2012 ACTA UNIVERSITATIS CAROLINAE PAG. 7–35
PHILOLOGICA 1 / GERMANISTICA PRAGENSIA XXI

VENI, VIDI, MORI: THE EDDIC POEM *GRÍMNISMÁL* AS A DRAMATIC AND MYTHOLOGICAL UNITY[1]

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ABSTRACT
The article deals with the Old-Norse *Lay of Grímnir*, one of the mythological lays of the *Poetic Edda*. The first part of the article reviews the scholarly inquiries into the poem, especially the opinions on the relation between the framing epic story of the poem, which describes the capturing and torturing of the disguised god Óðinn, and the main body of the poem, which consists of enumerative stanzas depicting the Old-Norse mythological world. The second part of the article analyzes the main motifs of the poem and tries to uncover their artistic and religious importance in the whole of the poem.

Keywords
Grímnismál, Old Norse myths, Old Norse religion, Old Norse literature

Då sitter vid vår sida en gud förklädd.
Hjalmar Gullberg

Grímnismál, the fourth of the mythological poems of the *Poetic Edda,* is preserved in two manuscripts: in *Codex Regius* of the *Poetic Edda* (*GkS* 2365, 4to) and in the so-called *Edda-fragment* manuscript (*AM* 748, 4to). The extant poem consists of 54 stanzas of differing length and metre and of a prologue and epilogue in prose. Twenty-one stanzas – more than a third of the entire poem – are quoted (sometimes with different wording) by Snorri Sturluson in his *Edda,* and stanza 47 is quoted by Óláfr Þórðarson in his *Third Grammatical Treatise*.

[1] The citations of Eddic poems in this article are taken from Jón Helgason's edition (*Eddadigte*, 3 Vols., København: Ejnar Munksgaard – Oslo: Dreyer – Stockholm: Norstedt, 1955–1962). Helgason's numbering is used even when I speak about different editions, translations etc. When quoting whole stanzas, Helgason's spelling is used, quotations in the text were normalized. The English versions come from the second edition of Lee Milton Hollander's translation, but I have occasionally changed the spelling (*The Poetic Edda. Translated with an Introduction and Explanatory Notes*, University of Texas Press: Austin, 1986[2]). The citations of *Hrólfs saga kraka* and *Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekka* are taken from Peter Tunstall's translation, of *Snorra Edda* from Samuel Laing's, of Saxo Grammaticus' *Gesta Danorum* from Peter Fisher's, of Homer from Augustus Taber Murray's, of Aristotle's *Poetics* from William Hamilton Fyfe's, of Euripides' *Bacchae* from Theodore Alois Buckley's, of his *Helene* from Edward P. Coleridge's and of *Bhagavad Gītā* from Kāshināth Trimbak Telang's translations.
I would like to express my gratitude to Prof. Håkan Rydving, who gave me at my disposal the text of his Prague lecture (see Rydving 2011).

The date and provenance of the poem are – as in the case of more or less all Eddic poems – obscure. There are no explicit or implicit criteria that would allow us to say anything more about the date or place of the poem's origin. The *communis opinio* usually places the poem in the Viking Age (9th–10th centuries) and in the West-Norse area (Norway, Iceland and other Atlantic islands occupied by Norsemen).[2]

The aim of the following article is to trace the history of the interpretation of *Grímnismál*, to defend the unity of the extant text and to provide a new literary and religious interpretation of the poem.

The Poem and the Frame

The prose prologue tells the story of the king Hrauðung's sons, older Agnarr and younger Geirrøðr, who are driven by a storm far from inhabited areas to a lonely island. There they are fostered by a couple of old peasants – the farmer's wife brings up Agnarr, while her husband gives Geirrøðr "good counsel". The next spring, the farmer gives the youths a boat, but before they start sailing home, the farmer takes Geirrøðr aside and speaks to him secretly. This last counsel proves to be anything but "good", because when the youths appear at the domestic coast, Geirrøðr pushes the boat with his older brother in the open sea and curses him to "fall in the power of monsters" (*Hafi þik smyl!*). Thereafter he makes his way home where he realizes that his father has died and since the legal heir – his older brother Agnarr – is not to be found, he is proclaimed a king.

The curse directed to Agnarr fulfils itself swiftly, since when the divine couple Óðinn and Frigg (who, in fact, were the old farmer and his wife) sit on their high seat *Hliðskjálf* and observe the worlds, Óðinn ironically comments on the destiny of Frigg's protégé Agnarr, who lives in a distant cave with a female giant. Frigg reciprocally accuses Óðin's protégé Geirrøðr of lack of hospitality. Irritated Óðinn sets out to examine the situation in person, while Frigg sends secretly a messenger to Geirrøðr, warning him of a stranger, a magician, at whom all dogs are afraid to bark. The stranger in a blue cloak is quickly captured, and since he refuses to say anything except his name – Grímnir – he is bound in between two fires without food and drink. It is not before the ninth day of the torture that Geirrøð's son Agnarr (having identical name as Geirrøð's brother) comes and offers Óðinn a drink. At that moment the god starts to speak and after extinguishing the fire with his word (*Grm* 1), giving a short thanks to Agnarr and telling a prophecy of his future reign in Geirrøð's realm (*Grm* 2–3), he begins his visionary speech: (*Grm* 4)

Land er heilakt, er ek liggia sé
ásom ok álfom nær,
en í Þrúðheimi skal Þórr vera,
unz um riúfaz regin.

[2] Most historians of Old Norse Literature dated the poem to the 10th century (Jónsson 1920, 143, 148, de Vries 1941, § 79, Sonderegger 742). However, some radically different opinions have been pronounced as well. For an extreme view see, e.g., Sophus Bugge who sees in the torture of an unrecognized god an echo of the story of Jesus' crucifixion mediated through the apocryphal script *Vindicta Salvatoris* (Bugge 454–463).

The land is holy which lies yonder,
near to Æsir and alfs;
in Þrúðheimr, there shall Þórr ay dwell,
till draws nigh the doom of the gods.

The speech itself, which fills most of the poem, is only loosely bound to the epic story and consists mainly of catalogue stanzas, enumerating the dwellings of different gods (*Grm* 4–17, 24), describing the life of Óðinn and his chosen warriors (*einherjar*) in Valhǫll (*Grm* 18–22, 24–26, 36), naming various mythical rivers (*Grm* 27–29), the horses of different gods (*Grm* 30), depicting the world-tree Yggdrasill and the animals living in it (*Grm* 31–35), the goddess of the sun and dangers threatening her (*Grm* 37–39), the creation of the world (*Grm* 40–41) and the best things in the mythical world (*Grm* 43–44). In stanza 45, the note suddenly changes and instead of impersonal description, Óðinn starts using the first person. He enumerates his bynames that – together with occasional remarks concerning the situation in which they were used – fill six (*Grm* 46–50, 54) long stanzas (*Grm* 50):

Sviðurr ok Sviðrir er ek hét at Søkkmímis,
ok dulða ek þann inn aldna iǫtun,
þá er ek Miðvitnis vark ins mæra burar
orðinn einbani.

Sviðurr and Sviðrir at Søkkmími's I was called,
when the old etin I hid,
and when Miðvitni's, the mighty one's,
son I slew alone.

Immediately after it, the poem turns back to the frame story, and its last and most dramatic part begins. In direct address, Óðinn blames Geirrøðr for forgeting the wisdom he has taught him, threatens to withdraw his support, prophesies Geirrøð's imminent death by sword and in the end casts off his disguise, appears in his true form and reveals his proper name (*Grm* 51–53):

Qlr ertu, Geirrøðr, hefr þú ofdrukkit;
miklo ertu hnuginn, er þú ert míno gengi,
ǫllom einheriom, ok Óðins hylli.

Fiǫlð ek þér sagða, en þú fátt um mant;
of þik véla vinir;
mæki liggia ek sé míns vinar
allan í dreyra drifinn.

Eggmóðan val nú mun Yggr hafa;
þitt veit ek líf um liðit;
úfar ro dísir – nú knáttu Óðin siá:
nálgaztu mik ef þú megir

Thou art muddled, Geirrøðr, too much thou hast drunk;
of much art robbed since rashly thou loosest
Óðin's and the einherjar's favour.

Full long I spake, but little thou mindest:
faithless friends betray thee;
before me I see my foster son's sword,
its blade all dripping with blood.

A death-doomed man will soon drink with Yggr:
not long the life left thee.
The norns wish thee ill; now Óðinn mayst see!
Come thou near if thou canst.

But the last line is hardly more than a rhetorical challenge. The prose epilogue refers that Geirrøðr, recognizing in the end the divine nature of his guest, ran to free him, but – by accident – pierced himself with his own sword. Óðinn disappears mysteriously, and we hear nothing more about him.

Historic-Critical Approach

The history of the scholarly approaches to *Grímnismál* is not as long as it is in the case of some other Eddic lays. Nevertheless it is no less interesting and it shows us very clearly the preoccupations and forms of understanding that governed the minds of the scholars of the past. Of course it would be naive to think that we are free of any bias and able to see the poem from a completely objective point of view. However, it can be helpful to see the faults of the past, at least in order to prevent repeating them.

Especially according to older scholars, the origin of the poem must be sought in the frame story, i.e., in the prose of the prologue and epilogue and the six stanzas at the beginning and at the end of the poem that are directly bound to it (*Grm* 1–3 and 51–3). They perceived *Grímnismál* basically as an epic poem that was only later adorned with opulent wisdom stanzas thus breaking the original narrative character of the poem.[3] According to this view, some critics tended to emend the "added" stanzas. We can begin with *Deutsche Altertumskunde* by Karl Müllenhoff, who reduced the 54 stanzas of the poem to 20 (Müllenhoff 159–160) while Richard Constant Boer was able to exclude as "unecht" 41 stanzas, leaving the poem as a stump of 13 stanzas.[4] The pinnacle of this approach, Hermann Schneider's *Uredda,* must be mentioned: it presented its audience with two poems, *The younger Grímnismál* whose entire length is 14 stanzas and *The older Grímnismál* consisting of just one single stanza (Schneider 107–110)! Startled readers could comfort themselves with Müllenhoff's words about "zwar eins der kleinsten, aber eins der großartigsten Lieder der Edda" (Müllenhoff 159), but this hardly prevents us from feeling that this is not the right way of treating old poems.

