

VÖLUSPÁ, THE PROPHECY OF THE SYBIL

Thorpe's Introduction (1866)

As introductory to the *Voluspa*, the following description of a wandering Vala or prophetess may be thought both desirable and interesting: "We find them present at the birth of children, when they seem to represent the Norns. They acquired their knowledge either by means of *seid*, during the night, while all others in the house were sleeping, and uttered their oracles in the morning; or they received sudden inspirations during the singing of certain songs appropriate to the purpose, without which the sorcery could not perfectly succeed. These *seid*-women were common over all the North. When invited by the master of a family, they appeared in a peculiar costume, sometimes with a considerable number of followers, e.g. with fifteen young men and fifteen girls. For their soothsaying they received money, gold rings, and other precious things. Sometimes it was necessary to compel them to prophesy. An old description of such a Vala, who went from guild to guild telling fortunes, will give the best idea of these women and their proceedings":—

"Thorbiorg, nicknamed the little Vala, during the winter attended the guilds, at the invitation of those who desired to know their fate, or the quality of the coming year. Everything was prepared in the most sumptuous manner for her reception. There was an elevated seat, on which lay a cushion stuffed with feathers. A man was sent to meet her. She came in the evening dressed in a blue mantle fastened with thongs and set with stones down to the lap; round her neck she had a necklace of glass beads, on her head a hood of black lambskin lined with white catskin; in her hand a staff, the head of which was mounted with brass and ornamented with stones; round her body she wore a girdle of agaric (knoske), from which hung a bag containing her conjuring apparatus; on her feet were rough calfskin shoes with long ties and tin buttons, on her hands catskin gloves, white and hairy within. All bade her welcome with a reverent salutation; the master himself conducted her by the hand to her seat. She undertook no prophecy on the first day, but would first pass a night there. In the evening of the following day she ascended her elevated seat, caused the women to place themselves round her, and desired them to sing certain songs, which they did in a strong, clear voice. She then prophesied of the coming year, and afterwards, all that would advanced and asked her such questions as they thought proper, to which they received plain answers."

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In the following grand and ancient lay, dating most probably from the time of heathenism, are set forth, as the utterances of a Vala, or wandering prophetess, as above described, the story of the creation of the world from chaos, of the origin of the giants, the gods, the dwarfs, and the human race, together with other events relating to the mythology of the North, and ending with the destruction of the gods and the world, and their renewal.

Bellows' Introduction (1936)

At the beginning of the collection in the *Codex Regius* stands the *Voluspo*, the most famous and important, as it is likewise the most debated, of all the Eddic poems. Another version of it is found in a huge miscellaneous compilation of about the year 1300, the *Hauksbok*, and many stanzas are included in the *Prose Edda* of Snorri Sturluson. The order of the stanzas in the *Hauksbok* version differs materially from that in the *Codex Regius*, and in the published editions many experiments have been attempted in further rearrangements. On the whole, however, and allowing for certain interpolations, the order of the stanzas in the *Codex Regius* seems more logical than any of the wholesale "improvements" which have been undertaken.

The general plan of the *Voluspo* is fairly clear. Othin, chief of the gods, always conscious of impending disaster and eager for knowledge, calls on a certain "Volva," or wise-woman, presumably bidding her rise from the grave. She first tells him of the past, of the creation of the world, the beginning of years, the origin of the dwarfs (at this point there is a clearly interpolated catalogue of dwarfs' names, stanzas 10-16), of the first man and woman, of the world-ash Yggdrasil, and of the first war, between the gods and the Vanir, or, in Anglicized form, the Waners. Then, in stanzas 27-29, as a further proof of her wisdom, she discloses some of Othin's own secrets and the details of his search for knowledge. Rewarded by Othin for what she has thus far told (stanza 30), she then turns to the real prophesy, the disclosure of the final destruction of the gods. This final battle, in which fire and flood overwhelm heaven and earth as the gods fight with their enemies, is the great fact in Norse mythology; the phrase describing it, *ragna rok*, "the fate of the gods," has become familiar, by confusion with the word *rokkr*, "twilight," in the German *Götterdämmerung*. The wise-woman tells of the Valkyries who bring the slain warriors to support Othin and the other gods in the battle, of the slaying of Baldr, best and fairest of the gods, through the wiles of Loki, of the enemies of the gods, of the summons to battle on both sides, and of the mighty struggle, till Othin is slain, and "fire leaps high about heaven itself" (stanzas 31-58). But this is not all. A new and beautiful world is to rise on the ruins of the old; Baldr comes back, and "fields unsowed bear ripened fruit" (stanzas 59-66).

This final passage, in particular, has caused wide differences of opinion as to the date and character of the poem. That the poet was heathen and not Christian seems almost beyond dispute; there is an intensity and vividness in almost every stanza which no archaizing Christian could possibly have achieved. On the other hand, the evidences of Christian influence are sufficiently striking to outweigh the arguments of Finnur Jonsson, Mullenhoff and others who maintain that the *Voluspo* is purely a product of heathendom. The roving Norsemen of the tenth century, very few of whom had as yet accepted Christianity, were nevertheless in close contact with Celtic races which had already been converted, and in many ways the Celtic influence was strongly felt. It seems likely, then, that the *Voluspo* was the work of a poet living chiefly in Iceland, though possibly in the "Western Isles," in the middle of the tenth century, a vigorous believer in the old gods, and yet with an imagination active enough to be touched by the vague tales of a different religion emanating from his neighbor Celts.

How much the poem was altered during the two hundred years between its composition and its first being committed to writing is largely a matter of guesswork, but, allowing for such an obvious interpolation as the catalogue of dwarfs, and for occasional lesser errors, it seems quite needless to assume such great changes as many editors do. The poem was certainly not composed to tell a story with which its early hearers were quite familiar; the lack of continuity which baffles modern readers presumably did not trouble them in the least. It is, in effect, a series of gigantic pictures, put into words with a directness and sureness which bespeak the poet of genius. It is only after the reader, with the help of the many notes, has familiarized himself with the names and incidents involved that he can begin to understand the effect which this magnificent poem must have produced on those who not only understood but believed it.

