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ÓÐINN AND THE NORSE JORMUNREKKR-LEGEND

THERE existed in Scandinavia a well-defined legendary tradition that, when Hamðir and Sqrli seemed about to achieve their vengeance upon the Gothic king Jormunrekkr for slaying their sister Svanhildr, the Goths were instructed (or advised) to stone them to death. The two have been sent, against their will and with considerable misgivings, by their mother Guðrún to avenge their sister. On the way they have met Erpr, a third brother, and, after an exchange of sneers and insults, have slain him. Upon arriving at the Gothic hall they have cut down large numbers of Goths and have lopped off the hands and feet of Jormunrekkr. Now they stand, themselves unscathed, Gothic weapons useless against them. Nothing seems to stand in the way of complete execution of their vengeance. Then, at the moment of their apparent triumph, come the instructions (or advice) to stone them. Upon this the ninth-century Eddic *Hamðismál*, the thirteenth-century *Völsunga-saga*, and the *Edda* of Snorri Sturluson all agree. Bragi the skald, in his *Ragnarsdrápa*, recounts only the attack in the Gothic hall, but he too represents Hamðir and Sqrli as stoned.

The several Norse accounts, however, are at variance as to the identity of the speaker of the instructions. Snorri states that he is Jormunrekkr;¹ the *Völsungasaga* clearly represents him to be Óðinn.² The *Hamðismál* describes the adviser in terms which are now generally regarded as a clear depiction of Jormunrekkr;³ Bragi seems not to indicate who gave the instructions, although it is present common opinion that he attributes them to Jormunrekkr.⁴ Yet the identity of the speaker is a problem of major importance, not only for an accurate interpretation of the individual texts, but also for a fuller understanding of the development of the Jormunrekkr-legend in Scandinavia. If the *Hamðismál* and the *Ragnarsdrápa* do agree with *Snorra Edda* in representing Jormunrekkr as the speaker, then the *Völsungasaga* account of the intervention of Óðinn must be regarded as an innovation of late saga-tradition, possibly on the part of the compiler of the *Völsungasaga* himself, and, as such, of slight

¹ *Skáldskaparmál* 51 (42), *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar*, udg. ved Finnur Jónsson (København, 1931).

² *Völsungasaga* 44 (42), udg. ved Magnus Olsen (København, 1906-08).

³ Str. 25.2-3: *inn reginkunngi, baldr í brynio*. I use Neckel's edition, *Edda*, I (Heidelberg, 1927).

⁴ *Ragnarsdrápa* 5.5-8, in Finnur Jónsson, *Den Norsk-Islandske Skjaldedigtning*, I A: Tekst efter Håndskrifterne; I B: Rettet Tekst med Tolkning (København og Kristiania, 1908), 2.

value in the study of the development of the Jǫrmunrekkr-legend. If, on the other hand, it can be shown that either the *Hamðismál* or the *Ragnarsdrápa* agrees with the *Vǫlsungasaga* in representing Óðinn as the speaker of the instructions, then it can be established that the intervention of Óðinn is no fabrication on the part of a late sagaman, but genuine old tradition, dating from the ninth century at the latest, which may well have played an important rôle in the development of the Norse Jǫrmunrekkr-legend. Certain incidents recounted in the extant texts, especially in the *Hamðismál*, might possibly then be attributed to the formative influence of this linking of Óðinn with the Jǫrmunrekkr-story.

The *Vǫlsungasaga* does not designate the speaker by the specific name of Óðinn; it describes him as *einn maðr hár ok elldílegr með eitt auga* who appears in the midst of the battle and gives Jǫrmunrekkr advice as to how to deal with Hamðir and Sǫrli. The description, the dialogue, the whole outline of the incident belong to the typical saga-representation of Óðinn. Again and again in the sagas and in Saxo the god appears in disguise at the precise moment that some renowned hero stands in need of aid.⁵ Tall, old, with one eye—this is the formalized description of Óðinn in saga after saga;⁶ even some of the names by which he is known—Hárr,⁷ for instance, and Gestumblindi⁸—reflect these traits of his physical appearance.⁹ The dialogue follows the saga formula: the statement of the strange old man (*ęigi eru þer visir menn, er þer kunnit ęigi þeim monnum bana at veita*); the king's request for advice (*gef oss rad til, ef þu kannt*); the answer of the old man (*þer skulud beria þa grioti i hel*).¹⁰ It is the wealth of parallels found in the great body of saga material that establishes beyond all doubt that the *Vǫlsungasaga* represents Óðinn, not Jǫrmunrekkr, as the one who suggests that the Goths stone Hamðir and Sǫrli.

⁵ Saxo, *Gesta Danorum*, ed. J. Olrik and H. Ræder (Hauniæ, 1931), I, vi, 7, p. 23; I, viii, 16, pp. 30 f.; vii, x, 6, p. 207; ix, iv, 12, p. 254; Vss. 13, 18; *Hrólfssaga Kraka* 26, udg. ved Finnur Jónsson (København, 1904). For other instances cf. von Unwerth, "Untersuchungen über Totenkult und Óðinnverehrung," *Germanistische Abhandlungen*, xxxvii (1911), 140 ff.; de Vries, *Allgermanische Religionsgeschichte* ("Pauls Grundriss," xii.2, Berlin und Leipzig, 1937), ii, 173 f.

⁶ Among them, Vss. 3, 11; Saxo, I, vi, 7, p. 23; vii, x, 6, p. 207. On Óðinn's disguises and appearances cf. especially von Unwerth, *op. cit.*, pp. 149 ff.; de Vries, *op. cit.*, pp. 191 ff.

⁷ *Vǫluspá* 15.3; *Grimnismál* 46.6.

⁸ *Hervararsaga ok Heiðreks* 10 f., *Fornaldarsögur Norðrlanda*, I (Reykjavík, 1891); Saxo, v, x, 1, p. 134 (*Gestiblindus*).

⁹ On other names cf. Falk, "Odensheite," *Videnskapsselskapet i Kristiania, Skrifter, Hist. fil. Kl.* (1924), no. 10; de Vries, *op. cit.*, pp. 191 f., and the references there cited.

¹⁰ With this can be compared the dialogue between the old man and the boy Sigurðr, who is seeking a horse, Vss. 13. These passages are quoted from Magnus Olsen's edition, which follows the MS in orthography and in omission of indications of vowel-quantity.

Of especial importance in this *Vǫlsungasaga* account are the circumstances under which Óðinn makes his appearance and the nature of his intervention. Hamðir and Sǫrli have cut off the hands and feet of Jǫrmunrekkr and are defending themselves valiantly against the attack of the Goths. Weapons are useless against them. Into the midst of the fray the old man wanders and comments on the ineffectual tactics of the Goths. Jǫrmunrekkr asks for advice, and receives it. Óðinn's rôle is purely that of counsellor. He himself does not, so far as we can tell from the text, command the Goths to use stones; he gives them advice alone, and that only when Jǫrmunrekkr specifically asks for it (*gef oss rad til*).

Snorri, on the other hand, makes no mention of either Óðinn or the taking of counsel; he states simply that Jǫrmunrekkr called out to the Goths to beat the attackers down with stones, and this was done. But it is perhaps worth noting that Snorri tells the whole story of the attack in four sentences: Jǫrmunrekkr awakens [Snorri represents Hamðir and Sǫrli as attacking by night while the Goths sleep] to find his hands and feet amputated, and arouses his sleeping warriors; Hamðir remarks that the head would be off now if Erpr [the brother whom he and Sǫrli have slain on the way] yet lived; the Goths rise and attack the brothers with weapons, but to no avail; Jǫrmunrekkr calls out the instructions to use stones. Essential details obviously are omitted. But it would be hazardous to attempt to discover whether Snorri has omitted these details because he is endeavouring to reconcile conflicting traditions or because he quotes at the end of this chapter those strophes of the *Ragnarsdrápa* which set forth the Jǫrmunrekkr-story. His primary source for the attack was the *Ragnarsdrápa*, but he obviously had another, perhaps written, perhaps oral tradition: the sentence setting forth Hamðir's remark that Erpr would have cut off the head finds no counterpart in the *Ragnarsdrápa*, but is identical with a statement in the *Vǫlsungasaga*: *þá melli Hamdir: "Af munþi nu hofudit, ef Erpr lifþi. . ."*¹¹

Bragi's account, unfortunately, is obscure. He states (*Ragnarsdrápa* 5) that *samráða* Hamðir and Sǫrli were beaten to the earth with stones, and in the following strophe (6) that *stála stökkvör flaums* "the impeller of the eddy of steels" caused the two brothers to be attacked with weapons.¹² In all probability, the attack under the leadership of *stála stökkvör flaums* preceded the stoning; for we know from both *Snorra Edda* and

¹¹ Vss. 44 (42). Further, these words, with the single variant of *væri* for *munþi*, are to be found also in the *Hm.* (28.1-2), in a strophe, moreover, which is quoted in part in the *Vss.* The saga first paraphrases (very closely, 11 of the 14 words being identical with those in the *Hm.*) *Hm.* 28.1-4, and then quotes the passage.

