

Ten Scandinavian and North English Etymologies

(1) OI *Edda*, (2) OI *þulr*/OE *þyle*, (3) OI *Loki*, *Laufey*, (4) OI *Víðarr*, (5) OI *litr*, (6) (O)I *glenna*, etc., (7) (O)I *glíma*, (8) OI *kofa(r)n*, (9) N Engl. *taistrel*, (10) N Engl. *pawky*

1. *Edda*

The history of the book title *Edda* is enveloped in total obscurity, for this word emerged as a byname (nickname). The long list of Icelandic bynames put together by Finnur Jónsson (1907) contains puzzling specimens of ancient slang. Hundreds of them mean nothing to modern Icelanders, and most do not occur except as bynames. They are awaiting the anthropologist who will explain how people ready to kill for a mocking verse put up with the most demeaning soubriquets one can imagine (cf. Liberman 1994c, 465–66). Given so many unintelligible bynames, it is not surprising that the meaning and origin of the word *Edda* remains a mystery.

Jan de Vries (1962, 93) offers an incomplete survey of opinions on *Edda*. Holthausen (1948, 45), Alexander Jóhannesson (1956, 44, 102), and Ásgeir Blöndal Magnússon (1989, 144) add nothing to the works of their predecessors. All the attempts to trace the history of *Edda* assume that this name has something to do with either old lore or skaldic poetry, or Oddi, the place where Snorri grew up. But titles like *Grágás*, *Fagrskinna*, *Morkinskinna*, *Mǫðruvallabók*, *Flateyjarbók*, *Hauksbók*, *Kringla*, etc., contain references to irreconstructible associations, the outward appearance of the manuscript, its place of origin, the first word in it, and the like, but never to its content. Nor is *Hungrvaka* a cookbook. This circumstance should never be lost sight of.

For a long time it was believed that *Edda* is a variant of *Veda* (so, for example, in Holmboe 1852, 120). As late as 1883, Long mentioned this derivation as self-evident (1883, 243). In the same year, Guðbrandur Vigfússon and York Powell brought out their celebrated *Corpus poeticum boreale*. In the introduction to volume 1 (xxvi–xxxvii), the history of the word *Edda* is told in great detail, and in “Excursus 4” to volume 2 (514) a new etymology of *Edda* from *Ertha* ‘Terra Mater’ of the Teutons is put forward. According to Guðbrandur Vigfússon,

a western man has learnt a snatch of a High German song on that favourite subject with all Teutons, the *Origin of Mankind* and *Mother Earth*, from a Southern trader or comrade . . . In this song the word “Erda” (or *Grandmother Erda*) occurs; he puts it into his own tongue as neatly as he can, and the result is “Edda.” Or, if he himself did not make the change, the minstrel would have done so, who sung it after him, for the Lay had passed through many Northern mouths before it got written down in our Codex.

This etymology is now cited (if at all) only to prove that Guðbrandur Vigfússon was a poor philologist. And yet he may have borrowed his idea from Jacob Grimm (1841, 22), who reconstructed the putative cognates of *Edda* as Gothic **izdô* and Old High German (OHG) **erdâ* (cf. his brief comment in Grimm 1878, 62, “*ëdda* [proavia, vielleicht: origo generis? oder summa, auctoritas, acumen als name für die alten dichtungen?]”). But Grimm wisely refrained from identifying the root, while Guðbrandur Vigfússon took this incautious step. Guðbrandur Vigfússon could not decide whether *Edda* was a borrowing from German or a cognate of **ertha*. He first says that *dd* in *Edda* is from *zd*, which is wrong, for *r* in *jǫrð* is old (that is, not from *z* by rhotacism). But then he speaks about a snatch of a German song learned by a Western man; surely, such a man would not have reproduced *ertha* as *edda*. Heinzel (1885, 69) pointed out in his review that Guðbrandur Vigfússon’s etymology is nonsense, and Eiríkr Magnússon (1896, 224–26) destroyed what little was left of it (he does not seem to have read Heinzel).

Guðbrandur Vigfússon, like Jacob Grimm before him, was inspired by the fact that Old Icelandic *edda* meant ‘ancestress’ or ‘grandmother’; this word occurs in *Rígsþula*. Rígr visits Ái and Edda, spends three nights in their cottage, and in due time Edda gives birth to Þræll (‘slave’), the progenitor of all future slaves by Þír (‘bondswoman’). The common noun *ái* has survived into Modern Icelandic (‘great-grandfather’), but *edda* has dropped out of the language, and its etymology is unknown. Few people in those days lived to be really old, so that an everyday word for ‘great-grandmother’ could not have had wide currency (the same of course holds for ‘great-grandfather’). Moreover, *edda* has a shadowy existence outside *Rígsþula*. The main question is whether Snorri knew it. Here Eiríkr Magnússon’s remarks have retained their importance. He quoted and compared the relevant passages in the Codex regius and the Codex Upsaliensis of the *Younger Edda* (Magnússon 1896, 226–29). The Codex regius contains a list of *heiti* for ‘woman’, among which we find “sværa heitir vers móðir, amma, þriðja edda, eiða heitir móðir” (cf. Sigurðsson et al. 1966, 1:538). Flanked by *amma* ‘grandmother’ and *eiða* ‘mother’, *edda* can mean ‘great-grandmother’.

In the capacity of Ái’s mate, Edda must also be understood as ‘great-grandmother’. But in the Codex Upsaliensis, the oldest extant manuscript of the *Younger Edda*, the series of appellatives for kinswomen including *edda* is missing from the list of *ókend heiti* for ‘woman’ (Sigurðsson et al. 1966, 2:347), although the manuscript begins with the crucial sentence: “Bok þessi heitir edda. hana hevir saman setta snorri sturlo sonr” [This book is called *Edda*; Snorri, son of Sturla, put it together] (Sigurðsson et al. 1966, 2:250). According to many scholars, the

Codex Upsaliensis is not far removed from the original. Eiríkr Magnússon concluded that someone (not necessarily Snorri) who knew the word *edda* ‘great-grandmother’ and the fact that Snorri’s book was called *Edda* would hardly have left out the passage with a comment on *edda*. In Eiríkr Magnússon’s opinion, Snorri was not familiar with the common noun *edda* ‘great-grandmother’ and could not have had it in mind when he called his work *Edda*. If the book title does not go back to Snorri, the same argument is valid for the compiler or scribe of the Codex Upsaliensis.

The most imaginative development of the great-grandmother idea belongs to Sivert N. Hagen (1904). He gave a detailed survey of earlier scholarship, but, for obvious reasons, did not mention Eiríkr Magnússon’s doubts about Snorri’s knowledge of the common noun *edda*. His starting point is that Snorri knew it and that he wanted to call his book (*ars*) *metrica*, “but without actually using the word *metrica*. And since he did not understand the real etymological meaning of the word, he translated it only after first connecting it with the similar word *matrix*, which is plainly a derivation from the word *mater* ‘mother’, and which is recognized as meaning ‘great-grandmother, urgrossmutter, eltermutter, oldemoder, *edda*’” (Hagen 1904, 130–31). In the remaining four pages of the article, he explains why Snorri could have arrived at such an etymology and how etymological games of the Middle Ages and exercises in folk etymology resulted in the production of bizarre words and ideas.

Hagen ignored two difficulties. He did not address the question raised by Eiríkr Magnússon, and he assumed that Snorri tried to find an appropriate name for *Skáldskaparmál* and especially for *Háttatal*. But Snorri’s *Gylfaginning* is not less important than his guide of the skaldic meters, even though in later times *eddureglur* referred to versification, not to mythology. The only scholar who noticed Hagen’s article was Neckel (1908b). Usually a reserved critic, he expressed his admiration for Hagen’s idea. He was also the only scholar who pointed out the specific nature of the title *Edda*: *Edda* is not a title in the same sense as *Guðrúnarkviða*, *Sverrissaga*, or *Skáldskaparmál*; it is a nickname given for fun, like *Sigrfluga* (King Sverrir’s banner), *Ormr inn langi*, etc. But he returned to the great-grandmother theory. In his opinion, Snorri had chosen as his book title the word preserved by *Rígsþula* because the idea of an old mother, *matrix*, matched so aptly the concept of (*ars*) *poetica*. Written twelve years after Eiríkr Magnússon’s paper, Neckel’s review contains a sympathetic reference to Jacob Grimm and Müllenhoff, but passes by Eiríkr Magnússon’s central thesis, namely, that Snorri appears to have been ignorant of the word *edda*. Neckel (1908a) also devoted an article to the etymology of *edda*, but it does not discuss Snorri’s book.

The latest defender of *Edda* ‘great-grandmother’ was Gutenbrunner (1942). Contrary to Hagen, Gutenbrunner believed that *Edda* had originally served as the title of *Gylfaginning* only, for each of the other two parts of the *Younger Edda*

had its own name. Since *Edda* resembles such words as *Eigla*, *Njála*, *Grettla*, and so forth, he suggested that the tales of the gods had once been called *Eddumál* or *Eddusaga*, *Edda* being an abbreviation of the longer title. This idea is uninviting: *Eigla* appeared as the short (clipped) form of *Egilssaga*, but the abbreviation *Edda* is the same as its source *edda*. Also, the prehistory of the name *Edda* cannot be demonstrated; therefore, Gutenbrunner's reconstruction falls to the ground.

The author of another derivation of *Edda* was Árne Magnússon, who knew and rejected the great-grandmother etymology and as early as 1787 traced *Edda* to *óðr* 'wits; poetry'. The semantics of *óðr* is discussed in all works on Óðinn and is here of interest only in so far as it connects the name of the god who stole the mead of poetry with the name of the first book on the foundations of skaldic art. Árne Magnússon's derivation found its champion in Konráð Gíslason. Few people read Konráð Gíslason today, but those who do know how irritating his style is: dozens of seemingly disjointed examples form a loose argument; there is almost no narrative and no culmination. However, it usually pays off to plod through his works, for Konráð Gíslason was a scholar of immense erudition and considered no detail insignificant. His 1884 article is typical. It begins in medias res with the following observation: "The verb *gretta*, derived from the adjective *grannr* 'tenuis', has been glossed as follows" (Gíslason 1884, 42, my trans.). By the middle of the article it becomes clear that Konráð Gíslason wants to establish the existence of the alternation *ð~dd*. Such niceties naturally did not bother Árne Magnússon, but Konráð Gíslason needs a "law" to prove his derivation. Once he has shown, as he believes, that *gretta* 'satisfy one's appetite' and *gretta* 'having had one's fill' can be related, he addresses the history of the words *stedda* 'mare' and *ledda* 'lead plummet of the fishing line', presumably derived from *stóð* 'stud' and *lóð* 'bullet'. With such parallels, *Edda* and *óðr* also appear to be related.

Konráð Gíslason's etymology was immediately attacked by Guðbrandur Vigfússon (1885). He showed that *ledda* and *lóð* (both designating 'lead', the name of the metal) are late borrowings and that neither of them is derived from the other. The origin of *stedda* is obscure and is better left alone. As a final thrust of his rejoinder, Guðbrandur Vigfússon proposes the pair *góðr* 'good' ~ *gedda* 'pike' (fish), thus adding insult to injury. With the analogues *stedda* ~ *stóð*, *ledda* ~ *lóð* gone, the bottom is knocked out of Konráð Gíslason's argument once and for all. Gering also found Konráð Gíslason's derivation unacceptable. In his annotations to a bibliography of Scandinavian philology for 1884, he summarizes Guðbrandur Vigfússon's letter and adds his own comment: "the new explanation is invalidated by the fact that as a skaldic term *óðr* is rarely used. Under certain circumstances, *μανία* could also mean 'poetic ecstasy', but *μαντική* ['prophetic gift'] never means 'poetics'" (Löschorf and Gering 1885, 152, my trans.). Eiríkr Magnússon (1896, 230–32) subjected Konráð Gíslason to devastating criticism. Hagen (1904, 127–29) devoted a lot of space to the refutation of the *óðr-edda* etymology; his objections to Konráð Gíslason are valid, but none of them is new.

