



# THE POETIC EDDA

A Dual-Language Edition

EDWARD PETTIT





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

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# Rígsþula

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*Rígsþula* (*Rþ.*) ‘Rígr’s List’, a poem in *fornyrðislag*, survives on pages 155–56 of the mid-fourteenth-century Icelandic Codex Wormianus (**W**) (AM 242 fol.), one of the manuscripts containing Snorri’s *Prose Edda*, where it seems to be missing both its ending and some earlier lines.<sup>1</sup> Its date and place of composition are uncertain. As usual for Eddic poems, Iceland is a possible country of origin, but a less likely one than in many other cases, because the social stratification described in *Rþ.*—aspects of which have ancient Indo-European cultural precedents—did not characterize medieval Iceland, which had no aristocracy and was subject to no king until 1262. Some degree of Irish influence is indicated by the otherwise unattested theonym *Rígr*, which probably derives from a declined form of Old Irish *rí* ‘king’. This might favour an origin in a Hiberno-Norse settlement in the British Isles, where tripartite social stratification might be found, but there was also medieval Irish influence on Iceland and Norway, for example.

The general purpose of *Rþ.* seems clear, albeit now highly distasteful, in its unashamed classism, ageism, sexism and racism. It is to affirm the poet’s (or his or her patron’s) view of the proper stratification of society into in-bred classes, from the uppermost of which—a class of young, fair-haired martial noblemen—stems the king. Beneath the nobles are the less refined, free peasant farmers and, at the bottom of the heap, the ugly, dark-skinned slaves who do the dirty farmwork and whose names sometimes attribute them physical deformity.

If the chronological progression from great-grandparents (slaves) to grandparents (freemen) and then parents (nobles) hints at the possibility of social advancement down the generations, the poet was certainly not at pains to emphasize it. His focus is on promulgating a racist ideology that distinguishes groups of human beings based on pigmentation and other physical features, presenting them as genealogically distinct from one another, and decreeing for them permanent places in a class hierarchy. A narrower aim was apparently to justify the king’s authority, which was won through slaughter and the possession of numinous knowledge about runes. The character Konr has runic knowledge superior even to that of his father Jarl, so that, even though he is

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<sup>1</sup> Images of the manuscript are available at ‘AM 242 fol.’, <http://www.e-pages.dk/ku/621>; see also *Codex Wormianus (The Younger Edda) MS. No. 242 fol. in The Arnarnagnaean Collection in the University Library of Copenhagen with an Introduction by Sigurður Nordal*, *Corpus Codicum Islandicorum Medii Aevi II* (Copenhagen: Levin and Munksgaard, 1931).

the youngest son, Konr becomes worthier of the title of *Rígr* than the man whom the deity himself had sired, acknowledged, leant his name to, and instructed.

It is curious that the deity in question is, ostensibly at least, Heimdallr, a figure better known as the gods' watchman against the incursions of giants. As it stands, *Rþ.* is the only surviving Old Norse text of substantial length to feature Heimdallr as its main character; there was, however, once another poem about him, as *SnEGylf* (27, p. 26) includes a fragment of an otherwise lost *Heimdalargaldr* 'Heimdallr's Incantation'. Furthermore, Heimdallr's importance at a fairly early date is probably indicated by his likely identity with the world-tree Yggdrasil (*Heimdallr* could mean '(Burgeoning) Home-Tree') and his probable depiction on the tenth-century Gosforth Cross from Cumbria, England, amid carvings likely to have been inspired by mythological Eddic poems. However, were it not for the prose introduction to *Rþ.*, which is the only part of the text to name Heimdallr, we would probably be inclined to identify the deity who calls himself *Rígr* as Óðinn. For it is elsewhere Óðinn who is the wandering god of aliases and wisdom, including runes, and of kings. It is elsewhere also Óðinn who visits farmsteads and who is called *Aldaföðr* 'Father of Men/Ages' and *Alföðr* 'All-Father'. One scholar has argued that the prose introduction equating *Rígr* with Heimdallr was composed in the fourteenth century by the compiler of Codex Wormianus,<sup>2</sup> who possibly took his cue from Heimdallr's progenitorship of 'greater and lesser sons' (presumably men of different classes) in *Vsp.* 1 and perhaps this god's kinship with dynasties in *Hdl.* 43. If so, *Rþ.* would not be a source of traditional information about Heimdallr.

