R**.<sup>4</sup> *HH. I* (32–44) describes an exchange of accusations of unnatural behaviour between a ship's

3 It is also noteworthy, however, that *Hrbl.* and *FSk.* are the only surviving texts to mention a *gambanteinn* 'tribute(?)-twig', in stt. 20 and 32, respectively.

4 On these, see J. Harris, 'Eddic Poetry as Oral Poetry: The Evidence of Parallel Passages in the Helgi Poems for Questions of Composition and Performance', in R. J. Glendinning and Haraldur Bessason, ed., *Edda: A Collection of Essays* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1983), pp. 210–42 at 218–24.

watchman and the land-based warrior Guðmundr, a less-charged version of which appears in *HH. II* (24–29 [19–24]). *HHv.* (12–30) contains a flyting between the ship-based warrior Atli and the land-based giantess Hrimgerðr, again with a distinctly sexual slant.

Old Norse has two words that describe apparently different types of flyting: *senna* (cf. ON *sannr* ‘truth’) and *mannjafnaðr* ‘man-comparison’. Scholars, however, have struggled to agree which features, if any, distinguish one type from the other. As a result, they have variously classified *Hrbl.* as a *senna*, a *mannjafnaðr*, both a *senna* (st. 1–14) and a *mannjafnaðr* (st. 15–46), and as a member of a joint *senna-mannjafnaðr* flyting genre. What no one disputes, however, is that the two types are closely related. And two of the most important studies of *Hrbl.* agree, albeit in different ways, that the poem draws on both types.<sup>5</sup>

As Carol Clover has shown, *Hrbl.* displays a wealth of similarities to other Germanic flytings, of whichever type. When analysed collectively, they reveal the basic conventions of early Germanic verse invective—conventions which must be understood for an informed reading of *Hrbl.* (and *Ls.*). The typical features of a Germanic flyting are:

- A stereotyped setting, often a drinking-feast in a hall or a stretch of water across which a travelling hero and an argumentative ‘coastguard’ rail at each other.
- An initial greeting or provocation, and an exchange of words in which each speaker seeks to identify the other.
- A stylized, turn-by-turn disputation comprising claims, accusations, defences and counterclaims. These are couched in strongly boasting, self-inflating, insulting, dismissive or strategically concessive terms, with much use of repetition, parallel syntax, and a marked contrast between ‘I’ and ‘you’. Threats, curses and vows are common.
- Content that, bound by socio-literary tradition, pits the praiseworthy ‘hard life’ of fighting, travelling and adventuring against the scorned ‘soft life’ of domesticity, cowardice, sexual dalliance and perversity, and that scorns beggarly appearance and crimes against kin. Thus circumscribed, each disputant strives to be the more eloquent in either raising himself above his opponent or in putting him down.
- An assumption of a basic level of truthfulness by the disputants. Therefore, any exaggerations or lies—which in *Hrbl.* might include many of Hárbarðr’s otherwise unsubstantiated claims—must be plausible.

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5 C. J. Clover, ‘Hárbarðsljóð as Generic Farce’, *SS* 51 (1979), 124–45; M. Bax and T. Padmos, ‘Two Types of Verbal Dueling in Old Icelandic: The Interactional Structure of the *Senna* and the *Mannjafnaðr* in *Hárbarðsljóð*’, *SS* 55 (1983), 149–74.

- An ending without physical violence, although violence may soon follow. In *Hrbl.*, as in *HH. I 44* (cf. *Beowulf* ll. 588–89), the flyting ends with the loser being wished an evil end.

For Clover, *Hrbl.* parodies the flyting genre by combining faithful adherence to convention in its choice of scene, and in Þórr's technique and subject matter, with winning subversion from Hárbarðr. However, not everyone is convinced that *Hrbl.* is a fully fledged parody. One scholar proposes that 'the *senna* is a romantic-comic form that contains the seeds of self-reflexive farce'.<sup>6</sup>

*Hrbl.*'s characterization is largely paralleled elsewhere in Norse literature. Its depiction of Þórr accords broadly with that found in, for example, *Hym.* and *Prk.* Þórr is portrayed as a down-to-earth, hot-tempered, slow-witted fighter who prides himself on his stupendous martial exploits against giants in defence of humankind and gods. His dealings with the giants Hrungnir, Þjazi and Fjalarr, but not Svárangr's sons, are known from other sources. Their mention might be enough to compensate for Þórr's unimaginatively orthodox verbal delivery and win him most flytings, but he fails to realize that Óðinn is playing by new rules invented specially to confound him.

Unlike in *Hym.* and *Prk.*, Þórr does not win in *Hrbl.* He is denied passage across the sound, does not get to fight, and appears slow-witted beside Hárbarðr, by whom he is variously bemused, intrigued and enraged. All Þórr is left with at the end is a long walk home and his honour as a fighting man. Thus, *Hrbl.*'s humour has more bite than that of *Hym.* and *Prk.*; it exposes Þórr's intellectual limitations and shows how verbal skill and quick wits can negate physical strength.

Óðinn (Hárbarðr), although also a warrior, is altogether more mysterious, as in texts like *Háv.*, *Grm.* and *Vm.* As in those poems, he adopts a pseudonym and a disguise. His appearance as a ferryman is paralleled in chapter 212 of the fourteenth-century *Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta* 'The Greatest Saga of Ólafr Tryggvason', where he appears as a *noðkva maðr* 'man of boats',<sup>7</sup> and in the prologue to *Grm.*, where he gets a ship for Agnarr and Geirröðr. Most similar is his appearance in *Sf.* as a *karl* 'old man' who offers to ferry the hero Sigmundr, who is carrying his dead son Sinfjötli, across a fjord, but who, having taken the body on board, leaves Sigmundr on the shore and tells him to walk around the fjord (cf. chapter 10 of *VS*). Here, in transporting the dead but not the living, Óðinn resembles the aged and abusive ferryman Charon, psychopomp of Greek myth. The Óðinn-aliases *Farmaguð* and *Farmatýr* 'God of Cargoes' may partly reflect this role, not just Óðinn's function as god of the hanged, the 'cargo' of the gallows. His 'ownership' of noblemen who fall in battle (*Hrbl.* 24) is well-known from other sources.

6 J. Harris, 'Eddic Poetry', in C. J. Clover and J. Lindow, ed., *Old Norse-Icelandic Literature: A Critical Guide* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), pp. 68–156 at 82.

7 Ólafur Halldórsson, ed., *Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta*, 2 vols. (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1958–61), II, 132–34.

