



# THE POETIC EDDA

A Dual-Language Edition

EDWARD PETTIT



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# Hamðismál

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*Hamðismál* (*Hm.*) ‘The Lay of Hamðir’, more fully *Hamðismál in fornu* ‘The Ancient Lay of Hamðir’, survives on fol. 44v–45v of **R** and brings its collection of Eddic poetry to a fierce and memorable conclusion. It is arguably the codex’s finest heroic poem, and likely to be among its oldest. Possible echoes in skaldic verses by Torf-Einarr Rognvaldsson, a jarl of the Orkneys in the early tenth century, may point to the existence of a version of *Hm.* by then.<sup>1</sup> That key aspects of a form of the story told in *Hm.* were known in ninth-century Norway is shown by stt. 3–6 of *Ragnarsdrápa* ‘Ragnarr’s Poem’, a skaldic composition attributed to Bragi Boddason, a poet thought to have been active in Norway c. 850–70. These four stanzas, quoted in *SnESkáld* (I, 42, pp. 50–51), describe scenes on a shield belonging to Ragnarr loðbrók which depicted the attack of Guðrún’s sons, Hamðir and Sǫrli, on the Gothic King Jǫrmunrekkr and their subsequent stoning.<sup>2</sup> At least one aspect of the story treated in *Hm.* has much earlier roots than that, however. For the vengeance exacted by Hamðir and Sǫrli on Jǫrmunrekkr for the killing of their sister, Svanhildr, is also attested, albeit in different circumstances and different form, in the mid-sixth-century *Getica* of Jordanes.<sup>3</sup>

Postdating *Hm.* are other Northern versions of the story, which attest to its popularity. Thirteenth-century Old Norse prose accounts survive in *SnESkáld* (I, 42) and chapters 42–44 of *VS*, the latter account being partly based on a version of *Hm.*, from which it quotes the first half of st. 28. Earlier, in the twelfth century, the story was told in Saxo Grammaticus’ *GD* (8.10.10–14), in which the Goths have become Danes and the avenging brothers Hellespontines. There are also German accounts, including references in the Latin *Annales Quedlinburgenses* ‘Annals of Quedlinburg’ and *Chronicon Wirziburgense* ‘Chronicle of Würzburg’ from around the year 1000, and a sixteenth-century Low German ballad called *Koninc Ermenrikes Dot* ‘King Ermenrik’s Death’.<sup>4</sup>

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1 See U. Dronke, ed. and trans., *The Poetic Edda: Volume I. Heroic Poems* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), pp. 214–17. For an edition and translation of Torf-Einarr’s verses, see *SPSMA* I, 129–38.

2 See also *SPSMA* III, 31–38.

3 See the introduction to *Ghv*.

4 For detailed discussion of relevant Norse and German texts, and their interrelationships, see C. Brady, *The Legends of Ermanaric* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1943); G. Zink, *Les légendes héroïques de Dietrich et d’Ermanich dans les littératures germaniques* (Lyon: IAC, 1950); Dronke, *Poetic Edda: Volume I*, pp. 192–224; von See et al., *Kommentar*, Bd. 7.

*Hm.* is composed almost entirely in *fornyrðislag*. The only exception is a single stanza of *ljóðaháttir* (29), which need not necessarily therefore be an interpolation. Some early scholars raised serious doubts about the poem's integrity and considered it something of a noble ruin, but others (probably more enlightened) subsequently discern a largely complete and finely crafted poem by a poet of rare skill—which does not, of course, necessarily mean that he may not have drawn on diverse sources. Although it is likely that st. 12 has been displaced from its original position after st. 14, and although st. 22 appears partly corrupt, *Hm.* is mostly comprehensible as it stands and appears to require no major textual surgery.