Thus it must be seen as a turning point in the history of this subject's research, when Magnus Olsen advocated for the first time in 1933 for the analysis of the entire poem as

[3] The opinion about the literary value of the catalogue stanzas was usually extremely low, Jan de Vries speaks about "Flickarbeit", which proves that the compiler of the poem "an Geschick, an Ursprünglichkeit und an dichterischer Gestaltungskraft mangelte" (de Vries 1952, 180), Boer calls the whole poem "bunter Wirrwarr von Strophen" that "untereinander nicht zusammenhängen" (de Boer 1906, 167, 133).

[4] Boer 1922, ii.63–4. However, this was already a decline of Boer's critical efforts. In his study of *Grímnismál* from 1906, he came to 8 "zweifellos echten" stanzas (Boer 1906, 161).

a whole and strongly argued against the so-called "higher text criticism" (Olsen 265–266, 276–278). There are especially two points of his critique that should be mentioned. First, Olsen was able to show that the catalogue stanzas do not represent an accidental heap of mythological wisdom, but they form a logically organized and well-ordered structure which should not be mutilated by light-hearted emendation or conjectures. The second – and maybe even more important – result of his analysis goes deeper and hits the heart of modern text criticism. We must keep in mind that our literary consciousness (not to speak about our literary categories) is derived mostly from modern European literature and is hardly useful for analysis of older texts. It might well be that scholars trained on romantic or early modern poetry perceive catalogue stanzas as not very dramatic or "großartig". But this says nothing about how they were perceived by their original audience. We should try to understand the extant texts, and not to impose our literary patterns on them or even change them in order to fit our literary taste.

The common starting point of historic-critical interpretations was the persuasion that archaic man was originally interested in epic "stories" in contrast to the antiquarian of the later epochs, whose encyclopaedic literary taste and hunger for collecting curiosities from the past could best be satiated by catalogues and similar devices.[5] But such a view can hardly be maintained, since catalogues can be traced back to the very dawn of the European (and not only European) literature. We can just mention the catalogue of ships (*Il.* ii.494–759), catalogue of Trojans (*Il.* ii.816–877) and catalogue of Nereids (*Il.* xviii.39–49) in *Iliad* or the catalogues of Nereids (*Theog.* 240–264) and of Rivers and Occeanids in Hesiod (*Theog.* 337–370).[6] An Old Norse parallel is, for example, the catalogue of *dvergar* in *Vǫluspá*, which has suffered perpetual attacks by modern scholars (e.g. Nordal 40–41), in spite of the fact that the catalogue is present in all extant manuscripts of the poem and thus probably belonged to it from the very beginning.[7]

Change of Paradigm

The changing opinions about the role of enumeration in Old Norse poetry led to a complete reversal of view on *Grímnismál* in the 20th century. In their influential studies on the composition of enumerative stanzas of *Grímnismál*, Christopher Hale, Bo Ralph and Elizabeth Jackson analyzed the mythological lists and came to the conclusion that *Grímnismál* catalogues are not "stray bits of lore" interpolated by "copyists" (Hollander 53) and that their construction follows a carefully deliberated plan.

On the one hand, this is definitely a positive result, and one is always pleased upon hearing that the old poets were more than just bunglers, unable to compose a single coherent poem. On the other hand, the theory about the original enumerative character of *Grímnismál* led to no less problematic results. In an article from the early 1930s Jan de Vries was the first to characterize *Grímnismál* as "didactic poetry" (*Visdomsdigtning*), and

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5 See Heusler 256. For the comical idea of the audience of catalogue poetry see Heusler 262.

6 Cf. many other examples from Iran, Mesopotamia and India collected by Franz Rolf Schröder (Schröder 1954, 179–185, Schröder 1958, 356–371).

7 For various types of treatment of Eddic catalogues in English and American translations of the *Poetic Edda* see Larrington 2007, 38–39.

after him the focus of research shifted ever more to the catalogue parts of the poem, while the conflict of Óðinn and Geirrøðr became just "a story, nothing more than epic frame for a poem, whose purpose was communication of a set of mythological knowledge".[8] De Vries viewed *Grímnismál* as a parallel to the Eddic *Vafþrúðnismál* and other enumerative poems where the context of the wisdom contest between god and other mythological being serves as a background for presenting sets of mythological wisdom. Rudolf Simek and Herman Pálsson clearly state that *Grímnismál*, "at first sight a mythological poem, must actually be counted among the wisdom poems,"[9] and for Gerd Wolfgang Weber, the plot of the poem was only a "Beiwerk", while the collected mythological wisdom presented its "Kernstück" showing the "fascination with the multifarious knowledge".[10] This position was led further by Bo Ralph, who turned the views of older scholarship upside down, interpreting the catalogue stanzas as the very core of the poem, while the accompanying prose represented for him a later attempt to incorporate traditional material in a pseudomythological story. According to these scholars the poem is basically not an epic but rather a mnemonic.[11]

However, such a position is hardly more acceptable than the old one, since at least the stanzas 1–3 and 51–53 are tightly bound to the accompanying prose. Ralph tries to explain them in a different way, interpreting them as a description of a "wisdom contest" between Óðinn and *þurs* Geirrøðr and thus replacing "the complicated story" with a "very natural one" that can be compared to the above mentioned *Vafþrúðnismál* (Ralph 115–116). But such a theory hardly survives a closer scrutiny. First, such an interpretation left unexplained the first stanza with direct reference to the fires Óðinn sits in between. Second, stanza 51 says explicitly that Geirrøðr has lost (*er hnugginn*) Óðin's support (*gengi*), his grace (*hylli*) and the help of Óðin's *einherjar*, all of which is inconceivable in the case of a *þurs*. Third, there are at least two further stanzas in the middle of the poem (42, 45), which refer to the situation described in the framing prose.[12]

Thus it seems better to consider the extant text (including both stanzas and the accompanying prose) as a consistent whole. The fact that the linguistic design of the prose might bear some traces of younger origin does not say much in this case. The prose parts of the lays of the *Poetic Edda* might well have been added later to the existing poems, but it was probably exactly at the moment when the "immanent" epic frame in which they were embedded, slowly began to fade in the memory of the audience. There are no contradictions between the text (of the poem) and the (prose) context, and though the prose could have undergone some changes in the course of oral transmission and its writing down, it is still a better starting point than the fully fictitious contexts used by the adherents of "no prose" theory.[13]

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[8] "[…] saadant Sagn var ikke andet end den episke Ramme for et kvad hvis egentlige Indhold var Meddelelser af en Række mytologiske Kundskaber" (de Vries 1934, 51).

[9] "[…] äußerlich ein Götterlied […] ist eigentlich der mythologischen Wissensdichtung zuzuzählen" (Simek – Pálsson 1987, 117).

[10] "[…] dessen Faszination von dem vielfältigen Wissen ausgeht" (Weber 4132).

[11] It was probably Andreas Heusler who first stamped *Grímnismál* as mnemonic poetry ("Merkdichtung"). See Olsen 265–266.

[12] In his article Ralph tries to give a completely fictional interpretation of *Grm* 42, based on the "pagan cosmological view that the cosmos was to remain intact as long as the kettle of the gods remained on its hearth" (Ralph 114) and he leaves stanza 45 unexplained.

[13] For example, Ralph removes the extant frame and thereafter asks, "what do we really know, for instance, about the frame story?" (Ralph 115).

The content of the prose does not point to a late origin. In fact, parallels to all the motifs it contains are easily found in Old Norse, Old Germanic, Greek and other heroic and mythical lore. The story of competing protégés of two gods, the supreme god and his wife who is able to trick her husband and so destroy his favourite, can be find in *Origo gentis Langobardorum* (*Origo* i) and in *Historia Langobardorum* by Paulus Diaconus (*Hist.Lang.* i.7–8) as well as in Iliad (*Il.* xiv.153–353). The story of removing the legal heir by his own brother we can find in *Hervarar saga*, Norwegian folk-tales and Herodotus, and the story of a son who helps the stranger tortured by his father and is promised the realm of his father in return can be found in *Hálfdanar saga svarta* (Snorri, *HSv* viii).[14] It is clear that the presence of old traditional motifs cannot prove the originality of any text. Nevertheless, it shows that the ideas behind the prose frame of the poem are old and cannot be used as evidence against the age of the frame.

However, there is one parallel that deserves special attention – the so-called "Prolog im Himmel" scene depicting the quarrel between Óðinn and Frigg, taking place in the divine world before the beginning of the poem itself. This scene is paralleled well by another Old Norse poem, skaldic *Hákonarmál* by Eyvindr Finnsson, which describes the fall of the Norwegian king Hákon the Good in the battle of Fitjar on the island of Storð (A.D. 961) and his subsequent entrance in Valhǫll. The first stanza of the poem, however, does not describe any actions on the battlefield but Óðinn sitting in Valhǫll and sending his valkyries to bring the doomed king to him. Although short in the context of both poems, the prologue fulfils an important and very similar function: it embeds the course of the terrestrial events in the broader religious context and gives it meaning, turning a simple death in battle (in case of *Hákonarmál*) or a death by accident (in case of *Grímnismál*) into an event of higher significance.