On the other hand, *Rígr's* offers of help in settings of domestic labour in *Rþ.*, and perhaps especially his advice to the distaff-wielding Amma of stanza 16, might find parallel in an obscure eleventh- or twelfth-century inscription in Norse runes on a spindle-whorl from Saltfleetby St Clement, England.<sup>3</sup> It seems to name Heimdallr, possibly beside Óðinn and one other figure, as helpers of a certain Úlfjót, most likely the woman who used the whorl. Óðinn was a practitioner of the type of feminine magic called *seiðr*, literally 'cord, string', which seems to have been conceptually 'spun'. Heimdallr is elsewhere obscurely called *Hallinskiði* 'Leaning Stick', a term which might identify him as the world-tree or *axis mundi*, but which would also aptly describe a distaff—the wooden stick, held at an angle, from which the whorl would have hung.<sup>4</sup>

2 See K. G. Johansson, 'Rígsþula och Codex Wormianus: Textens funktion ur ett kompilersperspektiv', *alvissmál* 8 (1998), 67–84.

3 On this artefact, see A. Daubney, 'LIN-D92A22 an Early Medieval Spindle Whorl', *Portable Antiquities Scheme* (2010), <http://finds.org.uk/database/artefacts/record/id/409249>; J. Hines, 'A Glimpse of the Heathen Norse in Lincolnshire', in E. Cambridge and J. Hawkes, ed., *Crossing Boundaries: Interdisciplinary Approaches to the Art, Material Culture, Language and Literature of the Early Medieval World: Essays Presented to Professor Emeritus Richard N. Bailey, OBE, on the Occasion of his Eightieth Birthday* (Oxford: Oxbow, 2017), pp. 118–26; J. Jesch, 'Further Thoughts on E18 Saltfleetby', *Futhark: International Journal of Runic Studies* 9–10 (2018–19), 201–13.

4 For illustrations, see E. Heide, 'Spinning *seiðr*', in A. Andrén, K. Jennbert and C. Raudvere, ed., *Old Norse Religion in Long-Term Perspectives: Origins, Changes, and Interactions: An International Conference in*

## Synopsis

*Prose:* According to ancient tales, the god Heimdallr went travelling on green ways. He advanced along a seashore and came to a farmstead, where he called himself *Rígr* 'King'.

*Verse:* Long ago, the mighty and wise god *Rígr* went walking (1). He came to the farmstead of *Ái* 'Great-Grandfather' and *Edda* 'Great-Grandmother', who wore an old-fashioned head-dress (2). *Rígr* sat between them and offered advice (3). *Edda* brought basic food, after which *Rígr* went to bed (4). He lay between them in the bed (5), and left three nights later (6). Nine months later, *Edda* bore a swarthy-skinned child called *Þræll* 'Slave' (7), a boy of coarse appearance (8) who set about his labouring (9). An ugly girl called *Þír* '(Female) Slave' arrived (10), and sat, talked and worked with *Þræll* (11). The pair had twelve sons with unprepossessing names, who did manual work around the farm (12). They also had nine daughters with names similarly denoting unattractive attributes (13).

This sequence of events is repeated, but one step higher up the social scale (with superior housing, physical appearance, clothing, food and work), at the dwelling of *Afi* 'Grandfather' and *Amma* 'Grandmother', who conceived by *Rígr* (or by her husband, with *Rígr*'s intimate assistance) and gave birth to a son, *Karl* 'Peasant Farmer', who, in turn, sired twelve sons and ten daughters with respectable names (14–25). *Rígr* then went on to the still more elevated household of *Faðir* 'Father' and *Móðir* 'Mother', who conceived by *Rígr* (or by her husband, with *Rígr*'s intimate assistance) a single vigorous, fair-haired, warlike son, *Jarl* 'Earl' (26–35).

*Rígr* taught *Jarl* runes, named him *Rígr*, declared him his son, and urged him to claim his rightful lands (36). The young man proceeded to do so by fighting (37), and distributed wealth to his people (38). He requested the hand of *Erna* 'Vigorous One', daughter of *Hersir* 'Chieftain', and the pair settled into married life (39–40). They had twelve noble, warlike sons (no daughters are mentioned), the youngest of whom was *Konr* 'Scion' (41–42). Young *Konr* (*Konr ungr*, which puns on *konungr* 'king') knew runes, had magical abilities and possessed the strength of eight men (43–44). He debated runes with his father, *Rígr*-*Jarl*, proved himself superior, and earned the right to use the title of *Rígr* himself and to understand (or teach?) runes (45).

*Konr* rode out to hunt birds (46), but a crow told him it would be more fitting to kill men (47). The crow then identified *Danr* and *Danpr*, possibly as noblemen for him to defeat (48).

The rest of the poem is lost.

