



THE POETIC EDDA

A Dual-Language Edition

EDWARD PETTIT



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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)

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Völuspá (*Hauksbók*)

The fourteenth-century manuscript *Hauksbók* (**H**)—AM 544 4^{to}—contains, on fol. 20r–21r, a version of *Völuspá* ‘The Prophecy of the Seeress’ (*Vsp.*) which differs substantially from that of the Codex Regius (**R**). The relationship between these versions, and another from which *SnEGylf* quotes, has not been precisely determined, but their differences probably result from a combination of oral diffusion (which may have involved some recomposition), interpolation, scribal error and other transmissional damage. They are extensive enough to warrant presentation of **H**’s text separately from **R**’s. They prompt reflection on the uncertainties surrounding the composition, transmission and preservation of Eddic poems in general, of the roles of poets, scribes and chance as creators of myths, and of the variation of Norse mythological ideas from person to person and place to place, both synchronically and diachronically.

H’s text is distinguished from **R**’s most strikingly by the omission of any explicit description of the killing of the god Baldr and by apparent narrative disjunctions that make the poem harder to follow. If **H**’s text is less comprehensible and on the whole less satisfying than **R**’s, it does, however, include passages of great interest that are absent from **R**. These include a compellingly ghastly image of the world-serpent gaping across the sky like an apocalyptic return of the primeval void (**H** 47), and, in a penultimate half-stanza (**H** 57), a reference to the arrival of a ‘commanding one’, who rules all, to ‘divine judgement(?)’, which raises questions about the nature and extent of Christian influence on the poem.

For further introductory remarks on *Vsp.*, see the introduction to the **R** text.

Synopsis

A seeress requests an audience from ‘all holy kindreds’, and asks whether a certain person (unnamed) wants her to recount her earliest memories (**H** 1). She tells of giants who fostered her, nine worlds, a glorious tree (Yggdrasill) beneath the ground (2), and Ymir, a giant who lived when there was otherwise only a void (3). She recalls how the sons of Borr (Óðinn, Vili and Vé) raised up earth (4), and mentions the young sun, stars and moon, before they had established their places (5).

The gods, she says, then named night and day (6). They made treasures and tools (7). They happily played board games and knew no want of gold, until three giantesses arrived (8). Then the gods assembled to decide about the creation of dwarves (9). There follow lists of dwarf-names, headed by Móðsognir and Durinn (at least some of this material is probably interpolated) (10–16).

The seeress then recalls the discovery on the shore of the inanimate forms of Ask and Embla, the first man and woman (17), which three gods, Óðinn, Hœnir and Lóðurr, animated (18). Her memories then return to Yggdrasill, now standing tall above a spring (19), from which came three maidens (the Nornir) who inscribed the fates of people on wood (20).

Next the seeress records how the gods discussed who had polluted the air (metaphorically) and promised Freyja to the giants (21). Þórr breaks oaths, probably by killing a giant builder to whom the gods had promised Freyja as payment for his work (22).

The seeress's thoughts turn to the god Heimdallr, whose hearing is hidden beneath Yggdrasill, and to Óðinn's sacrifice of an eye in return for wisdom (23). She then describes the birth of wolves to 'the old one' in the forest of Járnviðr and prophesies that one of them, in troll-form, will (arguably) assault the sun on behalf of the moon (24), perhaps as a result of which subsequent summers become dark and all weather treacherous (25).

Next the seeress, who apparently refers to herself in the third person, recalls the world's first war. It may have been caused when an itinerant sorceress called Gullveig (also known as Heiðr), possibly associated with the divine tribe called the Vanir, was suspended on spearpoints and burnt three times in the hall of Hárr (Óðinn), in an unsuccessful attempt to kill her (26–27). Having debated the best course of action (28), the Æsir (the tribe of gods led by Óðinn) fought the Vanir, with Óðinn casting the first shot, but the Vanir broke into the Æsir's stronghold (29).

After an obscure reference to intestinal fetters (and without mentioning Baldr's murder by Höðr at the instigation of Loki), the seeress pictures Sigyn sitting beside her husband, the presumably captive Loki (30), this being the first of multiple intimations of Ragnarok.

Garmr (a dog or wolf), she says, howls loudly—in the first of several such mentions—before prophesying that the howling wolf (Garmr/Fenrir) will break free of its bonds (31). Next she describes the giant Eggþér playing his harp, cockerels crowing and the waking of Óðinn's chosen warriors (32–33). She also mentions an ominous hall of snakes, where perjurers and adulterers suffered, where the dragon Niðhoggr sucked corpses and a wolf tore men's flesh (34–35).

Another reference to Garmr's howling and the seeress's own powers of prophecy (36) precedes a prediction that kinsmen will kill each other before the world ends (37). The seeress goes on to say that the giants play, the god Heimdallr blows his horn, and Óðinn consults the head of Mímr in search of knowledge (38). Yggdrasill groans

and shakes, and the giant (Garmr/Fenrir or Loki) breaks loose (39). The gods take council, the land of giants roars, and dwarves groan (40).

Garmr howls again (41). The giant Hrymr journeys from the east, the snake of Miðgarðr writhes, an eagle shrieks, and Naglfar (a ship?) breaks loose (42). A ship (Naglfar?) journeys from the east, bearing the giants, Loki and the wolf (43). The fire-demon Surtr arrives, probably with a radiant, fiery sword, cliffs collapse, witches fall down, people travel to Hel, the underworld of the dead, and the sky splits (44). Óðinn dies fighting the wolf, and Freyr dies fighting Surtr (45).

Garmr howls once more (46), the world-encircling snake gapes across the sky and Þórr will go to meet it (47). Þórr (mortally wounded?) steps away from the snake (48). The sun turns black, the earth sinks into the sea, the stars disappear, and flame rages against the sky (49).

For a final time, Garmr howls and the seeress looks further ahead (50).

She sees the green earth rising from the sea again (51). The surviving gods talk about the world-serpent and Óðinn's runic wisdom (52). They will recover their lost gaming pieces (53), fields will grow green without being sown, all evil will be remedied, and Hqðr and Baldr will return from the dead to inhabit Óðinn's halls (54). Hænir can then draw lots, and the sons of two brothers (probably Hqðr and Baldr) inhabit the world (55). She also sees a gleaming hall, located on Gimlé, where honourable people shall live happily forever (56).

