# A Study of Wisdom Adjectives in the Old Norse Poetic Corpus

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## Abstract

This thesis examines the use and distribution of seven core adjectives for wisdom in the Old Norse poetic corpus, those being: *fróðr*, *horskr*, *snotr*, *spakr*, *svinnr*, *víss*, and *vitr*, as well as their adjectival compounds. Scholarship concerning wisdom in the Old Norse poetic corpus often includes only those poems whose primary subject is wisdom. This study approaches the subject differently, addressing the semantic field of wisdom in Old Norse poetry and examining the issue beginning at the level of the word, thus presenting a different and broader view of how wisdom was presented in the corpus.

This thesis consists of an introduction, two main chapters, and a conclusion. The introduction discusses scholarship that exists on wisdom in the Old Norse corpus, reviews my methodology, and outlines the etymology of each of the core adjectives. The first chapter considers the words in the eddic corpus, and the second considers them in the skaldic corpus. Considering the different size and nature of these two poetic corpora – if, indeed, they ought to be thought of as such – the approach taken to each chapter necessarily differs. In the eddic chapter, every instance of each of the adjectives and their adjectival compounds will be addressed and examined. In the skaldic chapter, due to the much higher volume of poetry, trends will be established and only select occurrences will be addressed in detail. The conclusion is in three parts, the first addressing and comparing the use of the core adjectives in the corpus of Christian poetry, the second the use of words for women's wisdom, and the third the distribution of the words in eddic and skaldic poetry. This project demonstrates the benefits of addressing a subject based on the distribution of its semantic field, and allowing the lexicon to guide our lines of inquiry.

# List of Contents

## List of Tables

## Acknowledgements

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## Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References.

# 1 Introduction

| | |
|---|---|
| Meðalsnotr | Averagely wise |
| skyli manna hverr, | a man ought to be, |
| æva til snotr sé | never too wise, |
| þvíat snotrs manns hjarta | for a wise man's heart |
| verðr sjaldan glatt, | is never cheerful, |
| ef sá er alsnotr er á.[1] | if he who owns it's too wise. |

*Hávamál* 55

Above is stanza 55 of the eddic wisdom poem *Hávamál* alongside Carolyne Larrington's translation.[2] Preaching balance in all things, the poet employs *snotr* and two of its compounds, *meðalsnotr* and *alnsotr*, in order to emphasise the importance of moderation. Though the general sense of this stanza comes across in Larrington's translation, a closer look reveals that there are discrepancies in the translation of these wisdom adjectives in her English adaptation: *til snotr* and *alsnotr* are both translated as 'too wise.' Certainly, this is a fair translation, and one that captures the essence of the stanza. Is the nuance, however, present in the differentiation of the Old Norse *til snotr* and *alsnotr*, arguably lost? The purpose of this thesis is not to critique current translations of the poetry of the Old Norse corpus – indeed, I use Larrington's translation of the *Poetic Edda* in this thesis because of its unparalleled quality – but rather to focus on those nuances in meaning in wisdom adjectives that are often lost in translation.

To do this, I have selected seven adjectives that belong to the semantic field of wisdom. These are: *fróðr*, *horskr*, *snotr*, *spakr*, *svinnr*, *víss*, and *vitr*. Certainly, there are other words I might have chosen, but these seven demonstrate best the distributional variance across the semantic field. Wisdom poetry, the function of wisdom, the acquisition of wisdom, and the transmission of wisdom are just some of the topics that have received attention in the scholarship. There has not, however, as far as I am aware, been a study of wisdom that begins at the level of the word. Because discussions of wisdom have so often been based on text or genre, many instances in which wisdom words occur in the poetic corpus have been neglected. The implication, for example, of the use of the word *horskr* for *Billings mær* in *Hávamál*, for Gunnarr in *Oddrúnargátr*, and for Adam and Eve in *Lilja*, has not been explored. The purpose of this thesis is to conduct a selective semantic field study of wisdom adjectives in Old Norse poetry in order to more fully appreciate how their application and distribution might grant us new insight into how wisdom was conceived in the literature. This project questions a number of commonly-held assumptions about the nature of wisdom in the Old Norse poetic corpus that are not supported by the lexicon of wisdom words I

[1] All original eddic text taken from *Eddukvæði*, ed. Jónas Kristjánsson and Véstinn Ólason, 2 vols. (Reykjavík: Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag, 2014).
[2] Unless otherwise noted, all translations of eddic poetry in this thesis are from Carolyne Larrington, ed. *The Poetic Edda* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

have chosen to study. Óðinn, for example, is the god most commonly associated with wisdom and foresight. However, the most common wisdom adjective found in the eddic corpus – that is, *horskr* – does not once apply to him. Further, the idea that the wisdom of a woman was considered less worthy than a man's, or that her wisdom was primarily associated with manipulation and magic, is also challenged. In part, it is my hope that my project will '[uncover] nuances of meaning that are often considerably different from definitions found in dictionaries and glossaries,' as Vic Strite suggests a good semantic field study ought to do.[3] Strite goes on to say that 'knowing the contents and the parameters of a semantic field better enables us to understand a writer's choice of words, why one word is chosen over another, why certain words often appear together and why others don't.'[4] Thus, my literary study will be informed by a semantic one, in which explorations of poetic diction, genre, and identity, and presentation of these words' referents, will play an integral role.

The choice to address these words in the poetry is largely to do with the defining role poetry held in Viking Age Iceland as well as medieval Icelandic society. Anthony Faulkes' inaugural lecture delivered at the University of Birmingham on April 27th, 1993, asks the all-important question: what was viking poetry for? He focused in this paper on the skaldic corpus, in the end suggesting that 'one of the main purposes of viking poetry … was to affirm the Icelandic national identity.'[5] He discussed the importance of skaldic verse to the Icelanders, and how it was remembered and passed down generationally to '[remind] them of the status they held as the historians of the Norwegian kings, and of the fact that they were able to hold the destiny of those kings in their hands.'[6] Poetry for the Icelanders was immensely powerful, both at the time of its composition as well as, as Faulkes argues, centuries later, as a re-enactment of their success.[7] John Lindow similarly stresses that skaldic poetry was 'an elite part of the Icelanders' cultural heritage,' referring to how important it was to maintain an awareness of the mythology that was intrinsically tied up with skaldic poetry's composition.[8] Similarly integral to culture was the composition and preservation of eddic poetry. In the introduction to the *Handbook to Eddic Poetry*, Carolyne Larrington compares the mode of eddic poetry to the kettle of Hymir: 'an all-encompassing container for the Old Norse myths and heroic legends which froth, bob, and jostle together within it, whether as substantial poems, fragmentary verse sequences, or single *lausavísur*.'[9] The

[3] Vic Strite, *Old English Semantic-Field Studies*, (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1989), 1.
[4] Strite, *Old English Semantic-Field Studies*, 1-2.
[5] Anthony Faulkes, *What was Viking Poetry For?* Inaugural Lecture (Birmingham: University of Birmingham School of English, 1993), 26.
[6] Faulkes, *What was Viking Poetry For?*, 16.
[7] Faulkes, *What was Viking Poetry For*?, 15.
[8] John Lindow, "Eddic Poetry and Mythology," in *A Handbook to Eddic Poetry*, 117.
[9] Carolyne Larrington, "Introduction," in *A Handbook to Eddic Poetry*, ed. Carolyne Larrington, Judy Quinn, and Brittany Schorn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 1.

importance and influence of eddic poetry is demonstrated by its continued use into the Christian period to convey Christian wisdom in poems such as *Hugsvinnsmál* and *Sólarljóð*, and even later, into the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, for pastiche poems.[10] Tiffany Beechy reiterates the important place verse held in oral societies, saying that, 'in an oral culture, in particular, metrical language functions as the obvious choice for the encoding of important cultural information, from histories to genealogies to laws.'[11] Old Norse poetry was the chosen medium for praise, mythology, didacticism, riddles, and, some would argue, archiving history.[12] Further, the examination of poetry offers us the opportunity to become familiar with a lexicon as it is presented by those who knew the nuance of their language better than anyone else. Elizabeth Tyler stresses that 'verse consistently maintains the fine distinctions in semantic fields of words because poets know these distinctions, despite the fact that … some words are restricted to verse and their semantic field can only have been known from the verse tradition and not from general use.'[13]

Most of the scholarship specifically addressing wisdom in Old Norse poetry focuses on those poems that have been designated 'wisdom poems.' There is a decided interest in wisdom that is associated with the gods, that is numinous and otherworldly, or, alternatively, wisdom that is presented in specifically didactic contexts. Brittany Schorn, for example, focuses her study in *Speaker and Authority in Old Norse Wisdom Poetry* on *Hávamál*, *Vafþrúðnismál*, *Grímnismál*, *Alvíssmál*, *Reginsmál*, *Fáfnismál*, and *Sigrdrifumál*. She considers these to be wisdom poems, which, she claims, are all 'primarily associated with mythological speakers, and particularly with the figure of Óðinn.'[14] This distinction between what is and is not a wisdom poem is not one with which my study is concerned, and one that I have found, for my purposes, to be potentially limiting. My focus instead is directed primarily by the semantic evidence. Although some of the research questions Schorn addresses in her book are similar to mine, our methodologies are very different. Schorn touches on the semantics of wisdom only briefly, and chooses to focus only on those words included by Snorri in his list of *heiti* for *vit* in *Skáldskaparmál*, which she suggests are more focused on human wisdom than on supernatural wisdom.[15]

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[10] Larrington, "Introduction," 3.
[11] Tiffany Beechy, *The Poetics of Old English* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 12.
[12] See especially, for example, Bjarne Fidjestøl, "Icelandic Sagas and Poems on Princes: Literature and society in archaic West Norse culture," in *Bjar*ne Fidjestøl: Selected Papers, ed. Preben Meulengracht Sørensen and Gerd Wolfgang Weber (Odense: Odense University Press, 1997).
[13] Elizabeth Tyler, *Old English Poetics: the Aesthetics of the Familiar in Anglo-Saxon England* (York: York Medieval Press, 2006), 34.
[14] Brittany Erin Schorn, *Speaker and Authority in Old Norse Wisdom Poetry* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 35.
[15] Schorn's article "Divine Semantics: Terminology for the Human and the Divine in Old Norse Poetry," which was to be incorporated several years later into *Speaker and Authority*, carries out a semantic study of the vocabulary used to refer to the human and the divine in the eddic and prose corpora. Her approach is very much a literary one, and the examination of her chosen semantic field is not exhaustive.

Judy Quinn's article 'Liquid Knowledge: Traditional Conceptualisations of Learning in Eddic Poetry' does consider the transfer of wisdom and knowledge in poems that are not traditionally considered to be wisdom poems, though our methodologies, too, are different.[16] Quinn's study is decidedly literary (although she does address briefly the difference between *nema* and *hlýða* in terms of knowledge transfer), and her work is thus not informed by the lexicon of wisdom. The primary focus of her article is the distinction made between the knowledge of giants, gods, and men, and the various ways – most involving liquid – that knowledge may be transferred from divine beings to humans. Though this study has greatly influenced my interest in the depiction and application of wisdom in the poetry, our methodologies differ significantly, and the focus and scope of my thesis differs from Quinn's.

It is fair to say that, according to their content, those poems in the eddic and skaldic corpora that are not established as wisdom poems do not ask to be investigated in terms of the wisdom they contain. Lexically, however, I argue that there is as much cause to examine them to enrich our understanding of wisdom in Old Norse poetry as there is to examine those poems that have been labelled 'wisdom poems.' Just as it is interesting that *horskr* never applies to Óðinn, so it is revealing that *Átlamál hin groenlenzku*, a heroic poem not considered in any study of Old Norse wisdom I have come across, contains nine of my core wisdom words, whereas *Grímnismál*, a poem considered by Schorn to be a classic Óðinnic wisdom poem, contains only one. I do not wish to suggest that the lack of wisdom-related vocabulary makes *Grímnismál* any less of a wisdom poem, or that an abundance of this vocabulary demands that *Átlamál hin groenlenzku* be considered one. Rather, I argue that it is important to acknowledge that a lexical study of this corpus encourages us to focus our efforts to elucidate our understanding of wisdom in a wider corpus than what has traditionally been investigated by scholars interested in the portrayal and understanding of wisdom in the poetry.

Closer to my own methodology than the aforementioned wisdom studies is Judith Jesch's book *Ships and Men in the Late Viking Age*, which conducts a self-identified philological study of the nautical history of the Viking Age (which she presents partially in opposition to Malmros' primarily historical approach).[17] Jesch addresses the benefits and limitations of her methodology in the introduction to her book, stating that, though some of the vocabulary she is addressing had been addressed before, 'most of [those] studies are etymological, comparatist, and, often, decontextualized in approach [and] there is much to be gained from a recontextualization of semantic studies from a more precise application of the

[16] Judy Quinn, "Liquid Knowledge: Traditional Conceptualisations of Learning in Eddic Poetry," in *Along the oral-written continuum: types of texts, relations and their implications*, edited by Slavica Ranković, Leidulf Melve, and Else Mundal (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010).
[17] Judith Jesch, *Ships and Men in the Late Viking Age: the Vocabulary of Runic Inscriptions and Skaldic Verse*, (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2001), 42.

comparative method.'[18] She also references Lehrer when she notes the advantage of grouping chosen words according to their semantic fields as opposed to, for example, alphabetically, as a dictionary would.[19] Her chapters are organised in this manner, in that a chapter will address a large concept (for example, her second chapter, entitled *Viking Activities*) which is then subdivided into subsets of that concept (for example, in the case of Chapter 2, *Vikings, Death and War*, *Trade*, and *Pilgrimage*). Within each of these subsections, she then addresses her semantic field, beginning with the runic evidence and moving to the skaldic. This structure allows her to address each word individually as well as in relation to the other words in the field. The structure I have chosen differs essentially from this in that I have only one field and two corpora, thus the structure of my project as a whole rather resembles one of Jesch's subchapters. However, the benefit our respective methodologies share is that the words in our chosen semantic fields may be examined individually and in relation to one another, which is an important aspect of my project. Another scholar whose work has been inspirational to me but whose methodologies differ from my own is Christine Fell. In particular, I have found Fell's article 'Mild and Bitter: A Problem of Semantics' helpful when thinking about how to approach my own project.[20] In it, she cautions against being too quick to attribute our own assumptions to a term in a dead language (her study is focused on Old English) and also discusses the inadequacy of dictionary definitions. Though my project does not seek to redefine my chosen adjectives, I have been encouraged by Fell's thoughtfulness about the importance of the study of semantic fields and studying words in their contexts.

This thesis is divided into two chapters, one focused on eddic poetry and the other on skaldic. Each chapter is in turn subdivided into seven sections, each section dealing with one of the seven core wisdom adjectives with which this study is concerned. Within each chapter, the distribution pattern of each word as well as its related adjectival compounds will be discussed, as will the details of specific occurrences. This approach allows focus on the distribution patterns of the core adjectives within each corpus, and the conclusion will consider what we can discover by thinking about the two corpora alongside one another.

I owe an immense debt to Robert Kellogg, editor of *The Concordance to Eddic Poetry*, as well as to the editors of the *Skaldic Project* and the *Dictionary of Old Norse Prose*, without whose work this project would not have been possible.[21] That said, each of these resources does come with its own

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[18] Jesch, *Ships and Men*, 33.
[19] Adrienne Lehrer, "The Influence of Semantic Fields on Semantic Change," in *Historical Semantics – Historical Word-Formations*, edited by Jacek Fisiak, 283-96. Berlin: Mouton, 1985 in Jesch, *Ships and Men*, 33.
[20] Christine Fell, "Mild and Bitter: A Problem of Semantics," in *Lastworda Betst: Essays in Memory of Christine E. Fell*, ed. Carole Hough and Kathryn A. Lowe (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2002).
[21] Robert Kellogg, *A Concordance to Eddic Poetry* (East Lansing: Colleagues Press, 1988); *Dictionary of Old Norse Prose*. https://onp.ku.dk/onp/onp.php; *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross et al., https://skaldic.org/skaldic/m.php?p=skaldic.

limitations that have affected the methodology and results of this thesis. Kellogg's *Concordance* is as complete a representation of the eddic lexicon as one could ask for. Thus, my list of words in the eddic chapter should, allowing for my own human error, be relatively exhaustive. There is, of course, a discussion to be had concerning which poetry ought to be considered 'eddic' and which ought to be considered 'skaldic.' This is an issue that will come up throughout the thesis, and one that will be addressed in detail in the conclusion. In the interest of clarity, I have chosen to include in my eddic discussion most of those poems that are present in Larrington's 2014 edition of the *Poetic Edda*. These include all of the poems of the Codex Regius as well as *Baldrs draumar*, *Rígsþula*, *Hyndluljóð*, and *Grottasöngr*, which are often considered alongside the poems of the *Edda*. The neo-eddic poems *Grógaldr* and *Fjölsvinnsmál* are also included. *The Waking of Agantýr*, however, which Larrington does include in her volume, I will consider alongside the skaldic material due to its inclusion in the *Skaldic Project* database. Not included in the eddic discussion are the Christian eddic-style poems *Hugsvinnsmál* and *Sólarljóð*, the eddic-style praise poems *Haraldskvæði* (*Hrafnsmál*), *Hákonarmál*, and *Eiríksmál*, and the poetry featured in the *fornaldarsögur*, all of which are, as suggested by Margaret Clunies Ross, eddic in their style.[22] These poems are all initially included in the skaldic discussion, partially due to methodology: all of these poems are included in the *Skaldic Project* database. Thus, including them in that corpus for the purposes of initial analysis made sense for this particular project. Further, treating these eddic-style poems alongside more traditionally skaldic material revealed striking patterns that perhaps would not have appeared as starkly against an eddic background. The eddic style of these poems is, of course, considered and discussed accordingly in the conclusion of this thesis.

The treatment of the skaldic corpus is less straightforward. As the *Skaldic Project* is ongoing, my project could not reasonably include the extant skaldic poetry that has not yet been edited and published. Thus far, the published volumes include: *Poetry from the Kings' Sagas 1 and 2*; *Poetry from Treatises on Poetics*; *Poetry on Christian Subjects*; and *Poetry in fornaldarsögur*. My project considers all of the poetry included in these volumes. Forthcoming volumes include: *Poetry on Icelandic History*; *Poetry in Sagas of Icelanders*; and *Runic Poetry*. Considering the scope and importance of the poetry included in the Sagas of Icelanders (or, as I will henceforth refer to these sagas, *Íslendingasögur*), I felt I would be remiss to exclude it. Though the translations are unpublished, the *Skaldic Project* website does provide digital copies of this poetry in the original Old Norse.[23] Thus, by using the ability embedded in the

[22] Margaret Clunies Ross, *A History of Old Norse Poetry and Poetics* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2005),10; 10n9; 28.
[23] It must be noted that the text provided on the *Skaldic Project* website for unpublished volumes is the as yet unedited edition of Finnur Jónsson ed. *Den norsk-islandske skjaldedigtning*. A: *Tekst efter håndskrifterne*. B: *Rettet tekst*. Copenhagen: Gyldendalske, 1912-1915. Thus, inevitably, the numbers produced based on these unedited verses may ultimately be less accurate than those produced from the published, edited volumes. That said, I am

website allowing the perusal of poetry by saga, I searched each poem included in each of the *Íslendingasögur* individually in order to include these occurrences in my database. Here, especially, I was vulnerable to human error, and it may be that unintentional omissions have occurred. However, as Matthew Townend says about the important work of C. T. Carr: 'it is the general picture that is important here, rather than the exact figures.'[24] I have also in my data collection chosen to organise the poetry of the skaldic corpus according to the aforementioned divisions put in place by the editors of the *Skaldic Project*. These genre divisions, though modern, are not only helpful in terms of managing the sizeable corpus, but have also provided a useful basis from which to conduct an exploration of the use of the core wisdom adjectives for different types of poetry.

### 1.1 Etymologies

Although this study is not an etymological one, it is important to understand the wider etymological and distributional scope of the core adjectives with which this study is concerned. Thus, I have below outlined the general distribution of each of the core adjectives and compiled a database indicating the occurrences of each of the seven core adjectives in the eddic, skaldic, and prose corpora, as well as the existence and occurrences of all of their compounds, nominal derivatives, and compounds of their nominal derivatives. I have not included proper names, nor have I included words that appear exclusively in glosses. I have included occurrences in the prose corpus in these tables for two primary reasons, the first being to provide a more complete picture of the lexical scope of my seven chosen adjectives, as there are many compounds and derivatives of the words that do not appear in the poetic corpus. Secondly, there are some discussions in this thesis that benefit from reference to the prose corpus – for example, commenting on whether a particular word ought to be considered poetic, or discussing a word's general tendency to compound. For these reasons, I believe it prudent to include the prose occurrences in my database. The numbers provided come from the online *Dictionary of Old Norse Prose*. Because not every instance of each word is recorded in that database, the numbers provided below for the prose corpus may not be exact. They will, however, be sufficiently accurate to provide the kind of general overview of the words' productivity and distribution necessary for this project. Finally, though I have tried to the best of my ability to include all relevant compounds and derivatives, due the size and scope of this data collection, we must allow room here for human error and omission.

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confident that those discussions that do involve the poetry of the *Íslendingasögur* would not be greatly hindered if a small number of the core adjectives were added or removed in a more thorough editing process.

[24] Matthew Townend, *Antiquity of Diction in Old English and Old Norse Poetry*. E. C. Quiggin Memorial Lectures 17. Cambridge: Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse & Celtic, University of Cambridge, 2015), 13.

### 1.1.1 Fróðr

*Fróðr* is defined in Cleasby-Vigfússon as 'knowing, learned, well-instructed.'[25] It appears frequently in each of the eddic, skaldic, and prose corpora, occurring in its simple form 27, 28, and 78 times, respectively. According to Kroonen, *fróðr* has cognates in Gothic (*froþs*), Old English (*frōd*), Old Frisian (fród), Old Saxon (fród), Old High German (fruot), and Middle High German (*vruot*), all with the same basic meaning of, as Kroonen lists, 'wise' or 'experienced.'[26] *Fróðr*'s nominal form, *fræði*, has equivalents in Gothic (*frode*), Old High German (*fruoti*), and Middle High German (*vruote*), all listed as having the meaning 'wisdom' or 'sense.' Most relevant to the study of Old Norse *fróðr* will be a brief comparative analysis of *frōd* in the Old English corpus, to which I will turn later in this introduction.

*Fróðr* is extremely productive in terms of compounding, forming a total of 28 adjectival compounds and 14 nominal compounds across the three corpora. Including both its adjectival and nominal compounds, five compounded forms appear in the eddic corpus totalling six uses, 15 appear in the skaldic corpus totalling 23 uses, and 32 appear in the prose corpus totalling 191 uses. Taking note again of *fróðr*'s distribution in its simplest adjectival form (eddic 27; skaldic 28; prose 78), we can see that only in the prose corpus does the use of compounded forms outnumber that of the simple adjective. It is important, too, to take into consideration the immediately obvious disparity between the pattern demonstrated in the eddic corpus and that demonstrated in the skaldic.

| ***Fróðr* and its Compounds** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Simplexes** | | | |
| | Eddic | Skaldic | Prose |
| fróðr | 27 | 28 | 78 |
| frœði (1) | - | - | 39 |
| frœði (2) | 5 | 13 | 32 |
| | | | |
| **Adjectival compounds of which *fróðr* forms the first part** | | | |
| | Eddic | Skaldic | Prose |
| fróðgeðjaðr | 1 | - | - |
| fróðhugaðr | 1 | 4 | - |
| fróðligr | 1 | - | 6 |
| fróðugr | - | 1 | - |
| | | | |
| **Adjectival compounds of which *fróðr* forms the second part** | | | |
| | Eddic | Skaldic | Prose |
| bókfróðr | - | 1 | 2 |
| böðfróðr | - | 2 | - |
| dæmafróðr | - | - | 1 |

[25] *Cleasby-Vigfússon* (1874), s.v. "*fróðr*."
[26] *Etymological Dictionary of Proto-Germanic* (2013), s.v. "*frōda-*."

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| eljunfróðr | - | 1 | - |
| fáfróðr | - | - | 20 |
| fáfróðigr | - | 1 | - |
| flærðarfróðr | - | 1 | - |
| fornfróðr | - | - | 1 |
| happfróðr | - | - | 1 |
| kvæðafróðr | - | - | 1 |
| kynfróðr | - | 1 | - |
| ljúgfróðr | - | - | 3 |
| lögfróðr | - | - | 1 |
| mannfróðr | - | - | 2 |
| margfróðr | 1 | 1 | 15 |
| misfróðr | - | - | 2 |
| ófróðr | 2 | 3 | 26 |
| ófróðligr | - | - | 4 |
| ógnfróðr | - | 1 | - |
| óljúgfróðr | - | - | 1 |
| raunfróðr | - | 1 | - |
| sannfróðr | - | 3 | 42 |
| siðfróðr | - | 1 | - |
| tiðendafróðr | - | - | 1 |
| ættfróðr | - | - | 1 |
| | | | |
| **Nominal compounds of which *fróðr* forms the first part** | | | |
| | Eddic | Skaldic | Prose |
| fróðleiki | - | - | 1 |
| fróðleikr | - | 1 | 36 |
| fróðleiksást | - | - | 1 |
| fróðleiksauðhæfi | - | - | 1 |
| fróðleiksbók | - | - | 2 |
| fróðleiksepli | - | - | 7 |
| fróðleiksgeisli | - | - | 1 |
| fróðleiksmaðr | - | - | 1 |
| fróðleiksmeistari | - | - | 1 |
| fróðleiksræða | - | - | 1 |
| fróðleikstré | - | - | 2 |
| fróðmenni | - | - | 1 |
| fróðskapr | - | - | 4 |
| ófróðleikr | - | - | 2 |
| | | | |
| **Adjectival compounds of which *fræði* forms** | | | |
| | Eddic | Skaldic | Prose |
| frœðsamligr | - | - | 1 |
| | | | |
| **Nominal compounds of which *fræði* forms the first part** | | | |

| | Eddic | Skaldic | Prose |
|---|---|---|---|
| frœðagerð | - | 1 | - |
| frœðalaun | - | - | 1 |
| frœðamaðr | - | - | 2 |
| frœðibók | - | - | 10 |
| frœðimaðr | - | - | 23 |
| frœðimeistari | - | - | 1 |
| frœðinám | - | - | 2 |
| frœðnæmi | - | - | 1 |
| frœðisaga | - | - | 1 |
| | | | |
| **Nominal compounds of which *fræði* forms the second part** | | | |
| | Eddic | Skaldic | Prose |
| bókfrœði | - | - | 11 |
| fáfrœði | - | - | 25 |
| fornfrœði | 1 | - | 1 |
| mannafrœði | - | - | 1 |
| mannfrœði | - | - | 5 |
| margfrœði | - | - | 6 |
| ófrœði | - | - | 3 |
| orðfrœði | - | - | 1 |
| sannfrœði | - | - | 1 |
| stjörnubókarfrœði | - | - | 2 |
| stjörnufrœði | - | - | 1 |
| gamanfrœði | - | - | 3 |
| sannfrœði | - | - | 1 |
| saxafrœði | - | - | 1 |
| spádómsfrœði | - | - | 1 |
| | | | |
| **Adverbs** | | | |
| | Eddic | Skaldic | Prose |
| fróðliga | - | - | 7 |
| ófróðliga | - | - | 10 |
| | | | |
| **Verbs** | | | |
| | Eddic | Skaldic | Prose |
| frœða | - | - | 21 |
| sannfrœða | - | - | 1 |

Table 1

In the entirety of the of the eddic corpus, *fróðr* compounds only six times, represented by just five different words. All five compounds are adjectival, two being quantitative (*margfróðr* in *Hávamál* 103; and *ófróðr* in *Atlakviða* 38, *Sigurðarkviða in skamma* 20), and the remaining three qualitative (*fróðgeðjaðr* in *Vafþrúðnismál* 48; *fróðhugaðr* in *Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar* 2; *fróðligr* in *Sigrdrífumál* 14). There are no nominal *fróðr* compounds in the eddic corpus. In the skaldic corpus, we find that the

rate of nominal compounding for *fróðr* is similarly low, occurring just once (*fróðleikr* in *Hugsvinnsmál* 56). The number of adjectival compounds, however, is significantly higher. There are 13 adjectival *fróðr* compounds that appear in the skaldic corpus, amounting to 22 uses in total. Of those 13 words, two have *fróðr* as the first element of the compound (*fróðhugaðr* [4]; *fróðugr* [1]), with *fróðr* representing the second element in the rest.

In the cases of both the nominal and adjectival compounds, the frequency in the prose corpus is noticeably higher. There are 18 adjectival compounds in the prose corpus in total, amounting to 130 occurrences. Of these 18 forms, *fróðr* forms the second part of the compound in 17, representing 124 total occurrences, and forms the first part of the compound in just one (*fróðligr* [6]). Though there are fewer instances of *fróðr* being used in nominal compounds in the prose corpus, the frequency is still relatively high, with 14 compounded nominal forms present, representing 61 total uses. The only one of these forms which is found in either of the poetic corpora is, as outlined above, *fróðleikr*, which appears in *Hugsvinnsmál* 56. The other 13 are found exclusively in prose. Of the 14 words, 12 include the transpositional affix *-leikr* (one of these using instead *-leiki*).[27] The simplest of these compounds, *fróðleiki* and *fróðleikr*, occur once and 36 times, respectively, making this form by far the most common. The rest of the *fróð-leikr-* compounds include at least one more suffix, save one, *ófróðleikr*, which includes instead the negating prefix *ó-*. The only two compounds that do not include the morpheme *-leikr* are *fróðmenni* [1] and *fróðskapr* [4]. It is interesting that though the nominal form *fræði* was available to be compounded to easily form nominal compounds – which, as we will see below, it does – the choice was made in these instances to suffix *-leikr* to nominalise *fróðr* instead. This phenomenon barely occurs in the other direction, that is, there is only one instance of *fræði* being used to form an adjectival compound in the whole of the Old Norse corpus, that is *fræðsamligr*, whose single appearance in *Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar* represents its only use.

The nominal form of *fróðr*, *fræði*, is listed under two separate entries in the *Dictionary of Old Norse Prose*, the first ([1]*fræði*) referring to the occurrences in which the noun is feminine, the second ([2]*fræði*) to those occurrences in which the word is neuter. Both of these entries are presented as having essentially the same meaning, which is 'account, story, historical knowledge.'[28] In neither Cleasby-Vigfússon nor Zoëga, however, is this distinction made, and I will be following that non-differentiating practice here. The simple lexeme *fræði* appears considerably less frequently in both poetic corpora than its adjectival counterpart, occurring only five times in the eddic corpus and 13 times in the skaldic. Of the five eddic occurrences, four occur in *Völuspá*, and one in *Grípisspá*. The case is quite different in the

[27] Transpositional affixes are those affixes whose 'primary purpose is to change the category of their base without adding any extra meaning.' So, in this case, adding *-leikr* to *fróðr* changes the word from an adjective to a noun. Rochelle Lieber, *Introducing Morphology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 39.
[28] *Dictionary of Old Norse Prose*, s.v. "*fræði*," https://onp.ku.dk/onp/onp.php?o24337.

prose corpus, however, where there are 71 occurrences of *fræði*, nearly matching the 78 occurences of *fróðr*. What is certainly the most striking about *fræði*, however, is its tendency to form compounds almost exclusively in the prose corpus, and the frequency with which it does so.

There are 22 nominal compounds of which *fræði* forms a part. These compounds occur 104 times in the prose corpus, once in the eddic corpus, and once in the skaldic. In the skaldic corpus, *fræðagerð* appears once in *Heilagra meyja drápa*. In the eddic corpus, the word *fornfræði* occurs in *Frá dauða Sinfjötla*,[29] a piece which, though included in *Codex Regius* and often included in editions of the *Poetic Edda*, is actually a short prose text. Thus, it remains that there are no compounds including *fræði* to be found in what we might properly term eddic poetry. Of these compounded forms, nine (42 occurrences) feature *fræði* as the first part of the compound, and 15 (63 occurrences) feature *fræði* as the second. The distribution of the words in the prose corpus is, however, far from even, with most forms appearing only once or only in glosses, and only a select few documented more than ten times. Those that do make a significant showing (that is, those that occur ten or more times) are: *fræðibók* [10], *bókfræði* [11], *fræðimaðr* [23], and *fáfræði* [25].

The forms relating to *fróðr* consist almost exclusively of the nouns and adjectives featured above, with only two adverbial forms and two verbal forms. The adverbial forms are *fróðliga* and *ófróðliga*, which occur seven and ten times in the prose corpus, respectively, but make no appearance in either of the poetic corpora. The verbal forms are similarly restricted to the prose corpus, with *fræða* occurring 21 times and *sannfræða* once.

*Fróðr*'s Old English cognate, *frōd*, is thoroughly discussed by Corey J Zwikstra in his article ''Wintrum Frod': Frod and the Aging Mind in Old English Poetry.' Here, he suggests that there is a 'dual semantic nature of frod,' in that the type of wisdom represented by *frōd* is inextricably linked with old age.[30] As we will see in our exploration of *fróðr* in this thesis, there is no such specific association with the positive simple lexeme in the Old Norse corpus. However, as will be discussed in **2.1**, there is a potentially telling connection between the negative Old English form *unfrōd* and the negative Old Norse *ófróðr*, as least in the eddic corpus. In terms of the much more popular positive simplex, though, one aspect of *frōd*'s 'dual semantic nature' present in the Old English corpus is absent from – or at least, not integral to – the meaning of its Old Norse equivalent. Another, perhaps starker contrast between the two words is *frōd*'s absence from Old English prose.[31] Though *fróðr* as a simple adjective does have a very strong presence in both the eddic and skaldic corpora, thus maintaining strong poetic associations, it also appears relatively frequently in the prose corpus, appearing, as mentioned above, 78 times. *Frōd* in the

[29] The word occurs only one other time in the Old Norse corpus, in *Þorleifs þáttr jarlaskálds*.
[30] Corey J. Zwikstra, "'Wintrum Frod': Frod and the Aging Mind in Old English Poetry", *Studies in Philology* 108, no. 2 (Spring, 2011), 147.
[31] Zwikstra, "'Wintrum Frod'," 133.

Old English corpus also enjoys inclusion in far fewer compounds than its Old Norse equivalent, appearing in just five, those being *geomorfrōd*, *hygefrōd*, *infrōd*, *unfrōd*, and *unfrōdness*, all of which are adjectives save *unfrōdness*, which is a noun. It also has a verbal form, *frōdian*. The only one of these forms that occurs more than once is *infrōd*, which occurs twice in *Beowulf*. Overall, as Zwikstra helpfully outlines in the appendix to his article: 'the frod lexeme occurs a total 91x, 85x poetry, 0x prose, [and] 6x glosses.'[32] Of these, six occurrences are compounds, and one is verbal, leaving the overwhelming majority of appearances the simple adjective, *frōd*.

### 1.1.2 Horskr

Cleasby-Vigfússon's definition for *horskr* is simply 'wise.'[33] The definition does go on, however, to list words against which *horskr* is opposed, such a *heimskr* and *ósviðr*, and some with which it is associated, such as *hugr* and *mær*. Before moving to examine another point included in Cleasby-Vigfússon's dictionary entry – that is, *horskr*'s virtual absence from prose – it is important to address *horskr*'s unusual resistance to compounding and to participating in new lexeme formation. *Horskr* does not have a single compounded form in the whole of the Old Norse corpus, and even the derived adverbial, adjectival, and nominal forms occur notably rarely, totaling just eleven across all three corpora: *horskligr* occurs twice in the skaldic corpus, both times in *Hugsvinnsmál*, and once in the prose, in *Hómilíur: Homilae & sermones* (notably both Christian); *horskliga* occurs once in the eddic corpus, in *Grípisspá*, once in the skaldic, in *Merlínusspá I*, and twice in the prose, both in *Heilagra feðra æfi: 'vitae patrum'*; *horskleikr* occurs three times in the prose corpus, once in each of *Hómilíur: Homilae & sermones*, *Heilagra feðra æfi: 'vitae patrum'*, and *Hákonar saga Hárekssonar*; and *horskleiki* occurs once in the prose corpus, in *Ritning Bernharðs*. The two nominal forms listed here, both formed using transpositional affixes, are the only nominal forms of *horskr*; *horskr* does not have a derived nominal form created by an internal vowel change.

| ***Horskr* and its Compounds** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Simplexes** | | | |
| | Eddic | Skaldic | Prose |
| horskr | 25 | 33 | 6 |
| | | | |
| **Adjectival Compounds** | | | |
| | Eddic | Skaldic | Prose |
| horskligr | - | 2 | 2 |
| | | | |
| **Nominal Compounds** | | | |
| | Eddic | Skaldic | Prose |

[32] Zwikstra, "'Wintrum Frod'," 163-4.
[33] *Cleasby-Vigfússon* (1874), s.v. "*horskr*."

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| horskleiki | - | - | 1 |
| horskleikr | - | - | 3 |
| | | | |
| **Adverbs** | | | |
| | Eddic | Skaldic | Prose |
| horskliga | 1 | 1 | 2 |

Table 2

The etymological information given in Pokorny indicates that *horskr* has a number of Germanic cognates, those being Old English *horsc*, Old Saxon *horsk*, and Old High German *horsc*, all of which appear under the headword *kerd-*.[34] According to Pokorny, there are cognates in other branches of the Indo-European tree, giving us the Old Irish noun *cerd* ('art, craft; artisan, poet'[35]) and the Welsh *cerdd* ('art, poetry'[36]), respectively. Also related is the Latin, *cerdo* (a workman, artisan[37]), deriving from the Greek κέρδων.[38] *Horskr* shares a number of characteristics with its Old English cognate, *horsc*, as we will see below.

One of the interesting and unusual characteristics of *horskr* is, as Cleasby-Vigfússon's definition points out, its paucity in the prose corpus, its occurrences totalling only 6. *Horskr*'s conspicuously low number of occurrences in the prose corpus becomes especially notable considering its popularity in both of the poetic corpora (25 in the eddic and 33 in the skaldic). The only other word that has a similarly high number of uses in the eddic corpus is *fróðr*, and, as we have seen, *fróðr* also enjoys considerable popularity in prose as well as a proclivity for compounding. *Horskr* is clearly a poetic word. And even considered just in its poetic context, the word demonstrates interesting tendencies. It is the only word whose strongest showing – relative to the overall size of each corpus – is in the eddic corpus. Further, as we shall see, a significant number of its skaldic occurrences [16] are found in poetry from the *fornaldarsögur*, which is eddic in its style and content.[39] This strong tendency towards not only poetry,

[34] *Proto-Indo-European Etymological Dictionary* (2007), s.v. "*kerd-*." Here, the Old Saxon is also given as *horsc*, with a final /c/ instead of a /k/.
[35] Translated from the Greek in the *Proto-Indo-European Etymological Dictionary* by Shane Fair.
[36] as above
[37] *Cassell's Latin Dictionary* ed. D. P. Simpson (Hoboken: Wiley, 1968), s.v. "*cerdo*."
[38] Also listed in Pokorny are the related Greek forms Κέρδος n. "profit, gain, benefit, advantage," κερδίων "more useful, more fruitful," κέρδιστος "the most devious (Hom.); the most fruitful," κερδαλεός "winning, useful, cunning," κερδαλέη, κερδώ "fox," κερδαίνω "to win."
[39] There are other words whose *fornaldarsögur* occurrences are numerous (ex. *fróðr* [11] and *spakr* [relatively high with five out of its total 22 skaldic occurrences]), but these are somewhat artificially inflated by uses in *Merlínússpá* (accounting for eight out of *fróðr*'s eleven *fornaldarsögur* occurrences and four of *spakr*'s five). *Horskr*, however, appears in *Merlínusspá* only once. That said, even including all of the *Merlínusspá* occurrences, *fróðr*'s *fornaldarsögur* appearances account for only 21% (11/53) of its total uses in the skaldic corpus, and *spakr*'s only 23% (5/22), whereas *horskr* boasts approximately 36% (16/36) of its total skaldic appearances in the poetry of the *fornaldarsögur*.

but a certain genre of poetry, becomes more interesting when we consider the nature of the instances in which the word does appear in prose, which are decidedly poetic themselves.

The *Dictionary of Old Norse Prose* lists five examples of *horskr* in the prose corpus, and to that we can add at least a sixth, in *Elis saga*. This occurrence's absence from that database serves as a reminder that the numbers provided by the *Dictionary of Old Norse Prose* are not absolute. *Horskr* appears three times in *Strengleikar* (a translation of the *Lais of Marie de France*), and once in each of *Elis saga*, *Konungs skuggsjá*, and *Völsunga saga*. With the exception of the appearance in *Konungs skuggsjá*, all of these occurrences are in works of prose that were developed, in some way, from a poetic source. *Horskr* shares its preference for poetry with its Old English cognate, *horsc*. Bosworth-Toller gives a wider definition of *horsc* than Cleasby-Vigfússon does of *horskr*, providing the following: 'Quick, ready, active, valiant, applied generally to mental activity [cf. snel active: Icel. snjallr eloquent], wise, sagacious, sharp, quick-witted.'[40] Though *horsc* shares its poetic nature with its Old Norse cognate, it does not share its popularity. *Horsc* appears in the Old English corpus just seven times, once in each of *Azarias*, *Daniel*, *Exodus*, *Riddle 1*, and *The Riming Poem*, and twice in *Christ A*. Of these seven occurrences, five have a specifically Christian context. What *horsc* does share with its Old Norse cognate is its resistance to compounding and lexeme formation, its only related term being the adverb *horsclice*, which only occurs twice: once in *Soul and Body II* and once in a gloss.

### 1.1.3 Snotr

*Snotr* as a simple adjective occurs nine times in the eddic corpus, 20 times in the skaldic corpus, and 16 times in the prose. *Snotr* is found in Kroonen under the headword *snutra*, defined as 'clever, wise.'[41] Also derived from *snutra* is Gothic *snutrs*, Old English *snot[t]or*, and Old High German *snottor*, all with the same meaning. As Kroonen notes, *snutra*'s derivatives are exclusively Germanic. There are a number of descended verbal forms listed as well, but none of these has meanings associated with wisdom. *Snotr* does not appear in Pokorny.

*Snotr* has a relatively low compounding rate, forming only six adjectival compounds representing a total of 24 occurrences across all three corpora. These are: *allsnotr* [6], *margsnotr* [1], *meðalsnotr* [3], *ósnotr* [12], *ráðsnotr* [2], and *snotligr* [1], the last being the only one in which *snotr* is the primary element of the compound. These are primarily quantitative compounds, with the exception of the qualitative *ráðsnotr*. *Snotr* compounds to form only one nominal compound, *snotrleikr*, that occurs a total of four times, all of which are in the prose corpus.

[40] *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online* (2014), s.v. "*horsc*," https://bosworthtoller.com/19550.
[41] *Etymological Dictionary of Proto-Germanic* (2013), "*snutra*."

| ***Snotr* and its Compounds** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Simplexes** | | | |
| | Eddic | Skaldic | Prose |
| snotr | 9 | 20 | 16 |
| snotra, n | - | 2 | - |
| | | | |
| **Adjectival compounds of which *snotr* is the second element** | | | |
| | Eddic | Skaldic | Prose |
| allsnotr | 4 | 2 | - |
| margsnotr | - | 1 | - |
| meðalsnotr | 3 | - | - |
| ósnotr | 7 | 2 | 3 |
| ráðsnotr | 1 | - | 1 |
| | | | |
| **Adjectival compounds of which *snotr* is the first element** | | | |
| | Eddic | Skaldic | Prose |
| snotrligr | - | - | 1 |
| | | | |
| **Nominal compounds of which *snotr* is the first element** | | | |
| | Eddic | Skaldic | Prose |
| snotrleikr | - | - | 4 |
| | | | |
| **Nominal compounds of which *snotra* is the second element** | | | |
| | Eddic | Skaldic | Prose |
| húsasnotra | - | - | 3 |
| | | | |
| **Verbs** | | | |
| | Eddic | Skaldic | Prose |
| snotra | - | - | 2 |

Table 3

Of *snotr*'s nine appearances in the eddic corpus, seven are in *Hávamál*, one is in *Vafþrúðnismál*, and one is in *Grípisspá*. The conspicuous tendency towards *Hávamál* is also apparent in *snotr*'s compounds. There are four *snotr* compounds in the eddic corpus, totalling 15 occurrences: *meðalsnotr* [3], *ósnotr* [7], and *ráðsnotr* [1] occur exclusively in *Hávamál*, and *alsnotr* appears once in *Hávamál*, twice in *Þrymskviða*, and once in *Guðrúnarkviða hin fyrsta*. These instances will be discussed in more detail in the eddic chapter.

The 20 uses of *snotr* in the skaldic corpus are relatively varied. It can be found in poems of all genres and ranging in dates of composition from the tenth century to c.1400. Only three of *snotr*'s seven compounds occur in the skaldic corpus, representing a total of five occurrences: *margsnotr* appears once, in *Hugsvinnsmál*; *alsnotr* appears twice, once in *Hugsvinnsmál*, and once in Grettir Ásmundarson's

*Ævikviða II*; and *ósnotr* appears twice, once in *Hugsvinnsmál* and once in the poetry of the *Fourth Grammatical Treatise*.[42]

Only three of *snotr*'s six adjectival compounds appear in the prose corpus: *ráðsnotr* occurs once in *Konungs Skuggsjá*; *ósnotr* occurs twice in *Konungs Skugggsjá* and once in the *Diplomatarium Norvegicum*; and *snotrligr* occurs once in *Fagrskinna*. Each of *Konungs Skuggsjá* and the *Diplomatarium Norvegicum* also contain one instance of the simplex *snotr*, but *snotrligr* represents *Fagrskinna*'s only *snotr* word. *Snotr*'s nominal compound, *snotrleikr*, occurs four times in the prose corpus: twice in *Heilagra feðra æfi: Vitae patrum*, and twice in *Gautreks saga*. As is the case with the distribution of the simplex, the compounds, though far from numerous in the prose corpus, do not seem to prefer any particular genre of prose text.

*Snotr* has a very low-frequency nominal derivative, *snotra*, that appears as a simplex only twice across all three corpora, both times in the skaldic corpus. It occurs once as the name of an Ásynja in an anonymous *þula*. Elena Gurevich confirms that the word as the name of an Ásynja is found nowhere else in eddic or skaldic verse,[43] but that it is said of the goddess is *Gylfaginning* that she is *vitr ok látpruð*, 'and from her name every wise person is called *snotr*.'[44] *Snotra*'s second occurrence is in another anonymous *þula*, but this time of ship heiti.[45] Gurevich suggests that it is a weather-vane, whose head was likely carved into that of a woman. The only other use of *snotra* is as part of the compound *húsasnotra*. Gurevich helpfully summarizes that, based on its use in the context of *Örvar-Odds Saga* [1] and *Groenlendinga Saga* [2], *húsasnotra* must mean 'gable-head,' and 'have been a kind of wooden weather-vane on a ship, which could also adorn the gable of a house.'[46]

*Snotr*'s adverbial form, *snotrliga*, occurs three times, all in the prose corpus, once in each of *Konungs Skuggsjá, Heilegra feðra æfi: vitae patrum*, and *Valla-Ljóts Saga*. *Snotr*'s verbal form, *snotra*, 'to make wise,' similarly appears only in the prose corpus, once in *Hálfdanar saga Brönufóstra*, and once in the margin of AM 604 h 4º (c. 1550).

*Snotr*'s Old English cognate is the adjective *snotor* or *snottor*, which in Bosworth-Toller is assigned the meaning 'prudent, wise, sagacious.'[47] It occurs as a simple adjective in the Old English

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[42] Note that the appearance of *ósnotr* in *Hugsvinnsmál* occurs only in ms 624 – *ósvinnr* is used in 1199. This will be discussed thoroughly in **3.3**.
[43] Elena Gurevich, "Anonymous *þular*, *Ásynja heiti* 1" in *Poetry from Treatises on Poetics*, ed. Kari Ellen Gade and Edith Marold, vol. 3, *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross et. al., (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), 763.
[44] Snorri Sturluson, *Gylfaginning*, ed. Anthony Faulkes (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1988).
[45] Gurevich, "Anonymous *þular*, *skipa heiti*," 869.
[46] Gurevich, "Anonymous *þular*, *skipa heiti*" 869; for an alternative argument that *húsasnotra* is actually a wind-vane and essentially another work for *veðrviti*, see William Sayers, "Karlsefni's 'húsasnotra': The Divestment of Vinland", *Scandinavian Studies* 75, no. 3 (2003).
[47] *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online* (2014), s.v. "*snotor*," https://bosworthtoller.com/28253.

corpus approximately 60 times, primarily in homilies, but also in poetry and charters. It has a higher adjectival compounding rate than *snotr*, appearing as the first element in ten adjectival compounds (*fóresnotor* [1], *forþsnoter* [1], *gearosnotor* [2], *hygesnottor* [2], *módsnotor* [4], *rædsnotor* [1], *þancsnotor* [1], *unsnotor* [29], *wordsnotor* [9], *weoroldsnotor* [3]). These compounds are found primarily in poetry (the exceptions being *unsnotor* and *weoruldsnotor*, neither of which appears in poetry at all), demonstrating a stark difference to the Old Norse. Adjectival compounds of which *snotor* forms the first part are *snotorlic* (25) and *snotorwyrde* (2). *Snotor* compounds to form four nouns, which are *snotorness*, *unsnotorness*, *snotorscipe*, and *snoterung*, as well as two adverbs, *snotorlice* and *unsnotorlice*.

### 1.1.4 Spakr

Cleasby-Vigfússon provides two primary definitions for *spakr*. The first is 'quiet, gentle,' under which they specify use regarding infants, that is, 'not crying or restless.' This is contrasted with *óspakr*: 'restless, crying.' The second definition given is 'wise,' for which the Greek equivalent *σοφός* and the Latin *sapiens* are provided. More specifically, the definition reads: 'by the ancients the word is used with the notion of prophetic vision or second sight.' It is also noted as 'a soubriquet of several wise men of the Saga time,' under which examples are listed.[48] For a thorough examination of *spakr*'s etymology and cognates, we must turn to Pokorny.[49] Pokorny lists *spakr* (as well as its related lexemes *speki*, *spekt*, and *spekja*) as a descendant of the Proto-Indo-European *speĝ-*, meaning 'to be attentive, sharp-sighted.'[50] Curiously, the only other descendent of *speĝ-* is the Old Church Slavonic *pažo, paziti*, meaning 'watch.'[51] The entry in Pokorny does point, however, to the entry *speǩ-*, meaning *peer*, under which we find ON *spá*.[52] As is the case with *speĝ-*, the root *speǩ-*, produces no equivalent in Old English, though we do see equivalents in Old High German (*speho* [scout]; *spehōn* [peer]; *speha* [careful observation]; *spāhi* [smart, skilful] and Old Saxon (*spāhi* [smart, skilful]). From *speĝ-*, Pokorny also points to the entry *(s)p(h)ereg-*, under which can be found Old English *sprecan* [language] and Old English *sprecan* [speak] as well as Old Norse *spraka* [crackle, patter] and Old Norse *sparkr* [agile, lively, *rührig* (active)].[53] Though Pokorny seems to suggest that there is a connection between these proto-Indo-European roots – and, certainly, it is interesting that watchfulness seems such a prominent theme throughout – it remains that from the Proto-Indo-European root *speĝ-*, *spakr* and its related lexemes are the only Germanic representations.[54]

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[48] *Cleasby-Vigfússon* (1874), s.v. "*spakr*."
[49] *Spakr* is not found in Kroonen's dictionary.
[50] *Proto-Indo-European Etymological Dictionary* (2007), s.v. "*speĝ-*."
[51] Translated from Pokorny's German *achten auf*; also, with *sę* 'sich hüten' [beware].
[52] *Proto-Indo-European Etymological Dictionary* (2007), s.v. "*speǩ-*."
[53] *Proto-Indo-European Etymological Dictionary* (2007), s.v. "*(s)p(h)ereg-*."
[54] Note that there are other Germanic words to be found under these entries, but I have listed those I have deemed most relevant.

The simple adjective *spakr* is found a total of 164 times in the Old Norse corpus. Clearly a prosaic word, it occurs 150 times in the prose corpus and only three times in the eddic and 12 in the skaldic. Arguably, this makes its occurrences in each of the poetic corpora more noteworthy, as will be demonstrated in the following chapters. As we have seen with *fróðr*, *spakr* is very productive in terms of compounding, producing a total of 17 adjectival compounds and four nominal compounds. There is also a related adverb (*spakliga*) and verb (*spekja*).

| ***Spakr* and its Compounds** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Simplexes** | | | |
| | Eddic | Skaldic | Prose |
| spakr | 3 | 12 | 150 |
| speki, n | 1 | 5 | 69 |
| spekja, n | 1 | - | - |
| | | | |
| **Adjectival compounds in which *spakr* forms the first element** | | | |
| | Eddic | Skaldic | Prose |
| spakráðugr | - | - | 1 |
| spaklátr | - | - | 1 |
| spakligr | 1 | 2 | 9 |
| spakmáll | - | - | 1 |
| spakmálugr | - | - | 2 |
| | | | |
| **Adjectival compounds of which *spakr* forms the second element** | | | |
| | Eddic | Skaldic | Prose |
| draumspakr | - | - | 4 |
| fullspakr | 1 | - | 8 |
| hagspakr | - | - | 1 |
| heimspakr | - | - | 1 |
| janfspakr | 1 | - | - |
| lögspakr | - | - | 6 |
| málspakr | - | - | 5 |
| margspakr | - | 5 | 1 |
| orðspakr | - | - | 7 |
| óspakr | - | - | 25 |
| ráðspakr | 3 | 2 | 4 |
| völuspakr | - | 1 | - |
| | | | |
| **Nominal compounds of which *spakr* forms the first element** | | | |
| | Eddic | Skaldic | Prose |
| spakroeða | - | - | 1 |
| spakfrömuðr | - | 1 | - |
| spakleikr | - | - | 4 |
| spakmæli | - | - | 2 |
| | | | |
| **Nominal compounds of which *speki* forms the first element** | | | |
| | Eddic | Skaldic | Prose |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| spekibragð | - | - | 1 |
| spekiíþrótt | - | - | 1 |
| spekimaðr | - | - | 6 |
| spekimál | - | - | 1 |
| spekimeistari | - | - | 1 |
| spekiráð | - | - | 3 |
| spekingr | - | 4 | 106 |
| spekingabók | - | - | 2 |
| spekingaráð | - | - | 1 |
| spekingavit | - | - | 1 |
| | | | |
| **Nominal compounds of which *speki* forms the second element** | | | |
| | Eddic | Skaldic | Prose |
| bókspeki | - | - | 2 |
| draumspeki | - | - | 2 |
| gátsspeki | - | - | 1 |
| getspeki | - | - | 1 |
| hagspeki | - | 2 | 2 |
| himnaspeki | - | - | 1 |
| hugspeki | - | 1 | 1 |
| kennispeki | - | - | 4 |
| klerkdómsspeki | - | - | 1 |
| lögspeki | - | - | 3 |
| málspeki | - | - | 1 |
| orðspeki | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| óspeki | - | - | 2 |
| ráðspeki | - | - | 6 |
| ragspeki | - | - | 1 |
| skynsemðarspeki | - | - | 1 |
| taflspeki | - | - | 3 |
| veraldarspeki | - | - | 2 |
| draumspekingr | - | - | 1 |
| grikkjaspekingr | - | - | 1 |
| höfuðspekingr | - | - | 8 |
| latínuspekingr | - | - | 1 |
| lögspekingr | - | - | 4 |
| orðspekingr | - | - | 1 |
| ráðspekingr | - | - | 1 |
| veraldarspekingr | - | - | 2 |
| | | | |
| **Adverbs** | | | |
| | Eddic | Skaldic | Prose |
| spakliga | - | - | 15 |
| | | | |
| **Verbs** | | | |
| | Eddic | Skaldic | Prose |
| spekja | - | 1 | 8 |

Table 4

The distribution of *spakr*'s compounds follows the same pattern as the simple adjective, appearing far more frequently in prose than in skaldic or eddic poetry. Although the distribution pattern of the compounds is unremarkable in terms of its relationship to that of the simplex, there are a number of unexpected phenomena that deserve attention. The most glaring of these is the behaviour of the negative form of *spakr*, that is, *óspakr*. It is, by far, the most commonly occurring *spakr* compound in any of the corpora, with 25 appearances in the prose corpus, but none in the eddic or skaldic. It is true, of course, that the absence of *óspakr* from the poetic corpora is very much in keeping with *spakr*'s general tendency towards the prose corpus. However, there is an argument to be made for its significance when we consider it alongside the behaviour of *ófróðr*, which is similar. *Ófróðr* occurs 26 times in the prose corpus, but only twice in the eddic corpus and three times in the skaldic. *Fróðr*, as we will remember, has a much more even distribution across all three corpora than *spakr* does, meaning that it is unexpected in that lexicon that *ófróðr* should favour the prose corpus so heavily. For this reason, I suggest that there may be more to the high frequency of *óspakr* in the prose corpus than simply the fact that it is following the expected distribution pattern.[55]

Another interesting word is *margspakr*, which is the only *spakr* compound that does not appear most frequently in the prose corpus. Instead, *margspakr* is found most frequently in the skaldic corpus, where it occurs five times: four times in the poetry of the *Konungasögur* and once in *Haustlöng*. It occurs only once in the prose corpus, in *Íslendingabók*, and does not appear at all in the eddic poetry. This is not at all the case with *margfróðr*, which we find occurring 15 times in the prose corpus and only once in each of the eddic and skaldic. Thus, *óspakr* and *ófróðr* behave similarly where *margspakr* and *margfróðr* – arguably their opposites – do not.

Only two *spakr* compounds occur across all three corpora, and these are *spakligr* and *ráðspakr*. *Spakligr*, according to Cleasby-Vigfússon, carries the meaning 'wise, sage';[56] it has apparently lost – at least, lexicographically – the association with quiet and calm that appears as the primary definition for *spakr*. It occurs once in the eddic corpus (in *Völuspá*), twice in the skaldic (both times in *Merlínusspá*, once in *I* and once in *II*), and nine times in the prose, with no tendency to any one genre. The other word found in all three corpora is *ráðspakr*, which Cleasby-Vigfússon simply equates with *ráðsnjallr*.[57] *Ráðspakr* is found three times in the eddic corpus (once in *Hávamál* and twice in *Grípisspá*), twice in the skaldic (once in each of the anonymous *þula Dverga heiti* and Gísl Illugason's *Erfikvæði about Magnús berfœttr*), and four times in the prose. Thus, it occurs as many times as *spakr* itself in the eddic corpus. *Ráðsnjallr* does not occur in the eddic poetry, but *spakr*, *ráðspakr*, and *snjallr*, each of which occurs in

[55] The same cannot be said for *ósviðr* and *ósnotr*, both of which have a relatively high frequency in the eddic corpus.
[56] *Cleasby-Vigfússon* (1874), s.v. "*spakligr*."
[57] *Ráðsnjallr* is not found in either of the poetic corpora and occurs only four times in the prose.

the eddic poetry only three times, all make an appearance in *Grípisspá*. This will be addressed further in the Chapter 2.

*Spakr* has four compounded nominal forms, those being *spakræða*, *spakfrömuðr*, *spakleikr*, and *spakmæli*. The frequency of these words is extremely low, which is especially interesting in the case of *spakleikr* when we look at it beside *fróðleikr*. *Fróðleikr* is the most frequently occurring of all of *fróðr*'s compounds with 36 occurrences (all in the prose corpus), whereas *spakleikr*, in contrast, only occurs four times in the prose corpus (twice in *Hrafns saga Sveinjarnarsonar* and once in each of *Alexanders saga* and *Nikulás saga erkibyskups*) and is absent from both poetic corpora. This suggests that there was a stronger tendency to nominalise *fróðr* than there was to nominalise *spakr*.