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## Rígsþula

Svá segja menn í fornum sögum, at einhverr af Ásum, sá er Heimdallr hét, fór ferðar sinnar ok fram með sjóvarströndu nøkkurri, kom at einum húsabæ ok nefndisk Rígr. Eptir þeiri sögu er kvæði þetta:

1. Ár, kváðu, ganga grœnar brautir  
oþlgan ok aldinn, Ás kunnigan,  
ramman ok roskvan — Rígr stiganda.
2. Gekkk hann meirr at þat miðrar brautar;  
kom hann at húsi, hurð var á gætti;  
inn nam at ganga, eldr var á gólfi;  
hjón sátu þar hár at árnei,  
Ái ok Edda aldinfalda.
3. Rígr kunnir þeim ráð at segja;  
meirr settisk hann miðra fletja,  
en á hlið hvára hjón salkynna.
4. Þá tók Edda økkvinn hleif,  
þungan ok þykkann, þrunginn sáðum;  
bar hon meirr at þat miðra skutla,  
soð var í bolla, setti á bjóð;  
var kálfr soðinn, krása beztr;  
reis hann upp þaðan, rézk at sofna.
5. Rígr kunnir þeim ráð at segja;  
meirr lagðisk hann miðrar rekkju  
en á hlið hvára hjón salkynna.
6. Þar var hann at þat þríar nætr saman;  
gekk hann meirr at þat miðrar brautar;  
liðu meirr at þat mánuðr níu.
7. Jóð ól Edda, jósu vatni  
hørunðsvartan, hétu Þræl.
8. Hann nam at vaxa ok vel dafna;  
var þar á høndum hrokkit skinn,  
kropnir knúar, . . .  
fingr digrir, fúlligt andlit,  
lotr hryggr, langir hælur.





9. Nam hann meirr at þat magns um kosta,  
bast at binda, byrðar gørva;  
bar hann heim at þat hrís gerstan dag.
10. Þar kom at garði gengilbeina;  
*aurr* var á iljum, armr sólbrunninn,  
niðrbjúgt er nef, nefndisk Þír.
11. Miðra fletja meirr settisk hon;  
sat hjá henni sonr húss,  
ræddu ok rýndu, rekkju gørðu,  
Præll ok Þir, þrungin dægr.
12. Børn ólu þau, bjuggu ok unðu;  
hygg ek at héti Hreimr ok Fjósni,  
Klúrr ok Kleggi, Kefsir, Fúlnir,  
Drumbr, Digraldi, Drøttr ok Høsvir,  
Lútr ok Leggjaldi; lögðu garða,  
akra tōddu, unnu at svínun,  
geita gættu, grófu torf.
13. Døetr váru þær Drumba ok Kumba,  
Økkvinkálfa ok Arinnefja,  
Ysja ok Ambátt, Eikintjasna,  
Tøtrughypja ok Trønubeina;  
þaðan eru komnar þræla ættir.
14. Gekk Rígr at þat réttar brautir,  
kom hann at *høllu*, hurð var á skíði;  
inn nam at ganga, eldr var á gólfi,  
hjón sátu þar, heldu á sýslu.
15. Maðr telgði þar meið til rifjar;  
var skegg skapat, skør var fyr enni,  
skyrtu þrøngva; skokkr var á gólfi.
16. Sat þar kona, sveigði rokk,  
breiddi faðm, bjó til vāðar;  
sveigr var á høfði, smokkr var á bringu,  
dúkr var á hálsi, dvergar á oxlum.  
Afi ok Amma áttu hús.
17. Rígr kunnir þeim ráð at segja;  
.....
18. ....

9. After that he started to test his strength,  
to bind bast, prepare burdens;  
after that he bore home brushwood the entire day.
10. There came to the yard a crook-legged one;  
there was mud on her soles, her arm was sunburnt,  
her nose is turned down,<sup>19</sup> she named herself Þír.<sup>20</sup>
11. She sat herself then in the middle of the benches;  
beside her sat the son of the house,  
they talked and whispered, made the bed,  
Præll and Þír, day after tightly packed day.
12. They bore children, settled down and were content;  
I think they<sup>21</sup> were called Hreimr<sup>22</sup> and Fjósniir,<sup>23</sup>  
Klúrr<sup>24</sup> and Kleggi,<sup>25</sup> Kefsir,<sup>26</sup> Fúlnir,<sup>27</sup>  
Drumbr,<sup>28</sup> Digraldi,<sup>29</sup> Drøttr<sup>30</sup> and Høsvir,<sup>31</sup>  
Lútr<sup>32</sup> and Leggjaldi;<sup>33</sup> they laid fences,  
dunged fields, tended to swine,  
attended to goats, dug turf.<sup>34</sup>
13. The daughters were Drumba<sup>35</sup> and Kumba,<sup>36</sup>  
Økkvinkálfa<sup>37</sup> and Arinnefja,<sup>38</sup>  
Ysja<sup>39</sup> and Ambátt,<sup>40</sup> Eikintjasna,<sup>41</sup>  
Tøtrughypja<sup>42</sup> and Trøubeina;<sup>43</sup>  
from them have come families of slaves.
14. After that Rígr walked on right<sup>44</sup> ways,  
he came to a hall, the door was on the lintel,<sup>45</sup>  
he proceeded to go inside, a fire was on the floor,  
a married couple sat there, they stuck to their work.
15. The man carved wood there for a weaving-beam;  
his beard was well-groomed, his hair lay on his forehead,<sup>46</sup>  
[he wore] a close-fitting shirt; a chest was on the floor.
16. The woman sat there, twirled a distaff,  
readied thread(?),<sup>47</sup> prepared [it?] for [making] cloth;  
a curved head-dress was on her head, a smock was on her breast,  
a cloth was at her neck, 'dwarves'<sup>48</sup> at her shoulders.  
Afi<sup>49</sup> and Amma<sup>50</sup> owned the house.
17. Rígr knew how to give them advice;  
...<sup>51</sup>
18. ...<sup>52</sup>