She records that a 'commanding one', who rules all, will come to 'divine judgement(?)' (57). Her final image is of the flying dragon Niðhoggr carrying corpses, after which she says she will sink (58).

Further Reading

See the works listed in the Further Reading section for the **R** text, especially E. Mundal's 'Oral or Scribal Variation in *Völuspá*: A Case Study in Old Norse Poetry' and G. Steinsland's 'The Fantastic Future and the Norse Sibyl of *Völuspá*'.

Völuspá

1. 'Hljóðs bið ek allar helgar kindir,
meiri ok minni, mögu Heimdallar!
Viltu at ek, Váfgðrs, vel fram telja,
forn spjöll fira, þau er ek fremst um man?
2. 'Ek man jötna, ár um borna,
þá er forðum mik fædda hqfðu;
nú man ek heima, nú íviðjur,
mjötvið mæran, fyr mold neðan.
3. 'Ár var alda, þar er Ymir bygði;
vara sandr né sjór né svalar unnir;
jörð fannsk æva né upphiminn,
gap var ginnunga, en gras ekki.
4. 'Áðr Bors synir bjóðum of ypðu,
þeir er mæran Miðgarð skópu;
Sól skein sunnan á salar steina,
þá var grund gróin grœnum lauki.
5. 'Sól varp sunnan, sinni Mána,
hendi inni hægri of himinjöður;
Sól þat né vissi hvar hon sali átti,
stjornur þat né vissu hvar þær staði áttu,
Máni þat né vissi hvat hann megins átti.
6. 'Þá gengu regin qll á røkstóla,
ginnheilög goð, ok um þat gættusk:
nótt ok niðjum nqfn um gáfu,
morgin hétu ok miðjan dag,
undorn ok aptan, árum at telja.
7. 'Hittusk Æsir á Iðavelli,
afls kostuðu, alls freistuðu;
afla lögðu, auð smíðuðu,
tangir skópu ok tól gørðu.
8. 'Teflðu í túni, teitir váru,
var þeim vættugis vant ór gulli,
unz þrjár kómu þussa meyjar,
ámátkar mjök, ór Jötunheimum.

The Prophecy of the Seeress

- 1.¹

‘A hearing I ask from all holy kindreds,²
greater and lesser, the sons of Heimdallr!
Do you wish(?)³ that I well recount Váfoðr’s
ancient tales of the living, those which I recall from longest ago?⁴
2.

‘I recall giants, born of old,
those who formerly had fostered me;
nine worlds I recall, nine wood-dwelling women(?),
the glorious measure-tree, beneath the ground.
3.

‘It was early in ages when Ymir lived;
there was neither sand nor sea nor cool waves;
no earth existed at all, nor sky up above,
a gap of gaping abysses(?), and no grass at all.
4.

‘Before the sons of Borr⁵ lifted up lands,
they who gave shape to glorious Miðgarðr;
the sun shone from the south on the hall’s stones,
then the ground was overgrown with green leek.
5.

‘Sól, companion of Máni, cast from the south
her right hand over the sky-rim;⁶
Sól did not know where she had halls,
stars did not know where they had stations;
Máni did not know what might he had.
6.

‘Then all the great powers, the most holy gods,
went to their doom-seats and deliberated about it:
they gave names to night and its kindred,
called them morning and midday,
afternoon and evening, to count the years.
7.

‘The Æsir met on Iðavöllr,
they tested their strength, tried everything;⁷
they set up forges, fashioned treasure,
shaped tongs and made tools.
8.

‘They played at tables in the meadow, were merry,
there was for them no whit of a want of gold;
until three maidens of giants⁸ came,
immensely mighty, from Jötunheimar.

9. ‘Þá gengu regin ǫll á røkstóla,
ginnheilög goð, ok um þat gættusk,
hverir skyldu dvergar dróttir skepja
ór brimi blóðgu ok ór Bláins leggjum.
10. ‘Þar var Móðsognir mæztr of orðinn
dverga allra, en Durinn annarr;
þeir manlíkun mǫrg of gørðu,
dverga, í jørðu, sem Durinn sagði.
11. ‘Nýi, Niði, Norðri, Suðri,
Austri, Vestri, Alþjófr, Dvalinn,
Nár ok Náinn, Nípingr, Dáinn,
Veggr, Gandálfr, Vindálfr, Þorinn,
12. ‘Bífurrr, Báfurrr, Bǫmburrr, Nóri,
Án ok Ónarr, Ái, Mjǫðvitnir,
Þrár ok Þráinn, Þrór, Littr ok Vittr,
Nýr ok Nýráðr — nú hefi ek rekka
— Reginn ok Ráðsviðr — rétt um talða.
13. ‘Fíli, Kíli, Fundinn, Náli,
Hefti, Fíli, Hánarr ok Sviðr,
Nár ok Náinn, Nípingr, Dáinn,
Billingsr, Brúni, Bíldr ok Búri,
Frór, Fornbogi, Fræg ok Lóni,
Aurvangr, Jari, Eikinskjaldi.
14. ‘Mál er dverga í Dvalins liði
ljóna kindum til Lofars telja,
þeim er sóttu frá Salarsteini
Aurvanga sjöt til Jǫruvalla.
15. ‘Þar var Draufnir ok Dólgþrasir,
Hár, Haugspori, Hlévargr, Glóinn,
Skirfir, Virvir, Skáfiðr, Ái,
16. ‘Álfr ok Yngvi, Eikinskjaldi;
þat man æ uppi, meðan ǫld lifir,
langniðja tal Lofars hafat.
17. ‘Unz þrír kómu, þussa bræðr(?),
ástgir ok ǫflgir, Æsir, at húsi;
fundu á landi, lítt megandi,
Ask ok Emblu, ørloglausu.