Ritualistic Interpretations

Nevertheless, even the religious interpretation of the poem must first explain the connection between the enumerating stanzas and the epic frame. Such an explanation was given first in 1958 when Franz Rolf Schröder published his study on *Grímnismál*, explaining the didactic parts of the poem as a sacred wisdom and the epic opening as a description of *acquiring* this wisdom. He quotes many parallels of rituals from different religions, where adepts of various standing (e.g. shamans or participants of the sacrifices) must undergo painful tests involving heat, hunger and thirst, comparable to the torments Óðinn is exposed to in *Grímnismál*. These bodily sufferings lead in the end to religious ecstasy and achieving initiation in the secret lore that is hidden from common mortals: "When we turn back to *Grímnismál*, we come to the conclusion that all important features [of these rituals] re-appear in the poem".[15] Thus Schröder no longer compares *Grímnismál* to the *Vafþrúðnismál*, a wisdom contest presenting ready mythological knowledge of the participants, but rather to a shamanistic séance, in the course of which a divine knowl-

[14] For these and other parallels see Much 328, Weber 4132, Hollander 53, Unwerth 139.

[15] "Wenn wir nunmehr wieder zu den *Grímnismál* zurücklenken, so stellen wir fest, daß alle entscheidende Züge in ihnen wiederkehren" (Schröder 1958, 377).

edge is acquired. "Óðinn of *Grímnismál* comes close to a shaman, yes, he appears as his divine proto-image".[16]

Schröder's interpretation of the poem has had an important influence on scholars – prominently on Peter Buchholz – who in their works tried to search for further traces of shamanism in Old Norse culture and especially in the figure of Óðinn,[17] as well as on others, who – even when critical of Schröder and Buchholz's shamanistic theories – tried to understand the setting of *Grímnismál* as a ritual séance with obtaining sacred wisdom as a culmination point of the story. The works of Jerre Fleck and Edgar Polomé are good examples in this regard. These scholars saw starving, thirsting and sitting between fires as a remnant of an old Indo-European ritual whose descendant is, for example, the Indian *tapas*. "Obviously also *Grímnismál* centre around such a nucleus; virtually the entire poem consists of numinous knowledge. I submit that the innermost frame surrounding this core is a myth of Óðinn performing a first exemplary ordeal between the fires and thereby gaining the great wealth of knowledge carried in the nucleus. The performance of the rite leads to the god's ritual rebirth in a higher spiritual level, expressed in his realization of his new potential and expanded identity" (Fleck 1971, 64; cf. Fleck 1968, 38, Polomé 403–420).[18] And the first visible manifestation of the acquired "new potential and expanded identity" is the mythical wisdom, filling the majority of the poem.

The articles of Fleck and Polomé are important not only because they avoided the use of the terminologically weak concept of shamanism, whose usage for Old Norse phenomena is harshly criticized and whose value in the study of Old Norse religion seems to be rather limited.[19] The value of their interpretation consists no less in the fact that they are able to explain the importance of the catalogue stanzas in the context of the epic story. According to Fleck the mythological lore is not purposeless and plays a direct role in the poem. It is no accident, Fleck points out, that Óðin's monologue is addressed to the young Agnarr, who is explicitly assured that he will never get a better reward for one single drink (*Grm* 3):

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[16] "Óðinn dieses Liedes dem Schamanen nahesteht. Ja, er erscheint geradezu als das göttliche Urbild desselben" (Schröder 1958, 377–378).

[17] Buchholz 1971, 19. Buchholz 1968, 38 mentiones *Grímnismál* as an explicit example.

[18] One can mention Gro Steinsland as one of the modern proponents of this theory (Steinsland 98–99).

[19] I don't have the space here to discuss the problem of using the term shamanism, thus I would only like to point out some basic facts (for a detailed treatment, see von Schnurbein, 117–124 that – despite its heavy ideological bias and superficial treatment of the religious phenomena – offers a useful overview of the research in the first few pages).
There are basically three objections to using this term in the studies of Old Norse religion. First, the most famous "cases of shamanism" in Old Norse literature are today usually treated as having nothing to do with the concept (see Paul 42, 45, Edsman 23–25, 54–55, Fromm 1999, Dillmann 1992, 20–33, Dillmann 1994, 23–4). The second objection points to the fact that the studies about shamanism in Old Norse religion usually consist of nothing more than painstaking searching for singular parallels between Old Norse and shamanist concepts and rituals without addressing the cultural context in which they were embedded (Fleck 1971, 54–57, Ohlmarks 325–6). The third objection affects the very core of the problem: the concept of shamanism itself. New research has pointed to the discrepancies between the historical and typological uses of the concept and came to the conclusion that the notion of shamanism employed by the scholars of the past (especially Eliade) probably never really existed, and thus they recommend to keep the original terms *böö*, *ojun*, *noaidi*, *angakoq* etc. in the case of native cultures (von Schnurbein 124–126, Rydving 2011).

Heill skaltu, Agnarr, allz þik heilan biðr
Veratýr vera;
eins drykkjar þú skalt aldregi
giǫld betri geta.

All hail to thee, for happiness
is given thee, Agnarr, by Óðinn.
Better guerdon shalt never get
for one beaker of beer.

This reward, continues Fleck, is the didactic part of the poem itself. It consists of secret numinous wisdom whose knowledge – as can be seen from the summoned parallels – must have been an important condition for the Old Norse king whose office was religious as well as political (Fleck 1971, 63). Thus the gift of the religious wisdom to Agnarr is a symbolical expression of the fact that Óðinn takes the reign from Geirrøðr and gives it to him. Agnarr should not be compared to a shaman adept but rather to a royal pretender, who – as the young Konr in *Rígsþula* or Óttarr in *Hyndluljóð* – is given sacred wisdom by a god and through this wisdom becomes his father's heir. "The *Rígsþula*, *Hyndluljóð* and *Grímnismál* offers us three variants of the same functional narrative. A godly figure […] provides his human protégé with that numinous knowledge necessary to decide the succession in the latter's favour despite the principle of primogeniture" (Fleck 1970, 46). The old Geirrøðr, who does not remember the advice he was given by Óðinn,[20] dies in the end of the poem and young Agnarr becomes a ruler in his land for many years, as the last sentence of the whole poem explicitly states (*En Agnarr var þar konungr lengi síðan*).

Critique of Ritualistic Interpretations

Persuasive as the ritualistic explanation is, it has some weak points. First, we do not know about any "secret divine knowledge" which would be a necessary precondition for a Scandinavian king. It is of course possible to argue that the secret royal wisdom was in fact so "secret" that we do not know anything about it, but such an argument does not help much, since the wisdom Óðinn presents in *Grímnismál* was – as far as we can see – in no way secret. Óðin's bynames were widely used in Eddic as well as in skaldic poetry, and must have been well known to everyone who wanted to understand any Old Norse poem. We are not better informed about the sacredness or secrecy of the names of the gods' dwellings and mythological rivers. And in respect to *Grímnismál*, it is particularly difficult to figure out what use a Scandinavian king could have for a list of divine abodes, a list of Óðin's bynames or a list of mythological rivers. The parallels quoted by Fleck are of no help, because the role of the wisdom in *Hyndluljóð* and *Rígsþula* is much better justified: Óttarr, awaiting a trial about his father's property (his *fǫðurleifð*) obtains in *Hyndluljóð* the knowledge of his genealogy (see esp. *Hdl* 9), and we must keep in mind that genealogical information was of vital importance in property cases (Gurevich 75–79). In

[20] Cf. Óðin's "I have told a lot, but you have remembered little" (*fjǫlð ek þér sagðak, en þú fár um mant*) in stanza 52.

Rígsþula, the young Konr is in fact initiated in the mysteries of rune magic (*Rþ* 36), but the benefits of this knowledge are immediately clear (*Rþ* 43–44):

En Konr ungr kunni rúnar,
ævinrúnar ok aldrrúnar;
meirr kunni hann mǫnnom biarga,
eggiar deyfa, ægi lægia.

Klǫk nam fugla, kyrra elda,
sæva ok svefia, sorgir lægia:
afl ok eliun átta manna.

But Konr only could carve runes,
runes lasting ay, life keeping runes;
to bring forth babes birth runes he knew,
to dull sword edges and to calm the sea.

Fowls speech he knew, and quenched fires,
could soothe sorrows and the sick mind heal;
in his arms the strength of eight men had.

However, the weakest point of the shamanistic and ritualistic views is the interpretation of the sitting between fires as a religious rite. In the corpus of Old Norse literature we do not find a description of any such a ritual, and the only other (as far as I know) occurrence of binding a person between the fires suggests a completely different meaning. In *Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekka* Hjǫrleifr inn kvennsami, the king of Rogaland, goes to spy in the house of Hreiðarr, king of Sjælland, but is betrayed by his treacherous wife Æsa and caught. Hreiðarr has a gallow erected for Hjǫrleifr and meanwhile (*Hálf* viii)

> *Hjǫrleifr konungr var uppfestr í konungs hǫll með skóþvengjum sínum sjálfs millum elda tveggja at ráði Æsu; en hirðin sat við drykkju.*
>
> king Hjǫrleifr was strung up by his own shoestraps between two fires. It was Æsa, who gave this suggestion and the king's [i.e. Hreiðar's] retinue sat drinking.

It is not completely clear if the binding between two fires is intended here as a last humiliation to the sentenced king (as the binding with one's own shoestraps in front of a drinking retinue might suggest) or if it is actually torture (it happens because of the advice of the malicious Æsa). But it is definitely not a ritual intending to acquire "numinous" or "secret" knowledge. And this is in good agreement with the explicit formulation of the prose frame of *Grímnismál* that explicitly says that by binding and the absence of food and drink Geirrøðr *lét hann pína til sagna* ("tortured [his guest] to make him speak").[21]

[21] Alexander Haggerty Krappe (Krappe 140–141) and Jens Peter Schjødt (Schjødt 1988, 41) offer one more explanation of the binding between the fires. In their opinion the fire in Old Norse culture was used for destroying a hostile magician, and such an interpretation seems to be fitting, because the prologue explicitly states that Geirrøðr was misled by Frigg to believe that the masked Óðinn was a magician (*fjǫlkunnigr maðr*). But the Old Norse examples Krappe and Schjødt give (*Vsp* 21, *Hdl* 48) don't speak about binding between the fires, but generally about using fire, and at least the first doesn't seem to be valid at all, since Hildr of *Vǫluspá* is burnt after the gods "pierced her with a spear" (*geirum studdu*), and the fire here probably refers to a funeral pyre.