Contrary to expectation, compromised ideas tend to be indestructible. The great-grandmother etymology of *Edda* had a distinguished supporter (Gutenbrunner) in 1942, and it may still be alive. The reason for its longevity is not far to seek: *edda* is the only link between *Edda* and the rest of Old Icelandic vocabulary. The same is true of the *óðr-Edda* etymology. It was endorsed by Mogk (1893, 77), who says that both Finn Magnúsen and Peter Erasmus Müller derived *Edda* from *óðr* (I could not find the relevant passage in Magnúsen's books; see Müller 1811, 66–68), and with reservations by Sijmons 1899, 16–20. When later Mogk changed his mind (1901–9, 570–71), Flom took him to task for it (1905, 575). It was favored by Alexander Jóhannesson (1932, 19; 1956, 44, 102). The supporters of Konráð Gíslason's etymology recognize its weakness, but semantic considerations outweigh all others.

A variation on Konráð Gíslason's theme was offered by Willy Krogmann (1934). He objected to Konráð Gíslason's pseudoparallels *stóð/stedda*, *lóð/ledd* ~ *óðr/Edda*, expressed his surprise that no one had contested them (!), and derived *Edda* from **ōþ-iðōn* 'singing' or 'art of singing', or 'the corpus of songs' (**ōþ-iðōn* is not glossed) > 'poetry', an abstract noun like Gothic *hauhiþa* 'height'. Unfortunately, **ōþ-iðōn* is a figment of Krogmann's imagination, and even if such a word had existed, *ō* < *o* would not have had to lose labialization after syncope and umlaut, and **ð* would not have become *dd* (Andersen 1936, 67–70).

The third widely known etymology of *Edda*, like the previous ones, is also centuries old. Its originator, Björn á Skarðsá, traced *Edda* to *Oddi*, the farmstead on which Snorri grew up. Snorri lived there from the age of three (1180) to 1197, when his foster father Jón Loptsson died, and he must have profited immensely by the collection of manuscripts Jón had. Björn's etymology was not completely forgotten. Karl Blind (1895) pointed out that Rasmus Anderson (1880) shared Björn's view: Anderson surveys the other derivations of *Edda* and refers to those who "have suggested that it [i.e., *Edda*] may be a mutilated form of Odde (*Oddi*), the home of Saemund the Wise, who was long supposed to be the compiler of the Elder *Edda*." In his book on Norse mythology, Anderson mentions only *edda* 'great-grandmother', *Veda*, and Swed. *veta* 'know' (1879, 116; the same in later editions). The present-day popularity of the *Edda-Oddi* theory goes back to a lecture and an article by Eiríkr Magnússon.

On November 15, 1895, Eiríkr Magnússon spoke on the origin of the literary term *Edda* at the Viking Club. He discussed the great-grandmother theory, Guðbrandur Vigfússon's derivation of *Edda* from *Erda*, Árni Magnússon–Konráð Gíslason's *óðr-Edda* idea and suggested that *Edda* was formed from *Oddi*. The report printed in *The Academy* (Anonymous 1895) reflects the enthusiasm of the audience. The paper was considered to be "among the most important of any that had yet been given before the Viking Club" and "certainly one of the most learned" and the result "such . . . as could not well be impugned . . . new and startling" (Jón Stefánsson); "apparently no one had previously known the true mean-

ing” of the term (E. H. Baverstock). In expressing his agreement with Jón Stefáns-son, A. F. Major, hon. sec., noted that “where an Icelander could find nothing to criticise, an Englishman could not venture to say much” and added: “If we talked of the Codex Upsaliensis, if in our own early literature we spoke of the Exeter Book and the Vercellae Book, why should not Icelander scholars have talked of the book of Oddi?” Finally, the president (the Rev. A. Sandison) said that Eiríkr Magnússon’s “destructive criticism was . . . most fair, though crushing; while the constructive part of his paper was, if possible, even more brilliant, and so lucidly set forth that to him, at any rate, it had carried conviction.”

In his talk, Eiríkr Magnússon did not mention Björn á Skarðsá and presented his etymology as absolutely new. (In Magnússon 1895, only the misprints — *pollr* and *pella* instead of *þollr* and *þella* — are corrected, and it is said that no genuine Icelandic root ending in *óð* ever combines with the suffix *edd*.) Karl Blind could not come to the lecture and was much surprised to learn that Eiríkr Magnússon’s discovery had been called new and startling; hence his reference to Anderson’s book (see above). Blind knew nothing about Björn á Skarðsá, but Eiríkr Magnússon was well aware of his existence. In the published text of his talk (Magnússon 1896), there is a brief mention of Björn, but it is skillfully embedded in a long paragraph about other matters:

Coming now to the consideration of the derivations of Edda as a book title, the first that presents itself is Arni Magnússon’s. After rejecting the great-grandmother interpretation and Biörn of Skarðsa’s suggestion that edda was derivable from Oddi, the home of Sæmund the Learned, whom Biörn took to be the author of the Younger Edda, he proposes to derive the term from “óðr,” which originally means “wits,” the faculty of thinking and reasoning. (Magnússon 1896, 229–30)

The following footnote is given to the word *Oddi*: “Vigfusson, who has made a very careful study of Biörn’s Edda speculations, does not mention this point, and I have no means of verifying the source of Arni’s statement” (Magnússon 1896, 229n2). It must be said in all fairness that, although Eiríkr Magnússon was not the first to suggest the connection between *Edda* and *Oddi*, it was he who made this connection look plausible. In 1880, Anderson still speaks about *Edda* as a mutilated form of *Oddi*, while Eiríkr Magnússon showed that the two forms can be related by means of umlaut. As analogical cases he cites *Vatnshyrna* ‘the book of Vatnshorn’, *knot* ~ *knetr* (‘nut’ ~ ‘nuts’), *kom* ~ *kemr* (‘come’ ~ ‘comes’), *sof* ~ *sefr* (‘sleep’ ~ ‘sleeps’), *brodd* ~ *bredda* (‘goad’ ~ ‘big knife’), *boli* ~ *belja* (‘bull’ ~ ‘cow’), and *pollr* ~ *þella* (‘pine tree’ ~ ‘pine tree sapling’) (Magnússon 1896, 237 n1, 238).

Not all of Eiríkr Magnússon’s examples strengthen his argument. *Belja* ‘cow’ is “a bellowing animal” and is not derived from *boli* ‘bull’. *Broddur* ‘sharp point’ and *bredda* ‘knife’ are probably related, but the situation is not clear, for *bredda* surfaced only in the fifteenth century (Magnússon 1989, 78). The *þollr* (= *þollur*) ~ *þella* pair also poses problems. Eiríkr Magnússon gives Swed. *tall* ‘fir tree’ as a cognate of *þollr*, but *tall* is a cognate of OI *þoll* (Mod. Icel. *þöll*) ‘young fir tree’,

not of *pollr*. Nor does *poll(u)r* mean ‘fir tree’: *poll(u)r* is simply ‘tree’; however, it can be related to *þoll* (*þöll*). *Bella* ‘fir tree’ is a cognate of *þoll* < **þalnō* (Vries 1962, s.v. “þoll”), but its ties with *poll(u)r* need further proof.

If we look at the products of *i*-umlaut in short vowels, we will find the alternation *a~æ > a~e* (as in *nafn* ‘name’ ~ *nefna* ‘to name’), *e~i* (as in *segl* ‘a sail’ ~ *sigla* ‘to sail’), and *o~ø* (as in *norþr* ‘north’ ~ *nørðre* ‘more northern’) (Noreen 1970, 57–58). Owing to the alternation OI *ø~e*, *sofa* ‘sleep’ acquired the third person sg. *søfr/sefr*, and the plural of *knot* ‘nut’ became *knøtr/knetr*. The alternation *o~e* permeated morphology, but it seldom underlay word formation (and when it did, the derivation was never straightforward). Eiríkr Magnússon had no trouble finding the pair *Vatnshorn* ~ *Vatnshyrna* (he could have added *Hrafnkell* ~ *Hrafnkatla*), but evidently there is no pair of this type with *o~e*. It is most unlikely that Snorri or any of his contemporaries should have used the paradigm *knot* ~ *knetr*, *sofa* ~ *sefr* to invent a word like *Edda* that would form a partner for *Oddi*, and if the association was not obvious, there would have been no point in inventing such a name. We do not think of *Boston* and *lot* when we hear *best* and *let*, though the alternation *e~o* is present in *get* ~ *got* and *length* ~ *long*. If Snorri wanted to immortalize *Oddi*, why did he not call his book *Odda*? And of course we do not know for sure that *Edda* is Snorri’s coinage; even Snorri’s authorship of the *Younger Edda* was not recognized as widely as we might wish. Eiríkr Magnússon must have had similar doubts, for he suddenly explains that *Edda* is related to both *Oddi* and *Oddr* and that it

is the female counterpart of *Oddr* or *Oddi*, as, for instance *Æsa* is of *Asi*, *Hrefna* of *Hrafn*, *Olöf* of *Olaf*, &c. She is the passive, while *Oddr* or *Oddi* is the active principle in the evolution of the species, simply: *WOMAN. This is the Edda of Rígmál*. From *Oddi*, as a local name, the derivative fem. *Edda* for a particularly notable book preserved at a place of such a name, is in every way appropriately evolved both as to form and sense. This I maintain is the derivation of the *Edda* of Cod. Upsaliensis, which, as far as any tangible evidence goes, has nothing to do with *Rígmál*. In both cases, however, *Edda* descends from the stems *odd-* and *oddan-* in a perfectly correct manner. (Magnússon 1896, 238)

So, *Ái*’s wife *Edda* and Snorri’s *Edda* turn out to be the same word after all, twice derived from the root *odd(an)-*. This conclusion is quite incredible.

Like Konráð Gíslason’s etymology, the one proposed by Eiríkr Magnússon is still treated with respect. The editors of the *Saga-Book* included Eiríkr Magnússon’s article in the 1992 anniversary volume of the Viking Club. Jan de Vries (1962, 93) finds Eiríkr Magnússon’s etymology the best of those in circulation (Murray et al. 1989, s.v. “*Edda*,” preferred Konráð Gíslason’s). Ásgeir Blöndal Magnússon (1989, 144) calls both etymologies unconvincing, but, like James Murray, he would rather trace *Edda* to *óðr* than to *Oddi*. Sijmons (1906, XCI–XCII) gave up *óðr* and accepted *Oddi* as the source of *Edda*.

One more etymology of *Edda* was offered by Hugo Pipping (1926, 103–5). His starting point is the Swedish proverb “som man är klädd, så blir man hädd”

[as one is dressed, so is one judged]. He notes that in its present form this proverb makes little sense, for *hāda* means ‘defame, revile’, rather than ‘assess, judge’, and concludes that people once said not “hwar ær swa hædher, som han ær klædher,” but “hwar ær swa ædder, som han ær klædher,” with **ædder* being the past participle of **ēra* ‘to honor’. He sets up OI **ædder* ‘honored’, explains *Edda* as the feminine of this participle, and glosses *Edda* ‘a book about valued (respected, honored) things’, though he does not exclude the possibility of *Edda* being the past participle of **eira* < **aizian* ‘bound in brass’. He compares *Fagrskinna* ‘beautiful leather’ to his first gloss and *Eirspennill* ‘brazen clasp’ to the second.

Pipping’s reconstruction is needlessly complicated. In Swedish, the cognates of OI *heiðra* ‘show respect, honor’ and *hæða* ‘mock, revile’ appear to have been confused, so that *hāda* ‘revile’ took on both meanings, but the meaning ‘honor’ has been preserved in the proverb in which it serves as a doublet of *hedra*. Hellquist mentions Pipping’s opinion without discussion (1939, s.v. “hāda”). With regard to *Edda*, Pipping’s conjecture is of no value, for the participle **eddr* (‘honored’ or ‘bound in brass’) would have had to occur very often to become the title of a book, but it has not been attested a single time. Besides that, the names of manuscripts were always nouns. Pipping’s etymology has never been subjected to serious criticism. Jan de Vries (1962, 93) simply dismisses it as “verfehlt” [wrong].

This brings our survey to a close. Its highlights are as follows. (1) *Edda* is most probably not a word reflecting the content of Snorri’s book (‘old lore’, ‘ars poetica’, ‘ars metrica’, ‘venerable past’, or whatever). It is rather a conventional, perhaps even jocular byname referring to the appearance of the original manuscript or to some extraneous factor. There was a fashion of giving Icelandic manuscripts bird titles. Such are the legal codes *Grágás* ‘grey goose’, *Gullfjǫðr* ‘gold feather (quill?)’, and *Hryggjar-stykk* ‘a kind of duck’. It is hard to believe that *Grágás* got its name because it was copied with a quill made from a feather of a grey goose. Perhaps *Edda* was also one of such titles: *Edda* would be an appropriate “pet name” of *æðr* pronounced [æ:ðr] f. ‘eider duck’! If the title *Edda* has nothing to do with what is written in the *Younger Edda*, our chance of discovering its etymology is close to zero.

