



# THE POETIC EDDA

A Dual-Language Edition

EDWARD PETTIT



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# Hymiskviða

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*Hymiskviða* (*Hym.*) ‘The Lay of Hymir’ survives complete in both **R** (fol. 13v–15r) and **A** (fol. 5v–6v). The two versions differ little in content, but the latter is positioned between *Grm.* and *Vkv.* The now-established title *Hymiskviða* appears only in **A**, **R**’s text being headed *Þórr dró Miðgarðsorm* ‘Þórr fished for the Miðgarðsormr [‘the Snake of Miðgarðr’, i.e., the world-serpent]’.

The poem’s date and place of composition are uncertain, though scholars incline to the twelfth century or the first half of the thirteenth. However, archaeological evidence shows that myths about Þórr’s fishing for the Miðgarðsormr—the story central to this poem’s narrative—date back to at least the eighth century in Scandinavia. Furthermore, ancient mythic roots are suggested by broad parallels between Þórr’s fight with the Miðgarðsormr (a creature comparable to the Greco-Egyptian ouroboros and the Biblical Leviathan which Christ hooks in Patristic exegesis) and those of, for example, the Indian thunder-god Indra with Vrtra and the Greek Apollo with Python. In addition, the poem’s notion of divine feasting may have roots in the ancient Indo-European mythic concept of a divine feast for which sacred drink is prepared, despite opposition from giants or other monsters.

*Hym.*’s metre is *fornyrðislag*. Most stanzas have the normal four long lines, but instances with two, three and five lines also occur. The poem’s style is noteworthy because, of all the Eddic poems, *Hym.* has the most in common with Old Norse skaldic verse: numerous kennings and variations appear, and there is some unorthodox syntax. The poet also uses many unique words. Together, these attributes might suggest the work of a skaldic reviser of Eddic verse, or simply an original poet familiar with both poetic traditions.

A following prose section entitled *Frá Ægi ok goðum* ‘About Ægir and the gods’ links *Hym.* to the next poem in **R**, *Ls.*, which tells of Loki’s abuse of the gods at Ægir’s feast. The gods’ feasting in Ægir’s hall, which is enabled by Þórr’s successful quest for the giant Hymir’s cauldron in *Hym.*, is also mentioned in *Grm.* 45.

*Hym.* strings together four main narrative elements about Þórr, two of which are described more fully elsewhere in Old Norse literature:

1. The quest for the giant cauldron of the giant Hymir, which frames the other three main narrative elements. This story is otherwise alluded to only in a line from the mid-twelfth-century *First Grammatical Treatise*, which says *heyrði til høddu, þá er Þórr bar hverinn* ‘you could hear the handle when Þórr carried

the cauldron',<sup>1</sup> in some younger kennings, and in the prose introduction to *Ls*. That Týr should accompany Þórr on a quest is unparalleled—Þórr's usual companion, as in *Þrk.*, is Loki.

2. Þórr's fishing trip with Hymir, during which the god catches the Miðgarðsormr, is one of the best attested Norse myths. Þórr is probably shown fishing for this serpent on an eighth-century bronze plaque from Sweden and, more clearly, on four picture-stones: the Altuna Stone from Uppland, Sweden; Ardre Stone VIII from Gotland, Sweden; the Hørdum Stone from Jylland, Denmark; and the Gosforth Fishing Stone from Cumbria, England, which appears to show whales surrounding the bait (cf. *Hym.* 21), along with what might be part of the serpentine monster itself. These stones range in date from the eighth to the eleventh century.<sup>2</sup> The last two show a figure, presumably Hymir, about to cut Þórr's fishing line with an axe. Skaldic poems also refer to the encounter, providing details not found in *Hym.* The most noteworthy are six stanzas attributed to Bragi Boddason the Old in which Þórr hooks the sea-monster and a frightened Hymir cuts his fishing line;<sup>3</sup> Úlfgason's c. 985 *Húsdrápa* 'House Poem' (*Húsdr.*), in stt. 3–6 of which Þórr beheads the serpent;<sup>4</sup> a tenth-century stanza by Gamli Gnævaðarskáld, in which Þórr again kills the serpent;<sup>5</sup> and three tenth-century verses by Eysteinn Valdason.<sup>6</sup> *SnEGylf* (48, pp. 44–45), however, has the fullest account, which shows no clear use of *Hym.* It reads as follows, in summary:

Þórr's motivation is revenge for his humiliation by the trickery of the giant Skrímir/Útgarða-Loki, during which he appeared to fail at various tests of strength, one of which was lifting a cat—in reality, the Miðgarðsormr in disguise. Þórr sets out alone, as a young man, and without his goats or chariot. He spends the night as a guest at Hymir's place and the next morning asks to go fishing with him. Hymir doubts he would be much use, but Þórr disputes this. Hymir tells Þórr to get bait, which he does by tearing the head off Himinhjótr, Hymir's largest ox. The two row out to sea. Hymir is reluctant to row out too far because of the Miðgarðsormr, but Þórr rows on anyway. He baits his line with the ox-head and casts it overboard. On the sea-bed the serpent takes the bait and is hooked. It jerks away, smashing Þórr's fists onto the gunwale. But Þórr summons all his strength and, pushing his feet through the boat's bottom and onto the sea-bed, hauls the snake up. Þórr and the poison-spitting serpent stare at each other. Seeing this and realising that