Some further arguments against the ritualistic interpretation were summarized by Jens Peter Schjødt. He rightly points out that in the whole of the poem there is no word about acquiring wisdom. In the case of Óðinn, it is reasonable to suppose that the mythical wisdom he communicated was known to him already before his capturing and torment. And in the case of Agnarr, the promised reward (*gjǫld*) explicitly mentioned in stanza 3 is rather his future reign over the lands of his father (that is the subject of the stanza 2). *Grímnismál* contains no traces of symbolism of death and rebirth that is typical for descriptions of the Norse rites of initiation (Schjødt 1988, 37–39; see also Schjødt 2008, 64).

What is more, the ritual explanation of sitting between the fires does not fit the plot of the poem very well. Óðinn is definitely not tormented by his own will, as the first stanza cursing the burning fires shows clearly enough. And it would be really a strange policy if the king forced a suspicious beggar to perform a rite of initiation, the result of which should be a "new potential and expanded identity". The explanation that Geirrøðr wanted to torture Óðinn but by coincidence chose just the means used by an ancient Indo-European ritual is hardly worthy of considering. Further more, according to the *tapas* theory the initiated one should be the future king Agnarr, but it is actually Óðinn who is bound between the fires and tormented by hunger and thirst. And Óðin's speech seems to be directed to Geirrøðr rather than to Agnarr. In fact, the only person who arguably acquires any wisdom is Geirrøðr who recognizes – but obviously too late – who his masked guest was. Thus the poem does not focus on acquiring wisdom by humans. On the contrary, the inability to aquire some sort of wisdom seems to be its main motif.

Jerre Fleck himself was aware of these objections and tried to escape them by supposing that the author or editor of the poem contaminated or confused several different texts (Fleck 1971, 65). But such a presupposition destroys what seemed to be the strongest argument in favour of a ritualistic interpretation of *Grímnismál*. "It seems to be a poor method which presupposes that the author of the source has misunderstood his subject" (Schjødt 1988, 33). *Grímnismál*, seen as a coherent whole, does not offer a very good description of initiation of any sort.

Further Approaches

Thus we are once again left with the same problem: how can the enumerative body of the poem be connected to the epic frame in the prose and the first and last stanzas? We have already mentioned Magnus Olsen, who in his attempt to free the poem of the mutilating "higher text criticism", pointed out that at least some of the stanzas of the poem, though "catalogues" in fashion, are undoubtedly connected to the dramatic situation in Geirrøð's hall. Olsen especially mentions (Olsen 269–270, 273–4) the contrast between the god tortured by heat, thirst and hunger and the splendid depictions of the feasting *einherjar* (18, 25), of Óðinn himself drinking wine and beer in Valhǫll (19, 36) and especially the cold, refreshing pleasures of Søkkvabekkr (*Grm* 7):

Søkkvabekkr heitir enn fiórði, en þar svalar knego
unnir yfir glymia;
þar þau Óðinn ok Sága drekka um alla daga,
glǫð, ór gullnom kerom.

Søkkvabekkr called is the fourth [divine dwelling], which cool waters
ripple round about;
there Óðinn and Sága all their days drink,
glad from golden cups.

According to Olsen, such contrasts should not be understood as an argument for the splitting of the poem in more "original" ones, as the adherents of the historic-critical school used to do.[22] On the contrary, they demonstrate its unity: "After the analysis of the first part of the poem I cannot see any objections against its genuineness and doubts about its extant form. There are good internal criteria for this persuasion".[23]

This way of interpretating was pushed forward by remarkable studies of Alv Kragerud (Kragerud 45–48) and especially of Carolyne Larrington, who tried to prove that the contrast between the image of painfully tortured god and the vision of the divine world lies at the very core of the poem. In Larrington's opinion (Larrington 2002, 69–71), the cosmological and other enumerative stanzas of *Grímnismál* show a "divine world [that] stands in a perfected and archetypal relation to the flawed human world, in particular the hall of Geirrøðr where duties of hospitality are neglected and strangers ill-treated rather than given justice" (Larrington 2002, 70). Thus, for example, the intention of stanza 17 with the impressive description of the wastelands Óðin's son Víðarr dwells in, is to show – according to Larrington – the proper observance of the duty of revenge in the lands of the gods (*Grm* 17):

Hrísi vex ok há grasi
Víðars land viði;
en þar mǫgr of læzk af mars baki
frækn at hefna fǫður.

Greenwoods grow, and grasses tall,
and leaves in Víðar's land:
from horseback leaps the hero, eager
to avenge his father's fall.

Thus the cosmic geography of *Grímnismál* is in fact a "social geography": "the mapping of the divine land exemplifies how human lords should structure their lives, by imitating the customs of the gods within the microcosm of the human hall" (Larrington 2002, 73–74).

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[22] Scholars of historic-critical school used to regard sudden changes in subject and contrasting motifs as a sign of blending more original poems, which often led them to absurd claims about a number of poems and interpolations that can be detected in the extant text. According to de Vries, *Grímnismál* originates in two different poems with some further interpolations (de Vries 1934, 40–51). Later de Vries was able to find remnants of two different poems even in the relatively small and homogenous catalogue of gods' abodes (de Vries 1952, 174). According to Boer, *Grímnismál* is a mixture of five poems enriched by eleven further interpolations (Boer 1906, 173–174), and according to Müllenhoff, it is even possible to find in the five stanzas 29–34 remnants of three – "wenn nicht mehr" – different poems (Müllenhoff 160). For Hermann Schneider it was even questionable whether there existed something like *Grímnismál* before the compilers began their destructive work (Schneider, 84–85).

[23] "Jeg kan efter denne analyse av diktets første avsnitt ikke være i tvivl om at det er ekte og pålitelig overlevert. Indre grunner godtgjör det" (Olsen 269).

It is not my intention here to argue against this pleasantly simple and lucid interpretation. On the contrary, I would like to supplement it with some further points stressing the correspondence between the prose frame and the content of the catalogue stanzas. In the remaining section of this article, I would like to analyze the content of Óðin's vision in Geirrøð's hall and look closer into how far they concern the dramatic conflict between Óðinn and Geirrøðr.

Catalogue Stanzas: Themes and Motifs

In my opinion, the catalogue stanzas in *Grímnismál* are centred around three main themes: the problem of border and its crossing, the notion of *ragnarǫk* and the problem of wisdom.

A. Borders

The fact that many catalogue stanzas (especially the enumerative ones) exemplify the problem of borders has not escaped the attention of scholars. In three separate stanzas, the poem describes the rivers encircling the lands of men (28), the lands of gods (27)[24] and the rivers dividing them from the ash Yggdrasill (29). These rivers as well as the river Þund (21), the gate Valgrind (22) or the shield blocking the sun (37–38) "seem to function as a barrier" (Larrington 2002, 71–72). In many places the dividing sense of the barriers is explicitly stressed: the river Þund streaming between Valhǫll and the rest of the world "seems too huge to wade through" (*þikkir ofmikill at vaða*). *Valgrind*, the gate of Valhǫll, is locked and only few know how to open it (*fáir vitu, hvé hon er í lás lokin*). "Holy waters", i.e., the rivers which divide the worlds of gods and men are boiling (*hlóa*) and the bridge which crosses them (29) "burns whole with fire" (*brenn ǫll loga*).

Yet one can clearly see that all of these borders can be crossed and the means of doing so exist: the wall around Valhǫll has the gate Valgrind (22), there is the bridge Bifrǫst (29) connecting the lands of gods and men, and the name of the river Gjǫll (28) immediately calls to mind the bridge Gjallarbrú which connects the human and divine lands with underworld (28). At least some scholars agree that the mysterious "fish of Þjóðvitnir" (*Þjóðvitnis fiskr*) in stanza 21 may be a kenning for the bridge crossing the river Þund and thus connecting Valhǫll with the rest of the world.[25] Some gods are equipped with horses, which allows them to cross the barriers between the worlds, and Þórr is even able to wade through (30, 29). The ways of passing from one world to another and crossing their borders are mentioned: walking (9, 10, 45), flying (20), falling (28), riding (30), wading (21, 29), running (32) and other unspecified ways (29, 30). Thus the poem stresses the connection between the worlds as well as their division. An ideal metaphor for this double meaning of the border in *Grímnismál* is the image of gate or bridge: they

[24] The "treasure of the gods" (*hodd goða*) in stanza 27 seems to have the meaning "the realm of the gods" (Kock § 15).

[25] The stanza, especially its first part, is notoriously difficult to interpret. The hypothesis that *Þjóðvitnis fiskr* describes a bridge can be found for the first time in Rydberg (s.v. *Tjodvitners fisk*, p. 301).

are closed, locked and difficult to pass, yet their very being a *gate* or a *bridge* shows that they are intended for going through or over the marked border, even when many people do not know how to do it.

And this is exactly the point I would like to make: the whole poem shows that only certain types of beings can cross the borders of the two worlds and pass from one to another. Two of them are obvious: gods and (at least) some animals, for example the mythical squirrel Ratatoskr (32) or Óðin's ravens Huginn and Muninn (20), flying "the whole world over" (*jǫrmungrund yfir*). Of humans only the dead seem to be able to cross the borders: for them the gate *Valgrind,* "the fence of the slain", is intended, while the *valglaumnir*, "the host of the slain", wade through the streams of Þund. Living humans are enclosed in the world of the living, and Óðin's last challenge to Geirrøðr "come thou near [i.e., to me] if thou canst", says more than it seems.