Þórr's usual tormentor in Old Norse myth is Loki, with whom Hárbarðr has often been compared (and sometimes identified) by scholars. But antagonism between Óðinn and Þórr is also found in the long version of *Gautreks saga* 'The Saga of Gautrekr', and it might explain Óðinn's likely betrothal of Þórr's foster-daughter(?) to a dwarf in *Alv*. In chapter 7 of *Gautreks saga*, which is partly based on a late-twelfth-century(?) poem in *fornyrðislag*, Þórr and Óðinn—or rather Óðinn's human avatar—take it in turns to bestow curses and blessings on Starkaðr, a follower of Óðinn.<sup>8</sup> Þórr bestows the curses, Óðinn's stand-in counters with the blessings, and part of their exchange recalls the contrast in *Hrbl.* 24 between Óðinn as god of nobles and Þórr as god of commoners. Whereas in *Hrbl.*, however, Óðinn clearly has the upper hand over Þórr, who is characterized as a one-dimensional giant-killer, in the saga the antagonists appear equally matched.

## Synopsis

*Prose:* The god Þórr arrives at a sound on his way back from the east and calls to a ferryman on the other side.

*Verse:* He asks for the identity of the ferryman, whom he calls the 'boy of boys' (1). The ferryman replies by asking for the identity of Þórr, whom he calls the 'old man of old men' (2).

Þórr offers him food in return for passage (3). The ferryman mocks Þórr's lack of foresight, telling him that his mother is dead (4). Þórr says this news will grieve everyone greatly (5). The ferryman insults Þórr's impoverished appearance (6). Þórr asks him to steer the ferry over to him and enquires who owns it (7). The ferryman says a shrewd warrior called Hildólfr owns it, who told him to transport only good men and people he recognized. The ferryman again asks Þórr's name (8).

Þórr identifies himself proudly and again asks for the ferryman's name (9). The ferryman says that he seldom hides his name and declares himself to be Hárbarðr (one of the god Óðinn's many aliases) (10). Þórr asks why Hárbarðr would ever hide his name, unless he were involved in a feud (11). Hárbarðr replies that, regardless, he would defend his life against a man like Þórr (12).

Now thoroughly angry, Þórr declares that he would reward Hárbarðr for his insolence if he could get over the sound (13). Hárbarðr is happy to wait for him, and likens himself to Hrungrnir, Þórr's giant adversary (14). Þórr declares that he defeated Hrungrnir and asks what Hárbarðr was doing at that time (15). He says he was with a certain Fjølvarr on an island called Algroen for five years, where they killed warriors and tried out the women (16).

Þórr asks how they got on with the women (17). Hárbarðr says they pleased them and that he outwitted and slept with them all. He enquires what Þórr was doing then

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8 FSN, III, 31–38.

(18). Þórr says he was slaying the giant Þjazi and making stars out of his eyes. He asks what Hárbarðr was doing then (19). Hárbarðr says he was using love-spells against supernatural women and driving the giant Hlébarðr mad with a certain twig (20). Þórr points out the injustice of this (22), but Hárbarðr replies that one must take what one can. He asks what Þórr was doing then (22).

Þórr says he was fighting giants in the east in defence of the inhabitants of Miðgarðr. He asks what Hárbarðr was doing then (23). Hárbarðr says he was starting wars in Valland. He also declares that Óðinn owns the noblemen who die in battle, whereas Þórr owns the slaves (24).

Þórr declares that his adversary would divide forces unequally among the gods, if he had the power (25). Hárbarðr charges Þórr with cowardice when he spent the night in a giant's glove (26). Þórr calls Hárbarðr a pervert and threatens to kill him, if he could only reach him (27). Hárbarðr asks why he should do that, when their quarrel is so slight (28).

Þórr asks what Hárbarðr was doing while he was fighting the sons of Svárangr (29). Hárbarðr says he was sleeping with a woman in the east (30). Þórr observes that Hárbarðr must have had fun there (31). Hárbarðr says he could have done with Þórr's help to hold her (32). Þórr says he would have given it, if he could (33). Hárbarðr adds he would have trusted him, unless he proved treacherous (34). Þórr indicates that he would not have betrayed him (35). Hárbarðr asks what Þórr was doing then (36).

Þórr says he was fighting berserks' wives on Hlésey (37). Hárbarðr calls it shameful to fight women (38). Þórr claims they were more 'she-wolves' than women and adds that they destroyed his ship, threatened him and chased his servant Þjálfi. He asks what Hárbarðr was doing then (39).

Hárbarðr says he was in the army that prepared for war there (40). Þórr replies that Hárbarðr wants to speak about when he offered the gods harsh terms (41). Hárbarðr offers Þórr a ring in compensation (42). Taking umbrage for some reason, Þórr asks where he learnt such offensive words (43). 'From those old people who live in the forests of home', says Hárbarðr (44). Þórr says Hárbarðr is flattering the stones of cairns with that description (45). Hárbarðr says that is how he thinks of them (46).

Þórr again threatens to kill Hárbarðr (47), who then declares that Þórr's wife, Sif, has a lover at home, whom he would be better off attacking (48). Þórr thinks Hárbarðr is lying (49). Hárbarðr denies this and observes what a slow traveller Þórr is (50). Þórr says that it is Hárbarðr who has delayed him (51). Hárbarðr retorts that he never thought a herdsman would delay the god Þórr (52).

An exasperated Þórr again challenges Hárbarðr to row the boat over to him (53), but Hárbarðr tells him to clear off (54). Þórr asks Hárbarðr to tell him the way home (55). Hárbarðr gives him vague, mocking directions (56). Þórr asks whether he will get there today (57). Hárbarðr says he will, with difficulty (58). Þórr promises to pay Hárbarðr back for his mockery, if they meet again (59). Hárbarðr bids him be off to where monsters may get him (60).



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# Hárbarðsljóð

Þórr fór ór austrvegi ok kom at sundi einu. Qðrum megum sundsins var ferjukarlinn með skipit.

Þórr kallaði:

1. 'Hverr er sá sveinn sveina er stendr fyr sundit handan?'

Hann svaraði:

2. 'Hverr er sá karl karla er kallar um váginn?'

Þórr kvað:

3. 'Ferðu mik um sundit, fœði ek þik á morgun!  
Meis hefi ek á baki, verðra matrinn betri;  
át ek í hvíld, áðr ek heiman fór,  
síldr ok hafra, saðr em ek enn þess!'

Ferjukarlinn kvað:

4. 'Árligum verkum hrósar þú verðinum,  
veiztattu fyrir gørla:  
døpr eru þín heimkynni, dauð hygg ek at þín móðir sé!'

Þórr kvað:

5. 'Þat segir þú nú er hverjum þikkir  
mest at vita, at mín móðir dauð sé.'