*Spakr*'s nominal derivative, *speki*, appears similarly infrequently in each of the poetic corpora, with just one occurrence in the eddic corpus (in one of the prose passages of *Sigrdrífumál*) and five in the skaldic (three in *Hugsvinnsmál*, one in *Leiðarvísan*, and one in Þjóðólfr ór Hvini's *Poem about Haraldr hárfagri*). Also like its adjectival counterpart, *speki*'s frequency in the prose corpus is considerably higher at 69 occurrences.[58] *Speki* has a higher rate of compounding than *spakr*, with a total of 36 different forms totalling 186 occurrences. *Speki*'s compounds display an even more obvious tendency towards the prose corpus, with only four compounded forms showing up in both of the poetic corpora. The only one of these compounds that occurs in the eddic corpus is *orðspeki*, which appears twice in *Vafþrúðnismál*. *Orðspeki* also occurs once in each of the skaldic and prose corpora, in the anonymous *Leiðarvísan* and in *Snorra Edda*, respectively. There are three other *speki* compounds that occur in the skaldic corpus, and those are *hagspeki* [2], *hugspeki* [1], and *spekingr* [4]. In the skaldic corpus, *hagspeki* and *hugspeki* both occur only in *Hugsvinnsmál*, and *orðspeki*, as mentioned, in *Leiðarvisan*, all of which are Christian poems. *Spekingr*, too, has a tendency towards Christian poetry, with two of its four occurrences in *Kátrínardrápa* and one in *Heilagra meyja drápa*. Its fourth appearance is in an anonymous *þula*. What is particularly striking about *spekingr*, though, is the frequency with which it appears in prose: *spekingr* appears 106 times in the prose corpus, comfortably eclipsing all other *spakr* words save *spakr* itself. It appears most frequently in religious works, with 48 occurrences, the next-highest number of uses being in historical works with 27.[59] *Spekingr* is also productive in terms of compound creation, accounting for 12 of the 36 *speki* compounds. Cleasby-Vigfússon defines *spekingr* as 'a wise man, a sage,'[60] also including that the word was used for counsellors of kings. Importantly, then, this is a substantivisation of *spakr* into a person who possesses wisdom rather than the common noun 'wisdom.' Thus, arguably, rather than

[58] There is also a nominal use of the word *spekjur* in *Guðrúnarkviða III* which seems to be a hapax legomenon, with *spekja* in all other instances acting as a verb.
[59] *Dictionary of Old Norse Prose*, s.v. "*spakr*," https://onp.ku.dk/onp/onp.php?o74195.
[60] *Cleasby-Vigfússon* (1874), s.v. "*spekingr*."

comparing it with *speki*, we might more usefully compare it with *spakr* itself, for it is the substantive use of *spakr* that *spekingr* would make redundant.

### 1.1.5 Svinnr

*Svinnr* is defined by Cleasby-Vigfússon first as 'swift, quick,' but it is noted that this meaning only remains when use in relation to the *svinn Rín*, the swift Rhine.[61] The second definition given is 'metaph. wise,' and then it is noted that in modern usage, it has come to mean 'stingy.' It is also used substantively in the phrase *snúa á svinn sínu ráði* 'to turn to reason, mend one's ways'. Though it is the second meaning about which this project is primarily concerned, the less-common first meaning of 'swift, quick' is the one that demonstrates the link to *svinnr*'s Germanic cognates.

Though absent from Kroonen, *svinnr* can be found in Pokorny's dictionary under the entry *sṷento-, sunto-*, and is defined as 'rash, hasty, strong, smart.'[62] The English meaning provided for Proto-Indo-European *sṷento-, sunto-* is 'vigorous, vivacious, healthy.' Other descendants of *sṷento-, sunto-* are: Gothic *swinþs*, 'strong, git, healthy'; Old English *swīð*; Old Saxon *swīði*, 'strong, violent, valiant'; Middle High German *swint, swinde* 'strong, violent'; *geschwind* 'fast, rapid, hurried, fierce, grim'; Old High German *gisunt* (-d-) 'fit, healthy'; Old Saxon *gisund*; Old English *gesund*; Old Frisian *sund* 'fresh, unbeschädigt [undamaged], fit, healthy.' As evidenced by this list – and noted in Pokorny's entry – the word appears to have exclusively Germanic descendants. It is interesting, based on these brief definitions, that *svinnr* is the only descendant of *sṷento-, sunto-* that adopted a connotation of intelligence or wisdom, where in all the other languages, the primary meaning revolves instead around strength, speed, and even violence. Even *svinnr*'s Old English equivalent, *swíþ*, does not demonstrate an association with wisdom. It is defined in Bosworth-Toller as: 'I. strong; II. the comparative is used where later English uses *right* (hand, side, etc).'[63] Its listed compounds (*earm-*, *for-*, *mód-*, *un-swíþe*) are also all related to strength. Also sharing this meaning is the Old English verbal form, *swīðan*, meaning: 'I. to make strong, give strength to, strengthen, support; II. to be strong, exercise, prevail (?) [sic],' as well as the adverb, *swīðe*, defined as: 'very much, exceedingly.'[64] These cognates are very common in the Old English corpus, and do not share *svinnr*'s tendency towards poetry.

*Svinnr* as a simple adjective occurs a total of 62 times in the Old Norse corpus: eleven times in the eddic corpus, 44 in the skaldic corpus, and seven in the prose. *Svinnr* in the eddic corpus is spread out rather evenly between the mythological and heroic poems, appearing six times in the former, four of

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[61] *Cleasby-Vigfússon* (1874), s.v. "*svinnr*."
[62] *Proto-Indo-European Etymological Dictionary* (2007), s.v. "*sṷento-, sunto-*."
[63] *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online* (2014), s.v. "*swíþ*," https://bosworthtoller.com/29851.
[64] *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online* (2014), s.v. "*swīðan*," https://bosworthtoller.com/29852; *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online* (2014), s.v. "*swīðe*," https://bosworthtoller.com/29853.

which are in *Vafþrúðnismál*, and five in the latter. Its distribution in the skaldic corpus is split largely between poetry in the *konungasögur* and Christian poetry – 16 occurrences in each – but it also has the highest number of occurrences in the poetry of the *Íslendingasögur* than any other word in this study.[65] What is immediately striking, of course, is how infrequently it occurs in the prose corpus. This trend is, however, not entirely consistent across its compounds and derivatives.

| ***Svinnr* and its Compounds** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Simplexes** | | | |
| | Eddic | Skaldic | Prose |
| svinnr | 11 | 44 | 7 |
| svinnr, n | - | - | 3 |
| svinna, n | - | 3 | 2 |
| | | | |
| **Adjectival compounds of which *svinnr* forms the first element** | | | |
| | Eddic | Skaldic | Prose |
| svinneygr | - | 1 | - |
| svinngeðr | - | 1 | - |
| svinnhugaðr | 1 | 1 | - |
| svinnligr | - | - | 3 |
| | | | |
| **Adjectival compounds of which *svinnr* forms the second element** | | | |
| | Eddic | Skaldic | Prose |
| fásvinnr | - | - | 1 |
| geðsvinnr | 1 | - | - |
| margsvinnr | - | 3 | - |
| orðsvinnr | - | - | 3 |
| ósvinnr | 7 | - | 12 |
| ráðsvinnr | 1 | - | 5 |
| raunsviðr | - | 1 | - |
| frægðarsvinnr | - | 1 | - |
| | | | |
| **Nominal compounds** | | | |
| | Eddic | Skaldic | Prose |
| svinnleikr | - | - | 1 |
| svinnráð | - | - | 1 |
| | | | |
| **Adverbs** | | | |
| | Eddic | Skaldic | Prose |
| svinnliga | - | - | 2 |

Table 5

[65] It appears twelve times as a simplex and once in the compound *svinngeðr*.

The compounding rate of *svinnr* is relatively low, as it produces a total of 14 compounds. Twelve of these are adjectival. Of these adjectival compounds, four appear in the eddic corpus, totalling ten occurrences; six appear in the skaldic corpus, totalling eight occurrences; and six occur in the prose corpus, totalling 23 occurrences. One word with a particularly interesting distribution pattern is the negative *ósvinnr*. *Ósvinnr* is used seven times in the eddic corpus, an unexpected twelve in the prose, and is absent from the skaldic corpus entirely. Though we also see *ósnotr* appearing with a relatively high frequency in the eddic corpus, its use is restricted exclusively to *Hávamál*, whereas *ósvinnr* is more widely distributed, occurring three times in *Hávamál*, once in *Grímnismál*, twice in *Fáfnismál*, and once in *Sigrdrífumál*. Neither *óspakr* nor *ófróðr* has significant frequency in either poetic corpus,[66] but both words do demonstrate an overwhelming preference for the prose corpus, appearing there 25 and 26 times, respectively.

*Svinnr* holds the modifying position (that is, is the first element of the compound) in four of its adjectival compounds. These compounds are: *svinneygr*, *svinngeðr*, *svinnhugaðr*, and *svinnligr*. We can see here that there is a similarity with the tendencies of *fróðr*, but not of *spakr*, in that the four compound adjectives of which *fróðr* forms the first part are: *fróðgeðjaðr*, *fróðhugaðr*, *fróðligr*, and *fróðugr*. In common here we have the second components *-geð* and *-hugaðr*, both having to do with the mind. In contrast, the second elements of the *spakr* compounds in question include neither of these words, and the majority seem to focus instead on speech, with second elements such as *-ráðugr*, *-mál*, and *-málugr*.

There are two nominal compounds formed by *svinnr*, those being *svinnleikr* and *svinnráð*, each of which appears only once in the prose corpus (in *Ævintýr (Dómisögur): Exempla* and *Máguss saga jarls*, respectively). Both are absent from the poetry. *Svinnr* also has two nominal forms, but they, too appear infrequently. The masculine noun *svinnr* only appears three times in prose, and the feminine noun *svinna* appears three times in each of the skaldic and prose corpora. Neither of these nouns forms any compounds. The adverbial form, *svinnliga*, occurs twice in the prose (once in each of *Barlaams saga ok Jósafats* and *Hrólfs saga kraka*).

### 1.1.6 Víss

*Víss* is included in Kroonen's dictionary under the heading *wissa*, defined as 'certain.'[67] It appears alongside cognates in Gothic (*unwiss*), Old English (*wiss*), Old Frisian (*wis*), Old High German (*gi-wis*), Dutch (*wis*), and German (*ge-wiß*). Kroonen also explains that this is 'an adjective continuing the original past participle to **witan* – 'to know''. More detail concerning *víss*' origins can be found in Pokorny under the heading *u̯(e)id-*[2], meaning 'to see, know' (under which we also find the only reference in that

[66] *Óspakr* is absent from both, and *ófrodr* appears twice the eddic corpus and once in the skaldic.
[67] *Etymological Dictionary of Proto-Germanic* (2013), "*wissa*."

dictionary to *vitr*).[68] Three of *víss*' derivatives are listed under this heading: first, there is the verb, *vita, vissa*, listed alongside other preterite-present cognates in Gothic (*wait, witum*), Old English (*wāt, witon*), and Old High German (*weiz*); then, as a to- participle *vissa*, alongside cognates in Gothic (*unwiss*), Old High German (*giwis[s]*), Old English (*wiss*), and Old Saxon (*wiss*); finally, the adjectival form, *víss*, is listed alongside Old English *wis*, Old High German *wis*, and Old Saxon *wis*. Clearly, at least in its origins, *víss* has a connection to seeing and knowing for certain, and that connotation of certainty was maintained in Old Norse, with the definition of *wise* coming second to *certain* in Cleasby-Vigfússon's entry for *víss*.[69]

The *Dictionary of Old Norse Prose* has two entries for *víss*. [1]*Víss* contains 51 entries, separated into two sections. The first is assigned the definition 'wise, prudent, sensible, knowledgeable'.[70] The second section is a list of proper names that include *víss*. There are 45 entries under the first definition and six proper names. There are numerous eddic and skaldic citations listed under the 'word in other corpora' section on the page. [2]*Víss* contains 419 entries, nearly all of which fall under the definition 'enlightened, familiar, aware of (something), wise (to something), aware (of something).'[71] It is under one of the many subsections of the primary [2]*víss* definition that we find the neuter singular form, *vist*, listed as an adverb meaning 'certainly, (absolutely) sure, with certainty, indeed.'[72] Although the [2]*víss* entry is important to bear in mind, due to the primary interest of this study being concerned with the meaning of and thus information contained in [1]*víss*, meaning 'wise, prudent, sensible, knowledgeable,' I will be using data only from [1]*víss* whenever I discuss the prose occurrences of *víss*. The same goes for *óvíss*, where [1]*óvíss* corresponds to [1]*víss*, and [2]*óvíss* corresponds to [2]*víss*. Note that all eddic and skaldic entries are listed under [1]*víss*, even though some carry a meaning more in line with [2]*víss*. This issue will be addressed in the relevant sections of the thesis.

| ***Víss* and its Compounds** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Simplex** | | | |
| | Eddic | Skaldic | Prose |
| víss | 7 | 2 | 45 |
| | | | |
| **Adjectival compounds of which *víss* is the second element** | | | |
| | Eddic | Skaldic | Prose |
| auðvíss | - | - | 4 |
| bókvíss | - | - | 2 |
| bragðvíss | - | 3 | - |

[68] *Proto-Indo-European Etymological Dictionary* (2007), s.v. "*u̯(e)id-*[2]."
[69] *Cleasby-Vigfússon* (1874), s.v. "*víss*."
[70] *Dictionary of Old Norse Prose*, s.v. "[1]*víss*," https://onp.ku.dk/onp/onp.php?o87934; translated on the website from 'vis, klog, forstandig, kyndig'.
[71] *Dictionary of Old Norse Prose*, s.v. "[2]*víss*," https://onp.ku.dk/onp/onp.php?o104408; translated on the website from 'plyst, bekendt, klar over (noget), vis (på noget), opmærksom (på noget)'.
[72] Translated on the website from 'bestemt, (helt) sikkert, med sikkerhed, sondelig'.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| dáðvís | - | 1 | - |
| djúpvíss | - | - | 1 |
| drambvíss | - | - | 11 |
| dýrðvíss | - | 1 | - |
| fávíss | - | 2 | 19 |
| forvíss | - | - | 2 |
| framvíss | 3 | 2 | 8 |
| fregvíss | - | - | 2 |
| fullvíss | - | - | 1 |
| fundvíss | - | - | 2 |
| handvíss | - | 2 | 9 |
| hrakvíss | - | - | 1 |
| hrekkvíss | - | 1 | 3 |
| hrekkvísligr | - | - | 1 |
| hrøkkvíss | - | - | 3 |
| hundvíss | 2 | - | 6 |
| hvatvíss | - | - | 9 |
| kávíss | - | - | 3 |
| lagavíss | - | 1 | - |
| lævíss | 3 | - | 2 |
| margvíss | - | 1 | 14 |
| margvísligr | - | - | 1 |
| matvíss | - | 1 | 1 |
| ókulvíss | - | - | 1 |
| orðvíss | - | 1 | 3 |
| óréttvíss | - | - | 3 |
| óvíss | 3 | 1 | 15 |
| óvíss | - | - | 21 |
| prettvíss | - | - | 11 |
| prettvísligr | - | - | 3 |
| ráðvíss | - | 1 | 1 |
| rangvíss | - | - | 1 |
| réttvíss | - | 2 | 31 |
| réttvísligr | - | - | 1 |
| sannvíss | - | 1 | - |
| skammvíss | - | - | 1 |
| skilvíss | - | 1 | 19 |
| silvísligr | - | - | 5 |
| sporvíss | - | - | 1 |
| stelvíss | - | - | 1 |
| svipvíss | - | 1 | - |
| sögvíss | - | 1 | - |
| takvíss | - | - | 1 |
| talvíss | - | - | 1 |
| tökvíss | - | - | 2 |
| tölvíss | - | - | 3 |
| uggvíss | - | - | 1 |
| uppvíss | - | - | 23 |
| vegvíss | - | - | 1 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Nominal compounds of which *vísi* is the second element** | | | |
| | Eddic | Skaldic | Prose |
| áttvísi | - | - | 2 |
| bellvísi | - | - | 1 |
| bragðvísi | - | - | 5 |
| bragvísi | - | - | 2 |
| brekvísi | - | - | 2 |
| drambvísi | - | - | 11 |
| drambvísisfótr | - | - | 1 |
| farvísi | - | - | 1 |
| framvísi | - | - | 3 |
| hrakvísi | - | - | 1 |
| hrekkvísi | - | - | 2 |
| hrøkkvísi | - | - | 2 |
| hvatvísi | - | - | 5 |
| kávísi | - | - | 1 |
| leiðvísi | - | - | 1 |
| léttvísi | - | - | 1 |
| lævísi | - | - | 6 |
| margvísi | - | - | 1 |
| matvísi | - | - | 3 |
| óvísa | - | - | 9 |
| óvísleikr | - | - | 1 |
| prettvísi | - | - | 10 |
| ráðvísi | - | - | 1 |
| rangvísi | - | - | 1 |
| réttvísa | - | - | 3 |
| réttvísi | - | 2 | 39 |
| skilvísi | - | - | 2 |
| sögvísi | - | - | 1 |
| takvísi | - | - | 1 |
| tökvísi | - | - | 1 |
| tölvísi | - | - | 2 |
| váttvísi | - | - | 1 |
| ættvísi | - | - | 5 |
| | | | |
| **Nominal compounds of which *víss* is the first element** | | | |
| | Eddic | Skaldic | Prose |
| vísdómr | - | 3 | 89 |
| vísdómsbrunnr | - | - | 1 |
| vísdómsfullr | - | - | 4 |
| vísdómskona | - | - | 1 |
| vísdómsmaðr | - | - | 15 |
| vísdómsmeistari | - | - | 5 |
| vísdómsvegr | - | - | 1 |
| vísleikr | - | - | 1 |

Table 6

The polysemic nature of this word means that it has presented some challenges in choosing which occurrences of the word – and, indeed, which words – to include in this study. I have, as far as possible, chosen to include only the words whose meanings are wisdom-related. I have not, for example, chosen to include the noun *vísbending* [signal], nor have I opted to include the instances in which Cleasby-Vigfússon's first definition of *certain* seems to be the primary meaning. My study is, strictly, not an etymological one, but one concerned with literature and semantics, and thus, I have chosen to include only those occurrences that belong specifically to the semantic field of wisdom. I have also chosen to include in my study every adjectival compound of which *víss* forms a part, as it is only a matter of translation that would encourage me to include, for example, *lagavísum* (which Attwood translates as *law-wise*) and not *svipvíss* (which Larrington and Robinson translate as *treacherous*). Those compounds I have chosen to exclude, therefore, are only those that are indisputably nominal or adverbial.[73]

In its simple form, *víss* appears in the eddic corpus a total of seven times with the meaning 'wise.' Though the skaldic corpus boasts 22 adjectival occurrences of *víss* and its compounds, only two of those are simple lexemes (occurring once in the poetry of the *Fourth Grammatical Treatise* and once in a *lausavísa* of Hjálmþér Ingason), the other 20 representing various compounded forms. As we will see is the case in the prose corpus, *víss* demonstrates a conspicuous tendency to appear in Christian poetry, with Christian poems boasting 14 of the 22 skaldic occurrences. *Víss* appears in its simple form 45 times in the prose corpus, overwhelmingly favouring the corpus of Christian writings.

*Víss* is incredibly productive in terms of adjectival compounds, appearing as the second element in 52. Though a number of these are quantitative, the list also includes many qualitative compounds, such as, for example, *bókvíss* ('book-wise') and *talvíss* ('wise in numbers'). In the prose corpus, these words are consistently popular in religious works, but are much less likely to be found in historical works. Many of these words have a very low frequency even in the prose corpus, most appearing between one and three times. Though much more frequent in the prose corpus than the poetic, these words are not by any means absent from poetry. Four of the adjectival compounds can be found in the eddic corpus totalling eleven appearances, and 17 are in the skaldic corpus, accounting for 22 total occurrences. The only words to appear in the eddic corpus and not the skaldic are *lævíss* and *hundvíss*. *Lævíss* appears once in *Hymiskviða* and once in *Lokasenna*, both times in reference to Loki. It also occurs twice in the prose corpus, once in each of *Sörla þáttr* and *Pamfíluss saga*.[74] *Hundvíss* appears once in *Hymiskviða* and once in *Helgakviða Hjorvarðssonar*, both times referencing giants.

[73] These are: Mark Eirdr 23 *visdóm*; Anon Líkn 50 *réttvísi*; Anon Heildr 3 *vísdóm*; Þul Skipa 5 *sviðvíss*; Hst Rst 11 *handvíst*; and Sjórs Lv 3 *handvíst*. See Introduction for word list.

[74] The nominal cognate, *lævísi*, does not occur in either poetic corpus, but does appear six times in the prose corpus. Five of those are in *Pamfílus saga*, and the sixth is in *Snorra Edda*, where it is again associated with Loki.

The nominal morpheme *-vísi* is very productive, forming 32 compounds which represent a total of 125 occurrences (122 of which are in the prose corpus, with two in skaldic poetry). By far the most frequent is *réttvísi*, which accounts for 39 occurrences in the prose corpus and both of the skaldic occurrences. The adjectival cognate, *réttvíss*, is also the most common of the adjectival compounds, accounting for 31 of the total 167 in the prose corpus, and two of the 12 in the skaldic corpus. Both words seem to have a particularly Christian leaning, with 25 of the 31 occurrences of *réttvíss* in the prose corpus occurring in religious works, as well as 20 of *réttvísi*'s 39 prose occurrences. Similarly, both of *réttvíss*'s occurrences in the skaldic corpus are in Christian poetry, one in each of *Kátrínardrápa* and *Heilags anda drápa*. One of the noun *réttvísi*'s occurrences is in the late-thirteenth-century Icelandic religious devotional drápa *Líknarbraut*, and the other is in an anonymous stanza in the *Fourth Grammatical Treatise* (in which it refers to the righteousness of God). *Víss*' Old English cognate, *wís*, is presented by Bosworth-Toller as having three sub-definitions, which are: 'I. wise, discreet, judicious; II. wise, learned, skilled, expert; III. known.'[75] There is also a separate entry for *wis*, which consists of just one word: 'certain.'[76] Thus, though treated as two separate entries in Bosworth-Toller, the sense of knowing and certainty associated with the adjective clearly exists in Old English as well as in Old Norse. Like its Old Norse cognate, *wis* is also relatively productive in terms of compounding, forming a total of seven compounds in which it is the first element, and 17 where it is the second. There are a number of compounds listed in Bosworth-Toller as having Old Norse cognates, but arguably the most interesting is *rihtwís*, cognate with Old Norse *réttvíss*.[77] *Rihtwís* has another adjectival form, *rihtwislíc*,[78] two nominal derivatives, *rihtwís* and *rihtwísnes*, an adverbial form, *rihtwíslíce*, and two verbal derivaties, both *ríhtwísian*, in one sense meaning 'to justify,' and in the other 'to direct, aright, rule.' The adjective *rihtwís*, the two nouns *rihtwís* and *rihtwísness*, and the adverb *rihtwíslíce* all have negative forms. Altogether, the occurrences of the positive words total 2289, and the negative 1339. Of the positive occurrences, only eleven are in poetry,[79] and of the negative, only seven.[80]

[75] *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online* (2014), s.v. "*wís*," https://bosworthtoller.com/36032; under this entry as listed the cognates: Goth *weis*, O Fr *wís*, O Sax *wís*, OHG *wís*, and, of course, ON *víss*.
[76] *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online* (2014), s.v. "*wis*," https://bosworthtoller.com/36033.
[77] There is also the Old High German cognate, *rehtwís*.
[78] Cognate with Old High German *rehtwíslíh*.
[79] Four are in the *Paris Psalter*, four in the *Metres of Boethius*, two in the *Lord's Prayer II*, and one in the *Lord's Prayer III*.
[80] Six are in the *Meters of Boethius* and one is in *Instructions for Christians*.

### 1.1.7 Vitr

*Vitr* is defined in Cleasby-Vigfússon simply as 'wise.'[81] *Vitr* does not appear in Kroonen, but does feature in Pokorny under the substantial heading *u̯(e)id-*$^{2}$ ('to see; to know').[82] *Vitr* does not appear to have adjectival cognates in any of the Germanic languages.[83] Contrastingly, its nominal cognate, *vit* ('consciousness, intelligence, wit'), is related to Old English *wit*, Old Frisian *wit*, Old High German *wizzi*, and Gothic *un-wit*, and its verbal form, *vita* (*to have sense, be conscious*), has cognates in Old English (*witan*), Gothic (*witan*), Old Saxon (*witan*), Old Frisian (*wita*), and Old High German (*wizzan*).

*Vitr* appears as a simple adjective three times in the eddic corpus, 38 times in the skaldic corpus, and 149 times in the prose. Its occurrences in the eddic corpus consist of one in *Grípisspá* and two in *Átlamál hin Grœnlenzku*.[84] This makes *vitr* the only one of the seven core adjectives to not appear in any of the mythological poems in the *Edda*. *Vitr* and its compounds' uses in the skaldic corpus span from c.900 (*Haraldskvæði*) to c.1400 (*Máríudrápa*), demonstrating an almost equal preference towards use in poetry on Christian subjects and poetry found in the *Konungasögur*. In the prose corpus, *vitr* again shows a tendency towards religious and historical texts, with a noticeably low frequency in the *fornaldarsögur*. We see this trend continue with *vitr*'s compounds.

| ***Vitr* and its Compounds** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Simplexes** | | | |
| | Eddic | Skaldic | Prose |
| vitr | 3 | 38 | 149 |
| vit, n | 10 | 17 | 222 |
| | | | |
| **Adjectival compounds of which *vitr* is the first element** | | | |
| | Eddic | Skaldic | Prose |
| vitrligr | - | - | 61 |
| vitrmáll | - | - | 5 |
| | | | |
| **Adjectival compounds of which *vitr* is the second element** | | | |
| | Eddic | Skaldic | Prose |
| alvitr | 4 | 1 | - |
| brjóstvitr | - | - | 1 |
| djúpvitr | - | - | 13 |
| fávitr | - | - | 16 |
| fjölvitr | - | 1 | - |

[81] *Cleasby-Vigfússon* (1874), s.v. "*vitr*."
[82] *Proto-Indo-European Etymological Dictionary* (2007), s.v. "*u̯(e)id-*$^{2}$ -"; *víss* is also under this heading.
[83] *Víss*, however, does.
[84] It should also be noted that *vitr* occurs twice in the prose text found in the *Poetic Edda*: once in the prose introduction to *Reginsmál* referencing Reginn, and once, in the superlative form, in the prose introduction to *Grípisspá* referencing Grípir.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| forvitr | - | - | 5 |
| fullvitr | - | - | 1 |
| hugvitr | - | - | 2 |
| lögvitr | - | - | 6 |
| margvitr | - | 3 | 4 |
| misvitr | - | - | 2 |
| náttúravitr | - | - | 1 |
| óframsvitr | - | - | 2 |
| óvitr | - | - | 35 |
| sannvitr | - | - | 1 |
| slægvitr | - | 1 | 15 |
| stórvitr | - | - | 12 |
| | | | |
| **Adjectival compounds of which *vit* is the first element** | | | |
| | Eddic | Skaldic | Prose |
| vitanligr | - | - | 15 |
| vitfátt | - | - | 2 |
| vitlauss | 1 | 1 | 42 |
| vitlítill | - | - | 6 |
| vitmikill | - | - | 1 |
| vitminni | - | - | 1 |
| vitstola | - | - | 4 |
| vitstolinn | - | - | 17 |
| | | | |
| **Nominal compounds of which *vit* is the first element** | | | |
| | Eddic | Skaldic | Prose |
| vitafé | - | - | 25 |
| vitand/-end/-und | - | - | 64 |
| vitandi | - | - | 7 |
| vitra | - | 3 | 57 |
| vitfirring | - | - | 24 |
| vitleysa, -lausa | - | - | 6 |
| vitleysi | - | - | 24 |
| vitleysingr | - | - | 3 |
| vitmenni | - | - | 2 |
| vitorð | - | - | 50 |
| vitorðsmaðr | - | - | 3 |
| vitran/vitrun | - | - | 53 |
| vitringr | - | - | 16 |
| vits-munir | - | - | 46 |
| | | | |
| **Nominal compounds of which *vit* is the second element** | | | |
| | Eddic | Skaldic | Prose |
| alþýðuvit | - | - | 1 |
| bókavit | - | - | 1 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| bókvit | - | - | 1 |
| brjóstvit | - | - | 3 |
| englavit | - | - | 1 |
| greiningavit | - | - | 3 |
| hugvit | - | - | 23 |
| kenningarvit | - | - | 1 |
| líkamsvit | - | - | 9 |
| mannavit | - | - | 1 |
| mannsvit | - | - | 4 |
| mannvit | 8 | 3 | 42 |
| nasavit | - | - | 1 |
| óvit | - | - | 61 |
| samvit | - | - | 16 |
| skilningarvit | - | - | 11 |
| skilningsvit | - | - | 1 |
| skynsemðarvit | - | - | 3 |
| spekingavit | - | - | 1 |
| vanvit | - | - | 4 |
| veraldarvit | - | - | 4 |
| veraldavit | - | - | 1 |
| ørvit | - | - | 2 |
| öngvit | - | 1 | 15 |
| | | | |
| **Adverbs** | | | |
| | Eddic | Skaldic | Prose |
| vitrliga | - | - | 39 |
| | | | |
| **Verbs** | | | |
| | Eddic | Skaldic | Prose |
| vitra | - | 4 | 98 |

Table 7

*Vitr* forms the first part of just two compounds, those being *vitrligr* and *vitrmáll*. Both of these occur only in the prose corpus, 61 and five times, respectively. Interestingly, all five occurrences of *vitrmáll* are in religious contexts: three are in saints' sagas (*Klements saga*, *Pétrs saga postula*, and *Thómass saga*), one is in *Stjórn*, and one is in a fourteenth-century exemplum in AM 657 a-b 4º. *Vitr* forms the second part of 15 compounds, almost all of which are quantitative, the only definitively qualitative one being *lögvitr*. *Lögvitr*, along with *misvitr*, appear only in the *Íslendingasögur*. Very broadly, these compounds tend towards religious and historical texts. Only five of these compounds occur in either of the poetic corpora: *margvitr* appears once in each of *Vestrfararvísur*, *Hugsvinssmál*, and *Merlínusspá II*; *slægvitr* occurs once in *Lilja*; and *fjölvitr* and *alvitr* each appear once in *Háttatal*. Only

one *vitr* compound appears in the *Edda*, and that is *alvitr*, which can be found once in *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II* and three times in *Völundarkviða*.

*Vitr*'s nominal derivative, *vit*, enjoys a higher frequency than *vitr* in the eddic and prose corpora, with ten and 222 occurrences, respectively. It is not so in the skaldic corpus, in which *vit* occurs only 17 times compared to *vitr*'s 38. Also in contrast to *vitr*, *vit* does appear in mythological poems in the *Edda*, occurring in the following poems: *Hávamál* [5], *Sigrdrífumál* [2], *Hárbarðsljóð* [1], *Alvíssmál* [1], *Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar* [1], *Sigurðarkviða I* [1], *Atlakviða* [1], and *Baldrs draumar* [1]. *Vit* is also much more productive in terms of compounding than *vitr*, forming the first part of eight adjectival compounds and nine nominal compounds, and forming the second part of 24 (which are all, of course, nominal). Of all of *vit*'s compounds, only two occur in either of the poetic corpora. *Aungvit*, meaning 'swoon,' which occurs 15 times in the prose corpus (seven of which are in religious works), appears once in the skaldic corpus, in the anonymous *Drápa af Máríugrát*. Particularly interesting, however, is the word *mannvit*, which occurs in the prose corpus 42 times, again, primarily in religious and historical works. *Mannvit* also occurs ten times in the eddic corpus and three times in the skaldic. In the eddic corpus, it appears four times in *Hávamál*, twice in *Atlamál hin grœnlenzku*, and once in each of *Hamðismál*, *Grógaldr*, *Sigrdrífumál*, and *Hyndluljóð*. All four of its uses in *Hávamál* are gnomic, as is its use in *Hamðismál*; both of its uses in *Atlamál hin grœnlenzku* are attributed to Guðrún, used once to describe her as she carves the runes of warning for her brothers, and again when she is addressing the two men, who, after having ignored her runes, have arrived at Atli's court; in each of *Grógaldr*, *Sigrdrífumál*, and *Hyndluljóð*, *mannvit* alliterates with *mál* and is spoken of in terms of it being something that may be given or received. Incidentally, the last three instances are all spoken by female characters (Gróa, Sigrdrífa, and Freyja, respectively). *Mannvit* also occurs three times in the skaldic corpus, once in each of *Hugsvinnsmál*, *Lilja*, and *Eiríksdrápa*. The occurrence in *Hugsvinnsmál* is predictably gnomic, while the reference in *Lilja* is to the general inadequacy of man's understanding to comprehend God, and that in *Eiríksdrápa* in reference to the many good qualities of Eiríkr.

# 2 The Eddic Corpus

As Larrington succinctly summarises, 'eddic poetry is anonymous, stanzaic, relatively straightforward in form, and, like its relatives in other Germanic languages, it is capable of mediating all kinds of content: swift-moving narrative, pithy dialogue, grand monologue, and lyric description. It was the medium chosen by those anonymous poets and performers, male or female, who had myths to dramatize, wisdom to impart, and conceptions of the ancient Germanic and heroic past to explore.'[85] Most extant eddic poetry that exists outside of prose contexts is found in a manuscript known as the Codex Regius. The poetry in this collection 'can be seen as one product of a more general thirteenth-century desire to collect and codify the poetry and traditional learning of the past.'[86] This collection of poems came to be known as the *Poetic Edda* thanks to the misunderstanding of an Icelandic bishop in the 17th century. In 1643, bishop Brýnjolfur Sveinsson came by a manuscript in which he recognised some of the material, having come across it in the *Edda* of Snorri Sturluson. Thanks to the similarities in the texts, bishop Brýnjolfur named this manuscript *Sæmundar Edda*, erroneously attributing the collection of poems to a famous Icelandic scholar, Sæmundar the Wise. Bishop Brýnjolfur gifted the manuscript (GKS 2365 4º) to the Danish king in 1662, and thus it came to be known as the Codex Regius.[87] One of the defining features of the poetry in the *Poetic Edda* is the use of 'verse-forms that derive from the common German alliterative metre,' the Norse versions of which include *fornyrðislag*, *málaháttr*, and *ljóðaháttr*.[88] These verse forms are not found exclusively in the *Poetic Edda*; much of the poetry in the *fornaldarsögur* is in these metres, as are the eddic-style praise poems listed in the introduction, as well as, for example, *Merlínusspá*, *Sólarjlóð*, and *Hugsvinnsmál*, all of which are included in the database of the *Skaldic Project*, and will thus be addressed in the skaldic chapter.

Further, some of the poems that appear in the Codex Regius also appear elsewhere: stanzas from *Völuspá*, *Vafþrúðnismál*, and *Grímnismal* are quoted by Snorri in *Gylfaginning*; a variant version of *Völuspá* is found in *Hauksbók*; and *Hárbarðsljóð*, *Hymiskviða*, *Skírnismál* (to the end of stanza 27), some of *Vafþrúðnismál*, and the beginning of the prose introduction to *Völundarkviða* are all found in AM 748 1 a 4º. There are also those poems that are considered eddic but do not appear in the Codex Regius: *Rígsþula* occurs in the Codex Wormianus (AM 242 fol. dated to c. 1350); *Hyndluljóð* is preserved in Flateyjarbók (GKS 1005 fol. dated to the late fourteenth c); *Grottasöngr* is included by Snorri in

[85] Larrington, "Introduction", 3.
[86] Clunies Ross, *Old Norse Poetry and Poetics*, 8.
[87] Larrington, ed. *The Poetic Edda*, xi.
[88] Margaret Clunies Ross et al., "General Introduction," in *Poetry from the Kings' Sagas*, ed. Diana Whaley, vol. 1, bk. 1, of *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross et al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012): xvi.
[88] Clunies Ross et al., "General Introduction," xiv.

*Skáldskaparmál*; and *Baldrs Draumar* is preserved, along with those poems mentioned above, in AM 748 1 a 4º.[89]

Speaking to the difficulties of determining what eddic poetry is, Schorn notes that 'the definition of eddic poetry itself as a distinctive branch of Old Norse poetics is an artificial one that sits increasingly uneasily with modern scholars.'[90] She goes on to say that 'speaking of "eddic poetry" is misleading in two ways: it suggests that the poems' defining features are unique to 'eddic' material, and that there was a medieval concept of 'eddic' poetry (understood by that or any other name).'[91] The *Skaldic Project* editors acknowledge that their 'edition advertises itself as including all skaldic poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages, yet it could be argued on metrical grounds at least that it also contains poetry that could be termed "eddic".'[92] Despite these similarities in verse-form between the poetry found in the *Edda* and that found in, for example, the *fornaldarsögur*, 'it has become conventional to edit the Poetic Edda anthology and eddic poetry regarded as closely related to it separately from the rest of the corpus … which has had the effect of isolating them from the rest of the corpus and sometimes exaggerating their differences from it.'[93] Acknowledging the potential dangers of this separation, the *Skaldic Project* editors have followed what has come to be a scholarly convention, and omitted those poems in the Codex Regius and those considered closely related to them from their editing project. I follow this separation, addressing in this chapter those poems that are not included in the *Skaldic Project* database. Thus, to reiterate the specification made in the introduction, this chapter addresses those poems in the Codex Regius manuscript as well as those that Larrington chose to include in her 2014 revised edition of the text, which include *Baldrs draumar*, *Rígsþula*, *Hyndluljóð*, *Grottasöngr*, *Grógaldr* and *Fjölsvinnsmál*. *The Waking of Agantýr* is included in the *Skaldic Project* database, and thus that poem will be addressed in the skaldic chapter.

This chapter is divided into seven subsections, each focussed on one of the core wisdom adjectives. The sections are arranged alphabetically by word. Each section will address every instance of the simple adjective as well as those of its adjectival compounds. A table including each instance of the words and their compounds can be found at the beginning of each subsection for reference.

There are certain poems whose overall form and preservation it is necessary to discuss – for example, *Vafþrúðnismál* – and I have included such discussions in the section of the word I believe to

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[89] For more detail on these instances of preservation, see Margaret Clunies Ross, "The Transmission and Preservation of Eddic Poetry," in *A Handbook to Eddic Poetry*, ed. Carolyne Larrington, Judy Quinn, and Brittany Schorn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), especially 24-30.
[90] Brittany Schorn, "Eddic Modes and Genres," in *A Handbook to Eddic Poetry*, ed. Carolyne Larrington, Judy Quinn, and Brittany Schorn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 232.
[91] Schorn, "Eddic Modes and Genres," 232.
[92] Clunies Ross et al., "General Introduction," xiii.
[93] Clunies Ross et al., "General Introduction," xiii.

have the most important use in the poem in question. For example, I include a discussion of *Fáfnismál* in the *spakr* section (**2.4**) because I am most interested in *spakr*'s function within that poem, even though the poem includes words that precede *spakr* alphabetically. Thus, the poem is mentioned, but not thoroughly discussed, in preceding sections. In the case of *Hávamál*, due to its importance not only to this study, but to eddic scholarship in general, it will be necessary to include a discussion of its structure as well as its critical history. Instead of embedding this discussion in one of the word's sections, due to its integral nature, I will provide a brief summary of the poem and its relevant scholarship in a section below that precedes the discussions of the words.

As stated in the Introduction, unless otherwise indicated, translations of the eddic material are taken from Larrington's 2014 revised edition of the *Poetic Edda*. I have chosen this translation first and foremost because of its widely-accepted excellence, as well as its accessibility. There are some instances in which I have found it necessary to provide my own translations – this occurs primarily when Larrington has opted for an idiomatic interpretation which happens to have glossed over a word I am discussing. In these relatively few cases, I have indicated that the translation is my own. Regardless of whose translation appears, I always leave the core adjectives untranslated.

**Hávamál**

Because the poem *Hávamál* contains so many of the core wisdom adjectives with which this study is concerned and has such a complicated structure, it is important to introduce it more fully here. *Hávamál*, or 'The Sayings of the High One,' is a poem extant only in the Codex Regius. Usually presented as consisting of 164 stanzas of various metres, *Hávamál* is the longest poem in the Codex Regius, and is located between *Völuspá* and *Grímnismál*. There has been much speculation about the origin of the poem, and I will outline some of the most prominent of these discussions below.

The only breaks in the manuscript indicated by the scribe are at stanzas 111 and 138, marked by large capital letters which are typically only used at the beginning of poems.[94] In 1891, however, Karl Müllenhoff subdivided the poem into six distinct sections. These are:

| | |
|---|---|
| I. Gnomic verses | 1-79 |
| II. Óðinn's adventure with Billings maer | 95 (earlier?)-102 |
| III. Óðinn's adventure with Gunnlöð | 104 (103?)-110 |
| IV. *Loddfáfnismál* | 111(112)-137 |
| V. *Rúnatal* | 138-145 |
| VI. *Ljóðatal* | 146-163[95] |

[94] John McKinnell, "The Evolution of *Hávamál*," in *Essays on Eddic Poetry*, ed. Donata Kick and John D. Shafer, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 60.
[95] Karl Müllenhoff, "Ueber die ältere Edda: Hávamál." *Deutsche Altertumskunde* 250-88, 1891 in David Evans, "Hávamál," (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1986), 8.

Like Müllenhoff, John McKinnell suggests that *Hávamál* consists of a grouping of various poems with additions throughout by later redactors, agreeing with David Evans' suggestion that the title of the poem, 'Sayings of the High One,' may be taken from the last stanza of the poem, which is commonly attributed to a later redactor.[96] McKinnell in turn separates the poem into his own four 'original' sections by combining some of Müllenhoff's poems and removing those stanzas he believes to have been inserted by later redactors. He believes that the poem was likely edited and reorganised in the following ways:

> 1. The addition of lines that appear to impose unity. These stanzas include 80, 111 (1-3 and 9-10), 162 (4-9), and 164.
>
> 2. The addition of what he calls 'encyclopaedic' stanzas, which add unnecessary detail to pre-existing stanzas, the addition of which he attributes to 'a characteristic of twelfth- and thirteenth-century learning throughout Europe [which] often manifests itself in the form of poetic lists [in Old Norse].'[97] These stanzas include 81-83, 85-90, 137, and 142-145.
>
> 3. After the removal of those stanzas affected by stages 1 and 2, generally complete poems remain, connected by the assumption that Óðinn was the narrator. McKinnell believes that each of these probably began with a large capital letter in the hypothetical 'lost manuscript,' but that only those beginning stanzas 1, 111, and 138 were copied into the Codex Regius.[98]

Thus, McKinnell is left with four constituent poems:

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. The Gnomic Poem | 1-79 |
| 2. Hávamál B | 84; 91-110 |
| 3. Loddfáfnismál | 111, 4-8 and 11; 112-36 |
| 4. Ljóðatal | 138-41; 146-61; 162, 1-3; 163 |

Though I am considering the poem as a whole, McKinnell's distinctions, be they accurately indicative of 'original' divisions or not, are helpful in terms of thinking about theme, subject matter, and structure.

The *Gnomic Poem* consists of 79 stanzas of what Larrington believes was 'Norse folk-wisdom [which] formed the basis for the sequences of *ljóðaháttr* verses, already linked by verbal repetitions, or by theme.'[99] This wisdom is passed on in this poem, according to Margaret Clunies Ross, from 'an apparently extradiegetic narrative voice directly addressing an unspecified 'you.''[100] She assigns both the narrator and the narratee what she calls 'Everyman status,' as neither the *þú* nor the narrator is

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[96] McKinnell, "The Evolution of *Hávamál*," 59.
[97] McKinnell, "The Evolution of *Hávamál*," 83.
[98] McKinnell, "The Evolution of *Hávamál*," 84.
[99] Carolyne Larrington, *A Store of Common Sense: Gnomic Theme and Style in Old Icelandic and Old English Wisdom Poetry*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 18.
[100] Margaret Clunies Ross, "Voice and Voices in Eddaic Poetry," in *Poetry in the Scandinavian Middle Ages: Proceedings of the Seventh International Saga Conference, Spoleto, 4-10 September*, (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull'alto Medioevo, 1988), 48.

personalized.[101] She puts forward that the best approach to the narrator and narratee is to consider that the narrator assumes the role of the archetypal wise wanderer, and the narratee that of the archetypal pupil and Everyman. More specifically, Clunies Ross assigns Óðinn as the narrative voice for the poem as a whole. McKinnell, on the other hand, does not accept that there is a coherent narrator and narratee throughout, and instead believes the performer to be 'an impressionist who can adopt whatever character suits the point he is making at any particular moment.'[102] He argues that the performer is 'a shifting entity, a series of personae which illustrate the poet's main thematic concerns.'[103] This, according to McKinnell, would allow the performer to move in and out of the roles of different types of guests (in the *Gnomic Poem*, especially), and also in and out of the role of Óðinn, as needed. For the purposes of this thesis, it is not necessary to engage in more detail in the narratorial debate that surrounds the poem; those sections of *Hávamál* that are discussed in this thesis that necessarily belong to Óðinn are unequivocally assigned to him by both Clunies Ross as well as McKinnell (primarily I am speaking here of *Hávamál B*). Whenever the question of narrator occurs in this thesis, I address it as necessary. Concerning the origins of the *Gnomic Poem*, Evans proposes that there was an original, planned poem that resulted in 1-79, and that any disjointedness of it comes from basic problems in oral transmission of a text that does not have a narrative.[104] McKinnell is less sure about the cohesiveness of the *Gnomic Poem*, but admits that the poem is relatively consistent both in its tone and its metre.

*Hávamál B* or *The Poem of Sexual Intrigue* encompasses Óðinn's adventures with the (probably) giant women *Billings mær* and Gunnlöð, and focusses on 'sexual treachery.'[105] It is, according to McKinnell, neatly organised into three sections: the *Theme*, made up of five stanzas (84, 91-92, 93-94); the *Woman as Deceiver*, made up of eight stanzas (95, 96-101, 102); and the *Man as Deceiver*, made up, again, of eight stanzas (103, 104-109, 110).[106]

McKinnell's third poem, *Loddfáfnismál*, consists of 26 stanzas of gnomic advice given to a character otherwise unknown in the mythology called Loddfáfnir. With a few exceptions, each stanza begins with the words *Ráðomk þér, Loddfáfnir* ... [I advise you, Loddfáfnir], and proceeds to offer a piece of commonplace wisdom. It is this section, beginning with stanza 111, that is arguably the most problematic in terms of identifying its narrator. Whereas Evans and Larrington believe that stanza 111 was likely not originally connected to the following section, McKinnell believes it is 'a clumsy editorial

[101] Clunies Ross, "Voice and Voices in Eddaic Poetry," 49.
[102] John McKinnell, "Personae of the Performer in *Hávamál*," *Viking Society for Northern Research Saga Book* 37 (2013): 28.
[103] McKinnell, "Personae of the Performer in *Hávamál*," 35.
[104] David Evans, "Hávamál," (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1986), 11.
[105] John McKinnell, "Hávamál B: A Reconstructed Poem of Sexual Intrigue," in *Essays on Eddic Poetry*, ed. Donata Kick and John D. Shafer, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 96.
[106] McKinnell, "Hávamál B," 99.

attempt to identify the narrator with Óðinn,' whereas Clunies Ross believes it can be comfortably assigned to him.[107] She considers Óðinn to be a sub-divided ego, meaning that 'he experiences himself as both subject and object, narrator and actor,' which would allow him both to narrate the stanza and partake in its action.[108] The only core adjective that appears in *Loddfáfnismál* is *ósvinnr*, in stanza 122, where it appears in a gnomic construction warning against entering an argument with a fool. As we shall see, it matters less to this project whether the narrator of this section is Óðinn, and more that the context in which the word appears is a gnomic one.

*Ljóðatal* is the last of McKinnell's proposed sections. It consists of a first-person account of Óðinn hanging on the windy tree for nine days and nine nights sacrificing himself to himself, in which he recites various runes and spells that he learns as a result of the ordeal. Evans argues that *Ljóðatal* is 'doubtless an originally independent poem incorporated, seemingly with little or no modification, into the *Hávamál* collection,' and suggests that the reference to Loddfáfnir in stanza 62 may have been a later insertion attempting to connect this poem with the rest of *Hávamál*.[109]

Trying to suggest a date for these individual 'poems' is notoriously difficult. Larrington sums up the field until 1993 by saying that at that time, there was 'no conclusive proof of the date of composition of *Hávamál* in its present form, or of the age of its constituent parts. Scholars have argued, with equal vigour, that the mythological and mystical parts have attracted the gnomic material and hence are older, and exactly the converse.'[110] Since then, valiant attempts at dating these constituent parts have been made by McKinnell with the help of Fidjestøl's model of measuring the expletive particle *of/um*.[111] Even so, the dating of these sections remains ultimately inconclusive, and will not play an important part in this study. I choose instead to follow the examples of Clunies Ross and Larrington, who in their own studies consider the poem as a coherent work as it has been presented by the thirteenth-century redactor.

### 2.1 Fróðr

*Fróðr* is the highest occurring adjective in the eddic corpus, appearing as a simplex a total of 27 times, that number rising to 33 with the inclusion of its compounds. It also enjoys relatively high frequency in the skaldic corpus, with 30 occurrences, and middling popularity in the prose with 78. Its high frequency in the eddic corpus is due in large part to its use in *Hávamál* and *Vafþrúðnismál*, where it occurs eight and eleven times, respectively. It also appears twice in each of *Skírnismál* and *Fáfnismál*, and once in

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[107] David Evans, "Hávamál," (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1986), 26; Larrington, *A Store of Common Sense*, 51; McKinnell, "The Evolution of *Hávamál*," 92.
[108] Clunies Ross, "Voice and Voices in Eddaic Poetry," 50.
[109] David Evans, "*Hávamál*," (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1986), 35.
[110] Larrington, *A Store of Common Sense*, 17.
[111] Bjarne Fidjestøl, *The Dating of Eddic Poetry*, Bibliotheca Arnamagnæna 41, edited by Odd Einar Haugen (Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzel, 1999).

*Guðrúnarkviða hin fyrsta*, *Atlamál hin Groenlenzku*, and *Fjölsvinnsmál*. Across the eddic corpus, *fróðr* has a conspicuous tendency to be used in formulas and also for giants and gods.

| ***Fróðr* in the Eddic Corpus** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Poem** | **Stanza** | **Word** | **Referent** | **Speaker** |
| **Hávamál** | 7 | fróðr | gnomic | gnomic |
| | 28 | fróðr | gnomic | gnomic |
| | 30 | fróðr | gnomic | gnomic |
| | 63 | fróðr | gnomic | gnomic |
| | 31 | fróðr | gnomic | gnomic |
| | 14 | fróðr | Fjalar | Óðinn |
| | 107 | fróðr | Óðinn | Óðinn |
| | 141 | fróðr | Óðinn | Óðinn |
| | 103 | margfróðr | gnomic | gnomic |
| **Vafþrúðnismál** | 6 | fróðr | Óðinn | Vafþrúðnir |
| | 19 | fróðr | Óðinn | Vafþrúðnir |
| | 20 | fróðr | Vafþrúðnir | Óðinn |
| | 30 | fróðr | Vafþrúðnir | Óðinn |
| | 33 | fróðr | Aurgelmir | Vafþrúðnir |
| | 35 | fróðr | Bergelmir | Vafþrúðnir |
| | 26 | fróðr | Reginn | Óðinn |
| | 26 | fróðr | Vafþrúðnir | Óðinn |
| | 28 | fróðr | Vafþrúðnir | Óðinn |
| | 34 | fróðr | Vafþrúðnir | Óðinn |
| | 30 | fróðr | Vafþrúðnir | Óðinn |
| | 36 | fróðr | Vafþrúðnir | Óðinn |
| | 48 | fróðgeðjaðr | girls | Óðinn |
| **Fjölsvinssmál** | 4 | fróðr | Fjolsvinnr's mind | Fjolsvinnr |
| **Fáfnismál** | 12 | fróðr | Fafnir | Sigurðr |
| | 14 | fróðr | Fafnir | Sigurðr |
| **Skírnismál** | 1 | fróðr | Freyr | Njordr/Skadi |
| | 2 | fróðr | Freyr | Skirnir |
| **Guðrúnarkviða I** | 12 | fróðr | Herborg | Gullrond |
| **Atlamál** | 104 | fróðr | Guðrún | narrator |
| **Sigrdrífumál** | 14 | fróðligr | Mímir | Sigrdrífa |
| **Atlakviða** | 41 | ófróðr | sons | narrator |
| **Sgk II** | 20 | ófróðr | Guthorm | Gunnarr |
| **Helgakviða Hjörvarðssonar** | 2 | fróðhugaðr | raven | Atli |
| **TOTAL** | **33** | | | |

Table 8

That said, we will begin with *fróðr*'s uses in *Hávamál*, most of which are gnomic. Specifically, each is concerned with how to behave in a hall. *Fróðr*'s first use, in stanza 7, suggests keeping one's ears and eyes alert upon entering a hall:

| | |
|---|---|
| Inn vari gestr, er til verðar kømr, | The careful guest, who comes to a meal, |
| þunnu hljóði þegir, | keeps silent, with hearing finely attuned; |
| eyrum hlýðir, | he listens with his ears, |
| en augum skoðar; | and looks about with his eyes; |
| svá nýsisk fróðra hverr fyrir. | so every *fróðr* man spies out what's ahead. |
| | *Hávamál* 7 |

Stanzas 28, 30, and 63 are concerned with the guest's behaviour inside the hall, specifically the practice of asking and answering questions:

| | |
|---|---|
| Fróðr sá þykkisk | *Fróðr* he esteems himself |
| er fregna kann | who knows how to question |
| ok segja it sama | and how to answer as well |
| | *Hávamál* 28 |

| | |
|---|---|
| margr þá fróðr þykkisk, | many a man seems *fróðr* |
| er hann freginn erat | if he isn't asked questions |
| ok nái hann þurrfjallr þruma. | and he manages to lurk unscathed. |
| | *Hávamál* 30 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Fregna ok segja | Asking and answering questions |
| skal fróðra hverr, | every *fróðr* man should do, |
| sá er vill heitinn horskr | he who wants to be reputed *horskr* |
| | *Hávamál* 63 |

As we begin to think critically about the poetic lexicon of wisdom and consider how we might benefit from such a study, we are presented here with an opportunity to step back and rethink how we look at language, as simple as some of these observations may seem. The juxtaposition in stanza 63 of *fróðr* and *horskr* leads to some important considerations, the first and most obvious being that the words have distinct meanings – that is, they are not used synonymously. Secondly, that being *fróðr* seems to be a prerequisite to being *horskr*. These two words do not appear alongside one another anwhere else in the eddic corpus, so to speculate any more on their specific relationship here would be conjectural. Suffice it to say for now that we can see here important evidence that these wisdom adjectives had more pronounced and recognised differences than they are afforded by many English translations.

The association in the above stanza with asking and answering questions is one that we will see maintained through many of *fróðr*'s eddic uses. *Hávamál* 31, the last of the gnomic occurences, also deals with appropriate behaviour in a hall, citing the importance of avoiding involvement in the slinging of insults:

| | |
|---|---|
| *Fróðr* þykkisk | *Fróðr* that man seems |
| sá er flótta tekr | to retreat when |
| gestr at gest hæðinn | one guest is insulting another |
| | *Hávamál* 31 |

The remaining three occurrences in *Hávamál* have specific referents. In stanza 14, Óðinn describes being drunk at *fróða Fjalars*. Larrington suggests that here, Fjalar has been confused with the giant Suttungr,[112] and I would argue based on the use of *fróðr* across the rest of the eddic corpus that the referent here is likely a giant. The final two uses, in stanzas 107 and 141, are also associated with Óðinn. In 107, Óðinn is boasting about how he manipulated the giantess Gunnlöð in order to obtain the mead of poetry, saying:

| | |
|---|---|
| Vel keypts litar | That bargain-bought beauty |
| hefi ek vel notit, | I made good use of, |
| fás er fróðum vant, | the *fróðr* lack for little; |
| þvíat Óðreirir | for Odreirir |
| er nú upp kominn | has now come up |
| á alda vés jarðar. | to the rim of men's sanctuaries. |
| | *Hávamál* 107 |

Though the structure and sentiment of the line in question are gnomic, I would suggest that from the context, it is clearly meant that Óðinn lacks for little because he is *fróðr*. He confirms this suspicion in stanza 141, during the episode of self-sacrifice on Yggdrasil. Óðinn narrates the result of having taken up runes, learned spells from the son of the giant Bölþórr (thus, from his mother's brother), and drunk the mead from Óðreirir:

| | |
|---|---|
| Þá nam ek frævask | Then I began to quicken |
| ok fróðr vera | and be *fróðr*, |
| ok vaxa ok vel hafask; | and to grow and to prosper; |
| | *Hávamál* 141, 1-3 |

In *Hávamál*, there is a tendency for *fróðr* to be used both for gnomic wisdom as well as the wisdom of gods and giants. Notably, it is the only wisdom word in *Hávamál* to refer to Óðinn. It is the latter trend that will become more prominent as we track the remaining uses of *fróðr* through the eddic corpus.

*Fróðr* appears eleven times in *Vafþrúðnismál* (including occurrences in variant versions to that in the Codex Regius, which are discussed below). Of these appearances, four are formulaic (always applying to the giant Vafþrúðnir), three are direct references to Vafþrúðnir, and the remaining three refer to other primordial beings (two being named giants, and one being *regin* [the Powers]). Because *Vafþrúðnismál*

[112] Larrington, *The Poetic Edda*, 285.

contains such a great number of wisdom words, it will be necessary here to address the poem in some detail, and to include in the discussion an analysis of the words *svinnr* and *alsvinnr*, whose use is too intimately intertwined with that of *fróðr* to discuss separately.

*Vafþrúðnismál* appears in its fullest extant form as the third poem in the Codex Regius (henceforth referred to as 'R'), consisting of 55 stanzas. Approximately two thirds (stanzas 20-55)[113] of the version that appears in R also appears in MS 748 1 4to (A), which is believed be younger than R, likely dating from the late thirteenth century.[114] Elias Wessén suggested that there is sufficient linguistic evidence to indicate that the two versions came from a single source, as opposed to the later A having been copied from R.[115] Tim Machan notes that the differences between A and R are minimal, and believes that we may attribute these differences, for the most part, to scribal alteration.[116] There are a couple of instances in which these few discrepancies affect the study at hand, and these will be dealt with below. Nine stanzas of *Vafþrúðnismál* also appear, in full or in part, in the *Gylfaginning* section of Snorri Sturluson's *Edda*.[117]

The focus of the poem is a wisdom contest between Óðinn and the giant Vafþrúðnir, with most of the action taking place in Vafþrúðnir's hall. The poem begins in Ásgarðr, where Frigg, fearing for Óðinn's life, pleads with him not to journey to the hall of Vafþrúðnir. Óðinn, however, disregards her misgivings and travels to Vafþrúðnir's hall *at freista orðspeki/þess ins alsvinna jötuns* [to try the wisdom of the *alsvinnr* giant][118]. Óðinn arrives at the hall and presents himself to Vafþrúðnir in disguise as Gagnráðr, and after submitting himself to questioning by the giant and being deemed worthy of the contest, Óðinn takes on the role of questioner. After asking the giant a series of questions, the last of which concerns Ragnarök and the fate of the gods and of Óðinn himself, Óðinn wins the contest by asking Vafþrúðnir a question to which only Óðinn could know the answer, that is: what did Óðinn whisper into his son Baldr's ear on his funeral pyre? This question serves to simultaneously reveal his identity to the giant and make him the victor of the contest.