B. Ragnarǫk and Death

Many scholars have pointed out the essential role that *ragnarǫk*, the doom of the gods, plays in the poem (e.g. Olsen 269–272, de Vries 1941, § 79). This is certainly a correct observation, and one can find links to it in many places. In stanzas 33–35 it is spoken about the world-ash Yggdrasill and its decay: many serpents gnaw at its branches, dragon Níðhǫggr bites its roots, the harts eat its leaves, the side of the tree rottens. Stanza 35 explicitly says "The ash Yggdrasill doth ill abide, more than to men is known" (*Askr Yggdrasils drýgir erfiði, meira en menn viti*) and such a poor state of the "best tree in the world" (*Grm* 44) clearly indicates that the world itself is slowly coming to its inevitable doom. There are stanzas depicting *einherjar* summoned by Óðinn (18, 36) and stanza 23 clearly says for what reason: *fara at vitni at vega*, "to fare forth to fight the wolf", i.e., the Fenrir, who will be one of the destructive powers of *ragnarǫk*. In stanzas 37–39, the description of the sun is closed by mentioning the wolves pursuing it, calling in mind the day when they catch up to it and swallow it. And the very first stanza of the visionary speech (*Grm* 4) declares that Þórr will live in Þrúðheimr "till the gods perish" (*unz um rjúfaz regin*).

The notion of *ragnarǫk* penetrates more or less all Scandinavian mythology, and implicit as well as explicit links to the passing nature of everything can be found in many Eddic poems. But if we examine the occurrences of this idea in *Grímnismál*, we find quickly that the concept of *ragnarǫk* is closely connected to another one – that of human death. This is self-evident in the places where the poem speaks about *einherjar* as the fallen mortals: Óðinn "chooses every day the men to die with a weapon" (8) and half of them then "belongs to him" (14). Thus the human way leads necessarily from this world to the world of death like the rivers Gjǫll and Leiptr, which flow by the world of men (*gumnum nær*) but – as stanza 28 remarks – inevitably fall down to the underworld (*falla til heljar neðan*).

C. Vision, Recognition and Knowledge

The concepts of borders and of the inescapability of human death blend in the poem with one more – the concept of wisdom and knowledge. We can start its analysis by taking a short look at the role of seeing and sight. It is hardly surprising that a visionary poem speaks a great deal about sight. But the tension between seeing and recognition that permeates the

whole poem is striking. There are some remarks about the sight of the gods: the prose frame narrates how Óðinn and Frigg sat on Óðin's seat Hliðskjálf, "observing all the worlds" (*sá um alla heima*). Another link to the divine observation can possibly be found in a stanza mentioning Óðinn next to Sága, because the name Sága is usually related to the verb *sjá* "to see" and given the meaning "seeress".[26] But the most explicit reference to the divine power of seeing is stanza 4, where Óðinn, sitting in fetters in Geirrøð's hall, says:

Land er heilakt, er ek liggia sé
ásom ok álfom nær;

The land is holy I see (*sé*) laying,
near to Æsir and alfs;

Thus the god is able to see not only his immediate environment and the plain reality around him, but his power reaches further, to the other reality that is neither present nor visible. Sometimes humans, too, are equipped with the recognition of the things that are usually not visible. Such is the case in stanzas 9–10 where the slain comes to the otherworldly abodes of Óðinn:

Miǫk er auðkent, þeim er til Óðins koma,
salkynni at siá:
skǫptom er rann rept, skiǫldom er salr þakiðr,
bryniom um bekki strát.

Miǫk er auðkent, þeim er til Óðins koma,
salkynni at siá:
vargr hangir fyr vestan dyrr,
ok drúpir ǫrn yfir.

Easily known to Ygg's chosen
are the heavenly halls:
the rafters, spearshafts: the roof, shield-shingled;
and the benches strewn with byrnies.

Easily known to Ygg's chosen
are the heavenly halls:
a wolf hangeth o'er the western gate,
and hovers the eagle on high.

In the case of *einherjar* who see (*sjá*) the symbolical representations of Óðinn – weapons and armour, wolf and eagle – this visual perception naturally leads to knowledge: the seen directly changes into the "well known" (*auðkent*). The only problem is that *einherjar* who have this ability are already dead. Thus we come to the same conclusion as with the motif of borders: the everyday reality is separated from the worlds beyond and the contact between them is only possible in the cases of special groups of beings, notably gods and the dead.

[26] See Jónsson 1966 s.v. There are some objections to this etymology (Sturtevant 1145–1146), but they do not disclaim the prophetical sense of the name.

Therefore the problem of knowledge and wisdom is slightly more complicated in *Grímnismál,* and the connection between seeing and understanding in the world of living is usually much looser. Thus Geirrøðr, seeing Óðinn from the very beginning does not recognize him till the very end, in spite of the fact that Óðin's speech is full of odinic symbolism and slowly comes from hidden to quite open allusions to the real identity of the masked guest.

Already in stanza 3 Grímnir calls himself *Veratýr*, "the god of men", a byname of Óðinn. In stanzas 7–10 Óðinn uses a full four stanzas to describe his dwellings in contrast to other gods who are outdone in one stanza or a half-stanza. In spite of this Óðinn is mentioned soon again as an owner of the half of the slain (14) and as a god who will be avenged in the tumults of *ragnarǫk* (17). The depiction of the feast of *einherjar* quickly turns into the description of Óðin's eating (and drinking) habits (19), and in the next stanza (20) Grímnir for the first time uses the first person (*sjámk*) when speaking about Óðinn. This tendency continues in stanza 24 where Grímnir calls Þórr "my son" (*minn mǫgr*) and in stanza 36 where he identifies himself (*mér*) as an object of valkyries' comfort. Stanza 44 which celebrates Óðinn as "the best of the gods" and his horse Sleipnir as "the best of horses", forms a transition to the part of the poem where Óðinn manifests his real identity by enumerating his names.

These enumeration stanzas hide a direct link to the dramatic situation of the poem: in stanza 49 Óðinn says "Grímnir was my name in Geirrøð's hall" (*Grímni mik hétu at Geirrøðar*),[27] and immediately after that he begins to speak openly to Geirrøðr. He blames him for losing Óðins favour (51), for not remembering the knowledge he gave him, and he prophesies his impending death (52). The next stanza says again that Geirrøðr is on the threshold of death and makes sure that, similarly to the other slain, Geirrøðr will become Óðin's property. And exactly at that moment (53) the full revelation comes: "Now Óðinn mayst see – come thou near if thou canst" (*nú knáttu Óðin sjá – nálgaztu mik, ef þú megir*)! But the moment of recognition is – at the same time – the moment of human death. The vision and the recognition unite in the end and the themes of seeing, understanding, divine mask, crossing the border between the worlds and death reach their peak in a "revelation of Óðinn in all his majesty and terror".[28]

Stanzas 42 and 45

In this context, the notoriously problematic stanzas 42 and 45 must be mentioned. Both of them are to be found in the part of the poem where catalogues with more or less hidden hints make place for what one can call Óðin's direct self-revelation (45):

Svipom hefi ek nú ypt fyr sigtíva sonom,
við þat skal vilbiǫrg vaka;
ǫllom ásom þat skal inn koma,
Ægis bekki á,
Ægis drekko at.

[27] It is probably no accident that the names *Grímr* ("Mask") and *Grímnir* ("Masked") are both used twice in the catalogue of Óðin's names, see stanzas 46 (*Grímr*), 47 (both *Grímr* and *Grímnir*) and 49 (*Grímnir*). The same happens to Jálkr and maybe to Þundr (Schröder 1958, 364).

[28] "Offenbarung Óðins in seiner ganzen Herrlichkeit und Furchtbarkeit" (Müllenhoff 159).

Now my looks (*svipr*) I have lifted aloft to the gods (*fyr sigtíva sonom*):
help will come from on high,
from all the Æsir which in shall come
on Ægi's benches,
at Ægi's feast.

The key term *svipr* is translated differently in this stanza, most often as "face" or "sight". But *fyr* with the dative usually does not denote direction but simple being "in front of" somebody or something.[29] And Óðinn is definitely *not* standing in front of the gods but in front of men and so the mentioned *sigtíva synir* must be the humans in Geirrøð's hall and not gods.[30] In this regard it seems reasonable to understand *svipr* as the "disguise" or "mask" of the beggar Óðinn has been veiled with.[31] "[Óðinn] addresses Geirrøðr with his devastating speech that leads the series of covering names up to the real one in a terrifying climax […]. This must be accompanied by a dramatic uncovering […] behind the words we can see the deed".[32] Thus the stanza describes the moment of taking off the veil, the revelation itself, and can be roughly translated as follows:

Svipom hefi ek nú ypt fyr sigtíva sonom,
við þat skal vilbiǫrg vaka;
ǫllom ásom þat skal inn koma,
Ægis bekki á,
Ægis drekko at.

Now I have unveiled my disguise in front of the men
– that shall bring the delivery;
it shall come in to all the Æsir
on Ægi's benches,
at Ægi's feast.

The same motif of suddenly appearing recognition of what has been veiled hitherto appears in stanza 42 which closes the catalogue part of the poem:

Ullar hylli hefr ok allra goða,
hverr er tekr fyrstr á fúna;
þvíat opnir heimar verða of ása sonom,
þá er hefia af hvera.

Will Ullr befriend him, and all the gods,
who first the fire quenches;
for open lie to the Æsir all worlds,
when kettles are heaved from the hearth.

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[29] Cf. *kvað ek fyr ásom, kvað ek fyr ása sonom*, "To the Æsir (i.e. standing in front of them) said I, and to Æsir's sons" (*Ls* 64).

[30] That *sigtíva synir* can denote humans can be seen in *Fm* 24.

[31] This interpretation is given by de Boor 76. See also de Boor 132 and Baetke s.v. *svipr*: "temporary apperception" (flüchtige Erscheinung), "outer appearance" (äußerer Eindruck, Aussehen).

[32] "Dann wendet er sich unmittelbar an Geirrød mit seiner Vernichtungsrede, die in schrecklicher Steigerung aus den Namenhüllen den Wahren endlich emporstiegen lässt […] Dem muss eine handlungsmässige Enthüllung zur Seite gehn […] hinter dem Wort spüren wir die Tat" (de Boor 75–76).