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1 E. Haugen, ed., *First Grammatical Treatise: the Earliest Germanic Phonology*, rev. 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (London: Longman, 1972), pp. 30–31.  
 2 For illustrations, see P. Meulengracht Sørensen, 'Thor's Fishing Expedition', rpt. in P. Acker and C. Larrington, ed., *The Poetic Edda: Essays on Old Norse Mythology* (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 119–37 at 124–26; C. del Zotto, ed., *La 'Hymiskviða' e la pesca di þórr nella tradizione nordica* (Rome: Istituto di Glottologia della Università di Roma, 1979), pl. 8–11.  
 3 SPSMA III, 46–53.  
 4 SPSMA III, 411–17.  
 5 SPSMA III, 189–90.  
 6 SPSMA III, 185–88.

the boat is sinking, Hymir panics: he cuts Þórr's line just as the god is raising his hammer to strike the snake. Þórr throws his hammer after the sinking creature. Some people think the snake was beheaded there on the sea-bed, but the speaker (Hár) does not—he believes it is still alive. Þórr knocks Hymir overboard and wades ashore.

3. Hymir's threefold test of Þórr's strength: to carry the boat or the whales, to break a cup, and to carry the cauldron. As noted above, the third task is alluded to in the *First Grammatical Treatise*. Þórr's strength is also tested, albeit differently, several times by the giant Skrímir/Útgarða-Loki in *SnEGylf*. Folktales contain parallels, too: for example, in one Swedish story a giant offers a drink to his guests, but the hero's companions cannot lift the goblet; the hero lifts it easily and kills the giant by hurling it against his head.
4. The laming of Þórr's goat. *SnEGylf* (44, p. 37) tells a different version of this story, one in which the context differs, the farmer is unnamed and not said to be a giant, Loki is not blamed, and the laming is caused by physical attack, rather than curse. In summary:

Þórr and Loki arrive at the house of a peasant farmer [cf. Egill in *Hym.*]. Þórr kills his goats, which are then skinned and put in a cooking-pot. The two gods, the farmer, his wife, their son Þjálfi and daughter Rǫskva share the meal. Þórr tells the farmer and his family to put the goat's bones on the goatskins. They do so, but Þjálfi takes one of the thigh-bones and splits it with his knife to get at the marrow. Þórr gets up in the small hours and resurrects the goats by blessing them with his hammer. The goats get up, but one of them is lame in a hind leg with a broken thigh-bone. Þórr is furious but pacified by the household's terror. He accepts Þjálfi and Rǫskva as compensation. He leaves his goats with the farmer, and he, Loki, Þjálfi and Rǫskva set out for the land of giants.

A similar story occurs in British records in the early ninth-century Latin *Historia Brittonum* 'History of the Britons'.<sup>7</sup> In short:

Saint Germanus visited a wicked king called Benlli (*Benli*), but was refused entry to his castle. One of the king's servants invited Germanus to spend the night at his house. Having no food other than a cow and her calf, the servant killed the calf, cooked it and laid it before them. Germanus ordered that none of its bones be broken, and in the morning it was found alive and well beside its mother.

As John McKinnell observes, *Hym.*'s narrative corresponds to a common story-pattern found in at least seven other versions in Snorri's *Prose Edda*, Saxo's *GD* and *Þorsteins þáttur bæjarmagns* 'The Story of Þorsteinn Mansion-Might'.<sup>8</sup> In this archetypal pattern, Þórr, generally with one or two companions who are little or no help to him, visits a giant; he receives help from a giantess and has to cross a dangerous river or sea; the giant's hospitality is poor—or worse; the giant initiates contests which Þórr usually

7 J. Morris, ed., *Nennius: British History and The Welsh Annals* (London: Phillimore, 1980), pp. 26–27, 67 (§32).

8 J. McKinnell, *Both One and Many: Essays on Change and Variety in Late Norse Heathenism* (Rome: Il Calamo, 1994), chapter 3.

wins, sometimes by killing the giant or destroying a house-pillar; Þórr returns home pursued by giants, whom he slays with a special weapon.

In addition, comparisons may be drawn with other Eddic poems in which a questing god visits a giant. In *FSk.* Freyr's servant Skírnir visits giant-land on his master's behalf to win the giantess Gerðr; in *Þrk.* Þórr and Loki visit the giant Þrymr to regain Þórr's stolen hammer. Both quests are successful and the latter ends similarly with Þórr slaughtering the giants with his hammer. *Hym.*'s affectionate comedy involving Þórr also finds parallel in *Þrk.*, and gains poignancy from knowledge of his death against the Miðgarðsormr in their final battle, as described in *Vsp.*

## Synopsis

The gods, being thirsty at their meal, learn by augury of a fine collection of cauldrons belonging to the sea-giant Ægir (1). Þórr orders Ægir to hold frequent drinking feasts for them (2). He reluctantly agrees, on condition that Þórr bring him a cauldron big enough to hold ale for all the gods (3). The gods are unable to get one until Týr reveals that his father, the giant Hymir, owns a mile-deep cauldron (4–5).

Having decided to try to get this cauldron (6), Týr and Þórr set out from Ásgarðr for Hymir's home 'east of the Élivágar' (rivers) at 'heaven's end'. On arrival, Þórr leaves his goats with a certain Egill and enters Hymir's hall (7). Týr sees his nine-hundred-headed grandmother and beautiful mother (8). The latter hides the two gods below some cauldrons and behind a pillar for fear of her husband's bad temper with guests (9).