Two of the primary studies carried out on the structure of *Vafþrúðnismál* have been undertaken by John McKinnell and Maria Elena Ruggerini, the latter having been largely influenced by, but deviating slightly from, the ideas of the former. McKinnell suggests that the poem ought to be considered in four parts, and divides it as follows:

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[113] Maria Elena Ruggerini, "A Stylistic and Typological Approach to *Vafþrúðnismál*", in *Both One and Many: Essays on Change and Variety in Late Norse Heathenism*, ed. John McKinnell (Rome: Il Calamo, 1994), 156.
[114] Elias Wessén, *Fragments of The Elder and the Younger Edda*, Corpus Codicum Islandicorum Medii Aevi 14, (Copenhagen: E. Munksgaard, 1945), 21, cited in Tim William Machan, *Vafþrúðnismál*, (Cambridge: Durham Medieval Texts, 1988), 8.
[115] Wessén, *Fragments of The Elder and the Younger Edda*, 8.
[116] Machan, *Vafþrúðnismál*,13.
[117] Machan, *Vafþrúðnismál*, 7.
[118] *Vafþrúðnismál* 5, 2-3

| | |
|---|---|
| 1-5 | Prologue: Óðinn and Frigg in Ásgarðr (A) |
| 6-19 | Vafþrúðnir questions Óðinn (B) |
| 20-43 | Óðinn questions Vafþrúðnir about the past and the present (C) |
| 44-55 | Óðinn questions Vafþrúðnir about the future and post-Ragnarök (D)[119] |

Ruggerini, on the other hand, proposes that 'one can distinguish narrative sections of dialogue made up of four stanzas each, of four stanzas followed by a fifth, coda stanza with a precise function of its own, or of eight stanzas (four questions + four answers).'[120] Thus, the poem would be broken down in the following way:

| | |
|---|---|
| 1-4 | Prologue |
| 5 | Coda to Prologue |
| 6-9 | Guest Entering the Hall sequence |
| 10 | Coda to Guest Entering the Hall sequence |
| 11-18 | Vafþrúðnir questions Óðinn |
| 19 | Coda to Vafþrúðnir questioning Óðinn (role reversal) |
| 20-27 | Óðinn asks Vafþrúðnir questions about the origins of celestial elements (a) |
| 28-35 | Óðinn asks Vafþrúðnir questions about ancient matters (b) |
| 36-43 | Óðinn asks Vafþrúðnir: |
| | 36 summary question of the theme of (a) |
| | 38 summary question of the theme of (b) |
| | 40 question concerning Óðinn himself |
| | 42 question concerning the origins of Vafþrúðnir's knowledge |
| 44-51 | Óðinn asks Vafþrúðnir questions about the future |
| 52-55 | Independent thematic epilogue wherein Óðinn wins the contest |

Neither of these methods of organisation is necessarily better than the other, rather different aspects and elements of the poem may be brought to our attention approaching the poem from each angle, as we will see demonstrated below.

*Fróðr* is used first in stanza 6, when Óðinn, having just entered Vafþrúðnir's hall, challenges the giant, saying:

| | |
|---|---|
| hitt vil ek fyrst vita, | this I want to know first, |
| ef þú fróðr sér | whether you are *fróðr* |
| eða alsviðr, jötunn | or *alsviðr*, giant |

*Vafþrúðnismál* 6, 4-6

It has already been established by stanza 6 that Vafþrúðnir is *alsvinnr*: Óðinn says in stanza 1 that he wishes to contend with *inn alsvinna jötunn*, and the narrator confirms as much in stanza 5, when we are told that Óðinn has gone *at freista orðspeki / þess ins alsvinna jötuns* [to try the wisdom / of the *alsvinna* giant]. Thus, it would seem upon first reading of stanza 6 that Óðinn has gone to discover not whether

[119] John McKinnell, "The Paradox of *Vafþrúðnismál*," in *Essays on Eddic Poetry*, ed. Donata Kick and John D. Shafer (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014),155-57.
[120] Ruggerini, "A Stylistic and Typological Approach to *Vafþrúðnismál*," 181.

Vafþrúðnir is *alsvinnr* – which he appears to already know – but whether he is *fróðr*. However, I will argue that Óðinn already knows this, too.

Óðinn himself is called *fróðr* by Vafþrúðnir in stanza 6, after he has provided the giant with a series of answers to mythological questions which, according to McKinnell, 'is no more than an empty parade of knowledge without wisdom, reflecting Vafþrúðnir's arrogance but no real understanding of the world.'[121] Nevertheless, it is enough for Vafþrúðnir to confirm that his guest is *fróðr*:

| | |
|---|---|
| Fróðr ertu nú, gestr, | *Fróðr* you are, guest, |
| far þú á bekk jötuns, | come to the giant's bench, |
| ok mælumk í sessi saman; | and we will speak together in the seat; |
| höfði veðja | we shall wager |
| vit skulum höllu í, | our heads in the hall, |
| gestr, um geðspeki. | guest, on our wisdom. |

*Vafþrúðnismál* 19

The first indication that Vafþrúðnir is also *fróðr* is that his authority to bestow the designation on Óðinn is never questioned, and Óðinn does not require the giant to pass the same test – Óðinn refers to the giant as *fróðr* unquestioningly in the following stanza, before any questions have been answered. In stanza 20, Óðinn calls Vafþrúðnir *inn fróði jötunn* after asking him the origins of the earth and sky. He uses the same phrase, in the same position in the stanza, in stanza 30, after asking about the origins of the giant Aurgelmir. Vafþrúðnir himself also uses the phrase *inn fróði jötunn* once in stanza 33 to refer to Aurgelmir, and again in stanza 35 to refer to another giant, Bergelmir. Giants, it seems, are understood to be *fróðr*. The remaining specific referent of *fróðr* in the poem is to be found in stanza 26, in which Óðinn wants to know:

| | |
|---|---|
| hvaðan vetr um kom | from where winter came |
| eða varmt sumar | or warm summer, |
| fyrst með fróð regin | first among the *fróðr* Powers |

*Vafþrúðnismál* 26, 4-6

Though not specified as giants, these *fróðr reginn* are clearly a primordial force.

The formula *inn* ____ *jötunn* is used again in the poem to refer to Vafþrúðnir, in stanza 42, but with the word *alsvinnr* used instead of *fróðr*. The question Óðinn asks in stanza 42 anticipates the next set of questions by asking about how Vafþrúðnir knows the fates of the giants and gods, demanding: *frá jötna rúnum / ok allra goða / segir þú it sannasta, / inn alsvinni jötunn* [of the secrets of the giants and of all the gods / tell most truly, / *alsvinnr* giant]. This stanza is the last in McKinnell's section C (in which Óðinn asks Vafþrúðnir about the past and the present) and identified as an outlier by Ruggerini, in both

[121] McKinnell, "The Paradox of *Vafþrúðnismál*," 158.

breakdowns occupying a position of some importance. Though the formula does not appear again, the sentiment is repeated with the use of *alsvinnr* in stanza 34, in the last of Ruggerini's questions on ancient matters, wherein Óðinn asks Vafþrúðnir: *hvat þú furst of mant / eða fremst um veizt* [what you first remember, or what you know to be earliest]. He then concludes the stanza by saying *þú ert alsviðr, jötunn* [you are *alsvinnr*, giant]. Of all the questions Óðinn asks Vafþrúðnir, the two asked in these stanzas, in which he calls the giant *alsvinnr*, are the only two that seem impossible for Óðinn to verify – there is no correct answer to what Vafþrúðnir first remembers, and Óðinn would be in no position to determine if the giant was lying. Similarly, the demand Óðinn makes that Vafþrúðnir tell him all the secrets of giants and gods is met not with a verifiable answer, but with a vague promise from Vafþrúðnir that he can answer such questions because he has travelled *hvern heim* [into every world].[122] McKinnell also acknowledges a discrepancy in these two stanzas, in that they – alongside stanza 48, which I will address below – 'step outside the expected mythological subject matter [and] ask about the giant's own experience'.[123] McKinnell does not, however, offer a reason for this deviation. I suggest based on the appearance of *aslvinnr* in both stanzas that they serve to emphasize the exclusivity of the knowledge that the giant possesses.

This intimate relationship between *fróðr* and *svinnr* is also demonstrated in the formula Óðinn uses to question Vafþrúðnir, beginning in stanza 24. Óðinn prefaces his questions in stanzas 24, 26, 28, 30, 32, 34, and 36 with the formula *Segðu þat it* [ordinal number]*,/alls þik [fróðan/svinnan] kveða* (tell me this [ordinal number] thing, since you are said to be [*fróðr*/*svinnr*]). The choice of when to use each word seems largely to have been made based on alliterative requirements in these cases as opposed to content. However, there are some discrepancies between R (MS GKS 2365 4to) and A (MS 748 1 4to), which are outlined in this table:

| ***Fróðr* and *Svinnr* in *Vafþrúðnismál*** | | |
|---|---|---|
| Stanza | R | A |
| 24 | svinnan | svinnan |
| 26 | fróðan | fróðan |
| 28 | fróðan | fróðan |
| **30** | **svinnan** | **fróðan** |
| 32 | svinnan | svinnan |
| 34*does not alliterate | fróðan | fróðan |
| **36** | **svinnan** | **fróðan** |

Table 9

[122] *Vafþrúðnismál* 43
[123] McKinnell, "The Paradox of *Vafþrúðnismál*," 163.

Machan suggests that the discrepancy in stanza 30 is due to 'anticipation of the scribe of A of the same formula as in 26.2 and 28.2.'[124] As demonstrated in the above table, however, the same discrepancy occurs at stanza 36. Machan does not offer an explanation for this instance, and we are thus left to assume that he attributes it, too, to a scribal anticipation. This explanation, however, seems unsatisfactory, not least because we see *svinnan* used in stanza 32 in the A manuscript as well as the R. This would then mean that the scribe made the anticipatory error not once, but twice, having recognised *svinnan* in stanza 32 and then proceeded to miswrite the same word again four stanzas later. If indeed a scribal error did occur, I am more inclined to imagine that, as Evert Salberger suggests in his discussion of the poem's potential Norwegian origins, the scribe confused the <f> with the initial long <s>.[125]

As is outlined in the table, there is an instance of non-alliteration which occurs in both R and A, which is the use of *fróðan* in stanza 34. This choice is particularly puzzling as *svinnan* would alliterate with *segðu* in 34.1. Some modern editions of the poem – including the *Íslenzk fornrit* edition – substitute *svinnan* in an attempt to make the stanza alliterate and thus conform to the pattern. Curiously, this is one of the stanzas in which Óðinn refers to Vafþrúðnir as *alsvinnr*:

| | |
|---|---|
| 'Segðu þat it átta, | 'Tell me this eighth thing, |
| alls þik fróðan kveða, | since you are said to be *fróðr* |
| ok þú, Vafþrúðnir, vitir, | and you, Vafþrúðnir, know, |
| hvat þú fyrst of mant | what you first remember |
| eða fremst um veizt, | or what you know to be earliest, |
| þú ert alsviðr, jötunn.' | you are *alsviðr*, giant.' |

*Vafþrúðnismál* 34

Machan points out in his note on 34.4-5 that we should 'note that the alliterative stress falls on the adverbs *fyrst* and *fremst* and thus underscores Óðinn's central concern in the question', that is, what is the first thing that the giant remembers.[126] I would tentatively suggest that the alliteration may have been deliberately interrupted in the first half of the stanza with *fróðr* to draw further attention to the priority of *fyrst* and *fremst* and thus emphasise *alsvinnr*'s relationship to knowledge that is apparently unavailable to Óðinn.

I hope to have established that Óðinn knew that Vafþrúðnir was both *alsvinnr* and *fróðr* before he challenged him to this contest. Thus, we may now seek to establish why Óðinn initiated this wisdom contest at all. McKinnell suggests that 'Óðinn should be seen, not as trying to discover what Fate holds in store – for if he did not know that already, he would be unable to ask the questions – but as testing

[124] Machan, *Vafþrúðnismál*, 13.
[125] Evert Salberger, "Ett stavrimsproblem i *Vafþrúðnismál* 34", *Maal og minne*, (1955): 120, cited in Machan, *Vafþrúðnismál*, 12.
[126] Machan, *Vafþrúðnismál*, 82.

whether Fate is as immutable as it seems.'[127] He goes on to explain that if the giant answers all of Óðinn's questions as he expects, then Óðinn's fate is sealed, but if the giant deviates from the expected answers, Óðinn may simultaneously be free from his fate at Ragnarök but also put in real danger in this wisdom contest. Based on the use of *alsvinnr*, in particular, I suggest a slight emendation to this theory. I suggest that *alsvinnr*'s exclusive application to Vafþrúðnir serves to highlight Óðinn's desperation. Óðinn is never referred to as *aslvinnr* in the poem, and we may then guess from that that Óðinn does not deserve that designation, as Vafþrúðnir apparently does: it seems that Óðinn believes that the giant may have access to some knowledge that he does not. Óðinn has gone to Vafþrúðnir seeking information about Ragnarök, hoping to learn some secret that would allow him to escape his fate. When it becomes clear that the *alsvinnr* giant will not provide any new information about Ragnarök to suggest that Óðinn might avoid his doom, Óðinn ends the contest and, it is assumed, kills Vafþrúðnir. *Alsvinnr*, I would argue, is the highest designation available in this poem, but even the *alsvinnr* giant cannot provide Óðinn with the answers he wants to hear.

Following a similar format to *Vafþrúðnismál*, the neo-eddic poem *Fjölsvinnsmál* focuses on Svipdagr, who, having located the hall of his beloved Menglöð, engages in a wisdom contest with her doorman, the giant Fjölsvinnr. Unlike the wisdom contest in *Vafþrúðnismál*, the roles of questioner and responder never change: Svipdagr is always the one asking the questions, and Fjölsvinnr is always answering (excepting stanzas 2 and 6, in which Fjölsvinnr demands to know Svipdagr's identity and is denied the information). In the fourth stanza, Fjölsvinnr boasts about how wise he is, saying:

| | |
|---|---|
| 'Fjölsviðr ek heiti | 'Fjölsviðr I'm called |
| en ek á fróðan sefa | and I've a *fróðr* mind indeed, |
| þeygi em ek míns mildr matar' | though I'm not over-generous with food' |
| | *Fjölsvinnsmál* 4, 1-3 |

The giant's name, Fjölsvinnr, ought not be overlooked here. After Fjölsvinnr gives Svipdagr his name in stanza 4, Svipdagr proceeds to use it in his question-asking formula for the remainder of the poem:

| | |
|---|---|
| 'Segðu mér þat, Fjölsviðr, | "Tell me, *Fjölsvinnr*, |
| er ek þik fregna mun | because I'm asking you, |
| ok ek vilda vita' | and because I want to know" |

There is, perhaps, a further relationship here between *fróðr* and *svinnr*, as well as the attribution of *fróðr* to a giant. *Fróðr* is used in relation to supernatural beings in two more poems – *Fáfnismál* and *Skírnismál* – each time in a formula.

[127] McKinnell, "The Paradox of *Vafþrúðnismál*," 165.

*Fáfnismál* follows the events of the hero Sigurðr's slaying of the dragon Fáfnir and the subsequent conversations that Sigurðr has first with the dragon, then with his foster father Reginn, and then, finally, with some very persuasive nuthatches. In stanzas 12 and 14 of the poem, during his conversation with Fáfnir, Sigurðr asks the dragon two questions in the style of a wisdom contest. The first question concerns the Norns, and the second concerns the island where Surtr and the Æsir will fight at Ragnarök. The formula that begins these two stanzas is:

| | |
|---|---|
| 'Segðu mér, Fáfnir,<br>alls þik fróðan kveða<br>ok vel margt vita' | 'Tell me, Fáfnir,<br>you are said to be *fróðr*<br>and to know a great deal' |

*Fáfnismál* 12/14, 1-3

Not only is Fáfnir supernatural, but Reginn refers to him specifically as *inn aldna jötunn* [the old giant] in stanza 29 of the poem. So we see, again, this formulaic use of *fróðr* to insist upon a supernatural figure's wisdom before asking him questions.

In keeping with certain aspects of this pattern, *fróðr* appears twice in *Skírnismál*, both times used in a refrain at the beginning of the poem. In the first stanza, Freyr's parents, Njörðr and Skaði, express concern for their son to his page, Skírnir, and ask him to check on Freyr. They refer to Freyr as *inn fróði* in the refrain:

| | |
|---|---|
| ok þess at fregna<br>hveim inn fróði sé<br>ofreiði afi | and ask this:<br>with whom the *fróðr* man<br>is so terribly angry |

*Skírnismál* 1, 4-6

The same refrain appears in the next stanza in Skírnir's reply, after he says that he expects harsh words from Freyr should he approach him. Though Freyr is not a giant and these stanzas are not introducing a wisdom contest, the formulaic application of *fróðr* to a supernatural figure is in keeping with the patterns that have emerged thus far.

Moving now conspicuously away from this pattern, perhaps the most peculiar uses of *fróðr* have been left for last, those being the ones in *Guðrúnarkviða hin fyrsta* and in *Atlamál hin grœnlenzku*. In these poems, Herborg (foster mother of Guðrún's sister, Gullrond) and Guðrún are, respectively, referred to using *fróðr*. Not only are these the only instances in which *fróðr* applies to women, but they are the only examples in the eddic corpus of *fróðr* having a direct human referent. In *Guðrúnarkviða hin fyrsta*, Gullrond chastises Herborg, telling her:

| | |
|---|---|
| Fá kanntu, fóstra,<br>þótt þú fróð sér,<br>ungu vífi | You don't really know, foster-mother,<br>though you are *fróðr*,<br>with a young wife |

annspjöll bera. how to converse.

*Guðrúnarkviða hin fyrsta* 12, 2-5

In *Atlamál hin grœnlenzku*, the reference to Guðrún comes in the penultimate stanza of the poem, in which the narrator states:

| | |
|---|---|
| fróð vildi Guðrún | Guðrún the *fróðr* |
| fara sér at spilla, | tried to kill herself, |
| urðu dvöl dœgra, | but her days were long drawn out; |
| dó hon í sinn annat. | another day she died. |

*Atlamál hin grœnlenzku* 104, 5-8

David Clark suggests that this stanza demonstrates that 'Guðrún is far from being the heroine of this poem, and the poet designates her decision to attempt suicide as *Fróð* (str. 102) [wise].'[128] I disagree quite strongly with this reading of the stanza, not only because it is not supported by the grammar – it is Guðrún who is *fróðr*, not her decision to attempt suicide – but also because it does not make sense contextually. Clark's misreading also informs his confusion about the following stanza, in which the poet says *sæll er hverr siðan / er slíkt fetr fœða / jóð at afreki / sems ól Gjúki* [fortunate is any man / who afterwards can father / such heroic children / as Giuki fathered].[129] Clark's complaint that the sentiments of the latter stanza is 'off-key'[130] is no longer valid if stanza 104 is read in Guðrún's favour. We will see over the course of this study that there are numerous wisdom words applied to women, and that the lexicon is not nearly as male-dominated as much scholarship would suggest.

The overarching trend of *fróðr* tends towards gnomic verse and formulaic uses refering to supernatural beings, particularly giants. As we will find is the case over the course of this study, it is just as important to look at where a word does not appear as it is to look at where it does. *Fróðr* is never used to refer to any male heroes in the eddic literature – the only humans referred to in the heroic corpus as *fróðr* are women. Looking now at *fróðr*'s compounds, we will see that they largely conform to the pattern save a very interesting exception in the negative *ófróðr*

The compound *fróðligr* is formed using the very common adjectival suffix *-ligr*.[131] *Fróðligr* is used just once in the eddic poetry, in *Sigrdrífumál* 14, where it applies to Mím's head. Larrington presumes that this is synonymous with Mímir's head, which is a disembodied head of one of the Æsir

[128] David Clark, "Undermining and En-Gendering Vengeance: Distancing Anti-Feminism in the 'Poetic Edda'," *Scandinavian Studies* 77, no. 2 (2005): 189.
[129] *Atlamál* 105
[130] David Clark, "Undermining and En-Gendering Vengeance," 189.
[131] According to Llewellyn (1947), *-ligr* is the most common adjectival suffix in Old Norse. When affixed to a noun, *-ligr* creates an adjective of the noun with the meaning 'pertaining to' [noun]; when affixed to an adjective, the meaning of the adjective is, largely, unchanged. See R. H. Llewellyn, "The Rank-Number Relationship of Adjectival Suffixes in Old Norse", *The Journal of Social Psychology* 25, (1947).

form which Óðinn seeks wisdom.[132] In *Sigrdrífumál*, the valkyrie Sigrdrífa is teaching Sigurðr about runes, and relays to him the wisdom spoken by Mím's head. She introduces it:

| | |
|---|---|
| Þá mælti Míms höfuð | then Mím's head spoke |
| fróðligt it fyrsta orð | *fróðligt* the first word |
| ok sagði sanna stafi | and told the true letters |

*Sigrdrífumál* 15, 4-6

*Fróðligr*'s application to a being clearly endowed with some ancient wisdom is reminiscent of *fróðr*'s association with the wisdom of giants and other primordial beings.

There are two qualitative *fróðr* compounds in the eddic corpus: *margfróðr* appears once, in *Hávamál* 103, and *ófróðr* appears twice, once in each of *Atlakviða* 41 and *Sigurdarkviða in skamma* 20. *Margfróðr*'s single appearance in *Hávamál* is in a gnomic stanza, and thus does not deviate from our expectations of where we might find *fróðr* in the eddic corpus. *Margfróðr* appears in stanza 103, wherein some conditions of being *margfróðr* are provided:

| | |
|---|---|
| Heima glaðr gumi | At home a man should be cheerful |
| ok við gesti reifr, | and merry with his guest |
| sviðr skal um sik vera, | he should be *sviðr* about himself, |
| minnigr ok málugr, | with a good memory and eloquent, |
| ef hann vill margfróðr vera, | if he wants to be *margfróðr*, |
| opt skal góðs geta; | often should he speak of good things; |
| fimbulfambi heitir | a nincompoop that man is called |
| sá er fátt kann segja, | who can't say much for himself, |
| þat er ósnotrs aðal. | that is the hallmark of [an *ósnotr* man] |

*Hávamál* 103

*Margfróðr*'s alliteration with *minnigr* and *málugr* stresses its association with those qualities. This emphasis on being able to remember and to speak well may remind us of stanzas 28, 32, and 63 of *Hávamál*, in which *fróðr* is associated with the ability to ask and answer questions. This is also relevant, of course, to its use in *Vafþrúðnismál* and its formulaic uses in *Fáfnismál*. We also have the opportunity here to see *fróðr* used alongside other wisdom words, particularly *svinnr*. According to this stanza, being *svinnr* is a prerequisite to being *margfróðr*, suggesting that *margfróðr* has a wider semantic range. Whether *svinnr* is a hyponym of the simplex *fróðr* is impossible to tell from this stanza. That said, *fróðr*'s impressive number of qualitative compounds (see **1.1.1**) suggests that its meaning is broad and that it is widely used, which allows for the many specifications assigned to it by compounding. At the very least,

[132] Larrington, *The Poetic Edda*, 304.

*margfróðr* is used here in a context that conforms to the pattern we have seen in the behaviour of the simplex.

*Ófróðr*, on the other hand, appears in contexts quite unlike those in which we find *fróðr*. *Ófróðr* occurs twice in the eddic corpus, once in *Atlakviða* 41 and once in *Sigurðarkviða in skamma* 20. In both instances, the referents are young men or boys. The reference in *Atlakviða* is to Guðrún's young sons whom she has by now slain and fed to Atli in vengeance for the killing of her brothers. The stanza outlines that Guðrún never wept for her *berharðr* [hard as a bear] brothers nor for her *ófróðr* sons:

| | |
|---|---|
| nema ein Guðrún | all but Guðrún, |
| er hon æva grét | she who never wept |
| brœðr sína berharða | for her brothers fierce as bears |
| ok buri svása, | and her dear sons, |
| unga ófróðra, | young, *ófróðr*, |
| þá er hon við Atla gat | whom she had with Atli |

*Atlakviða* 38

The sympathy here is clearly with those for whom Guðrún never wept – her brothers and her young sons. Just as *berharðr* is an essential quality of her brothers, who were warriors, so are *ungr* and *ófróðr* essential qualities of her sons – her brothers ought to be mourned because they were brave warriors, and her sons ought to be mourned because they were young and *ófróðr*. Cleasby-Vigfússon suggests that *ófróðr* ought to be translated as 'ignorant,' but here I am more inclined to agree with Larrington's translation of 'innocent,' the implication being that they are inexperienced rather than lacking in some knowledge they ought to possess.[133]

The same may be said of Guthorm, the younger brother of Gunnarr and Högni, in *Sigurðarkviða in skamma*. The two older brothers arrange for their younger brother to murder Sigurðr, as Guthorm swore no oath of brotherhood to him, allowing Gunnarr and Högni to technically keep their honour intact. In stanza 20, after the two brothers have decided that they themselves cannot commit the killing, Gunnarr says:

| | |
|---|---|
| 'Vit skulum Guthorm | 'We should prepare Guthorm |
| gørva at vígi, | for the killing, |
| ungra bróður, | our younger brother, |
| ófróðara | *ófróðr* |

*Sigurðarkviða in skamma* 20, 1-4

[133] *Cleasby-Vigfússon* (1874), s.v. "*fróðr*."

Again, there is an emphasis here on his being younger, and, as Larrington translates it, 'not so experienced.' We get the sense that Guthorm is being used as a pawn by his brothers, who are presented largely as the villains in this story, our sympathies lying with Sigurðr in this moment.

There is no suggestion from these two uses of the word that it carries any negative connotation – indeed, I would argue that both of its uses are intended to elicit the audience's sympathy. Unlike, for example, in the case of *ósnotr*, the negating prefix on *ófróðr* does not indicate foolishness or ignorance. Instead, the word seems to correspond more readily with what Zwikstra suggests is one of the primary connotations of *fróðr*'s Old English cognate, *frōd*.[134] As outlined in **1.1.1**, Zwikstra argues that the Old English *frōd* is linked with the wisdom that comes with old age, and we can observe that its negated form *unfrōd* seems to denote youth and inexperience, just as *ófróðr* does. *Unfrōd* appears just once in the Old English corpus, in Beowulf, as the faithful Wiglaf watches Beowulf dying:

> Ða wæs gegongen guman unfródum
> earfodlíce, þæt he on eorðan geseah
> þone leofestan lifes æt ende
> bleate gebæran.[135]
>
> Then it came to pass with piercing sorrow
> that the *unfródum* warrior had to watch
> his most precious lord fare so pitifully,
> his life at an end.[136]
> *Beowulf* 2821-2824a

Just as Guðrún's young sons and Guthorm were victims of their circumstances, so, too, is the plight of Wiglaf, the young thegn, described here with pity. There is no shame in being *ófróðr* like there is in being *ósnotr* or *ósvinnr*, as we shall see – rather, the apparent state of innocence suggests that being *ófróðr* is something to be grown out of (or, in the case of the eddic examples, not). Thus, *ófróðr* is applied to young, innocent boys in the heroic poetry, but *fróðr* never applies to the heroes.

*Fróðr*'s two qualitative compounds that are found in the eddic corpus both have to do with the mind, and they are both in keeping with the pattern we have seen so far in that both refer to supernatural beings: *fróðgeðjaðr* appears in *Vafþrúðnismál* 48 in references to girls who glide over the sea, and *froðhugaðr* occurs in *Helgakvida Hjorvarðsonnar* 2, where it refers to an informative bird to whom Atli is speaking. There is some speculation as to who these women might be, but there is no doubt that they are supernatural and, at the very least, associated with giants, having been raised by them.[137]

The *froðhugaðr* bird in *Helgakvida Hjorvarðsonnar* understands the speech of men and can be understood by the hero Atli. The bird informs Atli that it is not the wives of Hjorvaðr who are the most

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[134] Zwikstra, "'Wintrum Frod'."
[135] R. D. Fulk, Robert E. Bjork, and John D. Niles, ed., *Klaeber's Beowulf*, 4th ed. (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2008).
[136] R. M. Liuzza, ed., *Beowulf*, (Toronto: Broadview Literary Texts, 2000).
[137] see Hannah Burrows, "Enigma Variations: *Hervarar saga*'s Wave-Riddles and Supernatural Women in Old Norse Poetic Tradition," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 112, no. 2 (2013): 205-6.

beautiful in Munarheimr, but rather the woman Sigrlinn, daughter of Svafnir. Atli asks the bird for further information, and the bird, in a unique turn of events, demands a sacrifice for its advice in the form of a temple.[138] This is where the exchange ends – we do not see how Atli responds to this, nor are we told whether he receives any further information.

Excepting the very interesting departure from the norm in the negative *ófróðr*, *fróðr*'s compounds largely behave as we might expect based on the trends presented by the simplex. Thus, the general tendencies of *fróðr* and its compounds are towards gnomic poetry and the wisdom of supernatural beings, with a particular proclivity towards inclusion in formulae.

### 2.2 Horskr

*Horskr* is the most unequivocally poetic word of all the core adjectives, occurring as a simplex 25 times in the eddic corpus and 33 in the skaldic, but only six times in the prose. It also has a strikingly low number of compounds and derivatives, forming a total of four compounds. Only one of these appears in the eddic corpus, that being the adverb *horskliga*, which appears once in *Grípisspá*. Of *horskr*'s occurrences in the eddic corpus, eight are in *Hávamál*, four are in *Atlamál hin groenlenzku*, three are in each of *Fáfnismál* and *Grípisspá*, and one is in each of *Atlakviða*, *Brot af Sigurdarkviða*, *Fjölsvinnsmál*, *Harbarðsljóð*, *Oddrunargatr*, *Skírnismál*, and *Rigsþula*.

| ***Horskr* in the Eddic Corpus** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Poem** | **Stanza** | **Word** | **Referent** | **Speaker** |
| **Hávamál** | 6 | horksr | gnomic | gnomic |
| | 20 | horksr | gnomic | gnomic |
| | 63 | horksr | gnomic | gnomic |
| | 91 | horksr | female mind | Óðinn |
| | 93 | horksr | man | gnomic |
| | 94 | horksr | man | gnomic |
| | 96 | horksr | Billings mær | Óðinn |
| | 102 | horksr | Billings mær | Óðinn |
| **Hárbarðsljóð** | 18 | horksr | wave women | Óðinn |
| **Skírnismál** | 9 | horksr | sword owner | Freyr |
| **Rígsþula** | 39 | horksr | Erna | narrator |
| **Grípisspá** | 31 | horksr | Brynhildr | Grípir |
| | 2 | horksr | Grípir | Sigurðr |
| | 50 | horksr | Gunnarr | Sigurðr |
| **Fáfnismál** | 35 | horksr | Sigurðr | nuthatches |
| | 36 | horksr | Sigurðr | nuthatches |

[138] see Timothy Bourns, "The Language of Birds in Old Norse Tradition", *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 120, no. 2 (2021), especially 221-3.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 42 | horksr | Hindarfell builders | nuthatches |
| **Atlakviða** | 12 | horksr | Högni, Gunnarr | Högni's son |
| **Atlamál** | 3 | horksr | Guðrún | narrator |
| | 10 | horksr | Kostbera | narrator |
| | 35 | horksr | Kostbera and Glaumvör | Högni |
| | 67 | horksr | Guðrún | narrator |
| **Oddrúnsrgrátr** | 29 | horksr | Gunnarr | Oddrún |
| **Brot af Sigurðarkviða** | 4 | horksr | Sigurðr | narrator |
| **Fjölsvinnsmál** | 45 | horksr | ravens | Menglöð |
| **TOTAL** | **25** | | | |

Table 10

*Hávamál* boasts not only the highest number of occurrences of *horskr*, but also the most varied use of the word in terms of context and referents. The first three occurrences are uncomplicatedly gnomic. In stanza 6, *horskr* is associated with (but not necessarily predicated on) being silent. The stanza reads:

| | |
|---|---|
| At hyggjandi sinni | About his intelligence |
| skylit maðr hræsinn vera, | no man should be boastful, |
| heldr gætinn at geði; | rather cautious of mind; |
| þá er horskr ok þögull | when a *horskr* and silent man |
| kømr heimisgarða til, | comes to a homestead, |
| sjaldan verðr víti vǫrum, | seldom does shame befall the wary; |

*Hávamál* 6, 1-6

This stanza teaches caution and restraint, lest speaking too much about your intelligence bring you shame. Stanza 20 reveals little of what it means to be *horskr*, but says that a greedy man may be laughed at when he comes among *horskr* men. Stanza 63 states explicitly that:

| | |
|---|---|
| Fregna ok segja | Asking questions and answering, |
| skal fróðra hverr, | this every wise man should do |
| sá er vill heitinn horskr; | he who wants to be reputed *horskr*; |

*Hávamál* 63, 1-3

The next five uses of *horskr* in the poem are in McKinnell's *Hávamál B*, or, *Poem of Sexual Intrigue*. These uses are all found in contexts involving the relationship between male and female figures. The first three examples – those in stanzas 91, 93, and 94 – are all arguably gnomic in character, but they bear being considered apart from the most basic gnomic examples based on that fact that they are each necessarily referring to the behaviour of a specific gender. In stanza 91, Óðinn insists that:

| | |
|---|---|
| Bert ek nú mæli, | I can speak frankly |
| því at ek bæði veit, | since I have known both: |
| brigðr er karla hugr konum; | the hearts of men are fickle towards women; |
| þá vér fegrst mælum | when we speak most fairly, |
| er vér flást hyggjum, | then we think most falsely, |
| þat tælir horska hugi. | that entraps the *horskr* mind. |

*Hávamál* 91

Though *horskr* here is clearly referring to the *hugr* of a female, we are presented with a male parallel of sorts in stanzas 93 and 94, the former claiming that

| | |
|---|---|
| oft fá á horskan | often the *horskr* [man] is seized |
| er á heimskan né fá, | when the foolish man is not |
| lostfagrir litir | by a delightfully fair appearance |

*Hávamál* 93, 4-6

and the latter,

| | |
|---|---|
| heimska ór horskum | among men's sons the *horskr* |
| gørir hǫlða sonu | are made into fools |
| sá inn máttki munr | by that mighty force: desire |

*Hávamál* 94, 4-6

Both these stanzas preach in their first half that a man should not reproach another for falling victim to these temptations. Though the messaging here is straightforward – that is, that anyone, regardless of intellectual ability, may be overcome by lust – it is worthy of note that *horskr* is used to refer to both the male and female victims of desire.

Óðinn goes on to give an example of when he himself was outsmarted by a female figure. He tells of when he attempted to seduce the daughter of Billingr (who is presumably a giant), and she deceived him, leaving a dog for him to find on her bed when he arrived expecting to see her. In stanza 96, when she is first introduced, she is the *horska mær*, and then in stanza 102, Óðinn admits that:

| | |
|---|---|
| háðungar hverrar | every sort of humiliation |
| leitaði mér it horska man, | the *horskr* woman devised for me, |
| ok hafða ek þess vætki vífs. | and I didn't even possess the woman. |

*Hávamál* 102, 7-9

McKinnell argues that this section, his *Hávamál B*, was written as an organised and cohesive whole.[139] Especially if we accept that premise, it would be difficult to argue that the repetition of *horskr* in these stanzas is accidental. Óðinn's claim in stanza 91 that men's fair words can seduce a *horskr hugi* seems to

[139] McKinnell, "*Hávamál B*," 99.

be somewhat undermined by the outcome of this episode, especially as *horskr* is used not once, but twice to describe *Billings mær*. What is important here is that we do not see a *horskr* woman tricking a man with seduction – this is not an example of what is described in stanzas 93 and 94. Instead, Óðinn, father of the gods, is thoroughly humiliated and outsmarted by the *horskr mær*, unable to achieve what he claimed it was possible for a man to do in stanza 91.

McKinnell briefly addresses the lexicon of his *Hávamál B* in a way that demonstrates the kind of gendered assumptions about language that this project hopes to dispel. Speaking of *horskr* and its 'synonyms' (in which he includes *snotr*, *ráðspakr*, *sviðr*, and *margfróðr*), he says that in *Hávamál B*, they 'are used only in senses related to sexuality,' and goes on to suggest that 'applied to a woman, they always refer to her caution in dealing with wooers,' whereas 'when they refer to men, they are used either to contrast an intelligent man's wisdom about other matters with his folly in love … or to introduce the fluent and unprincipled wooer under cover of apparently harmless aphorisms.' He summarises by saying that 'the use of *horskr* and its synonyms seems to be adapted by the poet of *Hávamál B* to the particular and restricted meaning of "clever in dealing with the opposite sex".'[140] I would like to challenge these observations here. First, it seems to make sense that the use of these words in a section dedicated to sexuality should relate to proficiency in dealing with the opposite sex – I do not think that *horskr*'s gnomic uses and its uses in *Hávamál B* are irreconcilable. The meaning of *horskr* remains the same even though the context in which it is applied has changed. I also query his characterisation of *horskr*'s application to women being simply that they are cautious dealing with wooers, especially when he then goes on to say that *horskr*'s application to men denotes intelligence. It is, perhaps, a subtle difference in language, but it is these kinds of choices made in scholarship that encourage what I argue is a skewed consideration of how the intelligence of men and women was perceived, at least as it is evidenced in the lexicon – *horskr* is applied to both men and women throughout the eddic corpus, and in both cases it suggests intelligence and capability.

*Horskr*'s use in *Hávamál* tells us first, in the gnomic section, that it is associated with both an accessible and laudable set of behaviours. Then, that it can be used of both men and women, both in a general gnomic sense as well as for a specified referent. It is just as important to look at where we do not see *horskr* in this poem. *Horskr* does not occur in any circumstance that deals with numinous rather than gnomic – or, perhaps more importantly, human – wisdom. In *Hávamál*, *horskr* is associated primarily with common gnomic wisdom, and even when it is applied to a presumably supernatural figure (the giant daughter of Billingr), it is in the context of a very human activity. Indeed, McKinnell goes as far as to say that in that sequence the 'poet is treating Óðinn and the giantesses as if they were human beings.'[141]

[140] McKinnell, "*Hávamál B*," 97.
[141] McKinnell, "*Hávamál B*," 99.

*Horskr*'s tendency to be applied to primarily common wisdom as well as its indiscriminate application to both men and women is a trend that continues through the eddic poems.

*Horskr* occurs in only three other mythological eddic poems: in *Harbarðsljóð* 18 in a complicated stanza referencing some mysterious women who Óðinn has seduced; in *Skírnismál* 9, in the description of a sword that will fight for its master if the master is *horskr*; and in *Rígsþula* 39, in reference to the woman Erna, bride of Jarl [Lord]. The occurrence in *Harbarðsljóð* is perhaps the least straightforward, not only in content, but also grammatically.

In *Hárbarðsljóð*, Óðinn, disguised as a river-warden called Hárbarðr, refuses to ferry Þórr across a river, and the two gods engage in a *flyting*. As they each attempt to outdo each other with tales of their exploits, Óðinn tells of a period of five winters during which he was on an island with many women. When asked about them, Óðinn responds:

| | |
|---|---|
| 'Sparkar áttu vér konur, | 'We had frisky women, |
| ef oss at spǫkum yrði; | if only they were *spakr* to us; |
| horskar áttu vér konur, | we had *horskr* women, |
| ef oss hollar væri; | if only they were faithful to us; |
| þær ór sandi síma undu | they wound a rope out of sand, |
| ok ór dali djúpum | and from a deep valley |
| grund um grófu; | they dug out the ground; |
| varð ek þeim einn ǫllum | I was superior to them all |
| efri at ráðum; | with my shrewdness; |
| hvílda ek hjá þeim systrum sjau, | I slept with the seven sisters, |
| ok hafða ek geð þeira allt ok gaman. | and I got all their hearts, and pleasure from them. |
| Hvat vanntu þá meðan, Þórr?' | What were you doing meanwhile, Þórr?' |

*Hárbarðsljóð* 18

Who these women are remains somewhat a mystery. Larrington suggests that 'Óðinn's riddling style and references to sand and digging out valleys suggests that they may perhaps be the unpredictable waves, daughters of Rán, the sea-goddess.'[142] Although Snorri names nine daughters of Ægir and Rán in *Skáldskaparmál*,[143] Hannah Burrows notes that 'the wave-maidens are not consistently identified as being nine in number,'[144] thus making it possible that Óðinn is indeed referring to the wave-maidens in this stanza.

Regardless of the identity of these women, however, there is clearly a relationship between the words *sparkr* and *spakr* and between *horskr* and *hollr*. In her discussion of the stanza, Carol Clover provides the following translation of the first helmingr, in which she omits the conditional *ef*s: 'we had

[142] Larrington, *The Poetic Edda*, 272.
[143] Anthony Faulkes, ed., *Edda* (Everyman's Library. London: J. M. Dent, 1995), 141.
[144] Burrows, "Enigma Variations," 199.

lively women, wise to us; we had intelligent women, generous to us.'[145] Clover notes that 'the language of this stanzas is intentionally obscure, and its meaning is disputed,'[146] and provides Oskar Lundberg's interpretation of the first helmingr, which reads: 'when these women were to be gentle with us, they were stubborn instead; when they were to be loving to us, they were refractory.'[147] Clover also points to an article by Sturtevant that deals with this stanza. Albert Morey Sturtevant, writing in 1912, wrote about this first helmingr that 'the two conditional clauses are in reality conclusions stated in the form of conditions, being mere extensions of the statements made in verses 1 and 3. Therefore, the adjectives in 1 and 3 are in sense repeated in the conditions: *sparkar* in *at spökum* and *horscar* in *hollar*.'[148] His interpretation reads: 'we had skilful (or shrewd) women (i.e. they would really have been shrewd) if they had turned out to be as shrewd as we were; we had loving women (i.e. they would really have been) if they had been loving towards us'.[149] He simplifies: 'our women were very clever but not so clever as we, they were very loving but not so disposed to give us their love.'[150] The interpretations of both Lundberg and Sturtevant rely on *horskr* meaning something like *loving* or *devoted*, a choice for which I find no support in the rest of the eddic examples – I suspect it would not be translated in such a way if it were applied to a man. A look at the context of the stanza may help elucidate what these words are doing here.

One of the key observations of Clover's article '*Hárbarðsljóð* as Generic Farce' is that, as she explains, 'what Þórr tries to construct, Hárbarðr effectively dismantles. Þórr wants to play by the rules, but can't, and Hárbarðr can but won't.'[151] In this way, Clover argues, the poet effectively parodies the *flyting* genre. The first evidence of Hárbarðr's non-compliance is the last line of stanza 16, in which Hárbarðr boasts about some sexual exploits. This, Clover continues, throws Þórr off, as it is precisely not the kind of boasting you might expect in a *flyting*. It is this adventure that Óðinn continues to relate in stanza 18. Clover says of stanza 18 that 'in an ironic imitation of the Hrungnir stanza, Hárbarðr expands on what is presented as a historical incident, [and] boasts of his prowess in martial terms ("varð ec þeim einn öllum / efri at tráðom").'[152] Looking at stanza 15, in which Þórr boasts of his defeat of the giant Hrungnir, Þórr comments specifically on the formidable nature of his opponent: Hrungnir is 'sá inn stórúðgi jötunn / er ór steini var höfuðit á' [the great-spirited giant whose head was made of stone]. If we accept Clover's suggestion that stanza 18 is directly responding to stanza 15, I argue that the adjectives

[145] Carol Clover, "*Hárbarðsljóð* as Generic Farce," *Scandinavian Studies* 51, no. 2 (1979): 132.
[146] Clover, "*Hárbarðsljóð* as Generic Farce," 143n37.
[147] Lundberg, Oskar. "Ön Allgrön. Är Eddans Harbardsljod ett norkst kväde?" *Arctos Svecica* 2 (Stockholm: H. Geber, 1994), 30 in Clover, "*Hárbarðsljóð* as Generic Farce," 143n37.
[148] Albert Morey Sturtevant, "A Note on the Hárbarðslóð," *Publications of the Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Study* 1, no. 4 (1913): 159.
[149] Sturtevant, "A Note on the *Hárbarðslóð*," 160.
[150] Sturtevant, "A Note on the *Hárbarðslóð*," 160.
[151] Clover, "*Hárbarðsljóð* as Generic Farce," 139.
[152] Clover, "*Hárbarðsljóð* as Generic Farce," 132.

used to describe the female figures in stanza 18 are intended to suggest their formidable nature – a conquest is infinitely more impressive when the conquered are worthy adversaries.

Though the grammar of this first helmingr is complex, I am inclined to agree with Larrington, who maintains the indicative *áttu* in the first part of both lines and the subjunctive *yrði/væri* in the second, so that it reads: "We had frisky women, / if only they were *spǫkum* to us; / we had *horskar* women, / if only they were faithful to us." It is necessary that the indicative be maintained because, as we are told in the last part of the stanza, Óðinn does conquer these women. What is particularly important to this project is that these women were *horskr* and, at the very least, had the potential to be *spakr*. Based on the use of these two words in *Hávamál* to refer to *Billings mær*, who did outwit Óðinn, and, as Clover argues, the stanza's juxtaposition to the stanza in which Þórr kills the impressive Hrungnir, these women who Óðinn managed to conquer possessed formidable intelligence, and were not simply waiting to devote themselves to men.

Although Sturtevant does make some connections in his article between *Hárbarðsljóð* and *Hávamál* (some more convincing than others), one parallel he does not draw is that between *Hárbarðsljóð* 18 and *Hávamál* 102, which is discussed above. Not only does *horskr* appear in both of these stanzas, but *spakr* does as well. In *Hávamál* 102, Billingr's daughter is referred to not only as *horskr*, but also as *ráðspakr*. Though we should not be too hasty to equate the simple lexeme *spakr* with any of its compounds, it is interesting to compare the two stanzas considering the similarity of language and juxtaposition of content. In *Hávamál* 102, Óðinn is soundly outwitted by the *horskr* woman, whereas in *Hárbarðsljóð* 18, Óðinn claims that he was superior to these women in *ráð*. The relationship between *spakr* and *ráðspakr* will be further examined in **2.4**, but suffice to say for now that based on the parrallel with the conquering of Hrungnir and that with the clever daughter of Billingr, these words applied to the women in *Hárbarðsljóð* 18 ought not be dismissed and allocated to the realm of what Sturtevant terms 'sex-love.'[153]

In *Skírnismál*, Freys tells his servant Skírnir, to travel to Jötunheimr on his behalf in order to woo a giantess called Gerðr who Freyr saw from Óðinn's high seat with whom he is now in love. In return for this favour, Freyr offers Skírnir a horse and a magical sword:

| | |
|---|---|
| Freyr kvað: | Freyr said: |
| "Mar ek þér þann gef | "I'll give you that horse |
| er þik um myrkvan berr | which will carry you through the dark, |
| vísan vafrloga, | sure, flickering flame, |
| ok þat sverð, | and that sword, |
| er sjalft mun vegask | which will fight by itself, |
| ef sá er horskr er hefir." | if he who wields it is *horskr*." |

*Skírnismál* 9

[153] Sturtevant, "A Note on the *Hárbarðslóð*," 164.

Snorri suggests in *Gylfaginning* that Freyr's relinquishing of this sword will contribute to his downfall at Ragnarök, where he is fated to be destroyed by the jötunn Surtr.[154] Hár relates the story to Gangleri, who comments that Freyr must certainly have regretted relinquishing such a weapon to Skírnir. Hár responds by telling Gangleri that *verða mun þat, er Frey mun þykkja verr við koma, er hann missir sverðsins, þá er Múspellssynir fara at herja* [there will come a time when Freyr will find being without the sword a greater disadvantage when Muspell's sons come and wage war.][155] Even if Freyr was unaware of the doom awaiting him at Ragnarök, to give away a magic sword based on lust is clearly misguided – as Helga Kress notes: 'to have a good sword is the same as to have power.'[156] We can apply the warnings of *Hávamál* 93 and 94 to Freyr. We remember that, according to these stanzas, a *horskr* man may be seized by the appearance of a beautiful woman, and that a *horskr* man may be made a *heimskr* [foolish] one by *inn máttki munr* [that mighty desire]. Presumably Freyr was *horskr* when he owned the sword, otherwise he could not benefit from its magical power. Thus, that this sword will only fight for a *horskr* master creates an ironic situation: by surrendering the sword that would only fight for him if he were *horskr*, he has stripped himself of that descriptor.

The last mythological poem in which *horskr* appears is *Rígsþula*, where we follow Heimdallr as he establishes societal classes. When establishing the highest class, he has Jarl [Lord] marry a woman called Erna, who is *hvítri ok horskri* [radiant and *horskr*].[157] There is little further information provided about Erna as an individual, only that she and Jarl are wed and live happily and produce heirs. What ultimately happens to those heirs we don't know, as the poem is incomplete. Although we find this reference in the context of a mythological poem, the reference is to a human woman, and one held in high esteem. The emphasis we have seen so far not only on worldly wisdom, but also on women, continues into the heroic poems.

*Atlamál hin grœnlenzku* has the highest number of occurrences of *horksr* after *Hávamál*, with the word appearing four times. It is an appropriate place to begin our discussion of *horskr* in the heroic poetry not least because all of its referents are women. The poem recounts the story of Atli's murder of Gunnarr and Hǫgni, and their sister Guðrún's subsequent revenge.

In order to highlight the importance of *horskr* in *Atlamál*, it is essential that we look at this poem alongside *Atlakviða*. *Atlakviða* directly precedes *Atlamál* in the *Edda* and is, according to Andersson, the poem from which *Atlamál* is partially derived. Theodore M. Andersson argues that the poet of *Atlamál*

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[154] *Vóluspá* 51-52
[155] Anthony Faulkes, ed., *Edda* (Everyman's Library. London: J. M. Dent, 1995), 32.
[156] Helga Kress, "Taming the Shrew: The Rise of Patriarchy and the Subordination of the Feminine in Old Norse Literature," in *Cold Counsel: Women in Old Norse Literature and Mythology*, ed. Sarah M. Anderson (New York: Routledge, 2002), 90.
[157] *Rígsþula* 39

knew *Atlakviða*, and notes that certain scenes, including the farewell scene between Kostbera and Högni that I will focus on below, 'reflect the poet's more overt treatment of emotions and his interest in domestic relations.'[158] I agree with Andersson that there is a deliberate shift in focus in *Atlamál* to include aspects of domestic life, and I suggest that this shift is demonstrable not only by the contextual additions and emendations that Andersson notes in his article, but by the lexical treatment of women in *Atlamál*.

*Atlamál* opens at the house of Atli, where the audience is introduced to Guðrún as the lady of the house as she is carving runes of warning to send to her brothers. The stanza reads:

| | |
|---|---|
| Horsk var húsfreyja, | The lady of the house was *horskr*; |
| hugði at manviti; | she used her common sense, |
| lag heyrði hon orða, | she heard what they were saying, |
| hvat þeir á laun mæltu; | though they spoke in secret |
| þá var vant vitri, | the *vitr* lady was at her wits' end, |
| vildi hon þeim hjálpa, | she wanted to help them, |
| skyldu um sæ sigla, | they were going to sail over the sea, |
| en sjalf né komskat. | and she could not reach them. |

*Atlamál hin grœnlenzku* 3

*Horskr* is the first word of the stanza, used alongside *mannvitr* and *vitr*. This description of Guðrún is of a woman by whom we ought to be impressed, having managed to spy on those who wished her brothers ill and then proceed to implement her knowledge of runes to warn them (which, we will be informed later by Kostbera, the wife of Högni, was considered an uncommon skill). Similarly important is that *horskr* alliterates with *húsfreyja*. There is no suggestion by the poet that being a *húsfreyja*, a lady of the house, and being *horskr*, are at all incongruous – in fact, the opposite is suggested.

Kostbera is also referred to as *horskr* after interpreting Guðrún's runes and then having a foreboding dream:

| | |
|---|---|
| Sæing fóru síðan | They went to bed then, |
| sína þau Högni; | Högni and his wife; |
| dreymði dróttláta, | the courtly lady had a dream, |
| duldi þess vætki, | not at all did she conceal it, |
| sagði horsk hilmi, | the *horskr* one told it to the prince |
| þegars hon réð vakna: | as soon as she awoke: |

*Atlamál hin grœnlenzku* 10

Here, *horskr* is used to refer to another woman who has used her runic skill, this time alongside a prophetic dream, to attempt to warn a male kinsman of impending danger. She assures her husband that *fár er fullrýninn* [few are very learned in runes],[159] and that he ought to be mindful of his sister's warning,

[158] Theodore M. Andersson, "Did the Poet of *Atlamál* know *Atlaqviða*?" in *The Edda: A Collection of Essays*, ed. R. J. Glendinning and Haraldur Bessason (Manitoba: University of Manitoba Press, 1983), 249.
[159] *Atlamál hin groenlenzku* 11

but her advice goes unheeded. Gunnarr's wife, Glaumvör, also tries to warn her own husband of danger after she, too, has a disturbing dream. Her warning is similarly ignored.

*Horskr* is used once more before the men set off to meet their doom as Högni bids farewell to Kostbera and Glaumvör:

| | |
|---|---|
| Hǫgni svaraði, | Högni answered |
| hugði gótt nánum: | – he felt concern for his family – |
| "Huggizk it, horskar, | "Be good in spirits, *horskr* [women], |
| hvégi er þat gørvisk; | whatever happens! |
| mæla þat margir, | Many say this |
| missir þó stórum, | – though often it turns out differently – |
| mǫrgum ræðr litlu, | for many it makes no matter |
| hvé verðr leiddr heiman." | how they are accompanied from home." |

*Atlamál hin grœnlenzku* 35

It is here that we will turn to *Atlakviða*. *Horskr* appears once in *Atlakviða*, and that is in stanza 12, where Högni's son is bidding farewell to his father and uncle and wishing that they be *heilir* and *horskir*.[160] Thus, we see *horskr* appear in the same scene in both poems, but with a pointed shift in its referents: in *Atlakviða*, Gunnarr and Högni are *horskr*, but in *Atlamál*, it is Kostbera and Glaumvör. This shift in referent speaks volumes about the choices the *Atlamál* poet made about how he used the word: it suggests that the *Atlamál* poet was aware that *horskr* had been used to refer to Gunnar and Högni, the two princely brothers, in *Atlakviða*, and then chose not only to apply it to Kostbera and Glaumvör in this scene, but exclusively to women in his poem.

Andersson offers two explanations for Gunnarr and Högni's decision to go to Atli's court: one is that the poet of *Atlamál* chose to focus on deceit and the theme of unawareness, and that Gunnarr and Högni did not recognise that they were riding into a trap. This would necessitate the brothers' disbelief and dismissal of their wives' warnings, which would suggest that Högni's use of *horskr* to refer to the women is used ironically: if he had put any stock in the wisdom of his wife, he may not have ridden to his doom. Andersson also offers an alternative, that the *Atlamál* poet chose to not focus on the Burgundians' fear that is present in *Atlakviða*, because he wanted to express that that fear was beneath them.[161] Based on my suggestion that the *Atlamál* poet consciously chose to remove the designation of *horskr* from the brothers and to apply it instead to the poem's women, I am inclined to agree with the former of these two suggestions. However, in either case, the poet is indicating (either through irony or direct indication by Högni) that Glaumvör and Kostbera are *horskr*.

[160] This is, incidentally, the only core adjective to appear in this poem.
[161] Andersson, "Did the Poet of *Atlamál* know *Atlaqviða*?" 249.

The last use of *horskr* in *Atlamál* is once again applied to Guðrún. The reference is made by the narrator immediately before Guðrún is mocked by Atli about the recent slaughter of her brothers:

| | |
|---|---|
| Stórr þóttisk Atli, | Atli thought himself a great man, |
| sté hann of þá báða, | he had got the better of both of them |
| horskri harm sagði | he told the *horskr* [woman] |
| ok réð heldr at bregða: | of her loss and even taunted her with it: |
| "Morginn er nú, Guðrún, | "Now it's morning, Guðrún, |
| misst hefir þú þér hollra, | and you've lost the faithful men, |
| sums ertu sjalfskapa, | you in part are to blame |
| at hafi svá gengit." | that this should be the result." |

*Atlamál hin grœnlenzku* 67

As in the first two examples, it is the poet's voice that describes Guðrún as *horskr*, she having stanzas before joined in the battle with her kin against her husband and his clan, proving herself an effective fighter. This reference is important because it is arguably the only instance in which *horskr* is applied to a woman when she has been effective in what is not a traditionally female sphere: Guðrún is *horskr* when she carves runes to save her brothers, and when she picks up a sword and fights alongside them. *Horskr* accounts for both of these impressive moments of resourcefulness, regardless of whether Guðrún's actions align with socially acceptable gender norms.

Though Brynhildr is no longer alive at the time of the action of *Atlamál hin groenlenzku*, she receives the designation of *horskr* by King Grípir. In *Grípisspá* 31, Grípir introduces Sigurðr to *horska / Heimis fóstru* [the *horskr* fosterling of Heimir], who is, of course, Brynhildr. Grípir warns Sigurðr, telling him:

| | |
|---|---|
| verit hefir þú Gjúka | when you've been one night |
| gestr eina nótt, | the guest of Giuki |
| mantattu horska | you won't recall the *horskr* |
| Heimis fóstru." | fosterling of Heimir." |

*Grípisspá* 31, 5-8

*Horskr* appears twice more in *Grípisspá,* applying once to Grípir and once to Sigurðr. In *Grípisspá* 2, Sigurðr, seeking King Grípir, asks a man he meets outside *'Er horskr konungr / heima í landi'* [is the *horskr* king at home in the land?]. In stanza 50, Sigurðr refers to Gunnarr as *horskr Gunnarr* as he asks Grípir incredulously whether Gunnarr will bend to the goading of Brynhildr and kill him. The audience of this poem would have known that the characters of Gunnarr and Bryhildr are impressive players in the events that will affect the hero Sigurðr's life. The fact that Brynhildr behaves the way she does – indeed, Grípir later warns that *mun fyr reiði rík brúðr við þik / né af oftrega allvel skipa* [in her anger and her grief / the powerful lady will not act so well towards you][162] – does not deter Grípir from referring to her

[162] *Grípisspá* 49

as *horskr*. Brynhildr, like Gunnar and, presumably, Grípir, is impressive and effective. I argue that *horskr* is used, regardless of gender, to indicate those whose wisdom is worthy of respect, and the following uses of the word to reference men in the *Edda* do not suggest otherwise.

The references in *Oddrúnargrátr*, *Brot af Sigurðarkviðu*, and *Atlakviða* are all to either Gunnarr, Högni, or Sigurðr. All of these men are, at various points in the narrative, considered princely, and *horskr* is used to describe each of them only in situations where they are being presented as the protagonists of the episode: in *Oddrúnargrátr* 29, Oddrún refers to Gunnarr as *horskr konungr* [*horskr* king] and also *kunríkr konungr* [king of mighty lineage] as she describes the moment at which Gunnarr, a prisoner of Atli, began to play the harp; in *Brot af Sigurðarkviðu* 4, the poetic voice describes what Guthorm is fed before he goes to murder Sigurðr, who is called *horskum*; and in *Atlakviða* 12, as we saw above, Högni's son says to Gunnarr and Högni as they lead their troops knowingly into Atli's trap: *Heilir farið nú ok horskir, hvars ykkr hugr teygir* [go well now and *horskir*, where your spirit takes you].

*Horskr*'s use in *Fáfnismál* is arguably more nuanced. *Horskr* appears in stanzas 35, 36, and 42. Its uses in stanzas 35 and 36 – those spoken by the nuthatches – will be dealt with in more detail and explored in relation to the rest of the poem below, in **2.4**. It is most important for our current discussion to note, as I will later argue more fully, that the nuthatches are giving Sigurðr advice about how to demonstrate kingly wisdom.[163] The nuthatches say:

| | |
|---|---|
| Horskr þœtti mér, | *Horskr* he would seem to me |
| ef hafa kynni | if he knew how to have |
| ástráð mikit | the great advice |
| yðvar systra | of you sisters[164] |

*Fáfnismál* 35, 1-4

and, immediately following:

| | |
|---|---|
| Erat svá horskr | He isn't so *horskr*, |
| hildimeiðr | the warrior, |
| sem ek hers jaðar | as a troop-protector |
| hyggja myndak, | I thought ought to be, |
| ef hann bróður lætr | if he lets a brother |
| á brott komask, | break away |
| en hann örðum hefr | when he the other has |
| aldrs of synjat. | denied of old age. |

*Fáfnismál* 36

[163] See **2.4** as well as Edgar Haimerl, "Sigurðr, A Medieval Hero: A Manuscript-Based Interpretation of the "Young Sigurðr Poems"," in *Revisiting the Poetic Edda: Essays on Old Norse Heroic Legend*, ed. Paul Acker and Carolyne Larrington (New York: Routledge, 2013), 32-52, and also Judy Quinn, "Verseform and Voice in Eddic Poems: The Discourses of *Fáfnismál*," *ANF* 107 (1992): 100-30.

[164] my translation

Sigurðr, of course, does listen to the nuthatches' advice and kills Reginn, and we then see him referred to as *horskr* in *Atlakviða*. That this designation is used to refer to Sigurðr, Högni, and Gunnarr, all heroes in their own stories (at least at the point when they are referred to as being *horskr*), as well as King Grípir, is perhaps not surprising. What should not be understated is the readiness with which this same word applies to their female relations. This word is not gendered.

There are two uses of *horskr* remaining in the eddic corpus, and those occur in *Fáfnismál* 42, in which the nuthatches refer to the *horskr* men who built Hindarfell[165] *ór óðøkkum / Ógnar ljóma* [out of radiant river-light], and *Fjölsvinnsmál* 45, where Menglöð assures Svipdagr that if he is lying about his purpose and identity, *horskir hrafnar* [*horskr* ravens] will peck his eyes out on the gallows.