Ferjukarlinn kvað:

6. 'Þeygi er sem þú þrjú bú góð eigir;  
berbeinn þú stendr ok hefir brautinga gervi,  
þatki at þú hafir bröckr þínar!'

Þórr kvað:

7. 'Stýrðu hingat eikjunni! Ek mun þér stöðna kenna,  
eða hverr á skipit er þú heldr við landit?'

Ferjukarlinn kvað:

8. 'Hildólfr sá heitir er mik halda bað,  
rekr inn ráðsvinni er býr í Ráðseyjarsundi;  
baðat hann hlennimenn flytja eða hrossa þjófa,  
góða eina ok þá er ek gerva kunna;  
segðu til nafns þíns, ef þú vill um sundit fara!'

Þórr kvað:

9. 'Segja mun ek til nafns míns, þótt ek sekr sják,  
ok til alls øðlis: ek em Óðins sonr,  
Meila bróðir en Magna faðir,  
þrúðvaldr goða — við Þór knáttu hér dæma!  
Hins vil ek nú spyrja, hvat þú heitir.'

## The Song of Hárbarðr

Pórr travelled from the east-way<sup>1</sup> and came to a sound. On the other side of the sound was the ferryman with the boat.<sup>2</sup>

Pórr called out:

1. 'Who's that boy of boys<sup>3</sup> who stands on the other side of the sound?'

He replied:

2. 'Who's that old man of old men who shouts across the strait?'<sup>4</sup>

Pórr said:

3. 'Ferry me over the sound, I'll feed you in the morning!<sup>5</sup>  
I've a basket on my back, the food couldn't be better;  
I ate at leisure, before I left home,<sup>6</sup>  
herrings and he-goats<sup>7</sup> — I'm still stuffed with it!'

The ferryman said:

4. 'You boast of early deeds at breakfast,<sup>8</sup>  
you don't fully understand what lies ahead:  
your household's downcast, I think your mother's dead!'<sup>9</sup>

Pórr said:

5. 'Now you're saying that which will seem to everyone  
most distressing, that my mother is dead.'

The ferryman said:

6. 'It's not as if you own three good farms;<sup>10</sup>  
you stand barelegged and have a beggar's garb —  
you don't even have your breeches!'<sup>11</sup>

Pórr said:

7. 'Steer the little ferryboat over here! I'll show you the landing-place —  
and who owns the ship which you keep by the shore?'

The ferryman said:

8. 'Hildólfr<sup>12</sup> he's called, who asked me to keep it,  
the counsel-shrewd warrior who lives in Ráðseyjarsund;<sup>13</sup>  
he told me not to ferry robbers or rustlers of horses,  
only good men and those whom I know well;  
state your name, if you want to travel across the sound!'<sup>14</sup>

Pórr said:

9. 'I would tell my name, even if I were outlawed,  
and all my lineage, too: I am Óðinn's son,  
Meili's<sup>15</sup> brother and Magni's<sup>16</sup> father,  
strong-ruler of gods — it's Pórr you're speaking to here!  
Now I want to ask this, what you are called.'

*Ferjukarlinn kvað:*

10. 'Hárbarðr ek heiti, hylk um nafn sjaldan!'

*Þórr kvað:*

11. 'Hvat skaltu of nafn hylja, nema þú sakar eigir?'

*Hárbarðr kvað:*

12. 'En þótt ek sakar eiga, þá mun ek forða fjörvi mínu  
fyr slíkum sem þú ert, nema ek feigr sé!'

*Þórr kvað:*

13. 'Harm ljótan mér þikkir í því,  
at vaða um váginn til þín ok væta ogur minn!  
Skylda ek launa kógursveini þínum  
kanginyrði, ef ek komumk yfir sundit!'

*Hárbarðr kvað:*

14. 'Hér mun ek standa ok þín heðan bíða;  
fanntaðu mann inn harðara at Hrungni dauðan!'

*Þórr kvað:*

15. 'Hins viltu nú geta, er vit Hrungnir deildum,  
sá inn stóruðgi jötunn, er ór steini var hofuðit á;  
þó lét ek hann falla ok fyrir hníga!

Hvat vanntu þá meðan, Hárbarðr?'

*Hárbarðr kvað:*

16. 'Var ek með Fjölvari fimm vetr alla,  
í ey þeiri er Algræn heitir;  
vega vér þar knáttum ok val fella,  
margs at freista, mans at kosta!'

*Þórr kvað:*

17. 'Hversu snúnuðu yðr konur yðrar?'

*Hárbarðr kvað:*

18. 'Sparkar áttu vér konur, ef oss at spökum yrði,  
horskar áttu vér konur, ef oss hollar væri;  
þær ór sandi síma undu  
ok ór dali djúpum  
grund um grófu;  
varð ek þeim einn öllum efri at ráðum,  
hvílda ek hjá þeim systurum sjau,  
ok hafða ek geð þeira allt ok gaman!

10. The ferryman said:  
‘I’m called Hárbarðr, I seldom hide my name!’<sup>17</sup>
11. Þórr said:  
‘Why should you hide your name, unless you have disputes?’
12. Hárbarðr said:  
‘But even if I have disputes, I’d defend my life  
before such a one as you are, unless I were doomed!’<sup>18</sup>
13. Þórr said:  
‘A horrible shame it seems to me in this respect,  
to wade over the bay to you and wet my burden(?)’<sup>19</sup>  
I’d pay you back for your insolent words,  
you swaddling-clothed(?) brat,<sup>20</sup> if I could get over the sound!’<sup>21</sup>
14. Hárbarðr said:  
‘Here I’ll stand and here I’ll await you;  
you’ve not found a harder man since Hrungrnir’s death!’<sup>22</sup>
15. Þórr said:  
‘Now you want to talk of the time when Hrungrnir and I had dealings,  
that stout-hearted giant whose head was made of stone;  
even so, I made him fall and sink before me!
- What were you doing meanwhile, Hárbarðr?’<sup>23</sup>
16. Hárbarðr said:  
‘I was with Fjölvarr all of five years,  
on the island which is called Algrœn;  
we fought there and felled warriors,  
tested many things, tried out the girls!’<sup>24</sup>
17. Þórr said:  
‘How did it turn out with your women?’
18. Hárbarðr said:  
‘We had sparky women, if they submitted to us;<sup>25</sup>  
we had knowing women, if they were nice to us;<sup>26</sup>  
out of sand they plaited ropes  
and out of a deep dale  
they dug the ground;  
I alone became superior to them<sup>27</sup> all by scheming,  
I slept beside those seven sisters,  
and I had all their lust and love-play!’<sup>28</sup>

Hvat vanntu þá meðan, Þórr?’