¹² Vogt, "Bragis Schild," *APS*, v (1930-31), 10, takes *flaums* with the *Foglhildar* of l. 4; but cf. Jónsson's criticism, "Brage Skjald," *APS*, v, 264.

the *Völsungasaga* that the Goths did set upon Hamðir and Sörli with weapons before they resorted to stones. But whether the sequence of the text of the *Ragnarsdrápa* represents the sequence of events is immaterial to the present discussion. The terms of the text preclude all possibility that *stála stökkvir flaums* advised or instructed the stoning.

It is *samráða* alone which indicates the circumstances under which Hamðir and Sörli were stoned. The meaning of the term, however, is by no means clear; it seems to mean either "upon common agreement" or "as the result of counsel." But if we take it as "upon common agreement," we have an impossible situation: Jörmunrekkr has awakened from sleep [Bragi, like Snorri, represents the brothers as making a surprise attack by night] to find his couch streaming with blood, his hands and feet floating in gore and ale on the floor, his hall in an uproar; under these circumstances he would hardly be in a position to take counsel with his warriors, or the Goths in a position to deliberate among themselves. Moreover, the element *ráð* does seem to imply the giving or taking of counsel; therefore, it would appear that there must be present someone who would be in a position to give counsel. This would seem to point to Óðinn, and, consequently, to agreement with the *Völsungasaga* representation. However, there exists another possibility: that *samráða* means neither "upon common agreement" nor "as the result of counsel," but simply "by common action."¹³ In that case, there is nothing in the word as used by Bragi to indicate even that the Goths were instructed or advised to stone Hamðir and Sörli, much less the identity of the speaker of the instructions. The evidence of the text of the *Ragnarsdrápa* is indecisive.

The phraseology of the *Hamðismál*, on the contrary, is by no means ambiguous. It describes the speaker as *inn reginkunngi, baldr í brynio*. The epithet *reginkunngi* is not to be confused with another word of similar appearance but wholly different derivation: *reginkunnr* "descended from the gods."¹⁴ The element *-kunngi* is the nom. sg. masc. weak form of the adjective *kunnigr:kunnugr* "wise." Moreover, it seems to have a connotation of "wise in magic." It occurs frequently in another compound, *fjqlkunnigr*, which, though it indeed means only "very knowing" and is conferred upon those possessed of extraordinary knowledge, nonetheless carries with it always a suggestion of sorcery.¹⁵ The

¹³ So, e.g., Jónsson, *APS*, v, 262.

¹⁴ *Hávamál* 80. 3. Inscription from Stora Noleby: *runo fahi razinaku[n]ðo*, A. Noreen, *Altisländische und Altnorwegische Grammatik* (Halle, 1923), p. 383.

¹⁵ *Skáld.* 47 (39): Hreiðmarr is called *fiolkvnigr* in a context which can mean only that he commanded great knowledge of magic; *Gylf.* 2: Gylfi was *fiolkvnigr*; *Vss.* 25: Grímhildr is given the epithet *in fjqlkunnga [ena fjqlkungu]*. Further instances are given by de Vries, *op. cit.*, pp. 63 ff.

sense of magic is even greater in the derivative noun, *fiqlkyngi*: according to *Gylfaginning* 26 Gangleri remarks that only *almikil fiqlkyngi* could have fashioned the ship *Skiðblaðnir*; in the next sentence he asks if Þórr has never been overcome *firir afis sakar eða fiqlkyngi*, and Hárr answers with the tale of Þórr's visit to Útgarðr, where Útgarða Loki bested him precisely by magic; in *Vǫlsungasaga* 5, when Siggeir's mother takes the shape of a wolf and kills the brothers of Sigmundr, it is said that she did this *fyrir trollskaðar sakir ok fiqlkyngi*. This specific identification of *trollskaðr* and *fiqlkyngi* shows beyond question that *fiqlkyngi* is magic of the most potent kind. Still more decisive is the *Ynglingasaga*'s account (c. 6–7) of Óðinn's *fiqlkyngi*, magic powers. Quite evidently, then, *-kunngi* does not mean “descended”; it means “wise in magic.”

Nor is the first element of the epithet, *regin-*, to be ignored. In it is implicit the idea of divine power. The simplex occurs frequently in the Eddic poems as a name for the gods, and in the mythological poems the element in compounds consistently conveys the sense of “divine.”¹⁶ Clearly, the compound *reginkunngi* must mean “divinely wise” with the connotation of wise in magic.

Such an epithet can hardly apply to Jǫrmunrekkr. For he is never represented as possessed of remarkable wisdom: he rashly and imprudently destroys his only son; and in later versions he falls an easy prey to the machinations of an evil counsellor.¹⁷ On the other hand, the term “divinely wise” perfectly fits Óðinn master of magic and father of magic songs, who can look into the future and read the fate of gods and men, who can take any form he wishes, who can cast spells on foes in battle, who knows the magic song for every occasion. And these are but a few of his magic powers. He is the inventor and master practitioner of runes; he is the wisest of all beings; and one of his names is *Fjelsviðr* “the very wise.”¹⁸ Óðinn is *inn reginkunngi* indeed.

The phrase *baldr í brynio* is less decisive. Meaning simply “destructive

¹⁶ The instances are cited by de Boor, *Deutsche Islandforschung* (Breslau, 1930), pp. 80 f. Cf. also de Vries, *op. cit.*, pp. 158 f. For a somewhat different opinion cf. Vogt, “Hropttr Ragna,” *ZfdA*, LXII (1925), 47; *Stilgeschichte der Eddischen Wissensdichtung* (Breslau, 1927), I, 55 f. Sturtevant, in “A Study of the Old Norse Word *Regin*,” *JEGP*, xv (1916), 258 ff., regards it as merely an intensive prefix, in the *Hm.* as in *Helgakviða Hundingsbana I*, 51.2, and the prose texts; cf. also Detter-Heinzel, *Sæmundar Edda* (Leipzig, 1903), II, 582. I am inclined to believe, however, that even in the late usage of the word as an intensive it is much more forceful and significant than such prefixes as *fjql-* and *mjok-*, and that it derives its special intensive force from its original literal meaning; cf. *regnheard*, *Beowulf* 326.

¹⁷ No shred of evidence supports Panzer's theory that Jǫrmunrekkr has the “second sight” of a dying man, *Deutsche Heldensage im Breisgau* (Heidelberg, 1904), p. 43.

¹⁸ *Gylf*. 11; *Grm.* 47.7; *Svipdagsmál (Fiqlsvinnsmál)* 4.1 and *passim*.

[or dangerous]¹⁹ in his byrnie," it could be applied as well to the warrior-king as to the god of war. To be sure, at the moment Jǫrmunrekkr is hardly to be considered dangerous with his hands and feet lying lopped in the fire, but epithets are often temporarily conventional rather than realistic. Nonetheless, it is wholly consistent with Óðinn, who, just as in the sagas he wanders around as a half-blind old man, appears in early poetry in full armour.²⁰

Just as we turn to other sagas to establish that the one-eyed old man of the *Vǫlsungasaga* could be only Óðinn, so we should turn to other early Eddic heroic poems to determine whether they afford any parallel to the *inn reginkunngi*, *baldur í brynio* of the *Hamðismál*. Unfortunately, though there are many sagas extant, there are only four other poems of the type of the *Hamðismál*.²¹ Yet despite this paucity of material, we find in one of these, the *Bjarkamál*—preserved though it is only in a Latin translation, a second-hand narrative, and a few detached verses—at least a partial parallel: Othinus *armipotens*, *uno semper contentus ocello*.²² The *armipotens* corresponds to *baldur í brynio*; the reference to the one eye is an implied rather than an expressed parallel to *inn reginkunngi*, for tradition had it that Óðinn gave his eye as the price of part of his infinite wisdom.²³ It seems altogether probable, then, that the one-eyed weaponed god of the *Bjarkamál* and "the divinely wise one, destructive in his byrnie" are one and the same: Óðinn, god of wisdom, of magic, and of war.²⁴

Furthermore, the *Hamðismál* agrees with the *Vǫlsungasaga* in speak-

¹⁹ The adjective seems to be *baldur:ballr*; the meaning is clearly "dangerous" or "destructive," not simply "bold": *þoll ráð*, *Hm.* 26.6; *ballir draumar*, *Baldurs draumar* 1.8; *ballr iqtunn*, *Hymiskviða* 17.3.