What these generic uses reiterate is that the use of *horskr* was not exclusive to any group, be that high-born or male. The only group completely excluded from being *horskr* in the eddic corpus is the gods themselves (except for Freyr, who is never directly referred to as *horskr* – we only deduce that he might have been *horskr* before we encounter him in the moment he arguably relinquishes any claim he may have had to that designation). *Horskr* is the most common wisdom word in the eddic corpus, but not once does it apply directly to a god or to numinous wisdom. This word is – with the exception of some peckish ravens – reserved for humans. It is equally important that we do not understate the lack of discrimination in its use for men and women.

### 2.3 Snotr

*Snotr* as a simplex appears nine times in the eddic corpus. Seven of these occurrences are in *Hávamál* (5, 24, 54, 55 [x2], 56, 95), and one is in each of *Vafþrúðsnimál* (7) and *Grípisspa* (8). *Snotr* also has a number of compounds appear in the eddic corpus, and is the only word in this study whose compounds occur more frequently in the eddic corpus than in the skaldic or prose: *alsnotr* appears four times, once in *Hávamál* (55), twice in *Þrymskviða* (26, 28), and once in *Gudrúnarkviða hin fyrsta* (2); *meðalsnotr* appears three times, all in *Hávamál* (54, 55, 56); *ósnotr* appears seven times, all in *Hávamál* (24, 25, 26, 27, 79, 103, 159); and *ráðsnotr* appears once in *Hávamál* (64). In total, *snotr* and its compounds appear 24 times, 19 of which are in *Hávamál*.

| **Snotr in the Eddic Corpus** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Poem** | **Stanza** | **Word** | **Referent** | **Speaker** |
| **Hávamál** | 5 | snotr | gnomic | gnomic |
| | 24 | snotr | gnomic | gnomic |
| | 54 | snotr | gnomic | gnomic |

[165] These men do not merit a mention in *Völsunga saga*, and the building of Hindarfell is referenced nowhere else in the literature, as far as I could find.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 55 | snotr | gnomic | gnomic |
| | 55 | snotr | gnomic | gnomic |
| | 56 | snotr | gnomic | gnomic |
| | 95 | snotr | gnomic | gnomic |
| | 55 | alsnotr | gnomic | gnomic |
| | 54 | meðalsnotr | gnomic | gnomic |
| | 55 | meðalsnotr | gnomic | gnomic |
| | 56 | meðalsnotr | gnomic | gnomic |
| | 24 | ósnotr | gnomic | gnomic |
| | 25 | ósnotr | gnomic | gnomic |
| | 26 | ósnotr | gnomic | gnomic |
| | 27 | ósnotr | gnomic | gnomic |
| | 79 | ósnotr | gnomic | gnomic |
| | 103 | ósnotr | gnomic | gnomic |
| | 159 | ósnotr | gnomic | Óðinn |
| | 64 | ráðsnotr | gnomic | gnomic |
| **Vafþrúðnismál** | 7 | snotrari | Óðinn | Vafþrúðnir |
| **Þrymskviða** | 26 | alsnotr | Loki as maid | narrator |
| | 28 | alsnotr | Loki as maid | narrator |
| **Grípisspá** | 8 | snotr | Grípir | Sigurðr |
| **Guðrunarkviða I** | 2 | alsnotr | warriors | narrator |
| **Total** | **24** | | | |

Table 11

Due to the overwhelming concentration of *snotr* and its compounds in *Hávamál*, it is there I will begin my discussion. The distribution is demonstrated in the following table:

| ***Snotr* and its Compounds in *Hávamál*** | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Stanza | *snotr* | *ósnotr* | *meðalsnotr* | *alsnotr* | *ráðsnotr* |
| 5 | x | | | | |
| 24 | x | x | | | |
| 25 | | x | | | |
| 26 | | x | | | |
| 27 | | x | | | |
| 54 | x | | x | | |
| 55 | xx | | x | x | |
| 56 | x | | x | | |
| 64 | | | | | x |
| 79 | | x | | | |
| 95 | x | | | | |
| 103 | | x | | | |
| 159 | | x | | | |

Table 12

*Snotr* first appears in *Hávamál* near the beginning of the poem, in stanza 5. Stanzas 1-4 deal with the physical needs of a traveller entering a hall. Stanzas 3-5 begin with the same structure in their first lines, that is, that *elds*/*vatns*/*vits er þǫrf* [fire/water/wits are needed] when a traveller enters a hall. As Larrington points out, in stanza 5, we '[progress] from an emphasis on the physical requirements of the traveller to the enumeration of the less tangible needs.'[166] Tellingly, the thing that is needed in this stanza (*vits*) is not the responsibility of the host to provide, unlike *eldr* and *vatn*, but rather the responsibility of the traveller:

| | |
|---|---|
| Vits er þörf | Wits are needful |
| þeim er víða ratar, | for someone who wanders widely, |
| dælt er heima hvat; | anything will pass at home; |
| at augabragði verðr | he becomes a laughing-stock, |
| sá er ekki kann | the man who knows nothing |
| ok með snotrum sitr. | and sits among the *snotr*. |

*Hávamál* 5

We are first introduced to the word *snotr* here not in reference to our traveller, but substantively representing those who sit in the hypothetical halls a man may enter in which he will surely be ridiculed if he *kann ekki* [knows nothing]. This socially elite group is invoked again in stanza 24. Here, the *ósnotr* man is depicted as a social outcast:

| | |
|---|---|
| Ósnotr maðr | The *ósnotr* man |
| hyggr sér alla vera | thinks that everyone is his friend |
| viðhlæjendr vini; | who laughs with him; |
| híttki hann fiðr, | he doesn't notice |
| þótt þeir um hann fár lesi, | though they say nasty things about him |
| ef hann með snotrum sitr. | when he sits among the *snotr*. |

*Hávamál* 24

These stanzas are important because they demonstrate that honour culture extended beyond the physical to include, as we see in stanza 5, *vits*. There was shame to be reaped by those who demonstrated stupidity in a stranger's hall. The juxtaposition of *ósnotr* with *snotr* in stanza 24 highlights the divide between those who are socially superior, the *snotr*, and the *ósnotr* man, at whose expense the bonds of the *snotr* are strengthened. We can see in stanza 5 that the *snotr* man will laugh at a man who *kann ekki*, and we see in stanza 24 that an *ósnotr* man does not recognise that he is not included among the ranks of the *snotr*. These two stanzas reveal not necessarily what being *snotr* entails, but suggest rather that those who are *snotr* belong to a societal group from which the *ósnotr* man is excluded.

The simplex *snotr* appears next in stanzas 54-56, all of which being with the refrain:

[166] Larrington, *A Store of Common Sense*, 22.

| | |
|---|---|
| Meðalsnotr | *Meðalsnotr* |
| skyli manna hverr, | a man ought to be, |
| æva til snotr sé | never *til snotr* |

*Hávamál* 54/55/56, 1-3

The focus of these stanzas is the theme of moderation that runs through the gnomic section of the poem. *Meðalsnotr* is the only adjective in this study to include *meðal-* in the eddic corpus, and this emphasis on moderation is amplified in the third line of the refrain, which warns against being *til snotr*. These stanzas differ in focus from stanzas 5 and 24, in which being *snotr* is presented as a societal norm, to which the *ósnotr* man ought to aspire. Here, the focus moves to individual wellbeing. All three stanzas caution against an overabundance of knowledge. Stanza 55 contains the highest number of *snotr* words in the corpus, and contains the only use of *alsnotr* in the poem. The full stanza reads:

| | |
|---|---|
| Meðalsnotr | *Meðalsnotr* |
| skyli manna hverr, | a man ought to be, |
| æva til snotr sé | never *til snotr* |
| þvíat snotrs manns hjarta | for a *snotr* man's heart |
| verðr sjaldan glatt, | is never cheerful, |
| ef sá er alsnotr er á. | if he who owns it's *alsnotr*. |

*Hávamál* 55

The only *snotr* word not included in this stanza is *ósnotr*. As we will see, there are warnings elsewhere about the downfalls of being *ósnotr*, but here, the focus is quite the opposite. This stanza emphasises that there are various degrees to which one can be *snotr*, and that of these, *meðalsnotr* is ideal. Further to this point, the stanza reveals the important distinction that being *alsnotr* does not preclude being *snotr*. Rather, being *alsnotr* is an extension of being *snotr*, albeit an undesirable one. Looking at this series of three stanzas, we can see that they are concerned exclusively with *snotr*'s association with knowledge, and specifically, as we see in stanza 56, knowing one's fate. There is a shift here from the dichotomy of *snotr* versus *ósnotr* as well as from the public to the private, the external to the internal.

*Snotr*'s last appearance in *Hávamál* as a simplex maintains an association with discontentedness. The insatiability here, however, is that of a man so consumed by desire that he cannot be satisfied by anything else. The stanza appears in McKinnell's *Hávamál B*, and is the first in what he calls the 'Woman as Deceiver' section which deals with Óðinn's embarrassment at the hands of *Billings mær*. It reads:

| | |
|---|---|
| Hugr einn þat veit | The mind alone knows |
| er býr hjarta nær, | what lies near the heart |
| einn er hann sér um sefa; | he is alone with his spirit; |
| øng er sótt verri | no sickness is worse |
| hveim snotrum manni | for the *snotrum* man |
| en sér øngu at una. | than to find no contentment in anything |

*Hávamál* 95

Thought tenuous, there is a connection to be made here between this *snotr* man and jarldom. In stanza 97, the man in love states that:

| | |
|---|---|
| jarls ynði | no nobleman's pleasure |
| þótti mér ekki vera | could I imagine |
| nema við þat lík lifa | except to live beside that body |

*Hávamál* 97, 4-6

As McKinnell suggests in his summary of these stanzas: 'the man in love desires only one thing, and without it he could not even enjoy the status of being a jarl.'[167] There is, admittedly, no evidence to suggest that this conditional statement in stanza 97 necessarily means that the *snotr* man referred to in stanza 95 is in fact a jarl – he could just as easily be a man imagining jarldom and its pleasure and insisting that he would still rather lay beside his beloved. At the very least, though, the contextual proximity of the idea of being *snotr* and the pleasures of being a jarl is worthy of mention based on what we have seen of the word so far in terms of its application near the beginning of the poem to the social elite who would look down on the *ósnotr* man. Indeed, we will see *alsnotr* directly applied to a group of jarls in *Guðrúnarkviða hin fyrsta* below. *Snotr* demonstrates a simple but important link between social elitism and gnomic advice, and subsequently between those who follow gnomic advice and those who are socially influential.

*Ósnotr* appears in direct contrast with *snotr* only once, in stanza 24, quoted above. There, it was revealed that an *ósnotr* man is an unwitting social outcast. *Ósnotr* also features in stanzas 25, 26, and 27. It will be beneficial to see all four of these stanzas set out:

| | |
|---|---|
| Ósnotr maðr | the *ósnotr* man |
| hyggr sér alla vera | thinks that everyone is |
| viðhlæjendr vini; | his friend who laughs with him; |
| hittki hann fiðr, | he doesn't notice |
| þótt þeir um hann fár lesi, | though they say nasty things about him, |
| ef hann með snotrum sitr. | when he sits among the *snotr*. |

*Hávamál* 24

| | |
|---|---|
| Ósnotr maðr | the *ósnotr* man |
| hyggr sér alla vera | thinks that everyone is |
| viðhlæjendr vini; | his friend who laughs with him |
| þá þat finnr | but then he finds |
| er at þingi kømr | when he comes to the Assembly |
| at hann á formælendr fá. | that he has few to speak on his behalf. |

*Hávamál* 25

| | |
|---|---|
| Ósnotr maðr | the *ósnotr* man |

[167] John McKinnell, "*Hávamál B*," 99.

| | |
|---|---|
| þykkisk allt vita, | thinks he knows everything, |
| ef hann á sér í vá veru; | if he cowers in a corner; |
| hittki hann veit, | he doesn't know |
| hvat hann skal við kveða, | what he can say in return |
| ef hans freista firar. | if people ask him questions. |

*Hávamál* 26

| | |
|---|---|
| Ósnotr maðr, | The *ósnotr* man |
| er með aldir kømr, | in company |
| þat er bazt at hann þegi; | does best if he stays silent; |
| engi þat veit | no one will know |
| at hann ekki kann, | that he knows nothing, |
| nema hann mælti til margt; | unless he talks too much; |
| veita maðr, | but the man who knows nothing |
| hinn er vætki veit, | does not know |
| þótt hann mælti til margt. | even if he is talking too much. |

*Hávamál* 27

All of the above stanzas focus on social protocol. Stanzas 24 and 25 begin with the same refrain, both highlighting the social ignorance of the *ósnotr* man, juxtaposed, as pointed out earlier, with the *snotr* man in stanza 24. Stanzas 26 and 27 are also concerned with societal expectations, but focus more on the fact that the *ósnotr* man cannot successfully engage in the asking and answering of questions. It seems from these two stanzas that there is no way for an *ósnotr* man to avoid scrutiny: if he avoids social interaction, he is delusional, but if he speaks too much (which he is bound to do), he will reveal his ignorance. The only way to avoid shame is to be *snotr*.

These four stanzas, all beginning with *ósnotr maðr*, are clearly intended to be read as a unit. Further, they recall stanza 5, which, we will remember, is the first in the poem to address social needs beyond the physical. First, of course, there is the repetition of *með snotrum sitr* in stanzas 24 and stanza 5. Additionally, there is the refernce to the man who *kann ekki* – knows nothing – in both stanzas 5 and 27. Though the foolish or ignorant man is not an uncommon theme in the poem, these two words collocate nowhere else. The connection between these four stanzas featuring *ósnotr* ensures that the themes associated with the social importance of being *snotr*, introduced in stanza 5, are carried throughout the poem.

*Ósnotr* appears three more times in *Hávamál*, in stanzas 79, 103, and 159, and is in all three instances the only *snotr* word in those stanzas. Stanza 79 offers insight into an *ósnotr* man's misconceptions about worldly wealth:

| | |
|---|---|
| Ósnotr maðr, | The *ósnotr* man, |
| ef eignask getr | if he manages to get |
| fé eða fljóðs munuð, | money or the love of a woman, |
| metnaðr honum þróask | his arrogance increases, |
| en mannvit aldregi: | but not his common sense; |

fram gengr hann drjúgt í dul. on he goes deeply sunk in delusion.
*Hávamál* 79

According to this stanza, an *ósnotr* man's *metnaðr* increases when he acquires money or love. That is not to say that money or love will make a man *ósnotr*; the possession of worldly riches is not inherently debilitating, but rather, an *ósnotr* man would be convinced that these possessions made him better than other men. It is the *ósnotr* man's attitude towards the wealth that indicates his foolishness, not the wealth itself. McKinnell summarizes that 'here, money and a woman's love are not seen as temptations to evil, but as good things that the fool never has the common sense to make use of.'[168] In the preceding stanzas (75-78) the audience is warned against such thinking, and encouraged instead to understand that it is not material wealth that will last, but rather a man's honour and reputation. Again, the suggestion here is that the *snotr* man would recognise this.

Stanza 103 repeats the sentiments of stanzas 26 and 27:

fimbulfambi heitir — a nincompoop that man is called
sá er fátt kann segja, — who can't say much for himself,
þat er ósnotrs aðal. — that is the hallmark of [an *ósnotr* man]
*Hávamál* 103, 7-9

This stanza – the first and only *ósnotr* stanza to be found in McKinnell's *Hávamál B* – reiterates what we learned in the gnomic section, that is, that an *ósnotr* man does not have anything to say in social situations.

The last instance of *ósnotr* in *Hávamál* is perhaps the most curious in that it is not gnomic and it does not relate to human behaviour. It occurs in stanza 159, near the end of the poem, in *Ljóðatál*. This is the only occurrence of a *snotr* word in *Ljóðatál* – thus far, *snotr* has not been associated with any numinous or otherworldly knowledge. Stanza 159, however, features Óðinn boasting about knowing a rune that would allow him to recall everything about gods and elves. He says:

Þat kenn ek it fjórtánda, — I know a fourteenth
ef ek skal fyrða liði — if I have to reckon up
telja tíva fyrir, — the gods before a group of men:
ása ok álfa — of Æsir and elves,
ek kann allra skil, — I know every detail,
fár kann ósnotr svá. — few who are *ósnotr* know that.
*Hávamál* 159

Óðinn does not actually refer to himself as *snotr*, but rather says that not many people who are *ósnotr* would know what he knows. Following this, we ought to notice that he does not say that no one who is

[168] McKinnell, "The Evolution of *Hávamál*," 72.

*ósnotr* would not know this, but rather *fár* [few] would. This suggests that there may be some *ósnotr* people who do know everything about the Æsir and the elves, which is a level of knowledge that would, according to Óðinn, be parallel with his own. This seems contradictory to the information we have so far gathered about the *ósnotr* man not knowing enough to maintain his intellectual dignity in a social situation, especially because this is knowledge that Óðinn has apparently collected as a result of his unique familiarity with runes and spells to which men would not have access. Nevertheless, the general implication is that knowing everything about the gods and the elves would be within the remit of a *snotr* man, which does correspond with what we have learned so far about *snotr*'s association with the collection and demonstration of knowledge.

The last *snotr* compound in *Hávamál* is the only qualitative *snotr* compound in the eddic corpus. *Ráðsnotr* is used in stanza 64, a gnomic stanza focused, again, on moderation. The stanza reads:

| | |
|---|---|
| Ríki sitt | Every man |
| skyldi ráðsnotra | [who is] *ráðsnotr* |
| hverr í hófi hafa; | should use his power in moderation; |
| þá hann þat finnr | for when he mingles |
| er með frœknum kømr | with the brave he finds |
| at engi er einna hvatastr. | that no one is boldest of all. |

*Hávamál* 64

This is the only instance of a *snotr* word that has been explicitly associated with power. The uses of *snotr* in stanzas 5 and 24 certainly suggest an influential social group to which a man ought to belong, but here, the *ráðsnotr* man has *ríki*. This is understood and uncontested: the stanza does not tell us that the *ráðsnotr* man ought to have power or that power is within his reach, rather the stanza begins with *ríki sitt* – the power that the *ráðsnotr* man unquestionably possesses. The word *ráðsnotr* appears only one other time in the Old Norse corpus, and that is in *Konungs Skuggsjá*. Written around the middle of the thirteenth century in Norway, *Konungs Skuggsjá* is a didactic text, depicting a father imparting wisdom to his son. *Ráðsnotr* occurs in the father's answer to his son's query about why a dearth may come upon the minds of men. The father begins his reply by saying: *Það er nú spyr þú, þá kemur af ýmisum hlutum og atburðum og skaðasamlegum, en sjaldan ætla ég þó, að þess kyns háskar komi með upphafi af alþýðu þeirri, er vinnur land eða byggir, ef þeir væri ráðsnotrir, er gæta skyldu og væri konungr sjálfur yfir*.[169] [What you have now asked about has its origin in various facts and occurrences of a harmful character. I believe, however, that such misfortunes would rarely appear among the people who inhabit and till the land, if the men who govern the realm were *ráðsnotrir* and the king himself were wise.][170] The use of the word here is

[169] Magnús Már Lárusson, *Konungs Skuggsja* (Reykjavík: H. F. Leiftur, 1955), 100-101.
[170] Laurence Marcellus Larson, trans., *The King's Mirror* (New York: American-Scandinavian Foundation, 1917), 196.

not dissimilar to its use in *Hávamál*, in that there it refers to a man in a position of power who is expected to exert that power responsibly. That *ráðsnotr* is found only in these two texts may invite an intriguing line of inquiry as to their relationship, but such a discussion is outside the scope of this project.

To briefly summarise, *snotr* and its compounds have provided a relatively coherent picture in *Hávamál*. It is the first of the core wisdom adjectives in the poem, and appears in stanza 5 referring not to the traveller, but instead to the socially acceptable men to whom the traveller must prove himself upon entering the hall. Immediately, being *snotr* is presented as necessary for social acceptance. We meet the *snotr* man again in stanza 24, here contrasted with the *ósnotr* man who does not realise he is a social outcast. Stanzas 54-56 warn us that not only must one avoid being *ósnotr* lest he be socially ridiculed, he also must not be *til snotr*, for knowing too much – specifically, knowing one's fate – will make a man unhappy. Stanzas 24-27 suggest that the *ósnotr* man is socially inept both because he cannot tell who his friends are, and because he cannot perform intelligence in a social setting. Likely, his lack of social support stems from his inability to behave acceptably in a hall, that is, to be able to ask and answer questions. The *ósnotr* man is socially inadequate, and the *til snotr* man is troubled. *Hávamál*'s theme of moderation is explicitly demonstrated here: one must be *meðalsnotr*. The only qualitative *snotr* compound in the *Edda*, *ráðsnotr*, demonstrates the social success available to a person who adheres to the advice given in the poem and is deemed *snotr* in *ráð* [counsel]. There is a connection all the way through the poem between being *snotr* and earning respect and, as a consequence, influence.

Only *snotr* and *alsnotr* appear outside *Hávamál* in the eddic corpus. *Snotr* appears once in each of *Vafþrúðnismál* (7) and *Grípisspá* (8), and *alsnotr* appears twice in *Þrymskviða* (26, 28) and once in *Guðrúnarkviða hinn fyrsta* (2). The two remaining uses of *snotr* in the eddic poetry are arguably uncomplicated and align with its use in *Hávamál*. Stanza 7 of *Vafþrúðnismál* contains the only occurrence in the *Edda* of the comparative *snotrari*. It is spoken by Vafþrúðnir as a threatening challenge to Óðinn, as he says to him: *Út þú né komir* / *órum höllum frá,* / *nema þú inn snotrari sér* [May you not come out of our halls alive / unless you should be the *snotrari* one].[171] As in *Hávamál*, *snotr* is here associated with the ability to ask and answer questions in a hall. In *Grípisspá*, Sigurðr refers to King Grípir as *snotr* in stanza 8 when he asks him about his fate. Once again, the focus here is on Grípir's ability to answer questions put to him. It is noteworthy that in both of these circumstances, the knowledge involved is not exclusively knowledge that is available to humans – Óðinn and Vafþrúðnir exchange information about the mythical past as well as the future, and Grípir is being asked about Sigurðr's future. These instances serve to further evidence the idea that being *snotr* does not necessarily have anything to do with the kind of knowledge that is being exchanged, as long as you can answer the questions put to you.

[171] *Vafþrúðnismál* 7, 4-6

*Alsnotr*'s occurrences in *Guðrúnarkviða hin fyrsta* and in *Þrymskviða* do not seem to carry the same negative connotation of excess that the word carries in *Hávamál*. In *Guðrúnarkviða hin fyrsta*, it is applied in stanza 2 to warriors who come forward in an attempt to comfort Guðrún in her grief:

| | |
|---|---|
| Gengu jarlar | *Alsnotr* warriors |
| alsnotrir fram, | stepped forward, |
| þeir er harðs hugar | they tried to ease |
| hana löttu | her fierceness of mind |

*Guðrúnarkviða hin fyrsta* 2, 1-4

These *iarlar alsnotrir* are not mentioned again after they fail to put Guðrún's mind at ease, the attention instead shifting to the women surrounding Guðrún. The women are introduced in the next stanza:

| | |
|---|---|
| Sátu ítrar | The gleaming |
| jarla brúðir, | wives of warriors, |
| gulli búnar, | adorned with gold, |
| fyr Guðrún | sat by Guðrún |

*Guðrúnarkviða hin fyrsta* 3, 1-4

This juxtaposition of the men and the women in these two stanzas lends a particularly masculine flavour to *alsnotr*, assigned as it is to the men while the women – referred to in relation to the men as *brúðir* – are associated instead with their jewellery. That *alsnotr* here does not appear to carry the same negative association with excess as it does in *Hávamál* does not take away from the poignancy of its use in that poem – instead, it brings into sharper focus the importance of the theme of moderation in *Hávamál*, that it is perhaps only in that didactic text that being *alsnotr* is discouraged. We will also take a moment here to remember the potential association between the *snotr* man in *Hávamál* 95 and the luxuries of a jarl in *Hávamál* 97 – this direct application of a *snotr* word to jarls serves to strengthen the suggestion that there is a deliberate connection between the two words in *Hávamál B*.

The use of *alsnotr* in *Þrymskviða* is exceptional in that it is used in a formula, it is applied to the transgressive figure of Loki, and it applies to Loki when he is cross-dressing. *Alsnotr* appears in the refrain that occurs near the end of the poem, once in each of stanzas 26 and 28. The giant Þrymr does not recognise that the figure being presented to him as Freyja is, in fact, Þórr. As such, he is shocked by 'her' voracious appetite and fiery eyes, and inquires about them in stanzas 25 and 27, respectively. Loki, dressed as Þórr's handmaid, responds in stanzas 26 and 28. The stanzas begin:

| | |
|---|---|
| Sat in alsnotra | The *alsnotr* maid |
| ambótt fyrir, | sat before him, |
| er orð um fann | she found an answer |
| við jötuns máli: | to the giant's speech |

*Þrymskviða* 26/28, 1-4

Although the use of *alsnotr* here is anything but straightforward, it does convey a familiar quality of *snotr* words in the *Edda* in that it is being applied to Loki directly before he tactfully answers questions. Loki and Þórr have come into Þrymr's hall under false pretences, but Loki recognises the need to continue to engage, for a time, in social convention in order to achieve their goal.

Further, I suggest that the alliteration of *alsnotra* with *ambótt* is intended to highlight the absurdity of the situation. According to what we have seen in the eddic corpus, *snotr* words are associated with a level of social proficiency and kinds of social activities that are not necessarily depicted as being available to women. Indeed, not once in the *Edda* does a *snotr* word apply to a woman. Here, however, it is applied not only to a 'woman,' but to an *ambótt*, a handmaid. Of course, the audience knows that the *ambótt* is actually Loki in disguise, and I would like to suggest that this hyperbolic application of *alsnotr* to Loki-as-handmaid would have been a means of including the audience in the joke, the butt of which is, of course, Þrymr. Although the implications of Loki's successful portrayal as a maid have been discussed in terms of his gender fluidity, that the application of *alsnotr* may be for comedic effect, has not, I think, been addressed.[172] That is not to say, however, that lexically-dependant humour in *Þrymskviða* has not been at least briefly explored. In Ruggerini's discussion of the effects that can be achieved by the manipulation of collocative pairings, she refers to stanza 25 of *Þrymskviða*, which prompts the first of Loki's responses as the *alsnotr ambótt*. Ruggerini suggests that 'we might highlight the comic effect achieved in *Þrymskviða* by substituting the traditional coupling *mær* 'famous' and *mjöðr* 'mead' with the unprecedented *meira mjöð* + *mær* ('more mead' + 'girl'), and by putting this combination into the mouth of the foolish giant Þrymr, who wonders at the enormous amount of mead that the supposed woman in front of him … is able to drink.'[173] Ruggerini's suggestion demonstrates another instance of the *Þrymskviða* poet using unexpected alliterative pairings to create a comic effect by highlighting Þrymr's ignorance, and I would argue that the poet is aiming to create that same effect by having *alsnotr* and *ambótt* alliterate.

Pointing to a paper that had recently been given by Theodore Andersson, Clunies Ross summarizes that 'caricature and overstatement are the hallmarks of Old Icelandic comedy.'[174] We see that at play already, of course, in that 'much of the comedy of *Þrymskviða* turns on the discrepancy between

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[172] see for example Margaret Clunies Ross, "Reading *Þrymskviða*," in *The Poetic Edda: Essays on Old Norse Mythology*, ed. Paul Acker and Carolyne Larrington, 177-194 (New York: Routledge, 2002); Jon Karl Helgason, "Gender, Class, and Discourse in *Thrymskvida*," in *Cold Counsel: The Women in Old Norse Literature and Mythology: a collection of essays*, ed. Sarah M. Anderson and Karen Swenson, 159-166 (London: Routledge, 2002).
[173] Maria Elena Ruggerini, "Alliterative Lexical Collocations in Eddic Poetry," in *A Handbook to Eddic Poetry: Myths and Legends of Early Scandinavia*, ed. Carolyne Larrington, Judy Quinn, and Brittany Schorn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 315.
[174] Clunies Ross, "Reading *Þrymskviða*", 184.

Þórr's normal manliness and the absurdly unconvincing female impersonation he carries out.'[175] Just as it would have been comedic for the audience to see Þórr's obvious failure at femininity go unidentified by Þrymr, so I argue that the idea that a handmaid could be *alsnotr* would have had a similar effect: the giant Þrymr is too stupid to realise that Þórr is male, and also too stupid to notice that this *ambótt* is far more skilled in rhetoric than a handmaid has any business being. This is not to say that women in general were not acknowledged for their intellect – what we see in the rest of this study, I hope, effectively disputes that – but this particular intellectual ability, to ask and answer questions and integrate successfully into ideal social groups, seems from the evidence collected here to be associated strongly with men. Thus, having *alsnotr* applied here to a male god impersonating not only a woman, but a servant woman, may well have appeared to the audience just as obviously absurd as the idea that Freyja could eat a whole ox by herself.

The most striking aspect of *snotr*'s distribution is its tendency to appear in gnomic verse, specifically in *Hávamál*. The same can be said of its compounds. Within the scope of the gnomic poetry, *snotr* and its derivates tend to be used to refer to social aptitude, such as knowing how and when to answer questions. Taking that idea further, we may make a tentative connection between appropriate social behaviour and social status. It is also worth noting that *snotr* never applies to a woman – the reference to Loki in drag, I would argue, serves to amplify this lack of female referents.

### 2.4 Spakr

As outlined in the introduction, *spakr* and its many compounds appear far more frequently in the prose corpus than they do in either of the poetic corpora. *Spakr* in its simple adjectival form occurs only three times in the eddic corpus, once in each of *Hárbarðsljóð* (18), *Grípisspá* (7), and *Fáfnismál* (32). Of the 23 compounds formed by *spakr*, only four occur in the eddic corpus: *ráðspakr* occurs three times, once in *Hávamál* 99 and twice in *Grípisspá*, in stanzas 6 and 21; *spakligr* occurs once, in *Völuspá* 29; *jafnspakr* occurs once, in *Hávamál 53*; and *fullspakr* occurs once in *Grottasöngr* 8. I will begin by addressing the occurrences in the heroic poetry.

| ***Spakr* in the Eddic Corpus** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Poem** | **Stanza** | **Word** | **Referent** | **Speaker** |
| **Völuspá** | 29 | spakligr | numinous wisdom | Óðinn |
| **Hávamál** | 53 | jafnspakr | gnomic | gnomic |
| | 99 | ráðspakr | Billings mær | Óðinn |
| **Hárbarðsljóð** | 18 | spakr | mystery women | Óðinn |
| **Grípisspá** | 7 | spakr | Sigurðr's words | Grípir |

[175] Clunies Ross, "Reading *Þrymskviða*," 188.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 6 | ráðspakr | Sigurðr and Grípir | narrator |
| | 21 | ráðspakr | Grípir | Grípir |
| **Fáfnismál** | 32 | spakr | Sigurðr | nuthatch |
| **Gróttasöngr** | 8 | fullspakr | Fróði | Fenja |
| **Total** | **9** | | | |

Table 13

*Spakr*, in its various forms, appears more than once only in *Grípisspá*, all three times referring to the prophetic king Grípir, and one of those including Sigurðr. The first two uses of *spakr* in *Grípisspá* are uncomplicated and unequivocal. In stanza 6, Sigurðr and Grípir begin to speak together and they are *ráðspakir rekkar* [*ráðspakr* men]. In the next stanza, when Sigurðr asks Grípir about what his future holds, Grípir informs him:

| | |
|---|---|
| Þú munt maðr vera | You will be |
| mæztr und sólu | the most glorious man under the sun |
| ok hæstr borinn | and raised up highest |
| hverjum jöfri, | of all princes, |
| gjöfull af gulli, | generous with gold, |
| en gløggr flugar, | and reluctant to retreat, |
| ítr áliti | striking to look at |
| ok í orðum spakr. | and *spakr* in your words. |

*Grípisspá* 7

Being *spakr í orðum* is listed alongside other princely qualities, and presumably included among them. As we will see shortly in our discussion of *Fáfnismál*, Sigurðr's journey in the eddic poetry traces not only his physical journey towards heroism, but also his intellectual one. This promise that Sigurðr will be *spakr* in his words supports this idea. However, both uses of *spakr* thus far have been qualified – Sigurðr and the king are *spakr* in *ráð* [counsel], and Sigurðr will be *spakr* in *orð* [words]. Based on how these terms are presented in these two adjacent stanzas, it is possible to be *ráðspakr* but not *spakr in orðum*, and this is the state that Sigurðr seems to occupy at the moment of his meeting with King Grípir.[176]

*Ráðspakr* appears one more time in the poem, and is used by Grípir when he is trying to convince Sigurðr that he himself is not, in fact, considered *ráðspakr*¸ in an attempt to avoid revealing to him the hardships he will face in the future. The king says:

| | |
|---|---|
| 'rétt emka ek | 'it is not true |
| ráðspakr taliðr, | that I am reckoned to be *ráðspakr* |
| né in heldr framvíss, | nor considered *framvíss*, |
| farit þats ek vissak.' | I've told you what I know.' |

*Grípisspá* 21, 5-8

[176] When this meeting actually occurs in the chronology of Sigurðr's life is, according to Richard Harris, irrelevant, as he suggests that 'the prophecy occurs completely separate from the plot.' Richard Harris, "A Study of Grípisspá," *Scandinavian Studies* 43, no. 4 (1971): 348.

The audience, thanks to the proclamation of the narrator in stanza 6, already knows that Grípir is, at least, *ráðspakr*, and might then infer that all of what Grípir is saying here is a lie. This statement involves the audience in the action of the poem, because the audience is included in those people who understand Grípir to be wise. Thus, the presence and knowledge of the audience themselves proves that claim false, and thus throws the rest of the sentiment, that is, that the king is not considered *framvíss*, into doubt.

It is curious that Grípir chooses to downplay both being *ráðspakr* as well as being *framvíss* when attempting to convince Sigurðr that he cannot see the future. According to stanza 6, Sigurðr is also *ráðspakr*, and he can evidently not tell the future, else there would be no point in interrogating Grípir. So why would Grípir go to the trouble of trying to tell Sigurðr that he is not *ráðspakr*? What we can learn from this statement from Grípir, at least, is that *framvíss* seems to be the only thing separating Sigurðr from Grípir in terms of each one's ability to perceive the future. It might be that we ought to think about *ráðspakr* not in terms of supernatural premonitory ability, but rather in reference to proficiency in *ráð* and anticipating its consequences.

Moving forward to *Fáfnismál*, the distribution of wisdom words becomes more meaningful when considering Sigurðr's journey towards princely wisdom. As Quinn states, 'while the narrative sub-text [of *Fáfnismál*] follows Sigurðr's physical rite of passage, the discourses of the poem itself map his intellectual rite of passage. The process of acquiring the wisdom and judgement appropriate to a king is revealed through Sigurðr's interaction with a series of conventional figures of authority.'[177] This journey is also the focus of Edgar Haimerl's article 'Sigurðr, a Medieval Hero,' in which he discusses Sigurðr's journey in the *Edda* towards the state of an ideal medieval king who demonstrates the qualities of both *fortitudo* and *sapientia*. Haimerl states succinctly at the end of his paper that 'the Codex Regius redaction of the Eddic poetry of Sigurðr's youth charts his progress towards this state of perfection.'[178] Whether Sigurðr reaches this point of perfection is surely debatable, but the distribution of wisdom words in the poem supports the idea that he moves closer to it.

Though there is some debate about when Sigurðr achieves various levels of wisdom,[179] it is clear that by the end of the conversation with Reginn, Sigurðr has demonstrated some tendencies towards wisdom. These include using gnomic verse to position himself above his foster father and, as Haimerl argues, showing a more nuanced understanding of the word *hugr*. Haimerl notes that Sigurðr uses *hugr*

[177] Quinn, "Verseform and voice in eddic poems," 119.
[178] Haimerl, "Sigurðr, A Medieval Hero," 48.
[179] Though I tend to agree with Quinn as opposed to Haimerl that at the end of Sigurðr's encounter with Fáfnir, 'Fáfnir makes it clear … that Sigurðr has only won because of his superior physical strength, and not because of his superior wisdom.' Quinn, "Verseform and voice in eddic poems," 124.

three times in reference to physical strength:[180] the first is in stanza 6, where he, answering a question posed to him by Fáfnir, says that *hugr mik hvatti, / hendr mér fulltýðu / ok minni inn hvassi hjörr* [*hugr* whetted me, / my hands assisted me / and my sharp sword]; in stanza 19, he juxtaposes *hugr* with physical strength, saying that Fáfnir *gazt harðan hug* [hardened (his) heart] when he wore the *Ægishjálmr*; the last time he speaks of *hugr*, however, in stanza 30, he says that *hugr er betri / en sé hjörs megin* [*hugr* is better than the power of a sword].[181] Heinrich Beck, in his 1988 article 'Heroic Lay and Heroic Language', explores the concepts of the Old Norse words *hugr*, *móðr*, and *sefa* in the eddic heroic lays. He concludes that '*hugr* means intellect and courageous disposition, not necessarily coupled with wisdom,'[182] and that seems to be what we are seeing here: Sigurðr recognises that some sort of intellect or courage is more important than physical strength, but has not yet, at this point, come to fully understand the importance of wisdom. It is in Sigurðr's encounter with the nuthatches that he becomes properly acquainted with what it means to be *spakr* and *horskr*, and how to avoid being *ósvinnr*.

Having tasted the blood of Fáfnir's heart, Sigurðr is able to understand the speech of birds, and it is from these birds that he will learn about wisdom. The absence of wisdom words applied directly to Sigurðr during this encounter is amplified by the prominence with which those denoting physical strength are employed. The episode with the nuthatches is peppered with princely language applied to Sigurðr alongside wisdom words which are accessible to Sigurðr, but never unequivocally applied to him. In stanza 32, he is called *spillir bauga* [breaker of rings], a designation reserved for good leaders who distribute wealth to their followers. In stanza 36, a nuthatch calls Sigurðr *hildimeiðr* and says that he is not as *horskr* as a *hers jarðar* [war-leader] ought to be if he lets Reginn live. *Hildimeiðr* is a compound noun created by the words *hildr*, meaning battle, and *meiðr*, meaning pole. Though Larrington translates this as 'warrior' – which is of course its meaning – the more literal translation is battle-pole [= warrior].[183] *Hildimeiðr* is a hapax legomenon, as is the other *hildr* compound in the poem, *hildileikr*, which translates to 'battle-sport',[184] used by Sigurðr in stanza 31. Though these are the only two *hild-* compounds in the eddic poetry, the noun *hildingr* – which occurs only twice in the prose corpus but is popular in skaldic poetry – appears 13 times in the eddic poetry, twelve of those in the Helgi cycle.[185] *Jaðarr* has the primary meaning of 'edge' or 'border', but when used poetically can mean something like 'prince' or

[180] He uses is a fourth time in stanza 26, where he says that Fáfnir would still be alive and have his treasure if Reginn had not challenged Sigurðr's *hugr*.
[181] Haimerl, "Sigurðr, A Medieval Hero," 43.
[182] Heinrich Beck, "Heroic Lay and Heroic Language," *Scandinavian Studies* 60, no. 2 (Spring 1988): 144.
[183] Andy Orchard does maintain the compounded format in his translation, but chooses the translation 'battle-tree'. Though the use of a living tree is more common in warrior kennings, Cleasby-Vigfússon clearly states that *meiðr* must never be used to refer to a living tree. *Cleasby-Vigfússon* (1874), s.v. "*meiðr*."
[184] *Cleasby-Vigfússon* (1874), s.v. "*hildr*"; Larrington maintains this compounded form in her translation.
[185] The 13th occurrence is in *Hávamál* 153.

'protector.'[186] The word appears four times in the eddic corpus, three with the meaning 'protector': once here, once in in stanza 35 of *Lokasenna*, where it applies to Freyr, and again in *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II*, in stanza 42, where it refers to Helgi. Though not common in the eddic poetry, both of these words clearly denote kingly qualities which are, essentially, physical.

The wisdom words are not applied so generously. As Haimerl notes, '[the nuthatches'] utterances are consistently in the subjunctive; in conditional clauses, they make [Sigurðr's] prudence dependent on his correct behaviour.'[187] Thus, Sigurðr is not yet *spakr* or *horskr*, nor has he demonstrated that he is not *ósvinnr* – he must make choices now that demonstrate these qualities. The first adjective denoting wisdom in this section is spoken by the first nuthatch, in stanza 32, where she says:

| | |
|---|---|
| spakr þœtti mér | *spakr* he would seem to me, |
| spillir bauga, | breaker of rings, |
| ef hann fjörsega | if he the life-muscle, |
| fránan æti | shining, were to eat.188 |

*Fáfnismál* 32, 5-8

The verbs *þœtti* (from *þykkja*) and *æti* (from *eta*) are, as the translation indicates, both in the subjunctive; Sigurðr's appearing *spakr* is contingent upon him eating the heart, implying he does not appear *spakr* now. Whether the heart itself will make Sigurðr *spakr* or whether the decision to eat it would be a *spakr* one is unclear. In her exploration of possible sources for the episodes of Sigurðr's youth, Hilda Ellis Davidson, when naming the peculiar rewards Sigurðr gets for his efforts, writes: 'By the eating of the heart, he gains strength and courage, and in addition the inspiration which enables him to understand the speech of birds, and so to be delivered from the hostility of Reginn.'[189] However, Sigurðr could already understand the birds after having only tasted the blood – it is in fact the birds themselves, as we can see above, who encourage Sigurðr to eat Fáfnir's heart. Davidson states that the 'imaginative idea of the power of the dragon – particularly his abnormal strength and courage – being transferred to the slayer who eats the heart and drinks, or possibly bathes in, the blood … is the essential feature of the Norse story' and that 'it is an idea to be found deep-rooted in the thoughts of people at an early stage of civilisation, and one that has world-wide distribution.'[190] Though that is surely the case, it is interesting that there is no direct reference in the poetry as to what the eating of Fáfnir's heart actually does to or for Sigurðr.[191] Thus, it is difficult to determine what exactly about eating the heart is *spakr*. Looking ahead

[186] *Cleasby-Vigfússon* (1874), s.v. "*jaðarr*."
[187] Haimerl, "Sigurðr, A Medieval Hero," 44.
[188] my translation
[189] Hilda R. Ellis, "The Hoard of the Nibelungs," Modern Language Review, Vol. 37, no. 4 (October 1942): 476.
[190] Ellis, "The Hoard of the Nibelungs," 473.
[191] Nor, indeed, does it appear to be explained anywhere in the poetry or scholarship why Sigurðr drinks the blood of Reginn.

briefly to *Sigrdrífumál*, however, we see that the only use of the noun *speki* in the eddic corpus is in a prose passage of the poem describing Sigurðr's interaction with the valkyrie Sigrdrífa, in which *hann segir ok biðr hana kenna sér speki, ef hon vissi tíðindi ór öllum heimum* [he asked her to teach him *speki*, if she had news from all the worlds]. From this, at least, we know that the eating of Fáfnir's heart did not grant Sigurðr omniscience, or even, indeed, *speki*, that surpassed that available to a valkyrie.

The next wisdom word encountered in this section is *horskr*, which appears in stanzas 35 and 36. In stanza 35, we once again see the use of the subjunctive, as it reads:

| | |
|---|---|
| Horskr þœtti mér, | *Horskr* he would seem to me |
| ef hafa kynni | if he knew how to have |
| ástráð mikit | the great advice |
| yðvar systra | of you sisters[192] |

*Fáfnismál* 35, 1-4

The same construction, *þætti mér*, 'he would seem to me,' is used here as in stanza 32, this time with the subjunctive form *kynni*. Here, the designation of *horskr* is reliant on Sigurðr knowing how to receive *ástráð* from the nuthatches. In stanza 36, the verb, *er*, is in the indicative mood, but in a negative form:

| | |
|---|---|
| Erat svá horskr | He isn't so *horskr*, |
| hildimeiðr | the warrior, |
| sem ek hers jaðar | as a troop-protector |
| hyggja myndak, | I thought ought to be, |
| ef hann bróður lætr | if he lets a brother |
| á brott komask, | break away |
| en hann örðum hefr | when he the other has |
| aldrs of synjat. | denied of old age. |

*Fáfnismál* 36

Clearly it is expected that a *hers jaðar* be *horskr*, just as it is clear that Sigurðr would not be fulfilling this requirement if he allowed Reginn to live. Stanzas 33 and 34 both contain warnings about Reginn, stanza 34 being the first in which it is suggested that Sigurðr murder his foster-father. The first stanza of this section, stanza 32, in which *spakr* appears, seems somewhat disconnected from the rest – the first nuthatch is the only one to mention the eating of Fáfnir's heart, whereas stanzas 34, 36, 37, and 38 (and, presumably, stanza 35) all directly refer to the murder of Reginn. Quinn notes that 'the opening of st. 32 is similar to the characteristic opening of a prophecy – 'Þar sitr X' or 'Þar liggr Y' (cf. Vsp. 35, Ls. 41, HHv. 8).'[193] Interestingly, stanza 32 begins the same way, with *Þar liggr Reginn* [there lies Reginn]. This juxtaposition of *Þar sitr Sigurðr* in stanza 32 with *Þar liggr Reginn* in stanza 33 not only, I would argue, connects the two stanzas to create a pleasing poetic pattern, but also serves to separate two different ideas

[192] my translation
[193] Judy Quinn, "Verseform and voice in eddic poems," 126.

(be they particularly prophetic or not). There seems to be a clear distinction drawn here between what it would mean for Sigurðr to be *spakr* and what it would mean for him to be *horskr*.

I would tentatively suggest that whereas being *horskr*, which is clearly expected of a *hers jaðar*, seems to be achievable by killing Reginn and removing a very obvious and physical threat, being *spakr* might be connected with something more numinous. The high frequency of *horskr* in the eddic corpus and the remarkably low frequency of *spakr* supports the hypothesis put forth earlier in this thesis that *horskr*, at least in the eddic corpus, is a word associated with less exclusive types of wisdom.

The last instance of *spakr* in the *Edda* occurs in stanza 18 of *Hárbarðsljóð*, which I deal with in some detail in **2.2**. There, I argue that the words associated with the women to whom Óðinn is referring are being employed to stress the impressive nature of the women. *Spakr* occupies a different position than *horskr* in this stanza, occurring in the antecedent as opposed to the consequent:

| | |
|---|---|
| "Sparkar áttu vér konur, | “We’d have had lively women, |
| ef oss at spǫkum yrði; | had they been *spakr* to us; |
| horskar áttu vér konur, | we’d have had *horskr* women, |
| ef oss hollar væri; | had they been faithful to us; |

*Hárbarðsljóð* 18, 1-4

As I discussed above, it seems that the conditions were fulfilled, as Óðinn boasts later in the stanza that he does ‘overcome’ the women. Thus, I maintain the argument that I make in **2.2**, that *spakr* ought to suggest that these women are formidable. It also may be worthy of note that this is the only instance in the eddic corpus in which *spakr* is used with the dative (*oss*), as if being *spakr* can be directed at someone.

The remaining uses of *spakr* in the eddic corpus are compounds and derivatives: *spakligr* occurs in *Völuspá* 29; *ráðspakr* occurs in *Hávamál* 102; *jafnspakr* occurs in *Hávamál* 53; and *fullspakr* occurs in *Grottasöngr* 8. Of these uses, two are associated with supernatural women, one is gnomic, and one refers to a mythological king.

*Spakligr* appears in stanza 29 of *Völuspá*, which reads:

| | |
|---|---|
| Valði henni Herföðr | Chose for her, Father of Hosts, |
| hringa ok men, | rings and necklaces, |
| fekk spjöll spaklig | *fekk spaklig* sayings |
| ok spá ganda, | and spirits of divination |
| sá hon vítt ok of vítt | she saw widely, and widely |
| of veröld hverja. | about every world. |

*Völuspá* 29, 1-4

This stanza is describing a moment in which Óðinn appears to be bribing the völva to reveal to him more of the future. It is clear what is happening in the first two lines, that Óðinn is presenting the völva with rings and necklaces. What is happening in the third and fourth lines, however, is less certain. Andy

Orchard translates *fekk* as 'had back,' whereas Larrington has opted to omit mention of that verb altogether, and to include *spjöll spaklig* in the list of things with which Óðinn is presenting the seeress.[194] The verb *fá*, however, has a number of meanings, some quite the opposite of each other. Cleasby-Vigfússon offers that it may mean, among other things, both 'to get, gain, win,' and also 'to give, deliver to one, put into one's hands.'[195] It would appear that both the translation of Orchard and that of Larrington favour the latter, but it does not make sense here for Óðinn to be giving the seeress *spjöll spaklig* and *spá ganda*, considering that he is asking her to reveal such things to him throughout the poem. Furthermore, stanza 22 reveals:

| | |
|---|---|
| Heiði hana hétu | Bright one they called her, |
| hvars til húsa kom, | whenever she came to houses, |
| völu vélspá, | the seer with pleasing prophecies, |
| vitti hon ganda; | she practised spirit-magic |

*Völuspá* 22, 1-4

It is clear from this stanza that the prophetess already possesses *ganda*, and thus would not need it from Óðinn, suggesting that actually *fekk* ought to be translated not as *gave*, but rather as *procured*. Thus, I argue that the *spjöll spaklig* are actually associated first and foremost with the skills of the seeress, and not those of Óðinn.

The referent of *ráðspakr* in *Hávamál* is also a supernatural woman, and one we have already encountered. In stanza 102, Óðinn laments his embarrassment at the hands of *Billingrs mær* in stanza 102:

| | |
|---|---|
| Mörg er góð mær, | Many a good girl |
| ef görva kannar, | when you know her well |
| hugbrigð við hali; | is fickle of heart towards men; |
| þá ek þat reynda | that I found out |
| er it ráðspaka | when that *ráðspakr* woman |
| teygða ek á flærðir fljóð; | I tried to seduce into shame |
| háðungar hverrar | every sort of humiliation |
| leitaði mér it horska man, | the *horskr* woman devised for me, |
| ok hafða ek þess vætki vífs. | and I didn't even possess the woman. |

*Hávamál* 102

Here, as we noted in **2.2** above, the giantess is presented as being both *horskr* and *ráðspakr*. Whereas *horskr* is a common word associated with human wisdom, *ráðspakr*, as we have seen, applies only to Grípir and Sigurðr. The presence of both *horskr* and *rádspakr* here to describe the giantess is perhaps highlighting both her human qualities – that is, that she, too, is forced to deflect the unwanted advances of men – and the fact that she may also share certain gifts with the heroic Grípir and Sigurðr which may not

[194] Andy Orchard, ed. *The Elder Edda*, (London: Penguin Classics, 2011).
[195] *Cleasby-Vigfússon* (1874), s.v. "*fá*."

be necessarily premonitory, but, perhaps more accurately, highlight her perception concerning the consequences of decisions made based upon *ráð*. This makes sense in context, considering she has managed to avoid the shame and humiliation that likely would have followed this encounter with Óðinn, instead displacing those consequences onto the god himself.

The last *spakr* word in *Hávamál* occurs in a gnomic context in one of the more puzzling stanzas of the poem, which reads:

| | |
|---|---|
| Lítilla sanda, | Of small sands, |
| lítill sæva, | of small seas, |
| lítill eru geð guma; | small are the minds of men; |
| þvíat allir menn | thus all men |
| urðut jafnspakir, | did not become *jafnspakr*, |
| hálf er öld hvar. | humanity is half, everywhere. |

*Hávamál* 53

We ought to pay close attention to the first half of this stanza, specifically the assertion that *lítill eru geð guma* – small are the minds of men. Based on the evidence in the eddic corpus, it seems that *spakr*, as a simplex and in compounds, is not a designation freely applied to humans. The only human figures to whom it applies are Sigurðr, the legendary dragon-slayer (and only then when he is engaged with other supernatural figures), and two mythological kings, Grípir and (as we shall see) King Fróði. The definition of *jafnspakr* given by Cleasby-Vigfusson is 'equally wise,'[196] so that this stanza is suggesting that every man is not as wise as the next. I would argue, based on the evidence in the eddic corpus, there are few men who achieve the status of *spakr*.

The last *spakr* word in the eddic corpus occurs in *Grottasöngr* 8 and refers to the legendary King Fróði. The two giantess sisters he has imprisoned and doomed to grind out good fortune for him grow tired of their mistreatment and lash out at Fróði, telling him ominously that he would have done well to consider their lineage before imprisoning them:

| | |
|---|---|
| Varattu, Fróði, | Fróði, you weren't entirely |
| fullspakr of þik, | *fullspakr* about your own interest, |
| málvinr manna, | eloquent friend to men, |
| er þú man keyptir; | when you bought the slave girls; |
| kaustu at afli | you chose them for their strength |
| ok at álitum, | and their appearance |
| en at ætterni | but you didn't ask |
| ekki spurðir. | about their lineage. |

*Grottasöngr* 8

[196] *Cleasby-Vigfússon* (1874), s.v. "jafn."

We might consider *fullspakr* to mean either 'well-informed' or, perhaps, to be more suggestive of a lack of foresight, be that practical or more numinous. Based on how *spakr* words have been applied to the völva and King Grípir, the latter may be more likely. Either way, the implication is certainly that if Fróði had been more *fullspakr*, he may not have endured such destruction as he did.

To summarize, we have seen *spakr* as a simplex relate to King Grípir, to Sigurðr, and to the mysterious (presumably supernatural) women in *Harbarðsljóð*. *Spakr*'s compounds appear in similar contexts, referring to King Grípir, Sigurðr, King Fróði, and the wisdom of the völva, as well as in a relatively cryptic stanza in *Hávamál* which, I argue, may speak to the difficulty of achieving the designation of *spakr* as a human being. As ever, it is equally important that we look at where *spakr* is not used. It does not appear in any context in the heroic cycle beyond its uses in *Grípisspá* and *Fáfnismál*, nor does it apply to any other non-legendary human figure in the whole of the eddic corpus. *Spakr* is also not associated with any gods. It seems to govern a specific realm of reasonably exclusive wisdom, potentially associated with foresight.

### 2.5 Svinnr

*Svinnr* and its compounds occur a total of 21 times in the eddic corpus. The simplex, *svinnr*, represents eleven of those uses, appearing twice in *Hávamál* (103, 161), four times in *Vafþrúðnismál* (24, 30, 32, 36), twice in *Atlamál in Grœnlenzku* (6, 57), and once in each of *Helreið Brynhildar* (5), *Hamðismál* (9), and *Fjölsvinnsmál* (40). In terms of its compounds: *ósvinnr* appears seven times in total, three times in *Hávamál* (21, 23, 122), twice in *Fáfnismál* (11, 37), and once in each of *Sigrdrífumál* (24) and *Grímnismál* (34); *ráðsvinnr* appears once, in *Harbarðsljóð* (9); *geðsvinnr* appears once in *Sigrdrífumál* (13); and *svinnhugaðr* appears once in *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II* (11).

| ***Svinnr* in the Eddic Corpus** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Poem** | **Stanza** | **Word** | **Referent** | **Speaker** |
| **Hávamál** | 21 | ósvinnr | gnomic | gnomic |
| | 32 | ósvinnr | gnomic | gnomic |
| | 122 | ósvinnr | gnomic | Óðinn |
| | 103 | svinnr | gnomic | gnomic |
| | 161 | svinnr | woman | Óðinn |
| **Grímnismál** | 34 | ósvinnr | unspecified | Óðinn |
| **Vafþrúðnismál** | 24 | svinnr | Vafþrúðnir | Óðinn |
| | 30 | svinnr | Vafþrúðnir | Óðinn |
| | 32 | svinnr | Vafþrúðnir | Óðinn |
| | 36 | svinnr | Vafþrúðnir | Óðinn |
| **Hárbarðsljóð** | 9 | ráðsvinnr | Hildólfr | Óðinn |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Helgakviða Hundingsbana II** | 11 | svinnhugaðr | Sigrún | Helgi |
| **Fáfnismál** | 11 | ósvinnr | Sigurðr (cond.) | Fáfnir |
| | 37 | ósvinnr | Sigurðr | nuthatch |
| **Sigrdrífumál** | 13 | geðsvinnr | Sigurðr | Sigrdrífa |
| | 24 | ósvinnr | gnomic | Sigrdrífa |
| **Atlamál** | 6 | svinnr | Glaumvör | narrator |
| | 57 | svinnr | Grimhildr | Guðrún |
| **Helreið Brynhildar** | 5 | svinnr | Brynhildr | Brynhildr |
| **Hamðismál** | 9 | svinnr | Sörli's hyggja | narrator |
| **Fjölsvinnsmál** | 40 | svinnr | girls at Menglöð's knee | Fjölsvinnr |
| **TOTAL** | **21** | | | |

Table 14

Arguably, the most striking thing about the simplex *svinnr* is its tendency to describe women. Women are the direct referents of *svinnr* in *Atlamál in Grœnlenzku*, *Helreið Brynhildar*, *Fjölsvinnsmál*, and stanza 161 of *Hávamál*. The referent in *Hamðismál* is Guðrún's son, Sörli, but I will argue that the context of the attribution suggests an affinity with the female mind.

The two uses of *svinnr* in *Atlamál in Grœnlenzku* are arguably the most unequivocal. Glaumvör, the wife of Gunnarr, and Grimhildr, the cousin of Guðrún, are both called *svinnr* in stanzas 6 and 57, respectively. Stanza 6 narrates the reception of Atli's messengers to the halls of the Giukings, and it is said *glöð var ok Glaumvör / er Gunnarr átti, / fellskat saðr sviðri, / sýsti um þörf gesta* [and Glaumvör was also glad, who was married to Gunnarr, the *sviðr* lady was not discourteous, busied herself with the guests' needs]. This stanza paints Glaumvör as the ideal host, dutifully fulfilling the tasks expected of her as the leader of the household. The second reference to a *svinnr* woman is to Grimhildr in stanza 57. Though the woman's name is not mentioned, it is clear that Guðrún is referring to Grimhildr when she speaks to Atli of her *svinna systrungu* [*svinna* female cousin] who Atli starved to death.[197] There is no other indication given here about the character of Grimhildr, but the context indicates that the adjective is used affectionately. I propose that the first instance of *svinnr*'s use in *Atlamál in Grœnlenzku*, that in which the narrator praises Glaumvör, can be used as a control occurrence. There is no reason to believe anything of Glaumvör other than what the narrator provides, that is, that she is courteous and good to her guests. In the same poem, Guðrún uses *svinnr* to describe her murdered cousin. Based on the fact that Guðrún is attempting to elicit if not sympathy, then acknowledgement from Atli that he behaved badly in this matter, it follows that Guðrún would use praiseworthy language to refer to the victim. Thus, the uses in *Atlamál in Grœnlenzku* establish being *svinnr* as a venerable quality in a woman.

[197] *Atlamál in Grœnlenzku* 57, 5

The use of *svinnr* in *Helreið Brynhildar* differs from the previous two in that it is self-referential. In this poem, Brynhildr refers to herself as *svinnr* after having been accused by the giantess she encounters of ruining the Giukings. The giantess says to Brynhildr:

| | |
|---|---|
| þú hefir Gjúka | you have ruined |
| um glatat börnum | the children of Gjúki |
| ok búi þeira | and destroyed |
| brugðit góðu | their good dwelling places |

*Helreið Brynhildar* 4, 5-8

to which Brynhildr responds:

| | |
|---|---|
| Ek mun segja þér, | I must tell you, I, |
| svinn ór reiðu, | the *svinnr* woman in the wagon, |
| vitlaussi mjök, | you very stupid woman, |
| ef þik vita lystir, | if you wish to know, |
| hvé görðu mik | how the heirs |
| Gjúka arfar | Gjúki made me, |
| ástalausa | love-bereft, |
| ok eiðrofa. | and made me an oath-breaker. |

*Helreið Brynhildar* 5

Brynhildr is forced to defend herself against this accusation that implies social deviance. Brynhildr, however, insists that she is not to blame, that she is *svinnr*, and that it was the actions of the men that forced her to behave contrary to her societal role. Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir observes that 'Brynhildr's right to demand vengeance for the crime committed against her is pitted against the 'men-first' attitude of the society around her, which does not seem to allow for women's separate sense of honour.'[198] Brynhildr seems here to be fighting against that. The fact that this attribution is self-referential removes the objectivity of the narrator's use of the word in reference to Glaumvör, and it is left to the audience to decide whether Brynhildr is deserving of the designation. It is interesting that both the reference to Glaumvör and to Brynhildr are related to acceptable female social behaviour: Glaumvör is *svinnr* when she courteously receives guests, and Brynhildr insists that she is *svinnr* after being accused of having destructive relationships with men.