9. 'Then all the great powers, the most holy gods,
went to their doom-seats and deliberated about it:
which dwarves should devise companies
from bloody surf and from Bláinn's limbs.⁹
10. 'There Móðsognir¹⁰ was made greatest
of all dwarves, and Durinn second;
they made many man-shapes,
dwarves, in the earth,¹¹ as Durinn said.¹²
11. 'Nýi, Niði, Norðri, Suðri,
Austri, Vestri, Alþjófr, Dvalinn,
Nár and Náinn,¹³ Nípingr,¹⁴ Dáinn,¹⁵
Veggr,¹⁶ Gandálfr, Vindálfr, Þorinn,¹⁷
12. 'Bífur, Báfur, Bømbur, Nóri,
Án and Ónarr, Ái, Mjøðvitnir,
Þrár¹⁸ and Práinn, Þró, Lit and Vit,
Nýr¹⁹ and Nýráðr — now I have enumerated —
Reginn and Ráðsviðr — the warriors²⁰ rightly.
13. 'Fíli, Kíli, Fundinn, Náli,
Hefti, Fíli, Hánarr and Sviðr,²¹
Nár and Náinn, Nípingr, Dáinn,²²
Billingr,²³ Brúni,²⁴ Bíldr²⁵ and Búri,²⁶
Frór,²⁷ Fornbogi,²⁸ Fræg²⁹ and Lóni,
Aurvangr, Jari, Eikinskjalði.
14. 'It's time to count the dwarves in Dvalinn's company
for the descendants of men — down to Lofarr —
for those³⁰ who set out from Salarsteinn
for the dwellings of Aurvangar at Joruvellir.
15. 'There was Draufnir and Dólgþrasir,
Hár, Haugspori, Hlévargr,³¹ Glóinn,³²
Skirfir, Virvir, Skáfiðr, Ái,
16. 'Álfr and Yngvi, Eikinskjalði;
that will always be remembered as long as the world lasts,³³
the long list of Lofarr's forefathers.
17. 'Until three came, brothers(?) of giants,³⁴
kind and strong, Æsir, to a house;
they found on the shore, with little strength,
Askr and Embla, lacking fate.

18. 'Qnd þau né áttu, óð þau né hofðu,
lá né læti né litu góða;
qnd gaf Óðinn, óð gaf Hœnir,
lá gaf Lóðurr ok litu góða.
19. 'Ask veit ek standa, heitir Yggdrasill,
hár baðmr ausinn hvíta auri;
þaðan koma döggar, þærs í dala falla,
stendr æ yfir grœnn Urðar brunni.
20. 'Þaðan koma meyjar, margs vitandi,
þrjár, ór þeim sal er á þolli stendr;
Urð hétu eina, aðra Verðandi —
skáru á skíði — Skuld ina þriðju;
þær lög lögðu, þær líf kuru
alda börnum, ørlög at segja.
21. 'Þá gengu regin öll á røkstóla,
ginnheilög guð, ok um þat gættusk:
hverr hefði lopt allt lævi blandit
eða ætt jötuns Óðs mey gefna.
22. 'Þórr einn þar vá, þrunginn móði;
hann sjaldan sitr er hann slíkt of fregn;
á gengusk eiðar, orð ok særi,
mál öll meginlig er á meðal váru.
23. 'Veit hon Heimdallar hljóð um fólgit
undir heiðvönum helgum baðmi;
á sér hon ausask aurgum forsi
af veði Valföðrs. Vitu þér enn, eða hvat?
24. 'Austr býr hin aldna í Járnviði
ok fœðir þar Fenris kindir;
verðr af þeim öllum einna nokkurr
tungls tjúgari í trolls hami.
25. 'Fyllisk fjörvi feigra manna,
rýðr ragna sjöt rauðum dreyra;
svört verða sólskin um sumur eptir,
veðr öll válynd. Vitu þér einn enn, eða hvat?
26. 'Þat man hon fólkvíg fyrst í heimi,
er Gullveig geirum studdi,
ok í holl Hárs hana brendu;
þrygjar brendu þrygjar borna,
opt, ósjaldan, þó hon enn lifir.

18. ‘They possessed no breath, they had no inspiration,
 no locks or voice or good colours;
 Óðinn gave breath, Hœnir gave inspiration,
 Lóðurr gave locks and good colours.
19. ‘I know a standing ash, it’s called Yggdrasill,
 a tall tree doused with white mud;
 from there come dewes, those that fall in dales;
 it always stands, green, above Urðr’s spring.
20. ‘From there come maidens, knowing many things,
three [maidens], from the hall³⁵ which stands by³⁶ the tree;
 one was called Urðr, the second Verðandi
— they inscribed on a stick — the third Skuld;
 they laid down laws, they chose lives
 for the sons of men, to state destinies.³⁷
21. ‘Then all the great powers, the most holy gods,
went to their doom-seats and deliberated about it:
 who³⁸ had mingled all the air with mischief,
 and given Óðr’s wife to the giant’s family.
22. ‘Þórr alone struck there,³⁹ swollen with anger;
 he seldom sits when he hears of such;
oaths were stamped on, words and sworn declarations,
all the binding speeches which were between them.
23. ‘She knows of Heimdallr’s hearing,
hidden under the light-accustomed holy tree;
 she sees a river splashing in a muddy fall
from Valfǫðr’s pledge. Would you know still [more], or what?
24. ‘East in Járnnviðr dwells the old one
 and gives birth there to Fenrir’s brood;
from among all those a certain one becomes
 the moon’s pitchforker(?) in troll’s form.
25. ‘He fills himself with the flesh of the doomed,
 reddens gods’ dwellings with red blood;
dark becomes the sunshine in following summers,
all weather treacherous. Would you know still one [more thing], or what?⁴⁰
26. ‘She recalls it, the first tribe-war in the world,
 when he stuck⁴¹ Gullveig up on spears,
 and in Hárr’s hall they burned her;
 thrice they burned the thrice-born,
 often, not seldom, yet she still lives.