That is not, however, to say that *Hm.* is easy to appreciate in all respects, especially as it is not always wholly clear who is speaking (R's attribution of st. 26 to Hamðir may well be mistaken). The poem's many vivid and often violent images—of, for example, Svanhildr being trampled by horses, Guðrún standing as a stripped, isolated tree, a man hanging from a gallows as a likely sacrifice to Óðinn, Jǫrmunrekkr's severed limbs burning in a fire, and Hamðir and Sǫrli surmounting corpses like eagles on a bough—make immediate and lasting impressions. But full appreciation of *Hm.*'s terse, confrontational and often sententious dialogue requires careful consideration, not just of what the characters say explicitly but also of what they do not state but may communicate implicitly.<sup>5</sup>

At its heart, *Hm.* is a tale of human tragedy both self-inflicted by human failings and predestined, being played out against a supernatural backdrop of weeping elves, a delighting ogress, inciting female spirits and the fatal decree of the Nornir. If Hamðir and Sǫrli, as 'brothers of the same mother' (24), had not acted angrily on their prejudice against their half-brother Erpr, 'the man of a separate mother' (14) whom they called a 'bastard' (12), they would have escaped Jǫrmunrekkr's hall with their lives, because the king would have been unable to command their stoning. Hamðir comes to recognize this: 'Off would be the head [of Jǫrmunrekkr] now, if Erpr [still] lived, the battle-brave brother of us both' (28). Yet, although Hamðir and Sǫrli had a choice, it seems they were fated to make the wrong one (or at least believed this was the case); in other words, they both had options and had none, their fate was at once in their hands and out of it. It is fitting that this haunting paradox which lies at the heart of much Northern myth and legend should find such telling expression in R's climactic poem, which marks the extinction of Guðrún's line.

5 See T. A. Shippey, 'Speech and the Unspoken in *Hamðismál*', in M. J. Toswell, ed., *Prosody and Poetics in the Early Middle Ages: Essays in Honour of C. B. Heatt* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), pp. 180–96.

## Synopsis

An introductory stanza sets the scene by referring to the burgeoning of grim deeds, the weeping of elves, and the pain that all men's afflictions cause in the early morning (1). It was long ago, the poet says, that Guðrún incited her sons, Hamðir and Sqrli, to avenge their sister, Svanhildr (2). She reminds them how Svanhildr was trampled to death by Jormunrekkr's horses (3), and declares that they are the last of her line (4) and that she stands alone, bereft (5). Hamðir reminds her that it was her dead brothers, Hogni and Gunnarr, who slew her beloved Sigurðr (6–7), whereupon she undertook to kill her sons by Atli, thereby bringing grief upon herself (8). Sqrli says that he has no wish to argue with his mother, but that the revenge she is asking them to take will cause her further grief, as he and his brother will die (9–10). The brothers set off to avenge Svanhildr (11) and met their half-brother, Erpr, whom they insulted and killed after failing to appreciate the wisdom in his enigmatic statement that he would help them as one foot helps another (12–15). They then dressed themselves finely (16) and encountered Svanhildr's stepson and reputed lover (Randvér), who was hanging wounded on a gallows (17).

The scene shifts to Jormunrekkr's hall, whose rowdy occupants are alerted to the arrival of the brothers and warned to devise a plan, as they are about to face mighty warriors intent on avenging the dead maiden (18–19). Jormunrekkr laughed at this and declares himself delighted at the prospect of capturing and hanging Hamðir and Sqrli (20–21). What happens next is unclear, due to textual corruption, but a woman (perhaps Óðinn incognito) possibly expresses incredulity that the two brothers alone could defeat two hundred enemies (22). Battle is joined and Hamðir taunts Jormunrekkr, whose arms and legs the brothers have severed and thrown in the fire (23–24). Jormunrekkr (perhaps inspired by Óðinn) roars at his men to stone the brothers, since iron weapons cannot hurt them (25), whereupon (according to the likely original form of the text) Sqrli castigates Hamðir for loosening the 'bag' (that is, prompting what is left of Jormunrekkr to speak) (26–27). Hamðir (apparently) then regrets the killing of Erpr, whom he now recognizes as their brother, with whose help they would have beheaded Jormunrekkr and thereby prevented him from ordering their stoning (28). Sqrli (possibly) says that the two of them won't fight with each other like wolves (29). Hamðir (possibly) then proclaims that they have fought well, won glory—and that no man outlives the time at which the Nornir determine he will die (30). A final stanza records where Sqrli and Hamðir fell (31).