The fourth and final use of *svinnr* in the heroic poems is not in direct reference to a woman, but is, I will argue, associated with one. In stanza 9 of *Hamðismál*, the poet says of Guðrún's son Sörli that *svinna hafði hann hyggju* [he had *svinna* sense].[199] It should first be noted here that the adjective does not

[198] Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir, *Valkyrie* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020), 112.
[199] *Hamðismál* 9, 2

apply directly to Sörli, but rather to his *hyggja*, his sense. Further, the placement of this sentiment is relevant, in that it occurs in a stanza in which Sörli is being sympathetic to his mother, saying:

| | |
|---|---|
| ‘Vilkat ek við móður | I do not wish |
| málum skipta; | to bandy words with mother; |
| hvers biðr þú nú, Guðrún, | what do you plead for now, Guðrún, |
| er þú at gráti né færat? | what lack makes you weep? |

*Hamðismál* 9, 7-8

Considering the exclusive association that *svinnr* has with women in the heroic poems, I argue that in this moment the poet is suggesting that Sörli understands – or at least sympathises with – Guðrún in a way that his brother Hamðir *inn hugumstóri* [the strong-minded one] does not.[200] Thus, of the four instances of *svinnr* in the heroic poems, three refer directly to women, and the fourth refers to the mind of a man that is emotionally attuned to the mind of his mother in a moment of her need. *Svinnr*’s association with women continues into the mythological poetry.

*Svinnr* is again used to refer to a woman in *Fjölsvinnsmál* 40, when Fjölsvinnr responds to Svipdagr’s question about whether the girls who sit at Menglöð’s knees offer protection to those who sacrifice to them. Fjölsvinnr responds:

| | |
|---|---|
| Bjarga svinnar | The *svinnr* women give protection, |
| hvar er menn blóta þær | wherever men sacrifice to them, |
| á stallhelgum stað. | in an altar-hallowed place. |

*Fjölsvinnsmál* 40, 1-3

The maidens of Menglöð, who, as Larrington notes, are all given names that sound quite positive in stanza 38, are depicted well here, as women (or perhaps giantesses) who hold up their end of the bargain when men sacrifice to them.[201] As we saw in *svinnnr*’s application to Glaumvör and, arguably, in the way Brynhildr uses *svinnr* to deny accusations of social deviance, here, again, a *svinnr* woman fulfills the duties expected of her.

*Svinnr* is applied to a woman one more time in the eddic corpus, and that is in *Hávamál* 161, in *Ljoðatál*, where *Óðinn* is speaking of a spell he knows that would allow him to overcome the mind of a *svinnr* woman. He says:

| | |
|---|---|
| Þat kann ek it sextánda, | I know a sixteenth |
| ef ek vil ins svinna mans | if I want have all a *svinnr* woman’s |
| hafa geð allt ok gaman, | heart and love-play: |
| hvítarmri konu, | I can turn the thought of the white-armed woman |

[200] *Hamðismál* 6
[201] Larrington, *The Poetic Edda*, 319n38.

ok sný ek hennar öllum sefa. and change her mind entirely.
*Hávamál* 161

Here, the beauty of this hypothetical *svinnr* woman makes her desirable, and we again have *svinnr* describing a societally acceptable woman.

The remaining uses of *svinnr* in the eddic corpus do not have a specified subject. Its use in *Hávamál* 103 is gnomic, and its four uses in *Vafþrúðnismál* are, as I explored earlier in this thesis, used in a formula. The appearance in *Hávamál* is in stanza 103. It reads:

| | |
|---|---|
| Heima glaðr gumi | At home a man should be cheerful |
| ok við gesti reifr, | and merry with his guest |
| sviðr skal um sik vera, | he should be *sviðr* about himself, |
| minnigr ok málugr, | with a good memory and eloquent, |
| ef hann vill margfróðr vera, | if he wants to be *margfróðr*, |
| opt skal góðs geta; | often should he speak of good things; |
| fimbulfambi heitir | a nincompoop that man is called |
| sá er fátt kann segja, | who can't say much for himself, |
| þat er ósnotrs aðal. | that is the hallmark of [an *ósnotr* man] |

*Hávamál* 103

There are a number of things we can consider based on *svinnr*'s use here, not least its relationship to the other wisdom words used in the stanza. We will remember the relationship between *fróðr, svinnr,* and *alsvinnr* in *Vafþrúðsnimál*, where the simplexes *fróðr* and *svinnr* are used interchangeably, with *alsvinnr* appearing to be slightly elevated. Here, we may be seeing the inverse, that is, *svinnr* seems to be a necessary quality of being *margfróðr*, indicating that *svinnr*'s semantic range is narrower. That said, we must also consider the effects of the prefixes *al-* and *marg-*, and whether these examples indicate that regardless of the relationship of the simplexes, the addition of an intensifying prefix will elevate the status and scope of one adjective above another.

This stanza's situation in *Hávamál* is also worthy of note. Stanza 103 appears in the middle of McKinnell's *Poem of Sexual Intrigue*, between the episodes depicting Óðinn's encounter with *Billings mær* and Gunnlöð, but it does not seem to belong to either episode or indeed have anything particularly to do with women or with deceitful men. Although it is not the purpose of this project to suggest a reconstruction of *Hávamál*, it is interesting to see *svinnr* in this stanza – especially where *snotr*, a word found so frequently in *Hávamál*, would have satisfied the alliterative requirements[202] – as it is the

[202] *Spakr* would not have satisfied the requirements because clusters of what Árnason calls s+stop and Suzuki calls /s/-clusters – that is, sp-, st-, and sk- – only alliterate with themselves. See Kristján Árnason, "On the Principles of Nordic Rhyme and Alliteration," *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 122 (2007): 79-114 and Seiichi Suzuki, *The Meters of Old Norse Eddic Poetry* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), 11.

simplex's only gnomic occurrence. It may be relevant that the word is once again in a context concerned with good social behaviour.

*Svinnr*'s compounds do not share its aversion to gnomic contexts. *Ósvinnr* appears in the eddic corpus seven times: three times in *Hávamál* (21, 23, 122), twice in *Fáfnismál* (11, 37), and once in each of *Sigrdrífumál* (24) and *Grímnismál* (34). Just as it is striking that *svinnr* never applies directly to men, it is equally important to note that *ósvinnr* never applies to women. Though the meaning of the two words is clearly related, the different contexts in which they are used suggests that *svinnr* and *ósvinnr* might have been considered differently than their linguistic relationship suggests – *ósvinnr* is used gnomically six of the seven times it appears, with the seventh instance (in *Fáfnismál* 37) being used in a subjunctive sense. These words were not, it seems, simply antonyms.

There does not seem to be a pattern in the type of gnomic advice associated with being *ósvinnr*. The first two instances in *Hávamál* are in the gnomic section, in stanzas 21 and 23, and chastise the *ósvinnr* man for not knowing the size of his own stomach and for laying awake at night worrying, respectively. Stanza 122 of *Hávamál* cites Óðinn telling Loddfáfnir that he ought not *skipta orðum* [bandy words] with an *ósvinnr* man. Sigrdrífa gives similar advice to Sigurðr in stanza 24 of *Sigrdrifumál*, where she cautions Sigurðr against contending with a *heimskr* man, *þvíat ósviðr maðr / lætr opt kveðin / verri orð en viti* [for the *ósviðr* man / often permits himself / to say worse words than he knows]. In a slightly different sense, but still without a definite subject, Óðinn reveals in *Grímnismál* 34 that beneath Yggdrasil there live *ormar fleiri...en þat of hyggi hverr ósviðra apa* [more serpents...than any *ósviðr* fool can imagine]. The last two instances – those in *Fáfnismál* – are spoken by Fáfnir (11) and a nuthatch (37). In stanza 11, Fáfnir, warning Sigurðr of the doom the treasure will bring him, says that he will have the *dóm ... ósvinns apa* [the fate of an *ósvinnr* fool]. This sentiment is echoed in stanza 37, wherein a nuthatch, warning Sigurðr of the dangers of leaving Reginn alive, insists that Sigurðr will be *mjök ósviðr* if he spares his foster father. Though these last two instances in *Fáfnismál* are not strictly gnomic, they are also not unequivocally applied to Sigurðr – the choices he makes will decide whether he deserves this designation.

*Fáfnismál* affords us an opportunity to look at how Sigurðr behaves in the face of being called *ósvinnr* in two different moments in the poem. Fáfnir warns that if Sigurðr takes the treasure, he will have the fate of an *ósvinnr* man, but Sigurðr ignores this advice and takes the treasure for his own. Later, the nuthatch tells Sigurðr that he will be *ósvinnr* if he lets Reginn live, because Reginn plans to kill him. Two of the nuthatches make mention of the fact that if Sigurðr kills Reginn, Sigurðr will then have all the gold for himself. In fact, it is not until just after the seventh nuthatch speaks, reiterating the fact that Sigurðr could have all the gold if he were to kill Reginn, that Sigurðr beheads him. In both instances, Sigurðr makes the decision that will bring him the treasure. He is promised an untimely death by both the dragon

and the bird, the first from the treasure's curse and the second by the hand of Reginn. In the second of these, the acquisition of the treasure happens to coincide with self-preservation, but in the first it does not, and he chooses the treasure over his life. Just as self-preservation is coincidental in the second instance to choosing the treasure, so is the avoidance of being called *ósvinnr*. When given the opportunity, Sigurðr chooses to take the treasure with the promise of doom rather than to leave it and save himself from the fate of an *ósvinnr* man.

There are three more compounded forms of *svinnr* found in the eddic corpus, and they are *ráðsvinnr*, *geðsvinnr* and *svinnhugaðr*, found once in each of *Hárbarðsljóð*, *Sigrdrífumál*, and *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II*, respectively. It is Óðinn who uses the word *ráðsvinnr* in stanza 9 of *Hárbarðsljóð* in reference to the otherwise unknown Hildólfr, who, he claims, has asked him (here disguised as Hárbarðr) to take care of his ferry. This man apparently lives in a place called Ráðseyjarsund, and it is clear that this is a figure Óðinn has invented to irritate Þórr. The inclusion of the word *ráð* in both the personal and place name associated with this invented figure can hardly be accidental, and is, I propose, a gesture towards Óðinn's own *ráð*. The noun *ráð* appears twice more in the poem, the first time being in the much-discussed stanza 18 in which Óðinn boasts: *varð ek þeim öllum / efri at ráðum* [only I was superior to them all with my *ráð*]. Its final appearance is spoken by the perpetually-outwitted Þórr who, in a desperate entreaty to 'Hárbarðr' near the end of the poem, says: *ráð mun ek þér nú ráða* [I'll give you some *ráð* now][203] before asking that Hárbarðr row the boat over to him. Hárbarðr, of course, refuses, demonstrating again his own superior *ráð*.[204]

*Geðsvinnr* is used by Sigrdrífa when she is teaching Sigurðr about runes. She tells him that: *hugrúnar skaltu kunna, / ef þú vilt herjum vera / geðsvinnari guma* [mind-runes you must know if you want to be / *more geðsvinnr* than every other man].[205] This usage is particularly interesting because it has a very specific association, that is, that reading *hugrúnar* will make you *geðsvinnr*. Looking at this admittedly small sample size encourages us to think about how compounding affects the meaning of these adjectives and the importance of each of a compound's elements.

In *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II* 11, Helgi calls Sigrún *snót svinnhuguð* [*svinnhuguð* woman] as he asks her how she would know that he had killed King Hunding. Turning briefly to skaldic poetry to the only other use of *svinnhugaðr* in the Old Norse corpus, the word appears, once again, beside *snót* [woman]. *Svinnhugaðr* appears in *Örvar-Odds Saga* in stanza 11 of a *lausavísa* by Hjálmarr inn hugumstóri. According to Clunies Ross' commentary, the reference to *snót svinnhuguð Sigtúnum í* is

[203] *Hárbarðsljóð* 53
[204] The word *ráðsvinnr* appears in one other place in the eddic corpus as a proper name, and that is in a list of Dwarf names in stanza 12 of *Völuspá*.
[205] *Sigrdrífumál* 14

likely to Ingibjǫrg, the daughter of the Swedish king.[206] In both instances, a Norwegian man is using the term to refer to a Swedish woman.

*Svinnr* provides a very different picture than some of the other words we have looked at in that its simplex behaves noticeably differently than its compounds. When the positive adjective has a direct referent, the association is always with women, whereas the uses of its compounded forms are never used for women and have much less-specific referents.

**2.6 Víss**

Of *víss*'s eleven occurrence in the eddic corpus, seven have the meaning *wise* while four have the meaning *certain*. The two separate meanings are never found in the same poem. The four occurrences that do not concern us semantically occur in *Hávamál* 99, and *Grípisspá* 12, 15, and 26. The *Hávamál* occurrence is in reference to *vísum vilja* [certain pleasure] that turns out not to be so certain at all, as it is ultimately denied to Óðinn. The relevant stanzas in *Grípisspá* read *sem þú víst segir* [as you surely say], *mundu víst vita* [you will surely know], [207] and *nú vill víst vita* [now I wish clearly to know] [208] respectively. *Víss* also has three compounds in the eddic corpus: *framvíss* occurs three times, once in *Grípisspá* (21), and twice in *Grottasöngr* (1, 13); *hundvíss* occurs once in *Hymiskviða* (5) and once in *Helgakviða Hjorvarðssonar* (25); and *lævíss* occurs once in each of *Hymiskviða* (57), *Lokasenna* (54), and *Grógaldr* (3).

| ***Víss* in the Eddic Corpus** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Poem** | **Stanza** | **Word** | **Referents** | **Speaker** |
| **Völuspá** | 48 | víss | dwarves | narrator |
| **Vafþrúðnismál** | 39 | víss | powers | Vafþrúðnir |
| | 39 | víss | Vanir | Vafþrúðnir |
| | 55 | vísastr | Óðinn | Vafþrúðnir |
| **Grípisspá** | 21 | framvíss | Grípir | Grípir |
| **Hymiskviða** | 5 | hundvíss | Hymir | Týr |
| | 57 | lævíss | Loki | narrator |
| **Lokasenna** | 54 | lævíss | Loki | Loki |
| **Alvíssmál** | 8 | víss | Alvíss | Þórr |
| **Baldrs Draumar** | 13 | víss | völva | Óðinn |
| **Helreið Brynhildar** | 13 | víss | Brynhildr | Brynhildr |

[206] Margaret Clunies Ross, ed. "Örvar-Odds saga," in *Poetry in Fornaldarsögur*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross, vol. 8, bk. 2 of *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross, Kari Ellen Gade, Guðrún Nordal, et. al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), 836.
[207] my translation
[208] my translation

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Helgakviða Hjövarðarssonar** | 25 | hundvíss | jötunn | Helgi |
| **Gróttasöngr** | 1 | framvíss | Fenja and Menja | narrator |
| | 13 | framvíss | Fenja and Menja | Fenja |
| **Grógaldr** | 3 | lævíss | Svipdagr's stepmother | Svipdagr |
| **Total** | **15** | | | |

Table 15

*Óvíss* also occurs in the eddic corpus, but only in its neuter singular form, *óvíst*, functioning adverbially. Though I am generally not including adverbial occurrences in my project, *óvíst* merits a brief mention due to the nature of its usage. *Óvíst* occurs three times in the *Edda*, twice in *Hávamál* (1, 38) and once in *Fáfnismál* (24). The two *Hávamál* appearances are identical: *þviat óvíst er at vita*, for which Larrington provides the translation 'it can't be known for certain.' The line in *Fáfnismál* is nearly identical, reading *þat er óvíst at vita*, translated as 'there's no knowing for certain.' This formula appears once more in the Old Norse poetic corpus, and that is in stanza 7 of the anonymous eddic-style praise poem *Eiríksmál*. The line in this poem is: *því at óvíst es at vita*, translted by Fulk as 'because it cannot be known for certain.'[209] Fulk notes this formula in his commentary on the stanza in the *Skaldic Project*, identifying a further similarity that has been noted by others, that in all four instances the formula is followed by an interrogative adverb.[210] Here we have an example of one of the core adjective's usage involved in what is clearly an eddic-style formula in poems preserved both inside the Codex Regious and outside of it.

Of the seven adjectival occurrences of *víss* that concern us, one is found in each of *Alvíssmál* (8), *Baldrs draumar* (13), and *Helreið Brynhildar* (13), and three are in *Vafþrúðnismál* (two in 39 and one in 55). There is one occurrence that is potentially ambiguous, and this is in *Völuspá* 48. The relevant stanza reads:

| | |
|---|---|
| stynja dvergar | the dwarves sigh |
| fyr steindurum, | before stone doors, |
| veggbergs vísir. | *vísr* of the cliff wall[211] |

*Völuspá* 48, 5-7

Larrington opts for the translation 'wise ones of the mountain wall,' which is certainly a viable possibility. Equally, however, it might be translated 'certain of the mountain wall.' The stanza comes near the end of the poem, during a description of the inevitable events of Ragnarök, and it could be that the

[209] R.D. Fulk, ed., "*Eiríksmál*," in *Poetry from the King's Sagas 1: From Mythical Times to c. 1035*, ed. Diana Whaley, vol. 1, bk.2 of *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross et. al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), 1011.
[210] Fulk, "*Eiríksmál*," 1011.
[211] my translation

dwarves are presented as being sure that their walls will hold against the onslaught. This example serves to highlight the difficulty of dealing with polysemy, especially in a dead language.[212] If we do choose to include this reference in our list of examples, we will find that is corresponds with the trend *víss* and its compounds display towards the supernatural.

*Víss* occurs twice in *Vafþrúðnismál* 39, which is Vafþrúðnir's response to Óðinn's question about the origins of Njörðr:

| | |
|---|---|
| Vafþrúðnir kvað: | Vafþrúðnir said: |
| "Í Vanaheimi | "In Vanaheim |
| sköpu hann vís regin | the *víss* powers made him |
| ok seldu at gíslingu goðum; | and gave him as hostage to the gods; |
| í aldar røk | at the doom of men |
| hann mun aptr koma | he will come back |
| heim með vísum vönum." | home among the *víss* Vanir.' |
| | *Vafþrúðnismál* 39 |

*Víss* seems here to refer to two different groups, one being the powers to whom Njörðr's creation is attributed, and the other being the Vanir. The third use of the word in the poem is in stanza 55, which is the last stanza of the poem, and is used in the superlative to refer to Óðinn:

| | |
|---|---|
| Vafþrúðnir kvað: | Vafþrúðnir said: |
| "Ey manni þat veit, | 'No man knows |
| hvat þú í árdaga | what you said in bygone days |
| sagðir í eyra syni; | into your son's ear; |
| feigum munni | with doomed mouth |
| mælta ek mína forna stafi | I've spoken my ancient lore |
| ok um ragna røk." | about the fate of the gods.' |
| | |
| "Nú ek við Óðinn deildak | 'I've been contending with Óðinn |
| mína orðspeki; | in words of wisdom; |
| þú ert æ vísastr vera." | you'll always be the *vísastr*.' |
| | *Vafþrúðnismál* 55 |

Vafþrúðnir uses what may have been his last words to identify Óðinn, name him victor of the wisdom contest, and attribute to him the title *vísastr*. He does not, however, provide any qualifier[213] – it is not clear whether Vafþrúðnir means to say that Óðinn is the *vísastr* of the two of them, the *vísastr* of all beings, or the *vísastr* just in *orðspeki*. I might suggest, however, based on the use here of *víss*, that the

[212] See John Lyons, *Linguistic Semantics: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 58-60; also **1.1.6**.
[213] Despite qualifiers being inserted in the translations of both Larrington ('wisest of beings') and Orchard ('wisest of men').

giant used his last words to antagonise the god. Although specification is not provided, based on the fact that the only other uses of *víss* were both in stanza 39 and referring to two different groups of powerful beings, we may tentatively assume that by calling Óðinn *vísastr*, Vafþrúðnir was, as Caroline Larrington suggests in her translation, stating that Óðinn was more *víss* than both the *regin* and the Vanir and, by extension, all beings. Further, it is only after Óðinn has succeeded in defeating the giant in the wisdom contest that Vafþrúðnir grants him this title. We may take the implication one step further, I think. Although Óðinn technically defeats Vafþrúðnir in this wisdom contest, this is not a victory for the god. Thinking back to the discussion in **2.1**, it is clear based on Óðinn's penultimate question – in which he asks about his own fate – that he did not get what he came for, which was hope that his fate might be mutable. Instead, he is told what he already knew: that he will be consumed by Fenrir at Ragnarök. Thus, whether intentional or not, the giant's assignment of *vísastr* to Óðinn suggests that Óðinn knows all that there is to know, and that there is nothing that he does not know, which includes the possibility that his fate might be changed – he is left with no hope that he will survive Ragnarök. It is, as McKinnell says, 'a mutual tragedy, in which Óðinn's triumph over Vafþrúðnir and the latter's death serve only to show that the victor is as much trapped and doomed as his victim.'[214] Óðinn may be *vísastr*, but it will not save him.

*Víss* is also associated with a wisdom contest in *Alvíssmál*. Apart from when it is found as an element of the dwarf's name, *víss* appears once in the poem, in the stanza in which Þórr is challenging Alvíss to a wisdom contest for Þórr's daughter's hand. Þórr calls Alvíss *vísi gestr* [*víss* guest], and promises him that he will not be denied the girl's hand if he can answer questions put to him.[215] Alvíss, of course, loses this contest, necessarily calling into question how *víss* he could have been. Thus far, *víss* has been attributed only to supernatural beings.

*Víss* is twice associated with female figures, once in stanza 13 of *Baldrs draumar*, and once in stanza 13 of *Helreið Brynhildar*. In *Baldrs draumar* 13, Óðinn insults the seeress when she refuses to do his bidding. He says to her:

| | |
|---|---|
| 'Ertattu völva | you are not a seeress |
| né vís kona, | nor a *víss* woman, |
| heldr ertu þriggja | rather you are of three |
| þursa móðir.' | giants the mother[216] |

*Baldrs draumar* 13, 5-8

The alliteration of *völva* and *víss* suggests an association between these two words, and yet they are not exactly equated. The particle *né* adopts the meaning *nor* when preceded by a negation, which we have in

[214] McKinnell, "The Paradox of *Vafþrúðnismál*," 165.
[215] *Alvíssmál* 8
[216] my translation

the first line with *ertattu*. It is interesting that one designation is not equal to or, it seems, a requisite of the other. Nevertheless, some connection between being a *völva* and being a *vís kona* is undeniable.

The final occurrence of *víss* and its second association with a female figure is that in *Helreið Brynhildar*. It comes at a time at which Brynhildr is relating the story of how she discovered she had been betrayed. She says:

| | |
|---|---|
| Því brá mér Guðrún | Thus reproached me Guðrún, |
| Gjúka dóttir | daughter of Gjuki, |
| at ek Sigurði | that I was lulled to sleep |
| svæfak á armi; | in the arms of Sigurðr; |
| þar varð ek þess vís, | then I became *víss* of this, |
| er ek vildigak, | that which I did not wish, |
| at þau véltu mik | that they tricked me |
| í verfangi. | into taking a husband.[217] |

*Helreið Brynhildar* 13

This occurrence in *Helreið Brynhildar* is the only one attributed to a human subject, all the others being associated with mythological figures. That said, it may be worth noting that she is speaking here from the world of the dead, and is dead herself. Even accepting this occurrence as an outlier, the evidence suggests that *víss* is a word for the most part inclined towards the non-human and the wisdom and knowledge associated with the beings who identify as such. This otherworldly association is only strengthened when we consider that *víss* is one of the few words in this study that is never associated with gnomic wisdom.

The same association with the supernatural can arguably be assigned to all three of *víss*'s compounds. The clearest example is arguably *hundvíss*. *Hundvíss* features in *Hymiskviða* and *Helgakviða Hjorvarðssonar*, both times in reference to giants. In *Hymiskviða* 5, Týr tells Þórr that his father, *hundvíss Hymir* owns a cauldron that would satisfy the demand of the giant Ægir, who the gods are forcing to serve them a feast. In *Helgakviða Hjorvarðssonar* 25, Helgi insists that *hundvíss jötunn* would be the only fitting match for the giantess Hrímgerðr due to her hideousness. In this stanza, *hundvíss* alliterates with *hraunbúa* [mountain-dwelling ogres], stressing the relationship between being *hundvíss* and being a giant. As neither of these gigantic referents demonstrates any particularly wise tendencies, I would suggest that this is a continuation of the trend present in the poems so far wherein *víss* words are relatively unquestioningly assigned to supernatural figures.

This trend continues with the compound *lævíss* which occurs three times in the eddic corpus, once in each of *Lokasenna*, *Hymiskviða*, and *Grógaldr*. In the first two of these, the referent is Loki, and in the last, it is the stepmother of Svipdagr. Kevin Wanner explores Loki's association with the word *læ*, and notes the appearance of the word *lævíss* being used to describe Loki in *Lokasenna* 54 and *Hymiskviða*

[217] my translation

37.[218] In *Hymiskviða*, it is used to refer to Loki as the one who lamed one of Þórr's goats. In *Lokasenna*, however, it is Loki who refers to himself as *lævíss*. He uses the word to describe himself in the stanza in which he, speaking to Sif, accuses her of sleeping with him and thus being unfaithful to Þórr. Although Wanner discusses the word *læ*'s various potential meanings, which include cunning, deception, injury, fraud, skill, etc, thus potentially encompassing both positive and negative associations, it would appear that in these two instances, the connotations it carries are exclusively negative. This is also true of the third and final time the compound appears in the eddic corpus. In *Grógaldr* 3, Svipdagr reveals to his mother that his stepmother has cursed him to go on a dangerous quest after losing to her at a board game. He says of his stepmother:

| | |
|---|---|
| Ljótu leikborði | An ugly game |
| skaut fyr mik in lævísa kona, | the *lævíss* woman has pushed me into – |
| sú er faðmaði minn föður. | that one who puts her arms around my father – |
| | *Grógaldr* 3, 1-3 |

The alliteration of *lævísa* with *ljótu leikborði* stresses a connection between the playing of this board game and the *lævíss* nature of Svipdagr's stepmother. Just as in its application to Loki, the word carries a suggestion of cunning and trickery.

*Framvíss* also appears three times in eddic poetry, once in *Grípisspá* (21) and twice in *Grottasöngr* (1, 13), and each time seems to have a connection to foresight. The occurrence in *Grípisspá* is spoken by King Grípir himself in a stanza in which he is denying that he is either *framvíss* or *ráðspakr*:

| | |
|---|---|
| 'Lá mér um oesku | 'Your youth |
| ævi þinnar | lay before me |
| ljósast fyrir | most clearly |
| líta eptir; | to look over; |
| rétt emka ek | it is not true |
| ráðspakr taliðr | that I am reckoned to be *ráðspakr* |
| né in heldr framvíss, | not at all *framvíss*, |
| farit þats ek víssak.' | I've told you what I know!' |
| | *Grípisspá* 21 |

This stanza comes in response to Sigurðr's demand that Grípir tell him all he knows about Sigurðr's fate. Sigurðr insists in stanza 20 that Grípir knows more than he is letting on, saying to him:

| | |
|---|---|
| Nú fær mér ekka | Now brings to me sorrow |
| orð þatstu mæltir; | the speech which you say; |

[218] Kevin J Wanner, "Cunning Intelligence in Old Norse Myth: Loki, Óðinn, and the limits of Soverignty," *History of Religions* 48, no. 3 (February 2009): 216-7.

| | |
|---|---|
| þvíat þú fram um sér, | because you see ahead, |
| fylkir, lengra; | prince, longer[219] |

*Grípisspá* 20, 1-4

*Ráðspakr*, we will remember, is also found in *Grípisspá* 6, where it is spoken by the narrator in reference to both Grípir and Sigurðr. As both Sigurðr and Grípir are described in *Grípisspá* 6 as *ráðspakr* men, it would make little sense that it is the *ráðspakr* aspect of Grípir that Sigurðr needs most – he is most interested in learning about his own future, and if being *ráðspakr* included having the gift of foresight, it would appear (at least, according to the narrator in stanza 6) that Sigurðr would have access to that power himself and would not need Grípir. Thus, it is left for us to deduce that it is the gifts of foresight associated with being *framvíss* that Sigurðr lacks. This is further suggested by Sigurðr's use of *fram* in stanza 20 as he insists that Gripir *fram um sér ... lengra* [can see further ahead]. Not only is that language echoed in stanza 21, but *fram* holds the same alliterative position in the first helmingr of stanza 20 that *framvíss* does in the second helmingr of stanza 21.

Both uses of *framvíss* in *Grottasöngr* refer to the giant women Fenja and Menja, who were forced by King Fróði to work a millstone, eventually grinding out an army to overthrow him. The first use is by the narrator in stanza 1 to refer to the girls as they are first introduced. The second reference is spoken by Fenja, who uses it to refer, again, to herself and Menja during an account of the two giantesses' many impressive deeds. Although not occurring in proximity to the uses of *framvíss*, there are two specific references to Menja and Fenja having some sort of prophetic wisdom. The first occurs in stanza 21, when Fenja says:

| | |
|---|---|
| Mól míns föður | The daughter of my father |
| mær ramliga, | ground strongly, |
| þvíat hon feigð fira | because she saw the doom |
| fjölmagra sá; | of fullmany men[220] |

*Gróttasöngr* 21, 1-4

This could, arguably, be referring to the evidence of war mentioned in stanza 19, but considered alongside stanza 22, it takes on a more prophetic flavour. Fenja states confidently in stanza 22 about Hrólfr Kraki that:

| | |
|---|---|
| sá mún hennar | he'll be famed |
| heitinn verða | as both |
| burr ok bróðir; | her son and brother; |
| vitum báðar þat. | as we two know. |

*Gróttasöngr* 22, 5-8

[219] my translation
[220] my translation

It is clear that the uses of *framvíss* in both *Grípisspá* and *Grottasöngr* have implications of prophetic wisdom. In the introduction to his translation of *Grottasöngr,* Clive Tolley suggests that the poem 'involves a collision between different sorts of wisdom,' noting that 'in contrast to the king, the maidens are said to have foresight, are *framvísar*. Fróði did not anticipate the consequences of the lack of wisdom he showed in neglecting to enquire about the nature of the maidens he obtained: he saw only strength, something to bolster his own power.'[221] This contrast between the wisdom of the king and the wisdom of the giantesses becomes, perhaps, even more interesting when we remember that the only other use of *framvíss* in the eddic corpus is for a Grípir, a good and prophetic king.

Having considered *víss* and its compounds, a tendency emerges towards the supernatural and away from the human. This is demonstrated by its proclivity to refer to non-human subjects as well as by its absence from gnomic poetry.

**2.7 Vitr**

*Vitr* has the lowest frequency in the eddic corpus of all the core adjetives, appearing only three times as a simplex. The infrequency with which *vitr* occurs becomes all the more striking when we are reminded that *vitr* occurs 38 times in the skaldic corpus and 149 times in the prose, indicating that it was by no means an inherently unpopular word. *Vitr* as a simplex occurs once in *Grípisspá* (51) and twice in *Átlamal hin Groenlenzku* (3, 12). All three of these refer to Guðrún. *Vitr* only has one compound in the eddic corpus, and that is *alvitr*, which appears once in *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II* (26) and three times in *Völundarkviða* (1, 3, 10).

| ***Vitr* in the Eddic Corpus** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Poem** | **Stanza** | **Word** | **Referent** | **Speaker** |
| **Völundarkviða** | 1 | alvitr | swan maidens | narrator |
| | 3 | alvitr | swan maidens | narrator |
| | 10 | alvitr | Hervör | narrator |
| **Helgakviða Hundingsbana II** | 26 | alvitr | Sigurn | Helgi |
| **Gripisspá** | 51 | vitr | Guðrún | Grípir |
| **Atlamál** | 3 | vir | Guðrún | narrator |
| | 12 | vitr | Guðrun | Kostbera |
| **Total** | 7 | | | |

Table 16

[221] Clive Tolley, ed., *Gróttasöngr* (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 2018), 8.

In *Grípisspá*, King Gripir tells Sigurð that:

| | |
|---|---|
| Þá er Guðrúnu | Guðrún will become |
| grimmt um hjarta, | grim in her heart |
| brœðr hennar | when her brothers |
| þér til bana ráða, | bring about your death, |
| ok at øngu verðr | and no joy |
| ynði síðan | will afterwards come |
| vitru vífi; | to the *vitr* lady; |
| veldr því Grímhildr. | Grimhild's the cause of this. |

*Grípisspá* 51

*Atlamál* is not only the only other poem in which *vitr* occurs in the eddic corpus, but is also the only heroic poem other than *Grípisspá* that refers to women as *horskr*. Brynhildr is called *horskr* in stanza 31 of *Grípisspá*, and this is the only poem in which she is referred to using that word.

Guðrún is also called *vitr* in *Atlamál*, first by the narrator in stanza 3, and then by Kostbera in stanza 12. The first instance occurs when Guðrún learns of the plan to ambush her brothers, and subsequently decides to send them runes of warning:

| | |
|---|---|
| Horskr var húsfreyja, | The lady of the house was *horskr*; |
| hugði at manviti, | she used her *manvit*, |
| lag heyrði hon orða, | she heard what they were saying, |
| hvat þeir á laun mæltu; | though they spoke in secret; |
| þá var vant vitri, | the *vitr* [lady] was at her wits' end |
| vildi hon þeim hjalpa, | she wanted to help them; |
| skyldu um sæ sigla, | they were going to sail over the sea, |
| en siálf né komskat. | but she could not reach them. |

*Atlamál in groenlenzku* 3

In the next stanza, Guðrún *rúnar nam at rísta* [carved some runes]. Interestingly, the second time Guðrún is called *vitr* is when Kostbera is referencing the runes, puzzling over why the *vitri* woman *skyldi villt rísta* [should carve so awry]:

| | |
|---|---|
| Eitt ek mest undrumk, | I'm greatly surprised by one thing |
| – mákat ek enn hyggja – | – I still can't make it out – |
| hvat þá varð vitri | why the *vitr* woman |
| er skyldi villt rísta; | should carve so awry; |

*Atlamál in groenlenzku* 12, 1-4

There is a clear consistency here with the use of *vitr* referring to Guðrún's ability to carve runes. I am not suggesting that *vitr* was reserved for the designation of precisely this kind of skill, but its absence from the rest of the poem and, indeed, the rest of the eddic corpus, encourages a close consideration of these

uses. To further elucidate the situation, I will turn briefly to the poem *Sólarljóð*. Although generally *Sólarljóð* will be dealt with in the skaldic section of this thesis for reasons outlined in the introduction, I feel it prudent to address here a similarity it shares with *Atlamál* in its use of *vitr*.

*Vitr* appears only once in *Sólarljóð*, where it is also associated with the interpretation of runes. It appears in the much-discussed stanza 78, during what Frederic Amory calls the 'runic epilogue.'[222] This is the first instance in which we are enlightened as to the circumstances of the poem, that is, that a father is speaking to his son. Although various interpretations of the first few lines are offered, I have chosen to follow that of Larrington and Robinson as it is featured in the *Skaldic Project*:

| | |
|---|---|
| Arfi! faðir | Heir! the father, |
| einn ek ráðit hefi, | I alone, have interpreted |
| ok þeir Sólkötlu synir, | and they, the sons of Sólkatla, |
| hjartar horn, | the horn of the hart |
| þat er ór haugi bar | that which out of the burial mound bore |
| hinn vitri Vígdvalinn. | the *vitr* Vígdvalinn.[223] |
| | *Sólarljóð* 78[224] |

Integral to our discussion is stanza 79, in which the father announces:

| | |
|---|---|
| Hér eru þær rúnir, | here are the runes |
| sem ristit hafa | which the nine daughters |
| Njarðar dætr níu, | of Njörðr have carved |
| | *Sólarljóð* 79, 1-3[225] |

The name Vígdvalinn is otherwise unknown in the sources. Vígdvalinn is not the only 'obscure ... eddic-sounding' reference the *Sólarljóð* poet creates, and Larrington argues that these 'eddic-sounding … nonce-formations' can be thought of like kennings, but that they use a system that is not systematic.[226] Rather, she argues that the figurations 'seem to depend on local and immediate metaphorical associations rather than systematic correspondences,'[227] and that this has led a number of scholars to equate the figure

[222] Frederic Amory, "Norse-Christian Syncretism and Interpretatio Christiana in Sólarljóð," Gripla 7, no. 1 (1990), 260.
[223] Margaret Clunies Ross and Peter Robinson, ed., "Sólarljóð 78," in *Poetry on Christian Subjects*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross, vol. 7, bk. 1, of *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross, et. al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 532.
[224] Margaret Clunies Ross and Peter Robinson, ed., "*Sólarljóð*," 352.
[225] Margaret Clunies Ross and Peter Robinson, ed., "*Sólarljóð*," 354.
[226] Carolyne Larrington, "Eddic Poetry – A Case Study: *Sólarjlóð*," in *A Critical Companion to Old Norse Literary Genre*, ed. Bampi Massimiliano, et al (Martelsham: Boydell & Brewer, 2020), 255.
[227] Larrington, "Eddic Poetry – A Case Study: *Sólarjlóð*," 255.

of Vígdvalinn with Christ.[228] Larrington goes on to note, however, the name's 'unsettling association with the archetypal dwarf, mentioned several times in eddic poetry.'[229] The overarching argument of Larrington's article is that *Sólarljóð* 'represents a productive encounter between native wisdom modes and Christian visionary literature,'[230] and these eddic-sounding formations are very much a part of that intersection.

I argue that *vitr* here acts as another link between skaldic Christian diction and the arcane world of eddic poetry. *Vitr* is a very popular word in the Christian skaldic poetry, occurring more in that category of skaldic verse than any other (14 out of a total of 38 in the skaldic corpus as a whole). It is interesting that we have this pointedly eddic-sounding name, Vígdvalinn, as the alliterating subject of *vitr*, a very un-eddic word in a Christian eddic-style poem. All the more intriguing, then, that two of the three uses of *vitr* in the eddic corpus have to do with the carving of runes, and that this Vígdvalinn, an invocation of the arcane but ultimately a Christian construction, is deciphering them.

The only *vitr* compound to occur in the eddic corpus is *alvitr*. *Alvitr* occurs four times in the eddic poetry, and applies exclusively to women, specifically to valkyrie figures. It appears once in *Helgakviða Hundingsbani II* (26) and three times in *Völundarkviða* (1, 3, 10). [231] In *Helgi Hundingsbani II* 26, Helgi addresses the valkyrie Sigurn as *alvitr* when he tells her that he has killed her father and brother, saying: *Erat þér at öllu, / alvitr, gefit* [it was not all good fortune for you, *alvitr*]. In *Völundarkviða*, the swan maiden Hervör and her two companions are referred to as *alvitr*. Stanzas 1 and 3 describe the maidens leaving *Myrkwood* and then yearning to go back, respectively. In stanza 1, *Meyjar flugu sunnan / myrkvið í gögnum, / alvitr ungar, ørlög drýgja* [Girls flew from the south across Myrkwood / young *alvitr*, to fulfil fate], and in stanza 3, *mayjar fýstusk / á myrkvan við, / alvitr ungar, ørlög drýgja* [the girls yearned for the dark wood / the young *alvitr*, to fulfil fate]. In stanza 10, *alvitr* refers to Hervör alone: *hann at hefði / Hlöðvés dóttir / alvitr unga, / væri hon aptr komin* [He thought that Hlodver's daughter, / the young *alvitr*, had come back again]. In the recent translations of Larrington and Orchard, the translation given for this word is 'strange creatures,' and the slightly older translation of Ursula Dronke offers instead 'foreign beings.' These translations are the product of various theories of borrowings and alternate spellings that I will briefly discuss here. I would like to suggest, however, that the most straightforward translation, that is, the one that reads this word like any other wisdom adjective prefixed by *al-*, is the simplest and best.

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[228] For the argument that Vígdvalinn ought to be associated instead with Saint Peter, see Amory, 1990, especially 262-4.
[229] Larrington, "Eddic Poetry – A Case Study: *Sólarljóð*," 255.
[230] Larrington, "Eddic Poetry – A Case Study: *Sólarljóð*," 257.
[231] There are two occurrences of the word in the prose introduction to the poem, too, both referring exclusively to Hervör.

Cleasby-Vigfússon provides two entries for *vitr*, one being for the adjective meaning 'wise,' and the other being for a feminine noun, which is listed as a variant spelling of the noun *vættr*, meaning 'wight' or some other 'being,' especially supernatural.[232] *Vættr* appears eight times in the *Edda*, four of which refer to valkyries or female deities, and four of which are used derogatively by Þórr to refer to Loki in a formula in *Lokasenna*. These latter four, clearly interesting and worthy of study in their own right, will not be addressed here. The four relevant instances include: *Guðrunarkviða hin fyrsta* 22, where the referent is Brynhildr; *Helgakviða Hjörðvarssonar* 27, where the referent is a valkyrie; *Öddrunargatr* 9, where the referents are some benevolent female beings, *hollar vættir*, invoked alongside Frigg and Freyja; and the last in *Sigrdrífumál* 4, where the referent must, from context, be a valkyrie. It is thus clear that this word is one used for female guardian spirits. However, I argue that the assumption that the *vitr* component in *alvitr* is a variant spelling of *vættr* is misguided for a number of reasons. First, the addition of the intensifying prefix *al-* is not typically used for nouns, whereas it is, as we have seen, a common prefix attached to adjectives. Further, there is no attestation anywhere in the skaldic or prose corpus that *vitr* is a variant spelling of *vættr* – the equivocation has been made, it would appear, on circumastantial evidence. It is, of course, likely that the similarity between *vitr* and *vættr* would not have gone unnoticed by the audience, but that does not necessitate this equivocation. Indeed, in the only other place *alvitr* occurs in the poetic corpus, in Snorri's *Háttatál* 99, it is used in the superlative to refer to princes, and there is no question there as to its meaning, with Kari Ellen Gade comfortably translating *Þeir jöfrar 'ró alvistrastir* as 'Those princes are the very wisest.'[233]

In a comment on her translation of *Völundarkviða*, Dronke addresses the difficult nature of this word that she identifies in her edition as *alvítr*, and suggests that there may be a precedent for her translation in the Old English corpus. [234] She offers that it might be a borrowing from Old English *ælwiht*, which is even rarer than *alvitr* in written sources, appearing, according to the Dictionary of Old English corpus, only in *Beowulf* and *Andreas* in Old English. She also suggests that the word may have been so rooted in Old English culture that it was appropriated in Christian texts and became *eallwihta*, commonly used to refer to all the creatures of God. There is also a very tempting link to be made grammatically, in that, as Dronke again points out, '*eallwihta* is the only OE compound in 'eall', 'all', where 'all' functions adjectivally rather than adverbially'.[235] If we were to accept that *vitr* is a variant spelling of *vættr* and that *al-* is in fact being used adjectivally in the Old Norse, this would be a tempting connection to make.

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[232] *Cleasby-Vigfússon* (1874), s.v. "*vitr*."
[233] Kari Ellen Gade, ed., "Snorri Sturluson, *Háttatal* 99," in *Poetry from Treatises on Poetics*, ed. Kari Ellen Gade and Edith Marold, vol. 3, bk.2 of *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross et. al., (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), 1207.
[234] For Dronke's full argument, see Ursula Dronke, ed. *Mythological Poems II*, 302-304.
[235] Except for *ealneg* [always], and *ealmægen*; Ursula Dronke, ed., *Mythological Poems II*, vol. 3, *The Poetic Edda* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2011), 302.

However, this borrowing would require a number of coincidences that I believe are unnecessarily complicated. First, there is no evidence of *vitr* or *vítr* being a variant spelling of *vættr* anywhere in the skaldic or prose corpora. Thus, it seems particularly curious that the intensifying prefix *al-* should be added not only to a noun, but to a noun not attested as a simplex. Further, the Old English simplex *wiht*, which is listed in Bosworth-Toller and Cleasby as the cognate of *vættr*, is extremely common in the Old English corpus.[236] It thus seems strange that the spelling variant of an extremely uncommon compound, *ælwiht*, would occur when a borrowed variant of the much more common simplex *wiht* did not.

Looking now at how *vitr* works in the corpus as a whole, we must not understate that the referents of the simplex and the compound are all women. Further, I wish to bring attention to the fact that Guðrún's carving of runes, that skill for which she seems to be called *vitr*, is a protective act. Just as valkyries protect warriors on the battlefield, so Guðrún was attempting to protect her brothers. This brings us back, of course, to the discussion of the origins and meaning of the word *alvitr*. Though I am still hesitant to accept unequivocally the suggestion that *alvitr* has more to do with being supernatural or 'strange' than it does with being *vitr*, we have an opportunity here to think about *vitr* and *alvitr* in terms of their designation of protective female figures.

[236] *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online* (2014), s.v. "*wiht*," https://bosworthtoller.com/35705; *Cleasby-Vigfússon* (1874), s.v. "*vættr*."

# 3 The Skaldic Corpus

As already discussed in the general introduction as well as in the introduction to Chapter 2, the modern line that is often drawn between what we call eddic and skaldic poetry is inevitably blurred. Having acknowledged that there are difficulties in making such a distinction, the verses addressed in the following chapter all appear (or will appear, as is the case for the as yet unpublished poetry of the *Íslendingasögur*) in the *Skaldic Project*. As outlined in the General Introduction to that project, there are a number of distinctions that we may consider when distinguishing skaldic verse from eddic. Some of the most important are: metre, subject matter, poetic language, context of preservation, and social context of composition.[237] In terms of metre, 'the major skaldic verse-forms *dróttkvætt* "court metre" and *hrynhent* "flowing-rhymed" are highly distinctive, and their development is one of the most important innovations that distinguished skaldic poetry from earlier forms.'[238]

Skaldic poetry 'is found embedded in other literature, in sagas of the kings and jarls of Norway, Denmark, and Orkney, and in sagas of Icelanders, some old and some not so old, and finally in school-books and treatises on style and metrics, where they are quoted as examples.'[239] Unlike the poetry in the eddic chapter, most of which was collected by a redactor into a single manuscript, the contexts in which skaldic poetry is found are important to our understanding and appreciation of the verses themselves.[240] As summarised in the General Introduction to the *Skaldic Project*: 'the prose context and the poetic matter are related, as one might expect; thus kings' sagas (*konungasögur*) contain predominantly encomiastic poetry about kings and other rulers in *dróttkvætt* metre; sagas of Icelanders (*Íslendingasögur*) also contain predominantly *dróttkvætt* poetry but its subject matter is usually not courtly; *fornaldarsögur* ... contain poetry that is predominantly in eddic metres dealing with a variety of subjects, including heroic material, but extending to occasional verse, gnomic and riddling poetry, biographical and semi-historical material.'[241] There is also then the corpus of Christian poetry, which differs in its preservation from the genres noted thus far, as it is 'generally in pre-Reformation compilations of religious devotional verse,

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[237] Margaret Clunies Ross et al., "General Introduction," in *Poetry from the Kings' Sagas*, ed. Diana Whaley, vol. 1, bk. 1, of *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross, Kari Ellen Gade, Guðrún Nordal, Edith Marold, Diana Whaley, and Tarrin Wills. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), xvi.
[238] Clunies Ross et al., "General Introduction," xv.
[239] Bjarne Fidjestøl, "Norse-Icelandic Composition in the Oral Period," in Bjarne Fidjestøl: Selected Papers, ed. Preben Meulengracht Sørensen and Gerd Wolfgang Weber (Odense: Odense University Press, 1997), 323.
[240] For more on the inclusion of verse in saga narratives, including case studies, see, for example, Erin Michelle Goeres, *The Poetics of Commemoration: Skaldic Verse and Social Memory, c. 890-1070* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Helen Leslie, "The Prose Contexts of Eddic Poetry, Primarily in the *Fornaldarsögur*," (PhD dissertation, University of Bergen, 2012); Heather O'Donoghue, *Skaldic Verse and the Poetics of Saga Narrative* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); T. P. Rowbotham, "*Fornaldarsögur*, Prosimetrum, and History-Writing in Medieval Iceland," (PhD dissertation, University of York, 2018).
[241] Clunies Ross et al., "General Introduction," xvi-xvii.

outside a prose context.'[242] Finally, there is the poetry found in the treatises on poetics, which includes the poetry found in, for example, the *Edda* of Snorri Sturluson, the *Third Grammatical Treatise* of Óláfr Þórðarson, and the anonymous *Fourth Grammatical Treatise*.[243]

There has been a significant amount of work done on skaldic diction, the two primary features of which are the use of kennings and *heiti*. Clunies Ross identifies kennings as 'conventional nominal circumlocutions for noun subjects in poetry,' and *heiti* as 'nominal synonyms for the noun subjects of poetry.'[244] Though these stylistic features have been the focus of much scholarship, the lexicon of the skaldic corpus, that is, the words themselves, has received comparatively very little attention, and this project sets out to begin to fill that gap.

Because of the nature and volume of the skaldic material, I have had to address it differently than I did the eddic corpus. Whereas with the eddic corpus it was possible to, if not closely examine, then at least make mention of and account for every occurrence of each of the core adjectives, the wide-ranging scope of the skaldic corpus does not allow for this – engaging fully with the context of every poem in which one of the adjectives occurs is impossible in a project of this size. Thus, I have had to be selective in my focus. After providing an overview of the use of each word across the skaldic corpus, I will focus on instances of the word that I believe best demonstrate the word's most important trends. Primarily, these will be trends that are either in line with those found in the eddic corpus or conspicuously not so. The overarching aim is to look at where the two poetic corpora overlap and where they differ in their application of the semantic field of wisdom. Similarities between the two corpora may be indicative of major trends that transcend what has already been identified as problematic genre distinction, whereas established deviations may identify those areas where focus differed.

It goes without saying that without the work of the editors of the *Skaldic Project*, completing my own project as it exists now would not have been feasible. I have benefitted not only from the searchable database, but, of course, from the commentary on each of the poems I have encountered. Both the scholarship of the editors themselves as well as the summaries of relevant past scholarship has been invaluable to me, and much of the secondary scholarship in this chapter will come from these volumes. Because the nature of my project has necessitated a general awareness of so many of the poems in the skaldic corpus, it has not been possible engage in detail with each one. Thus, for those poems that do not

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[242] Margaret Clunies Ross, "Introduction," in *Poetry on Christian Subjects*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross, vol. 7, bk. 1, of *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross, Kari Ellen Gade, Guðrún Nordal, Edith Marold, Diana Whaley, and Tarrin Wills. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), xlii.
[243] Clunies Ross et a., "General Introduction," xvi-xvii.
[244] Clunies Ross, *Old Norse Poetry and Poetics*, 23-4. For a very thorough investigation of the kenning system, see Bjarne Fidjestøl, "The Kenning System," in Bjarne Fidjestøl: Selected Papers, ed. Preben Meulengracht Sørensen and Gerd Wolfgang Weber. Odense: Odense University Press, 1997.

require a more detailed examination, the *Skaldic Project* volumes have provided the essential information necessary to understand the verses' meaning and contexts.

All editions and translations of poetry in the skaldic corpus, unless otherwise stated, have been taken from the *Skaldic Project*. I have included citational footnotes for all those poems with which I have meaningfully interacted – that is, that I discuss at length or quote significantly. For all those poems I have cited in a footnote, there is a corresponding bibliographical entry. Those that only appear in tables or which are mentioned in passing can, as specified above, be found in the volumes of the *Skaldic Project*. Each volume is cited as a whole in the bibliography in addition to the individually cited poems from each volume.

### 3.1 Fróðr

*Fróðr* and its compounds can be found in skaldic poetry ranging from the late ninth century (*Glymdrápa*) to the early fifteenth (*Drápa af Máríugrát* and *Máríuvísur*). It appears in Christian poetry as early as the mid-twelfth century and was still being used in royal praise poetry in the late thirteenth century. We will remember from the eddic chapter that the word in that corpus is often used in gnomic contexts as well as in reference to supernatural beings (primarily giants). Importantly, *fróðr* as a simplex is never used to refer to non-prophetic men in the eddic corpus – not, as we might broadly say, to the quintessential male heroes, such as they are. This last tendency is shared with its application in the skaldic corpus, as there are numerous examples of *fróðr* and its compounds referring to named kings. *Fróðr* does, on the other hand, maintain its tendency to appear in gnomic poetry of the skaldic corpus. Of *fróðr*'s 52 appearances in the skaldic poetry, 27 are in Christian poetry, which amounts to approximately 52 percent. Perhaps the most interesting thing about *fróðr*'s use in the skaldic corpus is its proclivity to be used for eminent Christian figures, just as it was used for impressive pagan and mythological figures in the eddic corpus. As a simplex and in compounded forms, *fróðr* is used to refer to, among others, Saint Plaucus, Saint Kátrín, Saint Augustine, Mary, Christ, and God. One of its compounds also refers to the Devil. Its high frequency in the Christian corpus, both in gnomic contexts and with named referents, seems to indicate that the use of *fróðr* was flexible in terms of the religious associations of its referents, as the same words were being used to describe Christ that had once been used to describe Óðinn.

| ***Fróðr* in the Skaldic Corpus** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Poem** | **Date** | **Poet** | **Word** | **Referent** |
| **Konungasögur** | | | | |
| Ynglingatal 6 | 9th c | Þjóðólfr ór Hvini | fróða | men |
| Gráfeldardrápa 2 | c. 970 | Glúmr Geirason | fróðr | King Haraldr Gráfeldr |
| Hrafnsmál 6 | late 13th c | Sturla Þórðarson | fróðr | King Hákon |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Hrafnsmál 12 | late 13th c | Sturla Þórðarson | böðfróði | King Hákon |
| Eiríksdrápa 3 | 1016-1023 | Þórðr Kolbeinsson | ógnfróðr | Eiríkr jarl Hákonarson |
| Lausavísa 1 | 10th c | Vagn Ákason | áfróðigr | Sigvaldi |
| Glymdrápa 8 | c. 890 | Þorbjǫrn hornklofi | eljunfróðum | Haraldr hárfagri |
| | | | | |
| **Christian Subjects** | | | | |
| Brúðkaupsvísur 5 | 14th c | Anon. | bókfróðr | male protagonist |
| Drápa af Máríugrát 10 | late 14th /early 15th c | Anon. | fróðan | Augustine |
| Drápa af Máríugrát 34 | late 14th/ early 15th c | Anon. | fróðust | Mary |
| Drápa af Máríugrát 41 | late 14th/ early 15th c | Anon. | fróðum | unknown monk |
| Drápa af Máríugrát 44 | late 14th/ early 15th c | Anon. | fróðr | Christ |
| Geisli 1 | 1153 | Einarr Skúlason | fróðr | he who gets goodwill of God |
| Harmsól 35 | c. 1200 | Gamli kanóki | fróðr | God |
| Harmsól 40 | c. 1200 | Gamli kanóki | fróðr | God |
| Harmsól 45 | c. 1200 | Gamli kanóki | fróðr | God |
| Hugsvinnsmál 81 | 13th c | Anon. | fróðr | gnomic |
| Hugsvinnsmál 95 | 13th c | Anon. | fróðara | gnomic |
| Hugsvinnsmál 3 | 13th c | Anon. | fróðhugaðr | gnomic |
| Hugsvinnsmál 6 | 13th c | Anon. | ófróðr | gnomic |
| Hugsvinnsmál 108 | 13th c | Anon. | fróðhugaðr | gnomic |
| Hugsvinnsmál 114 | 13th c | Anon. | fróðhugaðr | gnomic |
| Kátrínardrápa 3 | second half 14th c | Kálfr Hallsson | fróð | Kátrín |
| Kátrínardrápa 12 | second half 14th c | Kálfr Hallsson | fróðra | men |
| Kátrínardrápa 21 | second half 14th c | Kálfr Hallsson | fróðari | Kátrín |
| Plácitusdrápa 15 | 1150-1200 | Anon. | fróðum | Placus |
| Plácitusdrápa 51 | 1150-1200 | Anon. | siðfróðastir | Placus' sons |
| Leiðarvísan 43 | second half 12th c | Anon. | fróðr | gnomic |
| Leiðarvísan 8 | second half 12th c | Anon. | vegfróðr | God |
| Leiðarvísan 31 | second half 12th c | Anon. | flærðarfróðan | the Devil |
| Máríuvísur I 25 | late 14th/ early 15th c | Anon. | sannfróðir | people |
| Pétrsdrápa 13 | early 14th c | Anon. | fróðir | men who walk with the Lord |
| Sólarljóð 5 | 13th c | Anon. | fróðan | gnomic |
| Sólarljóð 83 | 13th c | Anon. | fróðr | gnomic |
| | | | | |
| **Treatises on Poetics** | | | | |
| Haustlöng 8 | late 9th c | Þjóðólfr ór Hvini | fróðugr | Loki |
| Háttalykill 71 | c. 1150 | Rǫgnvaldr jarl and Hallr Þórarinsson | fróðan | King Óláfr Tryggvason |
| Húsdrápa 7 | c. 980 | Úlfr Uggason | bǫðfróðr | Freyr |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Húsdrápa 8 | c. 980 | Úlfr Uggason | kynfróðs | Óðinn |
| | | | | |
| **Fornaldarsögur** | | | | |
| Hrókskviða 4 | | Hrókr inn svarti | fróðhugaðr | King Hálfr |
| Merlínusspá I 1 | c. 1200 | Gunnlaugr Leifsson | fróðir | men |
| Merlínusspá I 8 | c. 1200 | Gunnlaugr Leifsson | fróða | men |
| Merlínusspá I 11 | c. 1200 | Gunnlaugr Leifsson | fróði | Merlin |
| Merlínusspá I 19 | c. 1200 | Gunnlaugr Leifsson | fróðari | Merlin |
| Merlínusspá I 93 | c. 1200 | Gunnlaugr Leifsson | fróða | Merlin |
| Merlínusspá I 96 | c. 1200 | Gunnlaugr Leifsson | fróði | Merlin |
| Merlínusspá II 51 | c. 1200 | Gunnlaugr Leifsson | fróði | Merlin |
| Merlínusspá II 9 | c. 1200 | Gunnlaugr Leifsson | margfróðr | a supernatural woman |
| Skaufhala bálkr | post 1350 | Svartr á Hofstöðum | ófróðu | poem's intended audience |
| Lausavísa 4 | | Hervör | sannfróð | Hervör's mother |
| | | | | |
| **Islendingasögur** | | | | |
| Lausavísur 2 | | Hrafn Önundarson | sannfróðr | Hrafn |
| Lausavísa 12 | | Kormákr Ögmundarson | ófróðr | Narfi |
| Lausavísa 1 | | Trausti Þorgrímsson | raunfróðum | Viglund |

Table 17[245]

*Fróðr*'s tendency in the skaldic corpus to apply to eminent figures – primarily Christian, but also mythological – is exemplified in the poem *Merlínusspá*. *Merlínusspá* provides an opportunity to see *fróðr* being used to emphasize the wisdom of a figure whose primary function may have been to further the cause of the Church at the turn of the thirteenth century. *Merlínusspá* was written and published by the Icelandic monk Gunnlaugr Leifsson around the turn of the thirteenth century. The poem appears in two parts, and is a translation of Geoffrey of Monmouth's prose work, *Prophetiae Merlini* (the *Prophecies of Merlin*). *Merlínusspá* is found uniquely in *Hauksbók* where it forms part of *Breta Saga*, which is based off of Geoffery of Monmouth's *De Gestis Britonum* (known also as the *Historia Regum Britanniae*). Interestingly, the two parts of the poem appear in reverse order in the manuscript, 'so that the chronologically posterior part of the prophecies, as sequenced in Geoffrey's *De Gestis Britonum* … is placed before the chronologically prior part.'[246] Whether the prophecies or the saga was translated first, we do not know,[247] nor do we know exactly which manuscript of *Historia Regum Britanniae* Gunnlaugr used for his translation.[248] However, Russell Poole tentatively suggests that although no conclusion ought

[245] I have included dates in the skaldic tables for those poems that are most readily datable. The dates included in the tables are those provided by the editors of each respective poem in the *Skaldic Project*.
[246] Russell Poole, ed., "*Merlínusspá I*," in *Poetry in Fornaldarsögur*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross, vol. 8, bk.1 of *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross et. al., (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), 46.
[247] Poole, ed., "*Merlínusspá I*," 43.
[248] Poole, ed., "*Merlínusspá I*," 42.

to be made on the subject, it seems most likely that the manuscript Gunnlaugr used belonged to the Ω group suggested by Reeve and Wright.[249]

It is most relevant for our purposes to briefly discuss the possible reason for Gunnlaugr's translation of this text. Poole suggests that Gunnlaugr's translation of the *Prophetiae Merlini* was likely encouraged by – if not commissioned by – Guðmundr Arason, an 'activist for church rights' and the bishop of Hólar from 1203-37.[250] Around the time *Merlínusspá* was published in Iceland, there was a period of 'contestation of power between chieftains and church as intense (making allowances for scale) as that witnessed in England'.[251] Poole ultimately proposes that 'it seems probable that the text of the *Prophetiae* was brought to Iceland by somebody who realised the potential impact of this work as a predominantly grim diorama of the secular leadership down the ages that could be used as a weapon in current controversies about the primacy of ecclesiastical versus secular authority.'[252] I would argue that the way Gunnlaugr uses *fróðr* in his translation aligns with the idea that the text was translated to make the Church – represented in part here by Merlin himself – appear more competent than secular authority.