27. ‘Heiði hana hétu, hvars til húsa kom,
 ok völu velspá, vitti hon ganda;
seið hon hvars hon kunni, seið hon hugleikin,
 æ var hon angan illrar brúðar.
28. ‘Þá gengu regin öll á røkstóla,
 ginnheilög goð, ok um þat gættusk,
 hvárt skyldu Æsir afráð gjalda
 eðr skyldu guðin öll gildi eiga.
29. ‘Fleygði Óðinn ok í fólk um skaut;
 þat var enn fólkvíg fyrir í heimi;
 brotinn var borðveggr borgar Ása,
 knáttu Vanir vígspá völlu sporna.
30. ‘Þá kná Vála vígþond snúa,
 heldr váru harðgør höpt ór þormum;
 þar sitr Sigyn, þeygi um sínum
 ver velglýjuð. Vitu þér enn, eða hvat?
31. ‘Geyr Garmr mjök fyr Gnúpahelli,
 festr man slitna en freki renna;
 fram sé ek lengra, fjöld kann ek segja
 um ragna rök römm, sigtíva.
32. ‘Sat þar á haugi ok sló hørpu
 gýgjar hirðir, glaðr Eggþér;
 gól yfir *honum* í gálgviði,
 fagrrauðr hani, en sá Fjalarr heitir.
33. ‘Gól yfir Ásum Gullinkambi,
 sá vegr hólða at Herjafoðrs;
 en annarr gelr fyr jorð neðan,
 sótrauðr hani, at solum Heljar.
34. ‘Sal sér hon standa sólu fjarri,
 Náströndum á, norðr horfa dyrr;
 falla eittdropar inn um ljóra,
 sá er undinn salr orma hryggjum.
35. ‘Sér hon þar vaða þunga strauma
 menn meinsvara ok morðvarga,
 ok þanns annars glepr eyrarúnu;
 þar saug Niðhoggr nái framgengna,
 sleit vargr vera. Vitu þér enn, eða hvat?

27. 'Heiðr they called her, wherever she came to houses,
and a seeress of good prophecies; she drummed up spirits(?);
she practised sorcery wherever she could, she practised sorcery
while spirit-possessed,⁴²
she was ever the delight of an evil bride.
28. 'Then all the great powers, the most holy gods,
went to their doom-seats and deliberated about it:
whether the Æsir must pay a great penalty,
or all the gods must have offerings.
29. 'Óðinn let fly and shot into the army;
that was still the tribe-war earlier⁴³ in the world;
broken was the board-wall⁴⁴ of the Æsir's stronghold,
the Vanir bestrode the plains with a battle-spell.
30. 'Then one(?) can twist Váli's battle-bonds,
those fetters were made fairly hard, from bowels;⁴⁵
there sits Sigyn by her husband,
though not well-pleased. Would you know still [more], or what?
31. 'Garmr howls loudly before Gnúpahellir,⁴⁶
the fetter will break and the ravener run free;
I see further ahead, I can say many things
about the great doom of the powers, of the victory-gods.⁴⁷
32. 'A giantess's herdsman, happy Eggþér,
sat there on a grave-mound and struck a harp;
above him, in the gallows-tree,⁴⁸ crowed
a fair-red cockerel, and he's called Fjalarr.
33. 'Gullinkambi crowed above the Æsir,
he wakens heroes in Herjaǫðr's hall;
but another crows beneath the earth,
a sooty-red cockerel, in the halls of Hel.
34. 'She sees a hall standing far from the sun,
on Nástrandir,⁴⁹ the doors face north;
venom-drops fall in through the roof-vent;
that hall is wound with the spines of snakes.
35. 'There she sees wading swift currents
perjured people and murder-wolves,
and the one who seduces another's wife;
there Niðhogggr sucked the corpses of the deceased,
the wolf tore men. Would you know still [more], or what?

36. 'Geyr nú Garmr mjök fyr Gnúpahelli,
festr man slitna en freki renna;
fram sé ek lengra, fjöld kann ek segja
um ragna rök rømm, sigtíva.
37. 'Bræðr munu berjask ok at þönum verðask,
munu systrungar sífjum spilla;
hart er í heimi, hórdómr mikill;
skeggöld, skálmöld — skildir klofnir —
vindöld, vargöld, áðr veröld steypisk;
grundir gjalla, gífr fljúgandi;
man engi maðr öðrum þyrma.
38. 'Leika Míms synir, en mjötuðr kyndisk
at inu gamla Gjallarhorni;
hátt blæss Heimdallr — horn er á lopti —
mælir Óðinn við Míms höfuð.
39. 'Skelfr Yggdrasils askr standandi;
ymr it aldna tré, en jötunn losnar;
hræðask allir á Helvegum,
áðr Surtar þann sefi of gleypir.
40. 'Hvat er með Ásum? Hvat er með álfum?
Gnýr allr Jötunheimr, Æsir eru á þingi;
stynja dvergar fyr steindurum,
vegbergs vísir. Vitu þér enn, eða hvat?
41. 'Geyr nú Garmr mjök fyr Gnúpahelli,
festr man slitna en freki renna;
fram sé ek lengra, fjöld kann ek segja
um ragna rök rømm, sigtíva.
42. 'Hrymr ekr austan, hefisk lind fyrir,
snýsk Jormungandr í jötunmóði,
ormr knýr unnir, en ari hlakkar,
slítr nái niðfölr, Naglfar losnar.
43. 'Kjöll ferr austan, koma munu Muspells
um lög lýðir, en Loki stýrir;
fara fíflmegir með freka allir,
þeim er bróðir Býleists í ferð.
44. 'Surtr ferr sunnan með sviga lævi,
skínn af sverði sól valtíva;
grjótbjörg gnata en gífr hrata,
troða halir Helveg, en himinn klofnar.