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## Hamðismál

1. Spruttu á tái tregnar íðir,  
græti álfa in glýstomu;  
ár um morgin manna þolva  
sútir hverjar sorg um kveykva!
2. Vara þat nú, né í gær,  
þat hefir langt liðit síðan —  
er fátt fornara, fremr var þat hálfu —  
er hvatti Guðrún, Gjúka borin,  
sonu sína unga at hefna Svanhildar.
3. ‘Systir var ykkur Svanhildr um heitin,  
sú er Þormunrekr jóm um traddi,  
hvítum ok svörtum, á hervegi,  
grám, gangtómum Gotna hrossum.
4. ‘Eptir er ykk þrungit, þjóðkonunga —  
lifið einir ér þátta ættar minnar!
5. ‘Einstœð em ek orðin sem osp í holti,  
fallin at frændum sem fura at kvisti,  
vaðin at vilja sem viðr at laufi,  
þá er in kvistskœða kœmr um dag varman!’
6. Hitt kvað þá Hamðir inn hugumstóri:  
‘Lítt myndir þú þá, Guðrún, leyfa dáð Högna,  
er þeir Sigurð svefni ór vökdou —  
saztu á beð, en banar hlógu!
7. ‘Bœkr váru þínar, inar bláhvítu,  
ofnar völundum, flutu í vers dreyra;  
svalt þá Sigurðr, saztu yfir dauðum,  
glýja þú né gáðir — Gunnarr þér svá vildi!
8. ‘Atla þóttisk þú stríða at Erps morði  
ok at Eitils aldragi — þat var þér enn verra!  
Svá skyldi hverr oðrum verja til aldraga,  
sverði sárbeitu, at sér né stríddit!’
9. Hitt kvað þá Sqrli — svinna hafði hann hyggju:  
‘Vilkat ek við móður málum skipta,  
orðs þikkir enn vant ykkru hváru:  
hvers biðr þú nú, Guðrún, er þú at gráti né færat?’



## The Lay of Hamðir

1.                   There sprouted on the threshold<sup>1</sup> sorrowful deeds,  
                      the glee-stemmed<sup>2</sup> grievings of elves;<sup>3</sup>  
                      early in the morning any afflictions  
                      of the evils of men engender sorrow!
2.                   It wasn't [just] now, nor yesterday,  
                      it has long since passed —  
                      few things are older, it was further away by half —  
                      when Guðrún, born of Gjúki, incited  
                      her young sons to avenge Svanhildr.
3.                   'Your<sup>4</sup> sister was called Svanhildr,  
                      she whom Jǫrmunrekkr trampled with steeds,  
                      white and black, on the army-way,<sup>5</sup>  
                      with the grey, gait-tamed horses of the Gotar.<sup>6</sup>
4.                   'You're crushed back, people-kings —  
                      you alone [still] live of the strands of my family!
5.                   'T've become lone-standing like an aspen in a wood,  
                      bereft of kinsmen like a fir of branches,  
                      stripped of my desire<sup>7</sup> like a tree<sup>8</sup> of leaf,  
                      when the branch-damaging one<sup>9</sup> comes on a warm day!'
6.                   Then Hamðir the great-hearted said this:  
                      'Little would you, Guðrún, have lauded Högni's deed then,  
                      when they woke Sigurðr from sleep —  
                      you sat on the bed, and the slayers laughed!<sup>10</sup>
7.                   'Your embroidered coverlets, the blue-white ones,<sup>11</sup>  
                      woven by skilled craftsmen, floated in your husband's gore;<sup>12</sup>  
                      Sigurðr died then, you sat over the dead man,  
                      you didn't pay heed to gaiety<sup>13</sup> — Gunnarr willed it so for you!
8.                   'You thought to harm Atli through Erpr's murder  
                      and Eitill's life-end<sup>14</sup> — that was even worse for you!  
                      Everyone should bring another to life-end,  
                      with a wound-biting<sup>15</sup> sword, in such a way that one didn't harm oneself!'
9.                   Then Sqrli said this — he had a shrewd mind:  
                      'I don't want to bandy words with my mother,  
                      [though] it seems to each of you two that there's still a lack of talk:  
                      what do you ask for now, Guðrún, that won't bring you to weeping?