Hymir arrives home late and icy (10). His wife tells him of his son's long-awaited return and of Þórr's presence (11). Hymir's initial glance shatters the pillar and the cross-beam (12). As a result, nine kettles fall to the ground, only one of which remains intact—the quest cauldron (13). Hymir warily has three bulls beheaded and boiled for them to eat (14), two of which Þórr eats (15). Hymir, now short of food, says they will have to hunt for more (16).

Þórr then offers to row on the fishing-trip, if Hymir will provide the bait (17). Þórr accepts the challenge to get bait from Hymir's herd: he tears the head off a pure-black ox (18–19). Out at sea, Þórr urges the giant to row further, but Hymir is reluctant (20). Hymir catches two whales (21). Þórr baits his line with the ox-head and hooks the Miðgarðsormr (22). He drags it up to the gunwale and strikes it with his hammer (23), causing monsters to roar, the ground to resound and the whole earth to shudder. The serpent sinks back into the sea (24).

Hymir rows back silently (25), and asks Þórr to carry his whales home or to moor the boat (26). Þórr does both (27). Still the giant tests Þórr: he must break a goblet to prove his strength (28). At first, he fails, despite having thrown it straight through some columns (29). But then Týr's mother tells him to strike it against Hymir's skull (30). Þórr summons all his strength and shatters the cup on Hymir's head (31).

Hymir laments his loss (32), but has one last challenge for Þórr—to carry the cauldron home. Týr twice fails to lift it (33), but Þórr, his feet going through the floor, lifts it onto his head and leaves (34). After Þórr and Týr have travelled a long way, Þórr looks back and sees that they are being pursued by Hymir and other giants (35). He slays them with his hammer (36). A little later, one of his goats (which he has presumably collected from Egill) collapses, lame in one leg. Loki is to blame (37). Þórr gets two children (probably Egill's) in compensation (38). Þórr arrives back in Ásgarðr with the cauldron, thereby enabling the gods to drink ale well at Ægir's house each winter (39).

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## Hymiskviða

### Þórr dró Miðgarðsorm

1. Ár valtívar veiðar námu,  
ok sumblsamir, áðr saðir yrði;  
hristu teina ok á hlaut sá,  
fundu þeir at Ægis ørkost hvera.
2. Sat bergbúi, barnteitr, fyrir,  
mjök glíkr megi miskorblinda;  
leit í augu Yggs barn í þrá:  
'Þú skalt Ásum opt sumbl göra!'
3. Önn fekk jötni orðbægin hals,  
hugði at hefndum hann næst við goð;  
bað hann Sifjar ver sér fœra hver:  
'þanns ek öllum öll yðr of heita!'
4. Né þat máttu mærir tívar  
ok ginnregin of geta hvergi,  
unz af tryggðum Týr Hlórríða  
ástráð mikit einum sagði:
5. 'Býr fyr austan Élivága  
hundvíss Hymir at himins enda;  
á minn faðir, móðugr, ketil,  
rúmbrugðinn hver, rastar djúpan.
6. 'Veiztu ef þiggjum þann lögveli?'  
'Ef, vinr, vélar vit gørvum til!'
7. Fóru drjúgum dag þann fram,  
Ásgarði frá, unz til Egils kvómu;  
hirði hann hafra hornögfgasta,  
hurfu at höllu er Hymir átti.
8. Møgr fann ömmu mjök leiða sér —  
hafði höfða hundruð níu!  
En önnur gekk, algullin, fram,  
brúnhvít, bera bjórveig syni:
9. 'Áttniðr jötna, ek viljak ykk  
hugfulla tvá und hvera setja:  
er minn frí mǫrgu sinni  
glöggr við gesti, gørr ills hugar!'

# The Lay of Hymir<sup>1</sup>

## Pórr fished for the Miðgarðsormr<sup>2</sup>

1. Early,<sup>3</sup> the gods of the slain caught game,  
and were eager for a feast, before they were full;  
they shook twigs and inspected sacrificial blood,<sup>4</sup>  
they found at Ægir's<sup>5</sup> an ample choice of cauldrons.
2. The cliff-dweller<sup>6</sup> sat there, merry as a child,  
much like the son of a mash-blender;<sup>7</sup>  
Yggr's child<sup>8</sup> looked into his eyes in defiance:  
'You shall often make<sup>9</sup> drinking-feasts for the Æsir!'
3. The word-trying man<sup>10</sup> made work for the giant,  
he<sup>11</sup> brooded revenge at once against the god;  
he called on Sif's husband<sup>12</sup> to bring him a cauldron:  
'the one in which I can brew ale for you all!'
4. The glorious gods and the mighty powers  
could not get it anywhere,  
until Týr,<sup>13</sup> out of true loyalty,  
spoke a great piece of kindly advice to Hlórriði<sup>14</sup> alone:
5. 'To the east<sup>15</sup> of the Élivágar<sup>16</sup> lives  
all-wise Hymir<sup>17</sup> at heaven's end;<sup>18</sup>  
my fierce father<sup>19</sup> owns a kettle,  
a capacious cauldron, one league deep.'
6. 'Do you know if we can get that liquid-boiler?'<sup>20</sup>  
'If, my friend, we two use wiles to do so!'
7. They travelled far away that day,<sup>21</sup>  
from Ásgarðr,<sup>22</sup> until they came to Egill's;<sup>23</sup>  
he tended the nobly-horned he-goats,<sup>24</sup>  
[and] they<sup>25</sup> turned to the hall which Hymir owned.
8. The young man<sup>26</sup> found his grandmother very loathsome to him —  
she had nine hundred heads!  
But another<sup>27</sup> came forward, all-golden,  
white-browed, to bring her son a beer-drink:
9. 'Offspring of giants, I want to put you  
two brave ones under the cauldrons:<sup>28</sup>  
my beloved<sup>29</sup> is on many occasions  
stingy with guests, inclined to ill temper!'