A number of commentators take *baldur* in this passage as a noun, cognate to AS *bealdor* "prince": Gering, *Glossar* (1887), p. 16 (but not in 1903 and 1907; in his 1922 edition he emends to *ballr*); Detter-Heinzel, II, 583; Boer, *Die Edda* (1922), II, 342; Neckel, *Edda*, II, 10. But this sense occurs in no other extant Norse text; cf. Detter-Heinzel, *loc. cit.*—but also Bugge, *Studier over de nordiske Gude- og Heltesagns Oprindelse* (Christiania, 1881), p. 65, n. 3. And, an even more decisive argument, the phrase does occur in another Eddic poem, *Sigurðarkviða in skamma* 37.5, this time applied to a woman, obviously then not a prince: Brynhildr stands *þoll í brynio*.

²⁰ Cf. such of his names as *Hjalmberi*, *Grm.* 46.3.

²¹ *Atlakviða*, *Vǫlundarkviða*, *Hljóðskviða* (*Hunnenschlachtlied*), *Bjarkamál*.

²² Saxo, II, vii, 25, p. 60.

²³ *Vsp.* 28.7–13; *Gylf.* 8.

²⁴ Nor can the *sem biðr hryti* of 25.4 be used as evidence against the identification. Óðinn does not always appear balefully composed, but upon occasion has been known to lose his temper; cf. *Hrólfs.* 30. Moreover, one of his epithets is *Björn*; cf. de Vries, *op. cit.*, p. 179; Falk, *op. cit.*, pp. 4 f., 41. Falk, in fact, although regarding the person described in *Hm.* 25.1–4 as Jǫrmunrekkr, on p. 22 cites this passage as evidence of the connection between Óðinn and the bear: "likesom dette uttrykk [i.e., l. 4] synes direkte myntet på Oden (jfr. *Björn* og *Hrjótr*) . . ."

ing of the instructions as advice (*rǫð*) rather than as a command, and thereby affords one more argument against identification of the speaker as Jǫrmunrekkr. Sǫrli, hearing the instructions, turns to Hamðir and says:

Ból vanntu, bróðir! er þú þann belg leystir—
opt ór þeim belg bóll ráð koma! (26. 3–6)

Obviously, *þann belg* is a metaphorical term for the speaker of the instructions: they are the immediate cause of the disaster which “you won, brother, when you opened that bag,” that is, “when you caused that one to speak.”²⁵ Furthermore, “often from that bag destructive counsels come.”²⁶ The agreement with the *Vǫlsungasaga* in speaking of the instructions as *rǫð*; the designation of that advice as destructive; and, especially, the reflection that the one who gave it is someone from whom repeatedly come counsels which prove disastrous—all point to Óðinn rather than to Jǫrmunrekkr. For Óðinn is famed for implicit or explicit advice to eminent heroes in moments of crisis. Frequently, it is useful, a distinct aid to the hero; but often it turns against him. Many are the warriors who have been brought to their deaths by the counsels of Óðinn *hinn fúli ok hinn ótrúi*, as Þóðvarr Bjarki calls him.²⁷ Sǫrli’s words are apt comment indeed on the treacherous god of Valhalla.

²⁵ So Bugge, *Norræn Fornkvæði* (Christiania, 1867), “Tillæg og Rettelser,” p. 441; Hildebrand, *Die Lieder der älteren Edda* (Paderborn, 1876), p. 301; Gering, *Glossar* (1887), p. 18 (but cf. his later editions); Ranisch, *Zur Kritik und Metrik der Hambismål* (Berlin, 1888), p. 15; Heusler, *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Volkskunde*, VIII (1898), 102; notes to Genzmer’s *Edda*, 2 Aufl. (“Thule,” I, Jena, 1928), I, 57. A number of critics, however, take *þann belg* as Hamðir’s mouth: Detter-Heinzel, II, 584; Jiriczek, *Deutsche Heldensagen*, I (Strassburg, 1898), 92, n. 1; Gering, *Glossar* (1903), col. 95; 1907, p. 19; *Die Lieder der älteren Edda*, hgb. von Hildebrand, umgearbeitet von Gering (Paderborn, 1904), p. 461; 1922, p. 460; Gering-Sijmons, *Kommentar zu den Liedern der Edda*, II (Halle, 1931), 443; Boer, *Die Sagen von Ermanarich und Dietrich von Bern* (Halle, 1910), p. 31; *Edda*, II, 342 f.; Hollander, *The Poetic Edda* (Austin, 1928), p. 381.

²⁶ There is no reason why Óðinn should not be visible to Sǫrli; in the *Bjarkamál* alone of the older poetry do we find the popular conception of him as the invisible rider over the battlefield. With this one exception, the older Norse and Danish tradition always represents him as appearing in human form, visible to everyone; cf. his appearances to the house of Vǫlsungr in *Vss.* 3; to Sigmundr in *Vss.* 11; to Haraldr Hilditǫnn in the Battle of Bravalla, in Saxo, VIII, iv, 8 f., pp. 219 f.; to Hrólfr and his champions in *Hrólfs.* 26 and 30. On this cf. Olrik, *Danmarks Heltedigtning* (København, 1903), I, 73 f.

²⁷ *Hrólfs.* 33; cf. also *Saga Ketils hængs* 5; *HH II*, 34. 5–8.

Among the warriors who are killed directly because of Óðinn’s evil counsel are Víkarr, Saxo, VI, v, 6 f., pp. 152 f.; *Gautrekssaga* 7; Hagbarthus, Saxo, VII, vii, 11, p. 196. Often Óðinn assumes the rôle of the evil counsellor who stirs up strife: as Bruno, between Haraldus and Ringo, Saxo, VII, xii, 1, p. 213; as Gizurr, between Hlǫðr and Angantýrr, *Hervararsaga* 13; *Hlǫðskviða* (*Hunnenschlachtlied*) 12, in Heusler and Ranisch, *Eddica Minora* (Dortmund, 1903), p. 5; as Bolwisus, between the sons of Sygarus and the sons of Hamundus, Saxo, VII, vii, 5, p. 194.

Further, in the *bql* of 26.3 and the *bqll* of 26.6 we have an echo, both in sound and in idea, of the *baldr* of 25.3; the one destructive in his byrnie brings about disaster by destructive counsel. Indeed, it is an enticing hypothesis that in the echo on *bql*—*belg*—in the *baldr* of 25.3 and the *bql:belg:belg:bqll* of str. 26 we have a poetic play on words²⁸ designed to call to mind *Bqlverkr* “doer of evil”²⁹ and *Bqlvis*,³⁰ well-known names of Óðinn, referring to his rôle as destroyer of the peace.³¹

The phraseology of strophes 25–26 seems to have been nicely designed to show beyond doubt that Óðinn, not Jǫrmunrekkr, gave the instructions to stone the brothers. The poet of the *Hamðismál*, a clever artificer, subtly describes Óðinn in terms which no contemporary hearer could misunderstand: *inn reginkunngi* “the divinely wise,” that is, Óðinn god of wisdom of all kinds; *baldr t brynio* “dangerous[or destructive] in his byrnie,” that is, Óðinn god of war; “he who often gives destructive counsels,” Óðinn the treacherous god of Valhalla; and finally, the typical Norse poetic play on words which will call to mind Óðinn the god who stirs up strife.

The *Hamðismál*, according to this interpretation, gives a description of Óðinn much more complete than that of the *Vǫlsungasaga* and showing a more intimate knowledge of the Óðinn-cult than our Christian sagaman could hope to possess. The Eddic poet thinks of all sides of Óðinn’s character; the sagaman, telling his tale when the pagan cult has given way to Christianity, thinks of Óðinn primarily as a one-eyed old man; he represents him as *hár ok elldílegr med eitt auga* because tradition does so. Each gives a description typical of the type of literature to which it belongs.

The evidence of the *Hamðismál*, then, warrants the conclusion that the intervention of Óðinn in the battle in the Gothic hall was no late saga-motif, but a tradition dating from the ninth century at the latest.

Why the Jǫrmunrekkr-legend should have been connected with Óðinn is, of course, the sort of thing which is perhaps folly to attempt to determine. Nevertheless, several possibilities suggest themselves.³²

²⁸ This has been suggested by Detter-Heinzel, II, 584; Jónsson, *De Gamle Eddadigte* (København, 1932), p. 342. ²⁹ *Háv.* 109.5; *Grm.* 47.5; *Gylf.* 11; *Skáld.* 6.

³⁰ Saxo, VII, vii, 5, p. 194; cf. also *HH II*, pr. n. 1: *Blindr inn bqlvrsi*.

³¹ The vowel-variation suggests that which occurs in Óðinn’s names *Bileygr*, *Báleygr*, *Bqlverkr*. Cf. Schütte, *Dänisches Heidentum* (Heidelberg, 1923), p. 123; Falk, *op. cit.*, p. 39 and under the names cited; de Vries, *op. cit.*, pp. 174 f.