10.                   ‘Bræðr grát þú þína ok buri svása,  
niðja náborna, leidda nær rógi!  
Okkr skaltu ok, Guðrún, gráta báða,  
er hér sitjum feigir á mörum — fjarri munum deyjja!’
11.                   Gengu ór garði, gørvir at eiskra;  
liðu þá yfir, ungir, úrig fjöll,  
mörum húnlenskum, morðs at hefna.
- 12 [14].            Þá kvað þat Erpr einu sinni —  
                          mærr, um lék á mars baki:  
‘Illt er blauðum hal brautir kenna!’  
Kóðu harðan mjök hornung vera!
- 13 [12].            Fundu á stræti stórbrogðóttan:  
‘Hvé mun jarpskammr okkr fultingja?’
- 14 [13].            Svaraði inn sundrmæðri, svá kvazk veita mundu  
                          fulting frændum sem fótr oðrum.  
                          ‘Hvat megi fótr foeti veita,  
                          né holdgróin hõnd annarri?’
15.                   Drógu þeir ór skíði skíðjárn,  
                          mækis eggjar, at mun flagði;  
þverðu þeir þrótt sinn at þriðjungi,  
létu mōg ungan til moldar hníga.
16.                   Skóku loða, skálmir festu,  
                          ok goðbornir smugu í guðvef.
17.                   Fram lágu brautir, fundu vástígu  
                          ok systur son sáran á meiði,  
                          vargtré vindkõld vestan bæjar;  
trýtti æ trõnu hvõt — títt varat biða!
18.                   Glaumr var í hõllu, halir oðreifir,  
                          ok til gota ekki gerðut heyra,  
                          áðr halr hugfullr í horn um þaut.
19.                   Segja fóru Jormunrekki  
                          at sénir váru seggir und hjálmum:  
‘Rœðið ér um ráð! Ríkir eru komnir —  
fyr mátkum hafið ér mōnnum mey um tradda!’



20. Hló þá Jormunrekkr, hendi drap á kampa,  
beiddisk at bröngu, þöðvaðisk at víni;  
skók hann skör jarpa, sá á skjöld hvítan,  
lét hann sér í hendi hvarfa ker gullit.
21. ‘Sæll ek þá þóttumk, ef ek sjá knætta  
Hamði ok Sörla í hollu minni;  
buri mynda ek þá binda með boga strengjum,  
goðbörn Gjúka, festa á gálga!’
22. Hitt kvað þá Hróðrglöð, stóð uf hléðum,  
mæfingr mælti við mög þenna:  
‘. . . þvíat þat heita, at hlýðigi myni —  
mega tveir menn einir tíu hundruð Gotna  
binda eða berja í borg inni há?’
23. Styrr varð í ranni, stukku ǫlskálir,  
í blóði bragnar lágu komit ór brjósti Gotna.
24. Hitt kvað þá Hamðir inn hugumstóri:  
‘Æstir, Jormunrekkr, okkarrar kvámu,  
brœðra sammœðra, innan borgar þinnar;  
fœtr sér þú þína, höndum sér þú þínum,  
Jormunrekkr, orpit í eld heitan!’
25. Þá hraut við inn reginkunngi,  
baldr í brynju, sem björn hryti:  
‘Grýtið ér á gumna, allz geirar né bíta,  
eggjar né járn, Jónakrs sonu!’
26. Hitt kvað þá Hamðir inn hugumstóri:  
‘Böll vanntu, bróðir, er þú þann belg leystir —  
opt ór þeim belg böll ráð koma!’
27. ‘Hug hefðir þú, Hamðir, ef þú hefðir hyggjandi;  
mikils er á mann hvern vant, er manvits er!’
28. ‘Af væri nú haufuð, ef Erpr lifði,  
bróðir okkarr inn þöðfrækni, er vit á braut vágum,  
verr inn víðfrækni — hvöttumk at dísir —  
gumi inn gunnhelgi — gørðumk at vígi!’
29. ‘Ekki hygg ek okkr vera úlfa dæmi,  
at vit mynim sjálfir um sakask,  
sem grey Norna, þau er, gráðug, eru  
í auðn um alin!’