Þórr kvað:

19. ‘Ek drap Þjaza, inn þrúðmóðga jötun,  
upp ek varp augum Allvalda sonar  
á þann inn heiða himin;  
þau eru merki mest minna verka,  
þau er allir menn síðan um sé!

Hvat vanntu meðan, Hárbarðr?’

Hárbarðr kvað:

20. ‘Miklar manvélar ek hafða við myrkriður,  
þá er ek vélta þær frá verum!  
Harðan jötun ek hugða Hlébarð vera;  
gaf hann mér gambantein,  
en ek vélta hann ór viti!’

Þórr kvað:

21. ‘Illum huga launaðir þú þá góðar gjafar.’

Hárbarðr kvað:

22. ‘Þat hefir eik er af annarri skefr,  
um sik er hverr í slíku!

Hvat vanntu meðan, Þórr?’

Þórr kvað:

23. ‘Ek var austr ok jötna barðak,  
brúðir þölvísar er til bjargs gengu;  
mikil myndi ætt jötna ef allir lifði —  
vætr myndi manna undir Miðgarði!

Hvat vanntu meðan, Hárbarðr?’

Hárbarðr kvað:

24. ‘Var ek á Vallandi ok vígum fylgðak,  
atta ek jöfrum, en aldri sættak;  
Óðinn á jarla, þá er í val falla,  
en Þórr á þræla kyn!’

Þórr kvað:

25. ‘Ójafnt skipta er þú myndir með Ásum liði,  
ef þú ættir vilgi mikils vald!’

What were you doing meanwhile, Þórr?’

Þórr said:

19. ‘I slew Þjazi, the strong-minded giant,<sup>29</sup>  
I threw the eyes of Allvaldi’s son<sup>30</sup> up  
into the shining sky,<sup>31</sup>  
they are the greatest signs of my deeds,  
those which all people since may see!

What were you doing meanwhile, Hárbarðr?’

Hárbarðr said:

20. ‘Mighty girl-wiles<sup>32</sup> I had for mirk-riders,<sup>33</sup>  
when I lured them away from men!<sup>34</sup>  
A hard giant I thought Hlébarðr<sup>35</sup> to be;  
he gave me a tribute(?)-twig,<sup>36</sup>  
and I wangled him out of his wits!<sup>37</sup>

Þórr said:

21. ‘With ill-will you repaid good gifts, then.’

Hárbarðr said:

22. ‘[One] oak has what’s scraped from another,<sup>38</sup>  
it’s everyone for himself in such things!

What were you doing meanwhile, Þórr?’

Þórr said:

23. ‘I was in the east and I fought giants,  
brides skilled in mischief who went to a mountain;<sup>39</sup>  
the kindred of giants would be large if all had lived —  
there would be no men under Miðgarðr!<sup>40</sup>

What were you doing meanwhile, Hárbarðr?’

Hárbarðr said:

24. ‘I was in Valland<sup>41</sup> and I followed<sup>42</sup> battles;  
I incited princes, and I never made peace;<sup>43</sup>  
Óðinn owns the earls, those who fall in battle,  
but Þórr owns the kindred of thralls!<sup>44</sup>

Þórr said:

25. ‘You’d divide people unequally among the Æsir,  
if you possessed very much power!<sup>45</sup>

26. Hárbarðr kvað:  
 ‘Þórr á afl ærit, en ekki hjarta;  
 af hræzlu ok hugbleyði þér var í hanzka troðit,  
 ok þóttiska þú þá Þórr vera;  
 hvárki þú þá þorðir fyr hræzlu þinni  
 hnjósa né físa svá at Fjalarr heyrði!’
27. Þórr kvað:  
 ‘Hárbarðr inn ragi, ek mynda þik í Hel drepa,  
 ef ek mætta seilask um sund!’
28. Hárbarðr kvað:  
 ‘Hvat skyldir þú um sund seilask, er sakir ru alls øngar?  
 Hvat vanntu þá, Þórr?’
29. Þórr kvað:  
 ‘Ek var austr ok ána varðak,  
 þá er mik sóttu þeir Svárangs synir;  
 grjóti þeir mik bǫrðu, gagni urðu þeir þó lítt fegnir,  
 þó urðu þeir mik fyrri friðar at biðja!  
 Hvat vanntu þá meðan, Harbárðr?’
30. Hárbarðr kvað:  
 ‘Ek var austr ok við einhverja dœmðak,  
 lék ek við ina línhvítu ok launþing háðak,  
 gladdak ina gullbjörtu, gamni mær unði!’
31. Þórr kvað:  
 ‘Góð áttu þér mankynni þar þá!’
32. Hárbarðr kvað:  
 ‘Liðs þíns væra ek þá þurfi, Þórr,  
 at ek helda þeiri inni línhvítu mey!’
33. Þórr kvað:  
 ‘Ek mynda þér þá þat veita, ef ek viðr of kœmisk!’
34. Hárbarðr kvað:  
 ‘Ek mynda þér þá trúa, nema þú mik í tryggð véltir!’
35. Þórr kvað:  
 ‘Emkat ek sá hælbitr sem húðskór forn á vár!’



- Hárbarðr said:  
26. 'Þórr has sufficient strength, but no heart;  
out of dread and cowardice you squeezed into a glove,  
and you didn't seem to be Þórr then;<sup>46</sup>  
because of your dread you then dared neither  
sneeze nor fart so that Fjalarr heard!'<sup>47</sup>
- Þórr said:  
27. 'Hárbarðr, you pervert, I'd strike you into Hel,<sup>48</sup>  
if I could stretch across the sound!'
- Hárbarðr said:  
28. 'Why should you stretch across the sound, when our disputes are all as none?  
  
What were you doing then, Þórr?'<sup>49</sup>
- Þórr said:  
29. 'I was in the east and I defended the river  
when Svárangr's sons assaulted me;<sup>50</sup>  
they pelted me with rocks, but took little pleasure in the victory,<sup>51</sup>  
they first had to beg me for peace!  
  