The stanza fits the context of the poem well. The blessing to the one who will extinguish the torturing fires corresponds to the blessing of Agnarr who gives a drink to the thirsty god (*Grm* 3). The second half stanza corresponds to the just mentioned stanza 42 and describes the revelation itself. The English translation is not completely correct in this place since it speaks about Æsir, while in the original it is spoken about the "sons of the Æsir" (*ása synir*). And the most logical explanation is to understand these "sons of the Æsir" exactly as "the sons of the victorious gods" in stanza 45: as the humans who are present to the revelation. The "worlds will open" (*heimar verða opnir*) to those who will lift the kettles from the burning fires (in order to extinguish them?) and put an end to the torments of the god. Óðin's vision breaks through the borders of the human world and reveals the mysteries of the other ones.

The connection between the figure of a disguised god and the divine vision presented in *Grímnismál* is not as rare in the history of religion as it might seem. It is maybe time to point to one more parallel that has remained unmentioned up to now. In *Bhagavad Gītā* yogi Krishna agrees to be the charioteer of the Pandava prince Arjuna in the battle at Kurukshetra. But when facing the bloody fight with his own kinsmen, Arjuna is filled with doubts. At that moment Krishna begins his speech, teaching Arjuna the rules of Dharma first, then granting him the boon of cosmic vision and in the end appearing before the terrified prince in his universal divine form.

The Visit of an Unrecognized God

If this analysis of the enumerative body of *Grímnismál* is correct, its main themes are those mentioned above: death, recognition of the hidden and the demarcation between the divine and the human. They are exactly those motifs which form the plot of the frame story both in opening and closing stanzas and the accompanying prose. Thus it is, in my opinion, possible to speak of the coherence of the poem and its unity.[33] But before we try to get a closer grip of this unity, we must turn to the main motif of the whole poem.

The motif of gods visiting mortals in disguise and rewarding or punishing their hospitality or avarice is old and probably omnipresent, reaching from Vedic India to Israel and Greece (Krappe 138–139, 143–144). The Greeks knew Ζεύς Ξείνιος, Zeus the Guest, who was "the avenger of suppliants and guests […] who ever attends upon reverent guests", and the same was true about the Roman *Iuppiter hospes*.[34] Homer already says (*Od.* xvii.485–487):

> Aye, and the gods in the guise of strangers from afar
> put on all manners of shapes and visit the cities,
> beholding the violence and the righteousness of men […]

[33] According to Gerd Wolfgang Weber (Weber 4132), even all the enumerated bynames are not accidental and characterize different aspects of Óðin's power that the god uses against Geirrøðr in the end. In my opinion, such an interpretation goes a little too far: it can be hardly denied that most of the bynames have a connection to the plot of the poem, but I think that they have descriptive rather than dramatic function.

[34] Homer, *Od.* ix.270–271. Cf. also vi.207–108, xiv.57–58, xiv.283–284, xiv.388–389, xiv.158–159, Homer, *Il.* xiii.624–625. For *Iuppiter hospes* Ovidius, *Met.* ix.298, *Met.* x.224, cf. also Vergilius, *Aen.* i.731.

We also know many myths about successful or unsuccessful ends of this divine observation. Thus Jupiter and Mercury destroy the population of Phrygia by a flood when its inhabitants deny them hospitable welcome (Ovidius, *Met.* viii.565–715), and in the *Old Testament* God annihilates Sodom for its being hostile to His angels (*Mos* 1:19). In contrast, hospitable Lot and his relatives are saved from the burning Sodom (*Mos* 1:19), Philemon and Baucis are given their wish fulfilled after they have hospitably welcomed Mercury and Jupiter (Ovidius, *Met.* viii.565–715), and the same is told about the poor beekeeper Hyrieus (Ovidius, *Fasti* v.499–536) and about Abraham and Sarah (*Mos* 1:18). This corresponds perfectly to the plot of *Grímnismál*: Óðin's byname *Gestr* ("Guest") or *Gestr inn blindi* ("Blind guest") is attested and – according to the prose frame – the purpose of Óðin's visit to Geirrøðr was the intention to test the accusation of Frigg who blamed Geirrøðr for being mean to his guests: "He is so grudging about his food that he torments his guests with hunger when he thinks too many have come. Óðinn said this was a gross lie, and so they laid a wager about this matter."

These parallels are hardly surprising, since hospitality was considered a key value by more or less all archaic cultures. However, *Grímnismál* seems to describe more than just a widespread motif of human failure in the divine test of hospitality.[35] In fact, Geirrøðr is not given much chance to prove his virtue at all, since he is intentionally misled by servant Fulla, who is sent by Frigg to tell Geirrøðr "to beware lest he be bewitched by a warlock who was then come into [his] land." Everything that follows is just a consequence of the malevolent divine trick. And as the prose frame openly states, "It was evil slander, to say that king Geirrøðr was not generous about his food." Thus the test of hospitality cannot be the only meaning of *Grímnismál*: Geirrøð's lethal mistake and the meaning of the whole poem is to be sought somewhere deeper than in his poor morals.

When we ask about the meaning of any poem, it seems to be a little old-fashioned but still useful idea to start with its name. The title of *Grímnismál* is preserved not only in both manuscripts of the poem, but is attested in *Snorra Edda* as well, thus we can be sure that it is old and that the poem had been known exactly under the name we know today – *The Lay of Grímnir*. Now there is little doubt about the meaning of the well attested Óðin's byname *Grímnir*: it is derived from the word *gríma*, "mask" or "disguise", thus *Grímnir* is the "masked" or "disguised" one (de Vries 1962, s.v. *gríma*). Such a name fits perfectly in the context of *Grímnismál* and in the whole set of similar myths from other cultures showing disguised gods who encounter humans in their affairs. Thus in *Iliad,* the unrecognized Ares and Hera act in the disguises of the Thracian leader Akamas and the herald Stentor, calling the Trojans and Achaeans to fight bravely (*Il.* v.461–470, v.784–791). A little later Athena takes the place of Diomedes' charioteer Sthenelus (*Il.* v.835–841).

We know enough similar stories about Óðinn: in the story of Haraldr hilditǫnn, told by Saxo Grammaticus, Óðinn, disguised as Harald's chancellor Brúni, takes the position of his charioteer (*Gesta* viii.263); as an old man he greets Karl in mœrski in *Færeyinga saga* and places an ominous stick down where it is taken and used as the weapon with which Karl is killed (*Fær* xlvi–xlvii). As a man "with slouched hat upon his head, tall, old and one-eyed", Óðinn pierces his sword into the tree standing in the hall of Vǫlsungs (*Vǫls* iii) and as an warrior "clad in a blue cloak, with slouched hat on his head, and one-eyed" he breaks it again at the moment when the winner of the sword loses his favour (*Vǫls* xi).

[35] As Wolf von Unwerth seems to claim (Unwerth 136–140).

Hrólfs saga kraka tells the story of Óðin's encounter with the legendary Danish king Hrólfr kraki: travelling to Sweden, the king meets an old one-eyed farmer called Hrani who gives him good counsel. On the way back he stops with his retinue at Hrani again and is cordially welcomed (*Hrólf* xlvi):

> *'Hér eru vápn, er ek vil gefa þér,' segir Hrani bóndi. Konungr mælti: 'Ferlig vápn eru þetta, karl,' en þat var skjǫldr ok sverð ok brynja. Ekki vill Hrólfr konungr þiggja vápnin. Hrani bregzt við þetta nær reiðr ok þykkir gerð til sín svívirðing mikil í þessu. 'Ekki ertu þér svá hagfelldr í þessu, Hrólfr konungr,' sagði Hrani, 'sem þú munt ætla, ok eru þér jafnan eigi svá vitrir sem þér þykkizt,' ok tók bóndi á þessu hrakliga. Varð nú eigi af nætrgreiðanum, ok vilja þeir nú ríða veg sinn, þó at nótt sé myrk. Hrani er óhýrligr undir brún at líta ok þykkist nú lítils virtr, er þeir þágu eigi gjafir af honum, letr hann nú eigi, at þeir ríði sem þeim líkar. Riðu þeir nú á burt við svá búit, ok varð ekki af kveðjum.*
> *Ok sem þeir eru ekki langt komnir, nemr Bǫðvarr bjarki staðar. Hann tók svá til orða: 'Eptir koma ósvinnum ráð í hug, ok svá mun mér nú fara. Þat grunar mik oss muni ekki allsvinnliga til tekizt hafa, at vér hǫfum því neitat, sem vér áttum at játa, ok munum vér sigri hafa neitat.' Hrólfr konungr segir: 'þat it sama grunar mik, því at þetta mun Óðinn gamli verit hafa, ok at vísu var maðrinn einsýnn.' 'Snúum nú aptr sem hvatast,' segir Svipdagr, 'ok reynum þetta.' Þeir koma nú aptr, ok er þá horfinn bærinn ok karlinn.*
>
> "Here are some weapons I want to give you," says farmer Hrani. The king said, "These are hideous weapons." It was a shield, a sword and a coat of mail. But King Hrólfr would not take the weapons. Hrani bristles at this, to the brink of losing his temper, and feels he's been done a great dishonour here. "You are not being so clever in this matter, King Hrólfr, as you probably think you are," said Hrani, "and you are never as wise as you imagine." The farmer took great offence at this snub.
> There was no chance of a night's lodging now, and they just want to ride on their way, even though the night is dark. The displeasure is plain to see in Hrani's face, and he thinks he's been vastly underrated, when they wouldn't accept gifts from him, and he does nothing to stop them riding off as they like. They ride away now, leaving him like that, and nothing was said by way of farewells.
> And before they'd got very far, Bǫðvarr Bjarki halts. He spoke thus: "Sense comes late to fools, and so it comes to me now. I fear we've not been very wise, for we turned down what we should have taken, and chances are we've turned down victory."
> King Hrólfr says, "I suspect the same, because this must have been old Odin, and he certainly was a one-eyed man."
> "Let's turn back as fast as we can," says Svipdagr, "and see."
> They go back now, and by then both farm and farmer had disappeared.