20. Then Jǫrmunrekkr laughed, stroked his moustache with his hand,  
worked himself up for battle, grew warlike at his wine;  
he shook his reddish-brown hair, regarded his white shield,  
he made the golden goblet turn in his hand.
21. 'I should think myself blessed, then, if I could see  
Hamðir and Sǫrli in my hall;  
I would then bind the boys with bows' strings,  
the god-born<sup>49</sup> of Gjúki, fasten them to gallows!<sup>50</sup>
22. Then Hróðrglǫð(?)<sup>51</sup> said this — she stood by the doors<sup>52</sup> —  
slender-fingered, she spoke to this young man:<sup>53</sup>  
'...(?) because they promise it, that would not be obedience(?)<sup>54</sup> —  
can two men alone bind or beat [down]  
two hundred Gotar in the high stronghold?'
23. There was uproar in the house, ale-cups flew about,  
men lay in blood come from the breast<sup>55</sup> of the Gotar.
24. Then Hamðir the great-hearted said this:  
'You wished, Jǫrmunrekkr, for our coming,  
brothers of the same mother,<sup>56</sup> within your stronghold;  
you see your feet,<sup>57</sup> you see your hands,<sup>58</sup>  
Jǫrmunrekkr, hurled into the hot fire!<sup>59</sup>
25. Then the one descended from ruling powers<sup>60</sup> roared at that,<sup>61</sup>  
bold in his mail-coat, as a bear roars:  
'Stone the men, since spears don't bite,  
[or] edges<sup>62</sup> or iron,<sup>63</sup> Jónakr's sons!<sup>64</sup>
26. Then Hamðir(?) the great-hearted said this:<sup>65</sup>  
'You did badly, brother, when you loosened that bag<sup>66</sup> —  
bold counsels often come from that bag!<sup>67</sup>
27. 'You'd have had [some] heart,<sup>68</sup> Hamðir, if you'd had insight;  
every man lacks much when innate intelligence is wanting!'
- 28.<sup>69</sup> 'Off would be the head<sup>70</sup> now, if Erpr [still] lived,<sup>71</sup>  
the battle-brave brother of us both, whom we slew on the way,  
the widely brave man<sup>72</sup> — supernatural women<sup>73</sup> spurred me —<sup>74</sup>  
the combat-holy man<sup>75</sup> — to the killing!'
- 29.<sup>76</sup> 'I don't think wolves are an example to us two,  
that we shall ourselves fight each other,  
like the bitches of the Nornir,<sup>77</sup> those which, greedy, are  
nourished in the wilderness!'

30.                   ‘Vel hofum vit vegit! Stöndum á val Gotna,  
                          ofan eggmóðum, sem ernir á kvisti!  
Góðs hofum tírar fengit, þótt skylim nú eða í gær deyja —  
                          kveld lífir maðr ekki eptir kvið Norna!’

31.                   Þar fell Sqrli at salar gafli,  
                          en Hamðir hné at húsbaki.

Þetta eru kǫlluð ‘Hamðismál in fornu.’

30.<sup>78</sup>            ‘Well have we two slain! We stand on the Gotar’s slaughtered,  
                  above edge-weary ones,<sup>79</sup> like eagles on a branch!  
We’ve seized good glory, even if we shall die now or another day<sup>80</sup> —  
                  no one lives the evening after the Nornir’s decree!’<sup>81</sup>

31.                            There fell Sǫrli at the hall’s gable,  
                                  and Hamðir sank at the back of the house.<sup>82</sup>

This is called *Hamðismál in fornu* [‘The Ancient Lay of Hamðir’].