What were you doing then, meanwhile, Hárbarðr?'
- Hárbarðr said:  
30. 'I was in the east and I spoke to some woman;<sup>52</sup>  
I played with the linen-white lady and had secret liaisons,<sup>53</sup>  
I gladdened the gold-bright woman, the girl gave me pleasure!'
- Þórr said:  
31. 'You had good dealings with the girl there, then!'<sup>54</sup>
- Hárbarðr said:  
32. 'I'd have needed your help then, Þórr,  
so that I might hold the linen-white maid!'
- Þórr said:  
33. 'I'd have granted it to you then, if I'd been able!'
- Hárbarðr said:  
34. 'I'd have trusted you then, unless you betrayed me!'
- Þórr said:  
35. 'I'm not such a heel-biter as an old hide shoe in spring!'<sup>55</sup>

36. Hárbarðr kvað:  
‘Hvat vanntu meðan, Þórr?’
37. Þórr kvað:  
‘Brúðir berserkja barðak í Hléseyju;  
þær höfðu verst unnit, véltu þjóð alla!’
38. Hárbarðr kvað:  
‘Klæki vanntu þá, Þórr, er þú á konum barðir!’
39. Þórr kvað:  
‘Vargynjur váru þær, en varla konur;  
skeldu skip mitt, er ek skorðat hafðak,  
ægðu mér járnlurki, en eltu Þjálf!
- Hvat vanntu meðan, Hárbarðr?’
40. Hárbarðr kvað:  
‘Ek vark í hernum er hingat gørðisk  
gnæfa gunnfana, geir at rjóða!’
41. Þórr kvað:  
‘Þess viltu nú geta, er þú fórt oss óljúfan at bjóða!’
42. Hárbarðr kvað:  
‘Bæta skal þér þat þá munda baugi,  
sem jafnendr unnu, þeir er okkr vilja sætta!’
43. Þórr kvað:  
‘Hvar namtu þessi in hnœfiligu orð,  
er ek heyrða aldregi hnœfiligri?’
44. Hárbarðr kvað:  
‘Nam ek at mǫnnum þeim inum aldrœnum er búa í heimis skógum!’
45. Þórr kvað:  
‘Þó gefr þú gott nafn dýsjum er þú kallar þat heimis skóga!’
46. Hárbarðr kvað:  
‘Svá dæmi ek um slíkt far!’
47. Þórr kvað:  
‘Orðkringi þín mun þér illa koma,  
ef ek ræð á vág at vaða;  
úlfi hæra hygg ek at þú æpa munir,  
ef þú hlýtr af hamri hogg!’

- Hárbarðr said:  
36. 'What were you doing meanwhile, Þórr?'
- Þórr said:  
37. 'I was fighting brides of berserks<sup>56</sup> on Hlésey;<sup>57</sup>  
they'd done the worst things, deceived all humankind!'<sup>58</sup>
- Hárbarðr said:  
38. 'You did a shameful thing then, Þórr, when you fought with women!'
- Þórr said:  
39. 'They were she-wolves, and scarcely women;  
they smashed my ship, which I'd shored up,  
threatened me with iron clubs, and chased Þjálfi!'<sup>59</sup>
- What were you doing meanwhile, Hárbarðr?'
- Hárbarðr said:  
40. 'I was in the army which<sup>60</sup> made ready here  
to raise the battle-standard, to redden the spear!'<sup>61</sup>
- Þórr said:  
41. 'Now you want to talk about this, when you went to offer us unpleasant terms!'<sup>62</sup>
- Hárbarðr said:  
42. 'I shall compensate you for that, then, with an arm-ring,<sup>63</sup>  
just as the arbiters awarded, those who want to reconcile us!'<sup>64</sup>
- Þórr said:  
43. 'Where did you learn these offensive words,  
than which I've never heard more offensive!'
- Hárbarðr said:  
44. 'I learnt them from those old people who live in the forests of home!'<sup>65</sup>
- Þórr said:  
45. 'But you're giving cairns a good<sup>66</sup> name when you call them "forests of home"!'<sup>67</sup>
- Hárbarðr said:  
46. 'That's how I think of such things!'
- Þórr said:  
47. 'Your glibness will serve you badly,  
if I decide to wade across the bay;  
louder than a wolf I think you'll howl,  
if you take a hit from my hammer!'

48. Hárbarðr kvað:  
 ‘Sif á hó heima, hans mundu fund vilja;  
 þann muntu þrek drýgja, þat er þér skyldara!’
49. Þórr kvað:  
 ‘Mælir þú at munns ráði, svá at mér skyldi verst þikkja;  
 halr inn hugblauði, hygg ek at þú ljúgir!’
50. Hárbarðr kvað:  
 ‘Satt hygg ek mik segja, seinn ertu at fõr þinni;  
 langt myndir þú nú kominn, Þórr, ef þú litum færir!’
51. Þórr kvað:  
 ‘Hárbarðr inn ragi, heldr hefir þú nú mik dvalðan!’
52. Hárbarðr kvað:  
 ‘Ása-Þórs hugða ek aldregi mundu  
 glepja féhirði farar!’
53. Þórr kvað:  
 ‘Ráð mun ek þér nú ráða: ró þú hingat bátinum!  
 Hættum hætingi — hittu fõður Magna!’
54. Hárbarðr kvað:  
 ‘Farðu firr sundi! Þér skal fars synja!’
55. Þórr kvað:  
 ‘Vísu þú mér nú leiðina, allz þú vill mik eigi um váginn ferja!’
56. Hárbarðr kvað:  
 ‘Lítit er synja, langt er at fara:  
 stund er til stokksins, qnnur til steinsins,  
 haltu svá til vinstra vegsins unz þú hittir Verland;  
 þar mun Fjörgyn hitta Þór, son sinn,  
 ok mun hon kenna honum áttunga brautir til Óðins landa!’
57. Þórr kvað:  
 ‘Mun ek taka þangat í dag?’
58. Hárbarðr kvað:  
 ‘Taka við víl ok erfiði at uppverandi sólu,  
 er ek get þána!’

Hárbarðr said:

48. 'Sif has a lover at home,<sup>68</sup> him you'll want to meet;  
you'll use your might on him, that's more urgent for you!

Þórr said:

49. 'You're shooting your mouth off,<sup>69</sup> so that it should seem worst to me;  
you gutless man, I think you're lying!

Hárbarðr said:

50. 'I think I speak true, you're slow on your journey;  
you'd have come a long way by now, Þórr, if you'd travelled with oars(?)!<sup>70</sup>

Þórr said:

51. 'Hárbarðr, you pervert, it's rather you who's delayed me now!

Hárbarðr said:

52. 'I never thought a herdsman<sup>71</sup> would  
thwart the travels of Ása-Þórr!<sup>72</sup>

Þórr said:

53. 'I'll tell you what to do now: row the boat over here!  
Let's stop bickering — meet Magni's father!

Hárbarðr said:

54. 'Clear off from the sound! Passage shall be refused you!

Þórr said:

55. 'Show me the way now, since you won't ferry me over the bay!

Hárbarðr said:

56. 'It's a little thing to refuse, [but] it's a long way to go:  
it's one stretch to the stump, another to the stone,  
then take the left-hand road until you reach Verland;<sup>73</sup>  
there Fjörgyn will find Þórr, her son,  
and she will show him the kinsmen's ways to Óðinn's lands!<sup>74</sup>

Þórr said:

57. 'Will I get there today?'