Soon after his return, Hrólfr is attacked by the army of Hjǫrvarðr, his son-in-law, and he and all his men are killed. Only Bjarki, dying on the battlefield, has a magnificent vision of Óðinn, seeing him as "the fearsome husband of Frigg" (*horrendum Frigge maritum*) and "warlike god" (*belligerum divum*), no more an old peasant with shabby weapons, but a god who "mighty in arms" (*armipotens*) "protects himself with his white shield" (*albo clypeo sit tectus*) and "manoeuvres his tall horse" (*altum flectat equum*).[36]

[36] The vision itself is not told in the saga but was probably the part of the lay known under the name *Bjarkamál in fornu*. *Bjarkamál* is handed down only fragmentarily but the fundamental parts (including the vision) are transmitted by Saxo Grammaticus (*Gesta* ii.66). The curse of Óðin's trickery is pre-

In fact, both the myth of *Grímnismál* and the heroic legend of Hrólfr kraki tell the same story. Geirrøðr does not recognize to the very last moment the truth of the wisdom he hears, nor Hrólfr kraki the might of the weapons he is being offered, although they both meet the power that had stood behind their rise to prosperity. It is the story of men being blinded by outer appearance, not able to recognize that there is something deeper and more essential. Such an idea is present in nearly all religions. The god always remains a mystery for man and is never identical with the form in which he appears. "What is god? Everything" says the Greek poet Pindar in one of his fragments (*fr.* 140d). One can argue that Old Norsemen – as well as other polytheistic cultures – comprehended their gods in clear and sharply outlined shapes of easily distinguishable and identifiable figures. But there always remained a murky feeling that these figures were not the real forms of the divine. As Euripides says at the end of his *Bacchae*, "Many are the forms of divine things" (1389) and in his *Helene*, "Many are the forms of divinities" (1689).

Yet in the case of Óðinn this obscurity seems to have an even deeper meaning than in the case of other gods. While in their case concealment is only the result of their being god, in the case of Óðinn the relation to secrecy and obscurity seems to be much more intimate. Disguise must have been one of Óðin's most apparent features: we know hundreds of Óðin's cover-names,[37] and his permanent changing of outer shape is a subject of many commentaries. "When sitting among his friends his countenance was so beautiful and dignified that the spirits of all were exhilarated by it, but when he was in war he appeared dreadful to his foes. This arose from his being able to change his appearance and form in any way he liked" (*Yngl* vi). Óðinn is hidden and a hiding god, and it is no accident that we do not know any myth in which Óðinn appears to humans in his real shape and under his real name, as *Grímnismál* explicitly points out (*Grm* 54):

Óðinn ek nú heiti, Yggr ek áðan hét,
hétumk Þundr fyrir þat,
Vakr ok Skilfingr, Váfuðr ok Hroptatýr,
Gautr ok Iálkr með goðom,
Ofnir ok Sváfnir, er ek hygg at orðnir sé
allir af einom mér.

Now Óðinn's my name. Yggr was I hight,
Þundr was my name ere then;
Vakr and Skilfingr, Váfuðr and Hroptatýr,
Gautr and Jálkr among gods.
Ofnir and Sváfnir, they all have become
one with me, I ween.

One cannot but feel that the more one knows about Óðin's deeds, the more names and forms of his appearance one finds, the less one knows about the god himself. Óðinn hides behind his epiphanies instead of being perceptible with their help. He is a theophany of

served both in the *Bjarkamál* fragments (*Bjark* 8) and Saxo, thus it is probable that the vision was contained in both of them as well.

[37] Hjalmar Falk (Falk 1924) counts 169 of them, but these are definitely not all. Óðin's bynames derived from the root "mask" seem to be known not only in Scandinavia but in England as well (Ryan 464, Ekwall 41–44).

mysterium, while mystery is not just a veil around his real substance but *his substance itself*. It is no accident that when revealing his "true" identity in *Grímnismál* he does so with the help of a catalogue of his cover-names, i.e., names hiding his identity at the same moment. And this is exactly the aspect of Óðin's divinity that *Grímnismál* shows with stressed clarity (*Grm* 47):[38]

Saðr ok Svipall ok Sanngetall,
Herteitr ok Hnikarr,
Bileygr, Báleygr, Bǫlverkr, Fiǫlnir,
Grímr ok Grímnir, Glapsviðr ok Fjǫlsviðr.

[My name is] Truthful and Changeable and Finder of Truth
Glad in Battle and Spear-thruster,
One-Eyed and Fiery-Eyed, Evil-doer, Concealer,
Masked and Disguised, Tricky and Wise.

Some of the names, especially Changeable, Concealer, Masked, Disguised and Tricky speak clearly enough. It is, however, interesting that most of Óðin's masks do not keep his identity hidden forever, and even more interesting that the moment when the mask falls down and reveals his identity often coincides with the moment of death. Thus Haraldr hilditǫnn is killed by Óðinn immediately after he recognizes him, Vafþrúðnir becomes aware of the identity of his disguised guest and his own approaching death at the very same moment (*Vm* 55), and Hrólfr is told about the real identity of the old farmer at the moment when the weapons are lost and defeat is unavoidable. In Saxo's translation of *Bjarkamál,* it is the dying Bjarki who sees Óðinn riding his horse over the battlefield, covered with the corpses of Hrólr kraki and his retinue. Thus it seems to be no accident that Geirrøðr dies immediately after recognizing the true nature of his guest.

Drama

We have seen that it is possible to see *Grímnismál* as a unity centring around the themes of death, meeting the divine and wisdom (and its absence). The question remains, however, how to grasp this unity. We have seen that older generations of scholars tried to understand *Grímnismál* as an epic unity, i.e., the unity of action. But considering that in most of the poem there is no action at all, this hardly seems to be a fruitful idea. Later research tended to stress the mnemonic character of the poem, but such interpretations used to disregard the epic frame, thus being also problematic. Contrary to both these attempts, I would like to understand *Grímnismál* as *dramatic* unity. It might at first seem strange to speak about drama in the case of a poem, which consists of a speech of a single person who speaks most of the time not about his or another participant's situation but about some remote areas of the world. But perhaps it is not so strange after all. First, more scholars have observed (and I have tried to demonstrate why I am of the same opinion)

[38] Most of the translated names are taken from Hollander, *Glapsviðr* (Der im Betören gewandte) and *Fjǫlsviðr* (Der sehr weise) from de Vries (1972, s.vv. *glap*, *Fjǫlnir*).

that the enumeration stanzas form no "dead wisdom",[39] rather they participate very actively in the gradation of conflict in the poem. "The poet must have chosen very specific topics from the infinite amount of the mythological wisdom, and he did so in respect to the idea of the poem".[40] Thus the poem is not just a mnemonic device, as some scholars would have it.

With the term "drama" I do not want to suggest that the poem was dramatically staged, as some modern scholars (most notably Bertha Surtees Phillpotts and Terry Gunnell) wished to prove.[41] What I mean is rather a certain dramatic quality of the text, which slowly reveals the truth until its final revelation at the moment of the tragic conclusion.

But such a structure of the text is actually not so far from the Aristotelian notion of the drama. In his *Poetics* Aristotle divides the plot of the drama into two parts: complication and denouement: "In every tragedy, there is a complication and a denouement […] I mean this, that the complication is the part from the beginning up to the point which immediately precedes the occurrence of a change from bad to good fortune or from good fortune to bad; the denouement is from the beginning of the change down to the end" (*Poet.* 1455 b 26–30). This change constitutes what Aristotle calls "reversal" (*peripeteia*). "A reversal is a change of the situation into the opposite […] this change being, moreover, as we are saying, probable or inevitable" (*Poet.* 1452 a 23–25), it is "a change from bad fortune to good or from good fortune to bad, in a sequence of events which follow one another either inevitably or according to probability" (*Poet.* 1451 a 14–15).

This coincides closely with acquiring of knowledge, which constitutes a second important point in the dramatic plot, the "discovery" (*anagnorisis*).[42] "A discovery, as the term itself implies, is a change from ignorance to knowledge, producing either friendship or hatred in those who are for good fortune or ill" (*Poet.* 1452 a 30–31). The discovery has the character of recognition, a sudden awareness of a real situation, good example being Oedipus in the moment when he recognizes that he has murdered his own father and married his own mother. And what is important in our context, the moment of recognition – in an ideal case – coincides with a reversal, the pivotal point of the story. "A discovery is most effective when it coincides with reversals, such as that involved in the Oedipus" (*Poet.* 1452 a 31–32). Thus the very concept of drama is, according to Aristotle, tightly bound up with the recognition of truth (see *Poet.* 1454 b 19 – 1455 a 20). The characters act in the beginning without any real knowledge of the state of facts and only later recognize what they have actually done: "It is better [for the characters of the drama] to act in ignorance and discover afterwards. Our feelings are not outraged and the discovery is startling" (*Poet.* 1454 a 2–4). The whole of the drama can be characterized as a slow recognition of the truth that is hidden in the beginning but comes to full knowledge through a series of reversals and discoveries.

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[39] See Kragerud 48.

[40] "Aus der unendlichen Vielheit der mythischen Vorstellungen hat der Dichter ganz bestimmte Stoffe gewählt, und das ist geschehen gerade mit Rücksicht auf die Idee dieses Gedichtes" (de Vries 1941, §79).

[41] At the same time, I do not want to claim that this was not the case. It seems to me that we do not have enough information for decision of the question.

[42] "Two of the most important elements in the emotional effect of tragedy, reversals and discoveries are part of the plot" (*Poet.* 1450 a 32–36).