19. Reis frá borði, réð at sofna;  
meirr lagðisk hann miðrar rekkju,  
en á hlið hvára hjón salkynna.
20. Þar var hann at þat þrjár nætr saman;  
gekk hann meirr at þat miðrar brautar;  
liðu meirr at þat mánuðr níu.
21. Jóð ól Amma, jósu vatni,  
kølluðu Karl, kona sveip ripti,  
rauðan ok rjóðan, riðuðu augu.
22. Hann nam at vaxa ok vel dafna;  
øxn nam at temja, arðr at gørva,  
hús at timbra ok hløður smíða,  
karta at gørva ok keyra plóg.
23. Heim óku þá hanginluklu,  
geitakyrtlu, giptu Karli;  
Snør heitir sú; settisk undir ripti;  
bjuggu hjón, bauga deildu,  
breiddu blæjur ok bú gørðu.
24. Børn ólu þau, bjuggu ok unðu;  
hét Halr ok Drengr, Hauldr, Þegn ok Smiðr,  
Breiðr, Bónði, Bundinskeggi,  
Búi ok Boddi, Brattskeggr ok Seggr.
25. En hétu svá øðrum nøfnum:  
Snót, Brúðr, Svanni, Svarri, Sprakki,  
Fljóð, Sprund ok Víf, Feima, Ristill;  
þaðan eru komnar karla ættir.
26. Gekk Rígr þaðan réttar brautir;  
kom hann at sal, suðr horfðu dyrr,  
var hurð hnigin, hringr var í gætti.
27. Gekk hann inn at þat, gólf var stráð;  
sátu hjón, sásk í augu,  
Faðir ok Móðir, fingrum at leika.
28. Sat húsgumi ok sneri streng,  
álm of bendi, ørvar skepti;  
en húskona hugði at ørmum,  
strauk of ripti, sterti emar.

19. He<sup>53</sup> rose from the table, decided to go to sleep;  
then he laid himself down in the middle of the bed,  
and on either side [of him were] the married couple of the household.
20. He was there after that for three nights altogether;  
he walked then, after that, in the middle of the way;  
then nine months passed after that.
21. Amma bore a child, they sprinkled him with water,  
called him Karl,<sup>54</sup> the woman wrapped him in linen cloth,  
the red<sup>55</sup> and ruddy [boy], his eyes darted here and there.
22. He began to grow and to thrive well;  
he began to tame oxen, to prepare a plough,  
to build houses and to make barns,  
to prepare carts and to drive a plough.
23. They drove home then the one with hanging keys,<sup>56</sup>  
the goatskin-kirtled one, married her to Karl;  
she's called Snǫr;<sup>57</sup> she sat herself down beneath a [bridal] veil;  
the married couple settled down, distributed arm-rings,  
spread bed-covers and set up a household.
24. They bore children, settled down and were content;  
they were called Halr<sup>58</sup> and Drengr,<sup>59</sup> Hauldr,<sup>60</sup> Þegn<sup>61</sup> and Smiðr,<sup>62</sup>  
Breiðr,<sup>63</sup> Bónði,<sup>64</sup> Bundinskeggi,<sup>65</sup>  
Búi<sup>66</sup> and Boddi,<sup>67</sup> Brattskeggi<sup>68</sup> and Seggr.<sup>69</sup>
25. And they also named [their daughters] by other names, thus:  
Snót,<sup>70</sup> Brúðr,<sup>71</sup> Svanni,<sup>72</sup> Svarri,<sup>73</sup> Sprakki,<sup>74</sup>  
Fljóð,<sup>75</sup> Sprund<sup>76</sup> and Víf,<sup>77</sup> Feima,<sup>78</sup> Ristill,<sup>79</sup>  
from them have come families of peasant farmers.
26. Rígr walked from there on right ways;  
he came to a hall, the entrance faced south,  
the door was ajar, a ring was in the door-post(?).<sup>80</sup>
27. He walked inside after that, the floor was strewn;<sup>81</sup>  
a married couple was sitting [there], they looked in each other's eyes,  
Faðir<sup>82</sup> and Móðir,<sup>83</sup> played with [each other's] fingers.
28. The house-man<sup>84</sup> sat and twisted a bowstring,  
bent an elm-bow, put shafts on arrows;  
and the house-woman<sup>85</sup> thought about her arms,  
stroked her linen robe, smoothed the sleeves.