	Thorpe (1866)	Bellows (1936)	Auden-Taylor (1969)
1	For silence I pray all sacred children, Great and small, sons of Heimdall, ¹ They will that I Valfather's deeds recount, Men's ancient saws, that I best remember.	¹² Hearing I ask from the holy races, From Heimdall's sons, ¹³ both high and low; Thou wilt, Valfather, ¹⁴ that well I relate Old tales I remember of men long ago.	Silence I ask of the sacred folk, Silence of the kith and kin of Heimdal: At your will Valfather, I shall well relate The old songs of men I remember best.
2	The Jötuns I remember early born, Those who me of old have reared. I nine worlds remember, nine trees, The great central tree, beneath the earth.	I remember yet the giants of yore, Who gave me bread in the days gone by; Nine worlds I knew, the nine in the tree ¹⁵ With mighty roots beneath the mold.	I tell of giants from times forgotten. Those who fed me in former days: Nine worlds I can reckon, nine roots of the tree. The wonderful ash, way under the ground
3	There was in times of old, where Ymir dwelt, Nor sand nor sea, nor gelid waves; Earth existed not, nor heaven above, 'twas a chaotic chasm, and grass nowhere.	Of old was the age when Ymir lived; ¹⁶ Sea nor cool waves nor sand there were; Earth had not been, nor heaven above, But a yawning gap, ¹⁷ and grass nowhere.	When Ymir lived long ago Was no sand or sea, no surging waves. Nowhere was there earth nor heaven above. But a grinning gap and grass nowhere.
4	Before Bur's sons raised up heaven's vault, They who the noble mid-earth shaped. / The sun shone from the south over the structure's rocks: Then was the earth begrown with herbage green.	Then Bur's sons ¹⁸ lifted the level land, Mithgarth ¹⁹ the mighty there they made; / The sun from the south warmed the stones of earth, And green was the ground with growing leeks. ²⁰	The sons of Bur then built up the lands. Moulded in magnificence middle-Earth: Sun stared from the south on the stones of their hall, / From the ground there sprouted green leeks.
5	The sun from the south, the moon's companion, Her right hand cast about the heavenly horses. The sun knew not where she ² a dwelling had, The moon knew not what power he possessed, The stars knew not where they had a station.	²¹ The sun, the sister of the moon, from the south Her right hand cast over heaven's rim; No knowledge she had where her home should be, / The moon knew not what might was his, The stars knew not where their stations were.	Sun turned from the south, sister of Moon, Her right arm rested on the rim of Heaven; She had no inkling where her hall was, Nor Moon a notion of what might he had, The planets knew not where their places were.
6	Then went the powers all to their judgment-seats, The all-holy gods, and thereon held council: Tonight and to the waning moon gave names; Morn they named, and mid-day, afternoon And eve, whereby to reckon years.	²² Then sought the gods their assembly-seats, The holy ones, and council held; Names then gave they to noon and twilight, Morning they named, and the waning moon, Night and evening, the years to number.	The high gods gathered in council In their hall of judgement. all the rulers: To Night and to Nightfall their names gave, The Morning they named and the Mid-Day, / Mid- Winter, Mid-Summer, for the assigning of years.
7	The Æsir met on Ida's plain; They altar-steads and temples high constructed; Their strength they proved, all things tried, Furnaces established, precious things forged, Formed tongs, and fabricated tools;	At Ithavoll ²³ met the mighty gods, Shrines and temples they timbered high; Forges they set, and they smithied ore, Tongs they wrought, and tools they fashioned.	At Ida's Field the Aesir met: Temple and altar they timbered and raised, Set up a forge to smithy treasures, Tongs they fashioned and tools wrought;
8	At tables played at home; joyous they were; To them was naught the want of gold, Until there came Thurs-maidens three, All powerful, from Jötunheim.	In their dwellings at peace they played at tables, ²⁴ Of gold no lack did the gods then know,-- Till thither came up giant-maids ²⁵ three, Huge of might, out of Jotunheim.	Played chess in the court and cheerful were; Gold they lacked not, the gleaming metal Then came three, the Thurs maidens, Rejoicing in their strength, from Giant-home.
9	Then went all the powers to their judgment-seats, The all-holy gods, and thereon held council, Who should of the dwarfs the race create, From the sea-giant's blood and livid bones.	Then sought the gods their assembly-seats, The holy ones, and council held, To find who should raise the race of dwarfs Out of Brimir's blood and the legs of Blain. ²⁶	The high Gods gathered in council. In their hall of judgement: Who of the dwarves Should mould man by master craft From Brimir's blood and Blain's limbs?
10	Then was Mótsognir created Greatest of all the dwarfs, and Durin second; There in man's likeness they created Many dwarfs from earth, as Durin said.	There was Motsognir the mightiest made Of all the dwarfs, and Durin next; Many a likeness of men they made, The dwarfs in the earth, as Durin said. ²⁷	Motsognir was their mighty ruler, Greatest of dwarves, and Durin after him: The dwarves did as Durin directed, Many man forms made from the earth.
11	Nýi and Nidi, Nordri and Sudri, Austri and Vestri, Althiöf, Dvalin Nâr and Nâin, Niping, Dain, Bivör, Bavör, Bömbur, Nori, An and Anar, Ai, Miodvitnir,	Nyi and Nithi, Northri and Suthri, Austri and Vestri, Althjof, Dvalin, Nar and Nain, Niping, Dain, Bifur, Bofur, Bombur, Nori, An and Onar, Ai, Mjothvitnir.	Nyi and Nidi, Nordri, Sudri, Austri and Vestri, Althjof, Dvalin, Bivor, Bavor Bombur, Nori, An and Anar, Ai, Mjodvitnir,
12	Veig and Gandâlf, Vindâlf, Thrain, Thekk and Thorin, Thrör, Vitr, and Litr, Nûr and Nýrâd, Regin and Râdsvid. Now of the dwarfs I have rightly told.	Vigg and Gandalf, Vindalf, Thrain, Thekk and Thorin, Thrör, Vit and Lit, Nyr and Nyrath,-- now have I told-- Regin ²⁸ and Rathsvith-- the list aright. ²⁹	Veignr and Gandalf, Vindalf, Thorin, Thror and Thrain, Thekkur, Litr, Vitur, Nar and Nyradur,
13	Fili, Kili, Fundin, Nali, Hepti, Vili, Hanar, Sviur, Billing, Bruni, Bild, Bûri, Frâr, Hornbori, Fræg and Lôni, Aurvang, Iari, Eikinskialdi.	Fili, Kili, Fundin, Nali, Heptifili, Hannar, Sviur, Frar, Hornbori, Fraeg and Loni, Aurvang, Jari, Eikinskjald.	Fili, Kili, Fundin, Nali Hefti, Vili, Hanar, Sviur, Billing, Bruni, Bildur, and Buri, ¹⁴⁸ Frar, Hornbori Fraegur, Loni, Aurvangur, Jari, Eikinskjaldi: (All Durin's folk I have duly named,)
14	Time 'tis of the dwarfs in Dvalin's band, To the sons of men, to Lofar up to reckon, Those who came forth from the world's rock, Earth's foundation, to Iora's plains.	The race of the dwarfs in Dvalin's throng ³⁰ Down to Lofar the list must I tell; The rocks they left, and through wet lands They sought a home in the fields of sand.	I must tell of the dwarves in Dvalin's host; Like lions they were in Lofar's time: In Juravale's marsh they made their dwelling, From their Stone hall set out on journeys,

15	There were Draupnir, and Dólgrthrasir, Hâr, Haugspori, Hlævang, Glôl, Skirvir, Virvir, Skafid, Ai, Alf and Yngvi, Eikinskjalldi,	There were Draupnir and Dólgrthrasir, Hor, Haugspori, Hlevang, Gloin, Dori, Ori, Duf, Andvari, ³¹ Skirfir, Virfir, Skafith, Ai.	There was Draupnir and Dólgrthrasir, Har, Haugspori, Hlevangur, Gloi, Dori, Ori, Dufur, Andvari, Skirvir, Virvir Skafidur, Ai,
16	Fialar and Frosti, Finn and Ginnar, Heri, Hôggstari, Hliðdôlf, Moin: ³ That above shall, while mortals live, The progeny of Lofar, accounted be.	Alf and Yngvi, Eikinskjalldi, Fjalar and Frosti, Fith and Ginnar; So for all time shall the tale be known, The list of all the forbears of Lofar.	Alf and Yngvi, Eikinskjalldi, Fjalar and Frosti, Finn and Ginnar: Men will remember while men live The long line of Lofar's forbears.
17	Until there came three mighty and benevolent Æsir to the world from their assembly. They found on earth, nearly powerless, Ask and Embla, void of destiny.	³² Then from the throng did three come forth, From the home of the gods, the mighty and gracious; / Two without fate on the land they found, / Ask and Embla, empty of might.	Then from the host three came, Great, merciful, from the God's home: Ash and Elm on earth they found, Faint, feeble, with no fate assigned them
18	Spirit they possessed not, sense they had not, Blood nor motive powers, nor goodly colour. Spirit gave Odin, sense gave Hoenir, Blood gave Lodur, and goodly colour.	Soul they had not, sense they had not, Heat nor motion, nor goodly hue; Soul gave Othin, sense gave Honir, ³³ Heat gave Lothur and goodly hue.	Breath they had not, nor blood nor senses, Nor language possessed, nor life-hue: Odhinn gave them breath, Haenir senses, Blood and life hue Lothur gave.
19	I know an ash standing Yggdrasil hight, A lofty tree, laved with limpid water: Thence come the dews into the dales that fall; Ever stands it green over Urd's fountain.	An ash I know, Yggdrasil its name, ³⁴ With water white is the great tree wet; Thence come the dews that fall in the dales, Green by Urth's well does it ever grow.	I know an ash tree, named Yggdrasil: Sparkling showers are shed on its leaves That drip dew, into the dales below, By Urd's well it waves evergreen,
20	Thence come maidens, much knowing, Three from the hall, which under that tree stands; Urd hight the one, the second Verdandi – On a tablet they graved—Skuld the third. Laws they established, life allotted To the sons of men; destinies pronounced.	Thence come the maidens mighty in wisdom, ³⁵ Three from the dwelling down 'neath the tree; Urth is one named, Verthandi the next,-- On the wood they scored,-- ³⁶ and Skuld the third. Laws they made there, and life allotted To the sons of men, and set their fates.	Stands over that still pool, Near it a bower whence now there come The Fate Maidens, first Urd, Skuld second, scorer of runes, Then Verdandi, third of the Norns: The laws that determine the lives of men They fixed forever and their fate sealed.
21	She that war remembers, the first on earth, When Gullveig ⁵ they with lances pierced, And in the high one's hall her burnt, Thrice burnt, thrice brought her forth, Oft not seldom; yet she still lives.	³⁷ The war ³⁸ I remember, ³⁹ the first in the world, When the gods with spears had smitten Gollveig, ⁴⁰ And in the hall of Hor ⁴¹ had burned her, Three times burned, and three times born, Oft and again, yet ever she lives.	The first war in the world I well remember, When Gullveig was spitted on spear-points And burned in the hall of the high god: Thrice burned, thrice reborn, Often laid low, she lives yet,
22	Heidi they called her, whitherso'er she came, The well-foreseeing Vala: wolves she tamed, Magic arts she knew, magic arts practised; Ever was she the joy of evil people.	Heith ⁴² they named her who sought their home, The wide-seeing witch, in magic wise; Minds she bewitched that were moved by her magic, / To evil women a joy she was.	Heidi men call me when their homes I visit, A far seeing Volva, wise in talismans. Caster of spells, cunning in magic. To wicked women welcome always.
23	Broken was the outer wall of the Æsir's burgh. The Vanir, foreseeing conflict, tramp o'er the plains. Odin cast [his spear], and mid the people hurled it: That was the first warfare in the world.	⁴³ On the host his spear did Othin hurl, Then in the world did war first come; The wall that girdled the gods was broken, And the field by the warlike Wanes was trodden.	At the host Odhinn hurled his spear In the first world-battle; broken was the plankwall Of the gods fortress: the fierce Vanes Caused war to occur in the fields.
24	Then went the powers all to their judgment-seats, The all-holy gods, and thereon held council, Whether the Æsir should avenge the crime, ⁶ Or all the gods receive atonement.	Then sought the gods their assembly-seats, The holy ones, and council held, Whether the gods should tribute give, Or to all alike should worship belong.	The gods hastened to their hall of judgement, Sat in council [to discover who Had tainted all the air with corruption And Odhinn's maid offered to the giants,] ¹⁴⁹
25	Then went the powers all to their judgment-seats, The all-holy gods, and thereon held council: Who had all the air with evil mingled? Or to the Jötun race Od's maid had given?	⁴⁴ Then sought the gods their assembly-seats, The holy ones, and council held, To find who with venom the air had filled, Or had given Oth's bride ⁴⁵ to the giants' brood.	The gods hastened to their hall of judgement, Sat in council to discover who Had tainted all the air with corruption And Odhinn's maid offered to the giants.
26	There alone was Thor with anger swollen. He seldom sits, when of the like he hears. Oaths are not held sacred; nor words, nor swearing, nor binding compacts reciprocally made.	In swelling rage then rose up Thor,-- ⁴⁶ Seldom he sits when he such things hears,-- And the oaths ⁴⁷ were broken, the words and bonds, / The mighty pledges between them made.	One Thorr felled in his fierce rage; Seldom he sits when of such he hears: Oaths were broken, binding vows, Solemn agreements sworn between them.
27	She knows that Heimdall's horn is hidden Under the heaven-bright holy tree. A river she sees flow, with foamy fall, from Valfather's pledge. Understand ye yet, or what?	⁴⁸ I know of the horn of Heimdall, ⁴⁹ hidden Under the high-reaching holy tree; On it there pours from Valfather's pledge ⁵⁰ A mighty stream: would you know yet more?	Of Heimdall too and his horn I know. Hidden under the holy tree; Down on it pours a precious stream from Valfather's pledge. / Well would you know more?
28	Alone she ⁷ sat without, when came that ancient dread Æsir's prince; and in his eye she gazed. "Of what wouldst thou ask me? Why temptest thou me? Odin!	⁵¹ Alone I sat when the Old One sought me, The terror of gods, and gazed in mine eyes: "What hast thou to ask? why comest thou hither? Othin, I know where thine eye is hidden."	Outside I sat by myself when you came, Terror of the gods, and gazed in my eyes. What do you ask of me? Why tempt me? Odhinn, I know where your eye is concealed,
29	I know all, where thou thine eye didst sink In the pure well of Mim." Mim drinks mead each morn from	I know where Othin's eye is hidden, ⁵² Deep in the wide-famed well of Mimir;	Hidden away in the well of Mimir: Mimir each morning his mead drinks from Valfather's pledge.

