



# THE POETIC EDDA

A Dual-Language Edition

EDWARD PETTIT



<https://www.openbookpublishers.com>

© 2023 Edward Pettit



This work is licensed under an Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0). This license allows you to share, copy, distribute and transmit the text, and to adapt the text for non-commercial purposes, providing attribution is made to the authors (but not in any way that suggests that they endorse you or your use of the work). Attribution should include the following information:

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

Further details about the CC BY-NC license are available at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

All external links were active at the time of publication unless otherwise stated and have been archived via the Internet Archive Wayback Machine at <https://archive.org/web>

Digital material and resources associated with this volume are available at <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0308#resources>

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

Front cover image: 'The Two Corbies' by Arthur Rackham, from *Some British Ballads* (London, [1919])

Back cover image: The god Heimdallr blowing his horn, from a seventeenth-century Icelandic manuscript (AM 738 4to, fol. 35v)

Images on pp. 27 and 861: 'Two Ravens' (CC-BY 4.0) by M. Barran, <https://www.etsy.com/uk/shop/MarleenaBarranDesign>

Cover design by Katy Saunders.

# Brymskviða

---

*Brymskviða* (*Brk.*) ‘The Lay of Þrymr’ survives in **R** (fol. 17r–18r). Its date of composition is uncertain, with opinions ranging from the ninth century to the mid-thirteenth. The frequent use of the meaningless metrical filler *um* might indicate an early date of composition (it appears before verbs that in Primitive Norse would have had a meaningful prefix), but this feature might instead be a deliberate archaism. Similar doubt surrounds the significance of several half-lines of *fornyrðislag* that appear too short unless earlier word-forms with one more syllable are substituted.

The story of the theft and recovery of Þórr’s hammer (originally thunderous or fulgural) is not mentioned in any other Eddic poem. Nor is it referenced in Snorri’s *Prose Edda* or in the compositions of heathen skaldic poets recorded elsewhere. Perhaps *Brk.* reached Iceland comparatively late, having been composed elsewhere. John McKinnell has argued for an origin in the Anglo-Norse Danelaw and suggests that this ‘English’ poem was revised in twelfth- or thirteenth-century Iceland under the influence of ballad style.<sup>1</sup> Other accounts of the story survive in the Icelandic *rímur* ‘rhyming poem’ cycle called *Brymlur*, which was possibly composed between the mid-fourteenth and mid-fifteenth centuries, and in Scandinavian ballads written down in the late nineteenth century; these stand in uncertain relation to the Eddic poem.<sup>2</sup> Related myths are part of Baltic tradition. Additionally, stories of the theft or loss of a sky-god’s weapon or potency survive in the mythological traditions of other European cultures, which suggests that the general theme has ancient roots. Instances may include the Old English poem *Beowulf*, in which the sword that beheads Grendel’s mother, and which the hero takes from the giants’ lair, may originally have been a solar weapon that was stolen by giants from Freyr or his circle.

Other aspects of *Brk.* find parallel in Old Norse texts. As the following paragraphs show, Old Norse analogues exist for (1) the quest to the land of giants for a precious object, (2) the gods’ characterization, (3) Þrymr’s desire to marry Freyja:

(1) The gods rely on two objects to help them keep the giants at bay: Þórr’s giant-slaying hammer and the youth-giving apples of the goddess Iðunn. Like Mjöllnir,

---

1 J. McKinnell, ‘Eddic Poetry in Anglo-Scandinavian Northern England’, in J. Graham-Campbell, R. Hall, J. Jesch and D. N. Parsons, ed., *Vikings and the Danelaw: Select Papers from the Proceedings of the Thirteenth Viking Congress, Nottingham and York, 21–30 August 1997* (Oxford: Oxbow, 2001), pp. 327–44.

2 See Finnur Jónsson, ed., *Rímnasafn: samling af de ældste islandske rimer*, 2 vols. (Copenhagen: Møller, 1905–12), I, 278–89; E. M. Meletinsky, *The Elder Edda and Early Forms of the Epic* (Trieste: Ed. Parnaso, 1998), pp. 94–95; L. Colwill and Haukur Þorgeirsson, ed. and trans., *The Bearded Bride: A Critical Edition of Brymlur* (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 2020).

Iðunn and her apples are stolen by a giant, but recovered with Loki's help. The myth of Iðunn's abduction is told in *SnESkáld* (I, G56, pp. 1–2) and in the skaldic poem *Haust*. contained therein (22, pp. 30–33). It recalls Loki's flight and the gods' assembly in *Þrk*:

The gods Óðinn, Loki and Hœnir are travelling and mysteriously unable to cook an ox. An eagle in the tree above claims responsibility and says the ox will cook if they let it eat its fill. They agree, but Loki, enraged at the eagle's appetite, strikes it with a pole. The pole sticks to the eagle and Loki sticks to the pole. The eagle flies off with Loki dangling below and being dashed against stones and trees. Loki is freed only when he agrees to lure Iðunn outside Ásgarðr with her apples. Loki returns home and does so by urging her to compare her apples with others he has found in a forest. The giant Þjazi arrives in eagle form and abducts her. Lacking Iðunn's apples, the gods age. They call an assembly and Loki's involvement is revealed. Terrified, he agrees to search for Iðunn in the land of giants, if Freyja will lend him her falcon shape (*valshamr*). She apparently does, and Loki flies off. When he arrives at Þjazi's, the giant is out fishing, so Loki turns Iðunn into a nut and flies off again. When Þjazi discovers this he gives chase in eagle form. But the gods kindle a huge fire once Loki arrives back. The fire destroys the eagle's feathers and Þjazi drops down into Ásgarðr, where the gods kill him.