10. En váskapaðr varð síðbúinn  
harðráðr Hymir heim af veiðum;  
gekk inn í sal — glumðu þoklar —  
var karls, er kom, kinnskógr frørinn.
11. ‘Ver þú heill, Hymir, í hugum góðum,  
nú er sonr kominn til sala þinna —  
sá er vit vættum — af vegi lǫngum!  
Fylgir honum Hróðrs andskoti,  
vinr verliða, Véurr heitir sá.
12. ‘Séðu hvar sitja und salar gafli,  
svá forða sér — stendr súl fyrir!’  
Sundr stókk súla fyr sjón jötuns,  
en áðr í tvau áss brotnaði.
13. Stukku átta, en einn af þeim,  
hverr harðsleginn, heill af þolli;  
fram gengu þeir, en forn jötunn  
sjónum leiddi sinn andskota.
14. Sagðit honum hugr vel, þá er hann sá  
gýgjar græti á gólf kominn;  
þar vǫru þjórar þrír of teknir,  
bað senn jötunn sjóða ganga.
15. Hvern létu þeir hǫfði skemmra  
ok á seyði síðan báru;  
át Sifjar verr, áðr sofa gengi,  
einn með ǫllu øxn tvá Hymis!
16. Þótti hárum Hrunnis spjalla  
verðr Hlórriða vel fullmikill:  
‘Munum at apni ǫðrum verða  
við veiðimat vér þrir lifa!’
17. Véurr kvazk vilja á vág róa,  
ef ballr jötunn beitur gæfi;  
‘Hverfðu til hjarðar, ef þú hug trúir,  
brjótr berg-Dana, beitur sækja!
18. ‘Þess vænti ek, at þér myni  
ǫgn af oxa auðfeng vera!’  
Sveinn sýsliga sveif til skógar,  
þar er uxi stóð alsvartr fyrir.

10.                   And misshapen<sup>30</sup> Hymir of hard-counsel  
                          was late ready [to return] home from hunting;  
                          he went into the hall — icicles clinked —  
                          the old man's cheek-forest<sup>31</sup> was frozen when he came.
11.                   'Be hale, Hymir, [and] in good spirits,  
                          now a son has come to your halls —  
the one we two have waited for — from a long way off!<sup>32</sup>  
                          Hróðr's enemy<sup>33</sup> accompanies him,  
                          the friend of humankind, the one called Véurr.<sup>34</sup>
12.                   'See where they sit under the hall's gable,  
                          so they protect themselves — a pillar stands in front!  
                          The pillar burst apart before the giant's glance,  
                          and before that a beam<sup>35</sup> broke in two.
13.                   Eight [cauldrons] fell down, but [only] one of them,  
a hard-hammered cauldron, [fell] intact from the hanging-peg;  
                          they<sup>36</sup> came forward, and the ancient giant  
                          tracked his enemy<sup>37</sup> with his eyes.
14.                   His mind had misgivings<sup>38</sup> when he saw  
                          the griever of a giantess<sup>39</sup> had come on to the floor;  
                          three bulls were taken there,  
                          the giant ordered them to be boiled at once.
15.                   They made each one shorter by a head<sup>40</sup>  
                          and then carried them to the cooking-pit;  
                          Sif's husband ate, before he went to sleep,  
                          two of Hymir's oxen, whole, on his own!
16.                   It seemed to the hoary friend of Hrungnir<sup>41</sup>  
                          that Hlórriði's meal was, well, large enough:  
                          'Tomorrow evening, we three will have to live  
                          on food caught by fishing!'
17.                   Véurr said he was willing to row on the surging sea,  
                          if the bold giant would give him bait;  
                          'Turn to the herd, if you trust your courage,  
                          breaker of rock-Danir,<sup>42</sup> to seek bait!<sup>43</sup>
18.                   'This I expect, that bait from an ox  
                          will be easy for you to obtain!<sup>44</sup>  
                          The boy<sup>45</sup> turned fast to the forest,  
                          before which there stood an all-black ox.<sup>46</sup>

19. Braut af þjóri þurs ráðbani  
hátún ofan horna tveggja;  
‘Verk þikkja þín verri myklu  
kjóla valdi, en þú kyrr sitir!’
20. Bað hlunngota hafra dróttinn  
áttrunn apa útarr fœra;  
en sá jötunn sína talði  
litla fýsi at róa lengra.
21. Dró mærr Hymir móðugr hvali  
einn á ǫngli upp senn tvá;  
en aptr í skut Óðni sífjaðr,  
Véurr, við vélar vað gærði sér.
22. Egndi á ǫngul, sá er ǫldum bergr,  
orms einbani, uxa hǫfði;  
gein við ǫngli, sú er goð fjá,  
umgjörð neðan allra landa.
23. Dró djarfliga dáðrakkr Þórr  
orm eitrfán upp at borði;  
hamri kníði háfjall skarar  
ofljótt ofan úlfs hnitbróður.
24. Hreingákn hlumðu, en hǫkn þutu,  
fór in forna fold ǫll saman;  
sökkðisk síðan sá fiskr í mar.
25. Óteitr jötunn er þeir aptr reru,  
svá at ár Hymir ekki mælti;  
veifði hann rœði veðrs annars til:
26. ‘Mundu um vinna verk hálftr við mik,  
at þú heim hvali haf til bæjar  
eða flotbrúsa festir okkarn.’
27. Gekk Hlórriði, greip á stafni,  
vatt með austri upp lögfáki;  
einn, með árum ok með austskotu,  
bar hann til bæjar brimsvín jötuns  
ok holtriða hver í gegnum.
28. Ok enn jötunn um afrendi  
þrágirni vanr við Þór senti;  
kvaðat mann ramman, þótt róa kynni  
kröpturligan, nema kálk bryti.