It should not be necessary to claim that this is exactly what happens in *Grímnismál*. Geirrøðr acts in total unawareness of the identity of his guest, but through the revealed wisdom one can more and more guess who the guest is. In the end, when even Geirrøðr recognizes Óðinn, the climax and a short denouement comes. *Grímnismál* is certainly no classical dramatic text, but I nonetheless dare – not being a specialist in the field of drama – to compare it to some modern specimens of the genre, e.g., Bernhard's *Minetti* or Beckett's *Not I*.

Conclusion

However, the literary qualities of the poem should not hide the fact that what we are dealing with here is not only a *drama* but also a *myth*. There is probably no student of religion who would wish to proclaim today what was taken for a self-evident fact in the old days of "myth and ritual school": that myths are fantasies, having more to do with pleasure of story-telling, or poem-making, than with religion.[43] Myth was a means of understanding and describing human society, as well as the worlds around and beyond it. It seems mistaken to understand *Grímnismál* as pure literature (as some scholars have suggested), at least if what we mean by literature is an autonomous field without any direct relation to religion and myth. It is no accident that it is a *divinity* that plays the key role of the masked visitor. The supreme god is without doubt the essential character of the whole poem and we should keep in mind that it is *his* visit that constitutes the plot of *Grímnismál*. We should not forget that the main themes of both catalogue stanzas and the prose correspond closely to the characteristic features of Óðinn who is the god of death, the god of disguise and, especially, the god of wisdom.

In *Grímnismál* Óðinn reveals his identity by reciting his mythological wisdom. The same structure we find in *Vafþrúðnismál*. We hear Óðin's voice in further didactic parts of the *Poetic Edda* (*Reginsmál*, *Hávamál*).[44] In one Eddic passage (*Vm* 55) he is termed *æ vísastr vera* ("forever the wisest of men"). He is able to "get [an] answer to every question" (Snorri, *ÓT* lxiv) and procured a draught from Mími's well (Snorri, *Gylf* xv) where "wisdom and understanding are hidden" (*spekð ok manvit er í fólgit*). Thus he knows the destiny of men (*ørlǫg manna*) and "things that have not happened yet" (*óorðnir hlutir*), i.e., that will happen in the future (Snorri, *Yngl* vii). He is equipped (*Ls* 21) with knowledge of "all destiny of mankind" (*ǫll ørlǫg aldar*), but his wisdom of the divine is no less (*Háv* 159):

Þat kann ek it fiórtánda, ef ek skal fyrða liði
telia tíva fyrir,
ása ok álfa ek kann allra skil;
fár kann ósnotr svá.

[43] However, there are still some scholars who are of this opinion, and in the case of many others this argument is present implicitly. In respect to *Grímnismál*, Bo Ralph has stated that "various pagan beliefs and conceptions may have contributed to the ultimately resulting picture", but "they have been used […] with purely literary justifications" (Ralph, 118).

[44] It seems that the notion of knowledge of divine things was inextricably linked to the idea of instruction by numinous being. It is no accident that we find a valkyria (*Sigrdrífumál*), a dying dragon (*Fáfnismál*) and a dead mother (*Grógaldr*) among the speakers of instruction passages in the *Poetic Edda*.

The fourteenth [charm] I know, if to folk I shall
sing and say of the gods:
Æsir and alfs know I altogether –
of unlearned few have that lore.

In this passage, Óðinn himself takes the role of *þulr* ("reciter") and in two other places in *Hávamál* (*Háv* 80, 142) he gives himself the byname *Fimbulþulr* ("mighty reciter").[45] The noun *þulr* is usually related to the word *þula* ("recitation") which functioned as a denomination of metrically free collection of wisdom stanzas. In fact, big portions of *Grímnismál* share the characteristics of wisdom *þula*, revealing the myths and religious concepts to the present humans.

Now, considering that *Grímnismál* mostly focus on describing the mythological worlds and their entities, it seems that its main interest lies in the world beyond and the borders that divide it from the world of humans. We have seen that the catalogue stanzas are centred around a few themes exemplifying the gap between human and divine: death, wisdom, borders. In this context, it deserves attention that of the four occurrences of the adjective "sacred" (*helgi*/*heilagr*) in the whole poem three are used for describing borders: the gate Valgrind (22), its doorway (22) and the waters which divide the world of the gods from the rest of the world (29). The fourth occurrence designates the mythical lands "near to Æsir and alfs" (4), that is, what lies *behind* these borders and everyday human experience.

Yet as Carolyne Larrington has rightly pointed out, "what happens in the divine world and what happens in the human world are inextricably linked […] the divine world stands in a perfected and archetypal relationship to the flawed human world" (Larrington 2002, 73). The very first occurrence of the adjective "sacred" appears at the beginning of Óðin's visionary speech (4): thus, this occurrence exemplifies the difference between the sacred lands of gods and the 'unholy' state of Geirrøð's hall where foreigners are tortured. In this context one should also interpret Óðin's address to Agnarr (3):[46]

Heill skaltu, Agnarr, allz þik heilan biðr
Veratýr vera;

Hail (*heill*) to thee, Agnarr, when god of the men (*Veratýr*)
wish you hail (*biðr þik heilan*);

The sense of the blessing is to mark the change of the unhappy state in Geirrøð's realm: the last sentence of the prose epilogue states that after Geirrøð's death his son Agnarr reigned the realm for a long time. Thus the illegitimate king dies, leaving a throne to his heir, who – at least according to the name – can be seen as an incarnation of the rightful king that had been removed by the illegitimate one. What more: in the prose introduction we hear that Geirrøð's son Agnarr was given his name after his uncle Agnarr (*eptir bróður*

[45] The name (in female form *Fimbulþul*) is actually also present in *Grímnismál* as the name of a river (27).
[46] The greeting "hail" usually doesn't have any special religious meaning. In this place, however, the situation differs, as the poem itself points up by the use of *als* ("when" in Hollander's translation): Hail to you, *since* it is a god who wishes you this. We can once again compare a parallel situation in Eyvind Finnsson's *Hákonarmál*. As Hákon the Good comes to Valhǫll, all summoned gods *báðu Hákon heilan koma* (Eyv, *Hák* 18).

hans [sc. *Geirrøðs*]) and we are explicitly told that the young Agnarr is exactly as old as his uncle was at the time of his disappearing (*Agnarr var tíu vetra*; *Geirrøðr konungr átti þá son, tíu vetra gamlan*). Thus the epilogue of the poem can be read almost as a happy ending rewarding the good and punishing the bad. Unfortunately, myths are usually not so primitive and their message not so plain. They tend to show differences between human and divine world that are of insuperable nature. The main motifs of *Grímnismál* – wisdom, death, borders between human and divine – belong to these differences. Thus Óðin's self-revelation in *Grímnismál* seems to have the same purpose as most myths and other religious utterances: it depicts the shattering experience of the divine and the phenomena to which it was inextricably linked in the eyes of old Norsemen – wisdom, otherness and death.

Abbreviations

Bjark – *Bjarkamál in fornu*, ed. Heusler – Ranisch 1903.
Eyv, *Hák* – Eyvind Finnsson *skáldaspillir*, *Hákonarmál*, ed. Jónsson 1913–1916.
Fm – *Fáfnismál*, ed. Helgason 1955–1962.
Fær – *Færeyinga saga*, ed. Jónsson 1927.
Grm – *Grímnismál*, ed. Helgason 1955–1962.
Hálf – *Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekka*, ed. Le Roy Andrews 1909.
Hesiod, *Theog.* – Hesiod, *Theogony*, ed. West 1966.
Háv – *Hávamál*, ed. Helgason 1955–1962.
Hrólf – *Hrólfs saga kraka*, ed. Jónsson & Vilhjálmsson 1950.
Hdl – *Hyndluljóð*, ed. Helgason 1955–1962.
Homer, *Il.* – Homer, *Iliad*, ed. Monro – Allen, 1902.
Od. – *Odyssey*, ed. Monro – Allen, 1902.
Ls – *Lokasenna*, ed. Helgason 1955–1962.
Origo – *Origo gentis Langobardorum*, ed. Waitz 1878.
Ovidius, *Fasti* – *Fasti*, ed. James George Frazer 1929.
Met. – *Metamorphoses*, ed. Jacobus Johannes Hartman et al. 1959.
Paulus, *Hist.Lang.* – Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardorum*, ed. Waitz 1878.
Pindar, *fr.* – Pindaros, *Fragmenta*, ed. Snell – Maehler 1984.
Rþ – *Rígsþula*, ed. Helgason 1955–1962.
Saxo, *Gesta* – Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*, ed. Holder 1886.
Snorri, *Gylf* – Snorri Sturluson, *Gylfaginning*, ed. Jónsson 1900.
Hsv – *Hálfdanar saga svarta*, ed. Jónsson 1966.
ÓT – *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, ed. Jónsson 1966.
Yngl – *Ynglinga saga*, ed. Jónsson 1966.
Vergilius, *Aen.* – Vergilius, *Aeneid*, ed. James Bradstreet Greenough 1900.
Vm – *Vafþrúðnismál*, ed. Helgason 1955–1962.
Vsp – *Vǫluspá*, ed. Helgason 1955–1962.
Vǫl – *Vǫlsunga saga*, ed. Ranisch 1891.

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***VENI, VIDI, MORI*: EDDICKÁ *PÍSEŇ O GRÍMNIM* JAKO DRAMATICKÁ A MYTOLOGICKÁ JEDNOTA**

Résumé

Článek se věnuje eddické *Písni o Grímnim*, jedné z mytologických písní *Starší Eddy*. Jeho první část tvoří přehled kritického bádání, jež bylo *Písni o Grímnim* věnováno, s důrazem na to, jak se jednotliví badatelé pokoušeli vypořádat se vztahem mezi rámcovým epickým příběhem o uvěznění maskovaného boha Óðina králem Geirrøðem a katalogickými strofami mytologického obsahu, jež tvoří většinu básně. Druhá část studie analyzuje hlavní témata básně a snaží se odkrýt jejich uměleckou a náboženskou výpověď v celku básně.