(2) Whatever *Edda* meant, the word must have been clear to Snorri’s contemporaries. *Edda* ‘ancestress’ or ‘great-grandmother’ was known too little. As long as there is a suspicion that even the scribe of the Codex Upsaliensis was ignorant of this word, it is better not to explain *Edda* as *edda*. With some ingenuity, *Edda* can be associated with *óðr* and *Oddi*. But the flaws of both derivations are such that both etymologies should be abandoned. No one would have understood *Edda* as meaning *Óðbók* or *Oddabók*. There were more natural ways to suggest the connection between the book and *óðr* or *Oddi* than coining a word whose sound shape furnished no clue to the riddle. (3) Whatever the origin of *Edda*, it was invented as the title of one particular book, more or less, we can assume, on

the spur of the moment. It is therefore futile to look for the prehistory of this word and set up asterisked forms (**ezda*, **erda*, and the like). Hypotheses based on such forms carry no more weight than those which trace *Edda* to Sanskrit *Veda* or German *ertha*.

2. OI *þulr* / OE *þyle*

The figure of the Old Scandinavian / Old English *þulr* / *þyle* has been discussed by scholars for at least two centuries. The authors of countless articles and chapters in books devoted to Unferth, King Hrothgar's *þyle*, keep arguing not over the basic facts, but over their interpretation. A few proposals ('poet', 'spokesman', 'orator', 'jester', 'priest, wizard', 'sage') have been defended and rejected over and over again. But in Scandinavian philology the question seems to be closed. The tone was set by Axel Olrik (1909, 8–10), who drew a picture of an ancient *þulr*, a teacher, the king's alter ego, a man shedding words of wisdom from his seat (*stóll*) that stood on top of a hill. Olrik's inspiration was the runic stone of Snoldelev ("Gunnwalds stæinn, sunar Hróalds, þular á Salhaugum"; photographs of this stone can be found in many books, for example, in Vries 1956, table 10, between pp. 400 and 401). In 1927, Vogt brought out a monograph on *þulr*. He surveyed all the available data, concluded that the *þulr* had been connected with the Germanic cult practices, and called him a "Kultredner." Although the reviewers of Vogt's monograph questioned the *Kultredner* hypothesis (Malone 1929; Kauffmann 1934, 132–33), Jan de Vries (1956, 403) gave Vogt enthusiastic support, and Holthausen (1934, 374) referred only to him in the entry on *þyle*.

Below, I will offer some ideas on the meaning of *þulr* / *þyle* as prolegomena to what I consider the most promising search for the etymology of this word. Spellbound by the Scandinavian *þulr* on a hill, some students of Old English literature have also attempted to show that Unferth was an exorcist, a wizard, a heathen priest, or even a hypostasis of Wodan (Clarke 1936; Hardy 1969, 60–68; Hardy 1979, 442–43; Baird 1970; Hollowell 1976). This path leads nowhere; one has to twist the clearly narrated facts from *Beowulf* in light of incomprehensible hints in Scandinavian sources. However tempting it may be to try to obtain an all-round picture of the Scandinavian *þulr* and then build a bridge to Unferth, this procedure is unrealistic, for Scandinavian texts contain fragmentary and seemingly contradictory references, while Unferth is a figure in flesh and blood. Our only hope is to characterize the Old English *þyle* and then see whether the type we have reconstructed is compatible with its Scandinavian counterpart.

Since *þyle* is glossed not only *orator* but also *scurra* in Old English, it has been suggested that Unferth is the predecessor of court jesters. Stumpfl (1936, 397) and Welsford (1935, 85–87) had few doubts on this score, but their idea ran counter to the role played by the Scandinavian *þulr* and by Unferth and made no stir until it was revived (or rather advanced for a second time) by Rosier (1962)

and especially Eliason (1963); see also Kabell 1979. In its new form it found several supporters and several critics (among the latter are Ogilvy 1964; Hughes 1977; Bjork 1980).

As is well known, Beowulf promises to fight Grendel, but at the banquet Unferth recounts a story from Beowulf's youth which allegedly proves that Beowulf is obstinate, foolhardy, and not equal to the task he has undertaken. Beowulf parries the accusations and puts Unferth to shame. Later, Unferth appears in the poem a few more times: he observes Grendel's arm and does not say anything in his humiliation, but when Beowulf is getting ready to fight Grendel's mother, Unferth lends him his sword Hrunting, which fails at the decisive moment and after the adventure is returned to its owner.

The main question about the banquet scene is why Unferth attacks Beowulf with impunity. We can dismiss Deutschbein's answer (a þyle, like the Irish *filid*, was so revered that even Hrothgar did not dare interrupt him [1909, 114–15]), for it is not Unferth's impertinence that matters. We have to understand why someone — regardless of his position — should have wished to insult and alienate a potential avenger and savior. Nor was it safe to irritate Beowulf! We are told that Unferth was jealous of Beowulf. He may well have hated the young whippersnapper, and yet who would have allowed him to vent his anger in public? There is only one answer to this question, and it has been clear to many for a long time: Unferth attacked Beowulf because as þyle he was supposed to do so. Everyone, including Beowulf, knew what to expect and how to behave under the circumstances.

A newcomer had to be tested, for the host to find out how dangerous he was and whether he was not an impostor (Britton 1971, 247–48). A visit meant months of living together. Today's guest could become tomorrow's usurper, so some sort of initiation was necessary. Þórr's visit to Útgardaloki's is a classic example. Once he and his companions arrived, they were immediately invited to take part in several contests and were humiliated. The moment Beowulf sets foot in Denmark, he is also made to go through "customs": he is tested by the coastguard, then by Wulfgar, and finally by Unferth. This is what Brennan says on the subject:

Whether Unferth is a fool or a knave or both, or the symbol of some evil force in the cosmos, . . . may be put aside for present purposes. Whatever his personality or symbolic value, his function in the diplomacy is not obscure. As the coastguard had challenged Beowulf to match his deeds to his words, and as Wulfgar had challenged him to observe the niceties of Danish protocol, and as Hrothgar had challenged him to forgo possible claims against the Danish kingdom, and as Wealhtheow will challenge him to defend her children's succession to the throne, so Unferth challenges the hero to defend himself in public disputation. And while this may be . . . a test of his *sapientia* as the coastguard had challenged his *fortitudo*, and while the debate may provide amusement to the court in the form of a *flyting*, it is also an important part of the negotiation in progress. The king is about to make a decision which may jeopardize the kingdom's independent survival; the case *pro* has been made by the petitioner himself and the case *contra* will now be presented by Unferth. (Brennan 1985, 9–10)

It has always been known (though often contested) that the Unferth-Beowulf exchange resembles the Scandinavian *senna* (flyting). Several detailed analyses (especially Clover 1980) have made this idea familiar (cf. Parks 1990). But, as Brennan points out, the banquet scene in *Beowulf*, though a typical case of verbal dueling, is not a *senna*, for its function is different: it is not a prelude to a fight.

From oral tradition the *Beowulf* poet inherited the figure of a professional taunter and the motif of testing the hero. The office of Hrothgar's þyle offered him a unique opportunity to combine the two. Ogilvy (1964, 373), Rosenberg (1969, 57; 1975, 204–5), and Feldman (1979) compared Unferth to a type character (Malvolio), Sir Kay of Arthurian legend, Euryalus at the court of Alcinous in the *Odyssey*, Kent, a rough, outspoken fellow, in *King Lear*, etc. All these men indeed have something in common, but once again, only their function is relevant to us. Sir Kay is the whipping boy of the Arthurian cycle, something like Dr. Watson alongside Sherlock Holmes: Kay's lack of manners and Watson's lack of imagination serve as a foil to the perfect knights and the perfect detective; contrariwise, Unferth is not a foil to Beowulf: he is an indispensable part of the ensemble whose other members are Beowulf, Hrothgar, and Wealhtheow. The formulaic theme of the hero's arrival often contains the following elements: the guest is welcomed by the king, challenged by a retainer, and soothed by the queen (Smits 1986, 29–33, on *Beowulf*). In this respect, too, the þyle stood the *Beowulf* poet in good stead.

"Perhaps," observes Hulbert (1951, 16), "when a stranger had performed his *beot* before the court, it was the business of the thyle to bring up some event in the stranger's past which could be interpreted unfavorably, even though the thyle knew his imputations were untrue, so as to test the stranger's ability to defend himself." On the other hand, Welsford reminds us "that it is sometimes regarded as lucky to be abused, and that in very much later times good English hosts would keep a jester for the purpose of scoffing at his guests" (1935, 87). All this is true, but we need a conception that will allow the numerous observed parallels and motifs to merge.

We have to accept the following. (1) According to *Beowulf*, the king had a special man (þyle), whose duty consisted in challenging visitors. (2) Insulting visitors was part of their "initiation." It was expected and taken seriously. (3) A þyle's position was ambiguous: his services were valued, but he had a thankless job. Worthy guests defended themselves well, and a þyle must often have been worsted, as happened when Unferth attacked Beowulf. He could not help making himself ridiculous, so, in a way, he resembled the *Hofnarr* of the future. Modern scholars shy away from the term *jester*, which conjures up the Fool in *King Lear* and *Rigoletto*. But there is no shaking off the evidence of the gloss *scurra*. Unferth sits at the feet of his master, and that is where he belongs (Vogt 1927, 114; Eliason 1963, 269; Silber 1980, 103). In similar fashion, the trickster combined the traits of a culture hero, who had to learn his skills by trial and error, and a clown, for one's first steps are of necessity awkward. That is why the trickster could be elevated to the rank of a demigod or turn into a buffoon and still later

into the hero of picaresque novels. The glosses *orator* and *scurra* fit the þyle's office perfectly. (4) As early as 1909, Olrik called Müllenhoff's (1891, 288–301) idea about the þyle being a poet like a scop or a skald antiquated (Olrik 1909, 10). But verbal creativity in the epoch of the Edda and *Beowulf* was naturally associated with poetry, and even Vogt admits that there was something in common between the þulr and the composers of *níð* (1927, 58–59, 70). A þyle must have had a “dossier” on all heroes and princes. He was as well informed as any Widsith, but, unlike the singer of tales, he needed the knowledge of comparatively recent events, rather than historical parallels, and in this respect he was closer to the skalds.

In the second part of the poem, Unferth is indistinguishable from the other retainers. The banquet is forgotten not because Unferth was drunk (Beowulf's jibe need not be taken literally; besides, being drunk did not absolve the speaker from responsibility: Einarsson 1934, 978), but because there is nothing to remember: each actor played his part, and a new drama has started. This is another reason Rosier's reconstruction of Unferth's Machiavellian scheming is indefensible; Unferth is not a villain, he is a þyle. The fact that he owns Hrunting should not bother us. As far as we can judge, the plot preserved by the finale of *Reginismál* and especially by *Fáfnismál* reached Anglo-Saxon England in garbled form. The similarity between Regin and Unferth is incontestable (Rosier 1962, 3), but Hrotti/Hrunting must have been in the possession of Sigurðr's, not Regin's counterpart. Attempts have been made to play down the fame of Hrotti/Hrunting (allegedly, *Hrunting* is a cognate of Engl. *runt*), but names were not bestowed on swords to bring out their uselessness. Whatever the reasons Hrunting ended up in Unferth's hands and failed against Grendel's mother, the lending of it to Beowulf tells us nothing about Unferth's office.

A last caveat is in order here. *Beowulf* has been twice analyzed according to Propp's model of the fairy tale (Shippey 1969; Barnes 1970). Both scholars drew the conclusion that Unferth is a kind of magical donor (Shippey 1969, 6–9; Barnes, 1970, 422–24). This idea is wrong. Rosenberg (1975, 202, 204–5) noted a logical mistake in it; it should also be borne in mind that the donor's gift always works, while Hrunting does not. *Beowulf* is an epic poem “composed by theme,” unlike the fairy tale with its rigid structure; consequently, the arrival scene does not prepare for the gift of the sword.