36. 'Now Garmr howls loudly before Gnúpahellir,
the fetter will break and the wolf run free;
I see further ahead, I can say many things
about the great doom of the powers, of the victory-gods.
37. 'Brothers will battle and slay each other,
cousins will break the bonds of kin;
it's harsh in the world, great whoredom,
axe-age, sword-age — shields are cloven —
wind-age, wolf-age, before the world collapses;
grounds cry out, greedy ones are flying;⁵⁰
no one will show mercy to another.
38. 'Mímr's sons play, and destiny is kindled
at [the sound of?] the ancient⁵¹ Gjallarhorn;
Heimdallr blows loud — the horn's aloft —
Óðinn speaks to Mímr's head.
39. 'The ash of Yggdrasill shakes as it stands;
the ancient tree groans, and the giant breaks loose;⁵²
all are afraid on the Hel-ways,⁵³
before Surtr's kinsman swallows that one.⁵⁴
40. 'How is it with the Æsir? How is it with the elves?
All Jǫtunheimr roars, the Æsir are in council;
dwarves groan before stone-doors,
wise ones of the way-rock.⁵⁵ Would you know still [more], or what?
41. 'Now Garmr howls loudly before Gnúpahellir,
the fetter will break and the ravener run free;
I see further ahead, I can say many things
about the great doom of the powers, of the victory-gods.
42. 'Hrymr drives from the east, heaves his shield before him,
Jǫrmungandr writhes in giant-rage,
the snake lashes waves, and the eagle shrieks,
the one dim as the dark moon(?)⁵⁶ tears corpses, Naglfar breaks loose.
43. 'A ship fares from the east, Muspell's forces
will come over the sea, and Loki steers;
all the giant-kindred travel with the ravener,
Býleistr's brother⁵⁷ is with them on the journey.⁵⁸
44. 'Surtr travels from the south with the destruction of twigs,
the sun shines from the sword of the gods of the slain;
rocky cliffs collapse and witches tumble,⁵⁹
men tread the Hel-Way, and the heavens are cloven.

45. 'Þá kómr Hlínar harmr annarr fram,
er Óðinn ferr við úlf vega,
en bani Belja bjartr at Surti;
þar man Friggjar falla angan.
46. 'Geyr nú Garmr mjök fyr Gniphelli,
festr man slitna en freki renna;
fram sé ek lengra, fjöld kann ek segja
um ragna rök rømm, sigtíva.
47. 'Ginn lopt yfir lindi jarðar,
gapa ýgs kjaptar orms í hæðum;
mun Óðins son ormi mæta,
vargs at dauða Víðars niðja.
48. 'Gengr fet nú Fjörgynjar burr,
neppr, frá naðri niðs ókviðnum;
munu halir allir heimstøð ryðja,
er af móði drepr Miðgarðs véurr.
49. 'Sól tér sortna, sígr fold í mar,
hverfa af himni heiðar stjörnur;
geisar eimi ok aldnari,
leikr hár hiti við himin sjálfan.
50. 'Geyr nú Garmr mjök fyr Gniphelli,
festr man slitna en freki renna;
fram sé ek lengra, fjöld kann ek segja
um ragna rök rømm, sigtíva.
51. 'Sér hon upp koma qöru sinni
jörð ór ægi, iðjagræna;
falla forsar, flýgr qrn yfir,
sá er á fjalli fiska veiðir.
52. 'Hittask Æsir á Iðavelli
ok um moldþinur mátkan dæma,
ok minnask þar á megindóma
ok á Fimbultýs fornar rúnar.
53. 'Þá munu Æsir undrsamligar
gullnar tǫflur í grasi finna,
þærs í árdaga áttar hǫfðu.
54. 'Munu ósánir akrar vaxa,
bols man alls batna; man Baldr koma;
búa þeir Hǫðr ok Baldr Hropts sigtǫptir,
vel, vellívar. Vitu þér enn, eða hvat?

45. 'Then Hlín's second sorrow comes to pass,
when Óðinn goes to fight against the wolf,
and the bright slayer of Beli against Surtr;
there Frigg's fragrant one⁶⁰ will fall.
46. 'Now Garmr howls loudly before Gnipahellir,
the fetter will break and the ravener run free;
I see further ahead, I can say many things
about the great doom of the powers, of the victory-gods.
47. 'The earth's girdle⁶¹ yawns across the sky,⁶²
the jaws of the ghastly snake gape in the heights;⁶³
Óðinn's son⁶⁴ will meet the snake,
following the death of the wolf of Víðarr's kinsman.'⁶⁵
48. 'Fjörgyn's son⁶⁶ goes nine steps,
expiring(?), from the snake unapprehensive of the dark moon(?);
all men will abandon the homestead
when Miðgarðr's guardian strikes in anger.'⁶⁷
49. 'The sun turns black, earth sinks into the sea,
bright stars vanish from the sky;
ember-smoke rages and⁶⁸ the life-nourisher,⁶⁹
high heat sports against the sky itself.
50. 'Now Garmr howls loudly before Gnipahellir,
the fetter will break and the ravener run free;
I see further ahead, I can say many things
about the great doom of the powers, of the victory-gods.
51. 'She sees coming up for a second time
earth, green again, from the sea;
waterfalls tumble, an eagle flies above,
the one who hunts fish on the fell.
52. 'The Æsir meet on Iðavöllum
and talk about the great earth-rope,
and there remember great dooms⁷⁰
and Fimbultýr's ancient runes.
53. 'Then in the grass the Æsir⁷¹ will find
wonderful golden gaming-pieces,
those they had owned in early days.
54. 'Unsown fields will sprout,
all evil will be corrected; Baldr will come;
Höðr and Baldr will inhabit Hropt's victory-halls,
well, [as] gold(?) -gods.⁷² Would you know still [more], or what?

55. ‘Þá kná Hœnir hlutvið kjósa,
er burir byggja bræðra tveggja
vindheim víðan. Vitu þér enn, eða hvat?
56. ‘Sal sér hon standa, sólu fegra,
gulli þakðan, á Gimlé;
þar skulu dyggvar dróttir byggja
ok um aldrdaga ynðis njóta.
57. ‘Þá kœmr inn ríki at regindómi,
øflugr, ofan, sá er øllu ræðr.
58. ‘Kœmr inn *dimmi* dreki fljúgandi,
naðr fránn, neðan frá Niðafjöllum;
berr sér í fjöðrum — flýgr vøll yfir —
Niðhoggr, náí. Nú man hon sökkvask.’