*Fróðr* as a simplex appears six times in *Merlínusspá I* (1, 8, 11, 19, 93, 96) and once in *Merlínusspá II* (51), and the compound *margfróðr* also appears once in *Merlínusspá II* (9). Five of these eight occurrences are in reference to Merlin (*Merlínusspá I* 11, 19, 93, 96; *Merl II* 51), and none of those five has an equivalent word in the Latin source material, meaning that Gunnlaugr specifically inserted *fróðr* to refer to Merlin. *Fróðr*'s first appearance is in *Merlínusspá I* 1, and is used in the context of a general invocation by the narrator that *fróðir fyrðar* [*fróðir* men] ought to listen to him. The next appearance is in stanza 8, where Vortigern calls on his wise men to discern why his tower is collapsing. This is the only use of *fróðr* for which there is a Latin equivalent. In the Latin, *suos magos* are consulted. Not only is this the only use of *fróðr* that can be traced back to the Latin, it is also the only moment in the poem that Gunnlaugr mentions Vortigern's *magi*. Once Merlin is mentioned, the *magi* not only are not referred to as *fróðr*, but are not mentioned again at all. Thus, as far as Gunnlaugr communicates to his audience, the designation of *fróðr* passes to Merlin. This corresponds nicely with Poole's observation that Gunnlaugr 'seems to aggrandize Merlin's social status and function in a systematic fashion, putting him side by side with Vortigernus,' whereas in *De Gestis Britonum*, Merlin is not presented as having a

[249] Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, ed. Michael D. Reeve, trans. Neil Wright (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2007) in Poole, ed., "*Merlínusspá I*," 42.
[250] Russell Poole, "The Sources of *Merlínússpá*: Gunnlaugr Leifsson's Use of Texts Additional to the *De Gestis Britonum* of Geoffrey of Monmouth," in *Eddic, Skaldic, and Beyond: Poetic Variety in Medieval Iceland and Norway*, ed. Martin Chase (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 19.
[251] Poole, "The Sources of *Merlínusspá*," 18.
[252] Poole, "The Sources of *Merlínusspá*," 19.

closeness to royalty.[253] Poole also suggests that some of the language Gunnlaugr uses to describe Merlin is reminiscent of that used for bishops at the time.[254]

Philip Lavender discusses Gunnlaugr's treatment of pagan subject matter in *Þorvalds þáttr ens víðförla*, noting that the þáttr 'reveals a strong interest in the pagan beliefs of Iceland and the ways in which pagan viewpoints could be subverted into Christian ones.'[255] He goes on to engage with the scholarship of Jenny Jochens, who argues that 'an attempt to domesticate the pagan art was performed by bringing magic within the purview of the Christian bishop,' noting the equation of the pagan *spámaðr* with the Christian bishop in the þáttr.[256] Lavender concludes that 'if *Þorvalds þáttr víðförla* demonstrates an interest in adapting non-Christian subject matter for the purposes of Christian propaganda, then we can also see a similar attempt in *Merlínusspá*.'[257] I would like to consider the possibility that *fróðr*, which we saw in the eddic corpus frequently apply to the ancient wisdom of giants, is being used by Gunnlaugr to recall that ancient wisdom and bestow it upon the Christian figure of Merlin, giving him authority in both the ancient mythological and contemporary Christian sphere. At the very least, this is a clear example of a shift in *fróðr*'s application from eminent pagan figures to Christian ones that is so common in the skaldic corpus.

*Fróðr* does appear in *Merlínusspá* once more, in the compound *margfróðr*. *Margfróðr*'s appearance in *Merlínusspá II* 9 is the only use of the word in the skaldic corpus. We will remember that it also appears once in the eddic corpus, in stanza 10 of *Hávamál*, in which we are told that the *margfróðr* man ought to be cheerful with his guests, *svinnr* about himself, and eloquent with a good memory. In *Merlínusspá II* 9, we are introduced in a prophecy to a *meyju margfróðastri* [a most *margfróðr* maiden] who will eliminate two dangerous rivers from England only to then be destroyed by a hart. As is the case for most of the other uses of *fróðr* in *Merlínusspá*, there is no equivalent for this word in Latin source material. As well as being the only *fróðr* compound used in this poem, this is also the only time in the poem that any wisdom word is applied to a woman. Clearly, in this case, the compounded form of the word is doing something different to the simplex.

After *Merlínusspá*, *fróðr* and its compounds appear most frequently in *Hugsvinnsmál*, another Christian poem translated from a Latin source. Unique in its origins, *Hugsvinnsmál* is an Old Norse rendition of the Latin *Disticha Catonis*, which was a popular Latin didactic text first composed around the 3rd century A.D. and whose use continued into the Christian period. The Icelandic translator writing in the

[253] Poole, "The Sources of *Merlínússpá*," 24.
[254] Poole, "The Sources of *Merlínússpá*," 25.
[255] Philip Lavender, "Merlin and the Völva," Viking and Medieval Scandinavia 2, (January 2006): 118.
[256] Jenny Jochens, "Old Norse Magic and Gender: Þáttr Þorvalds ens Víðförla," *Scandinavian Studies* 63, no. 3 (1991): 313.
[257] Philip Lavender, "Merlin and the Völva," 119.

second half of the thirteenth century incorporated traditional Norse elements into his translation – such as the call to attention at the beginning of the poem and his choice to use the familiar *ljóðaháttr* metre[258] – while Christianising the original Latin text to make it appropriate for a post-conversion Icelandic audience.

*Fróðr* is used twice in *Hugsvinnsmál* in its simple form, both times in gnomic contexts. The first, in stanza 81, presents a sentiment familiar in the poetic corpus, that is, that a man should be aware of his surroundings:

> *glöggþekin skyldi gumna hverr*
> *ok fróðr ok forsjáll vera*
>
> every man should be clear-sighted and *fróðr* and foresighted
> *Hugsvinnsmál* 81, 4-6[259]

Stanza 95 suggests that every person ought to take good advice, regardless of its source. The verse concludes by saying:

> *ánauðgan mann hygg ek opt vera*
> *frjálsum fróðara*
>
> I think an enslaved man is often more *fróðr* than a free one
> *Hugsvinnsmál* 95, 4-6[260]

These stanzas correspond to *Disticha II* 27 and *Disticha* III 10. In neither of the Latin source stanzas is there an equivalent wisdom word, demonstrating the same phenomenon as we saw above with *fróðr*'s use in *Merlínusspá*.

There are two *fróðr* compounds found in *Hugsvinnsmál*, both of which are also found in the eddic corpus. *Fróðhugaðr* appears in the skaldic corpus in *Hugsvinnsmál* 3, 108, and 114, and in stanza 4 of *Hróksviða*, a long *fornyrðislag* poem found in the *förnaldarsaga Hálfs saga ok Hálfsrekka*. *Fróðhugaðr*'s appearances in stanzas 3, 108, and 114 of *Hugsvinnsmál* all focus on respecting one's mother and father – these are the only stanzas in the poem with this focus. *Fróðhugaðr*'s fourth and final use in the skaldic corpus, in *Hróksviða* 4, does not share this affiliation, instead being used in praise of King Hálfr. *Fróðhugaðr* is unique in that it is the only *fróðr* compound that appears in both the eddic and skaldic corpora but not in the prose – the five uses of it that have now been mentioned (including its reference to

[258] Brittany Schorn, "Eddic Poetry for a New Era: Tradition and Innovation in *Sólarljóð* and *Hugsvinnsmál*," *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia* 7 (2011): 135-6; 139.
[259] Tarrin Wills and Stefanie Gropper, ed., "*Hugsvinnsmál*," 409.
[260] Tarrin Wills and Stefanie Gropper, ed., "*Hugsvinnsmál*," 417.

a raven in the eddic poem *Helgakviða Hjörðvarssonar* discussed in Chapter 2) are the only ones in the Old Norse corpus.

The second and final *fróðr* compound found in *Hugsvinnsmál* is the negative *ófróðr*. Stanza 6 instructs that one ought to *kvað ... kunnliga* [greet intimately] every man met on the road, insisting that *er einskis spyrr* [he who does not ask] is *ófróðr*. As Wills and Gropper point out in their commentary on the stanza (and as can be seen in the above section in this thesis on *fróðr*'s eddic uses), *Hávamál* 28 and 63 similarly state that a man who wishes to be considered *fróðr* ought to be able to ask and answer questions well.[261] We do not, however, encounter *ófróðr* in *Hávamál* expressing the inability to engage in questioning (indeed, we do not se *ófróðr* in *Hávamál* at all), nor is *fróðr* used anywhere else in *Hugsvinnsmál* in relation to asking and answering questions. Neither *fróðhugaðr* nor *ófróðr* has any parallel in the Latin source text. Thus, of all the instances of *fróðr* adjectives in *Merlínusspá* and *Hugsvinnsmál* – the two poems we are dealing with that have Latin source material – *fróðr* only has a parallel in the Latin once.

There are two other instances in the skaldic corpus in which *ófróðr* appears, one being in a *lausavísa* of Kormákr Ögmundarson and another in *Skaufhala bálkr*, which is tentatively attributed to Svartr Þorleifsson the younger.[262] The former use is in an undeniably negative context. Kormákr's *lausavísa* 12 occurs in chapter 4 of *Kormákrs saga* and is directed at one of Kormákr's antagonists, Narfi. Kormákr calls Narfi *ófróðr* and *orfa Áli* [scythe-handling oaf].[263] There is no doubt as to the connotation of this word in context – Kormákr's intent is to use the word to insult Narfi. Thus, there are two examples of *ófróðr* which have a negative connotation. *Ófróðr*'s third appearance in the skaldic corpus, however, is potentially more ambiguous in terms of connotation and may in fact align more readily with how *ófróðr* functioned in the *Poetic Edda*.

*Ófróðr*'s use in *Skaufhala bálkr* 42 may not denote a shameful failure to be *fróðr*, but rather it may indicate innocence. *Skaufhala bálkr* is a fable about a fox, in which the fox recounts his various hardships and tales of his heroic life. *Ófróðr* comes in the last stanza of the poem, when the narrator, having finished telling his fable, announces that he has put this story together for his own pleasure and for *meinþurðar ófróðu meingi*, which Gade translates as 'the entertainment of an uneducated multitude'.[264] I would like to suggest, based on the sympathy that seems to be attached to *ófróðr* in the *Edda* and due to

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[261] Tarrin Wills and Stefanie Gropper, ed., "*Hugsvinnsmál*," in *Poetry on Christian Subjects*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross, vol. 7, bk. 1, of *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross, et. al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 364.
[262] Kari Ellen Gade, ed., "*Skaufhala bálkr*," in *Poetry in Fornaldarsögur*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross, vol. 8, bk. 2 of *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages*, ed.Margaret Clunies Ross et. al., (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), 952-3.
[263] Rory McTurk, trans., "Kormakr's Saga," in *Sagas of Warrior Poets*, ed. Diana Whaley (London: Penguin, 2002), 13.
[264] Gade, ed., "*Skaufhala bálkr*," 984.

the nature of the recounted poem, that by this phrase the poet meant something along the lines of 'gatherings of innocents' or 'groups of children.' Though this is speculative, if we tentatively accept this possibility, we have here an example of a poem in *fornyrðislag*, an eddic-style meter, potentially employing the meaning of a word found in the *Poetic Edda*, but that contrasts with its *Íslendingasaga* context. The cohesiveness of the lexicon of eddic-style poems regardless of their context is a phenomenon that will be discussed in the conclusion to this thesis.

Another word that appears in eddic-style poetry as well as poetry of the *Íslendingasögur* is *sannfróðr*. *Sannfróðr* appears three times in the skaldic corpus: in Hervör's *Lausavísa* 4 in *Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*, in the second *Lausavísa* of Hrafn Önundarson in *Gunnlaugs Saga*, and in stanza 25 of *Maríuvísur I*.[265] In Hervör's *Lausavísa* 4, Hervör is speaking to her mother, asking for her help in disguising herself as a man. She says:

> Bú þú mik at öllu, sem þú hraðast kunnir,
> sannfróð kona, sem þú son myndir
>
> Dress me in all respects, as quickly as you can, *sannfróðr* woman, as you would a son
> *Lausavísa* 4[266]

Burrows translates *sannfróðr* as 'truly-wise,' but I tend to agree with Cleasby-Vigfússon's suggestion that *sannfróðr* ought to be translated as 'truly-informed,' as in, 'wise to the truth.'[267] The emphasis here ought to be not on the degree to which Hervör's mother is wise, but what she is wise about – in this case, it is the fact that her daughter is disguised as a man. *Sannfróðr* appears twice more in the skaldic corpus, once in *Maríuvísur I* 25 to refer to people praising Mary when they see a woman step out of a fire unscathed – that is, they have been witness to the truth of Mary's grace. The second occurrence is in the *Lausavísa* of Hrafn Önundarson in *Gunnlaugs Saga* in which Hrafn is telling Gunnlaugr that they ought not fight over one woman when Gunnlaugr is aware of the fact that there are more women south beyond the sea. It seems in the case of this word that the word has the same necessarily specific meaning in all three situations, regardless of its referent. The fact that *sannfróðr*'s use appears to be quite consistent across these three uses, one being eddic in style and found in the poetry of the *fornaldarsögur*, one being a Christian poem in *dróttkvætt*, and the last in the poetry of the *Íslendingasögur* may suggest that while the meaning of some compounds is subject to change based on context and style of poetry – arguably like *ófróðr* – others are not.

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[265] *Sannfróðr* occurs 42 times in the prose literature, making it the most frequently occurring *fróðr* adjectival compound in that corpus.
[266] Hannah Burrows, ed., "*Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*," in *Poetry in Fornaldarsögur*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross, vol. 8, bk.1 of *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross et. al., (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), 375.
[267] *Cleasby-Vigfússon* (1874), s.v. "*fróðr*."

One more case study I would like to address here is the use of the simplex *fróðr* to apply to women. *Fróðr* is used to refer to two women in the skaldic corpus, both appearing in Christian poetry. The two Christian women referred to as *fróðr* are Saint Kátrín and Mary, and the references occur in the late-fourteenth-century *Kátrínardrápa* and the late-fourteenth/early-fifteenth -century *Drápa af Máríugrát*. Saint Kátrín is twice referred to using *fróðr*, in stanzas 3 and 21. The only other use of *fróðr* in the poem is for men who are sent *að prófa spekt* [to compete in wisdom] with her. Specifically, the poet tells us:

> Meistarliga vann mentir leystar
> mærin glödd af himna röddu
> allar þær er öfligr þollar
> öglis steittar hána friettu.
>
> The maiden, gladdened by the voice from the heavens, masterfully gave answers to all of the learned questions, which the strong fir-trees of the snake's path [GOLD > MEN] asked her.
>
> *Kátrínardrápa* 14[268]

*Fróðr* is associated specifically with the asking and answering of questions (especially in *Hávamál* and *Vafþrúðnismál*), and it would appear that Kátrín is considered *fróðr* in this poem specifically because of this skillset. The third and final use of *fróðr* in the poem is in stanza 21, which states of Kátrín that:

> fæddiz henni ei fyrr nie síðar
> fróðari mær nema dróttins möðir
>
> neither before nor since has a more *fróðr* maiden than she been born, except the Lord's mother [= Mary]
>
> *Kátrínardrápa* 21[269]

And of course, as outlined above, the only other woman in the Christian corpus referred to as *fróðr* is, in fact, Mary. In *Drápa af Máríugrát* 34, Mary is called *fróðust ... dróttins móðir* [the most *fróðr* mother of the Lord] after she recounts the events of the crucifixion.[270] Also referred to as *fróðr* in this poem are Saint Augustine (10), Christ (44), and a monk to whom Mary recounts her joys (41). *Fróðr*'s meaning in *Drápa af Máríugrát* is not tied to questioning the way it is in *Kátrínardrápa*, and its use in these two poems demonstrates its versatility: it can be specifically referring to a particular skill; it can be applied to impressive Christian women as well as men; and, importantly, it is not necessarily tied to Christianity or

[268] Kirsten Wolf, ed., "*Kátrínardrápa*," in *Poetry on Christian Subjects*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross, vol. 7, bk. 2, of *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross, et. al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 940.
[269] Wolf, ed., "*Kátrínardrápa*," 945.
[270] Kari Ellen Gade, ed., "*Drápa af Máríugrát*," in *Poetry on Christian Subjects*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross, vol. 7, bk. 2, of *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross, et. al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 782.

to being a Christian, which we can see from its application to the men sent to contend with Kátrín, who are referred to specifically as *heiðna spakinga* [heathen sages].[271]

Once again, I invite the reader to consider where *fróðr* does not appear. Only in one poem does it refer to a pagan god, and that is in Úlfr Uggason's *Húsdrápa*. Dated to c. 980, *Húsdrápa* is not a long poem, containing only twelve stanzas, and yet it features both *böðfróðr* and *kynfróðr* in reference to Freyr and Óðinn, respectively. *Kynfróðr* appears in stanza 8 as part of the kenning *fallin mög kynfróðr hrafnfreistaðar* [the fallen son of the kin-wise raven-tester [= Óðinn > = Baldr]].[272] This is one of only two kennings for Óðinn that incorporates a wisdom word, and the other is also found in this poem. In *Húsdrápa* 10, Óðinn is *svinnum sigrunni* [*svinnr* victory-tree [WARRIOR = Óðinn]].[273] Thus, only two of the 43 kennings that refer to Óðinn are related to wisdom.[274] One might imagine that a god so intrinsically associated with wisdom would be more intimately connected to its lexicon, and yet looking at both the eddic and now the skaldic poetry, we can see that is not the case. In fact, this is the only instance in the skaldic corpus that a wisdom word is associated with Óðinn in or out of the context of a kenning. The god of wisdom he may be, but skalds themselves seem to have been much more interested in his associations with battle in terms of how they chose to represent him in kennings.

*Fróðr*'s use is even more wide-ranging in the skaldic corpus than it is in the eddic, appearing in gnomic contexts as well as in reference to kings, Christian figures, and women. Though we do see it applied twice to pagan gods, the shift in its use from venerating pagan and mythological figures in the *Edda* to Christian figures in the skaldic poetry is conspicuous. This shift is especially evident, I would argue, in *Merlínusspá*, where Gunnlaugr's pointed use of *fróðr* may indicate an awareness of the changing function of the word. Its high compounding rate may suggest a very broad understanding of the simple lexeme in the skaldic corpus.

### 3.2 Horskr

*Horskr* and its derivatives occur 36 times in the skaldic corpus: the simplex *horskr* accounts for 33 appearances; the adjective *horskligr* for two; and the adverb *horskliga* for one. This unique aversion to compounding is apparent in both poetic corpora, with a single use of the adverb *horskliga* in *Grípisspá* the only representation of *horskr*'s derivatives in the eddic corpus. We will remember from the eddic chapter that *horskr* is reserved in that corpus for human wisdom – it does not apply to wisdom or

[271] Wolf, ed., "*Kátrínardrápa*," 940.
[272] Edith Marold, ed., "*Húsdrápa*," in *Poetry from Treatises on Poetics*, ed. Kari Ellen Gade and Edith Marold, vol. 3, bk. 1 of *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross et. al., (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), 418.
[273] Edith Marold, ed., "*Húsdrápa*," 420.
[274] Information taken from "Kennings for Óðinn," Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages, https://skaldic.org/skaldic/m.php?p=kenningnameref&i=4588.

knowledge that is exclusive to or related to the supernatural or the divine. This remains true in the skaldic corpus not only in relation to pagan figures, but to Christian figures as well. Unlike what we have seen with *fróðr*, *horskr* never applies to God, Christ, Mary, or any saints. *Horskr* appears just once in a Biblical context, in the poem *Lilja*, which will be discussed below.

| ***Horskr* in the Skaldic Corpus** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Poem** | **Date** | **Poet** | **Word** | **Referent** |
| **Konungasögur** | | | | |
| Eiríksmál 4 | c. 954 | Anon. | horski | Bragi |
| Eiríksmál 8 | c. 954 | Anon. | horskr | Eirík |
| Ólafs drápa Tryggvasonar 20 | 12th-early 15th c | Anon. | horskum | Óláfr |
| Poem about Óláfr Tryggvasonar | 1350-1375 | Anon. | hoskr | Óláfr |
| Lausavísur 1 | c. 900 | Hildr Hrólfsdóttir nefju | horskan | Göngu-Hrólfr |
| Lausavísur 2 | 12th c | Oddi inn lítli Glúmsson | horsk | Ermingerðr |
| | | | | |
| **Christian Subjects** | | | | |
| Brúðkaupsvísur 3 | 14th c | Anon. | horskr | male protagonist |
| Geisli 64 | 1153 | Einarr Skúlason | horskr | gnomic |
| Harmsól 45 | c 1200 | Gamli kanóki | horskum | group |
| Hugsvinnsmál 2 | 13th c | Anon. | horskr | gnomic |
| Hugsvinnsmál 26 | 13th c | Anon. | horskr | gnomic |
| Hugsvinnsmál 93 | 13th c | Anon. | horskr | gnomic |
| Hugsvinssmál 122 | 13th c | Anon. | horskr | gnomic |
| Hugsvinssmál 1 | 13th c | Anon. | horskligr | gnomic |
| Hugsvinssmál 146 | 13th c | Anon. | horskligr | gnomic |
| Leiðarvísan 26 | second half 12th c | Anon. | horskum | group |
| Lilja 17 | 1300-1345 | Anon. | hosk | Adam and Eve |
| Máríuvísur 23 | late 14th/early 15th | Anon. | hosk | woman |
| Sólarljoð 14 | 13th c | Anon. | horska | woman |
| | | | | |
| **Treatises on Poetics** | | | | |
| Háttalykill 67 | c. 1150 | Rögnvaldrjarl and Hallr Þórarinson | horskra | warriors |
| | | | | |
| **Fornaldarsögur** | | | | |
| Hrókskviða 3 | | Hrókr inn svarti | horskum | King Hálfr |
| Innsteinskviða 17 | | Innstein Gunnlaðarson | hoskr | Innstein |
| Merlínusspá II 21 | c. 1200 | Gunnlaugr Leifsson | horska | hedgehog |
| Merlínusspá I 96 | c. 1200 | Gunnlaugr Leifsson | horskliga | Merlin's prophecies |
| Víkarsbálkr 20 | | Starkaðr gamli Stórviksson | horskum | King Víkar |
| Ævidrápa 9 | | Örvar-Odd | hoskir | warship captains |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ævidrápa 9 | | Örvar-Odd | hoskir | warship captains |
| Ævidrápa 29 | | Örvar-Odd | hoska | warriors |
| Ævidrápa 46 | | Örvar-Odd | hoskir | Oddr and his men |
| Ævidrápa 60 | | Örvar-Odd | hoska | Hild |
| Ævidrápa 69 | | Örvar-Odd | hoska | Hárekr's daughter |
| Lausavísur 2 | | Hörðr/Hringr | horskum | Hörðr |
| Lausavísur 2 | | Hundingi konungr | hoski | Ölvir |
| Lausavísur 7 | | Ragnarr loðbrók | hoskum | gnomic |
| Lausavísur 2 | | Vargeisa/Álfsól | hoskr | Hjálmþer |
| Lausavísur 1 | | Ýma tröllkona | hoska | Ýma |
| | | | | |
| **Íslendingasögur** | | | | |

Table 18

As well as having a conspicuous aversion to Biblical – or, indeed, Christian – figures, *horskr* enjoys particularly high frequency in the poetry of the *fornaldarsögur*. Of *horskr*'s 32 appearances in the skaldic corpus, 16 are in the poetry of the *fornaldarsögur*. The highest number of *horskr* appearances in a *fornaldarsaga* poem is six, in the *ævidrápa* of Örvar-Oddr in *Örvar-Odds Saga*.[275] *Horskr*'s proclivity towards the poetry of the *fornaldarsögur* coupled with its high frequency in the eddic poetry and its virtual absence from the prose might suggest some sort of association not only with a mythic past, but with its poetry. Schorn discusses Snorri's attestations in *Gylfaginning* and *Skáldskaparmál* that 'poetry describing the words and deeds of men and supernatural creatures of the ancient past belonged to eddic metres, which were evocative of this antiquity,' and that the use of eddic poetry in the *fornaldarsögur* suggests that this impression remained even in the later medieval period.[276] It may be that this particular word, even in that later period, remained associated largely with the mythic and heroic past and its wisdom. Looking at the occurrences in the Christian poetry, of which there are 13, seven are gnomic. Further, *horskr*'s five uses in the poetry of the *konungasögur* include two from *Eiríksmál*, which is, we will remember, considered to be one of the early eddic praise poems.[277] *Horskr* is absent from the poetry of the *Íslendingasögur*.

*Horskr*'s use in the eddic corpus for prominent and princely men is also evident in the skaldic corpus, as it refers to Göngu-Hrólfr, Eiríkr Blóðøx, Óláfr Tryggvason, Hörðr, King Hálfr, Ölvir, Innstein Gunnlaðarson, Örvar-Oddr, King Víkar, and Hjálmþér. Whereas *fróðr* easily transitioned into use in the Christian corpus for prominent figures – including women – *horskr* did not. I will look at *horskr*'s

[275] This is not surprising, considering that later manuscripts of this saga contain 141 stanzas of verse, the highest number of all the *fornaldarsögur*. Margaret Clunies Ross, "*Introduction*," in *Poetry in Fornaldarsögur*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross, vol. 8, bk.1 of *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross et. al., (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), lvi.
[276] Schorn, *Speaker and Authority*, 118.
[277] Fulk, ed., "*Eiríksmál*," 1003.

treatment of divine figures and of women as well as its role in *Merlínusspá* in order to further examine its relationship to Christianity and to consider how its behaviour in the skaldic corpus differs from its behaviour in the eddic.

*Horskr* demonstrates in the skaldic corpus the same aversion to divine figures as it does in the eddic poetry, with, arguably, a few exceptions. In the Christian poem *Lilja*, Satan seemingly refers to the wisdom of God as *horskr*. In stanza 17, Satan promises the following to Eve:

> ‘Eigi munu þið Ádám deyja
> andlitshvít, þóað eplið bítið,
> heldur munuð með heiðr og valdi
> hosk og ík við guðdóm líkjaz.’
>
> ‘You and Adam, bright of face, will not die, though you eat the apple, rather, *horskr* and powerful, you will be like the Godhead with honour and might.’
> *Lilja* 17[278]

The snake promises that Adam and Eve will be *horskr* and *íkr*, like God. This is the closest *horskr* comes in the corpus to being associated with a divine Christian figure. It is never, however, actually applied directly to God. Two stanzas later, in stanza 19, God is the *íkr herra* [powerful lord] when he punishes Adam and Eve – we have reiteration that he is *íkr*, but never that he is *horskr*.

The only time *horskr* may apply directly to a divine figure in either of the poetic corpora is in *Eiríksmál* 4, in reference to Bragi, the god of poetry. After Bragi asks why there is such a din in Valhöll and remarks that it is as if Baldr has returned, Óðinn retorts:

> Heimsku mæla  skalat inn horski Bragi
> Þó at þú vel hvat vitir
>
> The *horskr* Bragi must not talk nonsense, though you know well why.
> *Eiríksmál* 4, 1-3[279]

Though Fulk clearly claims that Bragi here is the god of poetry, there is, as Gunnell notes, ‘some suggestion that Bragi, the Nordic god of poetry, was originally a human court poet (Bragi Broddason) [sic] who was taken into the ranks of the gods.’[280] Thus, there is some ambiguity here as to whether the reference is, in fact, to a god or a man. It may be interesting to consider here Goeres’ interpretation of this moment in which the loquacious Bragi – who she treats as the god of poetry as opposed to the human

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[278] Martin Chase, ed., “*Lilja*,” in *Poetry on Christian Subjects*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross, vol. 7, bk. 2, of *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross, et. al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 583.
[279] Fulk, ed., “*Eiríksmál*,” 1009.
[280] Fulk ed., “*Eiríksmál*,” 1008; Terry Gunnell, “Performance Archaeology, *Eiríksmál*, *Hákonarmál*, and the Study of Old Nordic Religions,” in *John Miles Foley's World of Oralities*, ed. Mark C. Amodio, (Arc Humanities Press, 2021), 145.

poet – introduces Eiríkr. She calls 'Bragi's exuberant praise … a wry reflection of the actual circumstances of recitation,' going on to say that 'just as Bragi performs a eulogy before Óðinn, so the human poet declaims before a ruler.'[281] Thus, the human poet is performing the same role as Bragi in this moment. When Óðinn calls Bragi *horskr*, then, and, as Erin Goeres suggests, 'reminds the audience of the artifice of poetic convention,' might this not be an instance of the poet in fact referring to himself as *horskr*, functioning as he is as Bragi's reflection?[282] This does not, granted, provide any certain answers to the question of whether *horskr* here is referring to a god or a man, but certainly it demonstrates further the potential ambiguity of the attribution.

*Horskr* is used again in the nine-stanza poem, in stanza 8, wherein Sigmundr encourages the newly-arrived Eiríkr Blóðøx to go *í höll horskr* [*horskr*, into the hall]. This use of *horskr* is in line with what we might expect from the word in the eddic corpus, that is, a common and complimentary word to apply to a king. Its application here to Bragi can, I would argue, be considered in the same way: regardless of whether Bragi is a god, *horskr* is not referring here to any divine or numinous knowledge, rather, as Fulk suggests, to the expectation that Bragi would be able to recognise Eiríkr.[283] It is worth mentioning that in *Ólafs drápa Tryggvasonar* 20, *horskr* is part of a kenning that incudes Óðinn, but it does not apply to him in the kenning – Óðinn is associated instead with battle (*hjaldrs Yggs* [the uproar of Yggr] = battle).[284] We see here an example of the preference of skalds to use battle kennings to refer to Óðinn, even, in this case, when a wisdom word was clearly available and in the mind of the skald.

*Horskr* applies to women six times in the skaldic corpus: once in a *Lausavísa* of Oddi inn lítli Glúmsson (2); twice in poetry found in *Hjálmþés saga ok Ölvis* (*Lausavísa* 2 of Vargeisa and *Lausavísa* 1 of Ýma tröllkona); twice in the *Ævidrápa* of Örvar-Oddr (60, 69); once in *Sólarljóð* (14); and once in *Máríuvísur* (23). I would argue that while the references that are not explicitly Christian correspond to what we came to expect of *horskr*'s application to women in the eddic corpus, its treatment of women in the Christian corpus (based on an admittedly small sample size) is less flattering.

*Horskr* is used self-referentially in the *Lausavísur* spoken by the sea ogress Ýma featured in *Hjálmþés saga ok Ölvis*.[285] Having been spoken to by Hjálmþér in a manner that displeases her, Ýma threatens him, referring to herself as a *hoska mær*. She also takes care to mention her bright hair and

[281] Goeres, *The Poetics of Commemoration*, 62.
[282] Goeres, *The Poetics of Commemoration*, 62.
[283] Fulk ed., "*Eiríksmál*," 1008.
[284] Kate Heslop, ed., "*Óláfs drápa Tryggvasonar*," in *Poetry from the King's Sagas 1: From Mythical Times to c. 1035*, ed. Diana Whaley, vol. 1, bk. 2 of *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross et. al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), 1051.
[285] Richard L. Harris, ed., "*Hjálmþés saga ok Ölvis*," in *Poetry in Fornaldarsögur*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross, vol. 8, bk. 2 of *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross et. al., (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), 504.

golden cloth, suggesting that she is both beautiful and wealthy. This corresponds with *horskr*'s behaviour in the eddic corpus in that it relates to a woman who is of good social standing and intellectually impressive.

Oddi inn litli Glúmsson refers to a similarly impressive woman in his *Lausavísa*, which is dated to 1152. The stanza praises Ermingerðr, the Viscountess of Narbonne:

> Trautt erum vér, sem ek vætti, verðir Ermingerðar,
> — veitk, at horsk má heita hlaðgrund konungr sprunda —
> þvít sómir Bil bríma bauga stalls at ǫllu
> — hon lifi sæl und sólar setri — miklu betra.
>
> 'We are hardly worthy of Ermingerðr, as I expect—I know that the *horskr* headband-ground [WOMAN] can be called a king among women—, because [something] altogether much better befits the Bil <goddess> of the flame of the standing-place of rings [ARM/HAND > GOLD > WOMAN]; may she live blessed under the seat of the sun [SKY/HEAVEN].'
>
> *Lausavísa* 2[286]

The two references to women in the *Ævidrápa* of Örvar-Oddr, though less descriptive, are indisputably also speaking favourably of the women in question. The first reference is to Hildr, the daughter of a giant, who is referred to as *horska ok stóra* [*horskr* and great].[287] The second reference is to the daughter of a ruler who is a faithful patron of Oddr, and she is called simply *horska dóttur*.[288] The relationships the protagonist has with each of these women yields good results, the first producing a strong son, and the second a successful ruling partnership. Both of these relatively straightforward references fit within framework established in the eddic corpus that *horskr* ought to be considered a praiseworthy quality in a woman, especially one of status.

The story in the Christian corpus is somewhat different. The only two references to women in Christian poetry are in *Máríuvísur I* and *Sólarljóð*. *Máríuvísur I*, composed in the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century, is a poem concerning a woman who is twice saved from being burned alive by the Virgin Mary. *Horskr* is employed as part of a kenning referring to the woman as she sat, empowered by Mary, in the fire unscathed:

> *hosk sat Bil í báli*
> *baugstalls um dag allan*

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[286] Judith Jesch, ed., "Oddi inn litli Glúmsson, *Lausavísur*," in *Poetry from the King's Sagas 1: From c. 1035 to c. 1300*, ed. Kari Ellen Gade, vol. 2, bk. 2 of *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross et. al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), 616.
[287] Margaret Clunies Ross, ed., "Qrvar-Oddr, *Ævidrápa*," in *Poetry in Fornaldarsögur*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross, vol. 8, bk. 2 of *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross et. al., (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), 936.
[288] Clunies Ross, ed., "Qrvar-Oddr, *Ævidrápa*," 945.

> [the *horskr* Bil <goddess> of the ring-seat [ARM > WOMAN] remained in the fire all day
> *Máríuvísur I*, 23[289]

Thus, the only instance in which we see *horskr* applied to a characterised woman in a Christian context, it is in proximity to a kenning that includes pagan elements. Even here, in a clearly Christian context, *horskr* is potentially in some way associated with the mythic pagan past.

*Horskr* appears once in *Sólarljóð*, referencing a woman who was the cause of a disagreement between two men that ultimately led to their deaths:

> Fádæmi verða í flestum stöðum
> goldin grimliga; á hólm þeir gengu
> fyr it horska víf,ok fengu báðir bana.
>
> 'Abnormal events are repaid fiercely in most places; they went to duel for the *horskr* lady, and both were killed.'
> *Sólarljóð* 14[290]

The *horskr* woman is desirable, but she is by no means praised for it. Shortly before, in stanza 11, the woman is the subject of the verb *lýta*, that is, 'to bring disgrace,' suggesting that she is an active player in this temptation (although she is never actually said to be doing anything other than being the object of desire). This woman is portrayed as a passive temptation – the use of *horskr* that we saw in the eddic corpus to denote a competent and resourceful woman does not seem to have made its way into the Christian corpus.

Though this concludes the summary of stanzas in which *horskr* refers to women, there are two other instances in which *horskr* appears in a conversation between a woman and man where the use might arguably be ironic. Both occur in the eddic-style poetry of the *fornaldarsögur*. In a *Lausavísa* delivered by Ragnarr Loðbrók to his wife, Kráka-Áslaug, after she has shared with Ragnarr her (quite reasonable) misgivings about his plan to invade England with just two ships, he says to her:

> Spari mangi rǫf Rínar ef rǫskva vill hermenn,
> verr samir horskum hilmi hringa fjǫlð en drengja;
> ilt er í borghlið baugi brandrauðum framm standa;
> allmarga veitk jǫfra, þás auðr lifir, dauða.

[289] Kari Ellen Gade, ed., "*Máríuvísur I*," in *Poetry on Christian Subjects*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross, vol. 7, bk. 2, of *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross, et. al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 695.
[290] Margaret Clunies Ross and Peter Robinson, ed., "*Sólarljóð*," 305.

> Let no person be sparing of the amber of the Rhine [GOLD], if a brave man should want soldiers; a multitude of rings befits a *horskr* ruler worse than one of men. It is no good entering the gate of a stronghold with fire-red rings; I know of very many kings who are dead, while their wealth lives on.
>
> *Lausavísur* 7[291]

Although he calls himself *horskr* and assures her that his plan is sound, he ultimately sails to his doom. Just as in the heroic poems of the *Edda*, a woman's misgivings are brushed aside by a man who then pays for his ignorance with his life – as it turns out, Kráka-Áslaug is far more *horskr* than Ragnarr.

In *Hjálmþés saga ok Ölvis*, Vargeisa is a princess who is trapped in the form of a monster. To return to her original form, she must procure a man's kiss. To do this, she offers Hjálmþér a sword in exchange for a kiss:

> Sæk þú Snarvendil; sigr mun honum fylgja,
> horskr, ef þú, hilmir, vilt þér í hendi bera.
> Koss vil ek af þér klénan þiggja;
> þá muntu mímung mér ór hendi fá.
>
> Take Snarvendill; victory will follow it, if you, *horskr* prince, want to carry it in your hand. I want to get a nice kiss from you; then you will get the sword from my hand.
>
> *Lausavísur* 2[292]

There is very obviously a power struggle occurring in this episode involving the transfer of a sword from a woman to a man. At this moment Vargeisa holds the sword and therefore the power.[293] She knows what she needs from Hjálmþér, and she preys on his desire for masculinity to obtain it. Not only does she offer him the sword in exchange for a kiss, but she also uses flattering language to entice him. Though it may be true that Hjálmþér is *horskr*, it seems the word could just as easily – if not more appropriately here – be applied to Vargeisa (especially considering the only other use of *horskr* in the poetry in this saga is to refer to *Ýma tröllkona* as discussed above).

Remaining in the corpus of *fornaldarsögur* poetry, it will be useful to look at *horskr*'s use in *Merlínusspá* to explore how its use is different from and complementary to that of *fróðr*. Merlin himself is never referred to as *horskr*, but the adverb, *horskliga*, is used to refer to how he devises his prophecies. *Mérlinusspá* I 96 reads:

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[291] Rory McTurk, ed., "*Ragnars saga loðbrókar*," in *Poetry in Fornaldarsögur*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross, vol. 8, bk. 2 of *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross et. al., (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), 670.
[292] Harris, ed., "*Hjálmþés saga ok Ölvis*," 498.
[293] See Helga Kress, "Taming the Shrew: The Rise of Patriarchy and the Subordination of the Feminine in Old Norse Literature," in *Cold Counsel: Women in Old Norse Literature and Mythology*, ed. Sarah M. Anderson (New York: Routledge, 2002), 90.

at inn fróði halr
hefr horskliga hagat spásǫgu,
sem fyr hónum fyrðar helgir.

… the *fróðr* man has devised his prophecy *horskliga*, like holy men before him.
*Mérlinusspá I* 96[294]

Here, the act of prophesying is done by Merlin in the same manner as the *helgir fyrðar*, that is, *horskliga*, in a *horskr* way. *Horskliga*'s alliteration with *hagat* and *helgir* intensifies the word's relationship to Christian prophecies. I would argue, too, that the alliteration of these words with *halr* in the line above, which is the subject of *fróði*, also serves to amplify that relationship discussed in **3.1** between *fróðr* and the competence of Merlin in the poem. *Horskliga* is being used here not to describe Merlin himself, but a tradition in which he participates. Jochens claims that 'a scrutiny of Old Norse poetry, the family sagas, and the law codes demonstrates that during an intermediary stage [between paganism and Christianity] clerical authors attempted to domesticate pagan magic using three simultaneous and often contradictory approaches.'[295] Of the three approaches she mentions, I believe that what is happening here is the '[permittance] of Christian leaders both to perform and to benefit from magic while the new religion gained acceptance.'[296] It may be that *horskr* is being applied to the *spásaga* here especially because the devising of prophecy is a pagan tradition that is in this text being adapted to suit Christianity. The association of *horskliga* with these *spásögur* may have been made intentionally to link the idea of sanctified Christian prophecy with that of the pagan prophecy of the *spámaðr*. Just as *fróðr* was applied to Merlin to grant him ancient authority, so *horksliga* was applied to *spásaga* to connect the pagan and the Christian.

*Horskr*'s second appearance in *Merlínusspá* is less straightforward. In *Merlínusspá II*, *horskr* is applied to a hedgehog king who will, according to Merlin, rebuild London, only to then greedily hide his plunder underneath the city. The use of *horskr* here seems to praise the hedgehog king's craftiness as opposed to his character, demonstrating again that a laudable moral code is not a prerequisite for the kind of competence celebrated by many of these words. If the reader were familiar with the hedgehog in the *Physiologus* (which Simone Horst suggests may be the inspiration for these stanzas),[297] she may have expected no good from the hedgehog. There is no equivalent for *horskr* in the description of the hedgehog in either the Y or B version of the Latin *Physiologus*, nor in the *Prophetiae Merlini* – once again, Gunnlaugr has inserted a wisdom word into his poem where there is no equivalent in his source texts.

[294] Poole, ed., "*Merlínusspá I*," 128.
[295] Jochens, "Old Norse Magic and Gender," 308.
[296] Jochens, "Old Norse Magic and Gender," 308.
[297] Simone Horst, ed. *Merlínússpá. Merlins Prophezeiung*, (Munich: Herbert Utz Verlag, 2012), 77-78.

*Horskr* occurs with high frequency in the poetry of the *fornaldarsögur*, does not readily apply to eminent Christian figures, and applies differently to women in Christian poetry and women in non-Christian poetry. It does not seem to have adapted as readily as *fróðr* did to the Christian corpus, and I would like to suggest that it has in the skaldic poetry maintained an association with the wisdom of the heroic past.

### 3.3 Snotr

*Snotr* and its compounds appear 25 times in the skaldic corpus. In the eddic corpus, *snotr*'s use was concentrated heavily in *Hávamál*, and though we do not see that same near-exclusivity to gnomic verse in the skaldic corpus, seven of *snotr*'s 25 uses are in gnomic contexts, six of which are in *Hugsvinnsmál*. Because of *snotr*'s tendency towards use in gnomic poetry in the *Edda* – we remember that three of its four compounds found in the eddic poetry (*ósnotr*, *meðalsnotr*, and *ráðsnotr*) were found exclusively in *Hávamál* – it will be important to focus on its use in *Hugsvinnsmál* in the skaldic corpus. Outside *Hugsvinnsmál* and the gnomic context, *snotr* refers to men, women, kings, warriors, and groups of people, primarily those who are receiving something from someone, which is a phenomenon I will discuss below. The nature of *snotr*'s compounding is worthy of note because it is so reminiscent of its behaviour in the eddic corpus: the only compounds found in the skaldic corpus are *ósnotr, alsnotr,* and *margsnotr*, which are the same as those found in the eddic corpus save for *ráðsnotr*, which does not appear in the skaldic corpus. These compounds are found only in gnomic contexts, in the poetry of *Hugsvinnsmál* and once in *Háttatal*. An examination of the habits of *snotr* in the skaldic corpus has much to offer in terms of our understanding of the relationship between the eddic and skaldic corpora. The two main elements of *snotr*'s behaviour in the skaldic corpus that I will address are its uses in *Hugsvinnsmál* as well as its tendency to refer to large groups of people.

| ***Snotr* in the Skaldic Corpus** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Poem** | **Date** | **Poet** | **Word** | **Referent** |
| **Konungasögur** | | | | |
| Erfidrápa Óláfs Tryggvasonar 16 | c. 1000 | Hallfreðr vandræðaskáld Óttarsson | snotr | a certain Þorkell |
| Hrafnsmál 3 | late 13th c | Sturla Þórðarson | snotrum | Hákon Hákonarson |
| Nesjavísur 12 | early 11th c | Sigvatr Þórðarson | snotr | woman |
| Nizarvísur 7 | late 11th c | Steinn Herdísarson | snotran | Sveinn |
| Lausavísur 27 | 12th c | Rǫgnvaldr jarl Kali Kolsson | snotr | probably Ermingerðr |
| Lausavísur 4 | early 10th c | Torf-Einarr Rǫgnvaldsson | snotrir | warriors |
| | | | | |
| **Christian Subjects** | | | | |
| Brúðkaupsvísur 8 | 14th c | Anon. | snotr | male protagonist |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Hugsvinnsmál 29 | 13th c | Anon. | snotrum | gnomic |
| Hugsvinnsmál 41 | 13th c | Anon. | snotrum | gnomic |
| Hugsvinnsmál 44 | 13th c | Anon. | snotr | gnomic |
| Hugsvinnsmál 46 | 13th c | Anon. | ósnotr | gnomic |
| Hugsvinnsmál 56 | 13th c | Anon. | allsnotr | gnomic |
| Hugsvinnsmál 79 | 13th c | Anon. | margsnotr | gnomic |
| Leiðarvísan 28 | second half 12th c | Anon. | snotrum | people receiving food |
| Máríudrápa 2 | c. 1400 | Anon. | snotr | Mary |
| Plácitusdrápa 31 | 1150-1200 | Anon. | snotra | people receiving faith |
| | | | | |
| **Treatises on Poetics** | | | | |
| Fourth Grammatical Treatise | 1330-45 | Anon. | ósnotran | gnomic |
| Fragments 3 | 961-1026 | Þórðr Særeksson (Sjáreksson) | snotr | Skaði |
| Háttatal 41 | 1222-3 | Snorri Sturluson | snotrum | people receiving gold |
| Þórsdrápa 9 | 975-95 | Eilífr Goðrúnarson | snotrir | Þórr and Þjálfi |
| | | | | |
| **Fornaldarsögur** | | | | |
| Hrókskviða 24 | | Hrókr inn svarti | snotru | Brynhildr |
| Ævidrápa 45 | | Qrvar-Oddr, | snotra | warriors |
| Ævidrápa 70 | | Qrvar-Oddr, | snotrum | men |
| | | | | |
| **Islendingasögur** | | | | |
| Ævikviða II 3 | | Grettir Ásmundarson | allsnotr | Thorbjorg |
| Lausavísur 2 | | Króka Refr | snotrum | men/warriors |

Table 19

Because of *snotr*'s important relationship with the gnomic material in the eddic corpus, I will begin this discussion with its six uses in *Hugsvinnsmál*. Wills and Gropper present a stemma which suggests that there are two main versions of *Hugsvinnsmál* available to us, the first represented by its oldest nearly-complete version, that is, AM 624, and the second version represented by 1199, which is 'the best ms. of the second version which preserves the text in full.'[298] The project also includes comparisons to the versions of *Hugsvinnsmál* in 720a IV, 723a$^{x}$, 401$^{x}$, and 696XV. Considering that *Hugsvinnsmál* is preserved in at least 44 manuscripts, this study is not, of course, exhaustive. Due to the nature of my thesis, I will comment only on the versions included in the scope of the *Skaldic Project*, being restrained by time and resources in my ability to scrutinise every manuscript in which *Hugsvinnsmál* occurs. That said, the study presented here yields interesting-enough results to begin a productive discussion about the role and consideration of wisdom adjectives in the poem.

[298] Wills and Gropper, ed., "*Hugsvinnsmál*," 359-60.

Wills and Gropper have chosen to treat 1199 as their main version. Of the manuscripts considered by the *Skaldic Project*, 624 is the only one in which *snotr* appears where it does not in 1199. *Snotr* and its compounds appear three times in 1199 and five times in 624. Two of these occurrences overlap, as outlined in the table below:

| ***Snotr* and *Svinnr* in *Hugsvinnsmál*** | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **29** | **41** | **44** | **46** | **56** | **79** |
| **1199** | - | snotr | sæll | ósvinnr | allsnotr | margsnotr |
| **624** | snotr | - | snotr | ósnotr | allsnotr | margvitr |
| **Latin** | bonus | bonus | - | stultum | - | - |

Table 20

From this table, it seems that 624 prefers *snotr* over other (apparently) appropriate *s* words: in both 44 and 46, *snotr* is chosen over *sæll* and *svinnr*, respectively, and stanza 29 includes *snotr* where there is no equivalent in 1199. That said, although 624 seems to favour *snotr*, stanza 79 presents us with the opposite, that is, a situation in which 1199 chooses *snotr* where 624 has *svinnr*. *Snotr* does not appear in stanza 41 of 624 because the part of the stanza in which *snotr* appears in 1199, that is, the second half, is not present in 624.

There does not seem to be any particular contextual necessity behind these choices, though there are some interesting relationships between some of the stanzas. *Hugsvinnsmál* 29 corresponds with *Disticha I*, 25, which warns of being sure of anything, even if it is promised to you: *Spem tibi promissi certam promittere noli: / rara fides ideo est, quia multi multa locuntur* [do not promise certain hope having been promised to you: faith is rare for this reason, because many people say many things].[299] The stanza in 1199 reads:

> Öðrum heita skaltu eigi því,
> Er undir öðrum átt;
> opt þik tælir, sá er þú trúat hefir;
> brigð eru beggja heit.
>
> You must not promise another what you have lent to somebody else; that one may often trick you, whom you have trusted; the promises of both are fickle.
>
> *Hugsvinnsmál* 29 (1199)[300]

The second half of 624, however, is closer to the sentiment of the Latin:

> Símálugs orð þykkir snotrum hól
> vindi líkt vera

[299] All translations from the Latin are my own.
[300] Wills and Gropper, ed., "*Hugsvinnsmál*," 378.

> To a *snotr* man the words of a long-winded man seem like the wind
>
> *Hugsvinnsmál* 29 (624)[301]

Stanza 41 preaches a similar sentiment to 29, that is, not to promise things you cannot give, and – corresponding to stanza 29 in 624 – not to be a windbag. The corresponding Latin verse is the *Disticha* I 25: *Quod praestare potes, ne bis promiseris ulli, / ne sis ventosus, dum vis bonus esse videris* [That which you are able to hand over, do not promise a second time to anyone, / do not be fickle, while you wish to be seen as a good man]. The Norse of 1199 follows this quite closely:

> Sinni optar heittu eigi seggjum gjöf
> þeirri er þú veita vilt;
> símálugs orð þykkja snotrum hal
> vindi lík vera
>
> Do not promise people more than once the gift that you intend to give; to a *snotr* man the words of a long-winded man seem like the wind.
>
> *Hugsvinnsmál* 41[302]

The second part of this stanza does not occur in 624, hence the lack of *snotr*. As we can see, the second half of this stanza in 1199 is essentially identical to the second half of stanza 29 in 624, both using *snotr*. Thus, if we assume that these lines were taken from the same stanza of the *Disticha*, that is, *Disticha I* 25, in both *Hugsvinnsmál* 29 (624) and *Hugsvinnsmál* 41 (1199), *snotr* is supplied for the Latin *bonus*.

The cases of stanzas 44 and 46 are somewhat more straightforward. Stanza 44 in both 1199 and 624 parallel the *Disticha I* 29: *Quod vile est carum, quod carum vile putato: / sic tu nec cupidus nec avarus nosceris ulli* [Believe that which is common to be beloved, that which is beloved to be common: / thus, you will not appear to anyone eager or greedy]. The first half of each stanza in 1199 and 624 deals with covetousness, and though they read quite differently, both represent the Latin equally well.[303] It is the second half of each stanza, however, with which we are concerned here. The last line of stanza 44 in 1199 reads: *sæll er, sá er sínu unir* [he is *sæll*, who is content with his own], whereas the same line in 624 reads: *snotr er, sá er sínu unir* [he is *snotr*, who is content with his own].[304] Though not explicit, I would argue that the parallel here between the idea of being *sæll*, that is, happy or blessed, and being *snotr* is reminiscent of *snotr*'s use in *Hávamál*, in which it was used largely to preach the benefits of being *meðalsnotr* – knowing too much would make a man unhappy. Here, it is the rejection of material excess that makes one *sæll* or *snotr*. This is an adaptation fitting for a Christian text.

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[301] Wills and Gropper, ed., "*Hugsvinnsmál*," 378
[302] Wills and Gropper, ed., "*Hugsvinnsmál*," 385.
[303] Wills and Gropper, ed., "*Hugsvinnsmál*," 388.
[304] Wills and Gropper, ed., "*Hugsvinnsmál*," 375.

Stanza 46 is also associated with wanting what is unnecessary. The parallel in *Disticha I* 31 reads: *Quod iustum est petito vel quod videatur honestum, / nam stultum petere est quod possit iure negari*. [Ask for what is just or indeed for what may seem honourable, / for it is foolish to ask for that which may be justly refused]. Again, the relevant wisdom adjectives occur in the latter half of each of these stanzas:

> Einskins biðja samir þér annan þess,
> er gengr af réttri rifi;
> ósvinnr maðr biðr þess iðugliga,
> er hann þarf hvergi at hafa
>
> It befits you to ask another for nothing which departs from right reason; an *ósvinnr* man frequently asks for that which he does not need to have
>
> *Hugsvinnsmál* 46 (1199)[305]

> Einskins biðja skaltu annan þess,
> er þú eigi þarft;
> ósnotr maðr biðr þess iðugliga,
> er hann þarf hvergi at hafa
>
> You must ask another for nothing which you do not need; an *ósnotr* man frequently asks for that which he does not need to have
>
> *Hugsvinnsmál* 46 (624)[306]

Though the first half of each of these stanzas differs slightly, both *ósvinnr* and *ósnotr* are essentially standing in for the Latin *stultum*. Note, however, the different grammatical function of *stultum* and *ósnotr*: *ósnotr* is used substantively whereas *stultum* is not. This distinction will prove relevant in following discussions both in this section and in the conclusion to this thesis.

Stanzas 56 and 57 summarize the introduction to Book II of the *Disticha*, with stanza 56 correlating roughly to: *Telluris si forte velis cognoscere cultus / Vergilium legito …* [If perchance you wish to learn the cultivation of the earth / read Virgil …] as well as *Disticha I* 10: *Ergo ades, et quae sit sapientia disce legendo*. [So be present, and learn by reading what wisdom is]. *Hugsvinnsmál* 56 reads:

> Allsnotr maðr ef íþróttir nema vill
> ok vel mart vita,
> Bækr hann lesi þær er gerðu bragnar spakir,
> þeir er kendu fróðleik firum,
> þvít á fornum bókum stendr til flestra hluta
> ráðafjölð ritin. [307]

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[305] Wills and Gropper, ed., "*Hugsvinnsmál*," 389.
[306] Wills and Gropper, ed., "*Hugsvinnsmál*," 389.
[307] Though *spakr*'s used in *Hugsvinnsmál* will be addressed in its own section in this chapter, it is important and relevant to note here that neither of its two occurrences in the poem – once here and once again in stanza 72 – experience the same variant representations that we are seeing occur with *snotr* and *svinnr*. S*pakr* is not interchangeable as *snotr* and *svinnr* are – it is doing something different in the poem. We must not, of course,

> If an *allsnotr* man wants to learn accomplishments and know many things well, let him read the books which *spakr* men who taught people *fróðleik* wrote, because a great deal of advice stands written on most things in ancient books.
>
> *Hugsvinnsmál* 56[308]

There are no wisdom adjectives in the Latin to denote the learner or 'wise man' in part because of the syntax of the Latin verse: whereas the subject of the Norse verse is the *allsnotr maðr*, the Latin is written in the imperative, addressing the audience directly – thus, there is no call for a third person subject who might be denoted 'wise.'

The last stanza in which *snotr* appears in *Hugsvinnsmál* is stanza 79, where it is in its compounded form, *margsnotr*. The paralleled stanza in the *Disticha* is II 25, which reads: *rebus in adversis animum submittere noli; / spem retine: spes una hominem nec morte relinquit* [Do not submit your soul to evil things; / keep hope: only hope does not abandon a person, even in death]. The Norse of 1199 reads:

> *Margsnotr maðr, sá er fyrir meinum verðr,*
> *Láti sinn eigi hryggja hug;*
> *Góðs at vænta skal gumna hverr,*
> *þótt hann sé til dauða dæmdr.*
>
> A *margsnotr* man who meets with misfortunes should not let them distress his mind; every man must expect good, although he may be sentenced to death.
>
> *Hugsvinnsmál* 79[309]

Instead of *margsnotr*, 624 features *margvitr* in its place. This is the only time in the poem that *snotr* and *vitr* appear to be interchangeable. As we saw was the case with stanza 56, there is not a direct equivalent in the Latin because the Latin is written in the imperative, so there is no third person subject. This stylistic phenomenon will be discussed more fully in the conclusion to this thesis.

The other phenomenon that bears considering is *snotr*'s tendency to refer to groups of people. There are seven examples in the skaldic corpus of *snotr* referring to groups of people, and they are not specific to a certain corpus. Four of these instances refer to a group of men or warriors: Torf-Einarr Rögnvaldsson's *Lausavísa* 4; Örvar-Oddr's *Ævidrápa* 45; Örvar-Oddr's *Ævidrápa* 70; and Króka Refr's *Lausavísa* 2. In the stanza of Króka Refr and those of Örvar-Oddr, the alliterating subject of the adjective

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discount the possibiltiy that the interchangability of *snotr* and *svinnr* has to do with their ability to alliterate with other *s*- words, whereas *spakr*, being an /s/-cluster (see Seiichi, *The Meters of Old Norse Eddic Poetry*, 11), only alliterates with other /s/-clusters, that is, those words that begin with *st*- and *sk*-. That said, this would not account for all of the occurrences, nor for the use of compounds. There is also contextual evidence to suggest that *spakr* is functioning differently to the other two words, which will be discussed in **3.4**.

[308] Wills and Gropper, ed., "*Hugsvinnsmál*," 395.

[309] Wills and Gropper, ed., "*Hugsvinnsmál*," 408.

is *seggr*. *Snotr* occurs in six ms versions of Torf-Einarr's *Lausavísa*, and alliterates with *seggr* in three: GKS 1005 fol (Flat), AM 303 4º (FskAx), and AM 301 4º (301x).[310] In the other three variants, the alliterating subject is *sveinn.*[311] The other three references of *snotr* to a group occur in *Plácitusdrápa* 31, *Leiðarvísan* 28, and *Háttatal* 41. In all of these instances, the group in question is receiving something en masse from a figure of means: in *Plácitusdrápa* 31, *snotr* is part of a kenning denoting Christ, but it is the *lýðr* [people] who are *snotr*. Christ is *siðbjóðr snotra lýða* [the faith-bringer to *snotr* men];[312] in *Leiðarvísan* 28, the *snotr* men are those who receive the bread and fishes from Christ: *matr vannsk mönnum snotrum* [the food sufficed for the *snotr* men];[313] and in *Háttatal* 41 (in which Snorri is referring to Skúli jarl Bárðarson):

> *Velr ítrhugaðr ýtum*
> *Otrgjöld jöfurr snotrum*
>
> The splendid-minded prince selects otter-payments [GOLD] for *snotr* people
> *Háttatal* 41[314]

These uses of *snotr* are general and largely anonymous. In some of these cases, it is not clear who the *snotr* people are, and it seems to not matter. *Snotr* is being used here in a different way than it is used in gnomic poetry to denote what we may today consider 'wisdom' – *snotr* used in these circumstances, I would argue, has very little inherent meaning, as there is no particular indication given in many of these circumstances as to why the people in these groups ought to be considered *snotr*.