According to Fred Robinson (1974, 130–31), Unferth is “a blustering, mean-spirited coward who does not enjoy the respect of his comrades and who seeks to bolster his self-esteem by decrying Beowulf's past performance and present qualifications.” On the contrary, Unferth is a sharp-witted, well-informed, brave man, whose reputation has spread far and wide, and who performs the difficult task of challenging visitors, provoking their *beot*, and guarding the court of his king against usurpers and impostors. Such is the þyle of Old English epic poetry.

Scandinavian allusions to the þulr can be interpreted in too many ways. By and large, the þulr must have been a close relative of the þyle, even though he had

a special seat (*stóll*), rather than sitting at the feet of the king. He also often made a fool of himself while performing his duty. Especially pathetic was an old þulr: wise but powerless, and *Hávamál* 134.5 enjoins us not to laugh at him. It was not necessary to be a þulr to be called one. *Vafðrúðnir* (*Vafðrúðnismál* 9.6) introduces himself as *inn gamli þulr* (which commands respect!), and Óðinn, the invincible challenger of all his opponents, was a *fimbulþulr* (*Hávamál* 80.5, 142.5), an arch-þulr, so to speak. In *Grímnismál* 27, fourteen rivers are named; only two of the names are compounds: *Fimbulþul* and *Geirvimul*. *Geirvimul* is reminiscent of Óðinn's name *Geirþulnir* (see Vries 1962, s.v. "Geirþulnir" and "vimarr"). Perhaps both rivers were dedicated to Óðinn (the distance between 'stream' and 'man' was short, as evidenced by *vimarr*). *Fimbulþul* could have been an especially mighty or dangerous, or treacherous river (certainly not 'a roaring river', for *þylja* meant 'murmur, mumble'). The literal meaning of *þylja* was to 'speak like a þulr' or 'compose þulur' (a special type of mnemonic poetry); cf. the verb *skálda*.

An admired orator, a despised taunter, a feared character assassin, a repository of obscure gossip — the þulr was all of this and much more, but never a wizard or officiating priest (*Kultredner*) and hardly ever an evil counselor. The use of the word *þulr* in everyday life is attested to by the "Víkarsbálkr" of *Gautreks saga*. Starkaðr did not want to sacrifice King Víkarr to Óðinn, but was duped into doing it. His reward was the derogatory title (almost a nickname) *þogull þulr* 'mute þulr'. This alliterative phrase of the *sartor resartus* type does not mean that Starkaðr was a þulr: it was coined or used as an insult and can be glossed 'the defeated'. Vogt called the phrase *þogull þulr* an oxymoron (1927, 45), and indeed 'mute þulr' is like 'wingless bird' or 'declawed tiger', the most miserable creature one can imagine (cf. Hollowell 1976, 244).

Unferth challenged Beowulf and played his part as best he could, but some time earlier, when Grendel arrived, Unferth had kept mum. Beowulf's gibe ("if you had been as brave with Grendel as you are now with me") probably hurt more than we can realize (cf. Britton 1971, 249). No one was able to resist Grendel, but Grendel appeared as a visitor and an *ellengæst* 'valorous guest', and Unferth had to test him. He missed his chance, and now he is a mute þyle ("Ðā wæs swīgra secg, sunu Ec[g]lāfes" [980]). *Swīge secg* is a less pointed phrase than *þogull þulr*, but its idea is the same. (The comparison of Starkaðr after the sacrifice and Unferth at the sight of Grendel's severed arm has often been made.) When Þórr and Loki bandy words in *Lokasenna*, each of them begins his speech with *þegi þú* (other verbal duelers do the same). We are apt to understand these words as 'shut up', and this is what they mean, but within the framework of a *senna* they carry additional connotations: he wins in a flyting who silences his opponent (Harris 1979, 69, 73n15).

Nothing definite is known about the etymology of *þulr/þyle*. Both words belong to the same strong declension (*i*-stem; no umlaut in Old Icelandic because the root is short). The noun **þuliz* must have been old, and one can expect related

forms outside Germanic. But even in Germanic the few putative cognates are of little interest. Although OE *þula* could in some exceptional situations refer to any poem (cf. *Rígsþula*), a usual *þula* was a versified list of names, that is, something mechanical and composed for memorization, not for pleasure. If Mod. Icel. *þaul* and *þauli* ‘difficult situation’ are also related to *þulr*, as Persson seems to have thought (1915, 216), it is characteristic that all the compounds beginning with *þaul-* designate laborious tasks, solid enterprises, and the like. The genre of the *þula* accords well with the idea implied by *þaul-*.

The earliest etymology of *þulr* (or rather of *þyle*) was offered by Schlutter (1896, 87). He connected OE *þyle* and OE *þel* ‘board, platform’ and suggested that a *þyle* was, from a historical perspective, an orator who used the platform for his appearance. The author of the next conjecture, Francis A. Wood (1899, 267; 1919, 246; 1927, 324–25), traced *þyle/þulr* to the Indo-European root **tuel-* ‘swell’ and compared *þyle* to OE *geþyll* ‘breeze’ (an obscure word from a gloss). Loewental (1919, 236) cited Lat. *tumeo* ‘(I) swell’ and *tullii* ‘violent hemorrhages’; *þulr* emerged from these efforts as the producer of ‘a torrent of words’. Torp, too, thought of a *þulr* as a vehement speaker, for he derived *þulr/þyle* from the root **tus* ‘rage’ (1909, 188). Torp could have been influenced by the idea of Óðinn, the “furious” god of poetry. Loewental also mentioned Russ. *toloka* ‘work done by a group of peasants, thrashing floor, pasture’ (stress on the second *o* or *a*) and its Baltic cognates, allegedly from ‘swell’. Seeing that *þylja* meant ‘whisper’, it is hard to imagine *þulr* as having anything to do with Wood’s “swelling” or Loewental’s “Wortschwall.” Latvian *tulúotiēs* ‘procrastinate; chatter’, suggested as a cognate by Alexander Jóhannesson (1956, 450–51), is too remote but closer to ‘murmur’.

Blankenstein (1908–9, 134) explained *þulr* in light of Church Slavonic *tlkovati* ‘interpret’. This explanation was supported by Olrik (1909, 10n3), Vogt (1927, 27), and Jan de Vries (1962, 626), who called it the best as regards meaning; it certainly fits the idea of *þulr* ‘interpreter of magic’, but not that of a challenger, taunter, or orator. Also, the fact that Old Icelandic borrowed the word *tulkr* ‘interpreter’ (cf. Swed. *tolka*; Norw., Dan. *tolke*) from Baltic or Slavic seems to indicate that the Scandinavians did not have cognates of this word. Trier gives no references to his predecessors (1944–45, 118–19). Perhaps he was unaware of their hypotheses, but he combined several elements of the former etymologies. He compared *þulr* to OE *þil* (= OE *þel* ‘board’) and both of them to Russ. *toloka* and to other Baltic and Slavic related words. For Trier *þil/þel* was both a stage (*Gerüst*) and a territory fenced in (*Gehege*), and *þulr* a speaker belonging to a strictly defined group.

In 1987 I began working on a new etymological dictionary of Modern English (see, for example, Liberman 1991 and 1994b). One of the lessons I have learned from sifting countless conjectures, some of them fanciful, others reasonable, still others brilliant, even if not always persuasive, is that scholars tend to

promote their solutions in disregard of those advanced by their predecessors. But a good etymology should not only contain a clever idea; it must make the other etymologies redundant. I am unable to offer a convincing etymology of *þulr* (just as I was unable to solve the *Edda* crux), but I find it useful to clear away heaps of respectable-looking rubbish. If we, however reluctantly, agree that the existing etymologies of *Edda* and *þulr/þyle* are wrong, we will stop referring to them, as we have stopped referring to Horne Tooke and Noah Webster's 1828 dictionary.

Chance comparisons — with OI *þil* (OE *þel*), Lat. *tullii*, Russ. *toloka* (assuming they are acceptable philologically), and the like — because we need an Indo-European root **tel-/*tol-* — will not make the derivation of *þulr* clearer. Only two ways are open to us. We should either look for the answer in archaic religious vocabulary or in medieval slang. The first way has been chosen by Polomé (1975, 661–62). In his view, the *þulr* fulfilled the “role of oral performer of the cult, mediating between men and gods . . . Described as sitting on a hill, pronouncing mysterious words, he must have communicated with the deity by means of special prayer formulas.” If this is what the *þulr* did, *þulr* can perhaps represent the zero grade of the root preserved by Hittite *talliia*, a verb possibly meaning ‘solemnly call upon the god (to do something)’ (this is Polomé's etymology). But the evidence for identifying the *þulr* and the priest is wanting. The word that will illuminate the prehistory of *þulr* (if it ever happens to be found) will rather mean ‘mock’, or ‘folly’. Even Lat. *stolidus* and *stultus* ‘obtuse, foolish, stupid’ provide better clues to **þuliz* than Church Slavonic *tlkovati* or Hittite *talliia*.

Recently, some attention has been expended on the name *Unferð*. Perhaps *Hunferð* is the correct form after all, and the time-honored emendation *Hunferð* to *Unferð*, introduced to save the vocalic alliteration in all four cases in which *Hunferð* occurs and to turn him into a legitimate son of Ecglafr, was unnecessary. It is also possible that *-ferð* goes back to *-ferhð*, but even if we could solve these problems, little progress would be made in the search for the etymology of **þuliz*, for there is no reason to believe that Hrothgar's *þyle* had a telling name like *Alvíss*, *Malvolio*, or *Barnacle* (see especially Vaughan 1976). Fred Robinson's (1970) gloss on *Unferð* ‘Un-intelligence’ or ‘Folly’ suits my ideas about **þuliz*. However, the match would be too good to be true: the *Beowulf* poet could not have known the etymology of *þyle*, and he did not consider *Unferth* stupid. Nor was any of the Scandinavian *þulir* a fool.

Etymology keeps pointing to the humble antecedents of all Germanic word-smiths. The scop started as a scoffer, the skald as a scolder (though the second case is less obvious). The **þuliz* was like them. He did not mount a platform (OE *þel*, OI *þil*) to pour out his invective, he did not interpret anything or call upon the gods. The name given him was low slang (like *mimus*, *scurra*, and so forth). It is no wonder we are at a loss when we attempt to trace its origin: we are seldom successful even in trying to guess the origin of our own colloquial and vulgar words.

3. Loki and His Mother Laufey

Some time ago, I published a long essay on Loki and Útgardaloki (Lieberman 1992b). Half of it is devoted to the origin of Loki's name. Here I would only like to call the attention of those interested in such matters to my conclusions. I believe that Loki was originally a chthonian deity and that his name meant 'enclosure' (from *lúka* 'close, lock up, bolt'). Germ. *Loch* and OE *loc(a)* 'enclosure' are cognates of *Loki*. This etymology and the comparison of Loki to Grendel (whose name can also be understood as 'bolt, latch') goes back to Jacob Grimm, and there would be no virtue in repeating it if Loki's name were not used for multifarious fantasies on Indo-European themes. Two of them will suffice as examples. Carnoy (1955, 51, s.v. 'Ὀδυσσεύς') compares Loki and Odysseus, for alongside 'Ὀδυσσεύς, 'Ὀλυσσεύς (the source of Ulysses) exists. The two characters are said to share the root **leuk-* 'light, brilliance' or **leugh-* 'lie, deceive'. A partial inspiration for this idea must have been Walde 1927–32, 2:410 (the same in Walde 1938–54, 1:824; cf. Pokorny 1959, 686). Knobloch (1974) returns to the old etymology of *Loki* < **wlq^w-ānos* and compares his name to *Volcānus* and Ossetic *Kurd-Alæ-Wærgon* 'lux/lupus'. The Ossetic connection may owe its existence to Dumézil's attempt to represent Loki as Syrdon's counterpart. It is a matter of some importance to discredit such speculations.

If Loki started his career as a chthonian deity, his ties to his father Farbauti 'dangerous striker' (a kenning for death) and his children Hel, the goddess of the underworld, and Fenrir, the main enemy of cosmic order, must have been old, which also explains the names of his mother: *Laufey* and *Nál*. *Laufey* 'leafy island' is simply 'earth', and, in a way, so is *Nál*. **Náley* would be an almost exact doublet of *Barrey* (in the *Younger Edda* [Jónsson 1931, 41, line 15]), the place ("grove") where Gerðr promised to meet Freyr (*Barri* in *For Scírnis* 39 and 41 [Neckel and Kuhn 1983, 77]). The compound *Nálgrund* existed, and, curiously enough, in Modern Icelandic *nál* means both 'needle' and 'bud'. There is probably no reason to refer *Nál* to *nár* 'corpse', for it would be more natural if *Laufey* and *Nál* were synonyms.