55. ‘Then Hœnir can select the [sacrificial] lot-twíg,
 when the sons of two brothers inhabit
the wide wind-home. Would you know still [more], or what?
56. ‘She sees a hall standing, fairer than the sun,
 thatched with gold, on Gimlé;
 there shall honourable hosts settle
 and enjoy delight during their life-days.
- 57.⁷³ ‘Then the commanding one⁷⁴ comes to divine judgement(?),⁷⁵
 the mighty one, from above, the one who rules all.
58. ‘The dim dragon comes flying,
 the glistening snake, from beneath, from Niðafjöll;
Niðhoggr carries in his wings — he flies over the field —
 corpses. Now she will sink.’

Textual Apparatus to *Völuspá* (*Hauksbók*)

Judging from the facsimile pages published in Jón Helgason, *Hauksbók: The Arna-Magnæan Manuscripts 371, 4^{to}, 544, 4^{to}, and 675, 4^{to}* (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1960), much of **H**'s text of *Vsp.* is hard to read. Worse, parts are illegible and a few words have been lost with the top left-hand corner of fol. 21. The present text relies heavily—in places entirely—on the transcription in Eiríkur Jónsson and Finnur Jónsson, ed., *Hauksbók udgiven efter de Arnamagnæanske håndskrifter no. 371, 544 og 675, 4^e samt forskellige papirshåndskrifter af Det kongelige nordiske Oldskriftselskab*, 3 vols. (Copenhagen: Thieles, 1892–96), I, 188–92, supplemented by the corrections and intuitions in Jón Helgason, ed., *Eddadigte*, 3 vols. (Copenhagen: Ejnar Munksgaard, 1951–52), I, 44–46. For online photographs, see 'AM 544 4^{to}', *handrit.is*, <https://handrit.is/en/manuscript/view/AM04-0544> (fol. 20r–21r). This edition normalizes the spelling, including many simple variants, such as *ll* for *l* and *nn* for *n*. Where the Jónssons expand the abbreviation for *fyr/fyri/fyrir* as *fyri*, this edition has *fyr*.

Völuspá] This poem is untitled in **H**, but the name *Völuspá* is used repeatedly in *SnEGylf*

1/5 *Viltu*] **H** *villtu*; illegible in the facsimile, so this reading relies on earlier editions

1/5 *Váþöðrs*] Illegible in the facsimile, so this reading relies on earlier editions

2/6 *íviðjur*] **H** *i viðjur*

5/4 *himinþöður*] **H** *iöður*

6/4 *gættusk*] **H** *giættuz*

7/8 *gørðu*] **H** *giørðu*

9/4 *gættusk*] **H** *giættuz*

9/8 *Bláins*] **H** *blains* or *blams*

10/5 *manlíkun*] **H** *manlikan*

10/6 *gørðu*] **H** *giorðu*

13/10 *Fræg*] **H** *freg*, according to Jón Helgason

17/1 *þrír*] **H** *þriar*(?), but with *-a-* erased (perhaps by a later hand); the text in this area is indistinct

17/2 *þussa bræðr*(?)] **H** *þussa*, apparently followed by *brudr* 'brides', but the latter word is almost entirely obliterated; cf. 8/6

24/7 *tjúgari*] **H** the first three letters of this word are illegible; they are supplied here from **R**

26/7] **H** these words are repeated, but crossed out

26/10 *enn*] **H** *en*

27/4 *vitti*] **H** *viti*

28/4 *gættusk*] **H** *giættuz*

30/3 *harðgør*] **H** *harðgior*

32/4 *Eggþér*] **H** *egðir*

32/5 *honum*] **H** absent; supplied from **R**

34/1 *sér*] **H** *sier*

34/3 *Náströndum*] Jón Helgason discerns a nasal stroke above the *u* in **H**

35/6 *eyrarúnu*] **H** *eyrna runa*

36/2 *Gnúpahelli* – 36/8] **H** *Gn. h. f man sl enn*, with the rest of the line hard to make out. The stanza is apparently abbreviated; the rest of it is supplied from st. 31.

37/7 *skeggöld*] **H** *skeggöll*, which could be translated ‘axe-shriek’, but this edition emends from **R**

37/13 *engi*] **H** *eingi*

40/6 *steindurum*] **H** *steindyrum*

41/3–8] **H** *f m*. The stanza is abbreviated

43/5 *fara*] **H** *farar*, according to Jón Helgason; emended from **R**

43/6 *allir*] **H** *aller*, according to Jón Helgason; other scholars read *aþrer* (i.e., *aðrir* ‘other’)

46/3–8] **H** *f m*. The stanza is abbreviated

47/1–8] The writing at the bottom of f. 20v is mostly illegible. The text of this stanza is based on the tentative transcription of Jón Helgason (*Eddadigte*, I, 13, 44–46), which was made with the help of an ultraviolet lamp.

48/1–8] This stanza is illegible at the foot of f. 20v. This reconstruction again relies on Jón Helgason; cf. **R** 54.

49/1 *Sól*] **H** torn away with corner of folio 21; supplied from **R**

49/5 *geisar*] **H** *ge-* torn away; supplied from **R**

50/1 *nú*] **H** torn away; supplied from **R**

50/4 *renna* – 50/8] **H** *r*. The stanza is abbreviated

51/1 *Sér*] **H** *Sé-* torn away; supplied from **R**

58/1 *dimmi*] **H** *dimi*

58/4 *Niðafjöllum*] **H** *niða* ‘(from) Niði’; owing to clear metrical deficiency, the text is emended from **R**

58/5 *sér*] **H** *sier*

Notes to the Translation

- 1 For fuller commentary on stanzas in **H** that find parallel in **R**, see the notes to the latter.
- 2 *Vsp.* **R** 1 lacks the adjective *helgar* ‘holy’.
- 3 Sg. (see following note).
- 4 The interpretation of the second half of this stanza, which differs from that of **R**, is debatable; textual corruption is a distinct possibility. *Váþðrs* (if the name is not rather *Vafþðrs*) could be the gen. sg. of *Váþðr* ‘Woe Father’, an otherwise unattested alias of the god Óðinn (though Loki has also been suggested), but note the similar-looking Óðinn-aliases *Valþðr*