	Valfather's pledge. ⁸ Understand ye yet, or what?	Mead from the pledge of Othin each morn Does Mimir drink: would you know yet more?	Well would you know more?
30	The chief of hosts gave her rings and necklace, Useful discourse, and a divining spirit: Wide and far she saw o'er every world.	⁵³ Necklaces had I and rings from Heerfather, ⁵⁴ Wise was my speech and my magic wisdom; Widely I saw over all the worlds.	Arm rings and necklaces, Odhinn you gave me To learn my lore, to learn my magic: Wider and wider through all worlds I see.
31	She the Valkyriur saw from afar coming, Ready to ride to the god's people: Skuld held a shield, Skögul was second, Then Gunn, Hild, Gönndul, and Geirskögul. Now are enumerated Herian's maidens, The Valkyriur, ready over the earth to ride.	On all sides saw I Valkyries ⁵⁵ assemble, Ready to ride to the ranks of the gods; Skuld bore the shield, and Skogul rode next, Guth, Hild, ⁵⁶ Gondul, and Geirskogul. Of Herjan's ⁵⁷ maidens the list have ye heard, Valkyries ready to ride o'er the earth.	Valkyries I saw, coming from afar, Eagerly riding to aid the Goths; Skuld bore one shield, Skogul another Gunn, Hild, Gondul and Spearskogul: Duly have I named the daughters of Odhinn, The valiant riders the Valkyries.
32	I saw of Baldr, the blood-stained god, Odin's son, the hidden fate. There stood grown up, high on the plain, Slender and passing fair, the mistletoe.	I saw for Baldr, ⁵⁸ the bleeding god, The son of Othin, his destiny set: Famous and fair in the lofty fields, Full grown in strength the mistletoe stood.	Baldr I saw the bleeding God, His fate still hidden, Odhinn's Son: Tall on the plain a plant grew, A slender marvel, the mistletoe.
33	From that shrub was made, as to me it seemed, A deadly, noxious dart. Hödr shot it forth;	⁵⁹ From the branch which seemed so slender and fair / Came a harmful shaft that Hoth should hurl; But the brother of Baldr ⁶⁰ was born ere long, And one night old fought Othin's son.	From that fair shrub, shot by Hodur, Flew the fatal dart that felled the god. But Baldr's brother was born soon after: Though one night old, Odhinn's Son Took a vow to avenge that death.
34	But Frigg bewailed, in Fensalir, Valhall's calamity. Understand ye yet, or what? Then the Vala knew the fatal bonds were twisting, Most rigid, bonds from entrails made.	His hands he washed not, his hair he combed not, Till he bore to the bale-blaze Baldr's foe. But in Fensalir did Frigg ⁶¹ weep sore For Valhall's need: would you know yet more? [I know that Vali his brother gnawed, With his bowels then was Loki bound.]	His hands he washed not nor his hair combed, Till Baldr's bane was borne to the pyre: But Frigga wept in Fensalir / For the woe of Valhalla. Well, would you know more? [Deadly the bow drawn by Vali, The strong string of stretched gut.]
35	Bound she saw lying, under Hveralund, A monstrous form, to Loki like. There sits Sigyn, for her consort's sake, Not right glad. Understand ye yet, or what?	⁶² One did I see in the wet woods bound, A lover of ill, and to Loki like; By his side does Sigyn sit, nor is glad To see her mate: would you know yet more?	I see one in bonds by the boiling springs; Like Loki he looks, loathsome to view: There Sigyn sits, sad by her husband, In woe by her man. Well would you know more?
36	From the east a river falls, through venom dales, With mire and clods, Slíð is its name.	⁶³ From the east there pours through poisoned vales / With swords and daggers the river Slith. ⁶⁴	From the east through Venom Valley runs Over jagged rocks the River Gruesome.
37	On the north there stood, on Nida-fells, A hall of gold, for Sindri's race; And another stood in Okólnir, The Jötuns beer-hall which Brímir hight.	Northward a hall in Nithavellir ⁶⁵ Of gold there rose for Sindri's ⁶⁶ race; And in Okólnir ⁶⁷ another stood, Where the giant Brimir ⁶⁸ his beer-hall had.	North, in Darkdale, stands the dwelling place Of Sindri's kin, covered with gold; A hall also in Everfrost, The banquet hall of Brimir the giant.
38	She saw a hall standing, far from the sun, In Nāströnd; its doors are northward turned, Venom-drops fall in through its apertures: Entwined is that hall with serpents' backs.	⁶⁹ A hall I saw, far from the sun, On Naströnd ⁷⁰ it stands, and the doors face north, Venom drops through the smoke-vent ⁷¹ down, For around the walls do serpents wind.	A third I see, that no sunlight reaches, On Dead Man's Shore: the doors face northward, Through its smoke vent venom drips, Serpent skins enskein that hall.
39	She there saw wading the sluggish streams Bloodthirsty men and perjurers, And him who the ear beguiles of another's wife. There Nidhögg sucks the corpses of the dead; The wolf tears men. Understand ye yet, or what?	⁷² I saw there wading through rivers wild Treacherous men and murderers too, And workers of ill with the wives of men; There Nidhogg ⁷³ sucked the blood of the slain, And the wolf ⁷⁴ tore men; would you know yet more?	Men wade there tormented by the stream, Vile murderers, men forsworn And artful seducers of other mens wives: Nidhogg sucks blood from the bodies of the dead The wolf rends them. Well, would you know more?
40	East sat the crone, in Iárnvidir, And there reared up Fenrir's progeny: Of all shall be one especially the moon's devourer, In a troll's semblance.	⁷⁵ The giantess ⁷⁶ old in Ironwood sat, In the east, and bore the brood of Fenrir; Among these one in monster's guise Was soon to steal the sun from the sky.	In the east dwells a crone, in Ironwood: The brood of Fenris are bred there Wolf-monsters, one of whom Eventually shall devour the sun.
41	He is sated with the last breath of dying men; The god's seat he with red gore defiles: / Swart is the sunshine then for summers after; / All weather turns to storm. Understand ye yet, or what?	There feeds he full on the flesh of the dead, And the home of the gods he reddens with gore; Dark grows the sun, and in summer soon ⁷⁷ Come mighty storms: would you know yet more?	Now death is the portion of doomed men, Red with blood the buildings of gods, The sun turns black in the summer after, Winds whine. Well, would know more?
42	There on a height sat, striking a harp, The giantess's watch, the joyous Egdir; By him crowed, in the bird-wood, The bright red cock, which Fialar hight.	⁷⁸ On a hill there sat, and smote on his harp, Eggether ⁷⁹ the joyous, the giants' warder; Above him the cock in the bird-wood crowed, Fair and red did Fjalar ⁸⁰ stand.	The giants watchman, joyful Eggthur Sits on his howe and harps well: The red cock, called All-Knower Boldly crows from Birdwood.
43	Crowed o'er the Æsir Gullinkambi, Which wakens heroes with the sire of hosts; But another crows beneath the earth, A soot-red cock, in the halls of Hel.	Then to the gods crowed Gollinkambi, ⁸¹ He wakes the heroes in Othin's hall; And beneath the earth does another crow, The rust-red bird ⁸² at the bars of Hel.	Goldencomb to the gods crows Who wakes the warriors in Valhalla: A soot red hen also calls From Hel's hall, deep under the ground.
44	Loud bays Garm before the Gnupa-cave,		Loud howls Garm before Gniphallir,