(2) *Þrk*'s affectionate comedy relies greatly on prior knowledge of the gods' traditional attributes and traditional gender norms. The comedy of Þórr as 'drag queen' is magnified by knowledge of his über-masculinity, and by the expectation that the proposed masquerade will be hard to bring off. Here is the familiar Þórr—the slow-witted scourge of giants, all bushy beard, fiery eyes and voracious appetite—temporarily emasculated. To be weaponless is a shocking experience for him. He is without his hammer once elsewhere in Norse myth, but finds other magical tools to compensate: Loki, having been caught flying in Freyja's falcon form by the giant Geirrøðr, was released only after swearing to get Þórr to come to Geirrøðr's courts without his hammer or girdle of might; this he does, but Þórr receives advice, a pair of iron gloves and a pole from the giantess Griðr, Víðarr's mother, with the help of which he kills Geirrøðr (*SnESkáld*, I, 18, pp. 24–30, including the skaldic *Þórsdrápa* 'Þórr's Poem').

Loki, unlike Þórr, seems often to have taken the form of a woman—hence his aptitude for the role of bridesmaid in *Þrk*. Loki's quick wits, evident in *Ls.*, are never displayed to better effect than in *Þrk*. Loki's role in Norse myth is complex. On the one hand, he gets the gods into trouble with the giants, instigates Baldr's death, fathers Fenrir and the Miðgarðsormr, and fights Heimdallr at Ragnarok. On the other, he usually rescues the situation, as when he thwarts the giant-builder's designs on Freyja (see below) or pacifies the vengeful giantess Skaði by making her laugh (*SnESkáld*, I, G56, p. 2). Despite their antagonism in *Ls.*, Loki and Þórr are paired elsewhere in Norse literature: they are companions on a visit to the giant Útgarða-Loki (who, however, is presumably some manifestation of Loki as antagonist) as told in *SnEGylf* (44, pp. 37–44), and in *Haust*. Loki is *Þórs rúni* 'Þórr's confidant' (*SnESkáld*, I, 22, p. 32).

Freyja, the beautiful and reputedly promiscuous Vanir goddess, wears the wondrous Brísingamen ('torc [or necklace] of the Brísingar') and drives a chariot pulled by cats.

In this regard she is the opposite of the manly Þórr with his goat-drawn chariot. But she also has a sterner side: she receives half the slaughtered warriors, and Óðinn the other half (*Grm.* 14); Þórr, by contrast, is the god of farmers. Her power is evident in the cracking of the Brisingamen and the shaking of Ásgarðr when she rejects marriage to Þrymr.

(3) Þrymr is elsewhere just a name, but he is not the only giant to want Freyja. According to *SnESkald* (I, 17, p. 20), the drunken giant Hrungrnir declared that he would, among other things, take Freyja and Sif home with him. Furthermore, *SnEGylf* (42, pp. 34–36) tells the story, probably alluded to in *Vsp.* 26, of a builder contracted by the gods to single-handedly rebuild Ásgarðr's wall in one winter in return for the sun, the moon and Freyja. The builder alarms the gods by working ahead of schedule with, thanks to Loki, the help of a marvellous stallion. Loki rescues matters by turning himself into a mare and distracting the stallion, so that the builder cannot meet his deadline. The builder flies into a giant-rage, whereupon Þórr kills him. Loki then gives birth to Óðinn's eight-legged horse, Sleipnir.

*Þrk.*'s burlesque, deft characterization, artful parallelism and swift, economic style make it the height of Eddic humour and, for the modern reader, one of the best medieval comedies.

## Synopsis

Þórr awakes and is angry to find his hammer missing (1). He tells Loki of the extraordinary theft (2). They go to the beautiful goddess Freyja, and Þórr asks her to lend him her feather-coat (3). She agrees willingly (4), and Loki uses it to fly to the land of giants (5). Þrymr, the lord of the giants, who is sitting on a grave-mound (6), asks why Loki has come. Loki asks Þrymr whether he has hidden Þórr's hammer (7). Þrymr says he has and that it will not be recovered until Freyja is brought to him as his bride (8).

Loki returns to the courts of the gods (9), and is commanded by Þórr to tell his news quickly (10). Loki does so (11), and the pair return to Freyja, whom Þórr commands to come with him to the land of giants (12). She refuses, the hall shaking and the Brisingamen fracturing at her disdainful snort (13). Consequently, the gods try to think of another plan (14). The prescient god Heimdallr proposes dressing up Þórr as Freyja in bridal attire (15–16). Þórr refuses because the gods would think him effeminate (17), but Loki reminds him that the giants will occupy Ásgarðr, home of the gods, if he fails to get his hammer back (18). So Þórr is dressed up to look like Freyja as a bride (19), and Loki says he will accompany him as bridesmaid (20).