4. Óðinn's son Víðarr

Víðarr, a silent god, whose only function was to avenge Óðinn, that is, to be his father's son, lived in a wooded tract overgrown with shrubs and tall grass (*Grímnismál* 17), but *viðr* 'wood; tree' has a short vowel, while in *Víðarr* the vowel is long. Since it is hard to imagine that the names of a god and his abode should be related by ablaut, *Víðarr* cannot mean 'the lord of the woods', though the later mythologists connected *Víðarr* and *viðr*, as evidenced by *Grímnismál*. Nor does this exercise in folk etymology explain Víðarr's role (the Scandinavian pantheon lacked Pan's counterpart, and in Iceland the deities of "the dark forest" would have been soon forgotten; even in fairy tales Icelanders are lost in the fog,

not in the wood). Attempts to connect *Víðarr* and *víðr* ‘wide’ have also failed to yield a satisfactory meaning.

The best solution would be to explain *Víðarr* as ‘offshoot, offspring’, and there is a way to arrive at such an etymology. Very early in its history, Germanic developed the syncretism ‘child’/‘wood’. Compare, for example, Engl. *chit* ‘young of a beast, very young person’ (as in *chit of a child*, *chit of a girl*, and the like) and ‘potato shoot’ recorded in the seventeenth century on the one hand and OE *cīþ* ‘shoot, sprout, seed, mote in the eye’ on the other; Germ. *Kind* ‘child’ and Old Saxon *cīthlêk* ‘tax on bundles of wood’. The association could have been from ‘offshoot’ to ‘child’, as in *imp*, *scion*, *stripling*, *slip*, or from ‘chip off an old block’, or even from ‘stub, stump’ (something formless, “swollen”) to ‘child’. In studying the history of German words for ‘boy, lad’, one constantly runs into nouns designating ‘peg, stump, bundle’, etc. (see the etymology of *Bengel*, *Knabe*, *Knecht*, *Knirps*, and *Striezel* in etymological dictionaries). The most complete list of such words can be found in Much 1909. In the Scandinavian picture of the world, the descent of human beings from trees (Askr and Embla) finds the well-known complement in skaldic kennings for ‘man’ and ‘woman’. Outside Germania, the Pinocchio myth points in the same direction.

In light of these facts, it seems that Kauffmann (1894, 168n1) was right when he compared *Víðarr* and *víðir* ‘willow’, though one can dispense with his **víðagaizaz* ‘willow branch’. Jan de Vries (1962, s.v.) calls Kauffmann’s etymology of *Víðarr* the least convincing of all. Perhaps this harsh verdict can be mitigated. One can ask, why *Víðarr* from *víðir*? Why precisely ‘willow’? And why Askr ‘ash’? Why Embla (possibly ‘elm’)? (See Liberman 1992a, 78–79.)

5. The Gifts of the Gods (*Vǫlospá* 18)

Three gods make Askr and Embla human: Óðinn, Hœnir and Lóðurr. Each of them could have been expected to have given the first human beings the property for which he is “responsible”: thus, in the Greek counterpart of this tale Athena would have endowed her protégé with wisdom, Aphrodite with the power to attract women, and so forth. But nothing is known about Hœnir and Lóðurr, so we cannot guess what wonders they worked. The gods gave Askr and Embla *ǫnd* (all these nouns will be cited in the accusative, as in the text), which can be understood as ‘breath’, *óð* ‘spirit’ or ‘speech’, which probably came from Óðinn, *lá*, and *lito góða*.

In the first half of strophe 18, it is said that “*ǫnd þau* [that is, Askr and Embla] *né áttu, óð þau né hǫfðu, lá né læti né lito góða*”; then “*ǫnd gaf Óðinn, óð gaf Hœnir, lá gaf Lóðurr oc lito góða*” (Neckel and Kuhn 1983, 5). *Læti* dropped out of the catalog; perhaps it was a synonym of *lá*. *Læti* is usually explained as the ability to move (it can also mean ‘voice’), while *lá* is glossed as either ‘warmth’ or ‘life’s color’. *Lito* (pl.) seems to pose no problems, for *litr* (cf. Gothic *wlits*, Old Saxon *wliti*) is ‘color’ and, by association, ‘human appearance’. Although the most

obscure of these words is *lá* (blood?), it may be that *lito góða* has also been misinterpreted.

The gods took care of people's ability to breathe, move, and speak, they gave them blood and human features, but they seem to have forgotten to supply Ask and Embla with a reproductive system. All the relevant nouns in *Vǫluspá* 18 begin with *l*. The creation myth in the form it has reached us must have been fairly old, and if the text is not corrupt, *lito* 'color(s)' is a wrong word: since its *l*- goes back to *wl*-, *lito* could not be an original member of the alliterating series. Either *lito* found its way into the strophe after *wl*->*l*- or it does not mean 'color(s)'.

In the Elder Edda, there is one more baffling occurrence of the word *litr*. While teasing Þórr, Óðinn says that Sif, Þórr's wife, entertains a lover in her husband's absence and adds, "langt myndir þú nú kominn, Þórr, ef þú litom færir" (*Hárbarðzlióð* 50.3–4; Neckel and Kuhn 1983, 86). The beginning is clear ("You would have been far along, Thor, if you"), but *litom færir* makes no sense. However, the line needs no emendation; as Sophus Bugge noted long ago, the same enigmatic phrase occurs in *Bergbúaþáttur*, in which a giant says, "ferk opt litom þopta," which may mean "I often row [=travel by means of oars in boats]" (this passage is reproduced in most annotated editions of the Edda). In the giant's line, *litom* (dat. pl.) seems to designate 'oar'. If this is correct, the end of Óðinn's speech should be understood "if you applied your oars," with an allusion to 'penis' ('oar'): "you would have been right in it if you had worked with your oar(s)" (as Sif's lover is now doing). The nonscurrilous meaning of Óðinn's remark is unlikely, for his taunt must be offensive. It is not improbable that inscription no. 9 of Maeshowe contains the same obscenity, with *lut*- being the main word (Lieberman 1995, 265). In Old Norse, there could have been the *l-t* (*lit*-/*lut*-) root meaning 'peg, stump, oar, penis'. Such roots (*k-b*, *r-b*, and the like) were most common, and vowels alternated freely in them. See also section 8, below.

Equally changeable were their final consonants. The complex *l-t* had a doublet *l-d*. In the Old Saxon *Heliand*, Zacharias, after having heard the prophesy, says about himself and Elisabeth, "is unca lud giliðen, lîk gidrusnod," apparently, "our time for having children is gone, our bodies are withered" (Behaghel and Mitzka 1958, 9, line 154). The context is unambiguous, but *lud* is a ἄπαξ λεγόμενον. It is usually glossed 'form, figure' or 'bodily strength' and referred to the root **leudh*- 'grow'. Rauch (1975) examined all the literature on *lud* and came to the conclusion that this word means 'sexual power', which is possible, though if *lud* is related to Norw., Swed. *ladd*/*lodd* and OI *lodda*/*lodd*- (see below), the meaning can be 'youth', that is, the time when one is still a *ladd* and a *lodda*. She also cited Scottish *lud* 'buttocks' (perhaps a short form of *luddock*). In Murray et al. 1989, *luddock* is glossed 'the loin, or the buttock'. *Buttock* is the sum of *butt* 'thicker end, esp. of a tool or a weapon; trunk of a tree, esp. the part just above the ground, etc.' (the definitions are from Fowler and Fowler 1990, 152) + the suffix *-ock*. I assume that *lud(d)* at one time also meant 'thicker end; tree trunk' and so forth, including 'penis'.

Still another possible candidate for membership in the *l-t/l-d* groups is Norw. *-ladd*, mentioned above. *Ladd* means ‘thick sock worn over another sock or stocking’, but in *tusseladd* ‘gnome’ and *askeladd* (*Askeladden*) ‘Boots’ (in fairy tales) the second component should be glossed ‘fellow’ or ‘boy’. According to Falk and Torp 1910–11, Engl. *lad* is the same word (a borrowing). A close parallel (‘sock’/‘child’) is provided by German *Strumpf*, originally ‘stump’, later ‘trouser leg’ and still later ‘stocking’, and Engl. dial. *strumpet* ‘fat, hearty child’; the reference to ‘woman’ is also common: alongside Engl. *strumpet* ‘whore’, we find seventeenth-century Icel. *strympa*, which denotes all kinds of (mainly tall) receptacles (‘dipper, pointed hat, bucket, building with a cone-shaped roof’) and ‘virago, big woman’ (Magnússon 1989: the more modern variant of *strympa* is *strumpa*; see Liberman 1992a, 87–91). OI *lodda* ‘woman’ and, most probably, *lodd-* in *Lodd-fáfnir* cannot be separated from Norw. *-ladd*.

Norw. and Swed. dial. *ladd* also displays the alternation *a/o* (*ladd/lodd*) typical of such words. In Falk and Torp 1910–11, *ladd/lodd* are tentatively derived from Celtic, but I wonder whether we are not dealing with another synonym for ‘stump, peg, (oar, shaft, etc.)’ and ‘penis’. Wright (1898–1905, 3:496, s.v. “lad sb.3”) mentions a Yorkshire word *lad* ‘the upright bar of an old-fashioned spinning-wheel, which turns the wheel; a stay for timber work; a back stay for corves or wagons’. The first step would be from ‘stump, peg’ to anything short and upright (the range is wide, cf. ‘trouser leg’). The meaning ‘penis’ would develop easily in such words, and somewhere along the way ‘sexual power’ could have been added. One and the same word often has (and had in the past) an abstract and a concrete meaning: cf. OE *gebyrd* ‘birth’ and ‘offspring’, MHG *gemacht* (and *gemehte*) ‘might’ and ‘penis, genitalia’, etc.

The history of the French source of Engl. *harlot* is unknown, but if it is *har-lot*, rather than *harl-ot*, and if it was indeed borrowed by Old French from Germanic before it returned to Middle English, this compound can be glossed ‘army fellow’ (*har-* = Germ. *Heer*). Cf. also ME *kikelot* ‘tattling woman’, *gig(e)lot* ‘wanton woman’, etc. (see Murray et al. 1989, s.v. “giglet, giglot”). The meanings ‘vagabond, itinerant jester’ precede ‘prostitute’. *Lot* could have been one more of the *l-d/l-t* words for ‘stump’ and ‘young person’. All this is too speculative to form the foundation for a solid etymology, but it is curious how many impenetrable words in Germanic cluster around the *l-d/l-t* root: *litr*, *læti*, *lut*; *-lot*; *lud*; *ladd*, and its variant *lodd*.

6. Icel. *glenna* ‘opening; joke; woman’; New Norw. *glensa* ‘glide precipitously; joke’; Dan. dial. *glente*, *glinte* ‘woman’

How can a group of closely related words combine the meanings ‘opening (= open space)’, ‘joke’, ‘glide’, and ‘woman’? Some of them coexist within the bounds of one and the same word. It will be useful to start from afar, namely, with the

history of the English verb *glide* (Germ. *gleiten*). This verb was originally present only in West Germanic (Swed. *glida*, Norw. *gli*, and Dan. *glide* are borrowings), but Scand. **glīða* seems to have existed. In Old English, the kite (a bird) was called *glida*, and in Old Icelandic *gleða*. The usual explanation is: ‘kite’= ‘gliding, soaring bird’ (cf. Connolly 1984, 273, sec. 4.1). OI *gleiðr* ‘with one’s legs wide apart’ represents the same grade of ablaut as OE *a-glādan* ‘make glide’. In Modern English, *glad* reminds one of ‘joke’, but ‘pleased’ is not the oldest meaning of this adjective. Germ. *glatt*, Lat. *glaber*, Russ. *gladkij*, etc., all point to ‘smooth’. Since the principal meaning of numerous Germanic *gl-* words is ‘light’ (from IE **ghlei-*), *glad* could have been coined with the sense ‘shining’; hence ‘pleased’ (the sheen itself was probably associated with smooth surfaces). The semantic bundle ‘opening-joke-glide-woman’ is a Scandinavian phenomenon without parallels in West Germanic.