	His bonds he rends asunder; and the wolf runs. Further forward I see, much can I say Of Ragnarök and the gods' conflict.	⁸³ Now Garm ⁸⁴ howls loud before Gnipahellir, ⁸⁵ The fetters will burst, and the wolf ⁸⁶ run free; Much do I know, and more can see ⁸⁷ Of the fate of the gods, the mighty in fight.	Bursting his fetters, Fenris runs: Further in the future afar I behold The twilight of the gods who gave victory.
45	Brothers shall fight, and slay each other; Cousins shall kinship violate. [The earth resounds, the giantesses flee;] No man will another spare. Hard is it in the world, great whoredom, An axe age, a sword age, shields shall be cloven, A wind age, a wolf age, ere the world sinks.	⁸⁸ Brothers shall fight and fell each other, And sisters' sons ⁸⁹ shall kinship stain; Hard is it on earth, with mighty whoredom; [Axe-time, sword-time, shields are sundered, Wind-time, wolf-time, ere the world falls;] ⁹⁰ Nor ever shall men each other spare. [The world resounds, the witch is flying.]	Brother shall strike brother and both fall, Sisters' sons defiled with incest; Evil be on earth, an age of whoredom, Of sharp sword-play and shields clashing, A wind-age, a wolf-age till the world ruins: No man to another shall mercy show.
46	Mim's sons dance, but the central tree takes fire At the resounding Giallar-horn. Loud blows Heimdall, his horn is raised; [Odin speaks with Mim's head.] ⁹	⁹¹ Fast move the sons of Mim, ⁹² and fate Is heard in the note of the Gjallarhorn; ⁹³ Loud blows Heimdall, the horn is aloft, In fear quake all who on Hel-roads are.	The waters are troubled, the waves surge up: Announcing now the knell of Fate, Heimdall winds his horn aloft, On Hel's road all men tremble
47	Trembles Yggdrasil's ash yet standing; Groans that aged tree, and the jötun is loosed. [Loud bays Garm before the Gnupa-cave, His bonds he rends asunder; and the wolf runs.] ¹⁰	⁹⁴ Yggdrasil ⁹⁵ shakes, and shiver on high The ancient limbs, and the giant ⁹⁶ is loose; To the head of Mim ⁹⁷ does Othin give heed, But the kinsman of Surt ⁹⁸ shall slay him soon.	Yggdrasil trembles, the towering ash Groans in woe; the wolf is loose: Odhinn speaks with the head of Mimir Before he is swallowed by Surt's kin.
48	How is it with the Æsir? How with the Alfár? All Jötunheim resounds; the Æsir are in council. The dwarfs groan before their stony doors, The sages of the rocky walls. Understand ye yet, or what?	⁹⁹ How fare the gods? how fare the elves? All Jotunheim ¹⁰⁰ groans, the gods are at council; Loud roar the dwarfs by the doors of stone, The masters of the rocks: would you know yet more?	What of the gods? What of the elves? Gianthome groans the gods are in council The dwarves grieve before their door of stone, Masters of walls. Well, would you know more?
49		¹⁰¹ Now Garm howls...	
50	Hrym steers from the east, the waters rise, The mundane snake is coiled in jötun-rage. The worm beats the water, and the eagle screams: The pale of beak tears carcasses; Naglfar is loosed.	From the east comes Hrym ¹⁰² with shield held high; / In giant-wrath does the serpent ¹⁰³ writhe; O'er the waves he twists, and the tawny eagle ¹⁰⁴ Gnaws corpses screaming; Naglfar ¹⁰⁵ is loose.	From the east drives Hrym, lifts up his shield The squamous serpent squirms with rage [The great worm with the waves contending] The pale-beaked eagle pecks at the dead, Shouting for joy: the ship Naglfar
51	That ship fares from the east: Come will Muspell's people o'er the sea, and Loki steers. The monster's kin goes all with the wolf; With them the brother is of Byleist on their course.	O'er the sea from the north ¹⁰⁶ there sails a ship With the people of Hel, ¹⁰⁷ at the helm stands Loki; After the wolf ¹⁰⁸ do wild men follow, And with them the brother of Byleist ¹⁰⁹ goes.	Sails out from the east, at its helm Loki With the children of darkness, the doom-bringers Offspring of monsters, allies of the wolf, All who Byleists's brother follow.
52	Surt from the south comes with flickering flame; Shines from his sword the Val-gods' sun. The stony hills are dashed together, The giantesses totter; men tread the path of Hel, And heaven is cloven.	Surt ¹¹⁰ fares from the south with the scourge of branches, ¹¹¹ The sun of the battle-gods shone from his sword; The crags are sundered, the giant-women sink, The dead throng Hel-way, and heaven is cloven.	Surt with the bane of branches Comes from the south, On his sword the sun of the Valgods, Crag topple, the crone falls headlong, Men tread Hel's road, the Heavens split open.
53	Then arises Hlin's second grief, When Odin goes with the wolf to fight, Aand the bright slayer of Beli with Surt. Then will Frigg's beloved fall.	Now comes to Hlin ¹¹² yet another hurt, When Othin fares to fight with the wolf, And Beli's fair slayer ¹¹³ seeks out Surt, For there must fall the joy of Frigg. ¹¹⁴	A further woe falls upon Hlin As Odhinn comes forth to fight the wolf; The killer of Beli battles with Surt: Now shall fall Frigga's beloved.
54	Then comes the great victor-sire's son, Vidar, to fight with the deadly beast. / He with his hands will make his sword pierce to the heart of the giant's son: Then avenges he his father.	¹¹⁵ Then comes Sigfather's mighty son, ¹¹⁶ Vithar, to fight with the foaming wolf; In the giant's son ¹¹⁷ does he thrust his sword Full to the heart: his father is avenged.	Now valiant comes Valfather's son, Vidar, to vie with Valdyr in battle, Plunges his sword into the son of Hvedrung, Avenging his father with a fell thrust.
55	Then comes the mighty son of Hlödýn: (Odin's son goes with the monster to fight); Midgård's Veor in his rage will slay the worm.	Hither there comes the son of Hlothyn, ¹¹⁸ The bright snake ¹¹⁹ gapes to heaven above; ¹²⁰ Against the serpent ¹²¹ goes Othin's son.	Now the son of Hlodyn and Odhinn comes To fight with Fenris; fiercest of warriors
56	¹¹ Nine feet will go Fjörgyn's son, Bowed by the serpent, who feared no foe. All men will their homes forsake.	In anger smites the warder of earth,-- ¹²² Forth from their homes must all men flee;- Nine paces fares the son of Fjorgyn, ¹²³ And, slain by the serpent, fearless he sinks.	He mauls in his rage all Middle-Earth; Men in fear all flee their homesteads; Nine paces back steps Bur's son Retreats from the worm of taunts unafraid.
57	The sun darkens, earth in ocean sinks, Fall from heaven the bright stars, Fire's breath assails the all-nourishing tree, Towering fire plays against heaven itself.	The sun turns black, earth sinks in the sea, The hot stars down from heaven are whirled; Fierce grows the steam and the life-feeding flame, / Till fire leaps high about heaven itself. ¹²⁴	Earth sinks in the sea, the sun turns black, Cast down from Heaven are the hot stars, Fumes reek, into flames burst, The sky itself is scorched with fire.
58			
59	She sees arise, a second time, Earth from ocean, beautifully green, Waterfalls descending; the eagle flying over,	¹²⁵ Now Garm howls... ¹²⁶ Now do I see the earth anew	I see Earth rising a second time Out of the foam, fair and green; Down from the fells fish to capture,