The pair set off for the land of giants, with rocks breaking and the earth burning as Þórr's goat-chariot passes by (21). Þrymr, sensing their coming, tells his household to prepare the benches (22), and says he has everything he wants, except Freyja (23).

The bridal pair arrive and the bride (Þórr) displays a prodigious appetite, eating an ox, eight salmon and all the delicacies meant for the women (24). Þrymr is astonished

(25), but the bridesmaid (Loki) explains that, in her eagerness to come, Freyja had not eaten for eight nights (26). Pymr tries to kiss his bride, but upon bending down under her veil is shocked by her fiery eyes and springs back (27). The bridesmaid explains that Freyja had not slept for eight nights either (28). Pymr's sister (a giantess) enters and requests a gift from the bride in return for her affection (29). Pymr has the hammer brought in and laid in the bride's lap to consecrate the union (30).

At once, Þórr's heart rejoices when he recognizes his hammer. He slays Pymr first and then his family (31). Pymr's sister gets a hammer's blow, rather than the gift she had requested. Thus Þórr recovered his hammer (32).

## Further Reading

- Arrhenius, B., 'Brisingamen and the Menet Necklace', in U. von Freeden, H. Friesinger und E. Wamers, ed., *Glaube, Kult und Herrschaft: Phänomene des Religiösen im 1. Jahrtausend n. Chr. In Mittel- und Nordeuropa* (Bonn: R. Habelt, 2009), pp. 219–30.
- Arnold, M., *Thor: Myth to Marvel* (London: Continuum, 2011), <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781472599292>
- Bertell, M., *Tor och den nordiska åskan: Föreställningar kring världssaxeln* (Stockholm: Stockholm University Press, 2003) [with English summary].
- Clunies Ross, M., 'Reading *Þrymskviða*', in P. Acker and C. Larrington, ed., *The Poetic Edda: Essays on Old Norse Mythology* (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 177–94.
- Colwill, L. and Haukur Þorgeirsson, ed. and trans., *The Bearded Bride: A Critical Edition of Þrymlur* (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 2020).
- Daimon, R., 'How White is Heimdallr?', *Viator* 51 (2020), 121–36, <https://doi.org/10.1484/J.VIATOR.5.127040>
- Damico, H., '*Þrymskviða* and Beowulf's Second Fight: The Dressing of the Hero in Parody', *SS* 58 (1986), 407–28.
- Davidson, H. R. E., 'Thor's Hammer', *Folklore* 76 (1965), 1–15.
- Finnur Jónsson, ed., *Rímnasafn: samling af de ældste islandske rimer*, 2 vols. (Copenhagen: Møller, 1905–12), I [*Þrymlur*]
- Frankki, J., 'Cross-Dressing in the Poetic Edda: *Mic muno Æsir argan kalla*', *SS* 84 (2012), 425–37, <https://doi.org/10.1353/scd.2012.0063>
- Frog, 'Circum-Baltic Mythology? The Strange Case of the Theft of the Thunder-Instrument (ATU 1148b)', *Archaeologia Baltica* 15 (2011), 78–98, <https://doi.org/10.15181/ab.v15i1.25>
- Frog, 'Germanic Traditions of the Theft of the Thunder-Instrument (ATU 1148b): An Approach to *Þrymskviða* and Þórr's Adventure with Geirröðr in Circum-Baltic Perspective', in E. Heide and K. Bek-Pedersen, ed., *New Focus on Retrospective Methods: Resuming Methodological Discussions: Case Studies from Northern Europe* (Helsinki: Suomalainen tiedeakatemia, 2014), pp. 120–62.
- Hansen, W., 'The Theft of the Thunderweapon: A Greek Myth in its International Context', *Classica et Mediaevalia* 46 (1995), 5–24.