19. The giant's counsel-killer<sup>47</sup> broke from above the bull  
the high-meadow of two horns;<sup>48</sup>  
'Your works seem much worse  
to the ruler of ships than when you sit quiet!'<sup>49</sup>
20. The lord of goats<sup>50</sup> asked the offspring of apes<sup>51</sup>  
to row the roller-stallion<sup>52</sup> further out;  
but the giant declared he had  
little desire to row any longer.<sup>53</sup>
21. Famous, moody<sup>54</sup> Hymir at once hauled up,  
by himself, two whales on a hook;  
and back in the stern the one related to Óðinn,  
Véurr, prepared a line for himself with wiles.<sup>55</sup>
22. The one who saves men, the snake's lone slayer,<sup>56</sup>  
baited the hook with the ox's head;  
it gaped at the hook,<sup>57</sup> the one whom gods hate,<sup>58</sup>  
the girdle of all lands,<sup>59</sup> from below.
23. Deed-brave Þórr daringly dragged  
the venom-gleaming snake up to the gunwale;  
with his hammer he struck from above the extremely hideous  
high-mountain of hair<sup>60</sup> of the wolf's birth-brother.<sup>61</sup>
24. Reindeer-monsters<sup>62</sup> roared,<sup>63</sup> and stony grounds resounded,  
all the ancient earth shuddered,<sup>64</sup>  
then that fish<sup>65</sup> sank into the sea.<sup>66</sup>
25. The giant [was] gloomy when they rowed back,  
such that Hymir at first said nothing;  
he turned the rudder<sup>67</sup> to another tack:
26. 'You would be sharing half the work with me  
if you bring the whales back to the farm  
or make fast our floating-buck.'<sup>68</sup>
27. Hlórriði went [and] grasped the prow,  
hoisted up the sea-steed<sup>69</sup> with the bilge-water;  
alone, with oars and with bilge-bailer,  
he carried the giant's surf-swine<sup>70</sup> to the farm  
and through a valley of wooded ridges.<sup>71</sup>
28. And still the giant, accustomed to stubbornness,  
disputed with Þórr about strength;  
he said no man was strong, even if he could row mightily,  
unless he could break a goblet.

29. En Hlórriði, er at hǫndum kom,  
brátt lét bresta brattstein gleri;  
sló hann sitjandi súlur í gøgnum,  
báru þó heilan fyr Hymi síðan.
30. Unz þat in fríða frilla kendi,  
ástráð mikit eitt, er vissi:  
'Drep við haus Hymis — hann er harðari,  
kostmóðs jötuns, kálki hverjum!'
31. Harðr reis á kné, hafra dróttinn,  
fcerðisk allra í ásmegin;  
heill var karli hjálmstofn ofan,  
en vínferill valr rifnaði.
32. 'Morg veit ek mæti mér gengin frá,  
er ek kálki sé ór knjám hrundit.'  
Karl orð um kvað: 'Knákat ek segja  
aptr ævagi, "þú ert, ǫldr, of heitt!"
33. 'Þat er til kostar, ef koma mættið  
út ór óru ǫlkjól hofi';  
Týr leitaði tysvar hrœra,  
stóð at hváru hverr kyrr fyrir.
34. Faðir Móða fekk á þremi,  
ok í gegnum steig gólf niðr í sal;  
hóf sér á hǫfuð upp hver Sifjar verr,  
en á hælum hringar skullu.
35. Fóru lengi áðr líta nam  
aptr Óðins sonr einu sinni;  
sá hann ór hreysum með Hymi austan  
fólkdrot fara fjǫlhǫfðaða.
36. Hóf hann sér af herðum hver standanda,  
veifði hann Mjöllni morðgjörnum fram,  
ok hraun/ivala hann alla drap.
37. Fórut lengi áðr liggja nam  
hafr Hlórriða hálfdauðr fyrir;  
var skírr skǫkuls skakkr á banni,  
en því inn lævísi Loki um olli.