	Which in the fell captures fish.	Rise all green from the waves again; The cataracts fall, and the eagle flies, And fish he catches beneath the cliffs.	Wings the eagle; waters flow.
60	The Æsir meet on Ida's plain, And of the mighty earth-encircler speak, And there to memory call their mighty deeds, And the supreme god's ancient lore.	The gods in Ithavoll ¹²⁷ meet together, Of the terrible girdler of earth ¹²⁸ they talk, And the mighty past they call to mind, ¹²⁹ And the ancient runes of the Ruler of Gods. ¹³⁰	At Ida's Field the Aesir meet: They remember the worm of Middle-Earth, Ponder again the great twilight And the ancient runes of the high god
61	There shall again the wondrous Golden tables in the grass be found, Which in days of old had possessed The ruler of the gods, and Fiölnir's race.	In wondrous beauty once again Shall the golden tables ¹³¹ stand mid the grass, ¹³² Which the gods had owned in the days of old, ¹³³	Boards shall be found of a beauty to wonder at, Boards of gold in the grass long after, The chess boards they owned in the olden days,
62	Unsown shall the fields bring forth, / All evil be amended; Baldr shall come; / Hödr and Baldr, The heavenly gods, Hropt's glorious dwellings shall inhabit. Understand ye yet, or what?	Then fields unsown bear ripened fruit, All ill's grow better, and Baldr ¹³⁴ comes back; Baldr and Hoth dwell in Hropt's battle-hall, ¹³⁵ And the mighty gods: would you know yet more?	Unsown acres shall harvests bear, Evil be abolished, Baldr return And Hropt's hall with Hod rebuild, Wise gods. Well, would you know more?
63	Then can Hoenir choose his lot, And the two brothers' sons Inhabit the spacious Vindheim. Understand ye yet, or what?	Then Honir ¹³⁶ wins the prophetic wand, ¹³⁷ And the sons of the brothers of Tveggi ¹³⁸ abide In Vindheim ¹³⁹ now: would you know yet more?	Haenir shall wield the wand of prophecy, The sons two brothers set up their dwelling In wide Windhome. Well, would you know more?
64	She a hall standing than the sun brighter, With gold bedecked, in Gimill: There shall be righteous people dwell, And for evermore happiness enjoy.	¹⁴⁰ More fair than the sun, a hall I see, Roofed with gold, on Gimle ¹⁴¹ it stands; There shall the righteous rulers dwell, And happiness ever there shall they have.	Fairer than sunlight, I see a hall A hall thatched with gold in Gimle: Kind Lords shall live there In delight for ever.
65	Then comes the mighty one to the great judgment, The powerful from above, who rules o'er all. [He shall dooms pronounce, and strifes allay, Holy peace establish, which shall ever be.]	There comes on high, all power to hold, A mighty lord, all lands he rules. ¹⁴² [Rule he orders, and rights he fixes, Laws he ordains that ever shall live.] ¹⁴³	Now rides the Strong One to Rainbow Door, Powerful from heaven, the All-Ruler:
66	There comes the dark dragon flying from beneath The glistening serpent, from Nida-fels. On his wings bears Nidhögg, flying o'er the plain, A corpse. Now she will descend.	From below the dragon dark comes forth, Nithogg ¹⁴⁴ flying from Nithafjöll; ¹⁴⁵ The bodies of men on his wings he bears, The serpent bright: but now must I ¹⁴⁶ sink. ¹⁴⁷	From the depths below a drake comes flying The dark dragon from Darkfell, Bears on his pinions the bodies of men, Soars overhead I sink now.

¹ In the *Rigsmaal* we are informed how Heimdall, under the name of Rig, became the progenitor of the three orders of mankind.

² In the Germanic tongues, as in the Semitic, the sun is feminine, the moon masculine.

³ This line, inserted into editions missing the Andvari reference, seems an erroneous re-reading of Stanza 15, line 2.

⁴ Compiler's Note: stanzas in Thorpe and Auden-Taylor begin to alternate positions at this point. Here they are re-ordered according to Bellows' plan, based as it is more accurately on *Regius*. See Bellows' note at this stanza.

⁵ A personification of gold. With the introduction of gold was the end of the golden age.

⁶ Of introducing the use of gold.

⁷ The Vala here speaks of herself in the third person.

⁸ His eye here understood to signify the sun.

⁹ [from Stanza 47, line 3]

¹⁰ [from the repeat refrain at Stanza 44, lines 1-2]

¹¹ [These three lines are combined with the preceding three in Thorpe]

¹² A few editors, following Bugge, in an effort to clarify the poem, place stanzas 22, 28 and 30 before stanzas 1-20, but the arrangement in both manuscripts, followed here, seems logical. In stanza 1 the Volva, or wise-woman, called upon by Othin, answers him and demands a hearing. Evidently she belongs to the race of the giants (cf. stanza 2), and thus speaks to Othin unwillingly, being compelled to do so by his magic power. Holy: omitted in *Regius*; the phrase "holy races" probably means little more than mankind in general.

¹³ Heimdall: the watchman of the gods; cf. stanza 46 and note. Why mankind should be referred to as Heimdall's sons is uncertain, and the phrase has caused much perplexity. Heimdall seems to have had various attributes, and in the *Rigsthula*, wherein a certain Rig appears as the ancestor of the three great classes of men, a fourteenth century annotator identifies Rig with Heimdall, on what authority we do not know, for the Rig of the poem seems much more like Othin (cf. *Rigsthula*, introductory prose and note).

¹⁴ Valfather ("Father of the Slain"): Othin, chief of the gods, so called because the slain warriors were brought to him at Valhall ("Hall of the Slain") by the Valkyries ("Choosers of the Slain").

¹⁵ Nine worlds: the worlds of the gods (Asgarth), of the Wanes (Vanaheim, cf. stanza 21 and note), of the elves (Alfheim), of men (Mithgarth), of the giants (Jotunheim), of fire (Muspellsheim, cf. stanza 47 and note), of the dark elves (Svartalfheim), of the dead (Niflheim), and presumably of the dwarfs (perhaps Nithavellir, cf. stanza 37 and note, but the ninth world is uncertain). The tree: the world-ash Yggdrasil, symbolizing the universe; cf. *Grimnismol*, 29-35 and notes, wherein Yggdrasil is described at length.

¹⁶ Ymir: the giant out of whose body the gods made the world; cf. *Vafthruthnismol*, 21. in this stanza as quoted in Snorri's *Edda* the first line runs: "Of old was the age ere aught there was."

¹⁷ Yawning gap: this phrase, "Ginnunga-gap," is sometimes used as a proper name.

¹⁸ Bur's sons: Othin, Vili, and Ve. Of Bur we know only that his wife was Bestla, daughter of Bolthorn; cf. *Hovamol*, 141. Vili and Ve are mentioned by name in the *Eddic* poems only in *Lokasenna*, 26.

¹⁹ Mithgarth ("Middle Dwelling"): the world of men.

²⁰ Leeks: the leek was often used as the symbol of fine growth (cf. *Guthrunarkvitha* I, 17), and it was also supposed to have magic power (cf. *Sigrdrifumol*, 7).

²¹ Various editors have regarded this stanza as interpolated; Hoffory thinks it describes the northern summer night in which the sun does not set. Lines 3-5 are quoted by Snorri. In the manuscripts line 4 follows line 5. Regarding the sun and moon as daughter and son of Mundilferi, cf. *Vafthruthnismol*, 23 and note, and *Grimnismol*, 37 and note.

²² Possibly an interpolation, but there seems no strong reason for assuming this. Lines 1-2 are identical with lines 1-2 of stanza 9, and line 2 may have been inserted here from that later stanza.

²³ Ithavoll ("Field of Deeds"?): mentioned only here and in stanza 60 as the meeting-place of the gods; it appears in no other connection.

²⁴ Tables: the exact nature of this game, and whether it more closely resembled chess or checkers, has been made the subject of a 400-page treatise, Willard Fiske's "Chess in Iceland."