29. Keisti fald, kinga var á bringu,  
síðar slæður, serk bláfán;  
brún bjartari, brjóst ljósara,  
háls hvítari hreinni mjöllu.
30. Rígr kunnir þeim ráð at segja;  
meirr settisk hann miðra fletja  
en á hlið hvára hjón salkynna.
31. Þá tók Móðir merktan dúk,  
hvítan af hörvi, hulði bjóð;  
hon tók at þat hleifa þunna,  
hvíta af hveiti, ok hulði dúk.
32. Fram setti hon skutla fulla,  
silfri varða, setti á bjóð,  
fán ok fleski ok fugla steikta;  
vín var í kornu, varðir kálkar;  
drukku ok dæmdu, dagr var á sinnum.
33. Rígr kunnir þeim ráð at segja;  
reis Rigr at þat, rekkju gerði;  
þar var hann at þat þrjár nætr saman;  
gekk hann meirr at þat miðrar brautar;  
liðu meirr at þat mánuðr níu.
34. Svein ól Móðir, silki vafði,  
jósu vatni, Jarl létu heita;  
bleikt var hár, bjartir vangar,  
ötul váru augu sem yrmlingi.
35. Upp óx þar Jarl á fletjum;  
lind nam at skelfa, leggja strengi,  
álm at beygja, orvar skepta,  
flein at fleygja, frökkur dýja,  
hestum ríða, hundum verpa,  
sverðum bregða, sund at fremja.
36. Kom þar ór runni Rígr gangandi,  
Rígr gangandi, rúnar kendi;  
sitt gaf heiti, son kvezk eiga;  
þann bað hann eignask óðalvöllu,  
óðalvöllu, aldnar byggðir.

29. She straightened(?) her head-dress, a medallion was on her breast,  
 [she wore] a long-trained dress, a blue-coloured shirt;  
 her brow [was] brighter, her breast lighter,  
 her neck whiter than pure, freshly fallen snow.
30. Rígr knew how to give them advice;  
 he sat himself then in the middle of the bench,  
 and on either side [of him were] the married couple of the household.
31. Then Móðir took a decorated cloth,  
 white, made of linen, [and] covered the table;  
 after that she took thin loaves,  
 white, made from wheat, and covered the cloth.
32. She brought forth full dishes,  
 ornamented with silver, set on the table  
 streaked bacon(?) and pork and roasted birds;  
 there was wine was in a flagon, ornamented goblets;  
 they drank and discoursed, the day was ending.
33. Rígr knew how to offer them advice;  
 Rígr rose after that, prepared the bed;  
 he was there after that for three nights altogether;  
 he walked on then, after that, in the middle of the way;  
 then nine months passed after that.
34. Móðir bore a boy, wrapped him in silk;  
 they sprinkled him with water, had him named Jarl;<sup>86</sup>  
 his hair was flaxen, his cheeks bright,  
 his eyes were as terrible as a snakeling.
35. Jarl grew up there at the benches;  
 he began to shake a shield, to string a bow,  
 to bend an elm-bow, to put shafts on arrows,  
 to let arrow<sup>87</sup> fly, to brandish spears,  
 to ride horses, to loose hounds,  
 to wield swords, to practise swimming.
36. From a thicket<sup>88</sup> there came Rígr walking,  
 Rígr walking, he taught [him]<sup>89</sup> runes;<sup>90</sup>  
 gave him his own name,<sup>91</sup> says he has [in him] a son;  
 he invited him to claim as his own ancestral fields,  
 ancestral fields, ancient settlements.