In reconstructing the origin of this bundle, the most important thing is to find a correct point of departure. The etymology of *glīdan*/**glīða* has not been ascertained, but the old idea (one finds it in Murray et al. 1989, s.v. “glide”) that *glide* experienced the influence of *slide* deserves support. In the remote past, *glīdan*/**glīða* probably designated quick, precipitous movement, like Norw. *glensa* and its synonym *glanta*, but with a still stronger emphasis on quickness. If this is true, the kite (in Old English and Icelandic: *glida*/*gleða*) is not a ‘soaring bird’, but a ‘bird swooping down on its prey’, and *gleiðr* refers to the legs of a runner or a jumper. I assume that all these verbs (*glīdan*/*glīða* and *glensa*/*glanta*) meant, among other things, ‘jump’ and possibly ‘dance’; cf. Germ. *springen* ‘jump’ and Old French *espranguier* ‘dance’, borrowed from Germanic (Stumpfl 1936, 123n52).

This reconstructed meaning of *glensa*/*glanta* will lead us to ‘joke’. Originally, fun was not synonymous with wit (see my discussion in Liberman 1994a). That is why it is so hard to accept the current etymology of Lat. *jokus* ‘joke’ (OI *já* ‘agree, confess’, OHG *jehan* ‘say’, OInd. *jācati* ‘[he] pleads, begs’), while the etymology of Germ. *Scherz* (MHG *scherzen* ‘jump merrily, have a good time’, OHG *scharz* and *schurz* ‘jump’, noun) is fully acceptable; and cf. OI *skopa* ‘mock’ and ‘jump’: the common denominator of gambols, buffoonery, mockery, etc., was ‘having a good time, amusement’ or ‘joke’. Norw. *glensa* *‘jump, dance’ is then related to *glensa* ‘joke’ as MHG *scherzen* to Mod. Germ. *Scherz*.

The next two steps will be more difficult. With some trepidation, I approach the barrier beyond which Jost Trier’s reign begins; cf. his work called “Spiel” (Trier 1947). Usually I prefer to admire his etymologies from a distance. There existed special fields, or enclosures, designated for games and entertainment, the prototypes of our stadiums. It is such fields that must have been called *glenna*. I believe that *glenna* meant ‘open space, valley’ (especially in place-names) and ‘joke’ because people enjoyed themselves in *glennor*. But the path from ‘jump’ to ‘open space’ could have been via ‘space between a jumper’s legs’ (Andrew Sihler, personal communication). Fritzner, the only scholar who gave this word some

thought, connected the two meanings, indeed with great caution, via such compounds as *leikvangr* and *leikvollr* ‘playground’ (Fritzner [1883–96] 1954, 1:610, s.v. “glenna”). Later, *glenna* ‘enclosure, field for entertainment’ expanded its semantic range. It began to be used about light spaces between clouds and the woman’s genitals. Whenever *glenna*, *glente*, etc., means ‘woman’, the reference is always to a coquette. *Glenna* ‘woman’ could have developed only from opprobrious or depreciating usage. Snorri’s word *glyðra* ‘featherbrained woman’ may have a comparable etymology. Thus we have ‘move quickly, jump, glide’ > ‘joke, jest, pranks’ > ‘place designated for public amusements, for example, edge of the forest, clearing’ > ‘open space in general, including patches of blue sky’ > ‘vulva’ > ‘featherbrained woman, coquette’.

This may seem a fanciful reconstruction, but nearly the same bundle ‘move quickly, joke; open field; vulva’ exists in Slavic, and the parallel is so striking that it is hard to think of a chance coincidence. The Russian noun *šut* means ‘clown, buffoon’, from which *šutka* ‘joke, jest’ (*šut-k-a*) was derived (unless *šut* is a back formation from *šutka*). Bulgarian dial. *šutka* is glossed ‘vulva’, an incomprehensible meaning to someone who comes to Bulgarian from Russian; it seems that *šutka* ‘vulva’ is equally puzzling to a speaker of Standard Bulgarian, for Mladenov” (1941, 696, s.v. шУТКА) tried to find a special etymology for it and compared it to Lat. *caverna*, etc., from *(s)keu- ‘hollow’. Slovenian *šutec* ‘madman, fool’ and Old Polish *szut* ‘clown, buffoon’ belong to the same group. The Common Slavic root is believed to be *sjut* < **sjetos* < IE **seu-t-*, from **seu-* ‘seethe, boil, make precipitous movements’; cf. Lith. *siaũsti* ‘rave, rage; play, play pranks’, *siũst* ‘make a noise’, and so on (Pokorny 1959, 914–15). Russ. *šustrj* ‘quick, artful’ is possibly related to *šut*, etc. (Vasmer 1953–58, 3:439–40, s.v. шУСТРЫЙ; Černyx 1993, s.v.). In Balto-Slavic, the development from ‘quick, violent movement’ to ‘pranks, joke’ is fairly straightforward.

Next appear Pol. *oszust* ‘cheat (sb.), swindler’ and *oszustac* ‘deceive’, Church Slavonic *ašutъ* ‘in vain’, Russ. dial. *šutëm* (that is, *šutjóm*) ‘fallow field’ and *šutyj* ‘hornless’. Vasmer doubts that any of these are related to *šut*, but they probably are. Kalima (1927, 50–51, and especially 1950, 415–17) believed that *šutka* ‘joke’, *ošutъ* ‘in vain’, and *šutyj* ‘hornless’ share the feature ‘spoiled’ and compared Finnish *pilu* ‘joke’ and *pilata* ‘spoil’. But a piece of uncultivated land, a fallow (*šutëm*) is not ‘spoiled’: it is ‘bare, empty’ or ‘unused’. In Jakobson’s opinion (1959, 276), ‘fallow field’, ‘vulva’, ‘in vain’, ‘hornless’, and ‘joke’ all have the connotation of ‘vacuum’. He lays stress on ‘joke’ being devoid of serious purport. But silliness is never the etymological meaning of old words for ‘joke, jest’, and it is undesirable to separate *šutka* from the Baltic verbs of violent movement listed above. Once again we end up with the following sequence: ‘move quickly, (rave)’ > ‘joke, jest’ > ‘open space’ (‘fallow field’, ‘vulva’, ‘hornless’, and many figurative meanings, such as ‘cheat, swindler; in vain’).

Only along this path can we account for *all* the members of the bundle discussed here. The other explanations leave something out. The easiest approach to

glenna would be from the root **ghlei-* ‘light, brilliance’; Engl. *clearing* and Germ. *Lichtung* are spaces of light in a dark forest. From ‘opening’ we easily get to ‘blue sky’ and ‘vulva/woman’. But what shall we do with ‘joke’ and ‘glide, (move) quickly’? Falk (1925, 118) noted that the connection between Swed. *glida* ‘glide’ and OI *gleiðr* ‘with legs wide apart’, which seemed natural to Hellquist, is not obvious, and indeed it is not: OE *a-glædan* is the causative of *glīdan*, but is a person with legs apart or standing astraddle “made to glide”? According to Falk, the connotation ‘open’ can be traced either to ‘light space’ or ‘glide from one another’. ‘Gliding from one another’ and thus creating some distance is an odd concept. *Glide* ‘move quickly’ (not ‘slide’!) can perhaps be connected with **ghlei-*; cf. the phrases “quick as lightning,” “with the speed of lightning,” and so forth.

It is rarely discussed how *glen-s*, *glen-n-a*, *glen-t-e*, etc., are interrelated. Why, for example, does *glens* mean ‘joke’ but not ‘opening’ or ‘woman’? Why does Norw. *glenne* not mean ‘joke’ or ‘woman’, while Icel. *glenna* has all these meaning (in addition to ‘opening’)? What exactly are *-s*, *-n*, and *-t* appended to *glen-*? Hellquist, who devoted a long article to such words (1898), treated them like the analogous examples from the reconstructed Indo-European: he posited certain roots and listed “extensions” (= suffixes). This may be the only rational approach to similar-sounding and apparently related words, but the picture that emerges from Hellquist’s analysis is one of largely unpredictable alternations of vowels and consonants. Language creativity breaks loose from the pages of Brugmann’s *Grundriß* and becomes a fact of everyday life. At one time, I traced the history of some *fl-* words in Germanic (Lieberman 1990); it is as intricate as the history of the words beginning with *gl-*. One moves (glides) from item to item trying not to deviate too far from the initial phonetic nucleus and not to build flimsy semantic bridges. To present an unbiased picture of the state of the art, I will quote the entry on *glenna* in *Íslensk orðsifjabók*:

glenna f. ‘rift, perineum, blue sky between clouds; grimace; trick, a movement in Icelandic wrestling; featherbrained woman, coquette; a great quantity of something’; **glenna** v. ‘open, stretch asunder; stride, walk with long steps; make mouths, rear up; clear up (about weather), brighten (about the sky)’. Cf. Faroese *glenna* ‘stare with a grin’, New Norw. *glenne* f. ‘the edge of the forest, blue sky between clouds’, *glenna* v. ‘have blanks, gaps; start running, etc.’, Swed. dial. *glänna* ‘blue sky between clouds, clearing in the forest’, *glänna* v. ‘gape, etc.’, *glännas* ‘be in the habit of biting (about horses)’, Dan. dial. *glenne* ‘clear up’ (with most of the clouds dispersed). The original meaning ‘brilliance, sheen > light spot (in the forest and in the air) > rift, blank’, etc. See also *glan* ‘brilliance’, *glanni* ‘foolhardy man, prankster’, *glensa* ‘play a trick on someone’. (Magnússon 1989, 254; my translation)

Almost the same information can be found in Vries 1962. The main difference is that ‘coquette’ is not mentioned (it appears only among the Danish cognates), and the semantic history is reconstructed so: the meaning ‘to joke’ < ‘to be open’ goes back to the mocking expression of ‘a half-open mouth’, with reference to Hellquist 1898, 23. Actually, Hellquist does not offer this reconstruction.

Magnússon 1989 and Vries 1962 obviate the main difficulties by ignoring the related verbs for “glide,” though Jan de Vries mentions them among the cognates. As regards *glenna* ‘brilliance’ and *glanni* ‘foolhardy man, prankster’, Magnússon 1989, s.v. “glanni,” says the following: “The original meaning of the root was ‘brighten up, shine’, whence such later meanings as ‘to be smooth, run, stare, joke, grin’.” On the evidence of Germ. *glatt*/Lat. *glaber*/Russ. *gladkij* ‘smooth’ versus Engl. *glad*/Icel. *glað(u)r* ‘pleased, expressing joy’, it is believed that the sequence was ‘smooth’ > ‘shining’ > ‘beaming with joy’ (see above), so even the step from ‘shining, happy’ to ‘smooth’ needs additional proof. One can imagine that ‘shine’ developed into ‘look’, then ‘look intently’ (= ‘stare’) and even ‘grin’ (as a matter of fact, *grin* and several other *gr-* words designating a smile go back to showing one’s teeth, so to ‘opening’), but how could ‘run’ and ‘play tricks’ evolve from ‘shine’? It seems that unless we begin with ‘move quickly’, we will never unravel this clew.

Finally, the relations between OI *glenna* and Irish *glenn*, Welsh *glean*, etc. ‘valley’ have to be explained. Strangely enough, not a single Scandinavian etymological dictionary touches on this problem. It may be that *glenna* ‘open space’ is a borrowing from Celtic; then the construction erected with such ingenuity from native (Scandinavian) elements will collapse. Engl. *glen* ‘mountain valley, usually narrow and forming the course of a stream’ reached England from Scotland (Murray et al. 1989). It was first recorded in 1489 and is mainly remembered because it occurs in numerous place-names (cf. *Glen More*, *Glen Albyn* = *Great Glen of Scotland*, *Glencoe*, *Glendale*, and so forth). The meanings of *glenn*, *glean*, etc., are ‘valley; brink, edge, slope, shore, river bank’. The word is old in Celtic; in Old Irish, it turned up in all case forms (*glenn*, *glinne*, *glinnib*; *s*-stem: Thurneysen 1909, sec. 337). For the meanings of *glenna* in Icelandic see the entry in Magnússon 1989 quoted above. The evidence from modern Norwegian dialects adds nothing new: ‘clearing, glade, grassy patch between the wood and the cliffs’ (Aasen 1873, 227, s.v. “glenna”). Incidentally, Aasen is the only scholar who mentions Engl. *glen* in a Scandinavian dictionary.