29.                   And Hlórriði, when it came to his hands,  
                        soon made steep stone<sup>72</sup> break with the glass;  
                        sitting, he struck it<sup>73</sup> through pillars,<sup>74</sup>  
                        but they brought it [back] intact to Hymir.
30.                   Until the fair loved one<sup>75</sup> imparted  
                        one great piece of loving advice which she knew:  
                        ‘Strike it against Hymir’s skull — it’s harder,  
                        the choice-weary<sup>76</sup> giant’s, than any goblet!’<sup>77</sup>
31.                   The hard lord of he-goats<sup>78</sup> rose at the knee,  
                        assumed his full Áss-strength;<sup>79</sup>  
                        intact was the top of the old man’s helmet-stump,<sup>80</sup>  
                        but the round<sup>81</sup> wine-vessel was riven.
32.                   ‘Many treasures, I know, have departed from me,  
                        when<sup>82</sup> I see the goblet dashed from my knees.<sup>83</sup>  
                        The old man<sup>84</sup> spoke words: ‘I can’t say  
                        ever again, “You, ale, are brewed!”
33.                   ‘It’s your opportunity [to see] if you can take<sup>85</sup>  
                        the ale-ship<sup>86</sup> out of our farmstead’,<sup>87</sup>  
                        Týr tried twice to shift it,  
                        [but] each time the cauldron stood still before him.<sup>88</sup>
34.                   Móði’s father<sup>89</sup> grasped it by the rim,  
                        and through the floor in the hall stepped down,<sup>90</sup>  
                        Sif’s husband heaved the cauldron up on to his head,  
                        and at his heels the rings<sup>91</sup> clattered.
35.                   They went a long way<sup>92</sup> before  
                        Óðinn’s son looked back one time;  
                        he saw advancing from stone-heaps, with Hymir, from the east,  
                        a warrior-host of many-headed ones.<sup>93</sup>
36.                   He heaved the [high-]standing cauldron from his shoulders,  
                        he swung murder-eager Mjöllnir<sup>94</sup> forward,  
                        and he slew all the lava-whales.<sup>95</sup>
- 37.<sup>96</sup>                   They had not gone far before  
                        Hlórriði’s goat lay half-dead before them;  
                        the trace’s team-mate<sup>97</sup> was lamed<sup>98</sup> by a curse,<sup>99</sup>  
                        and the crafty Loki<sup>100</sup> was the cause of that.

38. En ér heyrt hafið — hverr kann um þat  
goðmálugra gørr at skilja —  
hver af hraunbúa hann laun um fekk,  
er hann bæði galt börn sín fyrir.
39. Þróttflugr kom á þing goða,  
ok hafði hver, þanns Hymir átti;  
en véar hverjan vel skulu drekka  
qlör at Ægis eitrhörmeitið.

38.                   But you have heard — everyone who knows  
                          tales of the gods can tell it more fully —  
what recompense he<sup>101</sup> received from the lava-dweller,<sup>102</sup>  
                          when he<sup>103</sup> paid for it with both his children.<sup>104</sup>
39.                   The one of great strength<sup>105</sup> came to the gods' assembly,  
and he had the cauldron, the one which Hymir owned;  
                          and holy ones<sup>106</sup> shall drink ale well  
                          at Ægir's [home] each venom-rope-cutter.<sup>107</sup>

Textual Apparatus to *Hymiskviða*

*Hymiskviða*] This title, now traditional, appears only in **A**. **R**'s rubricated title is illegible in the photograph in the facsimile volume; the heading *Þórr dró Miðgarðsorm* is taken from its transcription. This edition is based on **R**.

Ár 1/1] The first letter is large, inset and rubricated, but faded, in **R**

1/8 *hverá*] **A** *hværia*

2/8 *gora*] **A** *gæfa*

3/3 *hefnudum*] **R** *hefðom*; **A** *hæfnð*

3/7 *þanns*] **R** *þann*; **A** *þanz*

3/7-8 *ollum ol yðr*] **A** *ollom yðr ol*

7/1-2] **A** *forv drivogan dag fraliga*

7/4 *Egils*] **A** *ægis 'Ægir's'*

9/3 *hugfulla*] **R** written twice

9/5 *frí*] **A** *faðir 'father'*

9/8 *gørr*] **R** *geyrr*; **A** *gærr*

10/2 *síðbúinn*] **A** absent

12/3 *forða sér*] **A** *forðaz*

13/5 *þeir*] **A** absent

13/8 *andskota*] so **A**; **R** *aNscota*

14/2 *hann*] **A** absent

14/3 *gýgjar*] **R** and **A** *gýjar*

14/7 *senn*] **A** *svn*

18/2 *myni*] **A** *monit*

20/3 *áttrunn*] **A** *attrænn*

20/6 *talði*] in **A** corrected from *milldi*

21/4 *senn*] **A** *sænn eða*

22/5 *ongli*] **A** *agni*

23/1 *djarfliga*] so **A**; **R** *diafliga*

24/1] *hlumðu*] **A** *hruto*

26/1 *um*] **A** *of*

27/6 *mæð*] **A** absent

27/9 *holtriða*] **A** *hollt riða*; **R** *holtriba*

28/1 *Ok*] **A** *Enn*

- 28/2 *um afrendi*] **A** *afafrendi*  
 30/1 *in*] so **A** *hin*; **R** *ip*  
 30/5 *haus*] **A** absent  
 30/7 *kostmóðs*] **A** *kostmoðr*  
 30/8 *hverjum*] so **A** *hveriom*; **R** *hverio*  
 31/1 *reis*] **A** absent  
 32/3 *er*] so **A** *ær*; **R** absent  
 32/4 *ór*] **A** *firi* (cf. *Fyrir* ‘before, in front of’)  
 32/8 *ert*] **A** *ær*  
 33/2 *mættið*] **A**’s *mættir* presumably addresses Þórr alone  
 34/3 *steig*] **A** *stoð*  
 35/8 *fjólhøfðaða*] so **A** *fíolhofðaða*; **R** *fíolþ hafðaða*  
 36/5 *hraunhvala*] **R** *hraonvala*; **A** *hraonhvali*  
 37/8 *um*] **A** *of*  
 38/1 *ér*] **A** *þær* (i.e., *þér*)  
 38/2 *um*] **A** *of*  
 38/6 *um*] **A** *of*  
 38/7 *er*] **A** absent  
 38/7 *bæði galt*] **A** *gallt bæði*  
 39/5 *véar*] **A** *veaRr*  
 39/8 *eitrhormeitið*] **R** *eitt havrmeitiþ*; **A** *eitt hormeitið* (-ið abbreviated)