This tendency for wisdom adjectives to apply to varied groups of people – demonstrated in particular by *snotr* – is a phenomenon that has not, as far as I am aware, been explored. The chronological and contextual range of this phenomenon indicates that it was not limited, for example, to warriors who may have reflected some impressive nature of their king, nor to Christian men who might have been considered 'wise' for following Christ. This finding merits further study to discover whether adjectives denoting other laudable qualities are also applied to groups of people in the same way, or whether it is a phenomenon largely exclusive to wisdom adjectives.

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[310] Russell Poole, ed., "*Torf-Einarr Rögnvaldsson, Lausavísur*," in *Poetry from the King's Sagas 1: From Mythical Times to c. 1035*, ed. Diana Whaley, vol. 1, bk. 1 of *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross et. al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), 136.
[311] AM 37 folx (J1x); AM 38 folx (J2x); AM 761 b 4º
[312] Jonna Louis-Jensen and Tarrin Wills, ed., "*Plácitusdrápa*," in *Poetry on Christian Subjects*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross, vol. 7, bk. 1, of *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross, et. al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 200.
[313] Katrina Attwood, ed., "*Leiðarvísan*," in *Poetry on Christian Subjects*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross, vol. 7, bk. 1, of *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross, et. al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 166.
[314] Gade, ed., "*Háttatal*," 1150.

### 3.4 Spakr

*Spakr* and its compounds appear just 22 times in the skaldic corpus, making it one of the lowest occurring of the seven words in this study. It occurs most frequently in the poetry of the *konungasögur*, where it appears nine times; its lowest frequency is in the *Íslendingasögur*, where it occurs just once in a *lausavísa* of Ófeigr Skiðason featured in *Bandamanna saga*. We will remember from the previous chapter that *spakr* as a simplex occurs three times in the eddic corpus, and that there are only six appearances of its compounds in that corpus, making it a low-frequency word in the eddic poetry as well. In stark contrast to this, *spakr* has a very high frequency in the prose corpus, appearing 150 times as a simplex and over 70 times in various adjectival compounds. *Spakr* has a moderate compounding rate in the skaldic corpus, considering its overall number of occurrences. There are four *spakr* compounds found in the skaldic corpus, the most frequently-occurring being *margspakr*. *Margspakr* is used five times: four of which are in the poetry of the *konungasögur* and one of which is in *Haustlöng*. *Margspakr* does not appear at all in the eddic corpus. The remaining three compounds are: *völuspakr* (*Sexstefja* 27); *ráðspakr* (*Erfikvæði about Magnus berfoettr* 7); and *spakligr* (*Merlínusspá I* 10; *Merlínusspá II* 1). *Ráðspakr* and *spakligr* are the only two of these compounds to also appear in the eddic corpus.

| ***Spakr* in the Skaldic Corpus** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Poem** | **Date** | **Poet** | **Word** | **Referent** |
| **Konungasögur** | | | | |
| Austrfaravísur 20 | c. 1019 | Sigvatr Þórðarson | spakr | Úlfr |
| Erfikvæði about Magnus berfœttr 7 | shortly after 1103 | Gísl Illugason | ráðspakir | farmers |
| Glymdrápa 8 | c. 890 | Þorbjörn hornklofi | margspakr | Harald hárfagri |
| Óláfs drápa Tryggvasonar 8 | 12th c. - 1425 | Anon. | margspakr | Óláfr Tryggvason |
| Sexstefja 27 | 11th c | Þjóðólfr Arnórsson | völuspakr | rings[315] |
| Stuttfeldardrápa 1 | 12th c | Þórarinn stuttfeldr | margspakr | Hrolf Kraki |
| Stuttfeldardrápa 2 | 12th c | Þórarinn stuttfeldr | margspakr | Sigurðr órsalafari |
| Vestrfaravísur 2 | c. 1027 | Sigvatr Þórðarson | spakr | men |
| Ynglingatal 8 | 9th c | Þjóðólfr ór Hvini | spakfrömuðr | King Dagr |
| | | | | |
| **Christian Subjects** | | | | |
| Heilags anda drápa 7 | late 13th c | Anon. | spakr | faith |
| Heilags anda drápa 10 | late 13th c | Anon. | spakr | spirit |
| Hugsvinssmál 56 | second half 13th | Anon. | spakr | gnomic |
| Hugsvinssmál 72 | second half 13th | Anon. | spakr | gnomic |
| | | | | |

[315] For a discussion of *völuspakr*'s use in a kenning in this stanza, see Diana Whaley, ed., "*Sexstefja*," in *Poetry from the King's Sagas 2: From c. 1035 to c. 1300*, ed. Kari Ellen Gade, vol. 2, bk. 1 of *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross et. al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), 1401-2.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Treatises on Poetics** | | | | |
| FGT lausavísur 18 | 1330-45 | Anon. | spakr | farmers |
| Háttatal 70 | 1222-3 | Anon. | spakr | Skuli |
| Haustlöng 3 | late 9th c | Anon. | margspakr | Þjazi |
| | | | | |
| **Fornaldarsögur** | | | | |
| Merlínusspá I 7 | c. 1200 | Gunnlaugr Leifsson | spakr | builders |
| Merlínusspá I 11 | c. 1200 | Gunnlaugr Leifsson | spakr | Vortigern |
| Merlínusspá I 10 | c. 1200 | Gunnlaugr Leifsson | spakligr | Merlin's prophecies |
| Merlínusspá II 1 | c. 1200 | Gunnlaugr Leifsson | spakligr | Merlin's prophecies |
| Lausavísur | | Anon. | spakr | Hervör |
| | | | | |
| **Íslendingasögur** | | | | |
| Lausavísur 2 | | Ófeigr Skíðason | spaka | Egil Skulison |

Table 21

*Spakr* and its compounds tend to be found in earlier skaldic poetry, and are absent from most of the late Christian texts we have seen populated with other wisdom words, such as *Brúðkaupsvísur*, *Drápa af Máríugrat*, *Máríuvísur*, and *Kátrínardrápa*. *Spakr* is also absent from other earlier Christian skaldic poetry, such as *Plácitusdrápa* and *Leiðarvísan*. The only two Christian poems in which *spakr* appears are *Heilags anda drápa* (7, 10) and *Hugsvinnsmál* (56, 72), both of which are dated to the second half of the thirteenth century. The two uses in *Heilags anda drápa* have Christian referents: in stanza 7, God is praised for showing Christians how to find the *veg vizku … með trú spakri* [way of wisdom … with *spakr* faith]; in stanza 10, Christians sing hymns to the *spökum anda* [*spakr* spirit].[316] The uses in *Hugsvinnsmál*, on the other hand, have less to do with Christianity specifically and are used instead in typically gnomic contexts. That said, *spakr*'s first use in *Hugsvinnsmál* is not typical of how we have seen other wisdom words used in gnomic literature so far. In stanza 56, *spakr* applies not to those at whom the gnomic advice is being directed, but rather to people whose wisdom has already been established:

> Allsnotr maðr ef íþróttir nema vill
> ok vel mart vita,
> bækr hann lesi, þær er gerðu bragnar spakir,
> þeir er kendu fróðleik firum,
> þvít á fornum bókum stendr til flestra hluta
> ráðafjölð ritin.

[316] Katrina Attwood, ed., "*Heilags anda drápa*," in *Poetry on Christian Subjects*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross, vol. 7, bk. 1, of *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross, et. al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 457; 459.

> ‘If an *allsnotr* man wants to learn accomplishments and know many things well, let him read the books which *spakr* men who taught people *fróðleik* wrote, because a great deal of advice stands written on most things in ancient books.’
>
> *Hugsvinnsmál* 56[317]

This stanza suggests that an *allsnotr* man can learn from that which has been written by *spakr* men. It is the *allsnotr* man who is being directed to read the *spakr* man’s book – the wisdom of the *spakr* man needs to be neither questioned nor improved. As we saw in the previous section, *spakr* is never substituted for *snotr* or *svinnr*, and it might be interesting – especially considering how *spakr* does not appear in gnomic contexts in the eddic corpus – how it is being used subtly differently here. As we saw in the above section on *snotr*, Wills and Gropper suggest that this stanza corresponds to the *Praefatio* of *Liber II* of the *Disticha Catonis* – particularly those lines which suggest that men can learn about tilling the soil from Virgil – and the last line of that *Praefatio*, which reads: *Ergo ades et quae sit sapientia disce legendo* [so be present, and learn by reading what wisdom is]. There is, as we have come to expect, no wisdom adjective present in the Latin source material, but we do see that the noun *sapientia* is associated in the Latin with reading.

*Spakr*’s use in stanza 72 is more like other standard gnomic occurrences. It reads:

> Af hyggjandi sinni skyldi maðr óhræsinn vera,
> nema geraz þarfir þess;
> opt at haldi hefr ýtum komit,
> ef leyniz spakr at speki.
>
> ‘A man should not be boastful [lit. should be unboastful] of his intelligence, unless need of it arises; often it has become a help to people, if a *spakr* man conceals his *speki*.’
>
> *Hugsvinnsmál* 72[318]

This generalised statement as the second half of a gnomic stanza is not unique (for example, see *Hugsvinnsmál* 29 [624] and 46). Wills and Gropper note how this stanza resembles very closely stanza 6 of *Hávamál*, the first two lines of the stanzas being nearly identical:[319]

| | |
|---|---|
| At hyggjandi sinni | About his intelligence |
| skylit maðr hræsinn vera, | no man should be boastful, |
| heldr gætinn at geði; | rather cautious of mind; |
| þá er horskr ok þögull | when a *horskr* and silent man |
| kømr heimisgarða til, | comes to a homestead, |
| sjaldan verðr víti vǫrum, | seldom does shame befall the wary; |

*Hávamál* 6, 1-6

[317] Wills and Gropper, ed., “*Hugsvinnsmál*,” 395.
[318] Wills and Gropper, ed., “*Hugsvinnsmál*,” 404.
[319] Wills and Gropper, ed., “*Hugsvinnsmál*,” 404.

After the first two lines, the similarities between the stanzas end. *Hugsvinnsmál* goes on to present a caveat, that one may boast of his intelligence if the need should arise, whereas *Hávamál* suggests taking caution. The following lines of each stanza differ from one another not only largely in sentiment but, more interesting for our purposes, in language. The *Hávamál* stanza continues the theme of a man coming into another's hall, and speaks of a guest who is *horskr* and *þögull* [silent], and a couple of lines later suggests that these qualities make a man *varr* [aware, wary, cautious]. This sentiment is partially repeated in the next stanza, wherein a *varr gestr* enters the hall and is *þegir* [silent] as he watches and listens to his surroundings. In the last line of *Hávamál* 7, this man is deemed to be *fróðr*, having informed himself in such a way. Alternatively, the *Hugsvinnsmál* stanza associates its *óhræsinn* [unboastful] man not with being *horskr* or *fróðr*, but rather with being *spakr* and possessing the accompanying *speki*.[320]

In 'The Evolution of *Hávamál*,' McKinnell refutes an earlier assertion by Klaus von See, who suggested that *Hávamál* is a late poem that was influenced by *Hugsvinnsmál*. McKinnell concludes instead that it 'seems unlikely that *Hávamál* has been influenced by [*Hugsvinnsmál*], but probably that [*Hugsvinnsmál*] has borrowed from [*Hávamál*] or something like it.'[321] Accepting this, regardless of whether *Hugsvinnsmál* borrowed this directly from *Hávamál* or from a similar source, its composition came after *Hávamál*. As we saw in the eddic chapter, *spakr* as a simplex never appears in *Hávamál*. It is perhaps curious that the *Hugsvinnsmál* poet includes *spakr* here when it is not associated with this sentiment (nor, indeed, any sentiment) in *Hávamál*, and, further, that it is so uncommon in Christian skaldic poetry.

The Latin stanza in the *Disticha* with which Wills and Gropper suggest *Hugsvinnsmál* 72 is associated once again does not contain a wisdom adjective, but does include the noun *prudentia*:

> Insipiens est, cum tempore postulat aut res;
> Stultitiam simulare loco prudentia summa est.
>
> Be stupid, when necessity or circumstance demands; it is the greatest common sense to feign foolishness in some moments.
>
> *Disticha Catonis II* 18[322]

The phrasing of the *Disticha* is not exactly paralleled by *Hugsvinnsmál*, thus it would be tenuous to suggest that the use of *spakr* was chosen as a direct representation of the Latin *prudentia*. Interestingly,

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[320] Although *speki* is the nominal form of *spakr*, this is the only instance in the entirety of the Old Norse poetic corpus in which the two words appear in the same stanza.
[321] McKinnell, "The Evolution of *Hávamál*," 75.
[322] Wills and Gropper, ed., "*Hugsvinnsmál*," 404.

though, stanza 27 of Book IV of the *Disticha*, which does not have a corresponding stanza in *Hugsvinnsmál* according to Wills and Gropper, includes both *prudentia* and *sapientia*.[323] It reads:

> Discere ne cesses; cura sapientia crescit;
> Rara datur longo prudential temporis usu.
>
> May you not cease to learn; wisdom is born of zeal;
> Little common sense is imparted by time's long experience.
>
> *Disticha Catonis IV* 27

It may be worthy of note that this stanza contains both Latin nouns that have appeared in the Latin source material for *Hugsvinnsmál* stanzas that use *spakr*. Interesting, too, that this stanza encourages the pursuit of wisdom specifically through learning as opposed to experience, which corresponds to the attribution of the writing of informative books by *spakr* men in *Hugsvinnsmál* 56.

We have another opportunity to look at *spakr* in a translated text in *Merlínusspá*. *Spakr* and *spakligr* occur four times in this poem, making *spakr* the second most commonly-used wisdom adjective in the poem after *fróðr*. *Spakr* occurs once in reference to the men building Vortigern's tower and once to Vortigern himself, and the adjective *spakligr* is used twice to refer to Merlin's prophecies. None of these occurrences has a corresponding adjective in the Latin. Both appearances of *spakr* are near the beginning of *Merlinússpá I*, in stanazs 7 and 11. The first use of *spakr* refers to builders who are summoned by King Vortigern to build a tower to hold Britain against the Saxons:

> Kómu til smíðar spakir vǫlundar,
> – þat es ýtum sagt – uppi í fjalli.
> En, þats drengir á degi gerðu
> sá þess engan stað annan morgin.
>
> *Spakr* builders came to the work up on the mountain; that is told to men. But what the men achieved by day, nowhere was it to be seen the next morning.
>
> *Merlínusspá I* 7[324]

This is not the first time Gunnlaugr mentions the builders, having informed his reader in stanza 6 that once Vortigern decided to build a tower,

> ... þangat til þeirar gerðar
> samnar mörgum mildingr smiðum

[323] *Hugsvinnsmál* 129 corresponds with *Disticha IV* 26, and *Hugsvinnsmál* 130 corresponds with *Disticha IV* 29. Wills and Gropper, ed., "*Hugsvinnsmál*," 437-8.
[324] Poole, ed., "*Merlínusspá I*," 52.

> ...the king assembles many craftsmen there for that word
>
> *Merlínusspá I* 6[325]

Gunnlaugr chooses to assign a wisdom word to the builders in stanza 7, whereas he does not in stanza 6. We might imagine that he has chosen to do this in an attempt to stay as true as possible to his Latin source, but looking at the Latin, we see that this is not the case. Poole follows Reeve and Wright's suggestion that the Latin source for both stanzas 6 and 7 appears to be section 106 of *De Gestis Britonum* (henceforth *DGB*), and, possibly, *DGB* 108 for parts of stanzas 7 and 8.[326] In *DGB* 106, when Vortigern is unable to protect his lands, he consults his *magi* before ordering the tower to be built. The section reads:

> Vocatis denique magis suis, consuluit illos iussitque dicere quid faceret. Qui dixerunt ut aedificaret sibi turrim fortissimim quae sibi tutamen foret, cum ceteras munitions amisisset. Peragratis ergo quibusque locis ut eam in congruo loco statueret, uenit tandem ad montem Erir, ubi coadunatis ex diuersis patriis caementariis iussit turrim construere.[327]
>
> In the end, with his *magi* having been summoned, he consulted them and ordered them to say what to do. They said that he should build for himself the strongest tower which would be a means of protection for him, as he had lost many fortifications. So with every place having been scoured so that it [the tower] would be placed in a suitable spot, he came at last to Mound Snowdon, where he ordered stonemasons, having been brought together from various countries, to build the tower.

The builders are only referenced in the Latin once, using the word *caementariis* [stonemasons]. Gunnlaugr has chosen to represent them with *smiðum* in stanza 6 and *völundar* stanza 7. Not only does Gunnlaugr use two words to describe the same group of people, but he attributes *spakr* to the *völundar* in stanza 7 when there is no wisdom word associated with these builders in the Latin.[328]

*Spakr* appears for the second time in stanza 11 of *Merlínusspá I*, at which point Merlin is about to divulge what lies further down below the lake which he has just revealed is the cause of the daily destruction of the tower:

> Ok enn fróði halr frétti lofða,
> hvat und vatni væri niðri;
> ok es engi þat annarr vissi
> sagði fylki fleinþollr spǫkum:

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[325] Poole, ed., "*Merlínusspá I*," 52.
[326] I have checked Reeve and Wright for variant ms readings where the wisdom words are concerned, and have noted any that occur.
[327] Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, ed. Michael D. Reeve, trans. Neil Wright, (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2007), lines 499-503, 137.
[328] The Latin of *DGB* 108 does not contain a noun denoting workers or wise men of any kind, the subjects being implicit in the verbs. We will remember that *fróðr* is used to describe the *magi* once in stanza 8, before then applying exclusively to Merlin.

> And the *fróðr* man asked people what was further down beneath the lake. And, when nobody else knew that, the spear-fir [WARRIOR = Merlin] said to the *spakr* king:
>
> *Merlínusspá I* 11[329]

There is some debate as to how *spökum* ought to be considered here, but I will be working with the most straightforward assumption that *spökum* is applying to Vortigern.[330] There is nothing in the Latin that can help decipher the referent in this case, as the Latin in *DGB* 108 upon which these stanzas are based does not apply an adjective to the king:

> Ammirans continuo rex super verbis illius iussit venire magos et coram Merlino sedere. Quibus ait Merlinus: ' … Dicite michi quid sub fundamento latet. Nam aliquid sub illo ipsum stare non permittit.' Expauscentes autem magi conticuerunt.[331]
>
> The king, admiring his words, ordered the *magi* to come and sit in the presence of Merlin. Merlin said to them: ' … Tell me what lies hidden beneath the foundation. For there is something beneath it that is not allowing it to stand.' However the *magi*, becoming frightened, fell silent.'

Whereas only Vortigern's men are referred to as *magi* in the Latin – a word Gunnlaugr translates as *fróðr* in stanza 8 – with no adjectives being ascribed to either Merlin or Vortigern, Merlin is *fróðr* and Vortigern is *spakr* in Gunnlaugr's translation. This continues the trend that we have seen thus far in for *Merlínusspá* and *Hugsvinnsmál* for Norse translators to supply wisdom words where they do not exist in the Latin source material. It may also be interesting to note that in both cases where Gunnlaugr has chosen to apply *spakr* – that is, to the *völundar* in stanza 7 and Vortigern in stanza 11 – the referent has been in a state of ignorance about the circumstances involving the collapse of the tower.

Gunnlaugr's application of *spakligr* is more consistent, referring twice to Merlin's prophecies, once in each of *Merlínusspá I* 10 and *Merlínusspá II* 1. The first occurrence of *spakligr* refers to Merlin's prophecy when it is proven to be accurate:

> Þat kvað valda  verdags hötuðr,
> at þar undir vas  ólítit vatn.
> Bauð grund grafa  gumna stjóri;
> reynisk spaklig  spámanns saga.

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[329] Poole, ed., "*Merlínusspá I*," 55.
[330] As Poole summarises in his commentary, Ernst Kock suggested that it should be considered adverbially to refer to Merlin's speech rather than apply to the king, who is not, Kock argues, demonstrating wisdom or knowledge at this time. Kock argues the same thing is happening with *skýrum* in stanza 9. Ernst Albin Kock, *Notationes Norrœnæ: Anteckningar till Edda och skaldediktning*, 28 vols. (Lund: Gleerup, 1923-44), §3142 in Poole, ed., "*Merlínusspá I*," 55.
[331] Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, lines 559-565, 141.

> The hater of the sea-day [GOLD > GENEROUS MAN = Merlin] said the cause was that a not small lake lay underneath. The commander of men [RULER = Vortigern] ordered the ground to be dug up; the prophet's account turns out to be *spakligr*.
>
> *Merlínusspá I* 10[332]

The part of *DGB* 108 upon which *Merlínusspá I* 10 draws does not contain a wisdom word that could have been translated to *spakligr*:

> Tunc Merlinus, qui et Ambrosius dicebatur: 'Domine mi rex, voca operarios tuos et iube fodere terram, et inuenies stagnum sub ea quod turrim stare non permittit.' Quod cum factum fuisset, repertum est stagnum sub terra, quod eam instabilem fecerat.[333]
>
> Then Merlin, who was also called Ambrosius, [said]: 'My lord king, call your labourers and order [them] to dig up the earth, and you will find a lake under it which is not allowing the tower to stand.' And when the deed had been done, a lake was discovered under the earth, which had made it unstable.

There is also no precedent for *spakligr* in *Merlínusspá II* 1, as this stanza does not draw from the Latin *DGB*, being part of the introductory section composed by Gunnlaugr. The stanza reads:

> Ráðumk segja sun*d*báls viðum
> spár spakligar spámanns göfugs,
> þess's á breiðu Bretlandi *sat*;
> hét Merlínus margvitr gumi.
>
> I resolve to tell the trees of the channel-fire [GOLD > MEN] the *spakligr* prophecies of the noble prophet, who resided in extensive Britain; the man *vitr in many things* was called Merlin.
>
> *Merlínusspá II* 1[334]

Thus, none of Gunnlaugr's uses of *spakr* or its compounds has a corresponding word in the Latin.

Casting our thoughts briefly back to the eddic chapter, we will remember that the only use of *spakligr* in the eddic corpus occurs in *Völuspá* 29. There, *spjöll spaklig* [*spakligr* sayings] is being given either from the völva to Óðinn or from Óðinn to the völva. I argue in that chapter for the former, which corresponds with its application here to prophecies, in that it does not make sense in *Völuspá* for Óðinn to be offering to give the völva *spjöll spaklig*, as that is precisely what he is seeking from her.

The only place outside *Merlínusspá* that *spakr* occurs in the poetry of the *fornaldarsögur* is also the only time in the skaldic corpus it applies to a woman. *Hervarar Saga ok Heiðreks* is thought to date to around the first third of the thirteenth century. As with most poetry of the *fornaldarsögur*, the verses

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[332] Poole, ed., "*Merlínusspá I*," 55.
[333] Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, lines 565-570, 141.
[334] Poole, ed., "*Merlínusspá II*," 134.

included in the saga are anonymous, and most of the poetry is considered to be older than the prose.[335] Stanzas 25-47, which have come to be known as *The Waking of Angantýr*, are thought to possibly date from the first half of the twelfth century, and stanzas 18-24 – which narrate the events immediately preceding Hervör's waking of the ghost of her father – are sometimes included in this section.[336] That said, Alaric Hall suggests that the poem was composed to fit into a narrative very like the saga we now have.[337] Ultimately, the date of the verse is unknown, but would realistically not be later than the beginning of the thirteenth century. Thus, *spakr*'s use here would be in keeping with the pattern we have seen with *spakr* that its use in skaldic poetry does not stray much past the late thirteenth century (with the exception of the *Fourth Grammatical Treatise* and possibly *Ólafs drápa Trygvassonar*). *Hauksbók* is the primary redaction of *Hervarar Saga ok Heiðreks*, and it paraphrases the events of stanzas 18-24 in a prose introduction (whereas other mss introduce each speaker directly before each stanza).[338] The stanza in which *spakr* occurs is spoken by a shepherd to Hervör, warning her about the dangers of approaching the barrow of her dead father:

> Spyrjat at því, spakr ert eigi
> vinr víkinga, ert vanfarinn;
> fǫrum fráliga sem fætr toga,
> alt er úti ámátt firum.
>
> Do not ask about that; you are not *spakr*, friend of vikings; you are in great difficulties. Let's go quickly, [as fast] as our feet can take us; all is terrible for men outside.
>
> *Lausavísur* 20[339]

At this point in the saga, Hervör is presenting herself as a man, and the shepherd is addressing her as such. Thus, though the poem's audience knows that *spakr* is being applied to a woman, the word is being used as though being spoken to a man. This is also the only instance in the skaldic corpus that *spakr* is negated. Because *spakr*'s sample size is quite small, it would perhaps be presumptuous to suggest that the poet specifically used *spakr* here, aware of its tendency to refer to men, as a clever linguistic device. That said, it is tempting to speculate about this unique use of *spakr*, in the negative, to refer to a cross-dressing woman.

*Margspakr* is the most common *spakr* compound in the skaldic corpus, occurring five times. Its use spans at least two centuries, from the end of the ninth (*Haustlöng* and *Glymdrápa*) to the twelfth (*Stuttfeldardrápa*). The fifth occurrence is in *Óláfs drápa Tryggvasonar*, the dating of which is

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[335] Burrows, ed., "*Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*," 369.
[336] Burrows, ed., "*Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*," 385.
[337] Alaric Hall, "Changing style and changing meaning: Icelandic historiography and the medieval redactions of Heiðreks saga," *Scandinavian Studies* 77 (2005): 8.
[338] For a detailed discussion of the manuscript transmission, see Burrows, ed., "*Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*," 367.
[339] Burrows, ed., "*Hervarar saga ok Heiðreks*," 380.

inconclusive, arguments having been made for anywhere from the twelfth century to the middle of the fifteenth.[340] Each of *margspakr*'s uses in the poetry of the *konungasögur* is associated with the generosity of a king, three times alliterating with words denoting generosity, and once referring to a mythical king famous for his generous nature. Chronologically, the first of these instances occurs in reference to Haraldr hárfagri in stanza 8 of Þorbjörn hornklofi's late-ninth-century *Glýmdrápa*, where it alliterates with the word *menfergir*:

> Menfergir bar margar
> margspakr — Niðar varga
> lundr vann sókn á sandi —
> sandmens í bý randir,
>
> 'The *margspakr* ring-destroyer [GENEROUS MAN = Haraldr] bore many shields into the settlement by the shore-ring [SEA]; the tree of the wolves of Nidelven <river> [SHIPS > SEAFARER = Haraldr] made an attack upon the shore
>
> *Glymdrápa* 8, 1-4[341]

The word *menfergir* occurs two other times in the Norse corpus, both in skaldic poetry: in the twelfth-century *Plácitusdrápa* and in Guðmundr Svertingsson's thirteenth-century *Hrafnsdrápa*. The other two alliterative occurrences of *margspakr* in the poetry of the *konungasögur* alliterate with the much more common *mildingr*, which is frequently – but not exclusively – found in Christian skaldic poetry. In *Óláfs drápa Tryggvasonar*, it is King Óláfr himself who is *mildingr* and *margspakr*:

> Snarr bar sigr ór hverri
> sárlóms mǫtuðr rómu;
> hæst gekk hreggbjóðr lista,
> hvar lands es kom, randa.
> Gnóg vas vist ok, vestan,
> vel drengila fengin,
> mærr áðr mildingr fœri
> margspakr, grôum vargi. [342]

[340] Heslop, ed., "*Óláfs drápa Tryggvasonar*," 1031.
[341] Edith Marold, ed., "*Glymdrápa*," in *Poetry from the King's Sagas 1: From Mythical Times to c. 1035*, ed. Diana Whaley, vol. 1, bk. 1 of *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross et. al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), 88.
[342] As Heslop explains, *margspakr* here actually appears as *margspaín* in the manuscript, but this has been widely accepted as a misreading. This assumption is based partially on the fact that most Christian writers would have been uncomfortable with the idea of foresight, thus rendering *margspaín* unpalatable. For a more thorough explanation, see Heslop, ed., "*Óláfs drápa Tryggvasonar*," 1040.

> ‘The swift feeder of the wound-loon [RAVEN/EAGLE > WARRIOR] bore off victory from every clash; the offerer of the storm of shields [(lit. ‘storm-offerer of shields’) BATTLE > WARRIOR] ranked highest in skills, whatever land he came to. The food was plentiful and very bravely provided for the grey wolf before the glorious, *margspakr* prince travelled from the west.’
>
> *Óláfs drápa Tryggvasonar* 8[343]

The second and more certain example of *margspakr* alliterating with *mildingr* could provide further support for this theory of misreading, as it may suggest that this was a recurrent collocation. *Margspakr* alliterates with *mildingr* again in stanza 2 of Þórarinn Stuttfeldr’s *Stuttfeldardrápa*, referring this time to Sigurðr órsalafari as he sets out on his journey to Palestine:

> Svá kom fylkis
> framt lið saman
> margspaks mikit
> mildingi vilt,
> at skip við skǫp
> skarfǫgr of lǫg
> hreins goðs heðan
> hnigu sex tigir.
>
> ‘Such a large outstanding troop of the *margspakr* leader, dear to the generous one [= Sigurðr], came together, that sixty ships, splendidly equipped with shields, glided across the ocean from here by the providence of the pure God.’
>
> *Stuttfeldardrápa* 2[344]

*Margspakr* also appears immediately before this in *Stuttfeldardrápa* 1. It does not alliterate in this stanza, but it is used in reference to the famously-generous legendary King Hrólfr, as Sigurðr’s journey is compared to his own:

> Dreif til handa
> herr framr grami
> hollr hauksnjǫllum
> hvaðanæva svá,
> sem fyrr í fǫr
> frétt hǫfðu rétt
> konunga kyn
> Kraka margspǫkum.

[343] Heslop, ed., “*Óláfs drápa Tryggvasonar*,” 1039.
[344] Kari Ellen Gade, ed., “*Stuttfeldardrápa*,” in *Poetry from the King’s Sagas 2: From c. 1035 to c. 1300*, ed. Kari Ellen Gade, vol. 2, bk. 1 of *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross et. al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), 474.

> ‘An outstanding, loyal army gathered around the hawk-brave lord from everywhere, just as [men] have rightly heard that the kin of kings earlier [were] in the company of the very *spakr* Kraki (‘Pole-ladder’) <legendary king>.’
>
> *Stuttfeldardrápa* 1[345]

Thus, in all four of its occurrences in the poetry of the *konungasögur*, ranging from the ninth century to the twelfth, *margspakr* is specifically associated with the princely quality of generosity.

The last example of *margspakr* in the skaldic corpus is in Þjóðólfr ór Hvini’s *Haustlöng*. *Haustlöng* is preserved in *Snorra Edda* in R, T[x], and W, and dates to the second half of the ninth century.[346] Whereas the previous four examples from the *konungasögur* referred to human men, *margspakr* here refers to the giant Þjazi:

> margspakr of nam mæla
> môr valkastar bôru
> – vasat Hœnis vinr hônum
> Hollr – af fornum þolli.
>
> The *margspakr* seagull of the wave of the corpse-heap [BLOOD > RAVEN/EAGLE = Þjazi] began to speak from an ancient tree; the friend of Hœnir <god> [=Loki] was not well-disposed to him.
>
> *Haustlöng* 3, 5-8[347]

Þjazi is a kenning referent 18 times, 17 of which appear in *Haustlöng*.[348] He is described in kennings with the use of a wisdom word twice, once as mentioned above, in stanza 3, and once again in *Haustlöng* 5, where he is referred to as *bragðvíss ósvífrandi ása* [the *bragðvíss* unyielding opponent of the gods].[349] This use of *margspakr*, though essentially contemporaneous with its use in *Glymdrápa*, is used entirely differently to how it is used by Þorbjörn hornklofi in that poem. Here, instead of being used to refer to a generous king, it is part of a kenning denoting an adversarial giant.

*Spakr* in the skaldic corpus demonstrates a preference for use in the poetry of the *konungasögur*, where its compound *margspakr* commonly alliterates with words denoting generosity. Its use in Christian poetry is limited, as it occurs only in *Heilags anda drápa* and *Hugsvinnsmál*. In the latter, as well as in *Merlínusspá*, it follows the trend we have thus far observed that wisdom adjectives are commonly

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[345] Gade, ed., “*Stuttfeldardrápa*,” 474.
[346] Margaret Clunies Ross, ed., “*Haustlöng*,” in *Poetry from Treatises on Poetics*, ed. Kari Ellen Gade and Edith Marold, vol. 3, bk. 1 of *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross et. al., (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), 431.
[347] Clunies Ross, ed., “*Haustlöng*,” 435.
[348] Information taken from “Kennings for Þjazi,” Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages, https://skaldic.org/skaldic/m.php?p=kenningnameref&i=6446.
[349] Clunies Ross, ed., “*Haustlöng*,” 439.

inserted by Norse translators of Latin texts where there is no linguistic precedent in the source material, a phenomenon which will be addressed in the conclusion to this thesis. The only time *spakr* refers to a woman in the skaldic corpus is to Hervör when she is dressed as a man. Overall, though there are relatively few examples of *spakr* in the skaldic corpus – especially when compared to its prevalence in the prose – both simplex and compounds lean towards the praising of prominent and traditionally masculine figures.

### 3.5 Svinnr

*Svinnr* and its compounds are the most frequently-occurring words in the skaldic corpus, appearing a total of 54 times. *Svinnr*'s use in the skaldic corpus spans from the late tenth century (*Húsdrápa*) to the fifteenth (*Heilagra manndrápa*, etc). The word appears 16 times in each of the corpora of Christian poetry, 15 times in the poetry of the *konungasögur* and of the *Íslendingasögur*, four times in the poetry of the *fornaldarsögur*, and once in each of *Háttatal*, *Húsdrápa*, *Háttalykill*, and an anonymous *lausavísa* found in AM 732 b. Unlike *fróðr* or *spakr*, *svinnr* occurs relatively rarely in the prose corpus, appearing only seven times in its simplex form, and 25 times in compounds.[350] In this sense, its distribution pattern is closer to that of *horskr*, which has a very high frequency in the eddic copus, a middling showing in the skaldic poetry, and a very small representation in the prose. We will rememeber, however, that *svinnr*'s representation in the eddic corpus, though not insignificant, was not as substantial as *horskr*'s or *fróðr*'s, with the simplex appearing only eleven times, and its compounds a total of nine. *Svinnr* is the only word in this study to behave like this.

| ***Svinnr* in the Skaldic Corpus** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Poem** | **Date** | **Poet** | **Word** | **Referent** |
| **Konungasögur** | | | | |
| Eiríksflokkr 1 | 1001 | Halldórr ókristni | svinnr | Eiríkr jarl Hákonarson |
| Höfuðlausn 2 | 1023 | Óttarr svarti | svinnum | Óláfr Haraldsson |
| Nesjavísur 4 | early 11th c | Sigvatr Þórðarson | svinnhugall | Sveinn |
| Nesjavísur 14 | early 11th c | Sigvatr Þórðarson | svinn | the Upplendingar's decision to support Svein |
| Óláfs drápa Tryggvasonar 15 | 12th c - 1425 | Anon. | svinna | Óláfr Tryggvason |
| Poem about Óláfr Tryggvason 5 | 1350-1375 | Anon. | svinnr | Þorkell dyðrill |
| Sexstefja 19 | 11th c | Þjóðólfr Arnórsson | svinns | Haraldr harðraði |
| Vellekla 14 | late 10th c | Einarr skálaglamm Helgason | svinni | Hákon jarl Sigurðarson |
| Vellekla 25 | late 10th c | Einarr skálaglamm Helgason | svinnum | Hákon jarl Sigurðarson |

[350] *Alsviðr* occurs once proprially.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Lausavísur 12 | 12th c | Rǫgnvaldr jarl Kali Kolsson | svinn | a woman |
| Lausavísur 15 | 12th c | Rǫgnvaldr jarl Kali Kolsson | svinna | Ermingerðr |
| Lausavísur 3 | 12th c | Ármóðr | svinna | Ermingerðr |
| Lausavísa 1 | 1030 | Gizurr svarti (gullbrárskáld) | svinnir | skalds |
| Lausavísur 27 | 1020-7 | Sigvatr Þórðarson | svinns | Sigvatr |
| Lausavísur 2 | 11th c | Magnús inn góði Óláfsson | svinn | unnamed woman |
| Lausavísur 4 | late 10th c | Eyvindr skáldaspillir Finnsson | svinnan | Hákon góði |
| | | | | |
| **Christian Subjects** | | | | |
| Brúðkaupsvísur 5 | 14th c | Anon. | raunsviðr | the young clerk |
| Drápa af Máríugrát 41 | late 14th/early 15th c | Anon. | frægðarsvinnir | unknown monk |
| Drápa af Máríugrát 42 | late 14th/early 15th c | Anon. | svinnir | people |
| Harmsól 46 | c. 1200 | Gamli kanóki | svinnum | warriors |
| Harmsól 61 | c. 1200 | Gamli kanóki | svinn | Mary |
| Heilagra manna drápa 20 | 14th /15th c | Anon. | svinnum | King Knútr |
| Hugsvinnsmál 46 | 13th c | Anon. | ósvinnr | gnomic |
| Leiðarvísan 5 | second half 12th c | Anon. | svinnir | men |
| Pétrsdrápa 15 | early 14th c | Anon. | svinnur | God |
| Plácitusdrápa 8 | 1150-1200 | Anon. | svinnan | Placus |
| Plácitusdrápa 21 | 1150-1200 | Anon. | sviðr | Placus |
| Plácitusdrápa 34 | 1150-1200 | Anon. | svinnan | Placus |
| Plácitusdrápa 44 | 1150-1200 | Anon. | svinns | Placus |
| Plácitusdrápa 59 | 1150-1200 | Anon. | svinnan | Placus |
| Vitnisvísur af Máríu 3 | late 14th/early 15th c | Anon. | svinnr | boy |
| Vitnisvísur af Máríu 5 | late 14th/early 15th c | Anon. | svinnr | boy |
| | | | | |
| **Treatises on Poetics** | | | | |
| Háttalykill 36 | 1150 | Rögnvaldr jarl and Hallr Þórarinsson | margsvinni | Fróði |
| Háttatal 6 | 1222-3 | Snorri Sturluson | sviðr | a prince |
| Húsdrápa 10 | c. 980 | Úlfr Uggason | svinnum | Óðinn |
| Málsháttakvæði | debated | Anon. | svinneygr | woman |
| AM 732b lausavísur 2 | 14th c | Anon. | margsvinnr | leatherworker (parodic) |
| | | | | |
| **Fornaldarsögur** | | | | |
| Hróksviða 25 | | Hrókr inn svarti | margsvinnr | Brynhildr, daughter of King Haki |
| Ævidrápa 32 | | Örvar-Oddr | svinnum | Guðmundr |
| Ævikviða 4 | | Ásbjǫrn | svinnr | Oddr |
| Lausavísur 11 | | Hjálmarr inn hugumstóri | svinnhuguð | Ingibjörg |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Islendingasögur** | | | | |
| Hrafnsdrápa 1 | | Guðmundr Svertingsson | sviðr | Hrafn |
| Þorgeirsdrápa 11 | | Þormóðr Kolbrúnarskáld | svinngeðr | Þórgeirr |
| Lausavísur 3 | | Björn Hítdælakappi Arngeirsson | svinn | Oddny |
| Lausavísur 23 | | Gísli Súrsson | svinna | dream woman |
| Lausavísur 17 | | Grettir Ásmundarson | svinnum | Grettir |
| Lausavísur 27 | | Grettir Ásmundarson | svinn | Thorir's daughter |
| Lausavísur 1 | | Hörðr Grímkelsson | svinnan | Illugi |
| Lausavísur 8 | | Kormákr Ögmundarson | svinna | Steingerðr |
| Lausavísur 63 | | Kormákr Ögmundarson | svinnr | Steingerðr |
| Lausavísur 1 | | Skarpheðinn Njálsson | svinnan | Brynjolf |
| Lausavísur 9 | | Þórðr hreða | svinna | Olöf |
| Lausavísur 8 | | Þórðr Kolbeinsson | svinnu | Björn |
| Lausavísa 16 | | Víglundr Þorgrímsson | svinn | Ketilrið |

Table 22

A common thread that runs through both the eddic and skaldic corpora is *svinnr*'s virtual absence from gnomic verse. *Svinnr* as a positive simplex does not appear in any gnomic contexts in the skaldic corpus, which is particularly striking considering its high frequency in the corpus as a whole. We do, however, see *ósvinnr* once in a gnomic context in *Hugsvinnsmál*. This echoes the habit of *ósvinnr* in the eddic corpus which did not share the same distribution pattern of its positive counterpart, but rather was used in a gnomic context in six of its seven appearances in that corpus.[351] *Ósvinnr* in stanza 46 of *Hugsvinnsmál* refers to a man who asks for that which he does not need. The equivalent in the Latin stanza in the *Disticha Catonis* expresses this sentiment using the word *stultum*, as was explored in detail in **3.3**.[352]

*Svinnr* more than compensates for its absence from the gnomic poetry of the Christian corpus with its prevalence in the poetry of the *Íslendingasögur*. *Svinnr* is by far the word that occurs most frequently in the poetry of the *Íslendingasögur*, appearing 13 times in eleven different poems. Though this could arguably be attributed to its generally high frequency in the corpus, *fróðr*, which has 52 total appearances in the skaldic corpus versus *svinnr*'s 54, appears in the *Íslendingasaga* poetry only four times. Many of *svinnr*'s referents in the poetry of the Íslendingasögur are impressive men such Hrafn, from Hrafns Sveinbjarnarson Grettir Ásumdarson. Of the 15 *Íslendingasögur* appearances, however, six refer to women. Grettir Ásmundarson, in fact, uses *svinnr* once to refer to himself, and a second time to refer to the daughter of a man called Þorir. It is especially clear from this example that the word was not

[351] Three times in *Hávamál* (21, 23, 122); twice in *Fáfnismál* (11, 37); once in *Sigrdrífumál* (24); and once in *Grimnismál* (34).
[352] We will also remember from that discussion that *ósvinnr* is absent from ms 624, where *ósnotr* is preferred.

considered exclusive to men, or, indeed, to women, as I argue it largely is in the eddic corpus in its simplex form in **2.5**.

Though *svinnr* in the skaldic corpus does not share the same strong tendency it demonstrates in the eddic corpus towards women, *svinnr* does apply to women elsewhere in the skaldic corpus, notably in the poetry of the *konungasögur*. Four of *svinnr*'s 16 referents in that poetry are women. The earliest of the four attributions is in Magnús inn góði Óláfsson's *lausavísa* 2, which supposedly dates from the eleventh century, referring to an unnamed woman with whom the speaker is enamored.[353] There are then three appearances in the twelfth century, all of which are connected. Two of them are in Rögnvaldr jarl Kali Kolsson's *lausavísa* 12 and 15, the first referring to an unnamed woman who laughed at Rögnvaldr as he slipped on a rock, and the second refering to Ermingerðr, the Viscountess of Narbonne (whom we have seen referred to as *horskr* and also [probably] *snotr*).[354] The third in a set of linked occurences also refers to Ermingerðr, and occurs in *lausavísa* 3 of Ármóðr, who was a skald said to have accompanied Rögnvaldr on his journies to the Holy Land. Beyond these examples, *svinnr* also refers to a woman once in a Christian context, once in Hjálmarr inn hugumstóri's *lausavísa* 11, and once in Hrókr inn svarti's *Hrókskviða*. This occurrence in the *lausavísa* of Hjálmarr inn hugumstóri, in which Hjálmarr refers to the Swedish princess Ingibörg as *svinnhugaðr*, is discussed in Chapter 2. There is another instance of a compound referring to a woman, and that is in *Hrókskviða* 25, in which Hrókr is referring to Brynhildr, the object of his desire (who he refers to in the stanza before as *snotr víf*, as discussed in **2.4**). Finally, *svinnr* is used in stanza 61 of Gamli kanóki's *Harmsól*, dated to c. 1200, to refer to Mary. *Svinnr* is used one other time in this poem, in warrior kenning in stanza 46. Warriors to whom Gamli promises to relate in the poem – that is, his audience – are *svinnum viðum sárklungrs*[355] [the *svinnr* trees of the wound-thorn [SWORD > WARRIORS]].[356] Reminiscent of Grettir Ásmundarson's use of *svinnr* to refer to himself and to a young woman, so here *svinnr* applies to Mary and to a group of warriors. As we have seen with the use of many of this study's words so far, there is no gender discrimination in the lexicon, even within the same poem. Surely the wisdom of Mary and that of Gamli's audience – especially as they are denoted as warriors – is not the same, and yet the designation is applied to both and seems to have been appreciated equally.

Of the above references to women that can be dated with any degree of certainty, none is later than the twelfth century. We do not see *svinnr* applied to Mary or any other female saint in some of the

[353] There is debate around who this woman might be (see Russell Poole, "Some Royal Love-verses," no. 3 (1985).) but this debate lies beyond the scope of this study
[354] Russell Poole, ed., "*Torf-Einarr Rögnvaldsson, Lausavísur*," 589; 592.
[355] Prose word order given for clarity.
[356] Katrina Attwood, ed., "*Harmsól*," in *Poetry on Christian Subjects*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross, vol. 7, bk. 1, of *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross, et. al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 113.

fourteenth- and fifteenth- century Christian poems where we have seen some of the other core adjectives used for such figures (such as *Drápa af Máríugrát*, *Máríudrápa*, *Máríuvísur*, and *Kátrínardrápa*). It appears that *svinnr* did not break into use in the later Christian poetry to apply to women like some of the other words in this study seem to have done.

When we piece together various aspects of *svinnr*'s distributional patterns, a picture begins to emerge that suggests *svinnr* may have had a particular tendency towards praising individual human beings even more so than the other core adjectives in this study. In this sense, it is very much the opposite of *snotr*, which tends towards the gnomic and to references to groups of people. The twelfth-century poem *Plácitusdrápa* provides an interesting case study in *svinnr*'s tendency in the skaldic corpus towards praise of named referents. In this poem, *svinnr* is the only core adjective to refer exclusively to the protagonist of the saga, Saint Plaucus, three times standing alone as a simple adjective and twice appearing in kennings.[357] This concentration seems especially noteworthy considering, as we have discussed, its absence from Christian gnomic poetry, its prevalence in the poetry of the *konungasögur* and the *Íslendingasögur* – in almost all of those instances to refer to individual human beings – and also its tendency even in the poetry of the *fornaldarsögur* to refer exclusively to human beings.

### 3.6 Víss

As was discussed in the Introduction, Cleasby-Vigfússon list a number of meanings for *víss*, those being: I certain; II wise; III surely (in the neuter case as an adverb); IV intentionally, knowingly; V of mind or manners (in compounds).[358] Predictably, these various meanings leave some room for translational interpretation, especially when it comes to choosing to translate the adjectival form as *certain* or *wise*. Choosing to cast as wide a net as possible, I have included all occurrences of the word which were translated to mean 'wise' by the various editors of the *Skaldic Project*, and would also like to draw attention to some other adjectival uses which were translated as *certain*, or *true*, but could arguably also be translated as *wise*.[359]

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[357] Once in a warrior kenning and once in a kenning denoting a generous man.

[358] *Cleasby-Vigfússon* (1874), s.v. "*víss*."

[359] There are two uses of the simple form of *víss* in *Hugsvinnsmál*, found in stanzas 47 and 140 that are not included in this study, though at first glance it might appear as though they could be. Stanza 47 warns against putting more value in an unknown man than a *vísa vin*, and stanza 140 advises that one can make friends out of *vísa fjándmenn* if feelings of hate and vengeance are avoided. Based on the Norse alone, both could arguably be translated as 'wise'. However, looking at the Latin source material for stanza 47 shows us that *víss* is chosen to represent *notis*, that is, *[those who are] known*. Thus, I am inclined to assign both uses of *víss* in *Hugsvinnsmál* the meaning *certain* or *true*. Interestingly, the only occurrence of any víss word in *Hávamál* also carries the meaning *certain* as opposed to *wise*. *Víss* appears in stanza 99 of *Hávamál*, at which point Óðinn is relating the story of how he was embarrassed by the rejection of *Billings mær*. He refers to how he thought, at the time, that he would later be enjoying *vísum vilja*, that is, 'certain pleasure'. Of course, this was not to be, and Óðinn found instead a dog waiting for him upon his return.

| ***Víss* in the Skaldic Corpus** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Poem** | **Date** | **Poet** | **Word** | **Referent** |
| **Konungasögur** | | | | |
| Haraldskvæði 21 | c. 900 | Þorbjǫrn hornklofi | skilvísi | Haraldr hárfagri |
| | | | | |
| **Christian Subjects** | | | | |
| Harmsól 27 | c. 1200 | Gamli kanóki | sannvíss | Christ |
| Harmsól 28 | c. 1200 | Gamli kanóki | ráðvisa | people |
| Heilags anda drápa 7 | late 13th c | Anon. | réttvísum | minds God illuminates |
| Hugsvinnsmál 114 | 13th c | Anon. | hrekkvíss | gnomic |
| Hugsvinnsmál 134 | 13th c | Anon. | fávíss | gnomic |
| Hugsvinnsmál 74 | 13th c | Anon. | sögvísum | gnomic |
| Kátrínardrápa 14 | second half 14th c | Anon. | riettvíss | Kátrín |
| Leiðarvísan 18 | second half 12th c | Anon. | lagavísum | Moses |
| Lilja 9 | 1300-1345 | Anon. | fávíss | gnomic |
| Máríudrápa 13 | c. 1400 | Anon. | dáðvís | Mary |
| Máríudrápa 37 | c. 1400 | Anon. | dýrðvís | Mary |
| Máríuvísur I 6 | late 14th/early 15th c | Anon. | margvíss | a devil |
| Plácitusdrápa 53 | 1150-1200 | Anon. | bragðvíss | Plaucus' eldest son |
| Sólarljóð 57 | 13th c | Anon. | svipvísar | women |
| | | | | |
| **Treatises on Poetics** | | | | |
| Fourth Grammatical Treatise 44 | 1320-40 | Anon. | vísan | Isaac |
| Haustlöng 5 | late 9th c | Þjóðólfr ór Hvini | bragðvíss | Þjazi |
| | | | | |
| **Fornaldarsögur** | | | | |
| Lausavísur 13 | | Hjálmþér Ingason | vísum | wise leader |
| Lausavísur 10 | | Hjálmþér Ingason | framvísum | King Hundingi |
| | | | | |
| **Islendingasögur** | | | | |
| Lausavísur 22 | | Björn Hítdælakappi Arngeirson | framvísar | goddesses (dísir) |
| Lausavísa 4 | | Egill Skallagrímsson | bragðvíss | Bard |
| Lausavísur 25 | | Hallfreðr vandræðaskáld Óttarsson | matvíss | Gris |

Table 23

*Víss* and its compounds occur a total of 22 times in the skaldic corpus,[360] and demonstrate a conspicuous tendency towards use in Christian poetry and away from use in the poetry of the *konungasögur*. Of *víss*'s 21 uses, 14 are in Christian poetry whereas only one occurs in the poetry of the *konungasögur*. Of these 14 Christian occurrences, it is used four times in a gnomic context (*Hugsvinssmál*

[360] This number does not include the disputable cases I mention below.

74 [*sögvíss*]; *Hugsvinnsmál* 114 [*hrekkvíss*]; *Hugsvinnsmál* 134 [*fávíss*]; *Lilja* 9 [*fávíss*]), twice to refer to a large group (*Harmsól* 28 [*ráðvíss*]; *Heilags anda drápa* 7 [*réttvíss*]), and the remaining eight times attributed to more or less specific referents, those being: Mary (*Máríudrápa* 13 [*dáðvíss*]; *Maríudrápa* 37 [*dýrðvíss*]); a devil (*Máríuvísur I* 6 [*margvíss*]); Plaucus' eldest son (*Plácitusdrápa* 53 [*bragðvíss*]); Christ (*Harmsól* 28 [*sannvíss*]); Moses (*Leiðarvísan* 18 [*lagavíss*]); treacherous women (*Sólarljóð* 57 [*svipvíss*]); and Saint Katrín (*Kátrínardrápa* 14 [*rietvíss*]). The single occurrence in the poetry of the *konungasögur* is in Þorbjörn hornklofi's *Haraldskvæði*, which is one of the three so-called eddic-style praise poems. This virtual absence from traditional praise poetry in the skaldic corpus is in keeping with the pattern observed in the eddic corpus for *víss* to tend not to apply to non-supernatural humans. *Víss*'s use in Christian poetry does not, however, appear to correspond with those trends set out in the eddic chapter, as it applies to people, such as Saint Kátrin (*Kátrinardrápa* 14) and Saint Plaucus' son (*Plácitusdrápa* 53), and is also included in gnomic verses (*Hugsvinnsmál* 74, 114, 134; *Lilja* 9). It would appear here that *víss*'s association with Christian subjects and teachings may take precedent over its tendencies demonstrated elsewhere in the two poetic corpora.

We also see in the corpus of Christian poetry a rare but not thus far unheard-of phenomenon, that is, the compounding of a wisdom word that assigns it a morally unfavourable flavour. Specifically, *svipvíss* in *Sólarljóð* 57, translated by Larrington and Robinson as *treacherous*. The stanza in question reads:

> Vindr þagði; vötn stöðvaði;
> þá heyrða ek grimligan gný;
> sínum mönnum svipvísar konur
> moluðu mold til matar.
>
> 'The wind fell silent; the waters stood still; then I heard a terrible din; *svipvíss* women were crushing earth into food for their men.'
>
> *Sólarljóð* 57[361]

Larrington and Robinson bring attention to the resemblance between the grinding of stone that these women must do as a punishment and the grinding that the giantesses of *Grottasöngr* are forced to do for King Fróði. We will remember that the *víss* compound *framvíss* is applied to the giantesses in Gróttasöngr and seems to be related to their ability to discern the future. It is interesting that here we have *svipvíss* applying once again to women grinding stone, but that in this circumstance, they are enduring a specific punishment, possibly thanks to their being *svipvíss*.[362]

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[361] Margaret Clunies Ross and Peter Robinson, ed., "*Sólarljóð*," 336.

[362] Cleasby-Vigfússon provide an explanation for the *svipvíss*' nominal counterpart sveipvisi as 'a "swooping-mind," fickleness, versatility' *Cleasby-Vigfússon* (1874), s.v. "*sveipvísi*." The only place the nominal form of the word occurs in the Old Norse corpus is in *Atlamál hin Grœnlenzku*, where it appears twice, once in stanza 7 and once in

On the other hand, we also see in this corpus the attribution of a seemingly neutral word, *margvíss*, to a devil in *Máríuvísur I* 6. The prefix *marg-*, being quantitative, does nothing to change the meaning of *víss*, but rather amplifies its inherent qualities. We are told in this stanza that:

> Vóx hræðilig huxan,
> hitt, er allir kvitta,
> myndar margvíss fjandi,
> milli fólksins illa.
>
> A terrible thought grew among the wicked people; that, which they all gossip about, a *margvíss* devil creates.
>
> *Máríuvísur I* 6, 1-4[363]

This is the first example we have of a quantitative compound being attributed to an inherently evil figure in a Christian poem – it seems that these wisdom adjectives do not necessarily carry moral baggage. That said, *víss*, especially, is often used to praise Christian figures who supposedly embody what it means to be good according to the Christian belief system. Thus, while the inherent meaning of these words seems to be morally neutral and yet primarily used to apply to praiseworthy figures, we have also seen that it is possible for these otherwise morally neutral wisdom words to create negative qualitative compounds – for example, in the case of *svipvíss*.

As well as its frequency in the Christian poetry, *víss*'s tendency to compound is also immediately obvious. Of its 22 appearances in the skaldic corpus, only two are not compounded, those being in the *Fourth Grammatical Treatise* and in Hjálmþér Ingason's *lausavísur*. Of course, my choice to include virtually all of *víss*'s compounds and to exclude any occurrence of *víss* that was not identified by the *Skaldic Project* editors as meaning 'wise' certainly has a bearing upon this distribution. That said, the disparity is wide enough that it merits mention, as the fact remains that there are 18 compounded adjectives with *víss* as their second component that feature in the skaldic corpus, which is much higher than any of the other words in this study. Although it is clear that the overwhelming preference for *víss* in the skaldic corpus is to compound, the story in the eddic corpus is not the same. Only one compound is common between the two corpora, that being *framvíss*. *Framvíss* appears only once in the skaldic corpus, and that is in *lausavísur* 10 of Hjálmþer Ingason, found in the *fornaldarsaga Hjálmþes saga ok Ölvis* (30). This corresponds with what we have already seen in the usage of other words (*horskr*, for example), that the lexicon of eddic poetry and the lexicon of poetry in the *fornaldarsögur* often overlap.

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stanza 74, the second instance echoing the first: *sýn var svipvísi, / ef þeir sín gæði* [the deceptive thought was clear if they'd been on their guard] (in reference to Atli's invitation to Gunnarr and Högni); *sýn var svipvísi, / er hann sín gæði*.

[363] Kari Ellen Gade, ed., "*Máríuvísur I*," 682.

### 3.7 Vitr

*Vitr* and its adjectival compounds appear in the skaldic corpus 43 times, ranging in date from the poetry of Þjóðólfr ór Hvini, which dates from the late ninth or tenth century, up to the fourteenth century, represented by a number of Christian poems. In terms of its referents in the skaldic corpus, *vitr* seems to occupy a similar space in the semantic field to *fróðr*: it is quite happily used in gnomic contexts as well as to venerate eminent figures. *Vitr* occurs overwhelmingly in the poetry of the *konungasögur* and in the corpus of Christian poetry, appearing in those corpora 13 and 16 times, respectively. This leaves four occurrences in the poetry of the *fornaldarsögur*, seven in the poetry of the *Íslendingasögur*, three in *Háttatal*, and one in a stanza in the *Fourth Grammatical Treatise*. This distribution in the skaldic corpus is strikingly similar to *svinnr*'s, as is *vitr*'s low frequency in the eddic corpus: *vitr*, we will remember, appears just three times in the eddic corpus in its simplex form (with its only compound, *alvitr*, appearing four times in that corpus). Unlike *svinnr*, however, *vitr* and its compounds are very productive in the prose corpus. Thus, *vitr* is unique in its distributional behaviour across the three corpora, being the only word with a low frequency in the eddic corpus and a strong showing in the skaldic and prose corpora.

| ***Vitr* in the Skaldic Corpus** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Poem** | **Date** | **Poet** | **Word** | **Referent** |
| **Konungasögur** | | | | |
| Eiríksdrápa 28 | c. 1105 | Markús Skeggjason | vitr | King Eiríkr Sveinsson of Denmark |
| Eiríksflokkr 7 | c. 1000 | Halldórr ókristni | vitr | the warships of the Wends |
| Haraldskvæði (Hrafnsmál) 2 | c. 900 | Þorbjǫrn hornklofi | vitr | valkyrie |
| Hákonarflokkr 7 | 1264-1284 | Sturla Þórðarson | vitr | Hákon Hákonarson |
| Liðsmannaflokkr 5 | 1110s | Anon. | vitr | woman |
| Magnússdrápa 4 | 12th c | Þorkell hamarskáld | vitr | Magnús berfoettr Ólafsson |
| Nóregs konungatal 24 | c. 1190 | Anon. | vitran | Eiríkr jarl Hákonarson |
| Óláfs drápa Tryggvasonar 21 | 12th c - 1425 | Anon. | vitr | troop |
| Poem about Óláfr Tryggvason 4 | 1350-75 | Anon. | vitr | Þorkell |
| Vestrfararvísur 5 | c 1027 | Sigvatr Þórðarson | margvitr | Knútr |
| Ynglingatal 16 | 9th c | Þjóðólfr ór Hvini | vitra | creature |
| Lausavísa 19 | 1020-7 | Sigvatr Þórðarson | vitri | King Óláfr Haraldsson |
| Lausavisur 1 | late 9th/10th c | Þjóðólfr ór Hvini | vitrum | Haraldr hárfagri |
| | | | | |
| **Christian Subjects** | | | | |
| Brúðkaupsvísur 24 | 14th c | Anon. | vitr | bishop |
| Brúðkaupsvísur 26 | 14th c | Anon. | vitr | Mary |
| Harmsól 29 | c. 1200 | Gamli kanóki | vitrir | men who saw Christ ascend |
| Hugsvinnsmál 23 | 13th c | Anon. | vitr | man |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Hugsvinnsmál 58 | 13th c | Anon. | vitrum | gnomic |
| Hugsvinnsmál 79 | 13th c | Anon. | margvitr | gnomic |
| Hugsvinnsmál 117 | 13th c | Anon. | vitr | gnomic |
| Heilags anda drápa 3 | late 13th c | Anon. | Vitr | God |
| Kátrínardrápa 3 | second half of 14th c | Kálfr Hallsson | vitr | Kátrín |
| Kátrínardrápa 15 | second half of 14th c | Kálfr Hallsson | vitrir | warriors |
| Leiðarvísan 7 | first half of 12th c | Anon. | vitr | those who accustom themselves to glories |
| Lilja 74 | 1300-1345 | Anon. | vitrir | people led to Heaven |
| Lilja 43 | 1300-1345 | Anon. | slægvitr | Satan |
| Líknarbraut 13 | late 13th c | Anon. | vitra | wise men whose way is guarded by Christ |
| Máríudrápa 41 | c. 1400 | Anon. | vitr | Mary |
| Sólarljóð 78 | 13th c | Anon. | vitr | Vígdvalinn |
| | | | | |
| **Treatises on Poetics** | | | | |
| Fourth Grammatical Treatise 42 | 1320-40 | Anon. | vitr | deacon |
| Háttatal 16 | 1222-3 | Snorri Sturluson | vitran | ruler |
| Háttatal 55 | 1222-3 | Snorri Sturluson | flölvitrum | ruler |
| Háttatal 99 | 1222-4 | Snorri Sturluson | alvitrastir | princes |
| | | | | |
| **Fornaldarsögur** | | | | |
| Hrókskviða 25 | | Hrókr inn svarti | vitra | potential sons of Brynhildr |
| Innsteinskviða 3 | | Innsteinn Gunnlaðarson | vitrari | wariness |
| Merlínusspá II 2 | c. 1200 | Gunnlaugr Leifsson | vitrari | Merlin |
| Merlínusspá II 1 | c. 1200 | Gunnlaugr Leifsson | margvitr | Merlin |
| | | | | |
| **Íslendingasögur** | | | | |
| Máhlíðingarvísur 3 | | Þórarinn svarti máhlíðingr Þórólfsson | vitr | Vermund (kinsman of Thorarin) |
| Lausavísur 1 | | Ásmundr hærulangr | vitr | Grettir |
| Lausavísur 1 | | Halli berserkr | vitra | Asdis |
| Lausavísur 18 | | Hallfreðr vandræðaskáld Óttarsson | vitr | Kolfinna |
| Lausavísur 2 | | Ófeigr Skiðason | vitran | Egil Skulison |
| Lausavísur 1 | | Anon. | vitr | Snorri goði |

Table 24

Considering its high frequency in the skaldic corpus and its compounds' productivity in the prose corpus, *vitr* has a relatively low compounding rate in the skaldic corpus with only four compounds totalling six occurences: *margvitr* appears three times (*Hugsvinnsmál* 79[364]; *Merlínusspá* II 1;

[364] In 624

*Vestrfaravísur* 5); *slægvitr* appears once (*Lilja* 43); *fjölvitr* appears once (*Háttatal* 16); and *alvitr* appears once (*Háttatal* 99). *Alvitr* is the only adjectival compound that is common to both poetic corpora, and will be discussed in more detail below in terms of the connection I believe we can see between supernatural women and the use of *vitr* and *alvitr* in both eddic and skaldic poetry.