³² Von Unwerth, *op. cit.*, p. 142, n. 1, attributes it to the close association between Óðinn and the *Vǫlsungs*. But neither Jǫrmunrekkr nor Hamðir and Sqrli belongs to the race of *Vǫlsungr*. Cf. also Simrock, *Die Edda*, 6 Aufl. (Stuttgart, 1876), p. 507; Rassmann, *Die Deutsche Heldensage und ihre Heimat*, 2 Ausgabe (Hannover, 1863), I, 271.

The most obvious is that since Jǫrmunrekkr was king of the Goths and Óðinn god and eponym of the Goths,³³ nothing would be more natural than that Óðinn should intervene on behalf of his own people at the moment that two outsiders seemed about to cut down the entire Gothic host.³⁴ But perhaps a more personal relationship may also be postulated. Tempting indeed is Falk's hypothesis that the similarity between the name *Jǫrmunrekkr* and Óðinn's name *Jǫrmunr* invited the conception of Jǫrmunrekkr as an avatar of Óðinn.³⁵ Again, it is possible that some Norse poets may have regarded Jǫrmunrekkr as an adherent of the cult of Óðinn, as one who had upon occasion sacrificed to him. Hanging was the customary method of sacrifice to Óðinn,³⁶ god of the

³³ Scandinavian tradition knows him as god and eponym of the Gautar: Eddic poets and skalds alike designate him *Gautr*; the skalds also *Gauta-týr*, *Hergautr*, and *Gauta spjalli*; Snorri, *Skáld.* 82, relates that the Goths are named after King Goti, who was so called after Óðinn's name *Gautr*. This tradition was known also to the Anglo-Saxons: Asser, *De rebus gest. Ælf. ad ann. 849*, knew *Geat* as especially venerated by the Gauts. Procopius, *Bellum Gothicum*, II, 15, states that the men of Thule especially honoured Ares, and immediately thereafter that one of the most numerous nations of Thule was the *Gautoi*; there can be slight question that Ares is to be identified with Óðinn (cf. below, Mars = Óðinn).

Moreover, place-names show that in southern Sweden, and in Västergötland, Óðinn has an especially prominent position; cf. Wessén, "Studier till Sveriges Hedna Mytologi och Fornhistoria," *Uppsala Universitets Årsskrift* (1924: 2), 77 f.; de Vries, *op. cit.*, pp. 170 ff., 199 f. On the close relation between the Gautar and Óðinn cf. especially Wessén, *op. cit.*, pp. 24 ff. But de Vries, "Studien over Germaansche Mythologie," *TNTL*, LII (1933), 195 ff.; *Grdr.*, XII, 2, 200.

Gothic tradition represents Óðinn as eponym and god of the Goths: according to Jordanes, *Getica*, ed. Mommsen, *MGH, Auct. Ant.*, v (Berolini, 1882), (1) the royal line of Amal kings was descended from *Gapr* (xiv, 79), the first of the heroes whom the Goths regarded *non puros homines, sed semideos id est Ansis* (xiii, 78); and (2) Mars was chief god of the Goths (v, 41). *Gapr* is unquestionably identical with *Gautr*: Wessén, *op. cit.*, pp. 18 ff., and the literature there cited—cf. also pp. 81 ff. For a contrary view cf. Müllenhoff, "Index Personarum," in Mommsen's *Jordanes*, p. 143; *Deutsche Allertumskunde*, iv (Berlin, 1920), 183. The *Ansis* are the *Æsir*. On the identification of Mars as Óðinn, cf. Wessén, *op. cit.*, p. 23. For a contrary view, that Mars = Týr (Tiwaz): among others, Mogk, *Hoops Reallexikon*, iv (Strassburg, 1918-19), 369; Schütte, *Dänisches Heidentum*, p. 83; de Vries, "Studien over Germaansche Mythologie," *TNTL*, LI (1932), 283 ff.; *Grdr.*, XII, 1 (Berlin und Leipzig, 1935), 170 f. On the close relationship between Óðinn and the Goths: Wessén, *op. cit.*, pp. 18 ff., esp. p. 24; also pp. 81 ff.

³⁴ This is the reason given by Saxo, viii, x, 14, p. 235. In his version Jǫrmunrekkr (Jarmericus) has become king of the Danes, that people which Óðinn *paterna semper pietate coluerat*.

³⁵ *Op. cit.*: *Odenstypus*, p. 37; *åbenbarelse*, pp. 21 f. And he regards this relation between Jǫrmunrekkr and Óðinn as casting light on *Hm.* 25.1-4, p. 22.

³⁶ The most notable Scandinavian instance is that of King Víkarr: Saxo, vi, v, 6 f., pp. 152 f.; *Gautrekssaga* 7. Cf. Chadwick, *The Cult of Othin* (London, 1899), pp. 16 ff., 36 ff.; Mogk, "Die Menschenopfer bei den Germanen," *Abhandlungen der kgl. sächsischen Gesell-*

hanged, lord of the gallows,³⁷ the hanged god.³⁸ And hanging is a striking feature of the Norse Jǫrmunrekkr-legend: Jǫrmunrekkr hangs his only son Randver; he vows that he will hang Hamðir and Sǫrli when they arrive in his hall. This peculiar and constant association with Jǫrmunrekkr of the mode of human sacrifice which is constantly and closely associated with Óðinn suggests the possibility that some Norse storytellers looked upon Jǫrmunrekkr as an adherent of the cult of Óðinn.

To be sure, it is altogether possible that the hanging of Randver may have had no significance other than that hanging was the customary punishment for the crime of which Jǫrmunrekkr believed him guilty: adultery, and the treachery implicit in the seduction of his father's bride. Among some Germanic tribes hanging seems to have been the punishment for treachery.³⁹ In any case, the hanging of criminals was regarded as sacrifice to Óðinn.⁴⁰ And the late prose texts preserve an incident which looks very much like a distorted vestige of the sacrificial character of Randver's death. Snorri (*Skáld.* 51) and the *Vǫlsungasaga* (42 [40]) relate that just before he was hanged, Randver plucked out the feathers of his hawk and sent it to his father; Saxo (VIII, x, 12, p. 234), that the hawk plucked out its own feathers. All explain that when Jǫrmunrekkr saw the denuded hawk, he realized that even as it was

schaft der Wissenschaften, Phil.-hist. Kl., xxvii (1909), 606 ff., esp. 611; von Unwerth, *op. cit.*, pp. 90 ff.; von Amira, "Die germanischen Todesstrafen," *Abhandlungen der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Phil.-hist. Kl.*, xxxi (1922), 202 f.; Steller, "Zum Wodanglauben," *Mitteilungen der Schlesischen Gesellschaft für Volkskunde*, xxvi (1925), 101 ff.; Höfler, *Kultische Geheimbünde der Germanen*, i (Frankfurt, 1934), 226 ff.; de Vries, *Studia Germanica* (Lund, 1934), pp. 392 ff.; *Grdr.*, xii, 2, 131, 169.

³⁷ He is known as *Hanga-Týr* (Viga-Glúmr, *Lausavísur* 10.2, I B, 114); *hanga guð* (Hávarðr halt, *Lausavísur* 14.4, I B, 182; *Gylf.* 11); *hanga dróttin* (*Yngs.* 7); *galga valdr* (Helgi trausti Ólafsson, *Lausavísa* 7, I B, 94); *galga farmr* (Eyvindr, *Háleygjatal* 1.7, I B, 60; *Skáld.* 11); *Hangi* (Tindr, *Drape om Hákon* 1.5, I B, 136; 7.3, I B, 137; Hásteinn Hrómundarson halta, *Lausavísur* 5.7, I B, 92). For further skaldic occurrences cf. de Vries, *De Skaldenkenningen met Mythologischen Inhoud* (Haarlem, 1934), p. 16. ³⁸ *Háv.* 138.

³⁹ Tacitus, *Germania* 12. It was specifically the punishment for robbery, von Amira, *op. cit.*, pp. 182 ff.; but was gradually carried over to related crimes, pp. 184 ff., among them treachery to the state, p. 185. Hanging for adultery seems not to have been common until a comparatively late date; cf. the dates of the instances cited by v. Amira, p. 177. But it does appear to have been known: v. Amira, p. 177 and *passim*; Boniface, *Ep.* 72, cited by Chadwick, p. 44. The hanging of Hagbarthus, seducer of Sygne, in Saxo, vii, vii, 5 ff., pp. 194 ff., however, is not necessarily a case in point: since he had also slain Sygne's brothers, his status was that of captured enemy; and the hanging of captives was common practice.