²⁵ Giant-maids: perhaps the three great Norns, corresponding to the three fates; cf. stanza 20, and note. Possibly, however, something has been lost after this stanza, and the missing passage, replaced by the catalogue of the dwarfs (stanzas 9-16), may have explained the "giant-maids" otherwise than as Norns. In *Vafthrútnismol*, 49, the Norns (this time "three throngs" instead of simply "three") are spoken of as giant-maids; *Fafnismol*, 13, indicates the existence of many lesser Norns, belonging to various races. *Jotunheim*: the world of the giants.

²⁶ Here apparently begins the interpolated catalogue of the dwarfs, running through stanza 16; possibly, however, the interpolated section does not begin before stanza 11. Snorri quotes practically the entire section, the names appearing in a somewhat changed order. Brimir and Blain: nothing is known of these two giants, and it has been suggested that both are names for Ymir (cf. stanza 3). Brimir, however, appears in stanza 37 in connection with the home of the dwarfs. Some editors treat the words as common rather than proper nouns, Brimir meaning "the bloody moisture" and Blain being of uncertain significance.

²⁷ Very few of the dwarfs named in this and the following stanzas are mentioned elsewhere. It is not clear why Durin should have been singled out as authority for the list. The occasional repetitions suggest that not all the stanzas of the catalogue came from the same source. Most of the names presumably had some definite significance, as Northri, Suthri, Austri, and Vestri ("North," "South," "East," and "West"), {footnote p. 7} Althjof ("Mighty Thief"), Mjothvitnir ("Mead-Wolf"), Gandalf ("Magic Elf"), Vindalf ("Wind Elf"), Rathwith ("Swift in Counsel"), Eikinskjaldr ("Oak Shield"), etc., but in many cases the interpretations are sheer guesswork.

²⁸ Regin: probably not identical with Regin the son of Hreithmar, who plays an important part in the *Reginismol* and *Fafnismol*, but cf. note on *Reginismol*, introductory prose.

²⁹ The order of the lines in this and the succeeding four stanzas varies greatly in the manuscripts and editions, and the names likewise appear in many forms.

³⁰ Dvalin: in *Hovamol*, 144, Dvalin seems to have given magic runes to the dwarfs, probably accounting for their skill in craftsmanship, while in *Fafnismol*, 13, he is mentioned as the father of some of the lesser Norns. The story that some of the dwarfs left the rocks and mountains to find a new home on the sands is mentioned, but unexplained, in Snorri's *Edda*; of Lofar we know only that he was descended from these wanderers.

³¹ This line omitted from many editions, while an alternate final line is appended to the following stanza (see Thorpe and note 3 above), perplexing due to its inclusion of the infamous dwarf Andvari, popularized by Wagner. Andvari appears prominently in the *Reginismol*, which tells how the god Loki treacherously robbed him of his wealth; the curse which he laid on his treasure brought about the deaths of Sigurth, Gunnar, Atli, and many others.

³² Here the poem resumes its course after the interpolated section. Probably, however, something has been lost, for there is no apparent connection between the three giant-maids of stanza 8 and the three gods, Othin, Honir and Lothur, who in stanza 17 go forth to create man and woman. The word "three" in stanzas 9 and 17 very likely confused some early reciter, or perhaps the compiler himself. Ask and Embla: ash and elm; Snorri gives them simply as the names of the first man and woman, but says that the gods made this pair out of trees.

³³ Honir: little is known of this god, save that he occasionally appears in the poems in company with Othin and Loki, and {footnote p. 9} that he survives the destruction, assuming in the new age the gift of prophesy (cf. stanza 63). He was given by the gods as a hostage to the Wanens after their war, in exchange for Njorth (cf. stanza 21 and note). Lothur: apparently an older name for Loki, the treacherous but ingenious son of Laufey, whose divinity Snorri regards as somewhat doubtful. He was adopted by Othin, who subsequently had good reason to regret it. Loki probably represents the blending of two originally distinct figures, one of them an old fire-god, hence his gift of heat to the newly created pair.

³⁴ Yggdrasil: cf. stanza 2 and note, and *Grimnismol*, 29-35 and notes. Urth ("The Past"): one of the three great Norns. The world-ash is kept green by being sprinkled with the marvelous healing water from her well.

³⁵ The maidens: the three Norns; possibly this stanza should follow stanza 8. Dwelling: *Regius* has "sae" (sea) instead of "sal" (hall, home), and many editors have followed this reading, although Snorri's prose paraphrase indicates "sal." Urth, Verthandi and Skuld: "Past," "Present" and "Future."

³⁶ Wood, etc.: the magic signs (runes) controlling the destinies of men were cut on pieces of wood. Lines 3-4 are probably interpolations from some other account of the Norns.

³⁷ This follows stanza 20 in *Regius*; in the *Hauksbok* version stanzas 25, 26, 27, 40, and 41 come between stanzas 20 and 21. Editors have attempted all sorts of rearrangements.

³⁸ The war: the first war was that between the gods and the Wanens. The cult of the Wanens (*Vanir*) seems to have originated among the seafaring folk of the Baltic and the southern shores of the North Sea, and to have spread thence into Norway in opposition to the worship of the older gods; hence the "war." Finally the two types of divinities were worshipped in common; hence the treaty which ended the war with the exchange of hostages. Chief among the Wanens were Njorth and his children, Freyr and Freyja, all of whom became conspicuous among the gods. Beyond this we know little of the Wanens, who seem originally to have been water-deities.

³⁹ I remember: the manuscripts have "she remembers," but the Volva is apparently still speaking of her own memories, as in stanza 2.

⁴⁰ Gollveig ("Gold-Might"): apparently the first of the Wanens to come among the gods, her ill treatment being the immediate cause of the war. Mullenhoff maintains that Gollveig is another name for Freyja. Lines 5-6, one or both of them probably interpolated, seem to symbolize the refining of gold by fire.

⁴¹ Hor ("The High One"): Othin.

⁴² Heith ("Shining One?"): a name often applied to wise women and prophetesses. The application of this stanza to Gollveig is far from clear, though the reference may be to the magic and destructive power of gold. It is also possible that the stanza is an interpolation. Bugge maintains that it applies to the Volva who is reciting the poem, and makes it the opening stanza, following it with stanzas 28 and 30, and then going on with stanzas 1 ff. The text of line 2 is obscure, and has been variously emended.

⁴³ This stanza and stanza 24 have (likely) been transposed in the manuscripts, for the former describes the battle and the victory of the Wanens, after which the gods took council, debating whether to pay tribute to the victors, or to admit them, as was finally done, to equal rights of worship.

⁴⁴ Possibly, as Finn Magnussen long ago suggested, there is something lost after stanza 24, but it was not the custom of the *Eddic* poets to supply transitions which their hearers could generally be counted on to understand. The story referred to in stanzas 25-26 (both quoted by Snorri) is that of the rebuilding of Asgarth after its destruction by the Wanens. The gods employed a giant as builder, who demanded as his reward the sun and moon, and the goddess Freyja for his wife. The gods, terrified by the rapid progress of the work, forced Loki, who had advised the bargain, to delay the giant by a trick, so that the work was not finished in the stipulated time (cf. *Grimnismol*, 44, note). The enraged giant then threatened the gods, whereupon Thor slew him.

⁴⁵ Oth's bride: Freyja; of Oth little is known beyond the fact that Snorri refers to him as a man who "went away on long journeys."

⁴⁶ Thor: the thunder-god, son of Othin and Jorth (Earth) cf. particularly *Harbarthsljóth* and *Thrymskvitha*, passim.

⁴⁷ Oaths, etc.: the gods, by violating their oaths to the giant who rebuilt Asgarth, aroused the undying hatred of the giants' race, and thus the giants were among their enemies in the final battle.

⁴⁸ Here the Volva turns from her memories of the past to a statement of some of Othin's own secrets in his eternal search for knowledge (stanzas 27-29). Bugge puts this stanza after stanza 29.

⁴⁹ The horn of Heimdall: the Gjallarhorn ("Shrieking Horn"), with which Heimdall, watchman of the gods, will summon them to the last battle. Till that time the horn is buried under Yggdrasil.

⁵⁰ Valfather's pledge: Othin's eye (the sun?), which he gave to the water-spirit Mimir (or Mim) in exchange for the latter's wisdom. It appears here and in stanza 29 as a drinking-vessel, from which Mimir drinks the magic mead, and from which he pours water on the ash Yggdrasil. Othin's sacrifice of his eye in order to gain knowledge of his final doom is one of the series of disasters leading up to the destruction of the gods. There were several differing versions of the story of Othin's relations with Mimir; another one, quite incompatible with this, appears in stanza 47. In the manuscripts I know and I see appear as "she knows" and "she sees" (cf. note on 21).