## Textual Apparatus to *Hamðismál*

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

1/1 *Spruttu*] The first letter is illegible in the photograph in the facsimile volume of **R**; this reading is therefore taken from the transcription therein

10/4 *leidda*] **R** *leiþa*

17/8 *biða*] **R** *biðia*

20/1 [*þrmmunrekk*] **R** *ior* / *mvr* with the rest of the word obliterated

22/8 *hundruð*] **R** *hvndropom*

28/5 *verr*] **R** *vaR*

28/8 *gørðumk*] **R** *gorþvmz*

29/1 *okkr*] **R** *ycr*

## Notes to the Translation

- 1 Cf. *Ghv.* 9.
- 2 I.e., joyless.
- 3 Probably benevolent ancestral spirits or other supernatural beings affiliated to a human family.
- 4 Guðrún uses the dual pronoun to address Hamðir and Sqrli together.
- 5 Or 'common highway'.
- 6 Goths. Cf. *Ghv.* 2.
- 7 Or 'of joy'.
- 8 Or 'wood'.
- 9 Probably a woman gathering wood. Otherwise, perhaps a gale, a fire, an axe or a hind.
- 10 Cf. *Ghv.* 4.
- 11 I.e., ones with blue and white stripes.
- 12 Cf. *Ghv.* 4.
- 13 I.e., Guðrún was distraught.
- 14 I.e., death. Erpr and Eitill were Guðrún's sons by Atli. The former is distinct from the Erpr whom Hamðir and Sqrli meet later in this poem.
- 15 Or 'painfully biting'.
- 16 Cf. *FSk.* 10.
- 17 This may simply mean 'southern'.
- 18 This stanza is presumably either an original stanza that has been misplaced—it would fit more comfortably after *Hm.* 14—or an awkward accretion.
- 19 He is, of course, distinct from Atli's son Erpr, whom Guðrún killed.
- 20 I.e., spineless, cowardly; cf. *harðan* 'hard' in the next line. It is unclear whether Erpr knows that, unlike him, Hamðir and Sqrli were hard in the sense that they could not be pierced by iron weapons (see *Hm.* 25).



- 21 Literally, 'ways'. Another proverbial statement, one that prompts the decidedly uncowardly Hamðir and Sqrli to kill their half-brother.
- 22 Hamðir and Sqrli.
- 23 Whether Erpr was indeed of illegitimate birth is uncertain.
- 24 Hamðir and Sqrli.
- 25 Or 'planning great deeds'. The reference is to Erpr.
- 26 Here *jarp-* 'reddish-brown' puns on *Erpr*.
- 27 This question is asked by Sqrli or Hamðir, or by both together. A prior offer of help by Erpr may be inferred.
- 28 Erpr, whose mother's name is unknown. Cf. *Hm.* 24 where Hamðir describes himself and Sqrli as 'brothers of the same mother'; also the prose preceding *Ghv.*, where, by contrast, Erpr is Guðrún's son.
- 29 Or 'leg'.
- 30 Proverbial.
- 31 I.e., hand (or arm) of the same flesh.
- 32 This foolish, impatient question is asked by either Sqrli or, much more likely, Hamðir (or by both together). It possibly cuts Erpr's proverbial utterance short.
- 33 I.e., the sword.
- 34 Perhaps one of the *disir* (cf. *Hm.* 28, *Rm.* 24); less likely, the goddess Hel.
- 35 Erpr.
- 36 In *VS* 44, Hamðir and Sqrli kill Erpr because they misinterpret his cryptic words as indicating that he would not help them; in *SnESkáld* (I, 42, p. 50), their motivation is to hurt Guðrún, who loved Erpr most. In *VS* 44, following the killing of Erpr, the usefulness of hand to foot, and of foot to foot, is demonstrated when Hamðir trips and has to use one hand to steady himself, and when Sqrli stumbles and has to use both feet to regain his balance; in *SnESkáld* (I, 42, p. 50), Sqrli stumbles and supports one leg with one arm.
- 37 Sqrli and Hamðir.
- 38 Randvér, Svanhildr's stepson and reputed lover; see the prose preceding *Ghv.*
- 39 I.e., of a gallows; alternatively, 'tree'. The combination of wounding and hanging may indicate a sacrifice to Óðinn. Cf. *Hm.* 21.
- 40 Or 'criminal'.
- 41 Gallows.
- 42 Randvér's corpse, which, as carrion, would attract birds. The crane (*trana*) is not a carrion-bird, but here presumably stands in for such.
- 43 Jǫrmunrekkr's hall.
- 44 Gothic horses were greatly prized; here they are presumably ridden by Hamðir and Sqrli. Alternatively, *Gota* 'Goths', presumably Hamðir and Sqrli.
- 45 Jǫrmunrekkr's sentries or other retainers.
- 46 The Old Norse line lacks alliteration, which may well indicate textual corruption.
- 47 Literally, 'under'.
- 48 Pl.
- 49 I.e., children descended from gods. Alternatively, *góð börn* 'good children'.