⁴⁰ Von Amira, *op. cit.*, pp. 202 f.—largely by implication; Höfler, *op. cit.*, pp. 226 f., 230, 232; de Vries, *Grdr.*, xii, 1, 252. But cf. Mogk, *op. cit.*, pp. 607, 639 ff. In point of fact, capital punishment of any kind seems to have been regarded as sacrifice to some god: v. Amira, pp. 198 ff.; von Schwerin, *Hoops*, iv, 328 f.

bereft of its feathers, so was his kingdom bereft of its might, for he was now without an heir. Saxo adds a further detail: that the young prince's hound added its plea to that of the hawk for the life of its master. These explanations look suspiciously like late rationalizations of an incident no longer understood.⁴¹ The association of animals, especially of dogs and cocks or hawks, with hanged men is an old one: the hanging of one or two dogs with the human victim was a well-known practice;⁴² Adam of Bremen attests the hanging of horses and dogs together with men at the festivals held every nine years at Uppsala;⁴³ Thietmar of Merseburg relates that at the spring festivals celebrated every nine years at Leire horses, dogs, and cocks (offered in place of hawks) were sacrificed together with men.⁴⁴ Therefore, it is not impossible that in older versions of the story the hound and the hawk were hanged together with Randver. In that case, whatever the original reason for the hanging of Randver, it may very well have been regarded as sacrifice to Óðinn.⁴⁵

The vow of Jǫrmunrekkr to hang Hamðir and Sǫrli is found only in the *Hamðismál*, in the episode immediately preceding the battle in the hall in which Óðinn intervenes and saves the Goths from complete annihilation. The Goths are drinking in the hall (str. 18) when watchers from the wall rush in to warn Jǫrmunrekkr of the approach of the brothers and advise him to take counsel (19). He, however, instead of calling for advice, calls for his arms, looks on his white shield, turns the cup in his hand (20), and announces that he will hang Hamðir and Sǫrli (21). His peculiar behaviour at this crucial moment is usually dismissed with a comment on the drunken pride of the ale-inflamed tyrant. This may be. However, the *Hamðismál* is a masterpiece of dramatic construction, every episode of which is nicely drawn to further the action of the poem. The first scene, the whetting of Guðrún, introduces the characters and the action and, by subtle suggestion, prepares the listener for the tragedy to come. The second episode, the slaying of Erpr, brings the action to a rapid climax

⁴¹ Cf. Chadwick, *op. cit.*, p. 25: "It is curious that the dog and hawk should be mentioned by Saxo . . . in connection with the hanging of Broderus [the name of the son in the Danish version]. Possibly the story had originally a different form."

⁴² Von Amira, *op. cit.*, pp. 105, 201, 203; J. Grimm, *Deutsche Rechtsaltertümer*, 4 Aufl., II (Leipzig, 1922), 261 ff.; de Boor, "Eine Griechische Romanstelle und ein nordischer Opferbrauch," *Festschrift tillägnad Hugo Pipping* (Helsingfors, 1924), pp. 36 f.; "Eddica," *APS*, II (1927), 99 f.

⁴³ *Gesta Hammaburgensis* IV. 27, *Script. rer. Germ.*, II (Hannoveræ, 1876).

⁴⁴ *Chronicon* I. 17 (9), *Script. rer. Germ.*, XXXIX (Hannoveræ, 1889).

⁴⁵ Tantalizing is the comment of Höfler, *op. cit.*, n. 235, pp. 236 f., on Saxo's "sonderbare Scheinhängung" of Broderus. Bugge, too, regarded the hanging of Randver as sacrifice to Óðinn, "Bemærkninger til norrøne Digte," *Arkiv*, I (1883), 251 ff. But he based his view on emendation of a poem which does not give a version of the Jǫrmunrekkr-legend, but merely mentions Jǫrmunrekkr in passing, the *Hyndlolið*.

and makes almost certain that Hamðir and Sqrli cannot succeed in their vengeance. Every moment of these first scenes is pointed toward the one end: the failure of Hamðir and Sqrli. It seems strange indeed that this poet, this master of dramatic technique, should now stop the action for five strophes, as many as he devotes to the Erpr-incident, merely to tell us that Jǫrmunrekkr was drunk.

It is much more probable that we have here an instance of the Germanic custom of making a solemn vow over the ale-cup.⁴⁶ It is of the nature of a boast, to be sure, and the ale may very well have been instrumental in the making of it; the numerous references in both Anglo-Saxon and Norse literature indicate that often the drink influenced the vows made by the warrior in the mead-hall. But at the same time, the drink made the oath more solemn, more binding. Jǫrmunrekkr may have laughed and looked at his shield when he vowed that he would hang Hamðir and Sqrli, but nonetheless he committed himself by promising, cup in hand, how he would deal with the attackers when they arrived in his hall.

Moreover, the very fact that he promises hanging rather than some other form of execution would in itself seem to suggest that we have here more than the idle threat of an ale-inflamed tyrant; one would expect a king become warlike with wine to boast of his prowess with the sword, not with the noose. We find this same promise also in the *Beowulf* (ll. 2936 ff.); the whole night long before the battle of Ravenswood Ongenþeow vows how he will deal with the enemy on the morrow: some he will put to the sword, others he will hang on the gallows. That is to say, those taken captive will be hanged. There is no suggestion here of drunken boasting on the part of Ongenþeow. On the contrary, the hanging of captives has a very real significance: among North and South Germanic tribes alike it constituted sacrifice to Óðinn.⁴⁷ A vow to hang the enemy, then, was in effect a promise to sacrifice him to Óðinn, a dedication of him to the war-god.

This practice of dedicating the enemy to Óðinn in order to ensure victory in battle is very old and well attested.⁴⁸ Tacitus (*Ann.* XIII, 57)

⁴⁶ Cf. Einarsson, "Old English *Beot* and Old Icelandic *Heitstrenging*," *PMLA*, XLIX (1934), 975 ff.

⁴⁷ Jordanes, *Getica* v, 41; Procopius, *Bell. Goth.* II, 15; Tacitus, *Germania* 12; *Annales* I, 61 [Helm denies that this is an instance of hanging; he believes that the heads were cut off and preserved as trophies, *Allgermanische Religionsgeschichte*, I (Heidelberg, 1913), 269, n. 69]; *Yngs.* 23 f.; Chadwick, *op. cit.*, pp. 16 ff., 36 ff.; Mogk, *op. cit.*, pp. 608 f., 611; Wessén, *op. cit.*, pp. 22 f.

⁴⁸ Cf. Chadwick, *op. cit.*, pp. 7 f., 30 ff.; Mogk, *op. cit.*, pp. 607 ff.; von Unwerth, *op. cit.*, pp. 82 ff.; Steller, *op. cit.*, pp. 98 ff.; Höfler, *op. cit.*, pp. 238 f.; de Vries, *Grdr.*, XII. 1, 174 f.; XII. 2, 169.

relates that before a certain battle between the Hermunduri and the Chatti both armies dedicated the enemy—men, horses, and all their belongings—to Óðinn [to Mars and Mercury]. The Scandinavian sources afford numerous instances, sometimes just before a decisive battle,⁴⁹ sometimes at the point in the battle when victory seems to be with the enemy,⁵⁰ sometimes at a crucial point in a man's career.⁵¹ The words of Jǫrmunrekkr in the *Hamðismál*, then, I interpret as a dedication of Hamðir and Sǫrli to Óðinn, a vow made solemnly on the ale-cup. If this interpretation be correct, then the behaviour of Jǫrmunrekkr in a moment of danger is no longer perplexing: advised to take counsel, he asks Óðinn for victory.

Furthermore, this interpretation may cast some light on the meaning of the strophe which in the manuscript follows the dedication-episode. Immediately upon Jǫrmunrekkr's announcement that he will hang Hamðir and Sǫrli

Hitt kvað þá Hróðrglǫð stóð of hleðom
 Mefingr mælti við mög þenna
 þvíat þat heita at hlýðigi myni
 mega tveir menn einir tíó hundraðom Gotna
 binda eða beria í borg inni há.⁵²

Cryptic, almost too concise, this is the most controversial strophe in the *Hamðismál*. The majority of the critics identify Hróðrglǫð as Guðrún, interpret it as her final instructions to her sons⁵³ [or to one of her sons] before their departure upon their vengeance-expedition, and consequently remove it from its manuscript position at the end of the scene in the Gothic hall and place it at the end of the first episode.⁵⁴ A few assume Hróðrglǫð to be some woman in the Gothic court, presuma-

⁴⁹ *Styrbjarnar-páttur* 2, *Hvss.* 14, *Sögubrot* 8, *Hlqðskviða* 24 f.

⁵⁰ Saxo, viii, iv, 9, pp. 219 f.

⁵¹ Saxo, vii, x, 3, p. 203; ix, iv, 12, p. 254.

⁵² Str. 22 in Neckel's edition. I omit punctuation.