Hárbarðr said:

58. 'You'll get there with toil and trouble while the sun's up,<sup>75</sup>  
as I think it will thaw!

Þórr kvað:

59. 'Skammt mun nú mál okkat vera, allz þú mér skœtingu einni svarar;  
launa mun ek þér farsynjun, ef vit finnumk í sinn annat!'

Hárbarðr kvað:

60. 'Farðu nú, þars þik hafi allan gramir!'

Þórr said:

59. 'Short will be our talk now, since you answer me only with scorn;  
I'll pay you back for refusing me passage, if we meet another time!'

Hárbarðr said:

60. 'Go now, to where fierce ones<sup>76</sup> may have you whole!<sup>77</sup>

Textual Apparatus to *Harbarðsljóð*

*Harbarðsljóð*] The rubricated title of this poem is illegible in the photograph in the facsimile volume of **R**; this edition therefore relies on the transcription therein

Speech directions are not always present in the **R** text, but are always found in what remains of the **A** text; those found, in whole or part, in neither text are italicized in this edition of *Hrbl*.

*Þórr*] The first letter is large, red (but faded) and inset in **R**

2 *svaraði*] **R** abbreviated *s*.

6/2 *góð eigir*] **R** *eigir goð*, but with indication that the words should be transposed

12/1 *þótt*] **R** *þot*

15/7 *vanntu*] **R** *vantv*

15/7 *Hvat ... meðan*] Subsequent instances of these words are variously abbreviated in **R**

18/12 *gaman*] **R** *gamaN*

19/7 *minna*] The fragmentary **A** text begins with this word

19/8 *síðan um*] **A** *of*

20/5 *ek hugða*] **A** *hvgða æk*

21/1 *þá*] **A** absent

21/1 *gjafar*] **A** *giafir*

24/6–7 *þá er ... kyn*] So **A** and **R**, but in **R** only after scribal correction from *eN þor þa er i Val falla. A þræla kyn*

25/2 *Ásum*] **A** *asa*

26/1 *ærit*] **A** *yrit*

26/4 *þér var*] **A** *var þær*

26/5 *þóttiska þú*] **A** *þottizkattu*

26/8 *hnjósa né físa*] **A** *físa næ hmiosa*

27/3 *um sund*] **A** *of svndit*

28/1 *skyldir þú*] **A** *scaltv vm*

28/2] *sakir ru*] **A** *sakar ærv*

29/3–4 *mik sóttu þeir*] **A** *þæir sottv mik*

29/4 *Svárangrs*] **A** *svarangrs*

29/6–7 *þó lítt fegnir; þó*] **A** *litt fægnir þo*

29/9 *þá*] **A** absent

30/2 *einhverja*] **R** *ein hveria*; **A** *einhærið*

30/3 *línhvítu*] so **A**; **R** *lindhvito* ‘shield-white’, but cf. *Hrbl*. 32 *línhvítu*



- 30/4 *launþing*] so **A**; **R** *laung þing* ‘long meetings’
- 30/5 *gladdak ina gullbiortu*] **A** *gladda æc hina gvllhvoitv*
- 31/1 *þér*] **R** *þr* (with sign of abbreviation above the *r*); **A** *þʳ*
- 31/1 *mankynni*] **A** *mannkynni*
- 32/2 *væra*] **A** *var*
- 33/1 *þá þat*] **A** *þat þa*
- 33/2 *viðr*] **A** *við*
- 33/2 *kæmisk*] **A** *kæmvmz*
- 37/2 *barðak*] **A** *barða æc*
- 37/2 *Hlésey*] **A** *hlæs æy*
- 37/4 *vélta*] **A** *villta*
- 38/1 *vanntu*] **R** and **A** *vantv*
- 39/1 *váru þær*] **A** *þat vorv*
- 39/4 *hafðak*] **A** *hafða*
- 39/5 *ægðu mér*] **A** *ægða mæx æc þæim* (with *mæx* interlined and *þæim* underdotted for deletion)
- 40/1 *vark*] **A** *var*
- 41/1 *óljúfan*] **A** *olijfan*, **R** *olubaN*
- 42/1 *þat þá*] **A** absent
- 42/4 *sætta*] **A** *sætt hafa*
- 43/3 *aldregi*] **A** *alldri*
- 43/4 *hnæfiligri*] **A** *hin hnæfiligri*
- 44/1 *mønnum*] **A** omits at the end of the page
- 44/1 *skógum*] **A** *skavgom*
- 45/1 *þat*] **A** absent
- 46/1 *um*] **A** absent
- 47/5 *hygg ek at þú æpa munir*] **A** *hygg æc þik æpa mvno*
- 48/2 *mundu*] **A** *mvntv*
- 48/4 *skyldara*] **A** *skylldra*
- 50/1 *mik*] **A** *þic*
- 50/3 *langt*] **R** *langt la*, with *la* underdotted for deletion
- 50/3 *þórr*] **A** absent
- 51/2 *dvalðan*] **A** *dvalit*
- 52/1 *Ása-Þórs*] **A** *asa þor*

- 52/2 *hugða ek*] **A** *æk hugða*  
 53/3 *hættingi*] **R** *hættingi*, **A** *hættingi*  
 54 *fírr*] **A** *fra*  
 55/1 *nú*] **A** absent  
 55/2 *eigi um*] **A** *nv æigi of*  
 56/1 *synja*] **A** *at synia*  
 56/3 *stokksins*] **A** *stoks*  
 56/4 *til steinsins*] **A** *ær til stæins*  
 56/5 *vegsins*] **A** *vægs*  
 56/6 *Verland*] **A** *valland*  
 56/7 *mun*] **A** *man*  
 57/1 *þangat*] **R** *heþangat*, with the letters *he* underdotted for deletion  
 57/1 *í dag*] **A** *a dægi*  
 58/1 *ok*] **A** *ok við*  
 58/2 *uppperandi*] **A** *vpp rænnandi*  
 58/3 *þána*] **A** *þa na*  
 59/1 *vera*] **A** absent  
 59/2 *allz ... svarar*] **A** *ær þv vill skætingv æinni soara*  
 60/1 *allan*] **A** *allir*

## Notes to the Translation

- 1 I.e., from *Jötunheim(a)r* ‘Giant Home(s)’, the lands in the east where he slays giants. Cf. *Ls.* initial prose.
- 2 The ferryman is Óðinn. His identity is half-revealed in *Hrbl.* 10, but, if the poem were dramatized, may have been more apparent to those watching.
- 3 A superlative; cf. *Hdl.* 1, *Gðr.* 1.
- 4 Þórr perhaps used *sveinn* ‘boy, young man’ in the technical sense ‘servant with a particular function’, *sveinn sveina* amounting to a superlative ‘best of servants’. But the ferryman takes this address as an insult to his age and status. Hence the ferryman’s barbed rejoinder: ON *karl* denotes an old man of low status. The irony of this exchange is not just that Þórr fails to recognize his father or that the two gods misdescribe each other’s ages, but that each describes the other in terms more appropriate to himself, Þórr sometimes being likened to a young man or boy in Norse myths, and Óðinn often appearing as an old man (*karl*).
- 5 This statement might indicate that night is approaching. Cf. *Hrbl.* 58.
- 6 According to the initial prose, Þórr is returning from the enemy territory of *Jötunheim(a)r*, so perhaps he ate enough for a round-trip before setting out from home. Cf. *Ls.* note to initial prose, *Ls.* 55, *Hym.* 15, *Þrk.* 24.