⁵¹ The *Hauksbok* version omits all of stanzas 28-34, stanza 27 being there followed by stanzas 40 and 41. *Regius* indicates stanzas 28 and 29 as a single stanza. Bugge puts stanza 28 after stanza 22, as the second stanza of his reconstructed poem. The Volva here addresses Othin directly, intimating that, although he has not told her, she

knows why he has come to her, and what he has already suffered in his search for knowledge regarding his doom. Her reiterated "would you know yet more?" seems to mean: "I have proved my wisdom by telling of the past and of your own secrets; is it your will that I tell likewise of the fate in store for you?" The Old One: Othin.

⁵² The first line, not in either manuscript, is a conjectural emendation based on Snorri's paraphrase. Bugge puts this stanza after stanza 20.

⁵³ This is apparently the transitional stanza, in which the Volva, rewarded by Othin for her knowledge of the past (stanzas 1-29), is induced to proceed with her real prophecy (stanzas 31-66). Some editors turn the stanza into the third person, making it a narrative link. Bugge, on the other hand, puts it after stanza 28 as the third stanza of the poem. No lacuna is indicated in the manuscripts, and editors have attempted various emendations.

⁵⁴ Heerfather ("Father of the Host"): Othin.

⁵⁵ Valkyries: these "Choosers of the Slain" (cf. stanza 1, note) bring the bravest warriors killed in battle to Valhall, in order to re-enforce the gods for their final struggle. They are also called "Wish-Maidens," as the fulfillers of Othin's wishes. The conception of the supernatural warrior-maiden was presumably brought to Scandinavia in very early times from the South-Germanic races, and later it was interwoven with the likewise South-Germanic tradition of the swan-maiden. A third complication developed when the originally quite human women of the hero-legends were endowed with the qualities of both Valkyries and swan-maidens, as in the cases of Brynhild (cf. *Gripisspo*, introductory note), Svava (cf. *Helgakvitha Hjorvarthssonar*, prose after stanza 5 and note) and Sigrun (cf. *Helgakvitha Hundingsbana I*, 17 and note). The list of names here given may be an interpolation; a quite different list is given in *Grimnismol*, 36. Ranks of the gods: some editors regard the word thus translated as a specific place name.

⁵⁶ It is worth noting that the name Hild ("Warrior") is the basis of Brynhild ("Warrior in Mail Coat").

⁵⁷ Herjan ("Leader of Hosts"): Othin.

⁵⁸ Baldr: The death of Baldr, the son of Othin and Frigg, was the first of the great disasters to the gods. The story is fully told by Snorri. Frigg had demanded of all created things, saving only the mistletoe, which she thought too weak to be worth troubling about, an oath that they would not harm Baldr. Thus it came to be a sport for the gods to hurl weapons at Baldr, who, of course, was totally unharmed thereby. Loki, the trouble-maker, brought the mistletoe to Baldr's blind brother, Hoth, and guided his hand in hurling the twig. Baldr was slain, and grief came upon all the gods. Cf. *Baldrs Draumar*.

⁵⁹ The lines in this and the following stanza have been combined in various ways by editors, lacunae having been freely conjectured, but the manuscript version seems clear enough.

⁶⁰ The brother of Baldr: Vali, whom Othin begot expressly to avenge Baldr's death. The day after his birth he fought and slew Hoth.

⁶¹ Frigg: Othin's wife. Some scholars have regarded her as a solar myth, calling her the sun-goddess, and pointing out that her home in Fensalir ("the sea-halls") symbolizes the daily setting of the sun beneath the ocean horizon.

⁶² The translation here follows the *Regius* version. The *Hauksbok* has the same final two lines, but in place of the first pair has: [those inserted in brackets]. Many editors have followed this version of the whole stanza or have included these two lines, often marking them as doubtful, with the four from *Regius*. After the murder of Baldr, the gods took Loki and bound him to a rock with the bowels of his son Narfi, who had just been torn to pieces by Loki's other son, Vali. A serpent was fastened above Loki's head, and the venom fell upon his face. Loki's wife, Sigyn, sat by him with a basin to catch the venom, but whenever the basin was full, and she went away to empty it, then the venom fell on Loki again, till the earth shook with his struggles. "And there he lies bound till the end." Cf. *Lokasemma*, concluding prose.

⁶³ Stanzas 36-39 describe the homes of the enemies of the gods: the giants (36), the dwarfs (37), and the dead in the land of the goddess Hel (38-39). The *Hauksbok* version omits stanzas 36 and 37. *Regius* unites 36 with 37, but most editors have assumed a lacuna.

⁶⁴ Slith ("the Fearful"): a river in the giants' home. The "swords and daggers" may represent the icy cold.

⁶⁵ Nithavellir ("the Dark Fields"): a home of the dwarfs. Perhaps the word should be "Nithafjöll" ("the Dark Crag").

⁶⁶ Sindri: the great worker in gold among the dwarfs.

⁶⁷ Okolnir ("the Not Cold"): possibly a volcano.

⁶⁸ Brimir: the giant (possibly Ymir) out of whose blood, according to stanza 9, the dwarfs were made; the name here appears to mean simply the leader of the dwarfs.

⁶⁹ Stanzas 38 and 39 follow stanza 43 in the *Hauksbok* version. Snorri quotes stanzas 38-41, though not consecutively.

⁷⁰ Nastrond ("Corpse-Strand"): the land of the dead, ruled by the goddess Hel. Here the wicked undergo tortures.

⁷¹ Smoke vent: the phrase gives a picture of the Icelandic house, with its opening in the roof serving instead of a chimney.

⁷² The stanza is almost certainly in corrupt form. The third line is presumably an interpolation, and is lacking in most of the late, paper manuscripts. Some editors, however, have called lines 1-3 the remains of a full stanza, with the fourth line lacking, and lines 4-5 the remains of another. The stanza depicts the torments of the two worst classes of criminals known to Old Norse morality--oath-breakers and murderers.

⁷³ Nithhogg ("the Dread Biter"): the dragon that lies beneath the ash Yggdrasil and gnaws at its roots, thus symbolizing the destructive elements in the universe; cf. *Grimnismol*, 32, 35.

⁷⁴ The wolf: presumably the wolf Fenrir, one of the children of Loki and the giantess Angrbotha (the others being Mithgarthsorm and the goddess Hel), who was chained by the gods with the marvelous chain Gleipnir, fashioned by a dwarf "out of six things: the noise of a cat's step, the beards of women, the roots of mountains, the nerves of bears, the breath of fishes, and the spittle of birds." The chaining of Fenrir cost the god Tyr his right hand; cf. stanza 44.

⁷⁵ The *Hauksbok* version inserts after stanza 39 the refrain stanza (44), and puts stanzas 40 and 41 between 27 and 31. With this stanza begins the account of the final struggle itself.

⁷⁶ The giantess: her name is nowhere stated, and the only other reference to Ironwood is in *Grimnismol* 39, in this same connection. The children of this giantess and the wolf Fenrir are the wolves Skoll and Hati, the first of whom steals the sun, the second the moon. Some scholars naturally see here an eclipse myth.

⁷⁷ In the third line many editors omit the comma after "sun," and put one after "soon," making the two lines run: "Dark grows the sun | in summer soon, / Mighty storms—" etc. Either phenomenon in summer would be sufficiently striking.

⁷⁸ In the *Hauksbok* version stanzas 42 and 43 stand between stanzas 44 and 38.

⁷⁹ Eggther: this giant, who seems to be the watchman of the giants, as Heimdall is that of the gods and Surt of the dwellers in the fire-world, is not mentioned elsewhere in the poems.

⁸⁰ Fjalar: the cock whose crowing wakes the giants for the final struggle.

⁸¹ Gollinkambi ("Gold-Comb"): the cock who wakes the gods and heroes, as Fjalar does the giants.

⁸² The rust-red bird: the name of this bird, who wakes the people of Hel's domain, is nowhere stated.

⁸³ This is a refrain-stanza. In *Regius* it appears in full only at this point, but is repeated in abbreviated form before stanzas 50 and 59. In the *Hauksbok* version the full stanza comes first between stanzas 35 and 42, then, in abbreviated form, it occurs four times: before stanzas 45, 50, 55, and 59.

⁸⁴ Garm: the dog who guards the gates of Hel's kingdom; cf. *Baldrs Draumar*, 2 ff., and *Grimnismol*, 44.

⁸⁵ Gniparhellir ("the Cliff-Cave"): the entrance to the world of the dead.

⁸⁶ The wolf: Fenrir; cf. stanza 39 and note.

⁸⁷ In the *Hauksbok* line 3 runs: "Farther I see and more can say."

⁸⁸ From this point on through stanza 57 the poem is quoted by Snorri, stanza 49 alone being omitted. There has been much discussion as to the status of stanza 45. Lines 4 and 5 look like an interpolation. After line 5 the *Hauksbok* has the line given in brackets. Editors have arranged these seven lines in various ways, with lacunae freely indicated.

⁸⁹ Sisters' sons: in all Germanic countries the relations between uncle and nephew were felt to be particularly close.