⁵³ Bugge, "Tillæg," p. 440—but cf. his earlier view, *NF*, p. 320; "Hamðismál," *ZfdPh*, vii (1876), 398; Grundtvig, *Sæmundar Edda hins Fróða* (København, 1876), p. 249; Hildebrand, p. 298; Koegel, *Geschichte der deutschen Litteratur*, i, ii (Strassburg, 1897), 215; Jiriczek, *op. cit.*, p. 92, n. 1; Heusler, *ZdVerfV*, viii, 102; notes to Genzmer's *Edda*, p. 53; Gering, 1904, p. 454; 1922, p. 454; Sijmons, "Das niederdeutsche lied von könig Ermenrichs tod und die eddischen Hamþésmól," *ZfdPh*, xxxviii (1906), 162—but cf. his earlier view, *Die Lieder der Edda* (Halle, 1906), p. 482; *Kommentar*, pp. 426 f. (his own views); Gering-Sijmons, pp. 440 f.; Schneider, "Studien zur Heldensage," *ZfdA*, liv (1913), 346; *Germanische Heldensage*, i ("Pauls Grundriss," x. 1, Berlin und Leipzig, 1928), 244; Wesle, "Zur Sage von Ermenrichs Tod," *PBB*, xlv (1922), 252 f.; Kienast, "Hamdismal und Koninc Ermenrikes Dot," *ZfdA*, lxiii (1926), 51, 53; Hollander, pp. 377 ff.; Neckel, *Edda*, i, 268; Genzmer, *Edda*, i, 55.

⁵⁴ The change is made by Grundtvig, p. 172; Bugge, *ZfdPh*, vii, 380; Hildebrand, p. 298; Gering, 1904, p. 454; 1922, pp. 454 f.; Genzmer, p. 55; Hollander, pp. 377 f.

bly mother, wife, or concubine to Jǫrmunrekkr,⁵⁵ and interpret it as her more or less inane comment upon the warning of the watchers from the wall. A very few—namely, Grimm,⁵⁶ Simrock,⁵⁷ and Rassmann⁵⁸—take Hróðrglǫð to be Óðinn.

The hypothesis that Hróðrglǫð is some woman in the Gothic court merits least consideration. For there is no indication whatsoever that such a woman ever existed in the story. The Jǫrmunrekkr-legend knows two women alone: Svanhildr, who is dead; and Guðrún, who has no business in the Gothic court.⁵⁹ Postulating the existence of any other woman is simply the last resort of those who regard Hróðrglǫð as a feminine epithet and yet are too conservative to shift the position of the strophe. Besides, such an interpretation makes the episode utterly pointless: Jǫrmunrekkr is warned of the approach of Hamðir and Sǫrli; he threatens to hang them; Hróðrglǫð states that no danger is to be expected from them.⁶⁰ The poet is too great a master of concise treatment of his subject and of rapid narration to bring the action to a standstill for nearly a sixth of its entire length, without apparent reason. The case rests between Guðrún and Óðinn.

The crux of the entire situation is the meaning of the words spoken by Hróðrglǫð: "Because that [is] danger⁶¹ that he [or you]⁶² will not [be]

⁵⁵ Ranisch, *op. cit.*, p. 12; Mogk, *Norwegisch- Isländische Literatur* ("Pauls Grundriss," 2 Aufl., II, Strassburg, 1901-09), 655; Detter-Heinzel, II, 581; Boer, II, 339 ff.

⁵⁶ J. Grimm, "Iðnakr und seine Söhne," *ZfdA*, III (1843), 154.

⁵⁷ *Die Edda*, p. 462. ⁵⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 271.

⁵⁹ No version mentions the mother or a concubine of Ermanaric. The only wives mentioned are Svanhildr, who has already been slain at the time Hamðir and Sǫrli approach the hall, and the seduced wife of the *Þiðrekssaga*, who is obviously a reminiscence of Svanhildr.

⁶⁰ Ranisch, *op. cit.*, p. 12: Hróðrglǫð addresses the Goths in general (he suggests striking out ll. 3-4), the essence of her words "Keine Gefahr ist da!" Detter-Heinzel, II, 582: Hróðrglǫð addresses Jǫrmunrekkr, saying, "Auf diese deine Rede drohen sie mit Dingen, die wol nicht angehen werden." Boer, II, 340—cf. also *Die Sagen*, p. 32, n. 1: Hróðrglǫð looks out the window, sees that the enemies are only two in number, and addresses the youth who has warned Jǫrmunrekkr to take counsel: "du drohst da mit etwas, was doch nicht gelingen wird" or "diese drohung wird sich nicht erfüllen"; he emends freely. Mogk, *Grdr.*, II, 655: Hróðrglǫð addresses Jǫrmunrekkr, saying, "Sei auf der Hut, denn zwei Männer allein können 1000 Goten binden oder fällen hier in der hohen Halle" [i.e., because they are drunk].

⁶¹ The text reads *heila*; but neither grammatically, syntactically, nor sensibly can it be construed in this passage. Emendation to *hætta* "danger" is justifiably urged by Hildebrand, p. 298; Bugge, "Tillæg," p. 440; *ZfdPh*, VII, 380, 399; Ranisch, p. 12; Jónsson, *Eddalieder*, II (Halle, 1890), 99—but not in 1932; Gering, 1904, p. 454; 1922, p. 455; Boer, II, 340; Gering-Sijmons, p. 441.

⁶² The text reads *myni*. But it is difficult to see why Hróðrglǫð should address his (or her) listener in the third person. There are two possible solutions: emendation to *mynir*;

obedient,⁶³ two men alone will be able to bind or destroy ten hundred Goths in the high hall." What is to be obeyed is not stated in this passage, but it is fairly obvious that Hróðrglǫð refers to instructions of some sort which must be followed if Hamðir and Sǫrli are or are not to succeed in their vengeance.

If we take this speech as the words of Guðrún to her sons, then we must of necessity do one of three things: either emend and possibly misconstrue the extant lines in order to write into them definite instructions;⁶⁴ or assume that the instructions have been lost and that just the framework of them has been preserved;⁶⁵ or (assuming the scribe to have been hopelessly unaware of the intent of the poet) re-arrange the strophes and lines to formulate a new version of the story which finds no counterpart in any of the extant accounts of the vengeance of Hamðir and Sǫrli for Svanhildr.⁶⁶ Such conjecture might be justified if the *Hamðismál* afforded any evidence that Guðrún gave instructions to her sons.⁶⁷ But

or rendering of the *mæli við* of ll. 3–4 as "spoke concerning" rather than the more common "spoke to"—that is, Hróðrglǫð reflects about the danger to *mog þenna* rather than addressing him directly. Unfortunately, there is no indication that at the date of the *Hm. mæla við* might mean "speak concerning," although the usage is found in the sagas: Fritzner, *Ordbog over det gamle norske Sprog*, II, 767.

⁶³ In accordance with Grundtvig, p. 172, taking *hlýðigi* as the adjective **hlýðigr* = *hlýðinn* "obedient." But it is not necessary with him to emend to *hlýðigir*. The form *hlýðigi* might very well be the nom. sg. masc. *hlýðigr* + the negative particle *-gi*.

Less safely can we follow Hildebrand, p. 298, in taking *hlýðigi* as **hlýði* for *hlýðni* "obedience" + *-gi*: *nam hoc (est) periculum, si obedientia non fuerit*; the advantage of this rendering, of course, is that it resolves the difficulty of the 3 sg. *myini*.

⁶⁴ So Bugge, *ZfdPh*, VII, 399: emends *þvi at þat heita* (22.5) to *þvi er þar hætta* and takes *hlýðigi* as **hlýði* "silence" (< *hljóðr*) with the neg. *-gi*; the lines are then to be rendered "therein is danger there (in the far distant land) that there be not silence." He is followed by Koegel, *loc. cit.*, and Jiriczek, *loc. cit.*

⁶⁵ So Hildebrand, p. 298; Jónsson, *Eddalieder*, II, 99; Sijmons, *Die Lieder der Edda*, p. 482—but he has since changed his opinion; Gering, 1922, p. 455.

⁶⁶ Neckel, I, 268 f., and Sijmons, *Kommentar*, pp. 426 f., completely revise strs. 11–17 of the extant text; their order is str. 16.2, 16.1, 16.3–4; 11.1–2, 12.1–2; str. 22 intact; 12.3–4; str. 13 intact; 11.3–6; str. 14; str. 15; str. 17. Cf. also Genzmer-Heusler, p. 55.