37. Reið hann meirr þaðan myrkan við,  
 hélug fjöll, unz at höllu kom;  
 skapt nam at dýja, skelfði lind,  
 hesti hleypti ok hjörvi brá;  
 víg nam at vekja, vøll nam at rjóða,  
 val nam at fella, vá til landa.
38. Réð hann einn at þat átján búum;  
 auð nam skipta, øllum veita  
 meiðmar ok mōsma, mara svangrifja;  
 hringum hreytti, hjó sundr baug.
39. Óku ærir úrgar brautir,  
 kómu at höllu þar er Hersir bjó;  
 mætti hann mjófingraðri,  
 hvítri ok horskri — hétu Ernu.
40. Báðu hennar ok heim óku,  
 giptu Jarli, gekk hon und líni;  
 saman bjuggu þau ok sér unðu,  
 ættir jóku ok aldrs nutu.
41. Burr var hinn elzti, en Barn annat,  
 Jóð ok Aðal, Arfi, Mōgr,  
 Niðr ok Niðjungr — námu leika —  
 Sonr ok Sveinn — sund ok tafl —  
 Kundr hét einn, Konr var hinn yngsti.
42. Upp óxu þar Jarli bornir,  
 hesta tømðu, hlífar bendu,  
 skeyti skófu, skelfðu aska.
43. En Konr ungr kunni rúnar,  
 ævinrúnar ok aldrúnar;  
 meirr kunni hann mōnnum bjarga,  
 eggjar deyfa, ægi lægja.
44. Kløk nam fugla, kyrra elda,  
 sæva of svefja, sorgir lægja;  
 afl ok eljun átta manna.
45. Hann við Ríg-Jarl rúnar deildi,  
 brögðum beitti ok betr kunni;  
 þá øðlaðisk ok þá eiga gat  
 Rígr at heita, rúnar kunna.

37. He<sup>92</sup> rode then from there through murky forest,<sup>93</sup>  
 hoar-frosted mountains, until he came to a hall;  
 he began to brandish<sup>94</sup> his spear-shaft, he shook his shield,  
 he spurred his horse to leap and drew his sword;  
 he began to waken war, he began to redden the field,  
 he began to fell warriors, he won lands by fighting.
38. He alone ruled after that eighteen estates;  
 he began to distribute wealth, to grant to all  
 treasures and gems(?), slender-ribbed steeds;  
 he scattered rings, hewed an arm-ring asunder.<sup>95</sup>
39. Messengers drove over moist ways,  
 came to the hall where Hersir<sup>96</sup> lived;  
 he<sup>97</sup> met a slender-fingered [maid],  
 white and wise — they<sup>98</sup> called her Erna.<sup>99</sup>
40. They asked for her<sup>100</sup> and drove her home,  
 gave her to Jarl, she went under linen;<sup>101</sup>  
 they settled down together and were content with themselves,  
 increased their families<sup>102</sup> and enjoyed life.
41. Burr<sup>103</sup> was the eldest, and Barn<sup>104</sup> the second,  
 Jóð<sup>105</sup> and Aðal,<sup>106</sup> Arfi,<sup>107</sup> Mǫgr,<sup>108</sup>  
 Niðr<sup>109</sup> and Niðjungr<sup>110</sup> — they learnt how to play —  
 Sonr<sup>111</sup> and Sveinn<sup>112</sup> — at swimming and 'table'<sup>113</sup> —  
 one was called Kundr,<sup>114</sup> Konr<sup>115</sup> was the youngest.
42. [Those boys] born to Jarl grew up there,  
 they broke in horses, put bands on shields,  
 scraped arrow-shafts smooth, shook ash-spears.
43. But young Konr<sup>116</sup> knew runes,  
 everlasting(?)-runes and life-runes;<sup>117</sup>  
 more [than that], he knew how to save men,  
 blunt edges,<sup>118</sup> calm the sea.
44. He learnt [to understand] the chirping of birds, [how] to calm fires,  
 put seas to sleep,<sup>119</sup> allay sorrows;  
 [he had]<sup>120</sup> the strength and endurance of eight men.
45. He disputed about runes with Ríg-Jarl,<sup>121</sup>  
 teased him with tricks and knew better;  
 then he obtained [victory] for himself and got the right  
 to be called Rígr, to comprehend runes.<sup>122</sup>

46.                   Reið Konr ungr   kjorr ok skóga,  
                          kólfi fleygði,   kyrði fugla.
47.                   Þá kvað þat kraka — sat kvisti ein:  
‘Hvat skaltu, Konr ungr,   kyrra fugla?  
                          Heldr mætti þér   hestum ríða  
                          ..... ok her fella!
48.                   ‘Á Danr ok Danpr   dyrar hallir,  
                          œðra óðal   en ér hafið;  
                          þeir kunnu vel   kjól at ríða,  
                          egg at kenna,   undir rjúfa.’