- Helgason, J. K., "'Pegi þú, Þórr!': Gender, Class, and Discourse in *Brymskviða*", in S. M. Anderson and K. Swenson, ed., *Cold Counsel. Women in Old Norse Literature and Mythology: A Collection of Essays* (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 159–66.
- Kroesen, R., 'The Great God Þórr — a War God?', *ANF* 116 (2001), 97–110.
- Lindow, J., 'Brymskviða, Myth, and Mythology', in M. Berryman, K. G. Goblirsch and M. Taylor, ed., *North-Western European Language Evolution (NOWELE) 31/32 Germanic Studies in Honor of Anatoly Liberman* (Odense: Odense University Press, 1997), pp. 203–12.
- McKinnell, J., 'Þórr as Comic Hero', in T. Pàroli, ed., *La funzione dell'eroe germanico: storicità, metafora, paradigma* (Rome: Il Calamo, 1995), pp. 141–83.
- McKinnell, J., 'Myth as Therapy: The Usefulness of *Brymskviða*', *Medium Ævum* 69 (2000), 1–20; also rpt. in J. McKinnell, *Essays on Eddic Poetry*, ed. D. Kick and J. D. Shafer (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), pp. 200–20, <https://doi.org/10.3138/9781442669260-010>
- McKinnell, J., 'Eddic Poetry in Anglo-Scandinavian Northern England', in J. Graham-Campbell, R. Hall, J. Jesch and D. N. Parsons, ed., *Vikings and the Danelaw: Select Papers from the Proceedings of the Thirteenth Viking Congress, Nottingham and York, 21–30 August 1997* (Oxford: Oxbow, 2001), pp. 327–44.
- Mees, B., 'Brymskviða, *Vígja*, and the Canterbury Charm', *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia* 9 (2013), 133–53.
- Meletinsky, E. M., *The Elder Edda and Early Forms of the Epic* (Trieste: Ed. Parnaso, 1998).
- Meulengracht Sørensen, P., *The Unmanly Man: Concepts of Sexual Defamation in Early Northern Society* (Odense: Odense University Press, 1983).
- Motz, L., 'The Germanic Thunderweapon', *Saga-Book* 24 (1997), 329–50.
- Motz, L., 'The Hammer and the Rod: A Discussion of Þórr's Weapons', in M. Berryman, K. G. Goblirsch and M. Taylor, ed., *North-Western European Language Evolution (NOWELE) 31/32 Germanic Studies in Honor of Anatoly Liberman* (Odense: Odense University Press, 1997), pp. 243–52.
- Nagler, M. N., 'Beowulf in the Context of Myth', in J. D. Niles, ed., *Old English Literature in Context: Ten Essays* (Cambridge, UK: D. S. Brewer, 1980), pp. 143–56.
- Perkins, R., *Thor the Wind-Raiser and the Eyrarland Image* (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 2001).
- Pettit, E., *The Waning Sword: Conversion Imagery and Celestial Myth in 'Beowulf'* (Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.11647/obp.0190>
- Puhvel, M., 'The Deicidal Otherworld Weapon in Celtic and Germanic Mythic Tradition', *Folklore* 83 (1972), 210–19.
- Sibley, J. T., *The Divine Thunderbolt: Missile of the Gods* (La Vergne: Xlibris Corp., 2009).
- Sturtevant, A. M., 'The Contemptuous Sense of the Old Norse Adjective *Hvít* 'White, Fair'', *SS* 24 (1952), 119–21.
- Taggart, D., *How Thor Lost his Thunder: The Changing Faces of an Old Norse God* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315164465>
- Taylor, P. B., 'Völundarkviða, *Brymskviða* and the Function of Myth', *Neophilologus* 78 (1994), 263–81.
- Von See, K., B. La Farge, E. Picard, I. Priebe and K. Schulz, *Kommentar zu den Liedern der Edda*, Bd. 2: *Götterlieder* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 1997).

## Þrymskviða

1. Reiðr var þá Vingþórr, er hann vaknaði  
ok sins hamars um saknaði;  
skegg nam at hrista, skǫr nam at dýja,  
réð Jarðar burr um at þreifask.
2. Ok hann þat orða alls fyrst um kvað:  
'Heyrðu nú, Loki, hvat ek nú mæli,  
er eigi veit jarðar hvergi  
né upphimins — Áss er stolinn hamri!'
3. Gengu þeir fagra Freyju túna,  
ok hann þat orða alls fyrst um kvað:  
'Muntu mér, Freyja, fjaðrhams ljá,  
ef ek minn hamar mættak hitta?'
4. Freyja kvað:  
'Þó mynda ek gefa þér, þótt ór gulli væri,  
ok þó selja, at væri ór silfri!'
5. Fló þá Loki, fjaðrhamr dunði,  
unz fyr útan kom Ása garða  
ok fyr innan kom jötna heima.
6. Þrymr sat á haugi, þursa dróttinn,  
greyjum sínum gullbönd snøri  
ok mörum sínum mǫn jafnaði.
7. Þrymr kvað:  
'Hvat er með Ásum? Hvat er með álfum?  
Hví ertu einn kominn í Jötunheima?'  
'Illt er með Ásum, illt er með álfum.  
Hefir þú Hlórriða hamar um fólgin?''
8. 'Ek hefi Hlórriða hamar um fólgin  
átta rǫstum fyr jörð neðan;  
hann engi maðr aptr um heimtir,  
nema fœri mér Freyju at kván!'
9. Fló þá Loki, fjaðrhamr dunði,  
unz fyr útan kom jötna heima  
ok fyr innan kom Ása garða;  
mœtti hann Þór miðra garða,  
ok hann þat orða alls fyrst um kvað:



## The Lay of Þrymr

1. Angry<sup>1</sup> then was Vingþórr,<sup>2</sup> when he awoke  
and missed his hammer;<sup>3</sup>  
his beard shuddered,<sup>4</sup> his hair shook,<sup>5</sup>  
Jǫrð's son<sup>6</sup> groped around himself.
2. And he spoke these words first of all:<sup>7</sup>  
'Listen now, Loki, to what I now say,  
it's unknown anywhere on earth  
or in sky above — the Áss<sup>8</sup> has been robbed of his hammer!'
3. They went to fair Freyja's dwellings,  
and he<sup>9</sup> spoke these words first of all:  
'Will you lend me your feather-skin,<sup>10</sup> Freyja,  
[to see] if I can find my hammer?'
4. Freyja said:  
'I would give it to you even if it were made of gold,  
and grant it even if it were made of silver!'
5. Then Loki flew<sup>11</sup> — the feather-skin resounded —  
until he came outside the Æsir's courts  
and he came inside the giants' lands.<sup>12</sup>
6. Þrymr sat on a grave-mound,<sup>13</sup> the lord of giants,  
he twisted gold bands<sup>14</sup> for his bitches,  
and evenly trimmed manes for his horses.  
  
Þrymr said:  
7. 'How is it with the Æsir? How is it with the elves?<sup>15</sup>  
Why have you come alone into Jötunheimar?<sup>16</sup>  
'It's ill with the Æsir, it's ill with the elves.  
Have you hidden Hlórriði's<sup>17</sup> hammer?'
8. 'I've hidden Hlórriði's hammer  
eight leagues<sup>18</sup> beneath the earth;  
no man shall get it back,  
unless he fetches me Freyja for a wife!'
9. Then Loki flew — the feather-skin resounded —  
until he came outside the giants' lands  
and he came inside the Æsir's courts;  
he met Þórr amid the courts,  
and he<sup>19</sup> spoke these words first of all:

10.                   ‘Hefir þú erindi sem erfiði?  
Segðu á lopti löng tíðindi!  
Opt sitjanda sögur um fallask,  
ok liggjandi lygi um bellir!’
11.                   ‘Hefi ek erfiði ok ørindi:  
Þrymr hefir þinn hamar, þursa dróttinn;  
hann engi maðr aptr um heimtí,   
nema honum fœri Freyju at kván!’
12.                   Ganga þeir fagra Freyju at hitta,  
ok hann þat orða alls fyrst um kvað:  
‘Bittu þik, Freyja, brúðar líni!  
Vit skulum aka tvau í Jötunheima!’
13.                   Reið varð þá Freyja ok fnásaði,  
allr Ása salr undir bifðisk,  
stókk þat it mikla men Brísinga:  
‘Mik veiztu verða vergjarnasta,  
ef ek ek með þér í Jötunheima!’
14.                   Senn váru Æsir allir á þingi,  
ok Ásynjur allar á máli,  
ok um þat réðu ríkir tívar,  
hvé þeir Hlórriða hamar um soetti.
15.                   Þá kvað þat Heimdallr, hvítastr Ása —  
vissi hann vel fram, sem Vanir aðrir:  
‘Bindu vér Þór þá brúðar líni,  
hafi hann it mikla men Brísinga!’
16.                   ‘Látum und honum hrynja lukla  
ok kvennváðir um kné falla,  
en á brjósti breiða steina,  
ok hagliga um höfuð typpum!’
17.                   Þá kvað þat Þórr, þrúðugr Áss:  
‘Mik munu Æsir argan kalla,  
ef ek bindask læt brúðar líni!’
18.                   Þá kvað þat Loki, Laufeyjar sonr:  
‘Pegi þú, Þórr, þeira orða!  
Þegar munu jötnar Ásgarð búa,  
nema þú þinn hamar þér um heimtí!’

10. 'Have you a message worth the hardship?  
Tell your long tidings in the air!<sup>20</sup>  
Stories often slip the mind of a sitting man,  
and a lying one deals in lies!'
11. 'I have [both] hardship and a message:  
Brymr has your hammer, the lord of giants;  
no man will get it back,  
unless he fetches him Freyja for a wife!'
12. They went to find fair Freyja,  
and he<sup>21</sup> said these words first of all:  
'Bind<sup>22</sup> yourself, Freyja, in a bride's linen!  
We two shall drive into Jötunheimar!'
13. Freyja became incensed then and snorted,  
at which all the hall of the Æsir shook;  
the great torc of the Brisingar<sup>23</sup> fractured:<sup>24</sup>  
'You'd know me to be most man-eager,<sup>25</sup>  
if I drive with you into Jötunheimar!'
14. At once the Æsir were all in assembly,  
and the Ásynjur<sup>26</sup> all in consultation,  
and the powerful deities deliberated about it,<sup>27</sup>  
how they might recover Hlórriði's hammer.
15. Then Heimdallr, whitest of Æsir,<sup>28</sup> said this —  
he knew the future well, like other Vanir:<sup>29</sup>  
'Let's bind<sup>30</sup> Þórr, then, in a bride's linen,  
let him have the great torc of the Brisingar!
16. 'Let's have keys clanging<sup>31</sup> at his belt,  
and women's skirts falling over his knees,  
and on his breast broad jewels,  
and top it off tidily about his head!'<sup>32</sup>
17. Then Þórr, the powerful Áss, said this:  
'The Æsir will call me perverted,<sup>33</sup>  
if I let myself be bound in a bride's linen!'
18. Then Loki, Laufey's son, said this:  
'Be silent, Þórr, [enough] of those words!  
At once will the giants occupy Ásgarðr,<sup>34</sup>  
unless you bring home your hammer!'