## Notes to the Translation

- 1 The title *Hymiskviða*, by which this poem is now customarily known, appears only in **A**.
- 2 ‘Miðgarðr’s Snake’, the world-encircling serpent. This heading occurs only in **R**.
- 3 I.e., in early/ancient days.
- 4 An act of augury. The twigs were perhaps dipped in blood, shaken, and the future divined from the blood-splashes. Cf. *Vsp.* 61.
- 5 Ægir ‘Sea’, a giant.
- 6 Ægir.
- 7 A ‘mash-blender’ being a brewer of ale, but the interpretation is conjectural. Possibly it is a proper noun.
- 8 *Yggr* ‘Terrible One’ is an alias of Óðinn; his child is Þórr, who often killed giants.
- 9 **A**’s variant reading *gæfa* (*gefa*) means ‘give’.
- 10 Þórr anthropomorphized.

- 11 Ægir.
- 12 Þórr, whose wife is *Sif* ‘(Married) Relation’.
- 13 ‘God’, one of the Æsir. Some scholars argue for the common noun *týr* ‘god’ here, the referent then potentially being Loki, Þórr’s crafty companion in other stories.
- 14 A name for Þórr. It may mean ‘Bellowing-Beast (i.e., Pig/Goat) Rider/Driver’.
- 15 Giants generally live in the east.
- 16 ‘Snow/Hail-Storm-Waves’, a term for various primaeval rivers.
- 17 A giant, the etymology of whose name is uncertain; there are various possibilities, among which is a relationship to OE *heamol* ‘niggardly’, which would be in keeping with Hymir’s stingy character in *Hym.* 9. He is also mentioned in a kenning in *Harkv.* 2, where he is perhaps confused with the primordial giant Ymir (*SPSMA* I, 95–96).
- 18 A folk-etymological link between Hymir and *himinn* ‘heaven’ appears likely. Cf. *Vm.* 37.
- 19 Only in *Hym.* is Týr said to be the son of a giant.
- 20 It appears that Þórr asks this question.
- 21 A’s variant reading means ‘They journeyed swiftly for a whole day’.
- 22 ‘God-Yard/Enclosure’, home of the gods.
- 23 Egill is probably a giant. A’s reading *Ægis* ‘Ægir’s’ is doubtless a scribal error.
- 24 The goats that draw Þórr’s chariot. *SnEGylf* (21, p. 23) calls them *Tanngnjóstr* ‘Tooth-Grinder’ and *Tanngrísnir* ‘Tooth-Distorter’.
- 25 Týr and Þórr.
- 26 Týr anthropomorphized.
- 27 Another giantess, in this case Hymir’s wife, Týr’s mother.
- 28 Apparently, the cauldrons were hung from, or rested on, a beam. Cf. *Hym.* 12, 13. The giantess’s rationale seems to be that there they would receive protection by being behind a pillar.
- 29 Hymir. A’s reading *faðir* ‘father’ is probably a mistake.
- 30 Literally, ‘woe-shaped/created’. Emendation to *vásskapaðr* ‘shaped by bad weather’ has been proposed. Word-play is possible.
- 31 I.e., beard.
- 32 The speaker is apparently Hymir’s wife.
- 33 Þórr. *Hróðr* ‘Glorious/Famed One’ is otherwise unknown. He might be a giant, but a connection or identification with Fenrir—called *Hróð(rs)vitnir* in *Ls.* 39 and *Grm.* 39—is another possibility; cf. the pitting of Þórr against the wolf in *Vsp.* 54.
- 34 Þórr, who is similarly *Miðgarðs véurr* ‘Miðgarðr’s guardian’ in *Vsp.* 54.
- 35 Here *áss* ‘beam’ may pun on *áss* ‘god’.
- 36 Þórr and Týr.
- 37 Þórr.
- 38 Literally, ‘his mind/heart did not speak to him well’.
- 39 The ‘griever of a giantess’ is Þórr, who makes giantesses weep by slaying their menfolk.
- 40 I.e., they beheaded the bulls.