⁶⁷ Ll. 3–4, *mefingr mæli við mog þenna*, are sometimes regarded as such evidence, by construing *mog* as "son" or "young man." But though this is a common meaning of the word, it is by no means the only one; *mogr* frequently means simply "man," with no implication of youth: cf. the instances cited by Jónsson-Egilsen, *Lexicon Poeticum* (København, 1931) p. 419; Fritzner, *Ordbog*, II, 772; Cleasby-Vigfússon, *An Icelandic-English Dictionary* (Oxford, 1874), p. 443. E.g., *Fáfn.* 16.6; *Guðr. I* 5.4, 11.4; *HH I* 47. 8. The most telling example is the *mogr* of *Hm.* 15. 7, which, used in narrative, referring to Erpr, is modified by the adjective *ungr*, and therefore obviously means simply "man," since the poet would hardly use the adjective "young" to modify a noun which itself implied "youth"; cf. also *Sg.* 6. 7: *mog frumungan*.

Rassmann interprets as "son" in the sense that Jǫrmunrekkr is a son of Óðinn, *loc. cit.*

it does not; this conception is based on the *Völsungasaga* account that she warned Hamðir and Sqrli to avoid injury to stones and on Snorri's statement that she instructed her three sons to attack Jörmunrekkr by night and to divide the task of slaying him.⁶⁸ It is unwise, however, to argue that because Snorri and the sagaman knew of these instructions, the *Hamðismál* poet likewise must have known of them;⁶⁹ the prose texts contain various incidents which are not found in the poem, incidents which are patently the additions of later centuries.⁷⁰ And, perhaps significantly, Snorri and the *Völsungasaga* do not agree as to the nature of the instructions. It seems questionable procedure indeed to change the position of the strophe in order to bring the *Hamðismál* version into conformity with the prose versions and then, further, to emend or to assume the loss of the most important part of that strophe in order to make it fit the version achieved by change of position.

This hypothesis becomes the more dubious when we consider that the extant *Hamðismál* contains instructions upon which the outcome of the expedition hangs: those of Óðinn to stone Hamðir and Sqrli. If these are obeyed, the brothers fail in their vengeance; if they are not obeyed, the brothers succeed. And the definitive argument that these are the instructions to which Hröðrglǫð refers lies in this fact: the danger in disobedience is that two men alone will destroy ten hundred Goths. That is to say, if Hröðrglǫð's instructions are not obeyed, Hamðir and Sqrli will succeed. These are instructions to the Goths.

Moreover, this speech of Hröðrglǫð's is craftily phrased; it does not promise immunity to Jörmunrekkr and all the Goths—it states merely

If, as Falk has urged in *Festskrift tilegnet Førstebibliothekar A. Kjer* (Christiania, 1924), p. 8, the expression "gudesønn" denotes the relationship between a man and the god to whose cult he has belonged during life and into whose fold he will be taken after death, then Rassmann's interpretation might be correct, and, moreover, ll. 3-4 might be further indication that Norse poets believed Jörmunrekkr to be an adherent of the cult of Óðinn.

⁶⁸ The theory that she instructed Hamðir and Sqrli to take Erpr with them (so first Sijmons, *ZfdPh*, xxxviii, 161 ff.) or instructed Erpr to help the other two (suggested by Heusler, *ZdVerfV*, viii, 102) is based upon the version set forth in the very late Low German ballad, *Koninc Ermenrikes Dot*. This poem does contain a few distorted and vague reminiscences of the Norse story of Hamðir and Sqrli, but they have been transferred to Dietrich von Bern; its every detail shows it to be a fine example of the distortion of heroic legend which can take place when a story is transmitted from one people to another with a wholly different body of legendary knowledge, and when it has been passed about among the folk for several hundred years.

⁶⁹ Ranisch's criticism of Bugge, *op. cit.*, pp. 1 f., is pertinent.

⁷⁰ The two most significant to the present discussion, perhaps, are: Guðrún gives to her sons magic armour (*Vss.*; impenetrable armour: *SnE*); after having slain Erpr, both brothers slip and the one supports himself with his hand (Sqrli: *SnE*; Hamðir: *Vss.*), the other with his foot (*Vss.*).

that all ten hundred shall not be slain. There would be no reason for Guðrún to make such a statement. For one thing, she was not interested in the ten hundred Goths; her desire was to accomplish the death of Jǫrmunrekkr, who had caused Svanhildr to be trampled in the mire. Again, if she were giving instructions, she would be specific, not enigmatic. On the other hand, these words would be particularly appropriate for Óðinn to utter. For wile is his not least outstanding characteristic. He is traditionally a perilous helper; his wishes do not always coincide with those of his devotees. He gives them victory and glory, only to bring about their destruction when he finds it desirable to take them to Valhalla.⁷¹ Thus, Haraldr Hilditǫnn had sacrificed to Óðinn all his life, and in the Battle of Bravalla when he saw victory with the enemy, he dedicated to Óðinn all the souls which should fall in the battle, but Óðinn ignored the promised sacrifice and slew him.⁷² Sigmundr asks Óðinn himself why he robbed Eiríkr of victory when he knew this king was valiant.⁷³ Again, when Hákon wishes to know why he has been summoned to Valhalla when surely he deserved victory of the gods, the Valkyre Skǫgul answers: "We have so brought it about that you hold the field, for your foes have fled."⁷⁴ Similarly, though Óðinn permits the Goths to prevail, he allows many of them to fall before Hamðir and Sǫrli, and he intervenes with decisive advice only after the brothers have mutilated Jǫrmunrekkr. According to tradition, Jǫrmunrekkr was seriously, probably fatally, wounded by Hamðir and Sǫrli; this is the kernel of the entire legend, common to Gothic and Scandinavian versions alike. The entire situation demands that Óðinn merely hint that he will save the greater number of Goths, and reserve the actual instructions until Jǫrmunrekkr has lost hands and feet. And he does give that advice in time to keep the letter of his contract: the brothers do not kill ten hundred Goths. This is a typical instance of Odinic interference.

Finally, the *Hamðismál* itself affords evidence that the strophe belongs in that place in which it is found in the manuscript. Hróðrglǫð, speaking, *stóð of hleðom* (22.2). Guðrún's scene with her sons is not localized in a house; therefore, this specific localization has no significance. It acquires significance only if the strophe is left in its manuscript position, at that point in the action where events are taking place in the hall. For the poet emphasizes the localization in the Gothic hall: the episode begins with the words *Glaumr var í hǫllo* (18.1); in str. 21 Jǫrmunrekkr announces that he will be glad to see Hamðir and Sǫrli *í hǫllo minni*; in

⁷¹ On this rôle of Óðinn cf. especially de Vries, *Grdr.*, XII, 2, 174 ff.

⁷² Saxo, VII, x, 3, p. 206; VIII, iv, 9, p. 220. So also does he with his spear break the sword which he had once given Sigmundr, *Vss.* 11.

⁷³ *Eiríksmál* 7. Cf. also *Saga Ketils hængs* 5; *Lokasenna* 22.

⁷⁴ *Hákonarmál* 12.

str. 22 *Hróðrglǫð* states that two men alone will be able to destroy the Goths *í borg inni há*; the first words of str. 23 are *stýrr varð í ranni*. There can be no question that the specific place-phrase *stöð of hleðom* belongs in a context which establishes localization in a hall.

Thus, the larger context of the poem and the situation as a whole demand identification of *Hróðrglǫð* as Óðinn rather than as Guðrún. Identification as Guðrún necessitates wrenching a strophe from its manuscript position,—hazardous procedure at any time, but rather violent when that strophe must be set down ten strophes earlier in a poem so short. And it requires further, in order to make that strophe fit into the new context, an endless chain of emendations and misconstructions of words that do stand in the text and “reconstruction” of words that do not.⁷⁵ Identification as Óðinn, on the other hand, involves no change in the position of the strophe and necessitates little emendation.⁷⁶ It makes for lucid interpretation of the strophe, and gives to the episode the importance which is suggested by its position between the climax and the catastrophe of the poem. This scene in the hall of Jǫrmunrekkr, like the Guðrún- and Erpr-episodes, points forward to the one inevitable end: the fall of Hamðir and Sǫrli under the shower of stones.

The one possible obstacle lies in the epithets *Hróðrglǫð* and *Mefingr*, whom the parallel structure shows to be one and the same person. The interpretation which makes this person a woman rests, in the first instance, on the form of the name *Hróðrglǫð* as it appears in the printed editions: the first element is unquestionably *hróðr* “glory” “fame”; the second is commonly considered the feminine nominative singular of the adjective *glǫðr*. *Mefingr* is more difficult to gloss. Its parallelism with *Hróðrglǫð* moved Bugge to emend to *mæ-fingr* “the slender-fingered,”⁷⁷ an admirable epithet for a woman.

But the argument, strong as it appears at first glance, is palpably weak. In the first place, the reading *Hróðrglǫð* ignores an accent over the *av* which the manuscript indicates.⁷⁸ If the vowel actually is long and the accent not merely a scribal error, then *-glǫð* cannot be from *glǫðr* at all. It could, however, be from *grǫðr* “greed”: in Old Norwegian *r* after a not immediately preceding *r* sometimes became *l* through dissimi-

⁷⁵ Cf. Ranisch's criticism of the Guðrún-theory, *op. cit.*, pp. 12 ff.