- 7 Or 'and porridge'. Þórr often travels in a chariot drawn by billy-goats. In *SnEGylf* (44, p. 37) he eats his goats for supper, before resurrecting them by consecrating their bones with his hammer. It might be this rite that Óðinn refers to as Þórr's 'early deeds' in the next stanza.
- 8 The implication may be that a true hero would be thinking of fame, not his stomach.
- 9 Þórr's mother is a giantess called *Jörð* 'Earth' or, as in *Hrbl.* 56, *Fjörgyn* 'Earth/Mountain'. The ferryman probably alludes to the water ahead—solid earth is no more. He might also allude to winter, when the earth seems dead and many of its inhabitants ('Þórr's household?') are dejected; cf. the imminent thaw mentioned in *Hrbl.* 58.
- 10 An insult, as Þórr was a god of farmers and especially popular in Iceland.
- 11 Cf. *Alv.* 5.
- 12 *SnESkáld* (I, 75, p. 113) names *Hildólfr* 'Battle-Wolf' immediately after Þórr as one of Óðinn's sons.
- 13 'Counsel-Island Sound'; the name is otherwise unknown but appropriate for the site of a battle of wits.
- 14 This request is, of course, merely part of Óðinn's act. He would have recognized Þórr instantly.
- 15 Meili is another of Óðinn's sons. He is also named in *SnESkáld* (I, 75, p. 113) and in *Haust.* 4, 14.
- 16 *Magni* 'Strong One' is known for his eventual possession, along with his brother Móði, of Þórr's hammer (*Vm.* 51); also for the story in *SnESkáld* (I, 17, p. 22) of how, aged only three, he alone was strong enough to lift the giant Hrungrnir's leg from the neck of his prostrate father.
- 17 Ironically, *Hárbarðr* 'Grey Beard' is an alias of Óðinn, who habitually conceals his identity. In *Grm.* 49 it is one of his names 'among the gods'.
- 18 The second and third verses of this stanza should perhaps be reversed for alliteration.
- 19 The meaning of *ogur(r)* is uncertain here; perhaps 'testicles', 'balls'.
- 20 Cf. *SnEGylf* (45, p. 39), where the giant Skrímir warns Þórr and his companions that the giant Útgarda-Loki's men will not tolerate *þvílíkum køgursveinum kþuryrði* 'cheek from babies like you'. The meaning of *køgur-* in *køgursveinn* is uncertain (perhaps 'swaddling cloth'), but the compound is evidently a derogatory term for a small man.
- 21 It is curious that, despite his rage, Þórr does not simply wade across the sound here or in *Hrbl.* 47. By contrast, he wades rivers daily in *Grm.* 29 and crosses the rivers called *Élivágar* in *SnESkáld* (I, 17, p. 22); furthermore, the account in *SnEGylf* (48, pp. 44–45) of how his feet touched the seabed when he was fishing suggests that he ought easily to have waded across a sound. On the other hand, *SnESkáld* (I, 18, p. 25) records that he got into severe difficulty when wading the river *Vimur*, which was being swollen by the urine or menstrual blood of a giantess.
- 22 Þórr's slaying of the stone-headed giant Hrungrnir is described in *SnESkáld* (I, 17, pp. 20–24), according to which he only narrowly survived.
- 23 Challenge questions are conventional in Norse flytings.
- 24 The events in this stanza are otherwise unknown, as are *Fjoltvorr* 'Very Wary' and *Algræn* 'All Green'. The former might, however, be a giant, the male counterpart of a giantess called *Fjoltvör*. If so, Óðinn's fighting beside a giant would be unique among surviving myths and perhaps calculated to anger the giant-killer Þórr.

- 25 Literally, 'if they became compliant [or 'wise'] to us'.
- 26 This stanza appears intentionally obscure, and partly nonsensical, in order to puzzle Þórr.
- 27 I.e., 'overcame them'. Sexual innuendo is possible.
- 28 This myth is otherwise unknown and the identity of the seven sisters is unclear. Óðinn might have invented it, and them, though he is famous for sneaky liaisons with women and giantesses.
- 29 *Haust.* and *SnESkáld* (I, G56, pp. 1–2) record how the giant Þjazi kidnapped the goddess Iðunn, but was eventually killed by the gods. Neither account attributes the killing to Þórr alone; note also *Ls.* 50.
- 30 Þjazi. His father *Allvaldi* 'All Ruler' is called *Qlvaldi* 'Ale Ruler' in *SnESkáld* (I, 56, p. 3).
- 31 In *SnESkáld* (I, 56, p. 2) it is Óðinn who throws Þjazi's eyes into the sky, making them into stars as part of a compensation package for Skaði, the giant's daughter. It is unclear who does this in a verse from the early skaldic composition *Ragnarsdrápa* 'Ragnarr's Poem', quoted in *SnESkáld* (I, 23, p. 34 and p. 180 n.). Cf. *SnESkáld* (I, 17, p. 22), where Þórr throws one of Aurvandill's toes into the sky and makes it a star.
- 32 I.e., cunning ways to seduce young women.
- 33 Witches. Cf. *kveldriða* 'evening rider', a term used of wolf-riding witches and those who brutally 'ride' men in the evening.
- 34 Perhaps 'their men'. This event is otherwise unknown.
- 35 *Hlébarðr* 'Leopard' or 'Lee Beard' is otherwise unknown.
- 36 Cf. *FSk.* 32 and note thereto. If the 'tribute(?) twig' is here a metaphor for a sunbeam, its touch perhaps inflicted sunstroke on the giant.
- 37 Chapter 7 of *Ynglinga saga* reports that Óðinn knew how to take away men's *vit* 'wits'.
- 38 Sense uncertain, but probably proverbial. Perhaps understand 'One oak keeps its bark, when another has its scraped off', or, in other words, 'Some win, some lose—that's life!' Men are often described metaphorically as trees in skaldic poetry.
- 39 Or 'rock', 'cliff'. Giantesses, like their menfolk, live in rocks. Þórr's killing of them is celebrated in a skaldic verse in *SnESkáld* (I, 4, p. 17), which also recounts his slaying of the daughters of the giant Geirrðr (18, pp. 24–30). Þórr kills an old giantess in *Þrk.* 32. He also claims to have killed two giantesses in chapter 59 of the Icelandic translation of Oddr Snorrason's late-twelfth-century account of the life of Óláfr Tryggvason.
- 40 *Miðgarðr* 'Middle Yard/Enclosed Space', often a term for the world of humans, seems here to refer to a protective wall surrounding that world.
- 41 Either Gaul or a fictional 'Land of the Slain (*valr*)'.
- 42 Or 'pursued'.
- 43 For Óðinn's incitement of discord, cf. *HH.* II 34.
- 44 Other sources record that Óðinn's valkyries pick the best noblemen who die in battle. They become the *einherjar*, the 'unique/only champions' who will fight beside him at Ragnarok. Þórr is usually associated with free farmers, rather than slaves, so this claim looks like another insult.
- 45 The interpretation of this line is uncertain. An alternative might be 'if you possessed as much power as you want'.
- 46 Or 'and you didn't think yourself Þórr then'.