⁹⁰ There has been much discussion as to the status of stanza 45. Lines 4 and 5 look like an interpolation. After line 5 the *Hauksbok* has the line given in brackets. Editors have arranged these seven lines in various ways, with lacunae freely indicated.

⁹¹ *Regius* combines the first three lines of this stanza with lines 3, 2, and 1 of stanza 47 as a single stanza. Line 4, not found in *Regius*, is introduced from the *Hauksbok* version, where it follows line 2 of stanza 47.

⁹² The sons of Mim: the spirits of the water. On Mini (or Mimir) cf. stanza 27 and note.

⁹³ Gjallarhorn: the "Shrieking Horn" with which Heimdall, the watchman of the gods, calls them to the last battle.

⁹⁴ In *Regius* lines 3, 2, and 1, in that order, follow stanza 46 without separation. Line 4 is not found in *Regius*, but is introduced from the *Hauksbok* version.

⁹⁵ Yggdrasil: cf. stanza 19 and note, and *Grimnismol*, 29-35.

⁹⁶ The giant: Fenrir.

⁹⁷ The head of Mim: various myths were current about Mimir. This stanza refers to the story that he was sent by the gods with Honir as a hostage to the Wanæs after their war (cf. stanza 21 and note), and that the Wanæs cut off his head and returned it to the gods. Othin embalmed the head, and by magic gave it the power of speech, thus making Mimir's noted wisdom always available. Of course this story does not fit with that underlying the references to Mimir in stanzas 27 and 29.

⁹⁸ The kinsman of Surt: the wolf Fenrir, who slays Othin in the final struggle; cf. stanza 53. Surt is the giant who rules the fire-world, Muspellsheim; cf. stanza 52.

⁹⁹ This stanza in *Regius* follows stanza 51; in the *Hauksbok* it stands, as here, after 47.

¹⁰⁰ Jotunheim: the land of the giants.

¹⁰¹ Identical with stanza 44. In the manuscripts it is here abbreviated.

¹⁰² Hrym: the leader of the giants, who comes as the helmsman of the ship Naglfar (line 4).

¹⁰³ The serpent: Mithgarthsorm, one of the children of Loki and Angrbotha (cf. stanza 39, note). The serpent was cast into the sea, where he completely encircles the land; cf. especially *Hymiskvitha*, passim.

¹⁰⁴ The eagle: the giant Hraesvelg, who sits at the edge of heaven in the form of an eagle, and makes the winds with his wings; cf. *Vafthruthnismol* 37, and *Skirnismol* 27.

¹⁰⁵ Naglfar: the ship which was made out of dead men's nails to carry the giants to battle.

¹⁰⁶ North: a guess; the manuscripts have "east," but there seems to be a confusion with stanza 50, line 1.

¹⁰⁷ People of Hel: the manuscripts have "people of Muspell," but these came over the bridge Bifrost (the rainbow), which broke beneath them, whereas the people of Hel came in a ship steered by Loki.

¹⁰⁸ The wolf: Fenrir.

¹⁰⁹ The brother of Byleist: Loki. Of Byleist (or Byleipt) no more is known.

¹¹⁰ Surt: the ruler of the fire-world.

¹¹¹ The scourge of branches: fire. This is one of the relatively rare instances in the Eddic poems of the type of poetic diction which characterizes the skaldic verse.

¹¹² Hlin: apparently another name for Frigg, Othin's wife. After losing her son Baldr, she is fated now to see Othin slain by the wolf Fenrir.

¹¹³ Beli's slayer: the god Freyr, who killed the giant Beli with his fist; cf. *Skirnismol* 16 and note. On Freyr, who belonged to the race of the Wanæs, and was the brother of Freyja, see especially *Skirnismol*, passim.

¹¹⁴ The Joy of Frigg: Othin.

¹¹⁵ As quoted by Snorri the first line of this stanza runs: "Fares Othin's son | to fight with the wolf."

¹¹⁶ Sigfater ("Father of Victory"): Othin. His son, Vithar, is the silent god, famed chiefly for his great shield, and his strength, which is little less than Thor's. He survives the destruction.

¹¹⁷ The giant's son: Fenrir.

¹¹⁸ Hlothyn: another name for Jorth ("Earth"), Thor's mother; his father was Othin.

¹¹⁹ The snake: Mithgarthsorm; cf. stanza 5c and note.

¹²⁰ This and the following stanza are clearly in bad shape. In *Regius* only lines 1 and 4 are found, combined with stanza 56 as a single stanza. Line 1 does not appear in the *Hauksbok* version, the stanza there beginning with line 2. Snorri, in quoting these two stanzas, omits 55, 2-4, and 56, 3, making a single stanza out of 55, 1, and 56, 4, 2, 1, in that order. Moreover, the *Hauksbok* manuscript at this point is practically illegible. The lacuna (line 3) is, of course, purely conjectural, and all sorts of arrangements of the lines have been attempted by editors.

¹²¹ Othin's son: Thor. The fourth line in *Regius* reads "against the wolf," but if this line refers to Thor at all, and not to Vithar, the *Hauksbok* reading, "serpent," is correct.

¹²² The warder of earth: Thor.

¹²³ The son of Fjorgyn: again Thor, who, after slaying the serpent, is overcome by his venomous breath, and dies. Fjorgyn appears in both a masculine and a feminine form. In the masculine it is a name for Othin; in the feminine, as here and in *Harbarthsljoth*, 56, it apparently refers to Jorth.

¹²⁴ With this stanza ends the account of the destruction.

¹²⁵ Again the refrain-stanza (cf. stanza 44 and note), abbreviated in both manuscripts, as in the case of stanza 49. It is probably misplaced here.

¹²⁶ Here begins the description of the new world which is to rise out of the wreck of the old one. It is on this passage that a few critics have sought to base their argument that the poem is later than the introduction of Christianity (circa 1000), but this theory has never seemed convincing (cf. introductory note).

¹²⁷ Ithavoll: cf. stanza 7 and note.

¹²⁸ The girdler of earth: Mithgarthsorm, who, lying in the sea, surrounded the land.

¹²⁹ The third line of this stanza is not found in *Regius*.

¹³⁰ The Ruler of Gods: Othin. The runes were both magic signs, generally carved on wood, and sung or spoken charms.

¹³¹ Golden tables: cf. stanza 8 and note.

¹³² The *Hauksbok* version of the first two lines runs: "The gods shall find there, | wondrous fair, / The golden tables | amid the grass."

¹³³ No lacuna is indicated in the manuscripts at line 4.

¹³⁴ Baldr: cf. stanza 32 and note. Baldr and his brother, Hoth, who unwittingly slew him at Loki's instigation, return together, their union being a symbol of the new age of peace.

¹³⁵ Hropt: another name for Othin. His "battle-hall" is Valhall.

¹³⁶ Honir: cf. stanza 18 and note. In this new age he has the gift of foretelling the future.

¹³⁷ No lacuna (line 2) indicated in the manuscripts.

¹³⁸ Tveggi ("The Twofold"): another name for Othin. His brothers are Vili and Ve (cf. *Lokasenna*, 26, and note). Little is known of them, and nothing, beyond this reference, of their sons.

¹³⁹ Vindheim ("Home of the Wind"): heaven.

¹⁴⁰ This stanza is quoted by Snorri.

¹⁴¹ Gimle: Snorri makes this the name of the hall itself, while here it appears to refer to a mountain on which the hall stands. It is the home of the happy, as opposed to another hall, not here mentioned, for the dead. Snorri's description of this second hall is based on *Voluspo*, 38, which he quotes, and perhaps that stanza properly belongs after 64.

¹⁴² The name of this new ruler is nowhere given, and of course the suggestion of Christianity is unavoidable. It is not certain, however, that even this stanza refers to Christianity, and if it does, it may have been interpolated long after the rest of the poem was composed.

¹⁴³ This stanza is not found in *Regius*, and is probably spurious. No lacuna is indicated in the *Hauksbok* version, but late paper manuscripts add the two bracketed lines.

¹⁴⁴ Nithhog: the dragon at the roots of Yggdrasil; cf. stanza 39 and note.

¹⁴⁵ Nithafjoll ("the Dark Crag"); nowhere else mentioned.

¹⁴⁶ Must I: the manuscripts have "must she."

¹⁴⁷ This stanza, which fits so badly with the preceding ones, may well have been interpolated. It has been suggested that the dragon, making a last attempt to rise, is destroyed, this event marking the end of evil in the world. But in both manuscripts the final half-line does not refer to the dragon, but, as the gender shows, to the Volva herself, who sinks into the earth; a sort of conclusion to the entire prophecy. Presumably the stanza (barring the last half-line, which was probably intended as the conclusion of the poem) belongs somewhere in the description of the great struggle.

¹⁴⁸ An additional line from the *Hauksbók* edition.

¹⁴⁹ Clearly a scribal error, as the stanza is repeated again verbatim.