⁷⁶ *heita* to *hætta*; possibly *myni* to *mynir*.

⁷⁷ “Sjældne Ord i norrøn Skaldskab,” *Tidskrift for Philologi*, vi (1865), 96; *NF*, p. 320; “Tillæg,” p. 440.

⁷⁸ *Codex Regius of the Elder Edda* (“Corpus Codicum Islandicarum Medii Aevi,” ed. Ejnar Munksgaard, x, Copenhagen, 1937), p. 90; *Codex regius af den ældre Edda i fototypisk og diplomatisk gengivelse*, udg. ved Ludv. F. A. Wimmer og Finnur Jónsson (København, 1891), p. 90. The accent is noted by Jiriczek, p. 92, n. 1; Gering, 1904, p. 454; 1922, p. 454; Sijmons, p. 482; Boer, I, 263.

lation;⁷⁹ the heavy repetition of *r* in the first element would warrant the sound-change in the compound **hróðrgrǫðr*. More difficult to explain, perhaps, is the loss of the final *-r*. However, not only was the poem handed down by word of mouth for three centuries before it was incorporated into Codex Regius, but it passed in the interim from Norway to Iceland. If the word originally were **hróðrgrǫðr*, during the centuries of oral transmission those who recited the poem naturally made the dissimilation; then someone, possibly even the compiler of Codex Regius himself, heard the second element as *-glǫðr* and took it as a mistake for *-glǫð*. But this is pure conjecture. We remain faced by the necessity of assuming either that the long open *o* of the manuscript is a scribal error or that sometime between the composition of the poem and the time that it was finally set down the final *-r* was lost.⁸⁰ Secondly, and more significantly, the sense of neither reading is particularly fitting to Guðrún, whose motive at no time in her career was glory. Either "glory glad" or "glory-greed" is a pretty epithet, but strikingly un-descriptive of the woman who devoted her life to vengeance, who, in this very incident of which the *Hamðismál* tells, sacrifices her remaining children to avenge her daughter. On the other hand, it admirably suits Óðinn, lord of Valhalla, who from first to last desired glory and triumph.⁸¹

Mefingr, too, does not unequivocally point to Guðrún. Indeed, no identification can be based on it alone, for its meaning is unknown. It is only from the context that we are able to derive the one certain fact that *mefingr* is parallel with *Hróðrǫglǫð* and that, therefore, the two designate the same person. The interpretation *mæ-fingr* "the slender-fingered" holds only if *Hróðrǫglǫð* is pronounced a feminine epithet. The very derivation suggested by Bugge, from *mær* "thin," would give as well *mæf-ingr* as *mæ-fingr*.⁸² Rask's suggested *mæringr* "the renowned" requires little more emendation.⁸³ Either of these epithets might well be applicable to Óðinn.⁸⁴ He was known by many names, some of them descriptive of the various sides of his character, some of his physical appear-

⁷⁹ Cf. Noreen, *Altisländische und Allnorwegische Grammatik*, §253. 2, p. 186.

⁸⁰ J. Grimm suggested that *Hróðrǫglǫð* might be a scribal error for *Hróptr glǫðr*, *ZfdA*, III, 154. This suggestion is tempting, for *Hróptr* is a rather common name for Óðinn; but its very commonness lessens the probability that the scribe was stupid enough to make the mistake.

⁸¹ Cf. such of his epithets as *Herteitr*, *Grm.* 47. 3; *hróðigr Heriafǫðr*, *Grm.* 19. 3.

⁸² Cf. the place-name *Mæveið*. The characteristic *μ* (*f* at the end of the Viking Period) of this *wa*-stem adjective would remain before the *i* of the suffix.

⁸³ *Edda Sæmundar hinns Fróða* (Holmiæ, 1818), p. 272.

⁸⁴ If de Boor, "Das schwert Mæring," *ZfdPh*, XLV (1913), 297, is right in taking *mæringr*, like *Gautr* and *Danr*, as a tribal name which has become an appellative, then might not *mæringr* like *Gautr* have been a name for Óðinn?

ance; others he assumed when he embarked upon his several adventures; a few are eponyms.⁸⁵ We by no means are certain of the meaning of them all; some are preserved only in the lists in *Grímnismál* and *Gylfaginning*. The interpretation *máf-ingr* is most tempting, for it involves no more emendation than is required by the rendering *máf-fingr*. And Óðinn is known by another name with the meaning of "thin": *þuðr*, *þunnr*.⁸⁶ The epithet might be connected with the names *Mævi* and *Mævill*,⁸⁷ which occur in the list of sea-kings at the end of *Skáldskaparmál* 89, where appears also *Gauti*, a name based on Óðinn's eponym *Gautr*. The names of many legendary kings seem to have been closely associated with those of Óðinn.⁸⁸ *Mæringr*, on the other hand, fits in very well with *Hróðrglǫð* whether we take the elements of this name as "glory" and "glad" or "glory" and "greed." The riddle of *mefingr*, then, may find solution in terms of Óðinn rather than of Guðrún.

Thus interpreted, str. 22 of the *Hamðismál* becomes highly significant in itself, and it also strengthens the interpretation of strs. 20–21 as the dedication of Hamðir and Sǫrli to Óðinn. And above all, it makes clear the poet's purpose in devoting a sixth of his entire poem, a poem the theme of which is the vengeance of Hamðir and Sǫrli, to the scene in the Gothic hall in which neither Hamðir nor Sǫrli appears: he is preparing us for the intervention of Óðinn in the battle after the brothers have attacked and mutilated the king. Jǫrmunrekkr is warned of the approach of the men whose sister he has slain; he laughs, possibly because he has drunk too deeply of the ale and possibly also because two men alone should presume to attack ten hundred Goths, and seizes his cup and dedicates them to Óðinn; the god appears, thus acknowledging the dedication, just as he recognizes the vows of Eiríkr to sacrifice himself if he may win victory over Styrbjörn; but he warns the Goths that certain instructions must be obeyed, or two men alone will succeed in destroying ten hundred Goths. This scene is one of the most pregnant in the poem. To be sure, it complicates matters; the failure of Hamðir and Sǫrli results from the slaying of Erpr: this is made clear by the *Hamðismál*, *Snorra Edda*, and *Vǫlsungasaga* alike; and there is no real place for the intervention of Óðinn in the legend as it appears fully developed in the extant texts. But aesthetically, from the standpoint of the *Hamðismál*, the scene is a masterpiece. For it unites, as does no other incident in the poem, the

⁸⁵ On them cf. especially Falk, *Norsk Vidsk. Skrift.* (1924), esp. pp. 35 f.; also de Vries, *Grdr.*, xii. 2, 191 ff. ⁸⁶ *Gylf.* 11; *Grm.* 46. 5.

⁸⁷ Suggested by Bugge, *NF*, p. 320. To be sure, he and Jónsson, *Lex. Poet.*, p. 418, derive these names from *már* (*môr*) "gull." This derivation, too, would be possible: many of Óðinn's names are connected with animal- and bird-names; cf. Falk, *Norsk Vidsk. Skrift.* (1924), 39 ff. ⁸⁸ Falk, *Norsk Vidsk. Skrift.* (1924), 36 ff.; *Festskrift Kjør*, pp. 2 f.

action of the entire story. And it shows not only the preparations on the part of Hamðir and Sǫrli—if we may give the name of “preparations” to the disastrous slaying of Erpr,—but also the preparations made by Jǫrmunrekkr, their antagonist, for the battle in the hall. Both sides involved in the conflict, avenging brothers and guilty king, make absolutely certain the fall of Hamðir and Sǫrli, their vengeance unachieved.

The extant texts, then, afford ample evidence of a close association between Óðinn and the Norse Jǫrmunrekkr-legend. The *Hamðismál*, the *Vǫlsungasaga*, and *Snorra Edda* alike represent Jǫrmunrekkr as hanging his only son; and hanging is always closely associated with Óðinn. The *Hamðismál* and the *Vǫlsungasaga* represent Óðinn as intervening in the battle in the hall, that is, the god of the Goths as intervening in the last battle of Jǫrmunrekkr king of the Goths. The *Hamðismál* further represents Jǫrmunrekkr as vowing to hang Hamðir and Sǫrli when they arrive in his hall. And finally, the *Hamðismál* portrays a scene which attains significance only if it is interpreted as Óðinn’s appearance in the Gothic hall before the attack of the two brothers. These several incidents strongly suggest that the linking of Jǫrmunrekkr with Óðinn was a very important part of the Norse legend. And the fact that this linking occurs already in the ninth-century *Hamðismál* would indicate that it is not the fabrication of late sagamen, but genuine old tradition.

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