- 47 According to *SnEGylf* (45, pp. 37–38), Þórr and his companions once mistook a wide opening for the entrance to a building in which to spend the night. At midnight they heard thunderous noises, felt the ground shake and sought shelter further inside. His companions were afraid, but Þórr grasped his hammer, ready to defend himself. In the morning he realized his mistake—their lodging had been the thumb of a giant’s glove, and the noises and earthquake had been the giant’s snoring. The giant is called *Skrýmir* at this stage in *SnEGylf* (cf. *Ls.* 62), but is later revealed as *Útgārða-Loki*; the *Hrbl.* poet apparently knew him by a third name, *Fjalarr* (cf. *fela* ‘to conceal’). Cf. *Ls.* 60 and 62, and the glove of the giant Grendel in *Beowulf*.
- 48 The subterranean world of the dead. Cf. *Ls.* 63.
- 49 Some lines detailing one of Hárbarðr’s exploits have perhaps been lost before this question.
- 50 This episode is otherwise unknown, but the sons of *Svárangr* ‘Clumsy’ are probably giants, as *Svárangr* appears among a list of giant-names in *SnESkald* (I, 75, p. 111; see also p. 172 n. to verse 75/2 therein). The river might be the Ífing, which divides the giants’ territory from that of the gods in *Vm.* 16; alternatively, it might be one of the Élivágar, which seem to have the same function in *Hym.* 5.
- 51 They lost the battle.
- 52 Probably a giantess. *A*’s *einþærio*, by contrast, is the acc. sg. of \**einþerja*, an unattested fem. form of *einþeri*, a term generally used in the pl. to describe undead male champions in Valhøll; perhaps *A* uses the fem. form to refer to a valkyrie.
- 53 Or, taking *R*’s reading, ‘long liaisons’.
- 54 This line presents textual and interpretative uncertainties.
- 55 A proverbial statement referring to the pain caused by wearing a dried-up shoe that has survived the winter.
- 56 *Berserkir*, literally ‘bear shirts’, were ferocious warriors, perhaps associated with Óðinn, who flew into a mad rage in battle.
- 57 ‘Hlér’s (i.e., Ægir’s) Island’ (*Hlér* ‘Sea’ being an alias of the sea-giant Ægir), now the Danish island of *Læsø* in the Kattegat.
- 58 This episode is otherwise unknown.
- 59 Þórr’s manservant, known for his fast running.
- 60 Or ‘when it’.
- 61 *Hrbl.* 40–43 are hard to interpret. The army might be that of the dead, of which Óðinn was leader; cf. *Hrbl.* 44.
- 62 Þórr apparently thinks he recognizes his adversary, but no other account of Óðinn threatening the Æsir is known. Perhaps Þórr mistakes the giantess-loving boatman for the sea-god Njörðr, who married a giantess and, as one of the Vanir, fought a war against the Æsir that, according to chapter 4 of *Ynglinga saga*, was settled by an exchange of hostages.
- 63 Literally, ‘a ring of the hand’.
- 64 Hárbarðr perhaps debases the notion of the ring as a sign of good faith by applying the term to his anus. In so doing, he might imply that Þórr enjoys homosexual activity. This could account for Þórr’s outrage in the next stanza—something that an alternative interpretation, of the ring as a manacle, does less well. Cf. *Ls.* 12.
- 65 The phrase ‘forests of home’ or ‘the world’s woods’ is not found elsewhere. Many editors emend *skógum* and *Hrbl.* 45 *skóga* ‘forests’ to *haugum* and *hauga* ‘mounds’, respectively,

to alliterate with *heimis* and get more obvious sense ('mounds of home' is closer to the 'cairns' of *Hrbl.* 45). But neither manuscript offers palaeographical support for this; some other verses in *Hrbl.* also lack alliteration; and forests, as the mysterious dwellings of outlaws and outsiders, make an apt metaphor for the otherworld of the dead. Hárbarðr is doubtless being cryptic to befuddle Þórr.

- 66 I.e., flattering.
- 67 Óðinn learns secret knowledge from the dead in *Háv.* 157 and *BDr.*
- 68 *Sif* '(Married) Relation' is Þórr's wife. No surviving myth proves Hárbarðr's claim, but Loki claims to have slept with Sif in *Ls.* 54, and his cutting of her hair in *SnESkald* (I, 35, p. 41) might suggest intimacy.
- 69 Literally, 'You're speaking according to your mouth's counsel'.
- 70 The sense of the final words of this stanza (*ef þú litum færir*) is uncertain. They are sometimes understood to mean 'if you had travelled through (all the day's) colours', i.e., 'if you had travelled night and day'. But *litum* might also mean 'with oars(?)' and represent a sexual insult ('oar' = 'penis'), following on from Óðinn's claim that Þórr has been cuckolded. A loose but effective translation in modern idiom might be 'if you'd put your oar in'.
- 71 Óðinn is apparently posing as a lowly herdsman as well as a ferryman.
- 72 'Þórr of the Æsir', a grand title.
- 73 'Manland'. A has *Valland* 'Gaul' or 'Land of the Slain'; cf. *Hrbl.* 24.
- 74 Óðinn tacitly withdraws his earlier claim, in *Hrbl.* 4, that Þórr's mother, here called *Fjörgyn*, is dead.
- 75 A's reading *at vpp rænnandi solv* gives different sense: 'by dawn'.
- 76 Presumably fiends of some sort.
- 77 A's variant text means 'Go now, to where all (*allir*) fierce ones may have you!'