- 41 'Friend of Hrungnir' is a kenning for 'giant', here Hymir. Hrungnir was a giant whom Þórr slew by smashing his skull with Mjöllnir, according to *SnESkáld* (I, 17, pp. 20–24); cf. *Hrbl.* 14–15.
- 42 A kenning for Þórr, rock-*Danir* 'rock-Danes' being giants.
- 43 Hymir speaks these words.
- 44 By contrast, A's text means 'This I expect, that bait from an ox won't be easy for you to obtain!'
- 45 Þórr. In *SnEGylf* (48, p. 44) he visits Hymir *sem ungr drengr* 'as a young youth/boy'.
- 46 In manuscripts of *SnEGylf*, the ox is called *Himinhrjótr* 'Sky Snorer' or *Himinhrjóðr* 'Sky Destroyer', among other variants.
- 47 Þórr, as one who plots Hymir's death or who defeats the giant's plan to destroy him.
- 48 A kenning for the ox's horned head.
- 49 These words are presumably spoken by Hymir, who refers to himself as the 'ruler of ships'. A less likely interpretation has Þórr as the 'ruler of ships': 'Your work seems much worse, ruler of ships, than when you sit quiet!' Some scholars propose that a following stanza or stanzas describing how Hymir and Þórr rowed out to sea have been lost.
- 50 Þórr.
- 51 Hymir. 'Ape' has connotations of foolishness.
- 52 Boat.
- 53 Hymir has apparently declined Þórr's offer to row (*Hym.* 17).
- 54 Alternatively, 'courageous' or 'fierce'.
- 55 Cf. *Hym.* 6.
- 56 Þórr. Some skaldic poems say that he killed the snake on this fishing-trip; cf. *Vsp.* 54.
- 57 A's *agni* means 'bait'.
- 58 The *Miðgarðsormr*.
- 59 Again the *Miðgarðsormr*, which encircles all lands.
- 60 A kenning for 'head'.
- 61 The *Miðgarðsormr*, brother of the wolf Fenrir. Alternatively, '... of the wolf's battle-brother', again referring to the *Miðgarðsormr*, which will fight alongside Fenrir at Ragnarok.
- 62 An obscure term, perhaps for monstrous antlered creatures or wolves which prey on reindeer. But Ursula Dronke emends *heingálkn* 'hone-wreckers', 'enemies of the whetstone', which she interprets, with reference to the story of Hrungnir's hurling of a whetstone at Þórr, as 'enemies of giants'.
- 63 A's *hruto* (*hrutu*) means 'staggered, fell'.
- 64 Cf. *Vsp.* 51.
- 65 The *Miðgarðsormr*, a snake which is also called a 'fish' in skaldic verse.
- 66 The reason for the serpent's sinking is unclear. Old Norse traditions differ as to whether Þórr killed it at this point, or whether Hymir cut the fishing line and so enabled it to escape. Snorri favours the latter and adds that Þórr knocked Hymir overboard in his rage.
- 67 *Ræði* 'rudder' may pun on, or be a mistake for, *ræðu*, acc. sg. of *ræða* 'conversation'.
- 68 A poetic term for 'boat', tailored to Þórr's caprine associations. Some scholars interpret this passage as a question: 'Would you share half the work with me ...?'

- 69 Another poetic term for 'boat'.
- 70 A poetic term for either 'boat' or 'whale(s)'.
- 71 There is more word-play here, as *hver(r)* 'valley' means literally 'cauldron', the primary sense elsewhere in this poem.
- 72 The stone of tall pillars.
- 73 The glass goblet.
- 74 Cf. *SnESkald* (I, 18, p. 25), in which Þórr throws a lump of molten iron through a pillar, the giant Geirröðr and a wall. Þórr was a god of house-pillars.
- 75 Hymir's wife.
- 76 Possibly the sense is that Hrungrnir was sleepy, having eaten choice items of food.
- 77 Cf. the stone-headed giant Hrungrnir, whom Þórr slays in another story.
- 78 Þórr.
- 79 I.e., divine strength. *SnEGylf* (48, p. 44) uses the same expression (*færðisk í ásmegin*) of Þórr when the god hauls up the Miðgarðsormr.
- 80 A kenning for Hymir's 'head'.
- 81 Perhaps *valr* 'round' puns on *valr* 'slain (body)'.
- 82 So **A**, but absent from **R**.
- 83 I.e., 'taken from my lap'. The speaker is evidently Hymir.
- 84 Hymir.
- 85 Translation uncertain.
- 86 A poetic term for 'cauldron'.
- 87 *Hof*, here translated 'farmstead', more usually denotes a temple.
- 88 It may be remembered, however, that Týr is typically imagined as one-handed; see the introductory prose to *Ls*.
- 89 Þórr.
- 90 I.e., his feet went through the floor. **A**'s *stóð* means 'stood'. Cf. *SnEGylf* (48, pp. 44–45) in which Þórr forces his feet through the boat's bottom and onto the sea-bed when hauling up the Miðgarðsormr, an account partly corroborated by two picture-stones.
- 91 Presumably the rings of a hanging-chain attached to the cauldron.
- 92 Some editors emend to *Fórut lengi* 'They had not gone a long way', to match *Hym. 37*.
- 93 Giants; cf. *Hym. 8*.
- 94 'Miller/Crusher', Þórr's hammer.
- 95 A poetic term for 'giants'.
- 96 Ursula Dronke considers stt. 37–38 intrusive. They clearly resemble an episode in *SnEGylf* (44, p. 37) in which an unnamed farmer hands over his son, Þjálfí, and daughter, Rǫskva, to Þórr as compensation for the former having lamed one of Þórr's goats; that episode does not, however, blame Loki.
- 97 A poetic term for 'goat'.
- 98 Literally 'twisted', 'askew'.
- 99 The words *á banni* 'in/by a (banning) curse' perhaps pun on *á beini* 'in the bone/leg'.
- 100 The trickster-god.



- 101 Þórr.
- 102 A giant, possibly the one called Egill in *Hym.* 7.
- 103 The giant.
- 104 The poet's direct address to the audience in this stanza is unusual.
- 105 Þórr.
- 106 Gods.
- 107 A likely kenning for 'winter', the season which kills ('cuts') snakes ('venom-ropes').