19. Bundu þeir Þór þá brúðar líni  
ok inu mikla meni Brísinga,  
létu und honum hrynja lukla,  
ok kvennváðir um kné falla,  
en á brjósti breiða steina,  
ok hagliga um höfuð typpu!
20. Þá kvað Loki, Laufeyjar sonr:  
‘Mun ek ok með þér ambótt vera,  
vit skulum aka tvau í Jötunheima!’
21. Senn váru hafrar heim um reknir,  
skyndir at sköklum, skyldu vel renna;  
björg brotnuðu, brann jörð loga,  
ók Óðins sonr í Jötunheima!
22. Þá kvað þat Þrymr, þursa dróttinn:  
‘Standið up, jötnar, ok stráið bekki!  
Nú færa mér Freyju at kván,  
Njarðar dóttur, ór Nóatúnum!’
23. ‘Ganga hér at garði gullhrynðar kýr,  
øxn alsvartir, jötni at gamni;  
fjölð á ek meiðma, fjölð á ek menja,  
einnar mér Freyju ávant þikkir!’
24. Var þar at kveldi um komit snimma,  
ok fyr jötna ǫl fram borit;  
einn át oxa, átta laxa,  
krásir allar, þær er konur skyldu;  
drakk Sifjar verr sáld þrjú mjaðar!
25. Þá kvað þat Þrymr, þursa dróttinn:  
‘Hvar sáttu brúðir bíta hvassara?  
Sáka ek brúðir bíta breiðara,  
né inn meira mjöð mey um drekka!’
26. Sat in alsnotra ambótt fyrir,  
er orð um fann við jötuns máli:  
‘Át vætr Freyja átta nóttum,  
svá var hon óðfús í Jötunheima!’
27. Laut und línu, lysti at kyssa,  
en hann útan stökk endlangan sal:  
‘Hví eru ǫndótt augu Freyju?  
Þikki mér ór augum *eldr um brenna!*’

19. Then they bound Þórr in a bride's linen  
and the great torc of the Brisingar;  
they had keys clanging at his belt,  
and women's skirts falling round his knees,  
and on his breast broad jewels,  
and they topped it off tidily about his head!
20. Then Loki, Laufey's son, said:  
'I shall also be with you as bridesmaid,  
we two<sup>35</sup> shall drive into Jötunheimar!'
21. At once the goats were driven home,  
hurried to the traces, they had to run hard;<sup>36</sup>  
rocks broke, earth burnt with flame,<sup>37</sup>  
Óðinn's son drove into Jötunheimar!
22. Then Þrymr, lord of giants, said this:  
'Stand up, giants, and strew the benches!<sup>38</sup>  
Now they're fetching me Freyja for a wife,  
Njörðr's daughter, from Nóatún!<sup>39</sup>
23. 'Golden-horned cows walk here in the courtyard,  
all-black oxen,<sup>40</sup> for a giant's amusement;  
I have a host of treasures, I have a host of torcs,  
it seems to me I lack only Freyja!'
24. They came there early in the evening,  
and ale was brought forth for the giants;  
he alone ate an ox,<sup>41</sup> eight salmon,  
all the delicacies which women should [eat];  
Sif's man<sup>42</sup> drank three casks of mead!
25. Then Þrymr, lord of giants, said this:  
'Where have you seen brides<sup>43</sup> bite more keenly?  
I've not seen brides bite more broadly,  
nor a maiden drink more mead!'
26. The all-wise bridesmaid sat in front,  
who found words in answer to the giant's speech:  
'Freyja ate nothing for eight nights,  
so mad keen was she [to come] into Jötunheimar!'
27. He<sup>44</sup> bent down under the linen,<sup>45</sup> desired to kiss her,  
but [then] he sprang back the length of the hall:  
'Why are Freyja's eyes frightful?  
It seems to me that fire burns from her eyes!'

28. Sat in alsnotra ambótt fyrir,  
er orð um fann við jötuns máli:  
‘Svaf vætr Freyja átta nóttum,  
svá var hon óðfús í Jötunheima!’
29. Inn kom in arma jötna systir,  
hin er brúðfjár biðja þorði:  
‘Láttu þér af höndum hringa rauða,  
ef þú ǫðlask vill ástir mínar,  
ástir mínar, alla hylli!’
30. Þá kvað þat Þrymr, þursa dróttinn:  
‘Berid inn hamar brúði at vígja,  
leggið Mjöllni í meyar kné,  
vigið okkr saman Várar hendi!’
31. Hló Hlórriða hugr í brjósti  
er harðhugaðr hamar um þekði;  
Þrym drap hann fyrstan, þursa dróttin,  
ok ætt jötuns alla lamði!
32. Drap hann ina ǫldnu jötna systur,  
hin er brúðfjár of beðit hafði;  
hon skell um hlaut fyr skillinga,  
en hogg hamars fyr hringa fjöld!  
  