46. Young Konr rode through thickets and forests,  
let fly with heavy arrow, silenced birds.
47. Then a crow said this — it sat alone on a branch:  
‘Why must you, young Konr, silence birds?  
You could rather be riding horses  
.....<sup>123</sup> and felling an army!
48. ‘Danr and Danpr<sup>124</sup> own costly halls,  
nobler inherited properties than you possess;  
they know well how to ride in a long ship,  
acquaint [others with] the edge,<sup>125</sup> inflict wounds.<sup>126</sup>

## Textual Apparatus to *Rígsþula*

*Rígsþula*] This poem is untitled in **W**. The title *Rígsþula* derives from a fragment of parchment bound into **W**, on which is written *þræla heiti standa í Rígs þulu* '(poetic) names of slaves are present in Rígr's list' (Dronke, *Poetic Edda*, II, 208 n.96).

1/1 *Ár*] **W** *At*

2/8 *at*] **W** *af*

2/9 *Edda*] **W** *ellda*

4/2 *økkvinn hleif*] **W** *økuinnleif*

7/3 *hørundsvartan*] **W** *hørfi svartan*

10/3 *aurr*] **W** *orr*

11/4 *húss*] **W** *huus*

14/3 *at hǫllu*] **W** *at* followed by a mark of insertion

17/3] **W** has no indication of omission

18] **W** has no indication of omission

20/3–4] **W** absent

32/4 *setti á bjóð*] **W** *abjþð*

35/7 *fleygja*] **W** *fleyia*

391/1 *Óku*] **W** *Oku* with a macron over the -u

39/6 *mjófingraðri*] **W** *miofingraði*

48/4 *ér*] **W** *per*

## Notes to the Translation

- 1 In view of subsequent events, it may be no coincidence that the first man and woman were found on the shore, according to *Vsp.* 17. Heimdallr himself may well have been born at the seashore; cf. *Hdl.* 35.
- 2 Probably a borrowing of Old Irish *rí* (gen. sg. *ríg*) 'king'. In view of Heimdallr's walking, successive sexual encounters and likely identity with the world-tree, a pun on ON *rígr* 'stiffness' is possible; cf. *Ls.* 48 footnote 124. The identification Heimdallr-Rígr is found only here.
- 3 I.e., in early days.
- 4 The green ways are suggestive of fertility.
- 5 (Heathen) god.
- 6 Although the precise interpretation of the poet's door-terminology is unclear, it seems likely that at each house Rígr visits the door is open, but that the technological means of opening advances each time, in keeping with the higher status of the household. Here, at the bottom of the social hierarchy, it appears that the door has simply been lifted from the doorframe and placed beside it.

- 7 I.e., grey-haired.
- 8 'Great-Grandfather'.
- 9 'Great-Grandmother'.
- 10 Literally, 'say', 'tell'.
- 11 ON *ríð* can also mean 'marriage', '(unmarried) sexual union', 'household' and 'state of life'.
- 12 Literally, the raised platform along the wall, where benches were placed.
- 13 Or 'seeds'.
- 14 Or 'on a serving platter'.
- 15 I.e., Rígr decided to go to bed. The preceding line about a boiled calf is perhaps misplaced.
- 16 A heathen ritual; its relation, if any, to Christian baptism is unclear.
- 17 'Slave'.
- 18 A half-line seems to have been lost here.
- 19 I.e., hooked.
- 20 '(Female) Slave'.
- 21 I.e., the children.
- 22 'Bawler'.
- 23 'Byre (Boy)'.
- 24 'Bungler'.
- 25 'Cleg', i.e., 'Horse-Fly', or 'Haycock'.
- 26 'Concubine(?)'.
- 27 'Stinker'.
- 28 'Log'.
- 29 'Stout One'.
- 30 'Lubber'.
- 31 'Grizzled'.
- 32 'Stooper'.
- 33 'Leggy'.
- 34 I.e., for peat.
- 35 'Stumpy'.
- 36 'Chunky'.
- 37 'Thick Calves'.
- 38 'Eagle Nose'.
- 39 'Noisy One'.
- 40 'Handmaiden'.
- 41 'Oaken Peg'.
- 42 'Tattered Dress'.
- 43 'Crane Legs'.
- 44 I.e., straight and/or morally correct.