The eddic-style praise poem *Haraldskvæði* is one of the earliest skaldic poems that includes *vitr*, dating from around 900, and is the earliest of the three eddic praise poems in the skaldic corpus. As such, it is perhaps interesting that *vitr* here should refer not only to a woman, but to a valkyrie. Both the eddic nature of the poem and the *vitr*'s reference to a female figure associated with mythological and heroic should perhaps be considered alongside *vitr*'s association with Guðrún in the *Edda*. We will also be reminded of the use of *alvitr* in the eddic corpus to refer to valkyrie-like women, and the discussion in the eddic chapter about its presumed association – one that I challenge – with the word *vættr*, meaning 'wight'. With this in mind, I turn now to Snorri's *Háttatal*, where we can find the only use of *alvitr* in the skaldic corpus. In stanza 99, Snorri attributes the superlative *alvitrastir* to princes:

> Þeir 'ró jöfrar alvitrastir,
> hringum hæztir, hugrakkastir,
> vellum verstir, vígdjarfastir,
> hirð hollastir, happi næstir.
>
> Those princes are the most *alvitr*, the most dangerous to rings, the most courageous of heart, the word to gold, the most battle-brave, the most loyal to the retinue, the closest to good fortune.
>
> *Háttatal* 99[365]

In the eddic corpus, we remember, *alvitr* applies only to valkyries, and was assumed to be related to *vættr*, and thus to mean 'strange creature.' We do not see any such assumption being made here, where the word is used to apply to men. The use of the word here by Snorri is unambiguous – he means to refer to the *jöfrar* as the wisest of men, and goes on to list numerous other princely qualities that these men possess. Clearly, *alvitr* in the eddic corpus and *alvitr* in the skaldic corpus have very different referents and must denote, to a point, different types of wisdom. That need not mean, though, that this is not the same word. We have seen throughout this study the same word applied, for example, to troops of warriors and to the Virgin Mary. The reason *alvitr* is translated differently in these two contexts is, I would argue, largely the gender of the referent.

There is a clear relationship between the word *vitr* and *vætr* in a kenning in *Ynglingatal*, a compendium of the lives of Swedish kings attributed to Þjóðólfr ór Hvini. In stanza 16 of the $K^x$ ms, which is the primary example used by Marold for this stanza, the first lines read:

[365] Gade, ed., "*Háttatal*," 1207.

> Þat frák enn,
> at Aðils fjörvi
> vita véttr
> of viða skyldi.
>
> I have learned, further, that the creature of charms [SORCERESS] had to destroy the life of Aðils.
>
> *Ynglingatal* 16, 1-4[366]

In a variant ms, AM 45 fol (F), a parchment ms dated to the first quarter of the fourteenth century, the third line reads not *vitta véttr*, but rather *vitra vættr*, which translates to something along the lines of '*vitr* creature' or '*vitr* wight'.[367] For all the confusion we have seen thus far between the differentiation – or, in some cases, the lack thereof – between *vitr* and *vættr*, it is worth noting that the two words are used together here not synonymously, but rather as one modifying the other as different parts of speech. This indicates that in this stanza, at least, a difference between the words was recognised and *vitr* is unproblematically applied to a supernatural female being.

As *vitr* appears in both *Hugsvinnsmál* and *Merlínusspá*, we are given the opportunity to examine how it is translated from Latin source material. *Vitr* appears four times in *Hugsvinnsmál*, which is, as we've previously explored, an Old Norse rendering of the Latin *Disticha Catonis*. Thus, we have the opportunity to refer to a source material and compare the language of the translation with the Latin original. *Vitr* appears in stanzas 23, 58, and 117, with *margvitr* appearing in stanza 79 as a variant reading in 624.[368] Stanza 23 warns that a *vitr* man may become angry even though he lives virtuously; stanza 58 speaks about how having friends is better than having power; stanza 79 warns that a *margsnotr*/*-vitr* man ought not to let misfortunes distress his mind; and stanza 117 is extolling the benefits of being both *vitr* and *sterkr*. Of these four occurrences, stanzas 58 and 79 have no direct lexical equivalent in the Latin source. The Latin source for stanzas 23 and 117, however, both include the Latin word *sapiens*.

The Latin parallel provided for *Hugsvinnsmál* 23 is *Disticha I* 7. The relevant lines read: *temporibus mores sapiens sine crimine mutat* [a wise man changes his morals without offense over time]. In the Latin, the noun *sapiens*, 'wise man', serves as the subject, standing in for the Norse *vitr maðr*. This is a relatively rare example in *Hugsvinnsmál* where one of the core wisdom adjectives is participating in the same grammatical function as the wisdom word in the *Disticha*. That is, both *sapiens* and *vitr* are part

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[366] Edith Marold, ed., "*Ynglingatal*," in *Poetry from the King's Sagas 1: From Mythical Times to c. 1035*, ed. Diana Whaley, vol. 1, bk. 1 of *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross et. al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012), 36.
[367] F also prefers *vættr* to *véttr* when referring to a sorceress in stanza 3, although it does not alliterate there with *vitr*, but rather stands unmodified.
[368] In 1199[x], the word appears as *margsnotr*.

of the subject phrase of the gnome. *Hugsvinnsmál* 117 and its corresponding *Disticha* stanza in Book IV 12 do not align quite as closely, the Norse reading:

> Afl ok eljan ef þú eignaz vilt,
> nem þú hyggindi hugar;
> beztr sá þykkir, er bæði má
> vitr ok sterkr vera.
>
> If you want to acquire strength and energy, learn wisdom of mind; he appears best, who can be both *vitr* and strong.
>
> *Hugsvinnsmál* 117[369]

The corresponding Latin reads *cum tibi praevalidae fuerint in corpore vires, / fac sapias: sic tu poteris vir fortis haberi* [when bodily strength becomes very strong in your body, / acquire wisdom: in such a way will you be able to be considered a strong man]. This construction is closer to that which has proved common in the translated stanzas that have been explored thus far, in that there is an imperative phrase involving wisdom in the Latin (*fac sapias*) where the Norse opts instead to represent the concept of wisdom purely adjectivally. This phenomenon belongs to a greater trend in the adaptation of Christian texts for Old Norse audiences that will be discussed in the conclusion.

*Vitr*'s two uses in *Merlínusspá* both occur in Gunnlaugr's introductory stanzas in *Merlínusspá II*. As these verses are original compositions by Gunnlaugr, there is no Latin source material to address. In *Merlínusspá II* 1 – in which Merlin's prophecies are, as we will remember, called *spakligr* – we are told *hét Merlínus margvitr gumi* [the *margvitr* man was called Merlin].[370] In the next stanza, it is said of Merlin that *vasat á moldu maðr vitrari* [there was not a more *vitr* man on earth].[371] It is interesting that after using *vitr* to speak so highly of Merlin, Gunnlaugr does not use the word again. The only wisdom word to apply to Merlin in the poem after this is *fróðr* in stanza 51. *Vitr* is the only wisdom word that Gunnlaugr uses exclusively in stanzas that have no source material in Geoffrey's *Prophetiae Merlini*.

Not unlike the words we have seen so far, *vitr* has little representation in the poetry of the *fornaldarsögur*, with just these two occurrences in *Merlínusspá* and one in each of *Hróksviða* and *Innsteinskviða* (both of which are found in *Háls saga ok Hálfsrekka*). Keeping this in mind, I would like to compare *vitr*'s distributional pattern over all three corpora with that of *horskr*. We will remember that *horskr* has a sizeable showing in the skaldic corpus with 36 appearances, and a very prominent place in the eddic corpus. It is, on the other hand, virtually absent from the prose corpus. In the skaldic corpus, *horskr* features overwhelmingly in the poetry of the *fornaldarsögur*. Considering all of this alongside *vitr*,

[369] Wills and Gropper, ed., "*Hugsvinnsmál*," 430.
[370] Poole, ed., "*Merlínusspá II*," 134.
[371] Poole, ed., "*Merlínusspá II*," 134.

we begin to see a fascinating relationship emerging between a word's use in eddic poetry, in the eddic-style *fornaldarsaga* poetry, and in the prose corpus: whereas *horskr* features prominently in the eddic corpus and the poetry of the *fornaldarsögur* and is virtually absent from the prose corpus, *vitr*, on the other hand, has an extremely low frequency in the eddic corpus as well as the poetry of the *fornaldarsögur* (despite its high frequency in the skaldic corpus overall), but shows up very prominently in the prose corpus not only as a simplex, but in many very productive compounds. Not every word in this study, of course, conforms exactly to this pattern, and it is precisely these sometimes-unexpected distributional patterns that will form a significant part of the concluding discussion of this thesis.

# 4 Conclusion

The two primary chapters of this thesis have both mapped the distribution and engaged with individual uses of the wisdom adjectives *fróðr*, *horskr*, *snotr*, *spakr*, *svinnr*, *víss*, and *vitr* in the Old Norse poetic corpus. By investigating the treatment of wisdom in the corpus beginning at the level of the word, I have included its application in poems that are not addressed in other studies of wisdom because wisdom is not their primary focus. Thus, this project, though its point of departure is specific, includes a much wider scope than most other wisdom studies. Looking at the treatment of wisdom on this scale has allowed me to observe patterns in the distribution of these adjectives – and, thus, this concept – across genre and time, with exciting results. Trends have been revealed in terms of the words' referents as well as the type of poetry in which they appear, speaking both to their individual nuance as well as to their general association with certain subject matter. *Horskr*, for example, demonstrates a particular proclivity towards use in poetry associated with ancient matters, whereas *víss* and its compounds are revealed to have a striking tendency towards Christian poetry.

Not only has this project revealed aspects of each of the seven core adjectives, but it has also, in turn, highlighted trends about the treatment of wisdom and, indeed, the use of language across the Old Norse poetic corpus. Having addressed the words themselves in the preceding chapters, the following conclusion will explore larger trends in the poetic corpus as a whole which have been revealed by this project. The three areas that will be specifically addressed are: wisdom words in the Christian corpus, words for women's wisdom, and wisdom words in the eddic and skaldic corpora.

### 4.1 Wisdom Words in the Christian Corpus

I have demonstrated over the course of this thesis that approaching the question of wisdom in Old Norse culture from individual words and working out towards the larger works and corpora in which they are contained can offer us a new and intriguing insight into how wisdom was considered across genre, time, and religion. My aim here is to observe the use of wisdom words in the Christian corpus and discover what we might learn from their behaviour, referents, and distribution.

To begin, it is important to summarise what has been demonstrated in this thesis, which is the fact that there is significant overlap with most of these seven wisdom adjectives in their application to pagan and Christian figures. This in itself ought not be overlooked, that a word used to apply, for example, to Óðinn, specifically in reference to the acquisition of the power of runes (*fróðr* in *Hávamál* 141), may also refer to the Christian God and to Christ. It is telling that a lexicon so intrinsic to the pre-Christian worldview maintained prominence and relevance in the Christian literary milieu. Clunies Ross notes in her discussion of Markus Skeggjason's *Eiríksdrápa*, written around 1103-7 about the Danish king Eiríkr

Sveinsson, that 'some of the vocabulary that expresses [concern with the inner life and the soul] looks forward to the vocabulary of the later part of the century, developed to express fundamental Christian concepts such as remorse, penitence and atonement.'[372] Poets composing after the conversion clearly understood that there was a need for a new vocabulary to accommodate Christian ideas that had not existed in pre-Christian thought, and whose representation was thus absent from their lexicon. The vocabulary of wisdom, however, survived and flourished during this period and beyond, suggesting that it did not need replacing with more appropriate, Christian alternatives.

Schorn demonstrates the elasticity of the Old Norse wisdom lexicon in her case study of the word *mannvit* (or *mannsvit*). Referring to the application of *mannvit*, she notes that 'the implicit contrast between humanity and other forms of life are missing in [eddic] texts,' whereas 'in a Christian context *manvit* might even become a limitation: human wit, to be contrasted with divine omniscience.'[373] Thus, Schorn shows the adaptation of a wisdom noun from pagan to Christian usage, helpfully summarising that 'the shifting connotations of *manvit* illustrate very well that the idea of wisdom in Old Norse had a recognisable semantic core.'[374] It is the strength of this semantic core that we see reflected not just in the continued use and adaptation of *manvit* into the Christian corpus, but in all of the adjectives dealt with in this study.

The Christian gnomic poem *Hugsvinnsmál* provides, yet again, a fascinating insight into the phenomenon of the adaptation of Old Norse wisdom words into the Christian corpus. It is perhaps unsurprising that the wisdom words in *Hugsvinnsmál* appear largely to be used in the same way as they are in the gnomic poetry of the eddic corpus. Nevertheless, this pattern has important implications. In Schorn's discussion of *Hugsvinnsmál* in her book *Speaker and Authority in Old Norse Wisdom Poetry*, she identifies it as a poem that stands 'on the cusp of two traditions of wisdom literature.'[375] Speaking of the poet's decision to translate the poem into *ljóðaháttr*, a metre largely associated with eddic poetry, she suggests that he 'chose a medium which conveyed the genre to a lay Icelandic audience in a way most consonant with its air of antiquity and authority.'[376] I would argue that the use of wisdom language in this poem is serving that same purpose, in that it is recalling – or, at least, not deviating from – the traditional lexicon of wisdom that would have already been familiar to an Icelandic audience.

It is not only the words, however, that recall eddic wisdom conventions, but the way that they are used. Schorn notes that 'the translations [of the *Hugsvinnsmál* poet] can be quite free, preserving sense

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[372] Clunies Ross, *A History of Old Norse Poetry and Poetics*, 130.
[373] Brittany Schorn, "Wisdom", in *A Critical Companion to Old Norse Literary Genre*, ed. Bampi Massimiliano, et al (Martelsham: Boydell & Brewer, 2020), 222-3.
[374] Schorn, "Wisdom," 226.
[375] Brittany Schorn, *Speaker and Authority in Old Norse Wisdom Poetry* (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2017), 141.
[376] Schorn, *Speaker and Authority*, 142.

over expression, although some are very close to the Latin original, even at the level of the wording. Yet even as the poet follows his exemplar with care, the influence of native wisdom poetry also shows through in the style. Although he mimics the Latin in casting his dicts in the imperative singular, he manifests a tendency towards the type of impersonal constructions favoured in Old Norse wisdom poetry.'[377] It becomes clear that many of these wisdom words were considered very much a part of those impersonal constructions – instead of the Latin imperatives that we see in the *Disticha*, the Norse instead substitutes an impersonal form which makes use of wisdom adjectives. A good example of this phenomenon is *Hugsvinnsmál* 56, which corresponds to the introduction of *Disticha II* and also to *Disticha I* 10, as discussed in **3.3**. Both places in the Latin whence the stanza is thought to take inspiration use imperatives. In the *Liber II* introduction, the reader is told to *Vergilium legito* [read Virgil], and in *Disticha I* 10, the advice is *ergo ades, et quae sit sapiential disce legendo* [so be present, and learn by reading what wisdom is]. Both *ades* and *disce* here are imperatives. *Hugsvinnsmál* 56, however, contains no imperatives, using instead an impersonal third-person construction:

> Allsnotr maðr ef íþróttir nema vill
> ok vel mart vita,
> Bækr hann lesi þær er gerðu bragnar spakir,
> þeir er kendu fróðleik firum,
>
> If an *allsnotr* man wants to learn accomplishments and know many things well, let him read the books which *spakr* men who taught people *fróðleik* wrote
>
> *Hugsvinnsmál* 56, 1-6[378]

The *allsnotr maðr* is the intended audience of the advice, and the verb used – *lesi* (from *lesa*) – is in the third person singular subjunctive form as opposed to the imperative. The wisdom adjective in these cases is an integral part of the impersonal construction.

This rather straightforward example does not, of course, apply as seamlessly to all uses of wisdom words in *Hugsvinnsmál* for which there is no Latin adjectival equivalent. Nor, indeed, can this explanation account for the fact that we see the same phenomenon, the same lack of wisdom words in the Latin source material, in *Merlínusspá*. I would tentatively suggest, however, that the insertion of wisdom adjectives by these two Old Norse poets does stem from the same tradition. Even though the wisdom words that are used in *Merlínusspá* do not appear in a gnomic context, we cannot discount the impact that the convention of using wisdom words with impersonal constructions would have had for an Icelandic audience. It is pertinent here to remember Lavender's attestation that Gunnlaugr was both 'adapting non-Christian subject matter for the purpose of Christian propaganda' as well as using 'stock eddic poetic

[377] Schorn, *Speaker and Authority*, 139.
[378] Wills and Gropper, ed., "*Hugsvinnsmál*," 395.

diction'.[379] I argue, as I did in particular in **3.1**, that the same thing is happening with language: that the application of wisdom adjectives in particular was a convention familiar to an Old Norse audience – and, indeed, to Gunnlaugr himself – and was thus employed as a tool to '[tailor] the poem for a Scandinavian audience.'[380]

In the century leading up to the composition of *Merlínusspá*, there was already a shift occurring towards a new kind of religious poetry. Clunies Ross identifies Einarr Skúlason's *Geisli*, in particular, as influencing this new religious poetry, an influence most keenly demonstrated in *Plácitusdrápa*, *Harmsól*, and *Leiðarvísan*.[381] Katrina Attwood argues that 'there is evidence of close relationships between the major twelfth-century Christian *drápur*, and that parallels in structure and diction between the texts suggest that the authors were familiar one another's work, either directly or indirectly though the medium of lost intermediary texts.'[382] There are wisdom words found in all of these poems. Some patterns are common among more than one of the works while others are unique to each individual poem. These four related works thus provide us with an excellent opportunity to observe and consider how wisdom could be expressed within a genre as well as by an individual poet.

Immediately striking is the scarcity of the seven core wisdom adjectives in *Geisli*. *Geisli* consists of 71 stanzas, but contains only two wisdom words. The first occurs in the first stanza, in which Einarr proclaims:

> Eins má óð ok bœnir
> — alls ráðanda ins snjalla
> vels fróðr, sás getr góða —
> guðs þrenning mér kenna.
>
> 'The Trinity of one God can teach me poetry and prayers; he is indeed *fróðr* who gets the goodwill of the eloquent ruler of all [= God].
>
> *Geisli* 1, 1-4[383]

The second use of a wisdom word is *horskr* in stanza 64, which is used in a similar context to how *fróðr* is used in stanza 1:

> Hverrs svá horskr, at byrjar
> hans vegs megi of segja
> ljóss í lífi þessu
> lofðungs gjafar tunga,

[379] Lavender, "Merlin and the Völva," 119; 117.
[380] Lavender, "Merlin and the Völva," 111.
[381] Clunies Ross, *A History of Old Norse Poetry and Poetics*, 131.
[382] Katrina Attwood, "Intertextual Aspects of the Twelfth-Century Christian *Drápur*", *Viking Society for Northern Research Saga Book* 24 (1994-1997): 236.
[383] Martin Chase, ed., "*Geisli*," in *Poetry on Christian Subjects*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross, vol. 7, bk. 1, of *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross, et. al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 7.

> þars hreggsalar hyggjum
> heitfastr jǫfurr veitir
> — skreytt megu skatnar líta
> skrín — dýrðar vin sínum?
>
> 'Who is so *horskr* that his tongue can tell of the gifts of the prince of the bright path of fair wind [SKY/HEAVEN > = God] in this life, where we think [that] the oath-firm king of the storm-hall [SKY/HEAVEN > = God] gives honours to his friend? Men can see the ornamented shrine.'
>
> *Geisli* 64[384]

Both of these uses have no direct referent, but rather are used impersonally to refer to those who benefit from or could speak about God's gifts. It is interesting that in both examples, the wisdom words are applied to people, not to God or to Christ, both of whom are, unsurprisingly, mentioned numerous times in the poem. The story of distribution is quite different in *Harmsól*, *Leiðarvísan*, and *Plácitusdrápa*. Each of these poems boasts 7, 8, and 9 wisdom words, respectively.

Looking at these three poems, whose relationships to *Geisli* and to each other are discussed thoroughly by Attwood, certain trends emerge. [385] Particularly fascinating is the exclusivity with which *fróðr* and its derivatives are used to refer to God and other ancient figures of Christian mythology as well as to gnomic wisdom. This is reminiscent of how *fróðr* is used in the eddic corpus to refer to ancient pagan beings and gnomic wisdom, and some aspects of *fróðr*'s use in the poems ties it even more securely to the use in the eddic corpus. In *Harmsól*, for example, *fróðr* is used three times, each time in a formula as part of a kenning for God. The formula repeats in stanzas 35, 40, and 45, and reads:

> himins es fylkir fremri
> fróðr hvívetna góðu.
>
> the *fróðr* king of heaven [= God] is superior to everything that is good.
>
> *Harmsól* 35; 40; 45, 7-8[386]

This use of *fróðr* in a repeated formula will remind us of the formulaic tendencies of *fróðr* in the eddic corpus as it applied to, for example, the giant Vafþrúðnir in *Vafþrúðnismál*, to whom Óðinn says in the refrain in stanzas 26, 28, 30, 34, and 36, when challenging him to answer questions: *alls þik fróðan kveða* [since you are said to be *fróðr*].[387] In all three of these twelfth-/early thirteenth-century poems, God is never referred to using a word other than *fróðr* or one of its derivatives.

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[384] Chase, ed., "*Geisli*," 59.
[385] Attwood, "Intertextual Aspects of the Twelfth-Century Christian Drápur."
[386] Attwood, ed., "*Harmsól*," 103; 107; 113.
[387] In stanzas 30 and 36 in the R ms, the variant *svinnr* is used (see **2.1**).

*Fróðr*'s use in *Leiðarvísan* is also reminiscent of its use in pre-conversion skaldic poetry, in that its only direct references are to God and Satan – both ancient, authoritative figures in Christian mythology – and its third use is gnomic. This is not, however, the only pattern to be observed in this poem. There is evidence in *Leiðarvísan* that the poet distinguished between specific and general wisdom and also between human and divine wisdom. *Leiðarvísan* contains a total of eight wisdom-adjective occurrences, *spakr* being the only word that does not appear in any of its forms (this is not particularly surprising considering *spakr*'s relatively low frequency in the skaldic corpus as a whole as well as its particular aversion to Christian poetry, with it appearing only in *Heilags anda drápa* and *Hugsvinnsmál*). *Leiðarvísan* provides us with an interesting opportunity to see the application of wisdom words divided in more than one way in the same poem: between named referents and groups of people, and between divine figures and men. The tendency in the skaldic corpus for wisdom words to refer to large, unnamed groups of people is especially common in Christian poetry, and usually the groups of people in question are receiving some benefit or reward from God. In *Leiðarvísan*, all words that appear in their simple, uncompounded form are used in this way, except for *fróðr*, which, as stated above, is used in a gnomic sense. *Svinnr*, *vitr*, *horskr*, and *snotr* all refer to groups of people who are in receipt of some benefit, all (save in the case of *svinnr*) from God. *Svinnr*, in stanza 5, is used in a kenning as part of the poet's invocation for men to listen to him as he speaks a poem about the Lord. Thus, even though these people are not receiving anything directly from God, they are about to hear a poem about his goodness. *Vitr*, in stanza 7, is used in a promise that *verðr, sás vensk á dýrðir vitr* [he will become *vitr* who accustoms himself to glories]; *horskr* is used in stanza 26 to refer to those to whom God showed miracles; *snotr* in stanza 28 refers to the 5000 people Jesus fed with the loaves and fishes, about whom the poet says: *matr vannsk mönnum snotrum* [the food sufficed for the *snotrum*]; finally, *fróðr* is used in stanza 43 in a phrase that bears striking resemblance to that in stanza 7, reading: *es fróðr, sás vensk góði* [he is *fróðr* who accustoms himself to what is good].[388] The three remaining wisdom words in *Leiðarvísan* are compounds, and they refer exclusively to named referents: God is *vegfróðr* in stanza 8; Moses is *lagavíss* in stanza 18; and the Devil is *flæðarfróðr* in stanza 31. Thus, there seems to a be a deliberate effort on the part of the poet to distinguish between the 'wisdom' of groups of people and that of named referents.

The second distinction occurs within one branch of the first, that is, the distinction between divine and human figures who are referred to using compounds. As demonstrated above, the words referring to God and the Devil are compounds of *fróðr*, and the one referring to Moses is a compound of *víss*. Though the sample size here is admittedly small, it could be argued – especially in light of the observations regarding the application of compounds versus that of simplexes in the poem – that this designation was

[388] Katrina Attwood, ed., "*Leiðarvísan*," 146; 164; 166; 176.

also deliberate. If this were the case, it would support my suggestion that *fróðr* remained a word at least partially associated with higher powers into the Christian period, and applied accordingly to Christian figures.

It must be said that *fróðr* was not used exclusively for divine figures and ancient wisdom in the Christian skaldic corpus. Indeed, in *Plácitusdrápa*, *fróðr* is applied as a simplex once to Saint Plaucus himself (15), and a second time in the compound *siðfróðastr* to Plaucus' sons (51). However, though this is the only poem of the four *drápur* being discussed here in which *fróðr* applies to a man, the application of *fróðr* to human men is by no means unique in the skaldic corpus. Unlike in the eddic corpus, where *fróðr* is never applied to non-prophetic men, it is quite comfortably used to refer to impressive human men in the skaldic corpus from the ninth to the thirteenth centuries.

Though *fróðr* is used once to apply to Saint Plaucus, the word used to describe him most often is *svinnr*. As discussed in **3.5**, *svinnr* applies exclusively to Saint Plaucus in the poem. It is also a word used much more commonly than *fróðr* in the poetry of the *konungasögur* to apply to impressive men as well as being the word with the highest number of occurrences in the poetry of the *Íslendingasögur*. I would like to suggest that by unequivocally associating *svinnr* with Plaucus, the *Plácitusdrápa* poet was attempting to establish his poem firmly in the Icelandic poetic tradition – *svinnr*, we will remember, is a very poetic word, and particularly a skaldic one. This also corresponds with what Louis-Jensen and Wills note as 'the poet's copious use of kennings to ornament his narrative,' some of which have traditional referents like man and sea, and others which had Christian referents.[389] Again, we are seeing the lexicon of wisdom being used by poets to marry Christian content and traditional Icelandic poetic tradition. This lexical element would not be unique in its application by the *drápur* poets to employ traditional poetic elements in their Christian poetry. Indeed, Attwood points out that 'such pre-Christian, heroic *drápur* as survive in a complete state conventionally begin with an invocation, in which the skald asks his audience, and particularly his patron, to maintain silence and listen attentively to his poem, and end with a similar section, in which a reward of some kind is demanded. The Christian poets retain these features, but adapt them to their new audiences.'[390]

Looking closely at the language of wisdom enables us to approach its treatment and depiction from an angle that has thus far, I think, been overlooked. The words themselves are indicators of the strength of wisdom's semantic core to which Schorn refers. There is evidence for the use of each one of these words pre- and post-conversion, with referents belonging to both pagan and Christian mythology. I hope to have demonstrated that these core wisdom adjectives played an integral role in the creation of a new Christian discourse for skaldic poetry. Whereas other studies explore the development of new

[389] Louis-Jensen and Wills, ed., "*Plácitusdrápa*," 181.
[390] Attwood, "Intertextual Aspects of the Twelfth-Century Christian *Drápur*," 230.

lexicons to suit the introduction of Christianity, this project demonstrates how an important semantic field was maintained and tailored to the changing needs of post-conversion poets. The result is an exciting marriage of tradition and innovation.

### 4.2 Words for Women's Wisdom

The recent publication of Jóhanna Katrín Friðriksdóttir's book, *Valkyrie*, speaks to the upsurge in interest in women's roles in Viking Age society not only for academics, but for the general public. In her book, Friðriksdóttir outlines the main stages of a woman's life, highlighting in many instances the essential roles they played in society. Along with practical tasks such as tending to the farmstead and making clothes and sails, women were also essential socially and politically. As Friðriksdóttir points out, 'that the valkyries and Freyja, the main mythological female figures in Norse culture, have so much agency is a consequence and reflection of a society in which women's contributions, work and wisdom were essential.'[391] This wide-ranging appreciation for women in their numerous societal roles is exemplified by the application of wisdom words to women across both poetic corpora.

It is important first of all to acknowledge what has been most obviously demonstrated by this thesis, which is the that these core wisdom adjectives all apply at least once to a woman in the poetic corpus, and most have numerous female referents across the eddic and skaldic poetry. In the eddic corpus, there are wisdom adjectices applied to figures in both the mythological and heroic poetry, and to supernatural figures as well as to human women. In the skaldic corpus, the wisdom adjectives are applied to women from the very beginning of the extant skaldic corpus – c. 900 (where *vitr* applies to a valkyrie in Þórbjórn hornklofi's *Hrafnsmál*) – all the way through to the late fourteenth/early fifteenth centuries (with *fróðr* applying to Mary in *Drápa af Máríugrát* and *horskr* applying to an unnamed woman saved by Mary in *Máríuvísur*). Even looking at just these three examples demonstrates the chronological and contextual range of how the core wisdom adjectives were applied to women, that is, for at least 500 years and to figures of both pagan and Christian mythology.

The eddic chapter outlined references to women using the core adjectives in various circumstances, as they were depicted participating in and contributing to society in different ways: there are women depicted as both active and passive objects of male desire; there are women shown to be capable rune-carvers and interpreters of dreams; there are women who keep a welcoming and respectable hall; and there are women who break out of what we might consider traditionally female roles and, at the most extreme, take up arms. At least one female figure depicted in each of these roles is referred to using one of the core wisdom adjectives. Some words, it appears, were more likely to apply to women and,

[391] Friðriksdóttir, *Valkyrie*, 18.

specifically, competence in traditionally female activities. *Svinnr*, for example, has a particular affinity towards the female, whereas *horskr*, by contrast, applies to male heroes as well as admirable female figures. It is especially fascinating to observe that *horskr* applied not only to men who were impressive in the traditionally male sphere and to women who were impressive in the traditionally female sphere, but also to one woman, in particular, who had success when she engaged in traditionally male activities.

Guðrún is described as *horskr* by the *Atlamál* poet after she takes up arms against her husband's soldiers in order to fight alongside her brothers. When she hears news of the clash of arms outside, she rushes out to meet her brothers, and *hlaðin hálsmenjum, / hreytti hon þeim gervöllum, / sløngði svá silfri / at í sundr hrutu baugar* [the necklaces weighing on her throat she hurled away entirely, / flung down the silver chain so the links all broke apart].[392] After this clear rejection of femininity, she fights alongside her brothers and demonstrates that *hæg varat hjaldri / hvars hon hendr festi* [she was easy with fighting, / wherever she turned her hand].[393] Stanza 52 tells that *þjórku þar gørðu, / þeiri var við brugðit, / þat brá um allt annat / er unnu börn Gjúka* [a battle they fought there for which they were famous; / that surpassed all others, what the children of Gjuki achieved], deliberately including Guðrún in the praise. In fact, in the stanzas retelling the details of this battle (49-53), of the three siblings, only Guðrún is mentioned by name. Guðrún's physical rejection of her feminine role coupled with her success with a sword – which Jochens identifies as 'acceptable' by male standards, if not 'distinguished' – moves Guðrún at this moment into the sphere of masculinity, where she remains *horskr*.[394] Thus, we can begin to consider based on this albeit small sample whether women's wisdom was appreciated in both the traditionally feminine and – if they managed to access it – masculine sphere.

There is a famous example of another such woman adopting praiseworthy masculine qualities in the skaldic corpus. Judith Jesch discusses at length the three extant verses of praise composed by Sigvatr Þórðarson for Ástríðr Óláfsdóttir, step-mother of Magnús inn góði. These three verses, preserved only in manuscripts of *Heimskringla*, praise Ástríðr for her role in securing Magnus' place on the throne of Norway. Jesch qualifies that Ástríðr is being praised 'because she has acted like a man, in speaking successfully at a public assembly,' and that she 'is praised for her *mennska*, a word that [Jesch] would argue has a connotation of 'manly behaviour' in this context.'[395] Although none of the core wisdom adjectives appear in these three verses, we have here an example of female praise that we may consider alongside that of Guðrún, who is praised for her notably un-feminine activity.

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[392] *Atlamál in Grœnlenzku* 47
[393] *Atlamál in Grœnlenzku* 49
[394] Jenny Jochens, *Old Norse Images of Women* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 143.
[395] Judith Jesch, "In Praise of Ástríðr Óláfsdóttir," Viking Society for Northern Research Saga Book 24 (1994-1997), 8.

In Carol Clover's seminal article 'Regardless of Sex,' she suggested a one-sex model 'in which, however unequal, men and women are, or can be, players in the same game.'[396] She argues that the ultimate dichotomy is not man versus woman, but rather strong versus weak, powerful versus powerless, etc.[397] I would argue that this examination of *horskr* – as well as the other core wisdom adjectives that apply to both impressive men and women – has the potential to work alongside Clover's idea, as it is a word clearly associated with princely men such as Gunnarr, Högni, Sigurðr, and King Grípir, as well as with admirable women such as *Billings mær*, Glaumvör, Kostbera, Brynhildr, and Guðrún. In terms of women moving into the male sphere, we can see that Clover's ideas about that flexibility apply – exceptional women may achieve the designation of one of these core adjectives while acting in the male sphere. What should not be underestimated, however, is that these same words are used for women who are competent in female spheres: Kostbera, for example, is *horskr* when she conveys warnings from her dreams to her husband, and *Billings mær* is *horskr* when she cleverly deceives Óðinn in order to avoid what surely would have been a dishonourable encounter. Further, Guðrún, who is called *horskr* after acting in the male sphere, is also called *horskr* earlier in the same poem when she is acting in the female sphere and writing warning runes to her brothers.[398] Thus, two important conclusions may be reached: first, that women who are successful in the traditionally male sphere may achieve the designation of 'wise'; second, and no less revealing, is that women engaging in traditionally female roles in society are referred to by the same terms not only as a woman who is functioning in the male sphere, but as men themselves. There is no lexical distinction in the semantic field as a whole to suggest that a woman successfully managing a farmstead is any less wise than a hero wielding a sword. And even where such a distinction does occur, as in the case of *svinnr*, there is no indication that that wisdom associated with the female is considered inferior.

The case in the skaldic corpus is largely similar, in that there are examples of the same words being used to refer to both women and men. The specific kinds of female figures being referred to, though, differ slightly. The wise women of the skaldic corpus can be separated into three basic categories, some more populated than others: human women, who are very often love interests of the poets; Christian women, often Mary or a female saint; and supernatural women, who appear relatively infrequently and who are often giants or valkyries. Many of the references to human women occur in the poetry of the *Íslendingasögur*, specifically in the sagas that are included in the sub-genre known as the *skaldsögur*. The *skaldsögur* are a group of sagas whose defining features include there being a skald protagonist who is

[396] Carol Clover, "Regardless of Sex: Men, Women, and Power in Early Northern Europe," *Speculum* 68, no. 2 (1993): 379-80.
[397] Clover, "Regardless of Sex," 380.
[398] *Atlamál in Grœnlenzku* 3

prone to travel abroad, and who is involved in a love triangle.[399] Thus, it is unsurprising that these sagas contain numerous verses focused on the women with whom the protagonists are infatuated. The sagas most often included in this sub-genre are *Kormáks saga*, *Hallfreðar saga*, *Bjarnar saga Hítœlakappa*, and *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu*. The collection edited by Diana Whaley entitled *Sagas of Warrior-Poets* includes *Víglundar saga*, which, Whaley says, 'has much in common with the sagas in [the group], and is included … as an intriguingly fresh variation on the theme of a poet's love in adversity.'[400] Alternatively, Poole offers in his edited volume *Skaldsagas: Text, Vocation, and Desire in the Icelandic Sagas of Poets*, discussion of *Egils Saga Skalla Grimssonar* and *Fóstbrœðra saga*, 'insofar as they shed light on the principal four.'[401] What all of these sagas share is the inclusion of a subgenre of skaldic praise poetry termed *mansöngvísur*, often translated as 'love poetry.'[402] The social effect and potential destructive nature of these verses has been much discussed, but I will focus here specifically on their function as praise poetry and on the lexical similarities some of them have to poetry composed for kings.

In the introduction to *Valkyrie*, Friðriksdóttir stresses that 'the stock phrase *vænn ok vitr* (beautiful and wise) is applied to countless female characters throughout the literary corpus, suggesting that physical looks and mental aptitude were considered equally important.'[403] Considering the pairing of these qualities – that is, wisdom and beauty – in the way Friðriksdóttir does, which emphasises the inclusion of wisdom as an important and desirable trait in a woman, is essential to understanding their importance and value in society not just for their physical appeal to their men, but as capable partners who would have contributed to the running of the household. This is demonstrated in the lexicon by the application of various wisdom adjectives to a number of these women in the *skaldsögur*.

Of all the protagonists of the *skaldsögur* – and here I will include *Víglundar saga* – Gunnlaugr is the only one who does not refer to the object of his desire using one of the core wisdom adjectives. The rest do: Kormákr twice refers to Steingerðr as *svinnr* (*Lausavísur* 8, 63); Björn and Víglundr refer to Oddný and Ketilrið, respectively, as *svinnr* (*Lausavísur* 16; Lausavísur 3); and Hallfreðr calls Kolfinna *vitr* (*Lausavísur* 18). In the case of each of these skalds, the words in question are reserved exclusively for their beloved. The same can be said for the only other *mansöngr* in the corpus, that is Halli berserkr's verse, featured in *Eyrbyggja saga* as well as *Heiðarvíga saga*, in which he refers to Ásdís Styrsdóttir

[399] Diana Whaley, ed. *Sagas of Warrior Poets* (London: Penguin, 2002), ix.
[400] Whaley, ed. *Sagas of Warrior Poets*, x.
[401] Russell Poole, ed. *Skaldsagas: text, vocation, and desire in the Icelandic sagas of poets* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2001), 4.
[402] For the argument that it more accurately ought to be termed 'erotic libel', see Jenny Jochens "Representation of Skalds in the Sagas 2: Gender Relations" in *Skaldsagas: text, vocation, and desire in the Icelandic sagas of poets*, ed. Russell Poole (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2001), 309-332.
[403] Friðriksdóttir, *Valkyrie*, 102.

using *vitr*. Each of these words is included in a verse celebrating the attributes and desirable qualities of these women. These are all, to an extent, verses of praise.

That a number of these praise poems include references to the women being *svinnr* or *vitr* supports Friðriksdóttir's observation that being wise was part of what made a woman appealing. There is one example in the poetry of the *Íslendingasögur* of a competent woman being referred to using one of the core adjectives after having made a decision the protagonist of the saga deemed prudent. In Grettir Ásmundarson's *Ævikviða II* 3 (featured in *Fóstbræðra saga* as well as *Grettis saga*), Grettir refers to Þorbjörg hin digra [the stout] as *allsnotr*. After Þorbjörg spares Grettir's life, he announces in his verse that *hún er allsnotr* [she is *allsnotr*]. Þorbjörg is not the object of Grettir's affection, so we have a unique opportunity to see a poet speak highly of a woman based directly on actions he has deemed worthy of the designation. This may be the only instance in the poetry of the *Íslendingasögur* in which a woman referred to using one of the core adjectives has demonstrated its inherent quality. Thus, we are led to believe that in reality, women must have been demonstrating these traits in such areas as tending to the farmstead and maintaining a welcoming hall – as Glaumvör is depicted in the eddic corpus – but such matters are not routinely the stuff of skaldic poetry.

Each one of the words in this study refers at least once to a male and female figure in the skaldic corpus. The closest any word comes to not having a female referent is *spakr*, which refers to a woman only once, and that is to Hervör when she is disguised as a man.[404] The words that are most relevant to this part of the discussion are *svinnr*, *vitr*, and *snotr*, as these are the only words in the study that are applied to human women in the poetry of the *Íslendingasögur*. Not only do each of these words refer to men in other verses in the *Íslendingasögur*, but each also appears at least once in the poetry of the *konungasögur* in reference to a king: *snotr* refers to Sveinn Úlfsson and Hákon Hákonarsson; *svinnr* refers to Eiríkr jarl Hákonarson, Hákon góði, Hákon jarl Sigurðarson, Óláfr Haraldsson, Haraldr harðráði, and Óláfr Tryggvason; and *vitr* is used to refer to Haraldr hárfagri, Óláfr Haraldsson, Eiríkr Sveinsson, Magnús berfœttr Ólafsson, Eiríkr jarl Hákonarson, Hákon Hákonarson, and Knútr. Needless to say, the wise women in the *Íslendingasögur* are in impressive company, and we should not underestimate the significance of the fact that the same words for wisdom are used in praise poems for paramours and in praise poems for kings.

In his lecture *What was Viking Poetry For?* Anthony Faulkes cautioned that the viking poetry composed about love, death, and poetry is in the minority, 'and to anthologise these as examples of an extensive corpus largely devoted to other topics gives a misleading impression of the poetry as a whole and runs the risk of simply recreating the poetry of the vikings in the images of the Romantics and

[404] Discussed in detail in **3.4**.

misreading it as a personal expression in a way that was probably not originally intended.'[405] Certainly, to discuss poetry that deals with these subjects as if it were as popular in the corpus as praise poetry for kings would be irresponsible. However, to dismiss it as too niche for consideration alongside more 'conventional' praise poetry is equally unhelpful, and discourages side-by-side comparison of what are, essentially, two different types of praise poetry. I am not, of course, suggesting that men and women were on equal footing, either in the society in which the *Íslendingasögur* were set or that in which they were recorded. I am suggesting, based on lexical evidence, that there was room to appreciate the wisdom of men and women equally in their respective societal roles.

### 4.3 Wisdom Words in the Eddic and Skaldic Corpora

In *A History of Old Norse Poetry and Poetics*, Clunies Ross summarises that 'skaldic-type poetry can be contrasted with eddic verse in several ways: in respect of its location in manuscript corpora, in its subject matter, in terms of authorship, with regard to certain illocutionary features and in terms of style and verse form.' [406] She goes on to say, however, that 'no single one of these criteria is sufficient to define a poem or verse as skaldic rather than eddic, and [her] own preference would be to abandon these two words as contrastive and exclusive terms.'[407] The distinction between eddic and skaldic verse and the division of those two corpora – if, indeed, we ought to consider them as separate corpora at all – is complex. As I stated in the Introduction, my practice has been to work within the divisions set out by the *Skaldic Project*. In this thesis, I have not sought to redefine these widely-accepted divisions, but rather I have set out to explore how looking at the distribution of words across these two corpora – as I will continue to tentatively refer to them – may encourage us to think about these categories differently. As we consider the findings of this thesis, we should bear in mind certain questions, such as: in what ways does this project support or call into question the traditional distinction between eddic and skaldic poetry? Further: what can the distribution patterns of these words within the traditionally skaldic corpus reveal about the importance of poetic context and what support may this provide – or not provide – for the categories set out by the *Skaldic Project*?

There are some words that demonstrate a particular tendency towards either eddic or skaldic poetry. The wisdom adjective most clearly associated with eddic poetry is *horskr*. *Horskr* is the most commonly occurring of the core adjectives in the eddic poetry in its positive simplex form, appearing 25 times in that corpus in both the mythological and heroic poetry. Its distribution pattern in the skaldic corpus is fascinating, and suggests a particular association with eddic-style poetry – that is, poetry that

[405] Anthony Faulkes, *What was Viking Poetry For?* 9.
[406] Clunies Ross, *Old Norse Poetry and Poetics*, 14.
[407] Clunies Ross, *Old Norse Poetry and Poetics*, 14.

uses eddic verse forms, in which Clunies Ross includes the poetry of the *fornaldarsögur*, riddles, didactic poems like *Hugsvinnsmál* and *Sólarljóð*, as well as the *erfikvæði* [memorial poems] *Haraldskvæði* (*Hrafnsmál*), *Hákonarmál*, and *Eiríksmál*.[408] Of *horskr*'s 36 occurrences in the skaldic corpus – three of which are not the simplex, but the compound adjective *horskligr* – 16 of those are in the poetry of the *fornaldarsögur*, six are in *Hugsvinnsmál*, one is in *Sólarljóð*, and two are in *Eiríksmal*.

*Horskr* has by far the highest percentage of occurrences in the poetry of the *fornaldarsögur* of any of the core adjectives, both when compared to its total number of uses and also overall. Though it is notoriously difficult to date not only the poetry of the *fornaldarsögur*, but the sagas themselves, the observations made in this thesis are relevant regardless of the date of the poetry. As Clunies Ross says, 'if genuinely old poetry was preserved inside [*fornaldarsögur* of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries], as well, perhaps, as poetry that was made to seem old, then the impetus to repackage heroic and legendary verse is probably attributable to a similar antiquarian, recuperative urge that caused Snorri Sturluson to systematise the traditional techniques of skaldic verse in *Skaldskaparmál* and *Háttatál* for young poets of his day and provide a digest of Old Norse myth in *Gylfaginning* so that they could understand the many mythological allusions the verse depended on.'[409] This suggests, of course, that skalds of the thirteenth and fourteenth century had an awareness of which words were appropriately 'ancient' and 'poetic.' The continued use of *horskr* for this type of poetry suggests that this awareness did exist, and the question then becomes: did the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century skalds recognise the ancient poetic nature of the word they were using, or did they simply recognise that it belonged to the lexicon of what we have come to call eddic-style poetry?

As Townend explains, 'the co-occurrence of cognate words as poetic vocabulary (both simplexes and compounds) in Old English and Old Norse must indicate that such words had already attained their marked status of being 'poetic' in the North-West Germanic period; they did not arise independently in the two languages, and two poetries, after separation. So this means that North-West Germanic poetic diction must already have been different from everyday language – specialized and rarefied – in the pre-separation period.'[410] This is the case for *horskr* and its Old English cognate *horsc*, both of which are decidedly poetic in their respective corpora. Thus, the poetic nature of these words is what we might refer to as 'ancient.'

Townend asks four important questions at the end of his lecture *Antiquity of Diction in Old English and Old Norse Poetry*. It is with the first two that I am primarily concerned here, both of which deal with the use of poetic language in Old English and Norse poetry. The first asks whether the poets and

[408] Clunies Ross, *Old Norse Poetry and Poetics*, 10; 10n9; 28.
[409] Clunies Ross, *Old Norse Poetry and Poetics*, 12.
[410] Townend, *Antiquity of Diction*, 20.

their audiences possessed 'the linguistic ability to recognize the time-depth of the archaic' or whether it was 'simply an elevated distance from everyday language which they appreciated.'[411] This question becomes relevant to our example if we assume that some, at least, of the *fornaldarsögur* poetry in which *horskr* appears was composed in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. If this is the case, the question that Townend asks may be applied specifically: did these thirteenth-century skalds realise that *horskr* was an archaic word, or did they know only that it was elevated from the everyday language they spoke? The second question Townend poses asks 'whether the preservation and continued use of archaic diction across centuries was the result of inertia or positive choice.'[412] These questions are related in that they both query the awareness the skalds had about the history of the words they were using.

In his study of words for *horse* in Middle English, Thorlac Turville-Petre insists that the vocabulary 'is not archaic and has no archaizing effect,' arguing that 'a fourteenth-century poet … could have had no sense of the lineage of the words from *Beowulf* through Laȝamon's *Brut*.'[413] To Townend's questions, then, Turville-Petre would answer: first, that Old English and Norse poets used words that happened to be archaic not because they knew that they were archaic, but because, as Townend puts it, it was 'simply an elevated distance from the everyday language which they appreciated'; and secondly, that the continued use of poetic diction across centuries was a matter not of positive choice, but rather of inertia. It may be that the skalds composing poems in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries could not have known the linguistic history of the words they were using in their poetry. I am not convinced, however, that it necessarily follows that these words were not being chosen positively to have a certain archaizing effect. Even if thirteen- or fourteenth-century skalds were unaware of the word's archaic history, its distribution suggests that there was an awareness of its effect – these two levels of awareness are not mutually exclusive. Regardless of whether the skalds knew the etymological history of the word, from the ninth century onward, *horskr* was associated with eddic-type poetry concerned with 'old lore[,] … the realms of the paranormal, death, the world of dreams and foreseeing the future.'[414] This stability over the course of five hundred years is astounding, and demonstrates yet again the apparent stability of this lexical field. Townend suggests 'that certain core elements [of Old Norse poetry] were both antique and enduring, and that we miss something important if we choose to focus only on innovation and change.' [415] I would argue that the use of *horskr* speaks volumes to that point.

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[411] Townend, *Antiquity of Diction,* 20-1.
[412] Townend, *Antiquity of Diction,* 21.
[413] Thorlac Turville-Petre, "Alliterative Horses," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 112, no. 2 (2013), 166-7.
[414] Clunies Ross, *Old Norse Poetry and Poetics*, 14.
[415] Townend, *Antiquity of Diction,* 21.

On the other hand, *horskr* is completely absent from the poetry of the *Íslendingasögur*. Thus, *horskr*'s distribution pattern is in stark contrast to those of, in particular, *svinnr* (in its simplex form, especially) and *vitr*, which both show a clear propensity towards use in skaldic poetry. *Svinnr* and *vitr* have the two highest number of occurrences in the poetry of the *Íslendingasögur* (13 of a total of 52 in the skaldic corpus and six out of 44, respectively) and among the lowest in the poetry of the *fornaldarsögur* (3 out of the total 52 for *svinnr* and four of 44 for *vitr*). This is, of course, far from a perfect science, but it is interesting to observe that *horskr*, a word associated so strongly with eddic-style verse, is completely absent from the poetry of the *Íslendingasögur*, whereas *vitr*, the word with the lowest number of occurrences in eddic poetry, features quite prominently in the poetry of the *Íslendingasögur*. *Svinnr* is different again, as it shares in this pattern with *vitr* only if we consider it exclusively in its simplex form, in which case there would only be eleven examples of it in the eddic corpus alongside two in the poetry of the *fornaldarsögur*.

The use of *svinnr* in the eddic and skaldic corpora also illuminates circumstances in which distributional crossover occurred. *Svinnr*'s clear lack of representation in its positive simplex form in the gnomic verses of both the eddic and skaldic corpora is striking. Especially given *svinnr*'s noticeably high rate of occurrence in the skaldic corpus overall, its absence from the gnomic poetry – represented for the most part in the skaldic corpus by *Hugsvinnsmál* – is conspicuous. The only appearance of *svinnr* in gnomic poetry of the skaldic corpus is in its negative form, *ósvinnr*, in *Hugsvinnsmál* 46. *Ósvinnr* is also the only form of *svinnr* to be found in gnomic contexts in the eddic poetry (and then, only in *Hávamál*). The inverse of this pattern is true for *snotr* – its overwhelming tendency, along with its compounds, to appear in the gnomic verses of *Hávamál* seems to be echoed in the skaldic corpus, where it appears more than any of the other words in the *Hugsvinnsmál*, despite its relatively low frequency in the skaldic corpus overall. This might suggest that some words belonged to a vocabulary specifically for gnomic poetry that overruled any potential eddic and skaldic division. As discussed in **2.5**, *svinnhugaðr* also demonstrates a common referent between the eddic and skaldic corpora, in that both the instance in *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II* as well as that in the *lausavísa* of Hjálmarr inn hugumstóri (featured in *Örvar-Odds Saga*) refer to high-born Swedish women: one the valkyrie Sígrun, and the other likely Ingibjörg, the daughter of the Swedish king. Both *Hugsvinnsmál* and the *lausavísa* of Hjlamarr inn hugumstori, found in a *förnaldarsaga*, fall into Clunies Ross' category of 'eddic-type verse.' Although these examples focus on only a single word, the evidence here – especially coupled with the exploration of *horskr*'s behaviour above – points towards supporting the suggestion that didactic poetry as well as poetry from the *fornaldarsögur* are likely to make use of eddic-style language regardless of their context of preservation.

Different again are *fróðr* and *víss*, which also share some distributional patterns across the poetic corpora. Unlike *horskr*, whose use in the eddic corpus was reserved almost exclusively for human

wisdom, both *fróðr* and *víss* have a tendency in the eddic corpus to not apply directly to human men – that is, specifically, our 'heroes.' That said, their distributional patterns are not identical: *fróðr* does appear in gnomic verses whereas *víss* does not, and *fróðr* refers to human women whereas *víss* does not. Incidentally, we see again, just as we saw with *svinnr* and *snotr*, a suggestion that there may have been a specifically gnomic vocabulary to which *fróðr* belonged whereas *víss* did not. The fact that they both demonstrate an aversion to the heroic male is made more interesting when we consider that they also have a relatively low frequency in the poetry of the *konungasögur* and quite high frequencies in Christian poetry. Indeed, the only verse in the *konungasögur* in which *víss* appears is in Þornbjörn hornklofi's *Haraldskvæði*, one of the eddic-style praise poems. Neither *fróðr* nor *víss* applies to heroic men in the eddic corpus, and they both demonstrate low frequency in the poetry of the *konungasögur* and high frequency in the Christian corpus.

The same cannot be said of *spakr*, whose focus in the eddic poetry, like that of *fróðr* and *víss*, veers away from humans generally and focuses on a particular brand of numinous wisdom. In the skaldic corpus, however, it quite happily appears in the poetry of the *konungasögur* referring to kings and to other great men. That said, all three of these words have a relatively low frequency in the poetry of the *Íslendingasögur*: just three of *fróðr*'s 52 total skaldic occurrences in the skaldic corpus are in the *Íslendingasögur*, two out of *víss*'s 22, and one of *spakr*'s 22. Thus, all three of these words tend not to refer to regular human men in the *Edda* and all have a relatively low frequency in the poetry of the *Íslendingasögur*. However, whereas *fróðr* and *víss* appear relatively infrequently in the poetry of the *konungasögur*, *spakr*, even though it is significantly less popular in the skaldic corpus overall, boasts more occurrences in the poetry of the *konungasögur* than the other two words combined.

Mikael Males points out that 'because it is datable with relative security, skaldic poetry offers us a unique possibility to follow cultural and literary developments in western Scandinavia much further back than the time of the first written documents, which began to emerge in the twelfth century.'[416] Given that much skaldic poetry does provide this opportunity to pinpoint chronological patterns in the use of these words, one might have expected to see certain patterns of this type emerge. However, among the poetry that we can confidently date, that is rarely the case. This project has demonstrated that it is in fact much more likely to see distributional patterns emerge based on the context and genre of the verses as opposed to their supposed age. Granted, chronology and context can never be entirely separated, but even in those contexts that chronologically overlap, there are distinct differences in distribution based on context.

[416] Mikael Males, "The Last Pagan," *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 116, no. 4 (2017): 492.

That the semantic field of wisdom seems to have remained so stable over the course of, in some cases, five or six centuries, is a fascinating realisation in itself. This stability not only in general use, but in use in specific contexts, further stresses the importance of this semantic field to skalds and audiences alike. What has become evident is that skalds using these core wisdom adjectives recognised and adhered to some of the same generic distinctions recognised and implemented by the editors of the *Skaldic Project*. In the case of some words, there are clear distributional patterns that mean, for example, that *víss* was considered an appropriate word to use in Christian poetry as well as in the type of poetry found in the *Íslendingasögur*, but not for praising kings. Contrastingly, there is the striking preference to use *horskr* in the eddic-style poetry of the *fornaldarsögur* over the type of poetry found in the *Íslendingasögur*. *Horskr*'s clear tendency to appear in the eddic poetry and in the eddic-style verses of the *forlandarsögur* not only demonstrates an awareness on the part of the skalds that certain words were more appropriate for certain subject matter, but also challenges us to further consider the lexical distinction that seems to have existed between eddic and eddic-style poetry and that which we might recognise as more traditionally or obviously skaldic.

There are few studies, as far as I am aware, that address and compare the eddic and skaldic lexicons in any detail. Though Schorn notes the large number of *hapax legomena* in the eddic corpus and the tendency for eddic poetry to use inventive synonyms and compounds and Quinn conducts an exploration of the use of kennings in eddic verse which is necessarily compared to their use in the skaldic poetry, these types of studies, though of course exciting and revealing in their own right, do not address the lexicon of each corpus per se.[417] Though the sample size of this study is small – just seven words – the implications of this thesis suggest that there are exciting rewards to be reaped by conducting semantic field studies across eddic and skaldic poetry in the Old Norse corpus.

Conducting a literary study determined by a semantic field demands that we look beyond our expectations about how a word might behave in a given corpus. When we begin our survey and assemble our corpus at the level of the word, we are no longer bound by pre-conceptions about where and how an idea may present itself in the literature: instead, we allow the lexicon to direct our exploration. As my project has demonstrated, this approach can lead us to consider how a concept is presented and handled in works that might – indeed, have – otherwise been overlooked. Additionally, looking at the distribution of these adjectives has shown not only that each has its own unique tendencies, but also that the semantic field as a whole remained remarkably stable in many ways from the ninth to the fifteenth centuries.

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[417] Brittany Schorn, "Eddic Style," in *A Handbook to Eddic Poetry: Myths and Legends of Early Scandinavia*, ed. Carolyne Larrington, Judy Quinn, and Brittany Schorn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 272; Judy Quinn, "Kennings and Figurative Language in Eddic Poetry," in *A Handbook to Eddic Poetry: Myths and Legends of Early Scandinavia*, ed. Carolyne Larrington, Judy Quinn, and Brittany Schorn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 288-309.

Though often scholars tend to highlight change and dynamism in medieval literature and culture, the stability demonstrated by the lexicon of wisdom in this corpus is an important discovery. This study has begun to shine some light on the many benefits of looking at ideas across the Old Norse poetic corpus starting with our simplest independent unit of expression: the word.

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