Despite the antiquity of the Irish word, its etymology is unknown, and it is isolated in Celtic. Stokes (1894, 120) compares *glenn* and MHG *klinnen*, Swiss *klänen* ‘climb’, OI *klunna* ‘cling to’; this is an etymology born of despair. *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru* (Thomas et al. 1950–, 2:1399, s.v. “glan”) only reconstructs Celtic **glanno-*, without giving any arguments. MacBain (1911, s.v. “gleann”) repeats Stokes and adds OI *gil* ‘ravine’ with a question mark, but in *gil*, *l* is an extension (the Indo-European root is **ghēi-* ‘gape’; cf. Behre 1944–45, 274–75). Since I am not a Celticist and not versed in special literature (perhaps the derivation of *glenn* has been solved, without my being aware of this fact), I can only juxtapose the following circumstances.

(1) It is rather improbable that the Celtic and the Scandinavian words should be unrelated. Phonetically they are extremely close, and the meanings ‘valley’ and

‘open space’ are not irreconcilable. It is also characteristic that in both groups of languages *glenn* / *glenna* regularly occur in compound place-names. (2) In Scandinavian, *glenna* has numerous ties to words formed from the same root with the help of other ancient suffixes (*s*, *t*) and sometimes displaying another grade of ablaut (*glanni*, *glanta*), unless *e* is the umlaut of *a*, a conclusion suggested by Celtic *glanno*. All the meanings of *glenna* can be traced to a word designating quick movement, and *glenna* ‘open space’ is only one link in a long process of development. In Celtic, *glenn* is isolated, and its cognates outside Celtic have not been discovered.

It seems reasonable to conclude that Celtic borrowed this word from North Germanic. The borrowing must have taken place early enough for the noun to be assigned to the *s*-stem and spread to all the Celtic languages. If this conclusion is correct, the history of Scandinavian *glenna* / *glens* / *glente*, etc., can be described without regard to its counterpart in Celtic.

7. (O)I *glíma* ‘wrestling’

Two ways have been tried in reconstructing the history of *glíma*. Every time a Germanic word begins with *bn-*, *br-*, *bl-*, *gn-*, *gl-*, *gr-*, it may happen that we are dealing with a reduced prefix, as in Germ. *bleiben* and *glauben*. This approach has been used even in Gothic, but *bnauan* ‘rub apart’ (< **binauan*?) still lacks definite etymology. Old Norse lost the prefixes so characteristic of the other Old Germanic languages, and it is seldom clear whether we are justified in looking on Scand. *g-* as a possible remnant of **ga-*. In 1895, Elis Wadstein analyzed a great number of Scandinavian words beginning with *g-* and suggested that their *g-* did not belong to the root, but *glíma* was not among them.

Conjectures along these lines have been made before and after Wadstein (Fick 1873, 1–2 [*gneistr*, *grennir*]; Bugge 1885, 212–13, 238–41 [*grein*, *greiða*, *greddir*, *grennir*]; Gould 1929, 948 [*Grerr*]; Holthausen 1942, 272, no. 77 [*glyðra*]; Sturtevant 1926, 218 [*grenja*]; Sturtevant 1948, 138–39 [*greppr*]). Jan de Vries (1962, 172–89) lists twenty-nine words that have been decomposed according to Wadstein’s method: *glam*, *glata*, *glíkr*, *glíma*, *glófi*, *glyðra*, *glymja*, *Gná*, *gneggja*, *gneista*, *gnípa*, *gnipall*, *gnit*, *gnjóði*, *gnógr*, *gnótt*, *gnúpr*, *gnægja*, *greddir*, *gregr*, *greiða*, *grein* 1, *grellskapr*, *grenja*, *grenna* 2, *greppr*, *Grerr*, *gríð*, *grína*. Only two of them undoubtedly have *g-* from **ga-*, namely, *glíkr* (= Mod. Icel. *líkr*) ‘like’ (adj.) and *gnóg* (Mod. Icel. *nóg*). *Greiða* ‘make ready’ is a cognate of Gothic *garaidjan* and OE *gerādian* (less certain is their connection with *grein* ‘difference’), and it can go back to *g-reiða*. *Greddir* ‘provider of sustenance’ compares well with OE *gereordian* and *reord*. *Glófi* ‘glove’, regardless of whether it is a borrowing from Old English, resembles *lófi* ‘palm of the hand’. None of the others has been recognized by Vries 1962 as containing an ancient prefix. This does not mean that the etymologies questioned by Jan de Vries are wrong, but, on the

whole, it is better not to derive OI *g-* from **ga-* without the support of incontestable cognates in the other Germanic languages. (Words with putative **ga-* can also be found outside the *gl-*, *gr-* set: cf. *gyggja* ‘frighten’ derived from **ga-yggja* in Holthausen 1948.)

Glíma has been analyzed as *g-líma* twice. Le Roy Andrews (1914, 134–35) suggested the etymon **gahlīmōn-* (with the root meaning ‘inclined, bending’), while Sturtevant (1926, 216) posited **ga-līman* (with the root meaning ‘glue together’; *glíma* = ‘with limbs twisted together, interlocked’). Sturtevant must have missed Andrews’s article, for Andrews begins his explanation by rejecting **ga-līman* as the source of *glíma*. When Sturtevant’s work was ready to be published, he read Brøndum-Nielsen’s etymology, approved its idea, but considered his own to be more convincing from a semantic point of view.

Brøndum-Nielsen (1924) examined *glíma* as one of the *gl-* words denoting brilliance (such as Germ. *glänzen* and OI *gljá* ‘shine’) and ‘quick movement’. In his opinion, *glíma* also meant ‘quick movement’; he compared *glíma* and *bregða* ‘move quickly’ < **breh-* ‘light up suddenly’. This etymology was accepted by Alexander Jóhannesson (1956, 379), Holthausen (1948, 89), and partly Jan de Vries (1962, 174), but de Vries gravitated toward understanding *glíma* as ‘amusement’ (cf. OI *glinga*, noun, ‘joke’ and *glinga*, verb, ‘blink’); he was followed by Ásgeir Blöndal Magnússon (1989, 255). This idea (*glíma* = joke, amusement) also occurred to Le Roy Andrews, but he rejected it.

The problem with *gl-* words is that so many of them are partial synonyms (see section 6, above). One constantly runs into ‘light’, ‘open space’, ‘move quickly’, ‘joke’, and ‘woman’. Even within Old Icelandic, *glenna* is like *glyðra* ‘feather-brained woman’, *glens*, and *glinga* (all three mean ‘joke’); since *glenna* also designates ‘open space’, it resembles *gljá* ‘shine’, and so forth. It is easy to combine these elements and produce any number of plausible etymologies. A feather-brained woman may have received her name because she is given to silly jokes or because she grins all the time; or a joke is called *glenna* from the association with coquettes, unless it is something empty (inane) or, conversely, bright and merry. The only way to avoid useless conjectures is to reconstruct entire semantic bundles (rather than each word separately) and check every step.

Generally speaking, Brøndum-Nielsen’s etymology of *glíma* is acceptable. The verb *glíma* could have been a synonym of **glíða*, though the function of the postvocalic consonants (“extensions”) remains unclear: *glí-m-a* = **glí-ð-a*. *Glíma* ‘make rapid movements, move quickly’ could have meant ‘jump, dance’ > ‘have a good time, joke’. But it is improbable that wrestling, despite its popularity in Iceland, is simply ‘amusement’. ‘Sport’ is indeed ‘amusement’, but in such names as *tennis*, *cricket*, *golf*, *hockey* (to the extent that their etymology is known) and *football*, *basketball*, *volleyball*, reference to some technicality is usually hidden. The same is true of terms like *goal*. ‘Quick movement’, let alone ‘amusement’ is not specific enough. I am not sure I can supply the missing link between ‘quick

movement' and 'wrestling', but it may be worthwhile to examine the North English verb *glime* 'look askance or shyly' (Murray et al. 1989).

This widely current verb must be of Scandinavian origin, even though **glíma* 'look' has not been found in any of the Scandinavian languages. Many words are apparently related to *glime*: OE *glǣm* 'brilliant light', which yielded *gleam* 'subdued or transient light' and later the verb *gleam*, MHG *glimmen* 'shine brightly' (cf. Mod. Germ. *glimmen* and *glimmern*), Swed. *glimra*, Dan. *glimre*, Engl. *glimmer* (probably also of Scandinavian origin; like *gleam*, *glimmer* has changed from 'shine brightly' to 'shine faintly'). See a detailed discussion of these and more distantly related verbs in Vries 1971, s.v. "glimmen." *Glime*, however, means 'look', and in this respect it shares some common ground with Middle English *glenten* 'shine; move quickly; look'. In Murray et al. 1989, s.v. "glent v.," we again run into words for 'shine, glitter', 'banter, taunt', and 'kite'. Murray was uncertain about their interrelations, but he made the following statement, with which I wholly concur: "The orig[inal] sense is prob[ably] that of quick motion, the application to light being secondary; for a similar development cf. GLANCE v." The Slavic counterparts of *glent* (again from Scandinavian) and MHG *glinzen* are Russ. *gljadet'*, Old Polish *głędać* (with a nasal vowel), etc. All of them mean only 'look'.

As was pointed out in the previous section, the reconstructed meaning of *glīdan* / **glīða* 'move precipitously' may go back to the observation of light's great speed. The same holds for Norw. *glensa*, but the subsequent semantic development of both roots depends on 'quick motion', not on 'light'. It is even possible that 'quick motion' is the primary sense, as the *Oxford English Dictionary* says, and that **ghlei-* 'shine brightly' is not the source of all the vaguely synonymous verbs from *glow* / *glühen* to *glent* / *glinzen*. In any case, some words mean only 'shine' (*gleam*, *glow*), others 'shine', 'move', and 'look', still others 'shine' and 'move' (such are, for example Swed. dial. *glänta*, *glinta*, *glätta* 'shine, gleam; slip, slide, open slightly'), and finally, some mean only 'look' (Russ. *gljadet'*, Engl. *glime*). Later interaction among these groups is more than likely.

It is noteworthy that *glime* means 'look shyly or askance', not 'look quickly', and here the history of *glance* provides a useful parallel. The origin of *glance* (first recorded in the fifteenth century) is not quite clear, but its semantic history has been traced in sufficient detail. *Glance* often presupposes a sideways motion of the eyes. Among the technical meanings of this word we find 'glide off an object struck, without delivering the full effect of the blow', and a stroke in cricket is called *glance* when "the face of the bat is turned slantwise to meet the ball, which should glance off towards fine-long-leg" (Murray et al. 1989, s.v. "glance sb. 1"). Perhaps Scand. *glíma*, of which the Icelandic noun and verb ('wrestling; wrestle') are the only known representatives, also meant a *sideways* twist.

Some of the movements (*bragð*, *hnykkur* 'movement') in Icelandic wrestling are called *bakbragð*, *halsbragð*, *handabragð*, *hnébragð* / *hnékkur*, *hælbragð* / *hælkrokur*, *klofbragð*, *leggjarbragð*, *magahnykkur*, *mjaðmahnykkur* (cf. *laus-*

mjöðm), *rassbragð*, *ristabragð*, and *tábragð*. These are named after the part of the body gripped (back, neck, hand, knee, heel, groin, shin, belly, thigh, buttocks, instep, toe). Others contain the names of different “grippers”: *bolahnykkur* (*boli* ‘bull’), *draugabragð* (*draugur* ‘animate ghost’), *músabragð* (*mús* ‘mouse’), *skessubragð* (*skessa* ‘giantess’). *Skólabragð* (*skóli* ‘school’) is nonspecific; *veltibragð* refers to ‘rolling’ (*velta*); *grikkur* means ‘a “Greek” (cunning) movement’, and its synonym is *glenna* (Magnússon 1989). My source of information is Davíðsson 1888–92, 53–70.