Svá kom Óðins sonr endr at hamri.

28.                   The all-wise bridesmaid sat in front,  
who found words in answer to the giant's speech:  
    'Freyja didn't sleep for eight nights,<sup>46</sup>  
so mad keen was she [to come] into Jötunheimar!'
29.                   In came the wretched sister of giants,<sup>47</sup>  
the one who dared to ask for a bride-fee:<sup>48</sup>  
    'Let red rings<sup>49</sup> [fall] from your arms,  
    if you want to win my affection,  
    my affection, all favour!'
30.                   Then Þrymr, lord of giants, said this:  
    'Bring in the hammer to hallow the bride,  
    lay Mjöllnir in the maiden's lap,<sup>50</sup>  
hallow<sup>51</sup> us both together by Vár's hand!'<sup>52</sup>
31.                   Hlórriði's heart laughed in his chest  
when, hard-hearted, he recognized his hammer;  
    he slew Þrymr first, the lord of giants,  
    and all the giant's family he laid low!
32.                   He slew the aged sister of giants,  
    the one who had asked for a bride-fee;  
she received a shattering blow instead of shillings,<sup>53</sup>  
    and a hammer's stroke instead of a host of rings!
- Thus Óðinn's son came by his hammer again.

## Textual Apparatus to *Brymskviða*

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

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

2/5 *eigi*] Late, paper manuscripts have *engi*

7/2 *illt er með álfum*] **R** absent

9/3 *unz*] **R** *oc vnz*

9/9 *hann þat*] **R** *þat hann*

11/1–2 *erfiði ok ørindi*] **R** *ørindi. erfidi. oc* with scribal indication that the first two words should be interchanged

13/2 *fnúsaði*] **R** *fnasasi*

19] This stanza is heavily abbreviated in **R**

22/3 *Standið*] **R** *hvar sattu standit up*, with the first two words (cf. st. 25) marked for deletion

22/5 *færa*] So one paper manuscript (*færa þeir*); **R** *færið*. **R**'s imperative pl. form is defensible, but less natural and probably a mistaken repetition of the preceding verb termination

25/6 *breiðara*] **R** *en breiðara*

26/2 *fyrir*] **R** *fyr*

27/3 *stökk*] Preceded by *co* in **R**, but marked for deletion

27/8] *eldr um*] **R** absent; a paper manuscript has *eldr of*

28/1–4] Expansion of **R**'s abbreviation *Sat in al. s. a. f. s. m.*

28/6–8] Abbreviated in **R**

## Notes to the Translation

- 1 The adjective *reiðr* 'angry' might participate in this line's alliteration, if an East Norse or preliterary West Norse form, *\*vreiðr*, lies behind it; but cf. *reiðr* in *Þrk.* 13, which does not alliterate.
- 2 Þórr. This title, which means 'Swing(ing)-Þórr', 'Battle-Þórr' or 'Consecration-Þórr', probably reflects the god's close association with his hammer, *Mjöllnir*.
- 3 Þórr was so attached to his hammer that it even returned to his hand when thrown (*SnESkáld* I, 35, p. 42).
- 4 Or 'began to shudder'.
- 5 Or 'began to shake'.
- 6 Þórr was the son of *Jörð* 'Earth', a giantess. There is irony to her mention here, given where the hammer turns out to be hidden.
- 7 Cf. *Br.* 5 [6], *Od.* 3.
- 8 Sg. of *Æsir*, here Þórr.