'Corpse Father' in *Vsp.* **R** 1 and *Váfuðr* 'Waverer' in *Grm.* 54. Instead of *vel* 'well', *vél* 'wile', 'trickery', 'treachery' is a possibility (though pl. *vélar* 'wiles' might be preferable), as Old Norse literature abounds with tales of Óðinn's wiliness and treachery: 'Do you wish that I expound *Váfuðr*'s trickery ...?' Uppermost in the poet's mind might then be Óðinn's treacherous killing of a kinsman, the giant Ymir, which may lie behind the creation of *Miðgarðr* in *Vsp.* **H** 4 (see *SnEGylf* 6–7, p. 11)—although Ymir's slaying is not explicit in *Vsp.*—or the burning of Gullveig in his hall in **H** 26. It is unclear who the seeress of **H** is addressing with the sg. form *viltu* (MS *villtu*; by contrast, **R**'s *vildu* clearly addresses *Váfuðr*); perhaps she addresses Óðinn, first as *-tu* and then as *Váfuðr*; or maybe she speaks to a single, unnamed representative of all the beings in her audience. It is also uncertain whether her words here are interrogative, especially as her subsequent questions in **H** are in the pl. (*Vitu þér ...?*), presumably to address all members of her audience. Yet another complication is that *Váfuðrs ... forn spjöll fira* could also be translated 'ancient tales of *Váfuðr*'s living (beings)', given that Óðinn was also called *Alfuðr* 'All-Father'. Overall, **R**'s version of this stanza presents fewer problems.

- 5 'Borer's'; *Vsp.* **R** 4 has 'Burr's'.
- 6 I.e., the horizon. The emendation of *jōður* to *himinjōður* 'sky-rim' supplies required metrical length and alliteration; cf. *Vsp.* **R** 5's *himinjódyr*.
- 7 This line appears only in **H**.
- 8 *Þussa* 'of giants' is an assimilated form of *þursa*. Cf. *þussa bræðr* 'brothers of giants' (an emendation) in *Vsp.* **H** 17.
- 9 On the difficulties of the second half of this stanza, see notes to *Vsp.* **R** 9.
- 10 *Vsp.* **R** 10 has *Mótsognir*.
- 11 *Vsp.* **R** 10 has *ór jörðu* 'from earth'.
- 12 On the many difficulties of this stanza, see notes to *Vsp.* **R** 10, the text of which differs.
- 13 'Corpse-Like One'.
- 14 'Pinch'.
- 15 '(One Who Has) Died'.
- 16 'Wedge' or 'Wall'.
- 17 There are many differences between **H** and **R** in their lists of dwarf-names.
- 18 'Stubborn'.
- 19 'New'.
- 20 ON *rekkr* usually denotes men (cf. st. 10's *manlíkun* 'man-shapes'), though a dwarf called *Rekk* appears in *SnEGylf* (14, p. 16) in a list derived from a version of *Vsp.* *Vsp.* **R** 12 has *dverga* 'dwarves'.
- 21 'Wise' or 'Swift'.
- 22 These four names are repeated from st. 11.
- 23 'Twin'.
- 24 'Brown One'.
- 25 'Lancet', ostensibly at least.
- 26 Perhaps 'Son'.
- 27 'Swift'.

- 28 'Ancient Bow'.
- 29 'Famous'.
- 30 **H**'s *þeim* 'for those' appears inferior to *Vsp.* **R** 14's *þeir* 'they'.
- 31 'Lee Wolf'.
- 32 'Glowing One'.
- 33 Or 'as long as beings continue to live', or 'as long as the age lasts'.
- 34 Instead of *þussa bræðr* (an emendation of *þussa brúðir*(?) 'brides of giants'), *Vsp.* **R** 17 has *ór því liði* 'from that company'. As neither passage makes good sense, there is presumably some deep textual corruption. The tentative emendation of **H** to *þussa bræðr* 'brothers of giants' is made on the basis that, of the three Æsir named in the next stanza, Óðinn, at least, was akin to the giants. Cf. *þussa meyjar* 'maidens of giants' in *Vsp.* **H** 8.
- 35 *SnEGylf* (15, p.18) similarly has *ór þeim sal* 'from the hall', but *Vsp.* **R** 20 has *ór þeim sæ* 'from the sea (lake?)'.
- 36 Alternatively, 'on' or 'in'. *Vsp.* **R** 20 places its sea 'under' the tree, as does *SnEGylf* (15, p. 18).
- 37 **H**'s *ørlog at segja* 'to state destinies/fates' differs from **R**'s *ørlog seggja* 'the fates of men'.
- 38 Sg., whereas *Vsp.* **R** 25 has pl. *hverir*.
- 39 He probably struck a giant builder; see note to *Vsp.* **R** 25.
- 40 Here the seeress's interrogative refrain differs slightly, though perhaps only due to scribal error.
- 41 Most likely Óðinn, but *studdi* could also mean 'she/it/one struck'. The subject switches to the pl. in the next line, so sg. *studdi* might be an error for *studdu* 'they stuck', which is the reading of *Vsp.* **R** 21; alternatively, **R** may have simplified matters.
- 42 Alternatively, the second half of this line might mean 'she practised magic determinedly' or 'she practised magic to her heart's delight'. *Vsp.* **R** 22 has *seið hon kunni, seið hon leikin* (emended; see note thereto for the difficulties of interpretation).
- 43 Where **H** has *fýrr* 'previously, earlier', *Vsp.* **R** 24 has *fýrst* 'first'.
- 44 Presumably a form of stockade. *Vsp.* **R** 24 has *borðvegr* 'board-way'.
- 45 The first half of this stanza sits awkwardly here and is absent from **R**. It gives no location for Sigyn, Loki's wife, to sit in. Also, the grammatical subject of the first line is unclear: 'he', 'she', 'it' or 'one'? Some editors emend *Vála* to *Váli* to give the sense 'Then Váli can [or 'did'] twist battle-bonds'. If this change is correct, we might surmise that Váli, whom Óðinn sired to avenge Baldr's murder (*Vsp.* **R** 32), took revenge not just on the morally innocent Hqðr but also on Loki, the fundamentally guilty party, by fettering him. *SnEGylf* (50, p. 49), however, tells of another Váli, a son of Loki, whom the gods turned into a wolf, who tore apart his own brother, Narfi (or Nari). As punishment for Baldr's death, the gods then bound Loki across three stones using Váli's (or Narfi's) intestines, whereupon those bonds (*bönd*) turned to iron.
- 46 *Gnúpahellir* is a variant of *Gnipahellir* found only in **H**, which attests both forms.
- 47 The second half of this refrain stanza differs somewhat from that of **R**.
- 48 The 'gallows-tree' could be the world-ash, elsewhere called 'Óðinn's gallows' (*gálgi Óðins*); alternatively, translate 'Gallows Wood', perhaps a sacrificial grove. *Vsp.* **R** 41 has *gaglviði* '(in the) gosling-tree/wood'.