Three words deserve special mention: *sveifla* (‘turning over, swinging’), for it shows that the name of a movement can indeed sound like *glíma*, *sniðglíma*, because the idea of the term is ‘side wrestling’ (cf. *á snið* ‘obliquely’, *draga e-ð á snið* ‘pull something aside’), and *súðahnykkur* (*súða* ‘clinch’), because this term contains reference to the type of ‘interlocking’. I believe that at one time *glíma* was a term of the same type as *sveifla* and *súða*. Perhaps it even described the most common movement, so that the sport came to be known as *glíma*. Once this happened, *glíma* in its specific meaning inevitably went out of use. Wrestling as the name of a sport usually goes back to the name of a characteristic movement: cf. Gr. *παλαίω* ‘wrestle’ (if it is related to *πάλλω* ‘swing’), Lat. *luctāri* ‘wrestle’ (if it is related to Gr. *λυγίζω* ‘bend, twist’), Engl. *wrestle* (frequentative of *wrest* ‘twist, turn’), and Germ. *ringen* ‘wrestle’ (from ‘move in an enclosure for prize fighting, Ring’). The combined evidence of Engl. dial. *glime* and the reconstructed Icel. *glíma* yields a verb that can be glossed approximately ‘push or pull aside; cast a sideways look’.

8. OI *kofa(r)n* ‘lapdog’

The Old Icelandic word *kofa(r)n* is interesting not only because its origin remains undiscovered, but because its Old Danish cognate occurs in a famous episode. The Danish chronicler of *Gesta Danorum* tells the story about how Hagan, King of Sweden, sent a dog to rule the Danes. The two extant versions are nearly identical: (1) “Tha sendæ konung Hogun of Swerike et kœuærne Danum til konung,” (2) “Tha sendæ Hagen konung aff Swerighe eet kœwernæ Danæ thill konung” (Lorenzen 1887–1913, 10–11). It is *kœuærne* / *kœwernæ* that corresponds to OI *kofa(r)n* and OSwed. *kœuærne*, *kœvræn*.

Alexander Bugge (1906, 163) considered *kofa(r)n* to be a borrowing. Kristensen (1906, 31) did not exclude the possibility of a native origin, but Fischer (1909, 91) followed Bugge and included this word in the section “Loanwords of Unknown Origin.” The few attempts to find the etymology of *kofa(r)n* revolve around the fact that *kofa(r)n* was a small dog which could be carried around or kept in the house. Kristensen cited MHG *kober* ‘basket’ (its Low German counterpart was *kower*). According to Fischer (1909, 232), Verner Dahlerup compared *kofa(r)n* and OI *kofi* ‘room’; he treated *kofa(r)n* as the substantivized form of an

adjective and referred to the pairs OI *salr* 'hall' and *salerni* 'privy', *faðir* 'father' and *faðerni* 'fatherhood, patrimony', as well as Mod. Icel. *þjóð* 'nation', *þjóðerni* 'nationality'. Holthausen (1948, 159, s.v. "kofa[r]n") repeats this etymology but supplies it with a question mark. Alexander Jóhannesson (1927, sec. 26) suggested that the earliest form had been *kofarnrakki* (*rakki* 'dog'), with *kofarn* being related to Germ. *Kiefer* 'jaw' < **kefru*.

OI *faðerni* corresponds to Gothic *fadrein**, a substantivized adjective; OI *faðerni* corresponds to Lat. *paternus*. But in the other words the suffixes *-arn*/*-ern(i)* are troublesome. The origin of *-erni* in *salerni* 'privy' and *víðerni* 'jacket' (a poetical word derived from *víð* 'wide') is unknown. Sometimes the group *-ern* is the result of later changes, with *-n* added as an excrescent element. Such is the history of Engl. *bittern*, *slattern*, and *marten* < *martern* and of Germ. *Ostern* 'Easter'. Alexander Jóhannesson (1927, sec. 26) lists *akarn* 'acorn', *ísarn* 'iron', *undarn* 'time before dawn', and *fóarn* 'crop or maw of a bird' as having the suffix *-arn*, but *-arn* is not a suffix in any of them. Words like *þjóðerni* are late in Icelandic. At present, they are rather numerous, but Alexander Jóhannesson (1927, sec. 38) can only refer to the influence of foreign models (*taverna* > Icel. *taverni*, etc.). Equally troublesome is the suffix in Gothic *widuwairna* 'orphan'.

In German, *-ern* in *hölzern* 'wooden' and other similar adjectives also supplanted *-în* late, and its history remains partly unclear. The history of *-ern* in verbs like *folgern* 'follow as a conclusion', *steigern* 'raise' is even more obscure. Engl. *stubborn* (with movable *s*) corresponds sound by sound to Icel. *þybbinn* (the same meaning), but the Icelandic adjective has a regular suffix, while *stubborn* ends in *-orn*, a pseudosuffix without analogues (Lieberman 1986, 110–12). It is safer not to compare *-a(r)n* in *kofa(r)n* and *-arn* in *akarn*, *ísarn*, *undarn*, *fóarn* and *-erni* in *salerni*, *þjóðerni*.

Jan de Vries (1962, 323) calls all the existing proposals about the etymology of *kofa(r)n* idle speculations. However, the case is not absolutely hopeless. This word probably has the root *kof-* and the suffix *-a(r)n*. The fact that the suffix appears in two forms indicates that it was added late. *Kof-* also turns up in Mod. Icel. *kofa* 'young bird of the loon family'. Although *kofa* was first recorded in the seventeenth century, it must be related to other nouns designating (young) animals, from OI *kobbi* 'seal' to Engl. *cub*, with the consonant frame *k-b*: cf. Dutch dial. *kabbe* 'young pig', Germ. dial. *Kibbe* 'ewe', Scottish *keb*, Engl. dial. *kebber* 'refuse sheep taken out of the flock', Swed. dial. *kibb*, *kubbe* 'cub', and so forth. Most of such words have *-bb-* (expressive geminates are typical of hypocoristic names), but Magnússon 1989 is probably right in viewing *kofa* as part of this group; Icel. *kufungur* (or *kúfungur*, a variant of *kuðungur*) 'young snail', another seventeenth-century word, may belong here, too. I believe that *kofa(r)n* was simply a cub, that is, a whelp.

One can also approach *kofa(r)n* as *Kläffer* 'barker'. The Dutch counterpart of Germ. *kläffen* is *keffen* (first recorded in 1598); cf. Dutch dial. *kaffen* and

Westphalian *käffen* (Vries 1971, 310). It is always taken for granted that such words are of imitative origin. To be sure, if dogs can go *arf-arf*, *bow-wow*, *woof-woof*, and *yap-yap* (in English), *beff-beff* and *bouff-bouff* (in German dialects), *gav-gav* and *tjav-tjav* (in Russian), they can also go *keff-keff*, *koff-koff*, and *klaff-klaff*. But some of these “imitations” may be more than accidental echoes of baby talk, and *keffen* could have been prompted by the *k-b* animal names and had a variant *kaffen* from the same source.

The cognates of *kofa(r)n* in the other Scandinavian languages reflect either the lack of a native protoform or the proliferation of expressive synonyms for ‘puppy’ (or both): cf. the list from Rietz 1867, s.v. “kövan”: *kjövan*, *kjövern*, *kjivan*, *kåven*, *kjävling*. The suffix *-arn* remains unexplained (as always). If the original form was *kofan*, rather than *kofarn*, it must have sounded unusually funny: it had the root designating clubby and chubby creatures and a “royal” suffix, as in *þjóðann* ‘king’ and *Herjann* (one of Óðinn’s names, apparently meaning the leader of the hosts). *Kofan* had an appellation indeed worthy of a cub king or a king of barkers. It may have been native or borrowed from Low German, or made up of a native root and a foreign suffix, but, in any case, we may safely dispense with ‘room dog’ and ‘basket dog’.

9. North English *taistrel* ‘rascal’

The etymology of this word, which occurs in many North English dialects, has hardly been discussed at all. (Hoy 1952 does not mention it.) In the files of the English etymological dictionary at the University of Minnesota, *taistrel* has turned up only once. In 1863, a certain reader of *Notes and Queries* asked about its origin (he spelled it *taistrill*) (D. 1863), and the editor cited Grose’s entry *taistrill* ‘a cunning rogue’ (which I could not find) and Jamieson’s *taistrill*, *tystrill*. In Jamieson 1879–82, *taistrell* is defined as ‘a gawkish, dirty . . . sort of woman; often applied to a girl who from carelessness tears her clothes’. *Taistrill/taistrell* must have been understood as *tearstrel*; hence the reference to a girl who tears her clothes. C. Clough Robinson (1862, 427) notes the spelling *tarestril* (as he suggests, under the influence of *tar* ‘mischievous character’), and Atkinson (1868, s.v. “tastrill”) thinks of a person in tearing rage.

Jamieson was aware of the difference in the meaning of *taistrel* in Scotland (‘dirty woman, slovenly girl’) and England (‘rascal’) and in his etymology referred to Dan. *taasse* (that is, *tosse*) ‘a silly man or woman, a booby, a looby’. In Wright 1898–1905, 6:11, *taistrel* (with numerous spelling variants) is explained as ‘rascal, scoundrel; a loose liver; a mischievous child’. This word seems to be a borrowing from Scandinavian, and here Jamieson was right. Mod. Icel. *teistinn*, *teistugur*, *teistur* means ‘peevish, fretful’. It surfaced only in the eighteenth century, but Cleasby-Vigfusson included it too ([1874] 1957, s.v. “teistinn”). Magnússon 1989, s.v. “teistinn,” compares New Norw. *teisten* ‘lively, merry’ and *teistell* m. ‘brave

and stern man'. Torp 1919, s.v. "teisten," cites New Norw. *teiste* 'Uria grylle or Cephus grylle' (a bird name: Icel. *teista* and *þeista* 'black guillemot'). Magnússon 1989, s.v. "teistinn, teistugur, teistur," offers an etymology via Swed. *test* 'lock (tuft) of hair', New Norw. *tist* 'thread', Dutch *teisteren* 'harass', MHG *tesen* 'tear, scratch', Engl. *tease*, etc. He explains *teistinn* as 'ready to tear or grapple'.

Consider also Dan. *tøs* '(saucy) girl, hussy', Swed. *tös*, and New Norw. *taus*. It is not unthinkable that *taus-* and *teis-t* represent two grades of ablaut of the same root. Engl. *tease* < *tāsan* 'separate the fibers' and OHG *zeisan* 'ruffle' are related by ablaut to Engl. *touse(l)* and German *zausen*. If Icel. *teista* is not a late corruption of *þeista*, this bird name can be understood as 'tearer'. The origin of words for 'girl' is exceptionally difficult to trace, but it is worthy of note that OHG *erzūsen* 'ruffle' is related to MHG *zūsach* 'shrubbery' (Kluge and Mitzka 1967, s.v. "zausen"), and words for 'bush' (just like words for 'stump') are often used in naming children and young women (these are usually derogatory names): cf. Germ. *Strumpf* 'stump' and *Strunze* 'slattern' and see section 5, above. So *teistinn* and *taus/tøs/tös* can be related. In any case, the English word must have come from Scandinavian. Given the wide range of meanings in Icelandic and Norwegian ('peevish, fretful', 'lively, merry', 'brave and stern man'), 'rascal, villain, cunning rogue; passionate, violent, or sour-tempered person' fits the picture well. And so does *-rel*, a suffix with depreciatory force, as in *scoundrel*, *wastrel*.

10. North English *pawky* 'pert, saucy'

Not much is known about the origin of this word. Jamieson's (1879–82, s.v. "pauky, pawky") derivation from OE *pācan* 'deceive', itself an obscure word, although accepted by Brockett (1846, s.v.) and Atkinson (1868, s.v.) and reproduced in Hoy 1952, 374, is untenable for phonetic reasons: ME *pēchen* would have given *peach*. Skeat (1900) looked for a different etymon and compared *pawky* to Norw. dial. *poka* 'be peevish, cross, defiant', whence *poken* 'defiant' (said about children) and *pok* 'refractory child', but *ō* in an open syllable would have become [ou], and the result would have been *poky*, not *pawky*.

I think *pawky* is a Scandinavian word from the root *polk-*; the *Oxford English Dictionary* cites a sixteenth-century form *palk* for *pawk*. In Modern Icelandic, *polloka* 'work hard, kill oneself with work' is part of a large group: *pollok* 'bad farm', *þjallaka*, a synonym of *polloka*, and the like (Magnússon 1989, 718, 713); all these words are recent and apparently borrowed. Engl. *pawky* is not recorded before the seventeenth century. The Icelandic words refer to strenuous efforts and hard but inefficient work, whereas *pawky* runs the gamut of 'maliciously deceptive, wily, shrewd, saucy, pert, insolent, arrogant, proud, squeamish, humorously tricky, arch' (see Murray et al. 1989 and Bayne 1900). Some slangy etymon from Low German is not unthinkable.

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