- 9 Þórr.
- 10 A garment that confers the power of flight. According to *SnESkald* (G56, p. 2, 18, p. 24), Freyja had a *valshamr* ‘falcon-skin/form’ in which Loki flew; see also *Haust*. 12. A similar Old English noun, *feðerhama*, is used, among other things, of the devil’s wings.
- 11 It is Loki, not Þórr, who wears the feather-skin.
- 12 Literally, ‘homes’.
- 13 The significance of sitting on a grave-mound is uncertain, because in Old Norse literature it is associated with both the exalted and the lowly: kings did it in honour of their ancestors or wives buried therein, but so did herdsmen. We may wonder whether Þrymr is sitting on a mound that conceals Þórr’s hammer, hidden ‘eight leagues beneath the earth’ (st. 8).
- 14 Collars.
- 15 Cf. *Vsp.* 50.
- 16 ‘Giant Homes/Worlds’.
- 17 Þórr’s.
- 18 A *ropt*, here translated ‘league’, was literally the distance between two ‘rests’.
- 19 Þórr.
- 20 I.e., while Loki is still in the air, before he lands; cf. Loki’s alias *Loptur* ‘Airy (One)’.
- 21 Þórr.
- 22 I.e., dress.
- 23 Or perhaps ‘torc of blazes’ (ON *brisingr* ‘blaze’). This marvellous neck-band is owned by Freyja, but may derive ultimately from the *Menet* necklace of Hathor, an ancient Egyptian goddess. The Old Norse term *men Brisinga* ‘torc [or necklace] of the *Brisingar* ‘Fiery Ones/Blazers/blazes’ occurs elsewhere only in the inverted form *Brisingamen* in *SnEGylf* and *SnESkald*. The torc is, however, probably mentioned, without being so named, in other Norse texts. According to the start of the fourteenth(?) -century *Sprla þáttr* ‘Tale of Sprli’, Freyja obtained a *gullmen* ‘gold torc’ by agreeing to sleep with the four dwarves (the *Brisingar*?) who created it; later it was stolen from her by Loki at Óðinn’s behest, although she did regain it. The same, or a closely related, story is alluded to in *Haust*. 9 in the ‘Loki’-kenning *Brísings girðipiófr* ‘thief of the Brisingr-girdle’. A form of the same treasure, strangely described as a *hafnýra* ‘sea-kidney’, might also have been fought over by Loki and Heimdallr in the form of seals, to judge from the tenth-century *Húsdr.* (st. 2). It might additionally be referred to in *Ls.* 20 as a gift from Heimdallr to the goddess Gefjun. In the Old English poem *Beowulf* (ll. 1197–1214) it appears as the *Brosinga mene*, which a certain *Hama* (cf. *Heimdallr*?) took to *þære byrhtan byrig* ‘to the bright stronghold’, and which was subsequently worn by Hygelac, Beowulf’s uncle. Cf. the implicit torc of *Mengloð* ‘Torc/Necklace Glad (One)’ in *Svipdagsmál*.
- 24 Or ‘fell down’.
- 25 Freyja had a reputation for promiscuity; see e.g. *Ls.* 30–33, *Hdl.* 6 and *Sprla þáttr*.
- 26 Goddesses.
- 27 Cf. *BDr.* 1.
- 28 Or ‘brightest/most radiant of Æsir’, but Heimdallr’s whiteness is confirmed by *SnEGylf* (27, p. 25); note also *Ls.* 20. The description might imply effeminacy.
- 29 Or perhaps, since Heimdallr is usually one of the Æsir, the sense is ‘... as the Vanir otherwise (could)’ or ‘... like those others, the Vanir’. Possibly the poet did not see a fundamental distinction between the two groups of gods, or drew on a tradition now obscured or lost.

Perhaps he was aware of an ancient tradition whereby all the gods were considered to be the kin of a Vanir god called Ingvi-Freyr; see *Haust.* 10. Prescience is not limited to the Vanir, as Frigg is said to know all fates in *Ls.* 29.

30 I.e., dress.

31 Or perhaps 'dangling'.

32 Probably by putting a head-dress on his head; cf. *Brk.* 27.

33 ON *argr* is a strongly pejorative adjective denoting perverse deviance from one's rightful nature. The word could be used, among other things, to brand a man as effeminate for wearing women's clothes, as cowardly in battle and, worst of all, as willingly being the 'female' partner in a homosexual act. There could be no more offensive word for the ultra-manly Þórr. Cf. *Hrbl.* 27, *Ls.* 23–24, the related noun *ergi* 'sexual perversion' in *FSk.* 36, and *HH.* II 1 pr. and 2, where Helgi wears women's clothing.

34 'God Yard/Enclosure', abode of the gods.

35 Loki's use of the neut. pl. form *tvau* '(we) two' classifies either himself or Þórr as female. Cf. *Brk.* 12, where *tvau* is unremarkable.

36 Þórr's chariot is drawn by two goats. See *Hym.* 7.

37 Cf. *Haust.* 16, *Hdl.* 49(?).

38 Hall benches were covered with fresh straw for the arrival of guests.

39 'Ship Towns', home of Njǫrðr.

40 Cf. *Hym.* 18.

41 Or 'He ate one ox'. The eater is Þórr. Cf. *Hym.* 15.

42 Þórr.

43 The pl. is puzzling.

44 Þrymr.

45 Presumably a linen headdress, perhaps with a veil.

46 This line lacks alliteration in the Old Norse, and therefore is probably corrupt.

47 A giantess.

48 A gift from the bride to the groom's family.

49 Probably golden arm-rings. For the likely meaning of *rauðr* 'red' here, see note to *Vkv.* 5.

50 *Mjöllnir* 'Miller/Crusher', Þórr's hammer, is an obviously phallic object. Its placement in the maiden's lap might symbolize the marriage's physical consummation. The Eyrarland image, a bronze figurine from medieval Iceland, possibly shows Þórr holding a phallus-like *Mjöllnir*.

51 The verb *vígja* 'to bless, consecrate, hallow' is also used of Þórr's consecration of his goats and of Baldr's funeral pyre in *SnEGylf* (44, p. 37; 49, p. 46), and of his blessing of runes or runic monuments. Þrymr might also be unintentionally inviting his own doom, since *vígja* may also have had overtones of 'consign to perdition'.

52 *Vár* 'Vow (of peace or fidelity)' is a goddess, details of whom survive in *SnEGylf* (35, p. 29): the ninth goddess, she hears people's oaths and private agreements between men and women, and punishes those who break them.

53 Quite possibly coin- or moon-shaped metal discs decorating Freyja's torc.