- 50 Possibly as sacrifices to Óðinn; cf. *Hm.* 17. The Old Norse line's alliteration is faulty, or at least unusual; the second half should perhaps be *á galga festa*, with the same meaning.
- 51 'Glory Glad', usually interpreted as a woman's name. Its bearer is possibly Óðinn in female form. Alternatively, it may just be an adjective describing an unnamed female observer.
- 52 Specifically, the door(s) to a sleeping chamber along the side of the hall.
- 53 The identity of the young man is unclear.
- 54 This line resists interpretation and may well be corrupt. Some text might have dropped out before it, though there is no indication of loss in **R**.
- 55 Or 'chest'. Unless this refers to Jǫrmunrekkr alone, presumably more than one man's chest may be inferred.
- 56 This refers solely to Hamðir and Sǫrli.
- 57 Or 'legs'.
- 58 Or 'arms'. The Old Norse line has unconventional alliteration.
- 59 The brothers have dismembered Jǫrmunrekkr.
- 60 Probably Jǫrmunrekkr, the ruling powers being gods. Alternatively, 'the one with divine/powerful insight', which, although still describing Jǫrmunrekkr, might suggest a link with Óðinn in particular. In *VS* 44, Óðinn advises Jǫrmunrekkr to stone the brothers; he intervenes similarly in *GD* (8.10.14).
- 61 This line lacks conventional alliteration.
- 62 Sword-edges.
- 63 Or 'iron weapons'.
- 64 *VS* 44 (cf. *SnESkald* I, 42, p. 49) indicates that Guðrún had made Hamðir and Sǫrli's armour invulnerable to iron, but *Hm.* makes no mention of this.
- 65 Either the attribution of these words to Hamðir is mistaken or Sǫrli spoke the second half of *Hm.* 24. It seems more likely that the following words were originally spoken by the shrewd Sǫrli, and that the half-stanzas *Hm.* 26 and 27 were originally a single full stanza spoken by him.
- 66 The 'bag' is Jǫrmunrekkr's head and torso.
- 67 This line might be corrupt. Perhaps it originally read *opt ór rauðum belg þoll ráð koma* 'bold counsels often come from a red [i.e., bloody] bag'.
- 68 Or 'mind', 'spirit'.
- 69 It is not entirely clear who speaks *Hm.* 28–30. However, *VS* 44 quotes a close variant of the first half of this stanza, and both the saga and *SnESkald* (I, 42, p. 50) attribute words corresponding to this stanza to Hamðir.
- 70 Jǫrmunrekkr's head.
- 71 *SnESkald* (I, 42, p. 49) says that Guðrún had instructed Hamðir and Sǫrli to cut off Jǫrmunrekkr's arms and legs, and Erpr his head.
- 72 If the rather awkward manuscript reading *varr* (= *várr* 'our') is kept, the sense is 'the widely brave one of ours'.
- 73 Cf. *Hm.* 15.
- 74 This line lacks conventional alliteration in the Old Norse.
- 75 Erpr again.

- 76 This is the only stanza of *ljóðaháttir* in *Hm*.
- 77 Supernatural females who determined humans' fates. Their 'bitches' are presumably wolves.
- 78 This edition assigns this stanza to Hamðir, but it might alternatively be spoken by Sörli or perhaps by both brothers together.
- 79 Goths slain by weapons. Cf. *Grm.* 53.
- 80 Or perhaps 'or tomorrow'.
- 81 Cf. *Fm.* 11.
- 82 This may indicate that the brothers fought their way separately outside the hall, where stones would presumably be more plentiful.