- 45 This seems to mean that the door has been opened by lifting it to rest on the lintel-beam to which it is attached by ropes or chains.
- 46 I.e., it was cut straight across at the brows.
- 47 Alternatively, perhaps, 'spread out her arms'.
- 48 I.e., fibulae, shoulder-clasps.
- 49 'Grandfather'.
- 50 'Grandmother'.
- 51 The rest of this stanza is missing. Presumably, Rígr sat himself in the middle of the benches, with the married couple of the household on either side of him.
- 52 A stanza is probably missing here.
- 53 I.e., Rígr.
- 54 'Man (of Low Rank)', 'Peasant Farmer'.
- 55 I.e., red-haired.
- 56 I.e., hanging from her belt.
- 57 'Daughter-in-Law'.
- 58 'Man'.
- 59 'Fine Fellow'.
- 60 Or *Hoplðr*. The name means 'Freeholder'.
- 61 'Thane'.
- 62 'Smith'.
- 63 'Broad One'.
- 64 'Farmer'.
- 65 'Bound Beard'.
- 66 'Dweller' or 'Neighbour'.
- 67 'Householder(?)'.
- 68 'Steep Beard'.
- 69 'Man', 'Warrior'.
- 70 'Woman'.
- 71 'Bride'.
- 72 '(Swan?/Slim?/Forceful?) Woman'.
- 73 'Proud Woman'.
- 74 'Sparky'.
- 75 'Woman'.
- 76 'Woman'.
- 77 'Woman', 'Wife'.
- 78 'Shy Girl'.
- 79 'Sharp/Cutting Woman(?)'.
- 80 Although the interpretation is somewhat uncertain, this might be a familiar hinged door with a knocker. At least, this door appears more advanced than those of the households Rígr visited earlier.

- 81 I.e., with straw.
- 82 'Father'.
- 83 'Mother'.
- 84 I.e., the master of the house.
- 85 I.e., the mistress of the house.
- 86 'Earl'.
- 87 Or 'javelin'.
- 88 Perhaps a memory of Heimdallr's identification with the world-tree, from which it is likely that Óðinn learnt runes (*Háv.* 138–39).
- 89 I.e., Jarl.
- 90 Or 'secrets'.
- 91 I.e., *Rígr*, apparently as a prefix, to judge from *Rþ.* 45.
- 92 I.e., Jarl.
- 93 Possibly a reference to *Myrkviðr* 'Mirkwood'.
- 94 Or simply, 'he brandished'.
- 95 I.e., to distribute the pieces as wealth to his noblemen.
- 96 'Chieftain', ruler of a district.
- 97 Jarl/*Rígr*, if he travelled with the messengers. But a mistake for *mættu* 'they met' seems more likely.
- 98 Presumably the people who lived there, not the messengers.
- 99 'Vigorous One'.
- 100 I.e., for her hand in marriage to Jarl.
- 101 I.e., she donned a bridal veil.
- 102 I.e., they had children.
- 103 'Son', 'Boy'.
- 104 'Child'.
- 105 'Child'.
- 106 '(Noble) Nature'.
- 107 'Heir'.
- 108 'Boy'.
- 109 'Kinsman'.
- 110 'Descendant'.
- 111 'Son'.
- 112 'Youth', 'Boy'.
- 113 *Hnefatafl* or a similar board game.
- 114 'Close Kin'.
- 115 'Scion'.
- 116 There is a pun on *konungr* 'king'.
- 117 Both these nouns mean literally 'life-runes'; the distinction between them is obscure.



- 118 I.e., the edges of weapons.
- 119 I.e., to calm seas.
- 120 An omission seems possible here.
- 121 I.e., King Jarl, the name/title *Ríg(r)* 'King' having been prefixed to his original name; cf. *Rþ.* 36.
- 122 Perhaps *kunna* 'to comprehend' here means in an official, or at least recognized, capacity; alternatively, perhaps *kunna* is a scribal error for *kenna* 'to teach'. Either way, it is apparently Konr's superior knowledge of runes, together with his other magical abilities, that gives him the right to succeed his father, despite being the youngest son. We are not explicitly told how Konr came by his knowledge of runes, whether it was innate (perhaps *Rþ.* 43 suggests this), or whether it was taught to him by Rígr or Ríg-Jarl.
- 123 A half-line seems to be missing—perhaps *hjørum bregða* 'drawing swords'.
- 124 Supposed members of the early Danish royal house. Chapter 17 of *Ynglinga saga* identifies King Danpr as a son of Rígr, who was the first to be called *konungr* 'king', and whose daughter was sister to King Danr the Proud, after whom *Danmørk* 'Denmark' was named. A Latin summary of the lost *Skjöldunga saga* 'Saga of the Skjöldungar' identifies Rigus (i.e., ON *Rígr*) as a great man who married the daughter of Danp (i.e., *Danpr*), by whom he had a son called Dan.
- 125 I.e., the edge of a sword or other weapon.
- 126 Any further stanzas that once existed are lost, but Konr presumably went on to succeed Jarl.