- 49 'Corpse-Shores'; *Vsp.* R 37 has sg. *SnEGylf* (52, p. 53) attests the same two forms.
- 50 This line appears only in **H**. The 'greedy ones' are witches or other monstrous females.
- 51 *Vsp.* R 45 has *galla* 'resonant'.
- 52 These two lines are in reverse order in *Vsp.* R 46.
- 53 Roads to Hel, land of the dead.
- 54 The second half of this stanza appears only in **H**. Surtr is a fire-demon, but 'Surtr's kinsman' is obscure. In *Fj.*, the giantess Sinmara is apparently Surtr's close relative, but if the term 'Surtr's kinsman' does not denote an animate creature, it might be a kenning for 'fire', in which case *þann* 'that one' (masc.) would presumably refer back to the 'ash of Yggdrasill', which will be consumed by fire, the 'destruction of twigs' (*Vsp.* H 44, R 51) that 'sports against heaven itself' (*Vsp.* H 49, R 55). But Fenrir has also been suggested as Surtr's kinsman, in which case *þann* could be Óðinn.
- 55 Rock is imagined as the dwarves' highway; *Vsp.* R 50 has 'of the wall-rock' (*veggbergs*).
- 56 **H** and *SnEGylf* have *niðfölr* or *níðfölr*, for which there are several possible meanings. *Niðfölr* could mean 'waning/dark-moon pale/dim' or 'rust-pale' (i.e., yellow); *níðfölr* could mean 'derision-pale' or 'hostilely pale'. It is also unclear whether the word describes the eagle of the previous line or another creature, such as the dragon Niðhoggr. *Vsp.* R 48 has *neffölr* 'fallow-nosed one'.
- 57 Loki; *Býleistr* 'Farmstead Foot/Sock(?)' (*Býleiptr*, possibly 'Farmstead Lightning', in *Vsp.* R 49) might well be Óðinn.
- 58 **H** has *ferð* where *Vsp.* R 49 has *för*. Both nouns mean 'journey', 'voyage'.
- 59 Or 'rush headlong' (*hrata*); *Vsp.* R 51 has *rata* 'wander'.
- 60 I.e., Óðinn. *Vsp.* R 52 has *Angantýr*.
- 61 A kenning for the Miðgarðsormr, the world-encircling snake.
- 62 Cf. the gaping void of *Vsp.* 3.
- 63 *SnEGylf* (51, p. 50) says that the wolf Fenrir (not the Miðgarðsormr) will 'go with gaping mouth and the upper jaw will be against the sky and the lower against the earth. He would gape more if there were room to'. A carving on the tenth-century Anglo-Norse Gosforth Cross in Cumbria shows a figure, probably identifiable as Óðinn's son Víðarr, separating the gaping jaws of a huge wolf-headed snake.
- 64 Þórr.
- 65 The 'wolf of Víðarr's kinsman' appears to be Fenrir, the wolf that kills Óðinn and is then, according to *Vsp.* R 53, slain in vengeance by Víðarr, Óðinn's son. 'Víðarr's kinsman' is either Óðinn or Loki, Fenrir's father, who entered into blood-brotherhood with Óðinn (*Ls.* 9). This impressive stanza appears only in **H**, where it is largely illegible to the naked eye.
- 66 Þórr.
- 67 This stanza is largely illegible in **H**; what is presented here is a somewhat speculative reconstruction that draws on *Vsp.* R 54.
- 68 *Vsp.* R 55 has *við* 'against'.
- 69 In **H**, at least, the 'life-nourisher' is probably fire.
- 70 I.e., 'great/mighty judgements'; alternatively, 'great events'. This line is missing from *Vsp.* R 58.

- 71 *Vsp.* R 59 has *eptir* ‘again’.
- 72 The nature of these *velltívar* ‘gold-gods’ is unclear—perhaps gold-dispensing gods or peerless gods. Or should *velltívar* be *véltívar* ‘craft-gods’? Another possibility is *veltívar* ‘benign gods’, if Hǫðr had been, as *SnEGylf* indicates, merely the unwitting instrument of Baldr’s murder. Deliberate ambiguity is possible. However, the sequence *vel vell-* appears stylistically awkward, and *vell-* could result from dittography. *Vsp.* R 60’s *valtívar* ‘gods of the slain’ might therefore be preferable.
- 73 This half-stanza appears only in H. Scholars disagree about whether it is a late Christian addition.
- 74 The identity of this male personage is uncertain (cf. *Hdl.* 44). He is, however, suggestive of Christ, or of Heimdallr, Óðinn or Baldr as potential ‘types’ of Christ. Note the unnamed *ríkr mjök ok máttugr* ‘very powerful and mighty’ divine controller of *SnEProI* (1, pp. 3–4); also the *Alfǫðr* ‘All Father’ of *SnEGylf* (3, p. 8), who is at once Óðinn and, being eternal, more than Óðinn—he is probably the creation of an accommodating Christian in order to suggest that heathens rightly perceived the existence of a single presiding deity and thereby to mediate between pagan and Christian beliefs.
- 75 Or ‘great judgement’, ‘divine tribunal’, ‘divine power’, ‘kingdom of (heathen) powers’, ‘kingdom’—the intended sense of *regindómr* is unclear. Some scholars detect a reference to Doomsday and the Last Judgement.

